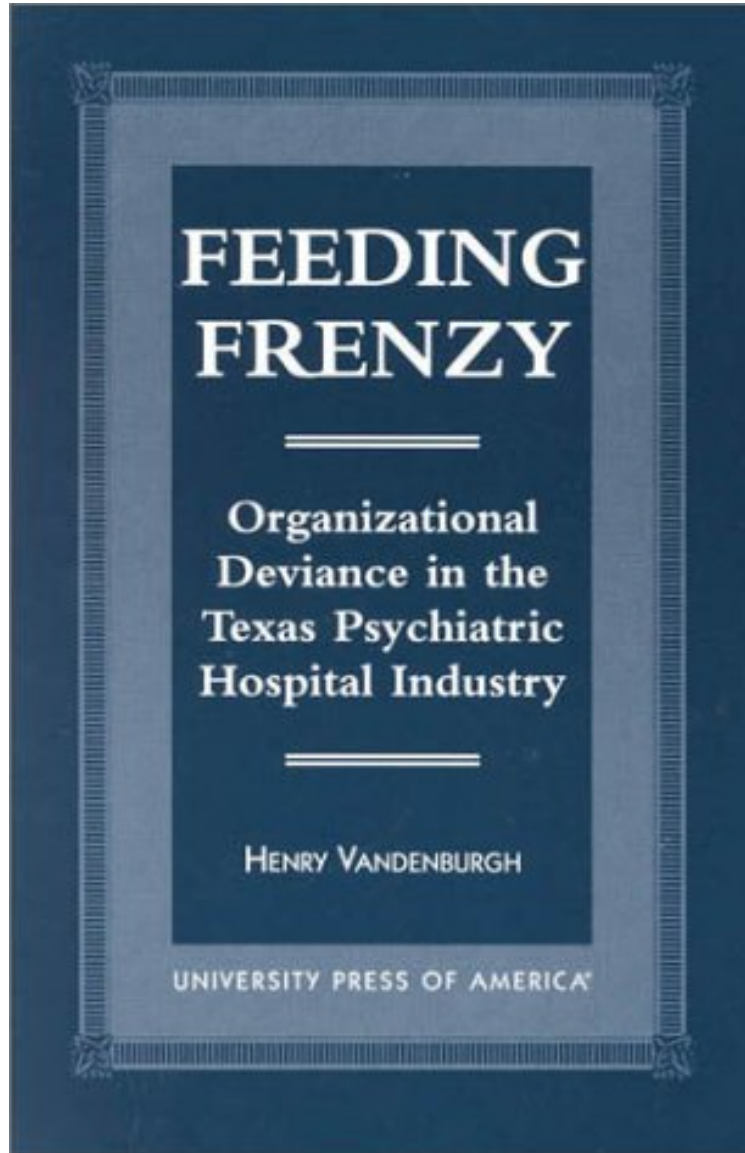


Feeding Frenzy: Organizational Deviance in the Texas Psychiatric Hospital Industry

Henry Vandenburg

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Henry Vandenburg : Feeding Frenzy: Organizational Deviance in the Texas Psychiatric Hospital Industry before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Feeding Frenzy: Organizational Deviance in the Texas Psychiatric Hospital Industry:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading, particularly for ex-patients made victim by the

scandalBy DaniellIf you had the misfortune of doing time in a for-profit Texas Psychiatric Hospital as a teenager during the 80s or early 90s, this is a worthwhile read. Vanderburgh offers up a detailed and highly damning account of the various unethical marketing and hospitalization tactics practiced by psychiatrists and hospital administrators, often including quotes from former employees acknowledging abuses either witnessed or participated in. Of particular interest to Vanderburgh are the economic rewards reaped by the unnecessary hospitalization of mentally-stable, well-insured teens. And I must admit, reading this book alongside my own medical records from the era was especially enlightening. I believe the book might've benefited from additional patient accounts. There are only a few included here, and given that thousands of children and teenagers ultimately were made victims by this rather outrageous era, it seems a pity that their specific recollections are underrepresented in the text. Having been a former patient in one such hospital for a half year, and spoken with many ex-patients I met back then, I'm sadly more than familiar with tales of downward spirals that began in a place ostensibly meant to help heal hurting kids. That notwithstanding, this is a worthwhile read. It's a play book for a crooked game, and if you ever found yourself forced to play it as a youth, and wondered why you couldn't win, well, now you know.

Feeding Frenzy reports the methods used by for-profit Texas psychiatric hospitals to recruit patients. Henry Vanderburgh found the use of marketing techniques such as 'suction' intake departments, seeking to hospitalize at least 30 percent of callers prompted by magazine ads, and the use of professional patient finders who set up support groups for parents of unruly teenagers and received \$1,500 bounties for each admission brought to hospitals in the late 1980's and early 1990's. He also found the funneling of payments of as much as \$20,000 a month to doctors who provided admissions, and the use of marketing social workers, hired by the hospital as program directors to supervise patient care, who actually spend 70 percent of their time in the community asking for referrals. Vanderburgh uncovered many other tactics, including stationing counselors at public schools for no charge, who in turn attempted to direct as many adolescents with 'good' insurance coverage to the hospital. Many hospitals also provided similar services to probation officers and police officers. Teams from hospitals even visited emergency rooms to compete for potential patients by offering free assessments. Also, once patients were successfully admitted, program directors manipulated the doctors to avoid discharging them until their insurance resources were exhausted. Vanderburgh exposes these unethical practices through interviews with hospital employees, using statistical techniques that prove that the practice of furnishing high physician stipends was widespread and that it led to the delivery of patients. He also notes that payments were likely to be higher in markets where competition was strong.

About the AuthorHenry Vanderburgh is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York at Oswego.