



# DEVELOPMENTS

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## MOST FASCINATING STUDIES

### Twenty Studies That Fascinated Child Psychology

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As much as we scientists prefer to view the world from a hard-nosed, empirical perspective in which we sweep any purportive role of aesthetic splendor under our laboratory rugs, there is little denying that we can occasionally revel in the beauty and harmony of a well-designed empirical study. I mean some studies just seem to appeal naturally to our artistic senses. These studies may not be particularly Earth-shattering in their scientific impact (although many certainly are!), but they just seem to resonate with all that's good and honest in the scientific world.

Of course, from an empirical, analytic perspective, it's not enough simply to marvel at the magnificence of a well-designed research study, there is also a certain compulsion to understand why we deem such research as fascinating. Or at least, I feel that compulsion. To better apprehend what makes for a fascinating study in child psychology, I undertook the first step of aggregating the opinions of other scientists. As with the other most outstanding studies articles I have reported here, my sampling frame was primarily composed of the doctoral level membership of the

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## MOST FASCINATING STUDIES (CONT...)

(cont. from p. 4)

*Society*. A preliminary round of randomly sampled respondents first submitted up to three nominations for the "Most Fascinating Studies in Child Psychology." Then, based on frequency of nomination, a reduced list of 30 studies was distributed to a second round of randomly sampled respondents, who rank-ordered their top 5 most fascinating studies. In this article, I report the fruits of the membership's recommendations.

Once again adopting the Lettermanian presentation methodology, the top 20 most fascinating studies in child psychology published since 1950 are ...

20) Field, T.M., Schanberg, S.M., Scaffidi, F., Bauer, C.R., Vega-Lahr, N., Garcia, R., Nystrom, J., & Kuhn, C.M. (1986). Tactile/kinesthetic stimulation effects on preterm neonates. *Pediatrics*, 77, 654-658.

19) Thelen, E., & Ulrich, B.D. (1991). Hidden skills. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 56(1, Serial No. 223).

18) Werker, J.F., & Tees, R.C. (1984). Cross-language speech perception: Evidence for perceptual reorganization during the first year of life. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 7, 49-63.

17) Deloache, J.S., Miller, K.F., & Rosengren, K.S. (1997). The credible shrinking room: Very young children's performance with symbolic and nonsymbolic relations. *Psychological Science*, 8, 308-313.

16) DeCasper, A.J., & Spence, M.J. (1986). Prenatal maternal speech influences newborn's perception of speech sounds. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 9, 133-150.

15) Flavell, J.H., Green, F.L., & Flavell, E.R. (1987). Development of knowledge about the appearance-reality distinction. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 51(1, Serial No. 212).

14) Gottlieb, G. (1993). Social induction of malleability in ducklings: Sensory basis and psychological mechanism. *Animal Behaviour*, 45, 707-719.

13) Melzoff, A.N. (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human neonates. *Science*, 198, 75-78.

12) Hubel, D.H., & Wiesel, T.N. (1965). Receptive fields of cells in striate cortex of very young, visually inexperienced kittens. *Journal of Neurophysiology*, 26, 944-1002.

11) Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

10) Brown, R. (1973). *A first language: The early stages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

9) Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. (1961). Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63, 375-382.

8) Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York: International Universities Press.

7) Chi, M.T.H. (1978). Knowledge structures and memory development. In R.S. Siegler (Ed.), *Children's thinking: What develops?* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

6) Suomi, S.J., & Harlow, H.F. (1972). Social rehabilitation of isolate-reared monkeys. *Developmental Psychology*, 6, 487-496.

5) DeCasper, A.J., & Fifer, W.P. (1980). Of human bonding: Newborns prefer their mother's voices. *Science*, 208, 1174-1176.

4) Elder, G.H., Jr. (1974). *Children of the Great Depression: Social change in life experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

3) Werner, E.E., & Smith, R.S. (1989). *Vulnerable but invincible: A longitudinal study of resilient children and youth*. New York: Adams-Banister-Cox.

2) Gibson, E.J., & Walk, R.D. (1960). The "visual cliff." *Scientific American*, 202, 64-72.

and the Number 1 most fascinating study in child psychology published since 1950 was...

1) Harlow, H., & Harlow, M. (1965). The affectional systems. In A. Schrier, H. Harlow, & F. Stollnitz (Eds.), *Behavior of non-human primates*. New York: Academic Press.