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**How infants communicate: Meaning, gestures, modes**

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*Abstract*

I address three central aspects of human communication from a developmental perspective: 1) The emergence of meaning; 2) The role of gestures; 3) The distinction between deictic and representational modes. A series of experimental studies on one-year-old infants demonstrates that infants have complex social expectations, akin to what has sometimes been referred to as “theory-of-mind”. These enable them to engage in meaningful interactions long before they convey meaning linguistically. The emergence of social expectations appears to be universal and socially mediated. Gestures afford interaction in ways that vocalizations do not; however, infants’ vocalizations complement their gestural acts in meaningful ways. Representational communication is initially grounded in space. The use of gestural iconic depictions, however, is a later achievement, likely mediated by the representational use of formal language.

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