

**National
Diaper Bank
Network**

Individual Blame or Collective Responsibility?

Existing Mindsets about Diaper Need and Systemic Poverty.

Research methods and sample composition

This supplement provides detailed information on the research that informs FrameWorks' strategic brief on diaper need and poverty in the United States. Below, we outline the research conducted with policy makers, advocates, and researchers, as well as members of the public that provides the evidence base for the brief, describing the methods used and sample composition.

The sector story of diaper need and poverty

To develop an effective strategy for communicating about an issue, it's necessary to identify a set of key ideas to get across. For this project, these ideas were garnered from researchers, advocates, and policy makers working on issues of child and family wellbeing, poverty, and diaper need. FrameWorks researchers conducted 10 one-hour interviews with these stakeholders. Interviews were conducted between September and October 2023 and with participants' permission, were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The list of interviewees was compiled by The National Diaper Bank Network in collaboration with FrameWorks.

Interviews with researchers and advocates in the child and family poverty sector consisted of a series of probing questions designed to capture their understanding about diaper need and poverty, including the cause of diaper need and poverty, its effects, and solutions to address the current problems and the root causes. In each interview, the researcher conducting the interview used a series of prompts and hypothetical scenarios for members of the sector to explain their research, experience, and perspectives, break down complicated relationships, and simplify complex concepts.

Interviews were semi-structured in the sense that, in addition to preset questions, FrameWorks researchers repeatedly asked for elaboration and clarification and encouraged members of the sector to expand on concepts they identified as particularly important.

Analysis employed a basic grounded theory approach.¹ A FrameWorks researcher identified and inductively categorized common themes that emerged in each interview and across the sample. This procedure resulted in a refined set of themes, which researchers supplemented with a review of materials from relevant literature.

Public understandings of diaper need and poverty

A primary goal of this research was to capture the various commonly held assumptions, or cultural models, that members of the public use to make sense of diaper need, poverty, and issues related to the topic. Cultural models are cognitive shortcuts to understanding—ways of interpreting, organizing, and making meaning of the world around us that are shaped through years of experience and expectations and by the beliefs and values embedded in our culture.² These are ways of thinking that are available to all members of a culture, although different models may be activated at different times. Individuals belong to multiple cultures, each of which includes multiple models (e.g., people participate in public cultures at multiple levels, including national and subgroup cultures). In this project, our goal was to explore the models available in public culture in the United States, but it is important to acknowledge that individuals have access to other models from other cultures in which they participate.

In exploring cultural models, we are looking to identify *how* people think rather than *what* they think. Cultural models findings, therefore, differ from public opinion research, which documents people's surface-level responses to questions. By understanding the deep, often tacit assumptions that structure how people think about diaper need and poverty, we are able to understand the obstacles that prevent people from accessing the sector's perspective described in the sector story. We are also able to identify opportunities that communicators can take advantage of; that is, existing ways of thinking that can help people arrive at a fuller understanding of the issue.

To identify cultural models that the public uses to think about issues related to diaper need and poverty in the United States, FrameWorks researchers conducted 20 virtual interviews with

members of the US public over Zoom in February of 2024. A diverse sample of participants was recruited, with variation along key dimensions, including but not limited to geography, socioeconomic status, education, and race and ethnicity (see below).

Cultural models interviews are one-on-one, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately two hours. These interviews are designed to allow researchers to capture broad sets of assumptions, or cultural models, that participants use to make sense of a concept or topic area—in this case, issues related to diaper need and poverty. Interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions covering participants' thinking about poverty in broad terms before focusing more specifically on their thoughts on diaper need, its causes, prevalence, and effects, as well as their thoughts about what, if anything, can or should be done to address poverty generally and diaper need specifically. Researchers approached each interview with this set of topics to cover but allowed participants to determine the direction and nature of the discussion. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with participants' written consent.

All participants were recruited by a professional marketing firm and selected to represent variation along several dimensions. For all participants, this included gender, age, race and ethnicity, geography in the United States, educational background, income, political views, and parental status (as self-reported during the screening process). The sample of members of the US public included 11 men and nine women. Of the 20 participants, nine were between 20 and 39 years old, nine were between 40 and 59 years old, and two were over 60 years old. Three participants identified as Asian, four as Black or African American, five as Hispanic or Latino, and eight as white. In terms of location in the United States, five participants lived in urban areas, five lived in rural areas, and 10 lived in suburban areas. In terms of education, four participants had finished high school, nine had some college education, four had undergraduate degrees, and three had postgraduate degrees. In terms of income, four participants reported an annual income of less than \$30,000, five participants reported a total annual income of between \$30,000 and \$39,000, six reported an income of between \$40,000 and \$69,000, three reported an income of \$70,000 to \$99,000, and two reported an income of between \$150,000 and \$199,000. Five participants described their political affiliation as Independent, nine as Democrat, six as Republican.

To analyze the interviews, researchers used analytical techniques from cognitive and linguistic anthropology to examine how participants understood issues related to diaper need and poverty in the United States.^{5,4} First, researchers identified common ways of talking across the sample to reveal assumptions, relationships, logical steps, and connections that were commonly made but taken for granted throughout an individual's talk and across the set of interviews. In short, the analysis involved discerning patterns in both what participants said (i.e., how they related, explained, and understood things) and what they did not say (i.e., assumptions and implied relationships). In many cases, analysis revealed conflicting models that people brought to bear on the same issue. In such cases, one conflicting way of understanding was typically found to be dominant over the other in that it more consistently

and deeply shaped participants' thinking (in other words, participants generally drew on this model with greater frequency and relied more heavily on this model in arriving at conclusions). As part of this process, researchers compared emerging findings to the findings from previous cultural models research, using this as a check to make sure that they had not missed or misunderstood any important models. Researchers then came back together and arrived at a synthesized set of findings.

Analysis was centered on ways of understanding that were shared across participants. Cultural models research is designed to identify common ways of thinking that can be identified across a sample. While there is no hard and fast rule regarding the percentage used to identify what counts as shared, models reported are typically found in the large majority of interviews. Models found in a smaller percentage of interviews are reported only if there is a clear reason that these models only appeared in a limited set of interviews (e.g., the model reflected the thinking of a particular subgroup of people).

While a sample of 20 participants is too small to ensure that the sample is perfectly *statistically* representative, its demographic variability is adequate to ensure that the identified patterns in thinking are *shared* across different groups within the United States. While larger sample sizes are needed to investigate *variability* within a population or to allow for statistically significant comparisons between groups, the goal of cultural models analysis is to describe *common* ways of understanding within a population. As a result, for cultural models research, sample size is determined by the concept of saturation: A sample is considered to be a satisfying size when new data do not shed any further light on underlying patterns of thinking within a population. For this project, our analyses confirmed that a sample size of 20 interviews was sufficient to reach a point of saturation as far as cultural models of diaper need and poverty in the United States were concerned.

Endnotes

1. Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research (observations)*. Aldine.
2. Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage.
3. Shore, B. (1998). *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning*. Oxford University Press.
4. Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods*. Palgrave Macmillan.

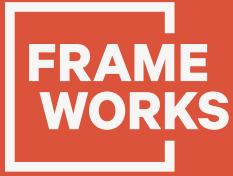
About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis[®], offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

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About the National Diaper Bank Network

The National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN) leads a nationwide movement working to end poverty in the U.S. so children, families, and individuals can access the material basic needs that all people require to thrive...including clean, dry diapers, period supplies and other basic necessities. Launched in 2011, its active membership includes more than 300 basic needs banks serving local communities in all 50 US states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. More information on NDBN and diaper need is available at nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org, and on [X \(@DiaperNetwork\)](#), [Instagram \(@DiaperNetwork\)](#) and [Facebook \(facebook.com/NationalDiaperBankNetwork\)](https://facebook.com/NationalDiaperBankNetwork).



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FrameWorks Institute. (2024). *Diaper Need and Poverty: Individual Blame or Collective Responsibility?: research methods and sample composition*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

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