

METHODOLOGIES TO SUPPORT  
RESEARCH INTO 'DIGITAL FAMILIES'

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ETHICS OF  
RESEARCH & ETHICS  
OF A DIGITAL FAMILY?

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# DIGITAL FAMILIES?

Family life as mediated through and by the digital

Family life as represented through the digital

The ethics of representation and research?

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# SHIFTS IN ONLINE IDENTITY

Identity as:

Real name and persistent (van Dijck 2013)

Replicable, searchable, owned (boyd 2010)

Context collapsed (Marwick & boyd 2011)

Identity controlled, curated and managed

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## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

“Surveillance is the business model of the internet. Everyone is under constant surveillance by many companies, ranging from social networks like Facebook to cellphone providers. This data is collected, compiled, analyzed, and used to try and sell us stuff. Personalized advertising is how these companies make money, and is why so much of the internet is free to users. We’re the product not the customer” (Schnieder 2017)

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# PARENTHOOD AS NORMALISED INTIMATE SURVEILLANCE

“The purposeful and routinely well-intentioned surveillance of young people by parents, guardians, friends, and so forth. The surveyed have little or no agency to resist. On one level, intimate surveillance points to the limits of most surveillance models, in that they are incomplete in trying to address subjects who have no agency or awareness of the means of resistance (for obvious reasons).  
(Leaver, 2015)

# Instagram as data

“ultrasound” on Instagram, March-May 2014.

	Images	Videos	Overall Media
March	3468	151	3619
April	3847	128	3975
May	3575	151	3726
3-Month Totals:	10890	430	11320

Leaver, T. and Highfield, T., 2016. Visualising the ends of identity: Pre-birth and post-death on Instagram. *Information, Communication & Society*, pp.1-16.

# INSTAGRAM AS INTIMATE SURVEILLANCE

Table 2. #ultrasound tagged images on Instagram, 10-11 March 2014

Total number of Instagram media items	295
Items deleted or made private within a fortnight	19
Sonograms	221
Sonogram without personally identifiable metadata	145 (66% of sonograms)
<b>Sonograms with personally identifiable metadata</b>	<b>76 (34% of sonograms)</b>
Collages / Professional Photos	45
Social experience of sonogram	22
Selfie	14
Historical sonogram	4
Sonogram humour	4
Other medical ultrasound (not foetal sonogram)	22
Advertising	4
Irrelevant	7

# DIGITAL REPRESENTATIONS OF FAMILY



**When exploiting kids for cash goes wrong on YouTube: the lessons of DaddyOfFive**

May 2, 2017 3.40am BST

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# CHILDREN REPRESENTED IN ONLINE MEDIA

Over 760,000 subscribers

Estimated income -US\$200,000-  
350,000 each year from youtube  
advertising revenue.

Extreme example of a popular genre

Sharenting – as community/ as  
problematic

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# NORMALISATION AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Pregnancy and infancy increasingly datafied and monitored

Digital parenting normalised as appropriate level of care (unplugged parenting as irresponsible)

Intimate surveillance enabling detailed profiling of children

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# IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH?

The digital as - *embedded, embodied  
and everyday* (Hine 2015)

Multi sited, multi modal research