CREATING OER: ACTIVITY

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The terms “mental disorder,” “mental illness,” and “psychopathology” are often used interchangeably by those in psychology and related fields; all refer to the study of unusual or abnormal behaviors. Unlike terms and concepts in many of the physical sciences, however, there is not a single, agreed-upon by all operational definition for these terms. The primary definitional conflict hinges on this question: Can mental disorders be defined as a scientific term, or are they instead socially constructed?

This lack of a single definition can lead to confusion and communication problems both when mental health professionals, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, or social workers, attempt to talk to each other and to the general public. As a result, mental disorders are used and defined in a variety of ways. Before beginning our examination of anxiety disorders, we must discuss these definitions and decide which one (or ones) will guide this book. Below are descriptions of the most common perspectives.

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### Mental Disorders as Statistical Deviance

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