



ECAY 6004

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Assessment 2

Identify 2 images which represent families in the 21st century. Then compare and contrast these images to explore, in depth, how social media can influence current representations of family within society.



1 - Polish Christmas Eve

Kasprzyk-Chevriaux, M. (2020) The 12 Dishes of Polish Christmas. [online] Culture.pl. Available at: <https://culture.pl/en/article/the-12-dishes-of-polish-christmas>.

As the Rose-Greenland (2016) suggests, colour is a critical component of social life. While people have different colour tastes, systematic patterns of colour preference within and between genders and cultures (Taylor and Franklin, 2012). Everywhere we look and everything we come into contact with in daily life seems to have colour, as Elliot *et al.* (2015) declare

This picture shows an old-school Polish family with multiple generations gathered around a dining table on Christmas Eve. Deeply ingrained customs, strong family ties, and the value of extended family relationships are all emphasised. The picture depicts grandparents, parents, and kids having animated discussions, eating Polish Christmas Eve food prepared at home, and participating in customs (Magdalena Kasprzyk-Chevriaux, 2022). For Polish families, Wigilia, or Christmas Eve supper, is the most significant meal of the season (Osewska and Stala, 2021). The quantity of dishes that should be served at a dinner is determined by tradition. Depending on the number of apostles or months in the year, it can be nine or twelve. Beetroot soup, which symbolises the crop grown by the farmers, is being served by the father. The table is arranged uniquely. Hay is put across the table to lie beneath the cloth in remembrance of Jesus Christ's birth in a manger. The table should be set for all family members and guests, plus an extra place in case someone unexpectedly shows up. The finest white tablecloth linen should be used. Specific Polish households set aside this location for departed or unable-to-attend family members (Osewska, Stala, 2021).

Moreover, the picture depicts traditional colour theory; the father, dressed in black clothing on a black background, symbolises the power and strength of men over their families (Evason, 2017: Delvecchio, 2020). According to Cherry (2020), colour psychology represents black as power, elegance, wealth and respect. Furthermore, how a father looks at his daughter may indicate his position in the family. White shirts worn by the son and daughter may represent innocence and purity, as Hui-Chih Yu (2014) declares. Shiarev *et al.* (2010) suggest the connotation of white with goodness, purity, and familiarity; however, they can still frequently represent the wearers' cultural customs and personal preferences. Because Catholicism is deeply ingrained in Polish tradition, the mother wearing blue clothing may emphasise her position as a nurturer and reflect the religious significance of Christmas (Slightly Blue, 2020: Dyczewski, 2002) because blue is frequently seen as a traditional Christmas colour as it is connected to the Blessed Virgin Mary.



2 - British Christmas dinner

Redigolo, T. (2019). Christmas crackers meaning: Why do we pull Christmas crackers? [online] Express.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/1218676/christmas-crackers-meaning-why-do-we-pull-christmas-crackers-explained>

This picture demonstrates how colour theory (Eastlake, 2015) and family history may coexist together. A mother, father, son, and daughter make up the family of four seated around a colourful table set with spotless white dishes and a tablecloth. As they exchange Christmas crackers, they laugh and smile with warmth. The parents are surrounded by a brightly lit Christmas tree, festive decorations, and a fireplace, representing the joy of the holiday season and the enlightening power of family relationships. As the Out (n.d.) states, there is something unique about the symbolic Christmas season. Kandinsky *et al.*, 1977 declare 'that spiritual experience is quickening, that positive science, the firmest basis of human thought, is imminent, we have reason to hope that the hour of pure composition is not far away'. The calm white colour of the walls emphasises the family's sense of cleanliness and cohesion even more (O'Connor, 2011). The diversity of brilliant colours enhances the family's interactions on the table, representing their collective energy and life when viewed through the prism of colour theory (Eastlake, 2015). Their relationships are exhibited on the white tablecloth and plates, emphasising simplicity and purity. The genuine laughter and compassion permeating the scene precede the family's apparent wealth. Their love, the depth of their shared experiences, and closeness to one another define their affluence rather than just their material belongings (Patrelli and Light, 2014).

Using the Polish family Christmas supper and the British family gathering as comparisons, this portfolio will highlight the parallels and discrepancies in customs, cultural features, and family dynamics.

As Dyczewski (2002) argues, each civilisation develops a unique set of indicators that are fully understood only by its constituent elements, while maintaining the cultural diversity of ethnic minorities within its borders is crucial to ensuring a vibrant and captivating future for the world and Europe, preventing monotonous and colourless routine.

In Image 1, the focus is on an old-school Polish family and their deeply ingrained customs. The image showcases the tradition of Wigilia, the Polish Christmas Eve supper (24th December), which holds great significance in Polish families (culture, traditions). The table is set with traditional dishes, symbolising the customs and heritage passed down through generations (Osewska and Stala, 2021). Additionally, religious symbolism is present, with the placement of hay and a white tablecloth representing Jesus' birth in a manger. The father's black clothing symbolises his position of power in

the family, while the mother's blue clothing reflects her role as a nurturer, influenced by the religious significance of Christmas (Osewska and Stala, 2021).

Image 2 emphasises the joyous and enlightening power of family relationships during the holiday season (25th December). The family is shown exchanging Christmas crackers (Regigolo, 2019), wearing paper crowns (Johnson, 2019), laughing, and smiling warmly, indicating the happiness and togetherness they experience. Symbolism is reflected through the brightly lit Christmas tree, festive decorations, and fireplace, representing the festive spirit and the importance of family traditions (Patrelli and Light, 2014). The diversity of colours on the table adds vibrancy and enhances the interactions within the family (Eastlake, 2015). The white walls and tablecloth symbolise cleanliness and simplicity, emphasising the family's unity and cohesion (O'Connor, 2011). Rather than their material wealth, the image suggests that the family's richness lies in their love, shared experiences, and closeness (Patrelli and Light, 2014).

What effects might social media have on families (positive and negative)?

Since media use can have positive and harmful effects on families, it is crucial to comprehend the family dynamics regarding media impacts, policy formation, and identifying individuals and families for interventions supporting child development and health. As per the perspective of family systems theory, family functioning pertains to the procedures and exchanges where the systems fulfil their requirements, decide, specify objectives, and set guidelines for the system and themselves. (Procentese, Gatti and Di Napoli, 2019). On the positive side, parents seeking guidance, information, and support might consult websites, blogs, apps, and online discussion groups, Lupton, Pedersen, and Thomas (2016) state. Social networking sites allow parents to connect, exchange details of their pasts, and seek advice. Parents can use them as part of their parenting practices and connections. Digital media and gadgets are widely used by parents as a means of communication, mainly while they are physically apart from their kids (Lupton, Pedersen, and Thomas 2016). However, there are also negative aspects to consider. Parental social media connections can create pressure to showcase achievements, leading to feelings of inadequacy when comparing oneself to others, as Glatz *et al.* (2023) state. Social comparison theory suggests that parents may evaluate their parenting abilities based on what they see from others on social media. This can negatively impact their confidence in their skills (Glatz *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, parents must navigate the digital world responsibly, setting boundaries for themselves and their children. Controlling internet and device usage and managing exposure to technology can be challenging in today's digitally connected world, as Auxier *et al.* (2020) point out.

The *Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Study* by Halliday *et al.* (2020) investigated the stigma and discrimination individuals faced on social media platforms. These platforms included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Reddit, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. Among the respondents, approximately 77% (266 individuals) reported experiencing stigma or discrimination related to their mental illness in the past year. Of this group, 21% reported encountering such experiences frequently, while 22% said they faced them often. About 21% of the participants identified social media as one of the top three areas where they experienced the most significant impact of mental health stigma and discrimination. This ranked as the fifth most commonly selected life area. Of those who listed social media in their top three, approximately 62% reported facing stigma related to it frequently or very frequently, compared to 43% of all respondents.

According to structural functionalism (Wilson, 2002), a person's family is crucial in assisting them in learning the social behaviours that society expects of them. Additionally, the home is the primary setting where a kid obtains socialisation, teaching ideas and values and the customs and culture of the society in which they are raised (Wilson, 2002). The youngster learns the behavioural patterns anticipated in particular social roles—such as gender roles—through socialisation. According to functionalism, the family is also necessary to maintain social order (Wilson, 2002). Giddens (2006) argues that the family is seen as a recognised unit because it has essential responsibilities to support society's social structure, norms and goals. However, Marxism analyses social reality and the economy, arguing that capitalism exploits families by making them responsible for the reproduction of future workers while providing an escape from work burdens (Weikart, 1994). Feminist theory holds that the traditional family, based on heterosexual marriage and gender norms, maintains patriarchal power and subjugation of women (Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009). Feminists advocate challenging and transforming socially constructed gender roles, abolishing the unequal division of labour, and dismantling hierarchical power dynamics in families and relationships (Lloyd, Few, and Allen 2009). Sorys (2020) argues that family transformations affect family functions. Although in the long run, the family is the most critical group for maintaining culture in society, and although procreation and socialisation functions are the essential functions of the family in the long run, the reduction in family size has also reduced the scope of its influence (Sorys, 2020). A large part of the socialisation and educational functions has been taken over by educational institutions and the mass media, which now provide information, transmit ideas and shape attitudes (CBOS, 2010). However, according to CBOS (2010), the essential value is still the family.

However, in the early 21st century, social networking sites, especially Facebook, gained enormous popularity, as stated by Gregersen (2019). The popularity of visual material has increased dramatically on social media sites, including YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok (Welsh Government, n.d.). Nowadays, people are more inclined to share photos, videos, GIFs, and memes on these platforms. This trend is particularly prevalent among family members, including children and teenagers, who wish to participate in creating and sharing visual content like everyone else (Welsh Government, n.d.). Additionally, we have seen advancements in sharing platforms, where YouTube has become a hub for video uploads, and TikTok was explicitly designed for sharing short videos. Friends or a much wider audience can quickly discover and view family photos on Instagram through hashtags and geocoding features (Barnwell *et al.*, 2021). For example, pregnancy or parenting on Instagram makes content easily discoverable (Lupton, Pedersen and Thomas, 2016). LinkedIn members have created resume-style sites that highlight their professional ties. As described by Murako (2023), social networks have emerged as a new channel for people to keep in touch with old friends and classmates from their youth (Murako, 2023). Plieth-Kalinowska (2018) states that the younger generation has strong internet and technological connections. They are at ease fusing virtual and real-world experiences and cherish their independence and uniqueness. They rely on continuous internet connectivity for various activities, including participating in social media and forums, and use mobile apps to share their life through images and vlogs. Due to this connectivity, boundaries and distance are no longer an obstacle in their ability to build relationships with people around the globe. They also get the chance to learn about various languages and cultures, which broaden their horizons and increase their level of adventure when it comes to travel (Plieth - Kalinowska, 2018).

Furthermore, teens are often more vulnerable to harm from social media use than most adults understand, as O'Keeffe (2008) elucidated. Most risks are found in peer-to-peer networks, inappropriate content, lack of awareness of online privacy concerns, and external effects from third-

party advertising groups. Ausat (2023) suggests that all these changes have given rise to a new arena of social dynamics that have fundamentally changed how public opinion is formed and how these influences can influence economic decision-making, among other aspects of life.

Gregersen (2019) defines social media as involving the exchange of ideas, information, and content on websites, while social networks focus on creating communities within these platforms.

Key influences of social media on individuals and society (Ausat, 2023):

- News and information sharing;
- Information and connectivity impact the consensus;
- Trends in culture and society;
- Filter bubbles and an abundance of information;
- Self-image and mental health;
- Security and privacy issues;
- Education (Both teachers and students can profit from social networking in several ways. Using social media to educate professionals and experts is a relatively simple process. Anyone may learn from others and progress in any field by following them. Anybody can educate oneself for free, regardless of where they live or their educational background (Akram, 2017)). ;

The adverse effects of social media on people and the community (Akram, 2017) :

1. Cyber harassment (The anonymity offered by social media sites makes it easier for cyberbullying and online abuse to occur. Abusive behaviour can target anyone, and it can be difficult to counteract its harmful effects);
2. Privacy issues are brought up by users' frequent sharing of private information on social networking sites. Businesses might gather and utilise this data for other purposes, such as targeted advertising, which could jeopardise people's privacy;
3. Time wastage and addiction: One drawback of social media use is the possibility of addiction, leading to excessive amounts of time spent mindlessly searching and skimming through feeds. Both personal relationships and productivity may suffer as a result.
4. Mental health problems: Anxiety, depression, and loneliness are more common among people who use social media excessively. Constant exposure to well-chosen content might have detrimental psychological effects and affect one's view of reality.

It is essential to point out that social media has become a crucial COVID-19 resource for the public, offering up-to-date health information and a platform for communication. It promoted healthier behaviours such as hand washing, mask-wearing, and social distancing. Also, it helped combat misinformation and encouraged people to adopt preventive measures for the early detection of infectious diseases (Abbas *et al.*, 2021). After the COVID-19 pandemic began, more people used the internet and media devices Bozzola (2022) states. Teenagers who use the Internet browse social

media, especially TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube (Bozzola, 2022). During the lockdown, peer communication and regular operations, such as classroom instruction, were made possible by using the Internet. On the other hand, it also had a more significant negative impact on mental health, as Abbas *et al.* (2021) state.

Public spaces and schools were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic (UK Health Security Agency, 2022). Without the educational and social opportunities integral to school-age children's daily routines, many kids and teenagers started to spend their whole days at home. Children and teenagers worldwide have been using digital media much more daily during social isolation to connect with friends and family (Shutzman, Gershby, 2022). Prolonged gadgets pose risks like weight gain, sleep disruptions, and psychological issues. Concerns about cyber-security from exposure to improper content and loss of privacy persist, as Chauhan *et al.*, 2021 claim.

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