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### Issue Proposal: Too Much Screen Time?

**Introduction:** What is screen time? Screen time means the time that people spend on their internet-connected devices, like computers, laptops, tablets, and phones. Opponents say that too much screen time cuts us off from real-life interactions with people and places and can even hurt us psychologically and physically. In contrast, supporters say that we don't have to stress about too much screen time since it connects us to other people and faraway places and we can prevent any possible problems from "too much" screen time. I say that before we pick a side, we should explore both the pros and cons of "too much" screen time. Since in modern society it's nearly impossible to avoid screen time in our lives, then knowing about these different sides will help us make informed choices for how we spend our screen time. That's why I propose "too much screen time" for my ENGL 1302 research topic.

**Overview:** Here's what I currently know about "too much screen time." Since I'm a 1970-s born GenXer, I've grown up with screens, whether that be TVs, computers, laptops, video game consoles, cellphones, or tablets. My dad loved technology, so as soon as he could afford these tech purchases, he did and then shared his love of tech with his kids. (In fact, my earliest memory of a computer was when he bought a \$2,000 Apple IIe desktop computer in 1984 and then ordered twelve-year old me to figure out how to operate it.) As a result, I grew up in a household with a small TV in every bedroom and a huge TV in the living room, at least two gaming consoles (Atari and Nintendo at first, and then Xbox later), and desktop PCs. My own

parents didn't limit screen time for me and my siblings because they didn't limit it for themselves. If we were at home in front of our screens, then everyone knew where everyone was, and we could get our entertainment without having to leave the house.

Of course, now we can take our screens with us, wherever we are (hello, smart phones and tablets) and – unlike old school TV stations – the flow of content never turns off because the Internet as whole never turns off. But I grew up thinking that was a good thing, so when I had my own kid (a 2000's born GenZer), I didn't think to limit screen time with my son, just like my parents did with me. (For instance, I'd be a hypocrite saying not to look at his phone when we eat dinner, as I've glanced at my phone sometimes.) As a result, I only realized that some saw screen time as a serious problem when pediatricians and teachers warned us parents that too much screen time could harm kids' physical and mental health. Honestly, I can see that even in myself, when I sometimes spend hours in front of a screen, not moving (and perhaps not sleeping when I should be sleeping), passively consuming social media content. But I also have that older mindset that I grew up with, that having access to that content, as well as connections with friends and family members several miles and even several time zones away, is worth the problems of “too much screen time.” So, my background shows I'm very familiar with and pros and cons of screen time.

**Research Plan:** Despite my own knowledge of and experience with “too much screen time”, I don't have the answers for specific questions. For instance, when specifically did “too much screen time” as a publicly discussed problem begin? When does screen time become “too much” and how can we tell? Is screen time a spectrum – meaning between 100% always-on screen time and 0% never-on screen time – and is there a “just right” spot of screen time, and how can we tell? And is it the quantity of screen time that's the issue or is it the quality of screen

time? I don't have specific answers to these questions, but I speculate that many folks who chose extreme "no screen time" do so because of negative effects that maybe could've been prevented. So maybe the "too much screen time" issue really is about quality (what we see) and not simply quantity (how much we see). So, my possible sources to find those answers (and answers to questions that may come up in my research) would be from experts, witnesses, and participants from academic and industry journals, current news sources, and reputable content creators.

**People:** For my audience, they would be opponents of screen time, supporters, and those who are in the middle. Specifically, I am trying to reach those who have no problem accessing everything on their screens, wherever they are and whenever they want. Having the freedom to consider or critique screen time is a luxury, as those who are still struggling economically and can't afford smart devices or access the Internet would think this issue as not relevant to them. So, I imagine that proponents (my "allies") would be those already feeling the benefits that good-quality screen time gives them, and opponents would be those who have felt the negative effects of "too much" poor-quality screen time content and online interactions. Therefore, the ages of both allies and opponents would be teens and adults.

**Conclusion:** As mentioned earlier, in modern society it's nearly impossible to avoid screen time in our lives. So, the question of when screen time becomes "too much" is a valid concern. However, how to answer that question is worth my time to research and explore for ENGL 1302, and I recommend to my audience to research for that answer before deciding what makes the most sense in their situation.