THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

IMPACT OF SCHOOL VOUCHERS ON COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Washington, D.C.
Thursday, August 23, 2012

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASKINS: (in progress) -- fellow here and along with Belle Sawhill I run the Center on Children and Families and Budgeting for National Priorities, our project to do something about the federal deficit, which has been so immensely successful so far.

The morning's event is sponsored by the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings and a program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard, and our purpose is to report on a remarkable new study, it's the first random assignment study of school vouchers that reports on results through college entry, which is the first time that that's happened with a random assignment study, so it's quite important.

It's an extension of a study that was originally conducted in New York City on vouchers, of course, and that original study was designed by Paul Peterson and his colleagues. Paul is now at Harvard, he was formerly at Brookings, as about half of Harvard was at Brookings and vise versa, I think, sometimes, and now this new study that reports on results through college using quite clever techniques was conducted by Matt Chingos, who is now here at Brookings, and Paul Peterson.

So, we want to encourage our audience to Tweet about the event if you would like to. I've never encouraged anybody to Tweet and I hope this is the last time I have to do it, but the address or whatever they call it is BIVouchers, BIVouchers with an S on the end.

Now, let me just tell you our plan for the event. I'm going to make a few comments about vouchers of an introductory nature, hopefully non partisan and political and so forth, and then Matt and Paul are going to summarize their study. They'll use the podium; they have a PowerPoint and so forth. And then we have a panel, which will make comments, then I will ask them some questions and we'll give a chance for the

audience to ask some questions, and then the event will end and by then it will be lunch time.

So, let me just say a few things about vouchers. I'm probably like a lot of members of this audience: I've never done research on vouchers. I've read about them as, I think, a good citizen needs to read about vouchers because they've been in the news now for at least, you know, two and a half decades or so. It's quite a fascinating topic and about to take a big jump up, as I'll explain in just a minute.

So, the basic idea is you can get a lot of parental involvement if you give parents the opportunity to decide where their kids go to school, and this would engender competition among the schools, so it's a market-based solution and that's been the main idea from the very beginning.

It has a long history in the U.S. I think there's actually a school system in Maine that's had vouchers since the 19th century, it had to do with some failings and arguments among various levels of government so they let parents decide, and I believe they still do it, but I would say that, at least in my case, and I think in many cases, the Mo & Chubb book, actually published by the Brookings Press, I think that was in 1990, really got a lot of attention to vouchers and since then it's been really quite a controversial topic in the scholarly world.

And in the real world, I think the Milwaukie program that began in 1990 was extremely controversial and it still exists and it's one of the programs that has been the most studied.

There are lots of variations among vouchers. I would say two of the biggest ones, number one, is whether religious schools can participate, and this raises constitutional issues unless you do it in a certain way, and the second issue that's gotten a lot of attention now, I think, primarily because of the voucher program in Arizona, and

that is whether the school should give parents an education savings account so they would have an account that they could only use for education and if they didn't -- if they found a school that charged less the amount that they're given by the government, then they can save that up and use it for the kid's college education. I believe Arizona actually has this program in operation and it plans to expand it.

There has been a lot of research on vouchers. It's been very controversial. I would say this is a classic case in which the research has produced a lot of heat and a lot of claims and maybe fairly, the results are still controversial. I don't think there's -- maybe I could say there's not a lot of light here. Hopefully this study will begin to change that a little bit.

I would say that one conclusion from the that does seem to be pretty widely accepted is that there are effects, especially on minority children are likely to perform better, inner city minority children, and the study that you're going hear about today is consistent with that conclusion. Even that's controversial but everything else, I think, is even more controversial.

And finally, by giving you some background -- by way of giving you some background, I think vouchers are about to take a big step up because Governor Romney has endorsed them and has proposed to spend, I think, something like $25 billion federal dollars on voucher programs in the United States. I think this would be, by far, the most aggressive step by the federal government into vouchers, and of course, it will be very controversial. I expect it will be an element of controversy in the campaign. Maybe it will even come up in the debates, but it shows you that when it gets in a presidential debate then it really is a very significant national issue. So, I think that is about to happen.

Now let me just say a word about people participating in the event today. Matt Chingos, of course, as I already mentioned, is here at Brookings in the Brown

Center. He's a fellow in the Brown Center and he studies classroom size reduction, teacher equality, and college gradation rates. Of course, you have a lot of biographical information in the material that was passed out at the beginning and so I'm just going to give brief introductions.

Paul Peterson, from Harvard, he's the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of government and director of program on education policy and governance, the co-sponsor of this event. He's also the editor-in-chief at Education Next, which was kind of an innovative journal because it's not -- it's scholarly, of course, but it doesn't really have a scholarly format. They try to write for a general audience, and they say all kinds of interesting and controversial things. I really have liked Education Next since I first became aware of it many years ago.

Nada Eissa is associate professor of public policy and economics at Georgetown and she's also a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury in the Bush Administration, correct?

And then Mike Petrilli, who's the vice president of Fordham Institute and research fellow at the Hoover Institution, and let me just cut to the chase here, I would say that Paul and Mike are probably two of the most famous people in education research in the country, and one decade from now I would say that our other two presenters are going to be among the most famous in the country if they survive ten years in the scholarly world.

So, we're going to begin with Paul, thank you, and Matt.

MR. PETERSON: Thank you, Ron. Yes, I'm a survivor, so it's great to be here, back at Brookings again where I was for several years and see all my friends here and to recall all the times I've been in this particular auditorium talking about a wide variety of issues.

But today we're going to talk about our recent study on school vouchers, and as Ron was saying, the voucher issue in the contemporary sense really sort of dates to 1990 when not only was there a Brookings book by John Chubb and Terry Mo published on this topic, but there was the first experiment or the first trial of a voucher in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

And then some years later they tried a similar program in Cleveland that was hotly contested. It went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court found in 2002 that vouchers were constitutional, at least vouchers for low-income families in big cities were constitutional, and the next big event was the District of Columbia voucher intervention, scholarship intervention, which Nada was involved in the evaluation of and this was important not only because it was in the nation's capital but also because the evaluation was very carefully conducted and set a new standard for the conduct of research on this particular topic. And we'll talk about its findings briefly and Nada will probably bring us up to date on them as well.

So, those are some -- and then most recently, just to add, there's been a spate of new voucher legislation in Indiana, Ohio, in Wisconsin, where they've greatly expanded the program that began back in 1990, it was initially about 1000 students, they've now got 22,000 students and expanding into new cities and they're going to grow some more.

So, vouchers are still pretty much a marginal issue on the landscape, but it's definitely not gone away. It's expanded recently. Public support grew 10 percent this past year for vouchers according to the poll that was released yesterday by Phi Delta Kappan and the Gallup Poll, they do an annual survey and they found that voucher support was up.

So, this is not necessarily an issue of the past, as some people might

have thought, of six, seven years ago, but as Ron said, we don't have very much in the way of long-term information about the real effects of school vouchers, nor do we have much information about the long-term effects of any educational intervention. It's very difficult to study the long-term effects of a public policy in an experimental way, which is to say, using the gold standard of assigning people to the treatment group or the control group, those who get the voucher, those who don't get the voucher randomly, by lottery. And to follow those kids over a very long period of time. It's very hard to find examples of that and therefore we rely upon test scores to decide whether or not something works.

Well, test scores are criticized as potentially misleading, maybe students are being taught to the test, maybe teachers are focusing narrowly on this test, maybe it doesn't really represent the wealth of knowledge that you expect students to acquire in the course of their schooling, but we tend to think that, you know, high school graduation, college enrollment, lifetime earnings is what education is, in part, all about. Of course it's more than that too, it's good citizenship as well, but these long-term measures are the ones that we really care about, but these are the things that we don't measure or we don't measure very carefully through experimental research because it's so hard to do, you have to follow people over a very long period of time.

Well, we were very fortunate that something happened in New York City in 1997 that made it possible for us today to report these results. What happened back -- it was actually a little bit -- it was the fall before, it was in the fall of 1996 that John O'Conner, the archbishop of the Catholic schools -- or the archdiocese that's responsible for the Catholic schools in New York City made a public invitation to Rudy Crew, the chancellor of the New York City Public School System, to send to the Catholic schools the city's most troubled students. I think he said, the thousand most troubled students you should send to our Catholic schools and we'll take care of them.

It's said that the nuns all shuddered when they heard this. That's maybe apocryphal. But in any case, Rudy Giuliani tried to back this idea, tried to get public money for it, but it was too controversial, people said it violated church and state. And so, in the end, it was private philanthropy, the School Choice Scholarships Foundation, some Wall Street investment folk put up a lot of money to pay for these vouchers for these kids to go to Catholic school and other private schools -- mostly Catholic schools in New York City because that's what the private sector looks like there, but not exclusively so, it was broader than that.

So, 20,000 students applied for these vouchers. There were only 1,300 scholarships, they called them. So, how were they going to do it? Well, they decided to hold a lottery. Well, as soon as I heard that they were going to do a lottery I said, you know, this is a chance to do an experimental evaluation. We'll compare those who win the lottery with those who lose the lottery and we'll be able to find out, for the first time, whether or not vouchers really have an impact.

So, I teamed up with an evaluation firm, MPR, and we went ahead and took responsibility for administering the lottery, which is important because it was not a lottery run by the people who had a vested interest in the outcome, it was run by an independent research firm, which was wanting to be sure it was a true random assignment to test and control group.

So, that was 1997. We made lots of mistakes, but one thing we did right, we got the Social Security Number of all the students before their name was put into the lottery and we were able to get that because you had to be of low-income to participate in this, you had to be coming from a public school, if you're entering second through fifth grade, not first grade, which anybody could apply if they were entering first grade, but you had to be of low-income and therefore you had to verify what your income was and

therefore the family had to supply income information. And at the same time we asked for the Social Security Number for the students and we had other identifying information on the students that allowed us to keep track of them as they were going through school.

So, for the first three years we followed the performance of these students and at the end of the three years we found that the African-American students had learned quite a bit more, according to test score data, but that the other students, mainly Hispanic students, hadn't learned that much more than the control group that was in the public schools. Of course, everybody was learning more but the question was, was the test group learning, the ones who got the vouchers learning more than the ones who were remaining in public schools because they didn't win the voucher.

So, we reported that and it was quite controversial for the reasons that people didn't believe test score data and there was -- and one of our biggest problems was there was attrition from our sample. We couldn't get everybody to come back in every Saturday morning to be tested, and so therefore the question was whether or not our results were biased because of the fact that we weren't getting information from everybody.

Now let me just highlight some of the main points that I've just made, which is, this voucher was for students in grades one through five, the voucher was $1,400, that's a little less than the tuition at the Catholic schools in 1997. The cost of a Catholic education, at that time, was not very expensive, it was about half of what the public schools in New York were spending per pupil. There were over 20,000 applications. We ended up with 1,279 in the treatment group and we had in our comparison group, the control group, the random assignment of the control group that we followed, there were 1,363.

Not everybody used the voucher, 81 percent of the African-Americans

used it at some point and 77 percent of the Hispanics used it at some point, and we had a lot of attrition initially, something that is very significant is that that issue has pretty much gone away, and I'm going to let you hear from Matt because he's the person who solved this problem.

So, Matt, if you'd explain how that problem was solved.

MR. CHINGOS: Thanks, Paul. So, as Paul mentioned, even if you do the sort of gold standard research design where you randomly assign students to get one intervention versus not get it, you still have to collect data on them going forward in order to be able to measure the impact. So, if only some kids are able to be tracked in that way you worry, has the experiment been broken? Has the validity been compromise by the fact that even though you randomly assign people, there's a whole bunch of people you don't observe.

So, one of the great advantages of working with these long-term administrative data that we've used for this project is that that problem has largely been solved. So, for the students that were included in the original voucher evaluation that was conducted back in the '90s, 99.1 percent had enough identifying information available -- that's Social Security Number, a name, date of birth, that we would be able to match them or attempt to match them to a college enrollment database.

So, the college enrollment database we used is maintained by the National Student Clearinghouse. The vast majority of post-secondary institutions in the country report regular enrollment data to the clearinghouse. Those participating institutions cover 96 percent of enrollment in the U.S., post-secondary enrollment. So, it's not 100 percent, but it's very close.

So, basically what we do is we send them a list of all the kids that were in the voucher experiment and then the clearinghouse runs a match and for the kids that

enrolled in college at some point, in one of those, sort of 96 percent of participating institutions, they send us back, you know, a dataset that tells us for each kid every semester they were enrolled in college, where they were enrolled in college, and some information about the college, and then we're also able to link that to other information about those colleges.

So, it might tell us that a kid enrolled for, you know, two semesters at a community college and then four semesters at a four-year college, and then in the long run it actually includes degree information. We're not going to talk about that today because not enough time has passed to look at degrees, but we're going to focus on the enrollment outcome.

So, the primary outcome of interest in this paper is enrolling in college within three years of expected high school graduation. So, the reason we picked three years is that's the longest period of time that we observe every one of the students in our study. So, those kids that were entering first grade back in the fall of 1997, they would have been expected, three years from their sort of projected graduation date would have been 2011, and because, you know, a lot of these kids who face academic challenges get held back a grade at some point in school, that's why we need that three-year window.

Of course, five, ten years from now we can look at longer-term outcomes, we can look at graduation from college, some folks have even started to do matches to data maintained by the IRS and look at earnings and things like that, and the great advantage of all these long-term studies using administrative data is that, A, the data are really great, and B, you solve this attrition problem by basically being able to get data on more or less everyone who stayed in the country.

So, just to give you a sense of sort of the baseline college going rates of

the students in our study, among the African-American students, 36 percent enrolled either full time or part time in college within three years of their expected high school graduation, and for the Hispanic students it was 45 percent. There also were a small number of students from other racial and ethnic groups who we, for the most part, set aside in this analysis because there's just too few of them to get reliable results.

So, if we look at the impact of using a voucher on the overall enrollment rate, full time and part time, of African American students, we find a 24 percent increase, so that 36 percent baseline I told you about increases by 9 percentage points to 45 percent. So, one way you can think about it is that it sort of closes the gap in our study between the Hispanic students and the black students, because for Hispanic students we don't find much of an impact.

That impact is concentrated in full time enrollment, so there's not that much of an impact on part time enrollment. The big impact seems to be on full time enrollment, which is a 31 percent increase.

So, in the absence of a voucher, we find that 3 percent of the African-American students in our study go to a selective college. We define a selective college as one where the average SAT score of entering students is at least 1100 on the old 1600-point scale, and it has to be a four-year college as well. So, for any American it's not very common to go to a selective college, and in New York City, for the students in our control group, the African-American students was 3 percent.

But being offered a voucher to go to private school increased that by 4 percentage points to 7 percent, so it actually more than doubled it.

So, the impact of this program wasn't just to move kids who were sort of on the margin of college who wouldn't have gone without a voucher and to move them into a part time community college type program or maybe they'd end up dropping out,

that doesn't seem to have been the impact of the intervention. It does seem, in a lot of cases, to really have increased the quality of the college as attended by these students, which I think increases my confidence that in the long-run you'll see impacts not just on enrollment, but on graduation as well, but of course it's still too soon to tell that.

So, I'm going to turn it back to Paul who's going to tell us a little bit about why we think we got these different results for these two groups of students.

MR. PETERSON: Yeah, just a final word on the significance of this and to give you some speculation. Matt doesn't ever like to speculate, so he leaves that to me.

Why is it that we got these results for African-Americans and not for Hispanic students? You can -- we got little effects for Hispanic students and so it's possible the differences that we're going to talk about here are not actually there, from a statistical point of view you can't be sure of that, but there are fairly large differences between the two groups, so we think that there's something going on here. So, exactly what was it?

And I think Matt's already given you one key statistic. Forty-five percent of the Hispanic students were already going to college anyhow, that's what the control group tells us, whereas only 36 percent of the African-American students were going to go to college if they didn't get the voucher. That's what the control group tells us.

So, what the intervention does is it brings the percentage going to college on the part of African-Americans up to the same level as the percentage of Hispanics that were going to college. So, those who got the voucher who were African-American, 45 percent were going to college, which is the same as for the Hispanics in the control group.

The Hispanics who got the voucher went up to 47 percent, which is not a

big enough increase for us to be confident that that's a real increase. So, why was that? Well, there is some suggestion that the quality of the public schools that the Hispanic students were attending in New York City were of higher quality than the quality of the schools attended by the African-American students.

Parents reported fewer problems than -- if the parents were Hispanic than if they were African-American -- or let's put it another way, the effect of going to a private school on reducing the problems at the school the child was attending was larger for the Hispanic students than for the African-American students. No, I'm sorry, the other way around. For the African-American students than for the Hispanic students.

It made a bigger difference in the terms of the quality of the school as perceived by the parents, and then we asked the parents to grade the school on a scale of A to F and the African-American parents saw a big improvement if they got the voucher opportunity. The Hispanics saw an improvement but it wasn't as big an improvement.

So, there's a suggestion there; it's speculation that if you think about it, the opportunity to go to a private school was a much bigger deal for the African-American students. They were moving to a much better situation than it was for the Hispanic student.

And the other possibility, though, is that the Hispanic family was already -- had resources to help their child get to college, they didn't need this extra boost. Once again, it's speculation, but there is that suggestion in the data.

There's a third fact, and that is the Hispanic community is Catholic and they were part of a social network that surrounds the Catholic churches which were offering much of the private education. And so the selection of the private alternative may have been more for religious reasons than for educational reasons within the

Hispanic community but not in the African-American community, which is largely protestant and which would not have any particular religious affiliation with these Catholic schools.

If they were going to go to a Catholic school they were doing it for educational purposes. So, all of these elements are suggestions, we can't be sure that they are the explanation.

Now, finally, in terms of the magnitude of the effect, the D.C. voucher program, which I mentioned at the beginning, is reported by the D.C. evaluation to have had an increase in the gradation rate of 21 percent, which is pretty large and amazingly close to our estimate of college enrollment. Well, if you're going to go to college, you've got to graduate from high school, so the fact that these two estimates come out very close is, I think, quite interesting and suggestive, that what we find in New York might be generalized to a larger context.

And it's also interesting to see that this same size of an effect was observed in Tennessee by those who were randomly assigned to smaller classes, eight fewer kids in their class instead of 24, 16 students in the class got an effect that was comparable, 19 percent, on college enrollment.

So, the magnitude of these effects is comparable to the kind of effects that were observed in Tennessee in the Tennessee class size experiment that's well known.

So, number one, it shows that these are realistic percentages, they aren't off the wall, they're not completely different from what other studies are identifying, but two, they also suggest that this can be attained a fairly low cost because the reduction in class size in Tennessee was a very costly intervention whereas the school voucher intervention really it's just a shift from one educational setting to another, so in principle,

there's really no additional costs involved.

And then there's been a recent, very important study on the effect of having a more effective teacher on college enrollment and the most you get out of having an effective teacher three years in a row is 4 percent, that's a generous estimate, and this is the study by Chetty and Rockoff and Friedman that's received a lot of attention lately, and there's been a lot of focus in the education world today about the importance of having a more effective teacher and we certainly agree with all of that, but you can see that the effects here are of a much larger magnitude than of that particular intervention.

So, with that we'll turn it over to Ron and the discussion.

(Applause)

MR. HASKINS: All right, now we have the opportunity to hear some reaction to these results and let's begin with Nada Eissa.

MS. EISSA: Okay, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this paper. I enjoyed it very much and what I'd like to do -- I don't have many comments -- I'd like to start with -- by talking a little bit about the -- what I see as the contributions of this paper and then some issues, methodological issues, that I think may be useful to address in the future, and then talk a little bit about the cost/benefit analysis and how this contributes to how we think overall about vouchers and policy design.

So, as I see it there are three different contributions that this paper makes, one is that it really is a contribution to thinking about the longer-term outcomes of vouchers and that is going to have a direct implication of the cost/benefit analysis of vouchers versus other types of education interventions. The second is the use of random assignment and I'll talk a little bit about that in a moment, but, you know, being able to answer this question of, what kinds of educational environments affect college attendance in a random assignment setting is really important methodologically.

And then a final, I think, really important contribution is the use of administrative data and the linkage of administrative data to these random assignments and to survey data to answer questions that we previously haven't been able to get at.

So, the paper shows, I think quite convincingly, that there's an important effect of college attendance from winning the lottery and also from attending private schools as a result of winning the voucher lottery. So, in that sense, it builds on existing, non-experimental evidence that shows attendance, for example, in Catholic schools tends to increase the rate at which students attend college in the future. That evidence is based on what we call quasi-experimental methods where information on religiosity or the proportion of people in a geographic area that are Catholic to predict attendance in Catholic schools.

And so what this paper adds to that literature, other than confirming the results, is this point of randomization. We no longer have to worry that the students attending private schools are, in some sense, different in a way that makes them more likely to go to college. So, it's not that they're different in ways that are irrelevant -- they might have different eye color or hair color -- but they're different in ways that predict the likelihood of college attendance, so they may be more motivate or their parents care more about education or their parents can afford to send them to private schools, all of which are important predictors of whether they ultimately go to college or not.

So, in a non-random setting, we're never able to convincingly separate out these other components from their environment or the private school environment and how that affects college attendance.

So, this study avoids a lot of those complications with the use of the random assignment setting.

As I said, I find the evidence compelling. In part that's motivated by the

fact that it's consistent with our own results from evaluating the D.C. voucher program, that was a five-year evaluation of a much larger, in dollar amount, voucher. The D.C. voucher gave students up to $7,500 to attend private schools in Washington, D.C. We tracked students over five years. In that evaluation we weren't -- it just finished in 2010 was our last report -- so, in that evaluation -- that evaluation was too recent for us to look at these outcomes, but what we were able to look at was high school drop out rates, and we found, as Paul mentioned, an important impact on drop out rates, that is, the attendance -- winning the lottery seemed to reduce the likelihood that kids dropped out of high school to a very significant effect.

So, that's consistent with them finding high rates of college attendance.

So, I'm inclined to believe the results, but I have a couple of issues that I'd like to raise before I run home with it. And there are three methodological issues, none of which necessarily over turn, but I think it would help us think more deeply about this effect. The first has to do with what I would call the dynamics of the impact. I find it -- I have to say, I was initially surprised that there was an impact. These are students who attended private school between first and fifth grade for an average of something like two years. We don't know, for example, what happened to them in high school, and that made me think about whether there might be -- first that made me think that this is a huge effect, but then I thought about the Head Start literature, which shows that there's an important fade out, so kids who are in Head Start seem to show very strong positive effects on academic performance, but over time that fades out as they go into regular school, sort of lower quality schools, compared to their peers, who did not -- who were not in Head Start.

So, then the question here becomes, well, is this an effect that -- is this a small effect because these students were out of the private school after they -- in high

school or not? I mean, is there fade out or is there something to the effect that once you put them in this environment there's kind of a permanent effect that -- well, this is what, I think, part of what it seems to suggest -- is there a permanent effect that doesn't get lost?

So, I think that, to the extent possible, and I know there may be some limits because they're not in school for that -- not in the private school settings for that long or on the voucher program for that long, to look at the dynamics? Is there fade out? Do students who stay longer in private schools seem to have stronger effects in terms of college attendance rates than ones who go in just for a short period of time and drop out, the ones who never use the vouchers, for example, do they have different effects?

You assume the IV results assume there's no impact on those students that never use the voucher. That's an assumption that you may want to sort of think a little bit more carefully about the dynamics of the effect.

That also leads to the second issue, which is whether there's a -- this is still really a black box, right, we kind of give them vouchers, they go to private school, and, you know, at the end of the day we see college attendance rates going up. Well, what is it about the private schools that's actually encouraging students to go to college? This is really important because, as Paul mentioned, there were 20,000 students who expressed interest in the New York City program, and at the end of the day only about 1,200 got it. And so if you want to think about expanding this, the effects of whatever it is that the voucher does and the private school does, if we want to expand it to the universe of students who are interested in New York City, not just in New York City but everywhere else, we need to understand better what's going on, and that's a really hard question.

We struggled with it as well in D.C., you know, what are the things about the private schools that's effecting student performance to the extent that we found

some? What is it -- why is it that the high school drop out rate fell so much for students who got the vouchers versus those who didn't? And so trying to sort of think inside about what's going on inside this black box, I think, would be useful.

And the final distributional -- the final point that I wanted to mention on methods is about the distributional effects. The way that this study -- and I think most studies characterize it -- is to say, well, they'll give you the mean outcome, right, on average there is a 24 percent increase in college attendance rates, whatever it is, on average, but we don't look at the distribution.

We then say, well, let's look by race: let's look at black students; let's look at Hispanics and whites. I think there's a much more compelling way to think about this, which is, what is happening across the distribution of students? There's some very interesting work being done by Marianne Bitler at U.C. Irvine and some coauthors on the New York City experiment, on the test score data, looking at the impacts across the distribution, and they're finding some evidence that students hit the bottom of the distribution where most of the gains are coming from, something we didn't find in a compelling way in D.C. In D.C. there were sort of -- there were no effects and it was kind of no effects everywhere, but in New York City they seem to be finding it at the bottom.

And then the follow up question becomes, well, who is it -- what are the characteristics of the students at the bottom? That might have -- that might feed directly into the black students where you find the effect and it might be sort of a different mix of students. I think that's a more useful way to approach this question and then we can sort of think about how we design policies to help these students go to college.

I'm told to stop, so I may come back to the -- we can come back to the policy implications and the cost/benefit analysis at the end.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Michael.

MR. PETRILLI: Okay. Thank you, Ron. First of all, congratulations to Paul and Matt for a great study. It's not only important to those of us who worry about school vouchers and school choice, but you can now imagine all kinds of scholars out there wondering how can I link a random assignment data to this college clearinghouse. I think about the KIPP random assignment study, some of the federal charter school studies, and all of the lotteries that are happening still across the country especially in the charter school world that continue to generate opportunities for this kind of research and I think it's very exciting. I hope we see a lot more of this and we'll have to kind of bide our time for a few more years to find out how this looks on the college graduation front, which is going to be very interesting.

So, this is important for school choice, no doubt, and I think it makes yet another case for saying that for low-income, African-American kids, it is hard to deny that this looks like a very strong intervention. Already the weight of the evidence was showing that for African-American kids in these programs there were strong outcomes, some studies showing that for student test scores, others on graduation rates in high school now and college enrollment, and big, big effects, and I think that's something that needs to be a part of the conversation.

We still hear sometimes in the national conversation people say the evidence is mixed, there's no compelling evidence. I think that's just not a fair characterization. To my knowledge, we haven't found any studies showing negative effects for vouchers, it's all been either no effects or positive and most of them showing positive for African-American kids. I think that's important.

There's clearly a story here that's about Catholic schools. Catholic schools have been studied for even longer than vouchers now. In the Coleman years that was in non-experimental ways, and so we didn't know for sure if those Catholic

schools were getting great results because of self-selection or not, but people who have studied Catholic schools have been trying to figure out what is it that they seem to be doing that might be getting these better results, and now I think this study, where most of the kids went to Catholic schools, who had the impact, kids who, themselves, were not Catholic, the African-Americans, I think it again gives us more reason to get inside that black box and try to understand what is it that those Catholic schools were doing that were getting these great results.

The tragedy, of course, is that since 1997 when that study started, we've had literally thousands of urban Catholic schools close, so this very effective intervention, it looks like, for African-American kids, has in many cases gone away and at the same time that we've all been very busy in the school reform world building charter schools, thinking about standards in testing and teacher equality and all these other metrics, here we have an intervention that's been working for decades and we've allowed it to kind of slip through our hands, and that's a real tragedy.

And I think, you know, job number one for philanthropists, and I think for policymakers, is to say, what can we do to stop this decline of urban Catholic schools? They seem to be making a huge contribution to our society.

By the way, you know, even in a larger picture you think about today, I think for the first time ever, we have two Catholic school educated people on the presidential tickets, Paul Ryan and Joe Biden, something like two-thirds of our Supreme Court, you know, Nancy Pelosi, on and on and on, you know, many of the country's leaders also coming from Catholic schools. There is something going on in there that we need to learn from.

Hopefully charter schools like KIPP and some of the other promising models out there have learned something, a thing or two about Catholic schools, and

some people argue that they are basically secular Catholic schools. They have the uniforms, they have the discipline, they have the same kind of pedagogy that you might find there and maybe some of the same character formation too.

Maybe that's just as good as the Catholic schools, and future studies will find that, but, again, let's not let these Catholic schools continue to close on our watch, you know, when we have these great results coming out.

So, that's one point. Second point is that I was surprised that Paul and Matt didn't talk about this. When you're trying to understand, how do you explain these results in terms of college enrollment rates? Well, go back to the original study and what do you find in terms of test scores? African-American kids showed significant positive results on test scores and Latino kids did not. That seems to be pretty interesting. I think it's good news that these results mirror one another, and as Paul said, there's a huge amount of debate right now around testing and whether these test scores measure anything that's important.

This seems to indicate, as does the Chetty study and some of the other studies that have come out recently with these long-term results, that there is some kind of relationship between improvements on test scores, even these dumbed down, fill in the blank, bubble tests, and things that happen in the real world ten years later. And so for those of us that support testing and still think that there's a lot of value in both measuring student achievement based on these tests and on holding schools accountable for raising test scores, I think this provides at least some indication that we're still heading in the right direction. Something happened back there when the kids were in second and third and fourth grade, their reading and math scores went up, and then, you know, a decade later their college enrollment rates went up.

I can't prove to you that those two things are linked, but it seems quite

probable that the reason the kids are enrolling in college at greater rates is because they learned more and they got themselves on a trajectory, even if they stayed in those schools for just a few years, that helped them get ready for college many years later.

One last point, we're going to hear a lot in the next couple of weeks about grit and character and the importance of non-cognitive skills, that's because there's an important new book coming out from Paul Tough, who is the author of the book *Harlem Children's Zone: Whatever it Takes*. He has a new book coming out called, *Why Children Succeed*, and he makes the case that a lot of what we're finding from the research is that it's not necessarily just the academic skills kids get but it's these things around grit, character, habits, things that help people, things like resilience, things like being able to persist in the face of challenges.

I think for one thing we want to know more about what those Catholic schools in the late '90s were doing to teach those skills, and I think we'd probably find some evidence that there were some interesting things happening on that front, but I think it also means that we must continue to say those kinds of skills are important but let's not discount the academic skills as measured by those test scores. And so, again, you know, I think if we were able to get inside the black box we might find that schools that are getting these results, both get the academic piece right, and you see that in the test scores, but they also get these non-cognitive skills right, and add that up together and you start to explain why we might see these results.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Thank you very much.

I want to ask a couple of questions about the study itself and then a couple more general points, especially where we're headed in this with vouchers.

I'd like you to talk a little bit more -- explain, especially in the previous study, the magnitude of the impacts on achievement test scores. And you pointed out in

your comments that I know about a lot of literature, and I, myself, had been involved in preschool programs that produced big impacts in the beginning and they seem to fade, and yet some studies show that these produce impacts despite the fade out and sometimes even very modest effects on achievement test scores.

I'm shading a little bit what you said. Maybe it's not just the achievement test scores. Maybe that indicates something early and it's something else late, I'm not sure, but what is the relationship between the achievement test scores and the outcome of more likely to go to college, especially if the achievement test scores are not enormous in the first place?

MR. PETERSON: Well, there's lots of ways of answering this or thinking about this question, and in some ways, as I listen to the conversation, I think, this is the key question: how could some little intervention, way back in 1997, for three years, have an impact many years later? I mean, can you believe this? And I think one way of thinking about it is, number one, the promise was a voucher for three years, but the reality was is that the foundation continued to fund these kids through eighth grade. So, if they were in kindergarten and they started in Catholic school, they got funded through eight grade. So, some did stay for a longer period of time.

But they then expected the kids would figure out how the Catholic school would help them get the right public school for going on to high school or that the Catholic school would pick up where the scholarship left off, that other money would come in and support the students. We don't know what happened. You know, there could have been a lot of downstream intervention that we cannot track that could have helped produce this outcome.

So, we can't just say it was this -- it was this $1,400 at the beginning that had this magical effect. There could have been a lot of intervening steps that took place.

Nonetheless, we do know that a lot of the students who took this voucher and made use of it only did so for one or two years, so, you know, it is a puzzle as to how you could have these long-term effects.

On the other hand, you take the Tennessee class size study, that was for kids beginning in kindergarten and first grade, it went through third grade, it ends at the end of third grade, that study is also showing effects on college enrollment many years later for African-American students but not for white students. The class size study produces results that are very similar to ours, so African-American students get this benefit of this early intervention and nobody can be sure what happens in between, but it's pretty interesting and you also find this -- in the D.C. voucher program a lot of the kids are in high school participating in the program, so this isn't the same -- quite the same issue of the face out.

So, I don't know, Matt might have more to say on this point.

MR. CHINGOS: I think this sort of discussion intersects nicely with Nada's comments about the dynamics of the impact and sort of getting inside the black box.

I think if you could get data on where these kids were going to private school, I wouldn't be surprised if -- or rather where they're going to high school -- I wouldn't be surprised if you found that the kids in the treatment group who got the voucher and used it in elementary school got help in high school. So, maybe one thing we can look at going forward is trying to find other administrative databases that would allow us to track, you know, where they went to high school I think would be a really interesting thing to try and get behind the dynamics of the impact. Was it that this sort of -- these cognitive and non-cognitive skills that students acquired as the result of attending private school in elementary school somehow persisted into college enrollment even

though they went back to the public sector in high school, or was it the sort of snowball effect where now they had these additional opportunities, the Catholic elementary and middle school either encouraged them to go to a Catholic high school, or in New York City maybe prepared them to go to one of the well-known magnet schools there or something like that.

So, I think getting at these dynamics would be really useful to the extent that we're able to get more data.

MR. HASKINS: Do you want to add anything?

MR. PETRILLI: I am curious about the magnitude of the original effects, if you know what those were, on student achievement.

MR. PETERSON: Oh, yes. Well, actually by year three, the effects for African-Americans are not trivial, they're a half a standard deviation, which his -- I don't know, we don't estimate this in terms of standard deviations, so, I don't know if it's quite comparable to this, but it was not a small effect.

Now, the first year effect was small, the second year effect was a little bigger, and the third year effect was quite a bit bigger. So -- but only for African-Americans. So, it can -- you know, I would not say that the test score effects were -- they were often said to be by the news media, but I don't think that's the way it was, in fact.

MR. HASKINS: Are you accusing me of relying on the news media for all my information about scientific studies?

MS. EISSA: Can I just --

MR. HASKINS: Oh, yeah, go ahead. Absolutely.

MS. EISSA: So, I think one of the things that I learned from the D.C. Choice is that we focus a lot on these quantifiable impacts. I think there was a lot of stuff going on that's not quantifiable or measurable.

Or maybe a better way to say it is it's not always the quantitative stuff. So, for example, in D.C. we found a very strong impact on parental satisfaction. When I'm thinking about, you know, are vouchers a good policy, I think of the trade-offs, right, so, there are gains and there are costs, and we focus so much on the test scores that we miss a lot of the stuff, and I think that parental satisfaction should be an input into -- as one of the benefits of vouchers.

So, what I wanted to say is it could be that even if there are no test score impacts, if what they're getting is this other stuff, right, whether it's changes in expectations, whether it's exposure to different peers, or just a change in the mindset or grit or something else that's going on, you know, I think we want to be a little bit careful that we don't want to link too much to the stuff -- you know, the test scores and really be open to what else could -- you know, students could get out of these vouchers.

MR. CHINGOS: There was very strong evidence from the original evaluation of big impacts on things like this. I mean, thinking back to those studies that Paul and colleagues did in the '90s, the test score impacts got all the attention, but they also found huge evidence of impacts among all students, if I'm remembering it right, on parental satisfaction, you know, parental measurement of school quality. So, if you don't have a copy I recommend to everyone to go to the Brookings bookstore and buy Paul's book with Will Howell called --

MR. PETERSON: You're not going to fall for this, are you?

MR. CHINGOS: I'm sort of an independent person. I don't get any of the royalties, so -- but that sort of nicely lays out sort of all of the results of the original study looking at things like -- and I think they also -- didn't you also do focus groups, collect qualitative information? So, really a wide range of outcomes.

MR. HASKINS: Let's stay with this comparison of your results with other

cities. One that really struck me was, and it's partly because I think I'm prone to the trap that you're talking about of, in the last, I'd say, ten years, there have been a number of really important studies on teacher effects, so everybody is very enthusiastic that at last we've found the silver bullet and teachers are the answers. If we had better teachers, everything's going to be okay, and then along comes this study and comparing it to the Chetty study, your impacts are five or six times as big. I mean, that is really -- that's a huge -- so, first, can you rely on that? Is that a fair comparison? Is it really a much bigger impact than we're finding in these teacher studies?

And secondly, if so, then what are the implications here?

MR. PETERSON: So, Matt, you tackle that one.

MR. CHINGOS: This is a hard one. I mean, I think the Chetty study is a great study; it's a really interesting study. I mean, it's a very different intervention, right, it's within a school getting a more versus less effective teacher for one year, and then we sort of multiply that by three to say, well, what would it be over three years? But, I mean, that's just -- that's sort of speculative. On one hand, it's generous to multiply it by three, on the other hand, we don't really know what the dynamics of that are, right, if you were to give someone a better teacher every year over a longer period of time, maybe there's kind of a snowballing effect where that increases every time.

So, I think it's sort of the old, you know, on the one hand, the other hand, but you kind of -- you have two hands, right, you can tackle both teacher quality and give families more choice over where their children go to school. So, in terms of a comparison, I think it's a useful context for the results we have, and sort of points to the conclusion that, you know, improving teacher quality is not going to fix everything on its own, but nothing is going to fix everything on its own. So, I think thinking about these range of interventions is useful.

MR. PETERSON: Right. You know, in some ways this is a much more dramatic intervention. You're taking a child from one type of school setting to another school setting, that's a pretty dramatic change, where as you get an effective teacher, it's in the same school, everything else is the same, teachers are really important but everything else is every important as well.

So, you know, whether or not -- of course we need better teachers, right, that's a -- nobody's going to argue against that, but I think if they had gotten effect-sizes of this magnitude from (inaudible), nobody would have believed them.

MR. PETRILLI: You know, Ron, it reminds me of the discussion back in the '90s, some people started to say, well, the reason maybe we're getting impacts in the voucher schools is because these Catholic schools have smaller class sizes. So, it's really a class size impact. Maybe it's a teacher quality impact. Maybe the Catholic schools back in the '90s had higher quality teachers than what they had in the public schools.

MR. PETERSON: And it could be a peer group effect. Don't ignore that possibility, that this particular intervention you're going to go to school with a lot of children whose parents are paying for that -- to go to that school, so although these are low-income kids, they're going to have a peer group that might be a different peer group than what they had had they stayed in a public school, so it may not be just the teaching instruction, it may not be just the discipline, it may be also the peer group, which does raise questions about how much are you going to get from a generalization of this policy.

And there you really have to go to more large-scale interventions and right now I'd say another place to try to learn more is in Milwaukee where they now have 22,000 students participating in a voucher program out of about 100,000 students in the Milwaukee public schools.

So, it's now a fairly large-scale intervention.

MR. HASKINS: Are you going to add anything?

MS. EISSA: No.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, so, the bane of social science is anecdote, but let me tell you one anecdote, because I want to continue the discussion, I think it's very important.

My son was a good football player and went to a school that had a lousy football team, so he decided he wanted to go to a place where they had good football. He's a highly motivated scholar, my son was. So, he went to DeMatha, which is a famous basketball, football factory sort of in the Washington area. And I cannot tell you the first time I walked into that school I thought I was in a new universe. I mean, I was used to going to the public school where disorder reigned. I mean, total confusion, students wrote all over everything, the men's room, boys' room, whatever they called it, was full of graffiti. I went to the Catholic school, they're going down the sides of the hall, everybody's on the right side, they're wearing ties, bathroom is perfectly clean, kids behave in the class, it was silent. I walk in while they were in class; it was silent in the school.

I mean, these are really, really big differences. Now, I have no idea how reprehensive that is. I'm not really saying seriously, ah, this is the answer, but if Catholics -- do we know a lot about the difference between Catholic schools and public schools?

MR. CHINGOS: Well, I mean, there was a lot of research back in the '80s and '90s and a lot of the focus was on the greater social capital that you would find in these Catholic schools, high expectations, in general, for everybody, less tracking, and a lot of those things have been tried to be replicated by, especially charter schools, and

some public schools as well. I don't know if we know as much right now in 2012 about those differences today.

MR. PETRILLI: You know, one thing that -- I mean, Paul was starting to get at about the generalize-ability is that even when you look at the control group versus the treatment group, that both of these groups are very different than the general population, and I'm kind of curious when you had those numbers about how many of the kids in the control group were going to college anyway, do we know how that compares to African -- you know, urban African-American and urban Latino kids in general? It seems like that's much -- it was much higher -- the control group was going to college in much higher numbers than sort of the New York City population as a whole? Is that fair to say?

MR. CHINGOS: Well, if you look at the -- we talked a little bit in the report about the Chetty, Rockoff, Friedman study, which is of a large northeastern urban city, probably a lot like New York --

MR. PETERSON: Some people say it even was. We don't know for sure.

MR. CHINGOS: Some people say -- some people do say that. And if you look at their data --

MR. HASKINS: Nobody watched them when they went out the door to collect data, where are you going? If they got a ticket for New York that's pretty good evidence, you know.

MR. CHINGOS: In any case, so they find that the average for students in that city college going rate is similar to what we get for the African-American control group, isn't that right, about 30, 35 percent, 36 percent? So, that sort of suggests that our control group is somewhat -- since it's a low-income sample, it's somewhat more

motivated to bring the low-income kids in our study up to sort of the New York average.

So, it's the disadvantaged groups, sort of socioeconomically, but there probably is a bit more motivation or something, something there even in the control group --

MR. PETERSON: But it's not dramatic. It's not dramatic, because most of the kids in New York City are of low-income. It's not like -- they don't -- they do serve a middle class population, but it's a fairly small part of the New York City School System.

MR. HASKINS: All right, so now a couple more general questions before we go to the audience.

Why have vouchers grown so much slower than charter schools?

MR. PETERSON: Well, in my opinion, that's because of the religious issue. I mean, the whole question of church and state has remained a big issue even though the Supreme Court ruled favorably on this, that issue has not gone away at the state level and the courts have blocked quite a few voucher pieces of legislation that would have instituted a voucher program. And I think just the general public support for charter schools is higher. It's a less partisan issue; both political parties are supporting charters.

Charters can be presented as really not alternatives to the public school but just sort of opportunities to innovate and try new ideas out that can be copied by the public schools. So, the threat to the public school is perceived to be less by many people in the case of charter schools.

So, there's a lot of political support for charter schools that just has not yet materialized for vouchers. Whether that will change in the future remains to be seen, but I would expect that the charter movement is likely -- charters are now, what, 4 percent of the students? What is it?

MR. CHINGOS: Yeah, about that.

MR. PETERSON: Four percent of the students are attending charter schools, which is still not a very large percentage. Vouchers it's got to be well under 1 percent, but I don't think we're going to see a change in those percentages.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody want to add to this?

MR. PETRILLI: I think there's a long history on vouchers in that there's been a debate in this country for 100 years about whether to fund Catholic schools or not, and also a long history of anti-Catholic bigotry going way back, and so I mean, I think that all plays together in this debate. You know, charter schools were brand new as of 20 years ago and it was something that, I think, parts of the centrists and center left were able to get behind in ways that they just couldn't get behind funding for Catholic schools.

MR. HASKINS: So, it seems that there are two -- this is a question about strange bedfellows -- it seems that there are two groups that support vouchers: black parents and Republicans and these two don't necessarily hang out together too much. How do you explain that? And especially why are Democrats so opposed to vouchers? I mean, almost every city that's had this debate it's Democrats that have been opposed to it. It certainly was here in Washington and it was a little ugly as well.

So, explain. I think it would be important for an audience to understand in terms of the future of vouchers, how do you explain the political alignment here?

SPEAKER: I'll take a first crack. I mean, I think it comes down to one word, and that's unions. You know, in a place like D.C. you have many black parents who wanted the vouchers, who were benefitting from them, but you also have a big part of the black middle class in D.C. are made up of teachers and other employees of the D.C. public schools, and so to have a program that seems very threatening to their livelihood, that in some ways is saying, hey, you're not doing a good enough job and

that's why we're shifting, allowing kids to go elsewhere, is deeply threatening.

What's been interesting is that I think you can make a case today that charter schools have been a much bigger threat to urban school systems and to teacher unions than vouchers because they've been at such larger magnitude, and so I think the difference is what we've already talked about, is not necessarily those urban politics as much as, frankly, the soccer moms and the sort of independents and moderate dems who might support charter schools but don't support vouchers, because, as Paul said, because of the religious issue.

MR. HASKINS: I thought this would really fire up the panel.

MS. EISSA: Well, I mean, I think it's an interesting point that you bring up. I remember a couple of things that struck me when working on the D.C. evaluation was exactly that how much support vouchers had from black parents in areas where there were no options. And also I recall there was one hearing -- I don't remember the specifics -- one hearing about the D.C. voucher where a congressman was making the case against vouchers and saying we need to invest more in the public schools and we need to change the way public schools function, and there was a black student on the panel, and he said, with all due respect, we don't have time. You know, this is -- you're talking about investments that may generate benefits in the future, but there was a high school student sitting there facing --

MR. HASKINS: I want it now.

MS. EISSA: -- I need the education now. And it's -- we sometimes miss that, you know, when we talk about potential changes to schools. These are institutions. They take a long time. It takes a long time to change culture and environments, and meantime, there are students who are searching for good opportunities and I think to the extent that vouchers do that, allow them to escape, essentially, I think they should be part

of the solution.

They're not going to be a solution to everything. I think maybe to some extent the problem was that vouchers were over sold initially in terms of what they could provide and the benefits, and so when we learn from the evidence that they weren't going to solve all problems, I think we sort of started to backtrack pretty quickly.

The other thing I would say is that there are important benefits to public schools and I say this as a parent who's made the shift in the opposite direction. My children were in private schools until now. My daughter is in high school and chose to go to a public school and with her, her siblings shifted with her. I think there's a tremendous benefit to good public schools -- we're in Montgomery County -- in terms of the types of peers that they have, it's a more diverse student body, there's more of a community setting.

So, I wouldn't underestimate the value that good public schools can bring to communities. And so I wouldn't want to see a world in which it's all vouchers, but I also wouldn't -- you know, don't think that the situation we have today in which public schools in inner cities are not serving the students, I don't think that's acceptable, and to the extent that we can address some of the short-term problems by allowing students to use vouchers and get to better schools, we should absolutely be pursuing that.

SPEAKER: And Ron, just one thing is, you know, maybe five or ten years ago it was true that it was just Republicans and black parents that supported vouchers, but you've seen big changes, at least in some places, Florida is probably the best example, where now you have, I think, a majority of the black caucus in the Florida legislature on support of the tax credit program there.

So, there's been some efforts made to try to bring the politics along. Some of that has to do with, you know, money, people -- you know, school choice groups

making donations to Democratic legislatures if they'll support school choice and therefore they're more apt to break with the unions, because they don't need the union money and support.

So, there's been some shifts in some places and some of the recent victories, like in Louisiana, are because there has been movement on the Democratic side as well.

MR. HASKINS: Right, so you mentioned Louisiana, and Paul, you mentioned that you didn't think vouchers were going to grow that much, but it does seem right now, in the last year or so, that there's a rebirth, almost, a new energy in it -- Arizona, New Jersey, Louisiana, I'm probably leaving out one or two places, and now Romney is -- appears to be hoping to make it an issue in the presidential election and actually use federal dollars.

So, what's the future going to be? Are we going to have more voucher programs?

MR. PETERSON: Well, you know, it is interesting, are we reaching a tipping point, which is what the choice people have always said if once we reach a tipping point there's going to be a pretty dramatic change very quickly. We haven't seen that. I mean, this movement for school choice, whether it's tax credits or vouchers or charters, dates back to 1989, 1990, and the growth has been very slow over 20 plus years, nearly a quarter of a century you've seen, you know, at most 5 percent, if you count the home schooling movement, maybe 6, 7 percent, but that's -- you know, that's still a very -- 93 percent -- and the private sector has not grown at all. The private sector is as small today as it was back in 1990.

So --

MR. CHINGOS: It's smaller.

MR. PETERSON: Is it -- you say it's smaller, okay, so you haven't -- you really have not seen the sort of, you know, much of a transformational development.

Now, if you got to 20 percent -- Milwaukee is really quite interesting because in Milwaukee you've got a very substantial charter school, you've got a very substantial voucher program. The public schools are losing students, the public schools are trying to figure out their -- the pension program is just overwhelming the Milwaukee Public School System.

So, you could see somehow a very dramatic thing happening in Milwaukee, and the same is true in New Orleans where Katrina sort of wiped out the preexisting system. You now have a pretty much new system created, but these are isolated examples within the United States. Whether or not -- it's going to happen in the big cities if it's going to happen anywhere but, you know, the great -- you know, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles -- as much pressure as there is on these systems from the choice movement, you don't sort of anticipate -- maybe Detroit, you know, Detroit is sort of another possibility where the pressures on the Detroit system are enormous.

So, you could imagine that there will be particular pockets where you could get transformational developments happening in the near term, but probably not outside of specific places.

MR. HASKINS: Matt, do you agree with that, the future of vouchers is mediocre at best?

MR. CHINGOS: Yeah, I mean, I think in a way, in the last ten years or so, to some degree, charters have crowded out vouchers, right, to the extent that there have been other kinds of choices, but reduce the pressure on the demand for vouchers. So, in the long run, because of sort of the issues Paul outlined, including the religion issue, it does seem that the future for vouchers is less bright than for other forms of

choice, but at the same time it does seem like there are some isolated opportunities where that may not be the case.

MR. PETRILLI: Well, there's going to be more kids using vouchers three years from now just because some of these new programs are going to grow. Indiana has got a statewide program, Louisiana, I mean, these are going to be massive programs and so there's going to be lots more kids participating, and by the way, great opportunities for research and for learning.

I think this is going to go with the political cycles, you know, if Republicans -- the reason we've gotten so many programs in the last two years is because of this wave of Republican lawmakers and governors that gave, you know, these super majorities --

MR. PETERSON: All the states we've mentioned have Republican governors.

MR. PETRILLI: Yeah, and super majorities in many cases in the legislature, that's been very important. Those won't last forever, I would predict, and so, you know, there will probably be -- we'll go back into a cycle where there's not as much progress on passing the choice legislation.

MR. HASKINS: Nada, do you want to add anything to this?

MS. EISSA: I would just add that if these college attendance results hold up and drop out rate results hold up, I think that could be compelling for pushing vouchers forward. I think one of the issues has been all the evidence so far has been mixed to some extent, but I think this is compelling. If you say that, you know, vouchers really do have an impact on the long-term well being of students, I think that could generate some --

MR. PETERSON: Now there is a point. Our study will change things.

MR. HASKINS: Absolutely. I think you paid her to say that. I'm not going to tell anybody --

MS. EISSA: I said if it holds up.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, audience. Questions. Comments. Yes? Do we have someone with a microphone? Right up here.

Tell us your name and ask a question.

SPEAKER: I'm Helen Raffel with Resources for the Future. I'm wondering whether the fact that the voucher amount, money amount, doesn't cover the average tuition of private schools means that the parents who are putting out the difference of several hundred dollars a year are actually putting more pressure on their children and watching their homework assignments and being more like Chinese mothers, and so forth, might not be a major factor in the advantage of the voucher program and that it's much more important, perhaps, especially in light of the fact that the people who apply for the vouchers are those who can afford the extra few hundred dollars a year, leave out those who are too poor for that. Maybe it's much more important to educate the parents about the importance, especially since, I don't know whether you've looked at the education level of the parents, but apparently there is a correlation there, not only in ability to pay the extra --

MR. HASKINS: Okay, let's -- let's answer the question.

SPEAKER: -- but also make pressure on the students. Isn't it more important, instead of a voucher program, to give a general education level for all parents impressing upon them the fact that they have to watch their children's school -- home situation?

MR. CHINGOS: So, it's certainly the case that part of this intervention wasn't a full tuition scholarship, families do have to make up the difference so this

hypothesis that it increased parent involvement is certainly plausible. Paul, did you guys look at that in the original studies?

MR. PETERSON: Well, there is this anecdote I recall where we were interviewing a mother whose reports that her little -- her son said to somebody, well, my mom's now paying for this so I've got to study, so you know, there might be some truth to this point that if you're putting money down on the table you can tell your children, I -- you know, it's not a gift from the government, your parents are doing this for you.

So, there may be something to that. Nonetheless, the D.C. voucher program got comparable effects on high school graduation rates and there was a $7,500 voucher and there was no private contribution. So, that -- Nada, if you want to comment on that.

MR. HASKINS: So, moderators and desperate researchers resort to these anecdotes.

All the way in the back, right there. Hand that young lady a microphone. On your right, yes, on your right.

SPEAKER: I am a supporter of the voucher system, however, I do have to be fair to the teachers who have the children left behind. For instance, the parents who apply for the vouchers program, they are normally a little more responsible, so they will drag the ones who are, you know, excelling in the public school, away from them so the teachers who are left -- the children who are left in the public schools, you know, they come from real young parents -- trust me, I know, I work over there in Ward 8 -- and they come -- and I don't know whose fault it is except, I think I'm here begging you to do a study on the children of the inner city, the effects of their environment, what the effect -- what effect their environment has on the classroom.

Because I have a great-grandson who's ADHD, for instance. A lot of the

children that I see as I volunteer in the school system, they react the same way, it's just that nobody's testing them. So, the teacher who may be a high ranking teacher in Ward 3 brings the same teacher in Ward 8, no longer.

I'm a little bit excited about the whole thing. Am I making myself clear?

SPEAKER: Yeah, absolutely.

SPEAKER: That's a great question.

MR. HASKINS: Let's answer the question. Go ahead.

MR. PETRILLI: And I think you get the heart of the big question here is that even if there is an intervention for the kids participating, even if it benefits those kids, you know, is this some kind of lifeboat strategy where it's good for those kids but the kids who are left behind end up doing worse because there's less social capital in the school, the peer effects aren't as positive, there's just more of a concentration of kids who are -- you know, have even greater disadvantages. You've now taken all the most involved, motivated parents out.

I think that's a really hard question to answer and I'd be curious to know what Paul and Matt would say on that. You know, my sense is, I don't know that we have much evidence that traditional public schools are doing a great job today tapping those motivated parents already, that they haven't found great ways to get those parents to contribute in a way that would help the typical school in Ward 8 anyway, and I don't know that we have -- so, I don't know that we have evidence that, at the end of the day, those schools are doing worse, though it's certainly something that's legitimate that you would worry about happening.

MR. PETERSON: You know, there's two studies that I think are relevant to this question, one is the Florida study by David Figlio which looked at the tax credit program that had a huge impact on some public schools but not on others because there

was a private school next door.

And so he looked to see, okay, do those public schools that have a private school right next door that all of the sudden there's lots of kids in public school can now afford to go to that private school, do they get worse because of this competition and the fact that some kids are leaving, or do they get better? And he finds solid evidence that they get better, they don't get worse.

So, that suggests to me that the public schools pay attention to this competition and find ways to improve and that the idea that all the resources that they're going to lose is going to leave those students worse off, the doesn't suggest that, and in fact, I've yet to find a convincing study that shows these negative effects that people have talked about.

Now, on the international front --

MR. HASKINS: Hey, before you leave that, so the bottom line on that is competition works for everybody, not just the people that went to the -- used the voucher?

MR. PETERSON: That's what the Figlio study -- and if you go to the international data, most countries in the world fund both public and private schools. They have, essentially, a voucher system, which allows families to choose between religious schools or the secular schools run by the government. Canada has it, England has it, France has it, Italy has it, Germany has it, Australia has it, New Zealand has it, but it varies from one country to another. In some places the private sector is very well developed, in other places it's not.

There's a very good quasi-experimental study that's taken a look at this international evidence, and they find that, you know, public and private schools in these countries are about the same. Once you control for the fact of what kinds of families go

to these schools, it's not that the private schools are a lot better than the public schools, they're about the same. But the whole system is better. Where there's more competition, the whole system is better. And I think that's the most interesting evidence because these systems have been in place for 100 years, and so you can see what would happen if you really scaled up to that kind of level.

So, I like to point people to Canada, which has a much higher performing educational system than we have and has, essentially, a voucher system because anybody can get the government to pay for their education, whether they go to a public school or a private school.

MR. HASKINS: I came up in the Vietnam era and we'd point a lot to Canada back then, people were just going there in droves.

Let's come up to the front with a mic, right here on your right.

MS. DANIELS: Thank you. Hi, I'm Jennifer Daniels and I work for the archdiocese of Washington Catholic schools, so Michael, and all of you up there, thank you for your kind words on Catholic schools, and for the comments regarding, you know, opening the black box of what happens inside Catholic schools, I welcome you to come any time. I'd be happy to set up a tour, and especially for the philanthropists that you mentioned. They are very, very special places and our mission is to serve the most needy in our neighborhoods, as it has been for 200 years.

However, I'm very involved in school choice in all levels. I recognize the fact not everybody is ever going to attend only Catholic schools, so I'm always looking for ways for us as school choice advocates to put our talking points, our messages together, and some of what you just said about international competition, I hope that we might continue to reinforce the idea of, just let the money follow the child. If the kid wants to go to a charter school, home school, Catholic school, whatever, if we're all saying, at the end

of the day, the child, the parent should make the decision and get rid of this monopoly where you're stuck based on your zip code, that would raise up all of our schools together and give the parents the empowerment that they need to do what's best for their child.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, thank you. Anybody want to respond to that?

SPEAKER: I'd add one sort of related point which has been made, I think, before, but I think is relevant. A lot of folks act as if choice policies like vouchers or charter schools are this brand new thing, but we already have a very extensive system of school choice for folks who can afford it, right. If you have money you can choose to send your kid to private school and you can choose the neighborhood where you rent an apartment or buy a house because of the public school.

So, when you talk about choice policy, you're not really talking about this radically new thing in the way a lot of folks assume, but really you're talking about expanding to all families the choices that one set of families currently has.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else want to add to that? Okay, let's go all the way over here on the aisle. In the purple shirt. There's only one of them with a purple shirt.

MR. DONOHUE: I knew there was a reason to wear this purple shirt.

I'm T.J. Donohue, I'm a AAAS science policy fellow placed at the National Science Foundation where I'm working on the innovative workforce of the future. In real life I'm a public high school science teacher and, not normally relevant in my introduction, is that my aunt has just celebrated 50 years as a school sister at Notre Dame, which becomes relevant to my interest, which is the fact that this happened in grades one through five, which I think is extremely interesting.

So, I have a hypothesis that maybe you can answer, but if not, I think

you should be able to answer it from your data.

Is there a difference in the fraction of students pursuing STEM majors in college? And I would hypothesize the answer is a resounding yes. And the reason it's a yes is not because of the fantastic laboratory facilities in Catholic elementary schools, it is because of the whole child mentality in Catholic elementary schools.

So, I don't know if you have a distribution and you can answer this question now, but if you don't, I strongly encourage you -- I mean, my own selfish interest as a chemical engineer, right, so but I encourage you to find out because everything I've been studying has been pointing to me that by age -- by fifth grade, if those kids have closed the doors to STEM and technical careers in that hallway of the future, they virtually never open them again, no matter what you do.

So, it's very interesting that it's grades one through five and I hope that you will try to dig through this if you haven't already.

MR. HASKINS: So, it's all over by fifth grade, is that right, Matt?

MR. CHINGOS: So, we don't know for sure. It's a great question, great suggestion, so in the enrollment data we have, I don't believe we know the student's choice of major, but in the degree data, when we have that, say, five years from now, if I survive, as was pointed out earlier, we'll have -- well, as a researcher, not as a -- hopefully I'll survive as a human being.

MR. PETERSON: By the time Matt's my age, we'll answer your question.

MR. CHINGOS: Right, and we'll know -- of course, for the degrees, we know the field the degree was in, so we can see whether the voucher program increased STEM degrees.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else want to add to that? Okay, one last

question. All the way in the back.

MS. RABIEE: Thank you. I'm Mana Rabiee with the Voice of America and I just want to make sure I'm reading the report correctly, because there were so many details and statistics in it. You mentioned if the vouchers were used to attend private school, are there non-private places the vouchers can be used, for example, public charter schools? And in that case, do the statistics change a little when you look at that group?

And then you referred to the impact, sometimes, is 20 percent, sometimes it's 24 percent, I want to make sure I'm understanding the difference between those two figures in terms of attendance in college. And then finally in your results page -- and forgive me if this is a little too detailed for the audience, you do say that some of these statistics or that one statistic is "noisy", and that the impact may be 0.4 percent to, as little as, just under 14 percent. If you could, for my sake, clarify what all those differences in those numbers mean so that I'm obviously not overstating the impact later.

MR. CHINGOS: So, the key difference is, so, in the experiment, if you win the voucher, you don't have to use it, right, you're just offered a voucher. So, in some cases we calculate the difference between being offered a voucher and not being offered a voucher.

But as Paul mentioned in the presentation, not everyone uses the voucher. So, if you assume the people who didn't use the voucher had no impact, then you can scale up the impact, spread it out just over the people who used it, and calculate an estimate for them. So, that's the difference, I think, between the 20 and the 24 percent.

MR. PETERSON: Before you leave that, though, let me point out to the audience that this is a big deal among social scientists. You can't -- I mean, a lot of

people think that's -- you've broken -- golden -- in the golden methodology here, you can't -- you've got to take the whole sample. Once selected, always treated and always analyzed, that's the rule.

MR. CHINGOS: Right, so if you wanted to be really conservative you'd say 20 percent and if you are willing to make that one assumption I talked about, you go up to 24 percent, so that's what we think the estimate is for -- if you use it -- when we say use a voucher to attend private school, we just mean use a voucher. The only way you can use a voucher is to attend private school.

And your question about the noise, I mean, this is only, you know, 2,500 kids in the group. The African-American kids we looked at, it was 1,000 kids, so there's always some uncertainty, you know, which kids happened to end up in the experiment on a certain day. So, any estimate, you could never say for sure it's exactly 24 percent. So, the point about that is just that, you know, you can't nail it perfectly, it's going to be some range. Our best guess is that 20 percent or 24 percent, whichever number you like.

SPEAKER: What is the 0.4 percent then?

MR. CHINGOS: So, that's a 95 percent confidence interval. We can talk about that after the event if you want to talk about confidence intervals.

MR. HASKINS: Good decision, that's very good. Okay, let's not end on a technical question, let's have one more question, quickly. Over here. Make it quick, all right?

MR. FARMER: Nick Farmer. Can you tell from your data whether the Hispanic students in the control group eventually went to Catholic schools anyway because they're from a Catholic community? One question. Second one, real quick, is your data available to the general research community so other people can explore some of the questions that have been raised here today?

MR. PETERSON: So, let me take the second point and change the topic slightly by saying, this -- to me the most important thing about this study is to emphasize that we've got to collect data that allows us to track people over a long period of time. We need to start collecting Social Security information and other identifying information on young children at the beginning of experiments. And the privacy rules out there interfere with that and there's less of that going on now. Because this study was done in 1997 we were able to do it. I think if it had been done a few years later, we wouldn't have been able to do it.

So, it's -- I think if we're going to learn what works over the long run, we've got to do a lot more to make sure that researchers have access to information that allows you to identify people.

MR. HASKINS: And will you make your data --

MR. PETERSON: However, you've got to be very careful with that data. So, this data now belongs to Mathematica, so only they can make that data generally available. And you've got to be very careful as to who you provide that information to or the whole privacy issue emerges, you know, at a very extreme level.

So, no, we can't do this because other institutions control -- we were able to get the data because we have established a record of being able to respect the privacy of individuals.

MR. CHINGOS: And the one sort of follow up I would add to Paul's general point there is I really hope that the D.C. voucher evaluation will be continued. I mean, I think it would be a crime if the federal government, who invested all this money in that effort, didn't then --

SPEAKER: Can I say something about that? Unfortunately the Privacy Act prevents us from doing that because after five years we have to destroy all of the

identifying information.

MR. CHINGOS: Okay.

MR. HASKINS: So much for that.

SPEAKER: That is a crime.

MR. HASKINS: A crime has just been committed. But relative to other crimes committed by the federal government, this is nothing.

MR. CHINGOS: I think it's a pretty big crime. I prefer the crime of breaking the Privacy Act to it -- so, anyways, that's too bad, and to answer your other question, just so we don't forget it, we do have, first, the kinds who in the original evaluation showed up to these follow up sessions, we know who went to private school in the control group and the numbers aren't that big, less than 10 percent.

MR. HASKINS: So, please join me in thanking the panel and the presenters. And thank the audience for coming. Good day.

(Applause)

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