

The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind

By Alison Gopnik, Andrew N. Meltzoff, Patricia K. Kuhl

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This exciting book by three pioneers in the new field of cognitive science discusses important discoveries about how much babies and young children know and learn, and how much parents naturally teach them. It argues that evolution designed us both to teach and learn, and that the drive to learn is our most important instinct. It also reveals as fascinating insights about our adult capacities and how even young children -- as well as adults -- use some of the same methods that allow scientists to learn so much about the world. Filled with surprise at every turn, this vivid, lucid, and often funny book gives us a new view of the inner life of children and the mysteries of the mind.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
A trio of nationally respected childhood-development scientists hailing from Berkeley and the University of Washington has authored *The Scientist in the Crib* to correct a disparity: while popular books about science speak to intelligent, perceptive adults who simply want to learn, books about babies typically just give advice, heavy on the how-to and light on the why. The authors write, "It's as if the only place you could read about evolution was in dog-breeding manuals, not in Stephen Jay Gould; as if, lacking Stephen Hawking's insights, the layman's knowledge of the cosmos was reduced to 'How to find the constellations.'"

The Scientist in the Crib changes that. Standing on the relatively recent achievements of the young field of cognitive science (pointing out that not so long ago, babies were considered only slightly animate vegetables--"carrots that could cry"), the authors succinctly and articulately sum up the state of what's now known about children's minds and how they learn. Using language that's both friendly and smart (and using equally accessible metaphors, everything from *Scooby-Doo* to *The Third Man*), *The Scientist in the Crib* explores how babies recognize and understand their fellow humans, interpret sensory input, absorb language, learn and devise theories, and take part in building their own brains.

Such science makes for great reading, but will likely prove even more useful to readers with a scientist in their own crib, acting as tonic to pseudoscientific how-to baby books that recommend everything "from flash cards, to Mozart tapes, to Better Baby Institutes." As the authors put it, "We want to understand children, not renovate them." --*Paul Hughes*

From Publishers Weekly
Although Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl have each conducted groundbreaking research into the cognitive development of infants and its philosophical implications, this book evokes less excitement than their more straightforward research. With breathless enthusiasm, the authors review recent findings in developmental psychology and explain, in a tone somewhat self-consciously aimed at the "lay reader," their hopes that they will help answer fundamental philosophical questions. They focus on Kuhl's work in early infant phonetic recognition and language acquisition, Meltzoff's work on imitation in infants and Gopnik's exploration of philosophical development in infants, as well as other important work in the field. How do babies learn? they ask, answering that "they are born knowing a great deal, they learn more and we are designed to teach them." They also give refreshing emphasis to the evolutionary basis for infant-caregiver interactions. For example, they explain that "motherese"Athe high-pitched, slightly louder than normal speech with elongated and articulated consonants and vowelsAis not only preferred by babies but also optimally suited to their developing auditory systems. It's ironic, though, that these authors, who from the first pages decry ill-informed condescension to children, should be themselves so unthinkingly condescending in their tone and presentation: "children and scientists," they repeatedly aver, "are the best learners in the world." Agent, Katinka Matson, Brockman Inc.; 5-city author tour.
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From Library Journal
Babies solve problems in exactly the same way that scientists workAby repeatedly testing "hypotheses" against real occurrences, then modifying their initial theories to fit reality better. The three authorsAall parents as well as noted specialists in infant developmentAuse this idea to organize their summary of research on cognitive development in early childhood. Chapters cover the development of language, of

understanding, and of minds and brains (the "software" and "hardware" of cognition). The authors do a good job of staying appropriately neutral on the big political issues of childcare and emphasize that this is not a book of child-rearing advice. It is instead a readable, concise summary of the recent explosion of research on early childhood development. Recommended for public and undergraduate libraries.AMary Ann Hughes, Neill P.L., Pullman, WA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Frazier:

The event that you get from The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind could be the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to recognise but The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind giving you thrill feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by anyone who read that because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this specific The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind instantly.

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Debra Weeks:

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Dennis Green:

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