12

SIBLINGS ACCOMPLISHING TASKS TOGETHER

Solicited and Unsolicited Assistance When Using Digital Technology

Sandy Houen, Susan Danby, and Pernilla Miller

Introduction

Children are immersed in digital worlds at home with family members, including parents and siblings. They engage in a range of digital practices that include social gaming, information searching, and digital communication such as video conferencing. Almost 20 years ago, Sonia Livingstone (2002) recognised the home as a site for digital media culture and, since then, the global phenomenon of family use of digital technologies has permeated many aspects of family life. It is nearly impossible nowadays to observe everyday family practices without observing family members engaging in digital technologies (Ayaß, 2012). As such, studies of everyday family life involve taking into account the social interactions of family members with each other and with digital technologies. ‘Close looking’ at digital practices in family life makes possible detailed investigations of particular digital cultural practices as they unfold moment by moment (Marsh & Bishop, 2012).

In everyday life, people help each other to accomplish tasks that may be problematic or unachievable without assistance. Kendrick and Drew (2016) define assistance as “actions by one person that may resolve troubles or difficulties in the progressive realisation of a practical course of action by another” (p. 2). For example, shopkeepers help customers to locate items on the shelf; parents assist toddlers to clean their teeth; siblings help each other when playing games. Young people, older adults, strangers, peers, children, or family members can provide assistance. This chapter illuminates how sibling assistance is sought, offered, provided, and managed in relation to a task underway. The focus is how siblings recruit and provide assistance to each other, showing how assistance is managed in situ as they engage with digital technology. It contributes new understandings about how siblings seek assistance from each other, identifying the nature of the assistance provided, and the influences of this assistance in relation to their continued engagement with digital technology and with each other.

Studies of family interactions involving digital technologies have focussed mostly on informal relational networks undertaken through digital media (Marsh et al., 2005; Marsh, Hannon, Lewis, & Ritchie, 2015; Plowman, Stephen, & McPake, 2010). For example, Tiilikainen and Arminen (2017) explored how family members negotiate their expectations and behaviours within the family interactional space of digital media practices. Even with the rapid and
worldwide uptake of digital practices in families, there is a comparative absence of studies that seek to understand the actual practices of young children’s participation with digital technologies and others in family settings. There are studies that investigate intergenerational everyday practices, often involving parents, children, and grandparents, including family members negotiating digital game play (Aarsand & Aronsson, 2009) and the use of Skype to maintain family contact (Busch, 2018). There are also studies of older children, usually friends, engaged in digital gaming (Piirainen-Marsh, 2012).

Understanding sibling relationships with each other offers the potential for learning about how to co-exist in a shared social world, and often provides the first contexts for learning about social and cognitive worlds (Howe & Recchia, 2014). Absent from many studies of digital life in families is a specific focus on the digital activities of siblings, although there are exceptions. For example, an EU Kids Online study investigated the impact of sibling status to find that older siblings had the effect of increasing the scope and number of online activities with some consequences for exposure to risk online (Olafsson, Green, & Staksrud, 2017). Young children, including siblings, engage and interact with digital technology such as digital gameplaying and edutainment software in order to aid task completion (Danby, Evaldsson, Melander, & Aarsand, 2018; Davidson, 2012). Davidson (2012) shows how “help was mutually accomplished” (p. 196) through siblings using directives to (i) complete a specific action and (ii) provide a list of instructions to achieve upcoming problematic tasks. The social nature of digital activities means that children coordinate their actions to accomplish a task at hand, such as working together to destroy enemies, to enter passwords to enable game play, and to help an inexperienced player engage with the game (Danby et al., 2018). Instructions are a key resource for children, as is collaboration and monitoring others’ actions to find a solution. Without an adult present, siblings can experiment and explore the possibilities of digital devices and games, in ways not possible when an adult is present. These digital activities promote independent exploration through use of trial and error, copying and demonstrating (Plowman, McPake, & Stephen, 2008; Wong, 2015). Studies of these activities reveal children’s competence in providing assistance when navigating problems associated with using digital technologies. In this chapter, knowledge of young children, who are siblings, and their use of digital technology is extended by describing how they offer assistance, and manage that assistance, as they engage with digital technologies in their home environment.

The approach taken is one that recognises children’s in situ competences. Competence, from an ethnomethodological perspective, refers to the understanding that children are “competent interpreters in the world” (Mackay, 1991, p. 31). Ethnomethodological and conversation analysis approaches (Heritage, 1984; Sacks, 1992) reveal strategies that siblings use to support each other’s digital activities. Ranging in age from two to nine years, siblings at times were participants in a mutually shared digital activity; at other times, while engaged in their own digital activities, they intervened to offer support to their sibling. For instance, there were examples of siblings calling out for help, and receiving solicited (or unsolicited) guidance through verbal and non-verbal means. Also, strategies of problem solving and collaboration were evident across these social interactions.

Revisiting Assistance

In social interaction, assistance involves “recruitment” (Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 1). Persons requiring assistance can seek it, while others can volunteer if they infer that help to accomplish a practical action is required. Recruitment of assistance can occur through direct and indirect means, using verbal and semiotic strategies (Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 1). Kendrick and Drew (2016, p. 11) conceptualise a continuum of recruitment ranging from direct to indirect methods.
Direct ways are usually explicit verbal requests (e.g., “Can you please get the suitcase down from the top shelf for me?”) and reports of trouble (e.g., “I can’t reach the suitcase”). Trouble alerts (e.g., “Oh No!”) fall between direct and indirect methods as they do not explicitly describe the trouble but allude to problems completing a task at hand. Conversely, indirect ways are not overt and can involve hints, embodied displays of trouble, and others’ foreseeing trouble. These indirect ways can prompt an offer or the provision of help (Haugh, 2017; Kendrick & Drew, 2016).

The Study

The data are drawn from approximately 200 hours of video recordings of children’s situated activities in home and school collected as part of an Australian longitudinal ethnographic study that investigated young children’s use of digital technologies (Danby, 2017; Danby & Davidson, 2019; Danby et al., 2018). Families were purposely selected to include those residing in urban and regional areas of Queensland, and families with different income and educational backgrounds. Parents were asked to video record their children’s and family’s activities while engaging in digital technologies.

This chapter focuses on sibling interactions from three families as they use digital technology. The siblings are of different age combinations (family one – children aged five and three years; family two – children aged nine and five years; family three – children aged three years and 18 months) and are recorded trying to accomplish an activity that was not pre-determined, rather the activity evolved as the interaction unfolded. Data include dyad sibling interactions that are (i) working cooperatively to progress through levels of a game on the iPad (family one), (ii) collaborating to win a virtual game of tennis (family two), and (iii) locating the cartoon character Peppa Pig (family three).

Conversation analysis was employed to examine data extracts from these families. Conversation analytic research involves creating detailed transcripts that capture verbal (e.g., words spoken, prosody, etc.) and non-verbal aspects of talk (e.g., gaze, gestures, etc.). While these fine-grained transcripts might be difficult to follow at first, their inclusion is necessary due to the analytic claims asserted in the chapter and for critiquing these claims. Table 12.1 details the key transcription conventions employed in this chapter (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017; Jefferson, 2004). Further explanation about conversation analytic transcription practices can be found in published papers (cf. Hepburn & Bolden, 2017; Jefferson, 2004). All participant names in the transcripts are pseudonyms.

The next section presents analyses of five data fragments. Fragment 1, Fragment 2 and Fragment 3 focus on how siblings offer and manage unsolicited assistance, and Fragment 4 and Fragment 5 focus on solicited assistance. Together, these show how siblings manage offers of and requests for assistance and what this means for accomplishing tasks together using digital technology.

Unsolicited Assistance

This section presents three fragments to explore how unsolicited assistance is given. Fragment 1 and Fragment 2 are from an extended interaction between siblings from family one (Tina – five years of age and Trae – three years of age) playing the game Spider: Rite of the Shrouded Moon, which had been downloaded from the App Store. During this interaction, Tina and Trae are lying side by side, each have their own device and play the same game, but separately, not interactively (see Figure 12.1).
Table 12.1 Key transcription conventions employed in this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tin:</td>
<td>Denotes speaker label: Tina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tra:</td>
<td>Denotes speaker label: Trae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((swipes Trae’s screen))</td>
<td>Double parentheses represent physical actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin: [turn on that]</td>
<td>Square brackets indicate overlap – either an overlap of talk or an overlap of physical action. Left square brackets indicate the onset of the overlap and the right indicating the offset of the overlap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tra: [((lifts arm]</td>
<td>&gt;when&lt; (0.2) ↑aargh::: A number within parentheses refers to silence, measured to the nearest tenth of a second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know. A full stop indicates falling intonation at the end of a unit of talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>got ya feast first, A comma indicates slightly rising intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tennis racquet, ↑ you’re six points more ↓ me ↓ arrows pointing downwards indicates an intonation dip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maa:arm? A question mark indicates rising intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ar hum_ An underscore symbol indicates level intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oh NO! An exclamation mark indicates animated tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>light Underlining indicates emphasis in the talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argh:::</td>
<td>Colons indicate elongation of the immediately preceding sound. Multiple colons indicate prolonged elongation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(I don’t) Words encased in single parentheses indicate the transcriber’s best guess of an utterance that was unclear to the transcriber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>that way</em></td>
<td>Talk encased in degree symbols indicates whisper talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;ar hum_&gt;</td>
<td>Talk encased in &lt;&gt; indicates talk that is spoken slowly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;ar hum_&lt;</td>
<td>Talk encased in &gt;&gt; indicates talk that is spoken quickly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12.1 Tina and Trae lying side by side playing with their own devices. 
Source: see Acknowledgements.
The game involves controlling a spider that searches for, captures, and eats bugs. The first fragment occurs approximately eight minutes into the interaction when Trae’s spider is trapped in a cage. He tries three times to release the spider without success. Although he does not explicitly ask for help to rescue the spider, Tina responds to Trae’s embodied display of trouble (Kendrick & Drew, 2016) and provides assistance.

**Fragment 1** Rescuing Trae’s trapped spider.

Tina first claims knowledge (Koole, 2010) about how to get the spider out of the cage (line 103). Tina’s claim is followed by a demonstration of that knowledge (Koole, 2010) when she swipes the screen and releases the spider from the cage (line 106). While a demonstration might assist Trae to learn how to rescue the spider from the cage, Tina’s physical assistance also means that she is in control of the iPad, instead of Trae. Once the spider is released, Trae pushes Tina’s hand away from the iPad, signposting that her assistance is no longer required (line 108). Tina accepts Trae’s resistance to further help and acknowledges that the task of rescuing the spider is complete by saying, dair you go (line 109). She hands Trae control of the device, and he continues playing while Tina watches on.

**Fragment 2** occurs just after **Fragment 1**. Here, Tina assists Trae to turn on a light to catch bugs.

**Fragment 2** Making a web, turning on a light helps to catch bugs.
After watching Trae (line 116), Tina displays her understanding of Trae’s focus by asking if he wants to get into the cage (line 117). Trae disagrees and informs her of his current task; to get some bugs (line 118). Here, their differing understandings of the task at hand are revealed. Once Tina is familiar with Trae’s goal, they coordinate their subsequent talk to the task of catching some bugs.

Tina first watches Trae swipe the screen for 1.2 seconds. When he does not catch any bugs, she treats this as problematic by issuing a directive to make a web (line 121). As directed, Trae swipes the screen in a manner that looks like he is creating a web (line 122), although, at this point, he seems to be unsuccessful. In response to this embodied display of trouble, Tina upgrades her assistance from a verbal instruction to providing physical support by swiping Trae’s screen in tandem with him (line 123). She presents the task as a joint activity, saying, *we’ll turn on that light* (line 124). Trae watches while Tina manipulates the screen, but she too fails to activate the light. After 2.1 seconds, Trae manages Tina’s assistance by pushing and holding her hand away, indicating that her turn to turn on the light is over, and that he now wants to reclaim the iPad (line 127). In response, Tina downgrades her physical aid to verbal support via a directive telling him to turn on that light (line 129). Trae swipes the screen continuously and activates the light (line 132). Tina then provides an upshot formulation (Antaki, 2008; Baraldi, 2014), *now you can catch some easy* (line 134). The upshot formulation assesses the past action of turning on the light with future action; that catching bugs will be easy, because the bugs are presumably attracted to the light, bringing closure to this sequence. Tina watches Trae as he plays the game for 9 seconds before returning focus to her own screen (line 136–137). This action indicates that Trae no longer needs assistance to catch bugs.

The next fragment, *Fragment 3*, is of siblings from family two in the lounge room of their family home (see Figure 12.2), who collaborate to enable the brother to win a virtual game of tennis. The motion-sensing console allows users to control their avatar using body movements; for instance, when the child jumps, their avatar also jumps.

*Figure 12.2* Siblings playing a motion-sensor-based virtual tennis game.
*Source: see Acknowledgements.*
The extract commences 12 minutes into an interaction between siblings Jett and Lara who wait for the screen to display the previous game’s scorecard. Once displayed, a new game begins loading. As the game loads, Lara offers unsolicited assistance to Jett to help him win the game. While it is unclear why Lara is willing to let Jett win, it might be because she is playing consecutive games, and not taking the game play in turns, as is done typically.

Fragment 3 Winning the virtual tennis game.

Sandy Houen et al.

136
Lara names Jett as the recipient of her offer of assistance aimed at winning the game by asking, "Jett do ya want me to win fa you?" (line 501). Although Lara’s assistance is unsolicited, Jett accepts her offer (line 503). Lara uses the change of state token, okay (line 505), to acknowledge his acceptance and to agree that their current focus is on Jett winning the game.

While the game loads, Lara and Jett make noises, reach their hands through their legs and wave their hands in front of the television (lines 506–511). Just before the game loads, Lara quietly instructs Jett to move backwards (line 512). This instruction may have been in response to previous technical trouble they encountered when Jett was standing too close to Lara, and the game console picked up Jett’s movements instead of Lara’s. When Jett does not move, Lara names Jett as the recipient and tells him to move (line 515). This time, Jett follows her instruction and moves slightly out of the way. Lara motions with her hand and quietly instructs him to move that way (line 517). He sits further back on the couch. Lara anticipates play by holding her arm horizontally (line 519). As the game commences, Lara swings her arms to control the on-screen tennis racket. While she plays, Jett asks her why she has a red tennis racket (line 526). Lara responds to Jett’s question saying, "I don’t know," perhaps suggesting she does not want to engage in a general discussion at present. This non-engagement might have something to do with her current focus on winning the game for her brother.

Jett leaves the interaction and returns 40 seconds later, as the game processes the score card (line 536). Lara gazes towards Jett and again uses the change of state token, okay (line 537) to connect the prior action of playing the game with the focus of winning the game for Jett (line 537). Jett re-enters the camera view as the scorecard is displayed. Next, we see Lara flop onto the couch (line 541) and pretend to cry, "how:ow:::

Siblings Accomplishing Tasks Together

The first three fragments in this chapter show how unsolicited assistance is provided by siblings to support accomplishment of a task at hand. The next section uses two fragments to show how siblings solicit and respond to assistance requested.

**Solicited Assistance**

Two fragments (Fragment 4 and Fragment 5) are used to capture siblings’ solicitations for assistance. Fragment 4 is a continuation of Fragment 2 where Tina has established that catching bugs is easy to do with a light on. They continue to play Spider: Rite of the Shrouded Moon.
Tina: "De light is back dair."

Trae: (holds left arm up) (RH continues playing game)

Tina: "The light isn't over here,"

Trae: ((continues swiping screen ))

(line 4.1) ((Tina watches Trae play game))

Tina: "I got ya feast first,"

Trae: ((continues playing game ))

Tina: ((watches Trae's screen ))

Tina: ((continues playing game ))

Tina: ((watches Trae play game))

Fragment 4
Finding another light, locating a feast and catching bugs.

As they play individual games on their own devices, Trae solicits Tina's assistance to find another light to catch more bugs. He asks, where's that light? (line 141). Shortly after, he reinitiates his call for help, naming Tina as the recipient of his request (line 144). First, Tina offers physical assistance, saying, I'll show you (line 149), and moves to take the iPad from him (line 149). Tina's physical aid could result in her taking control of the iPad and Trae halts playing the game. Trae declines her offer by saying nnargh (line 150) and pushing her arm away (line 151). Next, Tina downgrades her assistance from a physical demonstration to a verbal telling, informing him where he may find the light (line 152). The upshot of this verbal assistance means that Trae maintains control of the iPad and can continue playing the game. It also means that Trae can either accept or decline the verbal assistance offered by Tina. Trae continues swiping the screen, does not follow Tina's directions (line 155), and fails to find it. Tina reformulates her verbal assistance and tells him that the light is not where he is (line 154). She watches Trae play for 4.1 seconds before initiating a sequence of talk that focusses not on finding the light, but on getting a feast of bugs first (line 157). Finding a feast becomes their new focus. Although not captured in the extract, the interaction continues with Trae finding a feast. Amid the feast, he locates a light that attracts many bugs. Tina provides further instructions about making a web to catch them. After trial and error, Trae makes a web and captures some bugs.

Fragment 5
Captures a younger sibling assisting his older brother. While Emanual (three years of age) has solicited help from his mother to locate Peppa Pig, it is Emanual's younger sibling Zavier (18 months of age) who assists in accomplishing the task at hand. Zavier is located nearby using a touchscreen laptop located in the family lounge room (see Figure 12.3). He is scrolling through the menu on the YouTube Junior website. As he swipes the screen, different sounds and voices play. Emanual is off camera, but can be heard asking his mother to find Peppa Pig.

Fragment 5
Finding another light, locating a feast and catching bugs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment 5</th>
<th>Finding another light, locating a feast and catching bugs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>(2.0) ((younger brother swipes laptop screen with LF scrolling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>002</td>
<td>Youtube menu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Ema: Maa: arm?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 004        | (1.0) ((Zavier: swipes left - moves through YouTube catalogue))
| 005        | Ema: MU:M |
| 006        | (1.4) (((Zavier: swipes screen to the left))) |
| 007        | Zav: [vaa:irp] |
| 008        | Ema: Wis maa::: [peppa pig] fing. |
| 009        | Zav: (((turns head))) (((continues swiping screen)) |
| 010        | ????: nnno. |
| 011        | Zav: ((swipes screen)) |
| 012        | Com: (((catalogue displays a Peppa Pig image))) |
| 013        | Zav: dai:::?= |
| 014        | Zav: =((points at Peppa Pig image gazes around)) |
| 015        | Zav: ((gazes back at screen)) |
| 016        | Ema: ((stands beside brother)) |
Fragment 5 commences with Emanual seeking assistance to find Peppa Pig. Although Emanual’s query is directed at his mother (lines 3 and 4), his younger brother Zavier gazes (line 9) towards Emanual when he asks about Peppa Pig’s location (line 8). This gaze suggests that Zavier overhears Emanual’s request for help (line 8). Zavier’s focus returns to the computer screen and he continues swiping through the YouTube menu. While it is unclear whether the younger brother intentionally sets out to find Peppa Pig, when one is displayed on the screen he announces, *Dair* (line 13), and points to the Peppa Pig image (line 14). Having located Peppa Pig, Zavier has accomplished assisting Emanual. Emanual accepts the assistance when he stands beside his younger brother (line 16) and says, *press it* (line 18). At first, Emanual’s turn looks to be an instruction for his younger brother, but it is Emanual who quickly presses the image to play the clip. The two brothers stand beside each other when the clip begins to play. Zavier displays his excitement by raising his hands above his head saying, *Her↑[ar:: >erpa< pig.* (line 23).

In this fragment, the task of finding Peppa Pig was accomplished when a younger sibling volunteered and successfully provided aid to his older sibling after overhearing Emanual’s request for help; a request that was initially directed towards their mother.
Discussion

The family setting is an ideal context for understanding how siblings engage with each other and with digital technology. These data fragments and accompanying analysis show that siblings’ digital activities include instances where they are engaged socially. A close analysis of children’s social interactions shows how they collaboratively achieved a task when they build upon shared knowledge, and produce different kinds of digital practices. Across all of the interactions discussed, recruiting and accepting assistance led to a shared social enterprise (Danby et al., 2018). Verbal strategies that seek and offer assistance can happen via a variety of interactional means, such as “requesting”, would you/could you (Curl & Drew, 2008) and do you want me to (Curl, 2006).

Davidson (2012) specifically looked at the social organisation of help during young siblings’ use of the computer to reveal that, in addition to talk such as issuing instructions, assistance also could be achieved through multimodal actions, for example pointing a finger at the relevant point on the computer screen.

The siblings’ offering and seeking assistance from each other occurred through talk and multimodal action. Solicited assistance was achieved via questions, such as “where’s that light” (Fragment 4) or “where’s my Peppa Pig” (Fragment 5). Unsolicited assistance was offered in response to observed potential, or embodied displays of, trouble in accomplishing the task at hand. Most assistance was offered through verbal strategies, such as issuing directives, but physical strategies were also used, such as swiping the screen or taking the device to accomplish the task at hand. Fragment 1, for instance, showed Trae taking 1.2 seconds without accomplishing the task of rescuing the spider, which prompted Tina to treat this as an embodied display of trouble. She responded by trying to assist him by swiping the screen. In this case, physical assistance required the original game player to hand over control of the device. There is always a risk of handing over control of the device as this may result in (i) disengagement with the task at hand or (ii) losing the device to the other sibling, which may require the original player to do additional work to re-establish control of the device. For example, when Lara (Fragment 3) played the game so that Jett could win, Jett left the room, seemingly no longer engaged. He returned as the game ended and the scorecard was displayed. In Fragment 1, Trae managed Tina’s physical assistance by pushing her hand away, ensuring control of the device remained with him.

In returning to the data fragments discussed in the previous section, Fragment 2 is now reused to illustrate how assistance giving is modified based on the siblings’ prior turns of interaction. Using Fragment 2, we developed Figure 12.4 to provide a diagrammatic summary of how assistance was modified based on the other sibling’s uptake (or not) of assistance, either verbal or nonverbal.

At the start of Fragment 2, when Trae was initially unsuccessful, Tina modified her assistance in three ways. First, she presented the task as a joint activity, using the pronoun “we’ll” (line 124). Second, she modified her instruction to “we’ll turn on that light” (line 124) and third, she provided physical assistance by tapping the screen. This physical assistance provided Trae with a demonstration of what he should be doing. After Trae pushed her hand away, he showed that he no longer needed physical assistance and, instead, he copied her demonstration. Recognising that Trae was still unsuccessful, Tina tried another strategy, which was to revert back to offer assistance verbally by issuing a modified instruction. This strategy was ultimately successful.

In these sibling interactions, the provision of assistance, whether solicited or unsolicited, was negotiated and managed as part of the unfolding interaction. This was the case even when the assistance provided was unsuccessful or rejected. Assistance, whether offered or requested, successful or not, is negotiated and managed through a co-constructed accomplishment of social interaction including talk and non-verbal actions.
Verbal assistance offered via an instruction to Trae

121 Tin: you make a web

Assistance, via instruction, was unsuccessful. Trae did not make a web.

Assistance is modified, modifying both the instruction and upgrading her assistance from verbal to physical. Additionally, Tina presents the task at hand as a joint one (‘we’ll turn on that light’).

124 Tin: we’ll turn on that light-
125 Tin: [={tapping screen}]
126 Tra: [={watches Tina =hand away}]
127 Tin: ={Tina presses twice, Trae pushes Tina’s=hand away}]

Physical assistance is managed by Trae who after 2.1 seconds pushes Tina’s hand away.

While Tina’s physical assistance was unsuccessful in turning on the light, it provided Trae with a demonstration of what he should be doing. Trae manages Tina’s assistance by pushing her hand away indicating that he no longer needs her physical assistance.

128 Tra: ={swipes screen}

Trae copies Tina’s actions, but is still unsuccessful at turning on the light.

Tina once again modifies the type of assistance provided and reverts to verbal assistance by issuing a modified instruction

129 Tin: ={turn on that light}]]
130 Tin: ={(lifts arm out of Trae’s hold}]]
131 (5.0) ={(Trae plays game, Tina watches Trae)}
132 Com: ={(Tina presses twice, Trae pushes Tina’s hand away)
Conclusion

There is a common assumption that children do not need to be taught about technology; rather, parents often suggest that children "automatically pick it up" (Plowman et al., 2008). Plowman et al. (2008) point out that parents often do not explicitly tutor their children in digital engagement, but that it is through family practices that children acquire digital literacy skills, how to find information, and the cultural practices of digital life in families. This chapter has extended these descriptions of family life to show how siblings do not just pick up skills and dispositions when using digital devices and digital games. As demonstrated in close detail through analysis of siblings engaged in different kinds of digital activity, children take on roles and interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, that provide participatory spaces to observe and interact with each other when using digital devices. Here, the siblings' acts of assistance, both solicited and unsolicited, and requests for assistance, make possible the introduction and demonstration of a range of technical digital literacy skills. Just as important, though, is that sibling participation make possible relationships that support familial social and emotional closeness.

In contributing to understandings of sibling interactions as they engaged with digital technology in home environments, this chapter shows how siblings sought and provided assistance in their social interactions with each other. To complete the digital task at hand, the siblings used a variety of interactional strategies that provided assistance. There is no suggestion that interactional strategies that solicit or provide unsolicited assistance are unique to sibling interactions. Even so, within the home context, children who also happen to be siblings may engage with digital technology without adults present, while socially producing their sibling relationship.

Acknowledgements

Susan Danby was awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship (FT120100731) for this study. Ethical approval by Queensland University of Technology’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Children’s images were taken from the video footage. Picture formatting and artistic effect tools in MS PowerPoint™ were used to convert the image to a sketch, making participants de-identifiable. We sincerely thank the children and families for their participation in this study.

References


In R. Flewitt, O. Erstad, B. Kümmerling-Meibauer, & I. Pires Pereira (Eds.), Routledge handbook of digital

bjet.12636.

Davidson, C. (2012). The social organisation of help during young children’s use of the computer. Contemporary

doi:10.1075/ps.8.2.02hau.


Marsh, J., Hannon, P., Lewis, M., & Ritchie, L. (2015). Young children’s initiation into family literacy prac-


(Eds.), The appropriation of media in everyday life (pp. 197–230). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.


(Eds.), Media, family interaction and the digitalization of childhood (pp. 155–172). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.