

Q Alex Hetherington (researcher)
A Man with 3-year-old daughter

Q So I'll get straight into the interview. Shouldn't take too long, so I won't take too much of your time.

A Okay.

Q Most of the questions focus on play and technology.

A I see.

Q And when we're talking about technology, that can mean devices like mobile phones, tablets, cameras, that sort of thing.

A Sure.

Q But also, different things like apps, websites, digital media, games, things like that.

A Sure.

Q [Overtalking] background, how many children do you have?

A One.

Q Just the one, and how old are they?

A Just coming up to three and a half.

Q Just coming up to three and a half. Okay. No worries. Right, we'll go straight into the questions then.

A Sure.

Q This first set of questions, there are five in total, the first set's about play and technology.

A Okay.

Q What kind of technology features in your child's life?

A So, she hasn't got anything of her own, but what we tend to do sometimes is give her our phone. So she can play for a bit on there. So we have got YouTube Kids app. She quite likes to scroll around and watch some of the videos, like half an hour or so. Yes, things like that.

Q What kind of device is that on? Is it on your phone, do you have a tablet [overtalking]?

A Yes, it's an iPhone, yes.

Q Are there any other devices, any tablets, anything like that?

A Yes, we do have a tab as well, but she's not so keen on the tab because they are

heavy to carry around, so she prefers my or her mum's phone. It's a bit lighter to carry, yes.

Q How often would you say she watches things on your phone?

A Once a day, I would say.

Q For how long?

A Half an hour to an hour, sometimes, yes.

Q Is this in any particular place, or?

A No, usually the living room, yes.

Q Is she usually supervised?

A Sometimes yes, but not always.

Q Does she play while watching television at all?

A Yes, sometimes TV would be on, but it might not necessarily be for her, it would be mostly for us maybe the TV's on.

Q Are there any other media apps that she has? Does she watch Netflix at all? Anything like [unclear]?

A No.

Q No, just YouTube Kids, okay.

A The YouTube Kids, yes, because we know there's a filter on there. There must be one on Netflix, but I do have Amazon Prime, but I've never actually given her Amazon Prime. But she's very good at going to apps. Sometimes I do have a few games on my mobile, and she would just go on there and just mess around. She doesn't actually know how to play them, so what she's at [unclear]. Yes, she'd just scroll around, [unclear].

I do play a golf game. In my bag there are a lot of balls, so sometimes I open my bag and give it to her, and she would just look at me, play Halloween balls. So we customise things like that. So she quite likes to enjoy a good play around the door, just [unclear] balls and just see, great 3D view of it. So she quite enjoys that, yes,

Q Does she play any of the games at all? Does she have any hobbies in that area?

A In terms of technology?

Q Yes, so a video game?

A No, she doesn't really play any games on the mobile phone, no.

Q Are there any other members of the family that might introduce her to that kind of thing? And cousins, grandparents, any other [overtalking]?

A Do have grandparents but they're catching up with the technology. They all have smart phones now. Actually, saying that, my mum's around for a couple of

weeks, and she has a game called Candy Crush, which is very basic game. She quite likes the colours, but she doesn't actually know how to play it. She just enjoys like colourful games and things like that. But she can't really play, no.

Q Do you have any physical toys that relate to her digital interests?

A She has got, well digital, I don't know if you'd call them... She's quite a fan of the Toot-Toot, so she's got tracks. Since she's turned three, she quite likes to build blocks. She likes the large LEGO bricks. Previously she wouldn't, but now she can sit there with me, and that's how I interact with her as well because I work nine to five, my wife's the housewife.

So whenever I go home, we have our dinner. Then I quite like to sit with her for an hour and half, maybe, and we do play a bit of tracks, or maybe sometimes LEGO blocks. And then I give her instructions and I've noticed the last few months she's been pretty good at understanding what I'm trying to say to her. And she tries and follows those steps. So yes, we do sometimes build tracks.

Otherwise, we have a digital, but it is an electronic toy, though. It comes with batteries and everything, like small aeroplanes or things like fire trucks. I don't know if you class that digital. I don't know. She also, like Princess Elsa, she has got dummy [?] of hers and a few other things like that.

Q Does she have any other digital toys, maybe a lot of educational things like, I think it's called a LeapPad, like a tablet, anything like that?

A No, she hasn't got anything like that, no.

Q Are any of her toys internet-enabled?

A No, actually, no.

Q No, nothing like that, no [overtalking] robots?

A No.

Q Has she ever had a chance to play with any kind of augmented reality or virtual reality?

A Actually, my wife had an app for dancing. It just came to the market now, so yes, so she used to dance with her mum. So basically you hold the mobile phone and you do the steps, and it shows what you're doing on the TV. So my wife would connect the mobile phone to the laptop, and of course, the laptop would then go to the TV. So she can actually see her movements.

That's the only interactive thing I can remember, so it might be a bit crude example, but yes, she would quite like to follow it. So they did have a few clicks [?] tracked from here, like a bit slow so she can easily follow them. She quite loves to dance, like try and follow the steps and do the thing.

Q Has she ever had a chance to play with any kind of artificial intelligence systems, things like Alexa or Siri?

A No, because, to be honest, we don't really use it, [unclear], so no, she hasn't.

When Siri did come out, I used it for a bit, but I wasn't a huge fan of it, so yes, I never used it since then. And yes, she hasn't really got a chance. We haven't got Alexa in the house.

Q Does she play outdoors a lot?

A She does yes. She goes to nursery now, three days, and we actually love the outdoors. We have actually a slide and a swing in our back garden. She loves to go and play on there. She also has a bike now and a scooter. She actually loves to go on there, yes.

Q Does technology ever feature in her outdoor play?

A Not really, no.

Q So that's nearing the end of the first set of questions now, so the next question is specifically about LEGO, which I've mentioned already.

Q How much LEGO is there in the household?

A Well, for now, because, as you know, most of the LEGO is designed for slightly older children, because you got the tiny pieces. Growing up, I was a massive fan from my childhood memories of LEGO sets. So for her, we actually got only one set. It's called LEGO Classic Large Creative Brick Box. Yes, so that's big bricks.

She quite likes them, I wouldn't say every day, maybe once or twice a week. As I said, she's getting a lot better in following instructions. If I say, connect this to this, with that, she'll try and follow it from [unclear] if I ask her, assist her. But she's getting better, yes. She tries to make new shapes now.

Q Is she interested at all in LEGO more generally, any of the other LEGO products? In fact, the LEGO films maybe? She seen those?

A No, because maybe they just don't appeal to kids of her age. We are not yet, I wouldn't say not quite yet into LEGO now.

Q I take it you haven't been to anywhere like Legoland or anything like that?

A No, to be honest, we were planning this summer, but it's just not making realised, but yes, we're definitely plan to take her to a Legoland, definitely. We have been to Chessington, but not to Legoland, no.

Q This question might not be quite so applicable to you as some of the other participants have been [overtalking], but I'm going to ask anyway. What kinds of new toys and products do you think LEGO should be developing for children in the digital age?

A I think apps would be nice. But to be honest, me and my wife are always worried about her screen time. I don't know if it's like an app where you can... There might be one already, I have to go check, of course, but there might be apps where you got building blocks and you can probably join them, maybe something along this line, if it's not already there.

But then again, we always try and so something more, not physical interactive,

just interactive with her, by playing games and rather more... Sorry, that might be the wrong question answering, but yes, we are always a bit worried too much physical interaction because maybe growing up, we didn't have it. I don't know what your age is, but growing up, things weren't that difficult.

So we are a bit worried about that, not too much screen time, because we think it can actually have adverse effect on her creativity. Of course, it depends on if you have the right content, it might help.

Q That links really nicely to another question I'm going to ask. Hold that thought, I'm going to ask you about it in a minute or two. That's great.

A Sure.

Q Next question, when your daughter's watching something on a phone, is she actively engaged? Is she very focused on what she's watching?

A I would say a lot of times, yes, she is.

Q Do you think there's some exceptions to that?

A I think so, yes definitely. I think if she's a bit hungry or something, yes, then she might not be as focused. But mostly she's very focused. And also, it depends on the time of the day. In the morning she's energetic. She might not be on the phone, but later in the afternoon she might a bit tired and then, yes, she would stay on the phone longer maybe, if you give her [unclear] rather in the morning or during the day.

Q Do you think that she finds her time with technology to be meaningful to her other everyday interests?

A To be honest, she's too little to tell. Yes, it's a difficult one. I can ask her for myself, to be honest. But I'm thinking she's picked up so many things just from watching a lot of videos. She knows a lot of animals. What I like about her is she quite likes to watch informative stuff, even for her age. This could be like a big video of a person throwing toys in a bathtub, but they will say the name, so she would say the name of the fish they are throwing in the toy.

She's picked up so many names and couple of times me and my wife were a bit surprised, she knows that animal as well. But yes, I think technology is helping on that kind of thing, she knows so many animals and things like that, colours and things like that without even us telling her.

Q The next question, I think, again, it might not quite apply, because during [unclear] study is children aged three to 11. So your daughter is just the [overtalking] range, but still a really good perspective for us. So we're still really interested. This next question is how far does your daughter enjoy trying out new things and making improvements when she's using technology?

A I would definitely say she's very enthusiastic, like LEGOs being in the house for a few months now. But recently we bought a new set of tracks for her, and she was so excited about the new things. And I come really to in defence of an app for a technology because it does [unclear] something very new we've given to

her. I can't really relate in that kind of sense, but for a new toy, she's always very enthusiastic to learn.

Q So that's the end of the second set of questions. We're onto the third set now. There's three more. This section is about technology and children's emotions in well-being. So the first question is, do you think that there's a link between technology use and children's emotions and well-being?

A Definitely, I would say so, yes. Thing is, what they are looking at is going to have some impact on them. If they are looking at something funny, you can see her laughing. Well, most of the kids think they are funny. A colourful thing can always bring a smile. Of course, some things do scare her as well. There are some poems where [unclear] most certainly.

Well, she's a bit older now, but I remember when she was two, two and a bit, she would start to cry at some things. So we knew this poem or this nursery rhyme is probably, yes, she doesn't like something in there. So yes, I think there's definitely an emotional attachment to even physical stuff.

Q What kind of [unclear] emotions do you see in her when she's using technology? Is there more of a range?

A Yes, I think she's gets happy. Well, I a few times mobile's gone off, so she gets upset. So you can really tell she was engaged in it, and of course, mobile phone's battery ran out, so she was upset. But I a lot of times, I think it's to do with happiness and joy, really, rather than anything else.

Q Does she ever get frustrated with the content that she's watching?

A I wouldn't say content, but sometimes the internet's still buffering, then yes. Or, I remember we had this old phone and it wasn't as quick as my wife's iPhone. This I threw it away. It's no good to me. But yes, she would get frustrated. I wouldn't say with the content necessarily because there so much choice from there. She doesn't like something, she just swipes and go to the next one. I wouldn't say the content is [unclear] enough.

Q Have you noticed her ever getting bored of her technology use? She [overtalking].

A She does, yes. If she's bored, she just leaves the mobile phone and starts on something else. Yes, definitely does get bored.

IV Do you think she gets bored in a similar way to when she's playing with something physical, or is it a different thing when technology's involved?

A Maybe I think she's probably getting tired of sticking at one place. As I said, she's a very active child, and she just does not want to sit still. So yes, it's probably down to that, really, that she just wants to move about now. If she's really engaged she might take that mobile phone with her, while in other instances, she will just leave the mobile phone and wouldn't care about it.

Q When she's using technology, does she interact much socially with other people?

A No, I think she's very focused on what she's looking at. She wouldn't interact.

You have to sometimes call her name two, three times. Of course, if I tell her we're going outside, she'd throw the mobile phone away and be like, yes, let's go outside. So of course, it depends on what you are telling her what to do. If you tell her to eat or something, then she might not be really interested sometimes, depending on what we're going to feed her.

Q Do you think that certain types of technology might be better at supporting more social play?

A There's a good question, certain type of technology. Yes, I would say so. I would definitely say if it's a bit more interactive, yes. I wouldn't say YouTube is the best one, because that's just you showing them a bunch of animation, or cartoons and things like that.

But yes, if something's more interactive, that's bound to... I would say so, yes, definitely, that's bound to have a better impact on her. Or learning or interaction, yes.

Q So onto the fourth set of questions now. This one is about your role as a parent in technology-mediated play.

A Okay.

Q So you kind of already touched on this, I think, towards the beginning. When your child's play involves technology, do you ever play with her?

A Sometimes I do. As I said, I have a couple of games, apps in my mobile phone. So she would ask me what's this and what's that. Then I'll try to explain it to her. Maybe the games that I have aren't quite necessarily to the standards of her age, essentially. So I wouldn't say a whole lot, that kind of interaction, but we do sometimes watch animations together, and so there's a bit of interaction going on in there.

She would ask me what's that, and not too many tricky questions, of course. She's still learning to make sentences. She makes small sentences and things like that. So yes, there's some interaction. She likes to ask me all this kind of [unclear] noise, like the animals in there, or watch that if it's something new she doesn't know. Only she gets excited, she says, look, look, look. So it's small interactions like that.

Q Do you think that [unclear] you're harder to engage with what she's doing on technology when she's, say, watching YouTube or when she's playing one of your games, do you think there's a certain type of technology that's better for engaging with her?

A Yes, definitely. I think probably if you are playing a game, I would say it's definitely easier for us to interact together, rather than just watching a video. I think we playing a game would have more interaction between us, rather than just watching a video, because I think if there are two adults, maybe you're watching a movie, maybe you can converse a bit more, but with a child, maybe it's more to do with really actually playing the game or having something more interactive to be able to interact more.

Q You said that she mostly uses your devices. Does she approach you and ask to use them?

A Yes, she's very keen. If she's in a mood she would try and ask me for my mobile phone. And, of course, I check with the wife if she already used it. If not, then we... Or we just try to divert her attention, if she's already had enough screen time, that I'll try and say, oh, let's play with the tracks or share a castle as well with a princess. So yes, we try and interact that way.

Q I think you've already answered this one as well. Are there any kinds of technologies or apps or things that she only has access to with other family members, other than yourself?

A Then more clearly because as I said, it's only YouTube that uses. So, no. No, really, yes, she's not really a problem, we can leave her on her own, actually. We're not worried, she's not going to be anything on there, everything's filtered according to the child content, so we're never worried about that kind of thing.

Q This one's the middle one and it's already touched on, do you ever initiate play using technology?

A Mostly recently I have started. If I feel like she losing interest in a LEGO play, sometimes I do try and use my phone. I used to have a game where you have create a passageway, so it was a bit easier for her to actually move the blocks around on the mobile phone. It was quite colourful as well, but she would lose her interest quite quickly in that one as well.

Q We're onto the last set of questions now and these are more about your general perceptions of technologies.

A Okay.

Q The first question is do you think certain technologies offer more positive or negative experiences for you daughter?

A Negative, yes, again, negative in the sense of screen time, yes, we are a bit worried, because of course, everyone has their own perception because mobile phone is only ten, 15 years, they'd be like... Or if go watch smart phones, it's only been six, seven or eight years. A lot of smart phones have been in [unclear] and there's always that debate about how much a child who's developing a lot rather than an adult, should have, or should be close by because [unclear] has energy and it seems the signal for the time.

So yes, it's a bit of a mixed feelings on that, how much screen time we should be allowing her. So we're always a bit worried about the screen time. I wouldn't say we've come across anything too negative other than that prospect.

Q Do you have friends who you talk to about these kinds of things? Do you get ideas [overtalking]?

A Yes, all the time because just like myself, a lot of my friends are recent dads, are recent parents. I remember there's a joke that we do, I remember some of my friends got married earlier, they had children and when I used to see them with

their kids take their mobile phone, I was like, oh, no way, my child cannot have my mobile phone.

And now I understand why because sometimes you really want to do something and you need to distract the child, then you have to give them your mobile phone so that they can do their own thing for a bit. So yes, we always have discussions like that. I don't think I've seen anyone really, who's managed to... There are maybe a few exceptions, I would say, but yes, not many people I've seen who manage to not give their child their mobile phone.

Yes, but I think it's again a debatable thing and what we do sometimes is we do, sorry, what's the word for it, yes, mobile data we turn off. So you can't see the calls. It's only the Wi-Fi working. That's when we can do a lot, just our own peace of mind. Again, nothing's proven yet if it's against the health. Of course, again there's a myth about the eyesight as well, if you hold it very close to your eyes, then your eyes can get weak.

Like back in the day you used to hear about television sets. Of course, with the technology moving, they are trying to make the screen or the light's emissions from the screen a lot safer, like blue lights can be filter. On my mobile phone I do try to have the filter on for the blue light. Just things like that, I think, can have a negative impact. Of course, if that child is using the mobile phone for too long, if you can restrict the screen time, then it's probably fine.

I hope it helps. I don't know because, of course, I've not been able to tell you a lot about technology side because there hasn't been that kind of interaction.

Q It's been really interesting, really valuable. [Overtalking].

A Okay, I'm good I've helped you [unclear] something.

Q Are you concerned at all about the safety aspect of internet-enabled [overtalking] things like that?

A Yes, we are very much... Of course, she's too young at the moment. She can't have any interaction, but yes, it's definitely something. We see a lot, even grooming and things like that. So yes, I think you have to be careful. Of course, there's an age when your child starts to be sensible, then of course you leave them on their own, but up to a certain age, I think it's good to know what your child's up to. Some sort of supervision is very important, I would say, yes.

IV Do you have any concerns about data privacy?

A In some sense, yes, I do. Of course, Kirsten is too young to be doing shopping and things like that on my credit card. But a lot of times a lot of data [?] is saved in my mobile phone, so that's where I have to be a bit careful. Like if she can somehow share it with someone. So yes, from that sense, yes.

Q Do you think that your daughter's use of technologies influences family life in a positive way?

A In some ways, yes. She might not be in a good mood and maybe half an hour she can watch her favourite nursery rhymes or cartoons and she'll be in a better

mood. In that sense yes, definitely.

Q Do you think that, on the other hand that technology use can influence family life in a negative way?

A Yes, definitely can put strain on a relationship. If I go home and I'm on my phone constantly and I'm not interacting. Actually, something which we did notice when she was growing up, sometimes she would come to us and she'd take our mobile phone from us. And that symbolised, oh hang on, she's noticing.

She's only two, two and a bit, but she's noticing we are on our mobile phone, and not eye contact. So that's when you realise kids are really smart. She knows we're not making eye contact with her. So I think it definitely can have negative impact. A child can feel neglected, as an adult. If I'm speaking with my wife and there's no eye contact, then I'm on my phone, I might be half distressed. So yes, definitely it can have negative impact, no doubt.

Q Thank you. Do you have any concerns that perhaps aren't quite relevant now, but in the future you think it might be a bigger deal, that you might care a little bit more about with technology use?

A Maybe in the sense, we are a bit concerned about when she starts going to school, and then she sees her peers, everyone has a phone, because that's what we see quite a lot. She might demand a phone, so then we need to somehow justify why she can't have a phone. But not so much from the technology point of view. I'm a [unclear] person.

Q Last question then, what advice or guidance would you offer to new parents on issues relating to technology use and safety?

A I think for us it's just to make sure that if your phone has child-related content on your phone, you haven't got anything which you don't want a young child to look at. That's the most important thing. And also, things like if it's a kids' app, most likely it's going to be fine.

And try and be strict with screen time because I have seen the kids who can stay all day on the mobile phone. And I think that's definitely detrimental, because I think just being in the digital world, I don't think that's going to be too good. I think interactions are quite important.

Q Okay. Well, that's all the questions. Thank you so much for your time.

A Thank you for your time as well, thank you.