

## **Development of media uses in early childhood: A longitudinal study of Jonathan from six months of age to two years.**

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Dramatic changes have taken place in early childhood media use over the past few years as infants and toddlers not only watch television but also use touchscreen interactive media as an increasingly significant part of their entertainment, information, education and play worlds. At present, most studies on this topic are based on parental reports rather than field-gathered evidence and are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. As a result, we still lack a thorough understanding of media use during this critical period of child development.

The present study seeks to examine the shaping of media use in early childhood, focusing on the case of a young boy (whom we call Jonathan) from infancy until age two. The study was conducted in Israel between June 2015 and December 2016 and was based on a combination of ethnographic methods, including observations in the family home, interviews with parents and instant messaging with the boy's mother. The family chosen for the study can be defined as highly technology-oriented with abundant screen media at home, including several laptops, an Xbox, tablets and smartphones.

The study reveals a contradiction between parental concerns regarding negative effects of media and the child's high media exposure even during the first months of his life. The child's massive exposure to media is enabled primarily by unintentional parental practices: From infancy, the child responds to television in the background. He is also exposed to his mother's smartphone, as she uses it while taking care of him. Intentional media use begins at age six months, mostly resulting from the mother's instrumental needs: Screens serve as convenient and readily available babysitters, as a daily schedule regulator, and a calming device. As a result, by the age of 14 months, Jonathan is already an experienced media user with his own recliner and remote control, who prefers watching YouTube videos to playing with toys. The study's unique value is thus reflected in its thorough and long-term examination of a formative process of shaping media preferences and habits of a very young child in his familial environment, as well as the parental practices affecting this process.