

Q Patrizia Baldi (researcher)
A Woman with son (aged 11)

Q Perfect. So, just a brief introduction. We'll ask a few questions about technologies. And when we talk about technologies, we refer to mobile phones, tablets, cameras, game console, computer, etc. Everything that is available in a child's life.

And when we talk about media, we talk about things like apps, websites, digital games, etc. And in our questions, we are also interested in any kind of making, the children can be engaged in a creative coding like Scratch, or robotics, anything the kids likes. And making and tinkering, for example, creating things like 3D printing, if they're interested in these kinds of things, so virtual reality.

And what we're interested in this study is play that is led by adults or by children or by siblings, any kind of play led by anyone, not only by the child. And what we're interested in is especially play using digital devices and media, as we mentioned before. And, for example, using the digital devices, digital toys, not just thinking of it as a toy.

And also, how these digital devices can influence how the child plays, even when the digital device is not actually used, I don't know, in a pretend kind of play, for example.

And so, the study, the focus, is play and technologies, and media and creativity. This is the kind of interest of the study. Is it okay?

A Yes, that's fine.

Q Brilliant. So, just to confirm, your children are aged?

A Sorry?

Q Age of your children?

A I've got a nine-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy.

Q Right. We would ask you, in a way, because it's difficult. I have children as well, it's difficult to give answers about both of them because I'm sure that your children will act and play differently.

So, I would ask you to, in a way, choose to answer about one of your children. The one that is more interested in digital devices and media. So, if you think that the boy or the girl, so your answers will be only about the one that you think... Is it okay?

A Yes. Well, let's go for the boy because he's 11. Shall we do that?

Q Yes, perfect, brilliant. So, it's a lot of questions. So, how does technology feature in your child's play? So, does your child like to play with particular devices. And

if so, how? So, when, where, who with, how often? Why do you think it's important or fun, especially fun, for them to play with it?

A We just try to restrict, but it's quite difficult because a lot of schoolwork and things like that is technology-based as well. We do try as much as possible not to leave him on his own to do things. So, if he's doing something, say, on his iPad for school. He's into quite a lot of computer graphics and stuff, he's really interested in that. So, we've just got to make sure that some of that is very good for him because it may be that he then develops other skills because of that. And the school are quite keen on some of the things that he's doing.

But, at the same time, we've just got to watch that if he's on his Xbox and he's just playing mindless games... So, it's a balance, really. And I think he has got some skills there that we don't want to lose, but we've just got to just be mindful that we balance that, really.

Q Yes, of course. No, of course. So, there are these two aspects. He plays or uses his devices for homework and, also, on his own. So, it happens almost every day, I guess, between homework and play?

A Homework every day. But no, we try to restrict some of the devices, the games, and things, to maybe a couple or two or three times a week, so he's not just on them all the time.

Q Right. And does he play with friends as well? It happens if he has friends over?

A Sorry?

Q If he has friends over, does he want to play with digital devices?

A Yes.

Q Yes. And how do you think he's feeling, he wants to play with these devices because...? What do you think? Does he say why he wants to play with digital toys? Does he say why and how he feels about it?

A Well, I think it's because there's a lot more interaction with the digital toys, the digital devices, and that's why. And also, as well, his friends do the same thing, so it's a bit of peer pressure I think, as well.

Q I understand. Yes, I understand. He watches some TV as well?

A Yes, he does.

Q And when he watches TV, he only engages with the TV or also plays along, like an eye on the TV and then playing something else?

A Yes, sometimes he does. We try to restrict that because we, sometimes, adults, are guilty of that as well, because we're on our phone when we're watching television as well. So, we do try to restrict that and say look, just look at one... Do one thing rather than two or three things at once.

Q No, I understand.

A But it is difficult because we've got to watch that we're not being detrimental as well.

- Q No, I understand perfectly. Thank you so much. And does your child use apps and online sites, such as YouTube, Netflix, CBeebies, or something like that? And if he does, do you think... Well, first of all, does he?
- A Yes, he does. Yes, and the other thing that we forgot about, is that we've not that long signed up to Amazon Prime, of course, on his Kindle. So, of course, he can access YouTube and various things on that. So, we've had a put a parental control of that. Yes, we do. They're into all the different areas within the internet, so it's difficult sometimes.
- Q No, of course. Yes, we're looking at how the child's play is, in a way, influenced by these apps or online sites. Do you see these the fact that he's playing with, or watching online sites or apps? Do you think that it is an impact on the way he plays after?
- A Oh, yes. He was having trouble with something. I think it was something to do with his LEGO. And he said to me I'm going to go onto YouTube because I really don't understand how we can actually put this together. So that was good because we went onto YouTube, and I went on with him, and that influences play because, then, he was able to understand why you couldn't fit certain parts of that model together. So that was good.
- Q Yes, brilliant.
- A So, it is useful.
- Q Sorry, lots of questions. So, he plays with the video games, mobile, and tablet games you said. You said you try to limit the time. You said, maybe, two, three times a week or something like that. If he was free to him, like at any time, and he does it on his own in his room, or with you?
- A Oh, yes, he'd just be on all the time, yes, if we didn't restrict him. It's addictive. I know the first thing I do when I get up in the morning is look at my phone, so I can understand why it is so addictive, isn't it, yes.
- Q No, I understand. I understand. Yes, so he likes to play both on his own and with friends?
- A Yes, he does.
- Q Okay, perfect. And does he have any physical toys related to what they play with? I don't know, for example, some Minecraft blocks or figures? Do you know Minecraft?
- A Yes. Yes, he has. He's got some cars, I think, that work on the internet as well. Yes. I can't remember what the name is, but yes, he has.
- Q Oh, right. So, he plays with these things, sometimes, while he plays online, on the game?
- A Yes.
- Q Oh, right. And so, he has the things like... Well, he's too old for LeapPad, so does he have things like robots?

- A Yes, he has. He's got robots, yes.
- Q Oh, right, and these are digital items, they move, or they are interactive?
- A Yes.
- Q And is he engaging with them and with friends, or on his own, or with families, or siblings?
- A Yes, sometimes he'll go online with friends. So, if his friends are not around, he'll be doing that sometimes on the internet, playing with them, yes.
- Q Oh, right. All right. Sorry?
- A You still there?
- Q Yes. Sorry, I thought you said something. I don't know, we are getting close to Christmas time or something like that. So, if he asks for... Is he interested in getting toys, more digital ones like a Furby?
- A Oh, yes.
- Q Well, Furby, I don't know if it's his thing. But, for example, do you know, if he goes into a store, what does he like, in terms of digital toys?
- A Oh, he likes all sorts of things, like cars and trains, and robots, and all sorts of... I think there are some Harry Potter interactive ones as well. So, yes, he's into all sorts of things. And I think because he loves computer graphics and stuff, of course, he goes for that sort of thing because he just loves what that can do. It's not just a toy, it can do all sorts of other things as well.
- Q Yes, right, of course. So, it's quite one of his favourite...?
- A It's one of his interests, yes.
- Q And does he ever play with artificial intelligence assistant like Alexa, Siri, or Google?
- A Oh, yes. Because we're with Amazon, yes, we've got Alexa. He's got an Echo Dot in his room.
- Q Oh, right. Do you know how he plays with it, how he engages? We are interested in how his play is influenced by these...?
- A He tends to play music, really, on that. We've got control on that, so it tends to not really be anything, other than play music or just asking questions. Alexa, how many days is it to Christmas and things like that. He's in the background. So that's the sort of thing he does. So, he doesn't really do anything... Well, I don't think he does anything that he shouldn't be doing on there.
- Q No, I'm sure he doesn't. When you see him play or he's outside, etc., can you see the influence of these games and toys in his other play? I don't know, the language he uses, or things he says or does, or pretend play, they become part of his play life, not just when he's actually engaging with the device?

- A Yes, I think he does. Certainly, if he's playing with something, or mentioned something, and say does this do such and such, or why doesn't it. Or he's quite influenced if something is not working very well, oh, let's go onto the internet and we'll have a look at it and see, and things like that. So, yes, he's quite influenced by technology.
- Q And do you think his language has changed a bit? Does he use words that reflect the fact that he plays with these devices? Or, I don't know, for example, talking with friends or playing with friends, they mention words that have used in this digital play?
- A Yes, sometimes. I think because we've got quite used to it, perhaps we don't notice as much, but yes, I think he does, yes.
- Q Yes, I understand. And we're also looking at LEGO. Does your child own any LEGO or similar?
- A Oh, yes. He loves LEGO.
- Q Does he have items like LEGO films, LEGO bags, has he ever been to Legoland or he's interested...?
- A Yes, he's been to Legoland.
- Q Does he just like to play with the LEGO, or he likes the brand, I don't know, items from the brand or watching the movies, I don't know, the games, there are video games with LEGO, or not so much?
- A Yes, he's got some of the video games. And, as I say, he loves to build models as well.
- Q Yes, perfect, thank you. And so, you already mentioned parts of this because you said that when deciding when your child will use device, digital toys, games, and apps, if it was up to him, it would be quite often.
- A Yes.
- Q While, if it's up to you, you restrict. So, you said something like you don't want it to be detrimental, but what guides, so to speak, your choices, the time, or what's allowed, or what do you think is good and what you think is not?
- A Well, it's time, but, also, if he's going playing robots with his friends online, what worries me is he could be playing with other people or spending money that he shouldn't be spending. So, we do try to make sure that he's as sensible as he can be. So, he does understand that he shouldn't be going onto do other things. Play with your friends, or whatever. But just watch what you're doing. But we try to keep an eye on him at times.
- Q I understand. And thinking of what he's playing with and what he likes, what do you think, among apps, games, and digital toys, promotes play, and why do you think... How do you think that happens? Remote playing, instead of being, in a way, a passive viewer, so to speak, but it promotes more playing of the child?
- A Sorry, I didn't quite understand what you mean.

Q For example, I don't know, there are apps that ask the player to act in different ways. Different games and different apps, they ask you to do different things. And so, do you think, for example, some games on the tablet or on the computer or robots.

Among these kinds of games and toys, which one do you think they help your child to play more, or to become less active, limit his creativity. Where do you think... Sometimes, I don't know, with Minecraft, you're supposed to do certain things, while if you're doing a race, you're supposed to do others, for example. Which one do you think promotes play and creativity, while with others, limit? Is it clear?

A Yes, I think, sometimes, being on the internet, because, obviously, it carries on and carries on, and the time just flies, he can't really see... Well, he can. You know that you've got to a certain level. But I think with something like LEGO, it's a bit more tangible and you can see that he's, obviously, working out how to build a model. So, I think there's more creativity there, rather than just sitting around.

Q Yes, I understand. But do you think that some games, for example, Minecraft... Does he play Minecraft? Does he play with Minecraft or Roadblocks?

A Oh, yes, he does. And I think...

Q Do you think... Yes?

A Sorry.

Q No, no, you were saying I think...?

A No, I was just saying I think it's addictive. And I think, sometimes, it's just... For something like that, it's a bit more mindless, isn't it, rather than creative.

Q Yes, I understand. I see what you mean, yes. And we were wondering if, for example, in Minecraft and Roblox, you need to build the things. Or with others, you need to drive a car, I don't know, to make a race. Do you see a difference there, in your child, when he plays with one or the other?

A Yes, sometimes, he's just very into his own, you can't reach him at that point because he's so intent on what he's doing. Whereas, if he's playing a game or something, where it's actually just physical, it's different.

Q Yes, I understand. Thank you, yes. Are there some toys or products that you think, for example, a brand like LEGO should be developing for children in this digital age, to become more...? So, because children are so much interested in, again, in digital, in computers, in apps, do you think that, for example, because you said he plays a lot with the LEGO, that LEGO can start making something that would make children more interested? Such as similar to the computer games, so to speak?

A Well, I think, at the moment, they do have some really quite unusual figures and models and things that children can build. And I am quite lucky because he does seem to have a lot of patience. I think because children are on games and things, it's really... You can see the results quite quickly. Whereas, with something like a

model, it probably takes quite a while to build. But it's engaging that child with something that they've got to want to do, rather than go and do something digital.

Q Yes. I understand, thank you. And so, you were saying that when your child plays with technology, he's quite focused, right, quite engaged?

A Yes.

Q So, is he like that in general? Do you think he's more when he's playing with technology?

A Yes, I think it's more when he plays with technology.

Q Right, yes. And so, we were talking about his day, his everyday life. So, do you think... He finds something that he's really interested in when he plays with computer, and do you think it's just, in a way, playing, or also... I don't know how to explain. It's just a game or, actually, playing with these items makes him more interested, in general, in a good way, not necessarily in a bad way, but if...?

A He likes to work things out, as well. So, when he's doing something, he's... So, because he's interested in computer graphics and everything, he likes to actually do things on the internet. And he likes to be able to make something come to life. So, I think it's not just mindless sitting there on a computer game, he's actually working things out as well.

Q Oh, great. Brilliant. So, trying to make improvements to things as well, change them?

A Yes.

Q Oh, right. Yes, thank you so much. And we're also looking into children's emotions and wellbeing. So, you mentioned something already about the fact that you want to limit because you think it may be detrimental if it's too much. But do you have any other thoughts on this you'd like to share about digital play, etc?

A No, I just worry sometimes that if that's all they're doing, there's not actually doing anything else. We do try to take them out... Obviously, things like Legoland, it's a day out. Yes, they're actually seeing what they're actually playing with as well. But it's a lot more interesting, as well, sometimes, than just sitting in your bedroom, or whatever, playing with interactive things.

Q Yes. And when he plays with technology, is he happy, cheerful, joyful, in general?

A Yes, he's... I think he's happy and cheerful because he likes to do it, and if we restrict him to something, he's then looking forward to it, rather than it just becomes the norm and he's doing it every day. So, he's cheerful, he's not depressed.

Q Yes, that's good. So, mostly, you see these kinds of emotions, not others when he plays?

A Yes.

- Q Right. And do you think there are some kinds of technology that your child finds a bit boring or if he starts, he quickly stops playing? If there is any, why do you think this happens?
- A I think, sometimes, if it's something that he's not very good at then he'll perhaps not do it.
- Q Right, and is he similar... Is it the same attitude, so to speak, towards play that is not digital play? So, if he's not successful, he gets bored and leaves it there? In everything, not just digital play, or it's different for digital play?
- A No, I think he gets a bit frustrated with anything not digital within something that he's got. If he's got a model or something and he'll say oh, is that it? I thought it might have done something else. So, yes, sometimes there's that frustration. I think the digital is much more exciting because there's no end to it sometimes.
- Q Yes, I know, I understand. So, we are thinking, also, about children's social interaction when they play with technology. So, when he's playing with this technology, is he so taken that he can't really relate with others or, actually, he engages well with others while playing as well? And in general, also, is he a child that likes to...?
- A No, he seems to engage fairly well with people, so he's not into it and he's only just playing with himself. Normally, he's very good at interacting with other children.
- Q Right, perfect, thank you. In your view, which of the technology, the laptop or, I don't know, some Alexa or something, I don't know, some games, or whatever, which one do you think supports, helps better, in a social place? So, it's not just you, is there something that comes to mind that you think oh, I think this is better because...?
- A I think for social play, something like a LEGO model is much better because you can see him talking to his friends and saying where does that bit go or this is great, we can do this, or whatever. So, I think there's a lot more social interaction when he's got something like a model as well, and they're not just intent on looking at the screen all the time, they're looking at all the parts.
- Q Yes, I know what you mean.
- A So, I think that's interaction... I think I find that he's more interactive that way.
- Q Right. So, are there... Do you see something, I don't know, for example, Wii...? I don't know if you have the Wii or something or something like...?
- A Yes.
- Q There are two players that can play some games. Do you think that one or some, I don't know, other games like, I don't know, again, I'm saying Minecraft, between them, do you think which ones, among these kinds of games, help more to play with others, not just going on, on your own.
- A Well, I think both. But I think the model making, certainly with his friends, is more interactive. Because sometimes if they plug the Wii in, trying to ski and

stuff, and then they get fed up because they can't do it. Then, sometimes, they then get a bit despondent with that. I don't know, maybe it's just because some of his friends have got the same sort of interests, so they seem to be better on the models than they... That sort of thing, yes.

Q I understand. Perfect, thank you. And now, just a bit about you, when your son plays with technology, etc., do you happen to play with him or not?

A Oh, yes. He loves it. We love to play games and things with him as well.

Q Do you play with... This is a study a bit more on digital technology, so is there some apps or some digital toys or games that you play with him?

A Yes, I'm just trying to think. We play on the Wii, we play on the Xbox, yes. We're not as good as he is, so he quite enjoys that because then he's happy because we never win. But yes, we do, we play.

Q So, do you think that these devices, Wii, and the Xbox, are the ones that you play... Why do you think they are better than others to play with your son?

A Oh, it's good fun for us. And he likes the fact that we're getting into that as well. It can be quite a family thing. Yes, we quite enjoy doing that.

Q Yes. And when you're using your own device, does your child ever ask to play on them with you, and if so, what do you play together?

A Yes, I would say we play on the same device.

Q And are there some devices or apps that your child can only access with you or any other family member?

A No, he can access it with other people.

Q And do you ever happen to initiate, go to your son, and say, oh, let's play with some technology? And if so, can you give some example of that? And if you don't do it, why? Is there any reason for it?

A Sometimes it's just because... At the weekends, if we're off, we'll just say we have an hour, let's go and play with such and such. Then it's a family-type thing. Or let's get the Wii out and we'll do something fun. So, yes, we do.

Q We're toward the final questions. Do you think certain technologies offer more positive or negative experiences for a child? Which ones and why?

A It could be a bit of both, really. Positive, in that there are all sorts of possibilities, you can do all sorts of things on there. Negative could be that spending far, far too much time. They're not seeing their friends properly. They're not out, they're sitting in a room, it's very insular sometimes. And that can be very... Or also, as well, you could be spending money that you're not supposed to, or you could be online with somebody that claims that they're a child and they're not. There's all that stuff, that's the negative side of it. You've got to watch what's happening.

Q Yes, I understand. You said you have these kinds of concerns with technology, but did you see... Is it just in general, or do you come to this because...? What

brought you to this concern? Is there anything that brought you to these concerns or just a general, so to speak, worry?

A Well, I think it's things that you read, you see in the media, things that can happen if you're not very careful. Also, you do read about children that have depression and things like that because all they're doing is on technology all the time. It can affect their schoolwork because they're tired because they've been up, if you haven't restricted the times. That's how I know some of the problems. And also, speaking to friends and the school, as well.

Q And talking about this, do you think... Do you have concerns about the safety aspects of internet-enabled toys? And if so, what kinds of concerns? Or if you don't have any concerns, why, either way?

A Well, I suppose the concerns we've got are, obviously, if he's playing online with other people, who are these people that he's playing with? And also, as well, the content. Is that relevant for that individual's age? So, it's making sure that they're not accessing stuff that they shouldn't be accessing.

And, also, as well, things like something is violent, is it suitable, is it not, because they can be influenced by so many things online. But he's influenced by so many things reading books as well, so it's a happy medium, isn't it?

Q Yes. Yes, I know, I completely understand. And do you have any similar concerns about data privacy?

A Yes. We try as much as possible with the parental controls and things. But yes, we do worry that he's accessing stuff that he shouldn't be, or he could be influenced by people online that he doesn't know. So, again, that's something that we do worry about.

Q And do you think that the use of technologies in your children's lives, influences, also, your family life in a positive way, and if so, how?

A I think, certainly, in a positive way, in that I've probably never played games with my parents. Whereas we seem to come together, and it is positive, in that we're able to relate to what they're doing as well. But, as a child, my parents never really related to things, games, that we played years ago. I think that's positive.

Q Yes, perfect, thank you. And is there anything negative you think that comes from your children playing with technology?

A I think, sometimes, it's things that they come out with, words or... Just some things, and we've got to make sure that if they're coming out with words that they shouldn't be using, that we say that's not allowed, you shouldn't be saying that. So that's the only thing, sometimes, as well.

Q Do you have any concerns... So, you explained, pretty much, I think, concerns about your child's use of technology in general, or the use of technologies at home. Is there any difference?

A I think technologies that they're using at school is course work, but at home, it can be games and things. So, I do have, sometimes, a concern that perhaps it's not always good for them, certain things. So that's, sometimes, my concern.

Q Right, perfect, thank you so much. Would you have any advice or guidance you would offer new parents on issues relating to data privacy and safety in relation to your child?

A I think it's making sure that you read all the parental controls and set them up. And just be mindful. And make sure that you know what they're doing so that they're not just sitting in their bedroom, mindlessly doing stuff that you haven't got a clue what they're up to, as well. So, you've got to have a bit of control there.

Q Oh, look, thank you so much for your time. That was really, really appreciated.

A Well, that's all right. No, it's been really interesting. Thank you.