**Class Activities**

Chapter Two: Organization of Information: Frequency Distributions

Class Activity #1 (Group)

Ask each group of students to select five variables from any of the SPSS modules. Start by figuring out which categories the GSS uses to capture information on these variables. And then work to construct your frequency distributions. Fill in the cells for the following columns: frequencies, cumulative frequencies, proportions, cumulative proportions, percentages, and cumulative percentages. Once you have completed these frequency distributions, see how your work compares to those frequency distributions constructed for each of these variables across all observations. Following the instructions at the end of Chapter Two, construct frequency distributions using SPSS and compare these to what you constructed by hand.

Class Activity #2 (Group or individual)

Ask students to search one of the following scholarly journals and find an interesting article that uses frequency distributions: The American Journal of Sociology; The American Sociological Review; Demography; Population Studies. Find an article of interest that uses frequency distributions in some form. Have each group member read it and then discuss the following questions:

a) What is/are the variable(s) of interest in this study? How do/does the author(s) use frequency distributions to summarize their information? Do they report raw frequencies, proportions, and/or percentages? Do they provide information on several variables at once? Do they consider the dimension of time?

b) What does the information in these frequency distributions tell you? You should be able to pick up on some general trends. What are these? As a group, see if you can put together a brief summary of what the author(s) appear to be communicating. Present your summary to the rest of your class.

Class Activity #3 (Group or individual)

Pass out a bag of M&Ms to each student or group. Have the students arrange the M&Ms by color and then construct a frequency distribution by color. Ask students to include percentages and proportions in their tables. As a way to prepare the students for Chapter 3, you can then ask them to create a pie chart using their constructed frequency distribution table.

Class Activity #4 (Group or individual)

Provide or have students bring in two or three statistical tables from various media sources. Ask students to answer the following questions:

1. What is the source of this table?
2. How many variables are presented? What are their names?
3. What is represented by the numbers presented in the second column? In the last row of the table?