Historical and Contemporary Views of Abnormal Behavior

Chapter 2

Historical Views of Abnormal Behavior

Ancient Treatment

– Stone Age trephining involved chipping away a circular section of skull
– The Edwin Smith and Ebers papyri indicate that the Egyptians used surgery and prayers

Historical Views of Abnormal Behavior

– People were treated differently if thought to be possessed by good spirits rather than evil spirits
– Exorcism was the primary treatment for demonic possession
Hippocrates’ early medical concepts included
- Proposing that mental disorders had natural causes
- Categorizing disorders as mania, melancholia, or phrenitis
- Associating dreams and personality

Hippocrates (460-377 BC)
Humors: Fluids
Choleric: Yellow bile- quick tempered
Sanguine: Blood- warm, cheerful
Phlegmatic: Phlegm- sluggish, cool, calm
Melancholic: Black bile- gloomy, pensive (deep in thought)

Historical Views of Abnormal Behavior
Plato
- Viewed psychological phenomena as responses to the whole organism
- Emphasized individual differences and sociocultural influences
- Discussed hospital care
Aristotle wrote a lasting description of consciousness
Later Greek and Roman Thought

- Egyptians proposed a wide range of therapeutic measures
- Galen provided an anatomy of the nervous system
- Comfort was key to Roman medicine

Abnormality During the Middle Ages

The Middle East had a scientific approach
Europe was plagued with mass madness such as
- Tarantism/Saint Vitus’s dance
- Lycanthropy
Exorcism was still a popular European treatment
The extent of people’s fear of witchcraft is now questioned

Toward Humanitarian Approaches

The Renaissance led to a resurgence of scientific questioning in Europe
The sixteenth century saw the establishment of early asylums and shrines
- These were often no more than prisons
**Humanitarian Reform**

- In France, Pinel successfully experimented with treating mental patients with kindness.
- A man named Tuke performed similar work in England.
- Benjamin Rush pushed moral management in America.
- From 1841 to 1881, Dorothy Dix carried on a zealous campaign about the inhumane treatment of the mentally ill.

**Nineteenth-Century Views of Mental Disorders**

- Medical professionals, or alienists gained control of the asylums.
- Alienists touted morality as important to good mental health.

**Changing Attitudes Toward Mental Health in the Early 20th Century**

- Clifford Beers described his own mental collapse in *A Mind That Found Itself*.
- Beers then began a campaign for reform.
Mental Hospital Care in the 20th Century

• In 1940, most mental hospitals were harsh, inhumane, and ineffective
• Mary Jane Ward published *The Snake Pit*, which called attention to the plight of mental patients
• The organization of the National Institute of Mental Health and the passage of the Hill–Burton Act further reformed care
• The Community Health Services Act was passed in 1963
• Deinstitutionalization lead to mixed results

Contemporary Views of Abnormal Behavior

Recent changes include:
- Biological discoveries
- The development of a classification system for mental disorders
- The emergence of psychological causation views
- Experimental psychological research developments

Establishing the Link Between the Brain and Mental Disorder

Understanding was greatly increased by
- Technological discoveries
- Scientific advancements in the biological sciences

The discovery of a connection between general paresis and syphilis was a major milestone

Emil Kraepelin’s *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* marked the beginning of a classification system
**Models**

**Medical/Disease:** Person is abnormal because of some physical malfunction in the body

**Psychological:** Abnormality is due to defective strategies or coping with stressful circumstances and sociocultural conditions

---

**Psychodynamic:**
- Based on Freud’s theory of personality
- Abnormal behavior caused by anxiety from unresolved conflicts

**Humanistic:**
- Abnormal behavior caused when people’s needs are not met
  - Due to external circumstances or internal factors

---

**Behavioral**
- Abnormal behavior is learned
- Thus, it can also be unlearned
  - Using traditional learning principles
  - Replaced with more appropriate behaviors

**Cognitive**
- Thought processes lead to abnormal behavior
  - E.g., false assumptions, unrealistic coping
  - Changing thoughts changes behavior
Models

**Sociocultural**: Abnormal behavior develops within and because of context
- Some disorders are expressed differently in different cultures
- Some disorders are not expressed at all in some cultures
- Once labeled as abnormal, a person may start to act that way
  - Self-fulfilling prophecy

**Evolutionary**: Abnormal behavior may once have been normal and adaptive
- Maladaptiveness is crucial for being considered abnormal

**Which Model is Best?**
Some psychologists adhere to one model
Many use different models
- **Eclectic Approach**
  - Different models for different disorders
- **Biopsychosocial Approach**
  - Acknowledges biological, psychological and social factors
  - Combines models
Causation Views: Establishing the Psychological Basis of Mental Disorder

Mesmerism
- Involved treating diseases by “animal magnetism”
- Was a source of heated discussion in the 19th century
Scientists at the Nancy School proposed that hysteria could be both caused and removed by hypnosis

Hypnosis
A procedure during which a person’s sensations, perceptions, thoughts, or behaviors change because of suggestions made to the person

Hypnosis
First used as a treatment in the late 1700s by Franz Anton Mesmer
His work was discredited, and hypnosis fell into disfavor
Opinions are currently divided on the definition of hypnosis and its uses
James Braid: Father of Modern Hypnotism
Causation Views: Establishing the Psychological Basis of Mental Disorder

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) took the first major steps toward understanding psychological factors in mental disorders. His theories have evolved into the psychoanalytic perspective. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the inner dynamics of unconscious motives.

Causation Views: Establishing the Psychological Basis of Mental Disorder

Psychoanalysis concentrates on

- Catharsis
- The unconscious
- Free association
- Dream analysis

Evolution of the Psychological Research Tradition

Wilhelm Wundt established the first experimental psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig. J. McKeen Cattell brought Wundt’s methods to the United States. Lightner Witmer established the first American psychological clinic at the University of Pennsylvania. Soon after, the first psychological journals hit the press.
**Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920)**
**Edward B. Titchener (1867 – 1927)**

Structuralism: 1st school of thought
- The study of the structure of the immediate **Conscious Experience**
- Did not look at the broad range of behavior and mental processes studied today

**Structuralism**

Used a method called introspection
- Self-examination
- A person described and analyzed thoughts as they occurred

Focus too narrow
- Made little progress describing the mind
- Studied mainly healthy, wealthy white males

A second perspective emerged…

**Functionalism**

William James (1842 – 1910)
- Studied how and why the mind functions
- Also interested in how people adapt to the environment
- Broadened scope of psychology
- However, focus remained on consciousness
The Behavioral Perspective

Classical Conditioning
- Ivan Pavlov demonstrated that dogs will salivate to a nonfood stimulus once regularly accompanied by food
- John B. Watson emphasized the study of overt behavior

Operant Conditioning
- E.L. Thorndike and B.F. Skinner studied how the consequences of behavior influence behavior

Unresolved Issues

Unresolved issues include interpreting historical events and the influence of biases