

Chapter I

Criminology and the Sociological Perspective

- U.S. crime rate has decline since 1990 but the prison/jail population has increased
- Media distorts our knowledge about crime
- Crime is both an individual and social problem
- Sociological Criminology- sociological understanding of crime and criminal justice

Sociological Perspective

- People are social beings, more than just individuals
- Society shapes individuals' behavior, attitude and life chances
- Emile Durkheim a French sociologist and the founder of discipline, stressed social forces influence our behavior
- Famous study on suicide
- Social Structure- How a society is organized in terms of social relationship and social interaction
- Sociologist C. Wright Mills emphasized social structure lies at the root of private troubles
- Public issues
- Sociological Imagination- Ability to understand structure and historical basis for personal troubles
- Peter Berger observed that sociology studies false claims about reality and "unrespectable" element social life

Mutual Relevance of Sociology and Criminology

- Crime, victimization and criminal justice cannot be fully understood w/o appreciating their structural context

Rise of Sociological Criminology

- Norms- Standards of behavior, present in all societies
- Deviance- Behavior that violates these norms and arouse negative social reaction
- Custom- Remain unwritten and informal
- Social Control- Society's restraint of norm violating behavior
- Laws- Formal norms written or codified
- Social Disorganization- Breakdown of conventional social institution
- Criminogenic- Crime-Causing
- Throughout history, crime and deviance attributed to religious factors
- During the 19th century, scholars studied causes of crime through scientific investigation
- Emile Durkheim- Made major contributions
- Growing interest in biological root of crime
- In the U.S., sociology began to develop at University of Chicago- early 20th Century

- Robert K. Merton
A.) Anomie
- Edwin Sutherland
A.) Differential Association Theory
B.) White collar crime

Crime, Deviance and Criminal Era

Criminology- Study of the making of laws, breaking of laws and society's reaction to breaking the laws

Crime- Behavior that is considered so harmful it is banned by a criminal law

Goals of Criminal Law

- Keep public safe
- Articulate social values, morals and concern
- Protect the rights and freedom of the nation's citizenry by protecting it from potential governmental abuses and power

Overview of Criminal Law

Mala in se- evil in themselves

Mala prohibita- wrong only because it is prohibited by law

Felonies- crimes punishable by one (1) yr. in prison

Misdemeanors- crimes punishable by less than one (1) yr

Actus Reus- Actual act

Mens Rea- guilty mind