

# Treatise on the Distribution of the use of a Follow-Up Midwife by Academically Educated Mothers Compared to Non-Academically Educated Mothers

Friederike Harrich<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Researcher Institut für Geschichte, Theorie und Ethik der Medizin, Neubau 17.11, Raum 01.32,  
(Hauspostfach 1114), Moorenstr. 5, 40225 Düsseldorf, Germany

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## Abstract

In the publication „Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child“, the WHO clearly advocates that exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months after birth is essential for the development of the newborn. Of particular interest is the possible difference between academic and non-academic women, which has not yet been sufficiently investigated. First, however, there is the question of how children are cared for after birth, when the professional situation of mothers has changed considerably due to a changed image of women in society. Decisions about this are increasingly changing and subject to strong fluctuations over time. In the context of an emancipated and constantly changing image of women, a new understanding is developing which requires statistical processing.<sup>4,6,7,14</sup>

For this purpose, Dr. med. Friederike Harrich interviewed mothers about their situation and evaluated them in a large-scale study. This study was compared with two other studies in order to pool the data.<sup>1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14</sup>

This study, which is part of a larger series of surveys, looks at the distribution of the use of a follow-up midwife by mothers with academic training compared to mothers without academic training and presents the differences and similarities depending on the mother's level of education.<sup>4,6,7</sup>

**Keywords:** Breastfeeding, Breastfeeding behaviour, Breast milk, Mothers, Image of women, Gynaecology, Obstetrics, Paediatrics

## Introduction

Because of many different influencing factors that depend on the mothers' pregnancy and breastfeeding behaviour, there are many differences in their behaviour and handling of their children and in the context of pregnancy that have not yet or not yet sufficiently been studied. Similarly, post-pregnancy behaviour has not been sufficiently researched, nor has the question of whether there is a difference in behaviour depending on the level of education.

This paper, as part of a large series of studies, explores the question of whether there is a correlation between the possible decision to hire a postnatal midwife and the educational status of the mother.

## Material and Methods

The comparable studies are titled as follows in this meta-analysis:

Study A: "The breastfeeding behaviour of female

**Present Address of Correspondence:** Med. Friederike Harrich

Jülicher Straße 89  
40477 Düsseldorf  
Germany

academics in the period from 1950 to 1990” by Antonia Charlotte Freiin Teuffel von Birkensee.<sup>4</sup>

Study B: “On the change in breastfeeding behaviour in the FRG between 1950 and 1990 - An Orla History study” by Luisa Heininger.<sup>8</sup>

Study C: “On the Change in Breastfeeding Behaviour of Mothers in the Greater Düsseldorf Area between 1951 and 1990 - An Oral History Study” by Friederike Helene Margarethe Harrich.<sup>7</sup>

The three studies A, B and C were conducted as retrospective cohort studies. In studies A and B, a telephone interview was used to collect the data; in study C, a questionnaire was filled out in writing by the study participants alone, followed by a personal interview. Both methods have the advantage that the effect of social desirability in the form of impression management and self-deception is greatly reduced. The questionnaires, which are to be seen as a guide for the interviews, differ slightly, but also contain identical questions. All comparable surveys are compared in this meta-analysis. The study designs of the three studies to be compared are very similar, comparable but not identical. For example, it is noticeable that the time periods studied differ. While studies A and B examined breastfeeding behaviour in the years 1950 to 1990, study C investigated the same in the years 1951 to 1990. The dissertations by Ms Freiin Teuffel von Birkensee (Study A) and Ms Heninger (Study B) have the problem that the years 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 were duplicated in the cohort classification, which is not the case in Ms Harrich’s study (Study C). In order to prevent this duplication and still maintain equal time intervals, Study C began with a survey of women who gave birth in 1951.<sup>4, 6, 7, 8</sup>

Furthermore, the studies differ in the number of study participants. Study A and B each involved 100 women, 25 per cohort, while Study C involved 44 women, 11 per cohort. It should be noted with regard to the size of the cohorts that in study C an incomplete completion of the questionnaire or a failure to remember led to exclusion from the study, which was not the case in studies A and B.<sup>4, 6, 7, 8</sup>

In summary, study A deals with breastfeeding behaviour, birth and the time immediately after the birth of the child of academic women in the mentioned period, study B with non-academic women in the mentioned period and study C has a mixed study population. This and a closely coordinated study

design offer optimal opportunities for comparison.<sup>4, 6, 7, 8</sup>

## Results:

**Table 1: Use of a follow-up midwife in study A.**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4
Use of a follow-up midwife	92%	92%	88%	76%
No use of a follow-up midwife	8%	8%	12%	24%

**Table 2: Use of a follow-up midwife in study B.**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4
Use of a follow-up midwife	72%	80%	96%	83%
No use of a follow-up midwife	28%	20%	4%	17%

**Table 3: Use of a follow-up midwife in study C.**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4
Use of a follow-up midwife	90,9%	63,6%	100%	63,6%
No use of a follow-up midwife	9,1%	36,4%	0%	36,4%

The results of the analyses of the question whether the study participants had a follow-up midwife are shown in Table 1-3. It is striking that across the studies and cohorts, most study participants had no midwife, with values ranging from 63.6 % to 100 %.

Cohorts 3 and 4 are particularly noteworthy, not least because they contrast and directly follow each other, making them stand out from the other two cohorts. In the 1970s, the fewest women in the cohort and study comparison had a follow-up midwife. In

study B it was only 4%, in the other two studies 0%. This is a strikingly low value, which illustrates that the decision to have a follow-up midwife had nothing to do with the educational background of the women or the child fathers. The decision not to have a follow-up midwife was made irrespective of the educational level...

Furthermore, the development from cohort 3 to cohort 4, i.e. from the 1970s to the 1980s, is striking. The trend towards a follow-up midwife increased significantly to values between 17% and 44% in the study comparison, with study B showing the lowest value with 17% and study A the highest value with 44%. Study C is in the middle of the field in terms of percentage.

## Conclusion

The trend against a follow-up midwife in the 1970s with the opposite trend can be seen in the individually considered studies and also in the comparison of these. It can be seen that the development is independent of the academic level of education, but the extent of the development is not. If the mothers had an academic educational background in the 1980s, they were more likely to choose a follow-up midwife than if the mothers did not have an academic background.

### Conflict of interests:

No conflict of interests

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## Ethical Clearance

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