

Special Collection Call for Papers

Doing Family Online: (In)formal Knowledge Circulation, Information Seeking Practices and Support Communities

Individuals and families are increasingly reliant on information and communication technologies for their daily needs, activities, and socialization. Apart from rapid push to Internet-based communication brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, all levels of government have been ‘dematerializing’ administrative procedures for some time. Couples, parents, children, and other family members use the Internet to navigate certain formalities and get access to practical information regarding, for example, health care, schooling, or marriage. This multidisciplinary special issue of *Family Relations* examines the role of the Web as a human and bureaucratic-legal support tool for “doing family” and providing services for families around the world. Drawing on the scholarship of online networks and communities (i.e.: Proulx & Latzko-Toth 2000; Reingold 2000; Beaulieu 2010, Ammari and Schoenebeck 2016; Vivienne 2016; Geoffrion 2021), our objective is threefold:

- 1) We seek to understand how online communities, networks and discussion forums shape contemporary families’ and couples’ everyday life, sociability, and relations online and offline. More specifically, we are eager to receive manuscripts that explore the social dynamics created by the increasingly important place online information-seeking practices hold for parents — future, new or seasoned — as they search for reassurance about their parenting strategies, tips, and information regarding health, childcare, juridical-legal issues such as divorce or child custody, education, procreation, immigration, etc.
- 2) Apart from using Internet-based groups and discussion forums for practical information, family members find emotional support online. We seek manuscripts that document how interactions with like-minded parents, for example, provide a space to build connections, show empathy and support and draw on the experience of peers in similar or different situations.
- 3) We aim to document how formal and less formal expertise and trends in family matters — e.g., rights, services, and best practices — circulate and get recognition online; and how such knowledge is mobilized by couples, parents, children and other family members online and offline. We also seek manuscripts that examine the interrelation between online counselling and more formal associative and institutional family support and related legal services.

Areas to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

1. the role of online communities in emotional support exchanges and guidance for couples and parents (e.g., fathers, expecting mothers, adoptive parents, binational couples, parents of children with disabilities);
2. parents’ patterns of information-seeking behavior (e.g., regarding health, schooling, social services), the circulation of information in parents’ online communities and the articulation of online and offline realities;
3. legal and administrative advice-seeking practices (e.g.: divorce, adoption for same-sex partners, child custody, immigration formalities, domestic violence, surrogacy, etc.);
4. knowledge-building and circulation, the interaction between formal and informal expertise, online experts’ recognition processes, activism and its impact on policy makers and public policies;
5. how online discussion forums and networks reproduce, display or challenge inequalities due to race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and generation.

Please send a letter of intent of up to 500 words (theoretical/conceptual framework, context, empirical research methods or research/policy review) and a short author’s biography to laura.odasso@college-de-france.fr and karine.geoffrion@ant.ulaval.ca by **10 December, 2021**. Notification of acceptance of proposed manuscript idea and invitation to submit a manuscript for peer review will be sent by 20 January, 2022. Complete article manuscripts in line with *Family Relation* authors’ guidelines are expected by **1 June, 2022**.