

# 8 MENTAL DISORDERS: POPULAR MYTHS

## 8.1 Vocabulary

synonyms • nouns from verbs • paraphrasing

**A** Discuss the following questions.

- 1 What does the word *insanity* mean to you?
- 2 Which words in box a are correct psychological terms and which words are colloquial? What do they mean?

a  
autistic crazy deranged  
insane lunatic  
psychotic retarded mad

**B** What stereotypes are depicted in headlines A–D on the textbook page opposite?

b  
abuse delusion  
dissociation episode frenzy  
imbalance mood pact  
psychosis suicide syndrome

**C** Look up each noun in box b in a dictionary.

- 1 Is it countable, uncountable or both?
- 2 What is its psychological meaning?
- 3 What is a good synonym?
- 4 What useful grammatical information can you find?

**D** Study the two lists of verbs in box c.

- 1 Match the verbs with similar meanings.
- 2 Make nouns from the verbs if possible.

c	1	2
characterize	spread	
expel	connect	
exploit	eliminate	
link	display	
lose touch (with)	continue	
manifest	be detached (from)	
perpetuate	differ	
propagate	define	
vary	take advantage of	

**E** Look at the Hadford University handout.

- 1 How does the writer restate each section heading within the paragraph?
- 2 Find synonyms for the blue words and phrases. Use a dictionary if necessary.
- 3 Rewrite each sentence to make paraphrases of the texts. Use:
  - synonyms you have found yourself
  - synonyms from Exercise C
  - the nouns you made in Exercise D
  - passives where possible
  - any other words that are necessary

**Example:**

Melodramatic headlines in the press can affect sales considerably.

→ *Newspapers sell far more when they have sensational headlines.*

**F** Study the chart on the page opposite.

- 1 Look up the definitions of the types of crime represented in the chart.
- 2 What crime is most commonly committed by people with mental disorders? Why do you think this is?



### Stereotypes of mental illness

#### A Sensationalism in the press

Melodramatic headlines in the newspapers improve sales. With this in mind, the press exploits primitive emotions, such as fear and aggression, by representing mentally ill people as dangerous and antisocial. This is achieved in two main ways: by linking mental illness to violent crime, and by using specific language to perpetuate misconceptions of mental disorder.

#### B Mental health and violence

There is a popular belief that people who suffer from mental disorders are violent. This is not supported by research, which has found that intimidating behaviour characterizes only a small number of patients suffering from acute psychotic episodes.



## STEREOTYPES AND THE MEDIA

Sensational newspaper headlines perpetuate negative stereotypes of mental illness by linking it with violence, aggression, crime and death.

Look at the newspaper headlines on this page and identify the negative stereotypes they evoke.

**A** **Crazies set fire to primary school!!**

**B** **Schizophrenic kills mother in stabbing frenzy**

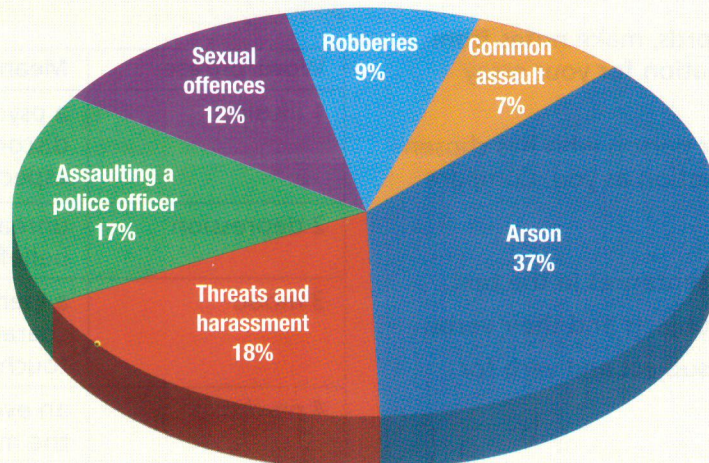
**C** **Autistic genius in computer scam**

**D** **DEPRESSED TEENAGERS IN SUICIDE PACT**

## MENTAL HEALTH AND VIOLENT CRIME

Research has found that only 5.2% of violent crimes are committed by people suffering from severe mental disorders. The chart below shows a breakdown of the types of violent crime included in this 5.2%.

Types of crime as a percentage of total violent crimes committed by patients with severe mental illness: 1988–2000



Source: Fazel, S. & Grann, M. (2006). The Population Impact of Severe Mental Illness on Violent Crime. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 163, 8.



## 8.2 Reading

essay types • complex sentences with passives • definitions

**A** Link the causes of mental illness in this list with the items in the blue box:

- a chemical imbalance in the brain
- b traumatic experience
- c poverty
- d genetics
- e abuse in childhood
- f drug abuse

- 1 Which are stereotypically associated with violence?
- 2 Give an example of a common belief related to mental illness.

schizophrenia    hysteria  
dissociative identity disorder    anxiety  
phobias    depression



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**There are five main essay types in psychology:**

- descriptive
- analytical
- comparison/evaluation
- argument
- practical report

**B** Look at the five essay types on the right.

- 1 What should the writer do in each type?
- 2 Match each essay type with one of the questions below the slide (A–E).
- 3 What topics should be covered in each essay question?

**C** Read the title of the text on the opposite page and the first sentence of each paragraph.

- 1 What will the text be about?
- 2 Choose one of the essay questions in Exercise B. Write four research questions which will help you to find information for your essay.

**D** Read the text.

- 1 Using your own words, make notes from the text on information for your essay question.
- 2 Work with another person who has chosen the same essay question as you. Compare your notes.

**E** Study the **highlighted** sentences in the text.

- 1 Underline all the subjects and their verbs.
- 2 Which is the main subject and verb for each sentence?

**F** Study the table on the right.

- 1 Match each word or phrase with its meaning.
- 2 Underline the words or phrases in the text which the writer uses to give the definitions. **See Vocabulary bank.**

**A** 'Violent crimes are often committed by those who are mentally ill.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Give examples to support your points.

**B** Describe four stereotypes of mental illness. How do they relate to the symptoms of real illnesses?

**C** Explain the methods used by the media to influence popular images of mental illness.

**D** Describe Asch's conformity experiments. How do they explain the influence of the media on individual attitudes to mental illness?

**E** Outline the differences and similarities between schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder.

Word/phrase	Meaning
1 illusion	a psychiatric disorder which disconnects different aspects of the personality
2 depression	unreasonable or illogical beliefs
3 mood	a mental disorder characterized by losing touch with reality
4 psychosis	an event that only occurs in the mind of an individual
5 delusions	an emotional state
6 multiple personality	a mood disorder that makes a person feel very sad and unable to live an active life



# 'You must be crazy!'

## (popular misconceptions about mental illness)

Attitudes to mental illness have varied significantly throughout history and across cultures. For instance, to this day, some preliterate societies (having no written language) believe that individuals who behave abnormally are gifted with supernatural healing powers and clairvoyance; that is, the ability to see into the future. In other words, the mentally ill are highly respected in some communities. In contrast to this, people suffering from mental illness in Europe in the Middle Ages (AD 500–1500) were accused of being possessed, that is to say, controlled, by demons or evil spirits. Attempts to expel these evil spirits involved cruel physical punishments, and isolating or imprisoning the 'possessed'. These traditional beliefs are probably responsible for the fear with which mental illness is approached. For, even in a modern scientific society, where the physiological causes of mental disorder are far better understood than in the past, prejudices and misconceptions about mental illness still persist.

One of the most common myths about mental illness is that it is an illusion; that it is 'all in the mind', depression being a case in point. Because depression is associated with tiredness and lack of motivation which are, to some degree, normal in everyday life, it is not always easy to distinguish between natural reactions to life's challenges and the symptoms of clinical depression, a mood disorder. As a result, people suffering from depression are often seen as 'weak', and are expected to exercise self-control to stop feeling depressed. Research has found, however, that depression is the result of chemical imbalances in the brain which affect mood, or emotional state, and is, therefore, a 'real' illness with physiological causes.

A second widespread myth about people who suffer from mental illness is that they are dangerous and violent. In reality, violence related to mental disturbance is usually only seen during rare episodes of severe psychosis, when an individual loses touch with reality. According to Pescosolido<sup>1</sup>, the most common causes of violence are alcohol and drug abuse, followed a long way behind by schizophrenia and depression.

Another misconception about people afflicted with mental illness is that they are out of touch with reality. It is true that some disorders, such as schizophrenia, may result in delusions – unreasonable beliefs, and hallucinations. However, the majority of people with mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, phobias and bipolar disorder, are completely in touch with reality.

Schizophrenia is a widely misunderstood disorder which is characterized by the creation of an irrational internal world. The Greek roots of the word *schizo*, meaning *split*, and *phrene*, meaning *mind*, have led to the popular belief that schizophrenics suffer from split minds or dual personalities. As a result, schizophrenia is often confused with multiple personality disorder (another name for dissociative identity disorder), which is, in fact, the result of traumatic events, whereas schizophrenia is largely inherited.

It is interesting to ask how these popular myths are perpetuated in modern society. Asch's experiments in conformity<sup>2</sup> explain how the attitudes of individuals are influenced by group opinions. One example of this is the media, including film, which has a powerful influence on popular views and is often responsible for propagating negative stereotypes of those who are mentally ill.

Looking at films first, it is easy to find examples of melodramatic misrepresentations of mental illness. A film such as *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957), which is based on the true story of Eve White's multiple personality disorder, dramatizes her illness. *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) is another film in which the more alarming face of mental illness is represented. What is particularly powerful about this film, however, is the emphasis placed on the oppression and maltreatment of the patients by the medical staff at the psychiatric hospital.

The press is another field of the media which encourages the public to continue believing in stereotypes of mental disorders. Newspaper reports routinely link violent crime with mental illness, and more specifically, use terminology related to mental illness to reinforce negative images.

In conclusion, it can be seen that, in spite of advances in psychiatric diagnosis and treatment, mental illness is still widely misunderstood. Negative stereotypes, encouraged by the media, persist in modern society, and mentally ill people are commonly perceived as weak, dangerous, violent, delusional, criminal and frighteningly unpredictable.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Pescosolido, B.A., Monahan, J., Link, B.G., et al. (1999). The public's view of the competence, dangerousness, and need for legal coercion of persons with mental health problems. *American Journal of Public Health*, 89, 1339–1345.

<sup>2</sup> Perrin, S. and Spencer, C.P. (1981). Independence or conformity in the Asch experiment as a reflection of cultural and situational factors. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 20(3), 205–210.



### 8.3 Extending skills

passives in dependent clauses • essay plans

**A** Find the words in the box in the text in Lesson 8.2.

- 1 What part of speech is each word?
- 2 Think of another word which could be used in place of the word in the text. Use your dictionary if necessary.

misconception attitude  
culture prejudice delusion  
inherited split melodramatic  
alarming terminology

**B** Study sentences A–D from the text in Lesson 8.2.

- 1 Identify the dependent clause.
- 2 Copy the table under the sentences and write the parts of each dependent clause in the table.
- 3 Rewrite the sentence using an active construction.

**Example:**

**A** *People often approach mental illness with fear, probably as a result of traditional beliefs.*

**C** Read the essay plans and extracts on the opposite page.

- 1 Match each plan with an essay title in Lesson 8.2.
- 2 Which essay is each extract from?
- 3 Which part of the plan is each extract from?

**D** Work with a partner.

- 1 Write another paragraph for one of the plans.
- 2 Exchange paragraphs with another pair. Can they identify where it comes from?

**A** These traditional beliefs are probably responsible for the fear with which mental illness is approached.

**B** A film such as *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957), which is based on the true story of Eve White's multiple personality disorder, dramatizes her illness.

**C** Schizophrenia is a widely misunderstood disorder which is characterized by the creation of an irrational internal world.

**D** *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) is another film in which the more alarming face of mental illness is represented.

Subject	Verb	By whom/what
Mental illness	is approached	by people

### 8.4 Extending skills

writing complex sentences • writing essay plans • writing essays

**A** Make complete sentences from these notes. Add words as necessary.

**A** in conclusion – limited number – severe mental illness – violent crimes – but – more likely – victims

**C** however – majority – mental illnesses – not linked – violent crime

**E** first – identify – different types – mental disorder – be – commonly – associated – aggression

**B** Studies – crime – psychiatric disorders – show – patients – be – more likely – victims – crime – perpetrators

**D** research – demonstrated – although – mental illness – may – linked – small number – violent crimes – drug – alcohol abuse – responsible – higher percentage

**F** for many years – it – popular belief – people with – mental disorders – violent and dangerous

**B** The sentences in Exercise A are topic sentences for paragraphs in essay A in Lesson 8.2. Put them in the best order for the essay. What is the main topic for each paragraph?

**C** Look at the essay question on the opposite page.

- 1 What kind of essay is this?
- 2 Do some research and make a plan.
- 3 Write the essay. **See Skills bank.**

## Essay plans

A

- 1 Introduction: two disorders commonly confused; different symptoms and causes; aims of essay
- 2 Describe symptoms of disorders 1 and 2
- 3 Describe causes of disorders 1 and 2
- 4 Illustrate similarities between disorders; behaviour, causes, treatments
- 5 Illustrate differences between disorders; behaviour, causes, treatments
- 6 Conclusion: disorders 1 and 2 are similar; delusions, detachment from reality; but different causes and treatment

B

- 1 Introduction: social importance of conformity; definition of conformity; give essay aims
- 2 Asch's hypothesis; majority can influence individuals even when majority is wrong
- 3 Describe experiment; methodology
- 4 Describe results; individuals conformed to the majority opinion
- 5 Link results to effect of mass media on individual thinking
- 6 Discuss criticisms of Asch's experiments; other variables; history and social context and relate to media influence on individual opinion
- 7 Conclusion: Asch's experiments demonstrated tendency to conformity; social context and history not fully accounted for; relate to effect of media on independent opinion.

## Essay extracts

1

To summarize, it is clear that schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder are similar in the sense that patients with both disorders may lose touch with the outer world as they construct an independent inner reality. In the case of schizophrenia, this inner world is disorganized and incoherent. In contrast, the patient with dissociative identity disorder may have distinct boundaries between their different personalities and experience very little confusion. The causes of schizophrenia are thought to be physiological and genetically influenced, whereas dissociative identity disorder is the result of traumatic or stressful events. Schizophrenia is usually treated with medication and hospitalization. In contrast, medication is not commonly recommended as a treatment for dissociative identity disorder, which is generally treated with psychotherapy.

2

Successful social groups require a high degree of cooperation between individuals, which can be achieved in various ways. One of these is the exercise of social pressure by the majority on the individual to behave in a certain way or adopt a particular belief. Conformity is the act of changing individual behaviour in response to group pressure. It is important to understand the effects of conformity because it is a powerful social phenomenon affecting most sectors of society, including education, politics and commerce. This essay will outline Asch's hypothesis of conformity, describe the methodology and results of his experiments and discuss them in the light of other research.

## Essay question

In 1999, thirteen young people were killed in a violent attack by two pupils of Columbine High School, Colorado. The attackers also died. Since then, a number of high school and college massacres have been carried out by adolescent males in the United States and Europe. To what extent do you think mental illness is the cause of this extreme violence?



### Understanding new words: using definitions

You will often find new words in academic texts. Sometimes you will not be able to understand the text unless you look the word up in a dictionary, but often a technical term will be defined or explained immediately or later in the text.

Look for these indicators:

<i>is or are</i>	<i>... it is an illusion</i>
<i>brackets</i>	<i>... (another name for dissociative identity disorder)</i>
<i>or</i>	<i>mood, or emotional state</i>
<i>which</i>	<i>Schizophrenia ..., which is characterized by the creation of an irrational internal world.</i>
<i>a comma or a dash (–) immediately after the word or phrase</i>	<i>... depression, a mood disorder</i> <i>... delusions – unreasonable beliefs</i>
<i>phrases such as that is, in other words</i>	<i>... clairvoyance, that is, the ability to see into the future.</i> <i>In other words, the mentally ill ...</i>

### Remember!

When you write assignments, you may want to define words yourself. Learn to use the methods above to give variety to your written work.

### Understanding direction verbs in essay titles

Special verbs called **direction verbs** are used in essay titles. Each direction verb indicates a type of essay. You must understand the meaning of these words so you can choose the correct writing plan.

Kind of essay	Direction verbs
<b>Descriptive</b>	<i>State ... Say ... Outline ... Describe ... Summarize ...</i> <i>What is/are ...?</i>
<b>Analytical</b>	<i>Analyze ... Explain ... Comment on ... Examine ...</i> <i>Give reasons for ... Why ...? How ...?</i>
<b>Comparison/evaluation</b>	<i>Compare (and contrast) ... Distinguish between ...</i> <i>Evaluate ... What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of ...?</i>
<b>Argument</b>	<i>Discuss ... Consider ... (Critically) evaluate ...</i> <i>To what extent ...? How far ...?</i>
<b>Practical reports</b>	<i>Outline ... Explain ... State ... Describe ...</i> <i>Summarize ... Discuss ...</i>



## Skills bank

## Choosing the correct writing plan

When you are given a written assignment, you must decide on the best writing plan before you begin to write the outline. Use key words in the essay title to help you choose – see *Vocabulary bank*.

Type of essay – content	Possible structure
<b>Descriptive writing</b> List the <b>most important points</b> of something: e.g., in a narrative, a list of key events in chronological order; a description of key ideas in a theory or from an article you have read. Summarize points in a logical order. <b>Example:</b> <i>Describe four stereotypes of mental illness. How do they relate to the symptoms of real illnesses?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction</li> <li>• point/event 1</li> <li>• point/event 2</li> <li>• point/event 3</li> <li>• conclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Analytical writing</b> List the <b>important points</b> which in <b>your opinion</b> explain the situation. Justify your opinion in each case. Look behind the facts at the <b>how</b> and <b>why</b> , not just <b>what/who/when</b> . Look for and question accepted ideas and assumptions. <b>Example:</b> <i>Explain the methods used by the media to influence popular images of mental illness.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction</li> <li>• definitions</li> <li>• <b>most important point:</b> example/evidence/reason 1 example/evidence/reason 2, etc.</li> <li>• <b>next point:</b> example/evidence/reason 3 example/evidence/reason 4, etc.</li> <li>• conclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Comparison/evaluation</b> Decide on and define the <b>aspects</b> to compare two subjects. You may use these aspects as the basis for paragraphing. Evaluate which aspect(s) is/are better or preferable and give reasons/criteria for your judgment. <b>Example:</b> <i>What are the differences between schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction</li> <li>• <b>state and define aspects</b> <i>Either:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>aspect 1:</b> subject A v. B</li> <li>• <b>aspect 2:</b> subject A v. B</li> </ul> <i>Or:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>subject A:</b> aspect 1, 2, etc.</li> <li>• <b>subject B:</b> aspect 1, 2, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• conclusion/evaluation</li> </ul>
<b>Argument writing</b> <b>Analyze</b> and/or <b>evaluate</b> , then give your <b>opinion</b> in a <b>thesis statement</b> at the beginning or the end. Show awareness of difficulties and disagreements by mentioning counter-arguments. <b>Support</b> your opinion with evidence. <b>Example:</b> <i>'Violent crimes are often committed by those who are mentally ill.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Give examples to support your points.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>introduction:</b> statement of issue</li> <li>• <b>thesis statement giving opinion</b></li> <li>• <b>define terms</b></li> <li>• <b>point 1:</b> explain + evidence</li> <li>• <b>point 2:</b> explain + evidence, etc.</li> <li>• <b>conclusion:</b> implications, etc.</li> </ul> <i>Alternatively:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>introduction:</b> statement of issue</li> <li>• <b>define terms</b></li> <li>• <b>for:</b> point 1, 2, etc.</li> <li>• <b>against:</b> point 1, 2, etc.</li> <li>• <b>conclusion:</b> statement of opinion</li> </ul>
<b>Practical reports</b> of experiments and studies <b>Outline</b> the problem and previous experiments. <b>Explain</b> why you carried out the experiment ( <b>rationale</b> ). <b>State</b> your hypothesis. <b>Describe</b> the experiment. <b>Summarize</b> and discuss results. <b>Example:</b> <i>How do Asch's conformity experiments explain the influence of the media on individual attitudes to mental illness?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>introduction:</b> background to problem, literature review, hypothesis</li> <li>• <b>methodology:</b> participants, methodology, tasks, measurements</li> <li>• <b>results:</b> summary of findings, graphs</li> <li>• <b>discussion:</b> assess findings in relation to hypothesis, suggest future research</li> </ul>