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Parenting on the Internet and the media in Olsztyn. Selected aspects

Keywords: parenting, Internet, foundation, group, Gazeta Wyborcza, local media, Facebook, NVC, RB, hate

Słowa kluczowe: rodzicielstwo, Sieć, fundacja, grupa, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, media lokalne, Facebook, NVC, RB, hejt

Introduction

Parenting is a challenge on many levels: from medical through psychophysical to socio-cultural, which can change depending on conditions, e.g. support from one's family or its absence. When they get no help from their loved ones, the parents usually look for information on raising children on their own, usually on the Internet. It is good if they manage to find valuable content, and it is even better if they find “a local society”, which will help them to develop a territorial bond. This is because support reinforced with localness gives young mothers and fathers a greater sense of security.

When writing about parenting on the internet, I reduce the common knowledge about it to the local level, i.e. I show actions of selected groups and foundations in Olsztyn, which set before themselves educational goals: supporting parents, especially young mothers. Therefore, I focus on cognitive aspects by presenting groups and foundations in Olsztyn which operate in the spirit of attachment parenting (AP) and non-violent communication (NVC)¹. I am going to characterise briefly the local activity of Internet groups, foundations and public actions based on several sources:

a) my own observations (membership of various groups),

¹ Or empathic communication or NVC – I will use these synonyms interchangeably in this text. I will also use the acronym AP for attachment parenting. These two concepts will be presented more closely further in the text.

- b) analysis of articles published in the Olsztyn branch of the “Gazeta Wyborcza” newspaper,
- c) non-categorised interview.

The “Gazeta Wyborcza” was taken for analysis because it is a national newspaper with a local branch in Olsztyn. Another argument is the newspaper circulation, which shows that (despite drops) it is still among the leading titles (Kozielski, 2022; MK, 2021; b.a., 2021). Searching the archive of the “Gazeta Wyborcza” in Olsztyn (<https://olsztyn.wyborcza.pl/olsztyn/>) using the keywords: attachment parenting, non-violent communication, Maja Mazur, Ewa Kazimierczak, Elżbieta Malinowska, hate, babywearing, “Každy Ważny” Foundation, “Mlekiem Mamy” Foundation, yielded 16 articles: one editorial, seven by Iwona Görke and eight by Dominika Myślak, the author of this article, who also works for the “Gazeta Wyborcza” in Olsztyn. These articles were published in 2018–2021. A non-categorised interview (open-ended questions) was conducted with the founders of individual groups and foundations. I asked in it about the purpose of establishing a group/foundation and about the idea behind establishing it, observation of changes in the context of parenting on the internet over the years with respect to the activity on the Internet, and promoting the idea of the group/foundation. The information thus obtained was used in the section characterising individual groups and foundations, and the responses can be found in the annex at the end of the article. It emphasises the thought that localness plays an important role in parenting and that local media can become an important space for developing public awareness going beyond the Olsztyn area.

This article was based not only on scientific papers but also on journalists’ articles and methodology and guiding publications because I have found the largest amount of source materials in the last two. For the same reason, I referred to the articles I have written because no one else – apart from Iwona Görke and myself – in the Olsztyn branch of the “Gazeta Wyborcza” dealt with this issue.

1. The Internet – the modern source of information

An excess of information is a modern problem. The internet makes its resources unlocated, due to which Internet users are not anthropologically anchored. In consequence, we have a sort of renaissance of localism, its rebirth, but in a modernised form. This is accompanied by a breakthrough in the pedagogical approach initiated by Jesper Juul. The authoritarian punishment and reward upbringing style and the law of the strongest have been abandoned, and the parent-child in the AP and NVC spirit is the new goal. These two approaches are not only needed in children’s upbringing but also in everyday human relations. Each conversation within a family should be conducted with respect and empathy, with no unfair judgement, and it should take into account the interests of each party. A change in the approach to upbringing

is also related to the “triple revolution” that took place in the family (Szlendak, 2010, p. 393). One of its components is the revolution in psychological education (psychological “ennobling”), which created the democratic family, which is oriented towards tolerance, self-expression and focused on the quality of life (Szlendak, 2010, p. 394).

The Internet has created huge opportunities to acquire knowledge through easy access to information for the young generation of Poles, although the parents, being of the middle generation, also often seek parenting information on the internet. There are many internet forums, groups or pages on social media intended as platforms for thought and advice exchange and parenting support. However, it is not infrequent that negative opinions or even hate can be found in these places². It cannot be ruled out that it is difficult for inexperienced future parents to find scientific knowledge on the internet because the content published on social media by celebrities is absorbed much easier and faster, because it is difficult to identify a border between the digital and the physical world nowadays – we are the most networked, and at the same time the loneliest society (Hatałska, 2021), living away from parents. Moreover, superstitions about parenting are still deeply rooted in Polish society (and probably in many others)³. Many women’s passive approach to giving birth, breastfeeding and children’s feeding can be given as an example. They do not always use professional literature, and they do not usually know the position presented by Juule, who wrote many years ago that “a family develops best when its members do not preach but they learn from each other” (Juul, 2004, p. 6). This Danish family therapist and the world-famous pedagogue definitely abandoned the authoritarian upbringing methods while propagating the ideas of respect towards another person – a child, a teenager, an adult – and mature adult leadership based on mutual relations with the child. A breakthrough in modern pedagogy is owed to Juul, whose work still provides inspiration and support in parenting⁴.

It is easier to talk about bad things, and they are talked about more often than good ones. It is not without reason that the paradoxical opinion that bad news is good news is still popular in newspaper newsrooms. Despite this verbal perversity, it is still worth talking about changes for the better. Recently,

² Hate speech on the Internet manifests itself through comments, full of hate, envy and judgement, which do not contribute anything to communication apart from hurting someone.

³ Domination of the maternity image by stereotypical beliefs and opinions is the subject of the book by Bogusława Budrowska, entitled *Macierzyństwo jako punkt zwrotny w życiu kobiety [Maternity as the turning point in a woman’s life]* (2000, p. 291).

⁴ For example, such Juul’s books are meant here as: *“Nie” z miłości [“No” out of love]* (2011), *Nastolatki. Kiedy kończy się wychowanie? [Teenagers. When does upbringing end?]* (2014), *Agresja – nowe tabu? [Aggression – a new taboo?]* (2013), *Twoje kompetentne dziecko [Your competent child]* (2021), *Twoja kompetentna rodzina [Your competent family]* (2011), *Kryzys szkoły [A crisis of the school]* (2014), *Rodzic jako przywódca stada [A parent as the herd leader]* (2017), *Zamiast wychowania. O sile relacji z dzieckiem [Instead of upbringing. About the strength of relation with a child]* (2016), *Życie w rodzinie [Life in the family]* (2013), and *Macierzyństwo jako punkt zwrotny w życiu kobiety [Maternity as the turning point in a woman’s life]* by Bogusława Budrowska (2000).

the situation started to alter distinctly, which resulted in the media talking about both the positive and negative sides of parenting⁵. There are more and more photographs on the internet of women after childbirth, materials on postpartum depression, D-MER⁶, baby blues⁷, and miscarriages, talking about them and ways of fighting hate speech among mothers themselves. Local foundations have been established which run “internet villages”, i.e. groups on social media, set up in the spirit of AP and based on empathic communication in the spirit of NVC, which care about the way people speak their minds (without judging), to make them safe places where one can find help and support. These measures are often accompanied by various public actions.

2. Transformations of localness

Localness plays an important role nowadays. For example, it is a response to information overload syndrome⁸. As one of its consequences, people turn towards their own trusted environment. This results from the general disorientation caused by excessive information stimuli. It is also a return to basic human needs and expectations: territorialness, “native space, with its sense of security, familiar structures and (not only geographical) orientation, and territorial separation from foreign interests. One’s own identification is also territory-based” (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 8). Territorialness can measurably favour anthropological anchoring: everyone lives in a specific place, which is, for them, a point of support, permanence and socio-cultural security. Thus perceived territorialness becomes an anthropological inevitability, a type of bond with a specific place, on which one depends, which one desires and for which one even yearns, “it is also a psychological category which determines the need to identify with a place, to integrate with other members” (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 8). The meaning of such a place is also symbolic, which distinguishes it from strange places – this is an emotional factor. Stanisław Michalczyk rightly points out that “the role of the local media stems from the communication and social importance of the local world, close space” (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 9). During the era of media domination, life in the global village, and information overload, it is increasingly difficult for one to understand the multitude of phenomena and processes and evaluate the weight of each fact. This is why information

⁵ Tomasz Szlendak writes about these issues in *Socjologia rodziny. Ewolucja, historia, zróżnicowanie* [Sociology of the family. Evolution, history, diversity] (2010).

⁶ Dysphoric milk ejection reflex, i.e. negative feeling, depressed mood, mental pain while breastfeeding.

⁷ Or postpartum/maternal sadness. It is a physiological reaction to childbirth, whose characteristic features include depressed mood, weepiness, irritability, which subside spontaneously after about two weeks.

⁸ Information overload takes place through “depression of being overinformed” and “vanishing of reality” (blurring of the border between reality and fiction), i.e., these are psycho-social effects of excessive inflow of information (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 8).

that is tangible, verifiable, territorially assigned, and coming from a small homeland is of particular importance.

Activities of local media are based on local communities, localisms, and localness, i.e., structures which enjoy their social renaissance⁹. Industrialisation, urbanisation and migrations to bigger cities resulted in the vanishing of local populations with their distinctive culture, custom and tradition. They were replaced by anonymous urban communities. Centralisation of authority and globalisation were additional factors exacerbating the crisis of localism. However, this happened against nature; hence the return to qualitatively altered localism and withdrawal from the global society structures: slow life, generation of logged-outs (Myślak, 2021c, p. 122–123), and a return to nature. It might seem that renaissance of localism excludes globalism, but these two forms of social life coexist and intertwine in a way which is reflected in glocalisation¹⁰ (Michalczyk, 2004, p. 16). Bohdan Jałowiecki wrote (1989, p. 66): “Wherever you look, be it scientific research, politics, issues related to rural or urban areas, in the economic or cultural sphere, in history, sociology, even anthropology – everything points to localness as the new obviousness, a new area that naturally comes to mind. Localness is overwhelming”.

Local media is also important because it is a part of the media system and the base from which regional and national media stem (Michalczyk, 2000, s. 168). In the 1990s, they were seen as an opportunity for a new state system and new forms of government (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 13–14), and now each political party has its own regional structures, which is proof of the local media strength and their potential impact on reality. Therefore, all the local actions – including those devoted to parenting, close to Juul’s views – give hope for broader social transformations in this regard¹¹, in accordance with the idea of introducing changes in baby steps, as grass-roots actions, that is – as in this case – locally, but also on the internet and in traditional media.

3. Two approaches – attachment parenting and non-violence communication

Attachment parenting¹² is an attitude which takes into consideration the theory of attachment and development psychology. It is based on specific research on brain development and the human mental sphere from the moment a person

⁹ Six main reasons of the localness renaissance can be identified (Giełżyński, 1988, p. 25–26).

¹⁰ Glocalisation is the co-existence of localisation and globalisation, inseparability of globalisation transformations from what is local.

¹¹ Obviously, not only Juul dealt with these issues, because Polish authors also do, and they publish in the series issued by Natuli – Dzieci Są Ważne (see <https://natuli.pl/pl/c/Seria-Rodzicielska/513> [25.05.2022]). I am not expanding on the issue of the achievements of Polish or other modern pedagogy, as they are of secondary importance in this context.

¹² Attachment Parenting. This term was coined by William Sears, the American paediatrician (Sears and Sears, 2013).

is born; it assumes accompanying a child in its development. This attitude is an instinctive approach (more of a style than a set of rules) in which establishing a close bond with the child is the prime objective. This is supposed to be helped by the “seven pillars of AP”: an emotional bond during delivery; breastfeeding; carrying the baby; sleeping close to the baby; believing that the baby’s crying is its method of communication; avoiding the use of “child tamers”; balancing the parent’s and child’s needs (Tyczyńska, 2014).

Non-violent communication becomes a universal method of communication based on mutual respect, understanding and dignity, and on being seen. Empathic communication starts with contact with the heart, i.e. with the intention with which words are said. This attitude is distinguished by a four-degree model of the communication process: observations (specific things that one sees and that serve the good of a specific person), feelings (what one feels faced with these things), needs (what one needs or values, and what evokes such feelings) and requests (specific requested – but not demanded – action) (Rosenberg, 2017, p. 265). This is a two-way process, and a participant focuses both on oneself and on the interlocutor. The essence of NVC lies in observation, in giving names to feelings and making one’s needs known so that the optimum solution can be found that allows one to satisfy one’s own and/or another person’s needs. Seven categories of needs are identified in publications on NVC: physical renewal, liberty/autonomy/freedom, co-dependence, integrity, celebration, spiritual communion, and enjoyment¹³. Everyone is said to have the same needs, but different strategies are followed to satisfy them. Small children are not capable of satisfying their needs, which is why they must have support from adults. They learn from their parents to identify their feelings, name them, and discover and experience new emotions.

NVC was developed by Marshall Rosenberg, who characterised two methods of communicating, symbolised by the giraffe and the jackal. Both these animals “live” in each person. The language of the giraffe is the language of the heart, compassion, and the language of feelings and needs. The giraffe speaks clearly and frankly about itself and about how it feels. During a conversation, the giraffe is oriented towards listening to the other person, and it wants to be heard and understood by the other person. It treats another person with respect and empathy. It can identify its and other person’s needs, both those satisfied and those still unsatisfied. On the other hand, the language of the jackal is one of judgement, criticism, comparison, and analysing. During a conversation, the jackal uses labels, stereotypes, and generalisations, threatens with punishments or tempts with rewards. The jackal expects others to meet its demands (“you have to”, “you should”, “it’s your duty”); otherwise, a conflict usually arises (Rust, 2010).

Owing to the knowledge of the language of the giraffe and of the jackal, people can better understand what affected a person’s attitude and made

¹³ A need is understood as feeling the lack of something, which the body tries to eliminate and satisfy.

him/her talk like the giraffe or the jackal. A person can control what he/she says and decide which animal, when and under what circumstances should be allowed to speak. As early as in the process of socialisation – primary and secondary – people acquire the ability to talk, which reflects what they actually feel, and learn to receive, to hear what is important to the other person and helps to understand this other person.

4. Presentation of groups and foundations in Olsztyn

There are two internet groups and two foundations that operate in the spirit of AP and NVC. Their characterisation – as was mentioned in the introduction – is a result of the answers given to the open-ended questions in the non-categorised interview (see: Annex) and the articles published in the “Gazeta Wyborcza” in Olsztyn.

4.1. Każdy Ważny Foundation¹⁴

The Każdy Ważny Foundation was established in 2015. Initially, its activities were targeted at couples who could not conceive a child. The foundation is chaired by Ewa Kazimierczak, who has helped people to develop and build relations since the beginning of her activities, organising workshops with a psychotherapist, conferences for women and parents, and sharing her expert knowledge of psychology and human relations. Maja Mazur is the deputy chairperson of the foundation – she advises women on carrying babies in scarves and soft carriers. She is an expert on attachment parenting and a leader and mediator in the spirit of non-violence communication. She meets persons and parents individually and in workshop groups, e.g. on anger, communication, and empathy. The Każdy Ważny Foundation was established with people with specific problems in mind. Her mission is consists in helping people to learn to develop respectful human relations because it is from them and for them that we are born. A special place in the activities of the foundation is occupied by relations between parents and children. The effects of the organisation’s activities are not immediately visible or measurable with any potentiometer, but its effectiveness is visible in the fact that the foundation clients return to the classes and bring new people, including their children.

As an institution, the Każdy Ważny Foundation operates professionally, and its activities focus on the prophylaxis and education of adults because a change should start from them rather than from children. This is why the foundation teaches the style of upbringing in which the role of the child is taken into account while caring about the relation limits and the adult’s

¹⁴ See Fundacja Każdy Ważny, <https://kazdywazny.pl/> [06.09.2021].

needs. In order to use the foundation's help, it is enough to call and make an appointment for consultations, thematic workshops or lectures. The personnel offer support, assistance for the management, and individual consultations for teachers and parents (Myślak, 2021a)¹⁵. Moreover, they conduct a blog and have an offer for schools and deliver open lectures in the town hall in Olsztyn. It is the same at meetings within so-called "women's circle" or an urban village, joining together people who want to talk in a safe space, have a piece of cake or a coffee, or just be with other people in a nice atmosphere (Myślak, 2021b). Such everyday actions often prove rare among people, and for many, they prove a rescue measure, especially at difficult times.

4.2. Chusty Olsztyn¹⁶

Chusty Olsztyn is a group on Facebook which was created in 2011. It has 523 members¹⁷. It was set up by Maja Mazur, mentioned above. The group is intended for parents and is made up of them. This is a place where parents who wanted to carry and those carrying their babies, as well as those who used to carry their children in scarves or soft carriers, established a community. The idea behind the creation of the group was to be able to continue the conversations that had been started during live meetings. The Chusty Olsztyn exists in the virtual world, but the mothers (group members) also make up smaller or larger "bond villages", meeting, talking and providing mutual support. The Chusty Olsztyn's activities were motivated by a wish to create a virtual village aimed at supporting mothers during the initial maternity period by sharing thoughts on parenting hardships: from sadness and dilemmas to joint celebrations and sharing joy arising from child rearing, creating the space for information and observations exchange in a safe atmosphere of non-judgmental acceptance.

The Chusty Olsztyn Group annually organises International Babywearing Day and European Attachment Day (Myślak, 2019a). They involve events whose aim is to talk about parenting in close contact with a child. The events also include lectures delivered by specialists, a weaving course, workshops in tying a scarf properly and fixing a carrier and caring about children with respect to their mental and physical development, including expanding their diet. Other topics are also dealt with, such as breastfeeding, rectus abdominis diastasis, and pelvic floor muscles. Meetings are attended by specialists in parental and

¹⁵ The foundation also organises summer play centres for children and support groups for teenagers. They can use help of a psychologist, mediator, psychotherapist, there is also therapy for adults and youth, as well as parenting consultations.

¹⁶ See Grupa Chusty Olsztyn, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/201485156555731> [06.09.2021].

¹⁷ As of 6.09.2021. The Chusty Olsztyn Group has its Facebook page: Chusty Olsztyn, <https://www.facebook.com/ChustyOlsztyn> [06.09.2021].

child support: physiotherapists, child psychologists, doulas¹⁸, lactation advisors, sensory integration therapists, and speech therapists. Babywearing has become increasingly popular in recent years, with a growing number of parents opting to carry their babies in scarves and soft carriers. This trend is linked to the rise in awareness and knowledge of the benefits of babywearing among specialists such as paediatricians and physiotherapists (Działowska, 2019). Funds are raised during International Babywearing Day and European Attachment Day, which are intended to help children in need of special support by the Chusty Olsztyn Group, which has the form of paying for a rehabilitation term, specialist visits or other costs of the child treatment.

4.3. Rodzicielstwo bliskości [Attachment parenting] Olsztyn¹⁹

The Rodzicielstwo bliskości Olsztyn group was set up on Facebook in 2018 by Maja Mazur and Ewa Kazimierczak and is associated with the Każdy Ważny Foundation. It has 702 members²⁰. It is intended for parents who find it important to develop close relations with their children – according to the rule that “parents who are attached to their children can be recognised by their behaviour towards another person”²¹. Like in the foundations mentioned above, members of Rodzicielstwo bliskości Olsztyn promote experience sharing, building and consolidating a community of parents who want to share their maternal and paternal practice. The idea behind the community was to promote the AP approach, i.e. one based on treating a human being as the supreme value. An increasingly large group of parents are looking to move away from a parenting system based on punishment and rewards and instead build relationships with their children based on active listening, respect for each other’s needs, and mutual care for each other’s boundaries.

¹⁸ Doula is an ancient profession. Initially, she was a servant to another woman, and the occupation evolved into one helping a woman after childbirth. Nowadays, a doula helps and supports women during pregnancy, during and after childbirth. She helps future parents to prepare for delivery and parenting: “Pregnancies are different, women have to cope with various emotions during the time, which is why a contact with another woman is extremely important. First, we talk about basic problems, then we work on the delivery plan, we exercise, so that the mum becomes aware what she wants the delivery to look like. I recommend childbirth classes to them, but if someone does not like the ideal of group activities, she can work on it with a doula” (Görke, 2018a).

¹⁹ See Grupa Rodzicielstwo bliskości, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RBOlsztyn> [06.09.2021].

²⁰ As of 06.09.2021.

²¹ The description of the group on Facebook. See Grupa Rodzicielstwo bliskości, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RBOlsztyn> [06.09.2021].

4.4. Mlekiem Mamy Foundation²²

The Mlekiem Mamy Foundation was established in 2018 by Elżbieta Malinowska (Olsztyn) and Marlena Świrk (Warsaw). Its aim is to provide mental support for families and to disseminate knowledge of natural feeding and conscious parenting. The Foundation propagates natural feeding, monitors the rights associated with it, cooperates with other entities and carries out interventions²³. Due to the issue of localness dealt with in this paper, I will focus on Elżbieta Malinowska, who represents the Foundation in Olsztyn. She is also a certified doula and a well-known breastfeeding promoter in Olsztyn, and a person who breaks stereotypes on maternity because she speaks openly on difficult moments during pregnancy, delivery and early maternity (Görke, 2019a; Dziennikarze GW Olsztyn, 2019). She argues that mothers have a right to be tired and to get help and that sometimes maternity looks quite different than it is presented on social media. She talks about what a mother does not have to be like: “The world demands from a mother to be satisfied and happy. With a hair-do and make-up. While the truth is that for her, a visit to a Rossman shop is like a trip to Paris” (Görke, 2018a), which can be confirmed by every mother – especially early in the maternity period²⁴. Malinowska seeks rescue measures in education, which is why she tries to make women aware of their rights. For example, she points out that women often give up breastfeeding because of the lack of support from their family, harassment or negative feelings associated with breastfeeding (D-MER). She speaks openly about baby blues, which affects as many as 85% of women²⁵. At the same time, she points out that society does great harm to breastfeeding mothers by pressuring them into the stereotype, according to which a mother must be happy all the time, cope with everyday problems easily, and not give in to physical or mental fatigue²⁶. These issues were also observed by Tomasz Szlendak, who wrote that “mothers in Poland live through a real horror. On the one hand, they are pressurised by the educational tradition, usually represented by their mothers and mothers-in-law, and on the other – under constant pressure from the media and society, demanding that they make a career, participate in public life and establish a proper intimate relation with the partner” (Szlendak, 2010, p. 434), and he sees the reasons for this in a misunderstanding of John Bowlby’s theory of attachment.

²² See Fundacja Mlekiem Mamy, <https://www.fundacja.mlekiemmamy.org/> [06.09.2021].

²³ More: Fundacja Mlekiem Mamy, *Nasze interwencje* [Our interventions], <https://www.fundacja.mlekiemmamy.org/category/nasze-interwencje/> [18.09.2021].

²⁴ More: Budrowska, 2000.

²⁵ See pacjent.gov.pl/jak-zyc-z-choroba/mloda-matka-w-depresji [Young mother in depression], <https://pacjent.gov.pl/jak-zyc-z-choroba/mloda-matka-w-depresji> [18.09.2021].

²⁶ It was discussed by Juul, who observed that aggression stigmatises not only children and adolescents, but also family life, with its tendency to disapprove of any intense emotions – except happiness. “[...] adults turn their backs on their human nucleus and become a sort of actors. The ideal lying at the base of this tendency describes the way »a decent person« or »a high achiever« should behave, it is a kind of botulinum toxin for the soul” (Juul, 2013, p. 12).

The Mlekiem Mamy Foundation organises various public events (Myślak, 2021d)²⁷, e.g. “Pracuję (z) pełną piersią”, #karmienieniewyklucza, #odstawienie-wszacunku, #karmiędlugo, #bojedzieniamaznaczenie, Tydzień Godnego Porodu, Tydzień Promocji Karmienia Piersią (Görke, 2018c, 2019d), Tydzień Douli (Görke, 2019b) and #HEJToJA (Myślak, 2020a); the latter takes place every year on the third Wednesday of October on World Dignity Day. #HEJToJA is the event with the strongest link to parenting on the internet because this wave of hate is often seen on the Internet – a place which apparently guarantees one anonymity behind an avatar. Everyday observations show that expressing public hate gives vent to one’s frustrations. When it comes to parenting, it is the mothers who usually talk aggressively about other mothers. Malinowska reports that mothers talk with hate about everything concerning other mothers, starting with the way of feeding a baby, its clothes, the way a mother carries her child, how the child plays, spending free time, nurturing, diaper brand, or even the choice of the childbirth method. Observations of the phenomenon show that there are two dominant types of hate, with page admins in the background or not. It so happens that mothers talk with hate on pages where admin control is rather lax or on ones created purposefully to hurl hate speech at mothers, such as Madka Polka. Unfortunately, each form of hate presence is proof of a lack of education, understanding and proper support²⁸.

The first edition of #HEJToJA was about child feeding methods²⁹. Its aim was to show that regardless of the way a mother feeds her child, she is the most important person to it. The emotional attachment to a parent is much more important to a small child than the type of milk given to it. Meanwhile, women insult each other in some Facebook groups or in comments under articles on child feeding because of the way they feed their children. When a question is asked: “Which infant formula is the best?” one of the answers might be a hateful comment, accusing the mother of being lazy and avoiding breastfeeding her child. It is similar when the discussion is about, for example, a photo of a mother breastfeeding in a restaurant. In response, there were some vulgar comments – that the mother “shows her tits”, that “she should go to the toilet” (Myślak, 2020a), etc. “Mothers on the internet” do not spare KPI women, i.e. those who feed their babies with their own drawn milk³⁰. In their hate speech, they write about them how they are “like a cow after calving” and “they milk themselves like cows” (Myślak, 2020a). Mothers who breastfeed

²⁷ These actions are executed through series of educational posts on social media.

²⁸ The role of support is discussed indirectly by Juul, and also by Budrowska and Szlendak.

²⁹ The second edition of #HEJToJA concerned the method of childbirth. Because no one has a right to tell the mother that she is worse only because she gave birth through caesarian section (which is sometimes unfairly called taking out the child). The aim of the action was to make mothers aware that – regardless of the method of childbirth – they are the best mums for their children.

³⁰ KPI (karmię piersią inaczej – I breastfeed differently). This feeding method is used by mothers of children with the cleft lip/palate.

babies over one year old are not spared either because – in the opinion of the model internet mothers – “they are sexually unsatisfied perverts” and they “enslave their children” (Myślak, 2020a).

Conclusion

Jesper Juul, who has been mentioned several times in this article, pointed to a certain clear aspect: that actions in response to aggression should be taken on two levels – to find the roots of anger and violence and to find a way of coping with them (Juul, 2013). In most cases, mothers’ hateful behaviours are caused by their propensity to give advice to others and to judge them. They also believe that the Internet guarantees anonymity. It cannot be ruled out that the mothers who write hateful posts on the Internet did not receive any support during their maternity when they needed help from others the most (Myślak, 2020a). Accumulated hard experiences and emotions produce suppressed frustration, which ultimately results in acts of hate to feel relief herself, but at the expense of another person. Bogusława Budrowska points out that “a young woman at early stages in her life was taught to cope with various issues in a rational and systematic manner without showing anger. [...] However, these abilities are not used in baby care, which is a process full of emotions without ideal procedures which guarantee success. [...] It is not surprising that a young mother often feels angry” (Budrowska, 2000, pp. 289–290). Therefore, the foundations and internet groups mentioned in this article have many important educational tasks. Building bonds with members of such groups can be compared to creating an alternative family model, where bonds “are sometimes stronger than those connecting traditional families. [...] Moreover, care networks whose members include relatives, friends and acquaintances have an open structure, unlike traditional families with a closed structure” (Szlendak, 2010, pp. 459–460).

According to Szlendak (2010, p. 432): “it is difficult for today’s mothers to reconcile their professional and family roles, and it is even more difficult since a lot of emotions have accumulated around modern maternity”. Educational activities could include the propagation of knowledge of mothers who combine maternity with work, like, for example, young mothers and businesswomen who do not see having a baby as the end of their professional careers³¹ (Myślak, 2019b; Szlendak, 2010, pp. 432–445). Press articles provide materials on urogynaecological physiotherapy. They encourage women to look after their pelvic bottom muscles after giving birth and to prevent diastasis recti (Myślak, 2019c). More importantly, nowadays, in the era of new media, when many people nearly naturally seek information on the internet and are present in social media, traditional forms of communication are used for educational purposes, which reinforce the message and enable reaching a wider group of recipients.

³¹ It is noteworthy that some of them raise their children on their own – not alone, not lonely, but on their own.

The social taboo is broken by writing increasingly often about issues related to a miscarriage as a traumatic experience for the soul and body – mainly – for the woman (Myślak, 2020b). More and more local circles of women, “villages”, are created in which a woman can get professional help and support, not only in connection with a miscarriage (Görke, 2018b, 2019c).

There are obviously much more such groups on the Internet, and they have a wider reach than local ones³². However, one should bear in mind that local media is important as it fills the information gap left by regional and national media in the communication system. Also, they have two dimensions: social, as local media and journalists constitute a practical sphere of multidirectional human activities, and scientific, in which local media and journalists are subject to scientific description and reflection, which, in consequence, deepens the general knowledge in this area (Michalczyk, 2000, p. 7). The importance of the local press cannot be ignored, as it plays important social functions: it educates, informs, mobilises, socialises, supports bond building, develops identity, and integrates; this structure is able to exert effective socio-political impact (Kowalczyk, 2003, p. 98).

When the social functions mentioned above (education, information, education, mobilisation, socialisation and local activation) are combined with publicising in the media, mainly on the Internet, an opportunity is created to reach a wide group of recipients with valuable actions. It is well known that “dripping water wears away a stone”, and support, understanding, and empathy combined with education are the best solution in the toils of maternity and the fight with ubiquitous hate speech. There is an interesting research issue of establishing and running pro-parenting groups and foundations by men – experienced or young fathers³³. Would they differ from those run by women? How could the press report about it? It is interesting that the local initiatives having the form of groups and foundations were initiated, established and are run only by mothers, and – according to the literature reports – there is now a “new fraternity”, which abandons the idea of an absent father and replaces it with one engaged in the care of the child, looking after it for a longer time and having a greater impact on it than traditional fathers (Szlendak, 2010, pp. 432–452).

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³² For example, hafija.pl, gosiastanczyk.pl, magdalenabockomysiorska.pl and dziecisawazne.pl.

³³ Like blogojciec.pl – run by Kamil Nowak, a father of three.

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Summary

This article is an exploratory study of online parenthood, combining research with popularization. The author has set two main objectives: 1) to present selected parenting groups and foundations in Olsztyn that follow attachment parenting (AP) and nonviolent communication (NVC), and 2) to examine their image in the local press. Using publications from the Olsztyn edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the author highlights the fact that attachment parenting and nonviolent communication are part of worldwide trends in parenting and that they are often the subject of negative media coverage. The study includes results from an uncategorized interview, and the author argues that local media plays a significant role in shaping public perception of the phenomenon.

Rodzicielstwo w Sieci w kontekście mediów olsztyńskich. Wybrane aspekty

Streszczenie

Artykuł ma charakter rozpoznawczy i autorka nie wyczerpuje w nim szerokiej problematyki rodzicielstwa w Sieci. Z tego powodu łączy się w nim aspekty badawcze z popularyzacją danej tematyki, a niektóre fragmenty wypowiedzi mają nawet walor poradnictwa. Badaczka postawiła przed sobą dwa cele. Pierwszy polega na zaprezentowaniu wybranych olsztyńskich grup i fundacji prorodzicielskich prowadzonych w duchu rodzicielstwa bliskości (RB) i porozumienia bez przemocy (NVC), a drugi – na omówieniu ich obrazu na łamach prasy lokalnej. Artykuły na ten temat publikowane były w olsztyńskim wydaniu „Gazety Wyborczej”. Autorka podkreśla, że rodzicielstwo bliskości i porozumienie bez przemocy należą do ogólnoświatowych trendów we współczesnym rodzicielstwie i są narażone na medialny hejt. Materiał prasowy został uzupełniony o wyniki wywiadu nieskategoryzowanego. Autorka udowadnia, że media lokalne odgrywają ważną rolę w kształtowaniu właściwego odbioru analizowanego zjawiska społecznego.

Appendix

I. Chusty Olsztyn

1. What was the purpose of establishing the Chusty Olsztyn group?

The Chusty Olsztyn Group is a place created by parents for parents. It is a place where parents who want to carry their children, who carry their children and those who used to carry their children create a community from the simplest announcements, workshops, and events in the neighbourhood devoted to babywearing and parenting. Its aim was also to continue the conversations started during live meetings.

2. What was the idea behind it?

My idea was to create a virtual mutual support village. We need support at the start of the maternity period so much. Beginning with sharing our hardships, sadness, and dilemmas, to shared celebrations, joys, as well as a bit of humour, which is also an element of support in parenting. The idea was that I met many parents in my work whose relatives are far away or whose relatives look at parenting through their past images, which blurs many difficult moments. Those at a similar stage of parenting have a fresh perception, which sometimes gives a wider look, but they are embedded in the same “here and now”. Therefore, the idea was to create a space for exchange in an atmosphere of acceptance.

3. What changes have you noticed in regard to parenting over the years of your activities?

I can see many parents who – for over ten years since they joined the group because they carried their children – are now mentors to those who are making the first steps on their parenting journey. They provide a different look, support and help to each other. Now, looking back, I see that this support goes way beyond the Internet. Many friendships established over the years still exist: they spend together free time, holidays or weekends. Parenting based on equal dignity for everyone is budding, and this is the greatest change that has taken place since the group has existed.

4. How has the approach to parenting, and its vision, changed over the years (since you set up the group)?

My impression is that attachment parenting has always been at the core of the Chusty Olsztyn group since its creation. Here, in the group, I can see many parents acting more and more intuitively, gaining competence. This has been happening since the beginning of the group's existence, and this is how I see it.

5. Parenting on the Internet – what's your vision of parenting from your group's perspective?

Parenting is based on equal dignity, parenting caring about the needs of parents and children, and intuitive and natural parenting. Mutual respect despite different values, empathy, diversity and acceptance – this is the vision of parenting that motivates members of the Chusty Olsztyn group. This is how I see it. What it's like – you should ask the group members.

6. What actions do you take to promote the group's ideas?

Given the multitude of my personal tasks on the internet, there are not many tasks. The group is private. My work as a babywearing advisor gives me an opportunity to invite parents to the group at each meeting. There are babywearing meetings organised each week. Giving this space for parents makes the meetings very relaxed. Such events as the European Babywearing Week and the International Attachment Week are held twice a year. Every year we try to issue a calendar with babywearing photographs. There have been flashmobs, walks and picnics. Sometimes live meetings are held in the group, and there were Zoom meetings during the lockdowns. Day-to-day group administration is also a great time to observe more than act and to trust in the group's wisdom, like the trust within a family, and to know that the competence of each group member will contribute to the atmosphere within the group when there are conflicts or issues that need to be approached with delicateness.

II. Rodzicielstwo bliskości Olsztyn

1. What was the purpose of establishing the Rodzicielstwo bliskości Olsztyn group?
The attachment parenting group was established to build a community of parents who want to share and enrich their parenting experience.
2. What was the idea behind it?
The idea was to propagate the attachment approach based on relations and closeness. To disseminate the idea and to share it. To create a community for which it is a supreme, common value to treat a human being subjectively.
3. What changes have you noticed in regard to parenting over the years of your activities?
Openness to what is not learned but intuitive, greater parents' faith in their competence, and the return of trust in every family member. The courage to share what supports and what is difficult.
4. How has the approach to parenting, and its vision, changed over the years (since you set up the group)?
This group has been a current attachment group since its beginning, so there has been no change in the vision or approach to parenting. It happens every day with each group member who shares their parenting experience in the group's safe space. This happens through the fact that more and more people join the group to share their experiences and to look for inspiration for themselves.
5. Parenting on the Internet – what's your vision of parenting from your group's perspective?
My vision is shared by the group members. Accompanying, learning, trusting in competence, accepting, and leniency towards oneself and towards others – this is what parenting is.
6. What actions do you take to promote the group's ideas?
The Każdy Ważny Foundation, which I'm co-running, promotes the group on its Facebook page. In our group, we create challenges that last even a month, events, and live meetings, and we invite others to workshops or conferences that we organise. When the need arose, a community was created which supported the fundraising organised to renovate a facility and create an Important Place there.

III. Każdy Ważny Foundation

1. What was the purpose of establishing the Każdy Ważny Foundation?
Our first aim was to provide support to parents who could not conceive a baby. That was the part for which Marta Stasiel, the foundation's co-founder, was responsible. We tried to set up some structures and get doctors to become involved. Unfortunately, that was not possible at that stage for a variety of reasons. Marta adopted Paweł, then Dominik was born, and now there's Madzia. She focused her attention on her family and stepped down as a management board member. Owing to the activities at the time, several children were born, and this is wonderful. It was worth it! I entered the path of organising various development events targeted mainly at women, married couples, and parents.
2. What was the idea behind it?
We were mainly motivated by our belief that everyone is of great value, regardless of age, and by the will to show it to the world. The love for a human being and the belief in his/her dignity regardless of everything – this is our most important claim.
3. What changes have you noticed over the years of your activities in regard to parenting?
Mainly changes in myself. The Każdy Ważny Foundation has the power to change one's life, of course, if one wants it and is ready for it. This is a place for growth for everyone who comes here. With Marta gone, Agnieszka Skórska and I decided to invite Majka Mazur to the board, who had run workshops for parents for some time. Majka agreed, and since that time, our main activities have focused on parenting and supporting parents in their relations with children, and the latter – in building their self-esteem. To us, relations are the most important thing in life.
4. How has the approach to parenting, and its vision, changed over the years (since you set up the foundation till today)?

This is definitely a several-year process. When we were setting up the *Każdy Ważny* Foundation in 2015, I had no idea of attachment parenting. It brought to my mind a sect of parents – fanatical proponents of stress-free child-raising. Only when I started to experience parental helplessness and a lack of communicative skills did I start to ask questions and seek solutions and help. I wanted very much to be of support to my kids, to be a mum close to them, and I did not know how. Luckily, I was dragged into the hustle and bustle of work, which absorbed me completely. First psychotherapy, which was complemented by getting to know Attachment parenting and Non-violent communication, thanks to Majka Mazur. I'm still in the process of change, and I see how much I have managed to change things into more life-giving. I know that I have had enough of this work for a lifetime.

5. Parenting on the Internet – what is your vision of parenting from your foundation's perspective? I'd like to transfer into the virtual space at least part of what people receive at our meetings. I mean acceptance, empathy, a different perspective, and a sense of communion among parents who want to build relations in their family. People are on the Internet, and those people have the same needs as those who come to our meetings. Although virtual reality is still a substitute for a relationship, it is worth being there with people.
6. What actions do you take to promote the foundation's ideas? I try to make the *Każdy Ważny* Foundation visible everywhere where there are parents. Now it is the internet and social media. Because of the epidemic, we had to withdraw to online activities. This form doesn't satisfy us because we think that the process taking place in the personal contact and in the live group process has a completely different quality and strength. We try to organise meetings where people experience an authentic and empathic relationship for themselves, even despite differences. These include lectures, conferences, workshops for parents, women's circles, individual consultations, children's activities, and development support groups for adolescents. We also try to respond to invitations from the media to make as many people as possible hear that it is worth working on relations and bonds in a non-violent way, that there are tools for parent support, and there are people who do not judge but accompany and believe in competence which parents just have to discover. Now that we have our Important Place, I believe more is going to take place for relations in our neighbourhood. I can see how people become open to coming to our meetings, how they make decisions which improve their relations, start to develop, get to know the diversity in others and not see it as something threatening. I really see a purpose in our presence in this small Warmian universe.

IV. Mlekiem Mamy Foundation

1. What was the purpose of establishing the Mlekiem Mamy Foundation? The Mlekiem Mamy Foundation was established by two doulas and breastfeeding promoters – Marlena Świrk and Elżbieta Malinowska. The foundation's goals include:
 1. To improve healthcare and to promote it in Polish society, including increasing the public knowledge of pregnancy, childbirth and child care, especially in difficult situations.
 2. Increasing knowledge of breastfeeding and feeding with woman's milk among children, adolescents, women, men, employers, healthcare professionals and other professional groups.
 3. Supporting mothers, including adoptive ones, sick children, and premature babies, in natural child feeding.
 4. Increasing the number of mothers who feed their babies in a natural way.
 5. Propagating knowledge of lactation, breastfeeding, patient's rights and labour law with respect to rights and obligations of breastfeeding employees.
 6. Employment support for breastfeeding mothers.
 7. Popularising conscious parenting, mainly among people from families threatened with social exclusion.
 8. Developing healthy nutritional habits and popularising physical exercise among children, adolescents and adults.
 9. Supporting women during the peripartum period, especially in special and difficult situations.
 10. Stimulating the development of local communities.

2. What was the idea behind it?

When establishing the foundation, we were motivated by the idea of supporting families and propagating knowledge of natural child feeding and conscious parenting, striving to protect natural feeding, observing the related rights, and monitoring and improvement of indexes by acting in cooperation with other entities.

3. What changes have you noticed over the years of your activities in regard to parenting?

During the years of our operations (the foundation has existed for three years), we have observed improved access to knowledge and information on parenting and giving birth. On the one hand, it offers opportunities to develop and broaden parents' awareness, and on the other – we see the lack of an ability to verify knowledge and check its reliability. Therefore, we noted an improvement in parents' awareness of specific social groups. This gives an illusion of a high level of knowledge among the whole society, which is obviously not true. We realise that most parents in Poland develop their methods of bringing up children based on outdated knowledge, which they get from their parents and often from specialists working with children.

4. How has the approach to parenting, and its vision, changed over the years (since you set up the foundation till today)?

Let's note that we have parents who want to be ready for every situation, and they do not believe in their intuition and parenting competence. It looks like this: whenever something worrying is going on with the child, for example, colic, the first thing some parents do is "google" it rather than observe the child. The parents want to know how to respond properly – here and now. They do not allow themselves to make a mistake. Therefore, it is a situation when access to knowledge (which is a fantastic aspect of modern parenting) may inadvertently lead to a disconnection from their own emotions and those of their child.

5. Parenting on the Internet – what is your vision of parenting from your foundation's perspective?

So far, we have noticed a strong trend for embellished, powdered parenting, free from any problems, difficult emotions and crises. This often made women feel guilty and lowered their self-esteem. The image of a mother who is always neat and trim, pretty, lives in a clean house and cooks exquisite dinners has always had a negative impact on young mothers. Luckily, we have been observing a "movement" of mothers who show on their profiles motherhood as it really appears: full of various emotions, chaos, crying children, mess, etc.

6. What actions do you take to promote the foundation's ideas?

Since the beginning of the Foundation's activities, we have stressed that we support all women in their choices. We would like every woman to have access to reliable knowledge, but we realise that each of them has a different history and different experiences, and she has a right to make different decisions. Our communication is based on respect and empathy. We develop information and education campaigns, run workshops, and publish articles and podcasts addressed to mothers and parents, in which we stress that it's worth educating oneself, but mainly it's worth trusting oneself, listening to oneself and one's child, and, of course, respecting other parents' different decisions.