

# Characterizing “Normal” Behavior



# Classifying Abnormal Behavior

- The Definition of “Abnormal” Behavior relates to what is considered “normal” by a group
- Abnormal Behavior is identified by a number of characteristics
  - Non- typical
  - Socially unacceptable
  - Distressing to the person who exhibits it or to the people around them



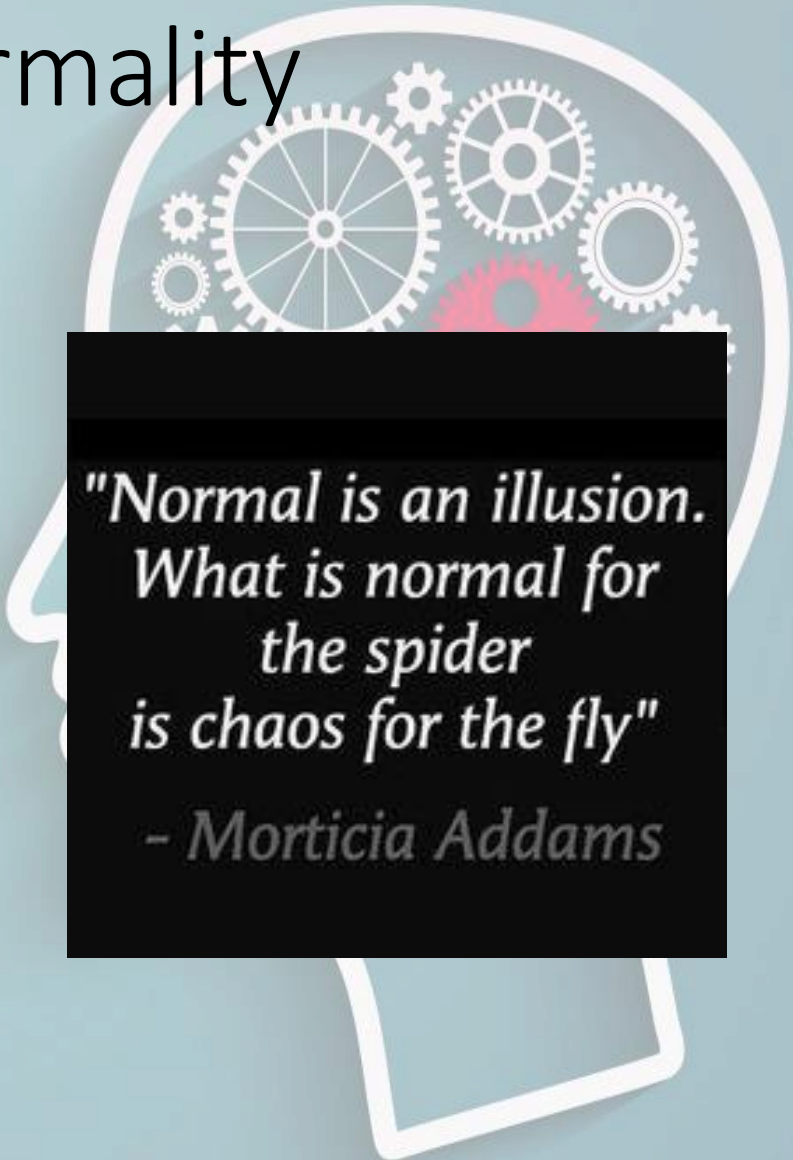
# Identifying Abnormal Behavior

- Criteria for **abnormal behavior** include statistical infrequency, dysfunction, personal distress, and violation of norms
  - None of these criteria alone is adequate for classifying abnormal behavior.
- Abnormal Psychology - The scientific study of abnormal behavior in order to describe, predict, explain, and change abnormal patterns of functioning.



# Dangers of Classifying Abnormality

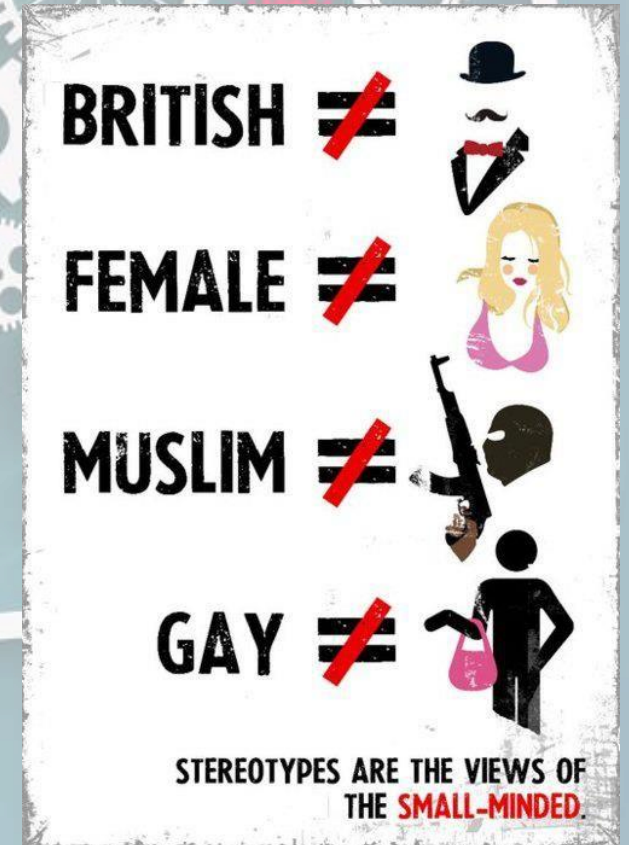
- Normal is Relative
  - What may be considered abnormal in one context, may be completely normal in another
    - Ex. Screaming and shouting is socially acceptable at a sporting event, but not in a library
  - Different cultures have different concepts of normality



*"Normal is an illusion.  
What is normal for  
the spider  
is chaos for the fly"  
- Morticia Addams*

# Dangers of Classifying Abnormality

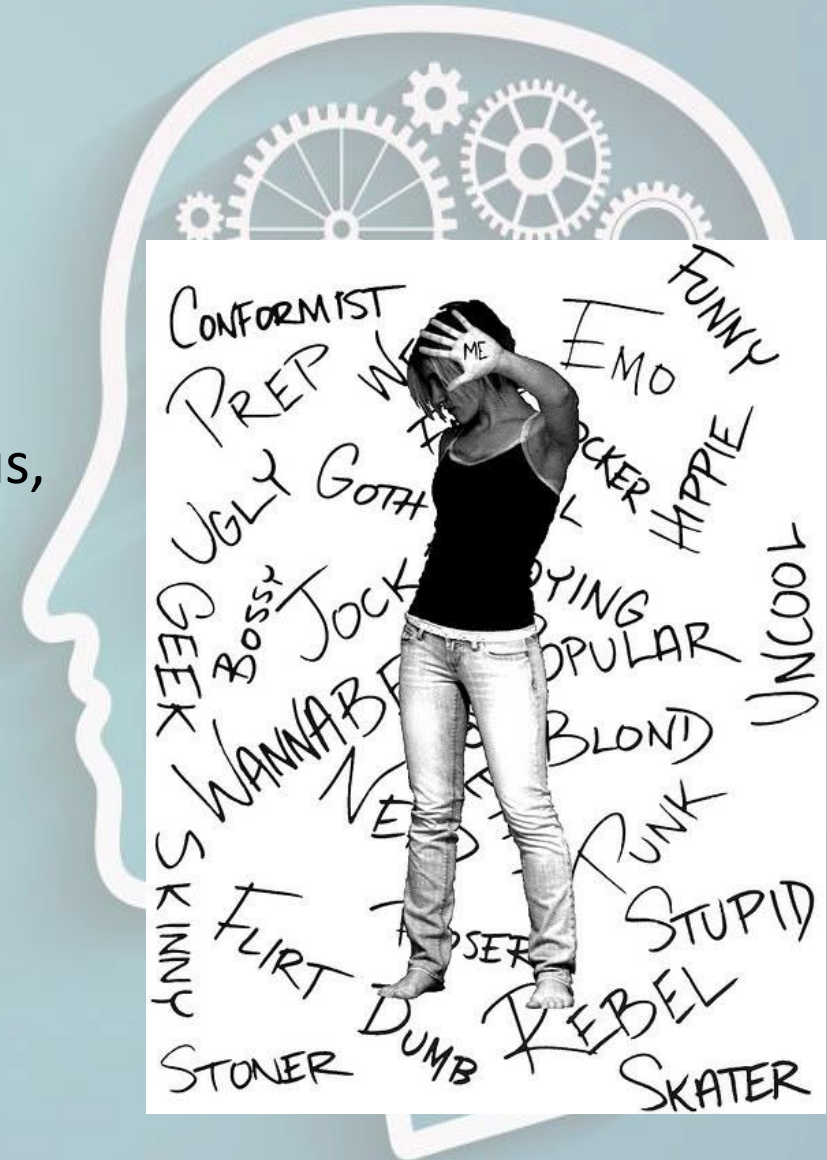
- Labels, Stigmas, and stereotypes
  - Attached labels can be used to dismiss and dehumanize people who we consider different
  - Do NOT use label as way of classifying something as bad!
    - Ex. “That’s Gay”
    - Associating something as bad with a label of something that is not leading to the negativity of the label





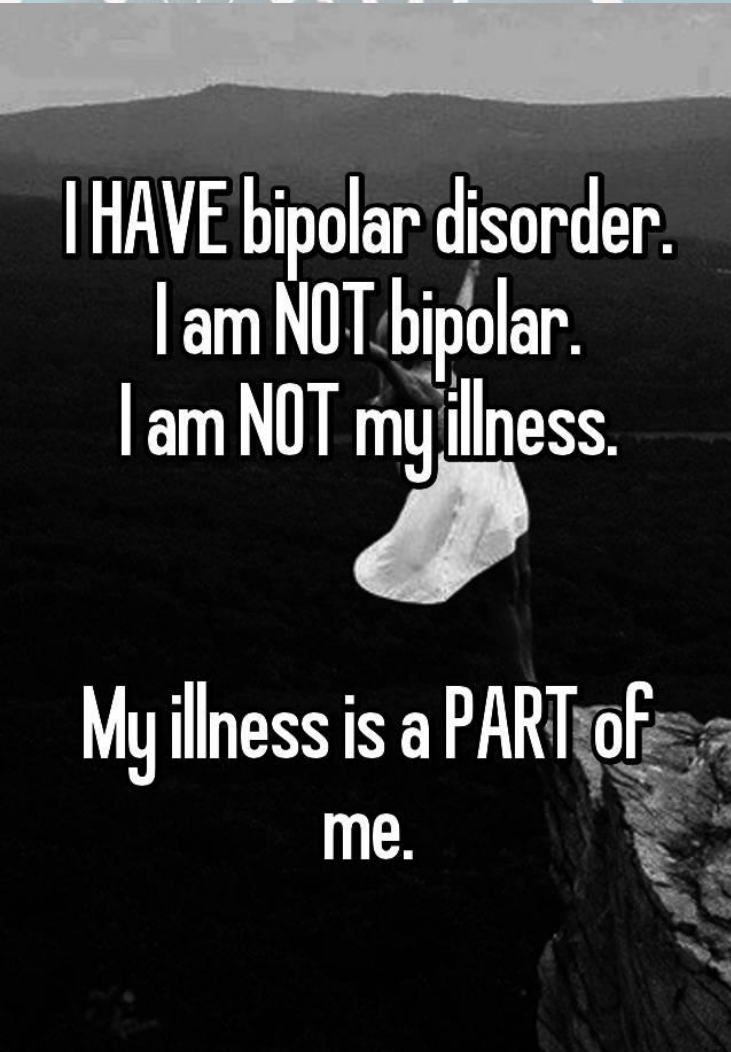
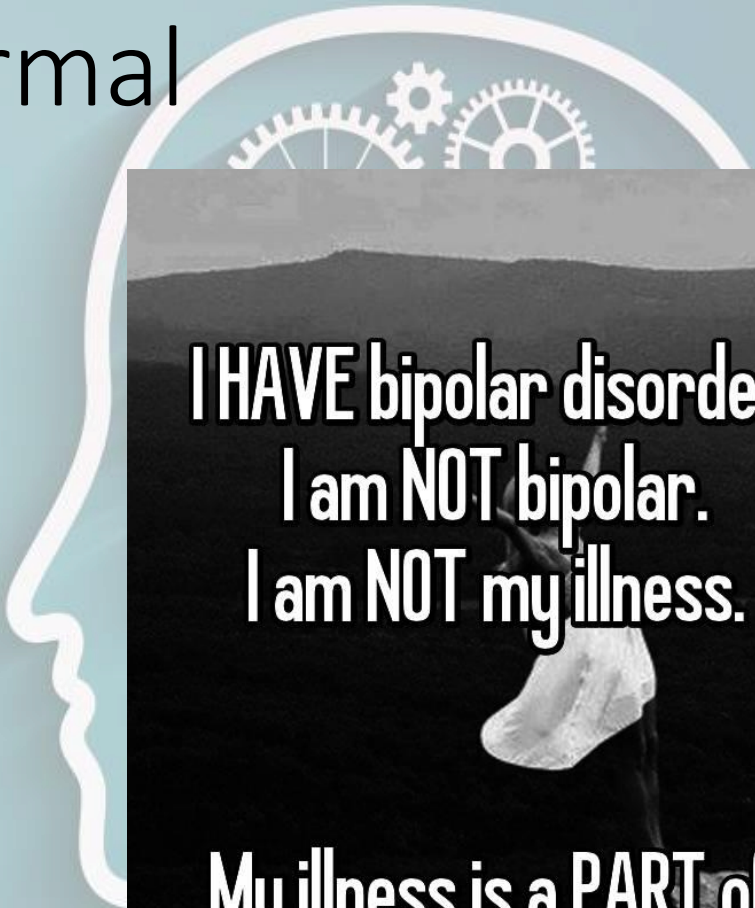
# Labeling Theory

- Assumption: people who are labeled as deviant become deviant
  - People who are so labeled as mentally ill are then stereotyped as unpredictable, dangerous, likely to behave in bizarre ways
- Labeled people are:
  - Treated as irresponsible
  - Denied access to normal activities
  - Forced to spend time with other deviants
  - Get socialized into mental patient culture, adopting mental patient worldview
  - Take on identity of a mental patient



# Dangers of Classifying Abnormal

- People are NOT just their abnormalities
- People are not “schizophrenics”, “alcoholics”, “autistics”, “phobics” or “bipolars”, but rather people with schizophrenia, alcoholism, autism...etc



**I HAVE bipolar disorder.  
I am NOT bipolar.  
I am NOT my illness.**

**My illness is a PART of  
me.**

# Four Ds of Abnormal Psychology: Deviance

- Deviance from or violation of a society's ideas about proper function
  - Norms- a society's explicit and implicit rules for proper conduct
  - Culture- a society's shared rules that govern the behavior of its members, common history, values, beliefs, habits, skills, technology, and arts
- Includes a valuation aspect which varies from culture to culture





# Four Ds of Abnormal Psychology: Distress

- Something that causes pain or discomfort among members of a group
  - Ex. Kissing on the cheek to say hello is uncomfortable for Americans
- Can lead to avoidance of similar behavior



# Four Ds of Abnormal Psychology: Dysfunction

- Abnormal makes regular function on a day to day basis difficult due to distracting nature of behavior
  - Ex. Bob showing up in short shorts makes meeting almost impossible to complete due to his distracting “unprofessional dress”



# Four Ds of Abnormal Psychology: Danger

- Behaviors that are considered to be reckless to the individual or others
- Dangerous behaviors as those considered to be outside the normal limits of acceptability and can lead to harm





# Researching Abnormal Behavior

- Behavior needs to be classified using specific method just like any other scientific study
  - Observation of behavior
  - Forming hypotheses about behavior
  - Sampling
  - Analyze results
  - Repeat Results

