**Notes on Using PSPP**

These instructional exercises were originally written for SPSS. However, some colleges, including many community colleges, do not have a site license for SPSS. The cost of SPSS is often prohibitive, so I rewrote the exercises to run in PSPP, which is free statistical software sponsored by the Free Software Foundation. For more information on PSPP, go to <http://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/>. Their website says that “GNU PSPP is a program for statistical analysis of sampled data. It is a Free replacement for the proprietary program SPSS, and appears very similar to it with a few exceptions.”

The easiest way to download PSPP is to go to <http://pspp.awardspace.com/> and look for the “Downloads” box. Then download the latest version (10.1 as of this writing) in either 32-bit or 64-bit format. If you’re not sure which version to download, go to the control panel and click on “System” and look for your system type. Then follow the instructions to download.

PSPP will run your SPSS data (.sav) file. You can also run SPSS syntax (.sps) files in PSPP. Sometimes PSPP will not run a particular SPSS command. I have rewritten some of the exercises to make sure that all the syntax files included with the exercises will run. That means I had to eliminate some parts of certain exercises. I also eliminated one exercise (STAT4S) which was heavily dependent on charts and graphs, since PSPP does not have much capability in this area. I kept the original numbering of the exercises to make it easier to make comparisons to the SPSS version.

Some PSPP commands do not have the full capabilities of the corresponding SPSS commands. For example, you can run a three-variable table in SPSS but not from the graphical interface in PSPP. You can use SELECT CASES in PSPP but it’s not as user friendly as SPSS. (See the document on “Differences between PSPP and SPSS.) However, you can paste the SPSS commands to select particular cases into a PSPP syntax file and then run the commands in PSPP so that is what I have done in the exercises. That’s a little awkward but it works. You will need to spend some time explaining this to your students. The only other alternative is to skip that part of the exercise.

PSPP will list the variables and you will select those variables you want to use. PSPP lists the variables using the variable labels. However, it’s much easier to find the variables if they are listed by variable names. You can change the way PSPP lists the variables by right clicking anywhere on the list of variables and selecting “Prefer variable labels” and that will list the variables by name. However, you will have to do this each time you encounter a list of variables. There is no way to do this permanently. Since this will make it much easier for students to find the appropriate variables I have inserted these instructions in each exercise.

To open the data (.sav) file in PSPP, click on “File” and then on “Open.” Navigate to where the data file is located on your computer. Then double click on the file name and it should open in PSPP.

You can open the syntax (.sps) files included with these exercises in the same manner that you opened the data file. Click on “File” and then on “Open.” Navigate to where the syntax file is located on your computer. Then double click on the syntax file name and it should open in PSPP.

To run the syntax files click on “Run” in the menu bar and then on either “All” or you can select the command(s) you want to run and then click on “Selection.”.

Your students should build the commands they want to run by clicking on “Analyze” in the menu bar and then pointing at the type of analysis they want to carry out. For example, to run a frequency distribution point at “Descriptive Statistics” and then click on “Frequencies.” There are some commands that must be run from a syntax file as noted above.

You can also paste the commands into a syntax file by clicking on the “Paste” button. This is a good way to learn what the appropriate command should look like if you want to learn how to build your own syntax file.

I’m a SPSS user and have just started using PSPP to create this set of exercises. If you discover any errors in the syntax files, please email me at ednelson@csufresno.edu and I’ll correct them. I’m always open to suggestions for improving the exercises as well.