

BOOK REVIEW FEATURE

THE DEVIANT SUBJECT: DAVID MATZA'S SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCE*

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For a criminologist of his stature and reputation, David Matza has published remarkably little. His criminological work consists of two books and three articles, and he has contributed two short pieces on "disreputable poverty." It is perhaps even more remarkable that these few publications have achieved such notoriety. Matza's work on delinquency, part of which was produced in collaboration with Gresham Sykes, have enjoyed a great deal of celebrity owing to its controversial break with the long-standing theme of subcultural delinquency. His later book, *Becoming Deviant* (1969), has been viewed by some as a sort of landmark in the development of the field.

This paper reviews Matza's contributions to the sociology of deviance and attempts to identify basic themes which are constant throughout his work. Part I deals with his metatheoretical stance, naturalism. Parts II and III briefly summarize his work on juvenile delinquency and the existential theory of deviance contained in *Becoming Deviant*. Those already familiar with Matza's sociology may find these synopses superficial, but my purpose is to illustrate recurrent issues rather than to explain his ideas in detail. Finally, Part IV presents a summary and conclusion.

"NATURALISM"

In his influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970:10), Thomas Kuhn defined paradigms as scientific

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achievements which serve for a time to define the legitimate problems and methods of a research field for succeeding generations of practitioners. Clearly, sociology does not exhibit the paradigmatic unity of other sciences and, consequently, the application of Kuhn's concept to the discipline is made somewhat problematic (see Ritzer, 1975). Thus, I am undoubtedly stretching the term beyond its original limits in applying it to Matza's naturalism. Nevertheless, much of Matza's work is aimed at explicating this perspective so as to provide new directions for criminology and the sociology of deviance and new conceptual "boxes" for analysis. As such, naturalism seems a logical place to begin.

Matza begins *Delinquency and Drift* (1964) with a call for the reordering of standards of theoretical adequacy; theory should be valued not for its quantifiability, its scientific precision or its technical utility, but rather for the plausibility of its imagery.

A system, whether it be capitalism or delinquency, has exemplars, basic figures who perpetuate the system. The accurate characterizing of exemplars is a crucial step in the development of explanatory theory. Given the present state of knowledge, pictures are not true or false, but rather plausible or implausible. . . . Currently, therefore, the test of a picture is its ring of truth (1964:1-2).

In *Delinquency and Drift*, Matza's theoretical approach was spelled out primarily in his critique of "hard determinism." In its quest for scientific status, he argues, positive criminology felt compelled to reduce the human being to an object, to treat his/her behavior as wholly determined by circumstances beyond his/her control. This is much more than a heuristic method, however. Positive criminology did not merely choose to treat humans *as if* they were objects in order to simplify the explanatory task, but rather so reduced humans *in essence*. This tendency is even greater in criminology than in modern sociology as a whole which, Matza argues, has largely shed this position (1964:5).

In the place of "hard" determinism, Matza favors the "soft" variety. Soft determinism involves "the maintaining of the

principle of universal causality as a guide to profound inquiry and an abandoning of universal assumptions regarding the nature of man, criminal or otherwise" (1964:7). The soft determinists see *both* choice and constraint as elements of humanity: 1) each individual is free in some contexts and determined in others; 2) some, due to personal qualities and/or social circumstances, are freer than others. In a curious summary, Matza states that the

. . . fundamental assertion of soft determinism is that human actions are not deprived of freedom because they are causally determined. The compromise of soft determinism is not without difficulties (1964:9).

Indeed it is not! The hard determinist naturally asks: "if choice itself is determined, is not choice illusory?" No, answers Matza, because 1) humans, while not totally free, are unlike objects of the physical order, and 2) the principle of universal causality is itself under attack even in the physical sciences (1964:9-10). We are on far safer grounds in accepting a more voluntaristic view.

In his argument there first appears a theme which reappears in more sophisticated form in *Becoming Deviant: The Loss of Human Agency*. It is important to understand that Matza is not pleading for a free-will psychology. Rather, he sees the need for a sociology which recognizes what he takes to be the self-evidency of volition and which accepts the tremendous complexity of forces which impinge upon volition. The typical juvenile delinquent, for example, must be seen as "drifting" into delinquency:

Drift is motion guided gently by underlying forces. The guidance is gentle and not constraining. The drift may be initiated or deflected by events so numerous as to defy codification. But underlying influences are operative nonetheless in that they make initiation to delinquency more probable, and they reduce the chances that an event will deflect the drifter from his delinquent path (1964:29).

Elsewhere, he reiterates:

To recognize and appreciate the meaning of being willing is by no means to assert the existence of a free will. Indeed, it is the very opposite. The logic of one's past, the human agencies in one's situation are certainly real. They are the grounding for the conduct of will. Free will, as the phrase itself implies, takes will out of context, converting it into an abstraction of as little use as any other Will. . . is a sense of option that must be rendered in context (1969:116).

Methodologically, the stance of naturalism requires first and foremost that the analyst "remain true to the nature of the phenomenon under study or scrutiny" (1969:5). In other words, sociological observers are encouraged to shape their method of approach entirely in terms of the nature of the subject; indeed, Matza phrases this dictum in terms of "loyalty." We must be loyal and committed, he says, not to any system of standards (including the scientific method) but only to the reality which we are studying. Thus, naturalism makes a clear break with positive science: the scientific method should be used where it is appropriate; i.e., for the study of reactive objects. The nature of humans as active subjects demands a different set of standards (1969: 3-5).

It is fairly obvious that there is a certain naivete in Matza's statement of this methodological doctrine. As Laurie Taylor (1970:289) correctly notes, the issue is not one of choosing to remain true to the nature of the phenomenon or choosing not to do so. The issue, correctly stated, is 'what is the true nature of the phenomenon under study?' In his enthusiasm for the philosophy of naturalism, Matza implies that there are those who self-consciously argue against remaining true to phenomena. I, for one, have never encountered such a person. The source of the demand for "remaining true" rests upon self-evidence; Matza comes to believe that, once the mystifications of positive science are stripped away, essential human nature becomes crystal clear.

It cannot be denied that abstract models of complex phenomena which are introduced as heuristic devices sometimes do become so entrenched as to cloud the vision of succeeding generations. This is in the nature of paradigmatic clashes as described by Kuhn. The disturbing thing about the early pages of *Becoming Deviant* is the author's "matter of fact" appeal to self-evidence; this is the weakest aspect of his defense of naturalism. However, Taylor (1970:289-290) may be right in suggesting that no great harm is done through this. In later pages of the book, Matza succeeds in spelling out a model of human nature which, if lacking in the precision and instrumental utility of positive science, at least matches it in terms of plausibility. I will leave the discussion of this model for a later section of this paper.

By encountering the notion of utility, our attention is directed to a final major aspect of the naturalistic perspective: *appreciation*. Matza is in direct agreement with certain of the societal reaction theorists concerning the undesirability of doing criminology with one eye on the deviant subject and the other on his correction. It is his position that the correctional focus is at least partly responsible for the mechanistic views which characterized the cruder forms of positive criminology.

The trouble with correctionalism, for Matza, lies not in a mere value-judgment. Rather, it lies with correctionalism's effect upon inquiry. In forfeiting the capacity to empathize with deviant actors, to put ourselves in their place, we also lose the capacity to comprehend their acts. We lose the ability to grasp their personal meanings and are left with a skeletal understanding (1969: 15-16). *Appreciation* of deviance is a very difficult attitude to maintain, for obvious reasons. Deviance troubles us, it violates our deeply-held values, it threatens the social reality in which we invest. Nevertheless, an appreciative stance is a necessary precondition for any true understanding of deviant phenomena.

Matza does not conceive of himself as the originator of the naturalistic perspective. Nor does he see himself as the first to do criminology from a naturalistic perspective. Indeed, the first eight-five pages of *Becoming Deviant* trace the development of naturalism through the work of the Chicago school, the functionalists, the neo-Chicagoans and others. I will not attempt

to summarize this development, for such a task would require far too much space. Suffice it to say that Matza recognizes an extensive debt to past theorists who are often criticized harshly, and perhaps unfairly, by many contemporary criminologists. He sees in the development of American criminology a gradual and admirable transition from correctionalism to appreciation (1969: 17-40), from an emphasis on pathology to a recognition of human diversity (1969:45-46), and from a simplistic dichotomy of conventional and deviant worlds to a rudimentary understanding of their overlap (1969:70-85). In each case, the functionalists have built upon the contributions of the Chicagoans, while the neo-Chicagoans have corrected many of the errors and extended many of the insights of the functionalists. Matza's task in writing *Becoming Deviant* was twofold: first, to isolate the major themes of a naturalistic approach to deviance and crime as they have been revealed in past scholarship; and second, to provide the elements of a naturalistic theory of deviance.

It might be charged that to collapse Matza's discussions from two books, published five years apart, into a single presentation is to oversimplify his basic theoretical assumptions. People do change their minds and develop their ideas over time. This is undoubtedly true and, in fact, it did happen in Matza's case; the discussion of the nature of the delinquent in *Delinquency and Drift* is relatively simplistic, whereas in *Becoming Deviant* it is more sophisticated and better grounded, in a philosophical sense. But Matza's two books are not as different as they may seem. The view of the human being which emerges from the preceding pages involves a recognition of the simultaneous existence of external 'push' and internal choice. In other words, humans are neither totally determined nor totally free; human life and behavior involve a complex interplay between determination and will. Matza has noted that *Becoming Deviant* is based upon a subjectivist approach which nevertheless recognizes that there are "realities in the world" (Weis, 1971:38). In fact, both books are based upon such an approach, but *Delinquency and Drift* tends to focus more directly upon the impact of these external realities.

THE THEORY OF NEUTRALIZATION AND DRIFT

Although the bulk of Matza's arguments concerning juvenile delinquency may be found in his first book, *Delinquency and Drift*, a fuller understanding requires the piecing together of elements from a number of other works. The discussion which follows draws upon several articles (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Matza, 1961; Matza and Sykes, 1961) as well as the well-known book.

The theory of neutralization and drift has its origin in an explicit critique of subcultural theories of juvenile delinquency as found, for example, in the work of Cohen (1955), Miller (1958) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). Each of these writers, in his own way, posits the existence of delinquent subcultures with their own set of values and standards of behavior. From this general approach, juvenile delinquency is explained in terms of the normative constraints manifested in the peer group. Matza proposes that the imagery of an oppositional delinquent subculture is erroneous, and presents evidence that delinquents are rarely committed to an alternative set of values. Rather, delinquents tend to be firmly committed to *neither* the conventional nor the delinquent world. They "drift" back and forth between deviant and conventional action.

The crux of the argument derives from an apparent paradox: if delinquents are not committed to an oppositional normative system, how then are they able to escape the normative constraint of the conventional culture? The solution, for Matza, is found in *neutralization*. The delinquent is seen as one who is able to break the moral bind by using a vocabulary of motives which justifies particular delinquent acts without challenging the fundamental legitimacy of the broader values which these acts contradict. These "techniques of neutralization" include the denial of responsibility for wrongdoing, the denial that any real injury was done, the denial of the legitimacy of the victim, the condemnation of the delinquent's condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties (see Sykes and Matza, 1957). Each involves an extension and distortion of defenses recognized in the Western legal tradition. Thus, the vocabulary of motives utilized by delinquents is

drawn from the conventional world itself, not from an alternative system of values.

Matza sees this "overlap" as a central feature of youthful deviance. The motivation for much delinquency is provided by "subterranean values" of the conventional society, "values, that is to say, which are in conflict or in competition with other deeply held values but which are still recognized and accepted by many" (Matza and Sykes, 1961). Examples include themes of excitement, leisure and aggressive masculinity as popularized by the media. Moreover, there are "subterranean traditions of youth" which have long existed in American society—quasi-deviant adaptations to the peculiar status of adolescent. These include delinquency, bohemianism, and radicalism. All are publicly denounced, all elicit a rather ambivalent societal reaction, and all exist in both extreme and mild, "safe" versions. "Teenage culture" itself is such a mild version of the subterranean tradition; it involves behaviors and beliefs which are based on the same subterranean values as the more extreme traditions, but it is not interpreted by most adults as a severe threat (Matza, 1961).

If delinquents are not truly committed to an independent set of values and guidelines, why do they appear so? According to Matza, the answer lies in the dynamics of the delinquent group. The adolescent male is attracted to the gang by an anxiety over his masculinity, which is itself grounded in a mood of fatalism. The typical gang delinquent is seen by Matza as one who feels unable to 'make things happen,' he feels determined, manipulated by forces beyond his control. The gang provides an opportunity to make dramatic things happen and thereby to re-establish a sense of control. But in the situation of the peer group, a system of collective misunderstanding develops. Each member comes to believe that his mates are in fact committed—more committed than he. To his masculinity anxiety is added a new anxiety over his status in the group. The constant "sounding" and verbal jousting which characterizes the interaction in juvenile gangs contributes to this membership anxiety and results in an ongoing bluff which is never called. Outside of the situation of company, the boy will express attitudes and values which are

often quite conventional, but in the group setting he must not do so. Thus, the members of the gang are bound by the *illusion* that there is an alternative normative framework to which the others are committed and to which *they must appear* to be committed.

Admittedly, much has been omitted from this brief synopsis of Matza's theory of delinquency. Nevertheless, it should be sufficient to illustrate several themes which are basic to the naturalistic perspective and which reappear in his later work. Matza's understanding of delinquency stresses the high degree of overlap between the conventional and delinquent orders; the delinquent phenomenon is not as deviant as it seems and, in a sense, the conventional order is not as conventional as it makes itself out to be. The delinquent is presented not as a determined object reacting blindly to external constraints. Rather, he is seen as a human subject who varies in his ability to choose, but who nevertheless adapts himself to the contingencies he perceives.

CRIME FROM THE INSIDE

Matza's second book and last criminological work, *Becoming Deviant* (1969), represents a change of focus. Here, he transcends his more narrow focus on juvenile delinquency in order to establish a broader naturalistic framework for the understanding of crime in general. There is another change in focus, however, which nevertheless preserves a link to his earlier concerns. As mentioned previously, Matza's image of humanity is twofold; it involves both agency (choice) and constraint. Humans are subjects who make choices and thereby shape their world, but which make these choices within broad circumstantial limitations. The theory of delinquency emphasizes ways in which external factors shape the behavior of juvenile delinquents by influencing their self-consciousness. *Becoming Deviant* focuses more directly upon the "inner" side of the process while continuing some of the basic themes developed earlier, especially the loss of human agency and the extensive overlap between conventional and deviant enterprise. The book presents what is essentially a phenomenology of crime, a "map" of the process of being deviant from

the internal perspective of the actor. It is a complex and difficult work, not conducive to brief summarization.

Matza sees in the history of American criminology the gradual development of three key concepts: *affinity*, referring to attraction between objects; *affiliation*, referring to the uniting of two objects which were previously unattached; and *signification*, or the feedback effect of societal reaction. All of these are crucial to the process of becoming deviant, but the manner of their use in criminology has been more appropriate for the physical than the human world. Matza's task is to humanize these concepts and explain their "location" in the patterned series of choices involved in deviation.

Far from merely reacting to their surroundings, human beings *adapt*. Herein lies the human meaning of affinity. It must be recognized, however, that human beings often lose their capacity to make self-conscious choices. This loss of agency is termed *natural reduction*, and calls to mind Matza's image of delinquents who, through their contacts with the ideology of juvenile justice, come to conceive of themselves as determined. Thus, "to be applicable and useful in the study of *man*, the idea of affinity must be revised in a manner that *affirms subjective capacities even while recognizing their diminution*" (1969:92, emphasis in the original).

Sociology's "favored affinity" has been that between poverty and deviance. To Matza, this makes a certain sort of sense. Still, the connection must be viewed not in terms of probabilistic statistical generalizations but in terms of the concrete adaptations of naturally reduced persons to dehumanizing surroundings. It is only in the context of affiliation and signification that affinity can come to have subjective meaning (1969:100).

In its earliest usage, affiliation came perilously close to constituting a notion of contagion. It has been gradually recognized, however, that this image does not fit the human world. Far from "catching" a deviation or blindly stumbling into a behavior pattern by reacting to new social surroundings, the actor gradually, though not inevitably, affiliates with an alternative meaning system and the social group in which it is grounded (see 1969:ch. 6). The less appropriate use of the concept was

characteristic of the differential association and subcultural traditions. As an exemplar of a more human concept of affiliation, Matza cites Becker's work on marijuana use. In this piece, Becker renders a "recipe" of marijuana use, a "faithful summary of how to do what people have *unwittingly* been doing all along," though not necessarily in their commonsense terms (1969:110, emphasis mine). Matza sees in this work a faithful description of the subject's construction of the meaning of marijuana smoking through ongoing interaction with more experienced others. It allows the novice the choice, at each stage of the learning process, of continuing or discontinuing. Through affiliation, the subject engages in a continuous creation and re-creation of the meaning of him/herself and of the deviant act. Such an existential project of meaning-creation is central to all deviation. The product is an individual gradually moving toward secondary deviation *prior* to the impact of societal reaction.

Signification involves the experience of *ban*; i.e., the subject's recognition of and adaptation to the fact that his/her activity is prohibited and subject to sanction. As Weis pointed out in his interview with Matza, the chapter on signification makes it clear that *Becoming Deviant* might better have been entitled "Becoming Criminal," since the author's focus is on the reaction to the state (Weis, 1971).

Matza sees the societal reaction theorists' emphasis on signification as praiseworthy, but criticizes them for neglecting its connection to the ongoing relations between the deviant and the authority of the state, and for failing to treat the deviant's acceptance or rejection of the deviant label as problematic. The importance of signification for Matza is twofold. Prior to apprehension, the experience of banned behavior forces secrecy and guilt, and thus dictates that deviants elevate the prohibited practice to a position of central importance in their lives. Moreover, the constant need for secrecy is relieved only in the company of others like themselves. Thus, Matza agrees with Schur and Becker in recognizing the importance of subcultural intervention (1969:154).

Signification *per se* begins with apprehension. Briefly stated, it results in a redefinition of self and of the world, since the

authority of the state causes the deviant to "lose the blissful identity of one who among other things happens to have committed" a deviant act. Labeling theory has failed, according to Matza, to address the question of why tagged deviants accept or reject the labels which are applied to them. Many do not. Ultimately, the issue comes down to the sort of reasoning engaged in by the signified rule-breaker. If, as a result of the cues from others, they interpret their isolation and punishment as an indication of an essence of themselves that they have not previously understood rather than as a mere consequence of an act, the label will be accepted and deviation will be amplified.

If the agents of signification understood that the process often 'backfires,' would they alter their activity? No, they probably would not, answers Matza. Herein lies his brief but potent critique of the state. The "regular suspect" is an institution upon which modern, rationalized social control rests. Without it, the formal effectiveness of criminal justice would be vastly reduced. But the functions of the signification process must be viewed at a higher level as well. The method of suspicion serves to create a collective representation which provides the foundation not only for institutionalized law enforcement, but for Leviathan itself.

Never completely successful, and rarely without an initial but weak basis in the facts of circumstance, the method of suspicion provides substance for a Manichean vision of society: The forces of evil are concentrated, their whereabouts are known in principle; the task of law enforcement can proceed. And it proceeds in approximately the same direction as when the police were first instituted—toward the 'dangerous classes.' Within a vision of concentrated evil, goodness may be conceived as pervasive. Given so striking a division, what recourse remains but to convict persons who 'have been given every chance' but continue amassing a record? Taking for granted the focused and instituted scrutiny to which they are subjected, they are made to appear strikingly different from the great majority who, as far as can be ascertained, have never done anything wrong (1969:196).

In its avid concern for public order and safety, implemented through police force and penal policy, Leviathan is vindicated. By pursuing evil and producing the *appearance* of good, the state reveals its abiding method—the perpetuation of its good name in the face of its own propensities for violence, conquest, and destruction. Guarded by a collective representation in which theft and violence reside in a dangerous class, morally elevated by its correctional quest, the state achieves the legitimacy of pacific intention and the appearance of legality—even if it goes to war and massively perpetrates activities it has allegedly banned from the world. But that, the reader may say, is a different matter altogether. So says Leviathan—and that is the final point of the collective representation (1969:197, emphasis in the original).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A number of themes remain constant through Matza's criminological work, although they are presented in different ways. The first and most important is a "soft" deterministic view of human nature which makes a clean break from positive science but which nevertheless leaves sufficient room for theorizing. The second, a derivative of the first which appears in its developed form only in *Becoming Deviant*, is a transcendental model of the human being. In this view, humans are capable of going beyond their circumstances and participating in an existential project; this is as much an ontological argument as an empirical one.

A third theme is directly linked to the previous two. This is Matza's tendency to focus upon factors which facilitate human action rather than casual influences. In other words, Matza's efforts have been directed largely toward specifying contingencies which make deviance possible, given the necessary intentions; e.g., techniques of neutralization. With the exception of his brief discussion of the mood of fatalism and the naturalistic conception of affinity, he has avoided any attempt to explain intention itself. Predictably, this has left him open to criticism:

Matza suggests that the 'mundane delinquent is the exemplary delinquent in that he personifies, more fully than the compulsive or the committed, the delinquent actor. But if this is true, Matza is not offering us a general theory of delinquency but a description of the conditions that make mundane delinquency possible. . . . [He offers merely] a restrictive *description* of a situation which requires *explanation* in terms of the highly varied reasons for which people move from occasional to frequent delinquency (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973:181).

Matza provides a plausible if unprovable answer to those theorists who see deviance as an inevitable process. However, this phenomenological ghost has not substance: the deviant has no material basis. We are not given any account as to why individuals should find affiliation to deviation attractive. Matza's phenomenology, like that of the ethnomethodologists, avoids the question of etiology which it presumes to resolve (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973:191).

Fourth, Matza consistently focuses upon the direct interplay between conventional and deviant orders. Delinquent subcultures are not oppositional; rather, their members drift back and forth from deviant to conventional activities and do not strongly oppose the basic values of middle-class society. The techniques of neutralization which they use to break the moral bind of the law are derived from some of the most basic institutions of society, albeit in a somewhat twisted form. The subterranean traditions of youth, one of which provides the background for delinquent activity, are subtly integrated into the flow of history and exist alongside more accepted forms. Moreover, the entire perspective of *Becoming Deviant* is based upon an opposition to any clear dichotomy between convention and deviance.

Matza's criminological work is not without its problems, as he himself has recognized (Weis, 1971). These problems begin, perhaps, with the philosophy of naturalism. Certain elements of this theoretical system impress, others disappoint. I concur with Taylor, Walton and Young (1973:173-174) in their view that

Matza's theoretical strategy threatens to lead us into a situation in which we can only accept as valid the accounts of deviant subjects themselves. In other words, if we were to confine ourselves to the letter of naturalism, we could *only* look at deviance from the inside and we could not consider the etiological effects of factors which subjects themselves are unable or unwilling to see. On the other hand, Matza's paradigm can be of considerable use so long as it is recognized that it represents only a part of the picture. It may very well be that external contingencies will relate to behavior only as they are mediated by actors, but this does not necessarily mean that they will accurately comprehend their situation or understand the process in which they are engaged. Even Matza sees that deviants may exhibit 'false consciousness' as, for example, when they experience the loss of agency through natural reduction.

It may also be that Matza overextends his appreciative stance. Although his attack upon overt correctionalism in criminology is quite defensible, it does indeed tend toward an extreme form of moral relativism. Still, there may be no real solution to this dilemma aside from the old dictum of making one's value-orientation explicit rather than hiding it in the terms of analysis. Matza seems able to do this in some of his work. One of his papers on "disreputable poverty" (1966) makes no pretensions of value-freedom; poverty is approached as a miserable and dehumanizing condition and, regardless of any virtues and cultural achievements which flow out of slum life, one which we ought to be rid of! This is made abundantly clear by his counter-attack upon a critic of his work, which is hardly phrased in relativistic terms:

Wishing ardently to avoid giving offense to the poor he falls heir to a charming infantilism. For him, despite the oppression of historic circumstance—for which we are to hold the 'non-poor' responsible—the organization of social life among the poor remains largely undaunted and intact. Far from seeing the poor as stupefied or disorganized until they have mobilized and achieved consciousness—the classic view of writers since

Marx-Valentine follows the romantic tradition in which the poor are merely different in their customs and arrangements (Matza, 1969b).

Delinquency and Drift may be criticized for an overly consensual view of society, although Matza seems hard to pin down on this point. His recognition of overlap, which is quite valuable, at times leads him to view culture as integrated across most all social groups and classes even if it tends to be self-contradictory at certain points (e.g., subterranean values). This, of course, relates to a much larger and older sociological debate which has never been settled to everyone's satisfaction. On the other hand, his unwillingness to admit the possibility of a truly oppositional subcultural system among juveniles may have lost its "ring of truth." The gang members of the South Bronx, for example, seem to be a good deal more self-conscious in their 'critique' of conventional morality than Matza's delinquents of the 1950s. Thus, it seems to be quite possible that the drifting delinquent may have been an historical artifact rather than a general phenomenon.

The most serious shortcoming of *Becoming Deviant* is that Matza's phenomenology avoids serious examination of larger etiological issues (for an examination of this problem in phenomenology and ethnomethodology, see McNall and Johnson, 1975). We need the sort of criminology which attempts to locate significant sources of deviance in the dominant culture and in the social structure and which, consequently, takes overlap into account. Matza, in his attempt to explain deviance existentially, directs attention to larger social factors only in his discussion of Leviathan's role in signification. This is somewhat curious in view of the following comment: "My second book, especially in the final part, is a critique of the state" (Weis, 1971:42). I, for one, do not believe that it came out that way. Matza deals with the state only as a phenomenological entity, not as an objective force which impinges upon people's lives in ways which they may not comprehend.

Still another problem with the perspective presented in *Becoming Deviant* is that it is difficult to test, to say the least.

This is not sufficient cause to write it off as bad theory. Still, one need not yearn for a completely rationalistic, non-empirical sociology to see that no theory can have great value in sociology unless it can be verified in the real world.

The problem with Matza's approach may be more of an inconvenience, however; we simply do not have the tools with which to test it precisely. *Becoming Deviant* is a dialectical work, and dialectical works are extremely difficult or impossible to deal with in terms of mainstream sociological methodology. Even the theory of neutralization has not as yet been supported or clearly refuted by empirical research (see Gordon et al., 1963; Siegel et al., 1973; Hindelang, 1972, 1974; Verlade, 1978). It may well be that it is one pattern among many. *Becoming Deviant* has met a similar fate. It has stimulated little empirical research due to the difficulty of operationalization. Moreover, it is rather difficult to tell where it leads us theoretically (Manning, 1972). Should an existential school of criminological thought arise, it undoubtedly will refer back to *Becoming Deviant* as its manifesto.

The direction which Matza seemed to be taking as of 1971 was toward the sort of position which might have dealt with some of the problems noted above. *Becoming Deviant* was written in part while in London, in the company of critical British criminologists such as David Downes and Stanley Cohen. Their emergent thought seems not to have had an observable influence on the book, but may have led him to change his mind later. As the following remarks show, he seemed to be moving toward a perspective which is much more consistent with his admiring critics, the radical criminologists.

I think the interest in interpretive or phenomenological sociology is a half-way house. In terms of my own personal development and of a lot of people I know, we've had to get out from under positive or bourgeois sociology. Phenomenology is what we had to go through, but only I think to get to the next stage: critical or Marxist sociology. . . . The interest in Dilthey and Husserl will gradually wane. A lot of us, I think, will move toward a more self-consciously Marxist interpretive sociology. I know that's what I'm doing. . . (Weis, 1971:44).

In terms of criminology, we will apparently never know what the "late-late" Matza would look like; he has decided to return to his earlier concerns with poverty and labor. As late as 1978, he considered a revision of *Becoming Deviant* for a second edition. Ultimately, the publisher decided that it was not the sort of book which really needed revising, and the project was abandoned. Too bad, because it would have been very interesting to see where Matza would have taken us.

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