

Can celebrity ambassadors change perceptions of breast feeding?

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Breasts are the strongest symbol of female sexuality and are abundant in the media, on magazines, in adverts and in film. Celebrity breasts are depicted as objects of sexual desire and as a model for everyday women to aspire to. Broadcast images of breastfeeding however are scarce and elicit controversy and even revulsion. In *Feminist Media Studies*, Spring-Serenity Duvall analyses celebrity depictions of breastfeeding, the ensuing debates, and the implications for motherhood and sexuality.

Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, powerful humanitarians with a focus on female and child health have recently appeared in public [breastfeeding](#): Hayek boldly fed an African mother's malnourished baby, and Jolie allowed herself to be photographed breastfeeding at home. Both apparently spontaneous, but more likely manufactured political statements, intended to tackle the difficult politics of public breastfeeding. The ensuing controversy criticised Hayek for confusing racial boundaries, undermining the birth mother and furthermore, for feeding her own child beyond 12 months. This was judged to be a disgusting habit, damaging to the sexuality of the child, and in ironic contrast to the recommended 2 year feeding period for the African birth mother unable to feed. A jealous public wanting their icon returned to her rightful place as busty sex symbol?

Celebrity breastfeeding may now become a more commonplace sight as high profile individuals do their bit for the celebration of breastfeeding and women as sexy and maternal beings. If you have a perfect body, designer clothes and a make-up artist to create a vision of maternal

perfection, it's ok. Could this risk a battle for average mothers against even more fervent social stigma of breastfeeding as unsightly and distasteful.

Jolie has traversed from sex symbol to global activist, campaigning for human rights whilst simultaneously managing to find time to breastfeed her child. Duvall hails her as "the ideal modern woman who is capable of not only having it all, but being it all". By revealing her purportedly casual private moment, has she eased the conflict of women as sexual being and mother, or set the ordinary woman an unattainable ideal?

More information: Not 'Simply the Breast': Media Discourses of Celebrity, Breastfeeding, and Normalcy. Spring-Serenity Duvall. *Feminist Media Studies*, 2014. [DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2014.919334](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.919334)

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