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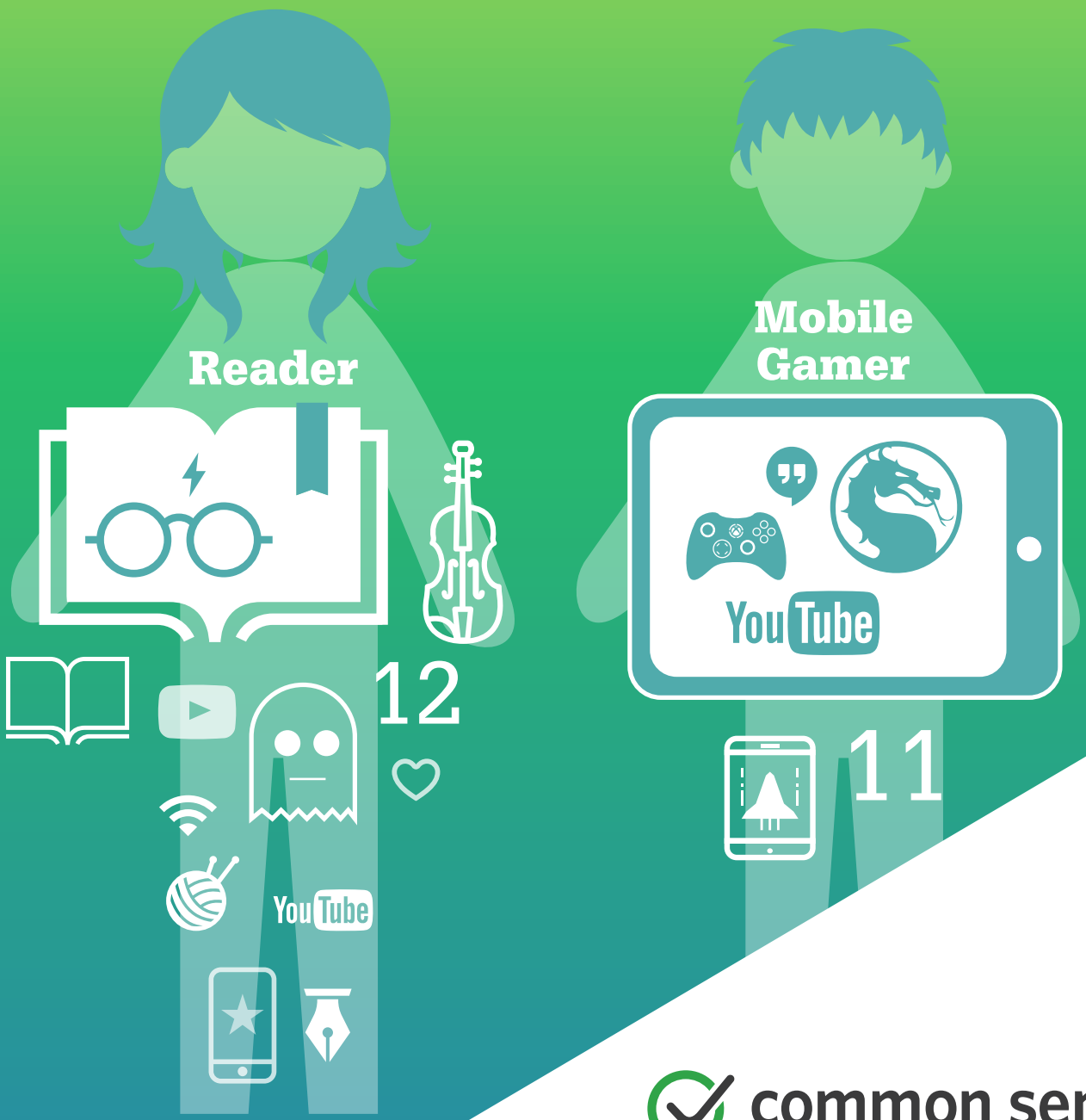

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CONNECTION AND CONTROL:

Case Studies of Media Use Among Lower-Income Minority Youth and Parents

The case studies were conducted with support from the Thrive Foundation for Youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Media experiences and practices among youth are often discussed as if children were a monolithic group. However, the ways in which youth use media are far more complicated and varied. Simply put, different youth use media differently, depending on their age, living circumstances, interests, access, and a range of other considerations. Despite the temptation to label children's media use as "screen time," it is inaccurate to lump together different forms of screen media use, because each serves different needs. It also would be a mistake to assume that there is a "typical teen media user" given the many reasons teens engage with media and the varied contexts in which media use occurs. Youth watch videos, play games, interact with friends, take and share photos, create art, and engage in many other activities using media and technology. Statistics are helpful for painting a broad portrait of youth media use, but case studies can be instrumental in understanding the stories and lives of youth, and they can provide a window into what teens' media use reveals about their development. In this report, we delve into the real lives behind the numbers to understand the "what" and "why" of the significantly higher hours spent by lower-income minority youth on media. Responding to recent findings, we focus on African-American and Latino youth in lower-income households.

The recent *Common Sense Census: Media Use by Teens and Tweens* (2015) (referred to as the *Census* throughout this report) examines the full range of youth media use, including where, how often, and in what contexts youth engage with media. Some striking results emerged from this study, including the finding that teens (13- to 18-year-olds) spend an average of about nine hours a day using media, excluding for homework and in-school use. Yet the *range* of hours is quite broad (from no time at all to over 10 hours), and what precisely these teens are doing during these hours varies tremendously. The *Census* also reveals striking information about the digital equality gap between higher- and lower-income families: For instance, over 90 percent of youth in higher-income families have a laptop in the home while just over 50 percent of kids in lower-income families do. Youth from lower-income families also are less likely to have access to a smartphone or a tablet. Furthermore, lower-income youth and minority youth spend more hours with digital media than their higher-income counterparts. Teens from lower-income families spend more time with media than those from higher-income families: 10 hrs. and 35 mins. (10:35) vs. seven hrs. and 50 mins. (7:50) of total media use. Moreover, the *Census* indicates differences across race/ethnicity in media use that we examine.

TABLE 1. TWEEN MEDIA PROFILES*

	All	Light Users	Video Gamers	Social Networkers	Mobile Gamers	Readers	Heavy Viewers
Percent of all tweens	**100%**	**27%**	**23%**	**15%**	**14%**	**11%**	**10%**
Total screen media	**4:36**	**1:35[a]**	**6:42[b]**	**7:54[b]**	**4:48[c]**	**1:34[a]**	**5:55[b]**
Total media	**5:55**	**2:16[a]**	**7:41[b]**	**9:59[b]**	**6:17[c]**	**3:44[d]**	**7:15[bc]**
Average time per day with each media activity:							
• Watching TV/DVDs/videos	2:26	1:05[a]	3:00[b]	3:12[b]	2:26[c]	1:00[a]	5:08[d]
• Playing games	1:19	:18[a]	3:06[b]	1:12[c]	1:57[d]	:18[a]	:29[a]
• *Video*	*:35*	*:04[a]*	*2:10[b]*	*:24[c]*	*:04[a]*	*:02[a]*	*:03[a]*
• *Computer*	*:11*	*:08*	*:16*	*:10*	*:09*	*:09*	*:20*
• *Mobile*	*:33*	*:06[a]*	*:41[b]*	*:39[b]*	*1:44[c]*	*:07[a]*	*:06[a]*
• Listening to music	:51	:33[a]	:45[ac]	1:44[b]	:48[c]	:36[ac]	:50[ac]
• Reading	:29	:09[a]	:17[b]	:21[b]	:43[b]	1:35[c]	:31[b]
• Using social media	:16	—	—	1:43	—	—	—

Note: A dash ("—") indicates that the mean is zero minutes by definition of the media type. Superscripts are used to denote whether differences between groups are statistically significant ($p<.05$). Items with different superscripts differ significantly. Items that do not have a superscript, or that share a common superscript, do not differ significantly.

* Common Sense Media, 2015

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TABLE 2. TEEN MEDIA PROFILES*

	All	Light Users	Heavy Viewers	Gamers/ Computer Users	Readers	Social Networkers
Percent of all teens	**100%**	**32%**	**26%**	**20%**	**13%**	**10%**
Total screen media	**6:40**	**2:26[a]**	**13:20[c]**	**6:57[b]**	**3:00[d]**	**7:03[b]**
Total media	**8:56**	**3:40[a]**	**16:24[c]**	**9:17[b]**	**5:58[d]**	**9:34[b]**
Average time per day with each media activity:						
• Watching TV/DVDs/videos	2:38	1:09[a]	6:24[b]	1:34[c]	1:22[c]	1:34[c]
• Listening to music	1:54	1:15[a]	2:40[b]	1:59[c]	1:32[ac]	2:16[bc]
• Playing games	1:21	:32[a]	2:11[b]	2:27[b]	:30[a]	:44[a]
• *Video*	*:37*	*:18[a]*	*:57[b]*	*1:12[b]*	*:12[a]*	*:12[a]*
• *Computer*	*:19*	—	*:28[a]*	*1:00[b]*	—	—
• *Mobile*	*:25*	*:14[a]*	*:46[b]*	*:15[a]*	*:18[ac]*	*:31[bc]*
• Using social media	1:11	:15[a]	2:09[b]	:53[c]	:20[d]	3:17[e]
• Reading	:28	§[a]	:32[b]	:29[b]	1:31[c]	:22[b]

§ Less than one minute but greater than zero.

* Common Sense Media, 2015

Note: A dash ("—") indicates that the mean is zero minutes by definition of the media type. Superscripts are used to denote whether differences between groups are statistically significant (p<.05). Items with different superscripts differ significantly. Items that do not have a superscript, or that share a common superscript, do not differ significantly.

For instance, African-American teens use an average of 11:10 of media a day compared with 8:51 among Latinos and 8:27 among whites. There is a significant overlap in the U.S. among the demographic factors of income and race/ethnicity, which is reflected in the *Census*. These case studies reflect that overlap, investigating media use in lower-income African-American and Latino youth.

Another objective of these case studies, then, is to better understand the day-to-day media *practices* of different types of lower-income minority youth. As mentioned above, youth are not monolithic in their practices; in fact, the *Census* describes distinct *types* of media users among tweens and teens, depending on media preferences and time spent with individual media. The types include Heavy Viewers, Gamers and Computer Users (only for teens), Video Gamers (only for tweens), Readers, Social Networkers, and Light Users (see Tables 1 and 2 for breakdowns of all media user types for tweens and teens). We use these categories to explore how each media type interacts with youth interests and values, parenting practices and resources (particularly money and time), and living situation.

The below case studies of 11 African-American and Latino youth, age 11 to 15, in lower-income households offer a window into these tweens' and teens' moment-by-moment media practices. Using in-depth interviews of these youth and their parents; observations of their use of phones, tablets, and gaming systems; and a series of texting prompts over several days, we paint detailed portraits of these youths' media practices in an effort to understand which devices they use and which activities they engage in, how they use their devices, and the meanings they and their parents draw from media use. These portraits reveal the complexity of their media practices and, perhaps most striking, how *interconnected* youth media practices are with their relationships, their parents' practices and resources, and their living situations. All of the parents in this study are mothers, most are single mothers, and all are raising their children with limited financial resources. This study also examines how these mothers approach their children's media practices, balancing an attention to phones, tablets, and games with other parenting and living challenges.

Among the research questions the case studies address and that we attempt to answer in the Conclusions section (page 59) are:

- How do youth of different media "types" engage differently with media and the people around them?
- How do youth engage differently across media devices and activities?
- How and when do youth engage in consumption versus creation?
- How do youth interact with the people and things around them when multitasking?
- How do youth use media to support informal learning?
- How do parenting practices influence youth media practices?
- How do youth and their parents talk about their sense of well-being, and how does this connect to media usage?

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METHODS

The report is based on 11 case studies (Stake, 2006) of African-American and Latino teens between the ages of 11 and 15 from households receiving free and reduced lunch. We used quasi-ethnographic research methods, designed to gain depth of understanding of youth media practices, not breadth or generalization (Patton, 2002). This type of methodology, in which the focus is on a detailed investigation and analysis of a small group of participants, is particularly suited to our research questions, which focus on the *participants'* perspectives and the *processes* that undergird media use. Data were collected between June 13, 2016, and August 12, 2016.

Site and Participant Recruitment and Selection. Participants were recruited from three branches of a regional nonprofit organization (given the pseudonym "Kids' Rec" here and throughout the report) that serves children and youth primarily through after-school and summer activities. All branches were in a metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic. We recruited local site directors, each of whom helped us recruit youth between the ages of 11 and 15 with free and reduced lunch status. We focused on a restricted age group (by comparison, the *Census* looks at 8- to 18-year-olds) so that we could better compare participants with each other analytically. Following our protocol, we began by obtaining parental consent before asking youth any study-related questions.

We used purposeful and snowball sampling to recruit one to two participants of different media types while also maintaining a relatively equal number of boys and girls. Interviews were scheduled either in the family's home, at Kids' Rec, or, for one family, over Skype, to respect the schedules of the participants and the living situation of each family (e.g., whether they had a single-family apartment or a shared living space). Some interviews took place on a single day, while others were spread across two or three days. When data collection concluded, parents and children were each given a gift card ($20 and $30 respectively) to thank them for their participation.

TABLE 3. STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Media Type[3]	Estimated Daily Screen Time*
Jaden[1]	11	M	Latino	Mobile Gamer	1 hour
Andre	12	M	More than 1 race/ethnicity	Video Gamer/Reader	1.5 hours
Carla[1]	12	F	Latina	Reader	1 hour
Makayla	12	F	African-American	Reader	2.5 hours
Samuel[2]	12	M	More than 1 race/ethnicity	Video Gamer	5.5 hours
Markus	13	M	African-American	Video Gamer	3 hours
Chris	14	M	African-American	Heavy Viewer	9.5 hours
Gabe[2]	14	M	More than 1 race/ethnicity	Social Networker	6 hours
Jasmine	14	F	More than 1 race/ethnicity	Reader	2 hours
Jayla	14	F	African-American	Social Networker	3.5 hours
Zara	15	F	African-American	Social Networker	4 hours

*These are *youth* estimates. As we discuss in the portraits below, some of them seem to underestimate their media use.

[1],[2] Indicates sibling pairs.

[3] These media types are inspired by the types identified in the *Census*, but they're not determined in the same way. See Data Collection and Data Analysis sections on page 8 for more information on how these types are assigned.

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We recruited 11 total youth from nine households (two sets of participants are siblings), several of whom know each other outside their family relationships and speak of each other in the interviews. All participants are attendees at Kids' Rec. Table 3 (page 7) gives an overview of the participants.

Data Collection

For each participant, we collected four types of data four different ways:

- *12-Question Screening Tool*: Filled out independently by the youth or filled out together with the researcher at the beginning of the interview process to gauge time with media and media type (based on the media use types developed in the *Census*).
- *Youth Media Practices Interview*: This interview with the youth included a "tour" of their phone or tablet. Parents either were present or absent, depending upon their wishes. While this dynamic certainly affected the responses of the youth, it was important to researchers to respect parental wishes.
- *Parent/Guardian Media Practices Interview*: Interview with the primary parent or guardian. In several cases youth and parent interviews were combined into one longer interview, sometimes with siblings present.
- *Experience Sampling*: Researchers sent youth a series of text messages over three days asking them about their most recent interactions with digital media (see below for a more detailed description of this data-collection technique).

Protocols for each of these data-collection methods are available in the appendix. Total interview time with each set of youth and parents ranged in length from 55 minutes to two hours and 30 minutes.

Experience Sampling. These data were collected through participants' phones or tablets using the automated EZ Texting app. Participants were texted questions daily for three days at five times: 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m., and 9 p.m. (response times varied, with participants often skipping a question; the initial protocol of seven times daily was lowered to five after feedback from participants). They were texted the same three-part question at four of these five times: *a). What is the most recent thing you did today with TV, video, a tablet, a phone, a computer, or a gaming system? b). How did you feel while you used it? c). If possible, describe the experience a bit.* At the 7 p.m. time slot, however, they were asked one of two questions: *What did you do today that you really enjoyed?* or *Was there anything you did today that was boring or frustrating? What?* (Participants were asked the first question on two of the three days and the second question on the other day.)

The full experience sampling was successfully completed in only a handful of cases. Participants sometimes had broken devices, had limited texting plans (in two cases, we switched to manually sending the questions using the app Kik), did not have their devices with them, or did not respond to the texts. We eventually gathered at least some experience sampling data on 10 of the 11 participants.

Data Analysis. Answers to the initial screening, interview transcriptions, and experience sampling were analyzed thematically across each research question (Saldaña, 2013). We (the authors) began our analysis by working collaboratively to determine which media "type" to assign to each participant. While types on the *Census* were based on the answers to 36 forced-choice questions, here we considered the above data sources in assigning a type (their answers to the 12-question screening tool, information from our interviews with each youth, parental insights about each youth's media practices, and our experience sampling data). Our choices of media types, then, while related to the *Census* types, derived from different sources and, in keeping with the purpose of the study, were grounded in participants' day-to-day lived experiences.

Validity. To ensure quality, all data were analyzed by two researchers, who worked collaboratively to edit participant portraits. Also, data from youth interviews, parent interviews, screening tools, and experience sampling were compared to triangulate data sources (Patton, 2002). Moreover, following Stake (2006), data were compared both within and across cases.

Structure of Report

Below are detailed portraits of the media practices and experiences of 11 youth and their respective parents or guardians. We touch on different issues in each portrait, but, across all of them, there is an attention to the daily lived *experiences* of these youth and parents and how media is woven into these experiences.

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KEY INSIGHTS

Statistics are useful for understanding how many hours a teen uses media on a typical day, but it can be difficult to know what those hours reveal about teens' personal lives—their families, their schooling, and their relationships with their peers. For instance, on any given day, American teenagers (13- to 18-year-olds) average about nine hours (8:56) of entertainment media use, excluding time spent at school or on homework (Common Sense Media, 2015). Tweens (8- to 12-year-olds) use an average of about six hours' (5:55) worth of entertainment media daily. Teens from lower-income families spend more time with media than those from higher-income families (10:35 vs. 7:50 of total media use). African-American teens use an average of 11:10 worth of media a day compared with 8:51 among Latinos and 8:27 among whites. While useful as a snapshot of media use, these statistics are greatly enhanced with insights generated while talking to tweens and teens themselves. There is a significant overlap in the U.S. among the demographic factors of income and race/ethnicity, and these case studies reflect that overlap, investigating how African-American and Latino tweens and teens in lower-income households, and their parents, integrate media into their lives.

Each of the following eight key insights demonstrates the importance of examining the specific experiences, interests, and contexts of a youth in order to understand why and how they use media. Two youths who are engaged in what seems to be the "same" media practice—for instance, watching a YouTube video on a tablet or using a smartphone to post on Instagram—may have quite different *approaches* to media and *goals* for that media use. Moreover, they may talk about their *experiences* of that media practice quite differently, both in the moment and regarding the ways parents, guardians, siblings, other family members, and friends respond to that practice. When we focus on lived experiences and practices, the statistical portraits of "average" lower-income African-American and Latino youth are greatly enriched and revealing.

1

Media practices of these youth are related to three interacting factors: youth interests and values, parental practices and resources, and living situation.

Different youth media "types" (e.g., Heavy Viewer, Reader, Social Networker, Video Gamer, Mobile Gamer), which reflect distinct patterns of device use and media consumption, depend, to some extent, on youth *interests and values*. For instance, two of the Gamers in the study talk about enjoying the challenge of gaming, with a 13-year-old Video Gamer saying he likes "playing more *harder* games." Also, all three Social Networkers identify friends or family—and staying in touch with them—as important parts of their lives. One teen Social Networker calls his friends his "squad" and uses social media to keep in touch with them. A 14-year-old foster child also complains lovingly about how her foster mother is always texting her, saying, "This lady blows up my phone!" Being a Social Networker supports her desire to stay connected to family.

Parental practices interact with youth media practices. For example, all the Readers have parents who read and who buy books for their children. A 14-year-old Reader even refers to her mother as "a bookworm" and talks about trips with her mother to Barnes and Noble to buy books. Similarly, *parental resources* (e.g., money and time) make a difference: Youth whose parents do not have the time to monitor their media use during the day have more flexibility around their screen time. The mother of a 12-year-old Video Gamer talks about how she cannot be home to keep him from too much screen time, so all she can do is call every few hours and ask, "Have you eaten? Have you done your chores?"

Finally, youth media practices are connected to *living situation*. A 14-year-old youth in the study recently moved to an unsafe neighborhood where he has no friends, limiting his social activities. He was more of a Video Gamer in his old home, where he lived in a safer neighborhood and had his friends and his brother and a video game console. But now, in his new place, he

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is a Heavy Viewer, having lost his console plug in the move and now watching TV almost all day.

Thus, for the 11 lower-income youth in this study, the *context* and specific media *practices* are perhaps more important for understanding the place of media in a youth's life than are the amount of time or types of media with which the youth engages.

2

Media activity, media type, and location of media device all affect the ways these youth engage with media.

Different *activities* engender different practices: Videos—short or long—often lend themselves to relatively quiet consumption so that viewers do not miss anything. For example, our interview with one 15-year-old participant was marked by frequent gaps in verbal interaction while she showed the researcher previews for her favorite TV shows or funny videos on YouTube. In contrast, social-networking apps such as Instagram and Snapchat can be attended to and then looked away from, allowing more social interaction in a face-to-face context. Yet these same apps, unlike videos, are always "on" and can pull youth from a conversation at any time. This same participant, for instance, checked her phone continually throughout the interview, never pausing for more than three or four seconds and often shifting topics abruptly due to distraction. Even within different media activities—games, social media, videos, music, reading—there are different modes of engagement. Television and Netflix both show movies, but the latter is driven more by personal viewer choice; Netflix users have far more control over what and when content is watched. With respect to social media, both Instagram and Snapchat, for instance, emphasize posting images, but only Instagram supports a lasting profile (much like Facebook), allowing a longer-term creation of an online identity. The participant above even demonstrated for the researcher how she skims Snapchat: "You just skipping. Like you press and press and press and press it. That's how it be like with my friends. I be skipping cause I don't wanna watch they snap. It be *forever* long."

Also, media *types* suggest which devices and activities youth prefer. For example, Social Networkers prefer being on a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) on a social media app such as Instagram, Kik, or ooVoo. A 14-year-old Social Networker referred to her phone as her "sleep buddy" and referred proudly to her strategic posting that has led to 696 followers on Instagram. Video Gamers, on the other hand, prefer their gaming systems, with occasional use of mobile devices to check game strategy. A 13-year-old Video Gamer talked about how he never texts his friends and how a few of his friends tried emailing him for a while, but "they stopped after they knew I didn't [email]." He is far more interested in finding shortcuts for his *Minecraft* play or even looking at shoe styles than he is in social interactions online.

Finally, *location* of device matters: When the only game system or TV is in a youth's bedroom, they tend to engage more in individual rather than family media use. A 14-year-old youth who recently moved, for instance, used to watch movies with his mother but no longer does; in the new apartment, the smart televisions (i.e., those hooked up to movie services such as Netflix) are in the bedrooms, and both he and his mom report that he only watches on his own now.

3

Technical expertise is not a prerequisite for managing children's media practices; parents in this study take a range of approaches despite varying technological expertise.

Across these parents, three parental practices for managing screen media use emerged: limiting amount of *time* spent with screen media, limiting *content* of screen media, and managing the effects of screen media use on youth *responsibilities* such as chores or schoolwork. The mother of a 12-year-old Video Gamer, for instance, makes her children shut off the screens when she gets home from work so they can read to her, and she limits the kinds of games they can play, allowing some first-person-shooter games but not *Grand Theft Auto*, of which she says, "We do *not* play those kinds of games!" In contrast, the mother of a 14-year-old Heavy Viewer limits her son's media use when he has homework or chores to do, but when those responsibilities have been met, she gives him freedom over time and content: "I don't put any ... time limits on him [during] weekend, summer time. He also has a smart TV, so he can do Netflix and YouTube [and] Pandora and all that other stuff on his TV."

Also, parents with different levels of technical expertise approach their children's media practices differently. For instance, the relatively digitally savvy parent of a 12-year-old boy and a 14-year-old boy notes that she regularly checks not only their search histories but also the viewing histories on the smart TV.

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She even reminds the boys of her monitoring during the interview, saying, "Neither of you should have *anything* in your messages that no one is allowed to see. So is there something that you don't want folks to see?" Meanwhile, less technically proficient parents may use methods that don't require knowledge about digital media; parents may look over their children's shoulders as they use their devices, spot-check them at unpredictable times, or take the physical device away when youth have violated the rules. One foster mother, for instance, does not know how to shut her 14-year-old daughter's phone down remotely. She tells the researcher what she did instead when she wanted to take her daughter's data privileges away: "I called the phone company and had them put [her mobile phone] on standby." This parent solves the problem creatively so that she can intervene with relatively little digital know-how.

4

Media practices interact with the relationships, living situations, and emotional states of these youth to affect their well-being, sometimes supportively and sometimes in more harmful ways.

Phones, tablets, TVs, and game systems are part of a broad network of relationships, living situations, and emotional struggles in youths' lives. For instance, media *support* youth well-being in some ways: Television shows and movies, music, games, and books provide entertainment, which becomes particularly important when children are living in a neighborhood with a high violent crime rate. Mobile devices provide powerful tools for meaningful communication: A 14-year-old girl living with her foster mother uses her phone to text frequently with her birth mother and father.

Also, social media can provide connection with friends and family members who live in different areas. A 15-year-old participant talks about how she uses social media to keep track of a growing niece she has never met. Social media can also offer youth a chance to experiment with different ways of presenting themselves to the world, testing identities outside of the face-to-face context, which can be daunting for some. The same youth, for example, appears to be nervous in face-to-face interactions with friends outside of school, but she loves the ease of interaction online. She describes a typical Saturday this way: "Just throwing it [hanging out]. I get on Google with somebody, you know. Just normal. And then I just be going to sleep or something, you know, wake up. I [am] cleaning. I'm texting people."

Media can also *harm* youth well-being in some ways: Social media apps that offer a chance to experiment with identity can also be a way to start arguments, provide a forum for teasing, and open youth to unwanted or undesirable attention. One participant, for instance, shows the researcher provocative pictures of herself and talks about how many "likes" she gets from friends, acquaintances, and strangers she has allowed to view her account. Video game play can feel out of control or addictive, particularly without parental resources to curb media time. The mother of one 12-year-old youth calls his iPad an "extension of his soul," and the youth himself talks about not really trusting himself to follow the media rules his mother has laid out.

5

These youth rarely engage in digital content creation, but they demonstrate creative practices in taking and manipulating pictures, especially in social media posting.

On any given day, American teens spend 3 percent of their time on computers, tablets, and smartphones creating content. The *Census* (2015) defines "content creation" as writing or creating digital art or music, while it labels social media use as "communication" and game playing as "interactive consumption." According to these definitions, there is little evidence of digital content creation among the youth in this sample, and all of it happens at an after-school program and not on participants' own devices, where they might have more time (i.e., evenings and weekends) and freedom to experiment. For instance, a 12-year-old participant learned to mix beats using Studio One software and digital music recording equipment at Kids' Rec, but he and his mother do not talk about creating music in our interview. In contrast, a 14-year-old Reader who attempted to use a 3D printer at Kids' Rec (unsuccessfully) does engage in creative activities at home, drawing and writing. No other participants talk about a digital creation experience, even at Kids' Rec, despite some having an interest in drawing or writing.

Lack of content creation could be in part an issue of a lack of parental resources, such as time and money for digital equipment, or could be related to parental rules (one participant's

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mother does not allow him to create YouTube content, for instance, even though he started his own channel at his father's house). Yet youth in the study show evidence of creative practices in the digital world, taking photos and altering them with different filters and stickers before putting them on Instagram or pulling images from the internet, often manipulating them, to create their lock and home screens. A 15-year-old participant, for instance, complains about "dry" (i.e., ugly) images on some people's social media accounts and demonstrates to the researcher how she modifies a picture of herself before she posts it, adding a filter and hunting up a few "stickers" from her phone and the internet to place around the edges of the photo.

6

These youth and their families frequently use different types of screen media to create connections among family members, in person and from afar. Youth also use media to create space when family is too close.

Screen media use may be interpreted as isolating, but the reality is more complex (see Common Sense Media, 2012, for a discussion of the complexity of media use). We found evidence in almost all cases of screen media being used to create *connections* and to create much-needed *space*. For instance, some participants use social media to keep in touch with friends and family who either live far away or whom they do not get to see frequently, particularly their fathers. One 14-year-old participant, for instance, refers to texting her father in her experience sampling response, writing that she feels "relieved … because I talked to my dad about how I feel." Also, several parents talk about watching movies together with youth and, in some cases, having some movies that only the older teen or tween get to watch with a parent, creating a special time together. A 14-year-old participant, for example, talks about how she and her mother have a couple of special movie series that only the two of them see together because her sisters "aren't into Harry Potter and the Hunger Games like me and my *mom* are." Video games can also provide an opportunity, particularly to tweens, for demonstrating expertise in their family relationships, teaching parents or siblings how to maneuver their way through a tricky obstacle or advance a character's skills. At one point, for example, a 12-year-old participant corrects his 14-year-old brother's ignorance about the game Terraria, saying, "You don't have wings anymore. You have a hover board, but that is not wings."

Yet some youth also use media to create space, particularly when family live in close quarters. A 12-year-old participant who lives in a single room with her mother and four siblings talks in her experience sampling about how she stays "focused" or "calm" by listening to music with her headphones. Similarly, a 14-year-old Reader talks about how she plays solitaire and mahjong on her computer "because it's fun and it's definitely a way to keep calm and peaceful when you don't feel like doing anything else."

7

Informal learning: These youth use media devices, particularly mobile devices, to solve problems.

Almost all the participants use media devices, particularly mobile devices, to solve problems, both in stories they tell about their daily lives and in person during interviews. A 15-year-old Social Networker uses three transportation apps to cut down on her travel time, and she watches YouTube videos to learn different hair and makeup styles. Another 14-year-old Social Networker uses YouTube to learn new dances. Three of the Gamers watch YouTube videos for gaming tips and tricks. A 14-year-old Reader uses her computer to look up the GPA and PSAT requirements for one of the universities she would like to attend. And a 14-year-old Heavy Viewer who recently moved and does not have his old friends' contact information monitors his Facebook chatting function so he can connect with them when they are around. He does not use social media the same way as other youth in the study, but when he does, he uses it to meet an important need: staying in touch with his friends: "I know when [my friends] are active on Facebook by the link on the bottom of their thing. It says 'active' now and after fifteen minutes it'll go, so that's how I know when they're on Facebook."

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8

Multitasking: These youth interact simultaneously on screens and face-to-face, a process that affects their face-to-face interactions.

Youth engage in media multitasking—interacting with a screen and the people in the room at the same time—in all but one interview. For instance, two of the Gamers play on mobile games at least part of the time while answering interview questions, and all three Social Networkers check their phones intermittently during interviews. Several participants pull up YouTube videos as part of the conversation, as a way of answering or augmenting their responses. Participants seem to believe they're sliding effortlessly between face-to-face interactions and use of their electronic devices, but conversation with devices turned on is stilted. Sometimes youth have to be prompted a couple times to get their attention back from the digital world, and often the researcher or parent has to remind the youth what they were talking about before they were engaged with their device. Several parents affirm this quality of youth multitasking, with one describing her 11-year-old son as "glued to the phone" and often not answering her the first few times she addresses him. Eventually, she says, she has to "pull him off" to get him to do a chore or go out. Multitasking, then, is not always a smooth process, particularly for parents trying to communicate with their children.

Less technically proficient parents may use methods that don't require knowledge about digital media; parents may look over their children's shoulders as they use their devices, spot-check them at unpredictable times, or take the physical device away when youth have violated the rules.

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PROFILE

CARLA

Reader

12 years old

Female

Latina

Lives with mother, younger brother, younger twin sisters, toddler brother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

YouTube, Harry Potter and other fantasy books

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PROFILE

JADEN

Mobile Gamer

11 years old

Male

Latino

Lives with mother, older sister, younger twin sisters, toddler brother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

YouTube, Halo, Mortal Kombat, *Google Hangouts*

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CARLA AND JADEN: A BROTHER-SISTER TEAM
Sharing Wi-Fi at Four in the Morning

Central Insight: *Media activities (such as reading, watching videos, and playing games) can be used both to make space from, and create connections to, family.*

Carla[1], 12 years old, and Jaden, 11 years old, two Latino youth, keep each other's secrets, help solve each other's problems, and regularly take each other's electronic devices. They spend a lot of time together, getting up together at four in the morning some days to use their electronic devices because that's when the Wi-Fi is the best (perhaps because others in the shelter where they live are not using it). They live together in one bedroom with their mother, their 9-year-old twin sisters, and their 2-year-old brother (who was away with his biological father at the time of the interviews). Their mom describes all four of them as not being very active, enjoying lying down and watching videos on their devices; they are alert and talkative when the topic turns to their interests. Because their room at the shelter is so small, both interviews take place in a fast-food restaurant. At the first interview, Jaden, the twins, and their mother all jump in to respond to the researcher, regularly answering a question directed at someone else. In addition to sharing the task of answering questions, they share food and devices, passing French fries and phones back and forth across the table to each other. Meanwhile, Carla is quieter (and, in fact, is described by her younger sister as "the quiet one in the family") and hangs back until drawn into conversation by the researcher or her brother.

Carla's Media Type: A Reader. Carla fits the *Census* media type of a Reader, reading one and a half hours a day or more. Her mother and brother say reading is her favorite activity—Carla says she likes writing and drawing more but admits that she reads a lot. She often has more than one book going at a time and even takes a book with her to read at the park or the beach. Most of her reading is in print (rather than electronic), and she estimates she uses media devices an hour and a half a day, but the different media activities she talks about and texts about in her experience sampling suggest it may be a bit more. She has her own tablet and sometimes uses her brother's smartphone. She used to have her own phone, but she rarely used it and her mother says about it: "Why [was] I paying for it if you're not even using your phone?" Carla watches YouTube and Netflix, interested most in "horror things" like the Chucky movies or "creepypastas" (horror stories and images) on YouTube. She also listens to music quite a bit—usually while reading.

Jaden's Media Type: A Mobile Gamer. Jaden, meanwhile, seems to match the Mobile Gamer type, reporting on over half the experience sampling events that he was playing games recently on his smartphone. He says he only spends an hour a day on screens, but his mother and sisters suggest that it is considerably more. His mother's estimate is at the extreme end: She thinks that he is probably on his phone all day when he doesn't have school, playing games or watching videos. She describes him as "glued to the phone" and feels like she has to "pull him off" to get him to do a chore or go out. Much of what Jaden watches on his phone has to do with video gaming rather than mobile gaming. And he talks enthusiastically about the time he gets to spend playing on a friend's PlayStation. He tells the researcher he has been watching a lot of *Halo* videos lately to get ready for his time with this friend: "I am trying to prepare myself not to lose so I can defeat him." This enthusiasm, combined with the evidence that he is perhaps logging more screen hours than a Mobile Gamer, suggests that he might be a Video Gamer if he owned a video game system. However, his family cannot afford a game system at this time.

Family Media Use: Time Together. Carla and Jaden's mother has her own smartphone, tablet, and laptop, all of which she seems to navigate easily. She shares her phone regularly with the twins, who do not have their own devices, allowing them to play games or take pictures with Snapchat. She, Carla, and Jaden play a few mobile games "together" (i.e., they each have the game on their own device and keep track of each other's progress), including Family House and Criminal Case. And the whole family likes to "play" *Just Dance*, a video game that encourages players to dance, on YouTube, innovatively using videos of others playing the popular game to play it themselves, even without being able to afford a game system. Their mother also says the family likes to watch funny videos online together: "If I'm on Facebook throughout the day, and I'll see a funny video, I'll just save it so when I'm with them [the kids], we'll watch it together." So, their mom brings her digital interests back to the kids. The family also shares an interest in "scary movies"—all except for one of the twins who,

[1] This and all subsequent names of participants and their families and friends are pseudonyms.

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Carla notes in amazement, "was scared of *Halloween*!" Jaden and Carla follow a YouTuber named Matthew Santoro, who posts videos about "creepy" or "freaky" facts, and they can't quite believe their younger sister is scared by something as tame as the movie *Halloween*. Yet their mom also lets the kids have time to follow their own interests, saying that often in the evenings "everybody watches something different" and that is OK with her.

While family members pursue their own interests, they often do it through overlapping devices and accounts. Jaden offers a confusing story of his headphones' provenance, saying, "I had *two* packs of headphones, one for me and one for Carla, so if she takes *that* one, I give the headphones I was *gonna* give *Carla* to my mom." When Jaden's uncle gave him a phone, their mother set it up with Carla's account, rather than go through the hassle of creating a new one, giving Jaden access to her Google and YouTube (and, hence, relentless teasing about her supposedly watching *My Little Pony*, which he finally agrees was on her account for their little brother). Carla seems to hate this fluidity, angrily recounting the incident in both interviews with the researcher. But this seems to be a practice Jaden is comfortable with. During the second interview, in fact, he asks the researcher if he can have the researcher's phone, on which he rapidly downloads Instagram and sets up an account.

"No Distractions": Reading, Writing, and Drawing as a Way to Make Space. Throughout her three days of experience sampling, Carla mentions being "focused" or "calm" in seven out of her 29 responses. She also talks about the feeling of being focused in the experience sampling, defining it as "no distractions, keep working." Carla and Jaden are interviewed during the summertime, when they are spending most days at their grandmother's house while their mother works. For Carla, these days do not offer a lot of opportunity to focus. She says, "I can't be alone in the house because I have to feed the kids and do the chores." She says she "never" gets the opportunity to be by herself, so she listens to her music as a way to focus.

Carla is happiest, according to her, her mother, and her experience sampling, when she *is* left alone to read, write, draw, knit, sew, or play her violin. Jaden and his mother tease Carla for all these activities, noting that she even brought her sketch pad and her knitting to the beach, getting sand in her knitting project. She talks enthusiastically about the Guardians of Ga'hoole series she first found out about at a book sale. Her mentor (she does not say who assigned her the mentor) gave her another one and she is now "trying to get the others" so she can read them. Similarly, she found the fourth Harry Potter book left behind when her aunt moved out, finding others in the series elsewhere, including the school library. This resulted in her reading the books out of order, something that surprised her mother but did not seem to bother Carla. Like other participants in our study, she tends to approach reading mainly through book ownership, finding books at stores, book sales at school, or the places she has lived.

But Carla's mother worries about the tendency to retreat into her own world that reading supports. Her mother describes her at different times as not being "social," and Carla agrees. Her mother encourages her to text more and communicate with friends through Snapchat, trying to expand her social circle, but Carla has little interest in that beyond one boy she likes at Kids' Rec. The family's one-room living situation is particularly difficult for Carla, who treasures her time by herself and, on top of that, "takes the [family] problems to herself." In fact, her mother says she recently talked to staff members at Kids' Rec about Carla starting to cut herself. This was an emotional but helpful conversation, according to her mother: "It's like she talked about it, me and her talked about it. She cried, I cried, we cried together."

"All About Electronics": A Social Gamer. When Jaden's mother first describes him to the researcher, she says he is "all about electronics." Carla confirms this, even calling him "obsessed." Jaden says his favorite apps are YouTube and Instagram because he can "watch my favorite videos and follow people." But many of the videos he watches are gaming-themed; he spends at least some of his online time rating games and apps; and his experience sampling indicates that he plays games more than anything else. He has a combination of gaming and social media apps on his phone, including Nebulous, Color Switch, Mortal Kombat X, Jetpack Joyride, Geometry Dash, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts. He wants Facebook, but his mother says he and Carla are still too young for that. Jaden says Nebulous is one of his favorite games because, unlike a similar game (Agar.io), "you can talk to people" while you're playing. When he can, he also likes

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playing *Halo, Mortal Kombat, Minecraft,* and *FIFA 16* with his friend on the latter's PlayStation. Finally, he likes to FaceTime his friend while they are each playing games on their own tablets; Jaden enjoys bringing the gaming and the social aspects together.

Carla and her mother both worry about Jaden's gaming, however, noting that it is often hard to get him to stop doing it, particularly when they need help with the other kids or with chores. He also has trouble sharing his device, particularly with the twins, and his mother sometimes has to take it away. His mother says that having his phone taken away is the thing that makes him the most upset. When his device is taken away, he gets angry, falling asleep right away or reading and then falling asleep. Sleeping seems to be a frequent coping mechanism for Jaden: He says he falls asleep on the school bus regularly; he is often "tired" at Kids' Rec, going to the reading room to "relax"; and that, when he gets back home from Kids' Rec at the end of the day, "I usually sleep again. Cause I am usually tired and get headaches." Jaden seems to use sleep as a way of dealing with anxiety and stress.

Media Management Across Households. When they are together, the kids' mother referees arguments, taking away devices when there is too much bickering and trying to get her kids to be a bit more "active" by going on a walk. She also worries about the kids' online safety, saying, "It's *different* now [...] I'm afraid cause there's people *out* there, you know." She tries to talk with them about potential dangerous situations and urges them to talk with their aunt (her sister) if they are not comfortable talking with her. She also uses her digital knowledge to protect the kids, putting the kids' accounts under her parent account so that she can lock certain content on YouTube, monitor their Google activity, and change the password to block them completely if need be. When they are apart from their mother, however, she has much less access to—and, hence, control over—their media activities.

Some non-school days, the whole family is at the kids' maternal grandmother's home. The children's grandmother, in their mother's words, "pampers" them (particularly Jaden), giving them more screen time than their mother would prefer. Carla says that, at Grandma's, "We never keep track. We, like, watch it [TV] the whole day." Their mother is quick to contradict Carla's account, saying that maybe the kids watch TV "if she's *sleeping*," but that when her mother wakes up, she probably says, "Oh my gosh! Turn that thing off! Stop watching TV!" Yet, their grandmother's household is a busy one, with a family (two parents and the 9-year-old who owns the PlayStation) renting a room and Carla and Jaden's aunt, uncle, and stepgrandfather living there as well. Their mother says that she regularly talks to her mother on the phone, telling her to take away Jaden's phone when he misbehaves, but "eventually, somehow, he gets it back [from his grandmother]."

There is also evidence that even the digital monitoring their mother has put in place might not be working. At the end of the first interview, when her mother is talking to the other children, Carla quietly hints to the researcher about a whole world out of the purview of their mother: "She doesn't *know* what I do with my tablet, like, the other things that I do?" And in a later interview at the fast-food restaurant with only Jaden and Carla, they talk about certain "secrets" they keep from their mother. For instance, their mother found Carla texting with a 12-year-old boy she knew from school and now closely monitors her account, not allowing her to contact him at all. But Carla and Jaden claim that she texts and FaceTimes with him on Jaden's device, on a separate account their mother does not check. Jaden talks about one time he almost told Carla's secret:

> One time I almost told my mom but [...] I faked it: "Mom, I have to tell you something." And then Carla got so mad at me. And sad. And then I said how much does a McRabbit [a brand of clothing] cost, and she was so relieved. But I was looking at Carla the whole time.

Given their intimate living situation, it seems hard to believe that their mother will not eventually uncover their secrets, but for now the siblings are maintaining them. Their mother seems to know that she does not have it all figured out, though, saying, "I don't know! [Laughs.] I'm just waiting, [to] see what's gonna happen now—what am I gonna do, what can I do, how can I respond to certain stuff, you know." As they enter their teen years, their mother is aware that educating them about and monitoring their media use is a work in progress.

"Living All Over": Housing and Devices in Transition. While all the kids struggle with the lack of permanent housing, Carla seems to have the most difficulty with it, complaining about how they have been "living all over" but that she really wants to stay in their current neighborhood because it "is the only place that makes me happy." This desire to stay seems in part due to her crush on the boy mentioned above but also comes from their transitory history. The family has moved frequently and Carla has not kept in touch with friends from past towns and neighborhoods, something that seems to make her sad. Jaden has less insight into his feelings about moving, but he, too, is enthusiastic about their current location, talking about playing soccer at Kids' Rec and watching movies with the teens there.

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This frequent moving seems to affect the permanence of their electronic devices as well. At the first interview, Jaden and Carla were both excited about an iPod their cousin had recently given them, arguing about who got to use it and who took it from whom. Yet, by the second interview about a month later, when the researcher asked about the iPod, Carla responded, "Oh, we haven't seen it in days." Similarly, both siblings used to have Nintendo DS's, a handheld gaming device. Jaden said it was his "favorite" and that he had "mostly all the Mario Brothers games" on it. Now Carla's is lost (the siblings guess it is still under a table at their aunt's house where they used to live) and Jaden's charger is long gone, making his device unusable. Jaden also had a computer at one point, but according to Carla and Jaden, his mother gave it to an unpleasant former boyfriend as a sort of inducement to keep him out of their lives.

Amid this transitional period in their lives, Carla and Jaden seem particularly devoted to each other. The researcher asks each one to tell her the "best thing in the world" about the other one. Jaden responds enthusiastically, "She is the most talented person I know. She knows how to sing, she does art, and she's athletic in a way." Carla says Jaden is "trustworthy" and at another point in the interview says, "I trust him and he trusts me. I can tell him anything."

Brothers and Sisters and Media: Negotiations and Learning

Most of the youth in this study have either biological or foster siblings. These brothers and sisters often play a major role in shaping youth media practices, whether it is around the need to *share* media resources, the parental determinations of what is "appropriate" for older versus younger siblings, explicit *teaching* of media practices to siblings, or more contextual *learning* of media practices through interaction and observation. Below are some examples:

Sharing

Two participants—brother and sister—have separate devices, but they share Google accounts, know each other's passwords, and know their mother's password. This makes sharing a limited amount of devices easier, but it can lead to frustration, especially for the older sister.

- A 12-year-old participant and his little brother supposedly "share" a phone, but the result is that his brother rarely gets to use it, limiting his media time.
- When a 15-year-old Social Networker's phones break, she loads "her" apps onto her 19-year-old foster brother's phone. This leaves him effectively without a phone.
- A 12-year-old participant sits on his older brother's headphones and breaks them, and another 12-year-old participant's little sister jumps on the bed and breaks the participant's tablet while she (the little sister) is using it, so sharing sometimes leads to broken devices.

Teaching and Learning Media Practices

- A younger, 12-year-old brother teaches his older, 14-year-old brother how to play Terraria, instructing him on different types of wings an avatar can have. Meanwhile, this same older brother models for his younger brother how to post more "grown-up" things on Instagram, teasing his younger brother about his posts and citing his own, more grown-up posts as models.
- A 12-year-old Gamer's younger brother watches raptly while his older brother plays video games, soaking up his game strategies.

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PROFILE

ANDRE

Video Gamer & Reader

12 years old

Male

More than 1 race/ethnicity

Lives with mother, younger brother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Xbox 360, PlayStation 4, anime books and movies

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ANDRE: A VIDEO GAMER *AND* A READER

How a Mother Shapes Media Practices

Central Insight: *Parents' active intervention in children's use of media and technology is one of many factors that affect children's media practices and their media "types."*

Andre is an energetic and polite 12-year-old boy, answering questions with "yes, ma'am" or "no, ma'am" throughout the interview. He is devoted to his PlayStation 4 and is quick with humorous comebacks. When the researcher and his mother refer to an actor from the original *Ghostbusters* movie, he teases, "I am not used to this culture. I mean, I heard of pagers and telephones with them long stringies." And when his mother starts talking seriously about the rules she has for him, he samples her voice on his phone and makes a song out of it, using digital creation to tease his mother. Andre lives with his mother and 7-year-old brother, with whom he supposedly "shares" a phone. In practice, he rarely allows his little brother to touch it, let alone make decisions about apps or wallpaper. His mother describes his favorite activities as gaming, sleeping, and eating (in that order), saying, "If he could eat while playing video games from his bed, that would be nirvana for Andre." Andre affirms this appraisal: "That would be the most awesomest thing ever!" Yet he also has other interests, rattling off a long list of books, playing football and basketball in the neighborhood with his friends, taking his brother to the pool in the summer, and (according to both him and his mother) putting time into his homework. He has experienced some bullying in his after-school program at Kids' Rec, but his mother and the staff are working actively on addressing it, and, in the meantime, he enjoys it there, even learning to mix beats using Studio One software and digital music recording equipment. Andre rides the bus to an international baccalaureate school in another neighborhood, where his teachers expect a lot of him because, as his mother says, "His test scores speak for themselves." Because of his high scores, he is expected to achieve at a high level.

Andre's Media Type: A Video Gamer *and* a Reader. From one perspective, Andre seems to fit the media type of the *Census*'s tween Video Gamer: He has two gaming consoles he uses regularly (the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 4, both given to him by relatives because his mother could not afford them), he has a PlayStation Vita that allows him to connect to his PlayStation remotely and play with other friends, and he has a tablet (broken at the time of the interview) that has upward of 50 games. Between the two gaming consoles, he owns about 20 games, but he also plays others at the houses of friends and cousins. He claims he only plays games for an hour and a half a day, but his mother tells a different story, suggesting upward of four or five hours when it's not a school day. As with other Video Gamers, Andre also enjoys watching TV and watching videos on his PlayStation, his phone, or the Wii in his mother's bedroom. Andre almost exclusively watches anime series and movies, providing a long list: *Dragon Ball Z, Toriko, Yugio, Bleach, Naruto, Full Metal Alchemist,* and *Soul Eater*. He even has an app on his phone, Funimation, that allows him to stream a variety of anime shows.

From another perspective, however, Andre fits the media type of a Reader: He estimates that he reads for about four hours a day and has a number of "favorite books." This aspect of Andre is, at least in part, shaped by his mother's parenting practices and modeling: The boys are not allowed to play video games at all during the school week, she shuts off the video game system at noon on Saturdays, she purchases the boys books and graphic novels, she herself is a vociferous reader of anime, and she does not allow the boys to have a television in their bedroom. Andre's mother worries about how gaming affects Andre's ADHD, and she says she does not want her boys "to be *those* kids that are constantly playing video games and can't play chess and have never put a puzzle together." Andre, then, is a Video Gamer and a Reader.

Gaming with Enthusiasm: "Dang! She Is a Hard-Core Koala Bear!" Andre and his brother get incredibly excited while playing, jumping up and down. Their mother verbally calms them down several times over the course of the interview. They shout out insults to each other, and Andre regularly provides lively commentary on the game, screaming loudly at one point while trying to escape a creature in *Mortal Kombat*, "Dang! She is a hard-core koala bear!" His favorite Xbox games are *Deadpool, Rising Revenge, Assassins' Creed, Star Wars,* and *Sonic Generation*. When asked why he likes these particular games, he says, "Because they all involve fighting, and Sonic is like one of the most awesomest video game characters in the world." He proudly notes that *Deadpool* is "the most M-rated [M for mature] game *ever*," appearing throughout the interview to equate the M rating with quality. Indeed, apart

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from *Sonic Generation*, the games Andre tends to play most frequently are first-person-shooter games, in which the player looks over the barrel of a gun and strategically shoots people or creatures to win the game. When playing *Infamous Second Son*, he kills a "citizen" and the researcher asks him about it. Andre says, "I am evil. And they said they all hate me, so you know." The researcher presses him, asking whether *he* is bad or the *citizens* are bad, and he responds, "I am … they are both … I am bad *and* they are bad." So he recognizes the immorality of shooting people but notes that the citizens are immoral, too (sometimes "flicking him off"), and lets the matter drop.

Perhaps because the video game systems are in the living room rather than the bedroom or perhaps because of his personality, Andre's gaming is sometimes social. He plays frequently with his brother—each has his own preferred controller—and there is a constant, lively banter between them, with cries of "Cheater!" ringing out frequently. As *Mortal Kombat* loads, Andre says to the researcher, "Watch me *dog* him in *Mortal Kombat*. It's just gonna be an easy do, re, mi, one, two, three!" He draws his mother into the fray as well, playfully asking her once, "Mom, you ready for that whooping in *Mortal Kombat*? I can give it to you later. Or now." There are other sweet moments with his mother as well. When she says she is enjoying being with the boys now, before the teen years hit and they won't talk to her anymore, Andre blurts out, "I will never … I mean, I will *always* talk to you!" They also connect through movies, with a "family movie night" every weekend. They either sit together in the living room or cuddle on their mother's bed, with Andre's brother or mother often falling asleep well before the end.

Oddly, despite the sheer number of games and game systems Andre owns and his enthusiasm for gaming, he does not seem that particular about either how he chooses his games or which games he plays. Most of the games on his phone and tablet were "recommended" to him automatically when he was playing other games, and many of his Xbox and PlayStation games were given to him by relatives (who try to help out with the family's financial struggles by buying the boys things they cannot afford on their own). He loved many of the games on his tablet, but when it broke, he did not seek those games out in other formats (e.g., his smartphone). He says, simply, "I just play … I have new games." Moreover, Andre does not seem to seek out resources for his gameplay. While he likes watching games on YouTube that he is not allowed to play, he does not seem to use Google or YouTube as a resource for getting over roadblocks that emerge during the games he does play (unlike other participants in this study). In fact, when a game or a level is too hard, he doesn't play it, simply shifting to another game. During the interview, he plays a difficult level of the game *Incrediballs* for the benefit of the researcher and completes it for the first time ever, to his great delight. Thus, although Andre plays intensely and maneuvers around his games skillfully, he is not single-minded about making progress in one game. This aspect of Andre's gaming is unlike the other Gamers with whom we talked.

"I'm Nosey": How a Digital Insider Uses Media to Her Advantage. Andre's mother describes herself as "nosey" when it comes to her kids' media devices, poking around on the devices and confiscating the phones and tablets every night at bedtime. She appears to be a digital "insider" of sorts, with some skills developed on her own and some taught to her by her brother, an IT specialist. She turns the data on the kids' phones on and off on a schedule, set up a mobile hotspot for Andre, and outfitted both kids' devices with Life360, through which she can monitor where they are at all times. Yet part of her motivation with this monitoring is to give her kids "independence": If she is keeping track of them, they can roam more freely, both in the digital and real worlds. She admits that her kids are "sheltered," in that she keeps them from some of the negative experiences she had as a child, but she wants it that way. When Andre's little brother makes a peace sign, for instance, she tells him sternly to stop and says, in an aside to the researcher, that "what he didn't realize is that where I grew up, that can get you shot." She uses her media knowledge to try to ensure that her kids don't have the same experiences she had.

Yet she also says that she's "not unrealistic" about her kids' media habits: She knows that they play video games when she is at work all day during the summer (she cannot afford the summer cost of Kids' Rec) and get "tunnel vision," so she makes sure to call every few hours to ask, "Have you eaten? Have you done your chores?" Similarly, she does not try to fight too hard against the more permissive rules at their father's house. For instance, Andre watches *Soul Eater*, an anime program that is set at the "Death Weapon Meister Academy." His mother is not pleased that he watches it but says, of their father, "You already opened that door so I can't really close it." Moreover, she researches M-rated games on sites like Common Sense Media to see why they have that rating, letting Andre play most of them but asking him to stay away from others. For example, she lets him play some first-person-shooter games but not a game like *Grand Theft Auto V*, which she sees as morally over the line. She describes the first time she saw Andre's friend playing it when she went over to pick Andre up: "When I walked into the room and all I saw was her son playing a game and he is picking up a prostitute, I lost *all* religion because all I kept thinking was, 'We do *not* play those kinds of games' and 'We don't *do* those things!'"

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Like some other parents in the study, Andre's mom uses her control over her children's media devices as a parenting strategy. For instance, during the interview, the brothers get involved in a heated argument over the game. She asks them to stop and, when they don't, takes their game controllers and makes them turn the game off. They do not seem too surprised by this, nor do they protest overly much; they appear to be used to this kind of parenting practice. Moreover, Andre's mom is particularly careful not to let media devices become *all* the two boys do, limiting their screen time, sending them outside to play, making them read to her in the evenings, and keeping the TV out of the bedroom so they will read at night. Andre tells the researcher that his back sometimes hurts because he hides books under his covers to read at night and to keep them away from his little brother. His mom explains,

> [When I tell him to go to bed,] Andre will say, "OK!" And he will turn his back to you so when you walk in all you see is the back of his head. But he has books. And I let it slide because they are reading. I would prefer for you to fall asleep reading than doing anything else.

Andre's mom not only purposefully manages her boys' media devices, she skillfully builds other interests into their lives as well.

"I Am Not the Hashtag Mom": Social Media and Fear. Andre's mother does not allow either him or his brother to have Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, or any other social media app on their shared phone. That is certainly disappointing for Andre, who moans that even "my *grandma* has Instagram. That is a shame." Yet he does not seem to know what he is missing, describing Facebook as "like, the book of faces or whatever." Andre's mother tells the researcher the story of a cousin's daughter who was on Facebook posting pictures and that "a friend of a friend" almost abducted her. She says that, even with family and friends, you can never know their "private thoughts," noting that it is usually *not* strangers "who end up hurting your kids." She fears for her children and makes sure they have limited exposure to social media. Andre's mother understands that the phone also is a communication device, however, and she checks it regularly, saying:

> In this house any form of communication or technology, if I wanna see it, I am going to look in it. There's no passwords that I can't know about. [Andre] has an email address but I have to be able to look into it. I can't not know what is going on. Because he is 12.

As with Life360, she lets her children have some independence (i.e., texting and emailing), but she monitors their communication to keep them safe.

Andre's mother is also incredibly careful with her own social media. Her sister-in-law has a degree in forensic psychology and Andre's mother takes her sister-in-law's warnings about predators to heart. In her own posting, she never uses the boys' first names, never reveals her location until after she's been there (lest someone use it as an opportunity to abduct the boys), and never posts facial pictures of her sons. She says that, generally, she is not a "vigilant" person but that her vigilance emerges in keeping her boys safe: "Like I tell anyone, I am not the hashtag mom."

"I am not the hashtag mom."

Experience Sampling: Happy, Overwhelmed, Calm, and Irritable—It's Not About the Media

A major goal of the experience sampling was to better understand how participants' well-being was associated with screen media use. As part of their experience sampling, participants were asked every evening to either talk about one thing they did that day that they enjoyed or something that was boring or frustrating. As Table 4 (on page 63) shows, almost all participants who answer those questions ("N/A" indicates that a participant has not answered that question) do *not* talk about a screen media activity. Instead, they talk about things such as outings with family, listening to music, or generally feeling bored. Only three participants refer to media. For two of them, both Video Gamers, it is about their devotion to gaming, and for the other, it is about watching Netflix, one of the only activities he has available to him in his new living situation.

The last column of Table 4 shows the descriptive words participants use to answer the question, "How did you feel when you were using [the screen media you just mentioned]?" While there are several moments of boredom, tiredness, anger, or irritability, the vast majority of the descriptors are positive, such as "excited," "peaceful," "chill," "focused," and "happy." From the in-the-moment youth perspective, then, their time with screen media supports their well-being on the whole. As other parts of this study demonstrate, however, that perspective may not capture all aspects of these tweens' and teens' well-being.

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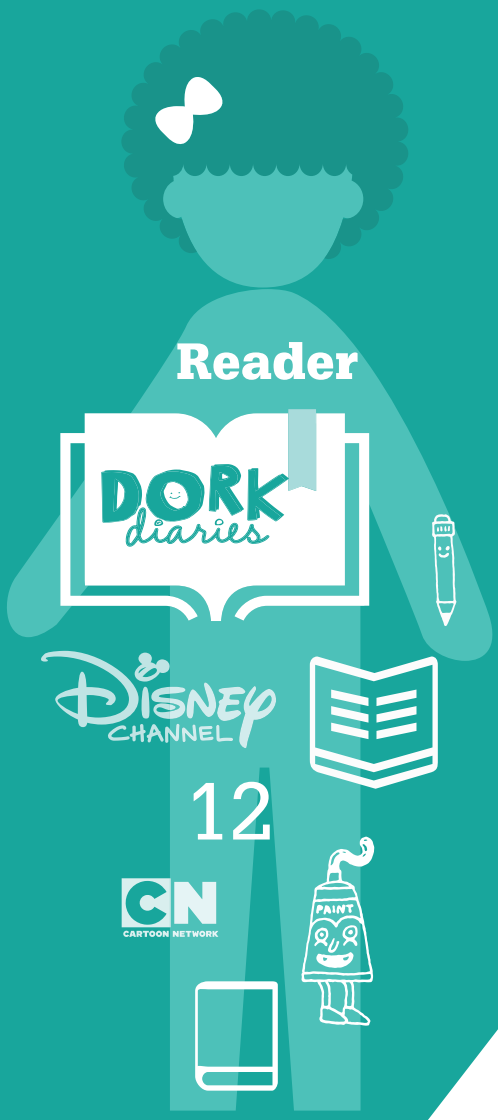

PROFILE

MAKAYLA

Reader

12 years old

Female

African-American

Lives with mother, younger sister

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Disney Channel, Dork Diaries, Dear Dumb Diary

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MAKAYLA: READING AS PART OF A "WEIRD" IDENTITY

Central Insight: ***Reading can be an intentional choice that reflects personal and family values.***

When interacting with Makayla, a seemingly easygoing 11-year-old girl, one is guaranteed a smile. During an afternoon of recruitment for this study, she listened carefully to age requirements and doggedly persuaded the researcher to allow her to participate since she would shortly be turning 12; she turned that persuasive force on her mother as soon as she arrived to get her to sign the consent form. Filled with nervous energy, she often stuttered when speaking during the interview. Her mom says that Makayla enjoys doing anything that involves the family and says she is the kind of person who stands up for other kids when they are being teased. She worries about this tendency in her daughter and, as a result, tries to keep her "around positive and happy people and atmospheres" to protect her. Much of Makayla's interview centers on her enthusiastic plans for the future: a lemonade stand, plans for spending time with her father ("Six Flags, the circus, park, playground"), a "bucket list" of things she hopes to do over her lifetime, and her hope that she will move up from the "almost honors" language arts class to the honors language arts class.

Makayla lives with her mom and her younger sister (a 7-year-old who seems to idolize Makayla) and sporadically visits her father, where she spends time with older and younger kids from her extended family. She has a small, core group of friends at Kids' Rec and another small group of friends at school. Makayla loves to draw, has participated in art classes, and talks excitedly about an upcoming camp with a heavy art component that she will attend. She names reading as her favorite activity and lists a number of books she has read recently. She also talks about watching TV, naming a number of Disney shows she enjoys watching. She "really, *really*" wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up and watches two shows about vets, *Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet* and *Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet.*

Makayla's Media Type: A Reader. Like the tween Readers in the *Census*, Makayla says reading is her favorite activity. She says she reads every day for an hour and a half, which is confirmed by her mother. And she spends little time with screen media compared to her peers in this study—she estimates about two and a half hours a day and seems to rarely check her phone. Makayla describes herself at a couple of points in the interview as "weird" compared with the rest of her friends. When asked to elaborate, she explains how, when the teacher gives the class free time and allows them to use their phones, her friends play a game or read a book on their phones, while "I read a *paper* book." Makayla's mother states that, due to financial constraints, they do not have internet at home, nor do they have any significant data usage on their phones. Makayla used to have access to a tablet on which she played games, but three tablets (one iPad and two other tablets) broke in succession due to a variety of accidents involving her little sister. Makayla gets worked up describing the details of precisely how the tablets were broken, but her mother cuts her off, saying, "Makayla, it's broken. That's *it*. [Turning to researcher.] She goes on and on." Her mother says that Makayla gets on the internet only at school or out and about on her phone when she can connect to a wireless network. Makayla's father has home internet access, so she gets online more frequently when she is visiting him, but these visits are rare because her father is a driver who is, Makayla says, "always, like, on the road a *lot*."

According to both Makayla and her mother, Makayla spends most of her time reading, playing dolls with her little sister, drawing, and jotting down notes in her journal. She has a number of journals and notebooks, which she fills with lists, drawings, and a few things she does not want to share with the researcher and that she calls "not *personal* stuff, but just like regular stuff, like what happened in the day." The screen media time Makayla does have seems mostly to be devoted to watching Disney Channel shows and other children's programming on the television in her mother's room, including the veterinarian shows mentioned above and *Dog with a Blog*. When she does watch TV, she often takes notes in her journal, detailing from one of her animal shows, for instance, how to deal with a dog's broken bone by "pop[ping] it back into place." Makayla occasionally watches YouTube, mainly to find new hairstyles for herself or her "doll babies." She wants her own iPhone so she can watch more Netflix, which she currently watches from time to time on her mother's phone. She has a list of her favorite Netflix movies in her journal, which include *Tooth Fairy, Frenemies, Geek Charming,* and *K.C. Undercover.*

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Parental Rules: "Kids' Channels Only." Her mom also describes Makayla as different from other kids her age, perhaps more sensitive. To protect her, Makayla's mother tries as much as possible to "separate her from a lot of people in the world." She monitors Makayla's media use, monitors who her friends are, avoids taking her to "bad neighborhoods," and keeps the house quiet: "I keep it quiet here, I don't have no arguing, no fussing. No one's running throughout the house, no mens, it's just us. So I just keep her focused and happy."

Makayla's mother's protective measures extend from the people she allows into her daughter's life to the programs she allows her to watch. She lets Makayla and her sister watch TV but "kids' channels only," citing Cartoon Network. She says the kids know the rules and that "they know if I see them watching *Empire* or *Love & Hip Hop*, they know not to watch it cause there's too much cursing and too much drama. It's too much, too much for *them*." She says these were the rules in her house when she was growing up and that it made her more of a "house person" than a "street person," teaching her how to settle disputes without "shooting and killing and all that stuff." Yet Makayla's mother is not against television. In fact, she feels like she should be watching more TV *with* her daughters so that it could be a family experience. She also laments that she does not spend enough time reading with them or just having more family "us time," but she works long hours and finds it difficult to make the time.

Beyond television, Makayla's mother does not talk about limiting media use but instead says that she closely monitors that use, often without Makayla's knowledge: "Pretty much she's still kinda young. I observe her a lot. She don't *know*, but I observe and see. I don't want her to get exposed too fast." Like other parents in the study, she believes that academics and grades are first priority and fears that media exposure may interfere with that. She does not seem to have a great deal of technical expertise (e.g., she does not seem to fully understand how data usage works) but she is still involved. For Makayla's mom, media monitoring is person-oriented: She monitors by looking over Makayla's shoulder. While she does use Facebook, she is wary of other games and apps, particularly Kik, a texting app many of Makayla's friends use. In fact, Makayla no longer has Kik on her phone because of a news story that scared both her and her mother:

> Makayla: Because my mom told me about a girl who had Kik and she was talking to a grown man and she didn't know it was a grown man. And so, the grown man tried to meet up with her—
>
> Mother: He *did* meet up with her. And killed her.
>
> Makayla: Yeah, he killed her.
>
> [Discussion about details of the story.]
>
> Mother: Yeah, so. That's *sad*.
>
> Makayla: I got scared, so I stopped [using Kik].

Makayla and her mother are afraid of certain aspects of digital media, and both seem to feel that reading, drawing, and playing with her sister are safer options.

The Practice of Reading: An Intentional Choice. Both Makayla and her mother talk about her as a reader. When describing what makes Makayla happy, her mother says, "She happy when she find a new book that she likes. And then she's happy sitting there, reading a book, relaxing, in the front seat [of the car]." Makayla circles "Reading" as her favorite activity on our initial screening tool. Yet she also says, "I'm a real slow reader" and "It's kind of hard for me to read." Makayla nonetheless maintains that "books are better" and when asked better than what, she answers:

> Electronics. Because when I was in, like, third grade I used be on like computers and stuff a *lot*. And so I noticed that [when] I started, like, reading a book, I kinda *improved*, like, a *little*, that I'd improved by, like, I knew new words and new stuff that some people didn't know in third grade. So it help me, a lot, to figure out new things.

She talks about her practice of reading as a choice, one she continues to make as part of what is perhaps a program of self-improvement. And she seems almost proud of the fact that others consider her weird for reading "paper books." For Makayla (and perhaps her mother), then, reading seems to be an intentional and thoughtful choice.

One potential interpretation of this choice is that it is related to other choices Makayla and her parents make about who she is and what she does: Her mother limits her media content to kids' channels, and Makayla chooses to play mainly with Barbies and doll babies. Her father encourages her to start a lemonade stand and helps her research cup prices on Safeway.com. These choices are different from those of other 11- and 12-year-olds in our study, moving more toward childhood and away from adulthood even as she turns 12 this coming fall. Yet Makayla has certainly been exposed to more "grown-up" media (for instance, she lists Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, Chris Brown, 50 Cent, 2 Chainz, and Snoop Dogg as her favorite artists in her journal), and she talks openly with the researcher and her mother about a novel she has started reading about a teenage pregnancy. While Makayla's parents allow her to consume media from a more adult world, both she and they are not in any hurry to move her growing-up process along.

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PROFILE

GABE

Social Networker

14 years old

Male

More than 1 race/ethnicity

Lives with mother, younger brother, two younger sisters, grandmother, great-grandmother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Kik, Instagram, SoundCloud, PlayStation 4

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PROFILE

SAMUEL

Video Gamer

12 years old

Male

More than 1 race/ethnicity

Lives with mother, older brother, two younger sisters, grandmother, great-grandmother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

iPad, Xbox 360, Clash Royale, YouTube

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GABE AND SAMUEL: BROTHERS

How a Social Networker and a Gamer Navigate Screens and Family

Gabe's Central Insight: ***Experienced teen social media users may act as self-appointed monitors of parents' and younger siblings' media use, instructing on the "right" way to interact on social media.***

Samuel's Central Insight: *Overuse of media (e.g., video games) can take away from other pursuits and affect well-being.*

The brothers Gabe (14 years old) and Samuel (12 years old) are alternately the greatest of rivals and the tightest of units. Their mother likens their bickering style to "two old men," and the interview ran for almost three hours due to the almost constant back-and-forth between the two of them, teasing, bantering, and outright arguing. They choose to sleep in the same room when there is a spare bedroom available, regularly take each other's side with other family members, and have developed their own "squad handshake." Gabe and Samuel live in a row house with their mother, their two younger sisters (8 and 10 years old), their maternal grandmother, and their maternal great-grandmother. Family is important to both of them: Gabe says "family problems" are what make him the most sad or frustrated, and Samuel answers the same question with "when my family has no time with us." Either Grandma or Great-Grandma is always in the house, and his mother is often out at work. Gabe talks about splitting the two girls up when they fight, and Samuel tells several stories about spending considerable amounts of time helping his sisters out with iPad or gaming problems. Their separate fathers—and the two additional households with two additional sets of rules and expectations—seem to occasionally be a source of tension between the brothers and, for Gabe, with his mother. They are both extremely devoted to their mother, teasing her and praising her in succession.

Gabe starts out the interview quiet and reserved, but in the presence of his boisterous family he warms right up and is soon teasing Samuel for his paltry amount of Kik contacts and teasing his mother for all the hashtags she puts at the end of a tweet. He circles "Listening to music" on our initial survey as his favorite activity, and the apps on his phone reflect this, including Spotify, SoundCloud, NetTube (an app for finding free music), and Dubsmash. He gets annoyed at his sisters when they mislabel a song as hip-hop: "It's called *trap* music. I told you this every time I turn it on! It's called trap music. Desiigner is not hip-hop—it's trap!" He plays on a soccer team, and it sounds like much of his grandmother's time after school and on weekends is spent driving him to games. His mother is on the fence about whether soccer or using his phone is his favorite thing to do: "He has a saying where he says soccer is life and he does love soccer very much, but if he gets in trouble and his phone is taken away, he is *beyond* unhappy. Like adult-level *tantrum* unhappy." Gabe's friends, whom he calls his "squad," are important to him. He says making friends is easy for him and that he has a lot of them. Samuel chimes in at one point and says Gabe's friends are

> Cool in a good way. They are not like "c'mon, kid, we are going to the movies" and stuff like "don't tell your parents—we're just gonna go." His friends are awesome. They make sure that everything is OK. And they are just chill.

Gabe also has, what he calls in an exaggerated voice, "a *relationship*" and is in one Kik group with friends like him who are coupled up. He shrugs his shoulders and changes the topic every time the researcher tries to get him to talk about it, but most of the photos in his gallery are of him and his girlfriend. He talks frequently about his father but doesn't like other members of his family weighing in on his dad, saying to Samuel at one point, "Don't call my dad by his first name."

Samuel is a bubbly, funny boy who is constantly making jokes, coming into the room at one point with Kool-Aid on his hand and fooling his mother into thinking he is bleeding from cutting himself. He is sensitive about his weight and refers to himself jokingly as "fat." He talks about being slimmer since he went to camp and then goes silent, looking at his brother. When the researcher asks him what's wrong, he says, "I bet he is laughing at me. On his inside." This and other comments demonstrate that he is particularly sensitive about his brother's view of him. In contrast to Gabe, Samuel has only a few, close friends—three, to be precise—with whom he plays video games and just hangs out and talks. At the time of the interview, Samuel was living through his fourth week without his iPad after getting it taken away for poor behavior. When asked what makes him the happiest, he answers, "It's my iPad. And sometimes Gabe." His response to the next question, what makes him most frustrated and sad,

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without missing a beat is, "My iPad and sometimes Gabe." His mother confirms this diagnosis, and Samuel talks sadly about his "trash-talking" that led to his brother refusing to play games with him anymore: "Now I really regret that cause I like playing games with him." Samuel also talks frequently about his father (the father of his two younger sisters as well) but is less defensive about him than Gabe is about his father, and there seems to be less tension between Samuel and his mother about his father. Yet Samuel's mother is irritated by what she sees as his father's more lax media rules. And, in his brother's words, Samuel "snitches on himself" several times throughout the interview as he talks about what he does at his father's house: watching YouTube—something his mother has forbidden—and even making a YouTube channel, to his mother's dismay.

Between Gabe and Samuel, they have a television in their bedroom and access to a plethora of electronic devices (including tablets, phones, and gaming systems), and, since each visits his father regularly, each has access to even *more* devices that he keeps at another house. Despite relatively similar levels of access to electronic devices, their media types are quite distinct.

Gabe's Media Type: A Social Networker. Gabe writes on his initial survey that he spends over five hours a day on social media, and he seems to fit the *Census* media type of a Social Networker. He and his mother also cite soccer as something he loves to do, but even that is used as a source for material to post on social media. For example, he recently posted a video of himself on Instagram doing a soccer move called a "knuckleball." He watches television, listens to music, and plays video games (he has a PlayStation 4 that he moves between his parents' homes), but both his expertise and his excitement emerge in force when he is showing off his smartphone and talking about his activities on Instagram, Snapchat, and Kik.

Samuel's Media Type: A Video Gamer. Samuel seems to fit squarely into the *Census*'s Gamer description: He plays games daily on his iPad and loves to play his Xbox at his father's house. When he was allowed to watch YouTube (his mother no longer lets either him or his sisters watch because of the inappropriate language in some of the videos), he often watched people reviewing and playing games. Several of his apps are wikis that contain vast amounts of information on the games he plays, and he spends "a lot of time" reading them to advance in his games. His mother calls his iPad an "extension of his soul," and when she takes it away from him for a few weeks, he says jokingly that he is "dying inside." Yet this Gamer and his Social Networker brother influence each other's media practices, with Samuel (enthusiastically, as he is with everything related to his older brother) finding his way with Snapchat and Kik and Gabe (often reluctantly) drawn into playing and discussing games.

"I Will Crush You for Real": How Two Brothers Talk About Gaming. Despite the fact that most of Gabe's screen time is spent on social media or watching TV, much of his interview time is spent in heated arguments with Samuel about gaming. The brothers argue about everything from the quality of the special effects on the Xbox versus the PlayStation 4 to who has a higher level on Pokémon GO to whether or not you can lose cards in Clash Royale. Gabe will no longer play most video games with Samuel because of the latter's extreme trash-talking and bragging, but they talk about long-time feuds between them. For instance, they argue about whether Gabe stopped playing Clash Royale because *he* was winning too much or because *Samuel* was winning too much and Gabe got "butt hurt" (i.e., overreacted to losing). They also discuss the one game Gabe will still play with his brother, Rocket League. Gabe describes playing Rocket League: "It's a giant ball, and you put awesome cars [on the ball] and put it in the goal." Samuel says, "It's cars and soccer. What more could you want?"

His mother calls his iPad an "extension of his soul," and when she takes it away from him for a few weeks, he says jokingly that he is "dying inside."

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Throughout their arguments, Gabe tries to come across as above gaming and certainly not interested in the games Samuel is. Samuel, meanwhile, seems committed to reenlisting his brother as his gaming buddy. The following extended exchange between the two gives a sense of the stakes for Samuel and how Gabe gets drawn into the debate:

> Gabe: [Samuel] just plays a lot of video games, that is it. To be honest I am not even focused on him sometimes.
>
> Researcher: Really?
>
> Gabe: When he is doing his thing, I am not really with him.
>
> Samuel: He played Terraria with me!
>
> Gabe: I usually just sit in a different room and listen to music or something.
>
> Samuel: He played Terraria with me for a little bit.
>
> Gabe: Yeah, it was only for his benefit, though. I didn't like the game.
>
> Samuel: Here is the thing—he didn't like it because he couldn't get far.
>
> Gabe: No! I didn't like it because it was *boring*. Same reason I don't like Minecraft—cause it's boring. There is nothing to do.
>
> Samuel: I gave you stuff so you could get far.
>
> Gabe: If there's no storyline in it, there is really no point in playing.
>
> Samuel [pretending to be Gabe]: "But, no! I don't have wings, so I'm just gonna quit the game!"
>
> Gabe: I *do* have wings.
>
> Samuel: You *don't* have wings anymore. You have a hover board, but that is not wings.
>
> Gabe: No, I have wings cause you gave me wings.
>
> Samuel: I gave you the *weakest* wings in that game, and then you said, "Oh, yeah, I'm the most decked-out person."
>
> Gabe: That's not what I said because I don't talk like that.
>
> Samuel: I gave you wooden armor.
>
> Gabe: This is legit what I said before I deleted this game. This game is some trash. I can't believe he plays it.

Samuel is honestly hurt by Gabe's assessment of Terraria, especially since it was his favorite game at the time. And Gabe seems to hold the game to a higher standard, complaining about the "storyline" and how it's "boring." Immediately after this exchange, Samuel again begs Gabe to go back to playing with him and Gabe, again, refuses. Samuel seems to sense how important gaming is to their relationship and wants to hold on to that as Gabe grows up, starting high school in the fall and perhaps spending more time with his friends and girlfriend.

Growing Up with Social Media: Gabe's Views of Himself and His Family. A frequent topic of teasing for Gabe is his brother's use of social media apps like Kik, Snapchat, and Instagram. To save space on his phone, Gabe recently deleted all his Instagram posts and started from scratch. Of the earliest posts he made (when he was around Samuel's age), he says, "It's back when I used to post stuff like the way Samuel would talk. [...] Like, 'This baseball field next to my house, it is so pretty!'" When the researcher asks him if his posting has changed over time, he says yes and that he used to post more pictures of himself. Indeed, Samuel's Instagram contains pictures of his new shoes and a recent Rice Krispies square he ate, labeled "Biggest one I have ever seen," a tagline that earns Samuel some merciless teasing from the entire family. While Gabe's terseness makes it difficult to get too much detail from him about the precise differences in posting style, he seems to imply that younger kids like Samuel post in a more observational style and are more focused on pictures of themselves, while teens like Gabe are perhaps directed more outward socially (although, it must be said, he has pictures of himself up as well). Generally, Samuel prefers Snapchat, which perhaps makes sense, since it is a platform that affords brief musings that disappear after a short period.

A major distinction between Gabe and Samuel's social media usage is the sheer number of contacts. Gabe has 492 followers on Instagram to what he calls his brother's "pitiful" 10 followers. Gabe talks for a long while about the different chat groups he has on Kik, comprising friends from school and camp. And then he teases his brother when Samuel claims he has 27 friends on Kik. Gabe can't believe a number this large is possible and looks over Samuel's shoulder, shouting, "Half of these are [from] team Kik! What are you talking about?" In other words, Samuel is counting automated messages generated by the app as legitimate contacts. This dispute grows so heated that eventually their mother takes the iPad away to stop both Gabe's teasing and Samuel's ever more passionate defenses.

The boys' mother seems relatively savvy about social media, not only having Facebook (an app both boys agree is "for old people")

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but using Instagram to promote the dance-lesson business she owns. Nonetheless, the boys tease her for the *ways* in which she posts, adding (they say) way too many hashtags, including tags that nobody else uses, which the boys find hilarious. They also tease her for her messaging etiquette, claiming that she is "a professional curver": someone who never texts you back. Gabe is particularly harsh with his mother, moving from teasing into real anger when he refers to the pictures she has posted of her dancing with a man named Adam. Gabe says, "And tell him to keep his eyes up! Your eyes are up here, not down here!" with Samuel backing him up on this. Both boys are clearly very protective of their mother and Gabe admits that he goes to her Instagram page regularly "to check on Adam."

Device Confiscation as the "Go-To" Punishment. Gabe and Samuel's mother gives her kids a significant amount of freedom around their electronic devices, but she is not afraid to confiscate them, citing removing the iPad as the "go-to" punishment for Samuel in particular. At the time of the interview, Samuel had been without his iPad for about a month, and though he compared having it taken away with how he felt when his dog died, she has remained firm. She notes, "He gets it taken away for not doing homework. He gets it taken away for me getting a call home from school. He gets it taken away for talking back. He gets it taken away for attitude or not doing chores." Gabe loses his phone more rarely. Also, because of his age and his responsibility level, he is allowed to do more on his device, including access YouTube, a great point of contention with Samuel. Their mother regularly checks search histories, including the viewing history on the smart TV. And when Samuel doesn't want to show Gabe his Kik messages, she says, "Neither of you should have *anything* in your messages that no one is allowed to see. So is there something that you don't want folks to see?" This effectively ends that argument.

Yet there are still struggles around screen-time rules and limits, due in large part to the fact that both boys spend a considerable amount of time in the two households headed by their respective fathers. Their mom seems to still be working through how to handle this, giving the boys' fathers the freedom to set their own rules to some extent when the boys are with them but also asking the boys to try to respect her rules. For instance, she does not allow Samuel either to watch or to create content on YouTube. When she hears during the interview that both he *and* his younger sisters were watching YouTube, she seems horrified. And when she hears that he *created* a channel, she becomes even more upset. While she is honest that she does not think Samuel's father is good at monitoring what they view, she seems to understand that she cannot protect the children from everything they might view at their fathers' houses. But the idea of Samuel *creating* something and putting it online is more distressing to her.

The iPad as an "Extension of Samuel's Soul": Issues of Well-Being. Samuel and his whole family affirm that he "loves" his iPad, particularly his games. When his mother lets him take it back out during the interview after his month-long purgatory without it, he gets giddy and starts rambling on about how big it is and how it feels different since he last picked it up. His mother laughs, saying, "He is so anxious and overjoyed that he is just rambling. Look at his face!" The iPad—and sometimes the Xbox as well—offers Samuel an opportunity to connect through gaming with his brother, his friends, and even his mother, who is now part of his "clan" in Clash Royale (she had the boys cheat and play her character skillfully for a while so she could get to a high-enough level to join up). It also offers him the opportunity to be an expert: Samuel is, without question, the most skilled gamer in his household. Even his older brother, Gabe, admits to Samuel's superiority in most games. Samuel has put in the play and research time (reading the game-related wikis and watching YouTubers talk about how to play games) to become the person whom family members approach to ask questions and get help related to gaming. He relishes this position, bubbling on happily when he is explaining some gaming nuance to those around him.

"I think if he could put a wedding dress on that iPad, he'd marry it."

But Samuel's mother worries that this expertise may come with a price. He gets incredibly frustrated when either the technology doesn't work or he cannot "beat" a level or a challenge in a game. He describes one game, Geometry Dash, that really frustrates him:

> This one time, I was playing it and I got to ninety-eight percent [just short of winning]. I threw it on the couch [and] I went upstairs for like thirty minutes crying cause it was so hard. I came back downstairs, tried it again [and] I lost. I just gave up on the game and deleted the game.

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> [Then] I got it again, and I am not as good as I thought I was *again*.

His mother says that this description of his reaction "sounds accurate." And yet, he notes that he still has the game—he seems driven to continue playing until he completes it. This determination is perhaps admirable, but it is sometimes viewed by his mother as unhealthy. When Grandma takes Gabe and the girls to Gabe's soccer games, Samuel often stays home by himself, playing games or watching videos instead of hanging out and playing soccer on the sidelines with the other kids who go to watch the games. His mother points out worriedly that he sometimes talks about his iPad (and his YouTube viewing in particular) "like it is an addiction."

Samuel's mother also feels that his gaming has affected his reading. She recounts how he used to read books all the time, begging her to buy him new releases from his favorite authors and reading happily even with the TV on in the background. But, she says, that all changed when he got his first game system: "The [Nintendo] DS ruined everything. And then after the DS it was the iPad. And I think if he could put a wedding dress on that iPad, he'd marry it." She says he still reads but not nearly as much. And when Samuel is given permission to have his iPad back for the course of the experience sampling, he says he is "nervous" that he will get it taken away again. He doesn't really trust his ability to control himself, predicting that he will have his iPad for only a couple months before it is taken away again. Yet Samuel does not seem all that unhappy about the prospect, perhaps appreciating that someone is there to put the brakes on even when he can't.

"One Eyeball on the iPad": Media Multitasking. Gabe and Samuel's mother describes a typical Saturday for the boys this way:

> They wake up. They get on an electronic—usually a cell phone [or] iPad. They have breakfast. They are *back* on the electronic while *simultaneously* watching TV. If it's soccer season, which takes up a little more than half of our year, then they are at soccer games and activities in between … [After soccer] there is usually a nap in there somewhere. And then it's TV and phones and iPads. Sometimes if [Gabe] brings his PlayStation back from his dad's house, they will play that, too. But that's not always here.

Not only do Gabe and Samuel spend most of their Saturday free time with screens, their mom makes clear that they are regularly *multitasking* with those screens. Samuel contests this story, saying that it would be impossible to attend to the iPad and TV simultaneously: "If one eyeball were on the iPad, the other one would just be up!" Despite their mom's requests that they stay off their devices and pay attention to the researcher during most of the questioning, notifications from Samuel's iPad and Gabe's phone distract them regularly. Also, their great-grandma spends a lot of time watching the TV in the living room, the main space on the first floor where the family hangs out. Both sisters are already begging for their own devices (they had Nooks, but it sounds as if those might now be broken), so it is only a matter of time before even more media devices jump into the fray. The girls may learn some of their brothers' media practices and add their own innovations, so their mother will soon be navigating an even wider variety of situations.

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Gaming: Contrasting Practices

All the youth in this study play digital games, but their specific gaming practices vary. We offer some contrasts here:

Mobile Devices/Game Systems

- The most common way to game for these participants is on their phones or tablets. All the participants have at least a couple of games on their mobile device(s), but they often do not talk enthusiastically about these games, skipping over them as they talk about their other apps.
- Game systems, while not owned by all participants, seem to engender more serious or competitive play. This may be in part because it is the Gamers who own them, but even a 14-year-old Social Networker becomes competitive about games when in the presence of his younger brother, a Gamer.

Social Gaming/Independent Gaming

- While we did find instances of youth leaning over a tablet to watch a sibling play and/or wait their turn, game systems lent themselves more to social gaming. Whether it is sibling "trash talk" or the foster mother of a 14-year-old teasing her for missing a step in *Just Dance*, game systems in public rooms seem to allow for easy (if sometimes heated) social interaction.
- Most of our non-Gamer participants, particularly the Readers, like playing games by themselves: A 14-year-old Reader plays solitaire on her computer to "keep calm and peaceful"; a 12-year-old Reader challenges herself with White Tiles; and another 12-year-old Reader liked to play Slither.io on her tablet before it broke.

Boys/Girls

- All the Gamers in this study are boys and seem to embrace that view of themselves, talking enthusiastically about the different games they own and the levels they've reached. One of them, a 12-year-old, even has game-related wallpaper on his tablet.
- Apart from the seemingly agreed-upon exception of *Just Dance*, the girls in the study neither do much gaming nor talk about it much. The one exception is a 14-year-old Reader (whose younger brother is a Gamer) who rattles off several games she enjoys and even has *Halo* wallpaper on her tablet. She explains this by saying, "I kinda like a few things that *boys like*?"

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PROFILE

MARKUS

Video Gamer

13 years old

Male

African-American

Lives with foster mother

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Xbox 360, *Minecraft*, Google, Channel Ten

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MARKUS: A VIDEO GAMER WITH EQUIPMENT "LIMITATIONS"

Central Insight: ***Youth who use media in "traditional" ways can still have sophisticated media knowledge and practices.***

Markus is a tall, quiet, 13-year-old boy who is outwardly serious but gets a shy smile on his face from time to time as he talks about a favorite video game or grudgingly acknowledges a joke made by the researcher. At the time of the interview he lives alone in a relatively large row house with his foster mother, but other foster siblings have lived there in the past and others may again in the future. Markus does have cousins (it is unclear whether they are foster cousins or blood relations) who come over frequently. Despite his height and his deepening voice, he comes across as quite young, naming the cartoons *Teen Titans* and *Uncle Grandpa* as his favorite shows. Also, he is reading *Stink* at the time of the interview, a book aimed both in content and reading level at third- and fourth-graders. Yet it sounds like he does well in school, and his foster mother, with whom he has lived for about three years, describes him as "very *book* smart" but somewhat forgetful, doing his homework and then losing it or failing to pay attention when the teacher explains something. He likes hanging out with his cousins and friends, either playing video games inside or playing basketball or football outside.

Markus is a reserved youth, never saying more than is necessary to answer a question. During our first meeting, his foster mother is present but sits across the room, with her chair facing us but not participating, even when the researcher tries to draw her in. The relationship between her and Markus is difficult to discern. When they're not together she describes him positively—if in general terms such as "smart" and "good"—and he refers to her respectfully. But she does not seem to know much about his interests or his friends, pointing only to "shopping for shoes," something they do together, as what makes him happiest. It is not clear whether she has tried to become closer to him and he has resisted, whether she has not sought that out, or whether indeed they *are* close and they simply do not want to share the more personal aspects of their relationship with the researcher. Nevertheless, this central relationship in Markus' life remains somewhat hazy throughout our conversations.

Markus' Media Type: A Video Gamer. Markus seems to fit the media type of a teen Video Gamer: He says playing video games is his favorite activity, and he has a TV with a game system (an Xbox 360) in his room. He also plays video games with his cousins, using their PlayStation 4 when he can because it is newer, giving it fewer "limitations" than his Xbox. He plays a few hours a day (he estimates three, which seems about right, given his schedule and his foster mother's claims). Unlike the other game players in our sample, he owns only a handful of games, and he uses YouTube to watch sports videos rather than follow gamers. Finally, he does not own a smartphone and has only irregular access to Wi-Fi. Markus, then, seems to be a gamer at heart but does not have the resources to pursue gaming with the same intensity as others.

Whether due to his limited electronic resources, the rules of his house, or his own preference, Markus' daily schedule involves far less media than his peers in this study. He walks the researcher through his morning after his alarm goes off at 6:45:

> I get dressed and ready for school and then I will grab my metro card and my book bag and then go outside and wait for the bus. [...] Then I would go to school and then it would be, like, 'bout fifteen minutes, cause I would have to wait 'bout a minute 'til they open up the doors. And then [during] the fifteen minutes, like, we get to talk and stuff. And then it'll be locker time and then it'll be homeroom.

The researcher asks him if he does anything else during this time such as texting, listening to music, watching TV, or reading, but the only thing he does with electronics all morning, he says, is text his foster mother and let her know he has arrived at school. In the afternoons, he is at Kids' Rec (where he does sometimes play games on the computers during free time) and does not return home until around 6:30, giving him just enough time to check over his homework for mistakes and then watch some TV before bed. It sounds like he is rather tired by the time he gets in bed, setting the timer to shut off the TV after only 30 minutes, when he is often asleep. The bulk of his media use occurs on the weekends, when he plays video games in his room, either alone or with his cousins. But, even then, he does not display the broad range of media practices we might predict: He never texts,

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spends little time using YouTube, and does not watch movies on Netflix, all practices that would require Wi-Fi or sitting at a desk and using the family's home computer.

Gaming as Challenge. Markus' gaming revolves around challenge. When asked why he prefers the game *Madden* to the basketball and shooting games his friends like, he replies, "I like playing more *harder* games," explaining how the possibility of getting the ball overturned is high, making it more difficult than the games his friends like. Similarly, he says what he likes about *Agar.io*, a game he plays on the computer at Kids' Rec, is that "it involves strategy." Generally, he says he enjoys both games and TV shows that are "competitive," explaining this as "something that's hard to do and, like, accomplish it." For instance, he sometimes watches *American Ninja Warrior*, an obstacle course competition on television that puts athletes through their paces. He also refers to Mount Everest, and the researcher, misinterpreting, asks, "Oh, you'd like to do something like that? You'd like to climb Mount Everest?" Markus responds, "I would like to *watch* somebody do it."

Watching Markus play offers a window into how he approaches challenge. Several weeks after the first interview, the researcher has a chance to watch him play *Minecraft* on the computer at Kids' Rec. He is sitting with a friend around the same age and they are both playing the game, comparing notes as they go. Yet they are playing quite differently. His friend, for instance, spends 10 minutes in one place mining and eventually starving because his character hasn't eaten. Meanwhile, Markus is constantly attentive to all of his status bars, gathering supplies into a number of chests, finding a pig to eat before his hunger bar gets too low, and toggling back and forth between *Minecraft* and Google searches for guidance on crafting a sword, a torch, and armor. When the researcher asks him about his overall goals, he says that he is trying to build a shelter but that it's hard because of all the obstacles "like [finding] the materials and, like, if it was night and I had to avoid the monsters and make it home before my stuff get lost." Markus' goal is to "get all the achievements," which include making a saddle and riding it until it wears out, killing an enderdragon, and creating a portal to the nether. He notes that some of these are "hard," but he is excited about the prospect of ticking through the list. This is by far the most talkative Markus has been throughout the research—he happily answers the researcher's many questions about where he is, what he is doing, and what the various creatures are. Several times he even offers spontaneous explanations without the researcher's questioning.

"We Don't Have Wi-Fi Here": No Wi-Fi as a Parenting Strategy. Markus' foster mother has a smartphone, on which she has Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. She also uses it to do her banking and has other apps she calls "business"-related such as OnStar, Uber, and a parking app. But she never lets Markus use her phone, and she buys him a basic phone without internet. She says that "he just really has a phone basically for communication with me, because he's independent—catching the bus to and from school." Moreover, she generally keeps the house Wi-Fi off. She turns it on briefly from time to time, which Markus usually takes advantage of, downloading a free app onto his tablet or downloading songs from SoundCloud to listen to later. While she does not explicitly state that this is a parenting strategy, she notes that he does not Snapchat with anyone "because we don't have Wi-Fi here."

Yet beyond the control of the Wi-Fi, Markus' mother does not seem to have too many rules or limitations on Markus' media use. She says that after he has finished his chores and his schoolwork, he is free to do whatever he likes and that she has even found him gaming at two o'clock in the morning a couple times. When the researcher asks if she has any rules about "what sorts of things online he's allowed to do when," she pauses, seeming to struggle a bit to answer the question. She finally says, "He knows he's not supposed to watch anything inappropriate. And he'll be quick to tell you, 'That's inappropriate.'" She appears to trust his judgment. She also realizes, however, that he may sometimes watch inappropriate content, but she does not really have a solution for this: "You can't always control what the kids watch. Or *listen* to. You can *try*. But … " Markus' foster mother is trying, but she knows there are potential flaws in her system.

Face-to-Face Connections Only. Despite his limited devices, Markus does have access to texting and calling on his phone and email on his foster mother's desktop computer. Yet he says he only interacts with his friends and cousins face-to-face. For instance, even though none of his school friends live in his neighborhood, he does not text, call, or email them over the summer. He notes that a few of his friends tried emailing him for a while, but "they stopped after they knew I didn't [email]." Instead, Markus spends his social time over the summer at Kids' Rec and at his house with his cousins. Markus does have Kik on his tablet, but he only has two contacts (his "godsister" and one of his friends) and he does not have Kik notifications turned on.

Yet Markus does seem to enjoy using electronic devices in a face-to-face context. He clearly enjoys his time with his cousins, playing on each other's gaming systems. And his foster mother says the kids spend lots of time "record[ing] each other on the Kindle and the tablet" and doing "the silly faces" on Snapchat (it sounds like this is on a cousin's tablet, not Markus'). He notes that his school friends have Instagram and Snapchat where they "just

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make videos and stuff," which they share with each other and the friends they have from their neighborhoods.

Watching Channel Ten: "Traditional" Screen Time. Markus is the only participant in the sample who actually volunteers a specific television channel when asked about what he watches: "I like—like, sometimes—Channel Ten because it gives me news and, like, up-to-date [events]." He never watches Netflix and rarely uses YouTube, using it only occasionally on the desktop computer to see sports highlights. When he is bored, he turns on the television and flips around to see if there is something he wants to watch. If not, he plays a video game or does something else. Thus, he consumes the menu of options presented to him at the time it is presented to him, not shopping around the internet like other youth in this study.

As opposed to many of his peers who spend a lot of time on phones or tablets, Markus primarily accesses the internet through a computer. His use of the computer is purposeful: He uses Google to search for information he needs for classwork or to figure out whether or not to purchase something. He names technology companies as an example of something he might research, "like Samsung and Apple—to see if they're just taking our stuff or like you're actually [getting] your money['s] worth." Markus is a critical consumer and knows how to maneuver around the internet. He talks, for instance, about "pop-ups" being an indication that a site is not "credible." He is smart and practiced with computer technology and the resources on the internet. However, he accesses and uses this technology and these resources differently from many of his peers, watching scheduled television rather than Netflix or YouTube and using the internet to search for specific items rather than to browse and see what's out there. Perhaps this is because the devices he has available to him—a TV and a computer—*afford* this kind of interaction, or perhaps he is simply not interested in the kinds of media practices in which his peers engage. Nonetheless, Markus is a relatively traditional media user.

"Different Dangers" for Kids Today: How Parents React

Most parents in the study refer to a changed world—one participant's mother talks about "different dangers" for kids today. These parents refer either to the ubiquity of the kids' devices, the content they can access (in terms of its appropriateness, or not, for tweens and teens), or the people online who could hurt their children. Parents have different reactions to this: They may move away from digital access for their children; they may use their technical expertise to monitor their children closely; they may focus on communication and discuss hypothetical situations; or they may, to some degree, throw their hands up because it is all so overwhelming.

Restricting Access

- A 12-year-old Reader and her mother both become so terrified after they hear a story about a girl being killed by a Kik contact that the youth removes it from her phone. Also, there is no Wi-Fi access in the house, reducing her access to online socializing.
- The foster mother of a 13-year-old keeps the Wi-Fi in the house turned off so her foster son has limited access to the internet in the house. Moreover, he does not have a smartphone, so he cannot get access outside the house either.

Close Monitoring

- The mother of a 12-year-old Gamer and his little brother takes her sons' devices away every night at bedtime (checking them to see what is on them) and uses the Life360 app to keep track of where they are physically.

Communicating

- The mother of a brother and sister pair in the study stresses how they can use her younger sister—their aunt—as a resource, telling her things they might not want to tell their mother and keeping open the lines of communication to another adult.
- The mother of a 14-year-old runs through hypotheticals with her and her sisters, asking them to talk with her about what they would do in certain online situations.

Letting Go

- The foster mother of a 13-year-old Gamer restricts his Wi-Fi use, but when asked about rules around TV, she says, "You can't always control what the kids watch … You can *try*," indicating that she may let at least that part of his media consumption go.
- The foster mother of a 15-year-old Social Networker says that she is "realistic" and knows she cannot monitor all of her children's media use, especially when they can just create an account. So she tries to pay attention to what they *do* choose to do in front of her and tells them when it is over the line.

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PROFILE

JAYLA

Social Networker

14 years old

Female

African-American

Lives with foster mother, foster mother's partner, younger biological sister

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

FaceTime, *texting*, *Instagram*, Just Dance

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JAYLA: "THIS LADY BLOWS UP MY PHONE"
Relationships, Conflict, and Smartphones

Central Insight: ***Even without technical expertise, parents can understand a digital native's practices and intervene to manage their media use.***

Jayla is a passionate and energetic 14-year-old girl who loves to dance. According to her foster mother, Ada, Jayla has always sought out social connection, ignoring the TV as a young child in order to just "sit and communicate … with grown-ups and be a part of that." Ada—a strong presence in her easy chair in what Jayla calls her "woman cave" at the front of the house—took Jayla and her younger sister in when Jayla was 7 years old. Jayla only remained with her, however, for about eight months before, in her foster mother's words, "It got to the point that I couldn't do it no more." After that, she was placed in a number of foster homes while her younger sister remained with Ada. Jayla is only recently (for several months) back with Ada because Jayla's birth mother asked Ada to try bringing the sisters together again. At the time of the study, Ada, Jayla, Jayla's sister, and Ada's long-time partner, Mr. Mike, all lived together in a two-bedroom duplex, but Jayla's sister was away visiting her father during the interview.

Jayla is passionate about hip-hop and modern dancing, learning dances from YouTube in her room. She goes so far as to organize an event with her friends at Kids' Rec, choreographing a dance and even creating permission slips in the computer lab. She used to be a part of a community dance group, where she was able to dance and collaborate with other youth on choreographing, but participation fees became prohibitive, so she had to stop. She takes obvious pleasure in dancing, performing for the researcher several songs from *Just Dance*, a popular dancing video game, and two other numbers she helped choreograph. Ada says that when Jayla was younger, she used to get Mr. Mike to watch her dance, saying, "Mr. Mike, let me show you this!" and taking obvious pleasure in her creation and in the audience.

Jayla and Ada appear to have an easy relationship, often finishing each other's sentences and joking with one another. For instance, Jayla starts a *Just Dance* song and struggles a bit out of the gate, so Ada says teasingly, "You ain't got a star [on the game] yet," to which Jayla responds, "Shh! *You* ain't dancing." A close physical intimacy seems to at least in part be borne out of Ada's relationship with Jayla's sister and out of Jayla and Ada's time together—however brief—when Jayla was younger.

Ada talks freely about how difficult it was for Jayla after her mother left and she was initially placed with Ada, saying she didn't do anything: not watch TV, read books, or do puzzles. Ada says, "She didn't really do nothing. She just cried all the time." While Ada is talking about this time in her life, Jayla is playing *Just Dance*. She makes comments now and then when she thinks Ada has gotten something wrong (e.g., "I didn't act out in school!"), but she mostly concentrates on the game, singing loudly to block out the story at several points and saying, "You know I hate talking about that!" As Jayla reenters Ada's home, then, her favorite video game acts as both a connection (e.g., showing off her dancing skills and getting teased about her missteps) to her "new" family and a way to escape from difficult topics her foster mother brings up.

Jayla's Media Type: A Social Networker. Jayla appears to fall within the *Census* media type of a Social Networker, using both a smartphone and a tablet. She claims three and a half hours a day of screen time, but her own and her foster mother's stories put that number closer to seven or eight hours. Jayla receives notifications from Instagram that draw her away from the interview on several occasions, and she's proud that she only has nine pictures on Instagram but 696 followers. She uses her iPad to FaceTime with her friends and sleeps with both devices, texting her friends frequently and calling her phone her "sleep buddy." Ada is concerned that these devices prevent her from getting a good night's sleep and describes her as being "consumed" by her phone. Jayla used to watch television, naming a number of Disney programs—*iCarly, Good Luck Charlie, That's So Raven, Hannah Montana*—but says that she doesn't watch television anymore. She loves playing *Just Dance* on the Xbox in the front room, *Acapella* on the Wii at Kids' Rec, and, according to the experience sampling, Candy Crush on her phone.

Social Media: "Straight Flexin'" or Making Connections? Jayla's smartphone has little space, so she has few apps and images stored on it. Yet she has her phone with her at all times, checks her Instagram frequently, and regularly FaceTimes with friends when she is not with them. When the researcher asks her at one

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point what she is doing on Instagram, she replies, "straight flexin'," which seems to mean showing off to her Instagram followers. Yet she does not engage with the social media community to the exclusion of face-to-face interaction and, in fact, seems to use it to *support* that interaction. She texts and FaceTimes with friends from school and Kids' Rec, and when asked if she ever tries to violate school rules and keep her phone with her, she says, "No point in taking it in. My friends there during school's hours." She has sleepovers with her friends about once a month, where, Jayla says, "We hang out. We hang out. We hang out. We go outside. We do [laughs] *girl* things." According to the experience sampling, the most enjoyable parts of her day are *not* screen time but activities like going to the store with her birth mother and going out for ice cream.

Jayla's phone seems to be a particularly important way of maintaining her connection with her birth parents. While Jayla never talks in her interviews about communicating with her birth parents (either with or without Ada present), her experience sampling indicates that that communication is a critical function of her phone. Across all three experience sampling days, she is texting with her birth mother or father one or more of the times we text her. Sometimes these encounters are satisfying—for instance, when she feels "relieved … because I talked to my dad about how I feel." Other times they are upsetting, such as when she texts her mother about not getting a check her mother had promised to send her or about how she misses her father and grandfather. Yet, upsetting or not, these text encounters seem to offer connection to her birth parents and an outlet for frustration with them that might otherwise go unexpressed. Ada says both girls ask their parents for electronics and that Jayla's birth mother bought her both her phone and her iPad. Jayla's birth parents seem to have a vested interest in maintaining the virtual connection as well.

Calling the Phone Company: The Creative Solutions of a Non-Digital Native. Ada and Mr. Mike are older and, while both of them own mobile phones and Ada is fluent with her television's DVR, neither seems to be digitally savvy. Despite this, Ada has clearly educated herself about the girls' media use, using the verb "FaceTiming" to describe Jayla's chats with her friends and loading Instagram onto her phone to follow Jayla and her sister. Ada says she can't just take the girls' phones and see what is on them because "they both got locks on 'em." Yet her strategy now is asking the girls to unlock their phones for her on a schedule that is "random—they won't even know." She also figured out how to disable Jayla's phone when she wasn't returning Ada's phone calls. The researcher, impressed, asks if she did that remotely, and Ada answers, "No. I called the phone company and had them put it on standby." Ada may not be fully comfortable with technology, but she understands the importance of the phone and the tablet to the children living in her house and has found ways to manage these devices.

Ada's location outside of the digital native community allows her to break the social norms when she wants. For instance, she kept the numbers of some of Jayla's friends on her phone and texted them about a surprise cookout she threw. Jayla loved the cookout but responds in horror about Ada texting her friends and their parents: "She got numbers of *my friends*! [And] why do you have my friends' parents' numbers?!" Ada responds simply, "That is what a parent is supposed to do to keep up with their child." Ada also shows no hesitation about frequently texting and calling, sometimes contacting Jayla by phone every few minutes when Jayla is late to return home. As Jayla puts it, "This lady blows up my phone! … I don't know. This lady? She's kind of crazy." When pushed by the researcher, though, Jayla admits Ada does it because "sometimes she be worried. She be worried." There seems to be at least a tentative understanding about Ada's seemingly intrusive phone use.

"This lady blows up my phone!"

"We Take *Care* of You": Chafing at the Rules. Ada describes Jayla's routine as, "Eat, phone, tablet. Eat, phone, tablet. Eat, phone, tablet," saying that Jayla doesn't go outside much, preferring to be in the house. Yet Ada is OK with that because, "There is so much going on out in the world. I worry a lot." Much of the conflict between the two seems to come from the ways Jayla's phone draws her out *into* that world. For instance, during the interview at their home, Jayla receives a call from her older male cousin, Deon, who is waiting in the car outside for her to give him some money she had promised him for a ride he gave her to the mall some time ago. Ada dives right into the situation, not allowing Jayla to go out to the car until she understands exactly why he is asking for money and using her Bluetooth ear piece to talk to Deon on her *own* phone to reprimand him. Ada eventually sends him home, saying, "Deon, don't sit out there and wait for her. She don't know how long this interview gonna be. Don't wait for her. And don't do things for children [thinking] they gonna *pay* you, cause children don't *have* money." Jayla shouts in

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the background, telling Deon to ignore Ada and saying to her, "I do have money. You always *do* that [interfere]! It's irritating!"

The argument continues even after Deon leaves, with Jayla saying she wants to leave and go to her aunt's house and Ada refusing by saying, "Sometimes kids don't have a choice." It is this idea—kids don't have a choice—that Jayla seems to struggle the most with. It sounds as if she had more freedom at previous foster homes, and she chafes at Ada's rules. Ada explains that they have rules for her because "we take *care* of you." Jayla seems to understand these rules, at least somewhat. She stays at home after the argument, neither running off to her aunt's house nor her bedroom, calming down (particularly after a calming word from Mr. Mike) and eventually firing up *Just Dance* again. She regains her good spirits and shows off her dance moves for all the adults. When the researcher asks her how she is going to do an entire dance routine by herself (i.e., without her friends), she responds, "I am just that person—I gets the spotlight!"

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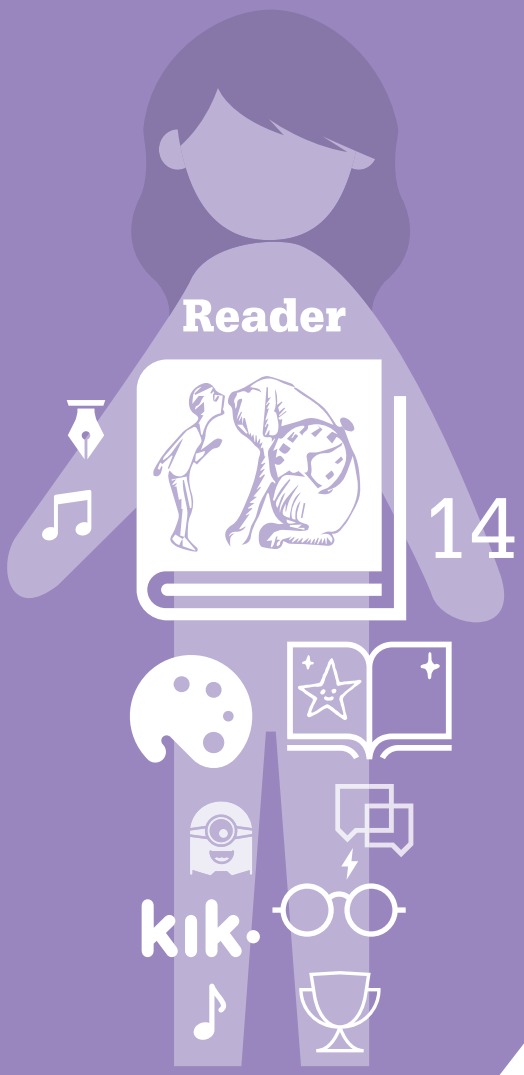

PROFILE

JASMINE

Reader

14 years old

Female

African-American and Native American

Lives with mother, two younger sisters

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

The Phantom Tollbooth, *Roald Dahl*, *Harry Potter books and movies*, *Kik*

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JASMINE: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS
Non-Digital Creativity and a Burgeoning Digital Presence

Central Insight: *Parents can nurture non-digital creativity, but supporting digital creativity is difficult without resources.*

Jasmine is a 14-year-old artist, writer, reader, and music lover who is already a published author (through a local nonprofit after-school program). She refers to both her African-American and her Native American heritage in our interview (which was done over Skype at her mother's request) but seems to identify more with the former. She lives with her two younger sisters and her mother, who describes her this way:

> She's very *strong*. She's very free-willed. She's very confident. She's a team player when she *can* be, but she also kind of likes her *own* path. She *does* need motivation—she gets moments where she does need motivation. She can kind of get into a period where she is being lazy or a little bit slow, turtle-like.

Like many of our participants, Jasmine is walking the line between childhood and adulthood. She has many ties to childhood: The children's classics *The Phantom Tollbooth (by Norton Juster)* and *The Witches* (by Roald Dahl) are her two favorite books; the first thing she does when she wakes up is go to her mom's room; she has Minion stickers on her lamp to remind her of the special moments of going to Minion movies with her dad; she likes "tag and running around—not too different from little kids' stuff" with her friends; and her room is filled with stuffed animals—including a doll named Molly she "can't sleep without." Yet she is also crossing the line into adulthood, using Kik to stay in constant contact with her friends via her new (three-week-old) cell phone; listening to Lauryn Hill and Beyoncé; and having at one point what her mom calls an "inappropriate" exchange of text messages with a boy her age from Kids' Rec.

Jasmine enjoys writing, drawing, listening to music, and either hanging out with her friends or communicating with them by phone. Her mom describes a typical day at home for her as relaxed and positive:

> Jasmine likes to chill in her room a lot. She'll keep the door open, we'll pop in, she'll pop out. And she'll come out [to] do certain things, but she'll be on her phone. She likes playing video games on her phone and her computer. She likes watching Netflix movies. She Kiks her friends. That's probably about it. [Also, she'll] listen to music.

Across all three days of experience sampling, Jasmine cites spending time with her sisters or her friends as the most enjoyable parts of her day. She also texts us about watching movies and, when asked what she liked about that, notes that it was being with her sisters, texting us at one point, "I was watching a movie with my sisters [in order to] spend time with them."

While Jasmine and her mother seem close and happy, Jasmine has, in her mother's words, "been through a lot" in her relationship with her father, with whom she is still in touch. When she was only 10 years old, she ran away from his house, and, when the police found her, she told them that he had punched her in the stomach. Her youngest sister is currently in counseling dealing with issues around their father, and her mom says that Jasmine sometimes "get[s] really down and depressed" when she thinks about her dad.

Jasmine's Media Type: A Reader. While Jasmine contrasts herself with her mom, the "bookworm," she appears to fit best in the *Census*'s Reader media type. On her survey, she circles both "Reading" and "Listening to music" as her favorite activities, and she maintains that she reads about four hours a day. Like many *Census* Readers, she does not have a television in her bedroom. She has her own laptop; her mother has a desktop; one of her sisters has a tablet; the family has Roku and basic television stations from an antenna in the living room; and she and one of her sisters recently got smartphones from their mom. Jasmine maintains she has about two hours of screen time a day, with 30 minutes of that dedicated to social media (which, in the past, mostly involved Kik on her laptop). But the addition of the phone to her routine is still new, and when she responded to our experience sampling texts only a week or so after the interview, she was already using her phone for games and music quite regularly. Jasmine's mother says, "We're either out or we're busy doing something else, so the kids don't really watch a lot of TV," and she says she's never bought the girls a game system.

"Not Exactly a Bookworm": Part of a Reading Community. Jasmine estimates that she reads four hours a day, and she bubbles over with excitement as she shows the researcher her favorite books, reading the descriptions on the jackets and talking about how many times she has reread them. She gets recommendations from her friends and her school librarian. She loves to read manga, taking inspiration from it for her drawing. Nonetheless, she says she is "not exactly a bookworm," in large part because

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her mother is a bookworm. In Jasmine's words, her mother "reads a book almost every time she has time to read a book." During the interview, her mother talks about reading across her life, from the Chronicles of Narnia series as a child to "urban fiction" in her 20s to self-help and parenting books now. She is very tuned in to Jasmine's favorites and encourages her to talk about what she has read. Yet neither she nor her mother frame reading as a central part of her life, focusing instead on the drawing, writing, and face-to-face and virtual social interactions with her friends.

Creativity Offline. Writing and drawing appear to be important components of how Jasmine defines herself. Both she and her mother note separately that Jasmine was voted "most likely to be a *New York Times* best-selling author" at her eighth-grade graduation (where she also received the coveted President's Award, signed by Barack Obama). She also proudly displays to the researcher the book of poems and stories in which she is an author (with other girls from an after-school writing group she was in the year prior), even reading two of her poems out loud. Jasmine's paintings and drawings also form a significant part of the interview, again with her and her mother pointing to the amazing work she has done, in art classes at school and on her own at home. Her favorite drawing style is anime, and when she describes the television shows she used to watch, she focuses quite a bit on the visual elements. For instance, she contrasts the old and new Powerpuff Girls shows by saying, "The graphics are different because it's, like, *newer*, and so they give it more of a pop with color now." Staff and youth at Kids' Rec also recognize her passion and talent for art; she recently made posters for a group project there.

Jasmine seems to want to take this research in a digital direction. At Kids' Rec, she got some basic experience with a DSRL camera and 3D printer, on which she tried to print an elephant during one of our observations. The printer was temperamental, however, and it never fully printed, a fact that she took in stride. She also had a chance to try some basic illustration on an iPad at Kids' Rec, but the format there has not yet allowed for in-depth digital creation. Jasmine has also done research online into university-level video game design programs, and she and her mother say that game design will be her major in college. She has gone so far as to look up the GPA and PSAT requirements for one of the schools she would like to attend. Yet, at least for now, Jasmine does not seem to engage in any regular practice of digital creation (beyond the use of word-processing programs for writing, although she writes by hand in journals as well), using her computer and phone more for entertainment and social connection. Thus, both she and her mother are oriented toward a future in which Jasmine creates digitally for a living, but, at least for now, they seem able to access primarily "offline" creativity.

It's Not *The Oregon Trail* Anymore: Navigating Kids and Media. Jasmine's mother moved the family to their current location for the social services after her divorce and stays for the good schools, but it is clear that it is a strain financially and that media-safety issues—on top of that—are trying. She is acutely aware of the dangers media could pose for Jasmine and her sisters. She explains the difference between her own computer use as a child and her girls' world this way:

> I think about computers when I was growing up. I think about *Number Crunchers* and things like *Oregon Trail* [both educational games from the 1990s] and things like that, and nowadays kids can turn on the computer and you got this pervert on the other line sitting [at] his home waiting for a 14-year-old to walk in. You know? So it's different dangers that's presented these days.

Jasmine's mother approaches these dangers with a toolkit of different strategies. She begins with the notion that trying to keep kids from everything online in 2016 is like "kicking a dead horse"—it's futile, since internet use is too pervasive to stop. With that in mind, she does a couple of things. First, she checks the girls' histories, "pop[ping] into their room" at random to look not only at what is *on* the device but what is *not on* the device: "I also check to see what they *deleted*. Like if I'm going through their history and there's two weeks of missing data, [I say,] come on now, why are you deleting stuff?" If she sees missing data like this, she moves her monitoring up to another "level," talking seriously with her daughter about it and perhaps taking away the device. She says she *appreciates* her daughters' attachment to their devices to some extent because "if they *mess up* on certain areas of their life [and] they're not doing what they need to do, then it's easy to take something important away." She sees her control over her children's media devices as a useful parenting strategy.

In addition to checking histories and talking about things after they happen, Jasmine's mother says she likes to talk with the girls about potential issues and "tell them the situation they're gonna get into *before* they get into it." For instance, at one point she says she asked, "Jasmine, you know they have pictures of penises and things on the internet. You know that, right?" She says these questions heighten the girls' awareness and open the door for the girls to talk to her about potentially uncomfortable topics. She also engages the girls in role-playing:

> Even though it sounds stupid, [it's important] to get on their level and be like, "Hey, what would you do if so-and-so did that and that was *your* boyfriend?" Just giving them those tools and hopefully when and if they get in that situation, they'll know how to handle it.

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Jasmine's mom, however, still is worried for her daughters, and for Jasmine in particular, saying she is generally fine but can be "influenced" by others, "losing herself" for the critical moment it takes to make a bad decision. As she concludes her discussion of all the strategies she uses and the fears she has, she simply says, "I don't really know how I'm going to navigate everything. But God is good and it will get done."

Screen Time as a Tool for Well-Being. Jasmine does not seem to engage in a lot of media hours per day (although that may be changing—see below), but she seems to use those hours strategically in ways that support her well-being. For instance, she uses movies as a way to spend time with her family. Going to the actual movie theater is an established "family tradition," from the Minions and Twilight series to Lord of the Rings and Transformers. Jasmine and her mother also have a couple of special movie series that only the two of them see together because her sisters "aren't into Harry Potter and the Hunger Games like me and my *mom* are." These special trips to the theater are not the only way Jasmine bonds over movies—she texts about watching movies with her sisters several times over the course of her experience sampling.

Jasmine also uses media to "chill" on her own, playing solitaire and mahjong on her laptop or listening to music while she reads, writes, or draws. In her experience sampling, she always describes these independent media activities positively as "happy," "calm," or "chill." Jasmine loves her family and her friends, but she also likes time alone and she appears to use her headphones as a subtle signal to family members that she does not want to be disturbed. Whether she's in a group or alone, Jasmine's use of media seems to support her well-being.

A New Cell Phone, a New Snapchat User. At the time of our interview with Jasmine, she had only had her phone for three weeks. But her mom describes her and her sisters as being "in cell phone land" for the past three weeks, and she now brings her phone to Kids' Rec, where a researcher saw her strategizing with a friend about how exactly to text back a boy. Jasmine recently got Snapchat but only has six friends, and she says, "I only keep them on there [Snapchat] because they're my friends from school. They're the only people that I really talk to." So far, her mother has not placed limits on the amount of time she uses her phone, and she has a smartphone with a decent data plan so she has ample access to social media. Moreover, as with other Social Networkers in this study, her relationship with her friends is important to her and she talks about them a lot. Though Jasmine is a Reader now, it remains to be seen how prominent a role social networking will play in the coming years, especially as high school approaches.

Single Mothering: Which Rules When?

All of the parents interviewed for this study are either mothers or foster mothers, and most of them are doing the parenting on their own, with the participation of the child's father in a different household or with the help of a partner who is not the child's parent. Moreover, several of the mothers in our study are raising children who have different fathers, complicating parenting issues even more. We noted specific challenges these mothers face in their parenting:

Trying to Close the Open Door

- Two mothers are trying to find ways to backtrack once their children have, at their fathers' homes, seen videos or played games that they have expressly forbidden. The mother of two brothers in the study maintains her no-YouTube policy for the kids at her house, even though she knows her younger son watches it at his father's. Meanwhile, the mother of a 12-year-old capitulates in many cases, allowing him to watch a specific forbidden program he saw at his father's house, saying of the father, "You already opened that door so I can't really close it."

Caregiving by Grandmothers

- The two mothers of sibling pairs in the study rely on the help of their mothers in raising their children. As single mothers who work, they cannot be home with their children every day after school or, for both of these mothers, some of the time on the weekend. These grandmothers love their grandchildren and do care for them but, in both cases, allow them to have more screen time than their mothers say is allowed.

Caregiving by Siblings

- During the summer, when most of our study takes place, the mother of a 12-year-old Gamer is not able to afford Kids' Rec during the summer, nor does she have family members who can look after the boys. On many days, then, he is in charge of himself and his younger brother. She asks them not to spend all day playing video games but says, "I am not unrealistic in a sense that I don't think they are not playing when I am not around." She calls them to make sure they have eaten and done their chores, but beyond that, she accepts the situation for what it is.

"It's Hard"

- Running a household on their own *and* finding the energy to monitor their kids' media use is generally difficult. The mother of a 14-year-old says:

  > Nobody teaches you these things [keeping kids safe on the internet], too. It's not like I knew. I'm only 32 and I've been married for 10 years and divorced, and I don't know, it's like every day I learn something else. It's *hard* in this day and age cause you [are] trying to keep up with so many things, and you question *your* ability as a parent based on how *other* people are living their lives.

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PROFILE

CHRIS

Heavy Viewer

14 years old

Male

African-American

Lives with mother, stepfather

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Netflix, YouTube, Facebook

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CHRIS: MEDIA PRACTICES THROUGH A TRANSITION

Central Insight: *A shift in living circumstances can lead to a shift in a child's media type.*

Tall, slim, and meticulously groomed, Chris is a 14-year-old boy who is mild-mannered and soft-spoken. His mom reconnected with her high school sweetheart after many years and they recently married. For that reason, Chris and his mother moved from a state in the South to a mid-Atlantic city. During the time of the interview, there was one week left in the academic year and Chris was not yet enrolled at his new school due to paperwork problems (he had been out of school for a little less than a month). Chris is friendly and has a quick wit. His mother describes him as "a handful" when he was younger but talks about him now as "shy," recounting how diligent he is with his schoolwork and chores. It is clear, in his exchanges with his mom, that they enjoy spending time with each other. She teases him laughingly about not hanging out with her by saying, "I try to get him out the house and get him to hang with us but he doesn't wanna hang with older folks." Chris quips quickly back, "I wouldn't say you're old. I would say you're old school."

According to both Chris and his mom, he spends his days hanging out in his room, watching TV, listening to music, and occasionally messaging on Facebook or Kik with his friends back home. His mom signed him up for the after-school program at Kids' Rec, where he plays games on the Xbox in the teen room and occasionally volunteers to help out with the younger kids during snack time. The first time one of the researchers met Chris at Kids' Rec, he showed tremendous enthusiasm about singing and proclaimed that he was inspired by contemporary "pop" music. He generated ideas with other students as they attempted to compose a song. When asked if he is shy, particularly about singing in public, Chris describes himself by saying, "I'm not really shy per se. [Pause.] I'm really just curious towards [singing]."

Chris' Media Type: A Heavy Viewer. Chris fits into what the *Census* typifies as a Heavy Viewer, spending most of his time each day on screens (he estimates his screen time at nine hours, 30 minutes). He has a smartphone with an unlimited data plan, a smart TV in his bedroom, and high-speed wireless access in the apartment. Most of his media interactions are with his smartphone, which he likes because he "can carry it around all the time." He only uses the smart TV when his phone "acts up." When asked in our screening tool about his favorite activity, Chris chooses "Listening to music," but the sources of music he cites in his interview are video sites such as Vevo and what he calls "reaction" channels (mostly video reviews of music and other media) where he's watching as well as listening. In other words, even his music listening blends with viewing. Chris has accounts on several social media sites—Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter—but relies mainly on Facebook and rarely posts anything himself. He occasionally plays games on his phone but usually deletes them quickly to make space for videos and music. Similarly, he sometimes reads online—he cites JustJared (a celebrity gossip site) as a source of news and playbooks.com (a "reader's theater" site with books for younger kids) as a source of books—but says he does not spend much time doing that, often skipping to the ends of books because "I really don't like going through all that to see who did certain stuff."

Watching TV and Movies on Netflix: Making Choices. Chris' new apartment is quite small, and it is not clear how well he knows his mother's new husband. He is hesitant to venture into the city, either on his own or with his mom, despite her urging, so he spends quite a bit of time in his room. Videos, movies, and TV shows seem to be the way he entertains himself during these long hours alone. He spends some time watching videos: He gets notifications on his phone from a number of YouTube music video channels, which he checks when he wakes up every morning, and he scans his friends' video recommendations on Facebook. But, according to the experience sampling, he spends most of his time watching TV shows or movies on Netflix. Also, he never posts his own recommendations or reactions, preferring simply to look at what others have to say.

While Chris watches a significant volume of TV every day, however, he is not "binge-watching" a single program. He says he likes comedy and that he watches "different types of stuff like *Family Guy* and the *Cleveland Show* and stuff like that." He does not limit himself to the newest shows and videos (his favorite comedians are Kevin Hart and Eddie Murphy) but searches around until he finds something he likes. Even then, however, he does not watch a single show all the way through but jumps around among the shows he has chosen. Thus, while most of his

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consumption is strictly passive, he is a somewhat choosy viewer, making judgments about entertainment and quality. In fact, the only time he says he's felt bored is when he's watching a movie on *television*, not one he has chosen on Netflix. His practices around video consumption, then, seem particular and personal.

The Parent Perspective. Chris and his mom seem close, teasing each other and recounting a number of activities they do or have done together. She appears to embrace technology, talking positively about their high-speed internet, the laptops the kids used in Chris' prior school, how she pays bills online and uses the local transit app to get around, and both Chris' and her use of Facebook. Her media rules revolve around homework and other responsibilities:

> My limitations with him on the phone, like, normally when he comes from school, is homework first. No phone, no TV, no computer, no nothing. It's homework, eat, then you have your time for your phone, your computer, whatever. He has a set time to go to bed when there's school. School is about to be out [in the neighborhood], so I give him a little more leeway, when school is out.

Chris' mom keeps his door open when he's doing homework so that she can make sure he's not doing anything else. Moreover, he isn't allowed to listen to music while doing homework. During the interview, Chris suggests that perhaps he would study *better* with music, to which she responds, "Mm-hmm. That's what *he* says. I don't say that." Her rules are clear and unbending, and, according to both of them, Chris is a good kid who follows the rules. Beyond homework and bedtime, however, Chris' mom is relatively open: "I don't put any … time limits on him [during] weekend, summer time. He also has a smart TV, so he can do Netflix and YouTube [and] Pandora and all that other stuff on his TV." Her limits, then, are neither around time nor around content but around Chris' other responsibilities.

Media Practices in Transition. A consistent theme in Chris' narrative is the change in his situation since the move. Prior to the move, they lived with his older brother (22 years old), with whom Chris describes a close relationship, often wrapped up in media practices: playing video games, listening to music, creating playlists. In fact, it is his brother who bought him a PlayStation 2 as a Christmas gift. Chris says he no longer plays because the cord is lost, but he also does not seem especially anxious to get a new one, suggesting that perhaps his practice of video gaming is tied to his relationship with his brother. When asked what he is most looking forward to this summer, he says, "I just wanna spend time with my brother, cause he's gonna come up and so we were gonna [go on a road trip]. So I just wanna spend time with my brother." They are planning a 10-hour car trip to visit their grandmother, just the two of them, a plan Chris mentions a couple times over the course of the interview.

Another change in his media practices is around his relationship with his mother. They used to watch movies frequently together, mostly comedies and Disney shows and movies. When asked what movies Chris likes to watch, his mother says, "He likes Disney," and Chris mumbles, "Not really," saying that he watches music videos mostly now. Not only does the *content* he consumes now seem to have changed, so does the *context* of consumption: He almost always watches alone, in his room, on his phone.

Chris also talks, albeit briefly, about his friends from his old place. He says that when they were together, they generally weren't *connected* to media devices:

> Basically we just talked. We didn't really need our phones. That was basically it—we just talked about certain stuff that happened in classes, and [the] only time we had our phones out [was when] they wanted to take pictures. I really don't like taking pictures like that, though, so I'd just wait for them.

When asked if they played video games together or interacted through online games or social media, Chris continues to talk about a relatively media-free relationship with his friends. He maintains those relationships now through Facebook because, as both he and his mom relate, he left before being able to get their phone numbers. He rarely posts to Facebook, however, using it more for its synchronous chatting capacity: "I know when [my friends] are active on Facebook by the link on the bottom of their thing. It says 'active' now and after 15 minutes it'll go, so that's how I know when they're on Facebook." Chris chats with his friends on Facebook when they are already online, seeming to enjoy the feeling of them being "together" in time, if not in space.

In Chris' telling, he did *not* fit the media type of Heavy Viewer prior to the move. Instead, he seemed to be more of a Gamer or even a Light User. His social transition—in particular the toll it has taken on a number of his relationships—seems to have spurred a set of new (and perhaps temporary) media practices in response to his situation.

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PROFILE

ZARA

Social Networker

15 years old

Female

African-American

Lives with foster mother, foster mother's biological son (older), foster sister (younger)

SIGNIFICANT MEDIA

Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Kik, ooVoo, smart TV

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ZARA: "I GOT CLOUT"
Making the Most of Social Media

Central Insight: ***Constant social media connection can both support and pose risks to a foster child independently navigating the system.***

At 15 years old, Zara gives the impression of already being a young woman, and she is aware of this: "I don't look 15 either [comparing herself to a friend's picture]. I look *grown*!" In the interview with the researcher, she was energetic and extremely talkative, constantly tapping her long nails on the phone as she navigated Instagram and Snapchat, refreshing frequently to check for changes and using videos and websites fluidly as narrative resources to make her points. As notifications came in rapidly on Instagram, she said, "You know, like, I got *clout*. People follow me and I follow them back."

Zara has a boisterous personality and is quick to laugh, particularly about funny images that she finds on YouTube, Instagram, or Snapchat. Zara has been a foster child for several years, enough that she takes it on as part of her identity, describing herself at one point as being "in the system" and connecting on social media with other foster children. At the time of the study, she was living in a foster family with a foster mother, that woman's 19-year-old biological son, and another foster child, a 10-year-old girl. She does not talk at all about her birth mother, but she mentions her birth father several times in her interview, proudly displaying a photo on her phone of him massaging her feet for her. She also has a biological sister in North Carolina with whom she is connected online and a niece—that sister's daughter—whom Zara says sadly she has never met. Zara's foster mother says she has "*grown-up* interests versus another child" and is anxious about her appearance—hair, makeup, weight—to the exclusion of childlike interests such as games or socializing. This focus on the aesthetic extends to media contexts, where she refuses to follow people with "dry pictures" (i.e., poorly composed or amateur-looking pictures) and mostly stays off of Twitter because "it keep being uglier and uglier." She has over 7,000 followers on Instagram and does not seem to be shy about contacting people through Instagram, Snapchat, and Kik, but her foster mother describes her as more aloof in face-to-face interactions with peers, rarely bringing friends to the house.

Zara's Media Type: A Social Networker. Within several minutes of meeting Zara, it becomes obvious that she fits into the Social Networker type in the *Census*, perhaps at its extreme end in terms of hours spent on social media on her smartphone. While her foster mother estimates that she is on social media four hours a day and Zara herself does not give an estimate, interviews suggest that she is attending to her phone almost constantly throughout the day. Even when she is watching TV, talking with people, or researching something on YouTube, she is alert for notifications coming in. She sleeps with her phone, checks it first thing when she wakes up (before even going to the bathroom, she says), and describes her first major task of the day as "clearing" notifications that have popped up overnight. Like Social Networkers in the *Census*, she also watches TV or videos for at least a couple of hours every day. She and her foster mother say she does not really like video games, but during the experience sampling, she does text once about being on a gaming system, "stealing cars [and] getting chase[d] by the police and [having people] shooting [at] me" with a friend.

Zara is not allowed to have her phone at school (although, according to her foster mother, this school policy was only put in place halfway through the previous school year), but it is her constant companion the moment she gets home and on weekends or summer days. When asked to describe a normal Saturday, she says, "Just throwing it [hanging out]. I get on Google with somebody, you know. Just normal. And then I just be going to sleep or something, you know, wake up. I [am] cleaning. I'm texting people." Her interactions with social media are woven seamlessly throughout the other parts of her day. She may clean or sleep or even watch a movie, but throughout it all she is on her phone. She does not see these interactions as separate from the rest of her life and, in fact, is puzzled when the researcher asks her what her favorite "activity" is on social media: "My favorite activity? Nothing really. I mean, I just be looking at people's posts and stuff." This multitasking does not feel like multitasking to Zara: It is simply another part of the moment-to-moment flow of her day.

"I Need My Data": Using Media Resources to Navigate Independently. Zara has a more detailed knowledge of her phone plan than anyone else in the study, down to the level of taxes and insurance. She makes clear that while her foster mother paid for

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her prior phone, "*I'm* paying for *this* bill," presumably giving her a bit more control over it. This kind of ownership seems to be important to Zara: She says she steals some of the books she reads from her classroom, for instance, because she does not like the hassle of checking out and returning them. Instead, she says, "I'll just keep it [the book] in my room and when I feel like I wanna *touch* it, I'm gonna touch it—when I feel like it." She seems to want this same feeling with her phone. In fact, shortly after she participated in the study, Zara made the decision to move to a different foster home, and being able to bring along her current phone, with its ongoing record of her contacts and interests, was critical for her. When asked about her phone plan, she says, "I get the unlimited. I need my data. I *need* it." Because Zara is a foster child who does not seem to have yet found a placement that works for her, her phone is something that *does* remain stable and something that she uses as a resource to navigate her world.

Zara's phone is a literal navigator, with three transit apps that she regularly uses to get around. The one she uses most often tells her exactly when the bus will arrive, and she pulls it up in a practiced way during the interview to show the researcher that "basically, this bus come in, like, 17 minutes, and then if I'm going to [a different area], the bus come in seven minutes." The second app is a backup: "Just in case one don't work, I use the other one." And the third is a map of the transit system so she can estimate how long a certain trip will take her and, in her words, "So I don't go around asking people how to get here when I just have it on my phone." These apps provide Zara with real-time information to navigate the city in which she lives and allow her to be independent, not having to rely on asking others to get where she wants to go.

Zara also uses her phone to navigate social situations that she may find difficult face-to-face. She talks about a boy she sees regularly in school who, until recently, had a girlfriend. After they broke up, she reached out to him via social media to get his number, making a connection that would have perhaps felt too awkward in person. Zara's foster mother notes that she rarely has friends over and doesn't go out with girlfriends "like a normal girl," painting her as having difficulty forming the kinds of "engaged" relationships she remembers having as a child. Yet Zara, from her perspective, describes a rich social life where things always "be popping." She often communicates with numerous people across multiple apps at the same time—for instance, simultaneously having a video call with someone over ooVoo, exchanging texts with people over Kik, and receiving feedback on her Snapchat and Instagram posts. She may not have the same kinds of relationships her foster mother is used to, but she is definitely making connections and she certainly has the felt *experience* of being in relationships with her social media contexts.

As a foster child, Zara is to a great extent dependent on people with whom she may not have a long-term or biological connection. Her foster mother is frequently frustrated by what she sees as Zara's ignorance of this state of affairs. She tells a story about a recent time when she made a doctor's appointment for Zara, but Zara refused to go, asking instead for her foster mother to schedule an appointment with her previous doctor. Her mother explains to the researcher her frustration with Zara's request, saying:

> You need to understand that this is an adult world. If you need somebody else to do something for you, you need to do it on the time that they have available for you to do it. Point-blank! Period! If you don't need their help, then by all means, do it however you want. But when you have to depend on somebody else, you're on *their* time.

She feels she is offering her effort and time and that Zara does not appreciate it, nor does she realize her dependent situation. Whether Zara consciously realizes her dependence or not, however, she has developed a strategy for dealing with it: She calls or texts someone to take her *out* of the foster home. Whether it be her biological father, mentors provided by the foster system, or boys she is in contact with online, she regularly reaches out. These people may take her out for a meal, to get her nails done, or, in the case of the boys, to "just cuddle and stuff" in the car. In this way, she is not beholden to a single individual like her foster mother but has a number of contacts who support her.

"I'm not even about to lie to you—my phone is distracting for real."

Operating the Phone at Light Speed: Zara's Media Practices. Sitting down with Zara for the first time, the researcher is struck by the *speed* with which she operates her phone, with her individual fingers barely discernable amid the blur. She has perfected the art of Snapchat skimming, demonstrating how she views a snap she is not very interested in: "You just skipping. Like you press and press and press and press and press it. That's how

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it be like with my friends. I be skipping cause I don't wanna watch they snap. It be *forever* long." Zara has high standards for social media, and many of her friends don't meet it, because their posts are too long, their pages are "dry" (ugly), or they do not have enough followers. She shows the researcher one of her friend's Instagram pages, describing her as cute and saying that "her Instagram is all right. It don't be popping like *mine* do. She got 1,000 [followers]." Zara maintains that she is not solely attending to sheer quantity of followers, but she is certainly impressed by that number (saying of one person she follows, "Do you see how much likes he got?! About a million!"). Her foster mother notes the way Zara and the other kids she knows value quantity, and she worries about her:

> Kids nowadays, they go off of likes. What does they get the most feedback on? And I know from watching [Zara's] pictures and the things that she posts, that when she gets the most feedback is when she posts the *inappropriate* things, so that's what she's trying to do. Like she can post a pretty *face* shot and she'll get like 50-something, 80-something likes. But if she posts a nice head shot with her breasts, with some *cleavage* in there, she'll get like 150 likes. So I think that's what they kind of base it on: How much response do I get from what I'm doing?

As with Zara's hair and makeup interests, Zara's foster mother worries about Zara's focus on others' perceptions of her.

Whatever the driving force, Zara is a prolific poster. At one point, the researcher asks her to explain the difference between a like and a post on Instagram. Rather than try to explain, Zara says, "Let me show you." She grabs a photo from her gallery, applies a filter to it, throws on a laughing emoji, and, in less than a minute all told, posts it on Instagram. As soon as she posts it, she says, "Watch—people gonna 'bout to start knocking! Y'all wait," immediately refreshing it (13 seconds after posting) to see if there is a response. While this manipulation of images of herself and others does not fit the *Census*'s definition of content creation, there is, at the very least, a great deal of agency in Zara's posting. She takes photos and videos of herself or "screenshots" friends and other posts, chooses whether and how to manipulate them, and chooses when and where to post them. Moreover, she has to manage a minimal amount of storage, constantly making strategic decisions about which photos, videos, and songs to keep and which to delete: If she keeps too many, she cannot create new content, but if she deletes too many, she does not have a storehouse to draw from to respond to the messages coming in. As her foster mother points out above, she gets constant feedback on these choices, with a varying number of likes and follows depending upon what she posts.

Due in part to her tentative foster status and in part to her limited financial means, Zara's media practices involve a great deal of creative problem-solving. Several months prior to the interview, the screen on her phone broke, so she moved over to a backup phone, which she kept for such emergencies. When *that* phone broke, she alternated among use of the house phone, her friends' cell phones, and her foster brother's cell phone. The first thing she did when she began borrowing her brother's phone was equip it with, in her words, "the stuff that I was really on … Instagram and Snapchat, Facebook Messenger [and a transit app]." While it is important to Zara to have her own phone, she adapts and innovates when that isn't available, pulling together a core group of apps she needs to survive, on social media and in the physical world. Her foster mother notes this creative problem-solving as well, marveling at how, even without her phone, she manages to get in trouble at school for her actions on social media, "accessing it from somewhere else."

A central practice in Zara's social networking seems to be "screenshotting." Screenshots take up most of her storage space, and she uses screenshotting as a strategy for dealing with people who, she says, are "getting on my nerves … Like when people be going at me or be saying some wild, crazy stuff or, you know, just something *stupid*, I be saving a screenshot and screenshot it up sometimes." In other words, she throws people's own words and images back at them or out to others as a way to get back at them for upsetting her. She also uses screenshotting for friendly teasing. For instance, she talks about a recent time when she and a male friend were video-chatting on ooVoo, taking unflattering screenshots of each other, sending them to each other via Kik, and then laughing about it over ooVoo. Zara doesn't think twice about this self-referential use of media, telling the researcher how Instagram was "popping" while she was watching the BET Awards on television, seeming surprised that the researcher did not have the same experience (and, in fact, to Zara's dismay, the researcher had completely *missed* the awards show!).

"You Gotta Pick and Choose [Your] Battles": Regulating Zara's Media Use. Struggling with the difficulty of monitoring media use, Zara's foster mother has a somewhat laissez-faire attitude toward Zara's media choices and practices. For instance, she knows that Zara watches reality shows that are "inappropriate," but she doesn't expressly forbid them: "A lot of things that she might be *interested* in might not be something that I per se wouldn't say she *couldn't* watch, but I just might not *like* that she watches them." So she allows Zara to engage with what she

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considers inappropriate content but makes her opinion known about that content. She describes her strategy this way:

> I'm *realistic* and know that they're gonna talk about it, so why not talk about it openly? [...] I don't want you to feel like you want to isolate these conversations. But [sometimes] I'm like, 'OK! Ya'll are getting a little too far off. Bring that down!'"

She knows the kids can have their conversations out of her earshot or that, with social media, they can just "create a whole other account" that is hidden from her, so she gives them a bit more leeway in exchange for being a bit more aware of what they're doing. When it gets "too far off," however, she steps in and says something.

Like other parents in this study, Zara's foster mother is most concerned about her children meeting their responsibilities. If they can do that, then she does not worry too much about what or how much they are consuming online or on the television: "I don't really care when they play with it, when they don't play, as long as you clean up after yourself and put it back [where it goes]." She says they can stay up as late as they want, "as long as six-thirty or five-thirty or whatever time you're supposed to be up and outta here, you can get up here and get outta here, then by all means—you do you." If her children are keeping the house clean and making it to school on time, she lets them regulate their own media use. Toward the end of her interview, Zara's foster mother says, "I don't regulate their phone use or anything because I would actually have to *take* their phones from them *to* regulate them," something which she sees as a last resort. In the end, she says, "You gotta pick and choose the battles that you want to fight." Zara's foster mother describes a relationship with Zara that is often tense and somewhat distant—in the midst of all these obstacles, the battle of Zara's media use is one that her foster mother is not fighting very hard.

Constant Connection: Risks for Zara. Zara's phone is an integral part of her lived experience: She attends immediately to notifications, she uses it to make arguments and answer questions, and she has a set of procedures in place for when her phone breaks. Zara often uses this constant connection to her advantage, reaching out socially online when she might be hesitant to do so in person or gaining some independence from whatever foster home she is currently in. Yet this constant connection also poses some risks for Zara. For instance, the independence her phone offers may make it difficult for her foster parent to set limits. Also, Zara herself admits that her attention to her phone makes it difficult to do her schoolwork: "I'll do my homework, but unfortunately I get distracted. So I be pushing my homework to the side and I be on my phone. I'm not even about to lie to you—my phone is distracting for real." She says that while she is doing her homework, she is talking on the phone and texting, making it difficult for her to complete it. Additionally, much of her talking, texting, and posting involves people from school, and, on several occasions, according to her foster mother, she has gotten in physical fights at school resulting from disagreements that started online

Perhaps the greatest risk Zara's phone use poses is around her online interactions with boys and men. She claims that some of the people she follows and who follow her back are over 18, and she admits that she has sent at least one nude picture of herself to a boy in the past. She is motivated at least in part by the reactions (likes, follows, comments) she gets to her posts. For now, Zara is caught up in the "clout" she is building for herself online as a skilled social networker.

Implications for Practitioners

Case studies provide special insights for practitioners working with lower-income minority youth and their families:

- We found that youth love to talk about their devices, what's on them, and what they do with them. And we found that even with the same devices or apps, youth are often doing very different things. Asking kids, with genuine curiosity, about their media practices is an excellent way to get youth talking about their lives and offers insights well beyond what we know about their media devices: their social interactions, their likes and dislikes, their plans for the future, etc.
- Technical expertise is not a prerequisite for understanding or intervening in youth media use; communication, spot checks, and management of the physical devices are all ways parents intervene in their kids' media practices and keep tabs on them.
- Screen media can provide many opportunities for connection, both in a face-to-face environment (e.g., playing games or watching movies together) and with people who are far away (e.g., texting or using Instagram or Facebook to keep in touch with family or friends). Practitioners who work with youth can make use of texting, social networking, or messaging apps to connect with the youth in their programs and to help those youth stay in connection with people in their lives they may be away from.
- The youth in this study who engage in a lot of creative activities such as drawing and writing seem to be heavily supported by their parents' encouragement and access to materials (e.g., paints, pens, sketchbooks). These same parents in our study do not have the resources to support digital creativity. There is room for collaboration among parents and practitioners to provide that support and nurture creative digital interests.

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CONCLUSIONS

The youth and parental practices described in these case studies led to a number of insights (see Table 5 on page 64). Though the youth describe similar media activities (e.g., watching YouTube videos, playing games, reading, texting, posting pictures, and downloading music) and media devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, televisions, and game systems), the social contexts in which they live, the parenting practices of the adults in their lives, and their own interests and desires are related to a wide range of media practices. For example:

- Jaden and Carla's navigation of their small family space gives evidence of the ways screen media can be used to create space from and connection to family.
- Makayla's pursuit of reading—and her mother's support—shows that a media practice such as reading can be an intentional choice that reflects personal and family values.
- The limits Andre's mother puts on his gaming suggest that parental policies can make a difference in the type of media user a child is.
- Samuel's constant gaming raises concerns over how media use can adversely affect a child's well-being.
- Gabe's staunch defense of the way in which he Instagrams offers evidence of media practices changing and developing over a child's life.
- Markus' skill at navigating information online demonstrates that, even with little media access, youth can develop expertise.
- Jayla's foster mothers call to the phone company suggest that parents need not have technical expertise to intervene in their kids' media use.
- Jasmine's mother's support of her creative work offline raises difficult questions about how parents without digital resources can support creative work online.
- Chris' shift from Gamer to Heavy Viewer shows how shifts in living circumstances can affect media type.
- Zara's media practices offer evidence of both the positive effects and the negative risks of strong social media connections.

Examining the dynamic interplay among media practices, parenting practices, and social context, then, reveals important aspects of youth and parent experiences. As to the specific questions posed at the beginning of the study (page 6):

1
How do youth of different media "types" engage differently with media and the people around them?

We found that media types were related to three sets of factors: youth interest and personality, parental practices and resources, and social context/living situation. As such, beyond the *time with* and *type of* media, there were few commonalities among kids of the same media type (beyond the obvious uses that different devices or apps allow: e.g., Instagram makes it easy to post pictures and messages). For instance, while both Carla and Jasmine are Readers, the former uses reading to escape and listens to music at the same time while the latter enjoys reading while her family is around, with the door to her room open and her family members coming in and out. Also, Carla and her family talk about reading as an important aspect of who she is, while Jasmine's family is clear that her *mother* is "the bookworm" and Jasmine's reading is more a part of her overall view of herself as a writer and an artist. These results contextualize the data from the *Census*, suggesting that surrounding *context* and specific media *practices* are perhaps more important for understanding the prominence of media in a child's life than the amount of time or types of media with which a child engages.

2
How do youth engage differently across media devices and activities?

Media "type" is related to which devices and activities youth prefer. For example, Social Networkers such as Zara and Jayla prefer being on a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) on a social media app such as Instagram, Kik, or ooVoo. Zara sometimes

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watches TV, but she Instagrams about what she's seeing. Similarly, Jayla will play *Just Dance* but grabs her phone between dances to see what messages have come in.

Also, the *location* of the media device (and whether or not it is mobile) affects the ways youth engage. For instance, a TV in a single child's bedroom (like at Markus' or Chris' home) supports more individual viewing, while YouTube on a mobile device allows youth to grab short clips to illustrate a point or simply make someone smile (Jaden and Zara use YouTube this way frequently throughout their interviews). Location of the media device is related to living situation—Carla and Jaden live in a single room in a shelter, while Jasmine has her own room in her mother's apartment, for instance—which can alter the kinds of public and private media activities they engage in.

Youth also engage differently across different types of media *activities*. Videos—short or long—may lend themselves to relatively quiet consumption in order that the viewer not miss anything. Social-networking apps such as Instagram and Snapchat, however, can be attended to and then looked away from, allowing more social interaction with others in a face-to-face context. Yet these same apps, unlike videos, are always "on" and can pull youth from a conversation at any time. Games require some concentration, but experienced gamers can and do chat throughout gameplay, trash-talking, and joking. Even within the different media-activity "categories"—games, social media, videos, music, reading—there are different modes of engagement. Zara, for instance, checks Snapchat for funny and interesting stories, but Instagram is the main app where she posts content and seeks followers.

Specific media practices, then, appear to relate not only to participant interests and surrounding social contexts but also to the kinds of interactions different devices, activities, and apps afford or allow. These youth make active use of media features to craft their own experiences.

3

How and when do youth engage in consumption versus creation?

The *Common Sense Census* defines "content creation" as writing or creating digital art or music, while it labels social media use as "communication" and game playing as "interactive consumption." According to these definitions, there is little evidence of digital content creation in this sample. The female Readers in the study—Carla, Makayla, and Jasmine—write and draw outside the digital context, but Jasmine is the only one who has explored digital creation, and neither she nor her mother talk about this in her interview (this is something we know about Jasmine through Kids' Rec). Part of this lack of content creation may be in part an issue of parental resources. For instance, Carla, Makayla, and Jasmine all are strongly encouraged and supported in their non-digital creativity by their parents, but those same parents do not seem to have knowledge of or access to *digital* creation resources.

Another issue may be the definition of content creation. Most of the youth in the study show evidence of creative practices in the digital world, if not strictly content creation: Zara takes photos and alters them with filters and stickers before she puts them on her Instagram. The Gamers with access to gaming systems—Andre, Samuel, and Markus—talk about their game-system avatars and the decisions they make about their appearance. And all the participants who own mobile devices pull images from the internet, often manipulating them, to create their lock and home screens. We did not see a single case where a youth kept the factory lock- or home-screen image. Perhaps, then, definitions of digital creation need to be expanded.

4

How do youth interact with the people and things around them when multitasking?

When asked about digital multitasking (doing two things on screens "at the same time"), the youth in this study deny doing it. Samuel even makes an argument that, because he would have to have one eye *down* on the tablet and one *up* on the television, it is a physical impossibility. Yet Samuel's mother has seen him using both devices at the same time; Zara talks about watching an awards show and posting about it on social media simultaneously; and Markus moves back and forth between *Minecraft* and Google effortlessly. These youth engage in digital multitasking, but they do not define it that way.

Youth are more forthcoming about simultaneously interacting on screens and face-to-face, and, in fact, we see evidence of this in almost every interview (with the exception of Markus, who does not have a mobile device other than a simple phone): The researcher's video chat with Jasmine is cut off because she starts playing solitaire; Andre and Jayla play on their gaming systems while answering interview questions; and Gabe, Jasmine, and Zara check their phones off and on during conversation. All these

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youth think they are sliding easily between face-to-face interaction and using their electronic devices, but conversation with devices on is more stilted than they realize. Sometimes participants have to be prompted a couple times before coming "back" from the digital world, and often the researcher or parent has to remind the youth what they have been talking about before they were engaged with their device. And, in reviewing the transcripts, we found that the *researcher* was often distracted by their multitasking, sometimes neglecting to obtain answers to questions.

5
How do youth use media to support informal learning?

Almost all the participants are using media, particularly online resources, to solve problems: Zara uses three transportation apps to cut down on her travel time and watches YouTube videos to learn different hair and makeup styles; Jaden, Andre, and Samuel watch YouTube videos for gaming tips and tricks; Markus uses Google to shop for shoes and make the argument to his foster mother to buy them; Jasmine uses her computer to research college entrance requirements; Chris uses Facebook to stay in touch with his friends and get their contact information; Jayla learns new dances from YouTube; and Makayla looks up pricing for the supplies for her planned lemonade stand. The mobility of internet search engines means that many of these kids do not seem to accept "I don't know" or "I've never heard of that" as an answer, grabbing a nearby phone and providing an example of an answer on the screen.

6
How do parenting practices influence youth media practices?

A central finding of this report is that *parents matter.* The choices parents make around kids' media devices and activities and the communication practices they have with their children seem to make a difference in the ways youth use media. Being digitally savvy can help: Andre's mother sets up the Life360 to monitor him and his brother; Jasmine's mother looks through her kids' histories to see what has been deleted; and Carla and Jaden's mother sets up the kids' YouTube through her account (although Carla and Jaden circumvent this). But non-digital practices make a difference as well: Samuel's mother simply takes his tablet when he misbehaves; Markus' foster mother turns off the Wi-Fi; and Jayla's foster mother calls the phone company to have her phone turned off. While none of the above methods is foolproof, some of these practices do seem to be making a difference in terms of these kids' media practices.

Parental practices are part of the larger context of a youth's life and, thus, can affect the type of media user they are. Andre's mother is evidence of this: She highly restricts his media use and provides a variety of books and requires some reading time. Through these actions (and, of course, Andre's reading ability, which makes reading relatively easy and enjoyable for him), she has helped to nurture him as a Reader while allowing him to pursue his interest as a Video Gamer.

7
How do youth and their parents talk about their sense of well-being, and how does this connect to media usage?

Across the sample, there are only a couple of instances where media use alone is described as either making a child happy or making a child sad or frustrated. Instead, phones, tablets, TVs, and game systems are part of a broader network of connections, responsibilities, and opportunities. More often, a media practice works *through* a relationship, a living situation, or a youth's existing emotional states to affect well-being.

Still, youth and parents talk about a number of ways media support their well-being: Television shows, movies, music, games, and books provide *entertainment*, which becomes particularly important when children are living in an unsafe neighborhood. Social media can provide *connection,* particularly with friends and family members who live in different areas or with those whom they simply don't have the opportunity to connect with often in a face-to-face environment. Television shows, movies, music, and video games can also provide connection in face-to-face contexts, with family movie nights, sharing (and dancing to) music, and playing games together. Video games can provide an opportunity for *expertise*—for example, teaching parents or siblings how to maneuver their way through tricky obstacles or how to beat levels. Finally, social media offers youth a chance to experiment with different ways of presenting themselves to the world, testing the waters outside the face-to-face context, which can be daunting for some.

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Youth and parents also talk about ways media can harm youth well-being. The social media apps that offer a chance to experiment with identity can also start arguments and provide a forum for teasing. Or, as in Zara's case, it can be difficult to predict the outcomes of posting sexually provocative images of oneself online. Games can feel addictive and raise anxiety (as in Samuel's experiences), particularly without parental resources to curb media time. Finally, any activity on a screen—watching TV shows or movies, gaming, using social media apps—can foster isolation, allowing youth to focus on the relationship with the screen rather than the relationships outside the screen.

Implications

The 11 in-depth case studies here examine the media practices of lower-income African-American and Latino youth to better understand the diversity of practices in the context of tweens' and teens' lived experiences as members of families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. We argue through these portraits that the varied and shifting social contexts and living situations of the youth in this study are interwoven with their media practices. These youth use different media to different ends at different times. Knowing how many hours of screen time each of these children has in a day is only one dimension of their complex media lives. For instance, gaming can be an opportunity for personal challenge but can also provide easy social interactions and bonding with siblings through "trash-talking." Social networking, similarly, can be critical when friends are not around, leading even to sleeping with one's phone, but that same social networking can be secondary when youth are in the presence of friends, so much so that a youth might forget their phone at home. These case studies reveal the breadth of media practices and the complexity of their interaction with characteristics internal and external to these teens and tweens.

Whether these youth are "straight flexin'" on social media, "crushing" each other in a gaming battle, or reading "a *paper* book," they are doing it in the context of a family, a neighborhood, and a broader online community. All of these contexts both *influence* and are influenced by youth media practices, creating a complex and shifting system that warrants further study.

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TABLE 4. EXPERIENCE SAMPLING AND WELL-BEING

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Answers to "What was enjoyable today?"	Answers to "What was boring or frustrating today?	Descriptive Words for Media Time
Jaden	11	M	Going to the store with Grandma Eating at iHop with my family	N/A	excited, awesome, happy, entertained, peaceful, relaxed, bored, sleepy
Andre	12	M	Playing games and watching movies	My brother	OK, excited, awesome, good, happy, relaxed, chill, mad and then not mad, overwhelmed, amazing
Carla	12	F	Spending time with my siblings Being alone	N/A	calm, focused, not distracted, entertained
Makayla	12	F	N/A	N/A	awesome, great
Samuel	12	M	Going to Dave & Buster's with my mom and sisters Playing on the iPad	Lying down was boring	great, mostly great, tired, like I just ate Popeye's and it was awesome, fun, mostly happy, awesome, truly great
Chris	14	M	Watching movies on Netflix Listening to my music	There was nothing boring or frustrating	sleepy, happy, content, bored, joy, no feelings
Gabe	14	M	Listening to music Laughing with my family	Lying down was boring	happy, bored
Jasmine	14	F	Spending time with friends Spending the day playing with my sister	N/A	calm, happy, fun, responsible, peaceful, cool, excited, nice
Jayla	14	F	Going to get ice cream at Sweet Frog Going with my mother to the store	When I went to the nail shop with my cousin and had no money	great, relieved, good, upset, irritated
Zara	15	F	N/A	N/A	OK, excited, irritated, good, fine, tired, annoyed, irritable

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TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS, MEDIA RESOURCES, AND CENTRAL INSIGHTS

Pseudonym	Age	Media Type*	Lives With*	Functional Devices*	Wi-Fi at Home?*	Exp. Sampling Resp. Rate	Central Insight
Jaden[1]	11	Mobile Gamer	Mother, younger twin sisters, toddler brother	Smartphone, TV, shared iPod	Yes	67%	Media activities (such as reading, watching videos, and playing games) can be used both to make space from, and create connections to, family.
Carla[1]	12	Reader		Tablet, TV, shared iPod		80%	
Andre	12	Video Gamer/ Reader	Mother, younger brother	Smartphone, TV, Xbox, PlayStation	Yes	75%	Parents' active intervention in children's use of media and technology is one of many factors that affect children's media practices and their media "types."
Makayla	12	Reader	Mother, younger sister	Smartphone, TV	No	27%	Reading can be an intentional choice that reflects personal and family values.
Samuel[2]	12	Video Gamer	Mother, two younger sisters, grandma, great-grandma	Tablet, TV, Xbox	Yes	52%	Overuse of media (e.g., video games) can take away from other pursuits and affect well-being.
Gabe[2]	14	Social Networker		Smartphone, TV, PlayStation		80%	Experienced teen social media users may act as self-appointed monitors of parents' and younger siblings' media use, instructing on the "right" way to interact on social media.
Markus	13	Video Gamer	Foster mother	Feature phone, tablet, TV, Xbox	No	0%	Youth who use media in "traditional" ways can still have sophisticated media knowledge and practices.
Chris	14	Heavy Viewer	Mother and stepfather	Smartphone, smart TV	Yes	93%	A shift in living circumstances can lead to a shift in a child's media type.
Jasmine	14	Reader	Mother, two younger sisters	Smartphone, smart TV, laptop	Yes	85%	Parents can nurture non-digital creativity, but supporting digital creativity is difficult without resources.
Jayla	14	Social Networker	Foster mother and her partner, younger biological sister	Smartphone, tablet, smart TV, Xbox	Yes	100%	Even without technical expertise, parents can understand a digital native's practices and intervene to manage their media use.
Zara	15	Social Networker	Foster mother and her biological son (older), foster sister (younger)	Smartphone (borrowed), smart TV, Wii	Yes	70%	Constant social media connection can both support and pose risks to a foster child independently navigating the system.

Table is organized from youngest to oldest, with the exception of sibling pairs.

[1],[2] Indicates sibling pairs.

*These categories represent the state of affairs at the time of the interviews.

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APPENDIX A
SCREENING TOOL

1. Gender: M F

2. Age: 11 12 13 14 15

3. Race/ethnicity: Latino/a African-American More than one race/ethnicity Other

4. If you had to pick one of these activities, which would be your favorite? (Circle one)

a. Reading

b. Watching TV or videos

c. Using social media

d. Listening to music

e. Playing mobile, video, or computer games

5. How many hours a day do you spend with screens? (TV, phones, computers, video games)

____hours ____minutes

6. How many hours a day do you spend watching TV or videos?

____hours ____minutes

7. How many hours a day do you spend reading? (Either on a device or on paper)

____hours ____minutes

8. How many hours a day do you spend using social media? (E.g., Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat)

____hours ____minutes

9. Do you own a smartphone? Yes No

10. Do you have a TV in your bedroom? Yes No

11. Do you have a phone you can text with?* Yes No

12. Can you text during the school day?* Yes No

*Not used to exclude anyone from sample

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APPENDIX B
YOUTH MEDIA PRACTICES INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. [Begin with any questions the researcher has about what she observed.]

2. What are some of your favorite things to do at home?
(Prompts: games, reading, writing, art/drawing, social media, listening to music, YouTube, watching TV/movies, browsing on the web.)

   a. Tell me about one of your favorite games. (Prompts: What do you like about it? What do you do?/How does it work?) What do your friends think about it? What do your parents think about it? (Prompt: Do they have any rules about this?)

   b. Tell me about one of your favorite apps. (Prompts: What do you like about it? What do you do?/How does it work?) What do your friends think about it? What do your parents think about it? (Prompt: Do they have any rules about this?)

   c. Tell me about something you've enjoyed reading recently—could be a book, a magazine, something online, a graphic novel, anything. (Prompts: What's your favorite part? Do you ever read similar things?) What do your friends think about it? What do your parents think about it? (Prompt: Do they have any rules about this?)

   d. How often is the TV on in your house? Tell me about one of your favorite TV shows or movies. (Prompts: What's your favorite part? Who's your favorite character?) [For non-native speakers: What language do you usually watch in?] What do your friends think about it? What do your parents think about it? (Prompt: Do they have any rules about this?)

   e. Tell me about one of your favorite YouTube shows or channels or stars. (Prompts: What kind of stuff do they show? What's one of your favorite episodes?) What do your friends think about it? What do your parents think about it? (Prompt: Do they have any rules about this?)

   f. Tell me about any art or writing you like to do. Walk me through something you created recently. How long did it take? What material(s) did you use? Did anyone else work on it with you? (If possible, get a copy or a picture.)

3. What are some of your favorite things to do with your friends?
(Prompts: games, reading, writing, art/drawing, social media, listening to music, watching TV and movies, browsing on the web.)

   a. Do you and your friends interact or talk when you're not together? (Prompts: texting, social media, games.) What do you do? What do you talk about? Walk me through something you did/talked about recently.

4. Who helps you when you're trying to figure out things on the phone, computer, or tablet?

5. What is your favorite part of school?

   a. Do you use computers or tablets at school? (Prompts: When? What do you do on them? Walk me through a recent activity.)

6. Walk me through the last time you had homework.
(Prompts: What were your assignments? Where did you do your homework? What did you use, especially for any writing or research [pencil and paper, tablet, computer, library, books]? Did you listen to music or watch TV at the same time? What did you listen to or watch? Did you text or interact on social media with your friends at the same time? What did you chat about?)

7. At end of the first interview, ask a). if they can text during school and b). which texting hours are OK (i.e., how early/how late can they text?).

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APPENDIX C
YOUTH "DEVICE TOUR" GUIDE

For use when getting a tour of a teen's phone, tablet, computer, gaming system, or other media device.

General:

Lock-screen image _____

Home-screen image _____

Are apps organized into folders? Yes No

Does teen use multiple screens or apps at a time? Yes No

What is the speed of movement among screens? Slow Medium Fast

Does teen listen to background music while scrolling? Yes No

Social:

How does teen communicate with peers (circle all that apply)?

Text Instagram Facebook On phone In apps

Other _____

What is the number of people the teen is following on their main social media app? _____

What is the number of followers the teen has on their main social media app? _____

Decision-making:

What uses the most storage? (can circle more than one) Images Videos Social media Games apps

What kinds of images does the teen keep? Selfies Friends Manipulated Images Celebs Video Games Anime Other _____

Does the teen follow app recommendations? Yes No

Does the teen use resources on the device to answer questions and tell stories (e.g., Google, YouTube)? If so, which ones?

Does the teen have explicit or mature content on the device? Yes No

Gaming:

What system(s) does the teen use? Wii Xbox PlayStation Nintendo Other _____

How many games or apps has the teen rated? _____

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APPENDIX D
PARENT/GUARDIAN MEDIA PRACTICES INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Walk me through a recent Saturday or Sunday in your child's life.
(Prompts: What did s/he do? With whom? On what devices, if any?)

2. What are some of your child's favorite things to do after school and on weekends?
(Prompts: Activities with friends, games, reading, writing, art/drawing, using social media, listening to music, watching TV/movies, browsing on the web.)

a. What do you think s/he is happiest doing? Why?

b. Is there anything s/he does that seems to make them frustrated, sad, or disconnected? What? What is your response?

c. What does your child do with her/his friends?

3. What are some of your favorite things to do?
(Prompts: Do you watch TV? What kinds of shows/movies?)

4. Do you and your child typically agree about her/his screen time?
(Prompts: Do you have any rules? If so, what? Why are they in place? How does your child react to them?)

5. At end of the first interview, ask a). if their child can text during school and b). which texting hours are OK (i.e., how early/how late can they text?).

APPENDIX E
EXPERIENCE SAMPLING PROTOCOL

10 a.m. What is the most recent thing you did today with TV, video, a tablet, a phone, a computer, or a gaming system? How did you feel while you used it? If possible, describe the experience a bit.

1 p.m. What is the most recent thing you did today with TV, video, a tablet, a phone, a computer, or a gaming system? How did you feel while you used it? If possible, describe the experience a bit.

5 p.m. What is the most recent thing you did today with TV, video, a tablet, a phone, a computer, or a gaming system? How did you feel while you used it? If possible, describe the experience a bit.

7 p.m. Was there anything you did today that was boring or frustrating? What? Or: What did you do today that you really enjoyed?

9 p.m. What is the most recent thing you did today with TV, video, a tablet, a phone, a computer, or a gaming system? How did you feel while you used it? If possible, describe the experience a bit.

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Connection and Control:
Case Studies of Media Use Among Lower-Income Minority Youth and Parents

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