Blog Topic: The Mind of A Psychopath

(...) Are psychopaths suffering from a ‘disease’? What is the direction of causality with respect to research findings involving the brain? Should they be held responsible for their actions? Should they be punished? Should considerations regarding the origins of psychopathy be introduced during trials of crimes like the Connecticut murders discussed above?

I think after everything going on in the world today -like the Boston Bombing, the movie theater shooting in Aurora, CO and the elementary school shooting in Newtown, CT, we as a society need to be educated more on mental health. I do not believe the government, or society at large, sees how important one’s state of mental health is -it is as important to one’s development as their overall health. The brain is one of the major organs in the body, controlling so much of our day to day actions. It’s health is just as important, if not more, than that of our skin, teeth, and other bodily organs that people make sure they keep up with. I feel like with society, mental health has a certain stigma and is looked at in a negative light. If someone has a psychologists they go to, it’s not talked about or others look at it negatively; but if someone is going to see a dermatologists that’s okay because it is about their health. Psychologists deal with the mental health of an individual and that is just as important as keeping up the health of any other part of the body.

I feel like because of the negative thoughts and stigma on issues with mental health there isn’t enough money given to research in the mental field, to help us further understand what causes individuals to become psychopaths. There also isn’t enough federal funding given to mental field to help treat and care for individuals, many of the mental health facilities in the area have had to shut down because of lack of federal funding. If as a society we understood the importance of mental health and prevention we could see, I think, a decrease in these horrific cases. I do not think, however, we can ever eliminate these cases, nor do I believe that just focusing on abnormalities of the brain is key. I do not believe, and we talked about this at the beginning of the year slightly when discussing the mind being separate from the brain, that the brain is the end-all. People do not realize the effects of one’s environment and how that can play a role in one’s mental health. That is why I think education is needed for society as a whole to fully grasp the importance of mental health.
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This is a very “sensitive” and uncomfortable subject to discuss, but it is one that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, these “psychopaths” find a way to turn up on our television screens by their heinous and destructive actions. Too often, we recognize psychopaths as those who murder or hurt innocent people for no apparent reason. It saddens me to think that this kind of thing keeps reoccurring. I just wish there was a logical solution to predict or counter these types of events from happening. I keep asking myself, why would someone do this? Why would you hurt innocent people? It gives me chills because I am a product of my environment and have been taught to believe that I am safe wherever I go in the United States.

This is where the debate comes in: should these psychopaths be charged for their crimes the same way as people who are not psychopaths? In one hand, these people are responsible for their voluntary actions that has caused others pain and suffering. It is their motivation that has fueled their actions to be so daunting and cruel to others. In the other hand, one would argue that psychopaths cannot help their thinking. The irrational thinking of a psychopath is where the problem lies. That type of thinking leads to bad things happening.

For example, we have experienced a tragedy this week in Boston, Massachusetts of two suspects that were responsible for the explosions at the Boston Marathon. Unfortunately, people were hurt and killed. We will by default think that these suspects are the scum of the earth and that justice should be served in any way possible. We can do that, but it is imperative to understand and find out the motive of these suspects wrongdoing. As a student of psychology, I believe it is our mandate to get as much information from these suspects that commit these crimes. We need to begin to understand their unstable mental processing and what exactly led up to the point where they made the decision to hurt others. Violence is not the answer.