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Conflict between self and other in the development of perspective tracking

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Abstract

We examine whether infants and young children experience “conflict” between their own perspective and that of another in a false belief scenario. Based on the altercentric hypothesis, we propose that young infants can track the perspective of others because they lack a competing self-perspective. With the emergence of self-awareness, children may then be able to generate a representation of their own perspective and only then does this become a competitor to the perspective cued by others. To test this, we presented 18- and 42-month-olds with a perspective-conflict scenario and used pupil diameter as an index of conflicting processing. Half of the 18-month-olds passed the mirror self-recognition (MSR) task. Functional t-tests showed that MSR recognizers had greater dilation during the anticipatory phase compared to non-recognizers. Data collection with 42-month-olds is ongoing; preliminary results from pilot data suggests that the pupil trace of the 42-month-olds is similar to the MSR recognizers.