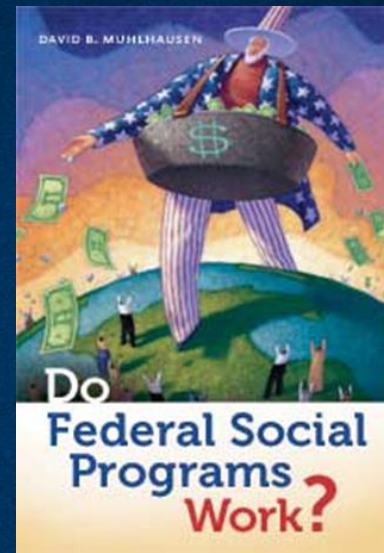


Do Federal Social Programs Work?

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Do Federal Social Programs Work?

- The book asks a simple question.
- While the question may be straightforward, getting to an answer is complicated.
- Reviewed all multisite experimental evaluations published since 1990
 - 20 evaluations of 21 programs



Benefits of Random Assignment

- Establishes equivalency between treatment and control groups
 - Identical composition
 - Identical predispositions
 - Identical experiences

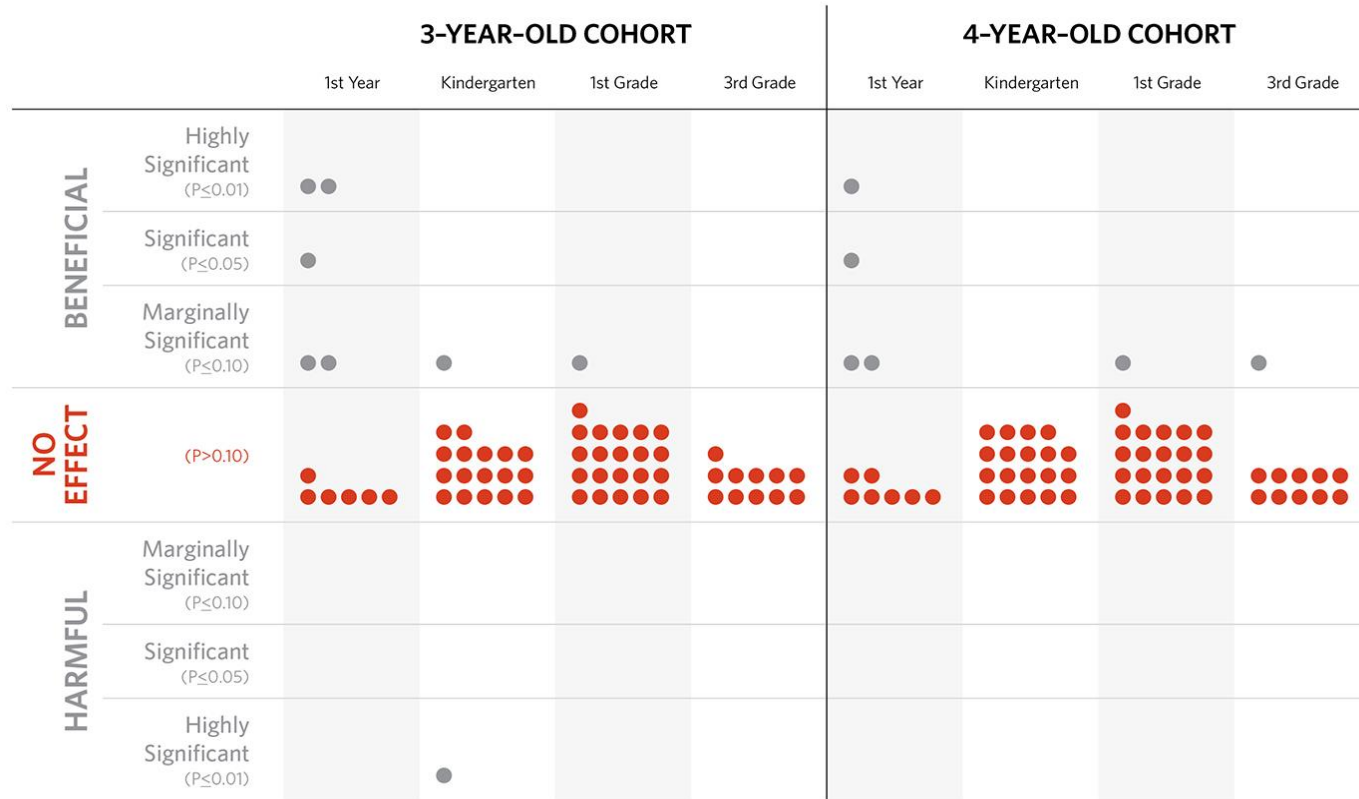


Head Start

- Most scientifically rigorous impact evaluation of Head Start ever done
- Nationally representative sample of 383 randomly selected Head Start Centers
- About 5,000 children were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups
 - Two cohorts: 3- and 4-year-old children
- Examined child cognitive, social-emotional, and health outcomes as well as parenting practices
- Key Finding: Head Start has little to no effect on participants and any initial benefits quickly disappear by Kindergarten



Head Start Cognitive Outcomes



Source: Muhlhausen, 2013, Table 4.4, pp. 107-108; Table 4.5, pp.113-115; and Table 4.6, pp. 120-121.



Abstinence Education

- Assessment of 4 highly regarded abstinence education programs
- Over 2,500 students (8- to 14-years-old or older) were randomly assigned to intervention and control groups
- Key finding: Abstinence education failed to affect the sexual behavior of participants

Abstinence Education Sexual Activity Outcomes



	Beneficial Effect			No Effect	Harmful Effect		
	Highly Significant ($P \leq 0.01$) ***	Significant ($P \leq 0.05$) **	Marginally Significant ($P \leq 0.10$) *	Insignificant ($P > 0.10$)	Marginally Significant ($P \leq 0.10$) *	Significant ($P \leq 0.05$) **	Highly Significant ($P \leq 0.01$) ***
Remained abstinent	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Abstinent last 12 months	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Number of sexual partners	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Expect to abstain though high school	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Expect to abstain as teenager	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Expect to abstain until marriage	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Unprotected sex/birth control use	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
Consequences of sex (pregnant, had a baby, STD)	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Source: Muhlhausen, 1993, Table 4.9, pp. 139-140.

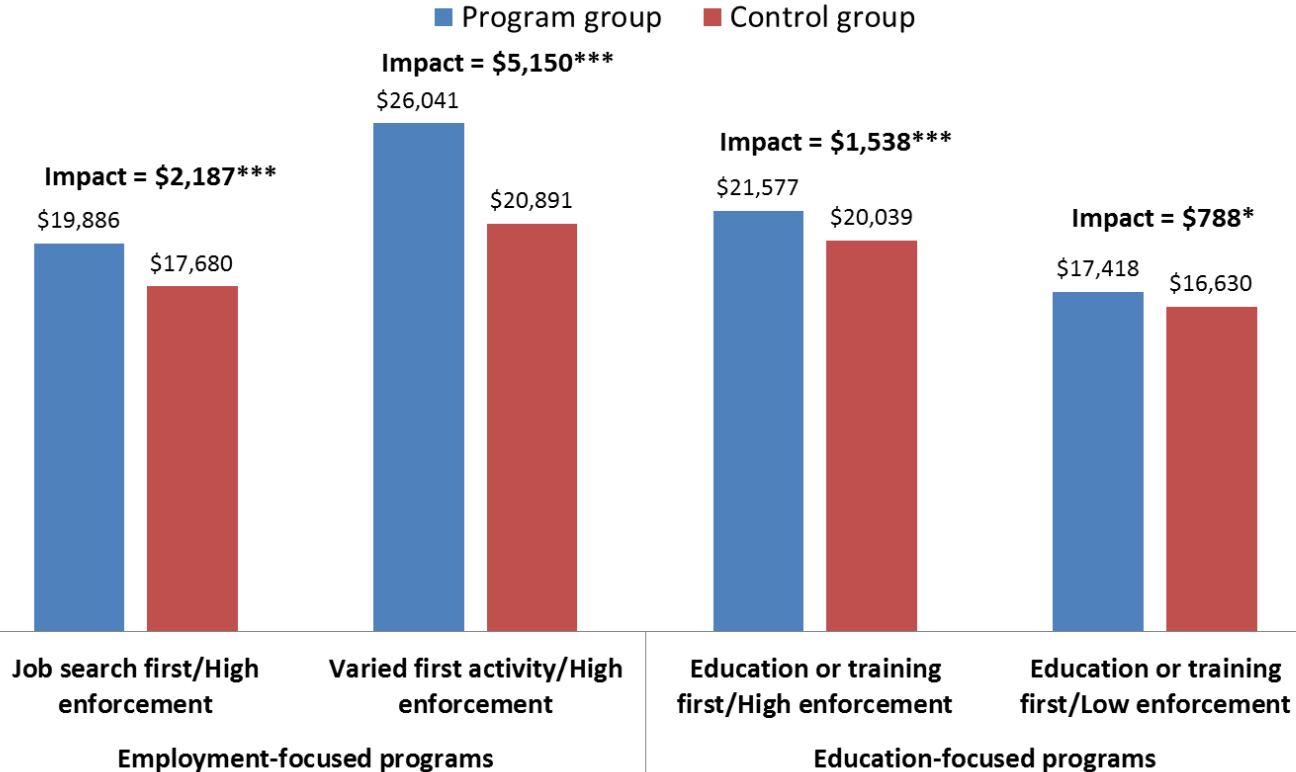


National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies

- Assessed various work-first strategies vs education and training
- Almost 42,000 individuals participated in the study
- Key finding: Work-focused (job-search first) approaches had greater beneficial impacts, compared to the effect of education/training-focused programs.



Work-Focused Strategies Worked Best (Five Years)



Source: Hamilton et al., 2001

Asterisks (*) denote statistical significant levels * $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) Project



- Assessed the effectiveness of 12 different employment and retention programs during the 2000s
- Over 27,000 single-parents participated
- Participants
 - Unemployed TANF recipients
 - Employed TANF recipients
 - Employed individuals not on TANF
- Key finding: Overall, programs that promoted employment stability and earnings progression fared no better than traditional TANF services.



The National JTPA Study

- Job Training Partnership Act of 1982
- Assessed impact of JTPA programs in 16 sites across the nation during the late 1980s and early 1990s.
 - Over 20,000 participants
- Key finding: While there were beneficial gains in income (mainly for women), the increased earnings were modest, at best.



JTPA Impacts on Total 30-Month Earnings: Assignees and Enrollees, by Target Group

	Mean Earnings		Impact per Assignee		
	Treatment Group	Control Group	In Dollars	As a Percent	Impact per Enrollee in Dollars
Adult women	\$13,417	12,241	\$1,176***	9.6%	\$1,837***
Adult men	19,474	18,496	978*	5.3	1,599*
Female youths	10,241	10,106	135	1.3	210
Male youth nonarrestees	15,786	16,375	-589	-3.6	-868
Male youth arrestees					
Using survey data	14,633	18,842	-4,209**	22.3	-6,804*
Using scaled UI data	14,148	14,152	-4	0.0	-6

Source: Bloom et al., 1997, Table 2, p 560.

Asterisks (*) denote statistical significant levels * $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$



Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998

- Congress mandated a large-scale experimental evaluation of WIA programs
 - Results were due by September 2005
- The Department of Labor awarded a contract for the evaluation in 2008—four years after the results were due.
- The final results may not be available until 2016—17 years after the passage of WIA.



Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

- Individual Training Account (ITA) evaluation
- Randomized evaluation that compared three ITA approaches without a true control group
- The lack of a control group means the study cannot tell us about the effectiveness of ITAs.



Center for Employment Training (CET)

San Jose, California

- As part of the JOBSTART evaluation, the CET program was found to be effective at increasing the earnings of disadvantaged youth.
- Viewed as a promising program and a model for other programs serving youth.

	Mean Income (48 months)
Treatment group	\$29,600
Control group	\$22,252
Impact	\$7,342***

Source: Muhlhausen, 2013, p. 285.
Note: *** $p \leq 0.01$



Center for Employment Training (CET) Replication

- The Department of Labor replicated and evaluated the program in 12 sites across the nation during the mid-1990s and 2000s.
- Key Finding: The federal government failed to replicate the successful results of the original program.
 - Training had no effect on earnings.



CET Replication Outcomes

	Beneficial Effect			No Effect	Harmful Effect		
	Highly Significant ($P \leq 0.01$) ***	Significant ($P \leq 0.05$) **	Marginally Significant ($P \leq 0.10$) *	Insignificant ($P > 0.10$)	Marginally Significant ($P \leq 0.10$) *	Significant ($P \leq 0.05$) **	Highly Significant ($P \leq 0.01$) ***
Received training certificate (1, 12, 24, 36, and 48 month follow-ups)	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Received high school diploma (1, 12, 24, 36, and 48 month follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Received GED(1, 12, 24, 36, and 48 month follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Received GED or H.S. diploma (1, 12, 24, 36, and 48 month follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Ever worked (1-5 year follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Number of months worked (1-5 year follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Earnings (1-5 year follow-ups)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Benefits from most recent job	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Source: Muhlhausen, 2013, Table 5.7, pp. 287-289.



Can Government Replicate Success?

(Butler and Muhlhausen, 2014)

- Success is never a simple matter of copying what others have done
 - Replication has poor track record
 - Single instance fallacy
 - Causal density
- The trouble with pilots or demonstration projects
 - Optimal vs. real world conditions
- Evolutionary replication
 - Be adaptable (waivers)
 - Trial-and-error approach
 - Dictate ends, not means (Reward achievement)
 - Shift locus of control from provider to customer



Doing Harm

- Building Strong Families
 - Couples were less likely to be living together (married or unmarried)
 - Fathers were less likely to spend time with their children
- Early Head Start
 - Increased dysfunctional parent-child interactions
 - Increased welfare dependency of Hispanics
- Head Start
 - 3-year-old cohort
 - Decreased the math abilities based on the perception of kindergarten teachers
 - 4-year-old cohort
 - More likely to be shy or socially reticent in 1st grade
 - More likely to display unfavorable emotional symptoms in 1st grade
 - More likely to self-report poorer peer relations in 3rd grade



Doing Harm

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 - More likely to have disciplinary problems based on official and self-reported data
 - Teachers were more likely to call parents about disciplinary problems
 - More likely to be suspended from school
 - Poorer academic performance in reading or English classes
- JTPA
 - Adult men more likely to be dependent on AFDC
 - Increased criminality of male youth with no history of criminal arrest
 - Male youth with criminal histories experienced long-term declines in income
- Job Corps
 - Less likely to earn a high school diploma
 - Worked fewer weeks and fewer hours per week



Inherent Limitations

- Despite the best social engineering efforts, the evidence overwhelmingly points to the conclusion that federal social programs are ineffective
- Is it just a coincidence that the findings of large-scale scientifically rigorous experimental evaluations support this conclusion?
- Calls for creating new national social programs need to be viewed with caution and skepticism
 - The record of federal social programs is not promising



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