# DAN’S NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM – Social Encounters

## System Properties

**Level Playing Field –** All characters and monsters in the game are allotted points in the three social attributes separately from the other attributes and follow the same rules for social encounters. For example, if the PCs decide to play a game where they are all insects and receive 1/10th the standard allotment of attribute points, this does not apply to the points they get for CNF, GUI, or WIL. Furthermore, all social growth is subject to the law of diminishing returns, such that the difference between two peoples’ social skill levels cannot become arbitrarily big. (Different creature species may still have different social “quantities”, and anyone can still cheat the social domain using magic.)

**Intelligence/Wisdom Independence –** Although characters can certainly use their intelligence and wisdom to outthink others in a social conflict, low scores do not prevent characters from participating meaningfully in a social conflict; for example, a pride of lions and a party of PCs may “socially” jockey for possession of a dragon corpse, using shows of strength and intimidation attempts coming from both sides. One exception is if either intelligence or wisdom is non-existent, such as with a golem or undead; in this case, the thing participates only as a figure against which the social encounter occurs (see “Involved Parties”, below).

## Elements

**Involved Parties –** Each party is a single character or group of characters involved in the social encounter. An involved party is a group when the social actions/reactions of an entire group may reasonably be summed up (e.g. an angry mob or a grove of sprites). A social encounter may also involve only one character, such as when a dumb ogre is trying to determine the intentions of another aggressive-looking ogre which is actually his reflection in a mirror.

**Context –** The context consists of everything contributing to the social environment. This includes intangible elements such as the parties’ relative social standings and the situation. For example, two lords sitting comfortably in a steam room are likely going to have quite a different social encounter than a princess, two barbarians, and a monkey lost in some catacombs and being chased by a dragon.

**Messages –** A single message is a “chunk” of information that one party sends to one or more receiving parties, with the intention of provoking a desired response from each of the receivers. There can be varying degrees of success, and neither the message nor the desired response need be obvious. Furthermore, messages can woven into each other so that there are multiple levels of communication going on simultaneously.

**Mediums –** A medium is anything capable of carrying messages, including voice and sound, written language, or magical or electronic mediums (e.g. crystal balls or emails). Note that the visual and even scent domains can be used as a communication medium.

**Influences –** An influence is anything which boosts or hinders the likelihood that a receiver will respond to a given message in the way the sender desires. For example, a princess may ignore a barbarian’s request to join the ranks of the knights because of the barbarian’s offensively stinky armpits. On the other hand, she may adore his brutish musk and hang off his every word. Noise in a medium is also considered a negative influence, such as a fog making it difficult to see hand-signs.

## Relevant Attributes

**Confidence (CNF) –** Blah.

**Guile (GUI) –** Guile represents one’s control over their own non-verbal communication, such as their body language. People with high Guile scores can even “lie”; for example, a salesman appearing sincere when trying to pass off a substandard product as exceptional. Guile shows up in animals of lower order, but it is driven by instinct rather than a conscious choice to deceive.

**Will (WIL) –** Blah.

## Stages

**Reaction –** This is the stage of first impressions. No real communication goes on here and all opinions are formed by judgment calls. Each of the involved parties sizes up the others and forms an initial opinion of them as well as the situation (context). The output of this stage is …….. Note that this stage occurs even in the case that the characters are communicating through some medium that disallows the parties from building judgments based…..

**Evaluation –** One or more characters, grouped into social parties. In virtually all cases each “group” will be a single PC or NPC, but in rare cases, the social actions/reactions of entire groups

**Maneuvering –** One or more characters, grouped into social parties. In virtually all cases each “group” will be a single PC or NPC, but in rare cases, the social actions/reactions of entire groups

# System Creation Notes

## Social System Goals:

1. Balanced – must not destroy the campaign world, or ability to tell good stories.
2. Meaningful choice – should involve some kind of strategy and depth, not just “roll a single dice and that’s the outcome”.
3. Player and Character Ability – The system should take into account both player choice as well as character ability. This applies to NPCs as well.
4. Inclusive – should involve all players, not just those whose characters are good in social situations.
5. Realistic – Social ability shouldn’t be mind control. It should take into account the personality of the character.
6. Concurrency – The roleplaying and system mechanics should work together, not supercede each other.
7. Fun – The social system must be fun.

A few qualities of the system I want right off the bat. In any social situation, with the \*sole\* exception of spell domination (such as a charm spell), the player has the final say in the character’s choices. This is in the spirit of Simon’s “do not take away a player’s ability to play” concept. In our game, there should be little to no actual domination spells, but there can be plenty of ‘nudge’ spells that simply alter a character’s functioning in social encounters, somewhat.

Social domain, what is it? It’s about COMMUNICATION. There are six elements in a successful communication exchange.

1. Sender
2. Receiver
3. Message
4. Acknowledgement
5. Communication Medium
6. Context