

# OUT OF TOUCH, OUT OF TIME: TENSIONS AROUND DEVICE TIME LIMITS IN THE FAMILY

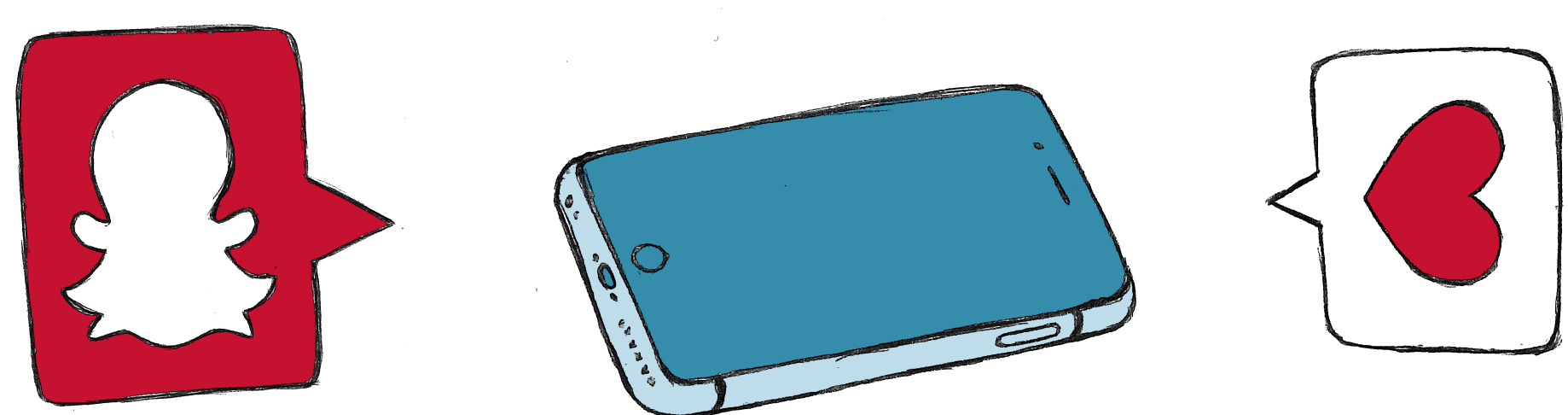
Abigail Marsh, Sarah K. Pearman, Lorrie Faith Cranor, Julie S. Downs

Carnegie Mellon University

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Questions

- How do families enforce rules about their child's phone use?
- How does using a parental control software or a behavior contract impact family time limits?
- How can parenting software balance enforcement and flexibility?



## METHODOLOGY

### Interviews

Two-hour interviews with 31 parent-child pairs

### Recruiting

Social media, community mailing lists, referrals and snowball sampling

| #    | Teen Demographics | #    | Parent Demographics |
|------|-------------------|------|---------------------|
| 16   | Female            | 27   | Female              |
| 28   | Apple iPhone      | 27   | White               |
| 13.6 | Mean Age          | 46.3 | Mean Age            |

## RESULTS

### Screen Time Concerns Families

**C15, 15 y.o. girl:** "Oh god... oh dear... It's a long time, I hate to admit it, but I'm pretty much glued to my phone."

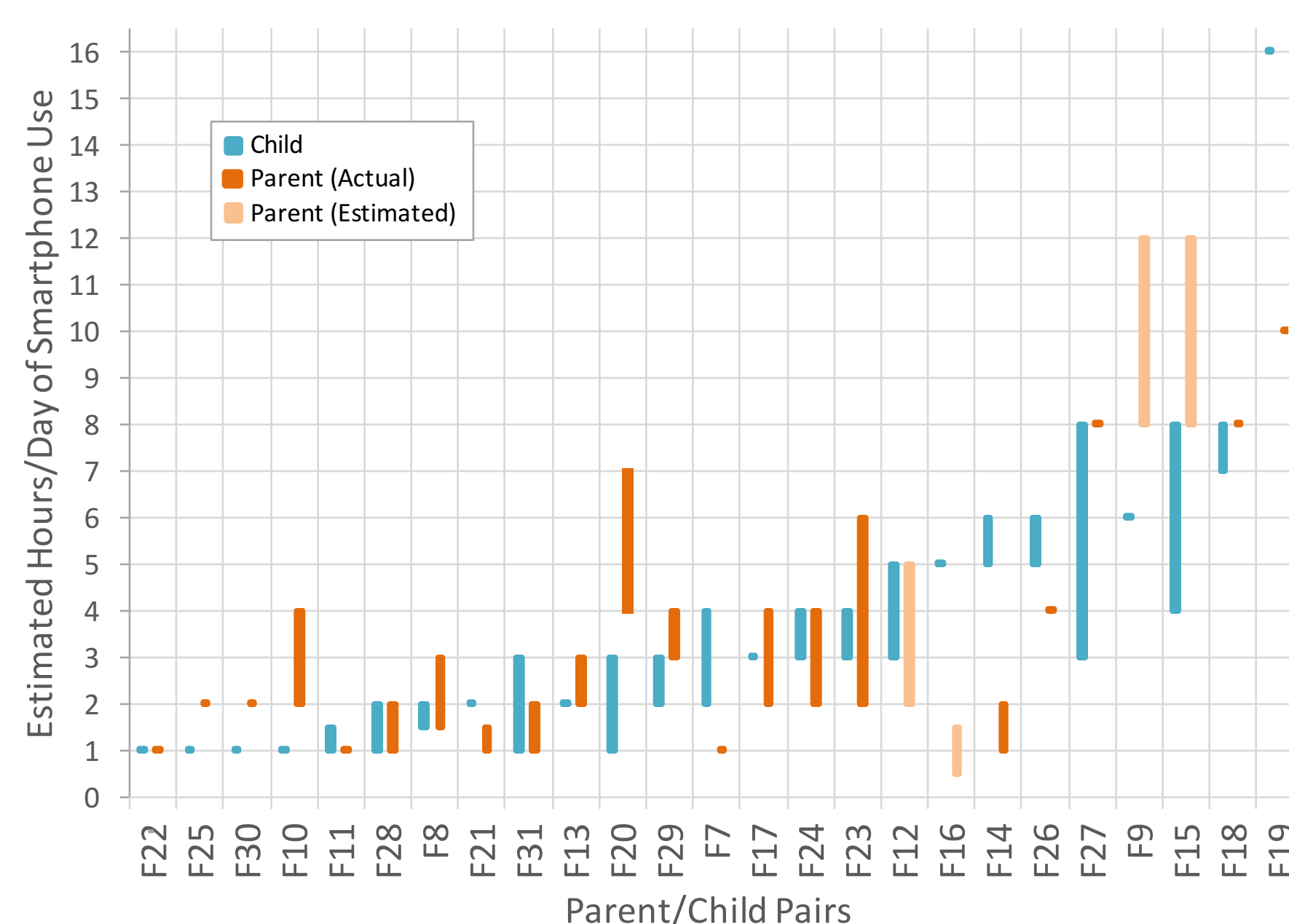


Chart shows participants' estimates of child's hours of phone use per day

### Enforcement of rules matters

Parental control software perceived as inflexible by children

**C27, 14 y.o. girl:** "Where's your limits? Tell me where your limit is. I know I'm a kid, but it doesn't make a difference. I am a person too."

Behavior contracts seen as hard to enforce by parents

**P13, mother of 13 y.o. boy:** "I'm not tracking your time. You have got to be responsible for it."

## CONCLUSION

### Recommendations for Parenting Tools

Be mindful of framing

- Offer weekend/weekday settings or individual days of the week

Avoid relying on human judgment for specific time limits

- Parent or child estimates of [X] hours of screen time prone to inaccuracy, unfairness

Build flexibility into automated enforcement of time limits

- Enable child user to request more time from parent, and parent to quickly allow the request
- Consider automatic short time extensions or pre-emptive warnings to prevent device shutdown mid-action



CyLab Usable Privacy & Security Laboratory