



University of the
West of England



ESRC seminar series: Social experiences of breastfeeding: building bridges between research and policy

9 November 2016: Thinking innovatively about breastfeeding policy.

Speaker abstracts and biographies.

Fiona Dykes

Reconfiguration of the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative reflecting the importance of relationships

In this presentation, Fiona Dykes illustrates the ways in which research can influence key strategic initiatives, associated policy documents and, in turn, practice. Research in MAINN unit and its influence on the Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) will be used as the example. In 1991 WHO/Unicef launched its global Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative with the aim to reverse hospital practices that were detrimental to breastfeeding. In 2013 Unicef UK published a new set of evidence based guidelines and associated standards for all maternity and children's services placing an additional emphasis on mother-infant relationship building rather than the previous very specific emphasis on breastfeeding (Unicef UK 2013). Unicef UK BFI have subsequently developed a more nuanced approach to implementation of the BFI using these revised BFI standards (BFIs). This involves changes to staff and student education, implementation and assessment of the BFI standards. This paradigm shift stemmed from service user and health care staff feedback and from research that made a case for this shift towards a more relational approach. In this presentation, the key global drivers for the original implementation of the BFI are referred to, followed by reference to specific research projects and associated publications that have influenced the Unicef UK BFI approach.

Biography

Fiona Dykes is Professor of Maternal and Infant Health and leads the *Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture Unit (MAINN)*, School of Community Health and Midwifery, University of Central Lancashire which she established in 2000. The staff of MAINN are multidisciplinary to include the disciplines of anthropology, midwifery, neuroscience, nutritional science and social psychology. Fiona is an Adjunct Professor at University of Western Sydney and holds Visiting Professorships at Högskolan, Dalarna, Sweden and Chinese University of Hong Kong. Fiona has a particular interest in the global, socio-cultural and political influences upon infant and young child feeding practices; her methodological expertise is in ethnography and other qualitative research methods.

Fiona is the conference convenor for the MAINN Conference held bi-annually in the UK and, more recently, on alternate years overseas (Australia and Sweden, to date). Abstracts are published in *Maternal and Child Nutrition*. The editorial office for this journal is in MAINN and she is a member of the editorial board.

Fiona is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has worked on WHO, UNICEF, European Commission, Government (DH), NHS, National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), TrustTECH® Service Innovation (UK), National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Wellcome Trust, British Council and Australian Research Council (ARC) funded projects. She is author of over 80 peer reviewed papers and the monograph *Breastfeeding in Hospital: Mothers, Midwives and the Production Line* (Routledge). She is also joint editor of four books including *Infant and Young Child Feeding: Challenges to implementing a Global Strategy* (Wiley-Blackwell) and *Ethnographic Research in Maternal and Child Health* (Routledge).

Francesca Entwistle

Achieving sustainability of the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards: A 'Call to Action' to change the conversation around infant feeding in the UK.

Francesca Entwistle will explain UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative plans to build on success and consider how Baby Friendly services can move forward, building sustainability into their achievements. This includes a new 'Gold Award' which will be presented to services which meet a set of newly created standards; leadership; culture; monitoring and progression. These standards when achieved will provide a solid foundation on which services can sustain and progress the Baby Friendly standards. In the second part of the talk, Francesca will present gaps in UK policy and discuss the UNICEF UK 'Call to Action' which aims to change the conversation around infant feeding and calls on all UK governments to protect breastfeeding and save lives by implementing four key actions; 1) Create a National Infant Feeding Strategy Board; 2) Promote, protect and support breastfeeding in all policy areas where breastfeeding has an impact; 3) Implement evidence-based initiatives that support breastfeeding; 4) Adopt, in full, the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions ("the Code").

Biography

A midwife of over 30 years, Francesca works as Professional Officer – policy and advocacy at UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative. Her specialist interest in breastfeeding was consolidated through her research exploring the impact of midwifery training and women's self-efficacy on breastfeeding outcomes for women from low income groups. She has worked with the Department of Health developing policy and practice in relation to Maternal and Infant Nutrition and regularly consults with key stakeholders, to ensure the focus on improving public health through breastfeeding and very early child development in the UK continues. Francesca leads the 'National Infant Feeding Network' and is a visiting lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire.

Paige Hall Smith:

Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference: Engaging researchers and practitioners.

The feminist and breastfeeding movements have not generally worked in partnership to achieve shared goals; indeed, shared goals remain elusive. Until recently, with notable exceptions, the dominant feminist voice has been in opposition to, or ambivalent on, breastfeeding, although there are many important and worthwhile feminist-informed critiques of breastfeeding policy and advocacy, a strong case can be made for the compatibility between breast feeding and feminism when we turn attention to creating policies and practices that emerge from women's experiences and which value and support the lactating body and caregivers. The Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference (BFIC) seeks to advance this conversation by bringing together academic scholars, practitioners, activists, and policy makers from the United States and abroad who are interested in considering feminist perspectives to address breastfeeding as a health priority for women and children. Since 2005 the 11 conferences have stimulated a growth in public discourse and scholarship on the sociocultural, economic, and political constraints to women's infant feeding choices. This paper will explore the conference orientation, themes, and dissemination strategies and that we have used that help to build bridges between research and practice and advance an important feminist voice in support of breastfeeding research, policy, practice and action.

Biography

Paige Hall Smith MSPH, PhD, is the Director of the Center for Women's Health and Wellness, and professor of Public Health Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where she also has a faculty appointment in the Women's and Gender Studies Program. In 2004 Dr. Smith was the recipient of the Linda Arnold Carlisle Professorship in Women's and Gender Studies at UNCG. She is founder and director of the Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference (BFIC) and the editor of four books, and other products, that have emerged from presentations at BFIC. Additionally, she is the chair of the Gender Working Group of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy. She has received federal, state, and local funding for her research on breastfeeding, violence against women, and women's reproductive health. She lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina with her husband and is the mother of one daughter, now a junior in college.

Sharon Tugwell:

Breastfeeding in the Digital Age: Expressions of Maternity through Breastfeeding Selfies.

Abstract:

This presentation focuses on one aspect of my research into the cultural representation of breastfeeding: that of the breastfeeding selfie. I take an interdisciplinary approach to considering the psychosocial significance of this phenomenon which has been made possible through digital technology. As such, my theoretical position is to consider these images from the intersection of both social and psychic registers: how they function as expressions at the level of culture and at the level of fantasy. I am interested in how these intimate snapshots convey meaning that has the possibility to both support and disrupt normativity in relation to the ways in which breastfeeding is expressed and represented in contemporary culture. What is the significance of the contexts in which these images cross over from the virtual, digital world into the 'real' world of the everyday? And what is the implication of a digital archive such as this for mothers, and for women more generally?

Biography:

Sharon is a second year PhD student in the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. My research is concerned with how breastfeeding is given meaning through its representation in both textual discourse and visual cultures. I breastfed my daughter Molly for 3 and a half years, and the profundity of this intimate relationship, as well as our relationship more generally, acts as a catalyst for all the academic work I do.

Laura Streeter:

Environmental quality and breastfeeding in the UK: Does environmental perception matter and who is most vulnerable?

Breastfeeding rates in the UK are among some of the lowest in the world. There are robust links between environmental factors and several health and behaviour outcomes, and reproductive behaviour appears to be similarly environmentally-tuned. Using data from the UK's Millennium Cohort Study, I test whether breastfeeding is susceptible to local conditions. I focus on street and neighbourhood-level cues as these are thought to be more salient and more likely to trigger behavioural responses than abstract concepts of environmental quality measured in aggregate at higher levels. I use different indicators of environmental quality and test whether perception modifies the relationship between objective environmental quality and breastfeeding outcomes. The positive relationship between individual SES and breastfeeding chances in the UK is well-established. Here I treat SES as a marker of individual condition and test whether high SES acts as a buffer against environmental insults to enable some women to breastfeed even in harsh environmental conditions. I discuss the implications of the results for further research and policy.

Biography

Laura is in the third year of her PhD at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, where she is part of the Evolutionary Demography Group. With a background in Biological Anthropology (BSc) and Reproductive & Sexual Health Research (MSc), Laura's research interests include human behavioural ecology, reproductive decision making and parental investment.

Outside of her PhD research, Laura has a passion for promoting breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding mothers and has begun training to become an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). She volunteers with her local La Leche League group, helping out at monthly meetings and with running antenatal breastfeeding courses.

Laura is also interested in promoting other aspects of reproductive and sexual health. She has previously volunteered with the Family Planning Association and Brook and is currently doing sessional sexual health outreach work with Spectra and the Terrence Higgins Trust alongside her PhD. Motivated to reduced health inequalities, Laura is interested in the intersection between front-line practice, research and policy, and hopes to combine all three elements in her future career.

Lula Mecinska:

Patching the gaps in support - breastfeeding women's peer support on social media in the UK and Poland.

Dedicated breastfeeding spaces across online social media platforms play an important role as a source of knowledge on the topic for breastfeeding women. Research on Polish forums by Radkowska-Walkowicz (2009) and Zdrojewska-Zywiecka (2012) indicates that women turn to these spaces for experiential and specialist knowledge on lactation they are unable to find in their communities or with their healthcare providers. Interviews conducted with breastfeeding women in Poland and in the UK suggest that women's breastfeeding experiences are marked by inter-generational mistrust and patchy healthcare provisions. Additionally, in the UK, the increasing professionalisation of breastfeeding peer support (Aiken & Thomson 2013) makes it susceptible to the systemic issues typical for in-hospital care identified by Dykes (2006). Beyond knowledge, the online spaces are places women go to in search of community and support. Through participant observation of selected social media sites, I was able to experience a range of forms of support created *by* breastfeeding women *for* breastfeeding women. These can roughly be grouped into instructional, informational and interpersonal support. Together with 'spillover' support, which crosses from online to real-life situations, breastfeeding women's actions on social media create a sense of togetherness, important in making support, alongside visibility and narrative, one of the tactics fostering a bottom-up breastfeeding movement.

Biography

Lula Mecinska is a feminist, a lactivist and a PhD candidate in the Sociology programme of Lancaster University and Graduate School for Social Research. Academically her background combines Sociology and Cultural Studies and her professional past is a combination of work for NGOs and governance programmes. Her current research falls within the interdisciplinary field of breastfeeding studies, with a particular interest in breastfeeding women's activism (lactivism). She is writing up her thesis looking at women's involvement in the breastfeeding movement in the UK and Poland. Her interests in the field are also breastfeeding as an embodied practice and the histories of discourses on breastfeeding within medicine and public health.

Gretel Finch:

Maternal eating behaviour in the early postpartum: Factors affecting appetite, food choice and energy intake in breastfeeding women.

Over half of all women of childbearing age are classified as either overweight or obese, with pregnancy and the first year postpartum being especially vulnerable times for weight gain. Excessive maternal weight retention has been estimated to occur in around 60 to 80% of women, and has adverse effects for both the mother's and child's physical health and wellbeing. The causes of overeating, and subsequent weight gain and obesity are complex with eating being influenced by physiological, cognitive and environmental factors. Anecdotally, women who breastfeed experience greater levels of appetite. The additional energetic demands of breastfeeding are around 330kcal daily. This study examined appetite, food choices and eating behaviour in the postpartum period in relation to weight management. The data presented are from mothers, with a baby aged 3 months and under, who were recruited from breastfeeding support groups, children's centres, using social media and by word of mouth in the south west of England. The data was collected during home visits in which the mother completed a series of eating behaviour measures and was interviewed. The findings presented revealed some modifiable behaviours which are associated with postpartum overeating and weight gain.

Biography

Gretel Finch has recently completed a Daphne Jackson Trust (the UK's leading organisation dedicated to realising the potential of scientists and engineers returning to research following a career break) Fellowship at the School of Experimental Psychology at the University of Bristol. This research which studied the method of infant feeding on maternal eating behaviour, was based in the Nutrition and Behaviour Unit, which is one of the largest of its kind in the UK, focusing on human appetite and weight control, food choice and dietary effects of mood and cognitive function, and the psychopharmacology of caffeine.

Previously, Gretel worked as a Research Scientist in the Department of Consumer Sciences at the BBSRC Institute of Food Research (Reading) on multiple projects examining human appetite, food choice and eating behaviour. Throughout her research career, her areas of research projects have spanned from study chocolate cravings and chocoholics, appetite changes through Ramadan fasting, to chocolate milkshakes and satiety. This was followed by a career break, raising two daughters, who are the inspiration behind her research passion: research into human milk and lactation. She certified as a La Leche League breastfeeding peer supporter during her career break, and is now gaining clinical practice towards the pathway to becoming an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant.

Hollie McNish

What Nobody Told Me about parenthood

“The world needs this book” The Scotsman

With Benjamin Zephaniah stating ‘I can’t take my ears off her’, Kate Tempest describing her poetry as ‘welcoming, galvanising and beautiful’ and fans ranging from Robin Ince, Pink, Tim Minchen, Marian Keyes to most of the UK’s midwives, Hollie McNish is a poet whose readings are not to be missed. She is an Arts Foundation Fellow in Spoken Word, has garnered over two million Youtube views for her online poetry performances and was the first poet to record at London’s famed Abbey Road Studios.

Here, she will be joining us to perform poems, read from and chat honestly and openly about her latest book, *Nobody Told Me*. The book is a unique blend of poetry and storytelling, taken straight from Hollie’s personal diaries. As she states herself ‘it is not a polished collection’; rather, it is a very candid, at times gutting, at others hilarious, look at her experiences from pregnancy to the pre-school drop off. Expect strong language as she talks colours, cravings, politics, transformers, sex, tree-climbing, feeding, train journeys, lots and lots of love and occasionally locking herself in toilets to cry a little.