Imitation in Infancy

This is the first book to bring together the extensive modern evidence for innate imitation in babies. Contemporary research has shown imitation to be a natural mechanism of learning and communication which deserves to be at centre stage in developmental psychology. Yet, the very possibility of imitation in newborn humans has had a controversial history. Defining imitation has proved to be far from straightforward, and scientific evidence for its existence in neonates is only now becoming accepted, despite more than a century of inquiry. In this book, some of the world's foremost researchers on imitation and intellectual development review evidence for imitation in newborn babies. They discuss the development of imitation in infancy, in both normal and atypical populations and in comparison with other primate species, stressing the fundamental importance of imitation in human development, as a foundation of communication and a precursor to symbolic processes.

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The aim of this series is to provide a scholarly forum for current theoretical and empirical issues in cognitive and perceptual development. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the field is no longer dominated by monolithic theories. Contemporary explanations build on the combined influences of biological, cultural, contextual and ecological factors in well-defined research domains. In the field of cognitive development, cultural and situational factors are widely recognised as influencing the emergence and forms of reasoning in children. In perceptual development, the field has moved beyond the opposition of ‘innate’ and ‘acquired’ to suggest a continuous role for perception in the acquisition of knowledge. These approaches and issues will all be reflected in the series which will also address such important research themes as the indissociable link between perception and action in the developing motor system, the relationship between perceptual and cognitive development to modern ideas on the development of the brain, the significance of developmental processes themselves, dynamic systems theory and contemporary work in the psychodynamic tradition, especially as it relates to the foundations of self-knowledge.

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Imitation in Infancy

Edited by
Jacqueline Nadel
and
George Butterworth
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