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INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION IMPACT OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (A STUDY OF INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL)

City University of New York PH.D. 1981

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION
IMPACT OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS
(A Study of Informal Social Control)

by

Maurice H. Heywood

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The City University of New York.

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ABSTRACT

The author investigates the informal social control process in an attempt to assess the impact and significance of sex, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status on the selection of particular strategies in resolving dyadic interpersonal confrontations. Since informal controls are exercised on an ad hoc, spontaneous basis, individuals must rely on their own "personal power" when involved in conflict situations arising outside formal, institutionalized structures. Six strategies ranging from minimal to maximal "personal power" were identified as being viable choices available to Ego in the confrontation with Alter.

A questionnaire describing twelve vignettes in which situational variables were systematically manipulated was distributed to day and evening college students in introductory sociology classes. The offender's racial or ethnic identity was specified in each vignette, yielding three vignettes for each of the four categorical groups being studied (white, Black, Hispanic, and Jewish). Within each set of three, Alter's socioeconomic status was identified once as "middle-class," once as "working-class," and once as "lower-class." Respondents were asked to select the option which they believed would

best reflect their immediate reaction in the situation depicted.

Data from 392 respondents suggest that Alter's personal attributes, specifically sex, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, are important influences in the selection of strategies. The study suggests, further, that the various groups differ somewhat in their use of aggressive strategies toward Alter. The offenses of Black Alters appeared most likely to be ignored while those of Hispanic Alters were least likely to be ignored. Jewish respondents were found to use the highest proportion of harsh strategies against all Alters, including Jews.

Each of the variables, finally, was revealed to influence the tendency to choose relatively harsh forms of "personal power" when both Ego's and Alter's ascriptive characteristics were controlled. The relative use of this "personal power" in interpersonal dyadic confrontations appeared to be an attempt by Ego to reinforce his or her self-concept or self-definition. In view of the paucity of studies in informal social control, this effort points some direction and raises pertinent questions for further research in this area.

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My greatest debt of gratitude goes, of course, to my wife, Myrtle, who prodded me during moments of frustration and lethargy, and who agonized almost as much as I did in the final stages of the project. I thank her, too, for her expert assistance in typing the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to attempt an assessment of the importance and impact of race, ethnicity, and social class on the selection of strategies for resolving interpersonal conflict. More specifically, we propose to investigate the dynamics of the informal social control process, a phenomenon which appears to have been largely ignored or overlooked by social scientists. By definition, informal social control is concerned with the various mechanisms, devices, and instrumentalities utilized on a person-to-person basis in an effort to curb deviant behavior and achieve some measure of redress. The process offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the exercise of personal power in non-institutionalized dyadic interpersonal relationships. It will be our intention to compare and contrast formal social control with informal social control. We shall examine the conditions and circumstances in which informal control emerges as a distinctive entity, and also inquire into the factors that appear to be significant in influencing its nature, content, and direction. We propose, further, to examine the alternatives available to Ego when the status quo has been upset by some deviant action of Alter. This exercise, hopefully, will serve

to heighten our awareness of the process, generate additional data for future study and criticism, and stimulate interest in this neglected dimension of social interaction.

Before we delve further into the informal social control process, however, it might be well to focus our attention on its counterpart, formal social control. While informal social control has been regarded as the foundation of social control in all known societies,[1] it cannot be fully understood or appreciated without first gaining a clear grasp of the larger arena embraced by formal social control. It is for this reason, therefore, that we now direct our attention to the phenomenon of formal social control.

NOTES

1. Talcott Parsons, The Social System, Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1951, p. 134

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CONTROL

In the quest for deeper insight and understanding into the nature and dynamics of social organization and the questions of stability and order in human relations, few concepts have occupied or demanded as integral or central a position among social scientists as has that of social control. As a matter of fact, social control has been very closely identified with the advent of American sociology, serving as the coordinating theme of a series of articles by E. A. Ross appearing between 1896 and 1898 in The American Journal of Sociology.[1] Despite its long history, the concept seems to be enjoying a resurgence today among social science theorists.

In the paragraphs that follow, we shall consider the work of some of the theorists who have dealt with the concept in an attempt to update the literature as well as to reformulate its meaning and impact in the light of recent industrial and technological changes in the modern nation-state. The task is also intended to establish the contextual framework of the study of interpersonal conflict resolution.

Morris Janowitz is probably one of the more prolific of the present-day theorists of social control.[2] In a

lucid, informative essay, Janowitz traces what he describes as the "intellectual parameters" of social control and examines its treatment and utility from its introduction into the sociological enterprise through its present state of development in the United States. For Janowitz, "...there is a direct line of intellectual continuity from the earliest efforts to formulate the component elements of social control to its usage by contemporary research sociologists aware of its intellectual background and theoretical purpose."[3] He argues cogently that the social control perspective "supplies an appropriate level of abstraction for the study of social organization and change," and concludes that the "core element in social control is the idea of self-regulation of the group -- whether the group be a face-to-face primary group or the nation-state. In essence, social control is a perspective toward social organization -- one which focuses on the outcome of regulative mechanisms."[4]

Combining both theory and research on the subject, Janowitz has produced a macrosociological study of social control in "advanced industrial society, especially in the United States, and particularly the last half-century after World War I."[5] In actuality, Janowitz sought to test the applicability of the social control perspective

in accounting for social change as it is manifested in the "political dilemmas" experienced by modern nation-states. Defining social control as the capacity of a social group, including a whole society, to regulate itself, Janowitz observes that:

> "The social control perspective is both a mode of analysis and a value orientation. Self-regulation is a moral aspiration and is multivalued in orientation. There is in fact a hierarchy of values, one that requires continual clarification. ...social control assigns the highest importance to the reduction of coercion. But at the same time it assumes that the pursuit of effective social control both depends on and will enhance personal and political freedom."[6]

A second theorist, Don Martindale, offers an analytical review of the concept which more closely parallels the focus of this essay.[7] While also tracing the historical utility of the concept of social control, he concentrates on its initial conceptualization and components, and provides an insightful review of Ross and other early exponents. According to Martindale, Ross argued that "much of the order in interpersonal behavior is a product of four properties of human nature -- sympathy, sociability, a sense of justice, and a sense of self-interest -- which by themselves create a natural, spontaneous order without the need for coercion from the outside."[8]

Later in his development of the concept, Ross is seen to have recognized the need for some "imposed" order in human relations; in Ross' own words, "in the course of time ... a society must inevitably institute a measure of control over the individual. The resultant system of control is partly natural, partly a matter of deliberate human artifice."[9] In refining his formulation, Ross evidently equated "social control" with socialization or social order. "The means of control," he said, "included public opinion, law, belief, social suggestion, education, custom, social religion, personal ideals, ceremony, art, personality, enlightenment, illusions, social evaluations, and ethics."[10] From Martindale's point of view, Ross actually combines forces which seem opposite or antithetical to each other, citing some of the means of control as both supporting and opposing the imposition of order and control.[11] What is important to us at this time is the enumeration of some of the elements which will be most instrumental in guiding or influencing the selection of particular mechanisms in resolving interpersonal conflict.

In addition to the pioneering work of Ross, Martindale critically examines the works of Jesse Pitts and Amitai Etzioni.[12] In presenting the views of the former,

Martindale ascribes to Pitts a formulation that regarded the emergence of social control as a consequence of the failure of a Darwinian "natural selection or survival of the fittest" theory of human relations:

> "Much of the impetus for the development and use of the concept of social control comes from the sociological adaptation of the Darwinian tradition. But there, however, the major dichotomy was between organism and nature; for the various theories of social control, it has been that between individual and society. It is assumed in these theories that society has to control the animal nature of man: if order is to be established and maintained, man's tendency to pursue his self-interest to the point of war of all against all must be limited through learning or selection, or both. Emergence of the concept of social control, thus, indicated a waning of the utilitarian concept of the natural harmony of self-interests."[13]

Martindale sees Pitts' derivation of the concept as "astonishing" and "a mare's nest of confusions," more indicative of his theoretical suppositions than of the social history of the concept.[14]

Despite this negative evaluation of Pitts, Martindale also points to one important aspect (at least from the standpoint of the present study) of Pitts' treatment of social control. Drawing on the work of Parsons, Pitts highlights the elements of deviance. While we may contest some of the theoretical positions presented, we can accept from Pitts the observation that deviance is any behavior

which upsets the institutional equilibrium:

> "The object of social control, according to Parsons and Pitts, is to alter the individual's deviant motivation, leading him back toward unambivalent support of the social system. This object is best accomplished by practices that head off and prevent deviance by preventing the buildup of tensions which incline to deviance, reinforce the desire to conform, clarify what is socially appropriate, and discourage deviance (by punishment) and reward conformity; and by modifying social patterns to accommodate deviant behavior."[15]

What appears important to us is the fact that deviant behavior is disruptive to equilibrium in human relations. The main culprit of conflict in this sense is deviant acts; at their manifestation, we are confronted with the problem of identifying and selecting mechanisms or devices (strategies) that will enable one to restore the status quo ante.

With respect to the work of Etzioni, Martindale cites his focus on the organizational aspects of social control. For Etzioni, all social units control their members. In organizations, informal controls are inadequate; formal controls are required since only they can be based on the institutional allocation of rewards and penalties. According to Etzioni, there are three types of organizational controls: coercive, utilitarian, and normative,[16] with each type being most appropriate to a particular type of institution or organization. For Martindale, the

importance of Etzioni's work is that he "extended the concept to its widest possible meaning, visualizing every form of order in interaction as a product of societal management. Groups, ...do this informally, and organizations formally through institutionalized allocations of rewards and penalties."[17]

After his critical evaluation of these influential theorists, and of Pitts and Etzioni in particular, Martindale argues that contemporary formulations of the concept of social control have failed to add any significant contribution in standardizing usage as to its meaning. Within this context, he suggests that much of the ambiguity stems primarily from the shifting or shuttling back and forth between two contrasting views of society: holism and elementarism:

> "Holism is the idea that society is a super-organic entity with laws of its own that are not reducible to generalizations about interaction; elementarism is the idea that 'society' is only a name for a complex dynamic process, consisting of strategies of people individually and in concert, and the only legitimate laws are laws of interaction."[18]

According to Martindale, holism perpetuates the society-versus-individual dichotomy; elementarism rejects it. The contemporary elementarist, in his view, must abandon conceptions of "human nature" and "natural order" as

these appear in Ross' earliest formulations. With this accomplished, social control would include "all processes that implement the legitimate order of a given community. The institutions ... include political, legal, and military and police institutions."[19] The scope of social control, therefore, ranges from the negative (reacting to deviance) to the positive (social planning) management of power.[20]

From the preceding, we can now turn toward another examination of the concept of social control. In his presentation of the literary review of social control, Roucek attributes its introduction into sociology to Comte, and notes its earlier philosophical context in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Roucek observes that the other theorists had also been preoccupied with the task of accounting for or determining the means or mechanisms whereby social solidarity is achieved. Regardless of whatever instrumentality is employed, there seems to be some emerging consensus as to the functions of social control: (1) to bring the actions of variant groups into conformity with cherished values in order that they may share ... "collective conscience," (2) to induce and preserve the degree of social solidarity that will ensure the perpetuation of the group...; and (3) ... to study

the various devices and techniques of social control utilized by ... "groups of actors who have power."[21] Assuming, therefore, this "consensus of functions," what remains is the matter of definition. It is in this regard that Roucek's contribution proves significant.

In an attempt to underscore the lack of unanimity of definition, Roucek offers two versions:

> "Social control may be defined simply as the methods used to get people to conform to societal norms and to specific role expectations. Or it can be defined more complexly as any social or cultural means by which systematic and relatively consistent restraints are imposed upon individual behavior and by which people are motivated to adhere to traditions and patterns of behavior that are important to the smooth functioning of a group or society."[22]

This lack of agreement is attributed, variously, to "semantics" and to original sources of translation (from French, German, English, etcetera), and also to interpretation by either European or American sociologists. This state of affairs, notwithstanding, Roucek identifies the persisting problems confronting social scientists: "Who exercises social control?", "Who Gets What, When, and How?" After this definition, Roucek proceeds to analyze the contributions of selected theorists of social control.[23]

Of particular interest to us, however, is his

reference to the empirical studies of Thomas and Znaniecki. For Thomas, "a person is everywhere and at all times at the mercy of the socially defined environment, every act must have a definition; every definition means the affirmation of an existing social value or the creation of a new value."[24] Further, social control signifies the social definition of the wishes of the individual and their incorporation in the common attitudes and objectives of the group.[25] Thomas' formulation will become an integral part of the process of informal social control where an individual's perception of his circumstances (definition of the situation) will be a crucial determinant of his selection of a particular strategy in the resolution of interpersonal conflict.

Aside from the question of definition, Roucek also presents an analysis of what he terms "categories" of social control. In this context, social control may be described as formal or informal, with the latter being a function of observing folkways and mores, while the former is exemplified by institutionalized procedures and the assignment of specific bodies to enforce them (laws, decrees, regulations, codes.) Ultimate authority resides in the state, which may exercise coercive power. Other categories of control include: regulative and suggestive

controls, external and internal controls. By definition, regulative controls emphasize rules, laws, and possible recrimination and punishment. Suggestive controls are typified by voluntary conformity through emulation, cooperation, and suggestion.[26]

Control, in addition, can be external or internal. The former are those imposed from without, and the latter are those through which the individual himself is motivated to conform in his behavior (conscience, conditioning processes, attitudes, indoctrination, socialization).[27] Roucek locates the operation of these controls in institutions which function to satisfy both individual and group (societal) needs, and these institutions also consist of established procedures which carry a certain degree of compulsion.[28]

It will be useful, at this juncture, to summarize the crucial elements contributed by the theorists discussed. Sifting through the observations of Janowitz, we can suggest that social control may be conceived of as a "perspective, a level of abstraction" by means of which one may examine how social organization is achieved in society. In addition to a mode of analysis, Janowitz sees social control as a "value orientation." This insight is significant because the concept of value orientation recasts the

definition of values from an emphasis on rightness or wrongness, desirability or undesirability, to one emphasizing the idea of values as describing "potential solutions" to problems. This recasting, therefore, seems more applicable or appropriate for our purposes. If we accept the new connotation, then, of social control as a value orientation, control (some sort of order developed among individuals pursuing their own self-interests, or order imposed on a situation from without) seeks to solve the problem of resolving interpersonal conflict, of eliminating deviance. Citing social control as the sine qua non of social interaction, Janowitz adds that social control is the "capacity of a group to regulate itself ... with a corresponding reduction of coercive control."[29] When we come to examine the informal social control process, the element of "coercive control" will be the line of demarcation between formal and informal controls. Janowitz, of course, conceives of this in largely macrosociological terms, while our efforts will focus on the microsociological level.

From the perspective of Martindale, confusion as to the meaning of social control can be traced to the contrasting approaches to the study of social control: holism versus elementarism. In succinct terms, holism "inclines toward

a totalistic conception of social control, visualizing all order in interaction as being brought about by society; ... Elementarism is inclined to place the primary meaning of social control in the management of social power."[30] Martindale opts in favor of an elementaristic conception, with the most crucial factor being "social power" -- social planning being its positive manifestation and reaction to deviance its negative counterpart. Again, Martindale's contribution focuses on a unique aspect of social control, that of "power."

Finally, we turn to Roucek. While acknowledging the lack of agreement on definition, Roucek suggests that we have achieved some sort of consensus as to the functions of social control: (a) the establishment of group (societal) conformity, (2) guaranteeing the perpetuation of the group through social solidarity, and (3) calling for the study of the mechanisms (devices, techniques) of control used by "groups who have power." In addition to the foregoing functions, Roucek identifies several cross-cutting categories of control: formal and informal, regulative and suggestive, external and internal. These categories, however, operate within an institutional matrix with ultimate authority (coercion) residing in the group (state).

of grievances, or restore the status quo ante. It is unsupported by third parties and rests primarily on the actual or perceived power of an individual to achieve the stated goals. It is this type of control which will be the focus of our attention in this essay.

NOTES

1. Don Martindale, "The Theory of Social Control," in Social Control for the 1980's, edited by Joseph S. Roucek, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1978. p. 46.

2. Morris Janowitz, "Sociological Theory and Social Control," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 81, Number 1; "The Intellectual History of Social Control," in Social Control for the 1980's, edited by Joseph S. Roucek, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1978; The Last Half-Century, Societal Change and Politics in America, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1978

3. Morris Janowitz, "Sociological Theory and Social Control," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 81, Number 1, p. 87

4. Ibid., p. 106

5. Morris Janowitz, The Last Half-Century, Societal Change and Politics in America. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1978, p. 3

6. Ibid.

7. Don Martindale, "The Theory of Social Control," in Social Control for the 1980's, edited by Joseph S. Roucek, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1978

8. Ibid., p. 46

9. Ibid., p. 47

10. Ibid., p. 48

11. Ibid.

12. Jesse R. Pitts, "Social Control: The Concept," in David L. Sills, ed., International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, New York, The Free Press, 1968, Vol. 14, pp. 381-82; Amitai Etzioni, The Active Society, The Free Press, New York, 1968

13. Don Martindale, "The Theory of Social Control," p. 50

14. Ibid., p. 51

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 52

17. Ibid., p. 53

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 56

20. Ibid.

21. Joseph S. Roucek, editor, Social Control for the 1980's, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1978, p. 4

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., pp. 5-8

24. Ibid., p. 8

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 12

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Morris Janowitz, The Last Half-Century, Societal Change and Politics in America, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1978, p. 30

30. Don Martindale, "The Theory of Social Control," in Social Control for the 1980's, edited by Joseph S. Roucek, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn. 1978 p. 53

31. Norman W. Storer, Focus on Society, 2nd Edition, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Mass. 1980, p. 371

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Empirical studies of the exercise of social power (informal control) abound in the sociological literature reviewed in preparation for this study. Regrettably, they are mainly concerned with control as it operates in subsystems of formal, bureaucratic structures. Noteworthy among these studies are the works of Etzioni, Millham *et al*, and Page.[1] In almost every instance, these authors portray informal social control as a varied, dynamic process. Each of the strategies employed in the particular settings described are also varied and effective in proportion to the flexibility or rigidity of the institutional network within which it occurs. In some cases, a type of "protocol" or "pecking order" emerges within -- but still outside -- the formally prescribed roles and statuses of the institution which somehow imposes a type of structure or order within which these informal systems operate. Nevertheless, in these "non-legal" arrangements, control is manifest and directed by a sort of "unseen hand" which orchestrates the extent and limits within which the informal social control process functions and has its existence.

Probably the first formal attempts to deal with the dynamics which are characteristic of informal social

control appear in the works of Erving Goffman.[2] In his Behavior in Public Places, Goffman urges that sociologists become more concerned with one of the most prominent but often neglected dimensions of social reality: "everyday face-to-face" or immediate interaction in the public order. This "public order," observes Goffman, "traditionally refers more to the regulation of face-to-face interaction among those members of a community who are not well acquainted than it does to interaction occurring in private walled-in places where only familiars meet."[3] These instances appear to have their own structure and operational norms, and, in addition, manifest two distinctive features: richness of information flow and facilitation of feedback. These features, argues Goffman, provide a rationale for analytical examination of face-to-face interaction.[4] In developing his discussion of what he terms "face engagements," Goffman identifies some of their properties:

> "An encounter is initiated by someone making an opening move, typically by means of a special expression of the eyes but sometimes by a statement or a special tone of voice at the beginning of a statement. The engagement proper begins when this overture is acknowledged by the other, who signals back with his eyes, voice, or stance that he has placed himself at the disposal of the other for purposes of a mutual eye-to-eye activity -- even if only to ask the initiator to postpone his request for an audience."[5]

The encounters cited by Goffman include behavior which is conformist as well as non-conformist. Of the latter category - which will become the focus of the present inquiry - Goffman notes that these may be intentional or unintentional, these elements determining the meaning an offended person (Ego) will impute to an offensive act.[6] In a subsequent work, Goffman continues to pursue a refinement of the interactive process.[7] Focusing on "order" or "equilibrium," Goffman introduces the idea of face-work and ritual,[8] both emerging in the process of resolving conflict encounters.

More specifically, Goffman identifies four "classic moves" involved in this type of face-to-face interaction: the challenge, the offering, an acceptance, and gratitude. This sequence of events or moves, each component exemplified by particular "strategies," tend to make for some rigidity of form or structure in this type of interaction. But Goffman suggests the possibility that disequilibrium may continue, an eventuality which elicits a type of "character contest."[9] This contest, as we will view it, in reality calls forth the use of personal power: how to achieve redress, how to restore the status quo ante, how to "save face."

While Goffman attempts to direct our attention to an

investigation of the entire gamut of activities which are integral aspects of interpersonal human relationships, Marvin B. Scott and Stanford M. Lyman[10] focus on the importance of "talk" in dyadic relationships. In their work, Accounts, these authors portray ad hoc relationships, relationships seemingly without a predictable structure but involving activities which ensue from an initial act of deviance. "Our concern here," note the authors, "is with one feature of talk: Its ability to shore up the timbers of fractured sociation, its ability to repair the broken and restore the estranged. This feature involves the giving and receiving of what we call accounts."[11]

By an account as an important feature of interpersonal conflict, the authors mean "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior -- whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause of the statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else."[12] The accounts "are situated according to the statuses of the interactants, and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectations."[13]

In expanding on their theory, Scott and Lyman dichotomize "talk" into excuses and justifications. Both are "socially

approved vocabularies," the former being utilized for mitigating or relieving responsibility when conduct is questioned, and the latter for neutralizing an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question.[14]

Excuses are further subdivided into four modal formulations: appeal to accidents, appeal to defeasibility, appeal to biological drives, and scapegoating. Justifications, on the other hand, are seen as analagous to four of the five techniques of neutralization introduced by Sykes and Matza.[15] In addition to the four techniques selected, the authors introduce two additional justifications which they term "sad tales" and "self-fulfillment."[16]

Scott and Lyman also identify five "linguistic styles" in which accounts are employed. Reflecting degrees of decreasing social intimacy, these styles are: the intimate, casual, consultative, formal, and frozen. The acceptance or refusal of an offered account depends in part on the appropriateness of the idiom employed. Failure to employ the proper linguistic style often results in dishonoring the account or else calls for further accounts.[17] The authors present numerous examples in which the various types of accounts are utilized, and argue cogently for greater concern on the part of sociologists with the formulation of theory which would integrate both verbal and nonverbal behavior.[18]

Even with this very cursory presentation of the main features of the work of Scott and Lyman, it is evident that accounts entail many of the ingredients involved in the informal social control situation, i.e., a deviant act, a demand for redress, and particular strategies of resolution. There is even the suggestion of the importance of "status." Nevertheless, their primary focus is on the linguistic aspect of the informal social control process as this element operates to restore balance and equilibrium in social relations. Beyond the features described, Scott and Lyman suggest a reason for analyzing accounts: a focus on the microsociological sphere of interpersonal interaction may hold the key to the problem of how society is possible.

Building on the work of Scott and Lyman, and pursuing a more empirical orientation, Blumstein and his associates attempted to devise a means whereby they could predict the "honoring" of accounts.[19] Drawing on the works of Goffman,[20] Blumstein suggests that an account is really the offender's explanation of his conduct; "honoring" thus becomes the offended actor's acceptance of the statement. As they perceive the process, "...a remedial exchange is triggered by an offense, opened by an account on the part of the offender, and closed either with a gesture of honoring on the part

of the offended person (signalling the restoration of interactive equilibrium), or else with some form of disengagement process following a failure to honor."[21] To the researchers, "a successful account is one honored by the demander. But honoring ultimately depends on the total meanings held by the offended party, incorporating not only the account, but also the demander's stake in restoring order, and his construction of the nature of the offense. The decision whether or not to honor involves integrating many different elements and assessing the goodness of fit between offense and account."[22] The researchers therefore committed themselves to examining some of the inferential elements in the process and utilizing them in predicting the likelihood of an account being honored. Blumstein and his associates devised a questionnaire in which subjects -- students in introductory sociology classes -- were treated as bystanders required to respond to written interaction vignettes. The researchers were not concerned with the subjects' personal judgement or assessment of their own actions in similar situations, but rather with their impressions of various elements of the accounting episode, and how these would affect their assessment of the likelihood that honoring would be the outcome. While recognizing, but ignoring what we see to be some of the strategies or alternatives open or available to the offended person, Blumstein et al propose that "the demander has a positive stake in

normalizing the interaction and should, therefore, abet the offender in issuing the proper ritual expressions."[23] By varying the factors utilized in their study, Blumstein and his associates concluded that the prediction of honoring behavior was influenced by the moral worth of the offender, his penitence, his status -- superior or inferior relative to the demander -- and the offensiveness of the violation.[24]

Before we proceed to what we perceive to be the most relevant empirical study in the available literature, it will be instructive to highlight some important observations concerning the works of Goffman, Scott and Lyman, and Blumstein et al. These researchers agree that interpersonal relationships are legitimate objects of scrutiny by sociologists, for they provide considerable insight into group relationships in general. "Talk" appears to be the ubiquitious feature of the interactive process. Its effective use is necessary to equilibrium in interpersonal relationships. The interactive process provides an arena for the "presentation of self," for identifying acts of deviance, and for the redress of grievances. It identifies the offender and the offended, who, in most cases, are either known to each other or meet in "structured" situations, -- contacts in which their statuses are clearly delineated.

Indeed, there were instances in which the encounter situation was a direct extension of some regular institutional pattern of interaction. In addition, some of the encounters resulted from both intentional or unintentional nonconformist acts, and suggested that not all participants in interpersonal conflict situations are desirous of restoring equilibrium -- which puts them at a distinct disadvantage. Hence, some dyadic interpersonal conflict situations are really contests of will, occasions for exercising personal power. Clearly, the whole concept of "encounters," of "accounts," and of "honoring accounts" encompass the use of social power. Yet the data merely imply, and more often than not ignore, some of the important variables which interpose themselves in such situations of interpersonal dyadic conflict.

The final study relevant to the research proposed here is the work of Norman W. Storer and two of his graduate students, Jacqueline A. Lofaro and Alan Edelstein.[25] This unpublished work continues the empirical orientation initiated by Blumstein and his associates,[26] and has some striking features parallel to the Blumstein study: the use of vignettes and of college undergraduates, and specific variables to be observed. Unlike Blumstein and his associates, who focused on the predictability of

"honoring" of accounts, Storer, Lofaro, and Edelstein focused on the various strategies employed by Ego in his encounter with Alter. The Storer study was prompted by an interest in the resolution of interpersonal disputes and the barrenness of reports of research on which responses are chosen and why.[27] In addition, the Storer group attributed this state of affairs to the seeming unpredictability of such episodes, to lack of agreement on whether these encounters were matters of conflict or of social control, and to the difficulty of adequately conceptualizing the phenomenon itself.[28] In any event, these researchers were mainly concerned with the Ego-Alter contest which develops after an initial attempt to resolve interactive disequilibrium has failed.

In examining the strategies available to Ego in his encounter with Alter, the Storer group developed and identified nine conceptually distinct strategies that the offended party might choose in attempting to "win" the encounter with the offender.[29] The strategies identified include: Ego may ignore Alter's offense; Ego may seek the aid of authority; Ego may offer additional information about the situation; Ego may offer a reward for compliance; Ego may threaten to withdraw an otherwise expected reward; Ego may introduce some additional unpleasantness into the situation; Ego may threaten to use

force; Ego may actually use force; Ego may attempt to distract Alter.[30]

After delineating these options, the researchers developed four "situational variables," two of which concerned the relationship between Ego and Alter (whether they were strangers or acquaintances, and which had the greater power), and two involving the nature of Alter's offense (whether it was directly threatening to Ego or not, and whether the offensive action was continuing or completed). With these considerations in place, the Storer group developed eight vignettes in which they systematically manipulated the variables selected for investigation, and offered a choice of strategies they had identified as being realistic possibilities in all of the circumstances depicted.

On the basis of their analysis of the research findings, the Storer group concluded that "most acts of informal social control are essentially expressive rather than utilitarian, and are selected from the range of possible strategies by criteria quite different from those that would be employed if practical success were Ego's goal."[31]

In addition to this general conclusion, the researchers

found that the respondents' (Ego's) ascriptive personal characteristics -- age, sex, and ethnicity -- make virtually no difference in the distribution of their choices. Understandably, the researchers consider their findings to be tentative and possibly the result of the social milieu in which the respondents live -- a largely urban setting. Their work, nevertheless, raises the possibility of further testing some of their findings, specifically the extent of influence of the ascriptive characteristics of race, ethnicity, and social class on the selection of strategies to resolve interpersonal dyadic conflict. It is this aspect of the research which will receive attention in this study of informal social control.

NOTES

1. Amitai Etzioni, The Active Society, The Free Press, Eew York, 1968; Spencer Millham, Roger Bullock, and Paul Cherret, "Social Control in Organizations," British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 23, 1972, pp. 406-422; Charles Page, "Bureaucracy's Other Face," Social Forces, Vol. 25, (1946-1947), pp. 88-94.

2. Erving Goffman, Behavior in Public Places, The Free Press, New York, 1963; Interaction Ritual, Anchor Books, New York, 1967; Relations in Public: Micro-Studies of the Public Order, Basic Books, New York, 1971.

3. Op. cit., p. 9

4. Ibid., p. 9

5. Ibid., Pp. 91-92

6. Ibid., p. 217

7. Erving Goffman, Interaction Ritual, Anchor Books, New York, 1967

8. Ibid., p. 19

9. Ibid., p. 22

10. Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman, "Accounts," American Sociological Review, 33 (February) 1968 pp. 46-62

11, Op. cit., p. 46

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 47

15. Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza, "Techniques of Neutralization: Theory of Delinguency," American Sociological Review, 22 (1957) p. 665

16. Scott and Lyman, p. 52

17. Ibid., p. 55

18. Ibid.

19. Blumstein et al, "The Honoring of Accounts," American Sociological Review, 1974, Vol. 39 (August), pp. 551-566

20. Erving Goffman, Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order, Basic Books, New York, 1971

21. Blumstein et al, Op. cit.

22. Ibid., p. 551

23. Ibid., p. 552

24. Ibid., p. 556

25. Norman W. Storer, Jacqueling Lofaro, and Alan Edelstein, "Determinants of Choice Among Strategies of Informal Social Control," Unpublished paper, Bernard Baruch College, New York, New York, 1978

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28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL: The Research Problem

As we have attempted to suggest in earlier paragraphs, the informal social control process emerges and develops at a particular point in interpersonal conflict situations. It seems to be characterized by a kind of "etiquette" which controls ensuing events after an Alter's behavior has been defined as deviant or nonconformist by a corresponding Ego. As a part of this "etiquette," Ego announces to Alter that his behavior is offensive or otherwise untoward and that a halt, redress, or restitution are required. If Alter concurs with Ego's definition of the situation, then compliance with Ego's request for satisfaction follows as a matter of course. A typical example would run something like this: "Excuse me, sir, but this section is reserved for non-smokers." Following this announcement by Ego, Alter responds with polite acquiescence and puts out his cigarette. Alter's response would then preclude further reaction by Ego and the conflict situation would be ended. This episode, however, is somewhat barren and does not lend itself to analytical examination. More interest and scrutiny are evoked, however, when Alter either ignores or refuses to acknowledge Ego's request. It is at this point that the core of the informal social control process actually unfolds.

Informal social control involves those techniques and mechanisms "exercised spontaneously, or on an ad hoc basis, by private citizens who do not have the legal right to use force."[1]

How, then, does Ego obtain satisfaction? If he perceives himself as having a stake in resolving the conflict in his favor, what options are available to him, including the use of force? To restate the case, "The period of interaction that we call 'informal social control,' ... begins not with Alter's act, (e.g., driving over a child's bicycle, knocking a tray from Ego's hand in a cafeteria, talking loudly during a concert), but with Ego's announcement to Alter that his behavior is offensive and should be stopped, or that Alter's behavior has caused Ego some loss for which restitution should be made."[2] We concede that very little analytical benefit is derived if Alter's response confirms Ego's definition of the situation. If, however, noncompliance with Ego's request results, the participants in the interactive process now become engaged in what Goffman calls a "character contest" or in a contest of wills. In short, both Ego and Alter will engage in the use of personal power as the prime instrumentality in resolving the conflict. Focusing on the actions of Ego, however, what are his choices?

Development of Strategies and Situational Variables

Earlier efforts resulted in the identification of nine conceptually distinct strategies from which Ego may choose: (a) withdrawing from the dispute and ignoring Alter's behavior, (b) offering Alter additional information about the situation, (c) offering either a symbolic or material reward, (d) threatening to withhold an otherwise expected reward, (e) employing verbal abuse, (f) threatening to use physical force, (g) actually employing physical force, (h) seeking the aid of an "authority," and (i) resorting to distraction.[3]

After carefully examining these strategies, we decided to collapse them into six distinct options which we felt would cover the range encompassed by those developed originally. It is our opinion that these options -- and/or other, more complex variations of them caused by a prolongation of the episode -- offer Ego adequate opportunity for exercising "personal power." The following strategies, therefore, will become the focus of study in this present research effort.

(1) Ignore the offense: Avoiding confrontation is always a viable alternative and could indicate considerable self-control under difficult circumstances. It might also result from an

assessment of the situation that reflects the high cost of pursuing the contest. In this context, it is probably the least expensive option and could be "face-saving" for both Ego and Alter.

(2) Offer additional information: In this option, Ego introduces information which will reflect favorably on his position, and suggests a reason why Alter should honor his request for compliance: "I used all of my money to buy the gift you just knocked from my hands and broke."

(3) Reward or Negotiate: This strategy offers both interactants an opportunity to salvage something from the confrontation. "I really respect and admire a person who shows consideration in situations like this one." Both Ego and Alter are presented with the opportunity to help each other in a display of "tacit cooperation."

(4) Additional unpleasantness: Some type of unpleasantness is introduced into the situation, as in crying, cursing, or "creating a scene" or other action which would then be curbed if Alter satisfies Ego's request: "I'll stop this if you do as I ask."

(5) Using force or the threat of force: Ego can resort to violent retaliation which could be destructive to both participants. Since Ego cannot legitimately employ force except in self-defense, it would usually ensue from an assessment revealing Ego to be more than capable of "winning" the contest. Its use or non-use is also indicative of self-discipline and suggests the failure of other mechanisms of control by Ego in his dispute with Alter.

(6) Recourse to an "authority": The goal is to enlist the aid of some recognizable agent or other constituted authority in resolving the conflict situation. It appears as a distinct possibility and suggests either that Ego's "personal power" is somehow inadequate and must be supplemented, or that Ego anticipates the "authority's" intervention on his behalf. It actually falls beyond the range of "personal power" usage since it tips the balance in the interpersonal contest.

It is our belief that these options run the gamut from minimal effort by Ego (Ignore) to maximum effort (Force or threat of force) before the ultimate is employed: legal

institutionalized authority. While "Recourse to an authority" is specifically mentioned as one of the strategies available to Ego, it really extends beyond the confines of the situation in which the informal social control process unfolds. A good example of our intentions in this instance would be a 100-yard dash in a track and field meet. Personal power controls who arrives first at the tape or finish line. An "authority" makes the determination when the contest is too close and there is no clear-cut winner.

Having thus identified the strategies which are at the disposal of Ego in his confrontation with Alter, we can now proceed to examine the structural aspects of the encounter. Obviously, the decision to employ a particular strategy does not occur in a vacuum; it is influenced by Ego's assessment of its potential success. In addition, Ego, operates within the context of his own definition of the situation. How does he see himself in relation to Alter? Does he occupy the dominant or subordinate position? Are both Ego and Alter equally strong/weak? Will Alter accept Ego's attempt to establish a position of dominance? In addition to the structural aspects, what other variables interject themselves in influencing Ego's choice of strategy? More specifically, what effect

would the identification of Alter's race, ethnicity, or social class have on Ego's choice?

Considering the impact of these phenomena appears to be consistent with recent developments in the area of ethnic studies. Daniel Bell, for example, contends that "shifts in power and values are occurring in which ethnic (rather than some other forms of group) identification has an effective (that is, instrumental and expressive) quality, and has become salient."[4] The utility of this concept, in addition, has been more than adequately documented in terms of "assimilation theory" in American race relations.[5] Glazer and Moynihan, in their recent work, Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, even suggest that the concept is more than deserving of further redefinition and refinement.[6] And with respect to social class, changes in the American opportunity structure have produced a heightened recognition on the part of social scientists of the importance of status differences in interpersonal relations. In this connection, there has been a continuing dialogue between two prominent social scientists regarding the dominance of race and/or social class, with Clark advocating the supremacy of race and Gershman the supremacy of social class.[7] If we accept the fact that ethnic identity and social class are intrinsic to the decision-making aspect of the informal social control process, it may be hypothesized that:

Statement of Hypotheses

A. Attributes such as sex, ethnicity, and socio-economic status will become integral determinants of Ego's or Alter's status in interpersonal relations.

B. In general, female Egos will opt for "softer" strategies than males in interpersonal relations.

C. These three attributes in isolation (that is, without also becoming distinguishing features of Alter's identity) will be of minimal influence in the choice of particular strategies.

D. In the interaction between members of different ethnic or racial groups, the choices of strategies will reveal a type of "pecking-order" in Ego's readiness to use "hard" responses against Alter.

E. While the socioeconomic statuses of Ego and of Alter will produce differences in the harshness of Ego's responses to Alter, socioeconomic status will not be as influential in the choice of strategy as will ethnicity or race.

F. When Ego and Alter are of the same ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status will determine the choice of strategy.

G. The strategy selected in interpersonal confrontation will tend toward "status reinforcement" where Ego perceives himself/herself to be in the dominant position.

These, then, are the basic assumptions which will be examined in the data to be presented below.

NOTES

1. Norman W. Storer, Focus on Society, 2nd Edition, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Mass. 1980, pp. 371-375

2. Ibid.

3. Norman W. Storer et al, "Determinants of Choice Among Strategies of Informal Social Control"

4. Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in Glazer and Moynihan, Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1975

5. L. Paul Metzger, "American Sociology and Black Assimilation: Conflicting Perspectives," in Edgar G. Epps' Race Relations: Current Perspectives, Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Mass. 1973, pp. 22-43

6. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Ethnicity: Theory and Experience, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1975

7. Kenneth B. Clark and Carl Gershman, "The Black Plight: Race or Class?" The New York Times Magazine, October 3, 1980

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The preceding review of the Storer group's efforts indicated that the relationship between Ego and Alter, i.e., whether they were strangers or acquaintances, could conceivably influence Ego's choice of strategy. In their view, this variable carries considerable weight for two reasons: concern not to jeopardize one's future relationship with an acquaintance, and concern about how a stranger may react to one's attempt at social control. Their views were later corroborated by the research findings.[1] In addition to whether Ego and Alter are acquainted, the question of whether Alter is the more "powerful" in the situation also becomes a significant factor in determining the choice among particular strategies.

Taking these observations into account, we decided to hold certain variables constant in the vignettes employed in the present study:

(a) Ego and Alter are strangers.

(b) Alter is always male.

(c) The conflict situation develops in "neutral" territory where neither participant has recourse to a "built-in" constituency.

(d) Relative "strength" will be indicated by

references to Alter's ethnicity and socioeconomic characteristics.

Given these controls, we feel it will be possible to observe the influence and operation of the variables selected for study in this project.

The informal social control process emerges, it must be recalled, in ad hoc, noninstitutionalized situations which are relatively brief and unpredictable. This creates the difficulty that observers can rarely be on the spot to identify and record the interactive process firsthand. In view of this, therefore, we decided to investigate the process by asking people how they believe they would react in a number of fictitious encounters. Despite the liabilities of this type of approach, we designed a questionnaire containing twelve vignettes depicting hypothetical but abstracted-from-real-life situations in which we systematically manipulated our situational variables. The offender's racial or ethnic identity was specified in each vignette, yielding three vignettes for each of our four categorical groups (white, Black, Hispanic, and Jewish). Within each set of three, further, Alter's socioeconomic status was identified as "middle-class" (professional or white-collar worker), "working-class" (skilled blue-collar worker), or "lower-class"

(unskilled blue-collar worker).

Alter's identify in terms of these basic variables is thus an artifact of the methodology employed in the study.

Following each vignette, in which Ego demands an "account" of or halt to Alter's deviant behavior and Alter refuses to comply, the respondents were presented with a list of four specific responses, each representative of one of the strategies we have earlier identified as being a viable alternative in each of the situations depicted. Space was also provided for respondents to write in other actions they would take if none of those offered satisfied them. We intentionally did not present the strategy of "Ignore," (although we consider it to be indicative of "personal power,") and we purposefully omitted "Recourse to authority" for reasons discussed earlier. Both options, however, could be written in if the respondent chose to. In this context, about 11 percent of the "write-in" choices were in the former category and two percent were in the latter category.

We concede that, in actual encounters, individuals may attempt many alternatives during the encounter, whatever its duration. Nevertheless, our concern in

this study was with the respondents' immediate reaction to the events described in the vignettes.

A typical vignette follows:

I. You have just completed purchase of an expensive crystal gift. On emerging from the store, a white business executive who was hurrying by, collides with you, causing you to drop the gift, shattering it to pieces. You ask the executive to replace the broken gift, but he merely stares at you scornfully. WHAT IS YOUR IMMEDIATE REACTION MOST LIKELY TO BE?

CHECK ONE ONLY:

___1a. Explain politely that you have no more money to replace the gift yourself.
___2a. Tell him that you would expect someone in his position to be more considerate and fairminded.
___3a. Criticize him loudly for not being more apologetic and understanding.
___4a. Grab his arm and demand reimbursement.
___5a. Something else? What:_____

_____

_____

The questionnaire also obtained personal data from each respondent: age, sex, ethnic identification, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, occupation (if applicable), religion, income, and physical size.

After the methodological amenities controlling preparation and use of this type of research instrument were observed, a total of 450 questionnaires was distributed

to sociology students (both day and evening) in five colleges of the City University of New York covering four of the five boroughs of the city. These were Baruch College, Brooklyn College, Hunter College, Lehman College, and Queens College. A total of 392 useable questionnaires was returned and provide the data analyzed here.

Footnotes

1. Storer et al, "Determinants of Choice Among Strategies of Informal Social Control," an unpublished paper. Baruch College, City University of New York.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

I. The Research Subjects:

Among the respondents, 41 percent were male and 59 percent were female; 76 percent were single and 24 percent were married or cohabiting. In terms of ethnicity and race, 25 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Jewish, 10 percent as Hispanic, 24 percent as Black, 38 percent as White, 2 percent as Oriental, and 1 percent as American Indian. Sixty-six percent of the respondents were born in New York City, and, at the time of the study, 94 percent of them resided within the five boroughs of the city.

With respect to socioeconomic status, 64 percent classified themselves as "middle-class," 29 percent claimed "working-class," and 7 percent said they were "lower-class." In terms of age, 40 percent were 20 years old or under, 46 percent were between 21 and 30, and 14 percent were 31 years of age or older. The median age of the respondents was 22.2 years.

Thirty-six percent of the respondents were full-time students, 38 percent held part-time jobs, and 26 percent worked full-time. The respondents reported a median income of $13,900 per household.

In terms of stature, 34 percent described themselves as being "small," 25 percent as being "medium-sized," and 41 percent as being "large-sized."

II. Data Analysis:

This research effort was undertaken with the purpose of discovering the extent to which race or ethnicity on the one hand, and/or socioeconomic status on the other, influenced the choice of a particular strategy in the resolution of interpersonal dyadic conflict situations. As conceptualized, the informal social control process casts Ego in the position of utilizing one or more forms of "personal power" in an effort to curb Alter's deviant conduct. As Ego attempts to accomplish this end, certain ascriptive elements of both parties become salient and, in effect, serve to influence Ego's choice of a particular line of action. Among these elements are age, sex, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Ego will, we hypothesize, take these into account in deciding how he or she will try to elicit some redress from a nonconformist Alter. The extent of "personal power" utilized will depend to some extent upon Ego's recognition and acceptance of Alter's relative status as presented in the situation. Acceptance of Alter's dominance translates itself into Ego's use of lesser power; the assumption that Alter is weaker will elicit a harsher response.

A. Viability of Strategies:

Based on a total of 4,664 responses to the twelve vignettes, all strategies seemed to be distinct possibilities as means of resolving interpersonal conflict. Seeking to reward or negotiate with Alter was the predominant choice and represented 29 percent of the total choices. Next in popularity was "additional unpleasantness," with 25 percent of the responses. The strategy of "additional information" received 19 percent of the choices, "force/threat" garnered 14 percent of the selections, "ignore" received 11 percent, and "recourse to authority" was the least popular choice, with only two percent falling into this category. Every strategy but the last one was chosen by at least one respondent for each vignette. "Recourse to authority" did not receive any choices in three of the twelve instances. Given this array of choices, therefore, no particular strategy attracted an overwhelming consensus of choice among the respondents.

To provide additional opportunity for analysis of these responses, the strategies were reclassified under the categories of "soft" and "hard." Strategies included in the former group are Ignore, Additional information,

and Reward/Negotiate. The latter category contains the remaining strategies, i.e., Additional unpleasantness, Force/Threat, and Recourse to authority. Of the 4,664 responses, 2,760, or 59 percent, were in the "soft" category and 1,904, or 41 percent, can be designated as "hard" strategies. (See Table I.)

TABLE I

Distribution of Choices of Strategies

	Strategy	No. of Responses	Percent	Resp. Soft/Hard	Percent
Soft	Ignore	512	11		
	Additional info.	886	19		
	Reward/Negotiate	1362	29	2760	59
Hard	Additional unpleas.	1168	25		
	Force/Threat	636	14		
	Authority	100	2	1904	41
	Total	4664	100	4664	100

B. Age and Size are not significant factors in the Selection of strategies.

As we pointed out earlier, the median age of the sample was 22.2 years. For the purposes of this study, therefore, this variable was divided into two categories: 16 to 20 years of age, and 21 years of age and over. On this basis (See Table II), age does seem to be of some significance, with older respondents choosing a higher proportion of "soft" strategies (62%) than younger respondents (55%). The significance of age could possibly be of more importance in our analysis if the array of ages had been more varied. Since 80 percent of the respondents were below the age of 31, however, a more meaningful analysis of its impact cannot be offered at this time.

On the basis of sex, females chose a higher proportion of "soft" strategies than males, and as in the case of age, older females chose a higher proportion of "soft" strategies than younger females. (See Table III.)

TABLE II

Choice of Strategy by
Age of Respondent

	Strategy	(16 - 20)		% S/H	(21 & Over)		% S/H
Soft	Ignore	183	10%		322	12%	
	Additional info.	324	18		546	20	
	Reward/Negotiate	496	27	(55%)	839	30	(62%)
Hard	Additional unpleas.	486	27		674	24	
	Force/Threat	299	16		327	12	
	Authority	38	2	(45%)	61	2	(38%)
	Total	1826	100	(100)	2769	100	(100)

TABLE III

Choice of Strategy by
Age and Sex of Respondent

Strat.	(16 - 20)				(21 & over)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Soft	329	(45%)	674	(61%)	677	(58%)	1030	(64%)
Hard	398	(55%)	425	(39%)	482	(42%)	580	(36%)
Total	727	(100)	1099	(100)	1159	(100)	1610	(100)

The choice of strategies by size (Tables IV and V) reveals that small-sized respondents chose a slightly higher percentage of "soft" strategies (61%) than either medium-sized (57%) or large-sized respondents (58%). Among the "hard" choices, larger-sized respondents selected the greatest proportion of Force/Threat as a strategy for resolving interpersonal conflict. This seems plausible in that large-sized Egos should be more likely to anticipate success in the use of this approach.

While we may acknowledge some influence of Ego's size in interpersonal conflict resolution, this variable reflects no consistent change in use by various groupings, i.e., medium-sized individuals should use a higher proportion of "hard" responses than small-sized, and large-sized should use a higher proportion of "hard" strategies than medium-sized persons. The data do not confirm this pattern; the significant difference occurs only between small-sized and medium-sized (larger-sized now included) in the use of "soft" responses, and between small-sized and medium-sized Egos as opposed to large-sized Egos in the use of the particular strategy of Force/Threat.

For purposes of this analysis, therefore, we shall discount the influence of the respondents' age and physical size. (Note that size, controlling on sex gives

TABLE IV

Choice of Strategy by Size

Strategy	(N=125) Small	% Resp.	% S/H	(N=92) Medium	% Resp.	% S/H	(N=151) Large	% Resp.	% S/H
Ignore	201	14		105	10		179	10	
Add. info.	288	19		213	19		315	18	
Reward/Negotiate	422	28	61	309	28	57	547	30	58
Add. unpleas.	369	25		322	29		419	23	
Force/Threat	173	12		128	12		301	17	
Authority	32	2	39	20	2	43	41	2	42
Total	1485	100		1097	100		1802	100	

no meaningful pattern, although age and sex do give a consistent but small pattern.)

TABLE V

Choice of Strategy by Size and Sex

	S M A L L				M E D I U M				L A R G E			
Strategy	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Soft	250	(52%)	661	(66%)	167	(56%)	460	(58%)	542	(53%)	499	(64%)
Hard	233	(48%)	341	(34%)	131	(44%)	339	(42%)	484	(47%)	277	(36%)
Total	483	(100)	1002	(100)	298	(100)	799	(100)	1026	(100)	776	(100)

C. Differences in Sex, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic status influence choice of strategies.

In the ideal-typical informal social control process, many aspects of the situation become salient: the specific deviant behavior of Alter, the attributes and characteristics of Ego and Alter, the milieu in which the process unfolds, and the "stakes" involved in demanding/granting/receiving redress. In view of this, therefore, it must be recalled that there were certain structural conditions which were imposed on the situation being analyzed at this time. To restate them: (a) Ego and Alter are strangers, which frees Ego from any constraints regarding maintaining a future relationship with Alter; (b) Alter is always male, so that varying Ego's sex should reflect some pattern of difference in response to Alter's deviance; (c) The conflict situation occurs in relatively "neutral" territory, hence any conditions which become influential in Ego's choice of strategy will lie in Ego's definition of the situation, especially as he or she makes assumptions about Alter's perception of the situation; finally, (d) Relative strength is indicated only by reference to Alter's ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In essence, the position of Ego or Alter as either dominant or subordinate will depend on just how these characteristics are interpreted or defined. Let us now examine what

we consider to be the most important variables in the analysis of the informal social control process.

1. Differences in sex affect the choice of strategies.

Female chose a higher proportion of "soft" strategies (63% to 53%) than males. (See Table VI.) Both males and females preferred Reward/Negotiate among the "soft" strategies. Females were more likely to provide additional information to Alter (22%) than were males (15%), a possible recognition of the male Alter's presumed greater power. Males opted for Force/Threat three times more often than females (22% to 8%), indicating their assumption of greater success when utilizing this strategy to obtain redress.

TABLE VI

Choice of Strategy by
Sex of Respondent

	Strategy	Resp. Male	Per-cent	% S/H	Resp. Female	Per-cent	% S/H
Soft	Ignore	199	10		310	11	
	Add. info.	288	15		596	22	
	Reward/Negotiate	534	28	(53%)	825	30	(63%)
Hard	Add. unpleas.	444	23		723	26	
	Force/Threat	415	22		219	8	
	Authority	30	2	(47%)	70	3	(37%)
	Total	1910	100		2743	100	

D. Ego's ethnic identity exerts slight influence on choice of strategies.

Respondents were asked to indicate a specific racial or ethnic group with which they identified by means of the following question:

Your race or ethnic group:

___a. Jewish

___b. Hispanic

___c. Black

___d. Irish

___e. German

___f. Italian

___g. Polish

___h. Other white: _____
(Specify)

___i. Oriental

___j. American Indian

___k. Other: What? _____
(Specify)

Despite the opportunities for including any category not specifically mentioned, no respondent identified himself or herself as being "white and Jewish," "white and Hispanic," or even "Black and Hispanic." The responses in the categories of Oriental and American Indian were too small to permit any meaningful analysis of these two groups. Further, the categories of Irish, German, Italian, Polish, and Other white were later subsumed under the general category of "White." The major groupings which resulted, therefore, were: white, Black, Hispanic, and Jewish.

On the basis of the data presented, Ego's ethnic identity produces some slight variation in the choice of particular strategies. Hispanics and whites chose a higher proportion of "soft" strategies (61 percent each) than did Jewish and Black respondents (55% and 57% respectively. (See Table VII.)

TABLE VII

Choice of Strategy by Ethnicity
by Percent "Soft"/"Hard"

Strategy	Jewish	White	Black	Hispanic
Soft	55	61	57	61
Hard	45	39	43	39

D. Alter's ethnic identify produces significant variations in Ego's choice of strategies.

The research findings (Tables VIII A, B, C, and D) confirm our belief that ethnic identity produces important variations in Ego's selection of a particular option in the resolution of interpersonal conflict. Consequently, Blacks were most likely to be ignored by Egos of all ethnic groups, and were also least likely to be the objects of Force/Threat as a distinct strategy. Stereotypes of Blacks probably include assumptions about their ability and readi-

ness to retaliate, hence employing too much "personal power" (Force/Threat) might prove too costly to Ego. Alternatively, the decision to ignore Alter's offense might be related to the existence of status differences. A low-status Alter might be defined as "non-existent," even "invisible." He thus becomes an object of scorn, or one that must be avoided, at any rate. Conversely, to perceive of Alter as being less likely to retaliate harshly should open the way to a larger proportion of "hard" responses. In this connection, Jewish Alters drew the highest proportion of "hard" choices from all groups, including Jewish respondents.

More specifically, the data reveal that Black respondents chose the highest frequency of harsh options against Jewish Alters (52%), followed by Jewish Egos against Jewish Alters (51%), and by whites (48%). Contrariwise, Jewish Egos utilized the highest proportion of harsh responses against all groups, with whites and Blacks eliciting the larger proportion of "hard" choices (45%) each.

In the distribution of choices according to ethnicity, Hispanics are the recipients of the lowest frequency of harsh options, and the highest "information"

among the "soft" strategies, which is consistent with the assumption that Hispanic Alters are least likely to "know the rules of the game," and so are regarded as non-threatening to Ego's position. (See tables on the following pages.)

TABLE VIII-A

Effect of Alter's Ethnicity
on Ego's Choice of Strategy

Ego's Ethnicity	Alter's Ethnicity							
A. WHITE	White		Black		Hispanic		Jewish	
Strategies	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent
Ignore	51	11	99	22	34	8	66	15
Add. info.	113	25	61	14	119	27	34	8
Reward/Negotiate	133	30	111	25	134	30	128	29
Add. unpleas.	70	16	119	27	90	20	102	23
Force/Threat	5	2	41	9	60	14	89	21
Authority	5	2	11	3	3	1	18	4
Total	442	100	442	100	440	100	437	100

SUMMARY

	White	Black	Hispanic	Jewish
Percent Soft	66	61	65	52
Percent Hard	34	39	35	48

TABLE VIII-B

Effect of Alter's Ethnicity
on Ego's Choice of Strategy

Ego's Ethnicity	Alter's Ethnicity							
B. BLACK	White		Black		Hispanic		Jewish	
Strategies	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent
Ignore	13	5	39	14	11	4	18	7
Add. info.	66	24	41	15	81	30	18	7
Reward/Negotiate	73	27	89	33	76	28	93	34
Add. unpleas.	62	23	78	28	70	26	82	30
Force/Threat	56	20	19	7	32	12	47	17
Authority	3	1	7	3	0	0	14	5
Total	273	100	273	100	270	100	272	100

SUMMARY

	White	Black	Hispanic	Jewish
Percent Soft	56	62	62	48
Percent Hard	44	38	38	52

TABLE VIII-C

Effect of Alter's Ethnicity
on Ego's Choice of Strategy

Ego's Ethnicity	Alter's Ethnicity							
C. HISPANIC	White		Black		Hispanic		Jewish	
Strategies	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent
Ignore	7	6	17	15	4	3	9	8
Add. info.	27	24	23	20	34	30	13	11
Reward/Negotiate	37	33	30	26	35	31	41	36
Add. unpleas.	26	23	32	28	28	25	23	20
Force/Threat	15	13	7	6	12	11	19	17
Authority	1	1	5	5	0	0	9	8
Total	113	100	114	100	113	100	114	100

SUMMARY

	White	Black	Hispanic	Jewish
Percent Soft	63	61	64	55
Percent Hard	37	39	36	45

TABLE VIII-D

Effect of Alter's Ethnicity
on Ego's Choice of Strategy

Ego's Ethnicity	Alter's Ethnicity							
D. JEWISH	White		Black		Hispanic		Jewish	
Strategies	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent	Resp.	Per-cent
Ignore	23	8	52	18	11	4	35	12
Add. info.	65	22	36	12	89	30	19	7
Reward/Negotiate	72	24	74	25	86	29	88	30
Add. unpleas.	83	28	107	36	73	25	85	29
Force/Threat	50	17	17	6	33	11	50	17
Authority	1	1	8	3	1	1	14	5
Total	294	100	294	100	293	100	291	100

SUMMARY

	White	Black	Hispanic	Jewish
Percent Soft	54	55	63	49
Percent Hard	46	45	37	51

E. When Ego's ethnic identity is specified, Ego's sex adds no significant variation to choice of strategy.

It appears that ethnic identity, in isolation, does not result in any significant variation in the selection of particular options in interpersonal confrontations. When sex becomes an added dimension, that is, when Ego's sex and ethnicity are combined, there yet is no major variation from the pattern produced by ethnicity by itself. It has already been demonstrated that females are more likely than males to select a less aggressive option in resolving interpersonal conflict situations.

Comparison of the percentage of difference between selection of "hard" options by sex as opposed to ethnicity reveals the same pattern identified earlier. The percentage of harsh responses by Jewish and white respondents reflected divergent directions: males of both groups chose a higher proportion, while females chose a lesser proportion than that reflected in the choice by ethnicity only. Sex differences were minimal among both Black and Hispanic respondents. (See Table IX.)

TABLE IX

Choice of Strategy by Ethnicity and Sex by Percent Soft/Hard

Strat.	Jewish		White		Black		Hispanic	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Soft	47	61	52	69	57	56	63	60
Hard	53	39	48	31	43	44	37	40

F. The relative use of "hard" options in inter-ethnic confrontations reveals a type of "pecking-order."

One of the many assumptions of this study is that different ethnic groups will tend to utilize different amounts of "personal power" in relation to the perceived status of Alter. Hence, when ethnicity is incorporated into one's self-perception, it is indicative of his status relative to others. Further analysis in terms of the intersection of ethnicity and ethnicity reveals a type of "pecking-order which emerges from a comparison of the percentages of "hard" responses chosen by one ethnic group against another. For instance, in inter-ethnic confrontations (Tables X-A and B), Jewish Alters utilize 7 percent more "hard" options against Black Alters than did Black Egos against Jewish Alters;

Blacks registered a five percent higher frequency of harsh choices against white Alters than did white Egos against Black Alters; Black Egos also employed a 14 percent higher proportion of harsh choices against Hispanics than did the latter against the former. White Egos utilized an 11 percent higher frequency of harsh options against Hispanic Alters than did Hispanic Egos against white Alters.

TABLE X-A

Percent "Hard" Choices by
Ethnicity of Ego and Alter

Alter	Ego: Jewish	Ego: Black	Ego: White	Ego: Hispanic
Jewish	38	38	35	35
Black	45	38	39	39
White	46	44	33	37
Hispanic	51	53	48	45

TABLE X-B

Differences in Percent of "hard" Choices by Ethnicity of Ego and Alter

	Ego			
	Jewish	Black	White	Hispanic
Jewish	--	- 7	-11	-16
Black	+ 7	--	- 5	-14
White	+11	+ 5	--	-11
Hispanic	+16	+14	+11	--

When sex is controlled, the "pecking-order" becomes more evident (See Tables XI-A and B). Male Jewish Egos chose "hard" responses against Blacks 5 percent more often than Blacks chose them against Jews; 10 percent more often against whites, and 24 percent more often against Hispanics. Blacks are plus 13 percent over whites and also 13 percent over Hispanics. Whites chose "hard" options 3 percent more often than did Hispanics against whites.

The same pattern of differential use of "hard" responses is evident when choices by females are taken into account.

TABLE XI-A

Percent "Hard" Choices by Ego's Ethnicity and Sex and Alter's Ethnicity

Alter	Ego: Jewish Male	Jewish Female	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female
Jewish	45	30	36	39	43	29	34	36
Black	51	41	40	37	47	33	39	39
White	56	39	40	47	43	25	39	36
Hispanic	58	46	54	52	52	39	46	49

TABLE XI-B

Differences in Percent of "Hard" Choices by Ego's Ethnicity and Sex and Ethnicity of Alter

Ego Male

Alter	Jewish	Black	White	Hispanic
Jewish	--	- 5	-13	-24
Black	+ 5	--	- 7	-15
White	+13	+ 7	--	-21
Hispanic	+24	+15	+21	--

Ego Female

Alter	Jewish	Black	White	Hispanic
Jewish	--	- 2	-10	-10
Black	+ 2	--	-14	-13
White	+10	+13	--	- 3
Hispanic	+10	+13	+ 3	--

G. Ego's socioeconomic status appears to be of little significance in the selection of strategies.

The socioeconomic status of the respondents was determined on the basis of subjective factors, i.e., respondents were asked to specify the SES with which they most identified because socioeconomic status is, for our purposes, important as a matter of the respondents' perception/self-definition. Regardless of whether respondents identified themselves as middle-, working-, or lower-class, however, they did not very meaningfully in the strategies they selected. Fifty-nine percent of both middle-class and working-class Egos selected "soft" strategies, while lower-class respondents elected them by a 66 percent share. Middle-class and working-class respondents opted more for additional unpleasantness among the harsh responses, while lower-class respondents showed an almost equal preference for additional unpleasantness and force/threat. (See Table XII.)

TABLE XII

Choice of Strategy by
Socioeconomic Status

Strategy	Middle			Working			Lower		
	Resp.	Per-cent	% S/H	Resp.	Per-cent	% S/H	Resp.	Per-cent	% S/H
Ignore	322	11		149	11		38	12	
Additional info.	560	19		258	19		64	20	
Reward/Negotiate	853	29	(59)	400	29	(59)	103	33	(66)
Additional unpleas.	750	25		360	26		53	17	
Force/Threat	404	14		178	13		49	16	
Authority	72	2	(41)	23	2	(41)	5	2	(34)
Total	2961	100		1368	100		312	100	

H. Choice of Strategies by socioeconomic status reflects little difference when ethnicity is introduced.

In the intersection of ethnicity and socioeconomic status, (Table XIII) middle-class Jewish and Black respondents opted for a higher proportion of "hard" choices (46% and 44% respectively) than either Hispanic (40%) or white (38%) respondents. Among working-class Egos, Blacks and Hispanics opted for a larger proportion of harsh strategies (44% and 43% respectively) followed by whites (40%) and Jews (39%). In the lower-class, Blacks elected the highest proportion of "hard" choices (39%).

Thus, the combination of ethnicity and socioeconomic status of Ego in isolation (that is, without reference or relationship to Alter's attributes) displays little variability in the selection of particular strategies in resolving interpersonal conflict.

TABLE XIII

Percent "Hard" Choices by Ego's Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status

	Ego			
SES	Jewish	White	Black	Hispanic
Middle	46	38	44	40
Working	39	40	44	43
Lower	17	33	39	15
N=	1172	1744	1088	442

I. Choice of strategies by socioeconomic status reveals power distribution.

Generally speaking, in interaction when socioeconomic status is the variable being examined, working-class Alters appear to draw the highest proportion of "hard" responses from middle-class, working-class, and lower-class Egos. In addition, middle-class and lower-class respondents give lower-class Alters the highest percentages of "soft" responses. Lower-class Egos appear to accord middle-class Alters the most respect, i.e., only 29 percent of their responses are in the "hard" category.

We can relate the choice of strategy, therefore, to the relationship between Ego's and Alter's socioeconomic

statuses. The nearer a particular status is to another, the higher the proportion of harshness will be reflected in the response. On this basis, the "pecking-order" again becomes evident. For example, in interclass confrontations, middle-class Egos utilize an eleven percent higher frequency of "hard" responses against working-class Alters than do the latter against the former. Middle-class Egos exert an eight percent higher proportion of harshness against lower-class Alters than do the lower-class Egos against middle-class Alters. Working-class Egos, on the other hand, utilize a seven percent higher frequency of harshness against lower-class Alters than do the latter against the former. (See Table XIV.)

TABLE XIV

Percent of "Hard" Choices
by SES of Ego and Alter

Alter	Ego: Middle		Ego: Working		Ego: Lower	
Middle	38	--	39	-11	29	- 8
Working	50	+11	48	--	41	- 7
Lower	37	+ 8	48	+ 7	36	--

J. Interaction by ethnicity and socioeconomic status of Ego when ethnicity of Alter is indicated does not significantly affect the choice of strategy.

In the intersection of ethnicity and socioeconomic status, there appears to be no significant variability in the selection of options in resolution of interpersonal conflict situations. Middle-class Jewish Egos continue to exercise the highest proportion of "hard" choices against all Alters. The exercise of options by females does not change drastically from the pattern of choice reported earlier.

While these patterns emerged from an analysis of the research data, it must be observed that the frequency of responses by those respondents who accepted working- and lower-class status was quite low. Hence, in order to determine if any further meaningful relationships existed between ethnicity and SES, it was decided to combine the responses of these two groups. After this combination was accomplished, the differences in percent of use of "hard" choices among the various groups was then isolated. On this basis, then, it is observed that the pattern of power distribution ("pecking-order") remains basically intact, except that there is minimal difference in use of "hard" options between whites and Hispanics against each other. (See Table XV.)

TABLE XV

Percent of "Hard" Responses by Ego by Ethnicity and SES and Alter's Ethnicity

		Ego							
		Jewish		Black		White		Hispanic	
		M	W&L	M	W&L	M	W&L	M	W&L
Alter	Jewish	38	29	40	34	41	27	42	31
	Black	46	38	38	39	39	38	42	36
	White	46	44	50	39	33	33	50	49
	Hispanic	53	46	55	49	49	49	50	41

As reflected in the following Table XVI, the middle-class Jewish Egos used a six percent higher proportion of "hard" options against Blacks than Black middle-class Egos did against Jewish Alters. Jewish middle-class respondents exercised "hard" options five percent more often against whites and 11 percent more often against Hispanics. Black middle-class Egos employed an 11 percent higher frequency of harshness against whites than did whites against Blacks. Blacks also used a 13 percent higher frequency of "hard" options against Hispanic Alters than did Hispanics against Blacks.

Thus, the only significant difference is that observed between Hispanics and whites, while the difference was negligible in the middle-class and nonexistent in thw working- and lower-class.

TABLE XVI

Percent of Difference of "Hard" Responses by Ego by Ethnicity and SES, and by Alter's Ethnicity

Middle-class Ego

Alter	Jewish	Black	White	Hispanic
Jewish	--	- 6	- 5	-11
Black	+ 6	--	-11	-13
White	+ 5	+11	--	+ 1
Hispanic	+11	+13	- 1	--

Working- and Lower-class Ego

Alter	Jewish	Black	White	Hispanic
Jewish	--	- 4	--	-15
Black	+ 4	--	- 1	-13
White	+17	+ 1	--	0
Hispanic	+15	+13	0	--

K. Interaction by ethnicity and SES of Ego with an Alter whose SES is specified does not alter the pattern of selection of choices of strategies.

In inter-ethnic, interclass confrontations, the selection of strategies reflects no significant difference from the pattern discerned in earlier relationships. Working-class Alters continue to draw the highest proportion of harshness from each socioeconomic level. According to the data presented in Table XVII, Jewish middle-class Egos selected the highest proportion (43%) of harsh strategies against Jewish middle-class Alters. Black middle-class Egos, on the other hand, utilized the lowest proportion of harshness (35%) against their own middle-class counterparts. White middle-class Egos employ the lowest frequency of harsh responses against lower-class Alters. Conversely, Black middle-class and Hispanic middle-class Egos displayed a higher proportion of harsh responses against lower-class Alters than did Jewish and white middle-class Egos.

Among the working- and lower-class Egos combined, whites (55%) and Jewish respondents (48%) chose harsher strategies against working-class Alters than did Black and Hispanic working-class Egos (42% each). Black working-class and lower-class Egos were highest in the fre-

quency of "hard" choices (41%), followed by whites (33%), and Hispanic and Jewish working-class Egos, each with 25% of the harsh choices.

TABLE XVII

Percent "Hard" Responses by Ego's Ethnicity and SES and by Alter's SES

Alter	Ego: Jewish M	Jewish W&L	Black M	Black W&L	White M	White W&L	Hispanic M	Hispanic W&L
Middle	43	46	35	33	39	32	41	35
Working	54	48	54	42	49	55	50	42
Lower	40	25	47	41	31	33	47	25

On the basis of the preceding information, Jewish Egos continue to be users of the highest proportion of harsh responses against Alter in interpersonal confrontations. They were followed by Black Egos in this type of response. Further, the pattern or relationship between harshness of response and closeness of status appears to be maintained. One could speculate that Jewish Egos believe they are not being perceived as they present themselves and thus must resort to harsher responses, even against their own group. Black middle-class

Egos seem to receive some reinforcement for their self-definition by middle-class Alters, and hence employ a lower frequency of harshness against this group. The data continue to support our suggestion that the degree of harshness of response by Ego appears to be related to the amount of "affront" that Alter's deviant behavior represents.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research was undertaken with the purpose of discovering the extent to which race, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status were influential in determining the choice of a particular strategy in the resolution of dyadic interpersonal confrontations. We elected to observe and analyze these variables as they became operational in the informal social control process. As conceptualized, the informal social control process unfolds in noninstitutionalized settings where behavior is largely ad hoc and spontaneous. Participants in the process, Ego and Alter, are prohibited from utilizing "social power" (reserved for formally structured group encounters) and must rely on their "personal power." In addition, the need to apply the various manifestations of this power emerges because Alter's behavior becomes untoward and contrary to expectations. In other words, both Ego and Alter are beyond the limits of formal constraints, and while they both have some concern for terminating the conflict, Ego carries the onus of responsibility for a satisfactory solution, since he is the aggrieved party.

Faced with Alter's deviant conduct, Ego has to choose a line of action -- a strategy or option -- which will curb the nonconformist nature of Alter's conduct.

Given this scenario, we became interested in the factors -- variables in this case -- which might be influential in determining how one would attempt to achieve redress. Recognizing that human relationships entail some degree of power-division among the participants, we reasoned that these variables would be construed in terms of defining just who has how much power and the right to use that power.

Generally speaking, the socialization process is designed to reinforce the value structure of particular social groups and the status definitions that exist in such groups. In formal, institutionalized situations, the power distribution by status is clearly delineated and conformity to existing definitions is the key to stability in the normative order. The question arises, therefore, as to whether Ego and Alter share the pre-existing definitions of their relative statuses. Our interest, however, is in when these shared definitions are thrown into question, which was achieved here by having Alter, in every vignette, refuse Ego's initial request for compliance. At the same time, we assume that Ego will equate his or her status in the informal social control process with that which he or she enjoys in the formal matrix. (If this were not the case, his

demand for an "account" would have been met with Alter's swift acquiescence or compliance.)

The operational definition of the informal social control situation employed in this study, however, precludes such an early end to the encounter. Instead, it requires active involvement and participation in defining, demarcating, and utilizing "personal power" because Ego's initial demand has been rejected. What factors will not become significant in Ego's quest for an end to the conflict? Which of these components will guide or dictate his choice of response?

The earlier empirical study by Storer and his student associates suggested that Ego's sex, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were of no consequence in Ego's selection of a particular option. This finding has been acknowledged in this present effort and we concur that, in isolation, they are not significant determinants of Ego's choice of response to Alter's deviance. We hypothesized, however, that when these attributes are specified for Alter, they then have a meaningful influence on Ego's attempt to resolve the interpersonal confrontation in which he is involved. This assumes that Ego will then evaluate his or her status vis-a-vis that of Alter, thus influencing his choice of strategy.

In analyzing the data complied on the informal social control process as depicted in its various aspects, we have found that:

(1) Sex is an important element in Ego's choice of a particular course of action. One a priori assumption of the study was that female respondents, in general, would opt for "softer" responses than would males when involved in interpersonal confrontations. This assumption has been conclusively confirmed.

(2) Race or ethnicity, when used to identify a specific Alter, dictate Ego's choice of option. In other words, in intra-racial or intra-ethnic, and inter-racial or inter-ethnic conflict situations, the race or ethnicity of Alter influence Ego's choice of response in his or her quest for some corrective action by Alter. In this regard, (a) the offenses of Black Alters were largely ignored by Egos of all groups. We hold that this finding is related to the perception of Blacks in terms of the degree of "retaliatory power" that they represent, as well as their readiness or disposition to employ power on their own behalf when confronted by a nonconformist Alter. In this vein also, (b) Jewish Alters were the recipients of the highest percentage of "hard" options from Jewish Egos (51%).

This may well be attributed to the threat these Alters appear to present to Ego. Where this potential threat was not acknowledged, a softer response tended to follow Alter's deviant conduct. When sex and ethnicity are combined, the pattern of choices remained consistent with ethnicity in isolation. However, while there was a wider range of difference in choice of harshness between Jewish and white males and females, Black males and females reflected almost no difference in response, and among Hispanics, females (40%) were slightly higher than males (37%) in the use of harshness of response.

(3) Ethnic groups differ in their use of aggressive responses against other ethnic groups in interpersonal confrontations. In general, Jewish respondents utilized the highest proportion of aggressiveness in their response to Alter's deviance, followed by Blacks, then by whites and Hispanics. When sex is added, Jewish males continue the use of the highest frequency of "hard" responses. They are now followed by whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Black females utilize the highest frequency of harshness against all deviant Alters except Blacks.

Probably the most striking feature of this "order of use" of "hard" choices is that of the position of whites.

While their placement in the scheme is arbitrary (they were dislodged by Jewish and Black Egos), it might result from a greater readiness to recognize Alter's affirmation of his own status vis-a-vis Ego in the encounter. It could also result from a recognition by white Egos that if the encounter were to be adjudicated by a third party, the decision would be in their favor. We might even speculate, as seems to be the case, that Jewish Egos have replaced whites at the top of the power hierarchy. In any event, Jewish and Black aggressiveness of response might also be construed in terms of their own self-concept and self-defition; their use of "hard" options is a clear signal to Alter to acquiesce in that definition.

(4) Socioeconomic status, in isolation, does not result in any significant variation in the choice of particular options. All socioeconomic levels chose a higher proportion of "soft" responses than "hard" responses. Among the three groups, lower-class Egos chose the highest percentage of "soft" strategies (66%).

(5) The addition of ethnicity to sex, as a control, reveals few if any differences. While Black and Jewish middle-class Egos utilize a higher frequency of "hard" responses, regardless of sex, working-class Alters continue to be the recipients of the highest proportion of "hard" responses.

(6) Inter-class confrontations reveal a differential distribution of power, that is, the disposition to utilize "hard" responses against Alter of various socioeconomic levels. What seems to emerge is the fact that power is distributed hierarchically, i.e., most power resides in the middle-class, less in the working-class, and least in the lower-class. More specifically, confrontations between the middle- and working-classes showed that middle-class Egos utilize an eleven percent higher frequency of harshness against working-class than do the latter against the former. In confrontations between working-class and lower-class, working-class display a seven percent higher preference for harsh strategies against the lower-class than do the lower-class against the working-class. Between middle-class and the lower-class, there was an eight percent higher frequency of harshness by the former against the latter. Consequently, the closer the classes are to each other, (moving from top to bottom of the social scale) the higher the proportion of harshness in response to Alter's deviant behavior. This finding appears to be related to the expectation of encounter with each level: more potential conflict will exist between middle- and working-class interactants because they are likely to encounter each other more frequently outside the "work-place." There is less likelihood of middle-class/lower-class confrontation on the same basis. When these

encounters do result, middle-class Egos might perceive working-class Alters as more threatening to their position; the lower-class will perceive the middle-class in terms of their "personal power" and thus, will accord them most respect, i.e., utilize a lower proportion of "hard" options against them.

The same pattern would also hold true between the working-class and the lower-class. The former perceives the latter in terms of threat. At the same time, the latter regards the former in terms of its inability to retaliate harshly, and hence shows a greater tendency toward harsh reactions to deviance.

(7) When Alter's ethnicity is specified and combined with an Ego whose ethnicity and SES are also indicated, there is no important variation from the pattern of choices found in either inter-ethnic or inter-class confrontation. Jewish Egos continued their use of a high proportion of "hard" responses against all Alters. This was true for both middle-class and working-class Jewish Egos. Blacks followed Jewish respondents in the frequency of use of "hard" options, and while whites and Hispanics both appeared to elicit a high proportion of harshness of responses, Hispanics remained the "low man on the totem pole" and drew the highest proportion of harshness.

(8) When Alter's socioeconomic status is identified, Ego's ethnicity and SES do not reflect any major variation in the pattern of selection of options. Working-class Alters continued to elicit a greater proportion of harsh options. While Black Egos exerted a high proportion of "hard" responses against working- and lower-class Alters, they utilized the lowest frequency of "hard" options against middle-class Alters, suggesting that there is some recognition/acceptance of Black middle-class status by middle-class Alters. At any rate, the inter-class power utilization did not seem to be altered to any significant extent.

In recapitulation, therefore, we can assert that the data presented tend to confirm our hypotheses concerning the influence of sex, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as points of departure in the choice of particular strategies in the resolution of dyadic confrontations. These three dimensions tend to elicit meaningful patterns in the use of "personal power" and, themselves, become indices of power as they are identified with particular Egos and Alters. The relative use of this "personal power" appeared to be an attempt to reinforce Ego's self-concept and self-definition.

These, then, are the major findings and interpretations of the present study. They are, admittedly, tentative in nature, a fact which characterizes most exploratory studies in sociological phenomena. We hope that the data provide a coherent statement by themselves, yet we recognize that they cannot remain unrelated to the larger body of sociological theory from which the concept of informal social control emanates. We recognize, further, that while the specific variables examined were our primary concern, we should temper extrapolating the findings beyond the scope of the socio-cultural milieu in which the study was conducted. Our respondents, it will be recalled, were college students who spent most of their lives in New York City and the metropolitan area. In addition, the findings must be construed within the limitations of the questionnaire as a research instrument. It is within the context of these constraints that we shall consider some of the theoretical implications of the findings.

Theoretical Implications and Questions for further Research

The informal social control incident offers a unique opportunity to examine social relationships from another dimension: outside the constraints of legally prescribed sanctions and in an environment which requires the interactants to rely on their own initiatives and resourcefulness. In short, denied the support of social power (group), they must engage in a contest of wills in which personal (individual) power is the most important commodity. Considering the existence and distrubution of this power in formal, institutionalized settings, can we assume that both Ego and Alter transfer this definition of its use to their unexpected encounter? Or does the informal social control situation afford Alter an opportunity to "bend the rules" to his advantage? Why would someone resist, even reject, Ego's "presentation of self?" Is Ego's maneuvering designed to jolt Alter back into a conformist reality, or is his behavior also an effort to claim a status not seen to be rightfully his? These are questions which were not originally raised in the study but appear to be deserving of some attention in the larger arena of life.

From another point of view, we may pose the question of dominant-minority relations. In such relationships,

the crucial element is one of power. Dominant groups hold power and the mechanisms to employ that power. Minority groups are relatively powerless. In such situations, folk wisdom suggests the existence of a power hierarchy among the various groups as they interact in the social order. Since we are primarily concerned with the behavior of groups of whites, Jews, Blacks, and Hispanics, we can suggest that they constitute the hierarchy within which power is distributed. In inter-ethnic or inter-racial confrontations, the "low man on the totem pole" is the recipient of the most power used against him. As a matter of fact, the power dimension seems to receive a sort of tacit reinforcement from the normative order. Is this order naturally transferred to and honored in ad hoc situations of interpersonal confrontation? The data presented in the present study suggest that when individuals are removed from the possibioity of official restraint or sanction by the group, the power hierarchy experiences significant changes which reflect themselves in the amount of harshness employed in extricating one-self from interpersonal conflict situations. Would the same eventuality ensue in dominant-minority confrontations generally?

Again, what if the system of social stratification in the society permits access to higher status by those in

the lower socioeconomic levels? If new arrivals to higher status receive recognition and acceptance in the formal, institutionalized matrix, will this recognition likewise be transferred to the unplanned and unexpected encounters of Ego and Alter? Is Ego's choice of strategy a reaffirmation of his claim/right to his status? And conversely, might Ego define Alter's deviant behavior as an attempt to deny pre-existing stereotypes of the relation between Alter and Ego?

Admittedly, we might discover some of the answers to these questions from observing the relationships in the wider social arena. In the nation of Zimbabwe, for example, we have seen a radical change in the political order: Blacks are now the majority (dominant) group. Is the resistance they encounter analagous to the type of behavior we have observed in the simpler and decidedly tentative informal social control experience? Is the new "Never again!" militance of Jewish Egos an attempt to reinforce their improved status in the power hierarchy? Why does the cry of "Black power" elicit the negativism it receives from most whites and Jews?

While these questions may well be beyond the level of abstraction possible or permissible in exploratory studies of this nature, they do suggest some direction and guidance

for continuing research in this area. New studies, certainly, should focus on the intersection of the attributes of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as these are combined and incorporated into the self-concept and the self-presentations of Ego and Alter in everyday encounters.

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