

# [PDF] The NURTURE ASSUMPTION: WHY CHILDREN TURN OUT THE WAY THEY DO

**Judith Rich Harris - pdf download free book**

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**Books Details:**

Title: The NURTURE ASSUMPTION: WHY C

Author: Judith Rich Harris

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**Description:**

Whether it's musical talent, criminal tendencies, or fashion sense, we humans want to know why we have it or why we don't. What makes us the way we are? Maybe it's in our genes, maybe it's how we were raised, maybe it's a little of both--in any case, Mom and Dad usually receive both the credit and the blame. But not so fast, says developmental psychology writer Judith Rich Harris. While it has been shown that genetics is only partly responsible for behavior, it is also true, Harris asserts, that parents play a very minor role in mental and emotional development. *The Nurture Assumption* explores the mountain of evidence pointing away from parents and toward peer groups as the strongest environmental influence on personality development. Rather than leaping into the nature vs. nurture fray, Harris instead posits nurture (parental) vs. nurture (peer group), and in her view

your kid's friends win, hands down. This idea, difficult as it may be to accept, is supported by the countless studies Harris cites in her breezy, charming prose. She is upset about the blame laid on parents of troubled children and has much to say (mostly negative) about "professional parental advice-givers." Her own advice may be summarized as "guide your child's peer-group choices wisely," but the aim of the book is less to offer guidance than to tear off cultural blinders. Harris's ideas are so thought-provoking, challenging, and potentially controversial that anyone concerned with parenting issues will find *The Nurture Assumption* refreshing, important, and possibly life-changing. --Rob Lightner

**From Publishers Weekly** Harris, author of a college-level textbook on child development, offers a contribution to the increasingly popular trend to absolve parents from feeling responsible for the rearing of their children. The inability of psychologists to demonstrate that parents have predictable effects on children, it is argued, vitiates the long-standing assumption of parents' crucial role in children's personality development. While the author's skepticism of the view that parents' behavior produces necessary and direct effects on children is itself well founded, her counterpoint to the "nurture assumption" is not. Rather than attempting to examine the evident complexity of parental influence on children, the author instead avoids the problem altogether, asserting that one must recognize "that children learn separately, in each social context, how to behave in that context." By consequence, the primary influence on a child's social development, Harris asserts, is not the family setting (in which the author thinks children merely learn how to behave toward other family members), but rather the peer group. Pleasant as this theory may be to some parents, this book contains not a shred of empirical research to support it. What substitutes for research are numerous anecdotes and pages of opining. Here, for example, is one of many personal observations the author uses to bolster her own argument: "I believe high or low status in the peer group has permanent effects on the personality. Children who are unpopular with their peers... never get over that. At least I didn't." While this kind of evidence is unlikely to sway the critical reader, it will undoubtedly find favor among those parents who, like the author, find in this book's thesis a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, which will mitigate guilty feelings about how they treated their children?feelings that, as the book implies, need not be analyzed. First broadcast to 20/20. BOMC alternate, QPB selection. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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