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Children's Representations of Events: Categorizing Leadership

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Abstract

Research in cognitive development suggests that very early in development children, even infants, may reason about social interactions between individuals that are likely to be relevant for representing leadership (e.g., Stavans & Baillargeon, 2019). In addition, some children develop as leaders (e.g., Kinkead-Clark, 2019; Li et al, 2007), and the specific behaviors they demonstrate are consistent with leadership theories (e.g., Direction, Alignment, and Commitment; Drath et al., 2008). The current study tests whether children represent leadership in terms of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment to shed light on leadership representations in cognitive development. When presented with a 'sample' event portraying leadership (or not) followed by another pair of events (only one portraying leadership), 10-13 year olds (N = 24) selected the correct match event significantly above chance; M= 68.50, SE = 4.88, t(23) = 13.91, p < .001. The findings have implications for cognitive theories by clarifying the nature of leadership representations.