

Module 7.2 – Journal: Social Control and Theory

Southern New Hampshire University

Samiyah Muhammad

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Professor Sharpe

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Social control is a mechanism used to garner the obedience of the masses. By the creation of a system and environment that thrives from the perceived social order, conformity is necessary. This goal is achieved in various approaches, according to the research of Adler, F. (2021) "...the influences of family and school, religious beliefs, moral values, friends, and even beliefs about government. The more involved and committed a person is...the less likely that person is to violate society's rules and to jeopardize relationships and aspirations." By appealing to their values, beliefs, thoughts, and actions a promise of stability and protection is agreed to by civilians and the criminal justice system alongside politics.

Strain theory is in direct association with social control and environmental situations based on the scenarios of a division of the means of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Considering the social and economic structure in the US only a small fraction of the populace has access the wealth that can provide a stable salary that doesn't require multiple sources of income. In other words, today's economy is nearly eradicating a middle-class status which can increase criminality, unemployment, and homelessness. "The real problem, Merton argued, is created not by sudden social change but by a social structure that holds out the same goals to all its members without giving them equal means to achieve them. This lack of integration between what the culture calls for and what the structure permits, the former encouraging success and the latter preventing it, can cause norms to break down because they no longer are effective guides to behavior." Adler, F. (2021).

A well-known crime famous for its notorious non-violent yet harmful impact is selling various drugs, such as narcotics and other illegal substances. A great example of this would be the criminalization and subsequent legalization of marijuana. Before the medical legalization of

marijuana in 1996, high volumes of impoverished community members received extensive sentences due to low-level distribution offenses. Although legal for medical use, rates of imprisonment for crimes tied to marijuana are directly correlated with the war on drugs. With little to no income for disenfranchised communities, the only way to provide shelter, food, and necessities was through low-level drug deals from youth in and out of gangs.

Presently, marijuana is legalized for medical and recreational use throughout various states and sold legally through dispensaries. Black and brown communities were impacted disproportionately, yet cannot participate in the same industry they once served time in jail or prison for. This example connects the strain theory and social control due to ill-informed political measures that create blockades through biased enforcement and inequitable living conditions. "...During the 1960s, marijuana became one of the major drugs of choice in the United States, particularly among white, middle-class young people who identified themselves as antiestablishment. Their lifestyles were distinct from those of the inner-city..." Adler, F. (2021).

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