Reflection

Before I took this course, I had a horrible relationship with statistics. I had taken an AP Stats class my senior year of high school and did very poorly. My teacher seemed to make the already confusing topics more confusing, and no matter how many times I stayed after class to get extra help, it didn’t seem to make a difference. Clearly, this experience was extremely frustrating. It left me with a bad taste in my mouth when it came to SOCL346. However, even though I clearly went into the class with a bad attitude, I can confidently say that I have learned a lot about statistics in this class and I will likely walk away with an A (high school me would be shocked)!

More specifically, in this class I learned how to enter data into SPSS and R-studio, I learned about measures of central tendency, measure of variability, z-scores and probability, confidence intervals, t-tests, analysis of variance, chi-squared tests, Pearson’s correlation coefficients, and regressions. Throughout the semester, we went through concept to concept of statistics and how to do each example by hand, in SPSS, and in R-studio. This was extremely helpful because if you didn’t understand how to do an example in SPSS, you could still do it by hand or in R-studio. Additionally, we had to remember and apply essentially everything we learned from last semester.

While many students are quick to say that what they learn in a course doesn’t matter in the “real world”, I can safely say that almost everything we learned in statistics matters outside of the classroom. Many students think they will rarely/never use what they learn in class, but we have already applied what we learned last semester to the study conducted at Head Start in 3 counties across Farmville. How many students can say that they used their statistics knowledge to help conduct an actual study in their college town?

Additionally, what we learned this semester can tremendously help us in interpreting our Head Start study findings and any future findings of studies we may choose to partake in. Data collection is only one part, the second (and some may argue the more important) part is knowing how to interpret and apply those results to the real world. In this class, we learned how to do that through by-hand calculations, SPSS data entry, and R-studio data entry. It is pivotal that we learned multiple ways to interpret findings, as we never know which method a future boss may ask us to conduct.

As I touched on earlier, collecting and interpreting findings are an extremely important part of sociology. If my future boss/employer wants me to use R-studio, I will be able to navigate that. Similarly, it is an incredible resume booster, as Dr. Pederson has mentioned to us before. I don’t entirely know how I plan to use my sociology degree in the future, but I’m sure what I learned in SOCL345 and SOCL346 will help me no matter what path I choose to take. It could be the difference between getting my dream job or getting stuck in a job I’m not passionate about. Needless to say, I am relieved that my apprehension towards statistics didn’t hinder me from learning everything there was to offer in this course. I am also lucky to have had a great professor like Dr. Pederson, who made statistics easier than I ever thought it could be.