



Chapter 4: Socializing the Individual

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Case Study: Identical Strangers

To understand the effects of “nature and nurture” on human development, some scholars have studied identical twins separated at birth and adopted by different families. One important study by Peter Neubauer used adopted twins without their knowledge. These studies revealed that even twins separated at birth share some characteristics with their siblings years later. This proves that while some traits are genetically inherited, others are learned from the environment in which a child is raised.

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Socializing the Individual



Bernstein, left, and Schein after their reunion



These photos show Paula Bernstein, left, and Elyse Schein, not long after they were adopted.

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Section 1 at a Glance

Personality Development

- People develop their personalities over the course of their lives.
- While scientists have debated for years whether nature or nurture plays a bigger role in personality development, most social scientists today believe that environmental factors have the biggest influence.
- According to social scientists, the principal factors that influence personality and behavior are heredity, birth order, parental characteristics, and cultural environment.
- Studies of isolated children suggest the importance of environment in personality development.

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Pieces of the Personality Puzzle

What makes you the person that you are?



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Nature Versus Nurture

A **personality** is the sum total of behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and values that are characteristic of an individual.

Nature

- **Heredity** is the transmission of genetic characteristics from parents to children
- **Instinct** is an unchanging biologically inherited behavior
- **Sociobiology** searches for the biological basis of all social behavior

Nurture

- Social environment can imprint characteristics on a child
- Pavlov's experiments showed that behavior could be taught
- Most social scientists believe personality arises from a mixture of both nature and nurture



Factors in Personality Development

Heredity

- Characteristics present at birth include hair type, eye color, and certain **aptitudes** (capacity to learn or do).
- Biological needs include hunger and thirst.
- Culture decides how you will use or satisfy hereditary characteristics.

Parental Characteristics

- Age, level of education, religious orientation, economic status, cultural heritage, and occupation of parents can shape personalities of children.

Birth Order

- Personalities are influenced by brothers and sisters.
- Early-born siblings have different traits than later-born siblings.

The Cultural Environment

- Each culture has set “model personalities.”
- Individuals experience a culture in different ways.

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Birth Order

Common Characteristics of Only/Firstborn Children

- confident
- perfectionistic
- organized
- scholarly
- conservative

Famous Examples Franklin D. Roosevelt, Bill Clinton, J. K. Rowling, Tiger Woods

Common Characteristics of Middle Children

- flexible
- diplomatic
- independent
- balanced
- generous

Famous Examples John F. Kennedy, Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Princess Diana

Common Characteristics of Last-Born Children

- willing to take risks
- outgoing
- creative
- rebellious
- persistent

Famous Examples Ronald Reagan, Jim Carrey, Cameron Diaz, Stephen Colbert

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Quick Lab

Are You a Product of Your Cultural Environment?

This simple experiment should shed some light on how much your cultural environment influences you.

PROCEDURE

1. Answer the questions below on a blank sheet of paper. This is a test, so do not look up any of the answers.
 - a. Is yak butter an important part of people's diets in India, Russia, or Tibet?
 - b. Do you think the word *Chomolungma*, which means "Goddess Mother of the World" in English, describes a spiritual leader, an Eastern religion, or a mountain?
 - c. If someone gave you Lapsang Souchong, would you eat it, drink it, or wear it?
2. Ask your teacher for the answers, to see how you did.

ANALYSIS

1. How many questions did you answer correctly? Chances are that you did not know most of the answers. The test focused on aspects of Tibetan culture. If you had grown up in Tibet, the answers would have seemed obvious.
2. Relate the test to American culture. For example, what if, in the first question, "peanut butter" replaced "yak butter" and "United States" replaced "Tibet"? Or suppose the second question asked you to identify an American icon instead. You might take it for granted that everyone would know the answers then.
3. As a class, discuss the influence of your cultural environment.



Influence of Social Environment

- Feral children and those with very little contact with a social environment do not develop skills such as walking or language.
 - In some instances, remedial therapy can allow isolated children to develop language and social skills.
- ▼
- Children who have been institutionalized may share some characteristics of those who have been isolated.
- ▼
- Studies show that a lack of human contact can result in developmental abnormalities as well as death.

Section 2 at a Glance

The Social Self

- Through socialization, people learn the basic values and behavior patterns of a culture and develop a sense of self.
- John Locke believed that humans were blank slates that could be socialized to have any type of character.
- According to Charles Horton Cooley, we develop our sense of self through an interactive process based on how we think we appear to others.

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Mirror, Mirror on the Wall



**Do you ever think
about how other
people see you?**

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The Development of Self

Socialization is the interactive process through which people learn the basic skills, values, beliefs, and behavior patterns of a society. There are many theories of how individuals gain a **self**, or distinct identity that separates you from other members of society.

Locke: The Tabula Rasa

- A “clean slate” onto which anything can be written
- Believed adults could shape newborns’ personality
- Absorb the aspects of the culture they are in contact with

Cooley: The Looking-Glass Self

- Process by which we develop an idea of **self** based on how we think we appear to others
- Three-step process
- Begins in infancy but continues throughout life

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Mead: Role-Taking

- Seeing ourselves as others see us is first step
- Eventually take on, or pretend to take on, the roles of others (**role-taking**)
- **Significant others** are the people who are closest to us: parents, siblings, and others who directly influence our socialization
- As an individual ages, significant others grow less important
- **Generalized other** is the internalized attitudes, expectations and viewpoints of society
- Children under three can only imitate the actions of others
- Self consists of “I” and “me”
 - The “I” is the unsocialized, spontaneous, self-interested component of personality
 - The “me” is the part that is aware of the expectations and attitudes of society—the socialized self

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INTERACTIVE 

Mead's Development of Self

According to Mead, children become capable of role taking through a three-step process. As individuals progress through the steps and the self develops, they are able to internalize the expectations of more and more people. Finally, their ability to interact with others grows until they are able to take on the role of the generalized other, or society as a whole.

Step 1: Imitation

Under age 3 When they are very young, children do not see themselves as separate from other people. They do not yet have a sense of self and can only imitate other people's gestures and actions. This mimicking is not role-taking, but rather preparation for it.



Step 2: Play

Ages 3 to 6 At this age, children begin to see themselves in relation to others. They are able to recognize specific roles and begin to act out those roles by dressing up. These roles can range from the everyday, such as pretending to be a doctor, to the more fantastic, such as playing princess.



Step 3: Organized Games

Over age 6 or 7 About the time children reach school age, they begin to take part in organized games and team sports. These activities require children to take on their own roles as well as to anticipate the actions of others.



Click on the image above to play the Interactive.

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The Presentation of Self

Dramaturgy

- Theory suggested by Erving Goffman
- States that social interaction is similar to a drama performance
- Suggests people are an audience, judging each others' performances, trying to determine each individual's true character



Impression Management

- Attempt to play the role well and manage the impressions that the audience receives
- States that much of our time with others is spent trying to manage their impressions



Goffman's theory suggests that an individual's self can be changed according to audience.

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SOCIALIZATION AND THE SELF

QUICK
FACTS

There are several theories about how the self emerges and **develops**.

John Locke: The Tabula Rasa

Each person is born as a blank slate. Humans, who acquire their personalities through interaction, can be molded into any type of character.

Charles Horton Cooley: The Looking-Glass Self

Humans form images of themselves based on how they seem to others. We imagine how we appear to others, judge whether they see us as we see ourselves, and use our judgments to form our sense of self.

George Herbert Mead: Role-Taking

Beyond seeing ourselves as others do, we begin to anticipate what others expect. After a three-step process, we take on the roles of others.

Erving Goffman: Impression Management

Social interaction is like performing for an audience. We change our personalities based on what impression we want to convey.

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Section 3 at a Glance

Agents of Socialization

- The primary agents of socialization in the United States are the family, the peer group, the school, and the mass media.
- As the principal socializer of young children, the family is the most important agent of socialization in most societies.
- As children grow older, forces outside the family—such as friends, school, and mass media—increasingly influence them.
- Resocialization, or the process of learning new values and norms, can be voluntary or involuntary.

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SOCIOLOGY CLOSE UP



This illustration contrasts a beautiful princess with an ugly villainess to highlight the distinction between good and evil.

How do fairy tales help to socialize children?

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Primary Agents

Sociologists use the term *agents of socialization* to describe the specific individuals, groups, and institutions that enable socialization to take place.

The Family

- Most important agent in most societies
- Usually first agent
- Can be intentional or unintentional
- Reflects the social groups family belongs to

The Peer Group

- Composed of individuals of roughly equal age and similar social characteristics
- Particularly important during pre-teen and early teen years
- Socialization focuses on values of the **peer group**



The School

- Planned activities for the deliberate purpose of teaching skills
- Extracurricular activities intended to prepare for a life in society
- Transmit cultural values
- Unintentional socialization comes from teachers and peer groups



The Mass Media

- **Mass media:** instruments of communication that reach large audiences without personal contact between those sending and those receiving the information, such as films, television, and radio
- Television is most common mass media
- Both positive and negative behaviors and beliefs are learned from television

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Statistically Speaking...

The Internet In the past decade, the Internet has come to play an increasingly large role in people's lives, including children. As a result, its significance as an agent of socialization has expanded.

67% Percentage of American households with school-aged children that have Internet access

2005 Year by which nearly all U.S. public schools had Internet connectivity

23.4% Percentage of children ages 8 to 9 using the Internet, compared to 44.8% of 8- to 9-year-olds, 68.9% of 10- to 14-year-olds, and 80.0% of 15- to 17-year olds

21 million Number of American teenagers who use the Internet

51% Percentage of teenage internet users who say they go online every day

Skills Focus **INTERPRETING CHARTS** What is the relationship between age and Internet use among children and teens?

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Education Statistics, 2007; Pew Internet & American Life Project

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Resocialization

Resocialization involves a break with past experiences and the learning of new values and norms.

Voluntary Resocialization

- Individuals choose to assume a new status
- Examples include going to college

Involuntary Resocialization

- Often occurs in **total institutions**, or a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society
- Examples include joining the military

Total Institutions



Total institutions such as military boot camps attempt to resocialize individuals by removing all semblance of a personal identity. *What examples of this technique are shown in this image?*

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Cultural Diversity and Sociology

Socialization Around the World

Primary agents of socialization—family, peer group, education, and mass media—tend to be the same in different cultures. The importance of each can vary across cultures, however.



- Some East Asian cultures emphasize the importance of education.
- “Cram schools” claim to help students get accepted to top schools.



- The Amish of North America control education closely.
- Amish children are isolated from modern mass media.



- Television arrived in the South Pacific nation of Fiji in 1995.
- The body image of teen girls changed dramatically after being exposed to American, British, and Australian television.

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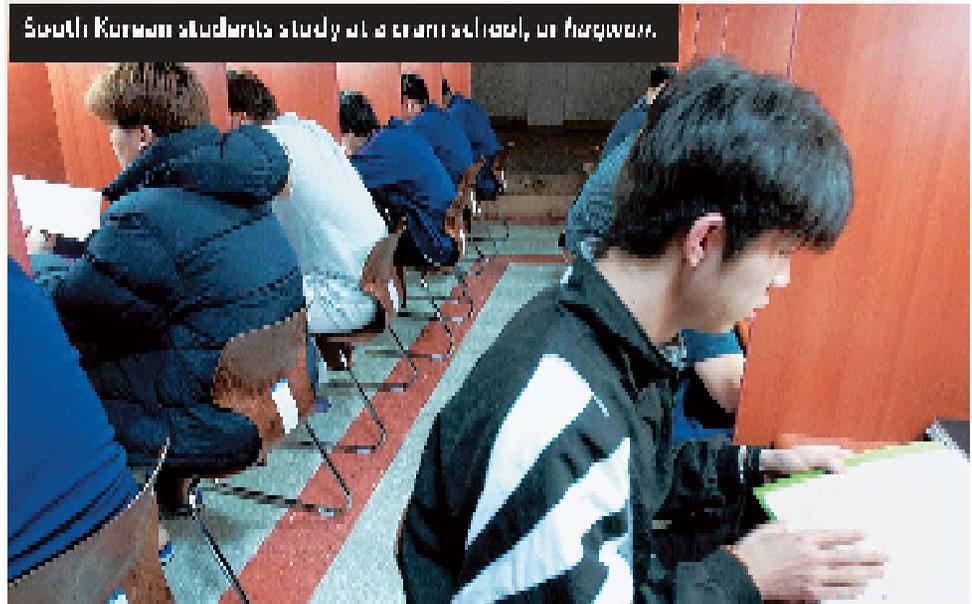
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Most Amish communities avoid modern technology. These Amish use traditional methods to build a barn.



South Korean students study at a cram school, or *hagwon*.

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Thinking Critically

- How are the Amish and East Asian approaches to education similar to each other? How are they different?
- Are some agents of socialization more important than others in your culture? Explain.

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Simulation: Applying What You've Learned

A Personality for Every Occasion

What is your personality and how is it displayed in different social settings?

1. Introduction

- In this simulation, you will explore two pieces of your personality: traits you have inherited and behaviors you have learned.
- Write an essay describing your personality and its sources.

2. Personality Analysis

- Create a time line of your life that includes important events and how they changed your life and personality.
- Compare your personality to other family members, and write an essay describing yours.

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Simulation (cont.)

3. Role-play Social Situations

- Use a series of scenarios to examine how your personality is displayed in different social situations.
- As a pair with a classmate, create conversations that display your personality.



4. Discussion

- Hold a group discussion about what you and your classmates learned during this exercise.
- Discuss the ways in which your personality has been shaped by both nature and nurture.
- How does socialization help the world to run smoothly?

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