Gergely et al 2002

This experiment used 14 month old infants as participants and involved two conditions.

Hands free condition:

The infants observed an adult place her hands on a table. Following this, in order to switch on a light box, she bent over and pressed the box with her forehead. One week later, the same infants were given the opportunity to play with the light box; 69% of them used their head to switch on the light.

Hands-occupied condition:

Infants observed the adult perform the same strange action to switch on the light box. However, the model was using her hands to hold a blanket around her shoulders. This made her hands unavailable for other actions. One week later, the same infants were given the opportunity to play with the light box; 21% of the infants used their head to switch the light on.

Conclusion:

In the hands occupied condition, infants seem to have assumed that the adult used her head because she had to, but this constraint did not apply to the infants. In the hands free condition, the adult could have chosen to use her hands, but she did not. The infants seem to have assumed there must have been a reason for this choice, so they copied it. Therefore, very young infants have the ability to observe a model’s behavior and infer his or her intentions and constraints on his or her behavior. The infants then use such information to decide which parts of the model’s behavior are possible or desirable to imitate.

Very young children are capable of observational learning, this is in line with Bandura’s SLT. However this observational learning is combined with more abstract and complex forms of reasoning. This is in line with Bandura’s increasingly cognitive Social Cognitive theory (SCT).