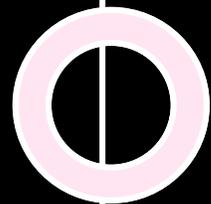




**FORENSIC
PSYCHOLOGY
& DISCOURSE**

KATHY FOX, PH.D.
SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF
VERMONT(USA)



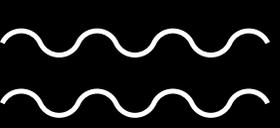


Outline

Dominance of psychological paradigm in corrections

Consequence of psychological discourse in practice

Alternatives: a more “social” perspective



Disciplinary Discourse

“Discipline” is of the mind, rather than just body

- Self-discipline and correction

Sciences become agents of power

- Parameters for what constitutes “truth”



● Psychological Discourse

CBT:

Yochelson & Samenow “Criminal Personality”

Cognitive distortions/thinking errors

Idea is to help people to:

Identify their thinking errors

Replace them with new ways of thinking

Change their criminal habits, reactions

Examples:

“victim stance”

“anger”

“sees self as a good person”





CONSEQUENCES

+ self-
awareness/reflection

Essentializing
discourse

Conceptually
difficult

Impossible to resist

Discounts
situational/social
factors



● Self awareness/reflection

- Situation: participant angry because other incarcerated person didn't refill coffee pot.
- Thinking error: "Failure to consider others"

F: Does that pattern fit?

P: It fits the person who emptied the coffeepot and didn't fill it back up!

F: Could it ever fit you?

P: Now that I think about it, it could be, like when I steal from someone.



● Essentializing discourse

- Situation: Participant angry because he is required to do programming.

F: It's not just a violent offender program...it's for criminal thinking, like "I can break this rule."

P: But if it's all that, why would I have to take a separate drug and alcohol program?

F: Did you recently get some bad news?

P: No, it's just that...

F: Did you recently get some bad news?

P: [angrily] No! I see what you're getting at!



● Conceptually difficult

Situation:

Discussing the crime for which the participant was convicted...

F: Do you think that's criminal?

P: Yeah, I guess, but what do you want [for the assignment]?

F: How are *you* criminal?

P: I reject the thought of being a criminal. That's what it says [on the thinking errors list]. That's what I do...



- And impossible to resist...

F: You gotta get past this “this ain’t gonna work” stuff.

P: So what you’re saying is I shouldn’t be honest. I should tell you what you wanna hear?

F: Well, by telling us what we want to hear, you’re gonna know what we want...

P: I don’t have a clue what you want!

P: You’re forcing us to do something that’s senseless. I am supposed to base my problems, my past, on this fucking list [of thinking errors].

F: We’re not forcing you...

P: Yeah, but if we don’t do it, we don’t pass and we don’t get out!





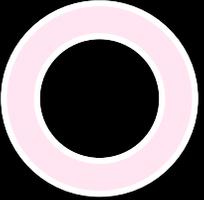
**Discounts
social/situational
factors**

P: The situation was, I had been drinking, getting drunk, with my girlfriend, and she pissed me off so I went to bed. I was sleeping and my girlfriend punched me in the balls so I broke her jaw. Then you said I didn't need to put so much here...

F: We don't need an explanation—like this getting drunk and all that—just what you did: you broke her jaw.

P: I was sleeping and my girlfriend punched me in the balls and I broke her jaw. Is that acceptable?

F: I don't know if I'd use the word acceptable...



Situation:
Participant felt
“justified” when
his safety
threatened.

P: She was hitting me.

F: How did it get to that point?

P: Oh, I see, so it’s my fault.

F: It might be—who knows?

P: No, it wasn’t.

F: So, “victim stance”?

P: yeah, most definitely. I don’t think that’s a thinking error. I mean look at the situation. I shoulda fucking smashed her head in.



● Social structural alternatives

"Sociology went out in the 70s"

Individual pathology=
Incomplete picture

"Social" pathology=
More accurate

Strengths-based
Good Lives Model

"Not that liberal relativist crap!"

Backgrounds: disadvantaged

Prison itself

- Criminogenic
- Hyper masculine

Reentry challenging





For more
information:

Kathy Fox
Kfox@uvm.edu

Thank you!

