



Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture

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What is the nature of human thought? A long dominant view holds that the mind is a general problem-solving device that approaches all questions in much the same way. Chomsky's theory of language, which revolutionized linguistics, challenged this claim, contending that children are primed to acquire some skills, such as language, in a manner largely independent of their ability to solve other sorts of apparently similar mental problems. In recent years, researchers in anthropology, psychology, linguistics and neuroscience have examined whether other mental skills are similarly independent. Many have concluded that much of human thought is "domain-specific." Thus, the mind is better viewed as a collection of cognitive abilities specialized to handle specific tasks than as a general problem solver. Mapping the Mind introduces a general audience to a domain-specificity perspective, by compiling a collection of essays exploring how several of these cognitive abilities are organized. This volume is appropriate as a reader for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, developmental and cognitive psychology.

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Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture From Brand: Cambridge University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #787281 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cambridge University Press
- Published on: 1994-04-29
- Released on: 1994-08-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.98" h x 1.18" w x 5.98" l, 1.81 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 532 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

..thought provoking and often compelling...The introduction and many of the chapters provide grounding in the basic issues for readers who are new to the topic. At the same time, because many of the chapters push the domain specificity hypothesis to its limits, readers who are well acquainted with the issues will find this volume worthwhile reading." Contemporary Psychology

About the Author

Hirschfield is Associate Professor of Anthropology and of Psychology at the University of Michigan.

Susan A. Gelman is the Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. She has authored more than one hundred publications on language and cognitive development and has received numerous honors and awards, including a J.S. Guggenheim Fellowship, a Distinguished Scientific Award from the American Psychological Association for Early Career Contribution to Psychology, and a Boyd McCandless Young Scientist Award from Division 7 of the American Psychological Association. She also serves on the editorial board of several journals. Her research has been funded by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the National Science Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation.

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