

EPISODE 3: ARE WE CRAZY ABOUT OUR KIDS?

TRANSCRIPT

TRT 32:44 MIN

00:00 Opening credits and title sequence

00:47 DVD Chapter 1: Economists Ponder Child Development

New Horizon babies, Arthur Rolnick entering room

NARRATOR: Children's experiences during their first five years are more consequential than we ever thought.

CHERYL POLK, President, HighScope Educational Research Foundation: We know that the brain develops the most in the first five years of life. By age 6, 95% of the child's brain is already developed. By age 6! So these early years are very, very important.

NARRATOR: And of all people—not just parents, pediatricians and teachers—but economists are paying attention.

ROBERT DUGGER, Economist and Investment Banker: Neural synaptic connections are occurring in a child's brain ages zero-to-three at a rate of 700 a second.

JAMES HECKMAN, Nobel Laureate, Economics, University of Chicago: The worst fallacy in this business is to assume that the abilities, the motivations, the skills of people are fixed at birth—they are not.

DUGGER: What happens in that 36-month period is important as far as whether a child is going to be trusting, and curious, and active and able to interact with other people in a productive way.

HECKMAN: What I came to understand was that ability was multiple in nature, that you could actually start, even at the earliest years, and increase the possibilities for individuals in their life. So that became very exciting to me.

Kids singing with Art Rolnick

02:14 **ARTHUR ROLNICK, Former Senior Vice President, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis:** Here I am, at the Federal Reserve Bank at Minneapolis, my expertise

is pre-Civil War banking, uh, I worry a lot about business cycles and financial crises, unemployment and inflation.

Art Rolnick at table with kids

ROLNICK, VO: How does somebody with that background get involved with early childhood, prenatal to five?

ART ROLNICK's speech: You have to figure out...what's the best investment? It's going to be early childhood education. Making sure these kids start healthy, and ready to learn.

NARRATOR: Science has demonstrated that a child's earliest experiences are vital to building the foundation for life-long individual success—in school and in life.

Rolnick's speech: ...we can put dollar values on almost anything...

03:05 NARRATOR: Economists are adding new data to this argument, studying two initiatives in particular, high-quality early care and preschool, calculating how much they cost, and how much they payoff to our economy.

And they're worried. Not because we're spending too much, but because we're spending too little where it matters most.

ROLNICK: You can make moral arguments for Higher Ed, for K-12, for reducing crime, for reducing pollution. But policy makers need more than moral arguments. We asked a very direct question that most economists or business people would ask: "What was the return on the investment?"

03:53 DVD Chapter 2: First Happy Returns: The Perry Preschool Studies

NARRATOR: The first study to catch the attention of Rolnick and other economists was from a high-quality early childhood experiment for low-income children in Ypsilanti, Michigan, called Perry Preschool. Founded in 1962, Perry Preschool grew out of the spirit of that time—the growth of the civil rights movement, desegregation and equal opportunity. The Perry children had master's level teachers and low student-to-teacher ratios. Educators even visited the families at home every week.

POLK: The children that were receiving the Perry intervention received 3 hours per day of a cognitively-rich preschool program, right? They focus on things such as math, literacy, play-based approaches, focus on engaging their imagination and their own investment in their learning.

Perry Footage

NARRATOR: The Perry kids were compared to a group of their peers, a control group, who weren't in the program. Both groups have been followed for 40 years.

Animation - Perry monographs

05:05 ROLNICK: They found that the children that were in the high-quality program were less likely to be retained in the first grade, were less likely to need special ed, were more likely to be literate by the sixth grade, graduate high school, get a job, pay taxes, start a family. And the crime rate between the two groups, the randomized group and the controlled group, the crime rate goes down fifty percent. So those looked like pretty good outcomes!

POLK: They became what we think of as model citizens in our country, despite their modest beginnings.

Animation - Perry payoffs

NARRATOR: And those outcomes equal hard dollars. The program was expensive. But economists calculated the benefits: the Perry students were more likely to stay on track in school, have higher skilled jobs and contribute more in taxes, and less likely to incur the social costs of welfare and prison.

06:01 POLK: The youngest children of the Perry Preschool studies are now 52 and the oldest children of the Perry preschool studies are now 56. So we've been following children from the Perry Preschool experiment for 50 years.

HECKMAN: What did we learn? Many things. It's very successful in terms of the economic performance of the children. For each dollar invested, you get back somewhere between 7 and 10 percent per annum over the lifetime of the child. Which is a huge rate of return.

NARRATOR: That translates, depending on the study, to a payoff of 7-16 dollars for every dollar spent on the program.

HECKMAN: What we found is that some of those same traits that are starting to be fostered early in life—solving problems but also getting along with others and basically planning in a wise way—payoff, and payoff substantially.

NARRATOR: Yet, despite the benefits, today public investment in affordable, high-quality programs like Perry is so low, only a fraction of our children can attend them. But up north, just across the U.S. border, one place took note of the lessons offered by the Perry model.

07:23 DVD Chapter 3: Québec Learns from the U.S.

ID: Montréal, Québec

NARRATOR: 20 years ago, Québec was the poorest province in Canada. It was stuck in a recession, and one-quarter of its citizens lived in poverty. The Prime Minister was alarmed by skyrocketing social welfare costs.

Camil Bouchard walking, meeting with Lyse Brunet

NARRATOR: He asked psychologist Camil Bouchard to head a task force to come up with solutions.

NARRATOR: Bouchard and his friend Lyse Brunet, a feminist and political activist, became allies in a growing political movement.

CU photo: Brunet with her daughter at demonstration.

Subtitles

LYSE BRUNET: This is during a demonstration.

CAMIL BOUCHARD: Is this you?

LYSE BRUNET: Yes. This is me and this is Geneviève. She was four years old and she had done this watercolor at daycare.

Archival footage: 1983 demonstration

LYSE BRUNET, Avenir d'enfants: In those days in Québec, there was a lot of marches in the street, and it was a context, I think, where the women's movement was very strong, and it was really the women who put forward the daycare issues.

08:46 NARRATOR: Nine years later, investments in high-quality early child care programs became central to Bouchard's strategy for reigning in Québec's rising social costs. His team was inspired, ironically enough, by research coming out of the United States.

Animation - Perry and Abecedarian papers

A series of studies drops on top of the Perry monographs, they open up and show graphs, etc.

NARRATOR: Bouchard found the evidence compelling. And not just Perry Preschool...

Archival photos: Abecedarian

Animation - Abecedarian papers

NARRATOR: ...but also Abecedarian, an intensive experiment like Perry, this one in North Carolina, which ran for five years. It provided infant and toddler care, as well as preschool. One gain? Kids from the program were four times as likely to graduate from college.

Archival Photo: Abecedarian kid

HECKMAN: The kids in the treatment group were no smarter. But you could measure their performance in class, and later ratings of how successful they are in controlling their anger, dealing with their fellow students, negotiating with each other.

Animation – reduced cost to society

Studies showing research papers, man with arm in air

NARRATOR: Economists calculated all the costs and benefits 30 years later. The net return to society? Nearly 100,000 dollars for every child.

09:56 NARRATOR: The Canadians also studied the Child Parent Center, a special half-day pilot program for low-income preschool children in Chicago.

Animation – Chicago reduced social costs calculated

Move on page with calculations

NARRATOR: The net return to society in reduced social costs alone from the Chicago program was more than \$84,000 per child.

CAMIL BOUCHARD, Community Psychologist: It was pretty clear that in applying that type of social programs we would have success in diminishing the vulnerability of our children. It was inspiring also because the methodology was beautiful.

10:28 DVD Chapter 4: “Québec is Crazy About Its Kids!”

Animation – map of Québec

NARRATOR: Bouchard and his team looked to the U.S. research and asked themselves: could investing in young children and their families improve personal outcomes and reap economic benefits in Québec? They were convinced it could, and released a report with 53 recommendations.

BOUCHARD: But the main thrust of it was that we were to approach the problems well before they manifest themselves, well before. We had decided that the government should

invest in the period from 0-5. If you had to choose, this is where you had to start with.

News footage: publication of "Québec est fou de ses Enfants"

Animation – news headlines falling on table – Gazette, Interview, and Carrefour

11:07 NARRATOR: When Bouchard and his team released the report in 1992, the public reaction was ecstatic.

Animation – newspapers falling on table – Chatelaine, L'actualite

BOUCHARD: The title of the report was kind of smashing...we are crazy about our kids, Un Québec Fou de Ses Enfants. I was just astonished at how many reporters, people from all over the place were at the press conference, for a governmental report. (Laughs). There was something special, there was a buzz around the title...

NARRATOR: Advocates for children were galvanized.

BOUCHARD: We met with very, very, very involved people and interested people in the community. They had read the report, they were ready to do something. And there was an enormous pressure on the government to create something significant.

Archival Footage: Camil Bouchard at press conference

BOUCHARD 1992 Speech (Subtitle):

We don't propose to invest 100, 200 or 400 million tomorrow morning. We propose a series of actions that spread over ten years will be able to set up in Québec a culture of prevention and preventive actions for the children and the families that need it most.

BOUCHARD: If you just put the report on the table and say to the government: "You should do that," and go fishing or hunting or to do something else, it won't happen. You have to have a constituency around the report.

LYSE BRUNET: At first it was like little projects for a couple of months and after that they wouldn't have any money to continue. It was step-by-step asking the government to put in place a real strong system.

Dad with kids and stroller walking down the street

12:43 NARRATOR: By 1997, advocates had broad support, and the government started a child care system intended for any family in Québec. The tuition: five dollars a day. It would cost almost a billion dollars in the first year alone, and no one knew if it would actually reduce poverty and social costs.

YOLANDE JAMES, Québec Minister of Families, 2010-2012: Investing in early childhood is a no-brainer at this point. But when you start a network like that, knowing not only the initial investment to get it going and really the structural change that you're putting in place, and the annual recurring cost, it, there are a lot of risks.

CPE Director Any Robillard with children

NARRATOR: Any Robillard directs a child development center, known as a CPE, in the Montréal neighborhood of Villeray. Today, sixteen years later, parents pay seven dollars a day.

Any Robillard asks the kids the names of their mothers.

At Graffiti CPE, Alexi Chartrand greets his son, puts on his coat, and they walk down the street to the market.

Subtitles:

ALEXI CHARTRAND: How are you doing? Do you have a nice drawing? Oh! You have two nice drawings. Bravo! Bravo! Did you have a nice day?

NARRATOR: Most every afternoon Alexi Chartrand, a freelance media producer, picks up his son Vladimir.

Subtitles:

VLADIMIR: Where's my mom? Is she coming?

ALEXI CHARTRAND: Mom is working – she's coming later. OK? Mom is working.

VLADIMIR: She's coming!

CHARTRAND: Could you carry this please? Thank you.

14:48 NARRATOR: CPE spots are coveted—there still aren't enough to go around. Vladimir was on a waiting list for two years.

CU fish frying

ALEXI CHARTRAND: ...it's actually, it's like a call from, from God. I have tons of friends that are on the list and waiting for the list. When they called us...at first we didn't believe it 'cause normally most of my friends called before they have their child so, "Oh, you're pregnant [SNAPS FINGERS]. All right, let's go."

Alexi Chartrand and Vladimir pick up plates and walk away

NARRATOR: Alexi's wife Veronique works part-time in the evenings, and by day pursues her education. The CPE system has turned out to be a good investment for Vladimir but

also for his family. Veronique's schooling will boost her family's life-long income and well-being. If Vladimir had not gotten a spot at a CPE, none of this would have been possible.

Vladimir, Alexi Chartrand in market

Parents arrive to pick up kids

15:50 NARRATOR: Québec's child care system is costly, and most of the returns will pay out when children grow up. But one benefit appeared right away.

CHRISTA JAPEL, Université du Québec à Montréal: We used to have a lower labor force participation compared to the rest of Canada, but since the new family policy we have surpassed the rest of Canada. Now, having mothers with young children in the labor force is very beneficial for the government, because people paying income tax are less dependent on government subsidies and hence, for every dollar that is invested in the child care system the...government gets back about a dollar and four cents, so it pays for itself.

CPE children

NARRATOR: Affordable child care is not the only investment Québec makes in its families. By law, all mothers can take 40 weeks of paid maternity leave at 75% of their salary, and most of the leave can be shared with the father. But that's not all. Mothers receive free universal pre- and post-natal care and services. Businesses must provide flex-time and nursing breaks for mothers.

YOLANDE JAMES: You have commonly situations of parents being able to take up to year off and the participation of fathers, 'cause you can share their times into that, has changed the dynamic in so many ways. That, too, is, is, is important and can't be neglected.

Alexi Chartrand and Vladimir walk down street

CHARTRAND, VO: This time is so important. They're so small, and you're not going to live that again, so I think it's important to just live this with your child.

NARRATOR: Only 60% of Québec's children have access to subsidized child care spaces, and the demand keeps growing.

Playground footage

NARRATOR: While it's too early to measure how these kids will fare as adults, the short-term social benefits are promising.

CHRISTA JAPEL: Having more mothers, participating in the labor force, of course the income goes up. So that's why Québec has the lowest rate of children growing up in

poverty. There's still lots of people waiting so we still have to develop spaces, and we have to work on quality.

18:32 DVD Chapter 5: Subverting Our Own Future?

NARRATOR: Family policy in Québec has wide support. No politician would dare try to dismantle it. More and more, the U.S. has become an outlier in its child and family policies.

European footage

NARRATOR: Every other rich nation guarantees paid maternal leave, and many offer paid leave for fathers as well. Most provide affordable child care or free preschool for all children. Like Perry, teachers usually have a degree in education. And now China is applying the lessons of Perry Preschool, Abecedarian and Chicago—investing billions in early education.

DUGGER: In years traveling in East Asia and elsewhere in the world, top people managing large amounts of resources asked me again and again, “Rob, why are Americans not investing in their own children? And I tried my best to explain but their answer back to me was “Rob, this makes no sense—this is nuts!”

HECKMAN: A month ago I was in Beijing, and what really encouraged me was that as part of their long run planning policy to reduce poverty in China, they were starting to develop early childhood programs. It sees early childhood and sees their whole policy towards early years as being fundamental for its success in the future.

NARRATOR: If research from our own country's experiments is inspiring governments around the world, why haven't we applied these lessons ourselves?

Capitol building

20:26 NARRATOR: It's not for lack of trying. Back in 1971, Congress passed a bill offering comprehensive, high-quality child care and other services for all American children birth to age five. It was vetoed by President Nixon.

In the decades since, most child care in America has remained patchwork, too often tough to find, hard to afford, and mediocre in quality.

Only one in ten child care centers across the country is accredited. California inspects its cemeteries more often the child care facilities.

And the price families pay can be staggering. Spots at Head Start and other subsidized programs are limited, while private, center based care for a four year old can cost \$12,000

a year or more. Families are expected to do it alone. Yet other sectors of our society receive billions in state support.

ED ads

“When we considered a new location for our headquarters, Virginia presented a great business case for assuring a profitable future.”

ROLNICK: Economic development, the way it is conventionally practiced in this country, is seriously flawed. I’m talking billions of dollars and the return is virtually zero.

NARRATOR: Across the nation, cities and states compete for each other’s jobs—enticing companies with tax breaks, land and other subsidies.

ED ads

“Come to Texas, we’re wide open for business.”

ROLNICK: When we allow cities and states to try to lure each other’s companies with subsidies, from a national perspective not one new job is created.

ED ads

“The Texas Interprise Fund ...”

NARRATOR: In 2011, this cost taxpayers more than 80 billion dollars—enough to fund more than 5000 child development centers for 10 years. Instead, most states have cut their investments in child development programs.

22:42 DUGGER: So when we say that we have a budget crisis, it’s not a shortage of money that we’re talking about. There’s plenty of money. This is lobbying power which assures that our political system continues to try to keep the spending patterns unchanged.

ROLNICK: The economics of it just doesn’t hold up. You want to make sure you have sustainable economic growth, invest in your kids.

ROLNICK at cocktail reception: Everyone’s saying, earlier, the better. It’s more efficient. If you wait, it’s going to cost you a lot more money, and you’re going to fail a lot more.

DUGGER: We are not producing the workforce that we need. We are producing a large, large number of people who are going to be unable to compete effectively on a global basis.

HECKMAN: And we create a two-tiered society, so we say to those kids: “Sorry. We’re not going to help—even though we know how to help, and we can do it in an effective way.

POLK: We know it has a great return on investment. We know it helps children’s life-long

learning. Why do we not do it? It's a question I ask myself daily.

23:53 DVD Chapter 6: Closing the Achievement Gap – in Utah

Utah scenic

NARRATOR: Despite everything we know, most states still confront fiscal challenges the old fashioned way—offering subsidies to business while cutting back on social services including child development.

When Utah Republican State Senator Aaron Osmond was appointed to the state's education committee, what he found sent him in a different direction.

SENATOR AARON OSMOND, Utah State Senate District 10 at hearing: Our special education growth is outpacing our normal student growth. We're spending a lot of money on special education without the outcomes that we really want.

NARRATOR: Nationwide, special education is provided for children with developmental delays. In Utah, the costs were spiraling. When Senator Osmond went looking for solutions, one school district stood out.

Granite District in Salt Lake City is large—and many of its families live in extreme poverty. In 2006, the district decided to invest in high-quality early education, like Perry Preschool had 40 years earlier.

BRENDA VAN GORDER, Director of Preschool Services, Granite School District: Children coming from at-risk family situations, often look like children who have disability, and yet what they really have is a lack of opportunity.

NARRATOR: Many of these kids come from homes where English is not spoken, and in the past, would have been steered to special education.

SEN. OSMOND: What impressed me most about their preschool program was how engaged these young children were in the educational process and how organized that the entire set-up was. These teachers knew exactly what was going on, the kids knew what was going on, and they were participating in the process.

VAN GORDER: I always tell our staff that I know that we're right on target, and the kids are right there with you, when they're kind of coming up out of their seats, and they're leaning forward and want to get to the teacher. We know that we've got them engaged in an activity, and when you're engaged, you're learning.

Animation – Granite School District testing numbers

NARRATOR: The children were given standardized tests at the start of preschool and their progress has been carefully calculated. 238 children—a third of all tested—scored so low they would likely need special education when entering elementary school. But after two years in Granite’s high-quality early education program, only 11 of those 238 students were assigned to special ed.

5th graders running up stairs

26:55 NARRATOR: Jason, Rey, Diego and Maria were among the low scoring students. They are in 5th grade now, and have been testing as well in math and language arts as the kids in high-income schools.

JASON, 5th grade student, Granite School District: The first time I did it, I got 11 minutes and 26 seconds. And the second time I got 8 minutes.

REY, 5th grade student, Granite School District: At first when he gives us the homework, I look at it, and I think, do I know this or do I not? Will I need help or will I just do it by myself? So once I get home, I’ve already thought about it.

LINDA HART, Teacher, Granite School District: How many of you are planning to get that alumni award?

VAN GORDER: All of these four children were in a range where they were potentially eligible for special education at that moment...

REY: My mom wanted to move me to another school, but I’m like: “No please—please no!”

VAN GORDER: We didn’t put them in special ed.

JANIS DUBNO, Senior Policy Analyst, Voices for Utah Children: We found that over four years that the state alone saved 1.4 million dollars, and if you include the federal savings, there was an additional savings of 1.1 million dollars, for a total combined state and federal savings of 2.5 million dollars.

SEN. OSMOND at hearing: We have an opportunity to mainstream these students and save significant dollars down the road. And there is the statistical historical evidence that it will work.

28:30 NARRATOR: In the face of ongoing opposition, Senator Osmond continues to push forward two bills, one to start more pilot preschools, the other to keep them all sustainable.

SEN. OSMOND: The concept of sustainable financing is allocating budget right now as a set-aside to be able to reinvest again in the future based on future savings that you hope

that you will realize, thus creating a kind of cyclical nature that there is always funding available for this particular program. The reality is though that we still need to prove to the legislature and to many groups in the state that that investment is worth it.

Senator WAYNE NIEDERHAUSER, Utah State Senate District 9 at hearing: It seems like we do this early intervention, but it seems to washout by the time students get in the seventh or eighth grade. And let's...I'd like to find out why that's the case.

VAN GORDER at hearing: We're not seeing the washout. Not only are they not washing out, they're still at the top of their class. They left preschool and entered kindergarten at the top, and they are maintaining at the top.

Animation – Achievement gap

29:35 NARRATOR: And if they're maintaining at the top, Granite district's preschool program is reversing a seemingly intractable national trend, where the achievement gap between high-income and low-income children has widened by 40% since 1970.

JANIS DUBNO: A 22-point gap between low-income and high-income schools in the Granite School District in language arts was reduced for the preschoolers to a five-point gap.

SEN. OSMOND: It's so compelling you cannot avoid having the conversation: "Why not invest early?"

NARRATOR: High-quality child care and preschool is just one piece of the solution.

POLK: The early child care education is not a panacea. You have to have clean, safe neighborhoods, good food, good communities; you have a support system around us all.

NARRATOR: Economists are clear about the equation: Our system is paying for failure, rather than investing in success.

ROLNICK speech: Not just one study, there are actually 4 independent longitudinal studies on early ed, all getting very, very high annual rates of return.

NARRATOR: The question is—what will we do about it? How much are we willing to invest for the long term? When are we going to get crazy about our kids?

POLK: We've invested in many things that help make this country as great as it is. But we have not shown the same level investment on our youngest citizens. And I think that, if we do, we can truly make this country live up to its marvelous promise.

----- END FILM -----