

# Parenting Today's CHILDREN

A DEVELOPMENTAL  
PERSPECTIVE



Lynn R. Marotz • Sara Kupzyk

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# Parenting Today's Children

**A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

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***Parenting Today's Children: A Developmental Perspective***

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# Preface

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Children face a lifetime of learning, exploration, successes and failures—a path that parents, educators, and various professionals have themselves followed. The quality of their environments, early learning opportunities, and positive adult support and encouragement plays an influential role in mapping a route along which all future skill acquisition is acquired. Thus, an understanding of children’s developmental needs, capabilities, and limitations enables parents and practitioners to create effective learning experiences and behavior guidance that will help children achieve a rich and fulfilling life.

Parenting advice typically has been handed down from one generation to the next. Generational knowledge transfer is less effective today because families are more mobile and diverse, and they encounter parenting issues that differ markedly from those in the past. Contemporary families are also faced with significant cultural and societal changes, stress, and challenges in their efforts to raise children. Such factors necessitate new approaches and interventions based upon a fundamental understanding of child development, changing family dynamics and environmental conditions, and the latest research findings. Consequently, contemporary parents often depend upon teachers, health clinicians, social workers, counselors, agency personnel, and many others for child-rearing information.

Today’s parents and children are diverse in terms of their race/ethnicity, language, family structure, socioeconomic status, and religious beliefs. Teachers and practitioners must be knowledgeable about these differences so that they are able to support and collaborate with parents as children progress through their sequential developmental stages. *Parenting Today’s Children* provides educators and professionals who work in numerous fields with the latest research-based information about common parenting challenges encountered in raising children, practices for positive behavioral guidance, strategies that support children’s progress along a developmental continuum, and approaches to building positive relationships with diverse families.

## Philosophical Approach and Organization

Many parenting textbooks are organized around a topical framework (i.e., children’s cognitive or moral development is discussed as a single concept across a birth-to-adulthood continuum). This approach requires students to assimilate and form connections among isolated pieces of information in a way that may—but often does not—create meaning. Furthermore, a topical approach presumes that students are able to generalize understanding into effective parenting practices and applied behavioral interventions. Educators have shown that students have difficulty grasping and retaining the conceptual significance of stand-alone information and its relationship to responsive parenting. Thus, educational efforts may not always lead to successful learning and facilitation of effective parental practices.

A more pedagogically sound approach is to provide a developmentally-based organizational structure. *Parenting Today’s Children* uses such a framework to support meaningful learning, improve retention, and foster critical thinking skills and innovation. This approach enables students to link, build, and integrate new knowledge along a progressive timeline. A developmental approach also promotes an understanding of ecological variables, their influence on child-rearing problems, and effective response



strategies. For example, a developmental perspective helps students relate a toddler's overt displays of frustration to their limited language and social skills, and to then translate this understanding into positive learning and behavior guidance responses that encourage more desirable behaviors.

Students will find *Parenting Today's Children* to be especially helpful for understanding parenting roles, responsibilities, and challenges as well as timely—and sometimes controversial—parenting topics. The material is based upon the latest research findings, and addressed in a clear, concise, and thought-provoking manner. A developmental framework makes student learning easier because each chapter builds on material presented in the previous one. Students will also consider many contemporary topics (e.g., “helicopter” parents, sleep deprivation, eating disorders, teens and plastic surgery, overscheduled children, depression and suicide, social media) which are discussed throughout the book. Pedagogical features (e.g., *Key Terms*, *Learning Objectives*, *Responsive Parenting*, *Trending Now*, *Questions for Discussion and Self-Reflection*, and *Field Activities*) reinforce learning that is interesting, meaningful, applicable, and easy for students to retain. Students will also benefit from the *Suggestions for Parents* features that are provided throughout the book; these features translate chapter material into practical ideas that can be shared with parents. Students will also appreciate the chapter structure, visual summaries and presentations (e.g., photographs, illustrations, graphs), and the easy-to-read format.

## The Intended Audience

*Parenting Today's Children* is designed to be a core text for collegiate-level majors and non-majors who are pursuing interests in early childhood, teacher education (primary and secondary), social welfare, nursing and ancillary health care, pre-med, psychology, counseling, and family studies. This book is also suitable for graduate-level courses in which the research and theoretical bases of parenting and family intervention are addressed. The format, writing style and subject matter also make it a valuable resource for students enrolled in parent educator certification programs offered through community colleges and universities, and for teen parenting and family and consumer science courses offered in secondary and vocational schools.

In addition, *Parenting Today's Children* can be an important asset for teachers, health care clinicians, school counselors, social workers, community educators, and other practicing professionals who work with, and mentor, children and their families. Often these busy individuals are looking for an easy-to-use reference book that contains the latest research results and answers to contemporary parenting challenges. Parents who are interested in learning additional ways to support their children's development and manage challenging behaviors will also find the book beneficial.

## Organizational Overview

*Parenting Today's Children* addresses parenting from a contemporary perspective. It presents the latest information about the multiple challenges that today's parents face, and the skills they need to be successful in their parenting endeavors. The most current published research is used to support ideas, discussions, and conclusions.

- The textual material is organized within a developmental organizational framework that fosters improved student understanding, application, and learning retention. This approach enables students and practitioners who have worked with children—as well as those who are inexperienced—to link, build, and integrate new knowledge along a progressive timeline.
- Chapters provide information that helps students and practitioners to appreciate the supportive role, responsibilities, and challenges that contemporary parents encounter in their efforts to raise healthy, happy, and successful children. The developmental framework contributes to improved student understanding

about the ways that parents can promote children’s development across all domains and at any given age. This approach also has pedagogical advantages for students who are trying to assimilate large amounts of new information.

- Each chapter includes extensive pedagogical material—*Key Terms*, *Learning Objectives*, end-of-chapter *Questions for Discussion and Self-Reflection*, and *Field Activities*, as well as *Responsive Parenting*, *Trending Now*, and *Suggestions for Parents* features—designed to foster student learning, information retention, and critical thinking. Each element strengthens students’ ability to apply parenting concepts to everyday situations.
- The discussion of contemporary—and sometimes controversial—topics that reflect the concerns of today’s parents is emphasized as preparatory material for class discussions and individual reflection.
- This text also comes with MindTap™ Education for *Parenting Today’s Children*. MindTap™ is a fully customizable online learning platform with interactive content designed to help students learn effectively and prepare them for success in the classroom. Through activities based on real-life teaching situations, MindTap™ elevates students’ thinking by providing everyday experiences in applying concepts, practicing skills, and evaluating decisions to guide them in becoming reflective educators.

## Content Features

Each chapter includes pedagogical features designed to enhance reader comprehension, retention, critical thinking, and skill in applying the information to everyday experiences and settings:

- *Key Terms* are highlighted in the text, defined on the corresponding page, and included in a comprehensive glossary.
- *Learning Objectives* identify important concepts and skills that readers will achieve after working through each chapter.
- The *Trending Now* feature addresses the pros and cons of contemporary, and sometimes controversial, issues that today’s parents may encounter. Discussion points are supported by the latest research findings, and include questions for readers to consider.
- The *Responsive Parenting* feature provides everyday case study scenarios that strengthen and reinforce students’ ability to apply effective parenting concepts to address children’s challenging behaviors in positive ways.
- *Suggestions for Parents* boxes translate chapter material into practical ideas that can be shared with parents.
- *Self-Reflection Questions* and *Field Activities* reinforce meaningful and applicable interactive learning based upon chapter content.
- *Current references* encourage further research and reading.
- *Visual aids* (e.g., photos, graphics, boxed and highlighted features) are designed to appeal to the media-based learner, and to expand upon and reinforce parenting concepts presented in the chapters.

## Accompanying Teaching and Learning Resources

### MindTap™: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap™ Education for *Parenting Today’s Children* represents a new approach to teaching and learning. A highly personalized, fully customizable learning platform with

an integrated e-portfolio, MindTap™ helps students to elevate thinking by guiding them to:

- Know, remember, and understand concepts critical to becoming an effective practitioner;
- Apply concepts, create curriculum and tools, and demonstrate performance and competency in key course areas, including national and state education standards;
- Prepare portfolio artifacts in preparation for eventual state licensure and launching a successful professional career; and
- Develop the habits to become a reflective practitioner.

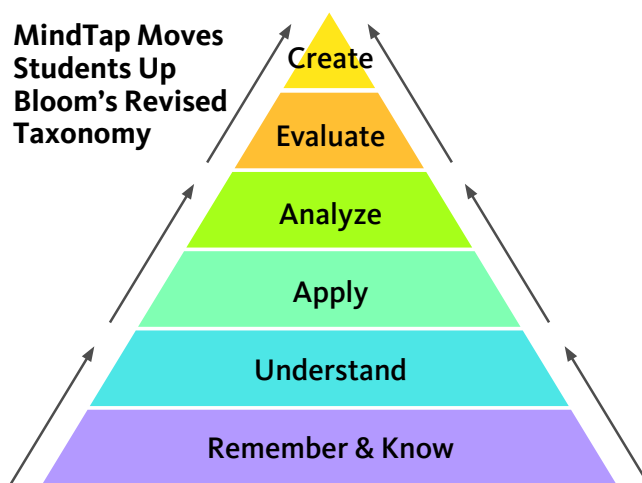
As students move through each chapter's Learning Path, they engage in a scaffolded learning experience, designed to move them up Bloom's Taxonomy, from lower- to higher-order thinking skills. The Learning Path enables preservice students to develop these skills and gain confidence by:

- Engaging them with chapter topics and activating their prior knowledge by watching and answering questions about authentic videos of parents and professionals collaborating to promote children's development.
- Checking their comprehension and understanding through Did You Get It? assessments, with varied question types that are autograded for instant feedback.
- Applying concepts through mini-case scenarios—students analyze typical teaching and learning situations, and then create a reasoned response to the issue(s) presented in the scenario.
- Reflecting about and justifying the choices they made within the teaching scenario problem.

MindTap™ helps instructors facilitate better outcomes by evaluating how future teachers plan and teach lessons in ways that make content clear and help diverse students learn, assessing the effectiveness of their teaching practice, and adjusting teaching as needed. MindTap™ enables instructors to facilitate improved outcomes by:

- Making grades visible in real time through the Student Progress App so that students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Using the Outcome Library to embed national education standards and align them to student learning activities, and also allowing instructors to add their state's standards or any other desired outcome.
- Allowing instructors to generate reports on students' performance against any standards or outcomes that are in their MindTap™ course with the click of a mouse.
- Giving instructors the ability to assess students on state standards or other local outcomes by editing existing MindTap™ activities or creating their own, and then aligning those activities to any state or other outcomes that the instructor has added to the MindTap™ Outcome Library.

MindTap™ Education for *Parenting Today's Children* helps instructors easily set their course; since it integrates into the existing Learning Management System, it saves instructors time by allowing them to fully customize any aspect of the learning path. Instructors can change the order of the student learning activities, hide activities they don't want for the course, and—most importantly—create custom assessments and add



Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Longman.

any standards, outcomes, or content they desire (e.g., YouTube videos, Google docs). Learn more at [www.cengage.com/mindtap](http://www.cengage.com/mindtap).

### **Online Instructor’s Manual**

The Instructor’s Manual contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

### **Online Test Bank**

The Test Bank contains multiple choice, true/false, completion, and essay questions to challenge your students and assess their learning.

### **Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero**

The Test Bank also is available through Cognero, a flexible online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content, as well as to create multiple test versions in an instant. You can deliver tests from your school’s learning management system, your classroom, or wherever you want.

### **Online PowerPoint Lecture Slides**

These vibrant Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with lecture preparation by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook!

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Lynn has authored numerous invited book chapters in national and international publications about children's health and nutrition, legal issues, and environmental safety. She is also the author of *Health, Safety, and Nutrition for the Young Child*, *Developmental Profiles: Birth through Adolescence*, *Motivational Leadership*, and *By the Ages: Behavior & Development of Children Pre-birth Through Eight*. She has been interviewed for numerous articles about children's health and nutrition and parenting that have appeared in national trade magazines and has served as a consultant for children's museums and training film productions. In addition, she has presented extensively at international, national, and state conferences, and continues to hold appointments on national, state, and local committees and initiatives that advocate on behalf of children and their families.



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Sara conducts research focused on issues of treatment integrity, academic problems, parent training, and early intervention for children with emotional and learning concerns. She has authored articles in several peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of Behavioral Education*, and *Psychology in the Schools*, as well as book chapters in *Behavioral Health Promotion and Intervention for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *APA Handbook of Applied Behavior Analysis*, and *The Practical Handbook of School Psychology: Effective Practices for the 21st Century*. She also presents at local and national conferences and reviews manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals.

# Parenting in Historical, Cultural, and Theoretical Contexts

# 1

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the chapter, you will be able to:

- 1-1 Explain why families are important to any society and cultural group.
- 1-2 Compare and contrast the concept of parenting in America from colonial times to the present day.
- 1-3 Describe how child development is influenced by each of the levels or rings identified in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model.

## naeyc Standards Linked to Chapter Content

**1a and 1b:** Promoting child development and learning

**2a:** Building family and community relationships

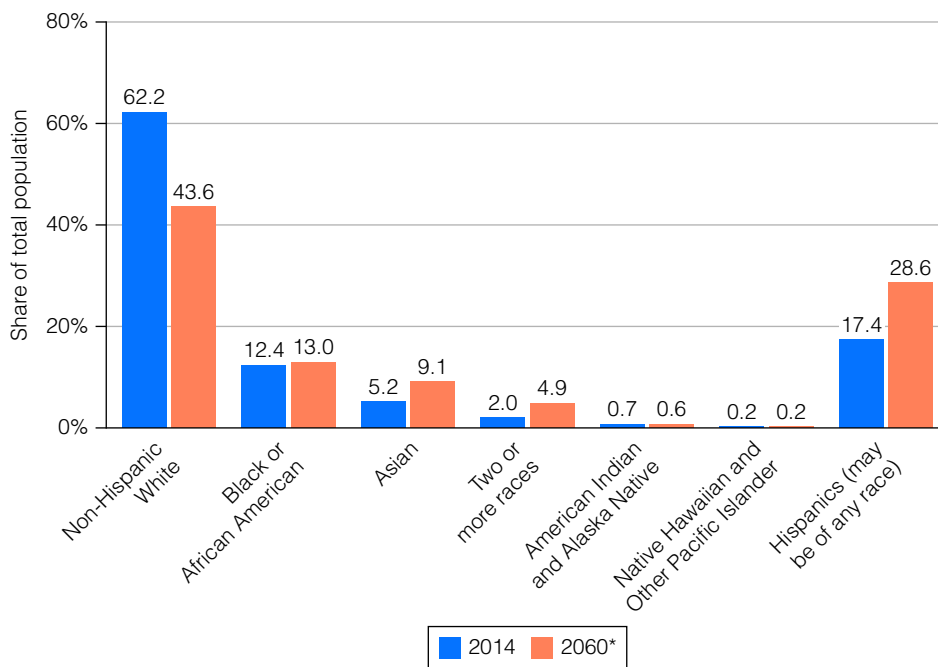


**F**or centuries, political, religious, sociological, and ethnic background factors have had a collective influence on American approaches toward children, families, and parenting.

Some represent milestones that have had a significant impact on the development of family

*continued on following page*

**Figure 1-1** Projected Ethnic Changes in U.S. Population Diversity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2014). National population projections.

arrangements, interactions, and parenting practices under challenging circumstances. Similarly, a steady and very large addition of people and families from other countries have, and continue to, substantially change the size, demographics, and complexity of the indigenous U.S. population (see Figure 1-1). An overview of only the most salient features and trends that have contributed to the rich diversity in this country and produced changes in the meaning of “family” and “parenting” follows. ■

## 1-1 The Meaning of Family

Is it necessary to describe the concept of family? Everyone has one, however defined, and interaction among families of various kinds is an everyday occurrence. Although the term is familiar and commonly used, we may not recognize that “family” often has very different meanings to many persons and cultural groups.

Although the family concept as a social construct has seemingly remained constant for centuries, its characteristics and functional relationships have undergone significant change in the past, and especially in recent decades. For example, family size has been steadily decreasing, single-person parenthood continues to increase, marriage and fertility rates are declining, and women are postponing childbearing longer—or remaining childless—as a result of career goals, personal choice, and economic challenges (Williamson & Lawson, 2015). Same-sex marriage, cohabitation, divorce, work-family



balance, reproductive technologies, and adoption by single and same-sex parents have resulted in family configurations and roles that differ substantially from those in the past. Many contemporary families also find themselves caring for aging parents at the same time that they are raising their own young children. More grandparents are assuming primary care and custodial responsibility for their grandchildren, and adult children are moving back to their familial home because of economic or health issues.

These and many other factors have altered the nature of the traditional **nuclear family** and given rise to alternative family constructs. Some social scientists believe these developments are a positive sign of familial resilience that promote an ability to adapt to changing social conditions (Henry, Morris, & Harrist, 2015; Wall & Gouveia, 2014). Others have cited negative effects on children's development and on adults in nontraditional relationships (Brown, Manning, & Stykes, 2015; Harcourt & Adler-Baeder, 2015). Further research may resolve some of these contrasts, which may lead to a better understanding of how well alternative family structures function and their effect on children, parents, and society.

**nuclear family** a unit consisting of two parents and their biological offspring.

### 1-1a The Historical Importance of Family

Throughout history, the family, as a legal and kinship unit, has always been considered fundamental to a society's continuation. It has served in support of important functions, such as land ownership, inheritance, and social and economic development. Well into the twentieth century, families often included many children, partially to ensure that a percentage would survive at a time when diseases were rampant and medical care limited. Children born into familial relationships helped to ensure the passage of social values and cultural traditions from one generation to the next.

## 1-2 A Historical Perspective on Parenting: Roles and Responsibilities

Although children are essential for societal and cultural survival, attitudes toward and respect for children have not always been favorable. The concept of childhood as a distinct life stage was not generally recognized until the 17th century (Aries, 1965). Prior to this time, children were considered to be small adults who no longer required parental care, attention, and protection and were expected to work alongside their family members.

Parents' views toward children have since undergone radical transformation. Their ideas about children's role in a family system and how children should be reared have been reframed by historical and philosophical developments. Although some parenting practices may seem unusual to us today, it is likely that parents were doing their best based on the information available to them at the time. Their fundamental goals of caring for and nurturing children to ensure their health and safety, preparation for adulthood, and maintenance of cultural norms and values have remained important throughout history.



**Photo 1-1** Parents' concepts of childhood and childrearing have changed throughout history. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Reproduction number LC-USZC4-11327 (color film copy transparency post-conservation)

### 1-2a Parenting in Ancient and Modern Europe

Early Greek philosophers were among the first to formally acknowledge the importance of parenting for children's development and a society's future. Plato (428–348 BCE), for example, advocated that pregnant women take care of themselves (e.g., take walks, eat well) to help ensure that they would have a healthy baby. He also believed that the first 5 years of a child's life were the most important time for learning. Aristotle (384–322 BCE),

in turn, urged parents to identify each child's unique talents, especially those that were conducive to leadership, and to adjust their parenting style to address children's different personality types.

During the Roman era (200 BCE–400 CE), parents cared for, socialized, and taught their children to read, write, and to engage in play. They typically arranged their children's marriages when girls were in their early teens and boys were several years older. Fathers were considered to be the head of their family, and were expected to handle financial and decision-making responsibilities, while women principally oversaw household duties. It was a father's right to practice infanticide if an infant was not of a preferred gender, was born with a physical defect, or he was financially unable to provide for another child in the family (PBS, 2006).

Historians paint a picture of parenting and family life during the Middle Ages (400 CE–about 1300 CE) that was quite different from that of earlier times. Couples married and usually had three to five children. Mothers gave birth at home with the assistance of a midwife or neighbors. As a result, maternal and infant mortality rates were high, with an estimated one in twenty mothers dying during childbirth and one in three infants perishing before their first birthday (Singman, 1999).

Child-rearing practices during the Middle Ages have been described as being unusually cold, harsh, and uncaring (Hanawalt, 1993). Living conditions were difficult. Child abuse was fairly common, and reflected prevailing religious and philosophical beliefs which underscored the need to eliminate children's evil thoughts and behaviors. Parents met children's basic needs, but provided limited nurturing and showed little affection. From our 21st century perspective, it may be difficult to understand why parents would treat their children in this manner. However, their indifference afforded some emotional protection from the likelihood (25–35 percent) that children would die (Hill, 1990).

It is also true that parents did not understand children's developmental needs in the same way they are understood today and, thus, saw no reason for engaging in much interaction with an infant or young child. When children turned seven, they were treated as an adult and would be taught a craft or skill, or entered into an apprenticeship, so that they could contribute to the family's economic survival. Formal education was primarily reserved for male children from upper-class families. These ideas and practices remained relatively constant over the next several centuries, simply because societal and economic conditions in feudal times were similar from decade to decade.

Such parental attitudes toward children, child development, and parental roles began to change during the 17th and 18th centuries, a time period often referred to as the Enlightenment. Earlier beliefs that children were born wicked and immoral were gradually being set aside and replaced with ideals that encouraged parents to be more lenient, understanding, and nurturing (Kagan, 1978). Philosophers, including John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, and John Amos Comenius, touted the virtues and innocence of childhood and the importance of environmental influences on children's development. Parents were counseled to guide children's behavior with rewards rather than harsh punishments, to encourage play, and to use nature to promote curiosity and hands-on learning. They educated children at home and taught them to write and to read the Christian Bible in preparation for adulthood.

Many of these progressive ideas, however, were set aside during the later 18th and 19th centuries. The advent of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe brought about social and political unrest that thrust many families into poverty and changed their way of living. Efforts to accelerate industrial productivity led to widespread urban crowding, poor living conditions, malnutrition, and rampant death and disease among the general population. Parents were forced to send children as young as nine and ten to work in factories to help support their family (Humphries, 2013). Fathers sought any employment in increasingly competitive labor markets, while mothers assumed



**Photo 1-2** Children as young as nine were sent to work in factories. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Reproduction number LC-DIG-nclC-01892 (color digital file from b&w original print)LC-USZ6-1226 (b&w film copy negative)LC-USZ62-15519 (b&w film copy negative)

full responsibility for all household tasks and children's education (Fitzgerald, 2000). However, difficult economic conditions forced many mothers to also seek work (usually service-related and at a lower wage than men), which represented a significant deviation from their traditional homemaker role.

Compulsory education became a priority, or was at least considered to be an important goal, in the latter half of the 19th century. Various groups throughout Europe argued that free public education should be available to all children (5 to 10 years); free also meant "not under the control of a religion-based organization" (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). Reading, writing, and arithmetic skills were considered necessary for people who were living in a rapidly industrializing world. This development also marked the movement of educational responsibility out of the home and into the public sector, which began to create a stronger sense of social and cultural identity—a way of defining what it meant to be "German" or "English," and, ultimately as the 20th century unfolded, Scandinavian, Italian, or Hispanic.

Families began leaving their farms and moving to the city in large numbers during the early 20th century. Rapid urbanization led to a higher standard of living for some families and an increase in poverty, substandard housing, and poor living conditions for others (Bairoch & Goertz, 1986). Poverty remained high among a large, unskilled working class (e.g., servants, laborers, farm workers) (Gazeley, 2003). Infant mortality declined and life expectancy increased as a result of improved wages, nutrition, sanitation, and living conditions. Fewer women were employed outside of the home, more regulations protected workers' safety, opportunities for advancement and free enterprise created a large middle class sector, and a new way of life existed for many families.

Twenty-first century parents continue their efforts to care for, nurture, and guide children to the best of their abilities. They worry about their children's well-being and the challenges they face as they grow up in a world that may be quite different from the one they knew as a child. At the same time, parents embrace new developments, celebrate their children's accomplishments, and hope that their children will enjoy a life that is equal to or better than their own.

## 1-2b Parenting in the United States

Many of the first immigrants to arrive in New England during the 1600s were intact Puritan families that worked closely together to survive in difficult conditions. They were passionately religious people who had fled Europe to live according to their fundamental religious beliefs and without fear of persecution. Fathers were in charge of family life, provided moral guidance, controlled all family property, and made all family decisions (Graham, 2000; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Because men were responsible for handling worldly affairs, they were often the only literate family member available to teach their children, mainly sons, to read and write. Girls were only taught to read (especially religious material) which explains why many colonial women often could read, but could not write or sign their names—with other than an "X" or initials (Monaghan, 1988).

The Christian Bible served as the family's main parenting manual. Verses provided guidance for proper behavior and encouraged parents to treat children with firmness and affection. "Firmness" is the key word in the parenting process, because early colonists considered children to be intrinsically "sinful" and, thus, in need of being taught to control their impulses (Chudacoff, 2007). Discipline was handled by fathers, who demanded children's strict obedience. Neighbors were also expected to help monitor and nurture the proper behavior of all children in the community.



**Photo 1-3** Slaves were bought and sold as manual laborers to work on plantations. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Reproduction number LC-DIG-ppmsca-11398 (digital file from original item, front)

Shortly after the Puritans had settled in Colonial America, other groups, such as the Quakers, followed. Their families were also close-knit and often included eight or more children, who helped to care for one another. The Quakers believed that children were born innocent and with goodness. They did not accept the notion of “breaking children’s will,” but taught children how to behave through example. Parents followed a parenting style that was less patriarchal or authoritarian than that used by the Puritans. They devoted much of their time to nurturing and teaching children in order to protect them against outside influences, although parental affection remained minimal so as not to “spoil” a child (Jensen, 1984).

Strong family unity was also characteristic of many early settler groups. The circumstances for some, however, were quite different. According to the 1860 census, African slaves, brought to America in large numbers, represented approximately 13 percent (4 of the 31 million) of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). They often faced seemingly insurmountable challenges, especially those who worked on Southern plantations. Although some owners made an attempt to keep slave families intact, others sold or sent family members off to live and work on different farms. Work-related role differences and a failure to recognize African marriages caused mothers, fathers, and children to be separated from one another. Slaves were forced to give up their name, religion, customs, and any hope of an education—indignities that would have long-lasting effects (Independence Hall Association, 2014).

Parenting roles remained similar among colonial families until the Civil War (1861–1865). When husbands joined the military, women were forced to take over family finances and farm-related duties in addition to caring for their children. Many women also filled teaching positions in schools that had traditionally been held only by men. Their teaching style proved to be more nurturing than the customary stern male approach and forever changed the way that children’s education would be conducted. When the war ended, women often remained in their new roles, which placed them in responsible positions that were equivalent to their male counterparts. The patriarchal family model, thus, began to slowly disappear and was replaced by relationships in which husband and wife were equal partners (Hacker, Hilde, & Jones, 2010).

A developing reverence for motherhood and a woman’s role in children’s development began to appear in the later 1800s. Families left their farms and moved to the city, fathers worked outside of the home, and mothers devoted their full attention to raising children. They nurtured, educated, and protected children from the perceived and real evils of city life, which, in turn, often meant that children became more dependent upon their parents. Some women also pursued interests other than homemaking, which paralleled a choice to have smaller families. Children could be considered a financial liability, given that they were no longer needed as a labor source for the family’s endeavors.

These developments contributed to an increased interest in parent education, which led to publications, study clubs, research studies, and the eventual establishment of the National Congress of Mothers (later to become the PTA) (1897), the Children’s Bureau (1912), and the National Association of Colored Parents and Teachers (1926). Parents took a greater interest in promoting children’s health, nutrition, psychological well-being, and personality development. However, fathers’ role became increasingly marginalized in the parenting process as psychologists promoted the importance of mothering and maternal bonding.

Despite these changes, the notion that women possessed a natural motherly instinct was abandoned (Watson, 1928). Mothers were advised to maintain strict feeding and sleeping schedules and not to immediately respond to children’s requests, but rather to let them cry. “Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit on your lap. Shake hands with them in the morning.” This was thought to prepare children for the world they would encounter as adults. There was also a general fear that giving too many hugs and kisses would turn boys into “sissies” (Grant, 2004).

Child-centered parenting practices continued to develop during the 1930s and 1940s. However, mothers were encouraged to follow a more relaxed and enjoyable approach to raising children. Parents had access to more informed approaches about how to support children’s developmental progress and provide age-appropriate discipline

based on the contributions of Arnold Gesell, Jean Piaget, and Dr. Benjamin Spock. Mothers were advised to follow their instincts and to try to understand children's seemingly troublesome behaviors from the child's perspective. Parents were made more aware of children's developmental delays and encouraged to seek professional guidance for maladjustment disorders, such as prolonged bed-wetting, temper tantrums, sleeping problems, and academic failure.

Such child-centered approaches endured even as family life itself changed significantly during the 1930s and 1940s. The Great Depression brought about high unemployment, poverty, and a decline in the birth rate. Marriage and birth rates surged at the onset of World War II as soldiers prepared to be sent overseas. Psychologists advised mothers to remain in the home, due to fears that their absence would cause changes in children's sense of well-being. However, the critical labor shortage that resulted while men served in the military meant that women were needed to work in factory, shipyard, military, and government jobs (Goldin, 1991). The Federal government responded by temporarily subsidizing a very limited national system of child care programs for working mothers (less than 1 percent of the approximately two million spaces that were needed) (Michel, 2011). Shortly after the war ended, the government ceased funding for child care centers despite the fact that demand remained high.

Prosperity and a renewed sense of optimism followed immediately after the war ended. Women married at an earlier age and had more children, which created a postwar "baby boom." The number of children living in two-parent households peaked during this period and remained the norm until the early 1960s. Many women returned to being full-time housewives; fathers resumed their role as the principal economic provider. Parents closely followed the advice of child development experts (e.g., Arnold Gesell, Erik Erikson, John Bowlby, Dr. Benjamin Spock) who encouraged them to be more nurturing and responsive to children's individual differences. Middle-class parents were determined to rear children who would ultimately be educated thinkers, tolerant of others, and successful in life.

Although life was good for many families during the 1950s and early 1960s, this was not true for everyone. Minority and immigrant families were often plagued by poverty, discrimination, unemployment, and high dropout rates among children (Elliott & Ionescu, 2003; Rumbaut, 1994). Families were encouraged to institutionalize children who were born with a disability. In some instances, mothers were blamed for causing their children's anxieties, mental health problems, and homosexuality (Rainer et al., 1960). Criticism was also leveled at parents for their leniency in raising a generation of children who failed to conform, questioned adult authority, and were seemingly uncontrollable.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, military deployments and antiwar protests against United States involvement in the Vietnam War began to challenge family bonding and unity. The introduction of birth control measures and more readily available abortion procedures meant that having a child was now a "personal choice" and not a "responsibility." The birth rate hit its lowest point ever, and the average family size decreased from four children to two. Social and economic instability contributed to high rates of divorce, poverty, and births to teen and unwed mothers. Increasing numbers of children were living in single-parent families, and more mothers found it necessary to seek paid employment (Popenoe, 1993).

Child psychologists voiced concern about how these changes would affect children's development, which, in turn, prompted a renewed interest and financial investment in child-study research. Experts, like Jean Piaget, continued to encourage parents to devote more attention to promoting children's cognitive, emotional, and moral development. Parents responded by limiting children's free play and enrolling them in multiple structured opportunities (e.g., preschools, music lessons, sports, theater, and art activities) to advance their physical and academic skills. Soon parents would be criticized for overscheduling children's lives.

Humanitarian concerns reached an all-time high during the mid-1970s through the 1990s. New social service programs were established and existing programs, including Medicaid and Head Start, expanded to assist more families and children living in poverty.



**Photo 1-4** Mothers were told to enjoy their children.

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Wilma left her job as an elementary school teacher to **homeschool** her 6-year-old twin boys and 8-year-old daughter. The decision had been difficult, but she feared for her children's safety every day as they walked to and from school. Their once modest Detroit neighborhood was now lined with foreclosed homes, many of them abandoned and occupied by gang members. Wilma's daughter was a gifted learner and often told her mother that she already knew everything they were teaching her at school. There were also many days when she didn't want to go to school because she was afraid of several children in her classroom who had severe behavior problems. The loss of Wilma's salary would make it more difficult for their family to do some of the things they enjoyed, but she knew that homeschooling her children was far more important.

Wilma's decision reflects a fast-growing trend in America and throughout the world. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), approximately 2.2 million school-age children (or 3 percent) are currently being taught by a parent at home. Parents have cited a variety of reasons for assuming this responsibility. Some favor the practice because it appears to re-establish the strong connection between parent as educator and child as student, an approach similar to parent/child relationships that prevailed in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some express disappointment with public school education and want to have more control over what children are being taught. Some parents desire greater involvement in their children's education and development. Others feel strongly about providing their children with moral and religious instruction in addition to academics. Parents associated with various minority groups frequently cite concerns about safety, discrimination, and academic quality as their primary reasons for choosing to educate children at home (Mazamal & Lundy, 2015; Ray 2015). Homeschooling is also rapidly becoming a preferred educational option among parents of children who have a developmental disability.

The homeschooling trend embodies politics, religion, and parental choice, but it is not without controversy. Critics cite a lack of empirical evidence supporting some of the positive claims that have been made (Lubienski, Puckett, & Brewer, 2013). However, they have also acknowledged that research

on such subject areas is often biased by the self-selected nature of parents (e.g., better educated, religious, financially stable) who choose to engage in homeschooling activities. Opponents also point to a lack of systematic oversight, inconsistent curriculum standards, and children's failure to achieve at grade level (Green-Hennessy, 2014). The National Education Association (NEA) and teachers' unions oppose homeschooling on the grounds that parents lack teacher credentialing and training in effective instruction. Furthermore, questions have been raised about the social isolation that children may experience when they are homeschooled and denied opportunities to participate in extracurricular school functions.

Advocates report that students who are homeschooled score above average on standardized achievement tests. Ray (2015) noted that homeschooled African American children averaged significantly higher scores on math, reading, and language tests than did African American children who were enrolled in public schools. Researchers have also determined that many homeschooled students are as well-prepared for college level math courses as their public schooled peers (Wilkens et al., 2015). Concerns that homeschooled children would lack social skill development have not been evident. Observers have noted that homeschooled children tend to exhibit fewer behavior problems and generally are quite mature, self-confident, and socially adept for their age. This may be attributed to the fact that they often have had opportunities to interact with peers as well as adult role models from diverse backgrounds during field trips, volunteer experiences, and participation in community activities. Vaughn et al. (2015) also found that homeschooled adolescents held unfavorable views of drugs and alcohol and were less likely than their public school peers to use these substances.

Parents have many decisions to make on behalf of their children, one of which is how to provide them with the best education possible. Their personal beliefs, values, goals, and expectations will serve to guide their ultimate choices. As a result, what works for one family may not necessarily be appropriate for another. Yet, many questions remain to be answered. Is homeschooling in a child's best interest? Does homeschooling isolate children from their peers and reality? Should parents be expected to meet certain requirements before they homeschool children?

**homeschool** parent-led, home-based education.

The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) mandated free screening, special education services, and civil rights protection, and marked a turning point in public attitude and support for individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

Dual-income families became the norm during this period. Financial pressures made it difficult for fathers to remain as the sole breadwinner. More than fifty-percent of mothers with children younger than age 5 sought full- and part-time paid employment (Leibowitz & Klerman, 1995). As a result, many children spent their days in out-of-home child care programs. Families again began having fewer children and changed some of their child-rearing practices. Fathers assumed some responsibility for children's care and household duties out of necessity (Gershuny & Robinson,

1988). The media and others warned parents that day care was harmful to children's intellectual and psychological development (Belsky & Rovine, 1988; Barglow, Vaughn, & Molitor, 1987). This only added to the guilt that parents were already feeling, so they tried to compensate for their absence by spending concentrated periods of "quality" time together whenever possible. In fact, researchers discovered that working parents were actually spending more time engaged in activities with their children than parents had in previous decades (Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Children's safety also became a predominant parental concern because of the amount of time they were away from home. As a result, parents dedicated considerable effort to teaching children about sexual abuse prevention, installing safety devices, and monitoring children's whereabouts.

Parents relied heavily on time-out, praise, and rewards to reinforce children's behavior. However, they were also reluctant to establish "too many" rules, criticize children's behavior, or use disciplinary measures that might be upsetting or reduce a child's self-esteem. Parents coached children to be independent and self-confident and tolerated their questioning of authority. As the 1990s drew to an end, it became evident that the American family and the way the current generation of children, commonly labeled "Generation Me," were being raised had changed.

Twenty-first century parents continue to experience new pressures and opportunities. Millions of jobs lost during the 2007–2009 recession led to extensive unemployment, poverty, and homelessness—trends that have been difficult to reverse. As a result, one in five U.S. children under the age of 18 lives in poverty, one of the highest rates among developed countries worldwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Parents struggle with increased drug use and abuse among their children as illicit substances became easier to obtain. They maintain busy lifestyles and try to balance work and family responsibilities. They have been blamed for escalating juvenile delinquency, gun violence, and early sexual activity rates, because of their seemingly lax parental control. They try to protect their children who are growing up in a digital age from overexposure to too much technology and social media, and struggle to keep their family connected.

Despite these challenges, 21st century parents have benefited from research advances and improved access to parenting information in books, articles, and on websites. As a result, they are often better informed about the importance of supporting children's health, nutrition, and early brain development. Today's parents are more aware of the need to seek professional consultation when a child's development may not be proceeding as expected. However, there are also times when parents may be overwhelmed by too much information or confused when contrasting viewpoints are presented. It is easy now to become a seeming "expert" in a variety of fields simply by self-promotion on social media.

Parents are also beginning to understand why it is important to participate in children's education. They purchase the latest electronic toys, learning videos, enroll children in private schools, and work with children at home in hopes of giving them an educational advantage. Some parents have taken this a step farther and chosen to homeschool their children. These trends are representative of the contemporary milieu that parents must decipher and act upon, and that may bode well for children and parents alike. Today's parents, like parents throughout history, continue to strive to create conditions and opportunities that may well make life better for their children than what they may have experienced.

## 1-2c A Nation of Immigrants

The historical overview of parenting in the United States outlined in the previous section highlighted the basic factors which have led to parental approaches that are considered fundamental to an American identity. The historical timeline also encompassed significant differences in parenting practices brought to the United States by immigrant families—and entire communities in some cases. A brief look at how their ideas have



**Photo 1-5** The 1970s marked an era of humanitarian concern. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ppmsca-03128]