

Researchers Speak: Insights about Family Stability and Self-Sufficiency

A VIEWER'S GUIDE

PART 1 | WHY WE CREATED THIS VIDEO COLLECTION

Researchers often have valuable insights for program leaders and policymakers. However, their research is typically presented in formats and contexts that don't speak directly to those who can make the best use of it. With these short videos (about 3 minutes long), we seek to bring relevant, timely research to everyone interested in reducing poverty and increasing family stability in the United States. Each video offers a few critical messages. Our hope is that these videos, and this viewer's guide, provoke your thinking, expand your dialogue, and give you ideas for how to strategically advance your work.

All four videos are available here – <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-focus-areas/family-support/additionaltopics/fssrc> – alongside the other products of the Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium.

PART 2 | A SNAPSHOT OF THE VIDEOS IN THIS COLLECTION

VIDEO TITLE AND SCHOLAR	FOCUS OF THE VIDEO	RECOMMENDED VIEWERS AND USES OF THE VIDEO		
		POLICYMAKERS	PROGRAM STAFF	SCHOLARS
PLACE AND POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES Scott Allard	The shifting geography of poverty in metropolitan America has important implications for the anti-poverty safety net	Expands the thinking of elected officials, philanthropic organizations, and public advocacy groups	Provides a big picture perspective for health and human service agencies, workforce development agencies, and nonprofit service providers	Serves scholars across the fields of social science, public policy, and social work who are interested in poverty, inequality, race, and place
MATERIAL HARDSHIP AND THE SAFETY NET Colleen Heflin	Meeting basic needs gives families a foundation that helps move them forward on the path to self-sufficiency	Gives policymakers concrete definitions of material hardship	Details how hardship can make it difficult to comply with the burden of administrative requirements	Deepens discussions of evidence-based policy
ENGAGING DADS IN FAMILY PROGRAMS Greg Fabiano	Working with whole families, including fathers and father figures, can make a positive difference	Reminds decision makers of the importance of including and engaging fathers in policy and programming	Can be used by early childhood education, child support, or WIC offices to spur creative ideas for engagement strategies	Provides a succinct description of a logic/program model and of how to design for intended outcomes
IMPROVING SERVICES BY REDESIGN Jodi Sandfort	Attending to how organizational and program resources are directed is a central responsibility of managers	Reminds policymakers of the importance of operational capacity for implementation	Gives program staff ideas for new ways to construct solutions to achieve desired outcomes	Narrows the gap between people who know how to do good programming and people who study it

PART 3 | HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF EACH VIDEO

We recommend a set of four steps taking a total of about 15 minutes.

1. VIEW ANY ONE OF THE VIDEOS (3 MIN)

Videos can be viewed in any sequence, or independently of each other. We recommend watching with at least one colleague.

2. EXPLORE THE MAIN THEMES OF THE VIDEO (5 MIN)

Discuss the reflection questions for each video on the “Closer Look at Each Video” starting on the next page.

3. REVIEW THE VIDEO ONE MORE TIME (3 MIN)

You may use the optional notetaker form to jot down the points that are most relevant to your work and your community.

4. ACT ON WHAT YOU’VE SEEN AND HEARD (4 MIN)

What is one next step you want to take? What additional reading or resources would you like to explore?

A CLOSER LOOK AT EACH VIDEO

PLACE AND POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES | Scott W. Allard (sallard@uw.edu)

Key terms

- Urban: The principal city or primary municipalities in a metropolitan area as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), as well as municipalities in metropolitan areas with more than 100,000 residents
- Suburban: the counties, municipalities, and census tracts (in incorporated and unincorporated areas) that neighbor the principal city or cities in a metropolitan area
- Poverty: Individuals in households with incomes at or below the federal poverty line (\$19,073 for a family of three with two children in 2014)
- For details on definitions, see Allard, Scott W. 2017. *Places in Need: The Changing Geography of Poverty*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Reflection questions

- How have poverty and need changed in your region or community over the past 30 years?
- What do the people you work with think about how the changes in the geography of poverty matter for your programs and mission?
- What are your strategies for engaging state and local elected officials to respond to areas of rising need in your community?
- How can your organization support the emergence of a new generation of local leaders who understand the needs of vulnerable communities? Which local partners can help make a case for greater public and private support of safety net programs?

Further reading and resources

- Allard, Scott W. (2017). *Places in Need: The Changing Geography of Poverty*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Berube, Alan, and Elizabeth Kneebone. (2013). *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Frey, William H. (2014). *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Lichter, Daniel T., Domenico Parisi, and Michael C. Taquino. (2015). "Toward a New Macro-Segregation? Decomposing Segregation Within and Between Metropolitan Cities and Suburbs." *American Sociological Review*, 80(4):843-873.
- Murphy, Alexandra K., and Danielle Wallace. (2010). "Opportunities for Making Ends Meet and Upward Mobility: Differences in Organizational Deprivation Across Urban and Suburban Poor Neighborhoods." *Social Science Quarterly*, 91 (5):1164-1186.

MATERIAL HARDSHIP AND THE SAFETY NET | Colleen Heflin (cmheflin@syr.edu)

Key terms

- **Material hardship:** the inability to meet basic needs such as food, medical care, housing, and other essential expenses

Reflection questions

- How do you observe material hardship among your clients? What does it look like?
- How does material hardship make it difficult to meet eligibility requirements for the programs you administer?
- What would need to change so that material hardship was no longer an obstacle to meeting eligibility requirements?

Further Reading and resources

- Heflin, Colleen. (2016). "Family Stability and Material Hardship: Results from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation." Published as part of a special issue on uneven recoveries from the Great Recession in the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*; 37(3), 359-372.
- Webpage on the Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium:
<https://www.opressrc.org/content/family-self-sufficiency-and-stability-research-consortium>

Key terms

- **Father:** any male caregiver; for example, biological or adoptive parents, stepfather; grandfather, mother's partner; or other relatives
- **Coaching Our Children: Heightening Essential Skills (COACHES):** A program specifically developed to engage and retain fathers in behavioral parent management classes. The program uses sports or another engaging, shared parent-child activity to help fathers practice effective parenting strategies.

Reflection questions

- What are you already doing to engage fathers effectively? What other possibilities does this research raise for you?
- Reflect on the policies you are involved in. How broadly do they support and acknowledge the contributions of dads?
- Review the resources below. What ideas do they generate?

Further reading and resources

- Website of the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network: www.frpn.org
- Website of the National Fatherhood Initiative: www.fatherhood.org
- Website of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse: www.fatherhood.gov

Key terms

- **Human-centered design:** Considering how people use and provide services when shaping organizational approaches to implementing programs or policies
- **Prototype:** Developing potential ideas for solving problems or challenges, implementing them in quick tests, and only making final decisions for large-scale adoption after you see what works
- **Innovation:** Something new tried in a particular context. It is not an invention, but rather, something new to that place.

Reflection questions

- How much of your organizational resources focus on programs rather than on people who receive services?
- Do you have regular communication mechanisms between frontline providers and managers? How might you develop organizational routines for using that knowledge to develop and adjust programs?
- Talk with others about persistent service problems that require an innovative approach. How might you support the right people in tackling these challenges with new ideas and tools?

Further Reading and Resources

- “Applying Design Thinking to the Social Sector” (e-case: <https://hubertproject.org/hubert-material/360/>)
- Jodi R. Sandfort. (2018). “Theoretical Foundations and Design Principles to Improve Policy and Program Implementation.” *Handbook of American Public Administration*. Edmund C. Stazyk and H. George Frederickson, editors, pp. 475-497.