Household & Family Session 5 – Birth and Childhood

"Was there a move towards more permissive treatment of children?"

Husbands have not always expressed concern about their wife's condition during childbirth.

(Quote 1) Nicholas Blundell, recorded in 1706: *"My wife felt the pains of labour coming upon her. Captain Fazakerly and I went a-coursing!"*

Bastardy

Children born out of wedlock always represented a very small proportion of births in England throughout the early modern period.

TABLE – ILLEGITIMACY

1590	**4,6% of baptisms**
1600	**3.5%**
1650	**0.5%**
1670	**1.5%**
1740	**3.0%**
1770	**5.5%**
1800	**5.0%**

A period of high inflation and economic disruption due to a succession of bad harvests in the 1580s and 1590s led to the frustration of marriage plans for many couples and a rise in illegitimate births.

The spread of Puritan moral attitudes among the parish elite and their increasing concern for the burden on the Poor Rate, brought bastardy and pre-nuptial pregnancy under closer scrutiny in local communities. As a result, the number of illegitimate births dropped considerably during the 17th century. Bastardy levels were at their lowest during the period from the 1620s until the 1650s, when Puritan influence was at its greatest.

Bastardy became confined increasingly to the lower ranks in society.

Levels grew again during the 18th century as the number of landless poor increased.

(Quote 2) Conditions were desperate for some. Francis **Place**, a London labourer in the 1790s, described the hopelessness of the situation faced by many of the urban poor:

"As the number of their children increases, hope leaves them. How their hearts sink as toil becomes useless."

Many children born to the poor were either abandoned or deliberately killed.

One poor man in Wakefield *"hanged his own child to death for taking a piece of bread to eat it."*

Founded in 1552, Christ's Hospital was the only establishment in London that had been set up to look after abandoned children. However, after 1676 the Hospital made no provision for illegitimate babies.

(Quote 3) The situation was desperate in the early 18th century when retired shipwright, **Captain Thomas Coram's** walks through London's East End: *"afforded him frequent occasions of seeing young children exposed, sometimes alive, sometimes dead, and sometimes dying, which affected him extremely."*

IMAGE – CAPTAIN THOMAS CORAM

In 1741, after 17 years of struggling to raise funds through subscriptions, **Coram** succeeded in opening his London Foundling Hospital: *"to prevent the frequent murders of poor miserable children at their birth, and to suppress the inhuman custom of exposing new-born infants to perils in the streets, or left at night at the doors of church-wardens or Overseers of the Poor."*

IMAGE – FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

Among the Hospital's artistic patrons were Coram's friend William Hogarth, who decorated its walls with his pictures and those of his friends, and George Frederic Handel, who gave benefit performances of his works in the Hospital Chapel.

Each year, some 3-4,000 infants were brought to the Foundling Hospital.

However, despite Coram's best intentions, it became a *"charnel house for the dead"*. Out of 15,000 children admitted in the first four years, 10,000 died. In fact, the setting up of public institutions like this probably increased the practice of abandonment by desperate parents.

Conditions for children of the rural poor could be just as terrible as for those in the towns and cities.

(Quote 4) William Huntingdon, a Methodist preacher, remembered his childhood as the son of an agricultural day-labourer:

"Suffering with hunger, cold and almost nakedness so embittered my life in childhood that I often wished secretly that I had been a brute, for then I could have filled my belly in the fields."

Bridal pregnancy

Bridal pregnancy was quite common in the 16th century, as it was the custom in all levels of society to have sexual relations some time before a formal wedding ceremony took place.

TABLE - BRIDAL PREGNANCY (births within 6 months of marriage)

1590	**31.5%**	**(35% brought to court)**
1630	**20.0%**	**(73% brought to court)**
1670	**15.0%**	
1690	**10.0%**	
1710	**11.0%**	
1770	**35.0%**	

Changing moral attitudes in the early 17th century are indicated by the substantial growth in the number of women who were brought before the church courts because they were pregnant at the time of marriage and bridal pregnancy gradually became restricted to the poor labouring classes.

Changing social attitudes led to a more general growth in both bastardy and pre-nuptial pregnancy in the second half of the 18th century.

IMAGE – PREGNANT BRIDE

REFER TO TABLES ON BRIDAL PREGNANCY AND ILLEGITIMACY

A growth of emotional bonds?

Mortality levels among babies and children remained high throughout our period.

TABLE - MORTALITY RATES

	Circa 1625	**Circa 1675**
Age	**Rate per 1,000**	**Rate per 1,000**
0-1	**128**	**142**
1-4	**72**	**97**
5-9	**36**	**40**
10-14	**41**	**21**
	277	**300**

Almost one third of children in all levels of society died before the age of 15, but the most dangerous age was from birth until 5 years. The situation was at its worst in London where, in the 1720s and 1730s, almost three quarters of all children born in the City died before the age of 5. This figure rose to over 90% of children in the parish workhouses.

From the mid-17th century, the mortality rates among children over the age of 10 years halved and, once a person reached 15 years of age, there was a fair chance of living to a ripe old age.

There is contradictory evidence as to whether these high mortality rates resulted in a lack of parental affection towards children. The theory is that parents would not invest emotional capital in their children if they were likely to die at an early age.

(Quote 6) In the late 16th century, the French writer, **Montaigne,** commented: *"I have lost two or three children, not without regret, but without great sorrow."*

(Quote 7) On the other hand, in 1650, **a Puritan woman** recorded:
"Two years ago I buried a child, which was a very great trouble to me to part with, and then I was more fully convinced of sin, which caused my burden to be the greater, so that I could seldom have any other thought but of desperation."

For some fathers, the death of a daughter might cause less obvious grief than the loss of a son and heir.

(Quote 8) The Lancashire gentleman **William Blundell** commented on the death of his sixth daughter in 1653:
"My wife has much disappointed my hopes in bringing forth a daughter, which, finding herself not so welcome in this world as a son, hath made already a discreet choice of a better."

Child mortality was so high that it was not until the 17th century that children who had died in infancy or youth began to be recorded on family tombs.

An early example is the memorial to Lady Margaret Leigh, of Fulham, who died with her baby in childbirth in 1605.

IMAGE – LADY MARGARET LEIGH

The image depicts Lady Margaret suckling her child at her breast.

Another is the swaddled effigy of the infant child of Sir John St. John Lydiard, of Trezoze, Wiltshire, who died in 1634.

IMAGE – CHILD OF SIR JOHN LYDIARD

There is some written evidence that affection may well have increased as children grew older, having survived the most dangerous first few years of infancy.

(Quote 9) This growth of affection is illustrated in the memoirs of **Simonds d'Ewes.** In 1636, he wrote on the loss of his only surviving son, aged 21 months:

"We both found the sorrow for the loss of this child, on whom we had bestowed so much care and affection, and whose delicate favour and bright grey eye was so deeply imprinted on our heart, for to surpass our grief for the decease of his three elder brothers, who dying almost as soon as they were born, were not so endeared to us as this was."

(Quote 10) In her mid-17th century diary, **Lady Anne Clifford** demonstrates a strong maternal concern for her three year old daughter during a bout of fever:

"Upon the 12th of February the Child had a bitter Fit of her Ague again, insomuch I was fearful of her that I could hardly sleep all night. So I beseeched God Almighty to be Merciful to me and spare her Life.

Upon the 21st the Child had an extreme Fit of the Ague and the Doctor sat by her all the Afternoon and gave her a Salt Powder to put in her beer."

The decline in the practice of giving a new-born the same name as a deceased sibling suggests an increasing recognition of each child's individuality. This practice had died out completely by the late 18th century.

Portraits of Elizabethan children are very stiff and formal. Here are some examples.

IMAGE - YOUNG ARABELLA STEWART WITH HER DOLL

IMAGE - CHILD WITH A SOOTHER, c. 1590

IMAGE - CHILD WITH AN APPLE, c. 1590

Family portraits of the 16th century and early 17th century show the children dutifully standing or sitting beside their parents with barely a smile on their faces and looking just like miniature adults.

IMAGE - FAMILY OF WILLIAM BROOKE, LORD COBHAM 1567

IMAGE – FAMILY OF SIR THOMAS LUCY, c. 1640

A renewed interest in family genealogy from the late 16th century led to the Long Gallery was added to many of the great English houses, where paintings of the family heirs were placed alongside their illustrious ancestors.

IMAGE - LONG GALLERY AT HADDON HALL, DERBYSHIRE

By the 18th century, the formal family portraits were being replaced by paintings showing children in more affectionate, natural or playful poses.

IMAGE – EDWARD & MARY HOWARD WITH PET DOG

IMAGE – GIRL WITH COCKATOO, c. 1690

IMAGE – REV'D ROBERT CHOLMONDELEY WITH HIS WIFE & CHILD, 1743

IMAGE – LEIGH FAMILY, 1768

IMAGE – COPLEY FAMILY, 1776

However, formal poses remained popular well into the 18th century. Like this portrait of the

IMAGE – THOMPSON FAMILY OF KIRBY HALL, YORKS, 1733

Changing attitudes to children's upbringing

There is a great deal of evidence that attitudes towards the upbringing of children changed in England during the early modern period.

Much of the change is attributable to rise and fall of four contrasting philosophical views on the nature of the new-born child:

1. The Calvinist view

The Calvinist view was that the child is born in Original Sin, and must be reared by repression of its will and its subordination to its parents and others in authority.

Obedience and deference were hallmarks of the hierarchical society.

A favourite Protestant Bible quotation was: *"If thou smite him with the rod, thou shalt deliver his soul from Hell."*

This Calvinist view was widespread in the 16th and early 17th centuries, and much advice was given to parents that the child's will should be broken to ensure its obedience.

(Quote 11) John Robinson, a Puritan pastor, wrote:

"Surely there is in all children ... a stubbornness, and stoutness of mind arising from natural pride, which must in the first place be broken and beaten down."

(Quote 12) Lady Jane Grey recorded during her strict Protestant childhood in the 1530s and 1540s:

"When I am in the presence either of father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfectly as God made the world, else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently sometimes with pinches, nips and bobs, and some ways I will not name for the honour I bear them, so without measure misordered that I think myself in Hell."

The training of children was often directly equated with the breaking in of young horses or hunting dogs.

A late-16th century Dutchman called Batty (!) had a theory that God had specially formed human buttocks so they could be severely beaten without incurring serious permanent injury!

(Quote 13) However, some 16th century Humanists adopted very different attitudes to discipline. **Sir Thomas More** reminded his children:

"I never could endure to hear you cry. You know, for example, how often I kissed you, how seldom I whipped you. My whip was invariably a peacock's tail. Even this I wielded hesitantly and gently, so that sorry welts might not disfigure your tender seats. Brutal and unworthy to be called father is he who does not himself weep at the tears of his child."

IMAGE - SIR THOMAS MORE'S FAMILY, 1526 (Feint lineart)

2. Tabla Rasa

In the second half of the 17th century, John Locke introduced the idea of the child being like a blank sheet or tablet, a Tabla Rasa, neither good nor evil, its mind and nature being open to being moulded by education and experience.

This theory had been proposed earlier in the century.

(Quote 14) In 1628, **John Earle** had argued:

"The child is .... the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple... His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with the observations of the world... He knows no evil."

3. The Child's character is pre-determined

In the 18th century, it became fashionable to believe that the child's character and potentialities are pre-determined – genetically determined as we would call it. Environment and education can reinforce good habits and restrain bad ones, but cannot change the pre-determined nature of the child.

(Quote 15) In 1744, **Lady Hervey** commented that children: *"acquire arts but not qualities; the latter whether good or bad, grow like their features: time enlarges, but does not make them."*

4. The Utopian View

In the mid-18th century, Rousseau espoused the Utopian ideal of the Noble Savage, the view that the child is born good and is corrupted only by experience in society.

(Quote 16) In 1688, **Aphra Benn** maintained: *"God makes all things good: Man meddles with them and they become evil."*

Deference to parents

Sometimes a fear of Divine Retribution was instilled to reinforce the subordination of the child to the will of the parents, and particularly the father.

(Quote 17) In 1685, **Edmund Verney** used the example of the death of his son Ralph as a warning to his younger brother:
"I exhort you to be wholly ruled and guided by me, and to be perfectly obedient to me in all things according to your bounded duty ... For shall you do otherwise and contrary in the least ... I am afraid that you will be in that evil circumstance snatched away by death in your youth, as your brother was last week."

A peculiarly English custom that lasted well into the early-17th century was for children, even as adults, to stand, kneel or doff their hats in the presence of their parents, and to be blessed by them on arrival and at departure from home.

Deference continued in the mode of address by a child to his parents. A son would commonly address his father as *"Sir"* or *"Most Honoured Father"*, and sign letters *"Your humble, obedient son"*.

In 1737, 18 year old Elizabeth Robinson was still addressing her parents as *"Sir"* and *"Madam"*. Ten years later, her brother Matthew at University addressed his father *"Honoured Sir"*.

However, modes of address were beginning to change during the 18th century. In the 1720s, John Verney addressed his parents as *"Dear Papa and Mamma"*.

Changes in attitudes to discipline

Attitudes to the disciplining of children were changing, too.

(Quote 18) In **"Some Thoughts upon Education"**, published in 1693, **John Locke** argued that the child is like an animal at birth, and that its conscience develops later. It follows, therefore, that the treatment of the child and its education should change accordingly, as the child grows older:

"Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it... You shall have him your obedient subject (as is fit) whilst he is a child, and your affectionate friend when he is a man."

Locke's more compassionate ideas gained much popular support, but the doctrine of Original Sin remained strong among the ranks of the Christian Evangelicals in the lower and middling ranks of society until the end of the 18th century.

(Quote 19) The middle-class Evangelical reformer of the poor, **Hannah More**, wrote in 1799:

"It is a fundamental error to consider children as innocent beings, whose little weaknesses may perhaps want some correction, rather than as beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil disposition, which it should be the great end of education to rectify."

(Quote 10) John Wesley's Sermon on the Education of Children in 1783 reinforced this message:

"Break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterwards subject to the will of God."

This child was obviously not broken!

IMAGE - BORED CHILD

18th century advice books were generally less supportive of strict punishment.

(Quote 21) James Nelson's "Essay on the Government of Children", published in 1756 suggested:

"Severe and frequent whipping is, I think, very bad practice: It inflames the skin, it puts the blood in a ferment; and there is beside, meanness, a degree of ignominy attending it, which makes it very unbecoming."

However, Nelson's book devoted a total of 200 pages to the damage done by excessive permissiveness.

Despite the advice books, the elite and professional families of the late 18th and early 19th centuries tended to treat their children much less strictly than previous generations.

IMAGE - LADY COCKBURNE & HER SONS, 1773

IMAGE – JOHN ANGERSTEIN'S CHILDREN, 1808

This laxity in discipline did not suite all commentators.

(Quote 22) Richard Costeker complained in 1732 that aristocratic sons were: *"degenerated into foppery and effeminacy. Thousands are ruined by the very effect of maternal love."*

In some families, the permissiveness was taken to extremes.

At a dinner for foreign ministers, Lord Holland allowed his young son, Charles Fox, to jump into a bowl of cream in the middle of the table and splash about at his pleasure.

(Quote 23) In the 1760s, **Lord Holland** instructed for his son's upbringing:
"Let nothing be done to break his spirit. The world will do that business fast enough."

In 1763, **he** wrote to Charles at school:
"I much wanted to see your hair cut to a reasonable length and gentlemanlike shortness. You and some Eton boys wear it as no other people in the world do. It is effeminate; it is ugly; and it must be inconvenient. You gave me hopes that if I desired it, you would cut it. I will be much obliged if you will."

Excessive permissiveness towards the upbringing of children could even be found in the homes of some military men.

(Quote 24) In about 1800, it was commented upon that **Admiral Graves** never had his children's hair cut:
"None of the children are allowed to be constricted, and when three or four of them cry at once for the same thing and run tearing and screaming about the room together with their long tails, the affect on strangers is rather surprising."

END OF PART ONE

Feeding Baby

Though some early examples of feeding bottles have survived, breast-feeding was almost universal for infants until the age of 18 months or two years.

For much of our period, in families of the greater and middling sort, the child was usually fed by a wet nurse rather than the mother, due partly to the husband's desire for the early resumption of sexual relations.

Through most of our period doctors continued to follow the Roman physician Galen's centuries-old prescription that: *"carnal copulation .. troubleth the blood, and so in consequence the milk."*

Despite this, some more enlightened fathers argued the benefits of maternal breast-feeding.

In 1596, the 9th Earl of Northumberland maintained: *"Mother's teats are best answerable to the health of the child."*

The Puritan Benjamin Brand, who died in 1636, had it proudly proclaimed on his tombstone that his wife bore him twelve children: *"all nursed with her unborrowed milk."*

While on the memorial to the wife of the 2nd Earl of Manchester was inscribed, in 1658, the fact that seven of her children: *" she nursed with her own breasts ... Her children shall rise up and call her blessed."*

In some families it seems to have been acceptable for female relations to share the experience of feeding the newborn child.

(Quote 25) In 1654, **Lady Anne Clifford** recorded shortly after the birth of her first great grandchild:

"My daughter of Thanet was there at the Birth and Christening of this first grandchild of hers. So as he sucked the milk of her breast many times, she having with her now youngest child, the lady Anne Tufton, being about nine weeks old. But my grandchild, the Lady Margaret Coventry, after my daughter of Thanet's departure from Croome, gave this Child of hers suck herself, as her mother had done most of her children."

IMAGE - LADY MARY BOYLE IN 1730 BREAST-FEEDING HER INFANT, but it probably represents an artistic reference to the Madonna and child, rather than a true image of the mother feeding the child.

However, employing a wet-nurse was a common practice throughout our period.

IMAGE - 18th CENTURY WET NURSE

(Quote 26) In 1716, **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu** wrote:
"I grant that Nature has furnished the Mother with milk to nourish the child: but I maintain at the same time that if she can find better milk elsewhere, she ought to prefer it without hesitation."

Careful selection of a wet-nurse was essential, as it was commonly believed that elements of the nurse's character would be passed to the child through the milk. According to Dr. Cadogan's advice book "An Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children", published in 1748, a good wet-nurse could cost £25 a year.

Not all families were so choosy. As the demand for wet-nurses rose in the early 18th century, those who wanted them had to resort increasingly to women of the lower classes.

This period 1720 to 1751 coincides with the so-called "gin epidemic, when gin became very cheap and drinking it increased in England from some 2 million gallons to about 11 million each year. There was widespread concern that gin was inciting the 'inferior sort of people' to commit criminal acts, making them unfit for work, and destroying their health and that of their children, born and unborn

IMAGE - GIN LANE

Hogarth's famous illustration entitled "Gin Lane" depicts a drunken wet-nurse with the top half of her dress open and a baby falling out of her arms. In another part of that scene, a woman is pouring gin down a baby's throat. Wet nurses often neglected the children put in their care regardless of whether they were drunk or not.

The death rate of infants fed by wet nurses was double that of those fed by their mothers, and Dr. Cadogan claimed that the children of the poor were healthier than those of the rich, because they were fed with their own mothers' milk, rather than a contaminated supply from a wet-nurse.

Ill-health in adult life was sometimes blamed on unsuitable wet-nurses in infancy.

(Quote 27) John Stedman, a military officer's son born in 1774, recorded:

"Four different wet nurses were alternately turned out of doors on my account, and to the care of whom I had been entrusted, my poor mother being in too weak a condition to suckle me herself. The first of these bitches was turned off for having nearly suffocated me in bed; she having slept upon me'til I was smothered, and with skill and difficulty restored to life. The second had let me fall from her arms on the stones 'til my head was almost fractured, and lay several hours in convulsions. The third carried me under a mouldered old brick wall which fell in a heap of rubbish just at the moment we passed by it, while the fourth proved to be a thief, and deprived me even of my very baby clothes. Thus was poor Johnny Stedman weaned some months before the usual time."

Fashions were changing even among the elite families.

In the 1770s, the Duchess of Devonshire was one of the first aristocratic mothers to breast-feed her own children, and the practice quickly spread, despite the social inconvenience.

IMAGE - MATERNAL BREAST-FEEDING

By the end of the 18th century, England was leading the way in maternal feeding, and it has been argued by some historians that this was a major factor that stimulated parental affection in the period.

IMAGE – HUSBAND WITH WIFE BREAST FEEDING BABY

In 1784 a German visitor to England, **Johann von Archenholz**, remarked with surprise: *"Even women of quality nurse their children."*

And **Thomas Gisborne's** handbook of 1797 advised the new mother: *"The first of the parental duties .. is to be herself the nurse of her own offspring."*

Swaddling

From the time of the birth of the child, there was an excessive concern with the moulding of a well-formed body.

From the beginning of our period until the mid-17th century, it was the common practice for infants to be tightly wrapped in swaddling bandages for at least the first four months of their lives.

IMAGE – CORNELIA BURCH, AGED 2 MONTHS, 1561

Medical opinion had it that *"for tenderness the limbs of a child may easily and soon bow and bend and take diverse shapes."*

Swaddling induced a slower heart beat, more sleep, less crying, and allowed the infant to be carried about, and even hung up, like a parcel.

(Quote 28) John Locke complained:
"The child has hardly left the mother's womb, it has hardly begun to move and stretch its limbs when it is deprived of its freedom. It is wrapped in swaddling bands, laid down with its head fixed, its legs stretched out, and its arms by its sides, it is wound round and round with linen and bandages of all sorts, so that it cannot move."

IMAGE - CHOLMONDELEY SISTERS

(Quote 29) In 1748 **Dr. Cadogan** commented:
"At the least annoyance which arises, he is hung down from a nail like a bundle of old clothes and while, without hurrying, the nurse attends to her business, the unfortunate one remains thus crucified. All who have been found in this situation had a purple face, the violently compressed chest not allowing the blood to circulate ... The patient was believed to be tranquil because he did not have the strength to cry out."

(Quote 30) The practice of swaddling was falling out of favour by this time.

Dr. Buchan wrote in 1769:
"The poor child, as soon as it came into the world, had as many rollers and wrappers applied to its body as if every bone had been fractured at birth ... In several parts of Britain the practice of rolling children with so many bandages is now in some measure laid aside."

(Quote 31) By 1784, **Johann von Archenholz** was able to remark:
"The children are not swaddled - they are covered with light clothing which leaves all their movements free."

Though infants became free of their swaddling bands, girls and young women continued to suffer terrible restrictions in the cause of fashion and good bearing.

In the early 17th century, Lady Anne Clifford's daughter was encased in a whalebone corset from the age of three.

IMAGE - CHILD'S CORSET

When **George Evelyn's 2-year old daughter** died in 1665, her doctor said it was because: *"her iron bodice was her pain, and had hindered the lungs to grow."*

Her breast bone had been pressed inward and two ribs were broken.

IMAGE - DAMAGE DONE TO A GIRL'S BONES

(Quote 32) William Law's handbook on child care, published in 1729, recorded the case of a girl who died at the age of 20. The autopsy found that:

"Her ribs had grown into her liver, and that her other entrails were much hurt by being crushed together with her stays, which her mother had ordered to be twitched so straight that it often brought tears to her eyes whilst the maid was dressing her."

(Quote 33) In his novel "Emile", **Rousseau** wrote:

"I cannot but think that this abuse, pushed in England to an inconceivable point, would cause in the end the degeneration of the race ... It is not agreeable to see a woman cut in two like a wasp."

Some 18th century girls suffered the constraints of other infernal contraptions.

(Quote 34) Mary Butt, a parson's daughter, wrote of her childhood experience:

"It was the fashion then for children to wear iron collars round the neck, with a back-board strapped over the shoulders. To one of them I was subjected from my sixth to my thirteenth year. It was put on in the morning and seldom taken off till late in the evening, and I generally did my lessons standing in stocks with this stiff collar round my neck."

(Quote 35) Lucy Aikin suffered too:

"There were backboards, iron collars, stocks for the feet, and a frightful kind of neck-swing in which we were suspended every morning, whilst one of the teachers was lacing our stays, all which contrivances were intended and imagined to improve the figure and the air. Nothing was thought so awkward and vulgar as anything approaching to a stoop. 'Hold up your head, Miss', was the constant cry. I wonder any of us kept our health."

Until well into the 18th century, it was common for both girls and boys up to the age of about 7 to be clothed in the same form of ankle length dress, covered by a pinafore or apron.

IMAGE - MASTER JOHN HEATHCOTE, 1770

IMAGE - BOY'S DRESS, C. 1810

Once beyond the age of 7, children were generally dressed as miniature versions of adults.

IMAGE – CHILDREN'S DRESS 1710-1750

IMAGE - CHILDREN'S DRESS 1760-1790

Adolescence

There was a strong contemporary consciousness of "adolescence" or "youth" as a distinct stage of life between the ages of 15 and 26.

IMAGE - BROWNE BROTHERS, 1598

(Quote 36) In the late 16th century, **Thomas Wythorne** wrote:
"After the age of childhood, beginneth the age named adolescency which continueth until twenty and five... n this age Cupid and Venus were and would be very busy to trouble the quiet minds of young folk."

Problems of adolescence increased as the length of time between sexual maturity and marriage grew.

(Quote 37) In Shakespeare's "A Winter's Tale", **the shepherd** remarked:
"I would there were no age between 16 and 23, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting."

Children of better-off families were brought up by nurses, governesses and tutors, then sent to boarding school, while the "middling and lesser sort" sent their children to be apprentices or servants in another man's household.

TABLE – RALPH JOSSELIN'S CHILDREN

IMAGE – WEAVER'S APPRENTICES

It has been estimated that two thirds of boys and three quarters of girls lived away from home during part of their childhood.

The practice reduced tension between parents and children, but perhaps the development of affectionate relationships was also affected.

(Quote 38) A Venetian visitor to England in about 1500 remarked:

"The want of affection in the English is shown clearly in the case of their children. After they have kept them at home till the age of seven or nine at the most, they put them out, both boys and girls, to hard service in the households of others, contracting them there for another seven or nine years. These are called apprentices."

The "fostering out" of adolescent youths as apprentices or live-in servants helped maintain order among a potentially unruly social group. Masters were acting 'in loco parentis' and were, to a large extent, responsible for their apprentices' and servants' behaviour.

The relative infrequency of appearances of apprentices or servants before the courts suggests that masters generally exercised effective control over their charges.

Many masters dealt severely with their servants. One London apprentice was flogged, salted and then held naked to the fire. Another was beaten with a boat-hook so severely that his hip was broken, while a female apprentice was stripped naked, hung up by her thumbs and given twenty one lashes.

Fortunately, not all masters were so brutal, and there are examples of wills written by apprentices and servants leaving money or personal items to masters who had obviously treated them like foster-children.

IMAGE – TAILOR'S APPRENTICE