

Chapter 10

Anthropo–Sociological Approach of the Criminology and Applied Victimology: Social Unrest, Insecurity, Fear

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Criminology attempts to explain the causes of crime using two different approaches: the anthropological and the sociological. The anthropological approach focuses on man as the author of crime, and seeks to determine the physical, psychological, motivational, and psychosocial factors, that may have led to the criminal conduct. The sociological approach, on the other hand looks at the macro social factors influencing the insurgence of crime. The problem of social control, namely the way in which a society is able to integrate individuals around a single coherent system of customs, traditions and norms, and thus guarantee community security is connected to the concept of social disorder. The concept of social disorder is also linked to that of marginality, characteristic of the immigrant condition: the loss of cultural roots and the lack of integration in the new cultural context places immigrants in the margins of society. Instances of social problems resulting were reported news broadcasts of events occurring towards the end of 2008 in Italy which suddenly brought to light a series of similar events, evidencing ever more frequent occurrences of racism and xenophobia. These episodes spoke for themselves. Evident as the light of day, it was no longer easy to conceal their true matrix. From the homicide of a Milan boy (from <http://www.rainews24.rai.it/notizia.asp?newsid=85897>) who had allegedly stolen a packet of biscuits, to the homicides of Castel Volturno immigrants (Castel Volturno is a Southern Italian little city)

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(from http://www.corriere.it/cronache/08_settembre_19/rivolta_castelvoturno_immigrati_de6698dc-8635-11dd-bef9-00144f02aabc.shtml), the violent Parma bashings, the injuries sustained by a young man from Ghana, and to those in Rome against a Chinese citizen. But this is not the end of the story. This study will analyze the Abba's homicide. Abba was a young man, an Italian citizen, and the son of Burkina Faso immigrants with Italian citizenship; he was born and grown up in Milan. The theoretical premises on which this case is based are those reported in victimology literature, it has been chosen for its similarity to other cases of xenophobia and because it brings new insights to present notions existing within criminology and applied victimology, (such as concepts of social disorder and social fear), and as such constitutes a significant contribution to this field of study.

BACKGROUND

Today most of the leading scholars in crime research find a correlation between urban decay and the weakening of social relations leading, in turn, to an enfeebling of collective security. In fact, a substantial number of studies in current social science literature have highlighted this nexus, having revealed a significant correlation between individuals' fear of crime and levels of fragility and insecurity, indicating a decline in social integrity.

Terror posed by the prospect of crime and the likelihood of becoming its victim form part of a phenomenon that is becoming more and more a defining feature of contemporary society, having resounding social and psychological repercussions. Further, value judgments proffered by local and government authorities, tending to influence relations amongst various social groups and overall social order, also impact on insecurity levels, making their appraisal difficult (Bandini, 2003).

Results of recent research studies on victimization, regarding illicit behavior which, in common language is referred to as "petty crime", but whose magnitude is often anything but minimal, provide indisputable evidence of the presence of insecurity generated by crime within the Italian population, to the extent that it has become a significant social phenomenon that can no longer be ignored.

Whereas the theme of a social sense of inse-

curity had been largely undervalued in Italy until a few years ago, in other countries, particularly in the USA and in Great Britain, it has been, over the last 30 years, the subject of copious studies and research. International analyses have found that a mounting sense of personal insecurity, even though concurring with a corresponding increase in petty crimes, seems to be becoming more and more widespread and frequent throughout society, regardless of the circumstances, to the extent of constituting, both from a social and a scientific point of view, a distinct entity.

Researchers have nominated two variables as fundamental indicators of sense of uncertainty: *fear of crime*, i.e. fear of crime on an individual basis, and *concern about crime* or social anxiety about crime or public order (Roché, 1998).

The first is a physiological and emotional response to an intimidation that may be either real or probable, so that a sense of danger based on intuition is able to indicate both the likelihood that a feared event could actually occur and the improbability of such an event happening.

On the other hand, social fear regarding crime is anxiety over the possibility that it could spread to one's own neighborhood.

It is interesting to note that crime does not strike homogeneously throughout the population in a uniform manner, but varies according to the genre, age, and type of municipality or geographical area in which subjects live.

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