

Heuristic for Visual Analysis of Advocacy Images

“When Nature Calls” Image:



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
Subject	<p>Who/what is the subject? What is the landscape like? Who are the people?</p> <p>The subject is a college-aged mother and her infant child. She is seated on a public toilet nursing her child.</p>
Composition	<p>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?</p> <p>The mother and her child are placed in the center of the image. The image is cropped so that the left and right edges of the image ends at the walls of the stall. The image is cropped a couple of feet above the mother. The bottom of the image is cropped approximately where the door to the stall would be.</p>
Camera Position/Angle	<p>How is the camera positioned in relationship to the subjects? Eyelevel? Above? Below? Far away? Close/intimate? Medium distance?</p> <p>The camera does seem to be placed at eye level. The camera is pulled back enough to show the interior space of the stall with the body of the mother and child at the center.</p>
Tonality/Color	<p>Is the image bright? Dark? Light? What colors are used? Are there cultural meanings to the color?</p> <p>The colors are muted with a blue tone. The mother’s clothing is matches the tone in shades of blue, except for her brown shoes. Blue is often associated with calm but it is also associated with depression or sadness. The effect is a very closed in, solitary space. The light is not bright. The child’s clothing contains shades of pink as well as other muted shades.</p>

<p>Look/Gesture</p>	<p>Where are the subjects looking? What is implied by the look? Does the subject acknowledge the camera? What gestures are being made?</p> <p>The mother is looking at the camera. She is not smiling. Her expression suggests that she is not comfortable in the surroundings. She seems wary. Her child is looking up at her while she nurses. The child is playing with the neckline of her mother's shirt.</p>
<p>Size Relationships</p>	<p>Does the subject fill the frame? Does the subject appear larger (closer) than other subjects, or smaller?</p> <p>The subject is centered in the frame which is cropped to the shape of the enclosed area of the public restroom.</p>
<p>Informational Value</p>	<p>How does placement of elements convey information about them?</p> <p>The placement suggests an enclosed, solitary place. The cropping of the image suggests that the act of breastfeeding is a lonely act. The mother and child seem out of place.</p>
<p>Framing</p>	<p>Do the elements of the image seem to belong together?</p> <p>The mother and child suggest a symbiotic relationship, but they seem out of place and lonely in the solitude of the restroom stall.</p>
<p>Salience</p>	<p>Are some elements of the image more eye-catching than others?</p> <p>The eyes seems drawn first to the child, especially to the dark pink edging of her shirt, and then the eye follows the line of the breast, lighter in color than the darker shirt and dark hair, and follows the line of the breast to the mother's wary face.</p>
<p>Modality</p>	<p>Does the image seem representative of reality?</p> <p>Yes. The location is very real, and the mother's expression suggests that the camera has captured a real moment in time.</p>
<p>Representational Meaning</p>	<p>Does the image have a narrative structure or a conceptual structure?</p> <p>Narrative.</p> <p>A narrative structure represents an event, action, or process. How? Who is acting? Who is reacting? How? Are the action and the reaction transactive?</p> <p>A conceptual structure defines, analyzes, or classifies subjects. Does the image classify the subject? Does it define or</p>

	identify the subject? Does it analyze the subject by showing it to be part of a whole or separate?
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Analysis of the Cultural Context

Variables	Questions
Owner/Client	<p>If the image was not directly produced, who commissioned the image? What are the affiliations of the client?</p> <p>University of North Texas students Kris Haro and Johnathan Wenske created the image as a class project.</p>
Creator/Designer	<p>Who created the image? What was the design relationship? Was there collaboration between the client and the designer?</p> <p>Same as Owner.</p>
Exigence	<p>What is the problem that the image is attempting to solve?</p> <p>Haro and Wenske claim that the images were created to support a proposed bill that would legalize breastfeeding in public places anywhere that a mother and her child are authorized to be and prohibits interference with the breastfeeding mother and child.</p>
Purpose	<p>What purpose was the image meant to serve? What message was the image intending to send?</p> <p>In support of the proposed bill, the image sends a message that mothers often feel they must (or are forced to) breastfeed discretely in undesirable places. The image is arguing that mothers should be allowed to breastfeed elsewhere.</p>
Terministic Screens	<p>How does the image rely on culture norms to convey the message?</p> <p>The image relies on the notion that a restroom is unsanitary and germ-riddled. It is not a desirable place to eat for adults, why should it be a place where children eat?</p>
Ethos	<p>How does the artifact present maternal agency? How does the image appeal to the need for the audience to trust the source?</p> <p>The image suggests that mother feel very little agency, and it seems to be an authentic experience. The suggestion is that this mother's experience is truly representative of experiences.</p>

<p>Text</p>	<p>How is text used in the visual? How does text direct meaning?</p> <p>At the top of the image is the text “Table for two.” At the bottom of the image there is a banner that contains the phrase “Would you eat here?” There is a fine print explanation of the fact that breastfeeding in public is not legally protected from harassment or attempts to make them leave public spaces in the state of Texas. It petitions viewers to contact state and local lawmakers to support a proposed law for those protections.</p> <p>“Would you eat here? By law, breastfeeding mothers are not protected from harassment and refusal of service in public, often forcing them to feed in secluded spaces such as public bathrooms. Contact your state and/or local representative to voice your support for breastfeeding mothers, because a baby should never be nurtured where nature calls.”</p>
<p>Audience</p>	<p>Who is the target audience? Is there an incidental audience?</p> <p>The target audience are citizens of the state of Texas. The intent is to raise awareness of the general public in the state of Texas that breastfeeding should be a protected right. In this case, mothers are not the direct audience, but could be an audience in that they realize that others have had shared experiences and that perhaps changes could be made if awareness was raised.</p>
<p>Distribution</p>	<p>How was the image distributed by the client/designer? How was distribution location chosen?</p> <p>The image was shared on Facebook. The campaign also has a website where the images are included and information about actions that interested supporters could take are explained.</p>
<p>Reception</p>	<p>How was the image received by the target audience? How was the image received by a larger audience?</p> <p>Some sources say that the images were first criticized in Facebook as being obscene; however, most of the media outlets that took up the images were positive.</p>
<p>Appropriation</p>	<p>Was the image appropriated and redistributed outside of the original distribution location? Who appropriated it? How was the image characterized in the redistribution?</p> <p>A number of media outlets wrote about the image, and most of these responses were positive and viewed the images as containing</p>

	a positive message and showing the reality of the marginalized spaces that maternal bodies occupy.
Success of Argument	<p>Was the image successful in making an argument?</p> <p>The image does seem to have been successful in that it received many positive responses.</p>

Theoretical Lenses

Variables	Questions
Ontological Lens	<p>Social Constructivism How is reality constructed in the image? What is the ideology being presented in the image? Whose version of reality is being presented?</p> <p>The image conveys that idea that mothers are marginalized by attempts to protect their nursing bodies from public view. The issue is presented from the mother’s point of view rather than society’s point of view.</p>
Application of Theoretical Methodology	<p>Rhetorics of Display (Prelli) How is the artifact situated within the context? What perspectives are revealed in the image? What perspectives are concealed? 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?</p> <p>The image shows that nursing mothers occupy a marginalized space in society. While many pro-breastfeeding campaigns target mothers and expectant mothers as their audience, suggesting that they have a moral or ethical imperative to breastfeed their children because of the health benefits, this campaign take on one of the major obstacles that breastfeeding mothers face. Kukla says that many breastfeeding campaigns do not address the obstacles, and this is one campaign that does.</p> <p>The image reveals not the point of view of an organization petitioning women to breastfeed, nor does it focus on offering breastfeeding mothers support and attempting to convey the message that breastfeeding is easy and can be done. Instead, the image targets the reasons that mothers are in need of support, because the embodied nature of mothering through breastfeeding is largely misunderstood and misrepresented. Discomfort and sexualization of female bodies through benevolent sexism marginalizes breastfeeding mothers. This image shows the results</p>

of that sexism. Those who expect breastfeeding mother-child pairs to hide themselves away may not thought of the way in which the mothers are being pushed out of society and asked to retreat to undesirable places to nurse.

What may be concealed in the image is sense of confidence and agency. This mother seems to have little agency, and her agency should be increased. Some who do not understand the benefits of breastfeeding might see this mother's discomfort as a reason that bottle-feeding might be preferable. Happiness with the mother-child breastfeeding relationship is not clearly evident, and this mother could be viewed who is feeding her child out of a sense of duty and not because she enjoys the embodied nature of mothering through breastfeeding.