Mummy influencers and professional sharenting

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Abstract
Sharenting (sharing parenting on social media) has become a widespread activity, and some of those parents become family influencers. Female influencers have been on the rise, partly as an alternative to the precariousness of the job market. This article presents a qualitative study on 11 Portuguese mummy and family influencers, analysing social media content observed throughout 2,5 years, as well as media discourses on them. It focuses on how these female content creators portray parenting and family, work-life balance as an influencer, and their boundaries for privacy and intimacy. It demonstrates how prominent mummy influencers reproduce a neoliberal ethos which favors an individual management of conciliating motherhood and a career in the context of post-austerity and precarity, through an emotional discourse that promotes relatability with the audience, converted into an essentially consumerist agenda.

Keywords: mumpreneurs, social media, family, self-care, motherhood.

Introduction

Through social media, self-representations of families in their everyday lives and intimate contexts have become more accessible to wider audiences. Sharenting (sharing parenting on social media) has become a widespread activity, and some of those parents become influencers on parenting; other content creators devoted to lifestyle or other themes also narrate their family lives. How do female social media influencers (SMIs), who monetize their ordinary, everyday family lives as a primary way of living, portray their labor as professional content producers and mothers? We focus on mummy influencers to interrogate how their position intersects with wider patterns regarding family, gender, work and welfare in contemporary societies.

The article reports on a qualitative study on 11 Portuguese mummy and family SMIs, based on the analysis of social media and mass media content. Portugal has the fourth lowest birth rate in the European Union (EU), female employment is above the European average, and is one of the European countries where women are most burdened with domestic chores. Families report they are discouraged from having a child in the post-austerity period (since 2015) characterized by low wages, precarious employment and housing crises (Inácio, 2019). The article will argue how mummy influencers promote a neoliberal solution to the difficult conciliation of work and family in the country as an example of individualistic response to wider precarization.

Sharenting and microcelebrity

'Sharenting' (sharing+parenting), which includes sharing experiences and consequently children's pictures and personal information in the digital space, has become a widespread activity (Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017; Damkjaer, 2018; Autenrieth, 2018; Steinberg, 2017). Sharenting has been reported to offer benefits for parents such as the opportunity to develop parental identity, to maintain social and extended family relations, to exchange support, information and guidance, to curate memories, to debate parenting experience in public domain (i.e. post-birth depression, breastfeeding, pregnancy), and to advocate for children (Lopez, 2009; Borda, 2015; Locatelli, 2017; Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017).

Public and academic debates on sharenting also highlight the difficult dilemmas between parents' rights to self-expression and children's rights to privacy. The risks include the misuse of children's pictures and information for purposes such as harassment by paedophiles, digital kidnapping (when someone steals images of a child to be re-posted as their own), potential

commercial misuse of children’s images to sell products, or children’s monitoring for commercial purposes. Another risk of the disclosure by the parent is causing damage to children’s biographical footprint in a way that could promote embarrassment or bullying (Steinberg, 2017; Siibak and Traks, 2019).

There are several frequently-used strategies deployed by parents who are average social media users to deal with these risks. Those include reducing posts about children to significant milestones in their lives, trying not to post questionable content; limiting audiences by creating groups with specific rights of access; and negotiating norms and practices on children’s disclosure of information with parental peer groups (Autenrieth, 2018). Parents also do ‘anti-sharenting’ when they post pictures preventing children from being recognized: disguising children with accessories, photographing children from a distance, and from behind, pictures of fractions of the children’s bodies, replacing facial expressions with stickers, emoji or are just blotted out (2018: 227). Research has shown that some pre-teens and teenagers are proud when the sharenting reflects positively on their self-image. However, they resent it and demand control of their privacy when they consider the content to be embarrassing, unfavorable to their physical appearance or contradictory to their impression management efforts (Lipu and Siibak, 2019; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019).

Since the digital environment has become highly commercialized, sharenting as personal narratives and interpersonal connection, especially in the blogosphere, has transitioned largely to a “more prolific, deliberate, and commercial form” (Abidin, 2015). Financial gain has turned into an aspiration for many parents (especially mothers) who use a panoply of social media to create content, aggregate followers, engage in partnership with brands and promote their own digital brands (Cunningham and Craig, 2017: 71) related to parenthood in a public marketplace for

goods and services (Borda, 2015). To maximize their visibility in the so-called *attention economy*, some parents deploy microcelebrity (Senft, 2013), the communicative practice of self-presentation as ordinary, authentic and intimate to appeal to followers, treating them as fans (Marwick, 2015: 333). One type of microcelebrities are influencers, who associate with commercial and non-commercial brands as a professional activity (Khamis et al., 2017).

When influencers share content about their children with sizeable audiences, children themselves sometimes become *micro-microcelebrities* (Abidin, 2017). These children inherit the fame and are subjected to a greater lack of privacy "since followers store, republish, and recirculate information in fan networks" (Abidin, 2015). They also face unregulated child labor and growing up branded in an overtly commercial approach.

While some mothers have made blogging about their experience of motherhood their main professional activity (Archer, 2019; Jerslev and Mortensen, 2018), Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) and Borda (2015) emphasise a continuum or blurred boundaries in sharenting practices between influencer mums and everyday mums. Motivations include having a voice or helping others are combined in different ways with the goal of making money. These authors note the huge phenomenon of the blogosphere as an increasingly influential public sphere to hold politicians to account and to influence parents' consumption as well as other decisions relating to their identities, families and public life. Wilson and Yochim (2017: 16) see this as part of a wider *mamasphere* - websites, social media platforms and community platforms where mothers find and exchange "information, inspiration, and opportunity" that help them navigate and resist uncertainty.

Female bloggers and mumpreneurs

There is a proliferation of “mommy blogs[,] beauty vlogs [and] craft micro-economies associated with do-it-yourself (DIY) sites” (Duffy and Hund, 2015: 1) set up by female users. Often, the women in question invest in blogging ‘as a passion’ in an attempt to gain visibility and find ways to become professionals, in a form of ‘aspirational labour’ (Duffy, 2016). Their labor is depicted as informal, at times ‘messy’ and casual, at times privileged and aspirational; lacking in routine but with specific pressures relating to the type of emotional labor demanded by the attention economy. Furthermore, when blogging is constructed as an extension of the self, there is little differentiation between labor and leisure (Duffy, 2016). They usually work from home – something that is depicted as flexible and emancipatory, but not problematized enough for its perpetuation of the role of women as carers (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017). Creative workers - as do digital users - not only face insecurity, fragmentation, and under compensation similar to domestic and care work done by paid or unpaid women (Jarrett, 2020), but they also - as Jarrett’s metaphoric concept of ‘digital housewife’ describes (2016) - perform affective, cognitive or immaterial labor that is unaccounted for.

Many influencers have previously worked in the creative sectors, where performing work is highly enjoyed, but which has also been characterised by “long hours, erratic work patterns, low (sometimes no) pay, financial insecurity and an eradication of work/life boundaries” (Berridge, 2019: 648). Furthermore, “limited parental leave and rights; the need to work long, irregular (...) hours; the expectation to travel; costs and availability of childcare” (650), as well as the importance of maintaining social life – in schedules barely compatible with childcare (McRobbie, 2016) – pose particular challenges to workers who have children in combination with progressing in their careers (Wilson and Yochim, 2017). Berridge found that female

creative workers did reflect on the “unsustainability of the industries’ labouring practices” (Berridge, 2019: 653) and see them as more detrimental to women than men, but negotiated these tensions at an individual level rather than calling for structural changes. These working cultures contribute to exclude women from the workplace and ultimately reinforce traditional gender roles, where the withdrawal from work in favor of childcare is shown as the result of personal choice (McRobbie, 2016).

Another subject figure of the postfeminist discourse is the *mumpreneur*, “women who combine running a business enterprise with raising children (Ekinsmythm 2014)” (Archer, 2019: 47). Littler (2018: 201) sees this as a promise of “a meritocratic solution to the overwork culture, the inflexibility of institutionalised labor, inadequately funded and socialised childcare, and the costs of recession within neoliberalism, all wrapped up in a package of glamour and self-realisation”. To Wilson and Yochim (2017: 70), stay-at-home, entrepreneur women are the individual response to “neoliberalism’s dismantling of social supports and public goods—from health care to education to recreation”, which ultimately represent ‘the privatization of happiness’ in the face of precarization. This figure (re)positions business inside the domestic sphere, in a glamorized manner, and re-traditionalizes motherhood (Lewis, 2010; McRobbie, 2009).

One group of mumpreneurs are “social media influencer mums or mum bloggers” (Archer, 2019: 47), as they combine their monetized, (quasi-)professional activities in social media with other entrepreneurial businesses. For some of the mummy influencers, the businesses they run from home are precisely around children and parenting, and their children are often the everyday, or staged, models for the products or services they are putting on the market. SMIs are thus entrepreneurs and, indeed, self-entrepreneurs (Genz, 2015). In the case of female and mummy

influencers, entrepreneurialism is combined with domesticity and female self-care – the areas of interest traditionally associated with femininity – under a romanticized and glamorized ethos.

Methods

This paper focuses on the representation of families generated by mummy and family influencers, and their labor. Specifically, the research questions are: (a) *how are parenting and family presented to audiences by mum and family influencers?*; (b) *how is the work-life balance and working as an influencer represented?*; and (c) *what are the boundaries for privacy and intimacy drawn by each influencer?*.

We conduct this inquiry within the particular cultural and social context of Portugal. The economic and social dynamics of recent decades have promoted transformations in family structures encouraging women's entry en masse into the labor market and more egalitarian gender relations between parents in Europe (Oláh et al., 2018). Nevertheless, some significant disparities persist in the continent, especially in peripheral societies such as Portugal's. The country has the fourth lowest birth rate in the EU (8.5%), above only other Southern European countries (Inácio, 2019). Low wages, precarious employment and housing crisis that characterize the post-austerity period since 2015 are cited as conditions that discourage families from having children.

In terms of gender inequality, although Portugal presents a female employment rate above the European average, unemployment is slightly higher among women and they face more job insecurity (Torres et al., 2018); and in 2019 it had the third biggest gap (22%) between men's and women's salaries (Silva, 2019). Furthermore, Portugal, along with Spain, is among the

European countries where women are most burdened with domestic chores in relation to men. The time between the end of maternity leave (which is five months at full pay, with an option of partial pay for up to nine months) and when children are guaranteed free access to daycare is 3.5 years. This childcare gap forces many parents (mostly women) to stay at home, instead of going back to work, because it is economically more viable than putting their child into a private nursery (Eurydice, 2019).

We conducted a qualitative analysis of 11 case studies of Portuguese mummy and family influencers: Dias de uma Princesa [Days of a Princess], Cocó na Fralda [Poo in the Nappy], Socorro! Sou Mãe [Help! I'm a Mother], Cacomãe [Cacomother], Blog da Carlota [Carlota's Blog], Violeta Cor de Rosa [Pink Violet], A Mãe é que Sabe [Mum Knows Best], Tomás - My Special Baby, Aos Pares [In Pairs], Ties/ Catarina Macedo Ferreira, and MinnieMars. Our sampling was purposive: we considered professional mummy or family influencers with significant longevity in social media production (at least for more than two years), popularity across social media platforms (most are present in Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, besides blogs), professionalization and full-time occupation as influencers; and optionally representation by celebrities or blog agency (six out of 11 are represented by agencies, as of July 2019).

There are different compositions and characteristics of the families of these mum influencers but the most common situation is of a married woman with three children, above the average in the country. Exceptions in terms of civil status are Catarina Beato/Dias de uma Princesa, who is remarried, and Joana Gama, one of the two authors of A Mãe é que Sabe, who is divorced. All of the children were below 18 at the date of 24/07/2019 (the oldest being 17, the oldest child of Sónia Morais Santos/Cocó na Fralda, and the youngest being one month old, the youngest daughter of Andreia Paes de Vasconcellos). Tomás - My Special Baby was named after her first

child was born, with Down's syndrome; and Minnie Mars' first daughter was diagnosed with Asperger's (Brito, 2017).

We collected data through non-participant observation of their social media profiles, especially blogs and Instagram, for over two and a half years, from October 2016 to July 2019. The corpus includes screenshots of ephemeral content such as Instagram Stories, archived posts, or bookmarked content posts where a more reflective stance is adopted by these creators. Additionally, we conducted an online search for paratexts, such as news and entertainment media, from television, newspapers or magazines, on these influencers, using their names and blog names and considering the period since they started their social media pages; in some cases they share on social media when they are interviewed for some news or entertainment piece. We developed an open coding, inductive analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) to reach a limited number of themes.

In making ethical decisions, we followed recent guidelines for internet and social media research (franzke et al., 2019). We considered the influencers' social media as public online locations since they are open and require no permission to access. In addition, "there is a high expectation that (large numbers of) strangers will be viewing their data and indeed this is often desired" (Townsend and Wallace, 2016: 14). Therefore, we identified no ethical issues in disclosing mummy influencers' social media profiles and their wider public visibility. Nevertheless, to better protect the privacy of their (minor) children present in the data, we decided not to include images from either social media or traditional media.

Results

Work/life as a mummy influencer

Most of the cases analysed in this study were created between 2011 and 2015, when austerity hit Portugal at the same time marketing started to invest more heavily in digital media, and social media in particular. Some mummy influencers talk about starting this social media presence out of their willingness to share emotions or personal interests. Fernanda Velez/Blog da Carlota mentions that she started the blog "unpretentiously playing around to share my love of fashion and, at that time (I had just become a mother), of baby fashion" (Correia, 2017). Violeta Cor-de-Rosa was created after Joana Soares "stayed at home for six months with her oldest daughter, then almost 4, with an illness" (Alvim, 2018). The authors of A Mãe é que Sabe are transparent to say they aimed to make a profit from the blog or make it their full-time job (Porto, 2015).

After blogging for some time and achieving a visibility that allowed them to monetize the social media presence, some of these women left their previous jobs in media, as journalists (Cocó na Fralda, Rita Ferro Alvim), scriptwriters (Joana Brás/A Mãe é que Sabe) or radio host (Joana Gama/A Mãe é que Sabe), in marketing (Aos Pares, Blog da Carlota) or as freelancers (Minnie Mars, as a makeup artist). For others, it seems also to have been the period of austerity and unemployment, at a time when social media were on the rise, that motivated them not to return to full-time jobs, e.g. Catarina Beato, who was an out-of-work journalist.

Others combine their blog with work as freelancers or small businesses, as true 'mumpreneurs'. In some cases, the blog and the professional activities sold as services or products both revolve around family and motherhood: Joana Soares used to work as an architect until an economic crisis hit the country at the same time as she had her first child, and she currently runs a business as illustrator, especially for children's room decoration, in Violeta Cor-de-Rosa; and Ties is the

brand name for the family blog of Catarina Ferreira, who works as a freelance photographer focusing on children and families. In other cases, there are freelance activities not directly connected with families, such as writing (Cocó na Fralda) or cooking workshops (Dias de uma Princesa).

These women, who were skilled and trained in communication, marketing and design, were therefore partly seeking a professional project that was better paid than their former or more traditional jobs, and partly looking for more flexible ways to accommodate both family and work. In an interview in 2012, Sónia Morais Santos said: “It is really hard to reconcile professional life, your relationship, being a mother, and still post some stuff on the blog” (Mendinha, 2012). In 2016, her story had changed:

> [As a freelancer] I work much more but I have time to pick up my children from school, take them to extra school activities and be much more present, even if I’m not interacting with them. But they know mum is close by. I am sure I am much happier now than when I was a journalist. (Chaves, 2016)

The testimonial of Joana Paixão Brás is another example: after self-funding for 1,5 years with her second child, she worked in a communication agency, where she says she “spent a wonderful year [and] learnt a lot”, but that “it was really hard to pick up my children at 7pm every day (…), I was feeling hopeless, nervous and sad”. She changed to “working from home. Consulting. Writing for the blog. Recording videos. Doing voice-overs. (…) Let’s try to make my own schedules, manage my own time, and pick them up way earlier” (A Mãe é que Sabe, 13/12/2018). Brás also talks about the importance of grandparents as support for bringing up children, but she lives far from them in the capital, Lisbon. So in this post, and throughout this

and other blogs, the urbanization and labor market rules with difficult schedules are presented as constraints on raising a family, for which welfare does not afford enough support, with the solution created individually through a family blog.

They show their combination of their role as mothers with that of influencers, doing work on or around social media, with highly flexible, yet demanding tasks. Mummy influencers present different rhythms and routines, but still busy and engaged in parallel projects: press events, travelling, other days spent at home. A few have children at home with them, whether as small babies or until they can attend the public kindergarten at the age of 3 (more below); others often *sharent* from home after children return from school. Fernanda Velez/Blog da Carlota says in an interview: “when I am on the phone or more focussed at the computer, they [the girls] talk more, shout or want my attention” (Cardinali, 2017).

Velez is the epitome of mumpreneurialism among this group. She runs a biannual fair in the country’s main cities with the brands that she and her children endorse through social media. Many of these brands are owned by other mumpreneurs and aimed at children or women (Barbosa, 2015). To others, entrepreneurialism is depicted as being especially difficult to combine with their roles as mothers, while at the same time as casual work, presented in a glamorized manner, resonating with the same aspects that Duffy and Pruchniewska (2017) found among fashion bloggers. For example, Dias de uma Princesa and Violeta-Cor-de-Rosa both often share on Instagram the ‘office of the day’ in cafés, with the author accompanied by children or not, or in meetings outside the home. As mummy influencers, this works to further instill an impression of seamless integration of childcare and work. In a series of Instagram stories on May 27th 2018, Joana Soares shows herself working in a crafts market with her then few months-old baby, still breastfed - a mumpreneur without leave.

This combination of the women's appearance and their (micro)celebrity as both mothers and entrepreneurs is co-opted for brand endorsement, alone or with their children. A few examples: Joana Soares is a brand ambassador for Woolite, a laundry detergent, appearing (alone) in a television advertisement for the product as well as blogging about it; Minnie Mars served as a model in an online campaign for perfume on Mother's Day (2019); Mariana Seara Cardoso and her children recorded an ad for Limiano cheese for the Day of Families (2019), and a television campaign for medical insurer Médis (2016). More often, the influencers run advertorials on their social media pages, recommending brands and products immersed in their daily lives. Commercial associations can also appear in the form of gifts they receive from brands – including trips and experiences – or sponsored content in the form of blog or Instagram posts or YouTube videos, or by the influencers using, in their everyday life, products for which they are ambassadors. Children often appear in these forms of commercial content, such as nappies, clothes, food, entertainment or education. Some of this content is contracted via the agencies that represent the influencers (as some tag the agency); in other cases it is direct.

Rita Alvim and Catarina Beato address the economic struggles of life as a freelancer or entrepreneur in terms of making ends meet with unstable pay and a family with three children to support. Beato, on the one hand, states that an influencer cannot live on gifts from brands, arguing for the monetization of social media content (Gonçalves, 2018); on the other, she acknowledges the pressure to continually post content at audiences' request or out of the need to create monetized content, to reply to private messages from followers, and to be constantly connected. Rita Alvim voices concerns that those gifts from brands create an environment with too many material goods around her children, and thus she attempts to filter and moderate the access she has to goods through her job onto her children.

While professional sharenting is strongly intertwined with monetization, the job of influencer can also be an opportunity to involve children, regardless of whether the content is sponsored or not. We found many occasions where children and parents play around a smartphone, for example with Instagram filters to entertain children, or have small children present themselves to the imagined audience of the influencers' followers ('hi people!') as they see their mothers doing.

Models of motherhood, parenting and family

Among the 11 influencers, we identified four different profiles regarding the models of parenting and family, as well as motherhood. Fernanda Velez represents the inspirational mother and influencer, with a strong emphasis on fashion for women and children on Blog da Carlota, throughout its several social media platforms, where her content is scarcer and more stylized, staged and with professional production. Cacomãe also portrays an affluent and inspirational lifestyle with a strong focus on emotional labor and consumption.

A second group relates to 'struggling' mothers who are inspiring to others: MinnieMars' Instagram account is also highly visual and aestheticized (she is the only influencer who is based solely in one platform), yet focussed on her dedication to her child with special needs (Brito, 2017). As presented below, she gave less visibility to her child's condition as she attained more popularity. This focus on the struggle to raise a child with special needs is also explicit in the writing of Andreia Paes de Vasconcelos', mother to Tomás, who has Down's syndrome. They highlight progress and achievements of the children and the family.

The third group of mummy influencers show positive and real-life, challenging aspects of raising children, during daily routines, and frame such practices as seeking to inspire others for a difficult task, while highlighting the emotional rewards. Mariana Seara Cardoso, who gave birth to four children in 14 months, says her public visibility should prove to others that 'anyone can do it'/'you will survive'. As Beato puts it, "the fact that I'm authentic will help another mother to feel normal" (Barros, 2018).

A fourth profile is a less romanticized account of motherhood: Joana Gama/A Mãe é que Sabe states in an interview that she never wanted to have children (*Sapo Lifestyle*, 2019). As the outlier in terms of her relationship, she educates the audience about the effect of parents divorcing when a child is young: in a series of blog posts with the tag 'divorce', she addresses how to communicate to the child about it, deal with the child's expressions of sadness, raise the child as a single parent, and deal with shared custody – including her own feeling of 'missing out' on a part of the child's development – but also the ethics of divorce, e.g. not denigrating the other parent to the child. In a roundtable on motherhood and divorce on a daytime TV show, she said her 5-year-old daughter "has a happy mother [and] a happy father, and she will grow up happier" than with married parents (Figueiredo, 2019).

These different profiles can be detected if we look at the books these mummy influencers have authored – on and around motherhood. A number of these books revolve around sharing personal experience, combined with inspirational messages. Rita Ferro Alvim was the precursor, in 2011, when she launched *Help, I'm a mother: How to survive joyfully to the first month of the baby*, which became a bestseller. In 2015, she launched *Help, they grow up so fast*. Across the book presentations, she portrays herself as an 'amateur mother' who seeks to use mindfulness to deal with the challenges of children's development. A similar personal experience appears in a 2016

book by Seara Cardoso, *My Big Family of Twins… Double Twins*: "life with children, and in this case with four twins, can be difficult, chaotic, messy and stressful", but there is time to "date, rest, relax and play". As we have shown, she emphasizes the importance of efficient time management in dealing (individually) with her parental role. Paes de Vasconcellos launched in 2018 a book about his son, *Tomás - Maternity, Trisomy and Love: The Story of a Special Baby.* Márcia d'Orey, the author of MinnieMars, launched in 2019 *Everything is possible, believe it*, about her life story of overcoming difficulties and traumas.

The mummy influencers of the fourth profile use humor, perhaps to attract more educated readers, e.g. Sónia Morais Santos published a book in 2012 with a selection of blog posts in a humorous tone. In the synopsis of the book by the authors of A Mãe é que Sabe: "what every mother needs, especially in the first few months, is to feel understood, coddled and confident (yes, we know, this sounds like an ad for sanitary pads)". Here the tone of self-mockery and humor, which is common in their blog, works to articulate conservative messages about motherhood in a self-aware manner. Authored books by SMIs are both a product and an investment in their visibility, as they justify more media publicity around the influencer and add further narratives to their public image (Deller and Murphy, 2020).

Indeed, mummy influencers gain a cultural and social prominence sustained by their participation in mainstream – news and entertainment – media. Some defend staying at home with children until the age of three, when universal childcare is available – something which is only possible as they work full-time as influencers (A Mãe é que Sabe, 27/05/2019). Stay-at-home mumpreneurs can also breastfeed until the children are older – Catarina Beato and Joana Soares focus on this aspect in particular. They also become advocates for changes in perception of breastfeeding in public: Joana Paixão Brás said in a daytime TV show: "I breastfeed my 2-

year-old child in public spaces proudly" (*Você na TV!*, 2016). However, Catarina Beato is the only case who approaches family-related topics in an explicitly political tone, and endorses the left-wing coalition CDU, for which she also stood as a candidate in the 2017 elections to the Lisbon municipal assembly (Dias de uma Princesa, 29/09/2017).

The influencers also approach wider issues relating to motherhood, specifically maternal physical and mental health. On her social media, Catarina Ferreira/Ties speaks about her experiences with five pregnancies and four deliveries, and documented the health problems she has had to deal with as well as the surgery that was done to repair them. She is also a face talking about the subject in traditional news media (Borja-Santos, 2017).

Discourses on women's maternal health are associated with the construction of self-care as crucial to the woman – and the family. Mummy influencers are *yummy mummies*, who are "sexually attractive and well groomed, and who know the importance of spending time on herself" (Littler, 2016: 227), but frame this time not as selfish, since they withdraw from their family obligations, and rather as useful and necessary to make them more efficient at meeting them, by improving their well-being and self-confidence. Fernanda Velez voices this: "Being a good mother, a good professional and liking myself, that is the only way I can feel balance" (Drogas, 2019). Mariana Cardoso says: "I have managed to find some time for myself. I like to do sports – it gives me strength for the rest of the tasks, and it is important to feel well to be able to take care of four babies" (Saraiva, 2016). This can partly be explained by the strong support from the beauty and fashion industries to mummy influencers: spa treatments, aesthetic treatments or sports.

Negotiating privacy and intimacy

Part of the specificity of their labor as mummy influencers is to negotiate privacy for their family, especially children, while deploying microcelebrity. Crucially, it is necessary to protect children's safety, against the perceived risks of the networked visibility of 'stranger danger' or kidnapping. As such, they do not share information about their schools or other places that they regularly attend (Fleming, 2018). They also use anti-sharenting strategies such as close-ups, pictures of their children without others, and often blur or use emoticons to cover other children's faces (Authenrieth, 2018). Although much content is produced in the home or other private spaces, the areas where they live can be recognized by people who know the cities in question. Mariana Seara Cardoso refers to the idea that *micro-microcelebrity* can actually protect children: "if people recognize them they will pay more attention" [in case something happens] (Pereirinha, 2016). However, the visibility of the children and the family of mummy influencers as a consequence of their microcelebrity can be empowering as well as constraining. In 2019, Catarina Ferreira reported on Instagram Stories she received online negative messages of a follower after an incident in the park with her child, but at the moment the person did not come forward to discuss it.

Regarding intimacy, Ferreira says "I show their image, not their intimacy. That is something that is ours: who they are, what they are like, how they react, their temper. I don't expose their problems, their anxieties". Similarly, Morais Santos says her blog does not feature the family's "intimate conversations nor deepest moments". In more than one interview, she expresses the idea that a successful blogger will create the "illusion of intimacy and proximity" when she is just sharing a small portion of her life (Pago, 2019).

The author of Dias de uma Princesa adds more to her sharenting rules: “I don’t share ridiculous situations that could prompt a feeling of being embarrassed for the other, [no] pictures of them in tantrums or in situations where they are frail” or that could bother them (Ribeiro, 2019). Nudity was not found in our prolonged observation of the social media accounts, but young children are frequently shown in nappies, for example on hot days, with brands tagged. This type of visibility can be constraining, and is subject to moderation by Instagram.

Besides the influencers’ different profiles, there are substantial differences in how they manage children’s privacy depending on the age of their children; these are especially evident in the cases of the oldest influencers, Catarina Beato and Sónia Morais Santos, with three and four children, respectively, and how the social media visibility of their children evolved as they grew up, or with different ages. The author of Cocó na Fralda said in an interview that, after her oldest son said he did not like something she posted on her blog (Pago, 2019):

> “I hardly ever write about the older [boys] and, when I do, I ask them. But when they are small it is harmless. They say sweet things.” At 8, Madalena, the only girl among the four children, “is about to step out”, she says. “She has her own life”. (André, 2018)

As Lipu and Siibak (2019) and Ouvrein and Verswijvel (2019) found among the teenage children of ordinary users, they ask parents not to share or take down something they have shared. Teenagers are questioned before posting, and are seen as having “the right to their privacy. (…) I can’t go tell about their girlfriends and friends or their intimacy”, the same influencer continues.

When MinnieMars started to gain more visibility throughout 2018 and 2019, she decided not to focus so much on the Asperger’s syndrome of her eldest daughter which led her to initiate the page when she stayed at home with her. In an Instagram Story (21/06/2019), she says she will

share the most positive things in their everyday life but preserve the family's intimacy: "the rest is kept to ourselves".

As one example towards Catarina Ferreira above demonstrated, influencers often have to deal with criticism, insult and trolling. Catarina Ferreira is repeatedly questioned by her followers why she addresses her children with the formal 'você' instead of the informal 'tu' in Portuguese language. The former is associated with a high social class and this aspect creates tension for the (probably middle-class) followers. Paixão Brás felt "especially bothered when more than one person said my girls were ugly" (Rosa, 2018) and Morais Santos says there are "very bitter people who write really mean comments" (Chaves, 2016). Catarina Beato has faced some episodes of harsh criticism relating to her having three children by different fathers, although she uses this to highlight ways to keep relationships healthy, and contributes to educate on ethics of divorce as *A Mãe é que Sabe*. These are examples of "ways in which emotional labour is needed to tackle the mean and degrading comments that most [mummy] bloggers have to come to terms with" (Mäkinen, 2020).

Discussion and conclusions

This study revealed about how influencers and their families publically negotiate privacy and intimacy in the face of the social media visibility through influencer status, how mummy influencer is a consequence of or a way to deal with wider welfare, job or housing conditions in the post-austerity period, and the types of parenting that they promote or struggle to attain. By focusing on their personal experiences, Portuguese mummy influencers voice their visions of what they think is better for children's development, for women and the family, foster debate

with their followers and serve as semi-lay, semi-professional spokesperson in the mainstream media for subjects relating to parenting (Lopez, 2009; Borda, 2015; Locatelli, 2017; Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017; Wilson and Yochim, 2017). As influencers, while they attract a community of followers, with whom they learn, they stand as central examples – as brands – in those communities. They know that their success depends on portraying themselves as authentic and revealing parts of their daily lives (Khamis et al., 2017), yet they stress that they maintain some privacy and intimacy for their families and the children's identities. These influencers create personal brands across multiple social media platforms that are parallel to or even work to sustain their entrepreneurialism (Archer, 2019; Littler, 2018). Therefore, their activity as influencers is also precarious and risky, not least in emotional and affective ways (Mäkinen, 2020).

Most of them are or were professionals in media, marketing, design and photography and thus possess communication skills that are strategic capital in gaining visibility on social media, which in turn is a fundamental condition for monetization and professionalization (Abidin, 2015; Borda, 2015; Archer, 2019). The other condition is the relationship they establish with audiences: influencers addressing the challenging aspects of parenting aim for *relatability* with their audiences, while a few portray an inspirational position, or exceptional by dealing with disability. This is related to their social origin, which appears to be middle to upper class. Even those who narrate their experience of their children's disability, do so from a position of privilege. This means that working class mothering is not narrativized in the same professional ways. On the other hand, while these women depict their influencer status as an escape to the difficulty of keeping long-hours jobs for low salaries and performing many chores at home, this

flexibility and autonomy working through technology from the home perpetuates their role as carers (Duffy and Pruchniewska, 2017).

This group of Portuguese mummy and family influencers reproduce a postfeminist, neoliberal culture in several ways (Genz, 2015; McRobbie, 2009). Firstly, by positioning themselves as successful yet struggling people who have dealt *at an individual level* with the difficult reconciliation of motherhood and professional career under the context of post-austerity and precarity, in the context of Portuguese society – while common to other developed countries (Wilson and Yochim, 2017), Portugal had fast changes due to late modernization. How ever different in tone – inspirational, inspiring, realistic, or cynical, as a combination of their social background and the influencer brand they want to create –, mummy influencers are central subjects in getting the family through the hurdles of precarity in post-recession. Secondly, they act as postfeminist subjects by presenting social media visibility as an opportunity for mothers, while masking the conditions for access and scale, i.e. the degree of universality of this 'solution'. As pointed out, most of the influencers have worked or are trained in design, marketing, journalism and media, and thus are competent and have an advantage to deploy microcelebrity techniques and add a professional level to the content creation. Thirdly, they are instrumental to a neoliberal culture as they focus on the importance of emotional labor, self-care and mindfulness by the mother, in order to withdraw her temporarily from her relational subjectivity only to return better to it. This is directly instilled by the industries of self-care that support them to reach female targets, but works to promote self-discipline in all moments of everyday life especially through an instantaneity culture such as Instagram's. Fourthly, neoliberalism is ever-present in their biographies – and their children's – as a consequence of the fact that they make a living from social media or related enterprises, meaning that consumption

is constant in their sharenting and thus contributes to accentuate a social construction of motherhood where emotional and material are intertwined.

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