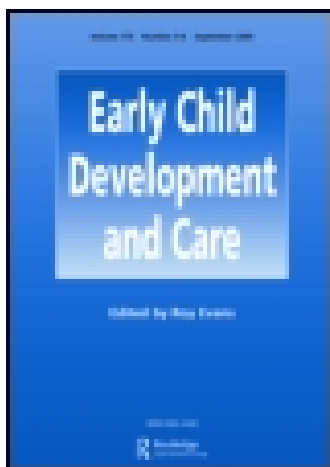




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'I don't even know what blogging is': the role of digital media in a five-year-old girl's life

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'I don't even know what blogging is': the role of digital media in a five-year-old girl's life

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Using a qualitative lens, this study investigated the role of digital media in the life of a five-year-old girl. The study focused on determining what this five-year-old knew about technology, what digital tools she was currently using and how important these tools were in her everyday life. Data collection included semi-structured interviews which were structured around digital and print-based elicitation devices (e.g. digital cameras and books). Findings from this study showed digital media did not engulf all aspects of this child's life; rather, she enjoys and engages with many different activities, both traditional and digitally based. Further research documenting children's introduction and engagement with digital technology is recommended, to better understand children's emergent digital literacy skills.

Keywords: emergent digital literacy; children; digital media; early literacy

The advent of new technologies and digital literacies has dramatically changed the way people communicate. One effect of constant adult use of digital media has resulted in children immersing themselves at younger and younger ages into new technologies. A quick search on the online video database, *YouTube*, for 'young children + iPad' collects dozens of videos of very young children interacting with *iPads* and smartphones, some of whom cannot yet speak.

Given the growing use of technology in society, a number of researchers argue for a shift to a definition of literacy, which expands print-based notions of text and incorporates multi-literacies, multilingual and multimodal literacy (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Marsh, 2004; New London Group, 1996). They argue that literacy resources could include, but not be limited to, multiple languages and symbols, as well as internet, television, music or comic books (Rowell, 2006). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1996) advocated for early childhood educators to critically examine the impact of technology on young children's lives and to prepare themselves for digital inclusion in programming to the benefit of children. NAEYC also recommended the inclusion of computers in classrooms to support existing practices, not replace them, and that 'computers should be integrated into early childhood practice physically, functionally, and philosophically' (p. 2). An updated NAEYC position statement acknowledges that early childhood

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care settings could narrow the gap between children from homes with less access to digital media and those with greater access in providing space for the exploration of digital tools such as digital cameras or audio and video recorders (NAEYC, 2012).

In an effort to better equip teachers for teaching so-called ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), closer examination of individual children’s uses and practices with digital media, in their homes and communities, is necessary. Teachers cannot ‘tap into’ and build upon children’s digital ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) without first understanding what children are already engaging in. This paper examines the role of digital media in one young girl’s life and describes the tools, both digital and print-based, that remain important to her in her daily routines and experiences.

Childhood in the twenty-first century

The research field of early childhood literacy has experienced a large shift in the first decade of the millennium. Print-based literacy is no longer the exclusive medium towards children’s literacy development, rather a more ‘robust semiotic field that includes a variety of electronic media’ (Razfar & Yang, 2010, p. 122) has proliferated into the daily lives of adults and children. In modern society, people need to interact and fluently use multiple mediums and modalities to create and distribute communication. Children are keen observers and develop their understandings of the role of technology and digital media by astutely watching adults use digital mediums (O’Mara & Laidlaw, 2011; Roberts-Holmes, 2014).

Learning, from a sociocultural viewpoint, is fundamentally social and mediated by signs, symbols and cultural artefacts used over generations (Razfar & Yang, 2010) and that literacy learning cannot be ‘abstracted from cultural practices in which it is nested’ (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 34). But each generation transforms the symbols, signs and tools of earlier generations to better suit its purposes (Razfar & Yang, 2010). In a digital age, children engage in meaning making by using and experiencing the digital tools of the relevant adults in their lives. Adults scaffold children into technoliteracy practices by demonstrating uses of a variety of devices (Marsh, 2004; O’Hara, 2011). Children then ‘pretend their way into literacies by “playing at” using computers, *iPads*, or cellphones as they try on technologically savvy user identities’ (Wohlwend, 2010, p. 145). Young children appropriate items from the adult world into their play activities, for example, Wohlwend (2009) documented a young girl using a toy carrot as a mobile phone and an active interchange between two young boys playing their favourite online videogame, *Digimon Rumble Arena*, using a piece of paper and markers.

Building on previous research documenting children’s emergent literacy practices, Marsh (2004) used the term ‘techno-literacy’ as a means of describing ‘literacy practices and events which are mediated by new technologies ... in addition to those which are embedded within older technologies that are constantly updated to include new technologies, such as television’ (p. 52). The term text no longer refers to print-based practices, but includes words plus images and sounds (Bearne, 2004; Coiro et al., 2008; Hassett, 2006; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007) and challenges traditional notions of reading as decoding print, but, rather as a ‘broad range of complex skills’ (Levy, 2009, p. 77). With the continued influx of digital media into the everyday lives of people, the term digital literacy has been added to the ever-expanding definition of literacy.

Despite over a decade of research and the increased use and sophistication of digital technology available to people, key stakeholders remain opposed to the inclusion of digital media and technology in the earliest years of schooling. Popular news media has described children's uptake of digital media as an affront to childhood and claim it has diminished children's play activities. Many concerns regarding digital media arise from beliefs that children no longer play because they are addicted to technology. Other concerns arising over young children's physical inactivity and screen time usage hang over the heads of many parents, especially given the strong stance against young children's use of digital media and digital tools by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In a policy statement, the AAP discouraged parents' use of screen media with children before two years of age and recommended limited exposure from two years onward (AAP, 2001, 2011). AAP's position stems from concerns that screen usage impedes other activities considered more constructive and developmentally beneficial for children within this age span. However, some suggest the 'moral panic' around children and young people's engagement in online communication is based on uneasiness about 'the rise of a vulnerable and unruly generation of "techno-subjects" who engage in practices that are unfamiliar to many adults' (Davies & Merchant, 2009, p. 82).

Given the differing beliefs and attitudes towards children's technology and digital tool engagement, there is a need for further examination into children's experiences with digital media. Since adults perceptions have dominated discussions on the topic of young children and digital media, it is equally important that we find ways to hear the 'voices' of children on this matter. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of digital media in the life of one young girl and to gain insight into one young child's perspective towards digital media.

Methodology

The study reported here was a single case study. As acknowledged by Dyson and Genishi (2005), each detailed case is simply one case. The phenomenon under study is context bound and 'may look and sound different in different social and cultural circumstances, that is, in different cases' (p. 4). Therefore, this particular case study does not seek to generalise, but rather, to provide a snapshot into the life of one young girl. In particular, the following research questions guided this exploratory case study:

- What does this five-year-old know about technology?
- What digital devices does she use in her home?
- How does this child respond to unfamiliar technologies and software?
- What is the role of technology and digital media in this child's daily life and what is her perspective towards these technologies and digital media?

The participant child was a five-year-old girl living in a suburban city in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia with her parents and younger brother. At the time of the study, Violet¹ was half way through kindergarten at a local public school. The family lives in a three bedroom townhouse where Violet has her own room. Both parents are highly educated, completing multiple degrees and Violet's mother is able to work from home many days a week. I (first author) had not previously met Violet before commencing the study. I had a peripheral understanding of her family based on the close relationship Violet's mother's parents and my parents share. I had seen photographs posted via Facebook and heard stories about Violet through my mother and Violet's

aunt. However, prior to the study, I was unaware of Violet's use of digital tools. Due to photographs on Facebook, I assumed Violet was aware of digital cameras and iPhone technology; however, I had no actual knowledge of what tools she had access to and how she used them. To gain insight into young children's uptake and engagement in digital media, then, I chose to investigate the digital tools to which one Kindergartener, Violet, had been exposed and with which she chose to engage. I also sought to examine her response towards new technologies (i.e. a new device and software package I introduced). Semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations were used to collect data in order to create a portrait of this 'case'.

It has been acknowledged that 'the best source of information about issues pertinent to children is the children themselves' (Scott, 2000, p. 106). Interview-based tools were used to facilitate conversation and ensure reliable and valid data. Careful attention was given to accessing the participant child's 'voice' (Cremin & Slatter, 2004), as I collected data over three visits to Violet's home. That is, data were collected directly from the child, but on occasion parent input was solicited to provide context (e.g. asking about rules governing technology use in the home). Because Violet's mother was always present during our interactions, such questions arose informally. In some instances, Violet's mother provided additional information after Violet's responses.

Given my desire to 'hear' the 'voice' of the child, particular attention was paid to Violet's interests and insistences throughout the study. Along with obtaining parent consent, I created a separate consent form specifically for Violet, using age-appropriate wording and larger font (Spink, Danby, Mallan, & Butler, 2010). I informed Violet as to the intent of my visits and explained the consent form, indicating that it requested her permission for me to ask her questions and to then write a paper about our visits. When Violet indicated she was unsure of what a paper was, I described it as 'like a chapter book'. Thus, Violet verbally agreed to her participation (i.e. the usual assent required of children) and also provided written consent.

It is noteworthy that a number of researchers have used case study research involving single participants in order to explore literacy development (Bissex, 1980; Calkins, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995). McTavish (2009) reports on a single case study, Rajan, in order to better understand children's in-school and out-of-school information literacy practices. She found Rajan's in-school literacy activities primarily used print-based text with a 'focus on facts' (p. 12), while in the home fact-finding was predominantly completed using the internet. Thus, the current study adds to a growing body of literature documenting young children's literacy development.

Research tools

The three interviews were structured around elicitation devices. Each device was selected for its appropriateness towards the focus of the research, but also for its appropriateness with children. All interviews were conducted at the family home in their kitchen and living room spaces. Mom and brother were present during all interviews, but remained removed from immediate interaction. The three activities in which we engaged are described prior to reviewing the study's results.

Activity 1: It's a Book and Goodnight iPad

I selected two picture books to read with Violet, *It's a Book* by Smith and *Goodnight iPad* by Droyd. *It's a Book* shares the dialogue between two friends, a monkey and a

donkey. Monkey reads a book and Donkey becomes curious about the device. Donkey asks a series of questions in an attempt to understand what features are contained in a book. Based on his questions (e.g. 'How do you scroll down?'), it is apparent Donkey believes a book operates similarly to digital tools. Monkey repeatedly replies 'it's a book' to Donkey's questions.

Like *It's a Book*, *Goodnight iPad* takes a humorous look at modern life and parodies the children's classic, *Goodnight Moon*. Rather than saying goodnight to the static items contained in the bedroom, the old woman and young rabbits say goodnight to all the digital devices contained in their home.

I selected these particular books for the numerous references to current digital devices. I hoped that as I read through the books I could use the illustrations to ask questions of Violet about digital media and digital tools. I had also hoped the illustrations would lead to child initiated comments, so I could begin to understand what she knew of technology and, more specifically, what devices she uses.

Activity 2: Picasa 3 digital software and drawing

After my first visit, I left a digital camera for Violet to experiment with between our visits. I showed Violet how to use the device and to charge the battery, if necessary. The intent of my second activity was to ascertain her interest in new media and her experience using digital cameras, laptops and a computer mouse. I selected *Picasa 3*, developed by Google, as I already possessed the software and was familiar with its operations. *Picasa 3* allows users to upload digital images and store (save within software), alter (through editing features) and share (via web-syncing system) them.

Along with my laptop, I brought blank A4 white paper and a pencil case full of markers, crayons and pencil crayons. During my previous visit, I became aware that Violet enjoys drawing pictures as a source of entertainment. I intended to have Violet draw a picture of her favourite hobby for me while I also drew a picture of my favourite hobby. My hope was to gain insight into her personal interests and any connections with digital media.

Activity 3: iPhone 'apps' and drawing

As the study progressed, I gained awareness of Violet's keen interest in drawing. During my third visit, I sought to explore this hobby in relation to digital media. Violet was an avid drawer using print-based media and I wondered if her enjoyment would translate equally using iPhone applications (or 'apps'). I downloaded two apps to my smartphone, *Picasso* and *Doodoo Lite*. *Picasso* contains a blank white screen, reminiscent of a piece of paper, and allows users to select a 'pencil crayon' from the 10 colour options available. There is an 'eraser' available for the user to make corrections. Users select a colour with their fingers and 'draw' an image, again using their fingers.

Doodoo Lite offers users the opportunity to select functions, such as 'pencil crayons' and provides a blank, black screen for 'drawing'; however, the user may press the 'paper' option to change the colour of the screen. Using fingers, the user creates lines on the screen; however, the design and colour of the line is randomly selected by the app. Once artwork is complete the user may select the 'reel' button, which replays the drawing experience as though it were a movie. Photographs

previously taken on the *iPhone* may be uploaded into the programme so that users can manipulate the image.

Analysis

Each interview activity took place in a large, open space, which operated as both dining room and living room, with Violet and I either sitting on the couch (activity 1) or at the dining room table (activities 2 and 3). As mentioned previously, during all visits Violet's mother and younger brother were present in the room, although engaged in their own activities in a different location in the room.

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and coded into broad themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008), using constant comparison analysis. Interview transcripts were coded manually, using the 'comment' function of *Microsoft Word* software. The design of this function allows writers to manually create 'notes' contained within the document. Field notes were also analysed in this fashion. Broad themes were developed from the research questions, particularly 'what does this five-year-old know about technology' and 'what digital devices does she use in her home'. Given the exploratory nature of the study the transcripts underwent multiple 'coding' in an attempt to more explicitly define the data before finally sorting the data into appropriate categories. More refined codes were needed to adequately answer 'what is the role of technology and digital media in this child's daily life', for example, interview transcripts and field notes were coded for instances of 'personal (Violet's) interest' and noted whether the activity was digital-based or print-based. Each interview, once transcribed and coded, presented an opportunity to inform future data collection. In the end, this portrait of a five-year-old girl documents Violet's perceptions of digital media and the role digital media and digital tools, such as *iPads* and computers, have in her daily life.

Results

Digital tools and Violet

Violet's home features an assortment of digital media and digital tools, which Violet and her younger brother may access under parental supervision. A television system sat in the living room and is used by Violet, along with her younger brother, to watch particular television shows, such as *My Little Pony*, *Go Diego Go!* and *Sesame Street*. However, her parents limited access according to particular times of the day. But, Violet noted that 'The people across the street have such a big tv that we can even watch it from here'.

Her family owns an *iPad* that Violet and her brother are allowed to use with supervision. Her father downloads games for her to play, although it appears Violet plays these games alone. Most recently, her father downloaded a game called *Baby Care Dress-up* for her to play. Violet described the game to me:

Violet: Well you can change the baby's clothes ... and feed her. And these are the only two things she doesn't like – carrots and pears.

Laura: Carrots and pears.

Violet: But she eats her baby cereal, her pickle, her tomato and her milk ... and her cucumber I think. And her apple ... And you can also give her and her dolls

a tea party with sugar cubes and can change the tea and she even eats the cookies. And each time there is a, in the background, there is a different baby in the swings.

Violet explains, in a later interview, that, although she may choose her baby's name and select items for baby's care, such as clothing, food and furniture, the game limits what objects are available for 'purchase'. When I asked her if she liked playing with the *iPad* she simply stated 'yes' and continued to describe the *Baby Care Dress-up* game.

Violet is aware of her mother's laptop, commenting 'my mommy has a computer – see'. She has used the laptop, but only 'sometimes' and let me know she prefers the *iPad* 'because the *iPad* only has dot coms. Daddy can download different games anytime'. She can name the computer accessory, mouse, and is aware of its functions.

While reading *Goodnight iPad*, Violet was able to name many of the digital tools illustrated on the pages, such as '... a computer, and an *iPad*, and a phone. And a radio. And an electric guitar or violin'. She told me her mother has an e-book, but could not remember the name; however, when 'Kindle' was mentioned she confirmed the brand.

Laura: Have you ever read a book on a screen like that?

Violet: Yes. Mommy has ... uh ... uh ... I forget what it's called.

Laura: Like a *Kindle*. I think there are a few different names for them.

Violet: Yeah. It's called a *Kindle*

Violet also noted the *Youtube* illustration, a young rabbit watching a video from the online database, and indicated 'I love watching [*Youtube*]'.

Violet has access to a variety of digital media and digital tools between her home and school. However, access in her home is limited to family spaces, such as the kitchen or living room. Her bedroom contains no digital media and proudly displays her many artistic creations (mostly drawings of fairies) and houses a basket of story books. She proudly noted the pink curtains adorning her window as they had been sewn 'just for her' by her mother's friend. Books remain an important part of her life as she quickly responded to my question regarding *Goodnight iPad*, 'have you ever seen this book before?' with 'no ... but I have a book called *Goodnight Moon*', indicating she is familiar enough with *Goodnight Moon* to recognise the similarities in book cover design and title.

After reading *It's a Book*, I asked Violet what donkey thought the book was. Her response 'a computer', initiated our conversation about her computer use. It was in this context that Violet indicated, at her school, there is a computer room but that her class has only visited once. When in the computer room she played 'with ... I think *PBS Kids* ... ummm ... or *Treehouse*'. Violet's mother interjected that Violet's school has *iPads* available for classroom use and that Violet's kindergarten class has used them, in fact, having access to the digital tool every Wednesday. When I asked Violet to elaborate on her classroom *iPad* use she told me her class uses the device to play games, such as a math game using fishes and an alligator game where the players help the alligator to find water in order to bathe. Violet explained, although there are not enough *iPads* for each student in the classroom, students are able to use the device alone or with friends. Since she did not volunteer information about her *iPad* use even though it occurred more often than the computers in the lab, it is possible that Violet may not associate an *iPad* with a computer, the topic of the conversation.

'I don't even know what blogging is': entering the unknown

Violet is still learning about digital media and is unaware of many digital tools. *It's a Book* shows Donkey asking Monkey if one may blog with a book. Violet responded with, 'I don't even know what blogging is'. During our reading of *Goodnight iPad*, Violet asked questions about the devices she was unaware of, such as 'what's a *Blackberry*?' and 'what's a *Facebook* friend?'. She was confused by the word 'gadgets', asking 'what's a gadget?', as she did not understand the word referred to digital tools.

'Imagination is the big thing': emergent digital literacy

Once I had an idea of the digital media and tools accessible to Violet I was curious how she would respond to new technology. My second visit to Violet's house began by uploading the photographs Violet had taken with my digital camera onto my laptop. We examined the photographs individually on the laptop screen. This allowed Violet to describe the pictures and explain why she took the photograph. Many of the photographs contained her favourite toys or hobbies. One particular photograph contained an image of her mother and brother and Violet indicated she took it 'because I love mommy and [brother]'.

Violet selected three of her favourite photographs to use in *Picasa 3* photo-editing software. I have included, here, *The My Little Pony* photograph (see [Figures 1](#) and [2](#)) as this image experienced the most digital manipulation and showcases the longest period of time Violet engaged with the photo-editing software.

Violet first selected the 'tint' feature to turn her pony, Luna, blue. She then accessed the heat map to see what would happen. Once she saw the result, she proclaimed, 'I actually really like that one a lot! ... It's perfect!'.

We began the process again, accessing, at Violet's request, the heat map once more, but leaving the initial colour scheme. The result can be seen in [Figure 3](#).

Violet enjoyed this edit as she felt Luna 'look[ed] like there's magic coming out of her horn!'.

Although Violet enjoyed viewing the photo alterations, she did not appear engaged with the process. As she waited between uploads and editing transitions, she played



Figure 1. Original photograph (All figures were taken by the child and researcher during data collection. Permission from both parent and child were given to use data for publication.).

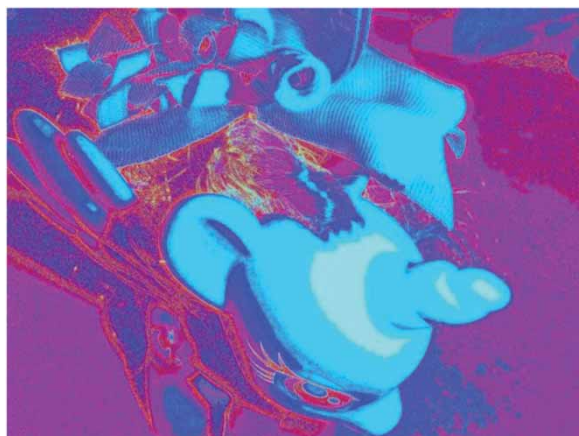


Figure 2. 'Tint' and 'blue' features alter photograph.

with a small piece of ribbon, blowing it across the table. I often prompted her to return to the activity, asking her multiple times to return to the editing activity, rather than continuing to play with the ribbon. I regained her interest when I suggested we draw pictures using white A4 paper and the writing tools contained in my pencil case (such as markers, pens and pencil crayons). I asked Violet to draw 'her favourite thing' on her piece of paper. She chose to draw two pictures for me (see [Figures 4 and 5](#)), both of which featured fairies, her main artistic inspiration.

As we created our pictures, Violet told me 'drawing is my favourite thing to do', which was evident when we toured her bedroom. She has covered the walls of her room with pictures she has drawn. When I asked about drawing pictures versus taking photographs, she told me she preferred drawing 'because drawing a picture is fun' and she can 'choose my own colours' and 'draw my own things'. Violet's mother supplied additional insight as she explained, for Violet, 'imagination is the

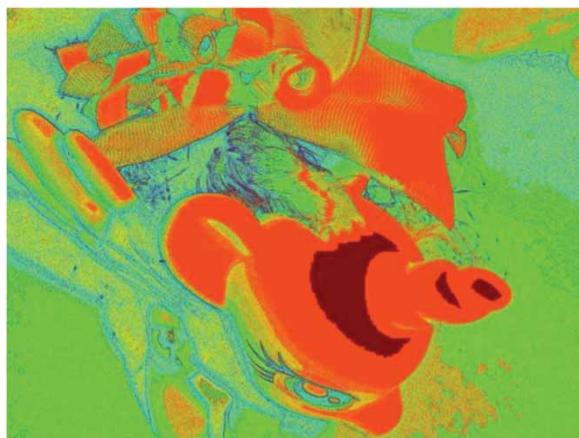


Figure 3. 'Heat map' altered photograph.



Figure 4. Print-based drawing 1.

big thing. She draws them all solely from imagination' rather than from objects she sees.

Upon realising Violet's strong interest in drawing original pictures, I decided to explore her use of digital tools to draw. Therefore, prior to my third visit, I downloaded two apps to my *iPhone* (i.e. *Picasso* and *Doodoo Lite*). Unfortunately, since her parents' *iPad* was unavailable that day, we had to use the smaller screen of an *iPhone*. Violet felt *Picasso* was too hard to draw with as the app produced wide lines, which overtook the small screen. She was unable to create a detailed image to her satisfaction. However, the large eraser was a bonus. Violet preferred *Doodoo Lite* because it was more colourful and the app permitted her to re-play the process she had taken to create her drawing (Figure 6).

When asked whether she would prefer to use a digital tool, such as the *iPhone*, or paper and pencil to draw, Violet indicated she would rather use paper because it is easier.



Figure 5. Print-based drawing 2.



Figure 6. Violet's *Doodoo Lite* image.

In addition to drawing on the iPhone with the *Picasso* and *DooDoo Lite* apps, we drew pictures on A4 paper, similar to our second visit. This time, however, I did not indicate what I would like drawn, rather, I let her use her imagination to draw what she felt. Violet indicated she would be drawing a picture of a gnome's house. As the artwork progressed, I asked questions about what was contained within a gnome house and took the opportunity to ask about digital media:

Laura: does [the gnome] have a computer in his house?

Violet: no ... he doesn't need one. The trees are close together [to where his friends and family live]

Laura: but what about friends who live on the other side of the forest?

Violet: he would get in his truck.

However, as my questions about digital media proceeded, Violet did indicate that the gnome had a television and video game system in his house, so he could 'watch gnome shows and legos'.

Discussion

In many ways, Violet exemplifies traditional North American middle-class views of a five-year-old girl (see Mollison's (2010) *Where Children Sleep* for examples of children's bedrooms). She has her own bedroom with a pink bedspread and matching pink curtains. She partakes in swimming lessons and an art class for young children on Saturday mornings. She enjoys My Little Pony and baby dolls. She was full of imagination and curiosity and shared her unique personality with me. For example, it

was her desire to ‘entertain me’ in her newly opened restaurant, ‘the Golden Fork’, which commenced our tour of her bedroom. She had created a menu, an ‘open/closed’ sign on the door, as well as a knocker for entrance, and paper and pencil to take orders from her patrons. She even included a small stool as the ‘kid’s chair’ in order for families to dine with young children. While providing an introduction to her imaginative play, this example also provides insight into the types of social experiences Violet has had. Given the attention to detail in ‘the Golden Fork’, Violet has visited restaurants with her whole family, made apparent in providing a ‘kids chair’. She is familiar with the signs associated with restaurants, such as the name of the establishment and the ‘open/closed’ sign, as well as the symbols typically found when dining out, such as the notepad and pencil a waiter would use and the menu for patrons to order from. Violet’s creation of the ‘Golden Fork’ resembled the literacy practices Heath (1983) observed of the middle-class children from ‘Maintown’. Violet’s bedroom is full of storybooks and she very comfortably interacted with me during the reading of *It’s a Book* and *Goodnight iPad*. Violet’s description of the elaborate narratives she constructs in accompaniment to her drawings, as well as the large vocabulary she develops as she creates stories with her younger brother again resemble the bedtime story and ‘book talk’ (Heath, 1982, p. 52) of Heath’s Maintown families.

Particularly for Violet, the opportunity for social (i.e. with other family members) or independent artistic creation, through her print-based drawings, seems to be what is most important to her. The 11 four-year olds documented by Yamada-Rice (2010) also shared a strong affinity for drawing, suggesting Violet is not an isolated exception but rather reflects a developmental interest shared by many similar in age to her. In particular, Violet showed me a drawing she had completed prior to one of my visits and I noted the inclusion of an ‘art room’ in her fairy house. Her fairy’s art room contained scissors, glue, glitter and ‘stacks and stacks of paper’. Also further evidence of her strong interest in drawing was gathered when using the digital camera. Violet felt it was important to photograph a drawing she had done, partially because it was ‘a drawing me and maman did together’, but also, I contend, because the act of drawing is a major component of her life. From a sociocultural perspective, drawing is a valued medium for meaning-making and learning in this family. On Saturday mornings Violet partook in art classes, an activity her parents would have enrolled her in. As well, Violet pointed to drawings done individually by both parents or, as the photographed drawing indicated, drawing was a parent–child shared activity.

At another level, Violet’s drawings point to the limited importance of digital media for her. For instance, it struck me that in Violet’s drawings of ‘homes’, digital media was not a focal point. As noted earlier, the drawing of her ‘fairy home’ contained an art room but technology did not appear. In addition, in the drawing of her gnome house, it was only after I began to ask questions about digital media that she included a television and video game console. Of course, whether she would have done so had I remained silent until completion of the drawing, remains unknown. Thus, through her drawings of homes, it seems that although Violet’s home contained digital media devices that she used, their prominence was not on par with other tools, such as her art supplies. Stephen, McPake, Plowman, and Berch-Heyman (2008) documented a similar trend with the participant children in their study. Many of these participants lived in privileged socioeconomic status homes with 53% living in ‘technology rich’ (p. 101) environments. Like Violet, the 19 children between the ages of three and five years indicated a strong interest in a multitude of childhood activities, such as information and communication technology games and activities, outdoor activities

(like swimming and playing in the garden) as well as traditional childhood activities (such as drawing). Similarly, Shifflet, Toledo, and Mattoon (2012) noticed preschool aged children in a childcare centre cooperatively and collaboratively engaged with tablet computers in their library centre while also continuing to engage with traditional childcare centres, such as block play and dramatic play. This seems indicative of children experiencing well-rounded childhoods, rather than a zombie-like fixation on screens as some adults like to portray contemporary childhood. However, despite Violet's lack of self-initiated digital engagement, she does seem to hold expectations towards the prevalence of digital media and tools within other people's homes. As we spoke about iPads I mentioned I did not own one, which she immediately responded with, 'what the heck', suggesting Violet has the impression all homes contain such technology.

When considering Violet's case in terms of future research, further investigation into her practices with digital drawing tools may serve to provide more insight into her perceptions of engaging in this favourite activity with digital-based and print-based media. In the current case study, the opportunity to use photo-editing software was not particularly entertaining for Violet. Although she felt the colours were intriguing, she appeared bored with the activity. Granted, it is difficult to assess whether Violet's apparent boredom was triggered by the wait time associated with the uploading or with the actual editing of the digital image. It is possible her lack of interest with digital editing software was due to her unfamiliarity with photography and editing and a lack of purpose for the activity since it was not self-initiated. The act of photo-editing is likely not a common activity within the home or at least not an activity shared between parent and child. Further investigations into such efforts to introduce digital technology to a young child are needed to better understand children's emergent digital literacy skills.

Conclusion

Researchers have begun to examine the emergent digital literacy practices young children build from early ages (Dodge, Husain, & Duke, 2011; Marsh, 2004; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). These investigations are beginning to show how generalisations of children as 'digital natives' may not be entirely true. Violet shows awareness of digital media, but is by no means an immediate expert. Her experiences with technology have often been mediated by an adult (e.g. her parents or the researcher). Children are naturally curious and technology presents an exciting tool to investigate, but not surprisingly, adults still hold a significant role in socialising children into socially and culturally appropriate practices with digital media.

The case of Violet also builds on other research suggesting digital media does not absorb children's lives and does not replace activities more positively associated with childhood. Rather, children, like Violet, engage in digital media alongside traditional childhood activities, such as drawing and dramatic play. Digital media may be an interest for children, given the accessibility of technology in many homes, but it is unlikely to be the only desire guiding their hobbies and interests. However, given this study documents a single case and was limited in duration, results and conclusions may be taken with circumscription. Further research documenting children's perspectives of their engagement with digital media and digital tools is necessary to more accurately describe the role, positive or adverse effects of, technology in children's lives.

Note

1. Violet is the pseudonym chosen by the participant.

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