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New Vistas

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Abstract

This work builds on ultra-realist criminology as a critical approach that seeks to confront the current criminogenic conditions of late-capitalism to offer a more accurate understanding of the underlying, real causes of crime, deviance, and harm. Ultra-realism accounts for both structure and agency but has an incomplete model of subjectivity, and is thereby limited. By incorporating Linda Zagzebski's concept of epistemic authority, this research intends to enhance ultra-realism's analytical framework and theory of subjectivity. In doing so, it will create a more fundamental understanding of the underlying, epistemological elements of deviant behaviour broadly, and specifically within my case study of relatively deprived neighbourhoods in East London.

Epistemic authority develops from an idea of rationality being compatible with autonomy. In this way, Zagzebski seeks to develop a model of rationality that can account for dissonant beliefs (and subsequent behaviours) that have often been labelled as irrational. This reading of rationality can strengthen ultra-realism's analytical capability, specifically when considering the formation of subjectivity and attitudes towards crime and deviance.

This presentation will offer a theoretical argument and the initial data from the case study using a grounded theory methodology. Through unstructured interviews in an area of relative deprivation, I will provide qualitative data on the location of epistemic authority, sense of subjectivity and community, and attitudes towards crime, deviance, and harm. This will in turn be generated into a substantive theory within the broader ultra-realist cannon.

Keywords

neighbourhood crime, Grounded theory