THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

CREATING HIGH-OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS: LESSONS FROM HOPE VI

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OPENING REMARKS:

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PUENTES: Okay. Hello everybody. Welcome to our event today. My name is Robert Puentes. I am the research, one of the research vice presidents here at the Brookings Institution, where I also direct our Metro program. And I'm really excited for this discussion today. We are going to hear from scholars at Opportunity Insights who are gonna present some brand-new research, helping us understand how revitalizing neighborhoods can create high opportunities for families.

This is a question that is really important to everything that we do here at Brookings Metro as it sits at the center of place-based policy making. The research is focused on which is a $17 billion federal effort to redevelop distressed public housing into mixed income communities, tracking the lives of more than a million people over 30 years. The research offers the first comprehensive look at how HOPE VI reshaped economic mobility for public housing residents and the findings shed new light on neighborhood disadvantage, the mechanisms behind it, and where revitalization efforts could make the greatest impact going forward.

So, we're gonna start with a presentation on this work from the authors of the study. Raj Chetty is the William Ackman professor of economics at Harvard, where he also directs Opportunity Insights and Matthew Staiger, who is a research scientist at Opportunity Insights the research offers remarkable insights into weather and how we can transform neighborhoods. And I'm really looking forward to hearing more about that after they present.

We are going to engage in a discussion that bridges the rigorous evidence from the work with the real-world implementation challenges and opportunities. And we're really lucky to have an excellent panel to engage in that discussion. Including Henry Cisneros, founder and senior advisor for American Triple I and former HUD secretary. Carol Naughton, chief executive officer of Purpose-Built Communities, and Ed Glaeser, the Fred and Eleanor Glim professor of economics at Harvard University. So, I'm really thrilled to welcome you all here. I'm looking forward to hearing more about the research. And now it is my pleasure to turn it over to Raj and Matt to tell us more about their excellent work. Raj, Matt, over to you.

CHETTY: Thank you so much, Rob. Thank you to the Brookings Institution and thank you all for joining. It's our pleasure to be able to share this new work that our team just released last week which

Matt and I did jointly with our colleagues at Harvard, Rebecca Diamond and Larry Katz, as well as Laura Tak at Cornell and our Census Bureau collaborators, Brad Foster and Sonya Porter.

To motivate this presentation let me show you a map of the city of Philadelphia from the Opportunity Atlas, which is a tool our team is constructed to look at how children's chances of rising up out of poverty and achieving the American dream vary across neighborhoods in America. So here we're using the Opportunity Atlas data, which you can look at yourself for your own city by going to opportunity atlas.org.

We're zooming in to the city of Philadelphia and showing you statistics on how children's chances of rising up vary depending upon the exact neighborhood in which they're growing up, where we color the map, such that the red colors are places where kids are less likely to rise out of poverty. And the blue green colors are places where kids are more likely to rise out of poverty. And if you look at the scale on the lower right-hand side of the map, you can see that if you take a set of kids who are starting out in families at the same income level, families making about $27,000 a year, which puts them at the 25th percentile of the US national income distribution, if we follow them over time and measure their own earnings using tax record data when they're in their mid-thirties.

Their earnings vary dramatically. You can see that in some parts of the city, like Mill Creek for example, kids growing up there have average incomes of $20,000 a year, or even less than that in some neighborhoods when they are in their mid-thirties. Yet there are other places just a couple of miles away where kids starting out, those exact same family income levels have achieved dramatically higher levels of income, 40, 45, $50,000 a year when they grow up. So, this fact about dramatic variation in children's chances of rising up across nearby neighborhoods is prevalent in Philadelphia, it's prevalent in cities across America, and it's now been well documented that children's chances of rising up very greatly depending upon their childhood environment. In light of that fact about the geography of economic opportunity, there's been a growing interest in one approach that I think is quite intuitive to helping families rise out of poverty given these findings, which is to help families move to opportunity.

So, you could imagine taking a set of children who are growing up, say, in the Mill Creek area in Philadelphia, and giving them housing vouchers or giving them assistance to move to a higher opportunity neighborhood nearby. And we and others have shown that those kinds of policies do have some promise. They can genuinely change children's outcomes quite substantially. But of course, they have limited scale. You can't move everyone to a different neighborhood. Not everyone wants to move to a different neighborhood. And so, the most common question we've gotten as we've done this sort of research over the past decade or so, is moving to opportunities and interesting approach on some small scale.

But how can you bring opportunity to where people currently live rather than having them move to opportunity? And so that's the question we want to tackle in this new study. Can we revitalize that community in Mill Creek, perhaps reconstruct the housing, make other changes such that we transform that low opportunity neighborhood into a higher opportunity area? To study that question, we're gonna analyze the largest neighborhood revitalization effort to date the $17 billion HOPE VI program, and to discuss what we found and discuss the details of that program. I'm gonna turn it over to my colleague Matt Staiger, who's one of the leaders in thinking about housing policy and economic mobility. Matt?

STAIGER: Thanks so much, Raj. As Raj mentioned in this project, we study the impacts of the HOPE VI Revitalization program. HOPE VI was a large federal program that targeted distressed public housing projects in high poverty neighborhoods. HOPE VI allocated $16.7 billion across 262 sites between 1993 and 2010. And these funds were used to demolish public housing and build mixed income communities in their place. So just to give you a sense of what HOPE VI did here I'm showing you an image of the Mill Creek Homes public housing projects where this picture is taken a few years before receiving a HOPE VI grant.

So as was typical of many hopes, six sites, this was a very segregated community in the sense that most of the families that lived here were very poor by virtue of the fact that they were recipients of public housing. And in addition, the physical architecture of the public housing development set the public housing residence apart from the surrounding community. Here on the right, I'm now showing you what this exact same neighborhood looked like after revitalization. As you can see, the new housing units now blended more seamlessly into the surrounding community, and these new housing units were reserved for a mix of families and public housing and families paying market rent.

And so, the intention of HOPE VI was to allow public housing residents to live in more mixed income communities. The question that we're setting out to answer in this paper is the following, did HOPE VI improve economic opportunity in these targeted neighborhoods? In other words, if you were to take a set of children who are growing up in public housing and assign them to live in the neighborhood on the left, or the neighborhood on the right, would you ultimately observe differences in their long run outcomes in adulthood? Now, before jumping into the details of our study, it's worth pausing for a moment and acknowledging that this was a controversial program. So as part of revitalization the original public housing projects were demolished and that displaced many families in our paper, we're not gonna focus on those displacement costs precisely because prior work has done a good job of documenting those costs.

But we want to acknowledge those costs and note that it's important context when interpreting the results from our study. All right, so let me start by telling you a bit about how we tackled this problem. So, we relied primarily on two data sources. Specifically, we link federal income tax returns to administrative data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Together. These data sets allow us to identify who is living in public housing, and then to track the incomes of those individuals over time using the tax records. In terms of a research methodology, the gold standard research methodology in social science is to use a randomized controlled trial. So, if we were to have set this up as a research study, what we would've liked to do is identify a big pool of public housing projects and then randomly split them into two groups.

One group would be the treatment group, which receives a HOPE VI grant. The other group would be the control group that doesn't receive an intervention. And in that setting, you would simply then compare the outcomes between the treated and controlled neighborhoods in order to estimate the impact of the HOPE VI program. Of course, in practice, HOPE VI was not implemented as a randomized controlled trial. And indeed, HUD specifically targeted some of the most distressed public housing projects in the country. However, because of limited funding, there were many distressed public housing projects that didn't end up receiving a HOPE VI grant.

So, what we're gonna do in our analysis is leverage this fact and use a matching methodology in order to reconstruct the conditions of a randomized controlled trial. In particular, what we do is we go back to the years before HOPE VI, and for each HOPE VI six project, we're gonna find what we call a matched control project. You, these are projects that did not receive HOPE VI funding but looked very similar along many dimensions. So, projects that were similar in terms of size, in terms of the characteristics of the residents, like their income, racial composition, and so on. And that way we then create similar conditions to a randomized control trial where we have both a treatment group and a control group, and we then track those groups of projects over time in the control setting.

The kind of projects remain as is. So, the high-rise towers remain as they were in the treatment group. They received the HOPE VI revitalization grants and the neighborhoods are revitalized. By comparing these two groups of neighborhoods, we're able to estimate the impact of the HOPE VI program. So, in our analysis, we're gonna study the effects on both children and adults. And so let me start by showing you what we found when we looked at the outcomes of adults. So, we start by asking how HOPE VI changed the income composition of the residents in the neighborhood. To do we identify all adults who are living in the physical footprint of the original public housing project, and in each year we measure the income of those adults.

So that's what I'm plotting on the vertical axis. On the horizontal axis, we're showing how that income, that average income changes between 10 years before and 15 years after the HOPE VI grant. So, as you can see, prior to HOPE VI, the average adults in these neighborhoods earned about $13,000 per year. This was very similar to the control sites, and we can see that the HOPE VI neighborhoods were pretty stable in the years. Leading up to the grants, after HOPE VI, the original public housing projects were demolished, and new housing units were built in their place. Once people move back in, we see a dramatic increase in the average income of the adults living in these neighborhoods.

So, 15 years after the award average income of adult residents increased by 50%. And so, this figure shows that HOPE VI achieved one of its primary stated goals, which was to create more mixed income communities. However, the new housing units in these neighborhoods were now reserved for a mix of public housing residents and families paying market rent. And as it turns out, these income gains are driven by higher income families moving into the market rate housing units, not by income gains among the public housing residents themselves. So, one way to see this is to look at impacts on the original residents of these neighborhoods. So, to do we go back to the year before the HOPE VI grant, and we find adults who are living in the HOPE VI projects and follow those individuals over time.

That's what I'm showing you here in yellow. And as you can see, we find no evidence that the adults who originally lived in these public housing projects benefited economically. And so, the key takeaway from this section of the paper is that HOPE VI was successful at creating more mixed income communities, but it did so by changing the mix of people who lived in these neighborhoods, not by improving the incomes of the adults who lived in public housing For children. We see a very different story. And so that's what I'll turn to next. When analyzing the impacts of HOPE VI on Children, we start by looking at prior residents of the HOPE VI sites in order to get a sense of what these neighborhoods were like prior to the intervention. So, to construct this figure, what we do is we go back 10 years before the HOPE VI grant and find kids who are living in the neighborhoods at this time, but who had moved away by the time of the HOPE VI grant.

For those children, we track their incomes in adulthood using the tax records and measure how much they are earning at age 30. So, we find that prior residents of HOPE VI sites earned about $23,000 in their early thirties, and we find very similar outcomes for children in our control sites. So, this suggests that the HOPE VI and control projects were very similar prior to revitalization. When we look at children who move into the revitalized public housing projects after HOPE VI, we see a very different story. So that's what I'm showing you here on the right. As you can see, kids who move into the revitalized public housing projects experience large gains in earnings. So, about a $3,500 increase in earnings, or a 16% increase in earnings.

These gains are not just limited to economic gains and income, but we also see gains in other important outcomes, like an increase in college attendance and a reduction in incarceration rates among boys. While promising there are two explanations for what could be driving these gains. So, one story is that HOPE VI really did fundamentally expand economic opportunity in these neighborhoods that the kids who grew up in public housing, in the revitalized neighborhoods were exposed to better neighborhood conditions, and that set them on a different life trajectory that led them to earn more in adulthood. Another plausible explanation is one about selection. So, it's possible that the revitalized public housing units could have attracted a different set of residents whose children would have earned more regardless of where they lived. For example, some HOPE VI sites implemented tougher screening rules.

And those rules may have excluded some of the most disadvantaged families in public housing. And so, in order to distinguish between these two stories, what we do is instead of making comparisons between children who grew up in different public housing projects, we make comparisons between children who grew up within the same public housing project. So just to fix ideas, consider two children who move into the exact same public housing project in the exact same year, but who are different ages when they make those moves. So, for example, one child is 10 years old and the other is 17 years old. If these gains are really about improvements in the causal effect of place, then we would expect that the younger child, the child who's exposed from more of their childhood to benefit more from being exposed to the, these neighborhood environments.

And that is exactly what we find in the data. So here in this figure on the vertical axis, we're showing the, in the gains in adult income for children in the revitalized public housing projects. Then on the X axis as a function of how many years the children spend in these public housing projects. And as you can see, there's a very strong relationship whereby we find that children who spend more time and revitalize public housing end up earning substantially more in adulthood. In fact, this same pattern appears when we make comparisons between older and younger siblings who are in the same family.

And this implies that the gains that we're finding cannot be explained by different types of families moving to different projects. But rather, these gains truly reflect improvements in the causal effect of place HOPE VI fundamentally changed economic opportunity in these neighborhoods. So how big are these effects? One way to interpret the magnitude is to compare these income gains to the cost of the program. So, HOPE VI was a very expensive program. It required a one-time upfront cost. Of $170,000 per revitalized unit, but the gains were also quite large. So, our estimates imply that each year that a family spends in a revitalized public housing unit increases the lifetime earnings of their children by $25,000.

So that's the gains from just spending one year in our revitalized project. And as you can imagine, these gains add up quickly over time when you start thinking about family spending multiple years in these revitalized areas. Indeed, over a 30-year horizon the increase in income tax from the in-income tax revenue from these income gains is enough to offset much of the upfront costs of the redevelopment these gains broaden the scope for using tools like tax increment financing to incentivize private investment in neighborhood revitalization efforts. Indeed, tax increment financing, which promises developers a share of the tax gains was used in some hopes six sites but was based purely on expected gains and property and sales tax revenue and did not leverage the gains in income tax revenues documented here.

So, in the next section of the research, we investigated mechanisms. Why is it that HOPE VI produces better outcomes for the kids who grow up there? Our research points to a central role of social integration. So, to show that, I'm gonna start by showing you how the impacts of HOPE VI vary with the affluence of the surrounding community. So, in order to construct this figure, what we do is we go back for each project and find children who are living outside of public housing, but within a one-mile radius among those children. We measure their average incomes in adulthood. So, you can think of this as a measure of the affluence or economic opportunity in the nearby neighborhoods.

We then group projects into three buckets based on this this measure of affluence. And within each of those buckets, we estimate the effect of the HOPE VI program. So that's what I'm showing you in this figure. As you can see, there's a very strong relationship whereby we find that HOPE VI had a larger impact when the nearby communities were relatively more affluent. Now, one of the most striking findings from our research is shown on the bar on the left, which shows that among HOPE VI sites that were located in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, the program had no impact. Just to pause on that, this was a very large program, invested tens of millions of dollars into these neighborhoods, tore down distressed old public housing towers, and rebuilt brand-new high-quality housing.

When those developments were located in broader areas of disadvantage, the children who grew up in those brand-new housing units did no better than children who grew up in traditional high-rise towers. It's only in the neighborhoods on the right of this graph where there's some economic opportunity in the surrounding neighborhoods to tap into do we see evidence of gains in the program? So, what these results suggest is that the benefits of HOPE VI are driven not just by improvements in housing quality per se, but it has something fundamentally to do with a change in the nature of social interactions. So, with additional evidence on this mechanism, we look at impacts on three direct measures of social interaction.

So first, we use survey data from decennial, from the decennial census to find children in public housing as well as children who are growing up outside of public housing, but in the nearby neighborhoods. We then track those children into adulthood and show that HOPE VI increased the likelihood that children in public housing ended up marrying and cohabitating with their former neighbors, suggesting that these two groups are interacting more intensively. Second, we use anonymized data from cell phone ping records to measure where public housing residents are spending their time. And what we find is that HOPE VI increased the amount of time that public housing residents are spending outside of the public housing development and in the surrounding neighborhood.

Third, we use data from Facebook to measure characteristics of high school or social networks. What we find is that HOPE VI increased the likelihood that children in public housing ended up befriending children from more affluent families. So, all of this evidence points to a story in which before HOPE VI, these projects were islands of disadvantage that were socially disconnected from the sur surrounding communities. And what HOPE VI did was its integrated public housing residents into the broader areas. And these connections ended up dramatically increasing the long run outcomes of the kids in public housing. So, in the last section of the paper, we take a step back from HOPE VI and ask whether the lessons from HOPE VI are likely to be relevant or applicable in a broader context beyond distressed public housing.

So, a key question here is whether HOPE VI public housing sites are unusually isolated or whether this integration mechanism can plausibly be used to expand economic opportunity in a broader setting of low-income neighborhoods? To answer this question to. For each neighborhood in the US, we measure the extent to which that neighborhood is socially integrated with nearby neighborhoods. Our key finding is that half of low-income neighborhoods are more isolated than the hope, than the typical

HOPE VI site was prior to revitalization. So, what this suggests is that there's many low-income neighborhoods out there that could plausibly benefit from increased integration. But how do we know that increasing integration in this, these other contexts would lead to gains and economic opportunity just as it did in the HOPE VI setting?

One thing that gives us confidence is that there appears to be a much broader, more general relationship between economic opportunity and integration. So that's the point I'm making in this figure. On the left to construct this figure, what we've done is for each low-income neighborhood in the US we've measured the degree to which that neighborhood is socially integrated with nearby affluent neighborhoods on the horizontal axis, what we're doing then is lining neighborhoods up. Based on that measure of social integration, we're on the left. We have the isolated neighborhoods, and on the right we have much more integrated neighborhoods. And then we're showing the relationship between that integration index and the outcomes of the low-income kids who grow up in those communities.

So, on the vertical access, we have the average adult income for children who grow up in these neighborhoods. This positive relationship shows us that among children who are born to low-income parents, those who grow up in more integrated neighborhoods tend to earn significantly more in adulthood. Now, one key question that affects the kind of political feasibility of these types of integration efforts is whether there are offsetting negative effects for the affluent kids when there's an increase in integration. So, to explore that, we flip this figure on its head and look at the outcomes of children and affluent families.

So that's what I'm showing here on the right. This figure. On the right, on the vertical axis, we have the average adult income among children born to affluent parents. And on the horizontal axis we have a measure of how integrated the affluent neighborhoods are to nearby low-income neighborhoods. And so here you can see that there's a very different story. What we find is that among children born to more affluent parents there does not seem to be a strong relationship between their outcomes and how integrated their neighborhood is with low-income neighborhoods. In other words, what these results suggest is that if one were to integrate low- and high-income neighborhoods, this would likely generate substantial gains for the children in the low-income neighborhoods without coming at a large cost for the children in the high-income neighborhoods.

More broadly, what this research suggests is that connection-based revitalization, more efforts to connect low-income neighborhoods to surrounding areas is a promising strategy for expanding economic opportunity at scale. And in order to support kind of future efforts in this area, we've identified a candidate set of neighborhoods that we think are amenable to this type of integration effort. So, these are low income, low mobility neighborhoods that are surrounded by relatively more affluent areas. These are the types of places that the findings from HOPE VI suggests that we would see the biggest benefits from integration. So, in order to view those neighborhoods. You can find a link on our website, which takes you to this map.

So, this is the opportunity atlas that Raj began to talk with. The blue areas are high mobility places. The red areas are low mobility places and overlaid on the opportunity atlas. In black dots, we have highlighted these candidate neighborhoods about 1300 neighborhoods across the US that could likely benefit from increased integration. Using this search tool, you can zoom into your local context. So, let's take San Francisco as an example and see which neighborhoods in your area make the list. So just to point out an example here, one of the neighborhoods in San Francisco that is a good candidate for connection-based revitalization is the Sunnydale neighborhood.

It turns out that this neighborhood has a large public housing project that actually just recently started a revitalization effort that was inspired in part by the Model of HOPE VI. And so, our research suggests that these types of efforts to integrate low and low mobility areas with the surrounding more affluent areas are likely to generate substantial benefits for the kids growing up in these places more broadly, most of the neighborhoods. Our list do not contain public housing. And a key next task, or next step is to figure out what are the most effective inter interventions in these other contexts ex increasing integration. So, one option is to change the built environment to remodel housing just as hope did. But there may be many other ways to achieve the goal of integration.

For example, improving public transportation, building more public spaces and community spaces, or reducing crime. All of these are examples of things that could plausibly increase integration. Our research can't tell us exactly which of these strategies is gonna be the most effective in these different contexts. We should have reason for optimism since the key lesson that HOPE VI teaches us is that it is possible to integrate low-income neighborhoods to surrounding areas. And that doing so generates substantial gains in economic opportunities in these places. Thanks so much for your time, and I'll turn things back over to Robin.

PUENTES: That's terrific. Thank you very much Raj and Matt. Wow, what an amazingly ambitious set of research. I would encourage everybody who's participating in this webinar, please check, take a look at the full report. There's an awful lot in there that these guys couldn't get to and definitely do. Go and play along, play around with the map. If you haven't seen that before, it certainly is you provide a lot of very interesting spatial data, and I really appreciated the overlay you just put on there. Again, thank you very much for all that. So, I'm gonna jump into a bunch of questions now.

I'm gonna turn over to the panel in just a second, but I'm gonna start with one for Raj and Matt talking about some, one of the big one of the big takeaways I think from this work is this generational divide. As you noted the findings show we really sharp split where adults in public housing didn't really see income games from HOPE VI, but children did. Each additional year that they spent in the neighborhoods boosted their future earnings. So, you touched on this a little bit, but say a little more, why do you think that this was the case and why do these neighborhood effects play out so differently across the generations? And then what does it mean for these kinds of investments when we think about adults versus children in distressed communities for other policies?

CHETTY: Yeah, thanks Rob. So, the pattern that you mentioned that there are big gains for children. Not so much for adults is echoed in prior findings from our group and now many others, showing that when people move to opportunity, for instance, in the moving to opportunity experiment that many may be familiar with, children ended up gaining, particularly children who moved at young ages and got the biggest dosage, if you will, of benefiting from that new environment. But adults did not gain in economic terms. And gains for children, not just in economic outcomes, but in health outcomes and education outcomes in a variety of domains. And so that's a pattern that we see, again, echoed here in the case of bringing opportunity to people rather than moving them to opportunity.

It's a pattern people have documented in other countries and so on. Just seems like a robust fact about how neighborhoods work. And my interpretation of it is that the environment in which we live often shaped by the physical environment, but more broadly the social connections we have and so on, are critical in a developmental context. And as we know from research and neuroscience and other fields. The brain is most plastic at younger ages, and in that developmental phase, it makes sense that we see bigger impacts on kids than on adults. And it's proportional to the amount of time that you're exposed to a better environment, different social influences and so on that you see gains.

Now to your a latter question, Rob, does this mean that there's nothing we can do for adults? I would not want people to take that message away. My interpretation is that place and place-based policies like what we're discussing today may be most relevant for children's outcomes. However, people-based policies, if you will, things like job training programs, getting people into different forms of higher education. There are many programs we're seeing out there that have quite substantial effects on changing adults' trajectories. It's just that they tend to operate, not per se, at the neighborhood or place-based level, but rather have to be targeted at developing the human capital of specific people. So, I think different approaches can make sense for different subgroups.

PUENTES: I'm gonna turn it to the panel now, so if panels can turn on their cameras. And Carol, I'm gonna start with you if you don't mind. One of the other really striking findings from this work is that hope sex didn't have the same impact on kids in places where surrounding peers were weakest. Or as me said during the presentation better outcomes where neighborhoods were more affluent. So that really, I think, underscores this point that rebuilding the physical housing isn't enough. You need these real social connections. And Matt talked a lot about this as well. Given that, how should policy makers think about where and when to invest? Should we be more selective about which neighborhoods we revitalize or should revitalization be paired with other steps to strengthen the surrounding communities first? So, Carol, we'll start with you and if other folks wanna weigh in, please feel free.

NAUGHTON: Yeah. Thanks, Rob. So, I do think that we really need to take what we've learned over these last 30 years and apply that lens to thinking about where a neighborhood revitalization strategy can be effective at putting more people on a pathway to economic mobility and better outcomes. I'd argue. I think we, we do need to look at this more concretely. There are a lot of places with need, right? And need and readiness and fit for the solution are completely different things. And so, taking, accepting that the need is real, but then looking at what the readiness of a community has for change and what the fit is for the particular solution is really important.

So, I would argue that first when you, you've started that. Analysis you're looking to say first, does the neighborhood revitalization model make sense in a particular place? You're looking at things like the surrounding economy in a city, in a region. If it, if that is weak, a neighborhood solution isn't what you would wanna lead with, right? But assuming that the. Neighborhood and or the city and the regional economy is strong enough, then you can start looking at the actual characteristics of the neighborhood, including the ecosystem in which that neighborhood exists. What other healthy things are there to tie into? Can you tie into Eds and MIDs to universities or hospitals?

Can you tie into some other neighborhood that is already strong and delivering great outcomes for people. So, if you look at those kinds of things and go through your analysis, I think you can come up with a place and a play, a playbook matrix that tells you where this model is likely to be successful and where it might not generate the kinds of outcomes that we wanna make. I'd also say that we should be really clear that there's never gonna be just one solution. For everything that this, getting more people on a pathway to economic mobility in this country is gonna take lots of good ideas and lots of good strategies. I think this is one of them, and that we can take the lessons learned as Purpose-Built has from HOPE VI, iterate on them and continue to build on them to create even a higher likelihood of success in neighborhoods where we're invited to work going forward.

I also wanna make the point about comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. Some of the HOPE VIers really embrace the challenge that Secretary Cisneros and others put to the community and said, can you do something really big? Throw away the rule book and think about what does your community need to create really wonderful opportunities? And the those places I think really are the ones that would shine if we looked down deeper into which neighborhoods themselves are really create, generating great outcomes for folks. And then other places where it was really mostly a housing strategy, particularly a housing strategy that was never successful in attracting a mix of incomes. Those are not, again, not a big surprise that they're not generating economic mobility for the children who grow up there. So yes, there's a lot of policy implications and I have lots of ideas about those.

PUENTES: Keep them coming. And I think it, I really appreciate the multidisciplinary element. You, it's obvious, I think it's intuitive, but we tend to get into our silos and That's right. Housing strategies without, to your point, these economic development strategies is really gonna, is really gonna suffer. So, I really do appreciate that. Anybody else wanna weigh in on that one or ...

NAUGHTON: Can I ask one question to put in the, I'm really curious about the average age of returning residents or returning adults to the public housing revitalized sites. My experience was most of the people who came back, most of the adults who came back were older and maybe in their fifties and sixties even. And we may not reasonably have expected their incomes to go up at that point in their lives.

PUENTES: Raj or Matt, anything on that?

CHETTY: Yeah, I think that's a reasonable concern, Carol. When we look at adults of different ages, we continue to see, no change in their income. So, I don't think it's driven purely by an age composition. Effect, part of what you raised there makes me wonder about whether the kids would benefit, right? It's gonna be adults who are slightly younger, who are gonna end up having kids who benefit in the way that we find. So that's also an important thing to keep in mind as we think about this going forward.

GLAESER: Rob, can I weigh in on kids versus adults and Place? Please? Can I thanks. The so one hypothesis for why there's this striking difference between the impact of neighborhood on kids and adults is that adults are less plastic, they're less likely to respond to the neighborhood around them. The other interpretation is that in fact, where you sleep is just not very impactful on how you spend your life for adults. And it's just a very different existence. And so, my preferred hypothesis is, in fact, place really does matter for adults, but the place that matters is where you spend your day, not where you actually sleep at night. And that's actually harder for us to measure and for us to document than we'd like, in part because we have really good cell phone data that documents the experienced segregation, the experienced connectivity.

Of adults. We have much less good cell phone data on people who are under the age of 16. And so, when I've tried to figure out whether or not they're kids, it's whether or not you spend the bulk of your weekday in a school, in a high school, but that captures all the teachers, all the janitors, all the administrators. And it's very hard to see that see that it makes a huge difference. We do have lots of evidence that who you work around really matters. That, that feels pretty robust as, as well. And so, I think, there's just a view that it's not necessarily that we stopped being plastic. I just, I benefited 30 minutes ago from having Raj's co-author Rebecca Diamond across the hall from me on a research point. But it is that where you connect with really matters a lot. And this also can partially explain why cities appear to be really good for adults that, like people who come to cities experience robust wage gains. And they really, in most of Raj's oi data, it, they look pretty dismal for kids. And that may have to do with the level of relatively integrated adults that urban, relatively integrated lives, that urban adults live relative to relatively segregated lives that urban children live.

PUENTES: Let me jump into one other question. Something I can see that's coming through a lot with the questions from the from the audience is around the displacement question. So, the research shows huge returns, roughly half a million dollars in lifetime earnings for a child raised from birth and a revitalized unit compared to about 170,000 in upfront costs, right? So, the benefit cost piece was really clever part of the analysis, but the report points out that HOPE VI also displaced many families along the way. Secretary Cisneros, how do we think then about the full welfare costs here? The welfare calculus, including those disruptions, right? And looking forward, if we want to see similar social integration benefits with less displacement, what kind of alternative approaches should we explore? If you don't mind, Secretary, I'll start with you and turn it to others if one way.

CISNEROS: Sure. Let me say first that, I’m very happy to receive this, these results and to congratulations to Raj Chetty and the team that did the work because HOPE VI has been controversial. But let me just give you just a set of just a little bit of a background, quick digression. HOPE VI came about because there was a commission called the National Commission on Distressed Public Housing in the early 1990s, and Jack Kemp, my predecessor, is HUD secretary, tried very hard on public housing, but just wasn't able to come up with support or ideas that would work. This commission said you have 86,000 units of severely distressed housing, and they basically said, put all the ideas, other ideas aside, and we're just gonna put a huge chunk of money into actually a. Improving public housing. And what we found when we got came to office in 1992 was places like Lexington Terrace in Baltimore where I went with Mayor sch smoke.

And the police wouldn't let us go in the building because they couldn't take, assure our safety inside the building. Places like Robert Taylor homes in Chicago where the gangs ran, the buildings and the structure of the buildings was conducive to gangs, being able to get onto the upper floors, take out the lights, watch for the police, et cetera. Cabrini Green, of course famous in Chicago in that same area. Places like Desire in New Orleans, the day I went to Desire in New Orleans. I there was police tape all around the area that I was supposed to have toured because of a murder that there had occurred there the night before.

Despite the criticism that other approaches needed to be used, it was clear that the structures didn't work, the rules didn't work. And the smartest thing to do was to bring those large structures down. And in 262 examples they did. Now what was actually done started with the physical and we brought in the council on new urbanism, Congress on new urbanism. And that group of architects helped us design places that were lower density had private entrances what they called defensible space, walkable integrated with the streetscape. And here's the problem with respect to displacement. It is mathematically impossible to bring back the same number of people. When you take down a 12-story building, sometimes four or five. 12 story buildings on the same site, right? And then tried to do lower density town home, sort of private entrances. And so, it was just impossible that everybody could come back, just not possible. Vouchers were used to help people move to the suburbs, and I have to believe that from the evidence that I've seen that some people benefited from the vouchers. They accepted the vouchers as a temporary solution, but many stayed and their lives improved.

Their educational experiences were good. Now, in terms of the people who came back I'm very happy to see these results, as I said. But I have to conclude that there were a mixture of dynamics here. One of 'em was the physical setting did make a difference. We ended up with rental apartments for sale town homes, senior citizen sites, youth recreation centers, police patrol units within the structures, and it was just a much better place to live, which I think had substantial impacts in changing people's expectations and emotional motivation about where they lived. As I said I, there were other dynamics working. When you take a place that is a complete sinkhole for any human motivations or any possible private investment, and you transform that area, then you end up with other processes, like the schools improving in the nearby area witnessed a place that was used to be called Techwood, Clark Homes in Atlanta later called Centennial Homes, where daycare centers.

Early childhood education across the street from Georgia Tech collaborative programs with Georgia Tech. That's just one example. Other places in Denver, for example, where we developed what we call the campuses of learners. Every, there were computer labs and everybody in the family was involved in some kind of learning experience. So, all of those things came together to make the kinds of outcomes I think that we see here very briefly. Is it possible to imagine o other communities remaining public housing or non-public housing having the same effect? And I think the answer is yes. In part it is physical. In part, it's linking to education.

In part it's using vouchers smartly which by the way requires emphasis on something that I came to believe is one of the most underutilized. Functions in our arsenal of tools, and that is fair housing eliminating discrimination and segregation in the use of the vouchers as people move to higher income areas. But all of these things work in the direction of people being able to improve their lives. I'm so happy to see the effects for children but I think it can have major effects for adults as well if integrated with placed based education, utilizing community colleges and public schools that gets physically close to the revitalized neighborhoods and helps people of all levels.

PUENTES: I agree with that. And the, obviously the ult alternative approaches by connecting it to education, economic development. Is intuitive. I think that's great. And clearly HOPE VI achieved. Its primary goal. I think the report makes, makes that very clear. But I think the lessons for the future are really helpful as well. Anybody else wanna weigh in on that one? So let me go then Ed, let me direct one to you. The one thing I was also struck by in the study was that many low-income neighborhoods across America today are as socially isolated as hopes six sites were pre revitalization. I think the report says even more so in, in certain places.

So, if you're advising a mayor or HUD secretary on how to increase social integration without undertaking, billions of dollars in redevelopment projects, what would be your top recommendations? I can tell you from a lot of the questions that are coming in, people are really looking for kind of the practical application of this today. So, what are the most promising interventions for building these bridges between isolated communities and the surrounding areas?

CISNEROS: I think the low hanging fruit is always regulation, right? The low hanging fruit is asking yourself, do high opportunity neighborhoods manage to zone out the possibility of people with lower incomes moving in? And so that's where I would be first is asking myself, have we made it easy to build in the areas to build affordable housing in the places in which we think the kids will have a, have a better experience? That typically would mean rental housing might mean housing that's particularly using low-income housing tax credit, or section eight housing vouchers.

But that feels like the place to really focus is to ask yourself are the things that you can do with the zoning code that will actually make it easier to build? Because it certainly is true across metropolitan areas that the places that are best for enhancing upward mobility have made it harder to build. And it's one of the things you get from having lots of educated urbanites. Educated urbanites are fantastic. They increase wages, they create positive spillovers for lots of people, but education is also educated. People are also really good at figuring out how to make it difficult for other people to build houses near where they live. And so that would be that would be my lowest hanging fruit. I think there also are, great things to think about in terms of section eight housing vouchers, which Raj has been on the forefront of for many years, thinking about how to target those vouchers towards families with young kids. Maybe even time limiting vouchers, more so to make sure that they go to go to the families that are getting get most. And also directing families with those vouchers to places that are higher opportunity neighborhoods. Those are all things that sort of have been in Raj's policy area for a while.

But I think they're great to mention as well. And the third thing is to think about how you're actually doing whatever you're doing with public housing, with the actual physical structures. And to think about whether or not there is a way to build bridges to make sure these areas are not as isolated as they could be. And to recognize that the kids are just, they're very local kids, right? They keep very narrow bounce on where they move. It's really striking and again, the work I've done on kid versus adult cell phone usage with the with Cody Cook and Lindsay Curer. Cody has also worked with Raj on, on their cell phone data here. But the extent to which kids of poor parents just have very different mobility levels than kids of rich parents, right? And if Cody has linked the cell phone up with the value of the home, and enormous differences in going to parks, in going to restaurants and going to retail among the kids with rich parents relative to poor parents.

And that's even true controlling for. And so having a strategy that's tied around how is it that we make it possible for the city to be owned by everyone and for poor people. And poor children in particular, not to feel like they're locked up in their nearest neighborhood. And then finally, I would just stress, schools are the traditional way that we make this. We create upward mobility, right? We shouldn't forget that. And, trying to figure out how to make our schools more functional. I'm very attracted to doing things with wraparound vocational training that doesn't displace existing training, but does stuff that sort of on the weekends, on the summer after school, you can, test those things with randomized controlled trials because it's really clear what they're supposed to deliver. You can have lots of different entities provide this because you can have straight out pay for performance. So, I think doing things that are innovative around schools delivering skills is a fourth strategy.

Rob, let me speak to non-public housing, isolated neighborhoods and how to connect them. I agree with the things that Ed has mentioned, but you could also add to that list transportation that makes it good bus routes. And by the way, in many cities they're moving more toward advanced rapid transit than rail projects. They're much less expensive, much more flexible, and allow these neighborhoods to be connected. We've seen that, for example, in Charlotte and other places where neighborhoods just opened up when transit lines were extended. Access to jobs in the central core or in other job generating centers, very important for the people who are in isolated neighborhoods and training nearby. Yes, schools very important, but new forms of vocational education offered. By community college, for example in, in storefronts even, or recruitment centers in isolated areas, important to reach people there. Very important in this process, however, is to remember anti displacement initiatives for the people who are there.

Now, what happens frequently when economic development occurs, let's say in in, in an adjacent area and then begins to spill over to an isolated area, is that the people who live there are displaced as tax appraisals go up and people have difficulty staying. So, we've saw, we've seen, for example, in Atlanta, a very innovative program of money raised by companies like Home Depot to create a fund where when taxes go up on people who own their homes in isolated neighborhoods, or are elderly or have long tenure, but they're very poor. Get help in paying the differential in taxes that's going to occur when values go up and allow them to stay. So, we have then the effect that's different from what was described in the report on, on, on HOPE VI, which is incomes go up 'cause newcomers come in with higher incomes. But the trick is to improve the incomes of the people who are there. Allow them to stay and allow these other. Types of programs to work for them.

GLAESER: Rob, I wanna echo on the bus comment. So, buses are the mode of transportation for poor Americans who live in urban spaces, right? They are vastly more flexible. The technology is constantly changing. It can change even more, right? There's an old joke that 40 years of transportation economics at Harvard can be boiled down to four words, bus good, train bad. And I think it's just really central to have, those people who care about connecting the poorest Americans to embrace the bus agenda, embrace paying for buses, embrace bus innovation, embrace bus procurement reform. All of these things are just a great place to try to create the connectivity that can weave together the American city for all.

PUENTES: Yeah, I think that's great. And I can tell you how we got, a lot of the comments that are coming in are on this and it's, it seems to be focused on the rail side. People seem to be wondering about investments in rail. As ways to redevelop these neighborhoods and how do you do this? But, and I think your point about rail versus bus is a really good one. And Raj, your work has shown for years, right? That accessibility or access to opportunity is one of the best ways to pull people up and out of poverty. And we don't really get into those difference between rail versus bus. But Adam, glad you, I'm glad you did bring that up. Carol, did you have something on that?

CISNEROS: You can get all the benefits of rail with a more flexible bus, including these advanced rapid line lines that have many of the advantages and attributes of rail, but they're more flexible and much, much less costly. So, you

GLAESER: Amen, henry. Amen.

CISNEROS: Reach deeper into, reach, deeper into neighborhoods.

NAUGHTON: Yeah. Thanks. So, a couple things I wanna add. First in terms of policies, thinking about investing in high quality, early learning in neighborhoods that we care about, where we're trying to set pe people up for a long-term success, high quality early learning that supports the little geniuses as the get ready for kindergarten, as well as provide opportunities for parents to go to work is really important. And we shouldn't separate that from the rest of this conversation. There's also policies that we could look at the state level that can make a difference. For example, the most important, resource for affordable housing is a low-income housing tax credit, and every state has its own qualified allocation plan.

And we should be encouraging state housing finance agencies to look at how they deliver that resource in a way that supports the development of mixed income housing that supports developing in places that have the amenities that everyone needs. And by amenities things like. Early learning access to grocery stores, access to high performing schools, whether they're there or whether there is a comprehensive financeable actionable plan in place designed to get there. So, there are a number of different levers that we can pull. If we are committed to creating neighborhoods that can really compete for people, and I say that intentionally because we know right now in some of these neighborhoods that are very isolated now, where there's not a lot of co-investment, there's also incredibly high transiency.

And so, people vote with their feet and leave if they get a little bit of cash in their pocket and that creates additional challenges or they leave because it's just been a really difficult place to live. And maybe they get rent that's a little cheaper somewhere down the road. But if we knit these things together and we're thinking about creating neighborhoods that can compete for people and provide housing opportunities and life journey opportunities that meet the needs of folks, we can put more people on a pathway to economic mobility.

CISNEROS: Let me say the as hard as HOPE VI has was to do, it's easier than working in some isolated neighborhoods because the government controlled the land on HOPE VI, and you could take a whole swath of land and build 250 or 400 units with central planned design very walkable, et cetera. But central planned design versus in many isolated communities, mixed title to individual properties deteriorated housing with no ability to improve it. It's in private hands. Nobody can wave a magic wand and make it improve. So that is much, much harder. But, it is possible to invest in housing production, housing supply, mixed housing, mixed on sites, infill sites improvements with people, helping people with improvements to their individual homes.

And as I said earlier, anti-displacement programs that allow them to stay when a neighborhood begins to redevelop. All of those things, I think are it make it possible to replicate the HOPE VI effect of breaking down barriers, a seamless neighborhood integrated to the street scape attracting investment into the area and nearby, this is possible to do.

CHETTY: Rob, if I could just, all these ideas that have come up, I think there's a common thread in them. It's great to hear different policy solutions that Carol, ed and Henry have. Proposed from transit to education to job training and so on. One common theme we've found, which relates to the findings of the present study as well, is that in all of those domains, the programs that are most effective combine resources with a social capital or connection element. Exactly the mechanism that we find to be central in driving the effects of HOPE VI. So, to give you a couple examples in the context of ongoing work we're doing with my colleague Larry Katz on job training programs, it's not the old-style job training programs that simply give you a set of technical skills that are effective when evaluated in randomized trials.

It's programs that combine those skills with a connection to an employer, getting you an internship, getting you connected to an ecosystem that's gonna get you on that track. Where we see big earnings gains. Same thing in the context of housing vouchers, which adds trust. Simply giving families housing vouchers. Surprisingly, I think does not actually help them move to opportunity and help their kids do better. Additionally, supporting them. We've found in randomized trials, we've run in that housing search process by giving them access to a counselor and support to connect with landlords and so on, fundamentally changes where they choose to live and then changes their life trajectory. So that, I think, is a common theme that I would encourage people to think about across whatever domain you're working in. It's not just about resources, not just about cash transfers. I think that additional support, that connection element is really key to helping people thrive.

CISNEROS: Absolutely.

PUENTES: Lemme stick with you Raj, just a general question. So, as you were going through this, again, it's very ambitious work, know, multi-year, multi-decade. What surprised you most when you started with the work and kind of as you were going through what really what stuck out at you that you didn't expect as you were going through this ambitious work?

CHETTY: I think when we started, we did what would be the most natural way to look at the data, to just follow the people who were living there before the adults and follow their incomes over time. Look at that first graph that Matt put up, and we were disappointed to see that the neighborhood changed dramatically, but it was resoundingly clear that the public housing residents themselves, their jobs, their economic prospects did not change significantly. But at that point, I think we had learned our lesson from our prior research and conversations we'd had with many colleagues. We knew that you might not see impacts on adults, but maybe you'd see something for the kids and that set off a multi-year effort. It's harder to think about how you analyze the data for kids because you can't do the simple thing you'd think of look at earnings before versus after, because obviously the kids don't have earnings before, so you have to approach the data in a different way.

Took a while to figure that out. I think what I was most surprised by is how we looked at many different dimensions of what might explain why some HOPE VI projects had bigger effects than others. We looked at. Programmatic elements we looked at where they were, the physical infrastructure and so on. There's really one thing and one and only thing that explains some of the heterogeneity, and that's the social interaction. Who's around you, who are you connecting? The fact, the clarity of that and the consistency with other findings, I found quite surprising.

CISNEROS: One has to be careful. You're right, Raj, in, in the many of the points in the report. This final point that you've just made about connection. But one has to be careful working with very poor people and people minority populations not to suggest that they need to be near someone else who's either different in income or different in ethnicity to improve their lives. There's a certain pride with which that issue needs to be addressed. I think it can be addressed in positive ways, focusing on income integration, focusing on just natural settings where people work together. But I have been called on the carpet more than once for in, for encouraging income integration with a suggestion that even the mildest suggestion that what I was saying is they need to be around someone else who had a different cultural setting or a different is important as we know that is. We'll have to find the language by which we tell people that's what's happening in their lives.

CHETTY: I appreciate your underscoring that, and I absolutely agree. And in fact, what we find in the study is it's not racial integration. Actually, that is correct. Associated with better outcomes. It's exactly, as secretary mentioned, it's income integration. And why is that? At some level, there are mechanical reasons. If we think about how our society works, that makes sense. Many jobs in America are obtained through referrals. If you are connected to somebody who's got a job at a good company, they might be able to help you out. It's not a reflection of your culture or your background or anything like that. I think it's about. Simply giving people, the chances that I think everyone doesn't...

CISNEROS: Yeah. Or it's as simple as one family, seeing another family where the family gets up and goes to work during the day and has set these jobs and works two jobs if they have to and then watching them have, get some of the rewards and benefits of life and wanting to copy that, wanting to model that that works I think.

GLAESER: I feel like connecting this with William Julius Wilson's noting in 1975 and the declining significance of race, that in fact, just because the ghetto walls were coming down, and it's a wonderful thing that those ghetto walls were coming down, but that actually led to more isolation by income of African American populations because relatively well-educated African Americans tended to move into other areas. And so there can be interesting tensions. Between racial and income isolation that are always worth thinking about. I don't know if there's an obvious policy there. I think we should continue to fight against racial discrimination in housing markets in any way we can. But that being said, you I think really the point is who are you going to, who's in your network, who's gonna enable you to get the skills that you need to thrive in the world? And that, and color is largely irrelevant for that.

CISNEROS: But so much of it has to do with getting housing of mixed income levels everywhere possible in isolated areas by whatever means subsidy programs, private investment public housing every kind of mixed but mixed income. Because what that does is attracts people who then bring money that can, they can spend on stores and pharmacies and local retail and justify the lines for buses, et cetera. And you get a dynamic at work there that just brings money into the area. And that of course touches the lives of people who are marginalized.

PUENTES: Let's stick on that. Just to close up. Oh, I'm sorry, Carol. Go ahead.

NAUGHTON: I was just gonna say the last thing to build on that, that creating mixed income housing creates the opportunity to have mixed income neighborhood schools. And those are wonderful cauldrons for people to get to know one another across income, both children and adults. So, it's one thing builds on the next, and if we don't have mixed income housing, it's really important. It's really almost impossible to create mixed income neighborhood schools.

PUENTES: And this is where I wanted to end this. I'm really glad you brought that up. You and Mr. Secretary. The, so given all this work, I mean we, I think we largely agree here on this, webinar, a lot of the participants, how do you, how do we engage then with state and local actors who actually that have the ability to get something done? Mr. You talked about just the effects of the neighborhood and bringing in additional wealth and capital. How, so what is the, what's the silver bullet, right? For getting folks really engaged in this and taking this work from where it is to something much more actionable and scalable across the country.

CISNEROS: I love local government. Local governments rarely ever start these initiatives. They start in the community and what we're seeing across the country is they bring philanthropy and other sources of capital. Into the mix the area, foundations and cities, for example, and others into the mix and get the ball rolling, then it is possible to get local government to invest in tax increment zones or spend their put an item on a bond issue et cetera. But it really starts with community determination, community initiative in many cases across the country.

GLAESER: Robert, I don't think I know the right answer, but I see no reason why there couldn't be a fantastic Brookings convening of leaders from a variety of different sectors who are gonna think about how to build the connections that ultimately empower opportunity across urban America. So, I think this would be a great thing for, for you guys to take on. And I'm sure that Henry's right about the sort of people. You give you an idea of who you wanna have at the table and probably you want Henry and Carol to be at the table too. So, the..

PUENTES: Indeed. Raj, Carolyn, Kevin?

CHETTY: One thing I'd suggest, Rob, is that people look at this, I dunno if it's a silver bullet, but I find the framing that this is not just about justice or something we should care about, helping fellow citizens. There's a pure economic case to be made here to think about these issues, right? If you simply want to increase growth, you want to increase productivity, reduce spending on transfers, less spending on incarceration, this kind of approach is gonna deliver that. There are upfront costs, but as Matt emphasized, a lot of those costs are recouped down the road in terms of incremental tax revenues, savings to the government. And so, I think having that economic lens, in addition to the important justice and opportunity lens is very valuable in these conversations.

GLAESER: It is a terrible thing for our country to waste human capital.

CHETTY: Exactly.

PUENTES: Then I think that this connection between one of the other common themes I keep hearing and get from the questions is, are these connections with these other areas of public policy? It's not just housing affordable housing in isolation. It's all of these different things that we talked about. So, I think talking to policy makers, presenting the broader vision, how all these different elements fit in. It's very hard to get people outta their silos, but, presenting these this overall arching narrative, I think is a good way to approach it as well.

We are just about at time. I we, tons of different questions of questions we did not get to. I would encourage everybody who's on the webinar now. Make sure you, you check out the work on opportunity Insights website. Make sure you play around with the maps and all of the spatial data that's in there. It's a tremendous amount of work. We barely scratched the surface, in the last hour. But I have been very grateful to Raj, you and Matt, for this excellent work. And to the panel. Henry and Carol, for your insights and to everybody who participated in your questions and staying engaged with this, I would encourage you, please me to do that.

CISNEROS: Bob, I wanna double down. Please stay involved. I double down on your thanks to Raj and Matt for really looking hard at a program that has been criticized over the years and helping us find value some kind of progress and some themes that can be applied more largely in public housing, but in other communities across the country. Thank you for using your scholarship, your knowledge, the resources you have, which could move into many other areas and focusing it on this. Thank you.

CHETTY: Thank you secretary for initiating the work that allowed us to study this question.

PUENTES: Excellent way to end it. Thank you all very much.