

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The psychology of Aboriginal Australians.** Edited by G. E. Kearney, P. R. de Lacey and G. R. Davidson. John Wiley & Sons Australasia, 1973. xii + 443 pp.

It is Dr. Kearney's contention that the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia probably present the research worker in the behavioural sciences with more difficulties than any other group in the world. "Their way of life is complex, their religion is not understood and their magic is powerful and baffling. Their cognitive ability is difficult to measure and the subject of controversy."

Scientific interest in Aboriginal Australians is not new. In the last century the social evolutionists used Aboriginal material to fill out their picture of primitive man and psychological studies of reaction-time and acuity were carried out by the Cambridge University expedition to the Torres Strait in 1898.

The name of Emeritus Professor Stanley Porteus has a place of honour in this record. He pioneered the application of intelligence testing to the Aboriginal people and his published papers in this area alone cover a period of fifty years. He uses his famous Maze to test Aborigines as early as 1915 (pp. 1, 18), not 1917 (p. ix), the year when the results were published in the *Psychological Review*.

Despite these early studies, this book conveys a strong impression that psychological study of the Aborigines began in earnest in the nineteen-sixties. Nowadays Aboriginal affairs are news. The massive disabilities under which these people have laboured is being documented and changes demanded in government policies. Research and no doubt support for such research reflects this growing public awareness and concern.

*The psychology of Aboriginal Australians* contains thirty-two readings describing the current state of knowledge in this field. They deal in turn with early studies, intelligence testing, concept development, deprivation and intervention, psycholinguistic studies, culture contact and adjustment, motivation, mental health and traditional culture. Most of the readings were first published in the seventies and only two pre-date 1966.

The intrinsic interest of the problems dealt with in these readings and the generally high quality of the studies reported make this collection a substantial contribution to thinking in cross-cultural psychology. Sectional introductions, some specially commissioned papers to bridge inevitable gaps and a comprehensive bibliography of all known psychological studies of Aboriginal Australians combine to give a degree of coherence unusual in such publications.

*The psychology of Aboriginal Australians* can be expected to contribute to the developing climate of opinion, weakening traditional stereotypes and strengthening the view of Aborigines as culturally different but equal.

R. H. T. Thompson

**The psychology of conservatism.** Edited by Glenn D. Wilson. Academic Press, London, 1973. 277 pp. £5.00.

This is an important book for anyone concerned with social attitudes. There are 17 chapters by ten contributors, six of whom are in, or have strong connections with New Zealand. All the chapters are based on studies using the now familiar Wilson-Patterson Conservatism Scale. The concept of conservatism and its similarities to other attitudinal concepts is described. The development and factor structure of the C scale is discussed, together with validation studies against theological conservatism, superstitious behaviour, humour preferences and attitudes to illness. The general theory of conservatism presented is linked to Eysenck's theory of personality and to his claim that there is only one attitudinal variable; and Wilson concludes that "social attitude and belief patterns cannot be explained entirely in terms of social learning processes . . . Some amount of variance apparently arises from more fundamental (probably constitutional) personality factors . . ." (p. 196). Kish and Patterson both explore links between conservatism and stimulus seeking, which appears to be similar to Eysenck's concept of 'extraversion'.

In the final chapter Wilson offers a scheme which identifies some of the genetic and environmental factors that produce 'intervening motivational variables'. These lead to an avoidance of stimulus or response uncertainty that directly underlies the verbally expressed conservative attitudes (p. 261). The work on which this theory is based is impressive and the theory itself is well presented and attractive to those drawn to a belief that there are general social attitudes, or response styles, into which specific attitude clusters fit (cf p. 10). The conservatism scale itself is an important contribution by New Zealand psychologists, and the general theory developed in this book will repay continued exploration.

L. B. Brown

**Time-series** by M. G. Kendall. London: Griffin, 1973. ix + 197 pages, £3.60.

Most psychological data are concerned with sequences of events extending through time, and time series analysis is logically one of the most appropriate methods that the psychologist could apply. Yet there are few general texts on this subject available to the graduate research student, and most psychologists are so limited in their appreciation of

the measurement problems and potentialities that they incorrectly suppose a repeated measures analysis of variance is legitimate and all that is available. In fact, sequences without, or with, trend effects need examining to establish their stationarity. The work of Helson was a tentative but mathematically inadequate step in this direction; the TOTE theory of Miller, Galanter, and Pribram cannot be taken beyond an extended prose essay without recourse to the models of time series; the computer models of sequential decision-making relate to time series.

Kendall has produced a readable and usable book on an interdisciplinary level which should help to dispel the fatuous myth that there are no useful statistics of the single case. If we want to begin an honest examination of the claims of some modifiers of behaviour, this book makes it clear what the ground work should look like. The calculations are simple with a computer and standard library programs, and quite impossible otherwise. Kendall's historical notes should be read with care as an illustration of the paths of irrationality in the so-called exact sciences.

R. A. M. Gregson

**Prospects for the reduction of road losses due to vehicle crash in New Zealand** by David Klein. Medical Research Council of New Zealand, Special Report Series Number 1, April 1973. 69 pp. \$1.20.

Despite the title of this report, it is ironic that there is no mention of speed or its compulsory reduction as a 'prospect' for crash reduction. Some 'crashes' that research and expensive advice have failed to reduce may have been altered by the simple expedient of a lower speed limit and fostering awareness of a fuel shortage. Klein as a sociologist recognised that cars have drivers (whose characteristics, he says, are not easily separable from the condition of the vehicle (p. 34)), yet he argues for a primary emphasis on environmental control (with guard rails) and on impregnable vehicle design. Both education and punishment are considered ineffective, and he has recommended, for example, compulsory accident reporting and altering traffic officer's duties, while the "very substantial sums that would be involved in expanding driver education would be far better spent on demonstrably effective environmental counter measures" (p. 22). Maybe; but the whole report has a doctrinaire ring to it. Where it might have given research leads it seems a rather bad-tempered response to our situation, so "The outlook for productive research in New Zealand within the next five years is unfavourable." (p. 57). A pity that the M.R.C. could not have found a more sympathetic person to advise them.

A parallel report on "Factors affecting road safety in New Zealand" for the Ministry of Transport, by another American, Frank A. Haight, on 15 December, 1972, was no more optimistic. Maybe local researchers have implicitly asked to be by-passed, perhaps because of a lack of

originality. Yet there is still a challenge to psychologists in these strictly non-psychological views of accident prevention, especially by using a 'human factors' scheme that separately identifies the driver, his vehicle, and the environment, and then considers their interaction.

L. B. Brown

## COMPUTER PROGRAMS

Editorial note: It has been suggested that the *N.Z. Psychologist* should publish brief notes on computer programs which have been developed or modified, and successfully run on local computers. In this way, we would act as a clearing house, in the same way that the journals *Behavioral Science*, *Applied Statistics* and *The British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology* already function. We agree to try this, accepting no responsibility for the accurate functioning of any reported programs. Persons submitting brief specifications must undertake to make comprehensible working notes and listings available to other members of the Society on request. Submitted notes should not include formulae or material expensive to typeset

### TTABLE: A COMPUTER PROGRAM FOR LINEAR TRANSFORMATIONS

P. E. BULL

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TTABLE is a fortran program that prints out a table of linearly transformed scores. The formula for the transformation is taken from Guilford (1965, p. 517).

This converts scores to a scale with any nominated mean and standard deviation. It should be noted that the distributions are not normalized by this procedure. The program prints a convenient table that facilitates the conversion of raw score values to transformed values. The user specifies: (1) the range of the raw scores to enter the table, (2) the interval between raw scores, (3) the means and standard deviations for the raw scores, and (4) the desired means and standard deviations. The table lists up to ten transformed scores against each raw score.

### REFERENCE

Guilford, J. P. *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.