**SOC 3290 Deviance**

**Overheads Lecture 4: The Demonic Perspective:**

**\***Supernatural explanations of deviance are important because:

- not entirely absent from our society

- other theories emerged in response

- some modern theories may be same thing in new guise

**Theoretical Images:**

\* Demonic perspective:

- cause/cure of deviance lies in supernatural

- deviance=sin

- our world=battleground for good/evil forces

\* Individuals succumb to evil forces & engage in deviance through:

- temptation (some choice/responsibility)

- possession (no choice/responsibility)

\* Cosmic consequences:

- for individual

- for natural order

- for everybody

**Identifying Demonic Deviance:**

\* Methods:

- Spiritual “diviners”

- Trial by ordeal

- Trial by battle

\* Lateran Council:

-banned ordeal by fire/battle

-introduced sacrament of penance/confession

- encouraged focus on individual responsibility

\* Colonial America: Salem Witch Trials (1692):

- Witchcraft hysteria in community/accusations

- Judicial proceedings followed: many executed

- Evidence included:

Mistakes in Lord’s Prayer

Testimony of aggrieved citizens

“Marks of the devil”

Confessions

“Spectral evidence”

**Social Control of Demonic Deviance:**

\* Little differentiation between types of deviance

\* Control = religiously administered public punishment:

- purges sinner’s body of devil

- restores body of community to correct relation to God

- administered by Priests/clerics (e.g. burning)

- variations by social rank

**Public Spectacles:**

\* 3 types:

-public executions

-public shaming

-symbolic rituals of penance

\* Relied on:

(1) centralized authority

(2) community control practices

\* Centralized authority:

- emerged as technology permitted economic surplus

- hierarchical organization replaces egalitarian

- religious revelation legitimizes

- laws specify who can/can’t do what

\* Community Control:

- deviants dealt with locally/publicly

- rituals restore community to grace

**Heterosexist Patriarchy & Religious Control:**

\* Western religious ideas favor male/ demonize female

\* 80% of witches burned were women.

\* Paganism driven underground (esp. After 12th century)

\* Biblical imagery portrays women as “conduit of evil”

**The Demonic Perspective Today:**

\* Still seen in:

- popular culture (horror movies, popular literature, some churches)

- canvassing literature

- the “religious right” lobby

- the controversy over women/gay clergy

- the “Moral Majority”

- televangelism

- marketing Christian merchandise

\* Not merely conservative:

- civil rights movement

- antiwar movements

- liberation theology

**Assessment of the Demonic Perspective:**

\* Inadequate:

-relies on belief - not observable fact

-not testable

-suspending viewpoint enables other useful questions

**Naturalistic Observations:**

\* Some attempt to explain witch trials by substituting modern untestable superstitions (e.g. psychoanalytic theory):

- both avoid responsibility

- both rely on “experts”

\* Other explanations: social disruptions:

-British revoking legal charter/economic crisis

-Religious tolerance confronting orthodoxy

-Shifts in orthodoxy (from dependence to mastery)

\* Results: Internal dissention & blaming women/less powerful

\* Demonic beliefs/actions must be situated in social/historical contexts

- suspend judgement of validity

- note influenced by/influencing social/economic/political matters

- produces useful questions for research

**Spiritual Observations:**

\* Naturalistic analyses lack sufficient perspective on evil

\* Calls to integrate spiritual dimension:

- Stanford Lyman (evils in “social bedrock”)

- Richard Quinney (need to integrate “sacred void”)

- Tifft & Sullivan (control by others denies our “spiritual home”)

- Pagan revival (Goddess-centered spiritualities)

\* All call for tempering of naturalistic analyses of deviance:

- need to incorporate moral/spiritual/cosmic

- neutral language disguises that deviance about good and evil

- winners=saints; losers sinners