

Perspectives on Fatherhood and Manhood in Polish, Turkish and British 'Daddy Blogs'

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Abstract

Blogs can be analysed as a tool for information, identity, and building and maintaining relationships. This study examines the phenomenon of "daddy blogs" and aims to identify the construction of masculinity and fatherhood in these blogs. The paper presents the results of qualitative research on the most popular parental blogs, written by men from Poland, the United Kingdom, and Turkey (three from each country). The study sample contains 90 blog posts, which have been analysed qualitatively using MAXQDA software. The study found three common patterns of constructing/expressing manhood and fatherhood. Firstly, manhood and fatherhood are presented in the wider, social context. In the blog posts, the role of a father in society, as well as gender norms, are negotiated. Secondly, fatherhood is presented in relations with children and duties regarding bringing them up, with visible differences in the description of father-daughter and father-son relationships. The authors often write about health, children's development, psychology, bullying, and cyber-bullying, which can be understood as the motivation to share information rather than just express themselves. Lastly, manhood and fatherhood are presented from the perspective of an individual, which is mostly expressed in texts about self-development, happiness, and well-being. The most common motives

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in these categories were: the role of a family and relationships in life, life-work balance, time management, and spending quality time with the family. These three perspectives complement each other, creating a complex construction of a man and a father, balancing between traditional and modern roles.

Keywords: *Blogs, parental blogs, daddy blogs, masculinity, gender.*

Perspectives sur la paternité et la virilité: analyse narrative des «blogs paternels» Polonais, Turcs et Britanniques

Résumé

Les blogs peuvent être analysés comme un outil de création et de maintien de relations d'information et d'identité. Cette étude examine le phénomène des «blogs des pères» et vise à identifier la construction de la masculinité et de la paternité présentées sur ces blogs. L'article présente les résultats des recherches qualitatives sur les blogs parentaux les plus populaires, rédigés par des hommes de Pologne, du Royaume-Uni et de la Turquie (trois de chaque pays). L'échantillon de l'étude contient 90 articles de blog analysés qualitativement à l'aide du logiciel MAXQDA. Trois modèles communs de construction et d'expression de la virilité et de la paternité ont été trouvés. Premièrement, la virilité et la paternité sont présentées dans un contexte social plus large. Dans les articles de blog, le rôle d'un père dans la société, ainsi que les normes de genre, sont négociés. Deuxièmement, la construction de la paternité est basée sur l'accomplissement de ses devoirs envers ses enfants, avec des différences visibles dans la description des relations père-fille et père-fils. Les auteurs écrivent souvent à propos de la santé, du développement des enfants, de la psychologie, de l'intimidation et du cyber intimidation, ce qui peut être compris comme une motivation pour partager des informations plutôt que de simplement s'exprimer. Enfin, la virilité et la paternité sont présentées du point de vue de l'individu qui est principalement exprimé dans des textes sur le développement personnel, le bonheur et le bien-être. Les motifs les plus fréquents dans ces catégories étaient les suivants: rôle de la famille et des relations dans la vie, équilibre de la vie personnelle et de la vie professionnelle, gestion du temps et passer du temps de qualité en famille. Ces trois perspectives se complètent en équilibrant les rôles traditionnels et modernes, ainsi créent la construction complexe d'un homme et d'un père.

Mots-clés: *Blogs, blogs parentaux, blogs paternels, masculinité, genre.*

Babalık ve Erkeklik Perspektifleri: Polonyalı, Türk ve İngiliz 'Baba Bloglarındaki Anlatıların Analizi

Öz

Bloglar bilgi, kimlik, ilişki kurma ve sürdürme için bir araç olarak analiz edilebilir. Bu çalışma "babalık blogları" olgusunu incelemekte ve bu bloglarda erkeklik ve babalık yapısını tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Makale, Polonya, İngiltere ve Türkiye'den (her ülkeden üç olmak üzere) erkekler tarafından yazılan en popüler ebeveyn blogları hakkındaki nitel araştırmaların sonuçlarını sunmaktadır. Çalışma örneği, MAXQDA Yazılımı kullanılarak niteliksel olarak analiz edilen 90 blog yazısı içermektedir. Çalışmanın sonucunda erkeklik ve babalığın inşasında ve bunu ifade etme biçiminde üç ortak model bulunmuştur. İlk olarak, erkeklik ve babalık oldukça geniş bir çerçevede ve sosyal bağlamda sunulmaktadır. Bloglarda, bir babanın toplumdaki rolü ve cinsiyet normları müzakere edilmektedir. İkincisi babalık inşası çocuklara yönelik görevleri yerine getirmek üzerine yapılmakta ve ayrıca baba-kız ile baba-oğul ilişkilerini betimlemede gözle görülür farklılıklar ile sunulmaktadır. Yazarlar genellikle sağlık, çocuk gelişimi, psikoloji, zorbalık ve si-ber zorbalık hakkında yazmaktadırlar. Bu durum kendini ifade etmekten ziyade bilgi paylaşma motivasyonu olarak ele alınabilir. Son olarak, erkeklik ve babalık kavramı, kendini geliştirme, mutluluk ve refah ile ilgili metinlerde bireysel perspektiften sunulmaktadır. Bu kategorilerdeki en yaygın motifler şunlardı: ailenin rolü ve hayattaki ilişkiler, yaşam-iş dengesi, zaman yönetimi ve aile ile kaliteli zaman geçirme. Bu üç perspektif geleneksel ve modern roller arasında denge kurarak birbirini tamamlamakta, erkekliğin ve babalığın karmaşık inşasını oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Bloglar, ebeveyn blogları, babalık blogları, erkeklik, cinsiyet.*

Introduction

In 2006, the BlogHer Conference in San Jose, California, included a discussion panel titled, “Mommy Blogs as a Radical Act!” This panel was the result of a discussion during the previous conference, when mother-bloggers argued that they were marginalised in the women’s blogosphere. This conversation started a discussion about the “mommy blog” phenomenon and the official introduction of the “mommy blog” as a genre in its own right (Lopez, 2009). Since then, researchers have explored how “mommy blogging” expresses and reinterprets different representations of motherhood. “Mommy blogs” have been analysed in terms of how they express mothers’ identities; their motivations for blogging; and their interaction on the internet, including their social support and sense of community (Lee, 2018).

However, fathers’ blogs (or “daddy blogs”)—perhaps because there are fewer blogs dedicated to fatherhood than motherhood—have attracted less attention and are still under-researched. There are significantly fewer papers and books on “daddy blogs” than on the “mummiesphere”. Lee (2018) dedicated a PhD thesis to the topic of Taiwanese, father-run baby blogs. One book, *Pops in Pop Culture: Fatherhood, Masculinity and the New Man*, edited by Elizabeth Podnieks, contains a chapter by Friedman on “daddy blogs” (2016). Lukoff, Moser, and Schoenebeck (2017) analysed gender norms on daddy blogs, particularly how they discussed childcare activities, and specifically focused on studying DIY language and imagery.

Åsenhed, Kilstam, Alehagen, and Baggens (2014) conducted research on the role of blogs in shaping the identity of first-time fathers. Findan and Özer (2015), in their work on blogs in the context of social capital, added one of the “daddy blogs” (<http://www.biradambirbebek.com>) to their analysis, concluding that blogs (including the example) contribute to the social capital in terms of trust and sharing knowledge. In their recent paper, Demiriz and Baran (2018) analysed blogs on fatherhood experiences, investigating how male subjectivities are grounded in hegemonic masculinities, and how heteronormative patriarchy takes new (re)appearances in the relation of fatherhood experiences with “motherhood”.

Besides these examples, there are few studies on daddy blogs. In her research on the “mamasphere” in Turkey, Yelsali Parmaksiz (2012) found only a few parental blogs written by men and concluded that “blogs written by fathers do not seem to belong to the community of mamasphere” (p.127).

This paper aims to widen the existing, rather modest literature on this subject. It presents the results of qualitative research on the most popular parental blogs, written by men from Poland, the United Kingdom, and Turkey, three blogs from each country. The reason for choosing these three countries is that

they represent differences in fatherhood practices, grounded in demographical and cultural differences. In the United Kingdom and in Poland, the maternal employment rate for women (aged 15-64 years old) with children (aged 0-14, by the age of the youngest child) reaches over 70%, and in Turkey this proportion does not reach 30% (OECD, 2016).

However, in Poland, right-wing policies encourage women to stay at home and pursue the traditional role of mother, with “500plus” child benefits (Biszewska, 2018). Also, in Turkey, we can see the sacralisation of mothers in the political and public discourse (e.g. Günerigök, 2016). Rates of female employment influences the labour division, and consequently motherhood and fatherhood practices and roles. Therefore, these three countries have been chosen to analyse a possible wide variety of fatherhood experiences and narratives. The study sample contains 90 blog posts, which have been analysed qualitatively using MAXQDA software. This study examines the phenomenon of “daddy blogs” and aims to identify and analyse the construction of masculinity and fatherhood in these texts.

The concept of fatherhood goes far beyond the biological, genetic creation of a child. Gregory and Milner (2005), quoting Hobson and Morgan (2002, p.11), point out that the term “father” has social/household implications, and “fatherhood” should be seen as the “cultural coding of men as fathers”—including their rights and duties, responsibilities and statuses, and the models of “good” and “bad” fathers. Since it is a matter of “cultural coding”, the notion of fatherhood differs among cultures and is always in the process of being constructed or negotiated—both in relation to other family members (especially the mother of the child) and community members outside the household (as a social construction).

Many studies demonstrate that understanding of fatherhood and family gender roles has been forced to change. Childcare is no longer seen as the exclusive duty of the mother, and fathers have needed to contribute to household tasks to maintain their position in the family (Lee, 2018). Still, the “traditional” division of labour is strongly established. Lee (2018) quotes multiple studies that show that even in Western, dual-earner families, fathers are generally less involved in household chores and childcare. They perform lighter tasks (like playing with children), their time involvement is limited to holidays and weekends, and in general they play a secondary role in the household. However, there are also studies that suggest that as the standardised notion of masculinity changes, more men undertake household and childcare responsibilities (Courtney, 2009).

Along with fields like education, health, violence, and counselling, fathering is one of the most important applications of the new knowledge of the construction of masculinity (Connell, 2005). Researchers often adapt the approach of “doing gender” to analyse parenthood. This approach posits that individuals performs gender in order to construct gendered behaviour as natural. The term

was first introduced by West and Zimmerman in 1986 (West & Zimmerman, 2009), and has subsequently been used by Judith Butler (2004), among others. Butler also uses the term “gender performativity”, to describe how people recreate gender through constant performance; gender norms exist because we act (perform) them in social practice. However, escaping these norms by making conscious performative choices is nearly impossible, since certain codes and behaviours are socially assigned to gender. In the same way that theatrical performances are subject to censorship and criticism, gender performances, “are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions” (Butler, 1990, p. 278). The social construction of gender, addressed by Connell (1995; 2005), is then a way of constructing social practice. It is “a product and producer of history” (Connell 1995, p.81). “Doing gender” in practice is often correlated to the division of labour in the household (Lammi-Taskula, 2008).

Action and performance in daily practice, which creates gender norms, similarly generates motherhood and parenthood—it is the “process of reproducing socially defined mothers and fathers” (Lee, 2018, p. 26). “Doing parenthood”, like “doing gender”, is bound to time and place. This also includes religious, economic, and political contexts (Lammi-Taskula, 2008). The circumstances of doing fatherhood and motherhood are characterized by time and place, which also includes religious, economic, and political influences (Connell, 2005). Individual men and women are “doing gender”, as well as parenthood, in a particular social and cultural context. Thus, gender relations are not fixed; new ways of interaction can be negotiated, and expectations redefined (Risman, 1998). Parenting blogging can also be regarded as a performance or “doing parenthood”. Likewise, it is governed by social conventions, such as by being a subject of criticism (often in a very explicit way through the comments posted by other users). Parenthood, like gender, is not about who we are. It is about what we do.

New media and the internet are more and more incorporated into our daily lives. While some academics analyse new media in terms of new possibilities for the self-organisation and self-mobilisation of society and democratization processes (Castells, 2012) and participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006)—or even draw a picture of an emancipatory cyber-utopia (Rushkoff, 2002)—others draw attention to the negative aspects of new media (“dark side of internet freedom”), such as surveillance (Morozov, 2011) or the purely commercial character of internet and digital consumerism (McChesney, 2013). Both optimistic and pessimistic approaches to new media are more relevant with the development of Web 2.0.

Blogs, together with Wikipedia, YouTube, and peer-to-peer distribution are part of the Web 2.0 movement (the writing and participating network), with the traditional “audience” in Web 1.0 acting as producer of the content (Scolari, 2009). Some researchers use the term “producers”—a hybrid of producer and user—to describe the blogger community (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). The “boom year” of blogging was two decades ago, in 1999. In 2004, “blog” was chosen to

be “word of the year” (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). Since then, blogs have become a significant part of the new media culture, praised for being democratic and revolutionary. They are also described as a way to construct the self and do community in late modernity (Hookway, 2008).

Technology-focused definitions describe blogs by emphasizing certain structural characteristics like their reverse chronological order, use of hypertext links, and the enabling of comments from readers. However, blogs are not only a web-based tool for sharing information. They “go beyond a purely informative role and provide a platform for debate, deliberation and the expression of personal identity in relation to the rest of the world” (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006, p. 5). Webb and Lee (2011) list three main characteristic of blogs: 1) Original content; 2) Links to other blogs; 3) Allowing and/or encouraging readers to comment.

“Blogosphere” is a common term used “to describe the overall community of blogs and bloggers, which is interlinked through a large number of cross-references between individual blog entries” (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006, p. 5). Among the various types of blogs, there are generally two main categories: filter blogs (thematic blogs that collect news and information and share these materials with the public) and diary-like personal blogs or “self-narratives” (Hookway, 2008; Lee, 2018; Webb & Lee, 2011).

While the early days of internet blogging and website design required a certain skillset (e.g. knowledge of HTML), blogging is now much easier and user-friendly. Many blogging platforms are free (e.g. Blogger.com, Wordpress.org), and one only needs basic computer skills to publish posts. As Bruns and Jacobs (2006) emphasise, blogs are a very democratic medium:

Anyone with access to a network can participate, the barriers to entry are low, and there is no central authority to grant publishing rights or accreditation, nor to prevent bloggers from linking and responding to information and ideas found elsewhere on or offline Bloggers have the chance to question their understanding of issues, engage in discussions, present their ideas, seek out approval for their notions, and grasp some sense of purpose, order, and hope. (p.5)

The ability of others to comment on blog entries has created an online community of bloggers that is “built by interactions between bloggers and their readers inside their blogs, and the interactions, such as leaving comments, forwarding blog entries, and setting up links, between one particular blogger and other bloggers” (Lee, 2018, p.36). Some researchers argue that online communities, like blogging communities, are no less “real” than offline ones. Moreover, online and offline communities should not be considered to be two distinct entities. These findings emerge from several studies on “mummy blogs”, where “the internet provides a platform for mothers to perform their roles of

mother and to interact with other mothers” (Lee, 2018, p.41).

Many parents use the internet to record their experiences of parenting. So, online content—through either social media or blogs—provides us with data on new constructions of family and gender roles in relation to parenthood. Children’s digital presence may start even before birth, since many parents share ultrasound photos of their babies on blogs or social media. Parents decide on their children’s digital presence long before their children are in a position to decide (Leaver, 2015).

In this paper, the researchers mostly focus on the image of fatherhood and its contexts as expressed in the blogs chosen for analysis. This article does not aim to explore “daddy blogs” in relation to their online or offline communities. Rather, it analyses the digital representation of fatherhood in three main dimensions: the social context, the relationship between the father and the child, and the father’s identity as an individual.

Research

The growing presence of blogs in academic discourse has followed their increasing popularity. Most studies on the blogosphere focus on the “twin pillars of cybercultural studies” (Silver, 2000): virtual communities and identities (Hookway, 2008). Blogs offer a number of opportunities to scholars; their content is publicly available, and it is relatively low-cost and time-efficient to retrieve data. Since many bloggers can remain anonymous, they may be relatively unself-conscious (Hookway, 2008). Researching public, online content precludes normative answers, which are a challenge in other research methods such as face-to-face interviews or surveys (McCullagh, 2008). Blogs allow access to a variety of data from various groups that are socially or geographically inaccessible to the researcher (for example, in this study, where content from three different countries, written in three different languages, is analysed).

In this analysis, researchers have chosen nine popular blogs written by fathers from three different countries: Poland, the United Kingdom, and Turkey. This study analyses the last 10 entries (as of April 2018) from each blog. Since the blogs were publicly available and not password protected, authors were not contacted for consent to use their blogs in this study. However, to respect confidentiality and protect the identity of the children described in their fathers’ blogs, this study does not publish the names or titles of the blogs. Similarly, some quotations have been slightly changed to protect confidentiality and the identity of the children. This approach to consent and confidentiality is common in blog-based research (Lee, 2018).

The main research question was: what model of fatherhood do the authors of the chosen blogs perform or express? To what extent do the fathers

claim to follow the traditional fatherhood model or to deny it? What does it mean for the blogger to be a father in the wider, social context? What does it mean in terms of the relationship with their own child and as an individual? In order to answer these questions, researchers applied content analysis, and focused primarily on written content.

Analysis

Becoming a father and displaying fatherhood in a social context.

Blogs allow authors to express and practice their own notions of parenthood; therefore, they may also be considered a form of “displaying families”. In this context, “display” is the process that individuals and groups use to “convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute ‘doing family things’ and hereby confirm that these relationships are ‘family’ relationships” (Finch, 2007, p. 67, as cited in Lee, 2018). Display may be a way of seeking legitimacy when family roles challenge “traditional” ones (e.g. when a father is the main caregiver; in non-heteronormative families, patchwork families etc.)—so the display is always in a relation to cultural context. Therefore, parent blogging may be seen as both “doing fatherhood” and “displaying” it.

Displaying fatherhood is the first category of this analysis. To this category, researchers assigned content which—explicitly or implicitly—answers the question: “What does it mean to be a (good) father?” Researchers sought content that explained each author’s understanding of the role of a father, mostly within a social context and within the community of practice, and in relation to their own children. A father’s and a man’s duties, as well as views on gender roles and feminism, were added to this category.

Thematic categories captured in the analysed blogs and classified as social contexts of fatherhood, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Social contexts of fatherhood: thematic categories captured in analysed blogs

THEMATIC CATEGORY / BLOG	PL_1	PL_2	PL_3	UK_1	UK_2	UK_3	TR_1	TR_2	TR_3
Pregnancy and becoming a father	X	X			X				X
Fatherhood as a task				X	X	X			

Father as a “tough guy” or a “teacher”	X		X				X		X
Community of men	X	X						X	
Relationships with daughters							X		X
Comments on “traditional” and “modern” upbringings	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Patriarchy and understanding of gender roles	X			X	X	X	X		X
Professionalism of fatherhood	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Since the child’s online presence begins before birth, “displaying fatherhood” also starts during pregnancy. In the analysed blogs, the authors shared their emotional struggle around becoming fathers during their partners’ pregnancy. An author from Poland (PL_1) wrote: “I really wanted to be a father, but I was terrified at the same time. I explored the unknown land and I was overwhelmed by the responsibility. I also knew how little I knew about fatherhood”. A Turkish blogger (TR_2) recalled that he was awaiting his son “with fear and excitement”. It is worth mentioning that traditionally in Turkey men haven’t been widely included in the pregnancy and postpartum process, however, there is an “increase in the rates of their efforts to take part in the pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum processes” (Ergin & Özdilek, 2014, p. 3).

Becoming a father is also understood literally, as one blogger (UK_3) recalled assisting at his second son’s birth. When his wife’s water broke, he rushed to the kitchen to “quickly put away the stuff that needed to go in the fridge and freezer,” and then called the midwife, wondering “whether I’d have to deliver the baby myself. I wasn’t scared and would deal with it if I had to”. This shows that the process of displaying families begins even before the birth of a child. Sharing emotional struggle may also suggest breaking with the traditional models of hegemonic masculinity, a term first introduced by Kessler (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, & Dowsett, 1982) and then developed and popularized by R.W. Connell (1982), along with Carrigan and Lee (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). Especially in Turkey, the commonly accepted model of parenthood is defined by emotional distance. However, this model—as shown in analysed blogs—is currently chang-

ing. The “formality-based connection between the father and children is seen to be decreasing and is being partly replaced by less formal emotional ties” (Boratav, Fişek, & Ziya, 2014, p. 303).

In the traditional understanding of gendered personality traits, masculinity is often described as ‘adaptive-instrumental’ and associated with competence and striving for achievement (Williams & Best, 1990; Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). It is confirmed in this research, with blogs defining fatherhood as a “task” or an achievement. Even when the emotional attachment is stressed, bloggers articulate difficulties when carrying out the practical tasks of parenthood. Fatherhood is a difficult undertaking, which one author (UK_1) described as “incredibly hard”. He also stated that there is “no training and often no guidance” for parenthood. Another author (UK_2) wrote about his anxiety and concerns, stressing that “once a parent, you are forever a parent”. Stress also occurs during pregnancy, which blogger UK_3 described as “a period riddled with worry, stress and what ifs . . . it’s like I’m expecting something bad to happen until the baby arrives”.

Because fatherhood is described as a “task”, authors use work and accomplishment metaphors (describing fatherhood in terms of duties, or as a “24/7 job”). One blogger (UK_2), however, stresses that a father can never rest and feel as though his task has been accomplished: “there are failures and mistakes . . . because being a dad is an endless learning curve”. Therefore, fatherhood is something seen rather as a series of tasks to be achieved (also to be seen as a “good father” socially) than an emotional relationship with a child.

In the traditional models of fatherhood, it is often visible that a father has a superior role in relation to children and the partner. It may be expressed by calling a father a “teacher”, whose role is to pass his knowledge onto the next generation. A Polish author (PL_1) explicitly names a father, “a guy, who—himself—had a tough childhood, with war, his own weaknesses, but can overcome it all and become an amazing husband and dad”. In this context, it is clear that to this blogger the father must be a strong figure, whose role is to provide for the family and display emotional resilience: “Despite struggles he always comes up to the mark and wins, without being a sugary figure” (PL_1).

While in the British blogs fathers admit their mistakes and see fatherhood as a learning process, Polish and Turkish bloggers more often emphasise the traditional role of a father in shaping and teaching their children. Turkish blogger (TR_1) writes: “This is fatherhood. You will never get bored of giving lessons!” Another blogger from Turkey (TR_3) quoted a magazine with an article that was written as a letter from children to parents, stating: “Every step you take, every decision you take [as a father], shapes who I will be in [the] future”. Another blogger (PL_1) wrote, “The most important task of a father is to teach children

to make the right decisions". The same author, in other posts, underlined that the role of a father is much more significant than teaching his own children. Reflecting on a biblical story from the Book of Numbers, he argues that "bad fatherhood" is a reason the biblical Israelite generations fell:

Being a father is definitely more than just procreation. It is more than providing food and shelter for a child. It is not about saying what's wrong and what's right. It is much more. It is a huge responsibility. Fatherhood is responsibility, steadfastness, sacrifice, it is love, it is dedication, it is authenticity, it is reliability. The father is the presence. A father is a person that a child wants to be when he or she grows up.

This concept of a father—as a role model and a teacher—conforms to the traditional notion of gender roles.

Hegemonic masculinity is both a process and a construct of cultural interaction. It is also naturalised by socialisation, learning models, and practices (Connell et.al. 1982). One of the tasks of fatherhood is to be a guide that initiates his son into a community of men. The role of a father is to demonstrate to his son "how to be a man". One blogger (PL_1) wrote:

Our best memories are those with fathers . . . when we were initiated in this secret world of men, of adults The father is always needed, but especially when a teenager transforms from a boy to a man. Lack of father support will be filled by nonsense from the internet and from age-mates. The notion of masculinity is degenerated. If a father doesn't lead his son, another person will. Always with fatal effect. This is the reason for sexism, chauvinism, objectification of women and other nasty things. It happens when there is no father to say: love and respect your wife and any other woman.

The same author, listing "manly" activities undertaken with his brothers, male cousins, and sons (such as firing up the barbecue or chopping wood) described them as being done "in our manly pack", where a young boy can be "encompassed by masculine attention and care. He is not alone. He has support".

Also, a blogger from Turkey (TR_2) associated fatherhood with teaching a son "how to be a man": "My son, giving me the pleasure of being a role model You are an older brother now. Growing up, you'll have a beard and moustache. You will have a piercing, drive a motorcycle, and will become a father too".

These traditional roles of men and narrations about the "community of men" reproduce hegemonic models of (heterosexual) masculinity.

While the relationship between father and son was described as taking part in a special “men’s pack”, the relationship between daughters and fathers was described from a much more emotional perspective, traditionally seen as more “suited” in relations with or between women. Two of the analysed blogs (both written by Turkish bloggers) contained entries about relationships with daughters (TR_1 and TR_3). Daddy bloggers wished to raise their daughters as sensitive but strong; having self-respect but caring. Daddy bloggers also shared high hopes about their daughters. For example, TR_1 wrote:

Live well, fulfil my own imperfections. You’re not only my hope, but the hope of the world. When I write it, you are just five years old still sleeping with your doll, but maybe you’ll find the cure for AIDS, maybe you’ll be a great painter, or maybe a great musician.

Raising a daughter is not an easy task, as there are many qualities fathers would wish for (or require from) their daughters. Blogger TR_3, writing about (or to) his daughter, also explored the emotional side of fatherhood, asking, “Can I raise a beautiful person, loving and respectful, fair, eager to share?”

Blogger TR_3 referred to the way society shapes gender roles, reminding his audience that “we often forget to let our daughters love themselves in the first place. We don’t teach them to value themselves”. It is notable that when writing about their daughters, bloggers usually used the letter form, addressing their posts to their daughters, and using more emotional language. These entries more closely resembled virtual diaries or virtual letters to their children.

When discussing relationships within the family, daddy bloggers often referred to “traditional” and “modern” relationships between parents and children, displaying self-reflection on applying (or not) various models of raising their children. Blogger PL_2 noticed, “We still have this opinion, left after our ‘traditional upbringing’, that a child must feel worse in order to behave better”. Blogger UK_2 disclosed that his “parents didn’t spend too much time [with him]”. In his Turkish “traditional upbringing”, blogger TR_3 noticed that, “we see ourselves as magnificent parents, celebrating that our child can open a jar—as if it was the only child in the world who can do this”. He compared traditional parenting to “marking fields of power”. He also ironically confronted his own fathering practices with the modern view of a “perfect father”, who would push his children towards success:

I don’t understand my friends [other parents]. I don’t have an ambition for success, I don’t wait for my child to be successful in at least 2 sports and in art (I’d kick up a dust if I had). I don’t even make them listen to classical music. Yes, to such an extent!

Again, traditional and modern upbringings are marked rather by expectations towards children and disciplining them, and in this particular traditional

upbringing parenthood is rather seen as a project or task.

When fathers represented themselves in their blog posts, they were humorous, tender, and caring. This is opposite to the fathers described by them, who usually “didn’t spend much time with them” and presented a traditional, “cold” upbringing. Similar findings were presented by Friedman (2016, p.97; italic in original) who wrote,

The intimacy, tenderness, and humor portrayed in many daddyblogs convey an empowered and engaged fatherhood. As opposed to the story of fathers often told about fathers (which focuses on either authoritarian coldness or ineffective charm), the story told by fathers presents a supple fatherhood that resists easy categorization within old tropes of masculinity and instead thickens the stories of both fatherhood and masculinity.

Researching first-time fathers, Åsenhed et al. (2014) have also learned that these blogs are not the best platform for strengthening their identity as fathers. The new fathers analysed in the 2014 study wished to challenge a traditional model of fatherhood. The researchers wrote:

The men do not want to repeat the same mistakes as their own fathers, but to be fathers in their own way The men express that they want to challenge current notions of gender. Among adults, they recognise that men are disadvantaged and not as prioritized as women in terms of parental leave Sharing experiences by reading such blogs, as well as their own writing in the blogs, help them in their preparations to become fathers. (Åsenhed et al., 2014, p.1316)

Researchers consider blogs to be “a tool in the quest to find a modern form of fatherhood” but the blogging fathers in the research sample also seemed to benefit from their blogs’ “support effect” (Åsenhed et al., 2014, p.1315). The findings of Friedman and Åsenhed et al. are consistent with the findings of this analysis.

Writing of a “community of men”, the studied bloggers seemed to support a traditional understanding of masculinity. However, some of them also took a stand against patriarchy and sexism. One Turkish blogger (TR_3) writes that,

the biggest reason for violence [against women] is the gender roles we impose upon our children. Boys, who cannot like ballet, but have to like football. Girls, who must prefer ballet over football. We teach our children bullying . . . I blame society and education.

He tried to negotiate the Turkish child-raising model: “To provide balance of power between men and women, we should not give more strength to wom-

en. We need to teach boys to share their strength. Instead of raising harsh women, we need to raise delicate men". In another entry, the author pointed out that "movies can teach girls how to overcome patriarchal society. But there are no movies showing boys how to overcome this [hegemonic] patriarchy". Another Turkish blogger (TR_1) even proposed "destroy[ing] all pop-culture" to ensure gender equality.

The analysed blogs also criticised patriarchy and the traditional roles imposed on fathers, as well as the traditional division of labour in the household, since they work oppressively against men. One of the UK bloggers (UK_2) commented on a UK shared parenting leave project:

It's clearly a very outdated attitude harking back to the days when husbands were simply expected to take care of women financially More men take on domestic and childcare-focused roles, women will increasingly be the providers in many households.

Another blogger (UK_1) stressed that hegemonic masculinity and traditional gender roles lead to discrimination against men. He recalled his own experiences of his divorce and custody battle:

The man in a divorce is an afterthought, especially when it comes to the children. There seems to be a myth that men can live happily with only a limited amount of contact with their children Fathers love their children, and men need money to survive.

Blogger UK_3 also pointed out that fathers feel like "passengers" when it comes to becoming a parent and parenthood:

Yes, it's your kid, but you aren't connected, involved or affected in the same way—the baby isn't growing in you. You go along to the appointments to support and be involved but are rarely acknowledged. This isn't about wanting praise for being there, but more about wanting to be treated as an equal parent. I remember times when a midwife has barely looked at me, let alone spoke to the missus and I as equals. Maybe I've been unlucky? Maybe I'm just a bit sensitive?

Daddy bloggers opined that fatherhood is "undervalued as an identity" (also found by Friedman, 2016, p.98), and—while acknowledging the role of mothers—say they feel "detached from the process", as blogger UK_3 described. Their emotional engagement, labour, and role in raising children is underestimated. As Friedman (2016) notes, when documenting the life of their children, "fathers are chronicling their involvement with their children, but they are also showcasing that intentional and thoughtful chronicle as a form of caregiving labour" (p.91). In both cases, bloggers gave examples of emotional connections between fathers and their children, which was seen as essential to performing

as “good fathers”. As blogger UK_1 emphasised, “Men have feelings as well. Fathers love their children”. Sharing the emotional dimensions of fatherhood, the analysed bloggers presented a masculinity which can be seen as the opposite of the hegemonic model of a strong, resilient, “tough man”.

When they present father-child relationships, daddy bloggers often positioned themselves as experts. It may be understood as seeking achievement (a traditional trait of “masculinity”), but it is also down to the general character of blogs as source of knowledge and their commercial character. Bloggers wrote about health, children’s development, psychology, bullying, and cyber-bullying, and it seems likely that they were motivated to share information rather than just express themselves. These posts can be also interpreted as “doing families”, upholding the image of good fathers and “proper” families.

The analysed bloggers frequently shared advice. For example, blogger PL_2 published a series of “how-to” entries, such as “How to simply reduce TV time without crying”. Remarkably, the analysed blogs had similar advice posts: children and media (especially the internet), health, nutrition, and safety.

Posts about children and media usage or advice and warnings about cyber bullying were published by all nine bloggers. Blogger TR_3 described how a boy became a victim of bullying because he liked ballet dancing. Blogger UK_2 shared his doubts and fears when his children said they wanted to become full-time YouTubers. In one entry, blogger PL_2 advised,

We need to know what a child watches or plays. Otherwise we will hear stories of 8-year-olds playing ‘GTA’ and ‘The Witcher’ [video games containing mature or violent themes and scenes], because parents have no idea what these games are about.

On the other hand, some entries—usually sponsored ones—were dedicated to reviewing technology and gadgets, such as Bluetooth speakers (PL_1) or portable projectors for family movie nights (UK_1).

When discussing the media and bullying, one blogger (PL_2) noticed that parents are also the subjects of criticism and surveillance on the internet and social media. He shared examples of comments that criticised the parents of a toddler who tragically died last year on holiday.

Another commonly shared topic is protecting children and finding the right balance between providing a safe environment and overprotecting them. Blogger PL_2 advised, “You can’t protect your child from everything. You can’t watch them 24/7. You can’t hold their hand all the time. And sometimes we are a second close to a tragedy”. Blogger UK_2 shared his experience of his house being broken into, which made him warn others and advise on alarm technology. He also shared his dilemma when his daughter wants to come back home

with a friend instead of her parents: “The protective father in me says: ‘Traffic!’ My head instantly filled up with various ‘What if?’ scenarios”. Blogger TR_3 warned parents about low-quality childcare, retelling the tragic death of a toddler in a nursery: “Don’t send your children to a school that sees them as clients. Don’t give peace to supervisors who don’t control [schools] and make necessary changes!”

Daddy bloggers also took a position of expertise on children’s health. Blogger PL_3 shared tips on taking care of children with chickenpox, writing to his readers, “I’m sharing this, because I know that it’s always good to read proven methods, and also I want to have the illness diary”. Similarly, blogger TR_2 described his child’s hand-foot-mouth illness in order to advise other parents. He also wrote about the health and psychological benefits of having a pet in the household, contradicting the view that animals are unsanitary. Bloggers UK_3 and TR_3 advocated swimming lessons for children.

Bloggers UK_1, UK_3 and PL_1 shared advice on healthy meals for the family (also challenging the traditional division of labour in the household) and on feeding a “fussy eater”. Blogger TR_2 shared a video about feeding children eggs, and PL_1 dedicates an entry to TV shows which may help children who are poor eaters improve their appetites. Blogger PL_2 ironically challenged common advice, posting a blog titled “Secret: why my children don’t get ill?” In this post, he humorously listed, “traditional Polish meatballs, air pollution, sweets, watching cartoons and collecting stones”. This post showed the blogger balancing between the positions of a child-rearing expert and critically assessing advice commonly shared on blogs.

In order to maintain a position of expertise, bloggers referenced research and publications and used professional language from the fields of psychology or medicine. For example, in one of his posts, blogger PL_2 supported his beliefs with Twins Early Development Study by Kathryn Asbury and Richard Plomin (2013). Blogger TR_3 warned parents about easy access to online pornography for children, quoting the EU Kids report (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). This behaviour showed the tendency to professionalise fatherhood and make it a role that requires mastering specific areas of knowledge, which bloggers seem happy to share.

Because “displaying fatherhood” online can be subject to ostracism and judgement, daddyblogs position themselves as experts, and they mention their failures. Blogger (UK_1) advised, “never beating yourself up for an error of judgement or mistake”.

In the analysed blogs, there is a visible tendency to professionalise fatherhood. Being a father requires specialised knowledge, and bloggers position themselves as experts—on children’s health, wellbeing, or even the technology

they have tested in a commissioned post. Even when these bloggers wrote about negative experiences—like a child’s illness or their own mental health struggles—they revealed this as a lesson, and most of the information provided was positive. Like the bloggers analysed by Lee (2018), the bloggers in this study constructed the image of a good/proper father who fits in with social expectations (also in terms of being logical and action-focused).

An individual perspective of fatherhood.

In the analysed blogs, fatherhood—with its social implications—is not the only component of the bloggers’ identity. In the analysed blogs, manhood and fatherhood were presented from the perspective of an individual, which is mostly expressed in posts about self-development, happiness, and wellbeing. The most common topics in these categories are: the role of families and relationships in life, life-work balance, time management, and the importance of spending quality time with family. In this context, fatherhood is just one way of fulfilling one’s identity. Bloggers did mention that fatherhood changes their identity and personality. Blogger PL_3, writing about music, mentioned that old rock’n’roll stars have become “older and ‘more normal’ Travis from Blink 182 still plays, takes care of his kiddos and leads a life of a responsible father Rock’n’roll has created real families”.

Thematic categories captured in the analysed blogs and classified as an individual perspective on fatherhood are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Individual contexts of fatherhood: thematic categories captured in analysed blogs.

THEMATIC CATEGORY / BLOG	PL_1	PL_2	PL_3	UK_1	UK_2	UK_3	TR_1	TR_2	TR_3
Importance of a happy family; anti-consumerism	X	X		X	X				X
Emotions & mental health		X	X	X					

Importance of a happy family: care, not career.

The analysed bloggers believed that a happy family and healthy relationships are key to one’s wellbeing. “Being a good father”, then, is a necessary

component of a man's identity, and being successful must include building a happy family, not necessarily having a well-paid career. Blogger PL_2 wrote, "We ought to stop and reflect on what we have. We need to appreciate people who we love". He listed "spending time with family, long walks in a forest are things which really matters". Blogger PL_1 declared, "Out of all my priorities, my family has always been the most important for me". Reflecting on his divorce, blogger UK_1 admitted that "thankfully", he had focused on building relationships with his children.

Bloggers argued that the family is a key to a happy life. They admitted that their own best childhood memories were formed by spending time with their own relatives (e.g. UK_2: "I remember baking cakes with my aunt . . . fact I remember it all these years later says a lot"). They advocated spending more "quality time" with their children. Blogger UK_1 wrote, "Every moment . . . is time well spent with your children for simply no other reason than you are with them". In another blog post, he added that "As you watch your children grow up, and this is one of those moments, memories are beautiful to hold and cherish forever".

In these blog posts, authors challenged the traditional role of a father who is only a material provider. On the contrary, they convinced readers that "you don't have to spend money to call it quality time", and in some entries praised an anti-consumerist lifestyle.¹ Blogger PL_1 wrote directly that "Consumerism is not the best path to follow", describing its effect on families: "We buy more and more toys for children, and having so many of them, they do not take good care of them; and then we get angry. It creates more problems than it solves". He gave an example of "People, who have everything: house, families, and they still want more. Because the world told them they should have more", and describing Christmas advertisements, he warns that "they [goods] may give you endorphins, but never happiness". Blogger UK_1 wrote that spending time with family is worth more than the money people make working long hours: "Your children deserve your time. Not just now and again. The memories you make as your children grow up are worth so much more than money". Blogger TR_2 also warned against spending too much money on "private schools, courses, events, language lessons . . . Never-ending greed".

Mental health is another topic that used to be taboo when discussing mas-

1 While they wrote posts arguing that money does not provide happiness, bloggers did not avoid sponsored posts or promoting goods or brands. Sponsored content was found in eight of nine analysed blogs. Because of the peculiar professionalisation of fatherhood in the analysed blogs, and the very well-specified group of readers, daddy bloggers have the potential to become influencers. Most of the analysed blogs were attached to active social media accounts, where they also actively promoted brands. Blogger PL_3 dedicated two blog posts to influencers, demonstrating the benefits of employing bloggers and instagrammers to promote brands. The brands and goods promoted in analysed blogs included Spotify, Nissan X-trail, 5-10-15 (kids' clothes brand), the Britax-Römer car seat, Water Babies swimming lessons, Haliborange, Vauxhall Grandland X and more.

culinity and manhood. Since mental health problems are perceived as a weakness, many men do not seek medical help, and mental health problems are still stigmatised (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Smith, Braunack-Mayer, Wittert, & Warin, 2007). The analysed blogs seemed to challenge the traditional notion of a strong, independent, and emotionally distant father who shows no distress or emotions. Blogger UK_1 described his divorce, named difficult emotions he experienced, and specifically discussed his feelings about not winning custody of his children. Polish bloggers PL_2 and PL_3 encouraged relaxation or meditation, often in the form of prayer, for mental health. On the other hand, they also wrote about self-development, in terms of their careers, hobbies, and wellbeing.

Cultural differences.

When the content from the nine blogs is analysed, very minor cultural differences are visible. Parenthood is defined by traditional gender roles, and various researchers prove that different cultures show the same pattern of gender differences. However, cultures would vary in the degree to which sex roles are emphasized (Costa et al., 2001).

Some topics were specific to the individual countries (e.g. UK bloggers discussed the new proposal for parental leave, and only Polish bloggers described relationships with daughters as opposite to sons). Only Polish blogs discussed religious motivations. In one blog post, PL_1 analysed the lessons about fatherhood he learned from the Old Testament. PL_1 and PL_2 also mentioned prayer as a form of meditation or relaxation. The Polish and Turkish blogs more noticeably emphasised the role of a father as a guide or teacher than the British blogs. However, all British blogs contained comments on patriarchy and feminism, also stressing that traditional models of masculinity oppress women and men alike.

It is notable that the analysed bloggers try to challenge traditional notions of gender and parental roles, and try to portray themselves as modern, active fathers. However, analysis shows that to some extent they still conform to the traditional roles. For example, when describing activities with children, they usually mention lighter tasks (e.g. playing sports, occasionally cooking with children). In the analysed blogs, only one father seems to be their children's primary caretaker. They often discussed "supporting" or "helping" their partner in raising children, and occasionally named "manly" activities like firing up a barbecue or chopping wood. Even when they described cooking healthy meals for their family, it was an occasional activity and opportunity to bond with their children rather than their usual, daily task.

While authors all of the analysed blogs seem to comment negatively on patriarchy and traditional gender roles—with not many cultural differences visible—it must be stressed that this criticism is embedded in different socio-demographic and cultural contexts. In the UK, the "traditional" model of families and

long-lasting stable (and heterosexual) marriages, with the father as a sole provider and role-model for boys, already started to become archaic back in the 60s (Richardson, 2014). It is definitely challenged by a decline in marriage rates, but also same-sex marriages and a more diverse approach to families, with same-sex parents, patchwork families, and dual-earning households. Social approval of same-sex relationships has also risen rapidly in the UK over the past 30 years (Schraer & D'Urso, 2017)

Contrary to the UK, same-sex marriages or civil partnerships,² and child adoptions by same-sex couples, is not permitted by Polish or Turkish law. In Turkey, the relationship between a father and a child is traditionally based on formality and respect (Boratav et al., 2014). According to the various research projects by government agencies, the majority of Turkish society sees the role of a man in a family as a bread winner, and the role of a women is defined by most of those surveyed as "do the daily chores". The most common model of a Turkish family is still based on the authority of a father (Güngör-Baran, 2004). However, this traditional understanding of fatherhood changes due to political, social, and economic factors, such as the rise in the rate of female employment, with men showing greater effort to participate in family life and raising children, and forming deeper emotional relationships with family members (Mercan & Tezel Şahin, 2017).

Also, in Poland, fatherhood and masculinity are associated with providing financially. Their roles and duties are fulfilled in the public sphere rather than at home and are described as "instrumentally-adaptive". Only recently has the view that men (fathers) can be as good parents as women (mothers) been widely accepted (Dzwonkowska-Godula, 2011). Research on modern fatherhood stresses passivity and a lack of engagement in the traditional models of fatherhood, naming present-day fathers "engaged", "new", or "modern". However, research shows that fathers still feel responsible for providing for the family and believe in the "specialisation" of parents' roles—different roles for the mother and father.

This research also proves that in reality various models of fatherhood function in all three countries, and that modern-day fathers' balance between patriarchal, traditional duties (still valid in all three cultures) and the "new parenthood", in which the traditional division of labour and cultural differences are more diffused.

Other findings

The analysed blogs displayed characteristics of both filter blogs (when they shared tips and advice on fatherhood, masculinity, and related topics) and personal blogs (when they described their own experiences or addressed posts

² Same-sex civil partnerships were legalised in 2004 throughout the United Kingdom. Same-sex marriages are legal in England, Wales and Scotland (Schraer & D'Urso, 2017).

to their children). However, as bloggers often write from a position of expertise, their blogs should be categorized as filter blogs.

Another important finding is that daddybloggers did not seem to be engaged in dialogue with one another. While the “mamasphere has cohered into a collective online storytelling” (Friedman, 2016, p. 92), in the “daddysphere”, strong interaction between bloggers and their readers seems less prominent. Links to other “daddy blogs” are rare. While bloggers did answer readers’ comments, most of these comments were written by women, often “mommy-bloggers”. Lee (2018), in his study on first-time Taiwanese father bloggers also noticed that “daddy bloggers” want to share a sense of community and preserve memories for their children to read in the future. However, signs of online community in analysed blogs were difficult to find, and evidence of any interaction between bloggers was limited.

Another fact noticed by Friedman (2016), which is confirmed in this study, is that parenting blogs are strongly monetized. Eight out of nine analysed blogs contained sponsored content: commissioned posts, affiliate links, and sponsored reviews. Promoted goods and brands, however, varied from those promoted in “mamasphere”. There were fewer products dedicated specifically to children, and more technology, gadgets, or cars—products discursively constructed as “manly”. Bloggers indeed see themselves as influencers. This topic could potentially be explored further in another study.

Conclusion

Blogs can be analysed as a tool for information, identity, and building and maintaining relationships. This study found three common areas for expressing manhood and fatherhood: negotiating fatherhood as social role, describing the relationship within the family and with children, and constructing an identity on an individual level, where fatherhood is just an “addition” to an existing identity. These three areas of discussion complement each other, creating a complex construction of an identity as a man and a father, and balancing between traditional and modern roles.

This research confirms what Friedman (2016) noted, that “Daddyblogs provide an interesting lens on masculinity as interpellated through fatherhood” (p.94) and “Daddyblogs thus both maintain and interrupt dominant discourses of fatherhood and masculinity” (p.87). Fatherhood is a part of their identity, but there are also other identities presented, reaching outside the limits of fatherhood. Being a father is then a work, a display, and a performance, which can be carried out online as well as offline.

Like Lee’s (2018) research, this study found evidence of performance in the nine analysed blogs. Posts were deliberately planned, and pictures were

carefully arranged. This confirms Albrechtslund's (2008) argument that online presence is anchored in surveillance practices which can empower—and not necessarily violate—the internet user.

In the analysed blogs, fathers wrote about the traditional notions of fatherhood and manhood, and often challenged outdated approaches to these. They criticised the traditional methods of child-raising, patriarchy, and the division of household labour. They also expressed "new fatherhood" in their online presence. However, when describing "offline" activities, they still showed signs of a more traditional division of labour. The traditional notions of fatherhood were also visible in different narratives when they described their relationship with their sons (who they teach "how to be men") and daughters, and in describing fatherhood as a "community of men".

With some visible differences between analysed blogs in terms of their views on parenthood, fatherhood, and masculinity, it is clear that daddy blogs are part of both practicing fatherhood and presenting (or performing) fatherhood. They also document changes within societies, as more fathers become engaged in and willing to challenge the hegemonic notions of masculinity and fatherhood. This study shows that blogs are not only a platform to present "doing fatherhood" or "displaying families", but to perform parenting practices as well—becoming a new, digital way of being a father, and not merely describing this practice.

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