SPSS PC Version 10: Recoding a Variable with SPSS[1]

The following uses a set of variables from the "1995 National Survey of Family Growth" to demonstrate how to use some procedures available in SPSS PC Version 10.

- As an example, let's collapse *age*, a variable that ranges from 14 to 45 in our NSFG data, into a variable with a smaller number of large categories. We can create a new variable with 4 values: those respondents with ages in the teens (14-19) will receive a value of 1, those in their twenties will receive a value of 2, those in their thirties will receive a value of 3, and those in their forties will receive a value of 4 on the new variable.

- To do this, click on *Transform*, then *Recode*, and then make sure to click on *Into Different Variable*. This will create a <u>new</u> variable containing our new grouped values. If you choose the other option, *Into Same Variable*, you will overwrite the original variable and will not be able to use it again. This will bring up a dialog box with the familiar list of variables. Choose *age* ("Age in years") and click on the right-pointing arrow. Now we need to enter a name for our newly created grouped variable. You can use any name (no more than 8 letters/numbers). For our example, I will type the name "age4cat" in the box under *Name* for the "Output Variable". In the "Label" box, you can use any description – I'd suggest something to the effect of "New 4-category age variable," then click the "Change" box.

- Next, click on the box saying "Old and New Values." This brings up a dialog box in which we can redefine the old values on the original *age* variable into their new grouped values on the new variable *age4cat*. First, to create the new category containing all those with values in their teens on the original age variable, click on the lower "Range" circle on the lower left-hand side of the box, then type the number 19 in the adjacent "Lowest through" box. Then, to give a value to this new range of 14 through 19, type a 1 in the upper right corner's "Value" box. Finally, click on "Add" on the right side of the dialog box.

- Continue this process for the other 3 new age group categories using either the "Value" or the "Range" options to define the categories of the old variable and typing in a new, unique value on the new variable for each of these categories, and then hitting the *Add* button. Be sure to note the difference between the two range specification boxes. One is used exclusively for defining values at the lowest end of the range. Since the original variable may also have some missing values, you should designate all "Missing and System Missing" values in the "Old Values" to "System Missing" in the "New Values."

- When all four new categories are created (these 4 should contain all valid values of the old age variable), hit the "Continue" button. This will return you to the original recode dialog box. Hit "OK." You should now have the new variable called "age4cat" available for analysis.

The syntax for these commands is:

```
RECODE  age
   (MISSING=SYSMIS)  (Lowest thru 19=1)  (20 thru 45=2)
   (46 thru 65=3) (ELSE=4)   INTO  Age4cat .
VARIABLE LABELS Age4cat 'New 4 Category Age Variable'.
EXECUTE .
```