

**Alienation and crime: from the mainstream to critical criminological perspectives**

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The definition of the word alienation reads in the dictionary as follows: “the state or experience of being isolated from a group or an activity to which one should belong or in which one should be involved” (Carter, 2014:4). Moreover, definitions of alienation include “loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganisation, loneliness, atomization, powerless, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of beliefs or values” (Feuerlicht 1978:10). Alienation had also been associated with “apathy, authoritarianism, conformity, cynicism, hoboism, political apathy, political hyperactivity or personalization in politics, prejudice, privatization, psychosis, regression and suicide” (Dean 1961: 753).

Understandings of alienation can be grouped under two contrasting camps: critical criminology and mainstream criminology. The first refers to the radical criminology or critical philosophical criminology in which crime is explained as a result of alienation and powerlessness of working class who have been brutalised by capitalism both directly, through producing brutalising conditions, and indirectly, through controlling law and legal agencies to criminalise working class values and protecting their own. Critical criminologists view criminal behaviour, the law, and the penalties imposed for breaking it, as originating in the deep inequalities of power and resources existing in society.

For Marx and Engels (1965) crime was simply the product of unjust and alienating social conditions — “the struggle of the isolated individual against the prevailing conditions” (p. 367). The four dimensions of alienation identified by Marx are alienation from: (1) the product of labour, (2) the process of labour, (3) others, and (4) self. When individuals become alienated from themselves, they become alienated from others and from their society in general. Alienated

individuals may then treat others as mere objects to be exploited and victimised as they themselves are supposedly exploited and victimised by the capitalist system.

Most critical criminologists are interested in how racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual orientation inequalities affect crime, victimization, and criminal justice. The major schools of critical criminology include Marxism, left realism, feminism, postmodernism, cultural criminology, and peacemaking criminology. Their critiques are centred, respectively, on capitalism, stratification and inequality, patriarchy, modernity, positivist criminology, and adversarial justice (Kauzlarich, 2014). Critical criminologists see crime as arising from social structures of inequality that can only be addressed through “major structural and cultural changes within society”. This field has its roots in the Marxist analysis of crime and justice, but since the early 1970s it has expanded to include other critical approaches to crime – such as left realism, feminism, peacemaking criminology, postmodernism, cultural criminology, white-collar crime, state-corporate crime, and green criminology (among others). While somewhat different in their approaches, these various schools of critical criminology share the goal of challenging traditional criminology's neglect of inequality and power issues (Long, 2015). It is a position that seeks to end suffering and to promote social inclusion, equality and human rights.

The second understanding of alienation refers to the mainstream criminology, or American empirical studies of alienation. The empiricist tradition overly is committed to the conception of alienation as a psychological state of the individual (rather than an attribute of the social system, and as such not necessarily, or even regularly, a matter of awareness), and overly committed as well to a 'multidimensional' concept of alienation, a view which is, as they see it, neither theoretically grounded nor very clear about the relation that holds, in principle or in fact, among the several varieties of alienation (Seeman, 1975). For instance, Seeman treats alienation from the personal standpoint of the actor-from his social psychological point of view. His five components of alienation are powerlessness, meaningless, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement (1959). Melvin Seeman's social-psychological approach to his varieties of alienation places the emphasis upon the actor's personal expectations and values. Alienation in this sense is also treated as an individualised subjective phenomenon, although Seeman does not deny the importance of the objective social conditions which produce subjective alienations.

We encourage authors who research links between alienation and delinquency/crime both from mainstream and critical criminological perspectives to share their findings with readers. The editors are compiling a special issue on mainstream and critical approaches to alienation-crime nexus. We are interested in both partisan and nonpartisan research or accounts on the relations between alienation and crime in macro, mezzo and micro levels of analysis. We welcome papers exploring and demonstrating the ways alienation penetrates the fabric of macro-level social institutions and, on the micro-level, the lives and minds of individual actors.

We are now encouraging potential contributors to submit abstracts for consideration which relate to this area of research. It is our intention that the special issue will encompass a wide conceptualization of the relations between alienation and crime, including perspectives that look at alienation either as a subjective state of individual consciousness or an objective condition of society. In taking this comprehensive approach, we intend the special issue to make a significant theoretical contribution to how the alienation-crime nexus is understood and experienced across societies. We are also interested in work from across disciplines: humanities, social sciences, and interdisciplinary work.

We invite contributions related to the below themes. These are broad indicative themes only, and we are interested in all dimensions related to special issues' topics including theoretical and empirical work which explores this area. In this special issue, we welcome both conceptual and empirical studies on the new developments in the link between alienation and delinquency/ crime, using a wide variety of research methods. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Objective alienations or objective structural forms of alienation leading to the crimes of wealth and the powerful elite, from crimes of the suites or white-collar crimes (both corporate crime and occupational crime) to structural and symbolic violence and injustices; violating human rights; crime against nature or climate crime; hate crimes against minorities, migrants and refugees; class, ethnic and gender discrimination, etc. Examples of objective alienation include alienating social conditions such as economic exploitation, economic inequality, or racial oppression. We welcome papers exploring the mechanisms employed by the rich and the powerful to exploit, oppress, and deprive the poor and the powerless at national and international scales. We are also interested in papers investigating how racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual orientation inequalities affect crime, victimization, and criminal justice.
- Subjective alienations as both predictors and/ or intervening variables leading to delinquent behaviors or street crimes: alienation is implicated in a range of crimes and social problems such as gun violence and school massacres, family honour/shame killings, under-age and excessive alcohol usage, drug abuse and addiction, rape, prostitution, teen pregnancy, using coarse and explicit language, truancy, vandalism, theft, gang activities, school dropouts, suicide, domestic violence, casual sex, depression, etc. We welcome papers exploring who is more alienated and why and what are the mechanisms involved in the relationships between alienation and crime/ delinquency.
- Specifying conceptually, and demonstrating empirically, the exact nature of the linkage between subjective and objective alienations in explaining crimes of the poor and the rich. It means even when alienation is viewed as a subjective state, research should encompass the objective environmental determinants of this subjective state.

For this Special Issue we propose to include 10-12 articles as well as an Introduction which will be prepared by the issue's guest editors. Once abstracts have been accepted, we will provide guidelines for preparing the selected articles.

Authors will benefit from:

- A double-blind peer review of their article
- Prompt publishing (as online first)
- Multidisciplinary context and a diverse audience
- High visibility thanks to open access to the journal

## References

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### **Basic information**

*Archives of Criminology* is the leading Polish criminological journal, published by the Polish Academy of Science.

The theme of this volume: we are looking for papers exploring the links between alienation and delinquency/crime both from mainstream and critical criminological perspectives (see the call for papers above).

The publication will be available with *open access*.

Preliminary calendar of activities:

May 31, 2022 – deadline for submission of abstracts (150 – 300 words)

October 31, 2022 – deadline for text submission

June 2023 – publication

Entries are limited to between 7,000 and 9,000 words.

Abstracts should be submitted through the online form **only**:

<http://ankietyinppan.pl/index.php/577543?lang=en>

More information about the Journal and guidance for authors available on the website:

<http://ak.inp.pan.pl/index.php/ak>

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