



Promoting participation of under-represented families in research

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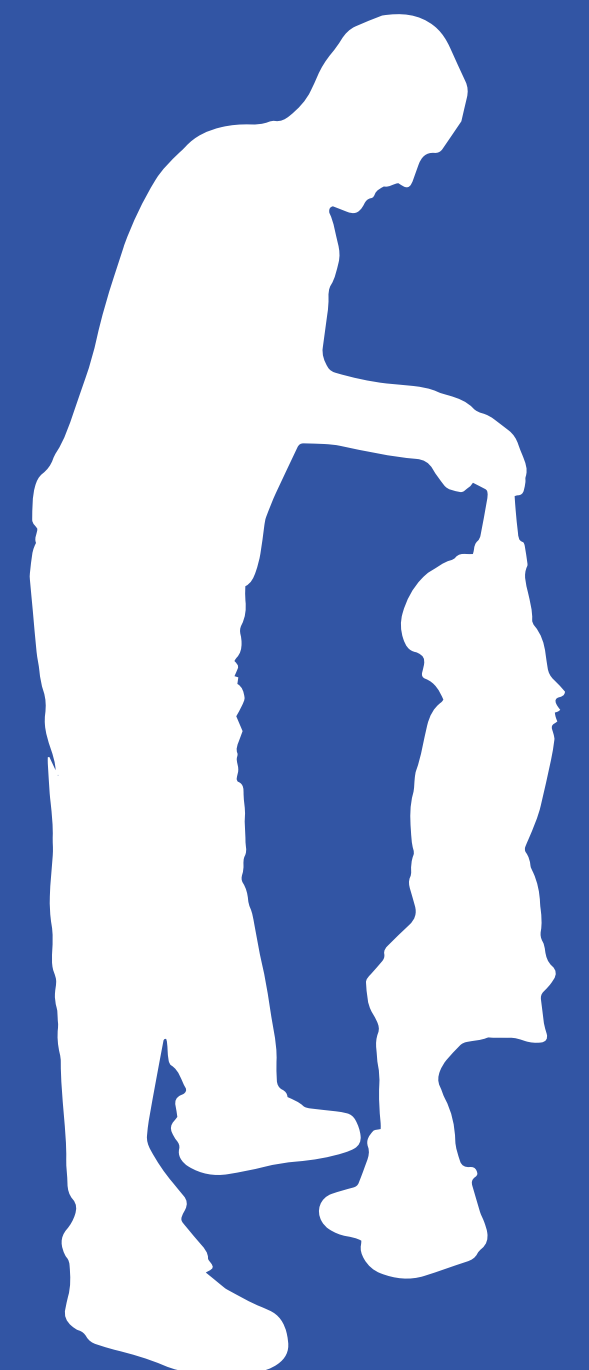
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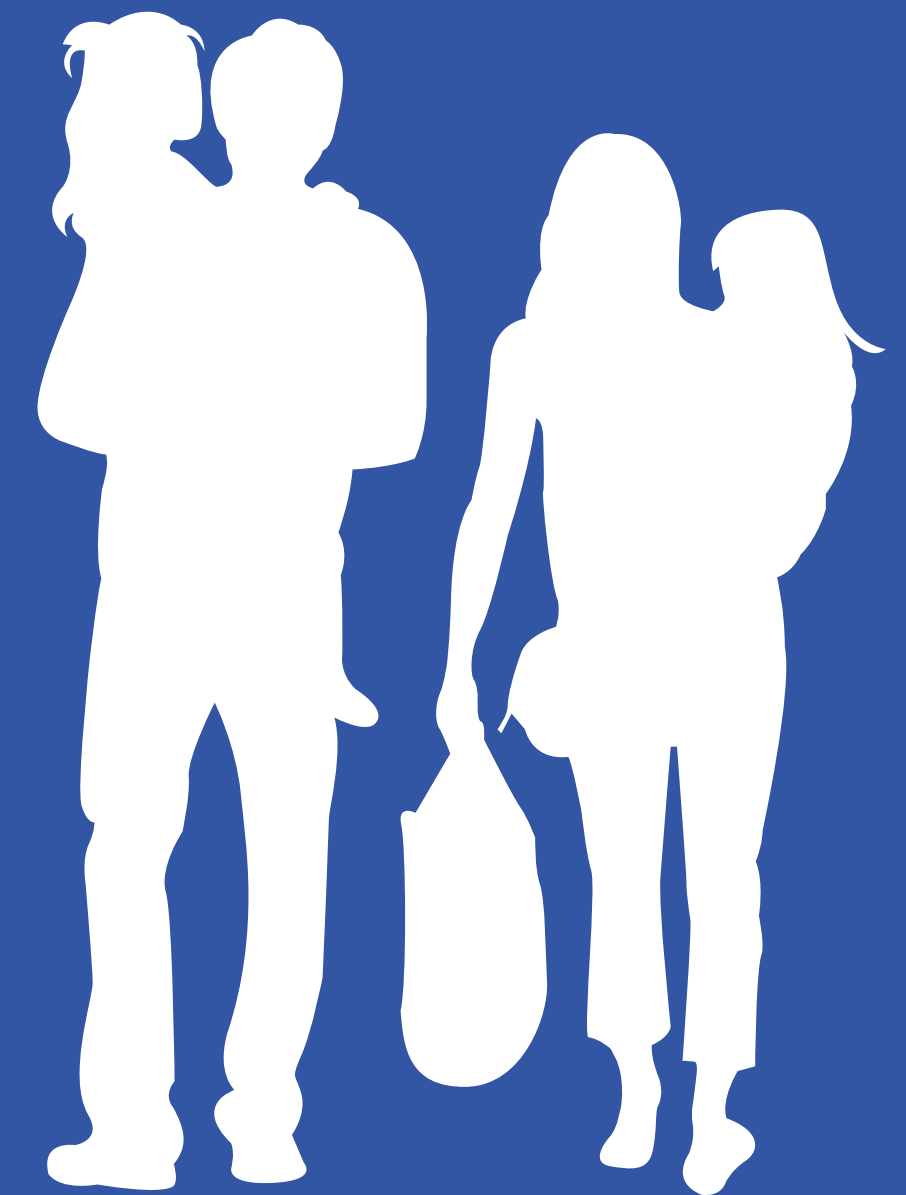
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Our Research:

We interviewed the parents/carers of young children (aged 0-14 years old) from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the NGO stakeholders who work with these families in the UK (London) and China (Beijing) to understand:

- What are the unique barriers, challenges and issues impacting on socio-economically disadvantaged parents'/caregivers' participation in education research?
- How do culture, social class, gender and ethnicity influence these challenges?
- What would support, encourage and enable socio-economically disadvantaged parents/caregivers to take part in education research?



England (London):



13 parents/caregivers of an annual family income of

£7400 or less

4 NGO stakeholders

China (Beijing):



10 parents/caregivers of an annual family income of

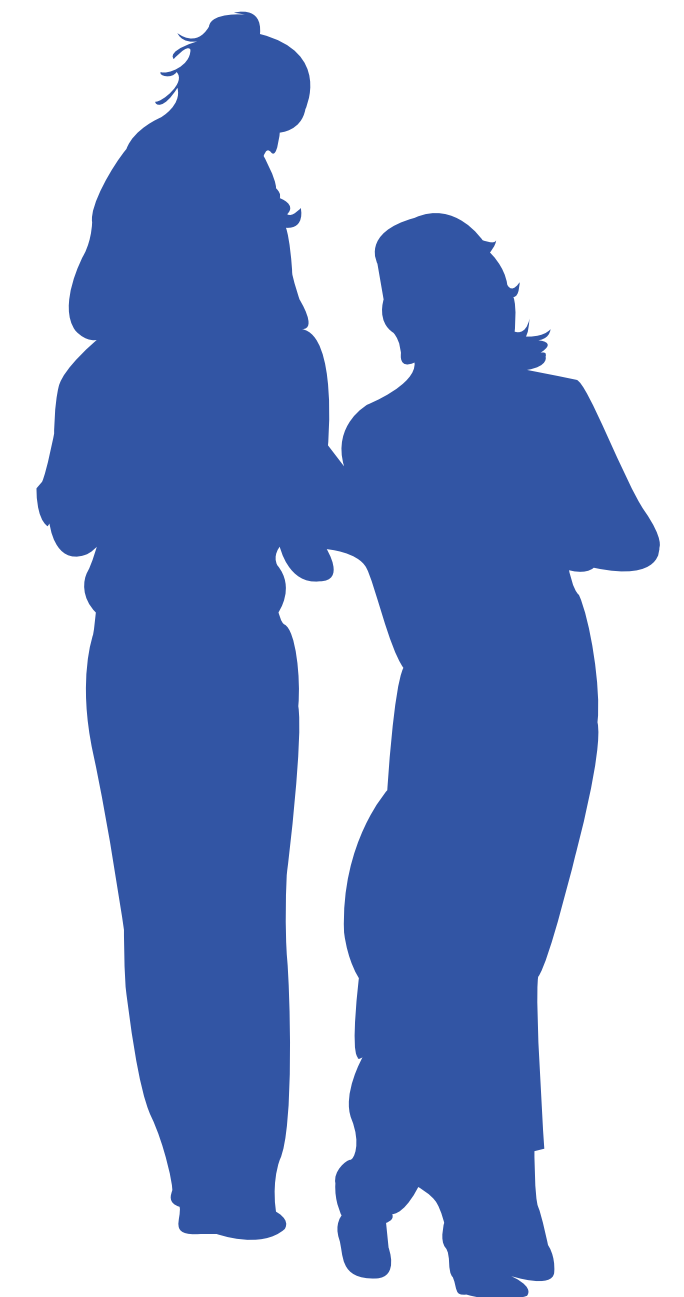
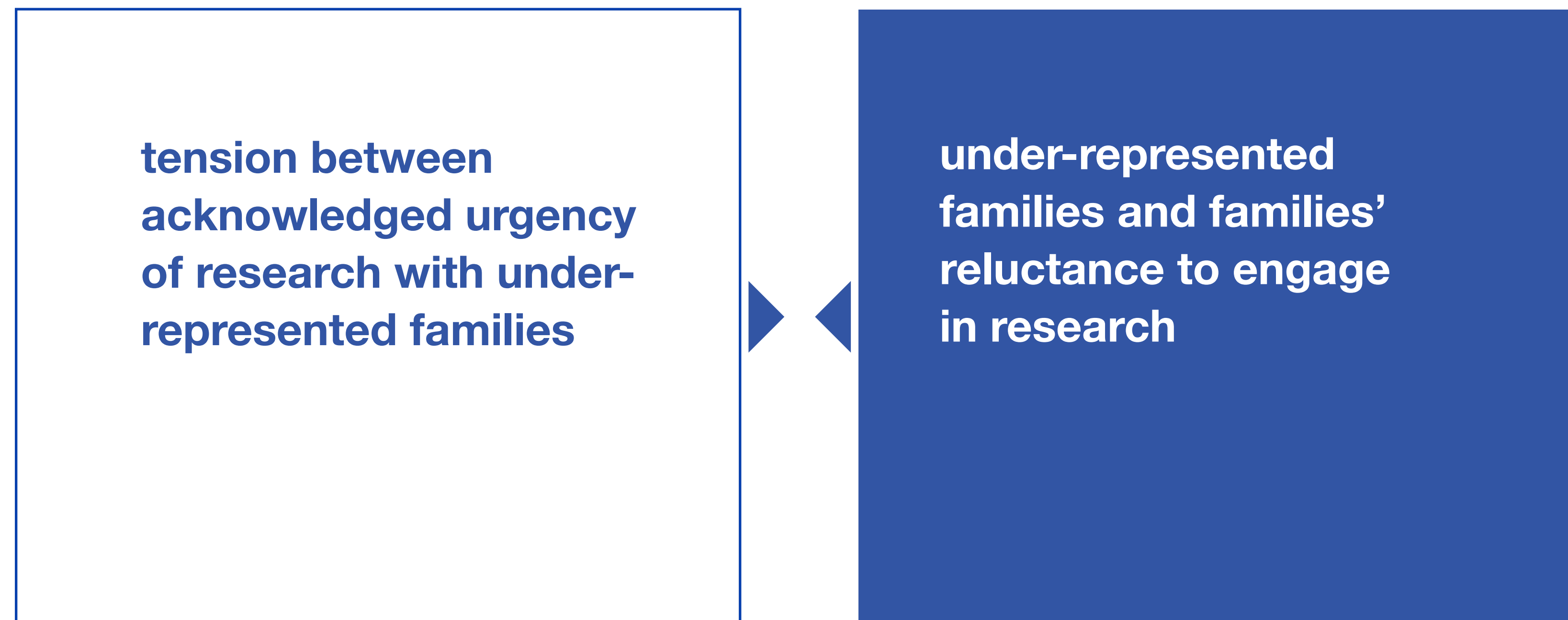
RMB¥100,000 or less;

or having high school education level or lower; or with disability

3 NGO stakeholders

What are our research findings?

- The tension between acknowledged urgency of research with under-represented families and families' reluctance to engage in research



Urgency of research with under-represented families

- All Chinese parents/carers: their first-time participation in education research because “[I] never heard of [any opportunities for participating in education research] before” (Li, Chinese mother with disability, Beijing)
- “If people don’t speak up now, how long is it going to go on for?” (Mandy, White British mother, London)
- “If it’s all types of people, then you have a better understanding on what’s happening” (Hanan, British Indian mother, London)



“To capture the experiences of families experiencing disadvantage is vital to understand what will best address tackling those disadvantages. Stripping away some of the academic conventions and researchers presenting as ‘human’, with empathy, open ears and active listeners not wedded to a script will help. Encouraging recruitment of research participants through introductions via their own community networks, prompted by researchers being sounding boards, hearing the real pressures, worries, experiences and aspirations of disadvantaged parents (whether affiliated to research questions or not) has got to be worth growing as a research technique. Time, time is key to grow trusting relationships. Time being a luxury not afforded to many researchers or parents.”

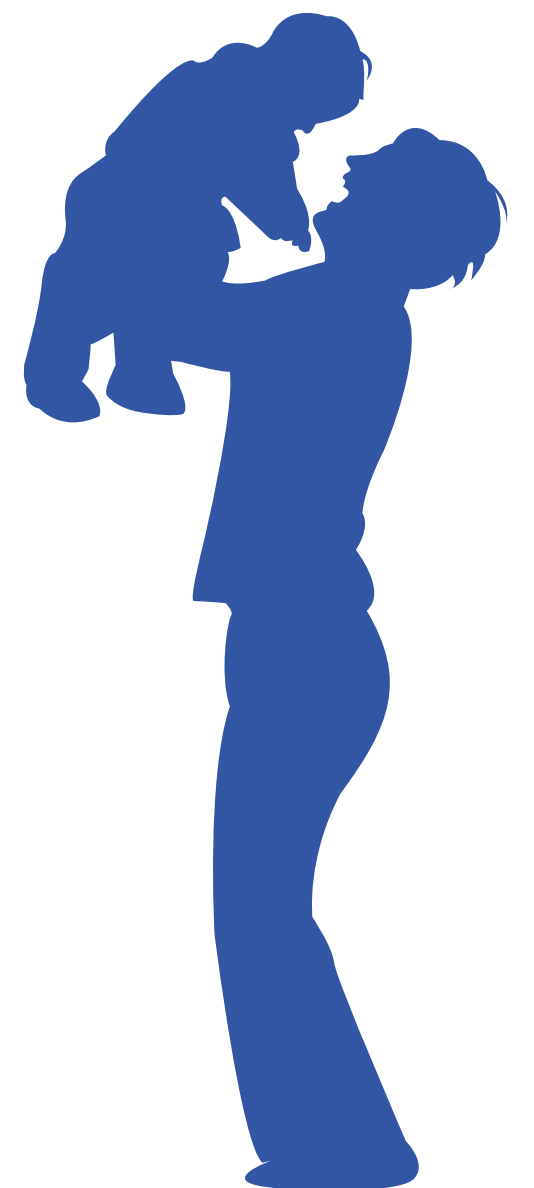
Dr. Deboraah Bell, Local Authority stakeholder

Under-represented families' reluctance to engage in research

- **Targeted for being a problem:** “Sometimes they might think that they’re being targeted because they’re low income which might makes them feel a bit at unease, maybe ashamed that they’re low income” (Nuria, British Pakistani mother, London)
- **Lack of trust:** “I’m Romanian, my husband is Romanian and because we’ve been raised in Communism part of our lives, people are very ... they don’t trust researchers.” (Corina, Romanian mother, London)
- **Psychological burdens (Embarrassment/Anxiety/Stress/Shame/Fear):** “Actually I had been feeling very nervous from 6.30pm [an hour ago], I kept looking at my phone, wandering what you are going to ask and what I should answer. Because I don’t have any achievements in educating my two children. I just take charge of them, shout at them if needed. I am unsure how to answer your questions, so I sent you a message. Now after talking with you, I am no longer nervous. At first, I was very nervous.” (Lin, Chinese mother, Beijing)
- **Not knowing or responding in the ‘right’ way:** ‘I don’t know education...I am bad at speaking. I don’t answer [questions] well...’ (Xin, Chinese grandfather, Beijing)
- **Lack of impacts:** “I do think that a lot of people just don’t see the system working for them and I think they don’t really think it’s worth spending 20 minutes talking about it because nothing’s going to change” (Michelle, White British mother, London)

“The research you conducted was extremely important since it focused specifically gaining insight on vulnerable population groups and I think presenting the challenges you all faced was relatable to all qualitative researchers.”

Hannah Froome, PhD student,
Brunel University London



What kind of research appeals to under-represented families?

- Highly relevant research topics (parents recognise its importance and usefulness)
- Flexibility in time and ways of communication to accommodate their needs:
 - ✓ London-based parents/carers: Going to parents'/caregivers' convenient location is crucial (e.g., playgroups, drop-in centres)
 - ✓ Beijing-based parents/carers: Different needs and preferences
- Providing immediate benefits (particularly parental knowledge/skills, children's activities, etc.)
- Providing follow-ups and long-term practical impacts



“In highly diverse multilingual societies, considering carefully how to include families who use English as an additional language is imperative. Working within the community from the very early stages of study design is ideal. However, where this is harder, for instance, with multiple languages and small budgets, flexibility, sensitivity and approachability are key. One size doesn't fit all and often families will be keen to work with the English they do have, but other times translation (whether through strangers, family members or using technical support) might be preferred.”

Dr Katya Saville, IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society

Our reflections:

- Verbal consent might be easier to achieve than written consent:
 - ‘Typical’ research information leaflet and consent form can be overwhelming.
 - Ethical concerns
- Trusted gatekeepers are key to successful access.
- Being less ‘professional’/ ‘formal’ can help parents to open up.
- Sometimes, ‘off-topic’ conversation is meaningful (building rapport).
- Fast funding timeframes do not support the need to develop relationships over time. If we are serious about making our research inclusive, we need longer project times.
- Collaboration with NGOs as equal partners may help overcome some of the barriers.

“Adding your voice to research makes it better and more relevant – and more likely to have a positive impact on the world!”

Helen Craig, UCL Co-Production Collective



Please check out the following QR codes for more information about the research and its impact activities:

The Video-Recording of the Impact Engagement Meeting:



The Webpage of Network for Innovative Research with Children and Young People (NIRC):

