

An Integrated Stress Process Theory: Viewing Intersections of Crime and Mental Illness

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Criminal and mentally ill populations have traditionally been addressed by different systems and corrective philosophies. Recent studies, however, have identified high prevalence rates of depression and substance abuse disorders among inmates. Such comorbidity presents numerous conceptual challenges. Mental health theories are not designed to explain crime; criminology is not calibrated to explain depression. This article proposes paradigmatic modifications designed to help theory catch up with data. Criminological concepts of “criminal coping” and “deviant peers” are integrated into the Stress Process paradigm. A theory for explaining comorbidity and covariation of crime and mental illness is proposed. Social policy implications are raised. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2009 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

Conventional perspectives dichotomize mental illness and crime into distinct and largely unrelated categories. Both “being mad” and “being bad” (Mechanic, 1999) involve social deviance, yet each is ascribed with

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