

Book reviews

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Measuring the mind. Conceptual issues in contemporary psychometrics

By Boorsboom Denny. Published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2005. 185 pp., £45.00. ISBN 0521844630

This small book contains six essays on the measurement of the mind, not the brain, and is, therefore, of great interest for clinicians. The author is in quest for the ultimate explanation of the validity of instruments measuring clinical dimensions. The essays are based on a solid philosophical foundation when considering the various psychometric theories of measurement used in clinical psychology, ranging from classical factor analysis to modern item–response theory models. At the end of the book the author comes to the conclusion that validity is about ontology while validation is about epistemology. In other words, the validity of a rating scale is a purely a clinical matter leading to the concept of clinical validity, while validation of a rating scale is the extent to which the total score is a sufficient statistic at the epistemological level. Thus, clinical validity is indeed necessary, but the validation process is the subsequent *conditio sine qua non* for measuring the dimension of the mind. In this process of validation, the author has correctly found the item–response theory models (the latent variable theory) to ‘...formulate a plausible philosophy of measurement...’.

The book contains important essays that are easy to read and without too much mathematical language. Strangely enough, the author makes no reference to Feinstein’s ‘Clinimetrics’ or to the articles published in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* over the last decades which provide examples of rating scales in affective disorders based on clinical validity and in the subsequent process of validation confirmed by item–response theory models.

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Schizophrenia – a practical primer

By R. Reddy and M. Keshavan (eds). Published by Informa Healthcare, Informa UK Ltd, 2–4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX13 4RN, UK, 2006, 211 pp., paperback, £44.99 (\$79.95)

This book is more than a practical primer. It is almost a script for treating and diagnosing persons with schizophrenia. You are introduced to schizophrenia in a case driven way with few words but lots of essential information. There are many useful clinical reflections and instructions. While you are reading the book, you are quizzed by many clinical issues to ensure the understanding of the key messages. There are quotations, from famous people, which enliven the reading and encourage you to reflect. The illustrations are very informative, supporting the saying that a picture can say more than a thousand words.

The most fascinating thing about the book is the thoroughness of the introduction to schizophrenia. Even though the book has only 211 pages, issues such as history of schizophrenia, recovery, assessing schizophrenia, talking to patients and families are described thoroughly.

The book is well-written and offers a splendid and exciting introduction to the world of schizophrenia. The target group is not only new healthcare persons in psychiatry, but also experienced persons who, in psychiatry, benefit from the book.

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