

A refresher course

Quantitative Data Analysis for Windows; SPSS Release 10:

A Guide for Social Scientists

ALAN BRYMAN & DUNCAN

CRAMER

HOVE: ROUTLEDGE, 2001; Pb

£16.95 (ISBN 0 415 24400 5)

REVIEWED BY **Lalage Sanders**

THIS is a new edition of an established textbook, updated to SPSS Version 10. It was a bestseller in its earlier editions, but for me this was an introduction. It is an interesting mixture of the principles of research methods and an SPSS guide. The reader is introduced to hypothesis testing, the difficulties of establishing cause and effect and the problems inherent in the concept of measurement in social research. The later chapters proceed to lead the way through the intricacies of bivariate and multivariate analyses, showing how to use and interpret SPSS.

As a guide to SPSS it is well informed and presents all the necessary information. It even makes reference to 'Roy's gcr criterion' (although it does not explain what Roy's largest root is – I have yet to find a text that does). It is not as user-friendly as some texts and the instructions are rather densely packed. However, there is a lot of necessary information and it is indexed – a prerequisite for a useful guide.

This is handy guide for a researcher who may need refreshing in some of the basics, and who can work their way through inferential statistics; but I would not recommend it as an introductory undergraduate text.

■ *Dr Lalage Sanders is Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Health and Social Sciences, University of Wales, Cardiff.*

Comprehensive education

Psychology for A2 Level

MICHAEL EYSENCK & CARA FLANAGAN

HOVE: PSYCHOLOGY PRESS, 2001; Pb £16.95 (ISBN 1 841 69251 4)

REVIEWED BY **Amanda J. Heath**

A NEW A-level system, a new textbook. Exam reforms have provided students with the freedom to pick and mix AS subjects or progress from AS- to A2-level in the same subject for the equivalent of the old A-level qualification. The Psychology Press has heralded the changes with an all-singing, all-dancing textbook from the prolific Michael Eysenck. While Eysenck is better-known for undergraduate texts, his collaborator here is the experienced A-level examiner Cara Flanagan.

Students will like this book. It presents chapter summaries, case studies, questions intended to stimulate independent thought, and even lists of useful websites for each topic. Additionally, it provides clear guidelines on how to write essays, ideas for coursework, and the low-down on the examination process with tips

on what examiners look for. This makes it the ultimate A2 psychology resource, and supplies everything needed to pass the course. The book, which follows *Psychology For AS Level* by the same authors, is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing a wealth of teaching resources from multiple-choice questions to slides ready-made for the teacher.

Having said this, though the content of the book in terms of breadth of coverage is completely comprehensive, I cannot help but feel that treatment of important theories and issues is at times parsimonious. Having taught at this level, I appreciate well that students are not expected to

attain the depth of understanding required of undergraduates. However, reading this book leaves me with the nagging worry that students are being spoon-fed. True, chapters are structured in sections that encourage the logical construction of arguments through summarising, describing and critically evaluating research. However, I fear the way this is achieved leads all too easily to rote learning, requiring no need for real critical thought in evaluating theories and constructing arguments independently. The simple 'I write a bit about a theory, I list someone's criticisms of it, I conclude neither way'

Experience sampling

Persons, Situations and Emotions: An Ecological Approach

HERMANN BRANDSTÄTTER & ANDRZEJ ELIASZ (EDS)

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001; Hb £37.50 (ISBN 0 19 513517 2)

REVIEWED BY **Nick Neave**

AROUND 25 years ago Hermann Brandstätter developed a technique enabling researchers to gain access to the subjective experiences of individuals as they went about their daily lives; this method being referred to as 'time sampling' or 'experience sampling'. In a typical assessment the individual makes notes in a booklet on their momentary experience approximately four times a day for a continuous period of 30 days.

This book is part of OUP's 'Series in Affective Science' and gives a detailed overview of this useful technique. Importantly, for the novice time sampler the first section provides detailed explanations of how to carry out and evaluate a study using the diary method. The latter section gathers together a series of papers providing a variety of examples drawn from work (e.g. factory workers), and everyday life (e.g. housewives, the unemployed)

to illustrate the use and interpretation of time sampling. Both theoretical and methodological considerations are addressed throughout.

If you are considering using time sampling in your research, or if you currently use this method, then this book will be of great value and interest to you.

■ *Dr Nick Neave is in the Division of Psychology at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne.*

– but is it spoon-fed?

technique is a nasty habit, seen in many undergraduates, that has often been acquired at the A-level stage.

My main reservation about the book is the neglect of information about the context in which theories and research are grounded. Introducing something of the background to a theory or a particular theoretician and relating

specific work to wider issues engages students' interest, and promotes analytical thinking at the same time as aiding understanding of complex material. I would like to have seen less of an emphasis on signposting key terms and key criticisms and more on fostering ways of reasoning and understanding that lay a foundation for further, more in-

depth, study. Still, good teachers will encourage this in students regardless, and this book is a comprehensive resource that serves its purpose exceedingly well – and at an affordable price, I might add.

■ *Amanda J. Heath is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire.*

Adding another A-level

Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour

RICHARD GROSS

LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON; 2001; Pb £22.99 (ISBN 0 340 79061 X)

REVIEWED BY **Carol Ireland**

PROVIDING a clear and concise rundown of the ever-growing field of psychology is a formidable task. This is particularly difficult when it must be delivered in such a way that a newcomer to psychology is able to understand complex theories and concepts with relative ease. Introductory books to psychology have always aimed to achieve this goal, with some accomplishing this more successfully than others.

Since the first edition of Gross's book I have been an avid fan, with it being a firm companion during my A-level psychology course. The latest edition has the same potential. From the very outset, Gross adopts a chatty and informal style that draws the reader in. Each chapter follows a natural direction, with the introduction of each theory being clearly described from its birth to its current development.

The book shows a relaxed style in which the reader can learn and retain the information given through an abundance of diagrams, pictures and photographs. These offer



a greater depth and richness to the text, allowing a breakup of the information to ease reading and reduce the risk of monotony. In particular, I liked the use of self-assessment questions throughout the book. These almost compel the reader to retain the information; and if the answer is not known, to quickly seek it out!

Introductory texts have a difficult task to keep up with ever-evolving theories and concepts within psychology, and the only slight disappointment with the book was the rare occasions when some of the information had become somewhat outdated. An example of this would be reference to the Division of Criminological and Legal Psychology, which

changed its name to Division of Forensic Psychology in 1999, and reference to 'prison psychologists', where 'forensic psychologists' has been the preferred term for many years, reflecting how such individuals work within a variety of forensic settings.

Nonetheless, Gross's book excels in its ability to provide valuable information to newcomers to the world of psychology in such a way that I would strongly recommend it as a 'must have' book for any A-level and psychology degree course.

■ *Carol Ireland is with HM Prison Service and the University of Central Lancashire.*



Stressing the practical

Occupational Health Psychology: The Challenge of Workplace Stress

MARC SHABRACQ, CARY COOPER, CHERYL TRAVERS & DAVID VAN MAANEN

LONDON: BPS BLACKWELL; 2001; Pb £16.99 (ISBN 1 854 33327 5)

REVIEWED BY **Cath Sullivan**

THIS is a practical guide to workplace stress culminating in a seven-step guide to a stress intervention programme. It is aimed at HR professionals and managers. Many aspects of the book – for example, the large and varied range of self-assessment questionnaires and checklists – make it especially suitable for this audience.

Some parts of the book could be clearer, and, unfortunately, some concepts are left unexplained. Also, the intervention programme sometimes focuses more on what to do than on how to do it. However, there are many exercises to complete, and the reader is frequently guided towards reflection about their own workplace.

Those in search of a review of academic findings may be disappointed as this is not the book's purpose. However, those in search of a more practical focus will find much in this book that appeals.

■ *Cath Sullivan is with the Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire.*