Chapter 19

Disorders of Personality

The Building Blocks of Personality Disorders

• Symptoms of personality disorders can be viewed as maladaptive variations within the domains of traits, emotions, cognitions, motives, and self-concept

• Personality disorders as maladaptive variations or combinations of normal personality traits
The Building Blocks of Personality Disorders

• Several personality disorders involve maladaptive variations on common motives, especially power and intimacy
• Cognitive processes can become distorted in personal disorders
• Several personal disorders include extreme variations in experienced emotion

The Building Blocks of Personality Disorders

• Most personality disorders include distortion of self-concept
• Social relationships, especially interpersonal and sexual behavior, frequently disturbed or involve maladaptive patterns in personality disorders
The Building Blocks of Personality Disorders

• Biology forms a building block of several personality disorders
• Disorders of personality can provide insight into the normal workings of personality

The Concept of Disorder

• Psychological disorder:
• Pattern of behavior or experience that is distressing and painful to the person
• Leads to disability or impairment in important life domains
The Concept of Disorder

• Associated with the increased risk for further suffering, loss of function, death, or confinement
• Abnormal psychology: Study of mental disorders, including thought disorders, emotional disorders, and personality disorders

What Is Abnormal?

• Statistical definition: Whatever is rare, not frequent, and not statistically normal
• Social definition: Whatever society does not tolerate
What Is Abnormal?

- Statistical and social definitions are tied to changing social or cultural norms
- Psychologists thus look within persons, inquiring about subject feelings and thoughts

What Is Abnormal?

- Psychopathology: Study of mental disorders
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. (DSM-IV): Widely accepted system for diagnosing and describing mental
What is a Personality Disorder?

- Enduring pattern of experience and behavior that differs greatly from expectations of a person’s culture
- Disorder is usually manifested in more than one of following areas: Thoughts, feelings, how a person gets along with others, and the ability to control own behavior

What is a Personality Disorder?

- Pattern of behavior is rigid and displayed across a variety of situations, leading to distress in key areas of life such as work and relationships
- Pattern of behavior typically has a long history in a person’s life, often back to adolescence or childhood
What is a Personality Disorder?

• Pattern must not be attributable to drug abuse, medication, or other medical condition
• All personality disorders involve impaired social relations

Varieties of Personality Disorder

• DSM-IV lists 10 personality disorders, classified into three groups:
  • Erratic group
  • Eccentric group
  • Anxious group
Erratic group

• Persons with these disorders appear erratic, emotional, and have difficulties getting along with others
• Includes antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders

Eccentric group

• Persons with these disorders appear odd, eccentric, do not get along well with others
• Includes schizoid, schizotypal, and paranoid personality disorders
Anxious group

- Persons with these disorders appear anxious, fearful, apprehensive, and have trouble with social relationships
- Includes avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders

Categories or dimensions?

- Categorical view
  - Either the person does or does not have personality disorder
  - Disorders are viewed as distinct and qualitatively different from normal extremes on some trait
Categories or dimensions?

• Dimensional view
  – Personality disorder is viewed as a continuum that ranges from normality at one end to severe disability or disturbance at other end

Culture, age, and gender: The effect of context

• Must take into account person’s culture, age, gender before defining behavior as revealing personality disorder
Specific Personality Disorders

• The Erratic Cluster: Ways of Being Unpredictable, Violent, or Emotional...

Antisocial personality disorder

• Little concern for others
• Impulse
• Easily irritated and assaultive
• Reckless and irresponsible
Antisocial personality disorder

• Glib or superficial charm
• Callous social attitudes
• Lack of guilt feelings or remorse
• Indifferent to suffering of others

Borderline personality disorder

• Instability of relationships, emotions, and self-image
• Fears of abandonment
• Aggressive
• Prone to self-harm
• Strong emotions
Histrionic personality disorder

- Excessive attention seeking
- Excessive and strong emotions
- Sexually provocative

Histrionic personality disorder

- Opinions are shallow
- Suggestible
- Strong need for attention
Narcissistic personality disorder

• Need to be admired
• Strong sense of self importance
• Lack of insight into other peoples’ feelings or needs
• Sense of entitlement

Narcissistic personality disorder

• Feelings of superiority
• Self-esteem appears strong, but is fragile
• Envious of others
The Eccentric Cluster

• Ways of Being Different...

Schizoid personality disorder

• Detached from normal social relationships
• Obtains little pleasure out of life
• Appears inept or socially clumsy
• Passive in the face of unpleasant events
Schizotypal personality disorder

- Anxious in social relations and avoids people
- Appears “different” and does not conform
- Suspicious of others
- Odd or eccentric beliefs, such as in ESP or magic
- Thoughts and speech sometimes disorganized

Paranoid personality disorder

- Distrustful of others
- Misinterprets social events as threatening
- Harbors resentment towards others
Paranoid personality disorder

• Prone to pathological jealousy
• Argumentative and hostile

The Anxious Cluster

• Ways of Being Nervous, Fearful, or Distressed...
Avoidant personality disorder

- Feelings of inadequacy
- Sensitive to criticism
- Restricts activities to avoid embarrassments
- Low self-esteem

Dependent personality disorder

- Excessive need to be taken care of
- Submissive
- Seeks reassurance from others
Dependent personality disorder

- Rarely takes initiative, rarely disagrees with others
- Does not work well independently
- May tolerate abuse from others to obtain support

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder

- Preoccupied with order
- Strives for perfection
- Devoted to work, seeks little leisure time or friendship
Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder

- Frequently miserly or stingy
- Rigid and inflexible and stubborn

Prevalence of Personality Disorders

- Prevalence refers to total number of cases present in given population during a particular period of time
- Obsessive Compulsive personality disorder most common, with just over 4% prevalence rate
Prevalence of Personality Disorders

• Next most common are Schizotypal, Histrionic, and Dependent personality disorders, about 2% prevalence rate each
• Narcissistic personality disorder least common, with 0.2% prevalence rate

Prevalence of Personality Disorders

• Total prevalence rate for having at least one personality disorder is 13%
• Differential diagnosis
Dimensional Model of Personality Disorders

- Distinctions between normal personality traits and disorders are in terms of extremity, rigidity, maladaptiveness
- Parallel with chemistry: A little of this trait, some of that trait, and amplifying to extremely high (or low) levels, resulting in specific disorder
- Dominant model currently is categorical model (DSM-IV)

Causes of Personality Disorders

- Abnormal psychology and psychopathology are highly descriptive disciplines
- Some theoretical work on causes of personality disorders
- Most work emphasizes either “biological” causes or “social” causes of personality disorders
Summary and Evaluation

• Hallmark of psychological definition of abnormal is anything that prevents a person from having satisfying relationships or from carrying on productive work
• Sigmund Freud taught that the sign of a mature adult personality is the ability to love and to work

Summary and Evaluation

• All of the personality disorders refer to symptoms that cause problems with relationships, work, or both
• Personality disorders refer to enduring patterns of experience and behavior that differ greatly from the norms and expectations of a person’s culture
Summary and Evaluation

• Disorder shows up in how a person thinks, feels, gets along with others, and the ability to control own actions
• Pattern is displayed across situations, leading to the distress in self or others in key areas of life such as love and work
• Disorder typically has a long history in a person’s life