

# Reading with Children: How Digital Technology Affects the Reading Practice

Example of the Russian market

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## Abstract

Reading has been a part of our lives for several centuries, and it has gone through several developmental shifts during its existence. And it might be facing another chain of changes in our times of digital technology. While many researchers and experts are already predicting a soon-to-happen crash of the traditional publishing industry, very few have actually questioned what consumers think about reading digital vs. paper and in what way their reading behavior has been affected. This is especially interesting in the case of reading with children, since youngsters are the future consumers of books and gadgets.

In this thesis I am going to investigate how a choice of the object (paper book or digital reading device) affects the course of a reading practice, involving adults and kids. In particular, the focus will be on the division of roles between the participants and emotional and practical reasons for choosing one object over another.

**Keywords:** reading practices, children books, digital reading devices.

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**Author:** Liubov Smirnova

**Tutor:** Hans Kjellberg

**Discussant:** Sara Lindau & Mattia Tosti

**Examiner:** Per Andersson

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# 1. Introduction

## ***1.1 Background and research purpose***

In our times we are witnesses to a digital revolution that is taking place in publishing. Digital publishing appears to be reaching critical mass. Most consumers have an understanding of eBooks and eReaders, and the sales of both eBooks and eReaders continue rising. Even though eBooks make up just a fraction of today's global book market, they already started driving dramatic changes. In its "Worldwide e-books market size & forecast report, 2009-2012" Outsell, an analytics company for the publishing industry, predicted that by the end of 2013 the worldwide share of eBooks will rise to 16,1%, growing at steep rates from year to year (Outsell, 2011). By 2016, eBook sales from portable devices will reach nearly \$10 billion worldwide, according to the Mobile Publishing 2011-2016 (Mashable, 2011). Digital devices will play an important part in how people buy & consume books. About 30% of eBooks will be purchased on tablets, 15% will be purchased on smartphones and roughly 55% will be purchased on e-readers by 2016. And, surprisingly, though 14% of book buyers own either a tablet or an eReader, 74% of them have not yet bought an eBook, so there are still quite many opportunities for growth in the eBook industry (Mobcast, 2011).

How did it happen and what put a start to it? In November 2007 Amazon presented to the world its new product – an electronic book (eBook) reader called Kindle (HowStuffWorks, 2012). At that point of time Kindle saw almost no competition – the demand for eBooks as well as for eReaders was at a steady low level. Amazon had two distinct advantages over earlier eBook manufacturers. The first was that the user could without any problem or hassle download an eBook from Amazon's online store, which contained more than a million titles in electronic format. Because the Kindle was wireless, one could download a book directly to Kindle without any need for connection with computer. The second advantage was that Amazon had a large customer base. Both of these factors helped Kindle go far beyond what its competitors could achieve. Two and a half years later, in April 2010, Apple released its first iPad (Apple, 2012), which also brought more attention to the market for the digital reading

technology. Already in May 2011, Amazon said the company is selling more eBooks than print books (Forbes, 2011).

So the traditional publishing is facing years of tough competition. The situation in the Russian market is worsened by the fact that the volumes of book trade are declining in general – the book sales fell by 7,5% in 2011 (Ведомости, 2011). At the same time, the eBooks market is growing at tremendous speed – its size tripled over the course of 2011 (Российская Газета, 2011). The sales of eReaders are at an even higher speed – in 2011 they increased by 265% in comparison to 2010 and 757% in comparison to 2009 (SmartMarketing, 2012). Considering this, many experts proclaim e-reading a jeopardy to the traditional book publishing. The only “light in the dark” is seen in the children publishing sector – publishing of paper children books so far remains steady. Many publishers that did not take into account that sector before try to enter it and compete for the market share – right now children books make up 15-20% of the total market (Pro-Books, 2012). Children books are hoped to continue sell great due to the fact that quality of paper and pictures still matter a lot, and eBooks cannot provide users with the same experience.

However, not everyone is sharing such a positive outlook on the future of children publishing. Susan Katz, president and publisher of HarperCollins Children’s Books admits, that even though children are still going to have a bookshelf, they will have shelves with many other things too. And that shelf will sure be filled with electronic gadgetry (Publishers Weekly, 2010). Karen Lotz, Managing Director of London-based Walker Books Ltd. adds that picture book digital publishing is “still in its infancy, but that too will change more quickly than we can imagine” (Huffington Post, 2011). In her opinion, in 5 years the children books market will look drastically different, but no one at this point can envision how exactly.

While it is obvious that publishers need to embrace change and adapt their business models to the challenges the digital revolution presents, there is surprisingly little information on how consumers react to the development in the reading technology. Better said, there is research on the general reading habits and preferences of adults, but little to none of it tries to touch – let alone investigate – the situations where the change in the reading patterns with children is exposed. Thus, the aim and the purpose

of this study will be to cover the existing research gap by mapping out the existing reading practices with children and looking at the impact the invention of digital reading devices has made on them.

To avoid confusion that readers might experience by the title of the current work, a disclaimer needs to be made. Though the title talks about the affect technology has on reading practices, the focus of this thesis will not be solely on the technological aspects of reading with children, but more on comparison of reading practices that involve traditional books and practices that involve digital reading devices.

## ***1.2 Delimitations***

As said before, this thesis will only focus on the reading practices that involve children and children's books. Moreover, the audience of the study will be limited to children of up to 5-6 years old, in other words, to preschoolers that still cannot read and need their parents' help in reading books. There are 2 reasons for such a limitation. First of all, in this age of a kid a parent is still a decision maker when it comes to buying books. A child's preferences are of course taken into account, but it's not the child himself who makes the final choice. Given that more and more adults turn to digital reading devices, it would be interesting to see if that is in any way influencing their reading behavior with children. Second of all, the children who are 6 and younger are those that were born shortly before and after the aforementioned events happened – the launch of Kindle and iPad. This generation was born into a world of digital reading technology and knows no other, which makes it an especially interesting segment for research.

Given the resource and time constraints the researcher had, it was not possible to carry out a global study. The research was conducted in Russia, thus, due to particular cultural and economical specifics of the chosen region, the results of the research may not be valid for other geographical areas.

### ***1.3 Disposition***

The current study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides the reader with a literature overview, that covers the existing research on theory of practices in general and reading practices in particular; Chapter 3 lays out the methodological framework and presents the details of the qualitative research; Chapter 4 tells a “story” of Digital Era and Digital Natives – topics that are essential for the overall understanding of the study; the results of the qualitative research are presented in Chapter 5 and deeply analyzed and discussed in Chapter 6; finally, in Chapter 7 a conclusion, theoretical and managerial implications, as well as recommendations for future research are given.



## **2. Theoretical framework**

### ***2.1 Consumption practices***

#### **2.1.1 Emergence and development of theory of practice**

A research on book consumption/reading practices requires delving into a number of sources and employing an interdisciplinary approach. The variety of disciplines applicable to this field is rather wide, but those of major importance to the current thesis are Marketing and Consumer Studies, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Early Childhood Development. Consumer research in particular has been to a large extent influenced by development in Cultural and Social Studies. Theory of practice that has emerged as one of the branches of social theory appears to be central to the topic of this study. Reckwitz (2002a) presents practice theory as a conceptual alternative to other forms of social and cultural theory (mainly to culturalist mentalism, textualism and intersubjectivism). Though it is not the aim of the current thesis to go too deep into explaining each and every branch of the social theory, it is nevertheless important to give a generic overview of the existing perspectives, helping the reader to better understand the specifics of the theory of practice.

In “Towards a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing” (2002a) Andreas Reckwitz carries out a rather detailed investigation of the emergence and development of different fields of social theory. He states that there are 3 different forms of explaining action and social order in the modern social theory. The first one is purpose-oriented theory of action, based on understanding of an individual as a “homo economicus”. Here action is explained as being connected to purposes, intentions and interests of an individual, thus social order is a product of the combination of those interests. The second form of theory is norm-oriented theory of action, based on understanding of an individual as a “homo sociologicus”. Here norms and values – rules which express a social “ought” - play the main role in defining an individual’s actions. This normative consensus also guarantees the social order. Both of these theories have been confronted by the cultural theory, which was a product of the “culturalist” revolutions in social philosophy of the XXth century. The cultural theory gave path to a completely new way of explaining and understanding

action by highlighting the importance of symbolic structures of knowledge. These structures “enable and constrain the agents to interpret the world according to certain forms, and to behave in corresponding ways” (Reckwitz, 2002a: 245-246).

However, Reckwitz points out that practice theory is only one subtype of the cultural theory. Therefore, there is another set of distinctions to look at. As has been said before, cultural theories explain and understand action and social order by paying attention to symbolic structures of knowledge. What all the forms of cultural theories differ in is the ‘place’ they give for the social element and also in conceptualizing the ‘smallest unit’ of the social theory. One branch of cultural theories – culturalist mentalism – locates the social in a human mind, because that is the place of knowledge and meaning structures. There are also two versions of culturalist mentalism – a subjectivist and an objectivist. The main difference between them is that the former places an emphasis on symbolic structures in the ‘unconscious’ mind, which results in human behavior, while the latter emphasizes the sequence of intentional mental acts in consciousness, making the social the subjective idea of a common world of meanings. So culturalist mentalism - both its versions – is based upon “the idea that mind is substance, place or realm that houses a particular range of activities and attributes” (Schatzki, 1993: 285).

According to Reckwitz, for the second field of cultural theory – culturalist textualism – symbolic structures find their place ‘outside’ of mind, in chains of signs, symbols or ‘texts’. The social, according to this theory, cannot be found on the psychological level of minds, but rather on the level of outward signs. Another outlook on social is offered by culturalist intersubjectivism, which locates the social in interactions. Symbolic meaning can be thus found in interaction between agents, in which they use the contents and patterns of objective realm of meanings during their speech-acts. They first internalize meanings in their minds and then they transfer them to each other during the interaction.

Unlike all the aforementioned theories, practice theory places the social neither in mental qualities, nor in interactions, nor in discourse. But before going into explaining what statements lie in the basis of practice theory, it is important to distinguish between ‘practice’ and ‘practices’. As Reckwitz points out, the term ‘practice’ (Praxis

in German) is used to describe the whole of human action (as opposed to ‘theory’), whereas ‘practices’ (Praktiken in German) are a routinized type of human behavior, consisting of several elements, interconnected with one another (so no practice can be reduced to a single stand-alone element):

- 1) forms of bodily activities;
- 2) forms of mental activities;
- 3) things and their use;
- 4) a background knowledge in the form of understanding;
- 5) know-how;
- 6) states of emotion;
- 7) motivational knowledge.

Cooking in a particular way, reading, taking care of somebody – these all are practices. In other words, a practice is a pattern, represented by a compilation of single and most often unique actions reproducing the practice (Reckwitz, 2002a). In this case the individual is the carrier of a practice – or a set of multiple different practices, which do not have to be connected to one another.

### **2.1.2 Introducing ‘action’ in understanding of a practice**

Reckwitz and another scholar, Theodore Schatzki, list Giddens, Bourdieu and Lyotard as the key exponents of the theory of practice (at the same time Schatzki points out that all the developed theories in this field are rather heterogeneous (Schatzki et al., 2001)). Writers like Bourdieu and Giddens use the term “practice” in a rather similar way – emphasizing routines, shared habits and competence. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) main focus is on the internal differentiation of practices (persons doing the same activity differently in different situations) rather than on organization of practices. He sees the cause of all the repeated practices in *habitus*, “the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent’s practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less “sensible” and “reasonable” (p. 79). To him, *habitus*, “which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions” (1990: 52), helps harmonize the agents’ experiences, thus producing a commonsense world where there is an objective meaning of practices. Focusing on *habitus*, Bourdieu, however, fails to distinct between understanding of practices,

procedures that they consist of and agents' engagement in them. Anthony Giddens (1984) also sees routines as being central to practices. Though he appreciates the agents' capacity for reflective monitoring of performance, he states that "reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices that makes them distinctively "the same" across space and time" (p. 3).

So the crucial point both for Bourdieu and Giddens is that practices are made by and through their routine reproduction. For them, dispositions of agents within the practices are pre-set and structured, their actions are predictable – both within a particular practice and across different ones. So in Giddens' and Bourdieu's world a reading practice happens out of habit as well, and reasons for reading, possible agents' interactions during the reading and any environmental issues are not considered important.

But Schatzki takes a different point of view. He states that practices consist of "embodied, materially mediated arrays, centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki et al., 2001: 3), so a practice to him is constituted by human actions, which do not have to be predictable. He identifies two central notions of practice: practice as a coordinated entity and practice as performance. The first notion is of "practice as a temporarily unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 1996: 89) (applicable examples are cooking, recreational, industrial practices). By insisting that doings and sayings that form a practice build a nexus he means that they are linked in particular ways. So in order for a practice to take place an agent has to: 1) understand what to do/what to say; 2) follow explicit rules, principles and instruction; 3) be a part of a structure that embraces tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods. Warde (2005) calls these components as 'understandings', 'procedures' and 'engagements', and by 'procedures' he understands the actual performances of practices in which an individual takes part, not just the rules for procedures. By introducing the concept of 3 major linkages between doings and sayings, Schatzki brings in a notion of differences that can exist in practices, due to changing understanding, procedures and values of engagement for different agents; he is the first one to criticize the common reduction of social practices to discursive practices. Moreover, he is suggesting that each practice should be analyzed from the angle of both carrying out a practice (doing it) and representing

it (expressing it in sayings), since each practice consists of both doings and sayings.

Let's look at a reading practice. An agent understands how to read a book (how to make sense out of words and thus out of letters) and knows that there is a set of procedures to perform in order to carry out a practice – such as, for example, taking a particular bodily position, using (or not) bookmarks, taking notes (very common when reading for studying), interacting with other readers (for example, during a play rehearsal) and sometimes even reading chapters in a non-common order (there is a book by Julio Cortázar (1987), reading which one needs to constantly switch between chapters in the order, pre-defined by the author). All these procedures are directly connected to engagement the agent has with the book: reading a textbook will take on a different shape than reading a comic book, and reading with a purpose of entertainment will look – and feel – differently than reading for the sake of learning. This way it is easy to see that reading cannot happen out of mere habit, but is influenced by many factors. Explaining to others what and how one is reading is the verbal representation of the practice: the description of the reading process can sound different for two readers of the same book.

The second notion, practice as performance, refers to carrying out a practice, which “actualizes and sustains practices in the sense of nexuses” (Schatzki, 1996: 90). Thus, each nexus of doings and sayings (each practice) needs to be performed on a regular basis in order to be sustainable.

Reckwitz sees a practice as a “routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood” (2002a: 250). As has been said before, to him a practice is a pattern, represented by a compilation of single and most often unique actions reproducing the practice, with single individuals acting as the “carriers” of a practice. But he underlines that it is not just the bodily behavior of the agent that builds the practice, it is also the routinized way of understanding, knowing how and desiring. He is assured that “these conventionalized ‘mental’ activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates” (2002a: 250). He adds, though, that this understanding and knowing exist only as long as they manifest themselves in bodily behavior.

So Schatzki – and then Reckwitz – are the first scholars to stress the importance of a deliberate action within a practice that, in its turn, can influence the practice to evolve and change. Warde agrees with them saying that practices “contain the seeds of constant change. They are dynamic by virtue of their own internal logic of operation, as people in myriad situations adapt, improvise and experiment” (2005: 141). So an agent is the true magician here: he has the power to shape a practice according to his understanding of it – and world in general (if someone suddenly decides that the most comfortable way to read a book is hanging upside down from a tree and starts performing it on a regular basis, then a new reading practice is created).

### **2.1.3 Status of material objects in the theory of practice**

Apart from trying to allocate a particular place for social, cultural theorists have always attempted to understand where to place the material in relation to the symbolic. What is the status of the ‘material’? How is it defined? Practice theory scholars that we got acquainted with in the previous section have not given the proper attention to the status of material objects. While looking at the routine character of practices, they did not give the role of objects in shaping and transforming those routines the attention it deserved. Even Schatzki (1996), who understands a practice as a bodily activity supported by a socially approved way of understanding and knowing, does not approach a matter of ‘things’. He only mentions once that ‘places are anchored in objects which are combined into settings’ (Ibid.: 189). So objects serve simply as symbolic identifiers, helping to establish certain settings for certain practices.

Reckwitz (2002b) criticizes Schatzki and other scholars for not bringing up the role of the ‘material’. He argues that if a practice is a nexus of doings and sayings then these doings must be *doings with things*, so things are unavoidably included in the production and reproduction of a practice. Even if not all practices are doings with things, most practices (including those presented by Schatzki) are. Holt (1995) agrees that a consumption practice most of the times belongs with the object at hand. Particular items are interconnected within a practice and they determine its development when being deployed or consumed (Warde, 2005).

Addressing the conceptualization of the material in cultural theories, Reckwitz (2002b) divides it in 3 different phases:

- 1) The sociology of knowledge; it places the material outside culture and understands it as structures that provide a foundation for orders of knowledge;
- 2) 'High modern' cultural theory – both variations of 'culturalist mentalism', 'textualism' and 'intersubjectivism', which have been touched upon in the previous section; these branches of cultural theory redefine the material as 'objects of knowledge' or 'symbolic objects' - objects that only exist when they are interpreted within collective structures of meanings. In other words, an agent needs to observe the material object and define it in a certain form;
- 3) Contemporary practice theory that takes into account the status of 'artefacts'. Though some scholars have attempted to look at the ways material things are incorporated into a practice, Bruno Latour (1993) was the first one to put the difference between 'objects' and 'subjects' of a practice aside (because there might be none), but look at the interaction between them. He suggested perceiving the 'material' part not as a 'social structure' or as 'symbolic objects', but as 'artefacts', as 'things' that are necessary components of practices. According to him, human agents do not only interpret the things in certain ways, but things are also applied, used and handled within their materiality. He sees objects to appear in social practices in 3 different modes: 1) tools; 2) infrastructures and 3) projection screens. As tools, objects do not affect the user's intentions in any way and simply reproduce them. As infrastructures, objects help to shape an autonomous world of a particular agent. As screens, objects serve as status identifiers and highlight the position of the user in social practices.

If we take Schatzki's position and combine it with Latour's, the outcome will be that not only human beings participate in practices, but also non-human artefacts, which become necessary components of practices (one can't bake a cake without using an oven). But, as Reckwitz (2002b) points out, in order to be used "artefacts" must be treated with practical understanding and thus become an integral part of a practice. Humans develop certain forms of know-how that become incorporated in practices alongside with things. Just like a practice cannot be reproduced if the body/mind has disappeared, it can neither be maintained if certain things to which a know-how is connected were to disappear.

This practical understanding contained in the materiality of artefacts determines that they have an influence on what kinds of social practices are possible. As Shove and Pantzar remark: "...practices involve the active integration of *material, meanings and forms of competence*" (2005: 45). There is no practice as 'listening to music on a gramophone' anymore, because invention of other devices for music reproduction have caused the gramophones to become extinct, and, as has been said before, a practice cannot be maintained if certain things, crucial to the practice performance, disappear. Material things, which role has been neglected by scholars for many years, have if not as much power as the agents, then surely assist those in shaping practices.

#### **2.1.4 Consumption as a part of social practices**

Even though lately scholars have started to pay attention to the role of material things in social practices, there hasn't been too much interest in applying the theory of practice to the area of consumption. In Warde's opinion (2005), two most prominent practice theorists, Giddens and Bourdieu, have made invaluable contributions to the main body of theory, but little of it is adequate for the research of consumption. This situation surprises Warde, since to him "the notion of practices is particularly instructive for the sociology of consumption" (Ibid.: 133) and theory of practices is a well-fitted theoretical path for the analysis of consumption. The key to changed consumption behavior lies mostly in the development of practices, since most practices require consumption in some way. Another scholar, Robert Mayer, insisted that more attention should be paid to individuals in their role as consumers (in Campbell, 1994).

Shove and Pantzar (2005) voice their concerns with the fact that understanding of consumption is often limited to acquisition and ownership. While they admit the symbolic importance of those, they argue that emphasizing only their importance might lead to a partial understanding of consumption. For them, many products are involved in the everyday conduct and reproduction of daily life, and the relation between material objects and practices deserves more attention that it receives. So consumption should be considered an integral part of daily life (see also Harvey et al, 2001). Campbell (1994) adds that while consumption is 'involving the selection,



purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service' (p. 102), surprisingly little is known about individuals' interaction with their possessions after the moment of purchase, because all the attention seems to go to the fact of purchase itself.

Warde (2005) agrees that consumption cannot be limited or defined by mere market exchange; it's not only the mere fact of purchase, but also the appropriation of the good/service during the process of consumption that is important for research. But, according to him, consumption is "not itself a practice, but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice" (Ibid.: 137; see also Holt, 1995). So it's not the consumption that defines the structure of a practice, but it's the agent's participation in a particular practice that shapes the nature of consumption. Respectively, consuming a product in a particular way is not a matter of personal choice, but a logical outcome of engaging in a practice. However, there is a new increasing trend that consumption becomes a practice in itself. For some people it's not the quality or functions of the products they purchase that satisfy their needs and wants, but the shopping process in itself. But in terms of the context of my research, it's not very likely that consumption is happening for the sake of consumption itself, so it will be looked at as a part of a practice, which fits Warde's statement that consumption is a moment in almost every practice.

Material objects are essential components of practices and take part in their performances when items consumed are put to use. Thus each practice requires agents that do not only have access to appropriate tools, but also possess the knowledge and know-how to manipulate them and sustain a practice. The last point is consistent with one of the statements presented in the previous section – that practice can be maintained if both the body/mind and the materialized understanding are there. Shove & Pantzar (2005) put a new spin on the consumption practices theory. They look at a creation of a new practice – which to them consists of "new configurations of existing elements or of new elements in conjunction with those that already exist" (p. 61), so what really important for a practice is how all the elements fit together. The conclusion to their study is that both practitioners and producers of a new practice are important to the practice adoption, since they both are involved in reproducing practices over and over again.

## **2.2 Reading practices**

### **2.2.1 Lack of existing research on reading practices**

In our everyday lives we are involved in an enormous number of practices. We shop, sing, ride a bike, order pizza, take shower, commute to work and do many other things. These practices take place at different times of day, with different number of people involved, the same practice can take longer or shorter depending on the circumstances. Reading – anything, be it a book or a newspaper – is one of the practices we perform regularly. Reading itself is a “complex cognitive skill, consisting of the coordinated execution of a collection of oculomotor, perceptual and comprehension processes” (Daneman, 1996: 513). During reading several processes are taking place at the same time: a physiological one, that helps you move your eyes from one location to another, word-processing, that connects the familiar visual pattern of the word with its meaning stored in you memory, and text-processing, that helps you build relationships between the words you’ve just encountered (Ibid.). To read is to “wander through an imposed system (that of text, analogous to the constructed of a city or of a supermarket)” (De Certeau, 1984: 167). Through reading individuals are “taken to a different place. They meet unforgettable characters. They lose track of time” (Brown, 2006: 14).

But reading is not a mere operation of understanding the text and thus does not only occur in our heads. An aspect that is central to reading is materiality: the relation between a reader and a book is a relation between two bodies – “one made of paper and ink, the other flesh and blood” (Littau, 2006: 2). Reading is a bodily act: it means that the body is involved and that one establishes relationships with oneself and with others (Chartier, 1995: 20). A reading practice this way represents itself in particular gestures and habits, and also in temporal and spatial characteristics (when and where the reading takes place) (De Certeau, 1984; Chartier, 1995; Van den Ploeg, 2004). The same book can be read – and thus understood – differently, depending on the way it was read. You will probably derive different meanings from the same text, if you just flip through the pages or read properly, making comments; some new insights can also appear if you join a book club and read together with other people. Thus it is unreasonable to consider reading as one activity that only exists in one form. Reading

is also a cumulative experience. “The more one reads worthwhile books, the more one gets out of reading, the more one is able to appreciate the context and the more one develops an appetite for it” (Van der Ploeg 2004: 5).

Reading has been around for hundreds of years and might seem deceptively simple (Johns, 1998). Maybe it is one of the reasons why doing a research on reading practices means coming across a dearth of publications on this matter. Difficulties in finding relevant empirical data in the study of reading have already been mentioned by some scholars. Price (2004) states that “one of the difficulties in studying reading is due to the fact that reading is so hard to observe: introspection is uncertain, psycho-sociological investigation is tedious” (p. 305). De Certeau (1984) points out that investigations of ordinary reading are generally statistical in type: “they are more concerned with calculating the correlations between objects read, social groups, and places frequented more than with analyzing the very operation of reading, its modalities and its typology” (p.170). In general most of the existing research on reading focuses on psychological, physiological and societal aspects of reading processes, as well as on different models of reading processes and information-processing during reading (cf. Samuels & Kamil, 1984; Venezky, 1984).

### **2.2.2 What reading practices have been researched**

Given the huge variety of forms reading can take on, it is not surprising that there have been very few attempts to develop a more holistic perspective on reading practices and their dynamics throughout the time. Two books that stand out here (in the author’s humble opinion) are “A history of reading” by Alberto Manguel (1996) and “Theories of reading” by Karin Littau (2006). Below will be an overview of the most common and important reading practices that the authors have touched upon.

The major shift in reading that is accentuated by both authors is the shift from reading aloud to silent reading. Though we are more used to the latter mode, in fact, reading aloud has a much longer history than reading in silence. In ancient times the nature of the writing surfaces (clay, wooden or wax tablets, papyrus or parchment later on) and economic use of space led to the fact that the scripts were difficult to carry and use,

and the words on them were crammed onto each other. Reading out loud gave the reader an opportunity to derive sense in the continuous flow of letters (Littau, 2006). Silent reading doesn't become common in the West until the tenth century, when readers start to systematically use interword spacing (which had been introduced earlier) (Manguel, 1996). This practice became highly adopted by educational institutions in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, since it allowed to read with eyes only and, therefore, to read more. Now the reader could establish a personal relationship with the book and the words even if there were other people in the room, while before that he would – deliberately or not – have to participate in the shared reading, since everyone was reading aloud. De Certeau (1984) adds that 'the text no longer manifests itself through reader's voice. [...] The autonomy of the eye suspends the body's complicities with the text' (p.175-176).

Interestingly, Manguel (1996) points out that there are practices, where a reader does not have a direct, visual connection with words, but still participates in a practice of reading. One of them is a practice of "reading" pictures. At the times when the illiteracy rate was still very high, pictures – especially in religious institutions (icons, murals) – were used to deliver the message to the people. Manguel brings up an example of Bible of the Poor from the 15<sup>th</sup> century – large picture-books in which each page was devoted to depicting two or more scenes from the Bible. Many couldn't read the script surrounding the picture, but "the majority of the people would recognize most of the characters and scenes, and be able to 'read' in those images the relationship between the stories of the Old and New Testament" (Ibid.: 103). But even in our days picture-reading still exists, and not only for little children who learn books through pictures, but also for adults – through advertising with "each story told within precise and limited frames, through familiar characters and symbols" (Ibid.: 105).

Being read to is another practice that does not involve a direct interaction with written text. In the Middle Ages, when only wealthy could afford having a book and only a minority of people could read, coming together to be read became a common practice. Travelling joglars and troubadours became the important mediators of texts; in the courts books were read aloud to family and friends both for educational and entertainment purposes; parents in the few literate families read to their children. Sometimes possessing a book during a book reading would acquire a talismanic

value: “in the north of France village story-tellers used books as props; they memorized the text, but then showed authority by pretending to read from the book, even if they were holding it upside down” (Ibid.:120). One more type of public readings – readings by the author – flourished in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It allowed the author to not only deliver his work to the public, but in a way to receive it back – in forms of reactions and feedbacks. The reactions in this case are instant and pure, since the public does not have a chance to go back, reread, give it another thought and find additional meanings. While readings to a bigger public were performed with the hope of gaining publicity and fame as a result, the aim of reading to friends was to polish the final drafts. Authors’ readings are still very popular – writers’ festivals regularly take place in Toronto, Edinburgh and Melbourne (to name a few).

The invention of print has served as a catalyst to two more shifts in reading practices. These are: 1) shift to reading in solitude, private reading; 2) shift from intensive to extensive reading. Easier to carry and use book formats, increasing supply and accessibility of books, increasing literacy rates – it all led to the growth in books purchased for private use. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, when individualism starts to take Europe by storm, a new form of literature that establishes a more intimate, personal relationship between text and reader – a novel – is gaining popularity at high speed and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it becomes a form of escape from the troubles of the real life (Littau, 2006). Instead of reading and re-reading the Bible over and over again, the reader starts to read more – and a more diverse set of books. In Manguel’s opinion, reading in bed offers the reader a particular quality of privacy, since it’s one’s personal space and private territory that no one can get into.

To many of us it wouldn’t occur that ‘reading the future’ (Manguel, 1996) is also a reading practice. In our days it happens when a reader asks a question about his future, then takes a random book, opens it on a random page and chooses a random line. Manguel finds this reading practice a very important one: while adapting the ‘reply’ of the book to his particular situation, the reader re-creates the text, transforms the words into a message that can be related to the question asked.

Brown (2006) underlines the uniqueness of another reading practice – reading used books. Used books, to him, create a setting in which the reader does not only connect

to the text and the meaning of it, but to the whole history behind the book, that is often represented by hand-written remarks and stains, and these “consumption traces alter the text, marking books with sacred and sometimes economic value” (p.57-58).

Another form of connection – between both the book and other readers – is created through group readings, a common feature of a classroom or a book club, where discussing the text with others allows the reader to get insights into the underlying meanings that he would have missed by himself. A rather peculiar reading practice that also involves other people, though not in the simultaneous reading process, is bookcrossing, which became extremely popular in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A reader, upon finishing the book, would leave it in a public space for others to take and read. The note inside the book would inform the future reader that the book cannot be kept for personal use but has to stay in the bookcrossing cycle. The book, in a way, with its purpose and history, connects people that might never meet each other in the real world.

The practice of reading is generally considered to be quite equal to consumption (De Certeau, 1984). During the process of reading a book – or some of its parts – is being read. Or, in other words, consumed. The materiality of the book is an important factor that affects the way we conduct our reading, and even when, how much and what we read (Littau, 2006). Some books might require specific positions for reading, which in turn would demand an appropriate reading place, since the comfort of the body often influences the emotions derived from the book. “Books read in a public library never have the same flavor as books read in the attic or the kitchen” (Manguel, 1996:152). The need to know more about readers’ interaction with a book in all its forms is obviously connected to the potential in further developing theory on consumption practices. The study of book reading as a consumption practice provides important insights into agents’ interaction with material objects and the role agents – both human and non-human - play in building a practice.

### **2.3 Merging Reading and Theory of Practice**

As we know by now, there were several major stages in the development of the theory of practice. In the very beginning a practice was considered to be a fixed, routinized sequence of events; an individual's actions and a practice outcome were deemed predictable, driven by *habitus*. Next came an understanding that all the agents – individual carriers of a practice – might affect the course of a practice by acting differently, not in the way that is determined by habit. This notion of deliberate action changed the perception of a practice: now a practice consists of 'understandings', 'procedures' and 'engagements'; in other words in order for a practice to take place an agent has to know what to do/say, be a part of a particular system of rules and instructions, typical for that practice, and share purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods, connected to that practice. So an individual's actions influence a practice to evolve and change. Later on scholars shifted their attention from subjects to objects: since practices consist of doings, at least some of them must be doings with *things*. So are material objects just symbolic identifiers or they are an essential part of a practice? Turns out, many practices would become extinct should the material objects disappear. A definition of 'know-how' is introduced: an individual should know how to handle an object and incorporate it into a practice for the practice to take place.

Reading has been an essential part of people's lives for centuries and, not surprisingly, appealed to scholars as an interesting topic for research. However, up to this moment scholars haven't expressed interest in applying the theory of practice on reading patterns. Reading, as has been shown in the previous chapter, takes on a wide array of modes and happens in various settings, and it involves both people – agents, and books or different digital reading devices – objects. Both agents and objects play their roles in practice formation. We have already learnt from Reckwitz that the choice of objects used during a practice may affect the organization of a practice and its further development. At this moment there is a clear need for research of the changes in the reading patterns caused by the digitization and invention of iPad and Kindle. Are these three elements – understandings, procedures and engagements – the same no matter what kind of object is used during a reading practice? If they are different, then in what way? Also, this research will help to bring up another important issue: the *interaction* between a subject and an object in a reading practice

and, thus, the *division of roles* between subjects and an object and the *changes these roles undergo* in reading practices with different material objects. This is especially interesting for a practice of reading with kids, since it is not just an interaction between the agent and the object that takes place, but also an interaction between two (and sometimes even more) agents. The theory contribution in addressing the aforementioned issues and underlining the *active* role of material objects (if a reading practice changes its form due to a different material object being used, then an object also takes part in shaping a practice) will build a way for further development of the discussion about the place of material in social practices.

Several researchers have come to a conclusion that using some objects during a practice is equal to consuming them, so both iPad/Kindle and books are consumed during a reading practice. The aforementioned interaction between agents and also agents and objects is the logical outcome of consumption. Researching this interaction will be a much needed contribution to the theory of consumption, since, as Warde, Campbell and Shove & Pantzar point out, very little is known about the interaction with things after their purchase. Through exposing distinctive qualities of objects used in reading practices, this research will further the understanding of why particular objects are used in reading practices in a particular way.

But, of course, before diving deep into investigation of the roles divided between agents and objects, one needs to understand – what are the most common practices for reading with kids? Who are the agents and what are the objects that are being used? And what are the understandings, procedures and engagements, brought up by Schatzki and Warde, that build those practices?

So the research questions are:

1. How are practices for reading with kids constituted? What are the most common elements in them?
2. What objects are mostly used in those practices? What are their roles and how do they affect the structure of a practice?
3. How does a parent's role change depending on what object is used?



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The current study is using qualitative research methodology for the insight development. The choice of a qualitative method fits the purpose of the thesis: its main aim is to answer “how” questions (how reading practices are constructed) and to understand and describe processes (how they are changing due to implementation of new technology). According to Bryman & Bell (2007), qualitative research orientation is ‘particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination’ (p.62). It is also the right approach to choose when one wants to build a theory, rather than evaluate it (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Since, as has been shown before, theory that already exists on the topic of reading practices is insufficient, so there is, first of all, a need for theory development, and, second of all, there is not enough data to build hypotheses and prove them during the research. The collected empirical material will be analyzed and will serve as a basis for new theoretical findings. In addition to that, Maxwell (1996) points out that qualitative studies are not only concerned with physical events, but also with how participants in focus understand their behavior and make sense of it. It correlates perfectly with the fact that practice relates to both doings and sayings (Schatzki, 1996), thus attention has to be paid not only to the bodily behavior, but also to its verbal representation. Quantitative research was found to be inappropriate for the problem investigated, since it mostly focuses on the state of things at a particular moment in time and neither does it capture (or if it does then to a much smaller extent) the sociological aspects, which are highly important for the current thesis.

Due to the problem of unexplored sections in theory, an abductive logic was deemed to be the most appropriate one to follow. As Dubois & Gadde (2002) put it, to develop theory rather than to confirm it one should go for the abductive approach. Abduction is a combination of deductive and inductive approaches, when the researcher constantly moves between theory and empirics, finding support for the former in the latter and vice versa. Logically, this approach follows the iterative process: research questions were revisited, modified and polished along with the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

### **3.2 Research design**

Since qualitative approach is more concerned with words than numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and is more focused on understanding a particular phenomenon rather than testing hypotheses (Merriam, 2009), in-depth interviews with consumers were found to be the most suitable method to investigate the problem at hand. In-depth interviewing is particularly useful in examining and understanding the social world, since attention is paid to the informants' perspective on the subject discussed rather than on the perspective of the interviewer (Miller & Glassner, 2011).

A dilemma that a qualitative researcher needs to deal with is having a structured or unstructured approach to the problem investigation: interviews can range from being highly structured with a planned rigid set of questions to informal talks where only broad areas of discussion are identified (Miller, 2002). Time resources available for the preparation of the current thesis require some structure to be brought in, so while the research questions were kept rather broad, interview questions were designed in a semi-structured way: all of them are open-ended questions, thus leaving room for participants to express their point of view and reveal their attitudes, but adapted to particular patterns/ processes that are being investigated. The common basis for these patterns/processes was derived during the theory analysis. One of the strengths of a semi-structured interview is that 'it facilitates a strong element of discovery, while its structured focus allows an analysis in terms of commonalities' (Gillham, 2005).

Nevertheless it is important to mention that having a tentative plan for research did not require the author to stick to it, since there was always a possibility of revising and changing some parts if necessary. For example, if a conversation was taking an unexpected turn, the interviewer did not push dialogue back to the designed path, but rather investigated the newly appeared nuances by asking questions that seemed relevant in the situation.

The advantages of speaking to interviewees rather than mailing out questions (even though open-ended) and receiving written replies are rather obvious: the interviewer has a chance to make sure that questions are understood correctly and explain them in more detail at once should there be such a need. In addition to that, a conversation

allows for a free flow of thoughts, so a researcher may catch some spontaneous reactions, while filling out a written form requires a respondent to structure her thoughts to some extent, and thus immediate, intuitive reactions are missed. However, though some of the respondents expressed interest in participating in the interviews, they could not find time for a conversation, but suggested replying in a written form. Their answers were included in the main analysis after all the oral interviews had been recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

While one could argue that observations should be an essential part of the current study, it is important to point out that a reading practice – especially the one involving kids, which are in focus of the thesis – is usually carried out in a rather intimate setting, where the main connection is built between a parent, a kid and a book. Presence of a stranger during this interaction might create a setting that is far from a usual, natural one for the participants involved, and thus the results of the observations will be skewed. In addition to that, “young children often refuse to engage in reading and writing in artificially contrived situations” (Sulzby&Teale, 1996: 729). This speaks in favor of choosing interviewing, since it is the best method of gaining a description of actions/events when observational access is not possible to get (Maxwell, 1996).

### ***3.3 Data collection and analysis***

Since the current study follows an abductive approach, both data collection and analysis were conducted in an iterative way, allowing for theory and empirical findings to influence one another. As has been said before, the empirical study consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Insights and unanticipated topics that appeared during first interviews were used for rephrasing (if necessary) of interview questions to be used later on, though interview guidelines were followed to ensure that investigation stays within the required field of study. Thus some of the issues were only researched in sufficient depth at later interview stages.

A connection that needs to be observed is between research and interview questions. Maxwell (1996) warns that they shouldn't be too identical; to him, research questions

are used to formulate what needs to be understood as the result of a study, while interview questions should be used as tools to gain this understanding. A researcher needs to anticipate what information will be possible to collect and prepare the questions accordingly. According to Gillham (2005), the main task is to develop questions that are relatively distinct from each other, that, as the interview progresses, tap into something different. Interview guidelines can be found in Appendix X.

The conduct of interviews followed the process described by Bill Gillham (2005): 1) during the *preparation phase* the interview guide was organized and possible prompts and side questions were prepared; 2) *the initial contact* with interviewees was set up through phone calls or e-mails, the interview guide was sent out in advance; 3) *the orientation* in the beginning of the interviews included providing all the respondents with an overview of the research and its purpose and also about their role in it; 4) *the substantive phase* consisted of the interview itself; 5) during *the closure phase* respondents were thanked for participation, informed about when the interview summaries would be ready and asked for permission to follow up with some more questions.

A total of 23 interviews were conducted (6 of them written). The average duration of an interview amounted to 30 minutes (ranging from 12 to 50 minutes); some participants showed unwillingness to participate in the study if a conversation was supposed to take longer than half an hour (taking care of small kids obviously does not leave too much free time). Interview guidelines were sent to participants in advance to give them time to remember particular moments/situations/feelings that were crucial for understanding of the phenomenon. All the interviews were conducted via Skype due to geographical and time constraints. For continuous access and reassessment of the information received all the interviews were recorded with the Callnote application for Skype and then transcribed. The language of communication was Russian, which is mother tongue for both the author and the interviewees. The interviews were then transcribed and transcriptions translated into English. Appendix Y presents a list of all the interviewees that took part in the study.

According to Miller & Glassner (2011), when interviewees feel comfortable enough they are ready to raise questions, highlight misinterpretations and irrelevant remarks

and offer corrections, which leads to successful interviewing. Thus all the interviewees in the current research were found and invited to take part in the study through the network of friends and family. Having a personal relationship (even though indirect at most times) helped to create a friendly atmosphere during the interviews. Regarding the sample, Maxwell states that in qualitative research ‘most sampling is neither probability nor convenience sampling, but *purposeful* sampling’ (1996: 70). By using this strategy a researcher is deliberately choosing particular persons that fit the criteria in order to provide the information that cannot be obtained from other sources. The main criteria used were that the interviewee had to be a parent of 1 or more kids between 1 and 6 years old. To ensure the similar cultural settings, preference was given to interviewees of Russian origin that have lived in Russia for the majority of their lives. Other social or financial factors did not come into play, though the author tried to include representatives of different walks of life.

When all the data was collected through interviews, a categorical analysis was used to extract the most important information in two stages. First, interviews transcripts were read one by one and the substantive statements were underlined and coded in relation to the problems discussed. After all of the transcripts were worked through in this manner, transcripts with the underlined statements were compared to one another in search for similar or contradicting information (experiences and opinions). This helped to group the coded citations into several core categories (which did not have to be similar to the research questions, but without any doubt related to them), and deciding on categories was the second stage of analysis. Coding the information at hand required re-reading and checking all the transcripts several times. As Gillham puts it, “you move back and forth, changing your mind, reviewing and revising while working through different transcripts. This iterative process is the heart of the matter: not linear, rather untidy, but from which emerges an organization of the common meanings derived from different accounts” (2005: 137).

The coded pieces of information from different sources were combined in several new documents, sorted according to the defined categories. Information comparison within the same category helped to identify sub-categories and see the nuances that were not that obvious when the analysis just started. The citations that were considered to be

the most interesting and descriptive were later on used in the analysis part of the thesis as ‘direct speech’ of interviewees.

### **3.4 Research quality**

The concepts used to assess the quality of a research rely highly on the research design. If the key focus of a study is on understanding (people/processes/events), as usually the case with qualitative research, the criteria for proving the study trustworthy will be different then in a quantitative study, which is usually concerned with testing hypotheses/discovering causal relations. There has been some argument over what criteria should be considered adequate for an assessment of a qualitative study. While many scholars have historically relied on validity and reliability, several others have come up with new ones. Lincoln & Gubba (1985) suggested credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as substitutes for internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. However, Merriam (2009) stresses that both perspectives can be to some extent combined in a research quality evaluation and this thesis will be using her guidelines in carrying out an assessment.

#### **3.4.1 Internal validity or Credibility**

‘Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality’ (Merriam, 2009: 213). The general criticism towards qualitative study design is directed at the subjective portrayal of reality presented by a researcher. Though it is impossible in qualitative research to capture the objective ‘truth’, several strategies were used to increase the level of internal validity/credibility.

1. Member checks, also called respondent validation. Several interviewees (chosen on the base of quality of interaction during the interview) were provided with an extract of empirical findings for feedback. This helped to ensure that respondents could recognize their personal experiences in the author’s interpretations and relate to them.

2. Adequate engagement in data collection. All the interviews were arranged and data was collected until it became ‘saturated’, in other words, until obvious patterns could be recognized in the received data and looking for more information proved to

be unnecessary. Since it was important to collect as honest replies as possible, respondents were encouraged to speak their mind. They were allowed to ask any questions if something was unclear to them, to add any information they found appropriate (also after the interview was over) and were even allowed to refuse to answer a particular question (though none of the respondents used that right).

All in all, the author tried to ensure that her point of view, all the assumptions and conclusions are thoroughly explained and that a reader has a clear picture of the research.

### **3.4.2 Reliability or Consistency**

‘Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated’ (Merriam, 2009). It is hard to prove reliability of a study that is revolving around social sciences: human behavior is dynamic, people’s attitudes change over time, as well as their perceptions. There also can be many interpretations of what is being observed, so no benchmarks can be established to successfully repeat the same study with the same results. In this light, what is important for a qualitative research is the consistency of the results with the data collected (Lincoln and Guba refer to this as to ‘dependability’ or ‘consistency’ (1985). The reliability in this case is ensured by providing the reader with detailed information on each step of the study: how data was collected, how it was analyzed and divided into categories, what insights led to particular decisions.

### **3.4.3 External Validity or Transferability**

‘External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations’ (Merriam, 2009: 223). In other words, external validity shows how generalizable the results of the study can be. However, the aim of a qualitative study is often not generalization, but deep understanding of a phenomenon. For that, data was being collected until found sufficient to answer the research questions. Finding respondents through family and friends helped to establish rapport with the majority of them during the interviews: the respondents showed interest in

the topic of the research, many of the respondents provided the author with interesting stories from life that were later on used in the analysis section as examples. Also, around 90% of the answers were found to be detailed and deep – interviewees provided specific information on particular elements of reading practices, followed their answers by clear and informative examples and in many cases tried to come up with reasons for a particular behavior.

In addition to that, the author tried to capture a wide range of different experiences and opinions. This helped to provide the reader with a bigger picture of reading practices with kids, parents' approaches and meanings of readings. The fact that this difference in practices, perceptions and approaches exists shows that the results are difficult to transfer to other situations, since many personal factors come into play. The target group was limited to Russian parents with kids of 1-6 years old, which means that a research of a different group of kids and parents could bring a drastically different variety of conclusions.



## 4. What is known about Digital Era

This chapter will provide the reader with literature review of those theoretical fields that the author does not plan to contribute to, but that are nevertheless important for the overall understanding of the topic.

### 4.1 Digital Age and Digital Natives

*In a relationship-driven world the key ingredient to successful media will be interactivity – Peter Georgescu, Young & Rubicam, Advertising Age, April 14, 1997.*

The 1990s can be proclaimed to be the beginning of the Digital Age, though no particular date can be named, since this era was gradually evolving from the prior technological achievements. The term ‘digital’ has 2 aspects to its’ meaning: technical and cultural. Technically, digital means media that are created using bytes built of bits<sup>1</sup>. In a broad, cultural sense, the term ‘digital’ refers to “media, which provide for users a high level of choice and interactivity because the bits and bytes can be rearranged and transmitted so easily” (Dresang, 1999: 7). This way print, radio and television (in their original forms and formats) are examples of pre-digital, linear media, while Internet and everything that it caused to appear later on is digital.

But already back in 1964, way before the Digital Age even started, a Canadian educator and scholar Herbert Marshall McLuhan was talking about the impact electronic media would have on publishing industry and general habits of book consumption. In his book “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man” (1954) he breaks media in 2 classes: “hot” or not requiring active participation (radio, traditional books) and “cold” or requiring high degree of participation (television, in our times – Internet). Already then he established the importance of the new media quality – interactivity.

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<sup>1</sup> A ‘bit’ (short for ‘binary digit’) – is the smallest unit of measurement, used for digital information storage and represented by a single numeric value, either a 1 or a 0. Most computers use combinations of 8 bits, called bytes, to represent one character of data. For example, the word “cat” has three characters, and it would be represented by three bytes.

The high-paced adoption of the Internet in the mid-1990s caused a great deal of excitement. As has often been noted, the Internet has been one of the fastest-growing new media ever (Leckenby, 2005). The reason for such excitement could be the characteristic of the Internet as an “interactive” medium, compared to other mass media from 1990s. These interactive features gave people a possibility to communicate with each other “beyond time and spatial restrictions” (Miller, 1996). As one can see, interactivity is one of the most important features of the wireless communication. That’s how Nicholas Negroponte, former head of the MIT Media Lab, described the impact of this digital culture in “Being Digital” (1995): "Being digital is different. We are not waiting on any invention. It is here. It is now. It is almost genetic in its nature, in that each generation will become more digital than the preceding one" (p. 231). According to him, the technological innovations are ‘being taken for granted by children the same way adults don’t think about air’ (Ibid.: 6).

However, interactivity – alongside with 2 other important features of digital media, connectivity and access - only got to play the role in full when new digital media was embraced by general population, computers gradually became more commonplace and the Internet turned into a place for children to learn and play. The nonlinear digital communication media started to draw in the older types – video, sound and print, the shift to user-controlled media has started and everything became accessible in a previously unknown way.

Table 1

Development of the Digital Age

1960s	Television becomes widely available; the global village begins
1970s	Internet precursor comes into use
1980s	Personal computers and digital media become widely available; video games bring digital media to youth
1990s	Internet becomes widely available; "older" electronic media such as television become digitized; technologies converge

Source: Dresang (1999), *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age*, p.7

Mark Prensky was the first one to realize that the generation growing up in the Digital Era is going to be quite different from the previous ones. He came up with the term “Digital Natives”, to describe the “native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet” (2005: 8). To Prensky, their thinking patterns have changed, as well as the way they process information. The society becomes more interactive, with people more and more intertwined through digital networks, which develop with extreme speed. Parents, who belong to a category of “Digital Immigrants” (those who were not born with technology at their hands, but have to adapt to it), become more digital-oriented together with their kids. As a result, current interactions, studying methods, reading practices should – and will – be influenced by the Digital Natives, and the change is inevitable.

#### **4.2 Books and Reading in the Digital Age**

‘The 20<sup>th</sup> century marks the transition from a culture based on paper to a culture based on the screen’ (Littau, 2006: 53). Printed books are affected by the Digital Age, and so are the readers’ reactions to them. Eliza Dresang (1999) coined these changes in perception of books as “Radical Change”. Radical Change, according to her, is a way of understanding books through three main characteristics of the digital world - interactivity, connectivity and access. It’s obvious that all 3 of the characteristics are tied to each other – *connecting* through a link in the body of text, a reader gets *access* to additional information on the topic, thus having an opportunity to add on to the content – in other words, *interacting* with the book.

The digital environment starts to redefine what reading and literacy stand for, whether we like it or not. People’s reading behavior is heavily influenced by the growing amount of available digital information. Already in 1994 Birkerts notes that the younger generation growing up digital – the Digital Natives I have talked about before – lacks the skills to concentrate and read deeply and be engaged in reading over a longer period of time. In 1999 E. Dresang argues for the fact that even in this digitalized world handheld books (‘a term that means, as it would seem, a book which can be held in the hand and read without the assistance of an electronic device’ (p. 5))

have their unique qualities, which among others include ‘a pleasurable, aesthetic experience... of reading print’, ‘time to linger and ponder issues that might fly by in a digital space’, ‘portability and availability that no other medium can match’ (p. 13). These characteristics contribute to the partnership between traditional books and digital media, not competition, she insists. However, already in 2008 she doubts whether her previous statements still hold true. New portable electronic book readers have gained the characteristics that used to be exclusive to handheld books – they are portable, provide easy access to a wide selection of books (hence availability), allow for reflection of ideas contained in the text. The quality of electronic paper is almost perfect, and though ‘aesthetics of holding a cloth bound book are missing, [...] a simulation of the experience is getting close’ (Dresang, 2008: p.298). These technological improvements lead to the danger that the art of reading a book is going to be compromised – the increased connectivity, interactivity and access may lead to the days when books are going to be consumed like magazines and newspapers, without proper immersion in the author’s ideas, but with jumping from one piece of information to another (Ibid.; cf. Littau, 2006).

Several other scholars have paid attention to the inevitable change in the reading patterns. Similar dramatic change happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as I have noted previously, when people switched from re-reading the few books they had at home all over and over again to reading extensively, not only books, but also periodicals and other material that started to appear at those times. Liu (2005) suggests that browsing or scanning is going to become the main reading pattern in the nearest future, as it’s the best way to survive in our information-intensive environment. The arrival of hypertext encourages this non-linear reading behavior (which he calls ‘hyper-reading’), making reading more fragmented and less in-depth. The linear reading trajectory for printed texts is thus challenged by the non-linear digital one, where the reading path is constructed by the reader, since in the beginning of the reading one doesn’t know where he will end up in the end (Kress, 2003). Rowsell&Burke (2009) warn that school and university teachers need to take into account the complexities of reading digital texts, since reading digital requires a different set of skills.

### **4.3 Summary**

As we have seen, three main characteristics of the Digital Age media – connectivity, access and interactivity – affect the reading patterns, especially with the younger population. In the current paper the author will research whether these characteristics have affect on the process of reading with kids: the little ones are highly influenced by their parents, who still mostly belong to the generation of Digital Immigrants rather than the generation of Digital Natives. Also, both linear and non-linear reading behaviors will be presented, since the study will focus both on handheld books and digital reading devices.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 General information

It is necessary for the reader to clearly understand what types of respondents have been researched in the current paper. Below one will find the characteristics that give a general description of the audience in question.

**Age:** In total, 17 interviews were conducted and 6 written replies were received. While the age of the respondents themselves was not taken into account (as it was not a significant factor for the results of the studies), the range of the children's age was from 1 year and 3 months up to 6 years and 4 months. Two of the girls, aged 7 and 14 years old, were included in the study as two elder sisters, affecting the course of reading practices with younger kids in two families. So out of the 23 studied families there were three families with 2 kids of different age (4 and 5 years old, 7 and 2,5 years old, and 5 and 2 years old), a family with twins (1 year and 4 months) and a family with 3 kids (14, 6 and 3,5 years).

**Gender:** The author also made sure that there was at least one child of each gender for each age category (starting at 1 year old and ending at 6). All in all, there were 19 boys and 10 girls that became subjects of the study. The majority of the respondents themselves were mothers, with 2 grandmothers and a father agreeing to participate in the study.

**Geographical diversity:** All the children were born and are currently being raised in Russia. The majority of respondents are living in two biggest Russian cities – Moscow and St. Petersburg, with population of 15 and 5 million people respectively. Four of the families are residing in regional centers (cities with population of 300 000 – 900 000 people) and 4 more are representing suburban areas with population of 15-30 000 people.

**Use of technology:** It will come as no surprise that all of the families have paper books at home. When it comes to technology, 5 families stated that they are using tablets in their everyday lives: in 4 families the tablets belonged to parents, with the kids using them occasionally, and in one case the tablet belonged to the child herself. At the same time, the majority of adults responded that they are reading books from e-

readers mostly and that they are buying less and less of paper books for their home libraries. In two cases the adults were also using smartphones to read books. How – and if – digital technology is used for reading with kids, will be looked at further on.

**Marital status:** The marital status of the interviewees was sometimes brought up in the flow of the conversation and proved to have some impact on reading situations in several cases. Four of the interviewees were single mothers, but in one of the cases a father found an interesting way to keep in touch with his kid through reading. More details will be given in the following sub-chapter.

Social status of the respondents was not taken into account and neither was their income. During the interviews it was quite obvious that some families simply could not afford buying a tablet and so they could not tell the pros and cons of using it for reading from their own experience. But in the current research the author was more focused on finding non-monetary reasons for not using digital devices in reading with kids, so the financial factor was deemed to be insignificant.

## ***5.2 Reading practices***

During the interviews the author observed that there are some descriptive elements that belong to all the reading practices that have been researched. These elements differed from family to family and affected the course of a practice to some extent, that is why they need to be presented in more detail.

### **5.2.1 Adult readers participating in a reading practice**

It will probably not come as a surprise that mothers are those doing the most reading with their kids. The “second place” is given to grandparents, especially to grandmothers. Fathers are occasionally reading with their little ones, and that mostly happens on weekends. This can be explained by several factors, and at this moment the situation is highly typical for the Russian culture (although it is slowly changing):

- 1) in most of the Russian families – especially in suburban and rural areas – there is a quite clear division of responsibilities between men and women. While men are the main providers for the family, women are supposed to be taking

care of children and do the household errands (at the same time many of them are working too). Thus women – usually, but not always – spend more time with children than their husbands;

- 2) in addition to that, a mother is allowed to have a childcare leave of up to 3 years without losing her job. In this case a woman, obviously, spends a lot of time at home with her child and, respectively, does most of the reading with him/her;
- 3) in Russia it's also common for grandparents to actively participate in bringing up their grandkids. Even if a mother stays at home, it is not unusual for her or her husband's parents to be helping out. Sometimes young families even live with one of the spouse's parents (that was the case in two families in this study). Another reason for the grandparents' involvement is that the governmental payments received by mothers on childcare leave are miniscule, and a fraction of salary is paid only during the first months, so the whole financial burden lays on the father's shoulders. If a man is not able to support his family, a woman has to start working shortly after the child is born. And, of course, single mothers need to use some external help, which often comes from grandparents.

So, mothers and grandmothers are reading with their kids the most. Sometimes spouses share the reading time equally – as one of the women put it, *'we need to make sure that one of us is reading with kids, so that the other one is free to do other things at home. So we have to take turns'*. If both parents are working, then a grandmother would do the reading during the day (for those families who can afford it – a babysitter), and parents will take it on in the evening.

In households with several kids the elder one would sometimes read with his/her younger siblings. For example, a 14-year old girl in one of the families spends even more time reading with her brother and sister than her parents: *'the boy loves to spend time with his elder sister in general – he is her knight in the shining armor – and he would prefer to be read to by her than by anyone else in the family'*, comments the children's grandmother. In another family the same situation existed, the only difference being that it wasn't an elder sister, but a cousin.



### 5.2.2 Number of participants in a reading practice

Usually there are only two participants in a reading practice: an adult and a kid. One of the mothers started laughing when I asked her if two adults are ever reading with her daughter: *'No, whenever someone starts reading with her, everyone else in the family runs to do other things while she is busy'*. However, some examples of reading processes involving more than two people have been described. These examples can be divided into two groups: when there are two adults and a kid or when there are two or more kids and one adult. The first scenario usually happens when two parents decide to read a book in roles for the kid (so they both take an active role in reading) or when one of the parents takes on a passive role of listener: *'My husband likes to be present when I am reading to our daughter, especially when I am reading fairy tales that he used to read as a kid himself. He often listens and gets surprised that he does not remember the plot'*.

A reading practice with two or more kids might turn into an interesting discussion or, on the contrary, become a challenge:

*'I have twins, so I have to read to them both at the same time. But it can become quite a hassle if one of them starts taking the book from the other or, even worse, starts hitting him with it';*

*'My elder daughter is 7 years old, and she does not care so much about the pictures anymore, she needs an interesting story, she follows the plot. But the younger daughter is just 2,5 years old, and pictures are everything she needs: she points at them, asks questions, interrupts. It all becomes really annoying for the elder one very fast, so I have to find time to read to both of them separately'.*

However, another mother pointed out that her son's friend often comes to their place to join the reading process: *'We pick a book together and sit down in a circle, so that everyone can see the pictures. I read the story, and they both ask questions or talk to each other about what they've just heard'*.

### 5.2.3 Temporal characteristics of a reading practice

On average a practice of reading with kids lasts for 15-20 minutes. The shortest time can be just a couple of minutes, while the longest one can stretch up to 3-4 hours: *'our daughter knows that we don't always have a lot of time to read with her, but if by some luck one of the parents is relatively free, she will take the most of it and the reading will have to go on for several hours'*.

Regarding time of day when a reading practice happens, the most common one is reading before the night sleep. In some families it happens only a couple of times a week, but for some children this reading is a must: *'she just loves reading before going to sleep. She won't fall asleep before we have read all the books she had chosen'*, says mother of a 3-year old girl.

Jumping forward, choosing books is a very important part of a reading practice. Only in three families mothers were choosing books to read themselves, but they were always aware of which books were currently the favorite ones: *'I ask him what he wants to read about. For example, cars. Or animals. He chooses something, and I always know which books he likes in this category'*. But the majority of kids prefer to choose themselves which books will be read. Usually they pick several ones, and then either all of them are read, or they put away those they don't like during reading. Sometimes parents suggest which books should be read, but all the parents agreed on one thing – if a kid doesn't want to read something, there's no point – and no chance – in talking him/her into it.

Going back to reading before night sleep, it usually happens when kids have already taken their evening bath and changed to pyjamas – in other words, when they are ready for sleep. In a couple of families this reading takes place earlier, when kids are finishing to play and are collecting their toys. It should be mentioned though that this evening reading routine doesn't happen in all the families as one might assume. Some parents prefer to read with kids during the day. A mother of two complains: *'When we start reading before going to bed, my kids start playing after a couple of minutes. They do not care about reading at that point, they do not want to sit still, they just want to have as much fun as possible before they are put to bed'*. Another mother, of

a 1,5-year old girl, adds: *'In the evening I prefer to sing lullabies instead of reading. This way I do not have to turn on the light, and my kid is getting used to the fact that since it is dark in the room, it's time to sleep soon, and she has to calm down'*.

But not all the women share this point of view. For some reading is a calming activity, a way to have some peace or take the kid's attention from something that is disturbing him/her. In one family the kid – a 1,5-year old boy – hates the process of changing clothes, so the mother once realized that if she starts reading at the same moment, or telling stories, she manages to calm him down at least for a couple of minutes. In another family grandmothers used the reading time as a way to have some rest in the middle of the day from more energetic activities: *'My mother and my mother-in-law sometimes stay with my son during the day. They get so tired from all the active games that they want to finally sit down and do something that doesn't include moving. Luckily, my son likes to read so there are no arguments about reading breaks'*.

Talking about other parts of day, there seems to be no specific time when reading usually takes place. In some families children like to read right after they wake up, before breakfast. *'I don't know how that happened, but now we have an everyday reading routine when he goes to bathroom in the morning. I sit next to him and we flip through a book or a magazine'*, smiles a mother of a 2-year old boy. *'We live with my parents at the moment. My mother doesn't go to work every day, so on those days when she is at home my daughter goes to her bed right after she wakes up and they read for 30-40 minutes'*, says another mother of a 2-year old. Another mother says: *'My kids are a lot more active in the morning. So there's more interaction between us, they are lot more responsive. In the evening their concentration time span is a lot shorter, so then reading doesn't last too long'*. Some other families read before the day sleep, and some read during the day in case they do not go for an afternoon walk. It turns out that weather – or time of year – has an impact on the frequency of reading: all the families admitted that when it's sunny and warm outside they prefer to go for walks and play in parks instead of sitting at home. That's quite understandable, since Russian citizens are not too spoiled with warm days throughout the year.

Families with little children (1-2 years) point out that reading can happen spontaneously throughout the day: kids of this age do whatever interests them at a

particular moment and forcing them to sit down and listen never works. *'Whenever I see that my son takes a book in his hands, I immediately start looking at pictures with him. He loses interest pretty fast, but these moments of reading in total can sum up to 15-20 minutes a day, so it is important to catch them to develop his interest'*. To avoid this lack of concentration, some mothers start reading when the kid is occupied with another activity. Here are two examples:

*'Sometimes I read to him when he is eating. I feed him with one hand and hold the book in another. This is one of those moments when I can capture his attention';*

*'We read during the evening bath. My son always moves a lot, so sitting down with him for a calm activity is almost impossible. But there is no escape from the bathroom without my help [laughing]'*.

#### **5.2.4 Spatial characteristics of a reading practice**

During the day reading can take place basically anywhere. In some families children are so attached to their parents that they follow them to any room, in other families it's parents who try to be in the same room with their kids to watch that nothing happens. So be it kitchen, living room, or even bathroom, as we have seen – there is no right or wrong place for reading with kids. Some also give books to their kids when they are sitting in the stroller during afternoon walks. The situation is different with readings before night sleep. They usually happen in the kid's bed so that he/she can fall asleep right after reading. In one of the families they sometimes sit on the floor if the kid wants to listen and play with some toys at the same time.

An important element of all the practices is the physical closeness of the participants. If reading takes place in the kid's bed, both participants sit side by side, often hugging each other. On a sofa or on a chair a kid is either sitting by the side or on his/her parents' lap. *'My mother-in-law prefers to read to her grandson sitting in front of him. So he is lying on the bed or sitting on a sofa, and she is sitting in a chair. He doesn't like it, because to him it is like listening to an audio book. He doesn't see the pictures and he doesn't have an adult nearby'*, tells one of the respondents.

### 5.2.5 Interactions during a reading practice

Children are involved in two kinds of interactions during reading: interactions with the reader and interactions with the book or any digital device that is being used. And these processes were rather similar for all the families in the study. Since pictures are the most crucial component of any book for the researched age category, 'reading' here equals 'looking at pictures and talking about them'. So in general a reading practice takes a following route: an adult starts reading, sometimes showing on the pictures what he/she is talking about, a kid might (and will) interrupt at some stage, point at a picture and name it, or ask something about it, or repeat the word, or imitate a sound (if, for example, it shows an animal). Sometimes it's the adult who asks questions about the picture to see how well the kid remembers and/or understands it. Elder children that can already follow the plot can interrupt to ask why/when/where/how something is happening and then a discussion starts: *'sometimes our reading turns into a lecture on geography. Or biology. Or something else. If he doesn't understand something, he asks a question, and my answer brings new questions and new facts, and that can go on forever. Sometimes we manage to get back to reading, sometimes we don't'*. Younger kids can suddenly start flipping the pages forward or back, and then the adult resumes reading from whatever page is open. A child can also close the book in middle of a story if he/she doesn't want to listen to it anymore. And, of course, the smallest ones try to shake or chew or tear the book since it's just another object for them. All in all, the main way of interacting with the book for children is touching it and the main way of interacting with the adult is asking or answering questions.

Only some of the respondents stated that they have a particular routine that they follow during every reading practice. One child is putting a bookmark on the page where the reading stopped, and during the next evening she first needs to recap with her mom what they read during the previous evenings, and then they can continue. Another kid, if he gets really interested in a book, has to read it again first thing in the morning, even though usually reading practices in the morning don't take place.

An interesting reading practice is taking place in one of the families where parents are living separately. The boy is only 3 years and 10 months old now, so he is not yet

used to having long conversations over phone or Skype. But since his father wants to keep in touch with him, 2-3 times a week, in the evening he is reading books to him on Skype. Though the boy might be playing with something at the same time, he is always listening attentively and it is important for him that the video is on, so that he can see his father at any moment. The mother does not actively participate in this readings, but she has to be around to know which book was read, because the same or the next day the boy might try to discuss it with her, or tell her about it, implementing some of the story's actions in his everyday life: *'he understands what is real life and what he heard in a fairy tale, but he just likes to combine it'*.

## **5.3 Material objects used during a reading practice**

### ***5.3.1 Paper books, audio books and digital devices***

The main material object used during a reading practice with children is, of course, a book – a traditional paper book. The variety of books available at the market right now is breathtaking. The most crucial component for a children book is, without any doubt, pictures, and several families even stated that they know what illustrators are the best ones and they often “go hunting” for their books. There are books of various formats for different ages – the smallest ones are easy to hold in small hands, the big ones usually have the best pictures, books made from different paper – thick pages for the smallest ones, so that they can't tear or chew the book, pages made from material that doesn't soak in water, pages with inserts of different textiles for touch sensations, and, of course, books printed on high quality paper, which are good as presents or as additions to home library. Very popular with kids are so-called 3D books – you flip a page and then a huge castle (for example) grows between pages. Some of the books require action on the kid's side – books with puzzles inside, with parts that one needs to pull to move the characters, books with sounds and lights that are produced by the push of a button. This list can go on and on. The competition in the children books' publishing is fierce, but, on the other hand, there are so many tastes to satisfy.

As I have said in the beginning, 5 of the families are using tablets in their everyday lives. But, surprisingly, only in one of them a tablet is used during a reading practice.

All the other families stated that a tablet is given to kids for playing games and watching cartoons. When it comes to e-readers, they are a useless tool for reading with kids who still care more about pictures than about the text. But at the same time most of the parents underlined that they would buy e-readers for their kids when they learn to read and, most importantly, when they go to school: *‘I remember carrying lots of textbooks to school and how tired I was by the end of each day. If there is a chance for my kid to have one small device for all the classes and leave the huge school bag at home – I will definitely use it’*.

Digital devices were bought by the parents themselves in all of the cases, and in the family where the tablet was used for reading all the books were downloaded from Internet shops. There are several ways traditional books get into a family: 1) they are purchased in online or brick-and-mortar bookstores; 2) received as gifts from family and friends; 3) loaned in libraries; 4) inherited from previous generations. The latter was the case in at least half of the families.

Since being read to is also a reading practice, it is important to draw attention to audio books that were used in three of the families. In two families it was a CD of different fairy tales that kids sometimes listen to before sleep, in another family it was a stuffed toy with recorded stories and children poems. In one more family the girl listens to radio theater plays every evening.

### **5.3.2 Pros and cons of using traditional books versus tablets**

The wide variety of books’ formats, shapes and looks was named as one of the main advantages of traditional books by many families: *‘Here they are, standing on a shelf, and they all look different. And any new book will be different. But a tablet is always a tablet, and a book in it is always just an icon on the menu. It’s pretty boring for kids’*. But of course storage was a problem named by many of the parents: home library is growing together with the kid, but many people experience difficulties with finding place to store books. On a tablet, on the other hand, one can download as many books as one wants. Of course, there is a limit to a tablet’s memory too, but external disks, being a size of a small book, have an enormous capacity. In addition to that, durability of books was another issue raised by many parents. Children,

especially the smallest ones, chew on them, drop them, they draw on pages, tore out pages – in other words, books have to be replaced. Books stored on a digital device can be kept for many years.

A tablet is a very mobile and convenient device: parents would choose it over paper books during traveling and for going to public places together with kids (restaurants, shops, banks and so on). Reading a paper book, as opposed to a tablet, also requires an additional source of light at all times, but, on the other hand, a tablet is not suitable for reading in bright light – for example, on the beach. This is also a problem when reading with several children: they can sit around a traditional paper book and all of them will be able to see the pictures, while an image on a tablet's screen cannot be seen perfectly from all the angles.

Even though a tablet is not a cheap purchase, in a couple of statements its cost was compared to book prices: *'books – good books printed on quality paper – cost so much right now, that having a tablet pays off pretty soon'*. In addition to that, e-books cost less than paper books (at least in Russia) and, as has been shown, e-books do not need to be re-bought. But, as one mother pointed out, *'even though books are quite expensive, still, if my kid tears one or two, it's still going to be cheaper than if he breaks a tablet. So I can give a book to him without worrying, but if a tablet is in his hands I need to be always there watching that he doesn't damage it'*.



## **6. Analysis and discussion**

### ***6.1 Role of an adult***

As I have shown in the previous chapter, a reading practice with a traditional paper book can take on 3 different forms:

- 1) one adult reading with one child;
- 2) one adult reading with several children;
- 3) a child reading a book by him/herself.

During the first kind of practice a kid is involved in two main types of interactions: with the adult and with the book. Interaction with the adult is reciprocal: the kid is not just reading the book with the adult's help, who pronounces the words and points at the pictures, the kid points at pictures himself, asks questions and gets answers, repeats the words and gets a response from the adult, older kids discuss the content of the books as well as pictures. In other words, there is a constant exchange of information between the adult and the kid. Regarding the interaction with the book, it goes one way – the kid touches the book, flips pages, very often chews on it and tears pages, puts it back to its shelf after the reading is done. The book obviously can respond in very limited ways – it allows to be handled, sometimes serves as a toy, but a kid cannot start an active interaction with it.

During the second kind of practice the scheme of interactions is the same, the only difference being that several kids not only interact with the adult, but also with each other. The interaction with the book remains to be the same. The third practice takes place when there is no actual reading involved (given the child cannot read yet at the age discussed), but only the interaction with the book as with a material object is happening. In this case a kid is sitting by himself, interacting with the book in the ways that were presented in the first paragraph.

So one can see that the first two kinds include a human interaction with questions and responses, conversations and discussions. Since a reading practice without an adult would turn to a practice of the third kind, it is obvious that an adult participating in

the practice plays an enormous role in it. And none of the respondents had any doubt about that:

*‘An adult plays a major role in the reading process. He teaches the kid not just to read, but to love reading. It is the adult who makes a kid interested in reading’;*

*‘The role of an adult is crucial. It’s helping the kid to focus on the right details, to connect one with another, to explain things. A kid would be lost without any external help, he wouldn’t know how and why certain things relate to each other’.*

So an adult does not only read the book and explains what is drawn on the pictures. An adult helps to connect the events and characters from the book with the real life: that the bear they just saw in the book is similar to the one they saw in the zoo the previous week, that the sun always rises in the east, that people behave differently depending on the circumstances. It is combining the fictional world with the real one, it is the whole process of creating the world around the kid by explaining the actions of a certain character. So it is not only the process of connecting facts, it is also relating to kid’s and adult’s own memories and emotions.

Since an interaction with a book happens in any kind of a reading practice, an adult also needs to teach the kid to handle books with respect. That they shouldn’t be thrown, or torn, or especially chewed, that they should be put back at the shelf where they were taken from, that pages should be flipped in a careful manner, and so on. Here books take on a special educational role, but I will get back to that in the next subchapter.

Another important moment is the physical closeness of the kid to the adult. In the early childhood kids are dependent on adults, and adults’ physical presence – especially their parents’ - gives them a sense of comfort and security. Thus the mother’s voice and her touch are essential elements of a reading practice:

*‘We downloaded several children books for her on the iPad, but she doesn’t like them. She doesn’t like those unfamiliar voices. She needs me or Grandma to read to her. On a side note – she loves iPad in general’;*

*‘One of my kids loves to hold my hand when we are reading. It is crucial for him. The other one is not so sentimental, but even he is in a mood to hug sometimes when we read’.*

This time spent together is important not only for children, but for their parents too. When asked about the most pleasant thing in reading together with their children, the majority of the respondents named the contact they have with the kids during these minutes: *‘I love to watch his reaction. It’s like he is letting me into his world. And I can see things through his eyes. Because their logic can be so different from ours. Once we were reading “The Red Riding Hood”, and he started crying. I thought he felt sorry for the girl because of what happened to her, but it turned out he was upset because she didn’t have a normal name like all the kids do. Would I ever see this story from this perspective without my son? I guess not’.*

## **6.2 Role of a book as a material object**

A book plays an important role in a reading practice, as it serves as a mediator between the participants of the action, since the majority of actions go through it. If we look at a book as at a material object, regardless of its content, there are several aspects that make it a unique part of a practice in the eyes of parents.

### **6.2.1 Tactile feelings**

The fact that a kid touches a book so much and so often makes it a very important object for the development of a child’s fine motor skills, especially at the early age. Children start to ‘discover’ a book through flipping pages (at some point they understand that a book consists of pages and that they can flip to the one they need), through tearing them, through holding a book in hands. After some time they start to pay attention to a book’s size and weight, because it’s different from a book to a book and they can experience it with their hands. Previously I have also talked about the books where one needs to pull on or move different parts, and about ‘3D’ books where different objects arise between the pages, and the kid can actually see how everything is built.

A book can also be produced with hands, and this is not only a tactile activity, but another opportunity for parents and children to spend time together (and I have just shown how important this ‘together-time’ is). Here are just a few statements from parents regarding this aspect:

*‘When my baby was just born, I made his first book myself. And some more books later on. Would I be able to do that with a tablet?’;*

*‘My granddaughter just made a book for me though she cannot write yet. But it has pictures, so she ‘helps’ me to read it’;*

*‘I can’t wait for my son to start learning to draw. Then we can make ‘books’ together, where he will draw pictures, and I will write the text. We have an iPad, and our whole family uses it and loves it, but I can’t imagine us two sitting together to program a game.’*

An interesting perspective was given by three mothers. A book in its physical form can become a game in itself – through the use of bookmarks: *‘After my son discovered bookmarks, he immediately turned using them into a game. He started collecting objects that can be used as bookmarks (like leaves, tickets) – several for each of the books we were reading. Even putting them between different pages entertained him. I was surprised such a simple thing could make him smile’.*

### **6.2.2 ‘Soul’**

This aspect might sound weird and not academic enough, but it was named by two thirds of the respondents: a paper book has a soul, and that is the main reason no technological wonder will be able to replace it. What they mean by the ‘soul’ is that with a paper book one feels that it was made by other people, that somebody put their soul in it, drawing pictures and writing text. As for a tablet – it remains another piece of technology, *‘alongside a TV or a microwave’*. Many of the interviewees referred to paper books as ‘real’, ‘live’ books, and stated that even though they want their kids to feel at ease with technology, they should “communicate” with paper books during their childhood. As one of the mothers explained: *‘When it comes to any technological device, I teach my kids to take care of it like of any other object that*

*costs money. They are expensive, I worked hard to earn money and buy them, so, please, be careful. But with books... It is never on a monetary level. I teach my kids to handle books with care not because they cost a lot but because they are the kind of objects that need to be respected. I tell them about the history behind the expensive books we have, explain them why and how important they are to the family, but never talk about their financial value'.*

### **6.2.3 Education**

As shown previously, children need to be taught to handle a book the right way without damaging it. Many parents consider that as one of the main educational roles a book as a physical object plays in a child's development: *'it's an element of bringing up your kid, of making him a human that cares about things he is surrounded with'*. While a parent won't disassemble a tablet or a toy to show to a kid that all the pieces have to stay together for the tablet/toy to function, with a book it is easy – a kid can feel how pages and a cover make a book. By reading a paper book children also learn concentration: you will not get the whole story if you are not able to stay focused and read from one point to another. In this sense reading is not only pleasure, but also work. Rewarding, but work.

The issue of concentration relates to the linear/non-linear way of reading, brought up in Chapter 4. While it is easy to hop from one piece of information to another, and interactive media allows one to do that, one has to stay focused and determined when reading a paper book, so the traditional media seem to be a good tool to teach a kid discipline.

### **6.2.4 Imagination**

Since the majority of paper children books only contain text and pictures, and do not have any sounds, let alone animation, children are free to turn the book's events into a movie in their minds. Themselves they add the details they cannot find on pictures, so a picture in this case provides food for imagination: *'A book is a journey. In your head you can do everything your way. And that is exactly what my son likes – that he*

*is in control*'. While too much sound can become a distraction from the reading process, animation might be a danger for development of a kid's imagination, since everything has already been prepared for him. An interesting comparison that helps to illustrate the situation: *'I know a family where parents prepared exciting competitions and interesting theme parties for their son – like looking for hidden treasures, or hunting magic elephants – up to the age of 13. And then they realized that he is too lazy – and maybe simply can't – to come up with something himself*'.

### **6.2.5 Memories**

Technology develops so fast with every year, that the tablets and phones we have now will be completely outdated in several years. So it's highly doubtful that the same device would 'travel' from one generation to another within the same family. But books stay the same for years and years. A book can become a keeper of emotions and memories of several generations, being passed on from one to another. It creates a connection between a child and a parent: when the child grows up, a particular book (not just the content, but the physical look) will remind him/her of the moments spent together. *'You can take a book that you inherited from your mother or grandmother and you can imagine how they were reading it when they were your age. And you know that someone else many years ago spent time with it, just like you are doing now*'.

### **6.2.6 Ownership**

Only in one of the researched families that used tablets the device actually belonged to a child. In all the other cases it was in the parents' ownership, and children had to ask for permission to use it. The situation is very different with paper books. When children get old enough to understand how to handle a book, they get all the books that had originally been bought for them in their ownership. They are in full control of these books – they can take them when they want, they can arrange their bookshelf in any order that suits them (and all the parents stressed the importance of a personal bookshelf for a kid), it belongs to them and they do not share this ownership with their parents. *'He considers his books to be a part of him. He always checks where*

*they stand, if I put them at the right place, and if I didn't he corrects me', adds one of the respondents.*

### **6.3 Role of a tablet in a reading practice**

After all the benefits of using a traditional book in reading with children have been discussed it is time to look at the situations where parents would turn to a tablet. Once again, only one of the families in the study was using a tablet during a reading practice. Children in 4 more families used tablets for games and cartoons. However, mothers in three more families stated that they would gladly use a tablet, but currently they cannot afford it. Parents' answers to the question "What is the most difficult thing in reading with your children?" will help to understand why a tablet can be such a useful tool.

*'You always have to be present. It's difficult in general, that you have to be there for your kid all the time, so reading is not an exception. Sometimes I wish there was someone else who could do it for me at least a couple of times a week';*

*'Do you know how many times we have to read the same book over and over again? And not just once, but day after day. A kid may love it, but ask any parent – you get so tired and annoyed of it at some point'.*

So while parents, as I have shown previously, find spending time with their children very important, they wouldn't mind if someone – or something – could take on their role from time to time. Some of the parents agreed that using technology is a way out – you give your kid a tablet and you can be sure that he will be busy and you will have free time to do other things. In addition to that, a tablet would solve the problem of reading the same book many times – a kid would choose a book himself and 'read' it as many times as he would like. There are no limits to a tablet's patience, so several parents (who do not own a tablet at this moment) assumed that a tablet might be even more efficient than a parent in teaching children something: if every time you press a red button a voice says 'red', you learn it pretty fast.

Now let's look at the reading process with a kid and a tablet. As opposed to a "kid – paper book" reading practice, interaction here goes both ways. It is not only the kid that is clicking on icons, choosing books and different actions within them. A tablet "responds" through different options: a book is read to the kid, and all the words are underlined while they are being pronounced, a kid can click on them to get explanations. Many books are animated, and a kid can interact with characters. In a way, a tablet does replace a parent, since it takes on many of a parent's functions: explaining, reading, pointing at pictures, and answering questions.

But there are four reasons for why a tablet is not an ideal tool for a child's reading:

1. **Independence of the kid.** Since a parent wants to have some free time, a kid is left by himself with the gadget. And, as mentioned previously, a tablet replaces a parent in some way. On the one hand, children learn to be and do things by themselves, without asking for help. But this approach has one big drawback: trusting a kid to technology spoils parents, who find a good way to keep their kids busy. If they overuse this freedom, a kid might need their presence less and less – at least with learning some basic skills of reading, writing and drawing. And many parents admitted that it's not a nice feeling: *'every time my daughter takes an iPad in her hands, I feel excluded. Like she doesn't need me anymore for help or support'*. Another parent compared it to the influence technology has on our life in general: *'It's already more convenient for us to keep in touch via Skype or social media, instead of meeting in person. We can lose contact with our children the same way if we allow technology to replace us'*.
2. **Entertainment.** In the majority of the families in this study a tablet is given to a kid only for games and cartoons, but not for reading. It can be explained by the fact that a tablet is considered by parents to be a kind of entertainment box, while reading is still a more serious process, even in childhood. The fact that a book on a tablet has so many options of interaction makes it a multimedia product with entertaining functions. The line between reading and entertainment becomes too thin: children have many distractions from reading, and they know they can switch to a more interesting activity at any moment. But all the parents want their children to be good at focusing and concentrating.



3. **Addiction.** The variety of attractions a tablet can offer is enormous, and a tablet can sure catch a kid's attention better than any parent. Many parents are worried that this interest in the gadget borders with addiction: children get upset and sometimes even angry when the device is taken away from them. So parents have to come to agreements with their children on how much time they are allowed to spend with tablets. Of course parents wish that children were just as interested in books – there would be no limits whatsoever on time spent reading – but, unfortunately, that doesn't happen. However, one of the mothers saw a positive side in children's extreme interest in technology: *'We, parents, want our kids to like what they are doing. If they like doing something on a tablet then we shouldn't forbid that. Maybe this way their interest in reading will develop too'*.
4. **Object of individual use.** Due to the previous issue with addiction to gadgets, children are not willing to share them with anyone else, at least at the time when they are using it. This becomes another step in their separation from their parents and other children. A reading practice is not an exception: many parents cannot imagine reading together with their children from the same device, because there is not too much interaction for two people.

Due to this reasons many parents still turn to traditional paper books for reading. Technology seems to be a helping hand used in particular situations. Of course it highly depends on the family where the child is growing: some people are so obsessed with the benefits technology brings, that they turn away from everything that seems old-fashioned. But the majority of parents, at least in this study, consider traditional paper books to be the perfect objects of interaction for their children.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of the findings

*RQ1: How are practices for reading with kids constituted? What are the most common elements in them?*

Reading with kids represents several reading practices. Two major practices here taking place side by side are reading a book aloud (carried out by an adult) and being read to (one or several children are the recipients of the message). One more practice is reading pictures, it can take place both when a kid is helped by an adult and when a kid is “communicating” with the book alone (at the age when he/she cannot yet read words). Readings that take place in kindergartens are a form of group readings – it is still only the adult that is reading the book and children are simply listening, but in this case a group discussion is taking place, in which all the children are involved at once.

Just like in any other practice, the main components of a reading practice are human agents – an adult and a child, and material objects that the human agents are interacting with (or, in other words, material objects that are being consumed). The range of the objects consumed will be looked at further on. A reading practice with kids can take place at almost any time of day (except for night time) and basically anywhere: the examples presented in this thesis showed children reading in literally any room of their homes, including bathrooms, and in public places. Usually the time of day and the place does not have any affect on the choice of books, though some parents prefer to read books that involve active participation (where a child needs to perform a particular task) during the day and leave fairy tales for the bedtime.

An interaction between the adult and the child during an ordinary reading practice takes a following route: the adult is reading the story, pointing at the pictures and explaining, the child might interrupt and ask a question, or repeat the word, or point at a picture himself, the adult then reacts to what the child said by answering the question or further explaining what is shown on the picture or why a particular event took place. The adult can also ask questions and encourage the child to express his

ideas and opinions or repeat the words/ the plot. This interaction shows the presence of two essential elements of a practice – understanding and procedures, discussed by Schatzki and Warde. Though understandings of what to do and how to do it differ for adults and children, they both know what is required to perform a reading practice. And the aforementioned interactions are the variety of procedures taking place during a practice. As each practice consists of ‘doings’ and ‘sayings’, according to Schatzki, both understanding and procedures can be classified as ‘doings’, i.e. the actual actions performed while reading.

Talking about engagements, the third element of a practice, they often differ from one practice to another. The main parents’ aim in the reading process is, of course, to teach their children to read, and paper books traditionally – and yet – play the main role in helping them to fulfill this purpose. However, for those moments when parents do not have enough time or are simply tired to devote themselves to reading with their children, a gadget like iPad has serious advantages over a paper book, since kids can read and learn with the help of the device. So in this case a parent’s motivation is to not be involved in the reading practice itself, at the same time making sure that children keep on participating. Children, on the other hand, engage into a reading practice to hear an interesting story, spend some time with their parents (or whoever is reading a book) and play. All three purposes are fulfilled through reading a traditional book, however, a digital device is a clear winner on the “play” part.

*RQ2. What objects are mostly used in those practices? What are their roles and how do they affect the structure of a practice?*

Material objects consumed during a reading practice can be divided into two groups: those that require active participation at least by one of the human agents and those that require little to no interaction. The first group is represented by traditional paper books and digital devices, such as tablets and electronic books that allow for the interaction presented above. The second group consists of audio books, or better said, devices that play the books – in one family fairy tales were recorded on a toy in a shape of an owl. Since the only action required in this case is to turn on the device, and a child spends the rest of the time as a passive listener (so basically no interaction is involved), the role of these objects have not been highlighted in the current thesis.

Electronic books have been excluded from the study, since they are rarely read with children under the age of 6 due to the lack of pictures. So the two main material objects consumed during a reading practice with children are traditional paper books and tablets. In some cases there are also toys that children take with them to “participate” in reading, but toys cannot be considered a common practice element due to random use. Both paper books and tablets serve as holders of information and mediators of reading between an adult and a child. However, a paper book can take on several other functions, such as: 1) a keeper of emotions and memories; 2) an educational tool (in terms of learning to handle any material object with care); 3) an object for development of children’s fine motoric skills and imagination. A tablet nowadays is perceived by many parents as an “entertainment box” and is mostly given to children for playing games and watching cartoons. To reconnect it back to the consumption issue brought up in the Chapter 2, paper books are mostly consumed as reading materials (what they actually are) and, in their physical form, also as educational and motoric skills development tools, while devices like iPad are consumed more as entertainment gadgets than as reading gadgets (in reading with children; adults in the study used it for both reading and games/ movies in equal proportions).

In addition to that, the choice of the object has an effect on the course of a reading practice. When a paper book is used, a child needs help from an adult in understanding the contents of the book, so a ‘child-adult’ interaction, described in the previous section, takes place. Due to the inability of a paper book to “respond”, the interaction with the book goes one way – from the adult/parent or the kid to the book. But when a tablet is consumed the interaction scheme changes significantly. Interactive options available on a tablet allow it to take on the functions otherwise performed by an adult: reading, explaining, pointing, repeating. And, as many parents pointed out, a tablet is more an object of individual use, but it’s not so suitable for sharing. So when a child is left by himself with a tablet, a ‘child-adult’ interaction is out of the picture, but since a tablet can “respond” back, the interaction between the human agent and a material object becomes mutual.

*RQ3. How does an adult's role change depending on what object is used?*

As I have shown in Chapter 6, an adult's role is not just to read a book aloud, but also to explain the words' meanings, characters' actions, to connect the events described in the book with the real life of the child. In addition to that the mere physical presence of an adult nearby brings the child a sense of comfort and security. However, since a tablet can take on the majority of an adult's functions, an adult's participation in a reading practice becomes unimportant and his role gets minimized to watching after a kid during the practice (to make sure nothing is damaged or broken) and answering question already after the reading took place. The parents that have experienced this situation stated that they very often feel useless when their children are doing something on a tablet. Here it is useful to again look at the third element of a practice – engagements. Those parents that want to spend time with their children try to favor traditional books over tablets, to keep their role in the reading process to themselves. Those that try to gain some free time and actually delegate their responsibilities in the reading routine will most probably turn to digital devices, that can replace them for a particular amount of time. These decisions can be classified as 'sayings' of the practice, since they manifest themselves in explaining to self and others why a certain reading practice is chosen over another.

## **7.2 Theoretical contribution**

In Chapter 2 I presented the thoughts of different researchers on the place of material in practices. Up to this moment there have been few attempts to investigate the role material objects play in a practice formation and the affect they have on it, but as we can see in reading practices with children, this role should not be neglected. Division of roles between the participants of the practice and flow of interactions can change depending on the choice of the object. A traditional paper book is an essential part of a reading practice – it helps adults to introduce their children to the world of reading and creating, a book itself in its physical form can serve as an educational tool. In this practice, just like in many others, human agents – adults - are those who possess the know-how, crucial for the practice creation. If the agents – and thus know-how – are not present, a practice ceases to exist. That has been a common academic view on the relationship between agents and objects in the theory of practices.

However, if we look at a reading practice with a tablet, we can see that it can be successfully performed with minor to no involvement from the adult agent. The necessary know-how is contained in the object itself, thus a tablet can replicate most of the adult agent's functions. So an object is not only an essential part of a practice that happens with the participation of human agents, it can actually replace one of the agents – the practice is then structured in a different way, but the goal of a practice is achieved. It is highly possible that there are other practices where material objects can be the carriers of a know-how, and since the technological developments do not stop, researchers need to pay attention to the change in the balance of the roles material objects share with human agents.

While understandings and procedures obviously differ between practices depending on what object is being used, the most interesting connection is observed between engagements and choice of the object. Those parents that wish to spend more time closer to their children and that try to be the main educational force tend to turn to traditional paper books – they require presence next to a child and, thus, constant interaction. At the same time those parents that for various reasons do not have the time, but still need and want to make sure that their children are both entertained and educated prefer to use tablets – a gadget captures a child's attention, takes on many of the adult's tasks in the reading process and leaves the adult free for a period of time. So one can see that two material objects that are used to fulfill the same purpose can be consumed in different ways, and engagements that bring up the need to use a particular object do not have to be similar.

### ***7.3 Managerial implications***

We are living in a world where technology develops at a tremendous speed. And publishers need to adapt at the same rate to keep their business afloat. While electronic devices and eBooks are eating on the share of paper books for adults, there is still some time for action in the sector of children books. First of all, publishers can be assured that many parents are still inclined to use paper books in the reading practices with children for various reasons, presented in this thesis. This generation of

parents is still a generation of those who were brought up with ‘real’ books and they will keep on bringing up their kids the same way, partially out of habit, partially out of their sincere belief in the uniqueness of paper books, as opposed to electronic ones. Reading together would remain an important routine for those parents who truly value the time they spend with their children and the connection they have. The issue of addiction can be taken advantage of: parents try to limit the time their kids spend using gadgets, while the access to paper books is always unlimited in their homes. And if parents want to see their children grow open, communicative, willing to play with other kids and not just with computers, they will try to maximize their interaction with paper books.

Another opportunity lies in the attitude towards tablets as ‘entertainment boxes’. Publishers need to take a brave step into the technology field and start issuing different complimentary games, cartoons and interactive tasks for tablets alongside paper books. Developing a smartphone/tablet application can be another option. It can become a positive contribution to the process of reading too: games and tasks involving the book’s characters can enhance children’s interest in reading more.

All in all, at this moment tablets and any other electronic devices do not have power to replace paper children books, but can be perfectly used as complimentary tools. While books are read at home when parents are available, tablets with games (ideally connected to the books read) can prove useful to keep kids busy, for example, during traveling and in public places. So children books’ publishers are relatively safe for the next 2-3 years. However, it is hard to make predictions for a longer period of time. Publishers need to keep in mind that the following generations will be getting more and more comfortable with technology and gadgets. So now is the time to put the foot in the door of technology, at the same time continuing to play on the ‘soul’ aspect to prove the importance of paper books.

#### ***7.4 Suggestions for future research***

Reading is a practice that has been around for hundreds of years and will sure be taking place for some more time. And even though reading has already experienced

changes throughout its history, all the signs points to the fact that these developments might go at a much higher speed in the nearest future. The possible influence new technology might have on the way reading is perceived in general has not been in focus of the current thesis, but is a very interesting issue. With so many gadgets surrounding us in our lives, would we still need to be able to read the same way we do it now? The change from linear to non-linear reading has already happened, so what is next? And are any changes going to happen in writing and many other skills human posses? While these topics might seem like coming from the sphere of futurology, both academia and marketers should be concerned with the changes taking place.

Going back to the use of devices in reading practices. While it was clear that the majority of parents nowadays are favoring paper books over digital technology, one needs to remember that these parents themselves grew up in different times. But their children are born surrounded with technology in all its forms, and for them it's an essential part of life. So when this children grow up, would they still have these warm feeling towards books? Would they still appreciate the values of paper books that were presented in this thesis? Given the time constraints the author had it was not possible to undertake a study that would stretch over several years. But it would make perfect sense to do observations of several families with small children over a course of 15-20 years. This way researchers would be able to see what role the type of objects used during reading play in the future book consumption patterns of children.

## **7.5 Limitations**

This thesis presents new insights for the practice theory (in particular – to reading practices) and for the practitioners involved in the field of publishing. However, there are still some limitations that need to be considered for the better understanding of the findings.

The sample chosen represented mostly female respondents. As explained in Chapter 3, this was mainly due to the cultural specifics – women are usually the ones reading with children. However, one still might criticize the study for containing gender bias.



Involving more male respondents for comparison of opinions would be a good improvement for future studies in this field.

Also, even though the author tried to include in the study users that lived both in large central cities as well as in small rural ones, there is some obvious discrepancy present in the financial abilities of the small town's inhabitants as well as in the economical and technological developments of their areas. A separate study that would investigate the reading practices with particular consideration of the environmental factors would by all means enrich the research in this field.

Another limitation that could have impacted the results is the fact that only one family was actually using an iPad for reading with kids. This could be explained by the fact that the wave of digital reading technology has only covered Russia recently, and at this point it still remains to be a territory for grown-ups. However, a similar study might have different results when more and more start to adapt modern technology to their "reading with children" routines.

In general, the population in question still belongs more to the Digital Immigrants – those who were born in times when the current technology was not yet around and who started using it in the older years of their life. While all of the respondents show no discomfort with using Internet and digital reading devices, they might still be bringing up their children the same way they were brought up themselves, or at least in a very similar fashion (technology-wise).

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## **Appendix I. Interview guide.**

### **I. General questions.**

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. How many people do you have in your household?
4. How many of those are kids?
5. How old are the kids?

### **II. Reading practices.**

1. Who usually reads books with your kids?
2. How often do you read books with your kids?
3. At what time do these readings usually take place? What's special for each time?
4. Do you have a particular reading routine that you follow? Tell me about the last time you read a book with your kid.
5. How has this routine changed as your kid grew older?
6. How many people usually participate in the readings? Give me examples of all the group readings you've had.

### **III. Books in different formats.**

1. What kind of paper books do you have at home? (Sizes, shapes, fairy tales/educational and so on).
2. How does your reading practice look like when you read from a paper book? Give me examples for all the book kinds.
3. How does the interaction between you and your kid look like when you use a paper book? What role do you play in this interaction?
4. What advantages do you as a parent see in a paper book for a kid of your age? Disadvantages? What is there for you in a paper book that technology will never be able to replace?
5. How do you usually receive new books? (Buy, gifts, borrow etc.)
6. What in your opinion is the role of a book for a child?

### **IV. Technology**

1. Do you use any technological devices when reading to your kid? (iPad/any other tablet, Kindle, computer etc.)
2. If yes, what exactly do you use it for? Type of book/activity.
3. How does interaction between you, your kid and the book look like when you use each particular device? Give me some examples of reading practices when you are using this device. What role do you play in this interactions?
4. What benefits do you see in using this device? Drawbacks?
5. How is the reading routine different from when you are reading a paper book?
6. How do you get new books that you then read on your device?
7. Is there something technology provides you with that a paper book can't?
8. If you are not using any technological devices, can you explain why?

## Appendix 2. List of interviewees.

### Skype conversations

Name of the interviewee	Children in the family	Age of the children
Svetlana Korzhickaya	1 boy	1 year and 3 months
Olga Lisitsyna	1 boy	3 years and 10 months
Anastasia Ignatova	1 girl	2 years
Elena Kuzmina	1 boy	2 years
Ekaterina Kukushkina	2 boys (twins)	1 year and 4 months
Nadezhda Fadina (grandmother)	2 girls and 1 boy	14, 6 years and 3,5 years respectively
Elena Leibel	1 boy	2 years and 3 months
Daria Rodina	1 boy	2 years and 2 months
Anna Golubeva	1 girl	2 years
Ekaterina Novak	1 boy	2 years and 9 months
Olga Vasilenko	1 girl	1 year and 6 months
Maria Chernikova	1 boy	6 years and 4 months
Lilya Ishakova	2 girls	7 years and 2,5 years
Alyona Logutova	1 boy	5 years
Lidia Novak (grandmother)	2 boys	5 years and 2 years
Aleksandra Kunicyna	1 boy	1 year and 4 months
Natalia Tikhanovskaya	1 girl and 1 boy	5 years and 4 years respectively

### Written replies

Name of the interviewee	Children in the family	Age of the children
Yulia Titova	1 boy	5 years
Aleksandr Kharchenko	1 girl	1 year and 8 months
Polina Solov'eva-Il'ina	1 girl	3 years
Ekaterina Sim	1 boy	1 year and 7 months
Alyona Petrova	1 boy	5 years and 2 months
Maria Sergeeva	1 boy	1 year and 8 months