



Social Learning in Human Infancy: Early Building Blocks for Social Cognition

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Human infants learn about physical laws and social conventions through observing the actions of other people. Beyond merely manipulating the world and learning through trial and error, children learn from watching and imitating experts in their particular culture. Human infants exploit others as proxies, a strategy that greatly multiplies their learning opportunities prior to taking action themselves. They learn from the trial and error and insights of others. The facility for such social learning is supported by three key building blocks: imitation, gaze following, and the identification of others as 'like me' (what applies to others, applies to me). I will draw on research from developmental psychology to make these ideas concrete, and will discuss more general theoretical lessons for early causal learning and the formation of human social cognition.