

Defining abnormality paper

Psychology



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This paper will be about the challenges in defining and classifying normal and abnormal behavior. There are several challenges that arise when defining and classifying normal and abnormal behavior. The challenges that will be elaborated will be situational context, culture, and mind and body. Efforts to understand, clarify and control challenging behaviors can be found back to more than a few years. Influences can range from age and gender to culture and situational contexts.

When bearing in mind the age of an individual, experts have their work cut out for them, anyone from any age group can experience from abnormal behaviors, this makes it challenging to make a diagnosis. Certain cultures have what some would think of being odd or “abnormal” customs. Even with each of these concerns taken into account, mind, body, culture, and situational context, trying to determine if a person is displaying normal or abnormal behaviors can still be challenging.

Many human behaviors can follow what is known as the normal curve. Looking at this bell-shaped curve, the majority of individuals are clustered around the highest point of the curve, which is known as the average. People who fall very far at either end of the normal curve might be considered “abnormal” (Sherry, K., N. d.). Situational Context Situational context is a social situation, behavioral setting, or general circumstances in which an action takes place.

If the situational context is not considered in determining a person’s behavior it will affect one’s judgment no matter if he or she is interested in understanding the current feelings of the person or his or her individual

tendencies, but will do so differently depending on the question one is trying to answer (Lieberman, 2006). In determining if behavior is abnormal, in context; a few considerations have to be made. One such consideration understands the circumstances surrounding the behavior (Hansell & Damour, 2008, p. 4).

For instance, if a person cries belligerently because of the death of a loved one this is a legitimate reason, but if a person cries belligerently out of the blue this could be considered abnormal. Another consideration is the context in which the abnormality occurs. One must consider the circumstance for the behavior, such as the death of a loved one, a close out sale on cars, or shopping in a mall. One last consideration is the demographic context characteristic of the person: age, race, gender, or class (Hansell et. al.).

For example, if a baby is crying in a shopping mall that would be considered normal but if a male adult is crying in a shopping mall this would be considered abnormal. Basically the thing to remember is not to judge a person by his or her actions. The reason for the actions could be unforeseen circumstances that no one is aware of. Also what is considered abnormal in our culture or society may be considered normal in another person's culture or society. Mind and Body According to Hansell and Damour (2008), “ the mind and the brain are fully interconnected and interdependent” (p.).

There are many biological and physiological aspects to explaining and treating abnormal behavior and the connection of mind and body must consider. The body has a wide-ranging group of adaptive responses to when it feels threatened. Physiological responses are involved in the experience of

anxiety. The pathological or normal experience of fear and anxiety are typically combined with the deployment of the autonomic nervous system, including the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.

Within these involuntary bodily systems contained are regulated and survival response to threats provoked. This determines whether an individual feels the need to abscond or oppose the threat. The limbic system located in the middle of the brain plays a vital role in determining how important the provocations are. Once the threat has passed, the parasympathetic system transposes the work completely by the sympathetic nervous system rendering the body to its pre-anxiety state.

It is up to the parasympathetic system to maintain the body's energy by regulating blood sugar and the heart rate (Hansell & Damour, 2008, pp. 135-136). The physiological models center on the cognitive and behavioral outcome of abnormal behavior and the biological models center around the physical aspects. Biology plays a key role in the cause of mental disorder, genetics must be considered in determining the cause of abnormal behavior. Medical conditions such as brain damage or environmental stimuli also can be a factor in causing a person to behave abnormally.

The ingestion of toxic substances or allergens can cause abnormal and emotional changes in behavior. Dramatic changes in feelings or behavior result from life troubling or traumatic life events, such as the loss of a loved one or relationship. Disturbances in any biological or physiological functioning influence the development of mental disorders (Haglin & Whitbourne, 2010, pp. 8-10). Culture Most commonly, abnormal psychology

is described as a deviation from the norms established by the society in which an individual lives (Butcher, Mineka, Hooley, 2010).

The problems arise, however, in the markedly varying definitions of normalcy established by various societies. Judgment of abnormal versus normal behavior is reliant on established societal rules of appropriate conduct that are greatly influenced by a sum of societal factors including religion, values, history, habits, and institutions (Comer, 2011). A society's established standards for normal behavior may have a significantly different look than that of another. A behavior that fits within the spectrum of norms for one society may be classified as severely abnormal in another.

For example, individuals whom act as a medium between the natural and spiritual worlds are often referred to as shamans and are widely accepted among numerous tribal societies. Not only are these shamans widely accepted, but in some cultures are held as influential and revered members of society. Interestingly, just as different cultures have varying views of qualification for abnormal psychology, certain forms of abnormal psychology are represented more abundantly in certain cultures.

In fact, there are certain forms of psychopathology that are only found in specific areas of the world, strongly suggesting correlations between specific psychopathology and culturally specific concerns (Butcher, Mineka, & Hooley, 2010). Ataque de nervios, found predominately in the Caribbean, is triggered by significantly stressful events and results in uncontrollable screaming, crying, trembling, and a feeling of loss of control (Butcher, Mineka & Hooley). Additionally, societal values and assumptions regarding

normal versus abnormal behavior can vary overtime and across situational contexts (Comer, 2011).

As cultures evolve, expectations for behavior change as well. Specifically, in the United States, classification of homosexuality has transformed significantly in recent years. Conclusion Defining normal and abnormal is a challenging and argumentative issue. Normal and abnormal are labels that need to be used with cautiousness when applied to actions. Due to the negative outlooks of society in the direction of people with mental disorders, being labeled as mentally ill has severe significances for the individual. It is also challenging to form a positive self-image if one has been labeled as ‘sick’.

I think decreasing the quantity of deeds labeled as abnormal and moving in the direction of a more positive meaning of mental health support to counter negative categorizes of mental illness. When it comes to situational context, culture, and mind/body we can see how it can directly affect a person. This may produce a set of behaviors that can be labeled as mental illness. In classifying abnormality, it is vital to understand the situational factors surrounding the individual (L. Glover, J. Klatter, B. Lewis, C. Swarmer, and A. Thornton N. p. , Nd.).