

*Novel Imitation Skills in Children at Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder*

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The role of imitation by children in social interactions is important because it facilitates back-and-forth exchanges with caregivers and peers and lays the foundation for social and cognitive development (Lowry, 2016). Through deferred imitation, children gain increasing experience about other people and the world, and demonstrate their capacity for representing stored mental images and knowledge (Warreyn, 2014; Paiget, 1962). Immediate imitation may help to facilitate play and language abilities (Brooke, 2008). Children with ASD are less likely to imitate a variety of acts compared to typically developing children and children with other developmental delays or disabilities (Gonsiorowski et al., 2015). By the age of 18 months, problems with imitation can discriminate infants with a later ASD diagnosis from infants with typical development. (Warreyn et al., 2014). The purpose of this research study is to examine the immediate and novel imitation skills in young children at-risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This study examines children's ability to imitate an examiner's actions with toys and objects during an assessment. We found that children at-risk for ASD had poorer imitation skills overall and in particular with "novel" or atypical tasks with objects.