The Deception of #motherhoodunplugged: One More Instagram Filter on Motherhood

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In the context of research on maternal mental health and social media, it is vital to understand what new mothers are consuming online and how it affects the social context of maternity.

METHODS

1. I critically analyzed 100 Instagram posts with the hashtag #motherhoodunplugged
2. Using visual analysis, coded for what symbols depicted and what not shown
3. Themes: Professional Make Up and Hairdos, Tidy or Staged Background, Professional Picture taken by Photographer.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

	%
Make up	48
Hairdos	51
Tidy/Staged Background	46
Professional Picture	62

No pictures showed negative feelings such as anger, frustration or even mothers crying.

DISCUSSION

- #motherhoodunplugged displays a staged representation of motherhood that reveals the inherent dichotomy between real-life motherhood and its portrayal online
- Hardship, frustration, anger and challenging times are seldom reflected in media, normalizing a false reality that may perpetuate the notion that women belong to their children and homes.
- Doing so contributes to the normalization of intensive mothering (Hayes, 1996)

The Instagram hashtag

#motherhoodunplugged portrays an unrealistic polished version of motherhood that **is harmful** to women.

Future Research

- An examination of #fatherhoodunplugged would shed light on how paternity is portrayed on Instagram.
- Geographic location: where is this phenomenon more prominent?
- Why is the "ugly side" of maternity hidden in social media?

REFERENCES
Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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