

CURRICULUM VITAE

Susan E. Mayer

ADDRESS

Harris School of Public Policy Studies
University of Chicago
1307 E. 60th St.
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EDUCATION

Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois

Ph.D. in
Sociology (June 1986)

Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

M.A. in
Sociology (December 1981)

Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

B.A. in
Sociology (June 1974)

EMPLOYMENT

Professor, Professor Emeritus Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies and the College, University of Chicago, 2003- present.

Dean, Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies University of Chicago, July 2002 – July, 2009.

Associate Professor, Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies and the College, University of Chicago, July 1996 – 2003.

Deputy Director, Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research, July 2000 to 2002.

Director, Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research, July 1997 – July 2000.

Visiting Professor, Northwestern University, September 1996 - April, 1997.

Assistant Professor, Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies and the College, University of Chicago, July 1989 - July 1996.

Research Associate, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, June, 1986 - June 30, 1989.

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Mayer, S.E. & Paul E. Peterson (eds.). (1999). *Earning and Learning: How Schools Matter*. (1999). Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

Mayer, S.E. 1997. *What Money Can't Buy: Family Income and Children's Life Chances*. (1997), Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Excerpt reprinted in *Poverty and Wealth in America: A Reader* edited by Dalton Conley. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2002.

Articles and Book Chapters

Duckworth, A. L., Ko, A., Milkman, K. L., Kay, J. S. +27 authors (2025). A national megastudy shows that email nudges to elementary school teachers boost student math achievement, particularly when personalized. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 122(13), e2418616122.

Shah., R., Kalil, A., & Mayer (2025). Engaging parents with preschools: Evidence from a field experiment. In press, *Applied Economics*

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., Oreopoulos, P., & Shah, R. (2024). Making a song and dance about it: The effectiveness of teaching young children vocabulary with animated music videos (2024). Revise and resubmit, *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., Delgado, W., & Gennetian, L. (2024). The education gradient in parental time investment and subjective well-being. *Review of Economics of the Household*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-024-09734-5>

Guryan, Jonathan and Jens Ludwig, Monica P. Bhatt, Philip J. Cook, Jonathan M. V. Davis, Kenneth Dodge, George Farkas, Roland G. Fryer Jr., Susan Mayer, Harold Pollack, Laurence Steinberg, and Greg Stoddard. (2023). Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes among Adolescents.” *American Economic Review* 2023, 113(3): 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20210434>

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Shah, R. (2023). Scarcity and inattention. *Journal of Behavioral Economics for Policy*, 7, 35-42.

Mayer, S., Kalil, A., Delgado, W., Liu, H., Rury, D., & Shah, R. (2023) How much does parent engagement matter for preschool children’s math skill development? Evidence from an RCT with low-income families. *Economics of Education Review*, 95, 102436

Mayer, S.E., Shah, R. & Kalil, A (2021) How Cognitive Biases Can Undermine Program Scale-Up Decisions in List, J., Suskind, D., & Supplee, L. H. (Ed.). *The Scale-up Effect in Early Childhood and Public Policy: Why interventions lose impact at scale and what we can do about it*. Routledge.

Mayer, S., Kalil, A., & Klein, N. (2020). Behavioral insights and parental decision-making. In L. Tach, R. Dunifon, and D. L. Miller (Eds.) (pp. 99-118) *Confronting Inequality: How Policies and Practices Shape Children's Opportunities*, Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0000187-001>

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Gallegos, S. (2020). Using behavioral insights to increase attendance at subsidized preschool programs: The Show Up to Grow Up Intervention. Special Issue on Nudges and Choice Architecture, edited by R. Thaler, K. Milkman, T. Rogers., D. Rand and G. Chapman.

Mayer, S.E., Kalil, A., & Klein, N. (2019). Behavioral insights and parental decision-making. In R. Dunifon, D. Miller, & L. Tach (Eds). (pp. 99-118) *An Equal Start: Policy and Practice to Promote Equality of Opportunity for Children*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0000187-001>

Mayer, S.E., Kalil, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Gallegos, S. (2019). Using behavioral insights to increase parental engagement: The Parents and Children Together Intervention. Published online before print *Journal of Human Resources*.
<http://jhr.uwpress.org/content/early/2018/04/02/jhr.54.4.0617.8835R.abstract>; NBER Working Paper #21602).

Klein, N., Lintz, K., Kalil, A., & Mayer, S. (2018). Helping parents follow through. *Behavioral Scientist*. In Nudge Turns 10: A Special Issue on *Behavioral Science in Public Policy*. Available at: <https://behavioralscientist.org/helping-parents-follow-through/>

Mayer, S.E. Lopoo, L. M. & Groves, L. H. (2016), Government spending and the distribution of economic growth. *Southern Economic Journal*, 83: 399–415. doi:10.1002/soej.

Kalil, A. & Mayer, S. (2016). Understanding the importance of parental time with children. Comment on Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Denny. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 262-265.

Mayer, S.E. (2012). Computers in schools and cognitive achievement: A summary of the research. *Estudios Públicos* 126 (Autumn). (Spanish and English)

Mayer, S.E. (2010). The relationship between income inequality and inequality in schooling, *Theory and Research in Education*. 8 (1), 5-20.

Mayer, S.E. (2009). In our interest: The responsibility to protect. In *Responsibility to Protect: The Global Moral Compact for the 21st Century* edited by R, H. Cooper & J. Voinov. Kohler. New York: Palgrave.

Mayer, S.E. & Lopoo, L. (2008). Government spending and intergenerational mobility. *Journal of Public Economics*, 92(1-2): 139-158.

Ludwig, Jens & Mayer, S.E. (2006). Culture and the intergenerational transmission of poverty: The prevention paradox. *The Future of Children* 16(2): 175-196.

Mayer, S.E. & Lopoo, L. (2005). Has the intergenerational transmission of economic status changed? *Journal of Human Resources*, XL (1): 169- 185.

Mayer, S.E. & Sarin, A. (2005). An assessment of some mechanisms linking economic inequality and infant mortality. *Social Science and Medicine*, 60(2): 439-455.
George

Duncan, G., Kalil, A., Mayer, S., Tepper, R., & Payne, M. (2004). The apple does not fall far from the tree. In S. Bowles, H. Gintis, & M. Osborne (Eds). *Unequal chances: Family background and economic success*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Harding, D., Jencks C., Lopoo, L. & Mayer, S.E. (2005). Trends in intergenerational economic mobility: Theories and estimates for the US since 1960. In *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success* by S. Bowles and M. Osbourne (Eds.) Princeton University Press and Russell Sage,

Shortened version reprinted in 2006 as Family Background and Income in Adulthood, 1961-1999. In *The Inequality Reader: Essential Readings in Class, Race, and Gender*, D. B. Grusky & S. Szelenyi (Eds.) Boulder: CO: Westview Press.

Jencks, C., & Mayer, S.E. & Swingle, J. (2004). Who has benefited from economic growth in the United States since 1969? The case of children. In *What has happened to the quality of life in the advanced industrialized nations?* E. Wolff (Ed). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Mayer, S.E. & Lopoo, L. (2004). Trends in the intergenerational economic mobility of sons and daughters. In *Generational income mobility in North America and Europe* edited by M. Corak. Cambridge University Press.

Evans, W., Hout, M. & Mayer, S.E. (2004). Assessing the effect of economic inequality. In *Social Inequality* K. Neckerman (Ed.). New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Gottschalk, P. & Mayer, S.E. (2002). Changes in home production and trends in economic well-being. In *The new economics of rising inequalities* D. Cohen, T. Piketty and G. Saint-Paul (Eds.). Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Mayer, S.E. (2002). How economic segregation affects children's educational attainment, *Social Forces* 8(1): 153-176.

Mayer, S.E. (2001). How did the increase in economic inequality affect educational attainment? *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(1):1-32.

Waldfogel, J. & Mayer, S.E. (2000). Male/Female differences in the low-wage labor market. In *Labor Markets and Less Skilled Workers*, R. Blank and D. Card (Eds.). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mayer, S.E. & Knutson, D. (1999). Does the timing of school affect how much children learn? In *Earning and Learning: How Schools Matter*, S.E. Mayer and P. Peterson (Eds.). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Mayer, S.E. & P. E. Peterson. (1999) The costs and benefits of educational reform. In *Earning and Learning: How Schools Matter*, S. E. Mayer and P. E. Peterson (Eds.). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Mayer, S.E. (1997). Trends in the economic well-being and life chances of America's children. In *The Consequences of Growing Up Poor*, J. Brooks-Gunn and G. Duncan (Eds.) New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mayer, S.E. (1997). Income, employment and the support of children. in *Indicators of Children's Well-being*, R. Hauser, B. Brown and W. Prosser (Eds.). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mayer, S.E. (1994), A comparison of poverty and living conditions in the United States, Canada, Sweden and Germany in *Poverty, Inequality, and the Future of Social Policy: Western States in the New World Order*, K. McFate, R. Lawson & W. J. Wilson (Eds) New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mayer, S.E. (1993). Living conditions among the poor in four rich countries. *Journal of Population Economics*, 6:266-286.

Mayer, S.E. & Jencks, C. (1993). Recent trends in economic inequality in the United States: Income vs. expenditures vs. material well-being in *Poverty and Prosperity in America at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, E. Wolff and D. Popademitrious (Eds.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Mayer, S.E. (1991). How much does a high schools' racial and socioeconomic mix affect graduation rates and teenage fertility rates? In *The Urban Underclass*. C. Jencks and P. Peterson (Eds.). Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Jencks, C. & Mayer, S.E. (1990). The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighborhood in *Inner-city Poverty in the United States*, L. Lynn, Jr. and M. McGahey (Eds.). Washington D.C.: National Academy of Sciences Press.

Jencks, C. & Mayer, S.E. (1990). Residential segregation, job proximity, and black job opportunities: The empirical status of the spatial mismatch hypothesis in *Inner-city Urban Poverty in the United States*, L. Lynn, Jr. & M. McGahey (Eds.) Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences Press.

Mayer, S.E. (1990). Cross-national comparisons of income and living conditions. *Proceedings of the Annual Research Conference*. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Mayer, S.E. & C. Jencks. (1989). Growing up in poor neighborhoods: How much does it matter? *Science*, 243: 1441-1445.

Mayer, S.E. & C. Jencks. (1989). Poverty and the distribution of material hardship. *Journal of Human Resources*, 24(1); 88-113.

Mayer, S.E. Who is poor? (1986). An assessment of income and other determinants of material well-being. Doctoral Dissertation, Northwestern University.

Ragin C., Mayer, S.E. & Drass, K. (1984). Assessing discrimination: A Boolean approach. *American Sociological Review*, 49: 221-234.

Book Reviews

Review of *Everybody's Children: Child Care as a Public Problem* by William T. Gormley and *Starting Right: How America Neglects Its Youngest Children and What We Can Do about It* by Shelia Kammerman and Alfred Kahn in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 1997.

Review of *Five Years After: The Long-term Effects of Welfare-to-Work Programs* by Daniel Friedlander and Gary Burtless, and *The Work Alternative: Welfare Reform and the Realities of the Job Market* edited by Demetra Smith Nightingale and Robert H. Haveman in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 1996.

Review of *Succeeding Generations: On the Effect of Investments in Children* by Robert Haveman and Barbara Wolfe in *American Journal of Sociology*, 1995.

Review of *Child Poverty and Public Policy* by Judith Chafel, in *Contemporary Sociology*, 1994.

Review of *The Underclass Question* edited by Bill E. Lawson, in *American Journal of Sociology*, 1994.

Under Review/Working Papers

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., Delgado, W., & Gennetian, L. (2023). The education gradient in parental time investment and subjective well-being. Under review, *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Kalil, A., Liu, H., Mayer, S., Shah, R., & Rury, D. (2023). Nudging or nagging? Conflicting effects of behavioral tools. Under review, *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Kalil, A., Liu, H., Mayer, S., Rury, D., & Shah, R. (2022). Nudging or nagging? Behavioral approaches to increasing parent reading and child literacy. Working Paper.

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Shah, R. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on family dynamics in economically vulnerable households. University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics, Working Paper No. 2020-143.

Shah, R., Kalil, A. Mayer, S.E. (2022). Engaging parents with preschools: Evidence from a field experiment. University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics, Working Paper, 2022-97.

Other Publications

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Michelini. Ed Tech's Learning Potential. *U.S. News and World Report* OP ED, October 5, 2023.

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Michelini, M. (2022). When it all became apparent. In *Behavioral Scientist: Brain Meets World*. Ed. E. Nesterak.

Ryan, R, Kalil, A. S. Mayer, & Shah, R. COVID-19 could erase parenting gains of the last 30 years. Commentary, Brookings Institution. |October 26, 2020.

Mayer, S. E., Kalil, A. & Oreopoulos, P. How technology can help parents communicate with preschoolers. OP ED *The Hechinger Report*. September 9, 2020.

Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & Michelini, M. It's about time – the best ways public policy can support parents. *The Hill*, May 27, 2021.

Kalil, A., Klein, N., Lintz, K., Mayer, S. Helping Parents Follow Through. *Behavioral Scientist*, September 10, 2018.

Kalil, A. & Mayer, S. E. Maternal time with children: when weak social science meets an uncritical press. Commentary, Brookings Institution. April 2, 2015.

Mayer, S.E. Invited comment on David Grusky. What to Do about Inequality. *Boston Review* 37(2), April 2012.

Mayer, S.E. Are we giving U.S. infants too much iron? July 9, 2011. *Providence Journal*. July 9, 2011.

Mayer, S.E. (2010). Revisiting an old question: How much does parental income affect child outcomes? *Focus* 27(2), Winter 2010. University of Wisconsin – Madison Institute for Research on Poverty.

Susan E. Mayer, (2001.) Changing caseloads: macro influences and micro composition – commentary. *Economic Policy Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, issue Sep, pages 53-55.

Mayer, S.E. & Jencks, C. Learning by just being there. *New York Times* OP ED. September 3, 2000.

Waldfogel, J. & Mayer, S.E. (1999). Differences between men and women in the low-wage labor market. *Focus* 20(1): 11-16.

Mayer, S.E. (1998). Invited comment on Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Is Equality Passe? *Boston Review*, December 1998/January 1999.

Mayer, S.E. (1996). Cities at the End of the Great Society in *Jobs and Capital* magazine of the Milken Institute, Spring.

Mayer, S.E. & Jencks C., War on Poverty: No Apologies Please. *The New York Times* OP ED, November 9, 1995.

Manuscripts Under Review

Kalil, A., Liu, H., Mayer, S., Rury, D., & Shah, R. (2025). A digital library for parent-child shared reading improves literacy skills for young, disadvantaged children. Under review, *European Journal of Economics*.

Working Paper: https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BFI_WP_2025-27.pdf

Bresciani, D., Kalil, A., Liu, H., Mayer, S., & Shah, R. (2025). Boosting young children's math skill with technology in the home environment. Under review, *Economics of Education Review*.

Rury, D., Kalil, A., Mayer, S., & B, Bresciani, D. (2025). Talking about words boosts preschool-age children's vocabulary: Evidence from a parent intervention. Under review, *Journal of Political Economy Microeconomics*.

Bresciani, D., Kalil, A., Liu, H., & Mayer, S (2025). Priming parental identity: Evidence from experimental data. Under review, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*.

Working Paper: https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BFI_WP_2025-26.pdf

Reports

Mayer, S.E. (2002) *The Influence of Parental Income on Children's Outcomes: A Review Report* to the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development.

<http://www.govt.nz/publications/2002/htm>

Mayer, S.E. (2000) *Why Welfare Caseloads Fluctuate: A Review of Research on AFDC, SSI, and the Food Stamps Program* Report to the New Zealand Ministry of the Treasury and JCPR

Working Paper. <http://www.treasury.govt.nz>

Fay Lomax Cook, C. Jencks, S.E. Mayer, E. Constantino and S. Popkin. (1986.) Stability and change in economic hardship: Chicago, 1983-1985. Research and Policy Reports. Evanston, Illinois: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Fay Lomax Cook, C. Jencks, S.E. Mayer, and L. Kramek. (1984.) Economic hardship in Chicago: 1983. Research and Policy Reports. Evanston, Illinois: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Mayer, S.E. & C. Jencks. Has poverty really increased among children since 1970? Working Paper #94-14, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Mayer, S.E. A comparison of poverty and living conditions in five countries. Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper #987-92.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Chair, University of Chicago Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 2012 – 2016

Executive Education Professor, Dubai School of Government 2005, University of Chile Department of Economics 2005-2015.

Member National Research Council, Board on Children, Youth and Families, January, 2011 – 2014.

Member of the Board of Directors of Chapin Hall Center for Children 2002- 2008.

Member Board of Advisors, Pew Charitable Trust Economic Mobility Project, 2010 – 2013

Occasional Columnist for *Aleqtisadiyah* (Saudi Arabian business newspaper) 2004-2006.

Member, National Academy of Science Committee on National Statistics Panel to Review U.S. Department of Agriculture' Measurement of Food Insecurity and Hunger 2004- 2006

Member, National Academy of Science Advisory Committee on Standards of Evidence and the Quality of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, 2004

Member U.S. Government General Accountability Office Educators' Advisory Panel – 2002- 2009

Member Advisory Board for the Social Sciences at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies 2002-2005.

Executive Committee, Northwestern/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research, 1996-1997.

Associate Editor, American Journal of Sociology, 1994-1997.

Chicago Comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy Committee Member, 1993-1995.

Select review committees:

External review committee, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University, 2016

External review committee, Princeton School of Public Policy (formerly Woodrow Wilson School) 2015

External review committee, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, 2015

External review committee, Queen's University School of Policy Studies, Kingston, Ontario, Canada 2013

ACADEMIC HONORS

Honorary Doctor of Laws conferred by Lake Forest College, 2007

Medalla Rectoral from University of Chile for distinguished service to the University, 2006

Outstanding Teacher Award, Harris School Student Association