**TOLERANCE2T: Exercise Using SPSS to Explore Measurement and Relationships Between Variables with Tolerance as Dependent Variable**

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**Note to the Instructor:** The data set used in this exercise is gss14\_subset\_for\_classes\_TOLERANCE.sav which is a subset of the 2014 General Social Survey. Some of the variables in the GSS have been recoded to make them easier to use and some new variables have been created.  The data have been weighted according to the instructions from the National Opinion Research Center.  This exercise uses RECODE in SPSS to combine categories of variables, FREQUENCIES to see how respondents answered the questions, and CROSSTABS to explore the relationships between variables.  A good reference on using SPSS is *SPSS for Windows Version 23.0 A Basic Tutorial* by Linda Fiddler, John Korey, Edward Nelson (Editor), and Elizabeth Nelson.  The online version of the book is on the [**Social Science Research and Instructional Council's Website**](http://ssric.org/node/582).  You have permission to use this exercise and to revise it to fit your needs.  Please send a copy of any revision to the author. Included with this exercise (as separate files) are more detailed notes to the instructors, the SPSS syntax necessary to carry out the exercise (SPSS syntax file), and the SPSS output for the exercise (SPSS output file).  Please contact the author for additional information.

I’m attaching the following files.

* [**Data subset**](http://ssric.org/files/gss14_subset_for_classes_TOLERANCE.sav) (.sav format).
* [**Extended notes for instructors**](http://ssric.org/files/Extended_Notes_for_Instructors_for_TOLERANCE2T.docx). MS Word (.docx) format.
* [**SPSS syntax file**](http://ssric.org/files/SPSS_Syntax_for_TOLERANCE2T.sps) (.sps format).
* [**SPSS output file**](http://ssric.org/files/SPSS_Output_for_TOLERANCE2T.spv) (.spv format).
* [**This page**](http://ssric.org/files/TOLERANCE2T.docx) in MS Word (,docx) format.

**Goals of Exercise**

The goal of this exercise is to discover which individuals are more or less tolerant of those who express opinions which might be very different from their own.  We will consider such variables as age, sex, education, income, and the region of the country in which the respondents live to see if these variables are related to tolerance.  In a subsequent exercise we will consider other opinions and behaviors that might be correlated with tolerance.  The exercise also gives you practice in using several SPSS commands – RECODE  to combine categories of variables, FREQUENCIES to explore how respondents answer various questions, and CROSSTABS to explore relationships between variables.

**Part I—Recoding the Variable We’re Using to Measure Tolerance**

We’re going to use the General Social Survey (GSS) for this exercise.  The GSS is a national probability sample of adults in the United States conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.  The GSS started in 1972 and has been an annual or biannual survey ever since.  For this exercise we’re going to use a subset of the 2014 GSS. Your instructor will tell you how to access this data set which is called gss14\_subset\_for\_classes\_TOLERANCE.sav.

Tolerance refers to the willingness of individuals to allow others to express opinions which might be very different from their own and to exercise their basic civil liberties in the expression of these opinions.  The GSS has a series of 18 variables that we can use to measure tolerance.  These 18 variables are divided into three sets of six variables each.

One set of variables deals with the willingness of respondents to allow those who might hold these very different opinions to teach in a college.  The questions on which these variables are based start with a general statement that “there are always some people whose ideas are considered bad or dangerous by other people. For instance, somebody who is against all churches and religion.”  This statement is followed by a question – “Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?”  There are six scenarios presented:

* “somebody who is against all churches and religion,”
* “a man who admits he is a communist,”
* “a man who admits he is a homosexual,”
* “a person who advocates doing away with elections and letting the military run the country,”
* “a Muslim clergyman who preaches hatred of the United States,” and
* “a person who believes that Blacks are inferior.”

The second set of questions focus on these same six scenarios but ask whether a book that such a person wrote “should be taken out of your public library.”  The third set asks whether such a person should “be allowed to make a speech in your (city/town/community).”

These questions were originally developed by Samuel Stouffer in his book on *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* (Doubleday, 1955). He asked about teaching in a college or university, having a book in a public library, and making a public speech for three groups:

* Communists,
* socialists, and
* those against all churches and religions.

These nine questions were included in the first three General Social Surveys in 1972, 1973, and 1974.  The question about socialists was dropped in 1975 and a question about homosexuals was added in 1973, those advocating military control of the country and those who are racists in 1976, and Muslim clergyman who preach hatred of the United States in 2008.  (See Tom W. Smith, “A Review of the Stouffer Civil Liberties Items on the General Social Survey,” GSS Topical Report No. 42, 2009)  The wording of the questions was not changed over time to ensure the comparability of the questions.  While we might prefer to bring the wording of the questions more in line with the way we would ask them today, it’s more important to maintain continuity over time.

So we’re working with 18 variables which are listed below:

* six questions focusing on teaching in a college or university – variable names are T1\_COLATH, T2\_COLCOM, T3\_COLHOMO, T4\_COLMIL, T5\_COLMSLM, T6\_COLRAC;
* six questions focusing on having books in a public library – variable names are T7\_LIBATH, T8\_LIBCOM, T9\_LIBHOMO, T10\_LIBMIL, T11\_LIBMSLM, T12\_LIBRAC; and
* six questions focusing on making a public speech in their community – variable names are T13\_SPKATH, T14\_SPKCOM, T15\_SPKHOMO, T16\_SPKMIL, T17\_SPKMSLM, T18\_SPKRAC.

In a previous exercise (TOLERANCE1T) we created an overall measure of tolerance based on these 18 variables.  The measure students created was named TOL.  I created the same measure and named it TOLR in the data set.  This is to avoid confusion between the measure students created and the measure I created.  In each variable that makes up this composite measure the value 1 refers to the tolerant answer and the value 2 refers to the non-tolerant answer.  So if we sum these 18 variables we’ll get a new variable with 18 being the lowest possible value and 36 being the highest possible value. Low values indicate greater tolerance and high values indicate less tolerance.  Let’s start by running FREQUENCIES in SPSS for this variable.  (See Chapter Three, Frequencies in the online SPSS book.)

There are 19 different categories in our overall measure of tolerance.  That’s too many to work with.  So we’re going to recode this variable into fewer categories.  When you use RECODE in SPSS, you can recode in two different ways—into the same variable or into different variables.  If you recode into the same variable, be careful.  It’s easier, but if you make a mistake, you will not be able to go back and recode it again.  You will have to close SPSS without saving the data set and then reopen the data set to get a fresh, clean copy of the data. So for this exercise recode into different variables.  (See Chapter 3, Recoding into Different Variables in the online SPSS book.)

There are two guidelines to follow when recoding.

* Try not to have so few categories that you lose too much information.  Recoding into two categories almost always results in too much loss of information.
* Try not to have too many categories.  You’ll find that too many categories make it hard to interpret the data and are confusing to the reader of your report.

A good rule of thumb is to recode into three to five categories.

We’re going to recode into four categories but what should those categories be?  It’s a good idea to avoid a category (when possible) that has a very large percent of the cases or a very small percent.  What we can do is try to construct categories that have about 25 percent of all the cases in each category.**[[1]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftn1" \o ")**  You won’t be able to have exactly 25 percent in each category but you can approximate it.  We can accomplish this by creating the following four categories:

* category 1 will be 18 through 19,
* category 2 will be 20 through 23,
* category 3 will be 24 through 27, and
* category 4 will be 28 through 36.

You’ll have to give your recoded variable a new name.  Call it TOL1.  To make your output more readable, assign value labels to these categories.

To make sure you didn’t make a mistake, run FREQUENCIES for your recoded variable (TOL1) and compare it to the frequency distribution for the variable I created which is named TOLR1.  They should be identical.  If you made a mistake, redo this part of the exercise.  If you recoded into the same variable, you will have to exit SPSS (or close your file) being sure **NOT** to save it.  Then get back into SPSS and open the gss14\_subset\_for\_classes\_TOLERANCE.sav file again.  The reason for this is that you have altered the coding of this variable and will have to get another copy of the data file to start over.  If you saved the data file, then you would have written over the original copy.  So be careful.  That’s why we said to recode into different variables in this exercise.

**Part II--More Recoding**

Now that we have our tolerance measure in a form that we can use in our analysis, let’s think about variables that might help us discover which individuals are more or less tolerant.  Let’s use the following variables:

* education – d3\_degree which is the respondent’s highest educational degree,
* family income – f1\_income06 which is the family’s yearly income for the year preceding the survey (2013),**[[2]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftn2" \o ")**
* sex – d5\_sex,
* age – d1\_age, and
* region in which the respondent lives – d25\_region.

Let’s start by running FREQUENCIES for each of these variables.

Some of these variables have too many categories.  So let’s recode three of them into fewer categories.

* age,
* family income, and
* region.

Look at your frequency distributions and decide on how you could recode age and family income into four categories each trying to get categories that have about the same number of cases.  You won’t be able to do this exactly, but you can approximate it.

Region uses the Census classification of states into nine Census regions.  We’re going to recode these regions into the four Census divisions using the following Census coding scheme:

* West combines the Pacific and Mountain regions,
* Midwest combines the West North Central and the East North Central regions,
* Northeast combines the Middle Atlantic and New England regions, and
* South combines the West South Central, East South Central, and South Atlantic regions.

Name your recoded values f1\_income061, d1\_age1, and d25\_region1.  Add value labels to make your output more readable.  Remember to recode into different variables.

After you are done recoding, run FREQUENCIES for both the unrecoded and the recoded variables to make sure you didn’t make a mistake.  If you make a mistake, you’ll need to redo the recoding of that variable.

**Part III—Analysis**

Now we’re ready to analyze the data.  All research starts with a question.  Your question is why some people are more tolerant than others.  So TOL1 will be your dependent variable.  The dependent variable is always what you are trying to explain.  Your independent variables are the variables that you think will help you explain the variation in your dependent variable. Put the dependent variables in the row and the independent variables in the column.   When you set your tables up this way, you’ll always want the column percents.  In addition to requesting the column percents you’ll want to get Chi Square and an appropriate measure of association.

Your independent variables are:

* education – d3\_degree which is the respondent’s highest educational degree,
* family income – f1\_income061 which is the family’s yearly income for the year preceding the survey (2013),**[[3]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftn3" \o ")**
* sex – d5\_sex,
* age – d1\_age1, and
* region in which the respondent lives – d25\_region1.

Interpret the tables using the percents, Chi Square, and your measure of association to help you describe the relationship between the two variables in your crosstabulations.

**Part IV.  Conclusion**

What have you learned in this exercise?  Which variables are statistically related to tolerance?  Which of these variables are more strongly related to tolerance?  How do you know?  What did you discover about the relationship of each independent variable to tolerance?

**[[1]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftnref1" \o ")** What you are doing is dividing the data into four quartiles.

**[[2]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftnref2" \o ")** Note that the 06 in the variable name does not mean this was the family income in 2006.   Rather it means that this variable uses a set of categories that was developed in 2006.

**[[3]](http://ssric.org/node/489/edit" \l "_ftnref3" \o ")** Education and family income are often used as indicants of socioeconomic status.