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Fear of crime, promoted to key performance indicator status in several jurisdictions, is a major ingredient in election campaigns, as well as being the keystone of many TV shows and cultural debates. In spite of the fact that scientific production on this theme has been uninterrupted since the 1960s [Hale 1996], our knowledge of the topic is not conclusive and is sometimes contradictory. This book, edited by Lee and Farral, is a collection of twelve contributions from criminologists, sociologists, psychologists and social geographers, whose common theme is a critical approach to the issue of fear of crime, and which intends to instruct social researchers on the pitfalls involved in naïve uses of the concept. The essays that follow the introduction by the two editors [pp. 1-11], can be divided into three thematic groups: the aetiology of the fear of crime (as a phenomenon and as an object of analysis); the consequences of the conceptual indefiniteness of "fear of crime" (what are we talking about?) and, as a consequence, its heuristic validity (do we really need it?).

The first four essays in the volume ["The 'moral panic' that wasn't," pp. 12-31, by D. Loo; "The enumeration of anxiety: power, knowledge and fear of crime," pp. 32-44, by M. Lee; "Critical geopolitics and everyday fears," pp.45-58, by S. J. Smith and R. Pain; "Preventing indeterminate threats: fear, terror and the politics of pre-emption," pp. 59-81, by L. Weber and M. Lee] investigate the aetiology of fear of crime (as a social phenomenon but also as an organising principle in social sciences). These first contributions all share the constructivist paradigm: in the first two, for example, "the crime issue's socially constructed nature" [p. 27] is put forward, and it is suggested that that "as a concept fear of crime was invented via new technologies of enumerating crime that developed in the Sixties" [p.34].

To explain fear of crime as a social phenomenon, Loo adopts the elite-engineered model of Goode and Ben-Yehuda and states that "the impression of a panic was created" [p. 27] by Republican politicians who are said to have acted as the "primary claims-maker" of the so-called "law 'n order" issue, by resorting to opinion polls and the mass media. The idea expressed by the authors points to the postulates implicit in the opinion poll data already listed by Bourdieu in his essay at the start of the 1970s: that everyone has an opinion on the issue analysed, that all opinions are equal and that the fact of asking for an opinion leads to its consolidation [Bourdieu 1973]. To support his thesis, Loo presents the results of several analyses conducted by the original data matrices of important opinion poll institutions (Gallup at the fore) which show how the fear of crime at the start of the 1960s was no greater than that recorded in the previous period. However, according to Loo, the way in which these data were processed and later presented contributed to creating the impression that public opinion was terrified about the spread of street crime.

In the next essay by Lee [pp. 32-44] the reference, identified in the introduction by the two editors, although never expressed explicitly in the essay itself, is to Giddens'

double hermeneutic theory: fear of crime became an issue only when it began to be measured. Lee covers the stages that led to fear of crime from the pages of a street questionnaire: the concept appears to be reified first by specialist agencies, then by mass media which are said to have favoured its spread and democratisation and, lastly it is consecrated by the efforts implemented by public policies to reduce its range. The two contributions that follow [S. J. Smith and R. Pain, pp.45-58; L. Weber and M. Lee, pp. 59-81] seem to have the function of showing how, even today, we are witnessing a similar mechanism in the alarm for the terrorist threat. "Fear of terrorism" is said to be subject, as occurred with the Crime Issue in the 1960s, to a process of thematic appropriation by politics, which uses it to justify the adoption of legislation that is sometimes illiberal. And, as with fear of crime, fear of terrorism is taken for granted, without any attempt to find empirical proof to support its presence in the population [p. 59].

The essay written by Smith and Pain [pp. 45-58] analyses the connections between everyday fears ("local") experienced by individuals and "global" fear following the events of 11 September 2001, developing a model that tries to consider them jointly. The contribution by Weber and Lee [pp. 59-81] is based on the role of political rhetoric in shaping fear of terrorism, following the attack on the World Trade Centre. At the end of this first part of the book, the question whether "fear of crime" really exists or is just a "phantom figure" [p. 38], a convenient category reified by use remains without a conclusive answer. Moreover, there is no convincing explanation given for why this (presumed) phantom number is able to drive public opinion and the electorate, so that legislation is approved on its behalf that limits personal freedom and a growing "market of security" is created that needs frightened citizens in order to thrive.

The essay by Day introduces the second group of contributions, which are more methodological in character ["Being feared: masculinity and race in public space," pp. 82-107 by K. Day; "Untangling the web: deceptive responding in fear of crime research," pp. 108-124, by R. Sutton and S. Farral; "Anxiety, defensiveness and the fear of crime," pp. 125-142, by D. Gadd and T. Jefferson; "Bridging the social and the psychological in the fear of crime," pp. 143-167, by J. Jackson]. This is the most promising part of the book, especially for those who deal with the methodological issues related to the detection and measurement of fear of crime. Indeed, a significant problem in the studies that have dealt with this issue for years is the indefiniteness of the object of study, with two signs of this in particular: the contradictions between the progression of fear of crime and the progression of acts of crime, unrelated phenomena even considering the black figure which afflicts the official crime statistics; and the weakness of individual links between fear of (and concern about) crime and exposure to risk, which are at the origin of the well-known (and as yet unresolved) risk/victimization paradox whereby individual perception of vulnerability does not correspond to vulnerability based on the calculation of risk. In literature, the paradox is usually explained in two ways: the first is that worries and fears have been crystallised around fear of crime, whereas their origins can be found elsewhere: in the social marginalisation of those who experience it, in the social networks, in the way in which the phenomenon is presented by politicians and mass media. The second way refers to the (presumed) reduced capacity for resilience of those who experience forms of social marginalisation. Despite being less exposed to the risk of crime, due to lifestyle, women and the elderly are thus said to be more

afraid because they are seen as being less capable of reacting during an act of crime, and recovering afterwards.

In this part of the book, there is room for a third way of considering the risk/victimisation paradox. The question is posed as to whether this is not the result of an inappropriate measurement of the phenomenon, stipulative, that is based on uncontrollable premises. Hence the need to question the way in which fear of crime is identified, particularly by surveys. The fact that there are many problems involved in the identification of fear of crime is not an original contribution [Ferrero 1995], but represents one of the fields in which Farral's work is more fruitful [Ditton and Farral 2000; Farral 2004].

The authors of the first two essays [K. Day, pp. 82-107; R. Sutton and S. Farral, pp. 108-124] tackle the paradox by questioning the relationship between gender and fear. This is not an original idea (already in 1997 an article by J. Goodey was evocatively called "Boys don't cry: Masculinities, Fear of Crime and Fearlessness"), but is definitely a promising route. After many years of dealing with the way in which fear affects the use of public space by women, Day asks whether men are aware of the fear they arouse, and to what extent this influences their use of public space. By the author's own admission, the study is still in the preliminary stage and the methodological structure of the research is not fully satisfactory: the data on which the essay is based involve 81 interviews conducted in a convenience sample of university students in California aged between 18 and 36. As well as calling for a return to the field with a larger sample, the author concludes that not only fear but also the sensation of inducing fear leaves a mark on individuals and that, as this often has ethnic connotations, it reinforces the position that the individual and his or her ethnic group holds in society.

The essay by Sutton and Farral [pp. 108-124] tries to understand to what extent gender stereotypes in the issue of fear of crime are shared between men and women. As in the previous case, the structure of the research was somewhat imprecise: the sample used included fewer than 100 people (50 men and 43 women, and again it was a convenience sample) and the analysis was limited to controlling whether the average differences between men and women in directly-experienced levels of fear attributed to gender and the opposite sex are significantly different. Women and men seem to agree on the fact that the former are more afraid of the latter, thus reinforcing a stereotype that other research, however, disconfirms. According to a number of recent investigations [we cite the one described in an article by Sutton and Farral 2005], by relating lie scales (used to measure the interviewer's tendency to provide socially desirable answers) with the levels of fear reported by men and women, it may be possible to demonstrate that the greater fear reported by women is actually produced by their greater acquiescence. Women tend to report greater levels of fear than men because this is socially desirable

Using a collection of the main findings on the issue, the essay by Gadd and Jefferson [pp. 125-142] has the function of confirming how the level of awareness of the concept of "fear of crime" is still widely insufficient, both in terms of individual fears, and in terms of the social significance of the phenomenon. Gadd and Jefferson suggest that, in order to further knowledge of the phenomenon, it is necessary to go back to the individual, by paying greater attention to the psychological implications of the fear (or non-fear) of crime. The fourth and final essay in this group, by Jonathan Jackson [pp. 143-167],

indicates that a large contribution to the study of the fear of crime might be made by the findings emerging from the study of risk. Jackson believes that the psychological aspect should be integrated with the sociological: the way in which risk is socially perceived, combining with subjective characteristics and experiences, shapes the fear of crime that every individual experiences.

The third group of contributions shows the concept of "fear of crime" in operation ["State-trait anxiety and fear of crime: a social psychological perspective," pp. 168-187, by D. A. Chadee, N. J. Virgil, and J. Ditton; "Revisiting fear of crime in Bondi and Marrickville: sense of community and perceptions of safety," pp. 188-210, by M. Enders and C. Jennet, with the contribution of M. Tulloch].

In their paper [pp. 168-187] Chadee, Virgil and Ditton look into the connections between anxiety and fear of crime and find that the latter is more related to the State-trait anxieties that characterise the individual than to whether he or she has been the victim of crime or fears being the victim of crime. In the essay written by Enders and Jennet [pp. 188-210], a classic theme of studies on fear of crime is introduced, that is, its relationships with social cohesion. The results reached by the authors are, by their own admission, ambiguous and inconclusive. This is not surprising, given that, alongside the indefiniteness of the dependent variable (the fear of crime) runs the indefiniteness of the independent variable, social cohesion, also indicated by the authors as "sense of community." Despite this, an interesting reflection is that the focus groups that were run alongside the sample survey revealed that it is not so much the relationship with the neighbourhood that reassured individuals, but rather the feeling of not being physically isolated.

To sum up, the radical and sometimes simplistic constructivism that characterises some of the essays is tempered by those contributions in which there is an attempt to show the limits of the concept, while at the same time safeguarding its potentials. For example, the attempt to solve the risk/fear paradox from a methodological point of view is very interesting: indeed, literature is full of ex post explanations, while there are still few attempts at examining the instruments, especially the quantitative ones, which are used to try and measure the phenomenon. Another critical aspect of the book is that, sometimes the caveats of one contribution do not seem to be included in the analyses presented by others. For example, some essays question the heuristic validity of a concept while others, on the contrary, describe it as a useful organising principle for policy intervention. Nevertheless, as this is a work that puts together the voices of scholars from different disciplines, a certain degree of non-homogeneousness is probably inevitable. For those approaching the study of fear of crime, the book is useful since each essay is supplemented with an exhaustive and up-to-date bibliography, much of which refers to the editors themselves, and, on the whole, represents a collection of the state of critical studies on the topic and of their main findings.

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