

# Assets Based Thinking and Infant Feeding Support: New Directions?

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Improving health through research  CHIEF SCIENTIST OFFICE

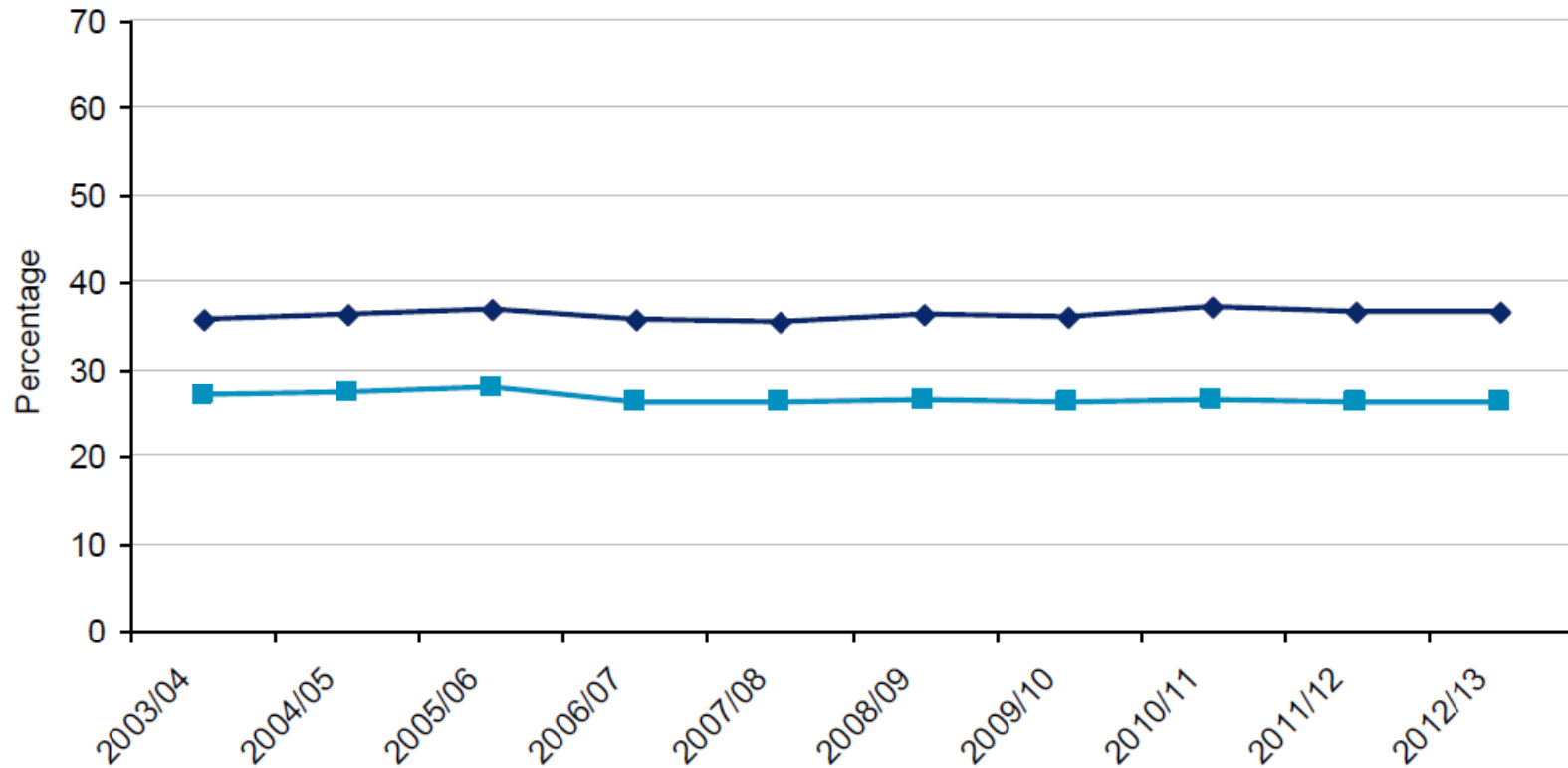


# Overview

- Do we need a different approach?
- “Assets based thinking” - what does it mean?
- Possible applications for how we communicate about infant feeding

# Breastfeeding in Scotland

Figure 3: Breastfeeding at the 6-8 Week Review; All participating NHS Boards; Year of Birth 2003/04 to 2012/13<sup>1</sup>



Ref: <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Child-Health/Infant-Feeding/>

—◆— Breastfed (includes mixed breast and formula fed)

—■— Exclusively breastfed

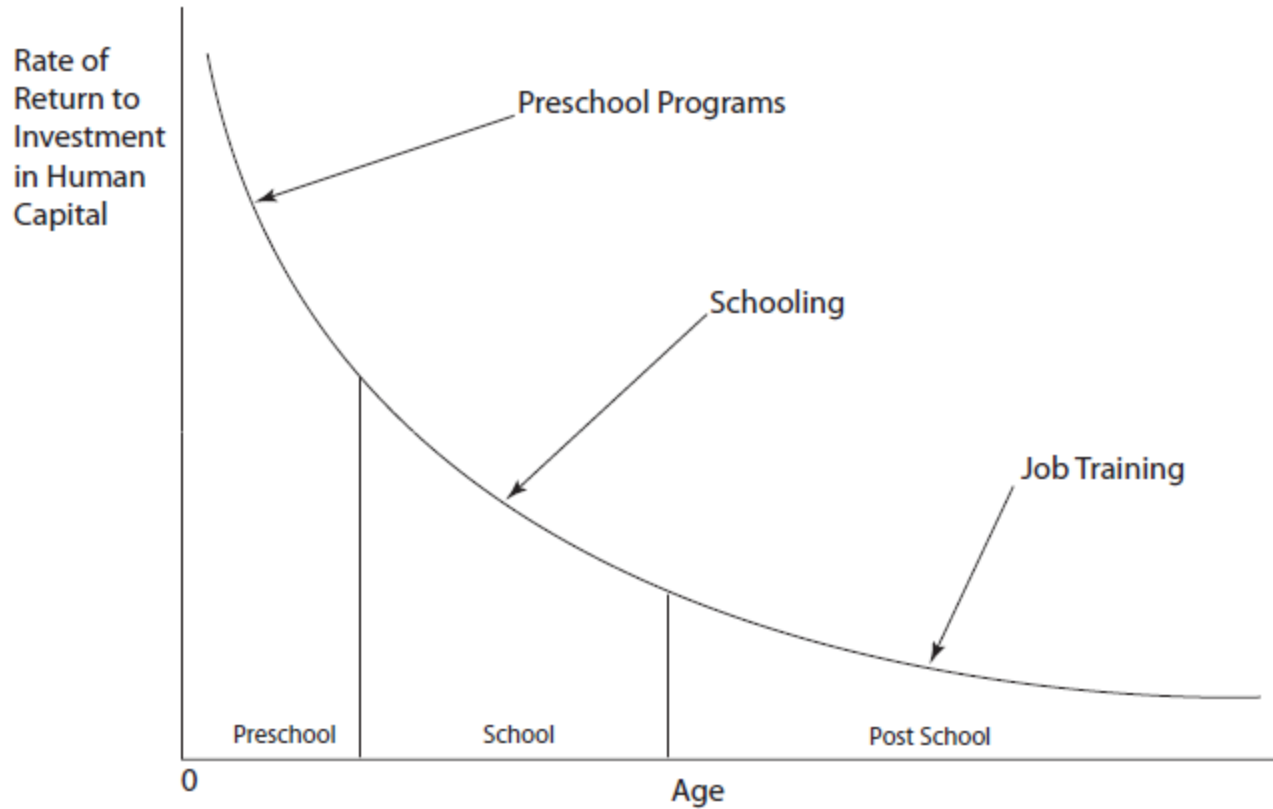
*“Breastfeeding is one of the biggest public health failures”*

Professor John Frank  
Director SCPHRP

“Early intervention is far more effective than later remediation. The **capabilities** that matter can be created.....”

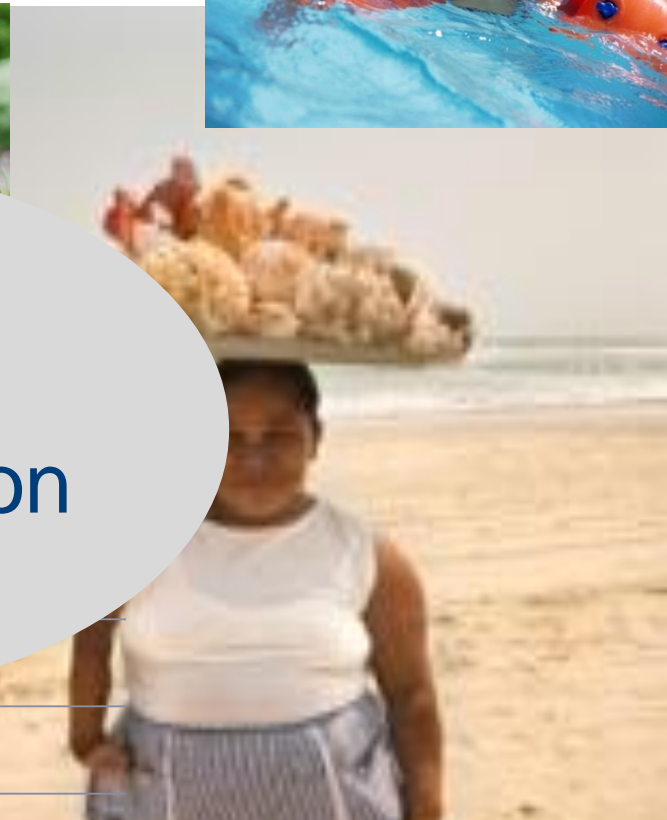
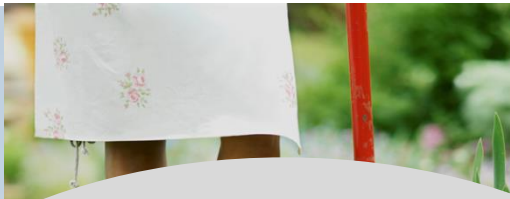
Conti and Heckman *Pediatrics* 2013;131;S133

Figure 12. Rates of return to human capital investment in disadvantaged children



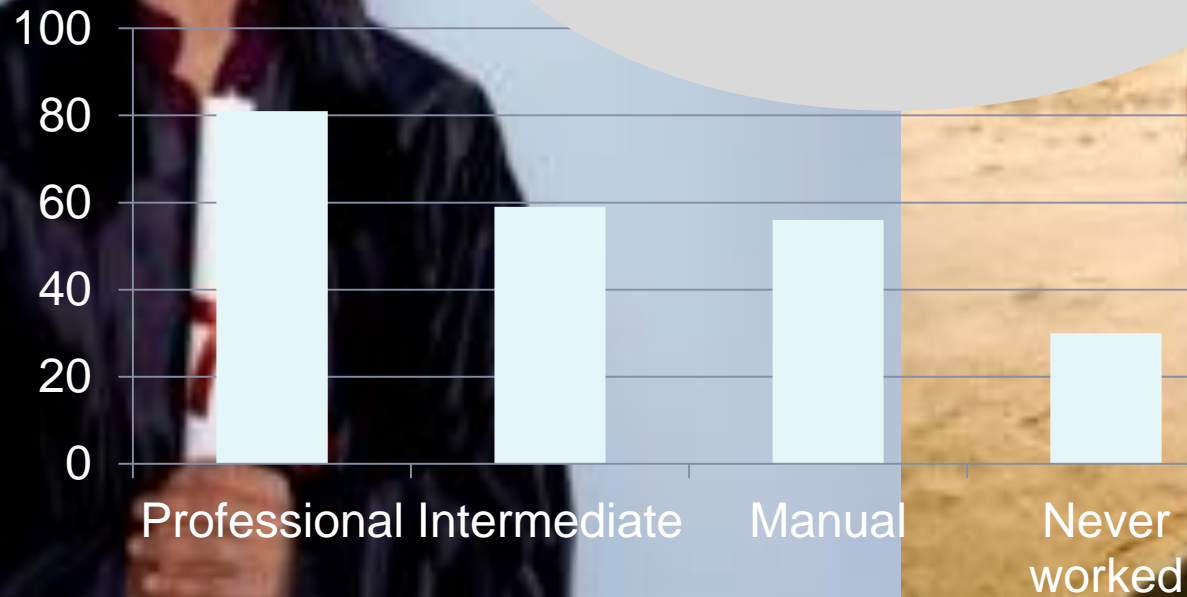
The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children  
James J. Heckman and Dimitriy V. Masterov

# Health Inequalities

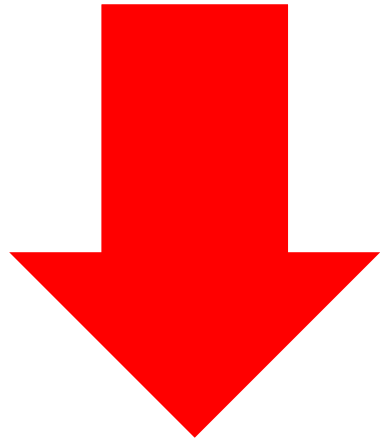


Narratives  
Communication

Breast  
employment



# Performing art skills



**Emotions**  
**Experiential learning**  
**Self-efficacy**  
*Feeling well, Happy, Relaxed, Confident*  
**↑ Oxytocin**



**Technical**  
**Theoretical**  
**Cognitive**  
*Complicated School like Anxiety*  
**↓ Oxytocin**





*Ideal*

# Goals



*Reality*

- Maximizing the likelihood of achieving goals
- A “happy” mother, and family
- *What are the risks of goal setting for breastfeeding?*
- *What are the unexpected consequences?*
- *How do we get everyone onto the same page?*
- *Complex values*
- *Goals and dynamics*
- *Being defined by*
- *Linear model of inputs and outputs*



# Stories reveal actual goals....

*“I could feel myself welling up because I had my heart set on getting out [of hospital] that day ...that’s why I said we’d go on to the formula”*

Primigravida woman. Stopped breastfeeding day 3

# Wellbeing is the driver of infant feeding decisions

- Most parents know that breastfeeding benefits health
- Parents set out to do the best for their baby

**BUT**

- Breastfeeding can be challenging
- Social situations can be adverse
- The immediate gains for wellbeing override the theoretical longer term benefits

Hoddinott et al. *BMJ Open* 2012;**2**:e000504

McInnes et al. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*: 2013, **13**:114

# Theory of decision making

- Automatic, fast, intuitive, impulsive, emotion driven, immediate gratification

VS

- Rational, slow, reflective, probabilistic, cognitive, delayed gratification

Strack F, Deutsch R. Reflective and impulsive determinants of social behavior. *Pers Soc Psychol Rev* 2004;8:220.

Kahneman D. *Thinking fast and slow*. London: Allen Lane; 2011

# Could Assets Based Approaches Help?

Assets based approaches seek to understand what resources are available to women, their families, their social networks and in their communities

# Jargon: Assets and Capabilities

- Capabilities are the capacities to function effectively in social and economic life
- Assets are the people, skills and activities available within families and communities
- A shortfall in one dimension (assets or capabilities) can be compensated by a greater strength in another

# Theory/philosophy

- **Antonowski A. Theory of Salutogenesis:** factors that create and support human health rather than those that cause disease
- **Nussbaum, Martha C. and Amartya Sen:** defining quality of life and the importance of creating capabilities for wellbeing. Focus on concrete human narratives rather than per capita GDP
- **Briefing Papers from Glasgow Centre for Population Health.** Practical examples of assets based approaches

# Evidence?

- Observational evidence associating personal, social and environmental assets with health outcomes (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010)
- Intervention research – scant
- Community development initiatives

Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine* 2010;7:e1000316

Glasgow Centre for Population Health: Briefing papers on Assets Based Approaches

# Assets based approaches as a philosophy underpinning communication

- Strengths/capabilities
- Knowledge and skills
- Resources
- Opportunities

- Needs
- Problems
- Deficits



Ecological  
Collaborative  
Social Capital

Individual  
focus tends  
to dominate

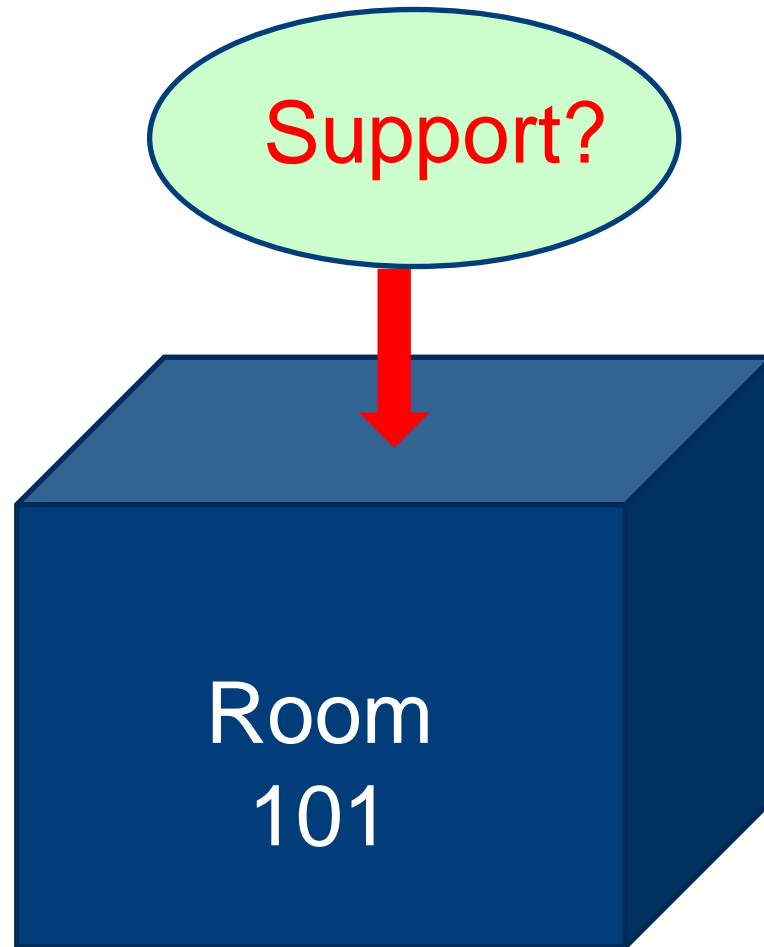
Wellbeing

Risk of  
illness





How we communicate reflects our underpinning philosophies



Support for healthy breastfeeding mothers with healthy term babies (Review)

Reefree MJ, McCosnick FM, Wade A, Quinn B, Dowdell T



You are here: [Health A-Z](#) / [Pregnancy and baby](#) /

# Breastfeeding help and support



Have a question about you and your baby? Type it here...

## Where can I get support?

Find breast feeding support services in your area:

Enter your postcode



*Is our language consistent with an assets based approach?*

... help with breastfeeding at the time you need it is really important.



Independent, confidential, mother-centred, non-judgemental breastfeeding support and information

# Language: “Support”

## Meanings

- A fan.....
- Join the club.....
- Need.....
- Hold up, sustain.....
- Problem solving.....
- Power differentials..



# Guilt, blame, pressure and lack of confidence

Maternal & Child Nutrition

Maternal & Child  
Nutrition

DOI: 10.1111/mcn.12148

## Original Article

### Shame if you do – shame if you don't: women's experiences of infant feeding

Gill Thomson<sup>a</sup>, Katherine Ebisch-Burton<sup>b</sup> and Renee Flacking<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Welfare Unit, School of Health, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK, <sup>b</sup>Köping Ekiert Institute for International Nutrition Research, Braunschweig, Germany, and <sup>c</sup>School of Education, Health and Social Studies, Dalarna University, Falun, Sweden

Maternal & Child Nutrition

Maternal & Child  
Nutrition

DOI: 10.1111/mcn.12150

## Original Article

### Disempowered, passive and isolated: how teenage mothers' postnatal inpatient experiences in the UK impact on the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding

Louise Hunter<sup>a\*</sup>, Julia Magill-Cuerden<sup>a\*</sup> and Christine McCourt<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of West London, Brentford, UK, and <sup>b</sup>City University, London, UK

# Getting everyone onto the same page

- Incorporating action research into interventions
- Reason for success in a peer coaching intervention and areas participating in the BIG (Breastfeeding in Groups) trial
- Collaboration, focus, creating local opportunities

**Hoddinott et al.** *Social Science and Medicine*. 2010;70(5):769-778.

**Hoddinott et al.** *BMJ* 2009;338:a3026.

**Hoddinott et al.** *Family Practice*. 2007;24:84-91.

# Listen to stories

## REFLECT ON:

- Goals
- Wellbeing
- Assets
- Values (what is not said)
- Meanings
- Motivators
- Network effects
- Collective stories / norms

Provide opportunities for families / communities to create the stories they want to tell and hear in the future

# Conclusion

- New approaches are needed
- Applying an assets based approach in practice, to research and to the design of interventions merits further consideration
- There are more questions than answers!

Please contact Pat Hoddinott  
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information or if you would like to cite this  
presentation



# References

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