

NEUTRALIZATION TECHNIQUES AS A FORM OF RATIONALIZATION OF DEVIANCE IN THE WORK OF THE POLICE¹

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Abstract: The paper discusses various techniques that police officers, as individuals, use to neutralize all the negative effects of their deviant behaviour. These techniques are not unique only to the police, but to every individual who, for various reasons, needs to reduce the negative effects of his deviant behaviour. These effects are not related only to possible social condemnation, but are often of an internal nature, in the form of conscience and self-condemnation. This phenomenon is problem especially in the work of the police.

Keywords: police, neutralization techniques, deviance, rationalization

INTRODUCTION

People tend to use different methods of justifying their behaviour that is not in accordance with the rules of a valid normative system (law, morals, religious norms, etc.). One of the ways to do that is to use the so-called neutralization technique. These techniques mentally prepare an individual for a deviant act by enabling him to justify such an act by rationalizing his illegal actions. In this way, they provide themselves with the necessary cognitive basis for violating current norms as well as a partial justification for subsequent deviant activities (Kappeler, Sluder, & Alpert, 1998: 114).

Although this is common to all people, the implementation of these techniques by of the police is of particular concern. Namely, the police are the state authority in charge of controlling the implementation of the law. But, by their illegal actions the police increase the general scope of illegalities in a society. Thus, all the phenomena that can encourage the practice of illegal work of the police

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are unacceptable. One of such phenomena is the process of rationalization of deviance through the implementation of neutralization techniques. In the text that follows, we will try to point out all the specifics of the implementation of these techniques, their characteristics and manifestations, but also the consequences that their implementation can lead to in the work of the police.

RATIONALIZATION OF POLICE DEVIANCE THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF NEUTRALIZATION TECHNIQUES

When considering the process of rationalization of deviance, it is important to keep in mind the fact that deviant persons do not resort to justifications of their behaviour only so that they can personally morally distance themselves from a specific act, but also to make it easier for the public to accept their behaviour. In other words, by justifying deviant behaviour, the perpetrator seeks to avoid characterizing his act as deviant, and thus to avoid negative reactions and legal consequences due to such behaviour. However, in order to achieve this, a concrete justification must be placed in a context that is understandable and acceptable to the public. The literature mentions how members of the police “construct” their excuses in order to adapt them to the public, especially those outside police circles. In this regard, the following explanation is significant: “Neutralization techniques are not limited to obviously deviant actions, but serve to neutralize the ‘stain’ that would otherwise accompany the implementation of coercive authority over fellow citizens. The police officers convince themselves and others that those over whom coercive authority is applied are despised by the general population and that they deserve such treatment, which is why no moral dilemma accompanies their action.” (Waddington, 1999: 301).

One of the most commonly used neutralization techniques is the use of euphemistic rhetoric. For example, material rewards from corruption can be justified by police officers as “compensation for the underestimated work they do” (denial of injuries), while the victims of harassment are often characterized as “social scum that deserves it” (denial of the victim’s existence), etc. With euphemisms, criminals try to present their deviant actions in a completely different light, trying to distance themselves from them. They also provide them with important moral justification, but at the same time help them maintain the self-perception of responsible police officers.

In order to obtain acceptance, it is usually sufficient for a police officer to use language that characterizes the unworthy nature of the victim (e.g. “scum”, “crime”). However, in order to “convince” the general public, police officers must use stronger arguments. In that sense, the victim of police action (e.g. police violence) is most often given the attribute of danger and danger to the citizens themselves, in order to elicit enough compassion for their actions by ordinary citizens. Also, as Kappeler, Sluder and Alpert point out, the characterization of victimized citizens as “drug addicts”, “deviant persons”, and “criminals” serves that function. As these authors explain: “Because the public has learned that drug use is dangerous, that drug dealers are well organized and heavily armed, that certain deviant segments of society deserve less full protection of the law and that criminals pose a threat to social and moral order, concrete actions of the police, even deviant ones, are considered more acceptable by the public. In this way, police officers play the victims of their actions in the light of the existing social feelings.” (Kappeler, Sluder and Alpert, 1998: 125).

This is exactly the reasoning that Jerome Skolnick noticed during the research in the Eastville Police Department. Instead of characterizing their personal immorality as bad behaviour, the police officers in this department are graded a label of immorality among the crimes. Thus, those who accept bribes



and gifts from gamblers are not characterized as “dishonest” but as “real”, since gamblers and book-makers are actually considered as “business” and not as “immoral” people. On the other hand, in the area of drug abuse, the concept of morality was completely different. All interviewed police officers believed that drug abuse posed a serious danger to the community and that, therefore, accepting “dirty” money from drug dealers had no justification (Skolnick, 2011: 186).

In the analysis of the use of euphemisms, the example of the Argentine junta seems especially interesting to us. In his study *The State of Denial - Knowing about Crimes and Suffering*, Stanley Cohen notes how the use of torture led to a changed meaning of the word, while neutral words received a new interpretation. Thus, for example, the word *assado* (barbecue) has become a bonfire on which corpses are burned; *la parilla* (a plate for frying meat), became a metal table on which victims were laid to be tortured; *submarino* did not mean a submarine, but the continuous immersion of the head in dirty water (often mixed with urine and faeces) and its extraction just before the prisoner drowned (Cohen, 2003: 104).

Rationalization of deviant behaviour through the application of neutralization techniques is obviously common to the police. There is, however, a fear that this tendency will take root within the police subculture, as many of its members consider them to be fundamental and valid standards and opinions. In fact, if more than a few officers in an organization internalize these techniques, it is certain that a collegial justification for deviant behaviour will be established. The degree of acceptability of a specific justification is also important for the general public, because if it rejects the justification offered by a deviant person, then it no longer serves the purpose of removing the label of deviant behaviour and then either the justification or the behaviour itself must be changed. If the public accepts this justification, then it will continue to be used as a technique to protect the actor, and specific behaviour can continue, or as Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert explain: “When a justification is accepted by the public, the next behaviour becomes easier to an actor who now has confidence that either the particular act was justified or that the justification was appropriate to remove the label of deviance. In both cases, the actor is free to continue the course of action until the public responds differently.” (Ibid: 127).

In order to understand the criminal actions of certain people, it is sometimes not necessary to look for the conditions under which their usual moral inhibitions weaken. Lars Svendsen points out five elements that lead people to agree with something that is evil, although they themselves cannot be characterized as evil: 1) *representation* - it is crucial how the actors are presented with something (there is a big difference between participating in a massacre of innocent people and self-defence from a powerful group that threatens to destroy us); 2) *distancing* - creating the greatest possible distance between one's own actions and the people who represent the object of those actions (the decision is made in an office, and the consequences are manifested in a completely different place, which one probably never sees), 3) *task division* - each actor performs only a fraction of the task and therefore feels little responsibility for the overall result; 4) *escalation* - a person does not make any radical changes in his choice of values, but changes them little by little, as he encounters various problems he wants to solve; 5) *socialization* - a person is introduced into a culture in which certain actions, which would otherwise be unacceptable, suddenly become the norm (since all actors in that culture accept the norms, one loses different ideas) (Svendsen, 2006: 177).

Herbert Kelman points out three processes that, according to him, contribute to the weakening of moral restraint versus participation in torture • *approval* - frees individuals from the responsibility to make personal moral choices based on standard moral principles; • *routine* - allows torturers to ignore the global meanings of the tasks they perform and eliminates the possibility of moral issues; •



dehumanization - excludes victims from the moral community of perpetrators, making it unnecessary to bring them into contact with them in a moral sense (Kelman, 2005: 131).

In a study symbolically titled *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Become Evil*, Phillip Zimbardo points out how each of us can morally distance ourselves from any kind of destructive or evil behaviour when it activates one of the four cognitive mechanisms. First, we can redefine our harmful behaviour by declaring it honourable. We achieve this by creating a moral justification for a particular action, by accepting moral imperatives that justify violence. Second, the denial of personal responsibility minimizes our sense of direct connection with our actions and their disastrous results, thus protecting ourselves from self-condemnation. Third, we can change the way we think about the actual damage our actions have produced. We can ignore, distort, diminish or disbelieve in any negative consequences of our rule. Finally, we can reconstruct our perception of victims by seeing them as deserving of punishment, blaming them for the consequences, or dehumanizing them (Zimbardo, 2009: 277).

Denying personal responsibility for one's actions is also one way of neutralizing deviant behaviour. Such denial is a powerful means of justifying cases of abuse and misuse of police powers. Maurice Punch believes that the excuses of police officers are usually focused on official needs and organizational pressures, and the most common denials of personal responsibility are the following: "You had to accept it if you wanted to fit in", "Boss wanted the results", "I undertook what was expected of me" (Punch, 2009: 180). By using such justifications, the members of the police want to emphasize that their decisions are the result of the influence of other people and a consequence of consistent respect for the demands of their authorities.

Kelman and Hamilton give a significant explanation in this regard in their book *Crimes of Obedience*: "An important consequence is that participants often do not consider themselves personally responsible for the consequences of their actions. It is true that there are individual differences that depend on the ability and willingness of participants to assess the legitimacy of the orders received. However, since they feel they have no choice in what they do, they do not feel personal responsibility. As perpetrators, they are not personalities, but only an extended hand of power. Therefore, when their actions cause great harm to others, they may feel relatively free from guilt" (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989: 16). This statement can be related to the observation made by Stanley Cohen, who claims that ideologically the repertoire of denial of responsibility is the richest, stating that the most common segment of this repertoire is obedience to authority (Cohen, 2003: 142).

With this in mind, we consider it quite justified to draw attention to obedience to authority and the issue of responsibility for crimes out of obedience to authority, as part of the explanation of the mechanism of denial of responsibility. Here it is important to recall the so-called "Nuremberg Principle", adopted after the Second World War, which emphasizes that the orders of the superiors cannot be used as an absolute defence for criminal actions committed by the subordinates. The UN Convention against Torture applies this principle to torturers in the sense that an order from a senior official or public authority cannot be taken as a justification for torture. Faced with such a temptation, individuals have an obligation to assess the legality of orders and to disobey those orders that they know or should know are illegal. Supervisors, on the other hand, have an obligation to consider the implications of the policies they pursue and to monitor the ways in which those policies are translated into specific orders and actions as they move down the ladder. In this sense, the responsibility of the superiors arises from omissions and shortcomings in their control, which may, directly or indirectly, encourage the use of torture by the subordinates.

The fact is that many police tasks are extremely complex, which is why their execution requires the engagement of several participants and the distribution of competencies among them. One of the



logical consequences that arise from such situations is the waste of responsibility. This process helps each participant to deny personal responsibility, that is, to shift the blame for possible omissions to another. In the literature, the waste of responsibility is often associated with a phenomenon that social psychologists call “deindividuation” - a psychological state in which people reduce their sense of personal identity and responsibility. Zimbardo specifically points out that various factors contribute to that, and above all the anonymity and diffusion of responsibilities. These factors act especially in the group, because by membership in it, individuals feel more anonymous or do not feel responsible, since they behave in accordance with the roles assigned to them, and not in accordance with personal values (Zimbardo, 2009: 370).

In the already mentioned book, Philip Zimbardo explains how any situation that makes people anonymous reduces the sense of personal responsibility. As this author points out: “When people feel anonymous in a situation, they can be more easily induced to antisocial behaviour, because in such a state people are no longer guided by the usual cognitive and motivational processes that control their behaviour in a socially desirable direction, reason, and behaviour over thinking about it” (Ibid: 277). This outcome is even more likely in a situation where it is permissible to act impulsively, especially if a particular policy allows for involvement in anti-social or violent action against others, as was the case in Brazil during the rule of the military junta.

To illustrate, a Brazilian police officer and interlocutor in one interrogation, who was transferred from a torture unit to an execution unit, pointed out during an interview the importance of anonymity in the use of violence, comparing his experience in both units: “While I was in the unit for execution, I could only put a hood over my head or over the victim’s head and eliminate my enemy as a normal part of the job, unlike the experience in the torture unit where I had to somehow personally get involved with the victim” (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo, 2002: 259).

However, even if we exclude such extreme situations and experiences that are mostly related to totalitarian regimes, the fact remains that police officers in most democracies often act in groups, in the dark, with masks over their faces (which is especially evident when arresting dangerous criminals). It is certain that these props help police officers to create deindividual anonymity, which makes it easier for them to commit violence or some other illegal procedure. Related to this is Hodgson’s interesting view that in addition to weakening the personal stamp in behaviour, deindividuation can result in a decrease in interest in normative standards in the sense that individuals easily overlook common rules and prohibitions, while impulsive behaviour becomes very possible (2001: 526).

Many studies show the extent to which deindividuation facilitates violence in both adults and children, especially when the situation supports such antisocial practices. The hypothesis that anonymity may encourage modification of internal constraints and release from learned controls and the obligation to take responsibility for a violent act was scientifically confirmed in an experiment conducted by Phillip Zimbardo at a college in the United States, in which he gave students the task of releasing “electric shocks” to other women. The participants who acted under a sense of anonymity were twice as aggressive in their behaviour as those who could be identified. The results of the experiment were clear – the women in conditions of deindividuation gave their victims twice as long shocks as the women in the control group. Moreover, the anonymous women gave equal shocks to a woman who was judged to be pleasant and to a woman who was judged to be unpleasant. On the contrary, the women who acted in conditions of individuation distinguished between a pleasant and an unpleasant goal, so they gave a pleasant woman shorter shocks than to an unpleasant one.

The connection between anonymity and the ability to participate in acts of violence is especially confirmed in wartime conditions. The presented data suggest the conclusion that it is easier to make a



person hurt and kill other people when he disguises himself and steps out of his ordinary personality. The anonymity experienced by these warriors obviously had the effect of easing the extreme atrocities they committed.

Just as the connection between an individual and his act can be neutralized by a denial of responsibility, so the connection between an act and consequences can be neutralized by a denial of injury. Considering it as a form of “act adjustment” or redesign (as opposed to “perpetrator adjustment”), Stanley Cohen believes that denying injuries aims to neutralize crime by minimizing the resulting pain or injury. For example, vandalism is just “mischief”; car theft is “borrowing”; a gang fight is a “private quarrel”, etc. (Cohen, 2003: 103). Unethical and illegal conduct by members of the police is also often accompanied by the justification that the specific conduct did not cause significant harm despite the fact that it is contrary to professional ethics or service rules.

This reasoning is especially present when police officers try to justify their actions by carrying out legitimate police objectives (e.g. false testimony is only a “beautification” of the facts). Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert point out that among the large number of police officers of all ranks, there is a deep-rooted view that there is nothing wrong with falsifying facts to fight real-world crime. For most of them, it is necessary and justified. This belief is especially present among police officers working in areas with a high crime rate. This is evidenced by the statement of a member of the NYPD accused of perjury, who addresses the members of the Mollen Commission (1994) with disbelief in the following words: “What did I do wrong? I just wanted to get the criminal off the streets?” (Kappeler, Sluder and Alpert, 1998: 117). On the other hand, criminal behaviours that cause extreme consequences do not allow such an easy denial of the injury. For example, the perpetrators of a brutal act can hardly claim that their victims were not actually injured. However, although the ability to deny injuries is limited, denial can still occur. Stanley Cohen argues that giving a different framework to a bad act (especially one committed for ideological motives) is more common in official discourse than in the vocabulary of individual perpetrators, especially when victims belong to a devalued ethnic group. As this author explains, it is usually claimed that victims do not feel pain like other people, and the most common argument is that violence is not only foreign to their culture, but it is the only language they understand” (Cohen, 2003: 151).

Even when they admit some responsibility and damage, offenders can still claim that it was not wrong to inflict injury in the given circumstances. More precisely, other targets or circumstances would not be appropriate, but the given “victim” got what she asked for (Ibid: 103). A typical example of denying the existence of a victim is the perpetrator’s argument that the victim was in fact the first to do the wrong thing (“The first one to hit me”), while he only reacted to that attack in order to self-defend. Unlike this, not so suspicious a case, in reality there are much more delicate situations of denying the existence of the victim. For example, when it comes to political atrocities, Stanley Cohen believes that denying the existence of a victim is more ideologically rooted in the narrative of blaming another. All recent perpetrators of political violence repeat the refrain: “Look what they have done to us” (Ibid: 152). There is also a noticeable tendency among police officers to rationalize illegal behaviour by denying the existence of a victim, which is especially pronounced in the case of the use of excessive force.

The police rhetoric of rationalizing deviant behaviour is significantly adapted to the type of crime, which is especially evident in the case of denying the victim. Thus, for example, completely different arguments are used for corrupt behaviour than for excessive force, and as particularly indicative, the following stand out: “Money taken is ‘compensation’ for the risk taken in performing dangerous work”, “Theft from drug dealers is justified because they would certainly be out on bail and dealing again” (Punch, 2009: 180). The formulation of such excuses is especially affected by the fact that corruption is



in fact a “victimless crime”, since the transaction usually takes place with the consent of the will of its actors. Undoubtedly, the interlocutor in the documentary “Bad Cops” Neil Putnam also acted under the impression of this fact, justifying his corruption in the following way: “Not only were there no victims, but everyone benefited. The department made arrests and achieved fame, and the informant received a monetary reward. Even the arrested dealer was not unhappy, because he was aware that he would have received a higher prison sentence if we had not “eased” him, by taking a certain amount of narcotics and money from him” (Ibidem).

Considering the fact that corruption usually does not have a human being as a victim, it could be easily concluded that corrupt behaviour does not require denying the existence of a victim. It is certain, however, that there are certain types of corrupt behaviour in which there is such a victim, and a typical example is “extortion” (i.e. shakedown). However, the rationalization of these crimes by denying the existence of the victim is facilitated by the fact that they are most often persons whose credibility has already been shaken (e.g. drug dealer, brothel owner), of which the police themselves are aware.

Dehumanization of the victim is a process very close to denying the existence of the victim. Euphemistic rhetoric also has a special role in it, which includes semantic distortions and play on words. In this way, the human character of the victims is replaced by “trivial” expressions, thus making concrete victimization inconspicuous or harmless. At the same time, justification is provided for committing the most morbid crimes. As Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo explain: “The identity of the victims is darkened when their murder turns into ‘elimination’. The victim loses any presence when described as a ‘contract fulfilled’. There are no people who bleed, maim, or die where mass murder is presented as ‘ethnic cleansing’ or where bomb victims are portrayed as ‘collateral damage’” (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbardo, 2002: 255).

The dehumanization of victims is especially characteristic of ideologically motivated crimes and crimes of obedience, and it takes place more on a collective (social, cultural, state) and much less on an individual level. In fact, the role of the state is usually crucial in the process of dehumanization of victims, especially in those cases when certain categories of people are defined as “enemies of the state”. In his work *Faces of the Enemy*, Sam Keen shows how visual propaganda, used by most nations against those they consider dangerous to “others” or “enemies”, creates archetypes of enemies. As this author explains, “visual images create a common social paranoia, which is focused on the enemy who would like to harm women, children, the state and the nation, destroying its fundamental beliefs and values” (Zimbardo, 2009: 379).

This is exactly the approach used by Hitler’s propaganda machinery when it sent a clear message to its compatriots through films and posters depicting Jews as pests that feed on the granaries of national resources. The fact is that most of us do not feel guilty when we kill an “annoying” insect. When people are viewed in the same way, it is certain that restrictions on how to treat them are moved or completely lifted. Herbert Kelman also offers significant insight into this problem. This author points out that the view of victims of torture as “non-citizens” was evident in the conversations Heinz had with “masters of torture” in Latin America: “When they identified guerrillas as Communists, they saw them as foreign agents and therefore, in fact, as ‘denaturalized’. Then, torture increased when guerrillas started killing military officers and their families, which is why they began to be considered not only as outsiders, who have no right to protection by the community, but also as dangerous elements from which the community has the right to be protected” (Kelman, 2005: 133).

When it comes to torture victims, Kelman believes that their dehumanization is largely due to the fact that they often do not belong to the ethnic or religious community of torturers and the dominant segment of society, citing Kurds in Iraq, the Bahamas in Iran, Palestinians in Kuwait and the territo-



ries occupied by Israel and Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. In most cases, the ethnic or religious identity of the victims is the main reason for their tendency to be tortured. In other cases, ethnic or religious identity is one factor of disagreement or rebellion. In all cases, it facilitates the exclusion and dehumanization, that is, the removal of one of the restrictions against torture and other serious human rights violations (Ibid: 133).

From this follows the logical conclusion that labelling certain individuals and groups, as particularly dangerous, can easily lead to their dehumanization, resulting in very serious consequences for their lives and security, especially when the current socio-political situation gives legitimacy to violence. To illustrate, the potential victims of the Brazilian repressive system have been dehumanized by being characterized as something to be feared of and not to be shown any respect and dignity that normal people deserve. This image justified police officers from committing violence against political dissidents during the rule of the military junta (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros and Zimbaro, 2002: 256).

Like other delinquents, dishonest police officers, when their deviance is revealed, tend to retaliate by counter-attacking criticism of the organization, leaders, or the integrity of the investigation against them, hypocrisy in the criminal justice system and double standards in society at large. As Punch (2009: 181) points out, deviant police officers take on the role of victim, stating that internal control inspectors are focused on them, and that funding and political will disappear when higher-level actors are in danger of being discovered. With this technique, police officers try to neutralize the deviant character of their actions, but also to prepare for new deviant “feats” by transferring part of the responsibility to those who make formal rules.

A common way to justify deviant behaviour is to call for a “higher goal” (e.g. by arresting dangerous criminals). Guided by “good intentions”, police officers easily decide to abuse the legitimacy of the police function. Looking at their role from the position of a “true fighter against evil”, they usually adopt the logic that “a good goal justifies the means”. In this regard, Punch warns: “A noble goal can have emotional and professional validity in certain situations for the police officers concerned, but it can also be used inappropriately” (Ibidem). By relying on “street justice” methods, police officers actually encourage injustice, questioning the “goodness” of their profession. However, in order to alleviate the disturbed utilitarian self-perception of the police function, they justify the application of illegal measures by achieving a noble goal. As one British police officer said: “If I act dishonestly, with the intention of doing good to the community, I am right, I am reliable, I am right. Honest intentions really make work easier by making you feel better about what you do” (Goldschmidt, 2008: 127).

Considering the phenomenon of the negative social hero, Olivera Pavićević and Biljana Simeunović-Patić point out the specific pattern of behaviour according to which the perpetrator seeks to rationalize his actions, among other things, with the need to satisfy justice. The use of such arguments is usually observed in criminals whose act can be characterized as “taking justice into one’s own hands”. These can be individuals or groups of ordinary citizens who try to alleviate their frustration or anger by implementing “raw justice”, rationalizing the use of cruel methods with various neutralization techniques, and especially by “calling for a higher goal” (see Pavićević, Simeunović-Patić, Kron: 2011).

This pattern of behaviour, however, is perhaps more characteristic of police officers than ordinary citizens, because police officers view the satisfaction of justice not only as an expression of anger, disappointment or revenge, but also as a moral obligation and their professional duty. As Skolnick points out, “police officers see themselves as ‘craftsmen’ who love their job and consider it fair” (Newburn, 1999: 119). Viewed in the context of police work, the “correct offender” pattern is undoubtedly linked to “Dirty Harry” syndrome, as it helps police officers address one of the key ethical dilemmas they



face during their work, giving them the opportunity to rationalize violations as obligations and duties materialized in a “noble” goal.

Finally, we will draw attention to another mechanism that contributes to the weakening of moral restraint from committing various forms of unethical-illegal conduct, and which can also, to some extent, be considered a kind of neutralization technique. It is about routine. Namely, the logic is that due to the frequent repetition of a certain behaviour, there is a high probability that it will eventually become acceptable (justified), i.e. common, and thus “normal” (non-deviant) behaviour (primarily in the opinion of the perpetrators, but also people close to them). In other words, a given behaviour becomes a routine in the daily activities of certain individuals and groups. Routinization of deviant behaviour is certainly a much more complex process than it seems based on this explanation, especially if we take into account the fact that it is not isolated, but runs in parallel with other processes and that its occurrence often depends on a number of other factors and circumstances (e.g. the degree of gratification of the manifestation of a given behaviour in the past, the probability that a particular action will be rewarded or punished, etc.). The question that logically arises here is whether it is possible to routinize unethical behaviour in the police. The results of some research on police deviations and especially data on the frequency, intensity and degree of manifestation of corrupt behaviour in some police organizations undoubtedly imply the conclusion that this is possible (see Kutnjak-Ivković, 2005; Punch, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The need of individuals to justify their crimes is an old social phenomenon. It is as old as human civilization, that is, culture as a set of values and norms that make up a given civilization. In every society and at every time, there are individuals whose actions violate the norms contained in the valid normative system. Violation of these norms has always brought with it the appropriate condemnation of society, but often the very feeling of guilt in the violator of these norms. Hence, the need of the offender to reduce the negative effects of deviant behaviour is quite clear and understandable. There are many ways to achieve this.

In this paper, we have dealt primarily with those techniques of neutralizing deviant behaviour that are inherent in the police. They point to a rich repertoire of these techniques used by all deviant individuals, not just the members of the police. Of course, the members of the police are more likely than citizens to find themselves in a situation where their actions can be valued as legal or illegal, moral or immoral. Namely, the very nature of the police profession is such that it requires from the members of the police not only legal, but also moral judgment in almost everyday situations, and this then means the possibility to make mistakes and do something that is not only socially unacceptable, but also unacceptable from the point of view of personal moral values. Therefore, the need to rationalize the deviant procedure is understandable, i.e. to neutralize its significance and character of deviance. Although it is possible to understand this phenomenon, it does not mean that it should be tolerated. On the contrary, the recognition of these mechanisms is crucial in preventive work to combat illegal police work. Ignoring the use of neutralization techniques, especially those that are clearly visible (such as euphemistic rhetoric), leads to a greater extent to illegal police work and, thus, the negation of one of the basic police functions - law enforcement.



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