

# Some discussion questions for abnormal psychology



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Nearly all of us have known someone at some point of our lives who has suffered from depression, alcoholism, anxiety or another psychological disorder. What is your perception, at this point, of abnormal psychology and psychological disorders? What is your own experience and knowledge of abnormal psychology? How do you think this course might change your perception when you have completed it?

My perception of abnormal psychology is that there are many different factors, which may affect people in different ways. There is so much that I do not know about abnormal psychology; and yet I have known many who have suffered from different forms of abnormal psychology. I have known people who have dealt with alcoholism, depression, and anxiety. Personally, my life has been affected by depression and anxiety through family members. Tragedy has also played a part in my life that have affected people close to me to where they have resulted in change of behavior. I am aware that many people suffer from depression some are treated and others go on without treatment. I can only guess that the same may be for other psychological disorders. I think that this course will make me more aware of different disorders and give more understanding to what I have known from past experiences and maybe allow me to have more understanding to what others may be going through in their lives.

I believe that psychological disorders are a result of not being able to handle what life has dealt. I think most of us have dealt with depression, alcoholism, anxiety or other disorders at one time or another in our lives. The psychological disorder may have been as a result of work related stress, family stress, stress of life or loss of a loved one. I think that people who

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suffer from alcoholism or drug use it temporary cope with depression but in the end the emotional feeling is still there when the drugs wear off. I also think the only way to cure a person is for them to change their perception of life and for them to learn how to deal with problems. I think counseling may help them to understand their problems, so that could be beneficial. Also, when the patient is off the medication the feelings of depression comes back that's why I think medications are temporary fixers. I love to observe people and understand why they are the way they are or why they do some of the things they do. Hopefully, this will help me better understand them or psychological disorder.

I think a person who have problems, need to seek a therapist or counselor; to talk about their problems, because it will be able to calm the individual down. The person will be able to think twice about their life and not destroy it by doing drugs or drinking too much. A person can drink too much or over dose on any kind drugs, it can lead to death, illness, or any kind of medical conditions. My perception of Abnormal Psychology is the behavior, medical, and the cognitive. The perception of psychological at this point is the patterns of behavioral and the symptoms; for example, mood, disorders, anxiety, and developmental disorders. The text book stated that psychological disorders can occur when and individual is associated with distress or impairment; for example, an individual who have bipolar (Durand, & Barlow, 2007). An individual can have mood swings, racing thoughts and reckless behavior; need to be treated with some kind of therapy. This course will help me to understand how individuals react when there is some kind of psychological disorder. This course will also help me to understand what the

individual illness is, and be able to help deal with the different situations that might occur.

Reference:

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth

Unit 2

Question one

Abnormal behavior can be very difficult to define. What is considered normal in one society may not be considered normal in another, depending upon that society's mores and norms. To determine if one is displaying abnormal behavior, certain criteria must be met. One of the criteria is the level of personal distress that is felt by the individual and another is how the behavior is viewed in a particular society.

Using material from the text, respond to the following questions: Which criterion is most important in defining whether a person is normal or abnormal, is it the individual or society? After considering both of these views, choose the one you feel is most significant and discuss why you think this is so. The strongest answers will provide specific examples and reference from the course material to support the position.

The criteria researchers follow in labeling an individual with a psychological disorder come in three distinct symptoms; these include, 1.) a psychological dysfunction, 2.) distress or impairment, and 3.) a response that is not

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typically or culturally expected. Taken from our text, “ the psychological dysfunction refers to a breakdown in cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, impairment of being able to function around or in society without the feeling of distress and, your behavior deviates from the average so much so that it is atypical or not culturally expected” (Barlow, & Durand, 2007, p. 3). What I find interesting is that all three aspects of the definition of a psychological disorder have to be present in order to for a particular behavior to be considered abnormal. If a person possesses two out of the three criteria listed in the definition, the person may have some issues that need to be addressed, but are not displaying acts of abnormal behavior. For example, a person that is experiencing psychological dysfunction due to distress may appear “ normal” and can function just fine in society. I know a few people like this that just need a little extra help to deal with their issues, but are able to live their day to day lives “ normally” (Barlow, & Durand, 2007).

I agree with the chapter it is hard to place a definition on what is considered normal or abnormal in society. I think we know it if we see it but this could have a positive or negative affect on categorizing a disorder. I am wondering if a long time ago if it was abnormal to sleep in the same bed with your husband but a couple did. Would it be considered abnormal behavior? Or when in the past when a woman did not have a career and just raised her children but there could have been a woman that had a career. Would this behavior be considered abnormal as well? I think that depending on where a person lives regardless or culture or area of the United States the definition of abnormal or normal could be subjective.

Reference:

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

## Question 2

Homelessness is a major problem in many urban areas of the United States and in many cases, those who are on the street suffer from one or more psychological problems. Using material from the course in support of your response, how did deinstitutionalization contribute to the problem of homelessness and how shall our society now deal with the problem of mental illness as it relates to the homeless population?

Deinstitutionalization had two goals: (1) to close the large state mental hospitals and (2) to create a network of community mental health centers where the released individuals could be treated (Durand & Barlow, 2007, pg 567). The community network system should have been in place and functioning before institutions were closed leaving many with no treatment. The result was we shifted many from one kind of institution to another; jails or prisons, group homes, nursing homes, and have taken on the numbers. That does not even count the numbers that are living on the streets because they lack the social skills to get and keep a job.

Many homeless people find it stressful to have an apartment; worrying about the money to pay for food, electric, and heat? The stress of applying for home health aides, energy assistance, and food stamps is often too much. Living on the street they do not have to worry about these things. If you

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have ever been through financial problems you know how stressful it is. The ability to handle stress is diminished by any psychological disorder making these “ normal stresses” intolerable. As a community should see to it that the needs of the mentally ill are addressed. Establishing small local hospitals, to provide short term stays, assigning case workers to help them apply for assistance would be a good start. The budget issues can easily be addressed by pointing out that if they do not provide for these needs they will most likely end up in jail or hospitalized cost much more than addressing their problems first.

Deinstitutionalized happened during the 19th century when the leaders in psychiatry care were alarmed at the increasing size and impersonality of mental hospitals and recommended that they be downsized. It took about 100 years before the community mental health movement was successful in reducing the population of mental hospitals with controversial policy of deinstitutionalized meaning patients were released into their communities (Durand & Barlow, 2007).

The problems with deinstitutionalizing were many

1. Patients were mentally ill and use to being under 24/7

care

2. Patients unable to stay on their medicines

3. Patients unable to get housing, jobs, no where to go

4. Patients have no money, some have no family to go to

## 5. Hundreds of nurses and staffing are not needed and are let go

These patients, many of them, are not suitable to be set free in society, they can't live on their own without medication and direction, therefore once set free, if they don't have any family to go to they will probably end up homeless.

Even now days, we do what we can to make sure our elders and mentally unstable are taken care of, but there is only so much that doctors can do for many of them. They can be treated, but they still have to be sent home under a family members care as they don't meet the criteria to be institutionalized.

I am a strong believer that if institutions were more available financially and medically to everyone then a lot more people would be getting the help they need. I realize that institutes are expensive, however, the expense of a truly mentally ill person on Medicaid constantly seeking emergency help just to get a warm meal or some attention isn't exactly cheap.

### Reference:

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

### Unit 3

Criminal behavior is often the result of an interaction between genetic and environmental factors; however, many believe that one may be a more significant cause. Referencing and citing material from the text, choose one

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side of the argument (genetics or environment) and discuss why this particular factor is more important in determining criminal or abnormal behavior. For example, if you think that environment is more important than genetics, why do you feel this is so?

My personal opinion is that there is an interaction between environment and genetics that set up the right combination resulting in criminal behavior. Environment exerts more influence; family dynamics, culture, and even exposure of pollutants or toxins are part of the environmental influence. People with the same genetic components must be exposed to the right environment before “engaging in criminal or anti-social behavior” (Jones, 2005). Inheritable psychological problems have to be “given the right circumstances” for the person with the genetic predisposition to engage in criminal behavior (Jones, 2005). Jones (2005) noted a Denmark study that “found a biological component for criminal acts against property, but not for violent crimes”.

I think I am leaning more towards the environment after reading the lesson, I had originally thought it was more genetically based, but the more I read, the more I was convinced that maybe the environment over ruled the genes. However, I do think they play off of each other. For instance, the text states that the environment may occasionally turn on certain genes (Durand & Barlow, 2007). So I guess if a child is born into a family of so called criminals, then that is probably the only behavior that child is going to know, therefore he/she will end up just like the rest of the family, but not because of genetics, because of the people and the environment. If someone were to snatch that child up right after he/she was born and place him/her into an <https://assignbuster.com/some-discussion-questions-for-abnormal-psychology/>

entire different environment where criminal behavior was not accepted then the only way that child would ever be exposed to that behavior would be on the streets or at school, however, he/she would know the correct way to behave and would hopefully resort to that way.

This isn't to say that a well behaved child will never act badly or even become a criminal. Considering the diathesis stress model, individuals inherit tendencies to express certain traits or behaviors, which may be activated under conditions of stress (Durand & Barlow, 2007). So this is saying that the stress of the environment can sometimes bring out those bad genes that some of us may carry deep down inside of us and we may not even know they exist. We all have a tendency to be a bit vulnerable under certain stress levels at certain times and it all depends on how we handle those life situations as to how we end up.

Reference:

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Jones C. M. (2005). Genetic and environmental influences on criminal behavior. *Personality Research: Rochester Institute of Technology*. Retrieved February 15, 2009 from <http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/jones.html>

Question2

The text discusses several ways that culture, gender or social factors

influences our health and behavior. Choose one of these factors and discuss <https://assignbuster.com/some-discussion-questions-for-abnormal-psychology/>

how this particular influence could influence one's behavior. Be sure to provide specific references and support from the text and course material for your response.

Although culture, gender, and social factors all take a part in influencing our health and behavior, I personally believe gender differences play a significant role in shaping how we are as a society. For example it is a general conclusion that women are nurturing, emotional, feminine and in some ways the weaker sex of the two. Men are generally seen as more masculine, strong, and dominant. In the workplace men still hold a sense of dominance and are generally viewed as the head of their households since women hold dominance in domesticated duties such as child care and housework. Though in our society we have learned to draw a gray line between gender roles, they definitely still exist. It is easily seen in our media and advertising which is part of our daily lives. For example how often do you see a male nurse or a female contractor? Also how often are little girls seen playing with baby dolls, while boys are expected to play with action figures? These types of subtle differences teach us from the beginning what is considered normal behavior in terms of gender.

The text book stated that " gender roles have a strong and sometimes puzzling effect on psychopathology" (Durand 2007). Women and men handle their fear, phobia and other behavior different. A man can hurt doing dangerous stunts, but he continues to do it. Some men try not to let other people know that he is hurt or fear of anything. A woman who may experience a bad car accident and she might not want to drive for a couple months or not at all. A woman may experience some type of phobia from the <https://assignbuster.com/some-discussion-questions-for-abnormal-psychology/>

accident. Most male are more likely to drink their fear or problems away.

Some women may show fear or scared that the incident might happen again that males are more likely than females to self-medicate their fear and panic with alcohol and in so doing start down the slippery road to addiction” (Pg. 65). Another one that falls in with gender is eating disorders which women tend to have more. I think that as growing up it depends on how girls and boys are taught and what they learn.

Reference:

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Unit 4

This unit’s reading, Younger children diagnosed with personality disorders, discusses the concept of preschool children being diagnosed with psychological disorders previously thought to be in adolescents and adults exclusively. Using critical thinking, what is your opinion on treatment at the earliest signs of mental distress in children? Support your ideas with specific references to the article and the text book.

I think it is so sad to hear about children younger and younger, especially preschool children being diagnosed with personality disorders. This may have been happening longer than we think and I agree with the article it is not comfortable to anyone. According to Dr. Charles Zeanah, a psychiatrist at Tulane University in New Orleans, “ the public is uncomfortable with the idea of serious psychopathology in young children – it violates our idealized

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images of babyhood and toddlerhood as care free, innocent, and a time when all things are possible” (Benedict Carey). However I think the sooner they are diagnosed the sooner they are treated and do not have to go through life with out feeling stable. But, having to live with those medications their entire life is going to be miserable for them as a child and as an adult. I also think that the media, their surroundings, and friends have a huge effect on how these children are feeling. Girls have the images of growing up fast, being skinny, wearing makeup and dressing provocative and the toys they sell are also of this image, make girls think this is how they have to be. Same with boys they tend to think that being popular, dressing cool in name brand clothes, and acting out in certain ways is okay. I think it is so sad that these young children who are our future have to go through and continue to go through these types of personality disorders their entire lives.

So my feelings on children being diagnosed are based on my experience. I don't know that children are really truly ever able to be 100% diagnosed with a mental disorder just because a lot of being diagnosed requires client feedback and children can't always give that part to the doctor. According to the reading, doctors are diagnosing mental illness in children at younger ages than ever (Carey, 2003). It also states that doctors are being pressures by the outpouring of new drugs on the market, and by patients who want medications that work better and quicker. I am however astounded that the number of children taking psychiatric drugs has more than doubled in the past 15 years (Carey, 2003). Before any medication is prescribed or treatment, I believe that medical test for underlying issues and a behavioral

assessment should be done. Understanding the behavior that is occurring in different situation may help in designing treatment (Durand and Barlow, 2007). If the child is a danger to him/her self I could see the need for medication, but I still think that each child is different and that not one treatment is a fix all.

## **References:**

Carey, Benedict (2003). Younger Children Diagnosed with Personality Disorders. Newspaper Source. Toronto Star. Retrieved on February 14, 2010 from <http://reserves.uah.edu/coursepage.asp?cid=72>

Durand, V. M., and Barlow, D. H. (2007). Essentials of Abnormal Psychology (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

### Unit 4 question 2

Although the short personality test you participated in was not as in-depth as those that are given by psychologists, it gives you a very good idea of the types of questions that are on the formal tests, as well as the personality profiles. Many employers require that their potential employees complete a personality profile before they are hired. What are some of the benefits a company would gain by requiring a personality profile of applicants? What are some potentially negative aspects of employers requiring a personality profile of applicants?

The most widely used personality inventory in the United States, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), which was developed in the late 1930s and early 1940s and first published in 1943. The MMPI and

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similar inventories are based on an empirical approach, that is, the collection and evaluation of data. The administration of the MMPI is straightforward. The individual being assessed reads statements and answers either "true" or "false". Some of the benefits from the data are that individual responses on the MMPI are not examined; instead, the pattern of responses is reviewed to see whether it resembles patterns from groups of people who have specific disorders (e. g., a pattern similar to a group with schizophrenia). Each group is represented on separate standard scales (Durand, & Barlow, 2007).

Some potentially negative aspects are that the original standardization sample- the people who first responded to the statements and set the standard for answers- included many people from Minnesota who had no psychological disorders and several groups of people who had particular disorders (Durand, & Barlow, 2007).

I have never had to take a personality test before starting a job so I am not sure what types of questions the test may consist of, but I actually find it quite disturbing myself. I feel that in many high paying professional jobs, the employer brings the prospective employee in several times to interview with several different people which gives the employer plenty of time to get to know enough about the person and if he/she will fit in with the group or not. The disadvantage is anyone can lie on those tests. On the other hand, I think once the person is hired in, it may be a good idea to get to know more about the person by using a personality test, but I don't think it's fair to base the hiring decision on the test. Maybe just as an immediate boss it would be good to know how the employee feels or may react in a given situation.

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Another negative thing I see is that each applicant may read into the questions differently which then they may respond differently.