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Interviewee: Mother of 2 sons ages 7 and 5

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Interviewee: I have four children.

Interviewer: Four. What are their ages?

Interviewee: Seven, five, three and one.

Interviewer: Our project is on ages five to 11 so we'll ask questions primarily about your children that are in that age range. So we'd like to chat with you about your electronic devices such as TV, smart phones, laptops, iPads, e-readers, desktop computers, game consoles, basically anything with a screen. Tell me about the devices your family owns and how your family members use them.

Interviewee: We own one television which is in our living area. We have one laptop which is in our study. We have, Chris and I each have a smart phone and we do own a tablet which we have only used when we travel.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Interviewee: That's it. No video game consoles, nothing.

Interviewer: All right. Let's see, tell me about these devices and how your family members use them. So for the TV, how do you [crosstalk 00:01:19]

Interviewee: We don't subscribe to cable. We have a Netflix and an Amazon Prime subscription so most of our TV, we use them just primarily for TV and video viewing and we primarily, the kids only watch on the weekends and then my husband and I will sometimes watch several times, you know, in the evenings during the week.

The computer we use for obviously personal and business reasons and then we also have started Elijah, he uses the Con Academy online program and we'll occasionally pull up information when questions come up on a You Tube video or something to show the kids. The other day I realized one of the kids didn't know how, where his milk came from and so we would pull up a You Tube video and show him that.

Our smart phones are never ... our kids never use them on their own. Occasionally we might do the same thing just like I described, showing them a video of something or pictures of people that they know so Chris and I just use them for surfing and keeping up email and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: And how about the tablet?

Interviewee: The tablet we've only used occasionally like I said when we were on vacation, we've put a couple of apps on there for the kids occasionally and then Chris when he goes on his long trips, he uses it as his portable TV that he can stream our services and stuff with, so ...

Interviewer: Do your children use devices anywhere else such as a friends or relatives homes, daycare or the library?

Interviewee: They use them at the library. Both boys like to play the computer games that are here and I'm trying to think. We really don't allow computer use outside of our house.

Interviewer: All right. So I've written down this list. I think you've pretty much answered those questions but who owns each of the different devices? Actually we talked about that. So you have the one TV in the living room.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: One laptop.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Two phones, one for you and your husband. And then the one tablet.

Interviewee: Tablet which is a shared device, yeah. Pretty much everything's shared except for the phones.

Interviewer: So think about your child's day yesterday. Walk me through the day from the time your children woke up until bedtime, paying particular attention to the devices they used yesterday.

Interviewee: Let me think about it. I think we probably didn't turn on any devices until the afternoon and that would have been to watch a couple of TV shows that they watch in the afternoon while I was doing some chores. We Skyped with their dad on our computer. I think that's really all we did yesterday.

Interviewer: All right. So let's look at this list again. How do these devices fit into your family routines?

Interviewee: Well our phones are obviously our primary communication devices and like I said, we use them for phone calls and keeping up with things and Skyping with friends and family and the TV is primarily our entertainment and occasionally educational, it's used for educational purposes. The tablet is purely entertainment, for the most part. Laptop would also be educational, business and personal, social.

Interviewer: All right, how has this changed? How have these routines or how the devices fit into your family as your children have grown older?

Interviewee: I would say we were late smart phone owners and I have become more aware over the last couple of years that as much as I said I wasn't going to use the smart phone it's on a lot more in my hands than I realize and I have become aware of am trying to set it aside more. But I know it's something that the kids see me looking at a lot and so even if they're not necessarily directly engaged with it, I realize that they're still being impacted and getting some kind of message from my use of it. I think that just as we've seen advertising and different things evolve over the last couple of years, we have really disconnected from anything that's live streaming and our being very selective about what we're choosing to pull into our homes so that's changed. I don't think that's something that I necessarily grew up with or thought about much, but in the last few years it's just been a change in the way that we use things.

Interviewer: All right. Do you remember how your routines were established when your children were very young?

Interviewee: I think we were probably not particularly intentional about it initially. It started to be a conversation that my husband and I had as we just engage with some different ideas from friends and I'm kinda stay up with the American Pediatric Society and stuff and what they're putting out about how kids are interacting with things and then just also I think as a parent, seeing things in a different perspective and just becoming a little bit more sheltering of what we really want to have input into their lives. Think I answered the question, I feel like I rabbit trailed.

Interviewer: No, no, no, you're answering just fine. Do the children have friends or relatives who make suggestions or model things to do on the devices?

Interviewee: Yes they definitely do. Their grandparents probably both sets watch more television than we do typically and they have at least one grandparent who plays a substantial amount of just, I don't know, the little games you play on your phone. So they definitely have that and then they have several close little friends who do play some video games and are talking about that world and so they are aware that it exists but they haven't expressed much feeling of being left out at this point so that's good.

Interviewer: Who primarily helps your children with the devices? For example if they need to get started on something or when something needs fixing.

Interviewee: That would be me, probably primarily and then if Chris is home but I'm the one who's home more often and so that would be me so I'll log Eli onto the computer and get him started on the Con Academy or watching a video or whatever and so they know how to get onto devices themselves except for the laptop but they are, they have rules not to.

Interviewer: So who makes decisions about purchases?

Interviewee: Purchases of the devices? [crosstalk 00:09:06]

Interviewer: The devices or software, anything related to screen [inaudible 00:09:10].

Interviewee: Both of us, both Chris and I probably make those decisions and probably I make more of those decisions than he does, again just more having to do with who's here and so, yeah.

Interviewer: Who would you say makes decisions about what the children are doing on the devices?

Interviewee: Us, we do. Chris when he's home he'll decide what's appropriate or not appropriate for them to watch. He's pulled up stuff for them to watch occasionally and then I make those decisions on a daily basis, yeah.

Interviewer: Would you say that your children use any of the devices independently?

Interviewee: I guess you could say that. We have a study where the laptop is and like I said, I'll pull up the Con Academy or something like that and I'll walk away and I'll be doing something for 15 minutes, come back and check on him. Make sure he's still ... he's never moved away from what he's supposed to be doing and so I guess in that sense, yes, he's working it on his own but he's not being completely unmonitored for long periods of time.

Interviewer: But you still boot up the computer and get him onto the appropriate place that you want him?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: All right. Let's see. When do you feel you need to guide your child's use of these devices?

Interviewee: All the time.

Interviewer: All the time?

Interviewee: All the time. At their ages right now, I don't feel like they have the discernment to be able to navigate the internet or even just getting on Prime Amazon by themselves so we do have locks on and passwords even to get onto our computer subscriptions and stuff, our TV subscriptions. Those will probably need to be heightened when we start increasing their age but yeah. And we try ... we have talks about that not everything on there is great, but and those discussions will probably continue.

Interviewer: Of course, okay. What ways have you provided guidance in how they use them? So you just mentioned you had discussions about what you think is appropriate online and what's not.

Interviewee: We've talked, even just in relation to TV shows because occasionally they have been interested in TV shows that their peers watch, that I personally just don't like and I try to explain a little bit. I don't feel I have to explain myself or justify myself all the time to them but I do try to explain that these shows don't have the same values that our family does or I am trying to, like I said, I know you guys have bad dreams, I don't want you to, your mind to have these images and stuff in your head that I know that you're not gonna know what to do with and so we've had discussions with 'em to try and explain why we make some of the choices that we do about what they're seeing.

Interviewer: Do you also talk to them about limiting time? I mean oftentimes [crosstalk 00:12:16]

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: About content but are there other factors?

Interviewee: Yeah absolutely. We and this is probably, I think this has been a change that we've made in the last year was moving all of their TV viewing to the weekend. So we don't turn on the TV for them at all during the week and then we limit to like they can watch a movie and a couple of TV shows and they have to kind of decide upon themselves what they want to do that weekend and we've talked about them wanting them to be able to use their imaginations and being able to figure out what to do with themselves when they're bored and really haven't had any ... I mean after an initial maybe a week of fighting about that just a little bit, it's ... they don't ask for it during the week 'cause they know it's not an option.

Interviewer: All right so how do you make decisions about guiding your child's use of electronic devices?

Interviewee: I think I've read several books. I read, 12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You, the, oh shoot, what's the name of it? The tech wise family and then I've read several things like stuff from the American Pediatric. They've kinda put out some new information just about what they're seeing as trends and so I find those things helpful to just reinforce our decisions about what we're letting them do and what kind of habits they're developing so I try to stay aware of some of the research that's happening. I can't stand half of all of it and I just feel like there's some common sense to some of this that we're just letting in and obviously our religious beliefs also, you know, set some parameters around what kind of, the content especially so that they're exposed to.

Interviewer: Do you consider your own childhood experiences with media when making decisions?

Interviewee:	I think I have. I feel like our, my parents made really, pretty good choices overall in what they allowed especially with content. I think I remember seasons of watching probably more. We didn't have lots of ... our parents, my parents weren't particularly text savvy so we didn't have all the newest technology or anything like that. Then I'd say on the counter side, my husband was exposed very early to a great deal and he is at a place in life now that he realizes, I mean he can see the impact of that and we've made a very conscious choice to not repeat those mistakes.
Interviewer:	When making decisions about guiding your child's use do you think about whether an activity is educational or not?
Interviewee:	Yes we do, yes.
Interviewer:	And how do you decide if it's educational?
Interviewee:	That's kind of a good question. I guess we ... is there truth? Is there beauty? Is there goodness to what is being said and communicated? Is it being communicated in a way that's thoughtful and stirring up the interest and stuff of the kids. Or is just something that's, I don't know, I feel like there are something's are promoted as educational that don't have much content and tend to be kinda hyperactive and so I would say I have a, I don't know, I just kind of view a little bit and kinda test it out myself before just letting them into it.
Interviewer:	So what other purposes do you see for your children's use of electronic devices?
Interviewee:	Apart from educational and then just fun entertainment that promotes good stories and fun, I mean I'm sure that we'll hit the point where they start to become aware of the social world and the social aspect of that, but I would like to prolong that period for as long as possible and make face to face and real relationships kinda the priority. And then I know that that will be part of their world eventually and then I would hope that we'll have to develop some new kind of standards about what that looks like and how they engage with that.
Interviewer:	Are there any usage you worry about?
Interviewee:	Yeah. I think that many uses of electronic devices tend to be addictive and also just channels from going from something that is mild and harmless to things that are not. They're very destructive and so I think that teaching them discernment and those kinds of things a must and it can't be something that we just assume somebody else is going to do. It has to be something that we have to be engaged with.
Interviewer:	So you mentioned a few resources. What other websites, magazines, TV shows or other resources have you seen or heard about parenting children's use of electronic devices or screen media?

Interviewee: I can think of a couple of bloggers that we use and they often connect to outside external links from mainstream magazines or psychologists and I can't name any particular of those magazines or those things off the top of my [crosstalk 00:18:12]

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: Head but those are places that I've gone to hear from people that I trust and who have similar parenting and value systems that we do to see what their reading and what they're hearing. Then we've used several different online resources as far as just helping us navigate content, common sense media is like a go-to thing for us. 'Cause we don't ever walk blind into any kind of movie or viewing. We wanna know what's in it. They occasionally will link to different articles and things that have to do with how you navigate that.

Interviewer: Do you recall the names of the bloggers?

Interviewee: At home is one of the names of the bloggers. Meg Meeker, I don't agree with everything that she says but she has put out some stuff about social media and internet use and other things. She's a pediatrician I believe. Let me think.

               Thinking of directly in relation to media because I'm having a hard time. Those are the ones that I can think of off the top of my head.

Interviewer: That's fine. Do you find that their advice is useful or there's some that you question?

Interviewee: I find most of their advice useful at least and at least thought provoking and oh, we haven't had that conversation or we need to think about this a little bit differently. I hadn't thought about it that way before.

Interviewer: Have you received advice from anyone about guiding your child's use of these devices such as professionals in the community like librarians, teachers, pediatricians, police officers or others?

Interviewee: I think our pediatrician once in a while will say something vaguely related to just ... he will occasionally like once every couple of years or something ask about media usage. In a very kind of just broad sort of way. But it's never been a long or discussion with much direction in particular so I don't know if he's just surveying for the most part or decides we don't need to talk or I don't know.

               I know that the library periodically puts out things and I know that the metro family magazine also will periodically put out things and they have actually, they have a couple of bloggers and writers that contribute to their magazine that also periodically address the media usage as well.

Interviewer: I'm going to have to find that magazine.

Interviewee:	Yeah it's a local ... actually think the library carries it here 'cause they drop 'em off. It's a once a month or yeah, periodical and it talks a lot about things that are just going on in the area that are related to families but then they also have some articles and stuff there, outsourcing from different places.
Interviewer:	I know I've seen it but my children are a lot older [crosstalk 00:21:30]
Interviewee:	Older, right, right.
Interviewer:	So we don't need it anymore, but definitely it sounds like a good resource. Let's see. Did you find the advice that professionals offer to you useful?
Interviewee:	Yes, most of the time. I think that most of the time it reinforces conclusions that we've mostly drawn for ourselves. I think that the more concrete the statistics and the more concrete they ... it's a hard thing to navigate because it's such a sensitive thing but I think that sometimes they're too vague. I feel like when you're vague, yes, you reach a broader spectrum and you don't shut down your listeners but you also haven't given them enough tools to really come back to some of the issues that we face. It's a double sided thing.
Interviewer:	So what else would you have liked to have learned?
Interviewee:	I just would like to see 'cause I ... like I said, I've read some of the statistics and then just some of the things that they're learning about how kids learn and what's helpful and what's not and I just don't think that those things are as clearly and as widely stated as they ought to be.
Interviewer:	All right so I mentioned part of the outcome of this study is to provide librarians training modules so that they can then come back and provide parenting programs.
Interviewee:	Eli.
Interviewer:	He says, I'm getting bored mom. How do you know who's advice to follow?
Interviewee:	I would be inclined to follow the advice of people who have both educational and work experience with children and with the issues that we're talking about, who have some kind of proven track record with outcomes and I don't know, who can articulate well. I don't know if I answered that question well.
Interviewer:	Yes you did, that's fine. What areas do you feel comfortable guiding your child?
Interviewee:	In what areas? That's a very broad question.
Interviewer:	It is.

Interviewee: In relation to [crosstalk 00:24:09]

Interviewer: Screen [crosstalk 00:24:10]

Interviewee: Just in relation to ... I feel like I've been, I've had the opportunity to read enough that this point I feel pretty confident in making most of my decisions. I'm always curious to hear more. There's constantly [inaudible 00:24:29] new things released, there's constantly new information so it would be great if the library were reviewing or recommending different things and had reasons for recommending those things. I feel like I'm comfortable with the decisions that we've made so far.

Interviewer: So this is part of the same question but you might've already answered it. Are there areas in which you have questions and would like further guidance about for now or in the future?

Interviewee: I think like I said, just kind of continuing to review content and outcomes for different programs, games, etc., that kids are using. Helpful things about filters, blocks, all those kinds of things are helpful and then just as the research continues to change and develop about what kinds of things we know really do work and what kind of things we're kidding myself about. Those are all things that I would be interested in continuing to hear about.

Interviewer: Okay great. So what are the main things you do with technologies? For example, communication, entertainment, work related, research, creative productions or anything you can think of?

Interviewee: Yeah I think communicating is a huge thing. Being able to keep contact with people we don't see face to face, yes. Researching I mean I think I'm probably Googling things probably five to 10 times a day just, what's this about? Being able to have all the information at our fingertips is something that is completely revolutionary. So that. I definitely use it for business and creative purposes as well as just with just fun outlets for helping with little projects at home and then obviously entertainment.

Interviewer: So in relation to each device you mentioned earlier, would you describe yourself as an expert, beginner or somewhere in between?

Interviewee: Probably somewhere in between on most of them. The TV, I think there's not much more to grasp on that in particular but I think that there's always new things on the phone. My phone is not, I mean it's sort of smart but it's not super smart so I know that that's a world that I'm probably not as into as I could be. The tablet, we're underusing that, I suppose and I'm sure there are more things to learn. I don't know how much there is to learn on that actually. Probably moderate.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your children's other parents experience with technology? Would you consider them expert, beginner, somewhere in between and what are the main things he uses technology for?

Interviewee: Right I would say he's probably more advanced than I am on those devices. He uses them a lot more for work. He uses a lot more computer programs and communication systems at work and he uses them also for keeping up with sports and all that kind of fun thing. So yeah.

Interviewer: All right. It would be helpful for me to have some basic information about you and your family. How would you describe your ethnic background?

Interviewee: White.

Interviewer: All right and your husband?

Interviewee: White.

Interviewer: Could you tell me the highest level of education you have completed?

Interviewee: I have received my bachelor's.

Interviewer: And your husband?

Interviewee: Has also received his bachelor's.

Interviewer: In what areas?

Interviewee: I have a [inaudible letters 00:28:36] degree from OU and Chris has a drama degree from the University of Iowa. He's actually starting his master's degree in information technology so complete change, yeah.

Interviewer: What are your professions?

Interviewee: I am a stay at home mom and Chris is an aviation's technician in the Navy.

Interviewer: Very interesting. And lastly, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about this topic?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of off the top of my head. I think it's a good topic to be studying. I think that it's an important one and I think it's an important one for families and parents to be continuing to learn and educate themselves on so that we put our kids in the best advantaged position we can. That they are able to cope with the changing technologies in healthy ways.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for talking with me today.