Case-based Social Statistics I
CSSS 321
Professor: Mark S. Handcock

Homework 1
Due Wednesday, January 12, 2005

Problems to be handed in:

1) Submit electronically exercises 1 to 5, and 36 to 38 from Unit A3 of CyberStats.

2) Submit electronically exercises 2, 3, 4, and 5 from Unit A2 of CyberStats.

3) Submit electronically exercises 13 to 16 from Unit A4 of CyberStats.

4) According to Cynthia Crossen (Tainted truth: The manipulation of fact in America. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 106): “It is a poller’s business to press for an opinion whether people have one or not. ‘Don’t knows’ are worthless to pollers, whose product is opinion, not ignorance. That’s why so many polls do not even offer a ‘don’t know’ alternative.”

   a) Explain how this feature might lead to bias in a survey?

   b) By considering each of the components of a study (Lecture 1-5), describe how opinion polls with this feature can be poor studies.

   c) Suggest some ways to change opinion polls to remove this difficulty without reducing their effectiveness to pollsters.

5) A recent advertisement for a piece of personal fitness equipment, “Captain Crunch,” claimed, “In just two months, research shows that people who used Captain Crunch lost three inches on their waistline.”

   Explain how each of the components of a survey should have been chosen if the research results are fair and unbiased.

   a) Component 1:

   b) Component 2:

   c) Component 3:

   d) Component 4:

   e) Component 5: