

Volume 41
issue 3 / 2022

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 41 (3)
set/2022-dez/2022

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

“Being a father is not enough, you have to participate”: presences and absences of masculinity in the care of children in advertisements for baby products on Instagram¹

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¹ A previous version of this work, significantly different, was presented at the 44th Intercom Congress.

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TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Silva, Carolina Tonussi; Sá Martino, Luís Mauro. (2022). “Being a father is not enough, you have to participate”: presences and absences of masculinity in the care of children in advertisements for baby products on Instagram. *Contracampo* - Brazilian Journal of Communication, Niterói, v. 41, n. 3.

Submitted on: 03/14/2022. Reviewer A: 08/18/2022; Reviewer B: 09/13/2022; Reviewer A: 11/10/2022; Reviewer B: 09/28/2022. Accepted on: 10/13/2022.

DOI - <https://doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v41i3.53494>



Abstract

What does baby product advertisements tell about fathers' and mothers' place in parenthood? This text, grounded on the work of Corrêa (2011), analyses 423 Instagram posts of products from Huggies and Neslac from January 2020 to December 2021, underlining the roles of fathers and mothers in baby care. The analysis suggests that (a) fathers are shown in 19 posts (4,49%); (b) its presence is mostly linked with fun, not care; (c) only one image shows a father taking care of a baby. Although the roles of women and men, especially as mothers and fathers, are changing in contemporary society, the adaptation of advertising to this context is still timid. These data are analyzed from the perspective of gender and identity studies.

Keywords

Parenthood; Gender; Communication; Advertising; Instagram

Introduction

In her doctoral thesis, Laura Guimarães Corrêa (2011; 2013) made a detailed examination of the commemorative publicity of Mothers' and Fathers' Day, highlighting the constituted gender performances, as stated by Butler (2007), in media representations. The result of his research is already expressed in the title of the work: "Mothers take care, fathers play".

The strength of this affirmation lies in the perspective of a sexual division of labor, markedly present in the relationship of heterosexual cisgender couples. It has been backed up and reinforced in advertisements referring to these two celebrations. In advertisements promoting products and services for babies, a prevalent and recurrent depiction is one where women assume the primary role of caregivers, shouldering the responsibility for childcare and nurturing, while the presence of the father figure is often downplayed or portrayed as merely decorative.

The context of celebrating these dates, in both cases, is framed within a perspective of heteronormative parenthood, where there is an immediate assumption of division between fathers and mothers in their relationship with their children. This unfolds in the assignment of specific behaviors attributed to each parent: caregiving is highlighted from the maternal perspective, while fathers are often relegated to the role of fun and play.

It is a game of constructing and shaping identities, in which the power of representation is asserted not only through the continuous and regular repetition of the same type of advertisements year after year, but also through the reiteration of stereotypes formed from that perspective. This not only indicates a place relative to gender but also demonstrates the expectation of a gender performance linked to the experience of parenthood.

The representation of such stereotypes can also be seen within the context of other advertising discourses that historically reproduce the image of a so-called "happy family" (the "margarine commercial family") through the display of a singular representation, emphasizing gender performances as well as the association with a specific social class, age group, and ethnicity.

It is within this perspective that the central question of this study can be formulated: What do advertisements for baby products reveal about the roles of fathers and mothers in caring for their children? This paper analyzes 423 posts of the Huggies and Neslac brands on Instagram social network between January 2020 and December 2021. These are two companies specialized in products for the care of newborns and children up to two years old. In what follows, we will firstly make a brief exposition of the questions referring to the changes in parenting profile; then, the focus will be on thinking about some aspects of the relationship between parenthood and care; and we will finally show the analysis of the advertisements, when the methodological procedures will also be detailed.

A transformation in the social role played by mothers and fathers

The historical construction of the attributions related to fathers and mothers, in Western cultures, has been defined by the same binary conception responsible for the definition of numerous other gender performances. This division, presented as a cornerstone of identity practices throughout much of history, was even more naturalized as it reproduced, across various instances, the practices of hegemony associated with what Bourdieu (2004) refers to as "masculine domination."

The place of masculinity in contemporary society has been discussed and reconsidered by a significant number of female and male authors, such as Welzer-Lang (2001), Silva (2006), Shugart (2008), Silva and Macedo (2012), Connell and Messerschmidt (2013), Guerra et al. (2014), interested in understanding the transformations in the concept and the emergence of *new masculinities*, while also being attentive to setbacks and the persistence of historically hegemonic values. It's worth noting that

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a significant portion of these studies originates from Psychology and Social Sciences, as well as within Gender Studies - the observation of their publication venues also suggests a demand for texts on this topic within the field of Communication.

Gabriel e Dias (2011, p. 253) highlights that a "new understanding about relationships was established and leafed through families with more diverse configurations, where the figures of mother and father, previously rigidly demarcated, are being diluted, giving rise to a more flexible and affectionate way of relating". The authors also indicate how "the role of being a father is undergoing significant transformation". However, Gabriel e Dias (2011) also observe a discrepancy between the conception and the proposal: "Participation, then, boils down to the time they are available rather than the entirety of time when the child needs care, with the mother or school being the primary caregivers for the child during the day" (p. 260). Even in the face of transformations in gender relations and an awareness of the need for care, the persistence of the traditional model is evident, reinforced by the advertisements analyzed in this study.

This division, drawn from a gender identity reduced to a biological question, is sustained from the chain of series of meanings attributed to practices associated with "feminine" in opposition to "masculine". The attributions related to parenthood, in this way, are inscribed in a larger network of meanings, based on the male-female binary opposition. These meanings constituted a chain of senses from which the representation of a subject was formed, a subject for whom a specific place in society was reserved from their origin.

Likewise, the signifier "mother" is inscribed in a series of close and associated references: *woman, care, affect, bringing a child up, education*, markedly located in the area of the particular activities at home. In contrast, the idea of "father" was turned to *authority, distance, firmness, practice* and care as public business. On the one hand, maternal care was ultimately inscribed in a discourse of unconditional love. On the other hand, paternal authority was a representation of norms and laws, in a discourse that permeated the domestic space without necessarily belonging to it – including as a reference to a subsequent sanction ("you'll see when your father gets home").

Moreira and Toneli (2013, p. 391) highlight tense aspects in the construction of these webs of meanings around the father figure: "These different discursive networks and their respective historical movements that configure relations of power/knowledge and that conform ways of being father seem to be important aspects to understand how paternity is configured in the present as a discursive fact".

As a result of a developed society based on a non-patriarchal model, in which the man (father) maintains authority over women and children in the family structure, for a long time women were excluded from socioeconomic activities. In a study on the subject, Bruschini and Ricoldi (2012) demonstrated how, structurally, there are few elements that guide men towards caregiving activities with their children. The public policies aimed at the parenting relationship refer, basically, to women, freeing men for activities exclusively related to paid work.

These concepts were cultivated since childhood, with the definition of a gender identity and the cultivation of two meanings attributed to it since then. The "authority" and "firmness" of the father prepares the boy for treatment as public business, while the "kindness" and "care" of the mother were formative for the girl to address the future treatment as their own children. Education was ruled by the divisions aimed at maintaining a certain social order in which the difference and inequality between the genders was one of the foundations of education.

This picture remains unchanged until the 20th century, in which political, economic and social transformations have caused a significant alteration in the conceptions and attributions of gender. The struggle for women's rights in both the private and political spheres began in the 19th century, gained more support in the 20th century, and despite advancements, there is still a long way to go to achieve equity in the 21st century.

This means, at least in theory, a review of the men and women's place within an expanded gender perspective, in which binarism would give way to a more diverse conception, ceasing to be based exclusively on the biological perspective.

Not by coincidence, this transformation in the conception of the subject seems to encounter resistance in equal measure, especially in the conservative demand for the maintenance of the current order in the face of changes – as Bauman (2008) recalls regarding the continuous process of transforming social identities, the pursuit of this decentered subject for new foundations to which it can cling to establish its identity leads nowhere but to fundamentalism.

It is noted, at the same time, the struggle for implementing changes that would allow greater equality and diversity, resulting in new models of parental attribution. Currently about 50% of Brazilian families are headed by women, and their conditions remain marked by wide inequality.

According to the Gender Statistics Study: Women's Social Indicators in Brazil¹, released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) on March 7, 2018, less than 11% of two chamber seats are held by women. They are in less than 38% of two managerial positions, where they could be at the forefront of decision-making, even being more educated than men. This situation tends to reproduce inequalities between men and women, at the same time reinforcing gender stereotypes to the extent that it is fundamentally affirmed as a way to distinguish activities and practices in society.

It is possible to notice this in various daily practices that, due to their proximity, can easily be naturalized – there is no focus on the arbitrary aspects of what their elaboration is carried out. See, for example, the difference between the time of the maternity license and the paternal license, childcare benefits only for the mothers, restaurants with baby changing facilities only in the woman's toilet, or the perspective of being ready to take care in case of need (“where is this boy's mother?”) reinforce and promote gender inequality linked to parenthood.

Thus, despite the advancements in the struggle for women's rights, it is still possible to observe a pronounced binary, patriarchal, and heteronormative perspective in the way parental roles are represented. This cultivation of a historically ingrained model can be seen in the representations circulating within society, even though it has been subject to constant criticism, reinterpretation, and challenges from gender-related social movements. This type of representation, it seems, still remains dominant.

In the realm of parenthood, the idea is propagated that the mother is the primary caregiver and therefore should undertake more activities related to childcare, doing so in a more intensive manner. As women, they would be naturally suitable to be so and, therefore, more “trained” to play such a role from childhood. They replicate the model they experienced from a young age in their homes and were exposed to through media and other spaces that reinforce such a stereotype. Even if unintentionally, the expectation of those around the couple is also that the mother assumes this role with greater determination.

Gomes and Resende (2004, p. 119) assert that “it is not just an issue of questioning a certain family model, but all the references of individual identity, to which each one tends to be molded”. Their study, carried out in the early 2000s, showed an attitude at the same time of questioning and justifying young parents in relation to their own parents. At the same time as they reject an education model based on the absence, or a rigid presence, of a father figure, on the other hand, they also justify their behaviors and attitudes by virtue of “lack of time” or “excessive workload”. There was, in this way, a founding ambivalence in relation to the role model/challenge that would directly influence their self-representations.

When it comes to the vision of women with respect to parenthood, there is a change in relation to the discourse of men. In this case, the issue of the father's role is highlighted - in this scenario, taken on by the mothers. Based on interviews with women family leaders, Perucchi and Beirão (2007, p. 63) show that “most of them reconstitute themselves by performing paternal and maternal functions”.

¹ Retrieved from: <https://educa.ibge.gov.br/jovens/materias-especiais/materias-especiais/20453-estatisticas-de-genero-indicadores-sociais-das-mulheres-no-brasil.html>

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Consequently, mothers assume more responsibilities in caring and, even unconsciously, they may limit fathers' involvement in the tasks, as it is expected by society that mothers fulfill this function.

As Bourdieu (1995) recalls, one of the strongest aspects of symbolic violence is to make the dominant adopt for himself the dominant discourse, resulting in nothing more than the naturalization of a situation of domination, but, in some cases, in its own legitimacy before society.

In research on the representation of women with respect to paternity, Perucchi and Beirão (2007, p. 63) detect this aspect of discursive incorporation. According to the authors, the sentences of their interviewees evidenced this aspect, showing that "constructions of gender based on a patriarchal model were evident in the sentences of the informants, relating motherhood to sensitivity and submission and fatherhood to strength and activity".

The media, in this aspect, has a fundamental role as to establish shared representations. Hennigen and Guareschi (2002, p. 46) remind us that the representations of the media are involved in a process of articulation stressed with the elaboration of identities: "As identities are culturally constructed, the media stands out in our time as a privileged space for the circulation of discourses, becoming a source of identity references". Hence its importance in considering the construction of identities related to fatherhood by circulating pre-existing conceptions, while also confronting changing social realities.

The advertising underrepresentation of men in caring for their children

Duda Mendonça's award-winning campaign, to which the title of the article refers, was created in the 1980s, at the time by the DM9 agency for the Gelol brand. It narrated the story of a father who takes his son to play in a football championship. Even under the rain, with his son on or off the field, the father is in the stands cheering along with his daughter. When the boy is injured after suffering a penalty, the father enters the field to apply the advertising ointment, which he had taken from home. The happy ending with the boy scoring a goal in the free-kick was accompanied by the phrase "It's not enough to be a father, you have to participate. It is not enough to be a medicine, it must be Gelol".

It is worth noting that the appeal to the father's participation in raising the child takes place in a context primarily formed by signifiers that refer to the male universe. The father is present accompanying his son in a soccer game – in Brazil, a sport historically associated with men. Few activities would be more masculine than "taking the child to the soccer game", a point that would allow, in the universe of relationships with other parents, to trigger a speech of pride. His effective participation takes place when the boy is injured and the father takes the place of a "doctor" on the team, another activity linked to the masculine. The mother is absent, and the daughter exists only to cheer for her brother.

The performance of domestic tasks by men is treated by the fictional media, to a large extent, as something close to parody. In a study on the subject in the American context, Vavrus (2002) shows that taking care of the house - and, consequently, of the children - is a typical plot of comedy series, being rarely treated seriously. Work from home, only those that involve repairs and construction, services of a more "technical" or "rational" nature, and therefore historically associated with masculinity. Even when performed, work at home is used as an element that reinforces the male-female dichotomy, emphasizing the "man" posture when doing these activities (Swenson, 2009; Courtney, 2009; Moio; Arnold; Gentry, 2013).

Likewise, advertising, at the time it was produced and broadcast, constituted an interpellation to the father figure in the sense of being present and active. What could have been a beginning for the representation in advertising of the male figure as more present and participatory in the responsibility of taking care of children has not progressed as it could in recent years. Advertising reflects and reinforces society's behavior, acting not only in the consumption of material goods but also in symbolic ones. As

indicated by Silva and Covaleski (2019, p. 213), it is a "reproductive instance of symbolic systems of meaning, because, at some level, it is capable of revealing consumption practices, influencing lifestyles, and constructing meanings in a society."

The repetition of easily recognized and assimilated stereotypes by the public is, in this perspective, a strategy of advertising itself in the sense of seeking to "generate engagement" with its public, in a complex regime of projections, recognitions and aspirations in which the representations in circulation tend to be reinforced.

At the same time, the representations of the father and paternity in the media have been the object of attention of researchers interested in observing how the construction of forms of masculinity dialogue - or not - with the transformations in contemporary society.

Martins (2019), studying the representation of masculinity in Disney animation movies, shows that the incorporation of knowledge regarding "being a man" is developed directly in the company's productions, restricting any non-hegemonic masculinity to the scope of parody; the exception, according to the research, is in "The Incredibles 2", in which there is an inversion - but not questioning - of the practices attributed to each genre when the father of the series, Mr. Incredible, is tasked with taking care of the children while his wife goes out to fight crime. The father's inability to handle the tasks related to the care of the children suggests the indirect reproduction of a binary perspective: only as an exception does a man take on these tasks.

Historically, advertising uses stereotypes that, while facilitating the recognition of certain characters or situations, reinforce prejudices through representations, or their absence, which are outdated and incoherent. Correa says:

advertising is one of the institutions that maintain the capitalist system, of which it is a fundamental part. Therefore, for the continuity of the status quo, it is necessary for advertising to incorporate the speech of the most powerful groups. In advertising, stereotypes, catchphrases, platitudes, and proverbs are used; as texts and images that explain, classify, simplify, and order social groups. With few exceptions, the advertising discourse uses fixed and shared social constructions that are part of the hegemonic cultural codes. (Corrêa, 2013, p. 41).

The risk taken in this type of posture is the reaffirmation of representations that do not match the reality of the public itself but support a certain classificatory bias of the social agents involved in a way that is sometimes distorted or labeled.

The examples could multiply, historically seen in the objectification and hypersexualization of the female body, the association of cisgender heterosexual men as examples of strength, or homosexuals portrayed with exaggerated speech and gestures. Additionally, there's been limited diversity and representation, such as the cases of Black individuals, the elderly, and people with disabilities, in advertising campaigns.

At the same time, as Wottrich (2018) reminds us, these representations are also challenged by the very audience they target when they don't feel represented or included in this type of portrayal. It is, therefore, a space for the reproduction and reinforcement of stereotypes, but also for resistance and negotiations of meaning, as recalls Hall (2003).

In the wake of Corrêa (2011) and Butler (2009), it is observed that the gender performances attributed to men and women are particularly different in attitudes towards children. Silva and Picinnini (2007, p. 572), in a research on the relationships between parents and children, highlight that parents "can have a broad participation in the lives of their children, not restricting their involvement to financial support, outings and games". Respondents "participated in the basic care of their children and shared responsibilities for the children with their wives". However, they point out, the professional aspect also invaded this territory of change, showing aspects of the economic base as an important component in

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this relationship. Fathers, in their study, "were critical of their participation in the daily lives of children, believing that it should be greater, demonstrating the existence of a conflict between ideal and real paternity".

Not just the division of tasks, but the division of responsibility: it's not just bathing but knowing if the water is at the ideal temperature, if the towel is close by to dry the baby, and if everything is also prepared for the post-bath. It is not just changing the diaper, but checking if it is needed to buy more, what size, and what brand. More than executing, the concern and planning of each task interfere with the heavy mental load and this needs to be divided more equally.

The current social structure makes women feel more prepared than men to take on the responsibility of taking care of children. Few references are given to men who want to play the role of co-responsible for the care of their children and, above all, to make them feel safe in this activity.

Silva and Piccini (2007, p. 563) scale this change. Emphasizing that "although father involvement sometimes still does not show a large quantitative growth", they indicate the existence of "a greater desire for participation, on the part of fathers, in raising their children, accompanied by a new capacity for fatherhood", whose characteristics are more associated with the maternal figure".

This type of advertising is anchored in a strong identity representation, aimed at defining not only well-defined male and female identities, but also in relation to dealing with children, especially at this moment in the child's life in which the number of demands, and the time of dedication, is particularly high.

Although there are initiatives that aim to break standards, such as the appreciation of real beauty and the representation of independent women in the labor market, in communication aimed at mothers, women are rarely included in the public sphere.

With women taking on multiple roles, managing both the family, household, and their careers, a support network becomes increasingly essential. The execution and control of domestic tasks, in addition to caring for the children, which were more concentrated on the woman, now need to be better distributed so that she can take on the other activities.

These representations assert themselves in countless spaces. In a study of telenovelas, for example, Ronsini (2011) demonstrates how this type of production "(re)produces a traditional feminine model that links women primarily to the roles of mother, wife, and homemaker, while leaving the public sphere as predominantly male-dominated." The low visibility of men taking a more participatory role also occurs in advertising and beyond the media. This representation is contained in spaces and institutions such as schools, Church, State (Theodoro, 2016, p.18), which limits the identification of men as parents who should naturally assume this responsibility.

The analysis of Instagram's posts

We sought to analyze the current context of male representation as responsible for caring for children through a documentary analysis of two brands of baby products. Instagram posts from 10/01/2020 to 12/31/2021 made by the Huggies brand, belonging to the Kimberly Clark company, and the Neslac brand, belonging to the Nestlé company, were analyzed. These are two institutional accounts, aimed at the dissemination of baby products, with an emphasis on the idea of "care" and "attention" as synonyms for "affection" and "dedication" from parents – mostly mothers, as indicated in this text. The update frequency varies, which makes a more exact chronological comparison impossible. Therefore, the arbitrary cut of practically two years was preferred here. In this first moment, all published images were included, in a total of 423.

Given the interest of this text in observing the father's place in this advertising, the images in which only the mother was present were immediately discarded. The remaining 19 became, effectively, the corpus of this work.

The image, especially the advertising image, is understood as a construction to be analyzed not only in terms of its intentionality as an element aimed at the consumption of the product but also of the representation itself existing in each of them. As Mondzain (2015; 2016) recalls, the image is linked to a regime of visibility in which the act of showing is not separated from what is placed outside the frame, which could be thought of in terms of equivalence to the erasure of a given discourse – point present in the imagery discourse (Lelo, 2017; Marques; Biondi, 2019).

A specific gender approach was used, with differences between female and male, and the place of parents of babies up to one year old in a family composed of a woman and a man. Just as the text criticizes the lack of representation of men in the role of fathers in advertising, there's also an absence of other family configurations that would be extremely relevant to analyze. However, due to time and scope constraints, this won't be addressed in the current article.

The cut by advertising products aimed at babies is due to the fact that this moment is particularly demanding in terms of care and attention to the child, thus presenting the possibility of verifying how the attributions of activities to men and women are represented. It's worth noting from the outset that the entirety of the analyzed corpus featured heterosexual couples; same-sex parenting, it seems, is still far from this type of advertisement. These are the official accounts of the products on the social network Instagram, with the dissemination of the advertising material produced.

The Neslac account had 17,000 followers, while Huggies had 412,000 at the time of the last query (February, 2022). In the case of Neslac, the last update was in February 2021, while Huggies maintains a roughly weekly pace of postings.

Posts referring to the advertising of disposable diapers and dairy compounds were analyzed, linked to two tasks – cleaning and feeding the baby – that can be performed by both the female and male figures without any reservation of a gendered nature.

The categories of analysis were dedicated to highlighting, in the images, the place reserved for the few male figures who actually appear in the exercise of paternity. As a point of reference in this aspect, the classic study by Joly (1996) was taken to guide the approach to the image as a set of relationships woven among its components. In the case of this study, the observation of father-child relationships in the images was emphasized, accompanied by the presence of objects in the scene responsible for constructing a setting, which was also taken as an object of analysis.

The analysis of the posts of the two companies on Instagram shows not only this perpetuation of a binary division of activities, but a marked presence of women as protagonists in moments of care that could be assumed by men. It is important, in this sense, to better characterize this text's objects of analysis.

The posts appear as advertisements for the brand's products on its institutional page. It is an advertisement linked to the institutional space, and, although it does not represent a strict case of organizational communication, in the sense given to the term by Künsch (2003), it is not detached from this reference.

The presence of brands and organizations in the virtual environment seems to imply new forms of bonding with the consumer, as it offers the opportunity for more direct communication with the final public. At the same time, it is worth remembering that this is not a communication about the institution, but about a product – elements that are close, but that do not completely overlap. It is not, therefore, the analysis of an institutional discourse, but its objectification in the form of the advertised product – the trigger, in this case, is the advertising discourse. Tortajada, Araña and Martínez (2013) indicate that, especially in social networks, the exposure of gender performances has long been one of the strongest premises in the construction of stereotypes in advertising.

In an initial approximation, a difference in the distribution of images can be noticed in the set of posts analyzed. While the Huggies brand Instagram brings independent posts (figure 1), Neslac forms, with

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the first two rows of posts, the figure of a woman (figure 2). The male figure is absent, and the interactions, in both cases, are between the woman and the baby.

The absence of any unorthodox body is observed, outside of a pattern that favors a thin silhouette, without any sign or marker of the time's passage. There is, of course, a class positioning: access to the advertised products is far from universal, and the scenario shows rooms in a supposedly upper-middle-class house. No household appliances appear, only furniture perfectly matched to the color palette – always light, with the brand's specific shades – in all the posts.

In the case of Huggies, there are posts showing only children, as is common in disposable diaper packaging. Within the scope of Neslac, in all posts, the child is accompanied by the mother.

This predominance of the female figure is not restricted to the initial posts. The absence of the male figure is characteristic of practically the entire set of images. The ways in which advertising is addressed, as well as the positioning of products and services, indicates Chang (2006), is strongly influenced by the dominant model of gender in terms of masculinity/femininity. From there, part of the difference between the representation of fathers and mothers in the posts can be understood, as well as their ways of addressing the expected audience.

In similar terms, Pimenta and Natividade (2012) examine the construction of gender in advertisements published in print magazines. From a semiotic matrix, the authors show the distance in the association between emotions and masculinity: "If we consider media representations as an important space for the construction of meanings about social identities, We can grasp that the examined advertisements exert an influence on the shaping of a notably hegemonic masculinity: one that is detached from emotions and oriented towards the external world".

In the case of the Huggies brand, of the total of three hundred and seventy posts, sixteen had the male figure and only one had a care situation, with the father bathing the baby (figure 1). The father holds the baby in the final moment of a bath, in a position of welcome, care, and affection shown in his smile; his gaze is directed towards the child, suggesting attention to the child's facial expressions.

Figure 1. The father taking care of the baby



Source: @huggies, August 8, 2021

In two others, the man appears holding the baby, in a moment of closeness and acceptance (figures 2 and 3; 4 and 5). These are the only situations in which there is a demonstration of affection and love between father and child, in which care is directly expressed in the form of affection. In the four images, the father is holding the child on his lap, either in a moment apparently close to sleep (figures 2 and 4), or with the baby awake (Figure 3) or in an exchange of smiles, in a moment of interaction and fun. (Figure 5).

The father figure appears again associated with care, affection, and love, values historically dissociated from the male universe, even within the scope of paternity. The perspective translates into the fact that the men are alone with their children in the photo: the strength of the bond is in the proximity and care for the child.

Figures 2 and 3: scenes of paternal reception



Source: @huggies, Retrieved March 9, 2021 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CMM0Q6JFdtg/>>; @huggies, Retrieved September 3, 2021 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CTYGgB9MSZe/>>

Figures 4 and 5: scenes of paternal reception



Source: @huggies, Retrieved September 23, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CFe0BNwHAIO/>>) @huggies, Retrieved August 25, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CEUm4PMHq9C/>>

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In all the other posts, the man was accompanied by the mother and the child.

In the second case, from the Neslac brand: of the fifty-three posts analyzed, only three portray the father, confirming Corrêa's (2011) perspective. that the father is playing with the child.

In both accounts, the images of mothers refer to happy moments, but as a complement to another task focused on care: interactions with children are always within a perspective of constant happiness, visible in the profusion of smiles both from mothers and the children; however, these are not situations of play or fun, but a perspective of being happy with the moment of care. If, in motherhood, joy is associated with care, in the paternal sphere, happiness and fun become the main activity.

It is worth noting, alongside this minimal presence of the male figure, a very idealized view of activities linked to the mother: as care becomes a moment of joy, there is a departure from any perspective of showing a "real motherhood", with the difficulties inherent in caring for babies: the women portrayed in the posts are well-dressed, made-up, with well-groomed hair and in top shape according to current standards of beauty.

No trace of sleepless nights, tiredness, uninterrupted demands, difficulty reconciling motherhood and work or any element outside of a discourse that associates care and happiness, in the case of women. In the case of man, the lack of this type of "real life" is a consequence of his general absence: there is no way to feel problems if you are not present.

In two Neslac posts in which a man appears, there is also an external object.

In the first one (figure 6), slightly blurred, it shows the serious father holding a kind of mobile or toy, while the daughter smiles at the situation. Their gazes do not intersect, and interaction occurs at best obliquely, stemming from the object that engages the attention of both parties.

Figure 6: parent and child interacting with object



Source: @Nestlenezlac, Retrieved January 14, 2021 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CG7qJp8BaIN/>>

Figure 07: Father accompanying his son in the game



Source: @nestleneslac, Retrieved October 29, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CKCZjGuhBG8/>>

The second (Figure 7) shows father and son playing with building blocks, smiling, putting the finishing touches on a careful shape created with wooden elements. The father accompanies the son in this moment of realization.

There is a certain exteriority in both scenes: while in the posts with interactions between mothers and children, the gaze is led to the core of the interaction (Figures 8 and 9), as if the scene showed a real moment of approximation, with the father figure there is no exchange of glances or smiles, but the seriousness in front of an object – which is, it is worth remembering, neither the diaper nor the dairy compound: the product itself does not appear in the scene, and only the logo is present, in the upper corner. In the second, the object is also the game, and the advertised product appears at the bottom left of the image.

None of the posts portray the father preparing the food, as is the case with two of the posts with the mothers (Figure 10). Even on the few occasions when he is present, the figure of the father remains as a reference to a certain exteriority, bringing to the advertising scene activities outside the act of caring, aimed mainly at fun. The concept associated with the product, in the male case, refers to the sphere of joy and fun as a purpose, different from the act of caring – the obligation lies with the mother, present in the interiority of this place.

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Figures 08 and 09: Mother and child interaction



Source: @huggies, Retrieved May 22, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CAghud8HFa1/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>>>; @huggies, Retrieved October 27, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CG2uV3knH6p/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>>>

Figure 10: Mother preparing the dairy compost



Source: @nestlenseslac, Retrieved October 26, 2020 from: <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CG0n4kihiJk/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>>

Bringing a distinction from Bachelard (2006), the father is in the scene, but does not properly “inhabit” this moment of the relationship with the son. The dwelling place, recalls Bachelard, is characterized by a sense of interiority, of the intimate, of what translates coziness and care; it is the space in which marks are left and from which references are extracted. In the posts, the father is seen inside the house, but not exactly inhabiting the place: his perspective of fun refers to the “out there”, from which another open possibility erupts in the scope of inhabiting.

The posts with the mothers, on the contrary, are translated all the time within the perspective of care regarding the act of inhabiting: not only are they in the environment of the house, but fully integrated with the assigned tasks - taking care of the health and feeding of the children, welcome and generate positive affections. In other words, within the scope of the analyzed posts, the father is, and the mother lives.

When analyzing advertisements to investigate norms and values related to motherhood and fatherhood, despite finding evidence of changes in family and gender relations, Corrêa (2011) observed, in general terms, the permanence of care activities in the maternal sphere:

We have seen that, in the advertisements, care is maintained mostly in the female sphere. As far as play is concerned, only the parents play. Play is in the sphere, above all, of men and children. Therefore, the empirical analysis does not point to a balance of roles (Corrêa, 2011, p. 227).

Of the 423 posts of products from the Huggies and Neslac brands on the social network Instagram, between January 2020 and December 2021, parents appear in only 19 posts, 4.49% of the total. The presence of the male figure is mostly associated with fun; being that in only one image the father is

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effectively taking care of the baby. With the data brought in this text, a decade later, it is noted that the space of gender equality debate is still little occupied by brands. The demands of an increasingly active consumer interested in issues of representation, as shown by Wottrich (2018), could be understood as warning signs for brands to seek to understand the transformations in the hegemonic discourse on the historical place of motherhood and fatherhood, positioning them in communicating to their audience.

As stated by Silva and Covaleski (2019, p. 219), advertising "has the power to make historically silenced issues visible, becoming a space to legitimize diversity and the struggle of social movements". The posts, however, still point to the repetition of well-known images related to gender and parenting.

Final remarks

Caring for children, especially as babies, is usually represented as a woman's responsibility, who is the figure mostly present in advertising and to whom communication is addressed. As anthropologist Miriam Goldenberg mentioned in an interview with the Revista do Instituto Humanitas Unisinos (IHU):

If today's children learn that father and mother can be equally available, caring, responsible, protective, present and loving, it is possible that in the near future, we will have true equality between men and women and the belief that in no domain (public or private) one is superior or more necessary than the other.

Some factors, in addition to the responsibility of taking care of babies, make motherhood more challenging, such as sleep deprivation, the hormonal issue and often the invisibility of the work done in general by the woman in the care of the house. Therefore, it is not about receiving help from the child's father, but about better balancing how this care will be. It is observed that not only the domestic space is still placed as predominantly female, as suggests the majority presence of this configuration in the posts - 414 of a total of 423 - and its link with the environment, while the man, in the 19 posts in which is represented, seems to bring exteriority to the scene, even if it is an indoor scene.

There are still changes in conceptions and practices regarding paternity, although there are still long ways to go.

In a society that carries a strong sexist heritage, there needs to be more conversations and exchanges about co-parenting, both in relation to the naturalness of parents' participation in caring for their children and the greater freedom for them to get involved and take responsibility for the tasks. This acceptance tends to grow with the identification that advertising has the potential to generate.

Although the place of women and men is changing, the adaptation of advertising to this context is still timid, as shown by the analysis carried out in this article. Mothers are represented by a body pattern that favors a thin silhouette, without any sign or marker of the passage of time.

The posted images show a class position that restricts this care to a certain economic possibility – the time of care is fundamentally restricted, and differences in the use of time appear marked there (Federici, 2019; Martino, 2022). The posts, in general, suggest an unrealistic maternity context: mothers are portrayed according to the prevailing standards of beauty, without any trace of tiredness. Fathers, in turn, are not very present in the communication of baby product brands. When represented, they appear more in moments of play and relaxation than in caring for their children.

In addition to men perceiving themselves as more represented in this role, advertising also reinforces a possible change in behavior for mothers, children and the couple's friendships. The more this model is well communicated by brands, the greater the chances of inspiring a fairer division that does not just overload women who already play multiple roles. If, as Federici (2019) points out, the domestic space is a workplace for women, a more diverse and egalitarian representation could perhaps emphasize its effective value.

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