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# Juvenile Delinquency Deviance: An Evolutionary Criminology Perspective

**Giacinto Froggio, *La devianza delinquenziale giovanile. Analisi psicosociologica di un fenomeno complesso*, Laurus Robuffo, Roma 2014, pp. 304**



The latest analyses of the Italian scientific literature allows us to assert that more and more alarming researches and journal news is reported on adolescents. Here are just a few of the many forms in which youth deviance is manifested: cases of murder, often of racist form, violence in the stadiums, in families, in the school, the attraction of young people towards organized crime, the widespread use of narcotics and alcohol, phenomena of micro-crime of nomadic and non-EU minors. In general, deviance is described as a behavior that violates a set of rules, norms, or even expectations of a different kind: social, moral, economic, and cultural.

Giacinto Froggio states in his previous book<sup>1</sup> that discomfort and delinquency can, but not necessarily, fall within the deviance. Discomfort in some cases can proceed with delinquency, and may be expressed and has an impact on antisocial behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Boys who have some form of discomfort or delinquency are not, according to Froggio, “out of head” or “strange”, nor individuals at the mercy of unconscious determinism. They would simply be people who have built life paths where important human growth opportunities are lacking—young people who have not been helped or unwilling to take responsibility for their own existence.

<sup>1</sup> G. Froggio, *Psicosociologia del disagio e della devianza giovanile. Modelli interpretativi e strategie di ricupero*, Laurus Robuffo, Roma 2002, pp. 25–32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 17–18.

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The book that has been considered for the review is a psycho-sociological scientific study of evolutionary criminology, during which the problems are addressed and explained by the epistemology of “complexity.” The author—Giacinto Froggio—psychologist and psychotherapist who has been involved in youth scientific work since the 1980s mainly in the Italian context, is also the author of many scientific publications. The book (English translation of the title: *Juvenile delinquency deviance: Psycho-sociological analysis of a complex phenomenon*) encloses a mature thought, expressed with a lot of expertise on the youth deviance seen in the psycho-sociologic key. The book is structured in nine chapters: in the first chapter, the phenomenon and concept of juvenile delinquency deviances are deepened and the author also provides the reader with some coordinates of norms. In the second chapter, the author showed the complexity of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency with some explanations on the evolution of delinquent behavior and on the phenomenon of the escalation of delinquent behaviors related to adolescent age. In the third chapter, the author wants to explain the role played by individual traits in the emergence of delinquent behaviors. The fourth chapter focuses on the explanation of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency considering the influence of the micro and macro social environment. The next chapter allows us to understand the phenomenon described by the author in the key to social control (the theory of social ties, attachment, involvement, interactive theory of Terence P. Thornberry’s delinquency). Chapter 6 presents theories that help to understand the process of learning the delinquency deviance of young people. In the next chapter, the General Strain Theory of Robert S. Agnew is developed more closely. The penultimate chapter develops the system of delinquency beliefs developed by Glenn D. Walters, mind theory and role-taking, and the development of the system of delinquency convictions. The last chapter is devoted to the problem of labelling and identity of young people living in deviance situations (theories of labelling, symbolic interaction, role-taking and role-making, application of interactional concepts to the understanding of delinquent behaviors).

It should be noted that since the 1990s, at the international level, the study of juvenile delinquency deviance has been increasingly developed on the psycho-sociological side, thus creating a movement that is providing new important explanations: it moves the attention

from a society that is generally considered and features of a purely individual character to focus on the cognitive, systemic, and relational aspects that are most closely related to causality. Moreover, this model is offering multisystemic strategies for prevention and rehabilitation, the only ones capable of providing effective responses to delinquency phenomena. Starting from this assumption, Froggio in his latest book *Juvenile delinquency deviance* exposes the origin of deviant behavior in reference to the various theories of biological and psychological traits, influences of the social environment, family, peer group, school and theories of control.

Reading the book, the reader immediately realizes that the problem of juvenile delinquency (young people between the ages of 14 and 25), is a complex phenomenon, generated from within a dense network of reciprocal interactions. The book presented is a psycho-sociological essay of evolutionary criminology in which the author formulates different hypotheses, interpretations of delinquent behaviors in adolescence (pp. 263–268).

Surely we appreciate the fact that the book proposes a systematization of the most important and current criminological models, thus delving into an “integrated criminology” through which it is possible to explain the origin, escalation and continuity of the behavior of the young people. The author in a very systematic way illustrates the origin of delinquent behavior by referring to the different theories of individual (biological and psychological) traits, to the various micro and macro social explanations, where the due importance is given to the social environment, to the family, peers, school, and theories of control. It is also to be appreciated that the escalation phase is described and understood by the author through the contributions of theories of social learning and the Strain’s General Theory.

Undoubtedly, the added value of this book is that after years of deviance based on social and psychiatric theories, a new multidimensional approach that defines deviant acts within a relational system complex. The position of the author and many studies based on cognitive and behavioral theories reveals that the deviant act is carried out by people within certain contexts. In my opinion, the contribution of Froggio is valid, although the subject is treated by the author with a certain approximation, without indulging in commonplace and easy arguments. What is appreciated is that the author refers

to specific international scientific studies and provides the elements needed to understand the problem.

We have to admit that the publication is not an exhaustive picture of the matter taken into consideration, but it certainly proposes to accommodate the most important and current criminological models, thus promoting a process of tracking a path of “integrated criminology” which explains in a synthetic way the origin, escalation, and continuity of the deviant behavior among young people.

I appreciate the fact that the volume analyzes the problem mentioned above. The book shows that this analysis is not done in a superficial manner, but the author seeks the true causes of the phenomenon. Sometimes it may also seem that the book is made as a compilation of various theories. But what matters here is, first of all, consistency and accuracy in the choice of scientifically verified theories.

The careful reading of this book also makes us understand that for the understanding of the phenomenon of youth deviance in the psychosocial key it is even more important to keep in mind the validity of this approach because it is difficult to understand the phenomenon only in psychotherapeutic key. It is then pleasing to see the author who promotes the explanation of juvenile delinquency behavior using the psychosocial paradigm. The explanatory approach to the devious phenomena applied by the author favors the fact that issues of system theory, experimental psychology, and behavioral cognitive patterns find particular space and contribute to defining a psychology of deviance with its theoretical seriousness.

In my opinion the publication is addressed to the researchers to which the author offers a good theoretical platform for the problem of delinquency deviance among young people. The volume can also be useful to parents and teachers as a work tool that can help kids in their growth. Undoubtedly, we can state that the author in the reviewed work provides the reader with the skills acquired in his career as a researcher in the area of youth deviance, addressing the articulated and innovative phenomenon in its various aspects.

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