

Youth deviance, urban security and 'moral panic': the case of Italy

Stefania Crocitti | Alessandro Bozzetti

OPEN ACCESS

Double blind peer review

How to cite this article: Crocitti, S., & Bozzetti, A. (2023). Youth deviance, urban security and 'moral panic': the case of Italy. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, XVII, 3, 198-210. <https://doi.org/10.7347/RIC-032023-p198>

Corresponding Author: : Stefania Crocitti
email stefania.crocitti@unibo.it

Copyright: © 2023 Author(s). This is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Pensa Multimedia and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia* is the official journal of Italian Society of Criminology.

© The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

Received: 28.07.2023

Accepted: 21.08.2023

Published: 30.09.2023

Pensa MultiMedia
ISSN 1121-1717 (print)
ISSN 2240-8053 (on line)
[doi10.7347/RIC-032023-p198](https://doi.org/10.7347/RIC-032023-p198)

Abstract

American sociological research and prevention policies on youth deviance and juvenile street gangs have a very long tradition. Since the mid-1990s, in some European Countries, youngsters' antisocial behaviors in public spaces gained terrain in criminological studies and on the public and political debates. In Italy, instead, youth has not been traditionally meant as a 'security' problem, but rather as a matter of educational and social policies. In recent years, however, also in the Italian context urban violence of juvenile street groups has become a recurrent topic in media representation, a source of citizens' insecurity and an issue to be solved by local security policies. Even though from classical approaches street gangs appeared as a complex phenomenon (aggregations involved in criminal acts but, at the same time, types of socialization for youth having a migratory background), there is the tendency to describe street groups according to a unitary and criminalizing 'gang' model. The aim of the article is to situate the study of youth street groups within the broader topic of juvenile delinquency in Italy. Moving from how the youth question evolved in Italian debate and policies, socialization practices as well as deviant behaviors of youngster in public spaces are analyzed. The difficulty for young people from the marginal strata to access a structured sociality located in certain urban spaces risks resulting in a subordinate social role and, eventually, in violence as a reaction in search of visibility. The ultimate goal of the article is to provide a reinterpretation of street groups that is not oversimplified and that pays attention to processes of inclusion/exclusion within the social structure, urban space, and the related conflict dynamics.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency, Street Gangs, Moral panic, Urban violence, Security policies

Credit author statement

The article is the result of joint reflections, research activities and writing. Therefore, each paragraph should be attributed to both authors.

Stefania Crocitti, University of Bologna, Department of Legal Sciences | Alessandro Bozzetti, University of Bologna, Department of Political and Social Sciences

Youth deviance, urban security and 'moral panic': the case of Italy

Introduction

The Italian approach to juvenile delinquency has long been considered more lenient than that of other Countries (Nelken, 2005). The broader tendency toward increasing punitiveness that, according to someone (Bailleau and Cartuyvels, 2014), has been related to neo-liberalism – leading to a pronounced dialectic of responsibility, targeting public discourse toward youth groups as a form of 'transfer of anxiety' (Nelken, 2005), and to a zero-tolerance response – had not influenced the juvenile justice system (Pazè, 2013), control agencies and, generally, the public opinion in the Italian context. The public opinion, in particular, seemed to show a 'benevolent tolerance' toward younger offenders (Scatolera, 2004), at least when they do not belong to marginalized social strata. At the beginning, Italian urban insecurity policies do not focus on juvenile antisocial behaviors (but for those linked to alcohol and, to a certain extent, drugs). Security measures targeted other disorderly people, namely homeless and Roma people. However, this approach has changed in recent times (Selmini and Nobili, 2008): media and political debate has focused on youth crime, particularly of juvenile street gangs, activating those mechanisms described as moral panic (Cohen, 1972). Studying youth socialization in urban spaces thus becomes crucial to provide counter-representations to a mediated – and sometimes overly alarmist – reading of the phenomenon.

The article aims to give account on how, in Italy, the juvenile delinquency question changed, not necessarily in the reality of the phenomenon but instead in media representation, citizens' perceptions and policies dealing with troublesome youth. We will resort to juvenile street groups as an example for discussing these changes.

Firstly, we will present criminological approaches to youth deviance and street gangs through a historical excursus of American and European research on juvenile street gangs. Then we will focus on Italian studies on youth deviance and street groups. Aware of the need to move beyond a 'single model' of street gangs (Feixa, 2020) and to take into consideration the complexity of groups, we will discuss Italian official statistics on juvenile delinquency, wondering whether the dominant representation of youth groups as dangerous reflected an increasing number of juvenile offenders. From this contextualization, the succeeding paragraph will investigate the role played by the media in the narrative frame that describes youth street gangs as the new *folk devils* (Cohen, 1972). The final paragraph will reconstruct Italian political responses to juvenile delinquency and youth

urban disorder, focusing on the current tendency to resort to punitive measures for controlling public spaces juvenile groups use as places of socializations. The need to problematize the media reading of the phenomenon and to reformulate social prevention policies, having also a careful look at urban spaces as place of visibility for marginal youth, appears to be a need that can no longer be postponed.

Criminological approaches to youth deviance and street gangs

Juvenile delinquency and youth street groups have been recurrent topics in American criminological research and security policies. Since the mid-1990s, also in some European Countries antisocial behaviors of young people in public spaces gained terrain. In Italy, instead, youth has not been traditionally viewed as a 'security' problem, but rather as a matter of educational and social policies. In recent years, however, in the Italian context there has been a shift in describing youngsters – above all, juvenile street groups – and urban violence as a source of citizens' insecurity and an issue to be dealt with punitive measures.

Thrasher (1927), in the seminal ethnographic study of Chicago, defines juvenile street gangs as composed by youngsters, mostly males with a migrant background, living in the marginal (interstitial) urban areas, resorting to conflict – with other groups and institutions – to find recognition within the social context. Groups develop a marked territorial bond (territoriality) in their residence neighborhood. Violence with other gangs is a way of asserting and defending a space of identity and existence. Later on, Foote Whyte (1943), in his study among street groups in Boston, defines such groups *street corner societies* to focus on how second-generation migrants resort to the group for finding "solidarity ..., protection and identity construction through the sharing of a difficult daily life" (Feixa, 2020, p. 101). Delinquency is episodic, a symbolic solution of adaptation for socially marginalized youth.

In the second half of the last century, American criminologists developed an interpretation of street gangs that "no longer appears to disregard delinquency and violence" (Prina, 2019, p. 44). Malcolm Klein (2001) defines juvenile gangs in New York as characterized by criminal behavior and derives from it both the perception of groups as dangerous to community safety and the legitimation of punitive law enforcement. Crime becomes prevalent, also because Klein's research has been based on data and interviews with police forces.

Another strand of analysis has been developed moving

along the approach of Thrasher and the Chicago School. These studies derive knowledge from qualitative studies, observing juvenile street gangs and giving voice to gang members. Ethnicity and migratory background are confirmed as elements of 'multiple marginalities' (Vigil, 2014) leading to the building of street groups, but also new factors emerge: the role of women (Vigil, 2008); the effects of globalization and new technologies; migrations of gangs together with shared (sub)cultural factors, such as rap music (Hagedorn, 2005; Hazen and Rodgers, 2014). Repressive responses have been questioned: Hagedorn (1998) warns about the risk of institutionalization, that is the result of consolidation of gangs' illegal activity to which the processes of criminalization contribute predominantly. The 'demonization' of groups results to be crucial in strengthening internal cohesion and in transforming them into a security issue. A debate, in fact, emerges also on new definitions. Brotherton (2008) proposes rejecting the term *gangs*, to speak instead of 'street youth organizations', in which criminal behavior is not dominant and coexists with pro-social activities.

The two different models of approaching juvenile street gangs in the American studies¹ influenced criminological scholars when youth groups started to gain visibility in European cities since the mid-1990s. In 1997, following the model that defines street gangs as characterized by territoriality (rooted in a neighborhood) and criminal behaviors as a distinctive trait, the *Eurogang* study group has been built. According to Eurogang, "street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity" (Weerman et al., 2009, p. 20).

This criminalizing view has been widespread in the UK. The debate on youth groups involved in urban riots shadowed social disadvantages to focus on violence of such groups, citizens' insecurity and, consequently, on the need for punitive policies (Andell, 2022). Even though some scholars defined riots as a reaction to the lack of social opportunities (Young, 2003) or linked to street subcultures using public spaces as an 'arena' (Miller, 2020), the dominant political and media discourse described such events as urban violence by "feral youth"², following the punitive response against juvenile antisocial behaviors that, since the '90s, has been at the basis of community safety policies in the UK (Moore, 2012, p. 98).

Differently, street groups have been defined as a 'community of like-minded people' in studies on *Latinos* in Spain and Arabs in France. In an attempt to highlight the distance from the criminalizing model described above, new terms have been coined. Recovering the tradition of

Latin American *pandillas*, 'urban tribe' is used to identify groups, composed by young people living in the suburbs, not characterized by territoriality, but that move throughout the city, prefer socialization places in the city center and, in particular, in the areas of youth entertainment (Feixa, 2020). Interviews with the *Latin Kings and Queens* members in Barcelona highlighted how "Latino youth move through and take possession of Catalan public space by creating and representing an identity ... It does not mean that these youth are members of youth gangs, nor that their attitude or lifestyle is particularly violent or delinquent" (Feixa, Porzio, Canelles and Recio, 2007, p. 54). They are driven by the search for a space "of resistance" in which they could counteract the invisibility - if not discrimination - they experience in daily lives.

Scholars who analyzed ethnic gangs in France (Mansilla, 2021; Mohammed and Oualhaci, 2022) focused on three intertwined factors: migratory processes and the dynamics of migrants' inclusion of second- and third-generation immigrants from the Maghreb, the urban transformations of suburbs, and the media and political construction of street groups in terms of danger to urban security. In tracing the history of youth groups, particular emphasis has been placed on how media representation and local security policies have changed over time. In the 1960s, the *Blousons Noirs* were not street gangs perceived as a security matter, but their "deviance" was defined on a symbolic level as nonconformity. In the following decades, the increasing number of immigrant families and the deteriorating housing conditions in the *banlieues* have led to a dominant narrative of street groups as the result of a "malaise of the suburbs", understood in the terms of an "ethnic-racial otherness" combined with a "socio-economic otherness" (Mohammed and Oualhaci, 2022, p. 320). Juvenile groups lost all character of cultural nonconformity and became manifestations of French violent youngsters with Arab origins. Public and media representations linked violence to an alleged "non-integrability" and help legitimize increasingly punitive urban security policies.

In Italy, traditionally, the youth question has not been considered as a 'security' issue, or as a problem of violence and security in public spaces, but instead as a challenge for social and educational policies, aimed at protecting young people. Since the '90s, however, there seems to be a shift from a picture of youngsters as irresponsible people to be safeguarded, because they can harm themselves (through drug or alcohol abuse), to a picture of violent people being a danger for others and for citizens' security (Selmini and Nobili, 2008, p. 353).

Socio-criminological research on youth have focused mainly on alcohol and drugs, and bullying at school (Baldry and Farrington, 1999) and online (Genta, Brighi and Guarini, 2013). Since the 1990s, the Italian part of the International Self-Reported Delinquency Study (ISRD) has opened the analysis to juvenile delinquency in public space, such as vandalism, also focusing on foreign minors, youth groups and their deviant behavior.

1 Differences are in focus (criminal activity or life experience), in methodology (descriptive and police knowledge-based or ethnographic research) and in intervention proposals (punitive response versus social interventions).
2 In these terms, the then Britain Minister of Justice quoted by McDowell (2012, p. 573).

From the ISRD study results that the migrant background of minors is related “to greater involvement in illegal behavior, although the differences with Italians are rather limited, and in any case much smaller than those found in official crime reports” (Gatti et al., 1994, p. 54). However, from other self-report studies, carried out in the Emilia-Romagna region and specifically oriented to test the relationship between migrant origins and juvenile delinquency, resulted that there was not a strong linkage between being a foreign minor and committing deviant behavior (Melossi, Crocitti, Massa and Gibertoni, 2011; Crocitti, 2011). Unlike the representation of foreign youngsters as at more risk to be involved in crime than Italian minors, having a migrant background does not result to be relevant in explaining youth deviance.

As to juvenile street groups, Italian research has been influenced by both the aforementioned approaches to street gangs. Moving from the Eurogang definition, the ISRD study found that 5.7% of sampled students “have to be considered a *gang member*” (Gatti et al., 2008, p. 56). Furthermore, being involved in illegal activities was higher for youngsters belonging to a group and being a member of a ‘street gang’ leads to an even higher involvement in crime (*ibidem*, p. 57).

Differently from this delinquency focused approach, studies carried out in some Italian cities (Genoa and Milan) in the early 2000s, when Southern-American gangs started to appear in urban places, brought to light a space – called ‘Latin Atlantic’ (Queirolo Palmas, 2010) – in which youngsters with an immigrant background were able to gain visibility and recognition. *Latin Kings and Queens*, *Netas*, *Mara Salvatrucha 13*, *Barrio 18* were portrayed in political and media debate as protagonists of urban disorder and violence. Contrary to this portrayal, ethnographic research displayed that these street organizations, by enacting practices of “defensive resocialization” (Bugli, 2009) from subordinated lives, provide Latin youth with support, identity and protection from exclusion and marginality (Queirolo Palmas, 2009; Grassi, 2021). Social and “political” characters of Latin street organizations have been found to prevail over the dominant narrative as criminal gangs.

Contrary to other European countries mentioned before (e.g. France and the UK), “where the combination “youth violence-urban insecurity” has been widely supported and widespread” (Selmini and Nobili, 2008, p. 365), Italian urban security issues, at the beginning, have focused on other figures of danger, namely immigrants, Roma people and homeless.

In the last decades, however, political and media attention has been devoted toward youth behavior in leisure time places (*ibidem*) and, recently, toward youth street groups – indistinctly referred to as gangs – that occupy public spaces, conflicting with other users of those same spaces (parks, shopping malls, squares). The youth issue as a ‘problem’ has gained terrain on the scene of urban security (and related policies), leading to a change in the institutional response, that from being focused on social

interventions seems to be, today, mostly centered on restraining and punitive measures. Also in Italy, like in other European cities, the link between urban violence and youth street groups has become central in local security policies and in related punitive responses for dealing with juvenile antisocial behaviors.

However, we believe there is an urgent need to counter such a representation of Italian street groups based on a “single model” of juvenile gang, often identified with the criminalizing one that dominates the American tradition, that does not fit the reality of youth socialization. It is important to consider the diversity and complexity of groups, not renouncing to problematize the social factors that are at the origin of these groups, the dynamics within the group, the interactions with peers and other generations, and their practices of protest and resistance, including deviant and violent behavior. All these elements are to be combined in order to make a distinction between *group* delinquency and *gang* delinquency (Mastropasqua, 2013, p. 250)³, and to delinquency not linked to youth aggregations as well. Youth street socialization should be viewed as a *continuum* at opposite ends of which are, on the one hand, delinquent gangs and, on the other hand, recreational aggregations, and in between a “plurality of hybrid groups” (Feixa, 2020, p. 102). Moving from this perspective, the article aims to analyze juvenile delinquency, to describe the multifaceted phenomenon of youth street groups in Italy, and to critically discuss the recent punitive turn in urban security policies targeting youngsters’ antisocial behaviors.

A case study from Italy. Official statistics on juvenile delinquency

Recently, the Italian public and political debate has focused on juvenile delinquency. The visible, disorderly and sometimes deviant presence of young people in the public space is read and discussed through media narratives that, by referring to ‘baby gangs’, highlight the urgency of this phenomenon, particularly evident after the forced retreat caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before discussing the media representation of these dynamics and the characteristics of youth groups in urban context, as well as the nature of their behaviors, we want to describe the broader phenomenon of juvenile delinquency moving from official crime statistics (with all the limitations they present, including the high level of unrecorded crimes, that is those crimes that are not reported by victims or discovered by penal agencies). In Italy, there are no official statistics recording crime perpetrated by gangs, since there is not a specific definition of such

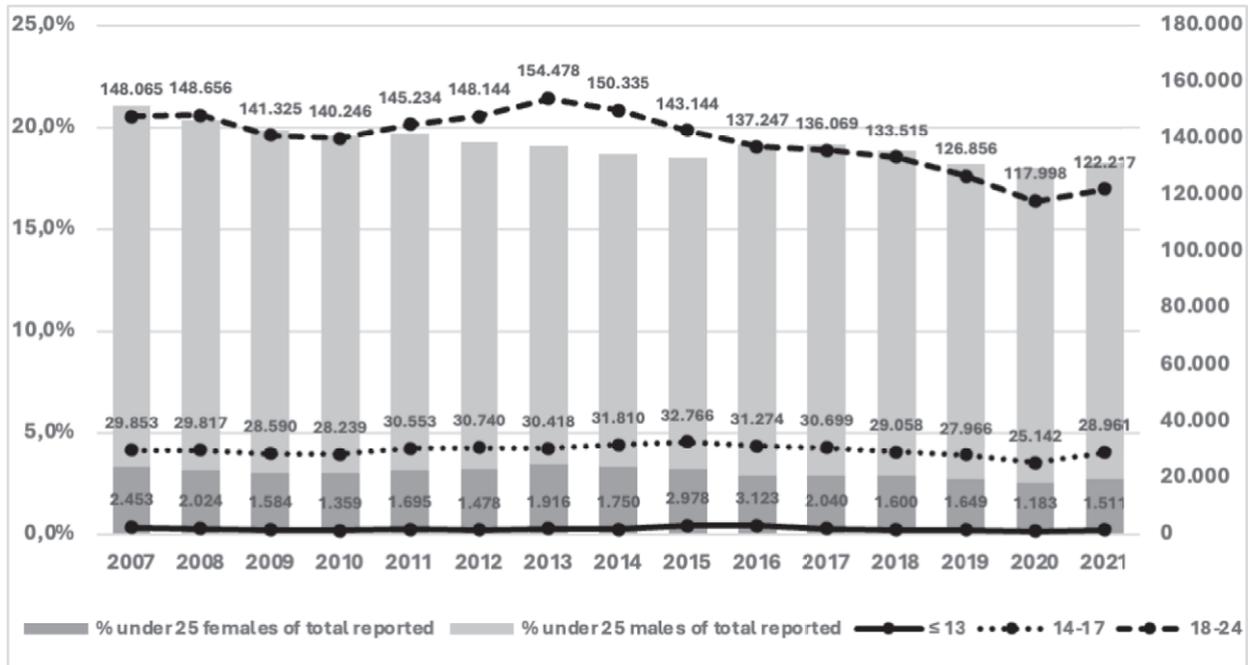
3 By concept of *gangs in process* are designated “street groups ... composed of young people ... in which some members have ties to illegal activities without such activities necessarily forming part of the group’s identity” (Feixa, 2020, p. 101).

groups in Italian penal laws (Prina, 2019). For this reason, in the paragraph, we will rely on data on juvenile delinquency to have some indirect information on youth groups' illegal activities.

The most recent available data by the Ministry of the Interior (2023), and reported by several media in early 2023, would emphasize – after years of decline or, at least, stability – a steady and worrying growth in crimes committed by minors. Considering the pre-Covid situation (year 2019 - the year with the fewest number of minors reported or arrested -, data updated in October) and the first year of the slackening of restrictions imposed by the pandemic (2022, data updated in October), and focusing on crimes characterized by a significant data base, there would have been a significant increase in juveniles reported or arrested for the crimes of culpable injuries (+33.8%), blows (+50.0%), and robberies (+75.3%).

To deeply explore the phenomenon, we need to refer to Istat data (2023) which, although updated to 2021, allow to show a medium-term historical trend starting from 2007. We consider the number of offenders reported by the police to the judicial authority, noting that only 37.5% of crimes are recorded and that in more than 60% of cases the offender is unknown (Prina, 2019).

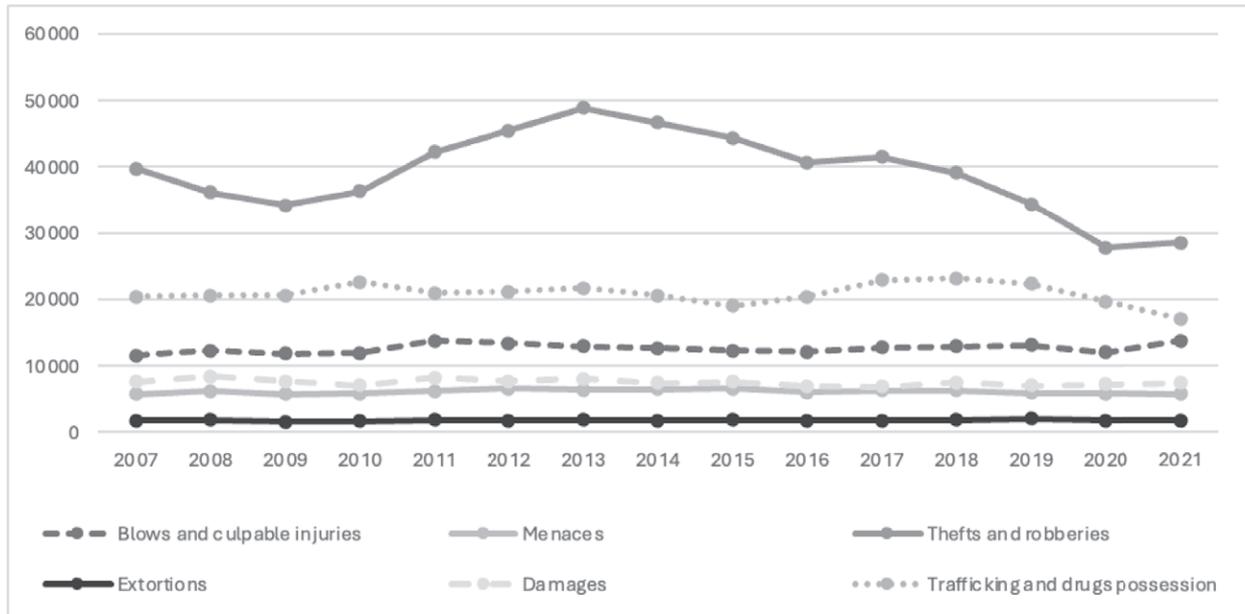
Based on available data, and with the awareness that the years 2020 and 2021 were affected by the pandemic, we can see that the incidence of juvenile crime on the total number of people reported or arrested does not increase, at least until 2021 (see Fig.1). These trends are the same in all three age groups that make up our target population: up to 13 years old, 14-17 years old, and young adults. Figure 1 also highlights female offenders: a minority compared to the male component, and not increasing over time.



Source: Istat data, <http://dati.istat.it/?lang=en&SubSessionId=32c3a186-4070-4518-8882-4d6a8efe941a>, last access 16/05/2023
 Figure 1 Number of offenders (up to 13 years old, 14-17 years old, and 18-24 years old) reported by the police to the judicial authority and breakdown by gender composition.

Figure 2 shows the number of offenders for crimes most attributed to street gang members: no crime among those considered denotes a clear upward trend. Blows and culpable injuries, as well as thefts and robberies, have in-

creased from the previous year, although the latter have not reached pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, other crimes show stable trends.



Source: Istat data, <http://dati.istat.it/?lang=en&SubSessionId=32c3a186-4070-4518-8882-4d6a8efe941a>, last access 16/05/2023
Figure 2 Number of offenders (under 25-years-old) reported by the police to the judicial authority by type of crime

Data closer to what can be considered crimes committed by a gang are those related to co-offense, which see the co-participation of several people in the commission of the same crime. These data should not be understood, uncritically, as gang-related data since most cases see the co-participation of 2 or 3 people, and since neither a territoriality of the actions enacted, nor a temporal continuity, nor, even less, a clear structuring of the group itself is necessarily evident. So, it is difficult to speak of 'youth gangs'. However, the reference to the number of offenders reported for criminal conspiracy (art. 416 of the Criminal Code, excluding art. 416-bis, i.e., mafia criminal organization) is the closest. The percentage of under-25s reported by police on the basis of art. 416 is very low: less than 1 percent of the total number reported for criminal conspiracy, amounting to about 800 reports nationwide, in line with previous years.

The reference to a purely quantitative methodology, mostly based on 'official sources' of penal institutions, to measure the numerosity of groups and the elements that characterize them risks representing youth society as static and predominantly delinquent (Miller, 2020), preventing the analysis of the underlying dynamics of group formation and the valorization of nonconformist but not deviant behaviors. For this reason, given the lack of a legal definition of youth gang and the absence of data to monitor it, some exploratory studies (e.g., Savona, Dugato and Villa, 2022) have attempted to map it on Italian territory on the basis of data collected from "key informants" – mostly law enforcement and social services – and through the systematic analysis of newspapers articles on juvenile gangs.

In the wake of qualitative studies is the research 'Youth

street gangs in Emilia-Romagna between marginality, deviance and urban insecurity' (Selmini and Crocitti, 2022). In Emilia-Romagna, a region of more than 4,400,000 inhabitants located in North-Central Italy, trends in juvenile crime are similar to those highlighted by the Istat data presented earlier. Although less linear than the trend shown – as it is based on a smaller number of cases – until 2021 we cannot speak of an increase in juvenile delinquency at the regional level: the number of under-25s reported, although with some fluctuations, remains stable over years. The research analyzed youth groups' behaviors in public spaces, with a particular focus on crime and deviance, considered by the media to be a cause of urban insecurity, through the view of privileged witnesses – such as school personnel, educators, social workers, representatives of local services, police – and the reconstruction of family, school, economic and social trajectories of the members of so-called *street gangs* (Selmini and Crocitti, 2022). Moving from preliminary results of this research, carried out between 2021 and 2022, the following paragraphs on media representations and juvenile antisocial behavior are developed.

Media representations between crime and moral panic

Youth violence, especially when perpetrated in groups, strongly affects the public perception of safety. The data presented before testify to a presence, albeit not alarming and not increasing over time, of violent behavior among youth. The central question, however, is whether such practices can fit into what the literature considers to be 'youth gang' actions. This is not a mere exercise in defini-

tional style since, as we will discuss in the following paragraphs, such a narrative framework is likely to have effects on institutional responses to juvenile behaviors in public spaces.

In talking about narrative frame, it needs to consider the role of the media in the “proliferation” (Feixa, 2020) of discourses that see youth street gangs as new *folk devils*. For decades now, it has been pointed out that mass media play a role “in defining and shaping social problems: the reporting of certain ‘facts’ can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic” (Cohen, 1972, p. 16). Through this highly symbolic process, media respond to the normative concerns of the public by inserting into the narrative frame certain moral directives that can lead to building of sudden and urgent social problems (*ibidem*). News provided by the media inform us about the normative contours of a society (Erikson, 1966): they make manifest what is right and what is wrong, the boundaries not to be crossed, the forms the *devil* can take. And this narrative, initially passed down orally to a limited number of people, reaches an increasingly wide audience through mass media and, today, through social networks.

The role played by the media is therefore crucial: the framing of the dynamics we are focusing on, which attributes to ‘baby-gangs’ (like juvenile street groups are called by Italian media) any conflictual event in public space in which young people are involved, contributes to creating a social climate of intolerance and fear, even if official crime statistics do not justify such alarm. Considering as ‘baby gang’ actions all events that can be framed in a different way – e.g., disorder, protest or urban violence – reinforces the visibility of the phenomenon, giving room for emulative behavior and contributing to strengthening the sense of belonging and the process of building a “gang” identity, even when this gang does not exist, or does not yet exist.

In other words, while much of the knowledge of the phenomenon comes from the media, research shows that this knowledge is often distorted: if “the media create sub-cultures in the process of naming them and draw boundaries around them in the act of describing them” (Thornton, 1995, p. 162), thinking of strictly criminal policies in response to these dynamics seems wholly inadequate, tending to “demonize” social groups and giving rise to “periodic waves of moral panic” (Feixa, 2020, p. 20).

Defining characteristics of the moral panic allows us, in the next section, to understand how this is applied toward the youth population. According to Cohen (1972, p. 9), moral panic occurs when “a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests”. A social fact, often already present, is then transformed into a public policy issue upon which feelings of concern and condemnation are poured by a public opinion conditioned by media and

politicians, who assume the role of ‘moral entrepreneurs’ by activating conflicts against easily identifiable scapegoats.

Such moral politics, inextricably intertwined with the interests of the dominant classes, plays a significant role in contemporary society: scholars have mostly interpreted them through the lens of the *elite-engineered model* (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts, 1978), according to which moral panic is the conscious result of campaigns constructed to divert attention from the real social crises inherent in the capitalist system, or through the *interest group model* (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994), according to which it is the unintended result of moral crusades undertaken by particular interest groups in an attempt to draw public attention to a specific set of actions.

Contemporary societies seem to be characterized by an endemic crisis on the economic-social level, cause of increasingly harsh conflicts. Given the difficulties of resolving such critical issues but, at the same time, considering the need to reassure public opinion, moral entrepreneurs need to make their voices heard. The reference to the need to enact expected, disciplined, ‘decorous’ behavior within the urban context can be interpreted in this way. And which populations are the easiest to discipline and punish? Those that are immediately visible, occupying public space inappropriately. Also because of the absence – already pointed out – of official data that can delineate the phenomenon, the narrative provided by the media contributes to determining the emergence of feelings of insecurity and fear toward youngsters who choose urban place to meet and socialize.

Once thought to be the unintended outcome of journalistic practices, moral panic would become a goal of daily news reporting (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995): once a person – or a group – is identified as a threat to social values or interests, it is described in a simple and easily understandable way that is useful in creating opposition that causes a response from authorities and policymakers. Such stereotyping has some effects: the exaggeration of certain characteristics of individuals or groups, useful to the narrative, can lead the folk devils to perceive themselves as more deviant (Wilkins, 1964). Such labeling would lead them to commit further deviant behavior, justifying and confirming the moral characteristics attributed to them, thus giving rise to a vicious cycle that is difficult to stop except through the criminal justice intervention.

Another characteristic peculiar to moral panics is their volatility. Populations targeted by moral entrepreneurs (e.g., migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, and now young people), receive attention in the press and are the subject of repressive policies for a few times, only to disappear as quickly as they appeared (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009). The ‘volatility of moralization’ (Hier, 2008) means that sensational discourses that articulate moral transgressions skyrocket suddenly, tend to be temporally limited, and run out rather quickly because public interest wanes or because they are replaced by other issues. Since volatile

4 “Pinot” refers to the average police officer working on the streets.

moralizing discourses would be localized manifestations of cultural representation patterns endemic to both media and society (Watney, 1987), episodes of moral panic would be ordinary rather than exceptional outcomes.

A firm point is that moral panic arises from a complex chain of social interactions involving claims-makers, moral guardians and the media, in order to reproduce structures of domination (Hier, 2008). In other words, news is not itself a creation of the media; rather, the media reflect pre-existing relations of domination (Hall et al., 1978). The media portrayal of youth gangs draws its main information source from institutions: news is taken from the police reports, thematic insights are based on the viewpoints of politicians and administrators. A narrative designed to reaffirm the stereotype of youth dangerousness only creates a strong interpretive circularity: mass media contribute to the 'hypervisibility' and 'spectacularization' of street groups through images narrated by others, that risk fostering the stereotype of the public enemy (Queirolo Palmas et al., 2021). In contrast, interpretations provided by associationism and social volunteering are rarely present, and there is almost no space for youngsters' voices.

To get a complete picture of the phenomenon, it is therefore necessary to explore the characteristics of youth groups, their interaction in the urban space and the dynamics of conflict and violence that may emerge within it moving from the standpoint of privileged witnesses who are in close contact with street groups. These insights can help us understand the reasons why, after years of a more protective approach toward youth in Italy (Nelken, 2005), there has been a moral panic toward it and the resort to punitive measures against juvenile antisocial behaviors.

Marginal youngsters' antisocial behaviors in public spaces

Urban space, far from being a neutral arena, is a site of claims based on interests and power relations (Valentine, 1996). The urban environment reflects existing social hierarchies and conflicts concerning the right to the city that emerge among the different populations living in it (Bauböck, 2003). Scholars of critical urbanism have argued that cities have been defined and are still structured around an idea of the adult, white, middle-aged, middle-class citizen (Carroll, Calder-Dawe, Witten and Asiasiga, 2019). Conversely, ideas of city developed and enacted by marginal groups – including the youth population – are often ignored, rejected, or actively stigmatized.

In the struggle for urban space, young people are a highly visible social group: public space is for them a place where they can express their voice, carry out specific performances, or simply meet and socialize. Through its domestication – understood as a form of appropriation that escapes adult control (Lieberg, 1995) – certain parts of the city (parks, neighborhoods, but also benches or terminuses of public transports) take on a special significance

for them, becoming habitual places of intimacy and rootedness (Cresswell, 2009; De Luigi, Piro, Reutlinger and Zimmermann, 2020).

However, youth access to urban space is hindered by several barriers. On the one hand, from an economic point of view, youth usually have few resources for market access: since they cannot own, alter, or rent private property, they can only choose, use, and occupy the property of others (Childress, 2004). On the other hand, young people are often bearers and experimenters of ways of using spaces in innovative forms compared to the way the spaces were originally conceived, as well as of behaviors and relational styles judged inappropriate by adults (Matthews, Taylor, Percy-Smith and Limb, 2000).

Intergenerational conflict thus seems to be a useful interpretive lens of the presence of youth in public space. In particular, adult society aims to exclude youth from it or, at least, to control its activities by hiding it or confining it into designated spaces that enjoy institutional and symbolic legitimacy, while directing participation toward predefined tracks. When juvenile behaviors do not fall within these standards, they risk being labelled as source of moral panic.

The empirical research shows a composite picture of juvenile street groups, often far from the media representation conveyed by the term baby gang. The youth aggregations examined in the research carried out in Emilia-Romagna region are characterized by a fluid and heterogeneous nature – thus, cannot be defined as gangs, lacking those typical traits that, according to scholars (Hagedorn, 1998; Klein, 2001; Thrasher, 1927), distinguish these groups, such as territoriality, systematic involvement in crime of most members, and a well-defined structure.

Although the groups examined share a common living area, they are extremely mobile within the city and are not characterized by a specific territoriality: they move around the city in search of spaces 'to be' in order to spend leisure time in an informal, unstructured way. However, these spaces are designed for the enjoyment of a well-selected public, composed mainly of adult citizens and consumers. For young people from the marginal classes, the limited opportunities to use public spaces and the almost obligatory positioning in peripheral (and invisible) areas of cities reflect and amplify their subordinate role within society. Thus, there emerges a need for visibility, a desire to be in the same places of leisure as their peers. There is something symbolic, for example, about meeting in a shopping mall or 'occupying' the city center: these are the quintessential places of consumption and opportunity, from which many of the young people in these groups feel excluded but want to be part of (McDonald, 2003).

Urban centers, in particular, represent the showcases of cities, and this is precisely why they are chosen by juvenile groups seeking a space of visibility and recognition. Additionally, the scarcity of available urban places means that these must be shared with other generations, particularly older ones: interactions between generations can become problematic when spaces are used in different

ways that are – or are perceived to be – incompatible.

The socialization practices of groups consist, in most cases and most of the time, of relational, recreational, and playful activities: whether in a square, a park, downtown streets, entertainment areas or shopping malls, young people construct and experience their identity within a group of peers. A characteristic of informal groups is the use of public spaces as “uncontrolled” places, where activities are “unstructured” and occur without adult supervision. This lack of control is, in itself, likely to be portrayed as a dangerous trait, regardless of the enactment of deviant or criminal behavior: the mere presence of a street group is perceived as a cause of insecurity. Highly patrolled cities and strict regulations on urban decorum also reflect an adult perspective on urban citizenship that stigmatizes youth practices – such as gathering in large numbers, playing music in a park, or even doing nothing in a square – as antisocial behavior (Massey, 2007; Walther, Batsleer, Loncle and Pohl, 2020).

Young people who are part of street groups construct their identity in constant interaction with the peers and other generations, using urban places as an arena to emerge from invisibility, satisfy relational and leisure needs, and gain a space within cities and society (Miller, 2020). Street subcultures combine ways of using urban spaces that are both an expression and a search for identity, albeit sometimes with marked traits of nonconformity and violent rebellion. Young people from the peripheral segments of the population, who do not find in the urban context a space in which to spend their free time, who do not have the opportunity to access the leisure places of their peers, and who do not have a role within society except in a marginal position, may react with deviant and violent behavior. In this sense, youth group violence can be interpreted in relation to the dynamics of tension and conflict between different generations and between peers in public spaces: to escape the invisibility of their life trajectories and exclusion and stigmatization by the ‘established group’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965), marginal youth resort to disorderly, unseemly, disruptive, even deviant and criminal behaviors.

To refer to these groups, in which criminal activity is not dominant but coexists with other community activities, we therefore want to reject, along the lines of Brotherton (2008), the concept of ‘street gangs’ to speak, rather, of ‘street youth organizations’. The risk, otherwise, is that a short-circuit is created between the lack of a role for youth in the urban space and, more generally, in society, the nonconformist and deviant practices of juvenile groups, the representation of such groups as ‘dangerous’, and the punitive reaction of control agencies, with the risk of reinforcing the protest identity within the group, transforming it into a ‘heroic subculture’ in opposition to the dominant culture (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003), and causing youth to adhere to such a ‘public stereotype of dangerousness’ by developing criminal careers.

These dynamics are made more complex by the potential that social networks offer in terms of visibility of

behavior, providing an additional stage for acts of distinction and rebellion. The growing spread of social networks has profoundly altered youth sociality and its spaces (Boyd, 2007), making groups fluid in composition, occasional in meeting and neither territorial nor settled in their choice of gathering places. The identity construction that characterizes youth aggregations has found an additional stage than urban places. The dynamics of group interaction and socialization are now played out in both real and virtual spaces (Schroeder, 2002). The virtual stage is not only alternative to physical places but becomes complementary: actions seem to acquire greater significance as they can be ‘showcased’ and disseminated through social networks to gain visibility and popularity.

Moreover, the audience that attends such performance is changing and expanding (Hodkinson, 2017; Hogan, 2010): if until a few years ago virtual content was disseminated mostly within an inner circle of people who also knew each other offline, today digital platforms allow words and images to be spread to an audience composed of unknown people. Through social media, style and cultural patterns are spread and can lead to emulation, and the same is for deviant forms of rebellion (Lim, 2013; Patton et al., 2014).

The Internet, on the one hand, amplifies the visibility of actions and allows a need for individual performance to be satisfied, while, on the other hand, it risks triggering a competition that requires performing increasingly spectacular actions to obtain and maintain that visibility (Storrod and Densley, 2017). Social media, especially for those young people who come from marginal trajectories, become a tool to break out of insignificance and cultivate expectations of social improvement if the opportunities for upward mobility are not provided by the society itself.

Finally, we cannot overlook the effect that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on young people. Increasing socioeconomic disparities, insecurity, feelings of loneliness and anger are some of the key words, highlighted by several surveys (Cooper et al., 2021; RER, 2021), that characterized youth conditions during the pandemic period and were also risk factors for violent behavior once they regained access to urban spaces. In particular, anger would be linked to situations of distress that, if not experienced through closure and social withdrawal, can be projected outward, even violently. What institutional responses can be put in place to deal with such manifestations?

Youth, urban disorder and the institutional response

In Italy, until few decades ago, youth deviance pertained exclusively to social policies and preventive measures; also the juvenile criminal justice system has been shaped in such a way to protect youngsters in their growth process.

The 1988 law on juvenile criminal trial, Juvenile Penal Institutions and the Juvenile Court (established in 1934 to decide on all proceedings that concern those who have not reached the majority age) are based on the principle

of the ‘best interest of the child’, leading to limit the juvenile’s stay in the criminal system in the shortest possible time, in order to avoid the effects of stigmatization, and, in some circumstances, setting back punitive needs of the State in the face of the child’s priority social recovery.

It is the socialization paradigm that characterizes the State’s response, with the obligation to modulate the penal reaction by resorting to the sanction most suitable for educating children. The restitutive paradigm has also been affirmed, recognizing centrality to the reparation of the damage caused to the victim or the community, and to mediation, through which the juvenile is able to understand the disvalue of his/her behavior (Pazè, 2013). In line with these principles, the Italian juvenile justice has made extensive use of probation (Pulvirenti, 2012, p. 390).

Scholars who studied the Italian or foreign nationality of juveniles entering the criminal justice system have, however, highlighted some aspects. Principles that inspired the 1988 reform, based on the “rapid exit of the child from the penal circuit” and the “residual nature of detention” (Mastropasqua and Colla, 2009, p. 11) have not been applied, in general, to foreign youth (Campesi, Re and Torrente, 2009) and, in particular, to ‘unaccompanied foreign minors’ and Roma people (Mastropasqua, 2013, p. 249).

Data on penal institutions “show the existence of differentiated forms of control depending on the social groups to which minors ... belong (Italians, Roma people, immigrants)” (Favretto, Scarscelli and Scivoletto, 2010, p. 223). In the last years, the total number of minors in prison decreased – it was 474 in 2010 and 316 in 2022 – whereas the percentage of foreign inmates showed an increase from 34.8% in 2010 to 44.3% in 2022⁴. Therefore, the juvenile justice “is characterized by a ‘double criminal trial’, one for Italian minors, the other for members of the categories considered more socially dangerous (Roma people and immigrants), ... thus coming to determine a scenario in which it is still possible to use the classic image of ‘unequal law’” (*ibidem*, 2010).

In the last decades, a punitive turn involved all youth, together with the stigmatization and low tolerance toward street groups and urban violence described above. Youth behavior in public spaces has become an issue to be addressed not only through social policies but (also and especially) through security policies. Citizens’ perceptions and demands for local government to ensure order in public spaces enter the urban security debate and agenda. Physical and social decay become the main source of concern of local communities.

In 2008, the power of mayors to issue ‘ordinances’ that provide an administrative sanction for those who engage in behavior that disturbs urban safety was strengthened

(Crocitti and Selmini, 2017). In the aftermath of the reform, the main two areas of intervention have been the prohibition of street prostitution and the prohibition of alcohol consumption in public spaces (Cittalia and Anci, 2009). The latter (so-called ordinances *antimovida*) ban antisocial behaviors in leisure places (and provide penalties for violations) targeting also youth socialization.

In 2017, tools for controlling entertainment venues become more punitive. Those who engage in antisocial behavior resulting from drunkenness and disturbance in leisure time places may receive an *order of removal* from those places (lasting 48 hours), and a concomitant administrative penalty. Repetition of the behavior may result in the issuing by the police of a *ban* from the places for a longer period (until two years). Since 2018, violation of such a ban is punished as a crime.

Urban security policies have outlined a ‘punitive administrative law’ (Ruga Riva, 2008) functional to repressive and securitarian goals. On the one hand, the new measures have contributed to spreading “a culture of punitiveness”, raising the “threshold of intolerance” and legitimizing “punitive attitudes in public opinion” (Selmini, 2020, p. 130). On the other hand, municipal punitive law has widened the net of criminalization, sanctioning behaviors that, although criminally lawful, are perceived as a danger for the decorum of cities.

These changes have affected juvenile behavior in public spaces and youth street groups, legitimizing, by virtue of the alleged dangerousness of such groups, fueled by alarmist media portrayals, preventive police checks at entertainment venues and the use of bans on access to such venues.

Emblematic of the punitive turn is the so-called crime of *rave parties* introduced in 2022 in the Italian penal code (article 633 bis). The punished behavior is “to organize or promote the arbitrary invasion of other people’s land or buildings, public or private, in order to organize a musical gathering or other entertainment purpose”. Recalling that youth groups use public spaces as a “scene”, a stage to have visibility and recognition (Pitti and Tuorto, 2021, p. 62), the criminalization of rave parties falls within a security ‘drift’ of urban control instruments against cultural and nonconformist expressions.

Conclusions

Over the last decades, public and political debate on juvenile delinquency has lost the traditional benevolent tolerance toward younger offenders. Even youth socialization in public spaces has changed, also because different are the places of entertainment and different are the modes of consumption for leisure time purposes. Unchanged, however, are social and economic disadvantages experienced by marginal youngsters behaving disorderly in public space or belonging to street groups.

A first finding of our analysis is the fluid nature of contemporary juvenile aggregations, most of which cannot be

4 Data are by Istat and by research reports available on <https://www.ragazzidentro.it/i-numeri-degli-istituti-penali-per-i-minorenni/> and <https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2022/02/11/giustizia-minorile/>.

defined as 'street gangs', lacking those features typical of gangs (organized structure, territoriality, systematic involvement in criminal activities). Street youth groups are characterized by forms of peer sociality that occur outside institutional contexts (family, school) and structured cultural, recreational and sports activities. Such spontaneous aggregations in 'unsupervised' spaces can sometimes be perceived as a danger to urban safety (Massey, 2007) and are often framed in the media narrative as 'baby-gangs', fostering punitive responses against them. However, such moral panic and following repressive measures are not effective. All the research on gangs shows that stigmatization and repression risk making the group more cohesive, amplifying involvement in delinquent activities and their progression to more serious crime, also because they lead to an increase of the 'us' versus 'them' attitude. Therefore, the Italian current tendency toward repressive measures should be reduced as much as possible, to prevent the problem from becoming much more serious in the long run, and the potential violence of some of these groups from spreading. Similar conclusions can be drawn on criminalization through media representations. The media framing of the problem, which defines 'baby-gangs' as almost every incident in public space in which more than one young person is involved, contributes to creating a social climate of insecurity and moral panic toward youth. This representation gives space for emulative behavior and, like the punitive response, helps reinforce a sense of belonging and the process of building a 'gang' identity.

Italian prevention policies concerning youth should be reshaped in order to foster social interventions (involving families, schools, community organizations) and the building of physical spaces where also marginal youngsters can have visibility. It is true that conflictual dynamics, well known in other Countries, started to appear in Italian cities and to acquire centrality as urban security issues. However, juvenile violence and antisocial behavior have something symbolic, for example, in meeting in a shopping mall, or in 'invading' the city center: these are the places of consumption par excellence from which many of the young people we are talking about feel excluded, but of which they want to be part. Most of the juvenile groups are not neighborhood-based, they move around the city looking for places presented to youth as *the* space of inclusion. But leisure spaces are designed for the enjoyment of a single, well-selected audience, made up mainly of consumers. Therefore, juvenile deviance and violence in public spaces may be interpreted as a reaction to marginality in search of recognition. To prevent juvenile delinquency, thus, an effort to rethink social interventions and urban place management strategies to support and give space even to a minority group of youngsters – but one that requires visibility – should be made.

References

- Andell, P. (2022). Utilizing Southern criminology in the global North: applying Southern criminology to over-standings of English gang research. In D.C. Brotherton & R. Jose Gude (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Gang Studies* (pp. 3-15). London and New York: Routledge.
- Bailleau, F., & Cartuyvels, Y. (2014). Juvenile justice in Europe: between continuity and changes. In S. Body-Gendrot, M. Hough, K. Kerezsi, R. Lévy, S. Snacken (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of European Criminology* (pp. 453-469). London and New York: Routledge.
- Baldry, A.C., & Farrington, D. (1999). Types of bullying among Italian School children. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22(3), 423-442. doi: 10.1006/jado.1999.0234.
- Baubock, R. (2003). Reinventing urban citizenship. *Citizenship studies*, 7(2), 139-160. doi: 10.1080/1362102032000065946.
- Boyd, D. (2007). Why youth (heart) social network sites: the role of networked publics. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* (pp. 119-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brotherton, D.C. (2008). Beyond social reproduction: Bringing resistance back in gang theory. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12(1), 55-77. doi: 10.1177/1362480607085794.
- Brotherton, D.C., & Barrios, L. (2004). *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation. Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bugli, V. (2009). Diventare latinos e latinas a Milano. In L.M. Visconti & E.M. Napolitano (Eds.), *Cross generation marketing* (pp. 303-325). Milano: Egea.
- Campesi, G., Re, L., & Torrente, G. (Eds.). (2009). *Dietro le sbarre e oltre. Due ricerche sul carcere in Italia*. Torino: L'Harmattan Italia.
- Caroll, P., Calder-Dawe, O., Witten, K., & Asiasiga, L. (2018). A prefigurative politics to play in public places: children claim their democratic right to the city through play. *Space and Culture*, 22(3), 294-307. doi: 10.1177/1206331-218797546.
- Childress, H. (2004). Teenagers, territory and the appropriation of space. *Childhood*, 11(2), 195-205. doi: 10.1177/0907568204043056.
- Cittalia & Anci (2009). *Oltre le ordinanze. I sindaci e la sicurezza urbana*. Roma: Cittalia.
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cooper, K., Hards, E., Moltrecht, B., Reynolds, S., Shum, A., McElroy, E., & Loades, M. (2021). Loneliness, social relationships, and mental health in adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 289, 98-104. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2021.04.016.
- Cresswell, T. (2009). *Place. A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Crocitti, S. (2011). I minori stranieri e italiani tra scuola, lavoro e devianza: un'indagine di self-report. *Studi sulla questione criminale*, 1, 65-106. doi: 10.7383/70747.
- Crocitti, S., & Selmini, R. (2017). Controlling Immigrants: The latent function of Italian Administrative Orders. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 23(1), 99-114. doi: 10.1007/s10610-016-9311-4.
- De Luigi, N., Piro, V., Reutlinger, C., & Zimmermann, D. (2020). Making a home in the city. How young people take part in the urban space. In A. Walther, J. Batsleer, P. Loncle, & A. Pohl (Eds.), *Young People and the Struggle for Partici-*

- patation. *Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies in Public Spaces* (pp. 97-112). London and New York: Routledge.
- Elias, N., & Scotson, J.L. (1965). *The Established and the Outsiders: a sociological enquiry into community problems*. London: Frank Cass & co.
- Erikson, K. T. (1966). *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: John Wiley.
- Favretto, A. R., Scarscelli, D., & Scivoletto, C. (2010). Carriere morali e costruzione di identità nel carcere minorile: un'ipotesi di ricerca. *Minorigiustizia*, 1, 216-227. doi: 10.3280/MG2010-001021.
- Feixa, C. (2020). *Oltre le bande. Saggi sulle culture giovanili*. Roma: DeriveApprodi.
- Feixa, C., Porzio, L., Canelles, N., & Recio, C. (2007). Giovani e 'bande' latine a Barcellona. *Fantasma, presenze, spettri. Mondi Migranti*, 1(1), 46-61.
- Foot, E. (1943). *Street Corner Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gatti, U., Caccavale, F., Ciliberti, R., Ciraso, G., Focardi, M., Romano, C.A., & Battista, G. (2008). La delinquenza minorile auto rilevata in Italia: entità del fenomeno e fattori di rischio. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, 1, 44-47.
- Gatti, U., Fossa G., Lusetti E., Marugo M.I., Russo G., Traverso G.B. (1994). La devianza "nascosta" dei giovani. Una ricerca sugli studenti di tre città italiane. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, 2, 247-267.
- Genta, M.L., Brighi, A., & Guarini A. (2013). *Cyberbullismo: ricerche e strategie di intervento*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Goode, E., & Ben-Yuhda, N. (1994). *Moral Panics: the social construction of deviance*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Grassi, P. (2021). (Trans)gangs in Milan: Re-socializing migration experiences in the richest Italian city. In L. Queirolo Palmas, E. Ballesté, P. Grassi, J.C. Mansilla, M. Oliver, K. Núñez & C. Feixa (Eds.), *Transgang. Researching Youth Street Groups in Southern Europe* (pp. 123-149). Retrieved from https://repositori.upf.edu/bitstream/handle/10230/52460/TRANSGANG_WP06.1_TransgangsEurope.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.
- Hagedorn, J.M. (1998). Gang Violence in the Postindustrial Era. *Crime & Justice*, 24, 365-419.
- Hagedorn, J.M. (2008). *A World of Gang. Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Hazen, J.M. & Rodgers, D. (2014). *Global Gangs. Street Violence Across the World*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Hier, S.P. (2008). Thinking Beyond Moral Panic: Risk, Responsibility, and the Politics of Moralization. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12(2), 173-190. doi: 10.1177/1362480608089239.
- Hodkinson, P. (2017). Bedrooms and beyond: Youth, identity and privacy on social network sites. *New media & society*, 19(2), 272-288. doi: 10.1177/1461444815605454.
- Hogan, B. (2010). The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(6), 377-386. doi: 10.1177/0270467610385893.
- Istat (2023). *Justice and Security Data*. Retrieved from <http://dati.istat.it/?lang=en&SubSessionId=339b4962-ada0-4b74-ab15-0831082807e8>.
- Klein, M.W., Kerner, H.J., Maxson, C.L., & Weitekamp, E.G.M. (Eds.). (2001). *The Eurogang paradox: Street gangs and youth groups in the U.S. and Europe*. Amsterdam: Kluwer Press.
- Lieberg, M. (1995). Teenagers and public space. *Communication Research*, 22(6), 720-744. doi: 10.1177/009365095-022006008.
- Lim, S.S. (2013). On mobile communication and youth "deviance": Beyond moral, media and mobile panics. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), 96-101. doi: 10.1177/2050157912459503.
- Mansilla, J.C. (2021). Youth street gangs in Marseille: Ethnicity, social mediation and multigenerational spaces. In L. Queirolo Palmas et al. (Eds.), *TRANSGANG. Researching Youth Street Groups in Southern Europe. TRANSGANG Working Papers 6.1* (pp. 73-122). Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra & European Research Council.
- Massey, J. (2007). Young People and the 'Right' to the City. *The international Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nation*, 7(3), 241-251. doi: 10.18848/1447-9532/CGP/v07i03/39402.
- Mastropasqua, I. (2013). I ragazzi stranieri nel sistema della giustizia minorile italiana. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, 4(13), 243-255.
- Mastropasqua, I., & Colla, E. (2009). Prefazione: il ruolo della Giustizia minorile e la dimensione socio-educativa della risposta penale. In G. Campesi, L. Re, & G. Torrente (Eds.), *Dietro le sbarre e oltre. Due ricerche sul carcere in Italia* (pp. 9-16). Torino: L'Harmattan Italia.
- Matthews, H., Taylor, M., Percy-Smith, B., & Limb, M. (2000). The unacceptable flaneur: The shopping mall as a teenage hangout. *Childhood*, 7(3), 279-294. doi: 10.1177/09075-68200007003003.
- McDonald, K. (2003). Marginal Youth, Personal Identity, and the Contemporary Gang: Reconstructing the Social World?. In L. Kontos, D. Brotherton, & L. Barrios (Eds.), *Gangs and Society. Alternative perspectives* (pp. 62-74). New York: Columbia University Press.
- McDowell, L. (2012). Post-crisis, post-Fordist and post-gender? Youth identities in an era of austerity. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(5), 573-590. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.671933.
- McRobbie, A., & Thornton, S.L. (1995). Rethinking "Moral Panic" for Multi-Mediated Social Worlds. *British Journal of Sociology*, 46(4), 559-574. doi: 10.2307/591571.
- Melossi, D., Crocitti, S., Massa, E., & Gibertoni, D. (2011). *Devianza e immigrazione: una ricerca nelle scuole dell'Emilia-Romagna*. Quaderni di Città Sicure n. 37.
- Miller, J. (2020). Passing on gang culture in the theatre of the streets: 'They'll grow out of it, then our age will grow into it and then we'll grow out of it'. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(8), 1086-1101. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2019.1655534.
- Ministry of the Interior (2023). *Consuntivo 2022. Analisi criminale*. Retrieved from https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-12/consuntivo_annuale_2022_sacoscad_28-12-22.pdf.
- Mohammed, M., & Oualhaci, A. (2022). Race and youth gangs in France: Denial, ambiguity, and recognition. In D.C. Brotherton & R. Jose Gude (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Gang Studies* (pp. 316-327). London and New York: Routledge.
- Moore, S. (2012). Comunità contraddittorie: i casi di "Street Life People", "Neighbourhood Policing" e "The Community". In S. Arsani & S. Crocitti (Eds.), *Modelli e strumenti per la prevenzione della criminalità. Riflessioni sulle politiche locali di sicurezza* (pp. 97-119). Bologna: Quaderni Città Sicure n. 40.
- Nelken, D. (2005). When is a society non-punitive? The Italian case. In J. Pratt, D. Brown, M. Brown, S. Hallsworth & W.

- Morrison (Eds.), *The New Punitiveness. Trends, theories, perspectives* (pp. 218-235). Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing.
- Patton, D.U., Hong, J.S., Ranney, M., Patel, S., Kelley, C., Eschmann, R., & Washington, T. (2014). Social Media as a Vector for Youth Violence: A Review of the Literature. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 548-553. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.043.
- Pazè, P. (2013). Il sistema della giustizia penale minorile in Italia. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, VII(4), 277-285.
- Pitti, I., & Tuorto, D. (2021). *I giovani nella società contemporanea. Identità e trasformazioni*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Prina, F. (2019). *Gang giovanili. Perché nascono, chi ne fa parte, come intervenire*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Pulvirenti, A. (2012). Il giudizio e le impugnazioni. In AA.VV. (Eds.), *La giustizia penale minorile: formazione, devianza, diritto e processo* (pp. 355-464). Milano: Giuffrè.
- Queirolo Palmas, L. (Ed.). (2009). *Dentro le gang. Giovani, migranti e nuovi spazi sociali*. Verona: Ombre Corte.
- Queirolo Palmas, L. (2010). *Atlantico latino: gang giovanili e culture transnazionali*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Queirolo Palmas, L., Balleste, E., Grassi, P., Mansilla, J., Oliver, M., Nunez, K., & Feixa, C. (2021). *Researching Youth Street Groups in Southern Europe*. Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, European Research Council.
- Regione Emilia-Romagna - RER (2021). *Noi, al tempo della Pandemia. Essere adolescenti in Emilia-Romagna*. Retrieved from <https://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/documentazione/pubblicazioni/prodotti-editoriali/2021/noi-al-tempo-della-pandemia-essere-adolescenti-in-emilia-romagna-nel-2021>.
- Ruga Riva, C. (2008). Il lavavetri, la donna col burqa e il Sindaco. Prove atecniche di "diritto penale municipale". *Rivista Italiana di Diritto e Procedura Penale*, 133-148.
- Savona E, Dugato M., & Villa, E. (2022). *Le gang giovanili in Italia*. Transcrime Research Brief n. 3. Retrieved from: <https://www.transcrime.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Le-gang-giovanili-in-Italia.pdf>.
- Scatolera, D. (2004). Devianza Minorile e Coercizione Personale. *Questione Giustizia*, 2-3, 397-411.
- Schroeder, R. (Ed.). (2002). *The Social Life of Avatars. Presence and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments*. Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Selmini, R. (2020). *Dalla sicurezza urbana al controllo del dissenso politico. Una storia del diritto amministrativo punitivo*. Roma: Carocci.
- Selmini, R., & Nobili, G.G. (2008). La questione giovanile. Nuove forme di controllo nelle occasioni di divertimento. *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, V, 353-366.
- Storrod, M.L., & Densley, J.A. (2017). 'Going viral' and 'Going country': the expressive and instrumental activities of street gangs on social media. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(6), 677-696. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2016.1260694.
- Thornton, S. (1995). *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Thrasher, F.M. (1927). *The Gang. A study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Valentine, G. (1996). Children should be seen and not heard: the public production and transgression of adult's public space. *Urban Geography*, 17, 205-220. doi: 10.2747/0272-3638.17.3.205.
- Vigil, J.D. (2008). Female Gang Members from East Los Angeles. *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, 1(1), 47-74. Retrieved from: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijisi/issue/17826/186937>.
- Vigil, J.D. (2014). Cholo!: The Migratory Origins of Chicano Gangs in Los Angeles. In J.M. Hazen & D. Rodgers D. (Eds.), *Global Gangs. Street Violence Across the World* (pp. 49-64). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Walther, A., Batsleer, J., Loncle, P., & Pohl, A. (Eds.). (2020). *Young People and the Struggle for Participation. Contested Practices, Power and Pedagogies in Public Spaces*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Watney, S. (1987). *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*. England: Comedia.
- Weerman, F.M., Maxson, C. L., Esbensen, F., Aldridge, J., Medina, & J. van Gemert, F. (2009). *Eurogang Program Manual. Background, development, and use of the Eurogang instruments in multi-site, multi-method comparative research*. Retrieved from <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/uk-ac-man-scw:58536>.
- Weinzierl, R., & Muggleton, D. (2003). What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?. In D. Muggleton & R. Weinzierl (Eds.), *The Post-Subcultures Reader* (pp. 3-26), Oxford-New York: Berg.
- Wilkins, L.T. (1964). *Social Deviance*. London: Tavistock.
- Young, J. (2003). To these wet and windy shores. Recent immigration policy in the UK. *Punishment & Society*, 5(4), 449-462. doi: 10.1177/14624745030054005.