#InstaMoms:
Filipina Influencers on Idealized Contemporary Motherhood

Veronica L. Gregorio
Cleve V. Arguelles

Abstract

This paper discusses how Filipina #InstaMoms relate to the evolution of the concept of ideal motherhood in the Philippines. We propose to look at Filipino motherhood in four stages: first is the ideal traditional, second is the ideal transient, third is the ideal transnational, and last is what we call idealized contemporary motherhood. We posit that while Filipina #InstaMoms consciously create contents for fellow mothers' consumption and their product promotion, they also unintendedly create the fourth stage which is idealized contemporary motherhood in the age of social media. Using netnography and guided by the frameworks of postfeminism and relatability, we found that idealized contemporary Filipina motherhood challenge the image of a "selfless mother" and encourage mothers to reject the concept of "motherhood guilt" but at the same time also brings in additional standards on motherhood. The images being shown by #InstaMoms include a mother who is financially independent (with small business or

earnings as social media influencer), self-confident with regard to her own body, can balance homemaking and self-care, and still oversee the emotional well-being of the family. While it implies agency and emancipation, it also means increased uncalculated labor for Filipino women who want to "have it all" (McRobbie 2009) outside of social media platforms. We recommend that future works include key interviews with #InstaMoms, that the roles of daddy influencers (specifically those who open separate accounts after their wives became known mommy influencers) be examined, and that self-representations of teenage mothers in the digital sphere (beyond Instagram) be explored.

Keywords: gender roles, Instagram, #InstaMoms, motherhood, Philippines

Introduction

In the past decade, Southeast Asia has been witnessing the rise of social media. Whether in business or politics, social media is fundamentally changing the way we live. One of the more notable developments brought by this is the immense success and popularity of social media influencers (SMIs). For many young Southeast Asians, it has even become a common aspiration to be one. SMIs can be broadly defined as a group which includes celebrities and noncelebrities with large followings and provides opinion on people's purchasing decisions (Burns, 2020). Popularly called influencers, SMIs accumulate followers by narrating their lives and lifestyles and engaging with their followers in both digital and physical spaces (Abidin, 2015a). They have become microcelebrities (Senft, 2008), with followers ranging from thousands to millions, whose online clout is being exploited for corporate and political needs (Abidin, 2016b). Since their debut, mainstream industries, which used to be reliant on traditional entertainment industry celebrities, increasingly resort to SMIs to reach the solid following under their commands. Influencers create their own webpages but in the past decade, they have become more accessible via YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok.

In the Philippines, SMIs are predominantly women whose brands revolve mostly around fashion, parenting, and travel. Some maintain a different day job, but many more women consider their work as social media influencers as a serious career. They produce a variety of textual, visual, and/or audio contents relevant to their followers. More importantly, they monetize their following by integrating paid advertisements into their contents. In fact, it is now common practice for successful SMIs to be managed by "influencer management agencies" to maximize monetized contents. But unlike traditional entertainment industry celebrities, their advertisements and other contents are usually more personal and intimate so that their brands will remain authentic to their followers. One of the members of the "OG" (an internet slang initialism used to describe an extraordinary person) lifestyle and travel bloggers/influencers is Tricia Gosingtian. She quit blogging in 2018 and the following year launched her fashion label Hinhin. As she promotes the brand on Instagram, the platform also served as her outlet to share her pregnancy and motherhood journey (Calasanz-Labrador, 2020).

Such a Filipina social media influencer is especially popular among urban, middle-class, young women who are immersed in social media. Usually aged 18 to 35 years, they represent an emerging trend in the region of empowered and self-taught social media-savvy young women. Increasingly, these young Filipinas are beginning to model themselves after social media influencers by creating similar contents in the same platforms (Banet-Weiser, 2012). This, and how SMIs are continuously sought by corporations and politicians, demonstrate its contemporary significance as a woman-centered global and national phenomenon.

Motherhood in the Philippines

In reviewing scholarly works on motherhood, we discuss the evolution of the concept based on historical and socioeconomic developments in the Philippine context. The earlier and still dominant cultural expectations and social norms on motherhood were formed during the Spanish and American colonial rule. Such expectations and norms center on the family wherein the mother, most of the time also

a housewife, puts the interest of the husband and children before all her needs and other social roles (Medina, 1991; Sobritchea, 1990). This ideal traditional motherhood in the Philippines is also strongly reflected in the character of Sisa in the novel *Noli Me Tangere* (Rizal, 1887). Roces (2010) explains this as an epitome of the suffering mother who never complained despite domestic violence of her husband. Another significant part in the novel is when Sisa went mad after discovering the death of her son, which can be interpreted as the impact of her failing to be an ideal mother who is supposed to provide care for her children.

The notion of the ideal Filipina mother expanded when the global demand for nurses and domestic helpers increased in the 1980s. Francisco-Menchavez (2019, p. 88) argues, "the historical precedent and normalization of labor migration becomes a key part of Filipinas' logics, and later critique, for working abroad." The government promoted labor export policies and encouraged women to join the pool of migrant workers overseas. Migration scholars have noted how leaving the country is a difficult and, most of the time, a collective decision by the family. Works on migrant Filipina workers reveal how they send almost their whole monthly salary to their families and even work extra on weekends to provide more for their children's education, clothes, food, and other needs (Asis, 1994; McCallum, 2021). An image of the ideal transnational Filipina mother was formed as more women became breadwinners. The image is one who can sacrifice (endure loneliness) and do care work from a distance.

Between the two notions is the ideal transient Filipina mother. Often ignored because of the nonextreme conditions of being too tied to the home (housewife) or being too far (overseas worker), the ideal transient is often a commuter wife. This means working outside of the city or village and staying in an apartment during weekdays and returning to their homes on weekends or several times a month (Bergen et al., 2007; Gerstel & Gross, 1982). Commuter wives in the Philippines face dissonance in their homes as "gender expectations about being a wife, mother, and in-law" (Gregorio, 2020a, 2020b) coincide with expectations of also being a provider for the family. Due to the continuous worsening economic conditions of the country, being a housewife for a low to middle income Filipino family is no longer ideal. However, due to the existing gender

norms and expectations on motherhood, not being overseas means that the ideal transient mother should still be hands-on and well involved in managing the household while also working full time.

The ideal traditional Filipina mother is one who can do care work for her husband and children, maintain the home, and provide emotional support to the whole family full time. She makes herself available for the family 24/7. On the other hand, the ideal transnational Filipino mother is willing to leave to show love and provide economically for the family. While afar for a long period of time, she should still be able to find ways to keep in touch, provide guidance and support through mobile calls and more recently, through social media interactions (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019; Cabañes & Acedera, 2012; Parreñas, 2005). The ideal transient Filipino mother should be able to strike a definite balance in between.

These three stages of idealized notions of Filipina motherhood—traditional, transient, and transnational—as we will show in our discussion, are currently being challenged by what we call the Filipina #InstaMoms of Instagram. While there is no need for mothers to think about being beautiful or fashionable in traditional, transient, and transnational motherhood contexts, in the age of Instagram, being glam is important to be recognized as #InstaMom in the fourth stage which is idealized contemporary motherhood.

Postfeminism, Influencer Moms, and Relatability

Postfeminism discourse emphasizes the role of modernity, popular culture, and female individualization in shaping young women's aspirations and anxieties (McRobbie, 2004). In popular culture, postfeminism is represented by "successful femininity" (Budgeon, 2011) which highlights gender equality but introduces a new set of contradictions. Young women are being encouraged to pursue higher education, have stable careers, be economically independent, but at the same time be able to catch up in the fast-changing society. Moreover, young women are depicted as independent, and when they long for men's companionship, it does not necessarily mean marriage. McRobbie (2004) argues that the "modern sophisticated girl" image is expected to have uncritical relations with commercially produced

sexual representations that endorse a new regime of sexual meanings—including consent and pleasure, among others. This strand of feminism offers a critical lens to highlight the co-optation of the paradoxical experiences of mothers in the Philippines into digital labor practices. It presents how #InstaMoms reinforce and challenge gendered expectations in Philippine society, but they do so with reservations.

#InstaMoms in the Philippines, as we will demonstrate later, perform with reservations in terms of sexual politics contrary to the past observations on American and British women in popular culture who are explicit with the new regimes of sexual meanings. To support this, we look at the relatability framework which focuses on five elements in studying influencer culture (Abidin, 2018): (a) accessibility (how easy it is to approach an influencer in digital and physical spaces), (b) believability (how convincing an influencer's depicted lifestyle and sentiments are), (c) authenticity (how genuine an influencer's actual lifestyle and sentiments are), (d) emulatability (how easy followers can model themselves after an influencer's lifestyle), and (e) intimacy (how familiar and close followers feel to an influencer). Similarly, we found recurring comments on the posts of #InstaMoms saying "relate *ako diyan mars*" (I can relate, sister), "I experience that too!," and "same *tayo*!" (we have the same—referring to a specific experience).

In terms of accessibility and intimacy, we observed how #InstaMoms reply to comments on their posts and how often they share the direct messages they receive from followers. We also watched live videos or recorded videos to see how often they accept discussion requests from their followers. In some instances, we also sent direct messages to ask about the events they attended. For believability and authenticity, we noted how often the #InstaMoms share their struggles as mothers who are having problems with disciplining their children, experiencing work pressure and stress, and also having to face spouse-related issues. Finally, for emulatability, we consciously chose middle class influencers, as opposed to upper class influencers, because their followers are more diverse and from different parts of the Philippines. Their routines and experiences are closer to the majority of the mothers in the Philippines who are from lower to middle classes.

Instagram as Fieldsite

Instagram has a unique origin when it was launched in 2010 as it was meant to be primarily a location-based check-in app (Leaver et al., 2020). While Instagram and other platforms are starting to have more resemblances in terms of content creation, Twitter remains to be popularly used for sharing opinions and ideas in limited words (280 characters) while Facebook is for creating and maintaining social networks, including family members. At present, Instagram is known for being a highly visual oriented space—from video creation to various photo filter options. Being dependent on visual contents, Instagram is useful in studying influencers, their target audiences, and the strategies they use for endorsing products or even political candidates.

Scholarly works on Instagram influencers cover different topics such as labor, economics, and politics. The work of Abidin (2016a) in Singapore for instance highlights publicity work and visibility labor among Instagram influencers and followers, who are mostly women. She found how followers use in-group vocabulary and follow community practices to be noticed by the influencers and be identified as "loyal," "active," and "good follower." One specific publicity convention that Abidin discussed is the #OOTD (Outfit of the Day) where followers model the clothes and tag the labels and brands to engage with the influencer who is advertising the product. The influencer in return is being compensated by the fashion brands while the followers participate in undercompensated and underacknowledged highly gendered visibility labour.

Beta (2019) on the other hand focuses on young Muslim women groups and their role in the Indonesian political arena. She conceptualized "social media religious influencer" to understand the intersection of politics, gender, and religion. The work is noteworthy as it explores how young women teach each other about Islam and perform a virtuous lifestyle in creative ways. Beta demonstrated how the religious Instagram influencers creatively and unforcefully maintain the gender norms and promote ideal Muslim womanhood. Some examples are being entrepreneurial but with the permission from the husband and using graphics with sweet images and soft colors to invite young women to

protest against Valentine's Day (which is seen as promoting capitalism and lust or desire). Perceptions of young women on Hijabi and consumption culture were also recently examined by various scholars in Malaysia (for more details, see Khalid et al., 2018; Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen & Manaf, 2019).

On a different note, the work of Thipparat Chiewcharnsuwan (2019) focuses on how Instagram influencers in Thailand encourage women to purchase brands from small e-commerce retailers. Using an online survey of 91 women Instagram users, Chiewcharnsuwan found that followers tend to purchase from small brands if they are endorsed and reviewed by influencers. It is likely that microinfluencers (100,000 or less followers) would trigger a purchasing decision compared to the macroinfluencers (100,000 or more followers). According to Chiewcharnsuwan, this is perhaps due to the more detailed reviews that microinfluencers provide in order to gain more Instagram followers.

This article aims to contribute to the study of influencers in Southeast Asia by looking at Filipino women who capitalize on their motherhood journey. However, unlike Tricia Gosingtian who is an upper-class fashion influencer and has been in the blogging scene long before the rise of social media, we will focus on middle class women who use Instagram to share solely their experiences and opinions about being a mother. Hence we ask, how do #InstaMoms reinforce or challenge notions on ideal Filipina motherhood? We argue that Filipina #InstaMoms are unconsciously creating what we call as "idealized contemporary motherhood" which aims to challenge dominant notions but also reinforce some of it. Additionally, the concept presents new expectations for Filipina mothers.

Doing Netnography

We used netnography to systematically observe and analyze the everyday life of #InstaMoms. Netnography is a research methodology that "adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated

communications" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62). Compared to more popular qualitative methods like participant observation or ethnography, netnography is described as unobtrusive, noninfluencing, and cost-effective (de Valck et al., 2009; Kozinets, 2002; Pollok et al., 2014). Different from content analysis, the participation of the researchers is central to netnography. Becoming a follower or a member of an online community is important to obtain rich data (Phillips, 2011).

By using an "ethnographic sensibility" (Schatz, 2009), the aim of this study is to gain an intimate understanding of how Filipina SMIs shape and reshape everyday motherhood through their ordinary and daily engagements in different social media platforms. This entailed close and detailed monitoring of the social media activities of four of the most popular #InstaMoms in the Philippines. With the help of two research assistants, we collated Instagram screenshots of posts and stories from January 2019 to December 2020. The authors themselves then looked at the interactions with followers and other noticeable patterns in about 350 to 450 screenshots per influencer. Longer Instagram stories were not included but the activities were noted, especially if it includes gathering with families during holidays and birthdays. The ultimate goal of adopting a netnographic perspective is not only to generate a rich account of how and why SMIs think, behave, and interact in a particular way in a given time and space, but most importantly, to understand their practices from their own perspectives (Geertz & Darnton, 2017).

We used the concepts from the relatability framework to study the lives and activities of four influencers: Janelle Strelon, Ciara Magallanes, Pehpot Pineda, and Isha Borromeo. They are the most followed mommy influencers in the Philippines and the next in the ranks have 7,000 to 9,000 followers only. These four #InstaMoms are also actively following, commenting, and liking posts of each other. Table 1 below shows a summary of their followers, posts, and accounts that they are following as of December 2021.

Table 1

#InstaMoms Included in the Study

Name	Instagram handle	Followers	Posts	Following
Janelle Strelon	@janellestrelon	19.8k	1,765	4,823
Ciara Magallanes	@ciaramagallanes	41.8k	1,703	584
Pehpot Pineda	@mommypehpot	86.1k	2,271	6,238
Isha Borromeo	@nanayisha	185k	4,579	1,196

Netnography was conducted daily as the #InstaMoms post almost every day. Part of the netnography is reading through the comments and exchanges between the followers and among the influencers themselves. Screenshots of posts were collated in a shared drive by the research team while the selection of photos and thematic coding were done by the principal investigators themselves.

Scripted Realities and Additional Standards?

We chose Instagram as the specific netnographic site for two reasons. On the one hand, these social media platforms house the activities of most Filipina social media influencers. It is an ideal terrain to closely observe their activities. On the other hand, this platform is relatively understudied compared to others. Despite its huge popularity among social media users, Filipino scholars previously focused on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter influencers and alter accounts (Arguelles, 2019; Cabbuag & Benitez, 2021; Ong & Cabbuag, 2022; Ong & Cabañes, 2019; Shtern et al., 2019). In this section, we discuss the four ways in which #InstaMoms reinforce or challenge notions on ideal Filipina motherhood.

Always Pretty, Rarely Messy

The first pattern is always being pretty and rarely messy in their Instagram posts and stories. From cooking to doing laundry, the

Instamoms are dressed casually and with light make-up and well-done hair. In this photo we show Ciara's post holding the creamy burger steak that she cooked. She even included the recipe in the caption. The background is well curated, with no empty pans or other cooking tools used. Most importantly, it is showing the product being endorsed.

Figure 1

Ciara Endorsing a Burger Patty in Her Home Kitchen

In specific commercial posts, the #InstaMoms also dress up their children. For Janelle's post below, you can see that she is wearing a matching dress with her twins while promoting a vitamin brand. This conveys one of the ideal traditional motherhood characteristics which is caring for the children's well-being by ensuring that they take the vitamins regularly.

Figure 2
Janelle Endorsing a Vitamin for Children

We posit that the rare posts of mothers being messy or haggard is a conscious attempt to be believable and authentic, as Abidin (2018) explained in her framework. In the photo below, a curated photo of a "tired" version of Ciara was posted and it received some comments of admiration and relatability from her followers.

Figure 3
*Ciara Sharing Her Thoughts on the Effect of Being a Busy Mother*

The other #InstaMoms are showing the same practice of posting haggard photos occasionally to show their followers that just like most mothers, they also get tired from housework and childcare. However, majority of the posts of #InstaMoms are still conveying the idea of balancing motherhood and maintaining beauty.

Promotion of Self-Care

The second pattern that we observed is the promotion of self-care. This promotion is also used by #InstaMoms to speak directly to their followers, as what Pehpot is doing in this post (which is actually a video from August 2019) where she says: "If you have snail cream moisturizer brand that you love, please comment below *at saan ako pwede bumili* (and where can I purchase it)."

Figure 4
From a Video Clip Where Pehpot Is Showing
Her Snail Cream to the Followers
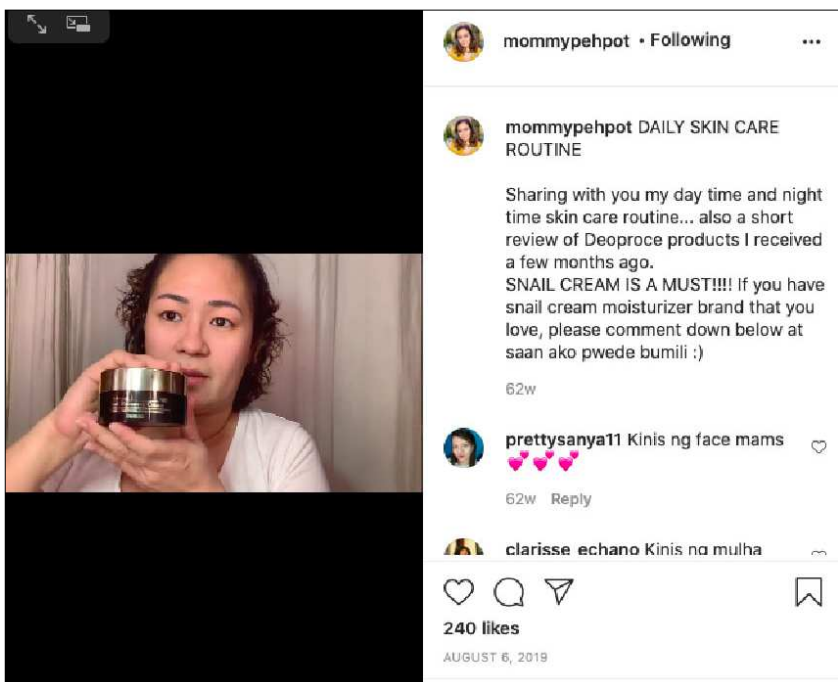
Another skin care promotion is through the post of Ciara. In a different light, she is giving the products away to gain more followers through reposts or tags in the comments, but at the same time also reminding followers that UV rays can damage skin.

Figure 5
Ciara With Her Child in an Endorsement of Skin Sunscreen

The self-care routine is also framed as "me time" in the context of being a busy mom. Nanay Isha for example emphasizes in this post that while she has no time for spa or salon, she makes time for hair care using the products of a particular shampoo and conditioner brand.

Figure 6
Warm Shower and Hair Care as Isha's "Me Time"

In the above two patterns discussed, #InstaMoms are challenging the stereotype within mothers that is about being selfless and not caring about one's appearance because of the "motherhood guilt" (Guendouzi, 2006). This notion of guilt is related to the good mothering ideology permeating society which includes beliefs that mothers should devote their time happily and fully to the home and family (for comprehensive review, see Sutherland, 2010). The motherhood guilt in the Philippine context comes in when mothers are shamed for wearing nice clothes while the child is looking messy or using old clothes, or when the food they cooked is delicious, but they do not seem "too stressed" so perhaps it is not that difficult to prepare. Time used by mothers for themselves is often seen as time that should instead be devoted for the family members.

#InstaMoms are showing that being a good mother and having "me time" are not opposing ideas. Isha particularly notes in her caption that she ensures that her child is asleep first before relaxing and doing her hair care routine. The accessibility and emulatability are seen as the #InstaMoms use their self-care promotion to engage with their followers. Emulatability is reflected on how #InstaMoms encourage other moms

to save some time in their night routine and use products that are not that expensive or high-end because they know that moms are thinking about the overall expenditures of the family too.

Fit and Active but Not Revealing

The third pattern that we see among #InstaMoms is the maintenance of the notion of being fit and active but at the same time being careful not to be revealing in dressing, to complement the taste of the target audience. These two posts, almost 1 year apart, Ciara posted in May 2019 and Isha posted in May 2020—but the idea is the same.

Figure 7

Isha Showing Routine Moves Using the Title From the Dance Song
"Igiling-Giling" (Also Translated as "Shake It, Shake It")

Figure 8

Ciara Sharing Her Weight Gain Story From Pregnancy and How She Is Aiming to Get Back in Shape by Jogging

Ciara is specifically sparking conversations with mothers who gained weight during pregnancy and stating that slow or little progress is still a progress. Similar to Isha, she is wearing simple shorts and T-shirt. #InstaMoms promote health by exercising but not wearing revealing clothes, unlike lifestyle influencers who are focusing on health, body image, and beauty by showing their bodies to their followers.

The "taste" of the audience we are referring to is also tied to the colonial construction on Filipino women that is related to the image of Maria Clara that is covering women's skin to prevent men from looking (Schultz, 2019; Tiongson, 1990). The same image is also referring to women who expose their skin as the "temptation" that ruins men, families, and societies. While some lifestyle influencers such as Michelle Dy (@michelledyy) or Rei Germar (@reigermar) defy this image, #InstaMoms

are careful to not be seen by their followers as breaking the clothing norms for Filipino women and, by extension, for Filipino mothers. The differences in ways of engaging with the audience of lifestyle influencers and #InstaMoms are quite apparent.

Family Moments as Content

Lastly, we find the notions of believability and intimacy from Abidin's (2018) framework through the family moments posted by the #InstaMoms. As they also post about their extended families and family problems, followers feel more familiar and closer to them. Pehpot shows here how their family collectively celebrates the birthdays of four family members all born in February, which is also generally being practiced by Filipino families. Ciara on the other hand shares about her husband's anxiety attack and expresses her sadness. Lastly, Janelle is sharing with her followers a more general experience that families are relating to due to the pandemic. She ensures that the children are still having family time with their father even if he is away.

Figure 9
Multiple Birthday Celebrations for Pehpot's Family

Figure 10
Ciara Reflecting on Her Husband's Anxiety Disorder

Figure 11
Video Call With Janelle's Husband
Who Is Working in Singapore

We identify the post of Pehpot as a fully optimistic form of family content, while Ciara's and Janell's posts as half pessimistic, half optimistic. Fully optimistic means the entire post is meant to share good feelings or good vibes for the followers, as also seen with the added goofy emojis that Pehpot used. Half pessimistic, half optimistic means the post started as pessimistic but ended with a light note. For Ciara, the full caption (below) provided details on how her husband and the family deal with anxiety issues. The writing style and flow of ideas are divided by the diamond emoji, and easy to follow for readers. From the pessimistic point to the optimistic point, she detailed how she supports her husband emotionally, with a joke on hypnotism, and ended with a smile emoji. Below is the full caption,

> His anxiety is back 😬 My husband's always been the *kenkoy*, joker, class clown type. But he struggled with anxiety disorder and just overcame it months ago . . . until last week. His anxiety is back. Not as bad as before, but still, we have to deal with it again. For one second, *sabi ko sa sarili ko, "hay, eto na naman kami"*. ◆ But then, I thought, *"Hindi. Mas kawawa ang asawa ko. Kailangan niya ko. Hindi niya makakaya mag-isa to"*. ◆ So, this week, *may ginagawa kami na* "counseling" every night. He is the patient and I am the counselor. He tells me how he feels, how he felt during the day (my husband's anxiety gets triggered when he feels something in his body, *iniisip niya na may* tumor, cancer, *mahe*-heart attack *na siya*, etc.) And I assure him *na* he is healthy. *Na hindi niya pa kami iiwanan ni* Olivia, and we will be together for 70 years more. Next, I sort of "hypnotize" him 😅 I make his body calm down, and tell him things that relaxes him—the beach, the sun, the sand, the trees and so on. So far, this "counseling" and "hypnotism" seem to help 🙂

For Janelle, as shown in the image, it is about their family narrative on the COVID-19 pandemic and she closed it with an encouraging statement for all that "what is important is we are all safe and healthy." Interestingly, during the whole duration of our netnography, we did

not see posts that are in the other extreme end of the spectrum which is just fully pessimistic.

#InstaMoms craft the post accordingly that they share some intimate and difficult issues in the family but ends with a solution or what we call "self-cheer" to let the followers know that they are upset but still handling it well. Some posts end with #InstaMoms seeking advice from followers but they are generally about child rearing, disciplining children, and saving money. In the abovementioned posts, followers engage in the comments by also cheering for the #InstaMoms. Specifically, followers are sending birthday greetings to the family of Pehpot, showing support to Ciara and her husband, and agreeing with the concerns of Janelle. Such intimate moments which are considered private, when shared with the audience, form a kind bond between women that transcend social media interactions.

Conclusion

Latest survey by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2021) reveals that for 6 years in a row now, the Philippines is the top 1 social media capital of the world, followed by Colombia, Brazil, Kenya, and Nigeria. The same report also indicates that there were 89 million individual social media users in the Philippines, about 81% of the total population. The most used social media platforms were YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Indeed, social media and, by extension, influencers are part of the everyday life of most Filipinos. This makes Instagram an interesting field site for interrogating contemporary gender norms and issues.

In this paper, we focused on Filipina #InstaMoms, their narratives on motherhood, and how it relates to the evolution of the concept of ideal motherhood. We underscored how the ideal traditional, ideal transient, and ideal transnational Filipina mothers are different from each other. But generally, all are family focused, with limited concern on the individual women's well-being and individual development. We posit that while Filipina #InstaMoms consciously create contents for fellow mothers'

consumption and their product promotion, they also unintendedly create what we call idealized contemporary motherhood in the age of social media. This notion, as we have shown in the previous sections, is brought about by four patterns involving physical appearance, self-care, wellness, and family moments.

We found that idealized contemporary Filipina motherhood challenges the image of a "selfless mother" and encourages mothers to reject the concept of "motherhood guilt" but at the same time also brings in additional standards on motherhood. While acknowledging the ways that #InstaMoms empower their followers and fellow mothers to care for their well-being and appearance, the adherence to the unequal division of emotional and physical labor within the home is still visible in their own posts. Are the standards for Filipina motherhood becoming postfeminist?

The additional standards, aside from the emotional and care work, from the three idealized notions of motherhood are shown above. Keeping a business, having matching outfits with kids, staying fit and stylish, cooking decent meals in line with the family budget, remembering birthdays and organizing the party, mediating and maintaining communication lines between children and family members from abroad, and many more. To answer, we return to the #InstaMoms and the effort they take to portray such self-presentation leading to a new form of motherhood against the background of the technological infrastructures. While it implies agency and emancipation, it also means increased uncalculated labor for Filipino women who want to "have it all" (McRobbie 2009) outside of social media platforms. The desire is not entirely wrong, but the neocolonial and capitalistic logics that drive such development on the idealized notions of motherhood need to be carefully evaluated.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, we present three recommendations for future related works. First is to conduct key interviews with #InstaMoms and ask their specific motivations in opening and maintaining their

accounts. One can ask how often they plan their content creation and how long does it take for them to curate a post with their family, specifically children. What are their considerations in publicizing their children's everyday activities or experiences in school? Key interviews will also be useful in creating a more inclusive and feminist-oriented research wherein the participants are fully aware of their roles in the research process and output.

Second is to examine the rising daddy influencers vis-à-vis established mommy influencers (e.g., Daddy Diaries, husband of #InstaMom Ciara Magallanes). Our initial netnography with daddy influencers reveals one pattern about acknowledging and challenging hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995). Research questions can focus on the performativity aspect of daddy influencers and how similar or different it is from mommy influencers. Why do they have to open separate accounts from their wives? Is it about reaffirming their own identities as fathers or about having a separate life from the collective family life being posted by the #InstaMoms?

The third recommendation is to interrogate further the self-representation of teenage mothers in the digital sphere (this can go beyond Instagram). With the trending videos on Tiktok, #MomsofTiktok and #teenpregnancy for instance, one can follow how teenage mothers are sharing their stories and encouraging other teenage mothers to also do the same. The claiming of space and voicing out of their life stories, we assume, allow these teenage mothers to first, have a sense of belonging in cyberspace compared to the "outside world" where they are being continuously judged or excluded (Gregorio, 2018, 2015) and second, also desire to "have it all" relating to the mommy influencers. Empirical data should be collected to confirm this assumption.

Postscript: Reflections on Digital Culture Research

As we attempt to navigate digital culture research, we encountered fundamental ethical questions including consent, privacy, and research with women and children. These are valid ethical issues but are not distinct

as large-scale online studies in social science research and experiments in medical research also face the same issues. We respond by presenting the debate and where we currently stand.

In general, one side argues that social media-based researches are observational. As explained by Moreno et al. (2013, p. 709), "For example, an observational study of YouTube videos involves publicly posted and available content accessible to any Internet user. In this case, the information is not private, and it does not require any interaction with the subject to access it." This means that consent is not necessary from the owners of the videos because it is publicly accessible. The other side of the debate argues that a reflexive ethical approach be provided. In the decision flow chart by Williams and colleagues (2017), they ask key questions that can help in deciding if consent is needed for using Twitter posts as research data (for details, see Figure 1, p. 1163). Some of the questions include the following: Is the user identifiable as vulnerable? Is the tweet deleted at the time of research/writing? Is the tweet from an individual organization member? Reflexive ethical approach can be seen as the researcher repeatedly asks himself/herself the said flow chart questions while conducting the data collection and then adjusting accordingly. At the end, Williams and colleagues (2017) posit that public figure accounts do not need consent.

Our personal take is that these ethical concerns are context specific. For example, a study on Twitter about a political issue showing individual Twitter users' accounts posts which can harm the users should be questioned. Especially if these accounts were randomly selected, there should at least be an attempt to anonymize the said individuals to make their identities unidentifiable. We see that a study on celebrities and their lives which they posted publicly for media consumption and for their own followers, on the other hand, is ethical. In the same way, our study on influencers is based on the posts of the #InstaMoms who curated their profiles for public consumption.

Ethical considerations on online research with/about/for women and children are also context specific. If the research focuses on sex workers' Instagram profiles, the research is expected to protect the identity of the

sex workers, particularly if the country considers it as illegal. Another example would be studies on social media-based violence against women and children. Faces and names of the accounts being studied or a viral photo of a survivor should be anonymized and blurred out. We firmly stand that studies that can relieve or cause trauma to women and children should do their best to protect their subjects' mental well-being, identities, and privacy. As for this study, we did not blur the faces of the children because they are already "micro-microcelebrities" (Abidin, 2015b) through their influencer moms. We argue that the discussion on Ciara's husband and his anxiety is a public content that she used to also discuss mental health openly within families and encourage individuals to face similar issues in a nonjudgmental manner.

Overall, beyond the "the posts are public/private" debate, it is crucial to return to the research question and the choice of methodology. As the question of this paper is on how Instagram moms reinforce or challenge notions on ideal Filipina motherhood through their posts, we did not see the need to conduct interviews with them. We also did not seek consent, following the reflexive critical approach, that the #InstaMoms are known and recognized public figures.

Acknowledgements

References

Abidin, C. (2015a). Communicative intimacies: Influencers and perceived interconnectedness. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.7264/N3MW2FFG

Abidin, C. (2015b). Micromicrocelebrity: Branding babies on the internet. *M/C Journal, 18*(5). https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.1022

Abidin, C. (2016a). Visibility labour: Engaging with influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia, 161*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177

Abidin, C. (2016b). "Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online?": Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity. *Social Media + Society, 2*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641342

Abidin, C. (2018, April 16). *Layers of identity: How to be "real" when everyone is watching.* Real Life. https://reallifemag.com/layers-of-identity/

Acedera, K. A., & Yeoh, B. S. (2019). "Making time": Long-distance marriages and the temporalities of the transnational family. *Current Sociology*, *67*(2), 250–272. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118792927

Arguelles, C. V. (2019). 青年是否正在虚度青春 —— 作为菲律宾千禧一代新兴政治的数字公民 (Is youth really wasted on the young? Digital citizenship as an emerging politics of Filipino millennials). *RefengXueshu (热风学术网刊), 14*, 47-62.

Asis, M. (1994). Family ties in a world without borders. *Philippine Sociological Review, 42*(1–4), 16–26.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2012). *Authentic TM: Politics and ambivalence in a brand culture*. New York University Press.

Beta, A. R. (2019). Commerce, piety and politics: Indonesian young Muslim women's groups as religious influencers. *New Media & Society, 21*(10), 2140–2159. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819838774

Bergen, K. M., Kirby, E., & McBride, M. C. (2007). "How do you get two houses cleaned?": Accomplishing family caregiving in commuter marriages. *Journal of Family Communication, 7*(4), 287–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267430701392131

Budgeon, S. (2011). The contradictions of successful femininity: Third-wave feminism, postfeminism and "new" femininities. In R. Gill & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New femininities* (pp. 279–292). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230294523_19

Burns, K. S. (2020). The history of social media influencers. In B. Watkins (Ed.), *Research perspectives on social media influencers and brand communication* (p. 209). Lexington Books.

Cabañes, J. V. A., & Acedera, K. A. F. (2012). Of mobile phones and mother-fathers: Calls, text messages, and conjugal power relations in mother-away Filipino families. *New Media & Society, 14*(6), 916–930. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811435397

Cabbuag, S., & Benitez, C. J. (2021). All hail, the baklang kanal!: Subversive frivolity in two Filipino influencers. *Plaridel*, 1–35.

Calasanz-Labrador, P. (2020, March 14). *Tricia Gosingtian on quitting blogging, launching her own fashion brand + more*. Spot.PH. https://www.spot.ph/shopping/the-latest-shopping/81352/tricia-gosingtian-hinhin-profile-a3126-20200314-lfrm2

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power*. Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R. (1995). *Masculinities*. Polity Press.

de Valck, K., van Bruggen, G. H., & Wierenga, B. (2009). Virtual communities: A marketing perspective. *Decision Support Systems, 47*(3), 185–203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2009.02.008

Francisco-Menchavez, V. (2019). A mother who leaves is a mother who loves: Labor migration as part of the Filipina life course and motherhood. *Journal of Asian American Studies, 22*(1), 85–102. https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2019.0008

Geertz, C., & Darnton, R. (2017). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (3rd ed.). Basic Books.

Gerstel, N., & Gross, H. E. (1982). Commuter marriages: A review. *Marriage & Family Review, 5*(2), 71–93. https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v05n02_05

Gregorio, V. L. (2015). *Maagang pagbubuntis: Mga kwento sa likod ng kwenta* [Thesis, University of the Philippines].

Gregorio, V. (2018). The only exception: Teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. *Review of Women's Studies, 28*, 1–28.

Gregorio, V. L. (2020a). Isolation and immunity within the family: Commuter marriages in Southeast Asia. *Current Sociology, 70*(5). https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120972143

Gregorio, V. L. (2020b). *Farm and familialism in Southeast Asia: Gender and generational relations in Malaysian and Philippine villages* [PhD Thesis, National University of Singapore].

Guendouzi, J. (2006). The guilt thing: Balancing domestic and professional roles. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*(4), 901–909.

Khalid, N. L., Jayasainan, S. Y., & Hassim, N. (2018). Social media influencers—Shaping consumption culture among Malaysian youth. *SHS Web of Conferences, 53*. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20185302008

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research, 39*(1), 61–72. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935

Leaver, T., Highfield, T., & Abidin, C. (2020). *Instagram: Visual social media cultures.* Polity Press.

McCallum, D. G. (2021). Affectionate remittances: Materialism and care in Filipino transnational families in Japan. *Current Sociology, 70*(6). https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921211034895

McRobbie, A. (2004). Post?feminism and popular culture. *Feminist Media Studies, 4*(3), 255–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/1468077042000309937

McRobbie, A. (2009). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change.* Sage.

Medina, B. T. G. (1991). *The Filipino family*. University of the Philippines Press.

Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, T. S. A. T., & Manaf, A. M. (2019). Celebrity-fan engagement on Instagram and its influence on the perception of hijab culture among Muslim women in Malaysia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication, 35*(1), 286–302.

Moreno, M. A., Goniu, N., Moreno, P. S., & Diekema, D. (2013). Ethics of social media research: Common concerns and practical considerations. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking, 16*(9), 708–713. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2012.0334

Ong, J. C., & Cabbuag, S. (2022). Pseudonymous influencers and horny "alts" in the Philippines: Media manipulation beyond "fake news." *The Journal of Socio-Technical Critique, 2*(2), 132. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/communication_faculty_pubs/132

Ong, J. C., & Cabañes, J. V. A. (2019). *Politics and profit in the fake news factory: Four work models of political trolling in the Philippines.* North Atlantic Treaty Organization Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

Parreñas, R. S. (2005). *Children of global migration: Transnational families and gendered woes.* Stanford University Press.

Phillips, T. (2011). When film fans become fan family: Kevin Smith fandom and communal experience. *Participations, 8*(2), 478–496.

Pollok, P., Lüttgens, D., & Piller, F. T. (2014). Leading edge users and latent consumer needs in electromobility: Findings from a nethnographic study of user innovation in high-tech online communities. *SSRN Electronic Journal.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2412081

Rizal, J. (1887). *Noli me tangere.* Berliner Buchdruckerei-Aktiengesellschaft.

Roces, M. (2010). Rethinking "the Filipino woman." In M. Roces & L. P. Edwards (Eds.), *Women's movements in Asia: Feminisms and transnational activism.* Routledge.

Schatz, E. (Ed.). (2009). *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power.* The University of Chicago Press.

Schultz, K. L. (2019). *Wearing the nation: Dress, illusion and identity in American stereography of the Philippines* [Master's thesis, University of California, Davis].

Senft, T. M. (2008). *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks.* Peter Lang.

Shtern, J., Hill, S., & Chan, D. (2019). Social media influence: Performative authenticity and the relational work of audience commodification in the Philippines. *International Journal of Communication, 13*, 1939–1958.

Sobritchea, C. I. (1990). The ideology of female domesticity: Its impact on the status of Filipino women. *Review of Women's Studies, 1*(1), 26–41.

Sutherland, J.-A. (2010). Mothering, guilt and shame. *Sociology Compass, 4*(5), 310–321. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00283.x

Thipparat Chiewcharnsuwan. (2019). *Social network influencers: The impact towards online apparel retailers on Instagram* [Thematic paper, Mahindol University]. https://archive.cm.mahidol.ac.th/handle/123456789/3112

Tiongson, N. (1990). The dressing tradition. In G. Cordero-Fernando & N. Ricio (Eds.), *Turn of the century* (pp. 112–133). GCF Books.

We Are Social, & Hootsuite. (2021). *Digital 2021: The Philippines*. Datareportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-philippines

Williams, M. L., Burnap, P., & Sloan, L. (2017). Towards an ethical framework for publishing Twitter data in social research: Taking into account users' views, online context and algorithmic estimation. *Sociology, 51*(6), 1149–1168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038517708140