

Nutrition Justice

Policy, Parents and Child Fatness

Critical Dietetics Conference 2015

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Diego Rivera Triumph of the Revolution: Distribution of Food

Today's presentation

- Policy, Parents and Child Fatness and my PhD
- Research design
- Parents and policy process
 - Responsibilising – getting the message
 - Stigmatising processes
 - Whose responsibility
 - Parent-participant policy solutions
 - Conclusions

Research design

This presentation drawn from PhD that uses lens of child 'obesity' and food policy to explore relevance of social class - context of social gradient

A critical policy analysis - bringing together health and social science – uses critical theory: Foucault, Bourdieu, Marxism (Bev Skeggs, Erik Olin Wright and others)

Qualitative methodology - focus on parents experiences of food policy

Document analysis of food, health and family English policy 1999-2012

Thirty two semi structured interviews: policy makers, implementers and parent-recipients of policy

Data analysis : thematic analysis

Purposive sampling – parents predominantly 'working class' with children - age 2 – 15 years- described by BMI as obese

Based in setting of the local state - an inner London borough

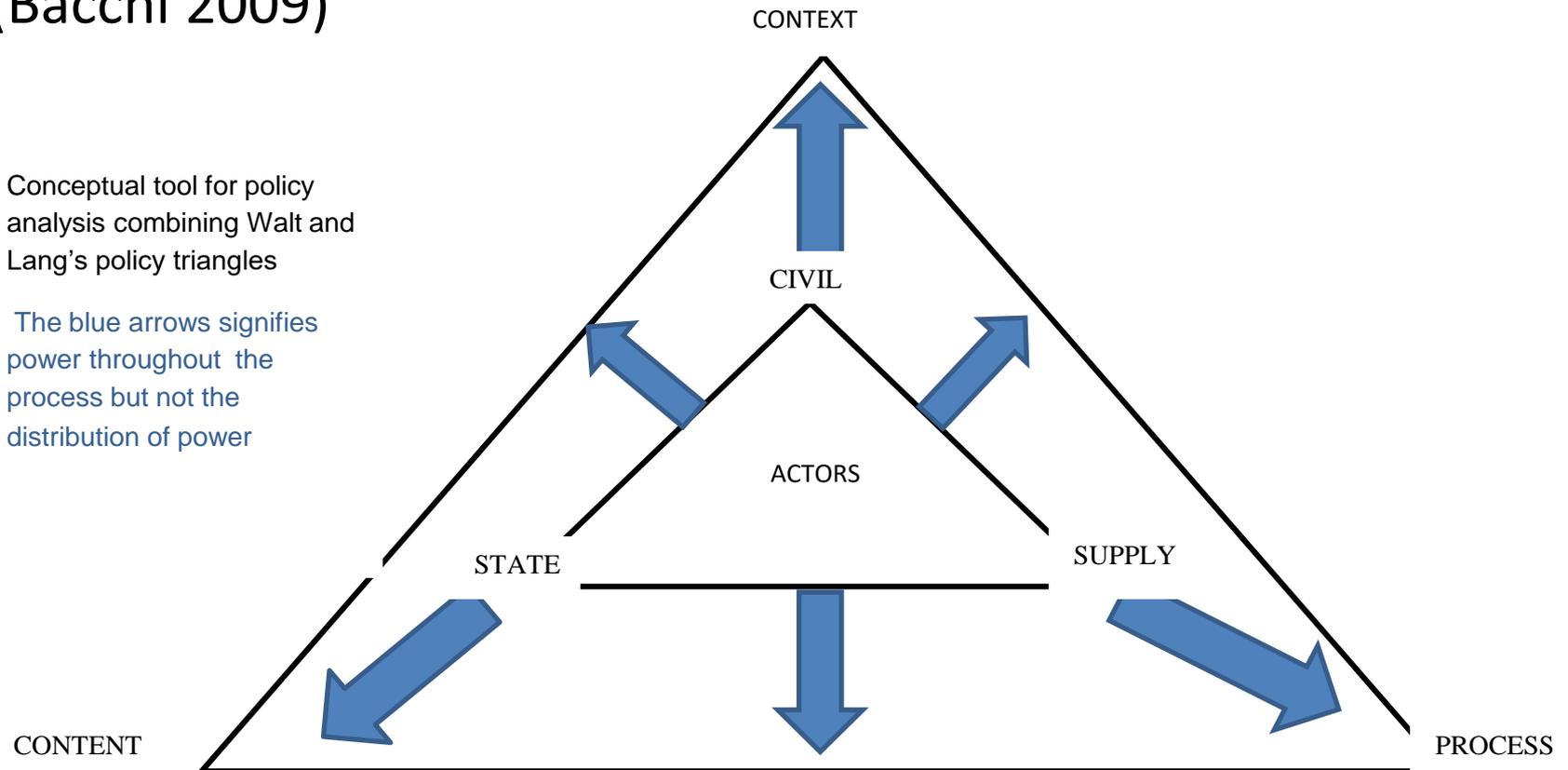
Aim: to inform policy and practice and move forward process of how parent influence food policy

Policy analysis tools

1. Conceptual triangle 2. 'What's Problem Represented to be' (Bacchi 2009)

Conceptual tool for policy analysis combining Walt and Lang's policy triangles

The blue arrows signifies power throughout the process but not the distribution of power



Sources: Lang (2005); Walt and Gilson, 1994 (in Buse et al, 2005)

Parent Sample

Age	Gender	Ethnic group	Post code	Occup	Edu.	Household type	State bens	Housing tenure	Assigned* social class
23 to 54	14 – F 2 - M	1 Russian/Azerb. 3 Black African 2 Turkish Cypriot 2 White English 1 Vietnamese 1 Black British 1 White/ Black Caribbean 1 Pakistani/Arab 2 Black Caribbean 1 Asian/Caribbn 1 other	All in lowest 2 deciles of MSOA 2 on deciles 5/6	Child - care workers Adult - care workers Bus drivers Admin. Nurse Teacher	14 – second. level 2 -degree level	7 one family lone parent 8 one family couple 1 not say	9 Yes	12 social 3 home owners 1 not say	14 working class 2 middle class

* Defining social class using Clement, W and Myles, J. 1997

Parents and policy

- **What is policy** - Government decisions, actions to solve problems that are product of tensions within society and represent contending interests (Colebatch, 2009)
- **Policy process** – analysis suggests no involvement of parents - only as recipients
- **What policy says** - standardised parenting model - underlying deficit – middle class values - parent need to change food practices - individualised practices - developmental psychology — detached from social causes
- **Are parent getting it right?** No, for example ongoing lack of perception – need to learn parenting skills and cooking (evidence base is mixed and contested)
- **Parent-participants say ‘We’re getting the message’** but the state is not helping – argue upstream policy action
- **Policy disconnect** - not fit for purpose of improving child health

Getting the message: anxiety and fear

'Nine out of 10 of our kids today could grow up with dangerous amounts of fat in their bodies. This can cause life-threatening diseases like cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease'



Killing your child

Leyla,
mum of 4

'if trends continue as forecast, by 2050 only one in ten of the adult population will be a healthy weight.'

Yeh it is scary to think that nine out of ten kids under danger of the cancer, diabetes and the rest. Diabetes that's a really bad one. I don't think people are aware it's really that high,

Policy process – we're getting the message

Samina

'They do say it's like a disease...that's why I find it scary... like I think I would my children to be healthier just because I know it's dangerous for their health. It's a health risk'

23 years old

Parents – anxiety and fear

Maya

... I was born big, my frame is big, I'm a big person okay. When I had my child that was my central focus I didn't want him to be fat. I didn't want him to be big, okay. Um and I know there was kind of this fear factor as well. Where every time I went to get him measured...he was breast fed. Every time I went to get him measured I was so fully aware that...because...he just looked like a little round ball...okay.

So, so, much stimuli going around and in your head, what's right and wrong. But for me, ultimately, you don't want your child to be big for so many reasons apart from health reasons as well. Social reasons, you know, that child gets alienated...and no matter how much confidence you build in that child...if that child looked in the mirror and sees like you know.... or can't fit into something then it is a major problem. But at the same time, it's like we don't have control

State NMCP – anxiety and fear

Maya

It was a total shock....I didn't see him as fat...he was growing but it's not as if to say...when I look at him now to how I looked at him then it's different.

Then child went through growth spurt!

Or parents restricting food:

Leyla

*...in a way hindering because even though they give you the letter there isn't kind of advice on clinics to go to help to guide parents. And obviously some parents take it very seriously and could start malnutritioning the children because they are given them a lot less...
...and that could affect the child's overall wellbeing.*

NMCP - State and Stigma

Leyla

...obviously when you get the letter of your child's measurements...you assume it's the parents fault straight way. If you heard your child's obese or whatever, parents are going to talk, people are going to talk and assume that the parents are obese as well. Or you know, neglecting the child, don't care, just feed it to shut it up.

NCMP – parent against parent

Liz

- *...it's the parents. I think it's the other parents...as I said obesity is horrible word and I don't think it should be used at all, male female, young old. It's a horrible word and it's got a stigma attached to it. Overweight is fine. Obesity sounds absolutely awful*

Stigma within families

Kerry

...the first child wouldn't eat anything as a child and she's grown up to be a real health freak. She doesn't eat anything bad. She knows when to stop eating before she goes to bed, she exercising three, four times a week and she is a beautiful slim healthy girl.

Now the second child she is completely different um she will eat for England... I'm hoping in a couple years she'll start looking at boys and think about her appearance... yeh I can see that her intake with fatty foods, processed foods.

Parent surveillance of children

Kerry

We don't know what children are doing when they leave school. I've seen my daughter, when I'm driving the bus, and when I've asked oh how did you get on today? Did you have anything to eat? 'No' - you know so she's fibbed already. I already know she's been in the chicken and chip shop. Then she wants her dinner, you know

Weight and social class stigma

Lena

They like to stereotype yes, I feel the government do like to stereotype families. They like to talk about the children will have less education and the children will be fatter and the children will be poor and the police will have their records by time whatever age. And I don't think that's right.

Interviewer

Who are they talking about?

Lena

I think they... they target parents on benefits. Once they know you're on a particular benefit that's it they separate you into a little section

Whose responsibility: 'ultimately'

Bedria

Economy and the government everything just linked together....It's one big chain just goes around and we're just in the middle and we're the one who just picks up!...It can be parents first because it's us who's responsible for what goes into my child's mouth...

Andrea

... ultimately again it still comes back down to parents because it's about giving your kid, if gave you kid the money

Whose responsibility?

Andrea

I think we are getting the message but they still don't seem to be doing anything about it. It was... what I was saying earlier about the message but you're still allowing all these products to be sold because you want the revenue from them. So they're big money spinners

Whose responsibility?

Parents constrained in practices through working hours, affordability and their local food environments

Leyla

it's keeping the adults on their liquor, the kids on the sweets and then the take-aways for dinner... It's what we're seeing everyday so all we think about is sweets and drinks...It's like the betting shops. We've got so many betting shops... a lot more people are doing it... it's not good.

Samina

Even where I live, ...like when you look around, it's all fast food, take-away, pizza, chips... Like people...like food is just one of the things you just (do). ..People just kind of want to eat and get on with what they need to do. No one puts time into food, so it's just what's easier, and they make fast food easier.

Policy and food scapes

Maya

..they dump those kind of things in our area because they see it as deprived and they think the people who live there don't matter

Yvonne

We don't cost anything, when they bury us

Felecia (describing convenience store in wealthy area)

Now that looks pretty. Its looks like something that would be more healthy....it looks like a little health food shop... it's not life threatening

Material conditions: Work

Liz

....I think it's a case of, it's the hours. If I didn't have to work the hours that I do or my husband the hours he did the kids would be eating healthily. Does that make sense?

- Low wages – 'no choice' or make a 'sacrifice'*
- Knowledge of other parents stealing food or borrowing food from neighbours*

Stigma - food practices

- Lack of skills suggested by one middle class parent and two working class parents talked about friends who 'oven bake' processed foods
- All parents participants cooked from scratch when time with some disagreement on affordability

Food practices - snacking

Leyla

...Because the children are bored (and) maybe parents are stressed, maybe depressed, you know. It's just an ongoing battle. Whereas the higher class, the nannies can say 'it's all prepared'. They say what time snacks will be (and) they can give them something healthier.

Food companies and Responsibility Reals (RDs)

- No parent participant had heard of the RD
- All thought should be mandatory to comply
- Shared interests between government and food industry
- Parallels drawn with smoking:

Andrea

In terms of these products (fast foods) these are money spinners aren't they! So you know it's like what they done for smoking isn't it. Will they ever really do anything about this or not? It's going to take years.

State interests do not support parents

Leyla

Yeh but more the government because if they cut down on what happens...like smoking ...you will see a cut down drastically. So obviously if they wanted to make a change they really could but they're choosing not to. So obviously it's not that much of a problem as far as I'm concerned that's how they see it

Hopelessness

Samina

...I feel like the lower class people are just left to get on with it. No one really cares that much...it's kind of just like survival...People just because (they're) on benefits... Things don't really make sense to me.... when I think about it. ... I don't know how there's no jobs and everyone just left to live off benefits that's not enough to look after yourself. And eat right and even think properly.... People just kind of get left. People don't stick together, even like neighbours. Like before no-one really knows anyone and people don't look out for each other. Times are just changed. I guess things have changed

Parents involvement in policy

All thought there should be a meaningful way for parents to be involved in informing policy

Syrita

Parents...I think there should be a party or a person within that party who would speak on behalf of...parents. Parents should have a say. I know when it comes to me I wouldn't have the time to do it!

Maya

but it's not going to happen. We live in a consumer society...how is that going to happen?...Alright, even in pharmaceuticals companies its serves their purpose when people are being sick. They'll take so many drugs and all that... It's an ever revolving sort of door. It's not going to stop...But think also we can't keep...blaming the government,

Yvonne

I'm not sure about that

Maya

We as people — as a community or— if it starts off with whatever— need to take ownership of it as well.

Policy solutions: Haes

Andrea

*...maybe we're making too much a thing of people being overweight? It's actually about just because your thin doesn't mean you're healthy.... especially when it comes to children...just almost saying you're overweight so you're the one who are unhealthy!
...So maybe the problem is let's stop focusing on young children just because they're overweight let's focus on the whole class*

Parent solutions

State

- Universal provision of fresh cooked free school dinners
- Food vouchers for those on benefits and non-taxable food vouchers on top of wages
- Regulate advertising
- Mandatory 'responsibility' deals
- Support for mum's to raise children instead of work and paying child minders
- Community level advice for parents including child weight given by professionals or parent peer mentors in schools and through Sure Starts
- Food and nutrition on school curriculum

Fiscal

- Not increase taxes/costs of unhealthy foods - reduce cost of healthy foods

Parent solutions

Work

Reduce working hours to support family life and raise incomes

Food industry

Healthy snacks aisles in supermarkets, clear labelling, healthy ingredients, quality foods

Food scape

Remove most fast food outlets. Mix of supermarkets and mainly affordable local shops – butchers, bakers, grocers with foods fresh from farm

Conclusions

- Disconnect all through policy –
- Policy is not fit for purpose of improving child health
- Policy becomes an instrument of weight and class stigma

Going forward

Critical pedagogic work with parents based on their solutions

Thank you for listening and any questions?



Diego Rivera Triumph of the Revolution: Distribution of Food

Additional slides

Social class and food

I mean we were working class but we weren't English working class and our diet was very different from maybe ...my friends...who were English. So diet was much linked to your culture, your traditions, more so than class, but class will reinforce things in the end KI 14

... I suppose to a larger extent it is the big supermarkets driving all this, with the Iceland and the frozen cheese on toast and all that....but on the other hand I do find that the general interest in food has never been higher, and that ought to rub off. I'm not sure it does

I: is that something you find in your ward?

No I wouldn't say I do ...I think it is more a middle class pursuit all this food stuff and cakes and baking KI 8

1

...

Waitrose

More vociferous over sort of middle class areas would say...and when you say middle class you mean the more well to do who can shop in Waitrose aren't you? KI



Well that depends doesn't it because you'd have to a look at all the shops that sell cheap versions of everything don't you, I mean , you know the Iceland example, I mean I'm not saying there's anything wrong with Iceland but and there are other shops too that sell vast quantities of unhealthy foods and very cheaply

I wouldn't know how much is related to social class except for the fact that in areas of deprivation there tends to be higher obesity statistics doesn't, so you feel there must be a correlation between the two things but... but I think there's' so many factors in it um. I think money is a big one to be honest, money is a huge one, so if you know you can go into any shop that sells good quality fruit and vegetables and good quality fish and that sort of nice lean meat then you're fine aren't you but if all you can afford is, is a very limited budget, it's so much easier to go somewhere like Iceland and get, you know, a year's shopping for a pound [LAUGH] I'm exaggerating obviously but you know it is a factor I think money is a major thing KI

Social spaces

There's a whole group of parents who stand outside the shop on the corner who are very overweight themselves and you can the next generation already, um you know, they've always got crisps in the hand, always got some sort of, a snack of some sort. So you can see it ... There used to be a café around the corner parents and eat fry ups twice a day and children see that whole philosophy going on to the next generation, and I suppose you would call that working class if you were to term them at all. KI 13

...And I have a certain social, set which I move within and we're all thinking about health and vitality and culture, arts, we're thinking about exercise and keeping an eye out for the latest thinking about food, fish oils you know, fibre, refined sugar , you know we're all onto that. KI 11

CAPITALISM

