Culture of Legality and Transgression of Norms in University Youth

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Abstract: This paper begins with an overview of the literature on legal, social and moral norms and their relationship with individual behaviours, and then discusses the culture of legality in a group of university students in Italy. In particular, this paper provides a reflection on the relationship that exists between social and legal norms and their mutual capacity to influence the behaviours of young people. We highlight the multidimensional nature of the underlying factors of conditionality, relativity and universality. We also discuss the existence of two types of social norms, general and generational and their differing capacities to affect behaviour. The research technique is a web survey on 3938 students from three Italian universities (Venezia, Bari, Salerno).

Keywords: culture of legality, social norms, legal norms, transgression

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Introduction

The question of legality is increasingly present in the debate and agenda of political actors. In this sense, our thoughts turn to micro-criminality or organized crime. But there are also some day-to-day behaviours that we do not see as illegal although they are transgressive of legal norms. This condition occurs when there is a misalignment between norms of behaviour laid down by society (social norms) and those formally required by law (legal norms). In this framework, talking about a culture of legality means speaking of the relationship between social and legal norms and their ability to influence social behaviours. This paper presents the results of research on university students and their culture of legality. In the first part of the work, we clarify the complexity of the relationship between the norms; in the second, we analyse the research data to deepen our understanding of the ability of the rules to influence social behaviours.

Social dynamics and culture of legality

The term *illegal behaviour* usually evokes a negative reaction, and we tend to criticize or describe it as socially reproachable. But then we frequently encounter behaviours that violate laws and do not arouse in us the same reactions. If we happen to slightly exceed the speed limit, we might not feel like we have behaved illegally. Other times we come across behaviours that make us feel uncomfortable even if they do not break any laws. In some cases, the observation of transgressive behaviour leads us to act to signal its problematic nature, but, in other cases, the behaviour is tolerated, and any sanctions are avoided. These brief reflections show the complexity of the relationship between legal norms and individual behaviour and the need to clarify the conceptual framework within which to analyse legal behaviours among young people.

A first reflection, taken for granted by the sociological debate, concerns the presence of different types of norms, not necessarily consistent with each other. But the debate is still open on the difference between these rules and their ability to influence legal behaviour.

The nature of the norms: moral, social and legal

The concept of a *social norm* is probably the most present in sociological debates and research. The spread of the concept in different areas has determined its polysemicity and the existence of different

semantic structures. This articulation of the concept makes it necessary to clarify certain matters with respect to its use in this context.

Gallino (2006), in his dictionary, highlights the different facets of the concept. He argues that the prevailing definition can be expressed as follows: "variously articulated and codified proposition which requires an individual or a community, as a permanent element of its culture or subculture (...), the conduct or the most appropriate behaviour (i.e. right) to be followed in each situation" (Gallino, 2006, p. 130).

A first consideration, also present in Gallino's work, places less emphasis on the prescriptive dimension and brings the semantic dimension of the concept to the social expectation of expected behaviour. If the expectation for a certain behaviour originates in the behaviour's direct observation, we can say that we expect the *in vogue* behaviour in each population. But the expectation of behaviour can also be brought back to a normative dimension that defines the *must be* by a social group or society.

This comprehensive approach relates to the degree of generality or abstraction of the rules and their degree of formalization. Next to norms of behaviour that determine precise ways of being and being in a relationship with others and which affect human behaviour, even without an explicit formalization, we find norms that orient the behaviours but do not determine a specific mode of action—when the boundary between the values and social norms is not well defined. Conversely, we find specific types of social norms that Gallino defines as *rules of law* where the rules regarding a specific expected behaviour have a clear definition even within the legal system. So, it follows that the legal norms must be considered as a category of social norms. First, legal norms authorize the State to act in a prescriptive way using its authority (and therefore also coercion) to ensure compliance. Second, citizens introject and accept these norms of behaviour. In the case of legal norms, the formalization itself assigns and allows a single person to identify the behaviour to which he or she must conform, and it is not necessary to have any share or acceptance of the norm. As a citizen in a democratic context, he or she can act, through voting and other tools of democracy, to propose a modification of formal rules (social norms of a legal nature) that he or she does not recognize. These differentiation elements, moreover, are not negligible and affect the very nature of social norms. In other words, the specific nature of the norms that are expressed through values, on the one hand, and the social norms that are formalized through legal rules, on the other, represent a continuum that has led some authors to raise the issue of the excessive width and comprehensiveness of the social norm concept (Bicchieri, 2006).

A different perspective is followed by Coleman (1994), who sees the social norms as a connecting element between the micro and macro levels of the system. According to Coleman, norms are the property of the macro-system that can influence the actions of individuals at the micro level. In this approach, the social norms "specify what kind of actions a group thought right or fair or wrong and unfair. They are created intentionally, in the sense that the people who create a norm or contribute to maintain it believe they can derive benefits if the rule is observed and be damaged if it is violated" (Coleman 1994, p. 313).

Within his general theory, a norm only exists when the individual surrenders to someone else their rights to act independently and to control the action. Again, Coleman points out that there is always a moment in which the social actor is free to assign or not assign his right to act. He will do so if, and when, he recognizes in this decision the possibility of realizing its goals more easily or if he deems that a violation would have too high a cost.

Coleman starts with the centrality of the voluntary nature of the transfer of rights, stressing the importance of social consensus on the norms and to whom the authority is delegated and insisting that it is "a right informally and socially defined" (Coleman 1994, p. 313). Although he does not define the subjects (they can be different) to whom to delegate the power to control the action, Coleman emphasises the informal dimension and social processes that lead to the construction of social norms and mechanisms that are activated to enforce them. In this perspective, he reminds us that the sanctions are predominantly of a social nature and exist "in corruption or improving the reputation, in physical or material damage" (Coleman 1994, p. 315).

Many works in literature have tried to make a classification of norms. Turiel (1983) proposed moral and conventional norms, the latter mostly related to the individual contexts that express them. Shweder, Much, Mahapatra and Park (1997) and Rozin, Lowery, Imada and Haidt (1999) proposed to classify the norms by their content and distinguish community norms or membership in a social group, autonomy norms or individual preferences, and divinity norms or reliance on supernatural beings (Debreuil and Gregoire, 2012). Particularly interesting was Cristina Bicchieri's (2006) classification into social, legal and moral norms (a similar proposal came from Elster in 2007, and referred to social norms, moral norms and almost moral norms). In her reflections on social norms, the author makes a clear distinction between the different types of norms and encourages readers not to confuse those norms with "the codified rules,

the expectations of regulatory and observed behaviors" (Bicchieri, 2006). In this logic, the author modifies the word *norms* with the word *social* to show their informal nature and lack of formal codification.

The adjective *social*, therefore, does not concern the object of the rules, but instead involves their nature and function, with the dynamics and processes that connect individuals to each other. This definition does not mean the absence of compulsory mechanisms for the behaviour or even the renunciation of sanctions that strengthen the role of the norm. These aspects exist but are informal, entrusted to the dynamics of communities and relationships between individuals. The emphasis is on the individual's behaviour, to his or her decision to accept the social norms and to adopt behaviour consistent with them. Per Bicchieri, social norms should also be distinguished from moral norms, which are based on rules followed in an unconditional way and that trigger strong and generalized emotional reactions. In other words, the moral norms are independent of the context and behaviour of other individuals. This approach has opened an interesting critical debate between those who accept or deny (Debreuil et al., 2012) this concept.

In 2013, Gaymard adopted the classification system proposed by Bicchieri. In her works, she argues that the conflict between behaviours and legal norms depends on the fact that there are different types of norms that can conflict with each other. It is "possible to highlight the interactions between two systems of norms: the legal system and the social system" (Gaymard, 2013, p. 229). In this way, the author distinguishes social norms from legal ones, and uses the term *legal* only with respect to the legal rules. This approach offers a *double simplification* as it narrows the definition of illegal behaviour only to legal rules and restricts the concept of social norms to those rules that have not had a legal formalization. This approach allows us to define the meaning of the term *social norms* and allows us to analyse the culture of legality as a meeting point between three different types of norms: moral norms, social norms and legal norms.

One final issue concerns the process of internalization of the rules. Social norms are different from other types of norms because they are the result of a social process through which the individual internalizes the expected behaviour. In this way, his or her adherence to the expected behaviour is not only the result of an external imposition but a personal commitment to the rule. The literature points out different social processes that affect the internalization of norms. These processes include the primary socialization processes (Parsons, 1951), the interaction rituals of identity confirmation (Goffman, 1963) and the mechanisms of reflexivity

that builds knowledge from the reflective reworking of experiences. The internalization of norms is associated with their confirmation process. The source of the confirmation may be produced by different processes: from comparisons among peers - where the recognition process is triggered in relational dynamics as an identity consolidation process - to the formal rules that structure and show how society recognizes social meaning (and not just individual) to individual behaviours represented by social norms.

This brief discussion on the debate about the social norms allows us to make some preliminary conclusions. First, it is possible to identify certain dimensions that, almost unanimously, scholars recognize as significant in the concept of *social norms*. In this perspective, we can identify at least two fundamental elements: (a) the expected behaviours that (b) the individual has introjected and contributed to define his or her identity. Second, the formalization of the concept of social norms does not represent a mere definitional element. On this we can, simplistically, present the debate on two different positions: on the one hand, those who consider the formalization process as a factor that defines some specific social norms (legal norms), on the other, those who consider social norms only the expected behaviours that do not find a legal formalization.

The behavioural typologies presented here allow us to highlight that there are social norms that are not also legal norms, as well as legal norms that lack the requirement of sharing and legitimacy, which makes them inconsistent with the very definition of social norms. If then, there are legal norms that cannot be considered as social norms, they do not stand up to the criterion of the specification and should be treated differently.

Social norms, legal norms and individual behaviours

The relationship between norms (social and legal) and behaviour is certainly complex and nonlinear. Here it is not meant to explore this relationship in all its aspects, but simply put into focus the fundamental elements related to: i) the factors that influence the capacity of social norms to affect the individuals' behaviour; and ii) the capacity of the legal norms to be binding, even in relation to the characteristics of coincident social norms.

Factors affecting the capacity of social norms to influence individual behaviour

Unlike Coleman, Bicchieri argues that sometimes individuals conform themselves to social norms though these norms are opposed to their immediate interest. Such adhesion to social norms, in fact, is not only

experienced as an opportunity for the realization of self-interest but also has an emotional component that connects with the sense of belonging to the community and the confirmation of personal identity. Moreover, the literature (Goffman, 1963) has highlighted the cultural aspects of social rules and their capacity to be constitutive elements of identity.

A cross-reading of the debate allows us to highlight the multidimensional nature of the factors that explain the relationship between norms and social behaviours, namely: i) conditionality with respect to the observed and expected behaviour, ii) relativity with respect to the concrete circumstances and the potential risks and iii) universality regarding homogeneity in the group or society.

i) Conditionality

Bicchieri (2006, p. 11) sums up three factors that affect the capacity of the rules to influence social behaviours:

• Empirical expectations: "I believe that a substantial part of the population conforms to the norms" (perception);

• Normative expectations: "I believe that a substantial part of the population expects that I conform to the norms" (adaptation or identity);

• Normative expectations with sanctions: "I believe that a substantial part of the population expects that I conform to the norms, and may sanction the behaviour".

Conditionality refers to the observation of the behaviours that everyone makes about persons who have the same characteristics (and role). Recalling some research by Cialdini (1990), Bicchieri and Xiao (2009) argue that "people tend to do what they believe others who are similar to them in relevant respects would do in a similar situation" (Bicchieri & Xiao, p. 192). The normative dimension of expectations, however, concerns "the belief that others expect one to conform to a given norm" (Bicchieri & Xiao, p. 192). In other words, the pressure for compliance to the group pushes the individual to have behaviours consistent with expectations of the group. The constraint of sanction, in its symbolic meaning as a threat not necessarily as an action (Rusconi, 1984), helps to reinforce the perception of the intensity of the norm and, consequently, affects the behaviour. These conditioning elements are taken from the sociological debate and, in particular, Goffman's work (1963) on the dynamics of the social representation of roles. Obviously, the more the subject believes that others have a certain behaviour, and that they expect that same behaviour from him or her, the more likely that his or her behaviour is consistent with social norms that define it.

ii) Relativity

The value attributed to social norms is not absolute, and, per Bicchieri, this condition is characteristic of moral norms. The adherence to the rule better reflects the situation and the context in which the actor acts. This approach is present in different authors albeit from different theoretical frameworks.

Coleman (1994), in his theory of social action, for example, assumes that the actor considers the choice to adapt to the expected behaviours by considering the costs that would incur if he or she decides not to delegate the right to decide in a different way. The relative value that the actor attributes to social norms in a social context depends on:

•   The symbolic meaning underlying the behaviour that is sanctioned by the norm;

•   Its relevance in the context of the overall elements that determine an individual's identity; and

•   The practical implications of the decision to join or not join and the dynamics that may arise.

iii) Universality

In this case, it is useful to recall the existence of a specific context that legitimizes the single social norm. A rule of behaviour, in fact, may be taken up by a single group, but it can have a broader scope and be an element of identity for the community or society. The norms that have a universal value may not necessarily also have the greater capacity to influence the behaviours. In some cases, we can have group norms that also become identity factors because they conflict with what is expected from society. This condition establishes a conflict that increases the internal identity and the external differentiation. Consider, for example, some behaviours of young people who have a clear reason to protest against a society with which they find it difficult to identify.

Finally, all these factors have a strong connection with social capital, in particular, its cognitive dimension. The consolidation processes of social capital, therefore, increase the intensity with which social norms are perceived and their ability to influence behaviours. An analysis of these different factors is complex because they are not independent of each other. Surely a high conditionality is the cause and effect of a legitimation of social norms as well as the intensity of the social capital. The emphasis that the authors give to individual factors depends on the theoretical approach within which they use the concept of social norms. The capacity of social norms to direct behaviours depends on the degree of *conditionality*, the costs and benefits perceived by the person about his or her *transfer of*

rights to decide in a specific context of space and time, the degree of legitimacy of the norms, and the intensity of social capital.

Capacity of legal norms to be imperative, even in relation to the characteristics of social norms.

Analysing the complexity of the relationship between social behaviour and legal norms, Gaymard (2013) notes that, from the point of view of citizens, legal norms do not always have the same relevance, or rather, do not have the same capacity for influencing behaviour. She proposes that the norms have a conditional property that binds the notion of prescription and the conditions that determine the imperative value. These observations raise the issue of the relationship between social norms and legal norms as the key element for understanding the meaning and motivations of transgressive behaviour against legal rules.

Feldman and Harel (2008), taking up the work of Bicchieri, argue that the social behaviour of adherence or non-adherence to the legal norm depend on two factors:

•   the consistency or inconsistency of the legal norms with the social ones and

•   the nature and form of legal norms (that the authors distinguish between rules and standards).

In this context, we will focus on the first of these aspects, describing it in the proposal made by Bicchieri (2009). Two conditions allow for the consistency between the social and the legal norms:

•   Compliance, when social and legal norms are consistent with each other. In this case, we can assume that legal rules formalize the widely shared social norms in the population;

•   Non-compliance, when there is a significant mismatch between the social norms in which citizens recognize themselves and legal norms.

Inconsistency between the different types of norms can be interesting. This condition is created, for example, when an important social change is not recognized even by the legal system. The divergence between different types of norms can be traced to at least three factors:

•   The speed of the process of social change. The post-modern society (Haley, 1990; Beck, Giddens and Scott, 1994), globalization (Sassen, 2007) and the liquid nature of social systems (Bauman, 2005) make the change a constant and not episodic event;

• The political system's slowness in taking charge of social change and activating changes in the formal legal norms.

• The resistance to change in bureaucracies that associate the change with the risk of loss of power and acquired position.

The work of Weaver (1986) points out that, "politicians are motivated primarily by the desire to avoid blame for unpopular actions rather than by seeking to claim credit for popular ones" (Weaver, 1986, p. 371). In the belief that the criticism of acts contrary to the expressed expectations creates a negative effect on consensus and voting, politicians adopt a conservative behaviour favouring the status quo.

All these factors make the relationship between social and legal norms highly unstable and subject to changes in the consistency's degree. The mismatch between the norms creates a delegitimization of the legal norms, with Gaymard (2013), in this regard, refers explicitly to *legitimate transgression*. Moreover, the literature suggests that the value of legal norms lies in their legitimacy, namely the fact that the population (at least a large portion of it) recognizes them as consistent with what they expect to have to do and, at the same time, considers them a representation of the behaviour effectively supported by most other people.

Objective, hypothesis and methodology

This research aims to address the culture of legality, trying to analyse the relationship that exists between social and legal norms and explore their mutual capacity to influence the behaviours of young university students. From a descriptive point of view, we want to highlight the statements of young people about the rules that stigmatize the behaviours expected by society. There are two perspectives of analysis, namely: what behaviours young people believe that society will praise or criticize, and what behaviours young people believe are reproachable or praiseworthy. We then analysed the incidence of different types of rules (moral, social and legal) in determining the consistency of behaviours with legal norms. Our hypothesis is that non-compliant legal norms are not able to direct individual behaviour. We checked three aspects: conditionality, relativity and universality.

The research technique was a web survey (via *LimeSurvey*). The link to complete the questionnaire was sent to all students of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the University of Bari Aldo Moro and the University of Salerno. The sample has been built per a consecutive random mode

(accidental sample). The lower age limit was 18 years, the minimum age for university admission, and the upper age limit was 34 years, the maximum age identified by IARD for surveys on youth (Buzzi, Cavalli and De Lillo, 1997, 2002, 2007). The survey was open for about five months from November 2014 to March 2015.

The Venetian sample consisted of 1,173 young people (890 females and 283 males); the Bari sample was 1,450 young people (997 females and 453 males) and the Salerno sample was 1,315 young people (831 females and 484 males). To make the sample similar to the reference population, the data was weighted based on gender and course of study in the academic year 2014-2015.

i) The structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of the following parts:

• Moral norms and values: a collection of values built from the IARD categories (Buzzi et al., 1997, 2002, 2007). This section aimed to bring out the importance given by the young students to the values proposed;

• General social norms: this perspective analyses the perspectives that students have of the society in which they live. We asked them to indicate whether the proposed behaviours are sanctioned by most citizens, and, therefore, an expression of a generalized social norm ("Now think from a different point of view and focus on your society. Would a person be criticised by most people for doing the following things?");

• Group social norms (or generational social norms): this perspective analyses the description of the personal behaviour rules and the evaluation of the behaviour of the individual, and aims to bring out the expectation of behaviour of the specific group of young people ("In your opinion, do you think these behaviours are acceptable or unacceptable?");

• Inclination to transgression: this perspective refers to the possibility that the respondent will adopt the listed behaviours. It considers, therefore, the willingness of young people to break the rules; ("We are now going to list different behaviours. Do you feel you may end up doing any of the following actions?"),

• Illegal behaviours and conditions of the context: aims to bring out the transgression of legal or social norms when the socio-economic environment undergoes significant changes. We chose the economic crisis as a factor that changes the conditions of the context and can be a factor that changes the perception of the seriousness of the transgression. Examples of behaviours considered were: tax evasion, using misleading

advertising or money laundering or outsourcing to economise on labour costs;

• Socio-demographic variables: gender, age, parents' occupations, commitment to voluntary activities, religious affiliation.

ii) From individual item to complex indicators

The analysis was developed through the construction of typologies based on the aggregation of the items and the construction of synthetic indices:

• A typology of young people's attitudes about values: strong individualism (wealth, prestige, successful career, a comfortable life), soft individualism (freedom, democracy, fulfilling your ambitions, religion), strong collectivism (involvement in your community, involvement in politics, solidarity), soft collectivism (observance of the law, security and public order, patriotism) and affective model (friendship, love, family). The battery was built from a factor analysis and comparison with the literature;

• A typology for describing the behaviours with respect to general social norms and group norms (table 1). A behaviour was considered an expression of a general social norm when more than 70% or less than 30% of respondents deemed it as socially reproachable or accepted (namely that the society considers it reproachable or accepted). The same operation was done for the definition of the generational norms. Crossing the variables on the society's opinion (general social norm) and on individual judgment (group social norm), we constructed a logical typology on the universality of the norms. This typology applies to those behaviours that are also the expression of a legal norm. The typology included:

- *Shared and compliant*: behaviours which are considered reproachable by society and by young people, namely the behaviours for which the two social norms agree;

- *Criticism of society*: behaviours which are considered reproachable by the young, but not criticized by the society, namely behaviours for which young people have a more critical view than society;

- *Youth transgression*: behaviours considered acceptable for the group of young people, but criticized by the society;

- *Legitimate transgression*: behaviour not criticized either by the society or by young people, for whom, therefore, the *transgression* is not socially sanctioned in any circumstances.

Table 1. Typology on the nature of the relationship between group norms and general norms

		General social norm	
		Yes	No
Group social norm	Yes	Shared and compliant	Criticism to society
	No	Youth transgression	Legitimate transgression

This typology has been used both for the classification of the individual behaviours (using the threshold of 30% and 70%), and the classification of individuals regarding each considered behaviour. In this way, for each behaviour, every young person was reclassified with respect to his or her way of behaviour elaboration and his or her normative system.

-      A typology on the relative dimension of the norms. In relation to some entrepreneurial behaviour we asked: "During an economic crisis, companies sometimes adopt illegal behaviours. Some of them are in the list below. In your opinion, to what extent are the following behaviours acceptable or unacceptable (1 meaning absolutely unacceptable and 7 meaning highly acceptable)". The question aimed to bring out whether the crisis was perceived as a possible factor that justified illegal actions. The responses were re-aggregated into four types:

-      Unconditional compliance with the norms (value 1): respondents consider the behaviour unacceptable and under no circumstances justified the proposed behaviours;

-      Negotiable unacceptability (values 2 and 3): respondents consider the proposed behaviour unacceptable, but with some reservations. The behaviours are considered less serious than the other proposed;

-      Justified transgression (values 4, 5 and 6): respondents were willing to justify the transgression, considering it highly acceptable;

-      Legitimization of transgression (value 7): respondents considered the proposed behaviour totally acceptable

Attitudes and willingness to legal behaviour in young people

In this section, we will report the survey results, with reference to the dynamics that connect the legal norms with the social norms and the attitude toward legal behaviours in young university students[1].

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[1] The data analyzed refer to the sample of Venetian students. Because of the similarity of the three samples, we preferred to focus the analysis on one university, pointing out the differences, if any.

Legal norms, social norms and behaviours

Here, we present the research results that describe the general and generational social norms. The analysis is developed from the legal norms to understand the culture of legality in young people and what logic determines their attitudes toward legal norms.

We focus on: i) the dimension of values in young people, namely the moral norms; ii) the representation of young people in relation to general social norms, namely the behaviour of the university students that society considers correct and expected; iii) the attitudes that young people found correct and that, therefore, represent the standards of behaviour of the group; and iv) the individual's preference and the behaviours that individuals believe they might have.

i) The dimension of values in young people: the moral norms

The first approach to the analysis of the normative universe of youth started with the analysis of the moral norms that they consider important, namely those norms rooted in their values and related to their emotions (individual or generalized).

It emerges that family and freedom are considered *very important* values for more than 80% of respondents, followed, with percentages between 75 and 70% by love, fulfilment of ambitions, friendship and democracy. So, the values considered as very important refer to the areas of family and close emotional relationships and individualistic values (self-realization and democracy). Just over half of the sample believe that the values of security, solidarity and observance of the law are important, and about a third of the sample considers relevant the values of economic well-being and successful career. The former are predominantly values oriented to collectivism, the latter to individualism. One young person in four considers involvement in the community as very important. Finally, the values of wealth, patriotism, prestige, religion and political involvement are considered very important for fewer than 15% of young people. The factor analysis carried out on values is consistent with the IARD's results (Buzzi et al., 1997, 2002, 2007) and highlights the five factors' structure: strong individualism, soft individualism, strong collectivism, soft collectivism and affective model. The adherence to the values does not show significant changes in the three territories where the survey took place.

ii) The general social norms

Per the rules explained in the methodological section, we can identify the general social norms of young people. On the one hand, cheating on an exam, buying fake of branded goods, working without a regular contract and downloading music illegally are behaviours that young people do not

perceive as disapproved by the society and are therefore widely accepted (percentages under 30%). On the other hand, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, doing graffiti in public areas or on private property, paying for sexual intercourse, having an affair with a married person or giving money in hand to obtain a favour are behaviours that young people believe society has consolidated norms of disapproval (percentages greater than 70%). For the first group of norms, there is a non-agreement between general social norms (expected behaviour from the perspective of society in general) and the law. The first group, in fact, represents what society thinks is right or wrong, acceptable or reproachable, but do not always coincide with what the law accepts or punishes. Some behaviours are illegal as determined by law, but they are deemed lawful for society in the minds of young people; others are legal but deemed reproachable for most people. While the law forbids downloading music without paying, it does not seem to be illegal by society, which considers it a commonly accepted behaviour. This contrast also applies to agreeing to work without a regular contract, buying counterfeit goods or cheating on exams. In these cases, the general social norms are more permissive than the legal norms and do not consider the attitudes proposed as reproachable. On the contrary, legal norms and general social norms agree for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, doing graffiti in public areas or on private property, giving money in hand to obtain a favour and paying for sexual intercourse; in these cases, what the law sanctions it is also sanctioned by the society. There is a substantial correspondence between legal and general social norms for cases of cheating on taxes, taking drugs to improve performance (work or sport), driving motor vehicles without a helmet and parking in a parking place reserved for people with disabilities.

While having an affair with a married person is a behaviour that legal norms do not prohibit, young people believe that the society disapproves (73.3%). So, in this case, the general social norm is to define the behaviour as reproachable. The data highlight how there are differences, sometimes substantial, between what is punished by law and what is sanctioned by society in general, thus confirming the existence of a gap between social and legal norms.

The behaviours that express a general social norm for the students of Ca' Foscari, are also social norms for the students of the universities in Bari and Salerno. The only difference is that the students at the University of Salerno do not believe that society condemns defacing public and private spaces and giving money in hand to obtain a favour.

iii) Generational social norms

Generational social norms are an expression group social norms as defined by younger people who view these norms homogeneously.

For young people, a widely accepted—though illegal— behaviour is downloading music illegally (93.4% acceptance). But other behaviours are considered unacceptable: cheating on taxes, driving motorcycles without helmets, parking in disabled spaces, taking drugs to improve performance, giving money in hand to obtain a favour, defacing buildings and public spaces, and driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs (all with acceptance percentages under 30%).

In between are the behaviours that draw different perspectives of judgment (percentage of acceptability between 30 and 70%) from young people, and so they do not constitute social norms. These behaviours include swearing, not respecting the speed limit, having an affair with a married person, cheating on exams, buying counterfeit goods, working without a regular contract, occasionally smoking marijuana, getting drunk in public. In these cases, we cannot talk about social norms that all young people recognize, and there may be subgroups, internally homogeneous, for which these rules may have a prescriptive meaning. There are no differences among the three groups of students (Venice, Bari and Salerno).

iv) Potential attitudes and behaviours of young people regarding legal norms

By analysing the possibility of acting (or not) on the indicated behaviours, we can define the predisposition to transgress among the young respondents, namely the relationship between legal norms and the willingness to perform certain behaviours. We find a high propensity to the transgression of legal norms (percentages greater than 70%) for the behaviours of downloading music illegally, not respecting the speed limit and working without a regular contract. For students at Bari and Salerno, the behaviour driving while not respecting the speed limits took on a medium level of transgression.

Young people express a medium inclination to transgression (percentages between 30 and 70%) for the behaviours of cheating on exams, buying fakes of branded goods, not paying the fare to use public transport and renting a flat without a regular contract. Finally, we find a low propensity to transgression (percentages under 30%) for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs or without a helmet, parking in a parking place reserved for people with disabilities, doing graffiti in public or private property, cheating on taxes and giving money in hand to obtain a favour.

Other critical behaviours, not expressions of legal norms, present similar characteristics of medium significance for young people. These behaviours include getting drunk in public, swearing (a behaviour that is common for students of the University of Bari), occasionally smoking marijuana and having an affair with a married person. Having an affair is the only behaviour that constitutes a general social norm, so, regarding this one we can talk about transgression. Finally, the willingness to take drugs to improve work or sport performance is low.

Social norms, legal norms and expected behaviours: Consistency, conditionality, relativity

How much then are the legal and social norms (general and group) able to influence the behaviour of young people? What determines the compulsory nature of the norms? An analysis of the literature allowed us to identify three relevant factors: i) consistency between the general and the generational norms, namely the universal dimension of social norms; ii) conditionality, namely the coherence between social norms and behaviours; and iii) relativity regarding the stability of norms in relation to the changing context features.

i) Consistency between general norms and generational norms

If we analyse the two perspectives (general and generational norms) together, the result can be summarized as in Table 2, depending on the agreement between the general social norms and the generational social norms. Table 2 shows the different types of relationships that can exist between general social norms and group social norms. We can distinguish:

- Shared and compliant: the behaviours are considered social norms by society and the younger generation. Behaviours are deemed eligible or ineligible from both perspectives;

- Criticised by society: the behaviours are considered an expression of social norms for young people, but not for the society as they represent it. We speak about criticism by society because the young people seem to think that society should be, in some cases, more rigorous and disapproving of certain behaviours, but in other cases, less rigorous and approving of behaviours;

- Youth transgression: the behaviours are considered representative of the general social norms, but not of generational social norms (neither are an expression of legal norms). In this case, young people recognize that society punishes such behaviours. But the culture of the youth group seems stronger than societal pressures, and the behaviours are a distinguishing and identifying group factor;

- Legitimate transgression: judgment towards these behaviours is consistent, and they are not considered norms for either the group or society. The transgression is justified because young people do not recognize themselves in these norms and do not feel a social pressure to conform to them.
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Table 2. General social norms and generational social norms

		General social norms - (% of social criticism)		
		0-30	30-70	70-100
Generational social norms (% Of unacceptability by young people)	0-30	Downloading music illegally *Shared and compliant*	Working without a regular contract Buying fakes of branded goods Cheating on an exam *Criticised by society*	
	30-70		Not respecting the speed limit Renting a flat without a regular contract Swearing Not paying the fare to use public transport Occasionally smoking marijuana Getting drunk in public *Legitimate transgression*	Paying for sexual intercourse Having an affair with a married person *Youth Transgression*
	70-100		Cheating on taxes Driving motor vehicles without a helmet Parking in a parking place reserved for people with disabilities Taking drugs to improve your performance (at work, in sport) *Criticised by society*	Giving money in hand to obtain a favour Doing graffiti in public areas or on private property Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs *Shared and compliant*

The table also allows us to analyse the relationship between the types of social norms and their consistency with legal norms. The shared and compliant social norms can be:

- Non-compliance: namely, not in agreement with the legal norms. Here, the behaviours are considered permissible by the social norms but in the presence of a legal norm are disconfirmed. In these cases, the social norm emerges *to the negative*: it becomes permissive towards behaviour that the legal norm prohibits;

-      Compliance, namely, in agreement with legal norms. Here, the behaviours are prohibited by both legal norms and social norms. In this case, the social norm confirms and strengthens the underlying legal norm.

The generational social norms (criticised by society) can be:

-      Non-compliance: when behaviours, although prohibited by legal norms, are considered acceptable by the young group;

-      Compliance: in this case, the behaviours prohibited by legal norms are considered reproachable (or not) for generational social norms. In this situation, the young people are more (or less) *critical* than the society about such behaviours.

The behaviours under *youth transgression* deal with the sphere of sexuality and are not an expression of legal norms. Regarding these behaviours there is a more critical attitude among the general population than those of this group: young people believe that society has coded for these behaviours a precise expected attitude, while we find less agreement in the perception of the group. Overall, young people do not recognize themselves in the social norm.

The behaviours in the type *legitimate transgression* are not considered representative of generational norms and the respondents do not think that they are expected behaviours for society.

ii) Conditionality: coherence between social norms and behaviours

Based on the analysis presented so far, we now want to see if, and to what extent, the propensity for behaviours is linked to the general or group social norms and describe what that connection is (table 3).

Consider the compliance behaviour of *driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs*. Eighty-eight percent of the sample said they act in accordance with the legal norm of not driving while impaired. Among these, the percentage of possibilities to transgress for those who recognize the social norm (shared and compliant norms and criticism to society) amounted to 10.1%, while for those who recognize the norm only in the representation of society (Youth transgression) or do not recognize it at all (legitimate transgression) the percentage ran from 76–62%.

When considering the compliance behaviour for *driving motorcycles without a helmet*, we can see that 92.2% of young people say they don't do this. Within this group, only the 3–6% of those who recognize the social norm (shared and compliant norms and criticism to society) may drive without a helmet, while among those who feel the social pressure on behaviour (youth transgression), 28% and 42% of them do not recognize general or generalized social norm.

Table 3. Behavioural expression of legal norms and social norms

		SC	CS	YT	LT	% of respondents: it could not happen to me
Non-compliance	Downloading music illegally	0.0%	2.9%	5.7%	7.4%	7.0%
	Buying fakes of branded goods	80.7%	76.7%	29.8%	39.7%	54.0%
	Working without a regular contract	48.9%	39.2%	14.5%	10.2%	22.7%
	Cheating on exams	71.0%	71.1%	13.8%	18.6%	40.8%
	Not paying the fare to use public transport	84.0%	79.5%	30.3%	27.1%	63.5%
Compliance	Giving money in hand to obtain a favour	94.2%	91.7%	30.4%	37.0%	87.9%
	Doing graffiti in public areas or in private property	96.5%	97.7%	61.7%	67.3%	90.2%
	Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs	89.9%	88.0%	24.0%	37.5%	88.0%
	Cheating on taxes	87.9%	86.6%	52.0%	50.0%	81.0%
	Driving motor vehicles without a helmet	96.8%	93.8%	71.4%	57.7%	92.2%
	Parking in a parking place reserved for people with disabilities	96.8%	93.8%	71.4%	57.7%	92.2%

SC = Shared and compliant; CS = Criticised by society; YT = Youth transgression; LT = Legitimate transgression

Now consider the non-compliance behaviour *downloading music illegally*, which is prohibited by legal norms but widely accepted by social ones (both general and group). To the 7% of those who say that they could not do this behaviour, it is a shared and compliant norm; for 2.9% it is a social norm only for the youth themselves; for 5.7% it is a social norm only from the point of view of society; and, finally, for 7.4% is not at all a social norm. In this case, the legal norm seems to succumb to social norms, which the individual behaviour. Consider, finally, the non-compliance behaviour for the youth group *buying fakes of branded goods*. Among the 54% of those who say they do not buy counterfeit goods, 20% and 34%, respectively, (those for which it is a shared and compliant norm and a norm only for the young) could violate the legal norm, while the percentage doubles (70 and 60%) for those that consider it a norm only from society's point of view, or who do not consider it is a norm at all. The effect of the social norm being only from society's point of view seems less effective in directing the behaviour.

This analysis seems to be a key to understanding of the relationship between legal norms and social norms. In the case of compliance behaviour, when there is consistency between both kinds of social norms (general and group) and the legal norms, the first ones confirm and strengthen the latter; but when the consistency is only with the group social norm, such a relationship is confirmed but with a lower intensity.

In the case of non-compliance behaviours, social norms determine the actions; when, on the contrary, young people do not recognize the norm of society, its effect is very low.

It emerges, then, that those who consider the behaviour as an expression of general and generational social norms (namely, they do not consider the behaviour acceptable) have a lower propensity for transgression. But those who recognize them only as an expression of general social norms or do not recognize them as social norms at all have a greater tendency for transgression. The legal norms have, therefore, a low binding capacity when they are inconsistent with group social norms. This is the case of *downloading music illegally*; the legal norms have high binding capacity when they are consistent with the social norms of the group. These findings are consistent with the literature concerning the directive capacity of norms based (concept of compliance and non-compliance) behaviours, namely the concordance or non-concordance between social and legal norms. In the event of non-agreement between general and generational social norms, the latter is more likely to affect individual behaviour.

Finally, we investigated whether there may be other variables that define subgroups of youth that can be internally homogeneous regarding the culture of legality.

To highlight the presence of variables that help to explain the behaviours, a logistic regression was carried out starting with the answers about the propensity to act out behaviours (table 4). The variables considered were: the presence of a general social norm, individual eligibility, some values (wealth, freedom, community involvement, observance of the law), commitment to voluntary work and gender.

For almost all the behaviours examined, the variable that decreases the ability to implement the behaviour is the belief that it is criticized by society. Indeed, those who believe that society stigmatises parking in disabled spaces have a 50% less chance of doing it and, similarly, a 30% less chance of not paying the fare on public transport and renting houses without a contract, compared to those who do not believe such behaviour is condemned by society.

A special case is the behaviour of smoking marijuana: those who think it is criticised by society have double the chance of doing it than those who do not feel criticised. In this case, the behaviour is not illegal under the legal norms and seems to be a consciously transgressive behaviour.

By contrast, the fact that some behaviours are personally permissible increases the possibility of putting them in place. The possibility of cheating on taxes, for those who accept such behaviour, is six times higher than among those who do not accept it; the possibility of parking in spaces reserved for the disabled and cheating on exams is 12 times greater and of paying for sexual intercourse is 32 times higher than someone who does not consider those behaviours permissible.

So, it seems that in the implementation of a behaviour personal consideration is more important than the social consideration of the norm. Those who consider the value of social commitment as important have a 40% lower chance of parking in spaces reserved for the disabled than those who do not consider it important. But those who consider observance of the law as important have 80% less chance of not paying the fare on public transport and 70% less likelihood of smoke marijuana, than those who do not consider them important. The other values are not significant in orienting behaviours. Gender is significant only with the behaviour of paying for sexual intercourse: males have a 5 times greater chance of indulging this behaviour than females to do. Among the variables considered the commitment in voluntary work was never significant.

The logistic regression confirms that regarding the gender variable the behaviours of the sexual sphere differ. The sexual behaviours constitute a ground on which the positions of males and females differ, highlighting general social norms and generations differentiated by gender. The girls believe that society has a general social norm for behaviour of having an affair with a married person and paying for sexual intercourse. Regarding these behaviours, therefore, only the girls perceive social pressure of disapproval.

We find a similar result, with regard to generational social norms, for the behaviour paying for sexual intercourse: it is considered acceptable by 60.1% of males and 27.1% of females, thus constituting a social norm only for the girls who consider it not acceptable.

Table 4. Logistic analysis

		Sig.	Exp (B)	95% CI per EXP(B)	
				Inferior	Superior
Buying fakes of branded goods	Acceptable: yes	0.00	5.75	4.39	7.55
Not paying the fare to use public transport	Criticized: yes	0.05	0.75	0.56	1.00
	Acceptable: yes	0.00	11.00	8.22	14.71
	Observance of the law: important	0.00	0.21	0.10	0.46
Cheating on taxes	Acceptable: yes	0.00	6.60	4.68	9.30
	Gender: male	0.06	1.41	0.99	2.02
Renting a flat without a regular contract	Criticized: yes	0.06	0.74	0.54	1.01
	Acceptable: yes	0.00	7.16	5.36	9.56
	Observance of the law: important	0.01	0.44	0.23	0.83
Paying for sexual intercourse	Acceptable: yes	0.00	32.29	13.87	75.15
	Gender: male	0.00	4.94	3.09	7.87
Cheating on exams	Acceptable: yes	0.00	12.36	9.28	16.46
Occasionally smoking marijuana	Criticized: yes	0.00	2.13	1.60	2.85
	Acceptable: yes	0.00	36.54	21.54	62.01
	Observance of the law: important	0.00	0.30	0.15	0.61
Taking drugs to improve your performance	Criticized: yes	0.05	0.67	0.45	1.00
	Acceptable: yes	0.00	16.62	11.03	25.03
	Gender: male	0.10	1.43	0.93	2.20
Parking in a parking place reserved for people with disabilities	Criticized: yes	0.01	0.55	0.35	0.87
	Acceptable: yes	0.00	12.94	7.88	21.27
	Social commitment: important	0.18	0.57	0.35	0.90
	Observance of the law: important	0.00	0.24	0.12	0.51

iii) Relativity: stability of the norms under crisis conditions

We saw that, in the literature, the value attributed to social norms is not absolute and adherence to the norms considers the situation and the context of the actor. In this regard, regarding some corporate behaviours that young people consider to be particularly serious for the stability of economic and production system, we analysed the degree of relativity attributed to each, namely the inclination toward their justification during an economic crisis. The illegal business behaviours are relative and not relative. With relative

not dependent on context conditions, those behaviours considered unacceptable (absolute unacceptability percentages greater than 70%) they are the opening of businesses with criminal intents (infiltration, bribery and money laundering), lack of respect for workers' rights (racial and gender discrimination in job recruiting and not respecting the company safety standards) and environmental pollution. Relativity in these cases is irrelevant since, even in conditions of crisis and changes in context, the social disapproval of such practices does not change. Instead, they are considered relative, those illegal practices which may be justifiable when conditions of the context change. This is the case of behaviours with the tax authorities: the tax evasion and saving money in tax havens are unacceptable behaviour on which you can negotiate and whose violation can be justified. The unacceptability of behaviour is *conditional* for other activities that can bring an unfair advantage to the company: using misleading advertising, industrial espionage, lack of clarity about where and how the product was produced and copying of trademarks and patents.

Legal activities that are considered socially disapproved (outsourcing to economise on labour, high wage differentiation within a company, imposition of higher prices for exploiting a monopoly position), show higher levels of acceptability and justifiability.

Conclusions

The analysis of the attitudes of young people made it possible to bring out their representation of the society's social norms and behaviours that they consider potentially correct.

A first point concerns the confirmation that the legal non-compliance norms have little capacity to effectively affect behaviours. When the social norms are the reference point for most young people and they do not feel a social pressure that pushes them to adopt behaviours compliant to legal norms, their behaviour belongs to what we define as legitimate transgression. This study also confirmed the relative dimension of the rules of behaviour: changing the contextual conditions (economic crisis) also changes the perception of the seriousness of the transgression of legal norms.

A second interesting point is there is no agreement between general and generational social norms. In this case, the generational dimension seems to be better able to contribute to the construction of identity. Social norms of

the group, therefore, have a greater conditional capacity than general norms when these two types of norms are not consistent with each other.

The relationship between norms and values is also interesting. The linear relationship that assumes that social norms are a practical expression of value systems is not confirmed. This relationship only emerges regarding values such as observance of the law and social commitment. The rules for behaviour seem to be the product of the reflexive processes of daily practice and comparison between peers. It would be useful to explore whether the connectivity produced from the internet provides fertile ground for confirmation of generational social norms.

Finally, these social norms see young people from very different standpoints. The analysis of variables that help explain membership in different subgroups is a relevant topic to deepen the culture of legality.

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