

Affect, embodiment and the limits
of belonging:
breastfeeding outside the home
in the contemporary UK

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Outline for today's talk

- Background
- Introduction to study and empirical base
- Findings
- Themes and analysis
- Conclusion



Background

Boyer, K. (2014) Workplace lactation and changing normative conceptions of working motherhood in the contemporary US, Feminist Theory.

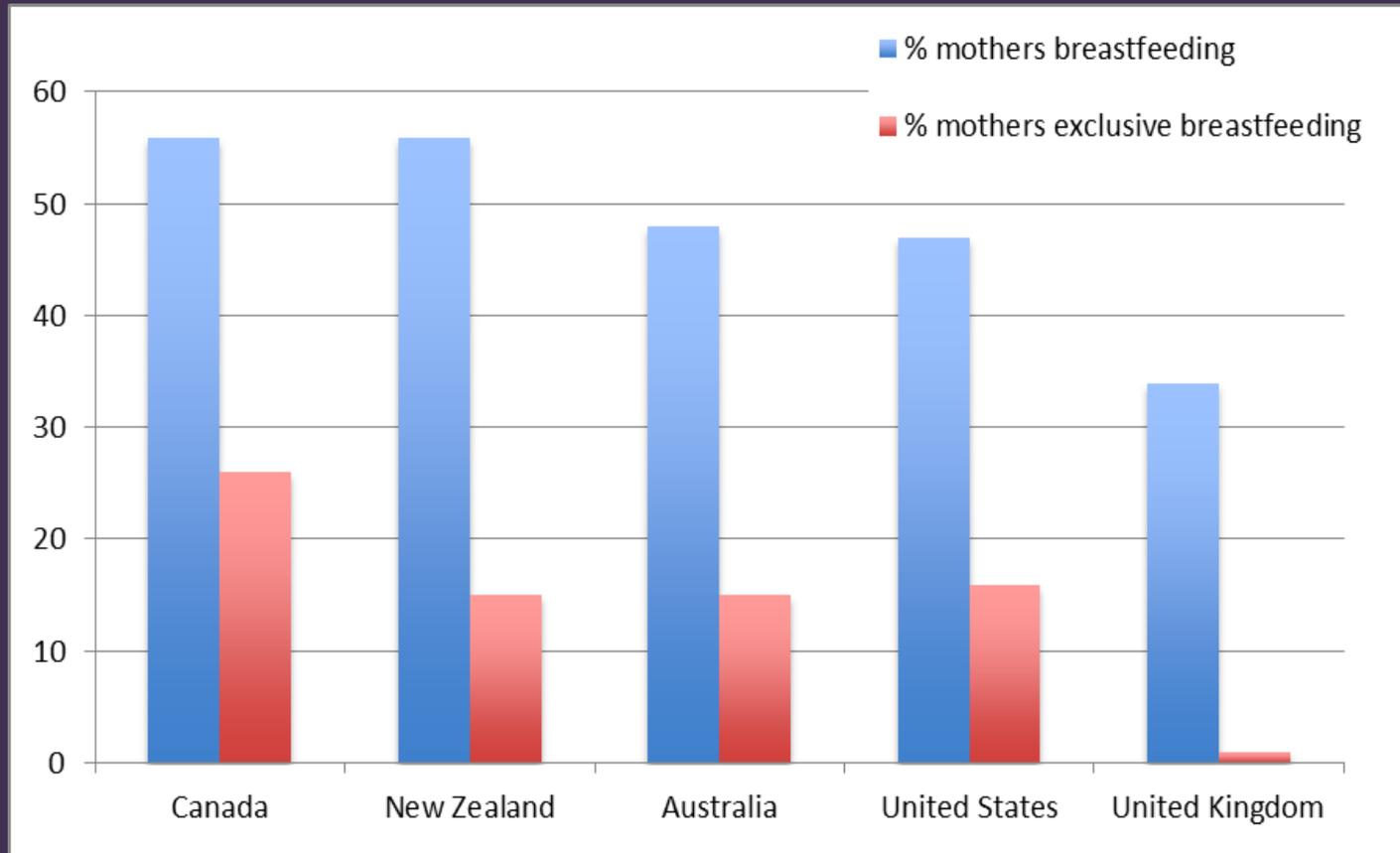
Boyer, K. (2012) Affect, corporeality, and the limits of belonging: breastfeeding in public in the contemporary UK, Health and Place (18) 552-560.

Boyer, K. (2011) 'The way to break the taboo is to do the taboo thing' breastfeeding in public and citizen activism in the UK, Health and Place 17 (2): 430-437.

Boyer, K. (2010) Of care and commodities: breast milk and the new politics of mobile bio-substances Progress in Human Geography 34 (1): 5-20.

Boswell-Penc, M. and Boyer, K. (2007) Expressing anxiety? Breast pump usage in American wage workplaces Gender, Place and Culture 14 (5): 151-167.

6 month breastfeeding duration rates: the UK in international perspective



Represents most recent data available. Data from: Statistics Canada Health at a Glance Breastfeeding trends in Canada data (2010); Royal New Zealand Plunket Society Breast feeding data (2009); Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding Rates (2010); US Centers for Disease Control Breastfeeding Report Card (2012); UNICEF-UK Baby Friendly Initiative (2010).

Experiences of breastfeeding in the UK



Study: empirical base

Participant observation (breastfeeding support group; breastfeeding picnics (Southampton and London), sure-start children's centre (London))

- Survey (N:46)
- 180 postings on *mumsnet*
- 15 interviews with breastfeeding women
- 12 months participant obs w/ mums group

Findings

- Range of experiences, some positive.
- But 49% reporting some kind of negative experience breastfeeding in public.

Findings

“(I recall) an experience of a mother and daughter glaring at me when I was breastfeeding in McDonalds” (survey respondent)

“there was one lady (who was) completely disgusted with what I was doing, giving me filthy looks, evils”(Terry, breastfed 3 months).

*“The people who see you doing it feel... awkward”
(Rhiannon, breastfeed 8 ½ months)”*

“you could just tell that everyone was really embarrassed and that made it really difficult...it was just a feeling” (Emma, breastfeed 3 ½ months).

“I don’t think others are comfortable with it, which made me uncomfortable” (survey)

I wish I could (have gone on longer) without any negative feedback, that was part of the reason I gave up breastfeeding at three weeks (on-line post, June 2012)

'I thought I'd be absolutely fine. ..I thought I'd just get on with it and it would be easy ... (but) people were really shocked by the fact that you're breastfeeding in public. I kind of felt like I didn't care, but I did care a lot, and it was really difficult... I just found it really stressful, really embarrassing, really horrible.'
(Emma, breastfeed 3 ½ months).

Themes and Analysis

Attunement

Intersubjectivity

Affect

Themes and Analysis

Affect: the active discharge of emotion (Deleuze & Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.400)

referring to the intersubjective work emotions do.

Themes and Analysis

Affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009)

Public comfort (Ahmed, 2010)

Conclusions



Thank you!

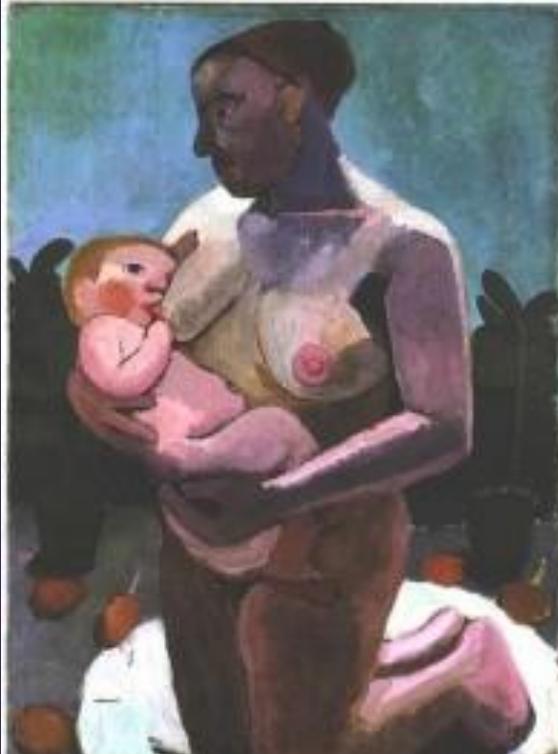




Photo: ByLei.com | *preserve happy.*

Leilani Rogers