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Interviewee: Father of 1 son age 10 and 1 daughter age 15

Interviewer: So you have one son? Is that correct?

Interviewee: One son, he's going to be 10 in a couple of weeks. October 22nd.

Interviewer: Happy Birthday. Is that fourth grade?

Interviewee: He's in the third grade.

Interviewer: Third grade, okay.

Interviewer: So, our project is focusing on children ages 5 to 11. And there are no right or wrong answers. We're just trying to understand how families work around screen media.

So first we'd like to talk about the different electronic devices that you have and that your son also uses. What kinds of electronic devices do you have at home?

Interviewee: He has access to a desktop computer that I use mostly, but sometimes he uses it. He has an iPad that we bought for him, and he has a cellphone that does not have access to data.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: It's only to text and communicate with us. He sometimes, he uses a Chromebook that belongs to his sister. It all depends on which one is charged at the moment.

Interviewee: And I would also add the TV because the TV set, our TV set is connected to like Netflix and things like that. So I guess I'm considering that an electronic device.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Interviewee: In the sense of access to data and screen time. We do have a book reader, but we haven't used it in years because no one in the house liked it. So we bought it, one of these Amazon Book Readers, but it's been dormant in a room for more than three years.

Interviewee: None of us liked it. Not even you know like... even changing fonts or things like that. It didn't work for me. I hated that I stopped at a point in a book and when I came back, it wasn't on the same page for some reason. The only thing I liked was the fact that I could press a word and get the meaning and the definition. That was the only thing I find like advantageous, but other than that I just didn't like it. I guess I'm too... I'm used to reading pages and because my kids and my wife, we all read often. So I guess everybody felt the same about it.

Interviewee: Amazon disappeared a book that I bought also. And I hated that. It rubbed me the wrong way.

There was a problem with authors, and then when I complained, they sent me, I don't know, 7.99 to... but the fact that they didn't even you know, tell me in advance that they were going to do it, I just... it rubbed me the wrong way. So that was another issue that I was like oh, here's another reason not to use it.

Interviewer: Not to... So thinking about the desktop, the iPad, the cellphone, and your daughter's computer. How does your son choose which one to use?

Interviewee: Okay, the-

Interviewer: I know you said before he uses that one that's plugged in.

Interviewee: Time. Yeah, but also the time. We, for example, if his [inaudible 00: 03: 50] and he just wants to watch a Netflix movie, but I'm watching a baseball game on the TV, he tries then to get either the desktop computer because it has access to Netflix or his iPad. The desktop computer I should say, both for my daughter, which she's 15, and my son, they both use it because that's Word and Powerpoint are. And that's like the homework [crosstalk 00: 04: 17]. Then I should also add that when his iPad is not charged and his sister is busy with the computer, the Chromebook, and I'm on the TV, he also asks for his mom's cellphone iPhone. And in that case, we allow him to use it even for Netflix, or for Youtube videos if it's in the house. Because of the wifi because otherwise-

Interviewer: Don't want to use up--

Interviewee: You could use data and then we would be using up the data.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: So in the house, he has done that. Not as often as the iPad and the TV, but that has happened also.

Interviewer: And so which of these devices does he tend to use alone and are there others that he uses with you or maybe with his sister? Five years is a big gap. Are they close?

Interviewee: No, but they are close. They are close. They tend to watch movies and TV or TVs together in the TV because they can sit down on the couch in the living room. But the iPad, he uses by himself a lot.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: In the car sometimes. If it's a... when we go to New York, you know long travel, Connecticut, he usually takes his iPad and he does his accesses... he does this thing that I didn't even know that could be done. He actually showed me how to do it where he kind of downloads his movies and they are actually offline while he's in the car. He doesn't have access.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Netflix and I think other, Amazon Prime, they allow you to download the movie. It downloads to your computer.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: For a certain period of time. You know it's not that it is going to be there forever.

Interviewer: It's not permanent. Uh-huh.

Interviewee: And the computer has to be, if I remember correctly, the computer has to be associated with the account.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: And for a certain period of time, you can watch the movie or the series you downloaded. And you're actually offline. So he has done that in the car. And... but he uses the iPad a lot, on his iPad, his own iPad a lot to watch actually Youtube and Netflix. He's mentioned he watches is that what... those are the channels or the tools that has the stuff that he likes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think that's it in terms of... because he's a reader. He reads books. He's... in terms of reading stories, he's pretty good with books.

Interviewer: Let's see, okay. So, can you walk me through a typical day in your son's use of media? What kinds of things does he use, like maybe yesterday or a typical day?

Interviewee: So, he... we get home after 5: 30, 6, whenever the day's done. And he usually watches a little bit of TV while we're cooking or fixing dinner. It's been a struggle to make him not use his iPad at the dinner table. That's the only issue that we've had. And he's sneaky in that way. He takes advantage of sometimes we being busy and he's the only one at the table. So, he says, "oh, well, since we're not talking". But what we usually do is that we want to make sure that the homework is done first. And if the homework is done and it's not time for bed yet, then he can have that... he can use that time to watch what he wishes. Now, there is also the fact that he does take piano lessons on Saturdays. And we want to make sure that he actually studies for piano.

So, you know, he's always like trying to see what happens in terms of [inaudible 00: 08: 38] and like checking really fast. I can watch, especially if he's into a series. Once Netflix releases a series, he knows he's out. He wants to watch whole thing. Then the other moment where he, during the day--talking about the day--the other moment where he watches, in front of a screen in the TV is in the morning right after breakfast. If I'm still doing stuff, we have a dog so while I'm [inaudible 00: 09: 10], I'm going to give the dog a stroll before he goes to school. So, at that time you can switch the channel. If I'm watching the news or whatever, he does... that's usually I would say like 15 to 20 minutes.

Interviewer: In the morning, yeah?

Interviewee: In the morning. Not all the time, especially with like now if there's baseball. I'm a baseball fan. I try to see the highlights or they don't get too much TV in the morning. In during the weekends though, we have to control. We have to say this is what you're going to do during the day, and that break down

that we give him, we put what is TV or computer time. Because otherwise, he will watch a whole series, 20 episodes if you are not on top of it.

Interviewer: Is there a particular breakdown that you want between computer use versus TV use?

Interviewee: Usually depending on what else there is to do. If you know their room needs clean up-

Interviewer: Ah.

Interviewee: Those kinds of things. I try to, I try to set a rule and I say try because I'm not on top of him like, you know, to make sure this is the case. But I try for him not to be more than two hours, straight hours in front of the thing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative) TV. You mean in a row or per day?

Interviewee: No, in a row.

Sometimes the day could be more. Sometimes if we, if me and my wife are busy and I see that he's getting bored in the corner and then he already read his book and things like that, I said you know you can watch TV now or you can go to Netflix and [crosstalk 00: 10: 56] you know because it's negotiable I think. It's negotiable. But, it is true that if we don't do that, he probably, if he's on his own, he probably spends way more time.

Interviewer: So we're interested in how parents decide on rules for media use. You said at least two rules I can think of. One: no media use during dinner, and two: homework has to get done before you can watch TV or play. Do you have any memory of how you came up with these rules or who set the rules? Your wife or...?

Interviewee: I don't remember who set it up. Maybe both? She's usually more on top of the homework thing because she's smarter than me so she'll remember the math.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I do remember that the rule about finishing homework and then doing iPad or whatever, it's in place even if it's not school time. Like when my daughter said, "I would like to go to the mall," you have to make sure everything is done first.

Interviewer: Done first.

Interviewee: So, it's just a rule. It doesn't matter--it doesn't have to be really with screen time or Netflix or whatever.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: It's more to... it's the same with, you know, with the stuff on the weekends. You know I want to go out with these [inaudible 00: 12: 42]. Can I ask my friend to come over for a play date? Well, let me see what, if everything is ready for next week, completed in terms of homework and then... so those

rules are in place. It doesn't matter if what they want is to watch TV or computer.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: There is another rule. We're talking about rules. There is another rule that's got to do with when they must stop. If something happens in terms of discipline or homework not done or things like that, then there is a couple of days that they are not allowed to do screen time in his case. His is specifically no screen time. You know we tell him you are not to do computer or watch TV for two days or three days. With the 15-year-old, it's different. We just shut off the data on her phone. Then she knows that that's the punishment.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. So that's interesting. Now, we are interested in how rules and practices change as kids age. So, with the younger one, a punitive measure would be no screen time. And with the older one, you shut down the data plan temporarily. Can you think of other ways that parenting changes as the kids age?

Interviewee: Not really. Not really, I mean, that's what we do with her. She's 15 and that's what's been going with him. I can't think of how...

Interviewer: That sounds good. Let's see. I think we covered a lot of these. Do you have any places you get advice on how to parent your kids related to screens? Such as websites, blogs, TV shows, magazines, other parents?

Interviewee: Not... how do I explain this. Not in a way that is structured in the sense that it is offered, being offered as advice.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: So I don't go to a website or a book that says how to manage your kids' screen time. I have access to a lot of information on digital platforms and things like that. So I usually... stuff that I read, especially from people who were involved in the creation and development of these tools, usually that tells you what's wrong with them. If there's something wrong with them.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: So I don't think this affects him right now because of his age. But I can tell you that with my daughter, we said no. Facebook, I'm sorry we're not doing Facebook.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewee: She's doing Instagram. And that's like a concession. I said, I know if I say no to that one, too, I'm going to probably have a mutiny here so... But yeah, my reservations with Facebook is because people who work with Facebook have written about things that they did, were a certain way, and how they did it. And some of them are regretting what they did. Some others are not regretful, but I can judge by what they say. And I said, this is, I don't want my daughter doing this now. If later she does it on her own, or she does it

behind my back, well, that's different. That's another issue. But right now, I have this reasons for deciding, you know. You're not allowed to have a Facebook.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Makes sense.

Interviewee: I guess, yes, yes, yes. Because it also affected decisions on how, why you use those platforms. So I'm basically reading and seeing today oh, I see that, that, that what I felt years ago, I wasn't that off target. So you know that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Interesting. Let's see. So, in what areas of media use do you feel comfortable guiding your child?

Interviewee: In what, ma'am?

Interviewer: Or is there... are there any areas you could use advice or help, or what areas do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable in guiding your kids online?

Interviewee: I have a particular situation, circumstance that I think you could tell I'm an outlier because of it, but it is what it is. My wife, their mom is a speech pathologist in pediatrics.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: At [name removed] Hospital. So she has had access and still have access to a lot of information about what affects kids.

Interviewer: Oh, sure, sure.

Interviewee: So I usually refer to her with many things that are about development, even you know from not only screen time or behavior or, but even I remember, even with food. Back when they were babies because she has read, she has studied, or she has access to doctors and people who knows about this. Just because she works where she works.

So I yeah, I understand that's not the case with regular parent, but it is my situation. I have that.

Interviewer: Can you think of any way that libraries can help you as parents or maybe because you guys have extra information libraries can help other parents in ways-- programming information, or ideas on how to be media mentors to their kids?

Interviewee: Yes. Yes. I'm... and I do think trying to, not to go into specifics, I think that libraries have tried in this country. The USA public libraries have tried to deal with this and there is a history of success and there is a history of failures. If you want to call it that way, but there is a concern from libraries about what to offer kids in terms of trying to be as fair as possible. Libraries have to fight in terms of not being pro or con of technology because technology is here to stay. And so, even when the library thinks that maybe this is not the best thing happening in technology, if it's a very popular tool, you have to go with it just because the demands there.

Interviewer: People are asking for it.

Interviewee: And people use them. So the library has to... so it's a very difficult position to be in. [inaudible 00: 20: 25] like whole challenges is many things that libraries have gone through in the history of libraries in this country haven't been easy. So, I think programming is the important because programming links itself to education, you know, for educational purposes. It's not only like entertainment in the sense of offering programs that entertain kids, but you can intertwine the educational aspect in the entertainment. Not to the kids, but to the parents or to the adult population [inaudible 00: 21: 49].

Interviewee: But yeah, I think the educational aspect and programming and librarians and library assistants being aware and trained based on this issues is, I think it's not only important, but it's we realize that it's important. And so, it's something that's being done already. If it's being done in a good way or a poor way, that's another discussion. But the fact that there are people there thinking about this, is a fact.

Interviewer: Let's see. One more question. Do you have any concerns or worries about children's use of technology-

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Or [inaudible 00: 23: 08]. Can you explain?

Interviewee: No, no, I know. The only issue, the only thing that I'm going to you know make a clarification about my answer is right now, at this point in my life, I'm more worried about the 15-year-old than this one.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: Because I think the peer pressure is too much.

Interviewer: For her?

Interviewee: For her. Yeah.

Interviewer: Aw.

Interviewee: Well, in terms of everybody's using... everything is on the phone. Everything I mean and sometimes I wonder-- I said, "you really want to tell me that you cannot spend half an hour doing something else besides texting and doing this and that?" So, yes, I do have concerns because I haven't seen negative result, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to. And as a parent, it's scary. And because I read a lot of these things, I wonder... I was going to say I wonder if it looks like I'm just a spectator and not doing anything, but it's because I myself you know, have to put in the balance. Okay, do I fight with her about this knowing that it's going to become a fight-

Interviewer: A fight.

Interviewee: Or how do I approach this because it's really easy for them. Also to tell that you are an old timer. And you don't understand what's going on.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Interviewee: So what do you answer to that? I mean, without getting confrontation that's what I mean. I know things I could answer, and I do reply, but are they going to do good to the relationship?

Interviewer: Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: So yeah, I do have concerns. I do wonder if the overall effect of access to a lot of information is really for good reason--better citizens and that sounds like a lot, but yeah that's the only way I can put it. It seems to me like it's ironic that this tools can provide so much and so easy access to information, but doesn't necessarily or you have doubts that they, by definition, provide a better outcome.

Interviewer: That's an excellent question.