ROSENHAN (1983) ON BEING SANE IN INSANE PLACES

Areas to learn about:
- Defining Abnormality
- Features of Abnormality
- Classificatory systems
Introduction

- What do we mean by abnormality?

- Can you think of episodes in your own life where your behaviour may have been considered abnormal?
Defining Abnormality

- How could you differentiate between normality and abnormality?
- Statistics? – deviation from the average?
- Social Control? – weird or unacceptable behaviour often results in labelling, but does this really mean they are mentally ill? (see story of Joe Odd written by psychiatric patient)
- Cultural Relativity – people labelled abnormal due to ethnocentrism
Features of Abnormality

Rosenhan & Seligman (1989) identified 7 major features of abnormality;

1. Suffering
2. Maladaptiveness (eg; irrational phobia)
3. Vividness & Unconventionality (eg; dress)
4. Unpredictability & loss of control
5. Irrationality/incomprehensibility
6. Observer discomfort
7. Violation of moral & ideal standards

● Any problems with the above identifying features?
● How useful is it to label someone?
Classificatory Systems

Two systems which recognise how groups of symptoms seem to occur together (syndromes) & can be classed as diseases.

- **International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 1948**
  - focussed on signs & symptoms (but problematic as some of these occur in a number of disorders)
Classificatory systems

- **Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), 1952.**
  - Most recent version – DSM IV (1994)
  - Five axes/dimensions
  - Includes influence of outside factors
  - Broader & more valid diagnosis & treatment
The Rosenhan Study