



## What will it cost you today? Gendered Discourses of Parenting in Singapore's National Environment Campaign

- Speaker:** A/P Michelle Lazar  
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- Date:** 2 October 2015, Friday
- Time:** 12.00nn - 1.30pm
- Venue:** FASS Executive Seminar Room AS7 01-07



### Abstract

Family formation and parenthood have been the focus of much state attention and intervention in Singapore. Since the mid-1980s, due to declining national fertility rates, the government has encouraged Singaporeans not to delay marriage and to start families soon. The present fertility scenario has been the result of changing societal and gender expectations, which led to changing women's expectations of themselves and of their partners, and a rising aspiration to be successful in careers outside the home. In order to manage the changed expectations of Singaporean women (and men) amid the crisis of declining birthrates, the public discourse has acknowledged and encouraged women's participation in the economic labour force, while emphasizing women's maternal roles. At the same time, men have been encouraged to take a more active role as fathers. Given the extensive public discourse surrounding parenthood in Singapore, one might expect a loosening in gendered expectations in parenting, led by the government. This paper examines the government's representation of parenthood as a social practice at one discursive site – the National Environment Agency's public education campaign against the spread of dengue. In particular, the 2010 ads will be examined, which specifically targeted parents to take responsibility for keeping their homes safe from the *Aedes* mosquitoes. Undertaking a discourse analytical approach to these ads, the paper discusses the emergence of two competing discourses of gender relations in parenthood -- a conservative discourse and an egalitarian one --, and the implications these double discourses have for Singaporean mothers and fathers in negotiating work-life balance in Singapore.

### About the speaker

Michelle Lazar is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at NUS. Her training is in the field of critical discourse analysis, a socially-interested form of linguistics, which she brings to bear upon the analyses of gender, media and politics. One of her research interests, for many years, has been on hetero-gender narratives of family formation in Singapore's public education campaigns. Michelle is founding editor of the Routledge Critical Studies in Discourse Series. She is currently the President of the International Gender and Language Association as well as the Academic Convenor of the Gender Studies Minor at NUS.

All are welcome. Register at <http://goo.gl/forms/n2y1v12o5T> by 28 Sep 2015.