

Playing The System



LAW AND SOCIAL CONTROL

With the Law



- What kind of relationship does PG&E have with the legal system at the beginning of the film?
- How do you think representatives of the corporation treat the law? What privileges do they initially have? How does that change throughout the film?

Navigating Social Control



- The law functions as a means of social control, it reinforces and protects the existing social system and hierarchy.
 - Different groups experience the law differently
 - Power relations shape the experience of the law and social control
 - The law can be manipulated and nuanced to provide support for those in power

Law and Social Control



- Two basic process of social control
 - Internalization of group norms
 - ✦ Consequence of socialization
 - Control through external pressure
 - ✦ Negative and positive sanctions

Where does the law fall in this description?

Informal Social Controls



- Folkways – established norms of common practices such as those that specify modes of dress, etiquette, and language
- Mores – societal norms associated with intense feelings of right and wrong and definite rules of conduct that simply must not be violated

Formal Social Control



- Legalization - the process by which norms are moved from the social to the legal level
 - Moral indignation
 - High value on order
 - Response to threat
 - Political tactics

Informal Social Controls



- **Informal methods of social control**
 - More effective in small groups and societies
 - Face-to-face relationships
 - Division of labor is simple
- **Informal social control stronger in communities that are:**
 - Smaller
 - Traditional
 - Homogeneous

Formal Social Controls



- Formal social controls are usually characteristic of communities:
 - More complex
 - Higher division of labor, heterogeneity
 - Competing subgroups with different mores and ideologies

Formal Social Controls



- **Formal social controls**
 - Are incorporated into society
 - Characterized by explicit establishment of procedures
 - Delegation of specific bodies to enforce them
 - ✦ Laws, decrees, regulations, and codes
 - Seldom exercised through positive sanctions

Formal Social Control



- Criminals are those who reject the law, and attempt to circumvent it.
 - The success of the circumvention of the law, depends on the power and status of the criminal
- Law enacted by legislatures and modified by courts define criminal and delinquent behavior
- Increasing reliance on law to regulate activities and behavior

Formal Social Control



- **Criminal Sanctions**

- 2010 – 6.7 million under criminal sanction
- 2010 – 3.3% of American adults
- 2010 – 2.2 million inmates
- 10% of federal inmates serving life sentence
- America has more people in prison and higher incarceration rate than any other country

White-Collar Crime

- **White-collar crime**
 - Generally crimes of privilege
 - Term coined by Edwin Sutherland in 1949
 - Crimes committed for gain within the job or occupation
 - More serious threat than more traditional crimes

White-Collar Crime

- **White-collar crime**
 - Extent is difficult to assess
 - Activities are hard to discover or hard to prove
 - Incorporates occupational and corporate crimes
 - Until the 19th century, no corporate crime
 - ✦ No laws against unethical or dangerous corporate practices

White-Collar Crime vs Street Crime

- The FBI estimates, burglary and robbery -- street crimes -- costs the nation \$3.8 billion a year.
- 16,000 Americans are murdered every year.
- Annual cost to consumers is estimated between \$174 billion and \$231 billion
- 56,000 Americans die every year on the job or from occupational diseases

White-Collar Crime: Some Examples

- Some comments on recent white-collar crimes
 - ✦ [White Collar Crime in Action](#)
- Can you think of any other examples of white collar crime?
- How does this us better understand the idea held by some that the legal system can be manipulated?