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The influence of the self-perspective in infant theory of mind

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Abstract

We examine whether development of self-awareness influences infants' ability to track and use others' perspectives to make belief-based action predictions. Based on the altercentric hypothesis (Southgate, 2020), we expect that infants who do not yet have a self-perspective to make more accurate predictions of an agent's actions on a non-verbal mentalizing task (NVMT) compared to infants who may encode the other's and their own conflicting perspective. To test this, we presented 18-month-olds, half of whom passed the mirror self-recognition (MSR) task, with a NVMT and used anticipatory looking as a measure of action-based attribution. Contrary to our hypothesis, preliminary findings with 32 infants using the differential looking score, suggest that those who pass the MSR task are more accurate in their anticipatory looking compared to infants who do not pass the MSR task. All other preregistered analyses will be conducted once data collection is complete in June 2021.