

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Imitation and Autism: A Neurofunctional Hypothesis

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2:30 PM

**Martin Colloquium Center
4127 Sennott Square**

Less proficient imitation is a hallmark of autism. Less proficient imitation not only distinguishes children who are autistic¹ from children who are typically developing, less proficient imitation also distinguishes autistic children from children with other developmental disabilities. Less proficient imitation also characterizes autistic adults across their lifespan. In this talk, I will first review three categories of previous explanations for autistics' less proficient imitation: cognitive explanations, interpersonal explanations, and the recent mirror-neuron explanations. Then I will describe another explanation based on the neural mechanisms of action execution. In the last part of my talk, I will apply a neurofunctional model of imitation to understand autistics' less proficient imitation.

¹For background on my respectful use of the term "autistic" rather than "person with autism," please refer to Sinclair's (1999) essay "Why I Dislike Person-First Language" (http://web.syr.edu/~jsincla/person_first.htm).

Reception to follow in Room 4125 Sennott Square