Social Control

ECED7009

Session 3a

Social Control

- In the origins of sociology
  - ‘social control’ served as a central concept both for relating sociology to social philosophy and for analysing total societies
- In its classical sense
  - it referred to the capacity of a social group to regulate itself
- While the traditional usage of social control has persisted
  - the term has been redefined to mean either socialization or social repression

Social Control

- Typology of Social Control
  - Informal Control
  - Medical Control
  - Legal Control

Three Categories of Social Control

- Direct Control
- Internal Control
- Indirect Control

Direct Control

- Nye (1958) refers to direct control as being:
  - Actual or possible restraints that can be marshalled against deviance
  - Including:
    - Legal punishments
    - Informal sanctions – shaming or ridicule

Internal Control

- Nye (1958) considers that this refers to internalisation
  - Namely a system of socialisation by which individuals are inculcated with a set of norms, values, beliefs and rules
  - These in effect keep individuals from deviating

Indirect Control

- The warm and secure bonds of attachment that persons feel toward conventional others
  - Children's attachment to parents,
  - Hence the family is the major source of indirect control in society

So Social Control Can also Be . .

- Direct Control
  - In the form of sanctions
- Internal Control
  - In the form of culture and socialisation
- Indirect Control
  - In the form of relationships (Nye, 1958)

The Micro-Oriented Theory of Social Control

- Katovich (1996) argues that . . .
  - ‘although the connotation of control is that it is ‘evil’
    - especially in the hands of Marxists or conflict theorists
    - who argue that the more powerful groups in society take advantage of less powerful groups through race, class, gender, or other forms of oppression’
  - he points out there are cooperative as well as coercive bases of control.

Informal Control within the Micro-Realm of Face to Face Interactions

- Four Basic Forms
  - Instrumental control
  - Ceremonial control
  - Interpersonal control
  - Categorical control

Instrumental Control

- Persons often come into contact with other persons over long periods of time to get various collective endeavours accomplished
  - the mutual give and take that actors exert on one another within relatively stable persistent relationships e.g.
    - Marriages
    - Partnerships
    - Organisational Associations

Ceremonial Control

- Special kind of cooperation or mutuality between actors which tends to be more fleeting and episodic than instrumental control e.g.
  - persons who are not closely acquainted will nevertheless provide to one another a smile, eye contact, and even a 'hi' when crossing each other's paths in public
    - Undertaken merely for the sake of establishing mutual identification and availability should the need arise.
- Katovich's ceremonial control is very close to Goffman's notion of interaction ritual

Interpersonal Control

- Two or more persons who share a focus on some immediate social objective
  - Not merely bystanders who happen to be at the same place at the same time observing some event
    - They invest their selves in the mutual project at hand
- Control occurs when identities are identified, committed to and mutually available to all participants in the project as needed
  - If mutual establishment of identities is not available in a particular strip of shared activity
    - the interpersonal control necessary to bringing it co completion or fruition would be absent
  - Interpersonal control means that everyone is
    - 'on the same page'
    - understands their roles in the accomplishment of the activity or event

Cooperative Bases of Control

- Critisisms of Katovich's theory
  - Does not go far beyond 'informal control'

Two Grand Theories of Control

- Beniger
  - Beginnings of life on earth (1 billion years ago) – to some degree owed his theory to Darwinism
- Gibbs
  - Theoretical system has three basic forms of control:
    - Inanimate
    - Biotic
    - Human

Beniger: Four levels of control

- Level One:
  - Emergence of organic matter and appearance of protoplasm
    - Organisms moving about in space and time in a physical environment
    - They are able to control themselves and availabe resources
    - Fittest for purposes of survival of their species

Beniger: Four levels of control

- Level Two:
  - 100 million years ago
    - Patterned behaviour through imitation
    - Sentient beings above level of insects engage in some form of imitation
    - Eventually rote imitation was supplemented by learning by teaching
    - Accompanying increase in brain size
    - Divergence of hominids and apes
    - Development of human language
      - In turn increased learning, teaching and memory
      - Creation of culture – Homo Sapiens
      - Greater control of the environment and fellow beings

Beniger: Four levels of control

- Level Three:
  - Neolithic or agricultural revolution – 5000 years ago
    - Accelerating with the rise of philosophy and science in Greece around 300 BC
    - Increased need to organise activities associated with production of food
      - Larger populations
      - Greater stratification
  - Some persons are now in positions to reap the benefits of the economic surplus created by this mode of production
  - Rise of formal organisation and the bureaucracy which underpinned the Commercial Revolution – 450 years ago

Beniger: Four levels of control

- Level Four:
  - Transition from agriculture to industrialisation as the major mode of production – 175 years ago
  - Industrial Revolution lead to acceleration of technological innovations
    - Railroads
    - Telegraph
    - Steam power
    - Electricity
- All lead to greater control of the natural an built environment
  - Computers in the 1950s and rapid acceleration of related information technologies since then
    - Internet
    - Medical and genetic programming technologies
- Information itself becomes the basis of the new controlling revolution (Beniger, 1986).

Gibbs:
Social Control

- Inanimate Control
  - Human attempt to control modify or affect an inanimate object or its characteristics e.g.
    - Rock to ward off a predator
    - Technology

Gibbs:
Social Control

- Biotic Control
  - Human attempt to alter, affect, or change the characteristics of plant or animal organisms e.g.
    - Food quests
    - Creation and maintenance of monoculture forests
    - Use of animals for various purposes
      - Transportation
      - Beasts of burden
      - Medical research
      - Warfare
    - Genetic engineering

Gibbs:
Social Control

- Human Control
  - Diverse ways humans attempt to control human behaviour
    - Two sub-categories
      - Internal control
      - External control

Gibbs:
Social Control

- Internal Human Control
  - Self-control e.g.
    - Going on a diet to lose weight
    - Changing jobs to reduce depression or increase salary
    - Trying to stop smoking

Gibbs:
Social Control

- External Human Control
  - Human attempts to control the behaviour of other human beings – excluding self-control

Gibbs: Social Control Three Subcategories

- Proximate Control
  - Direct or unmediated control of other human beings e.g. physical contact – pat on the back, kiss or assault – but not direct control as in inviting someone to dinner

Gibbs: Social Control Three Subcategories

- Sequential Control
  - Not all social life is conducted face to face with co-present others
    - Persons try to control others when there is spatial distance between the parties
      - Chain of command in the military
      - Communications technologies e.g. telephones or internet

Gibbs: Social Control Three subcategories

- Social Control
  - Norms and conceptualises control as the counteractions of deviance
  - Defining deviance and social control with reference to norms is overly narrow
  - Primarily because such an approach cannot account for large-scale attempts at social control such as mass media advertising or state terrorism

Gibbs: Social Control Three subcategories

- Social Control
  - ‘overt behaviour by a human, the firsts part, in the belief that
    - (1) the overt behaviour increase's or decreases the probability of a change in the behaviour of another human or humans, the second party in either case;
    - (2) the overt behaviour involves a third party but not in the way of sequential control;
    - and (3) the increase or decrease is desirable’ (Gibbs, 1989a/b/1994).

Typology of Social Control

- Social Control is often associated with the physical coercive power of the policy
- Social Control is more than policing
  - Individuals exert pressures for you to conform to their wishes
  - Some are subtle and others are flagrant

Typology of Social Control

- The three typologies of social control relate to their three respective 'systems of control'
  - Informal
    - Range of normative prescriptions and proscriptions covering the areas of interpersonal relations and group living
  - Medical
    - Behaviour more generally irrespective of the nature of the ties between persons in interaction
  - Legal
    - The law and legal system

Example

- Eating in a fast food restaurant and someone a few tables away is staring at you, perhaps grinning wildly but saying nothing.
  - Do you:
    - Ignore him
    - Mover to another table
    - Hurry up your meal
    - Get out of there as quickly as possible?
- If you do one of the above you are using informal control

Example

- If the police are called
  - Legal control takes place

Example

- What about Medical Social Control
  - Often after legal control has been brought to bear against a suspect
    - Medical personnel as primary agents of control
    - 1) disturbances involving those who are known to one another are more likely to call forth medical forms of control than disturbances involving strangers
      - More intimate the gathering the more likely this will be viewed as a medical issues – their drink etc
    - 2) the social class of the participant involved in the disturbance often affects the nature of control response
      - High status offenders and victims will tend to seek medicinal or therapeutic remedies for their problems
      - Lower status offenders are more likely to be dealt with by representatives of legal control

Emergence of Norms

- Social Control relies heavily on the concept of NORMS
  - Norms
    - a rule for behaviour, a guide to conduct
    - statements that regulate behaviour
    - Social control as regulation
      - Norms need not be explicitly stated or codified
      - Norms not always written down
      - Rather part of a group's tacit understandings of the proper way to act given certain conditions or situations
      - Norms are passed on more or less informally through socialisation

Sumner & Folkways

- Usages
- Manners
- Customs
- Mores

- Morals
  - Cannibalism
  - Abortion
  - Infanticide
  - Incest
  - Slavery
  - Prostitution
  - Sports

Sumner & Folkways

- He suggests that ‘early humans lived a ‘brutish’ existence’
- Survival needs
  - Again linked to Darwinism
  - Pleasure and pain
  - Humans live in groups
    - Societies
    - Technologies and production increased
    - Members of the group learn from one another
    - A society's storehouse of experiences
- Thus Folkways are the
  - Sum of the total of these informal ways of doing things, customs which provide for the needs of members of the group.

Sumner & Folkways

- Interestingly he suggests that with these Folkways other aspects developed:
  - Respect for greatest knowledge/experienced/authority
  - Respect of elders
  - Family ties

Sumner & Folkways

- Later this was developed into the notion of
  - Ethnocentrism
    - Where one group considered themselves higher than another
    - This is linked to identity and the associated
      - Truths
      - Mores
- Taboos
  - Anything seen injurious to the group
    - Wrong types of food
    - War
    - Sex with the wrong persons
    - Making gods/ ghosts angry

Codified Mores become Laws

- Eventually societies advance towards settling disputes through formal agents of control
  - Specialising in order maintenance and crime control
    - Mores become codified and institutionalised
    - Eventually these become laws

Mores to Laws

- Laws are norms that are considered to be so vital to the well-being of the group
  - their violation is to be addressed by whatever collective resources are available
    - in a systematic
    - and standardised way.
- Development of legal documents/laws (Sumner, 1906).

Sanctions

- Norms aim to guide behaviour via a system of sanctions
  - compliance with norms are rewarded
    - Positive sanctions
  - Those who violate norms are punished
    - Negative sanctions
- Such sanctions create intense pressures for members to conform to group norms

Forward Looking: Social Control

- Utilitarian perspective
  - Assumption that humans beings rationally calculate the costs and benefits of any line of action and adjust their behaviour accordingly

- A forward looking version of social control

Backward Looking: Social Control

- Actors often have no – or merely partial – knowledge of the long- or even short-term consequences of their actions.
  - Actors rely more on past experiences to judge to what extent negative or positive sanctions may apply to current situations.
- A backward looking version of social control

Centralised Sanctions

- Legal system
  - Formal agents of control
    - Policy
    - Courts
    - Corrections
- Social order is seen as a problem of
  - Collective action
  - How does society motivate enough people to contribute to the production of this shared or public good – social order?

Diffuse Sanctions

- Rewards or punishments meted out by individuals or organisations on a
  - Local
  - Informal basis against violators
    - Individual
    - Or collective
- Local
  - More or less informal realm of face-to-face behaviour
    - Small groups
    - Neighbourhoods
    - Communities

Types of Sanctions

- Natural sanctions
- Social sanctions
- Legal sanctions
- Supernatural sanctions
- (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 2005: 215-217).

Natural Sanctions

- Negative harmful or painful consequences of operating within a natural environment
  - Heat
  - Fire
  - Animals
  - Diseases
    - Similar factors that affect human health and well-being or other human beings.

Social Sanctions

- Product of human society
  - Pains associated with a friend's withdrawal of friendship
  - Being expelled or isolated from a group
  - Expression of disappointment or anger from a parent
- Natural sanctions are automatic social sanctions require the presence and participation of other human beings

Legal Sanctions

- Penalties provided by the state for violations of the
  - Criminal
  - Administrative or
  - Civil law
- Today sanctions include:
  - Fines
  - Imprisonment
  - Intermediate sanctions
- Earlier times sanctions also included:
  - Floggings
  - Transportation
  - Bodily mutilation
  - Forms of torture
  - And ultimately the death penalty

Supernatural Sanctions

- Rewards or punishments individuals receive upon their death
  - The belief that one will go to 'hell' for breaking a religious commandment
    - Geared toward shaping the behaviour of individuals in this world in the here and now.

Ranking of Sanctions

- Ranked according to time between behaviour and receipt of sanctions
  - Natural sanctions
    - Most direct
  - Social sanctions
  - Legal sanctions
  - Finally supernatural sanctions

Labelling Perspective

Stickiness of the label

- Primary deviance
  - Criminal act brought the attention of law enforcement
    - Peer groups
    - Associations
- Secondary deviance
  - Or does the behaviour results because of the affixing of stigmatising label?

Labelling Theory: Ditton

- Rather than focusing on the crime
  - The focus should be on the control attempts embodied in the societal relations to perceived deviance
    - Controlology
      - The study of control
  - Individual acts are irrelevant
    - As they need a societal reaction to the act!
  - To be a crime it needs to be reported and labelled as a crime
- This shifts the focus FROM the individual 'responsibility'
  - To
- Societal 'response ability' (Black, 1983)

Crime
as a Form of Social Control

- Black (1983) suggests that Crime is a form of social control!
  - Many acts defined as criminal are acts of self-help
    - E.g. vigilant groups
    - Any process by which people define or respond to deviant behaviour
  - Thus social control can be seen as a 'reaction' to perceived or real deviance
  - The reaction to acts of deviance can take myriad forms, ranging from accepted, appropriate, or legal responses to deviant and criminal responses on the other.
- Black's (1983) form of social control is often applied to terrorism

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