

The King Louie effect

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Children are socially motivated to learn at a much younger age than previous studies have suggested, according to new research undertaken by the School of Psychology.

Experimental studies have determined that from 15 months of age [children](#) begin to imitate the behaviour of other people more faithfully and less selectively than in earlier months.

Principal investigator of the study, Dr Merideth Gattis of the School of Psychology, said:

"The study demonstrates that faithful imitation begins earlier than previous scientific studies had indicated.

"It also shows that faithful imitation is socially motivated.

"In the past, some scientists have proposed that children copy faithfully because they do not understand how things work, with others arguing that children copy other people faithfully because they are interested in social relationships.

"Our study shows that babies copy faithfully because of their social motivation to interact with other people. We call this the King Louie Effect. Much like the orang-utan in The Jungle Book, when [babies](#) copy you, they are communicating: 'I wanna be like you, I wanna walk like you, talk like you.'

"So there seems to be a bit of King Louie in all of us. As children develop and become more aware of [social relationships](#), they copy what others do in more detail, including the unnecessary things."

This newly-identified [social motivation](#) to learn through shared experiences creates important [educational opportunities](#). Social relationships are important throughout life, but these findings indicate that the second year is an especially important time for relationships to influence learning.

More information: [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 ... /desc.12070/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2013.02700.x)

Provided by Cardiff University

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