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Interviewee: Mother of 1 boy age 9

Interviewer: All right. So, I'm going to ask you a series of questions. Feel free to answer as completely as you want. Take as much time with your answers as you'd like. The first is, how many children do you have?

Interviewee: I have two kids. I have a nine-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter.

Interviewer: Our project is on children ages 5 to 11, so we'll ask primarily about your children who fall in this age group, and since they both do, you can reply accordingly. So we'd like to chat with you about electronic devices such as TVs, smartphones, laptops, iPads, eReaders, desktop computers, and game consoles or any other devices that you might use. Basically, anything with a screen. So tell me about the devices your family owns and how your family members use them.

Interviewee: So my husband and I both have iPhones. Both kids have one of those Launchpads, just a little game device that's not hooked up to the Internet. I have a laptop. My husband has a laptop for work and for personal use. We have two televisions. That, I think, is it.

Interviewer: Do your children use devices anywhere else, such as a friend's or relatives home, daycare, or the library?

Interviewee: They come to the library once a week, and they get an hour at the computer in the library in the kids' section. Any time they're at Mimi and Papa's house, they'll watch TV or play on the computer, and that may be, like, once a month.

Interviewer: I've written down a list of the electronic devices you've mentioned. Could you talk through each one? So, who is the primary user, and what is the primary use for each of these devices as we go through them? So, for the iPhones.

Interviewee: My iPhone, I'm the primary user of it, and my husband is the primary user of his iPhone. The kids really don't use our phones, for the most part. She has a reading game that she'll play maybe once a week for 30 minutes on my phone, but that's it.

Interviewer: Let's see. The Launchpads, which I'm not familiar with.

Interviewee: Child, do you remember who made those Launchpads?

Child: LeapFrog.

Interviewee: Yeah, LeapFrog.

Interviewer: Oh, it's a LeapFrog.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: So they each have one, and they are the primary users. They really only get those maybe once every two weeks for about an hour.

Interviewer: What's the primary use?

Interviewee: Oh, the primary use. To play games.

Interviewer: So all kinds of different games?

Interviewee: Yeah. There's math games, reading games, science games. They have a bunch to choose from.

Interviewer: We had an early form of the LeapPad, so I think I know what you're talking about.

Interviewee: Yes, they love it.

Child: I have LeapSearch, which sort of connects to the Internet.

Interviewee: Yeah, but we don't really let him use that.

Child: Yeah. Occasionally.

Interviewer: Let's see. The first laptop you mentioned is your laptop.

Interviewee: Yes. The primary use, I mean, I just use it for all my stuff. I do email, Internet searches, Skype occasionally. I'm a fitness instructor, so sometimes I have meetings where I have to talk to my leaders and things on it. We watch Netflix on it sometimes.

Interviewer: The second laptop, you said, is your husband's?

Interviewee: Uh-huh (affirmative), and he uses it for work, but he also has a personal one, which he would do all the things I just mentioned on his personal one, also.

Interviewer: Okay, so he has two laptops, actually?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: The last devices you have listed are two TVs.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We don't have cable, so we just do Netflix or DVDs on those. We have an Xbox that's connected to it, so sometimes they'll play games on it.

Interviewer: Is that connected to the Internet, as well?

Interviewee: I think it is connected to the Internet, yeah.

Interviewer: Let's think about your child's day yesterday, or a recent day you were together. Walk me through the day from the time your child woke up until bedtime, paying particular attention to the devices he or she used yesterday or on that day.

Interviewee: A typical day, the kids will wake up and get dressed and have breakfast, make their beds. We start our homeschool day. Child is a third grader, so he has considerably more to do than Everly. She's doing pre-K this year. I'll do math with her, and we'll read books together while brother works on his math and his language arts. We read US history together while we eat lunch. He has copy work to do. Typically, we might run to Target in the afternoon if we've got grocery shopping to do. Child takes karate during the day, so we'll go to karate class. We'll come home. If it's a nice day outside, the kids will play with the neighborhood kids, because they've all come home from school by then, while I cook dinner. Most days, there is no screen time for the kids. If we've gone to the library that day, they'll have played the hour on the computer, but if it's not a library day ... Sometimes in the evening, they'll get to watch an episode of something on Netflix, but that depends on if school has been finished for the day. If they've both had their bath time and it's not too late, they'll get to do that. I would say five days out of seven, they're not watching TV at night. Then, at karate, she maybe used my phone for 30 minutes to play the reading game.

Interviewer: While brother's busy with his class?

Interviewee: While brother's busy, yes. That's it. I'm pretty strict about screen time. I try to limit it a lot more than, I think, the average person does.

Interviewer: Looking at our list again, how do these devices fit into your family routines? So, for example, has this changed as your children grow older? So for the iPhones, how does that fit into your family routines?

Interviewee: I mean, I kind of just use it whenever I hear it ding, like I get a message, or I'll need to check my email. The kids are never on the iPhones unless they're looking over my shoulder at something. We try to not be on them too much.

Interviewer: The Launchpads, how do those figure into their day?

Interviewee: If they get to, it's in the evening. It's typically they both have one, and they're just kind of doing it at the same time. They help each other out with it. Again, that's once every couple of weeks.

Interviewer: Is it something that you work with the children when they're using?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: So that's all their own time?

Interviewee: That's all them.

Interviewer: Unstructured play time?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. Do you feel that the routine and how the devices fit into your family has changed as they get older?

Interviewee: Probably. When he was little and he was my only one, he would get to watch TV, but he didn't have a Launchpad for a long time. There was definitely no phone use, and we weren't coming to the library and doing the computer time. She probably has gotten access to things younger, just because she's the second one, and that typically is kind of how it goes. I actually feel like we have less screen time than we had in the past, just because they've become more interested with playing with neighborhood friends. There's just other fun things to do besides watch a screen.

Interviewer: Do you remember how routines were established when the children were very young? So the decisions that you made about their use of technology.

Interviewee: Like how did I come to make those choices?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: I was raised with a TV on all the time. I mean, sun up to sundown. It was always in the background. I just knew that I didn't want that for my family. I've read a lot of books, and I've read a lot of studies about the effect screen time has, especially on little kids. Now, all the research that's come about with teenagers and the phones. Just, I want something better for them. The decision was made early, and my husband agrees that it should be limited and that we should read books and play instead.

Interviewer: Do the children have friends or relatives who make suggestions or model things to do on the devices?

Interviewee: Yes. He's got several friends that have their own phones that are his age, and we've talked about that. It makes me uncomfortable, because the Internet is a black hole of everything, good and bad. I have asked them if their friends are pulling out their phones, either say something like, "Hey, let's not do that right now," or maybe come inside if they won't get off their phones, just because I'm not there to monitor what's going on. I know that Child would like a phone, and we've talked about it, that he's not quite old enough to understand why we have chosen not to give him a phone. My family is supportive. My parents don't really understand the level that we have permitted. They definitely get to watch more when they're at their grandparents' house. I think that also has to do more with just

their energy level. They need the kids to be still and quiet for longer than I need them to be still and quiet. I don't feel pressure, and if anybody does try and pressure me, I've got deep roots for why we've chosen what we do, so it doesn't really bother me.

Interviewer: Can you explain that statement?

Interviewee: I've read too many books, and I've read too many articles about the negative effects of screen time. It doesn't do anything for you. It turns their brains to mush. I mean, all the teenagers that are addicted to their phones. I don't want us to be at dinner and everyone's looking at their hands with their devices. It's just a different world than I grew up in, and I want better for them than a lot of kids, I feel, have it theses days.

Interviewer: Who primarily helps your children with the devices? For example, when they need help getting started or when something needs fixing.

Interviewee: If it has to do with the TV or the Xbox, that's Daddy. He knows that. LeapPads, they can ask either one of us, myself or my husband. Then, I would help or they have asked librarians before for help on the computers at the library. Then, Child is real good with helping her on any of that stuff.

Child: If I can't work the TV, then Daddy helps.

Interviewer: That's kind of funny. In my house, it's all on me.

Interviewee: Is it? My husband works for Dell. He's very technical. He's the technical one.

Interviewer: Let's see. Who makes decisions about purchases?

Interviewee: Primarily me. Are you talking about technology?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Then that would be my husband. I mean, he comes to me and says, "Hey, I think we should do this," and we talk about it, but he's the one that does all the research and knows how to set it up and all that.

Interviewer: How about for purchasing games for their Launchpads?

Interviewee: That's my job. I bought all the games.

Interviewer: I imagine they give you recommendations of what they want or are interested in?

Interviewee: It's just my knowledge of them. He loves science, so any time we're in the market to get a new game for the Launchpad, then it's always something science. I mean, they're not on the Internet. They've never looked up games. They don't know what's out there, so I just kind of know them and what they would like.

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

Interviewee: I do.

Interviewer: Can you explain that a little bit more?

Interviewee: They never have ... What am I trying to say? They never are on the Internet unsupervised ever. If they have TV time, typically we have a library movie that they've picked out and I've said. "This looks okay," that they can watch. If we don't have that, then they'll ask, "Can we watch this on Netflix? Can we watch that on Netflix?" We've got all of that password protected for the stuff that's ranked PG and up, I think, so they can't even, if they were trying to. Then, of course, I bought all the Launchpad games, so I already know what's on there. Then, they're not on our phones except for that reading game, but I'm sitting right next to her while she's doing it.

Interviewer: So you might have kind of answered this one already, but which of these devices does your child use independently? I think you said the Launchpads.

Interviewee: The Launchpads are independent. When we're at the computer, at the library, I mean, I'm sitting behind them, but I'm not actively doing it. They also will watch Netflix. I mean, sometimes we'll watch a family movie or something, but if it's at night, they're typically ... Like if they want to watch a Pokemon show or something, we're not in there with them while they do that.

Interviewer: When do you feel a need to guide your child's use of these devices? In what ways have you provided guidance in how they use them?

Interviewee: I feel like we've done a really good job setting up boundaries to where I don't have to guide a lot. The Launchpads are I just set them up how they're set up. They can't change any of it. The library has been set up with boundaries. It only accesses these games and that's it. They can't just get on the Internet and do whatever. When she's sitting with me playing the game on the phone, I mean, sometimes she'll hand me the phone because she's accidentally gotten out of the game. She's pushed a button, so I just get her back on. I always make sure she's not getting somewhere she doesn't need to be. Like I said with Netflix with the password protection, we have an adult profile and a kid profile, and they always go to the kid one. It just shows age-appropriate things. Like I said, they have to ask what is it they want to watch, because even, there's certain kids shows like SpongeBob. That's not coming into my house, so we don't do that.

Interviewer: Are there certain programs on Netflix that you sit down together and watch and discuss what's going on in the narrative or anything?

Interviewee: We've done that, especially with Frozen and full-length movies, typically, we'll do that.

Interviewer: How do you make decisions about guiding your child's use of electronics? You've mentioned a few of these. When you make these decisions about guiding your child's use, do you think about whether an activity is educational, or are there some other factors that you think of?

Interviewee: Definitely. I'm always on the lookout for educational things or Bible, Christian movies. Last night, they watched a cartoon about Marie Curie. Who was it that you watched a couple weeks ago? Galileo, that's what it was.

Child: Yes, Galileo.

Interviewee: So they'll watch those shows like that. Or we have different DVDs like Veggie Tales and What's in the Bible. Those are my preferred. Also, because the Xbox is hooked up to the Internet, I'm remembering now that YouTube, sometimes we'll get on the NASA channel or National Geographic and watch together shows about the Earth or space.

I mean, I homeschool, so I'm always thinking how can I get in a little bit more quality programming. They do get to choose the silly stuff sometimes.

Interviewer: How do you decide if an activity is educational? That one's a little more subjective, I think.

Interviewee: If it's directly related to something we're studying, I would consider it educational, like when we watch the outer space things or about the Earth or about a certain animal or culture we're learning about. We're also doing US history, so they'll watch like Liberty's Kids. I don't know if you've heard of that before.

Interviewee: I consider that educational. I don't know. If it's engaging any part of their brain to where they have to think or they're just learning something. I wouldn't really consider Frozen educational. That's just fun and songs and a cute story, but it doesn't really have any substance to it, in my opinion. I don't know if that answered it or not.

Interviewer: It does. I think you've already answered this, but what other purposes do you see for your children's use of electronic devices?

Interviewee: Besides educational?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: I mean, it's for fun. We don't do a lot of screen time, but I know they like it, so I like to indulge them when they ask sometimes to do it. I know that they're good kids, and they don't get a whole lot of it. I mean, I want them to be able to do it sometimes for fun.

Interviewer: Are there any uses you worry about?

Interviewee: Absolutely. The unsupervised access to the Internet is what worries me the most.

Interviewer: What websites, magazines, TV shows, or other resources have you seen or heard about parenting children's use of electronic devices or screen media? That might be harder to recall, but are there types of resources you use that give you guidance?

Interviewee: I read the book Globe Kids. That was a big one. Just about kids and their use of screens.

Interviewer: I haven't heard of that one.

Interviewee: Oh, it's an excellent book, just all the research that's out on that. Then, MSN will sometimes have an article. I'll be scrolling on Facebook sometimes, and someone's attached an article about teenagers and screen time or phones. Sometimes my doctor, when we have well visits, he'll bring it up. Just be sure that they're getting outside activity and not just sitting around all day.

Interviewer: That's good to hear.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. It's crazy. When I hear that nine-year-olds are spending, like, six or seven hours a day in front of a screen, I just don't get it. Yeah, we don't do that.

Interviewer: Are there are other resources that come to mind? Other websites you've looked at? For example, Common Sense Media is a source.

Interviewee: Yes, I have been on there. Whenever I'm questioning whether we can watch a movie or not, I'll go on that and read the reviews on that, just to see it. I'm very strict about movies. If there's sexual content or the crude language ... I mean, stupid is a bad word. We don't talk like that. I just feel like so many movies are ruined when they bring in that language. It just doesn't need to be there. So yeah, that is definitely a website I go to.

Interviewer: Any others you can think of?

Interviewee: Not right now.

Interviewer: Were there any that you found that weren't helpful to you that you thought were giving you conflicting advice?

Interviewee: No, I can't recall that.

Interviewer: Have you received advice from anyone about guiding your child's use of these different kinds of device? You mentioned your pediatrician? Are there other professionals in the community that you might have talked to?

Interviewee: Professionals?

Interviewer: Like librarians, teachers, police officers. You mentioned your pediatrician.

Interviewee: I think that might be the only professional that I've talked to about screen time.

Interviewer: Is that pretty routine when you go to your well visits?

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, he's got so much he's got to say to me, so usually, it's just pretty brief. I know that he's there if I have questions. He's an excellent pediatrician.

Interviewer: Do they have any kind of advice documents in their office at all?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So they have brochures or pamphlets about screen media and using technology?

Interviewee: He has a little website you can download for all the different ages and stages about different topics, also.

Interviewer: Sounds great.

Interviewee: Yeah, it is.

Interviewer: It sounds like this advice is useful for you.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: What else would you have liked to have learned?

Interviewee: What else would I have liked to have learned like regarding making a choice for screen time?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: I don't know. I kind of feel like I know everything I need to know about it.

Interviewer: How do you know whose advice to follow? I think you might have already answered that one.

Interviewee: It's kind of a combination of everything I've read and then just kind of what sits well in my heart about it. If I read something that just doesn't sit well, then I just tend to think, well, that's not right for our family. The kid across the street is 10, and she just got a phone. I mean, I'm not her mom, so I don't make that decision for her, but that just doesn't sit with me. So that's kind of a gut check is what I use.

Interviewer: Picking up where we left off, in what areas do you feel comfortable guiding your child, and are there areas you have questions about and would like further guidance?

Interviewee: I feel pretty comfortable guiding them on all the devices. We haven't really talked much about the Internet yet and how to stay safe on that. We have been frustrated. We've been looking into ways to ... Like modems to use that would filter out a lot of the stuff so that you couldn't accidentally get to bad websites. There's not a whole lot of choices out there for that, especially because new websites are being created all the time. It's hard for them to keep up. We will definitely continue that search for when they do have more access to the Internet. I don't know that I feel like I need any guidance.

Interviewer: In terms of the main things you do with technology like communication, entertainment, work-related tasks, creative productions, research, et cetera, do you think that you would consider yourself an expert, a beginner, or somewhere in between?

Interviewee: Regarding them using?

Interviewer: Or you, for your own use, as well.

Interviewee: I feel like I'm closer to the expert. Maybe not expert, but better than somewhere in between.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about your child's other parent's experience with technology? So your husband's experience. What are the main things he or she does?

Interviewee: He's very experienced with technology, also. His primary thing that he's on is his phone, but I mean, that's what he does all day, is he's on his computer at work or on the phone, making some kind of presentation, emailing. He'll play Xbox with the kids sometimes. I can pretty much count on him to know how to do any of it.

Interviewer: So you would probably describe him as an expert, as well?

Interviewee: Yeah.

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

Interviewee: Caucasian.

Interviewer: And your child's other parent?

Interviewee: Caucasian.

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

Interviewee: I have a Bachelor of Science degree.

Interviewer: In?

Interviewee: In industrial engineering and management.

Interviewer: How about your husband?

Interviewee: My husband has a bachelor's in management of information systems and a bachelor's in marketing.

Interviewer: So you finished your bachelor's. What are your professions?

Interviewee: He is a sales director at Dell. Before I had kids, I worked in industrial engineering at Tinker Air Force Base and then again at Integris, but then I had him just a couple years out of school and decided to stay home. I've been home ever since. Now, I teach a group fitness class a few days a week, but that's it.

Interviewer: That sounds fun.

Interviewee: Yeah, it is fun.

Interviewer: What kind of fitness?

Interviewee: It's cardio strength. 30 minutes of cardio and 30 minutes of weights. It's all choreographed. Then, on Saturdays, it's a dance class.

Interviewer: Sounds fun.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's really fun.

Interviewer: Do the kids get involved, as well, or is it for adults?

Interviewee: It's for adults. Sometimes they can come in, but we pay a childcare lady for that.

Interviewer: That's great. Do you use any kind of technology with your job or your dance class?

Interviewee: I get a DVD three times a year that has all the routines on it, so I use that.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us on this topic?

Interviewee: I don't think so. I feel like I've said it all.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very much for your time today ...

Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: ... and getting to meet you and your lovely children.

Interviewee: Yes, they're pretty great.