MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

The ACE Family: Parasocial Relationships and Evolving Representations of Family

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Abstract

Although families have appeared in the media in various forms and mediums, representations of family now include a newer genre of social media influencers known as family influencers (Abidin, 2017). Family influencers post user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms of and about their families and lives as a form of income to achieve micro-celebrity status (Abidin, 2017). The ACE Family is one of the most popular and subscribed to family influencers and have consistently posted videos following their lives and success over the past few years. With a multitude of different types of videos on their channel to engage their viewers, some of their videos show more of their day-to-day lives and activities. This research paper explores representations of family and elements of parasocial interaction theory with family influencers by using the ACE Family as a case study to analyze a sample of eight of their videos representing their daily lives over the course of two years from 2017 to 2018. Informed by parasocial interaction theory and previous studies, the textual and visual analysis largely consists of emergent coding to answer the research questions: (1) What elements of the Parasocial Interaction Theory and affordances of user-generated content does the ACE Family use? (2) In what ways and with what techniques does the ACE Family convey ideas of family through their self-produced YouTube videos? The results revealed that the ACE Family frequently and consistently uses various parasocial interaction strategies to convey images of normalcy while presenting non-traditional ideas of family similar to professionally produced programming. This paper contributes to understandings of how parasocial interaction strategies can be effectively used in portraying representations or images of social media influencers and how media portrayals of family are evolving with the affordances of user-generated content.

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Introduction

At a time when social media influencers seem to rule the internet, performances of authenticity and amateurism make the sharing of personal lives more available and natural than ever before (Abidin, 2017). On YouTube, influencers film, edit and post their lives online for everyone to see, but only recently has the family unit also been documented by these measures. Subscribers follow family influencers and their children as they go through everyday turmoil and aspects of family life that are relatable yet set them apart (Abidin, 2017). Based in Los Angeles, the ACE Family is comprised of a heterosexual couple, Austin and Catherine, and their two young daughters, Elle and Alaïa. The ACE Family has only been on YouTube for under three years and has already gained over sixteen million subscribers, making their channel one of the most followed family YouTube channels. As family influencers, the ACE Family uses representations of family to market themselves to audiences. With their quick rise to fame and success, their lifestyle and habits such as their wealth and consumption of high-end material objects have become increasingly apparent as they live lavishly and post it for the world to see.

Over recent years, the rise in popularity of family YouTubers as a genre has set them apart from traditional influencers and other media presentations as they "are not simply a new incarnation of, or modern equivalent to, reality [television]" (Abidin, 2017, p. 3). Without an already established name or the means of production available to television or film, family influencers seek to represent the normal everyday lives through often self-directed production (Abidin, 2017). Typically, social media influencers have been known to form friendship-like relationships with audiences or followers known as parasocial relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Parasocial relationships are formed and maintained through a variety of interactions or techniques that simulate interpersonal, intimate, and conversational involvements (Dibble,

Hartmann & Rosaen, 2016). While techniques differ by platform, channel, or influencer, the use and presence of parasocial techniques have been and continue to be prevalent throughout social and mainstream media (Chung & Cho, 2017; Horton & Wohl, 1956).

From film to reality television, representations of family have been present through various mediums in the media for years. Now, social media offers a new channel for these representations to take place as has become apparent through the recent increase in family influencers (Abidin, 2017). This paper will research the parasocial interactions and portrayals of family in the media by family YouTube vloggers by considering the ACE Family as a case study. As a YouTube family, their scheduled content is different from television programming as it is neither scripted nor professionally produced. The ACE Family has stated on various occasions that they produce, film, and edit their own content.

The purpose of this study is to determine if and how successful family influencers convey ideas of family and whether those offer new or different portrayals of family in the media. The ACE Family's video content will be sampled and analyzed to determine how they represent family onscreen, and what techniques and messaging they use to portray notions of family. The parasocial interaction theory will be drawn upon to consider how they convey authenticity to their audiences to relate and gravitate to. With little previous research on family influencers, broadcast media representations and user-generated content will also be considered to better understand the shift of portrayals in regards to what is being portrayed and what the affordances may be with various mediums.

This research paper will explore the following research questions:

1. What elements of the Parasocial Interaction Theory and affordances of user-generated content does the ACE Family use?

2. In what ways and with what techniques does the ACE Family convey ideas of family through their self-produced YouTube videos?

Literature Review

YouTube vloggers and content creators depend on the formation of parasocial relationships to form relationships with viewers (Chen, 2016; Chung & Cho, 2017). The elements and strategies of parasocial relationships, family representations in media programming, and user-generated content are crucial in understanding how Family vloggers are managing within their craft while considering other representations of family in the media.

Parasocial Interaction Theory and Relationships

Friendship-like relationships have the potential to be formed through the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The introduction of new media platforms and social networking sites have only made these formations more possible and accessible (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Kim & Song, 2016). The relationships developed between audiences and performers in the media are known as parasocial relationships that can be explained by the Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI). Parasocial interactions refer to the interpersonal involvements of audiences with whom or what they consume, such that media users perceive those interactions as intimate, conversational, and authentic (Dibble, Hartmann & Rosaen, 2016). As they are developed, parasocial relationships are the one-sided relationships that form as audiences are repeatedly exposed to the same media personas so that audiences attribute feelings of intimacy, friendship, and identification with those figures (Chung & Cho, 2017). While these personas may seem to be accessible, it is an illusory or suggested relationship which will not be reciprocated (Chung & Cho, 2017; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Parasocial relationships are often developed between audiences and celebrities, micro-celebrities, or other figures in the media. The relationship between social media and parasocial relationships is more direct than ever as celebrities can have seemingly intimate interactions with

audiences (Chung & Cho, 2017; Horton & Wohl, 1956). These relationships are comparable to those of a regular social friendship. Consumers develop feelings of connection, understanding, and are often forgiving of figures as short or long-term involvements of loyalty form (Chung & Cho, 2017; Dibble et al., 2016).

YouTube. Platforms such as YouTube allow for the development of parasocial relationships as individuals create video content for others to consume (Chen, 2016). The more that consumers are engaged with and exposed to celebrities and personas, the more they develop high feelings of intimacy which then translate to increases in brand loyalty of celebrity endorsements (Chung & Cho, 2017). On YouTube especially, content creators have the ability to directly address their audiences in an intimate conversational face-to-face style (Chen, 2016; Chung & Cho, 2017). As celebrities advertise and share their personal lives with their audiences, the messages come across as natural and unfiltered, establishing their social presence in their followers' lives (Kim & Song, 2016).

Several strategies can be deployed to encourage parasocial interactions with audiences. Through social media, "verbal and nonverbal interaction cues" of intimacy, openness, interactivity, and self-disclosure all contribute to stronger parasocial relationships and consumer loyalty (Chen, 2016; Chung & Cho, 2017; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Kim & Song, 2016; Labrecque, 2014). Illusions of intimacy are built and then maintained through regularly scheduled messages saturated with personal information (Chung & Cho, 2017). As celebrities disclose more about their personal life, the likelihood of the enhancement of their parasocial relationships increases (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014). Consumers now expect personal and authentic communication. Without it, celebrities' messages may be viewed as dishonest and inauthentic (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014).

Chen (2016) noted the strategies of basking, mystification, and self-promotion as the main strategies to enhance parasocial relationships and presentations through YouTube. Strategies of self-disclosure, openness, and perceived interactivity are also commonly understood as successful strategies for developing parasocial relationships (Labrecque, 2014; Kim & Song, 2016).

The basking strategy refers to enhancing self-image and portrayals by associating with already established and well-known figures (Chen, 2016). This has been a popular strategy for YouTube influencers to capitalize on associations to gain popularity and establish themselves more quickly (Chen, 2016).

The mystification strategy refers to the notion that audiences only see and have access to a curated representation made available to them which then informs their ideas and understandings of the performers (Chen, 2016). Through social media, it is almost inevitable that mystification is used as the decision of what to post creates distance between performers and their audiences (Chen, 2016).

Similarly, the self-promotion strategy describes the act of choosing what to reveal to audiences by working to be respected for their accomplishments and abilities (Chen, 2016).

Other strategies such as self-disclosure, openness, and perceived interactivity have also proved to be effective in building and maintaining parasocial relationships (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014).

Self-disclosure is the "intimate, frequent, and highly confessional messaging" that performers share with their audiences (Chung & Cho, 2017, p. 483). Disclosing personal information and being open on social media encourages greater intimacy and trust with

audiences as they feel that they have private and inside information as a result of their relations with the performer (Labrecque, 2014).

In a similar way, perceived interactivity refers to the ability to simulate communication or interaction with consumers through directness and speed of responses (Labrecque, 2014). Interactions that are perceived to be direct and personal have positive impacts as they simulate social encounters to enhance feelings of mutual awareness and attention (Labrecque, 2014). As YouTube vloggers demonstrate directness, openness, and reveal intimate details, beliefs, and emotions that are not immediately observable, audiences feel that they get a greater sense of who the performers are as people, further simulating and solidifying ideas of real-life friendships (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014).

Audience Impact. For consumers, consumption of media is important in the process of constructing the self as consumers create a sense of who they are through their consumption choices (Chen, 2016). The freedom of choice is important as audiences know that it is a somewhat mutual experience in that they have no obligation to stay loyal to or engage in any celebrity or media persona (Horton & Wohl, 1956). As loyalty is established, those audiences' social identities and bonds will be impacted to remain actively engaged and to feel a part of the community (Tsiotsou, 2015). Essentially, audiences consume to fulfill their own social needs which result in greater loyalty and feelings of authentic relationships with media personas (Tsiotsou, 2015).

User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) has elevated and expanded potentials of parasocial relationships in new and social media. Through UGC, content creators and microcelebrities have been introduced and popularized (Chen, Xu & Whinston, 2011; Smith, Fischer & Yongjian,

2012). UGC refers to individually or collaboratively published content to be shared and consumed that is outside the realm of professional practices (Smith et al., 2012; van Dijck, 2009). Contributors and creators of UGC are thought of as "active internet contributors" who consistently volunteer their time in creative or 'playful work' (van Dijck, 2009). Today, UGC often takes the roles of various online forms including posts on social media platforms, blogs, product reviews, and advertisements (Chen, Xu & Whinston, 2011; Smith et al., 2012).

While UGC may not be as highly regarded as professional content, there has been profitable and strong UGC that has stemmed from YouTube's content creators through "the culture of self-promotion" (Kim, 2012; Smith et al., 2012, p. 111). Some have referred to today as an 'era of consent,' as consumers are considered to have more control than ever before on the messages they consume (Cocker & Cronin, 2017, p. 456; Pringle, 2004). This concept of choice and consent has allowed content creators of UGC, such as Family YouTubers, to become more popularized and successful, thus increasing their power as understandings of hierarchies are challenged (Cocker & Cronin, 2017).

The YouTube slogan 'broadcast yourself' has popularized the commodification of self-presentation through creative labour (Raun, 2018; Tolson, 2010). Functionally, YouTube allows for great ease and accessibility in creating and distributing content instantaneously to vast audiences (Susarla, Oh, & Tan, 2011). As a form of mass and self-communication, YouTube user participation features are crucial in creating stability and loyal audiences (Kim, 2012). YouTube is considered a form of post-television as there is a greater emphasis on immediacy, conversation, and interactivity between viewers and personas (Susarla et al., 2011; Tolson, 2010). It has popularized self-broadcasting and celebrity processes as modern public life that is

shared as media events for public discussion (Raun, 2018; Tolson, 2010). This phenomenon can be observed through cases such as the ACE Family.

Of great popularity and success on YouTube is the self-generated self-promotional aspect in which individuals can commodify themselves for mass distribution (Raun, 2018). Successful users engage in a process of celebrification to retain micro-celebrity status where creative labour is performed consistently and sold to audiences (Raun, 2018). The more that users participate in voluntary creative labour and post more content, the more that they generate greater ties and popularity which ultimately may lead to the bridging of corporate and advertising with creators to generate revenue (Shriver, Nair & Hofstetter, 2013).

Micro-celebrities have emerged as they are primarily amateur content creators driven to connect with and be considered famous by niche audiences while presenting themselves as celebrities for mass consumption (Cocker & Cronin, 2017; Raun, 2018; Smith, 2014). Highly successful figures from mainstream creative industries, such as from YouTube, have even proved to surpass political leaders in public influence, becoming figures of idealization and worship (Cocker & Cronin, 2017). As participants and volunteers of UGC become more successful, micro-celebrities are often swept up into the corporate brand marketplace and their celebrity status creates greater distances in intimacy and interaction with their followers (Cocker & Cronin, 2017). Thus, the cults of personalities in social media are forms of UGC in which individuals self-commodify for distribution and consumption while ultimately aiming to maintain a sense of authenticity in their crafted selves (Cocker & Cronin, 2017).

Labour and Monetization of User-Generated Content. The commercialization, promotions, and monetization of UGC is now common on social media platforms, often seen with celebrities and social media influencers (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). There are

multiple ways in which creators are able to monetize their success, one being crowdfunding platforms such as Patreon that give creators channels for compensation (Mixon, Asarta & Caudill, 2017). The Patreon website was first introduced as a solution to a "disparity between the economic power held by popular YouTube content providers and that of the national product brands that employ YouTube pages as an avenue for advertising" (Mixon et al., 2017, p. 2). Since the content posted on social media platforms are free to consume with no boundaries or limits to consumption, all content that UGC creators post becomes, in a sense, public property (Mixon et al., 2017). Thus, crowdfunding sites facilitate compensation for creators when they otherwise may not be able to gain monetary compensation for their labour and efforts.

YouTube has been in the process of "becoming an incubator for new businesses on the internet" (Han, 2018, p. 325). Now, many social media creators on YouTube grow from amateur to professional creators to then collaborate with businesses and other creators for commercial purposes (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). While not all YouTubers are monetized, each year the potential for financial success through YouTube grows with the top ten highest paid YouTubers of 2017 collectively earning a total of $127 million (Han, 2018). While the highest earning YouTubers can earn millions each year, only a portion of YouTubers have become financially successful through YouTube. Successful content creators often have multiple channels for revenue, whether through collaborating with businesses or creating their own (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). For monetized channels, although subscriptions and view counts matter, one of the greatest sources of YouTubers' revenues come from advertisements (Han, 2018).

Two types of advertisements on YouTube videos have become increasingly popular with YouTubers, in-video advertisements and persuasive sales (Han, 2018; Smith et al., 2012). In-

video advertisements refer to the commercials that pop up before or during YouTube videos. When viewers click on the ads, the YouTuber who posted the video can receive commission (Han, 2018). An even newer form of advertising is persuasive sales. Once YouTubers find success through their channels and videos they are positioned as potential "opinion leaders" (Fang and Hu, 2018; Han, 2018). As opinion leaders, YouTubers are often targeted by marketers to sell products or services to the YouTuber's audiences. As these advertisements are integrated into the videos and promoted by the YouTuber directly, often with the YouTuber sharing their own experiences or reviews, they receive commission for being a spokesperson and advertising products in a seemingly more genuine way (Han, 2018; Lee and Watkins, 2016).

Beyond brand partnerships, in-video ads, or other persuasive advertisements, as UGC creators gain more success and micro-celebrity status, they often come out with their own merchandise (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). As it becomes more common for content creators to engage in various monetization or commercialization opportunities, it becomes increasingly difficult for viewers to tell the difference between organic and sponsored content (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018). Even as social media influencers and content creators engage in more commercialization and there is greater understanding of different commercialization strategies amongst audiences, creators are still largely seen as authentic and trustworthy to their audiences (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018).

Family in the Media

Family on Television. Historically, portrayals of families on television present the "routine and the ordinary" while glamorizing ideal family structures and degrading others that do not fit a certain mold (Albada, 2000; Douglas, 1996; Stiffler, Web, & Duvall, 2013). However, as viewers observe families in the media, they expect those portrayals to represent the trends and

values in modern culture (Stiffler et al., 2013). While representations have changed over time to be more representative of changing societal norms, television is still not a fair representation of reality and is often self-limiting in its portrayal of family diversity (Douglas, 1996; Matheson, 2007; Skill & Robinson, 1994).

As explained through previous studies which used social learning theory as a framework, the portrayals of family in the media may influence people or cause them to compare those families to their own (Albada, 2000; Stiffler et al., 2013; Skill & Robinson, 1994). Families are presented on television to "make sense" to viewers by being "framed by characters, events, and relationships that are recognizable" as ordinary, relatable, and authentic (Douglas, 1996, p. 676). Social norms and meanings are repetitively reinforced on television to establish a basis for understanding structures of marriage and family while offering "lessons about appropriate family life" (Albada, 2000; Douglas, 1996, p. 676; Stiffler et al., 2013).

On television, programs depend on ideal middle-class images of family lifestyles and home situations (Matheson, 2007). By portraying ideal middle-class images, family portrayals seem to comfort working-class families by suggesting that they are happier than the rich and privileged (Thomas & Callahan, 1982). Even with these representations, nuclear families made up the minority of family portrayals and continue to be in the minority (Albada, 2000). American television families are increasingly diverse and now include single parent families, extended families, divorced families, and blended families to challenge common norms that are often seen as representative of the "ideal middle-class" (Matheson, 2007, p. 33). However, as television often positively idealizes non-conventional lives, it overlooks the hardships that are faced in those situations (Skill & Robinson, 1994). Whether individuals believe family to be idealized,

realistic, or unrealistic, most portrayals on television of families are not in sync with reality (Albada, 2000; Skill & Robinson, 1994).

Reality television has arguably "taken center stage" as a genre featuring images and portrayals of family life (Matheson, 2007, p. 33). When the concept of what is now reality television was first introduced through the British television show *The Family,* audiences were not receptive to the ideas of ordinary people being filmed and featured for entertainment (Holmes, 2008). Now, audiences are expected to accept reality television stars as normal people and their "real" lives (Brancato, 2007). Reality television sells ideas of non-conventional family relationships and structures as the norm as if they are the same as what everyday families experience, often challenging values and family ideals (McClain, 2013). Reality shows such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *Wife Swap*, *Trading Spouses*, and *Supernanny* seemingly give audiences non-scripted access to people and a glimpse into their lives (Brancato, 2007). This implies that they are expected to be of more significance in comparison to fictional characters as their actions and values are anticipated and evaluated (McClain, 2013).

Keeping Up with the Kardashians is a reality show centered around the Kardashian family that first aired in 2007 and is continuing to air, now in their sixteenth season. The show follows the elite lives of the family of celebrities in their relationships, turmoil, careers, and family relationships. The Kardashians have become a powerful force in popular culture and created businesses and products by selling their lives (McClain, 2013). Throughout the seasons, there are constant contradictions in values that deal with family and business (McClain, 2013). As an especially unique case of a reality television family portrayal, the Kardashians show the sides of both business and family throughout the show, showing how the mom and manager, Kris, has to consider her childrens' best interests for their personal life while considering the best

moves for their individual careers (McClain, 2013). With the increasing popularity of reality

television, there is an over-representation of middle class to greater wealth, showcasing exciting

lifestyles that suggest that there is more "space" and possibility of reaching those higher ranks of

socioeconomic status than is actually possible (Thomas & Callahan, 1982).

However, shows such as *Wife Swap* and *Trading Spouses* most often feature middle-class

families that are heterosexual and married with kids (Matheson, 2007). Even as the shows may

suggest differences in diversity, they do not "permit family diversity," instead reaffirming the

normalization of families to more traditional ideals as a form of self-improvement (Matheson,

2007, p. 38). Therefore, even with the opportunity, these shows featuring everyday middle-class

families continue to limit themselves in their potential of portraying diversity and family

(Matheson, 2007).

Family Influencers. Influencers are the microcelebrities of the internet who establish

their status as more than just a hobby, but a career and source of income (Abidin, 2017).

Influencers are sustained on social media by constantly posting "filler" content of their everyday

lives and routines, selling that they are regular people and amateurs (Abidin, 2017). Family

influencers are a genre of influencers who share their lives, as well as their family's lives, on

social media.

"Calibrated amateurism," introduced by Crystal Abidin (2017, p. 1), is defined as a

practice focused on aesthetics in which individuals craft and perform images of authenticity.

Individuals portray themselves as amateurs, whether or not it is true, by using social media

platforms and the affordances they permit (Abidin, 2017). These seemingly authentic

performances are edited, crafted, and calculated for entertainment value, to attract and sustain

audiences to maintain their own status and success (Abidin, 2017). Children of these families

grow up to be child microcelebrities who have been born or grown into that status, not by choice, but by their parents' decisions (Abidin, 2017). While there is often a question of child labour, families justify it by explaining that their children are willing participants and that they are recording memories (Abidin, 2017). These decisions and curated portrayals of families have the potential to be highly rewarding for families who reach influencer status as they continue to sell themselves as normal people living everyday lives while their incomes and sponsorship opportunities rise exponentially (Abidin, 2017).

The theory and previous research synthesized in this literature review considered the topics of Parasocial Interaction Theory, user-generated content, and family representations in the media. Drawing from the literature, these topics offered an opportunity of intersection to be determined in this study, and thus, the research questions posed emerged. While the analysis consisted of emergent coding, the preliminary codes and categories were directly derived from the respective sources as indicated in the literature review. In the subsequent section, organized by research question, the categories used to inform the emergent coding are clearly defined in Tables 1 and 2. The construction of the categories aimed to structure a basis for which the emergent coding could take place to be specific in exploring the research questions while offering room for exploration and further development of the codes within the categories.

Methodology

The ACE Family was chosen as the topic of this case study as they have quickly become one of the most followed Family YouTube channels since they started only a few years ago. Most YouTube families cannot compare with their subscriber count, even after being on YouTube for many more years. The ACE Family is also an especially trendy young family which shows through their style, lifestyle, circle, and look, even aligning themselves with other well-known figures in popular culture such as Kylie Jenner from *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Their social presence and YouTube presence makes them one of the most relevant content creators currently in popular culture with a family focus.

While the ACE Family is active on various social media platforms including YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, only YouTube was analyzed in this study to determine how they represent family. It is through their videos that the ACE Family constructs the messages they distribute using social, physical, and verbal cues. By analyzing the ACE Family's posted video content, a Research Ethics Board (REB) approval was not necessary as the videos were posted for public consumption and the analysis did not interfere with the family, channel, subscribers, or fans.

Data Collection

The ACE Family uploaded their first video on July 27, 2016 when Elle was approximately six months old and they have been consistently posting videos since, usually posting once every one to two weeks. While they do not claim to post their videos on a specific weekday, they regularly post videos within a short time frame. The videos range in length, but typically fall between 12 and 25 minutes. However, at times videos have ranged from as little as a few minutes long to close to an hour. The ACE Family has described the period from when

they first started filming to January 2019 as their first season. After a short break and releasing a YouTube documentary, the family was back to their regular content in March 2019 for season two.

All of the ACE Family's videos typically follow a similar structure. The videos start off with the same opening sequence featuring a theme song accompanied by footage of the family. Then, the ACE Family often welcomes the viewers to the video, offering a familiar greeting and discussing the video's contents or events. While the introduction song is almost always featured at the very beginning of each video, their additional welcome occasionally appears later on in the video. Many of the videos include consistent greetings and closings that are recognizable and familiar to their viewers. Usually, the greeting consists of Austin and Catherine, separately or together, starting the vlog by saying "Hey ACE Family!". Then, Catherine, if there, often says "welcome back to our channel" followed by Austin's "what's going on everybody?" before talking about what they will be doing that day. As these greetings are quite consistent video after video, they have become a part of the family's recognizability and brand on YouTube. While the body of the video differs as the content differs, each video ends with a similar closing segment. At the end of each video, at least one member of the family thanks the viewers for watching, asks them to subscribe to the channel, and gives a shout out to one lucky follower.

Gathering Sample. A historical sample of eight videos from the ACE Family's YouTube channel was collected from a two-year period in which they actively posted videos. These videos are spread out approximately three months apart from January 2017 to December 2018. A sample of eight videos over a two-year period was used to give a greater understanding of the family's dynamics over time and how their everyday lives and family dynamics may or may not have shifted. Each video selected was within the given three-month time frame that is

most representative of the ACE Family's everyday life. For instance, the first video chosen is the most fitting video from January 2017 to March 2017, based on the requirements. The videos are meant to represent the "normal" everyday lives of the ACE Family. Examples of suitable videos include videos filmed at home, everyday routines, or "normal" everyday activities such as going to a park, going for food, or going shopping. Videos that are outstanding with extravagant activities or considered out of the ordinary were not included. Unsuitable videos include proposals, pranks, birthdays, holidays, and pregnancy announcements.

To decide on which videos to sample, all of the videos posted on the ACE Family's YouTube channel that fall between January 2017 and December 2018 were considered. The two-year time frame was divided equally in eight, making for eight three month sections. All the videos in each three month period were considered to determine the most suitable video based on the requirements stated above. Therefore, all the videos were spread out across the two years while not always exactly three months apart between each individual video. The selected videos ranged from approximately 11 to 25 minutes each. While the ACE Family now consists of Austin and Catherine and their daughters Elle and Alaïa, Alaïa was born in October 2018 and was only a newborn at the time of the last video of the sample (See Appendix A).

Data Analysis

The chosen videos were first manually transcribed on the dialogue before reviewing the videos to take into account the visuals in the qualitative content analysis. The transcriptions were conducted to perform coding on the dialogue. In examining the visual content, the different scenes and settings in each video were visually analyzed for themes, frequency, and patterns that suggest normalcy in the ACE Family's everyday lives. The coding process mostly consisted of emergent coding with some codes informed by the literature review.

An inductive qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine the video content that the ACE Family has posted on their channel and analyzed aspects of language, parasocial techniques, interaction, and visual content. The codes looked for instances in which the ACE Family represented their normal interactions, activities, familial relationships, and behaviours to convey ideas of what normal everyday family life is to them. Examples of this include instances of messages on family, play, relationships, and home.

To be recorded as a code, instances were clearly recognizable and immediately identifiable. In examining the dialogue and visuals, instances were counted once when unique instances appeared in a particular clip. For example, if the family is out at a park, that would be counted as one instance for each unique clip in the video. Exceptions were made for coding specific words as each instance of particular words or phrases was counted. For visuals, only one instance of a particular code was recorded per scene to ensure reliability. For instance, if the ACE Family is in their living room with their kids in the background that goes in and out of the frame, the presence of the kids would only be coded once for that scene. Drawing on previously successful and frequently used cues in developing and maintaining parasocial relationships, the preliminary coding categories are as follows:

Table 1

Preliminary Coding Categories: Parasocial Interaction

Category	Description	Example
Basking	Vocally or visually associating with other already established figures (Chen, 2016)	The ACE Family mentions that they are friends with Kylie Jenner
Mystification	Curating content to present specific images of a person or situation (Chen, 2016)	Showing only the parts in a day that include laughing and smiling with family members

Self-Promotion	Choosing to reveal aspects of oneself to be recognized for one's accomplishments and abilities (Chen, 2016)	Showing one's cooking ability and including other people's satisfied and impressed reactions
Self-disclosure	"intimate, frequent, and highly confessional messaging" (Chung & Cho, 2017)	Discussing how one has been struggling with pregnancy, including the good and bad
Openness	Revealing details, beliefs, and emotions that are not immediately observable	Sharing the steps and parts to one's daily routine
Perceived Interactivity	"Response (speed) and the ability to communicate" to consumers in a way that seems direct. (Labrecque, 2014)	Speaking to viewers as if part of a conversation or addressing viewers directly.

The above codes are primarily informed by previous studies to determine uses of parasocial interaction theory. As primarily emergent coding, the preliminary codes acted as a framework to guide the coding but did not limit the types of codes to be collected.

The codes on familial representations and relationships were not based on previously identified strategies or categories. Therefore, rather than having preliminary codes, there was instead a focus on aspects of family including their presence, relationships, and roles within the channel and videos to guide the coding process. Rather than using visual semiotic theories to inform the coding process, the emergent coding aimed to record instances of only the literal instances that could be easily identified. The preliminary coding categories used as a basis for determining and exploring representations of family are as follows:

Table 2

Preliminary Coding Categories: Family Presentation

Category	Description	Example
Family Involvement and Presence	Visually observable displays and presence of familial involvement in the YouTube channel and videos	Elle's involvement in the channels and presence in the videos
Familial Relationships and Dynamics	Instances of behaviours or dynamics that reflect the nature of the relationships	Expressions of love to and about their family; Austin and Catherine being playful or joking with each

		other; instances of parenting; use of language
Filming process	Aspects to the filming process including who does the filming, how the filming is done, what is being filmed, and what is chosen to be included of the filmed content as decisions	Instances in which Austin or Catherine are filming; filming locations
Consumption	Evidence of or observable habits of consumption. Includes both the visual presence of and the acknowledgement of consumption.	Showing off new cars; showing off designer outfits; a trip to the mall

Beyond the family members as individuals and their interpersonal relationships, the emergent visual coding, guided by the above categories, strived to identify patterns and other elements relating to what the representations of family are and how they are presented. Upon conducting the analysis of the ACE Family's videos, conclusions were subsequently drawn about the use and prevalence of both parasocial techniques and representations of family.

Results: Findings & Analysis

The sample of eight ACE Family videos that fit the sample criteria and specified date range were transcribed and then coded for both the dialogue and visuals while considering each research question.

Research Question 1: Parasocial Interaction and User-Generated Content

Researchers have found several strategies and techniques of parasocial interactions that have been commonly and successfully used (Chen, 2016; Kim & Song, 2016; Labrecque, 2014). These techniques were considered as a base point from which to help conduct the coding process. The commonly effective techniques of mystification, self-promotion, openness and self-disclosure, and perceived interactivity were all used to varying degrees throughout the videos. As social media is primarily made up of user-generated content, how elements and affordances of UGC were used in the videos was also explored.

Basking. The strategy of basking was not used in any of the videos that were sampled (Chen, 2016). On multiple occasions throughout their hundreds of posted videos, there have been occasions in which the ACE Family has mentioned their friendships or connections to other well-known figures including Kylie Jenner, Nick Cannon, and Chris Brown. While the family has used this technique, it was not represented in the videos that were selected as most representative of their everyday lives.

Mystification. As described in Chen's (2016) study, mystification is the process of curating content to present particular images of individuals or situations. The concept of YouTube vlogging itself is already an example of mystification as creators have the ability to choose and edit content to portray it in whatever way they desire. The very fact that the ACE
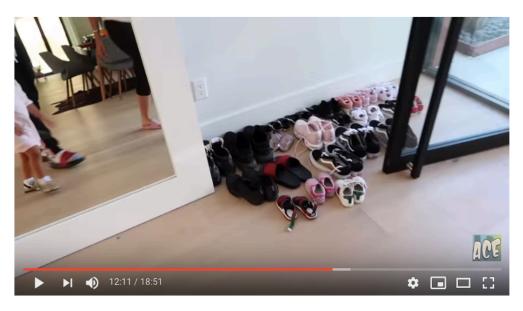
Family's videos are much shorter than the length of activities and days is evidence of inherent

mystification before even delving into the contents of each individual video.

Within each video that was sampled, the levels of mystification were further made

apparent through editing techniques as well as further attention being drawn to certain devices.

Two main techniques of mystification were identified in analysis: display of wealth and content

curation visibility. These codes as well as their sub-codes can be seen and described in the

following table:

Table 3			
Mystification			
Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example
Display of Wealth	Shopping/ Conspicuous Consumption	The instances in which acts or discussion surrounding shopping and conspicuous consumption are apparent	Showing off recently purchased items; act of shopping; justifying purchases
	Designer/high end items	Showing off or the use of extravagant and luxury items or products	Designer labels; luxury cars
Filming and Content Curation	Content Curation or Editing	Drawing attention to the content curation that takes place in the videos	Catherine telling Austin not to film certain things and to keep certain things or acts private
	Filming and Camera	Drawing attention to the filming processes	Addressing who is filming or if someone else should film instead

The first code, *display of wealth*, was used to identify instances in which the content

featured behaviours of conspicuous consumption or displays of luxury products. The display of

wealth came in various forms such as through showing shopping behaviours, making quick

decisions on purchases, or displays of luxury products and purchases. Displays of wealth through

consumption were apparent in all but one of the videos as the family displayed or was shown

using luxury or high-end items such as handbags, cars, or clothing. While luxury items did

appear in the videos samples from 2017, they became much more prominent and much more

attention was drawn to them in 2018. For example, in video 2017-2, two designer handbags and

backpacks were seen being used, although no additional attention was drawn to the brand names

of the bags. This contrasts with three of the four videos from 2018 (2018-1, 2018-3, 2018-4) in

which multiple designer items can be seen shown off or worn, often boldly and hard to miss. By

video 2018-3 they show off new custom designer shoes purchased for all of the family members,

including their unborn second daughter. In that scene, there were upwards of ten pairs of shoes

from that one purchase, all of which seemed to be brand names. Examples of the often bold

luxury items include head to toe designer outfits and multiple rows of designer shoes laid out and

on display (See Figure 1).

PREPARING FOR A HOME WATER BIRTH!!!

Figure 1. Video 2018-3 Screen shot from video. This image displays the many pairs of custom
designer shoes purchased from one order.

Similarly, in the last ACE Family video sampled, Austin wore flashy Gucci pants as he

and Catherine took few minutes to show off the new colours of their luxury cars (see Figure 2).

ELLE TEACHES HER BABY SISTER HOW TO DANCE!!! **ADORABLE DANCING SISTERS**

Figure 2. Video 2018-4 Screen shot of Austin hugging and showing off newly redecorated car.

The ACE Family's drastic increase in consumption habits correlates with their immense and quick success during the time frame from which the samples were taken. As a family, their wealth through material items changed quite drastically over the course of the two years. Not only did their consumption of material and luxury goods become much more prevalent, they also moved homes from an apartment, to their first large house, and then to another house. While they never seemed to be struggling financially, by video 2018-4 they seemed to have evolved to being much flashier with their wealth. From their cars, their homes, their outfits, and even their children's outfits, the presence of often flashy luxury items became harder to miss. By the end of 2018, the videos reflected that their normal consumption habits of often large luxury purchases became as normal as if a regular everyday shopping trip.

The second mystification code of significance was *content curation* visibility in which the filming and editing processes were made apparent to viewers. Instances of filming and content curation visibility appeared in four of the videos that were sampled, video 2017-4 and the other three which were posted in 2018: 2018-1, 2018-3, 2018-4. By drawing attention to the

content curation processes that take place, these instances serve as reminders of the self-directed nature of the videos, even as they become more successful. Therefore, as these instances are seen more frequently in 2018, this suggests that as they become more popular there is an even greater focus on enforcing their image as authentically filming and preparing their own content. In three of the videos, instances in which the camera was recognized were when there were discussions regarding who should be filming in a given moment or how filming should be done. For example, while Austin did most of the filming, if he wanted to show off something which required both of his hands, if available, Catherine would take over the camera. Instances like these drew attention to the fact that there is a method to their filming processes and that the video could not be completely organic because of it.

The other element that made the content curation more apparent was when instances of content curation decisions were made visible. An example of this includes a moment in video 2017-4 in which Austin is seen acting more intimately with Catherine. She immediately responds by telling him to stop as that behaviour should not be filmed or shown on camera. This reaction from Catherine shows that there are conscious decisions that go into what content is filmed and what is not. It also shows that while the family may seem very natural and open throughout their videos that there is still a selection or curation process of what they are choosing to present of the family. However, sharing this more intimate moment between Austin and Catherine and choosing to include that moment in the video was also an editing decision made by the family. Choosing to show this moment shows that while there are decisions that go into what goes into their videos, that there is a more loving and intimate side to Austin and Catherine's relationship that is often not shown on camera. While not apparent in all of the videos, these instances drew attention to the selective nature of content curation.

Self-Promotion. Another commonly used technique in establishing parasocial relationships through social media is self-promotion (Chen, 2016). Chen described self-promotion as the act of choosing to reveal aspects of oneself to display one's accomplishments and abilities. While this aspect of self-promotion is prevalent in multiple of the ACE Family's videos, another aspect of self-promotion that they exhibit is the self-promotion of their brand. Thus, the two codes identified were self-brand promotion and the promotion of personal skills or accomplishments. These codes and the sub-codes are as follows:

Table 4

Self-Promotion

Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example
Personal Skills and Accomplishments	The skills and accomplishments of one's child (Elle)	Skills or accomplishments of one's child recognized by their parents as being skills or accomplishments	Talking about Elle's intelligence or strength; Elle's ability to win against her parents for certain challenges
	Skills and accomplishments of Austin and Catherine (the parents)	Demonstrating or noting particular accomplishments or skills	Catherine speaking in multiple different languages; Austin demonstrating his basketball skills
Self-Brand Promotion	Featured ACE Family Merchandise	Drawing attention to or purposely featuring their branded merchandise on sale. Can be either quickly in passing or longer features within a video.	Pointing to a shirt they are wearing that is part of their merchandise; laying out many new merchandise items that are on sale
	ACE Family events	Promoting events hosted by the ACE Family	Promoting their ACE Family Charity Basketball event or meet-and-greet events with their fans.
	ACE Family videos/channel	Further promotion of their videos and channel within their video content	Plugging past videos; Discussing upcoming exciting videos to watch out for

The first of the two codes found under Self-Promotion recorded instances in which personal skills or accomplishments were made apparent on camera, either directly or indirectly. While not apparent in every video to the same extent, there was some demonstration of personal skills and abilities in six of the eight sampled videos. Among these there was a total of 19 instances showing their young daughter Elle's skills and accomplishments compared to just four instances of the parents showing their various skills and accomplishments.

In six of the videos, there were various instances in which the parents would draw attention to Elle's abilities, such as being able to score a basket on a toy basketball net, being strong enough to carry her dad's backpack, or being smart enough to recognize if her parents were trying to play a joke on her. These instances of young Elle were spread out over the video samples, although the accomplishments shifted from 2017 to 2018. In the earlier videos, 2017-1, 2017-2, 2017-3, and 2018-1, Elle was younger at around one year old and her accomplishments often would be firsts or things babies would typically be learning. In contrast, as shown through videos 2018-3 and 2018-4, by the end of 2018 Elle was two and a half years old and starting to speak. By then her abilities and accomplishments matched her age at that time. For instance, in 2017 Elle may have been shown congratulated for her ability to carry a bag, whereas in 2018 Elle was shown preparing her own breakfast cereal alone for a few minutes in the kitchen.

The self-promotion of personal skills of the parents appeared in three of the videos that were sampled: 2017-1, 2018-2, and 2018-3. These personal skills of Austin and Catherine were often not directly referred to or recognized as a skill but instead demonstrated for viewers to recognize. In a scene from 2017-1 when Catherine was alone with Elle, she was filmed counting to ten in six different languages. In this instance she showed that she has this ability but the presentation of it made it seem that she was merely trying to teach Elle. In contrast, when Austin

demonstrated some of his skills they were often more direct. For example, in video 2018-2 and 2018-3 Austin showed off his basketball skills in an effort to promote their Charity Basketball event and he noted his own dedication to being a good parent and husband.

The other code within self-promotion that was prevalent in multiple of the sampled videos was self-brand promotion. This code recorded instances in which the ACE Family would directly or indirectly promote their own brand, channel, events, or merchandise. To different extents, their brand promotion was recognized in all of the videos that were sampled, considering they would encourage fans to subscribe or follow them in each video. However, instances in which their promotion would go beyond that to promote merchandise or events appeared in four of the eight sampled videos: 2017-1, 2018-1, 2018-2, and 2018-4. The promotion of ACE Family merchandise as well as their events was more common in their more recent videos from 2018. In video 2017-1 the ACE Family showed off some of their new hats and a jacket that were being introduced as new merchandise. At that point, they were still a relatively new channel and that was basically the extent of their merchandise. By video 2018-3 near the end of 2018, the ACE Family showed off a room full of various new merchandise that had clearly developed leaps and bounds from their initial ACE Family hats at the beginning of 2017 (See Figures 3 and 4). Only in these two videos were multiple ACE Family merchandise items shown and promoted extensively during their videos. In a few other videos there were instances in which the family members were seen wearing some of their merchandise and briefly mentioning it, but that would be the extent of that video's merchandise promotion.

BABY VS LEMON

Figure 3. Video 2017-1 Screenshot of merchandise for sale. This figure demonstrates the early products of the ACE Family's merchandise.

ELLE TEACHES HER BABY SISTER HOW TO DANCE!!! **ADORABLE DANCING SISTERS**

Figure 4. Video 2018-4 Screenshot of merchandise for sale. This figure demonstrates the ACE Family merchandise being sold by the end of 2018.

Openness and Self-Disclosure. Openness and self-disclosure are closely related

techniques that have been proven to be successful in building parasocial relationships in previous

studies and have been combined as a basis for the coding (Chung & Cho, 2017; Kim & Song,

2017; Labrecque, 2014). Coding was conducted for instances of frequent, intimate, and confessional messaging as well as details, beliefs and emotions that are not immediately observable (Chung & Cho, 2017; Kim & Song, 2017). This was further developed into two codes: the sharing of personal information and sharing about YouTubing. These codes as well as sub-codes are described with examples in the following table:

Table 5			
Openness and Self-Disclosure			
Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example
Sharing Personal Information	Updates; Personal and Family Information	Sharing information about immediate or extended family; Providing day-to-day information; Sharing habits, updates, or other information (past or present) that would not be otherwise known	Sharing information about Catherine's parents; Sharing footage from a storm that happened the night before; Filming at doctor's appointments; discussing one's health
	Emotions and Feelings	Sharing personal feelings, beliefs or emotions on various situations	Openly talking about feelings of sadness, happiness, excitement, etc.
	Confessional Information	Confessional information in regards to mistakes or admitting to things	Austin admitting to accidentally have deleted all the footage of a video
YouTubing and YouTube career	YouTube profession	Sharing information about being a YouTuber and what that may look like	Answering common questions about being YouTubers
	Amateur nature of YouTube	Discussing YouTube as an amateur career for themselves or others	Saying and suggesting that anyone can be a YouTuber no matter the skill level or equipment

The first of these two codes, the sharing of personal information, is essentially just the sharing of information that is not immediately observable, which could include a variety of topics. For this reason, five sub-codes were developed. While not every sub-code was present or used to the same extent in each video within the sample, the sharing of personal information was

prevalent in all of the videos, often multiple times per video. Throughout each video, there was consistent information provided of both updates on what was going on and information about themselves or their lives. For instance, in video 2017-1 the video starts off with the family discussing that day's events as well as updates including that Elle was in need of a new mattress. Then, at the store Austin and Catherine provided information on their decision process and other options for Elle that they had tried or used in the past. They consistently continued to provide updates and information like this for the rest of the video and most of the other videos too.

However, beyond just sharing general bits of personal information or providing context throughout the videos, there were also fewer instances in which information was shared regarding feelings, emotions, or confessions. In six of the videos (2017-2, 2017-3, 2017-4, 2018-1, 2018-2, 2018-4), Austin and Catherine blatantly spoke about their emotions and how they were feeling in a given moment, rather than just displaying or conveying an emotion through their mood or actions. In those videos however, they would only usually mention their feelings or emotions once or twice in each video except for videos 2017-4 and 2018-1. In both 2017-4 and 2018-1, more emotion and feelings were discussed due to different events or conversations that brought it on. In 2017-4, Austin had a seemingly open and honest conversation with the viewers in which he discussed aspects of being YouTubers including the emotions and feelings that he has experienced as well as what he hopes for others to experience. Similarly, in the 2018-1 video, a storm from the night before which caused a palm tree to fall brought on some emotions from Austin as he expressed how sad he was that the tree was a casualty of the storm.

Confessional messaging was more rare with only one instance appearing across the eight videos that were sampled in video 2018-2. In that instance, Austin admitted that he had accidentally deleted all of the footage from a video that would have been posted. This confession

was followed up with a plug of a sponsored collaboration with company Seat Geek, as the video would have presumably featured the sponsorship. As this was the only instance of obvious confessional messaging, it suggests that the confession may have been included as a way to still include the information that may have been required by their sponsorship with Seat Geek. Meaning that if it had not been for the collaboration that the confession would not have been as necessary and could have not been mentioned at all.

The other code that was discovered under openness and self-disclosure was in regards to YouTubing. This code recorded instances in which members of the ACE Family would discuss or share their own experiences as YouTubers, answer questions, or share advice. While not a common theme across the videos, the topic of being a YouTuber or a career YouTubing did appear on a couple occasions. In video 2017-4, this code was most prevalent as Austin took over a minute in the video to sit alone with the camera and discuss common questions about YouTubing while also providing motivational advice for curious viewers. Not only was Austin encouraging viewers to jump at opportunities and try YouTubing, he drew upon his own experience from what starting a YouTube channel was like to where they are now. This information would otherwise not have been known or evident through observation and shed light on the ACE Family's journey to becoming highly successful.

Perceived Interactivity. Labrecque (2014) described perceived interactivity as the response and ability to communicate with consumers in a direct fashion, such as through message cues, as an important part of fostering parasocial interaction. Rather than considering the types of information or levels of openness being shared with viewers, the analysis for perceived interactivity looked to determine different ways and techniques the ACE Family was able to seem direct in their interactions as a way to strengthen potential parasocial relationships

with viewers. With this in mind, two codes emerged: direct interaction and emotional appeal.

These codes as well as their sub-codes are shown in the following table:

Table 6			
Perceived Interactivity			
Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example
Direct Interaction	Addressing and including viewers directly	Addressing viewers directly as if speaking directly to viewers; claiming to do something for viewers; showing appreciation for viewers	"hey guys"; giving advice; "I'm gonna cover their eyes" (Austin covers camera lens); speaking as if viewers are there too; Answering questions for viewers; "this is for you guys"
	Encouraging further action and interaction	Encouraging viewers to interact and engage with social media accounts and videos.	"leave a comment down below"; "give this video a thumbs up"
Emotional Appeal and Interaction	Showing or talking about emotion in regards to viewers	Sharing emotions in regards to viewers or showing that they care about their viewers	Expressing that they want all their viewers to be happy
	Re-affirming connection and intimacy	Further demonstrating and affirming connection and intimacy with viewers	Claiming to not keep secrets from the ACE Family; showing concern for their viewers

Throughout the videos sampled, there was constant and consistent direct interaction from the ACE Family to their viewers. Austin and Catherine, and sometimes Elle, would directly address viewers or speak to them as if in conversation. Austin and Catherine also made sure to thank viewers at the end of all the videos. In six of the eight sampled videos (2017-1, 2017-2, 2017-3, 2017-4, 2018-3, 2018-4), Austin and Catherine took this a step further by taking more time out of the videos to express their gratitude. However, while they thanked viewers, on occasion they would also claim to do acts of service to help or support viewers. While not apparent in every video, three of the videos (2017-1, 2018-2, 2018-4) included members of the

ACE Family noting or recognizing doing something for or to the benefit of their subscribers. For instance, in video 2017-1 Austin discussed the events for the day and contents of the video by suggesting that whatever they were doing would be for their viewers. He stated, "today we've got a couple different things going on for you guys". Rather than introducing the video and the family's activities as entirely their own, Austin's statement seemed to suggest and recognize that their activities for the day were to entertain the viewers. These instances emphasized the reciprocal give and take nature of the relationship between the ACE Family and their audiences.

While consistently speaking in a direct manner to viewers through dialogue and to the camera, there was also frequent encouragement for viewers to engage and interact further through various social media channels. Speaking in a direct manner, the family members would ask or instruct viewers to post comments, ask questions, or engage in other interactivity with their channels, and seemingly with them. For instance, in video 2018-1 Austin and Catherine asked their viewers if they say the greeting "what's going on everybody?" with the ACE Family, and asked viewers to comment below to tell them. However, Austin and Catherine are not known to respond to their viewers or address the comments posted on their videos, even after asking viewers to comment. Their lack of responsiveness could be due to the nature of the limited sample of videos focused on their day-to-day lives. They may be more responsive to comments in other types of videos such as with special events or occasions.

Another technique of directness and perceived interactivity that the ACE Family used through their dialogue was by using the term "ACE Family". While the name of the channel and their family unit is the ACE Family, throughout the videos members of the family would address viewers by "ACE Family" as well. Since their family as well as their fan base shared the same

names, this choice promoted a greater sense of equality and inclusiveness between the family members and their fans.

The second technique of emotional appeal specifically towards or regarding their fan base was used on multiple occasions. While certainly not as common as the techniques of perceived interactivity noted above, emotional appeal was only apparent in half of the videos sampled (2017-3, 2017-4, 2018-1, 2018-2, 2018-4) and usually only appeared once within those videos. In these videos, instances with expressions of Austin and Catherine's emotions towards their viewers displayed that beyond being loved and appreciated, their viewers are also cared for by the ACE Family. For instance, in video 2018-2, Austin and Catherine took time to address potential fraudulent tickets being sold for their charity event and warned viewers as well as reiterated detailed instructions to ensure real and reliable ticket purchases. While many events in the world face these issues on a day-to-day basis, Austin and Catherine addressed the issue and presented it as being concerned for and wanting to protect their fans.

Similarly, in one clip of video 2017-4, Austin spoke directly to viewers to address questions about being or becoming YouTubers. After sharing some experiences and giving advice, he went on to state that being a YouTuber makes him and his family happy and ultimately he cares for the happiness and well-being of their fans and subscribers as well. He suggested that since YouTube had been fulfilling for him and his family, that it could also be for viewers interested in YouTubing. After speaking to the camera he returned inside and informed Catherine that he had just had an "intimate conversation with the ACE Family". Recognizing the intimate nature of the conversation to both Catherine and the camera and choosing to include that footage emphasized the nature of the conversation with viewers. Thus, in this instance the emotional appeal technique was used and then made more apparent. Austin seemed to recognize

the quality and uniqueness of the conversation and its potential to further build trusting intimate relationships with their fans.

Gaze. Throughout the eight videos that were sampled, the gaze and filming processes that the ACE Family used contributed to their potential to build parasocial relationships as an aspect of perceived interactivity. The coding revealed three types of gazes common to various scenes in their videos: no gaze, partial direct gaze to the camera, and complete direct gaze to the camera. All three were present in each video with partial gaze as the most prevalent in each of the videos.

The filming was most often done by either Austin or Catherine holding the camera to film themselves and the rest of the family. There was often a partial gaze, meaning that as they interacted with their family members they would also ensure interaction with the camera, often through both dialogue and gaze. Partial gaze consisted of approximately equal amounts of attention being given to family members in the scene as well as the camera. The technique of using a partial gaze while filming added an element of inclusiveness with viewers, as if included in a scene or a conversation. Even more direct, instances of complete direct gaze occurred when both conversation and gaze were entirely directed towards the viewers. Rather than including the viewers in whatever they were doing, the scene would be focused towards the camera and viewers to discuss with them completely as if directly interacting. Examples of these scenes include the introductions and conclusions of the videos in which Austin and Catherine would welcome or thank viewers. Finally, the third and least common was when there was no direct gaze towards the camera. These instances often took place when the person filming was capturing content with no direct information or dialogue from the person filming or the other people involved in a scene. For example, in video 2017-2 there were clips of Austin capturing

Elle on camera playing, wandering, or watching television. These instances seemed to capture the family in a more natural setting as they did not actively engage with the camera.

Throughout the sampled videos, elements of various gazes and all four parasocial techniques of mystification, self-promotion, openness and self-disclosure, and perceived interactivity were used frequently and consistently. Although, how each technique was used sometimes varied or shifted over the two-year period. While elements of mystification were seen used throughout, display of wealth became a much more featured and apparent element in the 2018 videos rather than the 2017 videos sampled. Likewise, while self-promotion was used throughout the videos, there was an apparent increase of self-brand promotion from 2017 to 2018. The use of openness, perceived interactivity, and gaze remained more level over the two-year period. Along with other affordances of UGC, the various parasocial techniques and gazes are permitted by the UGC nature of the videos and platform, contributing to the creation of the ACE Family's presentations of everyday life and family.

User-Generated Content. As YouTube vloggers, the very notion means that the ACE Family uses and participates in developing user-generated content. However, through UGC there are affordances that can be used to further encourage parasocial interactions and provide versatility in content. All of the sampled videos being UGC themselves further encouraged viewers to engage in their other UGC channels and content, and use techniques that UGC affords that may contribute to greater parasocial interactions.

Throughout each of the videos, the ACE Family members would ask viewers to subscribe to their channel, engage through the comments, or like the video. On occasion, as shown in videos 2017-4 and 2018-2, they would also mention some of their other social media accounts and content posted on those accounts. While each video was consistent in asking viewers to

interact and engage with the individual videos, there were only two instances in which other social media accounts and content were mentioned. In both of these instances, their accounts and posts on Snapchat were mentioned to reference something that happened that was posted to a different social media platform. For instance, in video 2017-4 Austin referenced a Snapchat video that was posted of Elle scoring a basket on a toy net. As primarily YouTube influencers, the lack of references to their other social media accounts and content seemed to indicate a focus on their YouTube channel content. However, even with a YouTube focus, the access that audiences have to the ACE Family's multiple social media channels provides audiences with more ways to access, partake, and stay engaged with the family.

In preparation for their charity basketball event in video 2017-2, they also stated that there would be a livestream on YouTube for viewers to watch from home if they were unable to attend the event. While the event would be an opportunity for some viewers to be physically close to the ACE Family, the introduction of the livestream option allowed for viewers from home to feel included as it happened. Instead of just posting their regular YouTube video content a day or two after filming as they typically would, the ACE Family promised a live experience for their fans no matter if they were physically at the event or not. The livestream capabilities in addition to their regular YouTube video content is a feature through UGC platforms such as YouTube to ensure greater interactivity and reach to fans and subscribers.

Although the ACE Family does not engage in crowdfunding services such as Patreon to earn their income, their channel itself is monetized and they continuously expand their own merchandise. The ACE Family's own merchandise has grown and evolved since they started their channel a few years ago, and this was reflected in the sample. Video 2017-1 featured a scene near the end in which Austin and Catherine showed some ACE Family hats for sale. By

the end of the sampled videos, video 2018-4 featured a significant portion of the content on

introducing and displaying their new ACE Family merchandise. During this video Austin,

Catherine, and Elle went through the different merchandise items together in a fun way by

pretending Elle was shopping the items with her parents being the store owners. In this way, the

ACE Family was able to show off and explain many of the individual products for just under 12

minutes of the 25 minute video.

Beyond these lengthier scenes focused on promoting their merchandise, there were also

multiple instances in which members of the family wore an item from their merchandise and

plugged their merchandise website. These videos and particular scenes encouraged their fans to

purchase the merchandise and engage in consumption, often with the help of or presence of their

daughter Elle. As YouTube is presumably their primary form of income, the ACE Family's

increasing efforts over the course of the sampled videos displayed their efforts to monetize on

their success, not just through more subscribers but also through the sales of their merchandise.

The very nature of UGC affords YouTube vloggers, and allows the ACE Family to use

techniques to encourage engagement and build parasocial relationships so that audiences

contribute to their success and income through watching videos and purchasing merchandise.

Throughout the eight sampled videos, there were also instances in which sponsorships,

giveaways, and shout outs were mentioned. These instances seemed to encourage more

engagement and perceived parasocial interaction between the ACE Family and their fans.

Instances of sponsorships were apparent only in videos 2017-3 and 2018-2. At a similar rate,

giveaways were only mentioned in videos 2017-1, 2017-3, and 2017-4. The sponsorship that was

evident in two videos was by the same company, Seat Geek, a ticket purchasing website and app.

The lack of sponsorships with the consistency of promoting the same company twice further

instilled that the ACE Family was selective in their sponsorships and perhaps supported the app

beyond their own monetary gain.

Overall, the video samples demonstrated consistent and significant usage of already

recognized and effective strategies for enhancing parasocial relationships within the broader

categories of mystification, self-promotion, openness and self-disclosure, and perceived

interactivity. However, emergent coding revealed several alternative techniques within those

categories including the prevalence of self-brand promotion within the self-promotion strategy.

As a YouTube family, their videos conveyed a naturalness in filming their home life as they

exploitatively used parasocial techniques, often as a result of affordances of UGC. The ACE

Family's combination of the consistent use of parasocial techniques along with taking advantage

of affordances that UGC permits work together to generate engaging content and encourage

audience loyalty to monetize their brand.

Research Question 2: Family Representations

This research question considers the images and representations of family that the ACE

Family conveys through their day-to-day YouTube vlogs. Through the sample of videos chosen

to most closely represent the ACE Family's everyday lives, the analysis was conducted to

determine how they portray family and what those portrayals are communicating to viewers.

Except for the last of the videos sampled, the ACE Family consisted of Austin, Catherine and

Elle. Baby Alaïa was born in October of 2018 and was only born by the time of video 2018-4.

Thus, Catherine was pregnant for a couple of the other videos prior to that. Upon coding the

dialogue and visuals, codes that were developed included family involvement in the channel,

familial relationships, filming locations, presence, and filming process.

Family Involvement and Presence. As a family YouTube channel, it comes as no surprise that there is a strong family presence throughout all of the videos. The codes that emerged from observing the familial involvement and relationships included child involvement, family presence, and familial relationships. All of the family members contribute in some way to the videos and channel. Their involvement in the videos contributed to the understanding of the various roles within their family as well as with the videos, channel, and filming process.

As the only child in most of the videos, Elle was frequently featured in the videos. Elle is a crucial member to creating their family image and was seen in most parts of the videos with her parents. In fact, the analysis revealed that many of their activities from games or family time at home to outings together were to benefit or entertain their children in some way. From shopping for Elle's new mattress in 2017-1, to the day spent at the park in 2017-2, to taking Elle to the doctor in 2018-1, to letting Elle pretend to shop their new merchandise in 2018-4, all of the videos consistently seemed to revolve around her. Even in parts of the videos that did not seem to revolve around Elle, the family managed to still include her. In video 2017-4 when Austin surprised Catherine with the purchase of dirt bikes, the couple made sure to give Elle a turn on the bike with her mother. When not on the bike, Elle was held by her parents and included in their conversations. This showed that even in moments that seemed to be more about the parents, as much as possible, the family tried to incorporate their daughters. This type of involvement was common and consistent throughout all of the videos. In addition to appearing, Elle participated and was encouraged to participate with the filming process, such as by interacting with the camera. By the end of 2018, Elle was a bit older at two years old and as she learned to speak she interacted more with the camera, even voluntarily addressing the ACE Family and wanting to speak to the camera directly by video 2018-4.

Elle's frequent appearance and involvement in the channel was emphasized by the use of parasocial techniques to revolve around Elle. As mentioned above, parasocial techniques such as mystification, self-promotion, and openness all heavily drew attention to or revolved around Elle. For instance, with the mystification technique, the content of the videos was carefully curated to present a particular image of themselves. Even with their displays of wealth, Elle was often incorporated into those elements such as by drawing more attention to Elle's designer outfits than her parents'. In similar fashion, when using the openness or self-disclosure strategy Austin and Catherine frequently shared information about Elle as the main subject to be open about. Elle's consistent role throughout the themes of the videos and creating that image of family is crucial, and thus, the use of various parasocial techniques further enforced those ideas of family and centering their family, lives, and channel around Elle.

In addition to Elle's frequent presence in the videos, her parents Austin and Catherine were just as frequently featured in the videos. The great majority of scenes featured all three core family members and by video 2018-4, newborn Alaïa was also incorporated and shown with her family. While most of video 2018-4 featured Austin, Catherine and Elle, the family made sure to incorporate the newborn by holding her while Elle danced for her.

Throughout the eight videos, only five (2017-1, 2017-2, 2018-1, 2018-2, 2018-4) included clips which featured Austin and Catherine together separate from the rest of their family. In those five videos, the scenes which just featured the couple were infrequent, with only a few instances per video compared to the often ten to twenty instances in which the family would be featured altogether. When Austin and Catherine appeared in scenes or clips without Elle there was often a reason. For instance, in video 2017-1, there were a few instances in which Austin and Catherine seemed to be alone, however Elle was sleeping in a stroller nearby. In

video 2017-2, the instances in which Austin and Catherine were the only ones seen took place while they were still at the park they brought Elle to. While she was not seen in a few clips, she was still there with them and was seen in the following clips at the park and elsewhere.

Other instances of the parents alone seemed to be moments in which they were addressing viewers and providing information. In video 2018-4, the video opened with Austin and Catherine filming at home and showing off the new colours of their cars. During these scenes, the dialogue and content was almost entirely directed at viewers to provide information on what was going on in their lives. Similarly, in video 2018-6 Austin and Catherine were shown alone when he went to check on Catherine who was experiencing pregnancy pains. While he checked on her, they talked to the camera about the pain as well as previous experiences from her first pregnancy. They also used that scene to close out the video and mention upcoming announcements to look out for. Across the videos, the instances in which Austin and Catherine appeared alone were more often used to share information with viewers than aspects of their relationship as a couple.

Familial Relationships and Dynamics. The ACE Family's dynamics in their videos reflect the nature of their relationships and thus project a particular image of family onto the internet. Expressions of love were common in five of the videos (2017-2, 2017-4, 2018-1, 2018-3, 2018-4) including expressions of love between the family members or for the family to the camera. On multiple occasions, Austin spoke about the love he has for "his girls" and talked about wanting to give them everything. While Austin and Catherine would often be playful and loving towards each other, their relationship as a couple and as parents appeared happy, comfortable, and easy. The time that Austin and Catherine spent with Elle in the videos came across as playful and lighthearted as the family often joked and played together. Difficult,

painful, or unpleasant moments were uncommon, and when featured often would not relate to dealing with parenting or issues with Elle, but rather health issues or Austin and Catherine's own problems such as difficulties with Catherine's pregnancy.

Another aspect that conveyed the ACE Family's family dynamics and presented portrayals of roles and norms of family members was the language that was used. To each other and to the camera, the members of the ACE Family spoke casually, often using trendy phrases or slang. For example, in video 2017-4 Austin used the phrase "give me some knuckles". Phrases like these are popularized in popular culture and are understood amongst young adults and young people. Their energy and playfulness combined with their trendy language reinforces their image of being young and cool, even as parents. Furthermore, Austin and Catherine seemed to say whatever came naturally to them, occasionally using potentially inappropriate or explicit language. On occasion, swearing or sexually suggestive language was used, often in a playful way. Most of the instances of explicit language were spoken by Austin. While the swearing and explicit language were certainly not common to all of the videos, there were five videos (2017-2, 2017-4, 2018-1, 2018-2, 2018-3) in which potentially inappropriate language was used. While the swearing was certainly not overwhelming to the videos, it is worth noting that those moments were caught on camera, chosen to be included in their videos, and often would take place in front of their young daughter Elle.

While Austin seemed more relaxed about the use of his language, Catherine seemed more careful, sometimes even critiquing Austin's choice of language. In video 2017-4 Austin playfully used sexually suggestive language and actions towards Catherine and she responded by saying that he should not be doing that on camera. Across the videos that were sampled, this was the only instance that displayed the intimate or romantic side to their relationship. Instead, more of

the content was focused on being a family together with their children. Occasional peeks into their relationship add to their image of being playful, young, spontaneous, and in love. Their language combined with their ease and playfulness in their parenting style displays a relaxed approach to parenting and family life.

      Filming process. Throughout the videos, Austin and Catherine did most of the filming themselves, often holding the camera directly in front of them to include themselves in the frame. The analysis revealed that Austin did most of the filming and he had the most individual clips throughout the videos. While Catherine did do some filming in many of the videos that were sampled, she often filmed moments in which Austin could not. For instance, in video 2018-1 Austin and Catherine discussed the storm that occurred the night before and to show the extent of the damage, Austin passed the camera to Catherine to better capture the entirety of the situation with him in the frame.

      The choices that the ACE Family makes in their filming from who does the filming to what they are filming reflects their image as a family. Throughout the videos it became obvious that Austin was the one that was most involved with the filming process. Unlike having a film crew such as in broadcast or reality television, they act as their own film crew as they film themselves. While the whole family was consistently featured in the videos, Austin took on the dominant role by being the most present in the videos and the most actively engaged with the camera while filming the majority of the scenes. Catherine, while also involved in the filming, was more often seen performing typically motherly duties such as feeding the children than Austin who was more often seen playing with the children. In video 2017-1, Catherine filmed alone as she gave Elle a bath. Then in video 2018-4, Austin filmed with Catherine not seen in the background, stating that while she was also in the room, she was feeding their daughter Alaïa.

Moments like these contribute to their portrayal of family. While at first glance the ACE Family may seem like a completely modern family through their platform, they also represent aspects of the traditional nuclear family which contributes to their recognizability as a family (Douglas, 1996).

The analysis also revealed that there were a variety of filming locations that were used in the video samples. A common pattern throughout all of the videos was that a significant portion of each video was filmed at home. Most of the videos would both start and end with filming at home, and sometimes would include more footage at home throughout the day. When not at home, the filming locations were clear destinations or activities. For instance, in video 2017-1 the family had a shopping day to purchase a new mattress for Elle's crib. The video was framed by filming at home before and after shopping, with more footage at home in between as they set up the crib and enjoyed family time. Similar to this video, the locations not at home often centered around family activities. Other filming locations included a trip to a park, the family having dinner together, and going to a doctors appointment.

Through YouTube the ACE Family has documented their lives over time, also seeming to document their relationships and success. The eight videos documented their quick rise to fame which was evident through the material aspects of their lives. However, over the two-year period, many of the family's involvements, presence, and relationships with each other and the channel seemed to remain relatively consistent. As a family channel, an aspect that stood out across the videos was the consistent focus on their children. From the filming, to the activities, to the various locations, Elle was almost always at the forefront and involved with whatever her parents had planned. As a family, the focus on family dynamics and relationships with the children was more apparent than the romantic relationship between Austin and Catherine.

Beyond Elle's increase in involvement as she grew into being able to speak and interact with the camera, Austin and Catherine's involvement with the channel and camera was more or less the same across the samples.

Discussion

This section aims to interpret and discuss the findings and analysis above. While many of the previously determined strategies were identified throughout the ACE Family's videos, there were also various alternative aspects to those strategies. Considering families in the media, the ACE Family does not present an entirely new image. Their ability to present particular images of family comes through their videos as a result of the various aspects and affordances of parasocial interaction and UGC at their disposal.

Research Question 1: Parasocial Interaction and User-Generated Content

In the videos that were sampled to represent the ACE Family's everyday lives, the ACE Family used various previously identified strategies as well as introduced new aspects to existing strategies. The techniques of mystification, self-promotion, openness and self-disclosure, and perceived interactivity are common to successful YouTubers, and most proved to be consistent and frequent techniques that the ACE Family used throughout their videos (Chen, 2016; Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014). These strategies were used in similar ways as identified in previous research which further shows their prevalence and importance. However, there were also elements that the ACE Family used which further expanded those categories.

As the ACE Family films, edits and posts their own videos, there is an inherent level of mystification that takes place (Chen, 2016). According to Chen (2016), mystification tactics are important to constructing particular images of individuals and their expertise to encourage trust from audiences. The content of YouTuber's videos, similar to what may be seen in reality television, is curated to present certain aspects of people's lives or personalities in order to develop a certain image or storyline (Chen, 2016). The family focused footage and increasing prevalence of luxury goods were both results of the mystification that took place to share an

image of family that is always together even as they become more and more successful. The

additional attention drawn to aspects of filming or content curation re-affirmed levels of

mystification while also breaking it down by pointing it out to viewers. Drawing attention to the

filming and content curation rather acted as instances of un-mystification to the inherent aspects

of mystification in YouTube videos.

The frequent, intimate, and highly confessional messaging that occurs in YouTube videos

to build on the sense of parasocial relationships was consistently present throughout the sampled

videos (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014). Chung and Cho (2017) noted the parallels of

revealing information to others as relationships evolve. Therefore, to achieve the sense of

parasocial relationships there is a necessary amount and quality of information that needs to be

shared over time (Chung & Cho, 2017). Throughout the ACE Family's videos, there was

consistent context provided which often required them to be open about their lives and

experiences. While this remained consistent throughout their videos to maintain a certain degree

of constant openness and thus, trustworthiness, the instances of more intimate or confessional

moments were far fewer. In particular, the intimate looks into their lives or the admission of

mistakes offered looks into more private aspects of their lives which otherwise would not have

been observable. This balance was able to further simulate the bond of real-life friendships

necessary for strong parasocial relationships (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014).

The strategy of self-promotion was apparent on several occasions as discussed in the

findings. In both this study and previous research, such as by Chen (2016), instances of self-

promotion through performative skills were apparent and carefully chosen to promote particular

aspects of individuals. Elle's skills and accomplishments were the most acknowledged of the

personal skills in the family throughout the sampled videos. As a family YouTube channel, the

focus and attention on Elle's personal growth and abilities showed off not only her own accomplishments, but her parents' roles in it. Therefore, by drawing attention to or promoting her skills, they were further enforcing ideas of family, children, and growth.

The ACE Family's videos also featured an aspect to self-promotion beyond that of their own personal skills, their brand. Whether through discussing their channel, their events, or their merchandise, whenever relevant or possible they were sure to remind viewers of those aspects as if an extension to themselves. As their subscriber base grew, the elements of their brand also grew, giving them more to promote. Rather than focusing on just promoting their own personal skills, they put emphasis on promoting their channel and brand. While not exactly promoting an individual skillset, the brand promotion was also selectively done to reveal the positive and ideal aspects to viewers (Chen, 2016). Thus, their attention to promoting their brand is not to be overlooked as a strategy to encourage parasocial interactions and relationships.

Throughout the videos, the increase of the ACE Family's brand's prevalence and promotion reflected their channel's success through the use of various parasocial techniques and aspects or affordances of UGC. These elements make their immense success possible without the use of crowdfunding platforms. The ACE Family is able to generate profit through their merchandise in addition to their channel and other sponsorships that gives fans the opportunity to purchase images of the family to carry with them and use in their everyday lives. While influencers already thrive and find success through audience and electronic word-of-mouth, the sales of the ACE Family's merchandise creates even greater opportunities for word-of-mouth promotion or awareness of their brand and channel offline (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki, 2018).

Perceived interactivity was an aspect of parasocial relationships that has been introduced and been more effective as a result of UGC (Labrecque, 2014). This strategy was well displayed

across the ACE Family's videos as they addressed viewers directly, looked into the camera, and appealed to audiences through emotion. An effective way that perceived interactivity has been used in the past is through the dialogue, that is, addressing viewers in groups or as individuals, perhaps even by name (Labrecque, 2014). Throughout their videos, the ACE Family used this strategy. They frequently addressed viewers either by their names during their shout outs at the end of their videos, or seemingly directly throughout the videos. Occasionally, the ACE Family would also incorporate emotional appeals to establish intimacy into their already direct interaction to further enhance the potential of parasocial relationships to form (Labrecque, 2014).

Camera angle and gaze have been used in television in the past to further establish parasocial relationships and proved to be an effective technique of perceived interactivity (Auter, 1992). Through television programming, there is rarely direct gaze or conversation towards the camera or audience (Auter, 1992). However, through YouTube there is an ability for consistent direct gaze and conversation that may further encourage parasocial relationships to develop (Auter,1992). The nature of being UGC enabled the ACE Family to use this strategy of consistent eye contact and direct dialogue with the camera and their viewers frequently and consistently. On television, this level of interactivity is uncommon and often seems unnatural when it does take place as it is often conveyed as being separate, such as by characters stepping out of character (Auter, 1992). The regular use of the ACE Family's direct gaze and conversational tones further encouraged parasocial relationships to develop in ways that television or broadcast programming often cannot.

Unlike traditional television programming, the ACE Family was able to use certain techniques such as perceived interactivity frequently and more effectively due to being UGC. Although the ACE Family did use many previously identified strategies identified in parasocial

interaction theory frequently, they also used alternative techniques under those strategies which set them apart from other forms of media or influencers (Kim & Song, 2016; Chen, 2016).

Research Question 2: Family Representations

As family social media influencers, the ACE Family represents an image of family that draws both similarities and differences from other family representations in the media, especially due to the UGC and amateur nature of their presentation (Abidin, 2017). Similar to regular or reality television programming, the ACE Family also portrays aspects of the routine and the ordinary, while simultaneously glamourizing aspects of family structures or lifestyles (Alabada, 2000; Douglas, 1996; Matheson, 2007; Stiffler et al., 2013). By definition, the ACE Family is a nuclear family with two parents and their dependant children living altogether (Skill & Robinson, 1994). This creates a recognizable and seemingly ordinary image of family at first glance, similar to other families presented in the media (Douglas, 1996). However, in many ways the ACE Family offers other representations of family through their relationships, roles and activities. With expectations for images in the media to represent modern culture, as programs and the media often strive to do, the ACE Family conveys their ability to stay current through their consumption habits and language (Stiffler et al., 2013).

Unlike common middle-class family images that seem to suggest they are happier than the privileged, and unlike certain other portrayals such as the Kardashians which show elite lives of luxury, the ACE Family balances these lifestyles (McClain, 2013; Thomas & Callahan, 1982). Influencers often convey or aim to convey images that present themselves as both relatable and goal worthy (Abidin, 2017). The ACE Family's balance of aspects of a luxury lifestyle with normal everyday family activities and relationships assists them in creating a similar image to convey to audiences. The two-year time period from which the video samples were collected

represent a time of immense change and growth in success for the ACE Family. However, as a family their relationships and interactions seemed to stay consistent during that time. The financial success that is apparent through their videos shows their rise to success.

Unlike reality television programs that scrutinize families for their parenting styles, habits, or work-home balance, the ACE Family's content does not appear to actively air their problem points as a way to work towards self-improvement (Matheson, 2007; McClain, 2013). Instead, the ACE Family's video content emphasizes a happy unproblematic life that revolves around their daughters. Since it is not professionally produced content and the parents are the ones filming, they operate both behind and in front of the camera, often simultaneously. Rather than focusing on the adult lives of the family and the conflicts they may experience in their lives socially or professionally, the videos are all about the family unit. The prevalence and focus on the familial relationships and on the ACE Family's daughters far outweighs the emphasis on the parental relationship or other aspects to the parents' lives beyond just being a family and a parent. This focus limits potential dramatizations often seen on television (Matheson, 2007).

As other influencers often do, the ACE Family has positioned themselves using calibrated amateurism to perform images of authenticity while establishing their career through social media (Abidin, 2017). The ACE Family's curation and filming decisions correlate with the various techniques of parasocial interactions that are apparent across the sampled videos. The parasocial techniques of mystification, self-promotion, openness, and perceived interactivity contribute to the ACE Family's representations and image (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014). To be used as effectively and frequently as they are, the successful development of parasocial relationships for the ACE Family requires them to share and highlight aspects of their lives which ultimately creates their image of family (Abidin, 2017; Chung & Cho, 2017).

Similar to reality television, the ACE Family sells their personal lives to the public, although YouTubers retain more control over their videos and image than professionally produced television content (McClain, 2013). Instead of sharing the business side of their lives, as seen in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, the ACE Family's YouTube channel is already a major aspect to their business. Thus, rather than engaging in obvious business dealings or discussions, the ACE Family uses their channel as a platform for further promotion of themselves and their merchandise. These images of family and business are often difficult to differentiate between and thus exemplifies the non-traditional family life that the ACE Family represents (McClain, 2013). Their activities, tremendous focus on their children, and their particular personal and professional lives set them apart as they are still able to convey normalcy.

Therefore, while the ACE Family may not represent a total change away from broadcast television or reality television, the nature of their image through UGC permits them the ability to use techniques of parasocial interaction to sometimes greater extents. Similar to television portrayals, they are recognizable as a family unit and that remains their focus point throughout their videos (Douglas, 1996). The focus within their videos as being a family channel is especially evident through centering many of the activities around their children and spending less time on the other relationships that may exist such as the romantic aspect to the parents' relationship or relationships they have outside of the family. Even with their immense success on social media, they are able to continue to consistently use parasocial strategies and techniques to maintain their videos as being family focused. Their nature of being amateur creators selling authentic images without professionally produced content to focus on turmoil or situations for resolution portrays the ACE Family's life as easy going, natural, and relatable while still being goal worthy such as through elements of luxury.

Conclusion

With their success as one of the most successful and subscribed to family YouTube channels, the exploration of the ACE Family's videos aimed to determine the techniques and portrayals that the influencer family used and conveyed. This study has detailed how the ACE Family commonly uses a combination of previously identified parasocial interaction strategies with additional alternatives. The techniques that were so frequently used across the videos both encouraged and permitted the ACE Family to feature aspects of their family and ability to convey normalcy. Thus, this paper contributes to the understandings of how parasocial interaction theory can be utilized in creating or communicating representations through social media. As social media influencers are continuously popularized, how families are represented through social media also contributes to understanding the ever evolving media representations.

Limitations

To evaluate the various portrayals of family that come through UGC and family influencers, a larger sample would be required to form more conclusive results. The sample that was analyzed for this paper considered only a portion of the videos that seemed to be most representative of the ACE Family's everyday lives. However, the ACE Family is an active channel that is constantly posting new content and a wide variety of videos. Their other videos, such as prank videos or celebrations, while not necessarily normal to their everyday lives, may still be necessary to understanding their family life and dynamic. The sample also does not include the newer videos in 2019 as the family adjusts to life with two young children. The videos since the birth of Alaïa would also need to be considered to capture the changing dynamics of the ACE Family's life and family representations.

Furthermore, to understand what family portrayals are like throughout social media influencers and how that offers information or images that are important or different, more family influencers need to be examined and then compared with other media representations such as through television and film. In considering families in the media, many more families and mediums would need to be considered in depth in addition to different types of family influencers. Due to the nature and sample size of this paper, it would be impossible to conclusively say what the ACE Family's representations of family mean or represent in comparison to all the other family portrayals in the media.

Future Research

While this paper successfully explored and considered parasocial interaction in relation to family through social media platforms, there is still more research to be explored in this subject area. This paper focused on dialogue and elements of visuals and interactions from a limited sample of videos. Future study may consider a larger sample of videos to analyze the various family dynamics at play. It would also be useful to consider other family portrayals in the media in greater depth and the parasocial techniques that other families use across a variety of mediums. Regarding publics and modern home life, further research could also explore how family influencer portrayals or social media may be impacting young families in terms of home life, dynamics, and the family presence on everyday peoples' social media accounts.

In conclusion, the ACE Family uses various techniques of parasocial interaction that are permitted by UGC to portray images of regular family life while creating lasting parasocial relationships. Although they are trendy and seem new, their recognizability as a family draws similarities to and challenges other portrayals of family commonly in the media. Although not offering an entirely new image of family, the ACE Family demonstrates the evolving

representations of family in the media by becoming seemingly more representative of regular

families and regular family life while simultaneously maintaining their goal worthiness.

Appendix A- Video Samples

Video Samples for Data Collection					
Video	Date Posted	Title	Length	Description	URL
2017-1	Feb 24, 2017	BABY VS LEMON	19:42	The ACE Family goes shopping for baby Elle's mattress followed by some family time at home. During their family time they also do a lemon challenge with Elle before showing off some of their new merchandise.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mI6ysZt8xOg&t=891s
2017-2	Jun 3, 2017	DADDY DRINKS BREAST MILK!!! (HE LOST A BET)	13:18	The ACE Family spends some time at home playing with Elle before spending the day at a playground together. Later, they go out to have dinner before returning and concluding the video at home.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbCAJZpWwFE
2017-3	Jul 31, 2017	SHOULD WE GET HIM???	11:38	The ACE Family spends some family time out at an undisclosed location before going to visit some puppies. Then, they go home to recap their day and spend time together. Near the end of the video they play a little game and all taste very sour candy.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9h51ML21wQs&t=475s
2017-4	Nov 9, 2017	BABY VS. EXTREME SOUR WARHEAD (HILARIOUS REACTION)	15:52	The video starts off with Austin picking up food to bring home to his family. Then, he surprises Catherine with his new purchases of dirt bikes. After testing out the bikes, the ACE Family hangs out at home and tries extreme warhead candies.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol8nBrFq7gA&t=787s
2018-1	Jan 9, 2018	WE HATE DOING THIS!!!	12:41	The ACE Family gets ready for the day together before showing footage and talking about a storm from the night before. After investigating the damage from the storm the family goes to the doctor for Elle's pediatric check-up. The video ends with the family back at home and feeding Elle medicine.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkJx93eB3Jg&t=638s

2018-2	May 31, 2018	CATHERINE IS IN SERIOUS PAIN!!!	12:19	The ACE Family goes to the venue of their upcoming charity event, exploring and addressing questions and concerns of viewers. Later in the day, Catherine lies in bed in pain from her pregnancy. Catherine reflects and compares those pains to her experiences in her first pregnancy.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEOD0CQsJLM
2018-3	Sep 15, 2018	PREPARING FOR A HOME WATER BIRTH!!!	18:51	Elle prepares breakfast for herself and eats with her dad, Austin. Then, while Catherine is out running errands, the two of them set up their bath tub as if a water birth so they can all explore what it might be like if they are somehow unable to make it to the hospital on time. Once Catherine returns home, her new purchases along with other recent purchases are shown before testing out the previously prepared bath.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tL5n51oCBqs
2018-4	Nov 20, 2018	ELLE TEACHES HER BABY SISTER HOW TO DANCE!!! **ADORABLE DANCING SISTERS**	25:25	The ACE Family updates viewers on what's been going on in their lives and shows off the new colours of their cars. Then, they go through much of their new ACE Family merchandise from their living room as Elle pretends to shop. Later, Elle dances with her newborn sister and parents to music.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjS99tqYPcE

Appendix B – Parasocial Interaction and UGC Coding

Mystification

Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Display of Wealth	Shopping/ Conspicuous Consumption	3			4				8
	Designer/high end items	2			2	2		3	4
Filming and Content Curation	Content Curation or Editing				1		1		
	Filming and Camera					3		1	1

Self-Promotion

Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Personal Skills and Accomplishments	The skills and accomplishments of one's child (Elle)	9	3		5	1		1	
	Skills and accomplishments of Austin and Catherine (the parents)	1					1	2	
Self-Brand Promotion	Featured ACE Family Merchandise	7					2		23
	ACE Family events						6		
	ACE Family videos/channel	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	3

Openness and Self-Disclosure									
Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Sharing Personal Information	Updates; Personal and Family Information	8	3	4		6	10	5	3
	Emotions and Feelings		1	1	4	4	5		1
	Confessional Information				1		1		
YouTubing and YouTube career	YouTube profession				1				
	Amateur nature of YouTube				1				

Perceived Interactivity									
Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Direct Interaction	Addressing and including viewers directly	36	15	28	23	17	36	15	38
	Encouraging further action and interaction	4	2	3	3	4	4	5	9
Emotional Appeal and Interaction	Showing or talking about emotion in regards to viewers				1	7	3		
	Re-affirming connection and intimacy			1	1				5

Elements of User-Generated Content								
Code	Instances							
	2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Referencing other social media accounts				1		1		
Discussion about using livestream						2		
Plugging future/next video(s)						2		1
giveaway	1		1	1				
Shout out to brands	1		1				1	2
Shout out to people	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
sponsorship			1		1			

Appendix C- Family and Filming Coding

Family Involvement									
Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017 -1	2017 -2	2017 -3	2017 -4	2018 -1	2018 -2	2018 -3	2018 -4
Child Involvement	Encouraging Elle to engage in scene	2		6	5	1	1	3	8
	Voluntary child participation							6	2
Familial Relationships	Expressions of love	3	1		1	2		3	1
	Romantic (parental) relationship				1				
	Preparing for/talking about newborn							6	5

Visual Coding									
Code	Sub-Code	Instances							
		2017-1	2017-2	2017-3	2017-4	2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4
Filming Location	Home	15	2	2	13	6	3	11	12
	Appointment					2			
	Family outing (e.g., park, mall, restaurant)	11	3	1		4	4		
Material Consumption	Luxury/ designer product		3	2		1		6	3
	ACE Family merchandise (seen or worn)	11				4			33
Family Presence	All members (3 or 4)	20	7	5	9	7	3	7	3
	Catherine and Elle	1							
	Austin and Elle	1	1	2		1		3	1
	Austin and Catherine	3	2			3	1		4
	Austin only			1	6	1	2		
	Elle only							1	
Gaze	Complete Gaze	5	10	5	5	4	5	1	5
	Partial Gaze	17	4	1	10	7	2	9	6
	No Gaze	7	7	8		2		2	1
Filming	Austin Filming	20	10	9	14	12	6	6	7
	Catherine filming	8	6		1	1			5
	Camera on tripod or stand	1		3					
	Elle filming/ holding camera							1	

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