INTER-UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

# Classification of Studies

Upon acquisition of a data file and documentation, each data collection is designated an "ICPSR study number." This number is used to identify the study when placing an order for data or documentation. In addition, a "class number" (IV, III, II, or I) is assigned to every study which describes to the user the level of ICPSR processing work devoted to the study.

The classification scheme is not an indicator of the substantive quality of the data, nor does it always correspond to any given level of technical data quality.

## Class IV

Class IV studies are distributed in the form received by ICPSR from the original investigator. A key point to keep in mind is that the data in a Class IV release may, in fact, be of excellent quality and the documentation thorough. On the other hand, unknown problems may exist with the data. The designation of Class IV signifies that the ICPSR staff have completed the following technical steps regarding the data and documentation. Staff have:

- successfully read and copied the data and machine-readable documentation from the original storage medium provided by the principal investigator;
- confirmed that the number of cases, variables, and records per case, indicated in the documentation are present in the data;
- completed a random check of several cases to confirm that the codes in the data match the accompanying documentation;
- written a brief standardized substantive and technical description of all the data files in the collection;
- assembled a codebook which includes the study description and other information exactly as supplied by the principal investigator.

## Class III

Class III studies have had the above five steps followed for the Class IV level, as well as some additional work performed on the data files. Staff have:

- performed univariate frequencies for all variables and made note of any peculiarities in the data;
- verified data locations for all variables and noted any problems.

Class II

Class II studies have been checked and formatted to ICPSR standards. All the steps for Class IV and III studies have been performed plus the following steps. Staff have:

- investigated any undocumented or out-of-range codes, made corrections in consultation with the principal investigator, and noted remaining problems with codes;
- removed or recoded non-numeric codes;
- formatted the data in logical record length format, card-image format, or both and provided SPSS-X control cards;
- converted the original documentation supplied by the principal investigator into computer-readable format;
- identified all variables by number and an abbreviated label. Missing data codes are specified for each variable, along with their sequential location and width. The complete questionnaire supplied by the original investigator is included. All code values and meanings are listed.

Class I

Class I designated data collections have also been checked, corrected, and reformatted to ICPSR specifications. All the above checks that are performed on Class IV, III, and II studies are also done for Class I studies. Additional processing measures are also taken such as:

- verification that question skip patterns provide consistent responses;
- noting that the data have been recoded and reorganized where needed;
- providing univariate frequencies and other descriptive statistics for all variables and including them as part of the codebook;
- the archive staff working closely with the principal investigator(s) to resolve and data or documentation problems;
- converting the documentation into computer-readable format.
- printing the documentation and providing a copy to each member institution.