

The Future of U.S. Poverty Policy and Research

September 9, 2:00-5:30 p.m.

G10 Biotech, Cornell University

SCHEDULE

2:00-2:15 p.m.

Welcome and Introduction

[Daniel Lichter](#), Persistent Poverty Team Member & Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Professor of Sociology, and Director of the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center, Cornell University

[David Harris](#), Vice Provost of the Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology, Cornell University

2:15-2:50 p.m.

Anti-poverty Research and Policy in the United States:

Where are we Headed?

[Timothy Smeeding](#), Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Public Affairs, La Follette School of Public Affairs, and Director of the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract: Once we have improved our measures of poverty, we will find that low pay and unstable family structures are key forces which will continue to perpetuate poverty for undereducated workers and their children. We will have to deal with both the causes and consequences of these forces. Because low earnings are tied to low educational attainment and incarceration, especially amongst younger minority men, serious attention to programs linking these persons to jobs and earnings supports will be needed. Also the rate of out of wedlock childbirth must be reduced by giving younger women an attractive future alternative to childbirth before education and partnering are complete. In all cases a tight labor market will help us to achieve our anti-poverty policy goals, despite the fact that we may never see another employment period like the late 1990's.

Bio: Tim Smeeding is the Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Public Affairs and Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and director of the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). He is the founder and director emeritus of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS), which he began in 1983. His recent research papers have been on inequality, wealth, intergenerational mobility and poverty in national and cross-national contexts. His CV and recent papers can be found at:

<http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/facultystaff/smeeding-timothy.html>

2:50-3:25 p.m.

Issues in Measuring Poverty and in its Elimination

[Richard Burkhauser](#), Sarah Gibson Blanding Professor, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University

Abstract: Researchers have long urged a change in our official measure of poverty (Citro and Michael 1995). The election of a new Administration suggests that real change in our official poverty measure is now possible. My talk based on a recent OECD sponsored conference on poverty measurement issues will outline what Americans can learn from European efforts to measure poverty, including issues related to the use of the Current Population Survey to measure

poverty and inequality. It will then focus on what lessons can be drawn from 1990s style welfare reform targeted at single mothers and its value as a model for the reduction of poverty for working age people with disabilities.

Bio: Richard V. Burkhauser is the Sarah Gibson Blanding Professor of Public Policy in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University. His professional career has focused on how public policies affect the economic behavior and well-being of vulnerable populations, e.g., older persons, people with disabilities, low-skilled workers. He has published widely on these topics in journals of demography, economics, gerontology, as well as public policy. He received his PhD in Economics from the University of Chicago.

3:25-4:00 p.m.

Update from the Front: War of Poverty Still Mired Down

[Ron Haskins](#), Co-director, Center on Children and Families, Brookings Institution

Abstract: Since Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty in the mid-1960s, poverty – especially child poverty – has proven difficult to defeat. There are three major reasons: too many people work too little; wages at the bottom of the distribution are no higher today than they were three decades ago; and the number of mother-headed families – which are around five times as likely to be poor as married-couple families – has exploded. Nonetheless, the U.S. has figured out two limited but effective strategies for reducing poverty. The first, amazingly enough, is to give people money, as we do with elderly through Social Security. The second is to encourage, cajole, or force able-bodied people to work, even at low wage jobs, and provide them with subsidies in the form of cash, child care, food stamps, health insurance, and other benefits. Obviously, we need additional strategies. The three most obvious, which will be the focus of the presentation, are to strengthen preschool, K-12, and postsecondary education; to increase both work levels and work supports, especially among low-skill males; and to increase the number of children born and raised by married parents.

Bio: Ron Haskins is a senior fellow in the Economic Studies Program and co-director of the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution and senior consultant at the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore. He is the author of *Work Over Welfare: The Inside Story of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law* (Brookings, 2006), the co-author of *Getting Ahead or Losing Ground: Economic Mobility in America* (Pew Charitable Trusts and Brookings, 2008), and a senior editor of *The Future of Children*. In 2002 he was the Senior Advisor to the President for Welfare Policy at the White House. Prior to joining Brookings and Casey, he spent 14 years on the staff of the House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee.

4:00-4:45 p.m.

Discussion

4:45-5:30 pm.

Reception