


## BEING A MOTHER ON INSTAGRAM – MATERNAL DEVICE AND COLONIZED EMPOWERMENT

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### SUMMARY

The theme of motherhood has many aspects and its idealization and romanticization have already been widely discussed. In this work, we point to other devices that influence this experience in women, bringing psychic suffering, analyzing the discourse on motherhood present on Instagram, and intersecting the maternal device and gender technologies. The maternal device points to motherhood as a social construction that has changed throughout history, the naturalization of maternal feeling, and the promotion of the mother's image. In the neoliberal capitalist discourse, feminist achievements have been transformed into a colonized empowerment, because, despite the attention given to women mothers, they have not ceased to be required in the social and work fields, greatly increasing their tasks outside and inside the home.

**Keywords:** Gender. Gender Technologies. Gender Devices. Motherhood. Capitalism. Mental health.

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## INTRODUCTION

Stories about women mothers exist in folktales, oral traditions, and books such as the Bible. An Old Testament text points to what is the behavior of a "true mother":

And the king said, "Bring me a sword." "Divide the living child into two parts," said the king, "and give half to one and half to the other." Then the woman, whose son was alive, said to the king (for her bowels were softened for her son), "Ah! my lord! Give her the child that is alive, and do not kill him. But the other said, "It will not be he or mine or yours; I divided it. And the king said, Give this the living child, and kill him not: she is his mother. All Israel heard the sentence which the king had pronounced; they were afraid of the king: because they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. (BIBLE, 1 Kings 3:24-28)

The biblical and mythical model brings the idea of a woman who overcomes all physical and mental suffering to be able to see the smile of her son, where his happiness is more important than anything else, "to suffer in paradise" according to the popular saying. The evolution of this model so devoted to the offspring has its apex with the Virgin Mary, whose image was widely spread in the Christian world. Her virginity, loyalty, and dedication are still unquestionable today. She serves as a model associated with an image of a chaste, pure, and obedient woman.

Motherhood has long changed according to the evolution of humanity. Interests of the State, with the endorsement of medical scientificity and religious tradition, reinforced the place of care of children for women, since they were the ones who gestated and gave birth to them, that is, it was 'natural' that they also took charge of this task in the formation of new citizens (Moura, 2004).

In contemporary capitalism and with an increasing number of women in the labor market, issues related to motherhood have also changed. The female journey has changed, and it is still necessary to assume and reconcile the tasks of care and maintenance of the home and still work outside the home, but it is obvious that her obligations as a mother have not diminished. In addition to all the necessary attributions to be attractive to men, and the labor market, she must also be a good mother, in the mold of patriarchal hegemony. "Beautiful, modest, and homely". And another change occurred regarding the age of reproduction and the market that surrounds it.

According to the obstetrics treatises, a woman over 35 years of age is considered an "elderly pregnant woman", because for centuries the reproductive age has varied from adolescence to twenty-something years, and therefore, according to these treaties, a pregnancy after this maternal age is risky. Risks for the woman, risks for the fetus,

malformations, and poor prognosis. Anyway, many things conflict with the moment of reproduction. But medicine for this has also evolved and pointed to egg freezing, assisted reproduction, surrogacy, and other technologies that facilitate pregnancy after failures in the endeavor of conception and pregnancy.

Capitalism has benefited from the change in discourse and has added numerous resources for women who want to become mothers. By placing pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding as 'objects' of desire, or insignia of the good mother, it raises the status of these events, transforming the individual decision of each woman and enabling countless ways out for this choice. It is products and objects of consumption that make this experience, which, according to Zanello (2018), is not natural, but culturally constituted. It is, therefore, a social performance.

The *looping effect* is a discursive mechanism that points to what should occur according to the dominant logic, that is, a pregnant woman should follow a certain model, behave in such a way, feel in a certain way, and act as expected of a pregnant woman in the twenty-first century in the Western world. Scientific discourse acts on women's bodies, pointing out when and how to become mothers. Age, lifestyle, number of partners, type of partner, and living conditions interfere with each woman's body and decision (Zanello, 2018).

The difference of bodies, in capitalism, is used to maintain the social place of each subject. Before women were deprived of the work environment outside the domestic domain, today they need to reconcile the two environments in which they are widely demanded, but with little recognition of this work in both spaces.

If in previous decades the issue was focused on contraception, allowing women to become pregnant later, in recent decades there has been an increase in the demand for and improvement of assisted reproductive technologies. Medical niche in astonishing growth. The maternity market starts even before conception!

Based on the above, a study was proposed based on findings on social networks regarding motherhood and its implications, to describe how the intersectionality between maternal devices and gender technologies occurs in this virtual context.

## **GENDER TECHNOLOGIES**

Foucault (1996) defines the device as a set of discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements,

philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions whose function is to produce a subject that follows the script, that performs from the established relations of power and knowledge, being, therefore, a process of subjectification. Furthermore, the provisions are intended to face an urgency and to obtain a more or less immediate effect (Agamben 2009 *apud* Zanello 2018).

Lauretis (1994) conceptualizes *gender technology* as one of the instruments that operates – alongside discourses and power relations – in the production of subjectivities, based on Foucault's ideas. This technology is a mechanism that activates techniques, procedures, practices, and discourses that focus and result in producing subjects identified with the binary system, man and woman. Thus, the genre is "the product of different social technologies, such as cinema, for example, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as of the practices of everyday life" (LAURETIS, 1994, p. 208). With the advent of social networks and their extension, it is possible to perceive the reach of gender discourses and their way of performing.

Gender technologies constitute the devices, that configure privileged paths of subjectivation. Zanello (2018) explains that these devices interpellate *cultural scripts, and gender performances, and occur in multiple spheres ranging from symbolic media productions to the rule of everyday life behaviors, which is learned before birth, with the choice of names, clothes, and toys; and in childhood, there is a gender pedagogy that stipulates actions and productions expected according to biological sex.*

Social networks, as means of disseminating gender technologies, corroborate the maintenance of this scheme, as gender devices, favoring and disseminating ways of being, acting, and feeling for women, even focusing on their desire to be mothers. In these virtual spaces, the discourses mix scientism, mysticism, and common sense to maintain the old norms for women, relationships, and children. It is the *looping effect* (ENTER HERE WITH A FOOTNOTE WITH THE DEFINITION) dictating how a woman should behave, how a mother should be, and how the raising of her children should occur. Currently, gender technologies have reinforced and naturalized two aspects as fundamental for a woman: love (love device) and motherhood (maternal device) (Zanello, 2016).

## MATERNAL DEVICE

The device plays a decisive role in the processes of subjectivization, as previously stated, and it would be no different in issues related to gender and especially in the issue of

women who become mothers. The maternal device 'produces' the mother subject - it captures, guides, determines, intercepts, models, controls, and ensures the gestures, conducts, opinions, and discourses of the living being socially designated as a woman (Zanello, 2016; Maher; Saugerties, 2007).

With the social changes in the place of women, with the introduction of the contraceptive method and a greater participation of women in the labor market, motherhood became a choice and favored a greater participation of women in socio-economic life, as well as a freer experience of their sexuality. However, these new configurations did not detach women from the idea of what kind of mother they should be (FIDALGO, 2003).

And despite so many studies on women's health, and the pregnancy-puerperal cycle, little progress has been made in terms of having a look at women that is not biologizing, binarist, and patriarchal. Even discourses that try to promote another point of view on these issues tend to repeat old tactics that muzzle women in their singularities, displacing tradition, or the natural, what has been colonized. An example of this can be the 'Sacred Feminine' movement, which in a new guise of old tactics of imprisonment of the female body, establishes what is feminine or not, once again, dictating how women should be and how their relationship with their bodies, their interactions and their place in society should be. Normally, discourses like these are uncritical about gender, its technologies, and devices, in addition to the social, racial, and economic cut.

## **CAPITALISM AND COLONIZED EMPOWERMENT**

Having a baby today is a capital, an object of consumption, but whose experience needs a few steps to be complete. The offer of consultancies, courses, professionals, experiences, packages, and diplomas to validate that those people are good fathers and mothers. All of this feeds and is fed at the expense of a discourse that is uncritical of gender issues. Reinforcing more and more predetermined and fixed places for women and having pathologization as a consequence of those who do not aim for what is supposedly expected (Zanello, 2018).

When we come across the speeches and images of social networks, we perceive the performance in action as what is expected of a woman with children. Images, texts, dances, and even renowned professionals daily fill the eyes and ears of millions of women, adults, and children, with this discourse of what is best and expected, how it should be, eat

and behave. There is no guarantee that this will work, of course, but there is a strong appeal to maintain this *status quo*, and what works is the maintenance of this way of seeing women and mothers. Expecting from them actions according to the loving and maternal devices.

Currently, even with a greater discussion about the maternity market, it is perceived that the ways of seeking natural alternatives for motherhood and escaping the imposition of consumption are also colonized by capitalist ideals in the discourse. In postmodernity, capitalism colonizes the unconscious and nature (JAMESON, 2002). According to this author, in the postmodern age, time, culture, and lived experience become *commodities*. The experiences shared in Instagram stories, posts, and videos are artifacts conceived according to a social design, establishing order and reason for being, placing the singular experience as a model to be followed. Therefore, what is shared becomes a product with cultural, social, and commercial value.

The colonization of motherhood by capitalism happens in postmodernity, in an even more incisive and subtle way, not by logic. We see that, in cyberculture, attempts to subvert the logic of consumption end up entering the concept of production of immaterial labor and extraction of surplus value on social networks, an example of which is digital influencers. Where there is a change in the operation of the ideal female model, replacing repression with a constitutive power, an ideal model is placed and every woman who approaches it has higher social value. And what, then, would be the psychological effects of this?

## **MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH**

The social valorization of women's mothers over the last centuries has occurred to keep them in the domestic domain in terms of power and respectability. With the change that also occurred in how babies and children should be cared for, women's responsibilities increased even more, being responsible for the life, physical, and moral growth of the new citizens. Although they are gaining more jobs outside the domestic environment, they are not spared from this work either. From the eighteenth century onwards and especially in the nineteenth century, a new image of its relationship with motherhood was drawn, according to which the baby and the child become the privileged objects of maternal care (Moura, 2004). If you think about these privileged objects from the discourses of social networks, you can see that maternity has its products placed on virtual shelves.

Tips on various functions that women should perform with their children, nurse, teacher, nurse, psychologists, and all professions related to care, abound in online profiles. However, this type of discourse ends up reaffirming the idea of devotion and sacrifice for the sake of children and family. And currently, there is still the medical and religious endorsement that places these attributions as inherent to the nature of women. Thus, if, on the one hand, women acquire a family and social value, contesting this puts them in a place of transgression and "abnormality", since it contradicts the nature imposed by maternal and loving devices (Zanello, 2018; Moura, 2004).

Specialists from all areas that have been gaining strength, especially on social networks, are also responsible for dictating the rules according to what is expected in terms of maternal performance and performance. These professionals, through their interventions and pedagogies, have been contributing to the construction of norms aimed at regulating the doing, feeling, and thinking of women with children. And the rules (tips, advice, guidelines) put forward began to be followed no longer from the imposition or fear of punishment, but from the cultivated and oriented desire for a "normal and healthy life".

In the woman's body, in her specific physiology, the predispositions to mental illness would be inscribed (ZANELLO, 2018). See the increase in cases of postpartum depression and how much the justification falls more on the hormonal drop than a criticism of the demands of motherhood and the lack of social support for women. If, on the one hand, women's mental illnesses in previous centuries were related to deviations related to the roles socially attributed to them, currently the overload of following this model that can handle everything, sexually, socially, economically, and professionally, has produced another type of illness, and the false freedom of women leaves them alone and responsible for maintaining a happy home, of a brilliant career and a socially desired body. Would postpartum depression then be the new hysteria?

It should be taken into account that "(...) Every human experience is culturally constituted. And even emotions are culturally conditioned responses, they are configured at the interface between meaning, bodily sensations, and cultural meanings" (LEAVITT, 1996 *apud* ZANELLO, 2018). Therefore, even the symptoms are gendered and culturally designed. In this way, returning to the biblical quote, on the trembling entrails of the 'true mother' is placed what a woman should feel, do, act, act, and perform according to what is set by the culture, giving evidence of her benevolence and quality as a mother.



## METHOD

Qualitative research of the ethnographic type (virtual ethnography) was carried out through the analysis of *hashtags* present in *Instagram posts*. Taking into account the universe of thousands of users and posts on this social network, we searched for only two *hashtags*, namely: #maternidade and #maternidadereal. The collection was carried out for seven consecutive days, from 03/24 to 03/31/22, bringing together 210 posts. The choice of *posts* followed the order of the most relevant indicated by the social network, and collection was carried out in order of appearance. Those that were repeated or duplicated in both *hashtags* were excluded, and this repetition was considered relevant to recurring themes. Other *posts* that were collected were not categorized later as they did not fall into the spare categories. The comments were not analyzed, only the posts in their different formats: Photos, texts, videos, and banners.

It is important to note that the *hashtag* #maternidade had 17.4 million posts at the beginning of the research and that the *hashtag* #maternidadereal had 9.1 million *posts*. The selected sample may seem small quantitatively about the virtual world, but it brings a great qualitative richness to the analysis. (Fragoso et al, 2011)

It was noted that most of the posts used both *hashtags* researched, reinforcing that women mothers find in this virtual place a sense of belonging and community of exchange from the comments.

The posts were printed and stored in a folder for the organization of the material and subsequent qualitative analysis based on the categories found. Due to the frequency and repetition of the themes, categories were listed that will be described later.

After the collection, the visual pre-analysis of the data began to organize the material, perform reading, and later the coding and categorization of the posts from the search for *hashtags*, according to the content analysis (Bardin, 1977).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the analysis of the collected data, 7 categories were listed: 1) Our Lady of the greatest love – motherhood with the place of abnegation, virtuosity; 2) Exhausted mothers – the face of maternal fatigue; 3) Identity place of motherhood; 4) It's the mother's fault! 5) Mother enterprise – alternative or maintenance of status quo? 6) And with the word, the experts! – Tips on how to be the ideal mother and 7) Rituals of colonized empowerment.



Each of the categories listed will be explained using the theory of maternal devices and gender technologies and the images of the posts will be used.

1) Our Lady of the greatest love – motherhood with the place of abnegation, virtuosity

This category was the first to be recognized for the frequency of the theme of motherhood as a place of abnegation, sacrifice, donation, and care. It is important to note that the posts, in addition to reinforcing this virtuous place for women, made it clear that everything you do is for love. That is, the longed-for motherhood as this "suffering in paradise" was present in the volume of *posts* collected, in a substantial way.

In the first *post*, we see a mother who exalts having been chosen by God for the sacred task of mothering three children through care and love. There is here a romanticization and an idealization of the process of motherhood, leveraged by this ideal of the sacred mother. It is a place of privilege within society since a biological destiny expected and constructed for women has been fulfilled. The second *post* reinforces that this path has difficulties, but that they are all overcome by love. The mother woman here is the one who abdicates her life and her projects, often annuls herself in favor of seeing her children and family well. At the end of the sentence, this mother exposes that annulment is welcome, but not annihilation. After all, who will take care of the children if she is not present? This effective pedagogy in which women are led to exercise their "femininity" through care and this sense of indispensability is a form of colonized empowerment (Zanello, 2018, p.167). Finally, we see in the third *post* a declaration of love from the mother to her baby daughter. This type of post appears very frequently in the collected sample and reinforces the place of the mother as sacred and linked to love above all things.

We know that motherhood is not a watertight or uniform phenomenon, however, historically it is possible to observe the construction of an ideal model, both of woman and mother, and since then, despite different clothes, one of the guiding threads that remains is the association between motherhood and the sacred. In this path of building a maternal ideal, the woman starts to have an image of a saint, a good caregiver, selfless, asexual, and maternal by nature, as Badinter (1985) and Zanello (2018) point out.

This place confers on women a differentiated status in society, although it does not guarantee them any favorable conditions in the execution and experience of this social role. According to Badinter (1985), since the eighteenth century, women have been

changing the way they are mothers, and one of the significant changes is the emergence of what she calls the era of proof of love. "The baby and the child become the privileged objects of maternal care. The woman accepts to sacrifice herself so that her child lives, and lives better, with her." (Badinter, 1985, p. 143).

Figura 1: Posts 1, 2 e 3  
Categoria 1 – Nossa Senhora do Amor Maior



In this tone of proof of love, the posts collected also reinforce them as a model of a good mother to be followed. We remind you that it is not the objective of this work to focus on the issue of breastfeeding, and we are aware of the diversity of narratives within social networks on this topic. However, in the sample studied, breastfeeding was reinforced as a natural, devoted, pleasurable, and loving activity. After centuries of indifference to breastfeeding, the proximity of children, who were previously taken to wet nurses and caregivers far from the city, women began to show proof of love and one of them is breastfeeding (Bandinter, 1985, p.145).

The fourth *post* brings, therefore, a passionate text by a woman who says she loves breastfeeding her daughter and that breastfeeding is an overflow of love, an act of happy nutrition and affectionate support. Here the realization of the woman in the act of breastfeeding is highlighted and such action is provided by nature. There seems to be no doubt about this loving relationship and happy dedication, however, it is not a reality for all women. It is understood, then, that as a public policy, the incentive to breastfeeding is fundamental, however, when we bring up other issues, for example, intersectionalities, we

realize that the realities are different and need to be understood and respected. Finishing this category of analysis, we have the fifth *post* that closes the package of Our Lady of Greater Love. The ideal woman and wife (Federici, 2017) persists today, albeit with new arrangements, but always devoted to fulfilling her social role as caregiver and mother in the best way. It is important to consider that, according to Zanello (2018), in most cases, women reach the maternal device through the loving device.

Figura 2 – Posts 4 e 5  
Categoria 1 – Nossa Senhora do Amor Maior



## 2) Exhausted mothers – the face of maternal fatigue

This was the category where we found the most posts. Maternal fatigue is also linked to guilt for not prioritizing the child and maternal loneliness. It is present even in posts that try to deconstruct the need for perfection. But we do not find the possibility of regret, denial of love, or simply lack of guilt for prioritizing other tasks.

In the sixth *post* presented below, we observe a woman who is exhausted from taking care of her child alone, even though she has a husband. This centralized responsibility of motherhood is not shared by fatherhood. As Zanello (2018, p.166) points out, "men, in general, are not questioned, as if this matter did not concern them." Therefore, the care of the home and children exhausts these women mothers and can reach extreme levels of effect on their physical and mental health.

In the seventh post, portrayed in Figure 4, we can see this text in which the woman clarifies all the tasks that tire her, except motherhood! It is as if it were possible, in the model of ideal motherhood that society has, to exclude maternal fatigue. The lack of

division of labor, the lack of a support network, and the effective pedagogy that sustains the place of the good mother as the one who does everything without complaint is made invisible. The maternal device here acts voraciously, as it is understood as natural the care and affection spent by the woman in this function. Society does not see it as work and women feel and resent their bodies and subjectivities to all this excess. Society is expected and women are delegated the main, if not exclusive, responsibility for care.

In addition, there is also the naturalization of pain and fatigue, the search for normal childbirth from the perspective of the "humanized" natural, breastfeeding, medicines, supplements, consultations, and courses, in short. A whole model of mother to be followed, regardless of whether the woman in question presents, at that moment, in fact, desire and conditions (physical, psychic, and even financial) for the acquisition of the various "maternity combos".

In this vein, postpartum depression, so feared by puerperal women, is seen as something physiological and normal, expected even in the face of such a change in a woman's life. Currently, the term *Mommy Burnout* is commonly used to refer to chronic stress, emotional tension, and exhaustion, present in maternal exhaustion. It is used as a syndrome, even though it does not belong to the categorization of psychiatry manuals, but it reinforces the need for medicalization, silencing and not facing the central issues of this exhaustion. Little is thought about social changes about what is expected and required of a woman in the face of motherhood. There are so many projected and introjected demands that only the suffering and frustration of not receiving the glories after such an effort to have a child remains.

The lack of a support network, the lack of male participation in the division of care (when there is a man present), the absence of public policies that help women in the management of their time – both productive and formal work, as well as in the time for self-care. These are questions that go beyond the mere self-care so widespread on social networks and by specialists.

This responsibility attributed to women is justified by several arguments. Women are more careful, more attentive, and more apt to offer affection. Men, when present, focus on formal work outside the domestic environment (and also.

With the changes to the home office, they remain focused on work – which is what is expected of them). Men are not socially obliged to care for babies, for example. Such



arguments are structured on sexual differences, which is vital to the political order of capitalism (Badinter 1985, Federici, 2017; 1985; Pateman, 1993; Zanello, 2018).

It is important to think that the justification of biological differences reinforces male privilege even in the face of the puerperium, for example. Even though women at this stage are more vulnerable to the "hormonal flood", they are still considered more apt to care for their babies. This discourse omits the typical exhaustion of the puerperal woman and highlights that biology proves that the newly calved have more instinct to protect the offspring. Here, once again, the discourse of maternal instinct is seen as true and supposedly proven by biology (Freire, 2006). Maternal loneliness, coupled with general exhaustion, so present in the posts of the researched sample, points us to the urgent need for more effective dialogues and constructions regarding the exercise of motherhood.

### 3) Being a mother - Identity place of motherhood

In this category, motherhood enters as a place of identity for women – a recognition of oneself through the experience of mothering. It is understood here that, in the same way that romantic love is an identity for women, and, therefore, builds subjectivities from there, being a mother is also a mother. Because it confers compliance with a very dear and important norm in a patriarchal society. "Even recognizing that maternal attitudes do not belong to the domain of instinct, one continues to think that the mother's love for her child is so strong and almost general that it probably owes something to nature." (Badinter, 1985, p.13)

Figura 3 – Post 6 e 7

Categoria 2 - Mães esgotadas – a face do cansaço materno



Figura 4 – Posts 8 e 9

Categoria 3 - Ser mãe - Lugar identitário da maternidade



According to Federici (2017), from the century. XVIII women began to "be portrayed as passive, asexual beings, more obedient and moral than men" (p.205). And so, the desire for motherhood, although its care and complications did not and do not favor women, connect to this role so that not being a mother is seen as something pejorative, not desirable, and something to be avoided. Post number 8 features a mother who understands her existence as dependent on her son's existence.

In the ninth post, in turn, the new mother says how much motherhood has changed her, and how much better she is now. There is also imbued in this discourse the religious bias as part of the transformation from being a non-mother to being a mother. Here we recall Zanello (2018) when he refers to the heterocentric That is, in the process of becoming a woman and a mother, in our culture, we are organized in such a way that the other has a central role in our formation of being a person. For men, what happens is self-centeredness, that is, they are culturally encouraged to build themselves selfishly.

#### 4) It's the mother's fault!

A very recurrent feeling in the posts of the sample of this research, we know that guilt is very present in the daily lives of mothers, especially, and in a peculiar way, in heterosexual mothers who do not have a wide support network, as well as single mothers and those who cannot stop working. "Guilt is the symptom that the maternal device is working and that the ideal of motherhood and femininity related to this emotionality) has been introduced (Zanello, 2018, p.156)

In post number 10, in the Figure below, we can see 'the birth of guilt' that comes with motherhood, translated by choices and non-choices that women see themselves having to make daily due to the care of their children.

The blame falls on what she does and what she doesn't do - there's nothing off the radar! Mothers are always being led to question their actions, choices, behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and emotions. They even feel the pressure of effective control of culture, and when this is not effective, other punitive mechanisms come into play, such as medicalization (psychiatry), the legal system, and also the socio-assistance system (Zanello, 2018, p.156).

The final two posts in this category present technical discourses to help mothers with the feeling of guilt. Here we will only remember psychology as a gendered technology, which reinforces the existence of a *script*, a cultural performance to be followed. We will deal with these specialisms in better detail later, but here it is important to emphasize the naturalization of guilt as something that the mother cannot escape, only mitigate. Guilt as a tool of the maternal device is therefore also gendrada. We can think about how much men blame themselves or not for the same care of their children and we will already see the signs of gendering.

Figura 5 – Posts 10, 11 e 12  
Categoria 4 – A culpa é da mãe!





### 5) Mother enterprise – alternative or maintenance of *status quo*?

In the posts found in this category, we noticed a large number of women who have been making motherhood an opportunity for paid informal work, whether as a maternity blogger, offering tips, *lifestyle*, or selling products, among other activities. We know that "the greater the moral connotation of the classification of the 'human-type', the greater the potential for the *looping effect*" (Zanello, 2018, p.28). And we think that perhaps in this case there is a double path here. Female entrepreneurship is a place of reinforcement and maintenance of women in the domestic space, and most of the time, with low resources, compared to men; as a strengthening of cultural scripts, of the performances of colonized motherhood. Another possibility that may break with this bias is the creation of more spaces where feminist discourses circulate and the deconstruction of a unique, generalized way of being a mother that does not take into account intersectionalities. However, in the posts of the sample collected, we observed very few that were effectively questioning the structures of ideal motherhood, even if using the hashtag #maternidadereal, the reality we saw does not encompass a heterogeneity of experiences, leaving out relevant issues.

We have already mentioned at the beginning of this work that capitalism makes use of both bodily differences and any social phenomena from which it can take advantage. This has also been the case with the so-called female empowerment and with the possibility for women to work from motherhood.

In the posts in Figure 6, we see successful women mothers, famous in the middle of this social network, with a large number of followers and interactions. All of them show a visual presentation that denotes a certain level of success, social recognition, and *status*, always using emotionalities and feminized performances. Thus, when it comes to the researched sample, we have another gender technology working in favor of maintaining the *status quo*. In the selected posts, it is possible to see that most of these women corroborate this ideal model of a woman mother, who in addition to being an excellent mother is also an excellent professional, and manages to publicly promote her success on social networks.

It will be necessary to have a greater reach of gender literacy so that, effectively, we can perceive this space of motherhood as subversive within the logic of the capitalist system to which we are inserted. However, it is important to emphasize that this research does not fully answer the question, as it was not the central focus, and new studies are needed within this media universe and outside it.

Figura 6 – Posts 13, 14 e 15  
Categoria 5 - Mãe empreendimento – alternativa ou manutenção de status quo?



## 6) And with the word, the experts! – Tips on how to be the ideal mother

This category was found effortlessly by the various types of posts referring to tips, alerts, and information from specialists in various areas, among them: psychology, medicine, nutrition, law, and pedagogy. We also observe a new modality that is internet specialists or digital influencers. This last category is the most abundant among the so-called "maternity niche".

In the posts in this category, we see a variety of tips, information, and alerts for mothers. Many confirm the importance that children have acquired in society and how much the maternal role is to maintain life, order, discipline, and care. We noticed a new look for the old magazines and magazines aimed at the female audience in previous times. According to Thomaz (2015), there has been the insertion of the specialist triad, mother and media in Brazil, since the end of the 60s, where this learning of motherhood was established through the launch of the magazine 'Pais e Filhos', which guided and still guides the raising of children in our country. Today, it has also modernized and is in digital media, on different social networks.

In the posts above, we can see that experts are also checking out this space of gender technology that will shape the mothers of the moment. The *scripts* can even be contested but only to a certain extent. In most of the posts, what we see is the reinforcement of the place of the ideal mother, of the good mother who must carry out x, y, z activities and actions in favor of her children and family.

Post number 17 presents the myth of weak milk. As we can see, although the transformations in motherhood have been going on for a long time, in the middle of the century. There is still a need to demystify this type of narrative about breastfeeding. The last two focus on a course for pregnant women, where information is offered about early childhood, healthy eating, emotional health, and newborn care. And it is up to us to observe a little more, the course is aimed at women and no mention was made of the possible fathers involved or third parties who may participate.

The last post brings a warning from the psychology professional that at least refers to caregivers, although it has a certain tone of tragic destiny the fact that you are not loved for who the future adult will be. Finally, women mothers are bombarded with information and appropriate all of this in an attempt to specialize in motherhood (Freire, 2008). It is a way of being socially inserted and being positively recognized, performing the art of motherhood within what is understood as the best possible. "The new mother, who feels responsible for her child's health, does not hide her anxiety and asks the doctor for more advice and help." (Badinter, 1985, p.150)

#### 7) Rituals of colonized empowerment;

Monthly, specific clothes, pregnancy books, newborn books, pregnancy reveal videos, parties to discover the baby's sex (revelation shower), baptism, birthday parties, blessing showers, birth photos, and so on goes the infinity of products that give subjective and social place according to capitalist logic. Regardless of social class, this type of artifice to maintain this status of maternity prevails, according to budgets. It is a production of subjectivity, according to gender technologies, around what is considered 'natural' or expected for the occasion.

Figura 7 – Posts 16, 17, 18 e 19  
Categoria 6 - E com a palavra, os especialistas! – Dicas de como ser a mãe ideal



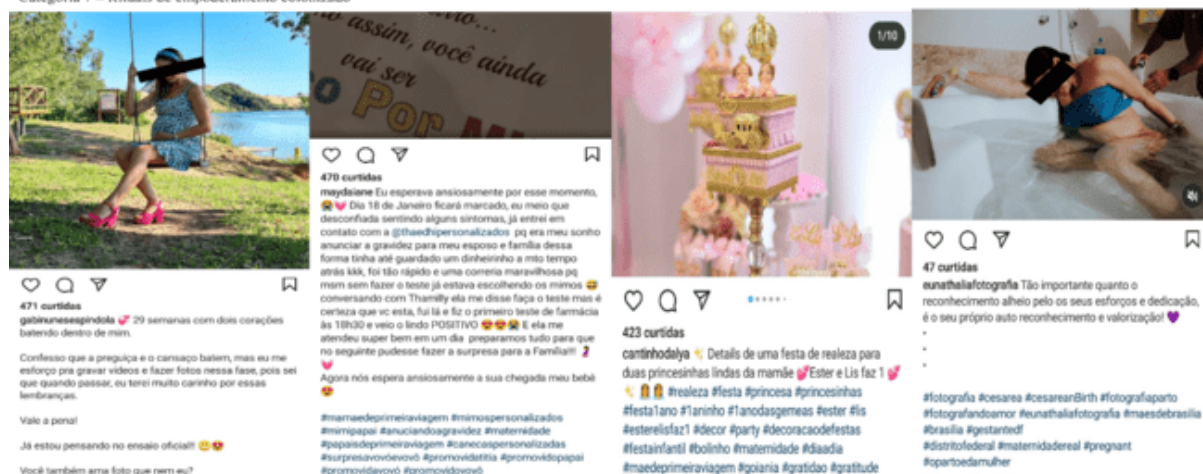
Of the selected posts we see the first one that brings a woman in a beautiful photo, dreaming of the official book, where there is the image treatment, makeup, and a whole production. In the second post of Figure 8, we have a video where she presents how she told her husband and family members that she was pregnant. He says that he dreamed of this moment and that he invested money to make his dream come true. Becoming a mother is a spectacle to be closely followed by followers. A spectacular life from motherhood works very well as gender technology within the maternal device.

Post number 22 presents the luxury of children's parties, very widespread among celebrities and also among internet celebrities and ordinary mothers who crave and spend their savings in a justification of pleasing and offering everything to their children. However, the social recognition and the place of colonized empowerment present in these situations seem to surpass any act of love. Finally, we see a woman in the bathtub, being photographed giving birth. It is an undertaking increasingly carried out and desired by pregnant women, trying and acclaimed by the general public. The common photos are not enough, there is the expectation and creation of the desire to have the official photos of the pregnancy (and all the other stages) made by photography professionals. We understand here as another social reinforcement of the place of mother, of the dream of motherhood, of the realization of the greater feminine destiny. At this point we ask ourselves, still without a complete answer: but when was the "dream of motherhood" historically created? The dream of motherhood seems to have been slowly built for women, since many centuries ago and has been improving more and more so that one perceives less and less the deceptions and more the illusions.

Finally, the creation of the monthly anniversary (birthday each month) is another example of how capitalism takes over life to create consumption. It takes over motherhood to maintain both consumption and the place of women in care and the domestic environment. In addition to maternity books, and birthday books with children, what is expected of a good mother – also seems to us to be expected of a good woman, that she is beautiful, remade after motherhood, sensual and productive. However this was not a constant in the research posts and, therefore, its relevance still needs to be investigated.



Figura 8 – Posts 20, 21, 22 e 23  
Categoria 7 – Rituais de empoderamento colonizado



## CONCLUSION

What was proposed with this work was to raise reflection on the colonization of motherhood and to point out that the maternal device associated with other gender technologies, especially the *looping effect*, has served as a maintainer of this place of imprisonment of women, even after so many social advances. And that the motto 'real motherhood' and 'motherhood' brings a social cut, and is discursively generated. Leaving aside countless forms of mothering, mothering, motherhood experiences, and each woman's own experience of motherhood, taking into account gender, relational, economic, and cultural aspects.

The internet has amplified this process, turning singular experiences into trends, which from a capitalist point of view can be very lucrative, since the new 'professionals' are only the peers who report their experiences and who somehow, due to the number of followers, have a discourse of power over those people who follow them. However, without making any criticism of hegemonic models and placing motherhood and mothering processes as products and objectives to be achieved according to the logic of capital, since it can be acquired with just one click.

With the findings of this research and its analysis, it was realized that despite having some possibilities of deconstructing the maternal device on Instagram, this social network ends up showing that the large maternal public still identifies with a colonized motherhood, just as we had in other times the magazines, the magazines for the mother-woman.

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