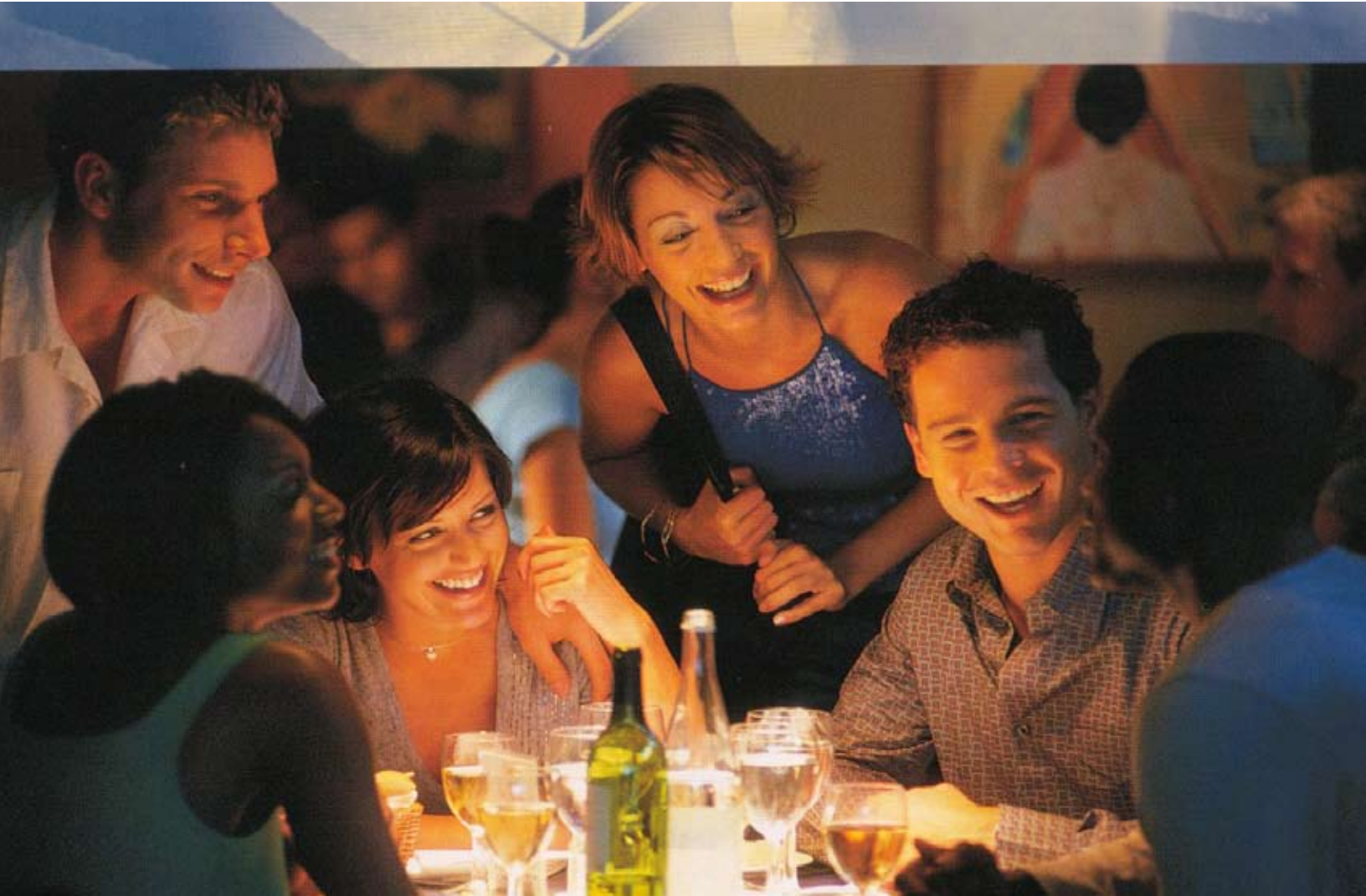


Selling the Suburbs: Exploring Representations of Social Diversity in Marketing Media in Markham, Ontario



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Executive Summary

The southern Ontario landscape is dotted with outdoor billboards and sales centres promoting new residential developments. As farms are converted to suburbia, developers and builders prepare the infrastructure, create detailed plans and begin to shape the look and feel of a future community through marketing material. Advertisements for a new residential development function as a prologue in the story of what a future community will be like: they offer pictures of who will live there, what they will own, what their houses will look like and what the quality of their amenity space will be. Planners on the other hand, also produce visions of what a future community will be like in policy documents such as Official and Secondary Plans. This study examines the policy context and marketing materials for new residential developments in Markham, Ontario. Questions directing the inquiry are: What kind of community is being promoted through planning policies? What messages are housing builders putting forth to sell their housing products? How similar or different are the visions of builders and planners?

Markham, Ontario is located on the suburban fringe of Toronto, one of the most socially diverse regions in Canada. Faced with ever-increasing population projections and concern about suburban sprawl, the region surrounding Markham has adopted the principles of sustainability and smart growth. Markham has been particularly influenced by new urbanism beginning the 1990s with the design of Cornell, a development on the town's eastern border. Following the theories of new urbanism, Markham's primary policy strategy for engaging social diversity is to provide variety in the urban form, particularly through building a range of housing types at different price points. The idea is that if physical diversity is built, the social diversity will follow. Diversity is supported and encouraged at every level of policy influencing Markham including the official plans for the Regional Municipality of York, the Town of Markham and Secondary Plans for specific development areas within the town.

Interviews conducted in June 2007, as part of a larger research project investigating planning theory and practice in Canadian suburbs, revealed that Markham planners, elected official and developers are generally committed to promoting greater diversity in the urban form and society. While most respondents described Markham as extremely diverse, they meant ethnically diverse, and even then they admitted there is less social integration between ethnic groups as they would like and saw ethnic enclaves forming throughout the town. All respondents agreed that there were few opportunities for affordable housing or opportunities to have a variety of incomes living in close proximity to each other as the policy calls for. Some planners thought that real estate and marketing strategies were partly responsible for the enclaving that was interrupting the achievement of diversity. These remarks sparked the interest for this study of marketing materials in Markham to see what builders were communicating in their advertisements and whether or not they were promoting diversity.

During the Fall of 2007 extensive "marketing bundles" were collected for 35 new residential developments in Markham, including websites, brochures, model suite imagery, posters and print ads. These advertisements were analyzed through a combined semiotic, content and

discourse analysis approach. The new developments being advertised were primarily freehold subdivisions with single detached, semi detached and townhouse products for sale. Two developments were high-rise condominiums, 1 was a townhouse condominium and another was a seniors lifestyle gated community.

The first objective determined the marketing themes being used throughout the sample:

- House Design and Construction
- Family
- Home and community
- Recreation
- Neighbourhood design and location
- Exclusivity and prestige
- Nature and environment
- Nostalgia for the past.

Different marketing materials emphasized certain themes, however most developments incorporated every theme to varying extents.

The second objective was to analyze representations of people within the sample and interpret the construction of social meanings. Thirdly, I assessed how social diversity was being made visible or invisible in the marketing material. Overall, the marketing material reinforced dominant cultural stereotypes and promoted a vision of social homogeneity rather than celebrating difference.

While we find it unremarkable that beautiful models sell us products like clothing, planners seeking to encourage inclusivity and diversity within communities may be concerned that builders are promoting new developments with overwhelmingly young, able-bodied, and attractive models. Teenagers are remarkably scarce in the images, with developers preferring to use images of young children that evoke emotions associated family bonds and a bright future.

Although Markham policy seeks to accommodate a variety of lifestyles, families and household types, advertising imagery promotes conventional gender identity, marriage, and traditional roles within a nuclear family. Even though Official Plans for Markham include the provision of affordable housing that can accommodate households with a range of incomes, none of the advertising stresses affordability and the text of the ads generally refer to privilege, exclusivity, and entitlement. Coupled with high land prices in the area, this marketing strategy targets affluent households and maintains high cost housing in the municipality.

Despite the fact that there are many different ethnic groups in Markham, white models were most prevalent in the advertising material. Most new developments did include some images with visible minority models in their marketing materials, however, images with

white models proved more numerous, were larger and were more prominently placed overall. Images with visible minorities were often included, however they were smaller, and visible minority models were often made into secondary subjects by positioning them on the edge of an image or through shadowing. The gated community in the research sample only used images of white models in its marketing materials. A large majority of freehold subdivision advertisements had white models only. The images used to sell townhouse and high-rise condominiums had the highest proportion of images including visible minority models and images showing models with different ethnicities interacting. The developments using the highest proportion of white models had generally higher house prices. The advertisements also downplayed ethnic differences: for instance, all visible minority models wore western clothing. Builders' websites featured the largest percentage of images including visible minority models, followed by print ads. Sales centre signs had the least visible minority representation.

This study revealed a disconnect between what Markham planning policy, and practicing planners strive for in terms of social diversity compared to what is being presented to potential homebuyers through the advertising material for housing products. While the town's policy promotes respect for difference, the imagery selling new developments disregards the increasing diversity and constructs an image of the prospective Markham homebuyer as Western, middle-upper class, youthful, beautiful, and part of a nuclear family. Because builders' advertising plays a significant role in attracting residents to new areas and constructing the character of a new community, it is essential that planners consider how new communities are being promoted and whether or not they align with the community planning objectives set out through planning processes involving citizen input. In cases, such as Markham, where there is a disconnect between official planning goals and what is being promoted through development practice, planners face the ever-important, yet considerable challenge of promoting the less saleable elements of community building: affordability, inclusivity, respect for difference, and social justice.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Diversity and Urban Planning	1
Study Introduction	1
Situating the Study.....	1
Responding to Difference through Urban Planning.....	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Chapter Two: Representing People and Place through Advertising	4
Representation.....	4
A Discursive Approach.....	4
Constructing Futures,	5
Envisioning Dreams	5
Identity Construction Sites:	6
Home & Economy	6
A Dream House in Utopia	7
Place Marketing in the Suburbs	8
New Urbanism: Suburbia in the New Millennium	8
Marketing New Urbanism.....	8
Chapter Three: Study Area and Research Sample	10
Study Area	10
Planning for Diversity in	10
York Region.....	10
New Urbanism Comes To Markham	11
Research Question.....	13
Objectives.....	13
Data Collection Method	13
Research Sample.....	13
Chapter Four: Marketing Themes	16
Methodology for Accomplishing Objective One:	16
Analysis of Marketing Themes:	16
A Combined Content Analysis	16
& Semiotics Approach	16
Applying the approach	18
Marketing Themes Findings.....	20
Methodology Strengths & Weaknesses.....	20
Marketing Themes Discussion.....	21
Marketing it all in Ballantry's Cornell.....	21
Ballantry's Cornell Marketing Theme Findings.....	21
The Past.....	23
Family.....	24

Home & Community.....	24
Neighbourhood Design & Location	24
Recreation	25
Nature.....	26
House Design & Construction.....	26
Exclusivity	27
Social Diversity.....	27
A Comment on Representations of the Environment in The Sample	28
A Comment on Representations of the Built Form in The Sample.....	30
Chapter Five: Social Discourses.....	32
Introduction to Social Issues	32
in Marketing Material.....	32
Methodology for Accomplishing Objectives Two and Three:.....	33
Findings and Analysis.....	36
Social Discourse on	36
The Beautiful Body:	36
Measuring up to the Vitruvian Man	36
Detailed Look at Body Imagery	39
Social Discourse on Gender Identity: Essentializing Dick and Jane	40
Social Discourse about Romance	42
& Sexuality.....	42
Detailed Look at Romance	45
Social Discourse about Gender Roles in Family: Meet Mr. and Mrs. Jones.....	46
Husband-Father Roles	47
Detailed look at Male Gender Roles Imagery.....	50
Wife-Mother Roles.....	51
Detailed Look at Female Gender Roles Imagery.....	53
Social Discourse about Family: Keeping up with the Joneses.....	55
Detailed Look at Family Imagery	58
Social Discourse about Age	60
Detailed Look at Age	60
Detailed Look at Ethnicity Imagery	67
Social Discourse about Class:	69
Queen Victoria's Hangover	69
A Detailed Look at Class	70
Discussion on Social Discourses:	73
A Picture of Exclusive Belonging	73

Chapter Six: Implications for Urban Planning	74
The Gap Between Planning Policy, Planners perspectives and Marketing Practice.....	74
Building Diversity Requires the Right Tools.....	75
The Challenge of Empire:	76
Planning’s Present History	76
Theories of Hope	78
and Praxis of Accountability.....	78
Conclusion	79
References	80
Website References.....	85

List of Tables and Key Figures

Table 1: Residential developments included in sample by urban development area and development type.....	14
Table 2: Number of residential developments in sample of 35 with each type of marketing medium available.....	15
Table 3: Sample criteria for coding marketing bundles according to marketing theme categories.....	20
Table 4: Number of residential developments using marketing themes in their marketing bundles out of a total of 35	21
Table 5: Themes used in the marketing bundle for Cornell by Ballantry.....	22
Table 6. Poses counted throughout the sample.....	34
Table 7. Questions asked of selected ads for semiotic and discourse analysis	35
Table 8: Number of development marketing bundles showing family combinations in order of predominance.....	56
Table 9: Presence of visible minority models in advertising materials for new developments in Markham.....	66
Figure 4. Conceptual diagram of content analysis, semiotics and the combined semiological/content analysis approach.....	17
Figure 5. Conceptual diagram of applying the combined approach to the research sample	19
Figure 21. Conceptual diagram of applying the quantitative and qualitative visual methodologies to the sample	34

Chapter One: Diversity and Urban Planning

Study Introduction

Through a systematic analysis of marketing materials in Markham, Ontario, this study explores how new residential developments are packaged in cultural ideologies and sold as commodities. This study demonstrates the marketing themes being used to sell new residential developments, with a focused analysis of social messages. Markham has adopted new urbanism, a planning and design theory, as part of its planning policy; therefore, it is a unique place to assess social messages in place marketing materials. It is necessary to look at the marketing of house and neighbourhood because “as something that purports to represent reality, advertising, for the most part, is perceived as a natural and unproblematic aspect of the landscape of contemporary social life” (Jhally 2006: 177). In an increasingly diverse Canadian society it is impossible to consider place advertising as unimportant because it represents and shapes physical and cultural landscapes. Advertising narrates and articulates cultural values, norms, morals and ideals (Jhally 1998). New residential developments replace undeveloped greenfields with places of culture and tell the story of those neighbourhoods through place marketing. Planners need a critical view of stories being used to sell suburban places in order to understand who and what are being included or excluded from the social production of new subdivisions.

Diversity within Canadian communities and the consequent challenges and opportunities which arise for the field of urban planning is the context in which this study takes place.

Chapter one situates the study within the larger urban planning context of an ever-changing social context in Canada. The second chapter offers background information on representation and discourse in advertising with a focus on place marketing. Information about the study area and research sample is provided in chapter three. The following chapter concentrates on marketing themes within the sample and outlines the study methodology, results and analysis. Social meaning in the marketing sample is the focus of chapter five including a detailed discussion of methods employed, results and analysis. Chapter six concludes the study by discussing implications of the marketing analysis for urban planning theory and practice.

Situating the Study

We live in a globalized era marked by increased flows of people, goods, money, and information. Political, religious, economic and cultural ideologies clash in a world system characterized by glaring inequalities. Unequal relationships established in the colonial period continue into neo-colonial power dynamics within a neo-liberal capitalist framework. Contemporary cities have what Sandercock (2003: 23) calls “an unresolved postcolonial condition” that creates serious tensions as we are brought closer together through increased global flows. Mohanty (2003: 147) describes the global system as four intersecting webs within which people, culture, goods, money and ideas flow. Images and aspirations are distributed

through media in the “global cultural bazaar”. Advertising and marketing networks sell consumables in the “global shopping mall”. “Global workplaces” are networks of employment through which labourers and their services flow, and “global financial networks” regulate the circulation of currencies and transactions.

The Canadian landscape is marked by cultural difference as a result of freer flows within globalized webs, and it is the site for increasingly complicated questions about identity, home, belonging and citizenship. Difference is primarily classified in Canadian culture according to gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, class, and ability. Diversity is the idea that social difference can exist together. While diversity often refers to a mix of ethnic or racial difference, this study is concerned with a broad range of social differences. Diversity can be a problematic term when it is used to present an uncomplicated vision of unity. It can provide a positive language that celebrates diversity while masking interlocking systems of oppression and pervasive discrimination based on essentialized notions of difference. I use the term diversity cautiously, recognizing the defining importance of plurality in today’s world and acknowledging the social complexities of difference it represents.

Responding to Difference through Urban Planning

As the social dynamics of space become increasingly complicated, diversity is emerging as “the guiding principle” for planning theory and practice (Fainstein 2005: 3). Spatial experiences of social difference produce varied responses from the planning community. Some planning theorists celebrate a diverse city that can stimulate creativity and attract talented people who foster innovation and economic growth (Florida 2003; Jacobs 1961). Other planning theorists respond to diversity

by emphasizing the importance of urban design for facilitating mixes of people and land use (Talen 2006). Concerns about the spatial manifestation of inclusion, exclusion and access mark other discussions about social difference in cities (Sandercock 2003; Young 1990). Social change in Canadian cities produces fear that is manifested on the landscape through enclaving, gates and restrictive covenants. Over 300 gated communities near the fringes of rapidly growing urban centres are documented in Canada (Grant 2005). Addressing the complexities of difference and negotiating reactions, whether they be celebration or fear, are key challenges for planners in a shifting and diverse cultural landscape.

Planning theorists and practitioners are asking how to create economically powerful, efficient, beautiful and “green” cities, as well as just and equitable social landscapes. This study is concerned with the socio-spatial impacts of representation in advertisements selling houses and neighbourhoods. Planning is politically embedded and “cities are spaces of power and control.” (Grant 2006: 15). Social injustice is structural and perpetuated through global systems of power with local impacts. Young (2006a) argues, “obligations of justice arise between persons by virtue of the social processes that connect them”. Cities contain social and spatial interconnections and are important sites to work towards justice. Planners work within spaces contested by myriad interests and “negotiating these spaces, claiming them, making them safe, imprinting new identities on them is today a central sociocultural and political dynamic of cities, a dynamic in which the planning system is deeply implicated” (Sandercock 2003: 21). Concern about difference in cities is essential for planners working towards justice. The changing social context in Canada necessitates new questions that planners should be

concerned with: How does planning affect culture and vice-versa? How does advertising for new residential developments impact community formation? How is access to certain places enhanced or impeded through planning or builders' advertising? What roles do planning and advertising have in excluding those who are constructed as social others? How does power operate within the planning system and development industry to privilege some and disadvantage others?

Purpose of the Study

This study stems from a larger project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada called "Theory and practice in planning the suburbs," led by the principal investigator, Dr. Jill Grant, Dalhousie University. The larger study examines how Canadian municipalities are responding to changing international trends in planning policy and practice. Between May and August 2007 information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with

planners, councillors, and developers in three growing Canadian municipalities: Markham, Ontario; Surrey, British Columbia; and Calgary, Alberta. I participated in conducting the interviews and use interview data from four separate interviews with Markham planning staff in this study to illustrate perspectives on planning policy and practice. Municipal policy and planning theories were considered alongside marketing of new residential developments. What do planners in Markham want in terms of social diversity and what planning theories inform policy and visioning? Marketing materials illuminate development practice; they depict what developers are building, while adhering to town policy, and represent future communities. Are the materials allowing for difference or fostering homogeneity? In what ways do builders and planners visions coincide? In what ways do they differ? In sum, this study asks what the gap is between planning theory and marketing practice in Markham.

Chapter Two: Representing People and Place through Advertising

Representation

Diversity and difference raise questions about representation. Representation is the “standing in for” and “giving meaning to” things or concepts (Hall 1997b). Social constructionists approach representation as culturally produced by participants who give meaning to people, objects and events through assigned and interpreted words, stories, images, and emotions. Hall (1997a: 3) offers an apt example: “it is our use of a pile of bricks and mortar which makes it a ‘house’; and what we feel, think or say about it that makes a ‘house’ a ‘home’.” Cultural meaning informs production, consumption, identity, difference, as well as the norms that set the rules for society.

Advertisements are representations and cultural texts that do not convey meaning on their own nor do they merely reflect reality. We participate in creating meaning from what we see. Elements of advertising function as signs that signify or represent concepts, ideas and feelings and allow viewers to decode meaning in similar ways (Hall 1997a; Downing and Husband 2005). We are all involved in producing and recreating meaning from cultural symbols in the advertisements we see. Advertising offers “ideals and images of ‘life and lives worth emulating’ rather than reproducing reality or mirroring the social”. (Schudson 1984: 215). Advertisements invite

us to decode meaning between their visual and textual elements in what Jhally (2006: 167) calls the “field of transaction”. The media “provides us with a well-worn script... in which we are all performers in some regard or other” (Downing and Husband 2005: 43). Analysis of representation from the social constructionist approach is interested in the symbolic function of signs in advertising.

A Discursive Approach

Advertisements as socially constructed cultural texts gain meaning within discourses. Hall (1997a: 6) defines discourse as “a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.” Advertisements are sites for discursive formation; they set the boundaries for what is appropriate to say or do, what is considered true, and what type of subjects personify the characteristics of the discourse. A discursive approach is concerned about the origin and production of meaning and knowledge.

Studying representation through the discursive approach draws on the work of Michel Foucault who showed how knowledge and meaning within discourses support power and the regulation of social conduct. Foucault

understood power as circulating rather than radiating from a source. Power relations saturate every element of life and operate “in the private spheres of the family and sexuality as much as in the public spheres of politics, the economy and the law” (Hall 1997b: 50). Power relations operate within planning systems and newly occupied homes on the suburban fringe. Power should be understood as a force or network producing discourses. Just as knowledge is socially constructed, so is truth. According to Foucault (in Hall 1997b: 49), “each society has... its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned... the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.”

The powerful production of knowledge as truth regulates social conduct. Dovey (1999: 29) illustrates the entanglement of discourse and power as social subjects are constructed in the interests of “the state in maintaining power and social order; private interests in stimulating consumption and those of dominant classes, cultures and groups in the maintenance of privilege.” Conforming to the rules of social regulation that become norms leads to access and social rewards. Non-conformists are punished, excluded, disadvantaged, marked by difference, and labelled as “others.” Since we all construct and reproduce social meaning, including the meaning of normality, we all comply in oppressing “others”. As such, we, including planners, must consider how our actions can instead work towards justice and accountability.

According to Dovey (1999: 46) “the practices of power can be hidden within the structures and representations of space.” Bignell (2002: 37) asks how meanings produced through

advertising “mask and naturalize an inequitable social system.” Housing advertisements as sites of discursive formation produce certain knowledge as truth. They present who lives in and by extension has citizenship rights to particular spaces. This study deconstructs, or opens up to interpretation, the social constructions in advertisements for new residential developments in Markham, Ontario. The discursive approach is an important tool for planners’ work towards justice and accountability. According to Razack (1998: 16) “if we can name the organizing frames, the conceptual formulas, the rhetorical devices that disguise and sustain elites, we can begin to develop responses that bring us closer to social justice.” Since power relations are historically situated, the discursive approach grounds a study of representations in historical contexts and links it to wider social systems (Hall 1997b). Through deconstructing advertisements, this study works towards “historicizing and denaturalizing the ideas, beliefs, and values of global capital such that underlying exploitative social relations and structures are made visible” (Mohanty 2003: 124).

Constructing Futures, Envisioning Dreams

Both advertising and urban planning processes produce visions of the future. Rahder and Milgrom (2004: 37) state, “planning is about the art of the possible, about imagining a better future.” Cronin (2004: 73) describes advertising as a way the future is imagined: “advertising does not so much represent society *as it is*, but as society *should be* according to capitalist principles.” Advertising is meant to draw us in and use deeply felt human needs to produce meaning about the product for sale. This transfer of meaning is meant to be automatic, unsurprising, and natural (Bignell 2002). Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1990: 45)

explain that “we never relate to goods only for their plain utility; there is always a symbolic aspect to our interactions with them.”

Identity Construction Sites: Home & Economy

The study of place advertising within the context of new residential developments illuminates the blurry distinction between citizen and consumer. Future citizens are marketed to as consumers who are looking to purchase, not only for a home, but also the lifestyle and identity the house and neighbourhood offer. The capitalist economy and related businesses and organizations prescribe that we are what we consume. “Advertising endorses and legitimates consumerism by saturating the culture with images intended to position commodity purchase at the center of identity” (Hope 2004: 155). In our culture, identity, desire and consumption are closely linked: “economic and psychosocial processes collude in the twentieth century in particular to encourage the expression of a subject that fulfils its desire by commodity consumption” (Young 2006b: 131) (See Figure 1). Identities are performed on the stages of urban spaces we inhabit. Within capitalism, space is commodified and in order to legitimately inhabit it, we must exchange monetary capital by renting or purchasing it. Grant (2006: 12-13) states “in the contemporary city, history and community have become commodities. New homes are sold as place products through which consumers identify their values and their status.” Identity is relationally determined and dynamic over time and space. As identities change new stages for performance may be needed. New home advertising “plays a fundamental role in keeping alive this constant need for the acquisition of a perfect place for living” (Amorim and Loureiro 2003: 22.1).



Figure 1: Images of consumption from Markham Builder Ads (top to bottom: Ballantray, Greenpark, Kylemore, Fram, Starlane)

By analyzing advertising of new homes, Dovey (1992: 187) argues “myths and meanings of suburban life surface and can be unpacked or punctured to reveal something of the social construction of the meaning of the house.” According to Amorim and Loureiro (2003: 22.1) an “ideal home acts as the territory that mediates, reflects and shapes social identity.” In order for the “ideal home” to be constructed as a place where identity can be formed it must be “a place of safety in a world of danger; a place where a certain taken-for-granted order prevails within a context of chaotic differences” (Dovey 1999: 140). The house that concretizes the concept of home has walls and a clear inside and outside. The ideal home contains safe-known-insiders who belong and are part of a family-us in contrast to potentially dangerous strangers: those seen as “others”. Home is possessive: ours and mine. Our cultural concept of the ideal home precludes difference and diversity in spaces articulated as “home”. It is homeland security against the unknown and different. Home writ large is block, neighbourhood, community, city, and nation. As people and culture flow through the webs of globalization, fear is constructed as “others” threaten to destabilize “our” home and way of life (Sandercock 2003). Home is not always a place of safety or belonging. Violence and oppression can occur within its walls (Dovey 1999). The ideal home is a cultural dream covering up realities of an unjust society at multiple levels from house to nation.

A Dream House in Utopia

Advertising manager, Jerry Goodis says, “advertising doesn’t always mirror how people are acting, but how they’re dreaming... In a sense, what we’re doing is wrapping up your emotions and selling them back to you” (Nelson 1983: C2). MacCurdy (1994: 31) spoke of advertisements as useful cultural

texts because they “show us what we most want - and fear that we will never have.” Advertisements sell us utopian visions of what life will be like after we have purchased the product: “hope for a better life and a promise of future success” (MacCurdy 1994: 46).

House advertisements sell us the ideal home in a utopian neighbourhood. The dream house is a powerful concept that is culturally inscribed from a young age through toys such as Barbie’s dream house. Dream homes are equipped with a plethora of appliances and furnished with luxuries. House models represented in advertisements are the imaginary stages on which we can rehearse our future dreams. Amorim and Loureiro (2003: 22.1) found that “housing developers create their marketing strategies, articulating the purchase of a property with the feeling of a dream that is becoming true.” Dovey’s (1999:139) conclusion is in support: “the ‘model home’ is a mirror which at once reflects and reproduces a suburban dream world.” Advertisements for new residential developments culminate in a “dreamland of a contemporary life, and nobility and tradition, shaping the taste of the new middle-class, offering both a fantasy life and a set of cultural cues” (Amorim and Loureiro 2003: 22.5).

Residences, whether houses or apartments are functional objects, yet they hold a range of values. The house has measurable economic, exchange, use and aesthetic values, but as a home it sustains immeasurable symbolic and sentimental value (Lawrence 1990). Buying a home is the largest purchase most people make. Advertisements for the dream house offer reassurance to buyers’ intertwined financial and emotional investments (*See Figure 2, page 8*).

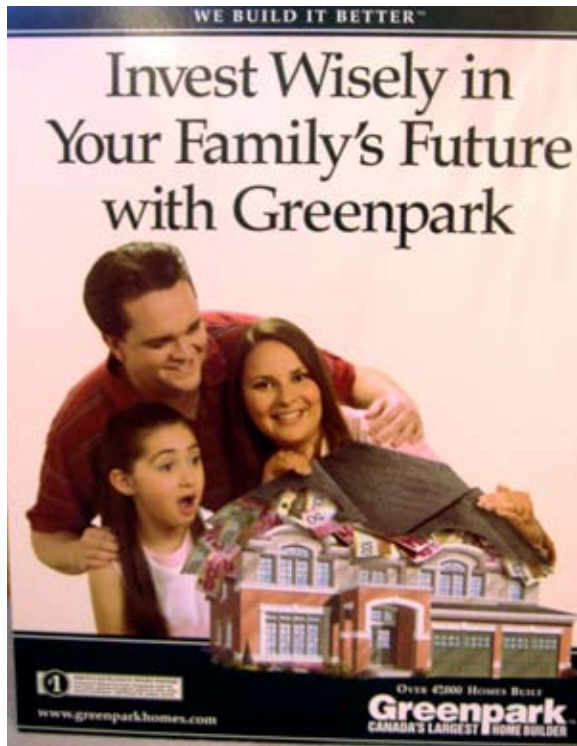


Figure 2: The dream home is a concept used in the advertising material for Markham to reassure buyers about their intertwined emotional and financial investment (Greenpark)

Place Marketing in the Suburbs

Harris (2004) outlines how Canadian suburbs changed from affordable fringe areas around cities characterized by do-it-yourself construction in the early 1900s to consumer havens characterized by corporate built, homogenous houses in the later half of the century. Government-promoted mortgages and availability of credit made this shift possible as home ownership rose in the post-World War II suburb. Harris (2004: 164) stated that “suburbs did not simply express debt-encumbered consumerism, they mandated it.” During this period of suburban development on cheap land planners practiced land use separation and the private automobile became necessary. Suburbs reflected the societal desire for growth and progress and provided homeownership in places where the family could feel safe from the anonymous city while enjoying the best of town and country

(Grant 2006). Such values sold houses in the new corporate suburbs framed as resort-like retreats and packaged with romantic images of family happiness. These values continued into the following decades in order to sell suburban housing in modern subdivisions, what Ward (1998: 143) calls “an imaginary happy land”.

New Urbanism: Suburbia in the New Millennium

In Canada, we are beginning to see a shift in what a happy suburban landscape looks like. Trends such as smart growth, gated communities, sustainability and new urbanism are influencing Canadian policy and practice (Grant 2007; Grant 2006; Moore 2004/2007). New urbanism is a popular approach to planning and design that developed in response to perceived physical and social problems, like automobile-dependency, separation of uses, ugliness, and placelessness, generated by conventional suburbs in the latter half of the twentieth century (Duany et al. 2000). New urbanism has wide-ranging goals; however, it emphasizes design-based solutions to perceived urban problems, regardless of the socio-economic history that led to those concerns. New urbanism approaches diversity as a challenge for physical design. Its primary strategy for bringing about social diversity is through mixing housing types and prices (Leccese and McCormick 2000).

Marketing New Urbanism

Recent studies show that new urbanist marketing strategies showcase neighbourhood design features and wrap them in a package of nostalgia. Freeman (2004) analyzed promotional materials from two Ontario neighbourhoods, Cornell in Markham and Oak Park in Oakville, to provide insight into developers’ perception of new urbanism. He found an emphasis on lane-based design,

small parkettes dispersed through the site, and streetscapes emphasizing traditionally designed houses. The developers also drew on a nostalgic view of the post-war North American suburbs. Hayden (2003) examined promotional materials for Disney-owned new urbanist development, Celebration in Osceola County, Florida and described the marketing materials as straddling the line between “life and entertainment, reality and fantasy” (Hayden 2003: 213). Celebration’s marketing material put a heavy emphasis on nostalgia and asked potential buyers to remember the “special magic of an American hometown” where “the movie house showed cartoons on Saturdays” and “the grocery store delivered” (Hayden 2003: 214). Winstanley, Thorns and Perkins (2003) examined advertisements for new urbanism influenced housing developments in Christchurch, New Zealand and found an emphasis on design features linked to neighbourliness, natural features, and images evoking a British colonial

past. Developments were also marketed with the “notion of deservedness” that linked “occupational status and reward, with experiences of housing, home and lifestyle” (Winstanley et al. 2003: 184). The authors found little visual evidence communicating a desirability of social diversity aside from a mix of age groups.

This study continues an exploration into advertising analysis for new urbanist, suburban housing developments. The discursive approach to understanding advertising material informed the study methodology, which is explained in following sections. Markham, Ontario’s adoption of new urbanist policies since the mid-1990s led to a proliferation of new urbanism influenced housing developments. The following chapter provides background on Markham, the study area, and introduces the study methodology.

Chapter Three:

Study Area and Research Sample

Study Area

Markham is a rapidly growing edge city in the suburban region of Toronto (See Map 1, Appendix 1, page 87). Along with other Toronto suburbs where immigration is shaping the population, Markham is growing quickly with increasingly ethnically diverse residents (Carey 2000; Gordon & Vipond 2005). The Greater Golden Horseshoe area around Toronto reached a population of 8.1 million in 2006 and grew by 8.4% since 2001. (Mahoney 2007).

Changes within the town's population during the census period from 1996 to 2006 reveal that Markham is a fast growing and increasingly ethnically diverse municipality. The Town of Markham had a population of 261,573 in 2006, which is a 24.5% increase since 2001 (Statistics Canada 2007). Markham is part of the York Region and is home to 49% of the Region's population of recent immigrants. Between 1991 and 2001 the population of recent immigrants living in Markham increased by 113%. Chinese is the most common visible minority of recent immigrants at 65%, followed by South Asian at 18% and Filipino at 4%. The percentage of immigrants with a low-income is greater than the percentage of non-immigrants in Markham and recent immigrants in other York Region municipalities. Recent immigrants have a comparable level of schooling to non-immigrants, but in the York Region, Markham has the highest level of recent immigrants with no knowledge of French or English. Chinese languages and Tamil are spoken most commonly in the

homes of recent immigrants to Markham (Regional Municipality of York 2006). In the interviews, planners characterized ethnic diversity in Markham as extreme. They also noted ethnic clusters in areas of Markham.

Planning for Diversity in York Region

Official Plans for both York Region and the Town of Markham contain policy related to diversity. According to the York Region Official Plan:

“healthy communities evolve in a way that preserves the natural environment and heritage, encourages community spirit and participation in decision-making, provides easy access to a range of services and leisure opportunities, provides a range of housing choices, ensures accessible public transit and encourages social diversity and respect for a variety of lifestyles” (Regional Municipality of York 2007: 37).

Furthermore, York's Plan acknowledges the planning challenges that come with ethnically mixed municipalities:

“growth has and will continue to provide challenge in building a sense of community in York Region. Migrations of large numbers of people, with their own histories and backgrounds create a rich, changing cultural landscape” (Regional Municipality of York 2007: 37).

Faced with the opportunities and challenges of diversity, the York Region seeks

“to develop communities where people of all ages, backgrounds and capabilities can meet their needs throughout the various stages in their lives by providing opportunities for employment, learning, culture, recreation

and spiritual, emotional, physical and social well-being” (Regional Municipality of York 2007: 38).

York Region recognizes the need to diversify housing to better reflect changing social realities:

“housing needs will be affected by social trends and the general aging of the population, resulting in more households with single parents, adults without children, unrelated adults sharing accommodations, retired active adults and elderly people requiring varying levels of care...The housing market is faced with demands for a broader variety of housing forms to meet the needs of different kinds of households” (Regional Municipality of York 2007: 41).

New Urbanism Comes To Markham

Since the mid-1990s, Markham and York Region have adapted planning principles and policies to facilitate new urbanist developments (Gordon & Vipond 2005; Grant 2006). Cornell was the first secondary planning area in Markham planned according to new urbanist principles. In the early 1990s, the Cornell area was provincially owned land and planned for a regional hospital and public affordable housing. Intense opposition to this plan by Markham residents led the town’s planning commissioner to create a new master plan for the community with the assistance of Andre Duany’s firm DPZ (Freeman 2004). Duany et al. (2000: 199) described their design as “a fairly pure application of the neighborhood concept” advocated by new urbanist principles. There was no publicly funded or affordable housing in DPZ’s master plan. The Cornell lands were sold to a private developer in 1995 and new urbanism set the tone for future planning in Markham. Because Markham adopted new urbanism into planning policy and its subdivision approval process, it has the largest concentration of new urbanist developments in North America (Skaburskis

2006; Steuteville 2002).

The Cornell Secondary Plan is an example of policy for new development in Markham heavily influenced by new urbanism theory. The plan (Town of Markham 2007) states, “the planning of the Cornell community is based on the principles of New Urbanism developed by the Congress of New Urbanism [*sic*] to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning and design.”

In 1996, Markham adopted the Design Implementation Guidelines, which outline expectations for new communities and are meant to bring about

“vibrant, pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods built on the foundation of a clearly articulated and thoughtfully rendered public realm” (Town of Markham 2005: 13).

The Cornell Secondary Plan highlights particular principles of new urbanism including the following tenet which links physical design and mix of housing types to social diversity:

“within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, race, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.” (Town of Markham 2007: 38)

Cornell’s urban design and sustainable development policies state:

“For the Cornell Planning District, the emphasis is on designing a community that is diverse in use and population” (Town of Markham 2007: 82)

Following the principles of new urbanism, Markham’s Official Plan focuses on ensuring the provision of a diverse housing stock to meet the needs of a diversifying population. In 1991 the existing housing inventory in Markham reflected the post-war desire for ownership of single detached houses. Eighty-percent of housing was low density, 12% medium density and 8% high density. The

town has set housing mix targets to meet by 2011, reducing the proportion of low density, and doubling the proportions of medium and high densities. The 2011 target is for 60% low density, 25% medium density and 15% high density (Town of Markham 2005). One of Markham's goals is

“to encourage the provision of a sufficient supply and a range of housing, adequate and appropriate to the existing and anticipated housing needs in Markham including housing which is accessible and affordable to low and moderate income households, seniors, and the physically and mentally challenged” (Town of Markham 2007: 2-53).

One of Markham's strategies for providing mixed housing is permitting “garden suites,” above detached garages on back alleys.

In interviews, planners connected the change in demographics with their goals to diversify the housing stock. One planner explained that multiple related immigrant families are living together in one single detached house. Another explained that social diversity has supported Markham's efforts to diversify the housing stock

“because Mr and Mrs Markham of a decade or two ago wanted their piece of the earth with their single family house... Their children and also many of the immigrants we have coming to Markham like apartment life.”

Planners acknowledged that there was still a long way to go before achieving their housing mix targets, but saw evidence of change:

“We are starting to get more diversity”

“Usually the mix is a little bit more on the singles side than we would like, but we are not too far off.”

“We are doing much better now than 10 or 15 years ago. But in my mind, we do not have enough opportunities for lower income people. There are not enough housing choices. We do not have enough rental, and

even affordable homeownership we are not doing very well. We are trying to find ways to change that, but that is the area we need to do some work on.”

As long as land value in Markham remains high and the single-detached house continues to be the housing product of choice for Canadians, Markham faces considerable challenges in reaching these housing mix targets. Residential builders will continue to construct single detached houses if that is what the market demands, which poses significant challenges for the town's goal for a diverse housing mix.

The Markham Official Plan and its secondary plans demonstrate a commitment to the new urbanist idea that good design can bring about good and diverse community. Interestingly, the York Region Official Plan appears to caution against the potential environmental determinism of new urbanism and Markham's policies with the statement

“A healthy community is based not only on how it is laid out, but also *how it becomes* a safe, caring community that maintains and promotes a high quality of life” (Regional Municipality of York 2007: 37, emphasis added).

Advertisements for new residential developments in Markham are like a prologue in the story of those places. Ads are a part of *how it becomes* the community it will be. It is therefore important to look at how the builder's interpretation of “happily ever after” may be similar to or different from what is set out through town and regional planning. Markham is an ideal site for an analysis of marketing materials because there is rapid growth at its edges and active advertising for new residential developments. The anticipated growth of an increasingly diverse population in Markham means that questions about how place and community are shaped will

continue in importance. Markham's adoption of new urbanist policies shape their approach to diversity, with a strong focus on design of the physical landscape and housing as a means to accommodate and achieve social mix. Its diverse, growing population and new urbanist planning policies on diversity make Markham an ideal place for exploring how society is represented in the marketing material for new residential developments and how the ads make social diversity visible or invisible. Markham's growing and diverse population set the context for this study's inquiry into social meaning in place advertising.

Research Question

This study is directed by the following overarching question:

What social meanings are constructed in marketing materials for new residential developments on the suburban fringe of Markham?

Objectives

1. To determine which marketing themes are employed in advertisements for new residential developments.
2. To analyze representations of people and society in the marketing materials and interpret the construction of social meanings.

3. To assess how social diversity is made visible or invisible in the marketing materials.

Data Collection Method

I collected marketing materials for new residential developments in Markham, Ontario from Friday September 28 to Tuesday October 2. The data included in this analysis represents a snapshot of time and place as it would be seen by a prospective new homebuyer. Prior to my data collection trip, I familiarized myself with areas of new

development in Markham and recorded the locations of sales centres through internet research. While in Markham, I drove along all the major collector roads and found some new developments by following signs and billboards pointing to where there were sales centres. The three main marketing media I analyzed were brochures, outdoor signs, and builder websites. I collected all of the brochures and a sample of floor plans prospective homebuyers would receive at the sales centres. I photographed the outdoor signs and billboards in front of the sales centres for analysis. Posters inside the sales centres that I was permitted to photograph were included as supplementary to the main mediums. Upon return from the data collection trip I included the builder's websites in my analysis.

There were two free magazines available in most sales centres advertising new subdivisions in the Greater Toronto Area, *Homes* and *New Homes*. I collected as many editions of these that were available in the sales centres and gathered all the advertisements in them for new residential developments in Markham. These ads were included as supplementary to the main marketing media. The complete sample was determined by the developments where all three of the main marketing media were available, or if one was unavailable there was a supplementary media.

Research Sample

The sample includes 35 new residential developments. These developments are located within 11 urban development areas designated by the Town of Markham. Most developments include low-density freehold subdivisions, however also included in the sample are two high-rise condominium developments, one mixed residential-commercial townhouse condominium development and one low-density senior's lifestyle gated community

	Urban Development Area	Name of Development	Development Type	Builder
1.	York Downs	New Yorkton	Subdivision	Kylemore
2.	Angus Glen	West Village - Angus Glen	Subdivision	Kylemore
3.	South Unionville	South Hampton on the Rouge	Subdivision	SkyHomes
4.	Markham Centre	Circa2	High-rise condominium	Tridel
5.	Markham Centre	eko	High-rise condominium	Liberty Development Corporation
6.	Villages of Fairtree	Golden Mills	Subdivision	Castle Rock Developments
7.	Wismer	Wismer Estates	Subdivision	Eldin
8.	Wismer	The Enclave at Wismer Commons	Subdivision	Greenpark
9.	Wismer	Wismer Woods	Subdivision	National Homes
10.	Wismer	Wismer Village	Subdivision	Esquire Homes
11.	Wismer	Windsong	Subdivision	Laurier Homes
12.	Wismer	Castle Square	Subdivision	HR Developments
13.	Wismer	Manor Gate	Subdivision	Rosehaven Homes
14.	Swan Lake	Swan Lake Village	Gated Community	Fram & Slokker
15.	Greensborough	Greensborough	Subdivision	Royal Park
16.	Greensborough	Greensborough	Subdivision	Fieldgate
17.	Greensborough	Greensborough	Subdivision	Madison
18.	Greensborough	Greensborough Village	Townhouse condominiums	Uppercity Properties
19.	Cathedral	Cathedraltown	Subdivision	Romandale & Fram
20.	Cathedral	Cathedral Park	Subdivision	Lakeview
21.	Cathedral	Heritage	Subdivision	Monarch
22.	Cathedral	The Residences at Victoria Square	Subdivision	CountryWide Homes
23.	Cornell	Cornell Markham	Subdivision	Ballantry Homes
24.	Cornell	Cornell Markham	Subdivision	Mattamy Homes
25.	Cornell	Grand Cornell	Subdivision	Greenpark
26.	Cornell	Grand Cornell	Subdivision	HR Developments
27.	Cornell	Grand Cornell	Subdivision	CountryWide Homes
28.	Cornell	Upper Cornell	Subdivision	Aspen Ridge Homes
29.	Cornell	Cornell Rouge	Subdivision	Forest Hill Homes
30.	Cornell	Cornell Rouge	Subdivision	Madison
31.	Boxgrove	The Gate of Boxgrove	Subdivision	Oxnard Homes
32.	Boxgrove	The Manors of Boxgrove	Subdivision	Greenpark
33.	Boxgrove	Woodlands of Boxgrove	Subdivision	Regal Crest Homes
34.	Boxgrove	Boxgrove Markham	Subdivision	Starlane Home Corporation
35.	Boxgrove	Boxgrove Markham	Subdivision	Arista Homes

Table 1: Residential developments included in sample by urban development area and development type.

The available marketing media (brochures, outdoor signs, websites, indoor signs and magazine ads) add up to create a marketing bundle for each new residential development, with no less than three media available for analysis (See Figure 3). Websites were available for analysis in 34 out of 35 residential developments. Thirty-three of 35 developments made brochures and

outdoor signs available. Fourteen residential developments allowed photographing of their indoor signs and 19 of 35 had advertisements in the magazines available in the sales centres. Most development marketing bundles include brochures, outdoor signs and websites; magazine ads and indoor signs were available for about half (See Table 2).

Marketing Media	Residential Developments
Brochures	33
Outdoor Signs	33
Website	34
Indoor Signs	14
Magazine Ads	19

Table 2: Number of residential developments in sample of 35 with each type of marketing medium available.



Figure 3: Marketing bundles were comprised of the above advertising materials: brochures, websites, outdoor signs, signs inside sales centres and magazine ads. (clockwise from top: multiple sources; Fieldgate, Arista and Starlane; SkyHomes, HR Developments; Royalpark)

Chapter Four:

Marketing Themes

Methodology for Accomplishing Objective One:

To determine which marketing themes are employed in advertisements for new residential developments.

Analysis of Marketing Themes: A Combined Content Analysis & Semiotics Approach

The study analysis involved a combined content analysis and semiotics approach (*See Figure 4*). Content analysis involves counting the frequency of visual and textual elements. Coding is the process through which descriptive categories are applied to images and texts in order to determine frequency. Content analysis is useful for demonstrating the existing elements and their prevalence within a sample of advertisements and lends quantitative evidence to otherwise impressionistic interpretation. Since content analysis usually only limits coding symbols and words without reading into any deeper messages it has been criticized as an ineffective tool for successfully deciphering meaning in advertisements. This is particularly problematic as advertisers increasingly rely on meanings attached to their products and less on details about the products themselves. Furthermore, it places too great an emphasis on repetition and cannot effectively account for strong or weak examples of codes, nor does it take into account relationships between other elements in an advertisement (Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1990; Rose 2007).

Semiotics looks at every advertisement individually as an intentional cultural text and studies its signs and meanings. At one level, objects in an image such as bricks, glass and shingles arranged in a particular way is the signifier to our mental concept of a house, which is the signified. Together the signifier and signified create a sign, which can then be analyzed at a wider level linking it to broader cultural concepts and meanings like home and comfort, or a large house to wealth, a shack to poverty. Cultural codes at work allow the reader of an ad to make the link between the first descriptive or denotative level and second connotative level of meaning. Barthes (1972: 115) refers to this connotative level of meaning as “myth” and as a “metalanguage” used to talk about signs. Cronin (2004: 113) explains that the “myths’ of advertising are not falsehoods or misrepresentations in any straightforward sense: they function as mobile power-knowledge formations that allow for the rehearsal of understandings of social relations.” Semiotics is useful because it permits a detailed and thorough analysis of signs and cultural meaning. It is a limited method because viewers can interpret the same images differently raising concern about replicability. It is important for semiotic researchers to recognize their own cultural standpoints and be reflexive about their readings of the images. Semiotic analyses are therefore useful for their interpretive contributions rather than their ability to determine objective, capital “T” Truth. (Crow 2003; Hall 1997; Rose 2007).

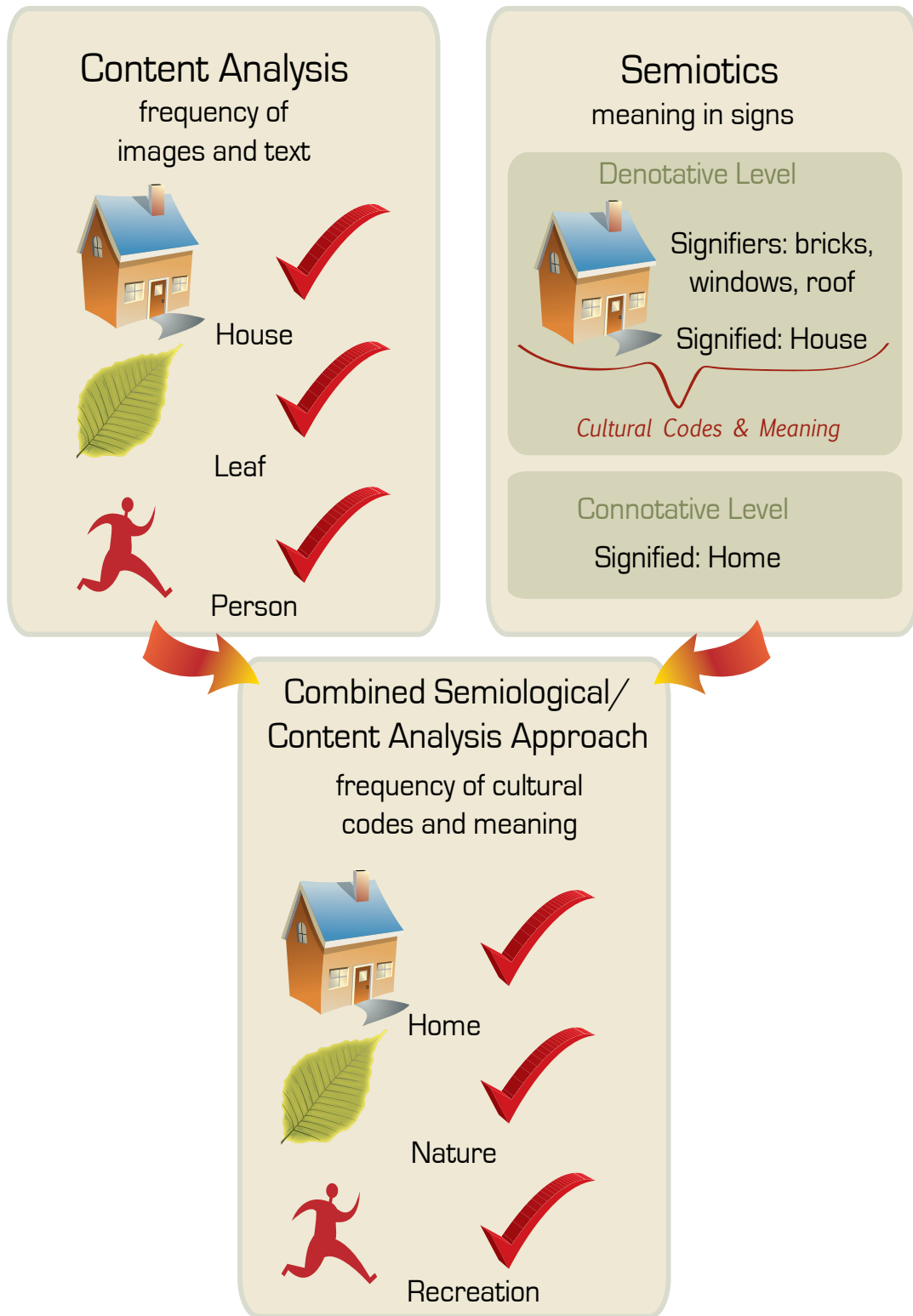


Figure 4: Conceptual diagram of content analysis, semiotics and the combined semiological/content analysis approach

Leiss, et al. (1990) developed a “middle-range” methodology to utilize the strengths of both content analysis and semiotics. The combined semiological/content analysis approach devises reliable categories using techniques from semiotics that go beyond the surface level to variables that require greater interpretation than in standard content analysis. This is useful for my study because simply counting houses or kitchens for sale in the ads will tell me very little about the overall messages and meanings builders are using to sell them. Developing coding categories such as family or exclusivity relies on cultural codes to translate certain images and words into meanings and messages. The combined approach from Leiss et al. is therefore a tool that can be applied to my sample allowing me to set categories based on interpretive themes to produce quantitative information for analysis and comparison.

Applying the approach

Using similar studies by Amorim and Loureiro (2003) and Maxwell (2004) as a guide, my analysis began with a close reading of every marketing media available for each residential development looking for messages about people and society, the natural environment, as well as the built form of the houses and neighbourhood. I recorded my observations by development and by marketing medium. I noted images of people, the environment and the built form, looking for symbols, poses and patterns that were repeated or emphasized. I read the text and recorded keywords and phrases, again looking for repetition and emphasis given by size and placement of images or texts. I also made note of the form and content of the logos. Also included in this close reading and recording were primary slogans as well as bolded text, secondary to the slogans, names of house models, minimum and maximum house prices and square

footage. I also observed colours and symbols connecting images and text together in the background, which plays an important role in producing meaning and communicating primary marketing message. I determined the predominant marketing themes for each development based on these observations, and following the method described by Leiss et al. for combined semiological/content analysis. The predominant marketing themes could be grouped into eight main categories: Exclusivity, Family, House Design & Construction, Nature, Home & Community, Neighbourhood Design, The Past, and Recreation. These “marketplace codes” or themes inform us as to what builders think are convincing messages and were used as categories for the combined content analysis/semiotics approach. I added social diversity as a category, not because it stood out on the initial first reading as a prominent theme, but because I wanted to include it along with the others for comparison.

I then proceeded to code each residential development’s marketing bundle by theme, marking whether or not a certain theme was present or absent from the builder’s marketing bundle. I determined whether or not a theme was present or absent, depending on whether certain keywords, phrases or elements appeared in the images (*See Figure 5*). Since the advertisements often employed more than one theme, a residential development could have up to nine present themes. Once a present or absent was assigned to each development marketing bundle, I added up how many themes were used per development marketing bundle. Additionally, I calculated how many residential developments were using each theme in their marketing bundles. Table 3 (*page 20*) shows a sample of the keywords, phrases and images I used as criteria for coding marketing material (*See Appendix 2, page 88 for a more extensive list*)



Figure 5: Conceptual diagram of applying the combined approach to the research sample

Marketing Theme	Sample Keywords	Sample Phrases	Sample Images
Exclusivity	Most desirable, prestige, privilege, luxury, enclave, superior, estates, distinctive, majesty	"You've earned the privilege" "Our home is your palace"	Private golf clubs, polo games, upscale house features, upscale fashion
Family	Family-friendly, Mom, old-fashioned family values, generations, extended family, children	"Markham's great family neighbourhood" "A celebration of family values"	Men and women demonstrating affection and affiliation with each other and children.
Home & Community	Belonging, true community, heart established community, sense of community, vibrant	"Come home" "Home is where the heart is" "It's your new hometown"	Communal public spaces and groups of friends meeting in restaurants or for fun
House Design & Construction	Quality building, architecture, design, experienced builders, craftsmanship, custom	"Built to stand the test of time" "These are homes that are truly designed to reflect the way you live"	Structural and design features, photographed exteriors, lavishly decorated interiors
Neighbourhood Design & Location	New urbanism, back lanes, transit, master-planned, pedestrian friendly, planned, streetscapes	"Live in the heart of" "Great alternative to urban sprawl" "Well-planned locations"	Renderings of shared public spaces, photos of streetscapes, picket fences, back lanes, transit stops,
Nature	Conservation lands, forest, woodlots, natural, landscaped, green space, environment, ecosystem	"Nature's playground on the Rouge" "Get close to nature in your own backyard"	Natural features central to image including leaves, earth, sky, clouds, birds, trees, stones, etc.
Recreation	Parks, parkettes, playgrounds, golf, active lifestyle, cycling, exercise, leisure, explore, play	"Exercise your appreciation for the great outdoors" "Listen to the rhythm of your footsteps on the trails"	People engaged in sports and activities such as cycling, jogging, playing, canoeing, fishing, etc.
The Past	Heritage, historic downtown, quaint, village, old-fashioned, old world, storybook, remember	"The finest in old-fashioned community life" "a community inspired by traditions"	Photos in black and white or sepia tones, antiques, sketched or painted images meant to look old
Social Diversity	Diversity, different backgrounds, feng shui	"Singles, families and empty nesters will enjoy majestic living" "Something for everyone"	Visible minority present, more than one ethnicity pictured together, symbols marked as "non-western"

Table 3: Sample criteria for coding marketing bundles according to marketing theme categories

Marketing Themes Findings

Every new residential development markets house design and construction. Family is the second most predominant marketing theme, with 32 out of 35 developments using it. Home and community, recreation as well as neighbourhood design and location tied for the next most common marketing themes with 30 out of 35 developments using. 28 used exclusivity, 26 used nature, and 24 used nostalgia as a theme. Social diversity was used in the marketing of 21 out of the developments (*See Table 4, page 21*).

Methodology Strengths & Weaknesses

This method provides a useful assessment of the themes used by each residential development and the predominance of each theme within the entire sample. This method allows a researcher to count otherwise subjective themes present in the data and therefore addresses one of the main restrictions in pure content analysis. However, it is still restricted to quantitative analysis, and does not reveal importance given to a particular message

Marketing Themes	Residential Developments
House Design & Construction	35
Family	32
Home & Community	30
Recreation	30
Neighbourhood Design & Location	30
Exclusivity	28
Nature	26
The Past	24
Social Diversity	21

Table 4: Number of residential developments using marketing themes in their marketing bundles out of a total of 35.

within a marketing bundle. Since a residential development received a tally mark for each theme any time a keyword, phrase or image appeared, it does not reflect a difference in the importance placed on a theme compared to others. For example, if there was only one image showing a family, the development received a tally mark worth the same “weight” as another community that may include many images, keywords and phrases about families. Furthermore, the importance of a theme in a given marketing bundle is difficult to measure solely through counting. Position and size of images and texts as well as intertextuality between them have a substantial impact of how themes in an advertisement will be read. The method’s strength lies in its ability to organize large quantities of words and images into coherent categories. The largest drawback is that it does not get at the relationships and hierarchy between themes within the marketing bundles.

Marketing Themes Discussion

I will demonstrate how marketing themes are articulated in the marketing bundles using one residential development as an example. Following is a discussion about how messages about the environment and the built form cut

across the marketing themes. The majority of the marketing themes have elements of social meaning, which I analyzed at a finer scale. The method and discussion of those findings are in the following chapter.

Marketing it all in Ballantry’s Cornell

The residential development Cornell, built by Ballantry Homes, is an ideal marketing bundle to demonstrate how marketing themes are used because all nine themes are articulated in its advertisements and because considerable background on Cornell has been provided in Chapter Three. All five marketing media (brochures, website, outdoor signs, magazine ads and indoor signs) were available for analysis of Ballantry’s Cornell development.

Ballantry’s Cornell Marketing Theme Findings

Table 5 (page 22) outlines the keywords, phrases and images I coded by theme throughout the marketing bundle. A discussion of these findings follows accompanied by images. The images I will use to demonstrate themes are from the brochures available in the sales centre, however many of the same photos and text appear in the other media as well.

Marketing Theme	Keywords	Phrases	Images
Exclusivity	Best, estate, Model name: The Hampton	"Best of everything" "Distinctive luxury features"	Upscale house features
Family	Parents, Mom, Grandfather,	"For all the times your parents left the porch light on for you" "Mom called you in for supper"	Couples being affectionate, Adults affiliated and affection with children
Home & Community	Gathering place, neighbours, peace of mind, safe, friendly, rest easy,	"Cornell is calling you back home. You're going to love it!" "Real community atmosphere, a neighbourhood that is safe and friendly"	Young couples gathered in a restaurant
House Design & Construction	Quality, craftsmanship, forward-thinking architects, innovative designs, comforts, spacious, traditional quality, contemporary design	"We build dreams... that last for generations to come" "Where quality makes a big difference" "Our designers create unique living spaces that are practical and comfortable yet sumptuous [sic]."	Multiple photographs of house interiors and exteriors, up close images of details like tiles, carpets, banisters
Neighbourhood Design & Location	Picket fence, main street, neighbourhood centre, focal point, shops, transit, services, formal square, sidewalk, conveniences, beautifully designed, small town, pedestrian-friendly	"Never more than a 5 minute walk away from your own local main street" "Amenities are just a hop, skip and a jump away" "Ballantry builds more than just homes, we build communities – pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods"	Couple is shown shopping on "main street," Markham showing amenities with small photos illustrating the activity that can happen in that place, streetscape photos
Nature	Rouge Valley Park, open space, woodlots, Model names: The Cedar Springs, The Garden Hill, The Green Valley	"All existing woodlots are to be retained" "perfectly situated in a city where natural and man-made amenities are equal in abundance"	Flowers, leaves,
Recreation	Road hockey, hopscotch, golf, community centres, pool,	"An abundance of recreational amenities"	Children playing, roller blading, jogging, cycling, golfing
The Past	Old world, old town, old fashioned,	"Old World Charm, New World Living" "The old town the new way" "For all the important things you may have put aside but you know are true... Cornell is calling you back home"	Cover Image: Sepia toned street with century old stone and wood houses with mature trees and a picket fence.
Social Diversity	none	none	Visible minorities present in the brochure and website images. There are elderly couples pictured once each on the website and in the brochures

Table 5: Themes used in the marketing bundle for Cornell by Ballantry

The Past

A nostalgic yearning for past times is strong in the marketing bundle for Ballantry's Cornell development. The tone is set by the cover of the brochure with a sepia toned, faded streetscape image with century homes, mature maple trees, and a white picket fence. The cover displays the development slogan: "Old World Charm, New world living" (Figure 6). The "old world" conjures nostalgia for a colonial period. The logo for Cornell, which is used by other builders in the same area, looks like an old street sign, and has a heritage appearance. Below "Cornell Markham" it includes in smaller print "Circa 1997." "Circa" lends it historic credibility; however, the mere decade old date betrays it. There are three images of people on the right-hand side of the cover, all white and none over the age of forty. The images of white people reinforce the message that it is a European "old world" they are recreating in Cornell.

The theme of the past continues on the following pages, albeit with a slightly more current past, the North American post-war small town: "Welcome to Cornell, The old town the new way" (Figure 7) The text continues prompting the prospective buyer to "remember" things like summer afternoons, picket fences, childhood fascination with grandfather's garage, parents leaving the porch light on, road hockey, mom cooking supper, and playing hopscotch. Ballantry continues with: "For all the important things you may have put aside but you know are true... Cornell is calling you back home." The prospective buyer is carried on an emotional mythic trip down memory lane then admonished for questioning its accuracy. Like a forgiving parent welcoming a wayward prodigal back, Cornell welcomes the buyer home and provides an opportunity to live with the important things in mind.

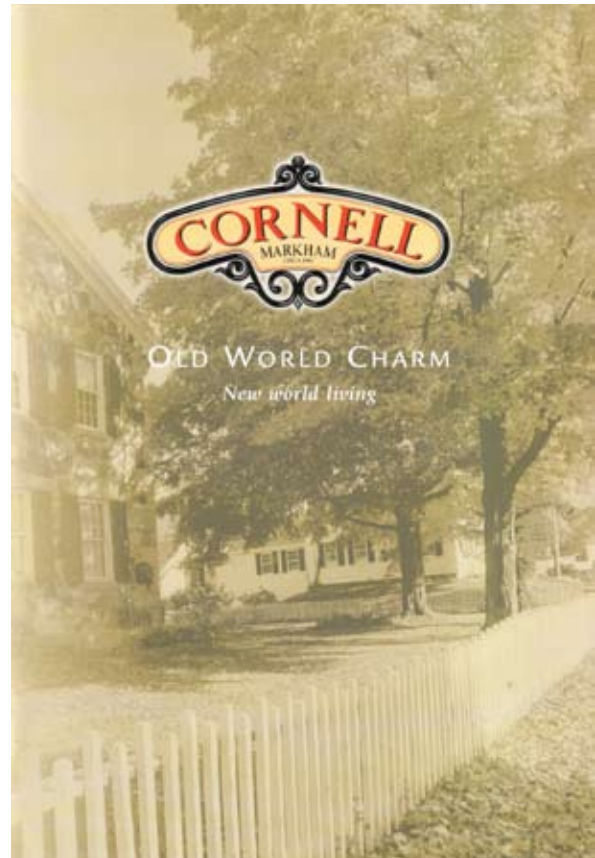


Figure 6: Cover of brochure conjuring nostalgia for a colonial past (Ballantry)



Figure 7: Linking the old and new in Cornell (Ballantry)

Family

Cornell is marketed as a family development. Images of happy contented couples, and parents with children abound within the marketing bundle. Families are shown playing, relaxing together and simply enjoying each other's company (*Figure 8*). The brochure is like a family photo album.



Figure 8: Happy young family in Cornell (Ballantry)

Home & Community

Home and community are persistent in the marketing text, primarily promoting safety and comfort. Ballantry's Cornell is where you can "rest easy" and have "peace of mind" (*Figure 9*). While peace of mind is a repeated phrase, the fear in question is not spelled out. It leaves room for the potential buyer to fill in his fear, whether it be investing money in the right house, or choosing a safe community for his family. Whatever his concern, Cornell is "the perfect choice."

Ballantry also offers "a real community atmosphere," which covertly addresses concerns about phony, placeless suburbs condemned in the new urbanist literature and parodied in popular culture. A striking image of community is of three young couples out for dinner in a candlelit restaurant (*Figure 10*). There are no visible wedding rings, but the young people are posed in affiliation as



Figure 9: Cornell's peace of mind

romantic couples. The message is that Cornell will provide the places for moments like this, where people can gather with their friends, enjoy a couple bottles of wine and good dinner. Furthermore, this image portrays Cornell as not only a place for families but as a trendy, hip place where young people will like to spend time.

Neighbourhood Design & Location

In line with new urbanist theory, community is closely linked to Ballantry's promotion of neighbourhood design. The neighbourhood is designed to facilitate these community and family moments. Ballantry adds value to their development with a "main street:" "If one thing could typify the difference between Cornell and most other new communities it is this – a subdivision doesn't have a main street, an old fashioned small town does" (*Figure 10*). Cornell is given the authority of authenticity with the phrase "just like any small town."

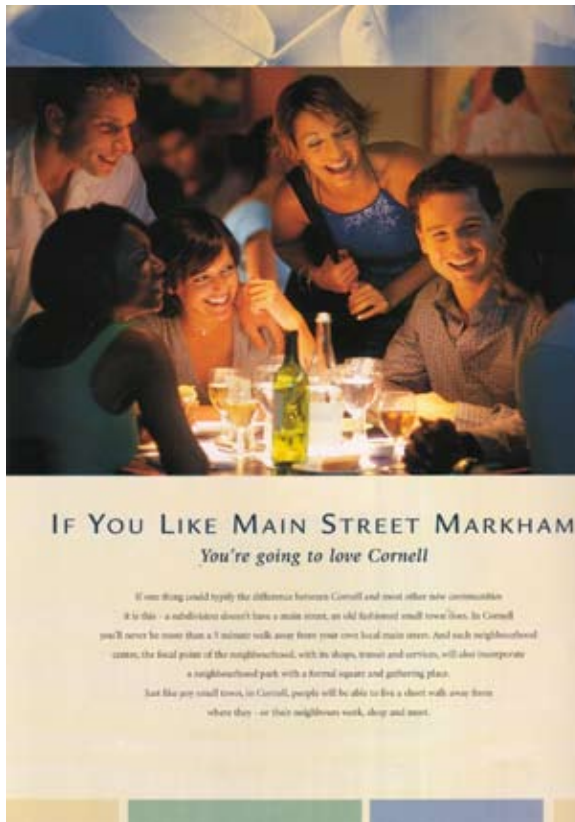


Figure 10: Cornell portrayed as a place young couples will enjoy (Ballantry)

Cornell's location is also highlighted as numerous "amenities are just a hop, skip and a jump away" in the rest of Markham (Figure 11). Ballantry suggests that people will be able to live a short walk away from where they – or their neighbours work, shop and meet." While there are some opportunities for employment in Cornell at the hospital, the daycare centre, some boutique shops and convenience stores, the majority of residents will work elsewhere while workers from Scarborough, and other more affordable Toronto suburbs commute in to sell Cornellians their milk, care for their children, and keep the hospital orderly. In an interview, one Markham planner explained: "our biggest concern is getting a better live-work balance in Markham. We actually have enough jobs in Markham for the Markham population but most of the people are leaving Markham in the morning and others are coming into work in Markham."



Figure 11: Cornell is advertised as a place within close proximity to many recreational amenities.

Recreation

Recreation is synonymous with the outdoors in Ballantry's marketing bundle, and in every other development as well, with the exception of a few images of indoor pools in the condominium projects. Recreation is a solitary activity, portrayed by a lone golfer; it is also a romantic activity shown by couples jogging and cycling together, as well as for family with images of children and adults playing together (Figure 11). The emphasis on Cornell's proximity to major recreation facilities highlights the importance of recreation for buyers. If Cornell functions as a bedroom community rather than a distinct small town, as Freeman (2004) argues, then the emphasis on recreation serves to promote the development as a weekend resort from work in the city.

Nature

The natural environment is featured on the heading on nearly every page in the brochure as leaves, washed in blue hues are repeated. One of the first images in the brochure is of a bouquet of wildflowers, held by a girl whose body is mostly cut off, and the flowers are the primary subject (Figure 12). Nature primarily serves as a backdrop in the images and is mainly referred to in the text as a place for recreation. Nature is also evoked in the names of the house models: The Cedar Springs, The Garden Hill, and The Green Valley. Like all model house renderings in the research sample, Ballantry's houses are surrounded by elaborate landscaping and backed by mature forest (Figure 13).



Figure 12: Example of nature as a feature (Ballantry)



Figure 13: Example of a house rendering with mature landscaping used as a selling feature (Ballantry)

House Design & Construction

Early in Ballantry's sales brochure is the claim that their homes are "built to stand the test of time," thereby giving the potential buyer reassurance for their investment. Direct mention of house design and construction does not appear again until much later in the package, after all the nostalgia, family, home, neighbourhood, and recreation messages have been given priority. The floor plans and renderings of exteriors occupy the centre of the brochure, and it is not until page 23 that Ballantry promotes its "Exquisite Interiors, So much more than just a new home" (Figure 14). The following page is devoted to Ballantry's historical record of building quality developments in Ontario.

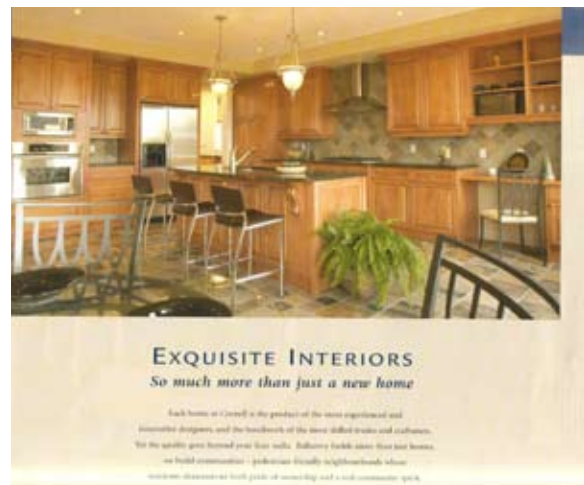


Figure 14: Example Interior Image (Ballantry)

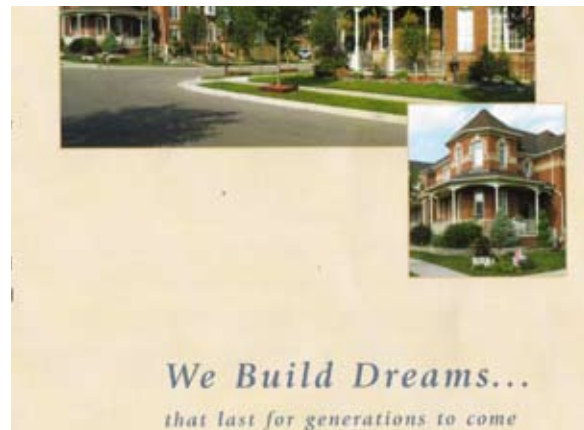


Figure 15: Image and slogan depicting the builder's legacy of house construction (Ballantry)

Once all of the key selling features have been outlined, Ballantry's brochure presents a list of "extraordinary features and finishes of a Cornell home" including a "lifestyle' quality kitchen with microwave shelf," "colonial trim and doors with pewter finish hardware," "cathedral ceilings," and "Manor House" style garage doors with window lights." The Ballantry advertising package sells the dream house. The company's primary slogan, which they use in other developments as well, is "We Build Dreams" (*Figure 15, page 26*). None of the house streetscape images nor any of the interior images have people in them. They are presented as empty stages with plenty of luxurious props that potential buyers could imagine themselves performing family and the other dramas of life upon.

Exclusivity

Exclusivity is not as strong a theme in Ballantry's Cornell as in other developments in Markham; however, there is still reference to getting the "best of everything" and "distinctive luxury features". The largest model house is called "The Hampton" evoking the well-known getaway for New York's wealthy elite. Ballantry's reference to the "old world" invokes colonialism and the privileges that correspond with being a citizen of a colonial power. Exclusivity and entitlement is thus communicated through the reference to old world charm without Ballantry having to market their development

Social Diversity

I could not categorize any keywords or phrases as reflecting social diversity in Ballantry's Cornell marketing bundle. There were, however, a number of images of visible minorities flashing as part of their website images. The majority of people in the brochures are white. There is an image of a black man golfing that is less than one square inch superimposed on the Markham map, and another image, literally the size of a thumbnail, of an Asian couple shopping. The only main image including visible minorities is the one of the young couples at the restaurant (*Figure 10, page 25*). The two couples lit by the candle and facing out towards the viewer are white. The third, black couple is divided, slightly blurry and shadowed in the corners of the image. Through positioning and shadow, they are given secondary subject status in this image.

The marketing bundle for Ballantry demonstrates the many themes through which builders sell their housing product. The house is frequently absent or in the background to images selling lifestyle, comfort and family happiness. New urbanism often offers post-World War II American small towns as a model for newer subdivisions. Ballantry has picked up on selling the nostalgia for this era whether or not it actually resonates as a true past for any of the diverse clientele who seek homes in Markham.

A Comment on Representations of the Environment in The Sample

The natural environment is primarily used in the sample as a setting for family recreation. Some builders advertise nearby environmental features as “pristine” or “untouched”; places where accessed is purchased along with the home. The irony being that as soon as houses are built and people There are rarely any pictures of people inside the houses and many images of people enjoying the outdoors. This functions to sell the neighbourhood as a resort-like weekend getaway. An emphasis on environmental imagery also appeals to buyers’ growing environmental awareness, even though there is little evidence of the houses or neighbourhood having less of a detrimental impact on the environment than any other suburban development. Highlighting environmental elements disguises the practice of land development, which clears and grades surfaces leaving it devoid of most local vegetation before constructing homes and manufacturing “natural” spaces through landscaping. To give an environmental appearance, builders frequently use images of leaves, sky, clouds, flowers, stones, and butterflies in the spaces between other images and text in the advertisements (*Figure 13*).



Figure 13: Familiar adage repacked with an environmental motif (Tridel)

Green and blue, the colours of earth and sky are used frequently in conjunction with and in lieu of leaf and clouds. These features create a “natural” intertextuality between the marketing messages and function to naturalize the other messages about society or the built form. The effect of naturalization creates the impression that everything in the ad has sprung from the earth in its natural and therefore proper order.

The natural environment is a strong marketing theme for Cornell Rouge, a new development built by Forest Hill Homes and Madison Homes. The environmental message is strongest at the builders’ shared sales centre, communicated through the indoor and outdoor signs as well as general décor using sticks, water, and leaves. The sales centre also has a child’s play area decorated to resemble a tree house. Slogans on some of the posters inside the sales centre read: “This is the corner of Cornell where Mother Nature lives...” “Being playful is in our nature,” “The comforts of home transcend your own four walls...” and “Listen to the rhythm of your footsteps on the trail.” These slogans are accompanied by images of people playing outside, as well



Figure 14: “This is the corner of Cornell where Mother Nature lives...” (Madison & Forest Hill Homes)

as images of natural features such as forests and waterfalls in their untouched condition (Figures 14 & 15). The “green” message is also strong on the builders’ separate websites, which share design elements and slogans

(Figure 16). They market Cornell Rouge as “The greenest corner of Cornell” and emphasize its proximity to the Rouge Park: “a forested paradise... right next door” (Madison & Forest Hill websites).



Figure 15: “The comforts of home transcend your own four walls” (Forest Hill Homes)



Figure 16: Homepage of Forest Hill Homes Cornell Rouge website



A Comment on Representations of the Built Form in The Sample

Messages about the built form cut across numerous themes, most strongly evident in people's use public space or the quality of the house. Both the houses and the neighbourhood are used in the construction of meaning about the past, family, exclusivity, neighbourhood, location, home and community. "Planned," "well-planned," "masterfully planned," and "master-planned" were phrases repeated in the sample and used to lend the authority of "expert planners" to the design. Builders stress the care with which the streets and other features have been laid out. Eldin even claims to have a "sophisticated methodology towards building homes." The authority of planning methodology is used to reassure buyers their purchase is tried, tested, and fail-safe. New urbanism is mentioned explicitly in several communities, although not as much as planned or master-planned. New urbanism in a marketable nutshell comes down to: "Homes are closer to the sidewalk with large porches. Garages are moved to rear lanes so that garages do not block out the view from the front of your house. From your porch you can now see your children playing down both ways, and greet your neighbours as they stroll by" (Ballantry Cornell). The new urbanist idea that neighbourhood design can bring about community is strong throughout the sample. Parks, squares and other intentionally designed spaces are marketed as places for social gathering and community building. "Streetscapes" is a popular term that has been cherry-picked from the planning literature to lend credibility to design of the built form. Greensborough Village's "Streetscapes combine the romance of second floor balconies with English Manor rooflines, oversized accent windows and more." Madison claims

"winding drives and quiet cul-de-sacs... create pedestrian-friendly streetscapes" in Greensborough, despite new urbanist's preference for the grid. Monarch Homes even markets its "family friendly streetscapes" in Heritage.

Builders sell their reputation along with the houses, emphasizing their legacy of years in the business of quality house construction. Houses are the dream home sets for people to perform their identities, and reflect their hopes. Windsong expresses this well: "These are homes that are truly designed to reflect the way you live in an established community." "Dream homes" are beautiful, harmonious, and luxurious with "dream features" including "gourmet kitchens."

The built form is an important signifier of the past in the marketing materials. Wismer Village is a "neighbourhood that feels like it's always been home." Swan Lake has "carefully crafted English cottage-style bungalows" and "Grand Cornell's superior, southernmost location and heritage-style home designs have new homebuyers looking 'back to the future.'" Marketing the concept of the historic Main Street plays an important part in selling



Figure 17: (Re)Creating History through marketing (Monarch)

nostalgia for the past. In Greensborough Village “We put shops and services in a cluster just like the main street of a small town we all cherish in our memories.” The ad thus constructs a myth of a shared past (See *Figure 19* for one of Monarch’s ads about making history.) Monarch’s development, Heritage, demonstrates how the built form is used across marketing themes of exclusivity, family the past, home and community, house design and construction, neighbourhood design and location, nature:

“Heritage’s home designs will evoke memories of architecture from a gentler era, when appreciation of art and music was a part of daily life. Offering an eclectic range of styles from Edwardian to Queen Anne, Victorian to Gothic revival, each home will be detailed to perfection, with beautiful stone and stucco accents, wide inviting porches, and fine features and finishes (Heritage: Online)

Floor plans and house model renderings play an interesting role in setting the tone for the marketing themes. Rendering styles for the majority of developments bear an uncanny resemblance to Thomas Kinkade paintings (*Figure 18*). The typical rendering style has watercolour-like texture, with the mid-day sky and light reflected on the windows. It is always the middle of summer, and there are extensive flower gardens and shrubbery in front of the house, mature trees and often a trellis with climbing flowering vines flank the house, and a hazy mature forest sets the backdrop (*Figure 19*). An emerging new rendering style for a number of the developments is a photo-realistic computer generated image that more closely resembles a house in the virtual world, than a watercolour painting (Monarch, CountryWide Homes, Kylemore). Houses are still encircled by gardens and mature forests, and aside from having a crisper image quality, the most striking difference is that it is dusk in these images and there are more warm colours than cool. As a result the lights are on inside

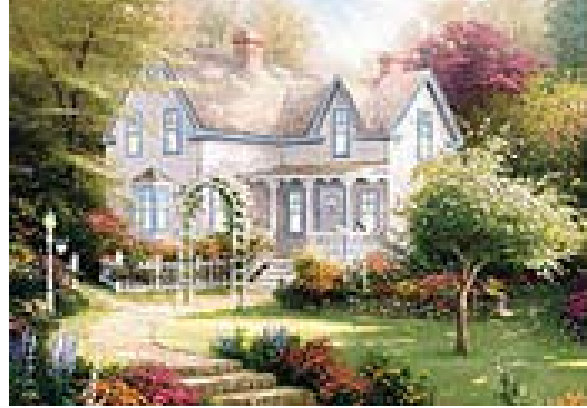


Figure 18 Thomas Kinkade Painting (www.thomaskinkade.com)



Figure 19: Typical cool-coloured, daytime rendering (Greenpark)



Figure 20: Updated rendering style creates warmth (Countrywide)

and like a nosy neighbour, the prospective buyers can see the luxurious furnishings, plants, artwork, curtains and furniture inside. This technique makes the houses seem more inviting, while also increasing its luxurious presentation (*Figure 20*).

Chapter Five: Social Discourses

Introduction to Social Issues in Marketing Material

The importance of marketing lifestyle and drawing on social messages was clear in themes identified for new homes marketing in Markham. While information about the housing products for sale are found within the marketing materials, they are often after social themes are used as the primary selling point, as demonstrated with Ballantry's Cornell. In many of the advertising images the house for sale is absent and the people depicted bear the full representation of the meanings and messages the builders communicate. The prospective house buyer reading the advertisement transfers meaning to the missing product. The attention to social themes and lifestyle is in line with other studies on advertising in general and place marketing specifically (Amorim and Loureiro 2003; Dovey 1992; Maxwell 2004). Leiss, et al (1990: 352) summarize this shift to lifestyle advertising:

"The simple point is that advertising today communicates more about the social context in which products are used than about the products themselves. The primary field of content in modern advertising is contemporary culture itself, and advertising is a contested discourse precisely for this reason. Advertising is more than a mechanism for communicating product information to individuals: it is a cultural system, a social discourse whose unifying theme is the meaning of consumption"

In this study, sample place advertising is a meta-discourse about the consumption of space on the suburban fringe. Within this overarching narrative numerous discourses build on each other and "articulate" with one another (Hill Collins 1998: 157). Foucault (1990: 33) refers to a "multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions." All the discourses in builder advertisements, planning documents, and other media contribute to the production of meaning and are part of culture's regime of truth. Advertisers draw on knowledge created through discourse, repackage it, and invite the viewer to decode or fill the in the rest of the story with what is already known about cultural codes as (re)produced through social discourses. Social meanings within discourses are reinforced and recreated by "reading" the advertising; the advertisement becomes a type of language about suburban culture. Social discourses in advertisements work to produce rules about behaviour and reinforce cultural concepts of "normal." In sociology something is normative "when the majority of people hold it as a value or a moral standard" (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 144). As images are repeated and reinforced through advertising, they become normative. Normative discourses in advertisements reinforce social rewards for those who successfully fulfil an expected role.

Social norms operate as yardsticks against which all others must measure. The marketing materials for new residential developments deliver the cast of characters of appropriate residents by showing what people who belong there look like, what they do, what they have, and what they value. Social norms are produced through the audience's reading of the poses and rituals depicted in the ad. The audience reads an ad according to knowledge produced by powerful discourses. Goffman (1976: 84) refers to the poses and social messages as conventionalized and stylized in "hyperritualization." Others would call these hyperritualizations of social life, stereotypes. According to Fleras and Kunz (2001: 113) stereotypes justify prevailing distributions of power and resources. Normalization and its disciplinary function in society is most evident when people "internalize the categories and values of the dominant regime of power" in the "production of docile and useful bodies" (Sandercock 2003: 70). The influence of these social norms within place advertising is essential for understanding how people read exclusion or inclusion in particular places.

Methodology for Accomplishing Objectives Two and Three:

To analyze representations of people and society in the marketing materials and interpret the construction of social meanings.

and

To assess how social diversity is made visible or invisible in the marketing materials.

To achieve objectives two and three, I employed visual methodological techniques from content analysis, semiotics and discourse analysis concerned with images and text regarding people and society (*Figure 21, page 34*). Two marketing bundles in the sample did not use images of people (Cathedral and Manor Gate) and are not included in the analysis. Therefore, the analysed sample included the marketing bundles for 33 residential developments.

I used content analysis to determine the frequency of certain poses and groups of people within the entire sample. Applying content analysis to the sample provided quantitative data for certain social messages and indicators of social diversity. My initial close readings of the marketing media led to development of the list of these poses and groupings. I counted representations (*Table 6, page 34*) within the entire sample and assigned a binary score to the development if the advertising included the pose or representation. For example, if one or multiple images of heterosexual romance were depicted in the marketing bundle, the development received one point. If no images of heterosexual romance were depicted in the bundle, it scored as zero. This method provided quantitative data to compare development marketing bundles. The results are discussed thematically in the following section.

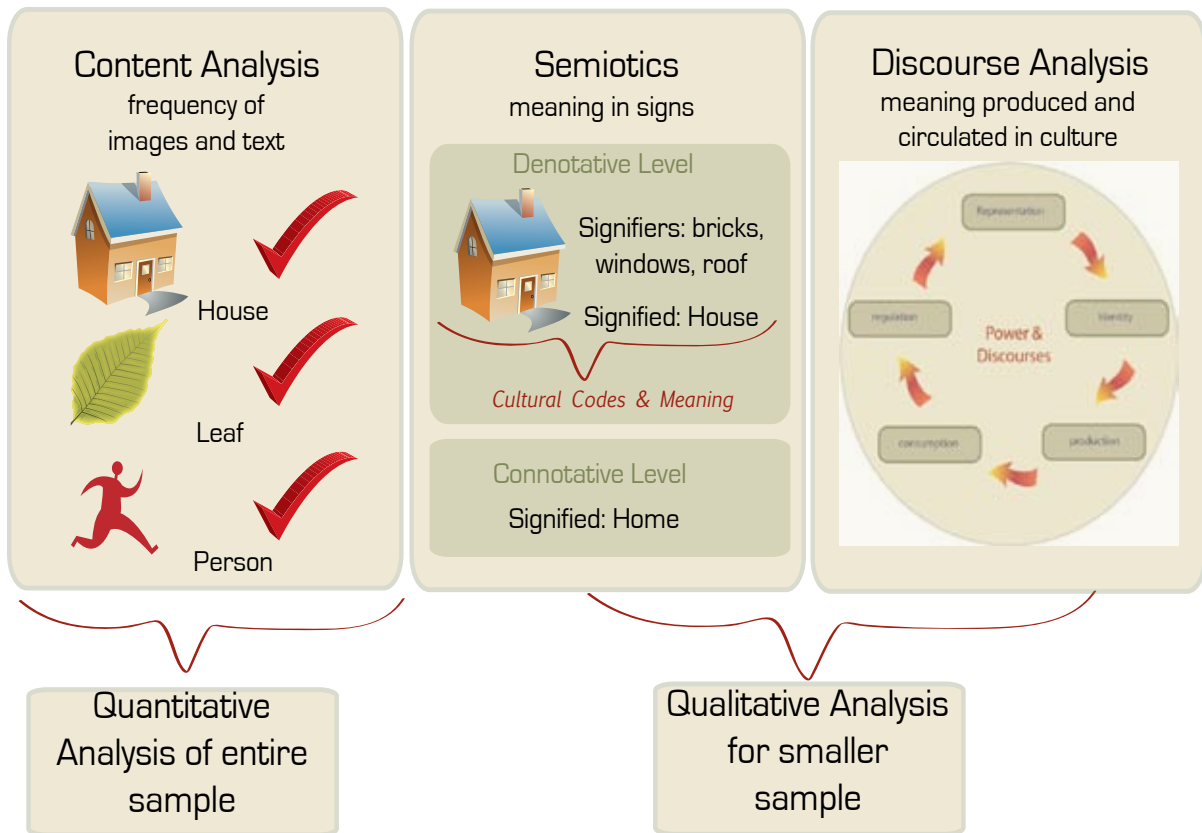


Figure 21: Conceptual diagram of applying the quantitative and qualitative visual methodologies to the sample

Visible Minority Absent	Visible Minority Present	Numerous ethnicities pictured together
Het Romance	Wedding Rings visible	Queer Romance
Family Image	children	teenagers
young adults - 20-50	mature adults 50-90	Three generations at once
Just Children, no adults	Just Adults no children	Father with baby or toddler
Mother with baby or toddler	Dad with child on shoulders	Father & Son
Father & Daughter	Mother & Son	Mother & Daughter
Father, Mother, Son & Daughter	Father, Mother, Son, Son	Father, Mother, Daughter, Daughter
Father, Daughter, son	Mother, Daughter, son	Father, Mother, 1 child
other family arrangement	Woman alone	Man alone
Woman/girl in pink	Man/boy in blue	Woman dressed like daughter
Man dressed like son	Woman doing chores	Woman shopping
Couple Shopping	Man in business clothes	Woman in business clothes
child(ren) in field	adults in field	

Table 6: Poses counted throughout the sample

Due to limitations of quantitative data analysis discussed in previous sections, I developed a combined semiotics and discourse analysis method to apply qualitative analysis to a smaller selection within the sample. Advertisements including images and text communicating particular social messages were selected for additional qualitative analysis. Discourse analysis is concerned with how meaning is produced and circulated within culture, as well as who holds power and benefits from those discourses. Culture can be understood as a circuit for channelling meaning and values between representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. A conceptual diagram adapted from Hall (1997a) of how meaning circulates within discourse is illustrated in Figure 21. Because advertising messages “function as mobile power-knowledge formations that allow for the rehearsal of understandings of social relations” (Cronin 2004: 113), discourse analysis, with questions about power, is appropriate for analyzing social meaning. I synthesized information about semiotic analysis and discourse analysis as explained by Hall (1997b) and Rose (2007) and developed an evaluation framework to apply to advertisements. The initial stage identified signifiers and signifieds of numerous signs in every advertisement at the denotative and connotative levels of meaning. I looked for cultural meanings, themes and discourses at work in the representations of those signs. I noted primary and secondary texts and considered not only what they said, but also the influence of fonts, colour and position. I proceeded to deconstruct the elements of the advertisement, looking for additional meaning given through the connections between signs.

Questions I answered for each selected advertisement were:

What is the setting?
Who or what is the subject of the image (what are they doing, where are they looking)?
Who or what commands the centre of the picture?
What are the relationships between signs (touch, pose, body language, positionality, cluster, division)?
What is the spatial organization of the signs?
What is the significance of colour used?
What is the significance of ages represented?
What is the significance of genders represented?
What is the significance of races represented?
How are bodies represented ?
How is class or income level represented?
What are the facial expressions?
What is the relationship to the viewer, where am I?
What are the visual absences?
What are the historic reference(s)?
Who has the power in this image?
What knowledges are being produced?
What is “sayable” about the discourses in the ad?
Who is personifying the discourse?
How is knowledge about the topic given authority or “truth”?

Table 7. Questions asked of selected ads for semiotic and discourse analysis

Information from the evaluation framework was summarized in paragraph descriptions and included with the findings for objectives two and three in the following section.

My analysis of social messages in the advertisements for new residential developments in Markham started with the body and moved up through classificatory systems of social difference. Discourses on social difference reveal much about social inclusion and exclusion. According to Cronin (2004: 128), “gender, class, race and other socially significant classifications... are constituted by, and in turn constitute, the social realm and function to co-ordinate access to economic, social and symbolic resources.” The social discourses that emerged in the marketing literature include the body, romance and sexuality, family and gender roles, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity and cultural difference. Many of the images produced meaning across more than one of these social differences and underlined the vociferousness of certain social discourses. The production of meaning across discourses can be understood as “intersectionality.” Although it was difficult to separate discourses operating together within a particular image, it was useful for highlighting recurring messages in the marketing material and for a better understanding of how diversity is represented in each discourse. This analysis determined the represented norms in social discourses, looked for diversity in social portrayals, and imagined alternative realities.

The following section is organized by social discourses. Each section highlights relevant theory about the discourse and how it is represented through advertising media. I outlined my findings from both the quantitative content analysis and the qualitative semiotics and discourse analysis. Each section concludes with a discussion about the social meanings produced at each level of discourse and how diversity is or is not represented in the findings.

Findings and Analysis

Social Discourse on The Beautiful Body: Measuring up to the Vitruvian Man

The human body is an important symbol marked by cultural complexities (Zita 1998). Young (1990: 136) outlines how modern Western scientific discourses of reason objectify bodies marked as other, “bringing them under the scrutiny of a gaze that measured, weighed, and classified their bodily attributes according to a standard of white male youthfulness.” Proportionality, beauty and strength are idealized in Western discourses on the body, and epitomized in Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing of the Vitruvian Man (Mirzoeff 1995) (*Figure 22*). Social messages in the marketing material of this study are primarily communicated through bodies of people in the advertisements who represent human emotions in symbolic tableaux of idealized life in the suburbs. We expect beautiful bodies selling us clothes and make-up; however, the same bodies are used to sell us side entrances, bay windows, and back lanes.

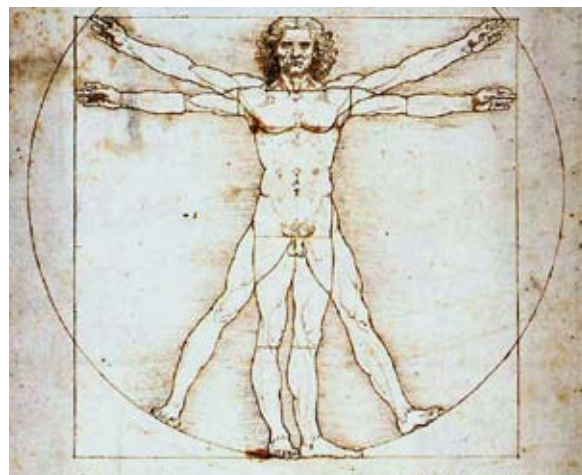


Figure 22: da Vinci's Vitruvian Man an idealistic representation of the human body (www.guide-to-symbols.com/_images_pub2/vitruvian.jpg)

Representations of people in the marketing material for new residential developments in Markham draw on Western discourses about the body and present readers with beautiful, thin, healthy, stylishly dressed, able-bodies. In a website image the viewer is looking directly onto the chest of a woman holding a red daisy above her breasts (*Figure 23*). In another a shirtless man shows off his muscular upper body, while swinging a child with his equally fit partner who displays her trim arms and a sliver of her slim midriff (*Figure 24*). The marketing materials emphasize recreation and represent the normal, good body as able and fit. Images with both men and women engaging in recreation together demonstrate an attraction between bodies and in Figures 25 and 26, the men admire the figures of female companions. Large, open-mouth, sparkling smiles are common and depict the body as a representation of an enviable mental state of happiness.



Figure 23: Female body used to sell houses (Lakeview)



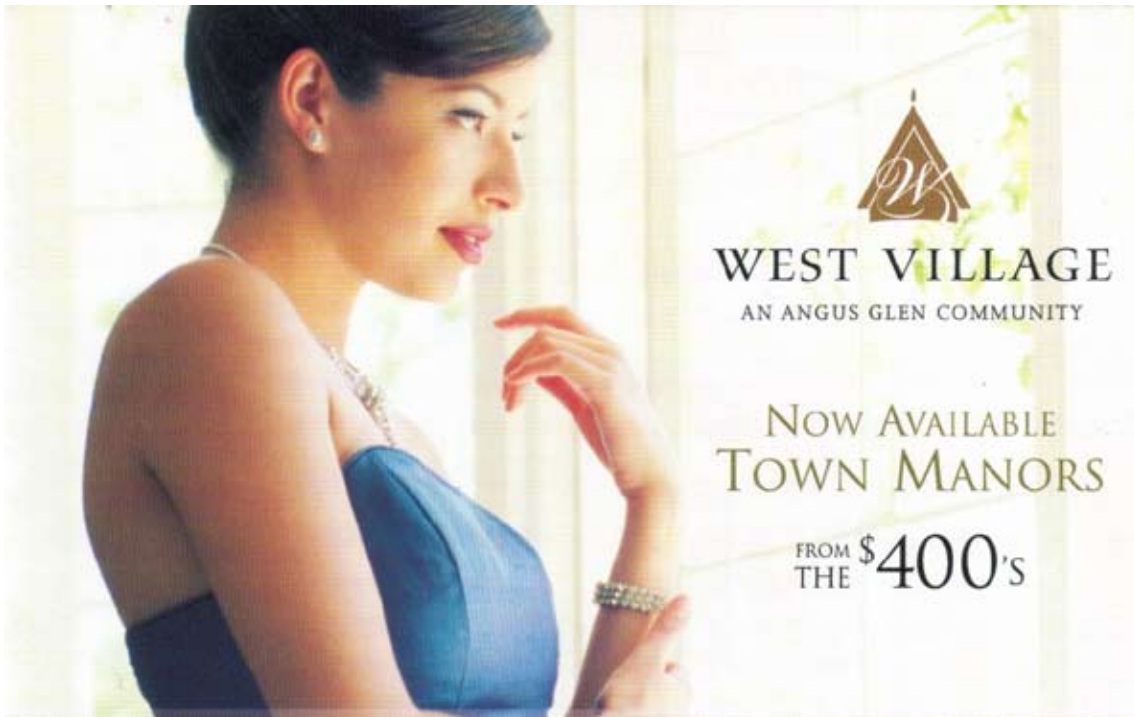
Figure 24: Fit bodies showcased in house advertising materials (Lakeview)



Figure 25: Man admires female golfer (Greenpark)



Figure 26: Man admires female jogging partner (Ballantry)



PERSONAL
STYLE



Live on the 6th Hole
Experience living in Unionville's most prestigious community. Our West Village community is surrounded by parks and stunning natural beauty. Choose from executive Singles and superb Town Manors.



NOW OPEN! Town Manors starting from the \$400's.

905.887.9950

Prices and specifications subject to change without notice. E&OE © 2007 Kylemore Communities. All Rights Reserved. Some conditions apply see sales representatives for details.



Figure 27: The Debutante (Kylemore)

Detailed Look at Body Imagery

“The Debutante” (Figure 27)

Residential Development West Village – Angus Glen

Builder: Kylemore

The primary subject of Figure 27 is a young woman dressed in extravagant formality and waiting expectantly at a window. The woman’s body, her diamond jewellery, and make-up are the signifiers of a debutante; an upper class woman making an appearance in society to avail herself to upper class men. Her right arm crosses her bodice to clasp her left forearm, leaving her left hand dangling elegantly near her face, not yet graced by a diamond wedding ring. She appears content, yet there is a certain reserve in her pose reinforcing her delicacy and perhaps conveying anxiety about her debut. Her white, teenage body represents the Western cultural ideal: thin yet with all the right curves. Her gown is laced up the back, signifying both a corset and ties on a parcel, gift-wrapped for her date.

The debutante signifies wealth, exclusivity, and luxury and embodies the lifestyle promoted in West Village. The development name and logo are layered on top of the window and in her line of sight. The viewer will naturally read from left to right and trace her gaze to the logo. Her curved left forearm is the hook leading the reader’s eye down to the bracelet of diamonds and the price “from the \$400s” a clear double message that the West Village is the realm of the wealthy. While she may or may not be a golf enthusiast drawn to living on the 6th hole of Angus Glen Golf Course, she is presented as the prize for a young professional to take home to an “executive Single” or “superb Town Manor” on the edge of the golf course.

Flowing from the blue satin gown’s skirt and linked by the colour of the sky, is the rendering of the Town Manors. Superimposing the houses on her body provides a direct visual link and prompts the reader to connect the house with the debutante. Common sense would indicate that the townhouses are very similar in form and style, and Kylemore works very hard to distract from that with the message “Personal Style” emblazoned across her waist. Myths of uniqueness and individuality are signified by the debutante and bought into by purchasers of mass produced housing. Style is equated with wealth and embodied by the debutante. Her beautiful body drips with diamonds and pours into the house rendering, selling style, wealth and prestige through Town Manors lining a private golf course.

Beautiful attractive bodies draw readers into the advertisement, offering bodies to emulate and imagine being with. The human body is used in advertisements to sell products that are often absent. In the sample, bodies are objectified to sell houses and in the process beauty and relationships are commodified. Kilbourne (1999) documented how body images in advertising can be especially damaging for girls and women who compromise health to emulate bodies deemed attractive in the cultural landscape.

Diversity of body types is lacking in the advertising materials. Models in the advertisements represent future residents of new Markham neighbourhoods; therefore, the handsome, fit, and able-bodied are the yardsticks of comparison. Through discourses on the body that render lesser-able bodies invisible “we have transformed a mental or physical condition into a disadvantage by privileging non-disabled norms” (Razack 1998: 152). Place marketing in Markham effectively displaces and disadvantages the disabled and everyone else who does not fit the exalted norm.

Social Discourse on Gender Identity: Essentializing Dick and Jane

In the marketing material for new residential developments, it is difficult to disentangle social discourses on gender identity, sexuality, romance, age and gender roles and their institutionalization in marriage and family. However, it is worthwhile to point out the dominant messages in these discourses individually. Gender portrayal is a significant aspect of advertising because it forms a starting point for understanding identity in Western culture. Whereas sex refers to biological difference, gender is socially defined, constructed and can be understood as a performance of “gender

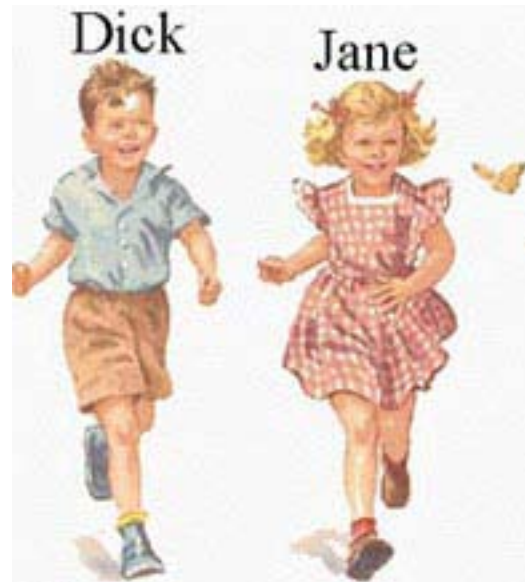


Figure 28: Children's storybook characters Dick and Jane (www.uit.fi)

displays – conventionalized portrayals of the culturally established correlates of sex” (Jhally 2006: 165). In North American dominant culture, parents want to know a child's sex at birth and proceed to construct their gender by dressing them in symbolic blue or pink, and establishing a firm binary difference in gender identity. Social construction of gender is imposed from birth, learned through social discourse and reproduced through normative behaviours in order to avoid social punishment in the form of bullying or ostracism. Dick and Jane are iconic symbols of gender norms and normative behaviour directed at children (*Figure 28*). A discourse of gender establishes social norms that

“indicate how men and women are supposed to look, act, and relate to each other in a wide variety of social situations; the ritualized behaviour ‘anchors’ expectations, rewards, and punishments and stabilizes social intercourse” (Leiss, Kline, Jhally 1990: 215).

Advertisements engage audiences in discourses about gender because it is easily marked and contains recognizable aspects of identity. Gender displays in advertisements are simplified and exaggerated, in what Goffman (1979: 84) calls “hyper-ritualization”.



Figure 29: Happy couple dressed in pink and blue to communicate their gender in a glance (Ballantray)

According to Goffman (1979: 7):

“femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression – something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual.”

Gender norms are a key basis for recognizing culturally conventional relationships and constructing social messages. At a glance, viewers can decode a romantic relationship or a family through the advertisement’s use of

hyper-ritualized gender norms.

Blue and pink clothes are used in the marketing materials for new subdivisions in Markham as signifiers of gender and allow readers to quickly recognize male and female subjects, decode the relationships depicted, translate their accompanying messages of love and belonging, and transfer the message to the product of house and neighbourhood. In nine marketing bundles women or girls were dressed in pink, and in five marketing bundles men were dressed in blue. On the cover of Ballantray’s brochure for Cornell there is an image of a man in blue and a woman in pink and white skipping through a field with their arms around each other. Their gender is read quickly because of the signifying colour of their clothing. Their pose of affiliation signifies romantic relationship and associated emotions (*Figure 29*) Similarly, in the brochure for Wismer Woods a young family is dressed in pink and blue with the mother and daughter sitting together, and the father has the son on his lap (*Figure 30*). At a glance the gender of the models is known and the concept of a happy family invoked.

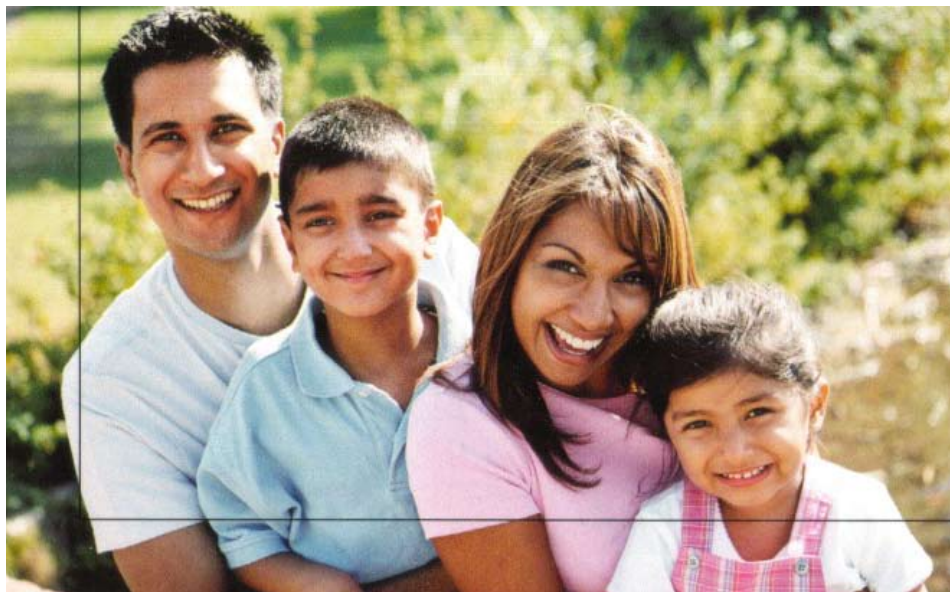


Figure 30: Happy family modeling stereotypical gender roles and clothing (National)

Inasmuch as gender norms have a stabilizing function in our culture, recognition that gender that can be performed in imprecise or fluid ways threatens the constructed stable foundation that morally charged social institutions like marriage and family are built upon. There is no diversity in representation of gender in the marketing material for new residential developments in Markham. Selling suburban houses depends on a binary definition of gender in order to package them with imagery of heterosexual romances and growing families, who are encouraged to consume ever-larger houses over time. Lived reality however, calls for a theoretical approach to gender that recognizes complexity. “Complex gendering unfolds when humans resist or subvert sex stereotyping” (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 148). In disallowing gender ambiguity and naturalizing the binary difference between men and women, “deviant individuals are relegated to the perverted section of our culture (e.g., transsexuals and transvestites)” (Jhally 2006: 168). Reinforcing normative gender discourses allows advertisers to draw on social norms to communicate emotions and ideas associated with their marketing themes.

Social Discourse about Romance & Sexuality

Romantic relationships represented in the marketing material for new residential developments in Markham can be described as heteronormative. Heteronormativity is a socially constructed “ideology that promotes gender conventionality, heterosexuality and family traditionalism as the correct way for people to be” (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 143). Heteronormativity depends on the binary division between males and females and their natural attraction and bonding. People who fit this norm are considered real men or women in natural sexual relationships and genuine families. Anyone who falls outside is characterized as a gender deviant engaged in unnatural sex and any attempt to form a family is illegitimate or pseudo. Those who measure up to the norm are privileged in the hierarchy of relational identity (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005). Performing sexuality, love, and affection “normally” and “correctly” depends on performing gender normally and leads to performing marriage and family according to cultural conventions. Thus illustrating the importance of an intersectional understanding of social difference and relationships.



Figure 31: Heterosexual romance depicted in advertising (Ballantry)

In the advertising sample, 24 of out of 33 marketing bundles depicted heterosexual romance (*Figures 31 and 32*). In the wholesome home, sex is not an explicit sales message, yet it is implied in certain poses of affection and in pictures in bedrooms. Williamson (2002: 120) explains that in advertisements sex is “cooked” in that it is “always hinted at, referred to, in innuendo double entendre, or symbolism: but never ‘raw’.” Houses are shown primarily as places where young couples can enjoy time together (*Figures 33 and 34*). Marriage imagery featured into some marketing bundles, with photos of wedding rings and bouquets (*Figures 35 and 36*). Romance imagery and the social convention of marriage was even present in an empty room through the presence of a wedding photo (*Figure 37*). Overall, wedding rings were less evident than expected, which may reflect sensitivity to couples choosing to buy a house together without being married.



Figure 32: Heterosexual romance depicted in advertising (Ballantry)



Figure 33: Happy young couples enjoy their new house (Starlane)



Figure 34: Young couple innocently cuddles on the couch of their new home (Starlane)



Figure 35: Wedding imagery in the ad transfers the emotion of passion to the house for sale (Starlane)



Figure 35: Wedding imagery in the ad prompts the prospective buyer to consider their future family in the house for sale (Starlane)



Figure 37: Even in an empty room heteronormativity is present via the presence of a wedding photo encircled in red (National)

Detailed Look at Romance

“The Happy Couple” (Figure 38)

Residential Development: Cathedral Park

Builder: Lakeview

Figure 38 is a prime example of sex being hinted at and used to sell new houses. The subjects in the image are two adults who are posed in playful affection, positioned on a bed. White is the colour of the sheets and their clothing, strengthening the visual connection between the bed and the couple. The woman is wearing a camisole and the man is not wearing pants. While their outfits are revealing, there are certainly more scandalous options, and the whiteness of their clothes represents the innocence and propriety of their sexual behaviour as the man and woman of the house. They are both laughing and enjoying themselves, implying sexual foreplay. He is behind her and raised up on his knees and she appears to be holding his right hand back, perhaps from tickling her. His elevated position puts him in a dominant position, even though she commands the centre of the image.

The happy couple appears on Lakeview’s website testimonials page with the heading: “Happy family speaks.” This image flashes between other images of family happiness representing the satisfied customers who are quoted on this page saying things like: “You helped my dream home become my home,” “My fiancé and I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent customer service we received,” and “We’re so lucky”. The proximity between this image and the quotes gives faces and action to the words.

Home, romantic intimacy and happiness are linked to experience purchasing a house from Lakeview. It is in this connection the reader can imagine himself experiencing sexual bliss in a Lakeview house and the bedroom therein.

Lakeview
Building Memories

OUR STORY Corporate Profile Our Mission Our Gallery Testimonials

COMMUNITIES
DECOR CENTRE
BUYERS GUIDE
SERVICE
NEWS
CONTACT US
VIDEO

Happy family speaks!

I absolutely love my Lakeview Home... I am the in house designer for Lakeview Homes and know the attention to detail & quality is impressive. I love working for & with a family run business. Thank you for a wonderful job guys. You helped my dream home become my home.
Mandy Samarzija (Woodland on the Humber- Brampton)

"The Lakeview team here on site has shown continual support in fulfilling our requests and we unconditionally thank them." The Dhillon Family (Woodland on the Humber)

We have moved into our new home and we absolutely love it. We wish to congratulate you and your entire team on a well built home. We searched for delicacies to put on our PDI and we just couldn't find anything of significance. That was a great feeling!" Peggy and Dave Samaroo (Huntsclub, Brampton)

My experience dealing with the people associated with Lakeview West Hill has been very pleasant – cooperative, understanding and helpful whenever I needed them." Laila Tikaram (Heights of West Hill)

My fiancé and I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent customer service we have received. I hear all these horror stories about buying a brand new home, but all I can say about our experience is all good things. We are so lucky to have chosen Lakeview as our builder." Tracey Abbott (Whitby)

I will definitely recommend Lakeview Homes to my friends and family, as you have all been wonderful to work with." Rajiv Sharma (Fletchers)

Figure 38: Young couple display hint at sexual satisfaction and represent the happy families who are satisfied homebuyers in Cathedral Park (Lakeview)

There are many images of opposite-gender adult affection and affiliation, and not one image showing similar interaction between adults of the same gender. One of the high rise condominium advertisements address diversity within heterosexual relationships:

“whether you are the upwardly mobile single, the happy young family or empty nesters rediscovering freedom, eko...is the place where life can come full circle.”

Otherwise, there is little mention of single lifestyle in the text; however, there are images of adults pictured on their own. Ten of the marketing bundles use images of women on their own, and only six marketing bundles picture men alone.

Although there is some indication of single adults through images, the text still implies a “natural” lifecycle, through which the upwardly mobile single will eventually form a family then later become a freedom-seeking retiree. The assumption that people will form heterosexual relationships and subsequent families is key in the continuing market for new suburban housing. Builders (re)produce images of reproductive and growing families in order to create the desire for bigger and better houses to accommodate more people who need sufficient space to stage their identities.

The invisibility of queer relationships in the advertisements for the good life in the suburbs demonstrates the “systematic dis-placement of gays and lesbians to the outside of civil society so that lesbians and gays have no legitimized place – not even a disadvantaged one” (Calhoun 2007: 241). Calhoun (2007: 242) describes “heterosexuality [as] the love whose name is continually spoken in the everyday routines and institutions of public social life” whereas same gender love is “this love that dare not speak its name.” The sample demonstrates young heterosexual love in the majority of marketing bundles and same

gender love is nowhere. Since the suburbs are popularly regarded as the best place to raise children, advertisements for new housing in the suburbs are part of a discourse that works to exclude queers from the suburbs, and thus from influencing future generations. Queer love is invisible and silenced in these images of “good life,” effectively displacing and excluding “those kind of people” from the cul-de-sacs where future generations will be raised. Respecting different, complex sexual identities and relationships “involve[s] recognizing that sexual identity, sexual attraction/desire, and sexual behaviour may not always hang together in one neat package for some individuals.” (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 148). In order to remain culturally relevant, advertising must recognize diversity and begin to engage with alternative lifestyles.

Social Discourse about Gender Roles in Family: Meet Mr. and Mrs. Jones

Gender roles ascribe responsibilities and duties and are (re)produced through advertisements for new residential developments. According to Jhally (2006):

“advertisements are a part of the whole context within which we attempt to understand and define our own gender relations. They are part of the process by which we learn about gender.”

Gender roles find normative definitions within the construction of the ideal North American family. Ideal families “consist of heterosexual couples that produce their own biological children. Such families have a specific authority structure; namely, a father-head earning an adequate family wage, a stay-at-home wife, and children” (Hill Collins 2000: 156). The traditional Western family structure is hierarchical and depends on the reproduction of constructed roles within the family unit. Hill Collins (1998: 158) sees the family structure as a foundation for other

social hierarchies: “individuals typically learn their assigned place in hierarchies of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation and social class in their families of origin. At the same time they learn to view such hierarchies as natural social arrangements, as compared to socially constructed ones.”

Much of our current day understanding of gender roles, and thus their representations, carries baggage from the Victorian area. According to Tange (2004: 278) “the Victorian middle-class home functioned to maintain crucial boundaries of class and gender identities primarily because it provided a stable location in which to “manage the social signifiers” of one’s position.” At the centre of a respectable Victorian home was a woman who was an efficient household manager. In the homes women managed, “children would learn manners and values, and men could seek refuge from the anxieties produced by public life” (Tange 2004: 278). These relationships carry into current day family discourses wherein “gender and age mutually construct one another; mothers

comply with fathers, sisters defer to brothers, all with the understanding that boys submit to maternal authority until they become men” (Hill Collins 1998: 159).

Husband-Father Roles

Historically in Western cultures, fathers were seen as moral and religious educators and breadwinners. More recently discourse around fatherhood opened up to the nurturing value of fathers’ involvement in the lives of children (Day, Lewis, O’Brien & Lamb 2005). In advertisements over the past couple of decades men are increasingly shown in home settings (Duffy 1994).

In the sample, men are portrayed as supportive husbands and fathers. The most stereotypical image of this is from Fieldgate’s Greensborough development, where a father is coming home in business clothes and is greeted by two small children. The whole scene is set in a field with a picket fence for added suburban symbolism (*Figure 39*).



Figure 39: Stereotype of father who returns after work to his waiting children in their suburban paradise (Fieldgate)

The supportive role for husbands and fathers is also represented quite literally, with men carrying children and women on their shoulders and backs (*Figures 40 to 46*). Eleven marketing bundles showed images of fathers with children on their backs. The connection between fathers and sons is strong in the sample. Fourteen marketing bundles include images of fathers and sons, while only seven show images of just fathers and daughters. Fathers carry and cuddle their daughters. Since little girls are constructed as fragile and in need of protection, the father embodies the safety that is being communicated about the neighbourhoods for sale (*Figure 40*). Meanwhile they prepare their sons for “the real world,” teaching them sports and how to tie ties (*Figures 47 to 49*).

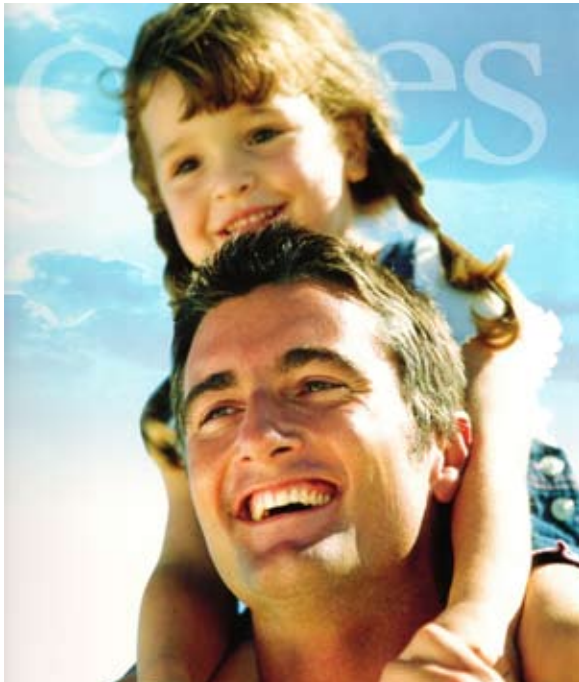


Figure 40: Father and daughter (Skyhomes)



Figure 41: Father and son (Windsong)



Figure 42: Happy family with daughter on father's shoulders (Regal Crest)

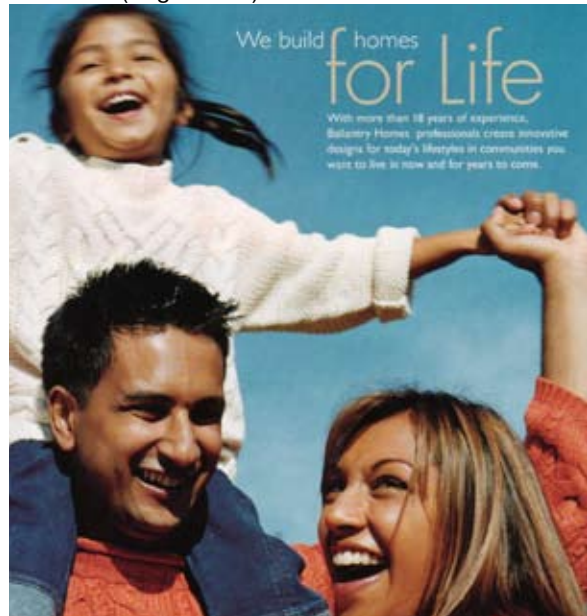


Figure 43: Daughter on father's shoulder (Ballantry)



Figure 44: Husband with wife on back (Fram)



Figure 45: Supportive parents carrying their children (Esquires)



Figure 46: Father supports the whole family on his back (Greenpark)

Katherine Perrott

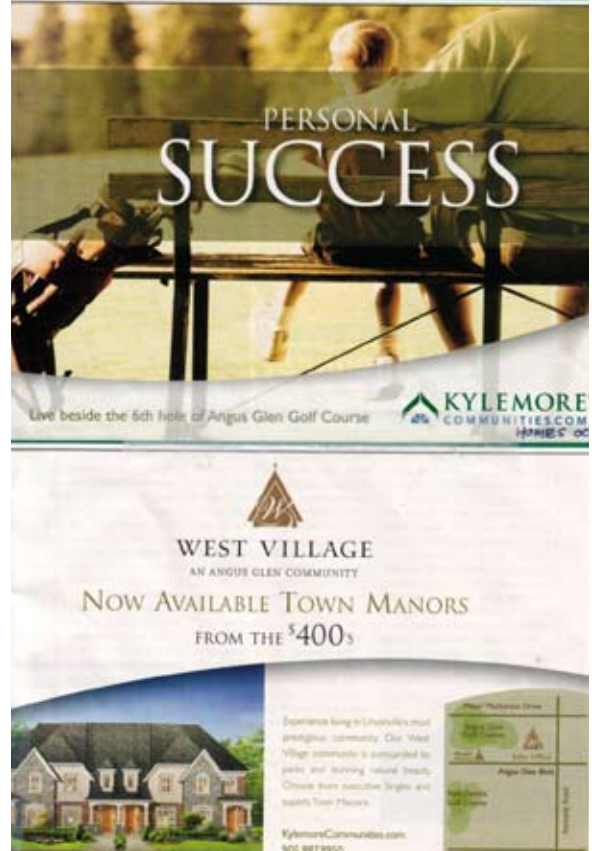


Figure 47: Father inducts his son into the successful exclusive world of golf (Kylemore)



Figure 48: Young man offers baseball tips to a younger generation (Madison)

SELLING THE SUBURBS 49

Detailed look at Male Gender Roles Imagery

“Tying the Knot” (Figure 49)

Residential Development: Heritage

Builder: Monarch

Discourses of male gender roles are communicated through Figure 49 and used to represent success. The heading on the sign inside the sales centre is “Our Successful Past Communities” and the image appears below the list of Monarch’s development successes in the Toronto area. The little boy is the main subject and a pair of disembodied male hands are tying a tie around his neck. He looks up at invisible the face seriously, and with a touch of apprehension, yet does not resist.

The hands are symbolic of the father who is preparing his son for the real world of power, business and success. Initiation into the successful male world is a sombre occasion the little boy is taking seriously. The gravity of the moment symbolizes the seriousness with which Monarch takes its business of house construction.



Figure 49: A father’s hands symbolically preparing his son for the “real world” (Monarch)

Wife-Mother Roles

Traditional images of women in marketing material are primarily of those performing the duties of wife and mother. She is a sexless, selfless nurturer and can be classified as the Virgin Mary female type, one of MacCurdy's (1994) four primary types of women portrayed in both medieval and contemporary images. "The Virgin Mary/mother/wife protects those she loves from the ravages of the physical world" (MacCurdy 1994: 47). Goffman (1979) found that women were often portrayed with children, acting childishly, and being treated in similar ways by men, such as being picked up and carried. Vestergaard and Schröder (1985) point to a decrease in advertisements depicting women upholding traditional femininity domesticity. In advertising studies on gender from the early 1980s Duffy (1994) found the only depiction of women considered positive were those where they were acting in previously male dominated

roles, therefore working outside the home. The ads were trying to reassure women who worked outside the home that they could still come home from work and transform to become appropriately feminine. Duffy concludes that images of women dressing in men's business clothes represent the idea that women must be similar to men in order to succeed. Success is not only equated with men but wealth; "women are replacing old stereotypes with new ones based on material achievement" (Duffy 1994: 12).

In the marketing material for new residential developments in Markham however, the construct of the wife-mother is still strong. These gender roles however, are more subtle than explicit in the advertising sample. Recreation is a major selling point in the sample and the new houses are wrapped up in fun and leisure rather than recreating tired gender roles. There is only one image of a woman setting a table and while there are images of women grocery shopping, there are relatively few images of women engaged in domestic chores (*Figure 50*).



Figure 50: Traditional role of homemaker (Forest Hill)

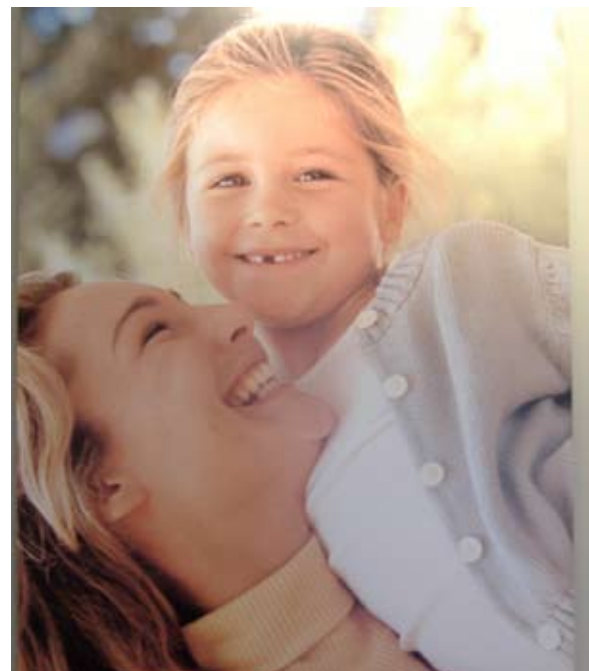


Figure 51: Women as nurturers and playmates for kids (Country Wide)

However, the idea of the stay at home mom is evident, particularly in the daytime neighbourhood renderings where women and children are the predominant subjects (*Figures 54 and 55*). Women are repeatedly shown with children, reinforcing mother as the appropriate role for adult women. The women in the sample images are attractive, slim and fit yet they are dressed modestly, downplaying their sexual attractiveness and communicating their roles as mothers and faithful wives. While men in the sample are busy inducting their children into the real world, women were more often seen as nurturers and playmates for children (*Figures 51 to 56*).



Figure 54: Mother reads to toddler (Monarch)



Figure 52: Women and children only in daytime rendering (HR)



Figure 55: Mother plays with baby (Ballantry)



Figure 53: Women and children only in daytime rendering (Arista, Fieldgate, Starlane)



Figure 56: Mommy and baby balancing act (Monarch)

Detailed Look at Female Gender Roles Imagery

“Mommy and Baby” (Figure 56)

Residential Development: Heritage

Builder: Monarch

The woman and baby are subjects in Figure 56. A game of mirroring actions and balance is being played out, with baby copying mother or vice versa. The background is white, allowing the reader’s eye to focus on the subjects and the text. Clothing connects mother and baby through uniform, with the white symbolizing innocence and purity. Their bodies mirror each other in action as well as appearance, both look fragile as they practice balance. Discourses being produced through this image are about motherhood, childhood, and the implied special connection between mothers and their babies.

This image and the previous example of husband-father gender role discourses reflect historically entrenched Western mind-body dualism where men are associated with high culture and the mind, whereas the women are associated with nature and the body. The father in Figure 49 is bringing his son into the world of business and the work of the mind, whereas this mother is pictured closer to nature in her role of introducing babies to their bodies.

The mother baby mirror game is the image accompanying text under the heading “A tradition of homebuilding excellence for over 90 years”. Mother and baby are embodying a discourse of tradition, quality, integrity and service. The “condominiums, master-planned communities and single-family homes” are absent on this poster, and the viewer enters a dialogue with the ad to transfer the emotions and connections demonstrated by the mother and baby to Monarch’s developments.

There is some diversity in how women are portrayed in the marketing sample demonstrating an alternative to the woman as stay-at-home-mother. There were several images of women in business suits pictured. These women were however, generally on the customer service pages of websites or pictured in the brochures as the helpful professional decorators (*Figure 57*). On one of Heritage's brochures, women are idealized as customer service representatives because of their talent for homemaking. Sandwiched between an image of a woman wearing a headset, and mother cuddling her daughter fresh out of a bath, is the phrase: "With us service is the art of making you feel at home" (*Figure 58*). Women in suits are rarely seen as inhabiting the house or coming home to it in the sample.

Even more indicative of success than the business suit is the luxury of leisure time. The

suit is indeed a cultural marker of personal "success," marking bodies as "white collar" in middle class jobs. More successful however, is the golf collar, a uniform of a wealth indicating sufficient income to afford not only a golf club membership, but ample time for leisure and family play. Men and women are more often pictured in the advertising sample to be having fun on the weekend with their spouses and families, rather than during the work week in their professional ensembles. A reduction in the images of women doing household chores is directly linked with class advantage. If neither the woman nor man of the house are pictured maintaining it, the implication is that they are contracting the housework to someone else. The lack of housework images also contributes to the magical appeal of the new house, where impeccably decorated and sparklingly clean interior and exterior give prospective buyers the illusion of a maintenance free abode.



Figure 57: Women in suits portrayed as customer service representatives and positioned close to an image of a mother caring for her daughter, linking mothering to customer service (National Homes)



Figure 58: Customer service representative positioned near the comforting mother creating a visual and conceptual link between mothering, homemaking and service (Monarch)

Social Discourse about Family: Keeping up with the Joneses

In traditional representations of family “the importance given to bonds between mothers and children, brothers and sisters, grandmothers and grandchildren, illustrates the significance of biology in definitions of family” (Hill Collins 1998: 163). Blood ties function to naturalize family structures “as “genuine” family and designates other forms of relations as “pseudo” (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 146). The reality of today’s family is complex as “there is growing acceptance of premarital sex, divorce, and remarriage, along with an erosion of sharp distinctions between cohabitation and marriage and between “legitimate” and out-of-wedlock births” (Coontz 2005: 49). Emerging “complex families include not only families as defined by biological and legal ties but also many other kinds of relationships that may be considered family by given persons or groups” (Oswald, Balter Blume & Marks 2005: 148).

In advertising, certain rituals and poses reaffirm family ties (Coltrane 1998). In a study of housing marketing in Australia from the 1960s through to the 1980s, Dovey (1992: 187) found a serious social anomaly in that houses “remain almost universally marketed for nuclear families with two adults plus children,” despite social realities to the contrary.

The marketing sample in Markham speaks to the challenges of marketing to diverse family structures. There are two images of multiple generations within Asian families shopping for a home together (Figures 59 and 60). This reflects builder desire to connect with the demographic realities that reflect changing family structure. Like other suburban municipalities in the Toronto region, Markham has a high proportion, 84.70%, of

married couple families, whereas the Toronto CMA as a whole had 74.34% (Statistics Canada 2006). Multiple family households are a growing part of the population, with the 2006 census indicating that 7.8% of private households in Markham are multiple family, which is higher than the Toronto CMA as a whole, with only 4.2%

The traditional family is certainly a strong symbol; however, there are numerous images of one parent with children, which may be attempting to appeal to single parents and



Figure 59: A multiple generation family indicates their satisfaction for the home they share (Regal Crest)



Figure 60: A multiple generation family shops for a home together (Monarch)

divorcees. Table 8 shows how many marketing bundle images show particular combinations of family members as the only subjects of an image. Two parents with children are the most common family images. Thirteen of the developments showed images of a father, mother, son and daughter. A father, mother and one child were also shown in another thirteen marketing bundles. Mothers and daughters were portrayed in 12 of the bundles, whereas mothers and sons were only represented in 4. Fathers and sons were portrayed in 14 marketing bundles and fathers and daughters in only 7.

Family Combination	Residential Developments
Father and Son	14
Father, Mother, Son and Daughter	13
Father, Mother and one child	13
Mother and Daughter	12
Father and Daughter	7
Mother and Son	4
Father, Daughter and Son	3
Grandparent and grandchild	3
Father, Mother, Daughter and Daughter	2
Multiple generation family	2
Father, Mother, Son and Son	1
Mother, Daughter and Son	1

Table 8: Number of development marketing bundles showing family combinations in order of predominance.

In light of family changes and the unsettling complexity those can pose for a culture, “by presenting an overall image of subservient femininity, adverts can be said to exploit the nostalgic longing of women (and men) toward the days when life seemed more straightforward” (Vestergaard and Schröder 1985: 89). Nostalgic images from the past are attractive because they simplify social relations for those in dominant positions, even if they better reflect imaginative memories rather than reality. Iconic images from the past get “appropriated to new contexts, creating analogies that recall past moments and suggest future possibilities” (Edwards 2004: 179). According to Dovey (1999: 149): “if the popular housing market is a guide, nostalgia is a pervasive spirit of our age which reflects a kind of ‘dis-ease’ with modern life.”

Tradition and family are tightly connected concepts in the marketing sample. Nostalgic images of family are common, the how nostalgia for the past is described through the analysis of Heritage. Special connections between mothers and daughters, fathers and sons are repeated throughout the representations of family in the sample. There is some indication that builders are picking up on alternative family arrangements, as is evident with multiple generations pictured together, and with images of single adults and children. The nostalgia for traditional family in advertisements in Markham speak to the potential disquiet about changing family arrangements.



Figure 61: "Christmas Homecoming" reinterpreted by Monarch in order to advertise residential development Heritage. Note the Asian and South Asian figures photoshopped into the image (Monarch website) The print ad version is slightly different: there are no visible minorities and the man is carrying suitcases instead of gifts.



Figure 62: "Christmas Homecoming" Norman Rockwell's original illustration for the cover of the Saturday Evening Post in 1948 (http://deacbench.blogspot.com/2007_12_01_archive.html)

Detailed Look at Family Imagery

“Christmas Homecoming” (Figure 61)

Residential Development: Heritage

Builder: Monarch

*There is also a video montage of this ad image soundtracked to Simon and Garfunkel’s “Homeward Bound” on Heritage’s website.

The setting of Figure 61 is indoors, which makes it stand out from the many outdoor images. It is immediately recognizable to those sharing particular cultural codes that the painting is done in the style of Norman Rockwell, who painted small town American scenes. The background Christmas tree and the gifts under the man in the centre’s arm indicate that the scene is a family Christmas, which would explain the many generations of people present.

The man is the subject, although the viewer does not get to see his face. The woman is a secondary subject, giving meaning to the man. He is the husband returning to a grateful and relieved wife. He is embraced before taking off his coat or putting down his luggage, which demonstrates that he’s been gone for a long time, increasing the emotion in the scene. The wife embraces her husband around his shoulders and neck. He is not hugging her back because his arms are full of gifts. The woman is looking off into the distance, smiling, though his shoulder obscures half of her face and most of her body. Though hers is the face that captures my attention, most of her body is obscured behind her husband. Her ring hand is gripping his back tightly, further underlining their marriage connection. There is a watch on her ring hand, together communicating the timelessness of marriage and traditional values.

The boy and girl in the front can be read as daughter and son. Colour links the people and their relationships together. The wife/mother is wearing a beige blouse, which matches the beige overcoat of the father/husband and the beige suit of the son. She also has a strip of red on the bottom of her skirt, which matches the red skirt of the daughter. All the colours have a sepia tone to them, further enhancing their heritage feel. As with the Husband, it’s the back of the boy we see most of and cannot see his facial expression. Both the boy and the girl have their hands behind their back. She is smiling and watching her parents.

The positionality of the subjects, and their dress reinforce social norms of gender roles and what qualifies as family. The sense is that this is a middle class family. Since it is a family gathering or party at the holidays then they are dressed in their best. It is all tidy, but not rich; therefore it retains a welcoming, not threatening feel.

The reader is put in the position of the man who is being welcomed home. The kind of Walton Family/Norman Rockwell tradition represented in the image is offered as the kind you can have in Markham. On the print ads the potential buyers is invited

“To be a part of Heritage,” and “Heritage” is in a large, scripted font and written across the bottom third of page at the legs of the man and back of the boy, who embody the concept of “A community inspired by traditions.” On the website, the image is accompanied by the message “A community nurtured by friendships”. A heterosexual, proper relationship between husband and wife is the image subject. The wife shows more affection than her husband, who is returning from some tour of duty. It shows the wife and mother as always waiting with an embrace at the ready for his return. In addition to family, other discourses in this ad are about tradition, community, proper behaviour of children, and what “traditional holidays” are (read: Christian, at Christmas).

This ad is not only reflects the style of Norman Rockwell, but is a direct copy of a painting Rockwell did for the cover of a December edition of the Saturday Evening Post in 1948 (Figure 62). In the original there was a goofy younger looking man with a bow tie and pipe standing in the position where the grandfatherly man in the beige suit stands in the Heritage ad. Perhaps he was replaced to give it more of a timeless feel because the bowtie man was definitely dated. Having the older man here also reinforces the generations of family being alluded to, because he is dressed in the same tones as the boy and father. The website image (Figure 61) includes visible minorities who have been photoshopped into the image. By incorporating Asian and South Asian models into the Christmas scene, the builders of Heritage are re-writing history to make it more ethnically inclusive and appealing, albeit culturally homogenous, Western, and Christian.

Social Discourse about Age

Children in the marketing sample represent the future, innocence, dreams and magic.

Their images evoke nostalgia for the innocent days, targeting adults who want the best (read: simpler time) for their children's future.



Figure 63: The Lemonade Stand (Mattamy)

Detailed Look at Age

“The Lemonade Stand” (Figure 63)

Residential Development: Cornell

Builder: Mattamy

This ad is set outdoors with shrub trees in the background, and a lemonade stand set up on a picnic bench, therefore presumably in a park or public space rather than a front yard. The main subject is the boy who is pouring lemonade into the cup for the girl, the secondary subject. Both are smiling and looking at the cup of lemonade. The boy is standing behind the sign of his little enterprise. You can see the entire profile of the girl. She is touching the table with her other hand. He has his other hand on knee. The signifiers of the lemonade stand are clustered together in the centre, and connected to the boy. This vignette is symbolic of gender relations epitomized in the fifties of the woman-household consumer, and male entrepreneur. Both subjects are white, and this is a white Western imagination of the past. It confirms that people of colour have not been part of [the constructed myth about] establishing this neighbourhood.

Black and white with a sepia wash so that it blends in with the beige, tan background - all to make it look old-fashioned and emphasize the textual assertion that this is an established neighbourhood. Establishment takes time and time is represented in the aged quality of the image. Navy blue is the colour of the text, it's a natural sky colour..

These sepia tones, the outfits, and everything that give is that old 1950s feeling gives it authority as an old photograph. The colours and fonts assert that Cornell is an established neighbourhood. The ad tugs at nostalgic “memories” and times when kids were innocent and safe in neighbourhoods that were likewise. “Remember when...” also give the ad in the text authority. Mattamy says it's real, and the buyer just has to remember it. A discourse of remembrance says that memories can be manipulated and created to sell new places. The myth created is that new homes can be magically located in the past.

This ad produces knowledge about how suburbia is a good place to raise kids, particularly sons who will be successful businessmen when they grow up. Suburbia is shown nurturing capitalist values and gender roles.

Katherine Perrott



Figure 64: Babies feet used to symbolize growing families being accommodated in the new house (Starlane)

We know that when building a
community
little things matter the most.

At Monarch, we believe in not just building houses, but creating fine communities that families are proud to call home.

You can tell it's a Monarch community when you see beautifully designed homes with wide, inviting porches and family-friendly streetscapes. It's about bringing people closer to one another, creating a sense of belonging. It's about building trust and sharing wonderful moments. It's all about community.

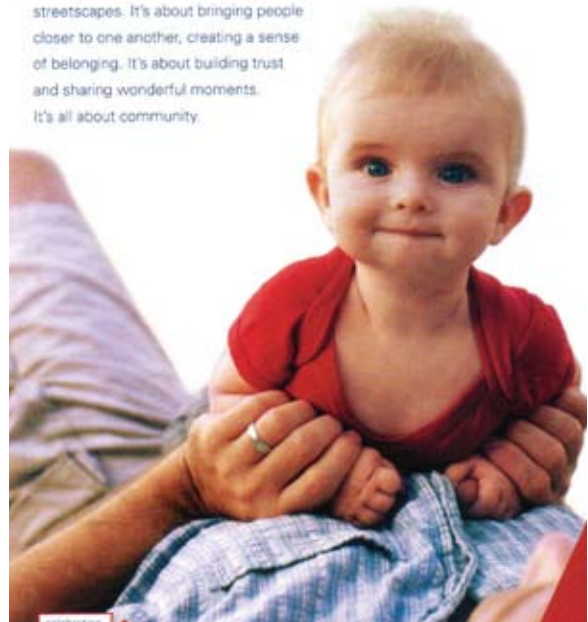


Figure 65: Baby symbolizes little details considered when building houses and communities (Monarch)

Babies are one of the strongest symbols of the future used in advertising (Rose 2007). In one image from Heritage, the baby (being held up by Daddy) looks at the viewer under the caption “We know that when building community, the little things matter the most.” The baby represents future and attention to details, the little things (Figure 64 and 65).

SELLING THE SUBURBS 61

Little girls were repeatedly used to embody the dream house concept. They are the ones making the wish that they can live in the new house that is for sale, and the parents are ultimately the ones who bite the emotional hook by wanting to make their wishes and dreams come true. The most prevalent image of little girls representing wish-making are them in fields, blowing the fluffy seeds of dandelions away, and making their “new home wishes” (Figures 66 to 69). Another powerful image of girls wishing for new houses and new urban neighbourhoods is for HR’s Grand Cornell, where they are standing over a Cornell streetscape in a snow globe (Figure 70). Girls and boys are used to symbolize innocence and the freedom of childhood within gendered roles.



Figure 67: Little girl and dandelion (Regal Crest)



Figure 66: Girl and dandelion (Lakeview)



Figure 68: Girl in field of dandelions (Country Wide)

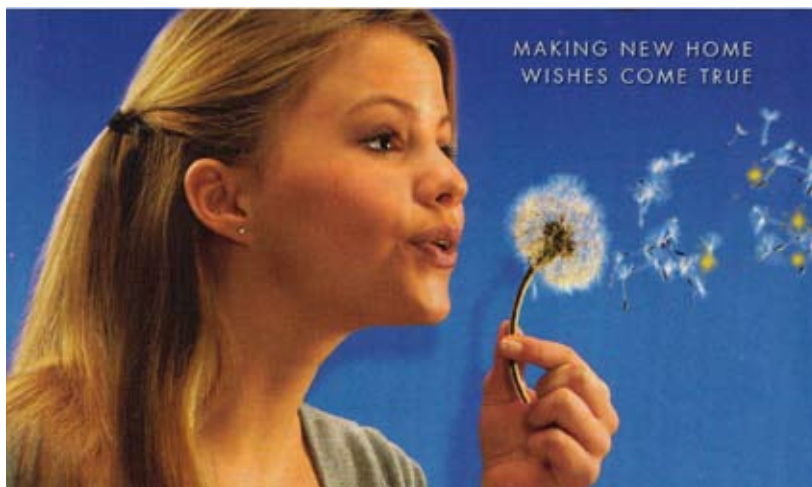


Figure 69: Making wishes on a dandelion for a new home (HR)



Figure 70: Young girls dream of a new home in Cornell (HR)

Twelve marketing bundles include images of children (mostly girls) playing in fields, including one dressed in a princess costume (Figure 73). Boys are pictured in storybook outfits like overalls with their fishing rods, baseball mitts and other symbols of childhood play (Figures 71 to 73). The new home is where fairy tales will come to life.



Figure 72: Storybook boys return from fishing (Madison)



Figure 71: Girls play in field (SkyHomes)



Figure 73: A little girl living her fairy tale (Regal Crest)

Youth are strikingly less visible than young children or adults, on first reading practically invisible. Upon a closer analysis they are present in 11 of 33 residential development marketing bundles. Youth were pictured with a family in a portrait, cycling in a pair, making a snack in a kitchen and alone studying, (Figure 74-76), and the getting ready for a formal occasion (Figure 77). Youth were never pictured in groups other than clearly posed families. When youth were included in the marketing bundle at all, they were most often in small pictures, and off in the distance. This may reflect social unease about youth as being scary or dangerous. The dream suburb is a safe place, and therefore, no unnerving youth “gangs”.



Figure 74: Youth in family portrait (Lakeview)



Figure 75: Youth on bikes (Mattamy)



Figure 76: Youth make snack in kitchen (Starlane)



Figure 77: Youth studies alone (Uppercity Properties)

Elderly people were present in the sample, however they were always fit, healthy, active, and youthful. In the majority of the sample they were shown interacting with grandchildren (Figure 78). They symbolize belonging,



Figure 78: Grandparents represent wisdom as well as family stability and legacy (Ballantry)



Figure 79: Active senior citizens (Fram)

purpose, wisdom and authority. Swan Lake, is a gated seniors lifestyle community, and there were no children or grandchildren pictured in the marketing bundle for Swan Lake, it remains a resort-like haven of youthful senior citizenship (Figure 79). This symbolizes the marketability of senior's freedom, peace and quiet.

The sample shows little diversity in age. Young adults with children under 10 years old are

the major subjects in the marketing sample. Youth are unfortunately neglected and seniors are used to symbolize family bonds or conversely, freedom from those bondages in the gated community. The age range depicted in the ads shows who the builders feel their target markets are. In addition to reflecting a general dis-ease about youth, it may also demonstrate an assumption that families who have teenagers are settled into older suburbs

Social Discourse about Cultural and Constructed “ethnic” Difference

Whiteness is strikingly over-represented in the marketing sample. Recognizing that race and ethnicity are politically determined and social constructed, I proceeded to analyze the sample using the concept of visible minorities. Statistics Canada (2007: online) defines visible minorities as: “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. The visible minority population includes the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Japanese, Korean and Pacific Islander.”

Even though the majority of developments included images with visible minority models in their marketing bundles, images with white models are more numerous, larger and more prominently placed overall (*Table 9*). 81.7% of the total number of images including people in the sample included only white models. 16.6% of images included visible minority models, 11.0% showed only visible minority models, and 5.4% used multiple ethnicities in one image. Figure 80 is a notable example of how visible minority models are included, yet maintained as secondary subjects through marginal positioning and shadowing. Representation of ethnic diversity is associated with development type (*Table 9*). The gated community in the sample only had images of white models in its marketing

Katherine Perrott

and not in the market for new houses to the same extent as young families. Manipulating and commodifying people’s emotional connection to their children is one of the most insidious techniques in selling housing. The house is constructed as a need in order to provide the best home possible for children and produces feelings of obligation and guilt in viewers of the ad.

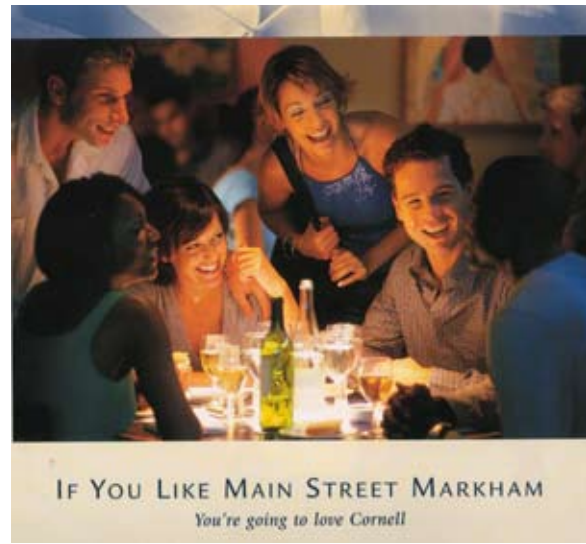


Figure 80: Visible minorities included yet maintained as secondary through shadowing and position (Ballantry)

materials. 81.8% of images in marketing material for subdivisions with single detached and row houses had white models only. The images used to sell townhouse and high-rise condominiums had the highest proportion of images including visible minority models and images showing models with different ethnicities interacting in the same tableau. There is potentially more at stake for condominium developers; they must make social mix appealing lest potential buyers be dissuaded from living in close proximity to those perceived as different. Builders’ websites had the largest percentage of images including visible minority models, followed by print ads, while the sales centre signs had the least visible minority representation.

Development Type	Number of developments	Total number of images including people analyzed	% of images including visible minority models	% of images including white models only	% of images including visible minority models only	% of images including models representing a mix of ethnicities
Subdivision	31	578	16.3%	81.8%	10.9%	5.0%
High Rise Condominium	2	29	31.0%	69.0%	13.8%	20.7%
Townhouse Condominium	1	7	57.1%	42.9%	57.1%	0.0%
Gated Community	1	31	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	35	645	16.6%	81.7%	11.0%	5.4%

Table 9: Presence of visible minority models in advertising materials for new developments in Markham.

Many builders in Markham are aware of a diverse demographic and employ various strategies to attract the Asian market. This is done using cultural symbols, such as coins, and symbols of feng shui (Figure 81). In some cases, builders are appropriating symbols without cultural sensitivity, such as in HR's promotion of feng shui, with a white girl floating above the Luopan compass in a pose of mock meditation (Figure 82).

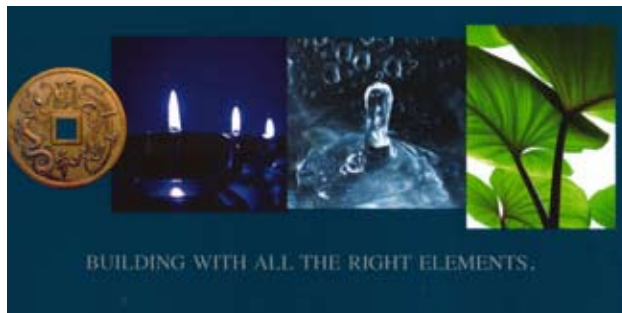


Figure 81: Advertising with culturally salient symbols to attract certain ethnic groups (Eldin)



Figure 82: Cultural appropriation by having a little white girl floating above a Feng Shui symbol (HR)



Figure 83: State of Mind (Regal Crest)

Detailed Look at Ethnicity Imagery

“State of Mind” (Figure 83)

Residential Development: Woodlands of Boxgrove

Builder: Regal Crest

The primary subject of Figure 83 is an Asian woman lying back, and floating over the other images in the ad. She represents the “Regal Crest state of mind.” A luxurious interior bedroom scene is shown behind her, the bed also symbolizes rest or peace of mind. Regal crest emphasizes their legacy of homebuilding and their ability to provide potential buyers with a range of appropriate housing “whether it’s your first townhome or your dream luxury estate residence.”

The Chow family is inset in the upper righthand corner, and there appears to be a few generations represented, demonstrating an alternative family arrangement to the dominant Western cultural norm of the nuclear family. The caption with their photo describes their delight with the purchase of their second Regal Crest house, lending legitimacy to the builders legacy of home building and customer satisfaction. In this ad, builders use Asian subjects to represent their target buying market, and the Chow family to demonstrate long-term Asian customer satisfaction in particular.

The implied ethnic enclaving is likely troubling to the Town of Markham, which promotes diversity and ethnic mixing, as is evident from the opening image on their website (Figure 81). Hill Collins (1998: 162) explains this resistance to neighbourhood mix: “just as crafting a family from individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, religious or class backgrounds is discouraged, mixing different races within one neighbourhood is frowned upon. As mini-nation-states, neighbourhoods allegedly operate best when racial and/or class homogeneity prevails.”

**It's Your Community
Your Opinion Counts.**



Figure 84: Image from the Town of Markham's website used as part of their Click with Markham campaign to get residents to provide feedback (Town of Markham Website 2007)

In the sample, white is the ethnic yardstick, due to a history of white control of culture and therefore of representations. Why is whiteness being used predominantly to sell new houses in Markham, which is very ethnically diverse? It could be that advertisers are selling the Canadian dream with images that prevail about the good life in the suburbs, and within broader media discourses (including television) those images primarily feature white people. Another reason could be that white models have a certain authority because of the town's history. Markham has a white, anglo settlement history, and builders using nostalgia as a strategy would typically represent the idealized past as a white one. Mohanty (2003: 336) argues that power is exercised

“whenever any discourse sets up its own authorial subjects as the implicit referent, i.e., the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural Others.”

Citizenship and location of one's home are intricately connected and define where one votes, which census tract one is counted within and which schools one sends their children to. Buying a home is thus a political act with citizenship implications. Whiteness in new house advertising offers the legitimacy of history and poses a threat to exclude those constructed as others from full rights to citizenship.

Social Discourse about Class: Queen Victoria's Hangover

Leisure time is an indicator of status and class. Successful people have free time and have not been put into “financial bondage” by purchasing the house; thereby needing to work additional hours to pay off their mortgage (Dovey 1992: 186). There is a strong message of class mobility in the sample; owners can work their way up from a condominium in Markham Centre (starting at \$202,000) to a park facing lot in Cathedraltown (\$928,900). The smaller town home developments carry an air of an exclusive past and the most exclusive developments blatantly dismiss any guilt that may occur with the purchase of an extravagant home. The advertisements use phrases like “you’ve earned the privilege”, “You deserve the very best” (*Figure 85*). The home is an indicator of “personal success”, and therefore, the bigger the better. Because

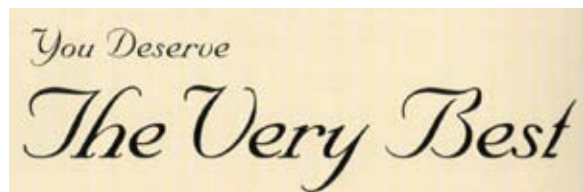


Figure 85: Entitlement used as a selling feature (Arista)



Figure 86: Selling individuality and appealing to the desire for uniqueness in house design (National)

houses are important symbols of success in our society, and they represent rungs on the class ladder:

“everyone is above average yet remains at least one rung below the dream. The satisfaction of desire and the production of envy are conflated in a market where distinction and difference are mass-produced. The house models are replicated by the thousands, yet marketed as the unique creations of a craft industry that will display the owner’s taste and artistry” (Dovey 1999: 147).

National Home’s advertising campaign with focuses on phrases such as “You are the one”, “The Art of self expression” and “You are the blueprint” to create a sense of uniqueness about the houses for sale, despite the fact that they are mass-produced (*Figure 86 and 87*). Advertising desire, success and entitlement means that the concept of home becomes an elusive goal as society always seeks to consume bigger, custom, and houses perceived as better.



Figure 87: Ad campaign encourages potential buyers to reflect their identity onto the design of their house (National)



Figure 88: The society lady lures the prospective buyer into a world of decadence and luxury housing (Kylemore)

A Detailed Look at Class

“The Society Lady” (Figure 88)

Residential Development: New Yorkton

Builder: Kylemore

The subject of Figure 88 is looking down, but her eyes are obscured by the brim of the hat. Is she flirting, shy, or merely uninterested in the viewer? Greenery provides a background that is possibly a park or a golf course, which are the green spaces shown in the rest of the marketing bundle. The outdoor green space is blurred as is the woman’s face and bare shoulders. The hat commands the centre of attention in the ad and functions as a symbol of high society, luxury and feminine maturity. Because the viewer cannot see her eyes, she is the subject, but she is also an object because she cannot look back. Some power is therefore removed from her and transferred to the viewer. “An Alluring Neighbourhood in Unionville” is the primary text in this ad, with the woman embodying the concept of allure. She represents the “Courtly Lady”, one of the primary female image types identified by MacCurdy

(1994: 35). The Courtly Lady, like the New Yorkton woman, is for the audience “the unattainable object of beauty that could transform their lives; they yearn for her, not with lust but with a perception that she represents a lifestyle, an image, clearly out of their reach.” Her power and status in life is our signified desire, which is projected onto the townhomes for sale.

A secondary image in this ad is a white hand, with a white dress shirt cuff opening an ornamental brass door handle. This symbolizes exclusivity in that only certain people are able to open the door to New Yorkton. The hand is marked by privilege. Discourses being produced in this ad are about exclusivity, upper classes, upper class fashion, and exclusive recreation. Lifestyle in this ad means golf clubs and access to privileged spaces, activities, women and other “possessions” of luxury. This ad also communicates the rule in suburban housing advertisements, in that sex is never explicitly referenced, however builders can allude to it through various symbols of allure, mystery and sexual attraction. Sexual allusions express the intense desire prospective buyers have for wealthy lifestyle and luxury possessions, acquired in the house for sale.

Builders using class, wealth and entitlement as a marketing strategy frequently use colonial symbols to naturalize and lend authority to their message. Much of the imagery is from the Victorian era, which our contemporary culture continues to be fascinated with (Tange 2004) CountryWide’s development, The Residences at Victoria Square most explicitly references the Victorian era in its marketing (*Figures 89 and 90, page 72*). Images and nomenclature from the era of Queen Victoria are present in other Markham developments particularly in the titles of house models and floor plans. Using Victorian imagery and sentiment in housing advertisements is particularly salient because

“for the middle class in Victorian England, the concept of home was of paramount importance. A particular home confirmed a specific family’s place in the social order, and, in ideological terms, reiterated middle-class standards through a concrete visual example that conformed to certain norms” (Tange 2004: 277).

The middle class Victorian family structure and social status implied their ability to

Katherine Perrott



Figure 89: Ad for Victoria Square (CountryWide)

employ servants, allowing women to be the household nurturers and managers and not be weighed down by domestic chores. Naturalizing class hierarchy and couching it in terms of deserving privilege is similar to what Tange (2004: 283) found in Victorian texts on the home endorsing

“the assumption that such homes are the exclusive province of those who have “naturally” reached this class position. For home to serve as a relevant marker of class position – and thus social worth – it was ideologically necessary to maintain that “truly” middle-class people “naturally” wanted certain kinds of homes.”

Middle class homes had to appear at once exclusive and accessible (Tange 2004).

Current day images of homes in Markham’s advertisements reflect similar tensions by

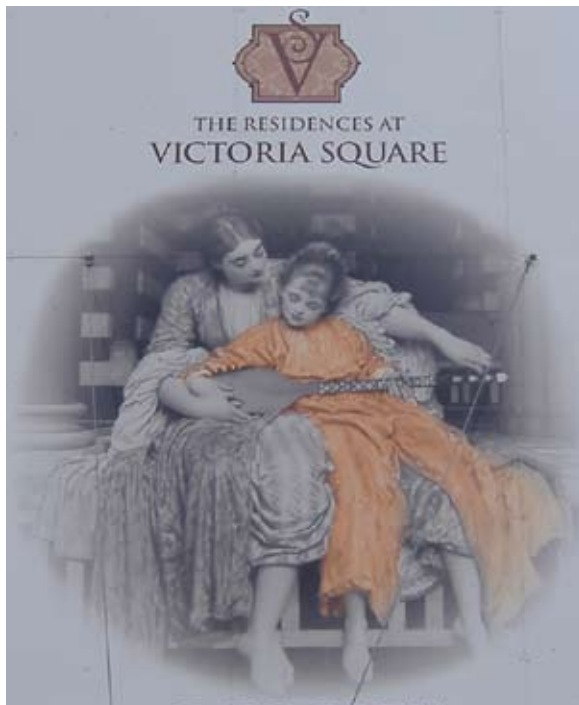


Figure 90: Ad for Victoria Square (CountryWide)

creating desire for commodities to make a house look like it could belong to the upper class, yet at the same time appear affordable. According to Young (2006b: 132),

“attachment to home as status symbol and investment opportunity creates and perpetuates a market competition in which most people are losers. The project of maintaining good “property values,” and not simply a comfortable living space, produces or exacerbates racial and class exclusion. This leads to communities of conformist homogeneity.”

In Markham, where there is some lingering builder resistance to mix housing types to the extent that planners would like to see, the class of people represented in the advertisements appears generally homogenous by neighbourhood. The importance of income is demonstrated through all the messages in the sample about luxury, exclusivity, having it all and getting the best. In Markham success is measured by wealth, and shown off through the homes people buy.

Discussion on Social Discourses: A Picture of Exclusive Belonging

Overall, the marketing material supports dominant social discourses. Images including the human body reinforce norms about body, gender identity, sexuality and romance, demonstrating little diversity. Some diversity is evident in gender roles, and family; however, the nuclear family is the represented ideal. Social discourse about age favour youthfulness through images of young families and active seniors. Very few teenagers are represented in the marketing material because the young family is the target market and there is a general cultural disquiet about youth. Visible minorities are represented in over half of the marketing bundles; however, whiteness dominates and cultural differences are downplayed while certain elements, such as feng shui are appropriated. Class exclusivity is communicated as symbols in the advertisements show the middle and upper classes as the norm.

Builders play on fears and desires when messages are used that comply with dominant social discourses. Traditional meanings and social norms communicate messages quickly and effectively through cultural codes. Conjured emotions through the depiction

and use of social discourses add value to the product. However, because home is so tightly connected to identity in society, use of social discourse sends messages about who is included or excluded from future development. Crow (2003: 45) asserts that “where there is choice, there is meaning.” When putting together their marketing bundles, builders intentionally choose keywords, phrases and images that they believe will sell their product and increase profit. Builders are not being socially malicious by perpetuating social norms and excluding difference, but the absence of malicious intent, does not mean there are no negative impacts from these messages. The advertisements reproduce social norms at the expense of all who are excluded from representation. Even if negative impacts of messages are not intended, builders should recognize responsibility for reproducing social inequality. Such recognition could lead builders to be more accountable in their marketing practices. Builders could demonstrate accountability by incorporating greater social difference in advertisements and being more inclusive in constructing social meaning. They could also work closer with planners and craft their marketing materials to better reflect the goals and visions set out through public planning processes.

Chapter Six: Implications for Urban Planning

The Gap Between Planning Policy, Planners perspectives and Marketing Practice

Planners and planning documents of Markham promote social diversity. In interviews planners described Markham as extremely diverse, however they focussed on ethnic diversity and admitted even within ethnic diversity there was quite a lot of enclaving rather than integration. They noted that there were few opportunities for income level diversity or people of different socio-economic classes to live in the same neighbourhoods. They expressed concern that Swan Lake seniors lifestyle gated community represented the ultimate in social segregation and prevented age diversity. Following new urban theory, planners in Markham see a mix of housing types and sizes as a desirable way to mix households of different income levels. One planner explained,

“we want to promote the idea that all forms of housing are good housing and everybody has different requirements based on who they are and where they are in their life and by integrating the housing types it makes for a better community overall – visually and socially.”

Markham’s official plan calls for a mixed housing and secondary plans set density mix targets for specific neighbourhoods.

“3.14.3 b) viii) Residential development within a Planning District will be designed to encourage a broad range of housing, by type and tenure, suitable for different age levels, lifestyles and family structures” (Markham, 2005: 3-80).

The long-standing suburban consumers preference for single detached homes and large lot sizes is a hurdle to overcome for planners seeking to promote greater housing mix. A shift in market preferences towards other housing types has begun in Markham because, as one planner explained, communities like Angus Glen have “premium product” townhouses facing onto park space giving townhouses a new appearance of luxury and exclusivity. Another planner clarified that having a greater mix of townhouses and semi-detached houses did not mean affordability, or consequently providing opportunities for households of different income levels to live in the same neighbourhood:

“Council says things like, ‘We are providing semis. That is affordable housing.’ It is a question of degree and scale.”

While the housing type is diversifying, builders are still sell premium products, and the housing market remains prohibitive. Planners were concerned that there were not enough opportunities in Markham for households with lower incomes to find rental or affordable housing ownership options:

“Poor people do not come looking for housing in Markham, because there isn’t any.”

One senior planner confessed to driving in from a neighbouring municipality because of the affordability problem in Markham:

“I could afford to live here, but I could not afford to buy the same house that I have. I

would have to buy down and I am not going to do that.”

Planners in Markham remain committed to the social diversity objectives of the planning policy, and spoke positively of the increased ethnic diversity. They recognized however, the significant challenges in promoting affordable housing and achieving household income diversity.

The emphasis on luxury and exclusivity in the marketing material confirm the resistance to sell more affordable housing, particularly in a booming housing market in a growing area. Certainly builders aim for the greatest profit from investment and will not ‘sell down’ any more than a homeowner would ‘buy down’. Whereas planners support policy that fosters greater diversity, builders are content to promote conformity in order to sell their products. As demonstrated in the previous section, a certain amount of social

difference is acknowledged and evident in the advertising material. However, as long as dominant cultural values are reproduced through advertising and other discourses, the suburbs will continue to be sold as safe, attractive communities where beautiful people form happy traditional families and live not just comfortably, but indulgently.

Building Diversity Requires the Right Tools

As the ethnic diversity of Markham grows, questions of how to accommodate diversity will escalate. One planner was particularly concerned about the need for new ways to engage the public, especially because residents whose first language is not English may not feel comfortable enough to make their voice heard in standard public meetings. Markham chose new urbanism as a guiding theory for planning policy; however, it is a limited approach to diversity. New urbanist champions



Figure 91: Luxury home in Markham’s Angus Glen (Perrott)



Figure 92: Coach house on a back lane in Cornell (Perrott)

Duany et al. (2000: 46) demonstrate an ahistoric understanding of class difference when they refer to the “intentionally poor,” like artists, who make good candidates for living in “granny flats” above garages of the wealthy. People do not choose to be poor: the neo-colonial, neoliberal marketplace chooses for them. New urbanists promote class diversity, yet through their discourses construct a homogenized “poor” who perform unacceptable identities and exhibit bad behaviour. A civilizing project motivates new urbanists to mix the middle class with the poor at a ten to one ratio so that positive behaviour can be reinforced (Grant 2006).

As mentioned earlier, Markham allowed new urbanist style “granny flats” or “garden suites” above detached garages on the back alleys. This has produced a social landscape that may be mixed but is not equitable (*Figures 91 and 92, page 75*). Winstanley et al. (2003: 186) argued that granny flats amount “to a limited form of heterogeneity”. Townhouses and semi-detached houses in Markham are typically greater than \$300,000, and homeownership costs can rise over \$1 million. Garden suites on the back alley sustain class difference and are a spatial manifestation of structural injustices. Owning a comfortable home on one of Markham’s attractive and expensive to maintain streetscapes is costly, and the less fortunate are relegated to the back alleys with the garbage, recycling, meters and other “unsightliness”. The stigma of inequality associated with living on the back alley limits this approach. Markham needs more creativity and greater incentives if it is going to convince developers to provide housing opportunities for an economically diverse population.

New urbanism provides builders with a dictionary of keywords and phrases to use in selling homes and neighbourhoods. When adopted by builders, “new urbanism adds

value to particular neighbourhood products. It allows consumers to mark their status and identify their values for all to see” (Grant 2006: 13). Winstanley et al. (2003: 187) found new urbanism limiting as it “promote[s] homogeneity rather than heterogeneity” and is a “primary a form of rhetoric design to sell housing profitably rather than a community development project based on new forms of housing.” The marketing materials for new residential developments in Markham reveal the market value of social conformity and new urban design values. Justice, equality, and the messy realities of life are not saleable.

The Challenge of Empire: Planning’s Present History

This study demonstrated the difficult role planners have in promoting justice and diversity in places where land equals profit and shelter is an economic investment. Planning is situated within structures marked by power and is inevitably involved in systems that privilege some while disadvantaging others. According to Grant (1994: 213-214)

“planning and capitalism make uneasy companions...While some suggest that planning in a democratic society means improving conditions for powerless peoples, other aver that it requires protecting freedom of action and free enterprise.”

Neoliberal and neo-colonialist power can be conceptualized as a continuation of colonial “empire”. Empire is not simply an unfortunate backdrop to planning, it is planning’s “present history” (Roy 2006: 8). Figure 93 is an advertisement for Empire Homes, a building firm based in Markham, and offers a curious parallel between the suburbs and empire. The question: “Where in the EMPIRE do want to live?” Is obviously intended to promote their company’s homes, however reading this advertisement in the present politico-economic context begs reflection upon what it means to sell the concept of empire.

Empire evokes a landscape of dominance, where there are places ruled by the hegemon, and those which have been conquered. This ad is in a way selling the spaces of privilege that come at the expense of other exploited places. When considered in light of planning for greater diversity in the Toronto region, the ad asks potential homebuyers, many of whom are recent immigrants, where in the empire they want to live: in the dominant, privileged suburbs of North America or in places that have been, if not militarily conquered, than economically.

The concern over selling housing and placemaking is not simply a question of space, but one of personal and cultural identity

because our culture connects status and identity so closely to notions of home. If our culture tells us 'we are what we buy' and homes are reflections of ourselves, then planners are dealing with an identity crisis. This also complicates our notions of citizenship versus consumerism. Where we can afford to live affects where we will vote and where and how we can participate in planning and political processes. In a sense we 'buy' our citizenship rights to place and participation. Yet are we citizens or consumers? As a messy hybrid of citizen-consumers, we are caught up in a society that systemically perpetuates privilege for some and disadvantage for many.

Planners are often placed in the middle of

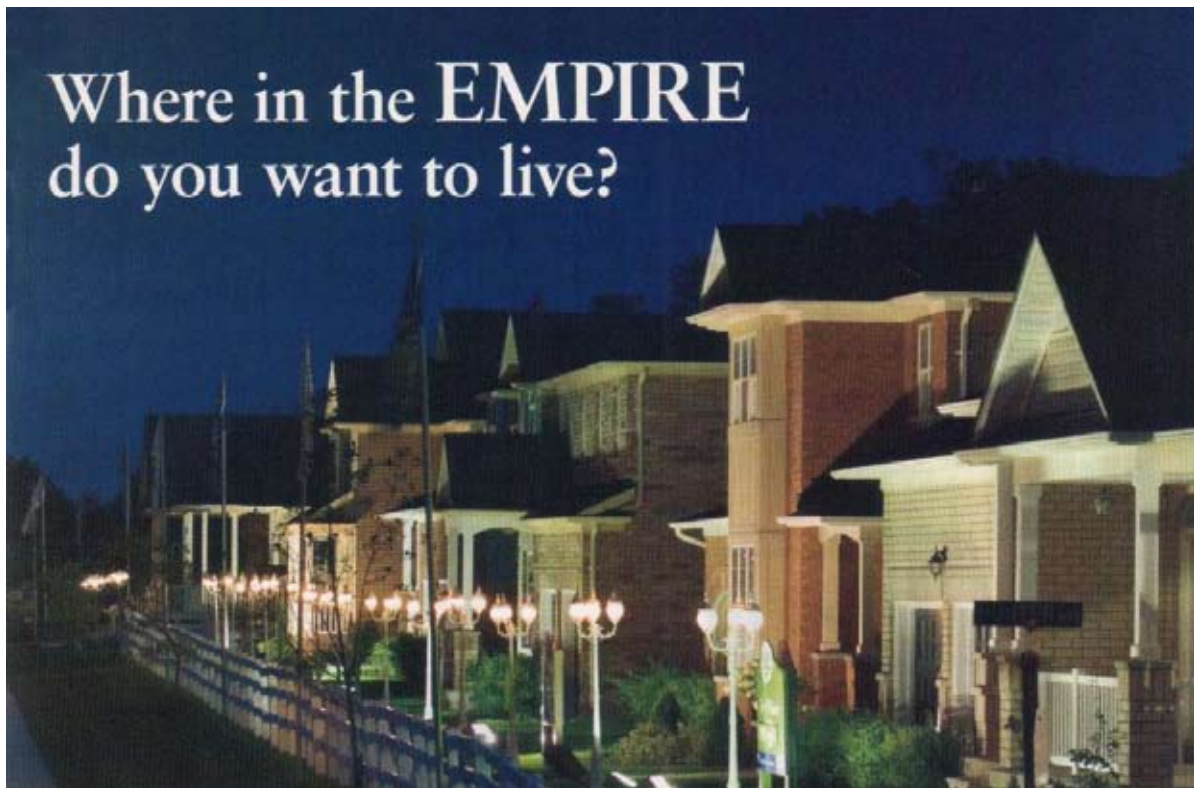


Figure 93: An advertisement for Empire Homes, based out of Markham, which positions a suburban streetscape as the place within *the* "empire" that potential buyers will want to live in (Empire Homes).

opposing interests and try to take a neutral stance to promote the ‘greatest good for the greatest number.’ However, the rights of social minorities are often neglected by this philosophy and its real life impact. Roy (2006: 13) argues against planners taking the position of the “innocent professional” and questioned the ethics of planners who attempt to take these neutral stances. The supposed neutrality of planners has contributed to the perpetuation of dominant social values and power:

“The planning system thus unreflexively expresses the norms of the culturally dominant majority, including the norms of how that majority likes to use space” (Sandercock 2003: 21, emphasis in original).

Planners are given power through the system, but certainly not as much as other actors. When planners try to promote social diversity they compete against the marketing budgets of large developers and builders who use conformity to drive higher profits. How can planning documents promoting social diversity and acknowledging social difference shout above the advertising ‘noise’ of competing builders?

Theories of Hope and Praxis of Accountability

What can planners do to accommodate difference in Canada’s increasingly diverse suburbs, while operating within political and economic systems that can perpetuate injustice? Freire (2003: 91-92) insists on a praxis of hope:

“the dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting.”

Planning for justice in cities and in the face of empire is indeed daunting, but hope

for planning to be a tool for more just and equitable places is needed. Shaull (2003: 34) argues that no educational process is neutral; it can either serve to bring about conformity to the dominant system or it can become a “the practice of freedom”. Similarly, the planning process is not neutral; it can either serve the spatial interests of dominance or it can become a practice of freedom:

“the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” (Shaull 2003: 34)

The gap between planning theory and practice can be enriched by Freire’s conceptualization of praxis: “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (2003: 51). What would this active, reflective planning praxis look like? Roy (2006) suggests that planning should move towards the role of mediation, which is an “act of intercession, reconciliation, or interpretation between adversaries or strangers, between society and art.” Goonewardena (2005:51) contends that “a call to mediate” is “to intervene critically and render ideology visible: break its spell.” Planners have a role to play in revealing ideology in place marketing in order to break the spell of a conformist, consumer-citizen vision of the future.

As planners we should understand our role in shaping society and work within our profession towards what Razack (1998: 170) calls a “politics of accountability,” that

“begins with tracing relations of privilege and penalty. It cannot proceed unless we examine our complicity. Only then can we ask questions about how we are understanding differences and for what purpose.”

Responsibility should be recognized in interconnections with whom our cities, neighbourhoods and streets are shared. Our responsibilities of justice also reach beyond municipal boundaries to issues of exported

waste and obligations to other regions. When Wolfville, NS decided to provide fair-trade products in municipal buildings (Anderson 2007), they demonstrated an understanding of responsibility and accountability as a municipality in their consumer relationships. How can this understanding also extend to the spatial relationships that planners deal with? Roy (2006: 25) argued that planning needs to be informed by a pedagogy of global responsibility:

“a pedagogy of global responsibility cannot simply articulate the duty to intervene, a duty that can call into being 21st-century empire or the civilizing mission of 19th-century colonialism or the diagnosis and reform of 20th-century development. It must also insist on accountability, on ‘answering to’ those who are the objects of our responsibility. The formal profession of planning, I would argue, pays attention to responsibility but not accountability. That struggle has been taken up by international social movements and by planners who have adopted more activist roles. In the time of empire, it is not enough to be responsible. It is also necessary to be accountable.”

Just as builders should consider greater accountability for the messages they produce in advertisements, planners need to be accountable for the places they plan. Are visioning processes being guided in ways that foster diversity, access, inclusion and justice or is the status quo perpetuated? What can be changed within the planning and municipal systems to act in ways that acknowledge interconnections and consequences in order to foster social justice? While municipal planners are only one set of actors in the process of placemaking, they have important responsibilities to citizens and significant roles to play in cultivating fair process, access, and visioning for difference-accommodating spaces.

Conclusion

Canadian landscapes are increasingly marked by social difference. In diverse municipalities like Markham, Ontario, planners need creative approaches for mediating difference and negotiating between competing interests. Planners play an essential role in listening to what residents want their city to be like, and guiding future visioning. Through advertisements for new houses, builders also play a role in place-making. This study determined that builders in Markham use house design and construction, home and community, neighbourhood design, nostalgia for the past, exclusivity, nature, family, recreation, as well as social diversity as themes in their advertising campaigns. Analysis of social discourses in the marketing material revealed overall support for dominant Western cultural norms of the body, gender identity, romance and sexuality, gender roles, family, age, ethnicity, and class. While some diversity was represented in the discourses on age, ethnicity, family, and gender roles, middle and upper class were represented as the norm and exclusive luxury was the goal. Planners in Markham promote diversity and expressed the desire for more income level mix at the city and neighbourhood level. This study demonstrates however, that advertisements for new residential developments foster conformity. Planners have a challenging but important role to play promoting the less saleable aspects of community building: making places more just, safe, affordable and inclusive.

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Website References

	Name of Development	Builder	Website
1.	New Yorkton	Kylemore	http://www.kylemorecommunities.com/comm_coming/yorkton/overview.html
2.	West Village - Angus Glen	Kylemore	http://www.kylemorecommunities.com/comm_coming/westvill/overview.html
3.	South Hampton on the Rouge	SkyHomes	http://skyhomes.ca
4.	Circa2	Tridel	http://www.tridel.com/circa/
5.	eko	Liberty Development Corporation	http://www.libertydevelopment.ca/ekomarkhamcentre/index.html
6.	Golden Mills	Castle Rock Developments	not available
7.	Wismer Estates	Eldin	http://www.eldin.ca
8.	The Enclave at Wismer Commons	Greenpark	http://www.greenparkhomes.com/
9.	Wismer Woods	National Homes	http://www.nationalhomes.com/communities/wismerwoods/
10.	Wismer Village	Esquire Homes	http://www.esquirehomes.ca/
11.	Windsong	Laurier Homes	http://www.laurierhomes.com/windsong/index.html
12.	Castle Square	HR Developments	http://www.hr-newhomes.com/
13.	Manor Gate	Rosehaven Homes	http://www.rosehavenhomes.com
14.	Swan Lake Village	Fram & Slokker	http://www.swanlakevillage.ca/
15.	Greensborough	Royal Park	http://royalpark.com

	Name of Development	Builder	Website
16.	Greensborough	Fieldgate	http://www.fieldgatehomes.com/communities/greensborough/greensborough.htm
17.	Greensborough	Madison	http://www.madisonhomes.ca/greensborough/welcome.html
18.	Greensborough Village	Uppercity Properties	http://www.greensboroughvillage.ca/
19.	Cathedraltown	Romandale & Fram	http://www.cathedraltown.com/
20.	Cathedral Park	Lakeview	http://www.lakeviewwhomesinc.com/
21.	Heritage	Monarch	http://www.taylorwoodrowcanada.com/index.cfm?method=Homes_CommunityDetail&divID=2&MetroAreaID=9&CommunityID=243
22.	The Residences at Victoria Square	CountryWide Homes	http://www.countrywidehomes.ca/dispatch.php?what=displayFrameset&communityID=7
23.	Cornell Markham	Ballantry Homes	http://www.ballantryhomes.com/For-Sale/Cornell/default.asp
24.	Cornell Markham	Mattamy Homes	http://www.mattamyhomes.com/communities/cornell/sub.asp?id=421
25.	Grand Cornell	Greenpark	http://www.greenparkhomes.com/
26.	Grand Cornell	HR Developments	http://www.hr-newhomes.com/
27.	Grand Cornell	CountryWide Homes	http://www.countrywidehomes.ca/dispatch.php?what=displayFrameset&communityID=7
28.	Upper Cornell	Aspen Ridge Homes	http://www.aspenridgehomes.com/
29.	Cornell Rouge	Forest Hill Homes	http://www.cornellrouge.com/
30.	Cornell Rouge	Madison	http://www.madisonhomes.ca/cornell/
31.	The Gate of Boxgrove	Oxnard Homes	http://www.oxnardhomes.ca/boxgrove.html
32.	The Manors of Boxgrove	Greenpark	http://www.greenparkhomes.com/
33.	Woodlands of Boxgrove	Regal Crest Homes	http://www.regalcresthomes.com/
34.	Boxgrove Markham	Starlane Home Corporation	http://starlanehomes.com/
35.	Boxgrove Markham	Arista Homes	http://www.aristahomes.com/