

# Let's Talk About Breasts

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This summer, I have learned more than I could have imagined back when I started this internship in June. Going into this internship, I didn't really understand why breastfeeding was so important and how breastfeeding and working simultaneously is an issue for women who have to do so. I really wanted to gain perspective on both of these issues, as well as pushing myself out of my comfort zone and interacting with women who have lived and continue to live lives very different from my own.

Dr. Johnson has done a fantastic job with nudging me in the right direction and pushing me out of my comfort zone. At first, I was hesitant and nervous to interview women one-on-one; I was worried these women would see me as young, naïve, and privileged, and that they would not be interested in sharing their personal stories with me. However, I was pleasantly surprised when women readily shared their experiences, grievances, and life stories with me. I was amazed at the effectiveness of a bright smile, appropriate questions, and a willingness to actively listen to women.

I learned that reproductive politics in New Orleans directly put black women at a disadvantage, and these problems remain unaddressed because of the constant dismissal of black women's concerns and issues. The number of barriers to meeting appropriate breastfeeding conditions at workplaces amazed me, ranging from women being afraid to talk to supervisors for fear of being fired to being unable to use lactation rooms because of cockroach infestations. I am truly bewildered at the lack of support some employers in New Orleans provide for women who are trying to create the healthiest life possible for their children while simultaneously providing for their families economically.

Along with my new knowledge of breastfeeding and the societal conditions associated with it, I have learned so much about qualitative research. I have learned how to code articles and improved on my transcription skills, as well as participating in journal clubs with other professors and interns in the qualitative research field.

I'm looking forward to continuing this work in the fall. I hope that in the future this information can be incorporated into a study that shows that Louisiana (and the United States as a whole) needs to implement more thorough policies to spark change in our society and encourage breastfeeding. Breast is best!