

Social Experience and Personal Development

GETTING STARTED

Discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- ▶ Who influenced you most when you were growing up?
- ▶ Do you think this person (or group of people) had an important role in shaping the kind of person you are today? Why or why not?
- ▶ What kind of influence would you like to have on the next generation?

TARGET WORDS—Assessing Your Vocabulary Knowledge

Look at each of the target words in the box. Use the scale to give yourself a score for each word. After you finish the chapter, score yourself again to check your improvement.

- 1 I don't know this word.
- 2 I have seen this word before, but I am not sure of the meaning.
- 3 I understand the word when I see it or hear it in a sentence, but I don't know how to use it in my own speaking and writing.
- 4 I know this word and can use it in my own speaking and writing.

TARGET WORDS

___ affect	___ conflict	___ ethnicity	___ range
___ apparent	___ conform	___ evaluation	___ retain
___ aspect	___ contact	___ gender	___ rigid
___ attitude	___ distinction	___ media	___ significance
___ concept	___ document	___ persist	___ style
___ confer	___ dominance	___ process	___ vary

The following passage is adapted from an introductory textbook on sociology. The passage focuses on four factors that influence our social development today. As you read, pay special attention to the target vocabulary words in **bold**.

SOCIAL FORCES THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES

- 1 Every social experience we have **affects** us in at least some small way. In modern industrial and post-industrial societies, however, there are four familiar influences that have special **significance** in the socialization **process**. They are the family, schooling, peer groups, and the mass media.

THE FAMILY

- 2 The family is the most important agent of socialization because it represents the center of children's lives. Babies are almost totally dependent on others, and the responsibility of meeting their needs almost always falls on parents and other family members. At least until the start of schooling, the family is responsible for teaching children cultural values, **attitudes**, and prejudices about themselves and others.
- 3 Family-based socialization is not entirely intentional. Children learn continuously from the kind of environment that adults create for them. Whether children learn to think of themselves as strong or weak, smart or stupid, loved or simply tolerated, and whether they believe the world to be safe or dangerous largely stems from this early environment that adults create.
- 4 Parenting **styles** aside, parental attention is important in the social development of children. Physical **contact**, verbal stimulation, and openness from parents and others all encourage intellectual growth.
- 5 The family also **confers** on children a specific social position; that is, parents not only bring children into the physical world, they also place them in society in terms of race, **ethnicity**, religion, and class. In time, all of these elements become part of a child's self-**concept**, or idea of him or her self. Of course, some **aspects** of social position may change later on, but social standing at birth **affects** us throughout our lives. In many ways, then, parents teach their children to follow in their footsteps.

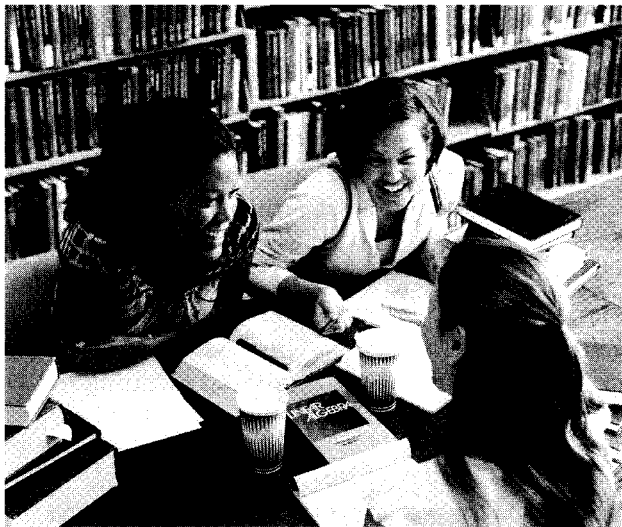
SCHOOLING

- 6 Schooling stretches children's social world to include people with social backgrounds that differ from their own. As children encounter social diversity, they learn the **significance** society gives to people's race and sex, and they often act accordingly: for instance, studies **document** the tendency of children to gather together in play groups composed of one race and **gender**.
- 7 Formally, schooling teaches children a wide **range** of knowledge and skills. But schools provide a host of other lessons informally through what sociologists call the *hidden curriculum*. Activities such as spelling tests and sports teach children key cultural values such as competitive success. Children also receive countless formal and informal messages supporting their society's way of life as morally good.
- 8 Moving beyond the personal web of family life, children entering school soon discover that **evaluations** of skills like reading and arithmetic are based on impersonal, standardized tests. Here, the focus changes from *who* they are to *how* they perform. Of course, the confidence or anxiety that children develop at home can have a **significant** effect on how well they perform in school.
- 9 School is also most children's first experience with **rigid** formality. The school day runs on a strict timetable, and children are encouraged to **conform** to impersonal rules and be on time. Not surprisingly, **conformity** and punctuality are the same kinds of behavior expected by most of the large organizations that will employ these same children later in life.
- 10 Schools also socialize children with regard to **gender**. Although **gender** roles are evolving, in the first years of school, boys often take part in more physical activities and spend more time outdoors, while girls tend to be less active. **Gender distinctions** continue into the later grades and **persist** right through college:

women, for example, encounter pressure to choose degrees in the arts or humanities, while men are steered toward the physical sciences.

THE PEER GROUP

11 By the time they enter school, children have also discovered the *peer group*, a social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common. A young child's peer group is generally made up of neighborhood friends; later, peer groups are composed of friends from school or elsewhere.



A peer group

- 12 Unlike the family and the school, the peer group allows young people to escape from the direct control of adults. With this newfound independence, members of peer groups gain valuable experience in forming social relationships on their own and developing a sense of themselves apart from their families. Peer groups also give young people the opportunity to discuss interests that may not be shared by adults (such as fashion and popular music) or are not approved of by parents (such as violent movies or video games).
- 13 For the young, the attraction of the peer group lies in the ever-present possibility of activity not permitted by adults; for the same reason, parents express concern about who their children's friends are. In a rapidly changing society, peer groups often rival parents in influence, as the **attitudes** of parents and children separate along the lines of a "generation gap." The **dominance** of peer groups is typically strongest during the teenage years, as young people begin to break away

from their families and think of themselves as responsible adults. At this stage of life, young people often show anxious **conformity** to peers because this new identity and sense of belonging eases some of the anxiety brought on by breaking away from the family.

- 14 The **conflict** between parents and peers may be more **apparent** than real, however, for even during the teenage years, children remain strongly influenced by their families. Peers may guide short-term concerns such as fashion and musical taste, but parents **retain** greater influence over the long-term goals of their children. One study, for example, found that parents had more influence than even best friends on young people's educational aspirations.

THE MASS MEDIA

- 15 The fourth major influence on social development is the mass **media**—impersonal communications directed to a vast audience. The term **media** is a Latin word meaning "middle," suggesting that the **media** function to connect people. Today, more than ever, the mass **media**—television, radio, and newspapers—have a great impact on our lives. For this reason, they are an important element in the socialization **process**. Television, introduced in 1939, has rapidly become the **dominant** means of communication throughout the world. Just how dependent on television are we? Figures **vary** by group, nation, class, and **gender**, but "average homes" may well keep a television on for seven hours or more each day. Years before children learn to read, watching television has become a regular habit and, as they grow up, young girls and boys spend as many hours in front of a television as they do in school. Indeed, children spend as much time watching television as they do interacting with their parents.
- 16 Family, schooling, peers, and mass **media** all have an impact on how we are socialized as children. Each of these social influences has the power to shape our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Yet, as free humans, we also have the ability to act back on society and, in so doing, shape our own lives and the world we live in, as is evident in the changes that have occurred in **gender** roles in the last thirty years.

Adapted from Macionis, J.J. and Plummer, K. (1997). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. New York: Prentice Hall Europe, pp. 139–141.

UNDERSTANDING THE READING

Respond to the following in writing. Base your responses on the reading and your own personal experiences.

1. Describe each of the four factors that shape our social development. Give examples of how each factor shapes us.
2. How are the influence of family and the influence of peer groups related to each other?
3. In what ways can peer groups have a positive influence? In what ways can they have a negative effect? Give examples.

FOCUSING ON VOCABULARY

WORD MEANING

Many words have more than one meaning. When you come across an unfamiliar word in your reading, you can look the word up in a dictionary. If the word has multiple meanings, use context clues—words and phrases around the word—to figure out which meaning fits. For example, read the two definitions for *significance* in the following exercise. Go back to paragraph 1 of the reading and examine the context in which the target word appears: . . . *there are four familiar influences that have special **significance** in the socialization process.* Read both definitions and choose the one that fits the context. Substitute that meaning for the target word and see whether the sentence makes sense.

Each of the following target words appears in the reading on pages 12–13. Use the paragraph number in parentheses to locate each word in context. Read the dictionary definitions below. Write the letter of the definition that reflects how the word is used in the reading. The first one has been done for you.

- b 1. **significance** (1)
- a. the meaning of a word, sign, action, etc., especially when this is not immediately clear
 - b. the importance of an event, action, etc., especially because of the influences it will have in the future
- _____ 2. **process** (1)
- a. a system or a treatment of materials that is used to produce goods
 - b. a series of human actions or operations that are performed intentionally to reach a particular result
- _____ 3. **attitude** (2)
- a. the way that you behave toward someone or something, especially when this shows how you feel
 - b. a style or behavior that shows you have the confidence to do daring things without caring what others think
- _____ 4. **style** (4)
- a. the particular way that someone behaves, works, or deals with other people
 - b. a particular design or fashion, especially for something such as clothes, hair, furniture, etc.

- _____ 5. **contact** (4)
 a. communication or meeting with a person, organization, country, etc., or the occasion on which the communication takes place
 b. the act or state of touching or being close to someone or something
- _____ 6. **aspect** (5)
 a. the direction in which a window, room, or door faces
 b. one part of a situation, idea, plan, etc., that has many parts
- _____ 7. **range** (7)
 a. a number of different things of the same general type
 b. the distance within which something can be seen or heard
- _____ 8. **rigid** (9)
 a. physically stiff and not moving or bending
 b. strict or difficult to change
- _____ 9. **distinction** (10)
 a. a clear difference between things
 b. the quality of being unusually good
- _____ 10. **conflict** (14)
 a. a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries, etc.
 b. a situation in which there is a choice between two or more opposing things
- _____ 11. **apparent** (14)
 a. seeming to be real or true, although it may not really be so
 b. easily noticed or understood
- _____ 12. **retain** (14)
 a. to keep something or continue to have something
 b. to keep facts in your memory

Each sentence below contains a paraphrase or set of synonyms for a target word. Read each sentence and then select the matching target word from the box. The first one has been done for you.

affect	conform	ethnicity	media
concept	document	evaluation	persist
confers	dominance	gender	vary

1. Employers cannot ask about _____ **ethnicity** _____ on job application forms.
 (race, nationality)
2. The older boy's _____ over the younger children worried some parents.
 (power, control)
3. Overseas travel can _____ a person's view of the world.
 (influence, change)
4. Ideas of correct parenting _____ from culture to culture.
 (differ, contrast)

5. Parents _____ their children's early life through the family photo album.
(record, set down)
6. The teacher's positive _____ of the student's work increased her confidence.
(assessment, judgment)
7. Heavy rain will _____ throughout the weekend.
(continue, carry on)
8. Many teenagers do not want to _____ to their parents' style of dress or taste in music.
(adapt, adjust)
9. The event was widely publicized in the local _____
(newspaper, radio)
10. One goal of public schooling is to help children develop a(n) _____ of social responsibility.
(idea, view)
11. A country's constitution _____ (on) its citizens certain rights and responsibilities.
(gives, bestows)
12. Writers will often use plural forms to replace the pronouns "he" and "she" in order to avoid _____ bias in their writing.
(sexual identity, female or male)

WORD TIP

- ▶ Note that social scientists often use the word **gender** to refer to a social or cultural distinction, while they use the word **sex** to refer to a biological distinction, male or female.

Gender affects the total salary people will receive in their lifetime.

Scientific and technological advances allow expectant parents to find out the **sex** of their baby before it is born.

WORD FAMILIES

Most of the target words introduced in this chapter are part of a word family. By learning the other members of a word's family, you can recognize words more quickly when you read or listen, and you can express yourself more clearly when you write or speak. Spelling patterns can help you identify a word's part of speech. For example, look at the first column in the table on page 17. Two of the verb forms have the spelling pattern *-ate*. In the noun column, the spelling patterns *-tion* and *-ity* occur twice. Getting to know these familiar spelling patterns will help you figure out a word's part of speech and know how to use a word correctly in a sentence.

Study the members of the word families in the table on the facing page. Look for spelling patterns for the verb, noun, adjective, and adverb forms of the words. Complete the table. List the patterns in the spaces. The verb and noun columns have been done for you.

Verb	Noun	Adjective	Adverb
conform	conformity	X	X
contact	contact	contact	X
X	distinction	1. distinct 2. distinctive	1. distinctly 2. distinctively
dominate	domination	1. dominant 2. dominating	X
X	ethnicity	ethnic	ethnically
evaluate	evaluation	evaluative	X
	persistence	persistent	persistently
X	rigidity	rigid	rigidly
X	significance	significant	significantly
	variation	varied	X
Spelling patterns			
-ate	-ity, -tion, -ance, -ence		

Read each sentence and identify the part of speech of the missing word. Write an appropriate form of the target word in the blank. Use the word families table above to help you. The first one has been done for you.

1. Because it burns more cleanly, natural gas has a significant (**significance**) environmental advantage over oil.
2. Even a small _____ (**vary**) in the amount of medicine given to a person who is sick can have serious consequences.
3. Teenagers often rebel against the _____ (**conform**) of school uniforms by personalizing book bags and notebooks with decorations.
4. There are _____ (**persist**) rumors that the software company will soon go out of business.
5. Although the sound was coming from far away, he could still hear it _____ (**distinct**).
6. Britain was the _____ (**dominate**) international power during the nineteenth century.
7. _____ (**contact**) lenses made out of glass were first developed in Germany in 1887.
8. The subjective nature of literature makes it difficult to _____ (**evaluation**) the true worth of any particular story or poem.

9. The strength of a building or bridge largely depends on the _____ (**rigid**) of the materials used to build it.
10. While factors such as age and gender do significantly affect participation in sports, factors such as marital status and _____ (**ethnic**) do not.

COLLOCATION

You develop your knowledge of collocations by seeing and hearing words in many contexts and noticing which words form partnerships with one another. Remember that collocations can contain different parts of speech and perform different grammatical functions within a sentence, as shown in the examples below.

Examples:

- a. Weak students often have a **bad attitude** toward completing homework.

adjective + noun

- b. People's **attitudes toward** the new theory changed after a surprising scientific discovery.

noun + preposition

- c. He had a complete **change in attitude** after failing the test.

noun + noun

Each item below contains three example sentences with the same target word. In each sentence, the target word is paired with a different word and forms a different collocation. In the fourth sentence, the collocation has been left blank. Choose the collocation from the examples that best fits the last sentence and write it in the blank. You may need to change the form of one of the words to fit the sentence. The first one has been done for you.

1.
 - a. The National Park **retained control** of the land, even though it was being used for commercial farming.
 - b. American universities **retain close ties** with past graduates through their alumni associations.
 - c. Home-health nurses serve a vital function by allowing the elderly to **retain** their **independence** even after the effects of aging have set in.
 - d. In order to _____ *retain control* _____ over the crowd at the parade, the police set up barriers to prevent spectators from walking into the street.

2.
 - a. The president of the university was happy to **confer** an honorary **degree** on the Nobel Peace Prize winner.
 - b. Among many primitive tribes, being a skilled hunter **confers** a high **status** upon an individual.
 - c. Each year, the Queen of England **confers titles** on British subjects who have provided particularly useful services to the country.
 - d. Wearing a trendy brand of clothing can do much to _____ on teenagers in the eyes of their peers.

3.
 - a. Poor physical conditions, a heavy workload, and **personality conflicts** with coworkers are all causes of stress at work.
 - b. In unlocking the secrets of DNA, scientists have opened up new areas of **potential conflict** between scientific progress and ethics.
 - c. The general had no wish to start an **armed conflict** that he was not certain of winning.
 - d. The political leaders were unable to prevent the peaceful protests from developing into _____.

4.
 - a. Finding a cure for cancer is a **continuing process**.
 - b. The **decision-making process** in large organizations can be awkward and unmanageable.
 - c. Quality control must be in place in all phases of the **production process**.
 - d. The industrial revolution led to major changes in the _____ of a variety of man-made goods.

5.
 - a. People who have a **positive attitude** toward life tend to live longer.
 - b. Many people adopt a **wait-and-see attitude** toward new technology.
 - c. Students often express **unfavorable attitudes** about videotaped lectures being offered in place of a live professor.
 - d. The older generation often has a(n) _____ toward the fashion and music of the younger generation.

6.
 - a. Although the history of the First and Second World Wars has been **amply documented**, new accounts of both wars are still being written.
 - b. The contents of the art exhibition had to be **fully documented** for insurance purposes.
 - c. The scientist's report **carefully documents** the development of the new drug.
 - d. The causes of many social problems have not been _____ because research is still ongoing.

7.
 - a. The supermarket was popular with international students because it stocked an **extensive range** of ethnic foods.
 - b. The restaurant could only offer a **restricted range** of meals because the electricity had gone out earlier in the day.
 - c. The college was able to offer a **surprising range** of degrees given its small size.
 - d. The toys were only suitable for a(n) _____ age _____ as they had many small parts that could be swallowed by young children.

8.
 - a. The goal of today's lecture is to **examine the concept** of culture in today's multicultural society.
 - b. Efforts to **develop the concept** of a global village are being held back by ongoing ethnic and regional conflicts.
 - c. The staff development workshop aimed to **introduce the concept** of relationship marketing to the sales team.
 - d. During the first class, the teacher _____ of social change and handed out a list of required readings on the subject.

Complete the passage by filling in the blanks with the target words in the box. Use each word only once.

affects	aspects	gender	style
apparent	conform	media	varies

EMOIONS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: DO WE ALL FEEL THE SAME?

- 1 We know that the people in our family, school, and peer group affect the person we become. In addition, the mass (1) _____, particularly television, affects our social development. Since every person's experiences and environment are somewhat different, does this mean that all people are completely distinct from one another? Or are there some (2) _____ that all people share? For example, do people the world over share similar feelings, and do they express them in the same way?
- 2 In fact, scientists have concluded that people throughout the world experience six basic emotions: anger, fear, disgust, happiness, surprise, and sadness. Moreover, people everywhere can easily recognize these emotions in the same distinctive facial expressions. This seeming, or (3) _____, similarity means that much of our emotional life is universal—rather than culturally variable—and that the display of emotion is biologically programmed rather than determined by our environment.
- 3 But even if the reality of emotions is rooted in our biology, there are three ways in which emotional life differs throughout the world. First, what causes a specific emotion (4) _____ from one society to another. Whether people define a particular situation as an insult (causing anger), a loss (calling forth sadness), or a mystical event (provoking surprise and awe) depends on the cultural surroundings of the individual.
- 4 Second, people (5) _____ to the norms of their culture when displaying emotion. Every society has rules about when, where, and to whom an individual may show certain emotions. For instance, people in the United States typically expect children to express emotions to parents, though adults are taught to guard their emotions in front of children.
- 5 Third, a society (6) _____ how people cope with emotions. Some societies encourage the expression of feelings, while others require a calmer (7) _____ of behavior. For example, in America, when someone encounters an old friend after a long period of time, the two may hug each other. In other countries, they may only shake hands. Societies also display significant

male/female differences in this regard. In England, most people consider emotional expression as feminine, expected of women but a sign of weakness in men. In other societies, however, this (8) _____ -typing of emotions is less pronounced or even reversed.

Adapted from Macionis, J.J. and Plummer, K. (1997). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. New York: Prentice Hall Europe, pp. 164.

EXPLORING THE TOPIC



Think about what you have just read and what you know about how emotions are expressed in various cultures. Working with a partner, select two countries and write a comparison/contrast essay that focuses on how emotions are expressed in these two cultures. In what ways is the emotional expression similar? In what ways is the emotional expression different?