

Research Reviews

Infant Communication with Teen Mothers

Flanagan,P.J., Coppa,D.F., Riggs,S.G., Alario,A.J.(1994). Communication Behaviors of Infants of Teen Mothers. An Exploratory Study. Journal of Adolescent Health, 15(2):169-75.

The relationship between adolescent mother-infant interaction and an infant's preverbal communication skills was studied by observing 13 videotaped teenage mother-infant pairs in a free-play setting. The infants were then videotaped in a structured setting designed to elicit preverbal communication behaviors, with an examiner. Infants were 9-12 months old, full-term, first born, and developmentally normal.

There was a significant correlation between a mother's interaction scores and the range of purposes for which her infant used communication behaviors. No correlation was found between maternal interaction scores and the frequency of communication behavior.

Infants whose mothers scored poorly on the Parent-Infant Interaction Scale used most of their communication behaviors to demand or protest. Infants from more optimally interacting dyads used communication behaviors for social interaction and commentary as well as to demand or protest. Maternal interaction and an infant's early communication skills appear to be related in this exploratory study.