How do we define abnormal behavior?

Psychological disorder - Abnormal behavior pattern that involves a disturbance of psychological functioning or behavior.

Abnormal psychology - The branch of psychology that deals with the description, causes, and treatment of abnormal behavior patterns.

Medical model - A biological perspective in which abnormal behavior is viewed as symptomatic of underlying illness.

Do these two individuals deviate from acceptable standards of conduct or social norms?
How do we define abnormal behavior?

Criteria for Determining Abnormality Cultural Bases of Abnormal Behavior:

1. Unusualness
2. Social deviance
3. Faulty perceptions or interpretations of reality
4. Significant personal distress
5. Maladaptive or self-defeating behavior
6. Dangerousness

Cultural Bases of Abnormal Behavior

Behavior that is normal in one culture may be deemed abnormal in another.

The standards we use in making judgments of abnormal behavior must take into account cultural norms.

Traditional Native American cultures (Trimble, 1991).
Historical perspectives on abnormal behavior

The Demonological Model

Origins of the Medical Model: In "Ill Humor"

HUMORS:
- Theory of four temperaments is ancient Greek idea that universe can be described in terms of four basic elements:
  - air, earth, fire, & water
- Hippocrates applied this to people:
  - body's 4 humors:
    - blood, black bile, yellow bile, & phlegm
- Galen then suggested an excess of any of these would characterize personality type:
  - sanguine (hopeful), melancholic (sad), choleric (hot-tempered), or phlegmatic (apathetic)
The Reform Movement and Moral Therapy

- Jean-Baptiste Pussin
- Philippe Pinel
- Dorothea Dix

A Step Backward

- In the latter half of the 19th century, the belief that abnormal behaviors could be successfully treated or cured by moral therapy fell into disfavor.
- Movement toward Deinstitutionalization

The Community Mental Health Movement: The Exodus from State Hospitals

- Congress in 1963 established a nationwide system of community mental health centers (CMHCs).
- CMHCs were charged with
  - Phenothiazines reduced the need
  - Deinstitutionalization: (Grob, 2001).
Contemporary Perspectives on Abnormal Behavior

The Biological Perspective

- Wilhelm Griesinger (1817–1868) argued that abnormal behavior was rooted in diseases of the brain.
- Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) likened mental disorders to physical diseases.
- Griesinger and Kraepelin paved the way for the modern medical model, which attempts to explain abnormal behavior on the basis of underlying biological defects or abnormalities, not evil spirits.
- Dementia praecox - The term given by Kraepelin to the disorder now called schizophrenia.

The Biological Perspective

- The medical model gained support
- Syphilis— general paresis (from the Greek parienai, meaning “to relax”).
- The later discovery of Alzheimer’s disease:
  - major cause of dementia
- The medical model is a major advance over demonology.
The Psychological Perspective

- Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893)
- Austrian physician Sigmund Freud (1856–1939).
- Psychodynamic model

The Sociocultural Perspective

- Sociocultural theorists believe the causes of abnormal behavior may be found in the failures of society rather than in the person.
- Accordingly, psychological problems may be rooted in
- Sociocultural factors also focus on relationships between mental health and social factors

The Biopsychosocial Perspective

- Many mental health professionals endorse view that abnormal behavior is best understood by taking into account multiple causes representing the biological, psychological, and sociocultural domains.
- Biopsychosocial model
- Perspectives on psychological disorders provide a framework not only for explanation but also for treatment.
Research methods in abnormal psychology

Description, Explanation, Prediction, and Control: The Objectives of Science

- Scientific method - A systematic method of conducting scientific research in which theories or assumptions are examined in the light of evidence.
- Theory - A formulation of the relationships underlying observed events.

Within this context, controlling behavior means

The Scientific Method

1. Formulating a research question.
2. Framing the research question in the form of a hypothesis.
3. Testing the hypothesis.
4. Drawing conclusions about the hypothesis.
Ethics in Research

Institutional review boards (IRBs) review proposed research studies in the light of ethical guidelines.

- **Informed consent** - The principle that subjects should receive enough information about an experiment beforehand to decide freely whether to participate.
- **Confidentiality** - Protection of the identity of participants by keeping records secure and not disclosing their identities.

Naturalistic Observation

- **Naturalistic observation** - A form of research in which behavior is observed and measured in its natural environment.
- Naturalistic observation provides information on how subjects behave, but it does not reveal why they do so.
- Questions of cause and effect are best approached by means of controlled experiments.

The Correlational Method

- **Correlational method** - Examines the relationships between factors or variables expressed in statistical terms.
- **Correlation coefficient** - Statistical measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables expressed along a continuum that varies between −1.00 and +1.00.
- The longitudinal study is a type of correlational study in which individuals are periodically tested or evaluated over lengthy periods of time, perhaps for decades.
The Experimental Method

Experimental method - Aims to discover cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating independent variables and observing the effects on the dependent variables.

Independent variables (IVs) - Factors that are manipulated in experiments.

Dependent variables (DVs) - Outcomes of an experiment believed to be dependent on the effects of an independent variable.

Experimental group - Group that receives the experimental treatment

Control group - Group that does not receive the experimental treatment.

Random assignment - Method of assigning research subjects at random to experimental or control groups to balance these groups on the characteristics of people that comprise them.

Selection factor - Type of bias in which differences between experimental & control groups result from differences in type of participants in groups, not from the independent variable.

Blind - State of being unaware of whether one has received an experimental treatment.

Placebo - Inert medication or bogus treatment that is intended to control for expectancy effects.

In a single-blind placebo-control study, subjects are randomly assigned to treatment conditions in which they receive either an active drug (experimental condition) or an inert placebo (placebo-control condition), but are kept blind, or uninformed, about which drug they receive.
The Experimental Method

**Internal validity** - Degree to which manipulation of IVs can be causally related to changes in DVs.

**External validity** - Degree to which experimental results can be generalized to other settings and conditions.

**Construct validity** - Degree to which treatment effects can be accounted for by the theoretical mechanisms (constructs) represented in the IVs.

Epidemiological Studies

**Epidemiological studies** - Research studies that track rates of occurrence of particular disorders among different population groups.

**Survey method** - Research method in which large samples of people are questioned by means of a survey instrument.

**Incidence** - Number of new cases of a disorder that occurs within a specific period of time.

**Prevalence** - The overall number of cases of a disorder in a population within a specific period of time.

Researchers must take steps when constructing a sample to ensure that it represents the target population.

**Random sample** - A sample that is drawn in such a way that every member of a population has an equal chance of being included.

By contrast, **random assignment** refers to the process by which members of a research sample are assigned at random to different experimental conditions or treatments.
Kinship Studies

- **Genotype** - The set of traits specified by an individual’s genetic code.
- **Phenotype** - An individual’s actual or expressed traits.
- **Proband** - The case first diagnosed of a given disorder.

Identical, or MZ, twins are important in the study of the relative influences of heredity and environment because differences between MZ twins are the result of environmental rather than genetic influences.

- **Twin studies**
- **Adoptee studies**
Case Studies

- **Case study** - A carefully drawn biography based on clinical interviews, observations, and psychological tests.

- **Single-case experimental design** - A type of case study in which the subject is used as his or her own control.

- **Reversal design** - An experimental design that consists of repeated measurement of a subject’s behavior through a sequence of alternating baseline and treatment phases.

A-B-A-B Reversal Design

![Diagram of A-B-A-B reversal design](image)

**Azrin and Peterson Study**

![Graph of Azrin and Peterson study](image)
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Bornstein, Bellack, and Hersen

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Critical thinking

**Critical thinking** - Adoption of a questioning attitude and careful scrutiny of claims and arguments in the light of evidence.

Here are some key features of critical thinking:

1. Maintain a skeptical attitude.
2. Consider the definitions of terms.
3. Weigh the assumptions or premises on which arguments are based.
4. Bear in mind that correlation is not causation.
5. Consider the kinds of evidence on which conclusions are based.
6. Do not oversimplify.
7. Do not overgeneralize.