"Just Because Children Are 'Digital Natives' Doesn't Mean Parents Are Obsolete":

Exploring the Domestic Context of Youth Smartphone Mediation

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Abstract

"Just Because Children Are 'Digital Natives' Doesn't Mean Parents Are Obsolete":
Exploring the Domestic Context of Youth Smartphone Mediation

Camille Lapointe

Over the past year, issues surrounding "children and screens" have intensified both in Québec and internationally. While this topic is often addressed in the media and political discourse as a monolithic issue, this thesis focuses on a specific aspect: how francophone parents in Québec regulate their children's smartphone use within the household. The primary aim is to explore the strategies employed by parents to mediate smartphone usage, including the specific approaches they use and the goals behind these strategies. This research draws on interviews with parents of first-time smartphone users who have recently integrated smartphones into their households, as well as a Google search analysis of queries related to parental concerns about smartphone regulation. The findings reveal the multifaceted nature of parental mediation, highlighting the importance of digital media literacy in modern parenting. Gendered patterns also emerged, with mothers more likely to engage in online research, reflecting the emotional labor associated with parenting and concerns over children's media consumption. Through this study, I contribute to a nuanced understanding of how parents navigate the complexities of digital regulation within the québécois family.

Table of Contents

Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

  In late May 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report focused on social media's influence on youth mental health, officially acknowledging it among the most pressing public health issues of 2023 (U.S Department of Health and Human Services). The Surgeon General's directive urges policymakers, tech companies, researchers, families, and youth to collectively address the impact of social media use. While acknowledging the benefits of helping youth feel more connected and creative, the Surgeon General emphasizes the risks associated with excessive social media use. These include negative effects on sleep, physical activity, mental health, and exposure to hate-based content, among others (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 8-9). The report calls for further research and recommends specific actions, such as strengthening safety standards, protecting children's privacy, promoting digital literacy, and encouraging responsible online behavior to ensure a safer social media environment for young users (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 15).

  Six months earlier in Canada, the Public Health Agency released a study on mental health and problematic social media use in Canadian adolescents, originally conducted in 2018. The study exposes significant mental health challenges among adolescents, revealing variations based on grade, gender, and financial well-being. Moreover, it emphasizes that approximately 40% of adolescents are vulnerable to problematic social media use (PSMU), which correlates with heightened psychological symptoms and emotional issues, particularly among older students and self-identified female users (Public Health Agency of Canada). Conclusively, the report underscores the enduring importance of social media for youth and the necessity to comprehend the mechanisms related to establishing healthy or unhealthy patterns of social media usage (Public Health Agency of Canada).

  In Québec more specifically, the Minister of Education Bernard Drainville, has issued a directive to school service centers establishing the prohibition of cellphones in classrooms of elementary and secondary schools, as well as in training centers across the province for implementation no later than December 31st, 2023 (Radio Canada). According to Drainville, the initiative aims to "create a more conducive environment for teaching and learning to promote the academic success of students" (Radio Canada). Prior to the announcement of this directive, a spring survey of 7,000 teachers conducted by the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement, an

association of 34 teacher unions, found that 92 % of respondents were in favor of a cellphone ban like the one Drainville proposed (MacDonald).

While the Canadian Public Health Agency underscores the importance of understanding the distinct processes related to healthy and unhealthy patterns of social media use, concrete recommendations remain limited. Similarly, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office offers general advice to parents and caregivers on promoting healthier social media use for children. These recommendations include creating a family media plan, setting tech-free zones or times for device disconnection, encouraging device-free family meals, fostering open communication, and collaborating with other parents (Social Media and Youth Mental Health 17). These actions are presented as practical steps to help parents guide their children toward a healthier relationship with social media (Social Media and Youth Mental Health 17). As North American governments emphasize the importance of child wellbeing, regulating social media platforms and Big Tech becomes increasingly difficult. In this landscape, the role of parental oversight at home takes on greater significance.

In response to the U.S. advisory, a variety of specialists have voiced concerns, arguing that the recommendations disproportionately burden parents (Doucleff). Indeed, prevailing norms often place the roles of facilitator, educator, and gatekeeper of children's media selection and usage squarely on parents, with limited external support (Broekman et al. 371). As a result, managing children's social media use has introduced unforeseen challenges, affecting both parenting and family dynamics. Nearly 70% of parents in the United States find modern parenting more challenging than two decades ago, with technology and social media listed as the top two contributing factors (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 13). This statistic, coupled with growing media attention and scholarly discourse around youth and media use, sparked my curiosity about parental mediation practices.

Gap in literature

Parental mediation theories and discourses have historically revolved around television, expanding to encompass video gaming and Internet usage, with relatively less attention directed towards the role of smartphones (Eastin et al. 2006; Lee and Chae 2007; Livingstone and Helsper 2008; Youn 2008 qtd. in Mendoza 31). While much of the existing literature delves into the various types of parental mediation, it tends to overlook the underlying factors and conditions

that may influence these practices (Balleys 1575; Barnes and Potter 11). Through this research, I aim to fill this gap by examining how interviewees perceive their role as parents and their reasoning behind their mediation strategies. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the topic of parental mediation in the context of francophone families and households within Québec is often overlooked. Given that francophones constitute a significant 80% of Québec's population, exploring parental mediation practices within this unique cultural and linguistic context presents a valuable opportunity (Caronia and Caron 21).

Research questions/methods/objectives

My thesis aims to learn if and how francophone parents in Québec moderate their children's smartphone use in the household? The objective of the interviews is to investigate the dynamics of smartphone integration on family life, focusing on parental perception. The primary aim is to delve into the strategies employed for mediating children's smartphone usage, encompassing specific approaches, applications used, and the intended goals behind these strategies. To shed light on this preliminary inquiry, I developed questions around the understudied topic of parental mediation in the context of francophone Québec. Thus, this thesis is concerned with the following questions:

1. How do parents understand their role in mediating their children's smartphone use? What are their logics of regulation?
2. What specific search queries are parents using on Google to seek information on digital mediation?

The research questions were answered through the following ways: first, 4 semi-structured interviews of 2 couples and 1 separated couple were conducted. Second, a Google search analysis was conducted using the most frequent queries used by interviewees when searching for parental mediation resources online. Through interviews and Google search analysis, I aim to offer insights into the social construct of 'good parenting' within the unique cultural and linguistic context of Québec. This investigation endeavors to extend the existing parental mediation literature primarily centered around television mediation by investigating mediation strategies within households in the context of smartphone usage. Additionally, the study aims to explore what the top search results can reveal about parents' selection of queries. The emphasis on this aspect arises from the growing reliance on search engines for information,

echoing concerns highlighted by many scholars in media studies and communication (Benjamin; Noble; Vaidhyanathan).

Thesis overview

Exploring parental mediation logics with couples/parents of first-time smartphone users first requires a few introductory elements. The first step involves contextualizing the reader in the current international and Québec discourse surrounding the digital age, media use, and their connection to youth and parenting. Following this introduction are the research questions, methods, objectives, and the literature gap that this thesis aims to address.

Chapter 2 will review key theories and main themes that need to be addressed to set the tone for this thesis.

Chapter 3 will account for the review of three overlapping types of literature: domestication of media and technology and gendered roles in the household, parental mediation theory, and digital media literacy, respectively. Most of the literature on the domestication of media and technology focuses on the physical and cultural changes that television brought to the home environment. This framework will be useful for exploring how the smartphone can evolve from being a new technology to a mundane and integrated part of household life and family dynamics. Closely tied to this literature is the social history of technology, particularly its intersection with the evolution of housework and household technology. The historical view of the home as a 'woman's place' bears important implications for the way gender norms play in and influence which technology 'belongs' to which gender or who regulates it. Therefore, this body of literature provides a framework for analyzing couple dynamics, the display of gender norms, and the integration of new habits and behaviors within family life during the interview process.

Still related to the history of television, the interest in parental mediation emerged in the 1980s when "deregulation was in effect and standards of children's television were low" (Mendoza 30). Since then, the preoccupation continued and the emphasis on parental responsibility for media in the home increased over the years. Since parental mediation theory has heavily focused on the medium of television, the literature lays a foundation for analyzing and interpreting the findings of the interview process and potentially establishing links or differences between the two (television vs. smartphone).

Finally, the literature on digital media literacy presents an intriguing challenge due to the lack of consensus around its definition. As a result, how we define digital media literacy—and the knowledge and skills necessary to be considered 'media literate'—vary based on the specific media type, with much of the earlier literature focused on mass media. Communication scholar James Potter (2010) offers valuable insights, having extensively explored media literacy and highlighted key issues and common themes within the communication field. To further this discourse, I incorporate Cho et al.'s (2022) recent framework for social media literacy (SoMeLit). By integrating older literature with this new framework, I aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what media literacy entails today, particularly in the context of domestic smartphone use. This review will also reveal the direct relationship established in existing literature between parental mediation and media literacy, frequently positioning the latter as a crucial goal or tool for effective mediation (Potter).

Chapter 4 will detail my critical approach and research methods deployed to answer my research questions. I will start by outlining the process behind conducting semi-structured interviews with parents, which constitute the core of my research. These interviews were coded using principles from grounded theory to identify key themes in the parents' responses and discussions, addressing the first research question. To tackle the second research question, I performed a Google search analysis of three queries derived from the parents during the interview process.

Chapter 5 will be concerned by the findings of interviews and specifically answer the first research question.

Chapter 6 will focus on the findings of the Google search analysis, specifically answering the second and last research question.

In concluding this thesis in chapter 7, I draw on the three areas of literature discussed in the literature review—domestication of media and technology, parental mediation, and digital media literacy—to highlight the primary takeaways of this study. Domestication theory illuminates how newly integrated technology reshapes family life, altering routines and redefining relationships. Based on the findings of my research, this includes not only the domestication of children's smartphones but also the re-domestication of parents' devices, as parents reassess their smartphone habits to align with familial goals such as cohesion and connectedness, or navigate tensions arising from these efforts. Parental mediation literature

contextualizes parents' preference for fostering autonomy and trust over technical monitoring, echoing broader findings that this type of mediation can reduce trust and discourage children from seeking parental support about digital issues (Media Smarts 43). Lastly, digital media literacy highlights both the skills parents use to access, evaluate, and critique information encountered online and their attitudes towards it. A gendered pattern emerged: mothers frequently engaged in online research to inform their mediation strategies or to better understand situations arising within the family, reflecting the emotional labor often associated with motherhood (Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 116). These takeaways allow me to conclude that parental mediation in Québécois families is not only shaped by broader cultural contexts but is also a complex, evolving process influenced by parents' values, goals, and the unique challenges posed by digital technology.

Chapter 2: Key theory

There are several foundational theories that help establish the context and direction of this thesis. While I have already explored provincial, federal, and international discourses surrounding "children and screens", this chapter introduces specific theories and definitions that illuminate the core themes of this research. Before moving into the literature review, I first discuss the significance of Québécois cultural identity, define concepts such as family and household, address societal expectations around "good parenting," and introduce the need for a feminist perspective.

First, the importance of cultural identity is addressed, particularly in the context of Québec's francophone community. While the focus is not on comparing the francophone and anglophone communities in Québec, it is crucial to emphasize the distinctiveness of francophone Québécois identity and culture. The study of family morality and cultural identity, such as through the lens of parents' use of the Québec Movie Rating System (Caronia and Caron), provides valuable insight into how media policies and regulations are influenced by cultural identity. This focus underscores how parental mediation is shaped by the cultural context in which it occurs.

Second, what is a family? What is a household? What is 'good parenting'? These notions permeate every aspect of life, from the media to the dinner table, with friends and family, knowing no bounds. Providing historical background and definitions aim to situate and contextualize the recurring notions and concepts used in this thesis.

Given that the focus is the domestic and familial context, a feminist framework is helpful for analyzing the gendered nature of the household and women's history and occupation in relation to mediating technology. While the feminist lens permeates the whole thesis, it is specifically applied and explained in two chapters: when reviewing the literature on the domestication of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and for the analysis of interviews.

Cultural identity of francophone Québec

As a French Quebecer reflecting on my own experience with my parents' mediation approaches, I began exploring how cultural specificity might influence social norms surrounding media regulation. During my first year of graduate studies, I interviewed my parents as part of a

pilot project in a methodology class, asking them about their mediating style and influences. They attributed their choices primarily to their own judgment, values, and intuition about what was best for their children. This conversation sparked my interest in examining how francophone Québécois identity and culture may influence regulatory practices.

The case of Québec's movie rating system provides valuable insight into how cultural identity and norms in francophone Québec shaped province-specific media regulation in the 1980s. The Régie du Cinéma established symbolic cultural boundaries for Québec, distinguishing it from other Canadian provinces by classifying films based on Québec's unique values and social consensus (Caronia and Caron 21). The organization cited factors such as "Québec values and social consensus", "the level of tolerance within Québec society", "the distinctiveness of Québec culture", and "the concerns of Québec residents regarding violence in media" (Caronia and Caron 21). As part of its mandate under the Cinema Act, and reporting to the Minister of Culture and Communications, the Régie du Cinéma not only classified films but also ensured compliance with specific regulations while publicizing these classifications to inform the public about film content. In essence, Québec's movie rating system was legitimized by the belief that the province's distinct culture and shared social values required regulatory frameworks that reflected these cultural differences (Caronia and Caron 21). Caronia and Caron's (2011) findings also highlight how media regulation, through rating systems and labels, operates as "condensed moral discourses" that communicate a collective ethos, playing a significant role in how families negotiate their identity through media regulation practices (32).

Since research on the social use of rating systems is part of the larger field of parental mediation and regulation of children's media use, researchers have been concerned with the extent to which parents know, understand, and use the ratings for regulating children's movie and television viewing, among others (Caronia and Caron 22). It is also in this similar realm that I wish to understand how culture, language, and Québécois identity may impact how francophone parents mediate smartphone use within the home. The issue at stake for this thesis is not so much establishing how francophone Québec vs. anglophone Québec differ, but rather focus on how francophone cultural identity and norms may influence how couples perceive their role as parents and as mediators of their first-time smartphone users. In turn, how do these perceptions and understandings guide their mediating strategies? Focusing on francophone Québec participants may be helpful to gain insight into how families construct, negotiate, or

reaffirm their value system, moral stances, educational perspectives, and cultural identity through mediation strategies.

Similarly, it is essential to consider the ecosystem of Google search results when examining francophone Québec, as culture and identity likely shape the online experiences of parents. Endogenous factors such as language settings, IP addresses, and personalization are now recognized as central to how Google operates and influences users' search experiences (Zuboff). These variables contribute to the diversity of results and sources encountered by different users. Consequently, the Google search analysis process seeks to identify connections between parents' choice of queries and the top results, all of which are embedded within specific cultural, social, and linguistic contexts.

'Good parenting' and the ideal of the family

As previous studies have demonstrated, when parents are involved in talking about family media practices and media regulation, their discourse on these topics is indistinguishable from the processes of constructing themselves as 'good parents' (Hoover et al. qtd. in Caronia and Caron 24). For example, Willet (2015) points out that 'good parents' in the 1950s in the United States were expected to limit commercial content while allowing for "educational shows such as *Sesame Street* which was constructed as a high-quality alternative" to be watched (1062). In accounting for the family's media practices and regulations, "parents appear to believe that the way they deal with the media defines how well they are performing as parents and as a family" (Hoover et al. 2004 qtd. in Caronia and Caron 24). While families exhibit differences in their approaches to mobile media regulation, social pressures concerning media and its impact on youth remain constant (Willett 1073). Consequently, the negotiations that occur within the family unit, influenced by common values and priorities, are continuously engaged in a dialogue with the prevailing discourses about what constitutes 'good parenting' and the aspiration to maintain a closely-knit family. As discussed further in Chapter 3, the current literature extensively addresses parental mediation as a strategy for achieving 'good parenting'.

But what is 'good parenting'? Far from having a fixed definition or meaning, 'good parenting' in the digital age is often associated with the "increased obligations of optimal parenting through rapid technological change and the ensuing media panics about young people's use of contemporary digital media such as the internet, social networking and

smartphones" (Jeffery, "It's Really Difficult. We've Only Got Each Other to Talk to" 203).

Concomitantly, "great expectations" are continuously surrounding the family's investments in

various digital technologies and keeping up with digital offerings (Livingstone 2009 qtd. in

Willett 1062). Livingstone (2016) explicitly mentions the conflicting discourses of risks vs.

opportunities associated with young people's use of digital media technologies and its effects on

parents, asserting that "digital media somehow intensify parental hopes, fears, and ambivalences

about risks and opportunities, now and for the future" ("Beyond Digital Immigrants? Rethinking

the Role of Parents in a Digital Age" 3).

Inextricably linked to the concept of 'good parenting' is the contested notion of the

'family' as both a sacred institution and a lasting ideal. The family is often viewed as the

foundation of Western society, with its values deeply ingrained in Western culture (Hoover et al.

55). Historically, this concept refers specifically to the "nuclear family—a unit comprising a

mother, a father, and their young children still living at home" (Hoover et al. 55). However,

Naomi Gerstel (qtd. in Hoover et al. 54) challenges this framework, defining the evolving family

as an ideological and social construct without fixed categories across time or within

contemporary contexts. Consequently, this thesis adopts a fluid definition of 'family' that

encompasses one or more parents related by birth, adoption, or other familial bonds to their

children, whether residing in the same or separate households with alternating custody.

Why the household?

One can ask, as the current debate in Québec centers on the use of smartphones in school

classrooms and their impact on youth development, education, and socialization. Roger

Silverstone astutely addresses the broader implications of media integration in a chapter on

domestication, stating that "the household is the starting point and the ground base for an

understanding of the social dynamics of media change" (242). This perspective underscores that

the household functions as a social, economic, and political unit where values are established,

sustained, and transmitted (Silverstone 241). While the household is a material and functional

entity, the concept of 'home' is a construct, a place shaped by the family living in that household,

forming "a web of human relations" (Ward 147). Thus, the household serves as a fertile site for

research, encouraging us to view communication technologies not simply as tools, but as

innovations that evolve within specific family contexts, responding to perceived needs and

desires. This perspective highlights the importance of studying smartphone regulation within the domestic sphere, where the integration of this new technology into family routines offers a significant moment for analyzing parental perceptions, opinions, and mediating styles.

The moral economy of the household

In the 1990s, Roger Silverstone and David Morley became interested in the ways media, especially television, began shaping family life. They explored how families incorporated media into their daily routines, coining the term "moral economy of the household" to describe how families not only consume but also assign moral and ethical significance to media and technology (qtd. in Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 328). This concept suggests that within a family, commodities like television—and later, smartphones—are not just adopted from the broader, external economy; they are also adapted, regulated, and woven into the fabric of family life. The household thus becomes a unique intersection of economic and cultural forces, where families actively negotiate the role and place of new technologies in their routines, interactions, and relationships.

In the context of the moral economy, family shared values and priorities shape the norms and expectations around smartphone use (Ward 148). This may include rules concerning screen time, appropriate content, or designated family time. Furthermore, these norms might not only involve parents but also the children, as both parties collectively navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by smartphone use in relation to family dynamics. Parents, in particular, play an active role in shaping this moral economy by setting examples, fostering communication, and managing conflicts that arise from smartphone use. In response to external influences, such as social norms, parents may resist certain practices that contradict their moral economy, prompting a re-evaluation of what it means to be a 'good parent' in the context of regulating their children's smartphone use. This negotiation between public and private spheres, and between the 'formal' and 'moral' economy, is a key theme that runs throughout this thesis.

'Good motherhood' and the need for a feminist lens

The moral economy of the household not only sheds light on familial media integration but also underscores the distribution of labor between parents, emphasizing the need for a feminist lens to explore gender inequalities in parental mediation. Balleys (2022), in her study of

familial digital mediation in French-speaking Switzerland, notes that "the systematic inclusion of both parents in research invisibilizes gender roles within heterosexual couples, in which fathers and mothers do not assume the same tasks and responsibilities" (1560). Consequently, terms like 'good parenting' often obscure the nuances of gender and the pre-existing familial, social, and relational contexts within these couples. For instance, Balleys (2022) identifies 'good motherhood' as a critical concept, as mothers (and stepmothers) predominantly assume the responsibility for digital mediation (1572). This burden is compounded by the emotional and domestic load associated with regulation, leading mothers to feel guilt when they fail to meet societal expectations for 'good' screen management (1572). When 'good management' or 'good motherhood' is unattainable, mothers may experience shame and fear (1571), highlighting the need to examine the relationship between maternal mediation and the mechanisms of 'mom shaming,' which arise from perceived failures to conform to social norms.

Despite ongoing discussions about gender equality in public and private spheres, Balleys' (2022) study emphasizes that the "assigning of mothers to the family's well-being is still taken for granted today" (1572). Her analysis of interviews reveals potential gender inequalities in heterosexual couples, emphasizing the importance of exploring these dynamics in my research. Interviewing couples offers insights into spousal interactions and responses, which can highlight underlying tensions. Chapter 3 will review feminist literature on domestic ideals and the historical context of housework and household technology, aiming to elucidate how the historical positioning of women in domestic settings continues to shape family dynamics—an essential theory for my research.

Chapter 3: Literature review

Exploring the implications of key theoretical insights, this literature review delves into three key literatures: the domestication of media and technology, parental mediation strategies, and digital media literacy. Each are central concepts for understanding the regulation of new technologies within the household. Family members engage in complex interactions with technology, negotiating roles, expectations, and the significance of these devices in everyday life. As parents regulate their children's smartphone usage, these interactions shape the family's collective understanding of technology and have an impact on their lives. Historically, gender-based divisions of labor have positioned mothers as primary caregivers, often making them responsible for media regulation within the household (Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 116). The domestication process is closely linked to parental mediation, with regulatory approaches influencing how new technologies are integrated into the broader media landscape of the household. Parental concerns, driven by specific rationales and motivations, play a crucial role in guiding these mediation strategies. Furthermore, digital media literacy frameworks are increasingly recognized for their influence on parental approaches (Adwige et al.; Barnes and Potter; Nikken and Jansz), emphasizing the importance of media-literate parents in managing the risks and benefits of smartphone use for their children. This review aims to illuminate how these bodies of literature intersect and apply to francophone parents' regulation of first-time smartphone users within the household.

Domestication of ICTs and gendered roles in the household
Definition and scope

Domestication theory originated in the early 1990s through an empirical and theoretical initiative led by Roger Silverstone at Brunel University in the U.K (Haddon, "Domestication and Mobile Telephony" 44). The concept was, in part, shaped by the developing literature on consumption, which, notably, highlighted the symbolic aspects of goods (Haddon, "Domestication and Mobile Telephony" 44). Later, the concept found resonance with media studies to "consider the contexts in which ICTs were experienced" (Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 195). Indeed, the

term "domestication" itself conveys the idea of "taming" the unknown and thus many studies have observed the dynamics as individuals and households engage with ICTs, navigating the processes of either rejecting these technologies or finding ways to seamlessly integrate them into their everyday life (Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 196). In terms of examining a range of ICTs in the home, research has focused on particular technologies such as the telephone (Bergman, 1994; Frissen, 1994), cable TV (Silverstone and Haddon 1996a), CD-i (Silverstone and Haddon, 1993), the home computer (Aune, 1996; Lally, 2002), the Internet (Bergman and van Zoonen, 1999; Haddon, 1999; Ward, 2005a), and later the mobile phone (Haddon, 2003) (all qtd. in Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 197). In this context, comprehending both the adoption (or rejection) and usage of ICTs in the home requires understanding the negotiations and interactions among household members, as well as the underlying dynamics of home politics (referred to as the formal economy of the household in chapter 2). In other words, individuals act and make choices, but these are made within the boundaries of both domestic and broader social contexts (Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 197).

Beyond the shifts in the meaning and influence of technology within the household, physical changes are also crucial to understanding the process of domestication. The introduction of television, for example, clearly illustrates how a new technology can become deeply integrated into the daily lives of families. Over time, homes were restructured to accommodate TV viewing, with rooms being designed around it as the central activity (Spigel 39). Similarly, the advent of the home computer led to the establishment of designated spaces, often a study, where the Internet, accessed from a stationary computer, held a fixed place (Peil and Röser, "Conceptualizing Re-Domestication" 47). In other words, the physical domestication of technology partly occurs when household spaces are adapted to meet the demands and affordances of new devices.

The scholarly focus on the domestic environment as a key context for television and media consumption has brought to the forefront a range of previously overlooked inquiries regarding the gendered nature of the home and the significance of gender relations in the consumption of television and other media (Morley 316).

Gendered nature of the household

When one recognizes the fact that television is primarily consumed within the domestic sphere, it becomes evident that the setting itself of television viewing is not a secondary factor that can be overlooked (Morley 316). By being central to its consumption, the household context raises questions about power dynamics, particularly those constructed by gender within the domestic sphere (Morley 316). According to Morley (1995):

> The fundamental issue concerns the differential positioning of men and women in the sphere of 'leisure' (whether as a temporal phenomenon—'time off'; or a spatial phenomenon—'at home'). For many men, the home is principally a site of leisure and rest (in contrast to their work obligations in the public sphere); for many women (if not most) the home is a site of labor (both physical and emotional) and responsibility, at least as much, if not more, than it is a site of leisure—whether or not they also do paid work outside the home (316; Luxton 16).

Thus, daily life at home serves as a cultural arena in which various inequalities are perpetuated (Peil and Röser, "The Meaning of Home in the Context of Digitization, Mobilization and Mediatization" 242). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the context of gender relations, where domestic media habits reflect and contribute to the ongoing division of labor based on gender, as well as the maintenance and evolution of gender discourse in society.

Drawing on Ruth Schwartz Cowan's *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Heart to the Microwave* (1983), the social history of technology and its intersection with housework is central to theories of domestication. While new household technologies were marketed as labor-saving for women, Cowan (1983) argues that they often replaced work previously shared by men and children (64). For example, before the automatic washing machine, laundry was a family activity, with men fetching water and children helping with tasks like wringing clothes or hanging them to dry. The washing machine mechanized this process, but instead of lightening the load for everyone, it consolidated the task under women's responsibility. What was once a shared effort became a solitary chore, adding to women's workload rather than redistributing it (Cowan 65). Additionally, domestic technologies raised expectations of cleanliness, further increasing women's burden (Cowan 65).

This history of housework and household technology is closely tied to women's roles, reinforcing divisions based on sex, class, and age (Cowan 68). As noted by Morley (1995), these divisions also shape perceptions of technological competence within the household (317). For instance, women are often viewed as "unable" to operate entertainment technologies like televisions or video players, despite routinely managing more complex domestic machines, such as automatic washing machines (Morley 317). This dynamic is not about technological incompetence, but rather reflects the socially constructed division of labor that assigns specific technologies and responsibilities to different genders (Schwartz Cowan 19; Morley 317). In line with these traditional roles, tasks like child-rearing, housekeeping, and cooking often lead to modern gender-related responsibilities, including overseeing children's media consumption.

More recently, Claire Balleys' 2022 study on *familial digital mediation as a gendered issue between parents* offers critical insights into the meanings, perceptions, and negotiations that take place in everyday family routines. Balleys (2022) emphasizes that "parental digital mediation is embedded in a gendered social and relational context, where fathers and mothers do not adopt the same roles, the same duties, nor the same mental burden" (1559). Conducted with Swiss families, her research highlights how paternal involvement often diminishes the emphasis on digital mediation within the family, reinforcing its framing as primarily a maternal responsibility (Balleys 1559). This perspective aligns with the need to view contemporary household dynamics within a broader historical context, acknowledging how traditional gender roles continue to shape modern parental mediation. Understanding how parents regulate their children's smartphone use today requires situating it within this ongoing history of gendered labor and responsibilities. This is an underlying theme that I aim to explore further during the interview process, as it provides crucial insights into the power dynamics and parental roles that influence digital mediation strategies.

The process of domestication, as analyzed through interviews, illustrates how parents develop strategies to manage their children's smartphone use, influencing not only the extent of usage but also its physical integration into the household. The acceptance or restriction of new devices is closely linked to their assimilation into daily family life and the responses of parents. This evolving relationship with technology reflects the type of life and identity parents aim to cultivate within their homes (Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 197). However, it also highlights the fears, challenges, and

gender inequalities that emerge in the context of regulation. Thus, the process of domestication and parental mediation is complex, demonstrating that it transcends simple notions of "success" or "failure." Rather, it is a nuanced and ongoing process that must be understood within the broader sociological and consumption patterns that shape family life (Haddon, "Domestication and Mobile Telephony" 52).

Parental Mediation

Definition, history, and limitations

The term parental mediation emerged in the academic field as a means of acknowledging that "parents take an active role in managing and regulating their children's exposure to television (and now digital media in general)" (Dorr, Kovaric and Doubleday 1989; Kaye 1979; Lin and Atkin 1989; Logan and Moody 1979; Nathanson 1999; Valkenburg et al. 1999 qtd. in Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 323). The theory has, for a considerable time, represented a hybrid communication theory (Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). While it predominantly originates from social/psychological media effects and information processing theories, it also inherently emphasizes the significance of interpersonal communication between parents and their children (Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). Although the definition of parental mediation varies across disciplines, it is commonly defined as the strategies parents or caregivers use to control, mitigate, supervise, or interpret (media) content or use for their children (Mendoza 29; Vincent and Haddon 41). Put more simply, "the notion of mediation is widely seen to capture the parental management of the relation between children and media" (Livingstone and Helsper, "Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use" 581). Additionally, it is often put in conversation with the risks children may face in light of media exposure (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 321).

While being one of the main pillars for this research, parental mediation has certain limitations that are addressed in Lynn Schofield Clark's article *Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age* (2011). These limitations accurately encapsulate how social constructions of 'good parenting' and conceptualizations of 'childhood' are prevalent even in the academic world and have shaped the term. Firstly, its foundation in the media effects tradition has led scholars to predominantly focus on the negative impacts of media on information processing and cognitive

development (Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). This emphasis has promoted an oversight of how parents try to leverage media for positive familial and developmental objectives (Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). Additionally, Clark (2011) points out that existing literature often overlooks the social pressures that shape parental choices in mediation strategies, suggesting its importance in decision-making processes ("Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). Thirdly, the concept of 'childhood' and how children are compared to 'adults' within the developmental paradigm isn't foreign to the emergence of parental mediation theory. Contemporary conceptualisations of children often portray them as "vulnerable, unable to protect themselves and in need of special care and protection" (Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 14). Consequently, the theory's orientation toward cognitive development and concerns about children's need for governance by parents has led to a bias toward children, especially younger children, with less attention to the evolving dynamics of the parent/child relationship during the preteen and teen years (Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). Lastly, the theory's historical focus on television has left gaps in its applicability to digital and mobile media contexts, as highlighted by many researchers (Eastin, Greenberg, and Hofshire 2006; Livingstone 2007; Livingstone and Bober 2006; Oswell 1999, qtd. in Clark, "Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age" 324). The latter is explored in the following paragraphs.

Television Mediation Strategies

The focus on parental mediation research, primarily conducted in the United States, gained momentum during the 1980s amid deregulation and insufficient standards for children's television (Mendoza 30). Throughout the 1990s, there was a continued interest in mediation research, driven by a growing emphasis on parents' role in overseeing media content at home. This shift was particularly notable as the government transferred the responsibility of youth media intervention from the media industry to parents and educators (Livingstone 2002 qtd. in Mendoza 30). Since then, parental mediation in the context of television consumption has been identified with the following three strategies: coviewing, restrictive mediation, and active mediation (Livingstone et al., "Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use" 583; Mendoza 30; Vincent and Haddon 41). On one hand, coviewing refers to the act of passively watching

television alongside children, without engaging in any discussion about the content or purpose of the media (Mendoza 30). Restrictive mediation, on the other hand, involves establishing guidelines and rules for children's television viewing, such as temporal use, spatial use, and content (Mendoza 30; Vincent and Haddon 42). Active mediation, also referred to as discussion, entails actively conversing with children about television, explaining, and endorsing programs, content, and advertising (Mendoza 30; Vincent and Haddon 42). However, as the Internet gained prominence nearly two decades after the initial focus on television mediation, researchers began to explore its multifaceted nature.

Internet Mediation

In the early 2000s, research investigating parental mediation strategies in relation to children's Internet usage drew from the aforementioned strategies, previously recognized for television use. A 2005 survey involving British participants aged 9 to 19, conducted by Livingstone and Helsper (2008), revealed the widespread use of restrictive mediation, such as implementing "rules, setting time limits, and imposing bans on specific activities or content" (qtd. in Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 83). In this study, the distinction between active mediation, involving discussions and explanations about media, and co-use, where the activity is shared, was found to be less applicable. Rather, the difference in medium and its affordances promoted 'social interaction' between a parent and a child (Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 83). Similarly, Clark (2017) proposes the term of 'participatory learning' and refers to "parent-child interaction with and through digital media, in the course of negotiating their interpersonal relationship" (qtd. in Vincent and Haddon 42). This adapted style of mediation "underlines both parents' emotional and rational motivations and the child's role as an active participant in learning and relationship-building" instead of solely focusing on parental approach (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 335). More specifically, the increase in the use of media as a solitary activity, whether in different spaces or on mobile platforms, signals a potential need for adapting mediation in response to the changes in media consumption. According to Sonck et al. (2013) "this individualization can conceivably problematize mediation, as it is difficult, if not impossible, for parents to apply active mediation or to engage in co-use under these circumstances" (97). Adding to this problematization, the

internet as a "focus for multiple activities, incorporating video content for passive exposure, as well as being an avenue for social interaction, active content production, and entertainment use" further complicates mediation avenues (Sonck et al. 97).

In light of the changes and opportunities for media consumption brought by the emergence of wireless Internet access, some parents are adopting technical forms of mediation, including "parental tools and filters", demonstrating that traditional (television) mediation is expanding to better suit concerns that are Internet specific (Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 83). Consequently, an empirical study conducted by Livingstone et al. (2011) (qtd. in Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 84) across 25 European countries identified 5 distinct Internet mediation strategies for children aged 9 to 16: first, "active mediation" refers to instances when parents sit with their children, actively participating in shared virtual activities. Second, "active safety" involves conversations with children about Internet safety strategies. Third, "restrictive mediation" is applied when parents impose rules and limitations on Internet use or content. Fourth, "technical mediation" is employed when parents utilize parental filters like parental control software. Lastly, "monitoring" is implemented when parents supervise their child's online activities after their use, such as consulting a child's search history (Livingstone et al. qtd. in Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 84). The diverse opportunities for media consumption enabled by the Internet prompted important questions for ongoing and future research, particularly regarding the specific devices used by children.

The Internet, transcending its role as a mere wireless network, now facilitates an array of media like smartphones, tablets, and computers, each enabling diverse web browsing experiences and more. The diversity in devices in the home—ranging from the types to the number of devices—presents distinct challenges for parental mediation. Eastin et al. (2006) highlight a pivotal distinction in Internet versus television mediation: the critical evaluation of online content, which can be uniquely created, manipulated, and imposed on users (qtd. in Mendoza 37). In contrast to television, platforms, including social media, are characterized by greater interactivity, personalization, and mobility. These internet-supported platforms are deeply embedded in the lives of first-time smartphone users, marking a significant shift in media

consumption dynamics. To fully grasp the complexities of parental mediation, we must consider the role of parental concerns and rationales, which are key in shaping their regulatory practices.

Parental Concerns and other factors for mediation

Despite the numerous studies on television and Internet mediation strategies, there are several factors beyond the purview of these that predict and influence whether or why parents mediate, as well as what type of mediation style they use (Mendoza 33). Sonia Livingstone (2002) suggests that family diversity and dynamics partly account for the variations in parental mediation (*Young People and New Media* 47). In *Young People and New Media* (2002), she categorizes families into types such as low interaction, conventional, intimate, talkative, democratic, and high interaction, highlighting how these types correlate with children's media use and family communication patterns (Livingstone 190). Additionally, research by others, points to the impact of gender (Balleys), parental education levels (Nathanson; Adigwe), and socioeconomic status (Cranmer) on mediation approaches. The following research has shown that parental concerns align closely with this study's objectives, aiming to explore the underlying motivations behind parents' regulatory strategies. Through interviews with parents, Clark (2012) identified four primary concerns driving parental mediation efforts: the future well-being of their children, maintaining family connectedness, achieving a work-family balance, and ensuring parental self-care and personal growth ("A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329). The subsequent sections will detail these main parental concerns, their link to specific mediation strategies, and the underlying parental motivations per figure 1.

Parental concerns	Strategies	Discussed in terms of	Rationales
Future of kids	• Restrictive mediation • Active mediation	• Homework, health, peers, bad influences • Cognitive development (stereotypes)	'It's good parenting to restrict.'
Family connectedness	• Active mediation • Coviewing • Calls, texts • Participatory learning	• Trust • Togetherness • Fun • Interaction, closeness	'Media are OK when meeting familial goals.' 'It's good parenting to trust.'
Work/family time	• Keep busy • Keep in touch	• Demands (school, sports, homework) • Checking in when not together	'Media are OK when meeting familial goals.' 'It's good parenting to trust.'
Self	• Keep busy	• Growing independence • Differing tastes	'It's good parenting to trust.'

fig.1. dimensions of parental mediation from Lynn Schofield Clark. "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation: Exploring the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative family communication research." A Handbook of Media and Communication Research : Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies, edited by Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Second edition, Routledge, 2012, pp. 318-333.

First, parents voiced concerns about their children's future, expressing worries that echoed common anxieties about the potential negative effects of media on children's cognitive development. In discussions about their reasons for limiting media use, they highlighted their desire to prioritize homework, address physical health issues, and alleviate fears regarding the adverse influences of stereotypes and violence. These concerns were centered around shaping what they considered a suitable and positive worldview for their children (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329).

When discussing the second concern of family connectedness, parents occasionally referenced the frequency of phone calls and text messages exchanged among family members throughout the day. They also mentioned enjoyable movie nights, which sometimes involved merely watching together (coviewing) and at other times included discussions (active mediation). Some families went beyond these two mediation styles and embraced what Clark (2012) has termed participatory learning, where both parents and children interacted and learned together through activities such as Wii bowling, Guitar Hero, or Dance Dance Revolution ("A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329). Concerning smartphone and social media use, "some parents supported activities like creating and posting videos online for friends and family" (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329). These activities are legitimized as

a way for "developing trust between parents and children" as well as "meeting familial goals" (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329).

The third concern that parents indirectly addressed was balancing work and family time. Remaining unarticulated was the strategy of allowing media such as smartphones to occupy children or maintain communication with parents during times when parents were working or occupied with household chores. Compared to the two first concerns, balancing work and family time has less to do with the "cognitive awareness of media and more to do with demands on parents' time" (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 330).

The last concern observed by Clark (2012) was similarly not explicitly mentioned but also offered a significant rationale for parental mediation strategies: the concern for parental self-preservation and self-development ("A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 330). In this context, parents permit media use to occupy children's time, meanwhile aiming to pursue their own interests or meet their needs. This rationale was also explored through the distinction between the activities parents prefer during leisure time compared to those preferred by the children (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 330). According to Clark (2012), this concern is legitimized within the narrative of "it's good parenting to trust in a teen's good judgment," which has been the most common rationale observed in Clark's study when discussing methods for keeping children occupied or maintaining communication ("A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 329-330).

The identified parental concerns, as highlighted by Clark ("A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 2012), not only provide us with more comprehensive dimensions of parental mediation but can offer insights into the priorities, values, and external factors (e.g., work) influencing these practices. For example, the fourth concern centered around the parental 'self' is discussed in terms of developing a child's growing independence and celebrating differing tastes for leisure time. This concern may reflect a type of communication that tends more towards low interaction, where parents are less likely to watch television with their children or discuss media with them. Alternatively, it may indicate conventional family types, where families make a point of eating together most days but engage in very few other activities together (Livingstone, *Young People and New Media* 191). Parental concerns, among other intertwined factors, shape the way parents engage with media regulation, conveying the multifaceted nature of parental mediation theory.

Tracing the evolution of parental mediation literature across diverse media, such as television and the Internet, is vital for situating this study within a wider historical context. The emphasis on the traditional three-dimensional framework—co-viewing, restrictive mediation, and active mediation—and its consistent application across different media underscores the necessity of exploring how adapted models might better align with non-television mediums. Nonetheless, this framework serves as a theoretical base, offering a well-researched approach for understanding how parents may navigate and regulate their children's media use at home. Yet, the motivations underlying these regulatory strategies often remain underexplored. Clark's (2012) contributions are particularly valuable in this regard, as they establish connections between parents' rationales, chosen strategies, and concerns, thereby enriching our comprehension of parental mediation. The literature's acknowledgment of the diversity in parenting styles and family dynamics further contributes to a nuanced grasp of parental mediation. Hence, reviewing existing literature is instrumental in contextualizing and refining our understanding, especially as we extend the discourse from television to smartphone mediation. At the core of this research is an examination of parental mediation theory, which not only probes the complexities and reasoning behind parents' regulation of smartphone use but also sheds light on how parents view their role as mediators. This exploration often intersects with broader inquiries into the concept of media literacy, investigated below (Mendoza 38).

Digital Media Literacy

Definition (or lack thereof)

The concept of literacy has undergone significant transformations since the mid-twentieth century, expanding beyond traditional reading and writing skills (Livingstone, "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 3). Livingstone (2004) highlights the current shift in ICTs in the early 2000s, emphasizing the emergence of a new era in 'audiovisual' content comprehension ("Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 3). The term (digital or new) media literacy, formerly coined as computer or Internet literacy, encompasses a range of competencies for using, understanding, and analyzing digital media and ICTs in the current context of Web 2.0 (Lin et al. 161). However, the lack of consensus on the skills, sets of knowledge and even on a basic conceptual definition has spurred debates, shaped research agendas, and influenced policy

initiates across scholars and disciplines (Livingstone, "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 5). Academic exploration of literacy involves multidisciplinary fields, engaging specialists in literacy, culture, media education, human-computer interaction, and social studies of technology among others (Kellner 2002; Kuber 1997; Poster 2001; Tyner 1998 qtd. in Livingstone, "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 3). More recently, within the field of communication and media studies, literacy research has concentrated on its intersection with parental mediation, particularly as a factor for influencing regulatory approaches (Barnes and Potter 7). Notwithstanding scholarly attention, media literacy has also increasingly been a topic of discussion among educators, consumerism activists, and parents worried about the potential media influences on their children (Potter 675).

Definition issues

In the 2010 article *The State of Media Literacy*, James Potter identifies three key challenges that hinder a unified understanding of media literacy (675):

1. Varying definitions and purposes

    1.1 definition of the media

    1.2 definition of literacy

    1.3 purpose of media literacy

2. Diverse curricula across educational contexts

3. The range of interventions aimed at mitigating media influence

This section will address the first challenge—the complexities of defining media literacy and its purpose. Curriculum-related issues are set aside, as they diverge from this section's focus on defining and understanding media literacy in the context of this thesis. Similarly, while the topic of interventions involves strategies to counteract negative media influences, it primarily aligns with quantitative research on mass media effects and falls beyond the scope of the current study. However, addressing the definitional challenges highlights the complexity of establishing research frameworks and approaches and underscores the evolving nature of media in our digital era.

1.1 Definition of the media

Scholars have diverse perspectives on what constitutes media in the context of media literacy. Some focus on specific media like television, computers, visual media, or digital media. With the convergence of mass media in the past decade, there is a growing awareness that media literacy should encompass all forms of media, especially given that mass media was traditionally the focus of research (Potter 679).

1.2 Definition of literacy

What does literacy mean in this context? The definition of literacy is approached differently by scholars. Some view literacy as an activity (Barton and Hamilton 1998 qtd. in Potter 680), a political and cultural practice (Sholle and Denski 1995 qtd. in Potter 680), or broadly a combination of skills and knowledge (Bazalgette 1997; Hobbs 1996; Potter 2004 qtd. in Potter 680). Critical thinking is a frequently mentioned skill, but the literature varies in specifying important skills and sets of knowledge for literacy. In the absence of consensus, this broad definition of literacy is helpful: "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide 1993; Christ and Potter 1998 qtd. in Livingstone, "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 5).

1.3 Purpose of media literacy

The purpose of media literacy is often seen as improving individuals' lives by providing them with more control over how media messages affect them (Potter 680). Many discuss its role in educational curricula, while some argue for its significance in social activism. Although scholars emphasize different aspects of media literacy, there is a shared understanding of its core principles, with most perspectives complementing rather than opposing one another (Potter 680). Other purposes for implementing media literacy revealed to be (a) democracy and active citizenship, (b) knowledge economy, competitiveness and choice, and (c) lifelong learning, cultural expression and personal fulfillment (Livingstone, Van Couvering, and Thumin 2004 qtd. in Lin et al. 161).

Common themes

Considering the complementary nature of ideas, Potter (2010) pinpoints four common themes where there is consensus in the literature. First, mass media can have both negative and positive effects on individuals (Potter 681). Second, the purpose of media literacy, as mentioned, is to provide tools for individuals to protect themselves from potential negative effects and gain control over media influences (Potter 681). However, there is debate about how to achieve this,

with some favoring targeted training and others advocating for a more humanistic approach within the framework of liberal arts (Potter 681). Thirdly, media literacy is a developmental process that requires ongoing effort and guidance. It involves the continual improvement of skills and knowledge acquisition, as the media landscape and message forms are constantly changing (Potter 681). Lastly, media literacy is multi-dimensional, influencing individuals across various dimensions (Potter 681). Scholars emphasize four dimensions, and research tends to focus on one at a time: cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, or moral (Potter 681). As an illustration of this, Potter argues that individuals may exhibit advanced cognitive literacy skills, such as analyzing a film's genre, the director's perspective, and its underlying theme. However, if their emotional development is lacking, they may struggle to fully engage with the feelings evoked by the content, making them more susceptible to negative emotional influences. Similarly, limited aesthetic development could prevent them from appreciating elements like soundtracks and costumes, while insufficient moral development may result in a superficial understanding of the ethical dilemmas presented in narratives (Potter 682). These dimensions independently contribute to a comprehensive understanding of media and its impact (Potter 681). Building on this consensus, the following paragraphs delve into the evolution of theoretical frameworks for media literacy and the adaptation from Internet-supported platforms to social media-specific frameworks.

Theoretical frameworks for media literacy

Since the 1980s, media literacy frameworks have predominantly focused on mass media, including media such as television, radio, and newspapers. However, with the rise of personalized media like social media apps and devices such as tablets and smartphones, researchers have expanded earlier frameworks to better address the diversity of media messages and influences. The following four frameworks illustrate the evolution and adaptation of media literacy literature over a period of 20 years.

In 2004, Sonia Livingstone and al. were commissioned by Ofcom, the independent regulator for the UK communications industry, to review relevant academic and other publicly available research into adults' media literacy. The following is thus a review of the most cited criteria and competencies found in research for media literacy in the UK, categorized into three

areas: access, understanding, and creation (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 3).

1. Access

1.1 Navigational competences

The first step in media use, requiring access to and ownership of a computer. These basic skills allow individuals to discover and navigate media technology, including both theoretical understanding and practical abilities like opening web pages, clicking on links, and scrolling through online texts (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 18).

1.2 Control competences

A more advanced level of proficiency, involving mastery over complex features of media technology, such as conducting effective online searches beyond basic link-clicking (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 20).

1.3 Protective competences

Essential skills for protecting oneself from undesirable media content, including blocking spam emails and filtering harmful materials encountered online (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 25).

2. Understanding

2.1 Comprehension

This includes the ability to decode and interpret media, involving knowledge of textual construction, generic conventions, rhetorical devices, and the context of media institutions (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 29). Comprehension skills enable individuals to use media to understand concepts such as influence, media dependency, and the social construction of reality (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 29).

2.2 Critical media literacy

Critical engagement with media content involves evaluating texts and sources for trustworthiness. This skill includes identifying commercial messages across various media platforms, such as television and digital web pages (Livingstone et al., "Adult

media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 34). Although there is extensive research on critical literacy for broadcast media, less attention has been given to internet media or mobile phones (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 34).

3. Creation

3.1 Media interaction

Engaging actively with digital content, particularly significant in political contexts where individuals participate in forums or e-voting. In the current era, this often includes interactions on social media, such as commenting on posts, responding to polls, or watching political live streams (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 40).

3.2 Media creation

Emphasizes that media-literate individuals should also be capable of creating content. In 2004, this included sending emails, participating in chat rooms, and creating web pages (Livingstone et al., "Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 46).

Livingstone et al.'s 2004 report captures the media literacy landscape before the full emergence of the interactive, user-generated Web 2.0 we experience today ("Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom"). With content creation now extending to the production of stories, publications, and short videos among others, this transition underscores a significant expansion of media literacy's scope, particularly in the realms of understanding and creation. The subsequent frameworks will explore how the evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has called for the adaptation of media literacy, reflecting on the profound changes in how we interact with, interpret, and contribute to the media landscape.

From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

In the late 1990s, platforms like YouTube, Myspace, Flickr, and Blogger belonged to the era of Web 1.0, often labeled as the "static web" (Van Dijck 4). This version of the web aimed to make information widely available to anyone with an internet connection and a computer, fostering the creation of an online presence. While it initiated a novel form of networked communication, it primarily operated in a one-way direction, where information was created and

disseminated by individuals or organizations to consumers. Users had limited opportunities for interaction, primarily consuming content rather than engaging with it. Eventually, Web 2.0 emerged in the early 2000s, significantly transforming online services. Progressively, platforms evolved from simple networked communication providers to interactive hubs for social interactions within a networked environment (Van Dijck 5). This new phase of the World Wide Web, characterized by social networking, blogging, tagging, hashtagging, user-generated content, and video sharing, opened up diverse and dynamic avenues for social connections, reshaping how we interact online today. Reflecting this digital transformation, research in media literacy from 2010 onwards has evolved accordingly. Frameworks now encompass a broader spectrum of skills, including refined critical engagement and analytical processes.

Frameworks for new media literacy

Chen et al.'s (2011) framework addresses these changes by distinguishing between two key continuums: from consuming to prosuming media literacy, and from functional to critical media literacy. On one hand, consuming media literacy focuses on the ability to access and use media, forming the basis for more engaged forms of literacy. Prosuming media literacy, on the other hand, extends into content creation and active participation, such as social media engagement, implying that effective prosumption also requires a solid foundation in media consumption skills (Chen et al. 86). For example, understanding and interpreting existing media is crucial before one can effectively create and contribute new content. On a different axis, functional literacy refers to the practical skills in media usage, such as understanding texts and using media tools (Chen et al. 86). Critical literacy advances beyond this, involving deeper analytical and evaluative skills to critique media content. This indicates that a solid understanding of functional literacy is essential for developing critical media literacy skills. Without a strong foundation in the technical knowledge of media tools, individuals may struggle to engage critically with media and grasp its socio-cultural implications (Chen et al. 86).
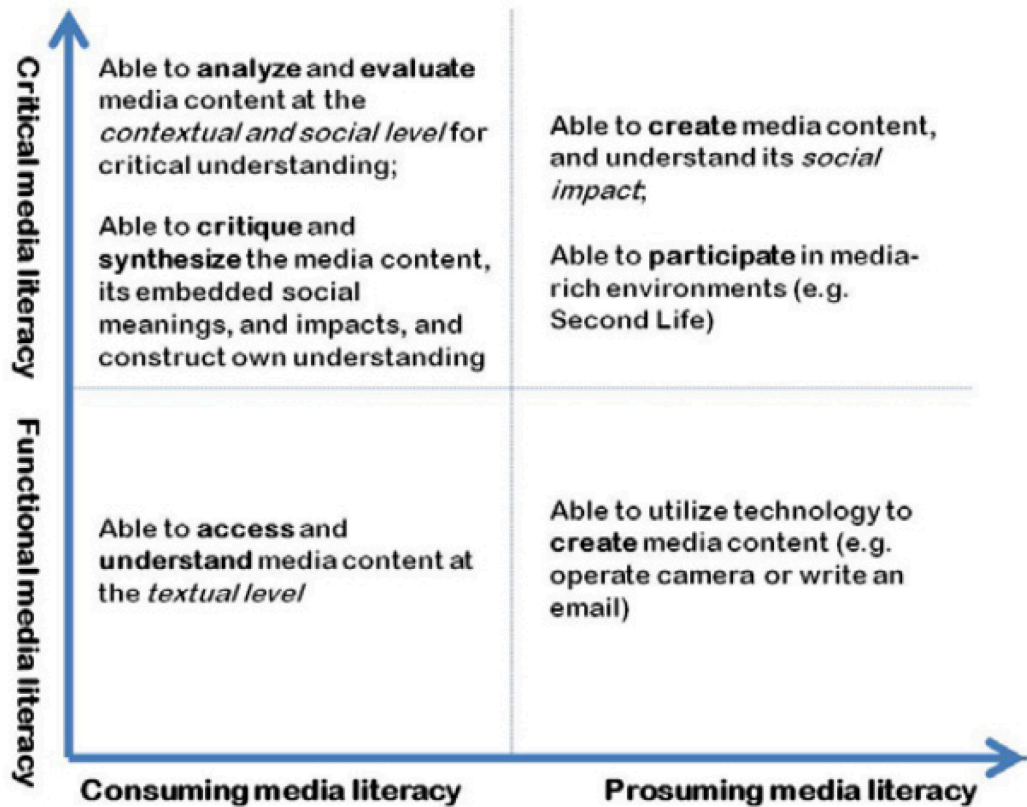
Fig. 2. *framework for new media literacy from Victor Chen et al. "Unpacking New Media Literacy." Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics, and Informatics. Vol.9, no.2, 2011, pp. 84-88.*

In refining Chen et al.'s (2011) framework, Lin et al. (2013) proposed a set of 10 indicators that span both the consuming and prosuming media literacy continua, which closely align with other established frameworks in the literature (Lin et al. 165). These indicators, the authors argue, help define the evolving skills required to navigate the complex media landscape (Lin et al. 165).

The first 5 indicators pertain to consuming media literacy, beginning with the technical skills necessary for media consumption. These foundational skills, such as operating digital devices, searching for information, and effectively using media technologies, are crucial for accessing and interacting with media (Lin et al. 164).

Beyond access, the ability to understand media content involves grasping the literal meanings of texts and interpreting ideas across different platforms. This aligns with the focus on textual understanding in Jenkins et al.'s (2009) work and the comprehension emphasized by Livingstone et al. ("Adult media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 2004). Once a consumer can comprehend media content, the next step is analysis—

deconstructing media messages by examining the language, genres, and codes within multiple modalities. As Lin et al. (2013) note, analyzing media helps users recognize that content is not neutral but constructed (164).

Further advancing media literacy, synthesis refers to the ability to remix or integrate personal viewpoints into existing media content (Lin et al. 164). This echoes Jenkins et al.'s (2009) emphasis on appropriation, where individuals meaningfully engage with and reshape media content (qtd. in Lin et al. 164). The final component of consuming media literacy, evaluation, involves critical engagement with media by questioning its credibility, assessing power relations, and determining the reliability of sources (Lin et al.165). This indicator highlights the importance of judgment, as noted by Jenkins et al. (2009), who stress the need for critical evaluation when navigating media messages.

Shifting to the prosuming continuum, Lin et al. (2013) outline 5 further indicators. Prosuming begins with the development of technical skills required for creating media, such as setting up online accounts, using software for digital artifacts, and distributing content through various platforms. Once equipped with these technical abilities, individuals must be able to disseminate information, which entails sharing content across digital networks, a skill that aligns with Jenkins et al.'s (2009) concept of networking literacy (qtd. in Lin et al. 165).

Production, a more complex skill, involves not only duplicating and remixing media but also creating original content, such as video clips or blog posts, which contributes to the broader media ecosystem. This process relates closely to Jenkins et al.'s (2006) ideas of transmedia navigation and distributed cognition, which focus on integrating media across multiple platforms (qtd. in Lin et al. 165). Participation, another key aspect of the prosuming continuum, requires individuals to actively engage in new media environments while being critically aware of socio-cultural values and power relations. This participatory culture, as Jenkins et al. (2006) highlight, promotes active involvement in media production and interaction, as individuals not only consume but also shape media content.

Finally, creation as a prosuming skill underscores the ability to produce media content with a critical understanding of the embedded socio-cultural ideologies and values (Lin et al. 165). Unlike simple participation, creation requires individuals to take initiative—whether by starting discussions or producing original artwork—that reflects a deep understanding of the media's broader impact. This notion of media creation ties back to Livingstone et al.'s ("Adult

media literacy-A review of the research literature on behalf of Ofcom" 2004) framework, where the creation of media is seen as a crucial outcome of media literacy (Lin et al. 165).
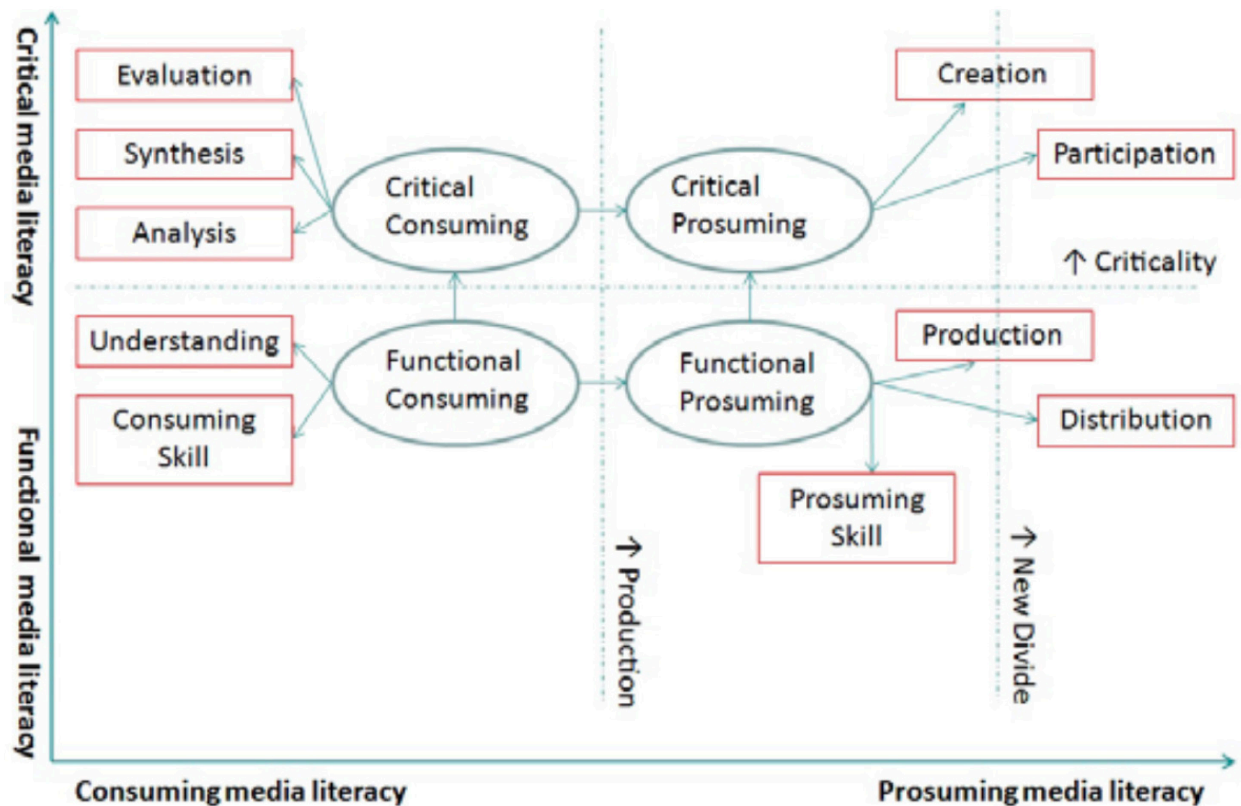
Fig.3. framework for new media literacy refined with 10 indicators from Tzu-Bin Lin et al. "Understanding New Media Literacy: An Explorative Theoretical Framework." Journal of Educational Technology & Society, vol. 16, no. 4, 2013, pp. 160–70.

Lin et al. (2013), through their 10 proposed indicators, highlight the commonalities in competencies and knowledge that define media literacy, as seen in existing literature. They argue for a refined framework that distinguishes between the characteristics of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, emphasizing the transformative impact of Web 2.0 (Lin et al. 166). More precisely, the framework accounts for three critical developments: the rise of participatory culture, the blurring distinction between experts and non-experts, and the role of social media in allowing users to express, interpret, and reshape values, ideologies, and identities through the process of media prosumption (167).

A new conceptual framework: Social Media Literacy

Cho et al.'s (2022) SoMeLit framework, which is closely aligned with Lin et al.'s (2013) model, adapts media literacy to the specific context of social media. This framework addresses

key elements such as content personalization through algorithms, the blurred boundary between media and users—similar to the blurring distinction between experts and non-experts—and the multiplicity of content. Designed to reflect the effects, affordances, and unique characteristics of social media, the SoMeLit framework outlines two core components of social media literacy: content and competencies. 'Content' refers to the awareness, understanding, and knowledge necessary to achieve social media literacy, while 'competencies' involve the skills and abilities required to apply and demonstrate social media literacy (Cho et al. 946).
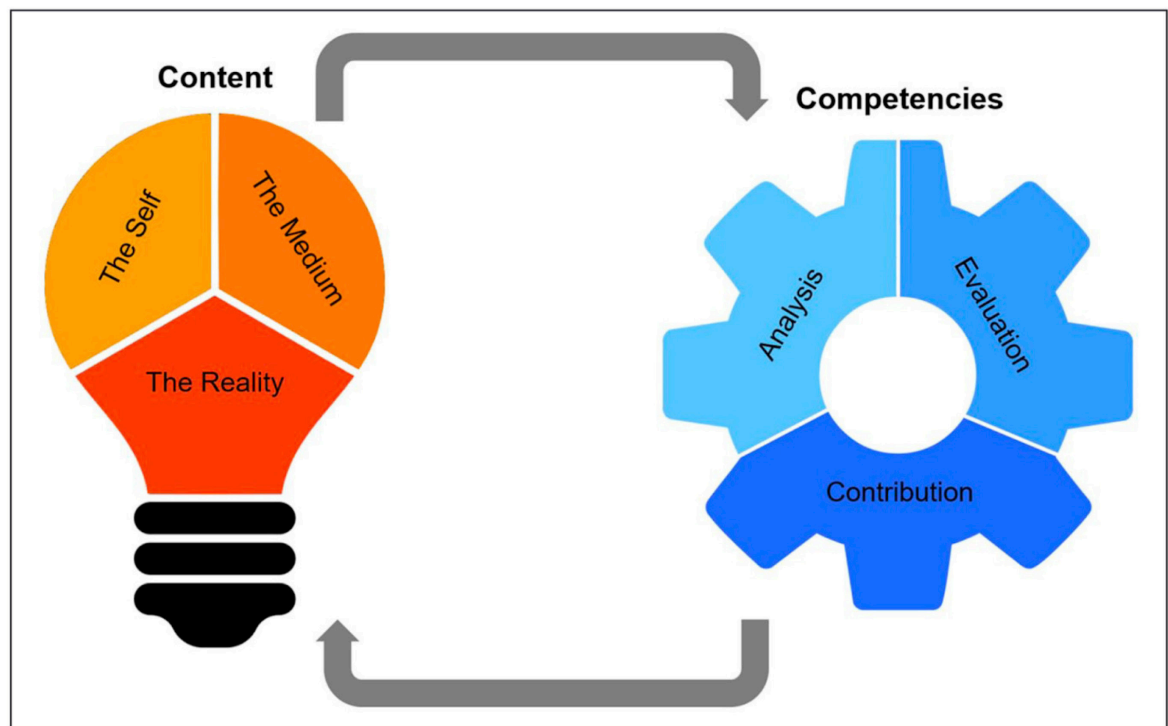
Fig.4.Social Media Literacy Framework from Hyunyi Cho et al. "Social Media Literacy: A Conceptual Framework." New Media & Society, January 2022, pp. 941-960. SAGE Journals, DOI: 10.1177/14614448211068530

Cho et al. (2022) propose 3 content dimensions in the SoMeLit framework, beginning with the importance of understanding the self. This dimension emphasizes the role of self-knowledge in relation to one's choices, consumption, and engagement within a social media environment. Social media literacy, in this context, diverges from traditional mass media literacy by highlighting users' awareness of their motivations, interests, and intentions when consuming content (Cho et al. 948). In this way, social media literacy places a central focus on the self and its conscious interaction with social media content.

The second content dimension is centered on the medium itself, which includes the understanding of technological affordances, platform architectures, and the absence of

34

journalistic conventions like sourcing and fact-checking (Cho et al. 949). Unlike mass media, social media operates with fewer regulations and is subject to economic and political influences that shape both the platform's structure and the content that circulates within it. Social media platforms, with their customizable features and distinct subcultures, challenge the one-way monopoly historically held by mass media institutions over agenda-setting and issue-framing (Cho et al. 950). Users must comprehend how these platforms enable greater participation in shaping public discourse (Cho et al. 950), though they also serve as breeding grounds for misinformation and hate speech (Andrews 2021 qtd. in Cho et al. 950).

The third dimension focuses on the notion of reality. Social media users must become aware of the multiple and often malleable realities that coexist online, recognizing the different criteria people use to judge the realism of social media content (Cho et al. 951). Previously, only a few mass media institutions possessed the infrastructure for producing and broadcasting content, which often reflected existing distributions of power and resources (Shoemaker 1987 qtd. in Cho et al. 951). In contrast, social media's millions of content creators generate diverse media worlds, each shaped by varying cultural, temporal, and socio-economic contexts. In this landscape, social media literate users understand that reality is socially constructed and often shaped by personal and emotional resonance (Cho et al. 952).

Beyond content dimensions, the SoMeLit framework also identifies key competencies necessary for social media literacy. Analysis, for instance, involves the ability to monitor one's social media content, consumption habits, and engagement patterns, while discerning connections between them (Cho et al. 952). This competency emphasizes the constant interplay between the self and the personalized nature of social media, distinguishing social media analysis from the traditional focus on external media content found in mass media literacy frameworks.

Evaluation, another competency, refers to the ability to interrogate the beliefs, values, and life experiences underlying one's social media environment, while assessing the realism of these messages (Cho et al. 952). This requires users to critically reflect on their subjective judgments and consider how shared values within social media groups can influence their perceptions of reality (Miller et al. 2016 qtd. Cho et al. 953).

Finally, contribution is emphasized as a central competency in the SoMeLit framework. It entails the "ability to develop, share, and disseminate messages for civic goals and the collective good" (Cho et al. 954). The competency to generate counter-messages against dominant media

messages often manifested itself through production in traditional media literacy. However, Cho et al. (2022) emphasizes the shift from "production" to "contribution" as social media facilitates the dissemination of counter-messages to a wider audience, historically confined to the walls of a classroom, among other places with low reach (954). The skills and knowledge required for effective contribution are ever-changing and are always in conversation with the medium (platforms), the reality, and the development of the self.

The SoMeLit framework ultimately redefines the relationship between users and media, moving beyond traditional frameworks that positioned media as external entities. Instead, it emphasizes mutual causation between the self, its values, and social media choices in constructing the user's reality (Cho et al. 955). By placing self-awareness at the center of the social media literacy process, SoMeLit reflects the broader evolution of media literacy, adapting from mass media contexts to the dynamic, personalized environment of Web 2.0. Despite its advancements, Cho et al. (2022) acknowledge the emergent nature of the framework and call for continued theoretical, empirical, and practical development to keep pace with the digital landscape (Cho et al. 955). This need for ongoing refinement echoes the larger challenge in media literacy research, a field that struggles with a lack of consensus and faces a persistent gap in understanding the digital media practices of parents and their impact on mediation strategies (Barnes and Potter 10).

Digital media literacy and parental mediation

Parents' engagement with media—encompassing their methods of access, comprehension, critical evaluation, and content creation—significantly influences their mediation approaches (Nikken and Jansz 262). Their perceptions of the internet's risks and benefits directly shape these strategies. For example, Dutch studies indicate that parents concerned about online threats tend to employ a broader range of mediation techniques (Nikken and Jansz 262). In contrast, those who view the internet positively for social and cognitive development often prefer active, content-specific restrictions, particularly co-use (Nikken and Jansz 262). Moreover, parents with greater technical proficiency are more likely to utilize safety-enhancing software (Nikken and Jansz 259-260). Overall, parents' strategies are deeply influenced by their concerns for their children's well-being, expectations of media effects

(Schofield Clark 2011; Warren 2003 qtd. in Nikken and Jansz 254), and their own experiences and knowledge of media (Austin 1993 qtd. in Nikken and Jansz 254).

Addressing the topic of knowledge is particularly relevant, as recent studies suggest that parents' digital media literacy can enhance their mediation practices (Adigwe 2021; Adigwe and Van der Walt 2020 qtd. in Adwige et al. 2). Further research indicates that parents with low digital media literacy may lack awareness of their children's online activities, including specific apps, social media platforms, and behaviors, thereby hindering their ability to oversee their children's digital media use (Livingstone and Bryne 2018; Nikken and Opree 2018 qtd. in Adwige et al. 3). This underscores the importance of digital media literacy skills, which can enhance a parent's confidence in navigating and managing their children's digital activities (Adwige 3). Moreover, media literacy may promote self-awareness and reflexivity regarding parents' own media usage, thereby informing their mediation approaches.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed three main bodies of literature: the domestication of media and technology, parental mediation theory, and digital media literacy theory. These theories are primarily related to my research focus on parents' regulatory approaches in relation to their children's smartphone use, along with the rationale, processes, and experiences that shape these strategies.

The chapter demonstrates that domestication theory serves as a foundation for understanding the social dynamics of media change and the process of media integration within families. It is essential to recognize that the domestic context has historically been intertwined with power relations and gender-based divisions of labor, often placing mothers in the primary role of regulating children's media usage. This finding remains consistent in the literature, regardless of whether mothers are engaged in full-time employment.

Additionally, parental mediation theory continues to be anchored in the three-dimensional framework of 'active, restrictive, and co-use' mediation strategies, albeit with slight adaptations over time, such as 'participatory learning' and 'technical mediation'. However, there is a notable gap in research exploring the underlying logics, rationales, and influences that guide parental regulation. Clark's (2011; 2012) research is particularly significant in this context, as it

identifies connections between parents' reasoning, adopted strategies, and apprehensions, thus enhancing our understanding of parental mediation as a multifaceted theory.

Throughout the chapter, I address the evolution from mass media to personalized media, underscoring the transition from web 1.0 to web 2.0 and its implications for the three bodies of literature. First, the nomadic nature of smartphones disrupts traditional household functions and challenges established norms within domestic spaces. Second, this nomadic media consumption complicates regulatory approaches, increasing opportunities for privatized consumption compared to fixed domestic technologies, thereby complicating traditional mediation strategies like 'co-use' or 'active mediation'. Third, the personalization of content through social media and its technological affordances has significant implications for parental mediation and digital media literacy, necessitating the continual evolution of these dimensions, as illustrated by various frameworks developed over time.

While I have reviewed the three main pillars essential to my research, many questions remain unanswered. How do francophone parents in Québec manage their children's smartphone usage within their households? Much of the existing literature focuses predominantly on Europe and the United States. How do these parents understand their role in mediating their children's smartphone use, and what specific rules do they establish? In the subsequent chapter, I will delineate my critical approach and research methodology for addressing these complexities.

Chapter 4: Methodology

One of my key research aims was to develop a solid understanding of francophone parents' approaches and experiences concerning their children's smartphone regulation, particularly as first-time smartphone users in the household. The topics of parental mediation, family dynamics, and family communication have generated compelling discussions, often intertwined with the themes explored in chapters 2 and 3 (key theory and literature review). To advance this research, I specifically considered:

1. How do parents understand their role in mediating their children's smartphone use? What are their logics of regulation?
2. What specific search queries are parents using on Google to seek information on digital mediation?

This chapter outlines my critical approach, and the research methods used to address the research questions. I begin by explaining the theoretical framework, followed by the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with parents. These interviews were analyzed using grounded theory to identify key themes in the parents' responses, which helped address the first research question. To answer the second research question, I analyzed three Google search queries provided by the parents during the interviews. For each query, I analyzed the top 5 search results, resulting in a total of 15 websites. Through this analysis, I aimed to understand what the top search results reveal about parents' choice of queries.

Theoretical perspective

When reflecting on the theoretical perspective of my research, I found myself drawn to the sociological paradigms I studied during my undergraduate years. My academic background, with a major in communication and a minor in sociology, allowed me to integrate courses from both fields, which proved valuable in exploring how sociological theories can inform communication research. Among these perspectives, the symbolic interactionist tradition particularly stood out to me. Herbert Blumer, inspired by George Herbert Mead's ideas at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, developed the primary variant of symbolic interactionism (Carter and Fuller 2-3). Blumer (1969) offered a dynamic framework that views human actions as actively constructing the self, situations, and society (Carter and Fuller 2-3).

Symbolic interactionism posits that reality is socially and subjectively constructed, with interpretation and action functioning as reciprocal processes. As such, our actions and those of others continuously shape situations, evolving meanings through daily social interactions (Blumer 2-8). In this framework, society emerges from shared understandings and interpretations of these changing meanings (Blumer 2-8). Symbolic interactionism allows for an exploration of how the present informs interpretations of the past and shapes future actions (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 262).

In this context, I considered each interviewee a reflexive agent, actively engaged in shaping their reality. This perspective suggests that participants are not passive subjects of larger social forces but instead actively construct their realities through language, communication, and actions. The paradigm of social interactionism supports this by portraying participants as dynamic, interpretive beings who think critically about their actions rather than responding automatically to stimuli (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 7). This perspective was reflected in the interview process, which encouraged parents to critically examine their approaches, past experiences, and perceptions.

My research aimed to understand how and why participants carried out regulatory activities and the meanings they attributed to them. Specifically, I sought to explore parents' understanding of smartphone use and regulation among first-time smartphone users in the household, focusing on their interpretations of actions and events within this aspect of family life. Symbolic interactionism, which views life as open-ended and emergent, was particularly relevant for this study. It encouraged an examination of actions and processes with an awareness of their temporal nature (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 263). This was especially pertinent as I focused on a specific moment in family life—the introduction of smartphones to children—where parents are negotiating and adapting their regulatory approaches to this new technology. One mother articulated this when she said, "I believe that our regulation might change over time," expressing concern that her current approach might evolve as situations and meanings change. This highlights the value of the interviews, providing a snapshot of a specific moment in time, where parents shared their realities while acknowledging that their interpretations and actions might evolve as a result of ongoing social interactions and negotiations.

It is through this sociological paradigm that Grounded theory emerged from the collaborative work of sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 7). Influenced by the pragmatist philosophical tradition, Strauss incorporated ideas of human agency, emergent processes, and subjective meanings into grounded theory (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 7). Their method was a response to the prevailing positivist methodologies that prioritized hypothesis testing over the discovery of new theories. Glaser and Strauss aimed to create a method that allowed theories to emerge directly from the data (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 7). Grounded theory involves an iterative process in which data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, enabling researchers to develop theory organically, rather than imposing preconceived notions or hypotheses.

Over time, grounded theory has evolved, with scholars like Kathy Charmaz (2008; 2014) making significant contributions. Charmaz (2014) emphasizes the importance of focusing on action and developing interpretive understandings of data. She argues that symbolic interactionism inspires theoretically driven research, while grounded theory offers the analytical tools to uncover fresh theoretical insights (Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* 262). Through Charmaz's (2014) action-oriented approach, I gained valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and practices of parents as they mediated their children's smartphone use.

Participants and recruitment

The study sought parents who were navigating the integration of a new technology—a smartphone—into their household, specifically given to one of their children. To qualify for participation, parents had to meet the following criteria: 1) They needed to be legal guardians of at least one child who lived with them either full-time or in joint custody; 2) they had to be francophones, with French as their first spoken language and the primary language of communication within the family; and 3) their children had to be between 10 and 16 years old and first-time smartphone users.

This age group was selected for several reasons. First, the children had to be old enough to have a smartphone, and research shows that most Canadian children receive their first smartphone between the ages of 11 and 13 (Media Smarts). Second, they needed to be young enough to still be subject to parental mediation. Younger children are typically seen as more

vulnerable and in need of greater protection, which often results in higher levels of parental oversight compared to older children (Clark, 2011; Duerager and Livingstone, 2012; Yardi and Bruckman, 2011 qtd. in Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 17). While it could have been insightful to explore how parental mediation varies across different age groups, this study organically focused on parents with children aged 12 to 14 years, as those who expressed interest in participating had children within this age group.

To recruit participants, I disseminated a call for parents through Facebook groups as well as my personal profile. Interested individuals were invited to contact me either via Facebook Messenger or email. Once I received confirmation of interest, availability, and eligibility from some of the parents, I arranged a phone call to introduce the project in more detail and address any questions they might have. After scheduling a time and place for the interview, participants received a consent form that outlined the scope of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, how their responses would be used, and their preferred level of anonymity. A signed consent form was required prior to the interview.

Participant details

The participants included two heterosexual couples who were interviewed together and one separated heterosexual couple, interviewed individually. Demographic questions about age, household income, education, and religion were not asked. However, it is important to note that the participant group was relatively homogeneous, particularly in terms of age, education, and ethnic background. This homogeneity represents a limitation, which will be discussed further in the final chapter.

Sample size and location

I initially aimed to recruit between 3 and 5 couples for the interviews, taking into account factors such as recruitment challenges, time constraints, and geographical considerations (with a preference for face-to-face interviews). Despite facing more recruitment difficulties than expected, I successfully conducted four interviews between January and February 2024. Two of the couples hosted the interviews at their homes, while the other two interviews were held at

Concordia University's downtown library and Jean-Jacques Rousseau School, where one participant worked.

Comparable study

My research aligns with the emerging field of qualitative studies on parental mediation. In my literature review, I encountered Claire Balleys' article titled *Familial digital mediation as a gendered issue between parents* (2022), which resonated with my own research due to its similarities in topic, methods, design, and context. Published in the Media, Culture & Society journal, Balleys' (2022) study focuses on the intricate interpersonal negotiations and challenges faced by contemporary parents in French-speaking Switzerland regarding screen use within families. The aim of her study was to explore the role of electronic devices in families, examining the meanings, perceptions, and negotiations embedded in daily family routines. Balleys (2022) and her team conducted separate interviews with 15 families, encompassing 26 children aged 10 to 18 and 24 parents from diverse backgrounds.

The findings revealed 10 discourse categories that addressed children's practices, parental approaches, and inter-parental discussions on digital practices (Balleys 1563). The study underscored that parental digital mediation is shaped by broader social and relational contexts, particularly gender roles, gender inequality, and dynamics within couples. Mothers often assumed primary responsibility for digital mediation, grappling with societal expectations of being 'good mothers', while fathers were more accepting of their own digital behaviors and less affected by societal scrutiny (Balleys 1572). Balleys (2022) concludes the article by recommending that future research delve into the social processes and factors influencing digital mediation (1575).

Balleys' (2022) study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it emphasizes the necessity of comprehensively investigating the family context, including conducting joint interviews with couples to capture the nuances of meanings, perceptions, and negotiations involved in daily family routines regarding digital mediation. Secondly, it underscores the household context as crucial for examining media consumption and domestication. Lastly, it advocates for a feminist lens in studying parental mediation of children's digital practices. These aspects were carefully considered in my research, and Balleys' (2022) study provided a comparable design and structure for implementation.

Interviewing couples

Interviewing couples was a design choice driven by several objectives. While Balleys' (2022) research demonstrated that even when parents are interviewed separately, the presence and arguments of the other parent still influence the discussions, conducting joint interviews was perceived as a way to uncover additional insights, particularly regarding the couples' dynamics (1572). I observed this phenomenon myself when interviewing the separated couple individually; they frequently used phrases like "his mom and I" or "his dad and I," and often referred to "we" when discussing rules they both agreed upon and enforced in their separate households. For the two couples I interviewed together, this format fostered a dynamic and comfortable environment where participants could collectively share and elaborate on each other's perspectives and experiences.

Balleys (2022) notes that interviews with couples "offer participants an opportunity to continue their marital conversations and define the contours of their familial and parental identity, or the 'we,' by distinguishing themselves from other models they consider morally less legitimate" (1572). This approach provided a deeper understanding of how individuals navigate their roles both as parents and as partners. Additionally, joint interviews facilitated the identification of contradictions or a lack of coherence in parental responses. By analyzing couple dynamics, including consensus and disagreements during the interviews, I gained valuable insights into the complexities of marital interactions and the decision-making processes related to digital mediation.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews conducted for this study were semi-structured, lasting between 60 and 80 minutes, with an average duration of 74 minutes. The specific structure of each interview was influenced to some extent by the participants' responses and personalities. While the interviews maintained a general framework, they primarily revolved around open-ended questions, allowing for a less rigid format. This semi-structured approach facilitated a focus on established themes while also providing the flexibility to explore new areas of inquiry that emerged during the discussions (Gaudet and Robert 100).

Grounded theory

Transcription and data analysis

Interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed using the Express Scribe transcription software, checked against the original recording, and edited to ensure accuracy. Non-verbal gestures, such as laughter, were incorporated into the transcriptions where deemed essential for conveying the intended meaning of the spoken dialogue. After the transcription of interviews, I uploaded the transcripts into the MAXQDA software program to start the analysis of data.

Data analysis was guided by the methods outlined in Charmaz's (2008) fully constructivist grounded theory, which is characterized as an inductive, indeterminate, and open-ended approach. This methodology emphasizes analysis as a dynamic process, allowing for the development of theoretical categories that reflect the data (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 157). Rather than concentrating solely on inquiry results, the iterative process of coding and memo-writing fosters a focused and incisive grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 168).

Grounded theory enabled the exploration of unexpected pathways by accommodating indeterminate and inductive reasoning (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 157). Starting with inductive logic, Charmaz (2008) notes that grounded theory eventually shifts to abductive reasoning, which addresses "surprises, anomalies, or puzzles in the collected data" ("Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 157). Abduction thus facilitates intuitive interpretations of empirical observations, leading to both emerging data and theoretical insights (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 157).

In line with constructivist principles, Charmaz (2008) asserts that researchers must (1) entertain a range of theoretical possibilities and (2) critically examine their own epistemological premises and research practices ("Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 163). Acknowledging that every researcher possesses inherent biases and preconceptions, grounded theory encourages openness rather than the imposition of a theoretical framework on the data (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 163). Throughout my analysis, I remained conscious of how my positionality and biases could influence what I deemed significant or insignificant in parental discourses. Charmaz (2008) suggests that researchers are often encouraged to choose topics in which they have a personal stake, recognizing that complete

neutrality is unattainable ("Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 163). While this was not my case, I still inadvertently brought preconceived notions about parental behaviors and attitudes. For example, I assumed that all parents would engage in online searches for information and resources—an assumption that is further explored in the Google search analysis chapter. Ultimately, grounded theory constantly redirected my focus to the data, challenging my preconceived notions.

Coding, memo writing, and theoretical sampling

According to Charmaz (2008), crucial coding practices lay the foundation of grounded theory research ("Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 163). Thus, an initial and close reading of the data was followed by a second reading to initiate the coding process, during which actions and analytic possibilities were identified. Specifically, line-by-line coding was chosen (as opposed to paragraph coding) to delve deeper into the phenomenon and attempt to explicate it. This type of coding gives researchers more directions to consider and suggests emergent links between processes in the data (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 164).

Second, writing progressively more analytic memos—rather than merely descriptive ones—advanced grounded theory practice. Memos were either partial, tentative, or exploratory but provided a framework for exploring, checking, and developing ideas while engaging with the data (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 166). Charmaz (2008) identified several key memo-writing practices, including defining the code or category by its properties found in the data, outlining the conditions under which the code or category emerges, is maintained, and changes, and comparing the code with other categories ("Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 166). For example, a memo titled 'parents as role models' highlighted the internal conflict parents experience in setting a positive example for their children regarding smartphone use. While many parents recognize the importance of modeling appropriate behavior, they often struggle to align their own habits with the regulatory standards they impose, leading to feelings of guilt and frustration. In contrast, a memo titled 'developmental justifications' revealed how parents frame their smartphone use within the context of maturity and responsibility, asserting that, as adults, they are better equipped to handle the complexities of technology than their children. This narrative allows parents to rationalize their actions, even in

the face of inconsistencies. The comparison between these two memos illustrates how parents navigate the conflicting dual roles as regulators and users of smartphones.

Third, theoretical sampling is another technique employed by grounded theorists to develop a theoretical category from the refined tentative categories that have emerged (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 166). This process involves returning to the field to gather more data on these tentative categories as they arise through analysis (Charmaz, "Grounded Theory as an Emergent Method" 166). However, due to the small sample size of this study, as well as time and resource constraints, I chose not to "return to the field" to collect additional data for category refinement. Future research could test and further explore my tentative explanations and hypothetical accounts.

Google search analysis of parents' queries

The second part of my research involved a Google search analysis. This method was conducted to provide an unbiased, objective and systematic instrument to answer the following question: What do the top Google results reveal about parents' choice of search queries? The interviews played a crucial role in shaping this search analysis process. Specifically, these interview questions aimed to provide direct insights:

1. What search engine do you use most to get informed about parental mediation?
2. What are the most frequent search queries, keywords, or search strategies you use when doing research? Why?

Overall, 10 queries emerged throughout the interviews, directly taken as in-vivo codes from 3 transcriptions out of 4 under the broader code of 'Googling', aiming to minimize alteration of the actual queries used by parents during their searches. The following is a list of the 10 queries expressed in French and subsequently translated into English. The selection of these queries was informed by participants' past search behaviors, given the central role of parental insights and experiences in this research. This approach underscored the significance of participants' chosen keywords as the foundation for query design, regarding them as carrying deliberate significance and serving as starting points for understanding and exploration. This was particularly relevant as it offered insights into how interviewees perceived their roles as parents and mediators, providing a lens through which to explore participants' concerns when navigating specific queries.

Interview number	Queries provided	Chosen query
Interview #1	Pre-adolescent behavior Sensitivity Emotion management Operation of Snapchat How to manage security settings	How to manage security settings in Snapchat
Interview #3	Guidelines for usage Cellphone usage Teenager Rule	Guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers
Interview #4	Blue light	Blue light

Based on these results, I narrowed down to 3 key queries, precisely 1 per interview. To improve the accuracy of the searches, I paired different queries together for each interview while maintaining the intended themes. The first query, corresponding to interview #1 was "Operation of Snapchat" and "How to manage security settings". Together, I synthesized 'How to manage security settings in Snapchat' to reflect an instance where the interviewee described a Google search she once conducted to learn about Snapchat, an application her son had recently downloaded.

The second query integrated 'Guidelines for usage', 'Cellphone usage', and 'Teenager' to create 'Guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers'. As highlighted by the choice of queries from interview #3, the new regulatory challenges faced by parents appear to correlate with the challenges associated with raising a teenager. This aspect will be discussed further in the interviews chapter.

The third query, derived from the last interview (interview #4) was 'Blue light'. The interviewee recounted an anecdote where, despite not conducting much research beforehand, her son's remark about the detrimental effects of blue light exposure before bed prompted her to investigate further. She recalled her son's advice and promptly put her phone away. Later that night, she conducted a Google search on 'blue light', a term she hadn't heard before.

Once I had these three queries: 1) How to manage security settings in Snapchat, 2) Guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers, and 3) Blue light - I borrowed a computer to input each query sequentially into the Google search engine. For each query, I analyzed the first 5 results, totaling 15 websites/results (5 for each query). I first focused on characteristics such as the publication year and date, publication topic, and the source of each result. This information was then added to a table (see Appendix B). Secondly, I delved into the substance and content of the top 15 results, drawing from Charmaz's (2008; 2014) coding method. To ensure consistent and smooth analysis of the websites, the content was copied into a word processor and then into MAXQDA. Using these 15 results, I sought to analyze the possible results parents might find when searching on Google.

Why query Google?

In the book *The Datafied Society* (2017), Rogers provides an explanation of the ontology of queries and Google's positioning as what Rogers terms an "epistemological machine" to study societal phenomena (76). Rogers (2017) outlines two primary research purposes for querying Google: medium research and social research, both of which intersect with my research to some extent. In the context of social research, Google queries and resultant website rankings serve as indicators of social trends. Researchers using digital methods can study these trends and analyze how search engine queries and results contribute to social sorting (Rogers 77). For example, one might investigate which terms are queried most frequently, when, and from where to gain insights into "temporal pockets of anxiety" (Rogers 77). However, my study diverged from this approach, as the queries emerged throughout the inductive interview process and, in turn, informed the selection of three main queries. Consequently, the medium of Google itself served as the tool for query results exploration, contrasting with digital methods that encompass various techniques such as crawling, scraping, indexing, and ranking (Rogers 76). Nonetheless, the interview process itself served as an experimental study of Google query trends, albeit with a very small sample of interviewees.

Another purpose for querying Google is medium research, which involves critiquing search engine results in terms of hierarchy, dominance, and "algorithmic philosophy" (Rogers 77). This type of inquiry may also explore the increasingly personalized and localized search results provided by Google. While this aspect was not the primary focus of my research, it is

crucial to consider the influence of Google's top search results and the associated politics. This is especially pertinent given that "most users tend to click on the top results, have the default results set to ten, and rarely venture beyond the first page of results" (Rogers 80). Although my research represented a preliminary investigation, it highlighted the potential for future studies to examine how search engine results inform parents and how information retrieval processes impact mediation strategies.

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework and mixed methods approach employed to explore francophone parents' mediation of their children's smartphone use, how they understand their roles as mediators, and how that translates to their Google queries. Grounded in the symbolic interactionist perspective, my research delves into parents' roles as active agents in constructing their realities through communication, ever-changing meanings, and actions. The semi-structured interviews provided in-depth qualitative data, which were coded and analyzed using grounded theory to uncover key themes in parental mediation practices and surrounding topics. The Google search analysis further enriched the study by highlighting the diverse concerns and questions parents have regarding their children's smartphone use and regulation. The next chapter delves into the results of interviews.

Chapter 5: Interviews

As I started conducting interviews for this project, I was welcomed into the homes of the parents who generously shared their time and insights. These intimate settings set the stage for our discussions, providing a window into the daily rhythms of family life in the midst of smartphone regulation. Within these walls, we uncovered many topics positioned to significantly enrich my research.

During one interview with a couple on a weeknight, their children were engaged in Nintendo Switch play downstairs while we conversed upstairs at the dinner table. As our dialogue extended past the one-hour mark, the mother gently paused in her response. She couldn't help but remark on the irony of realizing that amidst our conversation, the children may have surpassed their allotted screen time for the evening. This observation, coupled with the insights gleaned from the interviews, encapsulate the ongoing challenge parents face in managing and regulating their children's technology use within the home. In this chapter, I dive into the discoveries from these interviews, unpacking the array of themes awaiting further examination.

Particularly in this chapter, I have prioritized participants' experiences by incorporating direct quotes from excerpts of the transcriptions. Some extended quotes from participants are included, particularly when they share anecdotes or discuss pertinent issues that significantly contribute to the context of my analysis. These quotes serve to amplify participants' voices and to illustrate and illuminate various themes.

To commence this chapter, I have structured it in line with the exploration of two primary research inquiries. I deemed it pertinent to initially outline the mediation strategies employed in participants' households, followed by an exploration of parental concerns, rationale, and their self-perceived roles as mediators. In the initial section, I organized the paragraphs to align with the television and internet mediation strategies identified in the literature review, such as restrictive mediation, social interaction/participatory learning, active safety measures, and co-viewing/participatory learning. I also compared between the application of television and internet mediation strategies where appropriate. The final segment, 'intended but unapplied strategies', delineates a category comprising strategies conceived but not implemented, shedding light on the dynamic nature of regulation as an ongoing process subject to parental reassessment and adjustment. In the subsequent section of this chapter, I explore four primary objectives

frequently voiced by parents regarding regulation: 1) ensuring safety, fostering autonomy and a balanced lifestyle, 2) educating on digital conduct, 3) maintaining family cohesion and connectedness and 4) setting the example of smartphone use. These objectives, along with regulatory approaches, are inextricably linked with parents' conceptualization of their regulatory role. As the chapter unfolds and addresses the research's first question, the next chapter examines parents' Google queries in their efforts to mediate.

Parental mediation styles

Restrictive mediation

 Restrictive mediation, a common mediation type employed by parents to regulate their children's smartphone use, involves establishing guidelines and rules (Mendoza 30; Vincent and Haddon 42). In this study, parents utilized restrictive measures across three main categories: temporal use, spatial use, and content restrictions.

Temporal, spatial, and content restrictions

 Firstly, parents set specific time windows for allowing smartphone use (e.g. after school, during dinner preparation) or imposed simple time limits (e.g. no more than 30 consecutive minutes in the evening or allowing 'another 30 minutes'). Time constraints were the primary strategy for structuring children' smartphone use.

 Regarding spatial use, all parents mentioned prohibiting smartphones in children's bedrooms at night, sometimes up to an hour before bedtime. Smartphones were also banned during mealtimes, whether children were eating alone or with family members. One parent described his strategy of leaving the phone charger in the kitchen and prohibiting its relocation to enforce spatial and time restrictions, ensuring the phone stayed in the kitchen overnight.

 Another method for controlling both spatial and temporal use was through their children's smartphone plans. By opting for smaller data plans, parents ensured that children wouldn't spend too much time on their phones outside the house. For example, a mother expressed concern about her son's socialization on the bus if he had a lot of data: "When he's on the bus, I don't want him playing games on his smartphone and ignoring the people sitting next to him because he's so absorbed by the game". The preference for small data plans was common among parents who wanted to maintain some control over their children's smartphone use

outside the home. However, this approach also posed a dilemma, as parents wanted their children to have enough data for emergencies.

For content restrictions, some parents verbally prohibited their children from downloading certain apps, such as TikTok or games. Since none of them used technical mediation tools like parental control software, these restrictions were only communicated verbally, and parents acknowledged the possibility that children might defy these rules. Despite this, parents were aware that platforms like YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok—the most popular apps according to the parents in this study—provide endless and diverse content. Apart from a few prohibited apps, they preferred to discuss content with their children, recognizing that they had little control over what was watched.

Social interaction/participatory learning

In alignment with the findings of Livingstone et al. from their 2005 survey involving British participants, the parents in this study did not engage in active mediation or co-use with their children due to the nature of smartphone use (qtd. in Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 83). With smartphones fostering portability and individual media consumption, parents didn't actively discuss content with their children or passively watch alongside them. Instead, what Livingstone et al. (2017) referred to as 'social interaction' ("Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 84) and Clark (2011) termed 'participatory learning' (qtd. in Vincent and Haddon 42) occurred regularly between parents and children. This approach highlights not only the parents' motivations and feelings but also the child's role as an active participant in conversations and the overall relationship, rather than focusing solely on unilateral parental intervention (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 335).

Throughout the interviews, parents frequently mentioned that interactions or questions about content were often initiated by the children. For example, a mother recalled an instance where her son mentioned the term 'skincare routine' which started a conversation about the products a young content creator he follows had discussed. This led to a broader discussion between the parents and their son about consumerism, the influential cosmetics market, and the impact of social media trends and content creators on his life. For the parents, it was important to raise awareness about these topics and encourage their son to reflect on the content he consumes.

This example illustrates the dynamic interaction between parent and child and their engagement in relationship-building through digital media (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 335).

Another demonstration of social interaction and participatory learning intersects with how parents perceive their role as mediators, particularly as educators. Many parents share a common goal of educating children on proper online behavior through advocating for specific regulatory approaches. Achieving these educational goals requires initiating interactions and questions, either by parents or children, as parents are often unaware of their children's immediate online activities. Interestingly, these interactions can arise when combining other forms of mediation. For instance, a mother described her practice of 'monitoring' her child's online activities: "I look at his friends and who comment on his stuff. I check the little drafts of videos he made just to be sure. That's how I saw a couple of photos with 'fuck you' on them." After noticing these inappropriate gestures in her child's photos, she decided to address it the next day, discussing proper ways to communicate with friends online and the importance of avoiding vulgar signs in pictures. If she hadn't been monitoring her son's online activities when he was asleep, she wouldn't have seen these pictures. It seemed to be a rhetoric for legitimizing her approach.

Online conduct

Children's online conduct seemed to be a concern for most parents in this study for at least two reasons. Firstly, parents pointed out that their pre-adolescents are still learning how to behave in the real world and thus don't fully understand how to navigate the virtual world yet. Additionally, the affordances of smartphones allow for new features, leading to new and often unforeseen situations (Sonck et al. 97). Secondly, children's online behavior can compromise their own safety. Two examples illustrate a concern over safety and online access:

> You see, a situation happened at their school, there was a fight. My son told me, 'It's a shame, I didn't have my smartphone, I would have filmed it', and I said, 'Well no, you don't film that'. Then, we explained that if you get caught filming, we don't know what happens next, you can't use things without permission, without consent, we talked about that. He said, 'Oh, I hadn't thought of that'. It's all about learning social media conduct.

Another parent shared a similar situation about the need to educate on online conduct:

> I'm sitting with him on the couch, he's on a Snapchat group, and he's next to me, chatting with three people, and then he says, 'He could bring a knife'. I'm shocked so I tell him to hang up and I have a conversation with him. 'Do you even know what a knife is, first of all? It's a knife, you're telling someone to bring a knife?' 'Yeah, but it was an inside joke from when we were on the bus.' But you know, he's twelve years old, I get that it wasn't his idea to hurt people. But then I explained it to him, and he understood, you know, and I told his mother so she... You know, that's also a parent's fear. Are you going to say something stupid, you know, to fit in with the group, to... So at the same time, you give... I give trust, you know, I give autonomy, but still, you have to have safeguards like this, I was lucky, I was next to him. You know, but sometimes you think, okay, what can he say online?

In these two situations narrated by the parents, they expressed concerns about their children's online conduct, attributing it to their children's immaturity and their need for guidance in certain situations. Parents also want to prevent their children from saying or doing things online that could be used against them legally later on, noting that online traces stay forever. To prevent these kinds of situations, parents try as much as possible to 1) engage in conversations with their children about their online activities, as portrayed in these examples, 2) be in the same room as them when possible, to stay alert and supervise, and 3) monitor their children's digital activities on their smartphones when they are asleep.

In the realm of 'social interaction,' 'active safety' was another strategy to ensure that children's online conduct aligned with "staying far from potential online threats". This ties back to the second parental concern regarding children's online conduct, specifically focused on safeguarding them from potential dangers such as 'stranger danger'.

Active safety

Parents want to prioritize their children's online safety and take measures to prevent them from encountering vulnerable or dangerous situations. Thus, the discourse around 'active safety' was prominent among parents as they addressed concerns about online 'stranger danger' and discussed strategies for navigating it with their children. In another study conducted by

Livingstone et al. (2017), the researchers have identified the strategy of 'active safety' for when parents have conversations with children about Internet safety strategies ("Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 98). Indeed, this strategy was prevalent among the parents of this study who portrayed their pre-adolescents as vulnerable and in need of protection:

> Sometimes, you know, I realize that you really have to be careful with it. We've said to him, 'You can't just accept anyone, you need to have a source, like they're a friend of someone', because he tends to want to have as many friends and followers as possible. There's something in that too, it's more complex than we think. They want to have a lot of friends on social networks, but they're not really friends.

A mother has therefore become familiar at adjusting the privacy settings on her son's various accounts, particularly Snapchat and TikTok, while also engaging in ongoing discussions with him about online precautions. She mentioned setting his account to 'private' and removing him from the 'Snapmap' to prevent his location from being visible to friends or potential strangers.

In this specific case, the fear of online 'stranger danger' underscores the parental goal of ensuring children's safety. This objective is achieved through strategies that emphasize both 'social interaction' and 'active safety' by educating children on Internet safety techniques through ongoing dialogue and by setting social media accounts to private. Despite these safety concerns, parents also acknowledged the advantages of smartphone use, particularly its potential for promoting creativity.

Coviewing/participatory learning

While parents confirm the need to stay vigilant about the potential dangers of smartphone use, they also recognize and appreciate its positive aspects. One positive aspect highlighted most frequently is that smartphones, social media, and other applications have significantly nurtured their children's creativity, which parents consider both a beneficial and educational facet of smartphone use. The following two parental statements illustrate a mix of strategies: coviewing and participatory learning.

One parent described how creative activities like making TikTok videos nurture their child's creativity:

> There are other things that are very positive as well and that nurture creativity in young people because they take the time to learn these movements. Yes, they film themselves, but they are in the process of learning something and achieving a tangible result of their work. Yes, it involves a screen, but I still find it really fun. And with his friend group, our son is recognized for being good at doing cool things on TikTok.

Another parent detailed her son's interest in video creation using a new application:

> And he really likes making little videos too. Oh yes, there's a new app called Clip, I think. It's for videos. And that's really cool. I told him, 'You have to show me that', and it's a kind of thing where, for example, he puts his hand out, then the hand disappears, and he makes montages. It's really cool. He can make a video for ten minutes, jumping on the bed, falling, and filming himself several times. It's more fun than just taking photos; it makes clips. It's really fun. And then I said, 'You have to show me that. I want it too!'.

In these instances, several elements of coviewing and participatory learning unfold: the parent observes their child's content creation process through the various movements or takes they perform (coviewing); the child shows their parent the final product of the montage they created (coviewing/participatory learning); the parent comments positively, expresses their interest in the creative process (participatory learning); and this interaction opens up an ongoing dialogue about the positive aspects of certain digital activities (social interaction).

Hierarchy of digital activities/content

Throughout the interviews, a direct correlation emerged between what parents encouraged and what they considered beneficial for their children. In other words, parents predominantly support content that offers various benefits, such as educational value. For example, in the case of video creation, parents recognize its added value in nurturing creativity, teaching patience, and promoting focus and goal orientation, as children take pride in the final montages they create. These identified opportunities align with parents' desire to provide autonomy while also fitting their ideas of productive activities for their children's free time, in

contrast to other digital activities deemed trivial by parents. This establishes a hierarchy of digital activities closely linked to parental support and interest.

Throughout the interviews, even though I did not explicitly ask parents about their opinions on the content their children watch, all of them naturally commented on the types of content they dislike their children viewing. For example, one parent remarked:

> I don't have a problem with writing to friends, but when it comes to silly little videos, I really struggle. Another said, You know, what interests him is watching fails, finding out how to pass his video game level, and watching YouTubers like Squeezie. And I thought, damn, that's really...

A different parent noted:

> He'll watch, for example, YouTubers who play the game faster or with a different twist, and I think, you know, he's not watching a documentary on National Geographic. I find that the content is weak and insignificant. Another commented, He goes to watch these little videos, these YouTube videos that seem boring.

These comments indicate that parents are concerned not just with the amount of screen time their children do but also with how that time is spent. Thus, they hold specific ideals about how screen time should be organized and used.

The subjective dimension of time and what constitutes 'quality time' becomes particularly interesting when parents discuss endorsing (or not) their children's digital activities (Haddon, "The Contribution of Domestication Research to In-Home Computing and Media Consumption" 197). Parents' negative reactions to certain types of content seem to stem from a perception that their children are wasting time on 'insignificant' content that lacks beneficial value. In contrast, one mother shared her admiration for her son's proactive approach to learning English by downloading an application on his own:

> He's not very good at English, and then there was this app. I didn't even know; I thought it came from his teacher, an app to learn English. Duolingo. But it wasn't even a request from his teacher; he's doing it on his own. So why complain? 'That's fine with me, son, that you're doing your little English test'.

This example illustrates the mother's sense of fulfillment as her son surpasses her expectations regarding how he should utilize his screen time and for what purpose. She acknowledges that there is no justification for objecting to his smartphone use if he is engaging

in educational pursuits. However, as revealed through parental discourse, viewing videos for entertainment purposes is often perceived on the parent side as 'boring, weak, and insignificant'. This could be why parents are more inclined to extend screen time when it serves purposes beyond mere entertainment. In essence, when smartphone usage is perceived as beneficial for children, it legitimizes the extension of screen time and mitigates any associated parental guilt.

Hence, the subjective dimension of time, coupled with children's activities during screen time, appear to be closely intertwined and significantly impact parental mediation. Returning to the strategies of coviewing and participatory learning, parents appear to actively endorse certain digital activities, such as video creation and learning via applications (e.g. Clips, Duolingo), as they recognize their beneficial value for their children's development. However, it remains unclear whether parents express the same level of vocal disapproval for content they do not endorse for their children (e.g. watching fails on YouTube). What remains evident, however, is that parents are not indifferent to their children's activities during screen time. Depending on the nature of their activities, parents may demonstrate interest, pride, and encouragement, occasionally extending screen time, or eagerly anticipating its conclusion.

Intended but unapplied strategies

Several parents mentioned other strategies they intended to enforce before giving their children a smartphone. During our conversations, they confirmed that some strategies were either "going to be applied soon" or had been reconsidered and abandoned. One such strategy involved sporadic check-ups of children's smartphones, including their browsing history, friends, comments, conversations, and published content. This resembles the technique of 'monitoring', where parents supervise their child's online activities in a transparent manner (Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 84). They informed their children that they would notify them before conducting a check-up, sometimes asking their children to be present and provide a summary of their smartphone activities.

According to the parents, the primary reason they haven't performed these check-ups is that "time is flying by", and they forget amid their busy schedules. Additionally, some parents are hesitant to discover the amount of time their children spend on videos or content they consider 'insignificant'. They believe that if their overall regulatory approach is effective and their relationship with their children is good, there is no need to scrutinize the specifics. Parents

prefer to focus on the bigger picture and make changes only if necessary, rather than micromanaging their children's activities when everything seems to be going well.

As another 'monitoring' technique, a father mentioned that he initially planned to be 'friends' with his son on social media to keep track of what he posts, who comments on his posts, and who his friends are. However, he changed his mind shortly after giving his son a smartphone for three main reasons. First, he realized that his son uses applications he knows nothing about and has no interest in downloading or learning, such as Snapchat. Second, he wants to build trust in his relationship with his son, believing that if his son had a problem or wanted to discuss a situation, he would come to him. Third, the father cited a lack of time as another reason for not prioritizing this strategy. For the father, it seemed that the potential benefits of this approach were probably not worth the time and effort it would require.

It is interesting to consider these 'intended but unapplied strategies' at the intersection of the smartphone's domestication process and parental mediation for a few reasons. Firstly, these strategies reveal the gap between parental intentions and execution, highlighting how initial plans often shifted due to evolving circumstances and insights. For instance, parents initially set rules about sporadic check-ups and becoming social media 'friends' with their children, yet they often abandoned these strategies due to time constraints, a desire to foster trust, or a lack of familiarity with certain applications.

Secondly, those unapplied strategies provide insight into the dynamic nature of parental mediation. As parents navigate the complexities of their children's smartphone use, they continually reassess and adjust their approaches. This adaptability underscores the ongoing negotiation between parents' views, the evolving wants and behaviors of their children, and family dynamics within the household.

Finally, delving into those 'intended but unapplied strategies' provides a profound insight into the challenges and considerations parents face. Their discourses highlighted the delicate balance they endeavored to strike between monitoring and trust, between establishing boundaries and fostering independence and autonomy, and between active involvement and respecting privacy. In other words, the pursuit of balance emerged as a common goal among all interviewed parents. In their quest for balance lies parents' understanding of their role in regulating their children's smartphone usage and the underlying principles guiding their approach to regulation. The next paragraphs dive into these goals.

Key goals in parental mediation

Throughout the interviews, parents discussed their mediating strategies, parenting perspectives, and where their role as mediators fit into these dynamics. During the analysis, I identified that participants understood their role as mediators in relation to four main goals: 1) ensuring safety, fostering autonomy, and a balanced life, 2) educating on digital conduct, 3) maintaining family cohesion and connectedness, and 4) setting the example in terms of smartphone use. Parents' understanding of their role in mediating their children's smartphone use is closely linked to their concerns and the rhetoric surrounding regulation, which is also discussed below.

Ensuring safety, fostering autonomy, and a balanced life

Safety, autonomy, and balance emerged as keywords in all four interviews. The decision to give children a smartphone appeared to stem from the belief that it would ensure safety and foster autonomy—an argument frequently put forward when discussing the provision of a first smartphone to children. However, as parents navigate the integration of this new technology into their lives, they come to recognize its dual impact on safety and autonomy. Consequently, they aspire for their children to live a "balanced life", a goal that is mirrored in their mediating style, which they often refer to as a "balanced approach".

On one hand, parents recognized the need for their children to have a smartphone, especially as they entered high school and sought greater independence. For instance, as children began organizing activities with friends after school, parents welcomed this newfound freedom, with the condition that they stay in touch: "Text me when you're done, and we'll come pick you up". Providing a smartphone became a means of granting autonomy to their children while maintaining connectivity and awareness of their whereabouts.

On the other hand, parents became increasingly aware of how children's smartphones often became an extension of their hands, raising concerns about the potential diminishment of autonomy over time. As one mother articulated, "we want to ensure that he is capable of being proactive and taking initiative without a phone, so that he also develops a sense of autonomy. To be able to handle things on his own and exercise good judgment, so that his life is not dominated by the phone, and that there are other things he can develop alongside it". In this scenario, parents acknowledged that while the smartphone serves as a communication tool that fosters

autonomy, it also had the potential to impede it by becoming an inseparable extension of the self, leading to overreliance.

In terms of ensuring safety, parents have emphasized the significance of providing smartphones to their children, particularly due to the changing routines and the transition to high school. This transition often involved new responsibilities, such as taking the bus alone, which raised safety concerns for parents. One mother expressed this sentiment, stating: "Because now, he takes the bus to go to school. He's all alone. So it was a safety concern. And in the evening, he arrives all alone and I'm a bit of a helicopter mother. So I don't like it, I want him to text me when he's arrived". Additionally, parents viewed smartphones as essential tools in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, providing reassurance that their children could contact them if needed. However, while smartphones were seen as promoting safety in the physical world, they also introduced concerns about virtual safety.

Parents expressed worries about online safety, particularly regarding 'stranger danger', as highlighted by one parent who remarked, "On social media we have friends that we don't know personally, but we know who they are... but you know, Mr. Romualde or Mr. Piché, 54 years old, who are they? 'Oh, I don't know, but he asked me to be friends'. But you know, that kind of thing". The concerns highlighted underscore the complex interplay between ensuring physical safety in the real world and addressing potential risks in the virtual realm, illustrating one of the challenges parents must navigate.

To address concerns regarding autonomy and safety, parents have devised what they collectively refer to as a "balanced approach" to managing their children's smartphone usage. Central to this approach is the notion that children should learn to use their smartphones judiciously, a principle reflected in various strategies such as restrictive mediation, social interaction/participatory learning, active safety measures, and monitoring. The concept of 'balance', however, is inherently subjective, manifesting in diverse strategies implemented by different parents. Crucially, parents emphasize the importance of maintaining their children's pre-smartphone interests and activities. Many parents encourage their children to engage in pursuits such as playing musical instruments, participating in sports, reading books, and spending time with friends. Reflecting on their ideal vision of smartphone usage and regulatory approach, a father articulated, "Our goal is for them to learn to live in a reasonable and healthy way with it". In essence, parents view themselves as facilitators, striving to integrate

smartphones into their children's lives in a manner that promotes balance, while also addressing safety and autonomy concerns and harnessing the device's potential to meet parental objectives.

Educating on digital behavior

   Parents also perceive themselves as educators, acknowledging their role in instilling proper digital conduct in their children. They recognize the importance of guiding their children through this new technological landscape, feeling a responsibility to do so. Just as expected conduct exists in the physical world, parents emphasize the necessity for their children to understand that proper conduct is equally required in the virtual world. Throughout the interviews, some parents expressed various fears, opinions, and insecurities about their children's online activities, particularly concerning digital behavior and its connection to sexuality. Moreover, adopting the role of educators is not a straightforward matter where parents are simply the solution to developing digital citizenship or the problem due to their lack of knowledge (Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 5). The interviews presented a nuanced perspective, highlighting how parents navigate their understanding and capacities in fulfilling this educational role.

   For example, one couple shared their concern about the negative impact social media trends have on their child:

> It's crazy, it's all about selfies, filming themselves with their 'glowy complexion' and making a duckface, with low-cut tops for the girls. It's everywhere, and it's very suggestive. They're very young, and they don't realize what it might look like to a sexualized adult. They're still children without sexuality, but they're mimicking these behaviors. It's alarming because they're bombarded with these images and then reproduce them. I find it premature, really premature for some things, and it's a bit scary. That's something I sometimes tell my son to be careful about, because it gives the impression that he's trying to flirt, charm someone, or kiss someone, with the duck faces, eyebrows, hair, and poses. But they're just reproducing what they see, and they're good at it.

Additionally, a father expressed his apprehension about what his child might do on his phone: "With experience, I know what to do and not to do, but the applications he will

download...or the things he will say, or the things he will publish. I told him, 'do not send any photos'", referring to sexually explicit images, mentioned as 'dick pics' in the interview.

The parental concern that children might find themselves in dangerous, shameful, or illegal situations due to their digital conduct partly drives their motivation to educate them on the subject. Each parent has their own focus, whether it's educating their children about social media trends or warning them about the potential dangers of sexual cyber-violence, such as sending unsolicited explicit images.

For some parents, this role seems particularly challenging, as they feel in uncharted territory since they themselves didn't grow up with smartphones. One parent explained:

> This management, you know, and this new thing in our lives, as children and adolescents, we didn't experience having a phone and social media, that wasn't there at all. So, we really have to juggle and get used to this thing that we don't know. So, we tend to be reluctant, you know, or to be sure that we're doing the right thing. And sometimes, maybe it's more depriving or lacking than it could be.

Some parents struggle to navigate education because they don't feel fully qualified to teach something they didn't experience as pre-adolescents. Even now, they realize their use of smartphones and social media differs from their children's, making it hard to relate to their experiences to address them, such as the impact of social media trends. This issue is part of the 'knowledge gap' or the discourse on 'media generations,' where children and teenagers are seen as having far greater expertise in all things digital compared to their parents (Jeffery, *Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 6). While this concept often rings true in the media, the interviews revealed a more nuanced reality. Parents indeed struggle at times, but many also feel confident in their approach. As one father justly put it, just because children are 'digital natives' (Prensky) doesn't mean parents are obsolete. Rather, they play a crucial role in coaching their children to navigate through the complexities of the digital world. This includes fostering responsible and informed online conduct, such as engaging in discussions on sexually related topics. Despite the undeniable challenges, parents remain secure in their commitment to fulfilling their role as educators in shaping their children's digital citizenship.

Maintaining family cohesion and connectedness

Among the interviewed participants, another crucial goal emerged for parents as they navigate the regulation of their children's smartphone usage: maintaining family cohesion and connectedness. In essence, parents emphasize the importance of upholding familial ideals, ensuring that the household environment remains one of respect and good manners. Consequently, they do not hesitate to introduce new rules to uphold these values. However, parents also acknowledge the increased potential for communication and connectedness afforded by smartphone use.

By imparting foundational values for fostering strong family cohesion, parents establish their own moral economy within the household. Consequently, their regulatory approaches are largely oriented towards this objective and reflect their understanding of their role in nurturing positive relationships and fostering a healthy home environment. For instance, a mother described a recurring challenge with her older son regarding his attitude when he finishes his screen time:

> It takes him some time to readjust to the real world. The three dimensions, emotions, others, your surroundings, coming back to real life. Because it changes you. Naturally, I believe it takes him elsewhere. He needs to go through, like, a struggle of something to come back to real life. It comes out as impatience, it comes out as... Oh, you know, less pleasant. So, we have a discussion about it, 'You've just finished your screen time now be careful, you know. That's not a reason to answer like that'.

While parents both take the time to caution the son, intervene and make commentaries when it exceeds the boundaries they have set for good behavior, it happens that the son gets in return less screen time the next day, as a consequence of his words and actions. This is a demonstration of how parents may readjust and reassess their regulatory approach if their goal of maintaining family cohesion is impacted negatively.

On the positive side, there were also instances where parents noticed that giving their children a smartphone allowed for reinforced family connectedness through text messages, especially during school days where parent and child usually don't have communications:

> I find that there are a lot of cute little communications that make me feel a little closer in moments where I used to feel distant from our daughter. So sometimes,

she'll text me during lunchtime like, 'the exam went really well, love you, have a great day' and obviously, we wouldn't have spoken before. But now she tends to message me, I don't know, there are lots of little hearts (laughs). She writes me a lot of fun little things. So it's minimal, it might be just a sentence every few days, but it's a small touch that I don't hate. That's something that has changed a bit.

A father also shared how he occasionally communicates with his son via text messages after an argument, which he found to be beneficial. He explained:

Sometimes, I extol the merits of calling on the phone to resolve something. But sometimes, a message also has its impact. A written message can have a significant impact in terms of revisiting an event that occurred. It can resonate in a different context, where he is more willing to listen. And communicating with your father, I think that's something interesting.

From these experiences, it becomes evident that parents experience both positive and negative aspects of family connectedness related to smartphone use. When parents confront challenges, such as assisting their children in transitioning back to the real world after screen time, they not only exhibit their dedication to guiding their children through the effects of smartphone use (as educators) but also do so to maintain harmony within the family dynamic. To uphold this objective, they may find it necessary to adapt their regulatory approaches, modifying consequences as needed to preserve family cohesion, thereby reinforcing boundaries and fostering accountability. Despite these challenges, parents acknowledge the positive role of smartphones in enhancing family connectedness. Text messages serve as a tool for nurturing closeness and facilitating communication, even in resolving conflicts and keeping lines of communication open with their children. Through a blend of core values, adaptability, and the utilization of technology for positive communication, parents endeavor to foster a harmonious and connected family environment, a reflection of their mediating efforts and how they understand their role in all of this.

Setting the example for smartphone use

Throughout the interviews, parents acknowledged the difficulty of regulating their children's smartphone use, particularly in relation to their own usage habits. While they all agreed that parents need to lead by example, they disclosed the continuous challenge of

maintaining consistency between their own smartphone use and their regulatory approach for their children. Many parents expressed that they notice a lack of coherence between their actions and their demands towards their children. Not only do parents try to set high standards for themselves to demonstrate healthy smartphone use (mostly in terms of screen time), but children also notice the inconsistencies between what parents say and what they do, creating confrontation among the family unit (Lajoie 2024).

A mother noticed as early as when her son was two years old that he was mimicking her:

I remember very well, my son, he was two or two and a half years old. When he said, 'Oh, mommy, beep-beep-boop-bop!' (while fiddling with the phone), I thought, 'Oh my gosh, he's imitating me'. And then I realized, oh no, no no. For my two-year-old to imitate me, I must be on my phone a lot... So now he is twelve years old, but sometimes, I hide to be on my phone. It's ridiculous, you know. And if he does the same thing, I say, 'Can you put your phone away?' I'm not being consistent here. I think, you know, we try to be, but we aren't always consistent, and it's not always super educational, it's not always good.

Another mother reinforced this by mentioning that she and her husband "intentionally choose to do certain things after the children go to bed to avoid being on the screen too much in front of them". Parents understand and have observed that children are watching and learning from them. Therefore, if they want their children to limit phone usage and avoid developing what they call 'bad' habits, they must model that behavior themselves. This is one strategy parents have developed to remain consistent in their role of 'setting the example'.

Aside from the strategies parents develop to avoid being seen on their smartphones, most parents use their devices in front of their children. This often leads to children confronting their parents about it, prompting parents to justify their usage. A father describes a common conflict he and the mother have with their sons: "We often say, 'Hey, put down your phone,' 'Get off your phone'. Yes, we sometimes say that, even though we ourselves are on our phones, but then they say, 'Yeah, but you were on yours'. 'Yeah, but I just made dinner, and I just sat down, I just got on, you know, but you finished your hour of screen time'". This father acknowledged his own "stubbornness" in these confrontations and recognized that "of course, you kind of have to lead by example". In this situation, the parent understands that the solution isn't to justify his smartphone use but to demonstrate that he can unwind after dinner by doing something else.

However, in everyday life, there are discrepancies between what parents consider ideal and what actually happens. In other words, setting an example as they wish can be a complicated task for parents.

Developmental paradigm discourse

There's a prevailing discourse among parents that somewhat alleviates parental guilt when they struggle to lead by example. This discourse revolves around the notion that children may face developmental issues due to excessive smartphone usage, issues that adults seem to be shielded from. Without delving into the specifics of health facts and studies, it's noteworthy to observe the prevalence of parental discourse regarding health concerns. Serving as a rhetoric for regulating children's smartphone use, the fear of developmental issues also absolves parents of some guilt when it comes to their own smartphone usage in contrast to their children's. Here are a few examples drawn from the interviews that echo this sentiment: "I try to allocate some screen time for myself as well. You know, it's not easy because, well, we're adults. For him, it's dangerous, for us, it's less so. That really makes me wonder". Another participant remarked:

> And I also explain to them (referring to children), I've studied this after all – the maturity of the frontal lobes that allow you to have a certain control, less addiction precisely, to have a little more control. It's around 25-26 years old that the frontal lobes are really well developed. It's not true that at 12 years old, you have perfect control over the time you spend on your smartphone.

While some parents discuss matters of maturity, judgment, and self-control as a means of averting addiction, others express concerns about developmental issues, particularly in the social realm. One parent articulated this concern:

> There's also this whole human, relational aspect that doesn't develop. So, yes, they develop plenty of other tools, and they're up to date, and they're skilled. But that's what I fear the most. We often talk about it because there will definitely be side effects from using smartphones. Side effects in the sense that... There are repercussions on development because it's new. Maybe it will be minimal, but I'm sure that their relationship with others will be affected. The relationship with others, later in their lives, it's about really dealing with a human being. We deal with our machines. It's completely different, what you develop in building a

relationship with someone through that. Where does it lead to, you know? We're afraid of that. That's what we fear the most.

From these developmental fears, some parental roles outlined above appear to intertwine. Firstly, parents perceive themselves as guardians of their children, driven by the want to ensure their safety. This often translates into a restrictive mediation approach, manifested through measures such as limiting screen time. Secondly, some parents seek to instill in their children an understanding of the rationale behind various rules regarding smartphone usage. This reflects the dynamic of social interaction between parent and child, and underscores the parental role as an educator, not only in terms of proper digital conduct but also regarding the smartphone's potential impact on children's development. For instance, the mother draws on her academic background to elucidate the developmental processes of the frontal lobe. Lastly, these developmental fears serve not only as a regulatory mechanism but also as a means of absolving parents of guilt when their aspirations of leading by example diverge from their actual behaviors.

The parental role of leading by example for smartphone use reveals a dynamic interaction of concerns, strategies, and motivations. Parents grapple with the challenge of regulating their children's smartphone usage while navigating their own habits, often facing inconsistencies, confrontations, and feelings of guilt. While striving to model healthy habits, they are concerned about the developmental impact of smartphone use on their children. This apprehension prompts some parents to adopt restrictive approaches, while others prioritize educating their children about the potential consequences. Despite their efforts, discrepancies between ideal standards and reality persist, reflecting the complexity of this parental role.

In this chapter, my aim has been to elucidate how parents manage their children's smartphone usage within the household. I've done so not only by examining established mediation types from existing literature but also by delving into specific strategies and approaches, highlighting their dynamic interconnections. Furthermore, I've outlined four primary parental objectives that underpin these mediation efforts and elucidated their relationship with various strategies. Through this exploration, I've sought to capture the complex interplay between parental mediation types, concerns, regulatory rhetoric, and parental positioning within this process. Moving forward, the subsequent chapter will explore another dimension of parental mediation: a Google search analysis of parents' queries.

Chapter 6: Google search analysis

Understanding how parents seek information about digital mediation is central to this study, particularly their use of Google as an "epistemological tool" (Rogers 77). The second research question of this study asks: What specific search queries are parents using on Google to seek information on digital mediation? Building on this, I investigated a related question: What do the top 5 Google results reveal about parents' choice of search queries? This inquiry explores the potential relationship between parents' query choices, their Google search practices, and their levels of media literacy. Although the small sample size and the limited scope of the analysis did not produce particularly revealing results, the queries highlight the diversity in parental concerns and interests. They also point to important opportunities for future research, especially in understanding how parents use Google to support digital mediation approaches and how the information they encounter influences their practices.

Exploring these questions, however, proved more challenging than anticipated for several reasons. Initially, I approached the interviews with the bias and expectation that all parents were actively conducting Google searches related to their children's smartphone use. Considering the recent integration of smartphones into family life, I assumed that Google functioned as a primary parenting tool and a key resource for advice, information, or support (Rogers 77). However, this assumption was not borne out, as I received fewer queries from parents than expected.

Among the four interviews I conducted, only two parents confirmed conducting research relating to their children's smartphone use. In both heterosexual couples, the mothers said they had done some research, while the fathers did not. So, only one parent out of two, usually the mother, had engaged in this type of research. In the remaining two interviews, which involved a separated heterosexual couple, both parents initially stated they had not conducted any research. However, the mother later recalled researching "blue light" because she had never heard the term before her son mentioned it and wanted more information about it.

This situation, explained in the methodology chapter, clarifies why there is only one query from the separated mother interview, unlike the few queries from the other two mothers. Initially, I thought the queries were too disjointed; however, this underscores the diversity in the types of research parents conduct. Their searches reflected various situations and needs, demonstrating the wide range of concerns and interests mothers had regarding their children's smartphone use.

After narrowing down the queries, we now proceed to the Google search analysis. This analysis was structured around the three selected queries, which were categorized by publication year and date, title/topic, and source (see Appendix B). The top five results for each query were coded and analyzed to identify content and information patterns across these sources. The findings from this analysis are presented in the following section.

'How to manage safety settings in Snapchat'

Result #1: The webpage predominantly addresses the management of privacy settings on Snapchat, including options related to stories, cameo selfies, friends, and location (Snapchat Support, "How do I change my privacy settings on Snapchat"). It frequently uses terms such as "friend" or "My Friends", highlighting the importance of controlling who can view one's activity and contact the user for maintaining account security. Notably, this page includes information consistent with what one of the interviewees mentioned: "There are even guides, for example on Snapchat, there's a whole parental guide. How the app works, what options you can set for your child". She further explained, "I removed the location tracking on Snapchat so that my son doesn't appear on the map. You know, someone can locate you everywhere even if you're not online. I removed it". This interviewee, a mother from the first interview, provided the keywords that shaped this query. This top result reflects the information she might have encountered, corroborating the relevance of her provided keywords, which I identified in the following result as well.

Result #2: The initial webpage from Snapchat primarily concentrated on managing privacy settings, whereas this result specifically targeted safety concerns, delineating guidelines pertinent to both children and adults, such as 'never share your password with anyone' and 'choose a strong password' (Snapchat Support, "How do I stay safe on Snapchat"). This safety-oriented webpage manifested distinct phrasing, exemplified by sentences like 'customize your location on the map' as opposed to the usage of 'who can see my location' found on the preceding result (Snapchat Support, "How do I change my privacy settings on Snapchat"). Notably, the tone of this second web page adopted a proactive and directive tone, contrasting with the first result's more passive and informative style. Towards the end of the page, Snapchat extended an invitation to readers to engage with their 'Family Center', a tool designed to facilitate parental mediation of children's Snapchat activities (Snapchat Support, "How do I stay

safe on Snapchat"). Moreover, it cataloged additional resources of relevance to both children and parents, including guidance on account safety in case of 'hacking' and adherence to Snapchat community guidelines.

Result #3: This webpage featured a comprehensive 20-page guide on Snapchat privacy settings, created by Internet Matters, an organization dedicated to providing parents and professionals with extensive resources and expert advice on children's internet safety (Internet Matters, "Snapchat privacy settings"). Specifically designed for parents seeking to implement restrictions on their children's accounts, this guide offered a more detailed version of Snapchat's 'how to stay safe on Snapchat' page (result #2). It included step-by-step instructions with screenshots, covering restrictions on chatting, inappropriate content, location sharing, privacy and identity theft, data sharing, and social networking.

Result #4: The fourth result was a concise article titled "3 Tips to Manage Your Snapchat Account" by Internet Sans Crainte, funded by the European Union (Internet Sans Crainte). It briefly outlined three tips for parents to help their children protect their digital citizenship on Snapchat: 1) use a pseudonym and a Bitmoji avatar instead of their real name, 2) only allow friends to contact them, view their stories, and see their location, and 3) hide their phone number.

The article also reminded parents that for minors, the application was automatically set to private mode, meaning only friends could see their stories and contact them, and their location was in ghost mode, ensuring that no one could see their location (Internet Sans Crainte). Interestingly, this reminder highlights a piece of information that the mother of a 13-year-old son in interview #1 appeared unaware of, as she mentioned manually turning off the location settings on her son's phone. If she had to do this manually, it suggests that the settings were not automatically set to private. This discrepancy could imply the possibility that her son indicated an older age on Snapchat, among others. The specific reason for this discrepancy is not as significant as the fact that the mother did not encounter this information during her research but was aware of the 'Snapchat guide'.

Result #5: The fifth result was from Internet Matters and was another guide, but it focused less on safety settings and more on Snapchat's various functionalities ultimately tying back to safety ("Snapchat safety: What parents need to know"). It explained what Snapchat was, how it worked, and detailed features such as "My AI", Snapchat's artificial intelligence tool. The guide covered what data Snapchat collected with "My AI", how to disable data collection, the

"Here for You" mental health support feature, and the "Safety Snapshot", a program aimed at raising media literacy awareness (Internet Matters, "Snapchat safety: What parents need to know"). It also introduced the integrated suite of parental controls called 'Family Center', also mentioned in the above results. While the article indicated the risks associated with using Snapchat, it also highlighted the advantages and provided links to further information tailored to parents' interests.

For this query, the top 5 results are notably consistent, with a predominant focus on 'safety' as the central theme. The first two results come from Snapchat's support pages, both addressing privacy and safety settings. Most of the results either serve as guides or provide tips for managing Snapchat's safety features, emphasizing awareness and parental guidance. These results primarily target parents of first-time Snapchat users, reflecting a cohesive emphasis on safety and privacy. This alignment suggests that the keywords provided by the mother can lead to relevant and consistent information, which she also seemed to find satisfactory when researching on her end.

'Guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers'

Result #1: This article is tailored for parents whose children are beginning to request their first smartphone. It addresses common reasons children desire smartphones, parental concerns, how to prepare children to be responsible digital citizens, selecting the appropriate smartphone and plan, and tips for regulating smartphone use (Johnson). The article is supported by statistics and studies from Media Smarts, Canada's center for digital media literacy, providing context and factual basis for various recommendations (Johnson).

Notably, one key finding from these studies aligns with my interview analysis. The statistic that 93% of teenagers aged 14 to 17 own a smartphone highlights the evolving communication needs of adolescents (Media Smarts 13). This finding supports the interview results, where parents provided smartphones to their children mainly to meet the communication demands associated with starting high school, gaining independence, and participating in activities without parental supervision. This shift in routines was evoked early in the interviews chapter.

In the context of selecting cellular plans for children, another illustrative example from the webpage is as follows: "Regarding plans, strategies vary. 'He will have a data plan when he

can pay for it himself; it's a way to teach him responsibility,' says Geneviève Guilbault, whose son currently relies on Wi-Fi" (Johnson). As outlined in the previous chapter, parents in this study demonstrate careful consideration when selecting cellular plans for their children for several reasons: first, to facilitate socialization in situations where Wi-Fi is unavailable, thereby imposing some degree of usage restriction; second, to manage financial considerations, as cellular data is more expensive; and third, as a strategy to introduce smartphones gradually, initially without cellular plans and with the flexibility to adjust as needed.

Result #2: The second result is an article from La Voix du Nord, a French journal that cites the 'Centre pour l'éducation aux médias et à l'information' (CLEMI) regarding ten golden rules for teaching children responsible media usage (Tesse). The format and wording of these rules resemble commandments, which are authoritative directives, akin to the style often employed in religious or moral instructions. Overall, these directives are structured in a manner that underscores the expectation of good digital behavior. For instance, the rule "You shall obtain permission before sharing someone's photo" emphasizes the significance of consent, while "You shall not trust strangers" heightens awareness of digital safety precautions (Tesse). Through these commandments, CLEMI underscores the pivotal role of education in addressing serious issues such as invasion of privacy, harassment, hacking, consent, and image rights.

Result #3: The third result is from Pratico-Pratiques, a company specializing in producing and distributing content related to decoration, gardening, cooking, and health. Within the psychology section of their website, they present six tips for managing children's smartphone usage. These tips are supported by references, which, when clicked, redirect to Media Smarts' website under the 'parents' section (Gourdeau). Notably, both this result and result #1 cite Media Smarts as a source, despite Media Smarts' own articles not appearing in the top 5 results for this query.

Result #4: The fourth result directed me to the government of Québec's webpage titled "Balanced screen use among young people", aimed at providing recommendations for parents, which "come from recognized Canadian organizations" (Gouvernement du Québec). Furthermore, the page specifies that these recommendations are focused on leisure screen time and are categorized by age groups: under 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 12 years, and 13 to 19 years, despite the query specifically targeting teenagers. The article highlights the potential adverse effects of screen time (across all types of screens) on children's vision, sleep, learning abilities,

social skills, and psychological health, varying with these age categories (Gouvernement du Québec). While it suggests specific limits for screen use, it underscores that these guidelines should always consider the content type, usage context, and individual characteristics of the child, emphasizing the role of parental judgment in mediation. Towards the conclusion, the government offers numerous resources, including PAUSE, a communication campaign and year-round reference site providing information, advice, tools, and resources for parents and professionals, aimed at promoting responsible screen use for children (Pause ton écran, "À propos de pause"). PAUSE is developed by Capsana, with financial backing from the Québec government and private partners, in collaboration with a panel of experts in the field (Pause ton écran, "À propos de pause").

Result #5: This final result is the second one originating from France for this query. Interestingly, this French article also outlines "the golden rules" for responsible smartphone use. However, its focus lies on establishing a family agreement as a framework for smartphone usage. The article suggests including several terms of use in the agreement, such as daily time limits for different periods (weekdays, evenings, weekends, vacations), designated times when smartphones cannot be used, guidelines for civility and online behavior, restrictions on specific digital activities or apps, and scheduling family discussions about these practices (Mon enfant et les écrans). It concludes with what it terms as "the essentials", which are a set of recommended attitudes and habits for parents to adopt during this new phase of family life.

Among these 5 results, we encounter a spectrum of guidelines for smartphone usage, ranging from broad overviews to more detailed recommendations. All are designed for parents to manage their children's smartphone use, in line with the query's focus. Statistics and research are frequently used to support the credibility of these guidelines. Notably, "screen time" emerges as the most frequently discussed topic. Given the general query "guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers", the results and topics closely align with many concerns and interests expressed by interviewees regarding first-time smartphone users. These include the time spent on phones, the content accessed, the selected cellular plans, and the potential conversations and conflicts that may arise.

Result #1: The top result for this query is a sponsored, transactional website called EyeBuyDirect. The webpage begins by defining blue light and explaining the purpose of blue light glasses. It then highlights EyeBuyDirect's various lenses and blue light technology, followed by a selection of 1,746 eyewear options. At the top of the page, it notes that the article was verified by Dr. Matthew Miller, OD, an optometrist based in Tennessee, on May 19, 2022. As an international e-commerce platform, EyeBuyDirect appears to operate in the United States, Canada, France, and Australia.

Result #2 : The second top result is an article featured on the Canadian Association of Optometrists' website, which demystifies blue light and its effects on the human eye and general health. The article explains that blue light is part of the visible spectrum and comes naturally from the sun, but also from artificial sources like screens and LED lights (Canadian Association of Optometrists). It concludes by discussing blue-blocking lenses, emphasizing that the decision to add such a coating to prescription lenses is a personal choice that should be made in consultation with an optometrist, through discussing individual risk factors such as age, duration and intensity of exposure, history of eye conditions, and overall eye health (Canadian Association of Optometrists).

Result #3 : The third result is an article from Newlook's website, which advocates for blue light protective glasses as a solution to mitigate the harmful effects of artificial blue light. The article highlights that, while natural blue light is essential for optimal functioning, artificial blue light disrupts this balance (Newlook). In its concluding sentence, the article encourages readers to explore Newlook's selection of non-prescription blue light protective glasses.

Result #4 : The fourth result is an article from Zeiss, a technology enterprise operating in the optics and optoelectronics industries. The article starts with offering technical information about the spectrum of light, the benefits and dangers of blue light, and finishes by promoting the benefits of blue light-filtering lenses (Zeiss). Like most results so far, the articles are found on glasses and optics' companies' websites, thereby encouraging the purchase of their specific products. In Zeiss's case, it is their DuraVision® BlueProtect treatment.

Result #5 : The final result is particularly noteworthy, as it directs to PAUSE's website, the Québec government-supported campaign aimed at promoting responsible screen use for children and families, as referenced earlier (Pause ton écran, "La lumière des écrans: comment se

protéger"). The article, titled *Screens' Blue Light: How to Protect Yourself*, begins with statistics on screen time among high school and elementary students, highlighting the increasing exposure of children to blue light due to the growing use of various screens. While the article underscores that the effects and risks of artificial blue light on ocular and physical health remain incompletely understood, it emphasizes that blue light disrupts melatonin production, making it harder for individuals of all ages to fall asleep and wake up after evening screen use (Pause ton écran, "La lumière des écrans: comment se protéger"). Teenagers are especially vulnerable due to their delayed circadian rhythms, which already cause them to go to bed and wake up later (Pause ton écran, "La lumière des écrans: comment se protéger"). Despite acknowledging the lack of consensus on the negative effects of artificial blue light, the article offers seven recommendations to reduce exposure, such as following the 20-20-20 rule—taking a 20-second break every 20 minutes to look at something more than 20 feet away—and turning off all screens one hour before bedtime (Pause ton écran, "La lumière des écrans: comment se protéger"). PAUSE encourages implementing these tips to foster beneficial digital habits.

Throughout the results for this last query, all articles discuss both natural and artificial blue light, highlighting their benefits and drawbacks. However, 3 out of 5 of these articles are from eyewear or optics companies, which ultimately steer readers toward commercial purposes. Specifically, Eyebuy Direct, Newlook, and Zeiss present their glasses or lenses as solutions to the 'harmful effects' of artificial blue light. These articles exhibited selective reporting by either omitting references for their claims or citing only those that align with their commercial interests.

The remaining two results, from the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) and PAUSE, offered a more nuanced view on blue light and screen exposure. For instance, the CAO emphasizes that the decision to use blue-blocking lenses should be made in consultation with an optometrist. In contrast, the PAUSE article does not mention blue-blocking lenses as a solution for screen exposure. Instead, it focuses on practical recommendations for reducing screen time and indirectly blue light, particularly for parents and children. Additionally, PAUSE highlights that the effects and risks of artificial blue light on eye and overall health are still not fully understood, but suggests that following their tips can help reduce screen exposure. PAUSE, a communication campaign, and the CAO, the national voice of optometry in Canada, are both not-for-profit initiatives. For this query, there is a distinct contrast between the financial

motivations of businesses promoting blue light-blocking products and the public health-focused perspectives of non-profit organizations like PAUSE and the CAO, which prioritize practical, research-based recommendations over product promotion.

Sponsored results

As the first result for the third query was sponsored, I investigated the nature of sponsored content on Google search results. According to Google's guidelines found under *How Search Works* and *Ranking Results*, Google emphasizes its commitment to "labeling ads responsibly" and asserts that it "never provides special treatment to advertisers in how their search algorithms rank their websites" (Google). Google further claims to prioritize user experience by "only showing ads that are helpful to people" and states that it only profits when users find the ads relevant enough to click on (Google). In other words, the algorithms are allegedly designed to ensure that ads are relevant to users' needs.

However, questions arise regarding how the relevance of an ad can be assessed if users have not yet clicked on it and how Google ensures the helpfulness of its ads. Although Google asserts that its ads are designed to enhance user experience, the top result in this case—an e-commerce platform for blue light-blocking glasses—can only partially address the interviewee's question about blue light. This suggests a mismatch between user intent, query choice, and ad relevance. Such discrepancies raise concerns about whether Google's algorithms consistently reflect user intent accurately and whether more specific queries, such as "what is blue light" or "blue light glasses" would yield more homogeneous and relevant results.

Motivations for querying Google

A pattern emerged from the interviews, showing that mothers are often prompted to query Google in response to specific concerns or situations that they heard of or arose in the family unit. As these situations unfold in the household, two primary motivations were put forward for querying Google: 1) seeking information, and 2) validating opinions or rules, which involves checking whether the standards parents set align with those recommended by articles, including specialists' opinions.

Conclusion

      This search analysis was an exploratory experiment aimed at querying Google based on the keywords expressed during the interviews to observe the kinds of results that surfaced. Although the objective was not to precisely replicate the results the interviewees encountered, I unexpectedly found information in the articles and web pages that echoed what some mothers had mentioned when searching online. For example, the relevant information found on Snapchat's parental guide, which prompted a mother to remove the location tracking on Snapchat so that her son doesn't appear on the map. Indeed, the first two results were permeated with terminology and topics brought up during the interviews, such as parents' key concerns and the familial contexts they currently navigate. However, the final query revealed a blend of evidence-based information on blue light and product promotion.

      While this review was not particularly revealing in terms of query results, it lays important groundwork for future research at the intersection of platform studies and communication studies, particularly with a larger sample. One promising avenue for further study is identifying the types of information parents most frequently seek—a question this research began to explore. By interviewing parents about their Google search queries and the role online research plays in their parenting, this study initiated an exploration of parental search behaviors. However, the small sample size limited the ability to identify consistent patterns across parents' queries. Digital methods in social research could also extend this work by analyzing which terms parents search most often, as well as when and where these searches occur, offering valuable insights into parental anxieties and interests (Rogers 77). In medium research, examining search query results could also provide a foundation for investigating Google's policies, algorithmic structures, and the relevance of its results to parental queries. Moreover, future research could evaluate the influence—or perceived influence—of Google-sourced information on parental mediation. This study underscores that parents, particularly mothers, are not neutral in their approach to online research, highlighting the importance of examining how search results inform and shape their mediation strategies. Finally, ethnographic research could further explore parental information retrieval practices, intersecting with media literacy frameworks to deepen our understanding of these processes.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Navigating my teenage years in Québec in the early 2010s was like riding the wave of digital innovation. It was a time when computers, internet access, and mobile phones were becoming the norm in most households in Québec. As a Millennial, I belonged to one of the first generations of teenagers growing up alongside the evolution of these emerging technologies. The rapid pace of this technological shift led to different negotiations within the familial unit compared to what I experienced, as families today face new challenges brought on by this digital landscape. In 2024, younger generations are often referred to as 'digital natives' (Prensky), implying an inherent literacy in technology due to their constant immersion in it. However, as this thesis has shown, such categorizations oversimplify the dynamics at play. While younger generations may exhibit comfort with technology, the concept of digital nativeness often overlooks the significant role parents play in mediating and shaping digital habits. This thesis explored smartphone mediation with a blend of curiosity and apprehension about the intersection of future motherhood and the digital world.

Writing this final chapter a year after starting the introduction of this thesis, I am struck by how much has changed and has not changed since my youth. In that time, significant shifts have occurred regarding children, digital technology, and its regulation by various governing bodies. These topics are often addressed in the media and political discourse as a single, monolithic entity, a broad approach that fails to account for the complexity and nuance inherent in each of these themes (Jolicoeur). In fact, the regulation of 'screens and social media' have nearly become an electoral issue (Jolicoeur). Following a motion passed by the National Assembly on June 6, 2024, a special commission was formed to investigate the effects of screens and social media on young people's health and development (Assemblée Nationale du Québec). This commission is focused on a range of topics, including screen time limits, digital regulation measures—particularly in schools and online—access to educational technology, and social media use. During public hearings and consultations held in the fall, specialists and stakeholder groups presented their views on the issue. While some professionals and government representatives advocate for setting a digital age threshold at 16 as a solution, others argue that prioritizing media education would be more effective (Plante). I align with those who believe that media literacy education should be integrated into school curricula for children and made accessible to parents as well.

Over the past year, the urgency of this topic has only intensified, drawing in a growing number of stakeholders. Given its multifaceted nature, I chose to focus specifically on parents' perspectives and their approaches to mediating smartphone use within their households. My thesis responds to the concerns I had as I started this project, some of which I only fully understood through this process. As I conclude, I recognize that while topics within "children and digital technology" may intersect, they defy simple solutions. Technology will undoubtedly continue to evolve, and a deterministic approach will not yield lasting solutions. Similarly, enacting a digital age threshold will not fully protect children, pre-teens, or teenagers from the so-called impacts of screen exposure.

Through the interviews, I began to appreciate the complexity of parental mediation styles, parental concerns, regulatory narratives, and how parents position themselves within the broader process of smartphone domestication. To fully understand parents' perspectives, I engaged with three distinct bodies of literature, each providing a theoretical and historical basis that helped shape my research. In concluding this thesis, I will now explore how these three literatures collectively informed my approach and contributed to addressing my core research questions.

Domestication of Media and Technology

I have realized that my research was conducted at a pivotal time for the interviewees: a period when their children had recently received smartphones. This transitional phase offered a unique perspective for exploring family dynamics and parental strategies in regulating smartphone use, as household interactions and power dynamics shaped how this new technology was integrated, negotiated, and controlled. As the interviews revealed, most parents sought a "balanced" approach to smartphone regulation, though discrepancies often surfaced between their ideals and actual practices, influenced by the realities of everyday life.

The introduction of smartphones into family life has compelled parents to confront new challenges and reflect on their own digital habits. While parents recognize the importance of modeling responsible smartphone use, many struggle to maintain this standard, often leading to tension within the family. Recent findings from the CIEL, reported in Le Journal de Québec, underscore the complex dynamics of smartphone use within families (Lajoie). Children aged 9 to 17 expressed frustrations with their parents' screen time, noting how it affected family interactions. In this study, younger children stated, "tell my parents to put down their phone,"

while older ones observed, "My parents say they're listening to me, but they pull out their cell phone while I'm talking" (Lajoie). These frustrations highlight the ways parental smartphone habits can disrupt communication and connection within the family. At the same time, children often mimic their parents' behaviors, risking adopting similar digital practices over time (Lajoie).

These observations illustrate not only the domestication of children's smartphones but also a process of re-domestication, where the role of parents' smartphones is reassessed to align with familial goals, such as family cohesion and connectedness, or leads to tensions within the familial unit. Peil and Röser (2023) define re-domestication as "the re-inscription of a medium into everyday domestic life, which is linked to a transformation of established domestic communication cultures" ("Conceptualizing Re-Domestication" 45). Parents must therefore navigate the re-domestication of their own smartphone use while simultaneously mediating their children's devices, engaging in a constant renegotiation and reshaping of media integration within their everyday home lives.

Parental mediation

Building on this, parental mediation emerges as a key mechanism through which the domestication of media unfolds in practice, as it involves the strategies parents use to integrate or restrict smartphones into family routines, establish boundaries, and negotiate rules that align with their values and goals. The concept of 'parental mediation' refers to how parents manage their children's relationship with media (Livingstone and Helsper, "Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use" 581). Traditionally, this has also been discussed in the context of potential risks associated with media exposure (Clark, "A multi-grounded theory of parental mediation" 321). Parental mediation frameworks have evolved over time, reflecting changes in media, with more recent types focusing on "active safety", "monitoring," and "technical mediation" within the broader internet landscape. For example, "technical mediation" involves tools like parental control software (Livingstone et al., "Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Children Online" 84). However, my study reveals a notable absence of technical mediation and limited monitoring among parents. A 2022 study by Media Smarts found that 60% of Canadian parents reported not monitoring their children online, choosing instead to establish household rules collaboratively (43). Furthermore, nine out of ten young people indicated that their parents trust them to make responsible online decisions (43). Since 2013, Media Smarts has consistently

observed an inverse relationship between adult surveillance and youth trust, where increased surveillance correlates with decreased trust and a reduced likelihood of young people seeking parental help with online issues (43).

This finding aligns with the responses from interviewees in my study. All parents emphasized the importance of fostering autonomy, independence, and trust, balancing monitoring with trust, boundary-setting with autonomy, and active involvement with respecting privacy. This approach may partly explain parents' hesitation toward technical mediation, alongside variations in parents' media literacy levels.

Digital media literacy

Over the past two decades, digital media literacy frameworks have evolved to address the rise of interactive, personalized media such as social media apps, smartphones, and tablets. This evolution marks a shift from focusing on passive media consumption to addressing active engagement and the complex array of media influences today's users encounter. Despite ongoing debates surrounding the definitions of "media" and "literacy", as well as the broader aims of media literacy, I adopted the following definition to guide my research: "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide 1993; Christ and Potter 1998 qtd. in Livingstone, "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies" 5).

Parental attitudes toward using Google as a research tool provided valuable insights into the role of digital media literacy in modern parenting, particularly regarding accessing, evaluating, and interpreting information in the highly politicized landscape of search engines. Many parents demonstrated media literacy competencies in their efforts to assess credibility, filter content, and align external information with family values. Gender disparities were also notable in the interviews: all mothers reported conducting research, while none of the fathers mentioned doing so. This trend may reflect the greater emotional labor often attributed to mothers, potentially explaining their heightened concern over issues surrounding their children's media consumption (Jeffery*, Media Technologies of the Family: Parental Anxieties, Practices and Knowledges in the Digital Age* 116). While some fathers expressed willingness to research if challenges arose, they often preferred self-reflection over seeking external guidance.

For some parents, skepticism about the reliability of information on Google acted as a deterrent, as they anticipated the time required to verify online results. Although such skepticism aligns with media literacy principles like critical thinking and source evaluation, it might also indicate a lack of confidence or skill in applying these competencies consistently. My own Google search analysis showed that the results were not especially inaccurate, with some helpful, and some leading to commercially driven content rather than substantive information. Additionally, many parents valued advice from social networks and community discussions over online sources, viewing them as more reliable. By contrast, some parents used Google selectively, validating pre-existing beliefs and favoring content that aligned with their opinions while dismissing opposing viewpoints. For instance, one mother consulted Google to consider pros and cons of the video game Fortnite, taking external perspectives into account but ultimately adhering to her own values and beliefs. This dynamic highlights the intersection of media literacy and parents' integration of information, where they both utilize and critically assess the resources available to them, all while negotiating their role in shaping their children's digital experiences.

This research has provided valuable insights into how francophone parents in Québec navigate and regulate their children's smartphone use, addressing a critical gap in the underexplored Québécois and francophone contexts. Although cultural factors did not emerge as a prominent theme in the data, their absence suggests a need for further investigation into the role of culture in shaping parental mediation practices. Despite the limitations of a small and homogenous sample, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of parental mediation and underscores the growing importance of digital media literacy in contemporary parenting. Media education emerges as a promising avenue for supporting parents and children alike. It should not only address the challenges posed by smartphones and emerging technologies but also empower parents to feel confident and capable of making decisions aligned with their unique needs, values, and family communication styles. Crucially, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; media literacy must enable families to navigate this phase of integrating technology into the household in ways that work best for them. Looking ahead, integrating media literacy into educational curricula and making it accessible to parents represents a critical step toward achieving this goal.

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Appendix A: Table of interviews

Interviews	Parental concerns	Strategies	Discussed in terms of	Logic of regulation
Interview #1	Future of child, safety, and family connectedness	Restrictive mediation (no plan, he can only use when he has wifi - time limits, usually 1 hour when coming back from school - when child has negative attitude, the consequence is mostly less screen time) Social interaction/participatory learning (frequent discussions about themes around their child's smartphone use : content creators influence - reflecting on screen time to see if he thinks it is reasonable - how algorithms work/targeted content) Active safety (conversations about digital safety strategies e.g. not accepting someone who isn't your	Fear of developmental issues (social skills - emotion management) Raising awareness on 'stranger danger', hypersexualization Family goals	"We need to assist him in managing his behavior and emotions for good cohabitation." "It's a respect thing." "We need to do our job of discipline and follow-up." "The kids understand that we want a family atmosphere where everyone gets along well."

		friend on social platforms) Technical mediation (setting-up his account so it is more private: private account on TikTok - turning off location on 'Snap map') Monitoring (doing regular check-ups when his smartphone is charging for the night) Coviewing/ participatory learning (encouraging content creation for his creativity and showing interest in what he creates)		
Interview #2	Future of child and time together	Restrictive mediation (Monday through thursday almost no smartphone allowed, no more than 20 consecutive minutes - phone charger must stay in common area) Social interaction (asking questions and having conversations	Shared custody (he resides with him half of the time, allowing for a more consistent approach) Having a balanced life, routine, and hobbies outside of smartphone use	"I want to be able to trust my kid, responsibilize him, and give him autonomy." "We don't want to demonize the machine"

		about his smartphone activities) Active safety (conversations about digital safety strategies e.g. not accepting someone who isn't your friend on social platforms) Other (wanting to be friends with his son on Snapchat at first, but then realizing it isn't something he still wants to do)		"It's my job to educate him on digital behavior." "Provide structure is a parent's role" "Some media are better than others"
Interview #3	Family communication, connectedness and social relations	Restrictive mediation (paying for a small plan with almost no data - no smartphone in the bedroom at night and at the dinner table - refusing the downloading of certain apps) Calls and texts to keep in touch (know when they need a lift, what are their plans, sending and receiving cute messages	Changing reality and routine - growing independence Civility, politeness, and good manners kids' brains not fully developed to cope with a lot of screen time/content	"It's a communication tool that is given to you, not an item for solo zombie activities" "We want them to make smart use of it" "Socializing in the real world

		from their kid during the day etc.)		needs to remain a priority"
Interview #4	Future of child	Restrictive mediation (no smartphone in the bedroom at night and at the dinner table - refusing the downloading of certain apps) Social interaction (educating on digital behavior) Coviewing/participatory learning (mentioning interest in an app and kid showing their parent how an app for editing videos work)	Promoting autonomy and a balanced life Checking in when not together Staying true to her values	"My son is a good kid so I trust him with his smartphone" "If the regulation aligns with my values and views of parenting, I will do it no matter what other people think"

Appendix B: Table of queries

Queries	Publication year and date	Publication title	Publication source
'How to manage safety settings in Snapchat'	1. N/A 2. N/A 3. N/A 4. N/A 5. Sept.13th, 2022	1. How do I change my privacy settings on Snapchat? 2. How do I stay safe on Snapchat? 3. Snapchat privacy settings 4. 3 tips for setting up your Snapchat account 5. Snapchat safety: What parents need to know	1.Snapchat Support https://help.snapchat.com/hc/fr-fr/articles/7012343074580-Comment-modifier-mes-param%C3%A8tres-de-confidentialit%C3%A9-sur-Snapchat 2.Snapchat Support https://help.snapchat.com/hc/fr-fr/articles/7012304746644-Comment-rester-en-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9-sur-Snapchat 3.Internet Matters https://www.internetmatters.org/fr/parental-controls/social-media/snapchat/ 4. Internet sans crainte https://www.internetsanscrainte.fr/dossiers/reseaux-sociaux/conseils/conseils-pour-parametrer-son-compte-snapchat 5. Internet Matters https://www.internetmatters.org/fr/hub/guidance/snapchat-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/
'Guidelines for cellphone usage among teenagers'	1. July 4th, 2023 2. Sept. 9th, 2019 3.N/A 4. Nov. 13th, 2023	1. How to guide your teen and their cellphone - three reasons given for having a cellphone	1.Protégez-vous https://www.protegez-vous.ca/technologie/cellulaire-jeune 2. La voix du nord https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/635065/article/2019-09-09/ados-et-mobiles-les-10-commandements

	5. Jan. 3rd, 2022	2. Teens and cellphones: a toxic relationship? 3. Teens, texting, and cellphones: a user guide 4. Balanced screen use for children and teens 5. The golden rules for proper phone usage	3.Pratico-Pratiques https://www.pratico-pratiques.com/trucs/psycho/ados-textos-et-cellulaire-mode-demploi/ 4.Gouvernement du Québec https://www.quebec.ca/sante/conseils-et-prevention/saines-habitudes-de-vie/utilisation-saine-des-ecrans-chez-les-jeunes 5.Mon enfant et les écrans https://www.mon-enfant-et-les-ecrans.fr/les-regles-dor-du-bon-usage-de-son-telephone/
'Blue light'	1.May 19th, 2022 2.May 11th, 2023 3.July 24th, 2023 4.Oct.16th, 2022 5.July 25th, 2023	1. Blue Light Glasses & Computer Glasses 2. Blue Light: is there a risk of harm? 3. Everything you need to know about blue light 4. Blue light: the Good and the Bad 5. Blue light from screens: how to protect yourself?	1. Eye buy direct https://www.eyebuydirect.ca/fr/verres/anti-lumiere-bleue?channel=cpc&source=google&matchtype=&kw=&adid=483469300947&addisttype=g&utm_term=&utm_source=google&utm_medium=paidsearch&utm_campaign=4.CA-EBD-FR-NB-NA-AllProducts-NA-NA-NA-Ecom-NA&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw0_WyBhDMARIsAL1Vz8tDUd_IdSEKnJrl_-TRhmF-WmVpd4-awLzxotR6WVr8LlNZ5XWICq8aAiMCEALw_wcB 2. Canadian association of optometrists https://opto.ca/fr/bibliotheque-sante-

			oculovisuelle/la-lumiere-bleue-est-elle-nocive
			3. Newlook
			https://www.newlook.ca/fr/blogs/parlons-vision/tout-ce-quil-faut-savoir-sur-la-lumiere-bleue
			4. Zeiss https://www.zeiss.ca/vision-care/fr/sante-oculaire-et-soin-des-yeux/comprendre-la-vision/lumiere-bleue-avantages-et-inconvenients.html
			5. Pause ton écran
			https://pausetonecran.com/la-lumiere-bleue-des-ecrans-comment-se-proteger/