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Social control is a term that refers to how society and its members control each other and set norms. Dalton Conley defined social control as “what sociologists refer to as the set of mechanisms that create normative compliance, the act of abiding by society’s norms or simply following the rules of group life” (p. 196). Labeling theory takes social control one step further. Labeling theory is “the belief that individuals subconsciously notice how others see or label them, and their reactions to those labels, overtime, form the basis of their self-identity” (p. 206).

Social control is not always recognized by the people that exhibit it. The media portrays different types of people and social groups in different ways. Sometimes it is a positive depiction and sometimes it is not. Finally, there are people who take on a label when they get on a computer and join an online community. They become “trolls” and they exist to anger other internet users by purposely acting in an infuriating manner.

Social control is one of the driving forces or keeping social structure in-tact. Formal social sanctions, such as rules and laws, set boundaries for privacy and what is legally acceptable. Informal social sanctions, or the unwritten rules of society, are what govern people on a more personal level. This determines how people dress, their mannerisms, and who they interact with. However, when people do not acknowledge the fact that they are exerting social control over the society around them, problems arise. TV shows and movies portray, sometimes, accurately, social groups and their interactions. Students do tend to group with like-minded individuals and this is how friendships and relationships are built. They also portray social groups as hostile, almost xenophobic, towards other social groups and cliques. In actuality, groups just do not associate with one another. Some people almost become another person when in reach of a computer. They might act the same way around their friends but generally they tend to be shy, reserved, or introverted. They might begin by doing or saying one thing online and a member of the community will call them a troll. They then adopt the persona of troll and will browse online communities and instigate arguments. The internet gives them a sense of anonymity to become something they would not be in their physical community. They also receive attention, although negative attention, that they would not receive in their regular lives.

Early in my life, I was labeled as a geek or a gamer. Instead of trying to reject the label, I accepted and embraced it and it is one of the first words I use to describe myself to others. I was labeled based on the things I enjoyed doing. I didn’t see anything wrong with being enthusiastic about something I enjoyed regardless of what it was that society thought I should be enjoying instead, like sports or partying. I have always enjoyed learning about whatever I can get my hands on: classical mythology, world mythologies, new technologies, computers, programming, foreign languages, weird history, useless trivia, et cetera. I also have enjoyed reading a wide variety of genres of fiction novels. TV shows and movies portray ‘geeks’ in a primarily negative way. They are viewed as socially inept and essentially losers or the weird kids, the kid who cannot get the girl to save his life. Geeks socialize in different ways than other people do. My friends and I would play almost any video game we could play together. In fact, my younger brother made fun of me for going out very seldom and playing video games with my friends instead. Truthfully, there was more we could do online than there was to do in my hometown.

As a computer science major and also as a geek, people look to me for tech support, even though I am not trained for it. I still try to help as much as possible because it is in my nature, but usually I search the internet for solutions.

Works Cited

Conley, D. (2013). *You may ask yourself: An introduction to thinking like a sociologist* (3rd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton &.