

Universal child care, maternal employment, and children's long-run outcomes: Evidence from the US Lanham Act of 1940 ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the US Lanham Act of 1940, a heavily subsidized and universal child care program administered during World War II. I first estimate its impact on maternal employment using a triple-differences model. I find that employment increased substantially following the introduction of the program. I then study children's long-run labor market outcomes. Using Census data from 1970 to 1990, I assess well-being in a life-cycle framework by tracking cohorts of treated individuals throughout their prime working years. Results from difference-in-differences models suggest the program had persistent positive effects, with the largest benefits accruing to the most economically disadvantaged adults.

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