

**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 dyskinesia)
- \* 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 & Herrnstein: 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 (Ritalen)
- \* 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 Ritalen/ 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