Psychopathology

Introduction and History
Week 1:1
Syllabus

Review
Abnormal Behavior: Myths and Misconceptions

• What’s psychologically normal?

• What’s not?

• How do we describe people with mental illness?
  – Lazy, crazy, dumb?
  – Weak in character?
  – Dangerous?
  – Hopeless?
• **Case #1:**

  Tom is uncomfortable riding escalators. As a result, Tom avoids using any escalator.

*Remember to explore cases and scenarios fully before making snap judgments about peoples behaviors.*

*Teasing out normal from abnormal behavior is tricky!*
• a. How old is Tom? Is it more "normal" for Tom to fear escalators if he is a child versus an adult? Discuss developmental issues.

• b. What culture does Tom come from? Has he ever had exposure to an escalator? Cultural contexts must always be considered when evaluating abnormal behavior.

• c. How does Tom manage his fear? What symptoms does he have?

• d. To what extent does Tom avoid using escalators? Does his fear significantly interfere with his life?
• **Case #2:**

• Rachel has been caught urinating in the corner of her bedroom. Is her behavior abnormal?
• a. How old is Rachel? The clinical picture is very different if Rachel is one year old than if she is 13 years old. Discuss the importance of understanding developmental psychology.

• b. How many times has she engaged in the behavior? A pattern of behavior may be viewed differently than if it is a rare occurrence.

• c. Does Rachel have a medical condition? Is she on any medications? Rachel may have a medical or organic condition that accounts for her behavior.

• d. Has Rachel experienced a recent trauma or is she exposed to unusual stressors?

• e. How does Rachel feel about her behavior? How does she explain it?
In some cases, it is easy to pinpoint "abnormal behavior"
In other Cases, it is not so clear:

What is normal?

- Your uncle consumes a quart of whiskey per day; he has trouble remembering the names of those around him.

- Your grandmother believes that part of her body is missing and cries out about this missing part all day long. You show her the part that is missing but she refuses to acknowledge this contradictory information.

- Your neighbor has vague physical complaints and sees 2-3 doctors weekly.

- Your neighbor sweeps, washes, and scrubs his driveway daily.

- Your cousin is pregnant, and she is dieting (800 calories per day) so that she will not get "too fat" with the pregnancy. She has had this type of behavioral response since she was 13 years old.

- A woman's husband dies within the past year. The widow appears to talk to herself in the yard, doesn't wash herself or dress in clean clothes, and has evidently lost a lot of weight.

- A 10-year-old wants to have his entire body tattooed.

- A 23-year-old female smokes 4-5 marijuana joints a day, is a straight A student in college, has a successful job, and is in a solid long-term relationship.

- A person experiences several unexpected panic attacks each week, but is otherwise happily married, functions well at work, and leads an active recreational lifestyle.

- A 35-year-old happily married man enjoys wearing women’s clothes and underwear on the weekends when he and his wife go out on the town.
What is a Psychological Disorder?

- Psychological dysfunction
  - Breakdown in function
    - Cognitive
    - Behavioral
    - Emotional

- “Harmful dysfunction” (Wakefield)
What is a Psychological Disorder?

- Distress or impairment
  - Individual versus others
    - If it doesn’t bother you- then it’s not distress
    - Society seems to forgive eccentricity if a person doesn’t have impairment, and this forgiveness is directly proportionate to success.
  - Appropriateness to situation
    - Ex: death
- Degree of impairment
What is a Psychological Disorder?

• Response is not typical or culturally expected
  – Frequency
  – Deviations from “average”
  – Eccentricity

• Violation of social norms
How Do We Classify Psychological Disorders?

• Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
  – DSM-IV-TR
  – Outlines criteria for disorders
  – Prototypes/typical profiles
  – Constant revision and modification
    • DSM-V
    • This is all still constantly debated
What is a Psychological Disorder?

• Accepted DSM-IV-TR definition:
  – Behavioral, cognitive, emotional dysfunctions
  – Unexpected in cultural context
  – Personal distress
  – Substantial impairment in function
The Science of Psychopathology

• Study of psychological disorders

• Conducted by
  – Clinical and counseling psychologists (PhD, PsyD)
  – Psychiatrists (MD)
  – Psychiatric social workers (MSW)
  – Psychiatric nurses (MN, MSN, PhD)
  – Marriage and family therapists (MA, MS, MFT)
  – Mental health counselors (MA, MS)
The Scientist-Practitioner Framework

• Interaction of clinical work and science
  – Consumer of science
    • Informs practice
  – Evaluator of practice
    • Utilizes science
  – Creator of science
    • Synthesizes both

…. The Boulder Model!

Can you Guess Why I have this Picture on this Slide???
Clinical Description of Abnormality

- Presenting Problem

- Statistics
  - Prevalence
  - Incidence
Clinical Description of Abnormality

• Course
  – Episodic
  – Time-limited
  – Chronic

• Onset
  – Acute vs. insidious

• Prognosis
  – Good vs. guarded
Causation, Treatment, and Outcomes

- **Etiology**
  - Cause or development of psychopathology

- **Treatment**
  - Pharmacologic and/or psychosocial

- **Treatment Outcome Research**
  - Does the effect reveal the cause?
Common Errors in thinking about Psychopathology

“My friend’s aunt had a brutal case of depression a few years ago. She used to live in Seattle, but decided to go visit her friend down in Tucson for the winter last year. By the end of the winter her depression was gone—I guess the warm sun down there cured her!”
Anecdotes do not equal evidence

- Striking cases can be extremely memorable and provide excellent opportunities for learning.
- These cases are useful for hypothesis generation.
- These hypotheses must then be systematically tested.
The earth has been slumbering for eons, and with the inception of positive energy quasars is about to waken new consciousness. Masters of limitation and masters of divination manifest their realities in this same creative force; however, one moves in a downward spiral and one in an upward spiral by increasing the resonance within them.

From an article on “depression” in a newspaper in Santa Fe, NM
Scientific language does not make it science.
“Bipolar Disorder does not exist. My uncle has it and he makes like $400,000 as a lawyer--his dad says this is why he’s successful. Besides, they don’t even have a biological test for it--it’s just your opinion.”

*From a discussion of psychopathology on the web:*
Psychopathology often impacts multiple aspects of life functioning, but usually not all aspects.
The mayor is interested in factors that increase antisocial behavior. Over five years we assess many different variables and examine whether any of the explanatory variables is associated with increased levels of violent crime.

At the end of the study, we find out that the number of permits issued to ice cream vendors is positively associated with the number of violent crimes committed (so the more permits that are issued, the higher the rate of violent crime).

Based on this information, the mayor decides to ban all ice cream sales in the city.
Correlation is not causation

Type II error
or
Other explanation
Correlation is not Causation Continued:

• Correlations tell us something about the relation between two variables
• Correlations tell us nothing about direction of causation
Correlation is not Causation Continued:
What are some alternative explanations?

By failing to provide their children with appropriate nurturance, these “refrigerator mothers” led their children to develop autism and schizophrenia.

Frequent TV viewing before age 2 causes ADHD.

The Columbine murders were caused by antidepressant medication.
“Animal phobias are caused by nightmares that are so frightening that the child does not remember having the dream when they wake up.”

“His marital difficulties are due to his unresolved desire to sleep with his mother. If he denies this it is clear evidence of repression.”
If it can’t be tested, it’s not science.
If we don’t have proof this medication will not cause cancer in 50 years, children should not take Ritalin (Prozac, Zoloft, etc.).
We are often required to make decisions based on incomplete information.
Antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts, so children should never take them.
Avoid black and white thinking.
The most extreme viewpoint is usually wrong.
It’s crazy for someone to get shock therapy for depression. No one even knows why it works!
Unexplained is not inexplicable.
I’m in a discussion group for my clinical psych class. 8 out of the 17 of us have divorced parents. That must make you want to go into psychology!
A basic understanding of base rates and probability is critical.
Multiple converging methods are often needed to answer a question.
The work depicts individual copper canisters, each containing the cremated remains of patients from the Oregon State Hospital. The patients died at the hospital between 1883 (the year the facility opened, when it was called the Oregon State Insane Asylum) and the 1970's. All have remained unclaimed by their families.