**Today’s Lab Assignment**

**A Small-Group Effort**

Today you will be working with the people seated at the computer(s) next to you, a group of three or two, whichever is most convenient in terms of the layout of computers in the lab.

Each group will be comparing the **central tendency** and **dispersion** of frequency distributions for a variable in two countries using SPSS. You will be using the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) data on *(topic not decided yet, e.g. health, religion)*. It is on Blackboard under the “Data” menu button. Each group will explore a different variable in the two countries; your group’s variable appears below.

**The purpose of this exercise is to give you more practice with selecting and calculating measures of central tendency and dispersion, interpreting what they mean in a substantive context (not just reporting numbers) and why cross-national comparisons about differences and similarities in attitudes and behavior can be important.**

You will need to apply your knowledge of what summary statistics and graphs are appropriate for the type of measurement scale examined. When there is more than one option, you should produce all the options and see what is learned. However, you must also decide what is usually the **best** summary statistic and type of graph to present. Be prepared to defend your choice. A guide to these statistics and graphs is on Blackboard under the “Assignments” menu button and will be handed out in this lab.

The two countries you will be comparing are the United States and (*haven’t decided yet)*. There are some differences between these two countries. For example, *(site a few demographic differences not in these data)*. But this does not necessarily mean that people’s attitudes and behaviors are so different. We will be investigating whether and how attitudes and behavior vary in the two countries both in terms of central tendency, what is most typical or “average” in the two countries, and dispersion, how much variation there is in this attitude or behavior.

**Each group should follow the steps. Take notes on your group’s decisions and conclusions after discussion.** Ask for help if you are uncertain about any of the steps listed below.

1. Discuss and reach consensus about:

1. The type of measurement scale used in the survey for your variable. To do this, look at the specific category values of the scale for this variable that are listed under your variable’s name on the last page of this assignment.
2. The summary statistics and graphs that are possible to calculate given the type of measurement scale. See the guide that has been handed out with this assignment..

2. Open the ISSP data with SPSS; each person in the group should do this. To compare countries:

* Click on “Data” on the toolbar
* Click on “Split File”
* Click on “Compare Groups”
* In the box marked “Groups Based On” bring **V5**, the country code into the box.
1. Produce the SPSS output for the summary statistics and graphs that are possible to legitimately calculate by using the “Frequencies” command under “Analyze” on the toolbar and select the appropriate statistics and charts. Select the “Explore” commend to make a box-plot, if appropriate.
2. Save the output on a flash drive, your p drive, or the desktop. (Note desktop files are cleared after class; the p drive can only be assessed on campus computers or by remote connection to the QC server).

3. Examine the summary statistics and graphs.

1. If there is more than one option, discuss what is usually best to present and the reasons for your decision.

4. Compare the summary statistics and graphs for each country in your output. Discuss the following:

1. Using the **best** measure of **central tendence**, decide whether the two countries are very different, somewhat different, or similar?
2. Using the **best** measure of **dispersion**, decide whether the two countries are very different, somewhat different, or similar?
3. What do you learn about the **specific** attitude or behavior from these comparisons? Be prepared to summarize these conclusions in words.

5. **One** group member should go to Discussion Board on Blackboard under the Forum “Comparing Distributions.” **Other members will help compose the discussion from their notes.**

1. Create a new thread.
2. Title the subject with the **name of your variable** found below.
3. Attach your output file.
4. In the message section:
* List the name of the variable again, the names of your group members, and the type of measurement scale.
* State in what ways the attitude or behavior measured is similar or different in the two countries and give the statistical evidence for these conclusions. Next focus on the substantive meaning of the comparison. Why might it be important to know about similarities or differences in this specific attitude or behavior, if you were studying *(topic not decided yet, e.g.health, religion)* in the two countries?

6. The group will present these findings in class for discussion. Students will open the output file you attached in Step 5 on their computers; I will put the output on the overhead projector.

**Your group has been assigned the following variable.**

Name of Variable: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Category Values: