Chapter 14: Psychopathology (psychological disorders)
Module 14.1: What is Abnormal?

Overview of the Conceptual and Practical Problems

- What is the proper way to conceptualize and define abnormal behavior?
- How can the various psychological disorders that produce abnormal behavior be classified?
- What are the underlying causes of psychological disorders?

What Makes a Person’s Behavior Abnormal?

- Behavior must fit at least several of the following criteria to be labeled abnormal:
  - Statistical deviance: Occurs infrequently among members of a population
  - Cultural deviance: Violates the rules or accepted standards of society
  - Emotional distress: Lead to personal distress or upset
  - Dysfunction: Prevents a person from pursuing adaptive strategies
  - "Abnormal" behavior not a rigid category

The Concept of Insanity

- Insanity: A legal term defined as inability to understand that certain actions are wrong at the time of a crime
  - Under this definition, people with recognized disorders may be judged legally sane
  - Famous cases in which the insanity defense succeeded: John Hinckley Jr., Lorena Bobbitt
  - Used in less than 1% of criminal felony cases, despite public perception that it is common

Abnormality as a Disease--The Medical Model

- View that abnormal behavior is symptomatic of underlying “disease” that can be “cured” with appropriate therapy
  - Draws an analogy between mental and physical illness
    - Like physical illness, mental illness often has biological causes, symptoms, can be treated
  - A widely held view, but some question it
    - Causes of mental illness often unclear
    - Social, cultural context of symptoms is important, unlike for physical illness
Problems Associated with Labeling

- Diagnostic labeling effects: Labels for psychological problems can become self-fulfilling prophecies
- Make it difficult to recognize normal behavior when it occurs
- May increase likelihood that person acts in an abnormal way
- Rosenhan (1973): Participants faked disorders to enter psychiatric ward
  - Other patients saw through the deception, but staff did not; behavior was seen as consistent with disorder

Classifying Psychological Disorders: DSM-IV

- What is the DSM-IV?
  - The five axes of the DSM-IV
  - Anxiety disorders
  - Somatoform disorders
  - Dissociative disorders
  - Mood disorders
    - Suicide
    - Schizophrenia
    - Personality disorders

The Five Axes of the DSM-IV

- "Axis" = Rating dimension
  - Involve a wide range of factors including medical history, functioning in daily life
  - Axis I: Common psychological disorders
    - Examples: Schizophrenia; substance abuse
    - Our main focus in this chapter is Axis I
  - Axis II: Personality disorders and mental retardation
    - Example: Paranoid personality disorder
    - We will touch briefly on Axis II disorders
  - Axis III: General medical conditions
    - Example: Diseases of the circulatory system
  - Axis IV: Psychosocial and environmental problems
    - Example: Homelessness
  - Axis V: Global assessment of functioning scale
    - Scale from 10 to 100 used to rate functioning in activities such as school, occupation, family life