How to Download SDA GSS Data and Import into SPSS
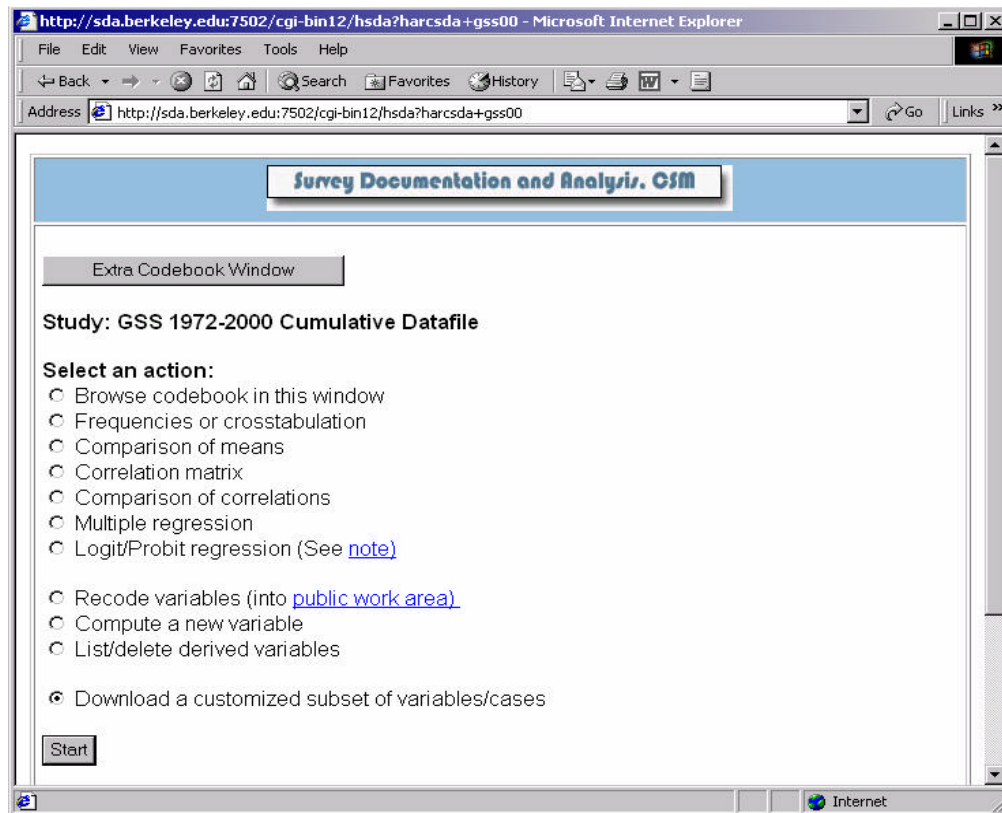
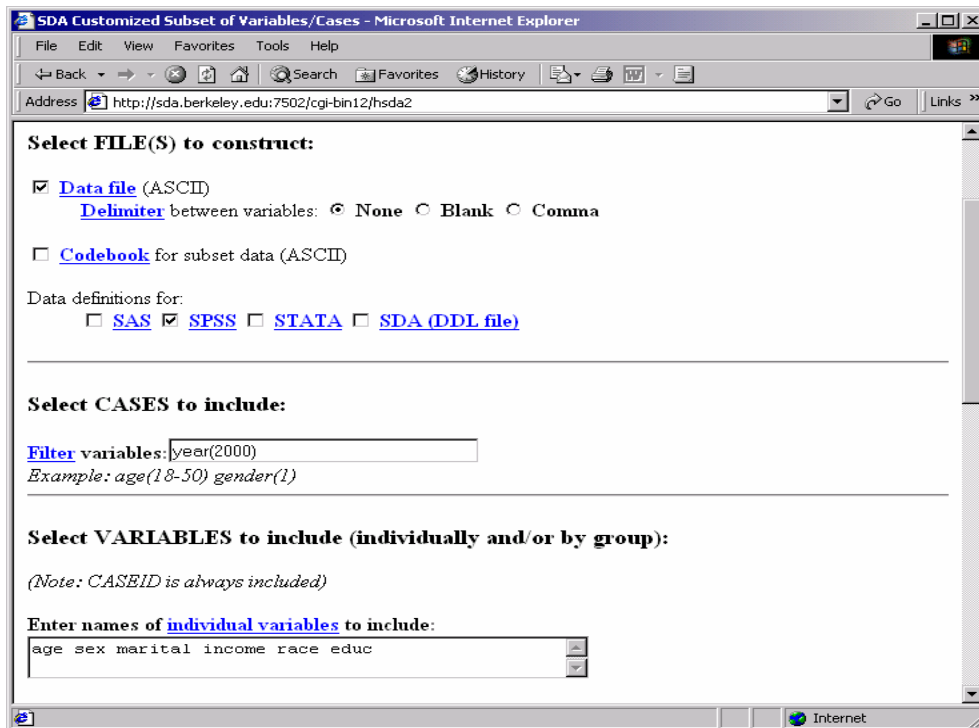1. Go to a SDA website and select a datafile. For this example, we use the GSS Cumulative Datafile 1972-2000 found at http://sda.berkeley.edu:7502/cgi-bin12/hsda?harcsda+gss00. You can also find it from Professor Stipak's website.

   In the "Selection Menu," go to the bottom of the list and select "Download a customized subset of variables/cases," as shown below.
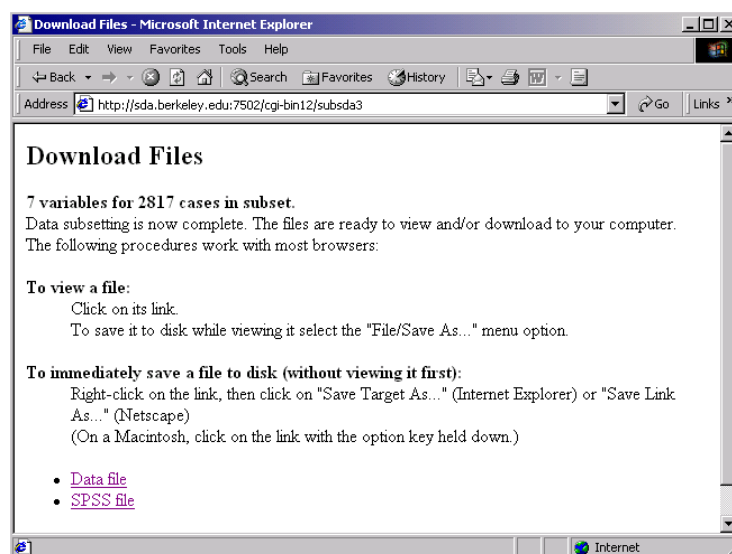

   Before clicking the "Start" button, you may want to click the "Extra Codebook Window" button at the top so you can easily browse through the variables in the next step. If you already know the variables you want, just click the "Start" button.
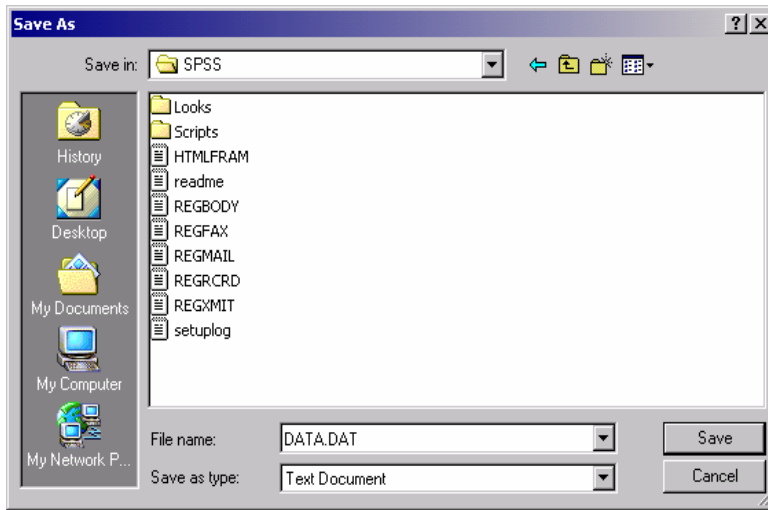
2. You want to download a data file and the SPSS definitions file that tells SPSS how to read the data file. In the "Select Files to construct" section of the page, unselect "Codebook" and select "SPSS." In the "Select Cases to Include" field, enter "year(2000)" to filter just the cases for 2000. These data files can be very large and take some time for the SDA website to create, so it's a good idea to use a filter to remove cases you are not interested in. In the "Select Variables to Include" field, enter the names of the variables you want. For this example, we have entered "age sex marital income race educ" into the field, without the quotes of course. The resulting window should look like that shown below. Go to the top of this page and click "Continue."

3. The next window is titled "Check the Subset Specifications." Review the information you have entered and make sure it is correct. Click the "Create the Files" button. After a few moments, the screen titled "Download Files" will appear. This screen is shown to the right. Notice there is a link to the files you created. Save the "Data file" and "SPSS file" to your computer. You can save the files by right-clicking on the "Data file" and selecting "Save Target As" from the drop-
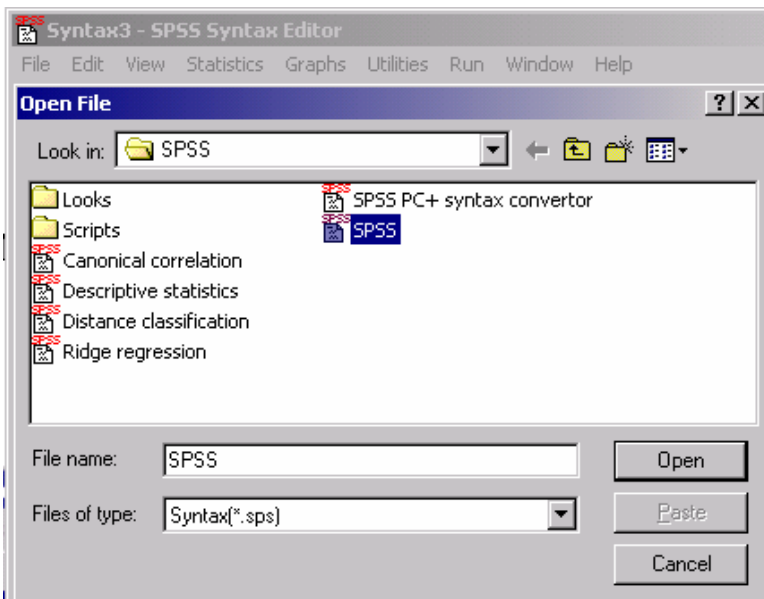
down menu. In this example, the files are saved to C:\Program Files\SPSS. Use names that you can easily remember. Here, we use the name DATA.DAT for the data file and SPSS.SPS for the SPSS definitions file.

When you click "save as," a "save as" window will appear that looks something like the window to the left. In this "Save As" window, click on the "Save in" drop-down list and go to "Program Files" folder and then the "SPSS" folder. You should see the contents of the "C:\Program Files\SPSS" folder in the window as you see
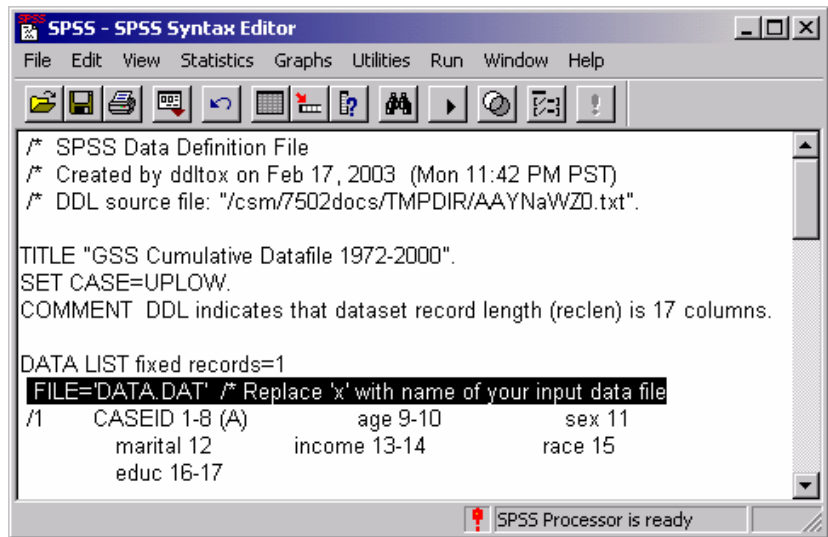
above. Change the file's name to DATA.DAT by entering DATA.DAT in the "file name" field. The window should look like the picture above. Click "Save." Repeat this same procedure for the second file on the SDA website, the "SPSS file." Be careful to save it to the same "C:\Program Files\SPSS" folder and name it SPSS.SPS.
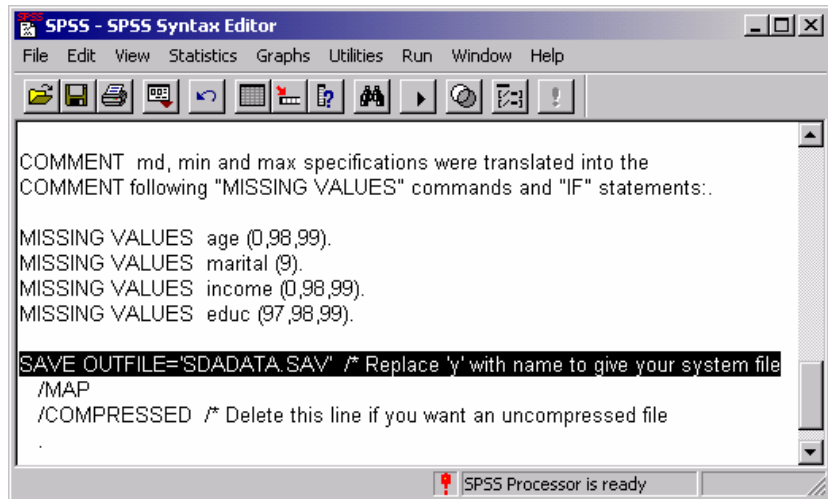

4. The next step is to open the SPSS.SPS file in the SPSS Syntax Editor. Open SPSS, go to the "File" menu, select "New," and then select "Syntax." When the SPSS Syntax Editor is running, click "File" in the menu and then click "Open." The screen should look like that on the left. It will be in the SPSS folder by default. If not, make sure you are in the SPSS folder. You will see the SPSS file

that you saved here a few moments before. The .SPS ending you gave it a few moments ago is not shown because SPSS recognizes it as an SPSS Syntax file. "Open" this "SPSS" file.
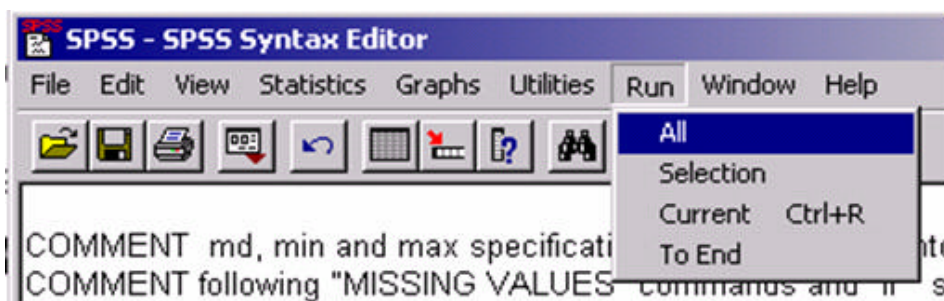
5. You should now see the
    contents of the SPSS.SPS
    file in the SPSS Syntax
    Editor window. This is
    the SPSS script language
    for processing data. You
    need to change two lines
    in this file that tell SPSS
    where the input file is and
    where to put the output
    file. The line that begins
    with "FILE=x" tells the
    Syntax Editor where to
    find the input file.
    Change the x in the line
    to 'DATA.DAT'. Make
    to 'DATA.DAT'. Make

    sure you put the single quotes around it. The line should now look like the highlighted line
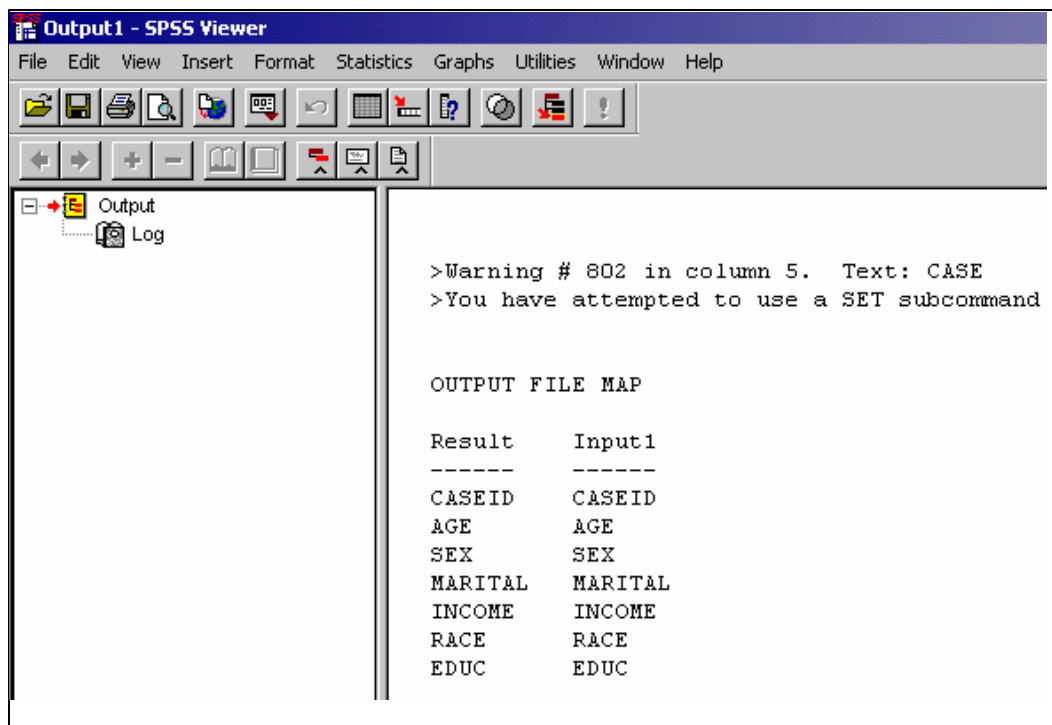   above.

6. Now you need to change the line that tells the Syntax Editor where to save the output file. Go
    to the bottom of the text.
    About the fifth line up
    from the bottom you will
    see a line that begins with
    "SAVE OUTFILE=y".
    Change the y to
    'SDADATA.SAV'.
    Make sure you put single
    quotes around it. The
    resulting line should look
    like the highlighted line
    to the right.

7. Now you are ready to run the script and create your new SPSS data file. Run the script by
    selecting "Run" from the menu and then selecting "All." The menu looks like picture below.

8. After a moment or two, you will see an SPSS Viewer window appear with the text shown on the next page (it will list your own variables if you used different variables). Don't worry about the warnings.

9. Your data file is now created and can now be viewed in the SPSS Data Editor. The SPSS Date Editor will be running in the background with your new data in it. You can close all the other SPSS windows except this Data Editor window. The Data Editor window should look something like the picture below.