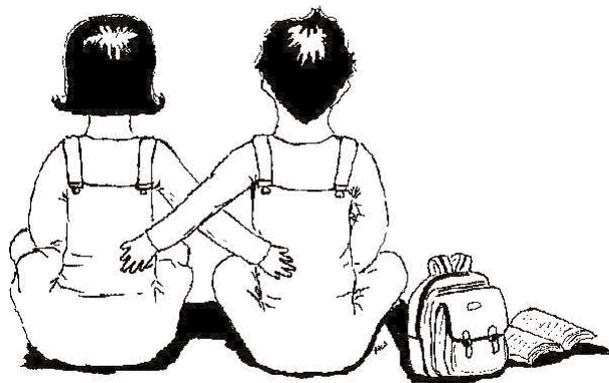


# T Environment D S



Newsletter Issue 4

March 2004

Dear Family,

Teds-Environment wishes to welcome all our families to 2004 by sending you more news about the study so far. We will also be announcing the winners of the drawing competition and launching an exciting new competition. You can also check out [www.teds-environment.com](http://www.teds-environment.com) kidszone where you will find exciting puzzles and quizzes.

We will be sharing the findings of our latest studies about why some children from poor environments do better than other children on IQ tests and how children as young as five can accurately talk about their own behaviour.

In this issue, we have also included an information sheet about peer influence. Many parents are worried that when children get older, friends more easily influence them. This leaflet gives helpful advice about being aware of being easily influenced. The leaflet will also give advice about becoming aware of other influences such as the media.

See page 3



Professor Terrie Moffitt

#### Prestigious Professors

We'd like to introduce you to two members of our team who have received recognition for their work.

Professor Moffitt won the Wolfson Research Merit Award from the Royal Society. It is an award that is designed to keep the best scientific minds in the UK. It is also designed to attract scientists with achievement potential to the UK.

Professors Moffitt and

Caspi collected the Eleanor Maccoby Book Award for their critically acclaimed book entitled 'Sex Differences in Antisocial Behaviour'.

This past summer, the *Times* voted the professors two of the top 'power brokers of wellbeing'. The professors were noted for their research, which is helping to shape our health. Others listed are influential people such as Madonna, Johnny Vegas and David Beckham!



Professor Avshalom Caspi

#### What's inside

What is our environment really like? Check out page 3 for the results of our national community study and see how people feel about their community.

#### TEDS-Environment Study gets high marks!

The TEDS-Environment team are delighted to announce that our research has received the highest quality rating given by the U.K. Medical Research Council: "Alpha-A." On 29 January the scientific board considered our progress so far, and read evaluations of our work by a panel of overseas experts. They said TEDS-Environment is "top notch," "cutting edge," "internationally first rate," and "the most important study of childhood today." The board approved our plans to invite all of the twins' families to take part in a home visit again, as the twins approach age 11 years. We must do a huge amount of planning before we are ready to visit families, and we have not even been told our budget yet. So don't expect us right away!

**The team would like to say a heartfelt thank you to every family who helps make the TEDS-Environment research a success!**



## Beating the Odds

### Background to the study

It is generally thought that children who grow up in poor families tend to have lower scores on intelligence tests, compared to children who are raised in well-to-do families. Mentally stimulating activities such as music lessons promote the development of children's intelligence. Researchers have found that parents who lack money find it difficult to provide such stimulating activities for their children.

However, not all children from poor backgrounds have lower intelligence. Indeed, some poor children overcome poverty and develop strong intellectual abilities.

### *What was our research question?*

In this study, we wanted to find out whether the stimulating activities that parents provide their children can help promote their IQ



development, whether the family is wealthy or poor. When the TEDS-Environment twins were 5 years old, we asked parents to tell us which activities they had engaged in with the twins in the past year. Examples of stimulating activities are:

- *Been to a park*
- *Been swimming*
- *Been on a long walk*
- *Been shopping (other than food shopping)*
- *Been to a religious service*

### *What did we find?*

We found that many

twins had better intellectual abilities than expected, given the level of poverty their families faced. We found that twins who had more opportunities to engage in stimulating activities with their mother or father turned out to have higher IQ scores than other children whose parents had the same income.

### *Why are the findings of the study important?*

The findings of this research are important because they show that not all children from poor family backgrounds are going to fall behind on IQ tests. The mental stimulation, attention, and interest that parents pay toward spending time with their young children can make a big difference in their children's lives. Children's intelligence can be enhanced if parents and other adults in their lives make the effort to stimulate their young minds.

It is important to remember that helping children develop does not have to be expensive for families. In fact, many of the stimulating activities on our list cost little or no money at all to do!

This study will be published in the journal, *Child Development*.

### Did you know?

That the most sets of twins and multiples carried by one woman, Mrs. Fyodor Vassilyev of Shuya, Russia (1707-1782), was 16 sets of twins, 7 sets of triplets and 4 sets of quadruplets. Mrs. Vassilyev gave birth to 69 children, 67 of whom survived infancy, with most surviving to adulthood!

### Here are some stimulating activities that parents can do with twins when they are 9 or 10:

- Bake biscuits or cook something special
- Read a book out loud
- Play board games or card games
- Sing songs together
- Plant something and watch it grow
- Visit a museum
- Dance
- Write a story together
- Go bike riding
- Visit a library
- Do a puzzle
- Teach children how to knit, crochet or sew
- Teach children an outdoor game or sport
- Build a model airplane, building, or car
- Draw or colour in
- Start a collection (e.g., coins, stamps, bugs, leaves, etc.)
- Put on a play or puppet play

## Good Puppet, Bad Puppet

In addition to being lovely puppets, Iggy and Ziggy are scientific tools !!! During our first home visit when the twins were five years old, Iggy and Ziggy helped us to make sure the twins felt comfortable talking to us about their own behaviour. This method was very innovative because a lot of people believe that children as young as five years old are too young



to report about their own behaviour. Our findings showed that they are wrong. The information reported by the children about some of their behaviour was similar to the information reported by mothers and by teachers. This means that young children have the insight, the attention and the understanding necessary to answer a few questions about their own behaviour and activities. Some of you might be wondering why would it be important to collect information from the children themselves if mothers and teachers already provide good and reliable information about children's behaviour?



Sometimes parents or teachers are not available to complete questionnaires or do interviews and we have to rely on other sources of information. Our recent study showed that young children are a reliable source of information about themselves.

Thanks to all the twins who responded to Iggy and Ziggy's questions and thank you to .... Iggy and Ziggy !!

## A British Community

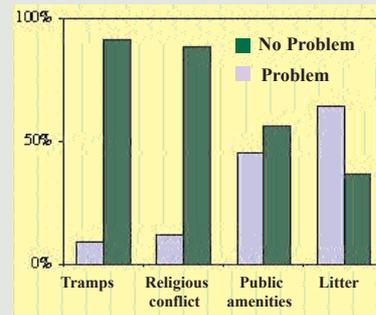
A nationwide study was conducted, with the help of Cambridge University, to find out what neighbourhoods in Britain are like. 16,000 questionnaires were sent out to 1,000 different postcodes. 97% of postcodes had questionnaires returned.

The survey showed that the most common problems seem to be with litter and broken glass within public places. Poor service from the police and public transport also seem to be a cause for concern. However, homelessness and race or religious conflict are problems for fewer peo-

ple. The distance children travel to schools also seems less problematic for many people.

Altogether, the survey asked about 32 different possible problems. More than half the people surveyed agreed on the same eight problems. These problems were mainly concerned with crime and unattractiveness of the local area (noisy traffic, run-down buildings, homes in poor condition, ugly signs). These seem to be Britain's strongest fears.

Studies like this have been conducted in America and Sweden. British people think that the attractiveness of their local area is more



problematic than people in America or Sweden. British people were also more worried about crime than the Swedish but less than the Americans. However, British people did feel the same way as the Swedish about public amenities (transport, shops, schools). Americans felt public amenities were more of a problem. British people also felt that religious conflict was less of a problem than the Americans or the Swedish.

So far, we have only looked at the overall problems. The next stage is to break down the survey to compare responses from different regions within Britain.

## Did you know?

Apparently, the oldest woman to give birth to twins is an unnamed 59-year-old woman from England, who was seeing controversial Italian fertility specialist, Dr. Severino Anitori. This millionaire businesswoman was beyond menopause and was infertile when she was pregnant with the fertilised eggs of a 25-year-old woman in 1993 (the eggs were fertilised by her husband). She gave birth to twins on Christmas Day, 1993.

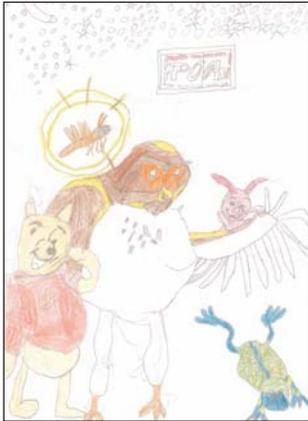
| Question posed                        | No problem | Problem |
|---------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Tramps, Beggars, or homeless people   | 91%        | 9%      |
| Race or religious conflict            | 88%        | 12%     |
| Schools being too far away            | 86%        | 14%     |
| Homes and gardens in poor condition   | 79%        | 22%     |
| Muggings, robberies and assaults      | 68%        | 32%     |
| Poor public transport service         | 56%        | 45%     |
| Vandals                               | 44%        | 56%     |
| Poor service from police              | 42%        | 58%     |
| Litter, broken glass in public places | 37%        | 64%     |

## The Winners!

Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to everyone that entered. You may even see your designs on your next birthday card. The winners receive a selection of Bloomsbury books. Winners and runners up receive a family cinema voucher.

Jasmine  
and  
Gemma

Age 9



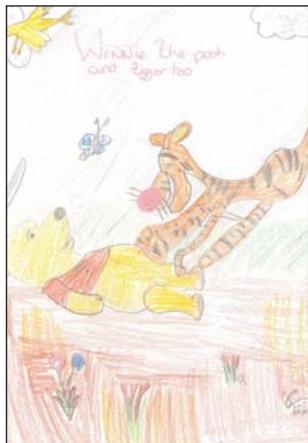
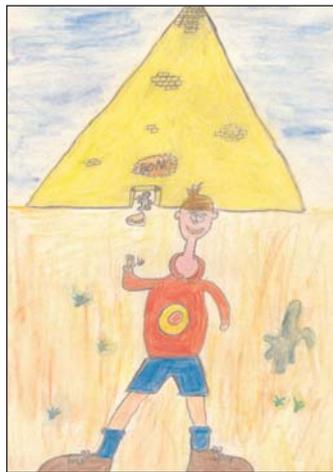
Kyle and  
Corey

Age 8



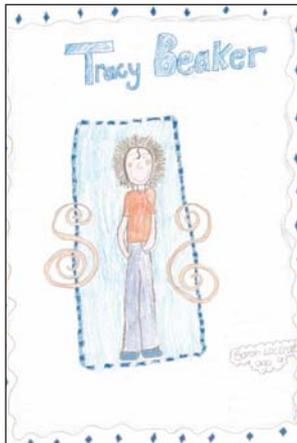
Aleksi  
and  
Daniel

Age 9



Beth and  
Sarah

Age 9



## Attention Kids!

How would you like to win a family ticket to any megabowl complex\* throughout the country? All you have to do is write about your best day out with your parent(s)/guardian. It can be as long or short as you want. Don't worry, we're not looking for the next William Shakespeare, or J. K. Rowling for that matter, what we want to see is your ideas. You can write about last year's summer holiday on the beach or a day out in the park, a trip to the museum or the local amusement arcade. Tell us about the most fun you spent with your parent(s)/guardian and why it was so much fun for you.

The best will be published in the next newsletter, so you will have your favourite day immortalised forever! The competition deadline will be 30th June 2004 so that gives you plenty of time to start writing. We look forward to reading your stories.

\*Based on two adults and two children

## Teds-Environment

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are happy to hear from you.

Teds-Environment  
Department Box P080  
Freepost LON7567  
London SE5 8YZ

Freephone:  
0800 317 029

W W W.Teds-  
Environment.com

Teds-Environment@  
iop.kcl.ac.uk