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# Gendered Spaces and Intimate Citizenship

## The Case of Breastfeeding

Lisa Smyth

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

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**ABSTRACT** This article situates breastfeeding politics in the context of intimate citizenship, where women's capability to care in a range of social spaces is at stake. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre and Fenster, the article considers the extent to which recent breastfeeding promotion work by the Health Promotion Agency in Northern Ireland has sought to reconceive of social spaces in ways that have the potential to improve intimate citizenship for breastfeeding women.

**KEY WORDS** breastfeeding ♦ capabilities ♦ gender ♦ health promotion ♦ intimate citizenship ♦ Northern Ireland ♦ space

### INTRODUCTION

. . . breasts are capable of transforming legislation, citizenship, and cities themselves. (Bartlett, 2002: 111)

Much research has been carried out which seeks to establish why some women breastfeed while others do not. The explanations cover a wide range of factors, including the economic and political influence of artificial milk producers (e.g. Palmer, 1993); the medicalization of pregnancy, childbearing and infant feeding and the development of 'scientific mothering' (e.g. Apple, 1987); the lack of significant breastfeeding role models for new mothers (e.g. Bentley et al., 2003); the sexualization of breasts and the shame and embarrassment associated with exposing breasts in public places (e.g. Bartlett, 2002; Carter, 1995); a desire to shift the burden of feeding onto others, not least fathers (e.g. Earle, 2000; Maher, 1992); and the

difficulty of returning to paid work while continuing to breastfeed (e.g. Hausman, 2004).

This article seeks to situate this range of reasons within two broader contexts. First, I argue that breastfeeding can be regarded as a site where Plummer's notion of intimate citizenship (2001, 2003) is in question. The embodied character of breastfeeding as a social practice raises the sorts of questions about queer breastfeeding noted by Giles (2003) and Longhurst (2008). Second, breastfeeding would seem to offer a good example of where citizenship, in this case intimate, is mediated by a gendered entitlement to inhabit and use public space (Fenster, 2005). As Stearns (1999: 322) has noted, 'the actual labor of breastfeeding is increased because women must constantly negotiate and manage the act of breastfeeding in every sector of society – in public and in the home'. Consequently, the breastfeeding women she talked to did their best to achieve invisibility in breastfeeding, often at significant cost (Stearns, 1999: 313).

In what follows, I first outline the idea of intimate citizenship, and particularly the ways in which breastfeeding as an embodied, dyadic, care-oriented practice, which often necessarily takes place in 'public' or social spaces, can be viewed in this light. Second, I discuss the ways in which citizenship is mediated through the social production of space, in often gendered ways. Turning then to Northern Ireland, the final section of the article focuses on efforts to reconceive of social spaces as breastfeeding-friendly in Northern Ireland, through the work of the Health Promotion Agency (HPANI) in the region. The key question this article is concerned with is whether perceptions and conceptions of social space in breastfeeding politics might lead to improved intimate citizenship for breastfeeding women.

## INTIMATE CITIZENSHIP

Plummer's 'sensitising concept' of intimate citizenship seeks to explain the broad range of conflicts and contestations associated with practices and processes of intimate life. If we understand citizenship as a distinct, and relatively thin, form of belonging to a collectivity (Isin and Wood, 1999; Marshall, 1950), which has the potential to be much thinner in its cultural content than that of national, ethnic or religious belonging, it would seem, as Marshall famously argues, to promise much in the way of equalizing the entitlements and obligations of those who 'belong' as citizens, whether legally or more socially defined. Plummer's innovative move in theorizing the ways in which belonging and entitlement are often both contested and asserted through 'intimate' contexts and issues, such as family life, sexuality, gender, reproduction and bodily transformations, more usually regarded as aspects of 'private' life beyond the 'public' concerns of citizenship, presents

a promising route for understanding the sociopolitical processes at work in generating and shaping these contexts and issues. As he argues, 'If "intimate citizenship" seems an oxymoron, it also suggests a potential bridge between the personal and the political' (2003: 15).

It seems to me that the tensions that explanations of low rates of breastfeeding in the 'developed' world point to, as women seek to manage the demands of infant care in contexts shaped by 'scientific' mothering, sexualized breasts and a masculine, or at least disembodied, model of the paid worker, can be understood as raising issues of intimate citizenship, which very much shape women's capability to care for their infants and young children.

In stating the issue in these terms, I am approaching it from the point of view of Nussbaum's (1995) outline of how public policy can best develop human capabilities. As she argues, a public policy that takes a utility-oriented approach, for example seeking to maximize infant and maternal health, or to distribute resources as evenly and fairly as possible, fails to take account of the full range of human capabilities, and consequently often overlooks major inequalities in so doing. Public policies that shape relationships between citizens, as well as between citizens and the state, should be concerned not simply with maximizing collective utility in specific contexts, but instead with enabling all citizens to develop the full range of their capabilities as human beings, including the capability to 'direct our own lives', as she puts it, not least in relation to childbearing and childrearing, and to do so 'in our own surroundings and context' (Nussbaum, 1995: 85).

In relation to breastfeeding, this would mean developing a context wherein women are not subject to moral (Lee, 2007; Wall, 2001) or health-oriented (Carter, 1995) pressure to feed their infants in specific ways, but instead one where women's capabilities to parent in self-directed ways, in their own surroundings and context, are the subject of public policy. The focus of public policy should not be on whether or not particular capabilities are *actually* developed in practice, but instead on whether we have the *opportunities* to do so:

Government is not directed to push citizens into acting in certain valued ways; instead, it is directed to make sure that all human beings have the necessary resources and conditions for acting in those ways. It leaves the choice up to them. A person with plenty of food can always choose to fast. A person who has been given the capability for sexual expression can always choose celibacy. The person who has access to subsidized education can always decide to do something else instead. By making opportunities available, government enhances, and does not remove, choice. (Nussbaum, 1995: 94–5)

Rather than treating infant feeding either as a simple matter of private choice and often private practice, as feminist attention to the practice has tended to do (Hausman, 2003), or as a matter of maximizing the health of

the population, as official efforts to promote health tend to do (e.g. Department of Health and Social Services Northern Ireland, 1999), an approach that regards infant feeding as a site of intimate citizenship might regard it as raising key questions about women's capability to nurture infants in a way that enhances rather than threatens their own sense of embodied selfhood in the physically and emotionally demanding context of infant care. This would address many of the issues raised in qualitative sociological analyses of why women do or do not breastfeed (e.g. Earle, 2002; Pain et al., 2001; van Esterik, 2002).

Thus, breastfeeding involves not simply an ability to choose to meet the basic needs of infants for nurture and close physical contact in a particular way, but also what Nussbaum describes as being able to form a conception of 'the good', and 'to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life'. In other words, public policy on the intimate citizenship practice of breastfeeding should enable women and men to make well-informed, and highly personal decisions about how to care for their infants in ways that enhance rather than diminish their sense of autonomous selfhood.<sup>1</sup> A key aspect of developing women's capability to care, then, would include reconceiving social space where infant feeding might take place, such that the need to manage possible reactions in distinct spaces is removed.

This approach would seek to take seriously the negative experiences of breastfeeding expressed, for instance, by the women in Schmied and Lupton's (2001) study, who, despite being committed to the idea of breastfeeding, nevertheless felt alienated from their infants through the practice. Blum also articulates a less than entirely positive experience, noting that 'breastfeeding was one of the most intensely ambivalent experiences of my life' (Blum, 1999: 208; see also Giles, 2003). A capabilities approach would enable women to make reasoned decisions about how to proceed, rather than making decisions in the face of physical and/or emotional difficulty, on the basis of moral pressure or a sense of moral obligation.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, citizenship affects intimate aspects of life, often in 'public' or social contexts, in ways which problematize the assumed distinction between public and private life. Choice is indeed important to citizens, but our sense of what options are available to us, and our ability to exercise choice in particular contexts, depends on states taking a broad perspective on citizenship, in ways that seek to develop the full range of capabilities, rather than seeking more narrowly to meet targets, etc., often through moralizing behaviours or overlooking the ways in which intimate practices such as breastfeeding are highly context-sensitive. Breastfeeding is an interesting practice where citizenship, understood both in terms of belonging and entitlement to resources that will develop our capabilities, is mediated through the meanings attached to particular bodies in specific social spaces.

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GENDER, CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL SPACE

As Fenster (2005) argues, if we think of citizenship broadly in terms of a sense of belonging produced through inhabiting collective space, rather than through ethnic or national identity, then citizenship depends to some extent on being able to use collective spaces, as well as having a choice over whether and how to use those spaces (Fenster, 2005: 222, 227).

This analysis of the dynamics of belonging through entitlement and capability to use public spaces draws on Lefebvre's argument that space does not simply exist prior to, or empty of, social processes, but instead is actively produced through those very processes. From this perspective, social space is produced through what he identifies as three interconnected 'moments', namely the perceived, the conceived and the lived, embodied social relationships are at the centre of sociospatial processes. As he comments, 'social practice presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs' (Lefebvre, 1991: 40).

Early infant care, including feeding, can, from this perspective, be understood as a practice that is actively shaped by, as well as shaping, the social spaces within which it takes place. These spaces are many, including hospitals, homes, workplaces, travel spaces and recreational and civic spaces. However, our ability to actively produce and use such spaces is not simply given by our formal inhabitance. Instead, as Fenster found, 'women's spatial mobility is very much dictated, if not controlled, by . . . cultural symbolic meanings of space' (Fenster, 2005: 226; see also Massey, 1994). This cultural symbolic meaning is shaped by complex interplays between gender, sexuality and other identity markers, such as religion or ethnicity. Fenster explains, for instance, that women in Jerusalem do not use the city centre main street of Mea Shearim because of signs at all the entrances:

These signs pose a clear request in Hebrew and English to limit the use of the public spaces in the neighbourhood by women unless they are dressed as required on the signs. (Fenster, 2005: 226)

Thus, women's ability to use this space, or to choose not to use it, is sharply circumscribed by the conceived and perceived processes through which that space is produced, or given meaning. It would seem that women's access to what can be described as citizenship, that is, their sense of belonging, defined in terms of their ability to use social spaces, is severely compromised by their gender, albeit mediated by other social divisions, such as ethnicity, class, 'race', etc.

Women who are actively caring for infants or small children also seem to manage that care in ways that are centrally shaped by their perceptions, as well as by representations, of the social dynamics of space. With respect to

infant feeding, research suggests that new mothers are aware of the health promotion message that 'breast is best', but respond to that message in different ways, shaped by their class and ethnic position (Carter, 1995). Much research on low rates of breastfeeding in Britain and Northern Ireland points to patterns such as women beginning to breastfeed while in hospital, but ceasing soon after returning home, because they find it impossible to continue to do so 'discreetly', not only when they are in other 'public' spaces, such as shops or cafes, but also when they are in the more 'public' areas of their own homes (Bolling, 2006; Hamlyn et al., 2000; Murphy, 2000; Murphy et al., 1999; Stewart-Knox et al., 2003). Some women breastfeed only in the 'privacy' of their bedrooms, a practice that is very difficult to sustain over any length of time, or switch to formula to enable them to care for their infants in what they perceive to be acceptable ways, while using 'public' spaces. Others do use public spaces to breastfeed, either in a self-conscious refusal to conform to perceived and conceived spatial norms, or through a strong sense of entitlement to use space, conferred through class or other socially and culturally powerful positions (Stearns, 1999).

#### NORTHERN IRELAND: GENDER, SPACE AND BREASTFEEDING

Turning now to the dynamics of gender and space in breastfeeding politics in Northern Ireland, I consider how social space has been organized through gender, and how one key actor in the field, the Health Promotion Agency (HPANI), is currently seeking to reconceive space as breastfeeding-friendly, as part of their strategy to increase breastfeeding rates.

The history of violent conflict in the region has had a major impact on perceptions of social space (Anderson and Shuttleworth, 1998; Kitchen and Lysaght, 2003; Leonard, 2006; Lysaght, 2002). The militarization of space and everyday life, through the activities of both the military and paramilitary groups, produced a gender regime that has been famously characterized as an 'armed patriarchy' (Edgerton, 1986). The impact has been a spatial segregation not only by religious/national identity, but by gender, and women have consequently been largely excluded from sociopolitical spaces (Dowler, 2002). More recent demilitarization does not seem to have significantly transformed perceptions of gendered social space, as the lack of women representatives in the newly reinstated Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly testifies (Ward, 2006).

The ways in which gendered perceptions of social space affect infant feeding practice have been noted, for example, by Bartlett, who commented that 'women are influenced in their choice to breastfeed or not by the *perception* that breastfeeding in public is not acceptable' (Bartlett, 2002: 116; emphasis added).

To what extent does the masculinization of space in Northern Ireland affect women's infant feeding practices? Northern Ireland has the lowest rate of breastfeeding in the developed world, albeit on the increase (Bolling, 2006). Sittlington et al., in their study of expectant mothers' attitudes to infant feeding in the region, found that, irrespective of intention or outcome, mothers agreed that 'women should not breast-feed in public places' (Sittlington et al., 2006: 8). This was in keeping with previous studies, which indicate negative attitudes to public breastfeeding in Northern Ireland (Greene et al., 2003; Stewart-Knox et al., 2003). Greene et al.'s study of teenage attitudes, for example, showed that 'The vast majority of respondents favoured breastfeeding in the home (96%) or in specially provided rooms (96%), such as baby changing rooms (95%)'.

Public perceptions that breastfeeding should be carried out in private, or if in public should be discreet, are not, of course, limited to Northern Ireland (see, for example, Bartlett, 2002: 117; Stearns, 1999: 313). Indeed, current proposals to extend Scotland's right to breastfeed in public to England and Wales have been met with similar sorts of public responses. For example, a recent radio discussion of the idea was less than enthusiastic, with commentators claiming that 'there are . . . things that are best done privately', and that 'you don't quite know where to look if it's there before you on the bus or some environment like that' (BBC Radio 4, 2007). Debates over whether to allow women to breastfeed in the UK Houses of Parliament were resolved following similar controversy. It was ultimately decided that women could breastfeed only in specially designated areas, and not in the Debating Chamber, Committee Rooms or Public Galleries (Sear et al., 2003).

There would seem to be a general perception that public spaces are inappropriate arenas for breastfeeding to take place, a perception that seems to be particularly entrenched in Northern Ireland. This depends on the production of social spaces as arenas where breastfeeding may only legitimately take place in disembodied, invisible ways, raising important questions about women's ability to practise citizenship when carrying out intimate aspects of care.<sup>3</sup>

## RECONCEIVING SOCIAL SPACE? BREASTFEEDING PROMOTION

Turning now to efforts to actively reconceive of social space in Northern Ireland as a site of infant feeding, I examine the efforts of the HPANI to shift the meaning of public breastfeeding, as part of its efforts to increase breastfeeding rates. This involves a reconsideration of the extent to which this may enhance intimate citizenship for breastfeeding women.



FIGURE 1  
'Other People Can Eat Here, So Why Can't He?'



Poster reproduced with permission from the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.

The HPANI has been actively seeking to promote breastfeeding as the best way to maximize infant and maternal health in Northern Ireland since 2003. It has run a number of campaigns targeting the general public, which have sought to reconceive of social spaces as arenas where women should be able to breastfeed their infants without censure. One of its most prominent campaigns was run in May 2004, February 2005 and again in January 2007. As the agency explains:

This campaign aims to raise public awareness about the health benefits of breastfeeding, and to encourage the general public to be supportive to mums who want to breastfeed their babies. (HPANI, 2007)

This campaign targeted buses and other venues around Northern Ireland. One prominent poster showed the face of a baby looking directly at the camera, with his mother in the background, beneath the question 'Other people can eat here, so why can't he?', with the campaign strap-line 'Breastfeeding mums need your support – because every baby deserves the best.'

This particular effort to reconceive 'public' social space as an arena where a (male) baby can 'eat' in the best way possible, by breastfeeding, and that mothers seeking to feed their infants in this way need public support, draws on the broader gender dynamics of public space, in seeking to change those very dynamics. Unusually for breastfeeding campaign images, the couple are not pictured in the process of feeding. The character at the centre of the image is a baby boy, who seems to openly question perceived spatial norms. The woman is not looking at the camera/the public, but instead has her attention entirely focused on her son. What we are presented with then is a conventional image of mother and son, and the challenge to public perceptions concerning the acceptability of public breastfeeding seems to come directly from the infant son, with the mother in a supportive, nurturing, background role. This poster presents a case for (male) entitlement to be *breastfed* in public, rather than a (female) entitlement to *breastfeed*, and seeks to enlist public support for the infant's case. While the poster explicitly seeks to reconceive public space as breastfeeding-friendly, it raises a question as to the extent to which women's intimate citizenship is enhanced, since it could have the effect of multiplying the (gendered) moral pressure on women to breastfeed (see, for example, Lee, 2007).

These campaigns have also included radio and television broadcasts, along with newspaper adverts. Again, the campaign message is reasserted, and one of the radio adverts explicitly addresses the question of public breastfeeding:

Here's some news for the people of Northern Ireland. Breastmilk is the best food a baby can have. But amazingly, some people would rather see a baby go hungry than see a mother breastfeed in public! Breastfeeding mums need your support, because every baby deserves the best. (HPANI, 2004)

What is interesting here is the introductory address to 'the people of Northern Ireland', which frames the subsequent comment as an issue of national importance. The structure of the narrative suggests that this is akin to a national news broadcast, which 'the people' would necessarily have an interest in. The newsworthy element of the story is supplied by the shocking story that a group of moral 'outsiders' would prioritize female modesty over infant welfare. This effort to reconceive social space in Northern Ireland by designating those opposed to public breastfeeding as moral outsiders, is typical of health promotion material that tends to emphasize infant rather than maternal welfare (Murphy et al., 1999: 243).

A central feature of this campaign has been the representation of breastfeeding as asexual. The HPA television advert, for example, which has been broadcast a number of times since 2004, shows a breastfeeding mother with infant and supporting father (HPANI, e.g. May 2004 and February 2005). The parents are dressed identically in dark grey sweat-shirts, and are pictured with their very young baby against a non-specific white background. The advert seeks to promote breastfeeding through an association with love ('food from the heart'), and health. The father is presented as being just as close to the infant as the mother, through physical touching, stroking, kissing and holding, some of which continues while feeding is going on. The suggestion of the advert is that breastfeeding is a form of love and care, and that fathers who support and encourage breastfeeding are actively involved in loving and caring for their babies. The advert avoids any representation of specific spaces, or any effort to distinguish acceptable and unacceptable spaces for breastfeeding. The identical clothing worn by both parents can be interpreted as an effort to desexualize the mother's body, as well as downplaying the ways in which breastfeeding is often conceived as enhancing a maternal-infant 'bond', at the father's expense.

The HPANI has claimed a degree of success for this campaign, following survey research that showed that awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding has increased, along with increasing rates of intentions to breastfeed among women, and increasing levels of supportive attitudes among men (HPANI, 2005b). This would appear to be in keeping with other evaluations of the impact of mass media campaigns on attitudes to breastfeeding (e.g. Foss and Southwell, 2006). This apparently successful reconceptualization of social space as breastfeeding-friendly seems to have drawn on already existing conceptualizations of motherhood as asexual, while reconceiving fatherhood as active, loving and physically involved with their infants (although this is a more general trend). What is unusual about this campaign is that the desexualization of the maternal body in this context has been accompanied by a narrative that situates breastfeeding-supportive fathers within the bonding space of breastfeeding, something which would appear to be aimed at undermining the popular assumption that breastfeeding is a barrier to shared parenting (Earle, 2002; Lee, 2007). This effort

FIGURE 2  
‘If You Could, Would You?’



Newspaper advertisement reproduced with permission from the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.

to shift the gendered discourse of early infant care towards involved fathering would seem to enhance both women's and men's intimate citizenship, as the value of caring for infants in a way that is often regarded in this context as embarrassing, disgusting or exhibitionist is asserted. Nevertheless, the almost disembodied portrayal of breastfeeding mothers in this advert raises a question about the extent to which this effort to reconceive social space as breastfeeding-friendly, and virtually gender-neutral, promotes women's specific ability to direct their own childrearing practices, a central feature of intimate citizenship, free from moral pressure either from the state or the fathers of their children.

One of the HPA's newspaper adverts, which is targeted specifically at men, and is published in the sports pages of the local press, shows a bare-chested man holding an infant, looking like he might be about to breastfeed. The advert, in seeking to improve fathers' support for breastfeeding, asks the implicitly male readership whether they would breastfeed themselves if they could (HPANI, 2007).

The attempt here to picture a man's physical involvement with his infant as almost interchangeable with a woman's seems daring and almost sexual. Indeed, it is striking that the man is pictured holding a baby girl, whereas the campaign images of mothers and infants always code and refer to the infants as male.<sup>4</sup> The publication of such an image contrasts sharply with an abandoned attempt at a similar strategy in New Zealand, although that campaign seems to have been at least partly thwarted by its timing, coming as it did shortly after the controversy over 'Brooke', a prostitute whose advertisement offered 'the milk of human kindness' to clients (Longhurst, 2008: 103–4). Commenting on the failed campaign, Longhurst argues that:

Men's breastfed, and especially lactating breastfed, bodies . . . tend to make little sense. They cause considerable cultural anxiety because they disrupt understandings of a specified kind of feminine maternity. (Longhurst, 2008: 103–4)

The bare-breasted, (hetero)sexual image of nurturing, but nevertheless muscular, fatherhood in the HPANI advert seems to confound this claim, as

**FIGURE 3**  
**'You Are Welcome to Breastfeed Here'**



[www.breastfedbabies.org](http://www.breastfedbabies.org)  
 Produced by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.  
 Tel: 028 9031 1611. [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)

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Poster reproduced with permission from the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.

it deliberately seeks to disrupt the gendered conventions of breastfeeding imagery in order to challenge male viewers over their commitment to fatherhood, and in so doing, open up the opportunities for women and men

to care for their infants by breastfeeding. This 'queering' of breastfeeding can be interpreted as an enhancement of intimate citizenship, as the advertisement asserts the value of women (and men) being able to practise a form of intimate care that may involve the public exposure of lactating breasts in any context, at least when caring for infants.<sup>5</sup> However, the extension of women's intimate citizenship in this way is again circumscribed by the desexualized and almost disembodied images produced in these campaigns of nurturing motherhood, which seems at odds with the use of a naked male torso in this particular advert.

One other noteworthy effort on behalf of the HPANI to reconceive public space is its 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here' campaign. This has involved recruiting businesses and other organizations to support breastfeeding by displaying a sign stating 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here'.

In a context where there is currently no right to publicly breastfeed, the agency launched this campaign in 2005, to recruit local businesses and other organizations to support breastfeeding women by prominently displaying a sticker with the campaign message on their premises (HPANI, 2005a).<sup>6</sup> While at first glance this would appear to be a useful strategy for publicly declaring women's entitlement to breastfeed outside of 'private' spaces, it does also have the unfortunate effect of indicating to breastfeeding women that unless such a sticker is on display, breastfeeding may not be welcome. Thus, it would seem that this campaign carries a risk of undermining women's entitlement to breastfeed in public places, and indeed segregating spaces in ways which echo the entrance signs on the Mea Shearim, noted by Fenster. Furthermore, this campaign gives private businesses and other organizations arbitrary power to decide on such entitlement. One coffee shop owner explained why he signed up to the scheme in 2006:

We decided to join the Breastfeeding welcome here scheme to support the breastfeeding mums who already visit our premises on a weekly basis. As a customer service led business we know the value of repeat custom and word-of-mouth and aim to meet the needs of all our customers. (<http://healthpromotionagency.org.uk/work/Publicrelations/PressReleases/welcomehere2006.htm>)

Thus, in using the campaign to simply appeal more explicitly to the already-existing customer base, the commercial space of the coffee shop was not being reconceived, and its use was not changing, it was simply being represented more explicitly as a space where breastfeeding was (already) welcome.

## CONCLUSION

It remains to be seen whether social space in Northern Ireland has been reconceived in such a way as to produce a more breastfeeding-friendly environment, and what the effects of such possible change might be for

women's intimate citizenship, understood in terms of an ability to choose how and where to parent. The cultural coding of women's breasts as primarily sexual raises particularly difficult issues for the promotion of breastfeeding, which the Northern Ireland campaign has tried to address by desexualizing maternal breasts and bodies in ways typical of similar campaigns elsewhere, while at the same time introducing men's sexualized bodies into the social space of early infant care, including breastfeeding.

Rates of breastfeeding are on the increase, although still very low, and the HPANI (2005b) is reporting more breastfeeding-oriented views. However, the question remains as to whether this effort to reconceive social space by representing fatherhood in more embodied, caring and supportive ways, while reinscribing motherhood as asexual, nurturing and self-sacrificing, will affect the use of social spaces, and ultimately make an impact on women's intimate citizenship. Enabling women themselves to participate in reconceiving the social spaces, domestic and more 'public', which they routinely inhabit, might go some way towards reducing the moral tone of much official involvement in infant feeding, and at the same time recognizing early infant care as an arena where intimate citizenship is at stake.

## NOTES

I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous referees who commented on an earlier draft of this article. I am also grateful for the valuable feedback from participants at the 'Monitoring Parents: Childrearing in the Age of "Intensive Parenting"' conference, University of Kent, Canterbury, 22 May 2007, and the International Sociological Association's Research Committee 32 Conference 'Women and Citizenship in a Local/Global World', Athens, Greece, 1 June 2007, where earlier drafts of the article were presented. I am grateful to the Health Promotion Agency Northern Ireland for permission to reprint the campaign materials included in this article.

1. In putting the case in these terms, I am rejecting Bacchi and Beasley's (2002) claim that discussions of autonomy necessarily reproduce a mind/body dualism. Instead, I would follow Cornell's (1995) argument that what is often at stake in reproductive and sexual politics is women's ability to imagine ourselves as whole over time, in ways where the body is central to that imagining.
2. As Carter (1995: 70) argues, 'Breast-feeding has been embedded in discourses of femininity, which specify what women ought to be and infer that if women are not like this it is because of some moral failing. Women are not expected to need any resources of particular conditions to perform this function since they are only after all doing what ought to come naturally.'
3. This also applies to those rare 'milkmen' who practise breastfeeding as a form of care, reported by Longhurst (2008: 107-9).
4. I am grateful to Stephanie Knaak for pointing this out.
5. Fiona Giles and Robyn Longhurst have commented on public hostility to women (and men) breastfeeding older babies and children, as well as breastfeeding adults or other species (see Giles, 2003; Longhurst, 2008).
6. Longhurst (2008) notes a similar campaign in New Zealand.

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