

# Essay on informal social control

[Countries](#), [China](#)



The methods and mechanisms employed to keep social order in a society is called social control. As part of the social control, people are made to follow some codes and social norms, implicit and explicit rules of behavior to maintain peace and harmony in a society. Social control is classified into two types - formal social control and informal social control. Formal social control refers to the external rules and regulations enforced by the government and administration to deter crimes and maintain equilibrium in a society.

Informal social control refers to the process of internalizing values and social customs to develop behavior conforming to the standards of society. The influence of cultural difference in the implementation of informal social control and its effectiveness is evident in the comparison of the three nations namely, Japan, China and USA below.

Japan is a country with low crime rate applying informal measures as means of social control. Shaming is a hallmark feature of Japanese culture. Japanese society is often termed as shame culture or shame society because shaming is a primary tool used as a means to maintain social order and gain control on children. Shaming with an accompanied threat of ostracism is inculcated in Japanese minds from young age. Chinese culture like Japanese culture too deters crimes through shaming. In Chinese culture, an act that deviates from the standards of societal rules is a matter of shame and dishonor for the entire family. Chinese people try to refrain from committing crimes thinking of how the act would cast a pall over the family name and reputation. This shame culture of Japanese and Chinese society is in total contrast with the US culture which inculcates feelings of guilt in people with the threat of punishment in this life and the life after that to condemn behaviors.

The US being an individualistic society promotes autonomy and independence and therefore, shaming through ridicules, contempt or social ostracism is not considered appropriate to maintain self-control. The feelings of guilt with threats of punishment by God and by the law are the crime deterrents in USA. It is very common in the US culture for parents to spank their children. Spanking is used as a punishment to deter children deviating from any social rules. The enforcement of rules and regulations by the law makers is prevalent in US culture where most of the people call police for every little thing. If a neighbor makes noise by playing loud music at night, police is called in to solve the matter. On other hand, China and Japan promote the culture of collectivism and therefore, encourage solidarity and interdependence (Li, Wang & Fischer, 2003). If Chinese culture views an act of deviance as a failure that disparages the image of the entire family, ancestry, friends and larger community, Japanese culture considers the failure to keep in with the societal norms and expectation as personal shame and Japanese people in order to atone for the crimes committed by others are ready to sacrifice their own honor. There are instances galore when many private and public sector officials have resigned to expiate for the mistakes of their juniors.

Taken into consideration the informal social controls employed in the three nations concerned, crimes rates in Japan and China are relatively lower than that of USA. The reason could be attributed to the prevalence of the shame culture in Chinese and Japanese society. In a shame culture, it is very important what other people think because shame is associated with how others view you and the desire to avoid shame and preserve honor functions

as an impetus to refrain from crimes whereas in guilt culture it is how people examine their behavior is important. Guilt is very person specific. One may feel guilty for an action of betraying someone's trust and another might not have any guilt for the same action. This difference in mentality and culture explain how informal social control is effective in one society and while ineffective in another.

In conclusion, the three nations Japan, China and USA are different in culture and social norms and therefore the implementation of informal social control varies from one nation to another. While China and Japan are mostly alike in their cultural norms and collective structure of society, USA stands poles apart. Though China and Japan both rely on shaming as means of informal social control, China stresses on morality and family honor whereas Japan emphasizes personal integrity and honor. Taking all the aspects into consideration, it is seen that Japan and China are more effective than USA in terms of applying informal social control to prevent crimes.

## **References**

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