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Parenting on Celebrities' and Influencers' Social Media: Revamping Traditional Gender Portrayals

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Abstract: This study consisted of a content analysis of parenting portrayals in the 40 most popular Portuguese male and female content producers on YouTube and Instagram, on a sample of content published in 2019. Female creators give disproportionately greater attention to parenting and are the ones depicting everyday labor related to it, whereas male creators show themselves as fathers in happy and fun moments. By way of their popularity and visibility on social media platforms, and as supported by the social media platforms and advertising realms, celebrities and influencers are amplifying the traditional division of parenting labor through the mechanisms of a postfeminist, hyper-individualistic discourse emphasized by female influencers and celebrities, and of humoristic content that confirms gender stereotypes without social punishment, deployed by entertainment personalities, both male and female.

Keywords: gender; Instagram; YouTube; humor; parenting



Citation: Jorge, Ana, Bibiana Garcez, Bárbara Janiques de Carvalho, and Ana Margarida Coelho. 2023. Parenting on Celebrities' and Influencers' Social Media: Revamping Traditional Gender Portrayals. *Journalism and Media* 4: 105–117. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia4010008>

Academic Editor:
Andreu Casero-Ripollés

Received: 25 November 2022
Revised: 28 December 2022
Accepted: 7 January 2023
Published: 13 January 2023



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1. Introduction

Celebrity and influencer cultures are an inescapable part of today's media ecology, which is also an indelibly platformized one. Social media are the place where ordinary personalities ascending to popular attention converge with celebrities who seek to maintain their relevance among audiences. Therefore, social media have also been examined for their contribution to the (re)construction of gender roles and identities. Given the centrality of these personalities on social media platforms, and the importance of social media as a location where parenting is performed, this paper particularly aims to understand how the representations and discourses on parenting that circulate on social media foster or hinder gender equality.

Through a critical examination that adopts a gender perspective, we considered the 10 most popular female and male creators on YouTube and Instagram in Portugal. We analyze men and women simultaneously since our understanding is that “gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradiction to some (real or imagined) model of femininity” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 848). While the digital has provided space for female creators to gain visibility, although disproportionately in traditional areas (Duffy and Hund 2015), and mum bloggers or influencers (Archer 2019) have been more visible, fathers are gaining more and more visibility on social media (Campana et al. 2020; Scheibling 2020).

In Portugal, progressive legislation concerning gender equality is not yet reflected in the daily reality of Portuguese society (Torres et al. 2018). Our content analysis revealed that traditional gender roles are emphasized by influencers and celebrities under a postfeminist, hyper-individualistic discourse, as well as through humor, hence potentially contributing to the perpetuation of gender (in)equality in relation to parenting.

2. Celebrities and Influencers on Social Media

While social media depends on the content created by users, not all users weigh the same in the digital political economy. To an extent, all social media users are inserted into the game of popularity (van Dijck and Poell 2013), but highly visible personalities are crucial to attracting, engaging, and retaining audiences on platforms (Andrejevic 2009; Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016; Stehling et al. 2018).

The visibility of personalities on social media today brings together two different paths and statuses (Jerslev and Mortensen 2018): on the one hand, personalities who gained visibility through social media, commonly referred to as influencers, content creators, bloggers, vloggers—or, depending on their main platform of visibility, YouTubers, TikTokers, Instagrammers. On the other, celebrities who had ascended to public attention before or outside social media, in fields such as popular culture (film, music, television, etc.), sports, and who come to use these platforms to sustain the attention of audiences under the idea of ‘unmediated’ access to their everyday lives (Marwick 2015, p. 333).

Part of the audience appeal of influencers and celebrities is based on the affordances of social media, namely their immediacy and interactivity—examples in point are Instagram stories or direct messages via any social media, but also comments, likes, and reactions. Content creators play with the technical functionalities of social media platforms as they try to attract and sustain the interest of audiences (Jerslev 2016), and elicit their engagement, which is vital to the functioning of the algorithms that condition their visibility (Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016; Stehling et al. 2018). However, there are significant differences between influencers and celebrities concerning their responsiveness: the former are perceived as closer to their followers than celebrities are, responding to their questions and requests (Abidin 2015, 2019).

Another part of the appeal has to do with the relationship that is cultivated by these highly visible personalities, who deploy tactics of intimacy and authenticity (Jerslev and Mortensen 2016) that create the perception of an authentic self-presentation (Genz 2015), and the illusion of proximity to audiences (Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016). Celebrities and influencers engage in emotional and affective forms of labor that foreground personal identities and visions (Baym 2015), with gender being one of them in implicit or explicit terms.

3. Gender, Private Life and Parenting

While celebrity culture has always revolved around the articulation of public or professional and private life, social media allows celebrities to seemingly communicate directly to audiences and affords controlled access to previously inaccessible backstage (Marwick and Boyd 2011). As for influencers, they place the narration of private life as the focus of their visibility, and therefore ordinariness and triviality are at the core of their social media presentation. That does not exclude, however, that ordinary and everyday events and matters can ascend to articulate public issues, as an expression of cultural citizenship (Hermes and Dahlgren 2006). Social media presentation by celebrities and influencers often elicits discussions around topics pertaining to lifestyle politics, as well as gender and sexuality (Jorge 2020).

Scholars have noted, however, that female creators are more subject to public scrutiny and pressure over their performances than their male counterparts, from audiences as well as advertising and brand agents (Duffy and Hund 2019) with this becoming an element to consider when sharing posts that can implicitly or explicitly activate (or challenge) gender imaginaries, roles or identities. The most vocal creators in favor of gender equality, sexual self-determination, and progressive causes are often exposed to backlash (Banet-Weiser 2018) in the form of popular misogyny or the mainstreaming of overtly sexist behaviors; and with interactions ranging from harassment to offense and ridicule.

Therefore, feminist scholars in particular have problematized the complexities of greater participation and visibility, on the one hand, of female creators and voices, and, on the other, of subjects relating to gender relations. Duffy and Hund (2015) note how social media production by female creators has greatly expanded in association with the

traditionally feminine domains of fashion, beauty, domesticity, family, and craft. This can further contribute to perpetuating the association of these spheres with the female gender, under the guise of do-it-yourself businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives. This can be said to constitute post-feminism, i.e., the appearance of self-determination under the guise of traditionalism and consumption (Genz 2015). Female creators also tend to construct an image of success and achievement, of a 'do-it-all' woman, knowledgeable while beautiful and moderately sexualized (Devos et al. 2022).

If children of celebrities and influencers work as a capital to engage the audiences (Jorge et al. 2022a), influencers and celebrities adapt these presentations both to their audiences' and advertisers' responses. The categories of brands that are associated with sharenting—the practice of sharing the parenting experience on social media—for instance, can further underline the traditional association of the feminine with care (Porfírio and Jorge 2022). 'Social media influencer mums or mum bloggers' (Archer 2019) have been on the rise, as part of a group of 'mumpreneurs', women who combine small businesses ran from home, often in the parenting market, with social media. These figures create a romanticized and glamorized ethos (Lewis 2010) while also generating some space to approach the hurdles of raising children amidst precarization (Jorge et al. 2022b).

In parallel, fathers are also starting to use social media as a space to voice a model of involved fatherhood that also finds the support of the market (Campana et al. 2020), adding more layers to a complex culture of fatherhood that "is rife with contradictions concerning gendered roles and responsibilities for work and family" (Scheibling 2020, p. 5). This space is often won on the back of emphasizing emotional processes, e.g., sharing the happiness and challenges of parenthood (Campana et al. 2020), while first-time-dads have been found to demonstrate more privacy concerns (Fox et al. 2022). Some of them are also attempting to make an income out of social media sharenting, experimenting with different identities (Scheibling 2020) that can attract audiences as well as sponsors.

4. Platform Society

Social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have become not only two of the biggest social media today, but a global phenomenon of socialization, entertainment, and commodification of digital content. These platforms cross different aspects of daily life, such as work, health, education, entertainment, and consumption practices (van Dijck 2017; van Dijck et al. 2018; Couldry and Hepp 2016). Their business model follows the dominant architecture and economic structure based on the exploitation, classification, prediction of metadata, and the commercialization of digital visibility and influence (Bishop 2020; Helmond 2015). The algorithmic system builds on the data generated by users and trades it with advertisers.

From its creation in 2005 as a video repository, YouTube quickly turned into a leading social network in the online video space (Hutchinson 2022). Currently, the range of audiovisual production found on the platform, mostly created by brands or influencers, is extensive. Among the most popular categories, there are music video clips and entertainment videos, do-it-yourself or how-to style tutorials, and vlogs—i.e., videos in monologue or documentary format, set in the creators' bedrooms and houses, and centered on intimate life matters, everyday moments, fashion, beauty and lifestyle tips (Bakioğlu 2018).

YouTube has made large investments in audiovisual and media resources to offer users and content creators an increasingly personalized experience, with high levels of interaction (Jorge 2020). Features include social functions such as comments, likes, and automatic lists of video recommendations; YouTube's Partner Program, which compensates content creators with part of the revenue from advertising; and the logistical support given to successful YouTubers around the world such as workshops, events, and recording studios. Those are some of the strategies carried out for the platform to grow in popularity, reach and profit (Burgess and Green 2018). As a result, YouTube reached more than two billion users across the globe; it has, as of 2022, an unprecedented number of creators, with a 40% increase in channels that made at least 10 thousand US dollars a year and generated almost

30 billion US dollars in advertising revenue in the year 2021 (Statista 2022; Hutchinson 2022). The platform's current efforts are focused on containing the exponential growth of competitor TikTok, especially by continuing to be attractive to creators by compensating for their content (Hutchinson 2022) and allowing them to remain algorithmically recognizable and celebrated (Bishop 2020), while also allowing for a new video format entitled 'Shorts', similar to its competitor's.

Instagram is associated with the promotion of self-image, especially through the selfie (Jerslev and Mortensen 2016; King 2018); aesthetic manipulation via filters; and instantaneity of content creation and sharing via mobile devices (Burgess and Woodford 2014). Through filters, the cultivation of public appearance, elegance, and an appealing and interesting lifestyle (Jin et al. 2019), Instagram fits perfectly into an image-based socialization culture (Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016), and the way it is creatively worked on (Cunningham et al. 2016).

Despite the promises of digital platforms, the freedom they allow to the user is apparent (Banet-Weiser and Arzumanova 2012) and their neutrality is only rhetorical (Gillespie 2018). In 2016, Instagram replaced the chronological feed with one based on interactions (Luckerson 2016). This transformation increased its power, through algorithms which are anonymous languages, inaccessible by the common user, and in constant mutation (Cunningham et al. 2016). The 'creative' user is replaced by the 'socially connected' user, contributing to a new system curated and controlled by the platforms themselves (Gillespie 2018), rather than by their stakeholders (Burgess and Woodford 2014).

5. Methods

Acknowledging that media are an important player in social construction (Silveirinha 2004), it is crucial to understand how parenting formations circulate among popular social media platforms. As spaces of high visibility, yet low regulation, social media were analyzed through discourses circulating by prominent voices, i.e., the most popular channels on YouTube and profiles on Instagram. This paper reports on a study on media and masculinities in Portugal, which sought to identify and examine, through an intersectional approach, representations of masculinities on various media, including social media. We focus here on gender differences regarding parenting and the practices of what has been called 'sharenting', particularly in relation to influencers and celebrities (Jorge et al. 2022a, 2022b; Porfírio and Jorge 2022). As mentioned, despite progressive legislation, Portugal retains high in gender inequality (Torres et al. 2018) in the culture, and thus we wish to understand how that is portrayed by highly visible personalities with regard to parenting.

For this study, our driving questions were: (1) What are the roles constructed by content creators in relation to parenting? (2) Do they differ according to gender, to platform (Instagram/YouTube), and to the status of the creator (influencer/celebrity)? We ultimately aim to discuss in what ways the representations and discourses on parenting that circulate on social media foster or hinder gender equality.

Our initial sample included the 10 most popular male and 10 most popular female content producers in Portugal on Instagram and YouTube in 2019 (according to rankings reporting to 2018—Insider 2018)¹. This study thus adds to existing knowledge focusing on celebrity sharenting on Instagram (Porfírio and Jorge 2022). On YouTube, most creators were specifically YouTubers, meaning they acquired such status through that platform; on Instagram, among the male profiles we found mostly football players, and also actors, singers and comedians; and among the female, two are influencer personalities, whereas the rest are celebrities from television, music, or fashion. Among the 40 content creators, and of particular importance to this paper, seven women (Carolina Patrocínio, Carolina Deslandes, Cristina Ferreira, Dolores Aveiro, Rita Pereira, Mafalda Sampaio, and Liliana Filipa) and seven men (Cristiano Ronaldo, Pepe, Ricardo Quaresma, António Raminhos, Nelson Semedo, SirKazzio, and Nuno Agonia) were identified as parents at the time of the sample collection. Other identity characteristics: all are heterosexual except one, whose sexual orientation is indeterminate (YouTuber João Sousa); in terms of ethnic-racial identity,

all are white except, on Instagram, Ricardo Quaresma (Roma) and Nelson Semedo (black), and, on YouTube, Pi (black); all were born in Portugal and have Portuguese nationality, except, on Instagram, Pepe, born in Brazil and with Brazilian-Portuguese nationality. In terms of age, most creators are aged 18 to 34; on YouTube, RicFazeres and Nuno Agonia are in the age group of 35–64; on Instagram, Ricardo Quaresma, António Raminhos, and Pepe (men), and Rita Pereira and Cristina Ferreira (women) are in that same age group; the only creator 65 or above is Dolores Aveiro.

At the level of content categories, on YouTube we found that the most popular male creators maintain channels dedicated to entertainment, including humor, or gaming; and on Instagram, the most popular creators are associated with sports and fitness, or music, television, and cinema, including humor. As for the female creators, on YouTube, they are associated with lifestyle, and in a smaller number, with humor entertainment (Mafalda Creative, Bumba na Fofinha); on Instagram, the prominent personalities come from the spheres of fashion and beauty, lifestyle, or music, television and cinema; an outlier is (again) Dolores Aveiro, who is famous through association (mother of Cristiano Ronaldo).

Our sampling strategy was systematic (Gunter 2013), selecting content in five weeks (weeks 3, 16, 29, 42 and 52) of 2019. For YouTube, when no content was published on those particular weeks², if the content producer had fewer than two videos collected, the video published in the week before or after was selected; when more than one video had been published in the selected period, the one with the most views was included; therefore, at least two videos from each content producer were selected. The exception was RicFazeres, where all but one video were related to one single theme—gaming—, deemed of low relevance as they pertain to a pure entertainment realm. As for Instagram, we collected all the content from the selected weeks, using the Instagram Scraper of the Digital Methods Tool Database (<https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase> (accessed on 15 April 2021)) to retrieve information on the date, caption, and type of content (photo/video); as it generated incomplete databases, we filled in the remainder of the data manually in Excel. Our final corpus consisted of 56 YouTube videos, with a total duration of 12 h and 46 min; and 629 Instagram posts. YouTube videos and all Instagram posts were then transcribed. In this paper, we focus on contents with representations of parenting and parenthood: 100 posts on Instagram, and 7 YouTube videos. Most, but not all, of this content was created by people who were parents, so we consider all the creators. Content from non-parents (three Instagram posts and five YouTube videos) represent their own parents; show themselves interacting with children who are not theirs; or represent parenting relationships.

Our codebook, which was used for the more general analysis of the representation of masculinities, included notions of masculinity and femininity, gender equality, (non-)heteronormativity, toxic masculinity concerning, or explicitly addressing the topics of, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and gender. The coding through content analysis (Neuendorf and Kumar 2016) was conducted using NVivo software. One author coded the material, cross-checking with one of the other authors and the rest of the project's team, for consistency across the overall project as well as specific decisions related to the nature of social media. In the analysis of the parenting theme in cross-tabulation with the remaining codes, we identified exemplary contents to analyze further and detect patterns and variations, which we explore in the Analysis section.

We followed the Association of Internet Researchers' ethical guidelines (Franzke et al. 2020). We searched for publicly available content, vastly accessible to wide audiences which is inherent to the status of celebrity or influencer. For the presentation of findings, we include exemplary portions of content, whether pictures or text, but not their URLs so as not to direct readers to the original content. Because we include content relating to children, we blurred their faces in the illustrative figures.

6. Analysis

6.1. General Findings of the Extensive Corpus

General findings of the extensive corpus help us to set the scene for what we found with regard to parenting. In line with the content categories described in the previous section, the overall predominant themes in the analyzed content are leisure, travel, and free time (19 YouTube videos, 215 Instagram posts) and lifestyle, fashion, and beauty (16 videos, 110 posts); on YouTube, commodities/technology is the third theme (14 videos), while on Instagram it is media, arts and entertainment (106 posts). If the distribution of categories of content follows a traditional gender division in the case of influencers (Duffy and Hund 2015), it is hardly surprising that male creators are the greatest contributors when leisure, travel, and free time are portrayed, whereas women contribute the most to lifestyle, fashion, and beauty.

Specifically on YouTube, it became apparent that masculinities and femininities are performed differently, and in rather stereotyped ways. While male creators' attitudes are associated with bravery, fearlessness, or even recklessness, and also with physical strength, female creators cultivate a persona in association with beauty and consumerism, which amounts to a postfeminist discourse (Genz 2015). Such performances are reflected in the video formats recurrently used by both genders. Streaming, vlogs, or product reviews engage in male YouTubers' prominent interests in gaming, cars, technology, and travel. Parallely, Q&As, assumptions or videos who promote interactivity with followers reflect the female YouTubers' tendency to elaborate on personal matters, tastes, and inclinations, while cultivating a proximity with the audiences (Jorge 2020).

6.2. Parenting and Everyday Family Life

Parenting is far more visible on Instagram (100 posts) than on YouTube (7 videos), as the former is more directly linked with everyday life. Another significant finding regarding the representation of parenting consists of a great disparity between the female and male genders with regard to the space that it occupies in the profiles of these celebrities and influencers. In our data, not only did we find that "motherhood, domestic roles, and care" (in 72 Instagram posts; in 3 YouTube videos) is more talked about than "fatherhood, domestic roles, and care" (in 28 Instagram posts; in 4 YouTube videos), but also that women talk about fatherhood (in 8 Instagram posts; in 2 YouTube videos) whereas men do not talk about motherhood. At first sight, this data indicates that the everyday care of children is guaranteed mostly by women. On the one hand, it could be argued that men aim to present themselves as zealous parents who are concerned about the exposure of their children's intimate life or privacy, and therefore filter or restrict a significant part of the content that covers their families (Fox et al. 2022). On the other hand, such a pattern can also be attributed to the nature of the profiles, as sports and entertainment men exclude children from their Instagram content. In contrast, one of the female creators, Dolores Aveiro, is highly visible on Instagram only for her relation to a global celebrity, as she is the mother of Ronaldo—even though the famous son does not appear in her contents.

When it comes to women, the representation of parenting can also be used to construct a 'do-it-all' female personality. For instance, mega-influencer Mafalda Sampaio attempts such a presentation on a YouTube video where she assertively states she has done all the bricolage for her daughter's 'Montessori bedroom' (17 September 2019), although the video shows her male partner doing some of the work—but also taking care of the baby while she does other things. This trait also further emphasizes a depiction of celebrities and influencers, especially women, as busy and hyperproductive entrepreneurs who capitalize even on their leisure, which we found throughout Instagram and YouTube.

Of the 28 Instagram posts on fatherhood, only in five of them the child cannot be identified or their face appears covered or masked—and three were posted by a female celebrity, Rita Pereira. In fact, and in a broader sense, television personalities Rita Pereira and Cristina Ferreira were the only mothers who did not make any type of identification of their children. Pereira enacted anti-sharenting (Autenrieth 2018), as she shared many

family moments, but avoided showing her son's face and hid his face through features such as filters or elements that cover the eyes, like sunglasses (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Rita Pereira's baby son with his eyes covered by virtual sunglasses—@hyndia (23 December 2019).

Ferreira is an outlier in the celebrity world, like other A-list television hosts, who seldomly posts any image of her son and avoids even talking about him in the media to protect him from media exposure. This indicates that women share more information about their routines as mothers and caregivers because, culturally and traditionally, the social role they occupy is related to parenting and caring activities.

When in fact posting about their children, male celebrities depict mostly environments of leisure, and out of the home, i.e., at parties, trips, and outings; when set in domestic settings, posts are related to special occasions, such as Christmas celebrations, or to moments of fun and play. As an example, Ronaldo posted about "Sunday with the family ♥" (15 September 2019) in which the family group performs numerous outdoor activities, such as riding bikes; Figure 2 illustrates another post by Ronaldo with children at home after a workday.

Female creators, in turn, post disproportionately more about moments set at home, with the adult celebrity or influencer performing domestic chores of maternal care, such as feeding the child (Carolina Deslandes, 18 September 2019), or taking care of the sick baby (Rita Pereira, 26 December 2019). This pattern is all the more evident when female and male celebrities are performing similar caring acts: football player Ricardo Quaresma posts a short video playing ball at home with his son, with #FatherLikeSon in the caption (19 January 2019). This articulation of the father's work and playing with the child acting as a mini-adult is an element of cuteness eliciting engagement. In turn, a video published by singer Carolina Deslandes shows her and her son saying goodbye to go to sleep (16 July 2019), with the caption: "Bye stars, bye Jesus, bye angels, bye mommy, bye dad. Now let us sleep ♥". These scenes work to construct a representation, on the one hand, of a paternity related to deeds, actions, leisure, the outside world and, on the other hand, a maternity associated with care, concerns related to children and the domestic environment.



Figure 2. Cristiano Ronaldo with his wife and children after a workday—@cristiano (15 July 2019).

Such a conservatism in patterns of what is expected of fathers and mothers is strongly affected by commercialism (Porfirio and Jorge 2022). Overall, on Instagram, influencers who are parents had more sponsored content than celebrities. For example, 8 out of the 13 Instagram posts by the influencer Liliana Filipa had some form of brand present—Figure 3 is one of such posts; whereas singer Carolina Deslandes had 2 branded posts out of 18 posts in the same period—illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 3. Liliana Filipa with her daughter advertising an underwear brand—@lilianafilipa__ (18 September 2019).



Figure 4. Carolina Deslandes advertising a stroller—@carolinasdeslandes (16 July 2019).

Such a pattern can be attributed to the fact that influencers live off their monetization of social media content. Another finding to corroborate this is that, among men, it is the only man outside sports or music, the comedian Raminhos, who tags brands in 2 out of 10 of his Instagram posts (though without being transparent about whether it is advertising or not). However, it has also been demonstrated that sharenting articulated by influencer mothers has for long been closely connected to a consumerist agenda (Jorge et al. 2022b); whereas fathers are still appropriating this new discursive field that opens up to expressions of fatherhood (Campana et al. 2020). For celebrities, sponsored content is more valuable, which also creates more space for a kind of labor where they articulate emotions and share more on their everyday life in their professional and personal lives, as well as relatable individuals.

Furthermore, we have to look at the level of the categories of brands present in the posts to find evidence that commercialism influences the representation of what being a father or a mother means, as well as a reinforcement of the traditional social roles. Maternal representations alternated between the “zealous mother”, who appears to push the baby’s stroller (e.g., Carolina Deslandes, 16 July 2019, see Figure 4) or show playful details of her daughter’s newly modeled room (e.g., Mafalda Sampaio, 17 September 2019); and the “sexy mother” who is always made-up, tidy, and performs sensuality with lingerie and tight clothes (e.g., Liliana Filipa, 18 September 2019, see Figure 3), as an example of a ‘do-it-all woman’ (Devos et al. 2022). This echoes the post-feminist idea that womanhood and motherhood have changed, that women do not have to choose between their families or careers and/or act a certain way.

In the organic content shared by female creators, there is a greater emphasis on child-care brands, children’s clothing, hygiene products, decoration, and underwear/lingerie for new mothers, although all sorts of products or services aimed at children appear in the posts of celebrity and influencer mothers. This commercialism can be accumulated with brands by the creators, as entrepreneurs or indeed mumpreneurs, such as TV host Carolina Patrocínio who launched her own brand of children’s products, an online store with second-hand objects to “help families give new life to baby items they no longer use” (14 January 2019). As for the male creators, the only two brands found in parenting posts are a hotel and a car, further creating the image of a “fun father”, who travels, plays and laughs with his family. This relates to vacation periods and/or days off, while women represent parenting more closely connected to the everyday life of parenthood. This effect of commercialism may also help explain why Sirkazzio did not upload any video for the first three months of his child—besides speaking of the precarity of the job as a YouTuber.

The positive emotions of parenting (Jorge et al. 2022a) are expressed by female as well as male personalities, not least also inviting relatability from audiences, and through the deployment of emojis. TV host Carolina Patrocínio posts on Instagram: “The baby’s first day of school is coming and the house will be empty 🏠” (13 September 2019); and footballer Cristiano Ronaldo shows all of his family members around a table, saying: “How great it is to arrive at home after a day of hard work and be with my lovely family 🙌❤️😊” (15 July 2019). However, it is women who tend to share more challenging situations, difficulties, or even bad moments lived in parenting experiences. Influencer Mafalda Sampaio says: “After a sleep tantrum, we found this shady and airy corner there to put her to sleep 😴 Traveling with a baby is lovely but hard 🤔👉” (14 July 2019); and Rita Pereira writes on an Instagram caption: “A sleepless night, otitis, cough, infinite snot, and tantrum, but love, a lot of love in these two beings [pic shows the dog] that sleep snuggled in my lap. This is my ‘post-Christmas’❤️ Additionally, you, what are you up to?!” (26 December 2019).

On Instagram, commercialism by female creators is more substantial, and it is also the locus of increased emotional labor. Like on YouTube, this appears in the intimacy they try to establish (“as you know, this is my favorite”, Mafalda Sampaio, 23 December 2019); but particular to Instagram is how they infuse advertorials with affect and depict more family moments (e.g., Carolina Patrocínio in a cosmetic ad, 22 December 2019). Sponsorships also incentivize representations as ‘adventurous women seizing life’ (e.g., Carolina Patrocínio in an advertorial with a car, 20 April 2019; Rita Pereira skydiving while traveling, 19 September 2019).

Among male creators, aside from other funny and playful moments, some adversity may appear through the use of humor: e.g., comedian António Raminhos posted a photo of himself with a filter that aged his face and said: “Weekends with children just kill you” (15 July 2019). Humor is also the discursive mechanism through which parenting appears on YouTube. The young female comic content creator Mafalda Creative sets a sketch in the car and creates the ‘father’ character as the experienced and knowledgeable person regarding cars and driving, who says the daughter drives terribly, sits wrongly and keeps the car a mess (16 July 2019). In another video, she places the grandmother as the person who cooks long, long hours for Christmas dinner, “with a lot of love”, and yet apologizes if the men in the family do not like the taste (24 December 2019).

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Our study on the most popular female and male celebrities and influencers on social media in Portugal made it evident that, despite promises that social media would allow for more diverse representation, parenting is still portrayed by highly visible personalities in a traditional gender role frame, i.e., female creators give disproportionately greater attention to parenting, and are the ones depicting everyday labor related to it; whereas male creators show themselves as fathers in happy and fun moments. By way of their popularity and visibility on social media platforms, and as supported by the social media platforms and advertising realms, celebrities and influencers are amplifying the traditional division of parenting labor through the mechanisms of a postfeminist, hyper individualistic discourse emphasized by female influencers and celebrities, and of humoristic content that confirms gender stereotypes without social punishment, deployed by entertainment personalities, both male and female.

This revamping of traditional gender roles stem from the fact that the most popular personalities on Instagram and YouTube are, from the start, not diverse from the point of view of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This normativity may derive from the fact that, despite the partial formal recognition of equality between genders, it is still an ingrained trait of Portuguese culture and society (Torres et al. 2018), as audiences form their popularity. It is also, we believe, further validated and amplified by advertisers and platform policies, i.e., by the political economy of social media platforms (Hutchinson 2022; Bishop 2020). Throughout our analysis, we have more clearly singled out commercialism as a contributing cause for such patterns (Khamis et al. 2017; Hearn and Schoenhoff 2016),

although much of the content is not transparently identified as sponsored. Female creators, especially influencers, are more associated with commercialism, which deepens women's association with material cultures. The categories of products and services advertised also follow a traditional gender divide, confirming Porfírio and Jorge (2022)'s conclusions. Younger children and children of influencers thus seem more exposed, and concerns for their privacy may be posed.

The fact that our study included both YouTube and Instagram allowed us to shed light on the fact that, on YouTube, parenting is more tangentially visible, and this is mainly articulated through a humorous discourse; while it is on Instagram that more discourses on parenting appear, something we attribute to its closer relation to everyday life. On Instagram, parenting appears as closely connected to material cultures as well as emotional labor, articulating the two. This can contribute to normalizing discourses for ordinary parents and aspirational content creators, and work to define parenting subject figures. This is particularly problematic in contexts of unequal gender roles, such as those in Portugal.

This study covered two of the most-used social media platforms, a considerable corpus to sample a year of content creation, and comparing women and men creators. However, as with every study, it has limitations: the fact that the corpus was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic does not reflect the major societal changes this disruption has brought about to families, emotionally and economically amongst other levels. It also did not include reactions or comments by the audiences. Future research could focus both on audience engagement and the perceptions that ordinary audiences generate of discourses produced by influencers and celebrities regarding parenting, namely how it affects their own parenthood as well as social media use for sharenting.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.J.; methodology, A.J. and B.G.; software, B.G.; validation, A.J.; formal analysis, B.G., B.J.d.C. and A.M.C.; data curation, B.G.; writing—original draft preparation, A.J., B.G., B.J.d.C. and A.M.C.; writing—review and editing, A.J., B.G., B.J.d.C. and A.M.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This study was funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, within the project DeCodeM—“(De)Coding Masculinities: Towards an enhanced understanding of media's role in shaping perceptions of masculinities in Portugal” (PTDC/COM-CSS/31740/2017).

Informed Consent Statement: We considered the celebrities' and influencers' open social media accounts as public online locations since they do not require permission to access. See Methods section for more details.

Data Availability Statement: The databases are not publicly available so as not to direct to original content for privacy reasons. See Methods section for more details.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ On Instagram, by number of followers, descending: Cristiano Ronaldo, André Silva, Pepe, Ricardo Quaresma, Bernardo Silva, António Raminhos, Nelson Semedo, André Gomes, Lourenço Ortigão, Diogo Piçarra (male); Sara Sampaio, Carolina Deslandes, Cristina Ferreira, Carolina Patrocínio, Rita Pereira, Dolores Aveiro, Bárbara Bandeira, Mafalda Sampaio, Liliana Filipa, and Carolina Loureiro (female). On YouTube, by number of followers, descending: Sir Kazzio, Dark Frame, Feromonas, Wuant, Windoh, Pi, Nuno Agonia, Tiagovski, João Sousa, RicFazeres (male); SEA3PO, Owhana, SofiaBBeauty, Inês Rochinha, Mafalda Sampaio, Catarina Filipe, Mafalda Creative, Angie Costa, A Inês Ribeiro, Bumba na Fofinha (female).
- ² For instance, SirKazzio did not upload any video in the first three months of 2019, which he explained in a video entitled “What if I went back to doing this? . . . ” (6 April 2019) as related to being too busy since the birth of his daughter.

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