

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2004). *Abnormal psychology* (3rd ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. ISBN 0-07-256246-3. 700 pages.

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Abnormal Psychology (3rd ed.), written by Dr. S. Nolen-Hoeksema, professor of psychology at Yale University, is a survey of theory, research, and practice in the field of psychopathology. In evaluating this text, we asked whether it meets the needs of introductory readers interested in counselling.

The author begins by discussing the generally accepted criteria (e.g., cultural relativism, subjective discomfort, maladaptiveness) that establish mental disorders defined through *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, text revision [DSM-IV-TR]) categories. Recent research and statistical information are offered together with engaging, detailed case studies and interactive computer software (e.g., online information on current research and practice questions), making it easy to explore and appreciate both the broad scope and the fundamental tenets of abnormal psychology. It is therefore an ideal and comprehensive examination of the field for the counsellor or counselling student who wishes to be informed about the range of clinical phenomena, their origins, and current treatments.

To do justice to a sub-discipline this large required some 19 chapters divided into smaller, "bite-sized" sections, beginning with general history and theory, followed by disorder-by-disorder coverage. Each chapter includes well-written summaries, and most chapters also feature unique additions such as (a) "Pushing the boundaries," a section that presents current scientific findings on the theme or issue under discussion; (b) key concept reviews that present in point form the major ideas found in the chapter; (c) tables listing the actual *DSM-IV-TR* criteria for specific disorders; (d) case studies that illustrate each disorder; (e) "Bio-psycho-social integration," a section that combines biological, psychological, and social theories about specific problem categories; (f) "Extraordinary people," a section that provides biographies or autobiographies of people who suffer from the mental disorder under discussion; (g) "Voices," which consist of quotations from people living with mental disorders; and (h) "Taking psychology personally," a perspective regarding how psychological concerns can relate to the reader on a personal level. These sections enrich understanding. Beyond fact and theory, the reader is immersed in the stories of people with mental disorders. This allows the reader to discover ways of thinking about diagnosis, etiology, treatment, and research. Put another way, the text moves well past a mere mechanical application of diagnostic labels or an impersonal conceptualization of etiology, encouraging an understanding of the fluid and complex context in which the struggle to cope with mental illness is lived.

Although the text is ultimately designed for the American reader, Canadian research is cited. *Abnormal Psychology* is highly relevant to Canadians, notwithstanding the

several introductory alternatives promoted as “Canadian” (e.g., Barlow, Durand, & Stewart, 2006; Davison, Neale, Blankstein, & Flett, 2005; Nevid, Greene, Johnson, & Taylor, 2005). While these alternatives do offer more Canadian research and perspective than does Nolen-Hoeksema, this book has significant value.

Some readers may concur that the dominant perspective is cognitive-behavioural. The author does a credible job evaluating competing (e.g., cognitive-behavioural, psychodynamic, biological) conceptualizations, treatments, and studies of the more extensively investigated disorders. A few chapters, however (e.g., anxiety disorders), would benefit from a more thorough overview of alternative conceptualizations and a more trenchant critique of the cognitive-behavioural perspective. In that respect, readers who adhere to other schools of thought (e.g., dynamic, existential) may be disappointed. The vulnerability-stress model should be referenced throughout the book as it is a central etiological model of psychopathology. Etiological theories may have been better presented more tentatively, emphasizing their hypothetical nature.

The overview of assessment and diagnosis (i.e., chapter 4) is excellent, with case illustrations and descriptions of psychological tests, measurements, information-gathering techniques, and interview formats readily available to explain and demonstrate key concepts. Nolen-Hoeksema has contrasted the continuum model with the dichotomy model of diagnosis, but a more in-depth focus on the various levels of symptom severity could be achieved by providing examples related to each disorder that show how it is possible to have certain symptoms yet be considered normal. Also, as the *DSM-IV-TR* is clearly the guiding framework, it ought to attract more than an acknowledgement of technical or scientific problems. Nolen-Hoeksema devotes few words to identifying fundamental issues concerning this nosology and nomenclature, what alternatives might exist, and why many practitioners regard the *DSM-IV-TR* as a misguided imposition. However, as most introductory texts do not address these matters thoroughly or incisively, this weakness does not separate this book from its rivals in any significant way.

As for treatment, Nolen-Hoeksema first details mainstream approaches in a separate chapter (chapter 5), then later describes specific treatments for each of the major disorders, introducing considerable research on treatment efficacy. Again, there is a tendency to showcase cognitive-behavioural therapy and psychopharmacology as the treatments of choice. Especially because these interventions are in vogue, their coverage would benefit from greater scientific if not political skepticism, particularly regarding the epistemology of medication effects. Alternative treatments for some disorders are not presented, and common factor models are briefly mentioned. Important areas of counselling (e.g., domestic violence, sexual assault, cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS) receive light coverage when assessment, prevention, and intervention in such areas should receive more attention. Throughout, Nolen-Hoeksema has incorporated discussion of cultural factors, presenting new research on topics such as cultural bias in psychotherapy, the *DSM-IV-TR* and diagnosis, and the need for practitioners to develop cultural competencies. Given the recent trend toward a “best practices” approach among providers, this material is essential.

To conclude, as practitioners and university instructors we have found this text highly informative and well conceptualized. Our students have commented spontaneously and positively on the quality, readability, and detail. The majority found it useful and inviting, and said they would recommend it. On a personal note, as counselling educators we have returned to this text repeatedly as a quick, authoritative, user-friendly, desk reference.

The content of abnormal psychology becomes increasingly important to the Canadian counselling community as we are required to demonstrate an understanding of diagnosis, assessment, empirically supported treatments, and up-to-date research findings. Without a comprehensive and reliable source, this understanding is neither easily nor efficiently obtained by busy practitioners. *Abnormal Psychology* is a readily accessible resource that satisfies counsellors' demands and can be a valuable introduction for the counselling student.

References

- Barlow, D. H., Durand, V. M., & Stewart, S. H. (2006). *Abnormal psychology: An integrative approach* (1st Canadian ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson.
- Davison, G. C., Neale, J. M., Blankstein, K. R., & Flett, G. L. (2005). *Abnormal psychology* (2nd Canadian ed.). Mississauga, ON: Wiley.
- Nevid, J. S., Greene, B., Johnson, P. A., & Taylor, S. (2005). *Essentials of abnormal psychology in a changing world* (Canadian ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson.

Guichard, J. et Huteau, M. (2005). *L'orientation scolaire et professionnelle*. Paris, Dunod. ISBN 2 10 048516 4. 120 pages.

Par : André Samson, Ph.D., Université d'Ottawa

Jean Guichard et Michel Huteau enseignent la psychologie au Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (Institut National d'Étude du Travail et d'Orientation Professionnelle) à Paris. Tout au long de leur livre, Guichard et Huteau tentent de répondre à des questions fondamentales qui touchent le counselling de carrière. Parmi ces interrogations notons : comment les individus procèdent-ils pour s'orienter? Quelles sont les inégalités d'orientation tenant de l'origine sociale et au sexe? Quelles sont les pratiques des conseillers d'orientation?

Pour répondre à ces questions, les auteurs situent d'abord les enjeux reliés à l'orientation professionnelle dans leur contexte social. Ils décrivent comment le choix de carrière se vit dans une société individualiste où le marché du travail ne se limite plus aux frontières nationales. Plus particulièrement, le rôle de l'école y est abordé. Un fait assez rare pour ce type d'ouvrage et fort captivant, Guichard et Huteau traitent aussi des dimensions éthiques et morales de l'orientation tout au long de la vie.

Au chapitre 2, il est question de la problématique de l'adéquation entre la formation de la main d'œuvre et la réalité fluctuante du marché du travail. Les auteurs démontrent que s'il est possible d'identifier les grandes tendances de l'économie avec une certaine exactitude, il est beaucoup plus ardu de quantifier exactement ces tend-