

INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINOLOGY

ORDER AND DISORDER



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INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINOLOGY: ORDER AND DISORDER

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Preface

The theme of this text is the relationship between order and disorder and its application to the study of criminology. The fascinating relationship between order and disorder can be seen on three levels: the social order of the larger society, the institutions of public order, and those individuals who, by violating the rules of society, come to the attention of the institutions of public order. A major advantage of this approach is that it uses an analytical and integrative method to examine the study of crime.

The ordered society has long been the quest of humankind. Such a society is characterized by such factors as individuals' accepting their roles, complying with society's values and norms, and obeying the rules. The achievement of an ordered society depends upon the socialization skills of the family and schools, upon the cohesiveness of societal norms and values, and upon a stable economic life and structure of government. However, contemporary Western societies resemble the disordered society far more than the ordered one.

Industrialized and urbanized modern societies constantly face new and persistent forms of social disorder. Criminal behavior and civil disobedience have dramatically increased in most Western societies since the 1950s. A major problem in any attempt to restore public order is that most Western societies prefer tolerant, humanitarian policies in dealing with violators of the law. A principled conviction, under attack at the present time, is that a substantial level of disorder is more tolerable than the annihilation of civil liberties in the service of revolution or reaction. But neither the liberal policies of humanitarian approaches nor the authoritarian solution of brutalizing punishments is currently working well in reducing crime.

In our world, order and disorder blend together. Too much order and a society becomes stifling; too little order, and a society can unravel and disintegrate. Many Americans today feel that the disorder of crime poses a real threat to the quality of life. But the American system is one that allows the rights, or freedoms, of the individual to be protected from abuse by the state. The balance between the rights of the individual and the security of society continues to pose problems in maintaining public order.

Our development of the "order and disorder" theme springs from the

writings of other criminologists. Some criminologists view crime as an indicator of a disorganized society; others claim that tolerable amounts of deviant and criminal behavior may even strengthen the social order. Still others have studied crime as a means of understanding the assumptions about order held by members of that society, assumptions upon which these individuals base decisions that contribute to everyday order and disorder. Finally, order is regarded by some criminologists as emerging from competition and conflict among various interest groups, and the disorder of crime is seen as endangering the interests of some groups while promoting those of others.

The organization of this text is unique. Chapter 1 begins with an examination of crime in contemporary urbanized and industrialized society. As a necessary starting point in this investigation of order and disorder, we give special emphasis to the effects of modernization on crime. The second chapter examines the means by which the law orders society. The criminal law depends on the position that humans have free will and, therefore, are responsible for their behavior. As citizens of the state, individuals become involved in a social contract that gives the state the right to punish those who violate the law. However, the decline of respect for and obedience of the law is resulting in higher rates of crime in the United States. The third chapter examines the enduring aspects, the extent, and the costs of crime in the United States.

Chapters 4 through 8 examine why criminals violate the law. Chapter 4 suggests that criminal behavior is purposeful activity resulting from rational decisions in which pros and cons are weighed, and the acts that promise the greatest potential gains are performed. This emphasis on free will and responsibility is quite different from that of the next four chapters, which argue that the disorder of crime results because individuals are impelled by psychological or biological deficiencies or by sociological factors.

The types of criminal behavior, or public disorder, are discussed in Chapters 9 through 11. Violent, property, and victimless crimes are the general categories of public disorder examined. The disorder that these crimes bring to the social order is emphasized, and the world views and techniques of those involved in these crimes are also investigated. The ever-changing nature of disorder and order is dramatically illustrated by examining the micro-perspective of those who refuse to comply with the rules of society.

The social control of crime receives attention in the final six chapters of this text. The structure of the criminal justice process, the police, the courts, community-based corrections, prisons, and social control methods of the future are the subjects of these chapters. The main emphasis is on how institutions of public order handle the disorder of crime. However, as microcosms of the larger society, political, cultural, and economic forces shape the policies of these social control institutions.

The format of each chapter is another unique feature of this text. The social context of crime, the philosophical ideas underpinning crime, and the theory of law all receive special emphasis in this text. An analysis section in each chapter examines the major issues related to order and disorder on the societal, institutional, and individual levels and also considers the cultural, political, and eco-

conomic forces in defining and handling public disorder. Moreover, policy recommendations throughout this text suggest more fruitful directions for the social control of crime.

We believe that this emphasis on order and disorder will be helpful in understanding crime in American society. We hope that students will find this a refreshing and stimulating text. We have been fascinated by our study of order and disorder in American society, and we trust that our enthusiasm will be shared by our readers.

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