

# Abnormal Psychology

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by

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# Chapter 1

## Looking at Abnormality

# Abnormality along the Continuum

- Continuum Model of Abnormality
  - No clear line between normal and abnormal
  - Requires subjective decisions about when a person has a disorder or not


# What Is Normal and Abnormal?



A man  
kissing  
another  
man



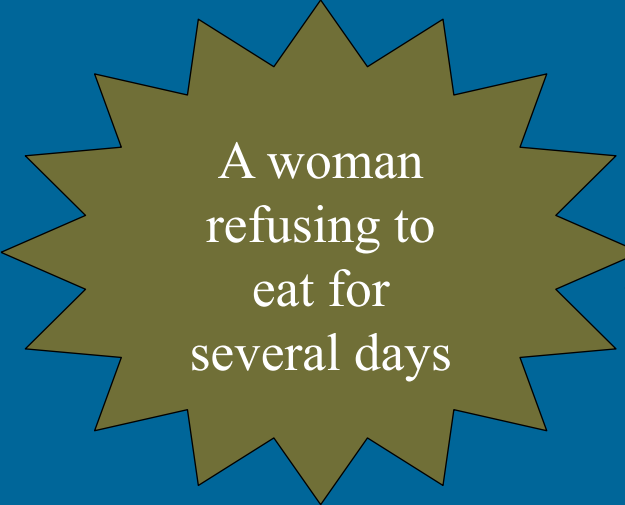
A woman  
slapping a  
child




A woman  
making a shrine  
and offerings to  
her dead  
husband



A man  
barking like  
a dog



A woman  
refusing to  
eat for  
several days



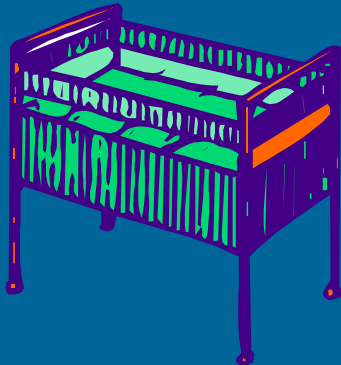
A man  
driving a  
nail through  
his hand

# Past Criteria for Normal and Abnormal

- Cultural relativism
- Unusualness of behavior
- Distress (discomfort of the person exhibiting the behavior)
- Mental illness

# Standard 1: Cultural Relativism

- No universal standards or rules for labeling a behavior as abnormal.
- Instead, behaviors can only be abnormal relative to cultural norms.



Example: In many cultures, family members sleep together in one room, often in the same bed. In the U.S., it is considered normal for babies to sleep in their own bed in their own room.

# Cultural Relativism cont.- Gender Role Expectations

- How are men expected to act? What types of behaviors are discouraged?
- How are women encouraged to act? What types of behaviors are discouraged?

# Standard 2: Unusualness

- Is the behavior rare?

(Depends in part on the norms for that behavior in a culture.)



# Standard 3: Distress

- Proponents of this view argue that a behavior is only abnormal if the individual suffers as a result of the behavior(s) and wishes to be rid of them.
- Some therapists object to the subjective discomfort criterion because people are not always aware of problems that their behavior may create for themselves or others.

# Standard 4: Mental Illness

- Implies there is a disease process, like hypertension
- There is, as yet, no medical test that identifies “mental illness”
- Psychological diagnosis is a label for a set of defined symptoms

# The Four “D’s” of Abnormality

## ■ Maladaptive = abnormal

- Dysfunction
- Distress
- Deviance (unusual)
- Danger

# Historical Perspectives

- Biological theories

- Similar to physical disease, breakdown of some systems of the body.

- Supernatural theories

- Divine intervention, curses, demonic possession, and personal sin.

- Psychological theories

- Mental disorders as the result of trauma(s).

# Ancient Theories

- Stone age

- Spirit possession

- Trephination

- Ancient China

- Balancing Yin and Yang

- Emotions controlled by internal organs



# Ancient Theories, *continued*

- Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome
  - Primarily “natural” theories
  - Hysteria
- Medieval views
  - Witchcraft
  - Psychic epidemics

# The Growth of Asylums During the Renaissance

- As early as the 12th century, hospitals began to include special rooms for people with mental disorders.
  - Treatment was often inhumane.
  - **Example: La Bicetre Hospital**
- Asylums were established and run by people who thought mental disorders were medical illnesses.
  - **Example: Benjamin Rush**

# Moral Treatment in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

- Movement toward a more humane treatment of the mentally ill
- Incorporated a psychological view:  
People become mad because they are separated from nature and succumb to the stresses imposed by the rapid social changes of the period.



# Modern Perspectives

- Biological
- Psychoanalytic
- Behaviorism
- Cognitive

# Biological Perspective

- **Biological emphasis as cause of abnormalities**
- **A classification system** using objective criteria and definitions
- Discovery of syphilis as the cause of **general paresis**, gave credence to biological factors as a cause of abnormality

# Modern Perspectives, *continued*

- **Psychoanalytic perspective** focused on the role of the unconscious
- **Behaviorism** examined the role of reinforcement and punishment in determining behavior
- **Cognitive approach** – how people think about their world and beliefs in self-efficacy often determines emotions and behaviors

# Modern Mental Health Care

- Development of pharmaceutical therapies
- Deinstitutionalization
- Managed care

# Deinstitutionalization

- ❑ Patients' rights – patients could recover more fully or live more satisfying lives if they were integrated into the community, with the support of community-based treatment facilities –
- ❑ Community mental health movement
- ❑ Halfway houses
- ❑ Day treatment centers
- ❑ Community mental health centers

# Professions Within Abnormal Psychology

Psychiatrists

Clinical psychologists

Clinical social workers

Psychiatric nurses

Licensed mental health counselors

Marriage and family therapists