

## Book Review / Compte rendu

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Barnow, S., & Balkir, N. (Eds.) (2013). *Cultural Variations in Psychopathology: From Research to Practice*. Gottingen, DE: Hogrefe. ISBN: 0-88937-434-1, 286 pages.

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*Reviewed by / Compte rendu par* : Constance Anne Barlow

### ABSTRACT

This is an edited book that aims to enhance understanding about the intersection of migration, culture, and psychopathology. The book presents research projects, literature reviews, and theoretical frameworks that address cultural variations in psychopathology. This review will provide a summary and critical analysis of the various chapters that address topics related to neuroscience, emotion regulation, diagnosis, and intervention. While the chapters in the book are rich in information and present detailed background literature that is current and relevant, the limitation of the book is its underrepresentation of discussions by the authors on how the research findings can be translated into practice.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage édité vise à mieux faire comprendre l'intersection entre migration, culture, et psychopathologie. On y présente des projets de recherche, des recensements de la littérature, et des cadres théoriques portant sur des variations culturelles de la psychopathologie. Ce compte rendu sert de résumé et d'analyse critique des divers chapitres sur des sujets ayant trait à la neuroscience, à la régulation des émotions, au diagnostic, et à l'intervention. Bien que les chapitres de l'ouvrage soient riches en information et qu'on y présente en détail de la littérature d'appui à jour et pertinente, les limites du livre résident dans le manque de discussion de la part des auteurs sur la façon de traduire dans la pratique ces résultats de recherche.

*Cultural Variations in Psychopathology*, a product of a 2010 closed international workshop titled "Cultural Variations in Emotion: Regulation and Treatment of Psychiatric Patients," was organized by the research team from the Institute of Psychology, Heidelberg University, Germany. The workshop brought together academics and practitioners from the EU, China, Canada, and the USA who exchanged views on research and practice with ethnically diverse minority groups. The objective of the edited book, which comprises 16 chapters arranged into 5 sections, is to "illuminate and understand the interplay between migration, culture, and psychopathology" (p. 4) and address implications for service delivery in the area of mental health.

Section I, *The Relevance of Culture for Mental Health and Illness*, begins with an introduction written by the editors, Sven Barnow and Nazli Balkir from the University of Heidelberg. Chapter 1 provides an informative overview of immigration trends in Europe and presents the epidemiology of mental disorders such as suicide, psychoses, affective disorders, and addiction. The author, Meryam Schouler-Ocak

of Berlin, outlines risk and protective factors for immigrants and presents a brief section on implications for research, policy, and practice.

Section II, *How Culture Shapes the Brain*, comprises two chapters that apply a neuroscience lens to understanding cultural differences. Shihui Han from Beijing, China, the author of Chapter 2, presents findings from transcultural priming imaging studies that shed light on cultural differences in self-representation between Western and Eastern cultures. The authors of Chapter 3, Northoff from Canada and Panksepp from the USA, use an evolutionary perspective to describe how culture shapes self-rated processing in the brain. While Section II will be of interest to cultural neuroscience scholars in particular, the complex, sometimes inaccessible, language of the articles may distance some readers.

Section III, *Interplay Between Culture and Emotion Regulation: Implications for Mental Health*, consists of three chapters. Chapter 4 reviews cross-cultural studies on emotional development and regulation. Its authors, Trommsdorff and Heikamp from the University of Konstanz, Germany, stress the importance of considering cultural context when studying emotion regulation and socio-emotional competence. American author Emily Butler, in Chapter 5, describes how cultural contexts modulate emotion regulation and emotional responding, concluding that links between emotion regulation and well-being are modified by culture. The final chapter in this section, "Unpacking Cultural Differences in Emotion Regulation: The Role of Flexibility" by Elisabeth Arons from the University of Heidelberg, offers a brief critical perspective of current theories of emotion regulation and applies the findings from her study of Turkish and German women to support her claim that emotion regulation strategies can have different outcomes in different contexts.

Section IV, *Diagnosis, Culture and Psychiatric Disorders*, centres on cultural variations in the manifestation and course of mental disorders. The first chapter in this section, "Culturally Informing Diagnostic Systems" by Juan Mezzich of New York University, tracks the progress of the inclusion of cultural considerations, particularly in the DSM-IV and the ICD-10. While this historical account is interesting and optimistic, it lacks both a critical analysis and a distinct call for future action.

The remaining six chapters in Section IV present research studies and theoretical perspectives that claim to challenge traditional constructions of mental illness. In Chapter 8 Baarnhielm, from Sweden, reports on a qualitative study that explores the meanings given to somatic symptoms by a group of Turkish and Swedish women, demonstrating how culture and context influence expression of distress. In Chapter 9, Flora, from Heidelberg University, discusses how cultural variables modify the experience of pain and its modulation. Although she promised, in the abstract, to provide suggestions on how cultural variables can be incorporated into treatment of chronic pain, they were not readily evident to this reader. In Chapter 10, Linden of Berlin writes about posttraumatic embitterment disorder (PTED). Since violations of beliefs in the just world are important in the development of PTED, he stresses the importance of considering cultural context in assessment and treatment because cultural context influences people's definition and experience of injustices.

In Chapter 11, Conner from the USA and Zhou from China consider the high rate of suicide among women in China, and discuss how the four United Nations recommendations to prevent suicide can be applied. In Chapter 12, Assion and Koch, two practitioners from Germany, discuss ethnic factors in the prevalence, etiology, and treatment of addictive behaviours. They include an informative section on clinical implications and future perspectives. The author of Chapter 12, Zandi of the Netherlands, describes his discovery of bias when a standard version of a diagnostic interview was used with Moroccan immigrants. He argues for the implementation of culturally sensitive diagnostic procedures when assessing mental illness.

Section V, *Treatment Taking Culture into Account*, consists of three chapters. In the first of these, Balkir describes an unpublished study of Turkish immigrants' help-seeking behaviours and then offers implications for clinical interventions based on the findings. Chapter 15, written by Quershi and Eiroa-Orosa from Spain, presents an interpretive-relational approach to enhance mental health providers' cultural competence that emphasizes self-introspection as opposed to knowledge gathering. The final chapter, authored by seven German scholars, outlines practice recommendations based on the 12 Sonnenberg Guidelines on requirements for psychiatric/psychotherapeutic care for immigrants.

*Cultural Variations in Psychopathology* is a dense volume that might be of more interest to researchers in the area of culture and psychopathology than to practitioners and policy makers because of its extensive reporting of research findings. An important common theme of the book was the repeated acknowledgement that immigrants are not a homogeneous group and their mental well-being is influenced by factors beyond individual psychology, such as the conditions under which they travel, their economic circumstance, and the social conditions of the receiving country.

While the five sections of the book addressed relevant mental health areas such as neuroscience, diagnosis, and practice, the chapters were divergent and discontinuous. Some offered dense theoretical frameworks and extensive literature reviews, while others consisted of reports of research projects that are specific to the European context. Because many of the chapters lacked an encapsulated discussion that could offer a critical analysis of the research findings or theoretical frameworks, the reader is required to assess the applicability of the study to their cultural contexts, and to extrapolate specific and practical policy and practice implications. *Cultural Variations in Psychopathology* would be enhanced with the inclusion of a concluding chapter that integrates the divergent ideas presented in the book.

### *About the Author*

Constance Anne Barlow has a PhD in Counselling Psychology and was a professor at the University of Calgary in the Faculty of Social Work. Since her retirement she has maintained an adjunct status with the Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. One of her research interests is international social work field education, and she has authored numerous articles on student internships in international settings.

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