

Attitudes towards breastfeeding in public

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Healthy, Independent lives 1
Creating Knowledge Conference
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Outline

- Context - breastfeeding and healthy lives
- Underlying reasons for opposition / support to breastfeeding in public
- A Quantitative Exploration of the Factors Influencing Attitudes to Breastfeeding in Public
 - *Under review*

Original Research

**UK Views toward Breastfeeding in Public:
An Analysis of the Public's Response to
the Claridge's Incident**

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Background

- Breastfeeding and health
 - WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months
 - For the baby: infection, diarrhoea, vomiting, obesity
 - For the mother: breast and ovarian cancer, osteoporosis CVD and obesity
- Breastfeeding in the UK and Yorkshire
 - UK, 2010, breastfeeding prevalence at birth, 6 weeks and 6 months was 83%, 57% and 36%
 - UK, 2010, exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months only 1%
 - UK, 2018, prevalence at 6-8 weeks: 46% (variation within local authorities: 23%-79%; Public Health England, 2019)
 - Yorkshire and the Humber generally lower than the rest of England / UK
 - 2010, 11% of UK mothers reported being stopped or made to feel uncomfortable when breastfeeding in public
 - 2010 Equality Act, unlawful for a business to discriminate against a breastfeeding woman

Our material

NEWS

Nigel Farage defends breastfeeding comments amid row

5 December 2014 f 🐦 🐦 ✉ ↻ Share



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Breastfeeding

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Claridge's hotel criticised after telling breastfeeding woman to cover up

Louise Burns says she felt humiliated after being told to cover up while feeding 12-week-old baby during Christmas tea with family



Mark Tran

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Tue 2 Dec 2014 11:30 GMT

3,685 2,264

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Claridge's staff order mother to cover herself with huge napkin after she started breastfeeding her 12-week-old baby

- Lou Burns, 35, asked to cover up while feeding daughter Isadora
- She was told to use napkin so 'not to cause offence' at Mayfair hotel
- Mrs Burns was left so embarrassed that she says she will never go back
- Claridge's says breastfeeding 'embrace' but mothers asked to be discreet

By ELEANOR HARDING FOR THE DAILY MAIL and LUCY CROSSLEY FOR MAILONLINE
PUBLISHED: 13:43, 2 December 2014 | UPDATED: 19:00, 2 December 2014

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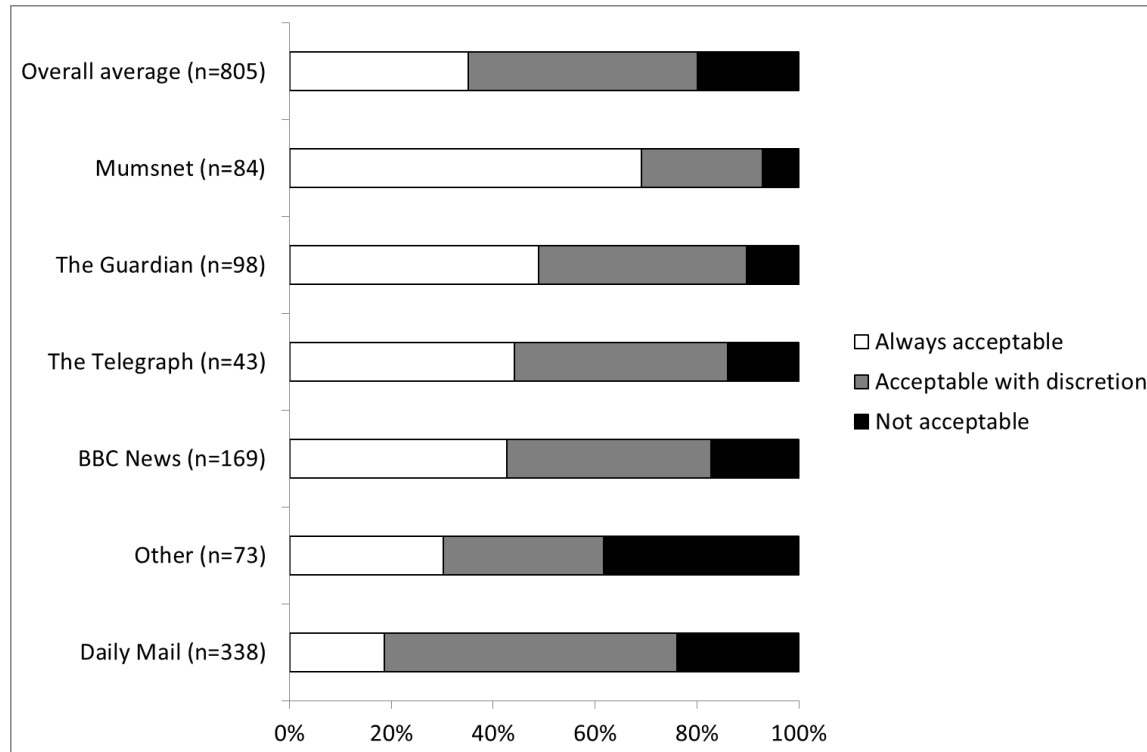
Our material

Media	Website	Overall No. of Comments Left on Site	No. of Comments Meeting the Inclusion Criteria (Word Count)
Daily Mail Online	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2863487/Women-stage-mass-breastfeed-protest-outside-Claridge-s-London-hotel-ordered-woman-cover-feeding-baby.html	2866	191 (17 116)
	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2857391/Claridge-s-staff-order-mother-cover-huge-napkin-started-breastfeeding-12-week-old-baby.html	3817	147 (11 545)
BBC News	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-30342953	1143	158 (9882)
The Guardian	http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/dec/02/claridges-hotel-breastfeeding-woman-cover-up	2264	98 (10 871)
Mumsnet Talk	http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/am_i_being_unreasonable/2250513-Claridges-Breastfeeding-Policy?	639	66 (8619)
The Telegraph	http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-health/11267989/Mother-forced-to-cover-up-with-large-napkin-while-breastfeeding-at-Claridges.html	669	43 (3354)
Sky News	http://news.sky.com/story/1387098/mums-stage-breastfeeding-protest-at-claridges	111	32 (3708)
Netmums.com	http://www.netmums.com/coffeehouse/general-coffeehouse-chat-514/news-current-affairs-topical-discussion-12/1214350-breastfeeding-mum-told-use-napkin-cover-up-claridges.html	21	18 (2633)
The Huffington Post	http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/12/02/breastfeeding-mother-louise-burns-humiliated-claridges-hotel-cover-napkin_n_6254858.html	50	18 (1885)
London Evening	http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/mother-told-to-cover-up-with-ridiculous-shroud-while-breastfeeding-in-claridges-9897118.html	60	13 (1567)
BBC News (YT)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7NS8oZwjZo	116	11 (1079)
Express	http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/542899/breastfeeding-Claridges-cover-up	51	7 (626)
The Independent	http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/breastfeeding-mother-told-to-cover-up-in-claridges-to-avoid-causing-other-guests-offence-9898283.html	5	2 (139)
The Caterer	https://www.thecaterer.com/articles/354387/claridge-s-responds-to-twitter-outrage-on-breastfeeding-incident	1	1 (84)
Total		11 813	805 (73 108)

Data analysis

- Acceptability
 - 'Always acceptable': breastfeeding in public is always acceptable.
 - 'Acceptable with discretion'
 - 'Not acceptable'
- Cohen's kappa - inter-rater reliability
 - 60 comments- 3 sets of 20 comments in pairs
- Thematic analysis
 - Set of reoccurring themes and related sub themes
 - Hierarchical structure and relationships
 - Themes and connectivity compared for consistency and accuracy across the research team

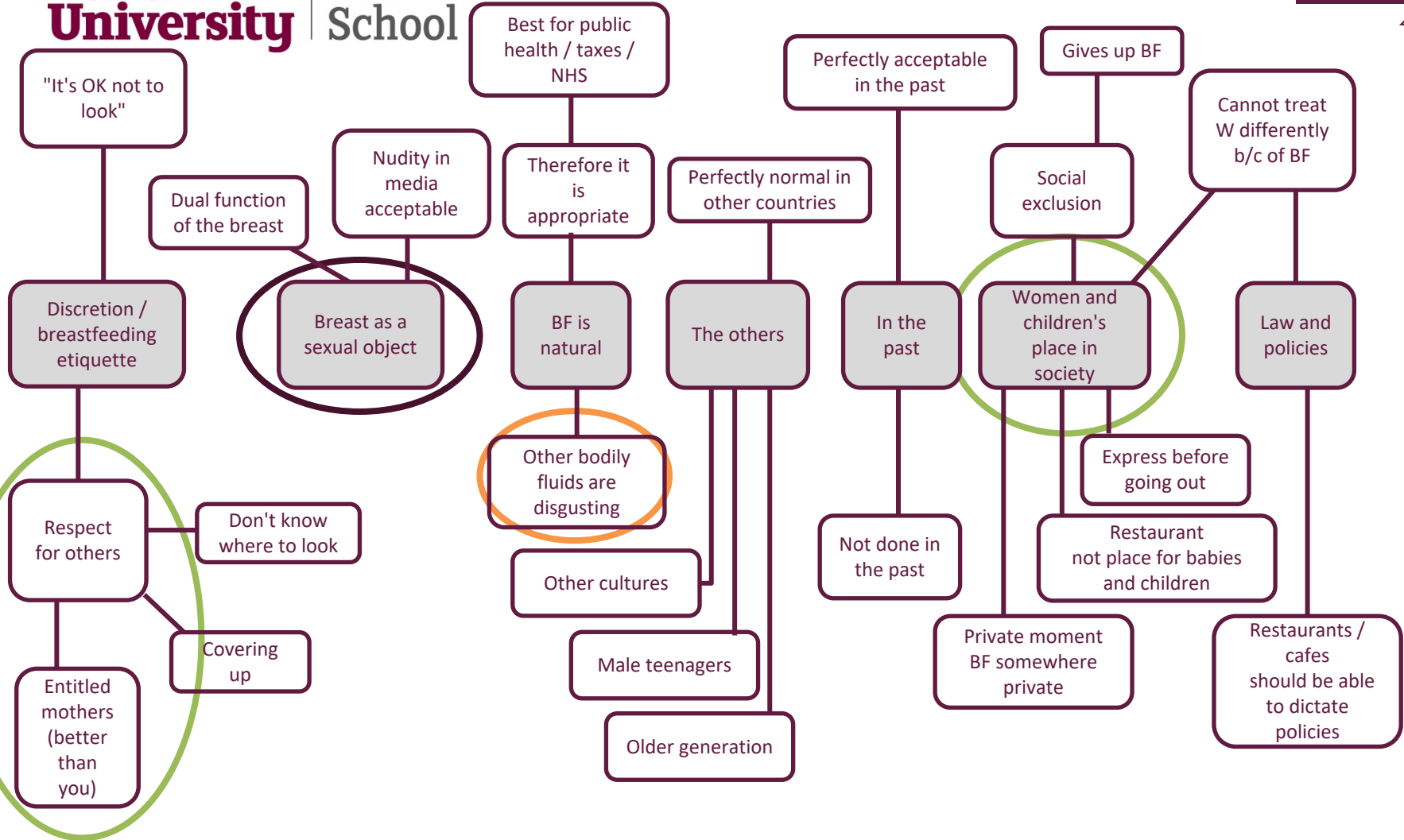
Our data



- Average Cohen's kappa (inter-rater reliability) 0.87
- Differences in opinion by media outlet
- Overall, 19.9% of comments expressed the idea that breastfeeding in public was never acceptable

The themes

Supportive of BF in public



Main theme

Sub-theme

Less / not supportive of BF in public

The sexual breast

Anyone who sees sexual content in this activity may have a psychological problem and should see a shrink!

If you want supporters to understand why breastfeeding in public is sometimes considered 'offensive' then please explain why, because as it is I just can't see what's wrong with it. Although my guess is that it's because those people associate breasts too much with sex.

Women in society

Here we go again, people who think their views are worth more than anyone else's again. If they want to feed the child they could bottle their milk and use it for later but arrogance and pig headedness are all the go now. They think that their view is right and everyone who doesn't agree with them is wrong and yet they want respect but have none for others who find breast feeding in public offensive.

I feel there is a modern trend for some women to really revel in their breastfeeding and turn it into almost something to show off

Having the right to breastfeed in public doesn't mean you should

Breastmilk is disgusting

I'm sorry, but it's a bodily fluid, at the end of the day, and I don't want to see breast milk any more than I want to see any other of the bodily fluids when I'm eating dinner

...breastfeeding is natural...going to the toilet is natural, do you just pee into a bucket next to you or do you get up and go to the bloody toilet...

Taking a dump is completely natural so why should anyone be made to feel uncomfortable about dumping in public

Reflection and expansion

- Sexual breast not that prominent
- Women in society
- Disgust
- How widely held are those views?
 - Relative importance of each?
 - Can anything be done about any of those?
- Who?
- Where?

Survey

- Open from May 2016 to May 2017
- 60 attitude items scored on a 7 point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree
- Demographic questions (age, gender, nationality, children, education attainment, religion affiliation and household income, media usage)
- BBC Radio Sheffield and Hallam FM (June 2016)
- 7190 respondents

Data analysis

- Factor analysis to identify relevant dimensions in the data
- Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis used to identify the dimensions predicted respondent attitudes
 - 'It is always acceptable to breastfeed in public'
 - 'It is never acceptable to breastfeed in public'
- Influence of respondent demographics and behaviour on the attitudes towards breastfeeding in public dimensions assessed using Welch's t-tests and Games-Howell multiple comparison procedures for the one-way ANOVAs

Factor Analysis

Variables	Eigenvalue	SD ²	α
<i>1: Breastfeeding is acceptable in public places</i>	9.69	23.07	0.93
<i>2: BF is healthy, convenient and economical</i>	3.03	7.22	0.85
<i>3: BF in public is disgusting</i>	2.79	6.64	0.64
<i>4: Breastfeeding in public offends others</i>	1.96	4.67	0.72
<i>5: Comfortable around breastfeeding</i>	1.9	4.52	0.84
<i>6: Embarrassing inadvertent gaze</i>	1.83	4.35	0.81
<i>7: Mothers who BF in public are self-absorbed and inconsiderate</i>	1.62	3.86	0.83
<i>8: Mothers who BF in public feel uncomfortable and vulnerable</i>	1.38	3.23	0.83
<i>9: Bottle feeding is best in public</i>	1.27	3.02	0.6
<i>10: Normative beliefs about breastfeeding in public</i>	1.14	2.71	0.71
<i>11: Partial nudity for fashion or on TV is acceptable</i>	1.06	2.52	0.93
<i>12: Social exclusion of breastfeeding mothers</i>	1.01	2.41	0.65

Notes: KMO: 0.882; Bartlett's test of sphericity: 165503.899; df: 861; $p < 0.001$. SD² = variance; 68.29% of the variance explained.

Parallel analysis using a Monte Carlo Simulation confirmed the 12-dimension structure.

Dimensions influencing acceptance and opposition to breastfeeding in public

It is **always** acceptable to breastfeed in public

(Adjusted R² = 0.47; F = 695.05; p <0.001)

1. Breastfeeding is acceptable in public places	0.58 ²
12. Social exclusion of breastfeeding mothers	0.10 ²
2. BF is healthy, convenient and economical	0.03 ²

5. Comfortable around breastfeeding	-0.13 ²
7. Mothers who BF in public are self-absorbed and inconsiderate	-0.13 ²
9. Bottle feeding is best in public	-0.05 ²
8. Mothers who BF in public feel uncomfortable and vulnerable	-0.03 ¹
V. People are sexually aroused by BF in public	-0.03 ¹
4. Breastfeeding in public offends others	-0.03 ¹

It is **never** acceptable to breastfeed in public

(Adjusted R² = 0.28; F =284.90; p <0.001)

7. Mothers who BF in public are self-absorbed and inconsiderate	0.16 ²
9. Bottle feeding is best in public	0.12 ²
3. BF in public is disgusting	0.11 ²
2. BF is healthy, convenient and economical	0.06 ²

1. Breastfeeding is acceptable in public places	-0.27 ²
10. Normative beliefs about breastfeeding in public	-0.06 ²
8. Mothers who BF in public feel uncomfortable and vulnerable	-0.06 ²
12. Social exclusion of breastfeeding mothers	-0.06 ²
6. Embarrassing inadvertent gaze	-0.04 ¹
11. Partial nudity for fashion or on TV is acceptable	-0.03 ¹

(1) significant at p<0.01; (2) significant at p<0.001

Factors influencing acceptance

- Women in society
 - Social exclusion of breastfeeding mothers
 - Mothers who breastfeed in public are self-absorbed and inconsiderate
 - Mothers who breastfeed in public feel uncomfortable and vulnerable
- Breastfeeding is disgusting
- Normative belief about breastfeeding in public
- NOT sexual dimension of the breast

Demographics

Who?

- Men less likely to be supportive than women
- Older members of the public less likely to be supportive than younger ones
- No religious affiliation more likely to be supportive

Media usage?

- Frequent Daily Mail / Daily Telegraph readers less likely to be supportive
- Frequent Guardian readers / TV or radio news more likely to be supportive

Conclusion

- Complex topic
- Partly addressed some gaps in current understanding about UK attitudes towards breastfeeding in public
- Avenues for social marketing campaigns
 - Empathy for breastfeeding mothers
 - Breastmilk image
 - Norm based intervention?
 - Explore in more depth the themes identified with members of the public holding strong negative views
 - Target through specific media outlets

Thanks to...

- BBC radio Sheffield
- Hallam FM
- Our participants
- My co-authors

