



Connecting the dots between poverty, inequality, and mobility

Agenda

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Bibiana Restaurant (1100 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C.)

Dinner 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Welcome and Introduction

Heather Boushey, Executive Director and Chief Economist,
Washington Center for Equitable Growth

Keynote Remarks

Neel Kashkari, President and Chief Executive Officer,
Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Friday, October 12, 2018

National Union Building (918 F St. NW, Washington, D.C., 2nd Floor South)

Breakfast 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions 9:00 – 9:15 a.m.

Heather Boushey, Executive Director and Chief Economist,
Washington Center for Equitable Growth

Session I: Metrics and Measurement 9:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Moderator: **Greg Acs**, Vice President, Income and Benefits
Policy Center, Urban Institute

Both inequality and intergenerational mobility can be measured many different ways, and the choice of metrics can be a powerful driver of the story that emerges. The goal of opening the day with this conversation is to agree on baseline definitions among participants that inform conversation for the rest of the day so that we have a shared understanding of what we're talking about and why.

Topics to cover:

- What are the right mobility and inequality metrics to measure intergenerational mobility if we think that inequality might matter for opportunity? For example, absolute versus relative mobility and the Gini coefficient versus the 90-10 ratio.
- What kind of economic resources matter most—earnings, income, wealth? What’s the right unit of measurement—family or individual?
- What are the levels and trends in intergenerational mobility and their relationship to inequality, and what do these big picture observations suggest about channels connecting the two?
- What are the implications of the inherently backward-looking nature of comparing economic outcomes between parent and child? How should we be thinking about metrics and measurement choices in order to help make a historical analysis predictive of future trends?

Break 10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Session II: The Development of Human Potential 10:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Moderator: **Isabel V. Sawhill**, Senior Fellow, Economic Studies and Center on Children and Families, Brookings Institution

Human capital acquisition is a key driver of intergenerational mobility. A wide-ranging body of research points to the myriad ways via which economic inequality could be impeding the acquisition and cultivation of human capital across the life cycle with implications for economic mobility. The goal of this session is to identify what we know and what remains under-researched regarding the channels via which inequality could be impeding the development of human potential.

Topics to cover:

- What does the research on the importance of health suggest about the role of public policy in shaping equality of opportunity? How, if at all, does the *distribution* of health-related outcomes matter for mobility-relevant outcomes?
- What is the role of parental investments in their children—both financial investments, as well as investment of time? What is the relative impact of quantity vs. quality of those investments?
- What is the role of financial resources in the income test score gap, and what are the institutional factors such as residential segregation and place-based disparities?
- What is the role of social capital and social networks in facilitating the acquisition of human capital, and how do they interact with other channels linking the transmission of parental advantage to child, including those mentioned above?
- What aspects of human capital development that occur later in life might we be overlooking?
- How does the emerging research in this field shape policy implications for an evidence-backed approach to jump-starting mobility?

Lunch 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

Session III: The Deployment of Human Potential in the Labor Market 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Moderator: Angela Hanks, Director, Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, Center for Law and Social Policy

While standard accounts of barriers to upward mobility focus on the acquisition and development of human capital, an emerging body of research suggests that equally “humanly capitalized” individuals can enter the labor market and be rewarded very differently for the same skills. The goal of this session is to explore how the changing structure of the labor market, eroding worker bargaining power, and persistent gender, sexual, racial, and ethnic discrimination could be standing in the way of people fully deploying their potential in ways that have implications for intergenerational mobility.

Topics to cover:

- How has the structure of the labor market—such as the decline in worker bargaining power, the fissuring of the workplace, and the erosion of career ladders—changed in ways that might depress today’s earnings and therefore impede today’s adults’ ability to out-earn their parents?
- How could persistent gender and racial discrimination be intermediating the effective deployment of human potential in the labor market?
- How does the emerging research in this field shape policy implications for an evidence-backed approach to jump-starting mobility?

Break 3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Session IV: Household Balance Sheets and the Deployment of Human Potential 3:15 – 4:45 p.m.

Moderator: Ida Rademacher, Vice President and Executive Director, Financial Security Program, Aspen Institute

While standard accounts of barriers to upward mobility focus on the role of family economic resources in childhood and how they relate to the acquisition and cultivation of human capital, family balance sheets also have implications for decision-making that follow people into young adulthood. Multigenerational portfolios of assets and debt have implications for how people weigh decisions about higher education and jobs, as well as their comfort level with risk-taking about those decisions. The goal of this session is to understand how family balance sheets influence individuals’ ability to fully utilize their human capital and the implications for upward mobility across generations.

Topics to cover:

- What kind of economic resources matter most when seeking to understand individuals’ choices about whether and how to pursue higher education and different jobs—earnings, income, wealth? Why do these resources matter? For instance, does their value stem from what they can buy or because of their insurance function?
- What are the measurement challenges to trying to capture how parental resources continue to shape individuals’ “choices” in early adulthood?
- What are the potential implications for intergenerational mobility of the growth in student debt, and how can we capture that?
- How does the emerging research in this field shape policy implications for an evidence-backed approach to jump-starting mobility?

Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks 4:45 – 5:15 p.m.

Elisabeth Jacobs, Senior Director, Family Economic Security,
Washington Center for Equitable Growth