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Is the child a theoretician?

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This paper addresses the issue of whether or not it makes sense to describe a child as a young scientist or a theoretician. The focus in this paper will be on Gopnik's theory theory. This theory, not only argues that children's thinking is theory-like, it also argues that children's cognitive development resembles theory change in science. First, Gopnik's theory will be introduced. Then, the implications of theory theory will be examined in two domains: children's understanding of physics, and children's understanding of causal relationships. In addition, supporting evidence for theory theory will be analysed. Finally, alternative perspectives to theory theory are presented. (orig.)

Classification: C30

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