

Parental guidance relinquished to kids regarding digital media

April 26 2017, by Jared Wadley

Parents can toss out the owner's manual for that new smartphone or tablet—they can get all the digital assistance they need from their teens.

According to a new study, more children are guiding their [parents](#) on how to use digital [media](#), especially newer media forms such as smartphones, tablets and apps.

But the assistance is not without possible conflict. Many parents may feel a loss in authority in the traditional power structure because their children are the technology experts, said Jan Van den Bulck, professor of communication studies at the University of Michigan.

Researchers wanted to document to what extent children are perceived to be active agents in their parents' digital media guidance.

The sample included 187 parent-child groups in Belgium, where the adolescents were between 12 and 19 years old, while the parents had an age range between 33 and 57 years old. Both parents and children were asked how often they taught the other about media, technologies and applications, including [digital media](#) and internet uses.

They also disclosed if any conflicts occurred with the different media uses. Only 19 percent of parents and 23 percent of children reported that there were never any media conflicts in their family.

Overall, existing conflicts in the family were strong predictors of media

conflicts, the study showed. In addition, the child's age was also a predictor of conflicts based on the parent's report.

"This indicates that the younger the [children](#), the more media conflicts there were," said Sara Nelissen, a researcher at the University of Leuven in Belgium and the study's lead author.

The findings appear in the journal *Information, Communication & Society*.

More information: Sara Nelissen et al. When digital natives instruct digital immigrants: active guidance of parental media use by children and conflict in the family, *Information, Communication & Society* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2017.1281993](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1281993)

Provided by University of Michigan

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