Visualizing Multilevel Models

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Introduction

An evolving set of notes on visualizing results from multilevel models.

> When this document is presented in *slide show format*, some slides may be long, and you may need to *scroll down* to see the full slide. In slide show format use the left and right arrow keys to navigate through the slides. `b` will make the text bigger. `s` will make the text smaller.

The examples below use the `simulated_multilevel_data.dta` file from *Multilevel Thinking*. Here is a direct link to download the data.

Organizing Questions

Try to think about some of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to visualizing multilevel models. In multilevel models, we don't want to just *control for* variation, but to start to *explore* the variation. Put concretely:

- Some approaches use *dots*. Some approaches use *lines*. Some approaches use *dots and lines*.
- Some approaches use the *raw unadjusted* data. Other approaches use *adjusted or model predicted* data.
- Some approaches attempt to show the *Level 2 specific regression lines*; some approaches only show an *average regression line*.
- What approaches might work well with *large numbers* of Level 2 units? What approaches might work well with *smaller numbers* of Level 2 units?

What approach(es) do you prefer?

Setup

I am not terrifically fond of Stata's default `s2color` graph scheme. Therefore I make use of the `michigan` graph scheme available at: https://agrogan1.github.io/Stata/michigan-graph-scheme/

```
. set scheme michigan
```

Stata's `s1color` scheme would also would be an option as would be Asjad Naqvi's incredible `schemepack`: https://github.com/asjadnaqvi/stata-schemepack

Get Data

```
. use "https://github.com/agrogan1/multilevel-thinking/raw/main/simulate-and-analyze-multi
> level-data/simulated_multilevel_data.dta", clear
```

Scatterplots (`twoway scatter y x`)

```
. twoway scatter outcome warmth

. graph export myscatter.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/myscatter.png saved as PNG
    format
```

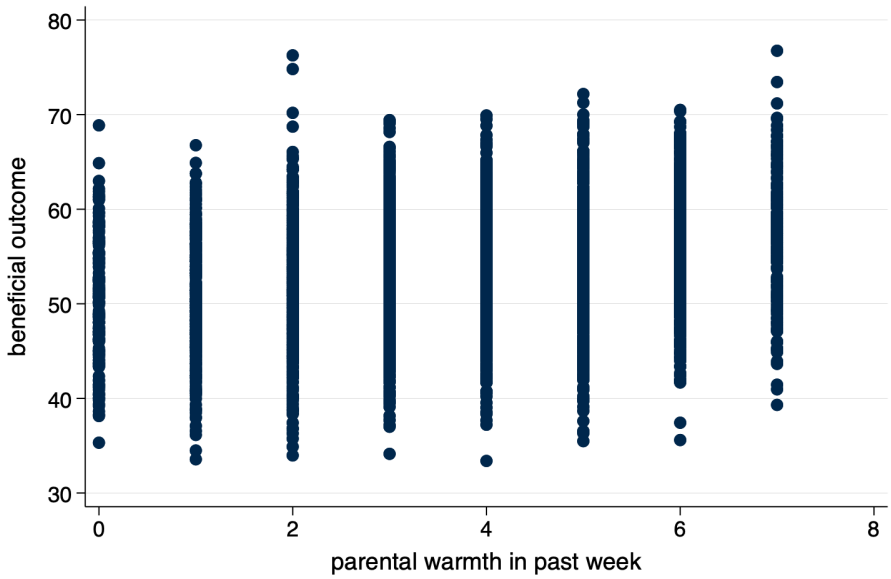


Figure 1: Scatterplot

Simple Linear Fit (`twoway lfit y x`)

```
. twoway lfit outcome warmth

. graph export mylinear.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mylinear.png saved as PNG
    format
```

Linear Fit With Confidence Interval (`twoway lfitci y x`)

```
. twoway lfitci outcome warmth

. graph export mylfitci.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mylfitci.png saved as PNG
    format
```

Combine Scatterplot and Linear Fit (`twoway (scatter y x) (lfit y x)`)

```
. twoway (scatter outcome warmth) (lfit outcome warmth)

. graph export myscatterlinear.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/myscatterlinear.png saved
    as PNG format
```

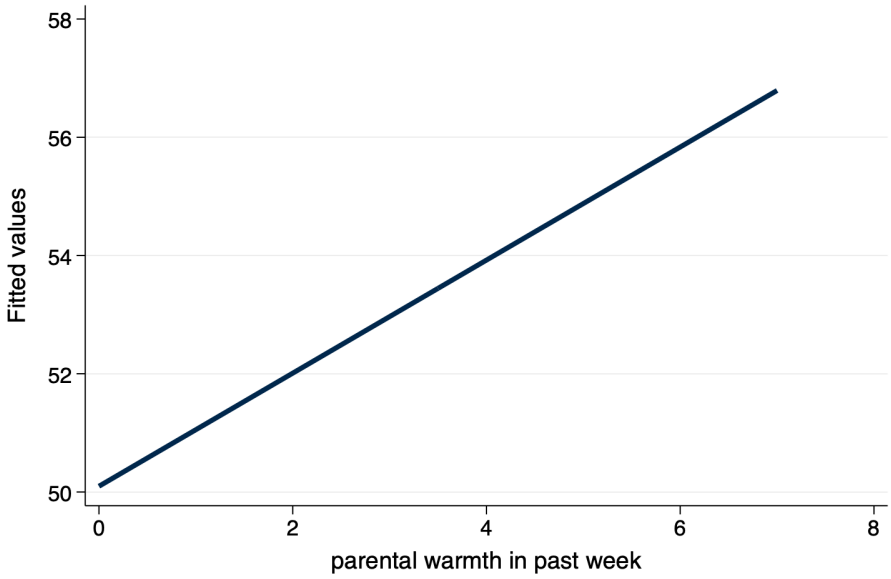


Figure 2: Linear Fit

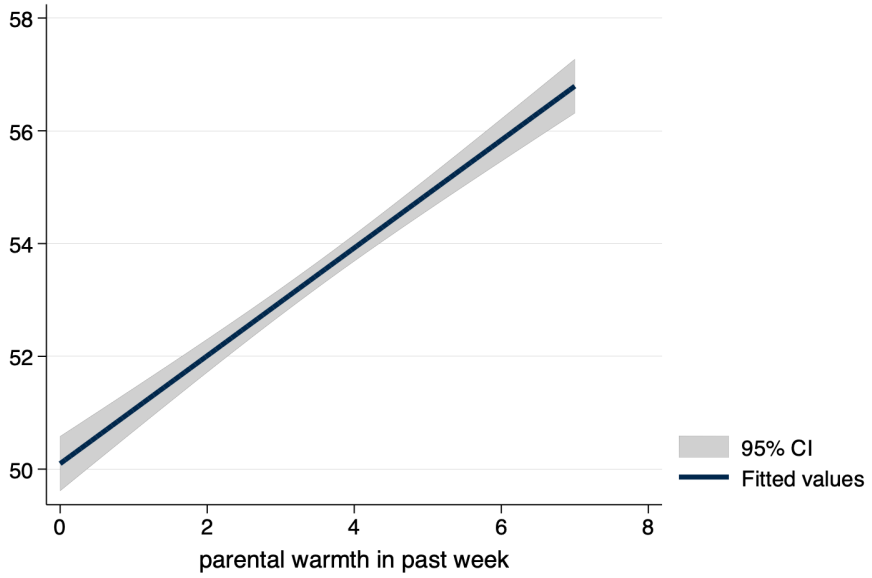


Figure 3: Linear Fit With Confidence Interval

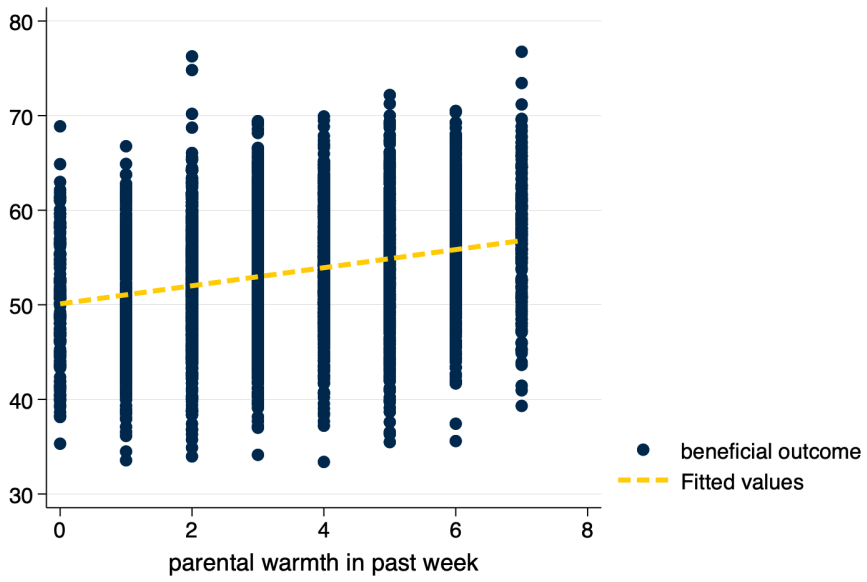


Figure 4: Scatterplot and Linear Fit

Spaghetti Plots (`spagplot y x, id(group)`)

```
. spagplot outcome warmth, id(country)

. graph export myspaghetti.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/myspaghetti.png saved as
    PNG format
```

Small Multiples (`twoway y x, by(group)`)

Small Multiples, showing a separate graph for each group in the data, are an increasingly popular data visualization technique. Below, I build a small multiples graph using the `by` option in Stata.

I use the `aspect` option to adjust the *aspect ratio* of the graph for better visual presentation. I also use the `mcolor(%30)` option to create some transparency in the dots of the scatterplot, which helps the presentation of these small multiples. The `mcolor(%30)` option could be useful in the other graphs in this tutorial as well.

```
. twoway (scatter outcome warmth, mcolor(%30)) (lfit outcome warmth), by(country) aspect(1
> )

. graph export mysmallmultiples.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mysmallmultiples.png saved
    as PNG format
```

Taking A Random Sample

At times, we may have *too many* Level 2 units to effectively display them on a *spaghetti plot*, or using *small multiples*. If this is the case, we may need to *randomly sample* Level 2 units. This can be difficult to accomplish as our standard `sample` command operates on each row, or on Level 1 units.

We can accomplish random sampling at Level 2, with a little bit of code.

```
. set seed 3846 // random seed for reproducibility
```

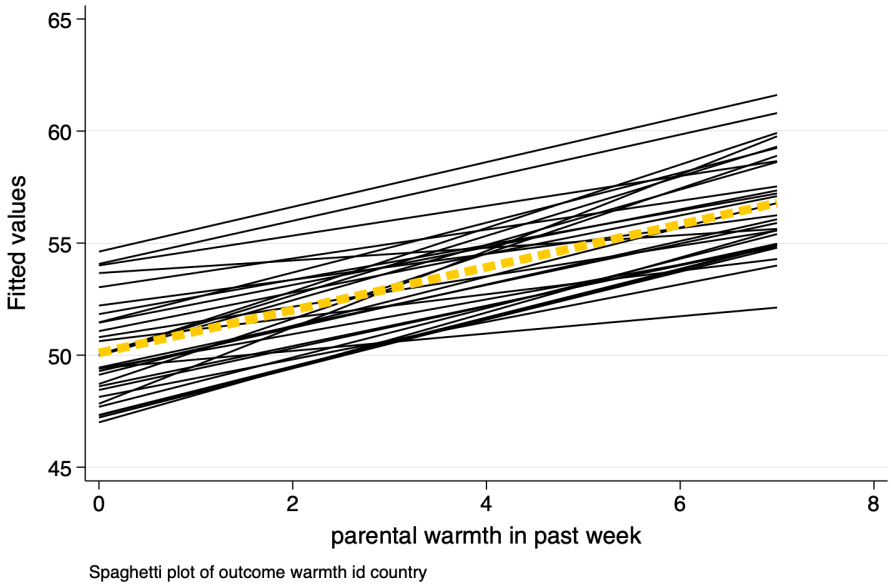


Figure 5: Spaghetti Plot

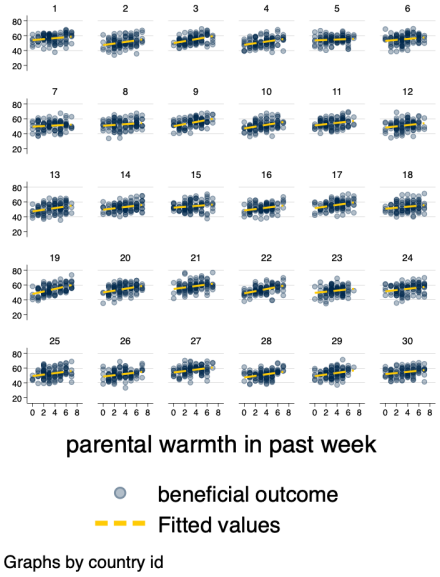


Figure 6: Small Multiples

```
. gen randomid = runiform() // generate a random id variable

. * by country (i.e. by Level 2 unit) replace the randomid
. * with the first randomid for that country (Level 2 unit)
. * so that every person in that country has the same random id

. bysort country: replace randomid = randomid[1]
(2,970 real changes made)

. summarize randomid // descriptive statistics for random id
    Variable |        Obs        Mean    Std. dev.       Min        Max
-------------+---------------------------------------------------------
    randomid |      3,000    .6174022    .2374704   .0733026   .9657055

. twoway (scatter outcome warmth, mcolor(%30)) /// scatterplot
> (lfit outcome warmth) /// linear fit
> if randomid < .5, /// only use a subset of randomid´s
> by(country) aspect(1) // by country

. graph export mysmallmultiples2.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mysmallmultiples2.png
    saved as PNG format
```

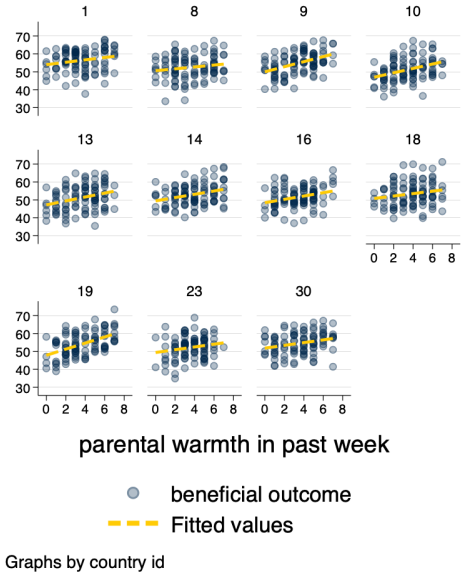


Figure 7: Small Multiples With A Random Sample Of Countries

Multivariate (Predicted) Relationships

A sometimes unacknowledged point is that graphs–unless we take steps to correct this–reflect *unadjusted*, or *bivariate* associations. We may sometimes wish to develop a graphs that reflect the *adjusted* or *predicted* estimates from our models.

In multilevel models, *prediction* is a complex question. The procedures below outline graphs that incorporate predictions using the variables, but do not include predictions that incorporate the random effects. (This will be added!)

Using Predicted Values (`predict`)

Estimate The Model

```
. mixed outcome warmth physical_punishment i.group || country: // estimate MLM
Performing EM optimization ...
Performing gradient-based optimization:
Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -9668.0859
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -9668.0859
Computing standard errors ...
Mixed-effects ML regression                     Number of obs     =      3,000
Group variable: country                         Number of groups  =         30
                                                Obs per group:
                                                              min =        100
                                                              avg =      100.0
                                                              max =        100
                                                Wald chi2(3)      =     401.00
Log likelihood = -9668.0859                     Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
```

outcome	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P>|z|	[95% conf.	interval]
warmth	.961837	.0581809	16.53	0.000	.8478046	1.075869
physical_punishment	-.8457672	.0798128	-10.60	0.000	-1.002197	-.6893369
2.group	1.084409	.2200548	4.93	0.000	.6531099	1.515709
_cons	51.64797	.4645466	111.18	0.000	50.73748	52.55847

Random-effects parameters	Estimate	Std. err.	[95% conf.	interval]
country: Identity				
var(_cons)	3.403	.9717558	1.944438	5.955659
var(Residual)	36.01911	.9346952	34.23295	37.89847

```
LR test vs. linear model: chibar2(01) = 200.29        Prob >= chibar2 = 0.0000
```

Generate Predicted Values

```
. predict outcome_hat // predict yhat
(option xb assumed)
```

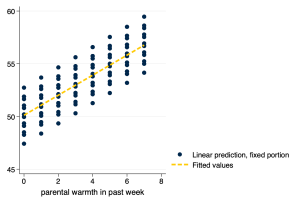
Graph With `twoway` Syntax

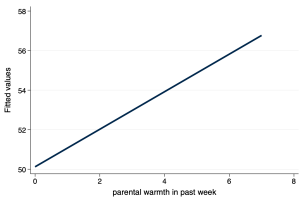
```
. twoway (scatter outcome_hat warmth) (lfit outcome_hat warmth)

. graph export mypredictedvalues.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mypredictedvalues.png
    saved as PNG format

. twoway (lfit outcome_hat warmth)

. graph export mypredictedvalues2.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mypredictedvalues2.png
    saved as PNG format
```





Spaghetti Plot With Predicted Values

```
. spagplot outcome_hat warmth, id(country)

. graph export myspaghetti2.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/myspaghetti2.png saved as
    PNG format
```

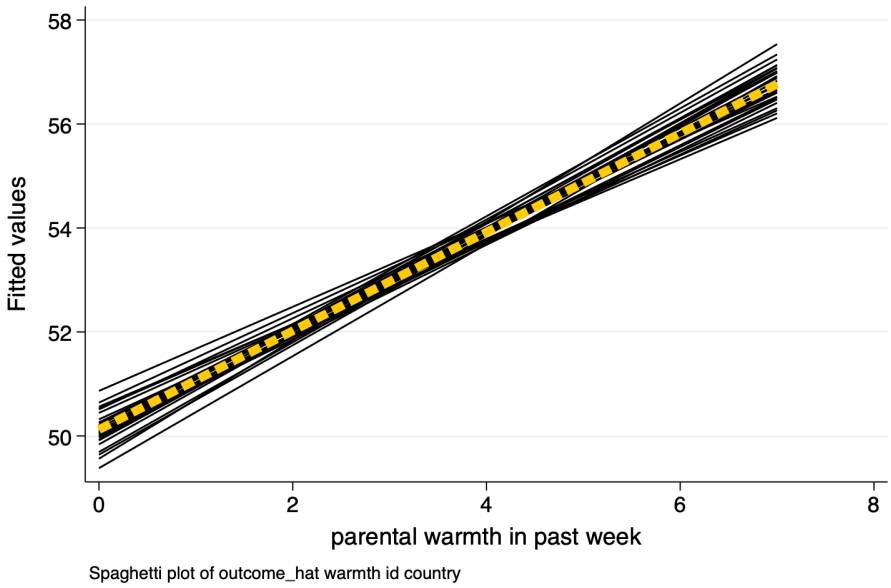


Figure 8: Spaghetti Plot With Predicted Values

`margins` and `marginsplot`

Estimate The Model

```
. mixed outcome warmth physical_punishment i.group || country: // estimate MLM
Performing EM optimization ...
Performing gradient-based optimization:
Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -9668.0859
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -9668.0859
Computing standard errors ...
Mixed-effects ML regression                     Number of obs     =      3,000
Group variable: country                         Number of groups  =         30
                                                Obs per group:
                                                              min =        100
                                                              avg =      100.0
                                                              max =        100
                                                Wald chi2(3)      =     401.00
Log likelihood = -9668.0859                     Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
```

outcome	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P>|z|	[95% conf.	interval]
warmth	.961837	.0581809	16.53	0.000	.8478046	1.075869
physical_punishment	-.8457672	.0798128	-10.60	0.000	-1.002197	-.6893369
2.group	1.084409	.2200548	4.93	0.000	.6531099	1.515709
_cons	51.64797	.4645466	111.18	0.000	50.73748	52.55847

Random-effects parameters	Estimate	Std. err.	[95% conf.	interval]
country: Identity				

var(_cons)	3.403	.9717558	1.944438	5.955659
var(Residual)	36.01911	.9346952	34.23295	37.89847

LR test vs. linear model: chibar2(01) = 200.29 Prob >= chibar2 = 0.0000

Generate Predicted Values *At Specified Values* With `margins`

```
. margins group, at(warmth = (1 2 3 4 5 6 7)) // predictive *margins*
Predictive margins                                      Number of obs = 3,000
Expression: Linear prediction, fixed portion, predict()
1._at: warmth = 1
2._at: warmth = 2
3._at: warmth = 3
4._at: warmth = 4
5._at: warmth = 5
6._at: warmth = 6
7._at: warmth = 7
```

	Delta-method Margin	std. err.	z	P>|z|	[95% conf.	interval]
_at#group						
1 1	50.4999	.3983539	126.77	0.000	49.71914	51.28066
1 2	51.58431	.3994365	129.14	0.000	50.80143	52.36719
2 1	51.46174	.3809288	135.10	0.000	50.71513	52.20834
2 2	52.54615	.38173	137.65	0.000	51.79797	53.29432
3 1	52.42357	.371884	140.97	0.000	51.6947	53.15245
3 2	53.50798	.3723656	143.70	0.000	52.77816	54.23781
4 1	53.38541	.3718315	143.57	0.000	52.65664	54.11419
4 2	54.46982	.3719738	146.43	0.000	53.74077	55.19888
5 1	54.34725	.3807751	142.73	0.000	53.60094	55.09355
5 2	55.43166	.3805823	145.65	0.000	54.68573	56.17759
6 1	55.30909	.398109	138.93	0.000	54.52881	56.08937
6 2	56.3935	.397607	141.83	0.000	55.6142	57.17279
7 1	56.27092	.4228024	133.09	0.000	55.44225	57.0996
7 2	57.35533	.4220306	135.90	0.000	56.52817	58.1825

Graph With `marginsplot`

```
. marginsplot // plot of predicted values
Variables that uniquely identify margins: warmth group

. graph export mymarginsplot.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mymarginsplot.png saved as
    PNG format
```

Scatterplot With Linear Fit and Marginal Density Plots (`twoway ...`)

As another possibility, we may wish to show more of the variation, by showing the variation in the *independent* variable and the *dependent* variable along with a *scatterplot* and *linear fit*. This is a complex graph and requires a little bit of manual programming in Stata.

Manually Generate The Densities To Plot Them Below (`kdensity ...`)

We generate the density for *warmth* at only a few points (`n(8)`) since this variable has relatively few categories.

```
. kdensity warmth, generate(warmth_x warmth_d) n(8) // manually generate outcome densities

. kdensity outcome, generate(outcome_y outcome_d) // manually generate outcome densities
```

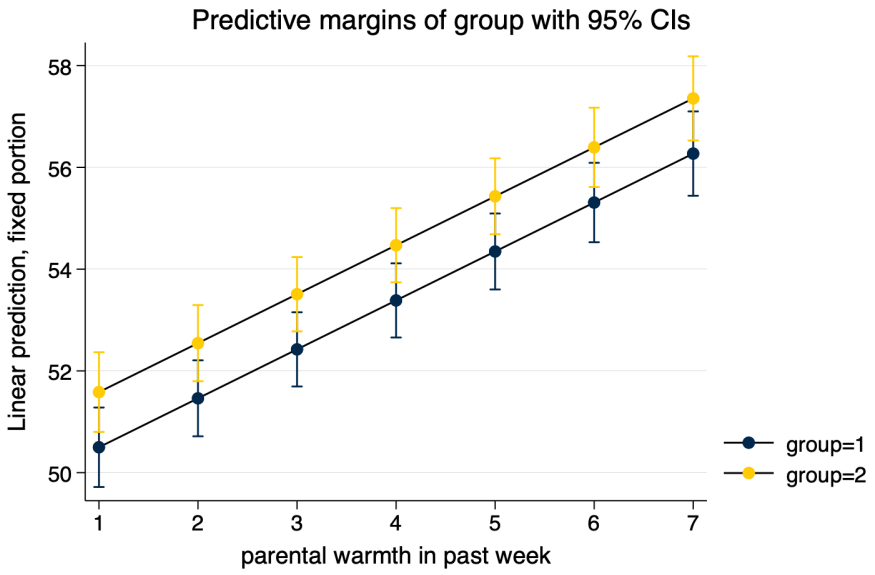


Figure 9: Predicted Values From `margins` and `marginsplot`

Rescale The Densities So They Plot Well

You may have to experiment with the scaling and moving factors.

```
. replace warmth_d = 100 * warmth_d // rescale the density so it plots well
(8 real changes made)

. replace outcome_d = -10 * outcome_d - .5 // rescale AND FLIP AND MOVE the density so it
> plots well
(50 real changes made)

. label variable outcome_y "density: beneficial outcome" // relabel y variable
```

Make The Graph (`twoway ...`)

You may have to experiment with whether scatterplots or line plots work best for displaying the x and y densities.

```
. twoway (scatter outcome warmth, mcolor(%10)) /// scatterplot w some transparency
> (lfit outcome warmth) /// linear fit
> (line warmth_d warmth_x) /// line plot of x density
> (line outcome_y outcome_d), /// line plot of y density (note flipped order)
> title("Outcome by Warmth") /// title
> ytitle("beneficial outcome") /// manual ytitle
> xtitle("parental warmth") /// manual xtitle
> legend(position(6) rows(2) ) /// legend at bottom; 2 rows
> xlabel(0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7) /// manual x labels
> name(mynewscatter, replace)

. graph export mynewscatter.png, width(1500) replace
file /Users/agrogan/Desktop/GitHub/multilevel/visualizing-MLM/mynewscatter.png saved as
    PNG format
```

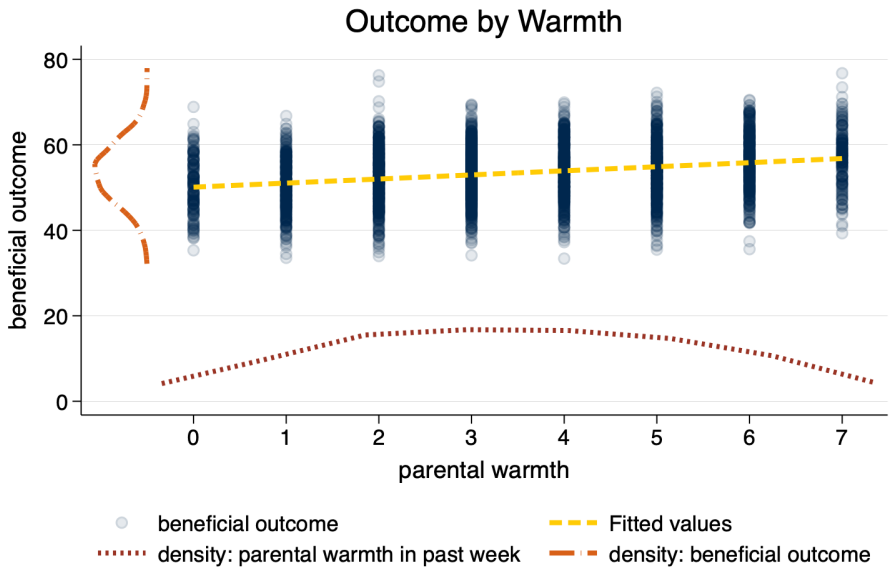


Figure 10: Scatterplot and Linear Fit With Marginal Density Plots

Spaghetti Plot With Linear Fit and Marginal Density Plots

Curvilinear and Linear Fits

Random Effects