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# The picture theory of symbolic development in early childhood

Alexander Porto  
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA

### Abstract

Symbolic representation is a central facet of human development that enables people to depict experiences and communicate meaningful information with others. Participation in social interaction relies on graphical symbols, gestures, and symbolic artifacts to form relationships, acquire language, and represent the world. However, substantial theoretical differences between cognitive and social-constructivist accounts of the development of symbolic representation prevent a unified model from forming. Thus, the task of this work is to introduce a theoretical model for symbolic development in early childhood. Throughout this work, Wittgenstein's picture theory of language is empirically grounded with nascent, cross-cultural research in iconicity and experimental semiotics in order to propose a picture theory of symbolic development in early childhood. Last, this work critically reformulates current debates regarding the representational facets of symbolic development and offers novel insights that bridge philosophy of language and cognitive anthropology.