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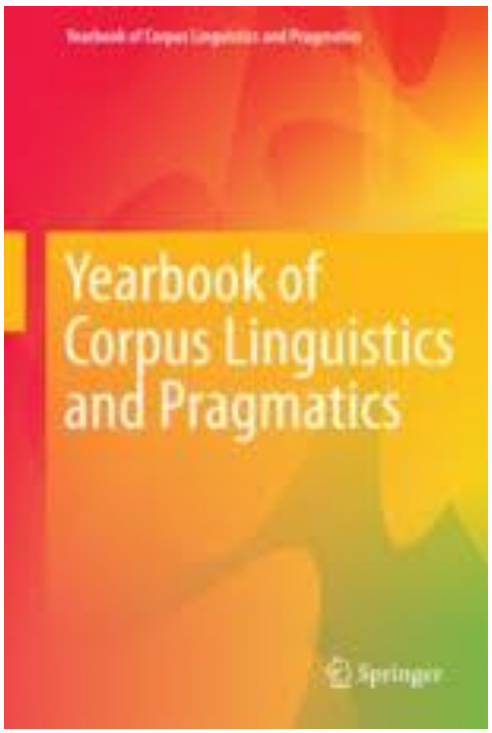

Connected parents: combining online and off-line parenthood in vlogs and blogs

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Abstract

This article explores evaluative discourse in a corpus sample of parents' vlogs (video blogs) and blogs (henceforth v/ blogs) dealing with family tasks and responsibilities, as a reflection of underlying values concerning parenthood. It pays special attention to the important role played by the expression of *attitude*, understood as "ways of feeling" and including the meanings of *affect*, *judgement* and *appreciation*, together with positive politeness in the social practices of the discursive construction of online and off-line parenthood. Analysis and description of the data show two main patterns in parents' practices, either aiming at perfection through juggling and multi-tasking or building resistance to the demands of families and society. Results show that parents frequently exploit the system of *affect* for building positive face and rapport, while indirectly expressing *judgement of social esteem* and *social sanction*, which construct their identities as mothers and fathers and those of the members of their communities of practice. The corpus for the study consists of a random sample of 400 evaluative units in posts and comments on v/ blogs dealing with family tasks and responsibilities (200 in English and 200 in Spanish, with half the sample being drawn from fathers' and the other half from mothers' v/ blogs). I will approach the analysis of the data from appraisal (Martin and White 2005, Bednarek 2008) and politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) in order to explore the features of evaluative discourse and the management of face. The methodology for processing the data borrows quantitative techniques from Corpus Linguistics, including the coding and statistical treatment of the sample with UAM Corpus Tools (O'Donnell 2011), together with Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis (DA), as done in some previous research (Santamaría-García 2011, 2014).

Key words: digital discourse, blogs, vlogs, social networking sites, internet-mediated interaction, pragmatics, politeness, appraisal, evaluation.

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1 Introduction

Despite the many accomplishments in so-called Western societies towards gender equality we know there is still a long way ahead in order to achieve equal treatment in the various spheres of our everyday lives. New technologies reveal very different gender patterns of social practices regarding the reasons why men and women decide to get connected in their free time. A quick browse through v/ blog indexes shows the vast range of categories in which people can and do participate regardless of their sex or gender. A closer look to those dealing with family tasks and responsibilities shows they are mainly written by and oriented to women. "The stressed mom" blog or "*Madres estresadas*" for instance, do not seem to have equivalent v/ blogs for fathers. This does not mean that fathers do not become stressed with childcare and, in fact, there are webs with advice for them, but, to date, there are fewer fathers than mothers sharing their parental stress with other men in b/vlog format. However the number of men who are v/ blogging from a father's perspective is increasing. Worth mentioning is a public campaign in Spain while writing this article, March 2016, by fathers who want to show their involvement in child care. The campaign "#padresigualitarios" ("fathers for equality") is supported, among others, by the "Asociación de Hombres por la Igualdad" ("*Association of men for equality*") and "Padres blogueros" ("*Blogger Fathers*"), who claim their part in childcare and want to show that they want to get involved in parenthood. "Padres blogueros" contains a list of 147 v/ blogs of men who are sharing their experiences as fathers in this format in Spain since 2011, as reported by Lantigua (2016) in *El Mundo* newspaper. "Madresfera", a site that keeps a register of b/vloggers dealing with parenthood, lists more than three thousand in their directory, which includes mothers and fathers' sites. This shows that despite the growing development in father v/ blogs in the last five years, there are more mothers sharing through this medium.

Let's see what the situation is in other countries. We can find lists of "top 10 daddy bloggers" in English from US and UK to Canada, Australia or Singapore. At "tots100", the site for parent blogs in UK, it is reported that "around 95% of blogs are written by women", (November 2012). It seems that, although there are more mother than father bloggers, the number of dads who are discussing the tribulations and joys of parenting from a father's perspective is increasing. At the digital media website mashable.com, Walden (2015) observes that "more and more often, dads are joining in on the trend,

developing online hubs where they can discuss everything from diaper rash to DIY tree houses".

In this article I will not be exploring gender discursive differences but treating genders under the roof of parenthood while looking for the dominant discourses v/ blogger fathers and mothers are giving their voices to.

My aim is to explore the use of evaluative discourse and politeness strategies in the situated social practices associated with the digitally mediated discourse of parents' v/ blogs when dealing with family tasks and responsibilities. I will focus on the evaluative expression of *attitude*, understood as "ways of feeling" and including the meanings of *affect, judgement* and *appreciation,* together with positive politeness strategies, namely, strategies for *claiming common ground*, *conveying cooperation* and *fulfilling the addresses' needs*.

My hypothesis, based on participant observation of v/ blogs, is that evaluative discourse and positive politeness strategies are exploited to reflect and negotiate the underlying values concerning parenthood in the construction of parents' identities and their social communities of practice. I expect a high frequency of attitudinal meanings of affect (i.e. happiness, security, satisfaction, inclination and surprise) and judgement (social esteem and social sanction) together with positive politeness strategies (claim common ground, conveying cooperation and fulfilling addressee's needs) used to build connection between speakers and addressees in the management of interpersonal rapport.

2 Theoretical Framework

In the following sections I review some relevant aspects regarding studies on personal and social identity, appraisal and politeness theories that shape the present study. Some of the specific features of parents' v/ blogs are also discussed, as they may explain the reasons underlying users' motivation for their choice of evaluation and politeness resources. Finally, some considerations regarding online and off-line social practices are included.

2.1 Studies on Personal and Social Identity

Studies of identity emerged with strength after the work of the neo-freudian Erik Erikson in the 1950s and 1960s, which "provided a psychological addition to earlier studies of 'groupness', an addition that stressed identity in context", as Edwards (2009: 15) observes, quoting Gleason's (1983) article on the historical development of identity. Worth mentioning from that period are the studies by Goffman (1959, 1967) on social self-presentation, which would lead to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) formulation of *face* as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself", (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61), and their distinction between *positive* and *negative faces* and *politeness theory* to be discussed in the following section.

Edwards (2009: 15) reports, following Joseph (2004), that "the early 1980s saw the appearance of important studies focusing on the linguistic aspects of identity", such as the collection of essays edited by Gumperz (1982) or Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985), which were "quickly followed by work on a variety of aspects of social identity" such as language, history and identity (Kroskrity 1993) or history and identity (Calhoun 1994). A more recent contribution to the multiplicity of social identities, Edwards (2009: 17) mentions the collection edited by Taylor and Spencer (2004) with some discussion and updating of Goffman's original ideas on the social self-presentation.

As some of the main reasons underlying current salience of identity we could mention changes in family roles and other social challenges: "It seems clear enough that people need social anchors. If the older and smaller intimacies of family and village are eroded by the urbanizing pressures of the modern dystopia, then substitutes will have to be found", Edwards (2009: 22). I would also suggest the connection between social challenges, transitions and interest in identity observed in Edwards (2009: 16): "If it is true that our age is one in which social stresses and strains are particularly marked, and if we are faced with many sorts of social and political challenges and transitions, then it is entirely understandable that matters of identity –its definition, its negotiation, its re-negotiation –will seem particularly salient". In our time we are faced with high levels of parenting stress deriving from lack of social support, time pressure, need for multitasking, low incomes or a change in the expectations from parents' roles, among other factors. The journalist Bristow (2006) describes the current maternal crisis as follows:

> "(…) a problem that is new: the identity shock experienced by a generation of women accustomed to being equal, having freedom and choices and careers and

> some semblance of control over their lives and emotions, upon the birth of a child. (…) Having reached the stage in their lives when finally, they feel grown-up and wanting to settle down, the birth of a child unsettles everything and everyone".

It seems that our mothers in the 1960s did not have so many options as we do now but there is still a lot to complain about. All the above mentioned factors could serve as triggers for the current need to build connection and groupness in parenthood through v/ blogs, which will eventually enhance the self-esteem of parents. We can find support for this idea in social identity theory, associated with Tajfel (1978, 1982) and scholarly descendants edited by Turner and Giles (1981) or Abrams and Hogg (1990). Edwards (2009: 27) explains the relationship between self-esteem and social affiliation derived from this approach: "The assumption here is that besides our uniquely personal sense of self, we also have social identities based upon the various groups to which we belong. Thus we can maintain and enhance self-esteem through valued social affiliations, as well as by purely personal activities and achievements." It seems reasonable to think that parenthood presents an important challenge to one's sense of worth, and sharing in parents groups would alleviate stress and strengthen self-esteem. This observation finds support in Edwards (2009: 27) when he observes that "us and them boundaries (…) can heighten feelings of individual worth. A corollary is that in-group solidarity should be expected to strengthen at times when one's sense of worth is threatened or tenuous". No wonder, then, that stressed parents use v/ blogs to share both their worries and achievements in an attempt to find solidarity and renewed strength to put up their heavy daily routines.

Observations regarding the use of language in the construction of parenthood will need references to the identity of individual fathers and mothers and the groups they belong to in an attempt to contextualise their discourse and link it to the bigger social picture in which it is produced. I will take Edwards' (2009: 1) cautionary note, delivered quoting Spolsky (2004), that "studies of the social life of language are often too 'language-centred'. Any investigation of language that considers only language will be deficient, and inappropriate limitations and restrictions can cripple insights". Therefore, my exploration of evaluative discourse dealing with family tasks and responsibilities will need the consideration of social factors, such as society´s expectations on mothers and fathers in the construction of parenthood identity. Language and identity are "ultimately inseparable" (Joseph 2004:13) and thus, exploration of the use of evaluative language

will show the individuals' own subjective sense of self and also their group membership(s).

Regarding the discursive construction of gendered identities, Litosseliti (2006: 48) explains how we draw on discourses about gender "that are recognizable by and meaningful for the language users (i.e. they pre-exist their users)" and gives "a 'female emotionality' discourse" or "a 'part-time father' discourse" as examples, (Litosseliti 2006: 48-49). For instance, Coates (1997) mentions two competing discourses of feminity: "a dominant maternal discourse, which involves mother's sharing of their pride and positive feelings about their children and a competing or 'subversive' maternal discourse, which includes expression of their negative feelings about their children" . What seems most interesting for the present study is Litosseliti's (2006: 49) observation, in line with post-structuralist and social constructionist theories that "(…) discourses construct or give meaning to how we see the world" and "(…) at the same time, they articulate, maintain, constitute, re-constitute, negotiate, and even resist some of these ways. (…). In resisting and contesting dominant discourses and the assumptions embedded in them, we are part of a process of changing perceptions of experience, as well as roles and identities (see Weedon, 1987; Fairclough, 1992)". This observation helps to understand the importance of v/ blogs in the process of spreading views and hence, in shaping roles and identities.

2.2 Studies on Evaluation and Politeness for relational work

The discourse function of evaluation has been approached within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) through the system of *appraisal*, the system for the expression of evaluation developed by Martin (2000) and Martin and White (2005). Appraisal resources include attitude, (for the expression of meanings of affect, judgement and appreciation), together with engagement and graduation resources, which are used "for adopting a position with respect to propositions and for scaling intensity or degree of investment respectively", (Martin and White 2005: 39). See table (1) for an overview of appraisal resources adapted from Martin and White (2005: 38) and including surprise as a distinct category for affect (Bednarek 2008: 161).

Table 1. Overview of appraisal resources.

Appraisal		
Engagement	Monogloss	
	Heterogloss	
Attitude	Affect	Un/happiness, In/security, Dis/satisfaction, Dis/inclination, Surprise
	Judgement	Social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) Social sanction (veracity, propriety)
	Appreciation	Reaction, Composition, Valuation
Graduation	Force	Raise
		Lower
	Focus	Sharpen
		Soften

This model shares many concomitances with the work on evaluation by Thompson and Hunston (2000: 6), who distinguished three main functions of evaluation: expressing opinion, maintaining relations and organizing the discourse. However, I will follow appraisal theory and for this study, specifically focusing on attitude (including meanings of affect, judgement, and appreciation), and leaving aside the study of engagement and graduation because the main interest is to explore the role played by the expression of attitude and its relationship with politeness strategies. The category of affect has been explored in the realisations of happiness/ unhappiness, security/ insecurity, satisfaction/ dissatisfaction, inclination/ disinclination and other feelings that can be associated with them and are included in the inventory by Martin and White (2005: 48-51) and in the modifications by Bednarek (2008: 142-182), who adds the meaning of surprise as a different category. I have followed Martin and White's (2005: 52-58) categories of judgement, including social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) or social sanction (veracity, propriety) and for the categories of appreciation (reaction, composition, valuation).

The need to connect evaluation with politeness was pinpointed by Channell (2000: 55): "The whole area of evaluative language seems to require tying up with the notion of 'facework' employed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their explanation of politeness". I have explored this connection in previous studies (Santamaría-García 2013, 2014) for the analysis of the relationship between the expression of attitudinal meanings and the realisation of politeness strategies. Politeness theory can account for various aspects underlying the evaluative function of language and its exploitation for the management of face and interpersonal rapport in terms of individuals' need to express attitude while saving face and doing relational work.

I will be using Brown and Levinson's (1987) concepts of positive and negative politeness in order to explore users' orientation to face while doing relational work. Speakers may choose to orient to the addressees' positive face, i.e. their "(…) desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of", (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61), or to their negative face, redressing their need to be "free from imposition", (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61).

Politeness theory has provided a useful theoretical framework for the study of relational work, even when it has been severely criticised (e.g., Eelen 2001, Watts 2003, Mills 2003, Locher and Watts 2005) and further developed into a more discursive approach (Watts et al., 2005, Lakoff and Ide, 2005 and Spencer-Oatey 2000). Critiques have not destroyed the model but triggered new trends of research in theoretical, descriptive, comparative and historical perspectives. As Locher and Watts (2005: 10) note, even when Brown and Levinson's framework has been challenged in different aspects, it can still be used "(…) if we look at the strategies they have proposed to be possible realisations of what we call relational work". Therefore, politeness strategies will not only be considered for mitigation of face-threatening acts but for "(…) the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others", Locher and Watts (2005: 10).

Many authors suggest returning to Goffman (1967 [1955]: 5) for the original definition of face (Dippold 2009, Locher and Watts 2005, Riley 2006, Spencer-Oatey 2002 and Watts 2003) because "Brown and Levinson seem to be thinking of the self as a stable core of values lodged somewhere in the individual, whereas for Goffman self is far less 'real' and is constantly renegotiable", (Watts, 2003: 105). Social interaction is essential for the

negotiation of self and face: "Goffman implies that our knowledge of the world and the place we occupy in that world is gained entirely through social interaction", (Watts 2003: 123) and face is interpreted by others in interaction: "(…) face is dependent on the interpretation of the other participants more than ourselves", (Watts 2003: 124). Likewise, for Dippold (2009: 3), face is seen as the result of speakers' presentation and its construction by others: "face is a conglomerate of the self-image speakers want to present to the outside world and the image that is constructed of them by others". v/ blogs

In the context of parents' v/ blogs we can expect v/bloggers and followers to preserve their needs for positive face in order to key into some commonality of experience amongst mothers of young children while building rapport and bonding in their social communities of practice. Therefore, we can expect a frequent use of positive politeness strategies, such as claiming common ground or conveying cooperation. Positive politeness will be, therefore, the focus of this study, including the strategies briefly summarised in table (2).

Table 2. Positive politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 102).

Positive Politeness Strategies	
1. Claim common ground	Convey X is admirable, interesting1. Notice, attend to H (his interest, wants, needs, goods)2. Exaggerate interest, approval3. Intensify interest to H
	Claim in-group membership with H 4. Use in-group identity markers
	Claim common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, empathy 5. Seek agreement 6. Avoid disagreement 7. Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground 8. Joke
2. Convey that S and H are cooperators	Indicate S knows H's wants and is taking them into account 9. Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants Claim reflexivity: 10. Offer, promise 11. Be optimistic 12. Include both S and H in activity 13. Give (ask for) reasons Claim reciprocity: 14. Assume or assert reciprocity

3. Fulfill H's want (for some X)	15. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

2. 3 Distinctive Features of Parents' v/ blogs that Shape the Production of Appraisal and Positive Politeness

The exploration of some of the distinctive features of parents' v/ blogs attempting at description of the genre, using Bhatia's (2004) approach, may lead to the definition of their main communicative purpose as sharing stance towards different aspects of parenthood. This purpose may be responsible for the frequent production of evaluation and positive politeness for the construction of v/bloggers' communities of practice as groups of individuals sharing feelings and values. As distinctive features of this type of v/ blogs, I would stress their combination of (i) interactional and transactional functions of language, (ii) interpersonal and ideational meaning, and (iii), their dialogic orientation.

i) Interactional and transactional functions of language

These v/ blogs provide a space for sharing parenthood stance and create a feeling of community and bonding. Thus, they can be seen to serve the interactional function described as "establish and maintain social relationships", (Brown and Yule, 1983: 3), as well as conveying "factual or propositional information", that is, the transactional function, (Brown and Yule 1983: 2) about parenthood matters.

V/bloggers can address a whole community of, usually, some hundreds or thousands of followers at once through their posts who, due to their condition of followers, will most probably feel linked by "positive affective involvement", using the terms referring to the dimensions of social identity in Eggins and Slade (1997: 52). Once they gain the status of followers, the expectation is that they provide support, which involves doing relational work by making use of appraisal and positive politeness resources. However, we may find followers who occasionally choose to challenge previous posts by expressing disapproval or disagreement on factual or propositional content but usually saving face (for them and addressees) in order to maintain their community feeling.

(ii) Interpersonal and ideational meaning.

Parent v/bloggers' decision to open a v/blog is usually driven by a strong desire to communicate ideational or propositional meaning with an essential interactive dimension as posts usually contain prompts that stimulate engagement of followers and their expression of attitude. A community of followers will usually provide support to the v/bloggers they are following by making use of an extensive range of language resources for construing interpersonal meaning, as the manifestation of the purpose "to act on the others" (Halliday, 2004: xiii). Interpersonal deals with "meaning about roles and relationships (e.g. status, intimacy, contact, sharedness between interactants)", (Eggins and Slade 1997: 49). Followers will tend to express their attitude in comments and invite other followers' contributions, building rapport and solidarity. This happens because "(...) when speakers/writers announce their own attitudinal positions they not only self-expressively 'speak their own mind', but simultaneously invite others to endorse and to share with them the feelings, tastes or normative assessments they are announcing." Martin and White (2005: 95).

(iii) Dialogic frame.

One of the most significant features of parents' v/ blogs that also seems to be responsible for their increasing success is their implementation of a dialogic frame, which facilitates dialogue between v/bloggers' and their followers, even when they are not engaged simultaneously in their dialogic activity. The comments show the contributions of the community, which create a "heteroglossic" framework of different voices. While writing has typically been an asynchronous communication mode with addressees out of sight, v/ blogs bridge the gap between writing and speech to some extent. The creation of a socially significant community of practice with common ground stimulates dialogue and facilitates engagement among users.

Thus, from this review of v/blog features, it seems that their use for the interactional and interpersonal, together with a dialogic frame that allows for simultaneous communication with many addressees connected by positive affective involvement, can be held responsible for the expectation of the frequent use of evaluation and positive politeness, as resources for building rapport and solidarity in the community.

2.4 Online and Off-line Social Practices with Special Mention to Everyday Creativity

The lines between online and off-line social practices are not clear cut, as online practices permeate through off-line contexts and vice-versa. As Jones et al. (2015: 9) note, "Digital technologies have altered our experience of the spatial and temporal aspects of context by creating complex 'layerings' of online and offline spaces". Both Carrington (2015) and Merchant (2015) show that digital technologies alter not only the ways people interact online but also the ways they do so in physical spaces. As a blogger father reports, he writes his blog and then talks to friends and family about his blog ("yanosoyunpadrenovato.blogspot.com.es" in "cajón de sastre" (*wastebasket*) section). The blogger mother at modern-moms-life.blogspot.com says "I definitely didn't know it [blogging] would totally take over my life at some points". The vlogger of Spanish "mimodemami.com" also reports (personal communication) that her activity in the vlog has had very positive consequences in her relationship with her twodaughters . She prepares tutorials of handicrafts with their help and the girls even act in some of the videos. This means they spend quality time planning scripts, collecting ideas and materials, video recording and discussing what could be improved next. Vlogging is improving their affective relationship by triggering the connection between creativity, emotion and motivation, with very positive effects in children upbringing and feelings of happy parenthood. The consideration of creativity, "as a quality of all human beings, which can be manifested in all types of discourses" and not only "associated with the innate talent of an individual, such as the gifted artist or scientist" is noted by Hidalgo Downing (2015: 108) who mentions Carter 2004; Gibbs 1999; Jones 2010, 2012; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Maybin and Swann 2006: "creativity is currently considered as much a feature of everyday language use and social practices as a feature of significant works of art, scientific discoveries or world-changing theories". She also observes the distinction in Cameron (2011) and Jones (2012) between "creativity with a small 'c' (everyday creativity) and creativity with a big 'C' (world changing creativity)". My impression is that everyday creativity also contributes to changing the world, though, and creative v/ blogging is an important tool for spreading and encouraging this type of creativity.

Mimodemami.com vlog would feature what Coates (1997) describes as "maternal discourse", involving mother's pride and positive feelings about her children. On the other end of the continuum, more resistant discourses would be represented by the Bad Mothers Club or workingmomsbreak.com, "For mums who can do it all but wonder why

they should" in UK, or by "malasmadres.com" (*badmothers*) in Spain, where mothers complain that they do not have time for themselves, which most of the time means they cannot find the time for fashion or beauty care.

In fathers' blogs discourses could also range from paternal discourse, showing pride in children, to the more subversive expression of negative feelings regarding changes in life due to paternity. However I have not found any father v/ blogs fitting the latter category as openly as bad mothers do, although some fathers express their resistance to new situations through humour. Why is this so? It could be that fathers who are investing their energies in father v/ blogging want to show that they care for children, the family and home, that they want to get involved in all aspects of their children's lives and that they can manage. Otherwise they would not be v/ blogging on this. The father blogger on hangingwithdad.com says he is telling the story "of a stay at home dad who, with his son, is venturing into the world dominated by women". And he expresses how he feels challenged by this world: "We feel we are hitting out heads against a constant societal whispering that says, 'Men don't quite belong here.'"

3 Data and Method for Analysis

Data analysis has combined extensive reading of the top ten father and mother v/ blogs in English and Spanish with the collection of a corpus containing 400 evaluative units from posts and their manual annotation with UAM Corpus Tool (O'Donnell, 2011) for automatic retrieval and statistical treatment of data.

Extensive reading has covered, approximately, 100 posts and comments to them from each of the following categories: 100 from father and 100 from mothers' v/ blogs in English and 100 from father and 100 from mothers' v/ blogs in Spanish. Extensive reading has served to identify dominant discourses in the genre. The sample has been collected during 2015- 2016.

After extensive reading I have collected a corpus of a sample of 400 evaluative units (200 in English and 200 in Spanish) from posts and the comments to them. Total number of words is 6,356. Selection has included 50% of posts related to the philosophy of the v/ blog contained in the "about me" section, plus 50% of posts in other sections dealing with time pressure in connection to parenthood.

Extensive reading has served to identify two main types of discourses. On the one hand, discourses showing good performance at time management for parental care while solving task-oriented everyday issues and, on the other side of the continuum, discourses resisting the temptation of perfection and declaring the parents' need of time for themselves apart from children and away for family duties, thus building some resistance to the demands of families and society.

In the case of mother v/ blogs, the first type is represented by craft-oriented v/ blogs, which encourage mothers' skills for DIY, and the second by, what I will call, the "bad-mother-club philosophy" or, as workingmomsbreak.com puts it: "mums who can do it all but wonder why they should". These two types will be identified as: "type 1, craft-oriented mother v/ blogs" and "type 2 mother v/ blogs", respectively.

In the case of father v/ blogs, the two types identified are: "type 1, craft-oriented father v/ blogs" and "type 2 joking-father v/ blogs". I did not find an equivalent to "bad-mother-club philosophy" featuring a "bad-father-club philosophy", most probably because, as noted in 2.4., it seems that fathers who are investing their energies in father v/ blogging want to show that they care and want to get involved in every aspect of their children's lives. What I found instead, is the use of humour to express how fathers manage to meet the fatherhood challenge. This type of joking father v/ blogs represents the other end of the continuum in father v/ blogs.

In order to have a balanced sample of the discursive types found, I collected half the amount of the data from the craft-oriented type 1 and the other half from type 2 "bad-mother" or "joking father" v/ blogs.

Analysis of the data has been approached from appraisal (Martin and White 2005, Bednarek 2008) and politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) as discussed in the theoretical framework above, in order to explore the features of evaluative discourse and the construction of rapport. Therefore, pragmatics and discourse Analysis (DA) methodologies have been combined with quantitative techniques from Corpus Linguistics, including the coding and statistical treatment of the sample with UAM Corpus Tools (O'Donnell 2011), as done in previous research (Santamaría-García 2011, 2014).

The degree of delicacy of the analysis presented here has made it necessary to compile a "tailor-made corpus", as expressed by Romero-Trillo (2014: 2) in order to illustrate some

very specific features of communication in the yet little researched discourse of v/ blogs. As Jones et al. (2015:1) observe discourse analysts need to "both draw upon the rich store of theories and methods developed over the years for the analysis of 'analogue' discourse, and to formulate new concepts and new methodologies to address the unique combinations of affordances and constraints introduced by digital media". And this is so because of the fast pace of new technologies and because digitally mediated discourse opens the scope for new social practices and forms of interaction, often including the production of multimodal texts, that challenge approaches that focus only on written or spoken language. My study is also in line with Jones et al. (2015) in its focus on the situated social practices that people use discourse to perform, with roots in Bourdieu's (1990) approach. Because of the rapid pace at which these social practices are being introduced, it is difficult for any single framework to meet the challenge of understanding all of the complex relationships between discourse and digital practices. In order to cope with the fast-changing landscape of digital media, discourse analysts need to both draw upon the rich store of theories and methods developed over the years for the analysis of 'analogue' discourse, and to formulate new concepts and new methodologies to address the unique combinations of affordances and constraints introduced by digital media.

Regarding codification, I want to discuss one of the most persistent difficulties for coding real data with the categories in the appraisal model, as noted in Santamaría-García (2014). It relates to indirectness and has also been discussed by Thompson (2011): "(...) an expression of one category of appraisal may function as a token (an indirect expression) of a different category; and that token may itself function as an indirect expression of yet another category, and so on." He argues for a coding system that includes information on the different component categories. For example, an expression of surprise that can be read as a token expressing judgement, can be coded as "t-judgement [surprise]." As a result from his observation, I decided to incorporate tags for indirect realisations of attitude in the coding system for the mark up of the data.

4 Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

The hypothesis of this study is that evaluative discourse and positive politeness strategies are exploited to both reflect and negotiate the underlying values concerning parenthood in the construction of parents' identities and their social communities of practice. I expect

high frequency of attitudinal meanings of affect and judgement together with positive politeness strategies used to build connection between speakers and addressees in the management of online interpersonal rapport.

According to my expectations, I found a high frequency of attitudinal meanings of affect and judgement. Table 3 presents, in the first column, the overall frequencies of types of attitude while second and third columns show realisations of the same phenomena in mother and father v/ blogs respectively.

Table 3. Realisation of appraisal as types of attitude in the data.

	GLOBAL RESULTS				MOTHERS' DATA				FATHERS' DATA			
Feature	N		Percent		N		Percent		N		Percent	
ATTITUDE TYPE	N=400				N=200				N=200			
affect	148	362	37%	90.5 %	66	186	33%	93%	82	176	41%	88%
judgement	214		53.5 %		120		60%		94		47%	
appreciation	38		9.5%		14		7%		24		12%	

As table 3 shows, affect is present in 37% (n=148) of the total number of evaluative utterances and judgement features higher, 53.5% (n=214), while appreciation is only contained in 9.5% (n=38). Affect and jugdgement together represent 90.5% (n=362), which reveals they are more useful resources for v/ bloggers to connect with their followers than the expression of appreciation, which could also be used to express reactions to things but seems not to be favoured, probably because it lacks the emotional content of affect and the potential to build social connection by communicating underlying values of parenthood through the expression of social esteem or social sanction. For instance, the blogger in the next fragment (type 2 blog) connects hairstyle and shoes with self-confidence while expressing judgement of social esteem, normality type (considered special and fashionable), social sanction, veracity type, (credible) and

social sanction, propriety type (good behavior) instead of expressing mere appreciation for those hairstyle and shoes:

> Fragment 1, mumsnet.com. (Type 2 blog)
>
> 10 ways to feel more confident Wonder woman
>
> Confidence isn't a personality trait, it's a habit – and one you can easily get into. Mumsnetters recommend everyday things that can give you a real boost. *All you need to look good is to get your hair and shoes right. A haircut and a new pair of shoes does <sic> the trick for me.*

"Get your hair and shoes right", contains "behavior we praise", i.e. expression of judgement of propriety (Martin & White 2005: 52), which will make you feel "special and fashionable", two categories for normality, social esteem, in Martin & White (2005: 52). Credibility is expressed in "does the trick for me" conveying the assumption that it will also work for us. Thus we find judgement of the three types of propriety, normality and veracity expressing the underlying value of the importance of the looks for the self confidence of mothers behind "wonder women".

Moreover, many of the realisations of affect include token judgements. In the mothers' data, consideration of token judgements expressed by categories of affect would raise total instances of judgement to n=158, which is 79% of attitudinal units. In the fathers' sample I only found n=14 token judgements, equivalent to 54%. This makes judgement the overall most frequent attitudinal meaning (n=266, 66.5%), and shows that father v/ blogs contain fewer instances of judgement, which could suggest a possible gender difference, although more data would be necessary to draw conclusions. These figures are represented in table 4.

Table 4. Realisations of judgement including token judgements.

	GLOBAL RESULTS		MOTHERS' DATA		FATHERS' DATA	
Feature	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent

ATTITUDE-TYPE	N=400		N=200		N=200	
affect	148	37%	66	33%	82	41%
judgement	214	53.5%	120	60%	94	47%
judgement including token judgements	266	66.5%	158	79%	108	54%

The following example includes an instance of an indirect token judgement realised through the expression of surprise:

Fragment 2, malasmadres.com. (Type 2 blog)
¿Y tú eres madre? Pues no lo parece.
(*And you are a mother? You don't look like one*)

The reported question both expresses and causes surprise in the mother blogger. It conveys judgement, propriety type, negative polarity, regarding the mother's behavior, a meaning also expressed by "No lo parece" (*You don't look like it*). It sounds as an accusation that something in her behavior causes surprise and is not adequate at the same time. And the sentence is further evaluated with affect-displeasure, as an annoying buzz in the brain, and an indirect judgement of the inconvenience of the question (propriety):

Fragment 3, malasmadres.com. (Type 2 blog)
Así que ahí se queda la frase retumbando en tu cerebro: "¡Ah! ¿Eres madre? No lo parece."
(*So the sentence keeps buzzing in your brain "Ah! You are a mother? You don't look like*).

In the same vein, the question in the following fragment communicates affect, surprise type and an indirect judgement of propriety, negative polarity, regarding the mother's behavior with distrust.

Fragment 4, workingmomsbreak.com. (Type 2 blog)

"How do you do it all?" I used to get that a lot. From other moms at my son's preschool. From parents at the Y where my daughter took swim lessons. From coworkers at the web consulting agency where I managed a team of designers. From the editor at the publishing company that offered me a contract to write a design book. Even from my husband.

As this mother admits in following sentences, the fact is that she was not being able to do it all and one day??, she broke down. The contradiction between? the real experience that she was overwhelmed and not able to cope with everything and the surprise mixed with distrust by others who thought she was, increases the feeling of tension leading to the explosion. She shares her experience with readers assuming that her perspective is most probably shared by them. Her judgement is exploited hence, to presuppose and raise common ground with readers.

The data show that meanings of affect and judgement are mainly used to realise positive politenesss by claiming common ground, 68% (n=272), which is a more frequent mechanism than conveying cooperation, 25% (n=100), or fulfilling the addressee's needs, 4.5% (n=18) in the corpus. Claiming common ground indicates that "S and H belong to some set of persons who share specific wants, including goals and values", (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103) and the data reveal that it is the more frequently exploited mechanism to either convey that some want of the addressee is admirable or interesting to S too or to claim common perspective, as we will see.

Table 5 below presents the overall frequencies of realisations of positive politeness in the first column while second and third columns contain results for mother and father v/ blogs, respectively.

Table 5. Realisations of positive politeness.

	GLOBAL RESULTS	MOTHERS' DATA	FATHERS' DATA

Feature	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
POSITIVE POLITENESS	N=400		N=200		N=200	
Claim common ground	272	68%	126	63%	146	73%
Convey cooperation	100	25%	57	28.5%	43	21.5%
Fulfill addressee's wants	18	4.5%	12	6%	6	3%
No strategy coded	10	2.5%	5	2.5%	5	2.5%

When it comes to claiming common ground, there is an even distribution among corpora of strategies conveying that something is interesting by noticing, exaggerating or intensifying such interest: 41.26% (n= 52) for mothers and 39.72% (n=58) for fathers. However, when claiming point of view and attitudes, mothers seem to prefer to do so by presupposing, raising or asserting common ground, 42.85% (n=54), while joking features very low, with 6.34% (n=8), and strategies to seek/avoid disagreement even lower 5.5%, (n=7). Fathers, on the other hand, seem to show preference for joking 51.36% (n=75), with strategies for asserting or presupposing knowledge of and concern for the addressees' wants featuring lower, 5.47% (n=8), and strategies to seek/avoid disagreement even lower 2.73% (n=4).

Table 6. Realisations of types of claiming common ground politeness.

	GLOBAL RESULTS		MOTHERS' DATA		FATHERS' DATA	
Feature	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
POSITIVE POLITENESS Claim common ground types	N=272		N=126		N=146	
Convey X is interesting by noticing, exaggerating, intensifying	110	40.44%	52	41.26%	58	39.72%
Raise-assert-common-ground	62	22.79%	54	42.85%	8	5.47%
Joke	83	30.51%	8	6.34%	75	51.36%
Seek/avoid disagreement	11	4.04%	7	5.5%	4	2.73%

Fragment 5 below illustrates uses of claiming common ground, joke, and fragment 5, the strategy of raise, assert common ground.

Fragment 5, daddybloggers.com.au. (Type 2 blog)

> A Dad's Diary #6 – "The nuggets are having kids and chips for dinner"
>
> You know when you're so tired you can't English word speak goodly? "The nuggets are having kids and chips for dinner." I said this to my wife on the phone tonight. Then I told my son to "wash your teeth and brush your face." My daughter got, "have you fed the… thing*." Cracks are beginning to show, people – the kids are more emotional, I have less patience, we're all tired. So damn tired.

This fragment contains meanings of affect, dissatisfaction and displeasure with token judgement of incapacity of the narrator himself, who admits not being able to cope with the situation. But he makes use of humour as a way to connect with his audience. Humour stresses "shared background knowledge and values" according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 124) and the data reveal it is a common strategy for fathers in type 2 v/ blogs, 42.46% (n=62), out of 146.

In fragment 6 we find several instances of raise, assert common ground:

> Fragment 6, doitonadimeblog.com. (Type 1 vlog)
>
> It's easy to feel defeated and wish you were rich, perfectly organized, and had it all together. But you want to know what? Life isn't a picture on Pinterest. And that's where I come in. I'm a video blogger and frugal mommy.

The vlogger indicates that she and the audience belong to a set of persons sharing specific wants, goals and values: "being rich, perfectly organized and had it all together" and

claims common perspective and will to help "And that's where I come in. I'm a video blogger and frugal mommy" presupposing familiarity with the familiar term "mommy".

Conveying cooperation is also exploited by v/bloggers in order to express that they share goals with addressees in some domain and can be cooperatively involved in an activity, thus redressing addressees' need for positive face. The corpus of mother v/bloggers contain more instances of this type of politeness, 28.5% (n=57), than the corpus of fathers 21.5% (n=43). The most frequent strategy for conveying cooperation is indicating the speaker knows the addressees' wants and is taking them into account by asserting or presupposing knowledge of and concern for addressee's wants. Mother v/ blogs show more instances of this strategy, 43.85% (n=25), than the corpus of fathers 30.23% (n=13). The other strategies, namely, claiming reflexivity and reciprocity are less frequent but occur mostly when the v/ bloggers indicate that they want what the addresses want for themselves (having quality family time, enjoying DIY, gaining self-confidence, etc.) and they can mutually help each other with reciprocity, for instance, the v/ blogger receives support through comments of friends and family and gives inspiration to the audience in return who may pay back with more inspiration. As this vlogger says:

> Fragment 7, www.doitonadimeblog.com/ (Type 1 blog)
>
> With the support of my family and friends, I started this blog to simply test and challenge myself to start new projects, share my inspirations, and hopefully inspire a few others along the way.

Claim reflexivity amounts to 43.85% (n=25) and reciprocity to 12.28% (n=7) in mother data, while the figures we find in fathers' are 46.51%, (n=20) and 23.25%, (n=10) respectively, as shown in table 7.

Table 7. Realisations of conveying cooperation politeness.

	GLOBAL RESULTS		MOTHERS' DATA		FATHERS' DATA	
Feature	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
POSITIVE POLITENESS	N=100		N=57		N=43	

Conveying cooperation types						
Indicate S knows H's wants and is taking them into account	68	68%	25	43.85%	13	30.23%
Claim reflexivity	45	45%	25	43.85%	20	46.51%
Claim reciprocity	17	17%	7	12.28%	10	23.25%

In the following example, the vlogger who claimed to know the addressees' wants for organization and a tight budget (see fragment 5) indicates that she is taking such wants into account, which serves as illustration of the strategy "conveying cooperation, indicating that speaker knows the addressees' wants and takes them into account":

Fragment 8, doitonadimeblog.com. (Type 1 blog)

I'm a video blogger and frugal mommy: I share with you what organization and budget living is for a REAL person. Me, my video camera and real systems that work for me to make your life better and easier. Real life. Realistic ideas.

Extensive reading of the corpus and analysis of results have also revealed some interesting differences between type 1 and type 2 v/blogs. Type 1, craft-oriented v/ blogs communicate positive polarity of the affect types of happiness, satisfaction, security, inclination and surprise more often than negative polarity and they usually refer to the performance of crafts and the use that could be made of them by the family. Affect of positive polarity is present in 82% of the realisations of affect in type 1, English language v/ blogs and in 90% in type 1, Spanish language ones. However, type 2 v/ blogs contain a higher percentage of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, insecurity, disinclination and surprise with a negative meaning and, consequently, positive polarity is less present, with the following figures: 50% of the occurrences of affect in the English data contain positive polarity and 40% in the Spanish sample. In the following example, the v/ blogger in mimodemami expresses happiness and satisfaction with her daugthers' performance:

Fragment 9, mimodemami.com. (Type 1 blog)

> ¡¡Ayúdales a hacer este invento y ni te imaginas lo bien que se lo pasan doblando todas las camisetas de la colada!!!
>
> (*Help them to make this gadget and you cannot imagine how much they will enjoy when folding all the T-shirts*!!!)
>
> (…) ¡Te enseño lo fácil que es hacerlo en el vídeo! Y por favor! Fijaos en lo bien que lo hace la niña y ¡no en mis michelines!
>
> *I show you how easy it is to make it on this video and please! See how good the girl is and ignore my spare tyre*!

She jokes about her own layers of fat and puts the focus on her daughter's performance and good behavior, expressing positive judgement of social esteem, capacity and social sanction, propriety. The production of judgements presents a difference, between type 1 v/ blogs, mainly oriented towards increasing esteem of capacity and social sanction of propriety, and type 2 v/ containing a higher amount of judgements of negative polarity, social esteem, related to lack of capacity and of social sanction related to propriety in relation to wrong behavior or unfair and overwhelming situations like the following:

> Fragment 10, workingmomsbreak.com. (Type 1 blog)
>
> They suffered from panic attacks and depression, heart palpitations and hives, migraines and mysterious coughs that won't go away.

The blogger tells about the experience of several mothers and their lack of capacity to cope with their difficult situations. This connects with judgements of propriety claiming common ground: "At first, I thought there was something wrong with me!"

Table 8. Differences in appraisal between type 1 and type 2 v/ blogs.

	TYPE 1 ENGLISH	TYPE 1 SPANISH	TYPE 2 ENGLISH	TYPE 2 SPANISH
Features	Percent	Percent		
Affect, positive polarity	82%	90%	50%	40%
Judgements, positive social esteem, capacity	80%	92%	45%	46%
Judgements, positive social sanction, propriety	88%	94%	49%	48%

Regarding differences in politeness, type 1, craft-oriented v/ blogs show a preference to build common ground by calling attention to the interest of crafts and usually presuppose, raise or assert common ground on needs for DIY. Conveying cooperation is mainly realised by considering the addressees' needs and showing knowledge and concern for them. In type 2 v/ blogs mothers claim common ground by calling attention to different situations which frequently are problems, needs and possible solutions or advice to overcome them. When they convey cooperation they usually do so by giving reasons why addressees can fulfill their needs, usually acquiring goods and services. If knowledge and concern for addressees are shown, they usually refer to goods and services that can be acquired too. In relation to father type 2 v/ blogs, I observed more frequent use of humour and irony, as discussed above, in order to claim common ground and share their evaluation of different situations. This could hint at a possible gender difference but more data would be necessary to be conclusive.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Analysis of the data has provided evidence supporting the hypothesis of this study that evaluative discourse and positive politeness strategies are exploited to both reflect and negotiate the underlying values concerning parenthood in the construction of parents' identities and their social communities of practice, featuring a high frequency of attitudinal meanings of affect and judgement together with positive politeness strategies used to build connection between speakers and addressees in the management of interpersonal rapport. Extensive reading and data analysis have revealed interesting patterns in the frequencies of the different categories of affect (i.e. happiness, security, satisfaction, inclination and surprise), judgement (social esteem and social sanction) and their distribution along with positive politeness strategies (claim common ground,

conveying cooperation and fulfilling addressee's needs) that can be summarised as follows.

Affect, and especially judgement, are the most frequent categories of appraisal realized in the corpus of parent v/ blogs analysed. The high frequency of judgement is attributed to its potential to build social connection through communication of underlying values of parenthood through the expression of both social esteem and social sanction. Craft-oriented, type 1 v/ blogs, contribute to build positive social esteem of capacity and social sanction of propriety, while type 2 v/ blogs contain a higher amount of judgements of negative polarity for social esteem related to lack of capacity and for social sanction related to propriety in relation to wrong behavior or unfair and overwhelming situations. The appraisal categories of affect favoured by type 1 are of positive polarity while type 2 contains negative polarity to express negative feelings related to parenthood. Regarding politeness, the most striking difference has to do with a higher use of humour by men in type 2 v/ blogs for claiming common ground, while women show preference to claim common point of view by presupposing, raising or asserting common ground.

Type 1 communicates a discourse of "doing it all and doing it yourself" (DIA and DIY), encouraging parents to cope with many different situations and finding resources in DIY to succeed, while type 2 challenges expectations for good parents with a discourse of "Even if we could, why should we do it all?", which often derives in the "spend time on yourself" philosophy, resulting in acquiring goods and services.

Although the modest size of the sample used is in line with the "somewhat critical attitude towards large-scale corpus analysis" (Bednarek 2008: 142) due to the qualitative character of appraisal theory, the findings reported here may be worth of further exploration with more data. I hope this study serves to illustrate the most salient behaviour among parent v/ bloggers. My aim was not to collect a representative sample of parent v/ blogs but to explore particular individuals' discourse on them in an attempt to find out common patterns in the use of appraisal and politeness resources. After all, it is the actions of individual members which contribute to the actions of groups. As Eelen (2001: 145) points out: "(…) groups as such do not act, only their individual members do. So, in the end even the most extremely 'socio'-oriented framework needs to say something about individual behavior." As individuals, we are all responsible for social processes and the discourse choices we make everyday play their role in shaping society. The growing

popularity and dissemination of v/ blogs portrays them as an emerging means of mass communication with social potential for either change or continuity. The values communicated through posts and comments will have an important share in shaping discourses of parenthood -and other topic fields- and time will say which will be the dominant types of parenthood discourses that give meaning to the world.

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VLOGS AND BLOGS MENTIONED

Dadand

https://dadand.com

Dad street

http://www.dadstreet.com

Madresfera

http://www.madresfera.com/

Madres estresadas

http://madresestresadas.com

Malas madres

www.malasmadres.com

Mimodemami

http://mimodemami.com/

Mumsnet

http://www.mumsnet.com

Tots 100

http://www.tots100.co.uk/

Working Mom's Break

http://www.workingmomsbreak.com/