

---

## Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

---

Bellack, A. S. & Hersen, M. (1990). *Handbook of comparative treatments for adult disorders*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

---

*Reviewed by:* Troy Janzen and Henry L. Janzen, University of Alberta.

Today's psychologist and counsellor is always in need of a comprehensive text that provides background information, a conceptual understanding, and treatment options for the major adult disorders. While this handbook is not exhaustive, it does provide a well-written quick reference that can be invaluable to the psychologist who works in a general practice. In addition, due to the objective way each of the major treatments are presented, the reader is able to gain insights into the similarities and differences between the various treatments.

Presented within its pages are the four major treatment options for working with adult disorders. Somewhat traditional in nature, this book adheres to a medical model of diagnosis and treatment. The reader is promised ". . . an overview of the best current thinking and techniques, from two or more major different viewpoints, on each of the major adult disorders" (p. xiv). As long as one agrees with Bellack and Hersen's definition of what constitutes a major viewpoint and major disorder, they have achieved success. For Bellack and Hersen, the major viewpoints are limited to traditional psychoanalysis, behavioural techniques, cognitive therapy, and pharmacological treatment. The major adult disorders that are covered include depression, panic and agoraphobia, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anorexia and bulimia, borderline personality disorder and alcoholism and substance abuse.

The book is organized into nine parts. The first part serves as an introduction to the major viewpoints that will be presented throughout the book. Noticeably absent from the first part is the cognitive viewpoint which is included later in the book. Each subsequent part deals individually with each of the major adult disorders. For some disorders, such as depression, up to four different viewpoints on treatment are presented. Other disorders, such as social phobia, have limited treatment options presented. In this case, cognitive-behavioural therapy and pharmacotherapy are the only treatment options presented. All of the disorders include a chapter on psychotherapy (usually meaning Freudian psychoanalysis) and behaviour therapy. The end of each part contains an editorial which highlights the similarities and differences between the various treatments.

This book has many strengths, some of which warrant highlighting. First, the utility of this book, for practising psychologists as well as students, is impressive. The organization, presentation, and comprehensive nature of the book allows for easy reference and each part can easily stand alone. This book could even serve well as a compendium to the Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual 3rd edition (DSM 111-R) section on adult disorders. Second, the emphasis that each of the authors has placed on process gives the reader a better perspective on the various treatments. The inclusion of case examples by each of the authors also helps crystallize things and allows the reader to view each of the disorders through their own various "lenses." A third strength of the book is the inclusion of comprehensive chapters for all the disorders on pharmacological treatment. With the abundance of different psychoactive drugs available for use, it is necessary for professionals, who work with medicated people, to be aware of the different types of drugs, their efficacy, the potential side effects, and the proper dosage and action of the drug. This book provides the reader with all of this necessary information for each of the adult disorders. A final strength of this book lies in the manner of presentation each of the authors has chosen. Each author was instructed ". . . not to write prototypical literature reviews arguing about which technique is better. To the contrary, the authors have attempted to communicate an understanding as to how and why they approach cases in a particular way" (p. xiv). As a result of this, each approach can be seen relative to the others. At times striking similarities exist between the approaches and their conceptual understanding of the disorders; at other times the approaches are markedly different from each other. Ultimately, the reader will be forced to decide which treatment approach seems to be best suited to deal with disorder and best fits their own personal approach to psychotherapy.

A limitation of this book involves the definition of what constitutes a major treatment approach. The book tends to be biased towards the psychoanalytic, behavioural, and pharmacological forms of treatment. All of these forms of treatment are all acceptable and well known. However, there is little attention given to cognitive approaches, and many of what are considered "cutting edge" counselling approaches are not even considered. Some of the "cutting edge" approaches might include solution-focused, or brief therapy, the gestalt approach, constructivist approaches, etc. It seemed that those approaches that did not fit comfortably within the medical model tended to be excluded.

Despite any possible limitations there are several reasons to recommend Comparative treatments for adult disorders. First, this book offers a comprehensive, comparative, and useful look at the major adult disorders. The utility of the book is unquestionable for those that work on a daily basis with clinical populations. Second, the emphasis on process within the book allows the reader to view each disorder from differing viewpoints. For those that already are comfortable thinking and working within a Freudian psychoanalytic and behavioural framework this handbook is a must have reference for your shelf and should sit next to the DSM 111-R, or the soon to be published DSM-IV.