

# **Youth Culture and Social Media**

Andra Siibak

# Generations online

---

- ▶ ICTs have become key elements in bringing different generations together and promoting the strengthening of family ties and experiences (Gonçalves & Patrício 2010).
- ▶ The opportunities offered by the new media are grasped by the members of six consecutive generations:
  - **G. I. Generation** (ages 74+)
  - **Silent Generation** (ages 65-73)
  - **Older Boomers** (ages 56-64)
  - **Younger Boomers** (ages 46-55),
  - **Generation X** (ages 34-45)
  - **Millennials** (ages 18-33) (Zickuhr, 2010).
- ▶ Studies indicate that Baby Boomers and members of the Generation X alike have acknowledged that new media technologies may offer them an opportunity to reach out to Millennials who otherwise seem to be out of reach (Stamoulis 2009).



# Thinking assignment

- 
- ▶ Do you communicate with your family members through the Internet?
  - ▶ What is the main motivation behind using online environments for family communication?
  - ▶ Who initiated this contact through new media?
  - ▶ Which environments you use most often and why?
  - ▶ What are the main topics under discussion?



# Why so?

---

- ▶ Believed to be most **convenient, affordable and fastest** way to communicate
- ▶ **Geographically distanced families**
- ▶ The asynchronous nature of the Internet, in which senders and receivers of messages do not have to be online simultaneously, supports interactions among people with **different temporal rhythms** (Boase & Wellman 2004).
- ▶ Turkle (2010) claims that many **people are actually afraid to interrupt their close ones** by trying to get in contact with them by the phone, or F2F.
- ▶ “Silver surfers” have made profiles in SNS in order **to re-connect** with their children and grandchildren (Simonpietri 2011).



# Motivations for using CMC

---

- ▶ **Feeling of connectedness and closeness**  
(especially for empty-nest families)
- ▶ First contact with family members is sought via rapid communication channels, MSN or Skype (for daily matters, organising events, etc)
- ▶ /---/Actually I talk to my mom quite often on Skype, even when we're both at home in different rooms and she wants to tell me something. We're both quietly busy with our laptops and then I get a message from her like: "Hey, go get some food".  
(W20 G1)



---

▶ /---/not half a day passed when my eldest daughter posted "Who showed Facebook to grandma?" on Skype [laughs]. This was a truly perplexed and somewhat even an annoyed question. But then I explained the situation and she found that actually it's quite nice that grandma can communicate with other people and welcomed her to the computer environment. (W42 G2)

▶ **CMC as a substitute for F2F communication**

- grandparents confessed feeling much younger when being able to keep in touch with their children and grandchildren through new media.



- 
- ▶ Written contact (MSN, chat) is preferred as then they can **think through and formulate one's messages better** and send them **to a large group of people**.
  - ▶ **To replace the intensity of F2F verbal communication** with the more subdued and neutral way of expression of a written text.
  - ▶ My younger daughter is somehow extremely emotional, a teenager; her audible expressions can sometimes be very angry or depress me or something like that. It's easier to take it through a text that has been typed into MSN or Skype /---/. (W42 G2)





# Inter-generational relations on SNS

---

- ▶ On the one hand: parents create profiles on SNS so as **to control** their childrens' postings and information shared on the site (Sullivan 2005). On the other hand, parents are helping their children **to get access** to environments that are forbidden to young people aged below 13 (boyd et al 2011).
- ▶ Young people are not as willing to interact with their parents via SNS as their parents are to interact with them (Simonpietri 2011; Siibak & Murumaa 2011).





Susan [redacted]

Happy Birthday sweetie! (Can I put that on FB without embarrassing you?)

Like · Comment · See Friendship · Sunday at 6:49am · 🗨

---

***If you have to ask, mom,  
the answer is no . . .***



## US parents' willingness to allow their child to create an account in violation of the minimum age requirement (boyd, Hargittai, Schultz, Palfrey 2011)

---

Are there any situations where you would allow your child to create an account on an online service if your child was younger than the service's age limit? (N=1,007).

Yes, for any listed reason (net)	78%
----------------------------------	-----

Yes, for educational or school related purposes	54%
---	-----

Yes, to communicate other family members	48%
--	-----

Yes, to communicate with me	47%
-----------------------------	-----

Yes, to communicate with friends	22%
----------------------------------	-----

Yes, because their classmates use the service	9%
---	----

Yes, but only under supervision	50%
---------------------------------	-----

No, I would never allow it	22%
----------------------------	-----

# **Should parents and children be Facebook friends?**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ye3vZJmdqpM>

# Family interaction on SNS (Burke 2012)

---

## ▶ **Who friends whom?**

- Children aged 13 to 17 are more likely to send a friend request to their parents
- More than 65% of friendships between 13-year-olds and their parents are initiated by the child
- Only 40% of children in their early to mid-20s send friend requests to their parents
- 50% of children in their mid-40s initiate Facebook friendships with their parents

## ▶ **How would you explain such findings?**

---



# Who talks to whom? (Burke 2012)

---

- ▶ Daughters post on their parents' Timelines nearly as often as their parents post on theirs', and after age 30, daughters post even more.
- ▶ Sons receive more posts from their parents than they make to their parents' Timelines.
- ▶ Commenting activity starts out nearly balanced between younger teens and their parents.
- ▶ As the child gets older, parents are more likely the ones to initiate communication.



# What do the parents say? (Burke 2012)

## WORDS USED WHEN TALKING TO DAUGHTER



FATHER



MOTHER

## WORDS USED WHEN TALKING TO SON



FATHER



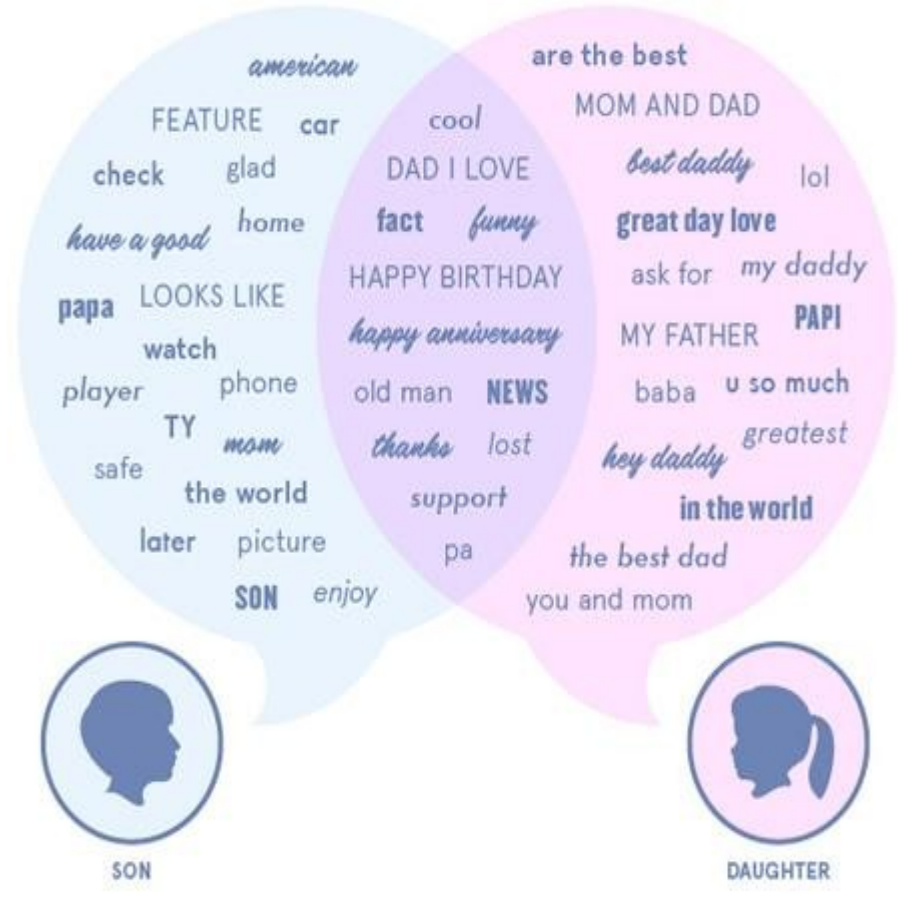
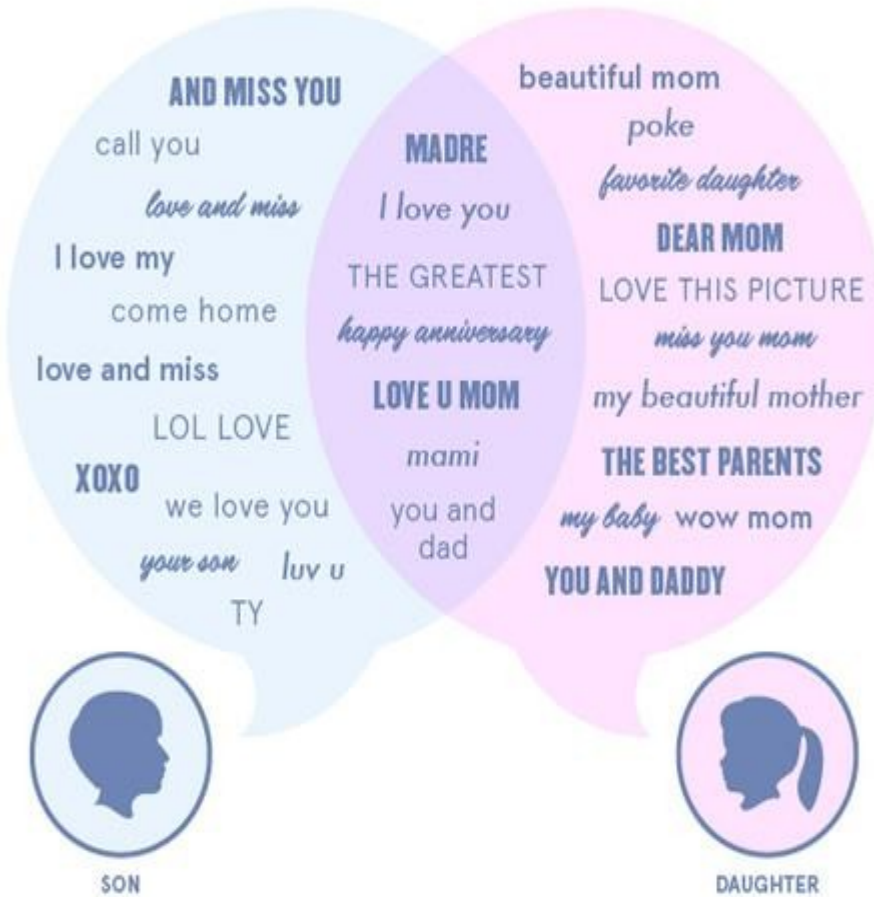
MOTHER



# What do the children say? (Burke 2012)

WORDS USED WHEN TALKING TO MOTHER

WORDS USED WHEN TALKING TO FATHER





- ▶ The oldest family members see themselves in the new media environment as observers rather than active content creators.
- ▶ Young people admitted not feeling particularly interested in the links and posts uploaded by their parents.
- ▶ Parents and grandparents felt concerned and irritated by their children's apparently superficial and simple postings.
- ▶ /---/ Sometimes it seems that I would like my younger daughter not to be such a typical adolescent or I find her postings and reactions there uninteresting or stupid, empty, trivial. /---/ That is what irritates me – these are my kids and I feel annoyed, wondering why this is happening to me, why is my child so trivial. Their environment is not like that, it shouldn't facilitate it. (W42 G2)



# Parents as “nightmare readers”

---

- ▶ Parents are usually often perceived as a disturbing factor on SNS i.e. “nightmare readers” (Marwick & boyd 2010)
- ▶ Hence, young people have made use of the privacy tactic named social steganography (boyd 2010), which is essentially a strategy where information is hidden in plain sight. Decoding such posts can be extremely difficult for the audience members without the appropriate „interpretive lens“



**Is Social Media Humiliation A Good Way For  
Modern Parents To Punish Their Children?**

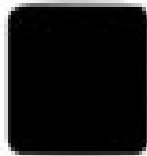
A group discussion

- 
- ▶ At the same time, interviews with youngest family members indicate that children have often perceived faults in the content creation practices of adults in their family. In such cases, representatives of older generations themselves lack the required sense of criticism and foresight as, evidently, they have not been able to foresee clearly enough the possible consequences of the practices described (Tamme & Siibak 2012).
  - ▶ /---/the boys in my class have taken to following my mom's Flickr and then making fun of me at school. I once wrote an essay in school that we had to post in a blog; I added a picture to the essay and when you clicked on it, it took you to my mom's Flickr. Yes... and then they so to speak tune my pictures and post them. (W12 G1)
- 



# Beware of your audience! Even parents can mess up 😊

---



[Redacted name]

Thank you all for the kind birthday wishes! I had a fantastic day on the beach in Avon with my beautiful wife. Next up a NY Strip @ Brennen's and a slice of cheesecake. A perfect ending for a perfect day! And maybe a happy ending afterwards. Hey I'm old, I'm not dead.

4 minutes ago · Like · Comment



[Redacted name]

....really Dad?

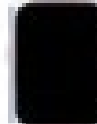
about a minute ago · Like



[Redacted name]

Your mother typed that.

31 seconds ago via Facebook Mobile · Like



[Redacted name]

I'm not sure if that makes it better or worse.

2 seconds ago · Like



Write a comment...

***More like an UNhappy ending!***

---



# How should parents mediate their children's Internet use?

Our suggestions to parents

# Sources of social support and mediation for children

---

- ▶ **Active mediation of the child's internet use** – the parent is present, staying nearby, encouraging or sharing or discussing the child's online activities.
- ▶ **Active mediation of the child's internet safety** – whether before, during or after the child's online activities, the parent guides them in using the internet safely, also possibly helping or discussing what to do in case of difficulty.
- ▶ **Restrictive mediation** – the parent sets rules that restrict the child's use (of particular applications, activities, or of giving out personal information).
- ▶ **Monitoring** – the parent checks available records of the child's internet use afterwards.



- 
- ▶ **Technical mediation of the child's internet use** – the parent uses software or parental controls to filter, restrict or monitor the child's use.
  - ▶ **Teachers' mediation**
  - ▶ **Mediation by siblings**
  - ▶ **Peer mediation**
  - ▶ **Other sources of safety awareness**





# Parental mediation in Europe (EU Kids Online)

---

## ▶ **Most parents in Europe:**

- talk to their children about what they do on the internet (70%)
- stay nearby when the child is online (58%)
- suggest how to behave towards others online (56%)
- talk about things that might bother the child (52%)

## ▶ **Parents restrict:**

- children's disclosure of personal information (85%),
  - uploading (63%)
  - downloading (57%)
- 



- 
- ▶ Most parents (85%) are confident about their role, feeling that they can help their child if the latter encounters something that bothers them online.
  - ▶ Parents (79%) are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them.
  - ▶ 68% of the young think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. However, 29% say they ignore their parents a little and 8% of children say they ignore their parents a lot.
-

# Parents' practices in the US (Madden et al 2012)

---

- ▶ 50% of parents of online teens have used parental controls or other means of blocking, filtering, or monitoring their child's online activities
- ▶ 46% of the parents have talked with their child because they were concerned about something posted to their profile or account.
- ▶ 44% of parents have taken the step of reading the privacy policies of websites or social networking sites that their child is using
- ▶ 42% of parents have searched for their child's name online to see what information is available about him or her.
- ▶ 31% of the parents have helped their child set up privacy settings for a SNS



# Parental mediation in Estonia

---

- ▶ According to the EU Kids Online findings 90% of the parents and 86% of the youth from the Estonian sample state that **active mediation** has been used for the guiding their internet use; 73% of the parents and 61% of the youth say that **restrictive mediation** has been used (Livingstone et al 2011)
- ▶ The focus-group interviews with pre-school children (N=61), however, indicate that **parents mainly use restrictive mediation** (setting rules) when supervising the internet use for the young children (Vinter & Siibak, in progress)



# Setting time restrictions (Vinter & Siibak 2012)

---

- ▶ B (7): /unhappily/ I'd like to play online more, but my mum and dad won't let me.
- ▶ **Time limits are quite vague and differ greatly among families:**
  - Children can use the computer every other day
  - May use the computer daily 15 min
  - May use daily 1-1.5 hours
- ▶ **Parents have also set rules in terms of what kind of content the child may access**
  - "pictures for adults" not allowed
  - Watching violent content
  - Playing action computer games



# Computer as a means for discipline

---

## ▶ Computer as a reward

*T1: Two children in my class can use a computer as a reward. One has tasks given by a speech therapist and he knows that after completing these exercises he can use the computer for 20 minutes. And it is a great motivator for him.*

*T2: ...There is a habit of making effort.*

*T1: This is positive.*

## ▶ Computer use is forbidden if a child misbehaves

*MO (6 B): ...sometimes I've warned him that if he acts up he won't be allowed to use the computer.*

---



# Active mediation (Vinter & Siibak 2012)

---

- ▶ **Warnings related to the physical well-being**

*FA (7 B): We've also said that you shouldn't be on the computer for too long as it's not good for your eyes to be too close to the screen.*

- ▶ **Warnings related to the technical aspects of the computer use**

*FA (7 G): We've helped her register for some sites. But we've talked about viruses and advertisements, too.*

- ▶ **Warnings related to the unwanted online contact**

*FA (6 G): My dad also said that you shouldn't talk to strangers on the Internet.*

---



# Monitoring

---

- ▶ Sometimes child's SNS passwords are used for logging in and monitoring the child's activities in more detail. In such cases, a trusting parent-child relationship is of utmost importance as the passwords need to be entrusted to the adult by the child. Our interviews indicate that knowing the child's passwords has helped parents prevent unpleasant and, possibly, dangerous contacts harming the mental and physical well-being of their child (Tamme & Siibak 2012)
- ▶ Someone with a very suspicious name had sent her a message on Rate; I don't remember the name but it was somehow related to reproductive organs and the message was connected to sex. I blocked the sender and, fortunately, my daughter never saw it – I discovered the letter when I checked her profile and have never told her about it. (W34 G2)





- 
- ▶ Estonian parents are **good in reactive mediation** - 18% of the youth and the parents claim that the parent has done something differently in their mediation tactics when a child has been bothered about something online (1. position in Europe)
  - ▶ **Estonian youth do not consider parental mediation strategies effective enough**: 72% claim that parental mediation does not limit what they do online (3. position) 44% ignores the guidance by the parents (6. position)
  - ▶ **Estonian parents do not consider their mediation practices effective as well** (66% thinks they should do more; 7. position); when only 11% of the children agree with that suggestions (11. position)



# Mediation by siblings (Vinter & Siibak 2012)

---

- ▶ Parents seem to fully trust their older children to make the right choices in terms of both selecting the web content accessed by their younger children and teaching them the necessary computer skills (e.g. in games).
  - ▶ *MO (6 B): We don't monitor his computer use – his brother's right next to him most of the time.*
  - ▶ *FA (6 B): He goes onto the Internet with his sister. Then he's allowed... he can play a game she picks for him.*
  - ▶ *MO (6 D): It's his older brother that gives him information about the computer and the Internet, not me or my husband.*
- 



# Teacher mediation (Kalmus, von Felizen & Siibak 2012)

---

- ▶ Teachers' mediation has been found to be slightly **more effective in supporting children's digital literacy and safety skills** than in widening the range of their online activities
- ▶ Teachers' **role in advancing children's skills remains almost constant** with children's increasing age, while their part in widening the horizon of kids' **online opportunities clearly diminishes** when children get older
- ▶ Teacher support **has a positive, although not very strong, correlations with risks and harm**. It might be that without previous teacher support over time, even more children might have experienced risks and harm.

- ▶ Pre-school teachers consider the role of parents to be far more significant compared to their own role as children's supervisors and mentors of children's internet use (Siibak & Vinter 2010; Vinter et al 2010).
- ▶ Focus-group with pre-school teachers (N=24) indicate that teachers generally use technology as a "benign addition" in their classes (Cuban, 2001: 67) which however does not help to shape either media literacy or the digital competence of the child (Siibak & Vinter 2010).



# **A debate: Teacher – student friendship on Facebook?**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm77KSBhyR8>

# Teachers-students FB friends?

## PROS

---

- ▶ Teacher-student friendships could help to extend classroom
- ▶ Students might lose out on a learning opportunity
- ▶ Majority of the teachers use “friendships” appropriately
- ▶ Need to connect in an environment where teens spend the most time
- ▶ Widen the gap between a student’s in-school life and their outside school life
- ▶ Violates free speech
- ▶ Students lose an opportunity to reach out

## CONS

---

- ▶ Online classrooms can be facilitated without “friendships”
- ▶ The teacher is not a “friend” but an authority figure
- ▶ Might expose unwanted info
- ▶ Any measure to protect the students is a good thing
- ▶ Exclusive teacher-student relationships are inappropriate



# Peer mediation (Kalmus, von Feilizen & Siibak 2012)

---



- ▶ Internet-related interaction with friends plays a **important role in opening up further online opportunities** for children rather than advances their digital skills
  - ▶ The importance of peer mediation, both in advancing skills and in increasing opportunities, **decreases when children grow older.**
  - ▶ Those children who get more advice from their peers take up more **communication and entertainment related opportunities**
- 





**Let's discuss!**

Children and teens are known to share one's SNS passwords amongst each other (boyd 2012)

Why do they do that?