

Learning for Life ladies,

It was a pleasure to be with you yesterday and to introduce you to some of my dearest colleagues at the Institute for Policy Research.

Diane Schanzenbach, a national expert in SNAP (the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program), spoke about the prevalence of food insecurity in our country, highlighting her concerns about the related impact of a potential recession. Diane's research is the first evidence we've had that food stamps during pregnancy improves birth outcomes. Further, such early investment also improves later in life health outcomes for women, and economic outcomes for all.

Sera Young, a 2019 Carnegie Fellow, who herself is an expert in food insecurity spoke about how her anthropological research in this area led her to identify the need for similar attention to water insecurity. Sera and her team are the first to develop a household-individual level measure of water insecurity, which will be published for the first time this week. Sera reminded us that by measuring water insecurity we will be able to access its prevalence, identify vulnerable populations, and monitor and evaluate interventions.

Beth Tipton whose deep, sustained research in education brings context to the statistical methods that underlie some of the studies we see in the academy and in the popular press. She drew our attention to the complexities of drawing a sample from a population, pointing out that the research on education does not represent the geographic distribution of schools in this country.

Celeste Watkins-Hayes spoke about her new book, *Remaking a Life*, and her [op-ed in the NYTimes](#), which was published just this week. Celeste shared a powerful story of Katrina and Terry who were part of the effort to expand the CDC's definition of an AIDS diagnosis in order to give women access to the social and health-care safety nets. As Celeste mentioned, this billion-dollar infrastructure is one of the most effective policy interventions in the past 30 years. I'm especially excited to share with you pictures of Katrina and Terry attached to this email. They put faces to the narratives Celeste shared.

I hope these women gave you much to discuss with your friends, family and colleagues. We'll add even more to that next week when we will be joined by Francesca Cornelli, the new dean of Kellogg, and Janice Eberly, a professor of finance and the director of the Kellogg Public-Private Initiative.

In the meantime, some podcast recommendations: Diane suggested *The Uncertain Hour*, especially the first season on welfare reform. Celeste likes the *Accidental Creative* and *The Daily* (from the New York Times).

Together in learning, rdm

RACHEL DAVIS MERSEY, PhD (she|her|hers)  
PROFESSOR | NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY  
ASSOCIATE DEAN for RESEARCH | Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing  
Communications  
FACULTY FELLOW | Institute for Policy Research  
*twitter.* @rdmersey | *phone.* 847.491.2196  
*office.* McCormick Foundation Center (MFC), 4-1  
Evanston, IL 60208

