

Documenting the realities of WIC breastfeeding mothers: A photovoice project

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Introduction

- Low breastfeeding rates of among women is a serious public health concern.
- Low rates of breastfeeding are associated with increased infections and hospitalizations for the infant and increased risks for various cancers for the mother.
- WIC women in Muncie, Indiana explored their concept of breastfeeding support through visual images and discussion in order to identify ways to increase breastfeeding.
- Analyzing the discussion for themes helped to develop local concepts of what these 7 women identified as support.
- Engaging them in research encouraged them to participate in addressing the needs to change attitudes and beliefs about breastfeeding in the community

Method



Participatory Photography is a qualitative research framework that offers a way to work with a targeted population by sharing photographs

Numbers: 7 WIC breastfeeding mothers from Muncie, Indiana participated in small group interaction in October 2006 through October 2007.

Session One: Orientation was given in using a camera. Assignments were to take pictures that described their lives as breastfeeding mothers. Disposable cameras were given to participants. Tape recording of the session was analyzed for themes by the researcher.

Session Two: Previous meeting and analysis of themes reviewed. Participants shared their photographs which focused the discussion. Discussion was taped and analyzed. Cameras were distributed again.

Session Three: Same as second session. Planning of a public display of the photographs was begun. Research was assigned and plans were executed on PowerPoint by the researcher.

Study Area



Category for 2006 Estimates	Muncie	Indiana
Population	61,683	6,313,520
Life-time Family Income	\$6,351	\$5,381
Families below poverty level	21.5%	9.9%
Earned-1 Infant	54%	64%

http://actionforresearch.org
United States National Transportation Survey, 2004 Births, CDC

Results

Themes developed when participants were asked what they saw in the photographs they took:

Sense of Strength Within



"It's not what's important to me. It's what is important for them... That's the most natural way to feed them."
Kathryn



"They were exploring and discovering. It's like breastfeeding."
Crystal

Sense of Receiving Support from Others



"I think I have had more support from my family and friends this time then I did the first time."
Kathryn



"We have been good support to one another, calling each other with random questions and concern."
Margaret

Importance of Role Models

"Breastfeeding sets a certain role model in our family."
Crystal



Support in the Workplace

Jennifer



"My steamer and pump make it easier to go places."



"My job has been supportive."



"My best friend...she supports me at work."

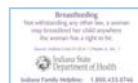


"I pump on breaks."

Community Action planned by participants and researcher :

Information on the Law

"I love these cards.. Breastfeeding is just taking care of your child and completely natural."
Lynn



Sharing Information

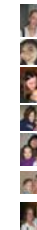


Community Artwalk Festival, October 2007



Poster for the Delaware County Fair, July 2007

Participants



Participants' Pseudonyms	General Demographics	Personal Demographics
Crystal	Age: 28 Education: 15 years	Family Unit: Married Breastfeeding Experience: 2 children, each over 1 year
Jennifer	Age: 21 Education: 14 years	Family Unit: Single Breastfeeding Experience: Two old and breastfeeding W/steaming
Kathryn	Age: 27 Education: 16 years	Family Unit: Married Breastfeeding Experience: 3 children, two never did breastfeeding, just starting with one
Lara	Age: 19 Education: 16 years	Family Unit: Married Breastfeeding Experience: 3 children, all breastfed, not currently breastfeeding W/steamed with first one
Lynn	Age: 33 Education: 16 years	Family Unit: Living with Father of child Breastfeeding Experience: 2 children, all breastfeeding, one still breastfeeding, one not
Margaret	Age: 27 Education: 16 years	Family Unit: Married Breastfeeding Experience: 1 child/pun finished after 1 year
Rachel	Age: 18 Education: 14 years	Family Unit: Living with Father of child Breastfeeding Experience: 2 children, 11 year old, both breastfed, still breastfeeding 2nd W/steamed with breastfeeding 1st

Discussion

- WIC women identified self determination and a belief that breastfeeding was the natural way to feed their. These beliefs and attitudes appeared to be very important in their success of breastfeeding.
- Positive attitudes about breastfeeding by the family, a friend or partners increased the duration
- Community attitudes that did not encourage breastfeeding were a deterrent to feeling comfortable breastfeeding in church and other public places
- Workplace policies that did not acknowledge the needs of the breastfeeding mother were the most difficult to overcome.

Conclusions

- Participation with targeted community can lead to local knowledge and beliefs being incorporated into effective interventions that increase duration.
- Participation in the project increased the participants awareness and interests in being change agents in their own community

Limitations

- Adaptation of these findings to interventions is appropriate to this specific situation but should not be generalized
- Analyzing is time consuming for many programs
- Community involvement of young mothers can be difficult because of family obligations

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