

Q Marion Oveson (researcher)

A Woman with son (aged 9)

Q Firstly, I just wanted to just go over a few things, like a few terms that I'm going to be using in the questions so that it makes sense and just feel free to ask any questions at any point.

A Okay.

Q When we say, technologies, we are talking about digital devices like mobile phones, tablets, cameras, game consoles and computers, stuff like that. That are available in you children's daily lives and also when we say technologies it also refers to media that children access, like apps or websites or digital games.

A Okay.

Q And then the next thing is, we're interested in any making that they're engaged in. So, things like robotics or creative coding and also making or tinkering, so designing digital artefacts in 3D printing or building virtual worlds and exploring VR and AR and stuff.

A Okay.

Q The last thing is when we talk about, play, we're interested in things that include adult led, child led, peer and sibling led play as well as play that is using digital devices and media. That includes playful engagement with digital devices or just generally with digital toys. And then play which shows the influence of digital devices and media when they're not present. There's a question around that, it will make more sense later on.

So, basically the questions are reflecting the study's focus, which is really around play with technology and media and creativity and stuff like that. Do you have more than one child?

A No, I've just got the one.

Q Is it a girl or boy?

A A boy.

Q How old is he?

A He's nine.

Q Okay, I'll start off with the first set of questions, which are around your son's play in technology.

A Okay.

Q How does technology feature in your son's play? Does he like to play with particular devices, apps or toys?

A Yes, he likes to play with his Xbox, his phone, iPad, yes.

Q When does he play with them?

A Usually probably after school and at the weekend.

Q Does he do that at home or and friends houses or at school?

A He plays with them here and at his friends' houses, and I think he does have access to an iPad at school as well and the laptop at school too I think. That wouldn't be used for playing though, I think they have some free time to play, but obviously not as much as what he would have at home.

Q Does he do these things alone or does he do it with friends?

A Both.

Q How often would you say he plays with these different things?

A Every day.

Q Why do you think that your son plays with them? Is there any particular significance to it?

A I think he just enjoys it and I think on his Xbox he gets to play with his friend as well on there, he gets to speak to them at the same time as when he's playing. So, he quite likes the fact that if it's raining outside he can still play with his friend and then still get to play on the video games. I think he's getting to that age as well where he's getting a bit older and he's not quite so much as interested in toys. But he's still obviously has got the imagination and wants to play, but it's just maturing a little bit as well.

Q When you say he's playing Xbox with his friends; do you mean online or are they physically in the same room?

A Sometimes both, but mostly he does it over the internet, but he does do it with his friends in the same room as well.

Q How do you think that makes him feel when he's doing that?

A It makes him feel really happy, I think, yes.

Q How does he show that?

A It shows in that you can hear him, so when he's in his room he's laughing, he's constantly laughing. He's making so much noise you can hear his volume getting quite raised as well, so you can hear the excitement in his voice and the change in the tone. You can also notice as well, maybe a negative kind of thing, but if I tell him he has to come off his electronic toys his mood then changes dramatically and he's like, I don't want to come off. He gets over it quite quickly, but there's always that initial, no, I don't want to, I'm quite happy playing kind of thing.

Q Does he ever play with these things when he's watching TV as well?

A Yes.

Q How does he do that? Is that on a phone or is that?

A Usually he'll be playing on his Xbox and he will have his iPad or his phone and

he'll be watching YouTube or something like that on there. Or if we're sat in the living room, like last night actually, we were sat watching a Christmas film together and he was sitting on his phone playing Fornite at the same time.

Q So, he's playing video games on his phone, not just on his console?

A Yes.

Q Does he engage with apps and online sites, like Netflix, CBeebies?

A Yes.

Q Do you think that has an impact on his play?

A The what, sorry?

Q Do you think that the things that he watches, like on YouTube and stuff, do you think that impacts on his play?

A Yes, absolutely. So, if he sees one of these YouTubers or somebody on Netflix and they're doing something then he will tend to want to play that game as well. I think it does have quite a big influence on him to be honest.

Q You've already mentioned that he plays video games, he plays Fortnite and does he play other ones?

A Yes, he likes to play Minecraft, he also quite likes playing some of the LEGO games, he plays LEGO City and another couple of LEGO movie ones, like LEGO Indiana Jones and LEGO Batman and that kind of thing. I would say that they're probably up there with his favourite ones.

Q When and where does he do this, is it the same as above or the same as you said before?

A Yes.

Q Does he have any physical toys that relate to online digital interests?

A Yes, he does have some Fortnite toys, he's got LEGO toys, he's got all those kinds of things, yes.

Q Does he like to play with these at the same time that he's playing the digital form?

A Not usually, sometimes, but not a lot. He'll sometimes maybe have like a little fidget toy, he'll maybe have a Rubik's Cube while he's waiting on the next match or that kind of thing. But not usually playing with them at the same time, they're quite a separate thing I would say.

Q Does he have any toys that are actually digital?

A Any what, sorry?

Q Any toys that are digital.

A Yes, he does. He's got a couple of things, he's got a couple of programmable robots, yes.

Q Does he play with those often?

A He probably goes through stages of when he uses them and when he doesn't. So, he probably will play them for about a week maybe once a month and it will be quite sporadic. He doesn't have the thinking and the same focus, like he doesn't play them as often as what he would want to with his video games or normal toys I would say.

Q Does he play with any internet enabled toys? Like internet connected ones, like, Furby or are the robots connected to the internet?

A Yes, they are connected to WIFI, but just so that they can be programmed through the phone. So, I suppose they are internet capable.

Q Does he play with any augmented reality or virtual reality equipment?

A Has got a virtual reality headset, yes. He hasn't used it for quite a while though.

Q Why do you think that is?

A I don't know, it's not a big fancy one, it's just one that you put your mobile phone in and I think it's probably the lack of different games that he knows about on it or that he knows how to play on it. I think he expected it to be a lot better than what it was when he asked for it and he was just a bit disappointed and it lost his interest and he's not really been back to it too much to be honest.

Q Does your son play with any sort of artificial intelligence assistants, like Alexa or Siri?

A Yes.

Q How does he do that?

A He's got an Amazon Echo Dot in his bedroom and he's got Siri on his mobile phone.

Q Does he ask them questions a lot or just sometimes?

A I would say he probably uses it daily.

Q And what kinds of things does he tend to ask about?

A I think it's more he uses more as a search engine, instead of Googling something on his mobile phone he'll ask Alexa or ask Siri. And he plays music through Alexa as well, he does try and cheat and do all his homework through Alexa. So, now he's not allowed to have it on when he's doing his homework because he's a chancer, so he will like that as well.

Q It's a different world isn't it?

A Yes, there's no way that I could've cheated on my homework when I was [overtalking], there was no way at all.

Q So, he uses it for information gathering and playing music and does he ask it silly questions or anything ever?

A Yes, he does ask it silly questions like what's poo made of and the usual boy

things.

Q Does your son's play in outdoor spaces feature technology in any way or show the influence of technology in any way? Like in pretend play or language.

A Yes, I would say so. Any time he does go out to play he will ask if he can take his phone with him because he wants to record a video and we wants to do things and if he's not then he will be maybe doing dances that are from one of the apps from his phone or that kind of thing. So, I think a lot of it is influenced by it.

Q This next question is about whether he plays with LEGO stuff and you already said he does. What about other aspect of the LEGO brand, does he have bags or films or have you gone to LEGO Land and stuff like that?

A We've been to LEGO Land Discovery Centre, we've not been to the actual LEGO Land, but we did go to the LEGO Land Discovery Centre a couple of years ago. And he did have the films on DVD, he's got a couple of games, I just literally got rid of the DVDs yesterday if I'm perfectly honest, because he doesn't watch them anymore ever since it's mostly online that we do these days. But he's had them and the video games for the Xbox, for the Nintendo that kind of thing also.

Q Who decides which devices and digital toys, games or apps your son uses and what guides these choices?

A It's me and I suppose it's quite influenced by his choice of what he likes. The titles and the games he plays on them is dictated by me and that's just whether it's age appropriate, whether he's going to use it in the right way and I don't want him to be playing it if there's too much violence in it, I don't really want that, that kind of thing.

Q In your view what types of devices or digital toys, games, apps promote play?

A On his mobile phone he's got a couple of apps that would promote him maybe not playing with toys, but being a bit more active, like dancing and that kind of thing and that's like TikTok on his mobile phone. There is also a couple of games that he's had, one that he had for his Xbox, which was LEGO Dimension and it comes with the little figures and you place them on a portal and when you put them on the portal they go into the game.

So, that encouraged him to pause the game, build the LEGO and then play with that a little bit and then go back to the game online as well. That one was one that encouraged quite a bit as well.

Q Out of those same sorts of devices, which ones do you think limit play?

A I would definitely say the Xbox, yes.

Q Why do you think that is?

A He's pretty much just sat with the controller in his hand, not movement, no nothing, just eyes fixed on the screen.

Q Which ones do you think promote creativity?

A I would think that probably quite a lot of them do, I think when he plays mostly Minecraft he has to be quite creative as to what he's going to do and it's more of an open game. Like LEGO World I think it is that he's got, it is a very open sandbox type game, so he really has to have a think about what he's going to do. You can't just go in and start fighting things and that's it, you need to think about what you're going to build, what you're going to do next. So, I think that they're probably the most influential ones for creativity.

Q Which ones do you think limit creativity?

A Definitely Fortnite.

Q Why is that?

A I think you just go in and you shoot people and that's it, there's not really much more to it.

Q What kinds of toys or products do you think LEGO should be developing for children in this digital age?

A The game that I was talking about, LEGO Dimensions that game was brilliant, but then they stopped it and it's now discontinued. So, there is no more expansion to it, so once you've done it then that's it, it's done. And we spent a lot, a lot of money on it and now it's sitting in a box in his bedroom, we spent hundreds of pounds on it. So, I'd love to see something a bit more like that being developed, whether it be in the same format or maybe even for an iPad or for a different platform, but something where you've got the digital version and the physical version at the same time.

I think that's a really good way to get kids involved in playing both physically and online as well or on a device of some sort. We really enjoyed that, it brought me and him together as well because we played it together and that was the thing that we done, he would get in from school and he was, can we play so we can build and we can do all of this? And we'd be helping each other with instructions, it was quite a nice family thing for us to do together.

Q We are interested in children's active engagement with technology in play, when playing with technology how far is your son actively engaged in general? How interested or focused on the activity is he?

A So, I would say he's very focused, I could go in and have a conversation with him and he wouldn't even have heard with I'm saying.

Q When he's playing with technology how far does he find the play to be meaningful to him and his every day interests in general?

A He absolutely loves it. I think if he never had it he would be devastated. It does have quite a big influence on him and all of his friends, it really, really does mean something to them.

Q What do you think it means to them?

A I just think he has a lot of fun and it's something he can share his interest in with his friends and I think because there is something for all different abilities, you

don't need to be the best at it, and you can play it on your own or with friends.

He's not a big sporty person, he doesn't really enjoy going out and playing football or that kind of thing and he thinks that he's rubbish at it. Whereas he thinks he's great at all the video games and I think because he feels he's really good at it then it's really, really important to him.

Q When he's playing how far does he enjoy trying things out and making improvements in general? You now how you can do that in some games, you can set yourself a challenge or you can try something different.

A I think he does try and improve it and I think he quite enjoys that element of it as well, so getting better at it I think. When he plays different games he does want to improve and do better next time he plays.

Q This next set of questions is about play with technology and children's emotions and wellbeing.

A Okay.

Q We're exploring the link between play with technology and children's emotions and wellbeing, do you have any thoughts on this topic that you'd like to share?

A I would say that your son can get very emotional over a game, when it comes to losing he can take it quite badly sometimes or he can be really, really happy when he's doing really, really well. If he has a bad game first thing in the morning it can probably set him up to have maybe not a great time for the rest of the day, it will always be playing on his mind I think sometimes.

So, for that reason I do not allow him to play on anything before school, he gets an hour an hour and a half after school, but that will be a bit before bedtime as well so that we don't have the same kind of experience at bedtime as well. So, I try and limit it so that it's not going to have an influence too much on the rest of his day.

Q You're taking care of his emotional needs in that way?

A Yes.

Q When he's playing with technology do you think your son is joyful in general?

A Yes, unless he loses.

Q What is the range of emotions that you see with him when he's playing?

A I would say him happy and then I can see him quite angry and then sometimes maybe a bit sad.

Q Why do you think there is this range?

A I just think because it depends on what he's doing, if he's done really well then he'll be really happy but then if he's not doing great then we will either get angry or he will get upset just depending on what's happened. Sorry the dog's barking.

Q That's all right. Which types of technology is he most likely to get bored with quickly when playing?

A What was that, sorry?

Q Which types of technology is he likely to get bored with quickly when playing?

A I'm not sure, I don't think he really gets too bored. Maybe sometimes the kind of programmable robot things that he's got, if he finds it a bit difficult then he does get a bit bored of it quickly with them. And I think that's why probably picks them up maybe once a month and then realises actually, it was quite difficult and I'm not going to try that again and then he comes back to it again a little bit later. So, it's probably the one that he gets the most bored with.

Q You also said that he got bored with the virtual reality?

A Yes, he did, he got bored with that quite quickly as well. Sorry, I forgot about that, but I think there just wasn't enough variety on it.

Q So, kind of at both ends of the spectrum, if it's too easy or too hard kind of thing?

A Yes.

Q Is that similar or different to the way that he becomes bored in play that doesn't involved technology?

A I think it is actually probably quite similar, probably really similar actually. If something is too difficult then he's like, I'm just not going to bother with this or if it is too easy then he'll not concentrate on it as much, he'll think that because it's so easy he just doesn't need to pay any attention. Although he will get bored of it quite quickly as well, so very similar to play without technology too.

Q We're also interested in his social interactions in relation to play. When playing with technology that allows for social interaction would you say that he engages well with others in general?

A Yes.

Q Which types of technology support social play in your view if any?

A I would say definitely his Xbox and his mobile phone, they're very social I would say.

Q Because he's playing with people online?

A Yes.

Q And talking about stuff together and [overtalking].

A Yes. He's talking about school, about whatever else, so it's loads of things, yes.

Q So, not just the game?

A No.

Q Shifting to questions about your role in the technology and technology mediated play. When your son is playing with technology do you ever play with him?

A Yes, I do, yes.

Q How does that happen?

A It's either I'll be playing with him in the same room or it depending on what we're playing, it might be game that we've both got on our mobile phones, so we'll play on our own devices. Or he'll be on the laptop and I'll maybe be on the Xbox or something like that. It's in the same room or at least in the same house.

Q Does that happen quite often or just sometimes?

A I would say probably most weekends we'll sit down and we'll play together.

Q Are there some devices or digital toys, games or apps that you think are better than others for playing together with your son?

A That I think are what, sorry?

Q That are better to play with him.

A I think that we probably play most on the Xbox and we tend to play either Minecraft or the different LEGO games together. That's they ones that we both tend to play, so the ones that are co-operative games. Fortnite is his favourite game, but it's something I would very, very rarely play with him because it's mostly a one player or an online kind of game rather than a co-operative game.

Q If you're ever using your own devices does your son ever ask to play on them with you?

A Yes, he does sometimes, actually. He will sometimes ask if he can play as well.

Q What sorts of things do you guys play together then?

A There's a couple of games that I have on my iPad that are probably just time waster games like racing games, that kind of thing. He's probably downloaded them in the first place to be honest and then they've just stayed on there and then then he'll ask can we play with them together.

Q Are there some devices and apps that he can only access with your or another family member?

A No, I think everything he's kind of got access to completely.

Q Do you ever initiate play yourself using technology?

A Yes, I will sometime just say to him, why don't we play this or why don't we go and do that. I know that he enjoys it and I know that that's quite a good way for me to get him engaged with me. If I said to him let's go outside and play football, it would probably be, no way Mum, but if I say come one let's go and play a video game together than that would be more of an interest to him.

Q Moving on to questions about your general perceptions of technology. Do you think certain technologies offer more positive or negative experiences for your son?

A Yes, I think it's quite a positive experience.

Q Which ones do you think are positive?

A I think he just really gets to interact with other people quite a bit more than what

he probably would if he never had them.

Q Are there any particular types of technologies you're talking about there?

A I would say his mobile phone and his Xbox actually. You can connect with anyone within reason, as long as he checks with me first and we know who the person is. They don't even need to be in the same street, the same room and he's probably meeting a lot of people he would never get to meet and made a lot of friends that he probably wouldn't have had either.

Whether it be a friend of a friend or that kind of thing and I think it's really good for his social side of things. It's made him probably a lot more confident in himself playing these games than what it would've if he didn't have it.

Q Do you think then there's certain technologies that offer more negative experiences for him?

A I don't really think so. I suppose some things he can get a bit over emotional about them, so there is a negative to them, but in general I think it's quite a positive experience for him overall.

Q Do you have any concerns about his experience with technologies?

A No, not really.

Q Are you concerned at all about the safety aspects of internet enabled toys?

A In all honesty, no, because I tend to if he's playing on it I will go through and check, who are you playing with, what are you doing, who are you speaking to? And I will make sure he's not speaking to any strangers he doesn't know and when he speaks to people over the internet as well when if he's maybe in a group with someone, I will always make sure I have a listen.

And he knows that if any adults were to contact him he's just not to speak to them and I do keep a good eye on him and check up on it a lot. We've got quite good internet security as well, so I'm not worried about getting virus's or being hacked, like personal details stolen or anything like that. Because I do tend to keep an eye on that, I don't let him download anything without permission, I do regulate it quite well.

Q That was the next question, is do you have any concerns about data privacy in relation to your son?

A No, if he gets an email or something comes up on the computer the first thing he does is, Mum what's this? He doesn't touch anything, he knows he needs to come and ask me before anything happens, he's probably more worried about it than what I am.

Q Do you think that his use of technology influences family life positively in any way?

A Yes, I think it does, it probably brings us a bit closer together. I think that using technology gives your son the opportunity as well, me and his dad aren't together anymore, so we've separated, but because he's got a mobile phone and because we've got the technology he can speak to his dad whenever he wants, which for

him is good and for his dad it's great.

His dad's also Tunisian, so his family's in Tunisia, so they can video call each other and he can still have a relationship with them even though we're not even in the same country. So, I think it's definitely has got a positive impact I would say on family, not just immediate family, but the extended family elsewhere in the world as well.

Q Do you think there's any negative influence on his use of technology as far as influencing the family life?

A I would say that there probably is a bit of negative as well if he does get a bit annoyed when I tell him to come off it. It's not always a battle, but there is always that, I'm still finishing the match and we argue over it a little bit sometimes. So, there is a bit of negativity as well attached to it I would say.

Q Do you have any concerns about his use of technologies or about the use of technologies at home?

A No, not really, no.

Q Lastly, what advice or guidance would you offer new parents on issues relating to data privacy and safety in relation to your child?

A I would say just to make sure that you keep an eye on them at all times. Speak to them about some of the dangers and just make sure that they flag anything to you before it can become an issue. And I think education is key, just making sure that they're well aware of anything that can kind of go on.

Q Did you have anything else that you wanted to add or any questions?

A No, I think that's about it, yes.

Q Brilliant, I really appreciate your time.