



# The Social Neuroscience of Empathy

*Jean Decety, William Ickes*

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In recent decades, empathy research has blossomed into a vibrant and multidisciplinary field of study. The social neuroscience approach to the subject is premised on the idea that studying empathy at multiple levels (biological, cognitive, and social) will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how other people's thoughts and feelings can affect our own thoughts, feelings, and behavior. In these cutting-edge contributions, leading advocates of the multilevel approach view empathy from the perspectives of social, cognitive, developmental and clinical psychology and cognitive/affective neuroscience. Chapters include a critical examination of the various definitions of the empathy construct; surveys of major research traditions based on these differing views (including empathy as emotional contagion, as the projection of one's own thoughts and feelings, and as a fundamental aspect of social development); clinical and applied perspectives, including psychotherapy and the study of empathy for other people's pain; various neuroscience perspectives; and discussions of empathy's evolutionary and neuroanatomical histories, with a special focus on neuroanatomical continuities and differences across the phylogenetic spectrum. The new discipline of social neuroscience bridges disciplines and levels of analysis. In this volume, the contributors' state-of-the-art investigations of empathy from a social neuroscience perspective vividly illustrate the potential benefits of such cross-disciplinary integration. Contributors: Daniel Batson, James Blair, Karina Blair, Jerold D. Bozarth, Anne Buysse, Susan F. Butler, Michael Carlin, C. Sue Carter, Kenneth D. Craig, Mirella Dapretto, Jean Decety, Mathias Dekeyser, Ap Dijksterhuis, Robert Elliott, Natalie D. Eggum, Nancy Eisenberg, Norma Deitch Feshbach, Seymour Feshbach, Liesbet Goubert, Leslie S. Greenberg, Elaine Hatfield, James Harris, William Ickes, Claus Lamm, Yen-Chi Le, Mia Leijssen, Abigail Marsh, Raymond S. Nickerson, Jennifer H. Pfeifer, Stephen W. Porges, Richard L. Rapson, Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory, Rick B. van Baaren, Matthijs L. van Leeuwen, Andries van der Leij, Jeanne C. Watson

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