

Goal: To understand the many ways that our thoughts and perceptions and mental abilities can become symptoms of different forms of abnormal behavior

PART IIC: DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: COGNITION

Dimensions of Psychopathology:

Cognition

- The first psychology labs: using introspection to have subjects report on their mental activity
- Behaviorism and the decline (temporary) of any focus on cognition
- Mid 20th century: Wiener and “cybernetics”—the organism not only behaves but takes in feedback about its behavior and then adjusts to achieve optimum results

Dimensions of Psychopathology:

Cognition

- Cognitive functions are the mental processes of:
 - Consciousness and self-awareness
 - Perception (organizing sensory inputs)
 - Ability to form and retrieve memories
 - Rational thinking and problem-solving
 - Effective and pragmatic communication
 - Executive control of thoughts, feelings, and actions coordinated to our environment

Dimensions of Psychopathology:

Cognition

- Thought patterns can be seen in other areas of psychopathology; e.g.
 - Negative thoughts and depression
 - Deviant sexual fantasies
 - Obsessive thoughts about drinking or drugging
- But cognitive dysfunction can be primary
 - Think about what it means when we speak of “mental illness” and “mental patient”—e.g.,:
 - Talking or acting in irrational, incomprehensible ways
 - Being disconnected from reality

Dimensions of Psychopathology:

Cognition

- What is abnormal?
 - The D's: distress, deviance, disability, dysfunction, degree
- Signs and symptoms:
 - Cognitive (e.g., distorted perceptions, unrealistic beliefs, non-communicative speech, loss of memory)
 - Emotional (e.g., reduced emotional expression— "shallow affect" --, inappropriate emotions)
 - Behavioral (e.g., disorganized activity, social withdrawal)
 - Somatic (e.g., muscular rigidity, hypersensitivity to sensory inputs)

Dimensions of Psychopathology:

Cognition

- The cognitive syndromes—DSM categories of disorders (text pp. 501-502:
 - Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders
 - Dissociative disorders
 - Gender dysphoria
 - Neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability)
- And all of these include both well-defined patterns of psychopathology as well as “other specified” and “unspecified”