



# Using a Hybrid Qualitative Research Design to Explore Healthcare Needs of Vulnerable Populations

**ssrs**

research. *refined.*

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Implications

“Economic inequality is **increasingly linked** to disparities in life expectancy across the income distribution, and these disparities seem to be growing over time.”

- Dhruv Jhullar and Dave A. Chokshi\*

“Poor health also contributes to reduced income, creating a negative feedback loop sometimes referred to as the **health-poverty trap.**”

- Dhruv Jhullar and Dave A. Chokshi\*

\*“Health, Income, & Poverty: Where We Are & What Could Help,” by Dhruv Khullar and Dave A. Chokshi, Health Affairs, October 4, 2018 (<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180817.901935/full/>)



"Researchers conduct qualitative research because they acknowledge the human condition and want to **learn more**, and **think differently**, about a research issue than what can be gleaned from most numerical quantitative studies."

- Margaret R. Roller and Paul J. Lavrakas\*

"[Q]ualitative research is useful at gaining **in-depth, meaningful information** from hard-to-reach, underserved, or hidden populations."

- Margaret R. Roller and Paul J. Lavrakas\*



## Research Goals

Gain a Deeper Understanding of How Society's Most Vulnerable Populations Experience and Interact with the Healthcare System



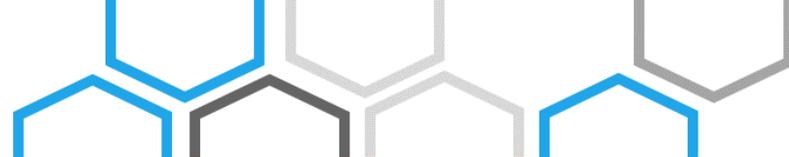
Hear from a demographically and geographically diverse group of low-income participants



Provide a better understanding of the experiences low income populations face attaining and accessing healthcare



Generate patient-centered insights and ideas to improve healthcare delivery systems



## Design & Implementation: Key Challenges

How do we design a study to hear from these populations of interest?

### Hispanics

- Different Countries of Origin
- Different Levels of Acculturation

### African Americans

- Concentrated in urban centers and throughout the south

### Rural Whites

- Geographically Dispersed

### Low-Income Asians

- Lack English Fluency
- Different Countries of Origin

# Design & Implementation: Hybrid & Multi-Method Study Design



## In-Person Focus Groups

Allow for collective sharing of experiences and ideas

Groups with shared ethnicity/cultural background that cluster geographically



## Individual Telephone Depth Interviews (TDIs)

One-on-one conversation allows for more deeper insights into an individual's experience

Wide geographic reach; not constrained by Internet-based limitations



## Online Discussion Boards

Great for sharing experiences, and idea generation

For diverse groups that don't cluster geographically

# Design & Implementation: Hybrid & Multi-Method Study Design



## In-Person Focus Groups

- NYC: Acculturated Hispanic, AA
- LA: Less-acculturated Hispanic, Mixed (Black, White, Asian)
- Cleveland: AA, White
- Atlanta: Less-acculturated Hispanic, AA



## TDIs

- 8 Rural Whites
- 2 Hispanics (Houston-based)



## Online Discussion Boards

- Rural Whites
- Asian Healthcare Activists/Community Leaders

# Research Implementation: Identifying Low Income and Financially Vulnerable Participants

In addition to income, we screened for material hardship indicators, government assistance...



## Material Hardship Indicators

**In the past 12 months, has there been a time you were worried or stressed about having enough money to...**

- Pay your rent or mortgage?
- Pay your gas, oil, or electric bill?
- Buy nutritious meals?



## Government Assistance

**In the past 12 months, have one or more persons in your household received:**

- Food stamps, also known as SNAP benefits?
- Cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)?
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?
- Income from General Assistance (GA)?

# Research Implementation: Identifying Low Income and Financially Vulnerable Participants

...and self-perception of respondents' own financial situation.



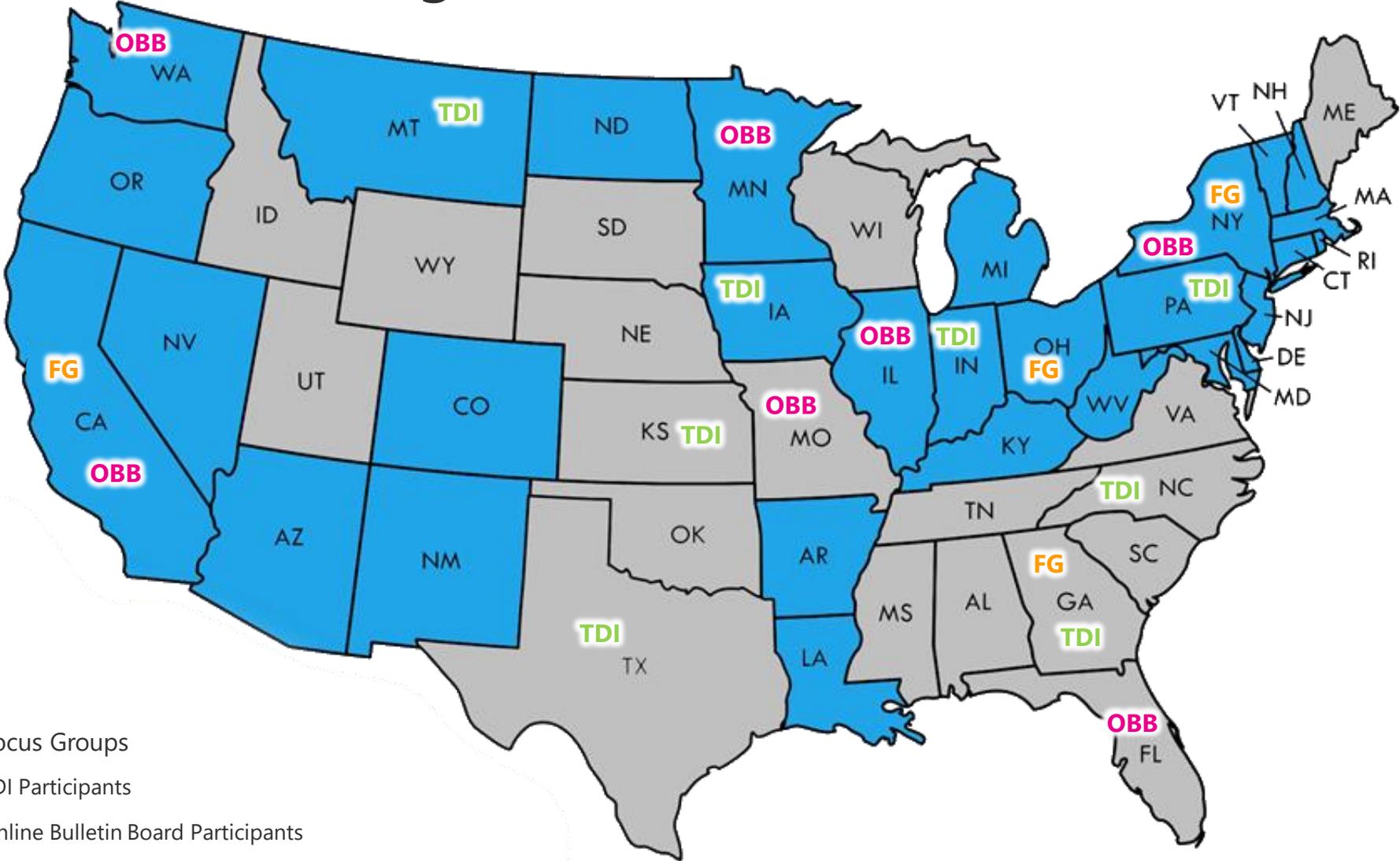
## Self-Perception of Respondents' Own Financial Situation

**When it comes to your household's financial situation, which of the following statements best apply?**

- **We may be blessed in other areas, but when it comes to money we are definitely poor and in need of assistance.**
- *We have difficulty from time to time but generally have enough money to get by.*
- *We are better off financially than most other people and money is generally not an issue for our family.*

# Design & Implementation: Strengths

- Broad representation geographically, and Medicaid expansion vs. non-Medicaid expansion states
- Broad representation of participants by other key demographics, such as uninsured, Medicaid, other insurance, with and without children under age 15 in the household, etc.



■ Medicaid Expansion States      ■ FG Focus Groups  
■ Non-Expansion States      ■ TDI TDI Participants  
■ OBB Online Bulletin Board Participants

# Design & Implementation: Strengths

Heard voices of respondents who shared a mix of experiences; gained a better understanding of the relationship between the physical environment and their health

## Physical Environment - General

**Moderator:** If I were with you and we had a video and I asked you to give me a **one-minute video of your neighborhood**. I'd like to get a sense of what I would see physically. **What might I see?**

**Participant:** "Cops all around, maybe a fight on the corner... somebody smoking weed on their stoop. That's that vibe.....It takes its toll on my mentality, my psyche, my whole. It takes its toll because I don't want to be there. I don't feel like it is a place that I belong. I want better for myself...**Sometimes there is a feeling of hopelessness.**" (AA female, NY)

## Impact of Environment on Health

**Moderator:** Do any of the factors of the environment, any of the other things that you struggle with have an **impact on health and how you feel physically, emotionally?**

**Participant:** "**When I changed my environment my life just got a whole lot better.** People will be telling me I need to move back to the east side to save money and it's like, 'I don't want to save money because I can't deal with that environment.'...**I like waking up, opening the shades and there'll be water.** That's peaceful compared to being on the east side where I'm like, 'Shoot, what was that shooting last night? I hope nobody got killed'" (AA female, Cleveland)

# Design & Implementation: Strengths

Design yielded fresh insights regarding interactions with the healthcare system and ideas to improve healthcare delivery systems

## Interaction With Health Care System

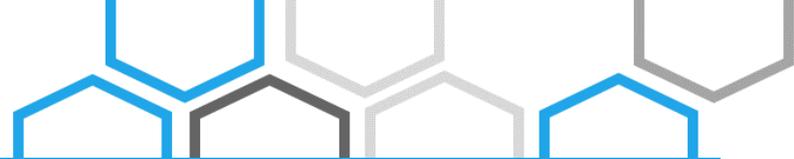
**Moderator:** Think back to your last experience as you've gone to a doctor, a clinic, or a hospital... **[W]hen do you look for medical assistance** and when do you get treatment yourself?

**Participant:** **I almost never go to a doctor.** I don't have medical and all of that... **I start taking things from the pharmacy. If they definitely don't do anything for me, then I go and see a doctor...** Sometimes I've gone to work and they said, "You don't look well." That's when I decide I better go and see a doctor. (Hispanic Female, Los Angeles)

## Idea Generation: Delivery System Improvements

**Moderator:** **[I]f you had a magic wand, and you could improve upon the kind of health care you are getting** and the access to the health care you're getting, do you have some ideas?

**Participant:** "For me, since we live out in the country, going to a doctor is a big thing. **Being able to either Skype or just talk to the doctor on the phone and ask a question, tell him what's wrong, and what the solution should be...**[B]eing out in the country, so far away from a doctor's office, it's hard." (White Female, Rural TDI)



## Design & Implementation: **Limitations**

- Hybrid “all-Qual” research design benefits from allowing ample time at each research phase to inform next steps
  - The expedited project timeline meant elements of the design were conducted simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- Often, qualitative research is not followed up by survey research
  - Results may not be generalizable to the wider population

## Implications for Public Opinion Research

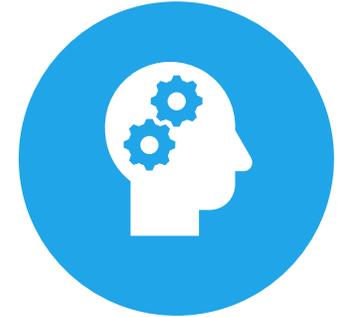
# “Solutioning” – New Research Era



**Listening**



**Context**



**Idea Generation**

## Research Design and Methods Well-suited for:

- Hard-to-reach, geographically-dispersed populations
- Experiences that are not necessarily top-of-mind including:
  - Sensitive topics
  - Challenging issues



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