

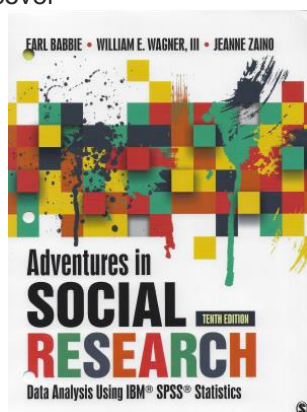
Highly recommended SPSS textbooks

Review of:

[Earl Babbie](#), [William E Wagner III](#) and [Jeanne Zaino](#)
[Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS Statistics](#)
 (10th edition, Sage 2019)

Paperback £65 from Sage UK. (\$43 from Sage US). Slightly cheaper from [Amazon Kindle](#), [Google Play](#), [ebooks.com](#) and [Kobo](#). A4 format, 478 pages (two prefaces, 22 chapters, two appendices and an Index/glossary) and weighs 495 grams: not easy to read in an armchair; a lectern will probably be needed!

Front cover



Rear cover



Publisher's blurb on the rear cover says:

Inspire students to pursue their own adventures in social research with this practical, hands-on introduction to data conceptualization, measurement, and association through active learning.

Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using IBM® SPSS® Statistics offers a practical, hands-on introduction to the logic of social science research for students in many disciplines. The fully revised **Tenth Edition** offers step-by-step instruction on data analysis using the latest version (24.0) of SPSS and current data from the General Social Survey. Organized to parallel most introductory research methods texts, this book starts with an overview of the social research process, then takes readers step by step through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis using SPSS Statistics.

This text can be bundled with a Student Version of IBM® SPSS® software at a special price. Ask your SAGE sales representative for details.

There are 3 holes drilled right through the book and perforations along the edge of each page so that pages can be separated and kept in separate folder. This could be fun if students are sharing a copy!

Particularly oriented to survey research, it uses SPSS 24 and data sets ² extracted from the 2016 wave of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) [General Social Survey](#) (GSS).

¹ [Retired] Previously:
Lecturer in Social Studies (1968-70) University of Birmingham
Senior Research Fellow (1970-76) [Survey Unit](#)
 (UK) Social Science Research Council (SSRC) now Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).
Principal Lecturer in Sociology (1976-1992) [Polytechnic of North London](#)
 (now part of London Metropolitan University).
Unit Director (1978-1992) [Survey Research Unit](#) Polytechnic of North London.

² See: [Commentary on SPSS files used in Babbie, Wagner and Zaino 2019](#)

This book is based on sound pedagogic principles and clearly derives from current live classes: you can practically hear the authors in the text. Unlike some other textbooks, it is not just a “How to” book, but also a “Why?” book, with occasional side comments revealing the sort of wry and mischievous sense of humour which appeals to students. At the end of each chapter there are summaries of main points, key terms, SPSS commands covered and sets of technical, thought-provoking exercises.

The authors start by emphasising the theory, practice and logic of social research, dealing with first one, then two and finally three or more variables, mainly using percentages in contingency tables, later using measures of central tendency and dispersion. The early sections tend put SPSS mechanics and statistics before research substance and are dominated by detailed GUI demonstrations (some going over several pages). Undergraduate students with crowded timetables tend to be straining at the leash and will be tempted to skip these (as the authors actually advise) to get at the real meat, analysing substantive contemporary issues of genuine interest to students in Sociology and related disciplines (abortion, religion, political attitudes, social inequality and gender issues). Only later, when they realise they don't know how to produce useful results from survey data, will they return to the mechanics. Postgraduates, especially PhD students will have more time.

The book uses **religiosity** as an early variable example (not the most interesting to UK students) but this appears to derive from their 8th edition, which seems in turn to be based on Glock et al (1967) ³

Modern students addicted to touch screens and point-and-click will appreciate the illustrations of the dozens of steps (and consequent displays of SPSS dialog boxes and output) involved in using the Graphic user Interface (GUI) but this reviewer finds them interminable (and a waste of trees).

The book tends to go in minute detail through every option of every GUI menu. For example, it uses nine (!) separate GUI steps to produce a simple bar chart:

[Graphs > Legacy Dialogs > Charts > Bar > Simple, > Define > Previews > % of cases > OK]
. when it would be easier and quicker to use syntax ⁴ (which makes students **think** before they click). However, the word “**syntax**” does not appear anywhere in the book: only two of the dozens of SPSS dialog boxes include the **Paste** button, but that is not even explained, let alone used.

Explanations of statistical measures of association and significance are in plain language, clear, concise, thorough and with simple tables and charts. The underlying approach to analysis is based on a logical model in which the effect of an **independent** variable on a **dependent** variable:

$X \rightarrow Y$ (the effect of **X** on **Y**) where:

\boxed{Y} = Dependent variable
 \boxed{X} = Independent variable

. . . is tested by the introduction of a third (**control**) variable.

$X \rightarrow Y . T$ (the effect of **X** on **Y** controlling for **T**) where:

\boxed{Y} = Dependent variable
 \boxed{X} = Independent variable
 \boxed{T} = Test (control) variable

They mention **elaboration** ⁵ and epsilon on page 173, but don't actually do any until page 333. At this point their analysis examples begin to be interesting (and appealing to students).

³ Glock C Y, Ringer B B and Babbie E R [To comfort and to Challenge: a Dilemma of the Contemporary Church](#) (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967)

⁴ **frequencies** polviews /format notable / barchart.

⁵ For a brief statistical explanation see: [3.2.1 Elaboration](#) (extract from Ring and Hall, 1988) [Statistical Notes](#))

Dependent variables: attitudes to abortion, homosexuality and gun control
Independent variables: church attendance, political conservatism and age
Test variables: education and religious preference

This is where genuine analytical adventures begin for students.

They also introduce the idea of **secondary analysis** of earlier surveys ⁶, either to retest original findings or to re-analyse the data using more recent statistical methods. They encourage readers to continue doing this for themselves. There is even a reference to Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) but unfortunately no extant data on which to test the theory that wealth comes from hard work. This does not prevent the authors from testing it themselves, using current GSS data.

Karl Marx would disagree, basically arguing that much wealth is produced by those who work hard, but is then usurped by others who either do no work at all, or employ others to do it for them. He did a survey for his *Communist Manifesto*, but his sampling methodology and questionnaire design were dire. The results were never published and the data no longer survive.

As Mark Abrams states ⁷:

“. . . nor did [Booth and colleagues] at any time conceive of any possible link between the social survey and social theory. As far as I know, only one substantial public figure, Karl Marx, thought there might be any connection between the two, and his solitary attempt to conduct a social survey with this end in view was so fatuous and incompetent that its results were never published. His questionnaire and his sampling techniques would shame any contemporary first year student taking an elementary course in survey methods. And, as far as I know, at no point in his very substantial body of social theory did Marx make any use of his one venture into survey research.

After Booth there came a steady stream of social surveys, both in this country and abroad, and from time to time valuable advances were made in methods – in the operationalisation of concepts (eg. Rowntree), in sampling (eg. Bowley), in attitude measurement (Thurstone, Lickert & Gutman), and in the statistical analysis of the data gathered (Pearson, Lazarsfeld and Kendall). But, at least in this country, the original Booth objectives remained unaltered; and one of the more remarkable features of the early history of modern social science is that in the accepted roster of world-famous theoreticians it is hard to think of a single British figure; the names that come to mind most readily are those of foreigners – Weber, Durkheim, Marx, Pareto, Simmel, Veblen, Tocqueville, Mannheim, Mead, Lasswell, etc.”

Now there's an interesting question on which to base an adventure project.

How well does 19th century Marxist theory stand up in the light of 21st century data?
Discuss, with worked examples.

[Notre Dame de Cenilly: 6 May 2020]

⁶ There are references to
Renzi, M. [Ideal family size as an intervening variable between religion and attitudes towards abortion](#).
Journal for the Scientific Study of **Religion** 14 (1) (1975)
and to D'Antonio WV, Stack S [Religion, ideal family size, and abortion: extending Renzi's hypothesis](#)
Journal for the Scientific Study of **Religion** 1980;19(4):397-408.

. . . but not to the original author of the technique Rosenberg M [The Logic of Survey Analysis](#) (Basic books, 1968)

⁷ See Abrams M
[Social Surveys, Social Theory and Social Policy](#) (1974, page 1)