

BOOK REVIEWS

This is a new section. ALL readers are invited to send reviews/comments etc. on books they have read or seen. Also, please let me know of any book(s) you would like to receive in exchange for a review. The address for this section is John Bibby, Maths Faculty, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Tel: 0908-653844 (work) and 0908-647093 (home). Each issue will list books received and give brief telegraphic reviews, to be followed up at a later stage by more complete reviews.

Books received and telegraphic reviews

H.J. Eysenck versus Leon Kamin (1981) Intelligence: The Battle for the Mind Pan Books, 192 pp., £2.95.

Contains 70-page articles by Eysenck and Kamin, and then each one's rejoinder to the other's article. Books with an adversary structure such as this present interesting possibilities if one really wants to carry out a debate on the intellectual plane. Kamin's rejoinder attempts a hatchet-job on Eysenck's use of Burt's (1961) paper, which has since been utterly discredited by D.D. Dorfman ("The Cyril Burt question", Science, 1978, 201, pp. 1177-1186).

Ruth Leger Sivard World Military and Social Expenditures 1979. World Priorities, Leesburg, Virginia, 36 pp.

Continuing a series started in 1974, this booklet contains ten pages of statistical tables for 1976 on military and social expenditure for every country in the world, along with information on resources, literacy, etc. etc. Analysis is limited to a few diagrams and maps. The main message is the misallocation of resources and the contrast between military development on the one hand and social underdevelopment on the other hand.



Sandinista Liberation Front (1980) Calculo y Reactivacion: una sola operacion. Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetizacion, Ministry of Education, Nicaragua. 128 pp.

The Nicaraguan literacy "crusade" of 1980 has been less well publicised than its Cuban counterpart of two decades earlier. Still less well known is the fact that the Nicaraguan campaign included numeracy as well as literacy. If "El Brigadista" is the film of the campaign, then this must be the book of the film!

At beginning and end are twenty pages addressed to the "Companero Alfabetizador" indicating how the book should be used. However, the bulk consists of a series of frames to students giving pictures, simple words, and simpler figures. Underneath each frame is a few notes to the alfabetizador.

The story starts with "how to write numbers", as illustrated above, and emphasises that before starting work the alfabetizador should aim to get the alfabetizando to speak, understand his experience, clarify his concepts, summarise the ideas, and add to his knowledge.

The book has six sections, based on six themes such as Raising economic production, Worker-peasant unity, and the National Development Bank. Mathematically speaking the six sections are as follows:

1. Writing numbers up to 20; simple addition and subtraction.
2. Numbers up to 100.
3. Up to 1000; measures and weights (non-metric).
4. Multiplication and division; geometric figures.
5. More uglification and derision.
6. Money; fractions; the calendar.

Radical statisticians will be pleased to note that there is no mention of significance tests.

Seriously though, is there anyone out there who would be interested in joining a subgroup in the Third World? If so please contact me, or meet at the Royal Society meeting on June 15th (plug!) entitled "Operational Research in Developing Countries".

H.J. Eysenck and L. Kamin, Intelligence: the battle for the mind, Pan Books, London and Sydney, (1981), pp. 9 + 192. £2.95.

This book is the literary equivalent of the exhibition bout - an occasion on which two pugilists go through the motions of knocking the spots off each other. In the blue corner sits one professor of psychology - Hans Eysenck - and in the red corner (possibly, the pinkish corner) sits another - Leon Kamin. The fight has four rounds, and is complicated by the fact that the contestants take it in turns to perform (two goes each). Each performance consists of an attack half directed at the 'scientific' resolution of the debate over the hereditary or environmental nature of intelligence, and half directed at the currently non-performing opponent and his camp-followers or camp-predecessors (as the case may be). Thus, Kamin gets in a few solid punches on Eysenck's disreputable intellectual antecedents (Burt, Terman, Goddard, etc.), and Eysenck scores with a few sound jabs against the Italian University system, where, in the name of a false egalitarianism, 'thousands of ill-prepared and ill-equipped students through the universities, make normal teaching impossible, and promote a detrimental sub-academic atmosphere and level of instruction'. The contestants seem unbowed by all these hefty blows, though they take a heavy toll of the reader, who frequently has to deal with some real stunners, such as Eysenck's assurance that though Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan, Hitler and Stalin were all of above average intelligence, 'this does not make them admirable as people'.

Submerged in all this persiflage, there are a few genuine exchanges, and Kamin makes a good case for saying that such 'genuine' data as the hereditarians have produced may often be seen as 'equally consistent with an environmental interpretation' (see Chapter 15 on studies of adopted children for an example of this). On the other hand, it would appear that Eysenck has a point when he argues that Kamin's environmentalism lacks predictive power and that Kamin is hard put to give an explanation of observed patterns of regression to the mean when pairs of parents and children are considered in respect of their IQ. Kamin offers the thought (p. 180) that 'regression is a necessary statistical consequence of the simple fact that the correlation in IQ between parent and child is less than perfect'. One wonders what the general reader, to whom this work seems directed, will make of that.

In short, the book offers little more than rehashed versions of works already published by these authors, who might have been better occupied in using the space to develop one or two arguments in detail - possibly the point about regression to the mean, and certainly the dispute over the significance of data obtained from studies of MZ and DZ twins (Chapter 16, and pp. 163-164). For all that, it is a good starting point for a newcomer in the area - though, before taking up residence, even temporarily, he or she might seriously consider Professor Chomsky's view that the question of the hereditary or environmental control of IQ is not one that would be of much interest in a decent society.

Michael Kidron and Ronald Segal (1981). The State of the World Atlas. Pan Books, in association with Pluto Press. App. 150 pp. £5.95.

The main content of this book consists of 65 double-paged maps of the world, coloured, shaded, and annotated to illustrate variables such as population, national income, and military spending. Several of the maps are identified by apparently whimsical or cryptic titles e.g. "Margins of safety", and "The islands of the blessed". A similar penchant for the obscure has crept into the listing of States of the World. This includes Rrepublika Popullore Socialiste e Shqipërisë, El Djemhouria El Djazaïria Eddomkratia, and Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo which you and I know as Albania, Algeria and China, respectively. This all goes to show that statisticians do not have a monopoly on mystification. (Yet!).

The maps fall into twelve Sections, starting with "The aggressive state" (area, population, etc.), and ending with "Signs of dissent" (including protests against nuclear power, and changes in abortion law or policy). As the above comments indicate, the present reviewer finds the book as a whole somewhat amorphous and unstructured, however interesting many of the individual maps may be.

The authors' introduction attempts to place the book in two historical contexts, within the tradition of political atlases, and as an informational weapon in the developing struggle against the state. "While it is true that the state has in its time been an instrument for the extension of personal liberty and for much material progress", say the authors "...It is our contention that the destructive aspects of the state have come crucially to exceed the constructive ones". This reminds one of Marx's analysis of the once progressive role of capitalism. However, while Marx was fairly explicit about what he wished to put in capitalism's place, Kidron and Segal do not tell us in this book what they would substitute for the state. But that, perhaps, would be too much to expect for a book which does not attempt to be analytic even in a statistical sense.

On the contrary, this book is largely an exercise in "letting the data speak for itself". This strategy presents problems, especially as the major sources quoted are governmental and intergovernmental agencies. Firstly, this data may wittingly or unwittingly be "doctored" e.g. definitions of unemployment. Secondly, governmental agencies stress certain concepts e.g. gold reserves, which are not crucial in a socialistic paradigm. Thirdly, key measurable variables may be overlooked by governments e.g. number of racial attacks. Fourthly, non-measurable variables (e.g. social cohesion) are ignored.

A further problem with this atlas is that by and large it does not consider relationships between variables. A few exceptions may be noted e.g. the map on GNP represents both level and rate of change on this variable, and "Bullets and blackboards" illustrates the ratio in each country between the number of soldiers and the number of teachers. However, in general the book is non-analytic in this sense, and a few scattergrams would perhaps have been useful.

In short then, I found the book somewhat disappointing. It does however present the question "How should data be presented by radicals?".