

# **EMOTION**

## **An IDEA Lesson**

Charles S. Reichardt  
University of Denver

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Welcome to the IDEA Project**

You are reading an IDEA lesson, where IDEA stands for “Instruction in Data Exploration and Analysis.” The purpose of an IDEA lesson is to provide hands-on experience in conducting empirical research via simple data analysis. By working through an IDEA lesson, you will use real data to conduct real research.

IDEA lessons are designed to be add-on components to academic courses. When you work through an IDEA lesson, you will be conducting research on a substantive topic that is relevant to a course you are currently taking. As you perform data analyses, you will delve into the subject matter of that course more deeply than would be possible using a traditional textbook alone. At the same time your textbook describes the research that others have conducted, the IDEA lesson will show you how to conduct research on the topic for yourself.

The data in an IDEA lesson are accessed and analyzed on the web using a freely available and easy-to-learn computer interface called Survey Documentation and Analysis (SDA). The SDA interface was created at the University of California at Berkeley. Everything a student (or instructor) needs to know to complete an IDEA lesson using the SDA interface is presented in the lesson in simple, step-by-step fashion.

A lesson is composed of several modules, each of which is designed to be completed within 20 to 40 minutes of class time (though additional time, perhaps spent outside of class, is needed to complete the assignments that accompany each module). The modules are sequential so that earlier ones need to be completed before later ones. But much can be learned even if all the later modules are not completed.

#### **Contents of the Lesson on EMOTION**

The present IDEA lesson explores the topic of emotion using survey data from representative samples of adults in the US. The lesson is composed of six modules (and an appendix), which are described below.

Module 1 examines the prevalence, in everyday life, of a variety of emotions.

Module 2 examines how the prevalences of different emotions vary across people of different ages and different levels of educational attainment.

Module 3 explains how to interpret the statistical significance of results from cross-tabulations and further explores correlates of emotion.

Module 4 studies sex differences in the prevalence of a variety of emotions.

Module 5 tests two theories of the causes of depression.

Module 6 provides suggestions for additional analyses that instructors can use in class or that students can work on as independent projects.

Appendix is a compilation of some of the variables in the data set that are relevant to topics addressed in the lesson.

### **The Data Set used in the EMOTION Lesson**

The data used in the present lesson come from the General Social Survey (GSS) which is a representative sample of "English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in noninstitutional arrangements within the United States." The GSS has been conducted either yearly or every other year since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), which is affiliated with the University of Chicago. The survey is funded, in part, by the National Science Foundation. In the early years, about 1,500 people were interviewed each year the survey was conducted. In recent years, about 3,000 people have been interviewed each year the survey was conducted. The individuals surveyed in the GSS are different from year to year. Between 1972 and 2004, a total of 46,511 respondents have been interviewed. From 1972 to 1974, quota sampling was used to select the individuals in the sample. Both quota and random sampling were used in 1975 and 1976. Starting in 1977, each sample in the GSS was selected at random. Interviews are conducted face-to-face.

The GSS asks questions that cover an exceptionally broad range of topics that include basic characteristics (such as age and years of education) and social attitudes and behaviors (such as attitudes about abortion and gun control). Some of the core questions in the GSS are asked of all the respondents in any given year. Other questions are asked of only a randomly selected portion of the sample each year. As a result, more questions can be asked without over-burdening any one respondent. Some questions in the survey instrument (called the permanent questions) are asked every year the survey is conducted. Other questions (called rotating questions) are asked periodically. And some questions (called occasional questions) are asked in only a single year.

### **Accessing the GSS Data Set**

To access the GSS data, launch a web browser and go to [www.du.edu/idea](http://www.du.edu/idea). Scroll down the computer screen to the heading "Data Sets" and click on the listing for the "General Social Survey." This will take you to the SDA interface where you can begin to explore and analyze the GSS data.

**August 8, 2007: The GSS data set for 2006 has just recently been made available on the web! The lessons listed below all use the 1972-2004 cumulative data set rather than the just released 1972-2006 data set. I will make the upgrades to include the 2006 data as soon as I can. Until then, use the 1972-2004 cumulative data set.**

---

The IDEA Project was funded by the Marsico Initiative at the University of Denver.