

Tekst 1

PARENTS AND PEERS

As a psychologist very familiar with the research, I think in “Do Parents Matter?” (*Scientific American*, August 2009) Judith Harris is conflating personality and behavior, which are two different concepts. Personality has more to do with genetic traits related to mood and energy (which plenty of research indicates are strongly influenced by genetics). Behavior, on the other hand, depends on context and is guided by laws of behaviourism – that is, reinforcement principles. If parents do (or do not) provide reinforcement for specific types of behavior, you will either see or not see those behaviors. Likewise, certain behaviors will be reinforced in the classroom by teachers.

I teach these basic principles. When people apply them, they work “like magic”. Simple but effective television shows, such as *Supernanny*, demonstrate their power. To suggest that parents “do not matter” or have little influence is beyond laughable. There is no doubt that peers matter, as Harris says – but the research shows they matter more when the parents ignore their impact, do not address their impact or do not take actions to ameliorate negative impact.

Rhombs99

Scientific American, 2009

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1p 1 Tegen welke visie protesteert “Rhombs99”?