

# Low-Income Women's Experiences with Breastfeeding and Lactation Support



A Program  
Evaluation of a  
Community Home  
Visitation Service

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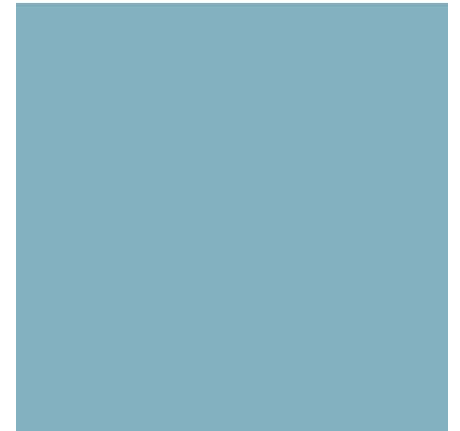
# Theoretical Framework

- Public Health, Anthropology, Feminism
- Biocultural

- Historical, social, biological, cross-cultural, economic and political contexts
- Political economy – how power and socioeconomic status impact health

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- Embodiment – the physical and the social are intertwined
- Reproductive rights and advocacy



**Table 2. Provisional Breastfeeding Rates Among Children Born in 2007\***

Sociodemographic Factor	Ever Breastfed (%)	Breastfeeding at 6 Months (%)	Breastfeeding at 12 Months (%)
United States	75.0	43.0	22.4
<i>Receiving WIC<sup>†</sup></i>			
Yes	67.5	33.7	17.5
No, but eligible	77.5	48.2	30.7
Ineligible	84.6	54.2	27.6

\* Survey limited to children aged 19–35 months at the time of data collection. The lag between birth and collection of data allows for tracking of breastfeeding initiation as well as calculating the duration of breastfeeding.

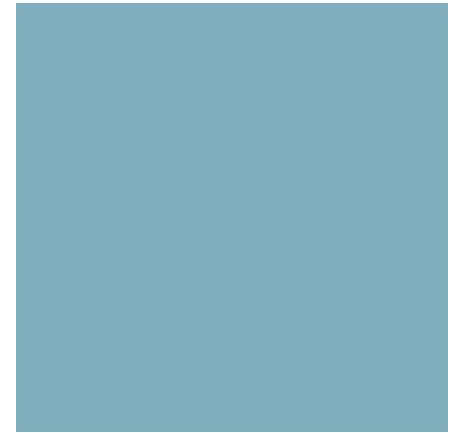
<sup>†</sup> WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Immunization Survey.<sup>41</sup>

- Low-income women are less likely to breastfeed than middle or high-income women, regardless of race or ethnicity
- Inadequate assurance of post discharge follow-up for lactation support
- Unique social, political, environmental and economic circumstances

# Background

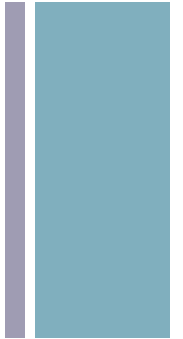
- Early Postpartum – critical time for breastfeeding assistance
  
- Research supports the Effectiveness of interventions:
  - Home visits by Lactation Consultants
- + ■ Telephone contact
- Peer-to-peer support groups
- Professionally-led drop-in centers







# The Program



- Provides lactation support services, particularly in the early postpartum period, to women in Hillsborough county, FL
- Services include:
  - Phone support
  - Home visits with a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) or International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)
  - Electric breast pump rentals
- Priority population: Low-income, at-risk women with infants < 1 month of age
  - women who are enrolled in Healthy Start or WIC
  - women with infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

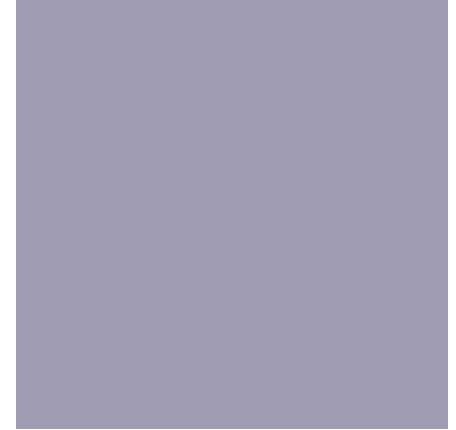
# + Methods

- **Participant observation** of lactation consultations in mother's home
- **In-depth, semi-structured interviews** with 15 participants who had received services within the prior 6 months
  - Breastfeeding narratives – mothers' lived experience with breastfeeding and services
- Coding of interview transcripts



# + The Mothers

- Age range of women: 16 years - 42 years
- Age range of babies: 1 month - 6 months (one 9 month old)
- 60% had one child
- 40% C-section rate
- Majority of women received home visit + pump + phone support
- At time of interview:
  - 1/3 were working
  - 100% of women received WIC or were WIC eligible
  - 1/3 unmarried/single



# Participants' Intended Breastfeeding Duration

Baby's Age	Intended Goal	Actual Duration	Intention Met?	NICU?
4 mo	2-4 months	1 week	No	Yes
1 mo	6 months	2.5 weeks	No	N
2 mo	6 months	3 weeks	No	N
5 mo	1 year	4 months	No	N
5 mo	1 year	4.5 months	No	Yes
4 mo	6 months	6 weeks	No	N
3 mo	1 year	6.5 weeks	No	N
9 mo	2 years	7 months	No	N
1 mo	3 months	8 weeks	No	Yes
6 mo	6 months	Still breastfeeding	Yes	N
4 mo	1 year	Still breastfeeding	-	N
6 mo	1 year	Still breastfeeding	-	N
2 mo	As long as possible	Still breastfeeding	-	Yes
4 mo	6 months	Still breastfeeding	-	N
1 mo	1 year	Still breastfeeding	-	N



## Physicality



“[The nurses] they’re like oh cram him on your boob. I’m like, this feels like really animalistic to me, I don’t like the feeling of this. The lactation lady and the nurses, they’re like push him on your boob. ... They’re like I know it feels violent, but this is how you have to do it.”



## Blaming the Baby

“My body just was never producing enough of what he wanted. He wanted and wanted.”

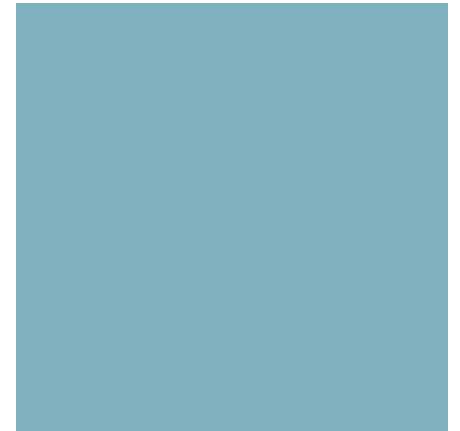
“I’d spend nights there, trying, trying, and he would get desperate. And it was ‘cause of him, not because of my breasts, or anything, it was him.”

“I think if you’re like, modest with it, you know and you cover yourself...”

“I actually tried not even to go to restaurants the first month or so until I got the breast pump.”

+ “Husband’s not such a fan of it. He’s always like, ‘you know people can see you.’”

## Nursing in Public



“When I switched to the pump, it gave me a lot of relief. I had more independent movement for myself.”

“[Pumping] was such a process. And it was so... not special and cuddly. It was so much more clinical”

“[Breastfeeding] didn’t hurt me... the pumping hurt a lot, because I was pumping all the time. So that kinda messed up, physically, my breasts a little bit.”

## Pumping



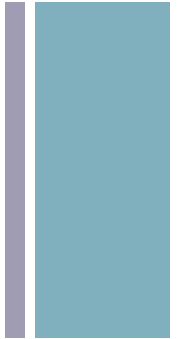


## + Economics

“[The nurse] had said you can go downstairs and rent a pump and it’ll cost you this much... And I just I looked at her and she must have read my face and she’s like, ‘Or we have a free service that will help you.’ And I was like yeah, cause I’m not working. So whatever the cost of a pump was gonna be was not within my budget at all.”

“I wanted to breastfeed him for at least a year. But already like 4 weeks into it I already saw that I needed to get a job and he couldn’t be so dependent on me.”

## + Economics



“Cheaper... that’s the conception that you’re given. ...Though I don’t know about that now. They say it’s less expensive. But if you think about it, you have to buy a pump; you have to buy bottles to pump into. You have to buy storage bags.”

“We have food stamps, so I was like I’d rather him be on formula than me be paying out of my own pocket for some Mother’s Milk tea.”

“They would come and say ‘don’t give up,’ that’s what helped”

“Just because he didn’t latch on they were like, ‘ok he’s not latching on so you’re going to have to tell WIC to give you the pump to help you breastfeed that way.’”

“The nurse walked in and said ‘oh, you’re not going to be able to  
+ breastfeed, your nipples are flat.’ Just like that.”

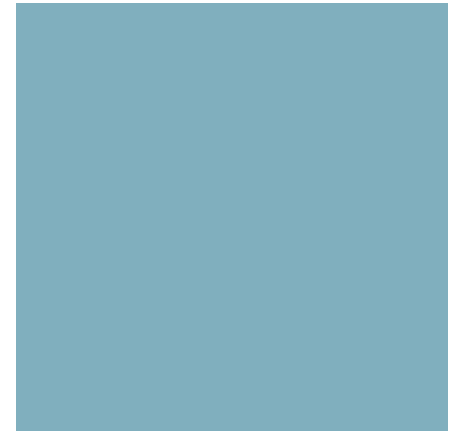
## Hospital Support

“WIC took a while to give me a pump”

“She was like ‘he’ll figure it out.’ Too laid back about it, when I was clearly really upset about it.”

+ “Everyone helped me and everything that I asked for was always there.”s

## Other Support





## Baby Café

“I wasn’t sure he was latching on well, so I needed somebody to see and tell...”

“Anytime I had a question, I could pick up the phone and just call or text her, and I’m getting a response right away.”





# Baby Café

- “And I was impressed on how quick it was. My husband and I were both like ‘wow’”
- “It was like so easy - that I could just text. The home visit is really... helpful. Cause we couldn’t have gone anywhere.”

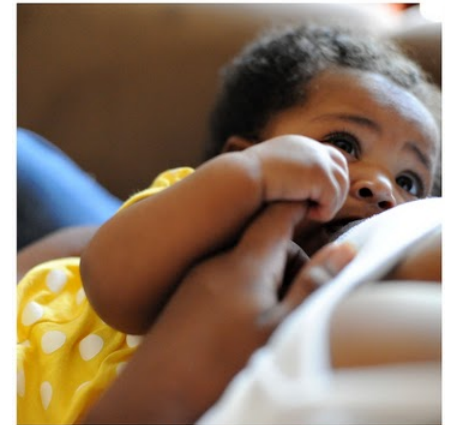




# Baby Café

“They should keep doing what they’re doing. And maybe add more visits. And just to check up on. Cause somebody like me would not call again.”

“I never knew that Baby Café did anything but give pumps.”





## Program Evaluation

## Recommendations

- Continue to provide on-call, home visitation by an IBCLC and breast pump rental
- Greater follow-up
- Provide a comprehensive lactation consultation with each breast pump delivery
- Refer mothers to peer-to-peer support groups





# Discussion Points

- Breast Pumps and the Medicalization of Breastfeeding
- Tradeoff between Self Autonomy and Self-Sacrifice
- No mention of Risks of Formula
- Room for Improvement in Social Services

# + Breastfeeding is the Biological Norm

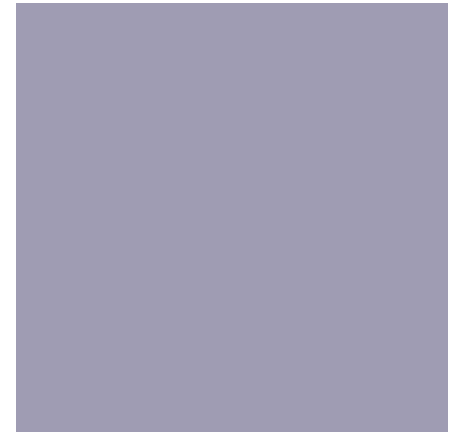
Getting rid of:

“Breast is Best”

“Advantages/Benefits of Breast Milk”



# Directions for Advocacy



“A choice that is not also a right is not really a choice – it is a privilege” - Alison Stuebe

# + Easy Advocacy

## **The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act**

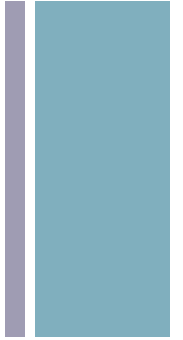
- 12 PAID weeks of leave after birth for all employees

## **Supporting Working Moms Act**

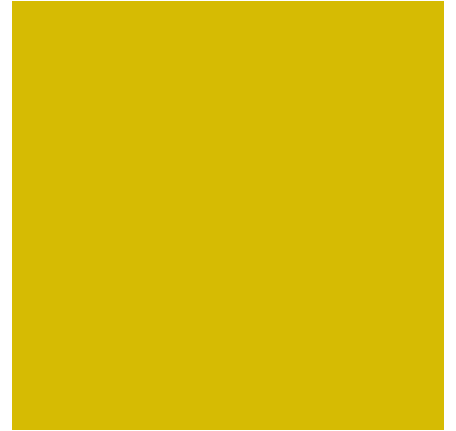
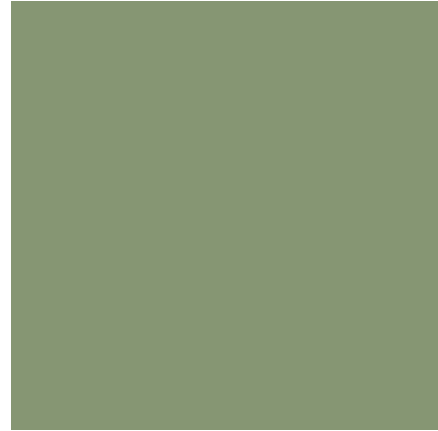
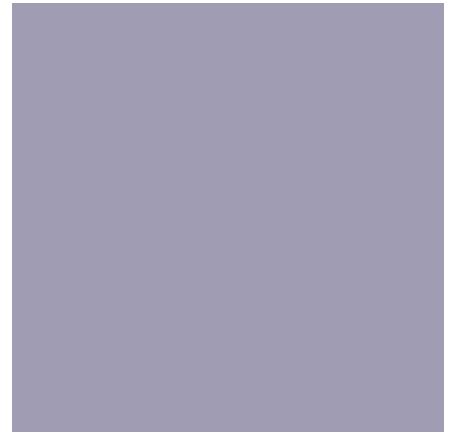
- Expand existing federal break time for nursing mothers law to 12 million salaried employees



# Suggestions for Future Research



- Extended nursing narratives
- Breast pumps: outcomes, health care provider and maternal perceptions
- Program Evaluation: Additional qualitative research with MCH program participants
- Study of which Baby Café service associated with breastfeeding duration:
  - Breast pump
  - Phone consultation
  - Home visit



**Thank You!**