

African-American Mothers breastfeeding 6 months and beyond: A Positive Deviance Inquiry of WIC participants in Georgia

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Breastfeeding (BF) in African-American (AA) Women

Gaps in the Literature

- Majority of the research is quantitative and needs-based
- Qualitative methods needed as few studies examine BF experiences of AA women (Spencer & Grassley, 2013)
- AA "*voices are absent in much of the lactation literature*" (Asiodu & Flaskerud, 2011).
- Asset-based approaches useful in addressing health of underserved women (Fowles, 2007)

Positive Deviance

- Asset-based approach to identify solutions to community problems within the community
- Positive Deviants**-individuals employing uncommon yet beneficial practices for better health in resource poor communities (Marsh & Schroeder, 2002)
- Positive Deviance Inquiry**- Discover the unique practices/behaviors of Positive Deviants (Marsh & Schroeder, 2002)

"A Positive Deviance Inquiry of the Long-term Breastfeeding Experiences of African-American Women in the WIC Program"

Purpose

- To explore the breastfeeding experiences of low-income African-American women using the Positive Deviance approach.*

Research Questions

1. How did mothers form the intention to breastfeed during pregnancy?
2. What enabled mothers to initiate and sustain breastfeeding during the first few weeks after birth?
3. What enabled mothers to continue breastfeeding for 6 months or longer?

Research Design

- Multi-phase qualitative study**
 1. **Focus Groups : WIC peer counselors (PCs)**
 - To understand local breastfeeding practices, including barriers and facilitators, of AA women in WIC program (Gross et al, 2014)
 2. **Individual Interviews: AA mothers**
 - To explore breastfeeding experiences of AA women in WIC program

Recruitment

- AA women in Georgia WIC program
 - Positive Deviants:** Age 18+, African-American, WIC participant, breastfeeding history ≥ 6 months, have a breastfed child age ≤ 2
- Purposive sampling (Patton, 1990)
 - Recruitment flyers given to WIC offices and PCs in 3 health districts
 - Interested participants were screened by phone using a screening tool

Interviews

- Semi-structured format
- ~ 60 minutes in length
- Participants homes, public libraries or eateries
- Brief demographic survey
- Audio recorded, professionally transcribed
- Analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006)
- Nvivo software

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening Question

- In as much detail as possible please describe your most recent experience breastfeeding.*

Breastfeeding Intention

- I want you to think back to your pregnancy. Please describe what motivated you to breastfeed when you were pregnant.*

Breastfeeding Initiation

- I want you to think back to when you gave birth to your baby. Please describe your experience initiating breastfeeding after birth.*

Breastfeeding during the first few weeks

- Now think back to the first few weeks after you had your baby. What was your breastfeeding experience like during this time?*

Breastfeeding ≥ 6 months

- Please describe what helped you continue breastfeeding for 6 months or longer?*

Ending questions

- If you had the chance to give advice on how to help African-American mothers to breastfeed, what advice would you give?*
- I want to better understand the breastfeeding experiences of African-American mothers from low-income families. Is there anything that I missed? Is there anything else that you would like to share?*

Note: Probing questions were also used

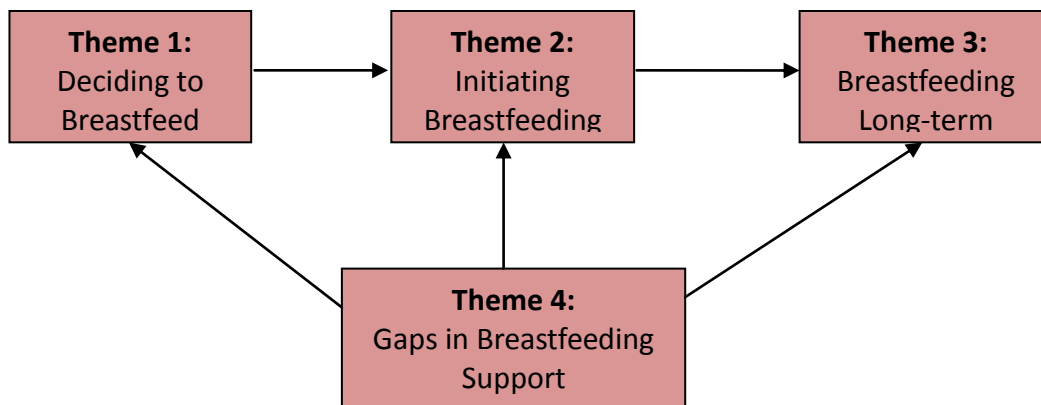
Participants

Sample size	N=11 AA mothers in WIC	
Age (mean)	29.1y	Range: 23-35y
Relationship Status	54.5% married 36.4% in relationship 9.1 % single	
Education level	54.5% some college 36.4% college degree 9.1% high school diploma	
Work status	36.4% stay at home 18.2% full-time 9.1% part-time 27.3% WIC PCs	
No. of children (mean)	3.1	Range: 1-5
Length of BF (mean)	10.45 mo.	Range: 1- 18 mo.

Interview Themes

Overall narrative:

- *“there’s not a lot of us”*
- *“person to person, everybody’s different”*



Theme 1: Deciding to Breastfeed

“I’ll think about it.”

- Family history
- Partner & mother support
- Cost & convenience
- BF education during pregnancy
 - Benefits: infant health, bonding, maternal weight loss
 - Sources: WIC, books, hospital classes, internet
- Some uncertainty
- Continue BF 2nd child

Theme 2: Initiating Breastfeeding *“In the beginning, it was hard.”*

- Variety of breastfeeding challenges
- Sufficient hospital lactation support
 - Formula samples
 - Midwives vs. OB/GYNs
- WIC PCs “heaven sent”
- Pumping breastmilk

Theme 3: Breastfeeding Long-term *“Dedication, patience, commitment, and sacrifice”*

- Length of BF: range 5.6 to 16 mos.
- BF “second nature” by 6 mos.
 - Can introduce other foods
- Good support system
- Infant health & bonding
- Focus on infant well-being
- Develop “tricks of the trade”

Theme 4: Gaps in Breastfeeding Support *“Push the issue more”*

- Few prenatal conversations about BF
- Mixed baby-friendly hospital practices
- No BF support groups for African-American mothers
- Lack of African-American WIC PCs, LCs
- Need BF accommodations in public spaces
- Lack of positive African-American BF images
- Use celebrities, churches, radio to promote BF

Discussion

- African-American women are breastfeeding.
 - Remember historical and socio-cultural complexities
- This study adds AA women’s personal BF experiences.
 - Qualitative methods
 - Positive Deviance (asset-based approach)
- Current BF promotion methods are not culturally-specific nor culturally-sensitive enough.**
- Numerous opportunities to improve BF promotion at multiple levels with a socio-ecological approach

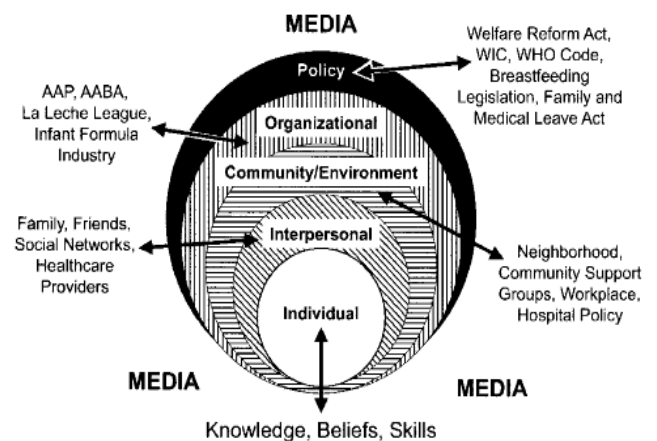


Figure from Bentley, Dee & Jensen 2003

Conclusion

“We’ve got to first learn that breastfeeding is for us...I truly stand behind the fact that ...in addition to [having] all the women,...all moms breastfeed, that these African-American women like the Hispanic women...We need our own thing. We need something separate too. Our culture is different. Our women are different. Just like the hair salon...we got our own type of hairstylist...I think we need our own community for breastfeeding too. Then that’s when we can go and pull and call on the older the generation that can stand behind us in breastfeeding.” -Eve, mother of 3

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