Journeys in Survey Research: Surveys by SSRC Survey Unit

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Future in Britain[1] survey 1970 ([UKDS SN 60](#))

Background

The **Future in Britain Survey** was commissioned in July 1970 by the **Next 30 Years Committee** of the then Social Science Research Council (SSRC, now ESRC). It was a national survey using face-to-face interviews with a (quota) sample (N=586) of people aged under 45, to ascertain their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, social changes in the past 15 years and their expectations and evaluations of likely social changes in the next 15 years. It also compared these with a small "élite" sample of about 60 senior businessmen, politicians, social scientists etc. One of the key findings[2] for future expectations in the general sample was "technological optimism" as against "social pessimism", but these views were not shared by the élite.

The survey reference at UKDS is [SN 60](#): it downloads in a zip file:

The SPSS saved file is in sub-folder

The [documentation](#) is contained in pdf file and includes:
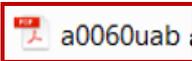
> **Codebook** (pp 1-15)
> **Facsimile questionnaire** (pp 26-34)
> **Coding instructions** (pp 35-44)
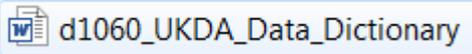
  (matches the contents of the Codebook.)

The codebook and questionnaire are difficult and confusing to use with each other and with the SPSS file. Modifications are suggested, with an account of the procedures followed to create new SPSS files which are easier to use with the documentation and also for teaching and secondary analysis. The following notes are the result of a great deal of detective work (and more than 40 years' experience of dealing with similar problems).

[1] The survey was designed by the SSRC Survey Unit and conducted by Research Services Ltd (RSL) in July 1970
[2] It was the first survey I worked on at the Survey Unit. In October 1970, Alan Marsh and I were presented with a huge pile of (Donovan Data Systems) printout from which we had to summarise the findings. The UKDS site mentions a report, but I have not been able to find a copy or a bibliographic reference.

Raw data

The raw data are not available. They were originally multi-punched on a single 80-column Hollerith card using all hole positions 0 – 9 plus the upper and lower zone punches (also known in the trade as the [11] and [12], **X** and **Y** or **–** and **+** punches).

80-column Hollerith card

From Computer Desktop Encyclopedia
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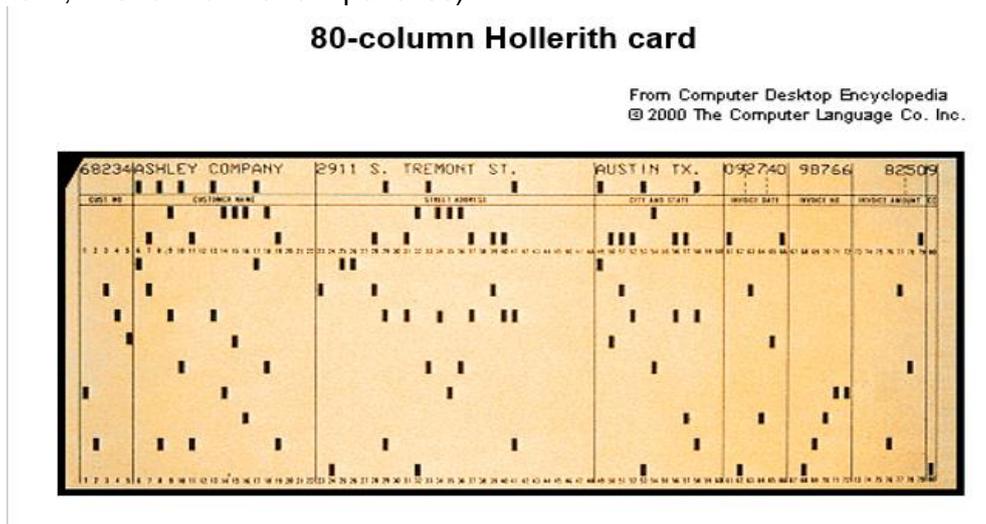
(See also Fig 2 on page 5 of 1.1.3 Introduction to the use of computers in survey analysis)

The SPSS saved file:

As downloaded, file [d1060] has 185 **variables**:

> **serno**, **cardnum** and **v1** to **v183**   and 586 **cases**:

[Top of file in Variable View]   [Bottom of file in Variable View]   [End of file in Data View]
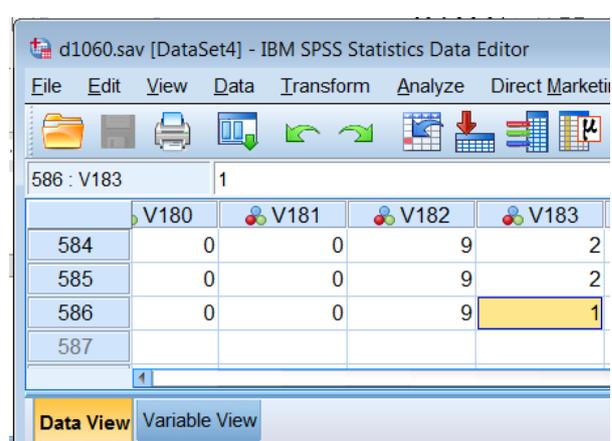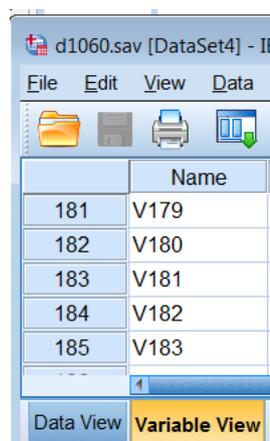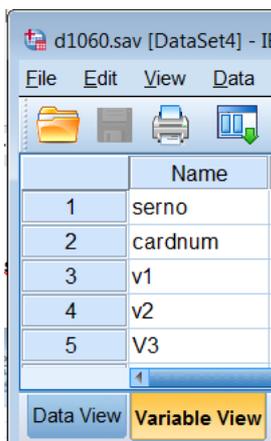
All variables are **numeric** integer.

Variable labels have been kept short, but do not contain question numbers and many bear no obvious relation to the question text or to responses.

There are no **value labels** or **missing values** specified.

Measurement levels are all set at **Nominal**, but many are **Ordinal**

2

Documentation

The facsimile questionnaire is straightforward to follow (but the hand-written data layout notes should be ignored). It bears no relation to the sequence of variables in the SPSS file, nor does it bear any obvious relation to the codebook, which, because it has no question numbers, is very confusing to navigate and difficult (if not impossible) to follow in relation to the questionnaire or to the SPSS file.

In a different, but more logical order:

1: Facsimile questionnaire (pp 26-34)

[Extract]

2: Codebook (pp 1-15)

Data layout (spread out on to three single-punched 80-column records from original multi-punched data on a single card) **variable numbers** from 1 to 183, full **question text** (but no question numbers) **response codes** and their **marginal distributions**.

[Extract]

3: Coding instructions (pp 35-44, handwritten)

[Extract]

Showcards:

There are no facsimiles of the show-cards used, but these can be inferred from the questionnaire.

Interviewer instructions:

There are no copies of any interviewer instructions, but some are embedded in the questionnaire.

Depositor

Although the SSRC Survey Unit is listed as depositor, it is not clear where, or by whom, the survey was prepared for deposit at UKDS.

Initial impressions

At times the questionnaire and codebook bear little or no relation to each other or to the SPSS file and there is no cross-indexing.

For instance **Q.8** has a list of items to be read out to respondents and asking them to use show-cards to indicate responses on 5-point scales of **Greater** ←→ **Less** (Card A) and (for selected items only) **Better** ←→ **Worse**.(Card B).

Questionnaire:

```
Q.8      I am going to read out some things that people have said might change
         over the next 15 years.

    a)   For each one, please look first at CARD A and tell me whether you think
         it will get greater or less over the next 15 years, and how much greater
         or less.

         ASK PART b) ONLY FOR ITEMS MARKED *

    b)   Then look at CARD B  and tell me whether this change will be, in your
         opinion, for the better or worse and how much better or worse.
```

```
* 8(1)  The amount of work the average man has 2\5  greater  5  4  3  2  1  less
        to do                                   2\6  better   5  4  3  2  1  worse
```

As each item was read out, there would be a follow-up prompt along the lines of:
"Is that a lot or a little?" but this distinction is **not labelled** in the codebook.

The questionnaire indicates record 2/05 and 2/06, but the codebook has them in 1/57 and 1/58 and has no question numbers.

Codebook:

1/57*	52	The amount of work the average man has to do	5 Greater 4 3 Don't know/no answer 2 1 Less	34 42 61 320 129

1/58*	53		5 Better 4 3 Don't know/no answer 2 1 Worse	95 214 97 120 60

The SPSS file has the variables as **v52** and **v53**, but the labels have **no question numbers**: the label for **v52** is not specific enough and for **v53** is meaningless.

	Name	Measure	Label	Values	Missing
54	V52	🔗 Nominal	Amount of work	None	None
55	V53	🔗 Nominal	Response better to worse	None	None

Drastic re-labelling is needed to make these and other variables ready for use in teaching and analysis by beginners.

For these two variables we can use **SPSS syntax:**

```
1  ⬚ variable labels
2       v52 'Q,8.1a: Amount of work average man has to do.'
3  ▶⬚  /v53 'Q,8.1b: Amount of work average man has to do.'.
4
```

. . to replace variable labels:

	Name	Measure	Label
54	V52	🔴 Nominal	Q,8.1a: Amount of work average man has to do.
55	V53	🔴 Nominal	Q,8.1b: Amount of work average man has to do.

. . and

```
5  ⬚ value labels
6       v52 5 'Much greater' 4 'Greater'  3 "Don't know/ No answer" 2 'Less' 1 'Much less'
7  ⬚  /v53 1 'Much worse' 2 'Worse' 3 "Don't know No answer" 4 'Better' 5 'Much better'.
```

. . to add the value labels:

v52

Value Labels

Value: [   ]   Spelling...

Label: [   ]

Add
Change
Remove

```
1 = "Much less"
2 = "A bit less"
3 = "Don't know/ No answer"
4 = "A bit greater"
5 = "Much greater"
```

OK   Cancel   Help

v53

Value Labels

Value: [   ]   Spelling...

Label: [   ]

Add
Change
Remove

```
1 = "Much worse"
2 = "Worse"
3 = "Don't know No answer"
4 = "Better"
5 = "Much better"
```

OK   Cancel   Help

The question about future changes is:

Q.4a)   Do you think about the future - what life
        will be like in Britain in 10, 15 or 20
        years' time?   Yes [1] D.K.
                                                         No [2] Y

. . and the data are in **V7**:

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing
9	V7	Numeric	1	0	Future life in B...	None	None

In the SPSS file the variable label is too **vague** and there are **no value labels**. A more informative variable label would be: Q.4a: Think about future life in Britain?

Key information tends to be at the end of the labels:

V3	Numeric	1	0	Important chan...	None
V4	Numeric	1	0	Important chan...	None
V5	Numeric	1	0	Important chan...	None
V6	Numeric	1	0	Important chan...	None

. . where it can't easily be seen without widening the **Label** column.

V3	Numeric	1	0	Important changes in last 15 years nuclear war
V4	Numeric	1	0	Important changes in last 15 years day of judgement
V5	Numeric	1	0	Important changes in last 15 years other
V6	Numeric	1	0	Important changes in last 15 years dont know

It is possible, but difficult, for an experienced researcher to work on the SPSS file with either the codebook or the questionnaire, but navigation would be much easier if the question numbers were included in the variable labels and repeated information abbreviated, eg:

	Name		Label
1	serno		Serial number
2	cardnum		Card number
3	v1		Q.1 Life change in Britain since 1955
4	v2		Q.2 Life change for the worse or better
5	V3		Q3b Specifics: nuclear war
6	V4		Q3b Specifics: day of judgement
7	V5		Q3b Specifics: other

It is not clear why v3 to v6 are included: there are very few cases with specific answers. It looks as if they are residual codes which need to be added to the multiple response list of changes for the better in the past 15 years Q.3a, 2/41 – 2/62, v116 to v137

Perceived changes in the past

1: Changes for the **better** in the past 15 years   [**Q.3a v138** to **v159**]

2/41-62	116-137	What are the most important changes in the past 15 years that you think have been changes for the <u>better</u>

2: Changes for the **worse** in the past 15 years   [**Q.3b V116** to **v137**]

2/63-80 3/1-4	138-159	What are the most important changes in the past 15 years that you think have been changes for the <u>worse</u>

Expected changes in the future

1: Changes for the **better** in the next 15 years

Questionnaire:

```
Q.7      Again, some things may get better and
         other things may get worse.

  a)     What do you feel are the things that
         will be better in 15 years' time than
         they are now?                          3/49-fo    O.U.O.  1/7-10
```

Codebook: [coded as binary 0,1 on record 3 columns 5 – 23: variables **v160** to **v181**]

What do you feel are the things that will be better in 15 years time than they are now

2: Changes for the **worse** in the next 15 years

Questionnaire:

```
b)   What do you feel are the things that                O.U.O.
     will be worse in 15 years' time than                       1/15-36
     they are now?
```

Codebook: [coded as binary 0,1 on record 1 columns 15 – 36: variables **v11** to **v32**]

1/15-36	11-32	What do you feel are the things that will be worse in 15 years time than they are now

The original multi-punched data have subsequently been spread out on to three single-punched records (but retaining the original coding scheme) before being fed into SPSS. For example, the data for **Q.4a** (**1** = Yes, **2** = No, **Y** = DK) and **Q.4b** (**3** = Interests, **4** = Not worthwhile, **X** = D.K.) were originally multi-punched in the same card-column, but in this data set they have been spread out on to two separate single-punched columns, **Q.4a** on card **1** column **11**, **Q.4b** on card **1** column **12** (hand-written notes on extract below).

[Extract] ↓↓

[**NB:** In the SPSS file, the alphabetic codes **Y** and **X** have both been recoded to numeric **9**.]

Standard SPSS practice in SSRC/SU was to use **positional**[3] variable names indicating the record and (starting) column where the data were located. Since the data for **Q4a** are on record **1** column **11** the variable would have been called **v111**: likewise the data for **Q4b** would be stored in **v112**. However, in this SPSS file, after **serno** (serial number of case) and **cardnum** (number of record within case) the variable names used are **v1** to **v183** (in a **sequential** convention). The data for **Q4a** are in variable **v7**.

Data location	Name	Question text	Value	Label	N of cases
1/11	7	Do you think about the future – what life will be like in Britain in 10, 15 or 20 years time	1 2 9	Yes No Don't know	388 193 5

The variable labels do not always accurately reflect the question content. For example **Q.3a** is an open-ended question about changes for the better in the **past** 15 years:

The questionnaire indicates that these responses are coded on record **3** cols **5 – 26** for changes in the **past**, but the codebook lists the variables in these columns as changes for the better in **future** (**v160** to **v181**)

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[3] See: <u>1.3.1 Conventions for Naming Variables in SPSS</u>

The itemised responses were originally multi-punched in record **1** columns **7-10**, but have been spread out on record **3** columns **5 -26** (with residual codes in card **1** columns **7-10**?) and recoded as binary (**0** = Not mentioned, **1** = Mentioned). They have been entered as **v160** to **v181** and should be treated as a **multiple response set**.

Similarly **Q.3b** asks about change for the worse in the **past**:

> b) What are the most important changes in the past 15 years that you think have been changes for the <u>worse</u>?
>
> 3 | 27 — 48
>
> O.U.O.

These have been spread out, **not** on record **3** cols **27 to 48** (as indicated on the questionnaire) but on record **1** columns **15 – 36** and entered as **v11** to **v32**, but again the codebook refers **not** to the **past**, but to the **future**.

1/15–36	11–32	What do you feel are the things that will be worse in 15 years time than they are now

Record **3** col **27** has actually been allocated to **v182** 'Q.17b: Political party support'

| 3/27	182	What political party are you inclined to support			
			1	Labour	55
			2	Conservative	33
			3	Liberal	8
			4	S.N.P.	1
			5	Plaid Cymru	1
			6	Communist	2
			0	Don't know/no answer	63
			9	Too young/did not vote	423

When working from the questionnaire, this is **very confusing**.

For teaching and secondary analysis purposes, this confusion needs to be tackled with very clear user-guidelines, preferably using the **questionnaire** rather than the **codebook**. As it stands, the documentation is virtually unusable with the existing SPSS file, especially for novices. What is needed is a completely new file with the variables arranged in **questionnaire order**, and with:

1: **Variable labels** completely re-written, to include question numbers and with much clearer relation to the actual question text.
2: **Value labels** added, keeping as close to response text as possible.
3: **Missing values** declared.
4: **Measurement levels** specified

Procedure followed

With the existing file **d1060.sav** open I used   Data >> Copy dataset to create a copy Untitled2
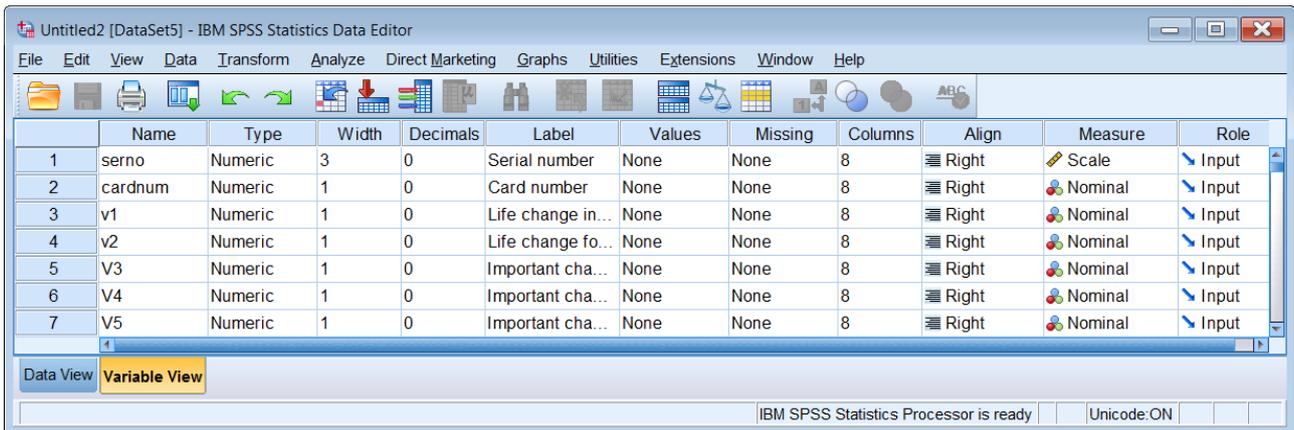

. . which becomes the new working file.

Navigation and analysis are made much easier if the variable attributes are re-ordered from the SPSS default:

Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role

View >> Customize Variable View:
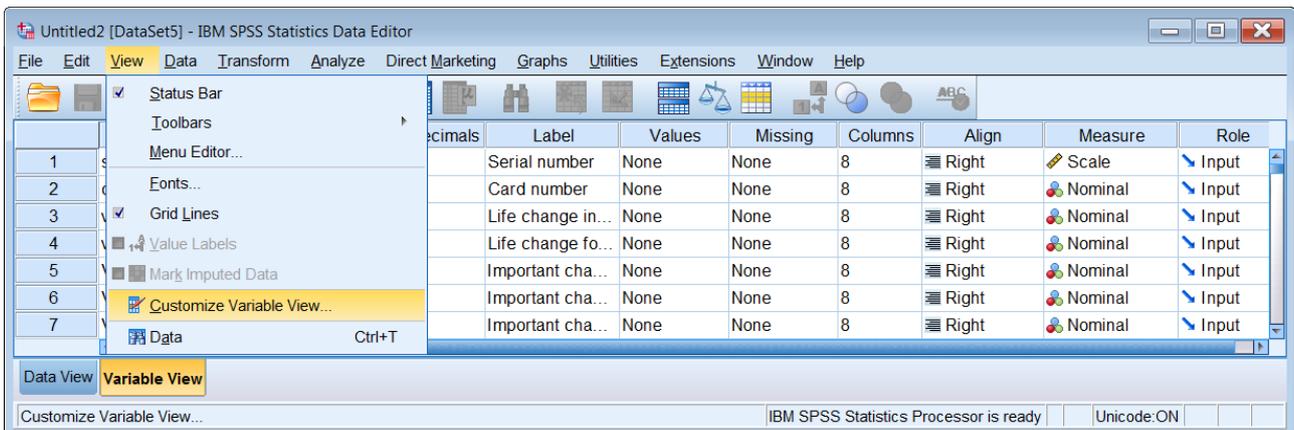
. . and re-order the attributes using the blue arrows:
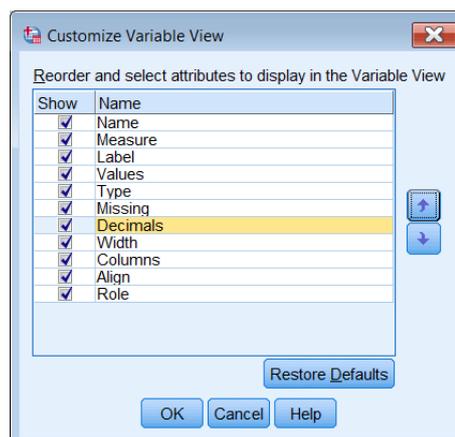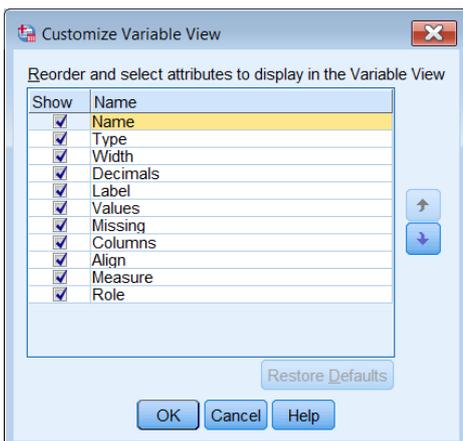
. . to bring more important attributes to the left:

It is now easier to see the more important information:
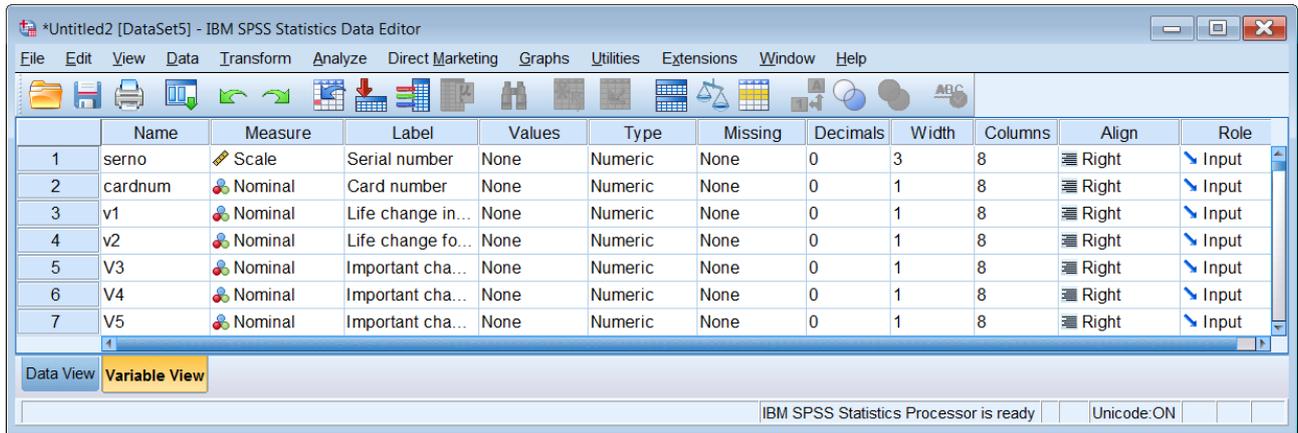
The file can then be saved with a new name (eg **future1970.sav**) leaving the original unchanged.

File >> Save as
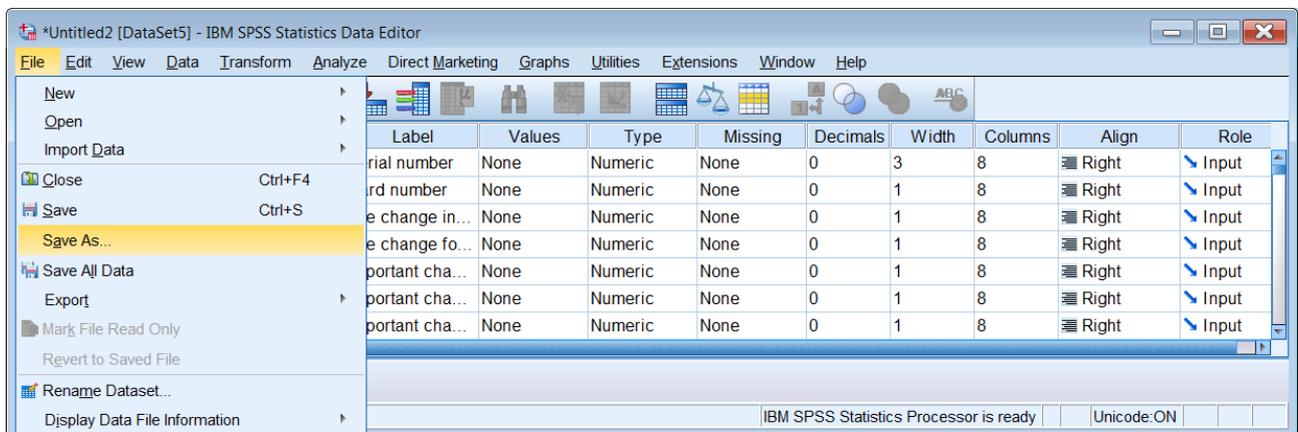
Change Untitled2.sav   to   **future1970**

. . and click on [Save] to save the new file: future1970.sav
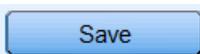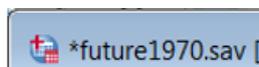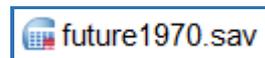
*future1970.sav [now becomes the working file:
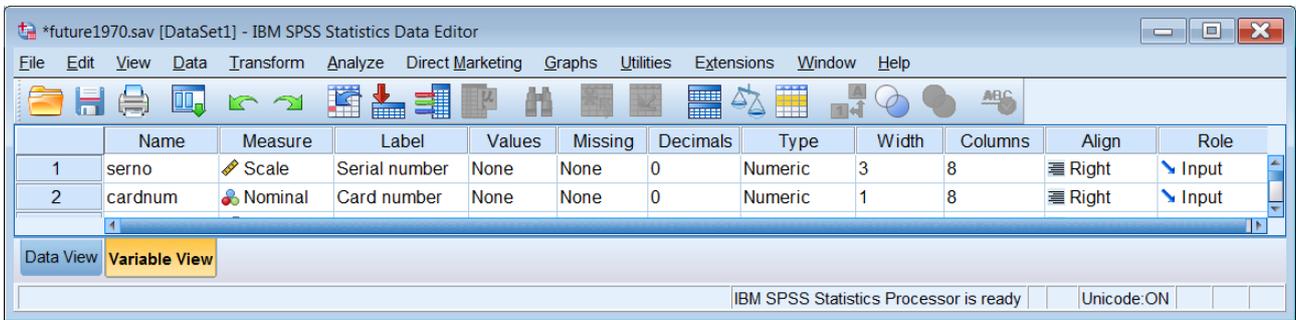
Widen the **Label** column by dragging the column separator to see the full text:
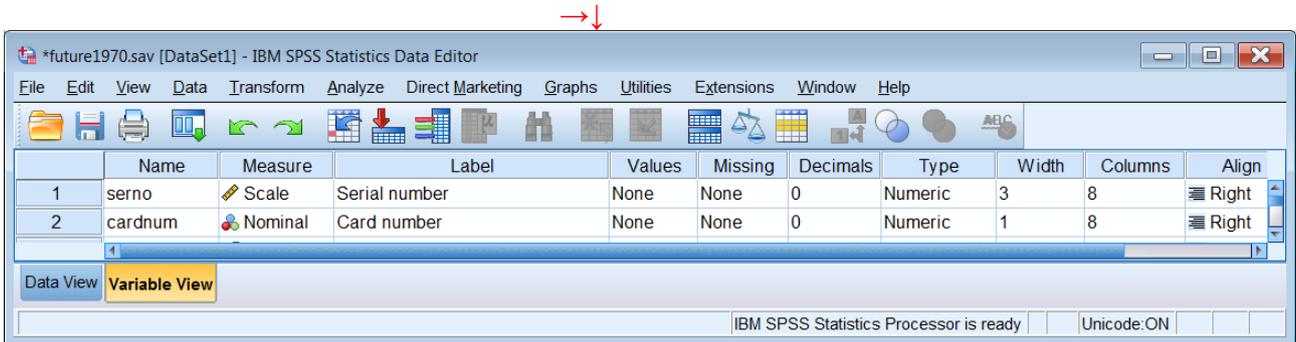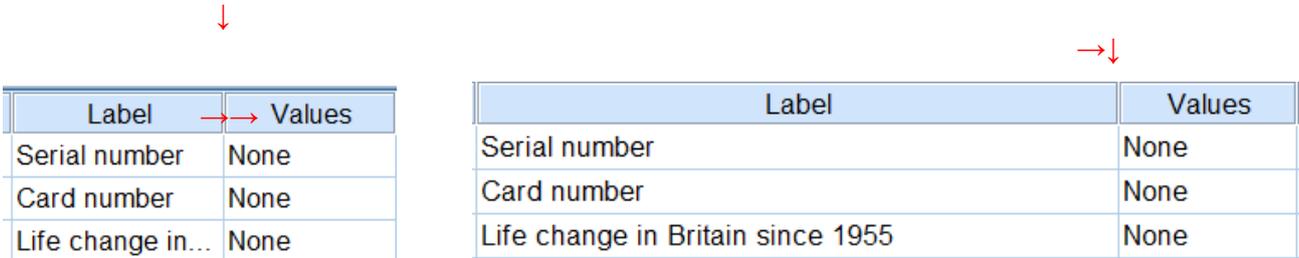
. . and drag in the right hand edge of the window to hide the attributes we don't need:
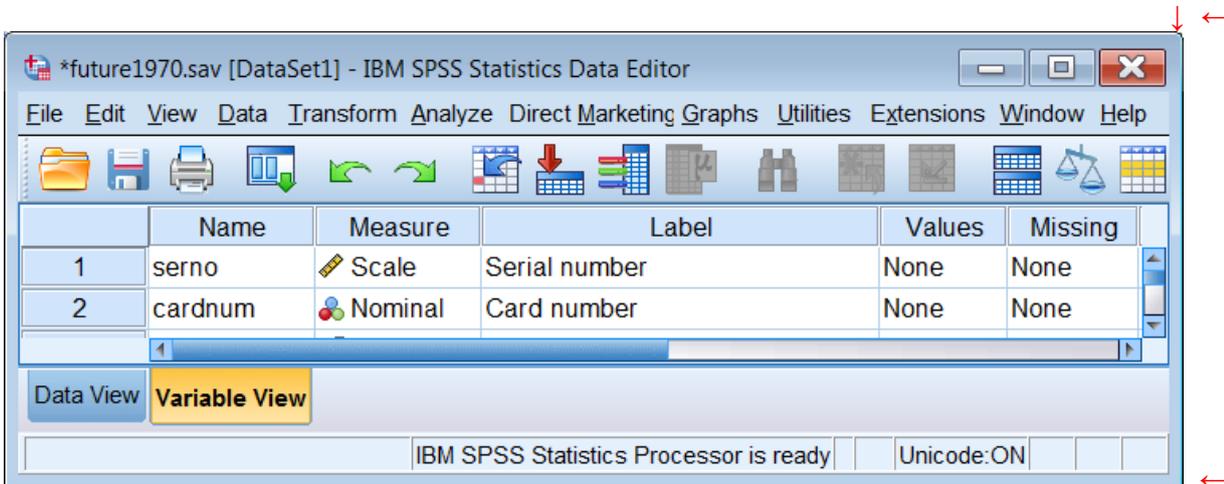
The file is now ready, but first it needs **substantial editing**.

Remedial work

We can now proceed to edit variable labels, add value labels, specify missing values and measurement levels. This could be done manually in the Data Editor, but there will be no audit trail: it is better practice to use syntax.

1: **Variable labels** need question numbers added and also re-writing for a much clearer relation to the actual question text.
2: **Value labels** are completely absent and need to be added.
3: **Missing values** are completely absent and need to be declared.
4: **Measurement levels** are all declared as **Nominal**, but many are **Ordinal**

For this reason I have created two new, separate versions of the SPSS file. My preference is always to work from the facsimile questionnaire (if available). For ease of use with the existing documentation, two versions of the SPSS file are needed.

1: An **intermediate** version, following the codebook, in which the variables will remain in **codebook order** (as per the version downloaded from UKDS)

2: A more **user-friendly** version, following the questionnaire, retaining the existing variable names, but with the variables re-arranged in **questionnaire order**

These SPSS files will be much easier to use with the SPSS settings changed to display:

Labels rather than **Names** using: [Edit >> Options >> General   :   Output]
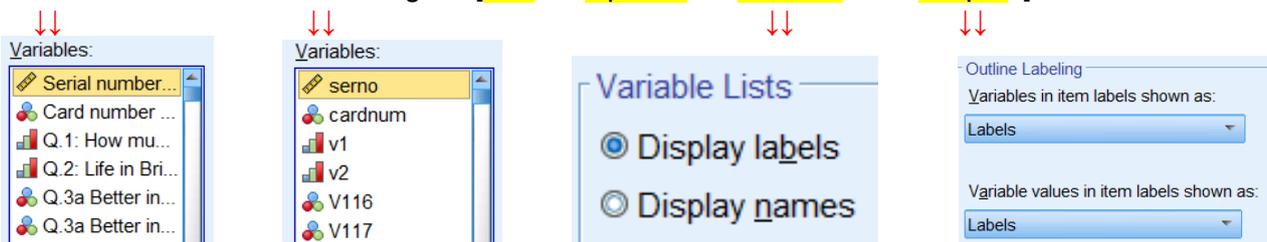
Some researchers may prefer to use question/item numbers as variable names, but this can yield redundant information in output since question numbers are repeated in the variable labels.

What I actually did was create a completely new file **future1970.sav** with variables names **serno**, **cardnum** and **v1** to **v183** retained in **codebook order** and a second file **future1970quaire.sav** with variables in **questionnaire order**,

1: **Variable labels** have been completely re-written with much clearer relation to the actual question text.
2: **Value labels** added, keeping as close to the text of response categories as possible.
3: **Missing values** declared.
4: **Measurement levels** specified.

With the existing file **d1060.sav** open I used   Data >> Copy dataset to create a copy as the new working file. The SPSS setup file **future1970.sps** has a complete set of syntax for new variable and value labels, missing values and variable levels.   After executing the syntax, the file was saved as **future1970.sav** with the variables in **codebook order**.

File **future1970quaire.sps** takes this file, re-orders the variables into **questionnaire order**, retaining the original variable names, regardless of where they appear in the raw data or the codebook and saves them in file **future1970quaire.sav** which is much easier to use with the questionnaire to hand.