UNDERSTANDING PARENTS AND CHILD-REARING

1 INTRODUCTION

From Beliefs to Scientific Evidence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 To describe how views about children and childhood have changed over time.

1.2 To recognize the many competing authorities and sources that influenced how children are viewed and reared.

1.3 To identify current influences on views about parents and child-rearing.

1.4 To appreciate the origins and role of parenting research.

PARENTING BELIEFS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Take a moment to look around you. Depending on where you are reading this book right now, you may see various kinds of people. Young, old, immigrant, native. Affluent, poor, introverted, outgoing. Multiple skin tones and a myriad of accents. But there is one thing we all share in common. Each one of us has been a child. We are all born into the world dependent on adults and needy for our survival yet full of potential. And for most of us, the primary source of learning—about the world, how to think and feel, and how to behave—was our parents.

It's no wonder then, that for millennia, people have asked important questions about parenting. How *do* parents affect children's development? Are parents the single most important influence on children's development? Do mothers and fathers make unique contributions to their children's development, or are their roles interchangeable? How does parental behavior change when their children grow? What role did parents play in rearing a child who became a pioneer of nonviolent civil disobedience (Mahatma Gandhi, 1869–1948) in contrast to that of another child (Adolf Hitler, 1889–1945), who became the architect of the genocide of six million Jews? More currently, consider the 44th president of the United States, Barack Obama. Born in 1961, he was reared by a single mother and his grandparents. Or Sonia Sotomayor, the third woman to be a Supreme Court Justice. She was raised by her immigrant mother after her alcoholic father died when she was nine. How did their unique experiences shape them? To what extent are children affected by their genes? What about the ways parents rear their children? In what ways do child-rearing practices affect children's personality, eating habits, aggression, social competence, intelligence, athleticism, occupations, and a variety of other potential outcomes?

The role that parents play in child development is commonly referred to as **socialization**. The meaning of the word has evolved over the past 100 years and is now defined as "how new members of a group are assisted by more experienced group members to internalize, and thereby act in accord with, the values, attitudes, **beliefs**, and actions of that group" (Grusec & O'Neill, 2018, p. 2103). As we will see, the answer to the question of *how* parents socialize their children is not a simple one. But our scientific understanding of the question has grown dramatically since the 1960s.

Researchers have been studying parents and socialization for a long time. However, early efforts to study parents, begun in the 1920s and 1930s, were both limited and one dimensional, as we will see. Researchers tended to focus on parental love or **discipline** and how that related to a child's behavior. But it is increasingly apparent that parents socialize their children in multiple domains, including gender development, **emotion regulation**, school success, and perhaps racial relations and religious beliefs. Furthermore, the role of parents is not limited to socialization. Rather, as Robert Bradley (2007) identified, parents have many other important child-rearing functions besides providing love and discipline. These include ensuring safety, structuring the child's environment and day, stimulating and instructing the child, and providing social connections (see Table 1.1).

Parenting by Our Ancients

Parenting practices and beliefs have changed over time and across cultures. Homo sapiens lived as hunter/gatherer societies for some 200,000 years. Our ancestors lived in nomadic groups as they hunted animals and foraged for food. Inferences about how our distant

TABLE 1.1 ■ Six Fundamental Tasks of Parenting	
Ensuring Safety and Sustenance	**Stimulating and Instructing**
● Providing food, housing, clothing ● Accessing health care ● Protecting	● Making available toys and learning materials ● Coaching ● Encouraging achievement
Giving Socioemotional Support	**Monitoring and Surveillance**
● Loving ● Disciplining ● Modeling	● Watching ● Collecting information ● Communicating with the child
Structuring	**Providing Social Connectedness**
● Structuring the environment ● Organizing the child's day ● Providing routines	● Connecting with family and relatives ● Forming peer relationships ● Joining institutions/organizations (e.g., religious, sports)

Source: Adapted from Bradley, 2007.

ancestors reared their children comes from observations of contemporary hunter/gatherer societies. Two examples of remaining hunter/gatherer societies are the Mbuti in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Batek tribe in Malaysia (Endicott & Endicott, 2014; Narváez et al., 2013).

Families in these societies engaged in egalitarian relationships; there was no hierarchical authority in the home or community (Narváez et al., 2013). Individualism was valued and children were considered as separate human beings, rather than a possession of their parents. Infants experienced constant physical contact. The hunter/gatherer model of child-rearing consisted of the mother playing the primary role, a long duration of breastfeeding (typically three or four years), prolonged physical contact with the mother, acceptance of the child's efforts at autonomy, and very little or no physical punishment (Roman, 2023). In these and other hunter/gatherer societies children were viewed as reincarnations of their ancestors or, in some cases, gods. Perhaps for that reason, coercing children to behave in particular ways was uncommon. Fathers played an active role in child-rearing. Child independence–training began early when the child turned 2 or 3 years old; once reaching these ages, mothers become less responsive and children were encouraged to spend time playing with their peers.

When societies began to shift to an agrarian-based culture in the past 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, adults' daily focus centered on the cultivation of food and accumulating resources. Consequently, hierarchical social structures emerged as well as changes in how parents reared their children. Infants spent less time with their mothers, less skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding ended sooner, and children experienced less time in free play. Changes also occurred in new expectations about child obedience and in beginning to use coercive practices, such as spanking and hitting, to control children (Durrant, 2020; Narváez et al., 2013; Roman, 2023).

The ancient Roman doctrine of *patria potestas*, "the power of the father," established in late antiquity perhaps around 400 BCE (Vuolanto, 2018) epitomizes this shift in views and practices about control in the family (Vial-Dumas, 2014). This doctrine gave absolute authority to the father—or the grandfather—living in the household. Fathers had the right to punish their children, including in the cases deemed most severe violations, putting a child to death. This doctrine solidified a child-rearing orientation that a hierarchical power structure, and particularly a patriarchal form, would be the dominant social order. This orientation resulted in the view that children were possessions, children must be obedient to higher authority, and the father was the head of the household.

Fascinating histories of family life in the ancient Egyptian family (Marshall, 2021), ancient Greece and Rome (Laurence & Stromberg, 2012), and Medieval England (Müller, 2019) highlight the fact that perceptions and treatment of children has changed dramatically across time. In his book, *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), French historian Philippe Ariès recognized this transformation. He contended that childhood, as we think today of that developmental stage, did not exist in the Middle Ages (476–1453 CE). During that period, children beginning at about seven years of age were considered to be small adults—physically smaller but essentially no different from adults. Children did not enjoy a special

PHOTO 1.1A Portrait of Margaret Theresa of Spain (1651–1673) by Diego Velazquez, 1653.

Source: Granger

status, adults did not consider childhood to be a unique developmental period, and children were not protected from abuse. Ariès believed that this **adult-centered** view of children only began to change in the late 16th century, when a new **child-centered** approach in the upper classes recognized childhood as a distinct time of life and a time when it was important to begin education.

Ariès based his thesis, to a large extent, on inferences derived from examining children's portraits and other paintings depicting children. Paintings of young children portrayed them as adult-like, as if they were simply miniaturized adults. Their expressions and portrayed activities did not suggest that adults treated that period of life as a special and unique time. For example, take a look at the childhood portrait of Margaret Theresa of Spain, painted around 1653. She is portrayed as amazingly regal for a young toddler. In contrast, the painting by Mary Cassatt 231 years later depicts a child of approximately the same age but engaged in behavior that looks much more characteristic of a young child—playing at the beach (see Photos 1.1a and 1.1b).

Historians have carefully scrutinized Ariès's thesis and have refuted his reliance on visual evidence from artists (Cunningham et al., 2014; Heywood, 2018). Thus, Ariès's thesis was not entirely accurate. Nevertheless, the central point—that the way we perceive children is a product of the times—is valid. Phrased differently, beliefs about children and parents are **social constructions**.

There have also been dramatic historical shifts in parents' views about children. In antiquity, children were considered the property of parents; parents had the right to do whatever they wanted with their offspring, even to kill them. Typically, it meant putting the child to work as soon as possible in an effort to help the family survive, whether it was working in the garden or the fields, hunting food, or helping out in the home. Hendrick (2002) presents an interesting conceptualization of various *themes* of childhood throughout British history, beginning with the *natural child* in the late 17th century to the *wage-earner child* during the Industrial Revolution and on to the *psychological child* of the early 20th century (see Table 1.2). Gradually,

TABLE 1.2 ■ Changing Conceptualization of Children in Great Britain	
18th-Century Views	Natural Child (Rousseau's Emile)
	Romantic Child (in literature, poetry)
	Evangelical Child (religious views)
	Wage-Earner Child (child labor)
19th-Century Views	Delinquent Child (unsocialized, misbehaving)
	Schooled Child (compulsory schooling)
	Child-Study Child (beginning of research)
	Children of the Nation (child reforms)
20th-Century Views	Psychological Child (in the family)

Source: Adapted from Hendrick, 2002.

PHOTO 1.1B Children playing on the beach by Mary Cassatt, 1884.

Source: Granger

parents began to perceive children as individuals with unique psychological needs. Not until the late 19th century (the Industrial Revolution) did the idea of a dedicated time period of childhood spread into the lower and middle classes.

AUTHORITIES' PARENTING BELIEFS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

In contrast to Ariès's approach of making inferences from art, a more direct way to examine how children and parents were thought about throughout history is by reading the published views about children. The writings of influential thinkers or authorities reveal changing views to such questions: How do parents influence their children? Is the nature of children basically good or evil? What role does society play? The best known types of individuals in influencing Western conceptions about socialization have been

religious leaders, philosophers, physicians (often pediatricians), and, most recently, psychologists. Below are some prominent examples from these four professions, with examples drawn primarily from Western **culture**.

Religious Leaders

In sacred writings, one can find many examples of views about children and parents. However, the descriptions are often limited to such topics as the significance of love and discipline, what is proper behavior, and the importance of children's learning of morality—a sense of right and wrong. All three of the world's great theistic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) share an emphasis on the family and encourage parents to devote considerable time and attention to their children. In Judaism (the Torah) and Christianity (the Old Testament), one of the Ten Commandments ("Honor thy father and thy mother," Exodus 20:12) as well as several proverbs and other scriptures give prescriptions as to how parents should treat their children, how children should behave, and the virtues that children should develop (e.g., being honest, having humility, caring for others, and respecting parents as well as elders).

Parents are also important in Islamic views of development. Topics related to the family concern about one-third of the injunctions in the Qur'an (Frosh, 2004). Like other religions, Islam promotes character development and such values such as patience, honesty, forgiveness, and respect for parents (Husain, 2006). But it differs by emphasizing the importance of family honor. Maintaining family *izzat* (pride, honor, self-respect) is an important value and a determinant of behavior in Islamic families (Stewart et al., 1999). The prominence of that value explains incidents of *honor killing*—when Muslim family members murder a female relative if she is suspected of bringing dishonor on the family.

In China, Confucius (circa 551–479 BCE), the father of Confucianism, also emphasized filial piety ("Parents are always right") as well as respect for elders, group identification, harmony, self-discipline, achievement, and **interdependence** (Lin & Fu, 1990). Interdependence refers to the view that family members are mutually reliant upon each other. Although it is debated whether Confucius can be considered a religious leader, his values strongly influenced the culture and how children are reared in China.

Given the fundamental role that religion plays in the lives of many people, it is not surprising that child-rearing is often a topic of religious writers. Many Christian leaders wrote about parents' influence in their children's development. One of the first and most influential was the theologian known as St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE). He developed the religious doctrine that children were tainted by **original sin**: "No man is clean of sin, not even the infant who has lived but a day upon earth" (Augustine, 397/1960, p. 49). This doctrine refers to how Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden through an act of free will (eating the forbidden fruit). Consequently, their nature became corrupt. Because all people are direct descendants of Adam and Eve, St. Augustine reasoned, everyone has inherited their sinful and guilty state. Therefore, infants are born willful and even evil. A German preacher from the 1520s went so far as to warn parishioners that infants' hearts

craved "adultery, fornication, impure desires, lewdness, idol worship, belief in magic, hostility, quarrelling, passion, anger, strife, dissension, factiousness, hatred, murder, drunkenness, gluttony" (Heywood, 2018, p. 50).

The Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther and others prompted changes in parenting. Luther (1483–1546 CE), adopting a **patriarchal** view of families, considered fathers to be the authority and moral guide. Consequently, it was the father's duty to teach religion and lead the family in prayer. He also believed that fathers should be involved in parenting. He wrote that "when a father washes diapers and performs some other menial task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool, . . . God with all his angels and creatures is smiling" (Gillis, 1996, p. 186). However, Luther was subjected to harsh punishment from his parents and teachers. Not surprisingly, he did not adopt that form of discipline with his children (Vieth, 2017).

John Calvin (1509–1564 CE; see Photo 1.2), the influential French Protestant religious reformer, promoted the idea that children are, by nature, sinful, and parents had an important role in correcting this problem. Calvin is well known for his doctrine of *total depravity*, the concept that all humans are born into sin and that human nature (without God) is destined for depravity. In his most significant work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536/1960), Calvin wrote:

> Even infants bear their condemnation with them from their mother's womb; for though they have not yet brought forth the fruits of their own iniquity [sinfulness], they have the seed enclosed within themselves. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin thus it cannot but be hateful and abominable to God. (p. 1311)

Calvin, a stepfather of two children, advocated that parents must educate and discipline their children in order to help save them from their sinful ways. Parents should not be indulgent. In fact, he argued that children need frequent *admonitions* (gentle or friendly corrections). However, those reprimands need to be administered in a kind way so that children will cheerfully obey.

Calvin influenced the thinking of many Protestant ministers, including John Robinson (1575–1625), a Puritan and spiritual leader of the Plymouth pilgrims. Robinson voiced concern about saving the child's soul:

> And surely there is in all children, though not alike, a stubbornness, and stoutness of minds arising from natural pride, which must in the first place, be broken and beaten down. . . . This fruit of natural corruption and root of actual rebellion both against God and man must be destroyed and in no manner or way nourished. (Greven, 1973, p. 13)

Robinson's child-rearing advice consisted mostly of using harsh punishment. Fathers should be the disciplinarians. Because of their greater wisdom, authority, and strength, they were in a position to correct "the fruits of their mother's indulgence" (Cable, 1972, p. 4). Many Puritan ministers accepted the belief that harsh punishment was necessary for educating children in order to restrain children's innate evilness, in order that the children would grow up to become faithful adults.

During the next century, John Wesley (1703–1791), an Englishman and founder of the Methodist Church, also promoted parental discipline as essential for children's development. He viewed disobedience to parents as synonymous with moral disorder and warned of the dangers of losing control of a child. He advocated frequent use of corporal (also called *physical*) punishment:

A wise parent . . . should begin to break their [the child's] will the first moment it appears. In the whole of Christian education, there is nothing more important than this. The will of the parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God.

PHOTO 1.2 John Calvin argued that infants are sinful.

Source: iStockphoto.com/Nastasic

Therefore, studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to his will, when they are men. (Greven, 1973, pp. 59–60)

Wesley's views likely come directly from his mother, Susannah. She bore 19 children (though only nine survived past the age of two years) and developed a detailed child-rearing philosophy. In a letter to her son, written in 1732, she described her child-rearing philosophy in the form of rules. Those rules are centered on four principles: establishing habits, developing morals, disciplining, and encouraging religious beliefs. Many of her rules are listed in Box 1.1.

CULTURE BOX 1.1: OUTDATED OR ENDURING? SUSANNAH WESLEY'S RULES FOR CHILD-REARING (FROM 1732)

On Daily Routines:
- Establish routines right from birth.
- For older children, do not allow snacking between meals.
- Children are to be in bed by 8 P.M.
- Girls should be taught to read before they are taught to do housework.

On Morality:

- Teach children about individual property rights, even in smallest matters.
- Commend and reward obedient behavior.
- Acts intended to please the parent, even if poorly performed, should be accepted kindly.
- Do not beat children who confess to misbehavior.

On Punishment:
- Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
- Never punish a child twice for the same misbehavior.
- Teach children to fear the rod by 12 months of age and to cry softly.

On Religion and Sin:
- Teach children to pray as soon as they can speak.
- Conquer a child's will; self-will is the root of all sin and misery.

Source: Adapted from Clarke, E. (1886). *Susanna Wesley.* Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers. Reprinted in P. J. Greven Jr. (1973). *Child-rearing concepts, 1628–1861: Historical sources*. Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.

Historians of the colonial and postcolonial period now believe that the authoritarian child-rearing practices advocated by the Reverends Robinson, Wesley, and others were limited to certain segments of the Puritan population and not representative of child-rearing practices in colonial America (Greven, 1977). In fact, Puritan child-rearing manuals discouraged spanking, a topic that we will return to in this book. Harsh punishments, whippings, and beatings were to be used only as a last resort—to combat the cardinal sins of stubbornness and disobedience. Instead, the use of **shaming** (such as public displays of the offending person) was considered a more effective technique for developing a strong sense of right and wrong. Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1850) well-known novel about the "scarlet letter" is an example of public shaming. Women who were deemed to be adulterers in the Puritan colonies had to wear the letter "A" as a punishment.

Over time, corporal punishment fell out of favor among many of the clergy. Some preachers even decried punishing children. Horace Bushnell (1802–1876), a Congregationalist minister in Connecticut, wrote a book called *Christian Nurture* (1908/2000). He proposed that infants were not born depraved but rather were "formless lumps." The parental role, he believed, should be one of providing good guidance in order to let children thrive. Today, vestiges of the harsh punishment orientation to socialization can be found among some conservative Christian writers (e.g., Rosemond, 2007) who continue to advocate hitting children to make them subservient. However, many other Christians do not subscribe to such views. For example, the United Methodist Church, in contrast to the beliefs of its founder, passed two resolutions in 2004 and reaffirmed them in 2012, calling for an end to corporal punishment of children both in the schools and in the home. The Presbyterian Church USA also passed, in 2012, a resolution against the use of corporal punishment. See Table 1.3 for a timeline of some of the changes regarding religious beliefs related to child discipline.

Philosophers

Philosophers have long pondered the nature of children, the influence of parents, and the impact of society on development. One recurring theme in philosophy has been the lifelong

TABLE 1.3 ■	A Timeline of the Views of Clergy and Churches About Children and Punishment		
354–430	St. Augustine	North Africa	Original Sin
1483–1546	Martin Luther	Germany	Patriarchy Emphasis
1509–1564	John Calvin	France	Total Depravity
1575–1625	John Robinson	England	Harsh Corporal Punishment
1703–1791	John Wesley	England	Frequent Corporal Punishment
1802–1876	Horace Bushnell	United States	Parental Guidance
2004	United Methodist Church passed a resolution to end corporal punishment		
2012	Presbyterian Church USA passed a resolution to end corporal punishment		

significance of the early years of life. This idea is captured in the Chinese proverb, "As the twig is bent, the tree inclines." The importance of childhood is also captured in a phrase from Virgil (40 BCE): "The child is the father of the man." The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) advanced the idea that children were blank tablets, waiting to be written on by parents and life experiences. Thus, he emphasized the importance of the environment in shaping children. He also recognized the unique role that fathers play in their sons' development (French, 2002). Aristotle espoused a patriarchal society, where a women's primary role was to produce male heirs and supervise households.

John Locke, the English physician and philosopher (1632–1704; see Photo 1.3), had a revolutionary and enduring impact on child-rearing practices. The son of Puritan parents, Locke wrote a child-rearing manual titled *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693/1996). Its radical view of child-rearing became the dominant guide to raising children in Western Europe and America during the first half of the 1700s. Besides advocating a **blank slate** position and thereby rejecting the notion of children as innately sinful, Locke proposed a novel view of a child's development. He appreciated the influence of the environment, recognized the need for early stimulation, and promoted parental encouragement of mature behavior: "The sooner you treat him as a man, the sooner he will begin to be one" (p. 72). Locke's view that children are rational beings meant that parents should reason with children rather than punish or reward them.

> For I am very apt to think, that great severity of punishment does but very little good, nay, great harm in education [socialization]; and I believe it will be found that *ceteris paribus* [other things being equal] those children who have been most chastised seldom make the best men. (p. 32)

He stressed the importance of the first few years of life, and his work prompted parents in Europe and America to be more loving, nurturing, and egalitarian (Clarke-Stewart, 1998). In

many ways, Locke's child-rearing philosophy foreshadowed contemporary child-rearing views. However, not all of his recommendations are currently regarded as sensible. Some of Locke's more unusual child-rearing proposals can be found in Box 1.2.

Another influential philosopher was Swiss-born Frenchman Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778; see Photo 1.4). In his book, *Emile* (1762/1956), Rousseau described methods for raising a child free from the corrupting influences of society. Rousseau, like Locke, rejected the idea of original sin in children: "Let us lay it down an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart, the how and why of the entrance of every vice can be traced" (p. 56). Children are born innocent and amoral; it is society that corrupts them. Rousseau wrote, "All things are good as they come out of the hands of the creator, but everything degenerates in the hands of man." In contrast to Locke, Rousseau believed that children were not rational—at least, not until age 12. "If children understood reason, they would not need education [to be raised]. . . . Nature would have them [wants them to be] children before they are men" (1911, pp. 53–54). Consequently, punishment for misbehavior made little sense to him: "Before the age of reason we do good or ill without knowing it, and there is no morality in our actions" (p. 34).

CULTURE BOX 1.2: CHILD-REARING PRACTICES ADVOCATED BY JOHN LOCKE NOW VIEWED AS ABUSIVE OR UNUSUAL

John Locke promoted a warmer, more sympathetic orientation toward children than most of his predecessors. However, he also proposed certain practices that are now regarded as unorthodox or even bizarre. Many pages of his manual are devoted to the virtues of "**hardening**" infants as a way of trying to defend against infant mortality. His suggestions included immersing infants in cold baths, building endurance and toughness by dressing them in light clothing and thin shoes in cold weather, administering low levels of pain as a way of firming up their minds, and avoiding certain fruits (peaches, melons, grapes) because of their "unwholesome" juices. Although vegans would not find this suggestion strange, Locke recommended a vegetarian diet for young children—at least, during the first three years of life.

Source: Adapted from Locke, 1693/1996.

The parental role, according to Rousseau, is not to discipline, educate, or train but rather to facilitate "natural development" or biologically determined maturation. Rousseau believed that children have positive inclinations and needed little help from their parents to develop. He encouraged mothers to breastfeed their babies themselves (rather than send infants off to wet nurses), to avoid all use of physical punishment, and to bring children up as vegetarians (something
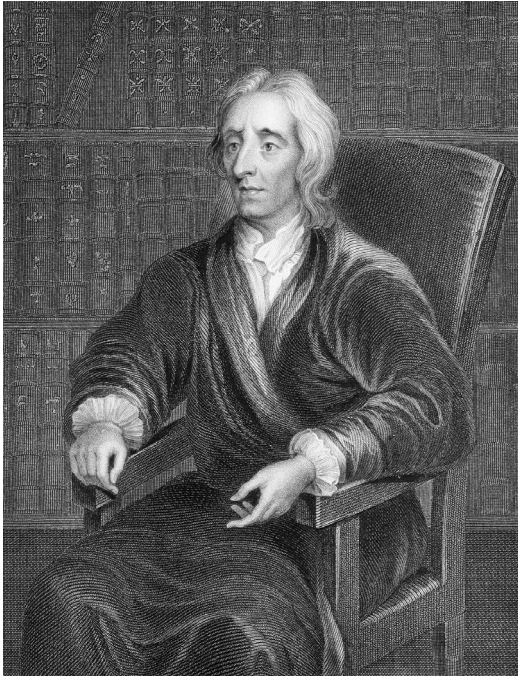
PHOTO 1.3 John Locke recognized the role of the environment in shaping how children turn out.

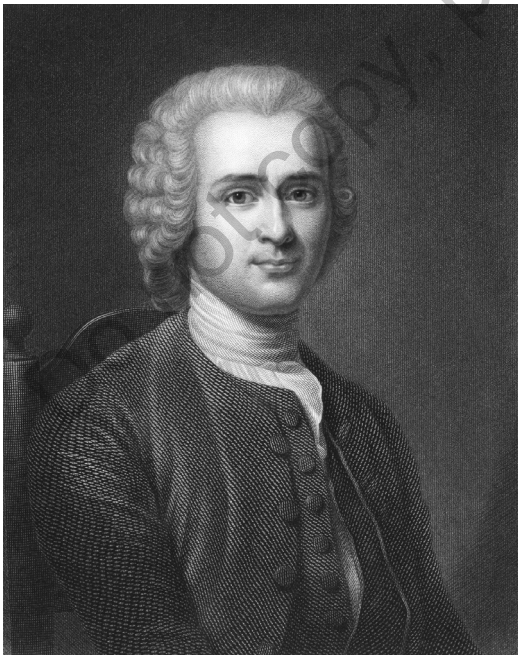*Source:* iStockphoto.com/GeorgiosArt

PHOTO 1.4 Rousseau believed that society corrupts the innocent nature of children.

Source: iStockphoto.com/GeorgiosArt

Locke also advocated). *Emile* ends with the description of the boy as a grown man: someone appropriately socialized who cares for people in need and has a capacity for loving others. As enlightened as Rousseau was by today's standards, he did not advocate bringing up girls the same way as boys. Girls required a specialized education in order to prepare them for motherhood.

Physicians

Physicians represent a third group of individuals who provided a strong dose of child-rearing beliefs to society, beginning with the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates (460–370 BCE). Many of their directives regarding child health or child-rearing were based on unsubstantiated personal ideas rather than medical knowledge. Given that a central goal of the early physicians was to combat the high rate of infant illnesses and deaths—the causes of which were largely mysterious at the time—much of their advice concerned infant feeding and nutrition (Ruhrah, 1925; Wickes, 1953). Box 1.3 contains some of the bizarre advice from premodern physicians.

In the United States, two American physicians stand out as particularly influential on child-rearing practices. The first one was Dr. Luther Emmett Holt (1855–1924; see Photo 1.5), who first published *The Care and Feeding of Children* in 1894. It, along with its 15 revisions, became the leading book on child care in the United States for almost 50 years (and was translated into Spanish, Russian, and Chinese). The book contains information about

daily care of infants, milestones of child development, feeding recommendations, and remedies for common ailments or behaviors (e.g., dealing with "the bad habits of [thumb-]sucking, nail-biting, dirt-eating, bed-wetting, and masturbation" Holt, 1929, p. 230). Many of Holt's recommendations sound reasonable by today's standards. For example, in the 14th edition (1929) of his book, he advocated breastfeeding with the rationale that there was "no perfect substitute" and justified it as resulting in lower rates of infant mortality, an observation repeatedly confirmed by scientific studies (Kozuki et al., 2013). Nevertheless, he recognized that some mothers would not or could not breastfeed their infants and therefore included detailed information about alternative feeding methods. He created highly detailed recommendations for when and how much formula should be fed to infants that gave the appearance of being scientific.

CULTURE BOX 1.3: ANTIQUATED PEDIATRIC TREATMENTS

For good health: Give infants warm baths and diluted wine (Hippocrates, 460–370 BCE).

To treat excessive hair: Rub the body with powder of burned dry figs (Aetius, 527–565 CE).

To soothe teething: Smear the infant's gums with hare's brains (Oribasius, 325–403 CE).

For crying infants: Give them a drink of "quietness": boiled-down extract of black poppies or poppy seeds (otherwise known as opium; 1520 until 20th century).

To cure bedwetting: Scatter dried and powdered rooster's comb over child's bed without his knowledge (Rhazes, ca. 900 CE).

Sources: Adapted from Beekman, 1977; Colon, 1999.

Dr. Holt also advocated some practices that we now consider medically and developmentally unsound or even outlandish. For example, he recommended that parents avoid kissing infants because "tuberculosis, diphtheria, syphilis, and many other grave diseases may be communicated in this way" (Holt, 1929, p. 205). Holt also warned against soothing crying babies or playing with infants, which could cause "nervousness" in children:

> Babies under six months should never be played with; and the less of it [play] at any age the better for the infant. . . . They are made more nervous and irritable, sleep badly, and suffer from indigestion and cease to gain in weight. (p. 201)

Dr. Holt considered thumb-sucking to be another serious problem. His solution: tying an infant's arms to the sides of the crib at night. Other techniques tried in the early 1900s in an effort to control thumb-sucking included strapping large mittens on infants' hands or putting foul-tasting ointments on their thumbs. The influence of physicians' beliefs on popular parenting culture was captured by an early 20th-century postcard reproduced in Photo 1.6. This
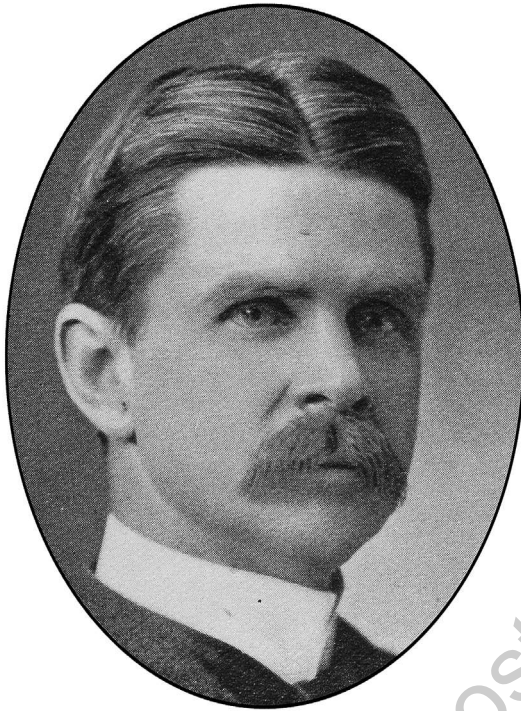
PHOTO 1.5 The first prominent American pediatrician, Dr. Luther Emmett Holt, was the author of a popular child care book.

Source: iStockphoto.com/ilbusca

is a whimsical depiction of children, because no one rides cows nor drinks from udders with long straws. The absurdity is presumably intended to highlight the message that parents should not feed cow's milk to infants.

One child raised strictly according to Dr. Holt's precepts grew up to become an even more influential physician. After working for several years as a pediatrician, Dr. Benjamin Spock (Photo 1.7) recognized the need for a new and radically different guide to child care. In 1945, he wrote *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care.* The book rapidly became a best seller, along with the shorter *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946). These books corrected some of Holt's peculiar recommendations and encouraged parents to enjoy their children. Parents were instructed to trust themselves in deciding how to raise their baby. His message to mothers was that "you know more than you think you do" (1946, p. 3). Dr. Spock advocated less emphasis upon strict regularity of feeding and sleeping schedules for infants and toddlers, encouraging parents to treat their children as individuals. Some of his advice changed over time. For example, he initially recommended circumcision for male babies as well as occasional use of physical punishment. Both recommendations subsequently changed.

Dr. Spock's book received the distinction of being the most widely read and influential child care manual ever published, available in 42 languages and having sold more than 50 million copies. In fact, *Baby and Child Care* was the second-best-selling book, after the Bible, and in fact has often been called "the Bible of child rearing." In addition to *Baby and Child Care*, Spock authored multiple books on child-rearing. In subsequent books, he addressed feeding issues, mothering, caring for children with disabilities, and dealing with adolescents. Even after Dr. Spock's death in 1998, the book continued to be published with the help of the latest coauthor and is still in print (Spock & Needlman, 2012). See Table 1.4 for a closer look at the contributions of philosophers and physicians.

TABLE 1.4 ■	Timeline of Philosophers and Physicians and Their Key Contribution Regarding Children	
460–370 BCE	Hippocrates	Specific prescriptions for child treatment
384–322 BCE	Aristotle	Children are blank tablets
40 BCE	Virgil	Child is father to the man
1632–1704	John Locke	Importance of environmental influences
1717–1778	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	Children are arational
1855–1924	Luther Emmett Holt	*Care and Feeding of Children* (1894)
1903–1998	Benjamin Spock	*Baby and Child Care* (1946)
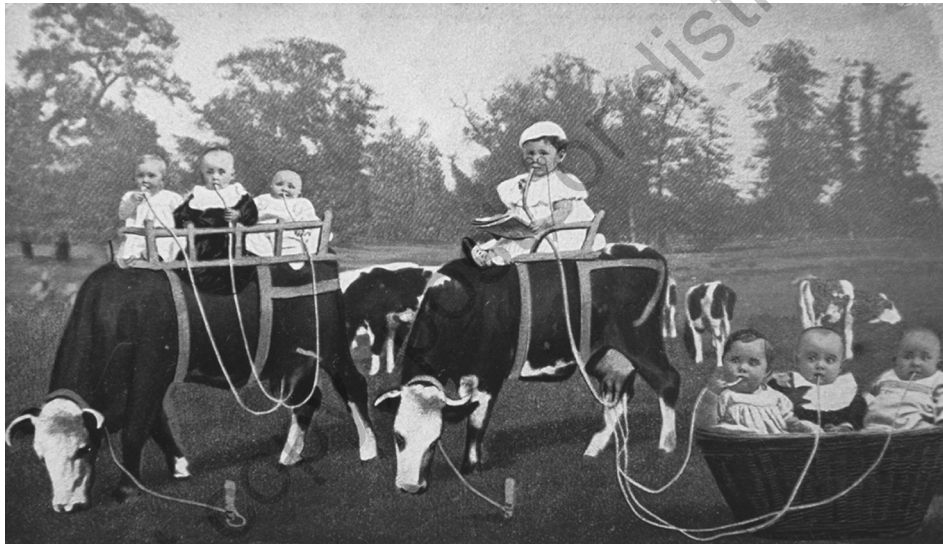
PHOTO 1.6 This postcard from the early 20th century was intended to warn the public of the dangers of cow's milk for babies.

Psychologists

Besides pediatricians, many types of professionals have contributed to the understanding of parenting. For example, since the late 1800s, family life educators under various disciplines (e.g., home economics, parent education, human ecology, family studies, family science) have focused on understanding the welfare of parents and children as well as the importance of strengthening families. European-born psychiatrists and psychologists Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Alfred Adler (1870–1937), Jean Piaget (1896–1980), and Erik Erikson (1902–1994) each theorized about children's development and, to varying degrees, the vital role played by parents. Both Freud and Adler were trained as physicians (Freud in psychiatry, Adler in ophthalmology) but both were seminal thinkers in the just-emerging field of psychology.

PHOTO 1.7 Dr. Benjamin Spock.

Source: Hulton Archive / Stringer/via Getty Images

Two early American psychologists who played important roles in developing research in the area of parenting were G. Stanley Hall and John B. Watson. Hall (1844–1924) was a pioneer in American psychology and is considered one of its fathers. At Harvard in 1878, he received the first PhD in psychology conferred in the United States. He established the earliest working psychology laboratory in the country, founded several journals, and became president of Clark University in Massachusetts, where he brought Sigmund Freud for a famous visit in 1909 (see Photo 1.8). Hall established a program of research on children, parents, and adolescents and pioneered the use of questionnaires in research. Although he is not remembered for his intellectual contributions, he was an influential figure in initiating research into children's development. With regard to child-rearing, Hall favored physical punishment: "We need less sentimentality and more spanking" (Cable, 1972, p. 172).

Another early American psychologist who played a more influential role than Hall on how we think about parenting was John B. Watson (1878–1958). Watson, known as the *father of behaviorism* for advocating the study of behavior, espoused an extreme environmentalist perspective in his writings about parents. According to Watson, nurture (i.e., the environment) far outweighed the role of nature (i.e., a child's genotype) in determining how a child turned out. He gained fame by his learning studies of "Little Albert," a nine-month-old infant (Watson & Rayner, 1920). By scaring Albert with the sound of a gong when a white rat was brought into view, Watson taught Albert to be afraid of the sight of a white rat. This was the first study to use **classical conditioning** on an infant. This form of learning was made famous by Soviet psychologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936). Little Albert was exposed to a white rat (originally a neutral stimulus). But by pairing the sighting of the rat with an unconditioned stimulus (the distress caused by the loud sound of a gong), the rat became a conditioned stimulus and elicited a strong negative emotional response whenever it appeared.
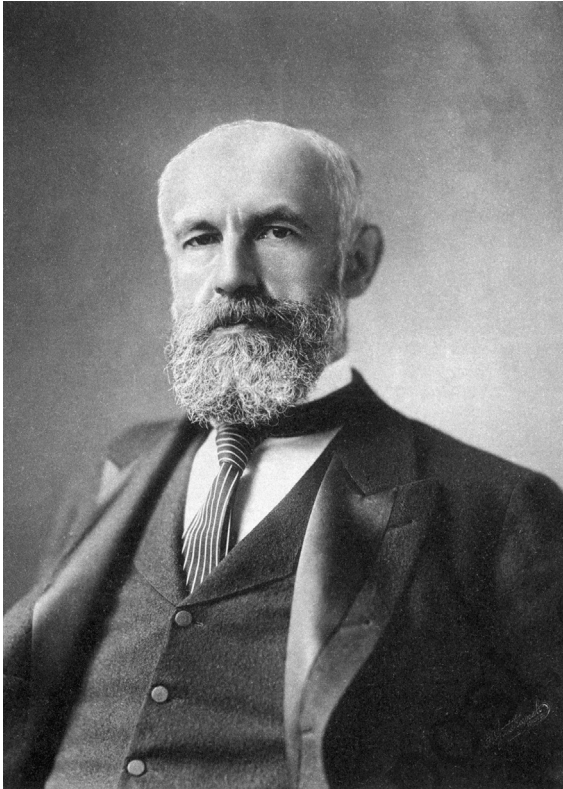
PHOTO 1.8 Portrait of G.S. Hall.

Source: Bettmann/Contributor/via Getty Images

The experiment was flawed in various ways (both ethically and methodologically), and evidence now indicates that Albert had some neurological impairments (Fridlund et al., 2012). Nevertheless, based on that work, Watson developed a theory of child-rearing. His book *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928) provided a psychological companion to Holt's manual. Watson believed that classical conditioning (operant conditioning had not yet been developed) could account for how children learned, and he ignored the role of genetic inheritance. See Table 1.5 for a look at how various psychologists contributed to beliefs about children.

Watson (1928) subscribed to some of Dr. Holt's views (e.g., not to kiss children) but developed his own views based on his theoretical orientation. For example, in contrast to Hall, Watson did not endorse the use of punishments at all. He wrote: "Punishment is a word which ought never to have crept into our language" (p. 111). He thought spanking was misguided for three reasons: It occurred well after the misbehavior, so it was not **contingent**; it served as an outlet for parental aggression; and it was unlikely to be used "scientifically" and thus appropriately. His parenting views will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

OTHER SOURCES OF PARENTING BELIEFS

Social and Political Forces

Writings by prominent religious leaders, philosophers, physicians, and psychologists provided influential sources of beliefs about children and parenting. However, those were not the only sources of beliefs. Society in general, politics, and the legal system also contribute to the way we think about children. Sandin (2014) provided a detailed history of how children have been treated in different societies, with a focus on social-political influences. How these forces shape views and treatment of children can be clearly seen in the areas of child labor, children's education, child welfare, and children's **rights**.

TABLE 1.5 ■ A Timeline of Psychologists and Their Key Contribution Regarding Children			
1844–1924	G. Stanley Hall	American	First working research lab
1856–1937	Sigmund Freud	Austrian	Psychosexual development
1870–1937	Alfred Adler	German	Individual psychology
1878–1958	John B. Watson	American	Behaviorism
1896–1980	Jean Piaget	Swiss	Cognitive stage theory
1902–1994	Erik Erikson	German	Psychosocial stage theory

In all too many societies, children have been treated very poorly throughout history. According to the historian Lloyd deMause (1975),

> The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused. (p. 1)

deMause documented widespread practices of engaging in **infanticide** (the killing of newborns and infants), abusing children both physically and sexually, selling or abandoning of children, sending infants to live with wet nurses, restraining infants with **swaddling** clothes during waking hours so they could not move, and "hardening" infants, as mentioned in Box 1.2.

It is not difficult to find many more examples of harsh and abusive child-rearing practices in history. The earliest evidence, dating back to around 1750 BCE, of abusive practices appears on the clay tablets found in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). These tablets contain 282 codes or laws of conduct in ancient Babylon. Named the Code of Hammurabi, after the king who established them, the laws describe penalties for specific unacceptable behavior. The tablets reveal a patriarchal orientation toward offspring: Children were legally the property of their father and had none of their own rights. Codes dealt with a wide range of topics, including fathers' rights, property, slaves, payments and debts, inheritance and dowries, divorce, and adoption (Johns, 1903). Examples of some Babylonian directives include: *Code 14:* If someone steals a child, he shall be put to death; *Code 186:* If an adopted son injures his adoptive father or mother, the son shall be returned to his biological father's house; and *Code 195:* If a son strikes his father, they shall cut off his fingers. Indeed, children have also been disfigured, injured, and maimed throughout history to suit adult beliefs and desires. Child maltreatment will be discussed at length in Chapter 15. However, two abusive practices from China and Italy, are described in Box 1.4.

Thankfully, not all historical evidence points to abusive practices toward children. The child-rearing orientation in ancient Egypt (ca. 3000–1000 BCE) was quite to the contrary. Based on what information can be gleaned from tomb paintings, hieroglyphics, medical literature, and archeological evidence, Egyptians—from pharaohs to peasants—parented in a child-centered way. Large families (with eight to 12 children) were common, and parents reared their offspring with love, care, and enjoyment (French, 2002). Mothers breastfed their children until age three. By the age of five or six, children began to prepare for their adult occupations, with the exception of the privileged children who attended school until age 14.

Greeks in the classical era (490–323 BCE) also enjoyed their children. They viewed their offspring as unformed and impressionable but also inheriting both physical and psychological characteristics from their parents and ancestors (Pomeroy, 1998). Ancient Greeks attended to their children and comforted them when they were frightened. Children were viewed as innocent, loving, happy, and playful. Aristotle (as had Plato before him) developed a **stage theory** about children and their proper care. He also recognized the individuality of each child and advised parents to tailor their child-rearing to each particular child. In general, Greek child-rearing had a nurturing orientation rather than a disciplinary one (French, 2002).

The Romans (510 BCE–476 CE) built upon Greek child-rearing ideas. Roman parents believed in the importance of the early years of life and devoted considerable time and attention toward influencing their children's physical, moral, and intellectual development. They loved their children and worked to promote close relationships. At the same time, patriarchal power was primary. Fathers had absolute authority as embodied in the concept of *patria potestas* ("power of the father"). This doctrine gave fathers the right to kill anyone in the household, including grown children. Although this authority was tempered by various factors (e.g., the wishes of the mother, the legal obligation to rear sons to adulthood), historians have discovered many examples of fathers exercising their power, both with infants and older children (French, 2002). It took both religious (e.g., Prophet Muhammed) and political leaders to end the widespread practice of **filicide** (a parent deliberately killing his or her own child). Emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor (280–337 CE), enacted two measures to discourage the practice, and it was subsequently banned.

CULTURE BOX 1.4: TWO EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL MUTILATION OF CHILDREN

The Chinese practice of foot binding was performed on as many as 1 billion girls over a thousand years (10th to early 20th century). Girls, beginning as early as four years old, would have their feet tightly wrapped so the arch would not grow, and their foot length would be no longer than four to six inches. Despite the pain and long-term crippling effects, mothers practiced this on their daughters so the children would be perceived as beautiful and marriageable. This practice was not officially banned until 1949 (Jackson, 1997).

Another example of mutilation—this time of boys—occurred in Italy from the mid-16th century until it was outlawed in 1870. Prepubescent boys were surgically castrated so their vocal cords would not develop, and they could continue to sing in the soprano range. It is estimated that during the peak of this practice, as many as 4,000 boys were castrated annually in order to supply opera houses (Peschel & Peschel, 1987). A recording of a "castrato," Alessandro Moreschi—who died in 1922—can be found on the Internet.

Historiography—the study of historical writings—reveals that infancy and childhood have always been hazardous periods of life. Until only the last 100 years or so, a high percentage of children died at early ages. For example, written records indicate that during the 16th century, the rate of **child mortality** (defined as child death prior to age five) ranged from 20% to 42.6%.

Of those children who died in childhood, about one-third died during childbirth and another 50% to 60% died during the first month of life (Shahar, 1990). From 1580 to 1720, about one-third of children in England died by the age of 15 years (Newton, 2015). Today, the highest infant mortality rate in the world is in Afghanistan, with an estimated rate of 104.89 for every 1,000 births. In contrast, the United States had a much lower rate of 5.17 per 1,000 and ranked 174th out of 227 nations (Central Intelligence Agency, 2022).

Throughout history, children frequently succumbed to fatal accidents. During the central and late Middle Ages (12th through the 15th century), children faced many hazards. Common dangers included being smothered by sleeping adults, falling into wells or rivers, and getting burned by cooking fires or house fires (Shahar, 1990). A study of death records from this time period revealed the six most common causes of children's deaths were: drowning, being crushed or pierced, falling, choking, being burned, and being killed by animals (Finucane, 1997).

Despite historically high rates of infant and child mortality, there is evidence that parents loved their babies, worried about their health, and grieved at their death. For example, the New England Puritan merchant Samuel Sewall, who lost seven of his 14 children before they reached age two, wrote in his diary of the "general sorrow and tears" when his two-year-old daughter died. In addition, he blamed himself for not being adequately careful about guarding her health (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988, p. 2).

Family economic needs were another determinant of child-rearing practices. To survive, parents have often required that their young children work. This may have meant having children work alongside parents, assigning them to become apprentices, or sending them off to work for someone else. It was not uncommon for children—sometimes as young as three years old—to work. The grim face of child labor occurring outside the family setting became common during the Industrial Revolution (roughly 1750–1850). At that time, as families migrated from countryside to towns, children toiled in factories, mines, manufacturing mills, and on street corners. Exploitation was rampant: Children worked long hours, received very low pay, and were placed in dangerous, unregulated conditions. In England, many children worked 16-hour days before Parliamentary acts (e.g., the Factory Health and Morals Act of 1802) limited workdays in factories and cotton mills to a maximum of 12 hours. In the United States, children worked in a variety of jobs, including those in mines, canneries, textile and glass factories, and as newsboys and peddlers.

Over time, child labor was outlawed in the United States. Laws were passed as early as 1836 in Massachusetts, but it took another 82 years for all states (except Alaska) to pass compulsory education laws in which children were mandated to attend school. In 1938, a federal law (the Fair Labor Standards Act) established the minimum age of employment and the maximum number of hours to be worked. With the exception of the agricultural industry, child labor is no longer a social concern in the United States. However, it continues to be widely practiced, particularly in developing nations (see Photo 1.9). The International Labour Organization and UNICEF estimates that 160 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 work (UNICEF, 2021). Child labor is primarily found in agriculture but also found in manufacturing, such as making bricks in Nepal (Larmar et al., 2017), and in illegal activities, including sex trafficking and pornography (e.g., Greenbaum, 2018).

PHOTO 1.9 A young garbage recycler in Nepal.

Source: iStockphoto.com/DimaBerkut

Clearly, beliefs about children and how to rear them have undergone many "domestic revolutions" (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Beliefs concerning the value of children, their roles in society, and the moral state of newborns ranged widely in the ancient world (as they do today). Other influences include economic shifts and hardships, politics, cultural changes, and (especially) statements and advice from those we view as authorities, such as pediatricians and psychologists. As new child-rearing ideas are proposed and gain acceptance, practices shift, and subsequent generations are guided by evolving and evidence-based understandings about children's development and parenting.

Modern Media

In our modern world, we are bombarded by multiple sources of information about children and child-rearing. The Internet is already strongly influencing our culture and certainly shaping the way we think about parenting. With a few clicks of the mouse, a parent today has Internet access to more than 70,000 results for "parenting books." Type in "parenting" on a search engine and you will come up with somewhere around 1.96 *billion* hits. Consider Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, reddit, blogs, posts, websites, and texting on cell phones. We are no longer limited to advice from published experts, local authorities, or our grandmothers. Anyone with access to the Internet can offer an opinion online on everything from talking to your kids about drugs to ending bed-wetting to preparing nutritious snacks for a picky toddler. It is true that the Internet has made sound, scientific articles easily available. But it has also given a voice to many

ideas with no reasonable basis. Even so-called "expert advice" discovered on the Internet might be based on a single study or one person's opinion. And with many product endorsements, it can be hard to tell the advertisers from the advisors.

As for print media, more than three dozen parenting magazines can be found on the market, hundreds of books are readily available, and newspaper columnists regularly dispense parenting advice. Television broadcasts educational shows about how to rear children as well as reality shows about the challenges of parenting (e.g., *Supernanny, Nanny 911*). If that's not enough, advertisements tell us what products we *need* to make our children brighter, happier, and healthier.

Children's Rights

In some countries around the world, a relatively new perspective on children is beginning to affect how children are treated. That perspective involves recognizing children's rights as separate from parental rights. Children are the most vulnerable major subgroup of the human family, but in many parts of the world, they are still treated as the parent's property (Hart, 1991). The United Nations recognized this worldwide problem and created the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) in 1989 in an effort to bolster the recognition of their inherent dignity and as well as the inalienable rights of children (Melton, 2008). The CRC contains four core principles: the right to life, survival, and development; devotion to the best interests of the child; nondiscrimination; and respect for the view of the child. Those principles are then expanded into a set of children rights as described in the 41 articles of the CRC. To date, all but one country has ratified that convention—the United States (Jones & Welch, 2018).

USING RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND PARENTING

Only through careful, systematic research can fact be culled from opinion. However, "facts" about children, parents, and social development in general are rarely fixed or immutable. The facts that do exist are not like laws of physics or chemical interactions, since each child is unique due to their genotype and the particular experiences they have had. The science of parenting consists more of the understanding of how children develop and the roles that parents play in influencing developmental processes—such as socialization and **individuation** (the process of becoming an autonomous person). The scientific efforts to study parenting have seen considerable development over the past century (see Photo 1.10).

Research Beginnings

Systematic research into child-rearing, comprised of developing hypotheses and then collecting data, began in earnest during the 1920s. Studies were initiated to provide answers for parents. Beliefs about children and parents, once only the province of ministers, philosophers, physicians, and politicians, could now be tested with research. A few early research milestones warrant mentioning. The first parenting study involved a questionnaire about parents' views of how to discipline children (Sears, 1899), conducted under the direction of G. Stanley Hall.

PHOTO 1.10 Photo of family from the 1880s.

However, it was only in the 1920s that studies began to appear in scientific journals with some regularity. The first child study center, established in Iowa in 1917, required many years of effort by an activist named Cora Bussey Hillis before it was funded. She recognized that the state was devoting considerable expense to studying how to breed better hogs. So, she argued, why not also focus on how to raise better children (Sears, 1975)? Child study centers were subsequently founded at Yale, Cornell, and the University of Minnesota. In 1930, *Child Development*, the leading journal in the field of developmental psychology, began publication. Even the concept of the *socialization* of the individual child is a relatively recent development in the social sciences, first being utilized and studied in the mid-20th century (Morawski & St. Martin, 2011).

Sustained attention to understanding the role of parenting in development commenced in earnest in the mid-1940s. Table 1.6 lists three early landmark studies into parenting. These studies by psychologists made a variety of contributions, including methodological approaches to studying parents, testing new concepts, and identifying associations between parenting practices and child outcomes. They also served to establish child-rearing as an important area of scientific inquiry.

Research and Expert Advice

How do contemporary child-rearing expert advice and **empirical** research match up? One effort to address that question can be found in a book by Jane Rankin (2005). She analyzed the writings of five experts: two pediatricians (Drs. Benjamin Spock and T. Berry Brazelton) and three

TABLE 1.6 ■ Early Landmark Studies into Parenting			
	Sample Size	Methods	Key Finding
Baldwin, Kalhorn, & Breese, 1945	150 children and their families	Interview	Parents who were democratic in child-rearing styles had the most competent children.
Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957	306 mothers	Interview	Maternal practices varied widely.
Baumrind, 1971	109 families	Interview, questionnaire, and observation	The typology of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting was established.

psychologists (Dr. James Dobson, Dr. Penelope Leach, and John Rosemond) on six common child-rearing issues. Rankin arrived at several conclusions. Foremost, the experts disagreed. For some issues, the disagreements were minor. But for others (including how to discipline children), their differences in opinion were dramatic. Given the conflicting advice, it was evident that experts do not necessarily base their advice on scientific evidence. Rather, an important influence appeared to be the expert's political philosophy, such as liberal (Spock, Brazelton, and Leach) or conservative (Rosemond).

Just as experts develop their own child-rearing philosophies, all of us, to one degree or another, have our own views of parenting and the appropriate way to rear children. These **lay theories** (informal and unscientific theories reflecting conventional wisdom), sometimes called **ethnotheories**, include beliefs about what children are like, when they attain particular skills, how children change, and the ways in which parents influence development. Folk theories can influence behavior and in turn, mental health (Furnham, 2017). For example, many people have theories about parenting, including the view that parents lead happier and more fulfilled lives than childless adults (Hansen, 2012). One of the goals of parenting research is to investigate the accuracy of lay theories so parents can rear their children more effectively.

Contemporary Research Trajectories

Today, investigators into parenting are not only psychologists but also anthropologists, biologists, educators, family life educators, pediatricians, physicians, social workers, sociologists, and many other researchers from various academic disciplines. Our current understanding of parenting is a consequence of this heterogeneous army of researchers. Contemporary understanding of child-rearing is based on empirical findings and thereby differs from mere child-rearing beliefs. These findings are continually being refined, modified, built upon, or even discarded as a consequence of new investigations. In that way, our child-rearing knowledge is evolving, and research from social and biological sciences is building a coordinated, science-based approach to parenting and healthy children's development (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

New research efforts are continually underway. In fact, each year, millions of dollars are spent on studies investigating questions about children's development. These empirical studies about parents and child-rearing can be found in a wide variety of scholarly journals. One high-quality scientific journal, *Parenting: Science and Practice*, was established in 2001 and is devoted solely to parenting studies. However, new parenting studies appear in hundreds of other journals virtually every day (see the Appendix for a partial listing). Studies published in journals are a key contributor to contemporary shifts in views about parenting, as will be described in this book.

CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

Rearing children involves multiple roles, including protecting, loving, disciplining, structuring, and monitoring their behavior and well-being. How parents go about those tasks is greatly influenced by what they believe about children and child-rearing. Those beliefs have been shaped by many sources throughout history, including personal experiences, religious leaders, philosophers, physicians, and psychologists (see Box 1.5). In addition, social and political forces, such as children's rights, have influenced the current social construction about children and parents.

Research into child-rearing is a relatively young science; it has only been around for about a hundred years. However, investigations into parent-child relationships are now a major enterprise, with new findings appearing each month in many different journals. Research over the past half century has made large strides in discovering more about how parents behave and influence children's growth, learning, and behavior. Children's development is complex, with many determinants. Similarly, parenting is multifaceted, changes over time, is influenced by many different factors, and can differentially affect children. Consequently, a dynamic perspective on parenting—its influences and effects—can best capture the research, as this book will illustrate.

APPLICATION BOX 1.5: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND THE EXPERTS

Where did the authorities get their information about how to parent? In some cases, they were informed by their interpretation of sacred texts. More commonly, individuals' personal experience in their own families and their unsystematic observations about children and parents informed their views. Many of the advice givers identified in this chapter were parents. Aristotle had two children. Dr. Holt had five. Some of the early child-rearing "experts," however, appear to have lacked extensive experience with children and therefore based their views on casual rather than systematic observations. Rousseau fathered five children, but he did not raise any of them. Because all his children were born out of wedlock (although to the same mother), they were sent to an orphanage. Rousseau thus based his beliefs on three sources: his work as a tutor, his observations of French peasant children, and what he had heard about children in primitive cultures (Damrosch, 2005). Locke, on the other hand, was a bachelor and did not have any offspring. Of the influential "authorities" cited, the only one who gained a rich background of experience with children and parents before writing his book was Dr. Spock. Spock authored his book only after a decade of work as a pediatrician

and fathering two children. Even so, he questioned the wisdom of his own advice and admitted that "when a young man writes a book about how to raise children, in a sense, it's his reflection on the way his mother raised him" (Morgan & Spock, 1989, p. 136). Consider your own beliefs about parenting. Where do they come from?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What is your view of the innate nature of children? Where did your idea of this come from?

- What are some common child-rearing practices in the United States that people from other countries may view as unusual or even cruel?

- We learn about child-rearing practices from many different sources. Which sources of information do you find most credible? Why?

- What are the key critical-thinking questions one should think about when evaluating child-rearing advice?