

Week 7: Popular Articles

Both articles this week deal with the two central psychometric concepts of reliability and validity

a) Annals of Medicine: The Dictionary of Disorder, Alix Spiegel (*New Yorker*), January 5, 2005

This is the story of Robert Spitzer and the development of the DSM-III and DSM-III-R (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual [Revision]) (published in 1980 and 1987 respectively)

When Spitzer took over in the 1970s, the DSM lacked “reliability” (e.g., same diagnoses of a person by different clinicians), and therefore lacked “validity” (the assessment of a “true thing” in a person; e.g., psychopathy):

“there can be no validity without reliability”

Allen Frances, who worked under Spitzer on the DSM-III and who, in 1987, was appointed the director of the DSM-IV, says, “Without reliability the system is completely random, and the diagnoses mean almost nothing – maybe worse than nothing, because they’re falsely labelling. You’re better off not having a diagnostic system.”

Supposedly, the “dops” were ascendent (“data oriented people”) in developing the DSM-III, as opposed to the “Freudians” with their emphasis on “neuroses”

Interesting story about Spitzer and the fraud of Reichian psychotherapy (and its orgone accumulator)

From Benedict Carey, "Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay 'Cure' " (New York Times, May 18, 2012):

The simple fact was that he had done something wrong, and at the end of a long and revolutionary career it didn't matter how often he'd been right, how powerful he once was, or what it would mean for his legacy.

Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, considered by some to be the father of modern psychiatry, lay awake at 4 o'clock on a recent morning knowing he had to do the one thing that comes least naturally to him.

He pushed himself up and staggered into the dark. His desk seemed impossibly far away; Dr. Spitzer, who turns 80 next week, suffers from Parkinson's disease and has trouble walking, sitting, even holding his head upright.

The word he sometimes uses to describe these limitations – pathetic – is the same one that for decades he wielded like an ax to strike down dumb ideas, empty theorizing and junk studies.

Now here he was at his computer, ready to recant a study he had done himself, a poorly conceived 2003 investigation that supported the use of so-called reparative therapy to “cure” homosexuality for people strongly motivated to change.

[“pray the gay away” is the catchphrase]

The new DSM-V is out; this would be a good paper topic if you have any clinical instincts (www.dsm5.org)

Two Pleas for Sanity in Judging Saneness

By DWIGHT GARNER

THE BOOK OF WOE

The DSM and the Unmaking of Psychiatry

By Gary Greenberg

SAVING NORMAL

An Insiders Revolt Against Out-of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis, DSM-5, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life

By Allen Frances

This month a new edition of the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,”

the so-called bible of psychiatry, will be released into the world. This revision, known as the D.S.M.-5, is hovering already on Amazon, its cover an appalling shade of purple, available for advance order at a hardcover price of \$189.

Before the new edition is in anyone's hands, however, we have pre-emptive strikes against it in the form of two industrious and perfervid [intense] new books, Gary Greenberg's "Book of Woe" and Dr. Allen Frances's "Saving Normal." Like Patriot antimissile systems, these volumes propose to knock the forthcoming manual out of the sky.

The arrival of a new D.S.M. is always an awkward moment for psychiatry. It's a rewriting of the rules of engagement with the human mind and a tacit admission of past errors, errors that have caused irreparable harm. Homosexuality

was listed as a mental disorder, for example, until 1973.

If you think disputes over a new edition are merely a matter for eggheads, you should reconsider your view. The manual holds vast sway over human lives, Dr. Frances notes, dictating “who is considered well and who is sick; what treatment is offered; who pays for it; who gets disability benefits; who is eligible for mental health, school, vocational, and other services; who gets to be hired for a job, can adopt a child, or pilot a plane, or qualifies for life insurance; whether a murderer is a criminal or a mental patient; what should be the damages awarded in lawsuits; and much, much more.” Both Mr. Greenberg and Dr. Frances argue that the manual and its authors, the American Psychiatric Association, wield their power arbitrarily and often unwisely, encouraging the diagnosis of too many bogus mental illnesses

in patients (binge eating disorder, for example)
and too much medication to treat them.

psychiatric nosology (classification of disease);
nosological diplomacy and homosexuality

b) Personality Plus, Malcolm Gladwell (*New Yorker*), September 20, 2004

This article is primarily about the Meyers-Briggs type indicator (MTBI); based on Carl Jung's notion of psychological frames

Google "Myers-Briggs type indicator

Again, we have issues of reliability and validity (p. 148: "But then again surely all universal dichotomous typing systems are arbitrary")

MBTI Basics

The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality inventory is to make the theory of psychological types described by

C. G. Jung understandable and useful in people's lives. The essence of the theory is that much seemingly random variation in the behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the ways individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment.

“Perception involves all the ways of becoming aware of things, people, happenings, or ideas. Judgment involves all the ways of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. If people differ systematically in what they perceive and in how they reach conclusions, then it is only reasonable for them to differ correspondingly in their interests, reactions, values, motivations, and skills.”

In developing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator [instrument], the aim of Isabel Briggs Myers, and her mother, Katharine Briggs, was to

make the insights of type theory accessible to individuals and groups. They addressed the two related goals in the developments and application of the MBTI instrument:

The identification of basic preferences of each of the four dichotomies specified or implicit in Jung's theory.

The identification and description of the 16 distinctive personality types that result from the interactions among the preferences.

Favorite world: Do you prefer to focus on the outer world or on your own inner world? This is called Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I).

Information: Do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in or do you prefer to interpret and add meaning? This is called Sensing (S) or Intuition (N).

Decisions: When making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic and consistency or first look at the people and special circumstances? This is called Thinking (T) or Feeling (F).

Structure: In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options? This is called Judging (J) or Perceiving (P).

Your Personality Type: When you decide on your preference in each category, you have your own personality type, which can be expressed as a code with four letters.

TAT: Thematic Apperception Test (developed by Henry Murray)

The Thematic Apperception Test, or TAT, is a projective psychological test. Proponents of this technique assert that a person's responses reveal underlying motives, concerns, and the way they see the social world through the stories they make up about ambiguous pictures of people. Historically, it has been among the most widely researched, taught, and used of such tests.

Google: "thematic apperception test" and look at the images you have to make up stories about

Book: "Cult of Personality", Annie Murphy Hall

'The Cult of Personality': Are You Normal? Think Again

By SALLY SATEL

Published: October 10, 2004

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

How Personality Tests Are Leading Us to Miseducate Our Children, Mismanage Our Companies, and Misunderstand Ourselves. By Annie Murphy Paul.

PSYCHOLOGISTS have long tried to capture our personalities. Their efforts thrive today in a testing business, worth \$400 million a year, in which some 2,500 tests are on the market. In her engaging book, “The Cult of Personality,” Annie Murphy Paul uses research and interviews to expose this sprawling unregulated industry – a world in which personality tests are used to help answer a range of social questions: which divorcing spouse will be the better parent, who will do well at what job, which student should be admitted to a

special program. But as she argues, the tests rarely meet the demands to which they are put. Nonetheless, she writes, their ubiquity “suggests that they have become our era’s favored mode of self-understanding, our most accessible and accepted way of describing human nature.”