Latina Millennial Mothers' Experience of Reshaping Motherhood Ideals: The Role of Fashion Mommy Influencers

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<u>Purpose/Rationale</u>. The current social presence of fashion influencers-turned-mothers demonstrates that self-fashioning is a foundation for self-gratification and allows women, particularly mothers, to proclaim their identity (Twigg, 2018). In fact, clothing functions as a means for women to rise from their roles as mothers (Banim & Guy, 2001), and the reconstruction of a wardrobe signifies a woman's transition into an unexplored chapter of her life such as motherhood (Clarke & Miller, 2002). Despite the growing popularity on the social media influencer phenomenon, little research seeks to understand the role fashion mommy influencers play among Latina women in the US as they experience motherhood. While previous studies in the social media research stream have explored family influencers' online authenticity (Abidin, 2017) and pregnant bodies and self-presentation on Instagram (Mayoh, 2019), there remains a conceptual gap. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of clothing and social media influencers in minorities' identity formation as they experience significant transition of the self.

<u>Conceptual Framework</u>. This study adopted three theoretical lenses. First, intersectionality theory concerns how identities are constructed within structures of power and privilege and provides insight on social issues (Crenshaw, 1991). This theory helped to comprehend how young Latina mothers in the US reconfigure gender and intersecting structures through the consumption of FMIs' disclosure on social media. Second, performance studies was adopted to understand the navigating of rigid societal standards whereby social media provides a means toward reproduction and creation of personal performances (Papacharissi, 2012). This theory helped to explore how FMIs' social media performances help make sense of self in viewers' motherhood. Lastly, the self-in-relation theory provided a lens into how individuals, particularly women, develop a sense of self that is greatly rooted in creating and preserving relationships and associations with others (Miller, 1991). This allowed exploration into the inner and exterior facets involved in FMIs and Latina millennial mothers' social networking relationship online.

<u>Method</u>. To achieve triangulation, data were drawn from three sources: (1) In-depth interviews, (2) digital ethnography, and (3) secondary data. We conducted in-depth interviews with 14 millennials who identified as cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual Latina women. The interviews were semi-structured, and follow-up questions were used to gain expansive descriptions. Each interview lasted about 30 to 75 minutes. Digital ethnography was conducted to explore FMIs' social stories in both physical (e.g., face-to-face interviews with participants who follow FMIs) and digital spaces (e.g., FMIs' presence and viewers' engagement in social media and blogs) (Murthy, 2008). A list of 25 FMIs was drawn from interviews conducted with the participants and focused on influencers who were discussed by the participants in detail. Lastly, media articles on influencer related topics and researchers' interview notes were used as data. Document analysis is commonly used for triangulating data to offer a multitude of

corroboration that prompts credibility (Denzin, 1970). Thematic interpretations developed through an iterative process that entailed a circular technique across the several forms of data (Spiggle, 1994).

Findings. Four major themes emerged: (1) *shaping of motherhood ideals* (2) *sense of solidarity through shared experiences with fashion mommy influencers,* (3) *fashion mommy influencers as a time-saving shopping reference for self, and* (4) *perceived distance in reality*. Our data analysis revealed that being situated uniquely between two different cultural boundaries – Latina/o and US, the participants construct their own motherhood as a reflection of their mothers' hard work while rejecting the behaviors they deemed adverse. To create unique motherhood paths, the participants looked to FMIs for information tailored to their experiences. However, the lack of Latina/o resources as well as the existing Latina stereotypes made the path toward individualization a bit complicated. Examples of major themes are presented in a table below:

Themes	Description	Example Quotations
Shaping of motherhood ideals	The reflection on cultural and parental influences on self to attribute, accept, or reject motherhood and style ideals.	… I do want my children to be more independent than I was growing up. That's one thing about my mom, I wish she gave us more independence instead of holding our hand through every situation. I want my kids to figure things out on their own. My mom… getting close to her 60s… she won't go to HEB [a grocery store] without makeup or a nice shirt on.
Sense of solidarity through shared experiences with fashion mommy influencers	The stimulating experience of seeing and feeling community through others personal experiences online.	It's always refreshing to have people that you can admire for the way they dress, their style and approach to their lifestyle… But it's [also] a nice resource,… some people are very open online about… the way that they struggle with certain things… So,… you're [not] the only one that's struggling.
Fashion mommy influencers as a time-saving shopping reference for self	The process of acquiring tailored information from FMIs' online content to shop conveniently and stylishly.	We're… moms, so we have less time to do things but [I'll] try to work around the little time that [I] have to make the best of it… By seeing these girls go online and… give you tips.
Perceived distance in reality	The process of comparison to others' lives and experiences as a way to know oneself, especially in social location or class.	I just enjoy looking at their lifestyle… In terms of their content, I view it as glamorous. They have time to do their hair, nails, and makeup for their content and I seem to leave the house with a tussled bun and sweatpants every day. It amazes me!

Discussion. Our analysis of the participants' narratives revealed how their intersectional identities (i.e., Latina/o-American, womanhood, motherhood) fused to establish their sense of self and revealed what the role of clothing is as they construct their identity in motherhood. Also, our findings revealed that the intersections between ethnicity and gender brought to light

discrepancies in the participants' motherhood ideals due to cultural norms and Latina stereotypes, especially regarding appearance management. To create their unique identity, the participants significantly referenced FMIs' content on social media. This tells brand marketers the role FMIs play among this group of consumers as they navigate such a transformative life experience. Importantly, the current position of the fashion market is predominately white and by hiring and collaborating with Latina influencers, it gives the industry an opportunity to develop strategies that resonate with this fast-growing ethnic market.

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