ABSTRACT

Previous research on the imitation phenomenon has revealed that imitation in children is related to model characteristics, subject characteristics, and maturation. Recent investigations have shown that being imitated also is related to imitative behavior--subjects who were imitated subsequently became more imitative than subjects who were not imitated. Other researchers have hypothesized that imitative behavior in children might be related to some aspect or aspects of their cognitive style. Selective attention and locus of control were found to be related to level of imitation in children. However, no study has attempted to determine if several aspects of cognitive style are related to imitative behavior in children. This study was designed to answer this question.

The entire membership (126 children) of six fourth-grade classes from a rural community were administered a simple modeling task and assigned to one of the following groups: (1) Imitators, (2) Indeterminate Responders, and (3) Nonimitators. Twenty subjects from each group were selected randomly and administered the following tasks: (1) Matching Familiar Figures Test, (2) Children's Embedded Figures Test, (3) Hagen's central-incidental task, and (4) the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children. A discriminant analysis was performed on the

data to determine which cognitive style variable or variables are most responsible for discriminating among the three groups, and if level of imitation in children can be predicted from their scores on the MFF latencies and errors, field dependence, locus of control, selective attention, and sex.

Preliminary results indicated that wide range and variability existed among the scores of the three groups. The discriminant analysis revealed that selective attention was the most discriminating variable among Imitators, Indeterminate Responders, and Nonimitators. However, a combination of selective attention and MFF errors predicted 46.7% of the known cases ($p < .05$). The remaining variables did not significantly contribute to the discrimination of the three groups. Two significant discriminant functions were derived: the first was characterized by an attention variable, and the second function was heavily weighted on response accuracy. The findings were discussed in terms of previous research and implications for future investigation.