

**SOC 3290: Deviance**  
**Overheads Lecture 29: Mental Disorder I:**

\* Today we introduce the topic of mental disorder. We will concentrate on the following:

- (1) Myths about Mental Disorder
- (2) Types of Mental Disorder;
- (3) Social Factors in Mental Disorder;

\* Next class we will look at societal response to mental disorder & its theoretical explanations

\* Mental disorder is common, but its most extreme varieties are relatively rare (e.g. schizophrenia affects 1-2% of population)

\* A strong social stigma attaches to mental disorder: linked to myths

**(1) Popular Myths about Mental Disorder:**

\* **Myth:** most mentally disordered people are very weird & disturbed

\* **Myth:** mental illness is hopeless & incurable

\* **Myth:** there is a clear line between mental illness & health

\* **Myth:** the mentally disordered are prone to violence & crime

\* **Myth:** midwinter depression = a mental illness (S.A.D.)

## (2) Types of Mental Disorder:

- \* Psychiatry: 2 views: medical vs. psychoanalytic
- \* *Traditional classification*: organic (injury) vs. functional disorders (psychological and social causation)
- \* Functional disorders: psychosis, neurosis and personality disorder
- \* Psychosis: losing touch with reality (e.g. Schizophrenia/ manic depression)
- \* Neurosis: little distortion of reality/ but unhappy (e.g. anxiety, phobias, OCD, depression, psychosomatic illness)
- \* Personality disorders: lack of concern for others (e.g. psychopaths)
- \* Medically-oriented psychiatrists view traditional system as too broad/ambiguous
- \* Prefer to use DSM-IV classification to diagnose symptoms of 300+ “mental disorders” (and efficiently collect payment)
- \* DSM-IV classification criticized:
  - merely descriptive/ not analytical
  - arbitrary definitions (# of symptoms)
  - focus on treating symptoms not cause (given drugs)
  - overemphasizes medical/biological view of mental disorder
  - defining mental disorders too broadly

## **(2) Social Factors in Mental Disorder:**

\* Sociologists emphasize impact of social factors on mental disorder:

- (1) Lower social class (social causation vs. social drift)
- (2) Gender: women (depression/anxiety)  
men (antisocial personality, paranoia, addictions)
- (3) Race/ethnicity: overall level unclear/ specific disorders  
notable among certain groups
- (4) Urban environment
- (5) Young age (esp. since 1980's): more social stresses with fewer  
coping resources

\* Next class:

- (1) Social responses to mental disorders
- (2) Theories of mental disorder