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**Living Journals:
Young children and digital media practices in
Azerbaijani families**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Education**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

30 March 2022

Abstract

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore young children's digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan. Five families, each including a five-year-old child, participated in multiple case studies over a period of 15 months in 2018-2019. The study generated data through a total of 15 family visits in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, and the use of 'living journals', a method developed for this purpose. Given its focus on the everyday lives of children, the study is informed by ecocultural theory, but also draws on the concepts of prolepsis and parental ethnotheories.

The research questions were:

1. *How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?*
2. *How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?*
3. *How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?*

The study addressed the first research question through the development of the living journals method. This method facilitated a remote exploration of children's daily lives: mothers were initiated as proxy researchers, thereby decentring the researcher in the data generation process. Families commented both on the completed journals relating to their own child, as well as those created by other participant children. The journals existed in both physical and digital formats, and were a source of visually rich multimodal, multivocal, metatextual, and multifunctional data. This approach constitutes a valuable methodological contribution to the range of options available to researchers who want to study everyday lives from afar.

Research questions two and three have led to three main empirical contributions. First, the living journals method revealed fathers' views on digital media and the extent of their involvement in their children's digital media practices. The findings demonstrated fathers' considerable influences on their children's practices as they were authoritative figures at home. Parents assumed different roles in mediating children's digital media practices, with fathers being active in setting rules but mothers more involved in the day-to-

day management of these practices. Second, the case studies showed how family context influenced children's digital media practices. This included parental preferences for the availability of certain types of devices and the language of digital media content to which children were exposed, as well as mothers' attempts to balance being a 'good' parent with managing relations with each other, their children, and extended family members. Third, a new parental mediation strategy was identified and termed as 'subterfuge'. Subterfuge relates to restricting young children's uses of digital technologies indirectly by shifting the blame onto inanimate objects. This strategy was contextual and situated, and was typically established by fathers but executed by mothers.

Lay Summary

The use of digital media undeniably becomes more commonplace in children's lives, whether this is actively encouraged or discouraged by parents. The digital technologies for daily use have been around for some time now, but it is still relatively new for young children. This study aimed to explore five-year-old children's digital media practices in a home context in Azerbaijan, a former Soviet country. The study also explored how family context influences the digital media practices of children and what parents do to mediate such practices. The existing research is predominantly undertaken in the Global North, while the Global South is less represented. Such a necessity of exploring the use of technology or digital media by children and in particular in a country from Global South has served as grounds for implementing this research project.

Current research in this and related areas has demonstrated that it is challenging to research the lives of children, leading some researchers to employ innovative approaches to gain insight in the everyday practices of young children. Similarly, this study starts with an exploration of the ways in which children's lives can be ethically explored and derives an innovative method to do so. This method is referred to in this project as the 'living journals' method and describes how data on children's lives can be collected remotely through the help of mothers, who in this case were always present in their lives as opposed to the researcher who could have only visited on occasion. This method serves as a major contribution of this project and was also used to generate rich insights into children's digital media practices and parents', in particular fathers' views on them.

This study found that mothers and fathers had varying types of influence on their children's uses of digital media. Fathers were mainly authoritative figures within families who initiated or sometimes participated in setting the rules for their children's access to digital media. In contrast, mothers were found to be in charge of overseeing the day-to-day implementation of such established rules with more direct control over how their children engaged with digital media. I also found that the beliefs parents held about digital media significantly affected their decisions on allowing access. Such influential beliefs were mostly

rooted in the experiences from the own childhood of parents as well as informed by the future of their children that they wanted to see. These beliefs also shaped a hierarchy of preferred devices for parents, with the larger screens, such as a TV, taking priority over others due to health concerns. Also, the language of the content of the digital media influenced parents' decisions. Parents who wanted their children to study in a different language other than Azerbaijani, encouraged their children to watch the content in the target language.

The study findings also revealed that most parents held negative views against digital media and set up many rules to restrict their children's access to the available devices. However, there were certain reasons which prompted them to relax the otherwise stringent rules. Some of these reasons were practical, for example to distract children when parents got busy, but the main and most frequent reason was related to the content of the digital media. If parents perceived the accessed content to be educational or felt that children were learning a foreign language while being exposed to digital media, they permitted access.

In terms of restricting children's access to digital media, parents were seldom direct in their instructions. Instead, they would try and limit children's access by using inanimate objects, such as TV remotes, Wi-Fi routers and device chargers as the reasons for restricting access. Oftentimes, they would hide away such tools necessary for the operation of other devices, or tell the children that the devices did not work. In this thesis, I have termed such strategies employed by parents as 'subterfuge', which refers to their indirect ways of managing children's access to digital media.

This research project discusses the above findings by highlighting the importance of culture and family context in which children live. It makes further observations that family context and parents' cultural beliefs and views shape the rules enacted by parents which ultimately turn into routines and daily practices of digital media use.

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Dedication

To my dad

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Publications and conference presentations

Journal articles:

A living journals approach for the remote study of young children's digital practices in Azerbaijan, *Global Studies of Childhood*

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20436106211034179>

Conference Proceedings:

Living Journals: Families interpreting young children's everyday lives in Azerbaijan, American Educational Research Association Conference, 2020 (with Lydia Plowman)

Conference Presentations:

Living journals: Families interpreting their young children's everyday lives in Azerbaijan, Paper presentation in the AERA annual meeting, 17-21 April 2020, San Francisco (Funded by MHSES graduate school. Postponed due to Covid-19)

Creating living journals for young children in Azerbaijan, Pecha Kucha presentation at the SERA conference, 20 – 22 November 2019, University of Edinburgh (Funded by SERA conference support fund)

Using interpretative phenomenology analysis to explore mothers' approach to their children's use of digital media in Azerbaijan, Paper presentation at the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) conference, 20 – 22 November 2019, University of Edinburgh (Funded by SERA conference support fund)

Children's daily experiences as shown in their living journals in Azerbaijan, Pecha Kucha Presentation at Interweaving Conference, 10 -11 October 2019, University of Edinburgh

Affects and Emotions in Research, Poster presentation at Interweaving Conference, 10-11 October 2019, University of Edinburgh

Returning to Azerbaijan as a researcher: the role of affective engagement, Paper presentation at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, 10-12 September 2019, University of Manchester (Funded by BERA bursary scheme)

Affects and Emotions in Research, Interactive Poster presentation at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) Conference, 2 -7 September 2019, University of Hamburg (Funded by MHSES Graduate School)

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction: setting the context

I believe in the power of stories. Every PhD study has its own unique story. The thesis I present here details the story of my PhD study. Before I invite the reader to embark with me on this journey, I would like to begin with the story of what led me to it, starting from when I was living miles away from the beautiful city of Edinburgh.

Immediately after graduation from my second postgraduate degree abroad, I got a job as a research assistant in a study researching the factors impacting the use of digital technologies in primary schools, conducted by an education professional in Azerbaijan for a doctoral degree at the University of Edinburgh (Mammadov, 2016). One of my responsibilities was to generate the data, as the researcher – Dr Mammadov – could not visit schools himself due to potential conflict of interest and influence on the research setting. While I was conducting individual interviews with children at one of the participant primary schools, a fifth-grader (age 10) who had not initially been selected for the sample, showed great enthusiasm and asked me to interview him as well. I still remember how surprised and happy he was when I told him I would interview him too, after making arrangements with his teacher and the researcher. The interview with the student revealed his knowledge and skills around digital technologies.

I was just as surprised, yet disappointed, when I met his mother during a subsequent focus group discussion with parents. Despite the student's interest in digital device use during classes and at home, as well as his digital literacy skills, his mother told me with pride that she had withdrawn him from computer classes and workshops at school and had limited his use of a family computer at home. She said she was absolutely against netbook¹ usage at school and home, and was against the class teacher's enthusiasm for using netbooks in the classroom. At school, she had also started a campaign to stop teachers from using netbooks in her son's class. This made me think about parental influence on the use of digital technologies among young children, and prompted reading which developed my

¹ A small, low cost laptop computer primarily for use in schools as a part of the 'one-to-one programme' started in several pilot schools in Azerbaijan

interest in the family context and children's everyday lives. I started thinking about children's daily interactions with digital technologies at home, and the variety of influences on their interactions, including how parents mediate their use.

Children's everyday lives are explored in this study to reveal their digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies. Given the importance of children's everyday activities, the study is situated within the frameworks of cultural-ecological theory, and explores children's digital media practices with a focus on their everyday lives, and interlocutors they interact with on a daily basis (Tudge, 2008). Children's everyday routines are influenced by the culture in which they live and the interlocutors with whom they interact daily, and studying them can reveal a great deal about their daily practices and activities (Tudge, 2008; Tudge & Freitas, 2012). Tudge (2008) argues that contextualist ecocultural theory encourages a focus on the individuals within the study, aspects of the context, and the interactions occurring among individuals. The theoretical framework of the thesis is further supported by the concepts of prolepsis by Cole (1998) and parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996) to identify influences on parents' mediation strategies.

By studying children's daily digital media practices embedded within their family routines, I revealed children's day-to-day digital media practices and influences on them. I also identified a parental mediation strategy which has not been discussed widely in the literature. I developed a living journals approach, which involves proxy observations of children's interactions with digital technologies provided by their mothers. The method enabled me to generate data from a distance without interfering with the children's routine. The method complemented family home visits in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, and further contributed to the study by facilitating fathers' participation, which is missing from many similar studies.

This chapter introduces the study and its context, rationale for its conduct, aim, and research questions. Then I outline the contribution of my study, followed by the key terms and definitions. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the thesis.

1.2 Research aim, questions and contribution

The aim of this multiple case qualitative study was to explore five-year-old children's digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan. Five families with five-year-old children

participated in the study over a period of 15 months in 2018-2019. The study generated data through a total of 15 family visits in Baku and the use of living journals, a method developed for this purpose. In addition to the convenience of my familiarity with the culture, I elaborate on the rationale for choosing Azerbaijan as a cultural context for the study in the following section (1.3). In addition to my personal suitability for the research study, the ongoing changes in the education system of Azerbaijan, such as the recent embedding of digital technologies in primary education, made Azerbaijan an attractive research setting for this study. Given the considerable impact of parents on their children's education, the role of the home context presented an exciting opportunity to explore influences on parents' mediation strategies. I was interested in the ecologies of children's everyday lives, and given the importance of children's everyday practices and interlocutors in their lives (Tudge, 2008), I developed a qualitative multiple case study (Merriam, 1998) in which five families with five-year-old children were invited to participate.

There have been research studies exploring young children's digital practices in a home setting in other countries through home visits, interviews with parents, questionnaires, observations and including children's voices in the research design (Aarsand, 2012; Arnott et al., 2019; Connell et al., 2015; Danby et al., 2013; Edwards et al., 2016; Palaiologou, 2016; Plowman, 2015). In the present study, focusing on children's everyday activities in relation to the developed theoretical framework, I aimed to explore five-year-old children's daily digital practices from afar. The first research question, which is primarily methodological, also enabled me to provide a general picture of children's interactions with digital media and involve fathers in the data generation.

Research Question 1 (RQ): How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?

After identifying how to study young children's digital media practices while minimising the researcher's presence, as well as revealing their digital media practices in a home setting in Azerbaijan, the following objective focused on the influences of culture and family context on these practices. I was interested in cultural and family context influences on young children's digital practices in a home setting in Azerbaijan, and therefore developed the following question.

RQ 2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?

Restating my interest in the influence of cultural context and daily interlocutors on children's digital practices, I was curious to learn how parents in Azerbaijan mediate their children's interactions with digital media. I did not aim to cross-check whether parents used any mediation strategies already established in the literature; instead, I was interested in the ways in which family context in Azerbaijan influenced parents' mediation strategies.

RQ 3: How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?

The study's overall aim and research questions are illustrated below (Figure 1.1).

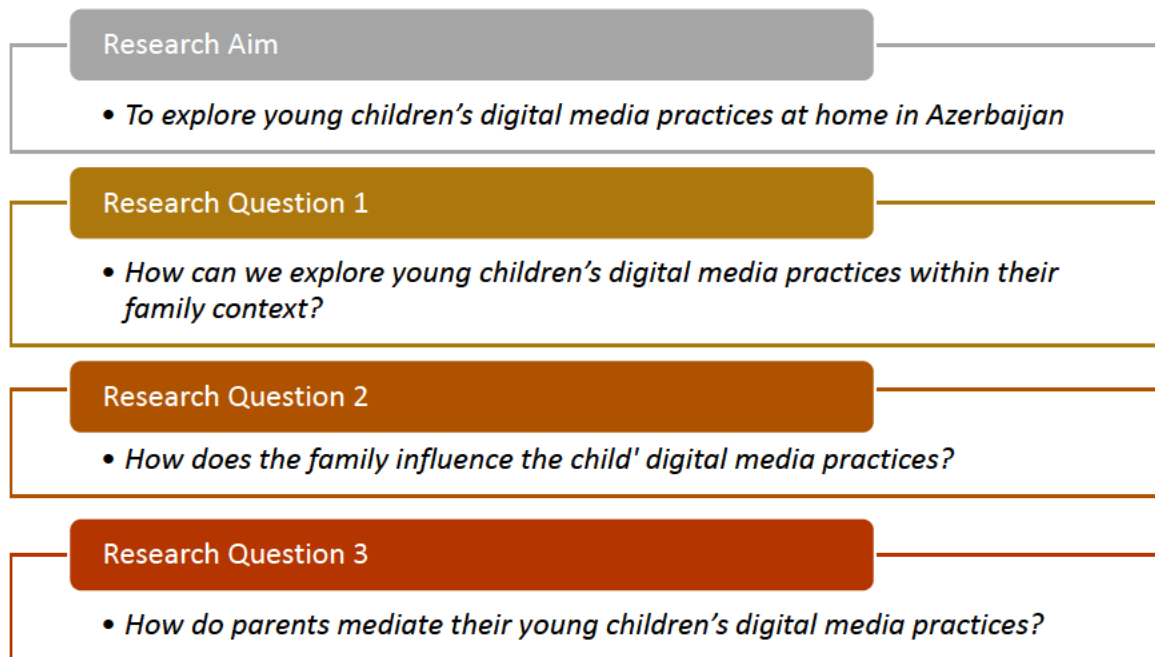


Figure 1.1 Research aim and questions

My thesis contributes to knowledge by responding to calls to extend research into the Global South by presenting cases from Azerbaijan. The thesis makes several contributions to existing knowledge. It makes a methodological contribution to knowledge by introducing a new approach – the living journals method – for researching participants' lives at a distance. The method also addresses the first research question in the study. Using this method, I was able to explore young children's digital media practices from afar by assigning mothers as proxy researchers. This approach decentres and deprivileges the researcher, limiting their presence in the fieldwork.

The data generated through mothers were visual, textual, and in audio format, and was turned into paginated journals in digital and print format. Families were invited to comment on the created journals to discuss their own and other participant children's digital media

practices captured in the journals. Fathers were invited to discuss the journals separately, and mothers discussed them with their participant children on an online platform. The method makes a valuable contribution to knowledge, as I was able to study young children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies without influencing their settings, and to elicit their own interpretations of the activities as captured in their journals.

The second and third research questions were answered through the three main empirical contributions of the study. First, fathers' involvement in the study revealed their views on their children's uses of digital media and their parental mediation strategies, making a valuable empirical contribution to knowledge. Fathers had a certain influence on their children's digital media practices, but this was mainly revealed in an indirect way that was also linked to their mediation strategy.

Second, family context influenced children's digital media practices in several ways. Parents' preference for certain types of digital media devices, and the language of digital media content, influenced their children's uses of digital media. Also, mothers were found to be mediating relationships with their spouses, extended family members, and their other children, while balancing being a 'good' parent. Third, a new parental mediation strategy was identified in the study, named 'subterfuge'. 'Subterfuge' means restricting children's access and exposure to digital media indirectly by shifting blame onto digital media devices. The subterfuge mediation strategy was mainly established by fathers in order not to spoil their relationships with their children, and was executed by mothers.

1.3 The research setting: Azerbaijan

I conducted my study in Azerbaijan with five participant families. In the interest of clearly setting out the research context of the study, in this section, I briefly introduce the country and elaborate on the rationale for choosing Azerbaijan as a research setting. In my thesis, I refer to Azerbaijan as a Global South country, although it is not geographically located in the South. Definitions of the Global South vary and are contested. This is not necessarily a geographical distinction but is sometimes used to refer to those areas of the world that have been marginalised by Europe and the USA and typically have low per capita income as measured by the World Bank. The term is often used as a contrast to the Global North, although this risks blurring inequalities within so-called 'developed' nations.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is a transcontinental country situated at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. Azerbaijan lies on the grounds of the Caucasus mountains surviving the Russian invasion as one of the Caucasus countries (De Waal, 2018). Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea on the East, Russia on the North, Georgia on the Northwest, Armenia on the West, Turkey on the Southwest, and Iran on the South (Figure 1.2). The country has a population of about 10 million (State Statistical Committee, 2021), most of whom live in urban areas. Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan, and the majority of the population are Muslim and speak the Azerbaijani language. Azerbaijan is a unitary constitutional Republic, and the President is the head of the state. Azerbaijan is on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) list of upper-middle-income countries eligible to receive Official Development Assistance (OECD, 2021).

Azerbaijan first established its independence in 1918 and created the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which lasted for 23 months prior to falling under the rule of the Soviet Union. For the second time, Azerbaijan restored independence in 1991, like neighbouring Georgia and Armenia. The country has been in a conflict with Armenia over the occupation of the Karabakh region in 1988 that caused many armed conflicts between the two countries, which eventually ended with the ceasefire in 1994. The newly established independence and war brought a number of problems to the development and establishment of the country. Therefore in 1994, both sides of the war agreed to cease the conflict, after which Azerbaijan started improving the country's economy through the gas and oil sector (Ciarreta & Nasirov, 2012). Further armed confrontation in October 2020, which soon escalated to the second Karabakh war, resulted in Azerbaijan reclaiming the majority of the territories of Karabakh, but this took place after I had finished collecting data.



Figure 1.2 A map of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Wikimedia commons)

Elaboration on the rationale

Undoubtedly, my initial interest in Azerbaijan was derived from being born and raised in the country and being familiar with the education system through my recent professional experience. However, increasing familiarity with the literature strengthened my rationale for selecting Azerbaijan. Scholars have called for more research about children's use of digital media across the Global South, as most of the research has been conducted in the Global North. Additionally, the ways in which families adopt and mediate digital technologies in their daily lives need to be further studied in an international context (Danby et al., 2018; Shin & Li, 2017). Marsh (2015b) argues for the necessity and importance of this kind of expansion for knowledge generation in the field. Adding knowledge generated in different contexts can only diversify knowledge, particularly in this field where digital technologies are rapidly developing in more economically affluent countries.

I was already aware of the introduction of informatics and technology classes in the first grade and the use of digital media devices at schools across Azerbaijan. Parents are not keen on introducing technologies to their children at such a young age at schools, although children are still exposed to various digital media devices at home (Mammadov, 2016). I decided to delve deeper and uncover reasons for this contradiction, with a focus on the family context, its influences on children's interactions with digital technologies at home within their everyday lives, and parents' mediation strategies.

Having been exposed to many different cultures and countries, and having studied in a Western country, I became more aware of the differences and similarities among these cultures and Azerbaijan. While it is not my intention to compare these cultures in the study, it was impossible to completely ignore the comparisons I would inadvertently make on my own. In line with cultural-ecological theory that guides my study, these implicit and explicit comparisons between my culture of origin – Azerbaijan - and the culture of the country in which I lived during the study and beyond – Scotland – contributed to revealing different beliefs about daily activities, and explicitly highlighted Azerbaijani parents' values and beliefs about their children's daily digital practices.

To summarise, I selected Azerbaijan as a setting for several reasons outlined below:

- parents' contradictory opinions about the use of technologies by their children were attractive to study further;
- to add knowledge produced in the Global South, heeding the call to expand similar research studies around the world as there has not been any research of this kind conducted in Azerbaijan before.

1.4 Defining young children's digital media practices

As established above, the thesis explored young children's daily lives at home, focusing on the influence of their families on their digital media practices at home and beyond. Throughout the thesis, I often refer to digital media practices of young children. In this section, I define what I mean by digital media and digital media practices. In my thesis, *digital media* is used interchangeably with digital technologies and refers to internet-connected TV, computers, laptops, netbooks, smartphones, and tablets. The focus is limited to the most commonly available devices in households that are designed for adults such as smartphones in Azerbaijan. Game consoles are quite expensive, internet-connected toys are rare, and Amazon devices such as Kindle Fire tablets for children, Alexa, Google hubs, and Apple HomePods are not available in the country.

Existing literature offers definitions of practices, many of which understand it to mean daily routine activities which occur somewhat naturally and without much planning. Practice theory suggests that practices are not unitary but consist of multiple elements and bundles

of activities that relate to other family practices, and shift over time (Shove et al., 2012). Drawing on Schatzki's (2002) social practice theory, Merchant (2012, p. 772) defines mobile practices as 'doings' ("characteristic arrangements of activities"), 'sayings' ("characteristic arrangements of relevant ideas in discourses") and 'relatings' ("characteristic arrangements of relationships"). Merchant (ibid) argues that digital technologies and people are bound together, and there are continuous relationships between them that do not happen in isolation. Practices, therefore, can be seen as people's everyday interactions with their surroundings, where such actions are also influenced by activities, discourses, and relationships.

Digital media practices are 'assemblages of actions' which involve the tools that are used for engaging with digital technologies, such as digital devices or the internet for connection (Jones et al., 2015, p. 3), and such actions tend to be recognised by certain groups of people as the means for achieving particular social goals, social identities, or social relationships (Ibid.). Digital media practices involve overlapping practices and are integrated with other cultural and everyday practices (Marsh, 2015a). Examples include reading books on a digital device, cooking a recipe found using Google search, and watching YouTube on a tablet. Therefore, digital practices are not necessarily isolated from everyday practices, but involve the physical and virtual realms equally, as well as sharing boundaries with technological systems and social systems (Jones et al., 2015). Digital media practices are not studied in a vacuum away from other cultural practices, given that boundaries between digital and non-digital activities are becoming blurred (Marsh, 2014). The technology used in everyday lives within homes contributes to reshaping the context, which results in blurred boundaries (Plowman, 2016, 2019).

Research conducted in the UK has demonstrated that parents try to develop a routine so that children achieve a balance between digital and non-digital activities (Kucirkova et al., 2018). Children's digital media practices are neither isolated nor bound to only one place (Aarsand, 2016). According to Tudge (2008), it is challenging to understand practices without paying attention to the context of those activities. In my research, I studied digital media practices situated within the context of family relationships and embedded them with everyday practices. There is a need to study children's digital media practices within their family context in relation to other potential everyday practices. In line with ecocultural

theory for my study, I explore children's everyday lives, with a focus on the influences of family on children's digital media practices.

Morgan (1996, 2019) did not view family as a structure made up of individuals but instead shifted the analysis to defining families by the activities associated with them. Such a view also includes the belief that activities or family practices are not limited to a home setting or any specific physical location. Family practices are the 'taken-for-granted', everyday and routine habits that occur within families irrespective of their physical location (Morgan, 2011). In addition to defining families by the 'doing' of such common practices, these also need to be 'displayed', conveying the meaning of actions to other relevant members of the family (Finch, 2007).

Based on the discussion above, I define digital media practices as I understand practices as "the 'doings', 'sayings' and 'relatings'" (Merchant, 2012, p. 772) that constitute the social actions of everyday life. Practices are the ways people interact with or incorporate objects and actions into their everyday lives and are influenced by social and cultural worldviews. I introduce their main elements below:

- "The 'doings', 'sayings' and 'relatings'";
- Related to other cultural and everyday practices;
- Situated within a context;
- Not bound to 'home';
- Families are 'doing' and 'displaying' practices.

Practices therefore need to be studied as embedded (Storm-Mathisen, 2016) and typically make use of visual data (Chaudron, 2015). My study explored children's digital media practices through visits and living journals methods that included visual data generation about the practices happening at home within everyday lives.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is presented in eleven chapters, including this chapter.

Chapter 1 sets the context of the study by introducing the research aim and questions. I explain why I have selected Azerbaijan as a cultural context to be explored, and state the study's aim and research questions.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework of the study. I begin by formulating two widely accepted theories: socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky, and the ecology of human development by Bronfenbrenner. The main shortcoming of the two theories is the lack of consideration of the role of culture in interpreting development. This aspect is famously critiqued by Tudge, who offers cultural-ecological theory as a solution to this problem. This theory is a perfect fit for my study, as it helps view the findings and interpret the results through the lens of cultural context. I also use the concept of prolepsis by Cole, and parental ethnotheories to explain research findings.

Chapter 3 introduces the existing literature in the field. First, I explore digital media practices of young children to highlight types of activities they interact with within their lives. Then I examine the influences that affect children's uses of digital media, and I group them as parental influences, child influences, and contextual influences. Next, I explore the existing literature on parental engagement with children's digital media practices, the mediation strategies they formulate as part of such engagement, and the factors that influence their strategies. I summarise this chapter with identified gaps in the literature.

Chapter 4 lays out the methods used for generating data for the study and the different approaches taken to address the challenges that arose along the way. I describe the rationale for a qualitative case study, then introduce the research aims and questions in greater detail and explain how they are relevant to the context of this study. I outline the reliability of the study and the techniques I used to improve its credibility, such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. I also describe how data was generated through initial family home visits in person and subsequent phases through online means using the living journals approach. Finally, I describe the steps I took to analyse the multimodal data generated through several approaches.

Chapter 5 describes my researcher identity from different aspects. Given my connection with the researched culture, I draw particular attention to reflexivity as part of the reliability of the study, in which I recognise having potential biases towards the research setting and culture. Therefore, I describe the ways in which I have tried to challenge such biases. In this chapter, I discuss my insider/outsider identity and reflect on affective engagements with participant families. They were particularly significant due to the nature of the study, involving young children and families.

Chapter 6 describes the living journals method developed for this study. Given the centrality of the method in my research, the approach constitutes a methodological contribution of the study, and it was instrumental in generating data remotely through the help of participant children's mothers who acted as proxy researchers. The living journals method enabled me to have a closer look at children's everyday practices, which also revealed their daily digital media practices from afar.

Chapter 7 provides reflections on the living journals method, including those of family members of the participant children. These reflections, from all involved, enable me to provide a higher-level look at the method, and detail its contributions comprehensively. At the end, the 4 Ms of the method are discussed to establish and summarise its major significance and contribution to my thesis.

Chapter 8 presents family influences on children's digital media practices as revealed by the study through the multiple cases explored. Each section starts with a pen portrait of the participant child and their family and sets the ground for understanding parents' approaches to digital media use and their beliefs around digital media. By presenting each family's case separately, I highlight the main themes that most frequently emerged in each one.

Chapter 9 offers the reader a formulation of fathers' views on their children's digital media uses and their approach to the mediation. The living journals method enabled me to include fathers in the data generation. As a result, I was able to reveal fathers' aspirations for their children's uses of digital media as interpreted through the concept of prolepsis, and

also present the actions fathers take to mediate their children's digital media practices. Fathers' involvement in the study makes a valuable empirical contribution, as they have specific influences on children's uses of digital media and their choices of mediation.

Chapter 10 synthesizes the study's findings and discusses its empirical contributions in light of the existing literature and the theoretical framework of the study. Children's digital media practices are discussed in this chapter, which also lays the groundwork for empirical contributions to the study. The thesis makes three main empirical contributions to knowledge. First, I discuss fathers' views about children's digital media practices and their role and involvement in the mediation strategies in comparison with those of mothers'. Fathers were authoritative figures at home, and mothers executed the rules they had assigned. Next, I discuss the influences of family context as a contribution. Parents' preferences for certain digital media devices and the language of content were the primary influential factors. Mothers were also found mediating relationships with their children and extended family members, trying to be accepted as a 'good' parent by these groups. The final contribution discussed is the introduction of a new parental mediation strategy: subterfuge. Subterfuge relates to the indirect ways that parents use to deflect responsibility from themselves and assign blame to inanimate objects (devices, internet connection) for managing their children's access to digital media.

Chapter 11 concludes the thesis. First, I answer the research findings and then state the main contributions of the thesis to existing knowledge. I reflect on the implications of the study for ongoing research efforts, as well as for parents. I also acknowledge the limitations of the study, which are outlined in a separate section in this chapter. I present some suggestions for future research, and finally, present concluding remarks to finalise the thesis.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the context of the study and briefly set out the research aim, which is to explore young children's digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan. I also briefly described the research aim and questions to be discussed in greater detail in

subsequent chapters. The selection of Azerbaijan as a setting for this study had several reasons, the two most important of which were the attempt to respond to calls to expand research in this area into the Global South, as well as my familiarity with the cultural context. I provided a definition of digital media practices adopted for my thesis drawing on several influential works, and briefly outlined the contributions that my study makes to existing knowledge. Finally, I laid out the structure of the thesis chapter by chapter to be used as a roadmap. In the following chapter, I continue setting the stage for my research by outlining the theoretical framework informing the study and its interpretation.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework developed for the current research. The chapter starts with contextualism and contextualist theories, and continues with cultural-ecological theory guiding the theoretical framework. Cultural-ecological theory is a contextualist theory partly based on cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky (1978) and the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1977). I also briefly discuss both theories, drawing on Tudge to strengthen my rationale for selecting cultural-ecological theory for the study in 2.3.

The central focus of this study was children's digital media practices and the influence of family within their cultural context, and revealed children's day-to-day digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies. Even though Tudge's theory does not directly relate to digital technologies, it helps explain the approaches parents tend to take. In 2.4, I also discuss the main elements interwoven within cultural-ecological theory. Next, in 2.5, the concept of prolepsis (Cole, 1998) is introduced to explain any possible links between parents' childhood and their current childrearing practices that also might be translated into their mediation strategies of their children's digital media practices. Parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 2006) are explored in 2.6 in order to elaborate on the extent to which parents' beliefs and cultural practices influence their decisions on their mediation strategies.

2.2 Contextualism and contextualist theories

Developing rigorous ties with theory, methods, and analytical approaches significantly contributes to developing a robust research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Tudge et al., 2006; Winegar, 1997). One of the critical elements of a research study is identifying the relevant paradigm to explain its philosophical underpinnings. My study was aligned with the contextualism paradigm, and in this section, I elaborate on its relevance to my research. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) define a paradigm as 'the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically

and epistemologically fundamental ways.' Winegar (1997) refers to paradigms as 'metatheories' and Pepper (1942) as 'worldviews'. Pollack (2007, p. 266) explains the research paradigm as a 'commonly shared set of assumptions, values and concepts'.

Tudge (2008, p. 62) refers to paradigms as 'views of the world' in terms of 'ways of thinking of the world' and explains two research paradigms: contextualism and mechanism. In order to study young children's digital practices at home in their own setting, I adopt contextualism. Contextualism is quite similar to constructivism in that they both accept the existence of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013a; Crotty, 1998). My philosophical views are in line with contextualism defined by Tudge (2008, p. 59) as a worldview through which one sees '...a multiplicity of realities, rather than a single reality.' Contextualism also helps me explain my choice of qualitative case study as I am interested in the multiple meanings and realities people have constructed (Merriam, 2009). Individuals' realities are heavily influenced by the socio-cultural context they are exposed to in their daily lives, and therefore individuals all grow up differently in varying contexts. In turn, they also shape their cultural context through their individual characteristics, daily practices and experiences, and develop their realities differently from one another depending on various factors. In my study, drawing on the contextualism paradigm and through multiple case study, I explored children's daily digital media practices and their parents' influences on these practices, eventually impacting the formation and development of the culture in which they live in the digital age.

Individuals in different cultural groups with diverse backgrounds or Socio-Economic Status (SES) see a different reality from one another. In line with the contextualist paradigm, in my study, I acknowledge that within and across families, everyone has different perspectives about digital media use, varying influences on the family dynamics at home, and parents' mediation strategies. Exploration of children's uses of digital technologies thus includes *individuals* – children's and parents' – views *within the socio-cultural context* of Azerbaijan that is geographically situated between the West and East. Where possible, I include the voices of other extended family members living in the same household as they influence family context.

The relations between the researcher and researched are subject matters that I aim to recognise and illuminate in my study. I strongly align my epistemological stance with the contextualist paradigm in that one of my main objectives has always been to '...not try to

make the researcher invisible but rather, having accepted her or his necessary visibility, to treat the information gained as a co-construction of researcher and participant in research' (Tudge, 2008, p. 61). This philosophical stand is also in line with the case study approach adopted for this study, as it also establishes the knowledge being co-constructed with the researcher and researched (Merriam, 2009). In order to attain co-construction, a researcher can build relations with the researched to establish mutual trust between them to share their thoughts and feelings, acknowledging the co-constructed nature of knowledge.

I have adopted contextualism as a paradigm to also help clarify the significance of the family context in children's digital media practices. Tudge (2008) discusses three main contextualist theories: the cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky, the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner, and ecocultural theory. My foci of research lie within everyday lives, how digital technologies intersect with family context and individual characteristics, and how these interrelations influence children and family relationships. Therefore, the study is based within the framework of cultural-ecological theory, which is also referred to as ecocultural theory (Tudge, 2008; Weisner, 2002). Cultural-ecological theory is based on these two theories, but it adds to their strength from the contextualist paradigm view, and it '...has at its heart the typical everyday activities between developing individuals and the people with whom they commonly interact' (Tudge, 2008, p. 78). Before introducing cultural-ecological theory and its suitability for my study, I briefly summarise the main tenets in Vygotsky's and Bronfenbrenner's respective theories.

2.2.1 Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Socio-cultural theory is centred on the individual within their cultural group and in the interactions between the other group members, as well as individual and created artefacts within the culture (Holzman, 2006). The theory argues that children learn and develop through social interactions within their culture (Vygotsky, 1978, 1993). According to Vygotsky (1987), while entering their culture, children do not only take something from it, but they also provide their own contributions. As members of their cultural groups, children interact with other group members and participate in activities that contribute to their groups. In this vein, children can achieve more if they receive pertinent guidance 'with collaboration, direction, or some kind of help, the child is always able to do more and solve

more difficult tasks that [sic] he can independently' and 'what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow' (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 209-211). Children's social interactions start from home and derive from their interactions with parents, siblings, or other significant adults in their lives. Rogoff (2003) claims that to understand a child's development, we should investigate the child's interactions within their everyday lives. In their everyday lives, a child interacts with different people, and these social interactions play a considerable role in children's learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978).

One of Vygotsky's most known concepts is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) explains the zone of proximal development as the result of interactions between two people, where more and less competent sides both learn something while interacting. Considering Vygotsky's works, Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) translate the Russian word 'obuchenie' as 'teaching/learning'. In addition to being a correct translation, it also clarifies bidirectional interaction between sides, where irrespective of the degree of competence, both sides together create a zone of proximal development and in the end, they both develop knowledge and skills.

Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) draw attention to the misinterpretation of the term 'the zone of proximal development' that, through later works, has erroneously become synonymous with 'scaffolding', a term first used by Wood and his colleagues (Wood et al., 1976). In further works too, Tudge (2008) critiques this mainstream interpretation of ZPD and argues that the focus should be not on the interactions and the support a less competent learner gets from another person, but instead on the zones of development that such interactions create, through which all participants learn. A number of research studies focusing on digital media and young children have referred to socio-cultural theory in their studies (Edwards et al., 2016; Kucirkova et al., 2015; McLean et al., 2017; Teichert, 2020).

2.2.2 Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development

As in the case of other contextualist theories, the theory of human development of Bronfenbrenner (1979) also emphasizes the interrelations between human development and the environment. Bronfenbrenner approached context more systematically and studied it from cultural, social, economic, and political aspects (Ceci, 2006). Bronfenbrenner started

his study of the ecology of human development in the 1970s, and his model was reshaped in the 1990s.

Bronfenbrenner's influential work of *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979) introduced a system of circles depicting significant, influential aspects of an individual's development. In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, a child holds the central place, and therefore the ecological environment is understood as circles represented as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. In the microsystem, a person participates in the interactions, activities and roles in a specific setting through physical engagement. In the next concentric circle – the mesosystem – the developing person plays an active role in the interactions among two or more given settings such as home, school, or a religious setting. In the exosystem, the person is not involved in the given settings but rather affects or is affected by those settings, such as mass media and parents' workplaces. In the end, the macrosystem relates to the systems mentioned above and includes ideas about dominant beliefs, policies, and ideologies.

Upon the wide acceptance of his work, Bronfenbrenner published *The Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development* (1986), where he described how each circle, despite not being directly related to family life, can influence processes happening within their lives. Bronfenbrenner explained these processes by describing Process, Person, Context, and Time (mainly referred to as PPCT model) and how they interrelate with one another. In other words, in the first model, he studied human development contextually; in the second model, he also included the proximal processes and bidirectional relations between them and human development (Tudge et al., 2017).

The 'Process' element happens regularly and involves persons and objects, and contributes to the interactions among individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). "Person" can be explained from biological and genetic facets. "Context" is a set of four circles, and each circle influences the development of a child in the centre of the first system – the Microsystem. "Time" is crucial in human development, and (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) divided time into micro-time, meso-time, and macro-time.

Plowman (2016, p. 200) suggests rethinking our understanding of context in the omnipresence of digital technologies within everyday lives, and highlights the necessity of 'more fluid ways of collecting and analysing data that take account of digital technologies that are increasingly immersive, miniaturised, embedded and mobile....'. This approach, in

turn, also suggests new forms of data generation using digital technologies, which would allow researchers access to the emerging context and its realities. In my study, I developed the living journals approach to have access to children's everyday lives from afar within their own emerging contexts.

Both Vygotsky's and Bronfenbrenner's theories refer to human development as a result of interactions among individuals, their unique characteristics and environments; however, unlike cultural-ecological theory, they regard culture separately (Plowman, 2016; Tudge, 2008; Tudge et al., 2011). Culture can be a broad concept applying to large numbers of people, such as whole countries or nation-states. Many different cultural groups exist within each broad border, and people may belong to more than one cultural group simultaneously (Tudge, 2008). In this sense, according to cultural-ecological theory, culture is central, and it is continually being (re)shaped (Plowman, 2016; Tudge & Freitas, 2012). The following section provides a discussion of cultural-ecological theory and its relevance to the current study.

2.3 Cultural-ecological theory

The preceding section discussed the contextualist paradigm as a worldview for this study. The contextualist paradigm revolves around the construction of reality by individuals, as reality is not considered something to be revealed; instead, it involves construction and interpretation of all the factors involved, such as cultural context, individuals, and settings (Tudge et al., 2009). Before elaborating on cultural-ecological theory, mainly drawing on Tudge and his colleagues, I briefly summarised main points in two contextualist theories – Vygotsky's and Bronfenbrenner's theories. Tudge (2008, p. 73) criticizes the broadly accepted view that contextualist theories necessarily use context as the primary 'explanatory variable' and instead suggests that context is to be seen as a dimension of lives otherwise filled with everyday events and activities (Tudge, 2000).

This study is guided by Tudge (2008)'s contextualist ecocultural theory, with a focus on the everyday lives of young children. Cultural-ecological theory focuses on the everyday practices and interactions among individuals, culture, and activities (re)shaping children's daily lives (Tudge et al., 2011). Tudge (2008) introduces cultural-ecological theory based on the influential study of *The Everyday Lives of Young Children*. Tudge studied three-year-old

children in the United States, Brazil, Estonia, Finland, Russia, Kenya, and Korea in this cross-cultural study. While the research reveals interesting findings related to the everyday lives of young children in these countries, it is also very well-known because of Tudge's extensive elaboration on contextualist theories and introduction of cultural-ecological theory.

Tudge (2008, p. 89) claims that cultural-ecological theory:

.... forces researchers to pay simultaneous attention to aspects of the individuals who are the focus of the study, aspects of the context (immediate, cultural, and historical), and (most important) to the actions and interactions going on between these individuals and the social partners, objects, and symbols that play important roles in their development.

Ecocultural theory is not directly related to digital technologies; the focus of Tudge's work is human development. By making everyday activities central, it becomes a good lens through which to interpret my study since it was set to explore young children's digital media practices, focusing on their daily lives and interactions as everyday practices which entail 'ordinary' practices that are often unnoticed and deemed unimportant by research participants (Brownlie, 2019).

According to cultural-ecological theory, individuals are not only influenced by their culture and cultural groups, but culture is likewise substantially affected by individuals. Since culture itself is a broad term applied to different types of groups and can vary in meaning across disciplines, it is difficult to arrive at a single definition that would be precise (Rogoff, 2003; Tudge, 2008). According to Geertz (1973, p. 44), 'culture is a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions [...] - for the governing of behaviour'. The often-unspoken rules in a given culture maintain order and adhere to the shared values. Cole (2005, pp. 2-3) calls culture heterogeneous and defines it as 'collective problem-solving toolkits of individual social groups in response to their historical and ecological circumstances.' Culture and society both refer to groups of people, but they are not synonymous, and any given society may include several different cultural groups, which may, in turn, be differentiated by ethnic group or social class (Tudge et al., 2000).

Tudge (2008, pp. 3-4) refers to culture as:

... the notion of a group of people who share a set of values, beliefs, and practices; who have access to the same institutions, resources, and technologies, who have a sense of identity of themselves as constituting a group; and who attempt to communicate those values, beliefs, and practices to the following generation.

In my study, I adopt Tudge's definition of culture as I share his belief that culture is a non-static notion and individuals can be a part of several cultures and cultural groups. A cultural group can be defined by the shared values held by the members, as well as their commitment to passing down these beliefs to the next generation (Tudge & Hogan, 2005; Tudge & Odero-Wanga, 2008). Variations occur across cultures to the extent that parents encourage their children to play or do other activities, and existing common beliefs and values thus do not necessarily result in dictating the behaviour of the members of a cultural group. Actions instead occur based on common factors, such as individual characteristics, the setting, and the culture (Tudge, Freitas and Brown, 2011). I am interested in the role of parents and children in shaping their family context at home within their cultural group in the digital age, followed by particular influences on their parents' mediation strategies.

Culture is constantly being generated with the influence of interactions between culture and individuals. Rogoff et al. (2015) suggest that the focus of culture should shift towards ways of life instead of accepting culture as a static notion, and such a shift requires studying individuals' involvement in cultural settings. Individuals are members of culture at different levels – one forming the broader cultural group at a national level, as well as smaller cultural groups formed at the level of social interactions. They do not merely inherit culture from their parents and pass it down to their children; on the contrary, they add to it and appropriate it according to their needs and desires. This practice is not new since, in their childhood, their parents have also added to their culture through participating, and so will their children prior to passing it down to the next generation (Lawrence et al., 2004). Human beings are the creators of the cultural situations they live in, as a result of which they are also affected by the culture that they are shaping (Worthman et al., 2016).

Tudge (2008, p. 76) calls individuals 'social creations', meaning that 'the social settings of which the individuals themselves are a part are responsible for development'. Individuals

are embedded into their cultural and family context, yet they can change the world they live in within their context. The interesting part of this dichotomy lies in the fact that 'children are born into their cultures' thus, they are mirroring the established activities, and also 'individuals are social creations', so they also contribute to their own development and shaping or reshaping of their culture, thus children's day-to-day activities create a basis for contextualist theories, thereby making it crucial to study contexts such as family context (Tudge & Freitas, 2012).

2.4 Family context and children's individual characteristics

In relation to the digital age and the individuals' contribution to shaping their cultural context, I wish to highlight here that while this process is happening, there are many other foreseen and unforeseen changes occurring in the studied culture. For example, the rapid technological development over the last decade has brought various changes to the cultural context in which children live. Under these circumstances, parents mediate and appropriate their children's uses of digital media within their own realities. In this sense, I am interested in the influences on parents' mediation strategies of their children's digital media practices. Given that parents do not have a reference point in their lives in relation to the mediation of their children's digital media uses, how do they decide which strategies to use? What influences their decisions on choosing the mediation strategies that they choose?

Context contributes to the determination of culture (Worthman et al., 2016), and it can play a role in the opportunities or limitations children become exposed to in their everyday lives (Tudge, 2008). Cole (1998) explains context as having a weaving property by using the Latin term – 'contexere', which means weaving together. More recently, Plowman (2016) has problematized context, highlighting the increasing invisibility of technologies in relation to children's interactions with digital media in their everyday lives at home and beyond. Home is more than a context; it is embedded in everyday lives. The increasing omnipresence of digital technologies contributes to (re)shaping context and shift of interactions of everything involved in the creation of that context, making boundaries between the context, digital, and home blurry (Plowman, 2016, 2019).

Studying activities in context is considered necessary, but it is also essential to understand the role of individuals participating in such activities (Tudge et al., 2000).

Children's encounters with digital technologies depend on their family context, in addition to their individual peculiarities and other interlocutors with whom they are interacting in their daily lives. The ways in which children behave in certain situations and their reactions might also depend on how '... their parents made the same decisions as do their friends and neighbours' (Tudge, 2008, p. 78). Parents' decisions regarding encouraging or discouraging their children from participating in certain activities stem from the values they hold and the qualities they wish to instil in their children, which in turn are shaped by the cultural groups of which they are a part (Tudge & Hogan, 2005). While exploring parents' decisions on their children's exposure to digital technologies through parental ethnotheories and the concept of prolepsis, to be discussed in this chapter, the extent to which children contribute to the formation and development of their cultural context in relation to digital technologies is of interest for this study.

Children develop within their family context; their characteristics and everyday activities form and reflect their culture (Tudge et al., 2013). Individuals are not only directly affected by the surrounding culture; individual characteristics play a role in the formation, development, and representation of their inherent culture. Contextualist theories posit that there are dynamic interplays between context and individual, which means that personal characteristics of a child and the characteristics of a given context both influence children's everyday activities (Tudge et al., 2012). In this regard, a child's interconnection with their family context is not necessarily straightforward, but rather subject to frequent transformation through direct or indirect exposure to ever-changing environments.

Cultural-ecological theory focuses on children's everyday interactions, families, and context (Weisner, 2002). Children's daily practices and interactions are also influenced by their individual characteristics (Tudge et al., 2013). Children are not regarded as passive actors in developing their culture; rather, children have an active role in navigating these relationships (Bodrova, 1997) and 'children learn from actively participating in practices involving them with others' (Tudge & Hogan, 2005, p. 104). Bronfenbrenner (1978) expands on the extent and motivation of children's participation and highlights that participation greatly depends on their will to influence their cultural context. Children's direct participation in decision-making, to a certain extent, is an essential element not only in their development, but also in the formation of their own culture (Weisner, 1997, 2002).

In a cultural group, children have varying degrees of motivation to learn specific skills or engage in some practices, and the way they do this tends to alter the nature of the activities, mainly due to their unique characteristics. Therefore, while engaging with cultural practices, children recreate those practices, which means that over time, they will be altered and amended (Tudge & Odera-Wanga, 2009). Children's activities affecting their culture are, in turn, influenced by the cultural beliefs and attitudes of the parents, thereby indirectly shaping their own culture. Tudge (2008) argues that culture influences a person's development, but question

s the mechanisms that bring about such influences. To him, these mechanisms are shaped by everyday activities of individuals and are being constructed at the local level, but at the same time being influenced by the culture of respective groups. While I agree with the statement, I suggest that this approach does not necessarily define the mechanisms acting in such situations. I also rely on the concept of 'prolepsis' - introduced in the following section - because it helps the study reveal the extent to which parents influence the lives of their children based on their past experiences, beliefs, and attitudes.

I view children as social creations and individuals who fully participate in and influence their culture and cultural groups through their daily activities and practices (Weisner, 1997). Children mature within their cultural context, and their everyday lives and activities carry important cultural meanings (Rogoff, 2003). Parents' cultural beliefs and attitudes reflect themselves on forming these cultural meanings. To some researchers, parental values and beliefs are the main determining factors of their choices, but to others, a child's characteristics are also significant factors in parents' behaviour (Tudge et al., 2012). As fully participating individuals, children's own characteristics affect their activities and experiences. In this sense, revealing parents' cultural beliefs in children's uses of digital technologies can provide opportunities to make possible linkages between cultural context, children's digital media practices, and parents' mediation strategies. I look at parents' motivations through prolepsis and parental ethnotheories, and I discuss them separately in the following sections.

2.5 Prolepsis

In this section, I am introducing Cole's (1998) concept of prolepsis, which constitutes a considerable part of the theoretical framework drawn for my study. Cole's concept has roots in the field of developmental psychology, and even though my study is far from this field and is carried out on a small scale, I find prolepsis a good fit for the study to elaborate on parents' mediation strategies of children's digital media practices.

Prolepsis as a concept is borrowed from literary theory, and it relates to narrating a future event before moving back in time to relay the events that occurred before it. As opposed to a flash-back (analepsis), prolepsis can be considered a flash-forward, where a future event is described before the next chronological events take place in the narrative (Brescó de Luna, 2017). The dictionary definition of the word similarly states that prolepsis is 'the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished' (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Cole (1998, 2002) applies the concept of prolepsis to the practice of childrearing and, in this context, explains it as a process of imagining their child's future and then channelling the child's present to meet the expectations of this imagined future. This phenomenon is undoubtedly informed by the culture of parents, rooted in their own past experiences and upbringings, and therefore, the parents' beliefs and the projection of the desired future for their children can often become a 'materialised constraint' on the present experiences of the child (Cole, 1998, p. 184).

In the previous section, I discussed how culture is non-static. Cole (1998) also refers to culture as non-static in his widely acknowledged book *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline*. Drawing on several cross-cultural research projects, Cole (ibid) concludes that studying humans also requires paying due attention to their cultural context, where humans are engaged with activities, live, and grow.

The social world influences the individual not only through the agency of flesh-and-blood, people who converse, communicate, model, or persuade, but through the social practices and objects unseen people have built up in the world around that individual (Cole, 1998, p. xiv).

For example, when I was in the eighth grade at school, my cousin had a bicycle and was willing to teach me how to cycle. However, my mother and relatives were against it because they thought girls should not cycle, which would have damaged my reputation as a girl. My cousin would cycle with his bicycle to the park, and I would walk there to meet him in the early mornings. In a place where nobody would see us, he would teach me how to cycle in secret. Later, my mother told me that my father had bought me a bicycle when I was a toddler, but after that, they did not upgrade it as girls are not expected to cycle after toddler years. Cultural expectations and my mother's own experiences influenced her decision about my cycling, which was a widely held 'mentality'² in Azerbaijan. As a result, I had to give up on learning to cycle at that age in my hometown, and I only learned when I moved to Bulgaria.

Later, when I moved to Edinburgh with my toddler son and husband, a bicycle was the first thing I bought my son when he was only 2.5 years old, and since then, I have been upgrading his bicycle as he grows. Reading Cole's concept of prolepsis helped me understand my actions in perspective, and analyse them in light of the concept. Accordingly, I grew interested in how parents' previous experiences with digital technologies can influence their decisions on their children's exposure to, and uses of, digital media devices. I was particularly interested in exploring these aspects in Azerbaijan since digital technologies were not widespread due to the country's socio-economic situation. Parents in this study did not even have constant electricity, let alone computers, in their childhood and some part of their teenagerhood.

Explaining the concept of prolepsis

As newborns come into the world, their biological advantages and constraints have already been formed. Cole (1998) questions how culture plays a role in a newborn's entrance into the world, and what happens when children's cultural past meets the present to influence the future. Problematising this question further, Cole (2002, p. 309) calls the process 'prolepsis', which is 'the representation of a future act or development as being presently existing'. Prolepsis is 'a cultural mechanism that brings the end into the beginning'

² Mentality is a literal translation of the word used in Azerbaijani language to denote a set of cultural beliefs held in the highest regard and considered to be vital to be followed. It can also be used as a description of one's characteristic way of thinking, as the word is understood in the English language.

parents revisit their past, and '...project it into the future, and then "carry" that conceptual future "back" into the present to create the sociocultural environment of the newcomer' (Cole, 1998, p. 183). Cole (ibid) draws attention to how parents start planning their children's present and future based on their own cultural experiences and assumptions in life, beginning from their children's birth. In other words, recalling their own past as ideal (although not always), parents sometimes project their children's future on their present lives, which can constrain or enhance their experiences and daily practices in various aspects of their lives (Figure 2.1).

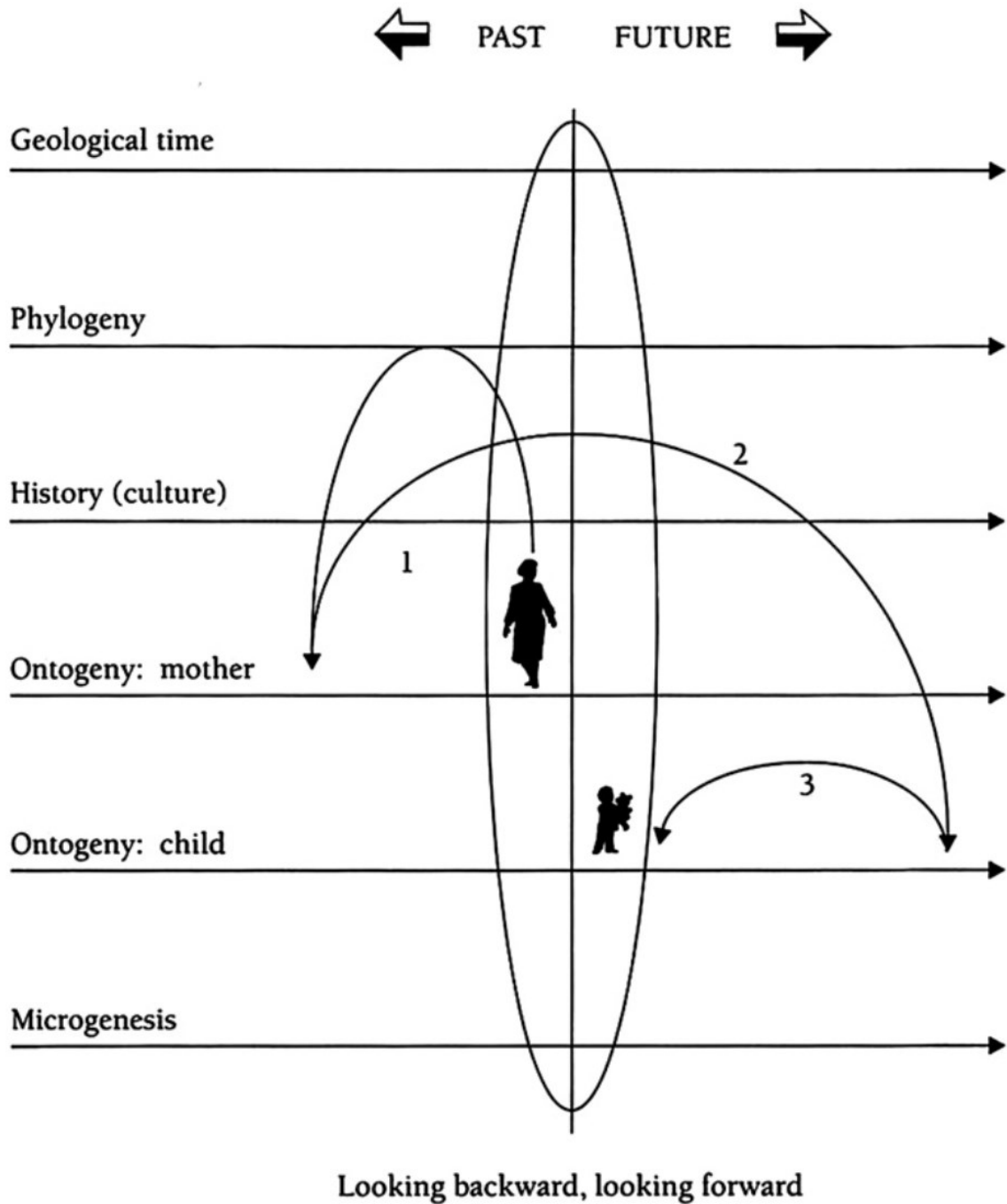


Figure 2.1 Explanation of prolepsis by Cole (Cole, 1998, p. 185)

To briefly summarize what each horizontal line signifies, drawing on Cole's explanations, below I explain them following them top-to-bottom, skipping the most self-explanatory one – Geological Time.

Horizontal line:

- Phylogeny stands for the history of life on earth.
- History (culture) refers to the history of humans, traceable through individual generational lineage.
- Ontogeny (mother/child) represents the lifespan of an individual.
- Microgenesis - the history of moment-to-moment lived experience.

Vertical line:

- Ellipse – a child's birth;
- Arrow 1 – the mother's memory of the past;
- Arrow 2 – the mother's imagination of her child's future
- Arrow 3 – the mother's behaviour based on her conception of the past (Cole, 1998).

Beginning from even before a child's birth, parents or any other adults playing a significant role in a child's life recall their own past and reflect it on the child's future and consequently, act upon it in the child's present. For example, I purchased my first computer when I was 20 years old. After multiple negotiations with my mother and relatives opposing my decision, I could only achieve this because they thought a computer would harm me psychologically and physically. Nevertheless, we had a computer at the university, so I knew that it would help me a lot in my studies if I had one. That is why when I had my son, I started allowing him screentime on a tablet from a very young age, as I was convinced that gaining these skills from an early age would help him start using digital media as early as upon entering school, helping him learn better through the use of technology and navigate digital media devices. As a parent, my decisions about childrearing were informed by my past experiences, as well as the projected future I held for my child in relation to digital media devices and their utility.

Having originated in developmental psychology, Cole's (1998) concept of prolepsis refers to a wide range of parenting activities rather than a specific one. McPake and Plowman (2010) successfully applied the concept to the context of digital media use by children, highlighting the critical influence of the beliefs parents hold towards the role of media in their children's lives. In my study, too, the concept of prolepsis serves as an

excellent complement to ecocultural theory, since, besides the complex influences the cultural context has on the parents' decisions about childrearing, their own past experiences, beliefs, and future aspirations for children play a significant role in the decisions they make in the present, in this case in relation to access to digital media.

It is noteworthy that Cole mainly refers to mothers while explaining the prolepsis mechanism, leaving fathers' role and involvement in childrearing under question. When clarifying the figure, Cole (2002, p. 311) explains all the arrows with 'mothers', but only in the last sentence, he says '...the ideal aspect of culture is transformed into its material form as the mother and other adults structure child's experience to be consistent with what they imagine to be the child's future identity'. It is widely acknowledged that even in the Global North, despite the active involvement of fathers in childrearing, mothers are the ones doing extra work for children based on their children's diverse requirements (Lamb, 2000). Azerbaijan is a patriarchal society (Najafizadeh, 2012) where it is widely believed and accepted that it is a mother's 'duty' and responsibility to raise a child in many aspects of their lives, except for meeting their material needs. In this regard, I have made it one of my personal and professional goals as a researcher to explore fathers' attitudes and roles in their children's daily interactions with digital technologies. While fathers think that mothers have to take care of the child throughout the day, does it also ultimately lie on mothers' shoulders to mediate their children's uses of technologies in a home setting and beyond?

The continuity of social activities and practices is essential for prolepsis to function. In my study, not only mothers but fathers and, where possible, extended family members are invited to reflect on young children's future in terms of their use or non-use of digital technologies. What do parents do when they make decisions about the mediation of young children's digital technology use? How do children's preferences come into play in this sense? Within the frameworks of eco-cultural theory, the interrelations among children's roles, parents' experiences from their own childhoods, their children's childhoods, and cultural context in relation to young children's interactions with digital technologies, make children's daily lives noteworthy to study. All these interactions interweave and reflect on one another.

Within this study, prolepsis helps to explain how parents form their views on children's use of digital media based on their previous experiences with digital technologies. Cole (1998) focuses the attention on mothers, but in this study, I apply the concept to mothers,

fathers and other adult family members, where possible, who make significant decisions in the children's lives. In addition to prolepsis, parents' decisions about their children's uses of digital technologies depend on parental ethnotheories, which I elaborate on in the following section.

2.6 Parental ethnotheories

In this section, to explain what motivates parents' choice of mediation strategies, I describe parental ethnotheories as developed by Super and Harkness (1997) in their 'developmental niche' theory. 'Parental ethnotheories form part of a system that links ideas about the child, about practices, and about outcomes with actual practices and actual outcomes' (Harkness and Super, 2006, p.78). They can be helpful in scrutinising any bidirectional link between parents' attitudes and their children's digital media practices.

In studying parents' cultural beliefs and parenting, Super and Harkness (1997) suggest a theoretical framework – 'developmental niche' – to explore children's relations with their parents and explain that children are members of a cultural system, so there are similarities with ecocultural theory (Tudge et al., 2000). 'Developmental niche' comprises three substantial elements: 1) a setting that is physically and culturally situated for children's lives; 2) traditions of raising children; 3) caregivers '/parents' characteristics and cultural beliefs – parental ethnotheories. These are all embedded in a system, yet each is also situated within a broader culture. A central premise of the developmental niche construct is that the child's environment is not a random collection of settings, customs, and parental beliefs, but rather it '...is organised in a non-arbitrary manner as part of a cultural system' (Super and Harkness, 1997, p.26). According to Super et al. (2020), developmental niche theory can be applied to various settings to clarify young children's daily practices within their cultural context. Parental ethnotheories play a crucial role as part of a developmental niche in children's daily activities and lives (Harkness & Super, 1996; Super & Harkness, 1986). In my study, I primarily focus on parental ethnotheories to explain reasons behind parents' mediation strategies as well as the influence of family context on children's digital media practices.

As has already been discussed in reference to eco-cultural theory and within the concept of prolepsis, culture is not static as it is constantly being (re)shaped by the involvement of various actors in it. In other words, culture is constantly regenerating itself,

and parents continuously enculturate their children, passing cultural beliefs, behaviours, and habits to their children (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006; Levine, 2003). Parents' beliefs, desires, values, and opinions have enormous importance within this culture transmission. Parents may hold different beliefs regarding enculturation of their children, and those beliefs affect parents' attitudes, actions, behaviours, and parenting styles in countless ways (Goodnow, 2002; Cole, 2005). In addition to parents' values, traditions, and practices, parental ethnotheories also have a substantive place in shaping parents' actions and practices. Harkness and Super (2006, p. 62) draw special attention to parental ethnotheories to explain parents' cultural beliefs, and the authors define parental ethnotheories as:

... cultural models that parents hold regarding children, families, and themselves as parents.... often implicit, taken-for-granted ideas about the 'natural' or 'right' way to think or act, and they have strong motivational properties for parents.

Here the 'cultural model' term refers to ideas that cultural groups share (Harkness and Super, 2006). Parental ethnotheories have become a part of a system connecting actual practices with various sets of ideas about children. They alone would not allow us to define outcomes for children, but they are indispensable elements in revealing parents' thinking behind their actions.

Parental decisions on their children's use of technologies are shaped and influenced by the media, parents' experiences at work, as well as their educational background (Chaudron, 2015; Chaudron, Di Gioia, et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2018; Plowman & McPake, 2013; Plowman et al., 2008). Subsequently, parental ethnotheories serve as a focal point through which larger culture is being filtered, and informs parental decisions on the organisation of children's daily lives (Harkness & Super, 2006). In this study, I am drawing on parental ethnotheories as part of the theoretical framework as they are also helpful for identifying factors that influence parents' choices of daily practices with their children in terms of digital technology use. I aim to reveal parental ethnotheories related to their children's use of digital technologies and their mediation strategies. Parents in Azerbaijan might have cultural models in regard to arranging children's bedtime or mealtime, but they do not have a set of pre-established ideas about mediating their children's use of

technologies. Cultural-ecological theory is well suited for exploring parental ethnotheories related to children's use of digital technologies focusing on children's daily routines.

This section outlined the significance of parental ethnotheories to this study, which contributes to the overall theoretical framework. Parental ethnotheories might critically influence the parents' mediation strategies of the children's uses of digital media. They are also valuable for identifying what influences parental choices in relation to their mediation strategies of children's daily digital media practices.

2.7 Summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework used to inform this study. Contextualism helps with understanding the importance of cultural and family context in the daily practices of children, and in the case of this study, the digital media practices of children. To further frame the significance of context, I described the tendency of adults and children to jointly shape their own culture, which is best captured by cultural-ecological theory. The theory highlights the importance of the surroundings and interlocutors in children's daily lives, within which children are seen as social creations with a role in shaping their culture. Through the lens of this theory, we come to see the dual nature of the adults' influences on the cultural context: while parents and other influential adults, as well as peers, naturally take an active part in shaping their culture, they also tend to influence children's actions through rule-setting. Children are also active participants in shaping their culture, and parental influences serve as an additional layer of indirect control over the practices shaping this culture.

The influence that parents and other adults have on children can be viewed through the concept of prolepsis. Prolepsis posits that parents refer to their own past experiences to inform their children's lives by projecting desired futures and acting in the present on such a basis. In terms of digital media use, since parents likely have no reference point to rely on from their own childhood, the concept of prolepsis can help explain how parents translate other similar experiences and practices, such as setting time limits and applying them to their children's uses of technology. Besides prolepsis, parental ethnotheories also form a significant part of the overall theoretical framework to understand other aspects of parental mediation strategies regarding children's digital media practices.

3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Digital technologies are becoming omnipresent within young children's day-to-day lives, and having access to them greatly influences children's everyday practices and their childhood (Arnott et al., 2019; Edwards, 2017; Edwards et al., 2016; Holloway et al., 2013; Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017; Manches et al., 2015; Marsh et al., 2005; Plowman, 2016; Plowman et al., 2008). Children are first exposed to digital technologies within the settings of their homes (Edwards et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2017), but the abundance of digital technologies at home does not necessarily predict frequent use by young children or dominance of digital technologies over young children's daily lives (Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017). Children's uses of digital media instead depend more on other factors, including parents' perceptions, parental mediation and children's characteristics (Matsumoto et al., 2021; O'Hara, 2011; Papadakis et al., 2019).

In this literature review, I explore the existing studies engaging with young children's daily digital media practices, as well as the extent of parents' involvement in children's access and uses of digital technologies. To do so, I draw attention to the empirical research studies undertaken in young children's interactions with digital media around the world, the context of their daily digital media practices and parental mediation of young children's uses of digital technologies. I summarise the literature in several themes developed in line with the research aim and questions of the study.

The research aim of my study was to explore five-year-old children's daily digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan.

RQ 1: How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?

RQ 2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?

RQ 3: How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?

In line with my research aim and questions mentioned above, I formulated the following structure for the literature review.

- Young children's digital media practices;
- Influences on young children's digital media practices;
- Parental engagement in young children's digital media practices;
- Parents' mediation strategies;
- Influences on parents' mediation strategies.

The literature review encompasses major works contributing to knowledge on children's digital media practices, family context and parents' mediation strategies. I have mainly reviewed seminal works and research studies conducted in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and some European countries. Due to the absence of similar academic research studies in Azerbaijan, I do not have reference points from this country.

3.2 Young children's digital media practices

Young children's access to digital technologies is rapidly increasing with the widening introduction of digital devices (Bird & Edwards, 2015; Edwards et al., 2015; Genc, 2014; Holloway et al., 2015; Laidlaw et al., 2021; Neumann, 2014; Rideout, 2013; Stephen & Edwards, 2017). Nowadays, young children are using digital technologies within their daily lives across settings such as home, nursery, museum, school, and all other contexts in which they spend extended amounts of time (Edwards, 2013; Edwards et al., 2015). Young children are born in an age in which their childhood experiences significantly differ from those of their parents. These observations naturally raise questions: What are the experiences of young children in terms of digital media use as part of their daily routines? How do they integrate digital media practices into their daily lives? This section of the literature review explores young children's digital media practices as part of their everyday activities across multiple settings, but in this study, the main focus remains on a home setting. Besides the diversity in settings, the section also explores the variety of digital technologies used worldwide.

Recent research in the Global North has revealed that children's exposure to digital devices begins well before school years, i.e. from birth, children start living in a media-rich world through their parents, caregivers, and siblings, for example, in the United Kingdom (Aubrey & Dahl, 2014; Flewitt et al., 2014; Livingstone, 2014; Marsh, 2011; Plowman et al., 2012), Europe (Chaudron, 2015; Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017), the United States (Lauricella et al., 2015; Rideout, 2013, 2014; Rideout et al., 2003), Canada (Teichert & Anderson, 2014) and Australia (Edwards, 2013; Edwards et al., 2015; Kervin et al., 2015; Neumann, 2014). Young children as the first-borns in the digital age are called 'digitods' (Holloway et al., 2015) or 'touch-screen generation' (Rosin, 2013), while their parents have been referred to as 'net generation' (Tapscott, 1998) and as 'digital natives', (Prensky, 2001) referring to the fact that they are the first generation to use modern digital technologies in their youth. Despite the growing number of studies, it is still difficult for researchers to stay in tune with the increasingly rapid development of digital technologies (Buckingham, 2013) and more research is suggested in children's interactions with digital media (Ólafsson et al., 2013).

Researchers have conducted surveys to probe into household ownership of digital technologies in various countries over the last two decades, confirming that children live in a media-rich environment, which affords them opportunities to develop digital literacy skills (Rideout, 2017; Smahelova et al., 2017). For example, surveys conducted in the UK by Ofcom at different times (Ofcom, 2013, 2019, 2021), in the US Common Sense Media surveys (Rideout & Robb, 2020), and in Europe (Chaudron, 2015; Chaudron, Di Gioia, et al., 2018) reveal young children's increasing use of digital media across settings and their parents' views on them. The surveys also reveal the increase in families' ownership and use of touch screen devices such as smartphones and tablets compared with previous surveys (Ofcom 2019, 2021; Rideout & Robb, 2020). It was revealed that young children have an increasing tendency to use their parents' phones to play games or watch YouTube videos, while tablets are mainly used to play games alone (Rideout & Robb, 2020). Children prefer watching on-demand platforms over TV as they offer them more freedom in content selection (Ofcom, 2021).

Qualitative studies also confirm children's increasing exposure to a diverse range of digital technologies across various settings (Chaudron, 2015; Livingstone et al., 2015; Marsh et al., 2017; Plowman et al., 2012; Chaudron, Di Gioia et al., 2018; Plowman et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2015). Palaiologou (2016) employed a mixed-method approach to reveal

young children's interactions with digital technologies in England, Malta, Luxemburg, and Greece. Almost 90 percent of young children aged 3-5 watch TV, and 34-62 percent can use smartphones, tablets, and laptops on their own. Despite the ubiquity of digital technologies in young children's lives, children's digital media practices comprise only a portion of their daily life in addition to their other everyday activities (Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017; Chaudron, Di Gioia et al., 2018; Plowman et al., 2012; Teichert and Anderson, 2014). Also, families' ownership of various kinds of digital media devices does not necessarily translate into their frequent use by young children; on the contrary, a mixture of many other aspects, such as parents' views on and attitudes towards their children's education, are crucial determining factors (Bakó & Tőkés, 2018; Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017; Plowman, 2016).

The literature confirms children's increasing access to digital media devices across many countries on each continent, but there has not been any research in Azerbaijan to explore the phenomenon by using either quantitative or qualitative approaches. The current study seeks to reveal young children's uses of various digital media devices, including TV, tablets, and smartphones, in a home setting in Azerbaijan. Given the socio-economic status of the country in comparison to the other developed countries identified in this literature review, this study responds to calls for research into young children's digital media practices in different countries and cultures in the Global South (Marsh, 2015b; Nikken, 2017; Shin & Li, 2017). Approaching existing knowledge from the different context of Azerbaijan can extend understanding of the implications of family context on children's digital media practices. Selecting Azerbaijan as a case study is also rooted in my familiarity with the culture and the history of the education system in the country.

The following section identifies widely acknowledged influences on young children's digital media practices in a home setting.

3.3 Influences on young children's uses of digital media

The previous section on young children's uses of digital media established the increasing use of digital technologies by young children across countries. This section delves further into young children's uses of digital technologies and introduces literature on the influences of young children's digital media practices in a home environment. After a brief

discussion of the literature, I continue by dividing such influences into three related categories: *parental influences*, *child influences*, and *contextual influences*.

Comstock and Scharrer (2012) consider influences determining young children's exposure and uses of digital media devices and divide them into three categories: (1) environment that defines accessibility of digital devices to young children; (2) children's and parents' personal characteristics and attributes, which include age, gender, and their perceptions of digital media; (3) situations and related factors, such as time and place of digital media use, as well as emotions. In their research, Stephen et al. (2013) highlight that families' specific circumstances and children's individual characteristics influence their daily encounters with digital media. This finding is contrary to the mass media claims that children's daily lives are driven by digital technologies. The authors (ibid) reveal four dimensions of family context that make a difference to children's engagement with digital technologies in a home setting:

- family perspective on the efficacy of technology as an educative tool;
- parents' perspectives on ways of supporting young children's learning;
- family interactions, the presence of siblings and other demands on parents' time;
- children's preferences and personal characteristics (p. 157).

While it is difficult to rank these influences in any order of importance, literature suggests that parents, as adults making most decisions in a home setting, tend to exert the most influence on children's use of and access to digital media (Nikken & Schols, 2015).

Parental influences

Parents influence their children's socialisation skills and development (Bandura, 1977), and this influence also spills over to their children's digital media practices, as children tend to follow their parents in other aspects of their daily lives as well (Bakó & Tóké, 2018; Burnett & Merchant, 2014; Danby et al., 2013; Elias & Sulkin, 2017; Nikken, 2017; Sonck et al., 2013; Terras & Ramsay, 2016). Parents introduce their preschool-aged children to using educational and fun applications to increase their literacy and numeracy skills (Marsh et al.,

2017; Marsh et al., 2015), but they do not always realise the extent of their engagement in their children's daily digital media practices (Plowman et al., 2008; Valcke et al., 2010). As a result, young children's digital media practices are not influenced by only parents' conscious decisions but also by subconscious actions (Smahelova et al., 2017; Nikken, 2017; Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017).

Dias et al. (2016) view parental influences as being on a spectrum between gatekeeping (restricting access) to scaffolding (supporting the use of digital devices): Nordic families tend to prefer the scaffolding approach, whereas, in southern Europe, gatekeeping is preferred. Parents' previous experiences with digital technologies also contribute to shaping their values and attitudes about the usefulness of digital technologies, consequently influencing their children's practices with digital media (Daneels & Vanwynsberghe, 2017; Lauricella et al., 2015; Marsh et al., 2015; McPake & Plowman, 2010).

Parents' attitudes and perceptions

Parents' attitudes towards children's digital media uses seem to be a significant predictor of children's uses of digital technologies at home (Plowman et al., 2008; Dias et al., 2016; Lauricella et al., 2015; Verenikina & Kervin, 2011; Cingel & Krcmar, 2013; Nikken & Oprea, 2018; Nikken & Schols, 2015; Nikken, 2017). Young children usually experience their first digital media practices by interacting with their parents, caregivers, or siblings (O'Mara & Laidlaw, 2011), and parents were found to encourage their young children to use tablets or smartphones (Wartella et al., 2013; Stephen et al., 2013; O'Hara, 2011) when they had positive views of their children's uses of digital media, and believed that their children were gaining digital skills (Bakó & Tórkés, 2018; Lauricella et al., 2016; Nikken, 2017; O'Hara, 2011).

Parents' views on digital media form their engagement with their children's digital media practices. As such, when parents are convinced of the educational value and advantages of digital media, they are ready to make it available for their children (Plowman et al., 2010; Livingstone et al., 2015; Lauricella et al., 2015) and build on the educational purpose of digital technologies (Verenikina & Kervin, 2011).

Digital media influences children's development in various respects, including cognitive, behaviour, and social-emotional learning (Anderson and Bushman, 2002; Lillard and Peterson, 2011). Parents do not see digital technologies as a threat to their children's

overall development, as widely claimed by the mass media (Neumann & Neumann, 2014; Palaologou, 2016; Plowman et al., 2011; Stephen & Edwards, 2017). Quality television programmes at home can assist preschool-aged children's learning, particularly numeracy and literacy skills (Comstock & Scharrer, 2007). This claim is also supported by parents who agree with the positive impact of their children's viewing of diverse educational content on their general development (Rideout & Hamel, 2006), and as a result, they tend to support their children and provide assistance when needed and requested (Chaudron, Marsh et al., 2018; Stephen et al., 2013; Gillen et al., 2007; Livingstone et al., 2015). Parents with positive opinions of their children's use of digital media are more likely to balance their children's use of technologies and play with traditional toys (Plowman et al., 2008).

Studies show that parents' perceptions of the role of digital technologies and their own confidence in using them also shape their mediation practices, thereby influencing their children's access to digital media (Plowman, 2015). Dias et al. (2016) assert that parents' perceptions play a crucial role in determining parental mediation styles, with adults who frequently use digital technologies themselves resorting to more permissive practices, while on the opposite end, parents lacking digital skills choose more restrictive strategies.

Parents' concerns

As children grow, opportunities allowing them to engage with digital media also increase, causing more parental concerns and anxieties over their children's digital media practices (Rideout & Hamel, 2006; Rideout, 2013; Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016; Kucirkova et al., 2018; Uhls, 2016; Plowman & McPake, 2013). Parents' concerns about young children's uses of digital media mainly include parents' anxieties over screen-based activities replacing children's social interactions with others and their physical activities outdoors (Plowman & McPake, 2013).

Parents express health concerns in relation to their children's use of digital media devices (Chaudron, 2015) and their lack of interest in social activities (Dunn et al., 2018). Children's gender and age significantly influence parents' concerns over their children's potential health issues caused by engagement with digital technologies. As such, younger boys' parents are more concerned about their children's uses of digital media devices as they tend to play games on digital devices more than girls (Kucirkova et al., 2018).

In addition, mass media draws attention to moral panic and describes digital technologies as harmful for children (Teichert & Anderson, 2014). Pointing out the ineffectiveness of this response in preparing children for a life in a digital age, Stephen and Edwards (2017, p. 116) refer to moral panic as ‘a barometer for adult perceptions of what childhood should be like in any given age and is not necessarily an effective response to the developmental niche in which children are growing up.’ Young children being online for a long time has resulted in sounding warnings of potential risks, such as internet-related harms, inappropriate content, or privacy and safety problems (Holloway et al., 2013). In light of the online risks that young children may encounter while engaging with digital media, research highlights the importance of cyber-safety education and the need to address it via a play-based approach in young children’s learning (Edwards et al., 2018). Similarly, several countries, for example, the United Kingdom (Commissioner, 2017), the United States (NAEYC, 2012) and Australia (Joint Select Committee, 2011), have called for including cyber-safety education in Early Childhood Education.

Child influences

In addition to the above-mentioned parental influences, children play an essential role in shaping their own digital media practices in a home setting (Plowman et al., 2010). Children are ‘...active and agentive in their use of digital technologies and media towards their own ends, moving fluidly between online and offline activities’ (Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017, p. 31). As children are also part of different social groups within their culture (Tudge, 2008), they can contribute to shaping their own digital media practices in a number of ways. Mediation efforts with digital media practices of young children can depend on many child-related factors such as children’s age, gender, digital media skills and individual characteristics (Connell et al., 2015; Domoff et al., 2019; Nikken & Jansz, 2014; Nikken & Schols, 2015).

Children from as early ages as infancy and toddler years are increasingly using digital technologies (Levine et al., 2019). Among child-related influences, children’s age and gender might be the most-cited factors influencing their access and uses of digital technologies at home (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

As children grow older, their digital media uses and diversity of their uses increase as well (Rideout, 2013). It is expected that increased cognitive, motor, and language abilities

will contribute to more frequent use of digital devices by older children (Lauricella et al., 2015). Children's gender and age have also been identified as influential factors in predicting the extent of digital media use, mostly in terms of health concerns, with parents of boys being more concerned about this issue than the parents of girls (Kucirkova et al., 2018).

Children's interactions with parents and digital technologies add to the multi-layered context increasingly integrated into their daily lives. When adults demonstrate attachment to mobile devices, the children in the family can also be observed to be spending less time with other activities and toys beyond digital media (Konok et al., 2020). A number of studies have demonstrated that the uses, adoption, and teaching can be bidirectional among children and parents. Children might introduce adults in a family to new media and tend to influence the media use of parents (Nelissen & Van den Bulck, 2018). Also, children can teach their parents the skills for using digital media, including computers, mobile phones, and the internet (Correa, 2014). While this may be the case in many families, as demonstrated by different researchers, when targeting parents with awareness-raising activities, researchers suggest noting that not all parents are less skilled than their children (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016; Clark, 2011).

Children's digital literacy also influences the extent of their exposure to digital technologies. Previous research has found that age and media skills of children were more significant influencers of digital media use than attitudes of parents (Nikken & Schols, 2015). It has also been observed that parents of children with good digital skills tend to adopt more permissive mediation strategies, while parents of children with less developed digital skills prefer restrictive strategies (Livingstone et al., 2015). Similarly, if parents are not confident in their own digital skills, they tend to elect more restrictive approaches, prompted by the desire to avoid risks that they themselves do not feel competent enough to resolve (Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2016).

Contextual influences

Children's digital media practices are also mediated by their social context (Kumpulainen & Gillen, 2017). In order to gain insights into young children's uses of digital technologies in their day-to-day lives at home, there is a need to examine the family home context (Stephen et al., 2013), as children find out about the different roles and importance

of various digital media devices in a home setting through their parents, siblings, and other adults involved in their lives (Piotrowski, 2017). Young children's digital practices are being shaped in relation to their parents/carers as well as siblings and peers (Danby et al., 2013; Danby et al., 2018; Merchant, 2012).

The relationship between family context and children's uses of digital technologies across various contexts generate strong interest, as home context usually offers more diverse resources to young children than formal education settings do (Plowman, 2016). In addition to the influence of the context on children's uses and exposure to digital media, it also influences their experiences with digital technologies (Miller et al., 2017; Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

My research is interested in exploring the complexity of interrelations between children, family context, parents/caregivers and siblings, and other extended family members closely involved in their lives in terms of their daily interactions with technologies in a home setting. Exploring and revealing the ways in which this complexity is reflected in young children's daily lives can contribute to research by providing more insights into children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies.

3.4 Parental engagement in young children's digital media practices

The previous two sections focused on young children's digital media practices and parental, child and contextual influences. The following sections explore parental engagement and parents' mediation strategies on young children's interactions with digital technologies.

Parents prefer and value physical and outdoor activities over online activities (Nikken & Schols, 2015) and draw attention to the negative influence of digital media practices on young children's outdoor and physical activities (Wartella et al., 2013). By focusing on physical, non-digital activities, parents tend to see shared outdoor activities as a practice of 'good parenting' and encourage their children towards outdoor activities (Livingstone et al., 2015). Parents in the UK were found to be keen on developing a routine in their children's daily activities, paying particular attention to the balance between digital and non-digital activities (Kucirkova et al., 2018), while previous research discusses the increasing loss of boundaries between online and other activities (Marsh, 2014).

Parental engagement in young children's digital media use plays a crucial role in positively fostering children's digital media practices (Connell et al., 2015; Nevski & Siibak, 2016; Nikken, 2017; Plowman et al., 2008; Rasmussen et al., 2016). Fathers are often found to play video games with their children instead of mothers who prefer reading books with them (Connell et al., 2015; Lamb, 2000; Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). In previous studies, researchers have primarily included mothers when conducting family visits (Livingstone et al., 2015; Marsh et al., 2015; Plowman et al., 2010). However, there is a need for more research revealing and explaining fathers' engagement in their children's interactions with digital media (Tang et al., 2018). It can yield interesting results to study fathers' views on their children's digital media practices in-depth, as well as the extent of their involvement in them. Azerbaijan is a patriarchal society where most of the duties related to child-rearing are left to mothers (Najafizadeh, 2012), which heightens the importance of inquiring about fathers' involvement in children's interactions with digital technologies. Exploring parents', in particular, fathers', opinions on their children's uses of digital technologies, as well as their engagement in their children's digital media practices through revisiting own childhoods (Cole, 1998) and identifying possible distinctions with the experiences of their children, can lead to insights into their mediation strategies.

3.5 Parental mediation strategies

The ubiquity of digital technologies is a relatively new phenomenon, which means that today's parents are confronted with challenges their parents did not necessarily face. Such a lack of reference points might result in parents' reliance on general practices of managing their children's activities and extending those strategies onto digital devices as well.

As the previous sections established, digital technologies are increasingly being embedded in family life, creating complex family environments, and this encourages parental mediation research to move beyond mediation strategies and look for possible relations with parental ethnotheories (Plowman, Stephen, et al., 2010b; Zezulkova & Stastna, 2018) and further factors shaping parental mediation (Shin & Li, 2017; van Kruistum & van Steensel, 2017). Given the increasing attention to the importance of culture and childrearing values on parental mediation strategies, there is a call to explore parental

mediation strategies across various countries to identify any country-specific factors (Kirwil, 2009; Shin & Li, 2017; Helsper et al., 2013; Krcmar & Cingel, 2015).

Matsumoto et al. (2021) summarise the existing approaches to understanding parental strategies for managing the use of digital media into three broad categories: 1) parental mediation styles, 2) mediation strategies, and 3) mediation as an emergent process. The first refers to the natural traits, socio-demographic factors and psychological components of humans, which may be governing their decisions on allowing or restricting access to digital media. In this view, digital media requires active management, lest it overtakes all the free time available to children. The second relates to mediation strategies, where the focus moves onto children and their daily lives, within which parents administer access to digital devices to punish or reinforce certain types of behaviour by removing or providing devices, respectively. The third category is the more recent approach and focuses on the interaction among social and material (devices), where parents tend to create a space for children involving different digital media devices and activities influenced by their beliefs. In this study, I explore parents' mediation strategies of their children's interactions with digital technologies, intending to provide insights into children's digital media practices by focusing on their everyday lives in line with eco-cultural theory (Tudge, 2008).

In relation to parents' mediation of their children's digital media practices, parental mediation theory acknowledges parents' involvement in their children's use of technologies. As Clark (2011, p. 325) notes, 'parental mediation theory posits that parents utilize different interpersonal communication strategies in their attempts to mitigate the negative effects of the media in their children's lives. It also assumes that interpersonal interactions about media between parents and their children play a role in socializing children into society.' Although researchers initially focused on the adverse effects of the media and the unwanted effects of television on young children, the work within the sociology of childhood and situated learning has put in place '...models that place at the centre of the investigation the child and her interactive experiences with influential adults' (Clark, 2011, p. 332).

Following the spread of digital media use, scholars have started linking and developing parental mediation theory with other digital media uses as well (Valcke et al., 2010; Valkenburg et al., 1999). The theory broadly connects with Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning, and recent research into parental mediation of young children's digital media

practices has revealed the following mediation strategies as the most widely used (Nikken & Jansz, 2014; Zaman & Mifsud, 2017): *active mediation*; *restrictive mediation*; *co-use*. **Active mediation** refers to the situation where parents talk to their children regarding the negative influences of media on their children to help them understand the potential negative effects of digital devices (Gentile, Swing, et al., 2012; Nathanson, 1999). Children thus can 'accept and internalise media rules in order to abide by them willingly.' (Clark, 2011, 327).

Restrictive mediation refers to parents' mediation strategies to restrict children's use of digital technologies (Valkenburg et al., 2013). Restrictions generally include the time, location, and duration of the interactions with digital media (Gentile, Swing, et al., 2012; Nikken & Jansz, 2014). **Co-use** means that parent and child use digital media together and watch content on TV or other digital devices, playing games or creating content that ultimately shares practices between parents and their children based on their commonly developed interests (Gentile et al., 2012). Clark (2011) notes that parents' mediation strategies also use various interpersonal communication techniques and adds the fourth strategy – participatory learning, which is learner-centred and '[...], encourages parents to be listeners and co-creators who invite their young people to serve as leaders and guides into experiences with gaming, mobile phones, and social networking, among other things.' (pp. 334-335).

With the increasing omnipresence and variety of digital devices, researchers have started going beyond the above-mentioned strategies as they tended to be less effective in relation to digital media such as computers, tablets, and new smartphones (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014). More studies have been conducted in the Global North to study what mediation strategies parents were using to manage their children's digital media practices across different contexts. Nikken and Jansz (2014) surveyed 792 Dutch parents' mediation styles of children's (aged 2- 12) uses of the internet in the Netherlands and revealed that parents also use 'supervision' and 'technical safety guidance' when it comes to the mediation of children's uses of the internet. Supervision strategy means that '...the child is allowed to go online alone but with the reassurance that they are under the direct supervision of a nearby parent', and 'technical safety guidance' is where parents install filters and programmes on children's devices to safeguard them against potential online harms and risks (ibid., 259). Zaman et al. (2016) used a diary method and interviews with 24 Flemish families in Belgium, with children aged 3 to 9, to explore contextual factors shaping

parental mediation styles of their children's uses of digital technologies. Their study identified a new mediation style, distant mediation, a combination of supervision and deference mediation styles previously identified in the parental mediation literature. Zaman et al. (2016) analyse parental mediation, adopting 'tacit knowledge' by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) in their qualitative research with 15 families and their children aged 0-8, and they distinguish among three mediation styles – 'regulation', 'guidance', and 'space', which are based on parents' various values (e.g., balance protection, health) and emotions (joy, love, fear, anger, and disapproval).

In their small-scale qualitative study of seven Czech Roma families, Zezulcova and Stastna (2018) looked at the influence of parental ethnotheories and values, including Romanipen, on parental mediation styles, and as a result of their exploration, they revealed three parental mediation styles: 'authoritative', 'pragmatic', and 'engaged'. My study did not examine the relevance and use of parental mediation strategies identified in the literature and discussed above in the context of Azerbaijan. On the contrary, by focusing on the potential influence of family context as well as parental ethnotheories and parents' own experiences with digital media explained through the lens of the prolepsis, I sought to reveal mediation strategies employed by parents which were influenced by parental ethnotheories, culture or family context.

3.6 Influences on parents' mediation strategies

This section summarises any influences on parental mediation strategies discussed in the existing literature. As a result of the literature review, the following influences on parents' mediation strategies have been summarised below:

- Parenting styles;
- Socio-economic status;
- Parents' gender;
- Parents' views;
- Parents' culture;
- Ethnicity of parents.

Parents' mediation strategies have been found to be influenced by their parenting styles (Holloway et al., 2014; Shin, 2018). Baumrind (1991) has identified four parenting styles that are differentiated according to the extent of the demandingness and responsiveness of parents. The identified parenting styles are: authoritative – that is, where parents are more responsive and demanding; authoritarian – parents are more demanding and less responsive; permissive – parents are not demanding but very responsive; and laissez-faire, where parents are less responsive and demanding. According to Warren and Aloia (2019), parenting styles such as authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian parenting were related to restrictive, active, and co-use mediation practices. Chaudron, Marsh et al., (2018) argued that already established parenting styles together with parent values create a spillover effect onto parents' mediation strategies.

Valcke et al. (2010) formulated a matrix based on Baumrind's styles in the context of digital technologies and have developed it further in relation to children's internet uses to study 'parental internet styles'. According to the authors (ibid), the authoritative mediation style entails parents setting rules but explaining them to the children, while in contrast, the authoritarian style implies setting rules without any explanation and with an expectation for them to be followed unquestioned. With permissive style, rules are not established, but parents are involved by monitoring children's access occasionally and negotiating the duration or frequency of access. Lastly, laissez-faire style means that parents do not interfere at all in their children's digital media practices. Based on the data collected for one of the most extensive European-wide studies led by Chaudron (2015) Brito et al. (2017) compared qualitative research findings from 14 European countries related to the ways in which parents manage their young children's uses of digital media, and the authoritative style was accepted most readily by parents to mitigate their children's use of digital technologies.

Parents with higher income are more involved in parental mediation than parents with lower income (Livingstone et al., 2015). In addition to this, parents' own knowledge and skills in digital technologies might predict their adoption of parental mediation style: parents who are less skilled in digital technologies might choose restrictive mediation style, and parents with more self-confidence in their digital skills feel more in control of their children's use of technologies (Dias et al., 2016). In general, parents' presence and availability at home are directly correlated with children's uses of digital technologies: as

the parents' availability increases at home, their involvement in parental mediation increases as well (Warren et al., 2002).

Parents' mediation strategies might differ depending on parents' gender (Valcke et al., 2010), and the previous literature argues that mothers and fathers have different mediation strategies for children's digital media practices (Brito et al., 2017). While fathers allow children more freedom to use digital media due to their technical competence, mothers are usually more conservative in their approaches and provide their children with more detailed guidance (Dias et al., 2016). Additionally, parents' views on the positive outcomes of their children's digital media practices significantly impact their mediation strategies (Smahelova et al., 2017). Exploring fathers' views on the mediation practices and their own strategies regarding their children's interactions with digital technologies is needed (Tang et al., 2018), and can contribute further insights to the literature.

Parents' mediation strategies are also influenced by their culture (Kirwil, 2009; Livingstone et al., 2015; Krcmar & Cingel, 2016; Smahelova et al., 2017). Culture can influence parents' mediation strategies as well as their effectiveness (Krcmar & Cingel, 2016). There can be cross-cultural similarities and differences in parents' mediation strategies for their children's uses of digital media (Kirwil, 2009, Krcmar & Cingel, 2016; Smahelova et al., 2017; Helsper et al., 2013). For example, parents in all cultures across Europe agree on the importance of parental mediation strategy. However, there is variation in the selection of parental mediation practices based on the culture (Chaudron, 2015). For example, in collectivist cultures, parents favour restrictive mediation over non-restrictive by setting time and content restrictions (Kirwil, 2009; Krcmar & Cingel, 2016).

Researchers have also measured the influence of ethnicity of parents on their mediation strategies, and findings indicate the potential influence (Barkin et al., 2006). For example, Hispanic families generally do not limit their children's uses of digital media as restrictively as Asian parents do in terms of their children's uses of TV and video games (Connell et al., 2015). Helsper et al. (2013) have developed the EU Kids Online classification identifying different parental mediation practices of the European countries, for example, parents in the UK, Russia, Italy, Germany and Belgium use restrictive parental mediation strategy, while parents in the Czech Republic use a passive mediation style. This kind of research is sporadic and not detailed enough to elaborate on possible influences of cultural and family context or parental ethnotheories on their mediation practices. Also, any

differential contextual factors might help to explain parents' certain mediation practises across various countries and contexts. In my study focusing on the context of Azerbaijan, I am interested in the influence of family context on parents' mediation practices of their children's uses of digital media at home.

The increasing embeddedness of digital technologies in family life exerts bidirectional influence on family dynamics, particularly between parents and children. According to Livingstone and Helsper (2008, p. 582), 'parental mediation both results from processes of family dynamics and child socialisation and contributes to the shaping of family values, practices, and media literacy'. It might therefore be expected that children are viewed as passive in dealing with the uses of digital media, but they engage with it beyond home and tend to bring their experiences into their family lives. As a result, the formation of mediation practices also greatly depends on children's characteristics. As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter in 2.4, children participate in and contribute to (re)shaping their cultural and family context.

There are a few studies on parental mediation, but not many on children's understandings and negotiations of the parental mediation strategies (Chaudron, Marsh, et al., 2018). Recognising the existence of various parental mediation styles concerning young children's digital media use, my study explored parental mediation strategies as influenced by their parental ethnotheories and family context within which their daily lives are situated. In doing so, the study also studied interrelationships within families in response to parents' mediation strategies regarding children's uses of digital media.

Given this crucial influence, this thesis sought to identify any potential parental mediation strategy shaped by the influence of family context, including the contribution of the parental ethnotheories and parents' own experiences with digital media, explored here through the concept of the prolepsis. The thesis did not attempt to confirm (non)existence of the above-mentioned parental mediation strategies identified in the mediation literature over the years. Instead, by drawing attention to the family context influencing parental mediation strategies, this thesis explored the possibility of parents' adopting a different mediation strategy influenced by family context within their culture, parental ethnotheories, and parents' previous everyday experiences with digital media. Focusing on the everyday activities of the families in their homes through cultural-ecological theory can

be helpful to identify any practices and strategies that parents adopt to mediate their children's everyday digital media practices.

3.7 Summary

The society where children are born influences their everyday activities (Tudge et al., 2006) and the ways in which they are brought up and prepared for their future lives makes a difference in their exposure to digital technologies (Livingstone et al., 2015). Irrespective of children's sociocultural status, access to digital technologies is rapidly increasing in line with the ubiquity of technologies. Even though it has proven difficult for researchers to keep up with the rapid development of digital technology (Coyne et al., 2017), the existing studies shed light on young children's exposure to digital media well before school years.

The main points that emerged from the literature review were:

- Young children's digital media practices need to be explored in a different cultural context, such as Azerbaijan;
- Fathers' opinions and views are missing in the literature;
- The ways in which family context and parental ethnotheories influence parents' mediation strategies.

Despite the growing number of research studies in the Global North, to my knowledge, no research related to young children's digital media practices has been conducted in Azerbaijan. The literature reviewed as part of this study also revealed that the approaches selected by parents can vary across cultural contexts. The research in this field is more common in the Global North, and while more remains to be investigated, there is still a better picture available to us than that of the limited research in the Global South. Exploring young children's digital media practices and their parents' viewpoints on mediation strategies around digital technologies in Azerbaijan can therefore be beneficial.

Previous research has focused mainly on mothers' opinions in relation to their children's digital media practices, and there is an apparent absence of research on the role of fathers in their children's digital media practices. Research also highlights that mothers

take responsibility for devising mediation strategies in most cases. The role of fathers in devising such mediation strategies was also explored in the present study.

Having the perspective of a different family context may enrich our understanding of the strategies parents choose to employ. This study shed light on parents' mediation strategies as affected by the family context and parental ethnotheories.

4 Methodology and data generation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter summarised the literature review conducted for the study on young children's digital media practices with a focus on the family context, and identified influences on these practices, as well as on parents' mediation strategies. It also briefly discussed the literature on parental mediation theory, focusing on the widely discussed parents' mediation strategies.

This chapter will explore the methodology and research design employed in this study. I will discuss matters including ethics and reliability, rationale and procedure. The latter parts of the chapter will refer to the two primary research methods used in my research, namely home visits in Baku, and the 'living journals' method that I developed to facilitate conducting this study from afar. Finally, I will present my approach to data analysis.

4.2 Qualitative case study

As stated in the theoretical framework chapter, I selected contextualism for this study, meaning I subscribe to the view that there are many realities rather than a single one (Creswell, 2013b; Tudge, 2008). The selected research paradigm also informs the methodology and data generation methods (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2009). To study multiple realities in-depth around children's digital media practices in Azerbaijan, qualitative case study research was developed (Merriam, 1988, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2021; Yin, 2013). Case studies can be qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods in nature (Yin, 2009, 2014), and in my study, a qualitative case study was used drawing on multiple cases – five homes in Azerbaijan to identify young children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies.

The case study method is mainly linked with three methodologists, Sharan Merriam, Robert K. Yin and Robert E. Stake. From an epistemological perspective, Yin (2015) leans more on a positivistic approach, focusing on the generalisability of research findings and being more concerned with ensuring the internal and external validity and reliability in the

research design. Stake (1995) and Merriam's (1998; 2009) epistemological viewpoints lean towards constructivism, in which knowledge is constructed among individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Both researchers highlight the existence of multiple realities, and only Merriam highlights co-construction of knowledge (Yazan, 2015). Merriam (2009) suggests the existence of multiple realities and their interpretations as well as the co-construction of them, which closely aligns with the contextualism paradigm explained in the theoretical framework chapter in 2.2. Whilst Yin does not demonstrate a clear stance between qualitative and quantitative research methods by not differentiating them (Yazan, 2015), Stake (1995) and Merriam (1988) suggest qualitative research methods for generating data for case studies. Revisiting contextualism as an argument for the existence of multiple realities and co-construction of the knowledge by the researcher and the participants, I draw on Merriam's case study approach.

The definition of case study varies greatly depending on the researchers' epistemological and ontological beliefs (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Patton (2015) suggests selecting the definition which resonates with one's research aim. Yin (2014, p. 16) defines a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in-depth and within its real-world context', paying special attention to ensuring validity and staying alert to this aspect in research. Stake (1995, p. xi) defines case study as 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'. Merriam (1998, p. xiii) defines case study as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit'. Drawing on the case study definition by Merriam (2009), I attempted to better understand '...the meaning people have constructed, that is how people make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world' (p.13).

According to Merriam (2009, p. 22), 'individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds', and through a case study of five homes in Azerbaijan, I aimed at meaning-making from young children's digital media practices at home and (re)constructing knowledge in conversation with them and their families (Merriam, 1998; 2009). Employing a qualitative case study approach allows the researcher to further delve into participants' everyday lives in their own settings (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2011), thus, I was interested in exploring young children's digital media practices in Azerbaijan through revealing their everyday practices. Also, a case study approach motivates the researcher to study the

phenomenon of interest in-depth and scrutinize the context and participants (Stake, 1998). Therefore, in studying young children's digital media practices in a home setting, I developed research questions that would shed light on the influences of their main interlocutors and family context in their everyday lives, basing it theoretically within the framework of ecocultural theory (Tudge, 2008).

For years, some opponents of the case study approach have refused to accept it as a formal method, criticising case studies as not being rigorous enough, as well as emphasising difficulties with generalisability, reliability, and validity (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2014: 2018). The problem stems from the results not being generalisable, but the approach is considered helpful in generating hypotheses rather than testing them or building a theory (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Since a researcher is usually personally involved in many steps of a case study, it is argued that one would find it difficult to look beyond their preconceived notions, thereby affecting the unbiased interpretation of the findings (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

As with other research approaches, case study has its own advantages and disadvantages. Although this research study was the first of its kind in Azerbaijan to my knowledge at the time of writing, generalisation of the research findings was neither my goal nor attempt in this case research (Yin, 2014). Instead, I was interested in influences of the 'everydayness' of children's practices (Tudge et al., 2011) and 'ordinariness' of culture (William, more discussion on Black), parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996), parents' previous experiences (Cole, 1998), and their influences on their mediation strategies. By focusing on the elements mentioned above, the research aimed to look at children's digital media practices in-depth and reveal any potential influences of family context on children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies. Thus, Azerbaijan was not used as a single case study; rather, five family homes were each used as individual cases for the study.

Defining the type of case study used in the study

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative case study features are *particularistic* – focusing on a specific situation or an event; *descriptive* – offering an in-depth description of a phenomenon being explored; and *heuristic* – extending a reader's experience of the discussed phenomenon or offering new insights about it. A case study is an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon of interest in a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015),

and a case is 'a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context' (Miles et al., 1994, p. 25). Homes were selected as a bounded context in Azerbaijan, and each family home represented a case, as the focus was not on the anthropological exploration of families and their practices but more on the strategies they individually employed to manage the uses of digital media by their children. As suggested by Merriam (2009, p. 41), the cases are intrinsically bounded, and in my study, cases are bounded by i) time – all children are aged five, ii) a place – all children are from Azerbaijan, and iii) stages – all children were in their school preparation year.

Case study can include a single case (Yin, 2014, 2016) or multiple cases (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007, 2013; Stake, 2010). Creswell (2007, p. 73) argues that,

Case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (*a case*), or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes [original emphasis].

There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple (Creswell, 2013a): An intrinsic case study explores the case itself as it is usually an interesting, extraordinary case (Stake, 2013). An instrumental case study is used to gain insight into a particular case which is hoped to provide clarity on a particular issue (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995). In contrast to this approach, in a multiple case study, cases are selected to demonstrate and explore a single phenomenon through different perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006).

Given the complexity of real-life contexts (Thomas, 2011), I used multiple case studies. In line with the selected contextualist paradigm, I also believe that knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and researched, and by employing a case study, it is possible to reveal multiple interpretations and provide detailed and thick descriptions for each case (Stake, 2006). By selecting multiple cases, I discussed young children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies.

Case studies can be designed using multiple methods, including observations, interviews, and document analysis and review (Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009). In my study, I used interviews, observations, room tours, photo elucidation with children, and the living journals method to provide rich descriptions of multiple realities provided by children and parents. With regards to children's digital media practices, a number of studies have employed a case study approach (Edwards, 2016; Nansen et al., 2012; Plowman, Stephen, et al., 2010b; Takeuchi, 2011; Teichert & Anderson, 2014). In my study, five family homes are viewed as separate cases in the overall bounding context of Azerbaijan to reveal multiple realities. The theoretical framework of the study fits well with the multiple case study approach as it points to the existence of multiple realities with a focus on everyday activities. Also, the research aim and questions are a good fit for this case study, and are discussed in the following section.

4.3 Research aim and questions

This section describes my research aim and questions. The importance and necessity of formulating well-defined research questions and linking them with strong ties to the theory and methods are crucial in developing a research study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Maxwell (2012) points out the importance of research questions' being 'answerable' by the selected study (p. 76). A case study approach is a good fit to answer the research questions as it supports the development of detailed descriptions of the cases through multiple sources of data generation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

My overall aim for the research was to explore young children's digital media practices in a home setting in Azerbaijan, and identify parents' mediation strategies within their own cultural context. I am particularly interested in the influence of families on their young children's digital media practices within their everyday lives and their parents' mediation strategies influenced by their previous experiences with digital media and parental beliefs and values. Children's everyday digital media practices across several settings have been studied by different researchers, as explained in the literature review. I was curious about the influences of families' and parents' values and beliefs about childrearing on their children's interactions with digital technologies. As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, situating my study within cultural-ecological theory (Tudge et al., 2006), I looked at

children's everyday lives within their own settings, parents' previous experiences with digital media through the concept of prolepsis (Cole, 1998), and parents' values and beliefs through parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996). The research design was based on home visits consisting of several methods each, and I was also keen to identify young children's digital media practices from afar.

Developing two to four research questions is suggested for a case study (Merriam, 1998; Maxwell, 2012; Stake, 1995). Designing the research questions proved to be one of the most challenging stages I had to overcome. I had to revisit and adjust my research questions several times at different stages. The research questions were developed following a logical development of my research aim (Figure 4.1). First, I aimed to look for other ways of generating data, in this case about children's digital media practices, from afar, minimising the role of the researcher. Therefore the first research question was methodological in nature, allowing me to identify children's digital media practices in a home setting and beyond in Azerbaijan. Recognising the existence of the previous child-centred methods where children or their parents were provided cameras, thereby minimising the interferences of the researcher in the field, I was interested in a more multi-layered data approach, including mothers, children, and in particular, fathers as described elsewhere (Savadova, 2021). I was interested in the influence of family on young children's digital media practices as opposed to other influences identified in the literature review. Similarly, focusing on the importance of everyday lives within their cultural context, I was interested in identifying any mediation strategies employed by parents under the influence of parental ethnotheories and their past experiences with digital media as explored through the prolepsis concept.

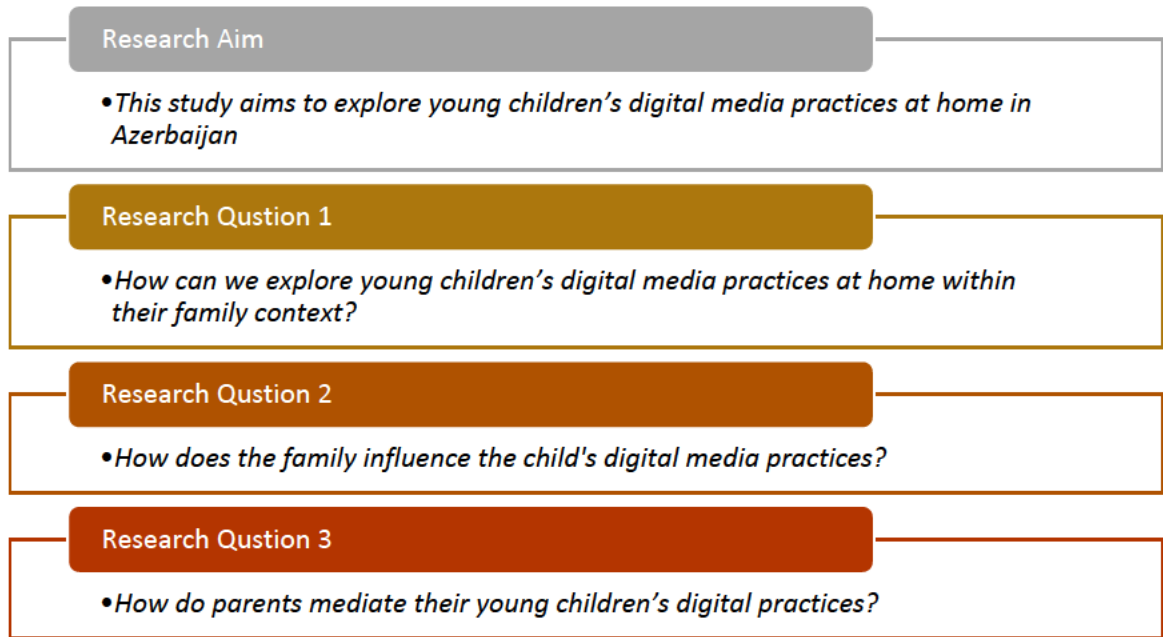


Figure 4.1 Research aim and questions

Given the importance of everyday lives of children and their parents and recognising the differences and similarities of their cultural contexts, the study employs a multiple case study approach to generate and provide in-depth and rich descriptions of the cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), exploring them in real-life situations (Stake, 2006) through home visits and living journals.

4.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of qualitative study means that its findings are credible, sound, and attention-worthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and ensuring trustworthy knowledge means generating data following ethical requirements of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Merriam, 2009). Nowell et al. (2017, p. 3) suggest that trustworthiness criteria adopted by researchers are ‘pragmatic choices’ that they have to make in order to ensure their studies will be valuable and acceptable. Applying several strategies in line with the philosophical underpinnings of their studies can ensure trustworthiness in their research (Patton, 2015). Trustworthiness of the study can also depend on the researcher and their approach to researching ethically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I discuss my reflexivity within the current study later in 10.2. Through multiple case studies, researchers also ensure the

trustworthiness of the study as the phenomenon of interest is studied within multiple cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I tried to ensure the trustworthiness of my study through ***prolonged engagement with participants, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing*** in line with Lincoln and Guba (1985), as explained below.

Prolonged engagement with research participants

I managed to remain in Azerbaijan for almost three months for fieldwork at the end of 2018. My engagement with mothers, in particular, however, started before the fieldwork when I was still in Edinburgh. Upon my return, I stayed in touch with mothers online, which continued during the data generation for living journals throughout 2019. After a short break, I contacted mothers again during the data analysis and later using online means. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were several breaks in our engagement as I tried not to contact families during those challenging times. Despite the short number of home visits in Baku and several interruptions due to Covid-19, I can confidently say that I had a prolonged engagement with mothers. Although from a distance, prolonged engagement with research participants during data generation in Baku and later on in Edinburgh was present to assure the study's credibility. Also, various sources of data, such as interviews with parents generating visual data throughout a year and a half, further contributed to the prolonged engagement and, in the end, the trustworthiness of the study.

Triangulation

Triangulation means cross-checking data generated through various methods such as observations, interviews, and data generated with different participants at various times and places (Merriam, 2009). In my study, triangulation was achieved by using multiple data sources (Patton, 2015) such as interviews with parents, different activities with participant children, visual data sent by the mothers for living journals, and data generated through the discussions around them. The process was not straightforward as there were different data sources such as pictures, videos, interview transcriptions, and living journals data which included multimodal data on their own. In particular, the living journals discussions helped me check my interpretations of the data as participants interpreted their own pictures and videos. The discussions with mothers and children enabled mothers to obtain more insights into their children's daily lives, which provided more data (6.2). Fathers' comments on the

journals also enabled further triangulation of the data generated through the living journals, as well as family visits (6.5).

Through home visits in Baku and living journals in Edinburgh, I was able to gather multimodal data in visual, textual, and audial ways through interviews with parents, having room tours, talking about their daily routines through picture elucidation with children, mothers' generating data for living journals, and discussing the journals with fathers separately, and mother and children together. Different sources of the data also contributed to the triangulation data during analysis (4.8).

Member checking

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 77) argue that member checking is conducted through:

.... solidifying reactions of respondents to the investigator's reconstruction of what he or she has been told or otherwise found out and to the constructions offered by other respondents or sources, and a terminal, formal testing of the final care report with a representative sample of stakeholders.

For me, member checking was challenging because I had different members of the families, such as parents and children. Additionally, I did not want to attempt to cross-check their data as it would have been ethically sensitive, causing potential discord among family members. I preferred to share family case descriptions and a short overview of my findings with mothers and fathers separately, and asked them if I might have misinterpreted any nuances related to their children's digital media practices and mediation strategies. Another challenge for me was that I was not able to discuss children's identified digital media practices with them in person as I did not have direct, in-person access to children, and talking to children online did not seem to be a practical option for me. For that, I trusted mothers to check in with their children, usually in connection to their children's digital media practices as interpreted in the findings.

Peer debriefing

Peer debriefing involves engaging with peers during the research process to explore the researcher's thinking and ways of dealing with the generated data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For peer debriefing, I frequently contacted two close friends conducting PhD studies of their own outside of Azerbaijan. In particular, constantly cross-checking my interpretations on specific issues such as childrearing practices and family relationships in Azerbaijan with my friends from Azerbaijan hugely benefited me to limit any misinterpretations, as I had left the country almost ten years before the time of writing. In this way, during the interpretation of the data analysis, my subjective views on certain cultural aspects in Azerbaijan remained under constant scrutiny.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Conducting qualitative research ethically ensures its trustworthiness (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). I tried to stay in tune with my obligations to the ethics committee, and I was aware of the 'ethically important moments' in the fieldwork and beyond (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 262). Throughout the study, I realised that qualitative researchers face ethical dilemmas and have to make ethical decisions in all the stages of their research study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; McGowan, 2020), especially when conducting research with young children and their families. This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines detailed in the BERA ethical guide (BERA, 2018). I only started contacting parents upon receiving ethical approval from the ethics committee at the University of Edinburgh (Appendix 1. Ethics application and approval from the University of Edinburgh). All identities are pseudonymised in the study, and I have obtained parents' and children's consent to use their images in the thesis or other publications and conferences presented on the generated data for this study. This section describes ethical considerations I faced and my approach to tackling them.

Mothers consented to participate in the research study after our first communication, and they asked for some time to discuss their participation with their spouses. I emailed mothers informed consent forms to provide them with lay terms about the research and its procedures and to aid them in their discussions with their spouses (Appendix 2. Informed consent form for parents). I explained to parents that participation in research was

voluntary, and they had a right to withdraw. Since two of the research participants were my friends, I paid particular attention to reiterating this position. According to Gallagher et al. (2010), it is almost impossible for researchers to claim that their participants are informed enough. Hence, in this study, I approached ethics as a continuous process (Flewitt, 2005); before each family visit, I renewed mothers' and children's consent. In addition to mothers, there were grandparents living in some families. I was aware of the complex power relations at home (Gallagher, 2019). Therefore, I paid due attention to observing power relations established in those households and acted accordingly.

Alongside parents, I approached children to seek their consent to participate in the study. Children can develop a different approach to and understanding of informed consent than adults (Arnott et al., 2020), and therefore, children's consent was approached with great care and attention considering its full complexity and holistic nature (Harcourt & Conroy, 2005; Kustatscher, 2014). Researchers have developed various practical, creative approaches to obtain informed consent from young children (e.g., Arnott et al., 2020). Children's consent was asked through an informed consent form prepared in accessible language for a five-year-old child to understand (Appendix 3. Informed consent form for children). My approach to the informed consent form for children was to ensure that children would be aware of the research procedures and what was asked and not asked from them. I explained to the children that I was there to find out more about their daily life and activities, for which I needed their agreement and approval. I had printed three questions on paper to gain their consent to participate in the activities during family visits and the living journals method. The questions were: '1. Do you want to spend time with me and tell me about what you do during one day? 2. Is it ok if your mother takes pictures or short videos of you and sends them to me? 3. Do you want to show me your favourite toys and take their pictures with me?.' The questions were intended for parents to read carefully and pose to children verbally. At the beginning of each family visit, I adopted an individual approach to explaining the questions to each child until I was content that the children understood them rather than agreed instinctively. I explained the research and discussed the reasons and extent of my visits to their families. I had a sheet of smiling and sad face stickers. I explained to the children that they could use the stickers to answer my questions by placing one below the questions as I read them and that it would be all right if they used neither. I had also left large blank spaces between questions in the consent forms if children

wanted to write or draw something on them. At that time, my intentions for including empty spaces were general rather than specific. Children preferred a more hands-on approach during the family visits and drew faces on the consent forms instead of stickers. As an extension of this exercise, they also used other blank papers to draw pictures for me to take home.

As with adults' consent, with children too, I made sure to ask children's continuous consent to participate in the activities and continuously offered them opportunities to join or leave the activity without applying any pressure on them (Penuel et al., 2009). Children's consent involved maintaining ethical relationships with them (Arnott et al., 2020). Sometimes they expressed their dissatisfaction; however, it was only noticeable in their verbal clues. Therefore, during family visits, I held myself accountable to follow children's subtle verbal clues (Flewitt, 2005), and there were times I asked children to take a break or stop the activity they were doing.

In the informed consent forms, parents and children did not want children's faces to be blurred; instead, they agreed that I could use children's pictures as they were in the thesis, publications, and conference presentations. I approached this consent as a possibly changing one, and before any conference presentations and publications, and in the final draft of the thesis, I approached parents and children through online means for an opportunity to affirm or revoke their consent on this particular issue. I also discuss children's involvement in this study in the living journals chapter in 5.5.

My son in several family visits

I had to take my three-year-old son to Azerbaijan to do fieldwork because my husband had a full-time job, and we did not have any childcare options in Edinburgh. I had many childcare options in Azerbaijan, including my mother's help. I had not planned to include my son in the family visits, and neither had I planned to take him with me. But one family visit to Elcan's family fell on a Saturday, and I had to take my then three-year-old son along. My son was welcomed, and soon the children included him in their games and even shared their iPads and games with him (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2 Family home visit 2. Elcan's sister, Arzu, is trying to find a game for my son, David, on her iPad, and David is sharing his snacks with her

Similarly, in Kamala's family visit 2, I had to take my son with me again, and this time Mrs Azadova was alone with her children at home. During our interview, Mrs Azadova explained that she never allowed her children to use her phone at home. Even when her toddler son asked her, she said she might think about it after guests left. When I gave my own phone to my son to watch videos on YouTube kids, she told her son he could do the same and gave her phone to him. In general, it seemed surprising for both mothers when I allowed my son to use my phone or tablet. Because, I think, they were expecting me not to allow my son to use any digital device at this young age at all as a part of 'good' parenting practice. While I argue that it did not alter Mrs Azadova's views on the young children's uses of digital media, I think it did change her opinion about me, as I believe she thought due to 'good' parenting practices as expected in Azerbaijan, and also as a PhD student in education, I would have been against it, i.e., not allowing my own child to use it. My thinking was further justified in the subsequent visit, where I interviewed Mrs Azadova, and it was revealed that she was very much against digital media use by young children due to her perception of their adverse effects on children.

4.6 Sampling

Sampling strategy

As explained earlier, the study aimed at heeding calls to extend research in young children's uses of digital technologies beyond Global North countries (Marsh, 2015b; Shin and Li, 2017). The study was the first of its kind in Azerbaijan, there was no reference point in terms of similar research in the Azerbaijani context and it was challenging to have access to the country and participants.

Within the context of Azerbaijan, I invited five families with five-year-old children to participate in the study. The participant children were in the school preparation year and were transitioning from nurseries to schools. Their homes were bounded cases for the study where children's digital media practices and parents' mediation strategies were the principal foci of the study within their everyday lives at home.

For my study, I was interested in locating 'information-rich cases' to find out more about '... issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry...' (Patton, 2015, p. 53). Identifying participants in Azerbaijan while being in Scotland proved challenging in the beginning. To address the problem, I initially used a convenience sampling method to inquire about suitable families through my personal and professional networks. After identifying several families with a five-year-old child, I employed the snowballing sampling strategy (Bryman, 2012), allowing me to access their personal social circle with children of the same age. A snowballing sampling strategy is used when reaching participants within the desired population for research is difficult and help is needed from the members of the target population (Naderifar et al., 2017; Bryman, 2012). Through the mixture of convenience and snowball sampling strategies (Creswell, 2012), I was able to identify five families meeting the requirements for participation in my study.

Merriam (2009) argues for the necessity of 'two-tier sampling' in qualitative case studies, which entails the selection of cases within the case. Furthermore, sampling involves selecting not only participants but also sites, settings, processes, and events as well. In my study, Azerbaijan was selected as a site for several reasons important to the research, such as:

- to explore the interrelationships in the homes in relation to children's digital practices under the influence of the cultural context;
- there was no similar study in the country that could be a reference point in the future for Azerbaijan (I am not aware of any research study conducted in Azerbaijan on children's digital practices at the time of writing);
- not much is known about the use of digital technologies by young children in the Global South (Plowman, 2015; Marsh, 2015).

The recruitment process commenced when I was still in Edinburgh. This decision was dictated mainly by my limited time for fieldwork in Baku. Initially, I used my personal contacts to spread the word about my research. When I first told my friends about my intention to find participants in Baku, two of them told me that they had children of that age and expressed the desire to participate in the study. As I had not lived in Azerbaijan for a while, I did not know the exact ages of my friends' children. I discuss my relations with two participant mothers and ethical consequences in 10.2 and 10.4. The only criterion in selecting participants was that the families had to have a five-year-old child. Further inquiries with these families, as well as with personal and professional contacts led to recruiting three more families.

Upon the first tentative agreement with mothers through emailing, they all took some time to think about their participation and discussed it with their families. Following the agreement, I sent mothers written informed consent forms where I had described the research in detail so that they could familiarise themselves with the information and discuss it with their spouses. Afterwards, all mothers confirmed their families' and own willingness to participate in the study. Following the mothers' consent, I organised a separate online meeting with each of them where I provided more information on the study, met the participant child to ask for their consent, and gained insights into the demographics of each family.

Sample size

All the families consisted of two heterosexual parents (Table 4.1). I need to mention that same-sex marriages are illegal in Azerbaijan when writing this thesis. The Socio-Economic Status (SES) is derived from my observations of the participant families and

general knowledge of the living condition of the population, which is the next best thing in the absence of a proper definition from statistical agencies, as I had not collected data on income and other pertinent criteria. My plans for data collection with the families were quite loaded and ambitious, which required that I established good relations and trust with the participants. My inquiry into their financial assets and income would have required a great deal of time and resources, potentially violating the trust between us. In my first visit, I asked a mother about her income but she was reluctant to answer the question, so I decided not to ask other participants about their income at all. For the purposes of gaining a perspective, through my observations a low SES equates to near or below the poverty line, while a middle refers to people who can afford to live comfortably, have their own flat, a car, and at least one stable job. In my research, high SES referred to a comparatively well-off family that could afford to send children to prestigious private preschools and provide personal digital devices to all their children (see Table 5.1 for children's ownership of devices). All names and surnames are pseudonyms.

Family	Person	Name	Age	Education	Occupation
Elcan Aliyev's family	Participant child	Elcan	5y 1m	Preschool in English	
	Mother	Narmin	30y	BA in English	Homemaker
	Father	Ayaz	33y	BA in Economics	Entrepreneur
	Sister	Arzu	8y	Private school in English	
	Brother	Elay	3y	Mother looks after him at home	
Khumar Hajiyeva's family	Participant child	Khumar (girl)	5y 3m	Private preschool in Russian	
	Mother	Banu	32y	BSc, MSc in Finance	Finance analyst
	Father	Nazim	32y	BSc in Economics	Procurement specialist
	Brother	Mahir	1y	At home (Looked after by a babysitter)	
Yasin Mammadov's family	Participant child	Yasin	5y	Tutoring in Russian	
	Mother	Fatima	31y	BA, MA in Regional studies	
	Father	Nadir	30y	BA in Regional studies	
	Sister	Aydan	8m		
	Grandmother	Safayat	52y	Secondary school	Homemaker
Kamala Azadova's family	Participant child	Kamala	5y	Public preschool in Russian	
	Mother	Sara	26y	BA, MA in English, PGCert in Education	
	Father	Murad	34y	MSc in Economics	
	Brother	Kamran	3y	Public preschool in Azerbaijani	
Bilal Rzayev's family	Participant child	Bilal	5y 1m	Private preschool in Azerbaijani	
	Mother	Amina	29y	MSc in Engineering	University teacher
	Father	Osman	33y	BSc in Engineering	Computer Engineer
	Brother	Davud	Born in Dec 2019		

Table 4.1 Demographic information on participant families

This section outlined sampling and recruitment procedures in the study through my personal and professional networks in Baku. This case study of five homes in Azerbaijan

proved to help gain insights into digital media practices of young children and their families, which also shed light on the role of the family context in such practices (Merriam, 1998). I describe each family in detail in the first findings chapter, where I provide case descriptions in detail (Chapter 8).

4.7 Data generation

I employed purposeful sampling to invite participants to the study (Merriam, 1998) and detailed the sampling procedures and actions in the previous section. This section describes the research design and consists of two subsections. The first section provides details on the data generation in Baku through family home visits and the second describes employing the living journals approach in Edinburgh.

Yin (2017, p. 66) refers to research design as a 'blueprint' for research – 'a logical plan for getting from here to there'; *here* being the beginning of the research study, such as setting questions, and *there* as interpreting the results of the research. Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) advise adopting a flexible approach towards designing a case study. However, Merriam (1998; 2009) suggests determining a well-defined design before embarking on the case study research while also staying flexible in the journey potentially filled with various challenges.

An opportunity for flexibility during the research design process, despite having an initial well-defined research design, proved to be helpful in the study since I had to make changes to the research design as I went along. I was interested in children's everyday lives and their everyday interlocutors in their own settings (Tudge, 2008) in relation to their digital media practices and parents' mediation practices. For various reasons, I was not able to stay in Baku for as long a time as initially planned at the start of my PhD studies. Therefore, I divided the data generation into two phases: the first phase in the field – in Baku, and the second phase – in Edinburgh, remotely exploring children's daily activities. I decided to conduct three visits to each family's home in Baku, which I called 'family home visits'. Each employed various methods and served a different purpose. While I acknowledge that my presence at home could have had certain implications for children and families regarding the authenticity of their activities, I think that children and other family members became accustomed to my presence over time. The following figure illustrates the

steps and times of the methods used in the data generation process, which I subsequently detail chronologically (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 Data generation stages

Online introductory meetings

September 2018

For various reasons, I could not visit Azerbaijan to start the fieldwork early and conduct introductory meetings with participant children and their families in person. Therefore, I turned to digital media tools in Edinburgh and arranged introductory online ‘visits’ with mothers. They were designed: i) to serve as introductory meetings with parents and children (if they were available); ii) to provide extensive information on the research methods and procedures for parents and children, when possible; and iii) to obtain more information about family members.

As mentioned earlier, five families living in the capital city – Baku – kindly agreed to participate in my research. Prior to conducting the online meetings, I emailed mothers, as they were my primary contacts, to ask for appropriate dates and times for them to have an online introductory meeting. I left the choice of date and time to the mothers. The online visits were video and audio recorded using ‘Blackboard Collaborate’ virtual classroom

software procured and supported by the University of Edinburgh. Through Collaborate, I created links for separate meetings and sent them to mothers to use any digital device at home to join the meeting.

Given that the platform provides an option to record the meetings and follow mothers' and children's consent as described in 4.5, I video-recorded the meetings. Due to the purposes of the meetings, mothers were required attendees, but children were invited when available. I stated explicitly and made it clear to the mothers that it was not 'required' for the children to attend the meetings because I was aware that young children may not have wanted to talk to a stranger over the screen. As expected, I was not able to meet all the participant children, some of them only popped in to say hello, while others wanted to stay longer to chat with me about their preschool or their interests, and others yet were not available at the time.

The videos of the meetings were transcribed to develop the family case descriptions and make adjustments to the interview questions for mothers. Based on the topics we discussed, I added questions for mothers to my interview schedules to further explore during home visits in Baku. Most importantly, I had a chance to get first-hand introductory information from mothers about their families and children, and sometimes from children themselves. The following section details the data generation process in Baku, focusing on each home visit and its procedures in separate subsections.

4.7.1 Family home visits in Baku

October – December 2018

Qualitative researchers tend to study their participants in their 'natural settings' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and I designed family home visits to delve into children's daily lives in their own environment. Considering the importance of the focus on children's everyday activities (Tudge, 2008) in revealing children's digital media practices and their parents' mediation strategies, I focused on revealing their everyday interactions with digital media in a familiar setting, such as their home, without them feeling under anybody's supervision. As noted earlier, while I acknowledge that my presence might have caused some intrusion in their daily activities, I started noticing that soon after my first family visits, children became accustomed to me and tended to accept me as somebody close to their family.

The case study research approach was a good fit, enabling me to employ multiple methods (Stake, 1995). Each visit consisted of several methods aimed at children and their mothers to generate data. This section describes the details of each visit, duration, procedures, and purposes. I provide several brief details of the family visits, such as the timeline, participants, and methods used in each family home visit in the following table (Table 4.2). Subsequently, each visit is described in detail in the following subsections.

Event	Participants	Activities	Duration	Generated data	RQ(s)
Visit 1 October 2018	Mothers and children	Trajectories with mothers	2-4 hours	-Pictures, short videos -Trajectories made by mothers -Audio recordings of trajectory discussions	<i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?</i>
Visits 2 – October- November 2018	Children	Talk about daily routine Room tours	2-4 hours	-Pictures -Short videos -Trajectories made by mothers -Audio recordings of room tours -Daily routine talk	<i>RQ1: How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?</i> <i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?</i>
Visits 3 November- December 2018	Mothers	Interview with mothers	2-4 hours	-Pictures -Short videos -Audio recordings of interviews	<i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?</i> <i>RQ3: How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?</i>

Table 4.2 Brief details of family visits

A multiple case study approach allowed me to adjust the methods that I thought would best fit to realise my research aim and answer the research questions, and each family home visit had a logical connection to the research questions and the aim. I was interested in the influence of parents' previous experiences with digital media and their parental values and beliefs in the form of parental ethnotheories on their children's digital media practices. Therefore, I asked them to create their family and life trajectories. Creating trajectories serves to get to know the participants better (Neale, 2020). Next, I discuss the visits with a focus on the methods used and the participants.

4.7.1.1 Family home visits 1

October 2018

I met families in person during the first family visits. The first round of family visits served the purpose of finding out more about parents' childhood, their previous experiences with digital media, and their values and beliefs about parenting. In line with Cole, those childhood experiences or the behaviour they had observed and remembered from their own parents' might have influenced their parenting styles (Cole, 1998), which could also spill over onto their mediation strategies of their children's digital technology uses. In order to learn the desired information, in the first family visits, I used the method of creating trajectories (Neale, 2015). In order to reveal parents' values and beliefs about their childrearing and their previous experiences with digital media, creating trajectories was a good way for parents to start talking about them. All family visits were arranged with mothers through the WhatsApp application. I went to each family with a voice recorder for audio recording mothers' interviews, an iPad for taking pictures and videos, a paper notepad for taking notes, and my own smartphone.

At all the participants' homes, I was invited to either a cup of tea or food with mothers, which is customary. Most of the time, children joined us too. We would move to the couch or stay at the table upon finishing tea or food. I once again provided them with information on the research and then explained that we would create and discuss life and family trajectories. Afterwards, I asked them whether they had any questions or comments on the research or the visit and ensured their questions were answered or their comments noted (Table 4.3).

Event	Participants	Activities	Duration	Generated	RQ
Family visit 1 October 2018	Mothers and children	Trajectories with mothers	2-4 hours	Pictures, short videos Trajectories made by mothers Audio recordings of trajectory discussions	<i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?</i>

Table 4.3 Details of family home visits 1

Creating trajectories

Drawing on elements of the narrative method, in this visit, I asked mothers to create their family and life trajectories, encouraging them to present their trajectories by asking follow-up questions without being too invasive (Riessman, 2008). As this study aims to capture and convey children's daily lives within their cultural context, it was essential to start the visit by a journey through mothers' lives with a focus on their childhoods, their previous experiences with digital media, and to highlight the important events and encounters since then until their current lives.

Through creating trajectories, mothers were asked to think about major events in their own lives and their families' lives and put them in some kind of order of their choice. Creating a trajectory was borrowed from a workshop conducted by Neale on longitudinal research studies in my first year as a PhD student, and supported by further reading of Neale's work (Neale, 2015, 2020). For the first visit, I asked mothers to talk about their lives and their family's lives in separate trajectories. Also, they were asked to create their trajectories until that moment – *past* part of the trajectories – and in the second stage, to develop *future* part of the trajectories. Mothers first visualised their trajectories in the form that they found convenient and then talked about them (Figure 4.4). One of them preferred to list the events, while another created a line with ups and downs, symbolising high and

low points in her life. The exercise fulfilled its purpose by shedding light on what mothers considered significant events in their lives in their own life trajectory and families' lives in family trajectory up to that point.



Figure 4.4 Steps of creating trajectories

Before creating their trajectories, and several times while we talked about them, I reminded mothers that they should not feel obliged to share any event with me if they felt uncomfortable, and I remained cautious not to cause any discomfort to mothers (Orb et al., 2001). Upon creating their life and family trajectories, I asked mothers to walk me through them, and they explained their life and family trajectories in detail, answering my questions as we progressed. While listening to mothers explaining their trajectories, I was also making notes which I used to pose follow-up questions. During the presentation of their life and family trajectory, I employed the conversational interview technique in order to allow space for participants to narrate their stories in a way that is meaningful for them (Guenette & Marshall, 2009).

In the second stage, I asked mothers to develop separate *future* life and family trajectories, highlighting the events that they thought would be crucial and necessary for their own lives and their families' lives. Upon finishing this exercise, mothers again explained the details of those trajectories to the extent they wanted to share with me. The discussions of the trajectories were audio-recorded, then translated and transcribed for the

data analysis process. The trajectories' visualisations were translated and uploaded on Dedoose for data analysis. Mothers were keen to describe and elaborate on the events necessary to their own and families' lives in detail. While mothers were creating their trajectories and describing them, some of the children preferred to stay with us and draw pictures for me.

I introduced the details of the first family visits and their rationale in this section. They were important in getting to know mothers and finding out about their childhoods in a way that they often referred to their own mothers' parenting styles and drew on similarities and differences with their own parenting styles. While it was not my goal to reveal mothers' parenting styles, by talking about these similarities and differences, mothers also talked about their values and beliefs about childrearing within their cultural context. Similarly, mothers at times talked about their previous experiences with digital media when they were talking about their childhood memories.

While the visits helped reveal the mothers' views, they were also challenging for several reasons. Firstly, mothers sometimes talked about the issues that I found too personal and did not know how to react initially. There was even a time when one of the mothers asked me whether to continue or stop her conversation when she was talking about her challenges of living in Azerbaijan (e.g., growing up as a girl in the country). I was not sure whether I was expected to stop mothers or simply listen to them as a careful listener without further comment. My intention was that the mothers would not feel like I was dismissing their challenges. The second challenge was that in some families, mothers-in-law were present and would come in and out of the room, and again I was not sure to what extent they would have wanted to talk about their trajectories in their children's and mothers-in-law's presence. Therefore, I reminded mothers that they could stop whenever they wanted. For example, in one instance, when a participant mother was talking about her plans, she used the English language so that her mother-in-law would not understand. However, initially, I was not aware of her intentions, and quite naturally, I answered in Azerbaijani, and then she told me in a low voice her intention of not being understood. Thus, this instance made me more attentive to the family dynamics at home and helped me be more cautious in the subsequent visits.

4.7.1.2 *Family home visit 2*

November 2018

Upon finishing family home visits 1, I took a one-week break to arrange and store the generated data and reflect on them by listening to the recordings and going through any visual data gathered during the visits. Merriam (1998; 2009) suggests conducting data generation and analysis simultaneously. Following every family visit, I would take some time to conduct an initial analysis of the data by simply listening to the audio recordings and taking notes. I was checking pictures and videos taken in the first visits and revisiting my notes taken in haste, which allowed me to start putting preliminary general themes together as well as making adjustments in the subsequent visits.

Parents were eager to arrange the visits 2, which was encouraging and a sign of their motivation to continue participating in the study. We again arranged the dates and times for family home visits 2 via WhatsApp. I had obtained children's and parents' consent for all activities, yet I approached ethics as an ongoing process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), as described in 4.5.

Family home visits 2 were mainly focused on the activities with the participant children. Depending on the children's motivation to participate in the activities, some visits lasted longer than others. Activities included discussions about daily routines, which I organised by having children talk about their daily lives through photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002), and room tours borrowed from the study of Plowman and Stevenson (2013), where children were asked to show me around their rooms and talk about their favourite toys and activities (Table 4.4).

The existing literature calls for talking to young children about their digital media use (Dias et al., 2016) and the necessity of creative methods involving young children in qualitative research (Aarsand, 2016). By developing these two activities, I intended to involve young children in the study in creative ways through listening to their voices in their own lives (Clark, 2010; Gallagher, 2019) as well as their interactions with digital media devices. The activities were also important and helpful since I conducted them with the children alone, with only occasional involvement from their mothers and grandmothers. All conversations during the activities were audio-recorded and later on translated and transcribed for data analysis.

Event	Participants	Activities	Duration	Generated data	RQ
Family visits 2 – October- November 2018	Children	Talk about daily routine Room tours	2-4 hours	Pictures Short videos Audio recordings of room tours And daily routine talks	<i>RQ1: How can we explore young children’s digital media practices within their family context?</i> <i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child’s digital media practices?</i>

Table 4.4 Details of family home visits 2

Talk about daily routine

For the ‘talk about daily routine’ activity, I showed participant children stock pictures of other young children doing various everyday activities. The set of pictures consisted of children engaged in activities such as cycling, baking with their mothers, playing with playdough, and activities with digital media. I showed children pictures to elucidate their daily routines. My aim was also to find out about children’s opinions on using technologies in daily life without turning the conversation into an interview. It was aimed at having children talk about their daily routines prompted by the pictures and their use or non-use of digital technologies and different practices in their daily lives. As experts about their own lives (Langsted, 1994), children provided me with meaningful insights into their daily lives.

In the beginning, it seemed like it was a natural way of conversing about their daily routines through other children’s activities prompted by the pictures, but children said on their own that they wanted to play with me instead, and some children wanted to take a

break and then go back to the activity. Two children were not particularly interested in the pictures as they were asking me to play something else with them. In these cases, I played with them as requested and stopped going through the pictures since, from their subtle, unspoken reactions, it was necessary not to stop the activity (Einarsdóttir, 2007; Flewitt, 2005).

Room tours with children

We took regular breaks with children after the first activity, where I either played games of their choice, or they played with their siblings or on their own on the tablet. After the break, I asked the children to show me their rooms and favourite toys and books. As mentioned above, the activity was inspired by Plowman's (2015) use of this approach. Children were quite eager to talk about their favourite toys, activities, books and so on, including their favourite clothing items. This activity also involved only children and me. However here, from time to time, mothers or grandmothers would stay with us or come to the room and prompt children to talk about this or that toy or remind them to behave themselves. This activity further elaborated on children's daily lives by the children themselves and offered insights into their digital media practices at home and beyond.

Both activities in the family home visit 2 were helpful for engaging children in the research. To avoid putting any pressure on them during the activities, I constantly checked their assent. Nevertheless, despite their usefulness, the activities were challenging as well, as it was quite naturally and predictably difficult to maintain children's attention throughout the activities. Also, mothers and grandmothers would sometimes tell children what to tell or show me as it was distracting children.

4.7.1.3 Family home visits 3

November – December 2018

In family home visits 3, I was interested in delving further into mothers' views on their children's digital practices and identifying their mediation strategies, while also revealing the ways in which family context influenced their decisions on the mediation strategies (Table 4.5). For this purpose, I interviewed mothers through semi-structured interviews (Appendix 4. Interview questions for mothers) and the questions were adjusted or changed

following the preliminary analysis of the data generated in the previous home visits (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interviews were audio-recorded. As mentioned earlier in this section, I had planned to include fathers in the interviews as well, but they rejected the offer saying that they did not have much time to spend at home, and therefore their spouses knew better about their children’s daily activities.

Event	Participants	Activities	Duration	Generated data	RQ
Family visits 3 November- December 2018	Mothers	Interview with mothers	2-4 hours	Pictures Short videos Audio recordings of interviews	<i>RQ2: How does the family influence the child’s digital media practices?</i> <i>RQ3: How do parents mediate their young children’s digital media practices?</i>

Table 4.5 Details of family home visits 3

Merriam (1998) cites interviews as one of the most helpful research methods for researchers when conducting case studies. The semi-structured interviews were focused on the research question about finding parents’ mediation strategies and children’s everyday lives. Interviews were conducted during the third family home visits, and at that point, the mothers and I had become familiar with each other, therefore, the interviews lasted longer than expected as the discussion would divert to childrearing and other aspects of life in Azerbaijan. Although sometimes they were not directly related to the interview questions, those conversations proved helpful in identifying parental values and beliefs.

This section describes visits which employed several methods. I was planning to conduct observations for long periods, but I was not able to do so because parents did not

have enough time during the weekdays, as they were working, and due to the long commute, they would usually come home around 7-8 pm. Thus, I chose to conduct activities that would not take too much of the families' time. Another challenge was that children wanted to play or chat with me, making it difficult to take notes. To tackle this, I started taking pictures that I hoped would remind me of the note I wanted to take. Upon returning home, I would make sure to take some time to check pictures and jot down some notes in my journal.

4.7.2 Living journals in Edinburgh: data generation from afar

April – December 2019

After the family home visits in Azerbaijan at the end of 2018, I returned to Edinburgh and took a three-month break from data generation. I focused on transcribing the interviews and activity recordings with mothers and children in this period. While still in Baku, I discussed the possibility of using living journals with mothers and children and asked for their assent and consent to participate. Thus, in parallel with data translation and transcription, I contacted mothers in March 2019 to start data generation for the living journals method in April. The primary purpose and motivation behind conducting the living journals method was to find a research approach to explore young children's daily interactions with digital technologies while minimising my physical intervention in their settings as a researcher. It was designed to seek answers for *RQ1: How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?* During two-week periods at different times of the year – school term and holiday break – I asked mothers to send me pictures or videos of their children, which they were to capture at pre-arranged times and prompted at certain intervals. I compiled those pictures and stills from videos to create custom-designed paper journals for each child in print and digital formats and later used them as prompts in acquiring all family members' opinions on the activities depicted in the journals. This method borrows elements from Tobin and his colleagues' Video-Cued Ethnography (Tobin et al., 1989) and Plowman and Stevenson's (2012) mobile phone diaries method. The living journals method remained central in the data generation process and contributed to the thesis from methodological and empirical perspectives. I briefly introduce the method in this section, and a separate chapter on the living journals approach

provides more granular details on the background, implementation, parents' and children's perspectives, and ethical dilemmas arising from its conduct in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, I provide family and researcher reflections on the living journals method.

I utilised the experience sampling method to explore young children's daily experiences (Hektner, 2007) in a home setting in Azerbaijan (6.3). The living journals method served multiple purposes: i) to better capture children's daily practices with digital technologies by giving voice to the participants, not only through data generation but also through its interpretation, and ii) to provide a solution to some of the challenges of researching homes, such as not wanting to intrude on family life and the difficulty of a researcher observing intermittent practices. I used WhatsApp's instant messaging application as it is very commonly used in Azerbaijan, and all the participant mothers used the application. I collected data while I was in Edinburgh, so I only interacted with mothers through WhatsApp beyond the initial home visits in Baku.

I employed this method twice during the data collection. The procedures were almost the same both times, with a slight alteration in the second phase. During the first phase, I sent prompts to five participant mothers three times a day, asking them to send me pictures or approximately 30-second videos of the participant child, alongside answers to four brief questions about where the child was, who they were with, what they were doing, and why they were doing it. During the second phase, I offered the mothers flexibility in sending me pictures at a later stage, as several of them had a problem sending at the exact time of the prompts or as soon as they took the pictures. Besides this change, I also added one more question to learn how their child felt while doing a given activity. This additional question was inspired by increased interest in affective engagement with participants.

The first phase was welcomed by families, particularly the printed and digital versions of the journals I sent to them, which were regarded as a good memory for the children and shared with all the relatives and even neighbours. Witnessing families' interest, I later decided to conduct the second stage during summer in Azerbaijan to delve into children's daily practices during school holidays. The response pattern was similar in the second phase: while three families were more involved, the other two were less due to mothers' work routines. My previous work on the methodological aspect of the living journals method also details the approach (Savadova, 2021).

To summarise, in this section, I outlined the data generation process for conducting the current study and detailed family home visits in Baku and, later on, the living journals method conducted remotely from Edinburgh. In the following section, I describe how the generated data was analysed.

4.8 Data analysis

The previous section detailed the data generation process regarding the employed methods, their benefits, and challenges. The data analysis was simultaneous with data generation in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), but the analysis became more detailed following translating and transcribing all the generated data, although the process stayed iterative (Merriam, 1998; Miles et al., 1994). In this section, I draw attention to the detailed steps of the data analysis process and the relevant approach which informed and supported it. Detailing data analysis steps systematically helps researchers make their research process as transparent as possible (Malterud, 2001). Doing so seeks to increase the validity and rigour of a qualitative case study (Malterud, 2001; Merriam, 1998, 2009). I have paid particular attention to capturing and unveiling the details of the process as much as possible.

Ecocultural theory, which was discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis, formed an analytical framework for the analysis. Through this framework, I gained insights into children's digital media practices, the role of family context in their practices, parents' motivations to allow or limit access to their children for digital devices, and parents' mediation strategies. While cultural-ecological theory and the concepts do not directly relate to children's digital media practices, through the theory, I focused on children's everyday practices using the living journals method and family visits. Parents' mediation strategies and influences were further studied through the concept of prolepsis to reveal the influence of their own experiences with digital media and, through parental ethnotheories, parents' values and cultural beliefs about childrearing.

Merriam (1998, 2009) highlights the importance of data management prior to data analysis. From a practical point of view, data management remained an important ethical, as well as practical, issue for me throughout the research process, as I was working with sensitive information about children and families (Alderson, 2014). I gathered multimodal

(visual, textual, audial) and diverse data, as it belonged to five different families and their members (Table 4.6). The following table illustrates the whole data set for the study, but I also break down the living journals data according to its types and quantity in Table 6.1 in 6.4.

Types of data	Total duration/count
Audio recordings of interviews (Trajectory discussions)	3 hours 13 minutes
Audio recordings of room tours and talk about the daily routine activities with children	2 hours 53 minutes
Audio recording of individual interviews with mothers in Visit 3	3 hours 42 mins
Living journals (created)	116 pages
Screen recordings of living journals discussions with fathers	5 hours 30 mins
Screen recordings of living journals discussions with mothers	3 hours 3 mins
Number of photos (living journals)	157
Number of text messages (living journals)	333
Total duration of voice messages	32 mins

Table 4.6. Data set depicting all types of generated data

I identified a proper data management strategy and analysis software to make sense of it at various levels. It was crucial to keep the data from each home separate and organised, as each was a separate case. In line with the university's guidelines, I used recommended data management software to store all the visuals and text gathered in Baku and Edinburgh in a safe encrypted platform provided by the university and in the data analysis software, to which only I had access. Hardcopies of the translated transcriptions were kept in a locked drawer in my home.

As support to organise and code data, I referred to Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software (MacMillan & Koenig, 2004). In selecting which software to use, I attended to the idea of its usability and importance in organising and analysing the generated data (Gibbs, 2014). I was familiar with the mixed-method analysis software Dedoose from the earlier research projects I had been involved in, so I used it for analysis purposes. The decision was also motivated by a feature of Dedoose, which allowed me to

upload gathered information in multiple formats in one place and code them, and later on compare and contrast those codes across the ranges.

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 14), data analysis can use various techniques, as 'there is variety in techniques because there are different questions to be addressed and different versions of social reality that can be elaborated'. The variety of the methods reflects the possibility of a different number of approaches that can be applied to analyse qualitative data (Miles et al., 2014).

Merriam (2009, pp. 175-176) defines the data analysis process as that '...of making sense out of the data. Moreover, making sense of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning.' Merriam (ibid) offers researchers clear guidelines through 'consolidating, reducing and interpreting' that lead to the construction of knowledge they seek in their studies. Yin (2014) suggests collecting the data first, followed by the analysis, whilst Stake and Merriam hold different, more flexible approaches to data collection and analysis. Stake (1995) does not suggest an exact time, whereas Merriam (2009, p. 171) argues for simultaneous analysis and generation of data, referring to it being analysed while collecting as 'parsimonious and illuminating'.

Similar to Merriam (2009), Miles et al. (2014, p. 70) highlight that data generation and analysis are 'interweaving' from the very start of research. The analysis in my study was synchronised with the data generation and was iterative in nature (Flick, 2013; Merriam, 1998, 2009; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2015), mainly drawing on the constructivist approaches of Merriam (1998, 2009) and (Miles et al., 1994, 2014) (Figure 4.5). The different stages of the data generation process were not standalone, but instead, each step was informed by the previous one. It was challenging not to divert from the research questions and aim as each family visit data generation would bring up new and interesting nuances to consider. Without ignoring any generated data, I was constantly revisiting my research questions to stay in tune with the aim of the study and, in general, conducting data analysis simultaneously with data generation ultimately contributed to generating rich and highly descriptive data.

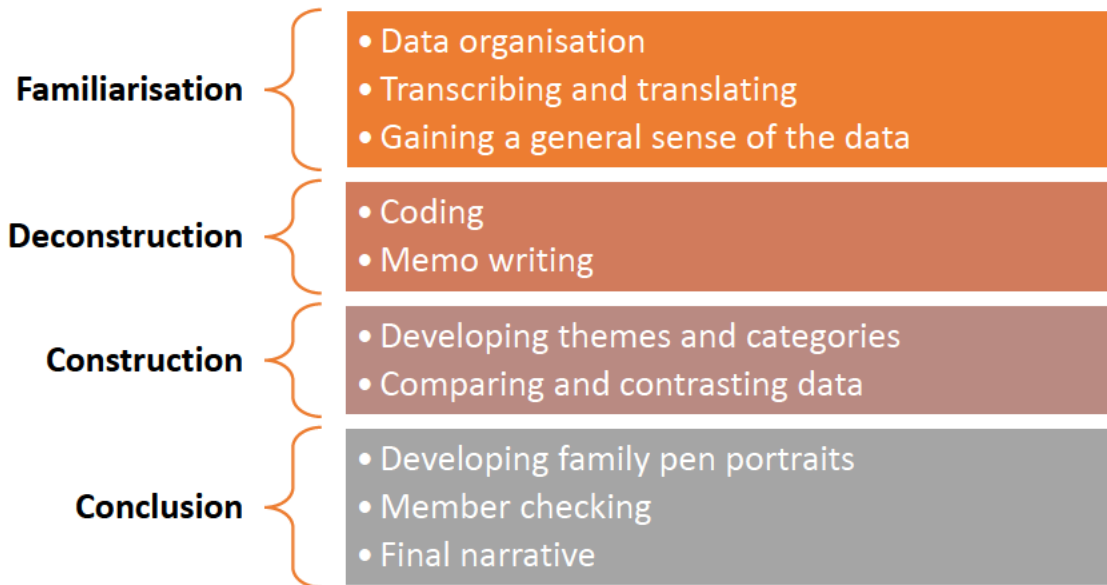


Figure 4.5 Data analysis stages (Adapted from Miles et al., 1994)

Following the figure above, I elaborate on the main categories below.

Familiarisation

In this stage, I mainly organised the data to familiarise myself with the generated data. This stage included data organisation, transcribing and translating, and gaining a general sense of the data.

Data organisation – It was vital for me to understand the generated data after each family visit because a lot was happening in each of them, and it was difficult to keep track of and remember everything. After each family visit, I allowed myself time to organise and sort out collected information. For example, I usually had interview recordings, pictures, videos, children’s drawings for me, field notes, and additionally my own notes. As mentioned above, I created a folder for each family in the university-supported storage platform, and upon creating each family’s folder and subfolders, I would simply add new pieces of information accordingly. The organisation effort was not a one-time process; on the contrary, it was ongoing from the very start of the data generation until the production of the final interpretations.

Transcribing and translating – Upon my return from Baku, I took several months to conduct transcription and translation. Previous research highlights the importance of transcription by the same person who conducted the interviews (Chafe, 1995; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Chafe (1995, p. 61) claims that ‘one cannot fully understand data unless one has been in on it from the beginning’. Upon finishing the data generation and storing all the field notes, pictures, videos, and video/audio recordings, I started transcribing and translating the interview recordings simultaneously, i.e. I listened to the interview recordings in Azerbaijani and directly transcribed them in English. I am aware that researchers might prefer to conduct data analysis in the language in which the data have been generated, but English has been my working language in higher education and at my work, and I am accustomed to working in this language, and I prefer to translate and transcribe the data simultaneously. Much of this process was onerous, but I had experience from previous research projects I was involved in while living in Azerbaijan. I find it necessary to talk about these processes separately in detail for the following reasons:

- they both contributed to the analysis process;
- each process was quite complicated since they involved different levels of revealing the data;
- each process in itself covered various steps.

Translation – I mainly translated from Azerbaijani into English, but sometimes, parents and children used the Russian language. During the transcription process, I had difficulties translating and transcribing the interviews where participants were switching between Russian and Azerbaijani as I did not exactly know how to show this switching point between languages. Similarly, deciding on the language variation in English was equally important and burdensome (Jaffe, 2007) as I had to constantly decide on the ‘correct’ translation of words and phrases carrying cultural meanings (Birbili, 2000).

At times I found that being a translator of the data enabled me to discuss the aspects of the texts that bore language-specific meaning which would have been otherwise lost in a literal translation (Temple & Young, 2004). I was in the field with the research participants, and I was going to be the one deciding on the final interpretations of the data. Being that ‘intermediary’ person as well as a translator armed me with sufficient tools to retain the

cultural implications in my translation. To provide a trustworthy translation, my familiarity with the cultural nuances of not only the source language but also with that of the target language supported and added value to the trustworthiness of the translation (Vulliamy, 1990).

Despite being familiar with the practice, there were several challenges to the process. As a native speaker, I understood notions/words/concepts and did not question them while I was in the field. When I came back, I started looking at the raw data from an English-speaking person's perspective to check whether they could be understood without any language-related misunderstandings and realised that I needed more explanation from the speaker. In line with Phillips (1960, p. 291), this is '...in absolute terms an unsolvable problem' the reason why 'almost any utterance in any language carries with it a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that the speaker may or may not be aware of but that the field worker, as an outsider, usually is not'. In such cases, my Azerbaijani identity and familiarity with the culture helped me retain significant meaning in the translation and interpretation process.

Transcription – In the transcriptions I produced, I was also interested in capturing and conveying, to a certain extent, descriptions of what was happening at that moment rather than simply transcribing the dialogue between researcher and researched. Thus, in the transcriptions, I was able to describe what I saw in addition to what participants were talking about and '...it is such descriptions that are the data of social science, from which inferences to conclusions and findings are made.' (Hammersley, 2010, p. 563).

In contrast to the conventional way of writing up a Word document as I was used to doing in my previous research projects, I created an Excel document for my transcription. In the first column, I put timing for each new topic or question. In the next one, I typed in the transcriptions. The following columns included notes and original words. The notes section contained brief comments, mainly from the field notes. In the original word section, I stored the literal translation of the language-specific words and phrases used in Azerbaijani, where I was challenged to find the exact concept/word in English. I also added the participants and places section to capture the spatiality and temporality of the data. In a lot of the interviews, almost all family members were in the house, especially children, which resulted

in a lot of movement and verbal exchanges. Especially in the room tours with children, it was important to capture the spatiality.

From the beginning of the fieldwork, I was curious about the affects of the researcher and the researched in the fieldwork that are and how they interrelate and interweave in the data, so I added the affects section to the transcription document. Affects are social and relational experiences of researchers in the field, which mostly relates to non-spoken but recognisable modes of communication (Thajib et al., 2019). (See 5.4 for extensive discussion on affects). To fill in this column, which naturally did not have all the cells populated, I allowed myself another try at listening to the recordings only to focus on the affects that I had remembered, made notes before, or elicited while listening to the recordings. You can see a screenshot of one of the transcription documents below (Figure 4.6)

MINUTES	TRANSCRIPTION	ORIGINAL	NOTES	AFFECT	PLACE	PARTICIPANTS
37.05.	<p>Sabina: Do you have any plans for your children's education in the future?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: My husband wants him to be a pilot. Yasin is more inclined to listen to his farther. Father is male, so he is closer to him.</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: It is his decision, I am not even thinking about it. He can pick whoever he wants.</p> <p>Sabina: What about your daughter?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: My daughter (smiling). I will control her.</p> <p>Sabina: How?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: In a sense... let's say in the society. I won't pay attention to what the society will say about her, but I want my daughter to make right decisions.</p>	<p>onun dediklərinə daha meyl edir. Kimi seçərsə seçsin mən nəzarət edəcəm.</p>		<p>I remember the conversation very well, and my emotions. I was surprised/frustrated/sad at the same time. Because knowing women's lives in Azerbaijan, our own challenges and limitations growing up in a small city in Azerbaijan, realising that they were all limitations to our lives based on 'unwritten' rules in the culture, Mrs Mammadova still wanted to control her daughter. As this conversation was a bit diverted, I did not go in details further. We came back to this topic and talked about it more in the end of the interview.</p>	<p>Mrs Mammadova's kitchen. Sitting at the table.</p>	<p>Mrs Mammadova. Mrs Mammadova's mother-in-law and children are home too. They sometimes come to the kitchen.</p>
38.30.	<p>Sabina: Would you do anything different in your daughter's life? Would you follow your mother's steps in raising a daughter?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: My mother has raised me in a way that I have seen beeing a woman as a weakness. Yur are a girl. Ah ... off.. You did this.. but I wouldn't want my daughter to go through the same.</p> <p>Sabina: How, for example?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: For example, if you are a girl, you should clean the house, why did you clean it this way? Why did you do it this way? Why did you go that way? Why did you lift your head and say something? Why did you say a word back? But I don't want to see them in my daughter... (pauses)... I want her to be happy for being a girl. She should not be weak or something for being a girl.</p>			<p>It is such a difficult and sensitive topic for me. I tried the hardest to stay neutral away from all my identities and simply focused on what Mrs Mammadova was saying at the moment. While for me it is clear that she was able to see the influences of her mother's approach to upbringing a girl, I was not sure to wha extent she accepts or rejected it.</p>		
39.40.	<p>Mrs Mammadova: How my brother grew up. If he doesn't like to eat some certain food, then it is alright. I [her mother] will make a different one for him. My brother is a boy, so he doesn't have to tidy up after himself. But I don't do that with Yasin. If he makes something dirty he shold clean up after himself. My character was not like that either. I have not been picky at all (smiling).</p> <p>Sabina: Do you think you were treated differently than your brother while growing up?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: Yes, I have seen a different attitude. For example, when I was five I have been told why I am not sweeping the house, neighbour's daughter is doing. If you are a girl you should do it.</p> <p>Sabina: Both from your father and mother?</p> <p>Mrs Mammadova: No, I haven't heard it from my father. Even until now, I haven't heard anything like that from him</p>	<p>filankəsin qızı</p>	<p>this expression is frequently used by mothers when they compare their daughters with other girls they know.</p>	<p>I have studied at school with Mrs Mammadova, but I have joined the school later. So I did not know many of the things she was telling about her childhood. I was aware of the limitations she had faced while we were at school. As her friend, I used to get comments from her mother about staying home as much as possible. My heart hurt several times during this interview, and my eyes get watery everytime I listened to this interview recording. Breaking the chain is very hard.</p>		

Figure 4.6 Screenshot of transcription

Gaining a general sense of the data – The data analysis was inductive and iterative, encompassing various elements because ‘... each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique’ (Patton, 2002, p. 433). Staying in tune with my simultaneous and iterative approach to the data analysis process mentioned above, once I finished organising the information, I would try to make a general sense of the generated data after each round of family visits. As such, one round of family visits helped adjust the next visit’s activities (Merriam, 1998). For one week, I would conduct all family visits, and the following week, I listened to audio recordings and made notes in connection with my research aim and questions, and additionally, to affects and emotions, in preparation for the next round of family visits.

Deconstruction

In this stage, I attempted to ‘deconstruct’ the data by coding them through two stages, then writing memos, developing categories or themes and, in the end, producing visual representations of data.

Coding – Coding enables researchers to rediscover the data under the lens formed by the aims and research questions, and coding is ‘...a form of early and continuing analysis’ (Miles et al., 2014, p. 93). According to Saldaña (2013, p. 3), ‘code is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’. Merriam (2009, p. 173) explains coding as ‘... nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. The designations can be single words, letters, numbers, phrases, colours, or a combination of these’. I added words or phrases to the written transcription of the interviews, pictures or videos using mixed-methods analysis software Dedoose. As my strategy was inductive at an early stage, I did not have any preconceived hypotheses, codes, or code groups. But following my research aim and questions, I also developed codes and code groups deductively. When selecting relevant coding approaches to my analysis, my reasoning was to find ways that would lead me to answer my research questions and heed my research

interests in this study (Merriam, 1998, 2009). The developed codes were also constantly compared within and across cases to reveal differences and similarities.

In the screenshot of the excerpt from Dedoose, coding is visualised (Figure 4.7). The chunk of the text is selected, and a code or code cluster is applied. The applied codes are shown in the window 'selection info'. There, the green coloured code is a code cluster, blue coloured code is the main code, and pink coloured is included within the main code. The codes shown in the selection have been first applied to the whole excerpt. However, as I re-read the transcription, I added more codes to smaller parts of the excerpt.

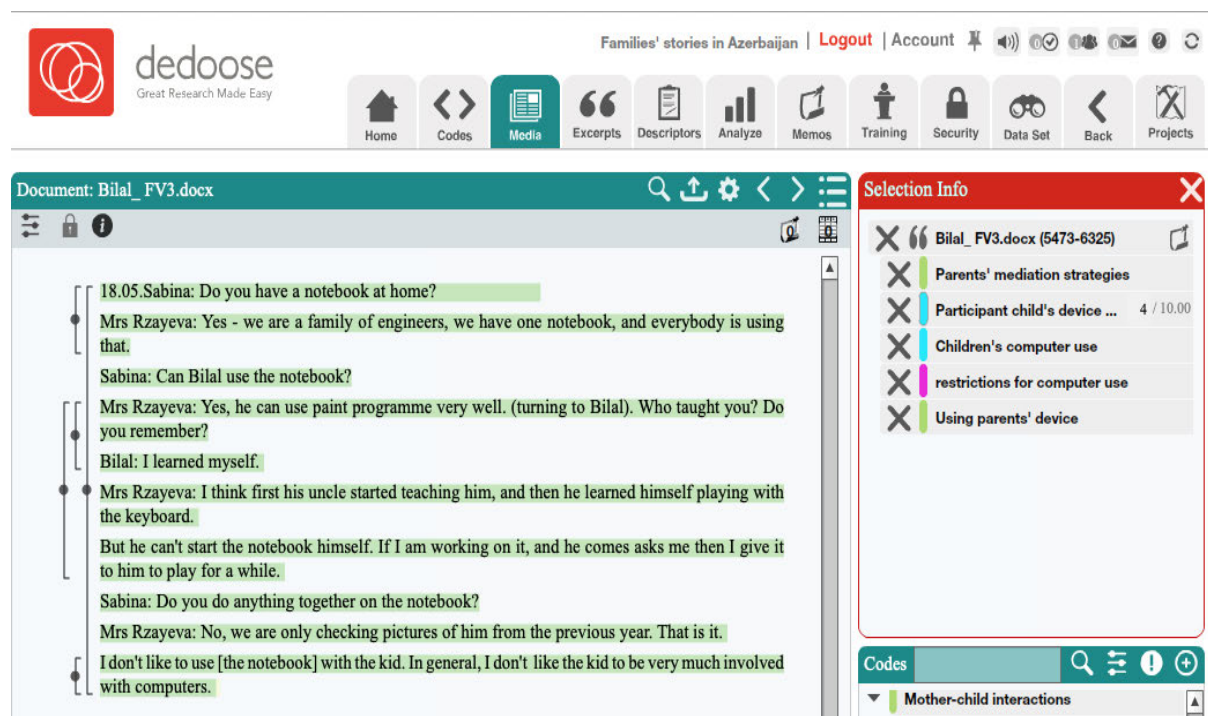


Figure 4.7 Screenshot of an excerpt from Dedoose (Bilal's family – Family Visit 3)

The coding process, in general, was divided into two phases: *open coding* and *focused coding*.

Open coding was the initial step in the coding process. As mentioned earlier, I held an inductive approach to coding (Thomas, 2006), so I developed codes and code clusters as I started the coding process on Dedoose. Through open coding, I assigned labels to the chunks of data in the form of a short phrase or word, which differed with colours on Dedoose. The process was open as I allowed the data to lead me while I was in tune with my research questions and aim, yet I remained open to all the possibilities and affordances extended by the data. As an initial step in the coding, it was necessary to get the gist of the data by categorising it using open coding.

Focused coding was based on open coding, and it also served to narrow down the number of codes. In the first phase, the created codes and code clusters were more descriptive in nature, whilst in the second cycle, they were more analytical and focused, based on the results of the codes developed during the first cycle (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Saldaña, 2013; Miles et al., 1994, 2014). Focused coding enables the researcher to select initial codes to create categories and themes. It 'requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense' and 'compare people's experiences, actions and interpretations' across cases (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 56-59). Developed focused codes thus were a result of iterative focused process within and across cases. As was the case with open coding, once I completed focused coding within one case, I began comparing and contrasting the developed codes immediately. During the open coding, I developed 351 code and code clusters, while in the focused coding, the number was narrowed down to 264. In Figure 4.8 below, I have provided an example of open and focused coding on the same transcript excerpt.

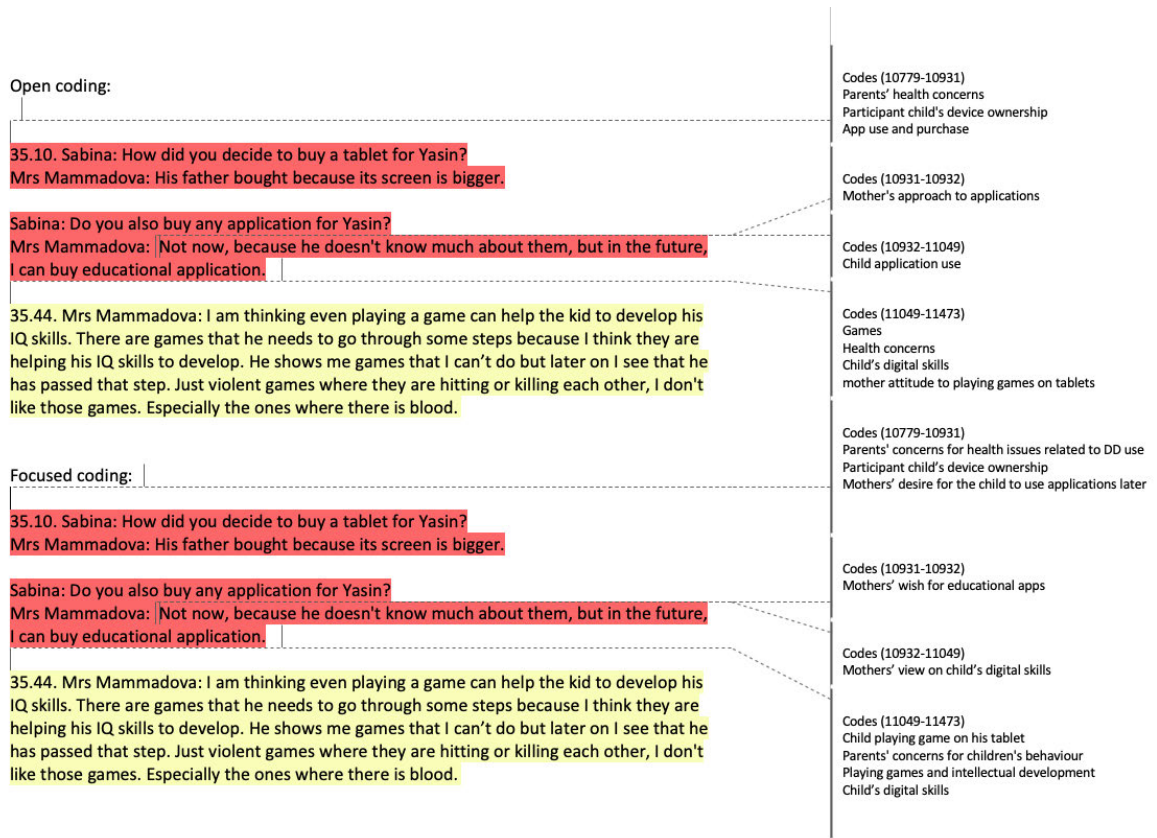


Figure 4.8. Open and focused coding

Memo writing – During the data generation and analysis process, I constantly reflected on my actions and tried to take notes (Clarke, 2005). While it was not always easy to write field notes during the family visits, afterwards, I would give myself some time to reflect on the data and jot down my thinking on the computer. Those analytic writings were also data for me during the analysis process, and they were analysed alongside the collected data (Saldaña, 2014). My memos reflected my research aim and questions, participants, analysis methods, analysis results, and other aspects of the research study (Miles et al., 2014). They helped capture my insights and think during data collection and analysis (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016; Stake, 1995).

Construction

This stage aimed to bring together the 'deconstructed' data through coding and 'construct' – bringing all the pieces together – to create categories and themes. Some researchers refer to a similar technique as 'synthesis' (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss,

2008; Eaves, 2001). This stage proved helpful given the multiple sources of data I had to analyse together.

Developing themes and categories – The iterative coding process led to creating categories. ‘Categories are conceptual elements that “cover” or span many individual examples (or bits or units of the data you previously identified) of the category’ (Merriam, 2009, p. 181). Creswell (2012, p. 245) referred to categories as ‘similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database.’ In this process, I selected refined codes due to focused coding that helped answer the research questions. As the categories were developed in line with research questions and aim of the study, their names were developed accordingly, and they were ‘responsive to the purpose of the research’ (developing an answer to the research question), ‘exhaustive’ (categories and subcategories should encompass all the data relevant to the study), ‘mutually exclusive’ (any piece of selected data does not fit in any other defined category or subcategory), ‘sensitising’ (category names should provide enough information on their own to be understood without explanation and be distinguished from others), and ‘conceptually congruent’ (categories should be at the same level conceptually) (Merriam, 2009, pp. 185-186).

Theme	Temporality and Spatiality in practices		
Categories	Grandmother mode'	Practices outside of home	Temporary access
Codes	Watching YouTube videos on granfather's computer	YouTube videos on phone in a café/restaurant	Temporary access to grandmother's phone
	Anytime access to grandmother's phone	Tablet use at school	Watching TV at grandparent
	Grandmother enabling access	Tablet use in a hotel	Checking pics/vids on grandmother's phone
	Grandmother permits the child to watch YouTube on her phone while feeding her	TV watching at grandparents	Grandmother-mother negotiations

Table 4.7 An example on the theme, its categories and codes

Conclusion

This stage was a summation of all the previous ones. Revisiting the research aim and questions of the study, I started to carry out interpretation of the data as below.

Developing family pen portraits – At this stage, I took some time to write up family pen portraits for families, explaining the demographic details of the participant children and their family members, some specific characteristics of children, and a digital inventory of their homes.

To reiterate what I mentioned earlier, the process remained iterative throughout the research study, moving back and forth between the data analysis and development of family pen portraits.

Member checking – As I had stayed in touch with the participant families, member checking was carried out several times during the interpretation of the data. The process was not straightforward, and therefore I contacted mothers several times to clarify certain interpretations as I did not want my own interpretations of the cultural nuances to come into play and influence my findings. I had to conduct member checking online (4.4).

Final narrative – Following the member checking, I started writing short narratives to develop the final narrative of the study.

4.9 Summary

This chapter details the data generation methods used to conduct this study to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research project. The contextualism paradigm formed the basis of the study, which was conducted as a qualitative case study. I described the research aims and provided the research questions. Then, I highlighted the importance of trustworthiness, including the strategies I used. Given the importance of ethical conduct in research, in particular research with young children, I described the approaches I took throughout the study and the ways in which I acquired the consent of parents and other

adults. Five families were selected through the purposeful sampling strategy in keeping with the case study approach. Following the sampling strategy, I briefly introduced the five participant children.

I also described the research design used in the study. The data generation started with family visits in Baku, which then continued remotely from Edinburgh through the living journals method. Then I illustrated the core elements of the data analysis process and described each element with its relevant stages.

5 My Azerbaijani researcher identity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by highlighting the ways I followed to ensure I remained reflexive throughout the research process. In 5.3, I recognise and discuss my dual identity as an insider to the culture I was researching as well as being an outsider, a person returning to the setting from another country. Then in 5.4, I discuss affective engagements with the research participants. While such affects and emotions are usually dismissed, citing recent developments in research in this area, I argue that such embodied engagements are to be embraced and used to inform the interpretation of findings. In the final section of this chapter, I describe my multiple identities as perceived by myself and the research participants, which in effect had some bearing on the entire research process.

5.2 A reflexive researcher

In the previous chapter, I discussed trustworthiness of the study, focusing on the specific strategies I used to ensure its credibility. When paying due attention to the interrelationships, the trustworthiness of the research increases (Hammersley & Gomm, 2008), in particular, if interrelationships between one's own self and researched are scrutinised in-depth. A researcher can also increase the trustworthiness of a study through reflexivity (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), leading to more inclusive methodologies attuned to power relations in the field (England, 1994). Being aware of their potential biases about the case(s) can help the researcher develop balanced interpretations (Merriam, 2009). This section outlines my attempts to remain reflexive throughout the research process.

'Defining' reflexivity

The researcher, being the main 'instrument' of the research study, carries with them the immense responsibility of being reflexive throughout any given study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Denzin, 2001). For a researcher to remain reflexive means being aware of their positionality towards the participants and making an effort to critically evaluate their own views as well as explicitly acknowledge that

such views may affect both the research process and its outcome (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Berger, 2015; Pillow, 2003). Such positionality may involve dimensions of insider/outsider aspect towards the culture being researched or similar intimate knowledge of the environment of the research participants affecting researcher's interpretation of the findings (Tudge, 2008). In line with the research reviewed above, for me, reflexivity was staying alert to the potential influences of my own identity on the data generation, analysis, and interpretation process throughout the study.

Reflexivity is a continuous process

In any study, reflexivity is a continuous process which requires that a researcher constantly interrogates their positionality, since it can exert potential influence on the interpretation of findings (Berger, 2015; Pillow, 2003; McGowan, 2020). 'Adopting a reflexive research process means a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, participants, and the research context' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.275). Being reflexive is an inherent aspect of every stage of the research process and every activity within it (McGowan, 2020). Throughout the data generation, I stayed alert to my biases which were likely arising from being a researcher from a UK institution, conducting fieldwork in my home country.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004, pp. 262-265) refer to reflexivity as an important tool to understand 'ethics in practice' or 'microethics' and introduce "'ethically important moments'" in doing research, which are unpredictable and subtle situations that arise in the practice of doing research,' and 'where the approach taken or the decision made has important ethical ramifications, but where the researcher does not necessarily feel himself or herself to be on the horns of a dilemma'. Reflexivity is closely connected with ethically important moments and they become more obvious in the field on a daily basis (ibid). In my study, I emphasise the importance of everyday activities, which made the everydayness of researcher practices in the fieldwork and beyond equally important for me throughout my PhD.

5.3 Negotiating insider/outsider identities

My identity during my research was as an Azerbaijani researcher studying in a UK institution and conducting fieldwork in my home country with my fellow citizens. Reyes (2020, p. 2) argues that researchers enter fieldwork with their 'ethnographic toolkit' that consists of researchers' visible (e.g., race/ethnicity) and invisible tools (e.g., social capital) and ties to their methodologies and theory of their research. My ethnicity and race contributed to my 'insider' identity in Azerbaijan, and the participants frequently asked: 'You know how things work here, right?' Whilst I did know 'how things worked in my country', I tried not to interpret my observations solely through my established knowledge of the culture. My responsibility was to ensure that my interpretations did not originate only from my intimate knowledge of the cultural context, but also depended on the data generated directly with the participants. A reflexive researcher offers interpretations, but also questions their constructions that might be influenced by their insider/outsider identities in the field (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010). Having an intimate knowledge of the researched culture can be beneficial in some ways but counterproductive (Tudge, 2008) for maintaining a balanced interpretation that minimises potential bias.

In the case of my research, I needed to conduct research in one cultural context whilst needing to acquire ethical approval in the cultural context of another country, which made the two settings divergent from each other. In addition to the differences in the ethics in practice and procedural ethics already discussed (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), the cultural context also differed. Although researching my home country made me an insider in some respects, at the same time, having come from a university based in the UK and being exposed to different cultures throughout most of my adult life defined me as an outsider. Negotiating the differences and similarities of these two identities while generating robust, rigorous, and rich data proved to be overwhelming initially. Once I realised that all my past and present experiences, skills, and knowledge formed a part of my research study, I understood that acknowledging this fact, rather than ignoring it, would add value to my data generation and analysis process (Stodulka et al., 2018) and highly influence the study design and findings (Patton, 2015).

Being a part of the culture within which I was conducting my research provided me with easy access to cultural norms, behavioural expectations, and parents' specific values and

beliefs. For example, as the findings show, parents were especially insistent on the 'language' of digital media their children were using. Parents wanted their children to know Russian and English and were keen to use digital media for this purpose, although they disapproved of its use in most other cases. Having grown up in the country, where during the Soviet era and long after its collapse, Russian was a dominant language on TV, I was aware that knowledge of Russian was expected of my generation. I remember most of our textbooks at university being in Russian, so we were required to know Russian first, and then learn English through it. The growing interest in English in workplaces further accentuates parents' desires for their children to learn English in addition to Russian. Some mothers thought I was lucky that my son was growing up in an English-speaking country, and he was learning English naturally. They were quite surprised that I did not send my son to any Russian tutoring classes so that he could learn Russian too.

In addition to my 'visible tools', my social capital in the form of 'invisible tools' sometimes complicated my relationships with participants. Besides culture, I shared some other traits with the participants, such as being married, having a young child, and being at almost the same age and stage in life. Nevertheless, prior to my visits, I had spent more than six years away from Azerbaijan. I had gotten married and spent three years in Georgia, where I was bringing up my son. Due to the influences of different cultures I had been exposed to in these past six years, my views on childrearing may not have been as aligned with those of participants' as they expected (Adeagbo, 2020). In my observations and interpretations, I, therefore, tried to remain reflexive towards my multiple identities and perspectives.

Researchers suggest keeping reflective journals from the beginning of research, drawing attention to their importance before, during, and after research (Watt, 2007). Due to the nature of home visits, I conducted with families, it was not always possible to keep clear reflexive journals; instead, I used quick notes and sometimes even took a picture to remember what was happening at that moment. Next, I discuss affective engagements with participant families.

5.4 Affective engagements with participant families

The above section discussed my attempts to be reflexive throughout the study from the initial stage of research until writing up the data interpretations. Qualitative researchers seek means and techniques to explain what they bring to their study by recognising and acknowledging their role and embodied engagements within the research process (Creswell, 2013b). The data generation process encompasses many complex emotional moments and challenges (McGowan, 2020) and is shaped by the relationships between researcher and researched within a shared culture (Adeagbo, 2020). In the end, this all results in a complex process that can be understood through reflection on our affects emerging from the fieldwork, and it allows us to view the lives of others in a better light (Slaby et al., 2019).

Stodulka et al. (2018, p. 3) define affects as 'sensorial phenomena that emerge from and influence encounters ... with informants, spaces, environments, events, memories, images, and texts' and affective scholarship as a systematic exploration of researchers' involvement with people, culture and processes. Drawing on Stodulka et al. (2018), I highlight the importance of recognising how an awareness of affective engagements can be valuable in the data generation process and interpreting data. Rather than the researcher as a participant being a methodological problem to be dismissed or overlooked, it can provide a rich, if challenging, resource. When thoroughly documented, a researcher's positionality makes it possible to convey the affective field experiences in the text and to bring those experiences back to life for the readers who have not experienced them first-hand (Davies & Stodulka, 2019). By developing such emotional literacy, a researcher can document their emotions and thus enhance emotional reflexivity, which in turn supports affective ways of conducting a research study (Thajib et al., 2019).

Data are generated together/with/despite these affects, and they should be acknowledged in research insights. The unavoidable emotions and relations emerging in the fieldwork with research participants or other interlocutors need to be recognised, as they represent an additional epistemic dimension (Davies & Stodulka, 2019). Such material and emotional exchange between researcher and participants results in enhanced 'intersubjective understanding', and acknowledgement of both pleasant and unpleasant encounters (Lücking, 2019, p. 110). For example, in the fourth round of family visits, I had planned to conduct intergenerational focus group discussions with mothers, mothers-in-

law, and children because extended families tend to live together in Azerbaijan and may have different perspectives on young children's interactions with digital technologies. However, participant mothers dissuaded me from involving their mothers-in-law, saying I had grown estranged from local customs and forgotten what complications could arise between them and the elders. This cultural aspect led me to respect the affects of my participants, and I had to change my plans for the last round of visits. I later realised that, rather than being an inconvenience, thinking about these social encounters as affective engagements can provide valuable research insights.

Fathers did not want to get involved in the study, insisting that they did not have much information about their children's daily lives because they were working most days, and that the mothers were better placed to answer my questions about their children. This instance also proved the 'emergent' nature of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013b, p. 20), as I had to make a shift in fieldwork and think about other ways of involving fathers in the study, which was made possible through the living journals approach. In order to pay due attention to these affects and their influences on the study, as a researcher, I was aware that I needed to stay reflective in the data generation process (Creswell, 2013b) and not be highly embedded with the research participants, so I was able to conduct the data generation because it was the primary reason for bringing me back to a very familiar environment – my home country, in connection with my fellow citizens (Silverman, 2013).

5.5 Different identities during the data generation process

Research has addressed dilemmas arising from exploring one's own community as an insider (Adeagbo, 2020; Zavella, 1993). However, during the fieldwork in Baku and the living journals discussions with fathers, I realised that my position in the study was more complicated than the insider/outsider discussions in the literature. My epistemological and ontological beliefs in research provide that researchers are part of their research. Drawing on ecocultural theory (Tudge, 2008), I believe that research is co-constructing the knowledge together with the researched. As a researcher, I held various identities, including the 'researcher' one, and it proved to be complicated for me to negotiate these different identities within the fieldwork. During family visits, I often questioned the nature of my

relationship with the participants who were parents, other relatives, and children in domestic contexts. These multiple identities were confusing for the participants and me: they wanted to share intimate details of their daily lives and discuss their children's behavioural changes, but at the same time, they wanted me to leave their homes and return to the university with positive images of Azerbaijani family practices. For them, I was:

- **a guest** – a fellow citizen visiting their home for a short while;
- **an old friend** – who needed help or 'wanted a favour';
- **a researcher** – gathering data for research abroad;
- **an expert** – somebody they assumed, mistakenly, could offer advice on child psychology;
- **a mother** – with a young son who was at a similar age to their children, but also a mother who was exposed to revered methods of child-rearing within a Western culture;
- **a foreigner** – somebody holding different, strange habits and viewpoints;
- **a native Azerbaijani** – a fellow citizen, identifying herself as an Azerbaijani who was also born and raised in the country.

As a novice researcher, at the beginning, I developed guilt and doubt about my capabilities as a researcher whilst tackling these multiple identities. However, soon I came to realise that this emerging identity of mine – a researcher – was part of me: I did not need to fit all my identities in and around this new identity, but instead, it had to fit in with other identities. I was trying to keep all my feelings and emotions apart to be a 'good' researcher, but keeping my feelings, affects, and emotions separate from my research was challenging. In addition to identity questions, I realised that feelings and emotions arose from the 'conversation' and 'negotiation' of these identities with myself. Trying to figure out these identities and their consequences on myself as a researcher and the data generation process left me quite perplexed with a lot of questions in the fieldwork. Thus, I had to accommodate a proper place among my other identities by simply adding it to my other identities, and therefore, in the end, in common with Stodulka et al. (2018, p. 2), I aimed to work '*with and through*, not *against* our subjectivities and related affects, feelings and

emotions in the endeavour to understand what matters to the people we study' [original emphasis]. The realisation of the interrelationships of multiple identities with my identity as a researcher and the process of recognising, acknowledging, owning, and using it for the benefit of my study all contributed to my development as a researcher. Below, I briefly describe what the aforementioned identities entailed for the research participants and me, and how interrelationships gave rise to various affective engagements throughout the study.

A guest from abroad

My very first family visit was to Kamala's family (6.5), and it was in the evening after a long day of meetings. When I entered the house and saw the table they had set for me, my hunger-stricken happiness melded into a confusion of my researcher self. That was when I started experiencing the confusion around 'researcher' self and insider-outsider identities. As an Azerbaijani, I knew that it is our culture that we do not ask the guests whether they would like tea or food; instead, we start with tea, and if it is mealtime, we share our meals with them. At the moment, I could not say no to their efforts, and I agreed to have dinner with them, but in the taxi, on the way home, the guilt embraced me. I had another family visit the next day, and it was similar hospitality with tea and homemade bakes made especially for me. Even Yasin's grandmother, Mrs Safayat Mammadova, made a traditional Azerbaijani dish to eat fresh and hot at the end of the visit. During all the family visits, I was offered food and lots of cups of tea in their house, to which I had to agree as it is not polite in Azerbaijan to refuse a cup of tea. In general, in all the families, mothers had prepared Azerbaijani traditional food or desserts for me as I was coming from a different country, and they assumed I had missed it. I realised parents were treating me as an Azerbaijani guest researcher from abroad, and around the table, the conversations were all about me and how I found being back in my country.

An old friend

Mrs Aliyeva and Mrs Mammadova were friends of mine. I had studied with Mrs Mammadova at school and Mrs Aliyeva at university. They knew me well, and we shared stories from those years. Due to my leaving the country for almost ten years, we had been apart, and we had not seen each other's children. Although my friends knew each other,

staying true to participant confidentiality, I did not share with them that they were participating in the same study. Both mothers had their pictures in the living journals, and only then were they aware of each other's participation in the study. However, by the end, it did not affect their discussion on the journals in any way. Fathers in these two families did not know each other at all.

Children in both families warmly welcomed me in their homes and started calling me by my nickname 'Sabish' soon after. In Yasin's case, although he became used to my presence at home, his grandmother reminded him several times that I was a teacher, and he needed to behave in the presence of a 'teacher'. In particular, during our talk, his grandmother was sitting in the room with us and guiding Yasin in his answers. Since Yasin was attending Russian tutoring classes during family visits, he was also often reminded by his mother and grandmother to answer my questions in Russian. At one point, his grandmother was holding him and helping him to answer my question in Russian. In visit 2, when I noticed that Yasin was already feeling tense, I offered him to stop the activity or take a break. After the break, I asked Yasin to show me his room and favourite toys. There were only two of us on this room tour, and he was feeling much more relaxed while showing me his toys and books.

A researcher

The most difficult part was when I engaged with participants as a researcher during interviews and conversations, as the conversation would sometimes become too personal, and parents were seeking my approval on specific ideas of theirs, such as child development or children's digital practices. Also, as I discussed in 4.5, gaining the consent of parents and children for using their visuals proved to be challenging. The challenge was related to the different approaches parents and I had towards using children's visuals in the thesis or other related publications. I was consistent in my ongoing approach to obtaining parents' consent, but each time parents reminded me that, as before, they did not have any objections to using their children's pictures. I put all my efforts as a researcher to explain what using pictures in the publications entailed and how it was crucial to get children's say and decision on that matter as well.

An expert

Parents asked me how I found their child and what I thought about their children on almost every visit. I was always taking some time to explain that I was not an expert on child development. Concerning technology use, I was constantly being asked what appropriate patterns of use were for children using digital technologies at this young age. During the living journals discussions with fathers, they also approached me as an 'expert' in education who had correct information on children's uses of digital technologies and their consequences. Fathers asked me the same questions that the mothers had asked about an acceptable amount of time on digital devices for children. In response, I reiterated that I did not have any opinion on children's 'correct' or 'good' uses of digital technologies.

In addition, during the discussions with fathers, I noticed that they approached me as someone opposed to established gender roles in Azerbaijan. Even when a father told me that he would not want his daughter to study abroad alone but would not oppose their sons doing the same, he told me that 'I guess you would not agree with me about this'. While it is true about me and my personality, even before leaving my country, I have never agreed with established gender roles in Azerbaijan. However, I did not share anything about my opinion explicitly or implicitly with fathers and therefore, I do not know what I did or said that caused them to develop that opinion about me. Nevertheless, I suspect that it could be related to me coming from the UK and spending most of my adulthood abroad, and being married to a Christian foreigner.

A mother

In addition to my identity as a researcher in the field, my identity as a mother also helped and at times guided me. As discussed in 4.5, I kept reminding children to take breaks during the visits, and whenever they invited me to play with them, I did not turn them down. In particular, I became close with Bilal as a play friend as he was an only child, and I found similar patterns with his behaviour and my son, who is also an only child. As such, from the very first visit Bilal asked me to play with him. Sometimes his mother objected to it in order not to take my time, but I was very familiar with that behaviour, and I always made sure that I played with him, which helped me strengthen our communication throughout the visits. In the last visit, Bilal wanted to make popcorn for me; while I stayed with him for a

short while, he wanted me to take the rest with me and even put chocolates in my bag for myself and my son.

A foreigner

I was a 'foreigner' to parents when I said something opposite to what an 'ordinary Azerbaijani' would say or do in a certain situation. Therefore, I also continued reminding myself 'to remain' Azerbaijani and 'put aside' the influences of the places in which I had lived and that had affected my thinking and behaviour, which was not easy. In relation to the communication with in-laws, one of the parents remarked that I had forgotten how things worked in Azerbaijan, alluding to the fact that in the first instance, I did not immediately understand why they did not want to say anything about research to their in-laws. I then realised that the involvement of the in-laws would bring with it a lot of potential conflict for the mothers. As a result of remembering cultural nuances, I built better relationships and better engaged with the research participants.

A native Azerbaijani

For me, the hardest was affectively engaging with my participants as a native Azerbaijani. Most of the conversations led to comparisons between Azerbaijan and the UK, where I lived during my PhD studies. There was always an expectation from me to understand parents' thoughts without them stating clearly, 'you know how things work here,' 'you know how people are here,' 'you know it well yourself.' As a native Azerbaijani, I knew everything mothers were talking about, but I had a completely different perspective on all those things, which points to the influences of different cultures I had experienced over the years. I was not able to bring the same interpretations to them as the parents anymore, and therefore, I always asked mothers further questions to explain their perspectives on the things that 'we both knew' and seemed not to require any more explanation.

Incorporating affects into my research

I could not sit down with mothers or children and have discussions or interviews in a quiet place during the visits. Many people were moving around, and often it took place in many different places in the house. As a pragmatic solution, Stodulka et al. (2019) propose

‘an Empirical Affect Montage’ as a technique to incorporate the researchers’ affects and emotions in dialogue with more traditional accounts of the phenomena they study (e.g., field notes, interviews, memory protocols, transcripts, photographs, video.). As the emotional diaries suggestion was relatively new, I did not know about it during my fieldwork. Nevertheless, I started noticing the importance of affects and emotions in data generation, and I was taking concise notes for myself in my notepad, phone, or whichever was the nearest. When I was not able to write, I would simply take a picture of that place, object or children to help me recall my affects and emotions or that of the research participants. This approach helped me reconstruct more complete pictures of the interviews, including the affects and emotions which had a bearing on my observations and eventual interpretations. Without these notes, the interview data could have been messy and patchy at best, with little consideration of the impact of affects on the data.

Nevertheless, after the fieldwork at home, I started adding different layers to my transcription. I created my transcriptions in an excel document, adding columns such as affects, participants, and places (Figure 4.6). I also added original text in Azerbaijani, notes, affects, places, and participant sections in the document. In the affects section, I added affects of myself and research participants, taken from my notes after each family visit and the things I would recall while reading the transcription retrospectively. Therefore, in addition to emotion diaries proposed by Stodulka and his colleagues (2018), I suggest adding affects in our transcriptions in a data analysis stage (4.8).

5.6 Summary

I strongly believe in the importance of recognising and accepting affective engagements with research participants. As a researcher, I generated data with humans, fellow mothers, and Azerbaijanis. Because of these affective engagements, my data generation and analysis were informed and rich. Whilst I was aware of my responsibilities as a researcher in front of my supervisor, university, and ethical committee to whom I had pledged to conduct an ethical study, the ethics in practice and engagements with participants were different. I realised that the ways in which I embodied different identities and affective engagements with those researched in my study and acknowledged these factors did not make me a ‘not good’ researcher, but on the contrary, ‘an aware researcher.’

6 A living journals method: Exploring young children's digital media practices from afar

6.1 Introduction

In order to study young children's digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan, I developed a new approach – Living Journals. The method served to respond to *RQ 1: How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?* This approach was instrumental in remotely studying participants, elevating participant agency in the data generation process and minimising or completely removing the need for a researcher to be physically present in the field. The data generation for this study was planned over a long period with considerable time intervals between them, which meant that I could not have been in the field for the entirety of the time. As a student in Scotland, I could only spend a limited amount of time in Azerbaijan. Ultimately, it became a central method of the data generation process for this study. Given its substantive methodological and empirical contribution to the thesis, I dedicated a separate chapter to detail its background, procedures, ethical dimensions, analysis and significance prior to explaining the chapter content.

In this chapter, I clarify and describe i) the background of the method, situating it within the literature related to other methods on which I have based it; ii) its procedures and various phases of development that might also be helpful to researchers interested in adopting the method in their studies; and iii) the analysis of living journals. The analysis and interpretation of the data I provide in this chapter mainly focused on the content analysis of the created journals. I have integrated the living journals' findings with those from other methods in the study, and I introduce them in Chapters 8 and 9. In addition to the ethical issues relevant to the overall research, the method produced further ethical dilemmas, which I discuss in this chapter too. This chapter demonstrates family members' perspectives on the method and their involvement in the data generation process, and concludes with a summary of the significant elements and limitations of the method.

6.2 The background of the method

Studying young children's everyday digital media practices presents a number of methodological challenges because it is not always easy to gain access to different contexts (e.g. home, formal education settings) where young children spend their time, be it around their family members, friends, or relatives (Aarsand, 2016; Poveda, 2019). Researchers are often inclined towards home visits, including extensive observations using digital cameras (Gillen & Cameron, 2010; Gillen et al., 2007), taking turns with parents in video-recording (Aarsand, 2012), or they instruct parents on how to record their children (Given et al., 2016). Researchers also trust children with digital tools to video-record or take pictures of their daily lives (e.g., (Clark & Moss, 2011; Poveda et al., 2012; Thomson, 2008) in order to gain physical access to children's daily lives at home and beyond. The researcher's presence for an extended period of time in contexts where children spend time can cause discomfort for children, especially at a young age (Matsumoto et al., 2019). Hence researchers turn to digital tools to observe children's daily lives within hard-to-reach contexts at home or beyond.

In addition to digital cameras, smartphones have been used in various studies to generate data (Burke, 2008; Clark, 2004; Garcia-Garcia et al., 2015; Pahl, 2006; Poveda et al., 2012; Rönkä et al., 2017; Teichert, 2020; Thomson, 2008; Yamada-Rice, 2017). For example, Mobile Phone Visual Ethnography (MpVE) (DeBerry-Spence et al., 2019) has been used to study research participants' everyday lives and mobility within marketplaces, or the Mobile Instant Messaging Interview (MIMI), which has been used to study research participants' daily use of media (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020). The mobile phone diary technique has been used in researching adults' lives (Karadzhov, 2021) as well as with young children, such as the study developed by Plowman and her colleagues (Plowman & Stevenson, 2012).

In their study of 'Toys and Technology,' Plowman and her colleagues have explored young children's encounters with digital technologies and play in a home setting. The study involved case studies of 14 households in Scotland, including home visits to families where each visit had a different purpose in line with the research's overall aim (Plowman et al., 2012). In addition to home visits, the authors also 'devised the mobile phone diaries as a mechanism for proxy observations within and beyond the household' (Plowman & Stevenson, 2012, p. 541). The researchers asked mothers to take pictures of their children at

certain times, prompted by their text messages. The authors refer to those pictures as 'experience snapshots' of young children's daily lives (ibid. p. 543). Once they collated the data, the authors turned them into storyboards and asked mothers and children to comment on them and talk about their activities.

Another well-known method was developed by Gillen and Cameron (2010; Gillen et al., 2007), called the 'A Day in the Life' approach to study how digital technologies influence young children (0-3) and their families' lives. In the study, the authors video-recorded one full day or at least six hours of seven two-and-a-half-year-old girls' lives in various countries (USA, Canada, Peru, UK, Italy, Turkey, Thailand). They supplemented the recordings with interviews and discussions around them with families.

Earlier than that, Tobin, Wu and Davidson developed Video-Cued-Ethnography (VCE) in their study of 'Preschool in Three Cultures' to examine preschool children's daily lives in a preschool setting in three different countries – Japan, China, and the United States (Tobin, 2019; Tobin et al., 1989). The authors identified a school setting in each country, spent time there, and video-recorded a full day in each school. They then edited those videos into short clips and showed them to children, families, and teachers in their respective schools, as well as across schools. The participants had an opportunity to explain their activities and identify similar and different activities in other schools, and comment on them. The authors thus were able to identify patterns within and across schools in three different cultures. A decade later, in 2009, together with a new team, Tobin conducted a follow-up of their study, where the authors returned to the same preschools to study the changes in the settings and practices (Tobin et al., 2009). The researchers added two more schools from each country that extended their study from the temporal and spatial perspectives in the new study.

The above-cited research studies have mainly relied on parents' or caregivers' opinions about the children's lives. Few research studies have attempted to include children's voices in the research literature through their active participation (Clark, 2010; Yamada-Rice, 2017). Researching young children's daily lives is considered challenging, even though the importance of including young children's voices in research studies related to their lives has always been the subject of researchers' interest (Clark & Moss, 2011; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). One of the participatory studies is the Mosaic approach developed by Clark and her colleagues (Clark, 2004, 2010; Clark & Moss, 2005, 2011). This approach initially appeared in

a study called 'Listening to young children' and included five-year-old children's voices in the research of services intended for children and families.

The Mosaic approach is a 'strength-based' framework for listening to and including young children's voices in the data generation about their lives through multiple methods (Clark, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2011). The existing literature posits that children themselves can best inform about their own lives (Burke et al., 2005; Lancaster & Broadbent, 2003; Langsted, 1994). Through participation in the research about themselves, they can communicate and make meaning of their daily lives and themselves. Clark and her colleagues (Clark & Moss, 2005, 2011) developed the Mosaic approach, a participatory approach drawing on children's lived experiences. The authors called it Mosaic because it draws on multiple methods such as observations and interviews, with participatory approaches such as tours, map-making, and photography.

Digital technologies are being rapidly developed and embedded in young children's everyday lives, and researchers face new dilemmas to capture young children's encounters with new digital technologies in their own settings. In this vein, researchers are encouraged to develop new approaches mixing visual with verbal in their methodologies (Yamada-Rice, 2017; Yamada-Rice & Stirling, 2015). Having conducted three family visits to each family in Baku, I experienced the challenges of visits to young children's homes and observations first-hand (4.7.1). Considering the importance of studying young children's digital media practices within their own settings and realising the challenges and extensive resources required for consistent ethnographic fieldwork, I faced a methodological dilemma. Family visits were not suitable for all-encompassing observations as they were short. Most parents were employed, so I conducted the family visits in the evenings or at weekends when daily practices were not reflective of the complete picture. Face-to-face interviews with parents did not provide a comprehensive picture of children's daily lives either, as it was not easy for them to recall every aspect of their daily lives.

Additionally, parents were not always certain of how to determine what constituted daily activities, and in interviews, parents preferred to talk extensively about their mediation styles and discuss the perceived harms of digital media from their perspectives. While informative in their own right, the conversations were primarily dismissive of any actual practices and were instead concerned with the harms posed by digital media and technology. Such one-sided discussion was not sufficient for constructing deeper insights

into the children's everyday digital media practices at home. Other approaches were required to gain a more comprehensive picture of children's daily digital media practices.

My solution to this problem was developing the living journals approach based on my reading about mobile phone diaries and Video-Cued Ethnography, particularly in conjunction with similar methods I discussed earlier. The living journals method offers researchers the possibility of using smartphones' full functionality to generate data at a distance by assigning participants as proxy researchers. In the next section, I explain the experience sampling technique, and following that, I outline the phases of the method and its major differences from its predecessors.

6.3 The experience sampling technique

I was interested in young children's everyday lives insofar as they would help me identify the existence of any daily digital media practices of young children. For this purpose, I used Experience Sampling Technique (ESM) to have a glimpse of children's everyday lives. I was able to document young children's daily lives in their own settings. In particular, in the case of this study, both parents in four out of five families were working, meaning that I was not able to observe children's daily lives. This section describes the main elements of ESM and its use with the living journals approach.

ESM is a technique allowing researchers to document individuals' lives in the context in situ first (Hektner et al., 2007; Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The method is administered to collect participants' self-reports within the repeated time frames using texts, pager, digital tools or applications (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987, 2014). ESM has not been used in education research broadly, except for few examples (Plowman & Stevenson, 2012; Rönkä et al., 2017). Offering it in particular with digital tools, and using mothers as proxy researchers (7.2), can offer educational researchers the ability to adapt it to study participants' lives in situ, minimising the researcher's presence in the field.

ESM was useful for reaching young children's individual lives because they were '... "behind closed doors" (literally and figuratively) and because participants are not always aware of patterns in the way contexts shape their own behaviour.' (Zirkel et al., 2015, p. 9). In order to have access to those activities happening at different times and settings, I turned to ESM. To send prompts to mothers, I had set time limits from 7.30 am – 8 pm. Sending

prompts early in the morning was related to the fact that children left home by 8 am or 8.30 am to go to preschool. The selection of timeframes was based on the agreement with mothers, who had indicated the times the whole family was up and getting ready to leave for school. I arranged with the mothers that I would send prompts at those times; however, mothers were also free to send the answers back after those time limits, according to when they could find time within their busy schedules.

One of the attractive contributions of ESM was that participant mothers were able to generate data on their children's daily random activities, which were later turned into journals for them to reflect on during the living journals discussion. In line with Zirkel, Garcia and Murphy (2015), the opportunity for the mothers to hold the physical copies of the journals for which they helped generate data helped them better feel and recall those activities.

6.4 Phases of the living journals method

The living journals method was the second step of the research design in this study. The data generation commenced with almost three months of fieldwork in Baku, Azerbaijan, where three visits were conducted to each of the five participant families from October until December 2018. After three months of completing fieldwork in Azerbaijan, I continued the data generation process through the living journals method in the UK, starting in March 2019. The living journals method included three phases, and each phase is described in detail in the narrative below. Overall, implementing the living journals method required almost ten months in this study.

Through my personal networks in Baku, I recruited five families with five-year-old children, with age being the only requirement to participate in the study. Table 4.6 in Section 4.1 in the methodology chapter provides information on families. The following table describes demographic information about the participant children, whose names are pseudonymised (Table 6.1).

Name of child	Gender	Age in years: months	Socio-Economic Status	Household composition	Languages prevalent at home	Child personal digital device ownership
Bilal	Male	5:9	Middle	Parents, paternal uncle	Azerbaijani, Turkish, English	No device
Elcan	Male	5:2	Higher	Parents, younger brother, older sister	Azerbaijani, English, Russian	A tablet
Kamala	Female	5:4	Middle	Parents, paternal grandparents, younger brother	Azerbaijani, Russian	No device
Khumar	Female	5:4	Middle	Parents, younger brother	Azerbaijani, Russian, English	No device
Yasin	Male	5:0	Middle	Parents, paternal grandmother, younger sister	Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish	A tablet

Table 6.1 Demographic information on the participant children

The family home visits in Baku (4.7.1) proved beneficial in getting acquainted with families and building trusting relationships. The living journals approach involved three phases, briefly introduced in the table below (Table 6.2). Each phase is described in detail in the narrative following the brief introduction.

Phase 1: Generating initial data

Generating initial data

April 2019 (first phase)

August (second phase)

In the first phase, prompts included four questions:

- *Where is your child?*
- *Who is your child with?*
- *What is your child doing?*
- *Why is your child doing that?*

However, in the second phase, one more short question was added:

- *How is your child feeling?*

Parents used their smartphones to send pictures, videos, texts and voice recordings through WhatsApp. Prompts were sent:

Tuesdays and Thursdays

(7.30-8.00am; 5.30-6.00pm; 7.30-8.00pm)

and on Saturdays and Sundays

(7.30-8.00am; 1.30-2.00pm; 7.30-8.00pm).

Phase 2: Creating living journals

Creating living journals

May 2019

September 2019

Online living journals were created using the Canva design tool. Print and digital versions of the journals were shared with the families.

Phase 3: Discussing living journals

Living journals discussions

Discussion with fathers

July – September 2019

Discussion with mothers and children

October, November 2019

Online discussions around the living journals with fathers separately and mothers and children together.

Table 6.2 Phases of the living journals creation

6.4.1 Phase 1: Generating initial data

During family visits in Baku, I found out that mothers spent most of their time with their children at home. The data generated from family visits informed the development of the living journals method. Three months after the family visits, I contacted mothers to remind them of the living journals method we had discussed during the visits. Once mothers reiterated their consent to participate in the study, I started the data generation process. I elaborate on the ethical dimensions of the method later in 6.5. I asked mothers to send me pictures or 30-second videos of their children prompted by my messages at certain times of the day. I requested that they add their commentaries based on my questions: *Where is your child? Who is your child with? What is your child doing? Why is your child doing that?* In the second round of the data generation, I added one more question as I grew more interested in the affective engagements of the children: *How is your child feeling?*

The living journals approach is situated within ecocultural theory (Tudge, 2008), which is often associated with cross-cultural research and visual methods for gathering data on everyday life. In line with the study's theoretical framework, I was interested in children's uses of digital technologies in their day-to-day lives and posing the questions mentioned above was beneficial in revealing children's daily lives. I did not ask mothers to focus on any particular activity. Although my study was about children's digital media practices, I chose not to ask parents to focus on digital encounters as it risked introducing a bias in their responses that did not reflect natural occurrences of children's digital encounters. As a result, I gained insights into children's daily activities that were naturally occurring within their own settings.

The data generation process continued for a week, running twice throughout the year, once during term time, in April, and another time during school holidays, in August. In this phase, mothers responded to my prompts by sending pictures or video clips of their children with commentary using an instant messaging application, WhatsApp, which offers diverse media and communication functions to users. Based on the latest official statistics on mobile phone ownership in Azerbaijan, in 2018, there were 10.34 million subscribers, which amounts to 105 subscribers per 100 inhabitants (State Statistical Committee, 2021). Though official statistics are not available on the use of WhatsApp in Azerbaijan, it is safe to say that the application is used ubiquitously in the country.

6.4.2 Phase 2: Creating living journals

As soon as participant mothers sent me responses, I confirmed the receipt of answers. In the second phase, I combined pictures, text, still images from video clips, and voice responses, and created a living journal for each child in digital and paper formats. I named the journals first in Azerbaijani and then found the relevant translation. After I compiled the journals, they looked very much alive, full of the children's everyday life experiences. In Azerbaijani, I named them 'Həyatdolu gündəlik', the literal translation of which is 'a journal full of life' and thus, in English, I translated it into 'a living journal'. While compiling each child's journal, I paid particular attention to accurately translating and transcribing mothers' commentaries, ensuring I did not overlook anything of significance in the data. I used almost all the photos and videos, as well as a wide range of stills from videos in the journals. Often, there were several pictures in the same setting with a slight variation. I used two of the most divergent versions in such cases, excluding the rest.

Similarly, I used almost every text and transcription of mothers' audio messages in the mothers' commentaries. Based on the information from the earlier family visits, I used the children's favourite colours and particular interests as themes to personalise their journals (Figure 6.1). The videos were playable in the digital versions, but I used stills from video clips for the paper format.

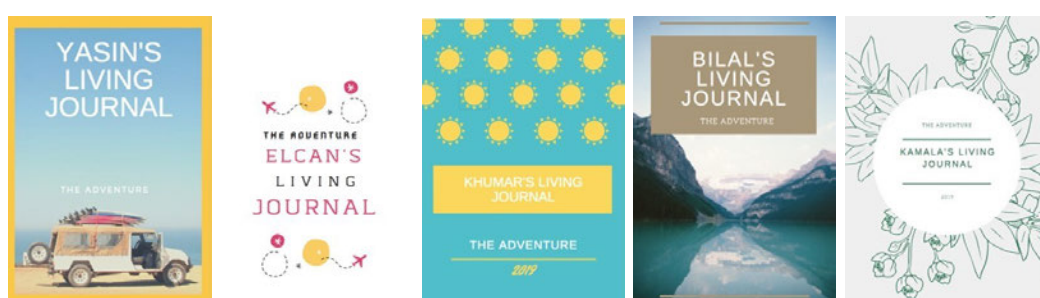


Figure 6.1 Cover pictures of the journals

As well as being a research output, the journals were also shared with participants as memorabilia. I sent each child's journal to their families in a paper format but used the digital format in the discussions of the journals with fathers separately, and mothers and children together (6.4.3). I asked mothers and children their permission to share their

journals with fathers. Given the absence of fathers from the initial data generation process, I deemed it necessary to renew the consent, predominantly as a precaution to avoid disclosing any information that mothers and children had never intended to share. I also acquired families' consent prior to showing their journals in a digital format to other families. It is crucial to highlight here that families were given only their own journals in hardcopy, and they saw other families' journals in digital format during online interviews through my sharing the screen with them (Appendix 5. Sample pages from the living journals.) I adopted this process to avoid unnecessary duplication of sensitive data. Being presented with the journals through screen-sharing meant that interviewees were able to study them in detail but could not retain the copies (6.5).

The response rate to the prompts differed across families: two families engaged at 50% and below – the rest at 88% and above (Table 6.3). The overall response rate across all families was 73%. Having the freedom to respond according to their preferences and opportunities potentially contributed to the high engagement rate. The lower engagement rate is characteristic for mothers who were in full-time employment during the data generation process, as they had fewer opportunities to respond to prompts. Mothers sent their commentaries mainly in the form of voice messages. This practice is common in Azerbaijan, and it is likely seen as a more efficient way to convey information than typing text. As seen in the table about response rates, I have also added the number of the mothers' multimodal responses. Multimodality of responses in this study was related to the variety of the data, such as visual (pictures and short video clips), audial (audio messages), and textual (text messages).

	Responses to prompts (max. 24)	Response Rate %	Number of photos	Number of videos (total duration)	Number of text messages	Number of voice messages (total duration)
Elcan	23	96%	53	15 (7 min 40 sec)	79	18 (8 min 22 sec)
Khumar	21	88%	23	21 (11 min 40 sec)	69	2 (18 sec)
Yasin	22	92%	52	1 (1 min 50 sec)	98	8 (1 min 08 sec)
Kamala	9	38%	8	1 (30 sec)	27	3 (41 sec)
Bilal	12	50%	21	0	60	1 (23 sec)
Total	87	73%	157	38	333	32 mins

Table 6.3 Response rates of families

The number of pages in the living journals varied based on the diversity of the generated data. In total, the living journals were 116 pages long, but it was different for each family: Elcan – 38 pages; Khumar – 23; Yasin – 28; Kamala – 11; Bilal – 16. I believe the diversity and inconsistency in the number of responses did not affect the quality of the living journals method, as I still had examples of various digital media practices from each family.

6.4.3 Phase 3: Discussing living journals

The created living journals were tangible so that family members were able to hold them in their hands and talk about their recent daily activities. In the third phase of the data generation process, mothers and children together, and fathers individually were able to hold their children’s journals and comment on them. Mothers and children participated in the discussion together since they had been present in the data generation process. I

conducted online discussions with fathers separately, as they had not participated in the data generation process, and they might provide a fresh look at children's activities.

The living journals discussions thus differed from interviews and produced rich data for the study. The journals were informative for all participant families. In addition to their own, they had a chance to study practices from four other families' everyday lives in the 'same' cultural context. Given the definition of culture and cultural groups discussed in the theoretical framework chapter (2.3), the diversity of families further added elements, including families' socio-economic situation, differing perceptions of digital media and parents' education level. In light of these diverse factors, parents were invited to see daily practices from other families that would also contribute to enriching the discussion. I conducted discussions around living journals in an online platform, and they were video-recorded and later translated and transcribed for analysis purposes.

6.5 Ethical dilemmas in the living journals method

The employment of visual methods (Wall, 2017), the involvement of young children (Flewitt, 2005), the use of the home as a research site (Plowman, 2016), as well as the use of social media (WhatsApp) for collecting data, although not new in their application (Marsh et al., 2015), all contributed to the complexities of adopting the living journals method. I elaborate at length on the ethical considerations of the study in 4.5. Extending that discussion, I detail ethical issues that arose mainly from the implementation of this method in this section.

Throughout its application, ethical considerations formed a crucial part of the living journals method. In particular, the consent of parents and children to participate in this study were regarded as a continuous process (Arnott et al., 2020; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Flewitt, 2005; Gallagher, 2009; Russell & Barley, 2020; Wall, 2017). First, children's and parents' consent to participate in the living journals method was granted during family visits. During each family visit in Baku, I allotted some time to explain the living journals to parents and children in detail. I discuss the details of obtaining informed consent from all participants in 4.5.

Before conducting the living journals method, I first contacted mothers through the WhatsApp messaging application. After receiving their permission, I recorded a short video

about the living journals approach for the children, in which I reminded them of what they and their mothers were invited to do. I sent video messages to mothers through WhatsApp and asked them to invite their children to watch the video recording together. I explained everything about my plans in practical terms, and used examples to make it easier for children to understand. I concluded the recording by extending an offer to the parents to hold a short video call if they or their children had any questions. Mothers said they did not think the video call was necessary as they remembered the living journals method.

Additionally, I invited children to send me pictures or videos of themselves, provided that they were willing and parents allowed them to. I was aware of the possible power relations at home, and mothers' decisions on allowing their children to send me pictures or videos using their phones (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). Children chose to respond to the video message through their mothers. During the first phase of the living journals method, when mothers answered my prompts through WhatsApp, unfortunately, I did not have a chance to communicate with children directly. I elaborate on missing this opportunity in 6.7. Given the relationship we have built through other instances of interaction and their consent to the method during the family visits, I accepted their assent conveyed through their mothers. After receiving consent from mothers for themselves and their children through WhatsApp, I started the first phase of the living journals method.

As I was not physically present in the process, I was unable to observe children's nonverbal responses to the research process (Aarsand, 2012, 2016; Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Einarsdóttir, 2007), except via the pictures and videos sent by their mothers. It was more important that children were satisfied and happy to have their mothers take their pictures or record videos, than to generate useful data for the method (Flewitt, 2005) and therefore, I was always extra careful after each answer to my prompts. It was always the first step to pay attention to the pictures to ensure that the children were happy with the visuals. I had established trusting relationships with children during family visits, which helped me ensure adherence to the ethical procedure (Flewitt, 2005; Wall, 2017). I was prepared to ask mothers to stop the data generation if I felt any discomfort in the visuals, or if mothers explicitly stated this, or I could understand it through subtext. Even though I remained highly alert towards this possibility throughout the research, the risk of its occurrence was relatively low, mainly due to the fact that mothers taking pictures or

recording videos of their children was already a routine activity to which children were accustomed.

In the first phase, mothers were the 'proxy' researchers in the field, so they decided what to show in response to the prompts discussed earlier in this chapter. During the discussions with fathers about the living journals, one father raised the issue of performativity and questioned whether all the pictures and videos of other families presented to him as part of the journals were authentic. He requested time to look over his daughter's journal from the very beginning one more time and commented on each picture, ultimately confirming that they reflected her everyday activities. Towards the end of the discussion, he noted that it was only natural for mothers to present their children in the best light possible. This issue has since been raised multiple times in one form or another at the conferences where I have presented my research.

The authenticity of the pictures and videos and potential performativity in the journals have always come under scrutiny. Throughout the process, I have been mindful of the mothers' involvement in the construction or selection of the pictures. In line with other similar studies (Aarsand, 2016; Flewitt, 2005; Plowman, 2017), my response to the questions is to recognize it. Rather than discarding the data based on this reason, I have instead embraced it as mothers' aspirations of what they would want to see their children doing, which in itself constituted data. The pictures, videos, and the accompanying commentary often reflected the parents' values and comparisons with their own childhood. This approach further added to understanding how parents were projecting their own past onto children, expecting and perhaps more highly valuing the familiar behaviour. In fact, mothers were trying to present to me the 'ideally good' activities, as clarified in the living journals discussions, such as playing outdoors, developing literacy or numeracy skills through books and writing on their notebooks. These were activities that they deemed necessary for their children to be doing throughout a day. Nevertheless, mothers were also vocal in their messages about their children's daily activities, explicitly assessing their activities as good or bad.

For example, there were two or three instances where mothers sounded frustrated with some of their children's activities. In the first instance, the mother who took a picture of her child playing outside two days in a row expressed her frustration in the commentary that there was 'no reading books, no studying.' I took note of those instances for analysis of

the data and revisited them while exploring the affective engagements of mothers, but I chose not to include them in the journals. My expectation that mothers would share the journals with relatives, friends, and even neighbours informed this decision. Additionally, children themselves would soon be able to read them, so I thought it best to avoid including what might have been perceived as mothers' frustration over their children's activity.

Before creating the actual journals, I asked parents for their children's renewed consent in the second phase as I did not communicate directly with children. I inquired if there were any visuals among those they had already sent that they would rather I did not include in the journal. I also asked about the children's favourite colours or themes they wanted to see in the journals as part of this inquiry. All parents agreed with the use of all the visuals and messages. They also explicitly expressed no objection from their children.

Children's consent was sought for all activities for several reasons: not only were their pictures and videos taken by mothers, but I was also using their visuals to create journals that would be available in a physical form for themselves, parents, and maybe other people they know. This aspect was particularly emphasised as their lives and individual activities were the main focus of online discussions with fathers (separately) and with mothers and children (together). The pictures and videos that followed also indicated that the children were aware of what was happening, and this warrants the assumption that children did not view this method as a kind of 'surveillance' of their daily lives. On the contrary, they eagerly shared their activities with someone they had previously met at home.

Once I received mothers' and children's consent (through their mothers) to show their journals to their own fathers, I sent the journals to each family. I took additional care while sending the journals from Edinburgh to Baku and entrusted people I knew. I wrapped each family's journal separately, adding a small souvenir for children and families, and sent the wrapped packages to my sister through my friend who was travelling to Baku. Once the packages reached my sister in Baku, I arranged a time and place with the participant mothers so that she could deliver the packages to them. My sister met with the participant mothers only once to deliver their packages. I did not want to rely on the post system, so instead, my sister delivered the journals to families separately.

After families received the journals, I asked mothers whether their spouses would want to discuss the journals with me. All the fathers agreed, and their involvement in the study enriched the data and proved beneficial overall. It was also essential to receive fathers'

consent together with mothers and children in showing their children's journals in a digital format to other families. I took extra care to safeguard the anonymity of participants when showing journals to other families. I did so in a digital format with names anonymised and families seeing other journals through me sharing my screen on a video call. This approach helped avoid dissemination and unnecessary creation of copies of sensitive data in the form of journals.

In addition to tackling ethical dilemmas while generating data for the living journals method, sometimes there were conversations between participants that became challenging to handle. For example, during the living journals discussion with Kamala and her mother, when I asked them whether Kamala watched TV at her grandmother's house, Mrs Azadova revealed that she did, but Kamala did not want her mother to talk about it. Kamala hugged her and asked her not to talk. During the same conversation, Mrs Azadova called herself a 'bad' mother as she did not allow her children to use her phone when they were in a restaurant or café with their friends. These kinds of tensions made me attentive to power relations at home (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008), and I chose not to comment on either instance, mostly because I did not want children to feel uncomfortable.

In the consent forms, I had asked parents whether they preferred me to use children's visuals as they were, or with blurred faces to conceal their identity in the thesis, conferences, and publications. All parents consented to their children's pictures being used as they were without any changes. When I asked families about publications, one mother said she did not mind, stating that she was eager to show Azerbaijani culture abroad. Likewise, when asked about sharing their journals with other families, none of them minded, expressing eagerness to learn about others' activities as well. Upon returning to the UK, I presented my research at several local and international conferences, where such openness of children's identities (using pictures) understandably raised questions and sometimes concerns. As a member of the cultural group, I anticipated such openness to sharing their private data, but I still exhausted all avenues to find a good balance between their openness and ethical obligations. This included staying in touch with parents throughout the writing of the thesis and producing publications, and asking for their consent at every stage.

6.6 Analysis and interpretation of the living journals

I merged the data generated through the living journals with the rest of the data collected from family visits. I also used content analysis to reveal and analyse the activities of each participant child aided by their mother's commentaries. Each family was treated as a case whose data was initially analysed separately, based on the research foci of the study, and then across cases (Stake, 2006). The data analysis allowed me to reveal and analyse opinions of various research participants. Each case's data was analysed separately and then compared and contrasted (Charmaz, 2006; Stake, 2006).

The interpretation of the analyses of the actual journals is described in the following table (Table 6.4). My prompt questions were: *Where is your child?; What is your child doing; With whom?; Why?; How is your child feeling?* The content analysis was aimed at revealing children's digital media practices as represented in the journals. The analysis highlighted individual differences and similarities in and across the journals (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The content analysis of the journals revealed 161 activities in total by children, including digital media practices as defined in 1.4. Similar to the findings in other studies, here too digital technology use did not seem to prevail in their daily lives (Kleeman, 2019; Plowman & McPake, 2013; Teichert & Anderson, 2014). Children seemed to be playing with various toys and also studying for their preschool classes as they were learning numeracy and literacy skills in preparation for school. As noted earlier, I am conscious that my data may not reflect a complete picture of the children's activities.

The inventories of digital technologies in the homes also indicate that homes were not technologically saturated, which is often reported in previous research in the Global North, as discussed in the literature review chapter (3.1). Here the socio-economic status of the country, as well as the availability of digital devices in Azerbaijan, play a role (1.4).

I was interested in the three main elements of the ecologies of their activities as illustrated in the prompt questions in 6.4.1: i) the type of digital media devices they were using; ii) the location of children's activities – at home and beyond home; iii) the companionship of children while doing those activities, especially if they were alone or not. It was revealed that only Elcan and Yasin owned personal tablets, and Khumar's family had a family tablet which Khumar was allowed to use previously, and then it was taken away from her. Elcan's family had bought him an iPad as it was required by his school to have a tablet.

According to Elcan's father, iPads were more durable, and therefore he had bought an iPad (8.2.1). Yasin's father had bought him an Android tablet as it had a bigger screen than phones (8.4.1). Kamala and Bilal did not own any kind of digital media devices. Children were mostly found watching TVs with conventional channels or access to streaming services. Only Kamala was not seen in interaction with any device in the journal.

Given Kamala's family's strong opposition to digital device use by their children, which will be discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, her mother aimed to further support this approach in her answers to the prompts. Her mother elaborated in the living journals discussions that Kamala watched TV and, as her mother put it, 'if you let her, she would watch for hours'. I observed all children's interactions with digital technologies only at home, except for Elcan. He was on vacation in Istanbul in the second wave of data collection, and he and his siblings had taken their tablets with them. Thus, he was the only child playing games on his tablet beyond home, in the hotel, or in his father's friend's house, where they were invited as guests. In none of the living journals were children pictured interacting with digital media devices together with their parents. However, this could be related to the mothers taking the pictures, and fathers being absent from home during days.

Name of the child	Bilal	Elcan	Kamala	Khumar	Yasin
Child's device ownership	No device	Personal tablet	No device	Family tablet	Personal tablet
Practices with digital media and devices used	Playing a game on mother's phone- 1 Watching cartoon on TV - 2 times	Games on tablets - 7 times Watching cartoon/YouTube videos on TV - 3 times	No interaction with digital media	Watching cartoon/TV show on TV - once Watching YouTube video on computer - once	Watching cartoon on TV - once None
Locations	Home	Home Hotel room Guest house	Home Friend's/Relative's home	Home Grandparents' house	Home Relatives' home
Companionship	Alone	Alone With siblings	Alone With sibling	Alone With sibling/cousins	Alone With sibling
Other activities	Outings with family; play with toys; visit to mother's work; studying.	Outings with family; vacation with family; games with cousins/siblings; play with toys; eating meals with siblings.	Outings with family; visit to grandparents/relatives; Studying; playing with toys.	Outings with family; play with sibling/cousins; visit to relatives/grandparents; studying; tyding up her toys/clothes.	Outings with family; visit to relatives; dancing in dance class; play with sibling; play with toys.

Table 6.4 Content analysis of the living journals

Children's most-captured digital media practice was watching TV, as depicted in all children's living journals, and it seemed to be the prevailing one in all the families. They were home most of the time, although in Elcan's case, as explained above, he was also pictured watching TV in a hotel room. In relation to the definition of the digital media practices as defined in 1.4, watching TV as a practice was the most commented 'doing', 'saying' and 'relating' one, because all the families talked about their children's TV watching, TV content, and the language of TV content their children were exposed to within their daily lives.

In addition to the content analysis of the journal visuals, I uploaded the digital versions of the children's journals into Dedoose software and coded them. The data analysis process of the living journals formed a part of the analysis of the data gathered through other methods in the study. Since I have explained each stage in detail in the methodology chapter (4.5), I only use the screenshot from Dedoose here to remind the reader of the coding process (Figure 6.2). In line with the general data analysis, I uploaded anonymised journal data into Dedoose, a mixed-method analysis software. Dedoose allowed me to code textual and visual data and export charts generated from the codes and coding themes for the analysis process. I provide an example from the analysis of the journals in the following extract where I have coded one day in Elcan's living journal. On the right hand in the list of codes, I have gathered the codes of the living journals under the 'living journals' code cluster. This approach was helpful in analysing living journals data on their own at first, in conjunction with the remainder of the collected data across the journals. Despite the inconsistency in the number of the visuals across journals, they provided insightful data on children's digital media practices. Even though the data were not equal in amount, the instances of activities were comparable across families.

The screenshot displays the Dedoose web application interface. At the top, the logo for Dedoose is visible, along with navigation links for 'Logout' and 'Account'. A toolbar contains icons for Home, Codes, Media, Excerpts, Descriptors, Analyze, Memos, Training, Security, Data Set, Back, and Projects. The main document area shows a document titled '3.15.2019.png' with a zoom slider and a text excerpt highlighted in green: 'In the evening, Elcan played games on his father's iPad, then put iPad 'to rest' and started playing with his blocks.' Below the text is a photograph of a young boy in a yellow shirt playing with colorful blocks on a table. On the right side, there are two panels: 'Selection Info' which lists the document and its associated codes, and 'Codes' which shows a hierarchical list of codes including 'Living Journals', 'technologies', and 'Mother's story'.

Figure 6.2 Extract from Dedoose: coding of one of the days of Elcan's living journal

Through Dedoose, I was able to code the journals themselves and transcriptions of the online discussions with family members about the living journals. After the initial coding process, I was able to identify emerging codes and, subsequently, themes within and across

cases. It was crucial to stay alert to the similarities and differences across journals and identify unique cases within journals. For example, the theme 'entertainment with iPad/tablet' was one of the main themes in one family; however, it was repeated only in one other family, and not so strongly. Although the other two families had tablets, the participant children in those families were not allowed to use them at all. Allowing other families to comment on one another's journals further revealed their attitudes towards using digital media. For example, as the 'entertainment with iPad/tablet' was reflected in the journal pictures of one family, members of other families provided extensive commentary on those pictures, particularly fathers and mothers who held strong negative opinions on the use of digital media by children.

6.7 Limitations of the method

Besides eliciting adults' views, I was also interested in actively engaging children in the data generation process. I explicitly invited children to send me pictures or videos with their mother's permission in the video I sent for children. From the fieldwork, I was aware that all children were familiar with sending photos or videos to their relatives. While inviting children to answer my prompts by videos or pictures, I made sure that I was not asking them to do anything without their mothers' knowledge, as their mothers would have been the first people receiving my prompts at certain times. My attempt failed, as the children initiated very few pictures or videos: only in a handful of cases had they asked their mothers to send me their pictures while playing (Yasin) or after a holiday celebration at their preschool (Elcan). This proved to be one of the main limitations of the method, as I was keen on including children's participation in the data generation. Despite this, children were invited to comment on their journals together with other children's journals during the discussions, and this approach still allowed me to include children's voices in the interpretation of the generated data.

As elaborated elsewhere (Savadova, 2021), asking mothers to generate data as proxy researchers provided them with sole responsibility to select what to share with me but their use of the video functionality of their smartphones also provided me with further context, which otherwise would not have been possible. While the mothers' control over the data might be seen as a limitation by some researchers, I found that aspect to be valuable in its own right and I approached the possible filtering of pictures by mothers as them

communicating further their thoughts of what children's ideal daily lives should resemble. Even though the living journals may have presented somewhat limited and filtered insights into these children's engagement with digital devices, the credibility and validity of the findings were increased by employing data triangulation to enable interpretation from the perspective of mothers and fathers, as well as with the use of methodological triangulation – entailing the use of other data collection methods, such as interviews and other methods employed during family visits. The use of different data sources from the participants and the contrasts this generated provided *valuable insights into children's digital media practices and parents' mediation strategies*.

The method could be resource-intensive to set up and interpret, as it requires the participants to own a smartphone and internet package to receive my prompts and send me answers in multimodal form. In the case of this research, all participant mothers owned a smartphone, and they either had a WiFi connection at home or a mobile internet package. This might not be the case for other researchers, and they might need funding to offer the required resources to participants.

The limitations of the method in this study can be summarised below:

- Non-inclusion of children in the data generation for the journal creation;
- Potential performativity from participants in the data generation for journals;
- Resource intensive to set up and interpret.

Being able to generate data remotely is particularly significant when the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The living journals method enables researchers to generate data remotely, minimising or completely removing the need to be physically present in the field. I conducted the study and developed the living journals method well before the pandemic, but the context of the pandemic made it even more valuable. Having had the opportunity to meet face-to-face before commencing the data generation certainly aided the process, but the method can be replicated without the initial meetings in person under certain circumstances where face-to-face interaction is not possible (Andries & Savadova, 2021).

6.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the living journals approach, highlighting its affordances for researchers to generate data from a distance in other contexts. Through this method, mothers were asked to answer the prompts sent through a smartphone application. Their answers were used to create journals, and subsequently, fathers separately, and mothers and children together, were requested to interpret their own journals and those of other participant children. Allowing other families to comment on one another's journals further revealed their attitudes towards using digital technologies and enriched the data. By decentring the researcher in the data generation process, the method allows researchers to generate both visually and textually complex and rich data. As a result, the method allows the researcher to generate multimodal, multivocal, metatextual, and multifunctional data, to be discussed in the next chapter.

7 Reflections on the living journals method

7.1 Introduction

Following the previous chapter, this chapter also focuses on the living journals method. This chapter discusses family members' perspectives on the method. The chapter also focuses on the method's caveats and contribution my study.

7.2 Mothers on being 'proxy' researchers in the field

In previous literature, researchers have asked parents to generate data for themselves at home. Aarsand (2012) refers to the parents in his research as 'co-researchers', and Given et al. (2016) call them 'surrogates'. Plowman and Stevenson (2012) refer to parents as 'proxy' researchers. In line with Plowman and Stevenson (ibid), I refer to mothers as 'proxy' researchers, as they generated data performing the role of the researcher. Using the living journals method, a researcher assigns participants as 'proxy' researchers in situ – thereby delegating the data generation undertakings in the field (Plowman, 2017), and simultaneously as interpreters of the data.

In general, mothers did not find the process difficult to manage, and most of the time answered me promptly. As proxy researchers in the data generation process, ultimately, mothers had the liberty to decide what to share with me. I was not present in the field, so I did not intervene in children's or mothers' daily lives. I discuss ethical aspects of mothers' decisions on selecting what to share or not to share with me in 6.5.

Having a chance to see other children's journals, mothers expressed their desire to know more about those families' activities and hear their children talking. For example, Yasin's mother, Mrs Mammadova, highlighted at the end of the discussion that she would be interested in the reasons why some of the children were attending an English course.

I found it strange that one child is learning English. Is he learning in the nursery or at home? What is the reason that parents have decided their five-year-old needs to know English? For example, I was sending [her son] to Russian tutoring because he was going to start Russian school.
(Mrs Mammadova, living journals discussion, 15 Dec 2019)

Sharing ordinary, everyday occurrences was not always deemed by mothers as something worthy of attention, and at times, mothers thought their children's day-to-day activities were not significant enough to share, as discussed in other studies (e.g., Brownlie, 2019). One evening, I sent the last prompt of the day to Bilal's mother. Mrs Rzayeva apologised for not having sent anything on that day because she said nothing significant had happened and concluded her message by promising that she would send me pictures and videos the next day when Bilal did something interesting. After a couple of days, Mrs Rzayeva sent me pictures of Bilal at the park and visiting his future school. After this exchange took place, I saw a need to reiterate to the mothers in a subtle way that if they were available when I sent prompts, they could send me whatever their children were doing at the time since I was interested in their children's everyday routines, although mothers were always welcome to share with me any activity of their children if they wanted. My purpose was to emphasise that I was not looking for anything out of the ordinary, so they did not need to wait for something to happen in their children's weeks to share with me. I was interested in children's everyday lives with a focus on everyday practices and interrelations as they entailed many interesting nuances (Tudge & Hogan, 2005).

During the living journals discussions, I witnessed a similar outlook by parents when families inquired with surprise as to why I would be interested in Azerbaijani children's everyday routine lives while I was living and studying in the UK. Initially, the participants imagined that I would be interested in extraordinary events and thought their lives would be too 'boring' for others to learn about for a study. Several parents had the opposite view, thinking that it would be quite impressive due to significant cultural and lifestyle differences.

7.3 Children's voices in the living journals

One of my aims in developing the living journals method was to include children in my study. I was keen to do so in order to conduct my research about and together with children in Azerbaijan, but it was not possible to the extent I had intended. It has been well established that young children have a right to have their voices included in research about

their lives, especially given that they are 'experts in their own lives' (Clark & Statham, 2005; Lancaster & Broadbent, 2003), and listening to children carefully can reveal a great deal about their lives (Clark & Moss, 2011; Clark 2005). Nevertheless, in line with Gallagher (2019, p. 190), children's agency is not 'a property of children but an effect arising within relations between children and various other kinds of beings'. Given the fact that in Azerbaijan, young children are still treated as people who are 'seen but unheard', I was keen to provide a platform for young children to include their voices in the study in Azerbaijan. The family visits in Baku contributed to this desire, because I was not able to include children's voices in the visits to the extent I had envisaged. Children were almost always accompanied by their mothers or grandmothers during the activities I conducted with them.

Then, when I started generating data through the living journals method, as discussed earlier in 6.5 when I sent my video recording to mothers, I invited children to take pictures and videos of themselves or their activities. I was encouraged by the knowledge gained during family visits that children would usually take pictures or videos of themselves and send them to their grandparents or relatives. The children did not send me any pictures or videos, and I could only assume that they were either uninterested in doing so or parents simply did not allow access. Ultimately, children were not involved in data generation to the extent I had envisaged, and it became one of the limitations of the living journals method that I discuss in 6.5.

During the data generation, children showed some initiative in passing certain information to me through their mothers, and asked their mothers to show me certain activities they were doing at that moment. For example, Elcan asked his mother to send me a video recording of him talking about the Novruz³ holiday celebration at preschool. Yasin wanted his mother to take a picture to show me his new Lego set and then a video with him explaining what he had built in great detail.

I continued to find ways to include children's voices in the study. In the interest of providing a platform of communication and encouraging such interaction, the children were offered another opportunity to discuss their journals together with their mothers. Inviting children to talk about their journals with their mothers was a deliberate decision because

³ Novruz is a national holiday celebrated in Azerbaijan and other similar Muslim countries, to celebrate the first day of spring (<https://azerbaijan.az/en/related-information/65>)

they had been together with their mothers in generating the data, and children could have provided perspectives that were different from those of their mothers'. Children were quite keen to interpret their journals and curious about other children's journals. In particular, when they identified activities that contrasted to their own, they asked questions about them and started brief conversations with their mothers around those activities.

Mrs Aliyeva: Look here, Elcan. You were watching about airplanes.

Elcan: Ah yeah. Yeah, planes. When they are up, they cannot go backwards.

When there is wind, it helps the airplane. I have also learned that the things behind the airplane are like that. It is the same. When the airplane turns, it needs to stay this way.

(Elcan and Mrs Aliyeva, living journals discussion, 7 Dec 2019)

Inviting children to interpret and comment on their own journals and other children's journals not only helped with involving their voices in the study but also provided insightful empirical data about their interests and views on the use of digital technologies. The discussions around the living journals helped me locate children's interests and digital practices further because while checking the journals, children demonstrated a particular interest in narrating activities of their own and other participant children. They interpreted their own activities. Seeing his picture in his journal, Elcan started talking about the cartoon show he was watching and how it does not stream anymore (Figure 7.1).

In the evening Elcan is watching TV alone in the living room.



Figure 7.1 Elcan is watching TV in their living room

Mothers highlighted how discussing the journals with their children provided a new perspective into their children's worlds, which otherwise seemed hidden in plain sight. For example, Mrs Aliyeva expressed her surprise that her son was only interested in talking about his iPad and his favourite plane game on it. It was also an indication of my claim in the thesis that participants do not always notice their everyday practices unless it is brought to their attention in some way.

You talked with Elcan, and I realised that he is only interested in tablets and games. You understand the child's world when you hear them talk. I don't know it is good or bad. I would want to hear other children speak as well. It would be really interesting for me.

(Mrs Aliyeva, living journals discussion, 7 Dec 2019)

Researchers have drawn attention to children's voices in childhood research, highlighting the importance of children's active participation in the data collection process (Christensen & James, 2008; Mayall, 2008). Although I was not able to involve children in my

research to the extent I had planned, their participation in the family visits 2, and in the living journals, discussions shed light on their insights into their digital media practices.

7.4 Fathers' involvement in the living journals

One of the contributions of the living journals approach was the inclusion of fathers' voices in the data generation process. When I was conducting in-person family visits in preparation for implementing the living journals method, I invited fathers to participate in interviews, but out of five fathers, none agreed. Fathers justified declining my offer by claiming that their spouses had a much better idea of their children's daily lives. All fathers in the participant families had day jobs, and that could have been another obstacle for interviews. After creating the journals, conducting discussions from a distance through an online platform at times best suited to fathers' schedules made this additional phase possible. I was pleasantly surprised that all fathers agreed to discuss the journals and held very engaging and fascinating discussions with me. For example, during discussions, fathers were proactive in initiating discussions and referred to journal pages multiple times to reflect on the activities. In addition to the other benefits of the living journals method, it allowed me to incorporate fathers' voices in my study, which is notably absent from research in young children's digital practices.

The living journals approach also revealed fathers' involvement in their children's daily lives and digital media practices. In Azerbaijan, fathers are usually breadwinners, and mothers are homemakers, spending time at home with their children. In some cultures, the responsibility to tend to their children generally rests with mothers (Izci & Jones, 2021; Tang et al., 2018) as well as navigating their children's uses of digital technologies (Dashti & Yateem, 2018). Similarly, several participant mothers in my study also noted that mothers were responsible for their children in every aspect of their lives in Azerbaijan. As such, parents were not present in any of the living journals' pictures. One mother's comment summarises all the pictures and videos in the five journals related to fathers being absent and never playing with their children.

There is no father... I didn't see any father playing with children in these pictures. It is the same in our house. It is very rare that Nadir [her husband] sits down and plays with children. It doesn't really matter if he

has free time or not. The most striking thing for me was that only mothers are dealing with children. It turns out everybody is like us. Only mothers are playing with children from the things that I saw.
(Mrs Mammadova, living journals discussion, 15 Dec 2019)

The mothers' absence was connected to the fact that they were taking pictures or recording videos; the fathers' absence mainly was related to them not being home or physically present most of the time. Even if they were home, their absence from those settings was related to not having patience or time to play with their children, as articulated by several participant fathers in the discussions. For example, one father noted that he did not have the patience to play with his child and that instead, his spouse played with the child most of the time. The same father added that sometimes he allowed his son to watch him while playing games on his phone, and in rare cases, he allowed his son to play that game on his phone. In another family, the mother said that his spouse gave his phone to their son to play games when he asked his father to play with him. In general, out of five families, only in one family did a mother highlight that her husband played with their children at home while she was busy with house chores most of the time.

During the living journals discussions, when fathers encountered children's activities that were quite different from their children's, they avoided further comment on those activities, only highlighting that their lives were different, and they might have had their own reasons for doing the activities they perceived as uncommon or unusual to themselves. For example, while one father avoided commenting on the picture where a participant child was playing a game on his tablet, another quite restrictive father said that he 'would suggest the child with iPad to use it less, because it is harmful'. He also compared the child with his daughter, who 'can sit down and watch TV for hours and hours.' He added that he and his spouse did not allow their child to watch TV or use any technology device (9.4.3).

7.5 The 4Ms of the method: metatextual, multivocal, multimodal, and multifunctional

The journals were tangible research data generated from, by, and about participants. Parents are not always aware of their day-to-day practices, which often seem mundane to them, and they are not consciously aware of the exact reasons and motivations behind those practices (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Therefore, exploring young children's digital

practices within their setting without the presence of the researcher and asking parents' opinions on them through discussions around the living journals allowed parents to look at their own digital media practices and those of others and elaborate on them. In general, the method's visual and personal nature goes beyond text-based research accounts to bring the data to life. The method allowed me to generate *metatextual*, *multivocal*, *multimodal*, and *multifunctional* data. This point on the significance of the living journals method requires further attention and elaboration, which I offer below.

Metatextual

The living journals method allows the research participants to comment on the journals of other families, which opens a window to a range of activities that may well be unfamiliar to them. Such an opportunity unveils the research participants' opinions, which are otherwise challenging to elicit within their own established practices. The discussion of such tangible, real-life practices, as opposed to abstract principles of childrearing, made the gathered data *metatextual*. In this study, therefore, metatextuality refers to generating an additional layer of insights through commentary on the existing text gathered in the preceding phases from all the participant families.

In the living journals method, participants comment on their own journals and those of others, so the researcher is not restricted to employing only interviews where parents mostly rely on their memories. With this method, parents and children are offered actual practices and activities from their own and others' lives in a material form. Instead of being put 'on the spot' and asked to recall their activities within a short timeframe while potentially feeling uneasy in interviews (van Kruistum & van Steensel, 2017), viewing pictures and video clips with their commentaries serve as prompts for those activities. By commenting on others' journals, participants are introduced to a diverse range of activities that might or might not happen in their own daily lives. The additional context of the lives of others offers further insights into their attitudes and opinions about the activities. Such extension also enables them to reflect on their lives within the context of others' activities and elaborate further. This aspect hosts a range of ethical considerations discussed in 6.5.

Multivocal

Multivocality refers to a multitude of voices of research participants in the gathered data. In the study, parents and children revealed and interpreted insights into their family lives, and therefore I was able to explore my main focus – children's interactions with technologies – through the voices of fathers, mothers, and children, shifting 'the anthropological gaze from the researcher observing and interpreting informants to informants observing and explaining themselves' (Tobin, 2019, p. 13).

Multivocality is a critical element of the renowned research undertaken by Tobin et al. (1989) (6.2). By employing VCE in the subsequent phase of the research, an edited version of one day's video recording at the study sites was used to elicit responses from a diverse group of participants. The participants included immigrant families (Tobin et al., 2007) or immigrant teachers (Adair et al., 2012) and focused on research with young children and their digital media use. Gillen et al. (2007) used adapted Video Cued Ethnography (VCE) and filmed a day in the life of two-year-old girls in five different countries. In contrast with the video-cued-ethnography (Bjork et al., 2009) and 'a day in the life' method (Gillen & Cameron, 2010), the living journals approach is distinct in that it avoids the constant presence of video cameras in the families' everyday lives. Such absence, in turn, contributes to minimising the researcher's visibility and potential influence on the research setting.

Multimodal

The participants have the freedom to decide how to communicate the messages back to the researcher. Mothers had a variety of options at hand to communicate information to me. If they chose to use their smartphones, mothers were able to send answers to the prompts in text, audio messages, or as pictures and short video clips. This makes the data generated through the living journals method *multimodal*, including textual (text messages), visual (pictures and short video clips), and spoken (voice messages) information, making the data both informative and attractive.

Multifunctional

Participants across all families found other children's daily activities interesting. Many participant mothers noted that the journals were also great keepsakes to be shared with extended family members and friends. The living journals are *multifunctional*: they contain

data to analyse, serve as prompts for further data generation, and represent research outputs that can be produced as part of funded research. Finally, they are 'gifts' for the participants and a tangible 'thank you' for their participation.

7.6 Summary

A particular advantage of the living journals method was in its affordance to generate data from afar without the researcher's direct interference. The method was developed to answer *RQ1: How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?* It was possible to generate data twice, at different periods of children's lives, from afar: one week in April during school term and one week in August during school holidays. Neither the researcher nor the researched needed to change their situation, and this allowed the children's daily digital media practices to be explained in their own settings. I remained a researcher throughout the process, but my role was minimised as mothers were asked to be proxy researchers in the field. The data presented to the families in the form of journals and the commentaries were collated but not altered, and the journals were tangible research data generated from, by, and about participants.

As explained in 6.2, the living journals method draws on mobile phone diaries (Plowman & Stevenson, 2012) and Video-Cued Ethnography (Tobin et al., 1989). A key difference is that participants were invited to provide commentary on other families' journals and on their own, highlighting similarities and differences with their own daily lives. The living journals themselves were coded and analysed together with other multimodal data: pictures, videos, audio, and text messages. Using the living journals as prompts and allowing participants to reflect on the activities of other families resulted in an engaging conversation and yielded rich data. Parents might not always be aware of the details of their daily lives and activities and might not remember them all while being on the spot during the interviews (van Kruistum and van Steensel, 2017), and therefore, parents found it more practical to reflect on the daily routines of their children rather than respond to questions on abstract principles of childrearing (Harkness and Super, 2006). Using the living journals to guide the conversation achieved my goal of avoiding abstraction, and focused more on everyday lives and activities in line with ecocultural theory. In addition to this, having a chance to view other journals in addition to their own enabled parents and

children to compare, contrast, or sympathise with others' daily activities. In common with Tobin and Hsueh (2007), who remark on the pleasures of working with Video-Cued Ethnography, the families expressed their appreciation of the living journals, especially the children.

8 Family influences on children's digital media practices

8.1 Introduction

The third phase of the living journals method was discussions with family members, and thus the method provided in-depth textual data on the children's digital practices as well as parents' mediation strategies at home and beyond. As a result, in addition to enabling me to gather visually rich data, it further allowed me to construct a more comprehensive narrative and answer the research questions through the discussions around the living journals with parents and children. As discussed before (4.8 and 6.6), I have collated data from the living journals with the data from the family visits and introduced findings together. In this chapter, I have arranged the themes according to the cases and mainly focused on mothers' and children's data, drawing on fathers' data where relevant, and in the following chapter, I mainly use data from fathers' discussions around the living journals. This chapter follows each family's data by focusing on the most frequently and widely discussed theme in each family. However, in the next chapter, I focus on the common themes across cases.

In this chapter, as a result of the data analysis in 4.8, I have identified the following themes. The themes ran through the whole data set, but some themes were more accentuated in some families. In the table below, I represent the themes observed in each family with an X, while the boxes highlighted yellow mark the themes that were the most pronounced in those families (Table 8.1).

Themes/Families	Bilal's family	Elcan's family	Kamala's family	Khumar's family	Yasin's family
Establishing a practice based on a rule	X	X			
Temporality and spatiality in practices		X	X	X	
Mothers managing children's exposure to digital media	X	X	X	X	X
Being a 'good' mother	X	X	X		X
Temporary restraints to avoid 'digital media harms'	X	X	X	X	

Table 8.1 Chapter themes according to families

The chapter is divided into five sections. Each chapter is about one family, and the most-observed theme in the family in relation to the research questions identified above. Each section starts with a pen portrait of the family, with details about connecting to family, their demographics, and digital inventory of family homes. For the following subsections, I use a quote from a child or mother of that family as I think they help to explain their content.

8.2 Elcan and his family

8.2.1 A pen portrait of Elcan and his family



Figure 8.1 Living journal page. Elcan is posing for a living journal picture

Introducing Elcan Aliyev

Elcan Aliyev (aged five years one-month-old) is a male child participant (Figure 8.1). He is the middle child in the family, with an older sister (aged 8) and a younger brother (aged 3) at the time of fieldwork. Elcan's mother said that he is not as social as his siblings, and needed 'time when he meets someone new or enters a new atmosphere' and 'he always first analyses, then talks, and he has interesting approaches to things'. He attended a private English speaking school's early learning centre, after which he continued at the same school

the following year. He has been exposed to three languages: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and English. While Azerbaijani is his native language, he was learning English at preschool and Turkish⁴ from cartoons and videos on TV and YouTube. Elcan had been using his father's iPad during my home visits in Baku, but by the time of the living journals exercise four months later, his father had bought an iPad for Elcan.

I conducted the first online meeting with Mrs Aliyeva when I was in Edinburgh. However, Elcan was asleep when it took place. During family visit 1, he was at preschool; therefore, I first met Elcan during the second family visit, when I had planned to have activities with him. From the beginning, Elcan started addressing me as 'Sabish khala' (aunt). The word 'aunt' is common in Azerbaijan when the younger generation addresses the older generation, even if they are strangers, but he was using my nickname from the beginning, copying his older sibling and mother. His older sister and younger brother were quick to strike up conversations with me, whereas he did not seem interested, and carried on playing his favourite plane game on his tablet. After a while, he started talking to me and explained the game in detail, which served as an icebreaker between us.

Family history and demographics

At the time of fieldwork in Baku, Elcan's mother – Narmin Aliyeva – was 30 years old, and Elcan's father – Ayaz Aliyev – was 33 years old. Both parents held undergraduate degrees from state universities in Baku. Mr Aliyev had earned his undergraduate degree in Economics, while Mrs Aliyeva's degree was in English philology. Mrs Aliyeva is a homemaker, taking care of their three children, while Mr Aliyev is an entrepreneur. The figure below provides brief demographic information about Elcan and his family (Figure 8.2).

⁴ The Azerbaijani language shares the same Turkic root as the Turkish language. As a lot of Turkish TV channels are watched in Azerbaijan, almost everybody can understand and speak the language including children.

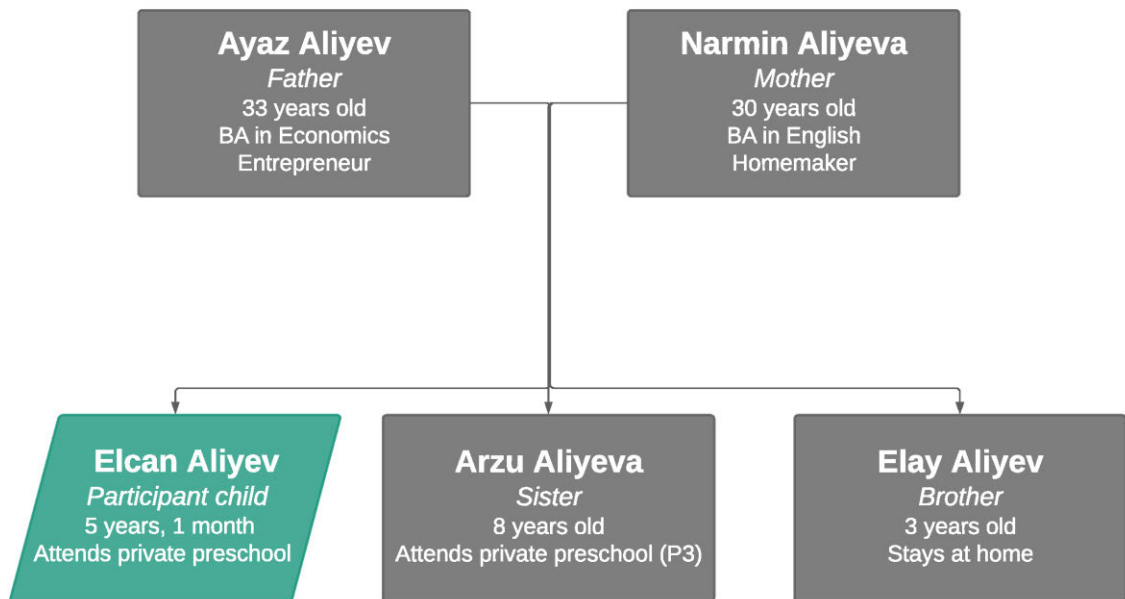


Figure 8.2 Elcan’s family

Elcan was born in Baku. His father had only moved to Baku to study at the university, but his mother was born and raised in Baku since her own family (Elcan’s grandparents) had themselves moved to Baku to study and had gotten married there. Elcan’s family was living in a three-bedroom apartment in a central area of Baku (Figure 8.3). Even though they owned a house, they had rented a separate one closer to the children’s school. Mr Aliyev said they had decided ‘so that their children could easily travel to school’. Elcan’s paternal grandparents live in the country, but often made extended visits to their house and stayed for periods of several months. While it is difficult to define the middle class in Azerbaijan, the fact that the Aliyevs were able to send their children to private school and preschool made them stand out from the rest of the families in the study.



Figure 8.3 A view from Elcan's family flat on the 15th floor in a central area in Baku

Digital inventory of Elcan's home

Mrs Aliyeva did not own any personal digital device other than her smartphone. She said she did not need any other digital device. Mr Aliyev owned a tablet and a laptop, but he mainly used them for his work. During the family visits, Elcan was using his father's iPad. However, soon, he received his own iPad when he started school. Elcan was taking his iPad to school to use for educational purposes on the days his teacher asked pupils to do so (Figure 8.4). At home, he only used his iPad during weekdays if he had some homework to do, such as listening to books or doing some literacy and numeracy tasks assigned by their teacher, and he used it for playing games or watching YouTube videos only on certain days, or when Mrs Aliyeva had to do house chores. Elcan's elder sister also had her own tablet, and his younger brother got a tablet when he started preschool. During the living journals discussion, Mr Aliyev stated that he had bought a MacBook for their elder daughter, but he was going to give it to her when she started school. Children use tablets throughout primary

school, after which they start using laptops during their classes and at home if they need to. Mrs Aliyeva was home with their children all the time. They mainly spent time in their rooms and in the kitchen, which had a dining table and TV. They had a bigger TV in the living room, and they watched TV and YouTube videos on that as well.

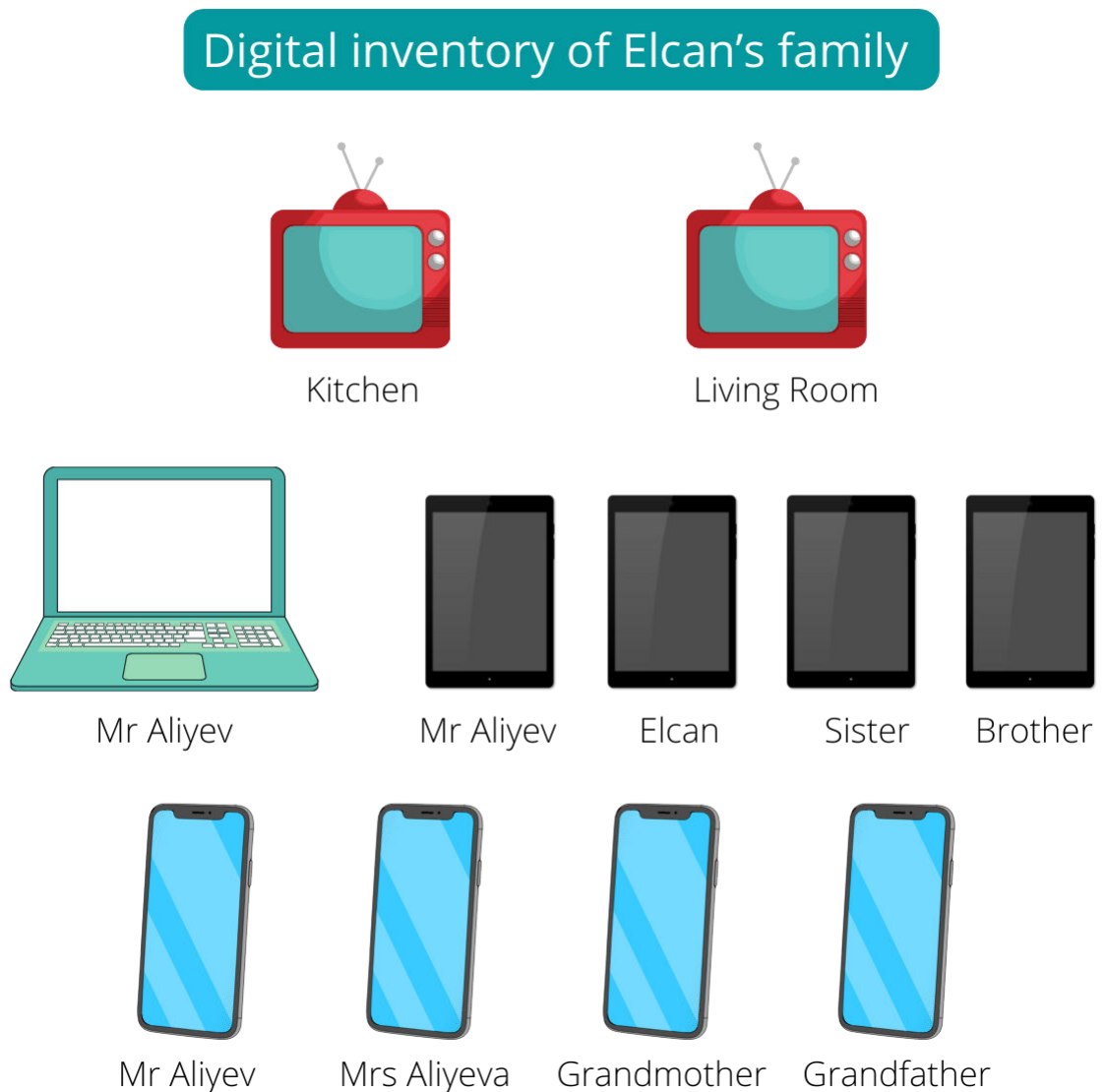


Figure 8.4 Digital inventory of Elcan's family home

Elcan's family's case data generation

I conducted three family visits to each family, including several methods. Also, the living journals method allowed me to generate rich textual, visual, and audio data. In these short

sections for each family, I elaborate on the details of the data generated for each family. The following chart visualises the methods' details as well (Figure 8.5).

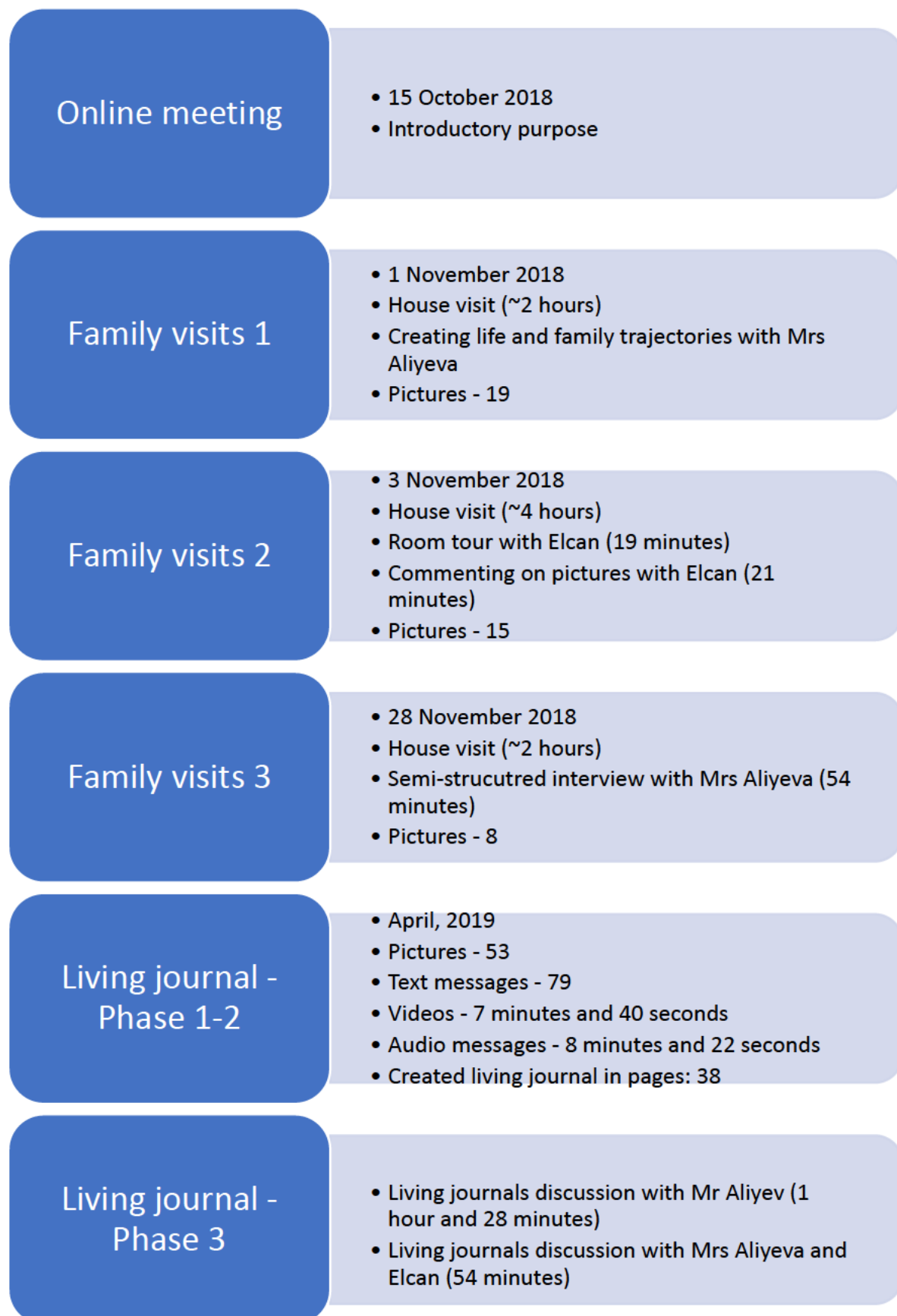


Figure 8.5 Data generation details for Elcan's family

I had three family visits to Elcan's family, and each family visit served a different purpose (4.7.1). Family visits to Elcan's family coincided with weekends twice, and once on a weekday, and they each lasted between 2 and 4 hours. My visits to Elcan's family lasted longer than planned as I was invited to have lunch with them at every visit, and brought my son along on family visit 2. My son was the same age as Elcan's little brother at the time, and as the children spoke English, they got along well. Elcan and his older sister played games and allowed my son to play games on their tablets, or take turns playing games. Elcan's mother was very much engaged with the living journals method, sending pictures/videos and textual or audio messages, which I think was the result of having a pre-existing friendship with her, and her feeling more comfortable with me. As discussed in 6.4.2, Mrs Aliyeva sent the highest number of pictures and videos, as she said she was a stay-at-home mother and she enjoyed sharing her children's daily activities with me.

8.2.2 'There is an iPad now, and it is very different.': Technology (re)shaping the home culture

There was no technology. We were waiting for five o'clock so we could watch cartoons on a government TV channel for just ten minutes. Then we were playing on our own. But we had neighbourhood children. I played with neighbourhood children a lot. I remember it well. There is an iPad now, and it is very different. Other than that, you can turn on TV anytime to watch different cartoons.

(Mrs Narmin Aliyeva, visit 1, 1 Nov 2018)

Mrs Aliyeva contrasted her children's childhoods with her own, and positively recalled times when there was no electricity, and she used to spend time outside playing with neighbourhood friends. In this and other remarks, Mrs Aliyeva made it clear that she valued social interaction with other children and spending time outdoors over any other activity from her own childhood. This preference was potentially informing her reluctance to allow technology in her children's lives since, for her, technology use meant the opposite – staying in and by themselves. Although, compared to other families in this study, the technology use was still abundant at their homes. Irrespective of her preference for less technology in

her children's lives, Mrs Aliyeva did still participate in establishing digital media practices at home through a) engaging in play with children as seen on family Vlogs on YouTube, b) doing YouTube 'challenges', and c) modifying children's everyday routines and activities through digital media use upon their request. This section demonstrates the ways in which Elcan's mother was participating in their digital media practices.

Engaging in play with children as seen on family Vlogs on YouTube

In some cases, Mrs Aliyeva's beliefs about technology use were put aside to fulfil parental obligations as directly requested by the children. For instance, according to Mrs Aliyeva, her daughter felt jealous of seeing other parents playing with children in the videos, so she asked for the same, and her mother complied. In addition to the direct requests, Mrs Aliyeva wanted to entertain the children because their father was at work most of the time, and she was trying to fill that void. This observation reflects the findings of Connell et al. (2015), who noticed that mothers tend to spend more time with their children in their day-to-day lives, thus they spend more time co-using digital media with their children.

Arzu, my daughter, is very jealous that parents are playing with their children all the time on those channels, and they ask us to play with them as well.

(Mrs Aliyeva, visit 3, 28 Nov 2018)

Mrs Aliyeva said she watched YouTube videos to learn about challenges or new games, and she engaged in similar activities and played with her children. One of such newly learned activities was a challenge where she had to blow up balloons and write challenges in small papers inside them. Children then had to pop them and do as the papers instructed. Mrs Aliyeva and Elcan's sister also talked about the YouTube challenge they had done with their cousin and how Mrs Aliyeva helped them when needed.

Children's role in modifying everyday practices

During visit 3, I asked Mrs Aliyeva about the children's bedtime routines. She talked about an interesting conversation with her children before putting them to sleep, and recalled a night when she did not know the ratio of women to men in Azerbaijan and was asked by her children to search Google and find the answer for them. Mrs Aliyeva pointed

out that, normally, children would ask her to read books to them or sometimes simply talk about various topics of their own choice. Also, instead of reading books, she was reading stories and interesting information from the internet upon their request. Using her phone, she sometimes searched for books on the internet and read to the children and most of the time, conversations would naturally follow.

I sometimes read stories for them from searching Google because they always want something new.

(Mrs Aliyeva, visit 3, 28 Nov 2018)

Elcan's parents had provided iPads for their children to use at the private school, as this was a requirement. As the data reveals, children were incorporating their digital media practices at school into their everyday lives at home; thus, children were themselves actively shaping the digital practices at home by asking for books to be found on the internet for bedtime reading, or doing YouTube challenges on their own initiative. At other times, children were imitating the practices that had become a norm in their school by asking to check certain facts on the internet or look up information in which they were interested.

Not only do parents contribute to shaping young children's digital media practices at home, but children also play a role in the formation of their parents' interactions with digital technologies (Nikken, 2017). In Elcan's home, children brought the school practices home, which ultimately influenced the parents' - in particular mother's - practices. By embedding their digital practices at home, the children were (re)shaping their home culture (Rogoff et al., 2015), influencing their own digital media practices at home (3.2). Children play an active role in (co)constructing family practices at home (Christensen & James, 2008), and as it is shown from Elcan's family practices, children are also (co)constructing digital media practices within their family context (10.3.2).

8.2.3 'iPad day is a day!': A rule becoming a practice

Elcan: ... On iPad day, he [Elcan's younger brother] wants to use the iPad, and my mum gives him a phone.

Sabina: What is an iPad day?

Elcan: It is a day. Don't you know what day it is?

Sabina: No. What do you do on that day? Is it a holiday?

Elcan: iPad day is a day. A day! We play games.

(Elcan, visit 2, 3 Nov 2018)

The 'iPad day' rule, which I clearly did not immediately and intuitively understand, was one of the major interventions. Elcan explained to me that his siblings were allowed to play games on their iPads for a half-day every Friday and an entire day on Saturdays. Visit 2 was on a Saturday, and children used their tablets on that day (Figure 8.6). On any other day, the iPads were off-limits for all the children, with the only exception being their use for completing homework assigned at the school to be done explicitly on iPads. The practice was otherwise restricted throughout the week. This section elaborates on Elcan's parents' mediation practice and their children's role in it.

Mrs Aliyeva further clarified that the iPad days were instituted to respond to their children's daily prolonged use of the tablets. She also added that on the 'iPad days', the children were not allowed to use their iPads all day long but were instead using them intermittently with freedom to choose whether to play games or watch videos. Rather than forbidding them completely, parents judged it fairer to retain the relatively free access to iPads but reduce the number of days when this was permitted. Initially, this was cut down to two days on Saturdays and Sundays but required further adjustments when parents realized that the children spent all their weekends on iPads. The children were in school the first half of every Friday, and by switching to this day, access was naturally further cut down, leaving Sunday free for family outings.



Figure 8.6 Family home visit 2. Elcan and his older sister, Arzu, are playing games on their iPads on 'an iPad day' in the kitchen

Mrs Aliyeva talked about the flexibility in her approach to the iPad day rule. As such, she talked about the day she had to go to the hairdresser and give the children their iPads so they would be busy until she returned. Thus, although the family had an 'iPad day' rule, the mother would change the rule depending on the time and space.

Yeah, we have iPad days. But for example, yesterday I had to go to a hairdresser and leave them home for half an hour. So, in order to be sure that they would not do anything to one another, I gave them an iPad so they could play.

(Mrs Aliyeva, visit 3, 28 Nov 2018)

Mrs Aliyeva also added that they had to use a different approach with their youngest son. Their son, Elay, was three years old during family visits. Their approach was to simply

hide the tablet away so he would not find it when he wanted to play with it (I return to this approach in 9.4.3).

Elcan's parents had consciously decided to send their children to a private school where the use of digital devices was a daily practice. As noted earlier, they had also purchased devices for each child and allowed access to them, which was more moderated than restricted. By the time I started data generation remotely through the living journals method a year later, all three children had their own iPads. This increase in the number of devices at home had led the parents to introduce additional rules to manage the children's access to the devices, which formed a significant part of the family's mediation strategy.

Both parents highlighted that they had agreed on the iPad day rule and were trying to follow it. Mr Aliyev also emphasized that it had been a joint decision, and clarified that the children were not necessarily allowed to use the devices throughout the day, such as watching videos for several hours in a row. The unanimity in deciding on and upholding the rule was potentially a factor in its success and the children's willingness to accept it fully.

It seemed that the children were eagerly awaiting the days when they could use their iPads for play. Having this clear rule in agreement with their parents resulted in them focusing on other activities on all the other days of the week (Hiniker et al., 2016). The children were competent users of the devices and clearly enjoyed them, and the fact that they had access to the iPads at school possibly also made it less desirable at home on school days. Also, they seemed to find their parents' rule fair, and therefore were keen to keep following the rule (Uhls et al., 2017).

Negotiating 'iPad days' with grandparents

As noted in 8.2.1, the children's paternal grandparents would often stay with them for extended periods of two or three months. The iPad day rule was affected by this influence from the extended family members. Mrs Aliyeva explained to me during the third family visit that Elcan's grandfather was firmly opposed to children's uses of digital technologies. Whilst the grandmother took pride in these and other grandchildren's ability to competently use tablets, the grandfather made his opinion clear by suggesting to Mrs Aliyeva that if she loved her children, she would not have allowed them to use any digital technologies. Possibly because he did not feel it was his place to impose any rules while visiting, the grandfather took a more hands-on approach to restrict the use of digital technologies by

offering children alternatives as a distraction, such as outings to a theatre or other activities out of the house.

My father-in-law was always against it. He is always telling me that if I love my kids, I shouldn't be letting them use their tablets or any digital technologies.

(Mrs Aliyeva, visit 3, 28 Nov 2018)

The parents introduced iPad days as an attempt to find the golden mean between access and restriction of digital devices. The rule was agreed upon by parents and accepted by the children, but the grandfather (Mrs Aliyeva's father-in-law) did not appreciate the rule as he was strictly opposed to the use of digital devices in general. While the iPad days rule had become a standard part of the family's digital culture, it was disrupted during the grandparents' visits. The practice was still maintained over a long period, which indicates that finding the balance was achieved and found acceptable by all parties involved.

8.3 Khumar and her family

8.3.1 A pen portrait of Khumar and her family



Figure 8.7 Family home visit 2. Khumar is playing a game on my tablet

Introducing Khumar Hajiyeva

Khumar is a five-year-old participant girl in the study who was five years and three months old when I started fieldwork in Baku (Figure 8.7). Khumar's mother said Khumar liked dressing up 'very much' and 'being pampered by her grandmother as she lets her do everything she wants.' Khumar had three Russian babysitters at different times, and her mother spoke Russian fluently, so Russian has become her first language. Khumar was attending a private Russian speaking nursery when I was conducting the family visits in Baku, and she started a Russian public school the following year. Khumar spoke Azerbaijani with her father because he did not speak Russian well. In general, if somebody talked to her in Russian, she answered in Russian; if they talked in Azerbaijani, she answered in that language. Mr Hajiyev took Khumar to preschool every day and picked her up on the way back home, and when he was busy, Khumar's maternal grandmother would pick her up from the preschool and stay with her until her parents returned home from work.

Family history and demographics

Khumar lives with her parents and a toddler brother, Mahir. Khumar's mother, Mrs Banu Hajiyeva, and father, Mr Nazim Hajiyev, were in their mid-30s. They both hold undergraduate degrees, but Mrs Hajiyeva had also earned a postgraduate degree. They both held full-time skilled jobs in government organisations (Figure 8.8).

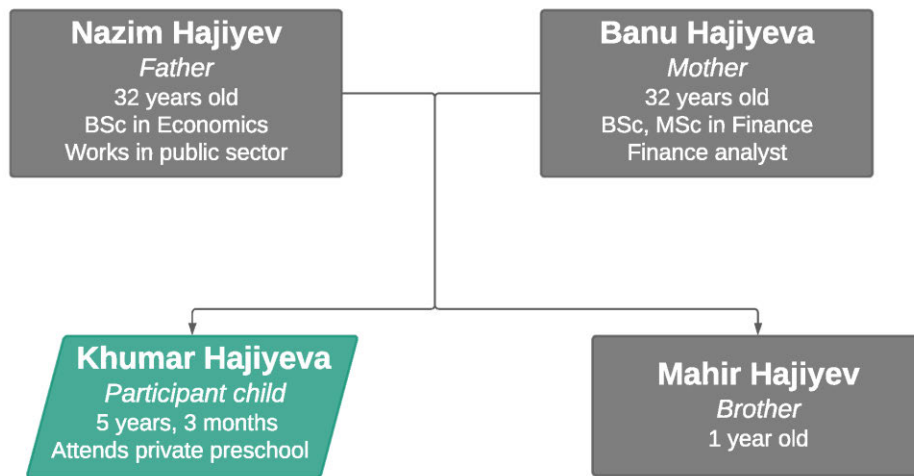


Figure 8.8 Khumar’s family

Digital inventory of Khumar’s home

Khumar’s parents had their own smartphones. They also had a tablet and a TV set at home. Their children were not allowed to use the tablet, although they were using it to look at their children’s baby pictures and videos together. Khumar and her brother were allowed to watch TV for a certain time, and sometimes they watched together with their parents. For example, Mr Hajiyev highlighted that they did not really have time to watch TV, but when they could, they would watch Survivor Turkey, a competition show, because ‘it is full of games, and we are watching to see who will win and lose’ (living journals discussion, 6 July 2019). During family visit 2, Khumar wanted to show me her iPhones that she was keeping in her bag. I asked her to show me, and she brought to me papers cut out to the shapes of phones on which she had drawn apple pictures, and she said there were three phones, one for her and another two for her parents (Figure 8.9).

Digital inventory of Khumar's family



Living Room



Shared



Mr Hajiyev



Mrs Hajiyeva

Figure 8.9 Digital inventory of Khumar's family home

Although Khumar was not allowed to use her parents' phones at home, she had made paper phones for herself. In one of the family visits, Khumar's mother said that Khumar's cousin was given her mother's old iPhone, which explained why Khumar had made Apple phones although her parents had Android phones.



Figure 8.10 Family home visit 2. Khumar is showing me her 'Apple Phones' she had made for her parents and herself

In addition to the digital devices that Khumar's family owned at home, her parents installed surveillance cameras in most of the rooms where children spent time. A babysitter was taking care of Khumar's baby brother at home, and in order to constantly monitor the child, they had installed cameras at home. In Azerbaijan, it is a common practice adopted by many parents who leave their children with a babysitter. They had first installed cameras in their flat when Mrs Hajiyeva resumed her work after maternity leave, and she had to leave Khumar with her babysitter. Through camera applications on their phones and computers, they said they would watch what Khumar was doing with the babysitter at home. They had kept them since then, and later they started using the cameras to monitor Khumar's younger brother with their babysitter. Khumar's parents had installed the application on their phones and computers at work to check live home cameras as frequently as they wished.

Khumar's family's case data generation

The following figure details the data generated for Khumar's family's case, followed by a discussion on the family visits and the living journal approach (Figure 8.11).

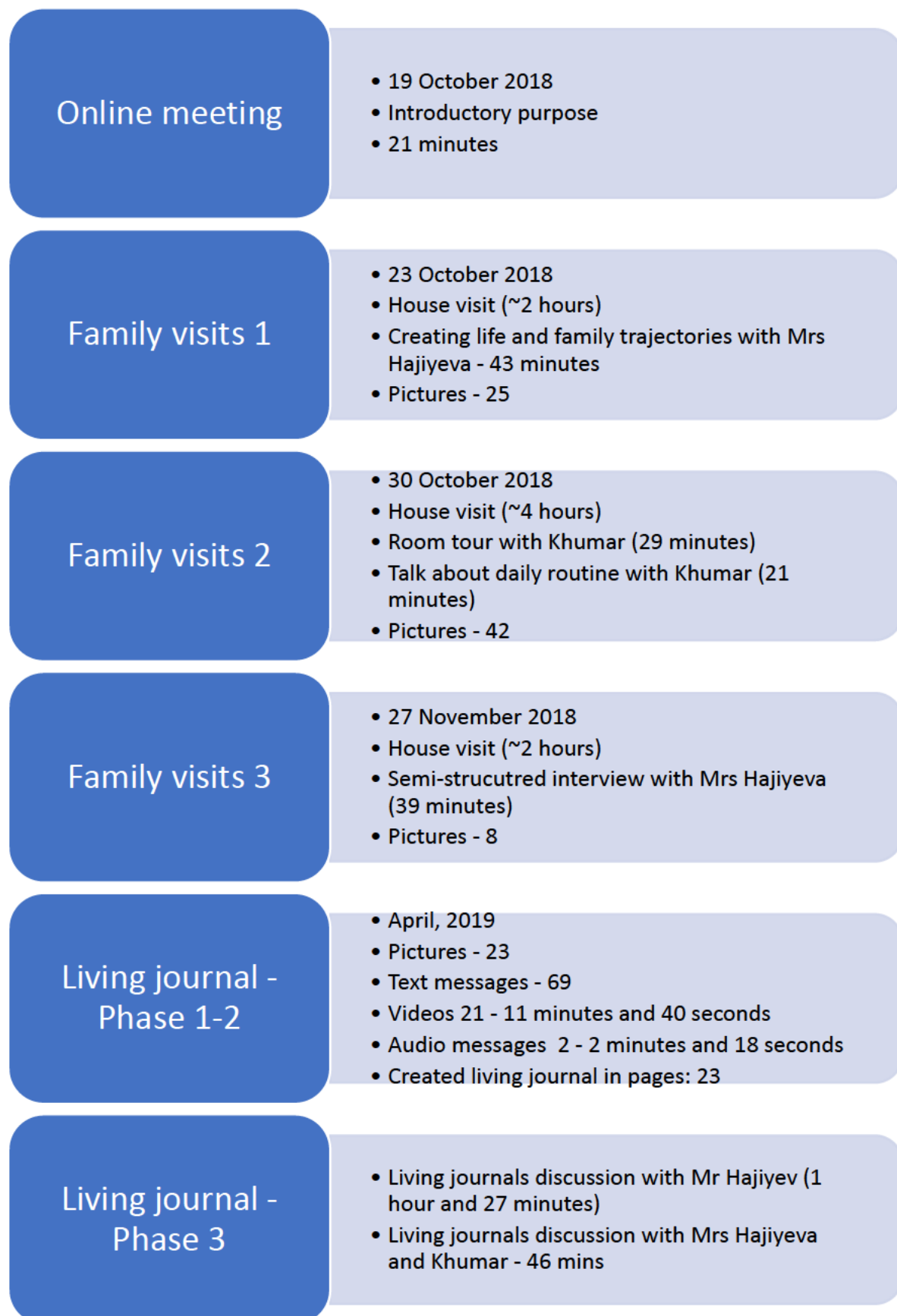


Figure 8.11 Data generation details for Khumar's family

Both Khumar's parents were working; therefore, they asked me to visit their homes in the evenings, and so I was not able to spend as much time as I spent with other families. Nevertheless, I was able to conduct all the family activities and methods I had initially planned. Khumar's family was the only one where the father was present during all family visits, and therefore, he joined the discussions from time to time whenever he found the topic interesting. Khumar's mother was very much engaged in the data generation process for the living journals. She would send commentaries in written text formats and audio messages, and she would send both pictures and videos. There were times that she was not home, or she was not with Khumar. At those times, she would send a screenshot from their home cameras as she was watching children through them. She even asked her mother to record Khumar feeding birds in the park and forwarded me that video recording.

8.3.2 'I was playing with my tablet when I was little': Children's changing digital media practices over time

Sabina: Do you have a tablet, Khumar?

Khumar: No. when I was a child, I had one.

(Khumar, visit 2, 30 Oct 2018)

It seemed like Khumar had lost access to the tablet quite a while ago, or at least, so she felt, given how she referred to the period as her childhood. This episode also highlighted a change in the family's mediation practice. The parents' apparent expectation was that Khumar would regulate the use of the tablet on her own and not use it for long periods. When she had failed to do so, the strategy adopted by the parents was complete restriction. Khumar still considered the tablet her own even though she was explicitly told that it was no longer hers, possibly because the device was put away and rarely used, so Khumar did not necessarily notice ownership changes. In this section, drawing on Khumar's family's case, I talk about parents' changing attitudes as well as the mediation styles over time and across contexts.

A similar episode arose in family visit 2 when I showed pictures of other children to Khumar to elicit her opinions on the activities shown in the pictures. When Khumar saw a

picture with other children playing on a device, she recalled having a tablet of her own when she ‘was younger’ and that she used to play games on it. Khumar further added that her mother had then put it away. She had not immediately made peace with the change and had attempted to use the tablet without permission until it was put away out of her reach. After this, she accepted that playing with the tablet was no longer an option, and she told me that she did not like it anymore, which she did not clarify even though I inquired.

I was also playing games on the tablet when I was little. Then the charge ran out. Then it had some charge again, but I played a lot, and they took it away from me.

(Khumar, visit 2, 30 Oct 2018)

The way Khumar described her attempts to use the tablet against her mother’s will suggested that she was quite keen to have the opportunities to play on the device. I can only assume this, but her sudden disinterest in using the device was possibly not genuine, and rather a coping mechanism to deal with the loss of this privilege. Her mother also spoke of these events during the first family visit, recounting that previously their tablet was in a place that Khumar could reach, but now they had put it away on the top of the shelf, and it was discharged (I return to parents’ mediation style in 9.4). Mrs Hajiyeva also noted that she had no intention of returning the tablet for a long time, at least until Khumar turned ten years old.

Mrs Hajiyeva said Khumar was turning into a ‘zombie’, meaning that she was so focused on the device that she would tune out everything around her. In addition to Khumar’s mother, the ‘zombie’ metaphor was repeated mostly by fathers, and thus it is more extensively discussed in the following chapter focused on fathers’ attitudes and mediation practices (9.3.1).

Overall, the general negative attitude towards digital media seemed to be the main factor behind Khumar’s parents’ long-lasting decision to restrict access. When the parents realised that Khumar was using the device excessively, it possibly reaffirmed their original negative beliefs, and they restricted Khumar’s access to the tablet entirely. In contrast, Elcan’s family, from the previous section, adopted a temporal mediation strategy that changed over time. Khumar’s parents’ mediation style was also spatial and contextual, further explored in the following section.

8.3.3 'Grandmother mode': Children's changing digital media practices over space

Whenever we visit my family's house, Khumar changes. So, she goes in 'grandma mode', and she gets in 'mummy mode' when we come back home.

(Mrs Hajiyeva, visit 1, 23 Oct 2018)

Mrs Hajiyeva highlighted the external factor influencing her family's digital media practices. By unspoken agreement, different rules applied to the digital media practices in Khumar's own home and her grandmother's home. As Mrs Hajiyeva explicitly stated, the grandmother's reason for such a permissive approach was that Khumar was the first grandchild and somewhat pampered. The changes in practices were temporary, and upon returning home, the stricter rules were always reinstated. This section discusses how children's digital media practices can depend on situations and context.

Changing rules at grandparents

In Khumar's family, both parents agreed to allow the use of digital media when Khumar was at her grandparents'. This approval possibly stemmed from the parents' desire to avoid confrontation in the presence of parents-in-law or other reasons related to power relations. This approach emphasised the fluidity of the rules, where the change of place provides for justification to amend the practices.

But now sometimes I give my phone to her when we go to my mother's house, so they keep calm.

(Mrs Hajiyeva, living journals discussion, 14 Dec 2019)

Sometimes when they visit their grandparents, they misbehave, and I give them the phone to calm them down, but then again, I take it away.

(Mr Hajiyev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Aiming for consistency in establishing rules

The above practice had been amended, as revealed later by the mother's commentaries on the living journals. Upon seeing Khumar's picture with a device at her grandmother's (Figure 8.12), Mrs Hajiyeva clarified that Khumar was no longer allowed to use a phone or

watch TV for long hours at her grandparents' house either. Mrs Hajiyeva said she had recently had a conversation with her mother and had explained to her that she should not allow Khumar to use her phone anymore.



Figure 8.12 Living journal page. Khumar is watching a cartoon on YouTube at her grandmother's house

She [Khumar] doesn't ask my mum for her phone anymore, because my mum has already told her 'no'. One time she cried for it but my mum didn't pay attention. After that she stopped asking for the phone. Before she would cry and my mum would try to stop her or cuddle her to calm her down. But then my mum saw that realised that there was no balance between our directives, so she stopped.
(Mrs Hajiyeva, visit 3, 27 Nov 2018)

Mrs Hajiyeva was clearly aware of the discrepancy between the practices in the two settings and corrected it to align with the rules established at home. She seemed content with the change, mainly because the widespread practice in both settings had now been made consistent with the beliefs held by both parents.

These observations echoed some of the findings by Nimrod et al. (2019), who argue that parental mediation is not limited only to parents but can also extend to grandparents who might play an important role in children's digital media practices. Besides, it can be common among grandparents to opt for more permissive mediation strategies in order to protect their bond with their grandchildren (Fisch, 2017). The fact that the grandparents'

visits are usually short provides grounds for parents to allow for more access to digital media and then revert to what might be considered normal upon returning to their own homes.

8.4 Yasin and his family

8.4.1 A pen portrait of Yasin and his family

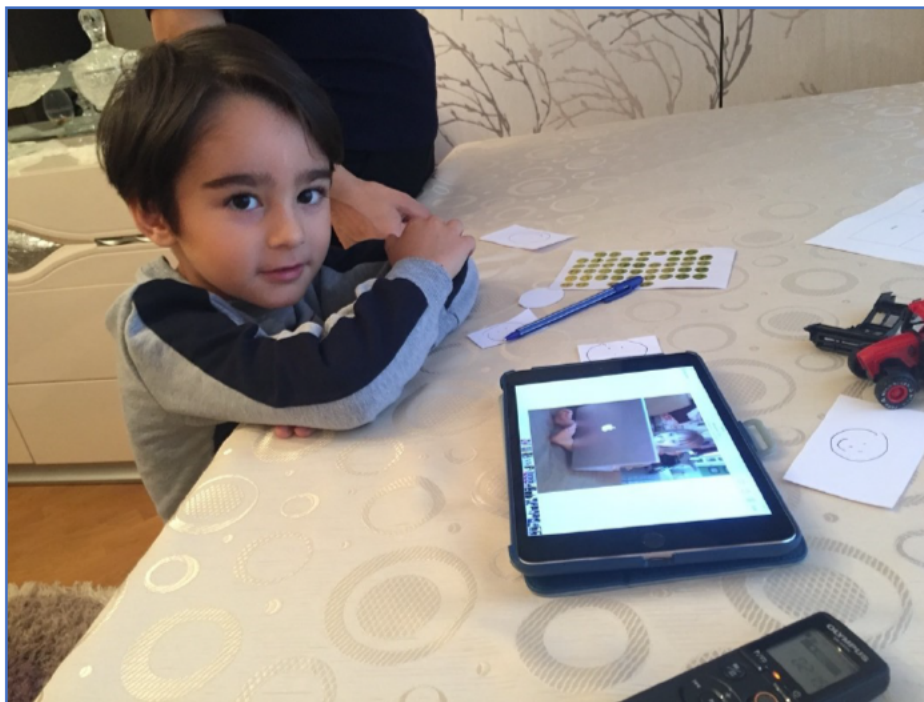


Figure 8.13 Family home visit 2. Yasin is waiting for me to show him pictures on the tablet to talk about daily routines

Introducing Yasin Mammadov

Yasin Mammadov is a participant boy in the study. He turned five during the family visits. Yasin's mother described Yasin as an 'energetic and social child who would talk to anybody and play with everybody'. Yasin was not attending nursery; instead, he was attending private tutoring classes in his neighbourhood where the teacher taught a group of preschool-aged children literacy and numeracy skills in Russian so that when they started school, they were able to communicate and demonstrate their knowledge using the language. Tutoring classes are quite popular in Azerbaijan, and this type of language tutoring is popular among families whose first language is not Russian, but who plan to send their children to a Russian speaking school. Yasin's mother – Mrs Mammadova – said Yasin had already learned how to communicate in Russian after these tutoring classes. During the

family visits, he was frequently reminded by his grandmother and mother to speak Russian with me.

During the first family visit, Yasin started calling me 'Sabish', my nickname, suggesting that he felt close to me although he had just met me. However, soon he started feeling uncomfortable during our conversations as his grandmother and mother reminded him that I was conducting a research study with him, and they sometimes referred to me as 'teacher'. Referring to an adult in such a manner is a common but formal practice, and throughout the visit, I encouraged Yasin to refer to me as he wished to try and create a relaxed environment. As I have captured in the picture from the first visit above, he has his arms folded, the way pupils are expected to sit in a classroom in Azerbaijan (Figure 8.13), which he started doing after being reminded of the purpose of my visit by his grandmother and mother. He did return to calling me by my nickname by the end of the visit.

Family history and demographics

Yasin's mother, Fatima Mammadova, is 31 years old, and his father, Nadir Mammadov, is 30. They studied together in the same cohort during their undergraduate studies in one of the prestigious public universities in Baku. They both hold undergraduate degrees in the same programme, and Mrs Mammadova further obtained her master's degree from the same university, simultaneously holding a full-time skilled job throughout her studies, and later in a government organisation. After I completed the living journals method, she started her second master's degree to support her career with a programme more relevant to her work. Mr Mammadov was unemployed when I started family visits in Baku. Yasin's grandmother, Safayat Mammadova, was in her late fifties and started living with the family after her spouse passed away. She was helping Mrs Mammadova with house chores and caring for her grandchildren. Yasin's sister, Aydan, was eight months old (Figure 8.14).

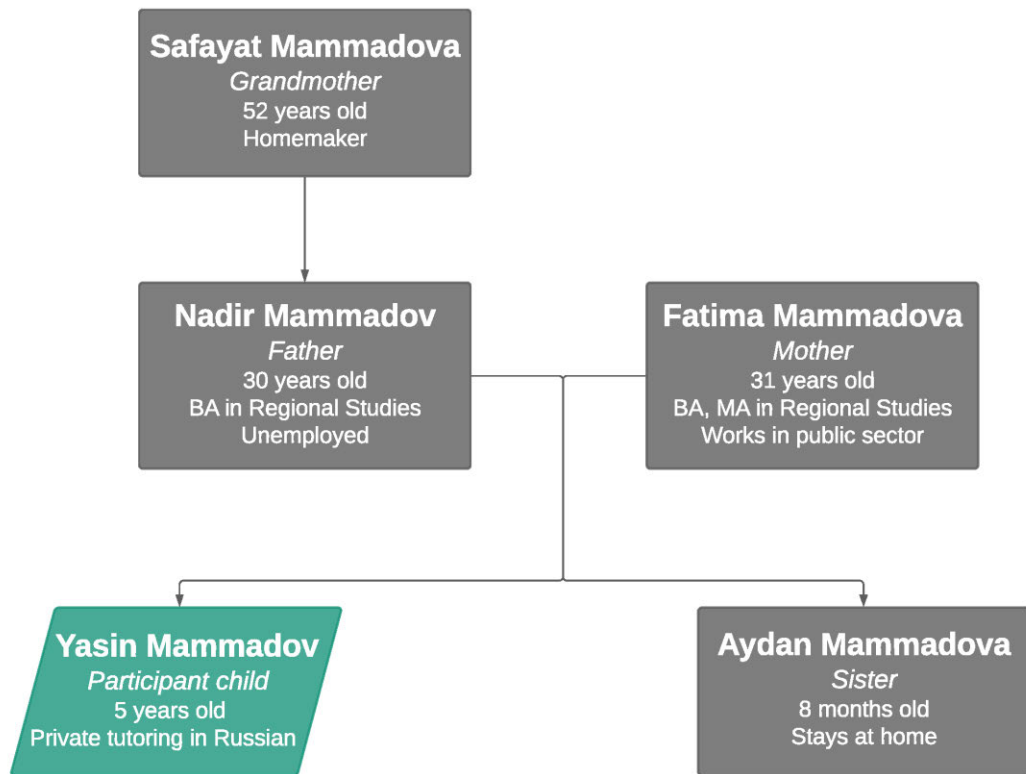


Figure 8.14 Yasin’s family

Yasin’s family lived in a two-bedroom flat on the fifth floor, bought by his grandfather when his parents got married. It is located in an old neighbourhood in Baku, and as such, strong relationships have developed with neighbours. In particular, as Yasin’s’ grandmother had lived in the neighbourhood for more than 20 years, she was quite familiar with most of the local neighbours and shop owners. She took Yasin and his sister out every day for a walk around the building, so Yasin spent a lot of time outside, playing with his friends under the supervision of his grandmother (Figure 8.15).



Figure 8.15 Family home visit 2. A view from Yasin's family's flat

Digital inventory of Yasin's home

Yasin's family owned a television set and a laptop. The TV was in the living room and was switched on most of the time. However, the laptop was Yasin's uncle's old one, which Mrs Mammadova used when she needed to do some urgent work from home. Yasin's parents each owned a smartphone, whereas the grandmother's phone was not a smartphone (Figure 8.16). Yasin had his own tablet. His father had bought it for him, thinking that as Yasin had been using the phone, which they considered harmful for his eyes, it would be better to have a larger screen, reducing the strain on his eyes. Mrs Mammadova said Yasin used it mainly to watch YouTube videos, but only when she allowed him to do so. This mainly happened when he was tired after tutoring.

Digital inventory of Yasin's family

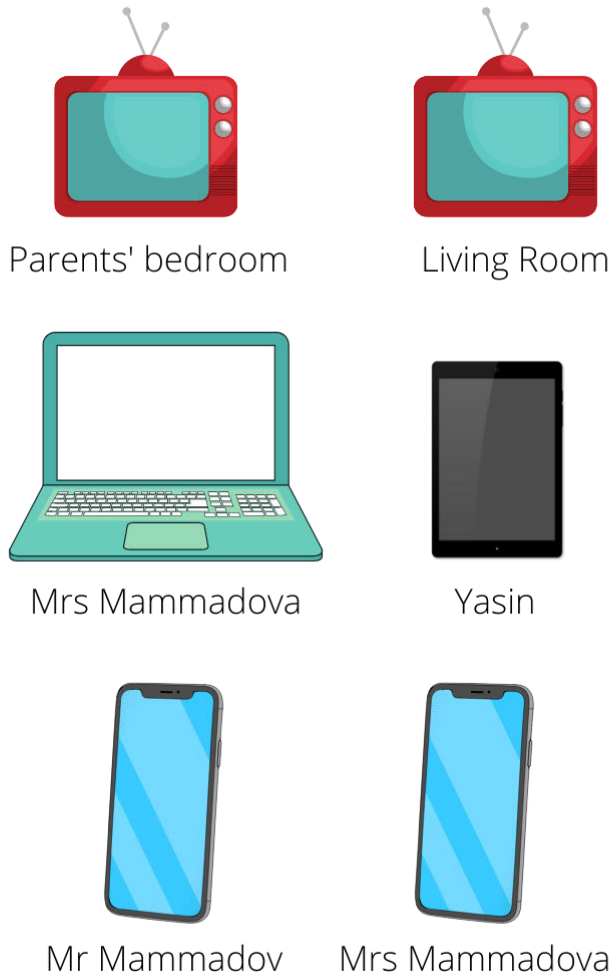


Figure 8.16 Digital inventory of Yasin's family home

Yasin's family's case data generation

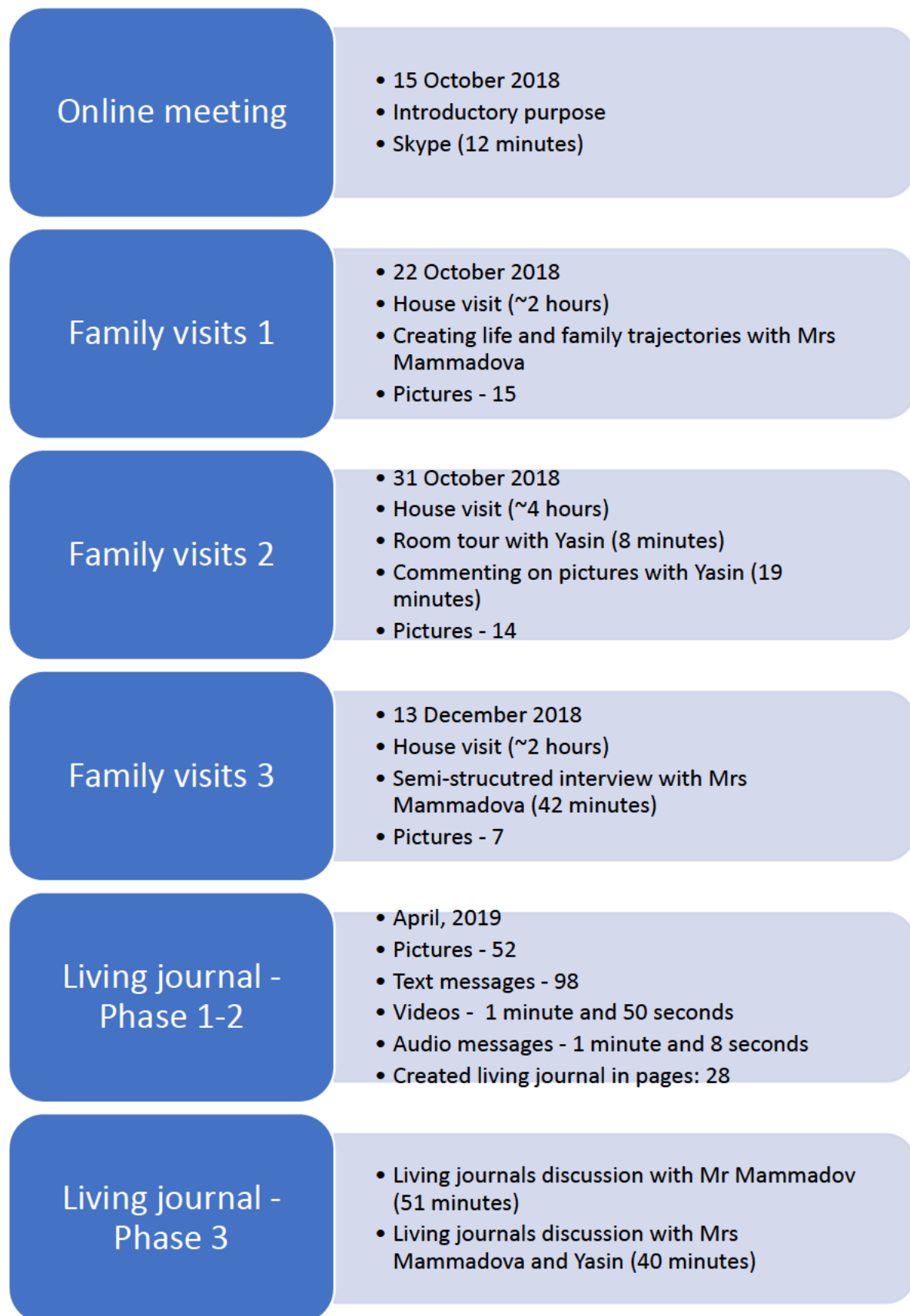


Figure 8.17 Data generation details for Yasin's family

The data collected for Yasin's family was diverse and sizable as they were actively engaged in the data generation process. The visits were quite engaging, often including lunches or dinners, meaning sometimes they lasted longer than intended. Mr Mammadov was not home during the family visits; however, Yasin's grandmother was home, and she would often join in our discussions or take care of the children when I was interviewing Mrs Mammadova. For the living journals method, Yasin's family is among the three families whose response rate was relatively high. Mrs Mammadova sent more pictures in response to the prompts, accompanied by detailed responses in text messages.

8.4.2 'So, there should be some supervision': Mother's approach to mediation

His father lets him watch and play when he is together with him. But he never gives the phone to him when he is alone. He always supervises him. He asks me not to give him my phone unsupervised either. But when I am doing house chores or some other stuff, I give my phone to Yasin and leave him unsupervised, which is not good. For example, yesterday, he tapped on an advertisement, and he watched some inappropriate content. So, there should be some supervision.

(Mrs Mammadova, living journals discussion, 15 DEC 2019)

Yasin's mother – Mrs Mammadova, highlighted the importance of supervision in order to avoid inappropriate content several times. She explained that children could be exposed to unwanted or scary content in the absence of proper supervision. Mrs Mammadova believed that children are voluntarily or involuntarily exposed to digital technologies in the digital age, and they better learn digital skills now so they can be competent users in the future. In this process, therefore, it is crucial for her that children are exposed to educational content under the supervision of their parents.

Mrs Mammadova and all the participant mothers aimed at minimising the time their children spent on devices and paid extra attention to their actions, and this usually took the form of mothers playing with their children at home or frequently supervising what their children were watching on TV. Having to carry this responsibility alone, and in many cases

for more than one child, in addition to other household duties, the mothers sometimes had to forego the control and allow free access, leading to feelings of guilt and failure.

Mother's emotions around their children's digital media use

The unpleasant feelings of guilt likely contributed to the habit of further restricting access to digital media when possible. This approach was also potentially caused by the general beliefs of mothers to deem books, outdoor play, and socialisation better than spending time on digital devices, which was also related to how they spent their time in their own childhood. This attitude can be interpreted in terms of the prolepsis concept by Cole (1998), which considers the formation of parental attitudes based on their own past childhood experiences, as discussed in detail in 9.5.

I feel guilty that sometimes when I am busy, in order to get rid of him, I give him my phone or his tablet to watch something. Yet, when I have time, I sit down with him and watch how rain or thunderstorms happen on YouTube videos, and I explain them to him as they are mostly in English or Russian [and he may not understand well].
(Mrs Mammadova, visit 1, 22 Oct 2018)

Besides these activities, Mrs Mammadova also saw fit to spend time with her son when he was using digital devices to maintain the supervision she deemed necessary, and steer him towards more educational content. She said she always tried to watch educational videos with him, such as how earthquakes or thunderstorms happen, and further explained the content to help him understand. Mrs Mammadova considered watching such content on YouTube a significant aspect of her son's preschool education.

Mother's approach to supervision

Mrs Mammadova highlighted that if parents do not want their children to overuse digital technologies, they need to create time to entertain them. In the third family visit, she showed me books and brain teasers she had bought for Yasin to keep him busy and away from digital media. Her strategy was to educate him through books and various tests in order to keep him away from his tablet. She said that she was aware that the tablet was more interesting than anything Yasin could have done on his own, so she deemed it

necessary to get involved in the activities to try and make them more attractive. She explained that if she did not want him to watch YouTube videos on the couch for hours, she needed to do activities with him.

If you don't give him the tablet, you have to stay and entertain him. [...] A tablet is not good anyway, but in that case, a parent should spare some time for the child.

(Mrs Mammadova, visit 3, 13 Dec 2018)

Mr Mammadov was generally opposed to Yasin's uses of digital technologies, although he drew attention to Yasin's developing digital literacy skills and commented on how digital could have been mixed with the physical play with LEGO.

He [Yasin] asked me to start a YouTube channel for him to teach other children how to construct LEGO. He likes Minecraft a lot too. He is playing the game; I can't even play myself.

(Mr Mammadov, living journals discussion, 15 Jul 2019)

For Mr Mammadov, Yasin was a capable user of digital technologies, and he wanted to utilise it to share his favourite activity – constructing LEGO – with other children through YouTube. While he spoke of this with some pride, he remained opposed to allowing additional access to digital devices.

8.4.3 'I do not let him watch cartoons in Turkish': Language choice to use digital media

Parents generally permitted access to digital devices when they served the purpose of learning a foreign language. However, it is notable that language learning was also carefully selected and moderated. Mrs Mammadova wanted Yasin to learn Russian as this would be the language of instruction when he started school. Therefore, she actively discouraged access to digital media in another foreign language – Turkish – even when she thought the educational content was better than that in the Russian videos. It was clear that the educational content was important to Mrs Mammadova and many other parents, but in this case, the language itself took priority, again in the interest of better education later in school.

I do not let him watch cartoons in Turkish, especially on TV, because he knows and understands them better. But I try to have him watch everything in Russian. On the tablet too, when he is trying to watch something in Turkish, I change them. Although those videos are better, I notice that he then starts using Turkish words.

(Mrs Mammadova, visit 3, 13 Dec 2018)

Children taking initiative in selecting content

Even though parents tried their best to supervise children, monitor content, and interfere with steering their choices, the children still got alone time with devices, which gave them the freedom to select the content they wanted. In the case of Yasin, he seemed to be acquiring the skill to manage the digital device with no scaffolding from parents.

Mrs Mammadova: There is a game, Minecraft, that he is very interested in. He looks for them on YouTube and watches them.

Sabina: How does he find them on YouTube?

Mrs Mammadova: Through voice search. I didn't even know about it. But he knows. He just, for example, says Minecraft and gets videos of Minecraft.

Sabina: How did you find out about voice search, Yasin?

Yasin: I learned it myself.

Mrs Mammadova: Did your cousin teach you? Who taught you?

Yasin: I have learned it myself (He shouts in frustration).

(Yasin and Mrs Mammadova, living journals discussion, 15 Dec 2019)

8.5 Kamala and her family

8.5.1 A pen portrait of Kamala and her family



Figure 8.18 Family home visit 2. Kamala is pretending to call her father and ask him when he is coming home

Introducing Kamala Azadova

Kamala is a five-year-old girl participant in the study (Figure 8.18). Kamala's mother said she liked drawing and making mosaics, but she did not like it when somebody tried to play with her toys. Kamala had been attending nursery since she was two and a half years old. During the fieldwork in 2018, she was going to a Russian-speaking preschool. Kamala also attended private school preparation courses three days a week for two hours in the afternoons. Kamala spoke Russian and Azerbaijani. At home, her mother spoke Russian with her to help improve her communication skills in this language.

Family history and demographics

Kamala's mother, Sara Azadova, is 26 years old. She holds an undergraduate degree from a prestigious state university in Baku. She is a teacher for four-year-olds in one of the private English schools in Baku; however, she said she did not want to be a teacher forever. In addition to her main job, she tutors adults and children in English in the evenings and at weekends. She gives classes on Saturdays too, but said she kept Sundays free for quality time with her family.

Her husband, Murad Azadov, is 34 years old. He holds an undergraduate degree from one of the prestigious state universities in Baku, and works as a sales consultant in a private company. Kamala has a younger brother, Kamran, who was three years old when I visited their home in 2018. The figure below shows demographic details about Kamala's family (Figure 8.19). In 2018, Kamala attended a private Russian preschool, and Kamran went to an Azerbaijani nursery. Sara and Murad took their children to preschool on their way to work, and Sara picked them up as she finished work earlier than her husband. Prior to commencing interviews about the living journals in the fall of 2019, Kamala had started a Russian-speaking school, and Kamran had started at the English-speaking private preschool where their mother was working as a teacher.

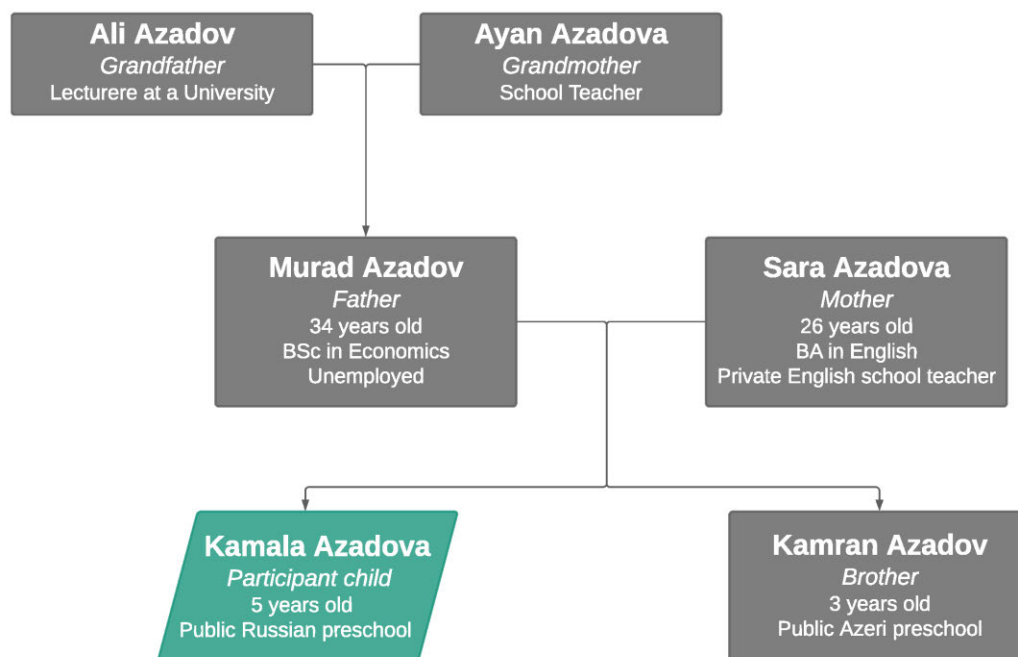


Figure 8.19 Kamala's family

Kamala's family lives with her paternal grandparents. In Azerbaijan, when men get married, they usually stay with their families. So, Kamala's family lived in her grandparents' two-bedroom flat, together with the grandparents. It was in an old Soviet-style building, and the flat was on the fifth floor. Kamala's grandfather is an informatics teacher, and her grandmother is a maths teacher at school. During the first family visit, Mrs Azadova said they had already bought a flat and were renovating it so they could move in as soon as possible.

Digital inventory of Kamala's home

Mrs Azadova's father-in-law had a desktop computer at home. In addition to that, they had a TV in the living room that seemed to be on most of the time. Kamala's parents had smartphones, but they did not seem to use them much other than for social media, which they used to keep in touch with their friends (Figure 8.20).

Digital inventory of Kamala's family

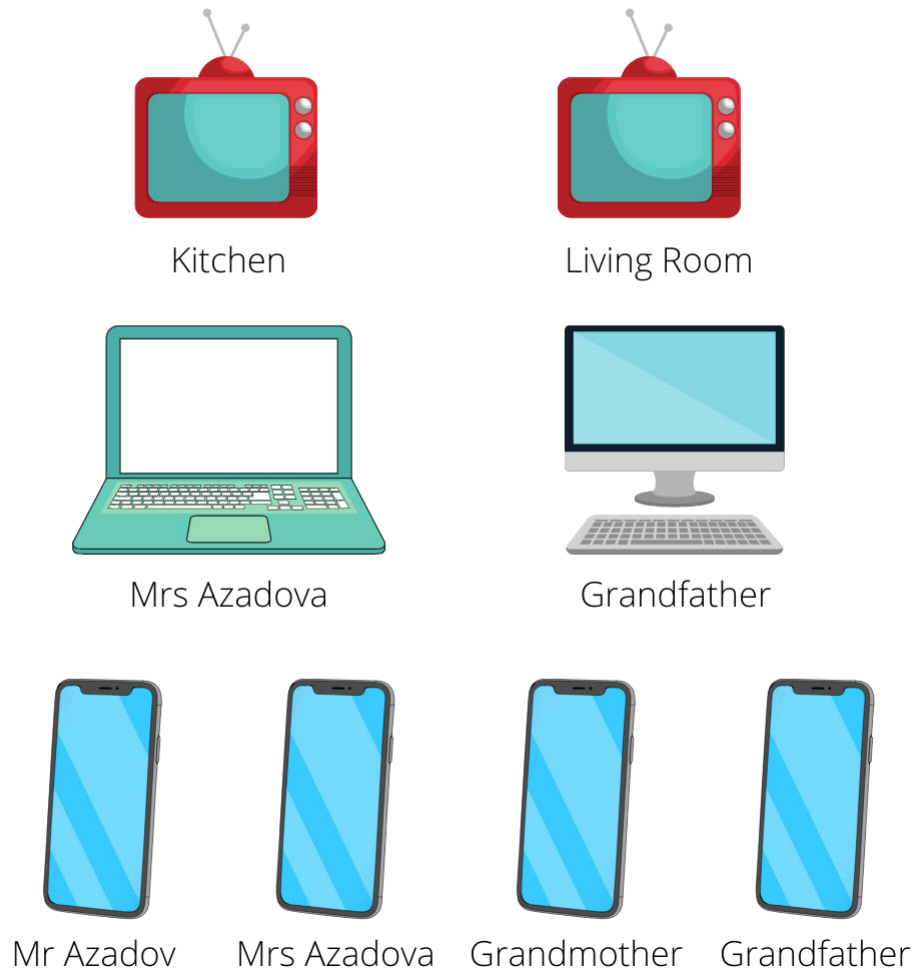


Figure 8.20 Digital inventory of Kamala's family home

Kamala's family's case data generation

The following figure details Kamala's family data generation, and a brief discussion on them follows it (Figure 8.21).

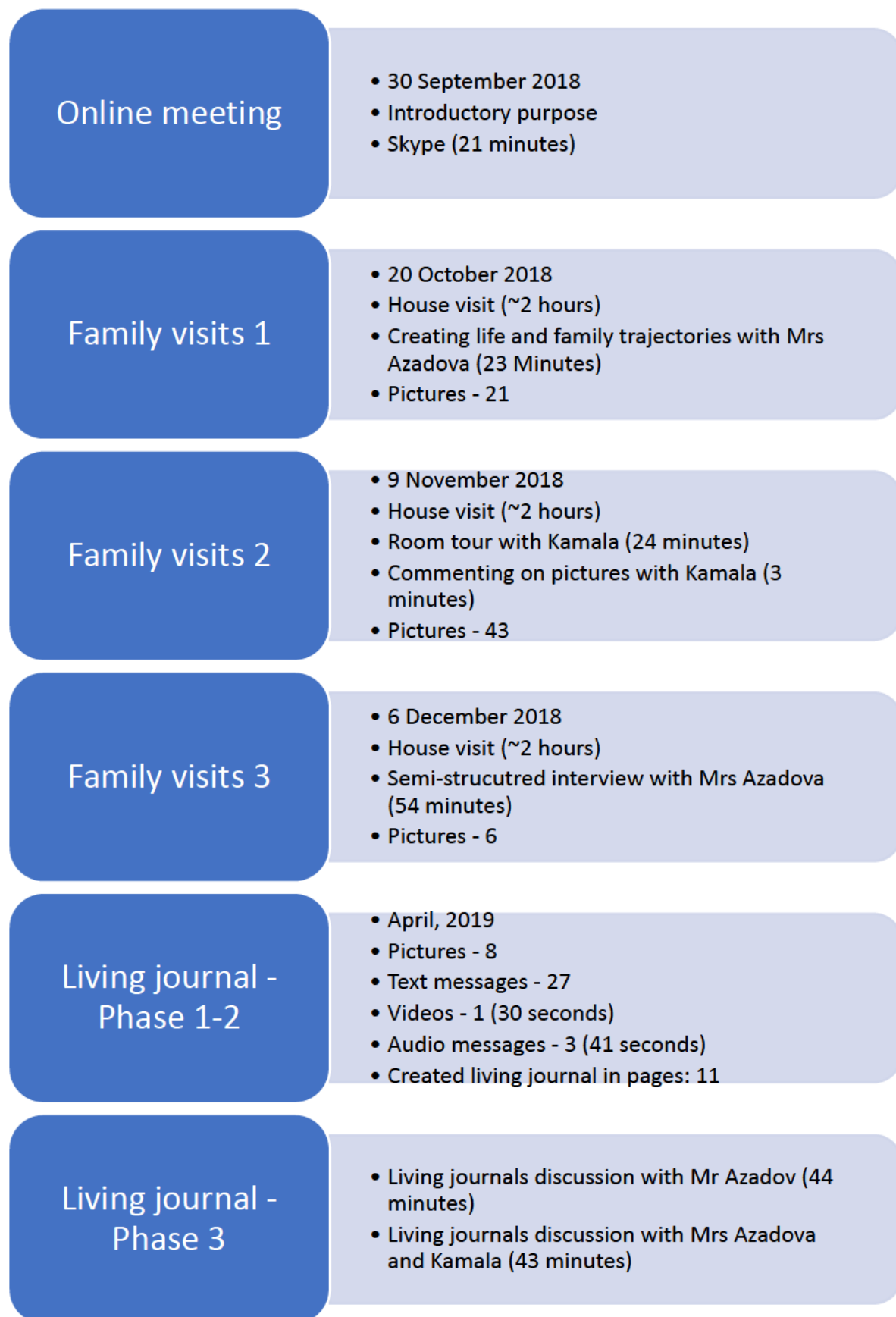


Figure 8.21 Data generation details for Kamala's family

One family visit was on a Saturday when I had to take my son with me, and it lasted longer than the others. During family visits, Mrs Azadova and her children were usually home. I did not have a chance to talk with any grandparents living in the same household as all participant mothers living with their in-laws had asked me not to involve their in-laws in the research.

For the living journals method, the data generated with Kamala's family were less than other families. Mrs Azadova was less engaged as she was working during the week and at weekends too, and therefore most of the time, she was not able to send pictures or videos. However, sometimes she would ask her mother to take a picture of Kamala and send it to her, and then she would forward them to me. As in the case of Bilal's family, I offered Mrs Azadova to discontinue her involvement. But she declined the offer and remained in the study.

8.5.2 'Who is iPad?': Being a 'good' mother and influencing child's digital media practices

Sabina: Do you have an iPad too, Kamala?

Kamala: Who is iPad?

Mrs Azadova: See, she doesn't even know what an iPad is, but Kamran [her son] knows because they use it during his class.

(Mrs Azadova and Kamala, living journals discussion, 8 Jan 2020)

During the living journals discussion, it became apparent that the Azadovs had not introduced a tablet to their children. In other families, even those children who did not own a tablet still recognised what a tablet was when they saw the one I had brought along for taking pictures during family visits. While checking other children's journals, Kamala lingered on the picture where Elcan and his brother were using their iPads. I asked her whether she had an iPad as well, and she asked me who iPad was. We had this conversation with Kamala in the presence of Mrs Azadova and Kamala's then almost five-year-old brother, Kamran. Mrs Azadova reiterated what Kamala had said, and she seemed to be proud of the fact their daughter had never seen a tablet, and as parents, they had not provided such an opportunity to her. This section describes Kamala's family's approach to digital media use, focusing on the influences of parents' perceptions of digital media on their children's uses of digital media.

While Kamala did not know how to use an iPad, her younger brother Kamran had recently started attending a private English-speaking preschool where they used iPads once a week. As Mrs Azadova was working in the same school, she commented that they only used the iPad for educational purposes. Mrs Azadova emphasised that she would only allow her children to use an iPad if they were using it for educational purposes. This approach echoed all other families who preferred the use of digital devices for educational purposes.

Mrs Azadova considered it an achievement that she had successfully kept digital devices away from her children. She highlighted that their children were not interested in digital technologies, unlike the other children around them. She disagreed with the approaches some other parents in her circle had taken by teaching their children how to use devices. She alluded to the fact that the 'mother factor' played a significant role in the children's uses of digital technologies, highlighting that while she refrained from allowing her daughter, another mother had, in fact, done so. We did not discuss the 'mother factor' in

any further detail, but I understood it to mean that mothers' perceptions affected the digital practices in any family.

8.5.3 'Bad mother': Mothers' perceptions of expectations from them

When we go out somewhere, to the restaurant or somewhere, they see that other children have a phone and start the 'drama' right away. Why is their mother giving a phone to them, and you are not?! You don't love us. (Mrs Azadova, living journals discussion, 8 Jan 2020)

During the living journals discussions with mothers and children, Mrs Azadova talked about how she was always telling her children that they did not have an internet connection on their phones when they went outside. Mrs Azadova half-jokingly declared that she was called 'a bad mother' by her children for not allowing them to use her phone at a restaurant or a café. It was unacceptable for her and her husband that children at this young age could be permitted to use their phones unless they 'misbehaved' when visiting some place – grandparents or friends. The concept of a 'bad mother', as Mrs Azadova termed it, captured the essence of how she viewed herself through the eyes of her children. To her, it was a sacrifice of her goodness in the interest of the greater good for her children. Because she had a negative attitude towards digital media, she deemed it her responsibility to shield the children from exposure.

Creating a 'proper' home context

Kamala's parents seemed to be creating a context to minimise digital media use in the home setting. During visit 2, Kamala showed me the room she shared with her grandparents. When I saw the desktop computer in the room, I asked her to whom it belonged and whether she had ever used it. Kamala said she never used it, other than when she talked with her maternal grandmother through it. I asked Mrs Azadova about the desktop computer during visit 3, and she said that nobody used it, so children thought it was only a decorative object in the room. The device was never used, but this availability still did not lead to the children accessing it, primarily due to the family context established by the parents.

It is their grandfather's computer. The children don't even know how to use that. We ourselves are not using it, so children think it is just something sitting there (smiling).

(Mrs Azadova, visit 2, 8 Jan 2020)

Parents have considerable influence on their children's digital media practices in a home setting (Marsh et al., 2017; Shin & Lee, 2017). In general, Kamala's parents seemed to be aware of their influence. During the same conversation, Mrs Azadova also focused on the fact that she herself did not know how to put the TV on and set channels for her children so they could watch cartoons on weekends.

Kamala's parents supported their opinions about the children's uses of digital technologies with their own actions at home: they preferred not to use any digital technologies themselves, so their children imitated them in that way. Parents' digital media practices, in addition to their attitudes towards and perceptions of digital technologies, seemed to affect children's interactions with digital media.

8.6 Bilal and his family

8.6.1 A pen portrait of Bilal and his family



Figure 8.22 Family home visit 2. Bilal is taking a break from checking pictures on my iPad for ‘talk about daily routine’ activity and showing me his toys

Introducing Bilal Rzayev

At the time of data generation in Baku, Bilal was the only child. He was five years and three months old (Figure 8.22). Within one year, during the period of living journals discussions, Bilal’s family welcomed the second baby boy. Bilal’s mother said Bilal liked playing with his mother and spending most of his time with her. He was very interested in LEGO, Minecraft, and active physical games, such as hide-and-seek, but mostly played with his mother at home and sometimes played Minecraft or chess with his father. Bilal was attending a private Azerbaijani preschool five days a week, from 9 am till 5 pm. He started attending the nursery when he was two years and seven months old. Mrs Rzayeva said she

felt guilty for sending Bilal to the nursery at such a young age. She explained the reason behind it was her desire to continue working at the university and the difficulties of finding a job in Baku. In Azerbaijan, mothers used to stay home and raise children. However, this practice is gradually changing since often both parents need to work for financial reasons. Besides, society is slowly changing, and women who pursue higher education want to work and at least earn enough 'for a lady to take care of herself financially' (Mrs Rzayeva, visit 1, 23 Oct 2018).

Family history and demographics

Bilal's mother, Mrs Amina Rzayeva, was 29 years old, and his father, Mr Sadig Rzayev, was 30 years old (Figure 8.23) at the time of the study. They were both from the same region and moved to Baku to study for their undergraduate degrees, met in the city, found jobs, and stayed there. Bilal's mother worked at one of the prestigious universities of Baku. She had gained her undergraduate degree at this university, and had been working there for several years, barring a short break when she had Bilal. In family visit 1, while creating her life trajectory, she recalled the period when she had to decide between her family and her job, and chose the former. She proudly explained to me how she managed to make the most of university despite all the difficulties along the way. At the time, she was teaching several courses in the Engineering faculty and, during data generation, was going to start to study for a PhD. She was also a founder of a start-up project that was growing slowly but steadily. Mr Sadig Rzayev was a computer engineer and worked as a programmer in a government organisation. He said he liked the fact that Bilal showed great interest in his job and that he might follow the same path in the future. Bilal's 24-year-old uncle lived with them too. He had recently returned from the army and was working in a private company in Baku.

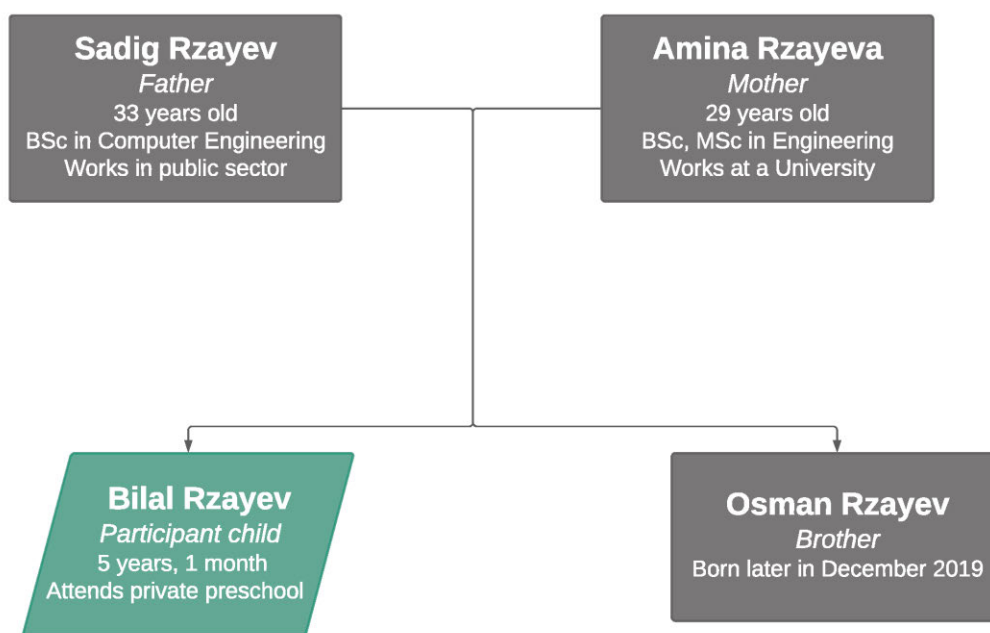


Figure 8.23 Bilal's family

Bilal used a lot of Turkish words. Bilal's parents also used a lot of Turkish words and phrases, due to their alma mater's strong ties with Turkey. Bilal seemed to have learned it from them as well as from watching Turkish cartoons on TV. Bilal's parents had been living in a small flat in a suburban area in Baku, but they had recently moved into a bigger flat relatively close to the city. Mrs Rzayeva explained the move was a desire to have a separate room for their son. However, Bilal was temporarily sharing his room with his uncle due to his return from the army.

Digital inventory of Bilal's home

Bilal's parents owned smartphones. They had a TV set in the living room that was on most of the time during the day. During visit 1, the TV was on for the most part, but nobody was watching it. When we started talking about the digital devices they owned, Mrs Rzayeva got up and unplugged the TV. She said: 'I am not watching TV, and my spouse sometimes watches documentaries, and Bilal joins him. I simply forget to unplug TV most of the time'. They also owned a laptop, and as Mrs Rzayeva put it, 'they are a family of computer

engineers', so everybody used it. Bilal did not own any digital device. However, in visit 2, he voiced his desire to have a tablet as his nursery friends had, but his mother said they were not thinking about it yet. Bilal was allowed to use his parents' phones from time to time to download and play games. The following figure details family's digital device ownership (Figure 8.24).

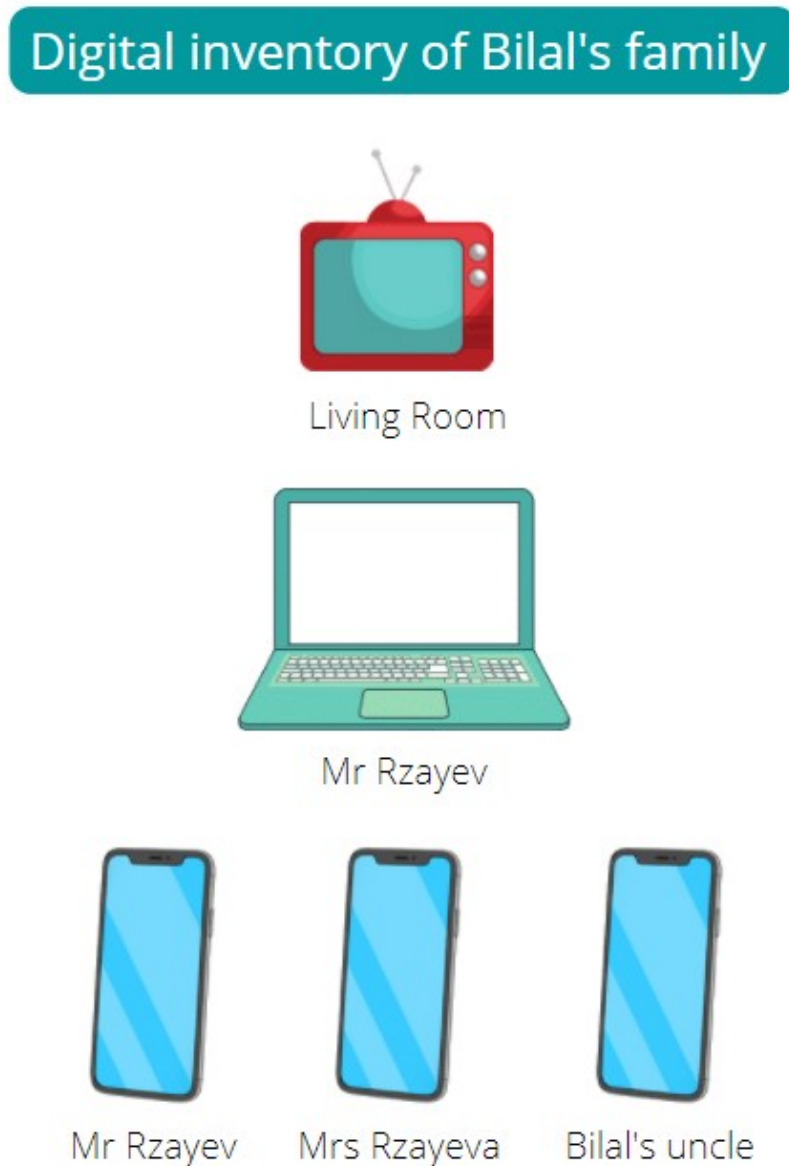


Figure 8.24 Digital inventory of Bilal's family home

Bilal's family's case data generation

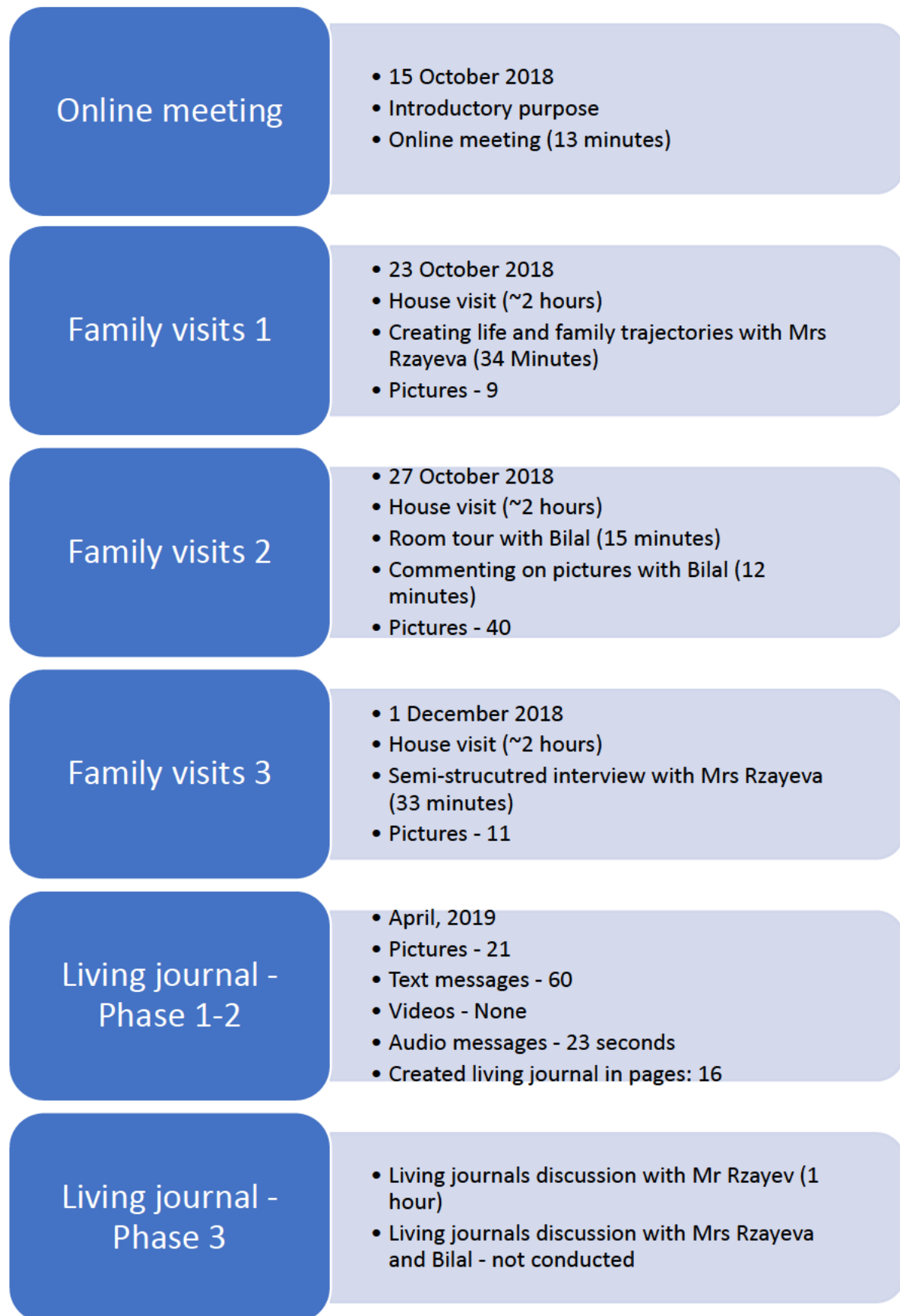


Figure 8.25 Data generation details for Bilal's family

Bilal's mother asked me to conduct family visits on Saturday mornings as she was home, and her husband was working on that day. Most of the time, Bilal was with us, and we always played some games. Other times, he wanted to draw something for me while waiting for us to conduct interviews. During the data generation for the living journals method, Mrs Rzayeva became pregnant, and she was sometimes not able to send answers to the prompts. I offered to stop the data generation, but she wanted to continue and managed to answer whenever it was convenient for her. Mrs Rzayeva, as Mrs Azadova, Kamala's mother, wanted to continue with the living journals method, I think, for the reason that they did not want to leave the study in the middle, despite the fact that they were reminded of this option twice by me. Later, I was not able to conduct a discussion on the living journals with Mrs Rzayeva and Bilal. While we agreed that we could have a discussion, after a month or two, the baby was born, and soon after, the spread of pandemic Covid-19 changed everything, and I did not want to contact them during this period.

8.6.2 'It is harmful to eyesight': Children learning from parents

Sabina: Do you like watching something on the computer?

Bilal: No, not at all.

Sabina: Is there any reason?

Bilal: It is harmful.

Sabina: What is it harmful to?

Bilal: It is harmful to eyesight.

(Bilal, visit 2, 27 Oct 2018)

This exchange with Bilal showed me that he had heard from his parents that using computers could be harmful to his eyesight, possibly when this was named as a reason for not allowing him access to digital devices. The other restrictions he listed related to juice, Haribo, and pork, which reinforced my presupposition that he had heard all these from his parents. He seemed to have internalised the understanding that a computer was bad for his eyesight, which potentially led to his asking for access fewer times.

Bilal joined our conversation when I was interviewing Mrs Rzayeva in visit 3. He was very keen to tell me he had learned how to use the computer by himself. Since Bilal was

living with his uncle in their house, Mrs Rzayeva mentioned several times his influence on him and talked about their relationship. She said his uncle would read books to him and play games when he had time. With regard to his computer use, she mentioned that his uncle first taught him how to use the Paint programme. Bilal's father also mentioned that Bilal watched him work on his computer, and was very interested in coding, which was part of his father's job. Bilal seemed to use the computer more with his father or uncle rather than his mother, who seemed to prefer the child to stay away from digital devices, and she herself tried to stay away from digital technologies in her daily life.

Mother's own use of digital media

Mrs Rzayeva talked about how she herself was not very 'much involved' with digital devices, and in fact, she did not like her child to use digital media devices either. Especially in order to spare more time for Bilal, she decided to stay away from her smartphone and the internet. That way, Mrs Rzayeva was also a role model for Bilal, as children tend to imitate their parents' activities, especially when they are young.

Before, when I was young, I was addicted, but as time passes, you grow out of it. I don't even check my work email now. They say you should check it all the time. But I haven't even opened it. For your kid's sake, you have to give up on some things.

(Mrs Rzayeva, visit 1, 23 Oct 2018)

Bilal's family was concerned about the perceived physical and psychological harms of digital technologies. The theme existed in other participant families as well, and it was the main reason for families to limit their children's exposure to digital technologies.

8.6.3 'I am fighting it so far.': Restraints as a temporary measure

For example, he is almost six, and he doesn't know what a modem is yet. But other children do. I am fighting it so far. I don't know what will happen in the future.

(Mrs Rzayeva, visit 3, 1 Dec 2018)

Similarly to some other mothers in this study, Mrs Rzayeva viewed the use of digital media as inevitable at some stage. In fact, most of the parents appreciated that in the adult life of their children, digital devices would become central. The task at hand at this stage was to hold digital devices at bay for as long as possible. Mothers viewed this as their parental responsibility, and considered it a success when they managed to accomplish the task. In line with Mrs Rzayeva, it was remarked by some other mothers that children in other families they knew had free access to devices or knew more about technology, while their own children did not. This was seen as a success and an achievement on their part.

Sabina: Does Bilal use his father's phone?

Mrs Rzayeva: He used to play games on his father's phone. But not anymore. I have forbidden everything. We should not use the word 'internet' in this house.

Sabina: What is the reason?

Mrs Rzayeva: Because he is getting addicted. He is learning bad words there. For example, he learned the word "stupid" from a Turkish video. It makes me angry. It is better if he doesn't learn.

(Mrs Rzayeva, visit 1, 23 Oct 2018)

As discussed in the previous section, Mrs Rzayeva was mitigating Bilal's exposure to digital devices, and she was also actively trying to keep Bilal away from the internet. Like other parents, Mrs Rzayeva was also worried about the harmful and inappropriate content on online platforms. Bilal watched cartoons and YouTube content in Turkish, and Mrs Rzayeva was not happy that he was learning 'bad' words from it.

When the internet was restricted at home, and the child was not allowed to use any digital media devices, Mrs Rzayeva said she and her husband spent more time with Bilal. She mentioned that when one parent was busy, the other one made sure to play with Bilal as he did not like to spend time on his own.

8.7 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the findings of the study through each case individually. Employing a multiple case study approach allowed me to delve deeper into daily digital media practices of children in each home, which is influenced by their cultural and family

context. While I discuss parents' mediation strategies more in the following chapter, some influences and aspects of their strategies were revealed through each case.

I introduced each family through a pen portrait at the start of each section, with each focusing on characteristic features of the families. The goal was to draw a picture of the participant children and their families to provide a context, especially around the issues that have a bearing on the interpretation of the findings.

Pen portraits in each section were followed by findings that emerged in each family. In this chapter, I briefly revisit and reiterate those findings, which are particularly significant in answer to *RQ1 – How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?* – and *RQ2 – How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?* Following the pen portraits, I start each section with a quote that is characteristic of the family, and serves as the core finding within each case.

I highlighted that digital technologies are reshaping family practices at home, which parents noticed as well. In Elcan's family, his mother regretted that her children were not spending as much time with other children as she expected based on her own childhood. This mother recognised that it was difficult to compete with digital media when it came to more conventional play or entertainment, which led her to expend extra effort to engage children in activities beyond digital media. It worked well for her that her children also wanted to imitate what they had seen on YouTube videos and asked her to play with them. This led to transferring the activities in the digital media realm into physical world and took the shape of doing similar YouTube challenges or looking up information on the web instead of reading books at bedtime.

In this family, the parents held positive views towards digital media use, which led to them encouraging access and providing children with personal iPads. Initially, they had adopted a free and permissive mediation strategy, but soon became concerned that children were not regulating and balancing their use of digital media. To balance their activities, instead of removing access to devices, which was the reaction of many other families, they instituted an 'iPad day' rule, which allowed children unrestricted access for certain periods of time towards the end of the week. The beliefs and attitudes of parents, as well as children's established practices and requests, shaped this type of negotiated context, which worked for all members of the family.

In contrast, Khumar's family chose to completely disallow their child's access to a tablet after realising that she spent more time on it than they considered appropriate. Khumar tried to use the device without permission until it led to her parents moving it out of her reach. It was also revealed that the rules to manage children's digital media practices and access were often quite restrictive, but they were also subject to amendments depending on the setting. In this family, children enjoyed more lax rules when visiting grandparents, especially for more extended periods of time. The family referred to this practice as switching between different modes, implying the known existence of different sets of rules in different settings. However, towards the end of this study, it was made clear that the mother of the participant child tried to achieve consistency in the rules across settings.

The findings also revealed that allowing children access to digital media was often accompanied by feelings of guilt for mothers. This was particularly the case in Yasin's family. Yasin's mother held a strong negative attitude towards digital media use by children. Yasin's mother felt that activities beyond digital media held more value for children, and the use of digital media was always an exception. Such exceptions were made for the purposes of education, learning a foreign language or, more seldom, for using digital media as 'babysitters', which is a known phenomenon in the existing literature (Livingstone et al., 2015; Polievková, 2020; Zaman et al., 2016). As noted, perceived harms that digital media could cause, including physical and psychological issues, prevented parents from allowing children free access. The dominant reason for allowing exceptions was for consuming educational content and learning foreign languages, which was seen as a worthy trade-off.

In Kamala's family, the strong negative views towards digital media had resulted in completely restricting access to digital media. In this family, the child was not aware of what an iPad was. It certainly is not expected that all children know an iPad, especially by this particular trade name, but I highlight this exchange above to note that the mother felt proud that her child did not know about it. This was considered to be an achievement on her part. In this family, the mother was trying to withstand peer pressure from other adults who allowed their children to play with their phones. She thought this made her a 'bad mother' in her children's eyes but persisted with the established practices, considering it her duty to protect the children.

In Bilal's home case, I highlight that the children internalised the established practices, beliefs, and knowledge about digital media. For instance, Bilal noted in a conversation with

me that digital media was harmful to eyesight, which he had most likely heard from his parents. Parents in this family were also trying to model their behaviour, expecting children to imitate them. Having negative attitudes towards digital media, they tried to reduce their own use of devices to encourage the participant child to engage in other activities.

In the following reflective chapter, I discuss my identity as a researcher based on my reflections on the interrelationships with participants and affective engagements.

9 Fathers' involvement in children's digital media practices

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 described family influences on children's digital media practices. It also articulated mothers' approach to mediating these practices in a home setting in Azerbaijan. Where relevant, the attitudes of the fathers were also highlighted.

As one of the main contributions of this study, which was mainly made possible by the living journals method, I was able to involve all the participant fathers in the study and elicit their views on, and mediation strategies for, children's digital media practices in Azerbaijan. Previous research, to my knowledge, has not included a comprehensive analysis of the opinions of fathers on the use of young children's digital media in a home setting. The living journals discussions with fathers yielded rich data elucidating different aspects of father involvement in their children's digital media practices, so a separate chapter is dedicated to elaborating on the involvement of fathers in the mediation of young children's digital media practices.

In this chapter, I draw mainly on the data from the living journals discussions with fathers to shed light on fathers' attitudes towards young children's uses of digital technologies within the family context, and their role in parental mediation. This chapter seeks to answer the research questions 2 and 3:

RQ2: How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?

RQ3: How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?

The structure of this chapter differs from the previous one in that instead of presenting families separately, more emphasis is drawn on the themes across families. Section 9.2 provides brief information on the fathers and a reminder of family demographics. Then, 9.3 discusses fathers' views on the children's digital media practices. Based on their views, 9.4 introduces fathers' approach to parental mediation within their families. Finally, 9.5

discusses fathers' role in mediating family relationships in relation to their children's digital media practices at home.

9.2 Brief information on fathers

Out of five families, only in one family did the mother highlight that her husband played with their children at home while she did chores or prepared dinner in the kitchen. In the other families, fathers said that they did not have the time or patience to play with the children. They were prepared to take children wherever they wanted by car or buy whatever they wanted. However, playing and helping them with their homework was seen as 'the job' of their mothers.

His mother teaches her most of the time. I don't have the patience.

Teaching kids is not for me. I can take them wherever they want but not teach. I can teach for a short while, but I don't have the patience.

(Mr Azadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Five families each represented a case in this multiple case study. Family composition and demographics are detailed in the previous chapter in individual family pen portraits (Chapter 8). Table 9.1 is a reminder for the reader, providing mainly demographic information of the families.

Family	Person	Name	Age	Education	Occupation
Elcan Aliyev's family	Participant child	Elcan	5y 1m	Preschool in English	
	Mother	Narmin	30y	BA in English	homemaker
	Father	Ayaz	33y	BA in Economics	Entrepreneur
	Sister	Arzu	8y	Private school in English	
	Brother	Elay	3y	Mother looks after him at home	
Khumar Hajiyeva's family	Participant child	Khumar (girl)	5y 3m	Private preschool in Russian	
	Mother	Banu	32y	BSc, MSc in Finance	Finance analyst
	Father	Nazim	32y	BSc in Economics	Procurement specialist
	Brother	Mahir	1y	At home (Looked after by a babysitter)	
Yasin Mammadov's family	Participant child	Yasin	5y	Tutoring in Russian	
	Mother	Fatima	31y	BA, MA in Regional studies	
	Father	Nadir	30y	BA in Regional studies	
	Sister	Aydan	8m		
	Grandmother	Safayat	52y	Secondary school	Homemaker
Kamala Azadova's family	Participant child	Kamala	5y	Public preschool in Russian	
	Mother	Sara	26y	BA, MA in English, PGCert in Education	
	Father	Murad	34y	MSc in Economics	
	Brother	Kamran	3y	Public preschool in Azerbaijani	
Bilal Rzayev's family	Participant child	Bilal	5y 1m	Private preschool in Azerbaijani	
	Mother	Amina	29y	MSc in Engineering	University teacher
	Father	Osman	33y	BSc in Engineering	Computer Engineer
	Brother	Davud	Born in Dec 2019		

Table 9.1 Reminder of families

9.3 Fathers' views on and aspirations for their children's digital media practices

This section first demonstrates fathers' views on their children's digital media practices and their involvement in the mediation strategies. First, 9.3.1 reveals fathers' differing opinions on their children's lives in the digital age, and then 9.3.2 introduces fathers' views on the importance of the language of the content their children are exposed to within their daily lives.

9.3.1 'Life is in constant change': Contrasting views of fathers on their children's digital media practices

We can't ignore iPads. They exist. In our times, we had SEGA [video game console], so I shouldn't have used it just because my father hadn't used it?! Or we haven't had iPad in our times, and that is why [children] shouldn't use iPads?! It is not a great achievement to use an iPad, but I think it is a step ahead. When I was little, I used to heat water and bring it to my mum to wash our clothes. Should I ask Elcan to do the same now? No, that is not right. *Life is in constant change.* [emphasis added]
(Mr Ayaz Aliyev - Elcan's father, living journals discussion, 21 Jul 2019)

During the living journals discussions, Mr Aliyev highlighted that it was unwise to expect children to repeat their parents' childhood practices as the times were constantly changing across generations. Similarly to other adult participants in the study, he drew on his childhood to frame the current context, but his conclusions contradicted those of other participants. In the quote above and throughout the living journals discussion, he emphasised the importance of children keeping in tune with their own times and context rather than blindly repeating the patterns of their parents.

In general, fathers drew parallels between their own and their children's childhoods, reflecting on the rapidly changing times and increasing ubiquity of digital technologies in their daily lives. Elcan's father seemed to accept his children's different childhoods. In this section, I discuss fathers' attitudes towards their children's uses of digital technologies by revealing the comparisons they make between their own and their children's childhoods.

Mr Aliyev had a positive attitude towards his children's digital media practices. He seemed to be oriented to their children's future and thinking about what kind of environment their children might live in in the future, as he was comparing Azerbaijan with developed countries, such as China, where digital technology uses are ahead. Therefore, revisiting his childhood and visiting technology-advanced countries, Mr Aliyev seemed to be projecting on their children's future and acting based on that assumption.

I have a very positive attitude towards children using iPads and computers. In China, everybody is using WeChat to pay. Nobody loses anything. If you are going to work with foreigners, it will be a necessity. Here [in Azerbaijan], I don't know.
(Mr Aliyev, living journals discussion, 21 Jul 2019)

Mr Aliyev took pride in their children's mastery of digital skills and improving digital literacies. Mr Aliyev seemed happy that their children had learned 'everything' on their own and had been using some programmes on their iPads at school. He helped children when they sought assistance in using digital media devices and expressed his willingness to answer any of their questions related to digital media use. Additionally, he shared his Apple ID password so that the children were able to download free games while being warned not to buy any applications.

Fathers' negative attitudes towards children's digital media practices

The fathers put significant emphasis on the ubiquity and accessibility of digital devices in their children's lives, which was identified as the main difference compared to their own childhood. However, not all fathers held a positive attitude towards their children's digital media practices. While four fathers (excluding Kamala's father) acknowledged that their children knew how to use digital devices such as smartphones, TV, and tablets, not all fathers were happy about their children's interactions with digital media devices at such a young age.

Mr Azadov, Kamala's father, stated the opposite to Mr Aliyev, drawing attention to what he perceived to be the 'appropriate' age for children for mastering digital skills. Mr Azadov recalled that he first started using a computer at the age of 18-20. He saw no need for children to learn to use digital media at a young age. He thought they could learn at a

later stage in their lives, similar to himself, while also allowing for the possibility of short informatics classes in primary school. Mr Azadov preferred such learning to occur only within the school settings and be contained within a single class instead of it being part of the children's everyday activities.

It [computer use] is bad for the child. I first saw a computer when I was 18 or 20. Some people learn how to use a computer at the age of 25. Let them learn at that age. It will be fine.

(Mr Murad Azadov, Kamala's father, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Other fathers also echoed Mr Azadov in relation to the appropriate age for children to start learning how to use digital technologies. For example, Yasin's father – Mr Mammadov – expressed a similar sentiment, highlighting his son gaining digital literacy skills. Mr Mammadov had not had a bicycle because his father had deemed it dangerous – a pattern that he repeated directly by not getting a bicycle for his own son. Similarly, in terms of his children's uses of digital technologies, he emphasised that the absence of technologies in his childhood made it acceptable for his child not to have any either. This view directly opposes Mr Aliyev's statement, who thought that the children did need not to repeat their parents' practices.

Mr Mammadov also drew an analogy between technology-saturated life in urban areas and a life spent outdoors in nature in villages. He concluded that children living in villages were more interested in nature and surroundings, which he also seemed to favour. This view was reminiscent of many other instances across this study where parents viewed screens or outdoors as oppositional, favouring time away from screens, be it visits to parks, the countryside, or simply playing with neighbourhood children.

Look at the villages; they don't have any phones. They are interested in nature. But here it is all about phones.

(Mr Mammadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Drawing on their past, fathers were projecting the experiences on their children's future, and acted in the present by limiting their digital media practices. This will be discussed later in 9.4.

Fathers' concerns for children's behaviour

Khumar's father, Mr Hajiyev, emphasised that Khumar becomes overly focused when watching something on a computer or phone, and she disregards everyone and everything around her.

I am fifty-fifty when it comes to technology use. It is bad for her eyes. She becomes a zombie. She just goes inside the computer or phone when she watches something.

(Mr Hajiyev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Almost all the parents expressed concerns over their children being too consumed by digital media devices, and fathers would touch upon this aspect while comparing their own childhoods with their children's. As in the clear statement in Mr Hajiyev's quote, four fathers thought that children were overly focused on the digital devices they were using. In fact, the Zombie metaphor was used by three fathers and two mothers in the study to express how children were becoming 'numb' while watching TV or YouTube videos on a tablet or a phone. All parents disapproved of such behaviour without articulating specific reasons as to why.

Yasin's father also compared his childhood with Yasin's and talked about the absence of digital technologies in the past and people's dependence on them in modern times, as well as the danger of children being exposed to unwanted content by 'just one click'. He thought that it was too early for Yasin, and he was already too dependent on the technology as it was, much like everybody else in the country or around the world [Mr Mammadov's comparison].

We are turning children into Zombies. We didn't have this in our childhoods. Before, technology depended on people, but now people depend on technology.

(Mr Mammadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Parents' health concerns in relation to technology use were not only about physical risks (i.e., concerns over their eyesight), but also potential psychological (i.e., getting scared

after watching something) and behavioural (i.e., imitating unwanted behaviour from YouTube videos) harms.

Mothers' and fathers' differing opinions

While four fathers out of five shared the opinion that it was too early for young children to use digital technologies, there were differing opinions between spouses on the 'appropriate age' for their children to start using phones. In Khumar's family, the mother wanted to purchase a phone for their daughter, but her father disagreed. During the living journals discussions with Mr Hajiyev, he said he would not think of purchasing a digital device for their daughter for a long time, but Mrs Hajiyeva joined the conversation and said they would buy their daughter an inexpensive phone to be in touch with her at school. Mr Hajiyev opposed it and insisted that it was not possible. Across other families, it was primarily mothers who wanted to purchase a mobile phone for their children when they started school to stay in touch. Notably, the parents who favoured buying a phone for children also emphasised that the phone would have to be a cheap one, pointing out that the important aspect was communication with the children rather than using the phones for additional screen time. Additionally, Yasin's mother talked about the importance of children learning typing skills, and that mastering those skills as early as possible was much better (8.4.2).

In Bilal's family, it was quite the opposite. Mr Rzayev was thinking about purchasing a phone, while Mrs Rzayeva was strictly against it. Initially, Mr Rzayev remembered buying his own first phone only during his university years. However, he focused on the fact that phones could soon become a necessity for young children as well. He thought of buying a phone for their son when he started school.

In general, fathers held similar opinions about their children's digital media practices at a young age. The exception they allowed was to watch YouTube videos on TV or their smartphones if they helped their children learn a new language – the language of instruction at school. The following section elaborates on this aspect in relation to fathers' views on their children's digital media practices.

9.3.2 'One language, one person; two languages, two people': Favouring language learning with digital media

We speak Azerbaijani at home, but in Russian schools, children mostly come from Russian families, so when Yasin starts interacting with them, it will be interesting. *One language means one person, and two languages mean two people.*⁵ [emphasis added]

[...] When he was little, we bought a satellite dish to watch only Russian TV channels. He likes watching cartoons on Russian TV channels, channels 93 and 94. He always watches cartoons in Russian.

(Mr Nadir Mammadov, Yasin's father, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

This sentiment expressed by Mr Mammadov reflects the opinions of many other parents in that they are more accepting of digital media if it serves the purpose of learning a foreign language. Knowledge of foreign languages is held in high regard by all parents in Azerbaijan, which they expect will lead to better opportunities for their children for study and later professional life. Even when parents are generally against the use of technologies, learning a foreign language through digital media is seen as an acceptable trade-off against everything they dislike about technology. As shown in the quote, parents not only permit access to the existing devices at home, but make an extra effort to provide additional equipment to facilitate access to media to learn a language. In the following journal picture, Yasin watches a Russian cartoon on TV in the living room (Figure 9.1).

⁵ A Turkish proverb: 'Bir dil bir insan iki dil iki insan', literally translation 'One language one person, two languages two persons'. It means that when a person learns a second language, they become a new (an additional) person as they also learn a new culture together with the language.

Yasin is sitting in the living room and watching a Russian cartoon on TV.



Figure 9.1 A picture from Yasin’s living journal (Yasin is sitting in their living room and watching a Russian cartoon on TV)

Upon seeing the above picture from Yasin’s living journal, Mr Mammadov highlighted that he did not know the language well and would not have been able to help his child with his homework. But Mr Mammadov, together with his spouse, had decided to send Yasin to a Russian speaking school, thinking that Mrs Mammadova would help Yasin. Revisiting his childhood, Mr Mammadov was frustrated that his own parents did not afford him a similar opportunity as he thought the mindset of children studying in Russian schools greatly differed from that of Azerbaijani-speaking children. This section focuses on the seemingly contradictory behaviour observed in the previous section, where fathers spoke out against their children’s uses of digital technologies. This section illustrates that they were ready to make changes to children’s day-to-day digital media practices to allow them to use devices

that help them learn and strengthen their knowledge of the language of instruction at the school they would be attending.

In Yasin's family, both parents deemed his Russian language learning essential, and they turned to digital technologies to support their efforts. While Yasin was a toddler, they purchased a satellite dish to have access to Russian TV channels, although they still had access to Turkish and Azerbaijani TV channels in addition to Russian. In the living journals discussion with Yasin's mother, Mrs Mammadova mentioned that his father had recently introduced him to YouTube Kids, so they felt more comfortable with him watching child-appropriate Russian videos on YouTube.

Azerbaijan and language learning

To clarify the motivation behind parents' interest in foreign languages at an early age, it would be helpful to describe the current situation in Azerbaijan briefly. Overall, most children are exposed to Russian, Turkish, and English to some extent in their daily lives, either in their households or in formal education settings. Historical connections with the Russian language, alongside many other reasons (Garibova, 2009, 2019), makes its importance linger in the country. For example, the Russian language has been serving as an alternative to Azerbaijani as the language of verbal and written communication in the country, even though it is not an official language of the state. While English has started to gain similar importance among younger generations (Mammadova, 2020), the Russian language remains important. Good working knowledge of Russian and English is an essential criterion in many job vacancies. Turkish is another language that the majority of Azerbaijanis speak and understand because it is very similar to the Azerbaijani language (Garibova, 2019), and almost all households own a satellite dish that broadcasts TV shows and programmes in Turkish, through which children and adults quickly learn the slight differences between the two languages.

Children learning a new language through digital media practices

In all the participant families, children were encouraged to watch content in languages other than their native tongue. The pattern was repeated in all families, but was less pronounced in Bilal's family. Although some participant parents did not know Russian or

English, they preferred to send their children to schools with instruction in those languages. For example, in three families, children were preparing to attend schools in Russian (Yasin, Khumar, Kamala) and in one family, an English-speaking school (Elcan). Although several fathers did not want their children to use digital devices at all (e.g., Kamala's father), they still agreed to their children using a digital device when it served the purpose of learning a language in the process. This theme was common across all families.

Bilal's parents had decided to send their children to an Azerbaijani-speaking school and arrange private language classes for him. However, Bilal mostly watched Turkish cartoons through the satellite dish, and he used some Turkish words while speaking with me during the family visits. Mr Rzayev mentioned that Bilal was playing the 'Word Charm' game on his mother's phone to improve his English vocabulary as he was having private English tutoring classes in the nursery.

He usually plays Minecraft and Word Charm with his mother to improve his English vocabulary.

(Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Given the importance of English and Russian in their children's future, and drawing on their experiences in their childhood and later life, fathers prioritised their children learning a new language and studying at school in that language. They believed that Russian and English would be necessary for their children to find a desirable job in the future. Even though they were against their children's use of digital media, they wanted to prepare them for the future and acted on that projection in the present by allowing them to watch content in a foreign language.

Mothers on children's language acquisition through digital media

All the participant mothers in the study seemed satisfied that their children had mastered foreign language skills through YouTube videos and cartoons. Mrs Aliyeva, Elcan's mother, recalled the time her children watched YouTube videos teaching fruit and vegetable names in English, and how she would sit down with children and watch those videos. In general, all families pointed out how their children watched YouTube videos when they were toddlers and improved their vocabulary in the language of instruction of their choice.

Elcan's mother noted that her children used to watch the videos in Turkish. However, she then asked them to watch videos or cartoons in Russian or English because 'it influences their language. Their teacher has said so too.' (Mrs Aliyeva, family visit 3, 28 Nov 2018).

In other families, too, mothers stressed the importance of videos teaching children other languages and encouraging their children to watch YouTube videos or cartoons in Russian or English languages as they were preparing to attend Russian or English-speaking schools. Mrs Mammadova stated that sometimes she saw better educational content in Turkish, but she still did not want Yasin to watch Turkish channels as he did not need that language for his education.

Especially on TV, I do not let him watch cartoons in Turkish because he knows and understands them better. But I try to make sure that everything is in Russian. On the tablet, too, he tries to watch something in Turkish, but I change them. Although those videos are better, I notice that he is using Turkish words. And also, I notice that in Russian videos, children scream and use bad words. But there are good things in Russian videos too, so I carefully pick them so he can watch the good ones. I control them.

(Mrs Mammadova, visit 3, 13 Dec 2018)

The previous literature has addressed parents' aspirations to use digital technologies, mainly to contribute to their children's education (Teichert, 2018). In this study, in addition to that, a particular emphasis was on the language of the content. Even though at times, parents did not approve of the content of the YouTube videos or cartoons in the target language, they navigated to different content in the same language to continue practising foreign language skills.

In sum, the perceptions and values of fathers surrounding the acquisition of foreign languages dictated, to a great extent, the practices of technology use. Watching TV or YouTube videos, mainly viewed as harmful, was excused if they served the purpose of learning a language. Alternatively, it was seen as a fair trade-off between harm and benefit, where parents hoped to gain some level of educational benefit from what they otherwise deemed harmful technology. Therefore, children's digital media practices at home were dominated by content provided in foreign languages. Naturally, the content was often

cartoons, whether on TV or other digital devices. This excluded other types of activities on devices, such as games, because children were expected to hear the language rather than read since they had not learned to read.

Both mothers and fathers had developed positive perceptions of digital media in cases where they allowed their children to learn the language of school instruction. Parents' positive perceptions of digital media for their children relate to their belief in the digital technologies' role in their children's learning and education (Lauricella et al., 2016). The specific context in Azerbaijan adds to it by highlighting that parents expect digital technologies to serve the specific goal of improving their children's language acquisition. Due to this expectation, parents were ready to amend their mediation practices and allow children to watch content in the target language that would not be tolerated in their first language. Previous research in non-English speaking countries has revealed similar findings: parents use digital technologies such as YouTube, playing games, and applications to teach their children English or any other language that are foreign to them (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Ramírez Verdugo & Alonso Belmonte, 2007; Si, 2015; Turgut & İrgin, 2009). This study further reveals that this is a goal for fathers, as well as mothers, and can be one of the reasons for them to make amendments or 'bend rules' in their mediation styles. The following section elaborates more extensively on fathers' approach to mediation styles.

9.4 Fathers' approach to mediating their children's digital practices and relationships – Introducing a new mediation strategy

The previous section introduced fathers' views on their children's uses of digital media devices. Comparing their own childhood with that of their children's, all the fathers agreed that their children's childhoods were different from their own. Identifying fathers' attitudes towards digital technologies was helpful in exploring their approach to parental mediation.

Parental mediation can determine young children's exposure to and uses of digital technologies at home (Gentile, Swing, et al., 2012). The previous literature has revealed parents' attitudes towards digital technologies as one of the factors affecting parental mediation (Terras & Ramsay, 2016). In 9.4, I illustrate the ways in which fathers' views influence their mediation strategies, and demonstrates fathers' role in the mediation of

their children's digital media practices. Part 9.5 elaborates on fathers' roles in navigating family relationships regarding their children's digital media practices.

9.4.1 'The phone monitors and blocks you.': Transferring responsibility onto devices

I don't directly ask Bilal. I tell him that it is forbidden to play [games on the phone] for a long time – *the phone monitors you and blocks you*. When you play for a long time, the phone itself blocks you. I don't tell him that I am the one stopping you. And when I see that he doesn't listen, I block the phone on my computer, and he leaves it. Because if I say so, he will demand that I unblock the phone, and I will get angry at him. I don't want him to be upset with me and *don't want to spoil our relationship* [my emphasis]. Generally speaking, I can make him do what I want. But he will be upset with me in the future, and he won't share anything with me. It is better if he thinks that it is the phone blocking him.

(Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

During the living journals discussion, Mr Rzayev – Bilal's father – noted that he did not directly interfere with Bilal's daily digital media use. Instead, he had linked his phone to his notebook, and when he considered Bilal's use of the phone to be excessive (according to him, more than half an hour), he would simply turn off the phone using his computer. Bilal was unaware of this and was led to think that the phone automatically shut down after prolonged use. Mr Rzayev further clarified that this approach meant that he did not have to set a password on his phone or take other similar measures to prevent Bilal from using his phone for a long time. Mr Rzayev highlighted that he could have made Bilal listen to him by directly requesting him to stop but chose not to do so. The motivation, as he explained, was to keep the communication open with his son, and to avoid spoiling their father-son relationship. Bilal's father limited Bilal's use of digital devices without his knowledge, and transferred the blame to the digital devices.

Besides controlling the length of use of the device, Mr Rzayev had used the same approach to regulate Bilal's behaviour on the phone. He disliked that Bilal tended to download many games on the device. Applying the same technique, Bilal was warned that downloading more than one game a day would result in the phone being blocked. He

initially did not believe it to be true, until his father demonstrated this when he noticed Bilal had downloaded more than one game. As the father reported, this first demonstration led to him altering his behaviour and stopping downloading games.

My phone is a database for Bilal's games. Last time I told him that it will get blocked if you keep downloading and deleting games. He thought I was joking, but one day I blocked it while he was doing the same. After that, he believed it to be true. Now he does not do that, only once a day he can download or delete a game on my phone.

(Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Bilal's father's approach to the mediation of his digital media practices seemed to be heavily influenced by the importance of his relationship with his son. Instead of confronting his son by imposing rules, he chose to shift the responsibility onto the device, attributing invented autonomous properties to it. The approach was considered successful, as it had been replicated to address other challenges in the use of the device as well.

9.4.2 'The internet is now gone': A different mediation technique

Bilal: There was the internet before, but the internet is now gone.

Sabina: What happened?

Bilal: It was cut here [in their new flat].

(Bilal, visit 2, 27 Oct 2018)

Bilal's father was unhappy with the amount of time Bilal spent on digital devices and he also chose to resort to restrictive practices by saying that there was 'no internet connection in the flat' after moving home. Bilal believed his parents, but not fully understanding the reasons behind not having the connection, he checked the TV set every day to see if the connection had been restored. The parents would generally switch the internet connection off through the router during the day and switch it back on sometimes in the evenings for their own use. As was the case in the previous section, this reveals that rather than setting rules, parents were imposing restrictions by shifting the blame onto inanimate objects.

Mr Rzayev recalled the instance when they had forgotten to switch off WiFi from the router, and Bilal had accidentally discovered that the internet was working again. When

faced with such a reality, the parents did not directly introduce the restriction but instead used an away day as an opportunity to switch off the internet once again upon returning home. This approach was reminiscent of the family (i.e., Khumar's family) in the previous section in terms of spatial change affecting the established rules and restrictions. In Khumar's family, changing the setting from home to the grandparents' served as grounds for altering the rules. In this case, going away to the grandparents' and coming back was used as a reason to reintroduce a restriction.

The same motivation, different interpretation

Bilal's mother used to hold a similar approach to managing TV by turning the WiFi router off before they decided not to turn it back on again. Mrs Rzayeva had 'forbidden the word WiFi' in their new flat (6.6.3), and she would 'turn the WiFi router off' when Bilal did not want to stop watching YouTube videos on TV or on the computer. While the approach was the same, Mr Rzayev still viewed his spouse's practice negatively. Mrs Rzayeva had also lied to Bilal about her new phone, saying that it was not possible to download games on it, given that Bilal had already broken one. Mr Rzayev seemed to find his spouse's approach wrong, highlighting that it was caused by her lack of determination to discipline him. He noted that Bilal didn't listen to her and was misbehaved, and therefore she had to lie to him. Mr Rzayev pointed out that his own approach was motivated by the desire not to spoil his relationship with his son, whereas his spouse resorted to such practice because she found it challenging to handle Bilal's frustration.

When I am not home, his mother cannot control him. He is a bit scared of me. However, honestly speaking, his mother defends him a lot, and that is why she cannot control him. She cannot take the notebook away from him, so she turns off the WiFi router.

(Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

The motivation behind these digital mediation practices was similar to those used by other parents in this study, who used similar approaches to avoid their children's tantrums in public or at their grandparents' houses.

Deceiving children to avoid tantrums in public

Kamala's parents also made up reasons such as the absence of a WiFi connection or lack of charge in their phones to avoid potential confrontation, mainly when they were in public or visiting grandparents. Additionally, on family outings with friends at a café or a restaurant, the children asked for their parents' phones when they saw peers using their parents' phones. In such cases, parents would lie to the children to avoid tantrums. For example, Kamala's parents resorted to subterfuge to avoid breaking their usual rules of not allowing children to use their phones and not wanting to give in just because they were out.

I am against children using phones. I never give phones to children. Very rarely, when we go somewhere, and they make me angry, I give them for 5 minutes or so. And then I take it away.

(Mr Azadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

When we go somewhere, they see that other children play games on their parents' phones. But we tell our children that there is no internet connection here or our phones are almost out of charge.

(Mrs Azadova, visit 3, 6 Dec 2018)

Other families allowed the change of context to alter their restrictive rules on digital media use, but in Kamala's family, although this was also present, it was scarce. Both parents felt that their restrictive rules were being challenged in situations where place and context changed but chose to stick to their own rules, even under pressure of going against others' practices in their surroundings.

9.4.3 'I hide the remote control away on top of the fridge': Restricting access to digital media

They watch TV at home for half an hour or so, but then I hide the remote control away on top of the fridge. It is bad for her eyes. I set a timer on TV for it to shut down in 30 minutes, and she can't reach the remote control.

(Mr Azadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Other families used similar mediation strategies to restrict children's access to devices. In Bilal's family, the devices were blamed for removing access. In the case of Kamala's family, the restrictions were set by affecting the devices, but the children were aware of these practices – setting a time on TV or putting away the remote control. This section demonstrates similar practices of removing access to devices or the means of controlling and using them observed across different families.

In three out of five families, parents were found to deceive their children this way. Even in Elcan's family, where parents generally had more permissive approaches (such as the 'iPad day' rule), Mrs Aliyeva mentioned that with their youngest son, who was three years old at the time of family visits, she would hide the iPad away after their son had played with it for 15 minutes. In general, it seemed to be a widely spread practice of putting the remote control, the tablet charger, or the tablet itself away somewhere out of reach of the children.

Avoiding harmful content

Though the extent and types of such practices varied across families, the purpose was very similar for all parents (Khumar's, Kamala's, and Yasin's parents) – to keep their children's digital media practices at a minimum and, in some cases, to keep their children away from digital media so they would not be exposed to unwanted. The grounds for their decisions were also similar: they thought digital technology use was harmful to children and their eyesight in particular. Sometimes the situation would change, for example, when Khumar's family found out that their daughter was able to reach the tablet using a small chair, they used the same practice by hiding its charger (6.3.2). Previous research has also addressed young children's parents' concerns over keeping digital technologies away from their children for health concerns (Kucirkova et al., 2018; Plowman & McPake, 2013). However, the findings of this study show that children were not aware of their parents' restrictions in many cases.

Imitating parent mediation practice

While some participant children did not know that their parents had put their device or charger away, sometimes they knew that what they were looking for was put away somewhere. For example, when Yasin found out that his parents had put his tablet away on

top of a shelf, he accepted that he could not access it, but he also seemed to have internalised this practice in his own way, using it to foil his toddler sister's attempts to play with his tablet. I observed this behaviour during family visit 2 when Yasin wanted to show me his tablet and asked his mother to take it down from the top of the shelf. When I asked why it was there, his mother explained that they usually kept it on the top of the shelf. Yasin then added that his sister was playing with it and almost broke it, so he also wanted to hide it from her by keeping it up on the shelf. In Yasin's family, it seemed to be a part of parenting strategies with toys and books as well. When Yasin was showing me his room, he was not able to reach most of his toys or books as they were on the top shelves of bookcases to keep them from getting damaged.

The study findings revealed that restricting children's access to devices had taken many different forms. In addition to lying to their children about the phone blocking them, the existence of WiFi connection on TV at home or on their phones, and their phones being out of battery or not being fit for downloading games, the fathers also put the TV remote control and their children's tablets away. The motivation was similar across families, including not to upset their children and to avoid any possible tantrums or confrontations. The approaches taken to restrict access to devices were not a one-off decision by parents but reflected in their practices towards other items at home, such as books and toys.

9.5 Fathers' role in mediating family relationships

The previous section discussed fathers' mediation strategies and revealed that fathers used several techniques to limit their children's access to digital media devices without their knowledge. This section elaborates on fathers' roles in mediating their children's digital media practices as well as family relationships.

9.5.1 'A child is like a blank piece of paper': Fathers being a role model

A child is like a blank piece of paper, probably he learned by watching his mother or me.... Internet is good on the one hand, but on the other hand, it is not suitable for children. But he is interested in digital technologies, and he comes and watches me when I am coding. Sometimes I get bored

and start playing games, and he comes and watches me. There are two accounts on our computer, one for me – private – and one for him – public. He knows how to put his password in and switch on the computer. (Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

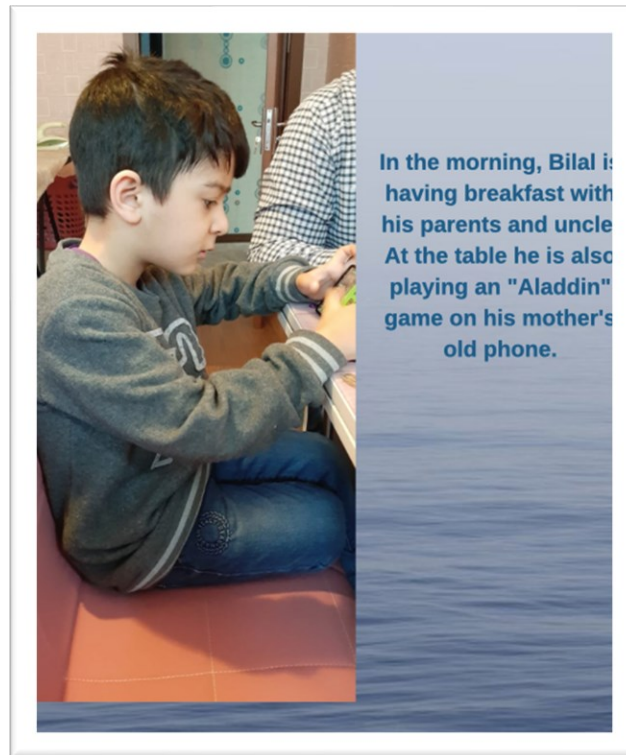


Figure 9.2 A page from Bilal's living journal

During the living journals discussion with Bilal's father, Mr Rzayev stopped at the above picture in Bilal's living journal and started talking about the 'Aladdin' game Bilal was playing on his mother's phone that day (Figure 9.2). Mr Rzayev remarked that this was the first-ever game Bilal had played. He was introduced to it by watching his father play it. Mr Rzayev highlighted that, in general, Bilal always grew interested in the games he played. He also added that Bilal had since been asked to stop using phones at the table as he had accidentally broken his mother's phone. While this was more apparent in Bilal's family, in other families too, sometimes children imitated their fathers in digital media use. They were interested in watching their fathers play games on their phones, and this often led to requests to teach those games to them as well. Fathers were role models for their children by directly or indirectly exposing them to new games.

Fathers and children bonding over playing games

Like Bilal, Yasin's father spent time with him while playing a game or allowing him to watch him play the game on his phone. I learned from Yasin and his mother that the father had taught him how to play the 'Conduit' game. Mr Mammadov also mentioned that Yasin had grown interested in the game after watching him play. Even though he was not permitted to use his phone, he was still allowed to watch while his father was playing.

He has seen me play, and he likes watching. Sometimes I let him play for five minutes, but it is not a game for children. So, I take it away from him.
(Mr Mammadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

In both families, children had first developed an interest in the games their fathers played. Initially, they would play the game with their fathers when permitted, often for short periods of time. Afterwards, they stayed interested in the games and independently played them on their mothers' phones. In most cases, it was fathers who played the games on the phones with children. Even though mothers tended to spend more time at home with their children, they were more likely to initiate or join the non-digital activities with children. Previous research has also found that the mothers are more likely to engage in non-digital activities (e.g., book reading) with their children, while fathers engage with digital ones (e.g., playing video games together) (Connell et al., 2015). In this study, it was clear that allowing children to play the games on the phones was not initiated by fathers for the children's benefit but was more of a concession to allow them to play after having watched for a long time. This practice could also be explained by fathers' attempts to spend some time with their children, given that their time with them was constrained during weekdays and sometimes at weekends.

Fathers introducing digital devices to their children

Irrespective of the fact that fathers were against their children's uses of digital devices and did not spend time with children at home for various reasons, they were still the ones buying digital devices for their children. In Yasin's and Elcan's families, fathers bought tablets for their children. In Yasin's and Elcan's families, fathers bought tablets for their children. For Elcan, it was a requirement of the preschool he was attending, and Yasin's father had bought a tablet for him because he thought the tablet's larger screen

was preferable to that of a phone, and was less damaging to his eyesight. When I asked about the tablet on the top of the shelf in the living room during one of the visits, Yasin excitedly said that his father bought it for him and added, 'although, it was not my birthday'. Mrs Mammadova confirmed, and said that 'his father bought it because the screen is bigger'. However, Yasin's parents had soon hidden the tablet away so that Yasin would not play with it.

I have bought a tablet for Yasin, but I made a huge mistake. He was too little to have a tablet. Now he is not interested in it at all. It is mainly on the top of the wardrobe. Maybe we don't take it out much. I don't know. But I think it is too much for him. He mostly plays sonic games.
(Mr Mammadov, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

In general, as mentioned above, most of the fathers were not necessarily encouraging the use of digital devices but were still part of establishing the practice through buying their first digital devices and introducing them to games on purpose or more organically – meaning their children saw them playing, and they grew interested in those games. To reiterate, such games were usually aimed at adults, and the fathers played them for their own amusement.

Hierarchy of devices at home

As mentioned above, parents were generally keen that their children should only be exposed to TV due to its bigger screen and the ease of content control. Parents' concerns over their children's eyesight gave rise to the measures of providing them with a better (bigger) screen. Like Yasin's family, in Khumar's family making decisions about the screen size of the device was one of the earliest steps for parents. Khumar's parents had taken their tablet away so Khumar would not play with it; instead, they had let her watch TV for an hour or so after her return from school. Khumar's family, like all families in the study, seemed to be developing their own ideas and acceptance of 'good' digital technologies for their children, in this case, based on the screen size and controllability of the device.

The study revealed that parents had a 'hierarchy of devices', with phones at the bottom of the scale due to their small screen and difficulty in monitoring its content. Tablets were in

the middle as the screen was bigger than phones', and TV at the top of the list because of its big screen, and as the content could be monitored more easily. In the living journals pictures, children were mainly seen watching TV either independently or with their siblings.

Being cautious about their own digital media practices/leading by example

The fathers seemed to be aware of their influence and stayed cautious about their own digital media practices at home and their influences on their children's uses of digital media devices. For example, Kamala's father seemed to lead by example as he wanted to keep their children away from digital media as long as possible. Mr Azadov thought the digital media devices spread radiation and children even adults should be away from them as much as possible. He stressed that he only used his phone when needed, mostly keeping it in places inaccessible to the children. He noted that even at night, he put his phone on flight mode so that it did not spread radiation at home.

They better be away from radiation as much as they can. Even when I sleep at night, I put it on Airplane mode. So, there is not much radiation at home. I have read it and heard that radiation is harmful. Everybody knows that radiation is harmful. Sometimes you get headaches etc. It is all because of radiation.

(Mr Murad Azadov, living journals discussion, 6 July 2019)

As explained in 6.5.2, Kamala's mother, Mrs Azadova, was also paying special attention not to use digital media devices around their children as she said they were not using the grandfather's computer at home, so the children 'would think it is just something sitting there'.

Fathers' assistance to their children

Fathers were aware of the potential influences of their children's peers on them. Mr Rzayev was looking at another child's (Elcan's) picture on his living journal and remarked that children were imitating one another and becoming interested in digital technologies. Bilal's father highlighted that although he was not interested in the new games Bilal downloaded, he was helping Bilal use his phone or notebook, and also to reach challenging

levels in games. Other fathers also asserted that they were ready to help their children with digital media use if they needed any assistance.

Children are our future. They can play but not long. Children are looking at each other and learning from each other. He comes and tells me that some children have downloaded a game, and he wants to do the same. I tell him that he can download and play. He does, but then he gets bored. So, I let him explore and find what is good and bad for himself.
(Mr Rzayev, living journals discussion, 6 Jul 2019)

Fathers introduced new technologies and games to their children. They bought tablets for them or allowed them to watch their fathers play games on their phones. In two families, fathers acknowledged that they garnered their children's interest in the games by only playing in their children's presence. Fathers also expressed their willingness to help their children use the device if they needed it. They seemed to be bonding with their children in this way, spending time with them and sharing or creating common interests.

9.5.2 'It is a family – a unity': Parents mediating their relationships

It is a family – a unity. So, they should always be together. The family consists of a father and a mother. There are things that fathers have more say in and areas where mothers have more say. For example, sometimes they ask me many questions, and I send them to their mother. I think it is not right to put everything on mothers. It is not right.
(Mr Aliyev, living journals discussion, 21 Jul 2019)

Elcan's father, Mr Aliyev, deemed it unacceptable to hold mothers alone accountable for the children's uses of digital media devices; instead, he thought that a family was a unity of both parents whose actions should align on such matters. The dynamic among parents is worthy of exploring, as data reveals that fathers and mothers agreed on their children's uses of digital technologies, yet the parents thought they expended different levels of effort to navigate them. Also, as touched upon in Khumar's family's case (7.3), extended family members such as grandparents were also participating in children's exposure to digital media devices by allowing their grandchildren to use their smartphones or watch YouTube

videos on their laptops. This section illustrates fathers' approach to sharing responsibilities concerning their children's uses of digital technologies and mediating their relationships with spouses and extended family members.

Mothers on fathers allowing their children to use digital media

Mothers monitored the kinds of games their children played on their devices, and what content they watched on YouTube or TV. The mothers highlighted that when they did not allow their child to use any digital device, most of the time, their children would ask them to play instead. Therefore, for mothers, the use of digital technologies was one of the pieces in the constantly renegotiated balance among children's wellbeing and other tasks. According to mothers, fathers used digital media devices as an easy 'opt-out' to occupy their children when they could not play with their children for various reasons.

I think both the father and mother should play with the child. I have left it up to him [Mr Rzayev]: sometimes he does play, but sometimes he doesn't and gives the phone to him instead.

(Mrs Rzayeva, visit 3, 1 Dec 2018)

Mrs Mammadova also expressed that her spouse preferred to use digital devices with their son, playing games on his phone or watching videos on YouTube. She used an example from his recent digital practice with Yasin. She seemed unhappy about her spouse allowing their child to be exposed to digital content, which might have been difficult to understand at this young age. For Mrs Mammadova, supervision of digital content seemed to be the main aspect of mediation strategy.

For example, once his father had shown him aliens, and he had gotten very scared. His father did not consider that you shouldn't show this kind of thing to children [in a low voice]. See what happens when there is no control?! For several days he was very scared.

(Mrs Mammadova, living journals discussion, 15 Dec 2019)

The study revealed that mothers had to navigate their relationships with their extended family members and spouses in relation to their children's uses of digital media. In addition

to monitoring their children's uses of digital media, they also had to mediate what their spouses and grandparents were doing with their children and digital media.

9.6 Summary

When I explained Cole's concept of prolepsis in the theoretical framework chapter (2.4), I elaborated on how parents reflected on their children's future experiences and projected them onto their current activities. Cole (1998) only mentioned mothers when explaining prolepsis. Scrutinizing fathers' views on their children's digital media uses through the concept of prolepsis further helped explain why the fathers were not inclined to develop their children's digital skills early on. Furthermore, children's day-to-day digital media practices were influenced by parental ethnotheories and their previous experiences with digital media in their childhood or later in early adulthood. Excluding Elcan's father, the rest of the fathers expected their children to learn digital skills later in their lives, similar to their own paths, thinking and acting on their own past experiences and reflecting on their children's present and future lives. Most parents in the study had mastered digital skills in their twenties. In particular, fathers, when comparing their own childhood with that of their children, expressed that they had mastered digital skills later in their lives and would prefer their children to do the same.

Fathers expected their children's future to be 'digital'. However, they were still hesitant to project this vision of the future on their current activities and decisions on the mediation of their children's daily digital practices. Whether or not the parents projected their future vision onto the present of their children was often a complex decision involving multiple factors. Fathers did not want their children to engage with digital technologies at a young age. The desire to prepare their children for the future through education did not outweigh the perceived detriments of digital technology use. Fathers considered the use of digital technologies if the content language was suited for their purposes, without worrying too much about the development of digital skills at this young age, albeit acknowledging the increasing demand for digital skills. For fathers, the focus was on the value of digital technologies, which could contribute to their children learning a target language. As discussed within the concept of prolepsis by Cole (1998), based on their past and present

experiences, parents projected these visions of the future onto their children's daily lives in the present.

Fathers introduced the digital device or games to their children and looked for ways to limit their children's exposure to digital media without children's knowledge. Their mediation strategies were mainly aligned with mothers'. The subsequent chapter discusses the main findings drawn from the previous chapters.

10 Young children's digital media practices in Azerbaijan

10.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings leading to three main empirical contributions of my study. Accordingly, I divide this chapter into three sections.

First, in 10.2, I describe the role fathers play within their families and their approaches to managing the use of digital media. I demonstrate that in most of the cases in my participant families, fathers appear as authoritative figures who are active in establishing rules but at the same time try to distance themselves from assuming the responsibility of directly implementing those rules. Subsequently, in 10.3 I present family context which affects children's digital media practices. There are a number of factors that shape the family contexts, but more prominently these are related to the preference of specific devices by the parents, their preference of foreign languages when accessing digital media content and the mothers' role as mediators of managing not only access to digital media, but also relationships among all family members. In the final section, 10.4, I outline a mediation strategy which parents use to shield themselves from direct responsibility and consequences of implementing restrictive rules. Often parents use inanimate objects to shift blame and use them as reasons for restricting or completely removing children's access to digital media.

10.2 Fathers' approach to managing access to digital media

In their research, Saracho and Spodek (2008) frequently refer to fathers as 'invisible parents'. A similar finding was apparent in my study, in part because I had generated data through mothers as proxy researchers, and the information presented to me was snapshots of children's lives at different stages. Throughout the research, it was made clear and came through in the living journals that children spent most of their time with mothers. The fathers were willing to take children out but preferred not to engage in any activities at home. They introduced games to their children, which tended to be the types of games designed for adults, or allowed their children to use their phones to some extent to play games or watch them playing games. Since fathers expected mothers to take care of their

children, they saw the mediation of their children's digital media practices as part of general childcare. To use a metaphor, fathers held legislative powers and mothers held executive powers. This was also highlighted by the fathers' unwillingness to confront their children and enforce the arrangements they had made, instead resorting to indirect methods of control, as discussed in detail in 9.4.

Previous literature offers differing opinions on the influence of gender of parents on their mediation practices (Sonck et al., 2013), as well as on the influence of culture and personal nature of individuals (Shin & Li, 2017; Kirwil, 2009). In Europe, a survey by Chaudron (2015) revealed that fathers were less strict in their mediation strategies than mothers. These quantitative studies are to be taken as a starting point for further research rather than a definitive result, because surveys conducted in different countries are not necessarily comparable. In addition to quantitative surveys, some qualitative studies also highlight the contradictory stances of parents in terms of mediating their children's uses of media and devices (Brito et al., 2017; Radesky et al., 2016).

In my study, I argue that the gender factor in parents' mediation strategies goes beyond the conversation around gender itself, and includes parental responsibilities as defined by family context and parents' cultural beliefs in relation to child upbringing and their own experiences in childhood. In sum, there were differences in parents' approaches to various aspects of young children's digital media practices. Fathers:

- had negative attitudes towards digital media;
- introduced new games and bought digital devices for their children;
- set rules for mothers to execute;
- saw mediation as part of mothers' daily childcare responsibilities.

The father is an authoritative figure at home in a 'traditional Azerbaijani' family (Tokareva & Efimova, 2019). In my study, fatherly authority was present in mediating children's digital media practices, and fathers were very well aware of this authority, but they chose not to exercise it in order not to 'spoil their relationship' with children. There is a folk saying: '*Validəyn ilə övlad arasında görünməz pərdə olmalıdır*', meaning '*There should be an invisible curtain between parents and children.*' Fathers believed that by keeping this

curtain intact, they would manage not to upset their children at present, and in the future be open for their children to talk to them when needed. The invisibility of the fathers seemed not to be by chance but by design, where the distancing from children was used as a tool to exercise authority as well as protect father-child relationships. In terms of digital media use, this type of distance and invisibility was useful in establishing restrictive practices, but failed in creating room for permissive practices. In this study, fathers intended to restrict the use of digital media generally, so the stance was mainly justified and suited to their beliefs. This distance was not broken even when children tried to spend time with their fathers watching them play on their phones. In such situations, too, this bonding time was usually short and focused on the interests of fathers (games suited for adults) rather than children.

Fathers seemed to romanticise their own childhoods when reflecting on their own childhoods in relation to their children's digital media practices. All fathers wanted their children to have childhoods similar to their own in terms of the absence of digital technologies, preferring to defer the acquisition of proficiency in digital literacies until later in the children's lives. Only Elcan's father elected to follow a path diverging from his own experiences, neither objecting to nor obstructing children from acquiring digital skills in the early years. I analyse fathers' attitudes towards their young children's uses of digital technology in line with Cole's concept of prolepsis discussed in the theoretical framework chapter (2.4). Cole (1998) describes prolepsis as a process by which parents reflect on their childhoods, project these childhoods onto their children's future, and act on them in the current moment. For some parents, this is an explicit choice; for others, there is less awareness of how their own pasts influence their child's future.

All the participant fathers had been introduced to computers and phones in early adulthood, and four of them explicitly projected their experiences onto their children's future. As fathers were content with their own current competence in digital technology, they saw no issues with restricting their children's access. Fathers' underlying logic was that as they had learned to use computers in adulthood, so could their children; there was no need to get started on this journey early. So, in line with the concept of prolepsis, fathers drew from their own past experiences to restrict children's access to digital media and seemed determined to try and prevent their children from using digital media devices at a

young age. This logic naturally affected fathers' mediation strategies concerning their children's digital media practices.

10.3 Influence of family context on children's digital media practices

Young children's exposure to and uses of digital technologies are increasing at home (Jones & Park, 2015; Piotrowski, 2017; Plowman, 2016; Wartella et al., 2016), and digital technologies have influenced different aspects of children's day-to-day lives, including the way they interact with one another (Wartella et al., 2013). My study explored children's uses of digital technologies, including smartphones, tablets, TV, and laptops with an internet connection, and the findings concur with the previous studies claiming non-dominance of digital technologies in children's lives contrary to what is advocated in mass media (Chaudron, 2015; Kervin et al., 2018; Plowman et al., 2008; Stephen et al., 2013; Teichert & Anderson, 2014).

The study revealed the following influences of family context on children's digital media practices to be discussed in separate sections:

- Parents developed a hierarchical view of preferred devices determined by the screen size of devices: TV being the most favoured device by parents due to its bigger screen;
- Despite their negative attitudes parents encouraged children to watch content in the language of instruction at their schools;
- Mothers mediated relationships among children, grandparents, and their spouses while remaining a 'good' mother in the eyes of all of them.

10.3.1 Hierarchy of devices

Previous literature has addressed various kinds of digital media devices used by young children. For example, research has explored parental mediation of children's uses of TV (Nathanson, 2001; Warren, 2001), video games (Shin & Huh, 2011), internet (Nikken & Jansz, 2014), social media (Lauricella et al., 2016) and smartphones (Shin, 2018). In my

study, young children's digital media practices did not vary much in terms of the diversity of the digital devices used: the participant children mainly watched TV, and occasionally used a laptop to draw something, or their parents' phones to play games, watch YouTube videos, or check their own pictures and videos. Sometimes they also used their mothers' phones to send pictures or voice messages to their grandparents or teachers. Only two children out of five had their own tablets (Yasin and Elcan), but Yasin was not allowed to use his tablet, and Elcan could use it mainly at school or home during 'iPad days' at weekends.

As discussed in the literature review (3.3), children's access to digital devices might be influenced by a range of factors, such as families' socio-economic status, parents' education level, and parents' attitudes towards digital technologies (Bakó & Tóké, 2018; Chaudron, Marsh, et al., 2018; Dias et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 2016; Nikken & Schols, 2015; Plowman, 2015; Plowman et al., 2008). In my study, parents were found to be developing a hierarchy of devices, informed mainly by their views on the screen size of digital devices as well as how easily they can control them to mediate their children's digital media practices (e.g., Yasin's father bought a tablet for him as it had a bigger screen than phones and it would be less harmful to his eyes).

TVs were first in this hierarchy due to their bigger screens and were thought to be less harmful to children's eyes. Parents felt that the content on a TV was easier to control, even when busy with other chores at home. The mothers felt that the devices with smaller screens and more child-friendly controls required a more hands-on approach to monitoring, but this demanded more of their limited time. Fathers thought they could hide away the TV remote control or turn off the WiFi router in order to control TV viewing. Children spent most of their weekdays at school, and only had time to watch TV for a short period in the evenings as they had homework to do. At weekends, parents preferred to take them on outings to malls or parks to keep their children away from TV. Even though there was a range of motivations for going out at weekends, parents explicitly stated that one of the factors affecting their plans was to provide children with some engaging activities which did not involve digital devices. Based on their own childhoods, during a time when outdoor play was more commonplace, this strategy was in part related to the parents' often-stated desire for their children to spend more time outdoors. These constraints and affordances of various digital devices significantly influenced children's digital media practices at home.

When allowed access to digital media, young children mainly were diverted towards devices with a bigger screen, which was a TV in all the households.

Overall, as discussed above and illustrated at length in chapters 8 and 9, young children in Azerbaijan were not exposed to a diverse range of digital technologies; on the contrary, TV was the primary digital device they had access to at home. There was a hierarchy of devices for parents, TV being the first as it was easy to control and was perceived to be less harmful to children's health. Irrespective of this leading role of the parents, children also had opportunities to construct daily digital media practices through participation in school activities or with their peers. These practices happened inadvertently instead of consciously, and they were then brought back to the home setting either directly, as activities with digital media, or indirectly – translated into non-digital activities at home (8.2.2). Irrespective of the preference in the digital devices, the language of the media content was seen as a significant aspect in parents' decision, which spanned all types of devices.

10.3.2 The language of digital media content

Parents manage their children's digital media practices by active involvement in non-digital activities (Kucirkova et al., 2018) or by supervising the content of the digital media children accessed (Nikken & Jansz, 2014; Sonck et al., 2013). The study revealed that managing content is also shaped by parents' reflections on the children's future and acting on it in the present. As explained above in relation to the fathers' approach to children's digital media practices (10.2), parents' motivations regarding the language of digital media content were analysed in terms of Cole's concept of prolepsis (1996). All the participant parents had needed to learn Russian or English to build a better career for themselves. Based on these experiences, parents were aware of the huge influence of Russian and English on their children's future and considered that a good career path was possible only by gaining proficiency in these languages. They wanted to prepare their children and set them up for success (8.3.2), so they were willing to make the concession of accepting digital technologies as a means of providing the necessary exposure to Russian and English [as the languages of both educational and entertainment content].

The importance of learning a language that could be useful in the future studies and careers of the children was also demonstrated by four out of five participant children

attending preschools in a language other than their mother tongue. This exposure to other languages during the day was reinforced by the use of digital technologies with content in the target foreign language when at home and accounted for some of the choices in their mediation strategies.

Based on their past and present experiences, parents reflected those projections of the future on their children's daily lives (9.3). By expanding the existing literature on parents' mediating digital media content to expose their children to only educational videos and games (Gentile, Nathanson, et al., 2012; Zaman et al., 2016), this study further revealed the influence of family context on parents' mediation strategies. As such, while it is not evident in the research conducted in English-speaking countries, in a different cultural context such as Azerbaijan, the 'language' of digital media matters for families, in addition to its content. For parents, the focus was on the value of digital technologies, which could contribute to the children's learning of the target language. The study findings revealed that the language of YouTube content, cartoons on TV, and games for Azerbaijani parents was as important as their educational value. Previous research argues that parents focus more on digital technologies rather than the content of the digital media (Domoff et al., 2019). In my study, parents were more motivated by the language of the content to the extent that sometimes they did not entirely approve of the content yet allowed their children access it if it was in the target language.

Parents were explicit in their action to direct their children to watch content in the languages of their children's instruction in formal educational settings. For example, Yasin's parents themselves did not attend a Russian speaking school, and they invested in the necessary equipment to introduce him to Russian cartoons on TV to support his learning of the language of instruction at school (8.4.3). Their goal was very closely linked to their own experiences in that they themselves had to learn Russian and English to receive better education and build a better career. The concept of prolepsis helped to reveal the ways in which participant parents frequently turn back to their respective childhoods to identify processes that helped them become who they are now, and their childhood experiences have a decisive role in informing their decisions about their children's uses of digital technologies (McPake & Plowman, 2010). Parents seemed to be romanticising their own childhood experiences and practices in recalling their own practices of socialising with other

children and playing outdoors, compared with staying indoors alone with digital devices. Thus, they were making interventions in their children's lives to limit their exposure to digital technologies and nudge them more towards outdoors play with other children. As noted earlier, this approach sometimes led to a conflict of values for parents: while they generally discouraged access to digital devices this was sometimes overlooked for the purpose of language learning, which was also informed by their own childhood experiences and the projections onto their children's future.

Other than projecting this on children's future and acting on it in the present, parents' stance and relevant actions were linked to parental ethnotheories. In line with previous literature, this study also revealed that parents do not have a reference point in relation to navigating their children's digital practices considering the rapid and relatively recent development of digital media (Plowman, Stephen, et al., 2010a). Parents draw on their cultural beliefs about childrearing and parenting to formulate their mediation strategies in the digital age. Parental ethnotheories derive from broader cultural influences and comprise cultural beliefs on parenting, children, and family, and these ideas interlink with other factors such as setting, context, and individual children's characteristics to contribute to day-to-day family practices influencing children's daily life (2.4). These beliefs are linked to parents' behaviour, aimed at the developing child and reflects on parents' day-to-day practices (Harkness et al., 2007).

10.3.3 Mothers as 'mediators'

Fathers and extended family members expected mothers to be the ones enforcing rules around digital media use. In particular, fathers across four families usually participated in setting the rules, yet expected mothers to take the lead in implementing them. In the families I studied, most fathers were out of the house and at work every day, which would explain their absence from direct engagement in mediation of their children's daily digital media practices, but as shown in 9.4, it also stemmed from the fathers' unwillingness to confront children directly and risk spoiling their relationship or upsetting them. As a result, mothers held the most power to shape the digital media practices of the children, in addition to the other responsibilities they had within their everyday lives, as also found by other studies (Valcke et al., 2010).

Mothers approach the supervision of their children's digital media use as part of their daily lives, internalising this responsibility in the same way as many other chores and tasks (Bird & Jorgenson, 2002). In addition to mothers themselves, this aspect was strongly enforced in my study by fathers and sometimes grandparents. Mothers felt guilty when they thought that this objective was unfulfilled – i.e., when their children were using digital media devices for a long time or when they learned something inappropriate from watching YouTube videos – because they viewed it as their failure to do their own 'job' well.

Mothers were also aware of their influence on the children's practices and took on the role of gatekeepers between children and digital devices (Brito et al., 2017). In addition to this, the study reveals that mothers also have to constantly negotiate a balance between maintaining the gatekeeping responsibility among their children, digital media, and extended family members, such as grandparents. Given that mothers often lived with their spouses' parents, they felt that their motherhood came under closer scrutiny, which in turn increased the pressure of the expectation to be a 'good mother'. Kamala's mother called herself 'a bad mother' after her children's reaction to her restricting their use of the phone in a café (8.5.3); Elcan's mother quoted her father-in-law telling her, 'if you love your children, you should not let them play with their tablets or any other digital technologies' (8.2.3) and Yasin's mother felt 'guilty' for allowing her children to use digital media devices when she was busy with house chores (8.4.2). Mothers' emotions, such as anxiety and concerns over their children's uses of digital technologies, overlapped with their desire to be accepted as good parents by themselves and others around them. Mothers also wanted to be accepted by their spouses and relatives as 'good' mothers. In relation to digital media use, meeting those multiple-sided expectations is a complex task for mothers, and as a result, most often, it was the children whose exposure to, and uses of, digital technologies are limited.

In sum, the study revealed that mothers:

- were more involved in mediation;
- felt 'guilty' when they allowed children to use digital media devices;
- felt more pressure to prove they were being 'good' parents.

10.4 Subterfuge: Implementing restrictions by proxy

Previous research has established that from their children's relatively young age, parents are developing strategies to mediate their children's uses of digital technologies (Livingstone et al., 2015) and parents' mediation strategies can determine the extent of their children's exposure to, and uses of, digital media (Gentile, Nathanson, et al., 2012). As stated before, my thesis did not seek to confirm or reject the existence of the mediation strategies discussed in the literature review (3.5). Rather, the study revealed a different mediation strategy heavily influenced by the family context that has not been discussed in the broader literature. Mainly, as a result of fathers' commentary on the living journals, I identified a different parent mediation strategy that I refer to as 'subterfuge'. In this section, I introduce the subterfuge mediation strategy that has not previously been discussed in the literature, to the best of my knowledge. It also provides an answer to the third research question about identifying parental mediation strategies, strengthening my study's claim that family context has a considerable influence on parents' mediation strategies supported by their parental ethnotheories and previous experiences with digital media.

Subterfuge as a parental mediation strategy means that parents do not directly communicate with their children to restrict their use of digital media devices. Instead, they prefer to interfere with their children's uses of digital media devices indirectly in order not to upset them, directing blame to the devices or connection. As outlined in 8.4, the examples of such behaviour included switching a phone off remotely while a child was using it, suggesting to children that a phone was monitoring them, deception about the availability of internet or charge, and hiding away the devices or their chargers and controls or putting them in places out of children's reach.

Subterfuge is guided by strong cultural beliefs of the parents, which themselves are seldom questioned or reviewed. The subterfuge mediation strategy is closely linked to parental ethnotheories, as the parents use a similar mediation strategy for other aspects of children's daily lives. Parents in Azerbaijan very often use the practice of postponement and avoidance, where parents might promise to buy a toy later in order to avoid a tantrum in a shop without truly intending to do so. Such approach is common for parents, where the expectation is that by dealing with an issue with deception in the moment, the child will

likely get distracted and forget about the issue. A simple example of this would be a child asking to go home, where a parent might say that they are now going home even if they plan to do so after many hours. When the child asks again after a few minutes, the response will be the same – that they are going now. And so on until parents actually intended to leave after several hours. Such postponement seems to be a preferred method for many, which avoids direct confrontation with the issue at hand and takes little account of the children's wellbeing.

Subterfuge was repeated in all families, although in Elcan's family, I only observed it once. The families in Azerbaijan reported using this strategy to mediate their children's exposure to and uses of digital technologies in a home setting and beyond. Subterfuge appeared to be initiated mainly by fathers and supported by mothers. This strategy was consistent with the general approach and preference of fathers to maintain distance from children for authority reasons and not spoil their relationships with their children. Rather than engaging directly in the mediation, parents preferred to shift the blame to the devices instead, or use the invented lack of an internet connection as a reason to limit children's access to digital media.

The subterfuge mediation strategy affecting practices is fluid and changes over time and place. The study's findings concur with the previous studies that parents' mediation strategies are subject to change depending on the physical environment and context, (Smahelova et al., 2017) and evolve around external (environment and settings) and internal factors (beliefs and attitudes) (Zaman et al., 2016).

Temporal and spatial fluidity in subterfuge is more apparent when children's regular context changes, such as family outings, grandparent visits, and any out of the ordinary days. Subterfuge mediation strategy is subject to change but based on my findings, I suggest that this should not be understood as mediation being constantly revised. Instead, it is a matter of parents having different sets of rules among which they can readily switch depending on the context. The rules applicable at home seem to be firmer and take the highest priority, while others used at grandparents' are temporary deviations from general practices, even if they occur regularly.

Findings in this study reveal that even though the established subterfuge strategy in the families is generally strict, as any other rules of the family (e.g. mealtimes, bedtimes),

subterfuge is not written down but instead held in the parents' minds and reinforced when needed. Smahelova et al. (2017) instead suggest that future research should focus on the context, such as time and place, of the situation where mediation strategies are exercised. My study has responded to this call by offering a closer look at such changes.

10.4.1 Grandparents' role in subterfuge

In addition to children's digital media practices at home, they were also exposed to digital media beyond home, such as in schools (Elcan) and through the practices of their peers in other settings (Yasin), or direct exposure to digital media in their grandparents' (Khumar, Bilal and Kamala) or relatives' houses (Khumar, Yasin). One of the affordances of the living journals was that they enabled me to have a glimpse at children's day-to-day activities beyond home, and therefore I was able to identify children's digital media exposure in their grandparents' houses (captured in Khumar's living journal). The findings revealed that grandparents in Azerbaijan were extensively involved in their children's day-to-day lives by taking care of them after school until their parents returned from work. During this period, children were allowed to watch TV or use their grandmother's phone. Thus, children were developing their own practices of digital media, moulded by their experiences at school and grandparents' or other relatives' houses.

The visits to grandparents often span a whole day or even longer, and such temporal and spatial changes in circumstances signal to the children a change in rules. A mother in this study has described this phenomenon as switching between different modes, as returning to the home context also means returning to the set of rules established by parents (8.3.3). Even though the different modes are recognised, the goal is still consistency in rules across settings, and a mother in this study took active steps to ensure it by asking her mother (her child's grandmother) to follow the rules they had set up in their own house. The findings reveal that in mediating young children's digital media practices, grandparents play a considerable role too. My study joins the attempts to expand the research on mediation strategies of young children beyond parents and onto grandparents and other caretakers in young children's lives (Nimrod et al., 2019; Pempek & Lauricella, 2017).

Grandparents in this study were found not to be using subterfuge mediation strategy. Instead, they were the ones allowing children to use digital media devices (e.g., Kamala's

and Khumar's grandparents) when they were visiting their houses. Previous research argues that it might be related to grandparents' wish to bond, strengthening their relationships with their grandchildren (Shin & Li, 2017; Clark, 2011). My study further adds that grandparents allow their grandchildren to use digital devices as entertainment during their parents' absence.

Still, parents seemed to be negotiating their mediation styles with grandparents based on their attitudes towards digital technologies. Parents had two main reasons for being flexible with their mediation style: i) they did not want their children to throw tantrums in front of grandparents, which, according to them, would have revealed their lack of good parenting (8.2), and ii) grandparents had difficulties in entertaining children for a whole day (8.5). As outlined above and described by existing studies (Jeffery, 2020; Mazmanian & Lanette, 2017; Smahelova et al., 2017; van Kruistum & van Steensel, 2017; Zaman et al., 2016), parents' mediation was not a one-time-accepted-forever rule. On the contrary, the data analysis revealed practices of rule-bending by otherwise strict parents. Parents were clearly consciously aware of rules being amended but allowed it for the same reason they resorted to subterfuge – deeming it appropriate so long as children were not aware of it, and it did not disrupt their image of being a 'good parent'.

10.4.2 Children's responses to subterfuge

Children negotiate their parents' mediation strategies (Schaan & Melzer, 2015), but Chaudron, Marsh et al. (2018) state that children comply with parents' mediation strategies. In my study, in many instances, children were not aware of the restrictions imposed on them as they were being conducted covertly through subterfuge. For example, it was common for parents to put devices out of children's reach, tell them that the internet was not working, switch their phone remotely or say that their phone was out of charge and that the chargers had been misplaced. As demonstrated by Bilal's family (9.4.2), Bilal was continuously checking their TV to see whether the internet was back.

Although children were not aware of the many restrictions their parents imposed through subterfuge, they internalised the ones they could observe within their own practices. Children are part of the cultural groups within and across families; observing such practices, children can adopt and readily apply them by themselves, thus being enculturated

by their families (Tudge, 2008). In other words, their daily practices were influenced by their cultural context and interactions with their families. For example, Yasin practised a similar approach using subterfuge to keep it away from his sister (10.3.2). First challenging and subverting norms of her household, Khumar, after trying several times to take the tablet from the top of the shelf and use it, in the end, decided just like her parents that tablets are not good, and she does not like it anymore (8.3.2). Children's characteristics and influence on their cultural groups and culture are as important as their culture's impact on them (Tudge et al., 2011). The presence of digital technologies has greatly influenced children's daily lives. Within ecocultural theory, culture is not static, and children's agency in reshaping their culture while being enculturated by their parents is demonstrable.

Parents want to ensure that their cultural values and attitudes about 'good parenting' are not threatened when adopting a mediation strategy. I argue that parents' mediation strategies are shaped and influenced by the interrelationships among parents' values and attitudes on childrearing – parental ethnotheories within their family. For parents, it is crucial to balance the requirements emerging through socialisation of their family values and digital media device uses (Padilla-Walker & Thompson, 2005). As the technology advances and the needs of individual children change as they grow, the parents find themselves needing to adjust their mediation strategies. While they still remained generally rooted in their experiences, the strategies could also take a path which diverged from their past experiences. The effectiveness of any parental mediation strategy also depends on the childrearing culture in which that strategy is implemented (Kirwil, 2009).

10.5 Summary

In this chapter, I started by discussing fathers' views on their children's digital media practices and their involvement in the mediation strategies at home and beyond. I argued that fathers were active in setting the rules around children's access to digital media but avoided being personally involved in enforcing them. This task fell within the realm of mothers' responsibilities, in large part because of the mothers being primary caretakers at home. Additional reasons for this division of tasks were related to family context, power relations within families, and societal gendered expectations.

The influence of family context was then discussed, including parents' preference for a certain digital media device – TV. Parents had inadvertently developed a hierarchy of preferred devices, with larger screens taking priority. I then discussed parents' encouragement of their children to watch content in a language of their instruction at school. Even when parents were generally opposed to their children's uses of digital media, they still allowed their children access to educational content in the interest of learning a foreign language in the process. This was a reflection on what parents valued, and was interpreted in light of Cole's (1998) concept of prolepsis, with parents projecting their preferences on children's future and acting on them in the present. Mothers' attempts to mediate complex family relationships was also highlighted, along with their desire to remain a 'good' mother in the eye of their children, spouses, and extended family members. Parental values and beliefs about childrearing influenced mothers, who were constantly negotiating their involvement in their children's digital media practices and their own motherhood in relation to parental mediation of children's uses of devices.

Parents tended to manage children's engagement with digital media indirectly through subterfuge mediation strategy. In so doing, parents avoided taking responsibility for verbally and directly communicating the rules on digital media use to children. Subterfuge greatly depended on time and context, leading to multiple different strategies utilised by parents. The children themselves did not seem to consciously understand the practices of their parents.

This chapter discussed the main findings of the study in relation to wider literature leading to the identification and discussion of the thesis contributions in the next chapter.

11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This final chapter concludes my study by returning to the research questions and offering final remarks. First, in 11.2 I summarise the main findings of the study and provide answers to the research questions. Then, in 11.3 regarding young children's uses of digital media and their parents' mediation practices the major contributions this study makes to knowledge are outlined. In 11.4, I reflect on the implications of the study, in 11.5, on the limitations. The further questions raised by this study are discussed in 11.6, along with some areas of interest and future research directions. Concluding remarks close the thesis.

11.2 Summary of the main findings: Answering the research questions

In my study I aimed to explore young children's digital media practices at home in Azerbaijan. In this section I provide answers to the research questions set in the beginning of the study.

Research Question 1. How can we explore young children's digital media practices within their family context?

We can explore young children's digital media practices by leveraging the affordances of digital media to overcome the challenges of geographical distance and engage parents as proxy researchers to study children's daily practices, which would otherwise be hidden from a researcher observing their settings directly. As discussed earlier, there were a number of other challenges to achieving this goal of the study, which were successfully addressed and resolved by the approaches I united within a living journals method I developed for my study. The living journals method in itself serves as an answer to the first research question.

The first research question arose from the existing challenges in this field of research, especially with young children. The objective of this question was to identify these challenges and find solutions to effectively address them. In general, it helped me solve the below-listed problems within my study, which can also be beneficial for other researchers in this and related fields.

- Generate data remotely without having to be in the field;
- Decentre and deprivilege the role of the researcher by inviting participants to act as proxy researchers in the field to generate data;
- Better capture research participants' daily activities or other phenomena of interest in their 'natural' settings;
- Enrich the data description by eliciting the participants' interpretations of the raw data;
- Present the generated data in a material form that serves to prompt participants to engage in discussion;
- Generate truly rich and diverse data: producing multivocality, metatextuality, multimodality and multifunctionality.

Remote data generation: The living journals method is offered to researchers as a method to remotely generate their data, minimising their participation in the field. Digital media is used as a research tool in this method. The ability to generate data remotely is particularly pertinent in the context of a global pandemic, but can also meet the other limitations of physical access to research settings, such as travel or financial restrictions.

Decentre and deprivilege researcher presence: Participants in the study are assigned as proxy researchers to generate data with the prompts from the researcher. As the data is remotely generated, the researcher does not interfere with the settings of research participants.

Better capturing children's digital media practices in their own settings: When minimising researcher presence and thereby removing the presence of cameras, capturing visuals becomes naturally difficult. This issue is successfully resolved with the help of parents acting as proxy researchers, who in most cases own smartphones with cameras and are able to capture images and videos of their children in response to prompts from the researcher. Additionally, this generally aligns with the standard practice within the families of capturing the images and videos of their children for their personal use.

Participant interpretations of data: In contrast with the researcher making potentially subjective interpretations of the gathered data, the input from the participants reflecting on

their own activities presented in the journals also helps to increase the trustworthiness of the data and the findings.

Use of data as prompts: Research participants are invited to comment on the created journals, which helps them to better recall the captured daily activities than would be possible by simply asking questions in an interview.

Enriching and diversifying data: Participant interpretations also enrich and complexify the generated data by adding *multivocality, multimodality, metatextuality, and multifunctionality*, as explained in 7.6. Families were able to comment on other families' journals, and their discussions around the living journals contributed to the development of metatextual data. The inclusion of family members' voices in the data interpretation process accentuates the multivocal aspect of the method. As proxy researchers, mothers answered prompts through video, audio, and text messages, and the living journals discussions were video-recorded. These all added to the multimodality of the living journals data. The created living journals were multifunctional as data, research outputs, and prompts.

The living journals revealed that homes in Azerbaijan are not media-saturated, which is different from the findings of the studies in the Global North. Digital media devices the children were exposed to were limited to TV, smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Only two children owned a personal tablet: one child was asked to have a tablet by school (Elcan), and another child's father had bought him a tablet with the thought that the tablet screen was bigger than that of a phone (Yasin). All families owned an internet-connected TV, and all parents had smartphones.

Children's most-observed digital practice was watching cartoons on TV channels or videos on YouTube. They were all in the language they were learning as a support to improve their language acquisition. Most of the time, children's digital media practices did not include their siblings, parents, and peers. However, in two families, children were captured watching TV with their siblings. Almost all digital media practices were at home.

By employing the living journals method, I was able to involve fathers in the study, contributing to the research design of the study. Father voices in the data contributed to the empirical findings as well, since their interpretations revealed that the mediation practices within families were mostly assigned by them but executed by mothers in the family context.

Research Question 2. How does the family influence the child's digital media practices?

There are two empirical contributions related to the second research question. Through the living journals method, the study revealed fathers' views on digital media and the extent of their involvement in their children's digital media practices. The study also demonstrated fathers' considerable influence on the mediation strategies for their children's uses of digital media. Based on their own experiences in their childhood, fathers were not keen for their children to use digital media devices at the age of five. But sometimes, fathers also played games that were not designed for child audiences, while mothers focused on educational content. Fathers were authoritative figures when mediating their children's digital media practices and preferred not to interact with them directly.

The decisions parents made about the everyday uses of digital media by children were informed by their beliefs around digital technologies, which were in turn shaped by their family context and parental ethnotheories, as well as their own past experiences with digital media. The influence of extended family members on children's exposure to digital media was exacerbated when the spatial and temporal changes occurred. The influence of family context included:

- parental preferences for certain types of device: hierarchy of devices;
- the 'language' of digital media content;
- mothers managing everyday lives while trying to be a 'good' parent.

Hierarchy of devices: As mentioned above, family home inventories consisted of smart TVs, laptops, computers, tablets, and smartphones. Three of the five children did not own a digital device, while two children owned tablets. Generally, the limited availability of digital devices is related to the Socio-Economic-Status of the country, but also to the negative attitudes of parents towards digital media practices of young children.

Parents preferred TV over other types of digital media devices for the ease of control of its content and constant mediation. They also preferred TV due to a bigger screen than

other digital devices available at home, and they thought a bigger screen would cause less physical damage to their children's eyesight.

Language of digital media content: In Azerbaijani families, all participant children were learning another language at school or at private tutoring. Four out of five children were getting ready to start a school in a foreign language, and parents were encouraging their children's language acquisition by exposing them to digital content in the relevant language. Despite their negative attitude towards digital media devices, parents would allow their children to watch the content if they helped their children learn a new language.

Mothers managing to be a 'good' parent: In most families, mothers and fathers had similar approaches to digital media use, which was primarily negative (except for Elcan's family). But fathers had a more distant indirect mediation strategy, and mothers took a more hands-on approach. Fathers also wanted mothers to be the ones taking care of their children's digital media practices as a part of their daily childcare routines. They agreed about the mediation strategy, but fathers expected mothers to take the lead in execution.

Mothers' emotions also added to the influences, especially when mothers felt 'guilty' that their children were interacting with digital media. Having frequent contact with extended family members, in particular, grandparents, seemed to be making mothers question their parenting skills in relation to their children's digital media practices. Parents would themselves also allow their children to use digital media devices at grandparents' houses to avoid tantrums or upsetting their children, which would have been detrimental to their parenting skills in the eyes of grandparents. In general, mothers were found to follow the rules of managing everyday lives while trying to remain good parents, as approved by their children, spouses and other extended family members.

Research Question 3. How do parents mediate their young children's digital media practices?

In the absence of a reference point in relation to the mediation of children's digital media practices, parents constructed their own mediation strategy informed by their cultural beliefs about childrearing and their own previous experiences with digital media. A new parental mediation strategy termed in the

thesis as 'subterfuge' was identified as an answer to RQ3. The subterfuge mediation strategy referred to parents' indirect interference with their children's exposure to and use of digital media devices without the knowledge of their children. By turning the WiFi router off, hiding the remote control away or putting it on the top of the shelves, or lying to their children about not having an internet package for their phones, parents avoided confrontation with their children as well as their tantrums in public places and managed to keep their children away from digital media as intended. The subterfuge mediation strategy has the following identified features:

- Indirect influence;
- Direct link with parental ethnotheories;
- Contextual;
- Temporal and spatial fluidity;
- Extended family members' involvement.

Indirect influence: The study findings revealed many instances when parents chose to avoid directly communicating their desires to their children when restricting their use of digital media. Instead, they preferred to indirectly influence their children's digital media practices and access by removing access to devices, or to chargers and remote controls, or lying about the availability of the internet or charge on the devices. This type of deceit was the main feature of subterfuge, which was observed across most of the families.

Contextual: Subterfuge mediation strategy is not static but instead changes depending on the contextual demands. In my study, parents were also found to negotiate the subterfuge mediation strategy. Whilst upheld most of the time, sometimes they conceded in the interest of avoiding tantrums in different contexts beyond home, for example, at grandparents' homes or in public places such as cafes and restaurants. Children often requested access to devices even when they were aware of the restrictions in place.

Temporal and spatial fluidity: Subterfuge was context-dependent as it became relaxed when a spatial change occurred, such as a visit to grandparents, a trip outdoors, or public spaces. In addition to allowing access for education purposes, parents permitted their

children to use digital media to learn foreign languages, even when they were generally against it. Parents then turned these instances into practices, breaking the well-established restrictive rules on digital media use. For example, they stopped opposing grandmothers' permissive strategies and allowed children to watch YouTube content, justifying it by the fact that the children were 'picking up the language'.

Extended family members' involvement: Besides spatial change, role changes for adults exercising authority in any given situation also allowed for the subterfuge strategy to be temporarily amended. For example, children were often left alone in the care of grandparents. While mothers and fathers were generally in charge of upholding the restrictive rules, their temporary absence could also be understood as good grounds for changing rules.

Mediating family relationships in light of digital media was also revealed, as mothers also incorporated their spouses' and grandparents' digital media practices with children. In general, parents assumed different roles in mediating children's digital media practices, with fathers being active in setting the rules but mothers more involved in the day-to-day management of these practices. Their beliefs towards digital media tended to align, leading to unified approaches irrespective of their differing roles.

Based on the answers to the research questions in this section, the following section summarize the thesis contributions to knowledge.

11.3 Thesis contribution to knowledge

This research study set out to advance our knowledge about studying digital media practices of young children within their family context, the influence of family context on these practices, and parents' mediation strategies in a country from the Global South. The thesis makes one methodological and three empirical contributions to knowledge.

The first contribution of the thesis was a methodological one, which entailed developing and implementing the living journals approach to explore young children's digital media practices within their family context. Research involving young children can be challenging. In the past, these challenges have been successfully resolved by employing methods such as Video-Cued Ethnography and mobile phone diaries (5.2). The living

journals method described here builds on its predecessors and offers improved tools to research young children with minimal interference from researchers and by removing the need for the constant presence of cameras in children's lives.

Given the importance of exploring children's everyday lives within ecocultural theory, the living journals method allowed me to focus on children's everyday lives without interfering with their daily routines from a distance. The main value of the living journals method is that researchers are not required to be physically present in the research setting. Using digital technology as a research tool makes it possible to generate data remotely. The living journals method utilised the affordances of the common, everyday use of an instant messaging application - WhatsApp. The ability to employ the living journals method remotely offers great value to researchers when travel is restricted, as has been the case during the pandemic, or in cases where access to research settings is otherwise limited. This method can contribute to the identified need of extending research in this field to the Global South. As most research is undertaken in the Global North, this method could potentially remove the geographical barriers for researchers, who otherwise might be inclined to conduct research in their own settings for the reason of accessibility and convenience.

By acting as proxy researchers, participants can provide researchers with observations and data without unduly affecting the setting. By decentring the researcher in the data generation process, the method allows researchers to generate both visually and textually complex and rich data. The visual and personal nature of the method goes beyond text-based research accounts to bring the data to life, allowing researchers to generate multimodal, multivocal, metatextual, and multifunctional data.

Through the remote data generation afforded by employing the living journals method, I created living journals in digital and print format. The created journals were both research output, and regarded as a keepsake by parents. They also served as a tool for conducting a further discussion with participants, allowing the study to generate an additional layer of rich, in-depth data.

The first empirical contribution of this thesis is the inclusion of scrutinised views of fathers on their children's digital media practices and their involvement in the mediation

strategies. The views of fathers are notably uncommon in this field of research both in the Global South and North (Edwards et al., 2015; Teichert, 2018). The living journals method allowed me to include fathers' voices in the study, which added fresh perspectives to the existing knowledge on their children's digital media practices. By actively seeking responses from fathers, I was able to gather empirical data that lends itself as a solid foundation for this study as well as a useful reference point for future research in the field. Including all participant fathers through the living journals in my research made methodological and empirical contributions to the field. As noted, fathers in my study avoided involvement through conventional methods of face-to-face interviews. It took an innovative method and approach to pique their interest, which I achieved through discussing the generated journals with them. I suggest that this should be taken as a useful approach by future researchers, not necessarily limited to the living journals method, but instead using an innovative approach which will encourage fathers to participate in research about children.

The second empirical contribution this thesis makes is the identification of the influence of family context on children's digital media practices, which tend to emerge as a natural part of daily practices. The family context was shaped by parental beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of digital media use, including parental preferences for the availability of certain types of devices and the language of digital media content to which children were exposed. Besides the devices and content, other social phenomena such as mothers' attempts to balance being a 'good' parent while managing relations with other spouses, their children and extended family members also affected the formation of family context. In my thesis, I argued that the family context and parents' cultural beliefs affected their decisions on allowing and restricting digital media use. My thesis clarified that there is more nuance to the decision parents make about their children's access to digital media, and often this involves consideration of other aspects of their social state and daily lives. By analysing this aspect through the theoretical lens of ecocultural theory, the concept of prolepsis and parental ethnotheories, I was able to tease out the social aspect of these decisions, in particular with regards to the relationships that the parents need to balance with different actors within their immediate and extended families.

The third empirical contribution of the study is identifying ‘subterfuge’ as a mediation strategy. Through the subterfuge mediation strategy, parents indirectly restrict their children’s use of digital technologies to avoid blame and maintain a good relationship with children. Not willing to confront their children, spoil their relationships, or upset them by clarifying the established restrictive rules was the main reason leading to subterfuge in the cases of the families I studied. This was particularly pronounced in the case of fathers, for whom this approach went hand-in-hand with their preferred method of maintaining authority by keeping a distance from the children. The identified strategy of subterfuge also serves as a key to gaining more insights into relationships among family members, which shape the culture of digital media use.

Whilst previous research has discussed the influence of parental ethnotheories on children’s access to digital media (Marsh et al., 2017; Plowman, McPake, et al., 2010; Stephen & Edwards, 2017; Zezulkova & Stastna, 2018), my research identifies a mediation strategy heavily influenced by parental ethnotheories in the absence of referring points for parents on the mediation of young children’s digital media uses. This contribution is important due to its adding original findings to existing knowledge, because not only does it identify a new mediation strategy, but it also establishes the importance of the study of parental ethnotheories and family context in parental mediation research. Identification of a new mediation strategy was made possible by observing a culture different from the dominant Global North. While in the Global North countries, parents might prefer to engage with children and clarify the boundaries to them, in Azerbaijan, parents relied on the opposite type of strategy – subterfuge. I provided examples of this strategy influencing children’s own practices around digital media and how they responded to subterfuge. Such analysis at a later stage also revealed the need to research this aspect in greater depth, as it might affect children’s perception of how digital technology works, which in turn could have much larger implications on their practices in the future than parents ever intended.

11.4 Implications

Implications for parents

The research has implications for parents and policymakers. Given that the study was primarily centred on exploring parental attitudes, I initially focus on the implications for parents. First, the thesis highlights that individual parents are not alone in the struggle of finding a balance between their children's digital and non-digital activities and mediating their children's uses of digital media devices in a home setting. One of the valuable contributions of the living journals was that parents were able to see other participant children's digital media practices as well as other daily practices and activities and comment on them in relation to their own children. Three out of five mothers were feeling guilty about their children's digital media practices, but through this approach were acquainted with similar activities of other participant children. As discussed, several mothers highlighted similarities with other families, particularly noting how fathers were not playing with their children in all families.

The second implication for parents is to encourage and support them to see the value of digital technologies in their children's daily activities, despite their young age. Previous research draws attention to the need of providing parents with appropriate resources and guidance by educators and policymakers (Livingstone et al., 2018) so they can make informed decisions on the navigation of their children's digital media use. Despite their concerns over digital technologies, parents in my study seemed to recognise that children are born in the digital age, and there are challenges in keeping them away from digital media. However, the study showed that parents could have been better informed on the possible navigation techniques or the ways in which they could encourage their children to make use of the digital technologies in a meaningful and valuable way (e.g., learning a foreign language). For example, one parent excitedly reported finding out about the existence of YouTube Kids, which offered them the safeguard of their child being exposed to only child-appropriate content. Offering parents help and navigation in this direction, mostly by informing and addressing their concerns, might help them in their navigation of digital media devices and content for children. Supporting parents in this regard can be helpful to parents and policymakers.

Implications for policymakers

In Azerbaijan, policymakers have introduced digital technology use in schools and preschools as part of the state education program. However, in line with the previous research (e.g., Mammadov, 2016), my research has also revealed that while children are being encouraged to use digital technologies in a formal education setting, the situation is different at home as parents instead strive to keep children away from digital technologies. Although I did not visit preschools, the thesis also revealed the need for the policymakers to take into account what is happening at homes in terms of young children's uses of digital technologies and invite parents alongside the educators in the discussions of the new policies before introducing them. Open discussions among policymakers and parents can only strengthen ties among all stakeholders.

Thus, the study findings offer policymakers a better view of the children's daily digital media practices at home. By attending to differences and similarities among young children's digital practices between home and school settings, policymakers can make changes in their new policies regarding the introduction of digital technology use in formal education settings. Policymakers can appropriate the introduction of digital technologies within classrooms to benefit children's learning and development in both settings. In this sense, building and strengthening bridges between homes and formal education settings would help policymakers and particularly parents to further support their children's development and learning.

Implications for future research:

This thesis has also methodological implications. First of all, developing the living journals approach in this study has considerable methodological implications for researchers in several ways:

- the method allows the researchers to generate data from afar, minimising their presence in the field;

- researchers can use this method as a participatory approach, asking participants to both generate and interpret data as proxy researchers;
- the created journals can serve as a tangible research output, whether in physical or digital form, which generates discussion on their own and other people's journals, as opposed to recalling the events from memory or being told about them;
- the method allows researchers to generate rich multivocal, multifunctional, multimodal, and metatextual data.

By employing the living journals method, the study has implications for research by including fathers' voices, which are notably scarce in the current literature (Edwards et al., 2015; Teichert, 2018). In light of the cultural context, the research highlighted the meaningful difference between fathers' and mothers' approaches to their mediation strategies and, in general, to family dynamics in relation to digital media use at home.

This research joins the previous calls (Marsh, 2015b; Piotrowski, 2017; Shin & Li, 2017) to invite researchers to shift their focus to a family context in the countries beyond the Global North. As such, this research has revealed a new parental mediation strategy influenced by parental ethnotheories. The newly identified subterfuge mediation strategy is heavily influenced by family context and parental ethnotheories in Azerbaijan, but this finding can encourage researchers to look for different mediation strategies under the influence of specific family context and parental beliefs and values in various cultural contexts.

This research on Azerbaijani young children's digital practices in a home context is the first of its kind (to my knowledge at the time of writing). The qualitative nature of the study provides in-depth information on young children's uses of digital media and their parents' mediation strategies.

11.5 Limitations

As with any research study, I remained aware of certain limitations through the conduct of this research. The limitations of my study include:

- small sample size;
- short observations;
- non-involvement of extended family members in research design as planned;
- the absence of research studies in Azerbaijan to serve as a reference point.

The first limitation is the small sample of only five cases in a single city, Baku. The number of homes and visits was mainly determined by my availability and the duration of time I could spend doing fieldwork in Azerbaijan. I established early on in this thesis that I was not claiming that the results would be generalisable onto the wider Azerbaijani population; on the contrary, I provided an in-depth picture of each case by demonstrating children's digital media practices, family influences, and parents' mediation strategies.

The second limitation was the limited number and short duration of family visits. I conducted some family visits in the evening in some families as both parents worked full time, so I was not able to conduct lengthy observations, including children, as I had planned. After data generation and during the write-up process, I visited Baku and had planned to meet up with parents and member-check the findings with participant families in person. I was only able to see two parents for a quick chat because a war started in the country soon after my arrival, in addition to the ongoing pandemic. As a result, I had to flee the country well before the planned date due to the escalating war. I, therefore, conducted member checking online.

The third limitation was the non-involvement of extended family members in the research design as planned. When I started my PhD, I wanted to go beyond parents' mediation strategies and discuss other family members' involvement in children's digital media practices. In particular, in Azerbaijan, extended family members tend to live together

and are closely involved in childrearing. I was not able to talk to other extended family members living in the same household with children as I had planned. In Kamala's family, paternal grandparents lived with the family; in Yasin's family a paternal grandmother; in Bilal's family a paternal uncle; and in Elcan's family, paternal grandparents had extended visits. Elcan's grandparents' visits coincided with the fieldwork time, and in Khumar's family, her maternal grandmother had frequent visits, including one which coincided with my visit. But in all families where grandparents were present during the fieldwork time, mothers did not want me to talk to their in-laws to avoid potential conflict. I only had ad-hoc conversations with two grandmothers.

The fourth limitation was the lack or absence of available research studies in Azerbaijan. It meant that I mostly had to draw on research studies conducted in other countries, especially in the Global North.

11.6 Future research directions

The living journals method enabled access to young children's lives. The fact that children were spending half of their days in preschool made it impossible to observe their daily activities within their educational settings. The cultural differences and ways of life in various settings also mean that approaches to digital media can be complex (Plowman et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2016). Exploring these differences would better inform our understanding of how children engage with digital media within their daily lives across settings.

Future research can also be conducted using mixed method approaches with a larger sample that could be generalisable across the country. Given the big educational and social gap between the capital city Baku and other cities and regions in the country (Ahmadov, 2017), further research could extend to other sites with the possibility of revealing a range of children's digital media practices and parents' mediation strategies. While the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan has recently started implementing programmes to introduce digital technology use in schools (Mammadov, 2016), there is an apparent lack of attention to children's digital practices at home. Given the importance of strengthening the bridge

between homes and schools, it is essential to conduct further research in Azerbaijan to understand the similarities and differences children encounter across these settings.

While the living journals method involved children's and parents' participation in research, future research can further develop it by asking children themselves to take pictures and make greater contributions by being more involved in generating and selecting pictures and ideas.

11.7 Concluding remarks

My PhD friend: What is your favourite toy, David?

David: My tabbie.

Friend: Ah, what is tabbie? Do you mean teddy?

David: Noo, tabbie.

(My then five-year-old son, David, and PhD friend during a break in our online writing session during the lockdown.)

I started this thesis with a personal story of what generated my interest in the topic and invited the reader to embark on a journey through my research. I want to conclude it with a similar personal interest. My son got his first tablet – an Amazon Kindle Fire – when he had just turned four. He started calling his tablet ‘tabbie’ and practiced a lot of chess games on it. When this conversation took place, I had just started writing about my findings. It got me thinking about what the mothers participating in my study would have thought of my mediation strategy.

I started this study when my son had just turned two; he is now six years old and goes to a primary school. My son still loves his *tabbie*, and interacts frequently with Alexa, illustrating some of the ways in which our family context has encouraged his interest in digital media. I have personally lived many of the experiences of the families in my study and often caught myself resorting to practices that have similarities with those I had observed in the research participant children and parents. Such decisions were often spontaneous reactions to respond to the challenges of managing my son’s access to digital media, reactions which I only understood upon later reflection. I noticed that when I judged his usage of the iPad to be excessive, in the heat of the moment I would implement restrictive measures which were rarely thought out in terms of pros and cons or strategized.

I understood my research participants better when I saw myself doing the same things. As parents, it is our culture, family context, and personal beliefs that produce the strategies which ultimately shape our family practices on a daily basis.

If I were to pass on one message from my thesis, it is that just as each child is unique, so too is each family and cultural context different in their own way. To show this, I focused on five families in Azerbaijan, viewing each family as a case, rather than focusing on the country itself. Nevertheless, I included the phrase 'in Azerbaijan' in the title of each publication and conference presentation I produced during this period and deliberated over whether I should make this word choice. I decided to reference Azerbaijani families in the thesis title because the context of any country makes a huge difference to how children access digital media, and what parents' mediation strategies are, both of which were aspects I wanted to emphasise.

By contrast, throughout my research I have been aware that the titles of studies undertaken in the Global North seldom specify the country in which the research took place. In such studies the dominant assumption seems to be that the findings apply equally to all countries by default. It is generally only accounts of studies from the Global South that identify and highlight the country of the research setting. I strongly contest this approach and argue that there is a risk that this gives us an oversimplified perspective on children's interactions with digital media. To use my study as an example, we should not expect that research undertaken in the UK will be directly applicable to families in Azerbaijan given the differences in childrearing practices and belief systems. An array of reasons has led to the dominance of knowledge constructed in the Global North. My study is one additional step towards redressing this dominance by extending and enriching our understandings of young children and their digital media practices beyond the prevailing perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics application and approval



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Moray House School
of Education

Research and
Knowledge Exchange
Ethics Committee

Student Application Form PROCEDURE FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This form must be completed electronically by all Postgraduate students (taught or research degree) prior to research commencing.

PhD/EdD Student

All Levels: Applications must be authorised by your supervisor and submitted to the Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee will review your application and provide feedback and authorisation.

Research should not commence until the supervisor(s) and, where necessary, the Ethics Committee have approved the ethics application.

Level 1: Your research project is completely desk-based (i.e. does not involve participants) and does not use information about living, identifiable individuals ('data subjects').

Level 2: Applies to non-intervention research where you have the consent of the participants and data subjects. This may include, for example, analysis of archived data, classroom observation, or questionnaires on topics that are not generally considered 'sensitive'. This research can involve children or young people, if the likelihood of risk to them is minimal.

Level 3: Applies to novel procedures, research without consent, sensitive personal data, or the use of atypical participant groups. Also, projects in which ethical issues might require more detailed consideration but are unlikely to prove problematic.

Level 4: Applies to research which is potentially problematic in that it may incorporate an inherent physical or emotional risk to researchers or participants; involve covert surveillance or covert data collection; or includes research studies in the NHS involving humans, their tissue and/or data.

SECTION 1: STUDENT & PROJECT DETAILS

1.1 Student Name: Sabina Savadova

1.2 Programme: PhD

1.3 Supervisor(s): Lydia Plowman, Holly Linklater

1.4 Institute: ECS

1.5 Title of Research Project: Living journals: Young children and family digital cultures in Azerbaijan

1.6 Proposed research start date: 01/09/18

1.7 Project Duration: 3 years

SECTION 2: ETHICS CATEGORY & GUIDANCE

2.1 Please tick the box which best describes your proposed research study:

Level 2: Applies to non-intervention research where you have the consent of the participants and data subjects. This may include, for example, analysis of archived data, classroom observation, or questionnaires on topics that are not generally considered 'sensitive'. This research can involve children or young people, if the likelihood of risk to them is minimal.

2.2 Ethical guidelines followed (tick all that apply)

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

2.3 Does the project require the approval of any other institution and/or ethics committee?

NO

SECTION 3: DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

Living journals: Young children and family digital cultures in Azerbaijan

This qualitative case study aims to explore young children's (aged 5) daily experiences with digital media at home. Besides primary focus on children, the study is designed to incorporate parents and other family members. It will explore social, as well as cultural and family contexts, in which young children at the age of 5 are living and engaging with digital media.

This study has the following aims:

- To investigate the availability of digital media at home;
- To identify the role of digital media in shaping children’s daily practices at home;
- To explore factors influencing parents’ attitudes to the children’s use of technologies;
- To describe family members’ perceptions of children’s practices with digital media at home.

Research Questions

1. How do we study young children’s digital practice in a home setting?
2. What are young children’s digital practices at home in Azerbaijan?
3. How do parents mediate their children’s digital practices?

I will select families through my personal and professional contacts. The data collection will be divided in two stages, in the first stage I will be in Baku whereas in the second stage I will be in Edinburgh and will interact with families online to conduct a living journals method. In the first stage, in order to learn more about the nature of their interactions with digital media, I will arrange four visits to each family. Each family visit will have its own agenda and purposes. During family visits, several activities will be conducted with children or other family members to answer research questions and achieve the research aims. For example, during one of the visits, semi-structured informal interviews with parents will be conducted. In the second stage, I will ask parents to create living journals of their children with me. For this purpose, I will assign mothers as proxy researchers to take pictures or record 30-second videos of their children with their mobile phones on the pre-arranged dates and times and send to me on three different dates during data collection. Later, from the selected pictures I will create a living journal in a digital and paper format for each participant child. These journals will be used for data analysis purposes as well and they will serve as memorabilia to mark children’s participation in the research. I will also invite parents and participant children to discuss the created living journals of their own and other participant children. As mothers and children will participate in the data gathering for the journals, I will ask fathers separately and mothers and children together to discuss the journals in online meetings. While families will have their own journals in a printed format, they will see other participant children’s journals only through my screen sharing. So, they will not come to own other families’ journals either in paper or digital format.

SECTION 4: PARTICIPANTS

- 4.1 How many participants is it hoped to include in the research?: 5 participant children
- 4.2 What criteria will be used in deciding on the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the study?

- The composition of families should vary;
- If possible, families should come from diverse Socio-Economic Status;
- In selection of participant children, gender equality should be ensured;
- Only 5-year-old children should be represented;
- Children coming from bigger families with siblings and other family members should be included as well.

4.3 How will the sample be recruited?

1. I will use my personal and professional contacts working at two different preschools: one public attached to public school and one private attached to private school.

4.4 Will participants receive any financial or other material benefits because of participation? YES

If YES, what benefits will be offered to participants and why?

As I live in Edinburgh, in the end of the research I will present a small souvenir from this city such as postcards, magnets or bookmarks to every family I visit. It is because I want them to remember this experience and their participation in this study.

Also, I will create a living journal called "A day in the life of [child's name]".

4.5 Are any participants likely to experience difficulties in participating fully in the study? (e.g. due to age, knowledge of English language, physical ability, additional support needs etc). NO

SECTION 5: POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS/RESEARCHER

5.1 Could the research induce any psychological stress or discomfort in the participants? YES

If YES, state the nature of the risk and what measures will be taken to deal with such problems.

It might induce psychological stress or discomfort in children as they are preschool-aged. If I notice such kind of discomfort I will take measures in order to calm down the children. The measures will include but won't be limited to:

* While introducing myself I will try to take my time with children, so that they get to know me; I will ensure that parents do not coerce their child to participate.

* I will try to play games and do their favourite activities, so that they can get used to me.

At any stage of the data collection, if I feel that children are experiencing any kind of discomfort I will finish the visit.

5.2 Does the research require any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures? NO

5.3 Does the research involve the investigation of any illegal behaviours? NO

5.4 Is it possible that this research will lead to the disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect? YES

If YES, indicate the likelihood of such disclosure and your proposed response to this. If there is a real risk of such disclosure triggering an obligation to make a report to Police, Social Work or other authorities, a warning to this effect must be included in the Information and Consent documents.

It is common in Azerbaijan to witness parents smacking or beating their children to control their behaviour. I expect that, although rarely, I might still come across such abuse. If I witness any of such aggressive treatment of a child, which is beyond the norms accepted in the UK, I will contact relevant organizations. I will also inform my supervisors about the incidents and seek professional advice from within the UK if needed.

There are currently no relevant government organizations in Azerbaijan, as domestic child abuse is not seen as a widespread problem, but there are other institutions who provide such care.

UNICEF, a multinational organization has a child protection programme and if needed, I will contact them for advice and assistance. Additionally, there is a local Civil Society Organization - "Azerbaijan Children's Union", which deals with children's rights issues in the country. If needed, I will contact them for advice and assistance as well.

Additionally, it is possible that parents will coerce their children to participate in the research against their will, so I will be alert to this and make clear to both children and parents that children do not need to participate unless they want to.

5.5 Is there any purpose to which the research findings could be put that could adversely affect participants? NO

5.6 Could this research adversely affect participants in any other way? NO

5.7 Could this research adversely affect members of particular groups of people? NO

5.8 Is this research expected to benefit the participants, directly or indirectly? NO

5.9 Will the true purpose of the research be concealed from the participants? NO

5.10 At any stage in this research could researchers' safety be compromised or could the research induce emotional distress in the researchers? YES

If YES, to either or both, give details and outline procedures to be out in place to deal with potential problems.

I have two sisters in Baku and I will always be in touch with them during data collection process. But in particular, I will always check in and check out with my middle sister when I visit families. I will send her short text messages before entering families' homes and upon leaving with my personal mobile phone. Also, I will create a list of families' addresses and keep her informed about the details of the families that I will visit on different dates. I always try not to share my emotional distress with my sisters, that is why in case of emotional distress I will consult with the university's student counselling services.

SECTION 6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT

6.1 Will written consent be obtained from participants? YES

Attachments: (NB you can upload multiple files at the same time)

Administrative consent may be deemed sufficient:

1. for studies where the data collection involves aggregated (not individual) statistical information and where the collection of data presents:
 1. no invasion of privacy;
 2. no potential social or emotional risks;
2. for studies which focus on the development and evaluation of curriculum materials, resources, guidelines, test items, or programme evaluations rather than the study, observation, and evaluation of individuals.

6.2 Will administrative consent (e.g. from a headteacher) be obtained in lieu of participants' consent? NO

6.3 Might any potential participants find it difficult to provide/withhold ongoing informed consent? (e.g. due to age, knowledge of English language, additional support needs, student/professional/dependent relationship with the researcher etc). NO

If YES, please outline the nature of this issue, and explain how participants will be supported during the ongoing consent process.

If NO, give reasons.

I will prepare consent forms for both participant groups, parents and children separately. For the rest of the family members I will add a clause in the consent form saying that parent

has read information leaflet to other family members, including the children or has asked them to read and they agree to participate.

In addition to that clause, I will ask if there is anybody in their family who is unable to give their consent in a verbal or written form. In that case, depending on the disadvantage I will approach them to have their consent in a different way.

SECTION 7: RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN/VULNERABLE ADULTS

Complete this section only if your research involves minors, (i.e. individuals who are less than 18 years) or vulnerable adults.

7.1 All researchers who plan to work directly with children and vulnerable adults should obtain application forms from the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Scheme) See <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/apply/>

Have you obtained the necessary, up to date Disclosure Scotland Clearance? n/a

7.2 In the case of minors participating in the research on an individual basis, will the consent or assent of parents be obtained? YES

If YES, explain how this consent or assent will be obtained. If NO, give reasons.

I will obtain a consent of parents/legal guardians of children in a written form, signed and dated.

7.3 Will the consent or assent (at least verbal) of minors participating in the research on an individual basis be obtained? YES

If YES, what arrangements will be made? If NO, give reasons.

Any kind of engagement and activity with participant children will start by introductions and questions regarding whether they want to participate in proposed activities. The questions will be kept simple and short, so that children understand what they are agreeing to do or what topics they are asked to talk about. I will obtain children's consent forms in a written form as well. For this purpose, I will create consent forms in an easy language so the participant children can understand it when read and explained to them.

SECTION 8: CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF DATA

8.1 Will the research require the collection of personal information from e.g. universities, schools, employers, or other agencies about individuals without their direct consent? NO

8.2 Will any part of the research involving participants be audio/film/video taped or recorded using any other electronic medium? YES

If YES, what medium is to be used and how will the recordings be used?

The research activities will be audio and video recorded. Mini iPad belonging to Moray House School of Education and Sport will be used for video recordings and taking pictures. Audio recorder again belonging to MHSES will be used to record the interviews. The audio recordings will be used for transcription, translation and analysis at a later stage.

Also, families will use their mobile phones to send pictures of their children for "sending photos" activities. But I will get a new sim card for my phone, so the texts and photos they send are not mixed up with my personal data. I will ask parents to use Whatsapp application, so it won't cost them any additional money, because WhatsApp is very popular in Azerbaijan and this application is widely used by parents. Additionally, messages sent through WhatsApp are encrypted end-to-end, which also makes this application quite secure and suitable for sending and receiving private data.

As data will be collected in Azerbaijan, relevant consent forms and any other materials to be used for data collection purposes will be translated into Azerbaijani by me.

Also, in the end of the data collection, audio recordings will be transcribed and translated into English as well as any other data in Azerbaijani will be translated into English by me.

8.3 Who will have access to the raw data?

Only I (the researcher) and my two supervisors will have access to the raw data.

8.4 How will the confidentiality of data, including the identity of participants, be ensured?

The data will be stored in encrypted form. When used for research, thesis or publication purposes, the research participants will be anonymized and referred to only by using anonymous codes.

8.5 Specify where the datafiles/audio/video tapes, etc. will be retained after the study, how long they will be retained and how they will eventually be disposed of.

The audio files will be retained throughout the period of studies and will be permanently deleted within three months of its completion.

8.6 How do you intend for the results of the research to be used?

The results of the research will be used to write up the final thesis and for publications in scientific journals.

8.7 Will feedback of findings be given to participants? YES

If YES, how and when will this feedback be provided?

The main findings of the study will be summarized in lay terms and provided to participants in written form in Azerbaijani, together with a note of gratitude.

8.8 Does your research concern groups which may be construed as terrorist or extremist? NO

8.9 Will your research involve accessing material that could be viewed as promoting terrorism or extremism? NO

SECTION 9: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The University has a draft 'Policy on the Conflict of Interest' (copies available from the Research Support Office). Regarding research the draft states that a conflict of interest would arise in cases where an employee of the University might be

“compromising research objectivity or independence in return for financial or non-financial benefit for him/herself or for a relative or friend.”

The draft policy also states that the responsibility for avoiding a conflict of interest, in the first instance, lies with the individual, but that potential conflicts of interest should always be disclosed, normally to the line manager or Head of Department. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or to cease involvement until the conflict has been resolved may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could result in dismissal.

9.1 Does your research involve a conflict of interest as outlined above? NO

SECTION 10: SIGNATURES

Students Signature: Sabina Savadova

Date: 20/05/2018

Supervisor Signature:

Date:

N.B. Have you attached copies of participant information sheet(s) and consent sheet(s) if appropriate? Have you checked through your application to ensure that you have answered all relevant questions?



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
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Ref: SSAV01062021

Sabina Savadova
Moray House School of Education and Sport

Date: 12th July 2021

Dear Sabina,

Amended title: Living journals: Young children and family digital cultures in Azerbaijan (May 2021, ref: SSAV01062021)

Original title: Exploring young children's (4-5) everyday experiences: Listening to families' stories in Azerbaijan (June 2018, ref: 1609)

The School of Education and Sport Ethics Sub-Committee has now considered your request for an amendment to the ethical approval for the studies detailed in the above application which was previously reviewed and approved by the MHSES Ethics Sub-Committee in June 2018 (ref: 1609) .

We note that the research detailed in the amendment submitted in May 2021 (ref: SSAB01062021) has already taken place, and we are unable to provide retrospective ethical approval for this amendment. Please note that undertaking research without full ethical approval can be viewed as research misconduct, and is a serious issue that can have significant consequences. We have carefully considered your case, and in conversation with your supervisor have some confidence that the research has been undertaken ethically. Additionally, as you are a PhD student engaging in a learning experience we have tried to reach a constructive and sympathetic resolution. However, please be aware that in the future you should take every care to ensure that any research you undertake has full ethical scrutiny and approval.

We have reviewed your amended ethics application (which details your study as conducted) and this letter is to confirm that the research would have met the School Ethics Approval criterion for this particular project, and, had the request for amendment been made prior to data collection, the Sub-Committee would have approved your application.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Fiona O'Hanlon
Convener, School Ethics Sub-Committee

Informed Consent form for parents (including other family members)

Living journals: Young children and digital media practices in Azerbaijani families

Dear Parent

It is important that you read the following information before agreeing to participate in this study. Please take your time to carefully read through the information provided below and discuss with your family members at your convenience. Please do not hesitate to ask me in case you or any other family member needs some clarification or has a question. You will be given a copy of this document as well. Thank you for reading this information and for your time.

Can I first find out about the researcher and the research topic?

- Yes.

I am Sabina Savadova. I am originally from Azerbaijan, but at the moment I am studying towards a PhD degree in Education at the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland, UK. I am doing a small research study to explore children's daily life experiences at home in Azerbaijan. My study aims to explore preschool children's daily experiences through family visits and several kinds of activities with children and their family members.

Why are you approaching me?

- Because, I am approaching families who have 4 or 5 - year-old children attending the selected preschools. In total, 4 to 5 families will be invited to take part in the research from your child's preschool.

Does participation have any incentive?

- Yes.

As I live in Edinburgh, in the end of the research I will present a small souvenir from this city such as a postcard, a bookmark or a magnet. Also, I will create a journal in digital and paper formats with the pictures of your child taken during their participation in the study and present the printed version to you.

Is participation obligatory?

- No! There is no obligation related to your participation in the study at all.

It is your decision whether to take part in this study or not. Even if you do decide to join the study you can withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences for you and your family.

What does our participation include?

- You and your family members' participation in the research includes the following:

Family visits: There will be four family visits in total. Your child will be expected to be present during family visits with whichever adult is home on that day. Parents and other adult family members are not expected to be at home in all the visits. Each family visit will last around an hour. I will discuss the content of each family visit with you during our first meeting.

Living journals: On four different dates and 4 to 5 times on certain pre-arranged times (once during school term and once holiday time) I will ask you to take pictures or 30-second videos of your child with your mobile phone and send to me. I will create a journal for your child depicting those activities which I will also use to discuss with you and your child together and your spouse separately. Furthermore, I will share those journals through my screen sharing with other families in order to stimulate the discussion of their children's daily lives in Azerbaijan. Other families will not be provided with your journals, they will only see them during online discussions of the living journals created for all participant children in the study. Each family will own their own journal in a paper format. Video-recordings of the discussions will not be shared with any other family and they will be stored in an encrypted data storage facility. Only I will have access to them.

I will contact you to arrange all the necessary steps with you and answer your questions.

Are there any possible risks and disadvantages related to our participation?

- No. There are no risks related to your participation in the research.

However, you will be committing some family time to take part in the research. There will be three family visits in general and one online introductory call before I start family visits. Each family visit will take around one hour and online call will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

What if something unexpected happens?

- In that case, please contact and inform me through the means provided in the end of this document.

If you have any concerns and complaints, you can contact my supervisors Lydia Plowman and Holly Linklater . You can write in English or Azerbaijani as you wish. The supervisors will have it translated through a translation agency.

Will our participation in this study be kept anonymous and confidential?

- Yes.

All the information that you and your family members provide, and I collect, will remain strictly anonymous and confidential during the research process and afterwards.

Will we be recorded, and how will these recordings be used?

- Yes.

I will use audio recorder and video recorder to record your participation during family visits. The recordings will be kept confidential in a web storage provided by the university and controlled only by me. Also, your family members' pictures and videos will be kept confidential and safe in that storage. Nobody will have any access to your recordings, pictures or videos or any other information you share with me. I will only give access to my supervisors - Lydia Plowman and Holly Linklater - in case they want to see the data, or I find it important to share it with them for the analysis process.

For the publication purposes, I can use different software to blur the faces in the pictures if you do not want any of your family members' pictures to be seen in any publications and I can show you different techniques I use to blur the faces and you can decide which one you would like me to use. You can also decline your photos to be used in any kind of publication.

Will I have access to the result of this study and what will happen to the results of the research?

- Yes.

I will provide a brief summary of the results to you and the full version of the PhD thesis will be available to public in English. The research results will be used to write a thesis for a PhD degree in Education at the University of Edinburgh. Moreover, using the results I will produce papers and articles for relevant publications in the field. I assure you that your, your child's and other family members' identities will be kept confidential and anonymous in the thesis as well as in any following publications and presentations. In case you do not want to use your children's pictures in the publications I will blur their faces or not use their pictures at all.

Does the study have ethical approval by relevant bodies of organizations?

- Yes. The study has ethical approval by the University of Edinburgh.

Yours sincerely,

Sabina Savadova

Contacts: (email. Skype, phone number)

If you and your family members agree to take part in the study, please sign the informed consent form below.

Signing the informed consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I agree for my child to participate in this research study. I have had a chance to ask my questions and I do not have any further questions.

I understand that my family's and my participation is voluntary, and I will obtain a copy of this form.

Print name and surname

Signature

Date and Time

To be completed by the PARENT/GUARDIAN

Please circle the relevant answer

- Is there anybody in your family who is unable to give their consent in a verbal or written form? YES/NO
- If yes, can you please specify (optional question): _____
- Have you understood everything about the study? YES/NO
- Have you explained basic things from this form to your child and asked his/her verbal consent?..... YES/NO
- Have you read this form for each family member living with you in your house and asked their verbal consent?..... YES/NO
- Are you aware that you, your child and any other family members can withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason and without any consequence? YES/ NO
- Do you know that your family members' identity including yours will be anonymised and remain confidential? YES/ NO

If you have thoroughly read the information provided above and agree for your family to participate in this study, please fill in the following form.

Your child's full name: _____

Your child's date of birth: _____

Preschool's name: _____

Name of your child's group in the preschool: _____

Other family members who live in your house:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Signed by parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Name and Surname: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone number: _____

Place the completed consent form in the envelope and seal it. Do not write any identifiable information on the envelope. Return the form to the researchers directly or via your child.

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix 3: Informed consent form for children

Child Consent form for children

(I will get two kinds of stickers - one smiling face and one sad face and will ask the child to put those stickers in front of the following statements, which I will read out to them one by one)

Family:

Child's name:

Date:

1. Do you want to spend time with me and tell me about what you do during one day?	Insert the sticker
2. Is it ok if your mother takes pictures or short videos of you and sends to me?	Insert the sticker
3. Do you want to show me your favorite toys and take their pictures with me?	Insert the sticker

Also:

- If you do not understand anything I say you can ask me.
- If you do not want to spend time with me anymore, I can stop anytime you want.
- You can go play whenever you want.

If you want, in the box you can write your first name or the initial letter of your first name:

Appendix 4: Interview questions for mothers

Exploring young children's (4-5) everyday experiences: Listening to families' stories in Azerbaijan

Parent (both parents if possible) Interview Questions at home

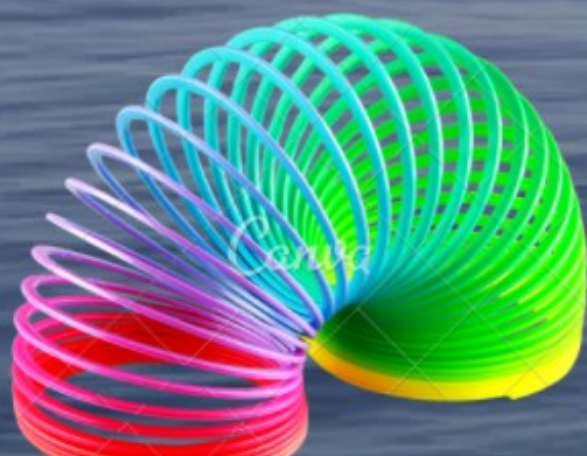
(This is the set of the questions that will be covered during all four family visits. Also, these are the prompt questions and I won't be asking them in this exact sequence.)

Childhood
1. Do you remember your childhood years when you were four or five years old? Any most vivid memories?
2. Do you remember any of your favorite toy or activity from those years?
3. Did you attend preschool? If yes, how do you remember the preschool years? If no, who was your caregiver at that age?
4. If you can compare your childhood with your child's what would you point out as main differences and similarities?
5. What do you want to make different or the same in your child's life?
Memories
6. Do you remember the day your child was born? How do you remember that day? Do you have any pictures or videos?
7. What do you remember from the first times of your child? Like the first smile? The first fall? The first word? Have you recorded any "first time" of your child? How? Which means have you used?
8. Does your child have a photo album? Do you like taking pictures of your child and recording their videos? Where do you keep your child's pictures and videos?
9. Does your child have a favorite toy from his childhood? Favorite activity?
Spending time together
10. What do you like to do most with your child?
11. What did you do last weekend together with your child?
12. Is there any activity that your child likes to do together with both parents? Or only with mummy? Only with daddy?
13. Is there any activity you like to do alone with your child? Like "your" activity with your child?
Play time

14. Does your child like playing alone, with you or with their friends?
15. Does your child have a favorite game? If yes, can you elaborate on them?
16. Does your child have a favorite toy that he takes with himself everywhere? If yes, can you elaborate on them?
17. What kind of toys do you prefer to buy for your child?
Preschool
18. When did your child start the preschool?
19. Do you remember the first day of preschool?
20. How do you get ready for the preschool in the mornings?
21. How does your child like attending the preschool?
22. Does he have a special activity that he likes to do in the preschool? If yes, can you elaborate on them?
23. Is there any technology device or TV in your child's preschool? If yes, what is it? What are they doing with it?
TV
24. What about at home? For example, do you have a TV set at home?
25. Does your child like watching TV? If yes, what kind of programmes? On a weekday for how long does your child watch TV?
26. Do you watch TV together with your child? What kind of programmes? Do you do something to encourage or discourage your child to watch TV?
27. Is there any activity/play that your child relates to TV? If yes, can you elaborate on them.
28. Do your children spend time at their friends or grandparents? When they do how do you keep in touch with them?
Mobile phone/Smartphone
29. For example, do you own a mobile phone? Do you give your mobile phone to your child? If yes, can your child use your mobile phone on their own? Does your child own a mobile phone? If yes, how did they learn to use it?
30. What does he/she usually like to do on the phone?
31. Do you both work? What do you do?
32. Would you like your children to follow your career path? Why yes, why not?
33. Do you use computer/laptops/tablets at work? What about at home?
Computer/Laptop
34. Do you have a computer/laptop at home? To whom does it belong? Does your child have their own computer/laptop?
35. Do you use computer/laptop with them? Do you teach them how to use those devices? If yes, can you elaborate on them.
36. What do they like to do on it? Do they like to use it alone or with somebody? (Can you elaborate on your answer?)
37. Do they learn anything from using computers/laptops? If yes, what kinds of things?
Tablets

<p>38. Do you own a tablet? Does your child use it? If yes, how did they learn it? Since when? Who taught it? How proficient are they? Does your child have their own tablet?</p>
<p>39. Does your child learn anything from using tablets? Have you taught each other something about using tablets?</p>
<p>Online and Offline interactions/practices</p>
<p>40. Do you use/buy any toy or digital technology device for your child? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>41. Compared to choosing toys, books for your child how do you choose technological devices or apps/websites for your child to use?</p>
<p>Preschool</p>
<p>42. Does your child take any technological device that you have at home to preschool? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>43. Does your child use any technological device in preschool? If yes, can you elaborate on them? Do you think they should/should not use any technological device in preschool?</p>
<p>Parent perceptions of technologies</p>
<p>44. In addition to their toys, how do you think your child needs to interact with technological devices on a week day or at weekend?</p>
<p>45. Do you see any negative and positive attributes of technologies to your children? If yes, what are they?</p>
<p>46. Are there times that you feel worried about your child's interactions with technologies? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>Technologies and family time/interactions</p>
<p>47. Is there any influence of technologies on your family's interactions at home? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>48. Do you use any social media platform? Do you have any family group on social media? (prompt: such as Facebook group, WhatsApp group)</p>
<p>Parent mediation</p>
<p>49. Do you think your child uses any of his/her toys or any digital device at home more than needed? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>50. Do you limit your child's use of any toys or digital device, including TV? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>51. Are there any particular toys or online games/activities you encourage your child to do? If yes, can you elaborate on them? Are there similar things you discourage your child to do?</p>
<p>52. Is there any toy or online game/activity that you like to play with your child? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p>53. Are there any rules on the use of any toy or technologies? If yes, can you elaborate on them? Have you installed any control tools on your technology devices? If yes, can you elaborate on them?</p>
<p><i>In the end do you have any questions to me, or any topics you would like to talk about and I didn't mention.</i></p>

Bilal is in his father's car going to his preschool. He is playing with the toy his mum bought for him.



It is an "iPad day". In the morning Elcan and his brother are playing games on iPad. They are using their sister's and father's iPads.



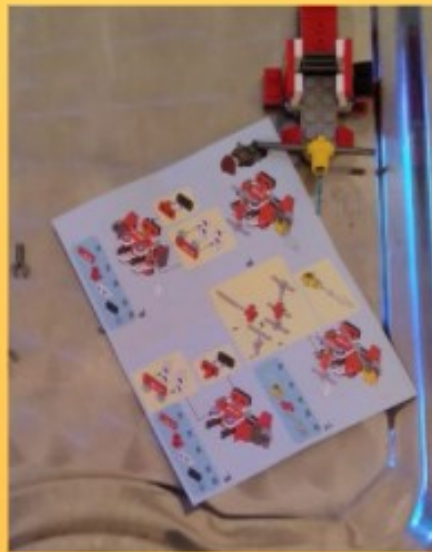
Kamala is finishing up her homework in the car on the way to her preschool.





**Khumar is at her grandmother's.
After doing her homework
she is watching
cartoons on the laptop in the
living room.**

In the evening, he is playing with his new LEGO toy that his mother got for him.



Appendix 6: Publication related to this thesis

A living journals approach for the remote study of young children's digital practices in Azerbaijan

Sabina Savadova

First Published July 27, 2021

Research Article

Citation: Savadova, S. (2021) 'A living journals approach for the remote study of young children's digital practices in Azerbaijan', Global Studies of Childhood. doi: [10.1177/20436106211034179](https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106211034179).

Abstract

This article proposes the living journals method for remotely studying participants, elevating participant agency in the data generation process and minimising or completely removing the need for a researcher to be physically present in the field. Employing this method, the paper describes how the method was used to explore 5-year-old children's digital practices in five families in Azerbaijan. Mothers were assigned as 'proxy' researchers to generate the data following prompts sent through a smartphone application. Mothers' answers were used to create journals, and subsequently, fathers separately, and mothers and children together were requested to interpret their own journals and those of other participant children. Allowing other families to comment on one another's journals further revealed their attitudes towards using digital technologies and enriched the data, emphasising its multivocality and metatextuality. The article describes the living journals method in detail, highlighting its affordances for researchers to generate data from a distance in other contexts. The article also discusses the methodological and empirical contribution of the method to this study about young children's engagements with digital media at home. By decentring the researcher in the data generation process, the method allows researchers to generate both visually and textually complex and rich data. The visual and personal nature of the method goes beyond text-based research accounts to bring the data to life, allowing the researcher to generate multimodal, multivocal, metatextual and multifunctional data.

Keywords

Azerbaijan, living journals method, visual method, young children, digital media

Introduction

This article proposes the living journals method for the remote study of participants, elevating participant agency in the data generation process and minimising or completely removing the need for a researcher to be physically present in the field. Using this method, participants are assigned as 'proxy' researchers in situ, thereby delegating the data generation undertakings in the field ([Plowman, 2017](#)) and simultaneously as interpreters of

the data. I initially developed this method to address the challenges of researching young children's everyday encounters with digital technologies such as computers, laptops, smartphones or tablets at home and beyond to answer the research question: 'How can we study young children's digital practices in a home setting?' Through the living journals method, I asked mothers to send me their 5-year-old children's pictures or 30-second videos with commentary through a widely used application – WhatsApp. I created actual journals from the generated data and used them as prompts to discuss them with family members. The discussions built around the living journals enriched the data with multivocality – listening to all research participants, and metatextuality – generating an additional layer of insights through commentary on the existing text gathered in the previous phases from them and other participant families. This article aims to introduce the living journals method and demonstrate its utility for researchers in social sciences, illustrating its implementation details and affordances rather than focusing on the study findings.

The method draws on contextualist ecocultural theory, emphasising the importance of the environment in which children live and the interlocutors with whom they communicate in their daily lives. The theory provides insights into young children's everyday lives by exploring their everyday activities ([Tudge, 2008](#); [Tudge et al., 2009](#); [Weisner, 2002](#)). The theory, therefore, enabled me to examine children's everyday lives, focusing on their environment and other actors in their lives.

The research setting and focal children

The participant families in the study live in the Republic of Azerbaijan – a transcontinental post-Soviet country situated at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. Azerbaijan is on the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) \(2020\)](#) list of eligible countries to receive Official Development Assistance. Purposeful sampling was employed to recruit participants for the study, expecting that the approach would lead to 'information-rich cases' to find out more about '... issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry' ([Patton, 2015](#): 53). Through my personal and professional networks in Baku, I managed to recruit five families with 5-year-old children, with age being the only compulsory requirement to participate in the study. The following table describes demographic information about the participant children, whose names are pseudonymised ([Table 1](#)). The Socio-Economic Status (SES) is derived from my observations of the participant families, compared against the general condition of the population rather than the definition of statistical agencies, as I had not collected data on income and other

pertinent criteria. A low SES equates to near or below the poverty line, while a middle refers to people who can afford to live comfortably, have their own flat, a car and at least one stable job. In my research project, high SES referred to a family which was comparatively well-off and could afford to send children to prestigious private preschool as well as providing digital devices to all their children.

Table 1. Demographic information on the participant children.

Name of child	Gender	Age in years: months	Socio-economic status	Household composition	Languages prevalent at home	Digital inventory at home
Bilal	Male	5:9	Middle	Parents, paternal uncle	Azerbaijani, Turkish, English	TV, a laptop, 2 smartphones Bilal owned: no device
Elcan	Male	5:2	Higher	Parents, younger brother, older sister	Azerbaijani, English, Russian	2 TVs, 2 Macbooks, 4 iPads, a kindle, 2 smartphones Elcan owned: an iPad
Kamala	Female	5:4	Middle	Parents, paternal grandparents, younger brother	Azerbaijani, Russian	2 TVs, a laptop, a desktop computer Kamala owned: no device
Khumar	Female	5:4	Middle	Parents, younger brother	Azerbaijani, Russian, English	TV, a tablet, 2 smartphones Khumar owned: no device
Yasin	Male	5:0	Middle	Parents, paternal grandmother, younger sister	Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish	TV, a tablet, a laptop, 2 smartphones Yasin owned: an Android tablet

Table 1. Demographic information on the participant children.

Background

Studying young children’s everyday digital practices presents methodological challenges for researchers, who are often inclined towards home visits. To investigate children’s daily lives at home and beyond, researchers tend to conduct extensive observations using digital cameras themselves ([Gillen and Cameron, 2010](#); [Gillen et al., 2007](#)), researchers and parents taking turns in video-recordings ([Aarsand, 2012](#)), trusting cameras to parents and instructing them to record their children ([Given et al., 2016](#)) or trusting children with digital tools to video-record or take pictures of their daily lives ([Clark and Moss, 2011](#); [Poveda et al., 2012](#)).

Irrespective of the variety of existing approaches, home and formal education settings where young children spend their time around their family members, friends and relatives remain largely inaccessible ([Aarsand, 2012](#); [Plowman and Stevenson, 2012](#); [Poveda, 2019](#)). Researchers' presence for an extended period of time in such contexts can cause discomfort for children, especially at a young age ([Poveda, 2019](#)). Hence, researchers turn to digital tools to 'observe' children's daily lives within hard-to-reach contexts at home or beyond.

In addition to digital cameras, smartphones have been used in various studies to generate data ([Clark, 2005](#); [García et al., 2016](#); [Poveda et al., 2012](#); [Rönkä et al., 2017](#); [Teichert 2020](#); [Yamada-Rice, 2017](#)). For example, Mobile Phone Visual Ethnography (MpVE) has been used to study research participants' everyday lives and mobility within marketplaces ([DeBerry-Spence et al., 2019](#)), or the Mobile Instant Messaging Interview (MIMI) to study research participants' everyday use of media ([Kaufmann and Peil, 2020](#)).

One of the most notable methods in a home setting is the mobile phone diaries method developed by Plowman and colleagues in their study of Toys and Technology ([Plowman and Stevenson, 2012](#)). Focusing primarily on parents' viewpoints, the researchers developed a mobile phone diaries approach to study young children's daily activities within and beyond home. The researchers sent text messages to remind mothers to take pictures of children at certain times. The authors labelled the pictures 'experience snapshots' of young children's daily lives ([Plowman and Stevenson, 2012](#): 543). Once they collated the data, the authors turned them into storyboards and asked mothers and children to comment on their activities.

The living journals method draws on the mobile phone diaries method, but a key difference is that participants were invited to provide commentary on others' journals as well as their own, highlighting similarities and differences within the presented daily lives. Furthermore, the living journals unified a mixture of multimodal data: pictures, videos, audio and text messages, and alongside the rest of the data, they were also coded and analysed.

The main focus was on young children's daily digital practices and their interactions with digital technologies within their natural settings. In this vein, Experience-Sampling Method (ESM) was attractive to be applied to and integrated with digital technology use. ESM allows researchers to document individuals' lives in situ and specific contexts ([Hektner et al., 2007](#)). The method preceded the current technological boom and used to be administered by collecting participants' self-reports within the repeated timeframes using texts, pagers,

digital tools or applications ([Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 2014](#)). ESM has not been used in education research broadly (e.g. [Plowman and Stevenson, 2012](#); Rönkä et al., 2017). However, utilising modern digital tools and involving participants as proxy researchers can offer educational researchers opportunities to adapt the method to study participants' lives in situ, minimising their presence in the field. In this research project, the method helped study young children's individual lives because they were ' . . . "behind closed doors" (literally and figuratively) and because participants are not always aware of patterns in the way contexts shape their own behaviour' ([Zirkel et al., 2015](#): 9). The following section provides details of the living journals method by describing its phases.

Details of the living journals method

The living journals method was the second step of the research design in the study that explored young children's interactions with digital technologies in a home setting in Azerbaijan. The data generation commenced with almost 3 months of fieldwork in Baku, Azerbaijan, where three visits were conducted to each of the five participant families from October till December 2018. After the 3 months of completing fieldwork in Azerbaijan, I continued the data generation process through the living journals method in the UK, starting in March 2019. The living journals method includes three phases, and each phase is described in detail in the narrative below. Overall, in this study, implementing the living journals method required almost 10 months.

Phase 1

In the first phase, I asked mothers to send me pictures or 30-second videos of their children, prompted by my messages at certain times of the day through WhatsApp application. I further requested that commentary be added based on the questions: *Where is your child? Who is your child with? What is your child doing? Why is your child doing that?* In the second round of the data generation, I added one more question as I grew more interested in the affective engagements of the children: *How is your child feeling?* In most cases, I immediately confirmed to mothers the receipt of responses. The data generation process in the first phase continued for a week, running twice throughout the year, once during term time, in April, and another time during school holidays, in August.

The living journals method is situated within the ecocultural theory ([Tudge, 2008](#)) that is often associated with cross-cultural research and visual methods for gathering data on everyday life. I was interested in children's ecologies, and posing the above-mentioned

questions were beneficial in further examining their daily lives. I intentionally avoided focusing on any particular activity and explained to mothers that I was interested in their children's daily lives. As a result, I gained insights into children's ecology of daily activities, revealing digital practices naturally occurring in situ.

Phase 2

In the second phase, I combined pictures, texts, still images from video clips and voice responses and created a living journal for each child in digital and paper formats. While compiling each child's journal, I paid particular attention to translating and transcribing mothers' commentaries accurately. I used almost all the photos and videos, as well as a wide range of stills from videos in the journals. Often, there were several pictures in the same setting with a slight variation. In such cases, I used two of the most divergent versions, excluding the rest.

In the mothers' commentaries, every piece of text and transcription of mothers' audio messages were used. I used the children's favourite colours and particular interests as themes to personalise respective journals (Figure 1, children's journal covers and sample journal pages). The videos were playable in the digital versions, but the paper format used stills from the videos.

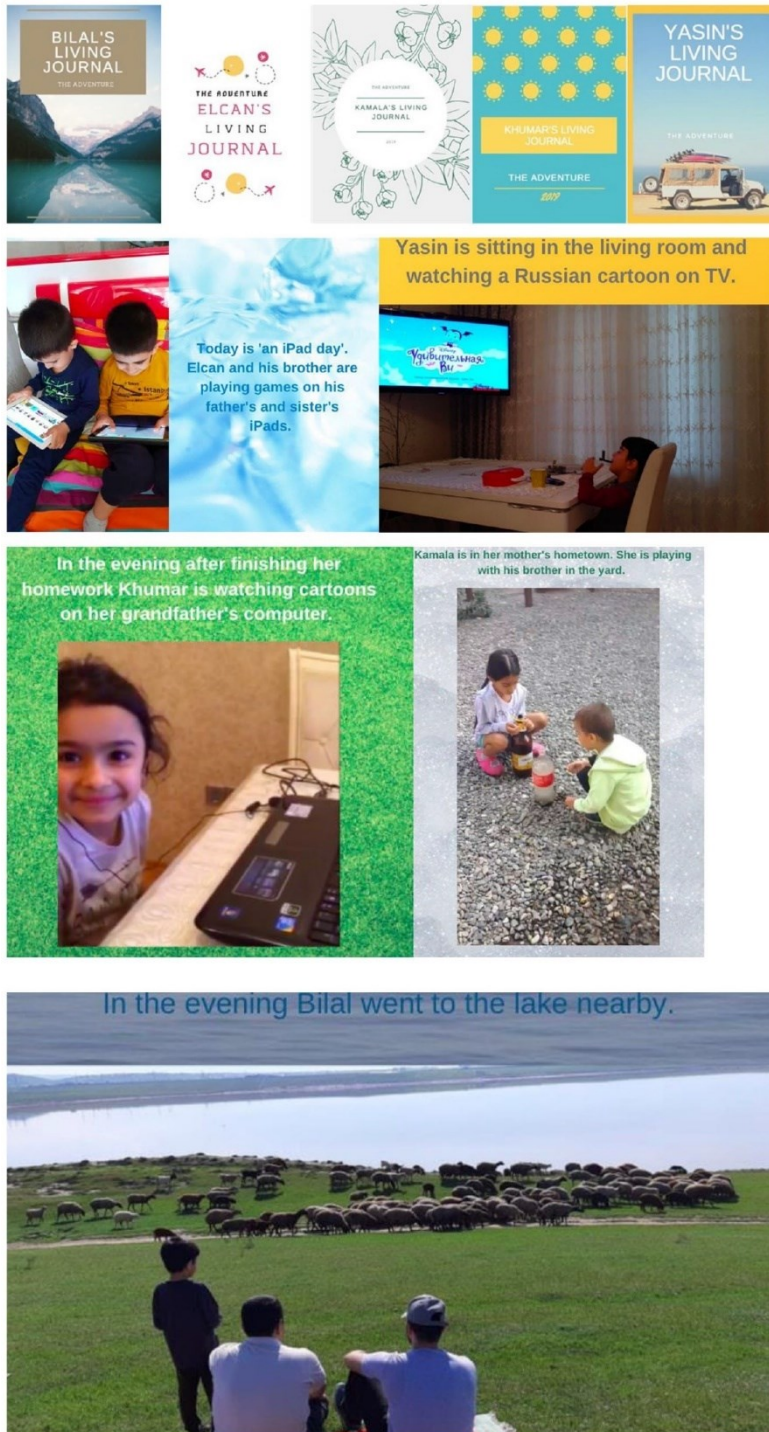


Figure 1. Children’s journal covers and several sample pages from the journals.

The journals were multifunctional on their own; they were analysed as data alongside other data in the research study, and they were themselves research output, which was also shared with participants as memorabilia. I sent each child’s journal to their families in a

paper format but used the digital format for screen-sharing during online discussions of other families' journals with names pseudonymised, thus avoiding unnecessary circulation of sensitive information. I requested mothers' and children's consent prior to sharing their journals with fathers. The absence of fathers from the data generation process necessitated such renewal of consent to avoid unwittingly disclosing information that could have been implicitly shared with me by mothers, be it about themselves or the children. Moreover, I acquired families' consent prior to showing their journals in a digital format to other families.

The response rate to the prompts differed across families: two families engaged at 50% and below – the rest at 88% and above (Table 2). The overall engagement rate across all families was 73%. Having the freedom to respond according to their preferences and opportunities potentially contributed to the high engagement rate. The lower engagement rate is characteristic for mothers who were in full-time employment during the data generation process, affording them fewer opportunities to respond to prompts. Mothers sent their commentaries mostly in the form of voice messages. This was a common practice of using WhatsApp in Azerbaijan and was likely seen as a more efficient way to convey information than typing text. Furthermore, as it is seen in the figure on response rates, I have also added the quantity of the mothers' multimodal responses. Multimodality of responses in this study was related to the variety of the data, such as visual (pictures and short video clips), auidial (audio messages) and textual (text messages).

Table 2. Responses of mothers to prompts, organised by the name of the participant child.

	Responses to prompts (max. 24)	Response rate (%)	Number of photos	Number of videos (total duration)	Number of text messages	Number of voice messages (total duration)
Bilal	12	50	21	0	60	1 (23seconds)
Kamala	9	38	8	1 (30seconds)	27	3 (41 seconds)
Khumar	21	88	23	21 (11 minutes 40 seconds)	69	2 (18seconds)
Elcan	23	96	53	15 (7 minutes 40 seconds)	79	18 (8minutes 22seconds)
Yasin	22	92	52	1 (1 minute 50seconds)	98	8 (1 minute 08seconds)
Total	87	73	157	38	333	32 minutes

Table 2. Responses of mothers to prompts, organised by the name of the participant child.

Phase 3

The third phase of the data generation process comprised online discussions around the created living journals with mothers and children together and fathers separately. Since mothers and children had been present in the initial process of data generation, their further joint involvement in the research did not present any conflict. Involving fathers separately was motivated predominantly by ethical concerns as described earlier, as well as by methodological imperative – their initial absence provided me with a fresh perspective on the children’s activities. This phase was a further and vital stage in the living journals method and added multivocality and metatextuality to the method.

During the initial steps of the data generation for the study, I had observed that each family had its own unique set of digital practices, so I sought to further my understanding of their perspectives. To avoid the discussions being limited to their own practices, I shared the journals of other families to gauge the attitudes towards mediation of digital technology use. Sharing the journals across families also helped me discuss practical examples of digital technology use that were uncommon to individual families’ digital culture. The tangibility of the living journals further contributed to recalling and discussing daily activities described in the journals. The living journals were informative to all participants: in addition to their own, they had a chance to study practices of four other families’ everyday lives within the same cultural context. This approach was further motivated by the observation that parents find it more practical to reflect on their children’s daily routines rather than respond to questions on abstract principles of childrearing ([Harkness and Super, 2006](#)). Overall, the living journals discussions differed from standard interviews and sharing the journals across families strengthened multivocality and metatextuality of the living journals method.

Data analysis

The variety in the types of data the living journals required a flexible tool for analysis. In my study, I used inductive thematic analysis ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#); [Nowell et al., 2017](#)) to explore the various types of data of each case. Each family was treated as a case whose data was initially analysed separately, based on the research foci of the study, and then across cases ([Stake, 2006](#)). The inductive thematic analysis allowed me to reveal and analyse opinions of various research participants, highlighting respective changes and similarities in their perspectives within each case as well as across cases ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#)). As in

the case of the analysis of the visual and textual data gathered during the family visits through observations and interviews, I employed an iterative approach for the analysis of the created living journals, adapted from the work of [Miles et al. \(2019\)](#) ([Figure 2](#)). During the analysis process, I revisited each step multiple times.

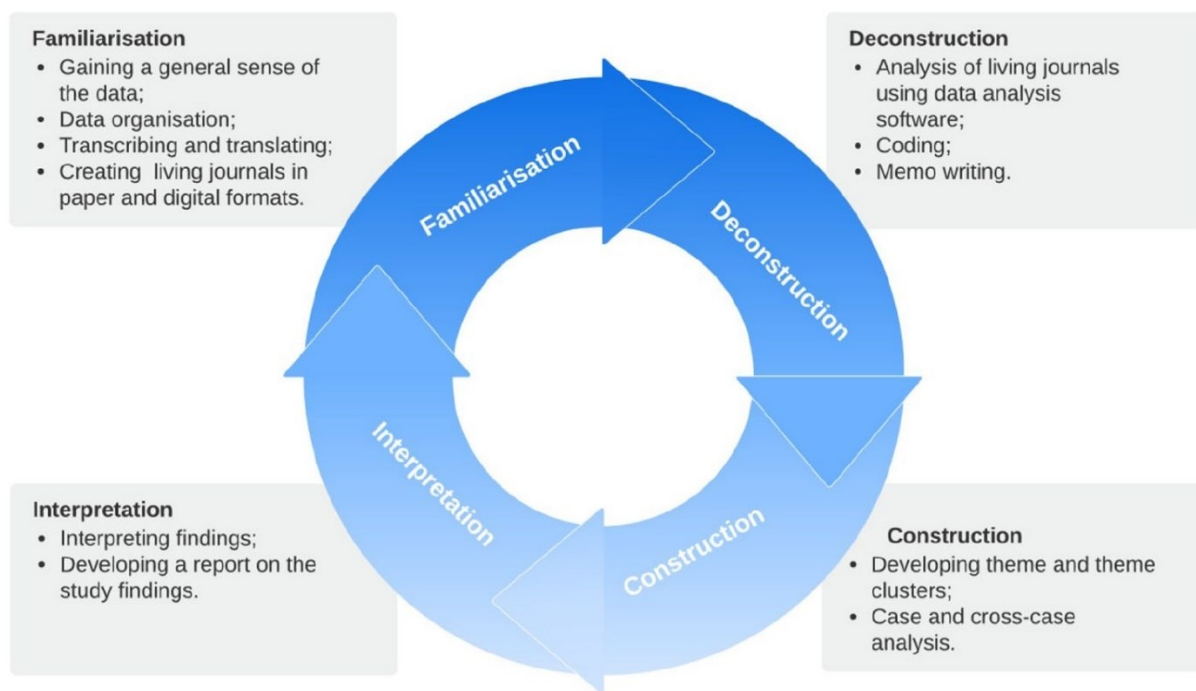


Figure 2. Data analysis process (sequence adapted from [Miles et al., 2019](#)).

In the *Familiarisation* stage, I became acquainted with the raw data before analysing it exhaustively. Additionally, living journals were created in digital and paper formats. The familiarisation stage was instrumental for making an initial sense of the data and taking note of initial emerging themes ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#)). Subsequently, based on this stage and guided by my research question, I constructed initial themes related to young children’s daily activities with digital media, such as ‘using a tablet to learn a language’, ‘entertainment with iPad’ and ‘reward screen time’.

In the *Deconstruction* stage, the primary analysis was carried out, where I conducted initial and detailed coding of the journal data. I developed codes inductively as they emerged from the data, following the research aim and question. In this stage, I was able to identify codes and code clusters that were omnipresent in all cases. Examples of this would be: ‘expectations from digital devices’, ‘parent influence on the device use’ and ‘child agency’.

Furthermore, memo-writing helped me keep track of the ideas emerging from the coding used in developing themes.

In the *Construction* stage, the developed codes and code clusters were further enhanced across cases and transformed into themes. The application of rigorous thematic analysis revealed the differences and similarities across cases, and this urged me to stay alert to similarities and differences observed in all other cases in order to try and establish whether themes observed in one family were repeated or refuted across others.

Ethical considerations

The employment of visual methods, the involvement of young children and using homes as a research site (Plowman, 2015), as well as the use of social media (WhatsApp) for generating data, all contributed to the ethical complexities of developing the living journals method. All ethical procedures were in line with the guidelines of the research association relevant to the field of study (BERA, 2018). All names were pseudonymised. All parents and children agreed to use children's unaltered visuals in academic work disseminated publicly, such as conference presentations and publications.

Parents' and children's consent and assent to participate in this study were regarded as a continuous process (Arnott et al., 2020; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Flewitt, 2005; Russell and Barley, 2020; Wall, 2017). Firstly, during family visits, I acquired children's and parents' consents for conducting the living journals method. In each family visit in Baku in the autumn of 2018, I allotted some time to explain the specifics of the living journals to parents and children. Upon my return to the UK, starting from March 2019, I first reached out to mothers through the WhatsApp messaging application for their consent. After receiving their permission, I recorded a short video about the living journals approach for the children, where I reminded them of the method and what they and their mothers were invited to do. I sent video messages to mothers through WhatsApp and asked them to invite their children to watch the video recording together. In the video recording, I explained everything about the living journals method in practical terms and with examples to make it easier for children to understand. The children were also invited to send me pictures or videos of themselves, provided that they were willing and parents allowed them to do so. I was aware of the possible power relations at home and mothers' decisions on allowing their children to send me pictures or videos using their phones (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). Children responded to renew their consent to participate in the living journals method through their

mothers. Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to engage in direct communication with children. However, given their consent on the method during the family visits, I accepted their assent conveyed through their mothers, after which I started the data generation process – the first phase of the method.

Due to mothers' involvement as proxy researchers and my physical absence from the field, I was unable to observe children's nonverbal responses to the research process (Einarsdóttir, 2007). Still, I stayed alert to the videos and pictures I was receiving after each prompt. Additionally, I regularly asked mothers whether their children ever objected to being recorded. I was prepared to ask parents to stop the data generation if I felt any discomfort in the visuals or heard anything to this effect from mothers. It was more important that children were satisfied and happy to have their mothers take their pictures or record videos than to generate useful data for the method (Flewitt, 2005). The pictures and videos that followed also indicated that the children were aware of what was happening, and this, in its own right, warrants the assumption that children did not view this method as a kind of 'surveillance' of their daily lives or an imposition. On the contrary, sharing activities with someone they had previously met at home seemed enjoyable for children, and establishing trusting relationships with them during family visits helped me ensure this (Flewitt, 2005; Wall, 2017). Also, parents were not doing anything out of the ordinary, as they constantly carried their phones. Additionally, the prompts asked for nothing that deviated from what was already an established practice in their everyday life (Plowman and Stevenson, 2012).

Throughout the living journals method, I have been mindful of the mothers' involvement in the selection of the pictures. I was aware of the fact that the mothers had sole authority to decide what to 'show' to the researcher and what to disclose about their children's lives (Barker and Smith, 2001). Like any other parent in the world, participant parents wanted to show a good side of their children's daily activities. The notion of 'good representation of Azerbaijani children in the western world' also added to this desire. Mothers had full control and ownership of the data they were sending after each prompt or later that day, and they were also vocal in their messages about their children's daily activities, emphasizing what they thought was good or bad for their children. For example, there were three instances where mothers sounded frustrated with some of their children's activities. The mother who took a picture of her child playing outside 2 days in a row expressed her frustration in the commentary, saying: 'no reading books, no studying'. I took note of those instances for

analysis of the data. In line with other similar studies (Flewitt, 2005; Plowman, 2017; Plowman and Stevenson, 2012), my stance towards this issue has always been rooted in its recognition. Rather than discarding the data based on this reason, I have instead embraced it as mothers' aspirations of what they would have wanted to see their children doing instead, which in itself constituted informative data.

In the second phase, before creating the actual journals, children's renewed consents were sought through their parents. I asked children and mothers if there were particular visuals they did not want me to include in their journal. All parents agreed with the use of all the visuals and messages. They also explicitly expressed no objection from their children. Children's consent was sought for all activities due to several reasons: not only were their pictures and videos taken by mothers, but I was also using their visuals to create journals, which would be available in a physical form for themselves, parents and perhaps their guests. This was particularly emphasised as their lives and individual activities were the main focus of discussions with fathers (separately) and with mothers and children (together).

In the third phase of the living journals method, prior to showing journals to fathers and other families, I returned to parents and children for renewing their consent. As noted earlier, this was a cautious approach on my part, pre-empting potential conflict that might have arisen by sharing this information with the fathers. After acquiring proper consent from each family, I decided to show the journals of other families with pseudonymised names through screen-sharing only, which in turn was necessitated by the sensitivity of the living journals data.

Fathers were invited to discuss the living journals separately from their spouses and children. This decision was motivated by the fact that fathers had not participated in the generation of the data for the journals. They first saw the visual and verbal data after the journals had been completed and printed. When invited to comment on the pictures and videos, they had a fresh perspective on their children's activities. As intended, discussing the journals separately helped them speak freely, as opposed to feeling constricted by spouses or children's subjective interpretation of the journals. During discussions, they interpreted their own children's activities and commented on others with great interest and attention. The richness of the activities in the five families' lives allowed research participants, in particular fathers, to have a glimpse of other children's lives and recognise or even

sometimes discover their own children's day-to-day activities by analysing them in light of other families' daily practices.

Discussion

Digital technologies are rapidly being embedded in young children's everyday lives ([Arnott et al., 2019](#); [Marsh et al., 2005](#); [Rideout, 2013](#)). Consequently, researchers face new challenges in trying to capture young children's encounters with new digital technologies in their own setting. In this vein, researchers are encouraged to develop new approaches, mixing visual with verbal in their methodologies ([Yamada-Rice, 2017](#)). Considering the importance of studying young children's daily digital practices within their natural settings and realising challenges and resource-intensiveness of ethnographic fieldwork, the living journals method offers researchers the possibility to use smartphones to generate data remotely by assigning participants as proxy researchers.

As mentioned above, the living journals approach extensively draws on the mobile phone diaries method ([Plowman and Stevenson, 2012](#)). In this section, I further elaborate on other similar methods while trying to situate the living journals method among them together with its strengths and caveats. Another well-known method to study how digital technologies influence young children's (0–3) and their families' lives was called 'A Day in the Life' approach, developed by [Gillen and Cameron \(2010\)](#). In the study, the authors video-recorded one full day or at least 6 hours of seven 2.5-year-old girls' lives in different countries: United States, Canada, Peru, UK, Italy, Turkey and Thailand. The authors also combined the recordings with interviews and discussions with families, and other methods to describe young children's daily lives.

Earlier than that, [Tobin et al. \(1989\)](#) developed Video-Cued-Ethnography (VCE) in their study of 'Preschool in Three Cultures' to examine children's daily lives in a preschool setting in three different countries – Japan, China and the United States. The authors identified a school setting in each country, spent time there and video-recorded a full day in each school. They then edited those videos into short clips and showed them to participants in respective schools as well as across schools. The authors thus were able to identify patterns within and across schools in three different cultures. A decade later, in 2009, Tobin and a new team of colleagues conducted a follow-up of their study, where the authors returned to the same preschools to study the changes in the settings and practices ([Tobin et al., 2009](#)).

Researching young children's daily lives is considered challenging, even though the importance of including young children's voices in research studies related to their lives has always been the subject of researchers' interest (Clark, 2011; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). The above-cited research studies have mainly relied on parents' or caregivers' opinions on the children's lives while providing a rationale for their deliberate decision to select this approach. An alternative approach is to see children as 'experts in their own lives' (Langsted, 1994). Through participation in research, children can communicate and make meaning out of the matters concerning their daily lives. Basing their reasoning on this thesis, Clark and her colleagues developed a 'strength-based' framework called the Mosaic approach to listen to and include young children's voices in the data generation about their lives through multiple methods such as tours, map-making and photography, with the variety of it all making the approach Mosaic (Clark, 2005; Clark and Moss, 2011). The Mosaic approach amplifies children's voices by giving them digital tools to record themselves; however, this approach was not suitable in my research context. During family visits in Azerbaijan, I observed that most families had adopted a restrictive mediation style towards their children's digital technology use. Therefore, it was not appropriate for me to provide children with a digital device and ask them to record their daily activities themselves, leading me to seek alternative solutions.

With the living journals method, I took another approach to include children's voices in the data generation process by offering them an opportunity to send me pictures or videos of themselves through their mothers in the video message I sent to them. I emphasised to children the importance of gaining their mother's permission before doing so. My motivation was to remain cautious and not interfere with any power balance between children and their mothers at home in terms of digital technology use. Three of the participant children sometimes asked their mothers to record videos and take a picture of certain activities or events to send to me, although these occurrences were not frequent enough to state that children's voices were prominent in the first phase of the data generation for the living journals. To address this issue, I further revised my approach and invited children and their mothers to check the journals and comment on them in the third phase of data generation. Speaking to them together was also driven by my interest in the anticipated discussion that would emerge from the generated data, in which mothers and children had participated together. Children seemed quite interested in the journals, and together with their mothers, they joined the discussions. In turn, this contributed to

enriching metatextuality and multivocality of the living journals method through children's active participation.

Overall, the inclusion of family members' voices in the data interpretation process accentuates the multivocal aspect of the living journals method. This enabled the parents to reveal and interpret insights into their family lives and allowed me to explore my main focus – children's interactions with technologies – through the voices of fathers, mothers and children, shifting 'the anthropological gaze from the researcher observing and interpreting informants to informants observing and explaining themselves' (Tobin, 2019:13). In contrast with the Video-Cued Ethnography and the 'A Day in the Life' methods, the living journals method is distinct in that it avoids the constant presence of video cameras in the families' everyday lives, which in turn contributes to minimising the researchers' visibility and their potential influence on the research setting.

As explained earlier in the article, the living journals method is primarily inspired by the mobile diaries method by Plowman and Stevenson (2012). Additionally, other methods described in this section have influenced its development at different stages. In the following section I further elaborate on the significance of the method focusing on the four Ms: *multimodality*, *multivocality*, *metatextuality* and *multifunctionality* of the living journals.

Significance and caveats of the method

First and foremost, researchers do not need to be in the field when using the living journals method. I was able to generate data twice at different periods of children's lives from afar. I remained a researcher throughout the process; however, my role was minimised as mothers were asked to be proxy researchers in the field. Mothers' assuming this responsibility also enriched the data, although the content they decided to share with me needed further interpretation. These decisions were carrying meta-information on their views of children's engagements with digital technologies as well as their daily lives. Therefore, neither the researcher nor the researched needed to change their context, and studying the children's daily lives in their own settings contributed to the authenticity of the generated data. The data presented to the research participants for commentary was collated but not altered, and the journals were tangible research data generated from, by and about participants. In general, the method's visual and personal nature goes beyond text-based research accounts to bring the data to life. The method allowed me to generate *multimodal*, *multivocal*, *metatextual* and *multifunctional* data.

To elaborate, the participants have the freedom of deciding how to communicate the messages back to the researcher. Therefore, the data generated through the living journals method can be *multimodal*. In my study, this included textual (text messages), visual (pictures and short video clips) and spoken (voice messages) information, making the data both informative and visually telling. The method allowed me to gather reflections of fathers, mothers and children, which contributed to increasing the *multivocality* of the research project. The multitude of voices enriched the gathered data, as well as the interpretation process. The method incorporates already gathered data into the next phase of data generation. In the case of my research project, the participants were offered to reflect on the commentary they had provided, as well as on the text generated by other families through similar means. Such an additional layer of interrogating participants' attitudes turns the final dataset into a *metatextual* product. Furthermore, in this particular study, participants across all families found other children's daily activities interesting. All of the participant mothers noted that the journals were also a great keepsake to be shared with extended family members and friends. Thus, the created living journals are *multifunctional*: they contain data to analyse, serve as prompts for further data generation and represent research outputs that can be produced as part of the research.

Based on the discussion above, I summarise the potential benefits of the method for researchers:

- (i) Generate data remotely without having to be in the field;
- (ii) Decentre and deprivilege the role of the researcher by inviting participants to act as proxy researchers in the field to generate the data;
- (iii) Better capture research participants' daily activities or other phenomena of interest in their natural settings;
- (iv) Enrich the data description by eliciting the participants' interpretations of the raw data;
- (v) Present the generated data in a material form that serves as a prompt for participants to engage in discussion;
- (vi) The generated data is truly rich and diverse: producing multivocality, metatextuality, multimodality and multifunctionality.

Above all, the first point in the list is particularly significant in the current circumstances when the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The living journals method enables researchers to generate data remotely, minimising or completely removing the need to be

physically present in the field. I conducted the study and developed the living journals method well before the pandemic, but the current context makes it even more suitable for conducting research remotely. Having had the opportunity to meet face-to-face before commencing the data collection aided in establishing trusting relationships with the participants; however, the method could be replicated with considerable success without the initial meetings in person.

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