

Subsistence and Sociopolitical Conditions: SCCS Variable Descriptions and Reliability 1

Michael Winkelman

Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-2402

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of publications to provide the variable descriptions and reliability assessments for the data bases in the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS). It was just over two decades ago that Murdock and White (1969; STDS34) provided the seminal publication of the pinpointed SCCS societies and selected variables which they analyzed to assess sample interdependence. Since then the SCCS data base has grown to well over 1000 variables covering virtually all major areas of social and cultural life as well as the physical environment.

New opportunities in ethnological research have been provided by this development of a cross-cultural data base which assesses sociocultural factors in a representative sample of world societies. Now one can more easily engage in an empirical and quantitative assessment of a plethora of social science questions and hypotheses about the effects of cultural, social and ecological processes on socialization, personality, behavior, expressive activity, sex roles, political process and numerous other aspects of human behavior.

The SCCS has established the basis for the massive development of anthropology as an ethnological science. This present publication makes available in the computer medium two bodies of information about the SCCS data bases and variables which have been provided in previous World Cultures publications. These are the DES or variable description files, and the REL or reliability assessment files.

The DES files published here provide variable descriptions of the original SCCS variables. The files give the reader a broader description and contextualization of the measures provided. This broader description not only ties the variables with theoretical concerns, but also provides the information and perspectives necessary for appropriate interpretation of the meaning of variables. For example, many variables in the VAR files are briefly described in ways that suggest an ordinal property to the variable. However, a close reading of the variable descriptions provides an understanding of the groupings that went into the formation of each level of the ordinal scale, and may often mitigate against a simplistic ordinal interpretation of the meaning of or dimension underlying the measurement.

The REL files provide information on variable and data set reliability, a fundamental issue in all research. The SCCS data sets have all addressed reliability issues; however, they vary in terms of whether they assess reliability, and in the methods employed and degree of success they attain. The data reported on variable reliability minimally provide information about high validity/low inference and low validity/high inference measures. The different studies on the SCCS provide another means of assessing and establishing both reliability and validity. Studies by different investigators assessing the same or similar principles in independent studies provide the data basis for convergent validation. An important step in establishing the

validity and reliability of the SCCS data and derived measures lies in analyses across different SCCS studies.

The references cited in the text are not included here and must be determined through access to the original sources. A number of the files presented here (01, 03, 04, 06, 30, 34) are also reprinted in Herbert Barry III and Alice Schlegel's Cross-Cultural Samples and Codes.

2. USE OF REL AND DES FILES

The REL and DES files are ASCII text files. If you have installed MAPTAB on a hard disk the editors suggest that you copy the files into the same directory as the MAPTAB program and its .COD and .DAT files. THE DES and REL files currently cannot be accessed from within MAPTAB. They can be read by any word processing program that accepts ASCII files. The files are edited portions of the original articles in which the codes first appeared. If you use a variable from the MAPTAB data base you should consult the DES file for that variable to get a fuller description of the definition of variable and the meaning of the scores than that provided by the MAPTAB .COD files. You should then consult the .REL file containing the variable to review author's comments on how the variable was coded and any difficulties associated with the coding of the data.

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4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Data Quality Control in the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample: Cross-Cultural Codes. Rohner, Ronald P., D. Scott Berg and Evelyn C. Rohner. *Ethnology* 21: 359-369 1982.

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