

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF NOT BREASTFEEDING

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A woman's decision whether or not to breastfeed her baby has life-long consequences for her health and that of her infant. The Surgeon General's **Healthy People 2010** goals to increase breastfeeding rates have led to a renewed interest in how to influence this decision, and a lively public debate has been recently sparked by the Ad Council's pithy public service announcements about the risks of not breastfeeding. The body of extant research into breastfeeding behavior has primarily focused on testing decision-making models from the 1970s, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, which confirm that a positive attitude toward breastfeeding is highly predictive of success. Recent developments in feminist theory have led to an expanded understanding of the sexualization of breasts and the objectification of women that provide clues to women's attitudes toward their breasts, but have not yet been developed into theory about women's decision to breastfeed. The **purpose** of this study is to use a phenomenological approach to describe the lived experience of women who have decided not to breastfeed. The results will identify common themes in these women's lives that have not been understood in the past and that could be influenced by healthcare initiatives to target these factors so that more women may breastfeed in the future, with a commensurate improvement in the health of women and infants. Phenomenology is a **method** of scientific inquiry developed to understand meaning in human experience. Beginning with phenomena, where other science begins with theory, the method is predicated upon the idea that human experience is shared between mind and body, allowing for women's experiences of her breasts and body to be significant in understanding her experience of feeding her infant. This research is in progress, so **findings** are preliminary and incomplete, but will expand our understanding of the culture that influences a women's attitude toward breastfeeding. Has the popularity of breast surgery, the reproductive freedom of the years after Roe v Wade, and the use of bodies as powerful weapons of change in the modern women's movement, given women a new sense of ownership of their bodies that precludes breastfeeding, or does this current climate reduce women's sense of power and control over their bodies by requiring perfect looking breasts, a body always in control, and breasts that function only sexually?