

“YOU HAVE NO STORY, YET!”
 THE ROLE OF THE ONLINE COMMUNITY IN
 SHAPING WOMEN’S ‘MY STORIES’ ABOUT THE
 JOURNEY TO MOTHERHOOD

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a folkloristic analysis of telling personal experience stories in the Estonian Midwives Association’s Family School discussion forum (www.perekool.ee), focusing on the Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth sub-forums. In the article women’s My Stories about their journey to motherhood are under discussion. The central question is how the practice of telling these stories is shaped and affected by the peculiarities of the online community, its communication space, traditions, and daily operation. The article seeks to answer this question in relation to the following topics: accepted and non-accepted topics and experiences; the message of the stories; the structure of the stories; vocabulary competence; and the style of storytelling. From the theoretical perspective, the focus is on participatory storytelling, that is, on the interplay of the specific online environment, narrator, story, and group, as well as the process by which the teller and the audience co-create the stories.

KEYWORDS

Conception • in vitro fertilisation • pregnancy • childbirth • personal experience stories • participatory storytelling • online communities • My Story

INTRODUCTION

It was over 30 years ago that Sandra Stahl drew attention to personal experience stories as a genre of folklore. She described these stories as

first-person narratives usually composed orally by the tellers and based on real incidents in their lives [...]. Whatever the experience, the story itself is a narrative creation of the teller, and it uses not only the experience itself as a base but also many traditional aspects of storytelling – predictable form, evidence of cultural and personal stylization, conventional functions. [...] the stories ‘belong’ to the tellers because they are the ones responsible for recognizing in their own experiences

something that is 'story worthy' [...]. If the story is successful, if it effectively entertains, teaches, or awes the audience, then the teller is likely to repeat it whenever the context. (Stahl 1986: 268–269)

Today the contexts in which the personal experience stories are told have changed. In parallel with face-to-face storytelling we observe personal experience stories in relation to the participatory culture of the internet, i.e. social media, online groups and the integrated digital technologies used to develop and share personal stories. There are different social media sites where telling personal stories is an important part of everyday communication, traditions, identity and community construction. This article focuses on personal experience stories in a text-based, asynchronous discussion forum.

The article is based on a case study of Estonian website Family School discussion forums. Family School was established in 2000 by the Estonian Midwives Association to bring together people interested in topics related to the family and relationships. I analyse the storytelling practice in relation to personal experience stories submitted to Family School's sub-forums Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth. The starting point of this study was to understand personal experience stories as manifestation of the collectivity of the internet group.¹ The central question is how the practice of telling women's stories about their journey to motherhood (which the women themselves call My Stories) is shaped and affected by participation in an online community through its communication space, traditions and daily operation. From the theoretical point of view, the focus is on the participatory storytelling, that is, on the interplay of the online environment, narrator, story, and group, and the process of co-creating the stories.

ONLINE STORYTELLING AS PARTICIPATION-BASED PRACTICE

From the interdisciplinary perspective the current research is related to the second narrative turn in the social sciences and humanities, the "movement beyond repetitive narrative texts, into the study of narratives and storytelling as polymorphous phenomena in context and interaction" (Hyvärinen 2007: 447) including the study of narratives as practices and sense-making processes rather than a finished product (see for example, Ochs and Capps 2001: 15; Hyvärinen 2007: 452; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008; Fetzer 2010; Georgakopoulou 2013; Phoenix 2013 [2008]: 72–73; Squire 2013 [2008]: 50; Tamboukou et al. 2013 [2008]: 5–7). This approach is fruitful in social media based narrative research because social media is socially constructed and contextually constrained by its structural parameters, which differ according to the specific form of online space and the people who use it (see, for example, Georgakopoulou 2007; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Bazzanella 2010: 19; Georgakopoulou-Nunes 2017).

The key term participatory storytelling relates to Henry Jenkins's idea of participatory culture² and refers to storytelling through participation in various web 2.0³ contexts, i.e. in social media environments such as blogs, social networking sites, wikis, chats, asynchronous discussion forums. The term also relates to the idea that all narratives created in these contexts are based on the co-creation (or collaboration) between the teller and the audience and are shaped by the participatory qualities of their surrounding discourse (see, for example, Page 2010a: 208; Wilson 2014: 130–135).

As Michael Wilson (2014) has pointed out, the idea of co-creation between teller and audience in the storytelling event is not new, because it is fundamental to performance centred thinking in folklore studies. Richard Bauman (1977; 1986; 2004) treated the audience as co-creators and stated that the “collaborative participation of an audience [...] is an integral component of performance as an interactional accomplishment” (Bauman 2004: 9). However, Wilson (2014: 130) argues that “the advent of social media technologies has taken the idea of collaboration” in the storytelling event “a step further”. He explains (ibid.) that,

for Bauman the collaboration is essentially around the co-production of meaning, while performer and audience (teller and listener) still maintain separate functions with distinct purposes: the performer assumes “responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative virtuosity” [Bauman 2004: 9] while the audience is required to evaluate “the way it is done” [Bauman 1977: 11].

In contrast, the evolution of social media technologies has led to new kinds of collaboration in which the traditional roles of teller and listener have become increasingly blurred. Wilson (ibid.) emphasises the idea that “telling and listening are fundamentally the same activity” in the social media and “come together in an act of co-creation”. Wilson (ibid.: 134) explains this in relation to stories as follows:

The posting of a story online invites, even perhaps expects or demands, a response from the visitor. Readers/listeners are invited to leave comments in a thread below the story, to pass the story on [...], or to provide a link between the story and another story to be found elsewhere online [...] sometimes another story will be told in response and sometimes a whole series of links will create a chain of stories [...]. The story becomes a living thing that each response modifies, so that the story is not the original post, but rather the original post plus the collective set of responses and metaresponses. In this sense the story is co-produced in an ongoing set of exchanges where all collaborators are simultaneously tellers and listeners.

The same idea about online storytelling event and the co-creation of the participants has been expressed by sociolinguist Ruth Page (for example 2010a; 2010b; 2012; 2018). Page describes online storytelling practice in relation to the discursive capacity of web 2.0 and the role of the feedback mechanisms that it offers. According to Page, web 2.0 software creates a dialogic online environment that connects storytelling participants with each other, weaving together the standards of narrative and commentary. Further, Page (2010a: 215–216, 218, 228) says that the various feedback mechanisms have different degrees of structural dependency on the original narrative content, that co-talk surrounding a narrative can shape how the story is told and that the nature of feedback channels, the audience and the episodic nature of the storytelling process all have the potential to influence emerging narrative forms. This means that in what way and to what extent the participation and co-creation between the narrator and the audience takes place depends on the communicative contexts, the specifics of the online group and its communication space and interactive channels.

To describe the role of the online community in the co-creation of teller and audience in the context of the current research I have found most appropriate Eric Thomas Newsom’s (2013) explanation of participatory storytelling, which he describes in his doctoral

dissertation *Participatory Storytelling and the New Folklore of the Digital Age*. Newsom (ibid.: 1) describes participatory storytelling as a process that locates in a specific time, space and community and says that “each digital storytelling event is a unique co-operation between teller and audience”, going on to say that “the story being the product of the tensions and interactions taking place during that event”. In saying this, Newsom emphasises the role of communities in guiding the creation, meaning, reception and distribution of online stories. Transferred to current research this means that although women express in Family School their personal experiences, the verbalisation of these experiences is shaped in the dialogue and co-operation of the online community, its traditions, the communication space and the daily operation (participants’ direct feedback and comments on the stories and discussions around and between the stories). As the nature of the co-creation in women’s personal stories on social media has been little explored so far,⁴ the current research sheds light on how participatory culture works in online communities where women transform their journey to motherhood into written stories.

DATA, METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS

The current analysis is based on 755 texts collected in the 2012–2019 period. The stories under scrutiny make up four groups: 1) 56 Strip Catchers’ stories (SCs) by women who want to get pregnant (the term ‘strip catchers’ means that they want to see the stripes that would indicate a positive pregnancy test), 2) 15 IVFers’ stories (IVFs) by women whose last hope to have a child is in vitro fertilisation, 3) 39 Belly Growers’ stories (BGs) by pregnant women and 4) 43 childbirth stories (CBs) by women who have given birth. I have also included 602 related comments (Com). The method I have used to collect the stories is forum observation combined with keyword search. Stories were documented in their telling situation by observing the forum members daily communication (reading the forum postings day to day) and using the forum’s search engine. In doing so, My Story and Our Story were the keywords,⁵ which helped to find and recognise personal experience stories among other kinds of forum communication.

To analyse collected texts I combined classical narrative analysis, narrative chain analysis, and discourse analysis. This choice of methods appeared to be helpful because the stories in forum communication often consist of fragments (an original story and its updates) and gain their meaning and final shape in dialogue with other forum users’ comments and similar stories written in return (more about the features of social media narratives, see Page 2012: 9–19; Georgakopoulou 2013: 694–696; Pilt and Laineste 2020: 496–501). Thus, classical narrative analysis, which focuses on the structure and the style of the narratives, helped me find common storytelling practices in the analysed online groups. Narrative chain analysis enabled me to see different story fragments in the context (cf. Kõiva 2009 174–175; 2010: 222). The aim of discourse analysis was to follow the direct dialogue (questions and answers) and the non-direct dialogue (for example, rhetorical questions or assessments related to a story) between storytellers and readers in order to understand how the online community shapes personal experience stories. For example, I underlined those sentences and text sections where the writer explicitly

mentioned that she changed or supplemented her story according to readers' request, or if the reader asked the writer to complete her story or was annoyed because the story did not meet the common practices accepted by the online community. In addition I used my observations on overall forum communication to confirm the conclusions that I had made using other methods. Through long-term forum observation I have become acquainted with the technological capabilities of the communication space, the official terms of use of the forum, and the traditions of the Family School that also affect the presentation of the stories.

Ethical issues are among the most contested areas in studies that concentrate on telling personal stories online (see also Orgad 2005: 13). On the one hand, forum observation is a great tool for the researcher in the sense that it enables one to collect the stories created in their natural telling situation – the researcher can observe forum communication and copy texts to the computer invisibly. On the other hand, this method requires especially careful consideration of research ethics. While the Family School forums are easily accessible, observation of communication has drawn my attention to the fact that the majority of personal stories are not addressed to the general public but rather to members of a sub-group with similar interests, experiences, values, problems and joys (see also Eysenbach and Till 2001: 1103–1105; Pilt 2013: 164–171; 2017: 165–166). Because of the delicate content, I planned to contact and ask consent from the forum members I wished to cite. Unfortunately, my endeavour was not successful, because Family School forums do not offer an opportunity to contact forum members individually. My next step was to communicate with forum administrators but I did not get the contacts of the forum members I was interested in. However, I did get permission to conduct my research and quote texts from Elina Piirimäe, the head of Family School. Because I did not succeed in reaching the storytellers, the stories and other texts cited in this article have been shortened; all information referring to locations and people (including the user names of forum members) has been removed in order to protect the storytellers and their family's need for privacy. Hopefully also the fact that all the stories have been translated from Estonian to English reduces the chance that people could be recognised through their texts, as well as reducing the chances that the quotations I have chosen to use could somehow harm them.

ONLINE COMMUNITY, DISCUSSION FORUM AND MY STORIES

Three key phrases form the context and conceptual framework of this study: online community, discussion forum, and My Story. The term online community refers to a certain kind of group dynamics; discussion forum is one of the many online spaces with its affordances and constraints; and My Story is one of the forms of the personal experience stories that appear in the online discussions.

The term online community is used synonymously with the terms internet group and online group in the current research. However, not all groups of people are considered communities by internet researchers, certain conditions must be met. These conditions vary from researcher to researcher and depend on the nature of the study, as well as on the understandings of what kind of relationships and connections can be consid-

ered communities in the online contexts (see more, for example, Jones 1995; Foster 1997; Fernback 1999; Rheingold 2001; McKenna and Green 2002; Parks 2011: 105–111; Tiidenberg 2017: 179, 191–196). The concept of online community in the current research fits Nancy Baym's (2015: 84–100) approach. Baym describes online community through the idea that there is certain feeling of belonging that makes the participants think that they are part of an online community. According to Baym the sense of cohesion is the result of a combination of five qualities: 1) a shared sense of space; 2) shared resources and support; 3) shared practices; 4) shared identities, and 5) interpersonal relationships. These aspects are all represented in the communication of the Family School forums, as illustrated by the following example:

When I signed up as a user of Family School's forums in 2007, I knew that my 'downstairs' does not work as it should. I expected that the Family School would be a place to look for wisdom, solace and advice. I have found them. But in addition to the wisdom, solace and advice, I have found a lot of good people and stories: stories of expected pregnancy, stories of unexpected pregnancy, stories of expected but non-existent pregnancy. I have also found stories about fears, hopes, tears and laughter. I have lived in these stories, sometimes joyfully, sometimes weeping. And although I don't know any of the writers personally, I have carried a lot of stories in my heart till now. Thank you for sharing your stories!

And today... Today I'll write my story: about the fear that my body doesn't want to bear a baby, about the journey to accept that, and about the child who has been expected and loved and has been inside me already 23 weeks. Maybe someone finds in my story the same that I found reading others' stories, and then everything is fine! (BGs No. 38)

The beginning of the story consists of very common idea among Family School users, i.e. that they think about discussion forums as a place where they can meet people with similar interests (for more on cyberspace and place see, for example, Healy 1997). This example also shows that Family School is not only a place to share your story, but also a place to access other's stories. Phrases such as "I have found a lot of good people and stories", "Thank you for sharing your stories!" and "Maybe someone finds in my story the same that I found reading others' stories" show that communication inside and around the stories is based on reciprocity. The aim is to offer mutual emotional support, exchange information and provoke dialogue between stories and experiences. This shows that the storyteller feels a kind of connection with the readers of her story, and that she has written her story with a specific audience in mind. Thus, Family School users form support groups, a fact that is very common in online groups on motherhood and fertility (see, for example, Malik and Coulson 2008; Kippels 2010: 11–13; Burns 2018: 18–30).

The more general observation of Family School communication also shows that members of forums have a considerable sense of 'we'. The denominator 'Famylschoolers' (*perekoolikad*) is used by the forum members. However, an even stronger feeling of cohesion is noticeable in the smaller sub-groups that are formed inside the thematic sub-forums. These small groups are formed by forum members who are in similar situations or have similar problems and joys: they have just had a child, they are encoun-

tering problems with pregnancy, etc. These groups are, for example, July Moms or November Moms on the Pregnancy sub-forum, or IVFers and Strip Catchers on the Conception sub-forum (see also Pilt 2014: 38–39; 2018: 53–54). Close interpersonal relationships appear in a wide variety of ways in these groups. In addition to the daily exchange of information and advice as well as supporting each other, group members often describe their activities in the group as spending time together. Although the women generally take part in the communication using the completely anonymous username Cuckoo (*kägu*)⁶ provided by the forum environment, they know each other through their writing style and the content of the stories. For example, one Cuckoo may respond to another Cuckoo's post with words like "I know you and your story. We met in one of the previous discussion topics." There is also notable role dynamics among the sub-groups – for example, women who have more experience in a particular topic, or who have spent more time in the Family School discussion forums, can start to share their expert knowledge as well as keeping an eye on forum rules.

As Family School is one of the oldest and largest discussion forums in Estonia,⁷ there are very clear and well-established official rules (accessible under the "User Terms" link) and traditions (unwritten rules) that long-term forum users consider 'their own'. For example, there are rules about suitable discussion topics, writing style, and general behavioural standards both in sub-forums and Family School in general (for more about Family School's written and unwritten rules, see Pilt 2014: 29–32). Awareness of these rules and practices increases the sense of belonging to the community.⁸

Discussion forums such as Family School are one of the many online environments that allow social media users to share information and personal stories. The difference between discussion forums and other types of social media space (i.e., online environments that allow user-generated content, sharing of knowledge and experience, and formation of communities and networks including, for example, blogs or social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) lies in their technological capabilities, which determine most of the affordances and constraints⁹ of users' communication. In addition, different discussion forums can differ in their structure and communication options and rules that affect what people can or cannot do in a particular online environment.

As in the typical discussion forum, the interaction in Family School is based on written asynchronous communication. Asynchronicity means that the parties of the interaction do not need to be present simultaneously. Texts are saved and archived on the forum environment at the moment of writing. Asynchronicity is an affordance that allows forum members to improve and edit their texts after posting them on the forum. That kind of technological opportunity enables forum members to prepare and elaborate texts and write long stories. These discussion forums are also technologically constructed such that the reply button to forum posts encourages discussion as well as sharing personal stories as a reaction to others' stories, giving participants the opportunity to react to posts by marking them "I agree" or "I disagree".

One of the affordances that Family School offers to users is the possibility of anonymity, mentioned above. It can be assumed that the opportunity to hide your 'real life' self (and thereby to reduce the chance of being hurt) is an important reason why the information and experiences that Family School users share with each other are often

very intimate and sensitive in nature. On the other hand, the possibility of anonymity also seems to be the reason why there are quite a lot 'completely honest' comments or posts criticising other participants' posts and experiences. This has led to the term 'Angry Cuckoos' developing in Family School communication, referring to forum users who take their bad moods out on others.

Communication in online forums such as Family School is limited by their thematic structure (during the period of this study, users were able to participate in 19 sub-forums provided by the owner of the environment) and the fact that moderators monitor use. For example, one of the constraints that directs participatory storytelling in Family School forums is the official rule that postings must be made in the sub-forum that is most relevant to the topic. Users cannot post whatever they want on the forum as the post may be deleted or moved to another sub-forum where group members to whom the post was originally addressed might not participate.

The birth of social media provided an important impetus for sharing personal stories, as it offers everyone the opportunity to tell and share their stories in multiple ways and in multiple channels, publicly or anonymously. Thus, the term My Story could have different meanings and take different forms in different social media sites. For example, My Story could be a blogpost, a post on a thematic discussion forum, an overview of the latest daily events on Facebook or Instagram, or a post on the webpage that invites people to share their personal stories. It can be a written, photo, video, audio, or multimodal story. It can be based on the narrator's personal life experience, or it could be fiction-like or philosophical self-expression in which the narrator's worldview plays the central role. It could be also posted for others to read or intended to elicit discussion.

In the Family School context, My Story is an emic term for the certain kind of personal experience story that appears as part of everyday communication among forum members with similar interests and experiences. There is difference between the My Stories (Strip Catchers', Belly Growers', IVFers' and childbirth stories) and the personal experience stories related to everyday life events (for example, parties, trips, shopping, anecdotes) which, in general, do not include elements that change a person's life. My Stories are based on a series of related events and experiences (that could be summarised as women's journey to motherhood) and are special in the sense that they reflect what kind of people the narrators are (cf. Salmi-Niklander 2009: 20–24; Lundby 2013: 44; Squire 2013 [2008]: 48–49). In other words, these stories play an important role in the self-presentation and identity construction in the Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth sub-forums. It can also be said that there is only one meaningful My Story per person inside a sub-forum, and the communication within these groups is more or less related to these stories (see also Pilt 2018: 51, 66).

The next five sections show the role of the online community, the characteristics of its communication space, traditions and daily communication, and the nature of co-creation in the process through which participants convey their personal experiences into stories.

Very generally speaking, the stories under study describe events, thoughts and feelings that women have experienced or are experiencing during their journey to motherhood. Thus, the central topics of Strip Catchers' and IVFers' stories are conception, infertility, child loss and the medical procedures that women must go through. Belly Growers' stories describe how a woman's body changes during the pregnancy, what a woman's hopes and fears are in relation to pregnancy and delivery and what problems she meets in communicating with midwives and doctors. Women describe their childbirth experiences and discuss what went well or wrong, and why (see more in Pilt 2018: 54–55). However, not all topics and experiences have been considered allowed or story worthy in Family School. While, on the one hand, the titles of the sub-forums give instructions as to which topics might be accepted, the sub-forum groups also have their own 'unwritten' rules (which are not regulated by moderators). In other words, not all of the stories that are posted under the title My Story are suitable for the forum. Analysis of the direct dialogue in the forums showed that if a story does not meet community members' understanding of 'correct' storytelling or correspond to their concept of My Story, readers remind storytellers of the rules or even criticise them.

Although abortion is associated with conception, stories related to this topic are taboo on the Conception sub-forum. My observation showed that the reason for this lies in two inside groups in the sub-forum: IVFers and Strip Catchers. The greatest wish of the members of these groups is to have a child, not to get rid of a baby. The following story is of the kind that received negative feedback from forum members. The author describes how she got pregnant unintentionally and her husband suggested an abortion. At first, the woman agreed but later changed her mind. While reader should experience positive emotions at the decision to have a child, the online community reacted negatively. The other women did not understand why such a tragic story was posted in such a happy style, and why the woman did not avoid pregnancy when she knew that her husband did not want more children.

I'll write you my story about stripes. I hadn't planned to get pregnant. [...] The surprise was huge when there were stripes on the pregnancy test in the evening. [...] Of course, I showed it also to my husband, immediately. He said, of course, strictly that he doesn't want more children [...] I was distraught and decided that I'd have an abortion. [...] Then I finally put my foot down and said that I decided that I don't want to get rid of my child and that I already had an abortion because of him. [...] Finally, he said that it's my decision. [...] I let my tiny darling live, called to my husband and let him know my decision. Unfortunately, he was very offended [...] By now, his mood is a little better. I hope that he will pull himself together, and I hope he will also be happy. [...] I wish you a beautiful spring and a lot of suns. (SCs No. 56, "Our Family's Stripes :)")

Why did you decide to post here that long, pointless story with spelling mistakes? What could readers do with that information? (Com. No. 157)

I read and read but don't understand. How is it possible to live with a person who forces you to have an abortion? How is it possible that you let someone influence you to kill your child? How is it possible that you don't use contraception if you live with that kind of jerk and/or don't plan children at the moment? [...] Like some life of aliens from other planets. (Com. No. 520)

When I opened the posting with that kind of title, I thought that I'd find a beautiful and cordial story, but in fact, it's all really tragic (Com. No. 521).

What does this smiley face mean in the end of the title though there is nothing funny or pleasant in that story? (Com. No. 524)

Community members are negatively minded about abortion stories, which can be seen as a reason why such stories are rarely found in the Conception sub-forum. There is a tacit agreement that the topic of abortion must be posted to the Health sub-forum, an unwritten rule that the long-term forum members reiterate to newcomers. However, there are some exceptions. Abortion stories are accepted in the Conception sub-forum if a woman does not wish to have an abortion but is forced to do so for some serious reason (for example, the birth of a potential sick child) and the woman seeks solace with her story; or if the story is written as a warning in a "Don't do it – you will regret it all your life!" form. Thus, the Conception forum sub-groups are ideologically pro-life, maintaining that posting abortion-related stories is not acceptable to protect the feelings of women struggling with infertility problems.

Often the point of contention is not the topic of the story but the depth of the woman's experience. We see this especially in Strip Catchers' and IVFers' stories. There is a widespread perception within these inside groups that in order to share a My Story, the teller should have some kind of long-term experience of the relevant problems (such as trouble getting pregnant or failed IVF attempts) and wisdom or heartbreak associated with those experiences that motivates her to write her story down.

The following is a comparison of two Strip Catchers' stories, both called "My incredible story" by the authors.¹⁰ The first story meets community members' expectations of My Story. The story is based on long-term experience, with the author of the story explaining why her pregnancy is special. She had been trying to get pregnant for eight years and had already planned to start IVF treatment as her last hope, but now all the symptoms and also a pregnancy test confirm that she has become pregnant in the normal way. The commenters warmly accept this story congratulating the author and showing their sympathy.

I'll write my incredible story, which has not yet been confirmed by the doctor but still. We have been strip catching for eight years. One year ago, I went to a fertility doctor's consultation. The new appointment was set for December to start IVF [...]. I measure the basal body temperature every morning [...], and now I have no period, my breasts are painful, my basal is higher, and the pregnancy test is positive. [...] My peculiarity is that only one fallopian tube works. In my case, I had no hope to get pregnant in the usual way anymore, and we were ready for IVF. It is our story. Thanks for bothering to read my story! (SCs No. 21)

Congratulations – such a heart-warming story! (Com. No. 247)

Congratulations! Many women who have been trying to get pregnant for a long time often succeed when they sign up for IVE. It's because after that they [...] don't think so much about getting pregnant and so these stripes come! (Com. No. 251)

The second story titled “My Incredible Story” does not meet the online community members’ expectations or their concept of My Story.

Hi. I'll write my story. We were waiting for our first child almost three years. Now she is 8 years old and we decided that there could be another one. We did ‘it’ at the right time and exactly 7 days later I felt a weird feeling in my stomach. It seemed like I had a high fever in the evening. I laid down and next day everything was ok. Now I have been waiting a week for my period to start, but yesterday I was so tired that my only wish was to sleep. I remember that with the first child I felt similarly before my period. It is absolutely incredible! Were we really successful on our first attempt? :) (SCs No. 24)

You have no story, yet! I would understand if the pregnancy test were positive. Would you please come back after you have your period and tell us again? Then I could wish you congratulations. Now I say that every long-term strip catcher has had such feelings without any actual pregnancy. (Com. No. 278)

There is no story here! I (and many others) have every month after OV the feeling that now I am pregnant, but the months pass and we are still strip catching. Do not overthink! (Com. No. 279)

I agree with the previous ones. There is no ‘story’ and even less an ‘unbelievable’ one. I also thought that now I can read how someone has become pregnant after long-term trying in an incredible way, but here someone pregnant in her head just talks about nothing. (Com. No. 280)

Indeed, if there were proof in the form of a pregnancy test, the end would be much prettier [...]. I do not want to say that my story is fabulous and that it is not so difficult for anyone else. Still, it just seems like a blessing when you are told that it will not be easy for you to have children, but you nevertheless get pregnant, and everything goes well. (SCs No. 25, written as a reaction to SCs No. 24)

It can be assumed that both the title and the content of the story (the storyteller only speculates that she is pregnant) have irritated the readers. Commentators emphasise that to have a story there must at least be stripes on the pregnancy test. With these answers, the group members decide that the storyteller is incompetent in writing a My Story. The feedback reflects how important it is for there to be long-term experience and at least some problems behind the story.

THE MESSAGE OF THE STORY

The role of the online community in shaping and affecting women’s stories can also be described in relation to the messages. The stories often contain explanations (either at

the beginning or at the end) about the purpose or the message of the story. Whether the story receives positive or negative feedback from readers depends on how the author explains why she is sharing her story. Thus, the author must understand the nature of her audience (including what the audience wants)¹¹ and describe her goals and the story's message in a way that is acceptable to the online group. The following excerpts of the Strip Catcher's stories and the comments to them are examples of unsuccessful messages that received negative feedback from group members. The reason lies in the fact that the writers have not taken into account the sensitivity of the audience: the authors suggest that readers should not think about pregnancy every month, but rather should 'take it easy' in order to get pregnant. The commentators are angry and critical because such suggestions do not benefit women who have long-term problems getting pregnant.

I want to say with my story that you try (I know how hard it is) not to think about pregnancy every month [...] If this is not possible, just do things that might lead your thoughts away and make you happy because maybe just then the miracle will happen to you. (SCs No. 38)

And who are you to come here and teach others? You think you made an extraordinary discovery now. Glad you did, but there is no need to teach others. (Com. No. 355)

I freed my mind [...] In any case, I sincerely wish you the strength and the ability to catch your stripes because it's emotionally creepy every month not to wait for the period! (SCs No. 46)

Well, nice if it goes well [...] but here there are those who are trying for years. Don't get me wrong, I'm really happy if someone gets the expected baby, but perhaps you understand why some women can't understand your teachings, like 'free your mind' and everything else. (Com. No. 405)

In other words, the authors of the stories contravene the unwritten rule of the group, which is that it accepts the sharing of personal experience stories when the writer offers hope to others or seeks solace herself, or asks for or shares information or advice, or warns against negative circumstances, but the group will not accept teaching (see also Pilt 2018: 56–65). The readers' resentment comes because all experiences are different: what works for one woman may not work for another. The following examples received positive feedback.

I wish that you who are waiting and waiting here can get your stripes, and maybe my story will help someone feel a little better (SCs No. 50).

It's nice to see that people who have been waiting for their little miracle for a long time will finally succeed! Congratulations! (Com. 425)

Now, I am sitting here (fortunately, I am on vacation) at home and wondering if there is still hope in such a situation? Has anyone started a pregnancy like me, and nevertheless everything ended well? There are so many sad stories about bleeding associated with miscarriage, and my own experiences are also so bad that it's difficult to remain sane. Thank you for bothering to think and share your stories.

I know that my situation is unique, and it is still going as it must go, but maybe someone can silence my fears and share her success story (SCs No. 1).

I had [in the early foetal ultrasound scan] also only a foetal egg, not the foetus itself. A few weeks later, everything was fine. Don't worry, and don't overthink. Everything will be fine. (Com. No. 4)

The first author does not teach, but expresses hope that others will ever get pregnant and that hopefully they find her story helpful; the second author shares her story to receive others' success stories in order to find solace and hope for herself.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORIES

The communication space and traditions of the Family School's groups direct the storyline, the length and the structural components of My Stories.

The women's experience stories under discussion are easy to find and are differentiable from the information feed of forum communication (single questions and answers, commentaries, etc.) in that their form fits the conventional understanding of what a story should be. They have a clearly distinguished beginning, theme development, and conclusion. The structure of the stories can easily be characterised using the components William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967) attributed to the personal stories that people share in oral communication. At the beginning of the experience story, the women describe how their story began and usually also explain the reasons why they decided to share their story with other women. Then description and analysis of the experience follow, and finally storytellers fix their current condition – pregnancy, another IVF procedure, childbirth or the lasting hope to get pregnant. As at the beginning of the story, the women often turn to the readers at the end of the story, explaining or repeating what they wanted to say to others, or what kind of feedback they expect.

The stories generally follow the sequence of events, but not always. Non-linear storylines are formed, for example, if the story is written as a reaction to someone else's story. In such a case, reciprocity or the dialogic mode of the communication shape the stories so that they begin with the present, move into the past, and end again with the present. The next story illustrates this point.

I understand you completely! I got my endo [endometriosis] diagnosis 4 years ago. The foci are located on the cervix. I've undergone LAP [gynaecological laparoscopy] and all sorts of other nice medical examinations!

The whole 'adventure' started 7 years ago when changes on my cervix were detected. [...] Now I am in Novavita [Nova Vita fertility clinic in Tallinn, Estonia] and IUI [intra uterine insemination] is waiting for me, and if it does not succeed – IVF. But it doesn't matter, I have found peace and a firm mind, and everything can only go well. :) (SCs No. 3)

While the overall structure of the stories derives more or less from the group's ways to communicate, that are affected by the technological capabilities of Family School's forum environment, there are also some traditions that forum members remind each

other of from time to time in relation to the structure of the stories. Thus, it is not rare for the story to get direct feedback about what is wrong or missing.

There is an unwritten rule that the story should not be too long. Nobody says what this actually means, but it can be assumed from the comments that 'too long' is when the reader gets exhausted before reaching the end. However, this does not mean that all long stories are criticised or not accepted. A long story seems to be more acceptable if the writer warns readers about the length in advance. Thus, it is quite common that the beginning of the story includes sentences such as, "before I start, I have to apologise – my story will be long". In addition, sometimes group members give advice on how to write better long stories: "*The story is very long and so dense that it was hard to read. I advise you next time to divide your story into parts. Then it will be easier to read.*" (Com. No. 586, feedback to the CBs No. 10)

The internet group also has a say about the elements that could be included in the story. For example, if someone writes a story about getting pregnant, it is expected that the story does not describe only the final event (conception), but the whole journey starting with an introduction outlining when and how the problems appeared, describing the efforts to become pregnant and which treatment the woman has received. In addition, as we saw in one of the previous examples, the description of stripes on the pregnancy test is a compulsory part of Strip Catcher's stories. Sometimes it happens that a young mother forgets to write about the weight and length of the baby in her childbirth story or does not mention the place where she gave birth. It is very common that someone from the group asks the storyteller to complete the story: "But what about the weight and length?"; or "But where did you give birth?" The following reader-writer dialogue illustrates this.

Lol, such a good story! I thought at the end of the story that this adventure took at least a couple of hours. I wish you happiness and joy anyway! Only one question more: how big was the baby at birth? (Com No. 709)

The baby's measurements – how could I forget them? My midwife thought that my baby is 'rather big', but when the baby was born at 36 + 4 week she was 45 cm and 2714 gm, a perfectly normal baby. (CBs No. 29)

USE OF LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY COMPETENCE

We can also observe the role of the online community, co-creation and women's personal stories in Family School forums in relation to a particular use of language and vocabulary competence. As Baym (2015: 86) has pointed out the members of online groups form speech communities that share ways of speaking to capture meanings that are important to them and the logics that underlie their common sensibilities. It can be said that the sub-groups of Family School have their specific use of language, which could be incomprehensible to those who are outside the group. Knowledge of the use of language and vocabulary is acquired by long-term observation of forum communication, by reading other forum members' stories, and asking group members what one or other word or expression means.

As many authors (see, for example, Arendholz 2010: 109; Bazzanella 2010: 20) have noted, the language of social media communication in general is a hybrid between spoken and written language, in fact being closer to oral than to written communication. This observation applies to personal stories shared in Family School forums, where abbreviations and jargon (traditionally attributed to oral communication) play important roles in conveying meaning. For example, to understand others' My Stories and write your own story according to the community's traditions, you have to know acronyms and abbreviations that denote important events and parameters on the journey to motherhood, such as DPO¹² (days past ovulation), OV (ovulation), DD (due date), SI (sexual intercourse), AH (abdominal height), etc. Other frequently repeated expressions might also be replaced with abbreviations, for example MW (midwife) when referring to medical staff. The same goes for various medical procedures: AFA (amniotic fluid analysis), US (ultrasound), FAS (foetal anatomy scan), NT (nuchal translucency scan), LAP (laparoscopy), etc. Abbreviations indicate the various diagnoses that women with fertility problems face, for example, ENDO (endometriosis) or PCOS (Polycystic ovary syndrome). The next example is a Belly Grower's story the content of which might not be clear to a reader who does not know the meanings of the abbreviations used.

Hi, Because I am a birdbrain and my pregnancy was registered when I was 20+ weeks pregnant then with the first US they controlled child's vital organs and gave approximate DD – 3rd of March (if I'm right). After that, I got another US as soon as possible, where all the organs were measured and the baby's growth was checked, etc. I was still shocked and couldn't ask too much. [...] According to a longer US, the DD is 27th of February, and I would like to know if it can be a time set by NT? (BGs No. 39)

One function of abbreviations seems to be to facilitate communication in a situation where women use complex terms that do not belong to their daily conversations outside a specific online group. This observation relates to the widespread internet communication tendency that people wish to make themselves understandable possibly quickly and easily (see, for example Zabolnova 2017: 28). On the other hand, observing the forum communication shows that these abbreviations are often borrowed from discussions with doctors and other medical staff, or they come from consultation documents. Therefore, it can be said that the members of the internet group adapt the language of professionals, who also usually use abbreviations because of the intensity of their work and because of traditions shared within their professional community.

Specific jargon is also used in the personal experience stories. For example, to understand these stories, you need to know what 'berries' are (ova collected for IVF), and the meanings of expressions such as 'strip catching' or 'I'm catching a baby' (the wish to see two stripes on the pregnancy test, indicating a positive result), 'belly growing' (being pregnant), 'circle of cold' (freezing ova as part of IVF treatment) or 'speck' (foetus, an unborn child in the mother's womb, seen on ultrasound pictures). The important keywords that women also use in their personal experience stories are 'miracle' and 'miracle expectation' or 'journey'. 'The miracle' means a baby who is expected or who (despite the mother's efforts) does not want to come. The term 'journey' refers to the woman's experiences in the process of becoming a mother. Most often, it is used in

IVFers' stories, in which it marks the challenges that women have gone through in the process of becoming pregnant. Some of these expressions seem to be specific to a particular online group (for example, berries as ova), while some have wider usage among women of childbearing age, for example, 'miracle' is widespread in other similar internet groups (see, for example, Pilt 2020).

THE STYLE OF STORYTELLING

Most of the stories explored are stereotypical in the sense that they follow a common storytelling style that derives from the topics and traditions of the online community. For example, as we have seen in several previous sample texts, it is characteristic that stories aim to solve problems, containing a number of questions that writers address to readers to provoke discussion. As with personal experience stories in general, women's stories are written primarily in first-person singular. However, some stories are also written in first-person plural, using 'we' instead 'I' indicating that the writer's experiences are at the same time (directly or indirectly) the experiences of her baby and/or partner. Both storytelling styles are accepted in the Family School discussion forum inside groups.

As the topics of the stories, the descriptions of situations in the My Stories are usually very delicate and intimate and express personal feelings and attitudes. All the stories under discussion are based on women's real-life bodily experiences (c.f. also Marander-Eklund 2002: 114). In the context of the current research this means that the experiences and related feelings women describe in their stories are not based on observed events, but events they have experienced, such as the physical pain of miscarriage or childbirth, nausea, movements of the baby during pregnancy, injections or other physical and psychological distress associated with in vitro fertilisation, anxiety and hopelessness. The combination of the physical and psychological pain that women experience on their journey is the reason their stories are often emotionally charged.

There are different ways to express one's feelings and attitudes in a text-based internet discussion forum. In addition to verbal expressions and emoticons, punctuation, highlighting and spaces can convey the emotions that women wish to express with their stories. While several researchers (for example, Kippels 2010: 20) have noted that using capital letters in forum communication generally means shouting (this also applies to Family School's Q&A style conversations), and that this is not usually acceptable to group members, in the studied stories the use of capital letters is fairly common and an accepted practice (cf. Paal 2010: 54 about illness narratives). This does not mean shouting, but is used instead to highlight women's heightened emotions more generally (both positive and negative), or to express and highlight some important part of the story. Similarly, numerous exclamation marks and emoticons are used to express the emotions that women experience on their journey. I shall illustrate these aspects with the next examples, first from a Strip Catcher's story and the second from a childbirth story. In the first example, the woman highlights the tragedy of her story using capital letters. In the second example, the woman emphasises the intensity of the pain experienced during childbirth using both exclamation marks and capital letters.

The doctor didn't give me any hope of becoming pregnant. I remember how the doctor said YOU WILL NEVER HAVE A BABY! (SCs No. 4)

I demanded painkillers!!! The midwife explained that I'm brave enough, and that's why I don't need them. I started crying and complained to my husband that this horror will NEEVEEERRRR end! (CBs No. 12)

An interesting aspect in relation to storytelling style is how the group members view spelling. While in more general communication, internet users do not usually prioritise spelling (above all, it is important that the information is conveyed and understood by the audience), in the case of My Stories there is an unwritten rule that the spelling mistakes are not acceptable. Some long-term forum members point to spelling mistakes, and whether or not there are typos in the story also seems to affect how the author of the story is treated (see, Com. No. 157 above, which was written as feedback on SCs No. 56). The Strip Catcher's story can be heart breaking, but if it is grammatically incorrect and is not easy to read, there is a high possibility that the author of the story will be criticised and will not receive the expected feedback. Such comments as "Read your story before you post!", or "Why do I have to read that story full of mistakes" are quite common if the author of the story ignores ordinary (not internet specific) writing rules. This seems to be the reason why women's stories in the Family School forums are generally grammatically correct.

Group members have their opinions on whether the style of the written story can differ from the typical storytelling style or not. Typical storytelling style insists that descriptions of the narrator's emotional experiences and assessments come to the fore. In contrast, the so-called diary format means that the story is presented without emotional description but as a detailed schedule of events. The analysed material shows that the suitability of the storytelling style relates to the functions of the stories – if the aim of the story is to get help or give advice, the diary-like format is more likely to be accepted, whereas if the aim is just to summarise one's own experience and provide entertainment this format is more likely criticised (for more on the functions of women's stories see Pilt 2018). For example, the diary format is accepted in the so-called IVF-Complete Stories,¹³ in which case a schedule and detailed information about treatment plays an important role in informing other women about how they could make their IVF journey successful. On the other hand, the diary format is very rare in childbirth stories and would (as illustrated by the next example) receive negative feedback from readers. The reason for this kind of criticism seems to be that more description of the situation and the emotion experienced are expected from this type of story, and that the audience does not need too much information: "Your child is only two days old, and you write such memoirs here!!? Do you have so much time as well as the child? I do not even bother to read such a schedule." (Com. No. 653, feedback to the CBs No. 22)

Readers tend to accept a success story more readily if it is written in juicy and figurative language. Thus, authors add humour to their stories (cf. Marander-Eklund 2002: 116–117), sometimes trying to tell the stories as modern fairy tales with good and bad, clever and silly characters, happy endings, and (as we have seen in several previous examples) lots of metaphors, such as 'an adventure', 'a journey' or 'a miracle'. This all make the stories sometimes fiction-like. The next example is one of the humorous child-

birth stories, in which the comedy lies in the slowness of the decisions of the midwife who helped the woman.

At 12:30, the first KTG was made, and it was announced that the child seems to be excellent, but the uterine work is more than modest. [...] One of the midwives said, "well, it's enough for the first fright, and we'll try again tomorrow" (I call her Slow here because I'll talk about her also later). [...] The wheelchair was brought into The KTG room. I didn't want to sit there but just walk, but Slow announced it was the doctor's order and why was I arguing. [...] Instead of the maternity room, she pushed me to my ward to pack my things. [...] Fortunately, the 'lift lady' also came into the room and said that she will do it [...] Instead of giving birth, Slow moved me into the procedure room. I asked why we came here, and she told me that I should let her do her job. I wanted to shout at her that she should let me give birth [...]. The 'lift lady' wished to remove my chair from Slow, but the latter said "Where's the fire?" [...] Finally, we got to the maternity department. [...] I told the doctor that I'm going to give birth immediately, but she asked me to lie down in bed to have a look. I replied that I would not lie down because I'm giving birth [...], and then the baby was born. My husband stepped into the maternity room at the moment when they put my baby boy on my belly and wished me a lot of happiness. (CBS No. 29)

You made my mood so good now. A very vividly and coolly described adventure. (Com. No. 706)

Another aspect in relation to storytelling style is how women describe what exactly happened on their journey and how they felt about this. Anonymity and the knowledge that the audience has similar experiences seems to play an important role here. It can be said that anonymity and the specifics of the audience are the reasons why women dare to describe the events and experiences and express their feelings and opinions completely honestly – they share shamelessly delicate details about the procedures and events that they have gone through, and describe the emotions that they experienced at the same moments ("I cried", "I screamed", "The midwife was...!"). These descriptions allow women to express themselves in a way that may not be possible in the face-to-face communication of their daily lives (due to the norms of society or because there is no one among the people around the woman to whom she dares to open up her most intimate experiences and feelings). Thus, the online community is a grateful audience that encourages women to share their stories and speak about things as they are without condemnation.

CONCLUSION

The article discussed the role of the online community in shaping and affecting women's My Stories about their journeys to motherhood. From the theoretical perspective, the focus was on participatory storytelling – on the interplay of the specific online environment, narrator, story, and group, and how the teller and the audience co-create stories. Telling personal experience stories of conception, in vitro fertilisation, pregnancy,

and childbirth on Family School's forums is affected by women's writing skills and the nature of their experiences, but also by the specifics of the online community, its meeting place (an asynchronous discussion forum with its affordances and constraints), its official rules, traditions and everyday communication. This communicative context promotes direct and indirect dialogue and co-creation between the participants and shapes and affects the topics, messages, language usage, structure, and also the style of the women's stories.

The analysis showed that similarly to forum communication in general, My Stories have thematic constraints that derive from both thematic distribution of the sub-forums and the common interests and traditions of the online community's inside groups. The speciality of the communication space and the traditions of the inside groups also shape the storyline, the length and the structural components of My Stories. Community-specific vocabulary competence (acronyms, abbreviations and jargon) plays an important role in understanding the stories of others and writing one's own story. The style of the women's narratives about their journeys to motherhood has been influenced by the specifics of their experiences, personal writing skills and by the traditions of a particular sub-group. There are group specific ways to express emotions and describe events and experiences. For example, a woman may use 'we' instead of 'I' in her story, illustrating how her experiences are at the same time the experiences of her baby and/or her partner. A discussion and questions are customary parts of women's My Stories. There is low tolerance of spelling mistakes among Family School members. Even when a story is heart breaking spelling mistakes are not accepted and there is high possibility that the teller will be criticised for this. The analysis also showed that the storytelling style of women's stories is related to the functions of the stories. If the aim of the story is to get help or give advice, the 'traditional' storytelling style as well as diary-like format are accepted. If the aim is just to summarise one's own experience and provide entertainment for others the diary format is more likely to be criticised (it seems that in with this story type the audience does not wish to read too much detail, considering emotions, the nature of the experience, and the message of the story more important). Humour, juicy and figurative language are characteristic of so-called success stories, which are sometimes told in the style of modern fairy tales. The anonymity and the specifics of the audience seem to be reasons why discussions participants shamelessly share unadorned delicate details about their personal lives, emotions and experiences in their stories.

To conclude, it can be said that the online community, not the woman, directs what kind of experiences are 'story worthy' and what is the best way to write one's story. While the stories are based on women's real-life events, there are right and wrong ways in the online community and its sub-groups for storytellers to configure their personal experiences into a story. Further, there is a well-established understanding among members of the online community of what is or is not a story and what kinds of experience and written self-expression are worth the title My Story in a particular online group. The story must be based on long-term experience and there must be a kind of problem, wisdom or heart break behind it. The teller must take into account the sensitivity of the audience, the taboo topics and the aims, functions and messages of the stories accepted in the group. Whether the community accepts the woman's experience as a story depends on both the specifics of her experience and the woman's ability to

write her experience so that it fits in with the group's communication and storytelling practices. The written form, the asynchronicity of the communication and the opportunity to comment especially allows the audience to control and shape what and how women write about their experiences. They allow the audience to delve into the story, go back and refer to specific parts of the story, make sure that the story follows the group's rules and traditions, give feedback on the story, or inform the author if there is something wrong or missing. In addition, the opposite is true, they also allow the teller to read existing stories and learn and discuss the norms and traditions of the online community. This then allows the woman to tell her own story in a way that is suitable for the audience, i.e. other participants in the online storytelling event.

NOTES

1 I have discussed the meaning of collectivity in the context of Family School forum communication in more detail in Pilt 2014. Collectivity in that context refers to the common ground on which an internet group is formed; it can be described by the following features: 1) a location in the virtual landscape; 2) rules and traditions regulating group behaviour; 3) similar interests, mutual self-expression, trust and exchange of information, experience, and narratives; 4) joint events and spending free time together; 5) ways of self-presentation and role behaviour; 6) the existence of a so-called core group that preserves the 'we' identity and controls the observation of traditions and communication rules.

2 Jenkins refers to participatory culture as one that allows free expression of artistic talent and civic engagement through the sharing of one's creations with others. In the process, everyone becomes a producer. Members also establish social connections with others by sharing their creations. Participatory cultures have been characterised by Jenkins as productive, creative and collaborative (see, for example, Jenkins et al. 2009: 3).

3 Web 2.0 (also known as Social/Participative/Participatory web) is the second generation of web tools and services, characterised by the change from static web pages to dynamic, interactive web pages, user-generated content and the growth of social media.

4 Just as Newsom (2013) in his dissertation dealt with the stories surrounding a horror character called Slenderman, co-creation among online participants has been studied in the context of fictional web-based storytelling and so-called collaborative storytelling. This means storytelling in the online groups where co-creation is a conscious and purposeful activity (for example, wikis, fandom sites, role-playing environments) (see, for example, Page 2012: 117–139). Co-creation has also been studied in relation to the concept of shared stories focusing on multiple storytellers retelling stories and on collective voice, i.e., the shared attitudes that storytelling promotes (see Dawson and Mäkelä 2020: 24–25; Page 2018). Co-creation, in the sense of co-operation between the teller and audience in the interactive everyday storytelling contexts in social media (the focus of the current research), has been studied, for example, by Ruth Page (2012: 24–116), in relation to bodybuilding discussion forums, Facebook updates, illness narratives on personal blogs and celebrity practices in Twitter.

5 Specifically, I collected texts entitled "My Story" or "Our Story" and stories where these phrases were used in the main text. In addition, I also included in the analysis stories that did not contain these phrases but had similar content to the stories mentioned above.

6 Cuckoo is an anonymous username that everyone can use. Although each forum member can use a unique pseudonym to identify themselves, this is not usually done in the sub-forums discussed in the current article.

7 There were over 81,000 registered users in Family School forums in the period of the current research. For reference Estonia's population was 1.32 million in 2019.

8 The rules and traditions that especially shape participatory storytelling are discussed in the analysis section of this study.

9 In the context of the current article, the concept of affordances refers to the properties of the particular online environment that allow or facilitate certain actions and user communication, and the concept of constraints to the properties that hinder or inhibit certain actions or communication (for more on social media affordances and constraints, see for example Tiidenberg 2017: 21–22, 112–113, 213–214; Bucher and Helmond 2018; Marabelli et al. 2018).

10 Originally, these stories were several pages long. I have selected excerpts that illustrate the duration and nature of the woman's experience and comments that show how community members respond to different kinds of experience.

11 Social media researchers have used the term 'imagined audiences' to show how creating social media content is based on the mental conceptualisation of the audience with whom we communicate (see Litt 2012: 331; Murumaa-Mengel 2017).

12 In this article, abbreviations and jargon have been translated from Estonian into English.

13 IVF-Complete Stories (*IVF-terviklood*) are detailed descriptions of IVF treatment with dates and times.

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