User's Guide:
The General Social Surveys on Nesstar

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User's Guide by Carl Gershenson
Version 1: October 1st, 2007

<u>Introduction</u>

The cumulative General Social Survey can now be accessed online at gss.norc.org, where it is housed in the Nesstar data environment.

This manual is intended to guide users through the Nesstar interface. This manual is also intended to replace Nesstar's own Web Guide. Nesstar was designed as an environment for hosting multiple databases, and so its focus is often different from that of a GSS user who wants to use a single database. This manual, then, is tailored for the user of the GSS. However, this manual may miss some topics, especially more technical topics. For further guidance, consult the official Nesstar Web Guide, online at

http://publicdata.norc.org/webview/help/index.html

or by clicking the button at the far-right of the Nesstar menu.

<u>A Note on Compatibility</u>

Nesstar is optimized to run on Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla's Firefox browsers. Apple users may run into problems if trying to use a Netscape-based browser like Safari.

You can download Firefox for free at http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/

NOTE: As of October 1st, 2007, not all of the features described in this guide are enabled for the GSS on Nesstar. Recodes and Bookmarks features are not yet working. The GSS team is working to resolve this issue.

Section 1: Accessing Nesstar and the General Social Survey

As mentioned in the Introduction, Nesstar was designed to manage multiple databases. As such, GSS users may find the first steps of accessing the GSS to be needlessly complex. This section will walk the user through these first few steps, while also familiarizing the user with the basics of the Nesstar Menu.

First, the user must enter Nesstar. From any page on the gss.norc.org website, click the "Data Analysis" tab in the main navigation bar, located directly beneath the GSS banner. In Figure 1.1 below, "Data Analysis" has already been selected, as the user can see from the fact that it is highlighted yellow (see the red arrow).

The user must next locate the master directory titled " ⊞ NORC Public Use Data Catalog" in the left-hand frame of the browser. It is marked below by a blue arrow.

Figure 1.1. Nesstar Welcome Page
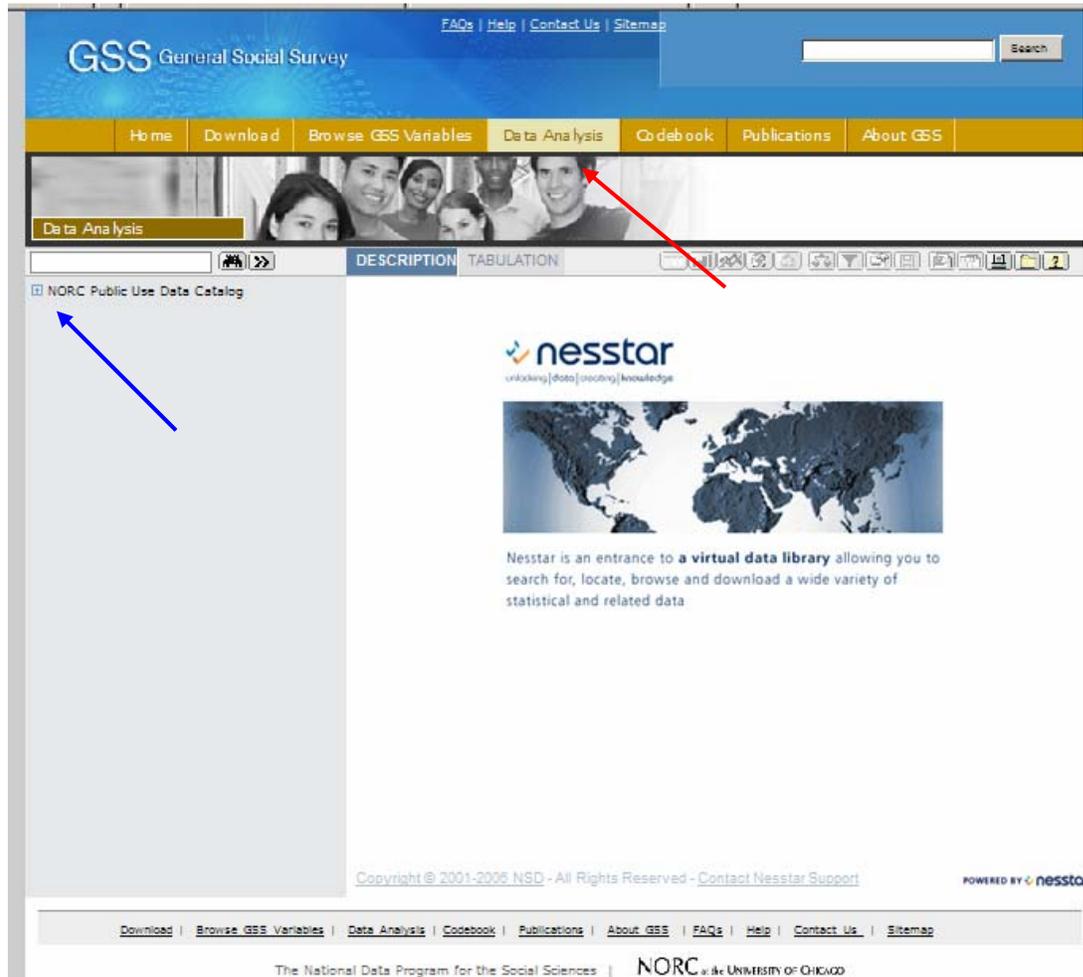
The ⊞ button in the title is the Nesstar "expand button". By clicking the ⊞ button, the user will expand the NORC directory, revealing all of the folders within. **NOTE:** Clicking the text to the right of the ⊞ button is insufficient. The user must click the ⊞ itself.

Figure 1.2: Magnification of Nesstar's Left Frame
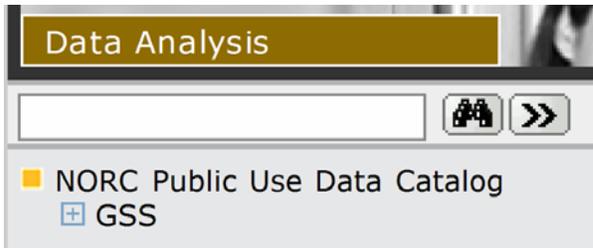
In our case, the only folder is " ⊞ GSS". Like before, click the ⊞ button once to expand the GSS directory.

Figure 1.3: Magnification of Nesstar's Left Frame
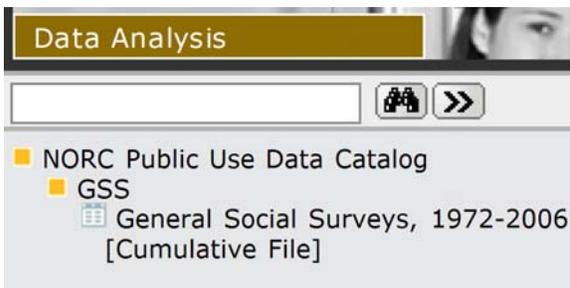
We now see two new icons. The orange ■ "collapse button" is the counterpart of the ⊞ button. Clicking " ■ GSS," for example, will hide the "General Social Surveys" dataset. In effect, clicking " ■ GSS" would take us from Figure 1.3 to Figure 1.2.

Also of importance is ▦, the dataset button. As there is only one dataset housed on the GSS site, the ▦ icon will appear only once. Click it to finally access the General Social Survey. Your screen should now resemble Figure 1.4, below.

Figure 1.4: Having Accessed the GSS
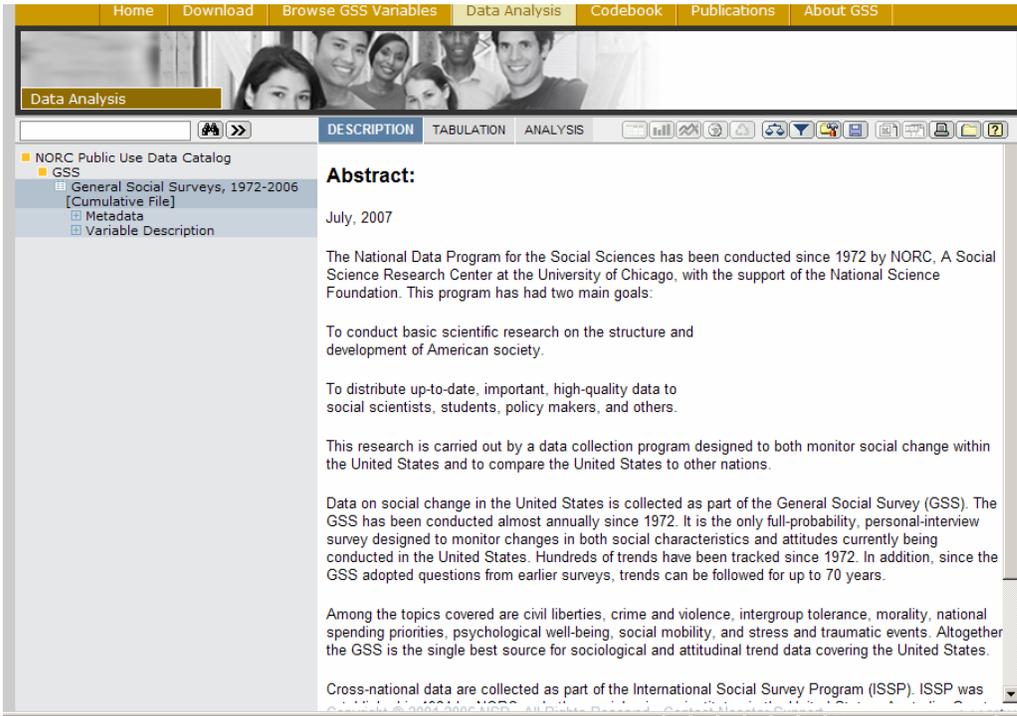
Some important changes: The right frame now contains an abstract describing the GSS. Also for the first time, the Nesstar function buttons located in the upper-right:

have "colored in," indicating that they may now be used on GSS variables.

One final point to discuss before moving on to "Section Three: Browsing GSS Variables" is survey-level metadata. The user should now be familiar with the use of the ⊞ expand button: click first on "⊞ Metadata," and then once more on "⊞ Study Description" and "⊞ Data Files Description." The user should now see Figure 1.5:

Figure 1.5: Survey-level Metadata
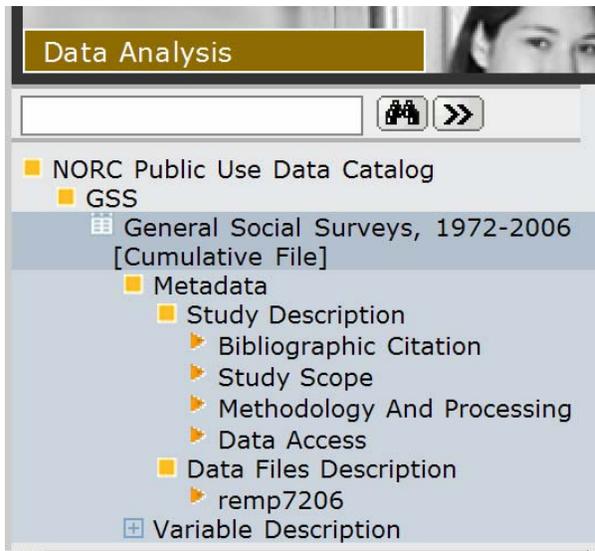
Each orange triangle ▶ represents a "bottom level" item, meaning that this path can be expanded no further. Clicking on either the triangle or the text will open up the desired metadata in the right-frame of NESSTAR.

When done viewing the survey-level metadata, click the ■ in "■ Metadata" to collapse the expanded metadata menu (in effect, returning the screen to Figure 1.4).

<u>Section 2: Browsing GSS Variables</u>

Users may browse the GSS variable lists according to several organizational schemes. The user may find these different organizational schemes by clicking the ⊞ button to expand " ⊞ Variable Description" as shown below in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: GSS Variable Organizational Schemes
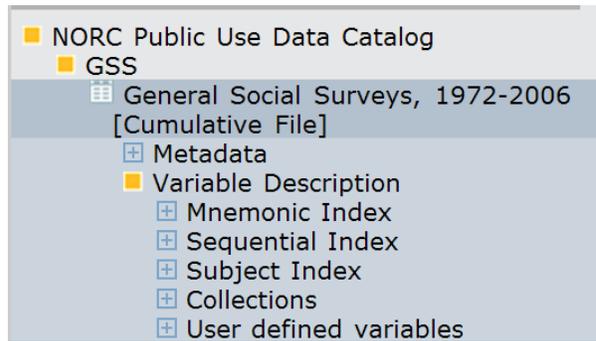
Mnemonic Index – Each of the over 5,000 GSS variables is assigned a unique mnemonic. The mnemonic consists of up to eight letters and numbers and is written in capital letters. The mnemonic index, then, allows the user to explore the GSS variables alphabetically by mnemonic.

If we wanted to find the GSS variable CANADA, first click on " ⊞ Mnemonic Index," then click on " ⊞ C," and finally on " ⊞ CANADA." Your left-frame should now resemble Figure 2.2.

We now see the label " ▶ Liking for Canada," which describes the content of the variable CANADA. The blue triangle ▶ is the variable icon, which indicates that we have reached the "bottom" of this directory. In effect, this means that we can go no further in the left-hand menu frame. Clicking the ▶ icon or the text "Liking for Canada" will have the same effect: opening up the variable description page in the right frame.

Note that the text "Liking for Canada" will be colored red while the CANADA descriptive page is open (see Figure 2.3).
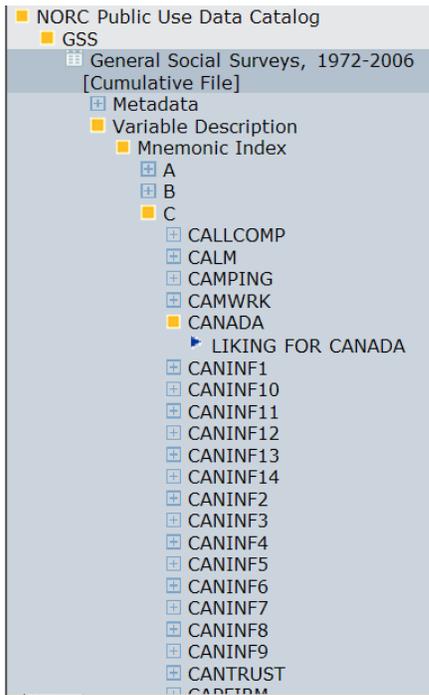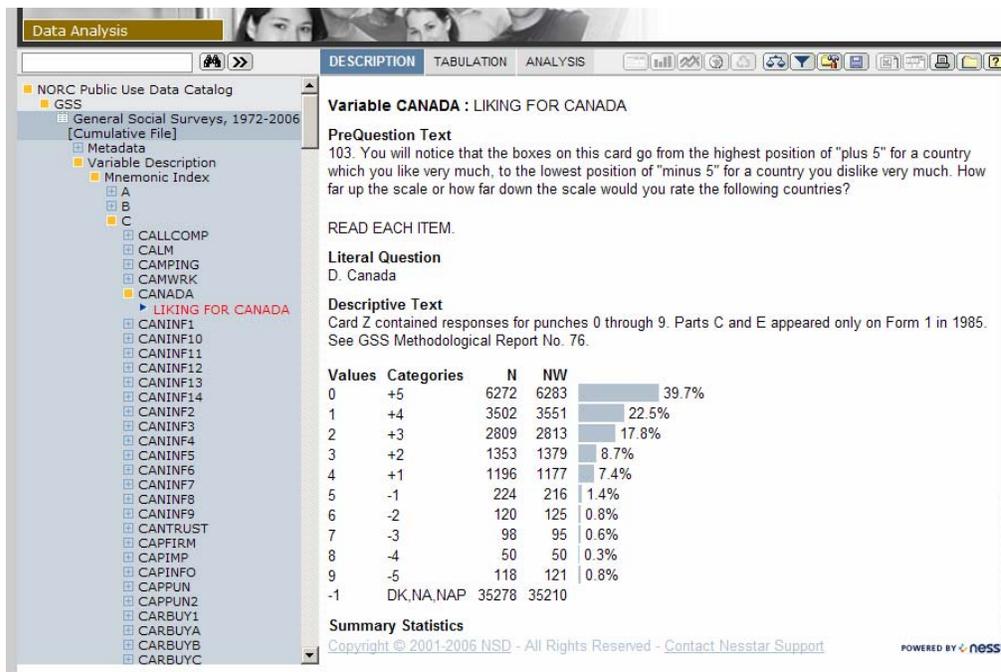
Figure 2.2: Mnemonic Index

Figure 2.3: The CANADA Description Page

Sequential Order – The Sequential Index is intended for those with a copy of the most recent GSS codebook in front of them, or for those with an intimate knowledge of the GSS variable ordering. One advantage to using the Sequential Index is that many thematically-related variables are placed one after the other in the Codebook.

To access the 199th GSS variable USCLASS1, first click "⊞ Sequential Index," then "⊞ 199-397," and finally "▶ Traditional Class Divisions Still Remain." This is a prime example of the advantages of the Sequential Index: directly following USCLASS1 in the Sequential Index are the variables USCLASS2 through USCLASS8, and then several more variables concerning social class. See Figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4: The Sequential Index
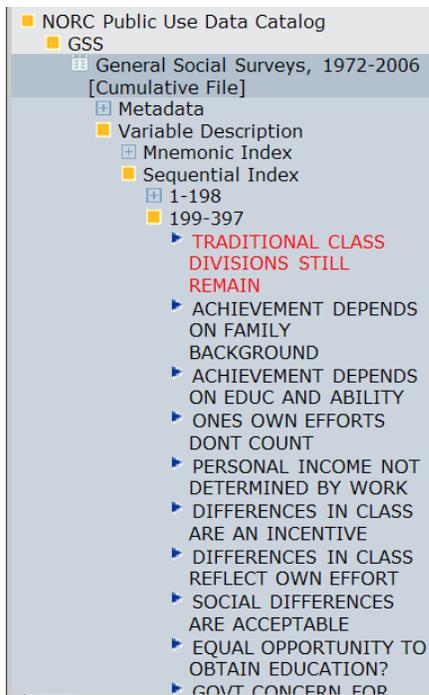
Subject Index – The online Subject Index is a modified version of the subject index found in the back of the GSS codebook. The subjects are organized alphabetically, and some subjects have several layers of subtopics nested within them.

If the user wanted to see what variables the GSS contains regarding the Bible, the user would first click "⊞ Subject Index," then "⊞ B," and then "⊞ Bible." At this point, the user would find no variables (indicated by ▶), but only more topic directories (indicated by ⊞). Clicking on "⊞ Feelings on the Bible" will reveal:

Figure 2.5: Subject Index
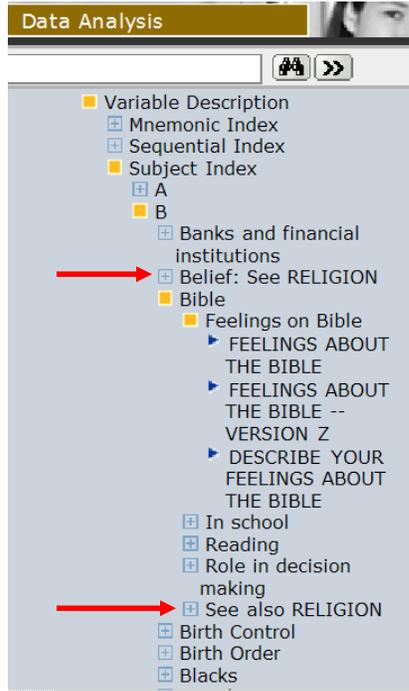
There are two other items worth noting here, both indicated by a red arrow on Figure 2.5. Where ever you see a Subject listing of the type, "⊞ Belief: See RELIGION" or a subtopic listing of the type, "⊞ See also RELIGION," these directories are actually empty despite the presence of the ⊞ expand button. Rather, these are placeholders intended to direct the user to the subject directory "⊞ Religion" where further relevant variables may be found.

Collections – The Collections index allows the user to view all of the variables contained in GSS and International Social Survey Program (ISSP) modules, as well as all of the variables administered in a given year, and finally, the more loosely defined "Thematic Collections" and "Other Groups." See Figure 2.6 for the expanded Collections index.

"Thematic Collections" tend to be variable groupings repeated continually, such as the GSS sequences on national spending priorities, tolerance for nonconformists, and confidence in societal institutions.

"Other Groups" tend to be unofficial modules, associated with a certain year, such as the 1998 Daily Spiritual Experiences sequence and the 2004 Daily Spiritual Experiences sequence.

Figure 2.6: Collections
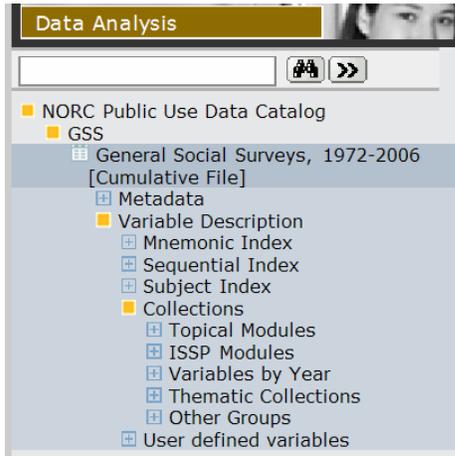
By now, the user should have no problem drilling down through the layers of Nesstar menu, clicking on ⊞ after ⊞, and so here we will detail a different way of accessing variables.

Navigating from the Right-hand Frame

In this alternate method, the user navigates through the right-hand "Target" frame instead of the left-hand "Menu frame." Until now, we clicked the ⊞ expand button instead of the text directly to the right. But now, let's click the text of " ⊞ Thematic Collections," so that we will be brought to Figure 2.7:

Figure 2.7: An Alternate Method for Navigation

Clicking these blue, underlined hyperlinks in the right frame is the equivalent of clicking the ⊞ expand button in the left frame. So if we want to "expand" the Tolerance collection by clicking once on underlined text, we are brought to:

Figure 2.8: An Alternate Method for Navigation
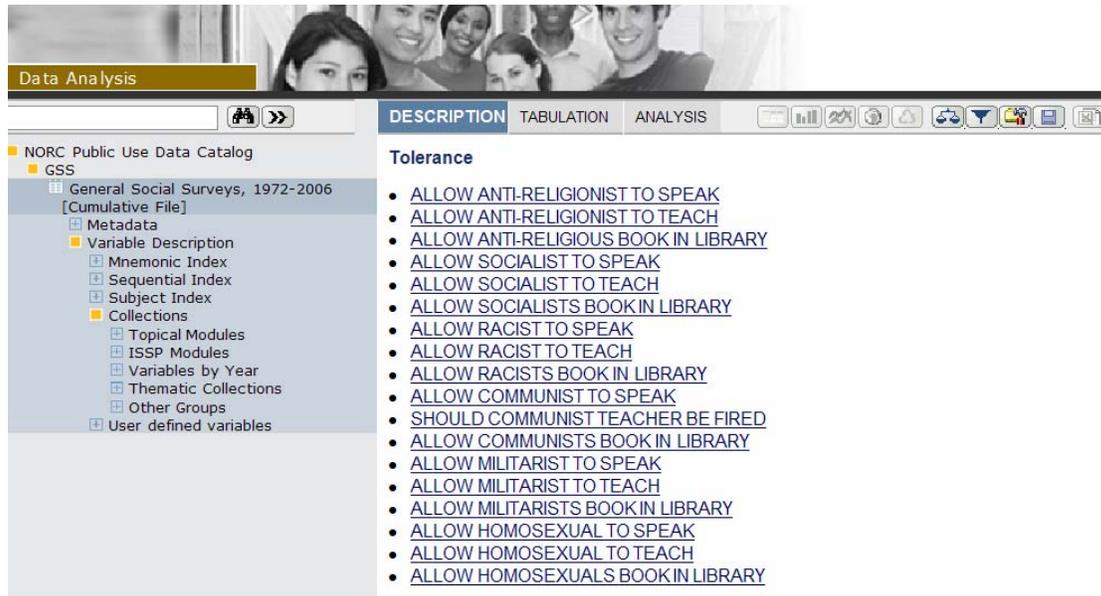
The right frame is now displaying the variable labels as blue, underlined hyperlinks. "Allow Anti-Religionist to Speak" in the right frame is the equivalent of "▶ Allow Anti-Religionist to Speak" in the left-hand menu frame.

Clicking on one of these links will take you to a variable description page akin to the CANADA description page seen in Figure 2.3

This alternate method for navigation is especially useful when viewing large variable groupings such as the Topical Modules, as the right frame becomes cluttered less easily than the left frame. The disadvantage is that you cannot "see where you are" within the database as well as you can in the left-hand menu frame.

When navigating in the right frame, use your browser's "Back" and "Forward" buttons to return to previously viewed pages.

User Defined Variables – This directory is where variables recoded by the user will appear. This option is not currently supported by the GSS on Nesstar.

<u>Section 3 – Searching for Variables</u>

   This section is important since when it comes to the search function, Nesstar was clearly not designed with a single dataset like the GSS in mind. Nesstar and all of its search defaults are optimized for searching for items within multiple datasets. Nesstar will most often offer *entire datasets* as search results. This is useless for the GSS user, who will only be searching for variables within a single dataset.

   As such, the user will want to pay the most attention to the section on the Advanced Search.

Basic Search

The Basic Search box is located directly above the left-hand, menu frame.
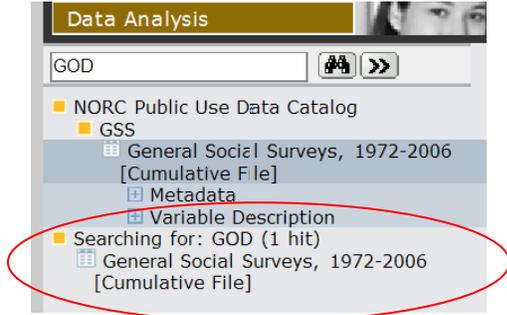
Figure 3.1: Basic Search
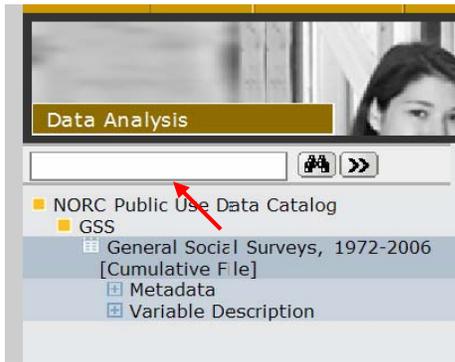
   To use the Basic Search function, enter text into the search box and click the basic search button [🔍].

   The Basic Search function is minimally functional when used with the GSS. A Basic Search will determine whether or not a variable is included in the GSS.

   Search results are located in the left frame, as the final item in the expandable menu. If the search results report any hits, this indicates that the variable searched for is included in the GSS. Unfortunately, Basic Search does not provide a quick link to that variable's description page, but rather opens up a mirror of "🈸 General Social Surveys."

   Figure 3.2 below displays a successful Basic Search wherein we confirmed that the GSS contains one variable with the mnemonic GOD.
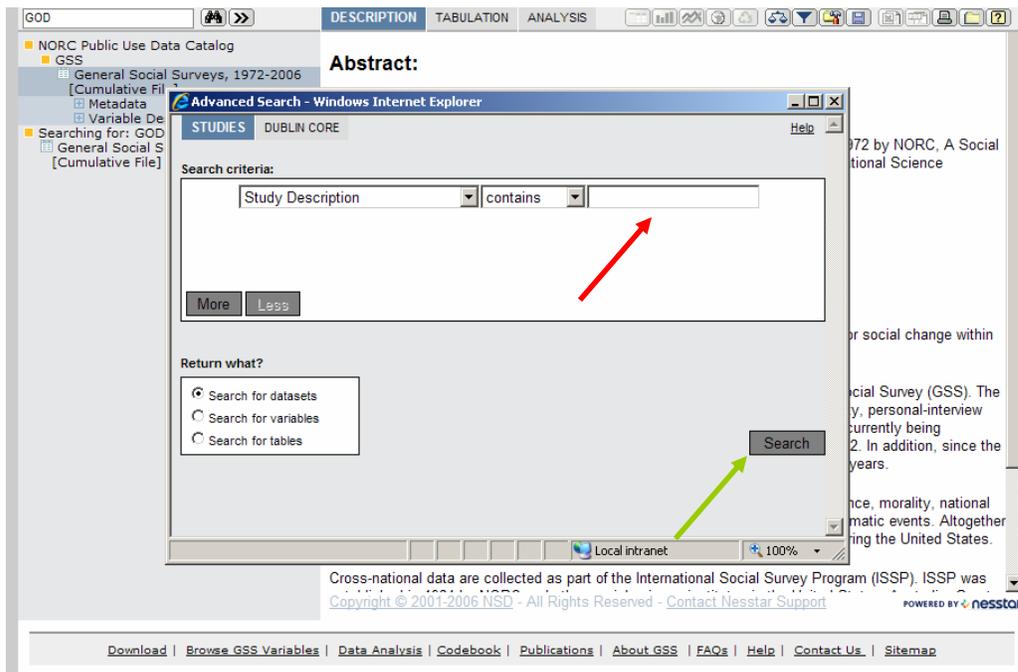
Figure 3.2: Basic Search Result - 1 Hit for God

Advanced Search

To access the Advanced Search function, click the Advanced Search button [»] located directly to the right of the Basic Search box and Basic Search Button [🔍]. Clicking [»] will open up the Advanced Search pop-up window.

Figure 3.3: The Advanced Search Pop-up Window

The Advanced Search function, in its default setting, is also minimally useful. Entering something into the search field (indicated by a red arrow above) and clicking "Search" (indicated by a green arrow) will only let the user know if the term searched for exists in the GSS survey-level metadata. Again, this is next to useless.

To use the Advanced Search function effectively, the user should:

1) Click on the leftmost dropdown menu under "Search Criteria" (red arrow below)
2) Select an option from the "Variable Description" category (inside the red circle below). This will ensure that Nesstar searches the GSS variable descriptions instead of the description of the GSS itself.

Figure 3.4: Advanced Search for Variable Name
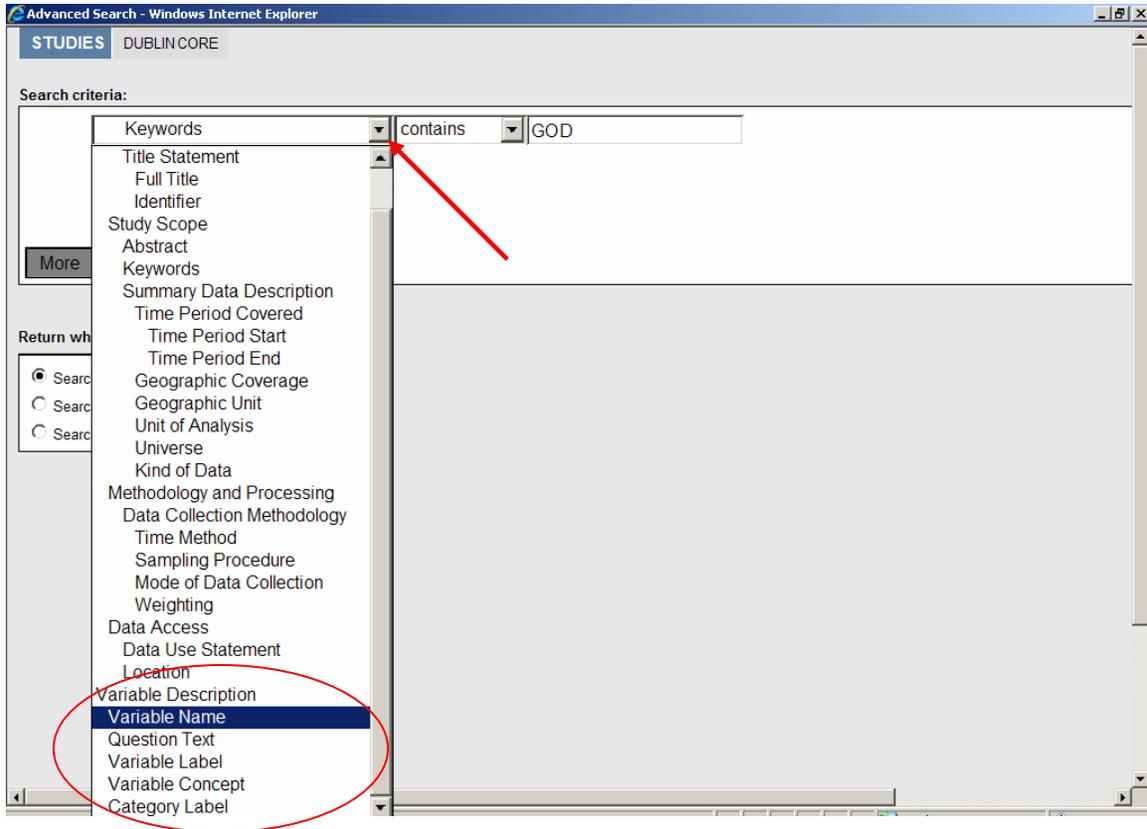
NOTE: In Figure 3.4, note that all of the options under "Variable Description" are indented. This indicates that "Variable Description" is a catch-all search option.

Variable Description: Searches in *all* of the below categories
Variable Name: Searches the variable mnemonics (like CANADA or CAPPUN)
Question Text: Searches the actual question wording, taken from the questionnaire
**Variable Label:** Searches the summarized version of the question text. Found to the right of the ▶ icon. (For example, CANADA's variable label is "Liking for Canada")
Variable Concept: This field is empty for all GSS variables
Category Label: Searches only the response options for variables

3) Select "Search for Variables" from the "Return What?" box in the bottom left of the window by clicking the circle to the "Search for variables" text's left (see the red arrow below). If you do not make this change, Nesstar will return a link to a mirror-version of the GSS rather than links to specific variables.
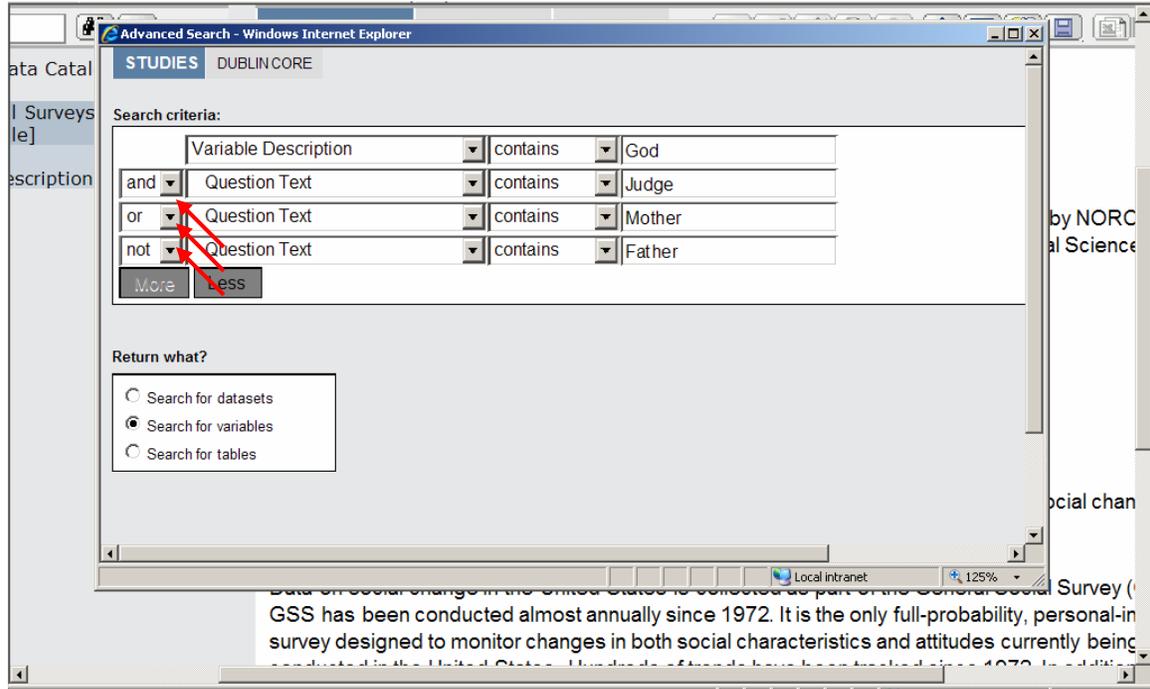
Figure 3.5
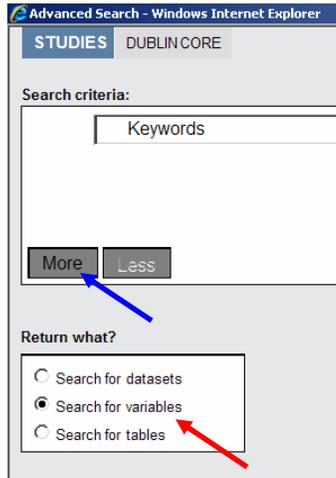
4) **Optional:** If you would like to refine your search by adding additional terms, click the "More" box as highlighted by the blue arrow in Figure 3.5. The "More" box can be clicked up to three times.

5) **Optional:** Once you've added the additional search terms (see Figure 3.6), you have the option to define the "search logic" by selecting from among the terms **and, or**, and **not** to connect the keywords. To chose the terms, click the boxes indicated by red arrows below.

   The meaning of these connector phrases should be fairly obvious. For example, in Figure 3.6 below, our search will return all variables with the word "God" in the variable description, **and** either "Judge" **or** "Mother" but **not** "Father" in the question text.

6) Finally, click the "Search" button in the lower-right of the search box (see the green arrow in Figure 3.3)

Figure 3.6: Four Search Terms

Finding Your Search Results

Next it is time to view the search results for the search shown in Figure 3.6. First find the text " ⊞ Variables found. Open folders to view." This text will be the last (bottom) entry in the left-hand menu frame. As such, the user might have to do a little work to find the search results.

If you cannot see the entry " ⊞ Variables found. Open folders to view" at the bottom of the menu-frame, either:

1) Click the orange collapse button ▪ wherever you see it to make room for the search results. In general, clicking the ▪ will reduce onscreen clutter by "hiding" menu text. (Clicking ⊞ will reveal any text hidden by clicking ▪.)

2) Use the menu frame scroll bar to move the menu in the left frame all the way down. This scroll bar operates the same as scroll bars on other websites and computer applications, only this scroll bar is dedicated to the left-hand menu frame. You can find the scroll bar inside the red circle in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Search Results
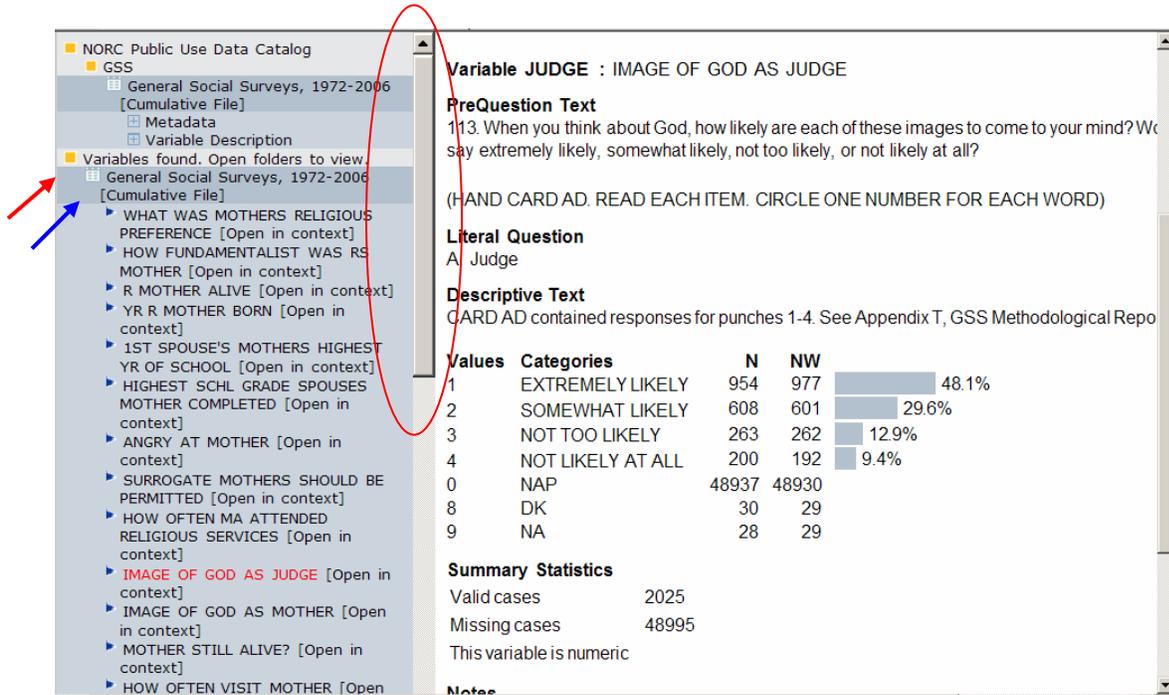
To expand the search results, first click " ⊞ Variables found. Open folders to view" (red arrow) and then click " ▦ General Social Surveys" (blue arrow). As in Figure 3.7, you should find a listing of the variable labels for each variable which met your criteria. In the instance above, our query produced quite a few hits.

These results will remain in the left frame until the user performs another search or reloads Nesstar.

Section 4 – The Variable Description Page

Once you have located a variable in the left-hand frame (see Sections 2 and 3), click the variable label (either the text or the icon ▶) to open up the variable description page. If this does not work, make sure Nesstar is in "Description" mode by checking that the "Description" tab is highlighted blue (see red arrow in Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: The Variable Description Page
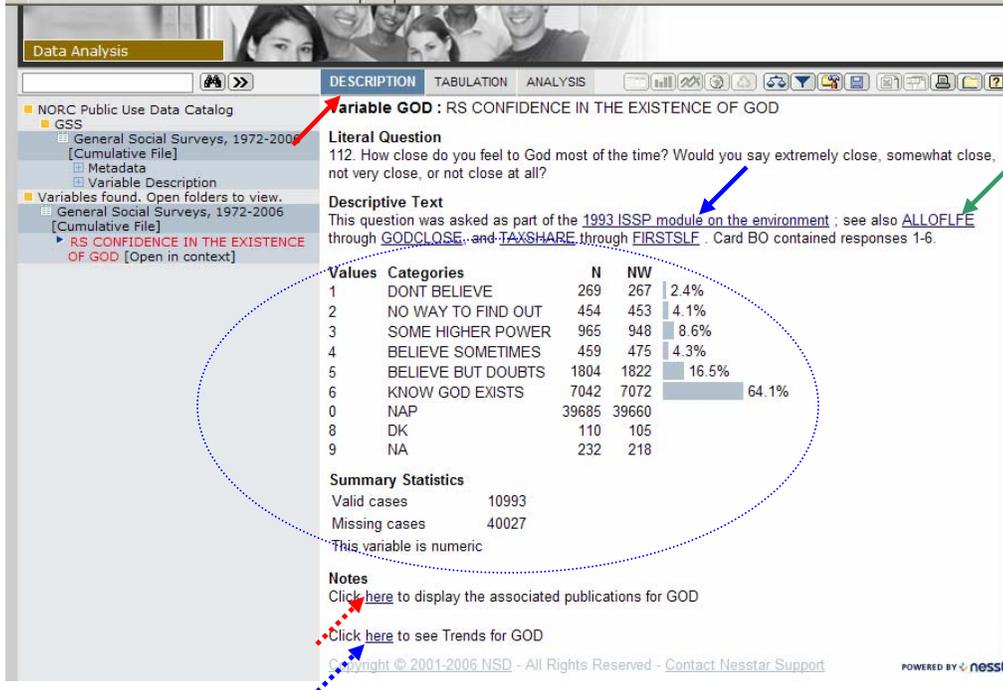
At the top of the Variable Description Page (see Figure 4.1 for an example), you will find the variable mnemonic (bolded and in capital letters) followed by the variable label. Underneath that is the "Literal Question", as taken from the questionnaire.

Descriptive Text: Directly underneath the "Literal Question" is the "Descriptive Text," which corresponds to the "Remarks" section of the paper codebook. Nesstar will provide a direct hyperlink whenever the Descriptive Text references a variable grouping such as a module (see blue arrow in Figure 4.1) or another variable (see green arrow in Figure 4.1). Clicking the link for a module will take to you a page which will list links to all of that module's variables. Clicking the link to a variable will take you to another Variable Description page. Some variable descriptions will also contain links to .pdf files of the GSS Codebook appendices and GSS reports.

Statistics (see the blue circle in Figure 4.1)**:** Values, category labels, and statistics can be found directly beneath the "Descriptive Text." Note that when appropriate Nesstar displays both the raw frequency (**N**) and the weighted frequency **(NW)**. The weight applied in these cases is WTSSALL.

The percentages/bar graphs to the right of **NW** are also weighted. The percentages are calculated **NW/(Weighted Valid Cases) x 100** . Note that Nesstar treats the categories NAP, DK, and NA as missing, and so these are not included in the denominator of the equation.

Summary Statistics: "Valid Cases" and "Missing Cases" as displayed here are unweighted**.**

Associated Publications (see the red dashed arrow in Figure 4.1)**:** The Nesstar GSS provides a link from the Variable Description page to the GSS bibliography. Clicking the "Associated Publications" link will open up a pop-up window with a partial list of publications using that GSS variable.

Figure 4.2: The Associated Publications Pop-Up
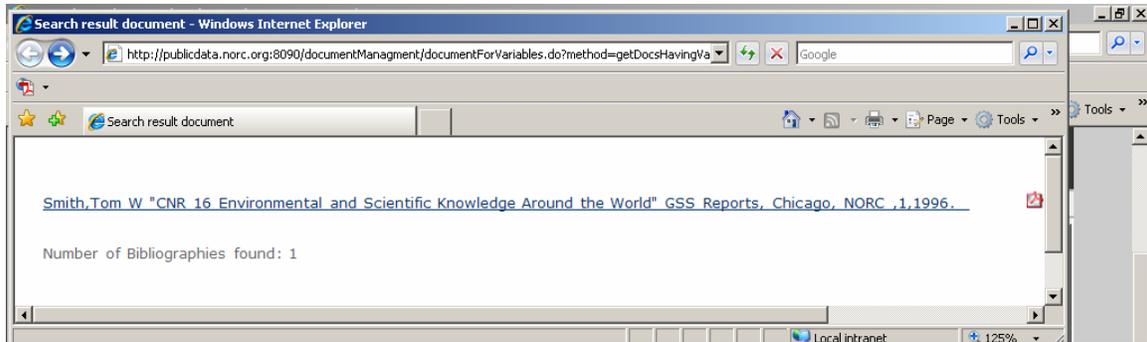
Click the blue hyperlink to be taken to an annotated bibliographic citation for that source. When available, click the Adobe Acrobat Reader logo ( ) to open up a .pdf version of that publication. Right-click the logo and select "Save as" to download the document to your hard drive.

Trends (see the blue dashed arrow in Figure 4.1): The Nesstar GSS provides a link to a Trends table for all variables with more than one data point. The Trends tables are cross-tabulations against the variable YEAR. They are weighted by WTSSALL, and selected on SAMPLE = 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9. Users can of course generate their own trends according to their own specifications. (See Section 5 for more information on cross-tabulations and Section 8 for weighting and filtering.)
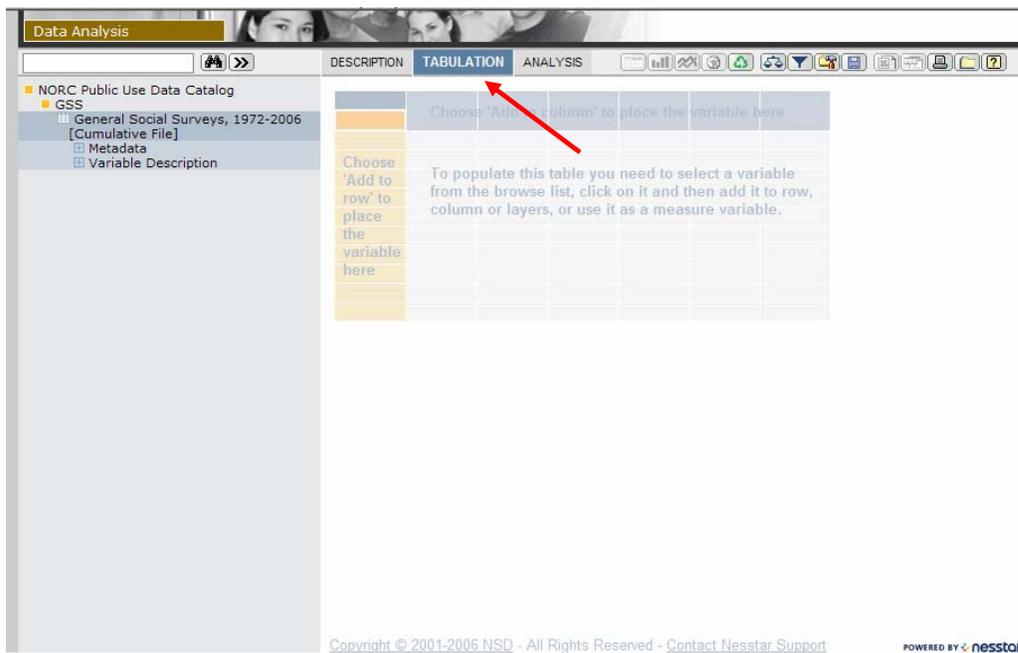
<u>Section 5 – Cross Tabulation</u>

This section will detail how to perform a basic statistical technique, the cross tabulation, with the Nesstar GSS.

The first step is to leave the "Description" section of Nesstar and enter into the "Tabulation" section. To do this, we need to click on "Tabulation" in the middle of the Nesstar menu bar (see red arrow below).

If done successfully, "Tabulation" will be high-lighted blue and you will see:
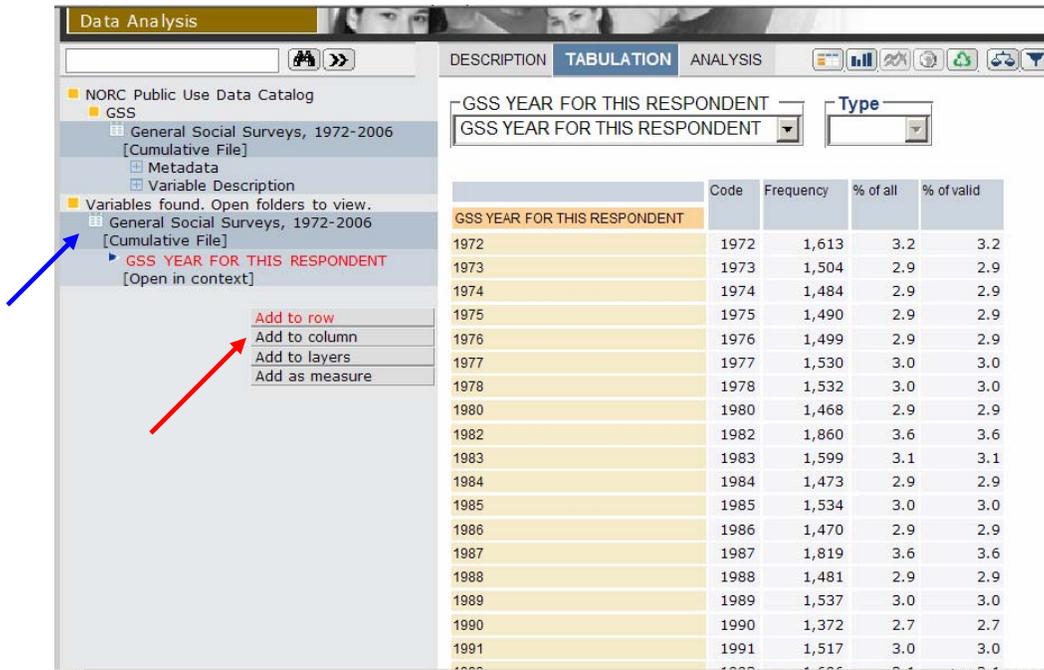
Figure 5.1: The Tabulation Screen

Next we will want to populate this table with variables. Creating a cross-tabulation of YEAR against a variable is an easy way to see in which years a GSS variable was administered. To do this, first add YEAR to the cross-tab.

We could locate YEAR under "⊞ Variable Description" by going to "⊞ Y" in the Subject Index. Or, if we knew that YEAR was the first variable in the Codebook, we could find it in the "⊞ Sequential Index."

However, since we know the exact mnemonic for YEAR, we will locate it through Advanced Search (See Section 4 for instructions on performing an Advanced Search.)

Clicking on the variable label for YEAR, "▶ GSS Year for this Respondent," in the search results (blue arrow) will open up the pop-up menu for the cross-tab function (red arrow). In the case of Figure 5.2, we have chosen to add YEAR to the row.

Figure 5.2: Adding YEAR to the Cross-Tab

Now we need a column variable. Let's search for one by expanding (⊞) the Subject Index. Once we reach the variable level (▶) we can click on the variable label and add it to the column, just like we did for YEAR.

In Figure 5.3 below, the red arrow indicates the pop-up menu from which we can add PARTYID to the cross-tabs columns. To reach PARTYID, first expand by clicking ⊞ Subject Index > ⊞ D > ⊞ Democrats. Then, click on "▶ Political Party Affiliation" to access the pop-up menu for the cross-tab (see red arrow below).

TIP: The blue arrow below highlights a convenient feature of Nesstar Cross-Tabulations. Clicking once on a cell will highlight that cell, as well as the row and column of that cell. In this way, the user can easily discern the row and column categories to which the highlighted cell corresponds.

Figure 5.3: Adding PARTYID to the Columns
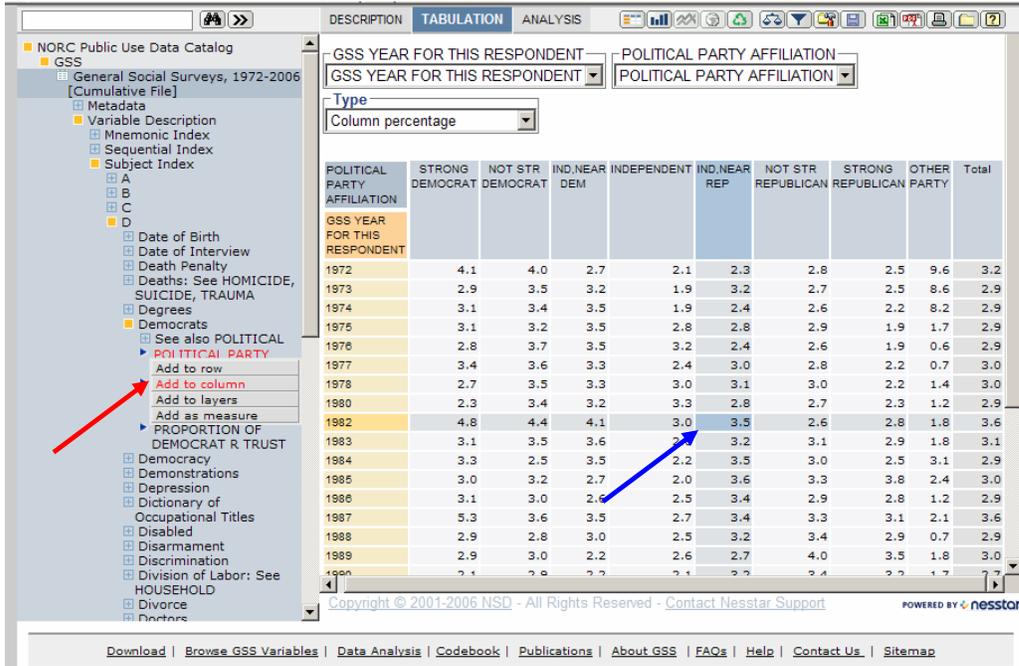
Adjusting the Cross-Tabulation: Rows and Columns

Note that the way we've created this cross-tab, the percentages listed are substantively meaningless: the fact that 4.1% of "Strong Democrats" were from 1972 and 8.7% were from 2006 speaks more to differences in GSS sample sizes than any long-term political trends. There are two ways to rectify this situation:

1) Most simply, we can switch the cross-tab from a Column percentage to a Row percentage. This option can be accessed by opening the drop-down menu labeled "Type." (See the red arrow in Figure 5.4)

NOTE: In Figure 5.4, we can see two other types of cross-tabs offered by Nesstar: one which displays raw numbers, and one which displays both row and column percentages.

2) A more complex solution would be to leave "Type" alone and switch the row variable with the year variable. To do this, first open the drop-down menu labeled as "GSS Year for this Respondent" (currently in the rows) and select "Move to column." (See the red arrow in Figure 5.5)

In this instance, "GSS Year for this Respondent" will move to the right. Now, open the drop down menu for "Political Party Affiliation" and select "Move to Row." (See the red arrow in Figure 5.6)

Figure 5.4: Cross-Tabulation Types

Figure 5.5: Moving a row variable to the columns

Figure 5.6: Moving a column variable to the rows

Adjusting the Cross-Tabulation: Categories

We now have substantively meaningful cross-tabs. However, the GSS has been administered so many times that our results do not fit nicely on one screen. For example's sake, say we're interested only in the last decade and a half of the GSS.

Similar to switching a variable from a row to a column, we must again access the variable's drop-down menu. Click on the drop-down menu labeled "GSS Year for this Respondent" (see red arrow in Figure 5.7 below).

## Figure 5.7: Choose Your Own Categories
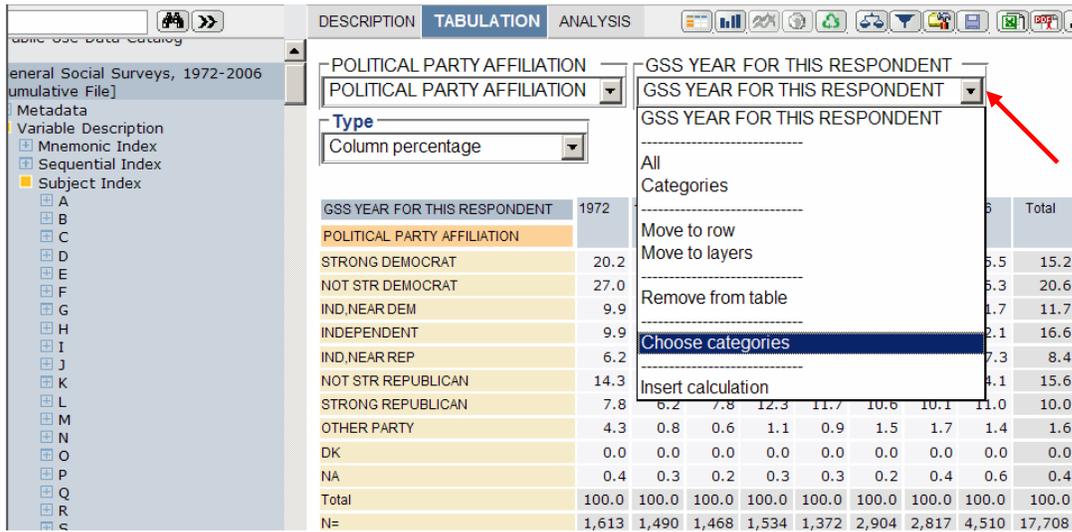
Selecting "Choose Categories" will open up the pop-up menu displayed below in Figure 5.8. Simply check the boxes of the categories you'd like to add to your cross-tab and uncheck the boxes you'd like to remove from the cross-tab (see red arrows in Figure 5.8).

Note the three buttons along the top of the pop-up menu (red circle in Figure 5.8): "Deselect All," "Select All," and "Update." Since there are so many year categories, first click "Deselect All" and then check the boxes for the desired years one by one.

When you have selected the categories you would like to include in the cross-tab, click the "Update" button (in the red circle below). This will close the pop-up menu and make the changes indicated.

**Figure 5.8: "Choose Your Own Categories" Pop-Up Menu**
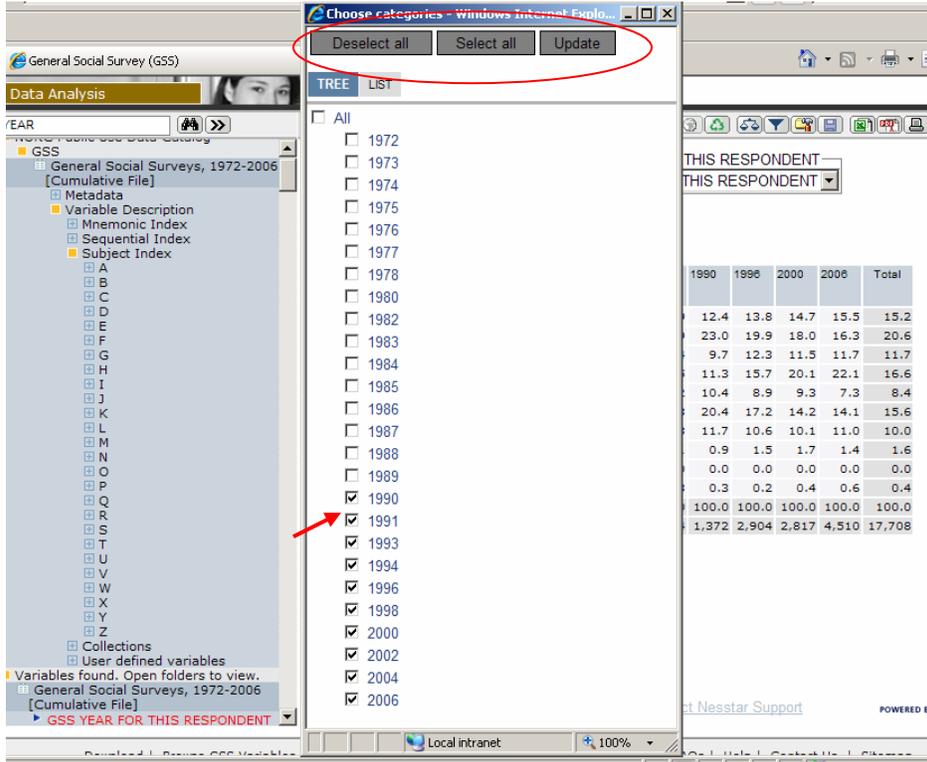
Adjusting the Cross-Tabulation: Layers

Now let's say we want to examine the party-affiliation of blacks over the last decade and a half. To do this, we want to add the variable RACE to our cross-tab as a **layer.**

1) Find RACE in the left-hand menu (use Advanced Search, Mnemonic Index, or Subject Index)
2) Click " ▶ Race of Respondent" and select "Add to layer" from the pop-up menu. (See Figures 5.2 and 5.3 for illustrations of similar processes.)

   The cross-tab will now be displaying party-affiliation by year for *white* respondents. If we want to look at data for black respondents, we must open the drop-down menu for "Race of Respondent" (see red arrow in Figure 5.9) and select the response category "Black."

**Figure 5.9: Using Layers in Cross-Tabulations**
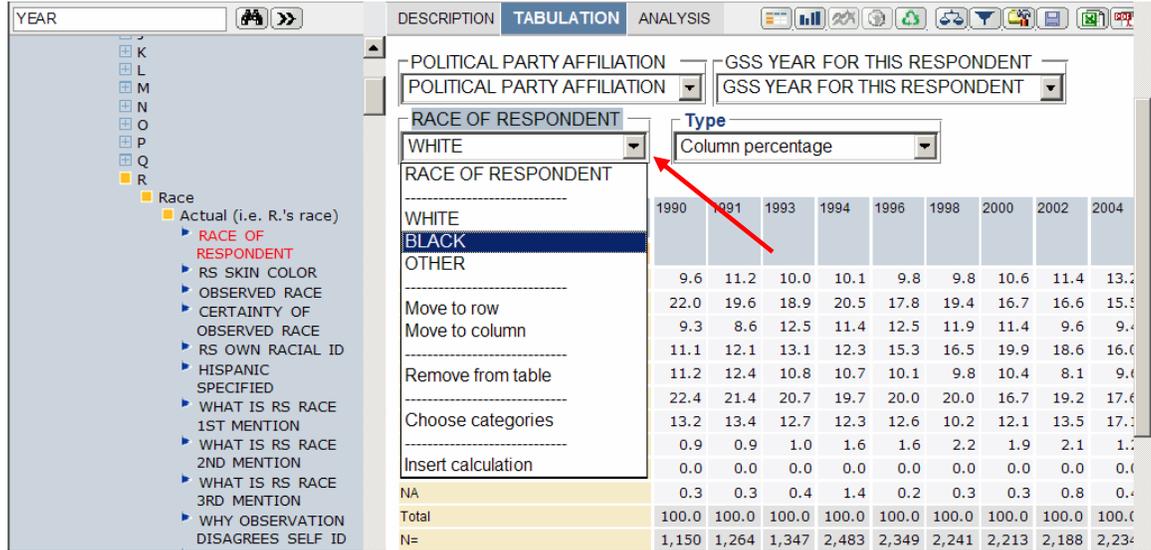
Adjusting the Cross-Tabulation: Measures

Now, say we want to examine the average family income of white respondents by party affiliation and year. To do this, we need to add CONINC to our cross-tab as a measure.

1) Find CONINC in the left-hand menu (use Advanced Search, Mnemonic Index, or Subject Index)
2) Click " ▶ Family Income in Constant Dollars" and select "Add as measure" from the pop-up menu. (See Figures 5.2 and 5.3 for illustrations of similar processes.)
3) "Average" is the default when you add a measure, but there are other options. To access them, click the "Measure" drop-down menu (see red arrow in Figure 5.10).

NOTE: To see which variable is currently being used as a measure, see the text displayed directly beneath the "Layer" and "Measure" drop-down menus (see red circle in Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10: Changing Your Measure
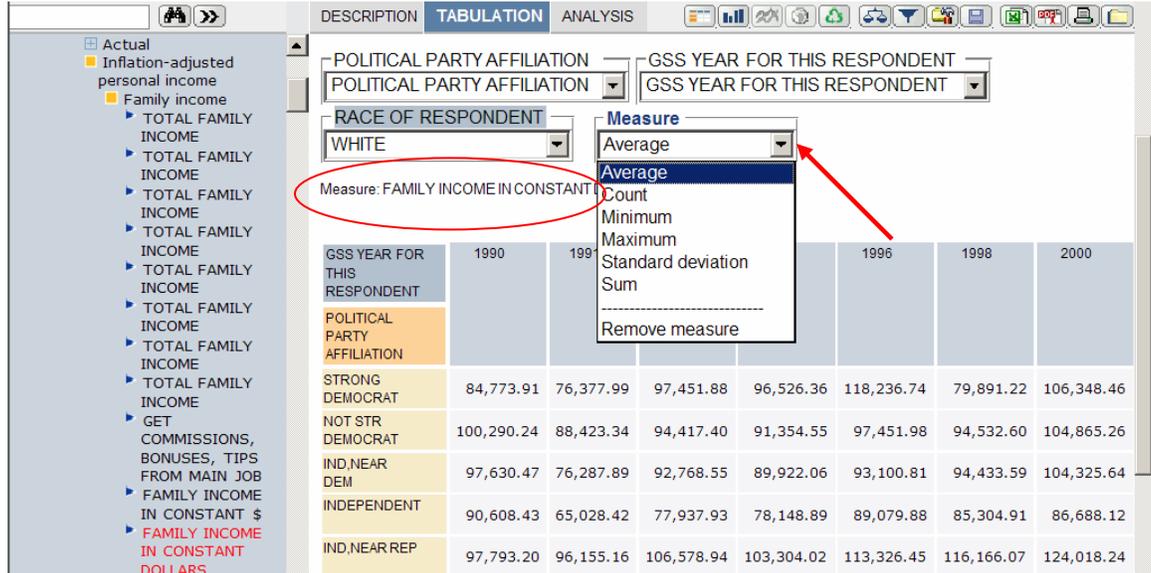
Adding a Control Variable to the Cross-Tabulation: Nesting Variables

Say we want to look at the average income of party-affiliates by year by *all* races all at one time. Layering is insufficient for this, since it can only display data for one race at a time. Rather, to control for race, we must remove RACE from layers and then add it again, this time as a nested row variable.

1) Remove RACE from layers by selecting "Remove from Table" in the "Race of Respondent" drop-down menu (see Figure 5.8).
2) Find RACE in the left-hand menu (use Advanced Search, Mnemonic Index, or Subject Index)
3) Click " ▶ Race of Respondent" and select "Add to row" from the pop-up menu. (See Figures 5.2 and 5.3 for illustrations of similar processes.)

Now each PARTYID category will be broken down by the three RACE categories. But what if we wanted instead for the three RACE categories to be broken down by the numerous PARTYID categories? To accomplish this:

1) Click on the orange "Race of Respondent" box in the actual cross-tab
2) Holding down the left mouse button, drag the "Race" box over the "Party Affiliation" box and then release the mouse button.

This will accomplish the switch. The process is recreated pictorially below.

Figure 5.11: Switching the Order of Nested Variables
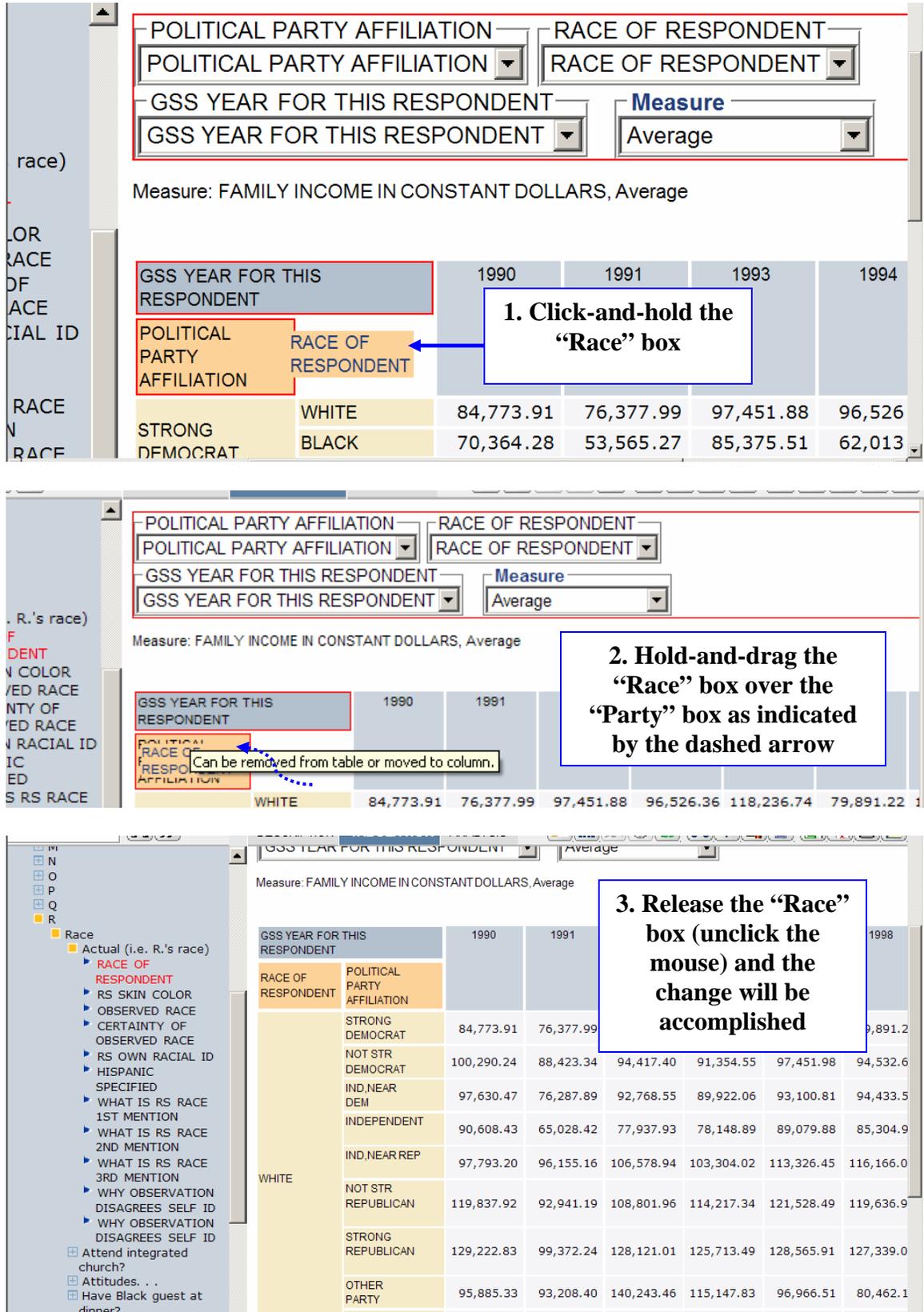
Cross-Tabulation: Display and Documentation

By this point, you may have forgotten exactly which variables you've placed in your cross-tab. At any point, clicking the "Description" tab (red arrow below) along the menu bar will take you to a cumulative description page for each variable contained in your cross-tab. This will *not* clear your table. Click the "Tabulation" tab to return to your table.

Figure 5.12: Descriptives for your Cross-Tabulation Variables
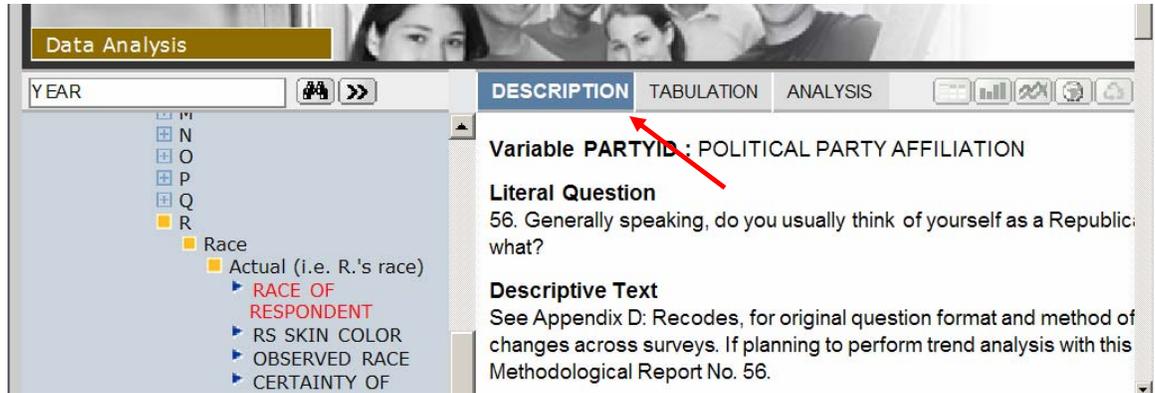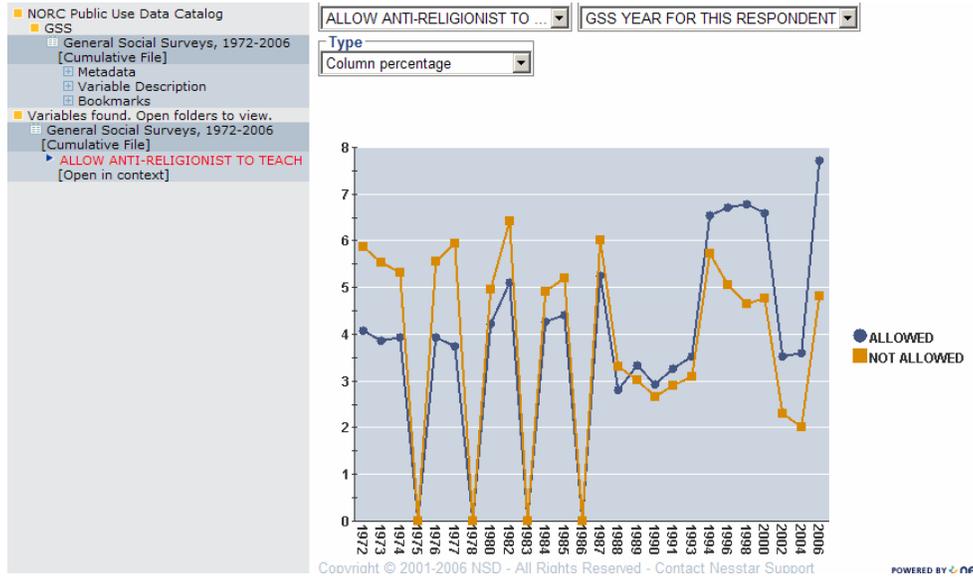

Graphs

Nesstar also allows you to create graphs from your cross-tabs. To do so, click the graph button , which will open up a drop-down menu displaying the different graphs available. The graphs available to you change depending on the type of data you are using. See the red arrow below for the location of the .

Figure 5.13: Making a Graph
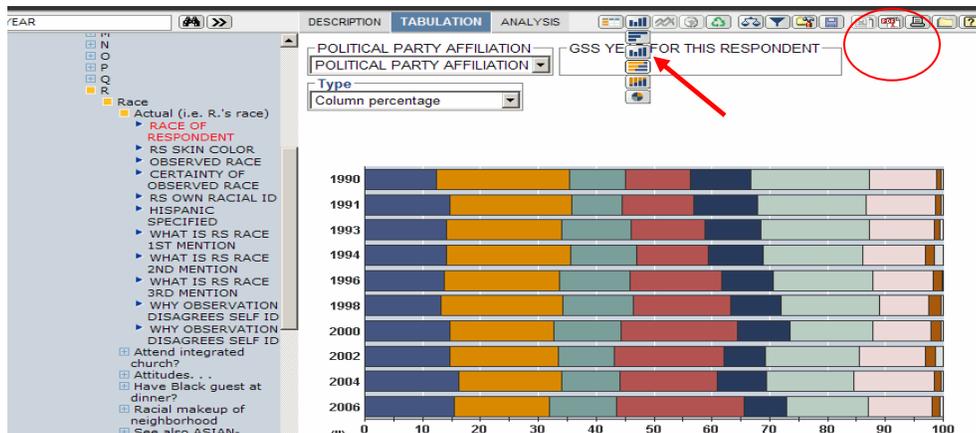
Time Series: You may also create a time series graph by placing YEAR in the row or column of a cross-tab against some other variable. Then, click the "Time Series" button ![icon], located to the right of the "Graph button" ![icon].

Figure 5.14: A Time Series Graph

Tips

- To return to your cross-tab from the graph view, click the "Tables" button ![icon] located directly to the left of the "Graph Button" ![icon].

- To export your cross-tab to Excel, click the "Export to spreadsheet" button ![icon] To export your cross-tab or graph as a .pdf document, click the "Export as pdf" button ![icon]. (See the red circle in Figure 5.13)

- To print your cross-tab or graph, click the "Print Preview" button ![icon]. (See the red circle in Figure 5.13)

- To start all over and make a new cross-tab, first click the "Clear" button ![icon], located two to the right of the "Graph" button ![icon].

NOTE: Nesstar cross-tabulations are fairly flexible and interactive, with more options than can be documented here. Experiment by playing around with the cross-tab displays as shown in Figure 5.11. Click and drag the various boxes to see what else can be done.

Section 6 – Correlation Matrices

        Nesstar also allows the user to create correlation matrices from GSS variables. To access the "Correlation" section of Nesstar, first access the GSS dataset (see Section 2). Next click the "Analysis" tab (see red arrow in Figure 6.1). If you were previously using the "Regression" function, you may have to click the "Correlation" tab in addition.

**Figure 6.1: Accessing the Correlations Section**
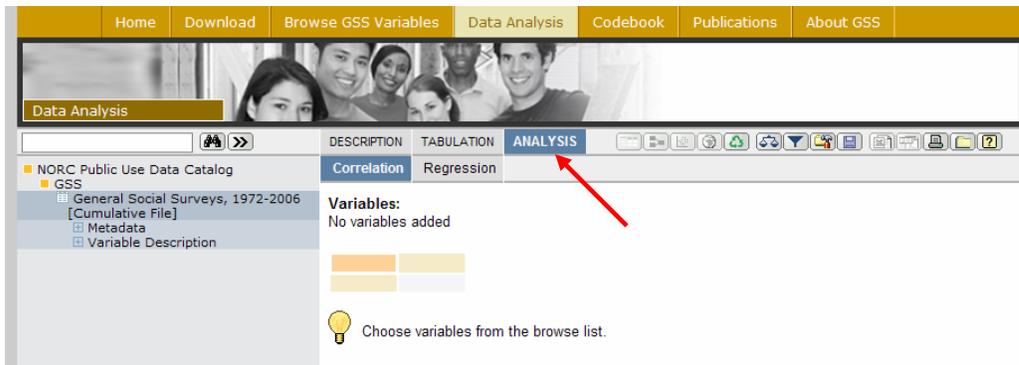
        By now the user should be adept at finding variables in the menu frame. If not, refer to sections 3 and 4. In this example, we will examine the correlation between age, sex, and the GSS tolerance variables for college professors who are against all religion, homosexuals, racists, or militarists. (The mnemonics in question are AGE, SEX, COLATH, COLHOMO, COLRAC, and COLMIL.) In Figure 6.2, we are adding the final variable COLMIL to a correlation matrix (see red arrow). For more detailed instructions for adding a variable from the search results to an analysis, see Section 5.

        Looking at the correlation screen, first note the option to remove variables from the correlation matrix (see the red circle in Figure 6.2).

        Obviously, correlations are much less meaningful when the values of the response categories are unknown. What does it mean to have a positive correlation between sex and anti-religion college professors? To remind yourself of the values for response categories, click on the "Description" tab (indicated by the blue arrow in Figure 6.2). Clicking the "Description" tab will take you to a cumulative description page displaying descriptives for all variables included in the matrix. To return to the correlation matrix, click the "Analysis" tab two to the right of "Description."

        We've made a somewhat large matrix here, and so the display options for the correlation tool have been pushed off-screen (the scroll-bar in the blue circle of Figure 6.2 tells us this). Scroll down so that your screen resembles Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.2: Adding Variables to Correlations
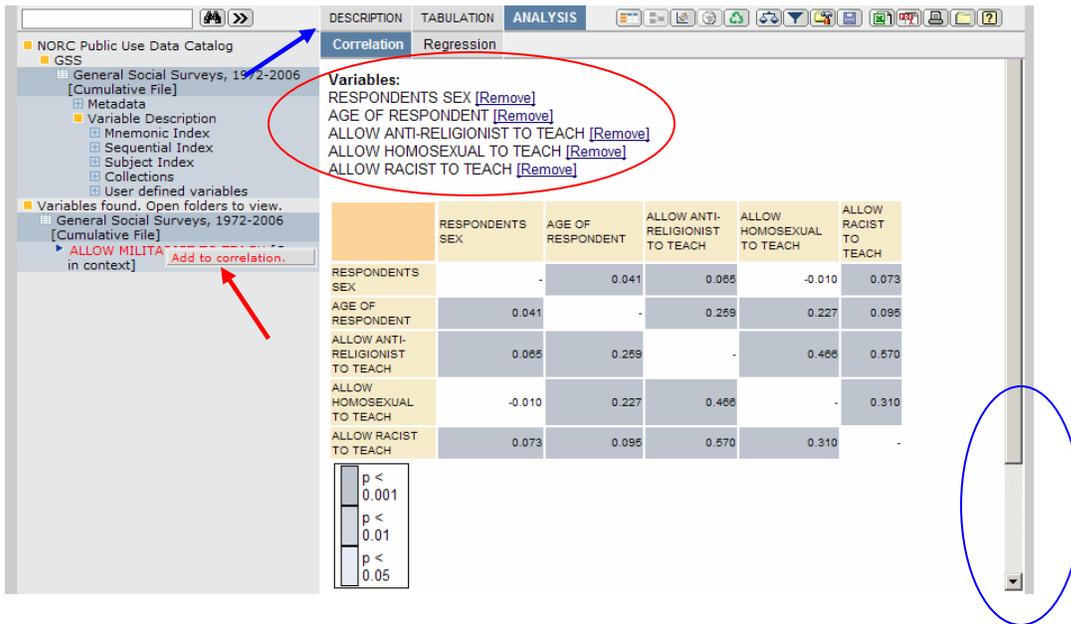
The p-value legend (see red circle below) tells us that most of our correlations are significant at the .001 level. However, with a dataset as large as the GSS, this isn't necessarily impressive; we need more information:

1) Check the boxes next to "Significance" and "Count" in the Display Options box (see red arrow in Figure 6.3)
2) Click the "Update" button in the Display Options box. Your screen should now resemble Figure 6.4.

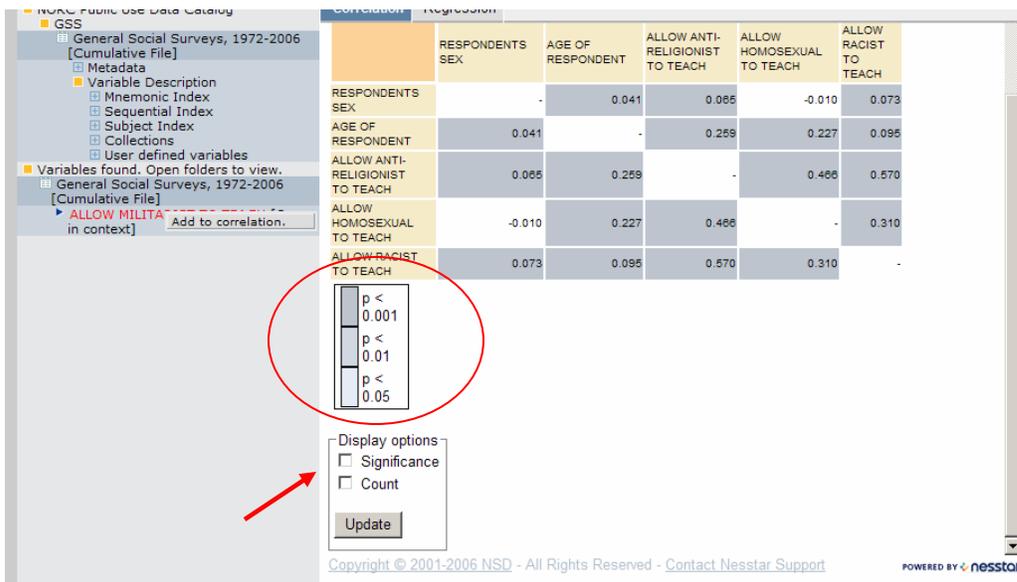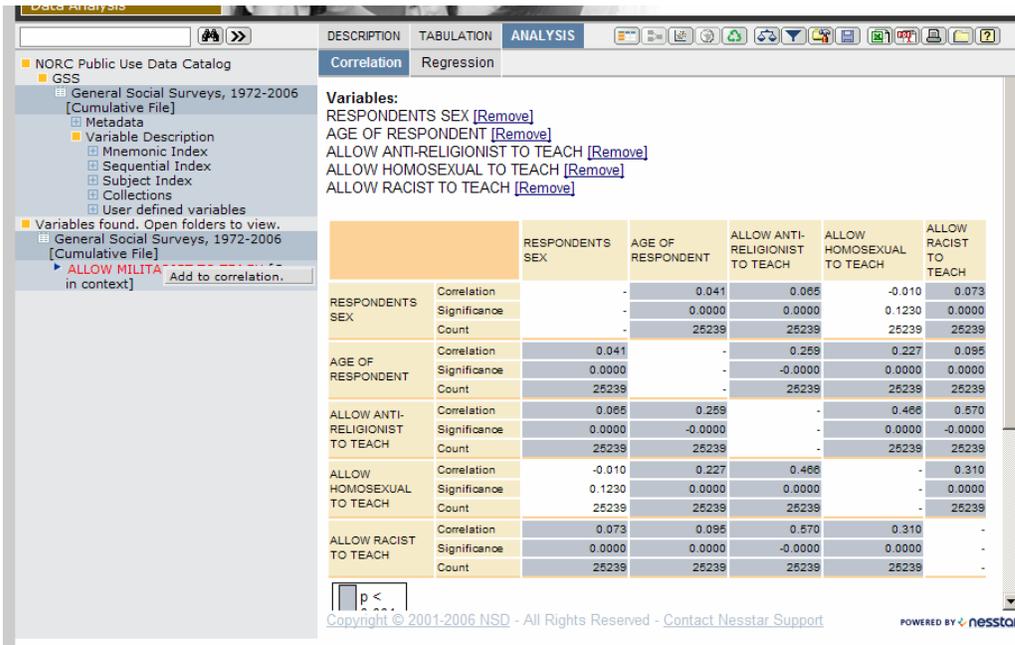## Figure 6.3: Correlation Matrix Display Options

Figure 6.4: A More Informative Correlation Matrix

Creating Scatterplots

Now that we are in the "Analysis" section of Nesstar rather than the "Tabulation" section, some of the menu buttons along the top have changed. Note that the bar graph button ![] and the Time Series button ![] have been replaced by the Regression Chart button ![] and the Scatterplot button ![] (see red circle in Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: New Menu Buttons for the Analysis Section


To create a scatterplot, first add at least two variables to your correlation matrix, then click the Scatterplot button ![] .

When plotting only two variables, note that the first variable selected will be plotted along the Y-axis, and the second along the X-axis.

Unfortunately, there are very few options once you have created your scatterplot. You may print your scatterplot by clicking ![] or create a .pdf with ![] (see the blue circle in Figure 6.5).

Additionally, you may choose between Listwise and Pairwise correlation analysis (see red arrow in Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: A Scatterplot
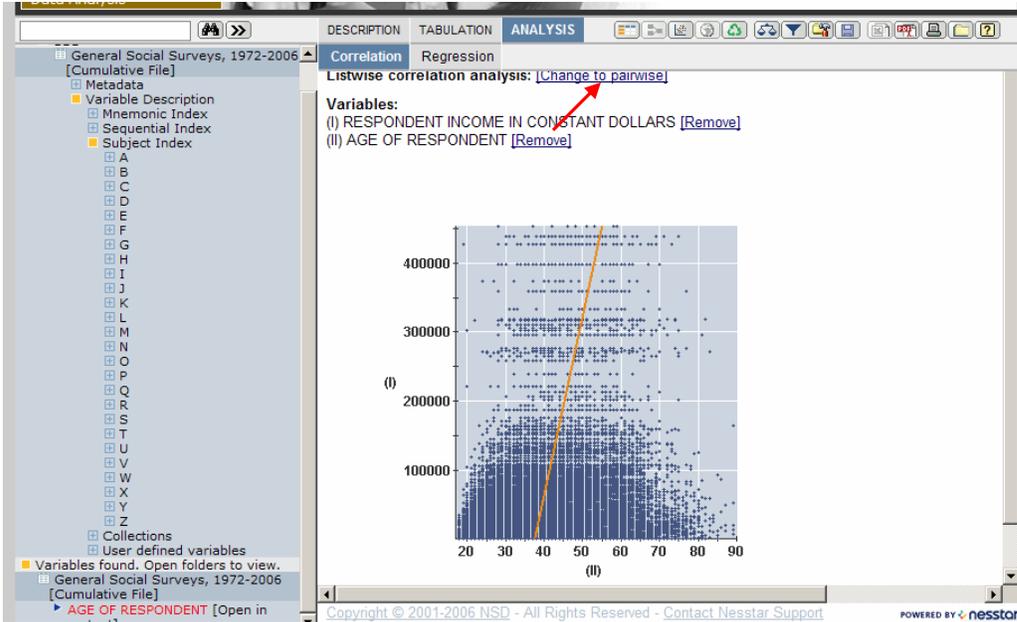
To return to the correlation matrix from the scatterplot, use the Table button , located two to the left of the Scatterplot button .

*A Word of Caution***:** Nesstar will not prevent you from running nonsensical correlations, such as correlations between two nonnumeric variables (such as in Figure 6.7).

Make sure to check the Variable Descriptions page to assure yourself that appropriate variables are being used. Also, future releases of the Nesstar GSS will allow the user to recode categorical variables into dummy variables.

Figure 6.7: No Correlation between Region of Interview and College Major
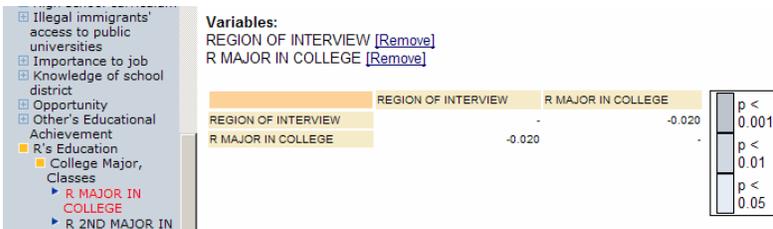
MISSING VALUES: For most variables, 0, 8, and 9 (NAP, DK, and NA) and -1 have been declared as missing values and will be excluded from all calculations. To see which values are considered missing, check the Variable Description page (see Section 4).

If Nesstar does not display a percentage next to the frequencies, then that value is considered missing. Thus we can see in Figure 6.8 that values 0, 8, and 9 are considered missing.

**Figure 6.8: Identifying Missing Values on the Variable Description Page**

Values	Categories	N	NW	
1	DONT BELIEVE	269	267	2.4%
2	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	454	453	4.1%
3	SOME HIGHER POWER	965	948	8.6%
4	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	459	475	4.3%
5	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	1804	1822	16.5%
6	KNOW GOD EXISTS	7042	7072	64.1%
0	NAP	39685	39660	
8	DK	110	105	
9	NA	232	218	

To control which variables are declared missing, see Section 8 on recodes. (Alternately, a temporary filter can be set up to exclude values from calculations, which is functionally equivalent to declaring them missing. Filters are also covered in Section 8.)

Section 7 – Regression Analysis

        Nesstar also allows the user to perform regression analyses on GSS variables. To access the "Regression" section of Nesstar, first access the GSS dataset (see Section 2). Next click the "Analysis" tab (see red arrow in Figure 7.1). If you were previously using the "Correlation" function, you may have to click the "Regression" tab in addition.

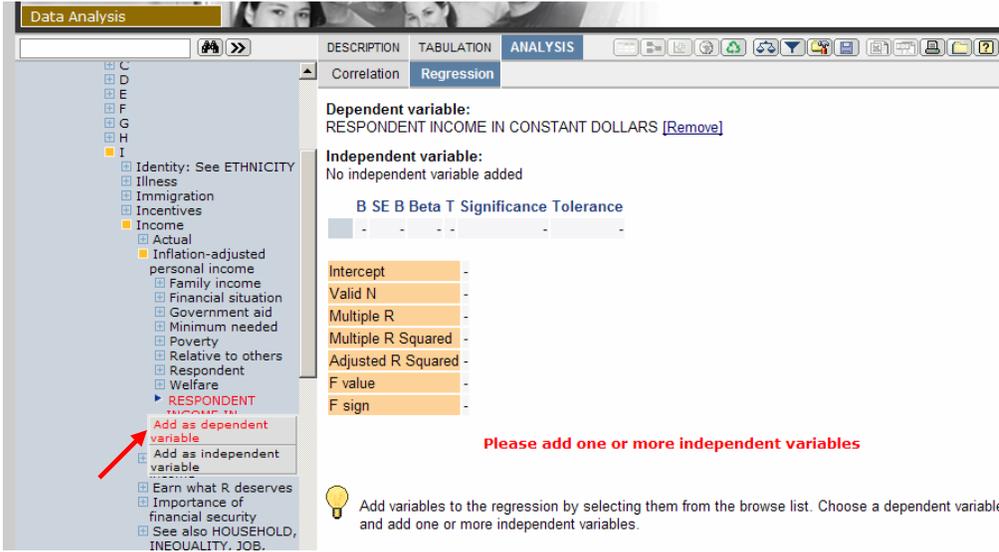**Figure 7.1: Accessing the Regression Section**
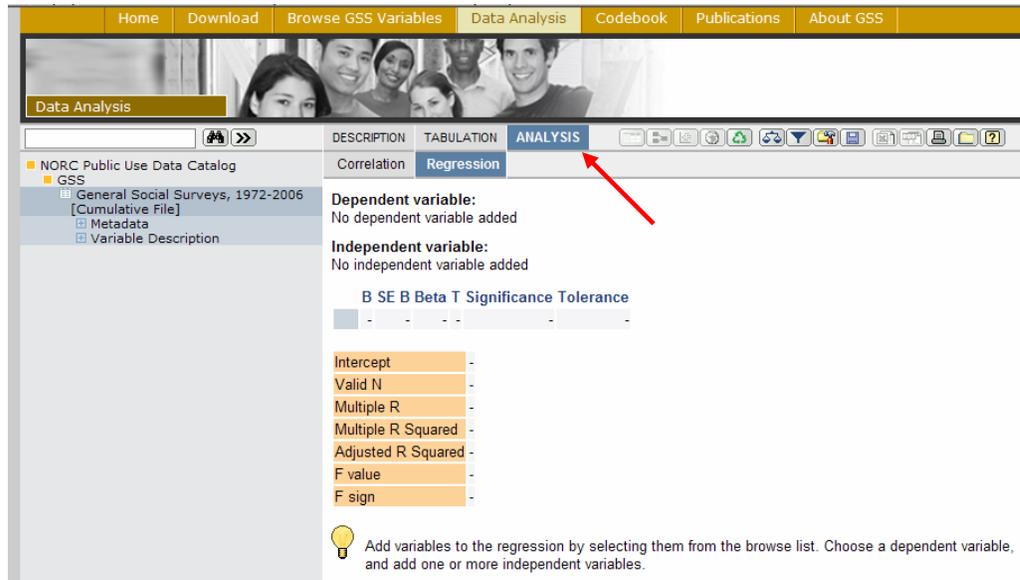
        By now the user should be adept at finding variables in the menu frame. If not, refer to Sections 3 and 4. First, we have to find a dependent variable:

1) Locate the variable CONINC in the left-hand menu (use Advanced Search, Mnemonic Index, or Subject Index)
2) Click "▶ Respondent Income in Constant Dollars" to open up the Regression pop-up menu.
3) Select "Add as Dependent Variable" (see red arrow in Figure 7.2)

To add independent variables, repeat the process above, only select "Add as Independent Variable" from the Regression pop-up menu.

Figure 7.2: Adding Variables to a Regression Analysis

Once the independent variables have been added, the regression screen should look like Figure 7.3:

Figure 7.3: The Full Regression Analysis Screen
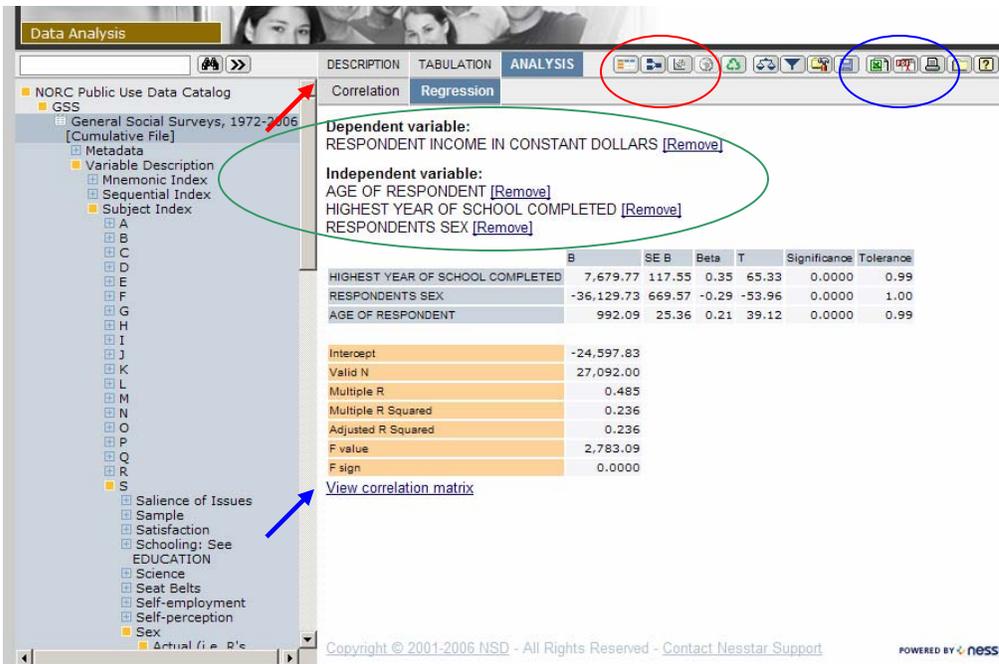
Most of the features and commands for the regression screen were covered in depth in Section 6 – Correlations. As such, the following will be succinct.

To see descriptives for variables (red arrow): Click the "Description" tab for a cumulative descriptives page for all variables included in your analysis. This will *not* delete your regression analysis. Click the "Analysis" tab to return to the Regression section.

To remove variables from the regression analysis (green circle): Simply click the blue, underlined "Remove" text next to the variable of your choice.

To print or export your table (blue circle): Use one of the buttons in the top menu. Their functions are explained in more depth at the end of Section 5.

To switch views to a correlation matrix (blue arrow): Click the blue, hyperlink indicated by the arrow. For instruction on using the Nesstar correlation function, see Section 6.

To create a scatterplot (red circle): To create a scatterplot "matrix" (i.e., a scatterplot will be created for each combination of included variables), click the Scatterplot button . To return to the Tables view, click the Table button .

The Regression Chart

The only new feature within the Regression section is the Regression chart. To create this, click the Regression Chart button (located within the red circle in Figure 7.3).

You should now see something like Figure 7.4.

There are no options within the Regression chart, except the option to remove variables (look within the red circle in Figure 7.4).

NOTE: Within the Regression chart, variables are referred to by roman numerals. You can see which roman numeral corresponds to which variable label by looking at the text at the top of the Regression chart screen (again, look within the red circle in Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4: The Regression Chart
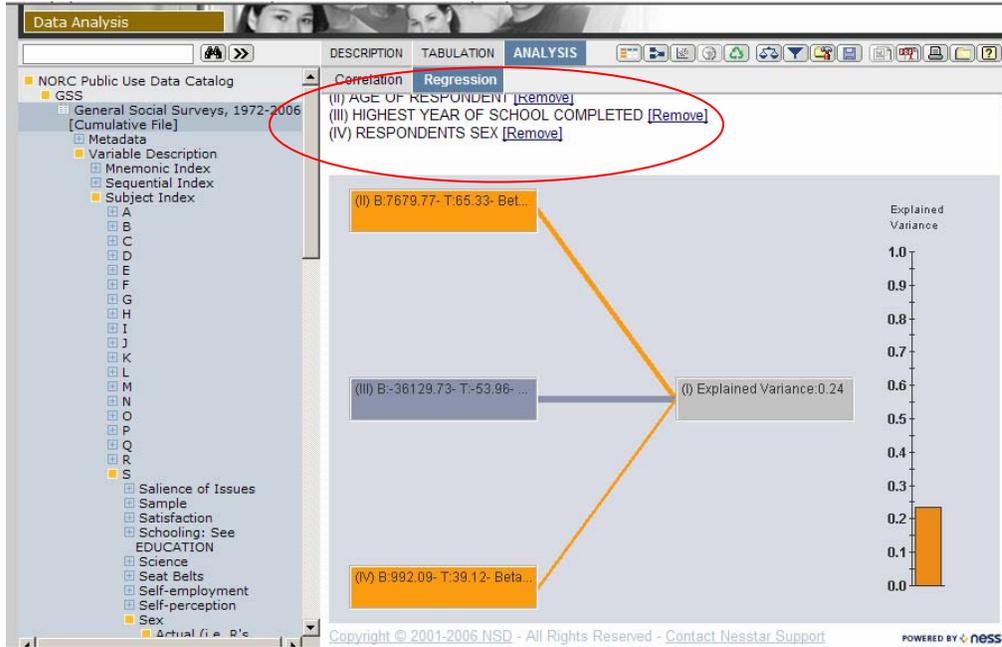
MISSING VALUES: For most variables, 0, 8, and 9 (NAP, DK, and NA) and -1 have been declared as missing values and will be excluded from all calculations. To see which values are considered missing, check the Variable Description page (see Section 4).

If Nesstar does not display a percentage next to the frequencies, then that value is considered missing. Thus we can see in Figure 7.5 that values 0, 8, and 9 are considered missing.

Figure 7.5: Identifying Missing Values on the Variable Description Page

| Values	Categories	N	NW	
1	DONT BELIEVE	269	267	2.4%
2	NO WAY TO FIND OUT	454	453	4.1%
3	SOME HIGHER POWER	965	948	8.6%
4	BELIEVE SOMETIMES	459	475	4.3%
5	BELIEVE BUT DOUBTS	1804	1822	16.5%
6	KNOW GOD EXISTS	7042	7072	64.1%
0	NAP	39685	39660	
8	DK	110	105	
9	NA	232	218	

To control which variables are declared missing, see Section 8 on recodes. (Alternately, a temporary filter can be set up to exclude values from calculations, which is functionally equivalent to declaring them missing. Filters are also covered in Section 8.)

<u>Section 8 – Weights, Filters, and Recodes</u>

To weight the GSS dataset, first click on the Weight button ⟨⟩, found in the top menu bar (see red arrow in Figure 8.1).

All of the GSS-produced weights have been preselected, and will appear in the "Weighting variables defined in the dataset" box (blue arrow).

Figure 8.1: The Weight Screen
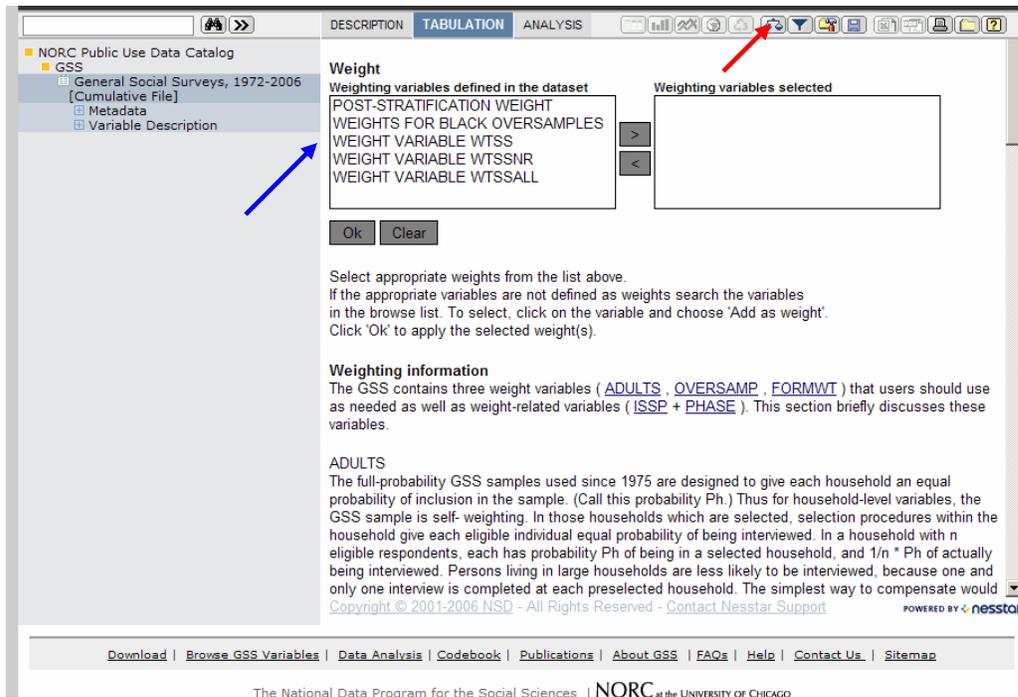
To apply a weight:

1) Highlight the desired variable label
2) Click the ">" button to move the weight to the right-hand box (red arrow in Figure 8.2 below)
3) Click "Ok" (blue arrow in Figure 8.2 below)

After you click okay, you will be taken to a page in the Analysis or Tabulation section. If you see red print at the bottom of the page (blue arrow in Figure 8.3), the weight has been activated.

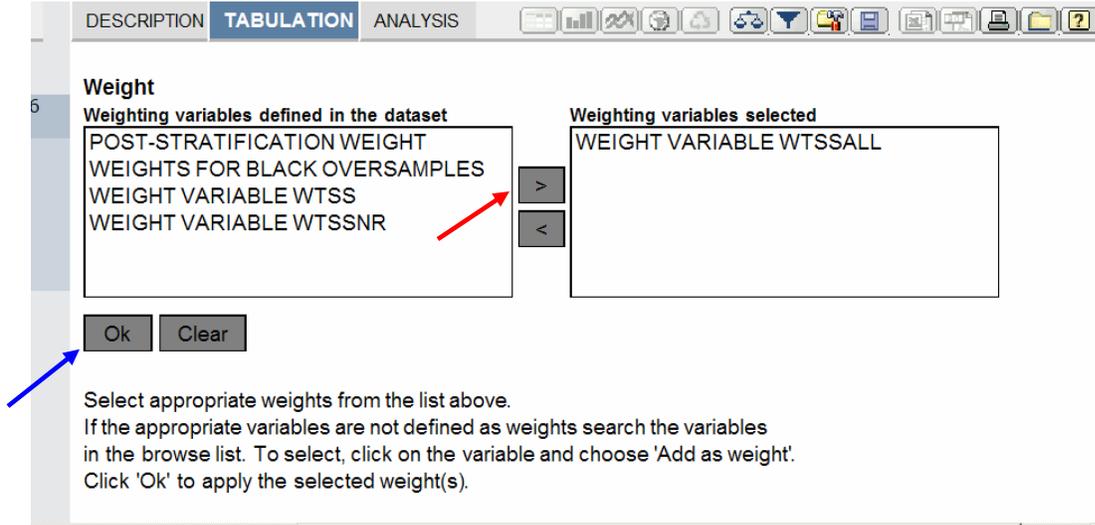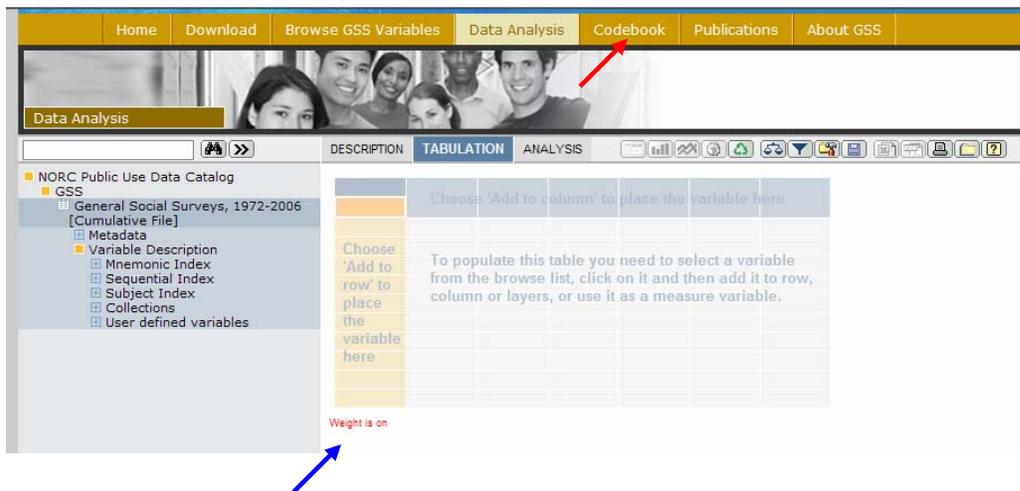**Figure 8.2: Activating the Weighting Variable**

Figure 8.3: The Weighting Variable is Activated

Nesstar allows the user to designate any variable as a weight. While the right-hand frame is showing the weighting page, clicking on a variable label (▶) from the menu frame will open a Weighting pop-up menu. The pop-up menu will offer you the choices "Add as weight" and "View Documentation."

For more information on the GSS weight variables, see Appendix A of the GSS codebook. (You may also access this by clicking the "Codebook" tab to the right of the "Data Analysis tab. See the red arrow in Figure 8.3 above.)

Setting up Filters/Selecting a Subset

You may exclude data from calculations performed by Nesstar by setting up a filter. This filter will remain active until you manually disable it or reload Nesstar.

To set up a filter, first click the Subset button ⬛, located directly to the right of the weight button ⬛ in the top menu. Once you are taken to the Subset screen, clicking a variable label (▶) in the left-hand menu will open a pop-up menu. From this menu, select "Add to subset" (see red arrow in Figure 8.4).

**Figure 8.4: Adding Variables to your Subset**
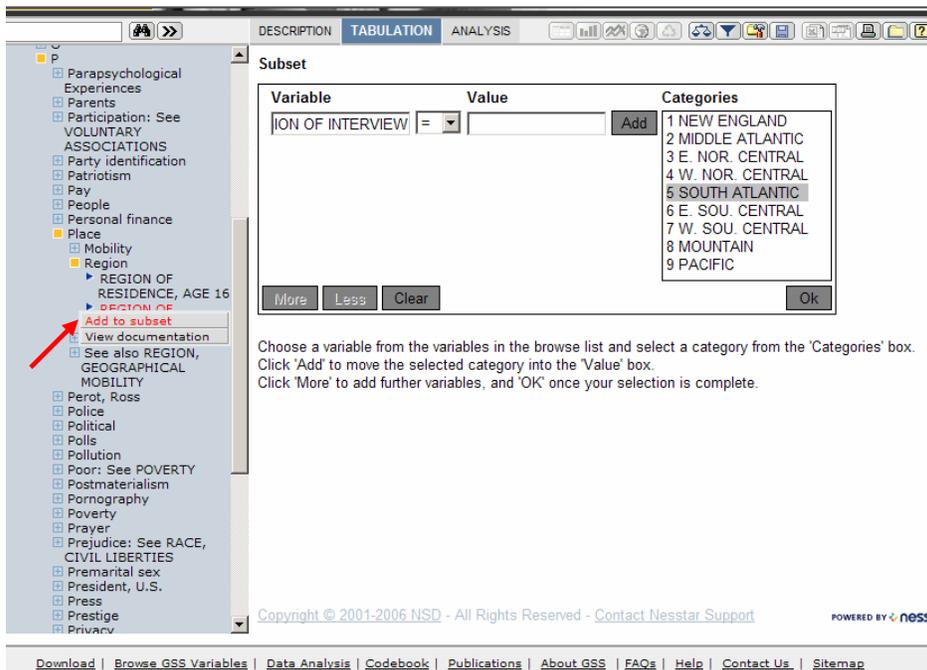
Say we only want to include respondents from New England, the Middle Atlantic, the South Atlantic, and the Mountain and Pacific regions. We will have to set up three filter statements in the subset screen.

First, to select for 1 New England and 2 Mid-Atlantic, we will set up the statement REGION OF INTERVIEW <= 2 MIDDLE ATLANTIC, where "<=" means "less than or equal to."

To do so, first select "<=" from the connector drop-down menu (red arrow in Figure 8.5). Then, highlight "2 MIDDLE ATLANTIC" in the "Categories" box and click the "Add" button (blue arrow in Figure 8.5 below).

NOTE: The symbol "< >" is the Nesstar equivalent of "≠" .

Figure 8.5: Setting up a Filter Statement
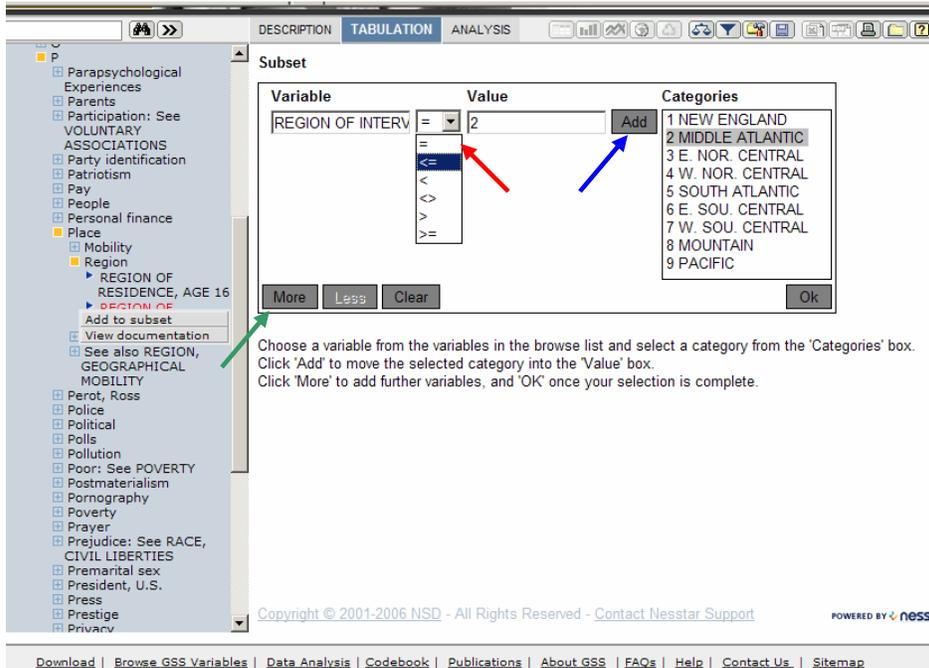
Once the "Add" button has been clicked, the "More" button in the bottom-left (green arrow in Figure 8.5) will be enabled. Click the "More" button to add further statements.

Repeat the steps listed above to create the statement REGION OF INTERVIEW = 5 SOUTH ATLANTIC. Repeat once more to create the statement REGION OF INTERVIEW > 7 W. SOU. CENTRAL.

Notice that these three statements are joined by the connector "and." No interview could have taken place in New England and the South Atlantic and the Pacific Coast, so we need to change these "ands" to "ors." Click on these "ands" to open the connector drop-down menu (see red arrow in Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.6: Operating the Connector Drop-down Menu
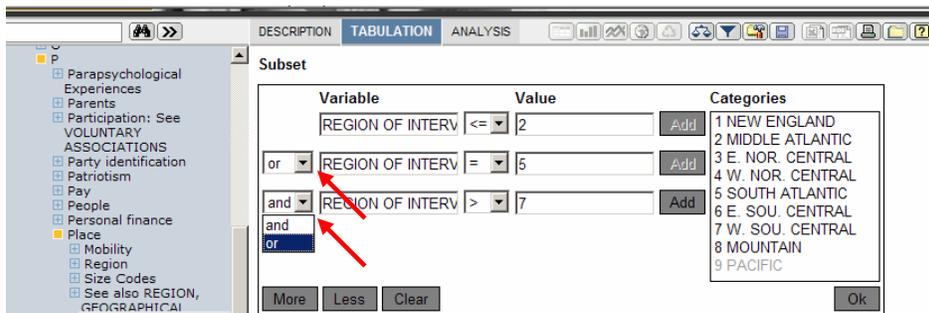
We still have room to add more filter statements, so we will restrict our Subset further to migrant Mid-Westerners. To do this, we have to add a new variable to the filter.

1) Click the "More" button again
2) Find the variable REG16 in the left-hand frame
3) Click the variable label (▶) and select "Add to subset" from the drop-down menu

In the same manner as described above, set up the statements

AND REGION OF RESIDENCE, AGE16 = 3 E. NOR CENTRAL
OR REGION OF RESIDENCE, AGE16 = 4 W. NOR CENTRAL

This brings us to five filter statements, which is the maximum allowed by Nesstar.

To activate the filter, click the "Ok" button in the bottom-right (red arrow in Figure 8.7).

Figure 8.7: A Full Set of Filter Statements
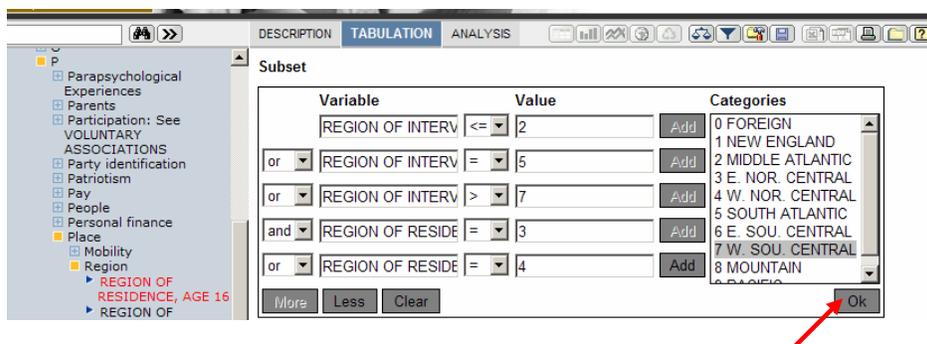
Once you have clicked "Ok," you will be taken to a Cross-Tabulation or Analysis page. Red text reading "Filter is On" will be displayed on these pages when the filter has been successfully activated (see red arrows in Figure 8.8).

Figure 8.8: "Filter is on"
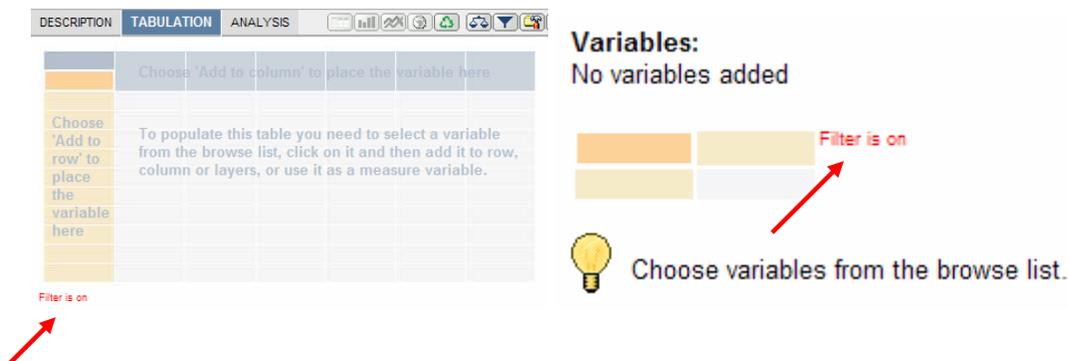
Recodes

To create a new variable by recoding a GSS variable, first click the Compute button 🖼, located in the top menu, to the right of the Weight and Subset buttons (see red arrow in Figure 8.1).

On the next screen, you will be prompted to "Please select a type of calculation." Access the drop-down menu and select "Recode." (See red arrow in Figure 8.9.)

Figure 8.9: Accessing the Recode Option
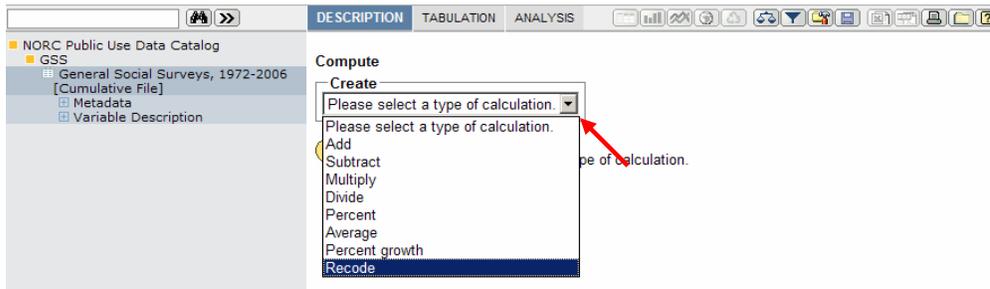
Next, select a variable to recode from the left-hand menu. Click the variable label to access a pop-up menu with the option "Recode variable" (red arrow in Figure 8.10).
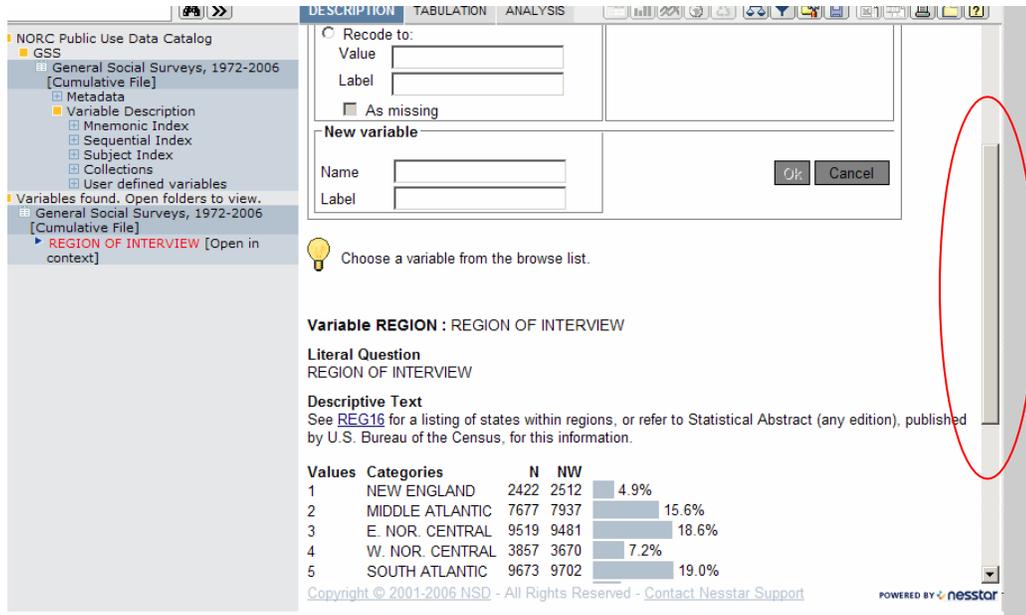
Figure 8.10: Selecting a Variable to Recode
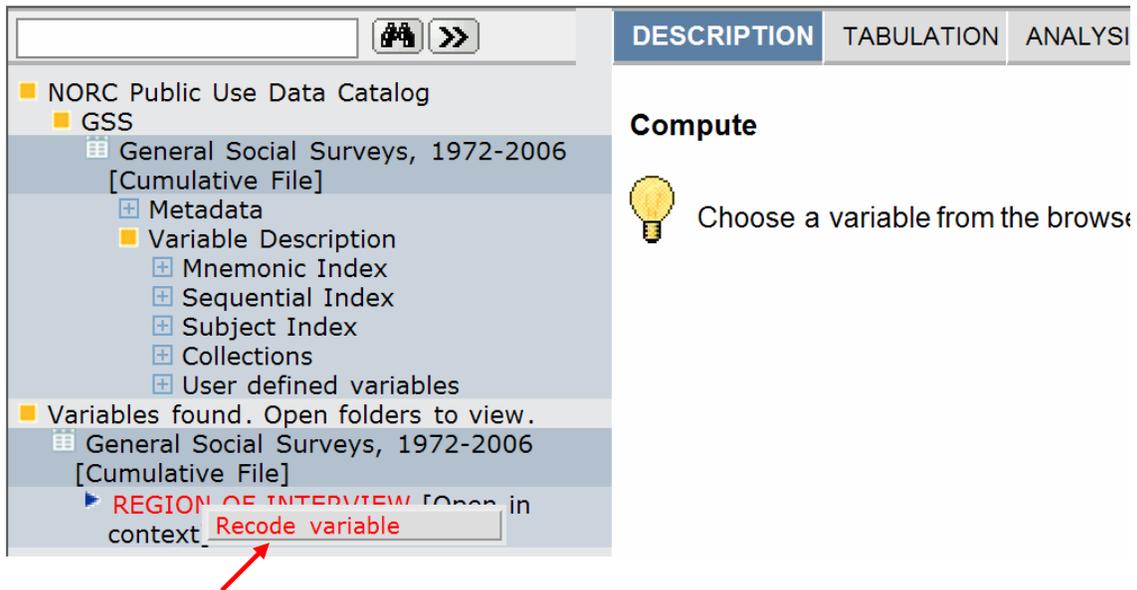
Here we will recode the variable REGION to create a dummy variable for the South Atlantic, "dSthAtl."

First, note that you can scroll down the Recode screen to reveal the variable description for Region. In Figure 8.11, we see that the category "South Atlantic" has the value "5."

Figure 8.11: Scrolling Down for Variable Description

Knowing that the value of "South Atlantic" is "5," we now want to scroll back up to recode "5" as "1." To do so, fill in the "Old Value" and "New Value" fields as shown in Figure 8.12 (red circle) and then click "Add" (red arrow in Figure 8.12).

When you have done this, the text "5 → 1 South Atlantic" will appear in the Added list. To remove an entry from the Added list, select the box next to the "added" text (blue arrow in Figure 8.12) and then click "Delete" (located to the right of the "Add" button).

To recode a value as **missing**, select the "Add as missing" box in the "New Variable" section (blue arrow in Figure 8.13).

To code the remaining values, enter text into the "All other values" field as shown in Figure 8.13 (red circle). Also, assign a mnemonic and variable label to the new variable (blue circle). Finally, press "Ok" (red arrow in Figure 8.13)

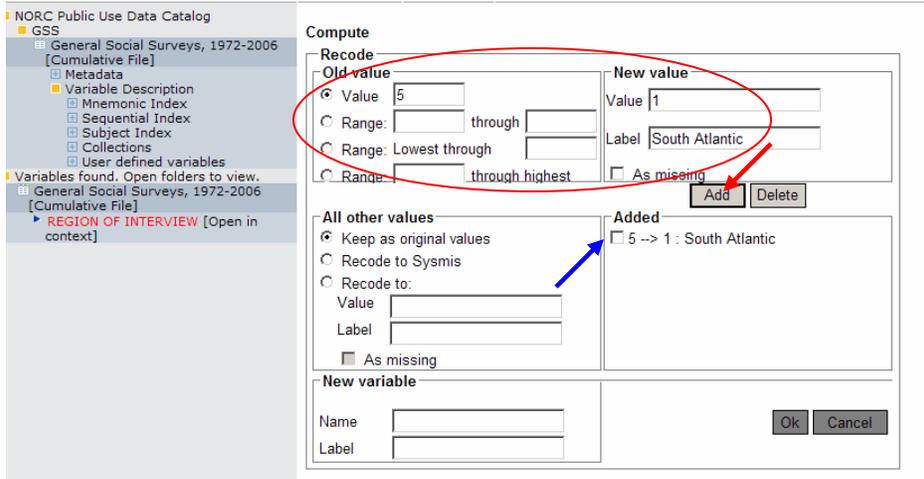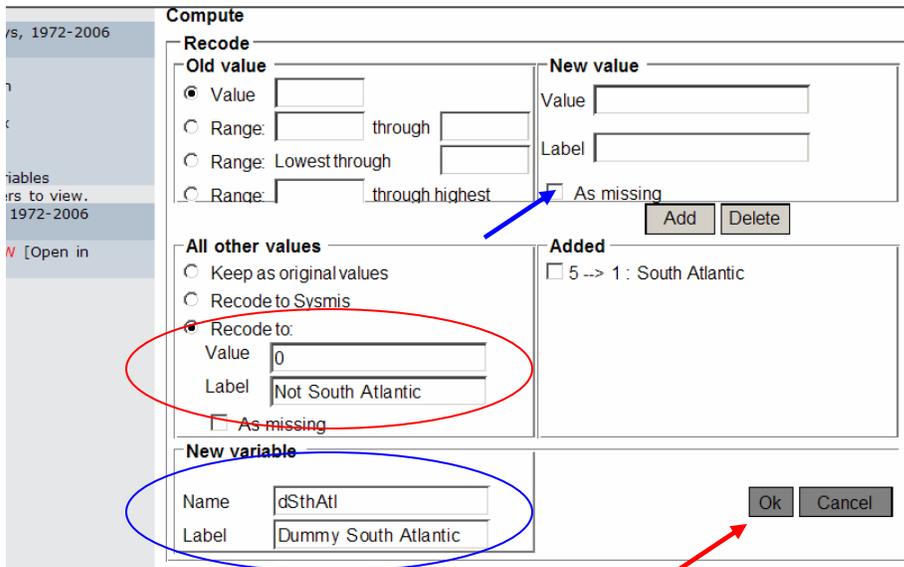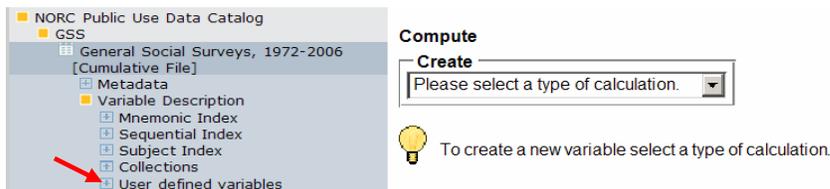**Figure 8.12: Coding the South Atlantic Dummy Variable**

Figure 8.13: Coding the South Atlantic Dummy Variable

To find your recoded variables, look under "⊞ Variable Description" > "⊞ User Defined Variables" in the left-hand menu (red arrow in Figure 8.14).

Figure 8.14: Finding Your Recoded Variable

Bookmarks

Nesstar will also allow you to create a browser bookmark. This will save your location within the Nesstar database directly to your browser's Favorites Menu. (In Internet Explorer 7.0, access your Favorites Menu by clicking the yellow star in the upper-left of your browser window.) To bookmark whatever page you are looking at, simply click the Create Bookmark button , located in Nesstar's top menu.

Section 9 – Downloading the GSS

Unfortunately, Nesstar does not offer the same range of statistical techniques as do standard software packages. However, Nesstar will generate custom datasets for use with a variety of statistical packages.

Also, note that the GSS website provides a number of quick downloads for SPSS users. You may download either the cumulative GSS or the GSS for individual years by clicking on the "Download" tab of the main website (see the blue arrow in Figure 9.4).

To download a GSS dataset from Nesstar:
1) Click "Download" (🖫) in the top Nesstar menu (red arrow in Figure 9.1).
2) Make a selection from the "Select Data Format" drop-down menu (blue arrow in Figure 9.1)
3) Click "Download" (blue arrow in Figure 9.1) and choose a destination on your hard drive for the dataset

Figure 9.1: The Download Page
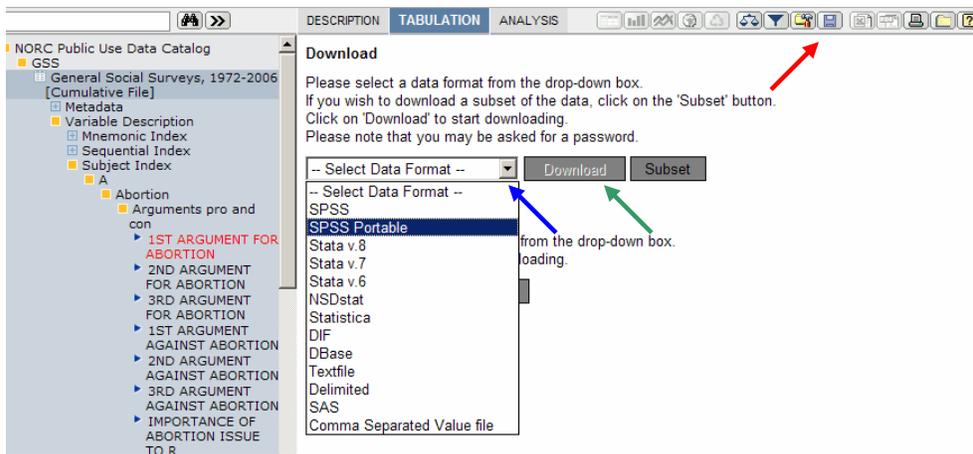
You may also choose to download a subset of GSS data. You can specify the subset either by setting up a filter as described in Section 8, or by creating a list of the variables which you would like to download.

To create a case-by-case filter:

1) Click the "Subset" button (red arrow in Figure 9.2 below)
2) Follow the directions in Section 8 to set up a filter
3) Click "Download" (green arrow in Figure 9.1 above) and choose a destination on your hard drive for the dataset

When you perform the above steps correctly, red text reading "Filter is on" will appear at the bottom of the Download screen (see blue arrow in Figure 9.2 below).

Figure 9.2: Downloading a Case-by-case Subset
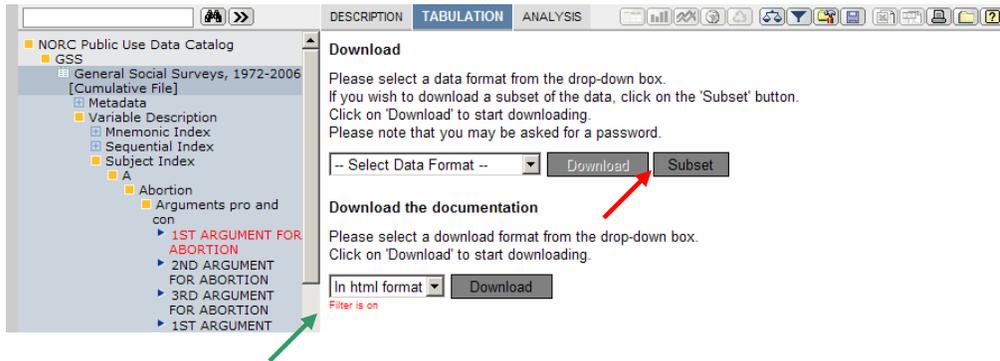

To Create a Variable-List Subset:

1) Click the "Subset" button (red arrow in Figure 9.2 above)
2) Click the "Variables" tab so that it is highlighted blue (red arrow in Figure 9.3 below)
3) Click on variable labels (▶) in the left-hand menu and select "Add to subset" from the pop-up menu (blue arrow in Figure 9.3)
4) Click "Ok" (green arrow in Figure 9.3) to be returned to the main download page (Figure 9.1)
5) Click "Download" (green arrow in Figure 9.1 above) and choose a destination on your hard drive for the dataset

When you perform the above steps correctly, red text reading "Filter is on" will appear at the bottom of the Download screen (see blue arrow in Figure 9.2 above).

Supported File Types

Nesstar allows the user to download datasets compatible with SPSS, SPSS Portable, Stata v.6-v.8, NSDStat, Statistica, Dif, DBase, and SAS. You may also download a textfile, a delimited textfile, and a Comma Separated Value file.

Figure 9.3: Downloading a Variable-List Subset
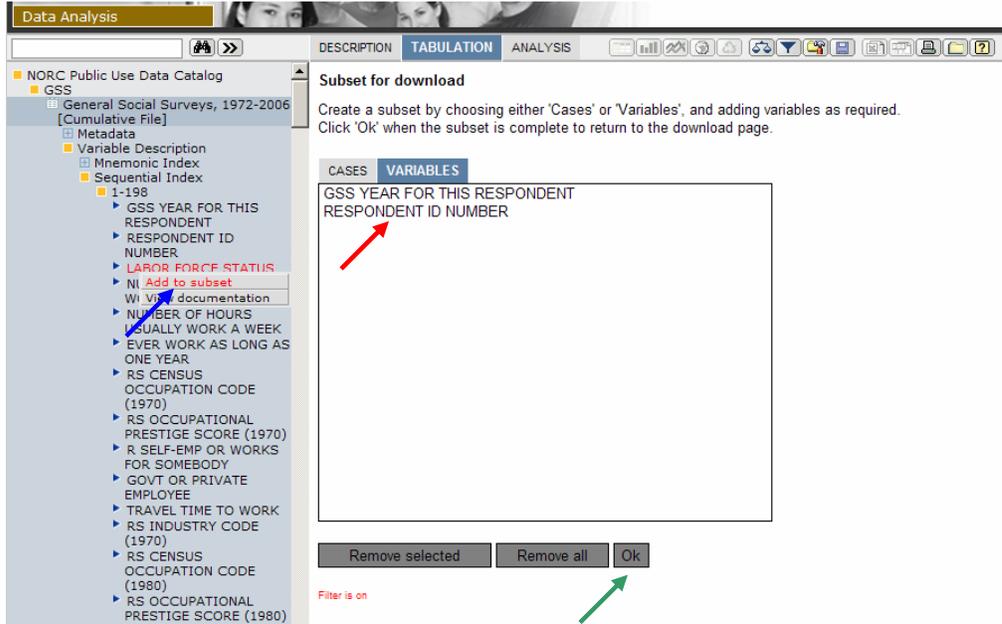
NOTE: Nesstar must perform a considerable number of background operations in order to prepare your download package. As a result, you may wait several minutes before your browser prompts you to select a save-to location for the file. If you can see your browser's blue progress bar inching forward, you merely need to keep waiting.

Downloading Documentation

This feature of Nesstar operates poorly with a dataset as large as the GSS: the HTML file loads slowly and is unwieldy. We recommend downloading the GSS Codebook and other documentation from the GSS website itself. This documentation is included under the "Publications" heading (red arrow in Figure 9.4).

Figure 9.4: Accessing GSS Publications