

## Parenting for a Digital Future

From early films, comics and TV to today's social networks, tablets and online games, technology has always entered into the discourses of parenting, raising new hopes and fears and necessitating shifts in parenting practices. Yet the pace of recent changes leaves many parents and carers increasingly anxious about what these changes will mean for their children, now and in the future. Parents may or may not be aided by the often-polarised policy and popular media advice about online dangers or the detrimental effects of 'screen time' on the one hand, and a vision of digital media as opening radically-new pathways to academic achievement or self-expression, on the other.

Based in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and supported by the MacArthur Foundation's Connected Learning Research Network, we are conducting a three-year qualitative research project examining how parents and carers approach the task of bringing up their children in the digital age. We ask:

- **What are parent's visions of their children's future and that of the wider society?**
- **What risks or opportunities do parents see opening up for themselves and their children?**
- **How do they conceive of being a 'good parent' and how do they evaluate the learning and social resources available to their children?**
- **How do children view and respond to their parents' hopes, fears and values around digital media?**

We have conducted in-depth interviews with 65 families of 108 children aged 0-17 across London. Our research participants crosscut by age, socio-economic status and gender, and also include families sampled purposefully to represent those who have 'voted with their feet' by prioritising the digital. These include: families of children taking part in digital media and learning projects (e.g. code clubs, music technology, apps development), parent bloggers and parents with children with special support needs.

## Publications and outreach

The research is shared through a blog (see reverse) and a series of publications and public appearances.

- **Press appearances (Sonia Livingstone & Alicia Blum-Ross):** The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, BBC2, The Guardian, BBC Radio 4 (Today Programme and the Digital Human), Vodafone's Digital Parenting magazine, Channel 4 News
- **Public appearances:** talks for parents, conferences (Family Online Safety Institute, the Parent Zone Digital Families, BritMums Live parent blogger conference), expert consultations (CEOP) and a policy brief & stakeholder event (May 2016)
- **Academic publications:**
  - Blum-Ross, A. and Livingstone, S. (in press) From youth voice to young entrepreneurs: the individualization of digital media and learning. *Journal of Digital Media Literacy*.
  - Livingstone, S. and Blum-Ross, A. (in press) Researching children and childhood in the digital age. In James, A. and Christensen, P. (Eds), *Research with children, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. London: Routledge.
  - Blum-Ross, A. and Livingstone, S. (under review) "Sharenting," parent blogging and the boundaries of the digital self. *Popular Communication*.
  - Livingstone, S. and Blum-Ross, A. (Book in preparation) *Parenting for a digital future*.

## [www.parenting.digital](http://www.parenting.digital)

Our blog explores how parents approach the opportunities and risks presented by the digital age – with an emphasis on the experiences of parents in the UK but with comparative pieces from researchers and contributors around the world. We launched in March 2015 and in just over a year have published over 100 posts, featured writing from over 50 guest contributors, and included frequent updates from our team that give crucial insight into the latest news, research, policy

debates and advice about parenting, children and digital media. Our content has also been featured elsewhere: on the *World Economic Forum Blog*, *The Conversation*, the *Connected Learning Alliance*, the *Digital Media and Learning Research Hub*, and others.

## **Blog aims & content**

There are many questions that face parents and those who work to support parents in relationship to children's digital lives. Some of these questions are in the here-and-now (e.g. should children have their own tablet computer? Are they really learning anything from playing computer games?), while some are more future-oriented (will coding help them get a good job? Are we losing our privacy in an age of digital surveillance?). Many of our posts have addressed current policy debates, from demonstrating some of the flaws in a widely-cited report claiming technology has little benefit for education, to suggesting how E-safety education in the US can be improved. We have distilled down 6 things policy-makers need to know about children and the internet and looked at how opportunities like learning-to-code impact on academic achievement and social engagement.

## **Audience**

- Those with a *personal responsibility*: parents and carers, grandparents or other relatives and mentors.
- Those with a *professional responsibility*: teachers, informal educators, childcare professionals, clinicians, social workers, etc.
- Those who advise or have *responsibility for supporting parents*, whether formally or informally: journalists, parenting experts and advisers, parent bloggers, media regulators, policy-makers.
- Those with a *research interest* in parenting, families and digital media: students and academics from diverse disciplines, think tanks and other research bodies.

## **Get involved**

We publish one or two posts each week, from our team and from guest bloggers.

**If you are interested in contributing or re-posting content, or want to let us know of upcoming events, research or suggest topics please contact us ([s.ottovordemgentschenfelde@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.ottovordemgentschenfelde@lse.ac.uk)).**