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## **Effects of Sexualized Images in Media on Attitudes Toward Public Breastfeeding**

Hannah J. Powell-Yost

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The University of Southern Mississippi

Effects of Sexualized Images in Media on Attitudes Toward Public Breastfeeding

by

Hannah Jacole Powell-Yost

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of Honors Requirements

May 2020



Approved by:

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## **Abstract**

Although breastfeeding is known to promote both physical and emotional health in both infant and mother, many women are hesitant to breastfeed in public due to perceived attitudes toward public breastfeeding. This research explores the relationship between frequent exposure to sexuality in mass media and people's positions regarding breastfeeding. It was hypothesized that sexualized portrayals of the female body perpetuated in mass media would negatively impact individuals' attitudes toward breastfeeding. No significant correlation was found between media exposure and negative attitude toward public breastfeeding. However, a few interesting results were observed. Individuals who responded positively to sexual media were more likely to associate female breasts with sex, which in turn influenced perceptions of public breastfeeding. Differences between male and female respondents were also reported. Findings are supported by and contribute to numerous other studies examining individual and societal perceptions regarding breastfeeding. Discussion suggests opportunities such as building awareness of and familiarity with breastfeeding, in order to decrease negative perceptions, and to promote confidence among women in their maternal choices, ultimately increasing rates of breastfeeding. The implications, as well as limitations, of the study were also discussed.

**Key Words:** advertising, public breastfeeding, mass communication, feminism, sexualized images in media, women's and gender studies



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## Chapter I: Introduction

Breastfeeding is the oldest, most natural form of human consumption on the planet. In fact, almost all mammals nurse their young. However, in recent years, public breastfeeding has become a heavily debated topic. It does not seem to be of concern that women are nursing their infants, but rather that they are becoming increasingly comfortable with the liberty of doing so in open spaces. Arguments come from all directions – some insist it is only natural to feed one’s child, while others plead that mothers should only nourish their children under the cover of a blanket or in a bathroom, which is then often countered with the point that adults are not exiled to a head-covering or unsanitary location for eating, so babies should not be either. The debate rages on. Why, though, does anyone care what a mother does with her own body and how she cares for her child? Why do people feel that it is the business of anyone else *but* the parent-child duo? Research by Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2006) suggests that males shown sexually objectifying media images in the study were more likely to see breasts sexually than for practical uses such as nursing. Ward’s research did not support a strong correlation between masculinity ideologies and either positive or negative male views of breastfeeding, however, and this paper intends to look more deeply into possible media influences on the overall attitudes toward breastfeeding (Ward, et al., 2006).

Stigma around public breastfeeding can pose a significant barrier to women wanting to practice this healthy habit with their infants. Marketers need to develop a clearer understanding of the impacts that their visual messages convey deep in the minds of viewers and consumers. This research explores the relationship between frequent exposure to sexuality in mass media and people’s positions regarding breastfeeding.

Correlations and findings can support further research across various fields of study to move society forward in a number of ways. In order to determine the effects of sexualized images in the media on attitudes toward public breastfeeding, a survey was conducted to examine relationships between exposure to sexualized images and attitudes toward public breastfeeding. The roles of gender and levels of individuals' feminist beliefs were also explored.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

Many studies have looked at attitudes toward breastfeeding, when done both in public and in private, and the perceptions surrounding it. Acker (2009) suggests that these views are founded in sexism stemming from oversexualization in media and advertising. This study reports that people who are used to seeing breastfeeding often, whether due to frequent exposure or their own experiences, are less likely to see it negatively. Additionally, it finds that men consider private breastfeeding much more appropriate than public feeding (Acker, 2009). In another study observing gender representation and sexualized imagery, researchers released three flyers for a professional conference, one a standard control layout, one like the control but including offerings of alcohol, and the other with eroticized images. Biernat's research (2017) reveals that "respect for event attendees" was slightly lower for the eroticized advertisement for faculty, and significantly higher for the control – possibly related to Acker's suggestion that people with more thorough life experience are less likely to place sexualized value on their choices and thoughts (Biernat et al., 2017; Acker, 2009). Conversely, Boyer (2011) reports that in many areas throughout Europe, public breastfeeding is very normalized, but in places that it is not widely practiced, it is considered somewhat of a taboo; research points to visible breastfeeding being deemed "scandalous" because of how women's bodies, especially breasts, are sexualized (Boyer, 2011). Participants of a study by Bylaska-Davies (2015) exploring how mass media influences women's choices to breastfeed noted that in the United States, our culture heavily sexualizes breasts, making them an object of sexuality rather than a means of human infant survival. They voiced

concern about the media's promotion of this sexualization in countless areas of advertising, and that content's negative influence on breastfeeding mothers. A subsection titled "Recommendations for Future Mass Media Messages" discusses the prevalence of media messages advertising formula and visually showing bottle-feeding, but rarely depicting breastfeeding. The study further encouraged the public normalization of breastfeeding to help it become standard to the audience (general society), highlighting that there are PSAs for vaccinations and smoking, but few to none for breastfeeding (Bylaska-Davies, 2015). In taking a stand for the cause of normalized public breastfeeding, Dillard (2015) proposes that positive deviance, "when a subset of a population rejects local social mores for the betterment of a group," should be applied to breastfeeding, similarly to how a protest would function, calling them "nurse-ins" (Dillard, 2015). Harbke and Lindemann's work (2018) looks at the acceptance of female public toplessness and what factors influence support of it. The study suggests negative reactions are likely founded by the perception of toplessness as an unspoken sexual display, and it evaluates many factors such as demographics, disgust sensitivity, sexual attitudes, sexual awareness, child protectiveness, and overall acceptance. These researchers find that public toplessness related to non-sexual functions such as sunbathing, breastfeeding, or protest are less likely to be viewed as indecent. However, it further explains that "in the absence of such non-sexual attributions, the bare breast itself could serve as a marker of sexuality" (Harbke et al., 2018). Directly relevant to this current research, "Breasts Are for Men" by Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2006) maps out pathways in which the ways breasts are used in the media shape men's subconscious acceptance of masculine ideologies and in turn their feelings toward

breastfeeding and childbirth. The APA defines “masculinity ideology” as “a particular constellation of standards that have held sway over large segments of the population, including: anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk, and violence” (American Psychological Association, 2018). Masculinity ideologies are frequently perpetuated by images in media, from advertising to entertainment, with a majority of women portrayed in magazines and ads in “Breasts Are for Men” shown solely in a sexual nature. In part of this study, men who are shown sexually objectifying images from media were more accepting of gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, and rape myths. Separately, men were slightly more likely to see breasts sexually than for nursing but remained overall supportive of breastfeeding in general. Men more in touch with popular male TV characters and men’s magazines were found to consider breasts more sexual than practical. In the final conclusion of this research, though, media use (A) was found related to masculinity ideologies (B), which related to male views of breastfeeding/childbirth (C), but (A) and (C) did not directly correlate (Monique Ward et al., 2006). Spencer, Wambach, and Domain’s “African American Women’s Breastfeeding Experiences” (2015) finds that in African American communities, the female body is perpetuated as being voluptuous, curvy, and sexualized. One participant in research regarding African American women’s experiences with breastfeeding explains how oversexualization causes breasts to be accepted in this manner, and so the underlying feelings toward exposure cause great discomfort around breastfeeding. From a social standpoint, Black women may be particularly disadvantaged in the realm of sexual objectification as it pertains to acceptance of public breastfeeding (Spencer et al., 2015). Finally, it is important from a feminist perspective to observe the

attitudes toward breast exposure by the women themselves as it relates to sexual agency and self-sexualization. A study on objectification by Ward, Seabrook, Grower, Giaccardi, and Lippman (2018) suggests that women who willingly objectify themselves as a means of agency may have reduced confidence and feelings of self-doubt, negative self-esteem, and increased unwanted sexual experiences (Ward et al., 2018). Many women do utilize their sexual autonomy as a power dynamic, however, so it is unclear in which direction Ward's research correlates to sexualized images and how women perceive themselves and act.

### **Research Questions**

As mentioned above, literature on the potential impact of media exposure on attitude toward public breastfeeding is limited. Therefore, the following hypotheses and research questions were developed in the current study:

H1: The more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the more likely they find public breastfeeding inappropriate.

H2: The more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the more likely they associate breastfeeding with sex.

RQ1: Are there any gender differences?

RQ2: Are there differences based on the level of feminism?

RQ3: Do people who feel negatively toward sexualized images feel more positively toward breastfeeding in public? Do people who feel positively toward sexualized images feel more negatively toward breastfeeding in public?

RQ4: Are there any differences based on the settings of public breastfeeding?

## **Chapter III: Method**

### **Sample and Procedure**

The goal of the current study was to examine the relationships between exposure to sexualized images and attitudes toward public breastfeeding. A survey was conducted online through Qualtrics in the United States in November and December 2019.

Convenience and random sampling were used to collect data. The survey was distributed via the social network site Facebook. Invitations were sent to the researcher's connections on Facebook to complete the online survey. The invitation included information on the purpose of the survey, its implications, and requirements (being an American aged 18 or older). In addition, lifestyle bloggers and influencers on Instagram were approached and asked to help distribute the survey link. These individuals all have strong Instagram followings that focus on family matters and represent a variety of groups in terms of race, gender, and political stance, which should minimize any strong biases. Willing influencers were provided the survey link, and they shared the link on their blogs, profiles, and stories. The respondents were informed that the study had been approved by IRB at the University of Southern Mississippi. Full compliance of ethical standards was met, and consent was obtained prior to any data collection.

The survey began with general questions about media exposure. Respondents were asked to report how often they were exposed to sexualized content in media. Then, before the questions specific to women and breastfeeding, participants were shown two fast food advertisements produced by the same company and highlighting similar products. Coded as "family friendly" (only to researchers, not to respondents), the first ad, the control, was a close-up photograph of three burgers next to each other, beneath the

restaurant's logo. The second ad, labeled "adult focus" (only to researchers, not to respondents), shows an attractive model in a bikini holding a similar burger by her mouth in one hand and a paper carry-out bag with the restaurant's logo on it. To determine the attitudes toward such different types of ads for basically the same product, respondents were first shown the "family friendly" control ad, and they were asked for initial reaction toward, attitude toward, brand recall, and level of influence of the ad. Then they were given several Likert scale questions to rate responses from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" for specific questions about this type of ad in general. The same process was followed for the "adult focus" ad. Respondents then answered questions measuring their attitude toward public breastfeeding, followed by questions on the level of feminism as well as demographic questions.

A total of 722 social media users participated in the study. The final analysis was constrained to all adults who fully completed the survey from start to finish, in order to provide the most accurate correlations among potential causation in experiences, demographics, and attitudes.

## **Measures**

Major variables in this study included media exposure, attitude toward public breastfeeding, association of breastfeeding with sex, and level of feminism. These factors were measured with questions developed by the researcher.

***Media Exposure.*** Respondents were asked questions regarding media exposure and how often, when, and where they are shown sexualized content, as well as how frequently this content specifically depicts the female body. They were asked how often

they saw sexual content in print media (magazines, newspapers, brochures, etc.), on television or in films, and on computers or mobile devices.

***Attitude Toward Public Breastfeeding.*** This was measured by directly asking respondents about their beliefs or responses to certain stimuli, such as opinions about nursing mothers in general, how women should handle breastfeeding outside of the home, and their own experiences with breastfeeding, if applicable. Given certain situations and ultimatums, respondents were given a 5-point Likert scale to rate their responses from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

***Association of Breastfeeding With Sex.*** Two questions were used to measure association of breastfeeding with sex. Respondents were asked if they thought the female breast’s primary function is for sexual satisfaction, and if exposing breasts is considered sexual.

***Level of Feminism.*** Respondents were also given four statements that align with modern feminist beliefs, designed by feminist theory and reviewing key points of other research and surveys regarding feminism. They were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” These statements include: (1) I consider myself a feminist; (2) All men and women should be treated equally regardless of gender; (3) Movements toward gender equity are essential to making progress in our society; (4) Women are more objectified than men are.

## Chapter IV: Results

Overall, 722 individuals completed the survey. Women were represented at a considerably higher rate than men in our samples, although specific data between male and female populations when sex was held as a control was not significantly different. Other demographics that stood out included that participants were predominantly White (81.3%), ranging in age from 25-44 (83.5%), female (97.5%), Christian (49.4%), household incomes exceeding \$45,000 (64.1%), married (71.5%), parents of 1-2 children (72.7%), and were college graduates with at least an associate's degree (56.8%).

### Media Exposure

The first hypothesis (H1) examined the correlation between exposure to sexual content in media and attitude toward public breastfeeding. This hypothesis was not supported. Contrary to the prediction, it was found that the more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the more likely they believed that bystanders of nursing mothers should be more tolerant of seeing breastfeeding,  $r(722) = .19, p = .00$ ; and women should feel confident to choose whether or not to nurse in a public setting,  $r(722) = .16, p = .00$ . In addition, the more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the less likely they were to agree that women need to cover up their breast and child when breastfeeding in public,  $r(722) = -.13, p = .00$ ; or that it is more offensive for a mother to breastfeed around other people's children, than to breastfeed around only adults,  $r(722) = -.09, p = .02$ .

## **Association of Breastfeeding With Sex**

The second hypothesis (H2) examined the correlation between exposure to sexual content in media and associating breastfeeding with sex. This hypothesis was not supported, either. The result was contrary to the prediction, which had suggested that the more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the less likely they believed breastfeeding was considered sexual,  $r(722) = -.11, p = .00$ .

## **Gender Differences**

The first research question (RQ1) examined differences among results depending on the gender of the respondents. Survey questions were processed through the software with gender held constant, in order to determine if there were significant differences in answers and attitudes between male and female respondents. Even though not statistically significant, several differences were observed between male and female respondents.

It was found that, in terms of media exposure, a slight difference exists when asked how often the respondents see sexual content on their computers or mobile devices. Cumulatively, the strongest answer was *daily* with 69.3%. However, male data showed they see this content on computers or mobile devices *daily* at a rate of 91.7%.

Brand recall levels varied somewhat between the entire group and specifically males. When shown the “family friendly” ad and asked how often they “recall the specific brands associated with this type of ad,” the full data set reported *sometimes* or *most of the time* at a rate of 65.9%. Males reported *sometimes* or *rarely* at 66.7%. *Sometimes* was the leading answer for both categories by a small margin.

One of the most varying answers between the full set and specifically men was in regard to the “adult focus” ad. The first difference was when respondents were asked to

rate their “initial reaction toward this advertisement.” While the overall average for the response *very negative* was 39.1%, 0% of men chose this answer, although 41.7% selected “negative” and 33.3% were “neutral.” The total combined for *negative* or *very negative* was 85.8%, which is more than double the male respondents’ combined negative/very negative percentage of 41.7% total. Similarly, when asked about “attitude toward this type of advertisement as a whole,” the overall negative/very negative rate was 85.8%, while it was just 50% for male participants. Additionally, men chose *very positive* for this question at a rate of 16.7%, while the overall total *very positive* was just .4%.

Next, participants were asked how “this type of ad influences their perception of the brand using it.” The total negative/very negative was 84.7%, while men were split totally evenly across the board for all choices except *very positively*, with each other option at 25%; this shows they feel slightly more negatively than positively toward this type of ad, but not as negatively as the overall average. A somewhat strong difference appeared in rating whether this type of ad “fits comfortably into their daily routine.” Cumulatively, respondents *strongly disagreed*, at a rate of 52.2, followed by *somewhat disagreeing*, at 25.6% – and only 2.1% strongly agree. For the male sample, *strongly agree* shot up significantly to 25%, while *somewhat disagree* remained alike, at 25%. Similar responses were found when asked if this type of ad “is appropriate for all audiences to view in public.” In total, 66.6% *strongly disagreed* with this statement, while only 4.2% *somewhat agreed*. Only 33.3% of male respondents *strongly disagreed*, while those who *somewhat agreed* shot up again to 25%. The final main difference in this category was rating whether this type of ad made the participant uncomfortable. Altogether, only 5.7%

*strongly disagreed*, but 64.8% *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*. Specific to men, 33.3% *strongly disagreed*, while only 33.4% *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*.

The next group of questions that showed increased differences by gender was in regard to public breastfeeding. The first difference was slight, but potentially important; participants were asked if women need to cover up their breasts and children when breastfeeding in public. Overall, respondents *strongly disagreed*, at a rate of 73.5%, while slightly fewer men felt this way, at 66.7%. Altogether, only 7.9% of users *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*, but when only observing the male respondents, this rose to 16.6%. When asked if they feel uncomfortable if they can see a mother breastfeeding near them, 86.3% *strongly disagreed*, while just 7.5% either *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*. In the male population, those who *strongly disagreed* fell almost a quarter, down to 58.3%, and the total of men who *somewhat agreed* was 25%. Another slight difference appeared when participants were asked if they feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near them, even if she is covered. The cumulative total *strongly disagreed* at a nearly unanimous rate of 94.3%; all levels of agreement totaled to just 2.5%. The male sample held constant: 75% *strongly disagreed* while 8.3% *somewhat agreed*; none *strongly agreed*. An interesting variation between responses by gender appeared when asked to whether “the female breast’s primary function is for sexual satisfaction.” Altogether, participants *strongly disagreed* at 92.4%, and only .8% *strongly agreed*. In the male data, *strongly disagree* dropped to 83.3%, while *strongly agree* jumped up to 8.3%. One last intriguing difference appeared when respondents were asked if it is “practical to expect a mother to only nurse her baby in private places.” In total, 91.8% *strongly disagreed*, while this number was nearly cut in half for the male respondents, at 58.3%. Out of all

participants, just .8% *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* with this statement, but 25% of the male group *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*.

The final section of questions that showed some differences by gender was regarding levels of feminism. Respondents were asked to rate the statement, "I consider myself a feminist." The complete data and the male data were very close in choosing *neither agree nor disagree*, at 29.9% and 33.3% respectively. Likewise, those who *somewhat* or *strongly agreed* were close, at 53.4% and 41.7% respectively. However, the total result for *strongly disagree* was just 8% for the cumulative data, while it was up to 25% for the male group. Asked if mothers should be expected to function primarily in the domestic sphere if necessary, rather than the father so that he can pursue a career, the entire group *strongly disagreed* at 51.8%, while just 14.5% *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*. In the male control, 58.3% *strongly disagreed*, while 0% either *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*.

### **Level of Feminism**

The second research question (RQ2) examined differences among results based on respondents' reported levels of feminism. It was found that the majority of respondents (83.4%) indicated they were either neutral to or agreed with self-identifying as feminists (29.9% *neutral*, 53.4% *agree*). Respondents were then divided into three groups, low, medium, and high level of feminism. No significant differences were found among the groups, though patterns are likely to be consistent among all those who did not disagree with self-identifying as feminists, since those who *disagreed* made up just 16.9%

The overall high level of feminism was reflected in answers to several survey questions. Responses that stood out for general media exposure included seeing sexual content on television or in films *daily* (70.6%) and answering that sexual content in media *always* or *usually* contains images of the female body (97.4%). Results that stood out regarding the “family friendly” ad included *strongly disagreeing* that this ad makes them uncomfortable (51.8%); and reporting a *neutral* initial reaction and attitude toward this ad, and perception of the brand using this type of ad (58.9%, 52.4%, 58.6% respectively). Stand out data regarding the “adult focus” ad included supporting a *negative* or *very negative* initial reaction and attitude toward this ad, and perception of the brand using this type of ad (85.8%, 87.3%, and 84.7% respectively); reporting *strongly disagree* or *somewhat agree* to whether this type of ads fits comfortably into their daily routine, is appropriate for all audiences to view in public, and makes them more likely to purchase a product (77.8%, 88.2%, and 89.7% respectively); *somewhat agreeing* or *strongly agreeing* that this type of ad makes them uncomfortable (64.8%). Significant data specifically regarding breastfeeding and breasts included *strongly disagreeing* that nursing mothers “should be more mindful of people around them when feeding (74.4%); *strongly agreeing* that bystanders of nursing mothers “should be more tolerant of seeing breastfeeding and that women “should feel confident to choose whether or not to nurse in a public setting (87.8% and 94.6% respectively); *strongly disagreeing* that women “need to cover up their breast and child when breastfeeding in public,” that respondents “feel uncomfortable if [they] can see a mother breastfeeding near [them],” and that respondents “feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near [them], even if she is covered” (73.5%, 86.3%, and 94.3% respectively); *strongly disagreeing* that female breasts’

“primary functions is for sexual satisfaction,” that it is “practical to expect a mother to only nurse her baby in private places,” and that it is “more offensive for a mother to breastfeed around other people’s children, than to breastfeed around only adults” (92.4%, 91.8%, and 85% respectively).

### **Attitude Toward Sexualized Images in Media**

The third research question (RQ3) examined the correlation between attitudes toward sexualized images in media and attitudes toward public breastfeeding. It was found that the more positively an individual responded toward sexualized images, the more likely this individual believed female breasts’ primary function is sexual satisfaction,  $r(722) = .10, p = .00$ ; exposing breasts is considered sexual,  $r(722) = .09, p = .01$ ; and it is practical to expect a mother to only nurse in private places,  $r(722) = .09, p = .03$ .

### **Public Breastfeeding Setting**

The fourth research question (RQ4) examined attitudes toward public breastfeeding in different situations. When asked if nursing mothers “should be more mindful of people around them when feeding,” 74.4% *strongly disagreed*, and an additional 11.5% *somewhat disagreed*; 87.8% *strongly agreed* that bystanders of nursing mothers should actually be more tolerant of seeing breastfeeding. Respondents reported almost unanimously that women “should feel confident to choose whether or not to nurse in a public setting, with 94.6% strongly agreeing.” In terms of breastfeeding specifically in public, 83.9% *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* that women need to cover their breasts and children when breastfeeding. The total percentage of answers that were opposite of the majority for each previous question equaled just 2.2% or less. Asked if they feel

uncomfortable if they can see a mother breastfeeding nearby, 86.3% *strongly disagreed*, while another 3.9% *somewhat disagreed*. This number dropped some when the idea of covering up was introduced, as 94.3% strongly disagreed that they would feel uncomfortable in the case of a nearby breastfeeding mother if she was covered. The strongest concurrence in this category appeared in response to the statement that it is “practical to expect a mother to only nurse her baby in private places” – 91.8% strongly disagreed, and when including those who somewhat disagreed, the total against this statement rose to 96.5%. To determine if the perceived appropriateness of public breastfeeding was influenced by children being present, participants were asked if it is more offensive for a mother to breastfeed around other people’s children than to breastfeed around only adults; 85% strongly disagreed, and another 7.1% somewhat disagreed. “Somewhat agree” and “strongly agree” totaled just 2.8%. Of all respondents who indicated they have breastfed, 96.8% reported having done so in a public setting. Of all respondents who indicated they have breastfed, 9.9% reported having done so only within a private setting.

## Chapter V: Discussion

Based on data collected through an online survey distributed across social media platforms, this study examined variables concerning media exposure, general attitudes toward breastfeeding, and differences in public breastfeeding situations, gender, and level of feminism.

It was found that public breastfeeding may not be as innately controversial as previously thought. While it certainly presents challenges in many areas, such as working mothers striving to breastfeed around company time, the debate regarding the breast as a sexual or as a functional organ, and division among mothers who prefer the bottle or breast for feeding, the matter of whether they *can* breastfeed in public may not be such an issue. Still, participants of another study have highlighted that United States culture “heavily sexualizes breasts, making them an object of sexuality and not of utilization for human infant survival” (Bylaska-Davies, 2015). Results of this study synthesize such information into a variety of potential explanations of attitudes toward public breastfeeding, holding this finding as true and offering both positive and negative correlations. With 96.8% of all respondents who have breastfed reporting having done so in a public setting, less than 10% reported having exclusively breastfed in private settings. It is evident that most women are either relatively comfortable breastfeeding in public, or at least more strongly feel the desire to nourish their child in this way than they feel awkward, humiliated, or nervous to do so.

## **Breastfeeding and Exposure to Sexualized Media**

As found in the results for H1, individuals who reported seeing sexual content in media frequently were likely to agree that bystanders of nursing mothers should be more tolerant of seeing breastfeeding, and they strongly agreed women should feel confident to make the choice whether or not to nurse in public. These respondents are very unlikely to agree that a woman must cover her breast and child when feeding in public, and almost unanimously do not consider it more offensive for a mother to breastfeed around others' children than only around adults. Overall, relationships regarding media exposure also imply that individuals who are heavily exposed to sexualized content in the media are not bothered by public breastfeeding. As explained in *Women's Lives*, people conceptualize their own lives based on interactions with other groups with whom they relate. Creation of knowledge is heavily impacted by the media, from what consumers view to how they interpret it. This text further elaborates that media representations "reinforce ideological notions of women's roles, bodies, sexuality... giving complex, sometimes contradictory messages" (Kirk, Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Content in media messages strongly impact society's interpretations and views of themselves. Because of that, media also influences people's perceptions of and attitudes toward others and their behaviors, which supports the relationships between this study and its relevance to real-life applications. As it relates to sexualized content and attitudes toward breastfeeding, the influence of media messages on people's attitudes ties into Acker's findings that the unfamiliarity of stimuli due to lack of exposure to that stimuli sets the stage for an increased discomfort toward that stimuli. In this case, the failure for media to represent the female breast for

nourishment, in favor of objectifying it for its sexual purposes, “creates knowledge” for both men and women that breasts are for pleasure, rather than utilitarian (2009).

### **Association of Breastfeeding With Sex**

Data collected for H2 further illustrates that there was a strong negative correlation between exposure to sexual content in the media and associating breastfeeding with sex. The statement “the more individuals are exposed to sexual content in media, the less likely they associate breastfeeding with sex” held true for 89% of participants.

These results were different from some earlier studies that suggest media exposure may negatively affect attitude toward public breastfeeding. Acker argues that media emphasizes “scandalousness” of breasts and offers minimal exposure to breastfeeding at all, especially as a positive act, which altogether has hindered the chance for people to become aware of and familiar with breastfeeding, much less perceive it positively (2009). A possible explanation is that the individuals more frequently exposed to sexualized content may have become desensitized to the sight or thought of breasts, and so they do not think twice when it comes to breastfeeding. Similar to the idea of desensitization, Acker points out that increased exposure to an object positively influences acceptance (2009). So, higher consumption of sexualized content in media may explain why these individuals are not bothered by exposure to breasts. It has been often suggested that sexualized media content leads individuals to only thinking of breasts sexually, and therefore finding breastfeeding offensive. The data from this survey, however, does not necessarily support that. It does not discount the possibility of such a statement, either, but participants of this survey who are frequently exposed to sexual

content in the media do not seem concerned with whether or not mothers breastfeed in public.

However, data collected for RQ3 suggested that the more positively an individual responded toward sexualized images, the more likely this individual believed female breasts' primary function is sexual satisfaction,  $r(722) = .10, p = .00$ ; exposing breasts is considered sexual,  $r(722) = .09, p = .01$ ; and it is practical to expect a mother to only nurse in private places,  $r(722) = .09, p = .03$ . So, while the overall media exposure does not necessarily negatively impact the respondents' attitudes toward public breastfeeding, those who reported positive reactions to the sexualized ad are more likely to associate breasts with sex. Although general media exposure is negatively related to association of breastfeeding with sex, attitude toward a sexual ad is positively related to association of breastfeeding with sex. This means, perhaps, that attitude toward sexual media content, instead of general media exposure, could serve as an effective indicator for attitude toward breastfeeding.

### **Public Breastfeeding and Gender**

A unique aspect this study examined, in RQ1, was differences in survey responses based on gender. Overall, the male sample reported a slightly less positive attitude toward breastfeeding than the cumulative sample. For the most part, however, these were not extremely significant variances.

Male respondents did report a higher frequency of viewing sexual content on their computers or mobile devices. The total population reported seeing this content daily at a rate of 69.3%, while 91.7% of men consumed it daily. This could be skewed – the women *could* see it as often but not notice as much as the males, given the majority (estimated

about 76%) heterosexual population in the United States combined with this study's data showing that 97.4% report that sexual content in the media *usually* or *always* contains images of the *female* body.

Male respondents reported more positive attitude toward the ad with sexualized images, compared to the overall response (see Figure 1a, 1b).

Figure 1a: Initial reaction toward sexual ad (All Samples)

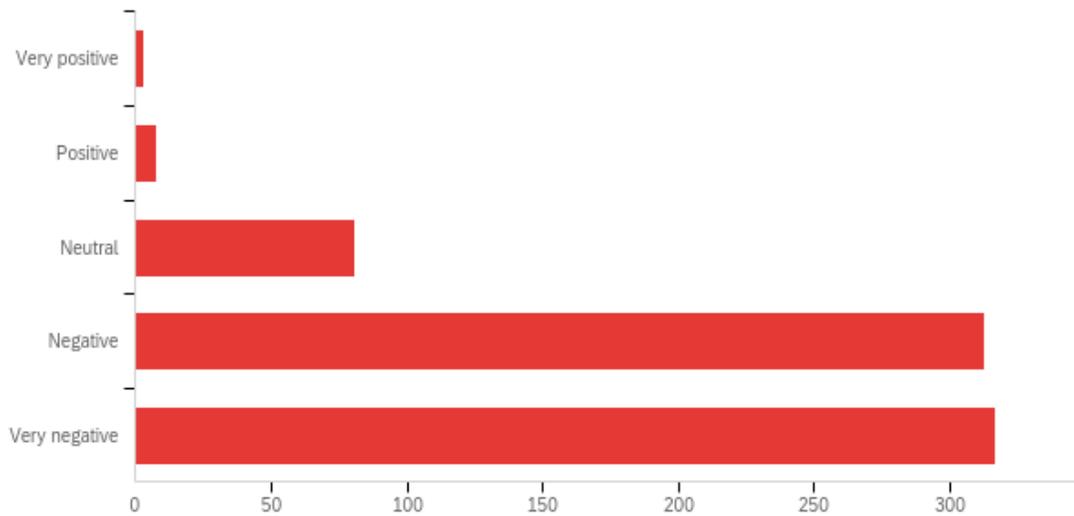
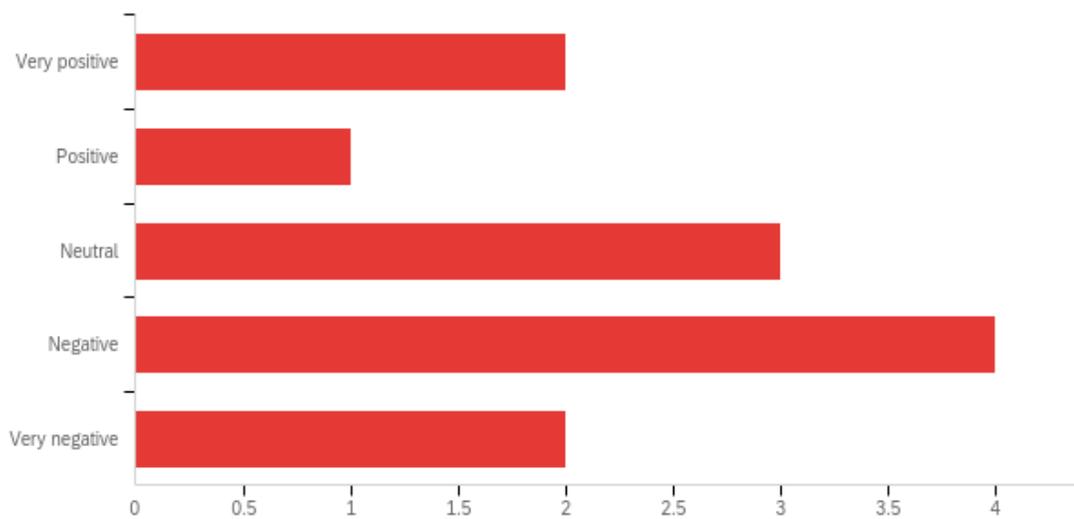


Figure 1b: Initial reaction toward sexual ad (Male Samples)



Attitudes toward this ad overall were *negative* or *very negative* at a rate of 87.3%, while this plummeted to just 50% for men. This suggests that men are more tolerant of sexualized displays in media, although it does not necessarily suggest they *prefer* this type of content. However, when comparing that 16.7% of males felt *very positive* about this ad, while the cumulative .4% total rated this ad *very positive* (only one woman or nonbinary individual reported this response), it is evident there is a slightly higher level of support for this content from men. Despite the male sample's indifferent or positive feeling toward the "adult focus" ad, they were distributed evenly when it came to how this type of ad influences their perceptions of the brand, except *very positively*, which had zero selections. The total population for this question felt *negatively* or *very negatively* at a rate of 87.4%. Male respondents reported *strongly agree* at 25% that this ad fits comfortably into their daily routines, while the total reported this response at just 2.1%. Male respondents reported more positive impact of sexual ad on brand perception (see Figure 2a, 2b).

Figure 2a: Effects of sexual ad on brand perception (All Samples)

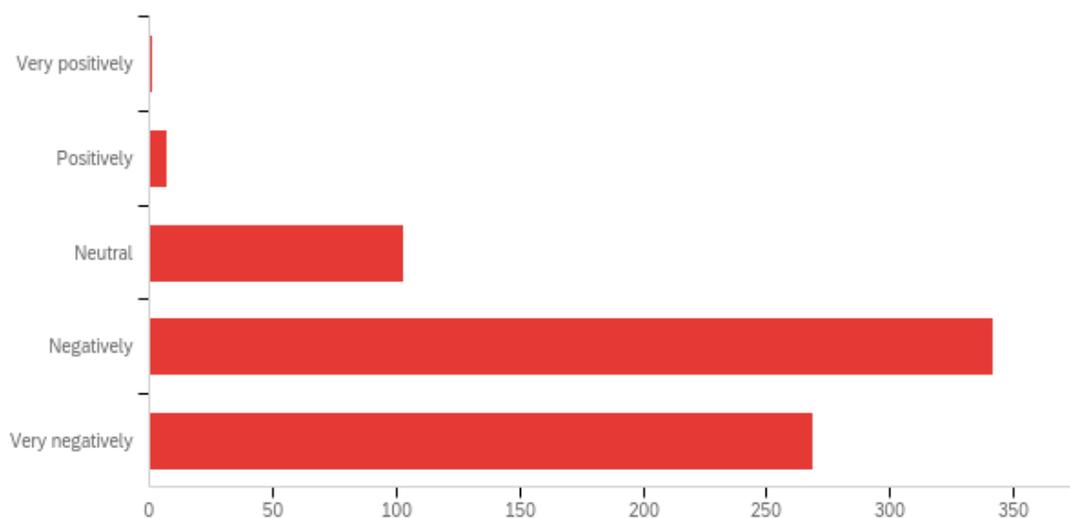
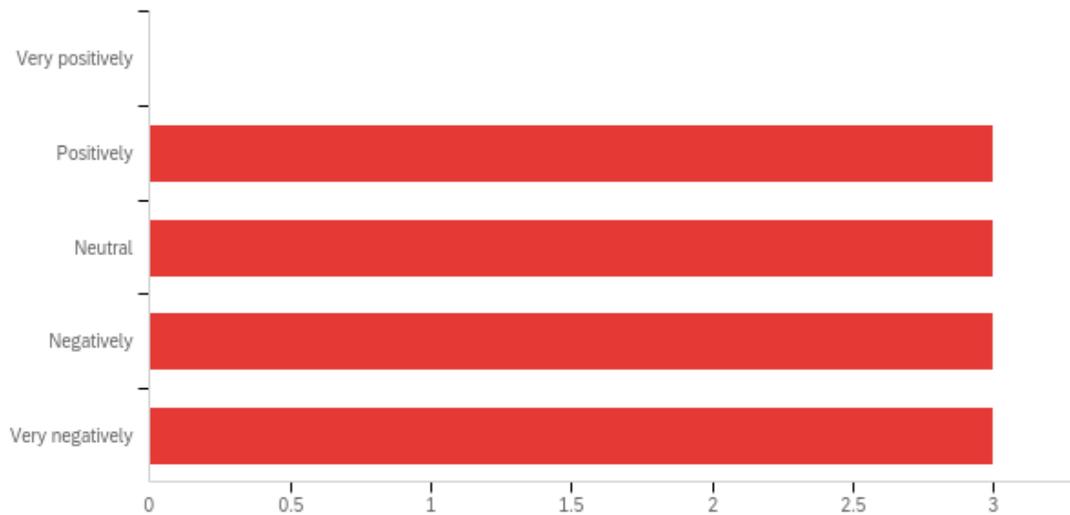


Figure 2b: Effects of sexual ad on brand perception (Male Samples)



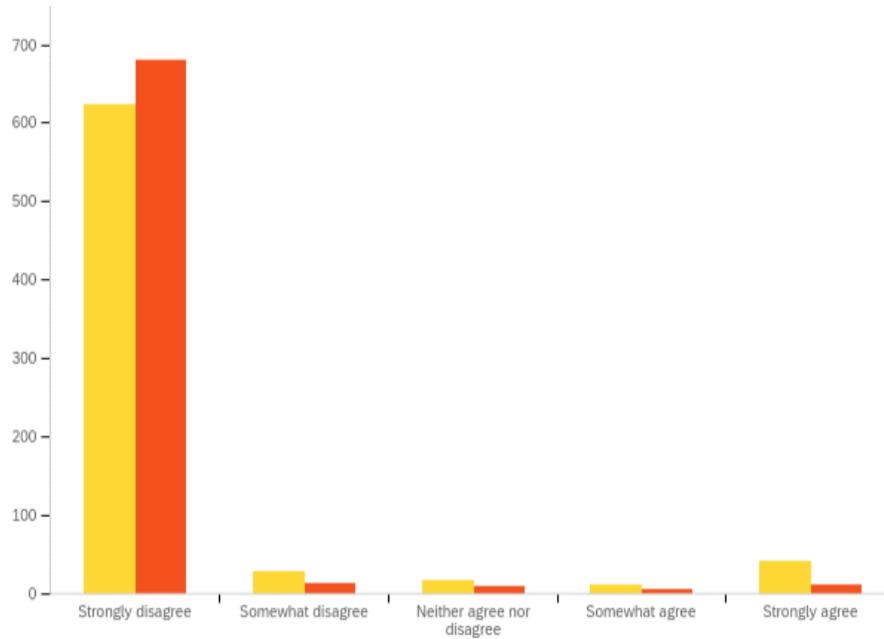
Findings were similar for whether this ad is appropriate for all audiences to view in public, with men *somewhat agreeing* at 25% and the total sample *somewhat agreeing* at just 4.2%. Both groups had solid responses for *strongly disagree*, with males at 33.3% and the total doubled at 66.6%. When asked if the “adult focus” ad makes the respondent uncomfortable, the total agreed at a rate of 64.8%, while just 33.4% of men agreed.

As illustrated, male respondents are somewhat more tolerant and even accepting of the ads containing sexual content. They are not generally bothered by these displays, in comparison to the overall total feeling negatively toward such ads and brands using these ads. This could be for a number of reasons. It is possible that men enjoy this content and so are not disturbed by it. It could also be that because they are not females, they do not feel the objectifying results of such content (only 33.3% of men *strongly agreed* that women are more objectified than men are; the total population *strongly agreed* at a rate of 72.9%). In *Gender in the Media*, Richardson and Wearing explain that women feel pressured into taking on very particular standards with their bodies, influenced by the engrained societal messages of “bodily perfectibility that is endemic to Western

cultures.” The authors further emphasize “how much effort and work on an ongoing daily basis it takes to ‘produce’ the normatively gendered, feminine body” (Richardson, Wearing, 2019). Men are not subjected to these levels of physical and aesthetic pressure, and so they may simply be oblivious to effects of objectification by sexualized content in the media.

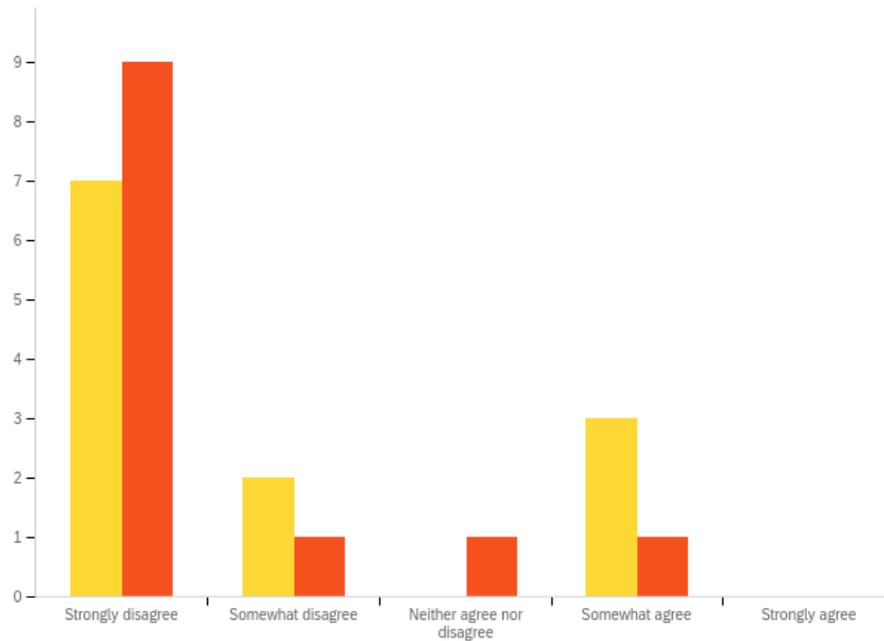
Responses on public breastfeeding varied greatly from question to question. In some instances, the male sample and total population showed very similar results, while other cases illustrated broad differences. When asked if women need to cover their breasts and children when breastfeeding in public, 73.5% of all respondents *strongly disagreed* and 66.7% of men *strongly disagreed*, so these were close. That insignificant variation could simply be due to the higher possibility that women empathize with the challenges of breastfeeding more than men, and therefore are slightly less strict in their views of exactly how it should be done. Likewise, 7.9% of all respondents *somewhat or strongly agreed* and 16.6% of men *somewhat or strongly agreed*. Similar patterns appeared when participants were asked if they feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near them, even if she is covered up, with 94.3% of all respondents *strongly disagreeing* and 75% of male participants *strongly disagreeing*; 2.5% of all respondents *somewhat or strongly agreed* while 8.3% of males *somewhat agreed*. A significant difference appeared when asking respondents if they feel uncomfortable when they can actually *see* a mother breastfeeding near them. While the cumulative total *strongly disagreed* at a rate of 86.3%, just 58.3% of men *strongly disagreed*; men *somewhat agreed* at 25%, while the total sample *somewhat or strongly agreed* at just 7.5% (see Figure 3a, 3b).

Figure 3a: Uncomfortable seeing public breastfeeding (All Samples)



Yellow/left bar = "I feel uncomfortable if I can see a mother breastfeeding near me."  
Orange/right bar = "I feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near me, even if she is covered up."

Figure 3b: Uncomfortable seeing public breastfeeding (Male Samples)



Yellow/left bar = "I feel uncomfortable if I can see a mother breastfeeding near me."  
Orange/right bar = "I feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near me, even if she is covered up."

Again, this could be due to women more deeply understanding the barriers of breastfeeding and therefore feeling more accepting of other women doing what they need to do in order to successfully breastfeed. Additionally, because men do not breastfeed, they are far more likely to be unfamiliar with the process of breastfeeding; having not experienced this activity for themselves, they cannot empathize with what a mother may be expecting or thinking of those around her while breastfeeding. This uncertainty of expected behavior in the presence of a breastfeeding mother could contribute to men's discomfort when they can see a breastfeeding mother near them. Acker further provides the tenet of social psychology that explains "we generally like things less if they are not seen often, and like things more when we see them more often." Acker's study suggests that based just on exposure, unfamiliarity with public breastfeeding could be a key factor in the lower levels of comfort with this situation (2009). Asked to rate whether the female breast's primary function is for sexual satisfaction, 8.3% of men *strongly agreed*, compared to the total population *strongly agreeing* at just .8%. The total population *strongly disagreed* at 92.4%, while most men did follow close behind in this response, with 83.3%. A significant variation appeared when participants were asked if it is practical to expect a mother to only nurse her baby in private places – 25% of men *somewhat* or *strongly agreed*, with 58.3% *strongly disagreeing*, compared to the total population *strongly disagreeing* at a rate of 91.8% overall, and just 1.9% *somewhat* or *strongly agreeing*. These findings suggest that men are generally okay with women breastfeeding in public, regardless of whether she is covered. This inference is slightly stronger if they cannot actually see the woman breastfeeding. Proportionally, far more men than the combined sample reported to *strongly agree* that the female breast exists

primarily for sexual satisfaction. This result, combined with their slightly lower levels of comfort around breastfeeding mothers, could suggest they are unfamiliar with the breast serving a purpose other than sexual gratification, and so seeing a mother and infant utilize it in this way could be unnerving. Finally, a significantly higher rate of men than the overall population believed women can simply nurse their babies only when in private places. This disregards the fact that infants are not machines and can be hungry at any given time, and it also undermines the common, often considered a double standard, that modern mothers are expected to work just like the fathers while also balancing traditional maternal and domestic duties. Acker argues that “many women do not breastfeed because of perceived social sanctions” and explains that one of the strongest predictors in a woman’s breastfeeding habits is derived from the influence of her partner (2009). In a bigger picture, a substantial portion of men may simply be unaware of the excessive responsibilities societally imposed on women, to “do it all.” Such an awareness could make them more understanding of women’s versatility to balance so many “jobs” and ultimately lead fathers to garner a greater appreciation for the children’s mothers. Considering that 0% of males reported either *somewhat* or *strongly agreeing* to the statement that mothers “should be expected to function primarily in the domestic sphere if it is necessary for one parent to maintain the home instead of pursuing a career” (instead of the fathers), and exactly 75% *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed*, this would be a logical step forward and implication of this research.

### **Public Breastfeeding and Feminism**

The final lens through which these relationships were examined was differences by levels of feminism, in RQ2. First, it is important to note that feminism is not a stance

against the male population, but rather “a concern to interrogate existing gender relations, identities or norms with a view to the potential for these to change and transform,” further securing equality and equity in all arenas (Richardson, Wearing, 2019). Over half of all respondents reported identifying as feminists, including nearly half of the male population as well. Overall, less than 20% disagreed with the statement, “I consider myself a feminist.” The male population *strongly disagreed* with that statement at a rate of 25%. Based on this data, a slight majority of all respondents consider themselves feminists, and so it is in line to suggest that a slight majority of all results likewise align with those who support feminism.

That said, the lowest proportion of those who do identify as feminists are male, although not by much. This seems to be in keeping with the other slight variations discussed throughout this study, such as males’ slightly higher acceptance of sexual content in media, males’ slightly higher levels of discomfort when a woman is breastfeeding within sight, and males’ slightly stronger belief that the female breast is intended simply for sexual satisfaction. The idea that most respondents consider themselves feminists, with the smallest population agreeing to that statement being males, suggests that while it is not an extreme difference, those who are not feminists are also slightly more likely to follow similar variations in patterns as the male samples here. So regardless of gender, those who do not consider themselves feminists are slightly more likely to: be interested in sexual content in media, be uncomfortable in the presence of breastfeeding mothers, and expect that a woman could have just breastfed her baby in a private place rather than affording that luxury in public.

Again, these inferences point to those who do not report to be feminists, regardless of being a man or a woman, and these suggestions can apply across any demographic, simply holding constant the variable of whether a specific individual identifies as a feminist. However, that is not to say that outliers do not exist, or that everyone in each “category” follows each pattern; even among those who identify as feminists, not all beliefs are the same. For example, differences in perceptions of breastfeeding exist among feminists, such as whether breastfeeding takes away a woman’s physical agency as her infant is dependent on her body, or whether it is an act of empowerment that a woman can make the independent choice to sustain another human’s life solely with her own body (Richardson, Wearing, 2019). Recognizing differences allows opportunity to examine how such differences come to be, what barriers they may construct, and potential areas of improvement and future research.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

If nothing else, these findings should serve to empower mothers who are uncertain or apprehensive about breastfeeding, particularly in public settings, to have confidence to do so. Even considering the reported gender differences, with the male population responding slightly less positively toward public breastfeeding, the sample still overall agrees that bystanders should be more tolerant of nursing mothers, at a rate of 83.4%; additionally, 91.7% agree that women *should* be confident in their choice of whether to breastfeed in public. Furthermore, Acker finds that just 36.9% of men agree that men are “more bothered by public breastfeeding than women,” while almost twice as many women reported believing this, at a rate of 60% (2009). So, mothers are not necessarily judged as harshly by their male counterparts as they may perceive. Therefore,

if a mother is holding back from nursing in public, in fear of others' thoughts, attitudes, or perceptions, this research can serve to show her that she is far more supported than opposed.

On a grander scale, the perhaps seemingly small steps of empowerment provided by this study can contribute to health goals that the United States government has been setting for decades, yet falling short of achieving. Periodically, government task forces involved in public health set benchmarks to achieve for breastfeeding, such as 75% of mothers leaving the hospital after childbirth to have initiated breastfeeding, and 35% to be still breastfeeding their infants at six months – but the goal of 35% was *repeatedly* unmet, so it was reduced to 25% (Lawrence, 2016). By providing this research to media groups, especially the findings of social impacts of sexualized content on attitudes toward breastfeeding, it is reasonable to expect that over time content produced by mass media groups will become more aligned with positive social outcomes, in the best interests of their consumers and the overall population.

Another purpose these findings could serve is to highlight the male sample's indifference or positivity toward sexualized content in the media. With just 33.3% of men *strongly agreeing* that “women are more objectified than men,” but the total population more than doubling that to *strongly agree* at a rate of 72.9%, it would seem that men are simply unaware of the effects of sexualized media on women. This is not to say they would not care if they *did* know, nor that they would care or even could equate a similar experience in order to authentically understand these perpetuations on women. However, the fact that men are significantly more comfortable with sexual content in the media does suggest that they are unaware of these representations' contributions to negative

influences on women, such as body dysmorphic disorders, hyper-sexualization, and lack of confidence for those who do not resemble the average slender, toned, and tan woman in this content (Ward 2006, pp. 712). Perhaps raising awareness of these issues could result in men being less tolerant of sexualized advertising, so that when ad effectiveness and sales reflect these changes, sexualization in ads will begin to slowly decrease, eventually leading to women having more realistic standards, normal sexual expectations, and increased confidence in their bodies and abilities.

Similarly, 25% of the male sample reported *somewhat* or *strongly agreeing* that they feel uncomfortable when they can see a mother breastfeeding near them. The uncertainty of expected behavior in the presence of a breastfeeding mother could contribute to men's discomfort when they can see a breastfeeding mother near them. Building on that, it could be beneficial to familiarize men with this practice in controlled settings, in order to make real-world practical situations more comfortable for all parties, thereby also potentially reducing women's discomfort with or lack of confidence in public breastfeeding. Suggested ways to promote familiarity with breastfeeding include the following: adding or improving information regarding breastfeeding in sex education classes for middle school and high school students; PSAs supporting breastfeeding, which would serve to normalize the practice for viewers of this content – Bylaska-Davies reports there are “few to none” for breastfeeding, compared to the tireless efforts regarding vaccinations and smoking, and that the “lack acceptance of breastfeeding in media portrayals contributes to the general public's lack of acceptance” (2015); and Dillard's suggestions on utilizing “positive deviance” to normalize public breastfeeding, thereby increasing overall comfortability with the process (2015). This data also presents

an opportunity for media groups to incorporate this into their programming, as it is likely a strong public interest particularly for women and mothers. These implementations would also serve the interest of the public – the National Institute of Health reports findings that following the recommended exclusive breastfeeding period for the first six months of an infant’s life may reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, certain allergies, asthma, and obesity, as well as promote stronger emotional security for both infant and mother (2018).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

From a broader, global standpoint, this study cannot definitively answer all of the questions often posed by or encountered in the media when it comes to breastfeeding. Limitations to this study included the sample itself, as well as having to limit results only to those who completed the entire survey. Over 1300 people participated, but data was extracted from just the 722 who fully finished it, which may have weakened the diversity of the group. Although some demographics stood out significantly, this study could be applicable to a more varying population; at the same time, the collected data could be more specific to those matching the common profile of participants – 81.3% White, 97.5% female, 49.4% Christian, 71.5% married, 72.7% having 1-2 children (18.6% having three or more, and 8.7% having none), and 56.8% having at least an associate’s degree. People outside of these scopes may have differing views from the views and information recorded for this study. However, for questions on which statistics are very strong in one direction, it should not be ruled out that these findings may indeed be much more widely applicable. It should be noted that these findings represent associations, not necessarily definite causalities. Because the sample is well-educated, they may have more

strongly opinionated views for or against public breastfeeding, depending on how and whether they critically or passively consume media. Additionally, this demographic is also somewhat representative of subgroups of women who are found to breastfeed at higher rates – “older, more educated, higher income, and Caucasian” (Richardson, Wearing, 2019) – and so they may be slightly more inclined to provide more positive answers than if respondents had included more women outside of this scope.

Repeating a similar study with a larger sample including a more diverse population could be advantageous in analyzing results and applying them to future research. Data collected from this paper can be applied to future studies regarding media production, consumption, and analysis; marketing, advertising, and consumer behavior; feminist theory as it relates to female sexuality, laws regarding breastfeeding, and gender roles; and various areas of the discipline of sociology, such as human sexuality, deviant behavior, social change, and human ecology.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Results

**Please select the frequency at which you see sexual content in each particular setting.**

#	Question	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never	Total
1	How often do you see sexual content in print media (magazines, newspapers, brochures, etc.)?	53.05% 383	29.64% 214	7.06% 51	8.73% 63	1.52% 11	722
2	How often do you see sexual content on television or in films?	70.64% 510	23.41% 169	3.60% 26	1.66% 12	0.69% 5	722
3	How often do you see sexual content on your computers or mobile devices?	69.25% 500	19.67% 142	3.74% 27	5.54% 40	1.80% 13	722

**How often does the sexual content you see in media contain images of the female body?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Always	51.66%	373
2	Usually	45.71%	330
3	Sometimes	2.35%	17
4	Rarely	0.28%	2
5	Never	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	722

**Please rate the following statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree:**

#	Question	Strongly disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat agree		Strongly agree		Total
1	Nursing mothers should be more mindful of the people around them when feeding.	74.38%	537	11.50%	83	4.57%	33	7.62%	55	1.94%	14	722
2	Bystanders of nursing mothers should be more tolerant of seeing breastfeeding.	0.97%	7	0.42%	3	2.91%	21	7.89%	57	87.81%	634	722
3	Women should feel confident to choose whether or not to nurse in a public setting.	0.55%	4	0.00%	0	1.11%	8	3.74%	27	94.60%	683	722
4	Women need to cover up their breast and child when breastfeeding in public.	73.55%	531	10.39%	75	8.17%	59	5.68%	41	2.22%	16	722
5	I feel uncomfortable if I can see a mother breastfeeding near me.	86.29%	623	3.88%	28	2.35%	17	1.52%	11	5.96%	43	722
6	I feel uncomfortable if a mother is breastfeeding near me, even if she is covered.	94.32%	681	1.80%	13	1.39%	10	0.83%	6	1.66%	12	722
7	The female breast's primary function is for sexual satisfaction.	92.38%	667	5.26%	38	1.25%	9	0.28%	2	0.83%	6	722
8	Exposing breasts is considered sexual.	52.08%	376	18.01%	130	12.88%	93	13.71%	99	3.32%	24	722
9	It is practical to expect a mother to only nurse her baby in private places.	91.83%	663	4.71%	34	1.52%	11	1.25%	9	0.69%	5	722
10	It is more offensive for a mother to breastfeed around other people's children, than to breastfeed around only adults.	85.04%	614	7.06%	51	5.12%	37	2.35%	17	0.42%	3	722

**What is your gender?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	1.69%	12
2	Female	97.51%	704
3	Nonbinary	0.42%	3
4	Prefer not to answer	0.42%	3
	Total	100%	722

**What is your age?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Under 18	0.14%	1
2	18 - 24	14.54%	105
3	25 - 34	61.50%	444
4	35 - 44	22.02%	159
5	45 - 54	1.25%	9
6	55 - 64	0.55%	4
7	65 or older	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	722

**What is your race/ethnicity?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.94%	14
2	Asian	1.52%	11
3	Black or African American	5.40%	39
4	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.83%	6
5	White	81.30%	587
6	Prefer not to answer	9.00%	65
	Total	100%	722

**What is your household income?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	< \$15,000	5.26%	38
2	\$15,001 – \$20,000	8.03%	58
3	\$20,001 – \$30,000	7.48%	54
4	\$30,001 – \$45,000	15.10%	109
5	\$45,001 – \$65,000	18.01%	130
6	\$65,001 – \$99,999	23.41%	169
7	\$100,000+	22.71%	164
	Total	100%	722

**What is your marital status?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Single	15.65%	113
2	Married	71.47%	516
3	Widowed	0.14%	1
4	Cohabiting	12.74%	92
	Total	100%	722

**How many children do you have?**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	0	8.73%	63
2	1	36.84%	266
3	2	35.87%	259
4	3	10.80%	78
5	4	5.26%	38
6	5+	2.49%	18
	Total	100%	722

### What is your level of education?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than high school diploma	1.39%	10
2	High school diploma or equivalent	11.77%	85
3	Trade or vocational certificate	7.62%	55
4	Associate's Degree	10.66%	77
5	Bachelor's Degree	29.09%	210
6	Master's Degree	13.30%	96
7	Doctorate or Professional Degree	3.74%	27
8	Prefer not to answer	1.25%	9
9	Some college	21.19%	153
	Total	100%	722

### Comparison between sexual and nonsexual ad

		M	SD
1	Rate your initial reaction toward this advertisement?	2.89	.856
	Rate your initial reaction toward this advertisement?	4.23	.739
2	Rate your attitude toward this type of advertisement as a whole?	2.92	.917
	Rate your attitude toward this type of advertisement as a whole?	4.29	.740
3	How often do you recall the specific brands associated with this type of ad?	2.75	1.019
	How often do you recall the specific brands associated with this type of ad?	3.14	1.093
4	How does using this type of ad influence your perception of the specific brand using it?	2.94	.792
	How does using this type of ad influence your perception of the specific brand using it?	4.21	.724
5	This type of advertisement fits comfortably into my daily routine.	3.10	1.129
	This type of advertisement fits comfortably into my daily routine.	1.79	.999
6	This type of ad is appropriate for all audiences to view in public.	3.69	1.479
	This type of ad is appropriate for all audiences to view in public.	1.53	.912
7	This type of ad makes me uncomfortable.	2.01	1.232
	This type of ad makes me uncomfortable.	3.78	1.173
8	This type of ad makes me more likely to purchase a product.	2.70	1.186
	This type of ad makes me more likely to purchase a product.	1.41	.730

# Appendix B

## IRB Approval Letter

Office of  
Research Integrity



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### NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-366

PROJECT TITLE: Effects of Exposure to Sexual Content in Mass Media on Attitudes Toward Public Breastfeeding

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Communication Studies, Journalism, Public Relations,

RESEARCHER(S): Hannah Powell-Yost, Fei Xue

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: October 10, 2019



Donald Sacco, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson