



Rhwydwaith Ymchwil Plant a Phobl Ifanc Cymru
Children and Young People's Research Network

Surveillance and stigma during pregnancy and early motherhood: the changing experiences of mothers and grandmothers.

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Overview

Contemporary health care and surveillance

Public parenting and surveillance

Research design: artefact facilitated dyad interviews

Findings

Discussion

Contemporary health care and surveillance

Medicalised view of health and wellbeing

Symptoms of ill health v signs of ill health
(Foucault, 2012)

Increased monitoring

Disproportionately affects women

Pregnant women subjected to regular testing

Self regulation



Community surveillance

Parenting occurs in public, semi-public or private space

Increasing public parenting in recent years

Acceptability of activity related to:

Noise

Space required

How much of the body is on display

(Perceived) cleanliness of the activity

Community co-parenting

'Invisible gaze'

Foetus as 'precious cargo'



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Mother banned from breastfeeding her five-month-old daughter at swimming pool because it was against 'no food or drink' rules

- Natasha Barnett was banned from breastfeeding daughter Olive, five months
- She had to take other children out of pool to breastfeed in changing



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Young mum labelled a 'tramp' for breastfeeding daughter in public



Surveillance and public breastfeeding

Mums report feeling uncomfortable

Strangers look at them

Some fear a negative reaction

Breastfeeding women thus:

- (i) do not breastfeed in public
- (ii) breastfeed in public but cover their body
- (iii) breastfeed defiantly in the open
- (iv) breastfeed comfortably in the open



Research design

Aim: Explore intergenerational feeding practices

- surveillance by health professionals, family, friends and strangers
- experiences of infant feeding

Dyad interviews: 6 mother/grandmother pairs

Mothers had infants under 2 years of age

Artefact facilitated interviews (Chapman 2000; Clendon 2006; Mannay 2016)

Interviewees were asked to bring 'everyday objects that make you think of infant feeding'

Findings - Policing pregnancy

Yeah, he said you can't have this you can't have that he didn't ask us what we wanted he said the only things you can have are um cheese and pickle he brought things we could have but he didn't ask if we liked 'em he didn't he didn't ask if we wanted them...and he even went to the chef about what I can have instead of asking me what has your health visitor said you can have...

...but it was really weird because for, for, like I couldn't believe how interfering like from when I was pregnant ...but like when I was pregnant no one cared (laughter) you could say oh I'll have a double vodka and coke with my fag (laughter) and it was like yeah no problem (laughter) so it's just totally different...yeah people try and police your behaviour



Findings – Policing from Strangers

Me and my partner went to a coffee shop and we was heating up a bottle um for (our daughter) and then the cleaner this man was, (he was) just cleaning around the tables, who worked there and he came up to me and said 'Are you breastfeeding?' and, like I said yes I was and I didn't really take offense to it but if I wasn't then I'd feel quite like...its intrusive...like I wouldn't walk up to him and say 'What did you have for your lunch today?' (laughter) like why are you asking me what my child has for milk?



Findings – White powder and stigma

If you do bottle people are thinking why is she bottle feeding? Why is she? Even to the point I almost feel that I have to make comments that it's my own milk.

And at one point, we were in one restaurant once, I was actually conscious I was hiding the powder, like I was actually doing it really secretively, mixing it.

The Breast Feeding Group

Friendships lost

Moral cultures (Lomax 2013)



Findings – What not to consume

I went out and mum had (my baby)...my (relative), we said that we was going out, and she was like “Oh, she can’t go out; she’s breastfeeding. She can’t drink alcohol.” and I was obviously gonna pump it out and then breastfeed the next day...and it’s just it’s so intrusive and rude and you get so angry about it that you think, d’you know what (laughs), it’d be easier just to give her (my baby) a bottle (of infant formula) from all these different inputs here and left right and left.

People say things like “Oh, I won’t judge you!”, and it’s like “Oh, well thank you!”. Yeah it’s like why would you judge me? It’s nothing to do with you, so why do you, why are you even saying? I didn’t even know I was in a jury like...It’s just so rude and that’s like really close personal friends who were saying I won’t judge you



Findings – Pole dancing

cos um if I don't have this (shawl) to cover myself it's quite like oh God who's coming who's coming...okay get off now hide the boob...and um yeah you feel like really you're like... I was in the park like, it only happened once, and I didn't have the cover and she was crying for the bottle and we hadn't got the bottle with us...so um yeah you feel quite dirty...you feel like...yeah it's kinda like I duno it's kinda like you're just stood there pole dancing...that's how you kinda get looked at like...sorta like ooh how dirty

'Breast is best' but not everywhere (Acker 2009; Boyer 2011)



Findings – Intergenerational patterns

Diane: I did really want Tanya to breastfeed cos it is better. I think Tanya doesn't like me saying I think it's better cos Tanya thinks I feel like a bad mum then, and she doesn't want me to feel guilty.

Tanya: No it's not; it's nothing to do with about my mum not breastfeeding. It's um, people in general like, if they haven't breastfed, why should they feel any worse as a mother than someone who has?

Tanya: Yeah I am happy about it, I just I might, I might bottle feed my next one just to make a statement!
(laughter)



Discussion

Understanding the sociocultural context of motherhood and infant feeding

Understanding the lived experiences of motherhood and infant feeding

Value of artefacts

White powder and stigma

Policing of consumption

Mediated sexualisation of the breast

Morality and acceptable motherhood

Moral Maze of Motherhood



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