



A study on the relationship between the individual, deviance and the power of social control

Nicola Malizia^{a*}
Ionut Virgil Serban^b

^a Associate Professor of Criminology and Sociology of Deviance - Department of Sciences of Man and Society - University of Enna "Kore" (Italy)

^b University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania

Abstract

Starting from the most significant theoretical contributions, the present study aims to analyze the relationship between deviance, social norms and legal norms, investigate the complex field of interpretative problems of the term deviance, delve into the dimension of social role expectations, investigate the phenomenon of labeling and the related processes, understand, finally, how much social control can impact deviant phenomena, also in terms of prevention. Over time, as is known, the social and criminological sciences have focused their interest on individual behaviors linked to deviance phenomena, the latter of which can be classified as the distancing of individuals or groups from shared norms within each specific social context and on criminal behavior, in clear violation of legal-regulatory precepts, to which a sanction is attributed. In the modern panorama and in advanced industrial societies, what increases interest in the study of deviance in general is the growing fear of crime and victimization, which generate feelings of insecurity and fear in members of society. The multiple forms of deviant behavior have therefore, over the years, been increasingly analyzed and debated, given the increase in their visibility, their representation and emphasis on the mass media, but, above all, due to their treatment within public, control and prevention policies. Parsons (1965) underlines that the term "deviance" was introduced into the sociological debate in the 1950s.

Keywords: deviance, society, deviant behavior, social control, labeling.

*Corresponding author: Nicola Malizia, *E-mail:* nicola.malizia@unikore.it

1. Introduction

It should be noted that deviant behavior varies depending on time, context, cultural affiliation and role; it depends on historically and socially constructed norms and the sanctions that result from their transgression. Deviance is not always dysfunctional; indeed, according to the theorists of the past, in certain cases it carries out a positive function of regulating behaviour, promotes creativity and serves as a negative reference for social control. The distinction of theories between traditional and modern is used exclusively for practical reasons, that is, to distinguish more recent (modern) theories such as interactionism, from those originated and developed during the first half of this century (traditional) such as, for example. e.g., the theories oriented towards the study of social problems of the Chicago School. The Sociology of deviance has long had a substantial number of theories which, each in its own way, attempt to explain the phenomenon. Theories that explain "deviance" vary depending on the "paradigm" according to which they are oriented (e.g. positivistic, functionalistic, interactionist), on the "focus" of the explanation (the deviant, the social reaction to deviance), on the "level" of explanation (macro or micro-social), the type of relationship that exists between the variables (cause-effect, probability) and whether or not values are taken into consideration in the research. In the Sociology of deviance, for example, the multiplicity of paradigms can be observed in the different way of interpreting deviant behavior starting from positivism, functionalism and interactionism. The traditional theories, those of the first half of the 20th century, used by the Chicago School to explain "social problems", have in some way a functionalist tendency. They seek the cause of deviant behavior in the social disorganization of the territory, that is, in the dysfunction of a part of society. Their question is focused above all on "why" a subject tends to be deviant. There are different approaches within the same paradigm: for Sutherland (1947) it is a question of learning; Merton (1959) explains it as a consequence of the tension (strain) produced by a gap between sought goals and the means available to achieve them; Shaw & McKay (1969) looked for the causes of deviance in the social disorganization present in large cities. Traditional theories focus on the deviant from the perspective of social control and attempt to explain "why" people deviate, the conditions and circumstances that contribute to deviance. Modern theories instead focus on the deviant from the point of view of the deviant himself: how society reacts to deviance, "how" the labeling process occurs, how deviants respond to labeling, and "who" is labeled by the social reaction. One can distinguish between objectivist and subjectivist theories, depending on the object focused. Objectivist theories define deviance as a violation of the social norm. Deviance in this sense is an objective data, which means that the researcher can identify an act as deviant through the comparison between the act itself and the normative code (informal, formal or health) available in a given society. These theories explain deviance as the result of the conditioning of structural, cultural factors and interactive processes within which individuals maintain a deviant status.

2. Deviance and the most representative theories

Cohen (1955) defines deviance as "that behavior which violates institutionalized expectations, that is, those expectations which are shared and recognized as legitimate within a social system". The subjectivist conception, in turn, defines deviance as an act (real or imaginary) that has been identified as deviant by people. So, in this conception it is the social reaction that defines whether an act is deviant or not. An example is the



definition of deviance given by Becker (1963): "from this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act that a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to a deviant. The deviant is one to whom this label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior so defined by people."

Some theories develop within a macro-sociological approach to the study of deviance: in this case the researcher tends to look rather at the structural variables (cultural, economic, social) that condition people's behavior. This is the case of the research undertaken by Durkheim (1969) who sought the causes of suicide in the condition of anomie of rapidly evolving societies. The most recent theories tend to be micro-sociological in nature and emphasize psychosociological variables, social interaction and behavior in groups. Goffman (1970) focuses his research on subjects and groups of subjects subjected to social reaction and stigmatized by it. Traditional theories conceive of a relationship between variables in a cause-effect manner. They tend to say that, for example, family breakdown causes drug addiction. More recent theories arrive at less rigid conclusions, based on co-variance and probability calculations: for example "family breakdown increases the probability - and therefore is a risk factor - of drug use". And, lastly, the consideration of values. Positivistic theories tend to distance themselves (neutrality) from the question of values. They are considered as subjective variables that must not mix with those of an objective nature. The latter can be demonstrated, tested and analysed. Other theories tend to consider values as important variables for research. Interactionist theories have a humanistic orientation and consider values as an integral part of research, once man is the subject of the theories he creates and cannot fail to consider the question of values.

the consequence of the different approaches is the adoption of different methodologies in the research field: traditional theories tend to use quantitative methods considered more objective: statistical analyzes provided by the State, "surveys" and experiments. The most recent theories, in turn, tend to favor qualitative methods: participatory observation, interviews, the analysis of documents, the analysis of the historical context and the present. It may be fun to remember, now just a historical curiosity, that in the last century and at the beginning of this one, the "physics" category also included studies that hypothesized and tried to demonstrate an influence of the physical environment (climate, season, latitude etc.) on crime and deviance, especially among young people. Subsequent research has radically changed the meaning of this apparent false statistical evidence. Moving from the external physical environment to the physical conditions of the subjects, it can be observed that from Lombroso (2013) onwards, physiological, constitutional, genetic, hormonal, neurological, etc. signs and clues have been systematically sought, capable of distinguishing and making the criminal is recognisable, "objectively" identifiable compared to the non-criminal, the perverse, the bad, the socially dangerous compared to the normal. Lombroso (2013) by absorbing and synthesizing, in an eclectic, disorderly and often confused way, important cultural stimuli of his time, such as

materialism, biological and sociological Darwinism, physical and cultural anthropology, attempted to give an initial positive response, empirical, to that ancient ideology. Carrying out anthropometric measurements on hundreds of prisoners, especially in Venetian prisons, in 1876, in his best-known work, "L'uomo delinquente" (The delinquent man) (2013), he formulated his hypothesis of the "born criminal" as a distinct anthropological type, with a compulsive tendency to commit crimes, characterized by anomalies, malformations and asymmetries of the skeleton, skull and face. Over the years, facing the many criticisms that had already been raised about his thesis (which also had a vast international success), Lombroso (2013) limited the share of born delinquents to 35% of all criminals, maintaining that these to be considered as such, they had to possess at least five of the proposed stigmata; he added to this category the "crazy criminal" and the "occasional criminal", and concluded his scientific journey by stating that every crime has its origin in a multiplicity of causes. As is evident, it can be said that the specific thesis of the criminal man did not survive its author, while the model of bio-anthropological research inaugurated by Lombroso had enormous success and was taken up by doctors, psychiatrists, geneticists and criminal anthropologists of Worldwide. Modern theories consider deviance to be relative and subjective.

relative because it is socially constructed and not a scientific fact. In this sense, the research is oriented towards the study of social reaction and the creation and imposition of rules by social control (formal, informal and healthcare); they see deviance as a phenomenon created by society and freely chosen by deviants. If the subject is free then the relationship between the variables can no longer be considered deterministically (cause-effect method of natural sciences) but probabilistically (correlations and probabilities). Goode (1996) offers a vision of the different approaches to deviance which appears useful as he manages to distinguish between absolutist and relativist perspectives, in order to also consider functionalist theories from a subjectivist perspective. The framework of the approaches is defined as follows: for the "absolutist approaches" deviance is an objective fact: it is a negative action not because it violates the norms, the laws of a group or a given society, but because it is constitutionally, objectively and absolutely negative. In the absolutist approach, those who determine whether an action is deviant or not are the laws and moral principles that guide human behavior: deviance is a violation of the law of nature, of scientific law, of divine law, of the law of the totalitarian state. An example is the conception of deviance that jumps from the bio-psychological theory of Lombroso (2013): the aberration of nature, characteristic of subjects in the process of involution, is a fact of nature that indicates the subject as a born delinquent; it is enough that the subject is objectively aberrant for it to be automatically considered deviant because it violates a law of nature; for the "subjectivist approach" deviance is a more relative than absolute phenomenon, more constructed than essentialistic, more subjective than objective. It is not considered an act that can be deduced as such from natural or divine laws, an intrinsic characteristic of the act, but rather a behavior considered this way because people perceive it that way. What determines whether an action is deviant or not "is the actual or potential condemnation that it will procure from common sense". We can distinguish, with Goode (1996), three perspectives within the subjectivist approach: "normative", "slightly reactive" and "strongly reactive". The "normative" perspective considers any act that violates the norms of society as deviant. Those who define whether an action is deviant or not are not the natural and moral laws (objectivist approach) but the sociologist, who observes and studies society and finds the actions that in that specific culture and context are considered deviant. For example, if the



sociologist finds that in a given society there are norms that condemn homosexuality, it is considered deviance regardless of the social reaction. Therefore, the normative perspective also considers the existence of "secret deviance": even if his deviance is not visible the subject can be considered deviant because he violates a social norm. Functionalist theories of anomie and learning take on this normative perspective. Some of the authors who support this trend are: Merton (1959), Cohen (1955), Sutherland (1947), Park (1925), Kreager (2007).

The reactive perspective has, according to Goode (1996), two gradations, the light one and the strong one. The "strong reactive perspective", which we prefer to identify here as radical, includes the most radical methodological currents, such as ethnomethodology: "deviance exists when and only when an action or condition is currently and concretely punishable or condemnation. Without condemnation there is no deviance." If a deviance is experienced in secret it does not constitute deviance because it does not cause condemnation; it will only be constituted on the day in which, due to various circumstances, it becomes visible and can therefore be sanctioned as a deviance. A drug addict will be considered a deviant only from the moment he comes out into the open and therefore the social reaction will be triggered which will sanction him and label him as a "drug addict". Otherwise he remains like a normal citizen. The "light reactive" perspective is an intermediate position between the normative one and the radical reactive one; the "focus" is not oriented to the norm itself (normative perspective), not even to the social reaction "here and now" (radical reactive perspective). Normativity is not denied: it exists and can be affected by the experiences of negative reactions (sanctions from the public) that have occurred in the past, in the present and that will probably occur in the future. The sociologist, however, first looks at the social reaction and then compares it with the norms. A different procedure is that of the normative perspective in which the sociologist first of all looks at the norm and then compares it with the sanctions of society. Just as no rule is absolute, there are no causal relationships between the variables in question, but rather correlations between them. The sociologist therefore adopts a probabilistic approach to deviance. Not only is people's reaction to the behaviors in question studied but also how people perceive the deviant is assessed; how this perception influences his behavior in the future; the consequent changes that occurred on the self-concept and on one's identity. The social reaction does not necessarily "create" the behavior: it is the result of a whole process of which the subject is also an integral part. Some authors who support this perspective are: Becker (1963), Erikson (1950), Matza (1976), Goffman (1970) and Lemert (1981).

3. The relativity of the norm in the concept of deviance

According to Ward et al. (1994) "deviance is created by society. Social groups create deviance by establishing norms whose infringement constitutes deviance itself." And if created it is also relative to the culture in which it occurs. Some factors can change the references to the rules and therefore their methods of sanctioning and transgression. Relativity is mainly due to certain factors such as time, context, the group one belongs to and the role one plays in society. 1) the time factor: behavior considered deviant in the last century may not be so today, such as the use of trousers by women. Other behaviors are related to life time: sexual abuse, juvenile delinquency, drug use; 2) the context factor: our conduct varies in relation to the context in which we are placed at a given moment: a church, a carnival party, the work or family environment; 3) the cultural belonging factor: society is made up of different subcultures, each of which is able to provide those who belong to it with a set of values, norms and sanctions. In a complex society, composed of the configuration of the most differentiated subsystems, the subject must adapt to particular cultural circumstances, that is, he must know how to interact and communicate with people and groups in contexts supported by the most varied sets of values and norms. In some groups - e.g. among members of a gang - what is considered deviant in wider society is considered "normal"; 4) the social role factor: deviance is related to the social role played by the members of a social group. Characteristics such as age, social status and gender determine the attribution of a deviant character to certain behaviors. The role of the policeman allows him to carry a weapon; that of the religious man to wear the cassock; that of the child to throw tantrums or mischief, and so on. On the other hand, the carrying of a weapon by a civilian, the wearing of a skirt by a non-religious person and mischief done by an adult are considered deviant. The study of deviance phenomena has proven to be essential for understanding the central processes of social systems, as deviance appears closely connected with other typical phenomena of collective life, such as the dynamics of power, the formation of the framework of norms and values, socialization processes, the definition of the role-status system, etc. It can therefore be stated that the study of deviance is not necessarily equivalent to the analysis of "social pathology", precisely because deviance is a "normal" fact that occurs in any society, even in the hypothetically most integrated ones. Hence the "symptomatic" character of deviant behavior, that is, its ability to refer to problems, questions and contradictions that are rooted much further upstream, in the very "logic" of social systems, and consequently, the need not to isolate the discussion on deviance in a completely superficial descriptive phenomenology, but to insert it into a multidisciplinary reflection that takes account, above all on an interpretative level, of the complexity of the topic. However, the discussion on deviance is mainly placed in the perspective of sociological analysis which, despite being rich in critical ideas and multiple openings, certainly does not exhaust the entire problem; the reason for this priority choice essentially lies in the need to address the topic with methodological homogeneity, even if partial, before summarizing the results obtained with other data. However, it is an open sociological discourse, which does not reject comparison and integrations when they are organic to the topic under analysis. This discussion focuses, for example, on the phenomenon of deviance and not on deviant behavior, both because the latter perspective is better suited to a psychological or psychiatric analysis, and because the phenomenon of deviance is actually not restricted to non-compliant "behaviors", but it also includes "ways of being and placing oneself" in the social system, which cannot be traced back to a "behavior".



4. Deviance and the difficulties of interpreting the term

Defining the concept of deviance is certainly not easy. Over time, there have been numerous efforts to define a dimension that can be linked - for many authors - to the behavior of the single individual in the social space full of norms and laws. Below are the main contributions: "it is behavior that does not conform to the models that are prescribed in a community or group and which therefore violates institutionalized expectations" (Leonardi 1967); "it is the process by which some subjects escape control" (Fichter 1961); "that behavior which violates the rules is deviant" (Cohen 1966); "conformity and deviation have meaning only in relation to the fact that the agents or actors in social systems are oriented towards social norms which are internalized as part of their personality" (Johnson & Walker, 1987); "behavior that violates the institutionalized expectations of a given social norm is deviant" (Ciacci & Gualandi 1977). From the example it is difficult to draw an overall definition of deviance, as the interpretations are heterogeneous; we can, however, attempt to isolate some elements that present problematic aspects: a) deviance refers to a violation of the norm. It is not only the intentional violation of an institutionalized "behavior model", but also more simply than a discrepancy in somatic, psychic, moral, cultural, etc. characteristics. considered "normal" in a given social context. Thus theft is considered "deviant" in a society that sanctions private property, just as a person who is significantly taller or shorter than average, a mentally ill person, or a disabled person is considered deviant (because "different"). The advanced distinction seems to assume that deviance is not a quality inherent to a specific behavior or characteristic, but is a quality attributed from outside, i.e. socially, to a certain way of being or acting that differs from accepted standards. In addition to the problem of defining deviance in terms of objective/subjective and non-conformity/difference, the question arises about the extreme relativity of every definition of deviance. In reality, as we will see later, deviance, precisely in relation to the variability of the norm, is commensurate with extremely changeable space-time dimensions. In fact, not only do the norms change, but also the tolerance limits around the norm and the criteria for negative-positive evaluation of non-compliant or different behaviors and characteristics. The phenomenon of deviance has to do with the processes of formation and maintenance of power, as it presents itself as an alternative to social control or, at least indirectly, expresses the need for change as opposed to the need for social order. Hence the obvious consequence that no society, no matter how interested in its own survival, can ignore the reality of deviance: generally every community touched by deviance, and all of them are, tries to theoretically understand deviance (and therefore interprets it in its own way). its) and to control it on a practical level (and the various methods of containment, stigmatization and sanction which we will deal with at length). Deviance, at least in cases where it involves deviant behavior, is obviously related to socialization processes (through which the internalization of norms takes place) for several reasons (Caliman 1997): the

different outcomes of socialization in different individuals explain in fact, how some are able to exercise internal control over themselves (orientating themselves towards conformism) and external control over others (stigmatizing their behavior or "different" quality) and how other subjects are instead inclined towards non-conformity and non-conformism. On the basis of these observations it is possible to give a provisional definition of deviance, to be further specified in the continuation of the discussion: "deviant is a behavior or a quality (characteristic) of the social person which, exceeding the limits of tolerance with respect to the norm allowed in a certain context social space-time, is the object of a process of sanctions and/or stigmatization, which expresses the functional need of the social system to control cultural change according to the logic of the predominant power".

The relationships between "normal" behavior or quality and "deviant" behavior or quality are extremely fluctuating, precisely in relation to the variable nature of the norm: the area of permissiveness or tolerance allowed towards the norm varies. In reality the norm is just an abstraction; it is a behavioral model corresponding to "average" conduct, with oscillations whose amplitude is considered legitimate, i.e. normal, in relation to a considerable and variable number of variables. Thus, with respect to a certain model of social behavior (e.g. premarital sexual courtship), certain variations are permitted depending on the age and gender of the individuals. The degree of internalization of the norm varies depending on the different modes of socialization, which characterize the different subjects and which explain the presence of a more or less profound consensus with respect to the regulatory framework. Finally, the degree of consistency, organicity and legitimacy of the regulatory system itself varies in relation to the global framework of a given society. Winslow (1970) pointed out that regulatory systems are differently structured depending on the structures of society and the types of institutional organization present in a certain context. Thus the oligarchic, anomic and pluralist structures correspond to coercive, utilitarian and normative organisations, characterized by different taxonomies and different qualitative connotations of deviance. In the first type (oligarchic-coercive) the norms appear organized in a rigid framework, supported by predominantly punitive sanctions (even in a physical way) and produce a type of alienating conformism (the subject adapts to ritualized behavior or withdraws by renouncing participation); in the second type (anomic-utilitarian) the rules appear devoid of organicity and foundation, they receive sanctions of the reward-punishment type, favoring opportunism and calculation, occasioning the different forms of deviance inspired by individual gain; in the third type (pluralist-normative) the norms are organized according to the different hegemonies of the emerging power in society, they receive a strong moral and symbolic sanction from which, however, the subjects who do not consent to the hegemony and who aim (through rebellion and innovation) to the development of other regulatory frameworks. However, Winslow's (1970) structural-institutional approach does not explain the presence of some deviances present in all the types of society listed and furthermore does not account for many forms of deviance independent of the institutional organization, but connected, in his opinion, to strictly individual factors. Not even the attempt by Dinitz et al. (1969) who try to clarify the different structure of the regulatory framework in two opposing types of society: the traditional-popular society and the modern-industrial society. The contribution of Dinitz et al. (1969) is important because it introduces an essential relationship between the regulatory framework (and deviance) and social change. In other words, it is stated that in static societies deviance takes on a rather limited character, precisely because the



norms are simple, easily identifiable because they are organic and peacefully internalized, the sanctions are such as not to stigmatize the overall personality of the deviant, but only one aspect sector of his behavior. On the contrary, in modern societies, the factors that produce social change also produce greater deviance precisely because the characteristics of the resulting framework of norms encourage infractions more and make the stigmatization of the deviant more incisive.

5. Role expectations contradicted by deviances

The definition of deviance in relation to normative systems implies a series of considerations on the relationships between deviance and role expectations: it is obvious that a violation of the norm also constitutes, in parallel, an infringement of the role expectations that a specific group of social observers have it came by building towards the subject. This fact cannot help but produce a certain frustration in the group, which sees the network of mutual, predictable and standardized relationships on which the safety of individuals is based threatened. The reaction to this perceived infraction of role expectations can be extremely varied; however, it never excludes widespread hostility towards the deviant, an attempt at blocking, a tendency to recover normal behavior through the use of the reward-punishment system, etc. In any case, deviance that is not remedied causes a radical rethinking of the system of role expectations that are not easy to rebuild in a short time. Beyond this global consideration, it should be underlined that deviants are usually deviants, as an objective infringement of a norm, only in relation to particular roles, exercised within particular groups or contexts (Gibbs 1966). And yet in modern industrial societies we are witnessing a phenomenon of role diffusion whereby there is a tendency to extend the judgment of deviance to the entire personality of the different person who is thus globally stigmatized. This is not the case in pre-modern societies where stigmatization remains, if anything, restricted to truly different sectors and does not include a judgment on all behaviour. In reality, the deviant is always compliant at least with respect to some sectors of his being or acting: he generally adapts to many norms of common life and conforms to the models of the deviant group to which he refers. On the other hand, it is difficult to find a perfectly conformist social person; everyone is deviant, at least in some roles, as we have already noted regarding the pluralism of institutional affiliations and loyalties which, when conflicting, pushes us to make choices towards some models and to place ourselves in a situation of dissimilarity compared to others. The case seems to occur in societies with a high degree of complexity, which imply a great risk of poor integration, if not outright disintegration. The reality of an inevitable non-integration of roles is reflected and transformed into the need to activate wider limits of tolerance of deviance: and it is precisely the mechanism that is triggered, alternatively and together with stigmatisation, when the group or system, accepting the insurmountability of deviance, they try to mitigate or prevent any disruptive effects. An example of this mechanism is represented by the way in which a few years ago

the capitalist model of Western society tried (with excellent results) to neutralize the hippie protest by progressively widening the limits of permissiveness towards the few deviant roles (hair, clothes, music, drugs) and encapsulating them through consumerist manipulation (commercialization of hippie fashion, etc.). Finally, again in relation to role expectations, it should be noted that deviance takes on different social relevance depending on whether it refers to roles that concern central or peripheral groups-institutions in the social system.

6. Social control as an “engine” to combat deviance

Deviance is a social construction: it is an inadequate response to the social norms constructed within a culture and is attributed to individuals who transgress these norms. Some deviances are unintentional and some are intentional. In a complex society it is more likely that a subject transgresses the norms, given that there are as many as the subsystems, subcultures and contexts that integrate it. Social control tends to threaten rather than punish unintentional deviance. Some people are considered deviant not for what they do or fail to do or for whether or not they intend to do it but for what they represent in themselves: therefore, the question of stigma arises. People can be stigmatized based on physical and psychological characteristics: skin color, cultural affiliation, madness. The process of stigmatization that manages to create the stereotype can be easily perceived in everyday life when Germans are referred to as Nazis, young people in nightclubs as drug addicts, gypsies as thieves and so on. But the center of concern of sociologists and social control agencies are intentional deviances, that is, when an individual consciously and voluntarily transgresses the norm. In fact, the desire to transgress constitutes the first step in the process of becoming deviant and is defined by Matza (1976) as affinity. There are many reasons that lead to deviance from the norm: family conflicts, the desperate search for an identity, the desire to belong to a rebel group, the lack of meaning in life, the social condition of deprivation regarding race, age, employment, education. These and other reasons, which more profoundly reveal the frustration of fundamental needs, can trigger the more or less clear, voluntary, intentional decision to transgress the norm. But just the desire to transgress is not enough. Many want it, but do not have the courage to take the risks of self-control (guilt) and social control. In relation to the regulatory frameworks and the corresponding role expectations, it is possible to highlight a close correlation between "deviance and social control"; for this purpose it is perhaps useful to recall some elementary notions on the concept of control: social control "is a process or mechanism tending to maintain the conformity of the individual elements of a social system to behavioral models, roles, relationships, culturally relevant". It is therefore a phenomenon that has to do directly with deviance, as Johnson (1960) more explicitly notes: "it consists in the action of all the mechanisms that counterbalance the deviant tendencies, either by completely preventing the deviation or, what more importantly, by controlling or reversing those elements that tend to produce deviant behavior." From the definition given it would seem that social control can essentially be thought of as having an antagonistic function with respect to deviance, which in turn would be defined as a process by which some subjects escape control; in reality it is not difficult to demonstrate that in certain typical situations social control can produce or at least stabilize and define deviance. As the theory of stigma dictates, social control determines the qualitative leaps that occur progressively in the process by which



one becomes deviant, contributing decisively to the establishment of secondary deviance (i.e. real deviance, not occasional or episodic). (Gibbs 1982).

The forms in which social control manifests itself are many, as demonstrated by some useful distinctions that are not only theoretical. Thus positive control is that which is exercised through persuasion, suggestion, the gratification-reward system, education, while negative control is achieved through threats, orders, prohibitions, sanctions (Gibbs 1975); Furthermore, the two methods are almost always applied simultaneously. Another distinction concerns the formal control expressed through regulations, statutes, official rules and the informal one which consists of calls, gestures, direct or indirect, implicit or explicit, often even merely symbolic presences; the first seems more widespread in complex and differentiated structures, identifying itself at most with the forms of organization and bureaucracy; the second is instead found much more present in simple structures, such as in primary groups where face-to-face relationships prevail. Finally, it is useful to keep in mind the difference between internal control and external control: the first can be defined as the effect of the internalization of role expectations and the acquisition of sufficient skills and motivations to adequately respond to role expectations, while the second corresponds to the current notion of social control and is the sum of the prescriptions or norms adopted by the social unit to ensure the minimum of functionality and consensus for the purposes of the unit itself (Heitzeg 1996). These various forms of control are exercised differently at different levels of the structure and by different forms of social aggregation: by global society, by different power centers (hegemonic groups or associations), by specialized institutions, by pressure or interest groups minorities, by more or less charismatic leaders.

One of the most studied points of the deviance-social control relationship concerns the measurement of the effectiveness of social control on reducing deviance. This analysis is relatively recent. The Merton school (1959) had neglected to consider reactions to deviance as a form of social control; Becker (1963), Kitsuse (1963) and Scheff (1966) emphasized the importance of social control following "primary" (i.e. occasional and episodic) deviance in producing "secondary" (i.e. structured) deviance, but did not study social reactions to deviance in their analytical properties and in their variability. Others like Lindesmith (1965) had limited themselves to noting the uselessness or ineffectiveness of social control; finally others such as Hollhingshead and Redlich (1958), Clark and Cornish (1985) had tried to delimit the social characteristics of the deviant, which condition the type of public reaction.

A global presentation of the issue on the forms of social control exercised after deviance is contained in a contribution by Clark and Gibbs (1965). These authors distinguish between normative reactions and actual reactions. The former refer to a social norm, in the sense that they are reactions to deviance that are predictable on the basis of a certain more or less legal evaluation criterion of deviance. They are divided into "evaluative" ('vulgar' regulatory sanction of deviance), legal (official sanctions) and "provisional" (probable

'vulgar' sanction). Of these reactions, in principle, it can be said that they are subject to a lot of variability: the authors cited take into account the degree of generality (not all reactions apply to all types of deviance), specificity (many reactions apply discretionally and not specifically), of relativity (the reactions depend on the characteristics of the deviant, the victim, the reactant, the situational circumstances), of consensus (not all reactions are equally legitimate), of coherence (between the three forms of normative reaction) . From what has been said, it is clear that evaluative reactions are essential in giving a consistent basis to legal ones; and that a possible gap between evaluative norms and predictive norms (i.e. between the reaction that people consider "dutiful" and the one they consider "probable") automatically becomes a symptom of an ongoing social change in the regulatory system. The same goes for "effective reactions", for which it is not possible to predict a precise taxonomy, but only to determine two fundamental patterns: correlation and relativity. On the basis of the first pattern, certain correlations that actually exist between actual reactions and types of deviance can be established: e.g. to what degree a given reaction actually applies to a given type of deviance (degree of generality); to what extent a given deviance is able to arouse a more or less wide range of reactions (degree of variation); to what degree is a reaction exclusive in relation to a deviance (degree of distinction). Analyzing the relationships between the two types of social control (the normative and the effective) we note that there are always notable discrepancies between the two, that is, there is a variable degree of certainty of real application of the sanction depending on the types of deviance and this variable certainty is related to the aforementioned characteristics of the protagonists of the entire deviance/reaction process. Moreover, this discrepancy and relativity is indicative of the distance existing between manifest principles and latent principles of social control in a given social system. The authors cited, in addition to analyzing the reaction system, also study the characteristics of the control agents (i.e. the reagents), distinguishing between normative reagents (in terms of what they should or can be) and actual reagents. The former (present in all societies in the three modalities: legal, evaluative, forecasting), are subject to a certain uncertainty: their designation as holders of the right to apply social control to deviance is conditioned by some variables: the status of the subject (exclusivity of roles), its availability or not (occupational exclusivity), the degree of coherence existing between the modalities (consistency), the level of consensus attributed, the characteristics of the people involved (relativity), the moral and legal authority granted (generality). As for the latter (actual reagents), it is noted that they tend to be more numerous than the normative ones. Furthermore, their characterization is conditioned by a large series of variables which almost exclusively concern the status of the reagents in relation to the breadth, specificity and complexity of the deviance. In a society in which only the statuses of legal (or official) reagents are clearly established, the specificity and differentiation of the statuses of unofficial reagents become a sign of the global importance of such statuses not only in relation to deviance, but also within the company. In other words, whoever reacts to deviance is either a person designated for this purpose, or a person with relevant status (Masini 1987). Even the discrepancies existing between normative reagents and actual reagents, in addition to depending on the general structures of society and the degrees of consensus and coherence relating to three types of reagents, ultimately demonstrate the consistency or authority of the norm (or its opposite) and emphasize the degree of "social order" that exists in a system. As for the degree of effectiveness of the reactions analyzed on deviance, it has not yet been possible to establish empirically whether the reactions



marked by an organic, rigid, global normative reference are more incisive, or those characterized by a specific, differentiated, relativized reference.

7. Labeling as a social practice

Opportunities to deviate are conceptually encompassed in what Matza (1976) terms “affiliation.” It constitutes the bridge between the simple desire and the real possibility of deviating. It is the moment of acquiring “know how”: knowledge of the techniques, values, skills associated with the various deviances. The desire to take drugs is not enough, but you have to know how to do it. Deviance can be assumed individually, but usually the process of learning this knowledge often takes place in association with others already affiliated and already in possession of the know-how. At this moment the group has a great influence: (1) of “belonging” when and if it constitutes a subculture in conflict with the norms and values of the larger society. Our society is made up of multiple subcultures. The most obvious example is that of subcultures involving punk and rap music, in which lifestyles, clothing, appearances and visions of the world are shared in such a way that only those who belong to them are able to interact and participate while others are considered merely curious; Other groups are of: (2) real and imaginary reference: in their real mode they allow direct interaction and in their imaginary mode they correspond to a representation fueled by fantasy or the mass media. In the latter case, the models that are presented tend to push people to imitate through substitutive experience: that is, the desire to do and behave as they suggest. Some groups are considered; (3) of “circumstances”, or “near-groups” (e.g. a crowd, a night club, a fan), characterized by the lack of organization and interaction between members and by a common goal (e.g. escape, typhus, a demonstration, drug use). In these impersonal environments, collective deviance often arises from a motive linked to a common objective. Another aspect concerns the visibility of deviant behavior between secreted, visible and deliberately visible behaviors. The first case concerns deviants who experience their behavior “off”. This is the case, for example, of homosexuality experienced in secret and revealed to others only selectively. In the second case, we distinguish those who cannot hide their personal characteristics and, therefore, are necessarily exposed to stigma for reasons of height, weight, race and age. Lastly, there are deviants by personal choice: it becomes a “way of speaking”, a symbol that is often transmitted through the way of dressing, haircut, tattoo, etc. Deviance also depends on labeling. It in turn can vary according to gravity, permanence, salience, source and connotation. a) severity: less strong sanctions are attributed to many deviant behaviors and this is the case for those that concern informal norms. Deviance within the healthcare model is stronger. A person who bears the label of crazy, schizophrenic, mentally ill, manic depressive, etc., has a greater probability of remaining permanently segregated from society. Even behaviors that deviate from the formal norm are often punished with intensity, and this is the case of

murderers, kidnappers, child molesters and traitors. Some of these behaviors against the formal norm, however, can also be reinforced within the culture, or within certain subcultures once it is a shared behavior. E.g. in some cases people praise behavior that clearly goes against the formal rule of not paying taxes to the state; b) the duration of the stereotype over time: some are just transitory, others are permanent. Some behaviors are found in the moment of deviance, sanctioned and immediately forgotten. For example when a driver runs a red light and is deemed crazy or something similar and immediately forgotten. Others last over time and this is the case, for example, of those who are stigmatized due to physical characteristics or alcoholism even years and years after they have stopped drinking. Those applied by justice remain practically forever: "once a criminal, always a criminal"; c) the salience of the stereotype: concerns the assumption by the deviant of the very quality of deviant; the acceptance and consequently the structuring of a deviant identity. Consider, for example, the case of a person who, in a condition of severe deprivation and hunger, finds himself in need of stealing food; he may be labeled as a "thief", but this will not easily become part of his identity, once it is established that the act was necessary for him to survive. On the other side there are those who assume, accept and live a deviant identity and status so that they are able to reconcile a lifestyle and sometimes be better accepted by others as an alcoholic, drug addict, prostitute, etc.; d) the source of the stereotype: it comes from society and ends up in society through the action of social control. But there are many agents of social control: the police, common sense, the group to which one belongs, the family, the school, etc. But it is rather the police that manages to draw people's attention to the person of the deviant in order to provoke the stereotype. They themselves start the process and want it for various reasons. This is the case, for example. e.g., skinheads, rappers, bloods, those who belong to the Ku Klux Klan, etc., who want to express themselves through the symbol and the assumption of a specific identity, as long as it guarantees them a status in society. The sense of the stereotype between positive, negative and neutral. The negative sense is the one most often present in common sense, which often serves as the main agent of social control. Society generally tries to dissuade deviants from their dissent from the norm through the sanctioning of transgression. And deviants normally have knowledge of disapproval of their behavior. Other behaviors are considered neutral, that is, through the justification and rationalization of the deviant action and the denial of the deviant character of the behavior. Other deviant behaviors may be given positive evaluations and deviants considered good, to be imitated. In this case the deviants have "overturned the table": what was deviant has become normal and desirable.

8. Individual and deviance

Sociologists of deviance, over time, have come to the conclusion that it is not possible to predict who becomes deviant. Everyone can be one, and the only thing that can and, indeed, needs to be considered, once a cause-effect relationship cannot be established, is to examine the probability that a person becomes deviant. Deviance is often linked to social conditions, especially socioeconomic status, race, sex and age. Some deviances are linked to socioeconomic status. The disadvantage of the poor is due, in part, to opportunity and, in part, to the greater likelihood of being labeled. Some deviances are more often found in wealthy environments and therefore depend on social position, power and prestige. In this category we find behaviors such as: illegal dumping of atomic waste, air pollution, financial scams on the stock exchange and computer systems. They are



white collar crimes, rather than street crimes. The deviants belonging to the so-called white collar workers are more difficult to sanction and punish: they have easier access to protective means such as money, privacy, secrecy, criminal defense. Furthermore, their crimes are often committed in protected and private environments such as in their villas and in reserved clubs and not in the middle of the street. Lastly, they are punished by administrative justice, rather than criminal justice. Street deviance is rather found among the poor population: not paying for transport, purchasing on the black market, theft from the supermarket, robberies, prostitution, etc. The condition of poverty, both in its concept of absolute and relative poverty, can push people to find illicit means to achieve ends that are not easily traceable through legal and normal means. The poor are more unfortunate in their relationship with justice: they are more likely to be labeled for both medical and healthcare deviance and criminal deviance. Some reasons for stigmatization are: the bad conditions in which the poor live, which encourage certain deviant behaviors; rather, criminal legislation tends to control violations of the law by the poor, while administrative legislation tends to control that of the rich. All this does not necessarily mean that the poor are more deviant than the rich, but rather that deviance among the poor is more monitored, visible and therefore sanctioned. It is necessary to take into consideration: a) race: even minorities of certain racial groups are victims of stigma: this is the case of black children who, in Brazil, can be more easily identified as deviants and themselves considered a risk to be avoided.

Other groups tend to raise the level of social and personal control, such as gypsies and immigrants. In other cases it seems to be not so much the racial component that attracts attention but rather the belonging to some subcultures considered deviant, such as that of rappers for black people. All in all it does not seem to be the racial component that leads to a deviant tendency; it seems more true that it is belonging to certain minorities that creates a greater probability of being suspected, of being arrested and of undergoing the labeling process; b) gender: certain behaviors prevail among males: violent actions, crimes against property, gang formation and mental disorders; others are connected to females: prostitution, crimes against morals, shoplifting, anxiety. These differences are mainly due to different socialisation, as it is easier for men to be educated in environments marked by force and violence, while women are more likely to be used to hiding their deviance. Males are, compared to women, subjected to stricter rules regarding dressing (less choice of color and style). But the big difference is especially noticeable in the statistics of convictions for transgression of the formal norm: the great majority of the prison population is made up of males; c) age: most norms in our society are related to people's age. Just look at the stereotypes directed at the elderly ("old", "demented") and those directed at the young ("unrestrained", "stoned", "irresponsible", etc.). But young people are rather the center of attention regarding deviance. Youth is a period of life in which people are more likely to look hard at their transgressions; common sense often mitigates and tolerates the "carefree" behavior of young people. But it becomes an age at

risk of assuming a deviant identity given that they are in a very unstable phase on the one hand and at the same time taking important steps towards the formation of identity and personality on the other. The statistics of drug use in nightclubs demonstrate how it is a behavior found rather among young people and not at all among adults and even less among those of the elderly. If, on the one hand, structural variables such as social status, cultural belonging, sex and age can explain the conditions and opportunities for deviating, they certainly cannot explain the cultural variables connected to the personal freedom of subjects who deliberately they want to deviate. Many people deviate intentionally, that is, because they can and want to. And it is social psychology that is best able to explain this last aspect, which is rather connected to predisposition and personal freedom. To explain the cultural component, two variables must be taken into consideration: 1) *socialization*; 2) *the formation of the self-concept*: 1) *by socialization* - tout court - we mean the process through which the norms, values and knowledge of a society are transmitted to new members. Through socialization, norms are internalized and behaviors and attitudes of conformity towards them are learned. A good part of the answers to the question "who becomes deviant" can find the answer in the lack of socialization or in the socialization of attitudes, values, norms and beliefs within an alternative subculture. Conformity and consensus are the main results of the internalization of the norm. This "support for conformity" comes from attachment to people and institutions and constitutes the main guarantee against deviance: attachment to parents, to school, consent to conventions, norms and shared values. Lack of attachment is related to deviance. Without the support of conformity the door is open to deviance. Others deviate not for the reasons just described, i.e. the lack of attachment to people and values, but because they have been socialized within deviant cultures that support deviance: the peer group, gangs, problematic and socially disorganized territories. Alternative socialization often includes learning not only norms but also values, lifestyles, attitudes and techniques. And everything is reinforced by the beliefs that are learned and seen around: if drug dealers make a lot of money they must not all be bad; if everyone smokes marijuana it won't be a bad thing; if many people don't stamp the bus ticket, I can do it too. It is through the process of socialization that deviance is learned as an advantageous option and a preferable path to conformity; 2) *the self-concept*: the self-concept concerns personal self-knowledge, identification and self-evaluation. It is clearly one of the variables that distinguish between the deviant and the non-deviant: the former is often aware of the difference in behavior, of the choice he has made, and of the career he has chosen. It is the awareness of acting and sometimes of being "outside" normality (outsiders). And those who subjectively feel like outsiders easily actually become outsiders. Feeling like an outsider depends rather on the labeling process. The first encounter with justice can be a strong influence on the assumption of a "deviant" self-concept. The boy who is arrested the first time because he stole an object from the supermarket is immediately labeled by the policeman as criminal, deviant or marginal. The evaluation of others on their behavior can become part of one's identity starting from the moment in which he subjectively takes on the label and therefore a status attributed to him.

Conclusions

At the end of the study conducted, it emerges that the multiple deviant situations do not seem to find an adequate response from the institutions and from society itself: the cultural dimension of the individual and the subjective predominates and manifests itself and materializes, consequently, in the actions of each social actor. In this system,



traditional values and structures enter into crisis, such as those of reference (family, school system and broader educational-training systems) which more easily allow the implementation of behaviors defined as deviant. The questions that still need to be asked today are the following: what is the connection between deviance, or rather deviant behavior, and the social construction of the same? And, in what terms does it manifest itself in the post-modern? Deviant behavior, i.e. deviant behavior, which finds elements that can be found both in one's own personality structure and in the social roles played, (also personal and implemented in the general environmental context) is described as the action that leads the individual to deviate from a norm socially, on average and legally accepted by all individuals. Specifically, the concept can have at least two interpretations: one of a negative nature since it is to be understood as a violation of (social and legal) norms; the other neutral since deviant is the one who deviates from the criterion/concept of normality. The fact remains that the term deviance is used more to indicate a sociological category than a social category. Sociology, in general, in fact, speaks of deviant behavior when it intends to describe behavior that deviates from the expectations of normality tested by a given society: it can deviate from a norm or an individual actor or a group; or it can be considered deviant behavior that is characterized by its relative exceptionality compared to the regulatory framework generally accepted by a society - State and, in any case, well rooted in the dominant culture of the time. Once again, at the basis of deviant behaviors, there seems to be a breakdown of the most intrinsic social bonds. The current social context, therefore, not only presents elements of risk for the process of forming one's personality but also and above all reveals its progressive renunciation of the creation of a more equitable, just and supportive context. The strong social conditioning, the lack of educational and training proposals on the one hand, and the fragmentation of social ties on the other, therefore, lead to the real risk of producing easily conditioned personalities, withdrawn into themselves, insecure and avoidant, willing to take on any behavior, even negative if this allows them to achieve objectives that would otherwise be unattainable.

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