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lightningtalks

WIGGINS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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Sociology

UNDERSTANDING TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICE ADDICTION IN AMERICA

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Wiggins Memorial Library
Lightning Talks
Fall 2022



WHAT DO I STUDY?

- *How prevalent is technological device addiction in the broader adult population in the U.S.?*
- *What social and demographic variables are related to technological device addiction?*
- *What is the relationship between meaning-seeking and technological device addiction?*
- *What is the relationship between technological device addiction and social integration? How do the tech-addicted feel about their social relationships?*



HOW DO I STUDY IT?

- **Secondary Data Analysis / Survey Research**
 - **Baylor Religion Survey**
- **Key Questions / Variables:**
 - **Tech Addiction**
 - I feel addicted to the technological devices I have.
 - I would panic if my phone suddenly stopped working.
 - **Social and Demographic Variables**
 - Education, Work Status, Gender, Social Media Use, etc.
 - **Meaning in Life Questions (Steger, 2006)**
 - I am seeking something meaningful in my life.
 - I have found a satisfying life purpose.
 - **Social and Felt Integration**
 - Family Closeness
 - Friends Closeness
 - People Dislike Me
 - Missed Out on Fun
 - Feel Important to Others
 - Feel Helpless



WHAT HAVE I FOUND?

“Who’s an iAddict?: A Sociodemographic Exploration of Device Addiction Among American Adults.” *Social Science Quarterly*.

- Roughly **one-fourth of American adults self-report tech addiction**, which is correlated with increased **education, employment, and social media use** (Nelson and Pieper, 2020).

“‘Maladies of Infinite Aspiration’: Smartphones, Meaning-Seeking, and Anomigogenesis.” *Sociological Perspectives*.

- **Seeking meaning in one’s life** is positively correlated with reports of smartphone attachment (Nelson and Pieper, 2022).

“Integration or ‘Instagrations’: A Closer Look at Connection in the Digital Age.” *In progress*.

- Tech-addicted people **feel less close to their friends** and are **more likely to report fear of missing out and feeling like people dislike them** (Nelson and Pieper, in progress).



DIGITAL DURKHEIM

New media

Old problems

DIGITAL DURKHEIM

Tech addiction as a “malady of infinite aspiration” (Durkheim, 1925)

Moderns are “powerless to fulfill themselves because they have been **emancipated from all limitations**” (Durkheim, 1925)

With **no boundaries** to guide online behavior, seeking may lead to **addiction** precisely because smartphones provide **everything**.

A person wearing a dark cap and glasses is seated at a wooden table in a dimly lit setting, likely a cafe or office at night. They are looking down at a smartphone held in their hands. A laptop is open on the table in front of them, displaying some content on its screen. The background is filled with out-of-focus city lights and a modern architectural structure, creating a bokeh effect. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused.

“INSTAGRATION” & ANOMIE

“INSTAGRATION” & ANOMIE



- Tech as telos
 - Postman (1995) on “god of technology”
- For some users, tech promises to relieve anomie, but actually ends up worsening it
- Tech offers feeling of connection, but produces greater feelings of isolation

“Instagrations” is not social integration!

THANK YOU



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