their readings and feedback of previous versions of the chapter. I am grateful to Tracie Hammontree who collected and transcribed a portion of the data during Spring 1997 and to Valerie Ward for her perspectives on the in-group/out-group uses of the terms 'skeezer' and 'sack chaser'. I am also indebted to the students and instructors who allowed me access to their classes and conversations, and their thoughts and feelings about language, gender, and sexuality; this research would not have happened without them.

Notes
1 See Graddol and Swann (1989) and James and Clarke (1993) for overviews of this research.
2 All participants' names are pseudonyms.
3 During an informal interview after class Natalie and Laticia made the connection between 'sack chaser' and 'gold digger' more clear. In this variety, 'sack chaser' refers to a woman who is after a man for his bag of marijuana, or 'sack', similar to a 'gold digger,' who wants a man for his money.
4 This reluctance to define may be related to in-group/out-group language use: 'skeezer' and 'sack chaser' are words from African American English (AAE). Don, Laticia, and Natalie are AAE speakers, whereas the speaker asking for clarification, the professor, is not. In addition, these students are the only AAE speakers among the 32 students in the classroom. Hence race and ethnicity, in addition to gender, may affect the negotiation of the floor and of the encoded meanings in this particular example.
5 It is also important to note the possibility of the female speakers, Laticia and Natalie, subverting as well as conforming to the dominant norms of the classroom. Laticia and Natalie produce highly 'masculine' and heterosexuialized ways of referring to other women, conforming to a dominant norm. Yet, at the same time, the label may work to subvert the conversational floor by topicalising the supposedly private and potentially taboo subjects of sex and sexuality within a public and academic context, just as it may also function to subvert the dominant 'whiteness' of the conversational floor.
6 In Examples 2 and 3 there is also the possibility of students conforming to expected or assumed norms of the class, similar to what may be happening in Example 1. In Examples 2 and 3 it is possible that the male speakers are conforming to what they perceive as the dominant perspective among other students (female) and the professors (female) in the classrooms.
7 The female professor is a single parent of two children.

References


The Remaking of Hegemony: Performing State Fatherhood

Michelle M. Lazar

Introduction

The Remaking of Hegemony
intended to encourage Singaporeans who in general were not having children (or having too few) to embrace parenthood. Consequently, a heightened visibility and popularization of fatherhood was one of the goals of the campaign. From a critical feminist perspective, the spotlighting on fatherhood as a social practice raises some questions for consideration. Do the representations of modern fatherhood, in keeping with social changes, promise an equitable division of labour between women and men as parents and entail a de-gendering of tasks, responsibilities and priorities? Or does the campaign continue to maintain, through subtle and seemingly innocuous ways, gender difference and inequality?

As will be shown, the advertisements in fact manifest the presence of both: fatherhood is enacted in terms of a symmetrical or shared model of parenting as well as in terms of an asymmetrically ordered social practice. These are analysed here in terms of two apparently contending discourses, namely the discourse of egalitarian gender relations and the discourse of conservative gender relations, respectively. I shall argue that the presence of the dual discourses, while indicative of contemporary social changes and tensions in gender relations, also contributes to the remaking of the hegemonic hetero-normative gender order to fit in with the changing times.

The word ‘remaking’ highlights two important aspects of the concept of ‘hegemony’ (Gramsci 1971) for this study. Hegemony maintains structures of dominance through constant re-enactment of ideology in and through a multitude of banal representations and interactions. Hegemonic structures are also never static but, in order to maintain long-term acceptance, mutate and adapt over time to conditions of social change and contestation. Hegemonic structures then, paradoxically, are both fragile and resilient. The articulation and complex interplay of the two discourses, as will be discussed in the present study, demonstrate the resilience of hetero-patriarchy.

At the start: I mentioned the politics at work in (fatherhood) representations. Let me explain what I mean by this. First, representations are recontextualizations of social practices (van Leeuwen 1993); thus they are always political for the choices made in them, such as who/what is represented, or not, and in what ways, in relation to the other? Second, in analysing the representational practices, we are interrogating the power dynamic at work in a particular socio-historical moment: what do the representational choices tell us about the changing (or unchanging) contemporary balance of power between men-as-fathers and women-as-mothers? Whose interests are served by the representational practices, and whose are suppressed? The focus on power relations between women and men makes the study of hegemonic forms of masculinity an important and necessary site for feminist critique (Canan and Griffin 1990, Segal 1990; Connell 1995), alongside feminist studies on women and femininity. Third, gender relations and identities in representations and interactions are institutionally embedded and framed. In the present study, this involves the framing of gender, specifically in terms of fatherhood, by the institution of the state, which has a stake in the representational practices and the support (or otherwise) for particular orderings of hetero-gendered relations. The role of the state in (re-)shaping a society’s gender structure – indirectly or directly (as in the present case) – has been little studied in CDA and feminist linguistics. The present study hopes to redress this lack of attention by showing that the ‘politics’ involved in gender relations in this case is double-layered. The represented power dynamic between women and men in families at the micro-level (‘politics’ with a small ‘p’) is embedded within state interventionist practices that (re)articulate the norms of gender relations in the service of achieving national procreationist objectives (‘politics’ with a big ‘P’).

In what follows, the socio-political context of the Family Life advertising campaign is provided, followed by an outline of the key theoretical concepts and analytical categories for a critical analysis of discourse. Analysis and discussion of fatherhood in terms of the dual discourses of gender relations are then presented. The analysis is based on 12 sets of advertisements from the campaign, produced both in print and televisual media, that deal with representations of parenthood (see the Appendix for a brief description of these). The chapter concludes by addressing the dynamic between the two discourses, and how state performances of fatherhood in the advertisements, while seemingly progressive, re-hegemonize the hetero-normative gender order.

The socio-political context

The Family Life campaign is one aspect of the government’s on-going efforts, since the 1980s, to reverse the trend of declining birth rates in Singapore. Although the efforts are directed at Singaporeans in general, the better-educated class has been particularly targeted for markedly underreproducing itself in the next generation. The concern with encouraging well-educated Singaporeans in particular to be parents is motivated by the government’s eugenic belief that an intelligent gene
State Fatherhood: Remaking of Hegemony

pooi is vital for the viability of the country's future economic and political survival. The Family Life advertisements, a multimedia campaign launched on television, newspapers, magazines and buses, was one of the programmes that aimed to promote family values and prepare people for their future responsibilities. These advertisements highlighted the importance of men's involvement in the household, indicating that they should help out in the home, but this has not amounted to a radical redistribution of domestic responsibilities.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, given a choice between their educational peers and women of lower educational attainment than themselves, men who need to change in order to overcome an impediment towards marriage and having children, the masculinist government—still largely the preserve of conservative men—has been reluctant to initiate radical changes to public policies (see Lazar 2001 for details) that would hold sacrosanct traditional Confucian—Asian values that support men's position as heads of households, and prioritize women's 'natural' reproductive and nurturing roles as mothers.

The tension between the strategic need to change men's traditional attitudes along more egalitarian lines on the one hand, and the reluctance of the government to relinquish the male patriarchal dividend on the other hand, has produced the double-voicedness in the government's rhetoric in the Family Life advertisement campaign.

Interdiscursivity, performativity and masculinist subjectivity

Discourse, following Foucault (1972), refers to a set of related statements—manifested multimodally through an interplay, for example, of language and visual structures (Lazar 2000)—that produce and organize a particular order of reality, and specific subject positions therein. Discourse makes possible ways of knowing about the world, a sense of who we may (and may not be) within that world order, and how we may (and may not) relate to one another. In the domain of parenthood, this means that there is nothing immanent about the identities of 'father' and 'mother', or in the way relations between them have been conventionally structured. Instead, these are ontological effects produced, sustained and regulated in and through discourse. Adopting Butler's (1990:33) view of performativity, fatherhood and motherhood can be viewed as enforced cultural performances. They are socio-historically contingent, stylized representations quite literally performed in the advertisement through a set of repeated semiotic acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame—sanctioned by the state—congealed over time. The move towards a more 'father-friendly' government over time, however, primarily through policy, has made more space for the development of a more equitable gender order. What this means is that the government has been reluctant to initiate radical changes to public policies that would hold sacrosanct traditional Confucian—Asian values that support men's position as heads of households, and prioritize women's 'natural' reproductive and nurturing roles as mothers.

The Family Life advertisements in this chapter's focus are located within two specific discourses, which produce two kinds of performed subject-effects. The discourses, which operate within an 'order of discourse' (Fairclough 1992, passim), are a dominant discourse of conservative gender relations and a counter-discourse of egalitarian gender relations (Lazar 1993; 2000). Rooted within a compulsory heterosexual matrix (Rich 1980; Butler 1990) based on the reproductive imperative of the Family Life campaign, the discourses are underscored by gender relationality: that is, ways of being a 'father' or a 'mother' are always explicitly or implicitly co-constructed in relation to each other (Lazar 2000).
The two discourses, however, structure this relationship in different, indeed (potentially) contradictory, ways. Their difference lies in whether possibilities for ways of being and becoming are equally available and interchangeable between women and men in all domains of social and personal life. The conservative discourse deriving from a traditional Confucian-Asian patriarchal ethic maintains gender polarity, whereby women and men each have clear gender-specific roles, responsibilities and prerogatives. The egalitarian discourse, in contrast, taking on board feminist critiques of gender asymmetry, strives for gender parity in all aspects of private and public life: indeed, in some instances, there is a breaking down or blurring of the private/public distinction altogether. At stake in the pair of discourses is the balance of power between women and men as they perform their respective parental (and other, careerist) identities.

In terms of fatherhood, the two discourses of gender relations produce dual significations of this identity, thus also setting up relationality between forms of masculinity (cf. Connell 1995): an egalitarian or emancipated father, and a more traditional one. It needs to be noted, however, that within a popularized culture of modern daddyhood, the distinction between the two is not always clear and easy to make. Indeed, different forms of fatherhood seem to merge and unite to constitute the amorphous culture of popular daddyhood. The locatedness of forms of masculinity within particular discourses of gender relations (that is, masculinities vis-à-vis femininities), therefore, is crucial to the identification of their performances in terms of an egalitarian or a conservative fatherhood. Forms of masculinity, further, interact with the imperatives of class, sexuality and 'race' in the advertisements. The egalitarian model of fatherhood presupposes an educated (compared to a poorly educated) class of men, cues in the campaign in terms of 'white' (versus 'blue') collar workers, leisure patterns, and local markers of socio-economic status such as ownership of a car. At the same time, the hetero-normative imperative of the campaign requires that a married, heterosexual masculinity is unequivocally performed across the pair of discourses, suppressing the interpretative possibility of a gay fatherhood. Also, in so far as only the Chinese (the majority ethnic group in Singapore) are the key protagonists in the visual images in the advertisements, ethnicity or 'race' is implicated at the outset in the classed and hetero-sexualized representation of masculinity.

In the following section, the two discourses are analysed in terms of sets of representation pertaining to fatherhood that manifest the particular discoursal meanings of conservatism or egalitarianism. Each of the representations is discussed through an explication of their co-semiotic (linguistic and visual) structures of expression. The framework used for the multimodal text analysis is a systemic-functional one: the study draws on aspects of the grammars of Halliday (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) for the analysis of the linguistic and visual structures, respectively, in the advertisements. The linguistic analysis mainly draws on the ideational (or representational) aspects, particularly in terms of material ('doing'), mental ('sensing'), and identifying relational ('being') processes and their related participant types: Actor/Goal/Beneficiary, Senser/Phenomenon, and Identified/Identifier, respectively. It also draws on logico-semantic relations between clauses, in which one clause extends or enhances the proposition contained in another.

The analysis of the visual images also draws on ideational meanings which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, are of two kinds. The first is 'narrative', which includes transactional (or dual participants) action and reaction structures. The names of the participant types are similar to those of Halliday's material and mental processes, respectively. Although Kress and van Leeuwen do not include 'Beneficiary' as a participant type in transactional action structures, this is a useful category which I have incorporated in my analysis. The second kind of ideational meaning analysed in the advertisements is 'conceptual', which includes classificational ('type of') and analytical ('part-whole') structures. In addition to ideational meaning, the present study draws on interpersonal aspects particularly in terms of close-up photographic shots, which suggest social affinity; and compositional aspects, specifically in terms of the notion of salience that deals with the images' relative size and sharpness of focus. The analysis of the visual images is supplemented by some of Goffman's (1979) categories in his work on gender advertisements (namely, 'shoulder-holds' and the 'executor' function, both of which will be explained in the discussion below).

**Fatherhood in discourses of egalitarianism and conservatism**

Modern fatherhood is a complex identity produced out of the dual discourses of hetero-gendered relations. The construction of fatherhood in the egalitarian discourse is first presented, followed by its representation in the conservative discourse. The basic distinction between the two discourses, as mentioned, is one of parity: that is, whether or not there is an equitable, fluid and mutual access to ways of being. In modern industrial societies, the issue of gender parity largely rests on the possibilities available to women and men both within the domestic sphere,
The discourse of egalitarian gender relations in the advertisements is identifiable in terms of two progressive representations: parenthood as symmetrical for women and men; and of men as devoted, nurturing fathers within the domestic sphere. Both are based on constructions of the 'New Man'.

This is a type of masculinity that has gained popularity in the Western media since the 1980s, in reflexive response to feminism’s critique of traditional forms of masculinity. Although the New Man, as a construct, is generally at home in commercial advertising and popular culture (Chapman 1988), in Singapore—unlike in the West—his beginnings were largely non-commercial. The government’s FamilyLife advertising campaign became the main precursor of such images, following which it became popular also in local commercial advertising. The New Man (in contradistinction to the Old), as will be discussed below, is expressly caring and sharing: as a father, he cares for and nurtures his children, and shares the experience and role of parenting with his partner.

Father as equal parent

The idea of the father as an equal parent is construed through representations of parenthood as identical for women and men. In many instances across the advertising campaign, women and men are collectively referred to as joint participants. For example, in terms of lexical choice, the gender-neutral nouns parents or parenthood are overwhelmingly favoured (over the gender-specific terms 'mother'/'motherhood' and 'father'/'fatherhood'). In the choice of pronouns, too, we repeatedly find either the collective their/we or the indefinite pronoun you (depending on whether the advertisement is presented from the first or second person’s point of view). In either case, gender is elided, and it appears to represent women and men alike, as constituting a single undifferentiated unit.

1. It [giving a child as sibling] 'sthemostpreciousgiftparentscangive' (LonelyChild)
2. Becomingparentschangesourlivescompletely. (SomethingWonderful Happened)
3. Asyougazeatyourchild,youwillfeelsoproudtobeparents (Experience TheJoy)
4. Understandably,parenthoodisanimportantdecision(ExperienceTheJoy)

As a corollary of being referred to as joint participants, we also find in the above clauses that women and men are represented as sharing a common experience. They are affected by parenthood in the same way and appear to respond to it identically. The representation of egalitarianism expressed in the language structures finds visual support in one of the (print) advertisements. In SomethingWonderfulHappened, the symmetry is striking on two counts. The couple is shown in a joint action process of pushing a baby stroller together in a park. The couple is positioned in the same way as they are shown in adjacent shots. Their equal share of the parenting process is further expressed in the fact that the couple here is not defined by any gender signifiers. Their shared parenting is also visually supported in the way that the couple are portrayed as distributed symmetrically across the picture space (that is, they are of equal size and orientation) which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:88), expresses a covert taxonomic classification process. What this process suggests is that the couple belong within the same category of 'parents', rather than being classified according to the differential and culturally value-laden roles of 'father' and 'mother'.

Commenting on the now widespread use of such gender-neutral terms as 'parenting' and 'parenthood', some scholars have noted that two different but related assumptions underlie their usage (Busfield 1987; Lupton and Barclay 1997). Both of these support the egalitarian thesis put forward in this chapter. The first assumption is that gender relations are becoming more symmetrical (as analysed above), and the second is that men are becoming more involved in the day-to-day care of their children, which is the focus of this section.
represented within the context of the heterosexual nuclear family (Lazar 1999), thus maintaining the ‘masculinity of the heterosexual husband’ (Hamerton 1996) and father, while at the same time precluding a gay parent identity.

In the campaign, the ‘emotionally literate’ New Father (Chapman 1988) is strongly represented, especially in interactions between men and their newborn babies. The portrayal is jointly realised by visual representational structures as well as compositional structures. In terms of the visual representational structures, three characteristic features of tenderness and emotional bonding are evident: cradling, intently gazing and sweetly smiling at the baby. Cradling is a transactional action structure whereby the man (Actor) carries the infant (the Goal) gently in his arms. However, the cradling, at the same time, is indicative of an analytical structure that represents a compound relationship between the man as Carrier and the baby as an Attribute, which is visually seen as an extension of him. Coupled with cradling are the reactional structures of smiling and gazing upon the infant in his arms.

Compositional structures, moreover, frame these performances in ways that heighten their emotional value. Close-up shots are especially deployed for this purpose. So, for example, a close-up in one advertisement (Your Family is Your Future) focuses on the facial expression of a young father, who gazes lovingly and smiles almost tearfully, overcome with emotion, at his infant. In another (Something Wonderful Happened), there is a close-up shot of a large male hand holding the very small hand of a baby to the accompaniment of the following reiterated adjective in the lyrics ‘tiny fingers, tiny toes’. Emphasizing the contrast in the size of the two hands, and the gentleness of the touch, evokes a heart-tugging quality of the father’s sensitivity vis-à-vis the baby’s vulnerability.

The tender, nurturing role of the New Father in these representations approximates so much stereotypical constructions of motherhood that, in a family shot in Your Family is Your Future, there is a reversal in the positions occupied by the father and the mother in relation to their baby. In contrast to conventional representations in the advertisements of the mother carrying the baby and the father protectively wrapping his arm around her shoulders (Goffman’s 1979 ‘shoulder-holds’), in this particular advertisement, it is the father who is shown cradling the baby, with the mother’s arm around him.

The Sensitive New Father is constructed not only visually, but also linguistically.

In these extracts we find an emotional response to the experience of fatherhood. (The first example from Your Family is Your Future is the verbal equivalent of the visual structures on gender reversal analysed above.) They are both expressed from the first person point of view (I, my) and stress (via repetition of my life) that the lives of these men are profoundly affected by children (note the material processes: had changed and can carry on). Whereas the impact is succinctly encapsulated in the first of these advertisements via premodification ‘(my whole life)’, this is elaborated over a series of identifying relational processes in the second advertisement, in which the father devotedly identifies himself wholly with his children.

More generally, too, many of the advertisements show fathers to be highly visible and actively involved in family life. Apart from representations of men as Actors in the visual structures, the men are depicted also in analytical terms. To take just one example, in the (television) advertisement, Why Build Your Career Alone?, we are presented with various snapshots of a father playing a board game with his family, sitting alongside his son and watching him do schoolwork, and sitting with his family gathered around him. In all these scenes, the man and the other characters are represented as parts that make up ‘the (whole) family’. Such a representation invites an interpretation of egalitarian gender relations, for here is a man who is portrayed as very much involved and part of the everyday family scene.

The discourse of conservative gender relations

Concurrently there is an overwhelming presence of the discourse of conservatism in the advertisements that maintains gender asymmetry in the construction of parenthood. Although within the general culture of daddyhood promulgated in the campaign fathers here remain highly visible, the paternal identity is qualitatively separate and unequal from the mother within the conservative gender order. The gender asymmetry is analysed on two levels: (1) the gender-differentiated roles performed by men-as-fathers in the domestic sphere; and (2) the generally unproblematic nature of men’s negotiations between their domestic and professional identities as father and careerist, respectively. (For details
WITHIN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Fatherhood: Remaking of Hegemony of the Asymmetrical Representation of Women-as-Mothers in the Advertising, see Lazar 2000.

Fatherhood is gendered role model Systematic representation of gender role differentiation is evidenced in the advertisements. The advertisers' focus on the father and child, which signifies gender differentiation in the performance of tasks and expertise.

Fathers-as-executors extend to their interaction with children. In the advertisements, fathers are shown interacting with children directly, not just indirectly. As noted by Pleck (1987, report in Lupton and Barclay 1997), who undertook a historical study of fatherhood in America, all these portrayals seem to support the more traditional, 'sex role model' type of fatherhood, which pre-date the New Father.

The Fun Daddy

Apart from the executor representation above, fatherhood (compared to motherhood) is largely construed in terms of fun and physical play. While the representation of men's involvement with children in this way is undeniable—indeed, some would consider the playful dad part of the New Mantope (Chapman 1988; LaRossa 1997)—it is asymmetrical insofar as the performance of gender roles and relations are concerned. Fun, play and popularity appear to be the prerogative of fatherhood and take center-stage. The latter means that there is greater frequency in the portrayal of men's activities with children, and these appear prominently in larger shots, for example, Fam, Fam, Fam, and Kids Make Your World Brand New, also in print. Moreover, father—child interactions typically center on leisure rather than on intensive day-to-day care-giving activities. This is indicative of differential understandings of care that apply to fathers as opposed to mothers. 'Care' where mothers are concerned is depicted in terms of giving support and undertaking mundane chores such as towel-drying children, cooking for the family, encouraging and applauding children's efforts, getting children dressed, and preparing them for public events, and watching over their safety (Fam, Fam, Fam, and Because That's Your Family). These tasks, moreover, are rendered unremarkable in the advertisements and taken for granted as the work mothers are expected to do. Care, or 'caring', when it comes to fathers, is portrayed in very different ways and contexts.

The popular fun dad representation, realized mainly through transactional action structures, depicts fathers as actors and their children as goals or beneficiaries for whom the father's affectionate behaviors are directed. For example, a father is shown ruffling his son's hair, tickling and playing with him, nuzzling and kissing his children, and making funny faces at them (Fam, Fam, Fam, all on television). In some instances, there is a role reversal, where fathers are the recipients and children are the actors. In one such case, three young children (Actors) sitting on their parents' bed playfully pillow-fight their dad (Goal), who good-naturedly receives the mock blows (Fam, Fam, Fam).
buddies', which accentuates the father's popular appeal. For example, in the same advertisement (Fam, Fam, Fam, television), the father and children are united in their role as Actors, who conspire to 'steal' and eat biscuits from the kitchen counter; these biscuits are freshly baked by the children's mother. The representation of being 'one of the kids' is especially well expressed via a classificational (covert taxonomic) process. Preceding the biscuit-stealing shot, the father and children are identically represented as they place their heads, totem-pole style, one on top of the other in a symmetrical vertical composition. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 81) have suggested that 'For participants to be put together in a syntagm which establishes a classification means that they [are] judged to be members of the same class and are to be read as such.'

An empirical account by one scholar posits that the Fun Daddy performance which captivates children's attention so much may actually be motivated by 'the pressure to perform as a male', in competition with the mother (Kraemer 1994: 206–7). Apart from what this suggests about the father's relationship with the mother, the performance has implications that are problematic in regard to children as well. It has been noted that fathers who frequently plug into the playful mode are likely to encourage gender stereotypes in their children (Poster 1981, cited in Kraemer 1994). Furthermore, notwithstanding fathers' genuine loving feelings towards their children, the enactment of the popular role, as Kraemer (1994) notes, does not help fathers learn to look after or be mindful of the needs of young dependent children. In a beach setting in one of the advertisements (Fam, Fam, Fam), for example, the father is shown simply clowning around in the water with his children, leaving the mother (who witnesses the interaction, although she is excluded from it) to watch over the safety of the youngest boy by holding firmly on to his float.

Father as the family head

Representations of gender role differentiation - whether in terms of men's executive role or their 'Fun Daddy' role - are not merely about functional difference but, rather, are implicated in asymmetrical power relations. This is perhaps most striking in representations of fathers as heads-of-households. In Why Build Your Career Alone? (print and television) this is indicated by the central position occupied by the father in relation to members of his family. Such a shot demonstrates an exhaustive analytical structure whereby the two adults and three children are parts (or 'Attributes') that altogether comprise 'the family' (the 'Carrier'). However, although the father is one member of the family (and one of two adults), he is represented as the most salient - literally the central - figure, flanked by his wife, who stands partially hidden behind him, and his children who encircle him in the front. Furthermore, other portrayals of him in relation to his family represent him as a Carrier himself, with members of his family represented as his Attributes. This is clearest in examples involving shoulder-holds, where the father is shown with an arm around the shoulders of his family members. Although shoulder-holds may be an affectionate gesture, at the same time they can connote an asymmetrical (Goffman 1979) and, in this case, also a specifically proprietorial relationship. In one scene of Why Build Your Career Alone, the man has an arm around the woman, which defines her in relation to him as his wife, and in another scene, he has an arm around a little boy, which defines the child in relation to him as his son. Shoulder-holds are a common enough gesture found also in other advertisements where men are represented with their families for example, Experience the Joy, Because That's Your Family, and Kids Make You See).

NEGOTIATING THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE SPHERES

In this section, the focus is on how men are represented as able to negotiate between their identities as fathers and careerists. In contrast to the advertisements that address women on motherhood, those directed at men about fatherhood construct a world in which fathers, basically, can have it all without significant tension.

The 'Cool' Dad

In some advertisements family life and paid work life are represented as co-existing harmoniously for men: that is, the identities of father and careerist are reconcilable without one compromising the other. This is one sense of the term 'cool', an Americanism for 'no problem' or 'everything is fine'. In fact, as the discussion will show, there is another stronger sense at work, too; namely, that 'it is positively great' to be a dad because he remains the family's central focus (a carry-over from his popular, fun daddy image).

The compatibility between the identities of home and workplace is enacted by bridging representations of men in the public and private worlds. The portrayal of men in the public realm of work is signalled by their attire (long-sleeved shirts and ties): that is, men here are seen as Carriers whose professional identities are inscribed upon their bodies, and (optionally) also in terms of the representation of an office setting. Although the men, in these instances, are seen primarily in their professional capacity, their identity as fathers is quite easily co-enacted. This is explicitly the case in two of the advertisements, Why Build Your Career
State Fatherhood: Remaking of Hegemony

Alone? and Fam, Fam, Fam, where the words for dad handwritten on a gift box and Dad written in icing on a birthday cake, respectively, are linking him (in his professional identity) to the cake with the words Happy Birthday Dad written on it.

The construction of the 'Cool' Dad, for whom the two spheres are entirely compatible and his negotiation between them relatively stress-free, is contrasted with the presentation of the 'Beneficiary' Dad. The latter is associated with the slogan 'Why Build Your Career Alone?' and the slogans 'Your Family is Your Future'. The underpinnings of this discourse can be seen in the following example:

I'm really excited about parenthood, but I also love my job. How will you divide your time between the kids, housework, and the office?

In 1, the use of the adversative conjunction sets up a presupposition that the two interests are conflictual. The asking of the question in 2 implies that there is a choice to be made between the home and the office, with the office/my job, which comes last, suggesting an implied order of priority prescribed for others (but not fathers).

Fathers, however, are construed as beneficiaries. It is not only the case that, as we saw, fathers are showered with gifts and birthday surprises from their family members, but that having a family is construed as positively benefiting their personal and career development. In two of the advertisements, 'Why Build Your Career Alone?' and 'Your Family is Your Future', the family is portrayed as bringing about certain personal qualities deemed necessary for men's professional success. In the following clauses, these selection of material processes (in 1-4) and causative constructions (in 5-7) systematically represents family life as a helping, enabling agent, and men, for their part, as the recipients: the ones who stand to gain:

1. Family Life helps (Why Build Your Career Alone? print)
2. It also provides stability, encouragement and support (Why Build Your Career Alone? print)
3. It's broadened my horizon (Why Build Your Career Alone? television)
4. It gives you a direction, a purpose. And most of all, it gives you a future (Your Family is Your Future print)
5. 'A happy, well-rounded Family Life makes people wiser (Why Build Your Career Alone? print)
6. Family Life has made my life a lot better (Why Build Your Career Alone? television)
7. I've learnt a lot (Why Build Your Career Alone? television)
8. And it was then, as I took her [the baby] into my arms for the very first time and looked down into her tiny perfect face, that I realized my whole life had changed. (Your Family is Your Future television)

All these personal benefits accrued on account of having a family translated directly into men's professional success. Hence the

building of careers and the cultivation of material consequences that

result from them are central to the discursive construction of the

family unit and the cultivation of material consequences

that result from them. The family is, in this respect, a central

element in the discourse of the professional self.

Building careers, however, are constructed as secondarily important. It is not only the case

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family unit and the cultivation of material consequences

that result from them. The family is, in this respect, a central

element in the discourse of the professional self.

Building careers, however, are constructed as secondarily important. It is not only the case

that the discursive construction of the professional self

emphasizes personal achievements (see

Michelle M. Lazar 155)
represented instrumentality of men’s involvement in family life: namely, that it enables the preservation and development of their own career interests. This is raised pointedly in Why Build Your Career Alone? (print) where, after outlining the usefulness of family life (see examples of clauses above), the advertisement closes with the rhetorical question that presupposes an affirmative response: ‘Isn’t that what you need for a successful career?’

Another way that family life is construed as having an instrumental effect upon men’s careers is that it is shown to imbue the pursuit of a career itself with greater, tangible meaning. Consider the following excerpt from Your Family Is Your Future (television):

Now for the first time, I seem to have a direction and a purpose (clause 7)
And I know what I’d been working for all my life (clause 8)
Not for money or status (clause 9)
I’ve been working for the future (clause 10)
And here in my arms was the future (clause 11)

Here, by means of the conjunction ‘and’ (used twice), the instrumental link between family life and work life is established. On the first occasion (clauses 7 and 8), fruits of family life (direction and purpose) are causally linked (by and) to the realization of the significance behind the pursuit of a career. On the second occasion (clauses 10 and 11), the new realization concerning his career is tangibly reinforced in terms of the baby in his arms. The depiction of meaningfulness of one’s career in this way, in fact, may be viewed in relation to what some scholars have suggested about conventional styles of fatherhood: namely, that men tend to translate their new responsibilities as fathers in terms of an increased commitment to (paid) work (Burgoyne 1987), which reinforces their traditional breadwinner role.

The absent father

Where there are admissions that a man’s career commitments may compete with his paternal identity, this is rendered as expected and understandable. The following are two verbal examples from the Collage Advertisement (television):

1 even though my work takes me away, when it comes to joy and dreams, my children are the key.
2 even though my work takes me away, my children are my hope and joy supreme.

The concessive (conjunctive) adjunct at the beginning of the clause complexes sets up a presupposition that fathers would be away on account of their career, and that this in itself is hardly surprising. Further, the choice of the material process ascribes to my career an agency of its own, positioning the man as the unwitting Goal, ineluctably ‘taken away’ on work. The remainder of the clause complexes, moreover, appears to compensate the absenteeism by representations of effusive declarations of the importance of his children to him. Through the rhetorical strategy adopted in these clauses, absenteeism of fathers is accepted and forgiven and not seen as a censure on men to balance their twin roles better. This is different for mothers, who are constantly reminded to self-regulate and strike a balance between family and career:

1 One of my major concerns right now is balancing family and career. But I have friends who have shown me that it can be done. A lot of Singaporean women are making that choice, too. (Babies and Careers)
2 And along the way, balancing what’s best by making the right choices and practical decisions. (Babies and Careers)

The need for balance, furthermore, is represented in terms of choices and decisions that mothers (and not fathers) are obliged to make. Note that choice in this conservative discourse does not connote freedom or the availability of a range of options; on the contrary, it suggests that women are not at liberty to pursue a career and a family anyway they like, but are constrained to select very particular options (which, according to number 2 above, are deemed ‘the right choices’).

Further, the representations in the examples above on fatherhood (from the Collage advertisement) are one-sided: we are told of the effect children have on the father, but not the effect of his absence upon them. The latter is borne out by Phoenix and Woollett’s (1991) observation that the literature on fatherhood rarely deals with the impact that fathers’ frequent absences on account of their careers have on the development of their children. Father-blaming, in other words, is non-existent, whereas mothers are held directly accountable for their children’s development and behaviour, and constantly risk blame (Woollett and Phoenix 1991; Nicholson 1993; Lazar 2000).

Conclusion

The presence of the dual discourses of gender relations in the national advertising campaign is indicative of the contemporary social space
The politicsofrepresentationthusentailrelativepresencesand absencesorganizedalonggenderedlines. Thisisfundamentallyan approachthatassumesunequalavailabilitytomenandtowomen, andtheinequity—hersanctionedbythegovernment—benefitsonegroupattheexpenseof theother.

AlthoughtheFamilyLifecampaignmanifeststwoapparentlycontra
dictorydiscoursesofgenderrelations (onebasedonparity, theotheron... outweighedbytheprevailingco-presenceoftheconservativediscourse, whichasaresulthelpsthechallengeposedbyegalitarianism.

Moreimportantly, the'brand'ofegalitarianismssupportedinthe campaignisitselffarfromsubversiveforitdoesnotseriouslyunder... stillremaindominantbyreflexivelyincorporatingdiscoursesthat challengetheirhegemony.

Theshiftsandalliancesbetweenthediscoursesconsequentlypro
ducenottwosinglecompetingmasculineidentities, butacomplex, hybridone. Theegalitarianrepresentationsmakeculturallyacceptable
avisibleandactiveroleforfathers:thatis,suchinvolvementisno
longerconsidered'unmanly'oranomalous. Atthesametime, the
co-existenceoftheconservativediscoursekeepsintactthebasic
genderedlabourofparenting. Forinstance, whiletherepresentation
ofequalparentingpresentsanidealofgendersymmetry, theoverlaying
oftheconservativediscourse (asshownintheanalysis)glossesthis
overwiththeunequal,genderedworkthatcontinues. Thenotionof
sharednessbecomestricky, asitcaneasilyslipintoaninterpretation
ofgenderrolecomplementaritywherebythefunctionsperformedby
fathersandmothersarerendered'differentbutequal'. Fromafeminist
perspective, suchaviewisproblematicsinceitoverlooksthesystemic
arrangementsinsocietythatmaintainnotjustdissimilarity,buthierarchically
dichotomousgenderorder. Itisnecessary,therefore,tobecriticallycircumspectonthemeaningof'sharing': whatandhow
muchisshared, andwhatthissharingentailsforfathersandfor
mothers.

AlsotheNewMan,centraltoegalitarianfatherhood,isanambivalent
creature. Somefeminists (forexample,Ehrenreich1984)aresympa
theticstowardstheNewMan,whomtheyfavourasawelcomealternative
toprevalingformsofhegemonicmasculinity. Manyothers,however,
aredeeplysceptical,notingthedisjuncturebetweenthemediaidealization
oftheNewManandmen'sactualcontributionsetoeverydaychildcare
andhousework(Lamb1987,citedinLorber1994). As
shownintheanalysisofthetheFamilyLifecampaign, thisallowed
fatherstostepinandoutoftheirparentalobligations,sincetheunder
lyingassumptionwasthatmothersbydefaultwouldalwaysbearround
forthechildren.

Thishybrididentityisapolitically-correct (PC)formofmasculinity;
'politicalcorrectness'herereadbothasreflexivelyprogressive,albeitina
limited superficial way, and as the identity approved and made normative in the advertisements by the government. PC masculinity gets the best of both worlds with little significant cost to men. Indeed, as the analysis of the discourses has shown, fathers stand to positively gain personally and professionally from their families, even though their type of involvement with children is rather limited. The interdiscursivity further indicates that men can perform their fatherhood role on their own terms: they have the option of being more involved, or less; or being active some of the time, and opting out at other times. Men, in other words, are not tied definitively to their identity as fathers in the same way mothers are.

PC masculinity (or specifically, PC fatherhood) is a make-over undertaken for the benefit of well-educated Singaporean women. On the one hand, women are assured that men still are ‘real men’ in the traditionally valued sense (for example, as dependable provider) but, importantly, on the other hand, they come in a progressive and emotionally developed packaging. For this class of women in particular, the New Man is ostensibly well matched for, as noted in the scholarly literature, he too is a middle-class phenomenon, and is believed to hold the greatest promise as would-be partners and fathers (Griswold 1993, cited in Lupton and Barclay 1997; Nicholson 1993). Yet, ironically, the same studies have shown that this class of men is also most likely to subsequently disappoint their partners because of their minimal domestic involvement. Where the same Family Life advertisements work to persuade women to become (m)other-oriented, it is assumed that the women will pick up men’s slack in the homefront, as mothers ‘naturally’ will be the primary care-givers. In other words, the hegemonic gender order and, specifically, hegemonic masculinity, are pragmatically re-made in superficially progressive terms ‘for the good of the nation’ (Lazar 2001), without disrupting the still culturally and politically ratified balance of power between Singaporean women and men.

Appendix

The following is a complete list of the advertisements referred to in this chapter, the majority of which appear in print and televisual versions. A brief description of each is provided:

**Why Build Your Career Alone?** (print and television) Family life is positively represented as boosting a man’s career by providing him with invaluable support and stability.

**Precious Moments** (print and television) Snapshots are shown of three young children (siblings) happily playing together, while their parents warmly look on.

**Lonely Child** (print and television) An only child is pictured sitting amidst many toys, yet looks sullen. In the television version, he visibly cheers up when his mother brings home a newborn baby, a sibling for him.

**Experience The Joy** (print and television) Married couples are advised on the benefits of starting a family while they are still young.

**Family, Fam(ily), Fam(ily)** (print and television) A family is engaged in a number of leisure activities, in which the father is prominently portrayed performing a popular and playful role, while the mother performs a supportive role and takes care of the less popular chores.

**Because That’s Your Family** (print and television) Three young children in a family are engaged in a series of collaborative activities, which delights and evokes a sense of pride in their parents.

**Your Family is Your Future** (print and television) The advertisement depicts the emotional experience of a young new father. As the man holds his infant in his arms for the first time, he realizes that from then on his whole life takes on a new meaning.

**Kids Make Your World Brand New** (print and television) The advertisement puts together a collection of individual shots depicting many different children, some of whom are represented on their own, while others are with a parent.

**Kids Make You See** (print and television) A family of five is represented enjoying fun, active, leisure activities together.

**Babies and Careers** (print only) Presented editorial style, this is a personal account of a young married woman, who is considering motherhood. She describes how balancing a career with maternal responsibilities is achievable.

**Then Something Wonderful Happened** (print and television) This is a narrative of a newly-wed couple, who start drifting apart on account of the demands of their respective careers. The husband decides that having a baby would save their marriage.

**Collage Advertisement** (television only) This is a special compilation of shots of men-as-fathers, selected from an archive of previously aired Family Life advertisements.

Notes

1. An earlier version was presented in the ‘Masculinities in the Plural: Discourse Analyses of Men’s Identity Performances’ panel at the 8th International
The culture of daddyhood, for LaRossa (1997:139) refers quite specifically to the playful aspects of American fatherhood documented in the early half of the twentieth century. My use of the term extends beyond the play aspect, and refers more broadly to what I consider to be an emerging global trend in fatherhood constructions toward the end of the last century up until the present century.

Most of the 12 advertisements were produced both in the print and televisual media; the total number of actual texts analysed is 22. I do not have permission to reproduce the advertisements. Because of space constraints, I am not able to provide full (multimodal) transcripts of the 22 texts, and have opted instead to provide brief descriptions of them.

The depiction supports an early American study by Chalton (1975) cited in Goffman (1979), which reported that 'the male head of household used the camera most of the time'.

References


