



Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40

By Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M.
Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press, November 2004

Summary Statement: Adults at age 40 who participated in a high-quality preschool program in their early years have higher earnings, are more likely to hold a job, have committed fewer crimes, and are more likely to have graduated from High School. Overall, the study documented a return to society of more than \$17 for every tax dollar invested in the early education program.

Topic/Goal: To identify both the short- and long-term effects of a high-quality preschool education program for young children living in poverty.

Method: The study, begun in 1962, identified 123 high-risk three- and four-year-olds over 25 years in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The researchers randomly assigned 58 of the children to a high-quality early care and education setting; the rest received no preschool program, and were then tracked through their lives to age 40. These children were studied every year from ages 3 through 11, and again at ages 14, 15, 19 and 27 to measure use of special education services, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, employment history and post-secondary education attainment, among other indicators.

Program Profile: The high-quality preschools were staffed by teachers who were well-qualified, who served no more than eight children from low-income families at a time, and who visited these families as part of the program to discuss their child's development. The preschool was a comprehensive program including education, health and family support and ran five days per week, 2.5 hours per day, at a cost of \$14,400 (2001 dollars, discounted annually at 3%) per child for two years.

Among the study's major findings in the *educational* area are:

- More of the group who received high-quality early education graduated from high school than the non-program group (65% vs. 45%), particularly females (84% vs. 32%);
- Fewer females who received high-quality early education than non-program females required treatment for mental impairment (8% vs. 36%) or had to repeat a grade (21% vs. 41%); and
- The group who received high-quality early education on average outperformed the non-program group on various intellectual and language tests during their early childhood years, on school achievement tests between ages 9 and 14, and on literacy tests at ages 19 and 27.

Among the study's major findings in the *economic* area are:

- More of the group who received high-quality early education than the non-program group were employed at age 40 (76% vs. 62%);
- The group who received high-quality early education had median annual earnings more than \$5,000 higher than the non-program group (\$20,800 vs. \$15,300);
- More of the group who received high-quality early education owned their own homes; and
- More of the group who received high-quality early education had a savings account than the non-program group (76% vs. 50%).

Among the study's major findings in the *crime prevention* area are:

- The group who received high-quality early education had significantly fewer arrests than the non-program group (36% vs. 55% arrested five times or more); and
- Significantly fewer members of the group who received high-quality early care than the non-program group were ever arrested for violent crimes (32% vs. 48%), property crimes (36% vs. 58%), or drug crimes (14% vs. 34%).

Conclusions: The major conclusion of the mid-life phase of the study is that high-quality preschool programs for young children living in poverty contribute to their academic and social development in childhood and their school success, economic performance and reduced commission of crime in adulthood. This study confirms that these findings extend not only to young adults, but also to adults in midlife. The return to the public on investment in such programs is even larger than previously estimated.

For more information: <http://www.highscope.org/Research/PerryProject/perrymain.htm>