Mixed Messages...
Media Representations of Infant Feeding

Dr Catherine Angell
Cardiff 2016
LATIN: ‘MEDIAN’

➢ AN INTERMEDIARY

➢ AN INTERVENING AGENCY, MEANS, OR INSTRUMENT
MASS MEDIA
The Media can be conceived as collections of industries, practices, representations, products of economic and statutory regulations, audiences’ understandings and as a means of delivering audiences to advertisers…

(Albertazzi and Cobley 2013)
Literature review

• Media AND infant feeding, NOT otitis media, NOT social media
• x186 results
• Included: breastfeeding, formula milk feeding, peer review, English language, original research
• Excluded: weaning, social media, non peer reviewed, non English language, commentaries and opinion

• x18 papers - infant feeding in mass media
• x3 dissertations - infant feeding in mass media
• x7 papers - media for infant feeding health promotion
Angell and Hundley

In July 2011 sixteen English daily and Sunday national newspapers were examined for articles containing references to breastfeeding and/or formula milk feeding.

Identified whether infant feeding appeared to be the:
- Focus of the article
- Incidental within the article
- Text and pictures coded - latent and manifest codes
28 articles covering 21 different ‘stories’…

- Breastfeeding in public spaces X8
- Celebrities and breastfeeding X2
- Infant feeding incidental to article X16
- Mastitis X1
- Returning to work X1
Themes

• Patterns and trends
• Who breastfeeds?
• Reasons to breastfeed
• Problematic breastfeeding
• Breastfeeding in the public eye
Patterns and trends


• ‘Spin’ on messages or advertising mirrored the trends in feeding (Potter et al 2000, Foss and Southwell 2006, Foss 2010)

• Differences in coverage matched cultural norms and expectations (Dodgson et al 2008)
Who breastfeeds?

- ‘Middle class’, educated, affluent women (Henderson et al 2000, Dodgson et al 2008, Foss 2013)
- Heterosexual, able bodied (Foss 2013)
  - ‘Unattainable perfection’ and ‘Earth Mothers’
  - Strange and sensationalised situations
  - Interest in female body and breasts
Reasons to breastfeed…

- Breastfeeding identified as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ (Foss 2013, Angell and Hundley n.d.)
- Lack of detail around specific health or emotional benefits (Henderson et al, 2000, Foss 2013, Angell and Hundley n.d)
- Societal or environmental implications of feeding choices not noted (Frerichs etc al 2006)

Not too Posh to breastfeed: Victoria plans to feed her new daughter naturally for the first time

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER
UPDATED: 14:02, 4 July 2011
Problematic breastfeeding

• ‘Problems’ are newsworthy
  • Insufficient milk - infant deaths (Brown and Peuchard 2008)
  • Returning to work (Angell and Hundley n.d)

• Fictional representations
  • Breastfeeding problems provided storylines (Henderson et al 2000)
    • Formula feeding ‘incidental’ or ‘everyday’ (Henderson et al 2000, Angell and Hundley n.d.)

• Individualised/extreme problems, pain and risk (Frerichs et al 2006, Foss 2013, Angell and Hundley n.d)

• Lack of practical information (Foss 2010)
Breastfeeding in the public eye

• Breastfeeding in public spaces/public view - most cited news item (van den Brandhof et al 2002, Angell and Hundley n.d.)
• Lack of images - breastfeeding referred to verbally, not visually (Henderson et al 2000, van den Brandhof et al 2002, Bylaska 2011, Angell and Hundley n.d.)
• Breastfeeding is good, but not in public…
  • Sexual connotations (Bridges 2007)
  • Unacceptable behaviour (Bridges 2007, Foss 2013)
  • Should be possible, but might cause outrage and disgust (Angell and Hundley n.d.)
Why the mixed messages...?
## Media theories...

Exhibit 3.1 Panel: List of Media Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associative network building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude construct creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience as commodification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience construction by media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic activation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available/voluntary screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catharsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional resonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition/binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/moralist decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer culture creativity and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Gaze activation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Non-normative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Invadible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Induced effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Information flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Information seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Integrated response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Interpretation by social class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Interpretive resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Knowability and feedback processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11 Least observable programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12 Levels of processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13 Limited capacity information processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14 Marketplace attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15 Mass audience media access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16 Media as culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17 Media and industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18 Media culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19 Media environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20 Media engagement as attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.21 Media entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.22 Media flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.23 Media system dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.24 Media as message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25 Message construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.26 Mood management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.27 Mutilated attention and motivated processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.28 Neo-assocationistic thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.29 Neo-mass audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30 Network political priming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.31 News content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.32 News diffusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.33 News factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.34 News frame creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.35 News selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.36 Newsworker socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.37 One-dimensional man-as-social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.38 Perception of hostile media weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.39 Reticular ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.40 Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.41 Sense of significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.42 Polysemic interpretations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Potter 2012)
Moving beyond ‘media effects’

• Seeing a behaviour = doing a behaviour
  • Media effects research ‘starts at the wrong end’ (Gauntlett, 1998)

• Two way reciprocal effect between media and public opinion (Neuman and Guggenheim 2011)

• Public opinion around infant feeding is mixed…so media portrayal will be mixed…
“When you’re young, you look at television and think, there’s a conspiracy… the networks have conspired to dumb us down. But when you get a little older, you realize that’s not true. The networks are in business to give people exactly what they want. That’s a far more depressing thought…”

*Steve Jobs*
Anatomy of a news story…

‘Breastfeeding mother told to leave council building, says she was experiencing milk drip…’

‘You absolutely can’t do that here’
Daily Telegraph 14/7/11

‘You hear everywhere that breast is best for your baby; so why wouldn’t I be allowed to do that?’

‘It was just awful. I felt so humiliated, intimidated and guilty through the whole thing’
Daily Express 14/7/11
Media effects

Agenda setting

• “Media do not tell us what to think… but rather what to think about” (McCombs and Shaw 1972 in Neuman and Guggenheim 2011)

• Lots of topics of potential interest… or not..

• What does the media choose to put in front of the audience?

- drama
- narcissistic human interest (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998)
- innocence and incompetence (Kitzinger 2000)
- breasts: sex
Anatomy of a news story…

‘Breastfeeding mother told to leave council building…’

‘You absolutely can’t do that here’
Daily Telegraph 14/7/11

‘You hear everywhere that breast is best for your baby; so why wouldn’t I be allowed to do that?’

Daily Mail 14/7/11

‘It was just awful. I felt so humiliated, intimidated and guilty through the whole thing’
Daily Express 14/7/11

‘Don’t breastfeed here, you’ll upset the Muslims’

The Sun 14/7/11

‘It’s a multicultural building…’

Daily Mail 13/7/11

‘Labour Councillor Shoab Akhtar said the office “wasn’t suitable” for breastfeeding…’

Daily Mail 13/7/11

‘Mrs Mitchell, who is married to Neil, 43, a lorry driver, said: “I was told to use the public toilets”’
Daily Mail 13/7/11

Mrs Mitchell, who is married to Neil, 43, a lorry driver, said: “I was told to use the public toilets”’
Daily Express 14/7/11

‘It’s a multicultural building…’

Daily Mail 13/7/11

‘Labour Councillor Shoab Akhtar said the office “wasn’t suitable” for breastfeeding…’

Daily Mail 13/7/11

‘Mrs Mitchell, who is married to Neil, 43, a lorry driver, said: “I was told to use the public toilets”’
Daily Mail 13/7/11
Media Effects

Framing

• Media provide a focus and environment for reporting a story, influencing how audiences will understand or evaluate it (Tankard et al 2001)

• “Heroes and villains” (Seale 2003)

• “Group stereotyping” (Seale 2003)

• “The news wave” (Scheufele 1999)
Anatomy of a news story…

‘Breastfeeding mother told to leave council building with baby’

‘You absolutely can’t do that here’
*Daily Telegraph 14/7/11*

‘Don’t breastfeed here, you’ll upset the Muslims’

‘Labour Councillor Shoab Akhtar said the office “wasn’t suitable”’

‘Mrs Mitchell, who is married to Neil, 43, a lorry driver, said: “I was told to use the public toilets”’
*Daily Mail 13/7/11*

‘BBC presenter compares breastfeeding to sex in public’

‘Breast is beastly – unless it’s a beauty…Women should be allowed to breastfeed in restaurants, but only if they have nice breasts’
*The Times 21/7/11*

‘You hear everywhere that breast is best for your baby; so why wouldn’t I be allowed to do that?’

‘It was just awful. I felt so humiliated, intimidated and guilty through the whole thing’
*Daily Express 14/7/11*

‘Cue outrage from the breastfeeding pressure groups such as the National Association of Perpetually Lactating Harridans’
*The Times 21/7/11*
“The media are not in the business of health education”
(Brown and Peuchaud 2008)

“It has to be possible to balance freedom of expression with wider moral and social responsibilities”
(David Puttnam 2014)

WHOEVER CONTROLS THE MEDIA, THE IMAGES, CONTROLS THE CULTURE.

Allen Ginsberg
American Poet

cangell@bournemouth.ac.uk
References


Bridges N 2007. Ethical responsibilities of the Australian media in the representations of infant feeding. Australian xxxxx


Dodgson, J, Tarrant, M, Thompson, J, & Young, B 2008, 'An analysis of infant-feeding content found within the Hong Kong print media', Journal Of Human Lactation, 24, 3, pp. 317-325 p9


