What characterizes young children’s socioemotional development?

**The Self**

- **Initiative Versus Guilt**—According to Erikson, in early childhood children must discover what kind of person they will become. On their own *initiative*, children at this stage explore their social world and use their own skills to make things happen. *Conscience* is the governor of initiative, and Erikson believed that their mistakes, if punished without reason, can cause children to feel shame and guilt, which may lower self-esteem.
  - **Initiative**: enthusiasm for new activities; governed by *conscience*
  - **Guilt**: results when children’s efforts result in failure or criticism; lowers self-esteem

- **Self-Understanding and Understanding Others**—According to Erikson, the young child has begun to develop self-understanding, which includes a representation of self and the substance of self-conceptions.

**Emotional Development**

- **Self-Conscious Emotions**—To experience *self-conscious emotions*, children must be able to refer to themselves and be aware of themselves as distinct from others. Pride, shame, embarrassment, and guilt are examples of self-conscious emotions. In early childhood, emotions such as pride and guilt become more common.

- **Understanding Emotion**—In early childhood, children show an increased ability to talk about emotions and increased understanding of emotions. Between 2 to 4 years of age, children considerably increase the number of terms they use to describe emotions. They are also learning about the causes and consequences of feelings. When they are 4 to 5 years of age, children show an increased ability to reflect on emotions.

- **Regulating Emotions**—Emotion regulation plays a key role in children’s ability to manage interactions with others.

- Emotion-coaching and emotion-dismissing parents Emotion-coaching parents monitor children’s emotions and view negative emotions as opportunities for teaching; emotion-dismissing parents view their role as to deny, ignore, or change negative emotions. Emotion-coaching parents are less rejecting and more nurturing than emotion-dismissing parents.

- **Regulation of Emotion and Peer Relations**—Moody and emotionally negative children experience greater rejection by peers, whereas emotionally positive children are more popular.

**Moral Development**—Moral development involves the development of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people.

- **Moral Feelings**—In the psychoanalytic view of moral development, self-punitiveness of guilt is responsible for keeping children from committing transgressions; they seek to avoid guilt. *Empathy* results when the person can understand how another feels and possibly anticipate a feeling as a result of an
action. Some believe that this empathetic ability forms a base for the child’s gradual acquisition of values.

- **Moral Reasoning**—In Piaget’s account of how children between the ages of 4 and 12 think about moral issues, he concluded that children go through two stages in how they think about morality:
  - **Heteronomous morality**—From ages 4 to 7, children think of justice and rules as unchangeable properties of the world. The rightness of behavior is judged by considering its consequences, not the intentions of the actor. Heteronomous thinkers believe in immanent justice, the concept that if a rule is broken, punishment will be immediate.
  - **Autonomous morality**—between the ages of 7 and 10, children are in a transitional phase with respect to how they think about morality. Starting at around age 10, children are aware that rules and laws are created by people, so one must consider the intentions of the actor as well as consequences in judging an action.
  - **Immanent Justice**—the heteronomous thinker also believes in immanent justice, the concept that if a rule is broken, punishment will be meted out immediately. The young child believes that a violation is connected automatically to its punishment.
  - **Moral Behavior**—Moral behavior is the focus of the behavioral and social cognitive approaches and holds that the processes of reinforcement, punishment, and imitation explain the development of moral behavior.
  - **Conscience**—conscience refers to an internal regulation of standards of right and wrong that involves an integration of all three components of moral development we have described so far—moral thought, feeling, and behavior.
  - **Parenting and Young Children’s Moral Development**—Research reveals that both parents and peers contribute to children’s moral maturity. Among the most important aspects of the relationship between parents and children contribute to children’s moral development are relational quality, parental discipline, proactive strategies and conversational dialogue.
  - **Relational quality**—Warmth, responsibility, and secure attachment in parent-child relationships are important foundations for moral growth in children. Secure attachment may play an important role in children’s moral development.
  - **Proactive strategies**—The use of strategies such as diversion or talking with children about values may help avert potential misbehavior by children before it takes place.
  - **Conversational dialogue**—Conversations related to moral development, whether intentional or not, can contribute to children’s moral development.

**Gender**—**Gender identity** involves a sense of one’s own gender, including knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of being male or female, which most children can do by about 2 ½ years of age. **Gender roles** are sets of expectations that prescribe how females or males should think, act, and feel. During the preschool years, most children increasingly act in ways that match their culture’s gender roles. **Gender typing** refers to acquisition of a traditional masculine or feminine role.
• Biological Influences
  • Chromosomes and Hormones—Males start to differ from females when genes on the Y chromosome in the male embryo trigger the development of testes rather than ovaries. The testes secrete androgens, which promote the development of male physical sex characteristics. Estrogens influence the development of female physical sex characteristics.
  • Evolutionary psychology view—According to evolutionary psychology, adaptation during human evolution produced psychological sex differences. Critics of this view argue that its claims are backed by speculations rather than evidence and that theorists pay little attention to cultural and individual variations in gender differences.
• Social Influences—Many social scientists argue that psychological gender differences originates in differences in social experiences for females and males.
  • Social theories of gender—Three main social theories of gender have been proposed—social role theory, psychoanalytic theory, and social cognitive theory.
    1. Social role theory states that gender differences result from the contrasting roles of women and men.
      – Gender differences caused by contrasting social roles of women and men
      – Less power, status, and pay for women
      – Women show more cooperation
    2. The psychoanalytic theory of gender stems from Freud’s view that young children are sexually attracted to opposite-sex parents, a view generally discredited today.
      – Preschool child sexually attracted to opposite-sex parent
      – At age 5 to 6, anxious feelings cause identification with same-sex parent
      – Unconsciously adopts same-sex parent’s characteristic behaviors
    3. The social cognitive theory of gender posits that children’s gender development occurs through observing and imitating what other people say and do, and through being rewarded and punished for gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior.
  • Parental influences—Many parents encourage boys and girls to engage in different types of play and activities. Fathers are more likely than mothers to act differently toward sons and daughters.
  • Peer influences—Peers extensively reward and punish gender behavior, and there is greater pressure for boys to conform to a traditional male role than for girls to conform to a traditional female role. Gender influences the composition of children’s groups, the size of groups, and interactions within a group.
• Cognitive Influences—Two cognitive theories stress that individuals actively construct their gender world. The cognitive gender developmental theory states that children acquire gender typing after they identify themselves as a girl or boy. Gender schema theory states that gender typing emerges as children gradually develop gender schemas of gender-appropriate and gender-
inappropriate in their culture. Children are motivated to perceive and act according to their gender schema.

What roles do families play in young children’s development?

Parenting

- Parenting styles—The quality and quantity of time that parents spend with their children are important for development. Baumrind identified four types of parenting styles:
  - Authoritarian parenting is a restrictive, punitive style in which parents impose strict limits and consequences to children’s behavior. Children of authoritarian parents are often unhappy, fearful, and anxious about comparing themselves with others, fail to initiate activity, and have weak communication skills.
  - Authoritative parenting encourages independence but with limits established by parents with children through verbal interchange. Children whose parents are authoritative are often cheerful, self-controlled and self-reliant, and achievement-oriented.
  - Neglectful parenting is a style in which the parent is uninvolved in the child’s life. These children tend to be socially incompetent, don’t handle independence well, and have poor self-control and low self-esteem.
  - Indulgent parenting is a style in which parents are highly involved in the child’s life but place few demands or controls on them. These children often have behavior problems, lack respect for others, and are low achievers.

- Parenting Styles in Context—Evidence linking authoritative parenting with competence on the part of the child occurs in research across a wide range of ethnic groups, social strata, cultures, and family structures, although some exceptions have been found. Researchers have found that aspects of the authoritarian style are sometimes associated with more positive child outcomes than those predicted by Baumrind. For example:
  - Asian American families
    Training yields positive outcomes-like high achievement
  - Latino childrearing
    Encourage development of family and self-identity; requires respect and obedience—several generations living together and helping each other.
  - African American families
    More likely than non-Latino White parents to use physical punishment.

- Punishment—Some research has concluded that corporal punishment is associated with higher levels of immediate compliance and aggression among children and lower levels of moral internalization and mental health.
  - Corporal (physical) punishment
    - Spanking linked to antisocial behaviors
    - Strong emotional support of parents reduces link
    - Associated with immediate compliance or aggression and lower levels of morality
  - Reasons to avoid physical punishment
    - Provides out-of-control role models
    - Punishment instills negative feelings
Fails to tell or show what is expected
– Punishment can be abusive

• Co-parenting—refers to the support that parents provide one another in jointly raising a child. Parental coordination and warmth are linked with children’s prosocial behavior and competence in peer relations.

Child Maltreatment—Whereas many people use the term child abuse to refer to both abuse and neglect, developmentalists increasingly use the term child maltreatment, which acknowledges that maltreatment includes diverse conditions.

• Types of Child Maltreatment—Four main types are:
  o physical abuse is characterized by the infliction of physical injury or otherwise physically harming a child.
  o child neglect is characterized by failure to provide for the child’s basic needs. Child neglect is by far the most common form of child maltreatment.
  o sexual abuse includes fondling a child’s genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.
  o emotional abuse (psychological/verbal abuse/mental injury) includes acts or omissions by parents or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, or emotional problems.

• The Context of Abuse—A combination of factors, including culture, family, and development, likely contribute to child maltreatment.
  a. Regular diet of violence on television
  b. Parents lacking sufficient resources or help
  c. Context of family interactions
  d. Parental history and beliefs

• Developmental Consequences of Abuse—Maltreated children demonstrate poor emotion regulation, attachment problems, and problems in peer relations, difficulty in school, and other psychological problems. They may also display anxiety, depression, conduct order, and delinquency.

Sibling Relationships and Birth Order

• Sibling Relationships—Because there are so many possible sibling combinations, it is difficult to generalize about many aspects of sibling influences. Research evidence suggests that positive aspects of children’s sibling relationship were more strongly related to adjustment than was sibling conflict. Siblings may have more influence than parents in some aspects of development.

• Birth Order—While some evidence exists for birth-order effects, such as that first-born children are more adult-oriented, helpful, conforming, and self-controlled, birth order by itself is not a strong predictor of behavior.

The Changing Family in a Changing Social World—In comparison with most other countries, the United States has the highest number of single-parent families.
• Working Parents—Whether children whose parents both work outside the home receive less attention than children whose mothers stay at home is uncertain. Many researchers find no detrimental effects of maternal employment.

Greater risk of problems if:
  o Work stress spills into home
  o Mother works in child’s first year
  o Type of day care environment may impact

• Children in Divorced Families—While children of divorce show greater adjustment problems (i.e., more likely to have academic problems, be anxious, depressed, less socially responsible), a majority of children in divorced families do not have significant adjustment problems.
  1. Divorce can be advantageous if the stresses associated with an unhappy marriage erode the well-being of children.
  2. When divorced parents’ relationship with each other is harmonious and when they use authoritative parenting, the adjustment of children improves.
  3. Among the factors involved in the child’s risk are prior adjustment, personality, gender, and the custody situation.
  4. Custodial mothers lose 25–50% of pre-divorce income, in comparison to an income loss of only about 10% for custodial fathers.

Communicating with children about divorce
  1. Explain the separation
  2. Explain it is not the child’s fault
  3. Explain it takes time to feel better
  4. Keep door open for more discussion
  5. Provide as much continuity as possible
  6. Provide support for self and children

• Gay Male and Lesbian Parents—Increasingly, gay male and lesbian couples are creating families that include children. Approximately 20 percent of lesbians and 10 percent of gay men are parents. Most children of gay and lesbian parents were born in a heterosexual relationship that ended in divorce. Like heterosexual couples, gay male and lesbian parents vary greatly. Parenthood among lesbians and gay men is controversial. Researchers have found few differences in children growing up with lesbian mothers or gay fathers and children growing up with heterosexual parents.

• Cultural, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Variations
  • Cross-cultural studies have concluded that children’s healthy social development is most effectively promoted by love and at least some moderate parental control.
  • Ethnicity—Families within different ethnic groups in the United States differ in size, structure, composition, reliance on kinship networks, and levels of income and education. Large and extended families are more common among minority groups than among the White majority. Single-parent families are
more common among African Americans and Latinos than among White Americans.

- Socioeconomic status—Low-income families have less access to resources than higher-income families. The differential in access to resources includes nutrition, health care, protection from danger, and enriching educational and socialization opportunities, such as tutoring and lessons in various activities.

How are peer relations, play, and television involved in young children’s development? Peer Relations—As children grow older, they spend an increasing amount of time with their peers, children of about the same age or maturity level. Peers provide a source of information and comparison about the world outside of the family. Peers also evaluate and provide feedback to one another. Good peer relations can be necessary for normal social-emotional development.

- Play’s Functions—Play is a pleasurable activity that is engaged in for its own sake, and its functions and forms vary. Freud and Erikson believed that play helps children to master anxieties and conflicts. Play therapy allows children to work off frustrations and allows the therapist to analyze conflicts and ways of coping. Piaget maintained that play advances cognitive development, and Vygotsky also considered play to be an excellent setting for development. Other theorists have described play as satisfying an exploratory drive and allowing children a chance to practice societal roles.

Types of Play
- Sensorimotor play—Infants derive pleasure from exercising their sensorimotor schemas. From the early months through the second year, they enjoy playing with objects in varying ways.
- Practice play—The repetition of behavior when new skills are being learned or when physical or mental mastery and coordination are required.
- Pretense/Symbolic Play—The child transforms the physical environment into a symbol, such as the make-believe play engaged in by young children.
- Social Play—Play that involves interaction with peers; social play increases dramatically through the preschool years.
  - Parten’s Classic Study of Play
    - Unoccupied play—The child performs actions without goals.
    - Solitary play—The child plays alone and independently.
    - Onlooker play—The child watches other children play.
    - Parallel play—The child plays separately from others but with toys similar to those being used by the other children.
    - Associative play—Children seem more interested in each other than in the tasks they are performing.
    - Cooperative play—Play that consists of social interaction in a group with a sense of group identity and organized activity. Cooperative play is uncommon in the preschool years.
- Constructive Play—Combines sensorimotor/practice play with symbolic representation and occurs when children engage in the self-regulated creation of a product or a solution.
- Games—Activities for pleasure that include rules and often competition.

Television— In the U.S., many children spend more time in front of the television set than they do with their parents. Television can have a negative influence on children by making them passive learners, teaching them stereotypes, providing them with violent models of aggression, and presenting them with unrealistic views of the world.

- Effects of Television on Children’s Aggression—Many studies have demonstrated the negative effects of viewing violence on television on aggressive behavior patterns of young children. Other research has found links between watching television violence as a child and acting aggressively years later. Boys who watched the most aggression on television were the most likely to commit a violent crime, swear, and be aggressive in sports. These studies are correlational, so we can conclude from them that television violence is associated with aggressive behavior. In addition to television violence, there is increased concern about children who play violent video games, especially those that are highly realistic. Correlational studies indicate that children who extensively play violent electronic games are more aggressive than their counterparts who spend less time playing the games or do not play them at all. Children’s television shows contain about 25 violent acts each hour.

- Effects of Television on Children’s Prosocial Behavior—Television also can teach children that it is better to behave in positive, prosocial ways than in negative, antisocial ways. Some evidence suggests that television can also promote good prosocial behavior when programs reflect positive social strategies.

- Television, Cognitive Development, and Achievement—In general, television has not been shown to influence children’s creativity but is negatively related to their mental ability. Watching television is also linked with reductions in school achievement. Some types of television—such as educational programming for young children—may enhance achievement.
- The average child watches about 28 hours of television per week.