

In writing about so-called 'culture-bound syndromes' – Amok, Koro, Susto, Latah and others – Prins makes the interesting point (which I must say had previously escaped me) that nearer home, we also have our own such syndromes e.g. overdoses, agoraphobia, some forms of shoplifting and baby-snatching. He could also perhaps have added anorexia nervosa to the list, as this seems to be a rare condition further afield.

While this is a book which might not be of too much help to those aspiring towards the MRCPsych, it is certainly a good read! Thus, although the eponym Kotzwarra's syndrome was new to me, the condition it describes is not, unfortunately, too rare or altogether unfamiliar. But to find out to what it refers you may need to buy a copy of the book. It could well turn out to be worthwhile.

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Quantitative Data Analysis for Social Scientists. By ALAN BRYMAN and DUNCAN CRAMER. London: Routledge. 1990. 290 pp. £10.95.

This is an attractive and well laid-out book, which primarily covers the topics usually dealt with in an introductory course in statistics, such as the summarisation of data, inference, and correlation. Additionally, however, the authors have chosen to include three more advanced chapters which cover analysis of variance and factor analysis.

A particular feature of the text is its replacements of formulae of the mathematical variety, with codes for SPSS programs. In general I do not find a mixture of textbook and programming manual appealing, but here the authors have managed to combine the two very successfully. Many data sets are provided and the exercises at the end of each chapter should prove very helpful to students.

Overall then a useful addition to the introductory statistics text market, although the authors themselves might prefer 'introductory quantitative data analysis.'

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The Clinical Relevance of Kindling. Edited by TOM G. BOLWIG and MICHAEL R. TRIMBLE. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 1989. 302 pp. £40.00.

When Graham Goddard first described the development of epileptic seizures through brain stimulation at low intensity one wonders whether he had any insight into the amount of work and speculation his findings would provoke. One suspects he would have been surprised that more than 20 years later a volume would

appear to discuss the relevance of 'kindling', not only to human epileptogenesis but also to memory formation, anxiety, alcohol and cocaine withdrawal, epileptic psychosis, manic-depressive psychosis, panic attacks and tardive dyskinesia. He would no doubt have been disappointed that the clinical relevance of kindling, even to human epilepsy, remains uncertain and that no clear clinical advances have resulted from the understanding of the neuronal processes involved in kindling and epileptogenesis in the laboratory animal.

This is a multi-authored edition from the proceedings of a symposium sponsored by Ciba-Geigy. For those unfamiliar with the field the early chapters are most useful as they deal with the mechanisms and current state of knowledge of both electrical and chemical kindling and the effects of antiepileptic drugs on this phenomenon. Subsequent chapters deal with further evidence that might possibly link kindling or kindling-like phenomena to other clinical areas.

The chapters are linked together into related groups which are followed by accounts of the discussion that took place in the workshops. The most revealing discussion is the final one, which attempts to bring a hard definition to the phenomenon. Up to this point the reviewer, a neurologist, had become more and more confused as to precisely what could and could not be encompassed by the kindling phenomenon. The discussion brings the reader back to reality with a painful bang. Kindling is in essence a non-physiological stimulus that can result in seizures in experimental animals. Taking the concept beyond the specific into the more general areas explored by this book has to be a questionable process, particularly where the clinical syndromes to which the hypothesis is applied are ones that are poorly defined and may well be heterogeneous in their make-up. Perhaps this book is as much a monument to clinicians' enthusiastic adoption of possibly over-simple hypotheses to explain clinical phenomena in their own fields, as much as to kindling itself.

There is no doubt that while the book contains chapters of widely differing merit it is a useful state-of-the-art summary for anyone wishing to read about the subject. To the outsider it appears very introspective and the workshop and the book might have benefited from the presence of critical outsiders producing more clinically relevant discussion. As is often the case with chapters written as a result of a symposium, many contain little in the way of original information and are available in only slightly different forms in other publications. For the average clinical psychiatrist or neurologist the book will make an informative and stimulating read, but one wonders whether there should not be some form of 'health warning' to go with the more speculative aspects of this publication.

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