
Doctor Iwona Zielinska’s monograph — published by Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS — is not only one of the few works in Poland on the subject of moral panic, but also — and above all — the first book in this field. Generally speaking, the author’s deliberations are aimed, firstly, at showing that the hitherto de rigueur way of understanding moral panic is not in line with the current nature of social reality and, as a consequence, inaccurately describes the occurring phenomena, and, secondly, at presenting a model of moral panic which would more accurately explain current phenomena. With the above aim in mind, the author proposes distinguishing two types of moral panic: “classical panic” and “transformational panic”.

The monograph consists of two parts, 6 chapters, preceded by acknowledgements and an introduction, and ending with a summary and an extensive bibliography (enumerating books and articles and a list of communications from public opinion surveys, reports, and web pages), as well as an English language summary.

In the first chapter of the theoretical part, entitled Moral Panic — a critical presentation of the concept, the author focuses on the development of the concept of moral panic since 1972. She analyses this phenomenon as it is understood by Stanley Cohen (1972), Kenneth
Thompson, and Chas Critcher, and American sociologists — Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda (1994), and Philip Jenkins. She presents and explains basic terms and concepts that are linked to the concept of moral panic, its five phases (the new situation — defining who are *folk devils*, depiction, increase in social unrest/concern, response from the authorities — “moral crusade”, and reduction in social tension), criteria (concern/unrest, hostility, consensus, volatility/unpredictability, and disproportionality), causes (model of grassroots forces, social engineering of the elites, and model of interest groups), similarities with other concepts and sociological theories (social movements, social problems, sociology of deviance, collective behaviours, risk society, and agenda setting), hitherto ways of explaining the phenomenon and criticism of the concept with a particular focus on the role of media in moral panic situations.

In the second chapter: *Two models of moral panic and their connection with Nomos*, a new way of understanding the phenomenon of moral panic is presented which is significantly different from earlier ways, and which, in the opinion of the author, is of key significance for the whole work. The phenomenon of moral panic is divided here into the classical variety (the aim of which is to strengthen social order in axio-normative society) and transformational panic (an expression of dissatisfaction by part of society with current normative principles), and, moreover, classical and transformative moral panics are compared in the context of the causes (*folk devils*), attitudes to *folk devils*, degrees of social concern, the main function of the panic, and the result. In this chapter, the author presents Peter Berger’s concept of Nomos (1997) and Mary Douglas’s anthropological concept of pollution (2007). The first of these constitutes a broader frame of reference for the phenomenon of moral panics, which, according to the author, should be treated as a symptom of transformation of Nomos, while the second concerns the strategy — which is universal for all societies — of coping with elements that disturb the sense of order. Further deliberations focus on the Nomos, its legitimization, religion as its basis, and its opposite — anomie, as well as on analysis of the phenomenon of witch-hunting between the XV and XVII century. The hypothesis is put forward that transformational moral panics show the ineffectiveness of legitimizations used to maintain the integrity of the Nomos (Zielińska, 2015, p. 15).
The third chapter: *Homosexual moral panic* concerns the methodological foundations of the author’s own research. The following are discussed in detail here: the research techniques applied in the analysis of press material; and the indicators and models used in analyses of the phenomenon, which serve in the verification of whether a studied case may be categorised as moral panic (attributive model, processual model). The attributive model consists of five indicators, proposed by American sociologists (Goode, Ben-Yehuda): disproportionality, concern, hostility, volatility/unpredictability, and consensus. The processual model, however, is a reconstruction of the course of events which make up the phenomenon of moral panic, and a presentation of the main participants/players and reactions of the parties to the conflict. The author of the concept, S. Cohen, distinguished three stages of moral panic, but this model was expanded by followers of Cohen’s ideas (K. Thompson, C. Critcher), and as a consequence, consists of five stages: the emergence of problematic circumstances, considered a threat to social order; the way in which a situation has been interpreted by the media (e.g., exaggeration and distortion of events; the conviction that the event will be repeated and occur with doubled strength; symbolization); a sharp rise in social concern; increased efforts by advocates of change; decrease in concern and estimating the results of moral panic. In this chapter, the author presents her way of understanding the discourse and the justification for applying this approach in her study. The study concerned homosexual moral panic (transformational panic), the culmination of which was events in Poland in 2005. The aim here was, firstly, to answer the question as to whether the category of transformational panic would find confirmation in empirical reality; and, secondly, to analyse press reports on the events in order to recreate the two discourses that emerged as a consequence of the increased presence/activity of homosexuals in the public space; and, thirdly, to look at the events of ten years ago from the current perspective. The research was limited to press discourse, and press materials from 6 national Polish dailies were used, which had been selected in such a way as to ensure a variety of perspectives and opinions (*Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita* — serious opinion-forming press, *Fakt, Super Express* — tabloids, *Nasz Dziennik* — containing extreme right wing content, and *Trybuna* — containing extreme left wing content).
The fourth and fifth chapter constitute the analytical part of the book. In the fourth chapter: Testing models relating to the phenomenon of “homosexual” panic, the proposed hypothesis — that events concerning homosexuals in 2005 can be considered transformational moral panic — is tested. Furthermore, the author presents the situation of homosexuals in Poland in the communist period and after 1989, as well as the five stages of the course of moral panic in the context of the increased openness of these people (awakening of discourse, painting a terrible devil, actions of moral experts, counter-attack of modernists, and suppressing panic) and indicators of moral panic (disproportionality, concern, hostility, volatility, consensus, and support for folk devils).

Chapter Five: Two discourses, two visions of social order concerns the presentation of results of analysis of press content, by recreation of two discourses (conservative and modernist) created through images, i.e., ways of representing the main categories of homosexual moral panic: the image of folk devils (gays/lesbians, homosexuality), the image of the parade, the image of supporters (modernists) and opponents (conservatives), the interests of these groups, actions manifested or proposed/undertaken (real/symbolic) towards folk devils (removal of “pollution”). In the context of the above, Mary Douglas’s concept (2007) is subjected to verification and the remaining actions of conservatives/modernists, which could not be categorised under Douglas’s typology — are presented, as are the arguments used by both sides of the conflict. Examples of engagement in the analysed events by representatives of the Catholic church are also discussed (Interview with Father Dariusz Oko and Father Tadeusz Bartoś).

In the sixth chapter: Conclusions and Summaries, the most important conclusions from the study are presented, with a description of the opposing camps: conservatives and modernists, and with the suggestion that it would be worth making a distinction within these camps between extremists and moderates. The author also focuses on changes in Polish society in relation to homosexuals and transsexuals over the last decade and the links between “homosexual” moral panic and Nomos. At the end of the deliberations, the author describes further possibilities of developing the concept of moral panic, taking into account so-called ineffective panics (S. Ungar and S. Cohen — e.g., cloning, software piracy, surrogate mothers),
two possible directions of further deliberations on this phenomenon (U. Beck’s concept of risk and M. Foucault’s perspective of discursive formations) (K. Thompson, 1999), applications of the theory of conflict and the theory of the sociology of emotions (fear, concern, indignation — moral panic), as well as empirical studies concerning the role of the Internet in developing panic in the context of grassroots initiatives (as opposed to the opinion about moral panic being a result of “engineering by the elites” put forward by many researchers).

Concluding, it can be stated that the following points about the reviewed monograph are especially noteworthy: the author has raised a very important and still current issue, which has received little coverage in empirical research in Poland (with the exception of the work of Rafał Smoczyński on the subject of satanic moral panic); studies (both quantitative and qualitative) concerning minority groups and their social perception are always desirable. Doctor Zielinska has also managed to present difficult and complex problems in a transparent manner and to cohesively link multiple important threads that are important for the understanding of moral panics. Her thorough study of the press and the clear way in which it is presented and interpreted are also noteworthy.

For all the above reasons, this book should be recommended to a broad range of readers: specialists from various fields — both theoreticians and practitioners — sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues, criminologists, lawyers and journalists. This monograph also constitutes a significant educational aid for students of the social sciences and humanities.

Bibliography

Berger, Peter (1997) Święty baldachim. Elementy socjologicznej teorii religii, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy „Nomos”.