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Linguistic images of modern parenthood on parenting websites

Summary

Contemporary socio-cultural transformations of family life can be observed in the area of non-specialist parental discourse in terms of both modern parenthood and the celebration of childhood. The new quality in the experience and creation of parenthood is noticeable especially in the communication performed with the help of Web 2.0 tools (which are currently among the most important platforms for the exchange of particularly valued "unscientific" – experience, because it is based on empirical knowledge). Internet messages (entries, posts, comments) create an involved parenting and glorify a small child as a subject of parental efforts in the context of post-hierarchical relationships, but they also serve to profile communities gathered around a superior idea or topic (e.g. *eco-mum*, *modern mother*, *fit-mum*, *dad in the city*, *dad at work*, etc.). They also endorse the principle of the aestheticisation of everyday life, the messages are filled with linguistic humour and expose a non-standard way of thinking, matching perfectly the main trends of postmodern communication.

Key words: contemporary parenthood images, parenting, parenting websites

Introduction

Social and cultural transformation in economically advanced societies has transformed the existential and legal grounds of contemporary parenthood (see Krajewski, 2007, pp. 205–206) and laid foundations for a special approach to a child as a subject of parenting activities and a scientific reflection (see Sitarska, 2012, pp. 90–92; Śliwerski, 2007). A new quality in perceiving

a child and their upbringing, and consequently the concept of parenthood and its description, was triggered by the development of information and communication technologies, new media, and especially Web 2.0 tools, which changed the paradigm of communication interactions. This allowed the users of different websites to create and publish content, and to communicate directly (see Czetwertyński, 2013, pp. 7–8). The concept and capacities of Web 2.0 contributed to the popularity of social websites, thematic discussion forums and a number of interactive Internet applications and the blogospheres (especially within microblogging, vlogging and podcasting) (Boutin, 2006). Individuals in the post-industrial society have been provided with tools that stimulate the need for expression in the global public forum. Chris Anderson illustrated this with a metaphor of "ants shouting into megaphones" (Czetwertyński, 2013, p. 8) which can be interpreted in the context of both communication democratisation and privacy globalisation. Social media, services, blogs and discussion forums are now among the largest platforms that generate selected social content, and present everyday experiences and unscientific descriptions of a selected reality, including parental experience. This is particularly popular among Generation Y, who have been so involved in developing and sharing personal content that it reflects an extreme form of *oversharing*[1] (Aggar, 2012, p. XI). The main reason for making such content – it seems – is not only a need for confession but also the opportunity to influence a number of recipients or even whole societies (see Bałdys, 2014, pp. 43–55), which translates into measurable income for the authors.

Parental discourse[2], as a method and the result of spontaneous or designed communication of parents about their children, has significantly moved from the private area to the virtual space. It makes contemporary motherhood or fatherhood "open"[3]. The openness does not only apply to the public exposure of looking after and raising children and the related issues but also – in a wider sense – an approach to one's child. The matter is well described by synonyms excerpted from sample posts, entries or comments:

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[1] *Overshare*: "to share overly intimate details from your life".

[2] Following Elżbieta Laskowska I assume that "a discourse is a series of linguistic patterns of behaviour related by a topic, purpose and way of making a statement; the topic, way and purpose determine and are determined by the text style and genre and a communication situation" (Laskowska, 2004, p. 14).

[3] See Facebook's declaration: "Our mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together" (http://www.facebook.com/facebook#!/facebook?v=info, access on 2 July 2015).

authenticity, *naturalness*, *modernity*, *common-sense* or *emotionality* are indispensable indicators of the "media" parenting style. "Media" parenting is certainly experienced differently than other models, shaped through a specific cultural transfer with a postfigurative vector (young people learn from the old). The universality and globality of "new media" make it also – or maybe first of all – configurative (young people learn from each other) (Mead, 1970). In addition, the tendency of recentivism exhibited by contemporary culture (emphasising the importance of what is "here" and "now"), emotionalism and affectation, appreciation (along with scientific findings) of the everyday common experience, have also found their implementation in the field of media creation of post-modern parenthood. This is based on preferred parenting standards and methods and, consequently, appropriately designed organisation of family relations. Initial recognition of the text effects of the contemporary micro- (Facebook, Twitter and parenting forums) and macroblogging (parenting blogs) reveals the popularity of hybrid parenting, which is between the permissive and authoritarian "style" concept (Baumrind, 1967), and the overprotective or narcissistic style (Schoenewolf, 1991). Taking only the text creation into account (we must remember that the linguistic and text section of the image of the world is not identical to the real world[4]), the concept of *parental mindfulness* – which people realise to a different extent – seems to be the foundation of contemporary trends, revealed in the analysed media records. The intramental category, referring to the consciousness that develops as a result of intended and non-valuating attention to experience which emerges instantly (Wagner & Wojciechowska, 2016, p. 24), can also be used – as a descriptive category – in a qualitative perception of parenthood creation in parenting Facebook groups and blogging websites. *Mindfulness* is also observed in an interpersonal aspect; according to scientific evidence (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009) it is manifested by: (1) listening, (2) acceptance without valuation, (3) being aware of one's own and child's emotions, (4) self-control skills and (5) developing an approach of compassion toward oneself and one's child (see also Wegner & Wojciechowska, 2016, p. 26). The presented components seem to be essential concept determinants in the text image area of post-modern parenthood. This is evidenced by excerption of the most common collocation of the words parenting from online

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[4] See J. Bartmiński: "The description of the world of linguistic meanings is not a description of a real world. It is only a description of a linguistic interpretation of an objective world or purely intentional worlds created by the speaking community" (Bartmiński, 1988, p. 18).

self-help books and parenting websites (parenting.pl, dzieci.pl, edziecko.pl, mamotoja). Metaphoric expressions such as *attachment parenting, empathic parenting, positive parenting, conscious parenting, wise parenting, parenting through playing* juxtaposed with *passive parenting, third child parenting or helicopter parenting*[5] confirm that creation in this area mainly covers attachment and emotional relations, parent's alertness, acceptance and openness to the child's needs but also self-reflection and self-control.

Methods and materials

The purpose of this study is to attempt to reconstruct the image of parenthood created in messages posted mainly by parents, but also for parents, on websites. The image of the world is a specific ideological structure that exists, according to researchers, as a network of mental concepts (Kurcz, 1987, p. 93) or as linguistic mapping and modelling, that is the interpretation of experienced reality (Maćkiewicz, 1999, p. 11–13). The study of the image of the world inscribed in language, in texts as specific uses of language, and in culture (that is, community-related ways of conceptualising the reality) has a clear methodological framework in contemporary humanities. This goes from the assumptions of linguistic relativism (cf. Sapir, 1978; Whorf, 1982) through the findings of cognitive linguistics on the relationships between perception, conceptualisation, and verbalisation (cf. Tabakowska, 2004, p. 667), to the theory of the linguistic/textual and cultural image of the world that can be reconstructed in units and in utterances of a given language (cf. Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska, & Fleischer, 2000, pp. 11–44). The image of the world is a projection of "variously verbalised interpretations of reality that can be expressed in the form of judgments about the world" (Bartmiński, 2006, p. 12) contained in a language, texts or, more broadly, in culture (after all, language is also an element of culture). The reconstruction of these judgments (concepts, assumptions about a particular fragment of reality) takes place in the opposite direction than proposed by cognitive linguistics[6], i.e. from a text

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[5] *Helicopter parenting* means constant "hovering" over one's child and solving all their problems; the *third child parenting style* means giving more freedom to the child (www.parenting.pl).

[6] Cognitive theory of language in the work of George Lakoff and Ronald Langacker or John Tylor, in contrast to autonomous linguistics, emphasises how people conceptualise,

to methods of conceptualisation and perception (perception and interpretation) (Tabakowska, 2004). Using this method of analysis, it is necessary to select language texts on the one hand and appropriate tools on the other. As the goal of the research was to reconstruct the image of modern parenting, it was natural to move toward internet texts, where parental discourse develops in an intense, spontaneous and unrestricted way. This allows the researcher to make almost ethnographic observations from the position of an observer of the discourse that is unfolding and building. For pragmatic reasons, only websites in the Polish language were included in the analysis. Google search points to the existence of 24,900 Polish-language pages on the Internet with parenting provenance. It was therefore necessary to limit the research material to a specific sample. The scope of the text sample includes 100 fragments of texts extracted from portals, websites, parenting groups with the largest reach (number of views or members), profiled around raising and caring for children (mainly young children). In the analysis, I used tools derived from cognitive linguistics and based on the assumptions of the cognitive metaphor used in the reconstruction of the linguistic and cultural image of the world as a carrier of "culturally constructed cognitive schema" (Sharifian, 2015, p. 478). This is very useful in naming, ordering or categorising cognitive models as certain stereotypical and culturally shaped patterns or strategies, because, as Lakoff and Johnson wrote, "most of our everyday conceptual system has the nature of metaphors" (see Łuczyński & Maćkiewicz, 2002, pp. 28–30). The metaphor is used to name, organise and interpret a specific aspect of reality (Jäkel, 2003, p. 21).

Cognitive metaphors are useful not only to specify the generally presented imaginary schemes (higher-lower, near-far, little-much) but they tend to be a "container" for individual realisations. The aforementioned structural metaphors expose the metaphorical structure of a term, from the source domain Y (*parenthood/parenting)* to the target domain X (*exposing another area of experience)*, and they simultaneously help to identify it in reality (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1988). The structure of the initial diagram has been updated with a number of examples to which specific linguistic and pragmatic strategies can be assigned. The text presents some of them.

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or "incapacitate", the effects of their perception of the world, and how they transpose them into language, how the image of the world is constructed using language data, and finally, how language behaviour correlates with thinking, nature and culture of people (Wileczek, 2018, p. 38).

Analysis

Parenting is a long-term project

Meanings "available" within a master conceptual metaphor, PARENTING IS A PROJECT[7], are first generated by expert or para-expert discourse about parenting. This is based on creating a conviction that scientific or expert knowledge is required in preparing for parenting and that being a parent means continuous learning. Parents need to have knowledge about physical and emotional development of a child, including sleep and wakefulness stages, stages of language development or ways to express emotions, as well as their own mental and educational training, self-improvement efforts, observations and readiness "to be happy".

The para-expert discourse (guide books, virtual media, training) turns motherhood and fatherhood somewhat into a profession, making them lose their naturalness. The whole related "industry" covers books, magazines, TV programs, websites, meetings (e.g. parenting fairs) and training for parents. Being a parent is like a professional specialisation. The purpose of the communication is to describe the activities offered to parents so that they are convinced they can grow a "high quality" child, which is possible though tedious. The result is supposed to compensate for the parents' financial and time efforts.

Some examples of training, courses or workshops for parents are as follows: *Effective Parent Training* (http://gordon.edu.pl/trening_skutecznego_rodzica); *Little Genius* (https://malygeniusz.org/warsztaty-dla-rodzicow/); *Conscious Parent Academy* (http://akademianaukiwroclaw.pl/kurs/warsztaty-dla-rodzicow/); *Parents' School* (Education, parenting competencies (online courses) (http://www.crp.wroclaw.pl/kategoria/edukacja-kompetencje-rodzicow-10.html); *Keep calm and bring up your child; How to bring up a happy child; Be closer to your child and yourself* (http://trenerzy.slask.pl/wydarzenie/blizej-dziecka-i-siebie-warsztaty-dla-rodzicow/), and: *Toolbox – bringing up a child without prizes and punishments in a family; Parents' remorse; My child does not listen to me* (http://dobrarelacja.pl/warsztaty-dla-rodzicow/). These examples are dominated by a persuasive function, which generates a need or even a necessity to follow

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[7] See: *Parenting is difficult*, http://mumme.pl/2018/04/14/rodzicielstwo-jest-trudne/, access on 7 June 2018.

new patterns and trends. On the text level, the impact occurs in two areas: (1) executing by choosing axiological vocabulary with obvious positive connotations, e.g. *acceptance, authenticity, balance, understanding, respect, (listening) skills, attachment, harmony/balance, happiness, support, (good) relations, passion;* (2) this refers to the concept area based on innovation culture. Hyperboles and "on-trend" vocabulary is often used, e.g. the proposed methods are described as *new/modern* (although the recommended concept by Thomas Gordon has been known in education since the 1990s) and *interactive* (e.g. a discussion method known for ages); the classes are advertised as *creative, fun and inspiring;* while references to foreign expressions such as *parenting/family coaching* (see http://www.annaslabon.pl/coaching-rodzicielski,20) or *parenting tutoring* (see http://www.tutor24.pl/index.php/2-uncategorised/49-tutoring-rodzicielski) are intended to kindle interest with original and customised courses. The number of available options is so huge that it covers every component of bringing up a child based on the abovementioned *mindfulness*. The issues covered include the following:

- communication (*Communication with your child*, www.parenting.pl; *Empathic communication workshops*, www.plineu.org; *Training on communication within a family*, www.spokotato.pl; *Words matter*),
- acceptance (*Parenting skills training*, edukatka.pl; *Closer to your child*, trenerzy.slask.pl; *Support and acceptance for your child*, www.pozytywne-rodziecielstwo.pl),
- emotion awareness (*Emotions brought home*, https://evenea.pl; *Alphabet of emotions*, www.instytutemocji.pl; *On emotions for parents and children*, www.gdansk.pl);
- competencies related to development and compassion toward oneself and the child (*Understand your child*, www.superego.com.pl; *Parenting upgrade. Check how far you have come*, www.agarogala.pl; *A parent free of stress. Online course*; *Parenting coaching course*, www.qpsychology.pl).

The presented titles or topics of courses follow the pattern of marketing slogans, whose purpose is to position, authenticate and inspire positive connotations of the reference action.

Parenting is struggling

Another area of "media" parenting somehow grows out of the need of the subjects and their response to models presented by post-modern

culture patterns and parenting "industry". A spontaneous parenting discourse suspended in the virtual space includes attempts to verify the pressure of perfect parenting as a factor indispensable in the "child" project. The verifications are made based on common experience and by designed mini-narrations. "There is no perfect parenting – you have to be yourself" claims Zuzanna Piórkowska in her blog *Houston – We've Got a Child*, which quotes examples of everyday behaviour that does not follow experts' (see: *Divine parenthood. Course for fallen parents and rebel children* (http://nieboiziemia.pl/index.php/teksty/ rodzina-i-zwiazki/item/boskie-rodzicielstwo-kurs-dla-upadlych-rodzicow-i-zbuntowanych-dzieci).

Implementation of the **parenting is struggling** conceptual scheme is also evident in the post by Eliane Rosso:

I am a mother. A mother of three. I consulted a physician because I forget things and have difficulty concentrating. The doctor told me to sleep 8 hours per every 24 hours. I suffer from back pain. The orthopaedist says I should exercise regularly. Preferably Pilates 2–3 times a week. The teacher of my oldest son says a child needs to be monitored when doing homework. My younger son also has a teacher and tasks, assignments, models and culture fairs, weekly presentations at school and does sport. He can't wait to see me. I should be in a VIP stand watching him playing. As for my youngest child the doctor suggests I should make his food myself. Every meal should contain fresh ingredients, with no empty calories and fillers that often cause allergies. He suggests that I should buy only fresh ingredients, cook at home, peel more and unpack less. Even if it takes twice longer. My husband and my older son claim that healthy food is disgusting and they can't eat it so I have to cook something different. Education experts and psychologists say you have to spend 30 minutes a day with each of your children to ensure their balanced development. The paediatrician says that the two of us should find a moment for sun and spend an hour outdoors every day because it is good for our brains. My monthly bills say I have to work all the time. And even more. A specialist in education and development claims that the best way is to let children discover the world through playing, even if they get dirty and it means washing their clothes every day. A couple's therapy expert says that the wife and husband should get away for a romantic date or spend time together 1–2 times a week. Science says that sex is health, which means that harmonious couples exercise 2–3 times a week. Successful women say that a woman should invest in her career, keep current and attend courses, and to spend time working toward her own development. A psychologist said I need some time only for myself. Now I am looking for an expert in magic to show me how to do it all within 24 hours (http://mamadu.pl/135569,jak-pogodzic-prace-z-wychowywaniem-dzieci-eliane-rosso)[8].

The quoted text is symptomatic for the way of expressing the rules of mindfulness related to being aware of one's own and one's child's emotions

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[8] All examples taken from online texts are quoted with their original spelling.

and developing a compassion approach toward oneself. It is fostered by a style of common relations, a structural confrontation of everyday images with those created by experts, with the concept of ironic closing of the text, based on the absurd (So now I am looking for an expert in magic...), and denounces the ideal's detachment from reality.

Other examples confront the scheme of parenting as struggling with images of a perfect mother. The language layer greatly contributes to demythologisation of the reality. This is evidenced by colloquial expressions, coarse words or even explicit vocabulary:

...nobody tells you that after a few sleepless nights you keep on repeating that you will do harm to him and why on earth your baby keeps screaming for five nights in a row and you will sell your soul to get a strong anaesthetic drug for the f***g teeth. After the sixth night you cry and say you give up being a mother. After the seventh night being half-asleep you want to sign a permit for somebody to adopt your baby so that you could only rest sleeping. Not even rest... just sleep! Only for 2 hours [...] Being a mum is the best thing but I am not going to pretend it is idyllic. Despite the fact that motherhood is a wonder, we are all humans and life is not an idyll from American sitcoms (http://matkaprezesa.pl/2015/02/pizgam-zlem.html, access on 17 May 2017).

A critical approach to the perfect parenting model is also seen in the comments to the reference blog. Using common vocabulary definitely exceeds the style and orients it toward negative valuation of the idealised images. This is evidenced by emotional posts such as the following:

1. [...] I have the right to have a bad day. Heavy sh***t in my kitchen or a pile of clothes to be ironed, while my child wears pyjamas until noon... Yes, I am a normal mother, and not a perfect one;

2. After almost three years of sleepless nights (My hubby works, I also do but I work shifts, so I am the lucky one to enjoy waking up in the middle of the night because I can sleep longer 2–3 times a week) I also feel like throwing a sh***t and not only...;

3. I hate hypocrisy. I have two kids whom I affectionately call my "little monsters". There have been countless examples of other exemplary mummies criticising me for it. Or for a number of other things (https://matkaprezesa.pl/2015/02/pizgam-zlem.html, access on 17 July 2018).

The semantics and spelling of the nicknames suggest an intended play with culture conventions (and standards), e.g. *Mother of two devils*, *Normal mother*, *Mother too*, *So-so mother*, *MoTer*. The spelling of the last nickname violating the spelling rules, refers to the habit of Internet users who intentionally

make language errors to stigmatise absurd, stupid or anti-social behaviour of contemporary mothers.

The author of the blog www.matkatylkojedna.pl, challenging the pressure of perfect motherhood, uses a direct address and a form of a letter:

Dear Mum Who Does Everything Wrong, does not feed properly, does not carry the baby properly, is a poor cook, buys wrong things and is completely unable to deal with a few-year-old ticking time bomb. You are writing that you are getting mad. You are writing that you can't go on. [...] You are not alone. I am next to you (http://matkatylkojedna.pl/ktora-czuje-sie-najgorsza-swiecie-stoje-obok-trzymam-cie-reke/, access on 18 May 2017).

Another aspect of the image of parenting as struggling is presented by statements on how to keep a parenting–professional work balance. The greatest number of posts with high emotional load come from mothers representing a group of *working mothers* or – less often – *working fathers,* since there is still a strong cultural stereotype of a man being the breadwinner and hence naturally suited for professional work. Women tend to describe their need to pursue their career as necessary to maintain emotional balance and personal fulfilment, e.g.:

I came back to work because I need it like the air to breathe. I love my job ("A fool loves his work, and work loves a fool" as my grandma used to say). I need contact with adults (to discuss problems with kids during breaks), satisfaction from running projects (I love short deadlines), my boss (so that a man, different than my husband, drives me mad and I have a reason to complain). Oh, some extra money is always a good idea and although it was not my main reason it was highly ranked. Oh, if I stayed at home I would not be a realistic mother but a frustrated mother. I do not wish it to my enemies not to mention my children (http://matka-realistka.blog.pl/2014/06/11/matki-domowe-i-matki-pracujace/, access on 20 May 2017).

Equally, they often point out a conflict of values, which results from difficulty in combining parenting and professional duties, and the related guilt. An Internet user called "BellaM" expresses it in the following way:

My child is 2 years old now and I have come back to my full-time job after the maternity leave. My mother-in-law looks after my daughter. I am under an impression that she starts to know her better than I do. I come back home as quickly as possible to spend at least some time with my child but it is never enough. I am often tired, to be honest. I spend whole weekends with her. I feel guilty that I do not spend as much time as I should with her and I still wonder if I am a bad mother (http://f.kafeteria.pl/temat/f10/pracujaca-mama-i-dziecko-p454232, access on 21 May 2017).

The author of the www.mama-bloguje.com blog points out similar dilemmas caused by remorse:

[...] many times, when I leave my daughter for a few hours, I feel guilty. Every day I wonder if my child would be happier if I stayed at home with her. Any time I leave her crying because I need to go, I feel terribly guilty (http://www.mama-bloguje.com/pracujaca-matka-jest-mniej-narazona-na-depresje/, access on 21 May 2017).

The abovementioned deliberations prove that the image of **parenting as struggling** is built on the key verbal units from the *fight* and *conflict* fields (e.g. *everyday fight*, *fighting tiredness*, *fighting with your child's behaviour*, *internal fight*, *fight with yourself*, *remorse*, *sense of guilt*). On the one hand, this suggests high awareness and self-reflection of contemporary parents, but on the other hand it highlights the contemporary paradox related to striving for self-fulfilment and organisation of a happy family life.

In order to capture the right context for the analysed pattern, one should emphasise that social representations of *non-perfect mother* with "an objective approach to motherhood" (http://www.matka-nie-idealna.pl/category/rodzina/macierzynstwo/), evoked by the abovementioned descriptions, take other implementations than *non-perfect fathers* (see *non-perfect dad* – Mamotoja.pl; *non-perfect father* – Familie.pl). Although the first image fits the frames of everyday struggle, the other one epitomised in the male "Internet sphere" should belong to another conceptual metaphor, i.e. the one that "gathers" associations with fun, joy and a nice time spent with a child rather than a difficulty in doing one's duties and exemplary role-playing[9].

Parenting is an adventure

The **parenting is an adventure** pattern covers parenting approaches often described by contemporary fathers. A culture shift in understanding the role of a father is symptomatically reflected by language and communication structures, and hence *daddyhood* (see http://www.blogojciec.pl/dzieci/ojcostwo-jest-tacierzynstwem/) substitutes the neutral but semantically obsolete *fatherhood*, which is often associated with patriarchy and dominance (see Wileczek, 2011, pp. 212–215). *Daddyhood*, which is semantically closer to *motherhood*

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[9] The approach is presented in a series of columns published in a book by the writers Sylwia Chutnik (2012) and Joanna Woźniczko-Czeczott (2012).

suggests a modern approach to parenting duties, mainly involving partnership, attachment, sensitivity and tenderness. Somewhat contrary to the traditional division of cultural roles into the "masculine" (strong, external and rational) and "feminine" (weak, internal and emotional). Opinions presented on the Internet suggest that young fathers follow a partnership pattern and are involved in looking after their children. They are no longer patriarchal progenitors, because it is simply "Great to be a dad" (https://modnytata.pl/). A contemporary father establishes a close and emotional relationship with his child, becoming a real companion and guide, or even a "pal", who feels satisfied in this role and enjoys it. The representation is evidenced by such expressions as: *cool dad*, *attachment dad*, *feeding dad*, *non-perfect father*, *parent good enough*, *good dad*, *trendy dad*, and statements like these:

1. I am absolutely convinced I am not going to be a perfect father. I have my vices, like everybody does. Neither am I going to be a coach who will send his child to an audition for a children's talent show. I'd rather invite my daughter to my world instead and perhaps show her how to ride a bike[10].
2. I am a man. A man of flesh and bones. That's the way it is. I am also a father. Being sensitive to a child's joy and harm is at the core of my existence [...]. A child is a treasure. The most precious one. For a parent impossible to be evaluated and estimated in figures and currency. And for a child? Joy, laughter and fun are the greatest values of carefree life but in order for the carelessness to last and be fully noticeable we need attachment (http://tataidziecko.pl/przytulanie-jest-fajne-tulmy-dzieci-codziennie, access on 1 June 2017).
3. In the eyes of your children you are a king. A superhero whose image they will remember for their whole lives (http://www.fajniebyctata.pl/, access on 29 August 2018).

In parenting discourse it is emphasised that the father should become a guide who will assist his child in the journey along the winding roads of life. A father is then not only responsible for playing and spending time with a child in a pleasant way but also to introduce standards and bans or to make a clear distinction between the good and the bad, and the acceptable and stigmatised values. With regard to the above, the author of the www.mateuszgrzesiak.natemat.pl blog claims that a father should not only be a companion in having fun but also a "loving guide"[11] assisting the child along the fascinating paths of life.

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[10] http://tataluka.pl/czy-mozna-byc-ojcem-idealnym/, access on 15 June 2018.

[11] http://mateuszgrzesiak.natemat.pl/141753,ojcem-byc-czyli-dekalog-bycia-tata,   access   on 15 June 2018.

Moreover, the **parenting is an adventure** pattern covers fascination with technology, shared by both children and parents. Modern parents do not stay away from multimedia tools and applications, which they consider their allies in the parenting process. The bloggers and users of discussion forums present an image of a child surrounded with state-of-the-art toys and gadgets, which are an important part of everyday life. Presentation of new edutainment (educational entertainment) items – comparisons, tests and specifications – is another part of the parental blogs. Based on this assumption, many parents not only present their child surrounded by different toys and gadgets but also create events that foster continuous intellectual and motor development of their children. The author of www.blogojciec.pl tests *25 best board games for children that you should know,* compares *25 valuable games and applications for children (for mobile devices),* describes *films, which touch your innermost feelings*, presents *11 ideas for non-material presents for children*, *11 places from our trip of Europe that are worth visiting...* or *Disneyland, Paris – tips, prices, attractions: what you need to know when visiting the place for the first time* (www.blogojciec.pl, access on 25 August 2018). It is all intended to highlight creative ways of spending time with your child, which in a wider context is related to the child's right to enjoy carefree and happy childhood and to the abovementioned trend of approaching parenting as a long-term project.

Furthermore, many parents who run their blogs and take part in discussion groups understand the child's need to learn the world through discovering and give their children a lot of freedom in everyday experimenting. This also applies to discovering new tastes and a *common cooking adventure*, which is definitely of educational value but sometimes gains exaggerated "gloss" (e.g. *little cook*, *little master chef*, *little gourmet* – www.mądrzy rodzice.pl, mamadu.pl).

The image of parenting as a joyful adventure tends to turn emphatic. Verbal components of the communication involve using expressive terms (*totally*, *perfectly*, *fantastic*, *great*, *exceptionally*), expressions with primary positive axiological connotations (*in love with being a mother*, *fascinated with changes*, *mother of a young prince*, *in love with him as a whole*, *child – delight incarnated*). The blogger called "Mamuśka Martuśka" describes her fascination with motherhood in the following self-presentation:

From toe to hair end – Mother. Completely in love with being a mother. Fascinated with changes that motherhood brings and intricacies of the mother-child relationship. [...] A mother totally immersed in observing the changes in her growing child (https://www.blogger.com/profile/12575080234447085558, access on 18 May 2018).

Although this way of creating the image of a parental bond as a fascinating adventure corresponds to the modern tendency for emotional and expressive statements (to emphasise one's authenticity) and aestheticisation of everyday life has become an artistic contribution, there are numerous texts that subject parenting to an acquired concept or ideology followed by parents within their "lifestyle".

Parenting is a lifestyle

When introducing the sociological concept of a *lifestyle*, it is worth emphasising references of contemporary parenting to trends – contemporary behaviour patterns typical of individuals or communities, which can be observed in everyday life (hierarchy of values and needs, ways to spend free time, consumption, outfits, attitude to nature and the world, human relations etc.). *Eco-parents* are among most distinctive examples of parenting created in the lifestyle context. Eco-parents are characterised by high sensitivity and awareness of environmental issues and they trust "folk wisdom" rather than science when bringing up their children (eco-parenting); they live in harmony with nature, eat natural products of organic or plant origin and avoid highly processed food, protect the natural environment, use natural products when taking care of their children (e.g. soap nuts for washing, salt and vinegar for cleaning), maintain natural newborn hygiene or raise children without nappies. They take part in clothes and toys swaps for economic reasons and environmental protection. They avoid any preparations, including some medicines and vaccines, which in their opinion could disturb the natural balance of the human body. The attitude that highlights coming back to nature is demonstrated not only in the functional area of human life but also in the emotional field and interpersonal relations. It is sometimes referred to as a strive toward homeostasis in everyday life, which is expressed by apology of attachment parenting.

This begins with natural labour (preferably at home, without a physician's assistance). Metaphors used to describe the experience are emphatic, e.g. *mystic*, *transforming experience*; *energy*, *power*; *holy process*; *spirituality in its pure form*; *introduction to life on earth*; *the mystery of life* (http://ml-eko.pl/mistycyzm-porodu/, access on 21 May 2017). Numerous posts emphasise the need to nurture attachment by *co-sleeping* and *babywearing* (see www.mamailusia. blogspot.com, www.szczesliva.pl), and giving up the *parenting training* in favor

of endless approval for the child's needs and emotions. Moreover, proper development of a child – according to many posts – means involvement of both conscious parents who provide their children with various stimuli for intellectual, physical and mental development in an ambience filled with tenderness and care. *Eco-parents* tend to be "anti-institutional" – as advocates of *home schooling,* i.e. teaching their children away from a school and educational institutions, they often discuss the solution.

Physical attachment and tenderness, respect for the child's needs, support in understanding the emotions the child experiences are only selected aspects of attachment parenting that contribute to perceiving a child as a sensitive ndividual, who needs care, patience and understanding in the often difficult and stormy childhood period. The examples of the idea include emotional posts by parents who approach their children as ideals:

My children are perfect to me in every respect. They couldn't be more wonderful. Their smiles, look, gestures, words. To me they are picture-perfect... (http://mitomamka.pl/moda-na-idealne-dzieci-i-idealne-matki/#, access on 6 June 2017).

Or more balanced:

My child is my greatest achievement. He is an exceptional little human and to me he will always be like that, no matter of what. Even if in some aspects he is doing worse than others, I am still proud of him. Because I know that he is eager, keeps trying and will finally succeed, and then we will together celebrate even his smallest successes (http://slodkiciezar.pl/idealne-dziecko-idealnego-rodzica/#, access on 04 September 2018).

The users of www.forum.mjakmama24.pl unanimously stay away from over-aestheticisation of a child and become more aware, exchange their parenting experience and learn how to satisfy their own needs. The topics of discussions depend on the interests and current needs of the parents, and foster establishing of numerous discussion groups, e.g. *SOS instant question – instant answer*; *Bottle-feeding mum*; *Mummies on a diet*; *Sophisticated mums*; *Cooking – beginners and not only*; *Culture corner*; *Mum in need* etc.

In so involved a parental discourse one can easily notice that practical knowledge on development and parenting takes precedence over theoretical knowledge, which is perceived as an opportunity to reduce potential parenting errors. Motherhood is approached through a conscious decision of an independent woman. For modern mothers and fathers, a child becomes the source of satisfaction and personal happiness, but still there are opinions that

condemn *perfect parents* who create images of only *perfect children*. The Internet parental discourse with a pragmatic inclination regards satisfying the child's needs as the key factor to ensure their emotional stability and security. For instance, misbehaviour that was perceived as being naughty several decades ago is now approached and explained through an emotional crisis, which results from a lack of skills to understand a child's emotions. The author of www.blogojciec.pl recommends the following when your child "bursts out":

> Let them [children] release what is hidden deep inside. [...] It is essential to help children name and recognise specific feelings because in future it will help them understand what is happening to them (https://www.blogojciec.pl/dzieci/blad-ktory-popelniamy-akceptujac-uczucia-swoich-dzieci-mogacy-utrudnic-nasza-relacje/, access on 1 September 2018).

Discussion

The presented reconstruction of the image of contemporary "online" parenting shows that the image is created by new social and culture trends that have affected the parent–child relationship (the concept of *mindfulness*, partnership, using scientific findings or world view when bringing up your child) and through marketing needs. In the consumer culture, parenting has become a flawless mercantile product prepared for a mass consumer. There are two clear approaches to parenthood: on the one hand we can see apology of childhood and its aestheticisation, while on the other hand there are symptoms of offspring instrumentalisation. The author of www.brzozoweczka.pl blog describes this as follows:

> The contemporary reality has changed. Parenthood is not only parenthood any more. In some groups it has turned into a race for a perfect child, a clash of skills, a battle of creative ways to spend free time and comparing the ways to stimulate the development. Everything needs to be effective, toys have to be educating and books have to teach. We witness the trend of "breeding" young Einsteins and Olympic Games winners in one [...]. The pleasure and learning through playing has become an obligation, a must, a need. Be better, faster, outclass your counterparts, be more talented, be your parents' pride.

Often children are approached as a project or investment, which requires great parenting efforts and significant financial expenditures. A child often becomes a tool to highlight the parent's popularity or to help the parent satisfy their own ambition while taking part in an endless competition.

Another issue is self-fulfilment as a parent. Perceiving parenthood as an individually created project within the framework of a "do-it-yourself" biography is likely to influence changes in the schemes of constructing the identity of the family and its members. On the one hand, it promotes being reflective and mindful (Marciniak-Budecka, 2014, p. 135), but on the other hand, it sometimes means being overprotective and is does not help in raising an independent child. In addition, the idea of permanent creation is often associated with publishing content without the so-called "informed consent", which raises doubts even of an ethical nature (a child is a person, not the 'tool' for self-creation).

To be precise, there is one more aspect presented on parenting websites that needs to be mentioned, as it completes the image of contemporary parenting nd is actually related to denial. A conscious decision not to become a parent, and first and foremost not to become a mother, was a taboo not even a long time ago. Nowadays such declarations as "I don't want to have children" are still regarded as whims, although according to research 23% of women aged 18–45 do not intend to become mothers (CBOS, 2013). The Internet freedom of expression encourages people to publish posts on the issue and reasons for anti-natalism include age, lack of mother's instincts, potential jeopardising of their careers or reduction in the economic status after giving birth to a child, fear of pregnancy and physical unattractiveness, lack of freedom and fear of unsuccessful marriage[12] (Drozd, 2018). *Voluntary childlessness* or *childlessness by choice* is approved by the forums users in the context of the right to decide about oneself and one's life (see https://mamadu.pl/137009,bezdzietnosc-z-wyboru-to-temat-tabu-dlaczego-nie-chce-miec-dziecka, access on 5 September 2018).

Verbal creation of parenting images is based on highlighting common language with its expressiveness, nonchalance, humour and originality, which is typical of the contemporary Internet language. Loanwords, neologisms, neosemantic terms, expressive vocabulary, and within syntax: ellipses, exclamations, sentences without endings are supposed to emphasise the emotional and authentic nature of the statement of the one hand, while on the other hand they contribute to building a wide parental community.

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[12] See article: *Kobiety nie chcą mieć dzieci*, https://www.deon.pl/inteligentne-zycie/wychowanie-dziecka/art,532, dlaczego-kobiety-nie-chca-miec-dzieci.html, access on 5 August 2018 or: *Nie chcą dzieci, bo boją się nieudanego związku. Takich kobiet w Polsce jest coraz więcej*, http://www.edziecko.pl/rodzice/56,79318,21856412,obawiam-sie-nieudanego-malzenstwa-dlatego-nie-chce-miec-dzieci.html, access on 5 August 2018.

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