FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY & DISCOURSE

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Outline

- Dominance of psychological paradigm in corrections
- Consequence of psychological discourse in practice
- Alternatives: a more “social” perspective
Disciplinary Discourse

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<th>“Discipline” is of the mind, rather than just body</th>
<th>Sciences become agents of power</th>
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<td>• Self-discipline and correction</td>
<td>• Parameters for what constitutes “truth”</td>
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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!
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:

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Thank you!