

## Applied Heuristic for Visual Analysis of Advocacy Images

### Mexico City Campaign Image:



Text: amamantar es lo primero que puedes hacer para asegurar la salud de tu hijo

Translation: Breastfeeding is the first (best) thing you can do to ensure the health of your child

Text: No le des la espalda, dale pecho

Translation: Do not give them your back, give them your breasts (Don't turn your back on them, give them your breasts)

### Analysis of the Artifact (Photograph)

The research project relies on visual analysis, cultural analysis, and rhetorical analysis to analyze the images. The chart below uses social semiotics, as described in Jewitt and Rumiko's "Visual Meaning: A Social Semiotic Approach" to analyze how visuals create meaning in the interaction between the image and the viewer through contact, distance, and point of view. It looks at how images convey compositional meaning through information value (placement of elements in a composition), framing, salience, and modality. The next chart examines how meaning is made from the images through analysis of both the production context and the contexts of distribution and reception. The final chart relies in the previous to analysis to analyze the way that these elements reveal and conceal information about the subjects, the way that the images perceive the social contexts of breastfeeding mothers, and finally to examine what is revealed and concealed about societal attitudes toward breastfeeding from the reception of the images.

Variables	Questions
<b>Subject</b>	<p><b>Who/what is the subject? What is the landscape like? Who are the people?</b></p> <p>Maribel Guardia is a front and center in the image. At the time of the photo-shoot she was approximately 54-55 years of age. She is topless, with a banner covering her large breasts.</p> <p>Behind her stands her son, Julián Figuero, who is approximately 19-20 years old.</p>
<b>Composition</b>	<p><b>How is the image laid out? How is space used? How are subjects placed in the image? What lines or patterns exists in the image?</b></p> <p>Maribel Guardia stands in the center of the image with her legs with her hand on one hip. Her son stands behind her, looking over her shoulder with one hand on her shoulder and one hand on her waist.</p>
<b>Camera Position/Angle</b>	<p><b>How is the camera positioned in relationship to the subjects? Eyelevel? Above? Below? Far away? Close/intimate? Medium distance?</b></p> <p>The camera is a medium distance, as the entire body from legs up was in the frame.</p>
<b>Tonality/Color</b>	<p><b>Is the image bright? Dark? Light? What colors are used? Are there cultural meanings to the color?</b></p>

	The subjects are well lit. The background is a crisp light blue.
<b>Look/Gesture</b>	<p><b>Where are the subjects looking? What is implied by the look? Does the subject acknowledge the camera? What gestures are being made?</b></p> <p>Maribel Guardia and her son Julián look directly at the camera. Guardia has her one hand on her hip and one on her side. Her head is turned to one side. Her son has a hand on her shoulder and one on her side in an almost protective or possessive embrace.</p>
<b>Size Relationships</b>	<p><b>Does the subject fill the frame? Does the subject appear larger (closer) than other subjects, or smaller?</b></p> <p>The subjects fill the frame.</p>
<b>Informational Value</b>	<p><b>How does placement of elements convey information about them?</b></p> <p>The position of Julián behind his mother with his hands placed on her suggests a relationship between them.</p>
<b>Framing</b>	<p><b>Do the elements of the image seem to belong together?</b></p> <p>Yes. They look comfortable with one another.</p>
<b>Saliency</b>	<p><b>Are some elements of the image more eye-catching than others?</b></p> <p>The banner across the chest draws the attention of the eye. But it is probably Guardia's torso and chest that attract the most attention.</p>
<b>Modality</b>	<p><b>Does the image seem representative of reality?</b></p> <p>The image is a photograph, so it includes real people.</p>
<b>Representational Meaning</b>	<p><b>Does the image have a narrative structure or a conceptual structure?</b></p> <p><b>A narrative structure represents an event, action, or process. How? Who is acting? Who is reacting? How? Are the action and the reaction transactive?</b></p> <p><b>A conceptual structure defines, analyzes, or classifies subjects. Does the image classify the subject? Does it define or</b></p>

	<p><b>identify the subject? Does it analyze the subject by showing it to be part of a whole or separate?</b></p> <p>I would say that it is a conceptual structure. It classifies Guardia as a former breastfeeding mother and attempts to show that breastfeeding will have positive results for children even into adulthood.</p>
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### Analysis of the Cultural Context

Variables	Questions
<b>Owner/Client</b>	<p><b>If the image was not directly produced, who commissioned the image? What are the affiliations of the client?</b></p> <p>The image was government commissioned as part of a pro-breastfeeding campaign in Mexico City.</p>
<b>Creator/Designer</b>	<p><b>Who created the image? What was the design relationship? Was there collaboration between the client and the designer?</b></p> <p>Unknown as of now.</p>
<b>Exigence</b>	<p><b>What is the problem that the image is attempting to solve?</b></p> <p>Mexico has very low rates of breastfeeding and a high infant mortality rate.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p><b>What purpose was the image meant to serve? What message was the image intending to send?</b></p> <p>The image is part of a “prolactina” campaign in Mexico City. It was meant to encourage women to breastfeed their children. This particular image makes an argument that the benefits of breastfeeding will last until adulthood.</p>
<b>Terministic Screens</b>	<p><b>How does the image rely on culture norms to convey the message?</b></p> <p>The image conveys dominant notions of womanhood and beauty through the use of the actress.</p>

<p><b>Ethos</b></p>	<p><b>How does the artifact appeal to the need for the audience to trust the source?</b></p> <p>The image features a popular singer, actress, and model. Her adult son is included in the image to convey the message that breastfeeding has long-term benefits.</p>
<p><b>Text</b></p>	<p><b>How is text used in the visual? How does text direct meaning?</b></p> <p>Text in the upper right hand corner: amamantar es lo primero que puedes hacer para asegurar la salud de tu hijo          Translation: Breastfeeding is the first (best) thing you can do to ensure the health of your child          Text on banner across Guardia's breasts: No le des la espalda, dale pecho          Translation: Do not give them your back, give them you breasts (Don't turn your back on them, give them your breast)</p> <p>The texts provides clues as to the relationship between the subjects. It aids the visual argument because without the text, it may not be clear who these subjects are. (I would argue that it is still a bit unclear as Guardia looks very young, thanks, in part, to digital photo alternation. More candid shots of Guardia show much more evidence of aging on her face.)</p>
<p><b>Audience</b></p>	<p><b>Who is the target audience? Is there an incidental audience?</b></p> <p>The target audience is new mothers. The goals is to encourage them to breastfeed their children. In interviews people involved in the production say that the goal is to get women to breastfeed for the first 3-6 months.</p> <p>The unintended audience seems to be men, as the image sexualizes the maternal body.</p>
<p><b>Distribution</b></p>	<p><b>How was the image distributed by the client/designer? How was distribution location chosen?</b></p> <p>As a campaign in Mexico City, the image was placed in various public places throughout the city.</p>
<p><b>Reception</b></p>	<p><b>How was the image received by the target audience? How was the image received by a larger audience?</b></p> <p>The image and others from the campaign caused a controversy because it relied on using famous actresses, most of whom were large breasted and model-thin, and seemed to sexualize motherhood. Various outlets claimed that the image was racist,</p>

	<p>classist, and sexist. Within a day of the launch of the campaign, one of the actress-models renounced her involvement.</p>
<b>Appropriation</b>	<p><b>Was the image appropriated and redistributed outside of the original distribution location? Who appropriated it? How was the image characterized in the redistribution?</b></p> <p>Yes. The images was picked up in various blogs and news outlets in Mexico, and then was published in blogs and news websites in English in the United States, including the Huffington Post. Most cites that published the image referred to the controversy surrounding the image.</p>
<b>Success of Argument</b>	<p><b>Was the image successful in making an argument?</b></p> <p>I would say that for a large portion of its intended audience the image did not convey the intended message. The message was overshadowed by perceptions of racism, classism, and sexism in the image.</p> <p>It seems that the campaign was quickly expanded to include women who were more representative of the general population.</p>

### Theoretical Lenses

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>Ontological Lens</b>	<p><b>Social Constructivism</b>  <b>How is reality constructed in the image? What is the ideology being presented in the image? Whose version of reality is being presented?</b></p> <p>In most of the images of actresses, there is no child featured in the image. This one does feature the grown son of Maribel Guardia. The image underscores dominant notions of femininity and sexualizes motherhood, which suggests that the images have been created through an androcentric view if mothers and women. The images in the campaign were referred to as being racist, sexist, and classic because they depict motherhood through the use of wealthy women who are associated with strongly associated with sexuality and masculine desire, and those women are topless with a banner covering their breasts.</p>

<p><b>Application of Theoretical Methodology</b></p>	<p><b>Rhetorics of Display (Prelli)</b>  <b>How is the artifact situated within the context? What perspectives are revealed in the image? What perspectives are concealed?</b>  <b>What did the audience believe was revealed? What was the audience see as being concealed? What conflicting ideas, ideologies, and values are exhibited through the audience's perception of the artifact?</b></p> <p>The image seems to underscore androcentric views of maternity and women. The campaign is meant to advocate for breastfeeding, but the breasts (other than the curvature at the tops of the breasts and the cleavage) are concealed for the sake of modesty; however, the actress is otherwise exposed from the waist upward. Concealing the breasts while revealing much of the rest of the body conveys the notion that breastfeeding is being associated with sexy, or at least with highly sexualized bodies. The image below is typical of the images located through an image search for "Maribel Guardia":</p>  <p>The fact that the campaign focused on a wealthy actress seems a bit tone-deaf because many of the obstacles that prevent women from breastfeeding in Mexico are caused by socioeconomics and lack of support for breastfeeding mothers. The image does not confront the fact that, "A lack of good nutrition, adequate maternity leave and opportunities to pump milk at work keep many Mexican mothers from the practice" ("Mexico City's Breastfeeding"). While the image is meant to advocate for breastfeeding, the image does not pose a challenge to societal norms that make achieving 3-6 months of breastfeeding difficult for many women in Mexico. It seems that the controversy surrounding the image has revealed a rift between the dominant culture of Mexico and the needs of mothers.</p> <p>It's a bit hard to ignore the placement of the subjects. The masculine son stands behind his mother with his hands on her</p>
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	<p>shoulder and waist. This suggests possession. Of course, she is his mother, but it seems that this could be representative of an androcentric view of motherhood. The son is the actor, the mothers is being acted upon here. It could suggest that mothers have a responsibility to the nation to breastfeed so that they raise strong and healthy children (particularly sons). What would be the affect if the mother was clothed and was embracing her son? I believe it would send a very different message. While these two subjects are recognizable to most in Mexico, they are not as recognizable to those outside. Outsiders unfamiliar with these subjects may be confused about the relationship here. Because of image altering, Guardia looks incredibly young. The text helps reveal the relationship that Guardia's fit physique and digitally manipulated face conceals.</p> <p>The text that accompanies the image suggests that mothers who do not breastfeed are betraying their children by turning their backs on them. This is a bit ironic because this places the blame for low breastfeeding rates squarely on the shoulders of mothers, but socioeconomic conditions and lack of adequate support make extending nursing difficult for some mothers. Because breastfeeding is being associated with good mothering, and the image here focuses on a wealthy mother with few obstacles, the implication is that wealthy mothers are the model of good mothering. If average women were used as models, then perhaps the campaign could more successfully create a role model.</p>
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Engle, Meredith. "Mexico City's Breastfeeding Campaign Sours as Public Challenges too-sexy Models." *New York Post* 26 May 2014. Web.

Prelli, Lawrence J., ed. *Rhetorics of Display*. Univ of South Carolina Press, 2006.