**SOC 3290 Deviance**

**Overheads Lecture 7: The Pathological Perspective 2:**

**\*** Today: social control policies/assessment of the pathological

perspective

\* “Treatment” = the cure for nonconformity

\* Associated with rise of the “Therapeutic state”

\* Problems: - assumes deviants have no choices in behavior

- hiding of social/moral judgements in name of science

\* Criticisms rarely heeded:

- Phrenology once officially recognized/practiced in policy

- Lombroso’s atavism used to classify delinquents

**Eugenics:**

\* Popular idea: reduce deviance by “removing deviant individuals from the gene pool.” Manifested in involuntary sterilization laws

\* Very popular in early part of 20th century/ many forced sterilizations

\* Laws increasingly challenged over time

**The Mental Hospital:**

\* Attempt to rehabilitate/change existing deviants

\* “Great confinement” of 17th-18th centuries

\* Hopeful treatments alternatively proposed/discredited over time

\* Reformers balked at harsh custodial control

\* Mid-20th century: mental hospitals essentially warehouses

\* Thorazine synthesized in 1952: reduced symptoms/restored order

\* Supporters very positive re: drug treatment

\* Detractors: (1) didn’t treat root cause of problem

(2) really about controlling patients

(3) disfiguring side effects (e.g. *tarditive dyskenesia*)

\* Drugs soon became treatment of choice

\* Mental Hospitals Depopulated between 1955-1970. Reasons:

(1) drug treatment

(2) legal rulings on patients’ rights

(3) journalistic exposes/sociological research

(4) cost-cutting by governments

\* Some jurisdictions want to do away with mental hospitals

\* Patients “dumped” into community:

- don’t access community health facilities often

- most end up on the street/in welfare housing

- right to post-hospital care?

**The Pathological Perspective Today:**

\* Despite failures, the pathological perspective is alive and kicking

\* New movement to study biological/pathological roots of deviance

\* Books/research reviews often don’t consider criticisms:

- Wilson & Herrstein: criminologists “uncomfortable” with

biological/psychological explanations

- Ellis: sexual assault a result of natural selection (discounts cross-

cultural studies/patriarchy)

**Hyperkinesis:**

\* Considered #1 childhood syndrome, despite being social deviance

\* What was once “bad” is now “sick”

\* Once diagnosed, drug treatment soon follows (Ritalin)

\* Peter Conrad:

- Researchers never discovered organic defect

- Researchers reasoned that if drugs improve behavior, organic

problem must have caused unruliness (illogical)

- New pediatric interest in child mental health (status booster)

- Synthesis of Ritalin/ FDA approval in 1961

- Parallel success of drug treatment/control for mental patients

- Pediatric specialists proposed new diagnosis: hyperkinesis

- Backed up by Learning Disabilities groups, medical

representatives on investigating committee

- Massive advertising campaign/profits by drug industry

**The Surgical Control of Deviant Behavior:**

\* Began with Buckhardt (1890)

\* Moniz (1935): first prefrontal lobotomy

\* Early 1950's: up to 50,000 lobotomies performed in U.S.

\* Proponents minimized negative outcomes

\* Many patients became vegetable-like

\* Fewer lobotomies after 1950's due to:

- journalistic expose’s

- questions about selection of candidates

- newer drugs

- newer psychosurgical techniques

\* Newer techniques:

- directed at hypothalamus, amygdala and thalamus

- based on animal aggression experiments (e.g. electric implants)

- proponents say safe/secure ways of control

- critics say unethical experimentation/real problems not there

- aggression not always result of electrical/chemical changes

- even if so, what causes these? The environment

- pathological speculation about “yet undetected lesions”

- pathological “profiles” of good candidates for surgery (e.g.

having a record of physical assaults, intoxication, impulsive

sexuality, and accidents)

- similar things can be caused by class related power imbalances

\* Pathological theorists’ retort:

- hypotheses for neurological investigation

- why don’t all lower class people act violently (their brains?)

- propose “early warning tests” for the potentially violent

\* Effectiveness of surgery:

- some individuals become more violent/incapacitated

- when those with physical problems removed from sample,

patients with behavioral problems show no improvement

- Evidence of effectiveness not convincing

\* Future of psychosurgery uncertain:

- Controversial

- Legal/regulatory caution

- Standards proposed (but vaguely defined)

\* Pathological theorists don’t give up/ remain imaginative:

- Suggest implanting two-way transmitters into deviants’ brains

- Total monitoring/control possibilities

- Illustrates total control potential of positivist science

- This possibility is not far from being recognizable

- Who’s in control?

**Assessment of the Pathological Perspective**:

\* Pathological perspective generally:

- Promises much/delivers little

- “Scientific” claims vs. methodological problems

- Humanitarian intent vs. repressive practices

\* Advantages:

- Emphasis on naturalistic causation introduces new complexities

- Humanitarian intent

- Optimism

- Flexibility

- Benefits of “sick role”

\* Disadvantages:

- Limits role of human choice

- Limits impact of socio-historical context

- “Deviants” somehow more determined than others/made

dependent

- False neutrality: moral decisions hidden by code words

- Expert Control mystifies discourse/produces “tunnel vision”:

(1) Possibly self-serving

(2) Influenced by institutionalized thinking

(3) Influenced by ad campaigns/drug industry

- Individualizing social problems/avoids social influences (e.g. on

homelessness)

- Ignoring the power politics of deviance

- The possibility of medical social control “for their own good”

(e.g. lobotomies, drugs for anxiety/eating disorders)

- Diverting questions about good and evil

\* In the end: the pathological perspective denies us a full vision of

deviance & social control as practical, human struggle