Review Evidence Base

Tech → MH

Limitations of Prior Studies

Emerging Evidence -Nuance

Effective "Media Parenting"

9:40

Friday, Sept 12

Support for Youth & Families in the Digital Age
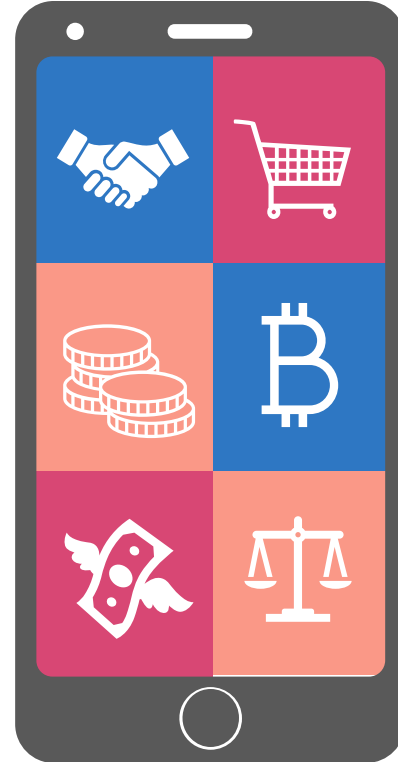
Michaeline Jensen, PhD
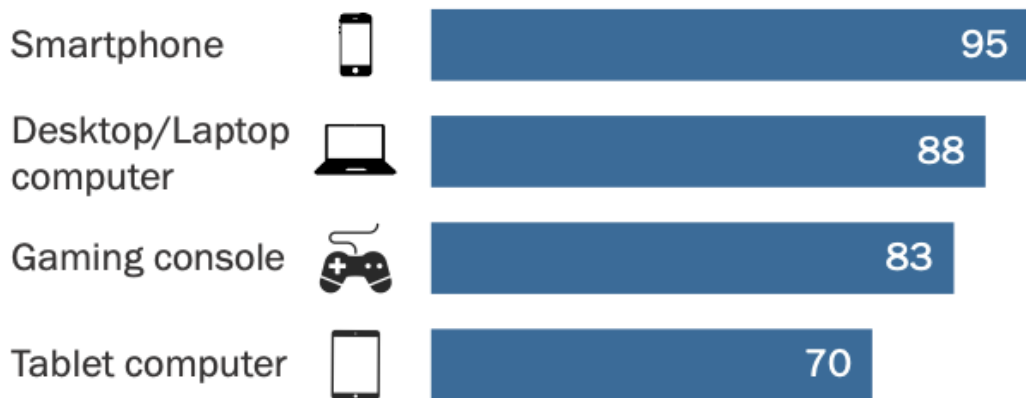
UNC GREENSBORO
Department of Psychology

Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose

Nearly all teens have access to a smartphone at home

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they have or have access to the following devices at home

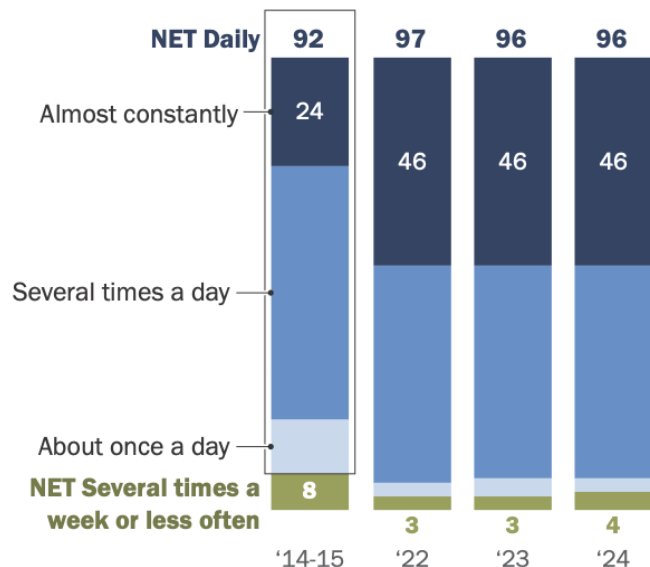| Device	%
Smartphone	95
Desktop/Laptop computer	88
Gaming console	83
Tablet computer	70

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept. 18-Oct. 10, 2024.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Nearly half of teens say they are online 'almost constantly,' up from 24% a decade ago

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they use the internet …

NET Daily: 92 ('14-15), 97 ('22), 96 ('23), 96 ('24)

Almost constantly: 24 ('14-15), 46 ('22), 46 ('23), 46 ('24)

Several times a day

About once a day

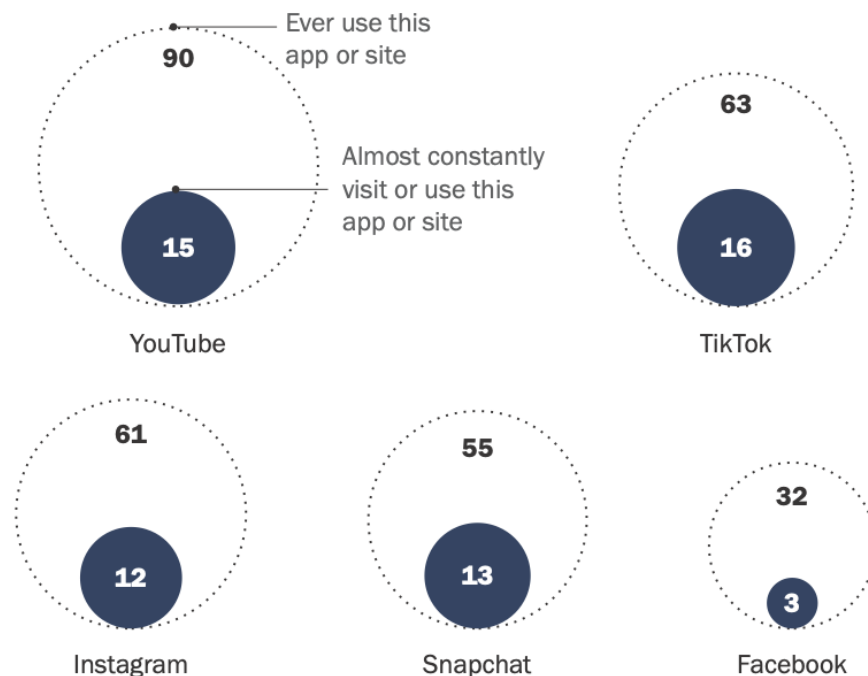NET Several times a week or less often: 8 ('14-15), 3 ('22), 3 ('23), 4 ('24)

Note: Figures may not add up to NET values due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept. 18-Oct. 10, 2024.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Similar shares of teens report using TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram 'almost constantly'

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they …

Ever use this app or site

Almost constantly visit or use this app or site

YouTube: 90 / 15
TikTok: 63 / 16
Instagram: 61 / 12
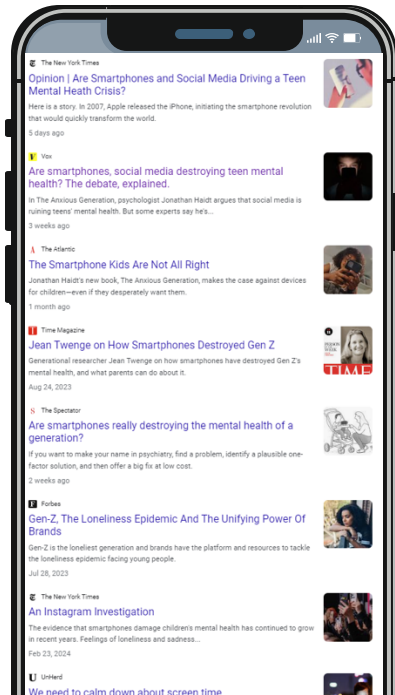Snapchat: 55 / 13
Facebook: 32 / 3

Note: Those who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept. 18-Oct. 10, 2024.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Smartphones and Social Media Harming Mental Health?

The New York Times

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

Surgeon General: Why I'm Calling for a Warning Label on Social Media Platforms

June 17, 2024

The New York Times

Opinion | Are Smartphones and Social Media Driving a Teen Mental Heath Crisis?
Here is a story. In 2007, Apple released the iPhone, initiating the smartphone revolution that would quickly transform the world.
5 days ago

Vox
Are smartphones, social media destroying teen mental health? The debate, explained.
In The Anxious Generation, psychologist Jonathan Haidt argues that social media is ruining teens' mental health. But some experts say he's...
3 weeks ago

The Atlantic
The Smartphone Kids Are Not All Right
Jonathan Haidt's new book, The Anxious Generation, makes the case against devices for children—even if they desperately want them.
1 month ago

Time Magazine
Jean Twenge on How Smartphones Destroyed Gen Z
Generational researcher Jean Twenge on how smartphones have destroyed Gen Z's mental health, and what parents can do about it.
Aug 24, 2023

The Spectator
Are smartphones really destroying the mental health of a generation?
If you want to make your name in psychiatry, find a problem, identify a plausible one-factor solution, and then offer a big fix at low cost.
2 weeks ago

Forbes
Gen-Z, The Loneliness Epidemic And The Unifying Power Of Brands
Gen-Z is the loneliest generation and brands have the platform and resources to tackle the loneliness epidemic facing young people.
Jul 28, 2023

The New York Times
An Instagram Investigation
The evidence that smartphones damage children's mental health has continued to grow in recent years. Feelings of loneliness and sadness...
Feb 23, 2024

UnHerd
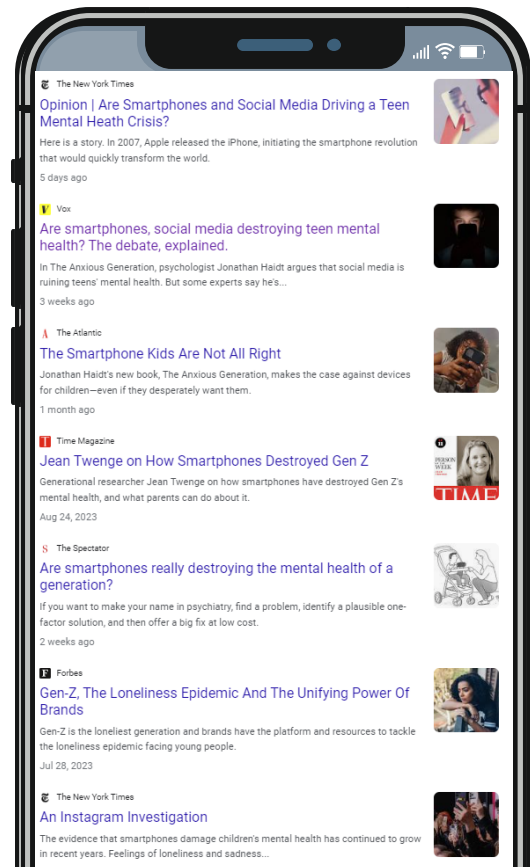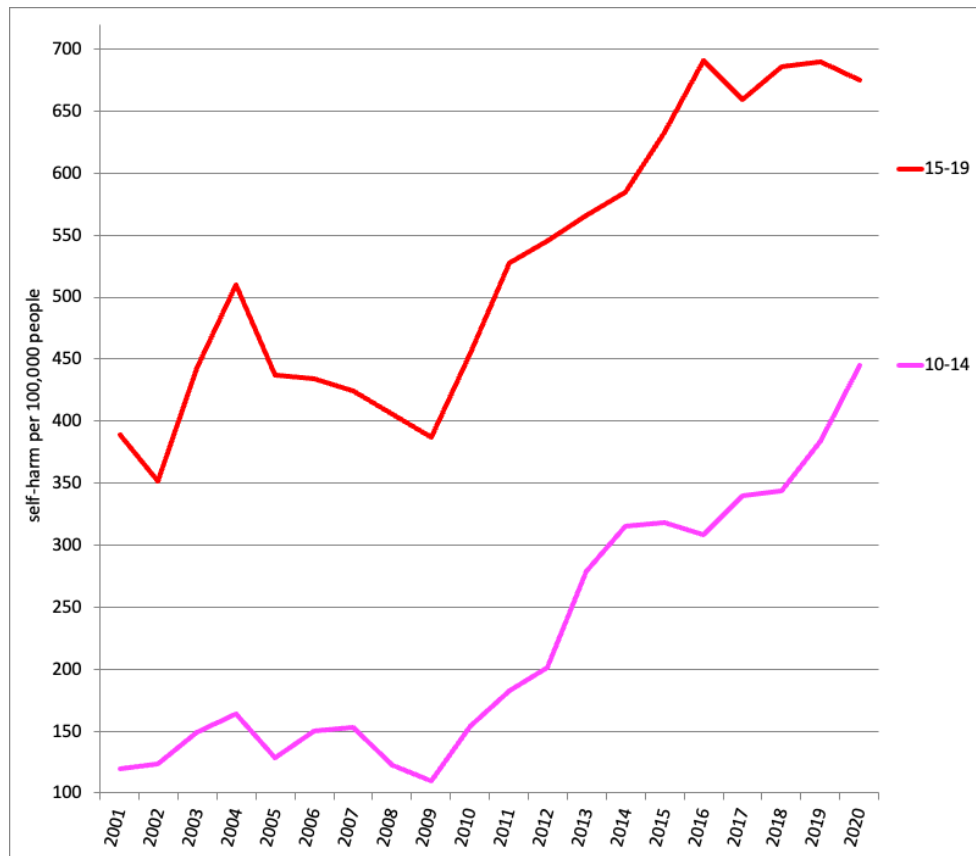**We need to calm down about screen time**

Lay of the Land

Mental Health Crisis

Moral Panics

Technology Engagement Driving a Youth *Mental Health Crisis*?

Rate of emergency room admissions for self-harm behaviors among U.S. girls and young women, by age group. Source: Generation Tech using CDC data (also see Figure 6.36 in Generations*)*

Novel Media Incites *Moral Panic*

NOVEL-READING A CAUSE OF FEMALE DEPRAVITY.

THOSE who first made novel-reading an indispensable branch in forming the minds of young women have a great deal to answer for. Without this poison instilled, as it were, into the blood, females in ordinary life would never such

VILE BOOKS AS DANGEROUS AS NARCOTICS

VATICAN CITY,
—Pope Pius XII attacked books that vice. He told recent world congr at Florence the danger from such books was not restricted to children.

Evil Communications

Seduction of the Innocent. By Fredric Wertham, M.D. (Museum

by MARGHANITA LASKI

Mind-Altering Devices

The Sisyphean Cycle of Technology Panics

No Progress; New Panic **4** → New Technology

Wheel Reinvention **3** → **1** Panic Creation

2 Political Outsourcing

Orben, 2020

Is there any consensus?

Psychological Well-Being and Social Media Use: A Meta-Analysis of Associations between Social Media Use and Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness, Eudaimonic, Hedonic and Social Well-Being

90 Pages · Posted: 15 Apr 2022 · Last revised: 23 Jan 2025

Jeff Hancock
Stanford University

Sunny Xun Liu
Department of Communication

Mufan Luo
Stanford University

Hannah Mieczkowski
Stanford

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

ELSEVIER

Current Opinion in Psychology

Review

Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health: An umbrella review of the evidence

Patti M. Valkenburg[1], Adrian Meier[2] and Ine Beyens[1]

The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

ACAMH The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 61:3 (2020), pp 336–348

doi:10.1111/jcpp.13190

Annual Research Review: Adolescent mental health in the digital age: facts, fears, and future directions

Candice L. Odgers,[1] and Michaeline R. Jensen[2]

[1]Department of Psychological Science, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA, USA; [2]University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, USA

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Washington, DC

Social Media and Adolescent Health

Young Adolescents' Digital Technology Use and Mental Health Symptoms: Little Evidence of Longitudinal or Daily Linkages

Michaeline Jensen[1] iD, Madeleine J. George[2], Michael R. Russell[3], and Candice L. Odgers[4,5]

[1]Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; [2]Department of Psychological Sciences, Purdue University; [3]Department of Biobehavioral Health, The Pennsylvania State University; [4]Department of Psychological Science, University of California, Irvine; and [5]Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University

N=2104

N=388

T1 Survey

T2 EMA

2015   2016   2017

Legend

= 10 participants

T1 Survey Sample

T2 EMA Sample

Percentage of Families in Poverty:

0%-7.81%

7.82%-18.32%

18.33%-31.34%

31.35%-51.01%

51.02%-100%

Person 1 ... Person 388

Day 1 ... Day 14 Day 1 ... Day 14

N=2104

N=388

T1 Survey

T2 EMA

2015 › 2016 › 2017

Legend

= 10 participants

T1 Survey Sample

T2 EMA Sample

Percentage of Families in Poverty:

0%-7.81%

7.82%-18.32%

18.33%-31.34%

31.35%-51.01%

51.02%-100%

Jensen et al., 2019
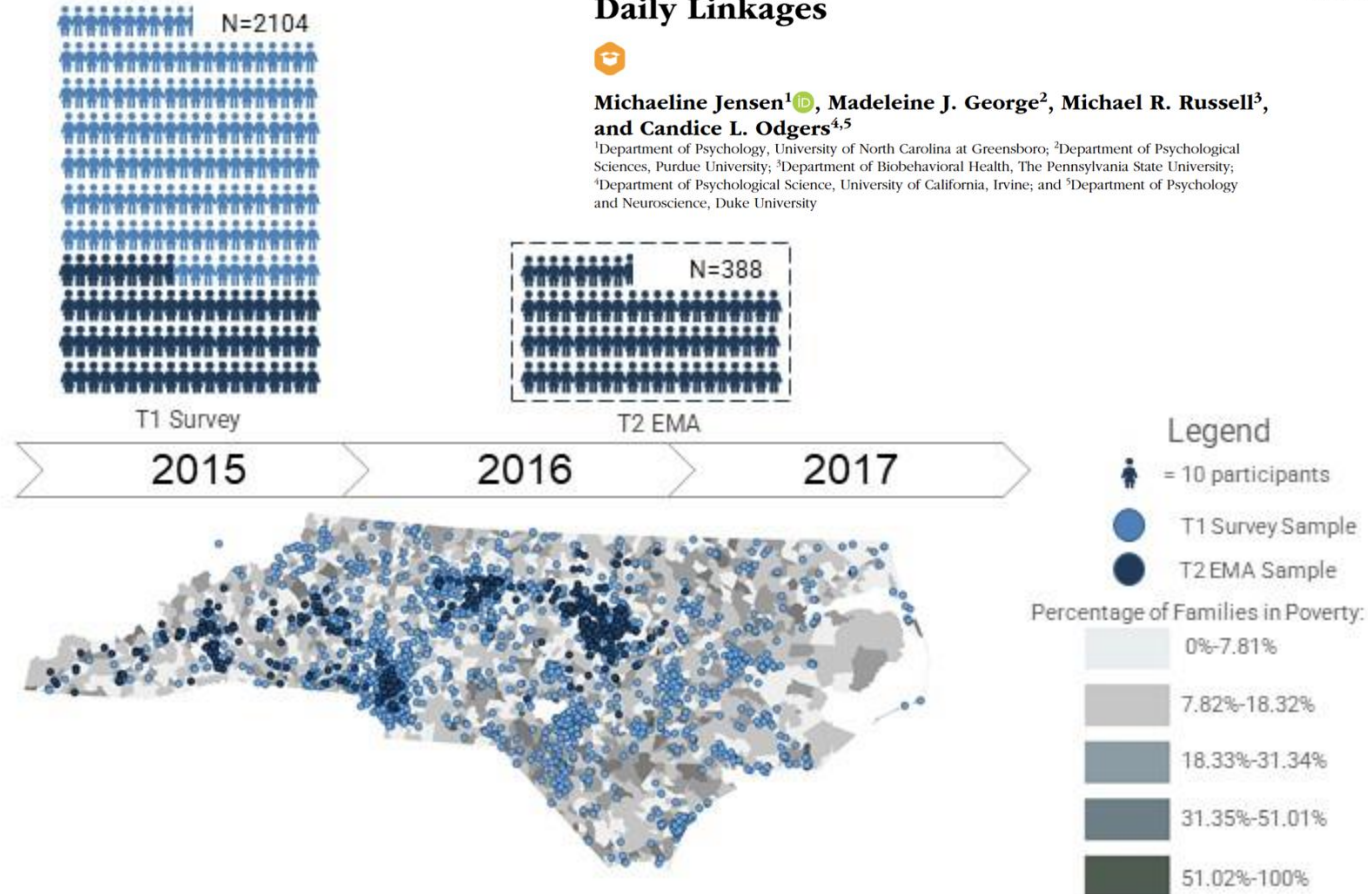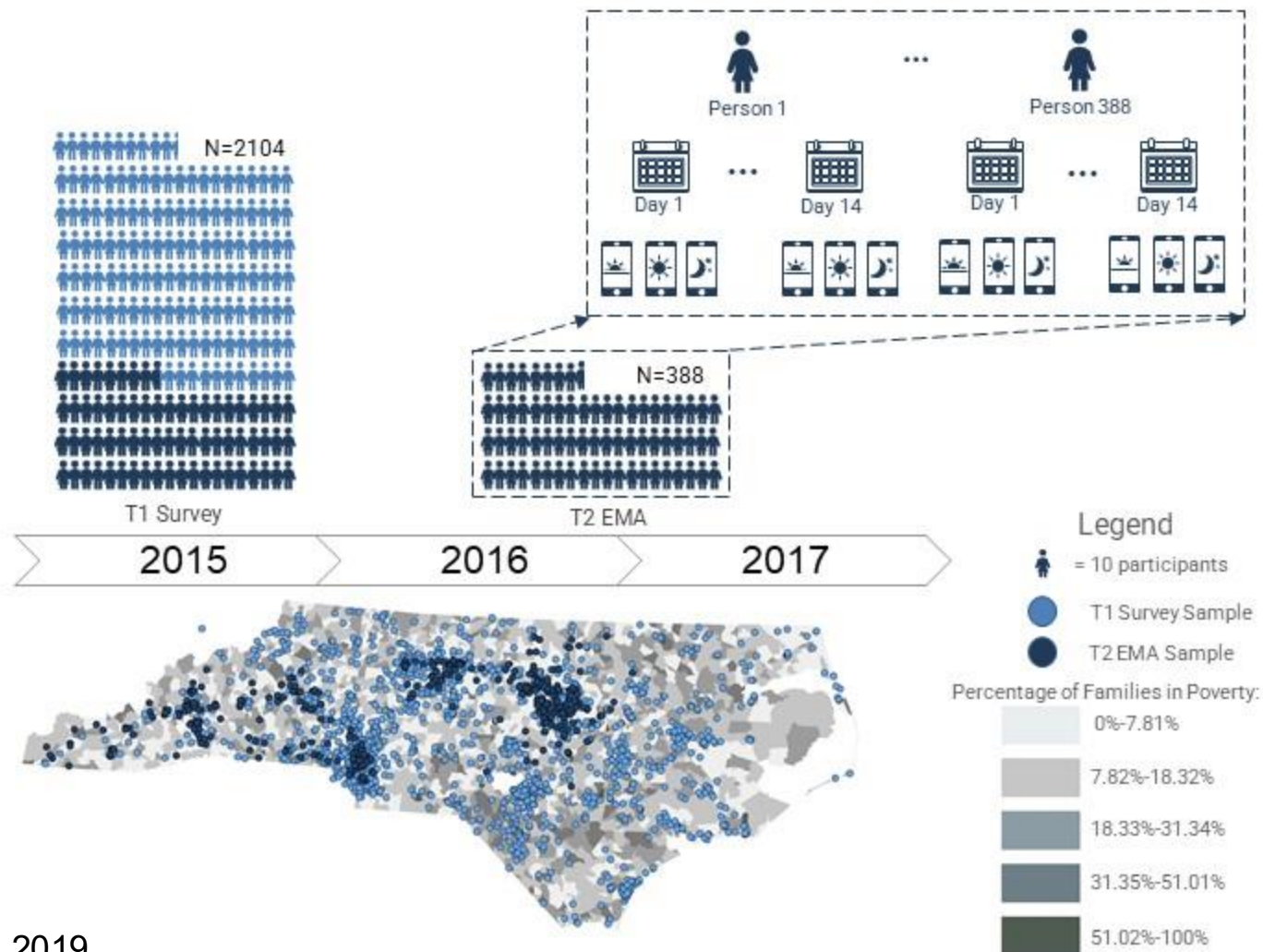
Little Evidence of Robust Longitudinal or Daily Linkages

Mostly Null Findings

Self-reported technology use for texting, entertainment, creating content, school work, or overall on conduct problems, inattention/hyperactivity, worry, or depressive symptoms

No Robust Moderation

By economic disadvantage, race/ethnicity, gender, or baseline mental health risk

Explored Non-Linear and Next-Day

That didn't yield much either....

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

Credit: Mark Zingarelli

Social Media Has Not Destroyed Generation

...over the technology is mi...

Jensen et al. (2019)
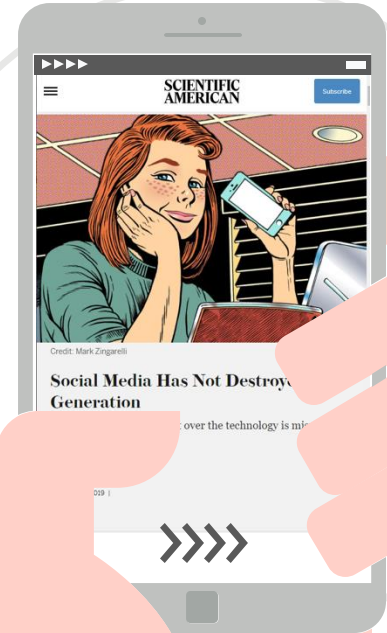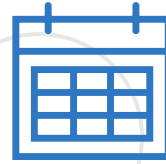
So what DO we know?

- Meta Analytic evidence
  - Results mix of positive, negative, and null associations
  - Small effect sizes (medium for problematic use measures)
- More important to understand how distinct features, affordances, and types of technology engagement impact mental health

Different Features→ Different Impacts

The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry **:* (2024), pp **-**

doi:10.1111/jcpp.14085

Annual Research Review: Adolescent social media use is not a monolith: toward the study of specific social media components and individual differences

Anne J. Maheux, [1,2] Kaitlyn Burnell, [1,2] Eva H. Telzer, [1,2] Maria T. Maza, [1,2] Kara A. Fox, [1,2] and Mitchell J. Prinstein [1,2]

[1]Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA; [2]Winston National Center on Technology Use, Brain, and Psychological Development, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 66:4 (2025), pp 592-594

Social media component effects: a commentary on Maheux et al. (2024)

Michaeline Jensen

Department of Psychology, UNC Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, USA

FIGURE Q. Perceptions of the effects of social media
Believe this feature has had a ... effect on them.

Feature	Mostly positive	Neutral	Mostly negative
Location sharing	18%	38%	45%
Public accounts	22%	46%	33%
Endless scrolling	27%	47%	26%
Appearance filters	38%	41%	21%
Comments sections	33%	48%	19%
Disappearing posts	30%	54%	16%
Metrics (likes, views)	35%	50%	15%
Video autoplay	32%	54%	15%
Read receipts	35%	53%	12%
Private messaging	45%	44%	12%
Notifications	41%	50%	9%
Recommended videos	49%	45%	7%

■ Mostly positive   ■ Neutral   ■ Mostly negative

Different Features→ Different Impacts

Filters

Effects that change the appearance of photos or videos.

Girls believe filters have a ...

21%	38%
NEGATIVE IMPACT	POSITIVE IMPACT

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES
Body image and appearance concerns

POTENTIAL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES
Fun and entertainment
Self-expression

"The filters cause a lot of facial dysmorphia."
—14-year-old

FIGURE Q. Perceptions of the effects of social media
Believe this feature has had a ... effect on them.

Location sharing
18% | 38% | 45%

Public accounts
22% | 46% | 33%

Endless scrolling
27% | 47% | 26%

Appearance filters
38% | 41% | 21%

Comments sections
33% | 48% | 19%

Disappearing posts
30% | 54% | 16%

Metrics (likes, views)
35% | 50% | 15%

Video autoplay
32% | 54% | 15%

Read receipts
35% | 53% | 12%

Private messaging
45% | 44% | 12%

Notifications
41% | 50% | 9%

Recommended videos
49% | 45% | 7%

■ Mostly positive   ■ Neutral   ■ Mostly negative

Different Features→ Different Impacts

Endless scrolling

No clear end point to the "feed" of videos or posts.

Girls believe endless scrolling has a ...

26%	27%
NEGATIVE IMPACT	POSITIVE IMPACT

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Feelings of "addiction" or overuse

Interference with sleep

POTENTIAL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Discovery of content relevant to interests

Discovery of identity-affirming content

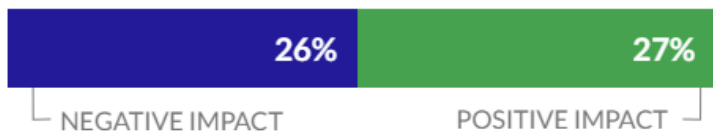*"I felt like I was spending too much time on it, and it was turning into an addiction."* —14-year-old

FIGURE Q. Perceptions of the effects of social media
Believe this feature has had a ... effect on them.

Location sharing
| 18% | 38% | 45% |

Public accounts
| 22% | 46% | 33% |

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Private messaging
| 45% | 44% | 12% |

Notifications
| 41% | 50% | 9% |

Recommended videos
| 49% | 45% | 7% |

■ Mostly positive ■ Neutral ■ Mostly negative

Different Features→ Different Impacts

Private messaging

Users can send or receive direct messages, photos, videos.

Girls believe private messaging has a ...

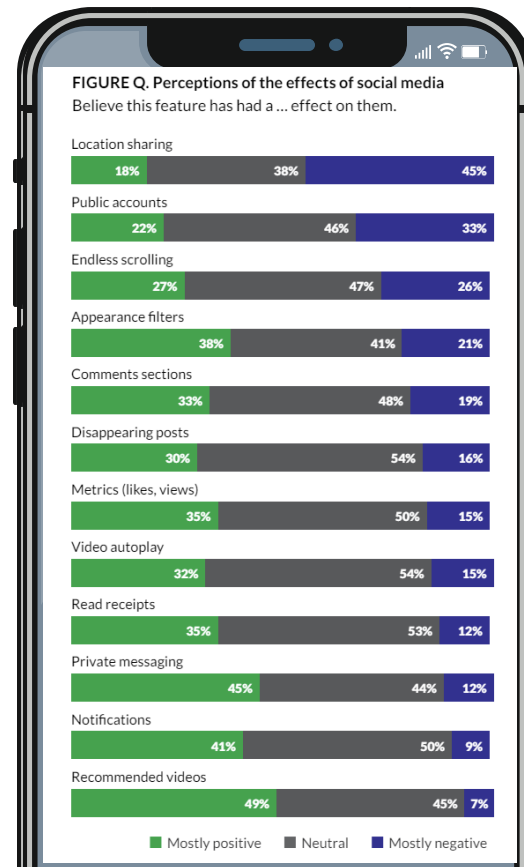| 12%	45%
NEGATIVE IMPACT	POSITIVE IMPACT

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES
Unwanted contact by strangers

POTENTIAL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES
Social connection

"Create a version for teens only to limit who can interact with us." —14-year-old

FIGURE Q. Perceptions of the effects of social media
Believe this feature has a ... effect on them.

Location sharing
| 18% | 38% | 45% |

Public accounts
| 22% | 46% | 33% |

Endless scrolling
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Read receipts
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Private messaging
| 45% | 44% | 12% |

Notifications
| 41% | 50% | 9% |

Recommended videos
| 49% | 45% | 7% |

■ Mostly positive ■ Neutral ■ Mostly negative

Impact Specific Domains of Wellbeing

FIGURE 4. Interference of social media with sleep

Report that platform gets in the way of sleep …

TikTok

| 17% | 24% | 41% |

Snapchat

| 10% | 21% | 31% |

Instagram

| 11% | 18% | 29% |

YouTube

| 12% | 16% | 28% |

Messaging apps

| 11% | 18% | 29% |

■ Weekly   ■ Daily

common sense media
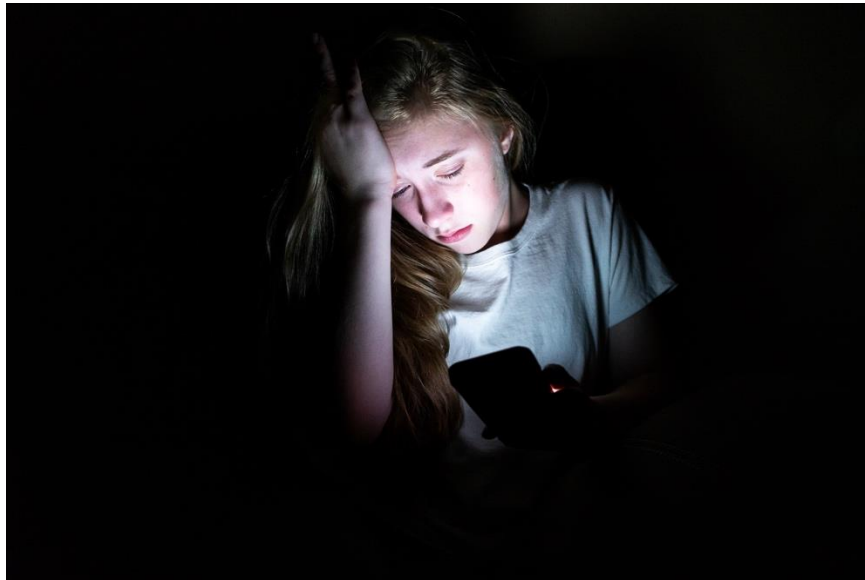
Who is Most at Risk, and When?

- Those who are using social media for social comparison, experiencing cyber-victimization, vulnerable in their offline lives

- Early Adolescence, early adulthood (Orben et al., 2022)

Different Teens See Different Impacts

TABLE 18. Focus on metrics (likes, views, followers) across vulnerable groups

Report focusing too much on … metrics daily	TOTAL	Depressive symptoms			Socially vulnerable	
		None	Mild	Moderate to Severe	Yes	No
YouTube	**13%**	9%[a]	12%[a]	29%[b]	29%[a]	9%[b]
Instagram	**21%**	12%[a]	25%[b]	45%[c]	43%[a]	15%[b]
Snapchat	**21%**	11%[a]	35%[b]	34%[b]	37%[a]	17%[b]
TikTok	**22%**	14%[a]	27%[b]	43%[c]	46%[a]	16%[b]

Where Does Research Need to Go From Here?

Youth ARE Struggling

We need to be looking in the right places for causes, solutions

Methods

Digital Phenotyping, DSEM, Observation, Mixed-Methods, Experiments

Nuance

Attention to potential benefits AND risks

Mechanistic, developmentally-informed science

Digital Literacy, Digital Citizenship

Next Frontiers

Artificial Intelligence in just-in-time intervention, chatbots
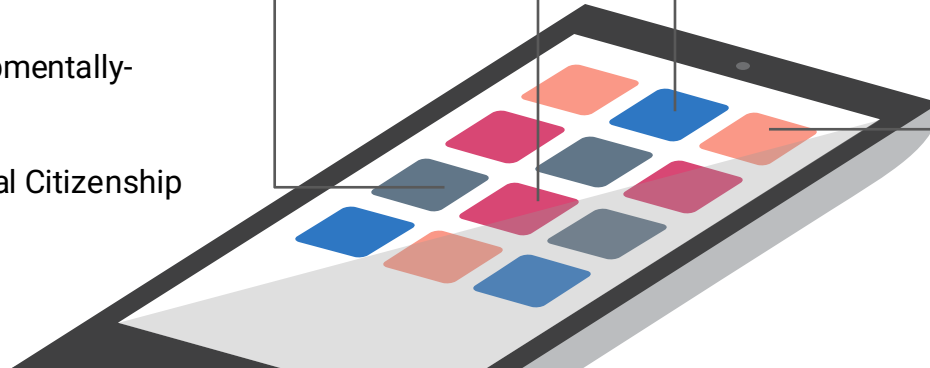
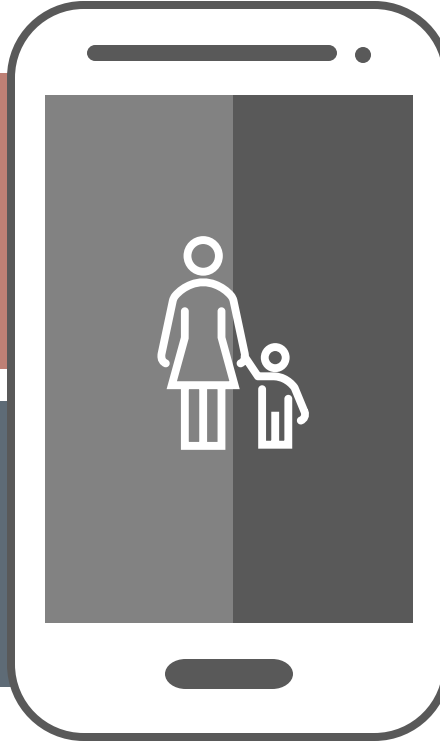# Parenting in a Digital Age

Target
- Parental mediation

(Navarro, Fletcher, & Jensen, 2021)

Tool
- Technology as medium for support, monitoring
- Reinforcer
- Racial/ethnic socialization via technology

(Jensen et al., 2021b, 2021c, 2023)

Trap
- Technoference
- Conflict
- Displacement of family interactions

(Jensen, et al., 2021a)

Transformative?
- Is any of this different from traditional, offline parenting or parent-child relationships?
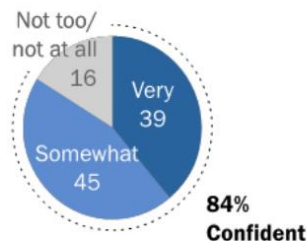
Jensen & Weinstein (In Prep)

A majority of parents are concerned that their child might ever spend too much time on screens and have reached out to doctors for advice about this
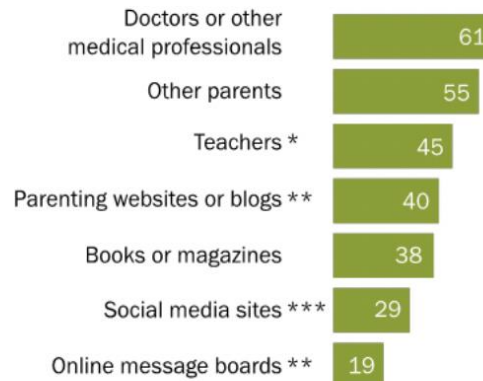
% of U.S. parents of a child age 11 or younger who say …

They are __ **concerned** their child might ever **spend too much time** in front of screens

Not too/not at all 28

Very 31

Somewhat 40

DK/Ref <1

71% Concerned
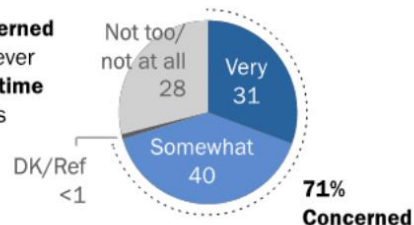
They are __ **confident** in their ability to **know how much screen time is appropriate** for their child

Not too/not at all 16

Very 39

Somewhat 45

84% Confident

They ever get **parenting advice or information** about screen time from …

Doctors or other medical professionals	61
Other parents	55
Teachers *	45
Parenting websites or blogs **	40
Books or magazines	38
Social media sites ***	29
Online message boards **	19

*Based on parents of a child age 5 to 11.
**Based on internet users.
***Based on social media users.
Note: If parent has multiple children, they were asked to focus on one child when answering this question. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 2-15, 2020.
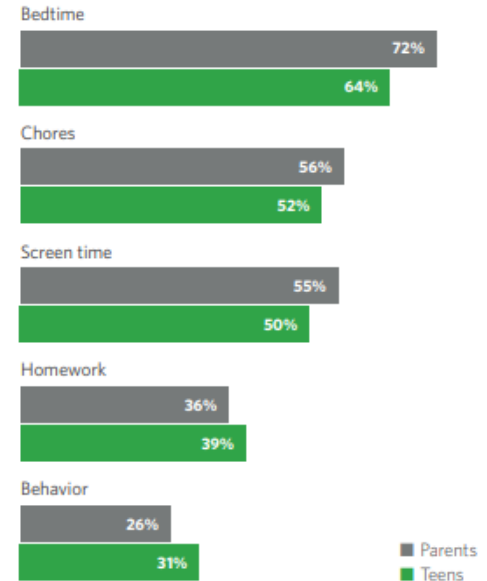"Parenting Children in the Age of Screens"

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Family Conflict about Media Use

Teens and parents say they argue about device use:

	PARENTS		TEENS
on a daily basis	36%		32%
less than daily	43%		38%
never	21%		30%

FIGURE 5. Causes of regular difficulties or conflicts between parents and teens

Bedtime
Parents 72%
Teens 64%

Chores
Parents 56%
Teens 52%

Screen time
Parents 55%
Teens 50%

Homework
Parents 36%
Teens 39%

Behavior
Parents 26%
Teens 31%

■ Parents
■ Teens

common sense

Evidence-Based Parenting Principles Apply to Media Parenting Too

Effective (media) parenting is:

- **Consistent**
  - Rules decided upon a-priori, applied consistently and fairly
- **Developmentally Appropriate**
  - Tailored to stage, age, and maturity
  - Scaffolding with early use, to support increasing autonomy
- **Authoritative**
  - Balances limit setting and monitoring with responsiveness and connection

Take Time to Understand Family Tech Ecology

Possible Questions for Teens	Possible Questions for Parents/Caregivers
1. What types of social media apps do you use and why did you choose those specific apps?	**1. How common is it for people in your family to use social media?**
5. How has being on social media helped you?	**6. What kinds of conversations have you had with your child about social media?**
7. Have you ever had any bad experiences on social media, or has your social media use ever affected you in a negative way? If so, how? *Has it prevented you from doing something you need to do or want to do?*	**7. What kinds of values and/or rules, if any, does your family have about social media use?** *How did you communicate these to your child?*
9. What kinds of conversations have you had with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) about social media, in general, and about your social media use more specifically? If you haven't had any conversations about your SM use, why not?	**9. Have you or any other family member had any concerns about your child's use of social media? If so, what are the concerns and how have you or your child addressed the concerns?**
10. Are there things your parent(s)/caregiver(s) could do to help improve your experience when using social media? Is there anything that would prevent them from doing that?	**10. Are there things you wish you can do to improve your child's social media use? If so, what usually gets in the way of you being able to do this?**

Lim & Celano, 2024
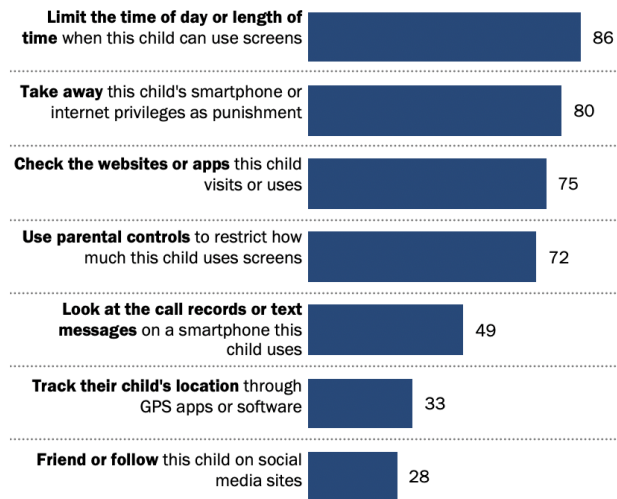
Media-Specific Parenting Practices

- Restrictive Mediation

- Monitoring

- Discursive Mediation

- Participatory Mediation & Co-Use

- Modeling

Media-Specific Parenting Practices

Roughly eight-in-ten or more parents limit when and how long their child can use screens or digitally 'ground' their child

% of U.S. parents of a child age 5 to 11 who say they ...

Limit the time of day or length of time when this child can use screens	86
Take away this child's smartphone or internet privileges as punishment	80
Check the websites or apps this child visits or uses	75
Use parental controls to restrict how much this child uses screens	72
Look at the call records or text messages on a smartphone this child uses	49
Track their child's location through GPS apps or software	33
Friend or follow this child on social media sites	28

Note: If parent has multiple children, they were asked to focus on one child when answering this question. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 2-15, 2020.
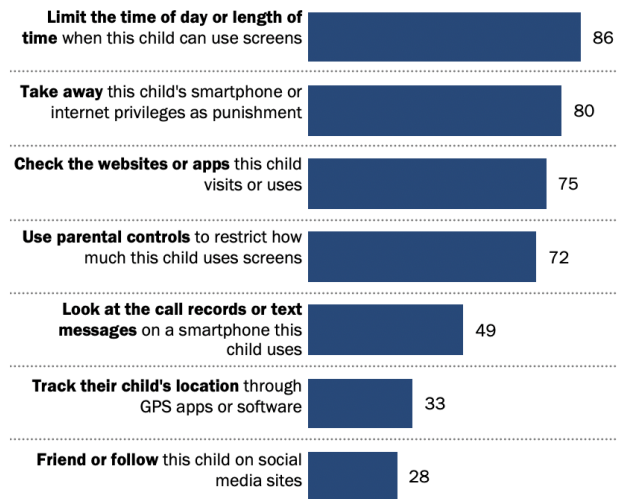"Parenting Children in the Age of Screens"

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- Restrictive Mediation
  - How much, when, with whom, what
  - Shifts with development (Decreases with age)
  - Can be face-to-face or via online tools
    - E.g., parental controls, content filters, automatic shutoffs
    - Doesn't need to be fancy. Old fashioned restrictions (e.g., no phones at table or in bedroom) work fine too

Media-Specific Parenting Practices

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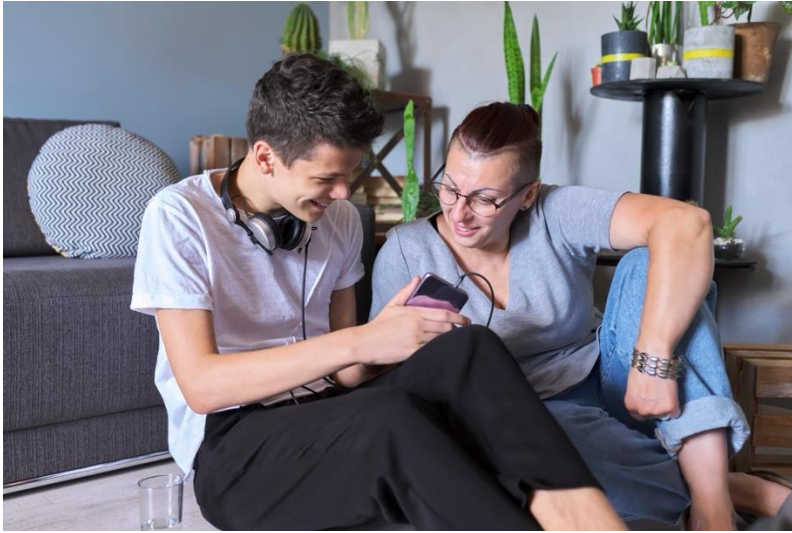"Parenting Children in the Age of Screens"

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- Monitoring
  - How much, when, **with whom**, **what**
  - Face-to-face or using tools
    - E.g., content monitoring apps– beware false alarms and privacy invasion
    - Covert monitoring (snooping) harms parent-child relationship and results in more secrecy (Hawk et al., 2016)

Media-Specific Parenting Practices

- Discursive Mediation
  - Aka "active" mediation
  - Conversations a great way to increase parent knowledge
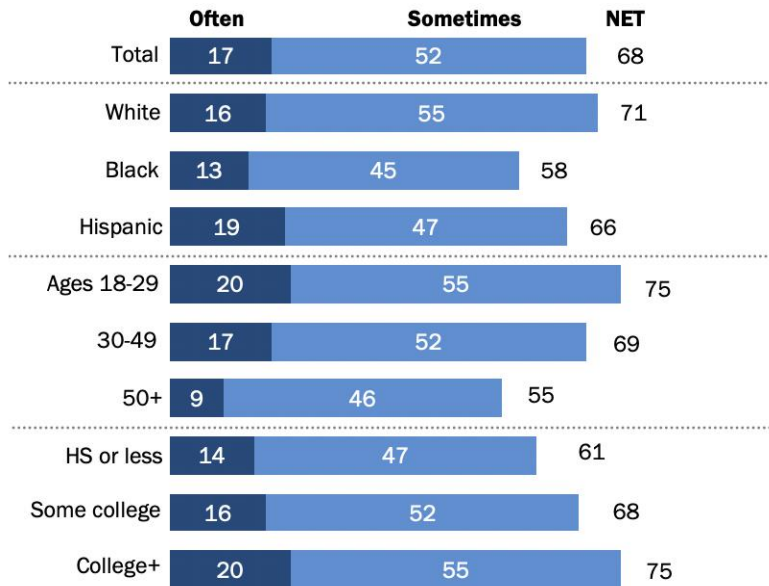 - Quite consistent benefits to child and family

Media-Specific Parenting Practices

- Participatory Mediation & Co-Use
  - Most common for TV, gaming, less on personal devices
  - Co-use tends to see positive outcomes

Media-Specific Parenting Practices

% of U.S. parents who say they ___ feel distracted by their smartphone while they are spending time with their children ...

	Often	**Sometimes**	**NET**
Total	17	52	68
White	16	55	71
Black	13	45	58
Hispanic	19	47	66
Ages 18-29	20	55	75
30-49	17	52	69
50+	9	46	55
HS or less	14	47	61
Some college	16	52	68
College+	20	55	75

Note: Based on parents who have at least one child under the age of 18 but may also have an adult child or children. This item was only asked among those who use a smartphone but is presented here among all parents. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 2-15, 2020.
"Parenting Children in the Age of Screens"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- Modeling
  - Parent screen time → child problematic screen use (Nagata et al., 2024)
  - Technoference, Phubbing

Point Families to Trustworthy, Evidence-Based Resources