

Advising on Research Methods: A Consultant's Companion.

Herman J. ADÉR, Gideon J. MELLENBERGH, and David J. HAND. Huizen, The Netherlands: Johannes van Kessel, 2008, 558 pp., \$128.00 (H), ISBN: 978-90-79418-01-5. \$115.00 (P), ISBN: 978-90-79418-02-2.

This is an interesting, useful, and somewhat unusual book. In its narrowest use, the book can serve as a text for teaching an advanced undergraduate or graduate course in statistical consulting, in which the point of view is that of someone advising the consultant. It is a text that I would consider using the next time I teach statistical consulting, even though I typically focus mostly on practice.

The book also contains a good bit of useful information regarding study design, as well as a brief but useful discussion of various standard statistical methods, with the focus primarily on regression, ANOVA, and ANCOVA. The examples are almost exclusively from the social and behavioral sciences, plus a few from medicine. The examples are described quite succinctly, perhaps overly so. The software references are primarily to SPSS; in fact, although SAS is mentioned, references to it are infrequent. Missing are examples from business and industry, and the overall flavor of the book is not one that students or consultants in this area would find appealing.

The book is divided into five parts:

1. *Preliminaries*—topics relevant to all aspects of advising
2. *Sampling and design*—planning a study
3. *Measuring*—design of surveys, tests, and questionnaires
4. *Basics of data analysis*—modeling, handling missing data, and data analysis strategies
5. *Data analysis techniques*—longitudinal data, regression analysis and factor analysis, including a short epilogue about structural equation modeling.

Because statistical consulting courses are typically taught with a focus on practice, this book might supplement hands-on work, with the proviso that students would use standard methods texts for technical details (a suggestion offered by the authors). Because consulting is not frequently taught, the most likely destination of this book is the consultant's bookshelf. It provides useful tips on consulting and presents its descriptions of techniques in a manner that allows for somewhat easy translation to a client. It often explores alternative approaches—not a strong point in most methods texts—and favors simplicity when that approach can get the job done. My experience is that it takes some art to tease from clients (especially those early in their careers in academic medicine) a clear statement of the research goals of "their" study. A little more on this topic would have been useful.

I am fond of the book's opening sentence reminding the reader that a consultant should be "available, affable, and able," in decreasing order of importance. The authors have produced a useful book that someone in the early stages of a consulting career should find especially helpful and easy to use.

Peter WLUDYKA
University of North Florida