

DEEP POVERTY INITIATIVE

Research Action Guide



Researchers are in an excellent position to help address issues of deep poverty in the United States. The following guide includes action steps that researchers can take to participate in this effort.

Conducting Ethical Research with those in Deep Poverty

Conducting research with people in deep poverty requires a particular approach that challenges the systemic factors that perpetuate deep poverty. Some key considerations include:

- Researchers examine their own biases and motivations to avoid further dehumanization, exploitation, and marginalization of those in deep poverty. Scholars must understand how we as researchers perpetuate systems, such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism that marginalize people in deep poverty. This is an ongoing process, and we must constantly engage in dialogue with participants, colleagues, and ourselves to address these issues. There are several resources that can help researchers begin and continue this process:
 - Horn, S.S., Ruck, M.D., & Liben, L.S. (2016). *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, vol. 50, *Equity and Justice in Developmental Science: Theoretical and Methodological Issues*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier (Academic Press imprint) Benson, J.B., Series Editor
 - Lott, B. (2002). Cognitive and behavioral distancing from the poor. *American Psychologist*, 57(2), 100.
 - Williams, W. R. (2009). Struggling with poverty: Implications for theory and policy of increasing research on social class-based stigma. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 9, 37–56.
- Researchers should use methods that address the systemic factors that perpetuate deep poverty. These research methods should honor the autonomy, experiences, and expertise of those living in deep poverty and create opportunities for them to share their stories. Qualitative and participatory action research are uniquely able to accomplish these goals. Researchers should also attend the structural systems of power and privilege that underlie deep poverty and seek to influence policy when possible. Many publications can help researchers begin to explore these issues including the following:
 - Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Limited.

- Grzanka, P. R., Santos, C. E., & Moradi, B. (2017). Intersectionality research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64(5), 453. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000237>
- Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., Becker, A. B., Allen, A. J., Guzman, J. R., & Lichtenstein, R. (2017). Critical issues in developing and following CBPR principles. *Community-based participatory research for health: Advancing social and health equity*, 31-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839918818830>
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2013). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2>
- Lott, B., & Bullock, H.E. (Eds.). (2001). Listening to the voices of the poor [Special issue]. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2).
- Lott, B., & Bullock, H.E. (2007). *Psychology and Economic Injustice: Personal, Professional, and Political Intersections*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mistry, R. S., White, E. S., Chow, K. A., Nenadal, L., & Griffin, K. (2016). A mixed methods approach to equity and justice research: Insights from research on children's reasoning about economic inequality. In S. Horn, M. Ruck, & L. Liben (Editors), *Equity and Justice in Developmental Science: Theoretical and Methodological Issues, Vol 50* (pp. 209-236), Advances in Child Development and Behavior Series. United Kingdom: Elsevier, Academic Press.
- Smith, L., Baranowski, K., Abdel-Salam, L., & McGinley, M. (2018). Youth participatory action research: Agency and unsilence as anti-classist practice. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 4(2), 176-186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tps0000155>

Collect Data on Social Class and Socioeconomic Status

Researchers should routinely collect participant data on social class and socioeconomic status. This data is critical for reporting the generalizability of research results and allowing for meta-analytic aggregation of data and secondary data analysis. Social class and socioeconomic status are complex variables that research measure in a variety of ways. Several articles can serve as an introduction to measuring these variables, such as:

- Aber, L., Morris, P., & Raver, C. (2012). Children, families and poverty: Definitions, trends, emerging science and implications for policy. *Social Policy Report*. 26(3). Society for Research in Child Development. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2379-3988.2012.tb00072.x>
- Diemer, M. A., Mistry, R. S., Wadsworth, M. E., López, I., & Reimers, F. (2013). Best practices in conceptualizing and measuring social class in psychological research. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 13(1), 77-113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12001>
- Liu, W. M., Soleck, G., Hopps, J., Dunston, K., & Pickett Jr, T. (2004). A new framework to understand social class in counseling: The social class worldview model and modern classism theory. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(2), 95-122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00364.x>

Challenging Structures in Academia

Research with those in deep poverty requires careful, thoughtful research that takes time and community investment. Academics must address structural factors that devalue this type of work, like the following:

- As a reviewer and editor of journals, encourage both individual authors and the journals themselves to routinely include social class information as part of submission processes. Consult the “Stop Skipping Class” Initiative from the APA Committee on Socioeconomic Status, for information on how to do this as an individual researcher (<https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/class/>). An example of a journal’s sociocultural policy can be found here: <https://www.srctd.org/research/journals/child-development/child-development-submission-guidelines#SCP>
- As a reviewer and editor, recognize and value the time and commitment necessary to conduct qualitative and participatory action research. Become familiar with these approaches to offer thoughtful critiques and analyses rather than dismissing engaged research because it does not meet criteria often used for experimental data (e.g., it utilizes qualitative or feminist approaches to data analysis or has small sample size).
- In your role as senior faculty or as a member of tenure and promotion committees, challenge criteria for tenure and promotion that directly or indirectly devalue engaged, community-based research. For example, value high quality research that requires community investment and qualitative approaches, rather than solely focusing on quantity of publications. Recognize that this kind of work will often result in publications outside of academic journals, like technical guides, organizational reports, white papers, or blog posts. Consider letters of support for tenure and promotion from community partners, not just other academics. A useful resource for valuing public scholarship in the tenure and promotion process can be found here: <http://imaginingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ScholarshipinPublicKnowledge.pdf>

Outstanding Research Questions

We hope that the APA’s Deep Poverty Initiative will encourage researchers to begin examining questions related to deep poverty. There are several outstanding research questions that researchers can answer.

- What are some new or improved ways of defining and understanding the experience of deep poverty that appropriately capture people living in extreme deprivation?
- What are some meaningful differences between poverty and deep poverty? How do these differences effect psychological health and well-being, brain development, and functioning? How is cumulative disadvantage different for people in deep poverty? How do these differences inform policy, practice, intervention and prevention efforts?
- How do systemic structures facilitate and perpetuate deep poverty? How do we understand the etiology of deep poverty from an interdisciplinary perspective?

- What interventions are most effective at reducing deep poverty? How can coordinated services better help address deep poverty, including effects on well-being and the experience of living in deep poverty?
- How do attitudes about those in deep poverty shape public policy? What are effective interventions for changing people's attitudes about those in deep poverty? What are ways to help people recognize and challenge their own biases about deep poverty?

This document is a product of the American Psychological Association Deep Poverty Initiative Working Group.