



FATHERS IN ADVERTISING

An Analysis of Stereotypes at Work



SUMMARY

	INTRODUCTION	PAGE 4
	INTERVIEW WITH ERIC MACÉ, SOCIOLOGIST	PAGE 5
	METHODOLOGY	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building the corpus PAGE 7 ● Method of analysis PAGE 7 ● Primary representations of fatherhood PAGE 7 	
1st PART	MEN AND CHILDREN: STEREOTYPES AT WORK	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women between accomplished housewives and double time PAGE 8 ● Feminine/masculine, mother/father: stereotyped, stratified differences PAGE 9 ● Holding fatherhood at a distance PAGE 9 	
2nd PART	WHEN MEN ARE UP TO THE TASK...COUNTER-STEREOTYPES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The counter-stereotype of egocentric fathers: acceptance of responsibilities and duties PAGE 14 ● The counter-stereotype of virile fathers: between keeping virility at bay and acknowledging sensitivity PAGE 16 ● Ambiguity and dumbed down equality PAGE 17 	
3rd PART	SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRENDS ?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Automobile and financial services : traditional bastions of masculinity PAGE 19 ● Stereotypes and counter-stereotypes often coexist PAGE 19 	
	LEXICON	PAGE 21
	APPENDIX	PAGE 22

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, companies have rallied around the theme of professional equality. In particular, a number of them have realized that equal employment processes cannot move forward without involving men in these issues or without challenging the cultural stereotypes that perpetuate the model of «men as breadwinners» who are devoted to their work and woman as being in charge of home and family life. Thus certain recently signed professional equality agreements mention the responsibility of businesses in this domain and recommend awareness efforts to target male employees.

To contribute to this movement, ORSE published two practical guides intended for use by union negotiators and human resources departments: «Promoting Parenthood to Male Employees, an Equal Employment Challenge», co-produced with CNIDFF in 2008, and «Men are the Future of Equal Employment» in 2009. Finally, ORSE invited major employers to weigh in on the topic of balancing professional and personal lives and in March 2010 produced «Dads and Directors: Thoughts from 10 Executives About the Work-Home Balance», published by Les Éditions du Cherche-Midi.

As a direct result of these actions, companies, through the voice of ORSE, are now exploring the nature of communications targeting male consumers in particular. How is fatherhood depicted in the media? Are their images of fatherhood conformist or even reactionary or do they contribute to a more evolved representation of gender ?

We feel it is important to work on these questions given that few studies have examined the image of men in the media. And yet «the stakes are high,» as sociologist Eric Macé reminds us, «since these depictions tend to legitimise or, on the contrary, undermine points of view considered to be self-evident and which are most commonly the dominant point of view of the day.»

This study, coordinated by ORSE, was carried out in partnership with BETC Euro RSCG and draws on the analytical work of Eric Macé, a specialist in media culture and gender.

It is the first of its kind and we hope it opens the door to more inquiries into the portrayals of male identity offered up by advertising and the media.

INTERVIEW

ERIC MACÉ, SOCIOLOGIST



ERIC MACÉ IS A SOCIOLOGIST, a professor at Université de Bordeaux and an associate researcher at CADIS (EHESS, Paris). He specialises in the public sphere, media cultures, cultural studies, representation politics and gender-related cultural movements.

What made you take an interest in the representation of fatherhood in advertising?

I work on power dynamics in culture or, in other words, the way in which cultural and media cultural depictions are the source of conflicting interpretations between social actors according to their points of view on the world. A representation is never an objective reflection of reality, but rather the reflection of the point of view held by those who produce the representation of that reality. The stakes are high since these depictions tend to legitimise or, on the contrary, undermine points of view considered to be self-evident and which are most commonly the dominant point of view of the day.

In a previous work, («Society and Its Double. An Ordinary Day of Television», 2006, Armand Colin), I described the way in which television professionals depict identities and male-female relationships in their programmes. I notably defined gender relations as being a form of «defeated conservatism»: television does indeed show the equalisation of conditions for men and women, but it frames it as a source of «problems», particularly for men who perceive a threat to their autonomy, for equality assumes, first, that women are more autonomous and, second, that men participate in the housekeeping and social cohesion tasks that were traditionally assigned to women.

Why address the topic of sexist representations through men? What can this approach add to the debate?

What we call gender is both an identity (masculine or feminine) and a social relationship, meaning that the difference between masculine and feminine is socially organised and that one cannot be defined without the other. Sexism in representations is not limited solely to feminine stereotypes, but also to depictions of the masculine. This is even truer because we are dealing with a masculinity that must reconcile itself with the autonomous woman and the loss of the social prestige of virility (which is now discredited and reserved for stigmatising depic-

tions of men in the working classes and especially in populations associated with migration). When we observe transformations in gender relationships, it is also informative to work as much on anti-feminism as on feminism or on the masculine as much as on the feminine.

As you see it, what role does advertising play in the transmission of sexist stereotypes?

- Advertising is a complex narrative that can be read at many levels: a practical reading of the product, an aesthetic reading of the spot's production, a sociological reading of the users being portrayed or a symbolic reading of the connotations of the characters and situations. With regard to sexist stereotypes, advertising appears less as an explicit message and more like a «massage» that causes a hierarchical difference to exist between the masculine and the feminine. The signs of this difference are constantly replicated and repeated so that they seem to be «natural» and nearly invisible to the public, which thus legitimises the idea that since men and women are different, it is normal for them not to have the same social roles and statuses.

Do the representations conveyed by advertising correspond to the public's representations? How do advertising professionals view the audience?

The audience of mass-marketed products is just as heterogeneous as it is big: the primary challenge of professionals in culture industries is precisely to unite different audiences, sensibilities and points of view. Hence the search for what I call a «temporary conformism»—the idea that the professionals have about what is acceptable or desirable at a given moment by the majority of the audience. This reasoning does not have much sociological grounding because it is based on limited surveys and qualitative studies, such that it leads professionals to make «wagers» by mixing the conformism of «what is already known» with the risks of «what is new».

For advertising professionals, could the distortion and challenging of sexist stereotypes represent a beneficial innovation?

Most definitely, particularly for the outsider brands. The first aim of an advertisement—before even promoting a product—is to stand out from the mass of other advertisements and any break with aesthetic, narrative or social role conventions can work toward that goal. Taking a stand against sexist stereotypes is therefore often a winning formula which makes it possible to differentiate the advertisement and associate the product with non-reductive gender roles, thereby producing the effect of a «non-sexist cachet», which can be explicitly observed in «fair trade» products. However, still speaking from a commercial point of view, a given advertiser and a given agency can juxtapose contradictory attitudes, for example for a brand of cars: it may play with gender codes in a non-sexist way for a small car targeting young consumers while at the same time serving up perfectly sexist archetypes for a family car.

Have you observed recurring lines of thinking at work? How would you define them?

The study for ORSE shows that advertising has well accounted for the transformations in families, which are no longer so-called traditional families with a stay-at-home mom and a dad who works outside the home: women also work outside the home and domestic and parenting tasks are supposedly shared. However, this is where we see the logic of defeated conservatism: advertising makes note of these egalitarian changes, but continues to portray and legitimise male resistance to these changes.

Therefore, the implicit message of advertisements which show women in domestic or parental situations is that women are spontaneously available and qualified for these activities and that the products are there to help them exercise their skills, particularly since they suffer from the «two work shifts» phenomenon by combining paid work with domestic work. On the other hand, when men are placed in the same situations, the implicit message is that they are not competent and that these roles threaten their masculinity, such that the products often present themselves as a resource to escape these constraints or to protect oneself against demasculinisation.

Do you see any changes in the representations of the two sexes offered up by advertising?

The advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s were spontaneously sexist because sexism was both legal and legitimate in society. During the «feminist instant» of the 1970s, certain representations were able to depict the autonomy of women because this aligned with the legal and cultural changes taking place and with women's access to consumption without seeking spousal approval. But since the 1980s, advertising representations tend

to reflect the anti-feminist point of view which consists of bombarding women with exhortations to be highly effective in all areas while indicting them for not managing to reconcile their professional, sexual and parental lives. Meanwhile, men, cut off from the encouragements toward virility, remain defined by an autonomy that must not get bogged down by social connections and domestic constraints.

How do you analyse the disconnect between the mostly sexist representations conveyed by advertising and practices that seem to aspire to egalitarianism?

Practices are not all that egalitarian: in 1999 working women devoted 4 hours and 10 minutes to domestic and parenting tasks while their working spouses only contributed 2 hours and 20 minutes (INSEE, Scheduling Survey).

The same is true among the youngest segments: in 2004 a study showed that six months after the birth of a child it is mothers rather than fathers who reduce or abandon the cultural and recreational activities they participated in before the birth because it is primarily the mothers who take care of the children.

In this context, several factors may work in favour of the generation of sexist representations among advertising professionals: consciously, for as long as practices do not truly change, it is not commercially risky to «appeal to» women rather than men for food and household products and unconsciously, as advertising professionals undoubtedly share the common point of view according to which matters of equality have been settled and are no longer to be addressed as problems.

In your opinion, how might advertising evolve?

I think that in France the feminist, anti-sexist point of view was discredited on the pretext that equality had been achieved and, as a result, advertisements are producing many neo-stereotypes that help legitimise the social differences between the sexes and very few anti-stereotypes which could legitimise an anti-sexist point of view.

When advertising professionals do not fully endorse the sexist (neo-) stereotypes, it is expressed more through the introduction of an interpretive ambiguity (the narrative can be read as both sexist and non-sexist) or a compensating compromise: if a man goes to pick his child up at school alongside all the other moms, he has to be depicted as a businessman leaving the office who can only arrive on time to fulfil his parental duty after overcoming a series of obstacles worthy of an action film.

One would have to compare French advertisements to those of countries that are more sensitive to inequalities, such as the Scandinavian countries, which would give an idea of what non-sexist representations look like.

METHODOLOGY

Building the corpus

This study seeks to analyse a corpus of television and print advertisements. Therefore, ORSE, with the assistance of BETC Euro RSCG communications agency, built a corpus to be analysed by conducting a search within advertising archives over the period 2002 to 2009 using key words pertaining to fatherhood; ultimately 43 advertisements were selected.

This corpus covers a variety of media with broadcast advertisements and print advertisements while also offering a diverse range of advertising agencies and industries, including food products, automobiles, baby products, household appliances, energy, clothing, beauty/hygiene, entertainment/recreation and financial services.

Method of analysis

The inductive approach was chosen for this study. Thus we began by watching all of the selected advertisements before analysing them in order to detect recurring logics and determine the structural outlines of the representations of fatherhood.

Primary representations of fatherhood

Using this method of analysis, several major themes were revealed. First, the persistence of sexist stereotypes through three major fatherhood narratives:

- and incompetence
- Neo-traditionalism, which shows men amongst themselves, protecting their world from feminisation
- And finally, virile reassurance with a totally relative commitment from fathers and noteworthy incompetence despite their good intentions

On the other hand, certain advertisements from the corpus take the opposing point of view by portraying «men who are up to the task»: they take on a fair share of family duties and responsibilities within more complex structures and demonstrate confident sensitivity. However, while certain advertisements depict committed fathers, the way stereotypes are thwarted reflects a certain ambiguity since the product being promoted often represents a highly stereotypical attribute.

1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

Advertising functions overall as a narrative that can be read at different levels: a practical reading with the product information presented, an aesthetic reading of the spot's production or a poster's graphic design, a sociological reading of the users being portrayed or a symbolic reading of the situations and character depictions. The purpose here is to analyse how advertising represents fathers and their relationships with their family and children. Do these representations feed into sexist stereotypes or do they take the opposite view? How are the supposed differences between the masculine and the feminine portrayed?

Like all culture industries, advertising is a business of risk characterised by tensions between the guaranteed returns on conformity (applying the same formulas as everyone else) and the jackpot of innovation. The representations of men and women in advertising can be studied in the light of this tension.

In that case, the question also arises of how these advertisements are received and their relationship with the audience. According to Eric Macé, referring to Marshall McLuhan, advertising is more «*a massage than an explicit message: it constantly reproduces the stratified differences between men and women, making it appear to be natural*».

And yet advertising is not an accurate reflection of society, but rather the reflection of how advertising professionals see this world. They are themselves partici-

pants in the tension between conservative perspectives and innovative or critical perspectives on traditional norms. As we shall see, while the analysed advertisements take into account changes in society, they still give more credence to stereotypical representations: evasive, neo-traditionalist or virile fathers.

To understand the representations of fatherhood in play, one must first begin with a quick detour into women and the evolution of how they are represented. As Eric Macé explains, «*advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s were spontaneously sexist because sexism was both legal and legitimate in society*». Women were above all depicted as accomplished housewives who ensured that all was in order and running smoothly in the home; meanwhile the model of men as breadwinners was prevalent.

«*During the 'feminist instant' of the 1970s, certain representations were able to depict the autonomy of women because this aligned with the legal and cultural changes taking place and with women's access to consumption without seeking spousal approval; but since the 1980s, advertising representations tend to reflect the anti-feminist point of view which consists of bombarding women with exhortations to be highly effective in all areas while indicting them for not managing to reconcile their professional, sexual and parental lives. Meanwhile, men, cut off from the encouragements toward virility, remain defined by an autonomy that must not get bogged down by social connections and domestic constraints.*»

Women : between accomplished housewives and double shifts

The depictions of women in advertising tend to make motherhood and domesticity their natural and normal calling. This sexist supposition about women as being naturally drawn to domestic life is not questioned and the products legitimise this representation because they make this vocation possible and even facilitate its fulfilment. Two trends can be observed. The first corresponds to the traditional narrative of the housewife: mothers are portrayed as competent, availa-

ble homemakers and the products being presented support them in this role. The second, more realistic narrative incorporates the difficulties of the «double shift» phenomenon encountered by working women. In this scenario mothers appear to be less competent and less available. The products help them with these domestic chores (which are not shared with men) and aim to compensate for the mental burden and guilt of not successfully reconciling work and home lives.

1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

Feminine/masculine, mother/father : stereotyped, stratified differences



← **GAZ DE FRANCE DOLCE VITA ADVERTISEMENT, Australia, 2009**

This advertisement symbolically illustrates how life and parenthood are shared between men and women. The woman is in pink and the man in blue. The woman goes inside toward the domestic sphere while the man goes outside to the public sphere. She spends money for the household (she is carrying a box that she is holding as if it were a baby); he is the master of technology (laptop computer on the table) and embodies the source of income. She is holding a doll (a little girl) while he has masculine, virile accessories (ball, skateboard) which let him move around in the world. Finally, the masculine sky is luminous; he is the god of creation. Meanwhile the feminine sky is stormy—it is the sky of original sin and the great flood: she is the one who erred and who will be welcomed into the ark in spite of it.

Holding fatherhood at a distance

The advertisements analysed take into account social transformations. The traditional family is no longer the norm; families are now more complex. Sometimes rearranged, they offer moments where there is no mother. The end of the distant masculine authority has given way to calls for fathers who get involved. The modern family seeks above all to focus on relationships and be rooted in interactions. Yet the inclusion of these new social practices and exhortations takes the form of reactionary responses: instead

of depicting products that support these new responsibilities and types of relationships, they are presented as a way to avoid or escape these exhortations. These advertisements amount to a defence of masculine autonomy in the face of these new trends by demonstrating that men are not cut out for parenting.

Drawing on this observation, Eric Macé highlighted three narratives which hold fatherhood at a distance: avoidance, neo-traditionalism and virile reassurance.

The avoidance narrative

In this narrative, exhortations toward parental parity are tiresome. In effect, men are incompetent: because they were not socialised within a model of involved, relationship-based fatherhood and because of their egocentric resistance to be-

coming fathers. While products support the «natural» skills of women or help them maintain their competence, the products enable men to escape these responsibilities or remain incompetent.

→ **RENAULT CLIO ESTATE ADVERTISEMENT, Publicis, February 2008**

This poster with humorous overtones illustrates how men and women share the world: the woman is preoccupied with motherhood and seeks information to this end while the man uses impending fatherhood as an excuse for advance gratification and a way to fulfil some of his personal desires. The advertisement leaves no room for shared interests.



1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

→ **FRANCE TELECOM WANADOO ADVERTISEMENT,**
CCM BBDO, September 2005

In this spot which depicts a father within his family, fatherhood is staged as an ordeal that is passively tolerated. Boasting about the merits of his wireless Internet connection, the father describes his family as a hyperactive, rowdy bunch who do not seem to share much concern for his need to work in peace and quiet. His wife, who seems to ignore him, only appears as a woman who devotes all her attention to a telephone conversation. At this point there is only one solution for him to move beyond the parental and domestic tribulations to finally get some peace and quiet : seek refuge in the garden where he can work in a tree thanks to his WiFi connection. Thus this advertisement depicts running away as a survival solution. The father who is overwhelmed by his family wants nothing more than to avoid his family responsibilities and maintain his own tranquillity.



↓ **ZAZOO ADVERTISEMENT,**
Duval Guillaume Antwerp and France Devos, 2003

This father is shopping at the supermarket with his son when the latter has a shocking temper tantrum. The distraught father no longer knows what to do to calm his son and begins to think about the condoms he should have used to avoid such annoyances. This is the ultimate legitimisation of desertion with the non-fatherhood fantasy served by the product.



1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

The neo-traditionalist narrative

In spite of everything, this kind of stereotype does take into account men's participation in parenting responsibilities, but the abnormality of this situation is emphasised through various virile mecha-

nisms intended to protect men from any doubts that may arise with regard to the image of their masculinity and the disappearance of boundaries and differences between men and women.

→ **GROUPAMA ADVERTISEMENT,**
Young & Rubicam, February 2004

This spot depicts a father at a celebratory meal with his family; it shows the father's thoughts which reflect all the financial burdens he must incur for each of the members of his family to ensure their well-being. Even at the heart of the family setting, it is the figure of the pater familias that stands out. He is represented as the only one who takes on the responsibility of the household. For example, instead of saying «we» to include his wife, he uses «I» to keep as his own this serious task of spending the money that he earns by working.



↓ **AZZARO CHROME ADVERTISEMENT,** Loeb & Associés, June 2006

The Azzaro advertisement for the «Chrome» fragrance shows three men representing three different generations (grandfather, father and son), as well as the mother. Sharing and solidarity are established through virile activities like rugby between men of the same family in an outdoor setting, in other words a properly masculine realm. This macho clique is also defined by the exclusion of the feminine: the mother walks behind them or sits far away from them as the passive observer of masculine games.



1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

→ **BMW 3 SERIES ADVERTISEMENT,**
BBDP & Fils, December 2007

Again, this spot portrays a world amongst men, «on the outside», where the symbolic polarisation of masculine and feminine is passed down from father to son. The father introduces his son to the outside world, to learning and to experience. What ultimately brings them closer is the typically masculine love of cars. The final scene reveals the technical, powerful and virile world of cars, which is passed along from one man to the next.



NOTE : In the corpus analysed, 18 advertisements stage a scene featuring a father and his son(s) (14 with one son, four with several). Eight advertisements feature both sexes and depict a father with children of both genders. In five advertisements the baby is too young for the sex to be determined. Finally, just three advertisements depict a father with his daughter and none show a father with just his daughters.

The narrative of virile reassurance

In this last category of stereotypes, fathers are still as incompetent, but they have good intentions. This incompetence is channelled through virile protective measures intended to reassert their masculinity and, thanks to featured products, to protect fatherhood from the feminine and the domestic. There is also

an effort to oversignify the abnormality of situations where the father must manage family tasks like picking the children up at school. The aim is to protect fatherhood from the feminine and domestic realms, or to reinforce feminine stereotypes through contrasts.

→ **MENNEN ADVERTISEMENT,**
Devarrieux Villaret, February 2002

In this advertising spot, a man must pick his daughter up at school; at the conclusion of a gruelling race against the clock, he manages to arrive on time. This is the opposite of feminine competence and availability because this father is portrayed as a superhero from an action movie: fetching his daughter at school is a true feat in his life as an important man, as symbolised by his executive suit. Here the product being promoted is not for children, but for the man: this virile deodorant shows that despite the feminine task of getting the kids at school, this father is still a real man.



1st PART | MEN AND CHILDREN : STEREOTYPES AT WORK

➔ **HUGGIES ADVERTISEMENT, JWT, August 2008**

In this spot a father changes his baby's nappies: has the time finally come for new fathers? No, because the scene piles on the signs of distance between masculinity and this type of task. Every effort is made so that the situation on display appears to be an exception and more fictional than realistic: the apartment seems to be a reception area in a public place rather than a domestic setting because he has to seek the refuge of the bedroom to find a bit of peace and quiet.

the father is wearing a suit and has a briefcase, signifying he works outside the home; and he is shocked by what happens when during the nappy change, which shows that he does not do it often. Finally, the bond with his son works in two masculine registers meant to subvert the feminine nature of the task: the power of the penis (spraying urine) and action movie-styled special effects with no regard for who will be cleaning the ceiling (it calls to mind the feminist slogan of the 1970s, «Proletarians of the world, who washes your socks?»).



↓ **EBLY ADVERTISEMENT, OUT OF THE BOX, July 2006**

The recurring logic illustrated by this spot is men's natural incompetence for domestic and parental tasks, despite their willingness to participate. The man prepares Eblly wheat cereal surrounded by his children, but it is the mother who usually cooks and she comes in after him to check the quality. The sports and military metaphor at work removes any danger of feminisation. Finally, the protective apron that the father is wearing signifies that he is the boss and that he should not be confused with the homemaker.



2nd PART | WHEN MEN ARE UP TO THE TASK... COUNTER-STEREOTYPES

While sexist stereotypes constitute the majority of advertisements in the selected corpus, certain advertisements adopt an opposing point of view and depict men who are involved in fatherhood and for whom the path toward equality between women and man is not a source of problems. Others mock the stereotypes observed above.

Nevertheless, within the whole of the studied corpus, these «counter-stereotype» ads only constitute the smallest share. Thus there is a less consequential number of media that can be mobilised. This gives rise to several questions: What form do counter-stereotypes take? What is in it for advertising professionals who take a stand against the stereotypes? Do these advertisements reflect social changes?

As Eric Macé explains it, questioning stereotypes can be analogous to an innovation bonus because it makes it possible to differentiate the product thanks to the advertising treatment associated with it. Thus, «taking a stand against sexist stereotypes is often a winning formula which makes it possible to differentiate the

advertisement and associate the product with non-reductive gender roles, thereby producing the effect of a 'non-sexist cachet', which can be explicitly observed in 'fair trade' products.»

Indeed, as we will observe in greater depth in the detailed analysis of the advertisements, counter-stereotypes serve above all to showcase a product that is a resource to support these involved fathers. These counter-stereotypes are thus characterised by the incorporation of both ancient and contemporary stereotypes and family organisational models in order to better subvert them. They are also defined by the support offered by the product with these new, accepted tasks.

Moreover, some advertisements harbour a certain ambiguity: while the representation of the father seems critical of the stereotypes traditionally at work, the product seems to align with these stereotypes. The irony or the distancing from the stereotypes is then paradoxically used to highlight a product that is highly stereotypical.

The counter-stereotype of egocentric fathers : acceptance of responsibilities and duties

This first kind of counter-stereotypes takes into account the evolution of social practices toward a more complex family where there is less polarisation between fathers and mothers, where fathers participate more and are no longer synonymous

with distant authority and where relations are more democratic. Rather than working around these new practices and exhortations, the fathers portrayed here fully accept them and get assistance with these new responsibilities from the advertised products.

→ **CSA ADVERTISEMENT,**
Ailleurs exactement, January 2005

This advertising spot, whose aim is to draw attention to the harmful effects of exposing children to violent images, depicts egocentric incompetence to better criticise it and offer up the product as a means of acquiring a new skill. The father who is absorbed in his film does not realise the trauma that the images may impose on his son. The message aims to avoid this type of behaviour, therefore it praises responsible fathers who strive not to expose their children to images not intended for their eyes by rejecting and criticising the behaviour of the egocentric father. The tone is educational and didactic, which corresponds to the public service context.



2nd PART | WHEN MEN ARE UP TO THE TASK...
COUNTER-STEREOTYPES

➔ **RENAULT GRAND SCÉNIC ADVERTISEMENT,**
Publicis Madrid, April 2009

A father at the wheel of his minivan as he takes his children to their various extracurricular activities introduces his blended family by speaking directly to the viewer. This process inscribes the spot in a relational register characterised by a complicity that emphasises emotions. This father is dealing with a complex, contemporary family and he must confront new responsibilities, which he fully accepts. The car is presented as a key element within this family architecture. Indeed, it enables him to successfully complete his different tasks and respond to the complexity of new family models. Here the product emerges as a tool that enables acceptance of one's responsibilities and affectivity.

Nevertheless there is an implicit asymmetry between the sexes. This advertisement does indeed show a responsible father who accepts his multi-faceted fatherhood, but with the classic, sexist separation of tasks: while the father is mobile and moves from one household to the next, the mothers of his children are stuck in each household. And although this «new father» moves from one ex-wife to the next, there are no examples of a woman who travels from one ex-husband to the next at the wheel of a giant car...



← **ARTHUR BONNET ADVERTISEMENT,**
October 2008

This poster portrays a man alone in the kitchen preparing a meal while his daughter is at the table doing her homework. Nothing is going on, save for the joys of togetherness. The father appears to be a model man at ease in a domestic context. He does not even need to bother with an apron because this appears to be a routine event for him as he fully takes on his role as father. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the highly stereotypical advertisements often depict a scene with a father and son, as if this man-man intimacy could prevent the demasculinisation caused by getting involved in family activities. This is not the case here. Nevertheless, there is one false note because this kitchen is totally masculine with its shades of grey and a certain coldness: everything is perfectly arranged and stored, which lends the scene a slightly artificial feel.

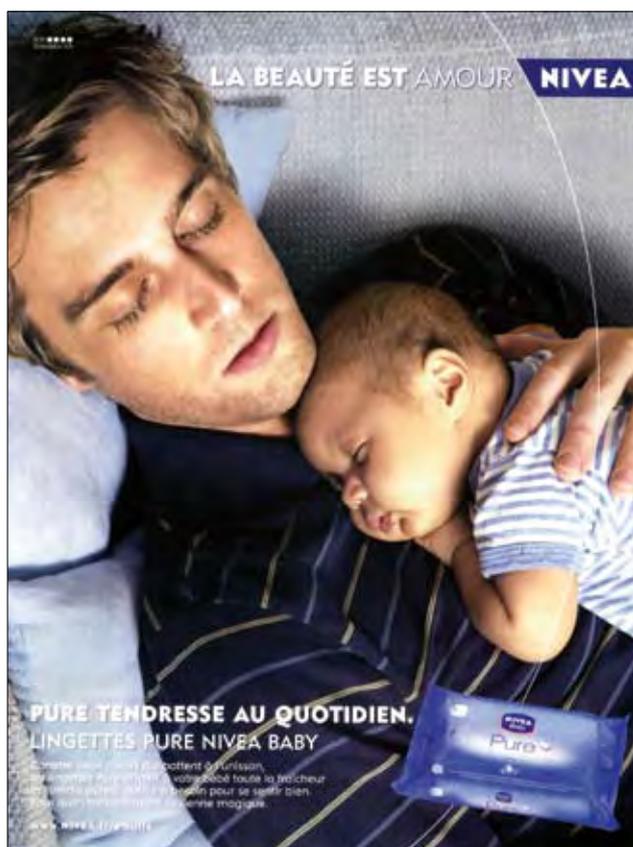
2nd PART | WHEN MEN ARE UP TO THE TASK...
COUNTER-STEREOTYPES

The counter-stereotype of virile fathers : between keeping virility at bay and acknowledging sensitivity

This second kind of counter-stereotypes depicts men who do not need to assert their virility. The fathers in these advertisements fully accept a relational form of fatherhood where sensitivity has its place.

→ **RENAULT TWINGO,**
WAM Publicis, January 2009

A young man arrives in his Twingo car in front of a nightclub with his friends; drag queens are standing in a queue to enter. He recognises one of them as his father. The father and the son both appear at first to be embarrassed, then the son calls to his father for help getting into the nightclub. Then comes the slogan: «At ease in your time, at ease in your Twingo.» This spot focuses on the son, who is already an adult: out of both affection and opportunism, he does not hesitate to acknowledge his connection to a «non-standard» father. He also seems to prefer the relationship with his father to the stereotypes of virility and to thereby move beyond prejudices. The slogan repackages the product as the symbol of a true relationship that is contemporary and far removed from traditional stereotypes



← **NIVEA,**
BDF Beiersdorf SA, September 2008

This advertisement shows a man who is sweetly relaxing: he is lying down with a baby in his arms under the slogan «Pure tenderness every day». This poster depicts the entire lexicon of femininity: attestation of gentleness, an advertised product which pertains to caring for infants and the close physical proximity to the baby. The father emerges as a modern man whose relationship with his child is characterised by tenderness, physical closeness and care. But this register is challenged or at least defeminised by a blue visual, as blue is the symbol of masculinity for both the father and the child. Is this then a defiance of stereotypes and a reshaping of the register of sensitivity or is it the persistence of gender polarisation?

Ambiguity and dumbed down equality

When counter-stereotypes serve stereotypical products

→ **SANTAS FAMILIA ADVERTISEMENT,**
Contrapunto 2003

This poster, which sings the praises of a family insurance policy, depicts James Bond as a father. The hero of the film is thus employed to opposite effect in the role of a father who safely manages his family. The effect of the advertisement lies in the gap between the identity of the hero and his function as a father. However, the hero presented remains a pater familias who is responsible for his family, which corresponds to an equally traditional stereotype of the male identity: man as breadwinner. The product directly targets the man who is financially responsible for his family. Finally, there are two levels of interpretation: the first level depicts the hero used to opposite effect, which connotes a counter-stereotype, while the second level associates the hero with a traditional masculine figure and showcases a product that enables the man to fulfil his role as Mr Breadwinner, thereby afflicting this poster with a traditionalist stereotype.



↓ **L'EQUIPE ADVERTISEMENT, DDB Paris, March 2005**

This advertising spot occupies a humorous space and uses irony to promote its product. A father comes to tell his little boy goodnight in his bedroom. The child opens his eyes and starts screaming, frightened by the presence of this father who is a stranger to him. Finally the father, who was holding a copy of L'Equipe in his hand, holds the paper in front of his face as if he were reading it. This is when the reassured little boy exclaims: «Oh, Daddy! It's you!» Here, the stereotype of the distant father is thus depicted in a critical and caricatured manner as the father who is distraught by the reaction of his son finds but one solution: to hold up like a standard the symbol of his egocentric fatherhood. The product itself becomes an object of ridicule: the signifier of egocentric fathers who are distant and uninvolved. The implied message of this irony seems to be that «*too much distance in fatherhood is harmful to fatherhood*».



2nd PART | WHEN MEN ARE UP TO THE TASK...
COUNTER-STEREOTYPES

Dumbed-down equality or shared incompetence



← CANAL J ADVERTISEMENT,
DDB Paris, 2007

These two posters respond to one another by showing a man and a woman in family settings who are awkwardly attempting to replace television programming for children. The man is clearly a father: he has all the indications of incompetent good will and protection from domestic matters (he is wearing an apron in the kitchen). The young woman could be a mother, which would enable the counter-stereotype of dumbed-down equality in the sharing of parental incompetence which is no longer a flaw reserved for fathers. Nevertheless, this very young woman could also be a big sister or a babysitter. In this case, order is restored: fathers in family settings are not occupying the same space as competent women, but rather they are grouped together with incompetent young women who lack skills because they are not yet mothers.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRENDS?

As we saw during the analysis, the various advertisements reflect tension between conformism and innovation that is characteristic of culture industries. But can one identify any constants or trends according to the business sector? Are certain sectors more conservative in their representation of fatherhood while others are more innovative?

Automobile and financial services : traditional bastions of masculinity

Automobile sector : the free, egocentric man

The automobile sector is particularly well suited to the refusal of fatherhood. In effect, as a synonym of freedom and independence, a source of pleasure and the object of desire, cars are at odds with fatherly and family constraints. Thus many automobile advertisements portray men who hit the road to escape far from their families and homes. Others show a committed father, but one for whom the product is a way to offset this attitude. Either fatherhood is shown as something negative for which the car can compensate, or fatherhood appears as a means of justifying the acquisition of an automobile that had long been coveted. While

women naturally derive happiness from motherhood and children, men naturally derive pleasure from cars.

Financial services sector : a responsible, provident family leader

Another stereotype of the male identity that was on wide display is that of the man as «breadwinner». Advertisements in the financial sector are directed at the head of household who must take financial responsibility for his children. Here the father is venerated: he does not flee his traditional responsibilities, but rather embraces them. In this sector advertising professionals are playing up the values of inheritance, legacy, heritage and succession.

Stereotypes and counter-stereotypes often coexist

However, while some sectors seem to reflect a more conservative trend, when we were analysing our corpus we saw that a given sector could present advertisements that demonstrated stereotypes while others took the opposite view. Similarly, the same advertising agency can also produce scripts that are diametrically opposed.

So how can we explain this apparent paradox and lack of logic? Consider the example of the automobile industry and Renault in particular. The series of advertisements for the Clio represents a highly stereotypical version of fatherhood: the man sees his impending fatherhood as the opportunity to buy a new car, fatherhood is a pretext for advance gratification and the advertisement fits squarely with the discourse of avoidance. Meanwhile the advert for the Renault Twingo seems to be far less traditional when it depicts an adult son who recognises his father among a group of drag queens.

Similarly, the advertisement for the Renault Grand Scénic takes into account the current changes in families and portrays an involved father of a blended family with a product that supports this devoted affection. What's more, this spot was created by Publicis Madrid, a branch of Publicis, the agency that originating the

more stereotypical Clio advert.

These three advertisements ably illustrate the coexistence of different lines of thinking, which are reflections of the tensions which characterise the advertising sector between the guaranteed dividends of conformity and the risk of innovation. It is ultimately the logic that the advertiser believes to be the most commercially advantageous that will win out, as well as the image it has of the product's target. In the examples mentioned above, this mind set does seem to be at work: for the Clio, advertising professionals are addressing future families, which they certainly perceive as far more conventional or traditional than the target audience for the Twingo, a car designed for young people, in which case they are trying to associate the product with modernity.

One thus realises that, to closely analyse the depiction of these stereotypes or counter-stereotypes in advertising, one cannot omit to consider the reasoning at work in the field, whether it is a commercial or aesthetic line of thinking. From this perspective, sector-specific analysis can be difficult since, as we saw, the same advertiser or the same agency may juxtapose radically different lines of reasoning.

LEXI
CON

APPEN
DIX

LEXICON

GENDER

Gender is the organisation of the differences between feminine and masculine in practices and in representations. For Joan Scott, «*gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes and also a primary way of signifying relationships of power*».

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

A «*form of socially forged and shared knowledge with a practical aim and which encourages the construction of a reality shared by a social group*» (Denise Jodelet, 1989).

The representation is not a reflection of the state of reality. It «holds up for view» an arrangement or ordering of reality, which aims not only to explain an established social order, but also to legitimise it. In fact, while it constitutes a form of knowledge, it also contributes to the construction of individual and social identities and the disseminations of standards, behaviours and values.

SEXISM

Term constructed on the model of the word «racism» to denounce discriminatory mentalities based on sex. This differential treatment affects women the most often and is perpetuated in language and discourse, notably through biased representations and stereotypes, as well as in practices.

SOCIALISATION

Socialisation is the process by which the individual embraces the rules of an organisation and all the interactions by which the social identity is constructed.

Primary socialisation is what occurs during childhood and secondary socialisation takes place between adolescence and the end of one's life. Several agents (or entities) are involved at the various steps of these processes. The family is undoubtedly the most decisive socialisation entity because it is the first one experienced. However it loses its monopoly of influence after early childhood. Schools, peer groups (friends), professional organisations (companies, labour unions), churches, associations and the media also contribute to the internalisation of values, standards and social roles in a way that can reinforce or contradict familial socialisation.

STÉRÉOTYPE

«*Simplified, distorted, rigid and anonymous representations of certain characteristics ascribed to an individual or a group (e.g. American Indians are good hunters)*» (Mollo, Pozo-Medina, 1991, p.12).



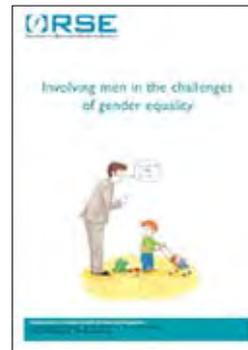
- MARS PETFOOD & FOOD, EBLY**, Out of the box, July 2006
- MEESCHAERT**, March 2007, poster
- MENNEN**, Devarrieux Villaret, February 2002
- NINTENDO**, June 2008, poster
- NIVEA**, BDF Beiersdorf SA, September 2008, poster
- OPEL ASTRA**, MC Cann Erickson, March 2005
- PAMPERS**, October 2007, poster
- PANASONIC**, Ailleurs exactement, May 2008
- PETIT BATEAU**, BETC EURO RSCG, 2007
- PEUGEOT 207**, BETC EURO RSCG, 2008
- RENAULT CLIO ESTATE, PUBLICIS, FEBRUARY 2008, POSTER**
- RENAULT CLIO**, Publicis Conseil, January 2008
- RENAULT GRAND SCÉNIC**, Publicis Madrid, April 2009
- RENAULT TWINGO**, WAM Publicis, January 2009
- SANITAS FAMILIA**, Contrapunto, 2003, poster
- SNC L'EQUIPE**, DDB Paris, March 2005
- STATE STREET INSTITUT**, 2007, poster
- VOLKSWAGEN TOURAN**, Agence V, April 2006
- VOLKSWAGEN TOURAN**, Agence V, April 2008
- VOLKSWAGEN TOURAN**, Agence V, April 2009
- VOLKSWAGEN TOURAN**, September 2008, poster
- WILKINSON**, JWT, November 2006
- ZAZOO**, Duval Guillaume Antwerp et Franck Devos, 2003



ORSE has published several documents about gender equality :



« Guide on gender equality best practices in companies » 2009



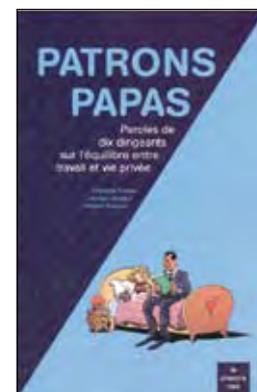
« Men are the Future of gender equality »
Document meant to increase awareness among male employees in companies on gender equality issues



« Corporate Guide : Promoting Parenting Among Male Employees », in collaboration with CNIDFF



Since March 2005, ORSE has been animating a site that classifies the gender equality agreements signed in France www.egaliteprofessionnelle.org



« CEOs are fathers, too. Testimonies of 10 leaders upon their work/life balance »
A book of interviews with big companies CEOs



Contact ORSE
Tél. : + 33 1 56 79 35 00
www.orse.org - contact@orse.org