

Introduction to Abnormal Psychology
(Psych 235)
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Outline/Overview

- Abnormality – definitions & related issues
- Treatment of abnormality
- A continuum-mental health to abnormality
- Case study: Joyce Brown (Billie Boggs)
- Diagnostic reliability – issues w/diagnosis
- Research methods


What is psychological abnormality?

- Cultural Inappropriateness – Different, extreme, unusual
- Subjective Distress – Unpleasant & upsetting
- Psychological Disability – Interfering with life
- Disability can elevate to dangerousness




Abnormality (other ideas)

- suffering
- maladaptiveness
- irrationality and incomprehensibility
- unpredictability and loss of control
- vividness and unconventionality
- observer discomfort
- violation of moral and ideal standards



Definitions of abnormality

- Differ dramatically over time
- Across cultures
- Examples
 - homosexuality
 - culture specific disorders



What do we do about abnormality?

Provide treatment to “correct”

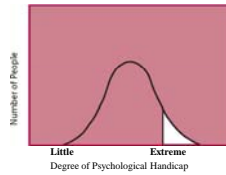
1. A sufferer who seeks relief from the healer
2. A trained, socially acceptable healer, whose expertise is accepted by the sufferer and his or her social group
3. A series of contacts between the healer and the sufferer, through which the healer tries to produce certain changes in the sufferer’s emotional state, attitudes, and behavior

Who does diagnosis & treatment

- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Counselor
- Whoever is doing the dx/tx
 - essentially a societal judgment
 - simple idiosyncrasies labeled abnormal
 - irrational to an observer may make sense from the actor's perspective


Abnormality is a Continuum

- Lieben und arbeiten - Freud
- Psychological disability - a continuum along which people vary.
- Most fall in middle range, mild-to-moderate handicaps.
- Cut point between normal and abnormal, e.g., unshaded area, is arbitrary.



What is Mental Health?

- Individuals with good mental health tend to share several attributes:
 - able to function effectively and to find satisfaction in life
 - have lasting and emotionally gratifying relations
 - likely to make a realistic appraisal of their own talents and shortcomings
 - able to cope effectively with adverse circumstances




The case of Joyce Brown (a.k.a. Billie Boggs)

JOHN HUSTON: 1906-1987
Stories on P. 7; Ebert's tribute: P. 15

NEW YORK POST
Saturday, August 26, 1987

KOCH ORDERS SWEEP-UP OF MENTALLY ILL




Diagnostic Reliability

- The extent to which a measure consistently yields the same results on repeated trials.
 - *Interobserver reliability*: The extent to which different observers (or raters) agree on the way they categorize or in some way quantify a given observation.
- Psychological measurement is never as precise as physical measurement.
 - Psychological measures only sample a small part of the domain of how a person acts, or thinks, or feels

Two examples of diagnostic difficulties

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Symptom pictures
- 43 combinations possible, 63 for children
- Major Depressive Episode
- 326 different disorders, 489 for children symptom




Generalized Anxiety Disorder

A. Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance).

B. The person finds it difficult to control the worry.

C. The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (with at least some symptoms present for more days than not for the past 6 months). Note: Only one item is required in children.

- (1) restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- (2) being easily fatigued
- (3) difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- (4) irritability
- (5) muscle tension
- (6) sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless unsatisfying sleep)




Major Depressive Disorder

A. Five (or more) of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.


Note: Do not include symptoms that are clearly due to a general medical condition, or mood-incongruent delusions or hallucinations.

- (1) depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated by either subjective report (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observation made by others (e.g., appears tearful). **Note:** In children and adolescents, can be irritable mood.
- (2) markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day (as indicated by either subjective account or observation made by others)
- (3) significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day. **Note:** In children, consider failure to make expected weight gains.
- (4) insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
- (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down)
- (6) fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day
- (7) feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick)
- (8) diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day (either by subjective account or as observed by others)
- (9) recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide




Research methods

- Clinical case study
- Epidemiological studies
 - Incidence
 - Prevalence
- Longitudinal designs
- Correlational studies
 - Correlation ≠ Causation
- Experiments - statistical inference
 - Control group, random assignment, blind design



Research methods (cont.)

- Alternative methods
 - single subject designs A-B-A-B
 - experiments of nature
 - analogue designs
 - quasi experiments
- All methods useful, strengths and weaknesses differ



Psychotherapy research

- Efficacy studies
 - test under controlled laboratory conditions
- Effectiveness studies
 - test treatments actually conducted in the “real world”
