

Advising on Research Methods: A Consultant's Companion, by Herman J. Adèr, Gideon J. Mellenbergh and David J. Hand, Huizen, Johannes van Kessel Publishing, 2008, 574 pp., €80 or US\$120 (paperback), ISBN 978-90-79418-01-5

A hard-to-find textbook, *Advising on Research Methods: A Consultant's Companion* is one of the most impressive books on methodology I have read in recent years. Filled with practical, efficient strategies, it is made to help consultants in their daily exercise in order to find “what does the client want to know and how to investigate?”. It is presented by the publisher as aiming to assist researchers “in the social and behavioral sciences, including . . . medicine and epidemiology” (see back cover).

This book, written by three experienced researchers and professors, comes in five parts and eighteen chapters, plus an epilogue, a detailed index and four appendices. First, the opening chapters discuss design questions and general methodological problems. In the second part on sampling and research designs, we see the standard elements like “units” and “variables” and the testing of research hypotheses (chapter 8). The central section concentrates on measurement, while the fourth part gives the basics of data analysis (with a useful chapter on “Missing and biasing information”). Finally, the last portion presents some techniques of data analysis like the “Univariate analysis of variance approach to repeated measures analysis”, general regression models, and non-formal data. In my view, the most interesting chapter was the third one on “Methodological quality”, because it insists on some often overlooked dimensions like data quality. What seemed mostly important were the specific sub-themes discussed, like “Dissemination and publishing” (mainly in journals and conferences; chapter 4), state exploration (p. 134), and nonresponse reduction and prevention (p. 200).

This book could be used in at least two ways: either for real consultants who already have some advanced knowledge in quantitative methodology, or in the university classroom for courses and seminars in research methods, since exercises and even “topics for classroom discussion” are provided (p. 67).

Herman Adèr, Don Mellenbergh and David Hand have made a tremendous job, even though they leave many questions unanswered in their book (although they provide the publisher's e-mail address if readers need some specific answers to some of the exercises; see remark, p. 17). My other quibble would be the very small size of letters in the second appendix, which seems to be a reprint from an online article (pp. 501-516). But all in all, I believe *Advising on Research Methods: A Consultant's Companion* would fit well in a university library that already includes some textbooks on applied methodology. Librarians should be aware that this title, in English but published in The Netherlands, is quite difficult to find in general bookstores, especially outside Europe; orders should be sent directly to the publishers web site (<http://www.jvank.nl/ARMHome/>). Potential readers of this book must have a good understanding of English and be familiar with the basics of methodology. I am not sure if a newcomer in the field could use this book on his/her own because the learning of methodology

requires help at almost every step.

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