eBaby4u

Sustainability Project: Public Health Persuasion Targeting African American Teen Moms

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Background

eBaby4u is a multiphase project to improve infant feeding & health outcomes—including breastfeeding—among African American teen mothers. To our knowledge, eBaby4u is the **only** online resource that specifically targets this audience.

eBaby4u's smartphone-enabled website and nine videos deliver evidence-based, culturally relevant infant feeding/health information. It fills an important gap in culturally relevant outreach to African American teen mothers, who have extremely low breastfeeding rates (Li et al 2005).

eBaby4u Phase I

For Phase I (Ragsdale, PI), we produced, pilot-tested, and launched the eBaby4u.com website and 9 parent education videos:

- Prenatal Nutrition
- A Day in the Life of a Teen Mom
- Breastfeeding Myths
- Breastfeeding Part 1
- Breastfeeding Part 2
- Introducing Your Baby to Solid Foods
- Bottle Feeding Myths
- SLEEP: For You & Your Baby
- My Baby is Stressing Me Out!

eBaby4u Phase II

For Phase II (Ragsdale, PI), we conducted in-depth interviews and surveys (N=112) among minority teen/young mothers at Early Head Start Centers to collect data on:

- How participants access online infant feeding and health information
- Their perceived barriers to optimal infant feeding (including breastfeeding)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
We know you've got them, and we're here to help!
Let's talk about

PERSUASION IN THE MEDIA AGE
TIMOTHY A. BORCHERS
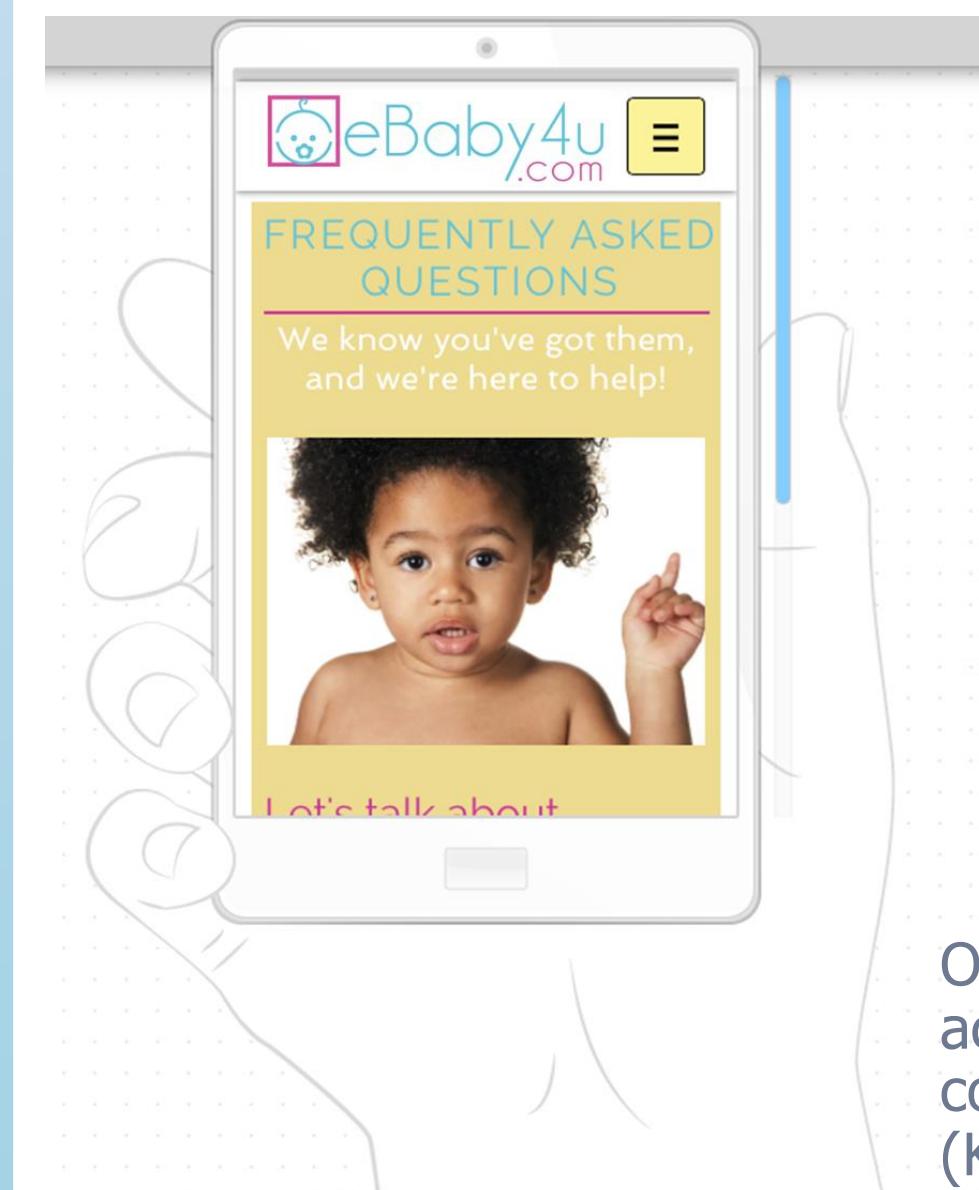
eBaby4u Sustainability Project

During Phases I-II, we determined that **sustainability** is a key component of eHealth sites like eBaby4u. In particular, eHealth content must be updated regularly because fresh content is integral to retaining audiences on social media—especially **heavy media consumers** such as teens.

To cost-effectively create fresh content, we developed a service learning project to enlist the talents of tech-savvy students enrolled in *Elements of Persuasion* in developing social media toolkits to drive African American teen moms to eBaby4u.

Service Learning Goals

Our goals were to link academic coursework to community service and increase students' critical thinking (Kezar 2002, Mitchell 2008). Our four objectives included:

- Develop *Elements of Persuasion* into a university-designated service learning course for Spring 2015
- Create and implement a theory-driven curriculum for *Elements of Persuasion*
- Convene an expert panel to judge students' campaigns produced in the course
- Evaluate content to inform eBaby4u's social media strategy
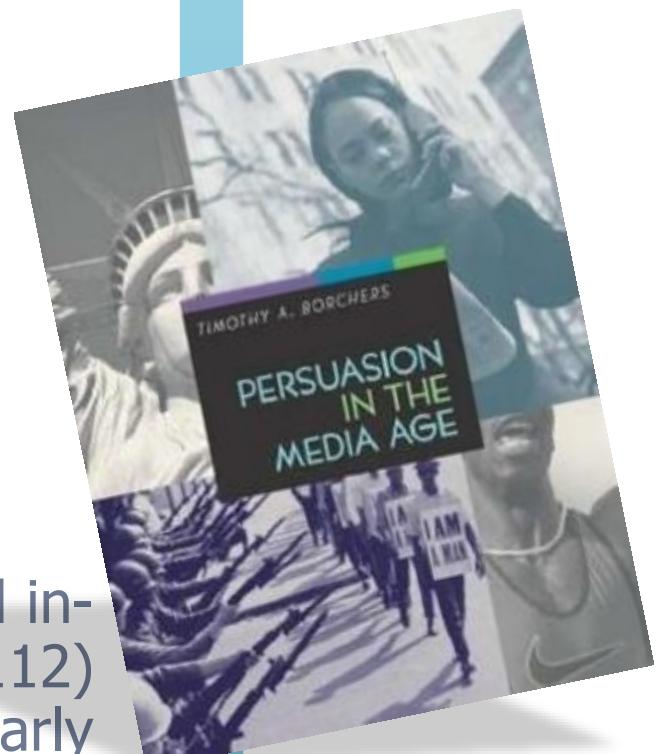
Borchers' (2013) *Persuasion in the Media Age* formed the project's theoretical framework. It includes five key elements necessary for effective persuasion:

Social Media Theory

- **Form relationships** with your target audience through language and images
- **Repetition**. Repeat logos so your audience is constantly exposed to them
- **Electronic eloquence**. Create 'buzz' to retain and expand your audience
- **Commoditization**. Ensure communicated info is truly valuable to your audience
- **Storytelling**. Use real-world examples that resonate with your audience

Results

Twelve teams (~70 students) developed culturally relevant social media toolkits for eBaby4u's target audience of African American teen mothers:

- Teams were required to incorporate all five of Borchers' elements of persuasion into their professional-quality campaigns
- Teams pitched their campaigns to their 'clients' (eBaby's PI and an expert panel of judges with backgrounds in social media) during in-class presentations
- The judges evaluated the 12 in-class presentation on a scale of 0-5 (0=missing entirely, 5=outstanding) and selected 1st and 2nd place winners

Results (cont.)

Criteria on which the in-class presentations were judged:

- **Argument**—Ex: Did the team convince you of their campaign's persuasive effectiveness?
- **Campaign materials & content**—Ex: Were campaign materials and content creative and visually appealing?
- **Printed portfolio**—Ex: Was the team's portfolio professional and credible?
- **Delivery**—Ex: Did their performance enhance the team's argument?
- **Organization**—Ex: Was the structure of the presentation logical, easy to follow?

Recommendations...

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#WellnessWednesday

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#WellnessWednesday The type of formula you choose for your baby matters. Visit our website to find out more: ebaby4u.com

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Conclusions

The eBaby4u Sustainability Project is a case study in successfully harnessing the service learning model to link academic coursework among tech-savvy students with public health persuasion after grant funds are expended.

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