INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN TIME PERSPECTIVE

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Chapter 5
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOURS IN ADOLESCENCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HISTORY,
PRESENT DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Our work offers a reflection on antisocial behaviours in adolescence that seeks to review and synthesize relevant and prominent perspectives on the subject, focusing on those that come from a developmental point of view. Such a framework implies, thus, a description and explanation of the antisocial phenomenon in its history, development and possible outcomes, more specifically, its etiology, risk and protective factors, developmental trajectories, manifestations, desistance and persistence mechanisms, and degrees of severity. Therefore, the importance of answering specific questions concerning the time at which antisocial manifestations first occur, the origins of such manifestations and the pathways followed before and after is highlighted. In fact, since antisocial acts may take place at different moments in the lifespan, our purpose was to identify the peculiarities of the phenomenon in adolescence, with particular focus on aspects that undergo considerable development at this stage and may play an important role in risk behaviours, namely, future time perspective, self-control, delay of gratification, psychosocial competence and interpersonal relations. The general conclusion of our review shows that several questions remain to be answered, particularly in the Portuguese context. Hence, we present a project of investigation seeking to address some of those issues.

Keywords: antisocial, adolescence, developmental, trajectories.

Introduction

A general assumption regarding the meaning of antisocial behaviours could be that they describe behaviours that violate social rules intended to promote respect and consideration towards other people’s life and property (Burt, Donnellan, Iacono & McGue, 2011; Kagan, 2004). Such definition makes it clear that the concept of antisocial behaviour is a socially determined construct that may include many different subtypes (from overt to covert), levels of destructiveness, forms (from direct to relational), functions (from instrumental to reactive), onsets (from early to late) and pathways (desistance or persistence). Ultimately, it “must be interpreted as a social event, with meaningful subtypes, topographies, antecedents, and functions” (Dodge, Coie & Lynam, 2008, p. 437).

Although we can list several examples of possible antisocial acts, the identification and study of antisocial behaviours, especially in adolescence, is defined by a high level of