Individual in society

Is it nature (biology) or nurture (environment)?
The study of self in society

- How does identity and individuality get established within the social context?
Nature as biology

- Biology seeks to establish the significance of heredity as seen in evolution. Psychologists study twins separated at birth to establish what is nature, what is nurture. For example, see Nancy Segal’s *Entwined Lives* and studies done at the University of Minnesota, psychology department.
Evolution

- Evolution seeks to discover what links we have to our animal pasts. For gender links, see Richard Wrangham & Dale Peterson’s *Demonic Males*. This study tries to establish an evolutionary basis for male violence. An evolutionary corrolary for women is Sarah Blaffer Hrdy’s *Mother Nature: A History of Mother, Infants & Natural Selection* which seeks to establish a link between evolution and biology.
Eugenics

- Sociologists don’t like these arguments because of the history of eugenics and the Holocaust. See Richard Lewontin’s *It Ain’t Necessarily So: The Dream of the Human Genome and Other Illusions*, for a critique of this perspective. Also, anything by Ruth Hubbard.
Nurture: Socialization

- Socialization is the process of social interaction through which people acquire personality and learn the way of life of their society through their life course.
- Agents of socialization
- Primary/secondary socialization
- Unsocialized people: “the wild child” (see Truffaut’s film, “The Wild Child,” also “Nell”). Genie, the little girl raised in abusive isolation. The condition known as “autism” as portrayed in “Rainman.”
Stages of socialization

- Jean Piaget’s stages of development on how we learn to think and George Herbert Mead’s stages of social development
Sensori-motor stage

- Birth to age 2. Infants do not distinguish self from environment. They do not realize effect of action on environment and that objects have permanent existence. Spontaneously imitate others, but not able to take on roles.
Preoperational stage

- Ages 2-7. Limited understanding of cause and effect. Through play and games learn role-taking. Begin to learn roles of others and particular other—parents.
Concrete operational stage

- Age 7-12. Children handle mental concepts like number and causality. May take social roles of others but not have abstract understanding yet.
Formal operational

- Age 13 on. Children achieve formal, abstract thought and understand the generalized other—attitudes and views of society as whole. Learn looking-glass self.
Other theories

- Freud’s psycho-sexual stages of development
- Kohlberg’s stages of moral development
- Gilligan’s stages of moral development based in gender differences
Life course

- Societal stages of life is called the life course (how society defines birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, aging, death)
Social interaction

- Process by which people act toward and respond to other people. Acts and symbols culturally defined. Important concepts—presentation of self, impression management.
- Social construction of space and time.