

Informal Social Control

ECED7002

Session 3b

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Three Forms of Social Control

- Informal Control
- Medical Control
- Legal Control

Informal Control: Socialisation

- The individual must be conceptualised as being formed by the group
 - Through closest associates
 - Charles Horton Cooley called this our primary groups:
 - Family
 - Friends

Informal Control: Primary Groups

- Primary groups are characterised as ‘expressive’
 - Meaning that members interact with one another for
 - the sake of each other’s company
 - it is the right thing to do
 - Such bonds of loyalty and commitment typical of consanguineous or family relations

Informal Control: Reference Groups

- Individuals identify with or look up to (Eisenstadt (1954) Shibutani (1962))
 - Close identification with the values of the reference group
 - individuals bonded to these groups will emulate their actions and ideas
 - They will conform to what they perceive to be the normative expectations of the group
 - Motorcycle gangs
 - Members of a university chess club

Informal Control: Secondary Groups

- Behaviour is characterised as instrumental
 - Group activities are engaged in for the sake of pursuing a collective goal
 - No necessarily for the sake of simply being together
 - Work groups
 - Casual acquaintance
 - Service encounters

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- The Family
- The Community
- Peers
- School
- Work
- Religion
- Mass Media

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Family
 - Earliest stages in the development of the human species
 - Changes in mother/father availability
 - Environments
 - Supportive infrastructure including
 - Mother, father, close male relatives, extended kin – aunts, uncles, grandparents
- Primary responsibility for imparting the tradition of the village to its new 'recruits' rested with the family (Hillery, 1968: 245).

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Community
 - Although parents are important in imparting societal norms and values to their children,
 - Socialisation is complete ONLY when parental oversight is supplemented by a supportive community
 - The village
 - Schools
 - Neighbourhoods
 - Caring teachers
 - Neighbours
 - Churches
 - Civic organisations
 - Other private and public institutions

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Peers
 - Schooling is emphasized in advanced industrial societies
 - Formal education at younger and younger ages
 - Much time is spent early on in an individual's life with same age peers
 - Conventional peers and youth cultures
 - Shared activities
 - Shared orientations
 - Strong pressures to conform
 - This applies both to normalised and deviant youth cultures
- Parents and especially mothers have the most direct bearing on how their children turn out is considered by Judith Harris (1998) to be wrong
 - She suggests that parents have been 'dethroned' as the frontline of socialisation.

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- School
 - Primary function of schooling is to impart the knowledge that children will need to take on adult roles
 - Work
 - Citizenship
 - Family
 - Community relations
 - Rules and regulations
 - Exposure to authority figures
- Major agents within school are:
 - Teachers
 - School administrators
 - School medical personnel
 - Fellow students
 - They all play a role in the moral development of youth

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- School cont.
 - Is a battle ground to a degree between families and schools for the 'souls and minds of children'
 - Society assumes that parents are failing in their roles as agents of socialisation
 - Parents demand more accountability from schools
 - Thus fuelling antagonism on all sides
- Traditional parental authority is diminished to the extent that the local culture and knowledge of the family
 - family values
- are replaced by the more cosmopolitan and modern values of the school system.

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Work
 - Persons must learn the particular norms, values, rules and history of the place of their employment
 - Often called organisational socialisation

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Performance proficiency
 - Learning and mastery of tasks associated with one's position within a work organisation
- People
 - Whom workers must learn to adjust in order to do their jobs effectively
- Political
 - Being aware of various aspects of the organisation
 - Who the politically powerful actors are
 - The nature of the informal networks vital for general information and social solidarity
- Language – argot
 - Used within organisations
- Goals and values
 - Rules and principles – formal and informal
 - To maintain the integrity of the organisation
- History
 - Traditions, customs, myths, and rituals used to transmit cultural knowledge to workers

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Religion
 - Religious socialisation
 - Belief system
 - Transmitted to new members across generations (Hervieu-Leger 1998)
 - Collective solidarity and identity of a group of 'true believers'
 - Church
 - Congregation

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Religion
 - Collective memory forged through religious teachings include:
 - Origin myth
 - How the world was created and humanity's place within it
 - Set of Rituals
 - True believers partake of the religious life
 - Forged sense of solidarity and collective identity
 - Understanding of the soul
 - Believed to survive the physical death of the body
 - Rules for living
 - In this world
 - If devoutly followed may lead to the attainment of grace or salvation in the afterlife

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Mass Media
 - Modern society entertainment and news media
 - Television
 - Film
 - Radio
 - Music
 - Newspapers
 - Magazines
 - Internet
 - Mass-marketed video games
 - Some believe the effect of such mass media on the public are generally bad
 - Other believe that various types of media can have a positive impact upon society

Informal Control: Agents of Socialisation

- Kurt Lewin Group climate is a key factor in shaping and directing group outcomes
- Muzafer Sherif
 - Group culture in the creation and resolution of inter-group conflict
- William Foote Whyte
 - Status hierarchies in groups
 - This structuring impacts not only the
 - group's culture
 - but also the
 - personal identities
 - of its members
 - (Hirschi 2004: 540)

How Groups Shape Individual Conformity

- Solomon Asch
 - How groups shape individual conformity
 - Subject judges which line matches the first line
 - All other persons in the room were told give the wrong answer
- Difficulty do you say the right answer and 'stick out' or do you conform to the group's answer which is obviously wrong?



The Asch Experiment.flv

Conformity and Obedience

- Stanley Milgram
 - The Nature of Obedience
- Milgram's Obedience Experiments
 - Learning experiment
 - Individuals would be instructed to give an electric shock to other subjects when they gave the incorrect answer in a paired word test
 - 'cover story'
 - effects of punishment on memory and learning
 - 'true aim'
 - how far research subject would go in delivering shocks to other research subjects
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEaKl5_Nn3w

Conformity and Obedience: Milgram's Obedience Experiments

- Outcomes:
 - Subjects were more likely to deliver the maximum voltage shock when the researcher was standing next to them in the room
 - 1963
 - 26 out of 40 test subjects (65%)
 - Did deliver the highest shocks on the generator

Small Groups

Simmel

- Groups provide the basis of primary socialisations to learn standards of the community
 - Family
 - Schools
 - Neighbourhoods
 - same-age peer groups

Small Groups

Simmel

- Groups can be the impetus for social change
 - Some groups may challenge the prevailing cultural standards and ways of living in a given society
 - Social control may therefore be contested
 - These can 'snow ball' into full-scale social movements
 - May contribute to the social welfare
 - Or may be injurious to the system

Small Groups

Simmel

- Small groups provide members with what network therapists term strong ties
 - Relationships that are deep and abiding
 - Give members a sense of 'we-feeling' or 'belonging'
 - Family and friends

Small Groups

Simmel

- Groups provide for the development of collective identity
 - Social solidarity
 - Can be forged around family name or lineage
 - Broader ethnic identity
 - Friendship group connected with a neighbourhood or school
 - A church or religious organisation
 - Youth gang

Small Groups

Simmel

- Groups provide members with an individual identity to which status and other kinds of social markers can be attached
 - Families provide a range of ascribed statuses
 - Sex
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Social class location
 - Simmel (1950)

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