How would you describe the role of parent? Is it to shape and mold a child into a respectable member of society? Or is it to raise a happy, self-assured individual? Regardless of your answers to these questions, it probably doesn’t come as a surprise to learn that our ideas about or our views of children as well as the role of parents have changed, sometimes dramatically, over the course of centuries. In this lecture we are going to talk about, we are going to take a trip back into history and talk about some historical views of children and parents.

In this lecture we will...

• Explore differing conceptions of childhood & their reflections in views of parents’ role

Specially in this lecture as I just said we will talk about different conceptions or views of children and how these views are reflected in ideas about parents’ role.

In this lecture we will...

• Explore differing conceptions of childhood & their reflections in views of parents’ role
• Discuss 2 main controversies in the field of child development

After our historical discussion we will talk about two main controversies or questions in the field of child development. And these are controversies that are still debated today.
Original Sin

- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)

Audio:
We’ll begin our discussion, our history lesson, in the Middle Ages which took place between the 5th and 15th centuries.

Slide # 5

Original Sin

- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)
- Children born into world as evil

Audio:
At this time in history children were viewed as being evil at birth.

Slide # 6

Original Sin

- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)
- Children born into world as evil
- Parents’ role
  - Promote survival (of family), not emotional attachment to children

Audio:
And this had implications for what people thought a parent’s role was during that time. You should also know that during the middle ages there was rampant disease and war and other difficulties, realities of daily life which made survival not something to be taken for granted. So these realities coupled with this idea of children as being basically evil in nature parents were believed to play the role of promoting the survival of the family or trying to keep family members alive rather than forming close emotional bonds or emotional attachment to children.

Slide # 7

Original Sin

- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)
- Children born into world as evil
Parents’ role
- Promote survival (of family), not emotional attachment to children
- Ensure children’s salvation, remove sin

Audio:
Parents were also expected to ensure children’s salvation. That is to remove their sin so that they would have an afterlife.

Slide # 8

Slide Title: Original Sin

Original Sin
- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)
- Children born into world as evil
- Parents’ role
  - Promote survival (of family), not emotional attachment to children
  - Ensure children’s salvation, remove sin
- Parenting practices

Audio:
These ideas about children and about the role of parents can be seen in the practices or behaviors that parents often used or were thought to have used during the Middle Ages.

Slide # 9

Slide Title: Original Sin

Original Sin
- Middle Ages (5th to 15th c.)
- Children born into world as evil
- Parents’ role
  - Promote survival (of family), not emotional attachment to children
  - Ensure children’s salvation, remove sin
- Parenting practices
  - Harsh discipline, low affection → obedience & submission

Audio:
For example, harsh discipline strategies as well as low affection or low levels of warmth with children were commonplace. These strategies were thought to instill obedience or submission in children which would help them theoretically in their afterlife. You might have heard the phrase used “children should be seen and not heard”. This idea seemed to have its roots in the Middle Ages and their ideas about children.

Slide # 10
Now fortunately for children’s sake in the 17th century a philosopher named John Locke came into the picture. He had very different ideas about children.

He believed that children were born as “blank slates”; in other words *tabula rasa*. This idea of children as a blank slate or you might think of it as a ball of clay; not in any kind of form at that time.

The parent’s role was then to shape children.

To shape their behavior or to shape their mind. To construct them into a respectable member.
of society. So children were not thought to be born evil, they were believed to be born as basically nothing and it was a parent’s job, parent’s responsibility, to shape children into a member of society.

**Slide # 14**

**Slide Title:** Tabula Rasa

Tabula Rasa
- 17th century, John Locke
- Children are “blank slates”
- Parents’ role
  - Shape children’s behavior and minds
- Parenting practices

**Audio:**

Now what parenting practices were commonplace during that time?

**Slide # 15**

**Slide Title:** Tabula Rasa

Tabula Rasa
- 17th century, John Locke
- Children are “blank slates”
- Parents’ role
  - Shape children’s behavior and minds
- Parenting practices
  - Emphasized patient instruction, rewards & punishments

**Audio:**

In contrast to the harsh, often times coercive and low warmth parenting that we saw during the middle ages, during the 17th century parents used patient instruction or teaching of children and they used rewards and punishments to help shape or mold children’s behavior. Now interestingly we will see these similar views reemerge in the 20th century in the form of behaviorism or learning theory which we will talk about in the next unit.

**Slide # 16**

**Slide Title:** Innate Goodness

Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau

**Audio:**

Now another historical period that is worth mentioning is referred to as the period of innate
goodness. This was advocated by another philosopher named John Jacques Rousseau, in the 18th century.

**Slide # 17**

**Slide Title:** Innate Goodness

Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau
- Children are inherently good

**Audio:**
He had yet another view of children. He believed that children are inherently good. Not evil, not balls of unformed clay but they had an inherently, a basically good nature.

**Slide # 18**

**Slide Title:** Innate Goodness

Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau
- Children are inherently good
- Parents’ role
  - Avoid corrupting child through ignorant or insensitive caregiving

**Audio:**
Parents’ role then was to avoid corrupting that basically good nature through ignorant or insensitive caregiving or parenting practices.

**Slide # 19**

**Slide Title:** Innate Goodness

Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau
- Children are inherently good
- Parents’ role
  - Avoid corrupting child through ignorant or insensitive caregiving
- Parenting practices

**Audio:**
Parenting practices or behaviors that were used during this historical period were the following.

**Slide # 20**

**Slide Title:** Innate Goodness
Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau
- Children are inherently good
- Parents’ role
  - Avoid corrupting child through ignorant or insensitive caregiving
- Parenting practices
  - Children permitted to grow naturally, w/ little parental monitoring or constraint

Audio:
Children were permitted to grow naturally or to sort of develop on their own with little parental monitoring or constraint. So parents tended to take more of a back seat approach to the parenting process. Just to stand back and allow those natural tendencies of children to emerge.

Slide # 21

Slide Title: Innate Goodness

Innate Goodness
- 18th century, John Jacques Rousseau
- Children are inherently good
- Parents’ role
  - Avoid corrupting child through ignorant or insensitive caregiving
- Parenting practices
  - Children permitted to grow naturally, w/ little parental monitoring or constraint
  - Advocated mother-child bonding

Audio:
This is also a period where Rousseau was a strong advocate of bonding between particularly mothers and children. You can see this stands in stark contrast to the lack of affection parents were supposed to show children during the Middle Ages.

Slide # 22

Slide Title: Enter the Developmental Psychologists

Enter the Developmental Psychologists
- 19th-20th centuries

Audio:
Now in the 19th and 20th centuries we began to see the first developmental psychologists or true developmental psychologists. Prior to this time ideas about and thinking about children were advocated primarily by philosophers.
Enter the Developmental Psychologists
- 19th-20th centuries
- Sigmund Freud, John Watson, and others advanced “modern” views about children

Audio:
During the 19th and 20th centuries we see some modern views about children being advocated by psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and John Watson. These are theorists that you’ll read more about later in the course.

Slide # 24

Slide Title: Enter the Developmental Psychologists

Enter the Developmental Psychologists
- 19th-20th centuries
- Sigmund Freud, John Watson, and others advanced “modern” views about children
  - Historical views apparent in modern developmental theories
- Beginning of systematic research on child development

Audio:
Interestingly though some via historical views or sort of remnants of these historical views are apparent in these more modern developmental theories. So Sigmund Freud introduced his psychoanalytic theories in the 1920s and 30s in which he argued that children are born with these basic aggressive and sexual drives. He argued that early family relationships, especially with mothers, were very important for channeling those basic drives into more socially acceptable behaviors. In Freud’s theory you can see traces of both the original sin view as well as the innate goodness view.

John Watson on the other hand, his behaviorism or learning theory is strongly rooted in John Locke’s view of tabula rasa. He also believed, like Locke, that parent’s responsibility is to mold and shape children’s behavior. He believed that the primary ways in which children learned is through observing other people, such as parents, model appropriate behaviors. So we can still see as I said these historical ideas about children and parents in our more modern developmental theories.

This modern period in the 19th and 20th centuries is also important because it marked the beginning of systematic research on child development and to a lesser degree on child socialization or parenting.

Slide # 25

Slide Title: Developmental Controversies

Developmental Controversies
• Some questions have plagued scientists, educators, and the general public, for centuries.

Audio:
Now as I said another goal or another purpose of this lecture is to talk about some developmental controversies or questions that we have related to the nature of children’s development.

Slide # 26

Slide Title: Nature vs. Nurture

Nature vs. Nurture
• Is development primarily influenced by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental factors (nurture)?

Audio:
Now the first of these controversies is what we refer to as the nature vs. nurture controversy and many of you have probably heard of this. The question here is development is individual development primarily influenced by biological inheritance, in other words nature, or is it influenced more by environmental factors, what we call nurture.

Slide # 27

Slide Title: Nature vs. Nurture

Nature vs. Nurture
• Is development primarily influenced by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental factors (nurture)?
  - Nature – individual’s genetic composition

Audio:
When we talk about nature most often we are referring to is the individual’s genetic composition. In other words the genetic material that they inherit from their parents. Strong advocates of the nature side of this controversy argue that genes determine the nature and course of development and that only extreme environmental conditions can override the influence of genes. So for example these people would argue that only in the cases such as severe child maltreatment or severe malnutrition, sort of environmental experiences, only in those extreme cases would environment override ones genetic composition.

Slide # 28

Slide Title: Nature vs. Nurture

Nature vs. Nurture
• Is development primarily influenced by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental
factors (nurture)?
- Nature – individual’s genetic composition
- Nurture – physical and social environment

Audio:
Now on the other side of this controversy are advocates of nurture. Now nurture refers to environmental experiences that can range from the physical environment of the womb, the prenatal physical environment, to characteristics of a child’s family, characteristics of their neighborhood or their school environment. So we need to even though in this course we focus primarily on the family environment we need to think of nurture as encompassing other environmental experiences as well. Theorists who argue the nurture side of this debate claim that environmental experiences determine the course of one’s development above and beyond your individual biological inheritance. So it is not necessarily the genes that you inherit but what you experience in your environment that determines who you end up being. Throughout history theorists have taken different views on this question. Today most developmentalists agree that both nature and nurture are important in determining a child’s personality. Nonetheless if you look carefully you can see more extreme positions advocated in contemporary society.

Slide # 29

Slide Title: Nature vs. Nurture

Nature vs. Nurture
- Is development primarily influenced by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental factors (nurture)?
  - Nature – individual’s genetic composition
  - Nurture – physical and social environment
- Ex: educational toys marketed for infants

Audio:
For example consider the huge market for educational toys for infants today. If you go to any child any toy store you can see shelves and shelves of toys marketed to infants and young children. For example the baby Mozart products you might be familiar with. Have you ever heard of the babbler? This is a product designed to introduce infants to foreign languages. Think for a moment about what assumption about nature versus nurture is implicit in this market of educational toys. I would argue that this market rests on the assumption that children’s development rests on the experiences that they have and that if we stimulate them, if we provide them with lots of stimulation through these educational toys, that we influence their development. So this would be sort of falling on the side of nurture or environmental experiences.

Slide # 30

Slide Title: Nature vs. Nurture
Nature vs. Nurture

- Is development primarily influenced by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental factors (nurture)?
  - Nature – individual’s genetic composition
  - Nurture – physical and social environment
- Ex: educational toys marketed for infants
- Ex: Harris’ *The Nurture Assumption*

Audio:
Now on the other side of the coin we can see an example of an extreme advocate of nature or the importance of biological inheritance. A developmental psychologist named Judith Rich Harris published a book a few years ago called *The Nurture Assumption*. And you can read about Harris’ views in chapter one of your text book. In short Harris argues that parents have little to no influence on children’s developing personalities beyond passing along your genes to children. In other words she believes that how parents behave with children, how they parent children, exert no influence or plays no role in that child’s development. So as you can see this is an example of an extreme stance favoring the nature side of this controversy.

I’d like you to throughout the course of the semester to pay attention to and be aware of or look for examples of a nature and nurture position in your in the popular press in reading newspaper articles, magazine articles, television shows. If you start to look carefully you can see examples of people sort of leaning to one side or the other.

Slide # 31

**Slide Title:** Early vs. Later Experience

Early vs. Later Experience

- Are early experiences (especially in infancy) or later experiences more important in determining developmental outcomes?

Audio:
Another important developmental issue focuses on the degree to which early experiences, especially those in infancy, or later experiences are the key determinants of a child’s development. Another way of thinking about this controversy is to consider this question: Can a child who experiences negative, stressful circumstances in infancy or early childhood overcome these experiences if she has positive experiences later on in her life? In Chapter 2 of your textbook, Brooks addresses this early versus later experiences question in detail.

Slide # 32

**Slide Title:** Early vs. Later Experience

Early vs. Later Experience
- Are early experiences (especially in infancy) or later experiences more important in determining developmental outcomes?
- Ex: attachment theorists

**Audio:**
Similar to the nature versus nurture controversy past and present theorists take different positions on this issue. Attachment theorists, and you’ll learn about attachment theory in the next unit, attachment theorists argue that children who don’t receive warm, nurturing caregiving in the first year or so of life will suffer permanent negative consequences. So this is an example of a theory that leans towards the early experiences side of the coin.

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### Slide # 33

**Slide Title:** Early vs. Later Experience

**Early vs. Later Experience**
- Are early experiences (especially in infancy) or later experiences more important in determining developmental outcomes?
- Ex: attachment theorists
- Ex: lifespan developmental theorists

**Audio:**
On the other hand lifespan developmental theorists believe that too little attention has been paid to the impact of later life experiences. They don’t necessarily deny the importance of early experiences as they claim that early and later experiences are equally important for a child’s development. So what position do you think the average member of our society today holds on this issue? Can you think of examples of emphasis on the importance of early experiences or later experiences?

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### Slide # 34

**Slide Title:** Contemporary Views

**Contemporary Views**
- What is our current view of children?

**Audio:**
Throughout the semester as I just said for the nature versus nurture controversy I’d like you to be on the lookout for examples of our contemporary views of children. What do you think characterizes or how can you characterize our current beliefs or ideas about the nature of children and the nature of parent’s role?
Contemporary Views
- What is our current view of children?
- Of parents’ role?

Audio:
What roles and responsibilities do we think parents have and how are those ideas or views reflected in the kinds of parenting behaviors that are commonplace in today’s society? Now to summarize this lecture here are some take-home messages. First of all ideas about children’s nature and the role of parents have changed throughout history. And as I just said these ideas about children and parents are reflected in the kinds of parenting strategies or behaviors that were commonplace in different historical periods. And secondly questions about genetic versus environmental influences and the importance of early versus later experiences continue to be debated in contemporary discourse and I’d like you to pay attention for and be on the lookout for examples of differing positions on these developmental controversies throughout the semester.