



Transition Material

Sociology A-level – Session 4

Key Term 5: Formal Social Control

TASK

How are people controlled in society? Think about what things encourage us and discourage us from performing certain behaviours (Think family, school, religion, police etc.)

Social Control refers to how society controls our behaviour and forces us to follow norms and values. There are two kinds of social control: formal social control and informal social control. Our behaviour is controlled through the use of consequences (sanctions). These consequences are either positive sanctions (rewards) or negative sanctions (punishments). Agents of Formal Social Control are supported by the law. These include the police and the law courts. They are able to use the law to punish those who break the law through formal warnings, imprisonment, fines and community service etc. The main purpose of these agents is to enforce the laws of society and regulate social behaviour.



Key Term 6: Informal Social Control

Agents of Informal Social Control These agents are still very influential. However, they do not have the backing of the law by themselves (though they can bring in the courts or the police). These agents still apply their own positive and negative sanctions. Each of the Agents of Socialisation we have looked at can also act as Agents of Informal Social Control as they have the ability to sanction different behaviour and force people to follow norms and values. As with socialisation, you need to be able to explain why each of these is a successful or unsuccessful agent of social control. The chart below shows different sanctions some agents may use:

Agent	Positive Sanction	Negative Sanction
The Family	Praise, pocket money, presents	Punishment (verbally or physically), withdrawal of support, guilt
Education	Rewards (e.g. House Points), prizes, praise, recognition, stickers	Detentions, guilt, being told off, exclusion, isolation, withdrawal of privileges
Peers	Praise, popularity, respect	Disrespect, bullying, isolation, name-calling
Religion	Promises of heaven / good afterlife, praise	Threats of hell / bad afterlife, guilt, isolation (excommunication).
Workplace	Praise, pay-rise, promotion, opportunities, bonus	Disciplinary, withheld promotion or pay-rise, sacking

TASK

Which of the agents of social control (both formal and informal) do you think have more of an impact on your own behaviours? Explain how and why?