Exploring the Role of Social Media Platforms on Family Rituals

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Synopsis of Project

This past semester I assisted Dr. Linda Tuncay Zayer with this research project. This project is not complete yet and a journal article is still in the works. I assisted with this project by conducting a literature review of the scholarship on the intersection of rituals and social media, with a focus on family rituals. I also collected data from Pinterest Trends. This poster highlights what I’ve done for this project. Current research examining data from 14 in-depth interviews conducted with Pinterest users (ages 21 to 45). Initial findings suggest that social platforms, like Pinterest, facilitate the performance of personal, group, family and community goals. These initial findings thereby created room for greater exploration of family rituals.

With the emergence of new media and digital technology, scholars have pointed to a gap in our understanding of the intersection of rituals in this new digitized landscape (Belk 2013). Consequently, we expected there to be a need to further understand how family rituals intersect with digital spaces, such as social media. The purpose of this research project was to bridge this gap and explore how family rituals are performed within and shaped by digital platforms and spaces, using Pinterest as the platform of study.

Literature Review of Scholarship

A literature review of 28 articles was conducted. Drenten and Zayer (2018) find Pinterest as a form of digital virtual consumption that aids consumers during identity transitions. A handful of studies sought to understand how families use digital technologies and platforms to remain connected while being spatially separated (Cabalquinto 2018; Marino 2019; Clayton et al. 2018). Other scholars have written about how digital technology and media affect family time and family rituals (Chitakunye & Takhar 2014; Costa 2013). This literature review confirmed that there is room to further research how digital technology and media facilitate and shape family rituals.

Data Collection

I collected data from Pinterest Trends, which is a new tool that shows the top search terms in the US within the past 12 months, as well as when the top search terms peak.

I went to Pinterest trends and first typed in “family” into the search bar. Then I took a screenshot of the first 20 results (both of the results page and individual post). Then I clicked through each related term that appeared from the initial “family” search result. These related search terms appeared below the search bar (see the first image as an example).

There were at least 27 related search terms, which included some of the following: Big Family; Birthday Party; Black Family; Family Activities; Family art; and Family dinner. I repeated the process of screenshotting the results and results page for 27 related search terms.

Additionally, I searched for each related term on the Pinterest Trends search bar. Only a few related search terms yielded results. For search terms that did have results on the Pinterest Trends, I took a screenshot of the graph for those search terms (see figure on the right as an example). The related terms that yielded results include “family, dinner ideas,” “family room ideas,” and “family pictures.”

Conclusion

The project thus far has found an intimate connection between digital platforms and family rituals. The next steps are to build on our current data to examine how digital rituals have intensified in times of disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

References:

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