Early History

- Aristotle argued that the most important aspect of adolescence is the ability to choose, and that the self-determination is not unlike some contemporary views that see independence, identity, and career choice as the key themes of adolescence.

  - Also recognized adolescents’ egocentrism, commenting once that adolescents think they know everything and are quite sure about it.
The 20th and 21st Centuries

• Inventionist view—Adolescence is a sociohistorical creation.
  – Schools, work, and economics are important dimensions of this view

• 1890-1920s known as “Age of Adolescence”
  – Lawmakers enacted a great deal of compulsory legislation aimed at youth
Adolescents in the United States

- Special interest to researchers is how social contexts influence adolescent development
  - Contexts- the setting in which development occurs
    - Historical
    - Social
    - Economic
    - Cultural

- Social policy is the course of action designed by the national government to influence the welfare of its citizens.
Theories of Adolescent Development

- 4 theoretical orientations to development:
  - Psychoanalytical
  - Cognitive
  - Behavioral and social cognitive
  - Ecological
Psychoanalytical Theories

- Psychoanalytical theories describe development as primarily unconscious and heavily colored by emotion.
- Psychoanalytical theorists emphasize that behavior is merely a surface characteristic and that a true understanding of development requires analyzing the symbolic meanings of behavior and the deep inner workings of the mind.
- Also stress that early experiences with parents extensively shape development.
Psychoanalytical Theories

• Freud’s Theory
  – The id consists of instincts, which are an individual’s reservoir of psychic energy
    • It is totally unconscious and has no contact with reality
  – The ego deals with the demands of reality
    • Also called the “executive branch” of personality because it makes rational decisions
  – The id and the ego have no morality (they do not take into account whether something is right or wrong)
Research in Adolescent Development

- Research Designs
  - Experimental research
    - An experiment in which one or more factors believed to influence the behavior being studied are manipulated, while other factors are held constant
      - Independent variable is the factor that is manipulated
      - Dependent variable is the fact that remains the same
Research in Adolescent Development

- Time Span of Research
  - Cross-sectional Research
    - Involves studying people all at one time
    - Main advantage is that researchers do not have to wait for the individuals to grow older
  - Longitudinal Research
    - The same individuals are studied over a period of time usually several years or more