

## SOC 3290 Deviance

### Overheads Lecture 6: The Pathological Perspective 1:

#### \* Introduction:

- Many previously immoral/sinful behaviors now “medicalized” as diseases of body/mind
- Excludes other interpretations/explanations
- May act as a means of control

\* Transformed classical perspective’s focus on free choice into causation

\* Legitimized by rhetoric of science/ provided simple answers

#### **Theoretical Images:**

\* Popularized by Lombroso’s Criminal Man (1876):

- “Born criminals” are evolutionary throwbacks (“atavists”)
- identified by physical anomalies (e.g. receding forehead)
- compared prisoners/soldiers to back this up
- earlier writers had similar ideas (e.g. Hippocrates, Della Porter, Lavater, Rush, Gall and Spurzheim).

\* Three essential components of pathological theorizing:

- (1) Determinism (deviance is caused, not chosen)
- (2) Positivism (faith in the scientific method)
- (3) Organic image (society like a large organism)

## **History of Pathological Theorizing: Cycles of Optimism + Failure:**

\* Pathological perspective runs in historical cycles:

(1) Optimism; (2) Failure; & (3) Renewed faith

\* We will detail this history in two parts:

(1) Theories related to “sick” bodies;

(2) Theories related to “sick” minds

### **(1) From Body Types to Chromosomes:**

\* Lombroso’s ideas refuted by Goring (1913)

\* Hooton (1939) resurrected Lombroso in The American Criminal

Problems:

(1) Prisoners can’t be equated with deviants (not all caught)

(2) Control groups unrepresentative

(3) “Physical inferiorities” = value judgements

(4) Traits may be socially derived

(5) previous incarceration for other crimes

\* Sheldon: Body types predispose to types of deviance:

(1) Endomorphs (fat, round, crave luxury)

(2) Ectomorphs (frail, skinny, plagued by physical problems)

(3) Mesomorphs (robust, strong, assertive= more delinquent)

\* Methodological problems: -vague definitions & measurements;

- social influences in classification

- \* Charles Goring: Focus on Heredity. Compared criminality of:
  - brothers
  - fathers and sons
  - distinguished (1) living together/apart
    - (2) visible vs. invisible crimes
  - correlation in levels of criminality high: mental ability?
  - problems: (1) inadequate controls
    - (2) visible/invisible distinction
    - (3) No evidence intelligence inherited
  
- \* Sensationalistic studies of family genealogy:
  - Dugdales' The Jukes
  - Goddard's study of Kalliak family
  - suggestion that deviance runs in families
  - Refuted: (1) studies of "respectable families" comparable
    - (2) biased sources
    - (3) subjective IQ measures
  
- \* IQ studies:
  - Goddard: 70% of prisoners have IQ (rated below age 13)
  - Murchison: not if most other do too
  - IQ scores fluctuate with education, linguistic and socioeconomic background
  
- \* Genetic studies: Identical vs. Fraternal twins (NOT 100%)
  - Adoption studies (small differences)
  - XYY males: research very limited
  - Generally many methodological problems

### **Psychological Pathology: The Abnormal Mind:**

- \* Deviance considered the result of a sick mind
- \* Three variations: (1) Psychoanalytic theory
  - (2) Psychometric assessments
  - (3) Focus on psychopathy
- \* Psychoanalytic theory:
  - Deviance caused by unconscious forces/repressed sexuality
  - Id: made up of libido and thanatos (“death instinct”)
  - lack of balance between id, superego and ego= deviance
  - problematic stages of personality development (oral, anal, and phallic)
- \* Problems:
  - unconscious motives can be found for anything
  - circular reasoning
  - unquestioned acceptance of modern male heterosexuality
  - exaggeration of importance of early childhood experience
- \* Psychometric assessments:
  - assume certain personality traits associated with deviance
  - little evidence backs this up
  - MMPI and CPI scales after the fact/ not predictive
  - Eysenck: genetic personality deficiency: neurobiological assumptions problematic
  - Yochelson & Samenow: circular reasoning
- \* Psychopathy Research: The search for people devoid of conscience
  - List of symptoms vague/ some even “normal”

- Disease not distinguished from behaviors
- Circular reasoning
- Biological measurements: (1) problem of subject selection  
(2) behavior itself may cause

### **Identifying Pathological Deviance:**

\* Search for causes/cures based in faith in:

- (1) science/scientific method
- (2) ability to predict/control

\* Ultimate goal: rational mastery over nature/deviance

\* Yet many problems with research/methodology:

(1) Physiological studies:

- imprecise definitions
- poor sampling
- inadequate control groups

(2) Psychological studies:

- professional socialization
- contextual variation in diagnosis
- class/cultural stereotyping
- definitional ambiguity
- circular reasoning

\* Why has this perspective remained respectable?

### **Historical considerations:**

\* Pathological theorizing/positivism linked to capitalism:

- efficient control of labor = profit maximization
- “technology of inner discipline” most efficient

- material science promises technical control
- “treatment” and “rehabilitation” into useful laborers

\* Prisons:

- constant surveillance/control
- classify individuals into types
- facilitate causal theorizing/molding useful workers
- similar dynamics in other institutions
- common now/ radical in early 19<sup>th</sup> century

\* Instrumental nature of positivism:

(1) Gender-specific hierarchies:

- advocacy of contextless, emotionless objectivity (male)
- parallels distancing/projection in pornography (“virtual reality of mastery”)
- sadism = bridge between classical/positivist thought
- pornography put into practice: powerful/positivist medicine making over the mind/body of alleged deviant

(2) Non-white/non-Eurocentric hierarchies:

- “neutrality” and emotional disengagement dismisses other traditions/epistemologies (e.g. African tradition of “ecstatic knowledge”).
- pathological characterizations of racial inferiority
- exclusive standard of truth denies other viewpoints

- \* Next Class: (1) Pathological social control  
(2) Assessment of the perspective