

Digitising Early Childhood International Conference

Title of Paper: Hayley's story: Exploring a junior primary student's relationship with media

Presenter: Dr. Madeleine Dobson (madeleine.dobson@curtin.edu.au)

Young children's perspectives and experiences are tremendously valuable. By encouraging children to share, and by listening to and appreciating their contributions, we can gain insight into who children are and how they live in our world. My doctoral research explored young girls' relationships with media, including digital devices, television, film, online media, and more. The cohort comprised a small sample of girls aged 7-13 from a Western Australian primary school. At the time of the study's commencement, the school in question had recently started an iPad program. The iPad program required all students from Years 4-7 to own an iPad, while the younger students had access to school-owned iPads. Hence, the girls engaged in the study were accessing and utilising digital technologies at school and at home. The study sought to explore the girls' experiences and perspectives, with an emphasis on eliciting their voices and establishing child-centric insight. A mixed research approach was employed with a feminist and participatory emphasis. Data generation included interviews with the school community; questionnaires issued to students and parents; an analysis of the girls' most favoured media; and child-guided/documentated home tours. The intent underpinning this comprehensive data generation was to gain a holistic, context-specific appreciation of the girls' lives and lived experiences with media. In terms of the girls' relationships with media, it became distinctly evident that these relationships were intimate and meaningful. While there were commonalities, such as the girls feeling emotionally bonded with and very excited about media, there was also rich diversity amongst the cohort. Three case studies emerged, one of which was focused on Hayley, a Year 2 student and the youngest of the cohort. Hayley's world was rich with technologies and a wide range of media, and she was keen to contribute to the study and share her views. Hayley spoke emotively about her favourite media, with which she had developed long-term bonds. This paper will focus on Hayley's story by exploring her whole-school, classroom, and home environments, and, most importantly, her thoughts and feelings about the media in her life.