

# Book Reviews

## Personality and Psychopathology

edited by C. Robert Cloninger (1999). xv + 524 pp., American Psychiatric Press Inc., ISBN 0-88048-923-5, US\$ 66.95.

The American Psychopathological Association annually publishes review volumes in the general field of mental health. In this edited volume the relationship between affective disorder and premorbid personality and in particular personality disorder is explored from a variety of perspectives and methodologies. A total of 18 chapters are divided into five broad areas, the role of personality in psychopathology, the development of personality, criteria for personality disorder, causes of personality disorder, and finally treatments and outcomes of personality disorder. As can be seen from these broad divisions, greater emphasis is placed on clinical personality disorder, than on normal variation in individual differences within the population. The reason for this emphasis is the recent observations that a variety of mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bulimia and major depressive disorder have significant comorbidity with clinical personality disorders. To some extent, this emphasis on personality disorder is a little disappointing as other areas of potential interest within the study of individual differences are neglected.

The editor of this volume, Robert Cloninger, is also an author on four of the 18 chapters and has in the past proposed an influential personality theory based partly on current knowledge of neurotransmitter systems (Cloninger, 1987). To take one example, in the scheme proposed by Cloninger, the trait of Novelty Seeking is dependent on dopaminergic tone in the nervous system. This proposal has been supported by findings that people with Parkinson's disease (and therefore brain dopamine depletion) score low on this trait, and that scores are correlated with dopamine receptor binding in the striatum on labelled tracer PET scans (Menza, Mark, Burn, & Brooks, 1995). Further physiological support for Cloninger's personality theory comes from a finding that in healthy controls the amplitude of the novelty induced P300 wave is correlated with Novelty Seeking scores (Hansenne, 1999).

With this background, it might be expected that biological aspects of Cloninger's theory would be well covered within the volume. However, the physiological ba-

sis of this theory, or of competing theories, is not examined. The chapters tend to focus on psychometric properties of the various personality schemes and correlations with depression and anxiety measures. In general in this work, there is very little attempt to examine the neural basis of personality or mental illness, with the exception being a chapter by Wayne Drevets, discussed below.

The strengths of this volume lie in the range of approaches used to analyse the problem of classifying personality, both in the normal population and clinically, and in relating this to mental disease. In the first section of the volume 'Role of Personality in Psychopathology', the interrelations between personality, depression, anxiety and eating disorders are described in four chapters. This analysis is based generally on questionnaire based approaches. However, these really only set the scene for later chapters that cover more specific topics. The second section is devoted to analysis of the factor structure and development of personality, and the first two chapters describe psychometric studies supporting the view that personality is stable across the lifetime. An interesting alternative to these chapters, and to the personality questionnaire approach, is presented by Niels Waller who describes a major study of words used in English to describe individuals. Using this technique, the entire contents of an American English dictionary are categorized in order to detect clusters of words used to describe individual differences in people. Using this methodology, two factors in addition to the "Big Five," often revealed by traditional psychometric studies, can be identified.

The following section deals with the concept of a personality disorder and the differences in description between clinician diagnosis and personality trait approaches. A strong point of this section is a chapter that considers the validity and benefits of categorical and trait based approaches to the diagnosis of personality disorder. Clinicians inevitably need to make a "present or absent" decision when applying a diagnosis but this can leave out a great deal of information and the cut-point between pathology and normality is to some extent arbitrary. Trait based approaches can use multiple dimensions and therefore can express far more information about the individual, but can be difficult to integrate into the clinic. This issue is dealt with admirably in the chapter by Armand Loranger and is a well balanced, critical review of the issues involved in the inevitably difficult topic of diagnosis. The remaining chapters in the section are, in con-

trast, a little disappointing as they present a biased view in their favouring of their own dimensional approaches over clinical categorization.

Four chapters dealing with the causes of personality disorder are presented in the next section, and together serve to highlight the lack of consensus on this topic. While one study described in the chapter by Lindon Eaves et al. finds some support for genetic inheritance of personality (with a massive sample size of nearly 30,000 subjects), the following psychodynamically oriented chapter by Lorna Benjamin argues for the importance of early experiences. The third chapter by Heath et al. then returns to the argument for inheritance of personality traits. The nature-nurture debate is clearly still active in the field of personality disorder research. The final chapter in this section, by Wayne Drevets, breaks away from this ageing argument by focusing on the functional neuroanatomy of individual differences in cognitive processing, and in particular in depression. He also presents an interesting theory concerning the role of frontal, sub-cortical and limbic processes that may underlie depressed mood. This chapter therefore presents a useful addition to his influential empirical findings of morphological abnormalities in the subgenual region of the brain in people with familial depression (Drevets et al., 1997).

A very interesting chapter by Aaron Beck begins the final section on treatment and outcomes of personality disorders. Taking a cognitive and evolutionary approach, he hypothesizes that particular cognitive coping strategies, that were once useful, are responsible for depression, anxiety and personality disorders in modern life. From this perspective, depression is considered as protective "demobilization" in the face of failure and anxiety is a reflection of "hypervigilance" which is a consequence of the evolutionary developed strategy of "better safe than sorry." If normal personality is considered in this way, then it can be seen as the possession of appropriate cognitive strategies for interacting with the particular niche in which the individual finds themselves. A personality disorder is accordingly considered in terms of excessiveness, inappropriateness and impulsiveness of the cognitive strategies possessed by an individual in the context of the environmental niche.

Unfortunately, the other chapters in the section are somewhat less innovative. A chapter by Campbell et al.

on impulsiveness considers treatment strategies and describes trials of various medications in children with conduct disorder. The penultimate chapter describes how personality assessments may be useful in predicting response to antidepressant medication and the final chapter describes opinions concerning psychotherapy of the borderline personality disorder patient by Albert Ellis.

Overall this book has many interesting features and presents a wide range of perspectives on personality and psychopathology. The emphasis is on how psychopathology can be considered from the point of view of comorbid personality disorders. However, for this reason it will be of most interest to researchers whose main interest is personality and its disorders, rather than psychopathology. In particular, this book is generally more focused on psychometrics than on the physiological aspects of individual differences and mental illness. For those with only an indirect interest in personality, for example researchers in depression or anxiety or in EEG correlates of personality, there will be some chapters which are of interest, but also some that are not.

## References

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