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**Carr, A. (2003). Essay book review of P. Bennett (2003). *Abnormal and Clinical Psychology: An Introductory Textbook*. London: Open University Press; S. Nolan-Hoeksema (2003). *Abnormal Psychology (Third Edition)*. New York: McGraw Hill. T. Oltmanns & R. Emery (2003). *Abnormal Psychology (Fourth Edition)*. Prentice Hall; R. Comer (2003). *Abnormal Psychology (Fifth Edition)*. Boston: Worth Publishers; G. Davison, J. Neale & A.Kring (2003). *Abnormal Psychology (Ninth Edition)*. New York: Wiley. *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 8.**

These five text books are designed specifically for students taking undergraduate courses in abnormal psychology. One of these books - Paul Bennett's - is from the UK. The other four are written by authors based in the USA. All five would serve as useful resources for undergraduate psychology courses on this side of the Atlantic. However supplementary reading would be essential to add a European or British dimension to the four North American volumes.

There are more than a dozen USA abnormal psychology texts, but only two or three UK counterparts. Paul Bennett's book, is therefore a welcome British contribution to the field. In this volume there is ample reference to important UK developments in theory, research and practice, for example, Eric Emerson's work on challenging behaviour in people with learning difficulties, Bob Wood's work on clinical psychology interventions with older adults, Chris Fairburn's work on eating disorders and Chris Brewin's work on PTSD. Critiques of dominant ideas about psychopathology by major UK figures such as Lucy Johnstone and Mary Boyle are included. Also, the book is even-handed in covering biological, cognitive-behavioural, psychodynamic and systemic perspectives. While the book is distinctively British in many ways, it makes adequate reference to North American and international literature. It also looks to the most recent version of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV TR) to define and classify abnormal behaviour.

The other four texts take a predominantly North American approach with limited reference to important UK clinical developments such as Cognitive Analytic Therapy, or empirical findings such as the results of clinical trials of systemic therapy for eating disorders, schizophrenia and depression conducted at the Maudsley Hospital. Family systems approaches and social constructionist approaches, are given far less coverage than they deserve. In contrast cognitive-behavioural and biological approaches are strongly privileged throughout these four volumes.

Having noted these contrasting points, it is only fair to say that the five volumes, which are all more similar than different, achieve their stated aim: to provide an overview of abnormal psychology in an interesting and informed way to undergraduates in this field.

All five text books have between 15 and 19 chapters and span between 400 and 800 pages. All five texts open with a consideration of theories about abnormal behaviour from the earliest times to the present with due regard being given to theories which emphasize the biological, psychological and social factors in the aetiology of psychological difficulties.

In all five text books an integrative lifespan oriented, bio-psycho-social approach is advocated. The five books deal with research methods in abnormal psychology from a scientist-practitioner model which has gained ascendancy in both the US and the UK.

There is also a section in the opening chapters of each of the five texts which addresses the issues of assessment, diagnoses and treatment of psychological difficulties.

Against this backdrop each of the five texts includes chapters which review the literature on common psychological difficulties, such as childhood disorders, anxiety and mood disorders, psychoses, somatic disorders, sexual disorders, addictions, personality disorders, and psychological problems in older adulthood. The DSM IV conceptualization of psychological

problems within each of these categories is privileged within all five text books. However controversies surrounding this type of conceptualization of psychological problems are adequately covered.

These five texts also cover professional issues in the practice of clinical psychology and the organization of services for people with psychological difficulties and the framing of relevant legislative issues.

The material in the chapters that make up the main body of each text is organized under similar sets of headings. Most chapters open with case studies followed by a description of the clinical features of the disorder. Then the results of epidemiological studies are given. Multiple theoretical explanations are then outlined followed, usually by bio-psycho-social integrative explanations. Summaries of key research findings, illustrative examples of research studies and discussions of controversial ethical issues are commonly presented also. It is a commendable feature of all five texts is that research findings, references and case material is very much up to date. However, as has been noted earlier, more balanced coverage of US and UK developments is given in Paul Bennett's text.

The five volumes share fairly similar sets of basic features which make them user-friendly learning resources. They are well laid and contain chapter overviews, summaries, glossaries discussion questions, and suggestions for further reading. In contrast to the UK volume, the four USA texts have a number of additional special features. They are beautifully illustrated with colour photographs and diagrams and have numerous ancillaries including CD ROMs containing case material and interactive exercises; videos containing dramatizations of the various disorders described in the texts; study guides for students; instructor's guides for lecturers; readers or case-study books of related material; and banks of test items. In addition useful information is available for all four USA texts on publishers' web sites. The UK text, in contrast has none of these special features.

These five books also differ in age and the degree to which they have been revised over the years. Paul Bennett's book is a first edition and has the freshness of a new text. The other four texts are in later editions, ranging from third to ninth, and this is reflected in the refinement of these volumes. Significant revisions to the four USA texts have occurred since their earlier editions. Libraries would be well advised to include a recent edition of at least one of these texts in their Abnormal Psychology section. Paul Bennett's book, because of its unique status as the most recent UK text on abnormal psychology, should be an essential purchase for all psychology libraries.

### **Biographical Note**

Professor Alan Carr is Director of the Doctoral Training programme in Clinical Psychology at University College Dublin. His recent works include *Abnormal Psychology* (Psychology Press, 2001); *Handbook of Child & Adolescent Clinical Psychology* (Routledge, 1999); and *Prevention: What Works with Children and Adolescents?* (Routledge, 2002).