Abnormal Psychology

- Abnormal Psychology
  - refers to the subject area concerned with the nature, causes, and development of abnormal behavior, thoughts, and feelings.
  - "Abnormal" is relative; it varies across time, place, and culture.

The Study of Abnormal Behavior

What is Abnormal?
What do you think?

Myths and Misconceptions About Abnormal Behavior

- No Single Definition of Psychological Abnormality
- No Single Definition of Psychological Normality
Identifying Abnormal Behavior: Basic Standards

- Statistical Infrequency
  - Paranoia, hallucinations, clinical depression
  - But:

Identifying Abnormal Behavior: Basic Standards

- Psychological Dysfunction
  - Breakdown in cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning
    - Hard to define “dysfunction”
    - Sometimes maladaptive behavior is a good thing

Identifying Abnormal Behavior: Basic Standards

- Personal Distress
  - Suicidal thoughts
  - Upset at own behavior (excessive elation, cleanliness)
  - But: sometimes distress is expected and normal - loss of a loved one.
  - Charles Manson - no remorse; MR, TV
Identifying Abnormal Behavior: Basic Standards

- Deviation from an Ideal
  - Failing to achieve a personal/cultural ideal
  - Vague: Whose ideal?

Identifying Abnormal Behavior: Basic Standards

- Atypical or Not Culturally Expected
  - Shouting at strangers, public nudity
  - Social reformers/protesters would be labeled as abnormal
  - Norms aren’t stable over time: Homosexuality

Conclusions

- All of the above definitions are incomplete.

- We all have a definition in our heads, whether we can clearly state it or not. Choosing a definition is inherently arbitrary.
Abnormal Behavior Defined

• A Psychological Dysfunction Associated With Distress or Impairment in Functioning That is not a Typical or Culturally Expected Response

• Psychopathology is the Scientific Study of Psychological Disorders

The Science of Psychopathology

• Mental Health Professionals
  • The Ph.D.’s: Clinical and counseling psychologists
  • The Psy.D.’s: Clinical and counseling “Doctors of Psychology”
  • M.D.’s: Psychiatrists
  • M.S.W.’s: Psychiatric and non-psychiatric social workers
  • MN/MSN’s: Psychiatric nurses
  • United by the Scientist-Practitioner Framework

To Become a Psychologist

• Ph.D. or Psy.D.
• 4-7 yrs graduate study (the range is probably more like 5-9 years).
• 1-year pre-doctoral internship in APA accredited hospital or mental health facility.
• At least 1 year of supervised post-doctoral experience for licensure (varies by state)
Difference between Ph.D. & Psy.D

• A Ph.D. is trained to:
  • conduct research, teach
  • assess & diagnose mental disorders
  • conduct therapy
• A Psy.D
  • limited to clinical practice.
  • Modeled after the M.D. degree.

Psychiatrist

• 4 yrs Medical school (M.D.)
• 4-5 yr residency in hospital
• ***Can prescribe medication for mental disorders-because of M.D. training.
  • Recent development: Psychologists are gaining limited prescriptive authority in some states... e.g. Louisiana, New Mexico

History of Psychopathology

• Supernatural Tradition: Mental illness was thought to be the result of supernatural forces (angry Gods, possession by demons).
**Mental illness: a biological problem?**

- Biological Tradition:
  - 5th century B.C., mental illness—a physical disease (e.g. Hippocrates and unbalanced humors).
  - “Somatogenesis”

**The Dark Ages**

- Church gains power; Demonology makes a come-back!!

**Mentally ill housed in asylums (1500s+)**

- Asylums converted after crusades when leprosy was on a decline.
- Deplorable conditions and treatment
- Biological tradition mixed with supernatural
Asylums became “attraction.”

Moral Treatment (1790s +)

- Philippe Pinel – humane treatment of mentally ill in asylums.
- Patients formerly chained & shackled were released & free to roam the buildings.

Treatment: cannabis, opium, alcohol.

Psychological Traditions

- Psychoanalysis
  - Unconscious drives and motivations
  - Associated with Freud, Jung, eg.
- Behaviorism
  - Rewards and punishments determine behavior
  - Associated with Pavlov, Watson, Skinner
- Humanism
  - Not feeling accepted or connected
  - Associated with Rogers, Maslow
Modern Psychiatry

Mental illness—Most are a combination of biological, psychological, and sociological causes

Treatment: somatic therapy (drugs, ECT) or psychotherapy

Psychological terms

- Presenting Problem: Original complaint
- Etiology: Cause
- Prevalence: How many people in the population have a disorder
- Incidence: The number of new cases in a given time period
- Course: Pattern of development and change
- Prognosis: Predicted future development or outcome