

When infants cry because they are hungry, a nipple is put in the mouth, and they suck, feel satisfaction, and sleep. They are assimilating this experience while perceiving auditory, tactile, and visual cues. This experience of perceiving certain patterns, or “ordering,” provides a foundation for the subsequent stages.

The second stage, **primary circular reactions**, marks the beginning of the replacement of reflexive behavior with voluntary acts. During the period from 1 to 4 months old, activities such as sucking and grasping become deliberate acts that elicit certain responses. The beginning of accommodation is evident. Infants incorporate and adapt their reactions to the environment and recognize the stimulus that produced a response. Previously, they cried until the nipple was brought to the mouth. Now they associate the nipple with the sound of the parent's voice. They accommodate this new piece of information and adapt by ceasing to cry when they hear the voice—before receiving the nipple. What is taking place is realization of causality and recognition of an orderly sequence of events. The environment is taken in with all of the senses and with whatever motor ability is present.

The **secondary circular reactions** stage is a continuation of primary circular reactions and lasts until 8 months old. In this stage, the primary circular reactions are repeated and prolonged for the response that results. Grasping and holding now become shaking, banging, and pulling. Shaking is performed to hear a noise, not solely for the pleasure of shaking. The quality and quantity of an act become evident. “More” or “less” shaking produces different responses. Causality, time, deliberate intention, and separateness from the environment begin to develop.

Three new processes of human behavior occur. **Imitation** requires the differentiation of selected acts from several events. By the second half of the first year, infants can imitate sounds and simple gestures. **Play** becomes evident as they take pleasure in performing an act after they have mastered it. Much of infants' waking hours are absorbed in sensorimotor play. **Affect** (outward manifestation of emotion and feeling) is seen as infants begin to develop a sense of permanence. During the first 6 months, infants believe that an object exists only for as long as they can visually perceive it. In other words, out of sight, out of mind. Affect to external objects is evident when the object continues to be present