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Recruiting Low-Income Families for Studies of Program Participation

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Guiding Themes

- What are common challenges when recruiting low-income families? What challenges are unexpected, or vary depending on the research study?
- How do broader societal structures affect the recruitment of low-income families, primarily structural racism, historical abuse by researchers, power dynamics and privilege?
- How can researchers address these challenges? What situations can complicate potential strategies?

Our Studies

Two-Parent TANF

- Study on experiences of two-parent families receiving and likely eligible to receive TANF
- Interviews and focus groups with over 80 low-income parents
- Included 5 states: California, Colorado, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Michigan
- Partnership with multiple agencies and organizations in each state



New Jersey Family Leave Study

- Study on the experiences of low-income parents with and without Family Leave Insurance
- Restrictive selection criteria
- Interviews and focus groups with 42 low-income mothers and fathers
- Newark, Trenton, and Camden, New Jersey
- Partnerships with key community-based organizations



Key Burdens of Participation

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- Time constraints
- Resource constraints (transportation, food, childcare)
- Literacy
- Fear and Distrust



Limit Burden of Participating

- Limit paperwork
- Convenient Locations
- Smart Scheduling
- Meeting basic needs: food and childcare
- Compensation

Historical Harms and Other Reasons for Non-Participation

Historical Harms

- Abuse in research
- Lack of benefit from research/extractive research
- Lack of understanding of consent

Establishing Trust

- Recognition of History
- Explaining the research
- Protecting Confidentiality and Privacy
- Mutual Benefits
- Researcher Self-Reflection

Partnering with Community- Based Organizations

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Reasons to Partner

- Learning about target population
- Research partnership
- Establishing physical presence
- Providing a location

Considerations when Partnering

- Is the organization a good fit?
- Relationship-building
- Partners' staff, time and space

Low-income families deserve to be included in research and represented accurately, and the quality of our research depends on their participation.

As researchers, it is our responsibility to make sure that our research design enables the inclusion of low-income families and will interpret their data accurately.



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Thank you!

