EDUC 784

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# Preface

These are the course notes for EDUC 784. Readings are assigned *before class.* Sections denoted with an asterisk (\*) are optional.

The notes contain **questions that are written in bold font**. The questions are also collected in a section called “Workbook” that appears towards the end of each chapter. During class time, we will discuss the Workbook questions, your answers, any additional question you have, etc. It is really important for you to do the readings, and write down your responses to the questions, before class. You won’t get much out of the lessons if you haven’t done this preparation.

Some chapters contain a section called “Exercises” that collects all of the R code from that chapter into a single overall workflow. **You don’t need to do the Exercises before class**, but you can if you want to. If a chapter doesn’t have an Exercises section, that means we will be working on an assignment together instead.

Image credit: Daniela Rodriguez-Mincey, Spring 2023

# 1. Review

This chapter is an exception to the overall format described in the Preface. It reviews some foundational material from EDUC 710 (Stat 1) that is useful for this course. There will be time to ask questions about the review material in the first class and second class, but there will not be time to review everything. So, if this review feels too short, you may also want to review your notes from EDUC 710.

Please read up to the Exercises in [Section 1.10](#sec-exercizes-1) before the first class. We will address any questions about this material in the first class and then begin the Exercises together.

## 1.1 Summation notation

Summation notation uses the symbol to stand-in for summation. For example, instead of writing

to represent the sum of the values of the variable in a sample of size , we can instead write:

The symbol means “add.” The symbol is called “Sigma” – it’s the capital Greek letter corresponding to the Latin letter “S”. The value is called the index, and is the starting value of the index and is the end value of the index. You can choose whatever start and end values you want to sum over. For example, if we just want to add the second and third values of , we write

When the start and end values are clear from context, we can use a shorthand notation that omits them. In the following, it is implicit that the sum is over all available values of (i.e., from to ):

## 1.2 Rules of summation

There are rules for manipulating summation notation that are useful for deriving results in statistics. You don’t need to do mathematical proofs or derivations in this class, but you will occasionally see some derivations in these notes (mainly in the optional sections).

Here are the rules:

**Rule 1: Sum of a constant (multiplication)**. Adding a constant to itself is equivalent to multiplication.

**Rule 2: Distributive property**. Multiplying each term of a sum by a constant is the same as multiplying the sum by a constant.

**Rule 3: Associative property**. It doesn’t matter what order we do addition in.

## 1.3 Sample statistics

Summation notation is useful for writing the formulas of statistics. The main statistics we use in the class are the mean, standard deviation, variance, covariance, and correlation. These are the building blocks for regression. Their symbols and formulas are presented below (using the shorthand summation notation). If you don’t remember their interpretation, you will need to go back to your Stat 1 notes.

* The mean
* The variance can be written as or sometimes using the symbol
* The standard deviation can be written or using the letter
* The covariance is a generalization of the variance to two variables, it describes how they co-vary:
* The correlation is the covariance divided by the product of the standard deviations of the variables. It takes on values between -1 and 1 and describes the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables.

For numerical examples see [Section 1.10.8](#sec-computing-stats-1).

## 1.4 Properties of sample statistics

The following are some useful properties of the sample statistics reviewed above. The properties tell us what happens to means, variances, covariances, and correlations when a variable is linearly transformed. We often linearly transform data (e.g., to compute percentages, proportions, z-scores, and in linear regression), so these properties turn out to be quite handy.

You can derive the properties using the rules of summation. For each property, the beginning of the derivation is shown. You should know the properties but completing the derivations is optional.

**Sum of deviations from the mean**. If we subtract the mean from each data point, we have a deviation (or deviation score): . Deviation scores sum to zero: .

* Derivation

**Mean of a linear transformation**. If with known constants and , then

* Derivation:

**Variance of a linear transformation**. If with known constants and , then

* Derivation

**Mean and variance of a z-score**. The z-score (or standardized score) is defined as . Standardized scores are useful because and .

* Derivation: use the rules for linear transformation with and .

**Covariance of linear transformations**. If and with known constants , , , , then

* Derivation

**Correlation of linear transformations**. If and with known constants , , , , then – i.e., the correlation is not affected by linear transformations.

* Derivation: use the rules for variances and covariances of linear transformation and the formula for correlation.

## 1.5 Bias and precision

In this section we consider two more important properties of sample statistics. These properties are defined in terms of *sampling distributions*. Recall that a sampling distribution arises from the following thought experiment:

1. Take a random sample of size from a population of interest.
2. Compute a statistic using the sample data. It can be any statistic, but let’s say the mean, , for concreteness.
3. Write down the value of the mean, and then return the sample to the population.

After doing these 3 steps many times, you will have many values the sample mean,

The distribution of these sample means is called a sampling distribution (i.e., the sampling distribution of the mean). A sampling distribution is just like any other distribution – so it has its own mean, and its own variance, etc. These quantities, when computed for a sampling distribution, have special names.

* **The expected value** of the mean, denoted , is the mean of the sampling distribution of the mean. That is a mouthful! That is why we say the “expected value” or “expectation” of a statistic rather than the mean of a statistic. It’s called the expected value because it’s the average value over many samples.
* **The standard error** of the mean, denoted , is the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of the mean. It describes the sample-to-sample variation of the mean around its expected value.

Now for the two additional properties of sample statistics:

* **Bias**: If the expected value of a statistic is equal to a population parameter, we say that the statistic is an unbiased estimate of that parameter. For example, the expected value of the sample mean is equal to the population mean (in symbols: , so we say that the sample mean is an unbiased estimate of the population mean.
* **Precision**: The inverse of the squared standard error (i.e., ) is called the precision of a statistic. So, the less a statistic varies from sample to sample, the more precise it is. That should hopefully make intuitive sense. The main thing to know about precision is that it is usually increasing in the sample size – i.e., we get more precise estimates by using larger samples. Again, this should feel intuitive.

Below is a figure that is often used to illustrate the ideas of bias and precision. The middle of the concentric circles represent the target parameter (like a bull’s eye) and the dots represent the sampling distribution of a statistic. You should be able to describe each panel in terms of the bias and precision of the statistic.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 1.1: Bias and Precision |

## 1.6 t-tests

The -test is used to make an inference about the value of an unknown population parameter. The test compares the value of an unbiased estimate of the parameter to a hypothesized value of the parameter. It is assumed that the sampling distribution of the estimate is a normal distribution, so the -test applies to statistics like means and regression coefficients.

The conceptual formula for a -test is

When we conduct a -test, the basic rationale is as follows: If the “true” population parameter is equal to the hypothesized value, then the estimate should be close to the hypothesized value, and so should be close to zero.

In order to determine what values of are “close to zero”, we refer to its sampling distribution, which is called the -distribution. The -distribution tells what values of are typical if the hypothesis is true. Some examples of the -distribution are shown in the figure below. The x-axis denotes values of the statistic shown above, and is parameter called the “degrees of freedom” (more on this soon).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 1.2: t-distribution (source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student%27s\_t-distribution) |

You can see that the -distribution looks like a normal distribution centered a zero. So, when the hypothesis is true, the expected value of is zero. Informally, we could say that, if the hypothesis is true, values of greater than are pretty unlikely, and values greater than are very unlikely.

More formally, we can make an inference about whether the population parameter is equal to the hypothesized value by comparing the value of computed in our sample, denoted as , to a “critical value”, denoted as . The critical value is chosen so that the “significance level”, defined as , is sufficiently small. The significance level is chosen by the researcher. Often it is set to or

There are two equivalent ways of “formally” conducting a -test.

1. Compare the observed value of to the critical value. Specifically: if , reject the hypothesis.
2. Compare the significance level chosen by the researcher, , to the “p-value” of the test, computed as . Specifically: if , reject the hypothesis.

Informally, both of these just mean that the absolute value of should be pretty big (i.e., greater than ) before we reject the hypothesis.

A couple more things before moving on.

First, the hypothesized value of the population parameter is often zero, in which case it is called a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis usually translates into a research hypothesis of “no effect” or “no relationship.” So, if we reject the null hypothesis, we conclude that there was an effect.

Second, the t-distribution has a single parameter called its “degrees of freedom”, which is denoted as in [Figure 1.2](#fig-tdist). The degrees of freedom are an increasing function of the sample size, with larger samples leading to more degrees of freedom. When the degrees of freedom approach , the -distribution approaches a normal distribution. This means that the difference between a -test and a -test is pretty minor in large samples (say ).

## 1.7 Confidence intervals

A confidence interval uses the same equation as a -test, except we solve for the population parameter rather than the value of . Whereas a -test lets us make a guess about specific value of the parameter of interest (i.e., the null-hypothesized value), a confidence interval gives us a range of values that include the parameter of interest, with some degree of “confidence.”

Confidence intervals have the general formula:

We get the value of from the -distribution. In particular, if we want the interval to include the true population parameter of the time, then we choose to be the percentile of the -distribution. For example, if we set , we will have a confidence interval by choosing to be the -th percentile of the -distribution.

As mentioned, -tests and confidence intervals are closely related. In particular, if the confidence interval includes the value , this is the same as retaining the null hypothesis that the parameter is equal to . This should make intuitive sense. If the confidence interval includes , we are saying that it is a reasonable value of the population parameter, so we should not reject that value. This equivalence between tests and confidence intervals assumes we use the same level of for both of them.

In summary, if the confidence interval includes zero, we retain the null hypothesis at the stated level of . If the confidence interval does not include zero, we reject the null hypothesis at the stated level of .

## 1.8 F-tests

The -test is used to infer if two independent variances have the same expected value. This turns out to be useful when we analyze the variance of a variable into different sources (i.e., Analysis of Variance or ANOVA).

A variance can be defined as a sum-of-squares divided by its degrees of freedom. For example, the sample variance is just a sum-of-squared deviations from the sample mean (a sum of squares) divided by (its degrees of freedom).

The generic formula for an F-test is the ratio of two variances:

where denotes sums-of-squares and denotes degrees of freedom.

Just the like -test, the -test is called by the letter “F” because it has an -distribution when the null hypothesis is true (i.e., when the variances have the same expected value). The plot below shows some examples of - distributions. These distributions tell us the values of that are likely, if the null hypothesis is true.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 1.3: F-distribution (source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F-distribution) |

The F distribution has two parameters, which are referred to as the “degrees of freedom in the numerator” and the “degrees of freedom in the denominator” (in the figure, d1 and d2, respectively). We always write the numerator first and then the denominator . So, the green line in the figure is “an -distribution on 10 and 1 degrees of freedom”, which means the in the numerator is 10 and the in the denominator is 1.

We use an -test the same way we use a -test – we set a significance level and use this level to determine how large the value of needs to be for us to reject the null hypothesis. The main difference is that is non-negative, because it is the ratio of squared numbers. We don’t usually compute confidence intervals for statistics with an -distribution.

## 1.9 APA reporting

It is important to write up the results of statistical analyses in a way that other people will understand. For this reason, there are conventions about how to report statistical results. In this class, we will mainly use tables and figures (formatted in R) rather than inline text. But sometimes reporting statistics using inline text unavoidable, in which case this course will use APA formatting. You don’t need to use APA in this class, but you should be familiar with some kind of conventions for reporting statistical results in your academic writing.

The examples below illustrate APA conventions. We haven’t covered the examples, they are just illustrative of the formatting (spacing, italics, number of decimal places, whether or not to use a leading zero before a decimal, etc). More details are available online (for example, [here](https://psych.uw.edu/storage/writing_center/stats.pdf)).

* Jointly, the two predictors explained about 22% of the variation in Academic Achievement, which was statistically significant at the .05 level ().
* After controlling for SES, a one unit of increase in Maternal Education was associated with units of increase in Academic Achievement ().
* After controlling for Maternal Education, a one unit of increase in SES was associated with units of increase in Academic Achievement. This was a statistically significant relationship ().

## 1.10 Exercises

This section will walk through some basics of programming with R. We will get started with this part of the review in the first class. You don’t need to do it before class.

If you are already familiar with R, please skim through the content and work on getting the NELS data loaded. If you are not familiar with R, or would like to brush up your R skills, you should work through this section.

### 1.10.1 General info about R

Some things to know about R before getting started:

* R is case sensitive. It matters if you useCAPS or lowercase in your code.
* Each new R command should begin on its own line.
* Unlike many other programming languages, R commands do **not** need to end with punctuation (e.g., ; or .).
* R uses the hash tag symbol (#) for comments. Comments are ignored by R but can be helpful for yourself and others to understand what your code does. An example is below.

# This is a comment. R doesn't read it.  
# Below is a code snippet. R will read it and return the result.   
2 + 2

[1] 4

* R’s working memory is cumulative. This means that you have to run code in order, one line after the next. It also means that any code you run is still hanging around in R’s memory until you clear it away using rm or the brush icon in R Studio - make sure to ask about how to do this in class if you aren’t sure.

### 1.10.2 The basics

As we have just seen, R can do basic math like a calculator. Some more examples are presented in the code snippets below. R’s main math symbols are

* + addition
* - subtraction or negative numbers
* \* multiplication
* / division (don’t use \)
* ^ or \*\* exponentiation

2 \* 2

[1] 4

# Remember pedmas? Make sure to use parentheses "()",   
# not brackets "[]" or braces "{}"  
(2 - 3) \* 4 / 5

[1] -0.8

# Exponentiation can be done two ways  
2^3

[1] 8

2\*\*3

[1] 8

# Square roots are "squirt". Again, make sure to use "()",   
# not brackets "[]" or braces "{}"  
sqrt(25)

[1] 5

# Logs and exponents, base e (2.718282....) by default   
log(100)

[1] 4.60517

exp(1)

[1] 2.718282

# We can override the default log by using the "base" option  
log(100, base = 2)

[1] 6.643856

# Special numbers...  
pi

[1] 3.141593

### 1.10.3 The help function

The help function is your best friend when using R. If we want more info on how to use an R function (like log), type:

help(log)

If you don’t exactly remember the name of the function, using ??log will open a more complete menu of options.

### 1.10.4 Logicals and strings

R can also work with logical symbols that evaluate to TRUE or FALSE. R’s main logical symbols are

* == is equal to
* != is not equal to
* > greater than
* < less than
* >= greater than or equal to
* <= less than or equal to

Here are some examples:

2 + 2 == 4

[1] TRUE

2 + 2 == 5

[1] FALSE

2 + 3 > 5

[1] FALSE

2 + 3 >= 5

[1] TRUE

The main thing to note is that the logical operators return TRUE or FALSE as their output, not numbers. There are also symbols for logical conjunction (&) and disjunction (|), but we won’t get to those until later.

In addition to numbers and logicals, R can work with text (also called “strings”). We wont use strings a lot but they are worth knowing about.

"This is a string in R. The quotation marks tell R the input is text."

[1] "This is a string in R. The quotation marks tell R the input is text."

### 1.10.5 Assignment (naming)

Often we want to save the result of a calculation so that we can use it later on. In R, this means we need to assign the result a name. Once we assign the result a name, we can use that name to refer to the result, without having to re-do the calculation that produced the result. For example:

x <- 2 + 2

Now we have given the result of 2 + 2 the name “x” using the assignment operator, <-.

Note that R no longer prints the result of the calculation to the console. If we want to see the result, we can type x

# To see the result a name refers to, just type the name  
x

[1] 4

We can also do assignment with the = operator.

y = 2 + 2  
y

[1] 4

It’s important to note that the = operator also gets used in other ways (e.g., to override default values in functions like log). Also, the math interpretation of “=” doesn’t really capture what is happening with assignment in computer code. In the above code, we are not saying that “2 + 2 equals y.” Instead, we are saying, “2 + 2 equals 4 and I want to refer to 4 later with the name ‘y’.”

Almost anything in R can be given a name and thereby saved in memory for later use. Assignment will become a lot more important when we name things like datasets, so that we can use the data for other things later on.

A few other side notes:

* Names cannot include spaces or start with numbers. If you want separate words in a name, consider using a period ., an underscore \_, or CamelCaseNotation.
* You can’t use the same name twice. If you use a name, and then later on re-assign that same name to a different result, the name will now only represent the new result. The old result will no longer have a name, it will be lost in the computer’s memory and will be cleaned up by R’s garbage collector. Because R’s memory is cumulative, it’s important to keep track of names to make sure you know what’s what.
* R has some names that are reserved for built-in stuff, like log and exp and pi. You can override those names, but R will give a warning. If you override the name, this means you can’t use the built-in functions until you delete that name (e.g., rm(x)).

### 1.10.6 Pop-quiz

1. In words, describe what the following R commands do.
   * x <- 7
   * x = 7
   * x == 7
   * 7 -> x
   * 7 > x

* Answers: Check the commands in R.

### 1.10.7 Vectors

In research settings, we often want to work with multiple numbers at once (surprise!). R has many data types or “objects” for doing this, for example, vectors, matrices, arrays, data.frames, and lists. We will start by looking at vectors.

Here is an example vector, containing the sequence of integers from 15 to 25.

# A vector containing the sequence of integers from 15 to 25  
y <- 15:25  
y

[1] 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

When we work with a vector of numbers, sometimes we only want to access a subset of them. To access elements of a vector we use the square bracket notation []. Here are some examples of how to index a vector with R:

# Print the first element of the vector y  
# Note: use brackets "[]" not parens"()"  
y[1]

[1] 15

# The first 3 elements  
y[1:3]

[1] 15 16 17

# The last 5  
y[6:11]

[1] 20 21 22 23 24 25

We can also access elements of a vector that satisfy a given logical condition.

# Print the elements of the vector y that are greater than the value 22  
y[y > 22]

[1] 23 24 25

This trick often comes in handy so its worth understanding how it works. First let’s look again at what y is, and what the logical statement y > 22 evaluates to:

# This is the vector y  
y

[1] 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

# This is the logical expression y > 22  
y > 22

[1] FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE FALSE TRUE TRUE TRUE

We can see that y > 22 evaluates to TRUE or FALSE depending on whether the correspond number in the vector y is greater than 22. When we use the logical vector as an index – R will then return all the values for which y > 22 is TRUE.

In general, we can index a vector y with any logical vector of the same length as y. The result will return only the values for which the logical vector is TRUE.

### 1.10.8 Computing sample stats

The following are examples of statistical operations you can do with vectors of numbers. These examples follow closely to [Section 1.1](#sec-summation-1) to [Section 1.4](#sec-properties-1)

# Making a vector with the "c" command (combine)   
x <- c(10, 9, 15, 15, 20, 17)  
  
# Find out how long a vector is (i.e., the sample size)  
length(x)

[1] 6

# Add up the elements of a vector  
sum(x)

[1] 86

# Add up the elements of a subset of a vector  
sum(x[2:3])

[1] 24

# Check the distributive rule  
sum(x\*2) == sum(x) \* 2

[1] TRUE

# Check the associative rule  
y <- c(5, 11, 11, 19, 13, 15)  
sum(x) + sum(y) == sum(x + y)

[1] TRUE

# Compute the mean  
mean(x)

[1] 14.33333

# Compute the variance  
var(x)

[1] 17.46667

# Compute the standard deviation  
sd(x)

[1] 4.179314

# Compute the covariance  
cov(x, y)

[1] 10.66667

# Compute the correlation  
cor(x, y)

[1] 0.5457986

### 1.10.9 Working with datasets

Most of the time, we will be reading-in data from an external source. The easiest way to do this is if the data is in the .RData file format. Then we can just double-click the .Rdata file and Rstudio will open the file, or we can use the load command in the console – both do the same thing.

To get started, let’s load the NELS data. The data are a subsample of the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS; see <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/>).

This data and codebook are available on the Canvas site of the course under “Files/Data/NELS” and are linked in the “Module” for Week 1. You need to download the data onto your machine and then open the data file (e.g., by clicking it, or double-clicking, or whatever you do to open files on your computer). That will do the same thing as the following line of code

#This is what happens when you double-click NELS.RData  
load("NELS.RData")

The function dim reports the number of rows (500 persons) and columns (48 variables) for the data set.

dim(NELS)

[1] 500 48

If you want to look at the data in a spreadsheet, use the following command. It won’t render anything in this book, but you can see what it does in R. (You may need to install XQuartz from https://www.xquartz.org if you are using a Mac.)

View(NELS)

If you want to edit the data set using the spreadsheet, use edit(NELS). However, R’s spreadsheet editor is pretty wimpy, so if you want to edit data in spreadsheet format, use Excel or something.

Working with data is often made easier by “attaching”” the dataset. When a dataset it attached, this means that we can refer to the columns of the dataset by their names.

# Attach the data set  
attach(NELS)  
  
# Print the first 10 values of the NELS gender variable  
gender[1:10]

[1] Male Female Male Female Male Female Female Female Female Male   
Levels: Female Male

**Warning about attaching datasets.** Once you attach a dataset, all of the column names in that dataset enter R’s working memory. If the column names in your dataset were already used, the old names are overwritten. If you attach the same dataset more than once in the same session, R will print a warning telling you that the previously named objects have been “masked” – this won’t affect your analyses, but it can be irritating.

The basic point: we should only attach each dataset once per R session. Once you are done using a data set it is good practice to detach it:

detach(NELS)

### 1.10.10 Preview of next week

[Figure 1.4](#fig-nels-1) shows the relationship between Grade 8 Math Achievement (percent correct on a math test) and Socioeconomic Status (SES; a composite measure on a scale from 0-35). Once you have reproduced this figure, you are ready to start the next chapter.

# Load and attach the NELS data  
load("NELS.RData")  
attach(NELS)  
  
# Scatter plot  
plot(x = ses,   
 y = achmat08,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement (Grade 8)",   
 xlab = "SES")  
  
# Run a simple linear regression   
mod <- lm(achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
# Add the regression line to the plot  
abline(mod)  
  
# Detach the data set  
detach(NELS)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 1.4: Math Achievement and SES (NELS88). |

# 2. Simple regression

The focus of this course is linear regression with multiple predictors (AKA *multiple regression*), but we start by reviewing regression with one predictor (AKA *simple regression*). Most of this material should be familiar from EDUC 710.

## 2.1 An example from NELS

Let’s begin by considering an example. [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2) shows the relationship between Grade 8 Math Achievement (percent correct on a math test) and Socioeconomic Status (SES; a composite measure on a scale from 0-35). The data are a subsample of the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS; see <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/>).

# Load and attach the NELS88 data  
load("NELS.RData")  
attach(NELS)  
  
# Scatter plot  
plot(x = ses,   
 y = achmat08,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement (Grade 8)",   
 xlab = "SES")  
  
# Run the regression model  
mod <- lm(achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
# Add the regression line to the plot  
abline(mod)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 2.1: Math Achievement and SES (NELS88). |

The strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables is summarized by their correlation. In this sample, the value of the correlation is:

cor(achmat08, ses)

[1] 0.3182484

This is a moderate, positive correlation between Math Achievement and SES. This correlation means that eighth graders from more well-off families (higher SES) also tended to do better in math (higher Math Achievement).

The relationship between SES and academic achievement has been widely documented and discussed in education research (e.g., <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education>). **Please look over this web page and be prepared to share your thoughts/questions about the relationship between SES and academic achievement and its relevance for education research.**

## 2.2 The regression line

The section presents three interchangeable ways of writing the regression line in [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2). You should be familiar with all three ways of presenting regression equations and you are welcome to use whichever approach you like best in your writing for this class.

The regression line in [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2) can be represented mathematically as

where

* denotes Math Achievement
* denotes SES
* represents the regression intercept (the value of when )
* represents the regression slope (how much changes for each unit of increase in )

In this equation, the symbol represents the *predicted value* of Math Achievement for a given value of SES. In [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2), the predicted values are represented by the regression line. The *observed values* of Math Achievement are denoted as . In [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2), these values are represented by the points in the scatter plot.

Some more terminology: the variable is often referred to as the *outcome* or the *dependent variable.* The variable is often referred to as the *predictor*, *independent variable*, *explanatory variable*, or *covariate.* Different areas of research have different conventions about terminology for regression. We talk more about “big picture” interpretations of regression in [Chapter 3](#sec-chap-3).

The difference between an observed value and its predicted value is called a *residual*. Residuals are denoted as . The residuals for a subset of the data points in [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2) are shown in pink in [Figure 2.2](#fig-resid-2)

# Get predicted values from regression model  
yhat <- mod$fitted.values  
  
# select a subset of the data  
set.seed(10)  
index <- sample.int(500, 30)  
  
# plot again  
plot(x = ses[index],   
 y = achmat08[index],   
 ylab = "Math Achievement (Grade 8)",   
 xlab = "SES")  
  
abline(mod)  
  
# Add pink lines  
segments(x0 = ses[index],   
 y0 = yhat[index],   
 x1 = ses[index],   
 y1 = achmat08[index],   
 col = 6, lty = 3)  
  
# Overwrite dots to make it look at bit better  
points(x = ses[index],   
 y = achmat08[index],   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 pch = 16)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 2.2: Residuals for a Subsample of the Example. |

Notice that by definition:

This leads to a second way of writing out a regression model:

The difference between [Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat) and [Equation 2.2](#eq-y) is that the former lets us talk about the predicted values (), whereas the latter lets us talk about the observed data points ().

A third way to write out the model is using the variable names (or abbreviations) in place of the more generic “X, Y” notation. For example,

This notation is useful when talking about a specific example, because we don’t have to remember what and stand for. But this notation is more clunky and doesn’t lend itself talking about regression in general or writing other mathematical expressions related to regression.

You should be familiar with all three ways of presenting regression equations ([Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat), [Equation 2.2](#eq-y), and [Equation 2.3](#eq-math)) and you are welcome to use whichever approach you like best in this class.

## 2.3 OLS

This section talks about how to estimate the regression intercept (denoted as in [Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat)) and the regression slope (denoted as in [Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat)). The intercept and slope are collectively referred to as the *parameters* of the regression line. They are also referred to as *regression coefficients.*

Our overall goal in this section is to “fit a line to the data” – i.e., we want to select the values of the regression coefficients that best represent our data. An intuitive way to approach this problem is by minimizing the residuals – i.e., minimizing the total amount of pink in [Figure 2.2](#fig-resid-2). We can operationalize this intuitive idea by minimizing the sum of squared residuals:

where indexes the respondents in the sample. When we estimate the regression coefficients by minimizing , this is called ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. OLS is very widely used and is the main focus of this course, although we will visit some other approaches in the second half of the course.

The values of the regression coefficients that minimize can be found using calculus (i.e., compute the derivatives of and set them to zero). This approach leads to the following equations for the regression coefficients:

(If you aren’t familiar with the symbols in these equations, check out the review materials in [Chapter 1](#sec-chap-1) for a refresher.)

The formulas in [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) tell us how to compute the regression coefficients using our sample data. However, on face value, these formulas don’t tell us much about how to interpret the regression coefficients. For interpreting the regression coefficients, it is more straightforward to refer to [Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat).

To clarify:

* To *interpret* the regression intercept, use [Equation 2.1](#eq-yhat): It is the value of when . Similarly, the regression slope is how much changes for a one-unit increase in .
* To *compute* the regression coefficients, use [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs). These formulas are not very intuitive – they are just what we get when we fit a line to the data using OLS.

It is important to emphasize that the formulas in [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) do lead to some useful mathematical results about regression. [Section 2.9](#sec-properties-2), which is optional, derives some of the main results. If you want a deeper mathematical understanding of regression, make sure to check out this section. If you prefer to skip the math and just learn about the results as they become relevant, that is OK too.

### 2.3.1 Correlation and regression

Before moving on, it is worth noting something that we can learn from [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) without too much math: the regression slope is just a re-packaging of the correlation coefficient. In particular, if we assume that and are z-scores (i.e., they are standardized to have mean of zero and variance of one), then [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) reduces to:

There are two important things to note here.

First, the difference between correlation and simple regression depends on the scale of the variables. Otherwise stated, if we standardize both and , then regression is just correlation. In particular, if the correlation is equal to zero, then the regression slope is also equal to zero – these are just two equivalent ways of saying that the variables are not (linearly) related.

Second, this relationship between correlation and regression holds only for simple regression (i.e., one predictor). When we get to multiple regression, we will see that relationship between regression and correlation (and covariance) gets more complicated.

For the NELS example in [Figure 2.1](#fig-nels-2), the regression intercept and slope are, respectively:

coef(mod)

(Intercept) ses   
 48.6780338 0.4292604

**Please write down an interpretation of these numbers and be prepared to share your answers in class. How would your interpretation change if, rather than the value of the slope shown above, we had ?**

## 2.4 R-squared

In this section we introduce another statistic that is commonly used in regression, called “R-squared” (in symbols: ). First we will talk about its interpretation, then we will show how it is computed.

R-squared is the proportion of variance in the outcome variable that is associated with, or “explained by”, the predictor variable. In terms of the NELS example, the variance of the outcome can be interpreted in terms of individual differences in Math Achievement – i.e., how students deviate from, or vary around, the mean level of Math Achievement. R-squared tells us the extent to which these individual differences in Math Achievement are associated with, or explained by, individual differences in SES.

As mentioned, R-squared is a proportion. Because it is a proportion, it takes on values between and . If then a student’s SES doesn’t tell us anything about their Math Achievement – this is the same as saying the two variables aren’t correlated, or that there is no (linear) relationship between Math Achievement and SES. If , then all of the data points fall exactly on the regression line, and we can perfectly predict each student’s Math Achievement from their SES.

You might be asking – why do we need R-squared? We already have the regression coefficient (which is just a repackaging of the correlation), so why do we need yet another way of describing the relationship between Math Achievement and SES? This is very true for simple regression! However, when we move on to multiple regression, we will see that R-squared lets us talk about the relationship between the outcome and *all* of the predictors, or any subset of the predictors, whereas the regression coefficient only lets us talk about the relationship with one predictor at a time.

To see how R-squared is computed for the NELS example, let’s consider [Figure 2.3](#fig-rsquared-2). The horizontal grey line denotes the mean of Math Achievement. Recall that the variance of is computed using the sum-of-squared deviations from the mean. For each student, these deviations from the mean can be divided into two parts. The Figure shows these two parts for a single student, using black and pink dashed lines:

* The black dashed line represents the extent to which the student’s deviation from the mean level of Math Achievement is explained by the linear relationship between Math Achievement and SES.
* The pink dashed line is the regression residual, which was introduced in [Section 2.2](#sec-regression-line-2). This is the variation in Math Achievement that is “left over” after considering the linear relationship with SES.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 2.3: The Idea Behind R-squared. |

The R-squared statistic averages the variation in Math Achievement associated with SES (i.e., the black dashed line) for all students in the sample, and then divides by the total variation in Math Achievement (i.e., black + pink).

The derivation of the R-squared statistic is not very complicated and provides some useful notation. To simplify the derivation, we can work the numerator of the variance, which is called the “total sum of squares:”

Next we add and subtract the predicted values (that old trick!):

The right-hand-side can be reduced to two other sums of squares using the rules of summation algebra (see [Section 1.2](#sec-rules-1) – the derivation is long but not complicated).

The first term on the right-hand-side is just the sum of squared residuals () from [Section 2.3](#sec-ols-2). The second term is called the sum of squared regression and denoted . Using this notation we can re-write the previous equation as

and the R-squared statistic is computed as

As discussed above, this quantity can be interpreted as the proportion of variance in that is explained by its linear relationship with .

For the NELS example, the R-squared statistic is:

summary(mod)$r.squared

[1] 0.1012821

**Please write down an interpretation of this number and be prepared to share your answer in class.** Hint: Instead of talking about proportions, it is often helpful to multiply by 100 and talk about percentages instead.

## 2.5 The population model

Up to this point we have discussed simple linear regression as a way of describing the relationship between two variables in a sample. The next step is to discuss statistical inference. Recall that statistical inference involves generalizing from a sample to the population from which the sample was drawn.

In the NELS example, the population of interest is U.S. eighth graders in 1988. We want to be able to draw conclusions about that population based on the sample of eighth graders that participated in NELS. In order to do that, we make some statistical assumptions about the population, which are collectively referred to as the *population model*.

The population model for simple linear regression is summarized in [Figure 2.4](#fig-pop-model). The three assumptions associated with this model are written below. We talk about how to check the plausibility of these assumptions in **?@sec-chapter-7**.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 2.4: The Regression Population Model. |

The three assumptions:

1. Normality: The values of conditional on , denoted , are normally distributed. The figure shows these distributions for three values of . We can write this assumption formally as

* (This notation should be familiar from EDUC 710. In general, we write to denote that the variable has a normal distribution with mean and variance .)

1. Homoskedasticity: The conditional distributions have equal variances (also called “homogeneity of variance”, or simply “equal variances”).
2. Linearity: The means of the conditional distributions are a linear function of .

These three assumptions are summarized by writing

Sometimes it will be easier to state the assumptions in terms of the population residuals, . The residuals have distribution .

Sometimes it will also be easier to write the population regression line using expected values, , rather than . Both of these are interpreted the same way – they denote the mean of for a given value of .

An additional assumption is usually made about the data in the sample – that they were obtained as a simple random sample from the population. We will see some ways of dealing with other types of samples later on this course, but for now we can consider this a background assumption that applies to OLS regression.

From a mathematical perspective, these assumptions are important because they can be used to prove (a) that OLS regression provides unbiased estimates of the population regression coefficients and (b) that the OLS estimates are more precise than any other unbiased estimates of the population regression coefficients. There are other variations on these assumptions, which are sometimes called the Gauss-Markov assumptions [see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauss%E2%80%93Markov\_theorem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauss%E2%80%93Markov_theorem).

From a practical perspective, these assumptions are important conditions that we should check when conducting data analyses. If the assumptions are violated – particularly the linearity assumption – then our statistical model may not be a good representation of the population. If the model is not a good representation of the population, then inferences based on the model may provide misleading conclusions about the population.

## 2.6 Clarifying notation

At this point we have used the mathematical symbols for regression (e.g., , ) in two different ways:

* In [Section 2.2](#sec-regression-line-2) they denoted sample statistics.
* In [Section 2.5](#sec-population-model-2) they denoted population parameters.

The population versus sample notation for regression is a bit of a hot mess, but the following conventions are used.

| Concept | Sample statistic | Population parameter |
| --- | --- | --- |
| regression line |  | or |
| slope |  |  |
| intercept |  |  |
| residual |  |  |
| variance explained |  |  |

The “hats” always denote sample quantities, and the Greek letters always denote population quantities, but there is some lack of consistency. For example, why not use instead of for the population slope? Well, is conventionally used to denote standardized regression coefficients in the *sample*, so its already taken (more on this in [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4)).

If it is clear from context that we are talking about the sample rather than the population, then the hats are usually omitted from the statistics , , and . This doesn’t apply to , because the hat is required to distinguish the predicted values from the data points.

Another thing to note is that while is often called a predicted value, is not usually referred to this way. It is called the conditional mean function or the conditional expectation function. Using this language, we can say that regression is about estimating the conditional mean function.

**Please be prepared for a pop quiz on notation during class!**

## 2.7 Inference

This section reviews the main inferential procedures for regression. The formulas presented in this section are used to produce standard errors, t-tests, p-values, and confidence intervals for the regression coefficients, as well as an F-test for R-squared. It is very unlikely that you will ever need to compute these formulas by hand, so don’t worry about memorizing them.

However, it is important that you can interpret the numerical results in research settings. The interpretations of these procedures were reviewed in [Chapter 1](#sec-chap-1) and should be familiar from EDUC 710. This sections documents the formulas for simple regression and then asks you to interpret the results in the context of the NELS example.

It is worth noting that the regression intercept is often not of interest in simple regression. Recall that the intercept is the value of when . So, unless we have a hypothesis or research question about this particular value of (e.g., eighth graders with ), we won’t be interested in a test of the regression intercept. When we get into to multiple regression, we will see some situations where the intercept is of interest.

### 2.7.1 Inference for coefficients

When the population model is true, is an unbiased estimate of (in symbols: ). The standard error of is equal to (see (**fox-2016?**), Section 6.1):

Using these two results, we can compute t-tests and confidence intervals for the regression slope in the usual way.

**t-tests**

The null hypothesis can be tested against the alternative using the test statistic:

which has a t-distribution on degrees of freedom when the null hypothesis is true.

The test assumes that the population model is correct. The null hypothesized value of the parameter is usually chosen to be , in which case the test is interpreted in terms of the “statistical significance” of the regression slope.

**Confidence intervals**

For a given Type I Error rate, , the corresponding confidence interval is

where denotes the quantile of the -distribution with degrees of freedom. For example, if is chosen to be , the corresponding confidence interval uses , or the 2.5-th percentile of the t-distribution.

The standard error for the regression intercept, presented below, can be used to compute t-tests and confidence intervals for :

### 2.7.2 Inference for R-squared

The null hypothesis can be tested against the alternative using the F-test:

which has a F-distribution on and degrees of freedom when the null is true. The test assumes that the population model is true. Confidence intervals for R-squared are generally not reported.

### 2.7.3 The NELS example

For the NELS example, the standard errors, t-test, and p-values of the regression coefficients are shown in the table below (along with the OLS estimates). The F-test appears in the text below the table. Note that the output uses the terminology “multiple R-squared” to refer to R-squared.

summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.5995 -6.5519 -0.1475 6.0226 27.6634   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 48.6780 1.1282 43.147 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
ses 0.4293 0.0573 7.492 3.13e-13 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.863 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1013, Adjusted R-squared: 0.09948   
F-statistic: 56.12 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 3.127e-13

The confidence intervals for the regression coefficients are:

confint(mod)

2.5 % 97.5 %  
(Intercept) 46.4614556 50.8946120  
ses 0.3166816 0.5418392

**Please write down your interpretation of the t-tests, confidence intervals, and F-test, and be prepared to share your answers in class.** Hint: state whether the tests are statistically significant and the corresponding conclusions are about the population parameters. For confidence intervals, report the range of values we are “confident” about. For practice, you might want to try using APA notation in your answer (or whatever style conventions are used in your field).

## 2.8 Power analysis\*

Statistical power is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis, when it is indeed false. Rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false is sometimes called a “true positive”, meaning we have correctly inferred that a parameter of interest is not zero. Power analysis is useful for designing studies so that the statistical power / true positive rate is satisfactory.

In practice, statistical power comes down to having a large enough sample size. Consequently, power analysis is important when planning studies (e.g., in research grants proposals). In this class, we will not be planning any studies – rather, we will be working with secondary data analyses. In this context, power analysis is not very interesting, and so we do not mention it much. Nonetheless, power analysis is important for research and so we review the basics here.

Power analysis in regression is very similar to power analysis for the tests we studied last semester. There are five ingredients that go into a power analysis:

* The desired Type I Error rate, .
* The desired level of statistical power.
* The sample size, .
* The number of predictors.
* The effect size, which is Cohen’s f-squared statistic (AKA the signal to noise ratio):

In principal, we can plug-in values for any four of these ingredients and then solve for the fifth. But, as mentioned, power analysis is most useful when we solve for while planning a study. When solving for “prospectively,” the effect size should be based on reports of R-squared in past research. Power and are usually chosen to be .8 and .05, respectively.

The example below shows the sample size required to detect an effect size of . This effect size was based on the NELS example discussed above. Note that the values and denote the degrees of freedom in the numerator and denominator of the F-test of R-squared, respectively. The former provides information about the number of predictors in the model, the latter about sample size.

# Install package  
# install.packages("pwr")  
  
# Load library  
library(pwr)  
  
# Run power analysis  
pwr.f2.test(u = 1, f2 = .1 / (1 - .1), sig.level = .05, power = .8)

Multiple regression power calculation   
  
 u = 1  
 v = 70.61137  
 f2 = 0.1111111  
 sig.level = 0.05  
 power = 0.8

Rounding up, we would require 72 persons in the sample in order to have an 80% chance of detecting an effect size of with simple regression.

Another use of power analysis is to solve for the effect size. This can be useful when the sample size is constrained by external factors (e.g., budget). In this situation, we can use power analysis to address whether the sample size is sufficient to detect an effect that is “reasonable” (again, based on past research). In the NELS example, we have observations. The output below reports the smallest effect size we can detect with a power of and . This is sometimes called the “minimum detectable effect size” (MDES).

pwr.f2.test(u = 1, v = 498, sig.level = .05, power = .8)

Multiple regression power calculation   
  
 u = 1  
 v = 498  
 f2 = 0.01575443  
 sig.level = 0.05  
 power = 0.8

With a sample size of 500, and power of 80%, the MDES for simple regression is . Based on this calculation, we can conclude that this sample size is sufficient for applications of simple linear regression in which we expect to explain at least 3% of the variance in the outcome.

## 2.9 Properties of OLS\*

This section summarizes some properties of OLS regression that will be used later on. You can skip this section if you aren’t interested in the math behind regression – the results will be mentioned again when needed.

The derivations in this section follow from the three rules of summation reviewed [Section 1.2](#sec-rules-1) and make use of the properties of means, variances, and covariances already derived in [Section 1.4](#sec-properties-1). If you have any questions about the derivations, I would be happy to address them in class during open lab time.

### 2.9.1 Residuals

We start with two important implications of [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) for the OLS residuals. In particular, OLS residuals always have mean zero and are uncorrelated with the predictor variable. These properties generalize to multiple regression.

First we show that

From [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) we have

Solving for gives

Since is a linear transformation of , we know from [Section 1.4](#sec-properties-1) that

The previous two equations imply that . Consequently,

Next we show that

The derivation is:

The second last line uses the expression for the slope in [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs).

### 2.9.2 Multiple correlation ()

Above we defined as a proportion of variance. This was a bit lazy. Instead, we can start with the definition of the multiple correlation

and from this definition derive the result, shown above, that is the proportion of variance in associated with .

Let’s start by showing that

Before deriving this result, note that [Equation 2.4](#eq-reg-coeffs) implies

and, using the the variance of a linear transformation ([Section 1.4](#sec-properties-1)), we have

These two results are used on the third and fourth lines of the following derivation, respectively.

Next we show that :

This derivation is nicer than the one in [Section 2.4](#sec-rsquared-2) because it obtains a result about using the definition of . However, this derivation does not show that the resulting ratio is a proportion, which requires a second step (which also uses [Equation 2.7](#eq-cov-y-yhat)):

Re-arranging gives

which shows that

One last detail concerns the relation between the multiple correlation and the regular correlation coefficient . Using the invariance of the correlation under linear transformation ([Section 1.4](#sec-properties-1)), we have

Consequently, in simple regression, – i.e., the proportion of variance explained by the predictor is just the squared Pearson product-moment correlation. When we add multiple predictors, this relationship between and no longer holds.

## 2.10 Workbook

This section collects the questions asked in this chapter. The lesson for this chapter will focus on discussing these questions and then working on the exercises in [Section 2.11](#sec-exercises-2). The lesson will **not** be a lecture that reviews all of the material in the chapter! So, if you haven’t written down / thought about the answers to these questions before class, the lesson will not be very useful for you. Please engage with each question by writing down one or more answers, asking clarifying questions about related material, posing follow up questions, etc.

[Section 2.1](#sec-example-2)

# Scatter plot  
plot(x = ses,   
 y = achmat08,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement (Grade 8)",   
 xlab = "SES")  
  
# Run the regression model  
mod <- lm(achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
# Add the regression line to the plot  
abline(mod)

|  |
| --- |
| Math Achievement and SES (NELS88). |

The strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables is summarized by their correlation. In this sample, the value of the correlation is:

cor(achmat08, ses)

[1] 0.3182484

This correlation means that eighth graders from more well-off families (higher SES) also tended to do better in Math (higher Math Achievement). This relationship between SES and academic achievement has been widely documented and discussed in education research (e.g., <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education>). Please look over this web page and be prepared to share your thoughts about this relationship.

[Section 2.3](#sec-ols-2)

For the NELS example, the regression intercept and slope are, respectively:

coef(mod)

(Intercept) ses   
 48.6780338 0.4292604

Please write down an interpretation of these numbers and be prepared to share your answers in class. How would your interpretation change if, rather than the value of the slope shown above, we had ?

[Section 2.4](#sec-rsquared-2)

For the NELS example, the R-squared statistic is:

summary(mod)$r.squared

[1] 0.1012821

Please write down an interpretation of this number and be prepared to share your answer in class. Hint: Instead of talking about proportions, it is often helpful to multiply by 100 and talk about percentages instead.

[Section 2.6](#sec-notation-2)

Please be prepared for a pop quiz on notation during class!

| Concept | Sample statistic | Population parameter |
| --- | --- | --- |
| regression line |  |  |
| slope |  |  |
| intercept |  |  |
| residual |  |  |
| variance explained |  |  |

[Section 2.7](#sec-inference-2)

For the NELS example, the standard errors, t-test, and p-values of the regression coefficients are shown in the table below (along with the OLS estimates). The F-test appears in the text below the table. Note that the output uses the terminology “multiple R-squared” to refer to R-squared.

summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.5995 -6.5519 -0.1475 6.0226 27.6634   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 48.6780 1.1282 43.147 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
ses 0.4293 0.0573 7.492 3.13e-13 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.863 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1013, Adjusted R-squared: 0.09948   
F-statistic: 56.12 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 3.127e-13

The confidence intervals for the regression coefficients are:

confint(mod)

2.5 % 97.5 %  
(Intercept) 46.4614556 50.8946120  
ses 0.3166816 0.5418392

Please write down your interpretation of the t-tests, confidence intervals, and F-test, and be prepared to share your answers in class. Hint: state whether the tests are statistically significant and the corresponding conclusions are about the population parameters. For confidence intervals, report the range of values we are “confident” about. For practice, you might want to try using APA notation in your answer (or whatever style conventions are used in your field).

## 2.11 Exercises

These exercises collect all of the R input used in this chapter into a single step-by-step analysis. It explains how the R input works, and provides some additional exercises. We will go through this material in class together, so you don’t need to work on it before class (but you can if you want.)

Before staring this section, you may find it useful to scroll to the top of the page, click on the “</> Code” menu, and select “Show All Code.”

### 2.11.1 The lm function

The functionlm, short for “linear model”, is used to estimate linear regressions using OLS. It also provides a lot of useful output.

The main argument that the we provides to the lm function is a formula. For the simple regression of Y on X, a formula has the syntax:

Y ~ X

Here Y denotes the outcome variable and X is the predictor variable. The tilde ~ just means “equals”, but the equals sign = is already used to for other stuff in R, so ~ is used instead. We will see more complicated formulas as we go through the course. For more information on R’s formula syntax, see help(formula).

Let’s take a closer look using the following two variables from the NELS data.

* achmat08: eighth grade math achievement (percent correct on a math test)
* ses: a composite measure of socio-economic status, on a scale from 0-35

# Load the data. Note that you can click on the .RData file and RStudio will load it  
# load("NELS.RData") #Un-comment this line to run  
  
# Attach the data: will discuss this in class  
# attach(NELS) #Un-comment this line to run!  
  
# Scatter plot of math achievement against SES  
plot(x = ses, y = achmat08, col = "#4B9CD3")  
  
# Regress math achievement on SES; save output as "mod"  
mod <- lm(achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
# Add the regression line to the plot  
abline(mod)



# Print the regression coefficients  
coef(mod)

(Intercept) ses   
 48.6780338 0.4292604

Let’s do some quick calculations to check that the lm output corresponds the formulas for the slope and intercept in [Section 2.3](#sec-ols-2):

We won’t usually do this kind of “manual” calculation, but it is a good way consolidate knowledge presented in the readings with the output presented by R. It is also useful to refresh our memory about some useful R functions and how the R language works.

# Compute the slope as the covariance divided by the variance of X  
cov\_xy <- cov(achmat08, ses)  
var\_x <- var(ses)  
b <- cov\_xy / var\_x  
  
# Compare the "manual" calculation to the output from lm.   
b

[1] 0.4292604

# Compute the y-intercept using from the two means and the slope  
xbar <- mean(ses)  
ybar <- mean(achmat08)  
  
a <- ybar - b \* xbar  
  
# Compare the "manual" calculation to the output from lm.   
a

[1] 48.67803

Let’s also check our interpretation of the parameters. If the answers to these questions are not clear, please make sure to ask in class!

* What is the predicted value of achmat08 when ses is equal to zero?
* How much does the predicted value of achmat08 increase for each unit of increase in ses?

### 2.11.2 Variance explained

Another way to describe the relationship between the two variables is by considering the amount of variation in that is associated with (or explained by) its relationship with . Recall that one way to do this is via the “variance” decomposition

from which we can compute the proportion of variation in Y that is associated with the regression model:

The R-squared for the example is presented in the output below. You should be able to provide an interpretation of this number, so if it’s not clear make sure to ask in class!

# R-squared from the example  
summary(mod)$r.squared

[1] 0.1012821

As above, let’s compute “by hand” for our example.

# Compute the sums of squares  
ybar <- mean(achmat08)  
ss\_total <- sum((achmat08 - ybar)^2)  
ss\_reg <- sum((yhat - ybar)^2)  
ss\_res <- sum((achmat08 - yhat)^2)  
  
# Check that SS\_total = SS\_reg + SS\_res  
ss\_total

[1] 43526.91

ss\_reg + ss\_res

[1] 43526.91

# Compute R-squared (compare to value from lm)  
ss\_reg/ss\_total

[1] 0.1012821

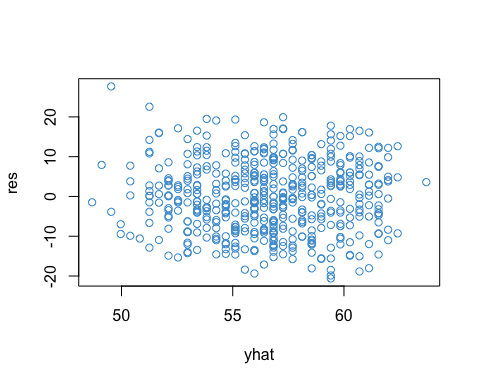
# Also check that R-squared is really equal to the square of the PPMC  
cor(achmat08, ses)^2

[1] 0.1012821

### 2.11.3 Predicted values and residuals

The lm function returns the predicted values and residuals and which we can access using the $ operator. These are useful for various reasons, especially model diagnostics, which we discuss later in the course. For now, lets just take a look at the residual vs fitted plot to illustrate the code.

yhat <- mod$fitted.values  
res <- mod$resid  
  
plot(yhat, res, col = "#4B9CD3")



Also note that the residuals values have mean zero and are uncorrelated with the predictor – this is always the case in OLS (See [Section 2.9](#sec-properties-2)})

mean(res)  
cor(yhat, res)

### 2.11.4 Inference

Next let’s address statistical inference, or how we can make conclusions about a population based on a sample from that population.

We can use the summary function to test the coefficients in our model.

summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat08 ~ ses)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.5995 -6.5519 -0.1475 6.0226 27.6634   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 48.6780 1.1282 43.147 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
ses 0.4293 0.0573 7.492 3.13e-13 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.863 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1013, Adjusted R-squared: 0.09948   
F-statistic: 56.12 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 3.127e-13

In the table, the t-test and p-values are for the null hypothesis that the corresponding coefficient is zero in the population. We can see that the intercept and slope are both significantly different from zero at the .05 level. However, the test of the intercept is not very meaningful (why?).

The text below the table summarizes the output for R-squared, including its F-test, it’s degrees of freedom, and the p-value. (We will talk about adjusted R-square in [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4))

We can also use the confint function to obtain confidence intervals for the regression coefficients. Use help to find out more about the confint function.

confint(mod)

2.5 % 97.5 %  
(Intercept) 46.4614556 50.8946120  
ses 0.3166816 0.5418392

Be sure to remember the correct interpretation of confidence intervals: *there is a 95% chance that the interval includes the true parameter value* (not: there is a 95% chance that the parameter falls in the interval). For example, there is a 95% chance that the interval [.32, .54] includes the true regression coefficient for SES.

### 2.11.5 Writing up results

We could write up the results from this analysis in APA format as follows. You should practice doing this kind of thing, because it is important to be able to write up the results of your analyses in a way that people in your area of research will understand.

In this analysis, we considered the relationship between Math Achievement in Grade 8 (percent correct on a math test) and SES (a composite on a scale from ). Regressing Math Achievement on SES, the relationship was positive and statistically significant at the level (, , , ). SES explained about of the variation in Math Achievement (, , ).

### 2.11.6 Additional exercises

If time permits, we will address these additional exercises in class.

These exercises replace achmat08 with

* achrdg08: eighth grade Reading Achievement (percent correct on a reading test)

Please answer the following questions using R.

* Plot achrdg08 against ses.
* What is the correlation between achrdg08 and ses? How does it compare to the correlation with Math and SES?
* How much variation in Reading is explained by SES? Is the proportion of variance explained significant at the .05 level?
* How much do predicted Reading scores increase for a one unit of increase in SES? Is this a statistically significant at the .05 level?
* What are your overall conclusions about the relationship between Academic Achievement and SES in the NELS data? Write up your results using APA formatting or whatever conventions are used in your area of research.

# 3. Two predictors

## 3.1 Interpretations

Multiple regression has three main interpretations:

* Prediction (focus on )
* Causation (focus on )
* Explanation (focus on )

By understanding these interpretations, we will have a better idea of how multiple regression is used in research. Each interpretation also provides a different perspective on the importance of using multiple predictor variables, rather than only a single predictor.

### 3.1.1 Prediction

Prediction was the original use of regression (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regression_toward_the_mean#History>). In the context of simple regression, prediction means using observations of to make a guess about yet unobserved values of . Our guess is , and this is why is called the “predicted value” of .

When making predictions, we usually want some additional information about how precise the predictions are. In OLS regression, this information is provided by the standard error of prediction (**fox-2016?**):

This statistic quantifies our uncertainty when making predictions based on observations of that were not in our original sample. The prediction errors for the NELS example in [Chapter 2](#sec-chap-2) are represented in [Figure 3.1](#fig-pred-error-3) as a gray band around the regression line.

# Plotting library  
library(ggplot2)  
  
# Load data  
load("NELS.RData")  
  
# Run regression   
mod <- lm(achmat08 ~ ses, data = NELS)  
  
# Compute SE(Y-hat)  
n <- nrow(NELS)  
ms\_res <- var(mod$residuals) \* (n-1) / (n-2)  
d\_ses <- NELS$ses - mean(NELS$ses)   
se\_yhat <- sqrt(ms\_res \* (1 + 1/n + d\_ses^2 / sum(d\_ses^2)))  
  
# Plotting  
gg\_data <- data.frame(  
 achmat08 = NELS$achmat08,  
 ses = NELS$ses,  
 y\_hat = mod$fitted.values,  
 lwr = mod$fitted.values - 1.96 \* se\_yhat,  
 upr = mod$fitted.values + 1.96 \* se\_yhat)  
  
ggplot(gg\_data, aes(x = ses, y = achmat08))+  
 geom\_point(color='#3B9CD3', size = 2) +  
 geom\_line(aes(x = ses, y = y\_hat), color = "grey35") +  
 geom\_ribbon(aes(ymin=lwr,ymax=upr),alpha=0.3) +   
 ylab("Math Achievement (Grade 8)") +  
 xlab("SES") +  
 theme\_bw()

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 3.1: Prediction Error for NELS Example. |

We can see in the figure that the error band is quite wide. So, we might wonder how to make our predictions more precise. On way to do this is by including more predictors in the regression model – i.e., multiple regression.

To see why including more predictors improves the precision of predictions, note that the standard error of prediction shown in [Equation 3.1](#eq-se-pred) increases with , which is the variation in the outcome that is *not* explained by the predictor (see [Section 2.4](#sec-rsquared-2)). In most situations, is the largest contributor the prediction error. As we will see below, one way to reduce is by adding more predictors to the model.

#### 3.1.1.1 More about prediction

Regression got its name from a statistical property of predicted scores called “regression toward the mean.” To explain this property, let’s assume and are z-scores (i.e., both variables have and ). Recall that this implies that and , so the regression equation reduces to

Since , the absolute value of the must be less than or equal to that of . And, since both variables have , this implies that is closer to the mean of than is to the mean of . This is sometimes called regression toward the mean.

Although prediction was the original use of regression, many research problems do not involve prediction. For instance, there are no students in the NELS data for whom we need to predict Math Achievement – all of the test scores are already in the data! However, there has been a resurgence of interest in prediction in recent years, especially in machine learning. Although the methods used in machine learning are often more complicated than OLS regression, the basic problem is the same. Because the models are more complicated, theoretical results like [Equation 3.1](#eq-se-pred) are more difficult to obtain. Consequently, machine learning uses data-driven procedures like cross-validation to evaluate model predictions. As one example, we could evaluate the accuracy and precision of out-of-sample predictions by splitting our data into two samples, fitting the model in one sample (the “training data”), and then making predictions in the other sample (the “test data”). [Equation 3.1](#eq-se-pred) is a theoretical result saves us the trouble of doing this with OLS. Machine learning has also introduced some new techniques for choosing which predictors to include in a model (“variable selection” methods like the lasso). We will touch on these topics later in the course when we get to model building.

### 3.1.2 Causation

A causal interpretation of regression means that that changing by one unit will change by units. This is interpreted as a claim about the expected value of “in real life”, not simply a claim about the mechanics of the regression line. In terms of our example, a causal interpretation would state that improving students’ SES by one unit will, on average, cause Math Achievement to increase by about half a percentage point.

The gold standard for inferring causality is to randomly assign people to different treatment conditions. In a regression context, treatment is represented by the independent variable, or the variable. While randomized experiments are possible in some settings, there are many types of variables that we cannot feasibly randomly assign (e.g., SES).

The concept of an omitted variable is used to describe what happens when we can’t (or don’t) randomly assign people to treatment conditions. An omitted variable is any variable that is correlated with both and . In our example, this would be any variable correlated with both Math Achievement and SES (e.g., School Quality). When we use random assignment, we ensure that is uncorrelated with *all* pre-treatment variables – i.e., randomization ensure that there are no omitted variables. However, when we don’t use random assignment, our results may be subject to *omitted variable bias*.

The overall idea of omitted variable bias is the same as “correlation causation”. The take-home message is summarized in the following points, which are stated in terms of the our NELS example.

* Any variable that is correlated with Math Achievement and with SES is called an omitted variable. One example is School Quality. This is an omitted variable because we did not include it as a predictor in our simple regression model.
* The problem is not just that we have an incomplete picture of how School Quality is related to Math Achievement.
* Omitted variable bias means that the predictor variable that *was included in the model* ends up having the wrong regression coefficient. Otherwise stated, the regression coefficient of SES is biased because we did not consider School Quality.
* In order to mitigate omitted variable bias, we want to include plausible omitted variables in our regression models – i.e., multiple regression.

#### 3.1.2.1 Omitted variable bias\*

Omitted variable bias is nicely explained by Gelman and Hill (**gelman-2007?**), and a modified version of their discussion is provided below. We start by assuming a “true” regression model with two predictors. In the context of our example, this means that there is one other variable, in addition to SES, that is important for predicting Math Achievement. Of course, there are many predictors of Math Achievement (see Section [Section 2.1](#sec-example-2)), but we only need two to explain the problem of omitted variable bias.

Write the “true” model as:

where is SES and is any other variable that is correlated with both and (e.g., School Quality).

Next, imagine that instead of using the model in [Equation 3.2](#eq-2parm), we analyze the data using the model with just SES, leading to the usual simple regression:

The problem of omitted variable bias is that – i.e., the regression coefficient in the true model is not the same as the regression coefficient in the model with only one predictor. This is perhaps surprising – leaving out School Quality gives us the wrong regression coefficient for SES!

To see why, start by writing as a function of .

Next we use [Equation 3.4](#eq-X2) to substitute for in [Equation 3.2](#eq-2parm),

Notice that in the last line, is predicted using only , so it is equivalent to [Equation 3.3](#eq-1parm). Based on this comparison, we can write

* $a^\* = \color{orange}{a + \alpha}$
* $b^\*\_1 = \color{green}{b\_1 + b\_2\beta}$

The equation for is what we are most interested in. It shows that the regression parameter in our one-parameter model () is not equal to the “true” regression parameter using both predictors ().

This is what omitted variable bias means – leaving out in Equation [Equation 3.3](#eq-1parm) gives us the wrong regression parameter for . This is one of the main motivations for including more than one predictor variable in a regression model – i.e., to avoid omitted variable bias.

Notice that there two special situations in which omitted variable bias is not a problem:

* When the two predictors are not related – i.e., .
* When the second predictor is not related to – i.e., .

### 3.1.3 Explanation

Many uses of regression fall somewhere between prediction and causation. We want to do more than just predict outcomes of interest, but we often don’t have a basis for making the strong assumptions required for a causal interpretation of regression coefficients. This grey area between prediction and causation can be referred to as explanation.

In terms of our example, we might want to explain why eighth graders differ in their Math Achievement. There are large number of potential reasons for individual difference in Math Achievement, such as

* Student factors
  + attendance
  + past academic performance in Math
  + past academic performance in other subjects (Question: why include this?)
  + …
* School factors
  + their ELA teacher
  + the school they attend
  + their peers
  + …
* Home factors
  + SES
  + maternal education
  + paternal education
  + parental expectations
  + …

When the goal of an analysis is explanation, it usual to focus on the proportion of variation in the outcome variable that is explained by the predictors, i.e., R-squared (see [Section 2.4](#sec-rsquared-2)). Later in the course we will see how to systematically study the variance explained by individual predictors, or blocks of several predictors (e.g., student factors).

Note that even a long list of predictors such as that above leaves out potential omitted variables. While the addition of more predictors can help us explain more of the variation in Math Achievement, it is rarely the case that we can claim that all relevant variables have been included in the model.

## 3.2 An example from ECLS

In the remainder of this chapter we will consider a new example from the 1998 Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS; <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>). Below is a description of the data from the official NCES codebook (page 1-1 of <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/data/ECLSK_K8_Manual_part1.pdf>):

*The ECLS-K focuses on children’s early school experiences beginning with kindergarten and ending with eighth grade. It is a multisource, multimethod study that includes interviews with parents, the collection of data from principals and teachers, and student records abstracts, as well as direct child assessments. In the eighth-grade data collection, a student paper-and-pencil questionnaire was added. The ECLS-K was developed under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Westat conducted this study with assistance provided by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey.*

*The ECLS-K followed a nationally representative cohort of children from kindergarten into middle school. The base-year data were collected in the fall and spring of the 1998–99 school year when the sampled children were in kindergarten. A total of 21,260 kindergartners throughout the nation participated*.

The subset of the ECLS-K data used in this class was obtained from the link below.

<http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/_author/ware-9780415996006/data.php>

The codebook for this subset of data is available on our course website. In this chapter, we will be using a even smaller subset of cases from the example data set (the ECLS250.RData data)

We focus on the following three variables.

* Math Achievement in the first semester of Kindergarten. This variable can be interpreted as the number of questions (out of 60) answered correctly on a math test. Don’t worry – the respondents in this study did not have to write a 60-question math test in the first semester of K! Students only answered a few of the questions and their scores were re-scaled to be out a total of 60 questions afterwards.
* Socioecomonic Status (SES), which is a composite of household factors (e.g., parental education, household income) ranging from 30-72.
* Approaches to Learning (ATL), which is a teacher-reported measure of behaviors that affect the ease with which children can benefit from the learning environment. It includes six items that rate the child’s attentiveness, task persistence, eagerness to learn, learning independence, flexibility, and organization. The items have 4 response categories (1-4), with higher values representing more positive responses, and ATL is scored as an unweighted average the six items.

### 3.2.1 Correlation matrices

As was the case in simple regression, the correlation coefficient is a building block of multiple regression. So, we will start by examining the correlations in our example. We also introduce a new way of presenting correlations, the correlation matrix. The notation developed in this section will appear throughout the rest of the chapter.

In the scatter plots below, the panels are arranged in matrix format. The variables named in the diagonal panels correspond to the vertical () axis in that row and the horizontal () axis in that column. For example, Math is in the first diagonal, so it is the variable on vertical axis in the first row and the horizontal axis in the first column. This can be a bit confusing at first, so take a moment to make sure you know which variable is on which axis in each plot. Also notice that plots below the diagonal are just mirror image of the plots above the diagonal.

load("ECLS250.RData")  
attach(ecls)  
example\_data <- data.frame(c1rmscal, wksesl, t1learn)  
names(example\_data) <- c("Math", "SES", "ATL")  
pairs(example\_data , col = "#4B9CD3")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 3.2: ECLS Example Data. |

The format of [Figure 3.2](#fig-pairs-3) is the same as that of the correlation matrix among the variables, which is shown below.

cor(example\_data)

Math SES ATL  
Math 1.0000000 0.4384619 0.3977048  
SES 0.4384619 1.0000000 0.2877015  
ATL 0.3977048 0.2877015 1.0000000

Again, notice that the entries below the diagonal are mirrored by the entries above the diagonal. We can see that SES and ATL have similar correlations with Math Achievement (0.4385 and 0.3977, respectively), and are also moderately correlated with each other (0.2877).

In order to represent the correlation matrix among a single outcome variable () and two predictors ( and ) we will use the following notation:

In this notation, is the correlation between and . Note that each correlation coefficient (“”) has two subscripts that tell us which two variables are being correlated. For the outcome variable we use the subscript , and for the two predictors we use the subscripts and . The order of the predictors doesn’t matter but we use the subscripts to keep track of which is which. In our example, is SES and is ATL.

As with the numerical examples, the values below the diagonal mirror the values above the diagonal. So, we really just need the three correlations shown in the matrix below.

The three correlations are interpreted as follows:

* - the correlation between the outcome () and the first predictor ().
* - the correlation between the outcome () and the second predictor ().
* - the correlation between the two predictors.

**If you have questions about how scatter plots and correlations can be presented in matrix format, please write them down now and share them class.**

## 3.3 The two-predictor model

In the ECLS example, we can think of Kindergarteners’ Math Achievement as the outcome variable, with SES and Approaches to Learning as potential predictors / explanatory variables. The multiple regression model for this example can be written as

where

* denotes the predicted Math Achievement
* SES and ATL (it doesn’t matter which predictor we denote as or )
* and are the regression slopes
* The intercept is denoted by (rather than ).

Just like simple regression, the residual for [Equation 3.5](#eq-yhat-3) is defined as and the model can be equivalently written as . Also, remember that you can write out the model using the variable names in place of and if that helps keep track of all the notation. For example,

As mentioned in [Chapter 2](#sec-chap-2), feel free to use whatever notation works best for you.

You might be wondering, what is the added value of multiple regression compared to the correlation co-efficients reported in the previous section? Well, correlations only consider two-variables-at-a-time. Multiple regression let’s us further consider how the predictors work together to explain variation in the outcome, and to consider the relationship between each predictor and the outcome while holding the other predictors constant. In the context of our example, multiple regression let’s us address the following questions:

* How much of variation in Math Achievement do both predictors explain together?
* What is the relationship between Math Achievement and ATL if we hold SES constant?
* Similarly, what is the relationship between Math Achievement and SES if we hold ATL constant?

Notice that this is different from simple regression – simple regression was just a repackaging of correlation, but multiple regression is something new.

## 3.4 OLS with two predictors

We can estimate the parameters of the two-predictor regression model in [Equation 3.5](#eq-yhat-3) model using same approach as for simple regression. We do this by choosing the values of that minimize

Solving the minimization problem (setting derivatives to zero) leads to the following equations for the regression coefficients. Remember, the subscript denotes the first predictor and the subscript denotes the second predictor – see [Section 3.2](#sec-ecls-3) for notation. Also note that represents standard deviations.

As promised, these equations are more complicated than for simple regression :) The next section addresses the interpretation of the regression coefficients.

## 3.5 Interpreting the coefficients

An important part of using multiple regression is getting the correct interpretation of the regression coefficients. The basic interpretation is that the slope for SES represents how much predicted Math Achievement changes for a one unit increase of SES, *while holding ATL constant.* (The same interpretation holds when switching the predictors.) The important difference with simple regression is the “holding the other predictor constant” part, so let’s dig into it.

### 3.5.1 “Holding the other predictor constant”

Let’s start with the regression model for the predicted values:

If we increase by one unit and hold constant, we get new predicted value (denoted with an asterisk):

The difference between and is how much the predicted value changes for a one unit increase in SES, while holding ATL constant:

In words: the multiple regression coefficient tells us how the much the predicted value changes for a one unit increase in the predictor, while holding the other predictor(s) constant.

This why we interpret the regression coefficients in multiple regression differently than simple regression. In simple regression, the slope is just a re-scaled version of the correlation. In multiple regression, the slope of each predictor is interpreted in terms of the “effect” of that predictor, while holding the other predictor(s) constant. This is sometimes referred to as “ceteris paribus,” which is Latin for “with other conditions remaining the same.” So, we could say that multiple regression is a statistical way of making ceteris paribus arguments.

Note that the interpretation of the regression intercept is basically the same as for simple regression: it is the value of when and (i.e., still not very interesting).

### 3.5.2 “Controlling for the other predictor”

Another interpretation of the regression coefficients is in terms of the equations for and presented in [Section 3.4](#sec-ols-3). For example, the equation for is

This is the same equation as from [Section 3.4](#sec-ols-3), but the correlation between the predictors is shown in red. Note that if the predictors are uncorrelated (i.e., $\color{red}{r^2\_{12}}$ = 0) then

which is just the regression coefficient from simple regression ([Section 2.3](#sec-ols-2)).

In general, the formulas for the regression slopes in the two-predictor model are more complicated because they “control for” or “account for” the relationship between the predictors. In simple regression, we only had one predictor, so we didn’t need to account for how the predictors were related to each other.

The equations for the regression coefficients show that, if the predictors are uncorrelated, then doing a multiple regression is just the same thing as doing simple regression multiple times. However, most of the time our predictors will be correlated, and multiple regression “controls for” the relationship between the predictors when examining the relationship between each predictor and the outcome.

### 3.5.3 The ECLS example

Below, the R output from the ECLS example is reported. **Please provide a written explanation of the regression coefficients for SES and ATL. If you have questions about how to interpret the coefficients, please also note them now and be prepared to share them in class. Note that this question is not asking about whether the coefficients are significant – it is asking what the numbers in the first column of the Coefficients table mean.**

# Run the regression model and print output  
mod1 <- lm(c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

### 3.5.4 Standardized coefficients

One question that arises in the interpretation of the example is the relative contribution of the two predictors to Kindergartener’s Math Achievement. In particular, the regression coefficient for ATL is 10 times larger than the regression coefficient for SES – does this mean that ATL is 10 times more important than SES?

The short answer is, “no.” ATL is on a scale of 1-4 whereas SES ranges from 30-72. In order to make the regression coefficients more comparable, we can standardize the variables so that they have the same variance. Many researchers go a step further and standardize all of the variables to be z-scores with M = 0 and SD = 1. The resulting regression coefficients are often called -coefficients or -weights ( is pronounced “beta”).

The -weights are related to the regular regression coefficients from [Section 3.4](#sec-ols-3):

A similar expression holds for .

Note that the lm function in R does not provide an option to report standardized output. So, if you want to get the -coefficients in R, it’s easiest to just standardized the variables first and then do the regression with the standardized variables.

Regardless of how you compute them, the interpretation of the -coefficients is in terms of the standard deviation units of both the variable and the variable – e.g., increasing by one standard deviation changes by standard deviations (holding the other predictors constant).

# Unlike other software, R doesn't have a convenience functions for beta coefficients.   
z\_example\_data <- as.data.frame(scale(example\_data))  
z\_mod <- lm(Math ~ SES + ATL, data = z\_example\_data)  
summary(z\_mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = Math ~ SES + ATL, data = z\_example\_data)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-1.9590 -0.5604 -0.1493 0.4569 4.1043   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 1.337e-15 5.416e-02 0.000 1   
SES 3.533e-01 5.666e-02 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
ATL 2.961e-01 5.666e-02 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 0.8563 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

We should be careful when using beta-coefficients to “ease” the comparison of predictors. In the context of our example, we might wonder whether the overall cost of raising a child’s Approaches to Learning by 1 SD is comparable to the overall cost of raising their family’s SES by 1 SD. In general, putting variables on the same scale is only a superficial way of making comparisons among their regression coefficients.

**Please write down an interpretation of the of beta (standardized) regression coefficients in the above output. Your interpretation should include reference to the fact that the variables have been standardized. Based on this analysis, do you think one predictor is more important than the other? Why or why not? Please be prepared to share your interpretations / questions in class!**

## 3.6 (Multiple) R-squared

R-squared in multiple regression has the same general formula and interpretation as in simple regression. The formula is

and it is interpreted as the proportion of variance in the outcome variable that is “associated with” or “explained by” its linear relationship with the predictor variables.

As discussed below, we can also say a bit more about R-squared in multiple regression.

### 3.6.1 Relation with simple regression

Like the regression coefficients in [Section 3.4](#sec-ols-3), the equation for R-squared can also be written in terms of the correlations among the three variables:

If the correlation between the predictors is zero, then this equation simplifies to

In words: When the predictors are uncorrelated, their total contribution to variance explained is just the sum of their individual contributions.

However, when the predictors are correlated, either positively or negatively, it can be show that

In other words: correlated predictors jointly explain less variance than if we added the contributions of each predictor considered separately. Intuitively, this is because correlated predictors share some variation with each other. If we considered the predictors one at a time, we double-count their shared variation.

The interpretation of R-squared for one versus two predictors can be explained in terms of the following Venn diagram.

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 3.3: Shared Variance Among , , and . |

In the diagram, the circles represent the variance of each variable and the overlap between circles represents their shared variance (i.e., the R-squared for each pair of variables). When we conduct a multiple regression, the variance in the outcome explained by both predictors is equal to the sum of the areas A + B + C. If we instead conduct two simple regressions and then add up the R-squared values, we would double count the area labelled “B”.

The Venn diagram in [Figure 3.3](#fig-venn-diagram) is also useful for understanding other aspects of multiple regression. **In the lesson we will discuss the following questions. Please write down your answers now so you are prepared to contribute to the discussion:**

* **Which area represents the correlation between the predictors?**
* **Which areas represent the regression coefficients from multiple regression?**
* **Which areas represent the regression coefficients from simple regression?**

### 3.6.2 Adjusted R-squared

The sample R-squared is an upwardly biased estimate of the population R-squared. The adjusted R-squared corrects this bias. This section explains the main ideas.

The bias of R-squared is illustrated in the figure below. In the example, we are considering simple regression (one predictor), and we assume that the population correlation between the predictor and the outcome is zero (i.e., ).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 3.4: Sampling Distribution of and when $ ho = 0$. |

In the left panel, we can see that “un-squared” correlation, , has a sampling distribution that is centered at the true value . This means that is an unbiased estimate of .

But in the right panel, we can see that the sampling distribution of the squared correlation, , must have a mean greater than zero. This is because all of the sample-to-sample deviations in left panel are now positive (because they have been squared). Since the average value of is greater than 0, is an upwardly biased estimate of .

The adjusted R-squared corrects this bias. The formula for the adjustment is:

where is the number of predictors in the model.

The formula contains two main terms, the proportion of residual variance, , and the adjustment factor (the ratio of to ). We can understand how the adjustment works by considering these two terms.

First, it can be seen that the adjustment factor is larger when the number of predictors, , is large relative to the sample size, . So, roughly speaking, the adjustment will be more severe when there are a lot of predictors in the model relative to the sample size.

Second, it can also be seen that the adjustment proportional to . This means that the adjustment is more severe if the model explains less variance in the outcome. For example, if and the adjustment factor is , then adjusted . In this case the adjustment is a decrease of 1% of variance explained. But if we start off explaining less variance, say and use the same adjustment factor, then adjusted . Now the adjustment is a decrease of 9% variance explained, even though we didn’t change the adjustment factor.

In summary, the overall interpretation of adusted R-squared is as follows: the adjustment will be larger when there are lots of predictors in the model but they don’t explain much variance in the outcome. This situation is sometimes called “overfitting” the data, so we can think of adjusted R-squared as a correction for overfitting.

There is no established standard for when you should reported R-squared or adjusted R-squared. I recommend that you report both whenever they would would lead to different substantive conclusions. We can discuss this more in class.

### 3.6.3 The ECLS example

As shown in [Section 3.5.4](#sec-beta-3), the R-squared for the ECLS example is equal to .2726 and the adjusted R-squared is equal to .2668. **Please write down your interpretation of these value and be prepared to share your answer in class.**

## 3.7 Inference

There isn’t really any thing new that about inference with multiple regression, except the formula for the standard errors (see (**fox2016?**) chap.6). We present the formulas for an abribrary number of predictors, denoted .

### 3.7.1 Inference for the coefficients

In multiple regression

In this formula, denotes the number of predictors and is the R-squared that results from regressing predictor on the other predictors (without the variable).

Notice that the first part of the standard error (before the “”) is the same as simple regression (see [Section 2.7](#sec-inference-2)). The last part, which includes , is different and we talk about it more below.

The standard errors can be used to construct t-tests and confidence intervals using the same approach as for simple regression (see [Section 2.7](#sec-inference-2)). The degrees of freedom for the t-distribution is . This formula for the degrees of freedom applies to simple regression too, where .

### 3.7.2 Precision of

We can use [Equation 3.6](#eq-se-3) to understand the factors that influence the size of the standard errors of the regression coefficients. Recall that standard errors describe the sample-to-sample variability of a statistic. If there is a lot sample-to-sample variability, the statistic is said to be imprecise. [Equation 3.6](#eq-se-3) shows us what factors make more or less precise.

* The standard errors *decrease* with
  + The sample size,
  + The proportion of variance in the outcome explained by the predictors,
* The standard errors *increase* with
  + The number of predictors,
  + The proportion of variance in the predictor that is explained by the other predictors,

So, large sample sizes and a large proportion of variance explained lead to precise estimates of the regression coefficients. On the other hand, including many predictors that are highly correlated with each other leads to less precision. In particular, the situation where approaches the value of is called *multicollinearity*. We will talk about multicollinearity in more detail in [Chapter 5](#sec-chap-5).

### 3.7.3 Inference for R-squared

The R-squared statistic in multiple regression tells us how much variation in the outcome is explained by all of the predictors together. If the predictors do not explain any variation, then the population R-squared is equal to zero.

Notice that implies (in the population). So, testing the significance of R-squared is equivalent to testing whether any of the regression parameters are non-zero. When we addressed ANOVA last semester, we called this the omnibus hypothesis. But in regression analysis, it is usually just referred to as a test of R-squared.

The null hypothesis can be tested using the statistic

which has an F-distribution on and degrees of freedom when the null hypothesis is true.

### 3.7.4 The ECLS example

The R output for the ECLS example is presented (again) below. **Please write down your conclusions about the statistical significance of the predictors and the R-squared statistic, and be prepared to share your answer in class. Please also write down the factors that affect the precision of the regression coefficients. This would be a good opportunity to practice APA formatting.**

summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

## 3.8 Workbook

This section collects the questions asked in this chapter. The lesson for this chapter will focus on discussing these questions and then working on the exercises in [Section 3.9](#sec-exercises-3). The lesson will **not** be a lecture that reviews all of the material in the chapter! So, if you haven’t written down / thought about the answers to these questions before class, the lesson will not be very useful for you. Please engage with each question by writing down one or more answers, asking clarifying questions about related material, posing follow up questions, etc.

[Section 3.2](#sec-ecls-3)

If you have questions about the interpretation of a correlation matrix (below) or pairwise plots (see [Section 3.2](#sec-ecls-3)), please write them down now and share them class.

Numerical output for the ECLS example:

cor(example\_data)

Math SES ATL  
Math 1.0000000 0.4384619 0.3977048  
SES 0.4384619 1.0000000 0.2877015  
ATL 0.3977048 0.2877015 1.0000000

Mathematical notation for formulas

[Section 3.5](#sec-interpretation-3)

Below, the R output from the ECLS example is reported. Please provide a written explanation of the regression coefficients for SES and ATL. If you have questions about how to interpret the coefficients, please also note them now and be prepared to share them in class. Note that this question is not asking about whether the coefficients are significant – it is asking what the numbers in the first column of the Coefficients table mean.

# Run the regression model and print output  
mod1 <- lm(c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

[Section 3.5.4](#sec-beta-3)

Please write down an interpretation of the of beta (standardized) regression coefficients in the output below. Your interpretation should include reference to the fact that the variables have been standardized. Based on this analysis, do you think one predictor is more important than the other? Why or why not?

# Unlike other software, R doesn't have a convenience functions for beta coefficients.   
z\_example\_data <- as.data.frame(scale(example\_data))  
z\_mod <- lm(Math ~ SES + ATL, data = z\_example\_data)  
summary(z\_mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = Math ~ SES + ATL, data = z\_example\_data)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-1.9590 -0.5604 -0.1493 0.4569 4.1043   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 1.337e-15 5.416e-02 0.000 1   
SES 3.533e-01 5.666e-02 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
ATL 2.961e-01 5.666e-02 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 0.8563 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

[Section 3.6](#sec-rsquared-3)

The Venn diagram below is useful for understanding multiple regression. In the lesson we will discuss the following questions. Please write down your answers now so you are prepared to contribute to the discussion:

* Which area represents the correlation between the predictors?
* Which areas represent the R-squared from multiple regression?
* Which areas represent the R-squared from simple regression?
* Which areas represent the regression coefficients from multiple regression?
* Which areas represent the regression coefficients from simple regression?

|  |
| --- |
| Shared Variance Among , , and . |

* Last question: The R-squared for the ECLS example is equal to .2726 and the adjusted R-squared is equal to .2668. Please write down your interpretation of these value and be prepared to share your answer in class.

[Section 3.7](#sec-inference-3)

The R output for the ECLS example is presented (again) below. Please write down your conclusions about the statistical significance of the predictors and the R-squared statistic, and be prepared to share your answer in class. This would be a good opportunity to practice APA formatting. Please also write down the factors that negatively affect the precision of the regression coefficients and address whether you think they are problematic for the example.

summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

## 3.9 Exercises

These exercises collect all of the R input used in this chapter into a single step-by-step analysis. It explains how the R input works, and provides some additional exercises. We will go through this material in class together, so you don’t need to work on it before class (but you can if you want.)

Before staring this section, you may find it useful to scroll to the top of the page, click on the “</> Code” menu, and select “Show All Code.”

### 3.9.1 The ECLS250 data

Let’s start by getting our example data loaded into R.

Make sure to download the file ECLS250.RData from Canvas and then double click the file to open it

load("ECLS250.RData") # load new example  
attach(ecls) # attach   
  
# knitr and kable are just used to print nicely -- you can just use head(ecls[, 1:5])   
knitr::kable(head(ecls[, 1:5]))

| caseid | gender | race | c1rrscal | c1rrttsco |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 960 | 2 | 1 | 28 | 58 |
| 113 | 1 | 8 | 14 | 39 |
| 1828 | 1 | 1 | 22 | 50 |
| 1693 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 50 |
| 643 | 2 | 1 | 14 | 39 |
| 772 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 49 |

The naming conventions for these data are bit challenging.

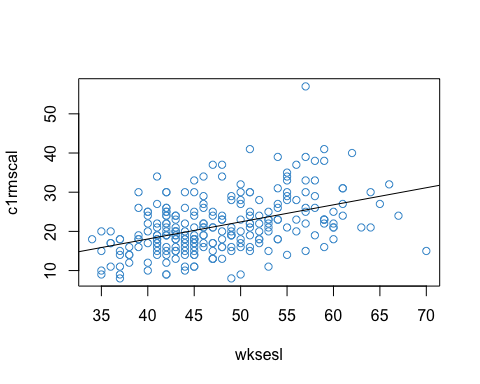
* Variable names begin with c, p, or t depending on whether the respondent was the child, parent, or teacher. Variables that start with wk were created by the ECLS using other data sources available in during the kindergarten year of the study.
* The time points (1-4 denoting fall and spring of K and Gr 1) appear as the second character.
* The rest of the name describes the variable.

The variables we will use for this illustration are:

* c1rmscal: Child’s score on a math assessment, in first semester of Kindergarten . The scores can be interpreted as number of correct responses out of a total of approximately 60 math exam questions.
* wksesl: An SES composite of household factors (e.g., parental education, household income) ranging from 30-72.
* t1learn: Approaches to Learning Scale (ATLS), teacher reported in first semester of kindergarten. This scale measures behaviors that affect the ease with which children can benefit from the learning environment. It includes six items that rate the child’s attentiveness, task persistence, eagerness to learn, learning independence, flexibility, and organization. The items have 4 response categories (1-4), so that higher values represent more positive responses, and the scale is an unweighted average the six items.

To get started lets produce the simple regression of Math with SES. This is another look at the relationship between Academic Achievement and SES that we discussed in Chapter [Chapter 2](#sec-chap-2)). If you do not feel comfortable running this analysis or interpreting the output, take another look at [Section 2.11](#sec-exercises-2).

plot(x = wksesl,   
 y = c1rmscal,   
 col = "#4B9CD3")  
  
mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ wksesl)  
abline(mod)



summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-16.1314 -4.3549 -0.8486 3.6775 31.5358   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 0.61595 2.73925 0.225 0.822   
wksesl 0.43594 0.05674 7.683 3.61e-13 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.482 on 248 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1922, Adjusted R-squared: 0.189   
F-statistic: 59.03 on 1 and 248 DF, p-value: 3.612e-13

cor(wksesl, c1rmscal)

[1] 0.4384619

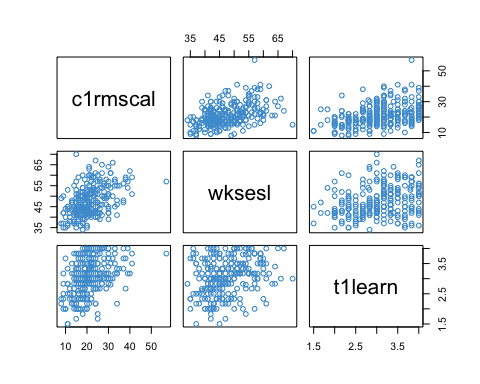
### 3.9.2 Multiple regression with lm

First, let’s tale a look at the “zero-order” relationship among the three variables. This type of descriptive, two-way analysis is a good way to get familiar with your data before getting into multiple regression. We can see that the variables are all moderately correlated and their relationships appear reasonably linear.

# Use cbind to create a data.frame with just the 3 variables we want to examine  
data <- cbind(c1rmscal, wksesl, t1learn)  
  
# Correlations  
cor(data)

c1rmscal wksesl t1learn  
c1rmscal 1.0000000 0.4384619 0.3977048  
wksesl 0.4384619 1.0000000 0.2877015  
t1learn 0.3977048 0.2877015 1.0000000

# Scatterplots  
pairs(data, col = "#4B9CD3")



In terms of input, multiple regression with lm is similar to simple regression. The only difference is the model formula. To include more predictors in a formula, just include them on the right hand side, separated by at + sign.

* e.g, Y ~ Χ1 + Χ2

For our example, let’s consider the regression of math achievement on SES and Approaches to Learning. We’ll save our result as mod1 which is short for “model one”.

mod1 <- lm(c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

We can see from the output that regression coefficient for t1learn is about 3.5. This means that, as the predictor increases by a single unit, children’s predicted math scores increase by 3.5 points (out of 60), after controlling for the SES. You should be able to provide a similar interpretation of the regression coefficient for wksesl. Together, both predictors accounted for about 27% of the variation in students’ math scores. In education, this would be considered a pretty strong relationship.

We will talk about the statistical tests later on. For now let’s consider the relationship with simple regression.

### 3.9.3 Relations between simple and multiple regression

First let’s consider how the two simple regression compare to the multiple regression with two variables. Here is the relevant output:

# Compare the multiple regression output to the simple regressions  
mod2a <- lm(c1rmscal ~ wksesl)  
summary(mod2a)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-16.1314 -4.3549 -0.8486 3.6775 31.5358   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 0.61595 2.73925 0.225 0.822   
wksesl 0.43594 0.05674 7.683 3.61e-13 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.482 on 248 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1922, Adjusted R-squared: 0.189   
F-statistic: 59.03 on 1 and 248 DF, p-value: 3.612e-13

mod2b <- lm(c1rmscal ~ t1learn)  
summary(mod2b)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.399 -4.211 -0.997 3.770 31.844   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 7.0394 2.1485 3.276 0.0012 \*\*   
t1learn 4.7301 0.6929 6.826 6.66e-11 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.618 on 248 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1582, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1548   
F-statistic: 46.6 on 1 and 248 DF, p-value: 6.665e-11

The important things to note here are

* The regression coefficients from the simple models ( and ) are larger than the regression coefficients from the two-predictor model. Can you explain why? (Hint: see Section [Section 3.5](#sec-interpretation-3).
* The R-squared values in the two simple models (.192 + .158 = .350) add up to more than the R-squared in the two-predictor model (.273). Again, take a moment to think about why before reading on. (Hint: see Section [Section 3.6](#sec-rsquared-3).)

### 3.9.4 Inference with 2 predictors

Let’s move on now to consider the statistical tests and confidence intervals provided with the lm summary output.

For regression with more than one predictor, both the t-tests and F-tests have a very similar construction and interpretation as with simple regression. The main differences are the formulas, not so much the interpretations of the procedures. Some differences:

* The degrees of freedom for both tests now involve , the number of predictors.
* The standard error of the b-weight is more complicated, because it involves the inter-correlation among the predictors.

We can see for mod1 that both b-weights are significant at the .05 level, and so is the R-square. As mentioned previously, it is not usual to interpret or report results on the regression intercept unless you have a special reason to do so (e.g., see the next chapter).

# Revisting the output of mod1  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ wksesl + t1learn)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-14.101 -4.034 -1.075 3.289 29.543   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) -6.05016 2.90027 -2.086 0.038 \*   
wksesl 0.35125 0.05633 6.235 1.94e-09 \*\*\*  
t1learn 3.52125 0.67390 5.225 3.70e-07 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.164 on 247 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.2726, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2668   
F-statistic: 46.29 on 2 and 247 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

### 3.9.5 APA reporting of results

This section shows how we might write out the results of our regression using APA format. When we have a regression model with many predictors, or are comparing among different models, it is more usual to put all the relevant statistics in a table rather than writing them out one by one. We will see how to do that later on in the course. For more info on APA format, see the APA publications manual: [(https://www.apastyle.org/manual)](https://www.apastyle.org/manual).

* The regression of Math Achievement on SES was positive and statistically significant at the .05 level ().
* The regression of Math Achievement on Approaches to Learning was also positive and statistically significant at the .05 level ().
* Together both predictors accounted for about 27% of the variation in Math Achievement (, ), which was also statistically significant at the .05 level ().

# 4. Categorical predictors

So far we have considered examples in which we regress a continuous outcome variable (e.g., Math Achievement) on one or more continuous predictors (SES, Approaches to Learning). In this chapter we consider how regression can be used with categorical predictors.

In an experimental context, the canonical example of a categorical predictor is treatment status (e.g., 1 = treatment group, 0 = control group). Examples of other categorical predictors commonly used in education research include:

* Geographical region / school district (Orange, CH-C, Wake, …)
* Type of school (public, private, charter, religious)
* Which classroom, teacher, or school a student was assigned to
* Gender (if recorded as categorical)
* Race / ethnicity (if recorded as categorical)
* Free / reduced price lunch status
* English language learner status
* Individualized learning plan status
* …

In regression, we deal with these types of predictors using an approach called *contrast coding* (also called *effect coding* or *dummy coding*). In particular, we will address three types of contrast coding:

* The special case of a single binary predictor
* Reference-group coding (called “treatment” contrasts in R)
* Deviation coding (called “sum” contrasts in R)

There are other types of contrast coding out there. We do not attempt an exhaustive review. However, the techniques we use in this chapter can be used with other types of contrast coding.

Along the way we will see that regression with a categorical predictor encompasses the independent samples t-tests of means and one-way ANOVA, both of which we discussed last semester. In the next chapter we will address how to combine categorical and continuous predictors in the same model.

## 4.1 Focus on interpretation

Categorical predictors can be challenging to understand because, depending on the contrast coding used, the model results can appear quite different.

For example, the two models below use the same data and the same variables (Math Achievement regressed on Urbanicity), but their regression coefficients have different values. Why? Because the models used different contrast coding for Urbanicity. In the first model, Urban and Suburban students are compared to Rural students. In the second model, Rural and Suburban students are compared to the unweighted average across all three groups. We talk in more detail about these interpretations in the following sections. For now, the main thing to notice is just that “different contrast coding = different results”.

load("NELS.RData")  
attach(NELS)  
  
# run model with default contrast (treatment / dummy coding)  
egA <- lm(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
# change to sum / deviation contrasts and run again  
contrasts(urban) <- contr.sum(n = 3)  
colnames(contrasts(urban)) <- c("Rural", "Suburban")  
egB <- lm(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
# print  
summary(egA)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 54.9927 0.6885 79.876 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanSuburban 0.6675 0.9117 0.732 0.46439   
urbanUrban 3.1275 1.0480 2.984 0.00298 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

summary(egB)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.2577 0.4021 139.897 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanRural -1.2650 0.5654 -2.237 0.0257 \*   
urbanSuburban -0.5975 0.5299 -1.128 0.2600   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

# Reset to original contrasts  
contrasts(urban) <- contr.treatment(n = 3)  
colnames(contrasts(urban)) <- c("Suburban", "Urban")

Note that the lm output doesn’t explicitly tell us what kind of coding was used. So, we need to know what is going on “under the hood” in order to interpret the output correctly. Also note that the while the *Coefficients* tables of the two models are different, they both explain the same amount of variance in the outcome. So, we could say that both models “fit” the data equally well, but they provide different interpretations of the relationship between Math Achievement and Urbanicity.

The choice of which contrast to use is up to the researcher. This choice should reflect the research questions you want to address. For example, if we wanted to know how Urban and Suburban students differ from Rural students, that is what the first output shows us. If we wanted to know how Suburban and Rural students differ from the overall average, that is what the second output shows us. As we will discuss below, we can’t make all possible comparisons among groups in a single model, so we have to make some compromises when choosing contrasts. Understanding how to align our research questions with the choice of contrasts is a big part of what this chapter is about!

## 4.2 Data and social constructs

Before getting into the math, let’s consider some conceptual points.

First, some terminology. *Binary* means that a variable can take on only two values: 1 and 0. If a variable takes on two values but these are represented with other numbers (e.g., 1 and 2) or with non-numeric values (“male”, “female”), it is called *dichotomous* rather than binary. Otherwise stated, a binary variable is a dichotomous variable whose values are 1 and 0. The term *categorical* is used to describe variables with two or more categories – it includes binary and dichotomous variables, as well as variables with more categories.

Note that encoding a variable as dichotomous does not imply that the underlying social construct is dichotomous. For example, we can encode educational attainment as a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not a person has graduated high school. This does not imply that educational attainment has only two values “irl”, or even that educational attainment is best conceptualized in terms of years of formal education. Nonetheless, for many outcomes of interest it can be meaningful to consider whether individuals have completed high school (e.g., <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/research-summaries/education-earnings.html>).

In general, the way that a variable is encoded in a dataset is not a statement about reality – it reflects a choice made by researchers about how to represent social constructs. When conducting quantitative research, we are often faced with less-than-ideal encodings of social constructs, especially demographic variables. For example, both NELS and ECLS conceptualize gender as dichotomous and use a limited set of mutually exclusive categories for race. These representations are not well aligned with current literature on gender and racial identity. Some recent perspectives on how these issues play into quantitative research are available here: <https://www.sree.org/critical-perspectives>.

Despite the conceptual issues inherent in categorizing social constructs, I would argue that categorical variables often have utility, *especially* in the study of social inequality. Here is an example of why I think gender qua “male/female” is a flawed but important consideration in global education: <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

**Please take a moment to write down your thoughts on the tensions that arise when conceptualizing social constructs such as gender or race as categorical, and I will invite you to share you thoughts in class.**

## 4.3 Binary predictors

Let’s start our interpretation of categorical predictors with the simplest case: a single binary predictor.

[Figure 4.1](#fig-reading-on-gender-4) uses the NELS data to illustrate the regression of Reading Achievement in Grade 8 (achrdg08) on a binary encoding of Gender (female = 0, male = 1). There isn’t a lot going on the plot! However, we can see the conditional distributions of Reading Achievement for each value of Gender, and the means of the two groups are indicated.

# Don't read this unless you really like working on graphics :)   
binary\_gender <- (gender == "Male") \* 1   
plot(binary\_gender, achrdg08,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 xlab = "binary gender (Female = 0, Male = 1)",  
 ylab = "Reading (Grade 8)")  
  
means <- tapply(achrdg08, binary\_gender, mean)  
labels <- c(expression(bar(Y)[0]), expression(bar(Y)[1]))  
  
text(x = c(.1, .9), y = means, labels = labels, cex = 1.5)   
text(x = c(0, 1), y = means, labels = c("\_", "\_"), cex = 2)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 4.1: Reading Achievement on Binary Gender. |

We can represent the relationship between Reading Achievement and Gender using the same simple regression equation from [Section 2.2](#sec-regression-line-2)

and we can still interpret the regression slope in terms of a one-unit increase in . However, since can only take on two values (0 or 1), there are also other interpretations of the regression coefficients. In this section we are interested in the these “more specific” interpretations of regression coefficients when is binary.

The general strategy for approaching the interpretation of regression coefficients with categorical predictors has two steps:

* *Step 1.* Plug the values for into the regression equation to get the predicted values for each group
* *Step 2.* Solve for the coefficients in terms the predicted values.

Looking at [Equation 4.1](#eq-binary-1) we can see that intercept () is equal to the predicted value of Reading Achievement for Females, and [Equation 4.2](#eq-binary-2) shows that the regression slope () is equal to the difference between predicted Reading Achievement for Males and Females.

There is one last detail that is important for interpreting these equations: for a single categorical predictor, the predicted values for each category are just the group means on the variable (see [Section 4.7](#sec-categorical-results-4), which is optional). So, using the notation of [Figure 4.1](#fig-reading-on-gender-4), we can re-write [Equation 4.1](#eq-binary-1) and [Equation 4.2](#eq-binary-2) as

We will use the equivalence between predicted values and group means throughout this chapter. However, it is important to note this equivalence holds only when there is single categorical predictor in the model, and no other predictors. Additional predictors are discussed in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5)

For the example data, regression coefficients are:

# convert "Female / Male" coding to binary  
gender <- NELS$gender  
binary\_gender <- (gender == "Male")\*1  
mod\_binary <- lm(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
coef(mod\_binary)

(Intercept) binary\_gender   
 56.4678022 -0.9223396

**Please take a moment and write down how these two numbers are related to** [**Figure 4.1**](#fig-reading-on-gender-4)**. In particular, what is equal to, what is equal to, and what is their difference equal to?**

### 4.3.1 Relation with t-tests of means

Simple regression with a binary predictor is equivalent to conducting an independent samples t-test in which the variable (Gender) is the grouping variable and the variable (Reading Achievement) is the outcome. The following output illustrates this.

For the regression model (same as above):

summary(mod\_binary)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.7278 -6.1472 0.3784 6.9765 15.0045   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.4678 0.5342 105.703 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
binary\_gender -0.9223 0.7928 -1.163 0.245   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.827 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.00271, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0007076   
F-statistic: 1.353 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 0.2452

For the independent samples t-test (with homogeneity of variance assumed):

t.test(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender, var.equal = T)

Two Sample t-test  
  
data: achrdg08 by binary\_gender  
t = 1.1633, df = 498, p-value = 0.2452  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group 0 and group 1 is not equal to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
 -0.6353793 2.4800586  
sample estimates:  
mean in group 0 mean in group 1   
 56.46780 55.54546

We will go through the comparison between these two outputs in class together. **If you have any questions about the relation between these two sets of output, please note them now and be prepared ask them in class.**

### 4.3.2 Summary

When doing regression with a binary predictor:

* The regression intercept is equal to the mean of the group coded “0”.
* The regression slope is equal to the mean of the group coded “0” subtracted from the mean of the groups coded “1”.
* Testing is equivalent to testing the mean difference
  + i.e., regression with a binary variable is the same as a t-test of means for independent samples

## 4.4 Reference-group coding

Now that we know about regression with a binary predictor, let’s consider how to extend this approach to contrast coding of categorical predictors with categories.

The basic idea is to represent the categories of the predictor in terms of “dummy variables.” Binary coding of a dichotomous predictor is one example of this: We represented a categorical variable with categories using binary predictor.

For predictors with categories, the most common approach to contrast coding is called *reference-group* coding. In R, the approach is called *treatment contrasts* and is the default coding for categorical predictors.

It is called reference-group coding because:

* The researcher chooses a reference-group.
* The intercept is interpreted as the mean of the reference-group.
* The regression slopes are interpreted as the mean differences between the other groups and the reference-group.

Note that reference-group coding is a generalization of binary coding. In the example from [Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4):

* Females were the reference-group.
* The intercept was equal to the mean Reading Achievement for females.
* The regression coefficient was equal to the mean difference between males and females.

The rest of this section considers how to generalize this approach to more than 2 groups.

### 4.4.1 A hypothetical example

[Figure 4.2](#fig-martital-status1) presents a toy example. The data show the Age and marital status (Mstatus) of 16 hypothetical individuals. Marital status is encoded as

* Single
* Married
* Divorced

knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/marital\_status1.png")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 4.2: Toy Martital Status Example. |

These 3 categories are represented by two binary variables, denoted and .

* is a binary variable that is equal to 1 when Mstatus is “married”, and equal to 0 otherwise.
* is a binary variable that is equal to 1 when Mstatus is “divorced”, and equal to 0 otherwise.

The binary variables are often called *dummies* or *indicators*. For example, is a dummy or indicator for married respondents.

In reference-group coding, the group that does not have a dummy variable is the reference group. It is also the group that is coded zero on all of the included dummies. In this example, “Single” is the reference group.

We can more compactly write down the contrast coding in the example using a *contrast matrix* .

This notation is an abbreviated version of the data matrix in [Figure 4.2](#fig-martital-status1). It summarizes how the two indicator variables correspond to the different levels of the categorical variable. As we will see in the [Section 4.9](#sec-exercises-4), contrast matrices are useful for programming in R.

### 4.4.2 Interpreting the regression coefficients

Regressing Age on the dummies we have:

In order to interpret the regression coefficients we can use the same two steps as in [Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4)

* *Step 1.* Plug the values for the variables into the regression equation to get the predicted values for each group
* *Step 2.* Solve for the model parameters in terms the predicted values.

**Using the above equations, please write down an interpretation of the regression parameters for the hypothetical example. (Note: this question is not asking for a numerical answer, it is just asking you to put the above equations into words.)**

### 4.4.3 More than 3 categories

[Figure 4.3](#fig-martital-status2) extends the example by adding another category for Mstatus (“widowed”).

knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/marital\_status2.png")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 4.3: Toy Martital Status Example, Part 2. |

Here we are interested in the model

**Please work through the following questions and be prepared to share your answers in class**

* **How should be coded so that “single” is the reference-group?**
* **Write down the contrast matrix for the example.**
* **Using the two-step approach illustrated above, write out the interpretation of the regression coefficients.**
* **Let’s imagine that we included an additional dummy variable for “Single” in the model. In this case we would have dummies in the model rather than dummies. Please take a moment to write down what you think will happen (Hint: something goes wrong)**

### 4.4.4 Summary

In reference-group coding with a single categorical variable:

* The reference is group is chosen by the analyst – it is the group that is coded zero on all dummies, or the one that has its indicator omitted from the model.
* The intercept is interpreted as the mean of the reference group.
* The regression coefficients of the dummy variables are interpreted as the difference between the mean of the indicated group and the mean of the reference group.

## 4.5 Deviation coding

In some research scenarios, there is a clear reference group. For example, in an experiment, all treatment groups are can be compared to the control group. But in other cases, it is less clear what the reference group should be. In both of the examples we have considered so far (gender and marital status), the choice of reference group was arbitrary.

When there is not a clear reference group, it can be preferable to use other types of contrast coding than reference-group coding. One such approach is called *deviation coding*. In R, this is called *sum-to-zero constrasts*, or *sum* contrasts for short.

The main difference between deviation coding and reference-group coding is the interpretation of the intercept. In deviation coding, it is no longer the mean of the reference-group, but instead represents the mean of all groups’ predicted values. When the groups have equal sample size, the deviation-coded intercept is also equal to overall mean on .

More specifically, in deviation coding:

* The intercept is equal to the mean of the predicted values for each category i.e.,

* When the groups have equal sample sizes (), the intercept is also equal to the overall mean on the outcome variable:

The regression slopes compare the each group to the intercept. Consequently, when the groups have equal sample sizes, the regression slopes are interpreted as the deviation of each group mean from the overall mean, which is why it is called deviation coding.

When the groups have unequal sample size, the situation is a bit more complicated. In particular, we have to weight the predicted values in [Equation 4.5](#eq-unweighted-mean) by the group sample sizes. This is addressed in [Section 4.5.4](#sec-extra1-4) (optional). To clarify that intercept in deviation coding is not always equal to , we refer to it as an “unweighted mean” of group means / predicted scores.

It is important to note that there are still only regression slopes So, one group gets left out of the analysis, and the researcher has to chose which one. This is a shortcoming of deviation coding, which is addressed in [Section 4.5.5](#sec-extra2-4) (optional).

### 4.5.1 A hypothetical example

The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) is an assessment designed to measure young children’s development in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional, and motor domains, in international settings. [Figure 4.4](#fig-idela1) shows the countries in which the IDELA had been used as of 2017 (for more info, see <https://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/libraries/GS_0.pdf>).

knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/idela\_map.png")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 4.4: IDELA Worldwide Usage, 2017. |

If our goal was to compare countries’ IDELA scores, agreeing on which country should serve as the reference group would politically fraught. Therefore, it would be preferable to avoid the problem of choosing a reference group altogether. In particular, deviation coding let’s us compare each country’s mean IDELA score to the (unweighted) mean over all of the countries.

[Figure 4.5](#fig-idela2) presents a toy example. The data show the IDELA scores and Country for 16 hypothetical individuals. The countries considered in this example are

* Ethiopia
* Vietnam
* Boliva

These 3 countries are represented by two binary variables, denoted and .

* is a indicator for Ethiopia
* is a indicator for Vietnam

knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/idela1.png")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 4.5: Toy IDELA Example. |

Note that the dummy variables are different than for the case of reference-group coding discussed in [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4). In deviation coding, the dummies always take on values . The same group must receive the code for all dummies. The group with the value is the group that gets left out of the analysis.

**Please take a moment to write down the contrast matrix for the IDELA example.**

### 4.5.2 Interpreting the regression coefficients

Regressing IDELA on the dummies we have:

In order to interpret the regression coefficients, we proceed using the same two steps as in [Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4) and [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4).

* *Step 1.* Plug the values for into the regression equation to get the predicted values for each group.
* *Step 2.* Solve for the model parameters in terms of the predicted values.

At this point, we want to use the first two lines to substitute in for and in the last line:

In the last line we see that is equal to the (unweighted) mean of the predicted values.

**Using the above equations, please write down an interpretation of the regression parameters for the hypothetical example. (Note: this question is not asking for a numerical answer, it is just asking you to put the above equations into words.)**

### 4.5.3 Summary

In deviation coding with a single categorical variable:

* The intercept is interpreted as the unweighted mean of the groups’ means, which is equal to the overall mean on the variable when the groups have equal sample sizes.
* The regression slopes on the dummy variables are interpreted as the difference between the mean of the indicated group and the unweighted mean of the groups.
* There are still only regression coefficients, so one group gets left out (see extra material for how to get around this).

### 4.5.4 Extra: Deviation coding with unequal sample sizes\*

When groups have unequal sample size, the unweighted mean of the group means is not equial the overall mean of the variable. This is not always a problem. In particular, in the IDELA example, it is reasonable that each country should receive equal weight, even if the size of the samples in each country differed.

However, if you want to compare each groups’ mean to the overall mean on , deviation coding can be adjusted by replacing the dummy-coded value with the ratio of indicated group’s sample size to the omitted group’s sample size. An example for 3 groups is shown below.

You can use the 2-step procedure to show that this coding, called *weighted deviation coding*, results in

Replacing with you can also show that , using the rules of summation algebra.

The punchline: unlike the case for the deviation coding, the intercept in *weighted deviation coding* is always equal to the overall mean on the outcome variance, regardless of the sample sizes of the groups. In R, you can use the package wec for weighted effect coding.

### 4.5.5 Extra: Deviation coding with all groups included\*

Another shortcoming of deviation coding is that it requires leaving one group out of the model. As a work around, one can instead use the following approach. Note that this approach will affect the statistical significance of R-squared, so you should only use it if you aren’t interested in reporting R-squared (or are willing to do some more fiddling around with R).

* Step 1: Center the variable so that .
* Step 2: Compute binary dummy variables (reference-group coding) for all groups,
* Step 3: Regress on the all dummy variables, without the intercept in the model:

Using the two step approach, it is easy to show that the regression coefficients are just the means of the indicated group. Since the overall mean of is zero (because of Step 1), the group means can be interpreted as deviations from the overall mean on .

Using the lm function in R, you can remove the intercept from the model using -1 in the formula syntax:

Y ~ -1 + X1 + ...

As noted, this will affect the statistical significance of R-squared, as reported in summary(lm). So, you shouldn’t use this approach when you want to report R-squared. The next two paragraphs explain why, but the explanation requires some material we won’t discuss until [Chapter 6](#sec-chap-6).

The F-test of R-squared can be computed by comparing two different models, a reference model with no predictors and a focal model with the predictors. The reference model used by lm depends on whether the intercept is included in the focal model. If the focal model has an intercept, the reference model also has an intercept. In the focal model omits the intercept, the reference also omits the intercept.

In the present context, the focal model omits the intercept and use dummies This model has the same R-squared as if we had used the intercept and dummies. However, the F-statistic for the test of R-squared (as reported by summary(lm)) is different for the two approaches, because of the choice of reference model. You can change the reference model, but it takes a bit of fiddling around. If you are interested, just ask in class.

## 4.6 Relation with ANOVA

As mentioned in [Chapter 3](#sec-chap-3), the F-test of R-squared is equivalent to simultaneously testing whether all of the regression slopes are equal to zero. In symbols:

Testing

is equivalent to testing

We have see above that the regression slopes the regression coefficient of dummy variables can be interpreted in terms of group-mean differences. For example, under reference-group coding, we can re-write the null hypothesis above as:

In this notation, we let denote the reference group. If we add $\_C $ to each equality in the null hypothesis, we have

Note that this is the same null hypothesis as one-way ANOVA – i.e., all the group means are equal. Consequently, the F-test of R-squared using a categorical predictor is equivalent to the F-test of the omnibus hypothesis in one-way ANOVA (assuming homoskedasticity). In [Section 4.9](#sec-exercises-4), we show how the two approaches produce the same numerical values.

Although regression with a categorical predictor is mathematically equivalent to one-way ANOVA, you may have noticed that the two approahces are not used in the same way. In ANOVA, we first conduct an F-test of the omnibus hypothesis, and, if the test is significant, we follow-up by comparing the groups using procedures that control for familywise error rate. In regression, we just report the F-test along with the test of the individual contrasts, without any discussion of familywise error rate control. Which approach is correct? Depends who you ask….

## 4.7 More about categorical data\*

Check back later for:

* mean and variance of binary variables
* covariance between binary variables and between binary and continuous
* regression coefficient when X is binary

## 4.8 Workbook

This section collects the questions asked in this chapter. The lesson for this chapter will focus on discussing these questions and then working on the exercises in [Section 4.9](#sec-exercises-4). The lesson will **not** be a lecture that reviews all of the material in the chapter! So, if you haven’t written down / thought about the answers to these questions before class, the lesson will not be very useful for you. Please engage with each question by writing down one or more answers, asking clarifying questions about related material, posing follow up questions, etc.

[Section 4.2](#sec-social-constructs-4)

Please take a moment to write down your thoughts on the tensions that arise when conceptualizing social constructs such as gender or race as categorical, and I will invite you to share you thoughts in class.

[Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4)

Please take a moment to write down how the regression output is related to the Figure. In particular, what is equal to, what is equal to, and what is their difference equal to?

# Don't read this unless you really like working on graphics :)   
binary\_gender <- (gender == "Male") \* 1   
plot(binary\_gender, achrdg08,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 xlab = "binary gender (Female = 0, Male = 1)",  
 ylab = "Reading (Grade 8)")  
  
means <- tapply(achrdg08, binary\_gender, mean)  
labels <- c(expression(bar(Y)[0]), expression(bar(Y)[1]))  
  
text(x = c(.1, .9), y = means, labels = labels, cex = 1.5)   
text(x = c(0, 1), y = means, labels = c("\_", "\_"), cex = 2)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

# convert "Female / Male" coding to binary  
gender <- NELS$gender  
binary\_gender <- (gender == "Male")\*1  
mod\_binary <- lm(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
coef(mod\_binary)

(Intercept) binary\_gender   
 56.4678022 -0.9223396

[Section 4.3.1](#sec-t-test-4)

We will go through the comparison between these two outputs in class together. If you have any questions about the relation between these two sets of output, please note them now and be prepared ask them in class.

Regression with a binary predictor:

summary(mod\_binary)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.7278 -6.1472 0.3784 6.9765 15.0045   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.4678 0.5342 105.703 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
binary\_gender -0.9223 0.7928 -1.163 0.245   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.827 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.00271, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0007076   
F-statistic: 1.353 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 0.2452

Independent samples t-test (with homogeneity of variance assumed):

t.test(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender, var.equal = T)

Two Sample t-test  
  
data: achrdg08 by binary\_gender  
t = 1.1633, df = 498, p-value = 0.2452  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group 0 and group 1 is not equal to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
 -0.6353793 2.4800586  
sample estimates:  
mean in group 0 mean in group 1   
 56.46780 55.54546

[Section 4.4.2](#sec-reference-group-interpretation-4)

Regressing Age on the dummies we have:

In order to interpret the regression coefficients we can use the same two steps as in [Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4)

* *Step 1.* Plug the values for the variables into the regression equation to get the predicted values for each group
* *Step 2.* Solve for the model parameters in terms the predicted values.

Using the above equations, please write down an interpretation of the regression parameters for the hypothetical example. (Note: this question is not asking for a numerical answer, it is just asking you to put the above equations into words.)

[Section 4.4.3](#sec-reference-group-more-than-three-4)

The Mstatus example with 4 categories:

knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/marital\_status2.png")

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Here we are interested in the model:

Please work through the following questions and be prepared to share your answers in class

* How should be coded so that “single” is the reference-group?
* Write down the contrast matrix for the example.
* Using the two-step approach illustrated above, write out the interpretation of the regression coefficients.
* Let’s imagine that we included an additional dummy variable for “Single” in the model. In this case we would have dummies in the model rather than dummies. Please take a moment to write down what you think will happen (Hint: something goes wrong).

[Section 4.5.1](#sec-idela-4)

Please take a moment to write down the contrast matrix for the IDELA example:

[Section 4.5.2](#sec-deviation-interpretation-4)

Regressing IDELA on the dummies we have:

In order to interpret the regression coefficients, we proceed using the same two steps as in [Section 4.3](#sec-binary-predictors-4) and [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4).

* *Step 1.* Plug the values for into the regression equation to get the predicted values for each group.
* *Step 2.* Solve for the model parameters in terms of the predicted values.

At this point, we want to use the first two lines to substitute in for and in the last line, which leads to

In the last line we see that is equal to the (unweighted) mean of the predicted values.

Using the above equations, please write down an interpretation of the regression parameters for the hypothetical example. (Note: this question is not asking for a numerical answer, it is just asking you to put the above equations into words.)

## 4.9 Exercises

These exercises provide an overview of contrast coding with categorical predictors in R. Two preliminary topics are also discussed: linear regression with a binary predictor, and the factor data class in R. We will go through this material in class together, so you don’t need to work on it before class (but you can if you want.)

Before staring this section, you may find it useful to scroll to the top of the page, click on the “</> Code” menu, and select “Show All Code.”

### 4.9.1 A single binary predictor

Regression with a single binary predictor is equivalent to the independent samples t-test of group means. Let’s illustrate this using the NELS dataset with Reading achievement in grade 8 (achrdg08) as the outcome and gender as the predictor. Although gender need not be conceptualized as dichotomous or even categorical, the variable gender reported in NELS data is dichotomous, with values “Female” and “Male”.

To start with, let’s recode gender to binary\_gender by setting Female = 0 and Male = 1. Below we use a little trick for doing this. First we create a logical vector (gender == "Male") and then coerce the logical vector to binary by multiplying it by 1. There are other ways to do this but this approach is pretty easy.

# load("NELS.RData")  
# attach(NELS)  
  
# Note that gender is non-numeric -- it is a factor with levels "Female" and "Male"  
head(gender)

[1] Male Female Male Female Male Female  
Levels: Female Male

class(gender)

[1] "factor"

# A trick to create a binary indicator for males   
binary\_gender <- (gender == "Male") \* 1   
  
# Check that the two variables are telling us the same thing  
table(gender, binary\_gender)

binary\_gender  
gender 0 1  
 Female 273 0  
 Male 0 227

Next we regress Reading Achievement (achrdg08) on binary\_gender and compare this to an independent samples t-test using the same two variables.

# Regression with a binary variable  
mod1 <- lm(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-20.7278 -6.1472 0.3784 6.9765 15.0045   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.4678 0.5342 105.703 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
binary\_gender -0.9223 0.7928 -1.163 0.245   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.827 on 498 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.00271, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0007076   
F-statistic: 1.353 on 1 and 498 DF, p-value: 0.2452

# Compare to the output of t-test  
t.test(achrdg08 ~ binary\_gender, var.equal = T)

Two Sample t-test  
  
data: achrdg08 by binary\_gender  
t = 1.1633, df = 498, p-value = 0.2452  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group 0 and group 1 is not equal to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
 -0.6353793 2.4800586  
sample estimates:  
mean in group 0 mean in group 1   
 56.46780 55.54546

Note that:

* The intercept in mod1 is equal the mean of the group coded 0 (females) in the t-test:
* The b-weight in mod1 is equal to difference between the means:
* The t-test of the b-weight, and its p-value, are equivalent to the t-test of the mean difference (except for the sign):

In summary, a t-test of a b-weight of a binary predictor is equal equivalent to an independent samples t-test of means.

### 4.9.2 Reference-group coding

As discussed in [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4), the basic idea of contrast coding is to replace a categorical variable with categories with “dummy” variables. In reference-group coding, the dummy variables are binary, and the resulting interpretation is:

* The intercept is interpreted as the mean of the reference group. The reference is group is chosen by the analyst – it is the group that is coded zero on all dummies, or the group whose dummy variable is “left out” of the dummy variables.
* The regression coefficients of the dummy variables are interpreted as the difference between the mean of the indicated group and the mean of the reference group

Reference-group coding is the default contrast coding in R. However, in order for contrast coding to be implemented, our categorical predictor needs to be represented in R as a special data type called a factor.

### 4.9.3 Factors in R

Factors are the way that R deals with categorical data. If you want to know if your variable is a factor or not, you can use the functions class or is.factor. Let’s illustrate this with the urban variable from NELS.

# Two ways of checking what type a variable is   
class(urban)

[1] "factor"

is.factor(urban)

[1] TRUE

# Find out the levels of a factor using "levels"  
levels(urban)

[1] "Rural" "Suburban" "Urban"

# Find out what contrast coding R is using for a factor "contrasts"  
contrasts(urban)

Suburban Urban  
Rural 0 0  
Suburban 1 0  
Urban 0 1

In the above code, we see that urban is a factor with 3 levels and the default reference-group contrasts are set up so that Rural is the reference group. Below we will show how to change the contrasts for a variable.

If we are working with a variable that is not a factor, but we want R to treat it as a factor, we can use the factor command. Let’s illustrate this by turning binary\_gender into a factor.

# Change a numeric variable into a factor  
class(binary\_gender)

[1] "numeric"

factor\_gender <- factor(binary\_gender)  
class(factor\_gender)

[1] "factor"

levels(factor\_gender)

[1] "0" "1"

We can also use the levels function to tell R what labels we want it to use for our factor.

# Change the levels of factor\_gender to "F" and "M"  
levels(factor\_gender) <- c("Female", "Male")  
levels(factor\_gender)

[1] "Female" "Male"

### 4.9.4 Back to reference-group coding

OK, back to reference coding. Let’s see what lm does when we regress achrdg08 on urban.

mod2 <- lm(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
summary(mod2)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 54.9927 0.6885 79.876 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanSuburban 0.6675 0.9117 0.732 0.46439   
urbanUrban 3.1275 1.0480 2.984 0.00298 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

In the output, we see that two regression coefficients are reported, one for Suburban and one for Urban. As discussed in [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4), these coefficients are the mean difference between the indicated group and the reference group (Rural).

We can see that Urban students scores significantly higher than Rural students (3.125 percentage points), but there was no significant difference between Rural and Suburban students.

The intercept is the mean of the reference group (Rural) – about 55% on the reading test.

Note the R-squared – Urbanicity accounts for about 2% of the variation reading achievement. As usual, the F-test of R-squared has degrees of freedom and , but now (the number of predictors) is equal to – the number of categories minus one.

### 4.9.5 Changing the reference group

What if we wanted to use a group other than Rural as the reference group? We can chose a different reference group using the cont.treatment function. This function takes two arguments

* n tells R how many levels there
* base tells R which level should be the reference group

# The current reference group is Rural  
contrasts(urban)

Suburban Urban  
Rural 0 0  
Suburban 1 0  
Urban 0 1

# Chance the reference group to the Urban (i.e., the last level)  
contrasts(urban) <- contr.treatment(n = 3, base = 3)  
contrasts(urban)

1 2  
Rural 1 0  
Suburban 0 1  
Urban 0 0

Note that when we first ran contrasts(urban), the column names were names of the levels. But after changing the reference group, the column names are just the numbers 1 and 2. To help interpret the lm output, it is helpful to name the contrast levels appropriately

# Naming our new contrasts  
colnames(contrasts(urban)) <- c("Rural", "Suburban")  
contrasts(urban)

Rural Suburban  
Rural 1 0  
Suburban 0 1  
Urban 0 0

Now we are ready to run our regression again, this time using a different reference group.

mod3 <- lm(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
summary(mod3)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 58.1202 0.7901 73.559 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanRural -3.1275 1.0480 -2.984 0.00298 \*\*   
urbanSuburban -2.4600 0.9907 -2.483 0.01335 \*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

Compared to the output from mod2, note that

* The intercept now represents the mean reading scores of the Urban group, because this is the new reference group.
* The regression coefficients now represent the mean difference between the indicated group with the new reference group.
* The R-square and F-test stay the same – in other words, the total amount of variation explained by the variable Urban does not change, just because we changed the reference group.

### 4.9.6 Deviation coding

It is possible to change R’s default contrast coding to one of the other built-in contrasts (see help(contrasts) for more information on the built-in contrasts).

For instance, to change to deviation coding, we use R’s contr.sum function and tell it how many levels there are for the factor (n). In deviation coding, the intercept is equal to the unweighted mean of the predicted values, and the regression coefficients are difference between the indicated group and the unweighted mean.

contrasts(urban) <- contr.sum(n = 3)  
contrasts(urban)

[,1] [,2]  
Rural 1 0  
Suburban 0 1  
Urban -1 -1

# As above, it is helpful to name the contrasts using "colnames"  
colnames(contrasts(urban)) <- c("Rural", "Suburban")

Now we are all set to use deviation coding with lm.

mod4 <- lm(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
summary(mod4)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.2577 0.4021 139.897 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanRural -1.2650 0.5654 -2.237 0.0257 \*   
urbanSuburban -0.5975 0.5299 -1.128 0.2600   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

Note the following things about the output:

* The regression coefficients compare each group’s mean to the unweighted mean of the groups. Rural and Suburban students are below the unweighted mean, but the difference is only significant for Rural.
* Although the output looks similar to that of mod3, the coefficients are all different and they all have different interpretations. The lm output doesn’t tell us this, we have to know what is going on under the hood.
* The R-square does not change from mod2 – again, the type of contrast coding used doesn’t affect how much variation is explained by the predictor.

### 4.9.7 Extra: Relation to ANOVA

As our next exercise, let’s compare the output of lm and the output of aov – R’s module for Analysis of Variance. If regression and ANOVA are really doing the same thing, we should be able to illustrate it with these two modules. Note that if you check out help(aov), it explicitly states that aov uses the lm function, so, finding that the two approaches give similar output shouldn’t be a big surprise!

# Run our model as an ANOVA  
aov1 <- aov(achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
# Compare the output with lm  
summary(aov1)

Df Sum Sq Mean Sq F value Pr(>F)   
urban 2 741 370.5 4.824 0.00841 \*\*  
Residuals 497 38163 76.8   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

summary(mod2)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 54.9927 0.6885 79.876 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanSuburban 0.6675 0.9117 0.732 0.46439   
urbanUrban 3.1275 1.0480 2.984 0.00298 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.0151   
F-statistic: 4.824 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.008411

If we compare the output from aov to the F-test reported by lm we see that the F-test, degrees of freedom, and p-value are all identical. If we compute eta-squared from aov, we also find that it is equal to the R-squared value from lm.

# Compute eta-squared from aov output  
741 / (741 + 38163)

[1] 0.01904688

In short, ANOVA and regression are doing the same thing: R-squared is the same as eta-squared and the ANOVA omnibus F-test is the same as the F-test of R-squared.

### 4.9.8 Extra: Weighted deviation coding with all groups

This section presents a “hack” for addressing the two main issues with deviation coding noted in [Section 4.5](#sec-deviation-coding-4). This is a hack in the sense that we are working around R’s usual procedures. The result of this hack is to provide deviation coding in which comparisons are made to the grand mean on the outcome for all categories, not just categories. As a side effect, the F-test for the R-squared statistic reported in summary(lm) no longer correct, so we show how to fix that too.

First, note that if if we omit the intercept term, all of the reference-group coded dummies can be included in the model and the regression coefficients now correspond to means of each group. We omit the intercept using -1 in the model formula.

# Omit the intercept using -1  
mod5 <- lm(achrdg08 ~ -1 + urban)  
summary(mod5)

Call:  
lm(formula = achrdg08 ~ -1 + urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
urbanRural 54.9927 0.6885 79.88 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanSuburban 55.6602 0.5976 93.14 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
urbanUrban 58.1202 0.7901 73.56 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.9763, Adjusted R-squared: 0.9761   
F-statistic: 6822 on 3 and 497 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Note the following things about the output:

* The coefficients are no **longer interpreted as mean differences**, just the raw means.
* The R-square and F-test **do** change from mod2. When the intercept is omitted, R-squared can no longer interpretated as a proportion of variance unless the variable variable is centered. When the intercept is omitted, it also changes the degrees of freedom in the F-test, because there are now 3 predictors instead of 2. In general, when the intercept is omitted, R-square and its F-test do not have the usual interpretation, so we need to be careful.

By itself, the “group-means” appoach to contrast coding is not very interesting – we don’t usually want to test whether the group means are different from zero. However, this approach can be used to provide an alternative to deviation coding if we center the variable before using the above approach. After centering, the grand mean of is zero, and so the group means represent deviations from the grand mean (i.e., deviations from zero) and the tests of the regression coefficients are tests of whether the group means are different from the grand mean.

# Center the outcome variable  
dev\_achrdg08 <- achrdg08 - mean(achrdg08)  
  
# Run the regression with group mean coding  
mod6 <- lm(dev\_achrdg08 ~ -1 + urban)  
summary(mod6)

Call:  
lm(formula = dev\_achrdg08 ~ -1 + urban)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-22.3002 -6.1620 0.2098 6.7948 15.5573   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
urbanRural -1.0564 0.6885 -1.534 0.12556   
urbanSuburban -0.3889 0.5976 -0.651 0.51554   
urbanUrban 2.0711 0.7901 2.621 0.00903 \*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 8.763 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.01904, Adjusted R-squared: 0.01312   
F-statistic: 3.216 on 3 and 497 DF, p-value: 0.02264

Note the following things about the output:

* The regression coefficients compare each group’s mean to the overall mean on the outcome. Urban students are significantly above average, Rural and Suburban students are below average but the difference is not significant.
* The R-square is the same as mod2 because the variable is centered, but the F test is not the same as from mod2. The next two paragraphs explain why, but the explanation requires some material we won’t discuss until [Chapter 6](#sec-chap-6).

The F-test of R-squared can be computed by comparing two different models, a reference model with no predictors and a focal model with the predictors. The reference model used by lm depends on whether the intercept is included in the focal model. If the focal model has an intercept, the reference model also has an intercept. In the focal model omits the intercept, the reference also omits the intercept.

In the present context, the focal model omits the intercept and use dummies This model has the same R-squared as if we had used the intercept and dummies. However, the F-statistic for the test of R-squared (as reported by summary(lm)) is different for the two approaches, because of the choice of reference model. You can change the reference model, but it takes a bit of fiddling around. If you are interested, just ask in class.

What all of this mean is that we can compute the “correct” F-test of R-squared by comparing mod6 to a model with just the intercept. The following code shows how to do this.

# A model with only the intercept  
mod7 <- lm(dev\_achrdg08 ~ 1)  
  
# Compute the F-test of comparing mod6 to mod7  
anova(mod6, mod7)

Analysis of Variance Table  
  
Model 1: dev\_achrdg08 ~ -1 + urban  
Model 2: dev\_achrdg08 ~ 1  
 Res.Df RSS Df Sum of Sq F Pr(>F)   
1 497 38163   
2 499 38904 -2 -740.91 4.8244 0.008411 \*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

This is the same F-test reported for mod2, mod3 and mod4 above.

# 5. Interactions

In statistics, the term *interaction* means that the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable. In the context of regression, we are usually interested in the situation where the relationship between the outcome and a predictor depends on another predictor . This situation is also referred to as *moderation* or sometimes as *effect heterogeneity*.

Interactions are a big-picture idea with a lot conceptual power, especially when describing topics related to social inequality or “gaps”. Some examples of interactions are:

* The relationship between wages and years of education depends on gender. This has been called the gender pay gap and it is considered a pretty important issue for gender equality (e.g., <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_pay_gap>).
* The relationship between reading achievement and age depends on race. This has been interpreted in terms of racial inequality in educational outcomes (e.g., <https://cepa.stanford.edu/educational-opportunity-monitoring-project/achievement-gaps/race/>).
* The effect of COVID-19 school shutdowns on academic achievement depended on SES. This has been interpreted in terms of social inequality in access to educational resources outside of schools (e.g., <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime>).

I hope these examples convince you that some of the big issues facing education and society at large are actually about interactions – how the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable. In this chapter we are going to talk about how you can use regression to conduct research on these types of topics.

Some terminology: When we talk about statistical interactions, we often leave the outcome variable implicit and focus on the predictors. For example, the gender pay gap can be described as an interaction between gender and years of education. The outcome variable (wages) is implicit in this description. Throughout this chapter we are exclusively interested in interactions between two predictors at a time, which are called *two-way interactions*. There are actually three variables involved, because a two-way interaction also requires an outcome variable. It is possible to consider “higher-order” interactions (e.g., interactions among three predictors or *three-way interactions*) but we aren’t going to do that here. Sometimes we will use the terminology *main effect* to describe the relationship between each individual predictor and the outcome variable, as distinct from the interactions among the predictors. Up to now, we have be working with main effects only.

We start by considering what happens when both categorical and continuous predictors are used together in a multiple regression model. We use this combination of predictors as bridge from the previous chapter and as a way of digging into the math behind interactions. Later sections will consider what happens when we have interactions between two continuous predictors, or two categorical predictors.

It might be helpful to mention that this chapter gets pretty complicated and is very long (sorry!). It is definitely the hardest material we have covered so far, because we are drawing on everything we have done up to now and adding even more stuff into the mix. So, if these readings feel daunting at moments, that is to be expected. You might consider taking a break and doing the readings in smaller chunks. Also keep in mind that we are going to discuss all of this in class together, so just get what you can from these notes, provide some initial responses to the Workbook questions, and press on. This is where regression starts to get really interesting – you got this!

## 5.1 An example from NELS

For the first few sections of this chapter, we will focus on the gender gap in Math Achievement as our example (e.g., <https://www.nctm.org/Publications/TCM-blog/Blog/Current-Research-on-Gender-Differences-in-Math/>). The t-test reported below uses the NELS data to illustrate the gender gap in Math Achievement in 12th grade. The output shows that, on average, males scored about 3.18 percentage points higher than females on a Grade 12 Math test. This gap isn’t very big. However, it tends to grow rather than get smaller as students progress to higher grades, and it has implications for gender equality in STEM education and STEM professions.

load("NELS.RData")  
attach(NELS)  
t.test(achmat12 ~ gender, var.equal = T)

Two Sample t-test  
  
data: achmat12 by gender  
t = -4.5529, df = 498, p-value = 6.658e-06  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group Female and group Male is not equal to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
 -4.527002 -1.797687  
sample estimates:  
mean in group Female mean in group Male   
 55.47092 58.63326

In this chapter, our goal is to use linear regression to better understand the gender gap in Math Achievement. To help us do this, we will also consider a third variable, Reading Achievement. The plot below shows the relationship between Math Achievement and Reading Achievement estimated just for males (Blue), and the same relationship estimated just for females (Black).

# Create indicators for females and males  
females <- gender == "Female"  
males <- gender == "Male"  
  
# Regress math on reading, for each group separately  
mod1 <- lm(achmat12[females] ~ achrdg12[females])  
mod2 <- lm(achmat12[males] ~ achrdg12[males])  
  
# Plot reading and math for females  
plot(achrdg12[females],   
 achmat12[females],   
 xlab = "Reading",   
 ylab = "Math")  
  
abline(mod1, lwd = 2)  
  
# Add again for males  
points(achrdg12[males],   
 achmat12[males],   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 pch = 2)  
  
abline(mod2, col = "#4B9CD3", lwd = 2)  
  
# Add a legend  
legend(x = "topleft",   
 legend = levels(gender),   
 pch = c(1, 2),   
 col = c(1, "#4B9CD3"))

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.1: Math Achievement, Reading Achievement, and Gender. |

**Please take a minute to think about what this plot is telling us about the relationships among the three variables. In particular:**

* **Does the gender gap in Math Achievement change as a function of Reading Achievement?**
* **Is the relationship between Math Achievement and Reading Achievement the the same for males and females?**
* **What do the results mean for gender equality in Math and STEM education?**

Note that in [Figure 5.1](#fig-math-reading-1), we estimated two separate simple regression models, one just for males and one just for females. In the next few sections, we will work our way towards a single multiple regression model that can be used to represent the relationships among these three variables.

## 5.2 Binary + continuous

Let’s start by considering what happens when we include both Gender and Reading Achievement as predictors of Math Achievement in our usual multiple regression equation:

where

* is Math Achievement in grade 12
* is Reading Achievement in grade 12
* is Gender (binary, with female = 0 and male = 1)

Note that this model does **not** include an interaction between the two predictors – we are first going to consider what is “missing” from the usual regression model, and then use this to motivate inclusion of another predictor that represents the interaction. To get an initial sense of what is missing, the model in [Equation 5.1](#eq-yhat-5a) is plotted in [Figure 5.2](#fig-math-reading-2) using the NELS data – can you spot the difference with [Figure 5.1](#fig-math-reading-1)?

# Run the regression  
mod3 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender, data = NELS)  
  
a\_females <- coef(mod3)[1]  
b\_females <- coef(mod3)[2]  
  
# Get the slope and intercept for males  
a\_males <- a\_females + coef(mod3)[3]  
b\_males <- b\_females   
  
# Plot reading and math for females  
plot(achrdg12[females],   
 achmat12[females],   
 xlab = "Reading",   
 ylab = "Math")  
  
abline(a\_females, b\_females, lwd = 2)  
  
# Add points and line for males  
points(achrdg12[males],   
 achmat12[males],   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 pch = 2)  
  
abline(a\_males, b\_males, col = "#4B9CD3", lwd = 2)  
  
# Add a legend  
legend(x = "topleft",   
 legend = levels(gender),   
 pch = c(1, 2),   
 col = c(1, "#4B9CD3"))

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.2: Math Achievement, Reading Achievement, and Gender (No Interaction). |

In order to interpret our multiple regression model, we can use the same overall approach as we used to interpret categorical predictors in [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4). If we plug-in values for the categorical predictor, we get:

The equations for and are referred to as *simple trends* or *simple slopes*. These describe the regression of Math on Reading, simply for females, or simply for males. The difference between the two simple regression equations is the predicted gender gap in Math Achievement.

Based on these equations we can interpret regression coefficients as follows

* The regression intercept, , is the intercept of the simple trend for the group coded “0” (i.e., the intercept of the regression of Math on Reading, simply for females; see [Equation 5.2](#eq-females1-5)).
* The regression slope for the continuous predictor, , is the slope of both of the simple trends (see [Equation 5.2](#eq-females1-5) and [Equation 5.3](#eq-males1-5))
* The regression slope for the binary predictor, , is the difference between the intercepts of the simple trends (i.e., we add to to get the intercept of the regression of Math on Reading, simply for males; see [Equation 5.3](#eq-males1-5)).
* In this model, is the also the predicted gender gap in Math Achievement (see [Equation 5.4](#eq-gap1-5)).

The regression coefficients for the example data are shown below. **Please use these numbers to provide an interpretation of the simple trends and the gender gap in Math Achievement for the NELS example. (Don’t worry about statistical significance, just focus on the meaning of the coefficients reported in the “Estimate” column.)**

summary(mod3)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender, data = NELS)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.2448 -3.6075 0.3968 3.9836 15.5606   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 19.98122 1.86278 10.727 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.63551 0.03275 19.404 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 3.50166 0.52473 6.673 6.69e-11 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.839 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4538, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4516   
F-statistic: 206.4 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Here is an example to help you get started:

* Simply for females, the regression of Math Achievement on Reading Achievement has an intercept equal to 19.98 and a slope equal to 0.64. The intercept tells us that a female student with Reading Achievement score of 0% is expected to have a Math Achievement score of 19.98% (the units of the two tests are percent correct). Since the lowest value of Reading Achievement in our example is about 35%, the intercept is not very meaningful for these data. The regression slope tells us that, for females, a 1 unit increase in Reading Achievement is associated with a .64 unit increase in Math Achievement.
* Simply for males, ….
* The gender gap in Math Achievement was equal to …

### 5.2.1 Marginal means

Before moving on to consider interactions, let’s revisit a topic from the previous chapter. In [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4), we noted that the regression coefficients for categorical predictors (dummy variables) can be interpreted in terms of the group means of the outcome variable. However, when additional predictors are included in the regression model, this interpretation no longer holds. This section explains why.

To see what the issue is, let’s compare the output of the t-test in [Section 5.1](#sec-example-5) with the regression output shown above. In the t-test, the mean Math Achievement for females was 55.47, and for males it was 58.63. The mean difference was

However, the regression coefficient on Gender in the multiple regression model above is equal to . Thus, unlike [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4), the regression coefficient on Gender is no longer equal to the group-mean difference in Math Achievement. But why?

Remember that in the multiple regression model, the regression coefficient on Gender is interpreted as the relationship between Math Achievement and Gender, *holding Reading Achievement constant*. So, the regression coefficient on Gender is still interpreted as a mean difference, but now it is a *predicted* mean difference that represents the gender gap in Math Achievement after controlling for Reading Achievement. The t-test doesn’t control for Reading.

In order to emphasize the distinction between “raw” group means computed from the data and the predicted group means obtained from a multiple regression model, the latter are referred to as *marginal means*, or sometimes as *adjusted means* or *least squares means*. I think they should be called *predicted means*, but, alas.

### 5.2.2 Summary

In a regression model with one continuous predictor and one binary predictor (and no interaction):

* The model results in two regression lines, one for each value of the binary predictor. These are called the simple trends.
* The simple trends are parallel but can have different intercepts; the difference between the intercepts is equal to regression coefficient of the binary variable.
* The difference between the simple trends is often called a “gap”, and the gap is also equal to the regression coefficient of the binary variable.
* It is important to note that the predicted group means for the binary variable are no longer equal to the “raw” group means computed directly from the data, because the predicted group means control for the correlation between the predictors. The predicted group means are called marginal means to emphasize this distinction.

Keep in mind that this summary applies to the multiple regression model **without an interaction**. In the next section we improve our model by adding an interaction.

## 5.3 Binary + continuous + interaction

In this section, we discuss what was missing from the multiple regression model in the previous section: The interaction between Gender and Reading.

Mathematically, an interaction is just the product between two variables. [Equation 5.5](#eq-yhat-5b) shows how to include this product in our multiple regression model – we just take the product of the two predictors and add it into the model as a third predictor:

In terms of computation, we would literally take the product of our two predictors and save it as a new variable in our data set, then add the new variable in to the regression model. In practice, R will do all of this for us behind the scenes, so we don’t actually need to “hard code” new variables.

For the NELS example, the regression model with the interaction is depicted in [Figure 5.3](#fig-math-reading-3). Note the the simple trends are no longer parallel and the regression lines agree exactly with what we had in [Section 5.1](#sec-example-5). So, as promised, we have now arrived at a single multiple regression model that captures the relationships among Math Achievement, Reading Achievement, and Gender.

# Interaction via hard coding  
genderXachrdg12 <- (as.numeric(gender) - 1) \* achrdg12  
mod4 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXachrdg12)  
  
# Get the coefficients for females  
a\_females <- coef(mod4)[1]  
b\_females <- coef(mod4)[2]  
  
# Get the coefficients for males  
a\_males <- a\_females + coef(mod4)[3]  
b\_males <- b\_females + coef(mod4)[4]  
  
# Plot reading and math for females  
plot(achrdg12[females],   
 achmat12[females],   
 xlab = "Reading",   
 ylab = "Math")  
  
abline(a\_females, b\_females, lwd = 2)  
  
# Add points and line for males  
points(achrdg12[males],   
 achmat12[males],  
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 pch = 2)  
  
abline(a\_males, b\_males, col = "#4B9CD3", lwd = 2)  
  
# Add a legend  
legend(x = "topleft",  
 legend = levels(gender),   
 pch = c(1, 2),   
 col = c(1, "#4B9CD3"))

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.3: Math Achievement, Reading Achievement, and Gender (No Interaction). |

To see how to interpret the coefficients in this model, let’s work through the model equations using our two-step procedure. As before, we first plug-in values for the categorical predictor, then we use the resulting equations solve for the simple trends and the gender gap in Math.

These equations are summarized graphically below in [Figure 5.4](#fig-interactions).

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.4: Interaction between a categorical and a continuous predictor. Image credit: Daniela Rodriguez-Mincey, Spring 2023 |

Based on the equations and figure, we can interpret regression coefficients as follows. Some of these interpretations are the same as in the previous section, but some are different.

* The regression intercept, , is the intercept of the simple trend for the group coded “0” (i.e., the intercept of the regression of Math on Reading, simply for females; see [Equation 5.6](#eq-females2-5)). This is the **same** interpretation as for the model without the interaction discussed in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5).
* The regression slope for the continuous predictor, , is the slope of the simple trend for the group coded “0” (females; see [Equation 5.6](#eq-females2-5)). This is **different** from the interpretation of the model in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5) – in that model, was the slope of both simple trends, not just the trend for females.
* The regression slope for the binary predictor, , is the difference between the intercepts of the simple trends (i.e., we add to to get the intercept of the regression of Math on Reading, simply for males; see [Equation 5.7](#eq-males2-5)). This is the **same** interpretation as for the model without the interaction discussed in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5).
* The regression slope for the interaction term (or simply, the interaction), , is the difference between the slopes of the simple trends (i.e., we add to to get the slope of the regression of Math on Reading, simply for males; see [Equation 5.7](#eq-males2-5)). This is **different** from the interpretation of the model in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5) – in that model, was the slope of both simple trends.
* The difference between the predicted values (i.e., the predicted gender gap in Math Achievement) is no longer constant, but is instead a function of (see [Equation 5.8](#eq-gap2-5)). In particular, the predicted gender gap in Math changes by units for each unit of increase in Reading. This is **different** from the interpretation of the model in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5) – in that model, the predicted gender gap was constant over Reading and equal to .

This last point is especially important in the context of our example. The gender gap in Math Achievement is a function of Reading Achievement. This is the mathematical meaning behind the concept of an interaction – the relationship between two variables (Math and Gender) is changing as a function of a third variable (Reading).

### 5.3.1 Choosing the moderator

Interpreting interactions can feel a bit unwieldy at first. This section introduces some additional terminology that helps better align the mathematical results with the kinds of research scenarios we considered in the introduction to this chapter.

First, note that it is equally valid to say

* the relationship between Math and Gender depends on Reading, or
* the relationship between Math and Reading depends on Gender.

In other words, it is equally valid to interpret our interaction in terms of the gender gap (i.e., the relationship between Math and Gender) or in terms of the simple trends (the relationship between Math and Reading).

Although both interpretations are equally valid, in most research settings we will be more interested in one of them rather than the other. For example, our research interest in [Section 5.1](#sec-example-5) was about the gender gap in Math Achievement. So, we can simplify our lives by focusing the gender gap (i.e., the relationship between Math and Gender). For the purpose of our example, the simple trends are an equivalent but less interesting way of interpreting the interaction. The point is: we don’t have to report both the simple trends and the gender gap – we usually just choose one.

In the two bullet points above, whichever variable appears in the “depends on” clause is called the *moderator*, and the other two variables are called the focal variables. The researcher chooses which variable to treat as the moderator when interpreting an interaction. The overall idea here is to “break down” the interaction in the way that is most compatible with your research question(s).

Since our focus is the gender gap in Math (i.e., the relationship is between Math and Gender), Reading is our moderator. In particular, we might interpret the interaction as follows

* The predicted gender gap in Math changes by units for each unit of increase in Reading.

By contrast, if we were mainly interested in the relationship between Math and Reading (i.e., the simple trends), then we could treat Gender as the moderator. For example, we might say:

* For females, predicted Math Achievement changed by units for each unit of increase in Reading, whereas for males, the predicted change was () units for each unit of increase in Reading.

The simple trends might feel less intuitive than the gender gap, but the two interpretations are mathematically equivalent. It is just a matter of whether you want to interpret the interaction with reference to the gender gap, or with reference to the simple trends. When writing up your research, you don’t need to do both. But I am going to make you do both in the next section for practice.

### 5.3.2 Back to the example

The regression coefficients for the example data are shown below. **Please use these numbers to provide an interpretation of the interaction between Gender and Reading. For practice, please attempt the interpret the interaction in terms of (a) the gender gap in Math, with Reading as the moderator; and (b) the relationship between Math and Reading, with Gender as the moderator. Don’t worry about statistical significance, just focus on the interpreting the coefficients reported in the “Estimate” column.**

summary(mod4)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXachrdg12)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
genderXachrdg12 -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Some potential answers are hidden in the “Code” tab below, but don’t peak until you have tried it for yourself!

# Gender gap  
# General: The gender gap in Math is smaller for students who are also strong in Reading  
# Specific: The gender gap in Math Achievement decreases by .18 percentage points for each percentage point increase Reading Achievement  
  
# Simple slopes  
# General: The relationship between Math and Reading is stronger (i.e. has a larger slope) for females than for males  
# Specific:  
# For females, Math scores are predicted to increase by .72 percentage points for each percentage point increase in Reading Achievement  
# For males, Math scores are predicted to increase by .55 percentage points for each percentage point increase in Reading Achievement

### 5.3.3 Centering the continuous predictor

You may have noticed that the regression coefficient on Gender was wildly different in regression models with and without the interaction. In the model without the interaction ([Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5)) the coefficient on Gender was 3.50, and in the model with the interaction (above), it was 13.40. So in one model, the “effect” of being male was a 3.5 percentage point gain on a Math test, but in the other model, it was a 13.40 percentage point gain. Why this huge difference in the “effect” of Gender?

The answer can be seen in the equation for the gender gap. In the model **without the interaction**, the gender gap was constant and equal to the regression coefficient on Gender (denoted as in the model):

But in the regression model **with the interaction**, the gender gap was a linear function of Reading and the regression coefficient on Gender is the intercept of that linear relationship.

This equation tell us that, in the model with the interaction, is the gender gap for students who score 0% on the Reading test. Since the lowest score on Reading was around 35%, the intercept in this equation (i.e., , the regression coefficient on Gender) is not very meaningful.

In previous sections, we have ignored the regression intercept when it was not meaningful. But, ignoring the regression slopes for predictor variables can get confusing, and, in general, it is nice for the regression coefficients to be interpretable (otherwise, why are we doing this!).

One way to address this situation is to center Reading Achievement so that it has a mean of zero. To do this, we compute the deviation score

is the mean-centered version of (Reading Achievement). If we regress Math Achievement on rather than we end up with the following equation for the gender gap in Math:

Since when , the regression coefficient on Gender () is now interpretable as the gender gap in Math Achievement, for students with average Reading Achievement. This is a much more interpretable number than the coefficient in the original interaction model!

Using the example data, this approach yields the following regression coefficients (the \_dev notation means the variable was centered):

# compute the deviation scores for reading  
reading\_dev <- achrdg12 - mean(achrdg12, na.rm = T)   
  
# Run the interaction model as above  
genderXreading\_dev <- (as.numeric(gender) - 1) \* reading\_dev  
  
mod5 <- lm(achmat12 ~ reading\_dev + gender + genderXreading\_dev)  
summary(mod5)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ reading\_dev + gender + genderXreading\_dev)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 55.29439 0.35127 157.411 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
reading\_dev 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 3.49930 0.52135 6.712 5.26e-11 \*\*\*  
genderXreading\_dev -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.00652 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

The regression coefficient for Gender is now pretty close to what it was in the multiple regression model without the interaction, but the interpretation is different (i.e., it is now the predicted gender gap in Math for students with an average level of Reading, rather than the predicted gender gap in Math for all students).

Notice that the intercept in the model above has also changed compared to the previous model in which Reading was not centered. This is should make sense based on what you already know about the regression intercept.

Also note that centering Reading did not affect the regression coefficient for Reading or the interaction. So, centering makes the regression slope on Gender more interpretable, but it doesn’t affect our overall interpretation of the simple trends or the gender gap. To learn more about how centering works, see [Section 5.5.5](#sec-how-centering-works-5) (which is optional).

**Please write down your interpretation of the intercept and the regression coefficient on Gender in the above regression output, and be prepared to share your answer in class**.

### 5.3.4 Summary

The interaction between two variables is just their product. When this product is added as a predictor in a multiple regression model with one continuous and one binary predictor:

* The model again results in two regression lines (simple trends), one for each value of the binary predictor.
* However, the simple trends can now have different intercepts *and different slopes*. The difference in slopes is equal to the regression coefficient on the interaction term. In other words, the simple trends have different slopes because of the interaction.
* The difference (“gap”) between the regression lines changes as a linear function of the continuous predictor, and the slope of this linear function is again equal to the regression coefficient on the interaction term.
* The last two points are equivalent ways of stating the central idea behind a (two-way) interaction: the relationship between two variables changes as a function of a third variable.
* When interpreting an interaction, the researcher chooses which pair of variables will be the “focal relationship” and which variable will be the moderator.
  + In our example, we focused on the gender gap in Math (i.e., the relationship between Math and Gender) and Reading was the moderator.
  + But, if we were more interested in the relationship between Math and Reading, would could have focused on the simple trends and treated Gender as the moderator.
  + It is usual to only report one way of these two ways of “breaking down” the interaction – the one that is most relevant to your research question.
* Centering the continuous predictor can be helpful for ensuring that the regression coefficient on the binary predictor remains interpretable in the presence of an interaction.

## 5.4 Following-up an interaction

The procedures discussed in this section are used typically used *after* we have concluded that there is a statistically significant between two predictors (i.e., after we have examined the summary(lm) output in the previous section). When we follow-up an interaction, the goal is to gain a better understanding of *how* the focal relationship depends on the moderator. Basically, the summary(lm) output from the previous section tells us whether or not the interaction is significant, and, if it is significant, the procedures discussed in this section let us describe the interaction in more detail.

The overall idea is illustrated [Figure 5.5](#fig-visreg-1). Compared to the plots we have seen previously in this chapter, [Figure 5.5](#fig-visreg-1) now includes confidence bands for the simple trends. The confidence bands show the values of Reading for which the gender gap in Math is statistically significant. In particular, it appears that the gap is not significant for students at the highest levels of Reading Achievement.

Note that this information was not available from the summary(lm) output in the previous section. The summary(lm) output told us that the interaction term was statistically significant, which means that the gender gap in Math changes as a function of reading. The plot provides more information about *how* the gender gap depends on Reading – it is statistical significant for students at lower levels of Reading Achievement, but appears to shrink and eventually disappear as Reading Achievement increases.

# Install the package if you haven't already done so  
# install.packages("visreg")  
# Load the package into memory  
library(visreg)  
  
# Run the regression model using R's syntax for interactions "\*"  
mod6 <- lm(achmat12 ~ gender\*achrdg12, data= NELS)  
  
# One line of code to plot trends with confidence bands :)   
visreg(mod6, xvar = "achrdg12", by = "gender", overlay = TRUE)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.5: Example of a plot using the visreg package. |

In this section, we discuss how to translate the confidence bands in the plot into statistical tests that can provide more specific information about the how the gender gap in Math depends on Reading. Making these kinds of inferences about interactions is one of the main advantages of using multiple regression rather than just fitting the simple trends separately as we did in [Section 5.1](#sec-example-5). Another advantage is that we can now easily produce nice plots like [Figure 5.5](#fig-visreg-1) :)

Before moving on, it is important to emphasize that, if the interaction term in the summary(lm) output is **not** significant, we don’t use the procedures discussed in this section. This is because a non-significant interaction means that we have inferred the focal relationship *does not* depend on the moderator. Consequently, there is no need to describe this dependence in more detail, which is what the procedures in this section are for.

### 5.4.1 Marginal effects

Since we are interested in the gender gap in Math Achievement, we will start by considering the values of Reading for which the gap is statistically significant. Note that this information was not available from the standard summary(lm) output shown in [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5) – the output showed that the regression coefficient representing the interaction was statistically significant, but it didn’t tell us for the values of Reading for which the gender gap was statistically significant. We can answer this type of question using the marginal “effects” discussed in this section.

There are three main types of marginal effects. For linear models, they are all basically the same, and we will only use one of them in this section. However, it is important that you can distinguish among them, especially when we get into non-linear models (e.g., logistic regression; see **?@sec-chap-10**). In general, when you report marginal effects in your research, you should be able to tell your reader which approach you used so they understand what you did and how to interpret the results.

To explain the three approaches, first let’s write the gender gap in Math Achievement using a slightly more compact notation (“” for difference):

The three types of marginal effects are:

* Marginal effects at the mean (MEM): Report the gap at the mean value of
* Average marginal effect (AVE): Average the effect over values of :
* Marginal effects at representative values (MERV): Report the marginal effect for a range of “interesting values” chosen by the researcher (denoted by \*, , etc.)

MEM and AVE are equivalent in linear models, but are different for nonlinear models (see **?@sec-chap-10**). The MERV approach also overlaps with MEM and AVE, because usually we choose the mean (or median) as one of the representative values of the predictor.

In this section we focus on MERV, because it is widely used. One common choice for the “interesting values” is the quartiles of , which are reported below for the example data. The output shows the gender gap in Math Achievement for 5 values of Reading Achievement. The values of Reading Achievement are its 5 quartiles. You can think of the output as a tabular summary of [Figure 5.5](#fig-visreg-1).

# Install the emmeans package if you haven't already done so  
# install.packages("emmeans")  
  
# Load the package into memory  
library(emmeans)  
  
# Fit the model using R's formula syntax for interaction '\*'  
mod6 <- lm(achmat12 ~ gender\*achrdg12, data = NELS)  
  
# Use the emmeans function to get the gender means on math, broken down by reading  
gap <- emmeans(mod6,   
 specs = "gender",  
 by = "achrdg12",   
 cov.reduce = quantile)  
  
# Test whether the differences are significant  
contrast(gap, method = "pairwise")

achrdg12 = 31.8:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -7.74 1.637 496 -4.728 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 51.3:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -4.27 0.593 496 -7.207 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 57.0:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -3.25 0.529 496 -6.138 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 61.7:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -2.41 0.658 496 -3.659 0.0003  
  
achrdg12 = 68.1:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -1.28 0.967 496 -1.321 0.1872

**Please use the output to make a conclusion about the levels of Reading Achievement for which the gender gap was significant. Please be prepared to share your answer in class!**

Note that the computations going on “under the hood” when testing marginal effects can get pretty complicated. You can read more details here: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/emmeans/vignettes/basics.html>

### 5.4.2 Simple trends

In this section we test whether the slope of each of the simple trends is significantly different from zero. Like the marginal effects in the previous section, this is information was not entirely available in the summary(lm) output discussed in [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5). From the summary(lm) output we learned the following two points about the simple trends:

* The regression coefficient on Reading told us about the relationship between Math and Reading, simply for the group designated as zero on the binary predictor (simply for females).
* The regression coefficient on the interaction term told us whether the simple trends differ for the two groups (e.g., whether the simple trend for males differs from the simple trend for females).

Note that what is missing, or implicit, is a test of whether the simple trend for males is different from zero. This test is of less relevance to our example (since we are treating Reading as the moderator), but we consider it for illustrative purposes.

The tests of the simple trends for the example data are reported below. As stated, these aren’t super interesting in the context of our example, but you should **check your understanding of simple trends by writing down an interpretation of the output below**.

# The regression coefficients on reading, broken down by gender  
simple\_slopes <- emtrends(mod6, var = "achrdg12", specs = "gender")  
test(simple\_slopes)

gender achrdg12.trend SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female 0.728 0.0470 496 15.487 <.0001  
 Male 0.550 0.0451 496 12.208 <.0001

### 5.4.3 Summary

When making inferences about an interaction:

* If the interaction isn’t significant in the summary(lm) output, we stop there. But if the interaction is significant, we may want to report more information about how the focal relationship depends on the moderator.
* When the focal predictor is categorical, we can follow-up a significant interaction by taking a closer look at the statistical significance of the marginal effects (e.g, how the gender gap in Math changes as a function of Reading)
* When the focal predictor is continuous, we can follow-up a significant interaction by taking a closer look at the statistical significance of the simple trends / simple slopes.

## 5.5 Two continuous predictors

At this point, we have covered the main ideas behind two-way interactions. In this section and the next, we apply these ideas to different combinations of predictors variables. In this section we address interactions between two continuous predictors. In the next section we address two categorical predictors. In both cases, the regression equation and overall interpretation is the same as the previous sections – e.g., the relationship between and changes as a function of . However, there are also some special details that crop up in these different settings.

In this section we will address:

* The importance of centering the two continuous predictors. Centering helps us interpret the “main effects” (i.e., the regression coefficients on the individual predictors).
* How to follow-up a significant interaction using simple trends. As was the case for a categorical and a continuous predictor, this helps us interpret the interaction in more detail.

First, we introduce an new example.

### 5.5.1 Another NELS example

To illustrate an interaction between two continuous predictors, let’s replace Gender with SES in our previous analysis. Apologies that this new example is mainly for convenience and doesn’t represent a great research question about, e.g., why the relationships between Math and Reading might change as a function of SES.

The overall approach with SES as the moderator is illustrated in [Figure 5.6](#fig-readingXses-5) below. It presents the simple trends for Math and Reading at three values of SES. The overall situation should hopefully feel pretty familiar from the previous sections. The displayed values of SES (9, 19, and 28) are its 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles, which is the default choice for the software we are using for plotting. For visual clarity, the confidence bands are not shown.

#Interaction without centering   
mod7 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\*ses, data = NELS)  
  
# Note that band = F removes the confidence intervals  
visreg(mod7,   
 xvar = "achrdg12",   
 by = "ses",   
 overlay = TRUE,   
 band = F)

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.6: Math (achmat), Reading (achrdg), and SES |

### 5.5.2 Centering the predictors

The take home message of this section is that you should center continuous predictors when their interaction is included in the model. There are two reasons:

* Just like [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5), centering makes it easier to interpret the “main effects” (i.e., the regression coefficients on the individual predictors).
* Centering can make the estimates of the main effects more precise. This is because centering can reduce the correlation between the individual predictors and the interaction term. Remember from [Section 3.7.1](#sec-inference-for-coeffecients-3) that highly correlated predictors lead to less precise estimates of the regression coefficients. We discuss this problem in more detail in **?@sec-multicollinearity-6**, but for now we just discuss how centering helps us avoid the problem.

First lets consider how centering facilitates interpretation. Begin by noting that the coefficients and in the regression model

can be interpreted in terms of the following simple trends:

The first equation shows us that is the slope of relationship between and , when is equal to zero – in our example, the relationship between Math and Reading when SES is equal to zero. Similarly, the second equation shows us that is the slope of relationship between and when is equal to zero – in our example, the relationship between Math and SES when Reading is equal to zero.

In general, the value of zero may not be meaningful for continuous predictors. But, when the predictor is *centered* (i.e., a deviation score), the value of zero is always the mean of the original variable. For example, if we centered SES, then would represent the relationship between Math and Reading for students with average SES. Similar considerations apply if we treat Reading as the moderator instead of SES. Note that this is just the same trick as [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5), but this time both predictors are continuous and so both can be centered.

The second main reason for centering is a bit more technical. It has to do with reducing the correlation between the predictors and their interaction. In general, the interaction term will be correlated with both predictors if (a) the predictors themselves are correlated and (b) both predictors take on strictly positive (or strictly negative) values. Highly correlated predictors lead to redundant information the model, so we want to avoid this situation (this is technically called *multicollinearity* and we discuss it in more detail in a **?@sec-multicollinearity-6**).

To see how centering can reduce the correlation between the predictors and their interaction, let’s take a look at [Figure 5.7](#fig-centering-5). The left hand panel shows the relationship between SES and its interaction with Reading. We can see that they are highly correlated. This is because (a) SES and Reading are themselves correlated, and (b) both SES and Reading take on strictly positive values. As mentioned above, the interaction term will be correlated with both predictors whenever these two conditions hold. (The figure shows the correlation just for SES and the interaction, but the same situation holds for Reading.)

# Correlation without centering  
r <- cor(ses, achrdg12\*ses)  
  
# Plot  
par(mfrow = c(1, 2))  
title <- paste0("correlation = ", round(r, 3))  
plot(ses, achrdg12\*ses,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 main = title,   
 xlab = "SES",   
 ylab = "SES X Reading")  
  
# Correlation with centering  
achrdg12\_dev <- achrdg12 - mean(achrdg12)  
ses\_dev <- ses - mean(ses)  
r <- cor(ses\_dev, achrdg12\_dev\*ses\_dev)  
  
# Plot  
title <- paste0("correlation = ", round(r, 3))  
plot(ses\_dev,   
 achrdg12\_dev\*ses\_dev,   
 col = "#4B9CD3",   
 main = title,   
 xlab = "SES Centered",   
 ylab = "SES Centered X Reading Centered")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.7: Correlation Between SES and SES X Reading, With and Without Centering |

We can see in the right hand panel of [Figure 5.7](#fig-centering-5) how centering the two predictors “breaks” the linear relationship between SES and its interaction with Reading. After centering, the relationship between SES and its interaction is now highly non-linear, and the correlation is approximately zero. Again, the same is true for the relationship between Reading and the interaction, but the figure only shows the situation for SES. The upshot of all this is that centering reduces multicollinearity between the “main effects” of the predictors and their interaction.

Below we show the output for two regression models. Both models regress Math on Reading, SES, and their interaction. The first model does not center the predictors, but the second model does (the \_dev notation denotes the centered predictors).

The main difference between the models is that SES is a significant predictor in the centered model but not in the “un-centered” model. This is because the main effect of SES has a different meaning in the centered model, and it is also less correlated with the interaction. This is also true for Reading, but the differences between the two sets of results are less pronounced for Reading.

# Without centering  
mod7 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\*ses)  
summary(mod7)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 \* ses)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-17.1336 -3.8944 0.7278 4.1301 15.0153   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 25.849200 5.389797 4.796 2.14e-06 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.511601 0.099427 5.145 3.85e-07 \*\*\*  
ses -0.100114 0.291214 -0.344 0.731   
achrdg12:ses 0.004270 0.005196 0.822 0.412   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.031 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4184, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4149   
F-statistic: 118.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

# With centering  
mod8 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev\*ses\_dev)  
summary(mod8)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev \* ses\_dev)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-17.1336 -3.8944 0.7278 4.1301 15.0153   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.826225 0.286906 198.065 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
achrdg12\_dev 0.590313 0.036103 16.351 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
ses\_dev 0.137305 0.041485 3.310 0.001 \*\*   
achrdg12\_dev:ses\_dev 0.004270 0.005196 0.822 0.412   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.031 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4184, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4149   
F-statistic: 118.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

**Please provide an interpretation of all four regression coefficients in the centered model. Your interpretations should make reference to the situation where one or both predictors are equal to zero (see** [**Equation 5.9**](#eq-simple-5) **above) and should also mentioned the interpretation of the value of zero for the centered variables.**

Note that the interaction and the R-squared are the same in the centered and uncentered models. This is discussed in more detail in the extra material at the end of this section ([Section 5.6](#sec-two-categorical-predictors-5)), but it is sufficient to note that centering only affects the interpretation of the main effects (and the intercept, of course).

### 5.5.3 Simple trends

Centering helps us interpret the main effects of the individual predictors, but we haven’t yet discussed how to interpret the interaction term. As shown in [Figure 5.6](#fig-readingXses-5), the overall situation is not that different than with a binary predictor.

The usual way to follow up a significant interaction between two continuous is using the MERV approach discussed in [Section 5.4](#sec-inference-for-interactions-5). Using this approach, we consider the focal relationship for some “interesting values” of the moderator. As with MERV, the choice of values of the moderator is up to the researcher, but some usual choices are

* The quartiles of the moderator
* M 1 SD of the moderator
* A selection of percentiles of the moderator (The visreg plot in [Figure 5.6](#fig-readingXses-5) uses the 10th, 50th, and 90th)

These are all doing very similar things, so choosing among them usually isn’t super important.

Although the interaction between Reading and SES was not significant in our example model, let’s break down the interaction using SES as the moderator, just to see how this approach works. The output below presents the simple slopes for the three values of SES shown in [Figure 5.6](#fig-readingXses-5) (i.e., the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles). We can see in the output that the simple slopes are all different from zero. (And the non-significant interaction in the summary(lm) output tells us that the slopes are not statistically different from one another.)

# Break down interaction with SES as moderator  
simple\_slopes <-emtrends(mod7,   
 var = "achrdg12",   
 specs = "ses",   
 at = list(ses = c(9, 19, 28)))  
test(simple\_slopes)

ses achrdg12.trend SE df t.ratio p.value  
 9 0.550 0.0583 496 9.429 <.0001  
 19 0.593 0.0365 496 16.251 <.0001  
 28 0.631 0.0639 496 9.878 <.0001

### 5.5.4 Summary

When regressing an outcome on two continuous predictors and their interaction, the overall interpretation of the model is same as discussed in [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5), but:

* It is useful to center both predictors, to facilitate the interpretation of the main effects (i.e., regression coefficients on the individual predictors), and to improve the precision of the main effects (i.e., reduce multicollinearity).
* When following up a significant interaction, the usual approach is to report the simple trends for the focal variables at a selection of values of the moderator (e.g., a selection of percentiles). The example illustrated how to do this even though the interaction was not significant, but you shouldn’t follow up a non-significant interaction.

### 5.5.5 Extra: How centering works\*

It might seem that centering both predictors is a bit dubious – how can we just change the predictors in the model? This sections shows that using the centered or the un-centered predictors doesn’t make a difference in term of what predictors are in the model, it just changes the interpretation of the main effects (and intercept).

Using for the centered variables, simple algebra shows:

The second line of the equation shows that we are not changing what we regress on – i.e., the predictors are still and . We are changing the interpretation of the main effects (and intercept), but this is exactly the purpose of this approach. Also note centering does not change the regression coefficient for the interaction at all. So, we get main effects (and intercept) that can be more easily interpreted, and the same interaction

## 5.6 Two categorical predictors

This section addresses interactions between two categorical predictors. Up until now, we have looked at interactions only for categorical predictors that are dichotomous. In this section, we address an example in which one of the categorical predictors has more than two levels. This requires combining what we learned about contrast coding ([Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4)) with what we have learned about interactions. One nice aspect of interactions among categorical predictors is that we usually don’t need to use procedures like marginal effects to follow up significant interactions, so long as we make good use of contrast coding.

In experimental (as opposed to observational) settings, interactions among categorical predictors fall under the much larger topic of ANOVA and experimental design. The analysis we look at in this section is a two-way between-subjects ANOVA, meaning that there are two categorical predictors considered, as well as their interaction, and both predictors are cross-sectional. ANOVA is a big topic and is not the focus of this course. However, we will discuss how to summarize the results of our analysis in an ANOVA table, and consider how this differs from the standard regression approach.

### 5.6.1 An example from ECLS

For this topic we will switch over to the ECLS data and examine how SES and Pre-K attendance interact to predict Math Achievement at the beginning of Kindergarten. The variables we will examine are

* Math Achievement at the beginning of K (c1rmscal). This is the number of correct questions on a test with approximately 70 items.
* Whether the child attended Pre-K (p1center). This is a binary variable that indicates pre-K attendance.
* SES, coded as quintiles (wksesq5). We will denote this variable as SES, but keep in mind it is quintiles in this example (e.g., SES = 1 are the respondents with SES between the minimum and the first quintile).

Coding SES as quintiles allows us to consider it as a categorical predictor with 5 levels. This is a widely-used practice, because SES often has non-linear relationships with outcome variables of interest, and these relationships can be more easily captured by treating SES as a categorical variable. This approach to SES is also convenient for our illustration of interactions between categorical predictors.

In this analysis, our focus will be whether the “effect” of Pre-K on Math Achievement depends on (i.e., is moderated by) the child’s SES. Please note that I will use the term “effect” in this section to simplify language, but we know that Pre-K attendance was not randomly assigned in ECLS, so please keep in mind that this terminology is not strictly correct.

The relationship among the three variables is summarized in the visreg plot below. We can see that the effect of Pre-K on Math Achievement appears to differ as a function of SES – i.e., it appears that there is an interaction between Pre-K and SES. Our goal in this section is to produce an analysis corresponding to the figure.

#   
load("ECLS2577.Rdata")  
ecls$prek <- factor(2 - ecls$p1center)  
ecls$wksesq5 <- factor(ecls$wksesq5)  
mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ prek\*wksesq5, data = ecls)  
visreg::visreg(mod, xvar = "wksesq5", by = "prek",   
 partial = F, rug = F, overlay = T,   
 strip.names = T, xlab = "SES",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement in K")

|  |
| --- |
| Figure 5.8: Math Achievement, Pre-K Attendence, and SES |

**Before moving on, please take a moment to write down your interpretation of** [**Figure 5.8**](#fig-prek-by-ses-5)**, focussing on how it illustrates an interaction between SES and Pre-K. Additionally, please describe how the figure would be different if there was no interaction between Pre-K and SES**.

### 5.6.2 The “no-interaction” model

As in [Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5), we will start with a model that includes only the main effects of SES and Pre-K. Seeing where that model “goes wrong” is a good way of understanding the interaction between the two predictors.

In order to represent a model with multiple categorical predictors, it is helpful to change our notation from the usual and to the more informative “variable names” notation:

In this notation, the predictor variables are indicators (binary dummies). The variable is just the indicator for Pre-K attendance, as defined above. The variable is an indicator for the j-th quintile of SES.

Both predictors use reference-group coding, as discussed in [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4). For , reference-group coding is implied because it is a binary indicator. For , reference-group coding is accomplished by omitting the binary dummy for the first quintile (i.e., the first quintile is the reference group).

We can interpret the coefficients in this model using the same two-step procedure described in [Chapter 4](#sec-chap-4). Since there are many terms in the model, things are going to start getting messy quickly, so brace yourself for some long equations (but simple math!).

The main points about the interpretation of this model are as follows.

* The intercept is the predicted value of Math Achievement for students in the first SES quintile who did not attend Pre-K. This corresponds to the blue line in the first column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5).
* The effect of Pre-K attendance for students in the first SES quintile is equal to . This corresponds to the difference between the red and blue lines in the first column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5).
* Because the model in [Equation 5.10](#eq-prek-ses-5) does not include an interaction, we already know that it implies that the effect of Pre-K is constant over levels of SES. Below we show that effect of Pre-K for SES = 2 is the same as the effect for SES = 1. The same approach can be used to show the effect is constant over all levels of SES. Note that while the model assumes the effect of Pre-K is constant over levels of SES, this is actually inconsistent with what is shown in [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5). We will improve on this model by adding an interaction in the following section.

This equation says that the difference between the red and blue lines in the second column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5) is the same as the difference in the first column – i.e., they both equal . This is what it means for there to be no interaction between two categorical predictors.

If you want more practice with this, you can show that [Equation 5.10](#eq-prek-ses-5) implies the effect of Pre-K is constant over all levels of SES. Additionally, you can use the 2-step approach to show that the effect of SES is constant over levels of Pre-K attendance.

### 5.6.3 Adding the interaction(s)

We have just seen that [Equation 5.10](#eq-prek-ses-5) implies that the effect of Pre-K is constant over levels of SES, and vise versa. In order to address our research question about whether the relationship between Pre-K attendance and Math Achievement depends on children’s SES, we will need to add something to the model – an interaction (surprise!).

We know that interactions are just products (multiplication) of predictor variables. Since SES is represented as 4 dummies, this means we need 4 products to represent the interaction of Pre-K with SES. The resulting model can be written:

As you can see, we have a lot of predictors in this model! Although we are only considering two distinct “conceptual” predictors, we have 9 coefficients in our regression model (+ the intercept).

Again, there are a few main things to notice:

* The interpretation of the intercept has not changed. It still corresponds to the blue line in the first column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5).
* The regression coefficient on is still the “effect” of Pre-K for students in the first SES quintile (i.e., the difference between the red and blue line in the first column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5)). This is because all the variables are equal to zero for students in the first SES quintile, and so all of the interaction terms in [Equation 5.11](#eq-prek-ses-5b) are equal to zero.
* The effect of Pre-K is no longer constant over levels of SES. Again we will focus on SES = 2, but the same approach works for the other levels of SES.

The last line shows that the “effect” of Pre-K for students in the second SES quintile is . This is not the same as the effect for students in the first quintile, which was just . In other words, the difference between the red and blue lines in the first column of [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5) (i.e., ) is not equal to the difference in the second column (i.e., ) unless the interaction is equal to zero (i.e., ).

The same approach shows that the effect of Pre-K at each level of SES results in a similar equation:

This pattern makes it clear that, to isolate the interactions (i.e., through ), we need to subtract off – i.e., we need to subtract off the effect of Pre-K for students in the first SES quintile. In anology with reference group coding for single predictor (see [Section 4.4](#sec-reference-group-coding-4)), we can think of the “reference effect” or baseline to which the interaction terms are compared.

For example

* The interaction between Pre-K and the second SES quintile is the effect Pre-K has on Math Achievement for students in the second SES quintile, *as compared to the effect in the first SES quintile.*
* The interaction between Pre-K and the third SES quintile is the effect Pre-K has on Math Achievement for students in the 3rd SES quintile, *as compared to the effect in the first SES quintile.*
* etc. etc.

Mathematically, the interaction terms are represented as “differences-in-differences”. For example,

This looks quite complicated but it is just an extension of reference-group coding. This equation is saying that the “reference effect” or “baseline” for interpreting the interaction () is the effect of Pre-K in the first SES quintile (i.e., ). As noted above, all of the interaction terms have the same reference effect.

### 5.6.4 Back to the example

That last section was a lot to take in, so let’s put some numbers on the page to check our understanding. The output below shows the summary for a model that regresses Math Achievement on Pre-K, SES, and their interaction. **Please write down an interpretation of magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each regression coefficient in this output (including the intercept), and be prepared to share your answers in class.** Remember that wksesq5 is the variable code for the SES quintiles – the digit that follows the variable code indicates the level of variable. It may be helpful to refer to [Figure 5.8](#fig-prek-by-ses-5) when interpreting the coefficients.

mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ prek\*wksesq5, data = ecls)  
summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ prek \* wksesq5, data = ecls)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-16.7682 -4.7682 -0.9755 3.9545 31.2318   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 16.0455 0.7355 21.816 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek1 -0.3735 0.9601 -0.389 0.69732   
wksesq52 2.2931 0.9570 2.396 0.01663 \*   
wksesq53 2.9300 0.9127 3.210 0.00134 \*\*   
wksesq54 4.6310 0.9439 4.906 9.87e-07 \*\*\*  
wksesq55 7.2990 1.0343 7.057 2.19e-12 \*\*\*  
prek1:wksesq52 1.0638 1.2118 0.878 0.38012   
prek1:wksesq53 2.1087 1.1544 1.827 0.06785 .   
prek1:wksesq54 1.6715 1.1684 1.431 0.15267   
prek1:wksesq55 2.7972 1.2340 2.267 0.02349 \*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.9 on 2567 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1621, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1592   
F-statistic: 55.19 on 9 and 2567 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

### 5.6.5 The ANOVA approach

The output in the previous section is detailed enough that it is not usually required to follow-up a significant interaction among categorical predictors using marginal effects. However, the summary output still omits some information we might be interested in. For example, the Pre-K indicator in the above output tells us the effect of Pre-K, but only for children in the first SES quintile. We might also want to know about the overall effect of Pre-K across levels of SES – i.e., is there a significant difference in Math Achievement for students who attended Pre-K, after controlling for their level of SES? Similarly, what is the overall main effect of SES?

One way to summarize the main effects of Pre-K and SES, as well as their interaction, by asking how much variance they explain after controlling for the other predictors in the model. This is the ANOVA approach we discussed last semester, but now applied to two categorical predictors.

The ANOVA table for our example is below, and it is followed by the R-squared coefficients for each predictor, which are called “eta-squared” () in the context of ANOVA. These R-squared (eta-squared) coefficients tell us what proportion of the variance in Math Achievement is attributable to the main effects and the interaction.

# ANOVA Table  
anova(mod)

Analysis of Variance Table  
  
Response: c1rmscal  
 Df Sum Sq Mean Sq F value Pr(>F)   
prek 1 3434 3434.3 72.1437 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
wksesq5 4 19914 4978.4 104.5805 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek:wksesq5 4 299 74.7 1.5701 0.1795   
Residuals 2567 122198 47.6   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

# R-squared (eta-squared)  
#install.packages("effectsize")  
effectsize::eta\_squared(mod, partial = F)

# Effect Size for ANOVA (Type I)  
  
Parameter | Eta2 | 95% CI  
--------------------------------------  
prek | 0.02 | [0.01, 1.00]  
wksesq5 | 0.14 | [0.12, 1.00]  
prek:wksesq5 | 2.05e-03 | [0.00, 1.00]  
  
- One-sided CIs: upper bound fixed at [1.00].

**Please write down your interpretation of the ANOVA table and R-squared (eta-squared) coefficients and be prepared to share you thoughts in class.** Note that the ANOVA output leads to different conclusions than the regression output above. We will discuss the discrepancies between the ANOVA and regression output in class.

Let’s end this discussion of ANOVA with two qualifications.

First, I should clarify that the term “main effect” has a somewhat different meaning in ANOVA as compared to regression. In the regression examples, we talked about the effect of a predictor, *conditional on* the other predictor being zero. In ANOVA stuff above, we instead talked about the average or overall effect of a predictor, while holding the other predictor constant. These two interpretations are related but not the same, and in the ANOVA literature, “main effect” usually means the average or overall effect.

Second, some people claim that it is bad practice to interpret main effects *qua* average effects in the presence of an interaction. The basic argument is that we shouldn’t report the average effect when the “real message” of the interaction is that the effect changes as a function of the other predictor. I think that main effects and interactions aren’t really incompatible concepts, especially if we are talking about conditional main effects rather than average main effects. But, you should be aware that this topic is debated and you are free to make up your own mind (as always!).

## 5.7 Workbook

This section collects the questions asked in this chapter. The lessons for this chapter will focus on discussing these questions and then working on the exercises in [Section 5.8](#sec-exercises-5). The lesson will **not** be a lecture that reviews all of the material in the chapter! So, if you haven’t written down / thought about the answers to these questions before class, the lesson will not be very useful for you. Please engage with each question by writing down one or more answers, asking clarifying questions about related material, posing follow up questions, etc.

[Section 5.1](#sec-example-5)

* What does the following plot is telling us about the relationships among the three variables. In particular:
  + Does the gender gap in Math Achievement change as a function of Reading Achievement?
  + Is the relationship between Math Achievement and Reading Achievement the the same for males and females?
  + What do the results mean for gender equality in Math and STEM education?

mod1 <- lm(achmat12[females] ~ achrdg12[females])  
mod2 <- lm(achmat12[males] ~ achrdg12[males])  
  
# Plot reading and math for females  
plot(achrdg12[females],   
 achmat12[females],   
 xlab = "Reading",   
 ylab = "Math")  
  
abline(mod1, lwd = 2)  
  
# Add points and line for males  
points(achrdg12[males],   
 achmat12[males],   
 col = "#4B9CD3", pch = 2)  
  
abline(mod2, col = "#4B9CD3", lwd = 2)  
  
# Add a legend  
legend(x = "topleft",   
 legend = levels(gender),  
 pch = c(1, 2),   
 col = c(1, "#4B9CD3"))

|  |
| --- |
|  |

[Section 5.2](#sec-binary-continuous-5)

* No interaction model: The regression coefficients for the example data are shown below. Please use these numbers to provide an interpretation of the simple trends and the gender gap in Math Achievement for the NELS example. Don’t worry about statistical significance, just focus on the meaning of the coefficients.

mod3 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender, data = NELS)  
summary(mod3)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender, data = NELS)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.2448 -3.6075 0.3968 3.9836 15.5606   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 19.98122 1.86278 10.727 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.63551 0.03275 19.404 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 3.50166 0.52473 6.673 6.69e-11 \*\*\*  
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.839 on 497 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4538, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4516   
F-statistic: 206.4 on 2 and 497 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Here is an example to help you get started:

* Simply for females, the regression of Math Achievement on Reading Achievement has an intercept equal to 19.98 and a slope equal to 0.64. The intercept tells us that a female student with Reading Achievement score of 0% is expected to have a Math Achievement score of 19.98% (the units of the two tests are percent correct). Since the lowest value of Reading Achievement in our example is about 35%, the intercept is not very meaningful for these data. The regression slope tells us that, for females, a 1 unit increase in Reading Achievement is associated with a .64 unit increase in Math Achievement.
* Simply for males, ….
* The gender gap in Math Achievement was equal to …

[Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5)

* Interaction model: The regression coefficients for the example data are shown below. Please use these numbers to provide an interpretation of the interaction between Gender and Reading. Don’t worry about statistical significance, just focus on the meaning of the coefficients.

# hard code the interaction term  
genderXachrdg12 <- (as.numeric(gender) - 1) \* achrdg12  
  
# Rund the model with the interaction included  
mod4 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXachrdg12)  
summary(mod4)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXachrdg12)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
genderXachrdg12 -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

* Interaction model using the centered continuous predictor: Please write down your interpretation of the intercept and the regression coefficient for Gender in the regression output below.

# compute the deviation scores for reading  
reading\_dev <- achrdg12 - mean(achrdg12, na.rm = T)   
  
# Run the interaction model as above  
genderXreading\_dev <- (as.numeric(gender) - 1) \* reading\_dev  
  
mod5 <- lm(achmat12 ~ reading\_dev + gender + genderXreading\_dev)  
summary(mod5)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ reading\_dev + gender + genderXreading\_dev)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 55.29439 0.35127 157.411 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
reading\_dev 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 3.49930 0.52135 6.712 5.26e-11 \*\*\*  
genderXreading\_dev -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.00652 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

[Section 5.4](#sec-inference-for-interactions-5)

* The output shows the gender gap in Math Achievement for 5 values of Reading Achievement. The values of Reading Achievement are its 5 quartiles. You can think of the output as a tabular summary of [Figure 5.5](#fig-visreg-1). Please use the output to make a conclusion about the levels of Reading Achievement for which the gender gap was significant. Please be prepared to share your answer in class

# Install the emmeans package if you haven't already done so  
# install.packages("emmeans")  
  
# Load the package into memory  
library(emmeans)  
  
# Fit the model using R's formula syntax for interaction '\*'  
mod6 <- lm(achmat12 ~ gender\*achrdg12, data = NELS)  
  
# Use the emmeans function to get the gender means on math, broken down by reading  
gap <- emmeans(mod6,   
 specs = "gender",  
 by = "achrdg12",   
 cov.reduce = quantile)  
  
# Test whether the differences are significant  
contrast(gap, method = "pairwise")

achrdg12 = 31.8:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -7.74 1.637 496 -4.728 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 51.3:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -4.27 0.593 496 -7.207 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 57.0:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -3.25 0.529 496 -6.138 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 61.7:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -2.41 0.658 496 -3.659 0.0003  
  
achrdg12 = 68.1:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -1.28 0.967 496 -1.321 0.1872

* The test of the slopes of the simple trends for the example are reported below. As previously stated, these aren’t super interesting in the context of our example, but you should check your understanding of simple trends by writing down an interpretation of the output below.

# The regression coefficients on reading, broken down by gender  
simple\_slopes <- emtrends(mod6, var = "achrdg12", specs = "gender")  
test(simple\_slopes)

gender achrdg12.trend SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female 0.728 0.0470 496 15.487 <.0001  
 Male 0.550 0.0451 496 12.208 <.0001

[Section 5.5](#sec-two-continuous-predictors-5)

* Please provide an interpretation of all four regression coefficients in the centered model. Your interpretations should make reference to the situation where one or both predictors are equal to zero (see [Equation 5.9](#eq-simple-5) above) and should also mentioned the interpretation of the value of zero for the centered variables.

# With centering  
mod8 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev\*ses\_dev)  
summary(mod8)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev \* ses\_dev)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-17.1336 -3.8944 0.7278 4.1301 15.0153   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 56.826225 0.286906 198.065 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
achrdg12\_dev 0.590313 0.036103 16.351 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
ses\_dev 0.137305 0.041485 3.310 0.001 \*\*   
achrdg12\_dev:ses\_dev 0.004270 0.005196 0.822 0.412   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.031 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4184, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4149   
F-statistic: 118.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

[Section 5.6](#sec-two-categorical-predictors-5)

* Please take a moment to write down your interpretation of the figure below, focussing on how it illustrates an interaction between SES and Pre-K. Additionally, please describe how the figure would be different if there was no interaction between Pre-K and SES.

#   
load("ECLS2577.Rdata")  
ecls$prek <- factor(2 - ecls$p1center)  
ecls$wksesq5 <- factor(ecls$wksesq5)  
mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ prek\*wksesq5, data = ecls)  
visreg::visreg(mod, xvar = "wksesq5", by = "prek",   
 partial = F, rug = F, overlay = T,   
 strip.names = T, xlab = "SES",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement in K")

|  |
| --- |
|  |

* The output below shows the summary for a model that regresses Math Achievement on Pre-K, SES, and their interaction. Please write down an interpretation of magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each regression coefficient in this output (including the intercept), and be prepared to share your answers in class. Remember that wksesq5 is the variable code for the SES quintiles – the digit that follows the variable code indicates the level of variable. It may be helpful to refer to the previous figure in your interpretations.

mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ prek\*wksesq5, data = ecls)  
summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ prek \* wksesq5, data = ecls)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-16.7682 -4.7682 -0.9755 3.9545 31.2318   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 16.0455 0.7355 21.816 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek1 -0.3735 0.9601 -0.389 0.69732   
wksesq52 2.2931 0.9570 2.396 0.01663 \*   
wksesq53 2.9300 0.9127 3.210 0.00134 \*\*   
wksesq54 4.6310 0.9439 4.906 9.87e-07 \*\*\*  
wksesq55 7.2990 1.0343 7.057 2.19e-12 \*\*\*  
prek1:wksesq52 1.0638 1.2118 0.878 0.38012   
prek1:wksesq53 2.1087 1.1544 1.827 0.06785 .   
prek1:wksesq54 1.6715 1.1684 1.431 0.15267   
prek1:wksesq55 2.7972 1.2340 2.267 0.02349 \*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.9 on 2567 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1621, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1592   
F-statistic: 55.19 on 9 and 2567 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

* Please write down your interpretation of the ANOVA table and R-squared (eta-squared) coefficients below and be prepared to share you thoughts in class. Note that the ANOVA output leads to different conclusions than the regression output above. We will discuss the discrepancies between the ANOVA and regression output in class.

# ANOVA Table  
anova(mod)

Analysis of Variance Table  
  
Response: c1rmscal  
 Df Sum Sq Mean Sq F value Pr(>F)   
prek 1 3434 3434.3 72.1437 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
wksesq5 4 19914 4978.4 104.5805 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek:wksesq5 4 299 74.7 1.5701 0.1795   
Residuals 2567 122198 47.6   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

# R-squared (eta-squared)  
#install.packages("effectsize")  
effectsize::eta\_squared(mod, partial = F)

# Effect Size for ANOVA (Type I)  
  
Parameter | Eta2 | 95% CI  
--------------------------------------  
prek | 0.02 | [0.01, 1.00]  
wksesq5 | 0.14 | [0.12, 1.00]  
prek:wksesq5 | 2.05e-03 | [0.00, 1.00]  
  
- One-sided CIs: upper bound fixed at [1.00].

## 5.8 Exercises

These exercises provide an overview of how to compute interactions using the lm function, how to center continuous predictors, and how to follow-up significant interactions with the emmeans package. We will go through this material in class together, so you don’t need to work on it before class (but you can if you want.)

Before staring this section, you may find it useful to scroll to the top of the page, click on the “</> Code” menu, and select “Show All Code.”

### 5.8.1 Binary + continuous + interaction

There are multiple ways of implementing interactions in R.

* We can “hard code” new variables into our data (e.g., the product of a binary gender variable and reading)
* We can use R’s formula notation for single term interactions (:)
* We can use R’s formula notation for factorial interactions (\*)

The following code illustrates the three approaches and shows that they all producing the same output. In general, the \* syntax is the easiest to use, so we will stick with that one going forward. The variables used in the example are from the NELS data:

* achmat12 is Mat Achievement (percent correct on a math test) in grade 12.
* achrdg12 is Reading Achievement (percent correct on a reading test) in grade 12.
* gender is dichotomous encoding of gender with values Male and Female (it is not a binary variable, but a factor, as discussed in [Section 4.9](#sec-exercises-4).

# Interaction via hard coding  
genderXreading <- (as.numeric(gender) - 1) \* achrdg12  
mod1 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXreading)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXreading)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
genderXreading -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

# Interaction via `:` operator  
mod2 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + achrdg12:gender)  
summary(mod2)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + achrdg12:gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
achrdg12:genderMale -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

# Interaction via `\*` operator  
mod3 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\*gender)  
summary(mod3)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 \* gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
achrdg12:genderMale -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Before moving on, check your interpretation of the coefficients in the models. In particular, what does the regression coefficient on the interaction term mean?

### 5.8.2 Centering continuous predictors

As noted in [Section 5.3](#sec-binary-continuous-interaction-5), the regression coefficient on Gender is not very interpretable when there is an interaction in the model. In the above output, the coefficient on gender tells us the gender gap in Math Achievement when achrdg12 = 0. We can fix this issue by re-scaling achrdg12 so that zero has a meaningful value. One widely used approach is to center achrdg12 at its mean. When a variable is centered at its mean it is called a *deviation score.*

Let’s see what happens to our regression output when we use deviation scores for achrdg12 instead of the “raw” score

# Re-run the model with reading centered at its mean  
achrdg12\_dev <- achrdg12 - mean(achrdg12)  
mod4 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev\*gender)  
summary(mod4)

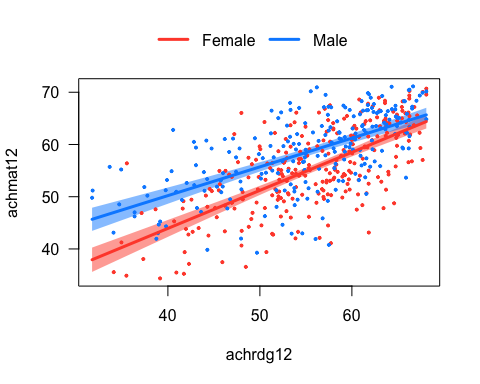
Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev \* gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 55.29439 0.35127 157.411 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
achrdg12\_dev 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 3.49930 0.52135 6.712 5.26e-11 \*\*\*  
achrdg12\_dev:genderMale -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.00652 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Note that the intercept and the regression coefficient on Gender have changed values compared to mod3. What is the interpretation of these coefficients in the new model?

### 5.8.3 Breaking down a significant interaction

Next, let’s plot our model with the interaction term. One advantage of having everything in a single model is that we can level-up our plotting! The following code uses the visreg package. Note that the error bands in the plot are produced using the standard errors from emmeans, which is discussed below. If you want to know more about how visreg works, type help(visreg).

# Install the package if you haven't already done so  
# install.packages("visreg")  
  
# Load the package into memory  
library(visreg)  
  
visreg(mod3, xvar = "achrdg12", by = "gender", overlay = TRUE)



If the interaction is significant, then we usually want to report a bit more information about how the focal relationship changes as a function of the moderators. There are two main ways to do this:

* Marginal effects (aka marginal means, least squares means, adjusted means): This approach is used when the focal predictor is categorical and we want to compare means across the categories, conditional on levels of the moderator.
* Simple trends (aka simple slopes): This approach is used when the focal predictor is continuous and we want to examine the slopes of the simple trends, conditional on the moderator.

Usually, the researcher will chose one or the other approach, whichever is best suited to address the research questions of interest. Our example was motivated by consideration of the gender gap in STEM (i.e., the relationship between a STEM and a categorical predictor), so the marginal effects approach is better suited. We will also illustrate simple trends, just to show how that approach works.

### 5.8.4 Marginal effects

Let’s breakdown the interaction by asking how the relationship between Math and Gender (i.e., the gender achievement gap in Math) changes as a function of Reading. This can be done using emmeans package, and the main function in that pacakge is also called emmeans.

The three main arguments for the emmeans function:

* object – the output of lm. This is the first argument
* specs – which factors in the model we want the means of (i.e., the focal predictor)
* by – which predictor(s) we want to use to breakdown the means (i.e., the moderator(s))

We can use emmeans to compute the marginal effect at the mean (MEM) as follows:

# Install the package if you haven't already done so  
 # install.packages("emmeans")  
  
# Load the package into memory  
library(emmeans)  
  
# Use the emmeans function to get the gender means on math, broken down by reading  
gap <- emmeans(mod3, specs = "gender", by = "achrdg12")  
summary(gap)

achrdg12 = 55.6:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 55.3 0.351 496 54.6 56.0  
 Male 58.8 0.385 496 58.0 59.6  
  
Confidence level used: 0.95

# Test whether the difference is significant  
contrast(gap, method = "pairwise")

achrdg12 = 55.6:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -3.5 0.521 496 -6.712 <.0001

In the above output, we only get one Gender difference in Math, and that is computed for the value of achrdg12 = 55.6, which is the mean value of Reading. As noted, this is called the marginal effect at the mean (MEM).

It is often more helpful to report Gender difference for multiple different values of achrdg12, which is called MERV (marginal effects at representative values). While there are many ways to chose the representative values, one convenient approach approach is to use the quartiles of achrdg12. This is accomplished using the cov.reduce argument of emmeans as follows.

# Use the the covarate reduce option of emmeans with the quantile function  
gap\_quartiles <- emmeans(mod3, specs = "gender", by = "achrdg12", cov.reduce = quantile)  
summary(gap\_quartiles)

achrdg12 = 31.8:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 37.9 1.186 496 35.6 40.3  
 Male 45.7 1.129 496 43.5 47.9  
  
achrdg12 = 51.3:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 52.1 0.412 496 51.3 52.9  
 Male 56.4 0.426 496 55.6 57.2  
  
achrdg12 = 57.0:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 56.3 0.355 496 55.6 57.0  
 Male 59.6 0.393 496 58.8 60.3  
  
achrdg12 = 61.7:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 59.8 0.447 496 58.9 60.6  
 Male 62.2 0.482 496 61.2 63.1  
  
achrdg12 = 68.1:  
 gender emmean SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 64.4 0.674 496 63.1 65.7  
 Male 65.7 0.693 496 64.3 67.0  
  
Confidence level used: 0.95

# Test whether the gender difference in math achievement is significant at each quartile of reading achievement  
contrast(gap\_quartiles, method = "pairwise")

achrdg12 = 31.8:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -7.74 1.637 496 -4.728 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 51.3:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -4.27 0.593 496 -7.207 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 57.0:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -3.25 0.529 496 -6.138 <.0001  
  
achrdg12 = 61.7:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -2.41 0.658 496 -3.659 0.0003  
  
achrdg12 = 68.1:  
 contrast estimate SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female - Male -1.28 0.967 496 -1.321 0.1872

At this point, you should be able to summarize your conclusions about the gender gap in Math and how it depends on Reading.

### 5.8.5 Simple trends

Next we will show how to use emtrends to test the conditional or “simple” slopes of Math on Reading, given Gender. As mentioned, this approach is not very well suited to the example, but we are going through it here just to illustrate how to do this type of analysis.

The three main arguments for emtrends are

* object – the output of lm. This is the first argument
* var – which continuous predictor in the model we want the slopes of
* specs – which factor predictor(s) in the model to break the trend down by

Let’s see how it works.

# Use the emtrends function to get the regression coefficients on reading, broken down by gender  
simple\_slopes <- emtrends(mod3, var = "achrdg12", specs = "gender")  
summary(simple\_slopes)

gender achrdg12.trend SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 Female 0.728 0.0470 496 0.636 0.821  
 Male 0.550 0.0451 496 0.462 0.639  
  
Confidence level used: 0.95

test(simple\_slopes)

gender achrdg12.trend SE df t.ratio p.value  
 Female 0.728 0.0470 496 15.487 <.0001  
 Male 0.550 0.0451 496 12.208 <.0001

The foregoing analysis tells us how the relationship between reading and math changes as a function of gender, and, in particular, whether the simple slopes are significant for males and females. Recall that the simple slope for females (the group coded zero) is just the regression coefficient on reading in the original lm output. So, the only new thing this output gives us is the simple slope for males.

### 5.8.6 Two continuous predictors

Interactions with continuous predictors are basically the same as for continuous and categorical. One main issue is that we should always center the predictors, not only to facilitate interpretation of the regression coefficients, but also to reduce the correlation between the main effects and the interaction.

For an example, let’s replace gender with SES from our previous analysis. Apologies that this new example is mainly for convenience and doesn’t represent a great research question about, e.g., about why the relationships between math and reading might change as a function of SES!

Here we will focus on how centering affects the results of a regression with interactions among continuous predictors.

# Without centering  
mod5 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\*ses)  
summary(mod1)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + genderXreading)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
genderXreading -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

# With centering  
achrdg12\_dev <- achrdg12 - mean(achrdg12)  
ses\_dev <- ses - mean(ses)  
mod6 <- lm(achmat12 ~ achrdg12\_dev\*ses\_dev)  
summary(mod2)

Call:  
lm(formula = achmat12 ~ achrdg12 + gender + achrdg12:gender)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-19.0582 -3.7864 0.5014 4.0775 16.2889   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 14.80310 2.64922 5.588 3.8e-08 \*\*\*  
achrdg12 0.72824 0.04702 15.487 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
genderMale 13.39328 3.65828 3.661 0.000278 \*\*\*  
achrdg12:genderMale -0.17794 0.06514 -2.732 0.006524 \*\*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 5.801 on 496 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.4619, Adjusted R-squared: 0.4586   
F-statistic: 141.9 on 3 and 496 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

We can see that, while both models account for the same overall variation in math, SES is significant in the centered model. This has to do both with changing the interpretation of the coefficient (it now represents the relationship between math and reading for students with average reading) and because it is no longer so highly redundant with the interaction term.

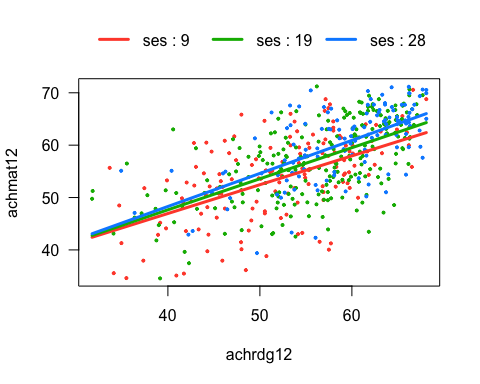
Although the interaction with SES was not significant in either model, let’s break down the interaction with emtrends just to see how it works. This time we will use the at option rather than the ’cov.reduceoption to break down the interaction. The values 9, 19, and 28 are the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentile of SES, which is the same approachvisreguses (You can overwrite the defaults using thebreaksargument -- seehelp(visreg)`).

# Break down interaction with SES as moderator  
simple\_slopes <-emtrends(mod5, var = "achrdg12", specs = "ses", at = list(ses = c(9, 19, 28)))  
summary(simple\_slopes)

ses achrdg12.trend SE df lower.CL upper.CL  
 9 0.550 0.0583 496 0.435 0.665  
 19 0.593 0.0365 496 0.521 0.664  
 28 0.631 0.0639 496 0.506 0.757  
  
Confidence level used: 0.95

Finally let’s summarize our (non significant) interaction with a nice plot.

# Note that band = F removes the confidence intervals  
visreg(mod5, xvar = "achrdg12", by = "ses", overlay = TRUE, band = F)



### 5.8.7 Two categorical predictors

For this topic we will switch over to the ECLS data and examine how SES and Pre-K attendance interact to predict Math Achievement at the beginning of Kindergarten. The variables we will examine are

* Math Achievement at the beginning of K (c1rmscal). This is the number of correct questions on a test with approximately 70 items.
* Whether the child attended Pre-K (p1center). This is a binary variable that indicates pre-K attendance.
* SES, coded as quintiles (wksesq5). We will denote this variable as SES, but keep in mind it is quintiles in this example (e.g., SES = 1 are the respondents with SES between the minimum and the first quintile).

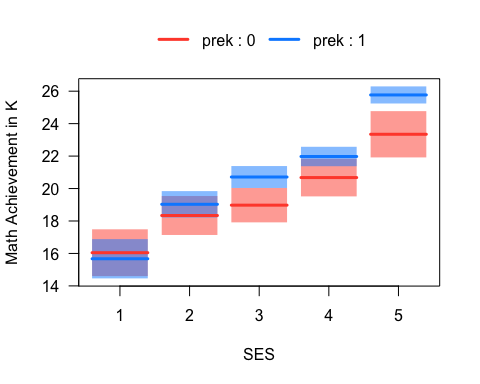
The regression model is as follows. Note that both variables need to be converted to factors in R, so that R will treat them as categorical variables. Also recall that in R the default contrast coding for categorical predictors is reference-group coding.

load("ECLS2577.Rdata")  
ecls$prek <- factor(2 - ecls$p1center)  
ecls$wksesq5 <- factor(ecls$wksesq5)  
mod <- lm(c1rmscal ~ prek\*wksesq5, data = ecls)  
summary(mod)

Call:  
lm(formula = c1rmscal ~ prek \* wksesq5, data = ecls)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-16.7682 -4.7682 -0.9755 3.9545 31.2318   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 16.0455 0.7355 21.816 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek1 -0.3735 0.9601 -0.389 0.69732   
wksesq52 2.2931 0.9570 2.396 0.01663 \*   
wksesq53 2.9300 0.9127 3.210 0.00134 \*\*   
wksesq54 4.6310 0.9439 4.906 9.87e-07 \*\*\*  
wksesq55 7.2990 1.0343 7.057 2.19e-12 \*\*\*  
prek1:wksesq52 1.0638 1.2118 0.878 0.38012   
prek1:wksesq53 2.1087 1.1544 1.827 0.06785 .   
prek1:wksesq54 1.6715 1.1684 1.431 0.15267   
prek1:wksesq55 2.7972 1.2340 2.267 0.02349 \*   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 6.9 on 2567 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1621, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1592   
F-statistic: 55.19 on 9 and 2567 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

To facilitate interpretation of the ouput, you can refer to the plot below. Each regression coefficient in the output corresponds to a feature of this plot.

visreg::visreg(mod, xvar = "wksesq5", by = "prek",   
 partial = F, rug = F, overlay = T,   
 strip.names = T, xlab = "SES",   
 ylab = "Math Achievement in K")



In order to summarize the model as an ANOVA table, we can use the following code. Note that the ANOVA output tests the variance explained (i.e., R-squared) of the original variables, and does not include dummy variables.

anova(mod)

Analysis of Variance Table  
  
Response: c1rmscal  
 Df Sum Sq Mean Sq F value Pr(>F)   
prek 1 3434 3434.3 72.1437 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
wksesq5 4 19914 4978.4 104.5805 <2e-16 \*\*\*  
prek:wksesq5 4 299 74.7 1.5701 0.1795   
Residuals 2567 122198 47.6   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

In an ANOVA context, the R-squared statistics are called eta-squared. They are reported below:

effectsize::eta\_squared(mod, partial = F)

# Effect Size for ANOVA (Type I)  
  
Parameter | Eta2 | 95% CI  
--------------------------------------  
prek | 0.02 | [0.01, 1.00]  
wksesq5 | 0.14 | [0.12, 1.00]  
prek:wksesq5 | 2.05e-03 | [0.00, 1.00]  
  
- One-sided CIs: upper bound fixed at [1.00].

# 6. Model building

Up until this point we have considered models with only a handful of predictors. This chapter addresses how to scale up to real-life applications in which we may have many predictors. [Section 6.1](#sec-hierarchical-models-6) discusses the main ideas, [Section 6.2](#sec-worked-example-6) goes through a worked example, and [Section 6.3](#sec-too-many-predictors-6) addresses some technical details. Compared to the previous chapters, there aren’t a lot of mathematical details in this chapter. The focus is on using the techniques of the previous chapters in more realistic research scenarios (i.e., with lots of predictors).

There are two basic approaches to model building with many predictors. A *simulataneous* model is a single regression model that includes all predictors of interest. When there are many predictors, this is sometimes referred to the “kitchen sink” approach – just put everything in the model (including the kitchen sink). Conceptually, this approach has the advantage that it mitigates omitted variable bias and therefore helps justify the causal interpretation of regression coefficients. However, in practice it can lead to computational problems, especially when highly correlated predictors are included in the model. We discuss this situation in [Section 6.3](#sec-too-many-predictors-6).

*Hierarchical* model building is an alternative approach in which predictors are added into a model sequentially. A hierarchical approach is most appropriate when subsets of predictors can be grouped together conceputally. To illustrate this idea, let’s considering the following hypothetical example in which we seek to explain Reading Achievement using predictors that can be grouped into student factors and curriculum factors:

* Student factors
  + age
  + prior achievement
  + parental education
  + SES
* Curriculum factors
  + in-classroom reading (hrs)
  + peer discussion (hrs)
  + reading materials (level)
  + homework (hrs)

The student factors and curriculum factors are called “blocks” of predictors. A block is just a conceptual grouping of one or more predictors. It is up to the researcher to decide what counts as a conceptually meaningful block of predictors. The overall idea is to use your knowledge of your research area to design a regression model that addresses your research questions. This takes some practice. We will see some more examples of blocks of predictors in [Section 6.1](#sec-hierarchical-models-6) and [Section 6.2](#sec-worked-example-6).

In hierarchical regression, blocks of predictors are added into the model one at a time. The rationale for adding the blocks of predictors sequentially is to isolate the proportion of variance in the outcome (i.e., R-squared) attributable to each block, while controlling for the other block(s). Using our example, we could proceed as follows:

* **Step 1**. First we run a regression model with just the student factors. These variables are known to predict Reading Achievement, but they aren’t the types of factors that can be intervened upon via schooling. These types of predictors are often called “control variables”. What counts as a control variable is a largely non-statistical consideration that depends on the research context.
  + After we run the regression model with this first block of predictors, we record the R-squared statistic. We don’t care very much about the value of the regression coefficients at this point, since we know we have left out the curriculum factors.
* **Step 2**: Next we run a regression model with student factors *and* the curriculum factors, so that our model now includes all of the predictors. By comparing the the R-squared of the model in this second step (curriculum and student factors) to the R-squared of the model in the first step (only student factors), we can determine how much additional variation in Reading Achievement was explained by the curriculum factors. If the additional variation explained by the curriculum factors is substantial, we can reason that intervening on the curriculum may be a good way to improve Reading Achievement.

It is important to note the following points about this example:

* The second step in the hierarchical model is the same the simultaneous model – they both include all of the predictors. This is true in general. The final step of a hierarchical model is always the same as the corresponding simultaneous model.
* So, what does the hierarchical model give us that the simultaneous model doesn’t? The change in R-squared attributable to each additional block of predictors, controlling for the previous block(s) of predictors. This “change-in-R-squared” statistic is the main focus of this chapter.
* It is important to distinguish model building from variable selection. Model building is about research-question-driven strategies for partitioning the variation explained by a large number of predictors. Variable selection is about “weeding out” predictors that are not useful. So, in model building, the final model should always include all of the potential predictors, but in variable selection, the final model may include only a subset of the potential predictors.
* Variable selection is an important topic that is the focus of a lot current research in machine learning. There was also a large number of “step-wise” regression procedures used for variable selection in last century, but they didn’t work (i.e., different procedures resulted in different models and there were no good criteria by which to choose amongst them). If you have a research scenario that requires variable selection, this problem is best dealt with through machine learning. If you are interested, check out this resource: <https://glmnet.stanford.edu> (and feel free to ask questions in class!).
* A note on terminology: In some research areas, “hierarchical” is used to refer to multilevel models (e.g., “hierarchical linear models” in sociology). That is not the usage here. It would make sense to refer to the types of models we are calling “hierarchical” as “step-wise”, but, as mentioned in the previous point, the term “step-wise” already refers to a large number flawed techniques for variable selection. So… here we are.

One last thing: The overall idea of this chapter is that you should build models that answer your research questions. For concreteness, this chapter discusses the main statistical techniques for model building in the context of hierarchical regression. But, you don’t need to use hierarchical regression – the same techniques can be used in other ways creative ways as well.

## 6.1 Hierarhical models

The key ideas of hierarchical regression are:

1. Partition the predictors into conceptual “blocks”. Each block contains at least one predictor, but they usually contain more than one (e.g., “control variables”, “home factors”). No predictor can be included in more than one block.
2. Build a series of regression models in which the blocks are entered into the model sequentially. For this to be *hierarchical* model building, it is required that each new model in the series includes the blocks from all previous models. So, with three blocks we would have:
3. Compare the R-squared value of each model to that of the previous model. This allows us to determine whether each new block “adds anything” to the model. To see how this works, denote the R-squared values of our three models as , respectively. Then we proceed as follows:
   * Compute to evaluate the contribution of Block 1.
   * Compute to evaluate contribution of Block 2, controlling for Block 1
   * Compute to evaluate contribution of Block 3, controlling for Block 1 & 2.

The symbol is pronounced “delta R-squared.” It always has two subscripts, which denote the two models being compared.

The main advantage of hierarchical modeling is that we partition the total variance explained by all of the predictors into parts contributed uniquely by each block. In particular, it follows from the definition of delta R-squared that:

This means that the variation explained by all of the predictors together () can be separated into the 3 distinct components that are isolated by using hierarchical approach.

Sometimes we let denote a model that contains no predictors (only the intercept). Then can be equilvanently written as . This makes the notation of the previous equation a bit more consistent:

The above equation shows us that hierarchical modeling building is an approach to partitioning the total variance explained by a set of predictors (here denoted ) into the variance uniquely attributable to different blocks of predictors (the s). While there are many other approaches to model building, this equation is what uniquely defines *hierarchical* model building.

### 6.1.1 Example of blocks

We have already seen some examples of blocks of predictors in the previous chapters. This section highlights two examples.

* Categorical predictors with categories are represented as blocks of dummy variables. The dummies are conceptually equivalent to a single predictor.
* Interactions are blocks of predictors. Often interactions are entered into a regression model on separate step, after the “main effects” have been entered. Below is an excerpt from a study that illustrates this approac. The study is about equitable access to gifted-and-talented (GT) programs in New York City. In order to apply for GT programs, students need to take a test in Kindergarten. The test is optional and not everyone takes it. The study is mainly interested in whether attending Pre-K increases the probability that a child will take the test, especially for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in GT programs. (cite: Lu & Wienberg (2016). Public Pre-K and Test Taking for the NYC Gifted-and-Talented Programs: Forging a Path to Equity. Educational Researcher, 45, 36-47):

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More generally, blocks are any subset of predictors about which you want to ask a research question. It can be just one variable, or it can be a collection of conceptually related variables.

**Please take a moment to write down one or more examples of a block of variables from your area of research, and I will invite you to share your examples in class.**

### 6.1.2 Nested models

Whatever your blocks are, hiearhical modeling requires they are used to make a sequence of *nested models*. The idea behind nested models is depicted in [Figure 6.1](#fig-nested1). In the figure, Model 2 contains total predictors, and Model 1 contains a subset of those predictors. This relationship is shown by letting the area representing Model 1 be contained by the area representing Model 2. We can think of this like Matryoshka nesting dolls (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matryoshka_doll>). Model 1 is contained within Model 2, in the sense that all of the predictors in Model 1 are also in Model 2.

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| Figure 6.1: Nested Models |

A bit more technically: One regression model is nested within another if the former can be obtained by removing some predictors from the latter. Other than the difference in the predictors, it is assumed that the models equivalent (same outcome variable, sample samples, etc.).

The difference between nested and non-nested models is illustrated in [Figure 6.2](#fig-nested2). The partially overlapping ovals are intended to indicate that the models share some predictors, but each model also has some unique predictors.

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| Figure 6.2: Nested vs Non-Nested Models |

As noted in the figure, a hierarchical model is a series of nested regression models. You might be wondering why it is so important for the models to be nested. Part of this is conceptual – the hierarchical approach allows us to partition the total variance explained into parts attributable to different subsets (blocks) of predictors (see [Section 6.1](#sec-hierarchical-models-6)). Nesting is also required to compute statistical tests for the statistics (more on this in [Section 6.1.4](#sec-delta-rsquared-6)).

In short, we can statistically compare Model 1 and Model 2 in the left hand panel of [Figure 6.2](#fig-nested2), but not in the right hand panel. (Side note: In the right hand panel, we could compare Model 1 vs Model 3 and Model 2 vs Model 3, but this would not be a hierarchical model because the s wouldn’t add up to the of Model 3.)

### 6.1.3 Some practical advice

So far we have discussed hierarchical modeling conceptually, but have not really addressed how to use it in practice. The following advice is paraphrased from the late Jacob Cohen (cite: Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aitken (2003). Applied Multiple Regression Analysis. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum. Section 5.7.3).

* The hierarchical approach provides an effective strategy of inference if variables are entered into the model according to their relevance to the study.
* The variables that are most central to the study should be entered first, those that are secondarily of interest should be entered second, and those that fall into the category, “I wonder if” or “just in case” should be entered last.
* This principle may be succinctly stated as “least is last.” That is, “when research factors can be ordered as to their centrality, those of least relevance are appraised last in the hierarchy, and their results taken as indicative rather than conclusive”

[Figure 6.3](#fig-nested3) maps Cohen’s strategy onto our diagram for nested models. One addendum to this approach is that “control variables” are usually entered first. These are variables that have been established as important in past research, but are not of central interest to the present study. The rationale for entering them first is that new studies should add something beyond what has been established by past research.

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| Figure 6.3: Cohen’s ‘Least is Last’ Principle |

### 6.1.4 Delta R-squared

We have already seen how to compute – by subtracting the R-squared value of a nested model from that of a nesting model. This is a very widely used way of comparing nested regression models.

When adding predictors into a model one at a time (i.e., blocks with only a single predictor), testing is equivalent to testing the b-weight of the added predictor. But when adding multiple predictors into a model, provides important information that is not captured by any of the statistics we have considered so far. It is technically called a multiple semi-partial correlation, but “delta R-squared” or “R-squared change” are widely used terminology.

Statistical inference for uses the F-test shown below. Let Model 1 be a regression model with predictors that is nested within Model 2, with predictors. Define and . To test the hypothesis versus we can use the test statistic

which has an F-distribution on and degrees of freedom, when the null hypothesis true. This test assumes that Model 2 satisfies the linear regression population model (see @sec-population-model-2) and that Model 1 is nested within Model 2.

## 6.2 A worked example

To illustrate hierarchical modeling, let’s use the ECLS data to address whether reading achievement at the beginning of Kindergarten (c1rrscal) is related to SES (wksesl), parental (mother’s and father’s) education (wkmomed and wkdaded, respectively), and attendance in center-based care before K (p1center; pre-K status, for short).

This example is intended to be a realistic illustration of how to use the techniques we have covered up to this point. The sections below can be thought of as excerpts from a research paper, and also shows how to report results in a regression table. But there are some caveats that should be mentioned before starting:

* We used some tricks from later chapters to deal with non-linearity, and
* keep in the mind the subset of ECLS data we are using is not a representative sample and the results should not be assumed to generalize to the general population.

### 6.2.1 Research questions

We will address the following research questions.

* RQ1: Does SES predict Reading Achievement upon entry to K?
* RQ2: Does Parental Education (mother’s and father’s) predict Reading Achievement, after controlling for SES?
* RQ3: After controlling for both SES and Parental Education, is Pre-K Status associated with better Reading Achievement in K?
* RQ4: Does the relationship of SES or Parental Education to Reading Achievement change as function of Pre-K Status – in more causal language: does Pre-K participation reduce pre-existing disparities in Reading Achievement upon entry to K?

### 6.2.2 Data analysis plan

The research questions were addressed via hierarchical regression modeling with the following blocks of predictors.

* Block 1: wksesl
* Block 2: wkmomed and wkdaded
* Block 3: plcetner
* Block 4: Interactions between p1center and the other predictors

To aid the interpretation of regression coefficients in the presence of interactions, all continuous variables (predictors and outcome) were transformed to z-scores. plcenter was coded as binary indicator for Pre-K status.

The blocks were entered into the model in the indicated order. The RQs were addressed by examining the R-square change () for each corresponding block. (In practice, we would also interpret the sign and direction of the significant regression coefficients in the final model, but we will leave that as an exercise.) A significance level of .05 was used for all tests reported in this study.

Preliminary examination of the model residuals indicated violation of the assumption of linearity. To address this, the outcome variable was log-transformed and a quadratic term was added for wksesl (wksesl\_sq). These procedures for checking and addressing non-linearity are discussed in the coming chapters.

### 6.2.3 Results

The F-tests of R-squared change for each block of predictors are reported in [Figure 6.4](#fig-table1). The results show that block 1 (linear and quadratic trends in SES) explained about 18% of the variance Reading Achievement. While blocks 2 (parental education) and 3 (Pre-K) contributed statistically significant increases in variance explained, the change in R-squared was not large. Block 4 containing the interactions with Pre-K was not statistically significant after controlling for the main effects.

load("ECLS2577.RData")  
attach(ecls)  
  
# Recode variables  
p1center <- 2 - p1center  
z\_c1rrscal <- scale(c1rrscal)  
z\_wksesl <- scale(wksesl)  
z\_wksesl\_sq <- z\_wksesl^2  
z\_wkmomed <- scale(wkmomed)  
z\_wkdaded <- scale(wkdaded)  
log\_c1rrscal <- log(z\_c1rrscal - min(z\_c1rrscal) + 1)  
  
# Run models  
# models  
mod1 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq)  
mod2 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded)  
mod3 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded + p1center)  
mod4 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ (z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded)\*p1center)  
  
R2\_1 <- summary(mod1)$r.squared  
R2\_2 <- summary(mod2)$r.squared  
R2\_3 <- summary(mod3)$r.squared  
R2\_4 <- summary(mod4)$r.squared  
  
rsquared <- c(0, R2\_1, R2\_2, R2\_3, R2\_4)  
delta\_rsquared <- c(0, R2\_1, R2\_2 - R2\_1, R2\_3 - R2\_2, R2\_4 - R2\_3)  
Models <- paste0("Model ", 0:4)  
names(delta\_rsquared) <- Models  
  
# Tests of R-square change  
model\_results <- knitr::kable(cbind(Rsquared = rsquared,   
 Delta.Rsquared = delta\_rsquared,   
 anova(lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ 1), mod1, mod2, mod3, mod4)),  
 digits = 3)  
model\_results

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  | Rsquared | Delta.Rsquared | Res.Df | RSS | Df | Sum of Sq | F | Pr(>F) | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Model 0 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 2576 | 343.636 | NA | NA | NA | NA | | Model 1 | 0.176 | 0.176 | 2574 | 283.114 | 2 | 60.522 | 277.886 | 0.000 | | Model 2 | 0.179 | 0.003 | 2572 | 282.032 | 2 | 1.083 | 4.970 | 0.007 | | Model 3 | 0.184 | 0.005 | 2571 | 280.271 | 1 | 1.761 | 16.168 | 0.000 | | Model 4 | 0.187 | 0.002 | 2567 | 279.538 | 4 | 0.733 | 1.683 | 0.151 |   Figure 6.4: R-squared change and F-tests |

Although we didn’t have research hypotheses about the individual predictors, it is often useful to report a table such as the one below to summarize that kind of information. The table was produced using the stargazer package in R and is representative of the usual format for reporting regression output from hierarchical regression models. The values reported for each variable are the regression coefficients, with the standard errors in parenthesis. **Please take a moment to look over the table and write down any questions you have about its interpretation**

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### 6.2.4 Interpretation

The focus of this section is on the interpretation of the statistics and their significance. In practice, we would also interpret the sign and direction of the significant regression coefficients in the final model. As noted above, the outcome variable was log transformed, but we ignore that detail here. It would usually not be necessary to report results both in a table and inline, but the latter are shown for illustrative purposes (practice, practice, practice!).

* RQ1: SES had significant linear and quadratic relationships with Reading Achievement. Together, both predictors explained about 17.6% of the variance in Reading Achievement (.
* RQ2: After controlling for SES, Parental Education explained a small but statistically significant proportion of the variance in Reading Achievement (),
* RQ3: After controlling for SES and Parental Education, Pre-K status explained an additional .5% of the variation in reading achievement ().
* RQ4: There was mixed evidence about the interactions between Pre-K Status and the other predictors. The F-test of R-squared change indicated that the interaction terms did not explain a significant amount of variation in reading (). However, the interaction with paternal education was significant at the .05 level. After re-running Model 4 with only the paternal education interaction, it was found that this effect was not significant at the .05 level (; see output below). It may be concluded that there were no significant interactions with Pre-K status.

mod4A <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded\*p1center)  
summary(mod4A)

Call:  
lm(formula = log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed +   
 z\_wkdaded \* p1center)  
  
Residuals:  
 Min 1Q Median 3Q Max   
-0.88751 -0.23151 -0.00025 0.20858 1.34884   
  
Coefficients:  
 Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)   
(Intercept) 0.795829 0.015160 52.495 < 2e-16 \*\*\*  
z\_wksesl 0.115158 0.016322 7.056 2.2e-12 \*\*\*  
z\_wksesl\_sq -0.019645 0.005306 -3.702 0.000218 \*\*\*  
z\_wkmomed 0.018424 0.011174 1.649 0.099327 .   
z\_wkdaded 0.042770 0.017016 2.513 0.012016 \*   
p1center 0.060274 0.016163 3.729 0.000196 \*\*\*  
z\_wkdaded:p1center -0.014023 0.016373 -0.856 0.391830   
---  
Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1  
  
Residual standard error: 0.3302 on 2570 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.1846, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1827   
F-statistic: 96.99 on 6 and 2570 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

In summary, it was found that SES and Parental Education were significant predictors of children’s Reading Achievement upon entry to Kindergarten, indicating that pre-existing disparities in reading due to economic factors are apparent at even this very early age. Attendance in Pre-K explained an additional .5% of variance in Reading Achievement and was associated with increased Reading Achievement; however, there was no evidence that participation in Pre-K reduced pre-existing disparities in Reading Achievement associated with the economic factors (i.e., there were no interactions between Pre-K participation and the economic factors).

## 6.3 Too many predictors?

What is better: more predictors or fewer? While there is no definitive answer to this question, there are two points that we should keep in mind when adding predictors into a model:

* The ratio of sample size to number of predictors: .
* The correlation among the predictors (AKA multicollinearity).

In order to understand the effect of these factors in multiple regression, its helpful to refer to the formula for the standard error of a regression coefficient (from [Section 3.7.1](#sec-inference-for-coeffecients-3)), which is presented again below:

Recall that denotes standard deviations and that is the R-squared from the regression of the -th predictor on the remaining predictors.

### 6.3.1

We can see from the equation for that increasing the number of predictors leads the term to get smaller. Consequently, the ratio

will get larger (and hence the standard error will get larger) if the increase in the number of predictors is not compensated by an increase in In other words, predictors that do not add explanatory power to the model (i.e., do not increase R-squared) will lead to reduced precision for all of the regression coefficients.

So long as , the effect of the number of predictors is negligible. But when the number of predictors gets close to the sample size, the estimates of the regression coefficients can become very imprecise. Many seek “rules of thumb” for the ratio of observations to predictors. This is just a complicated way of asking how large the sample size needs to be, and the correct answer to that question is provided by power analysis ([Section 2.8](#sec-power-2)). That said, if -ish you should start probably worrying about the number of predictors in your model.

### 6.3.2 Multicollinearity

Regardless of sample size, when a predictor is highly correlated with the other predictors, its precision is negatively affected via the term . When the situation is called multicollinearity. Note that multicollinearity can occur even if none of the pairwise correlations among the predictors is large – it has to do with the relation between predictor and *all* of the other predictors, which is why it is called *multi*collinearity.

The term is called the *tolerance* and its reciprocal is called the variance inflation factor (VIF).

Note that appears in formula for the standard error of the regression coefficient.

Some examples of how to interpret the are provided below:

* If , the estimated regression coefficient is 5 times less precise than it would be without multicollinearity.
* If , the estimated regression coefficient is 10 times less precise than it would be without multicollinearity.
* If , it is a good idea to reconsider whether the predictor needs to be recoded or omitted from the model.

In general, it is a good practice to check VIF as part of model diagnostics, which is the topic of the next chapter. For our example, the VIF statistics for Model 3 and Model 4 are reported below.

For Model 3:

# install.packages("car")  
car::vif(mod3)

z\_wksesl z\_wksesl\_sq z\_wkmomed z\_wkdaded p1center   
 6.290370 1.206007 2.950358 3.377283 1.053738

For Model 4:

car::vif(mod4)

there are higher-order terms (interactions) in this model  
consider setting type = 'predictor'; see ?vif

z\_wksesl z\_wksesl\_sq z\_wkmomed   
 28.157965 6.447179 12.799652   
 z\_wkdaded p1center z\_wksesl:p1center   
 13.816244 1.812096 28.320202   
z\_wksesl\_sq:p1center z\_wkmomed:p1center z\_wkdaded:p1center   
 7.562264 12.516708 14.011576

We can see that including the interactions led to a high degree of multicollinearity for some of the regression coefficients in the model. Based on this information, as well as the non-significant for the interaction block, it would be advisable to focus our interpretation on Model 3 rather than Model 4.

## 6.4 Workbook

This section collects the questions asked in this chapter. There aren’t many, we will mainly be focussed on going through the worked example during class time.

[Section 6.1](#sec-hierarchical-models-6)

Please take a moment to write down one or more examples of a block of variables from your area of research, and I will invite you to share your examples in class.

[Section 6.2](#sec-worked-example-6)

* Look over the tables below and write down any questions you have about their interpretation or the write up provided in [Section 6.2](#sec-worked-example-6).

|  | Rsquared | Delta.Rsquared | Res.Df | RSS | Df | Sum of Sq | F | Pr(>F) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model 0 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 2576 | 343.636 | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Model 1 | 0.176 | 0.176 | 2574 | 283.114 | 2 | 60.522 | 277.886 | 0.000 |
| Model 2 | 0.179 | 0.003 | 2572 | 282.032 | 2 | 1.083 | 4.970 | 0.007 |
| Model 3 | 0.184 | 0.005 | 2571 | 280.271 | 1 | 1.761 | 16.168 | 0.000 |
| Model 4 | 0.187 | 0.002 | 2567 | 279.538 | 4 | 0.733 | 1.683 | 0.151 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

## 6.5 Exercises

The exercises reproduce the worked example in [Section 6.2](#sec-worked-example-6). We will go through this material in class together, so you don’t need to work on it before class (but you can if you want.)

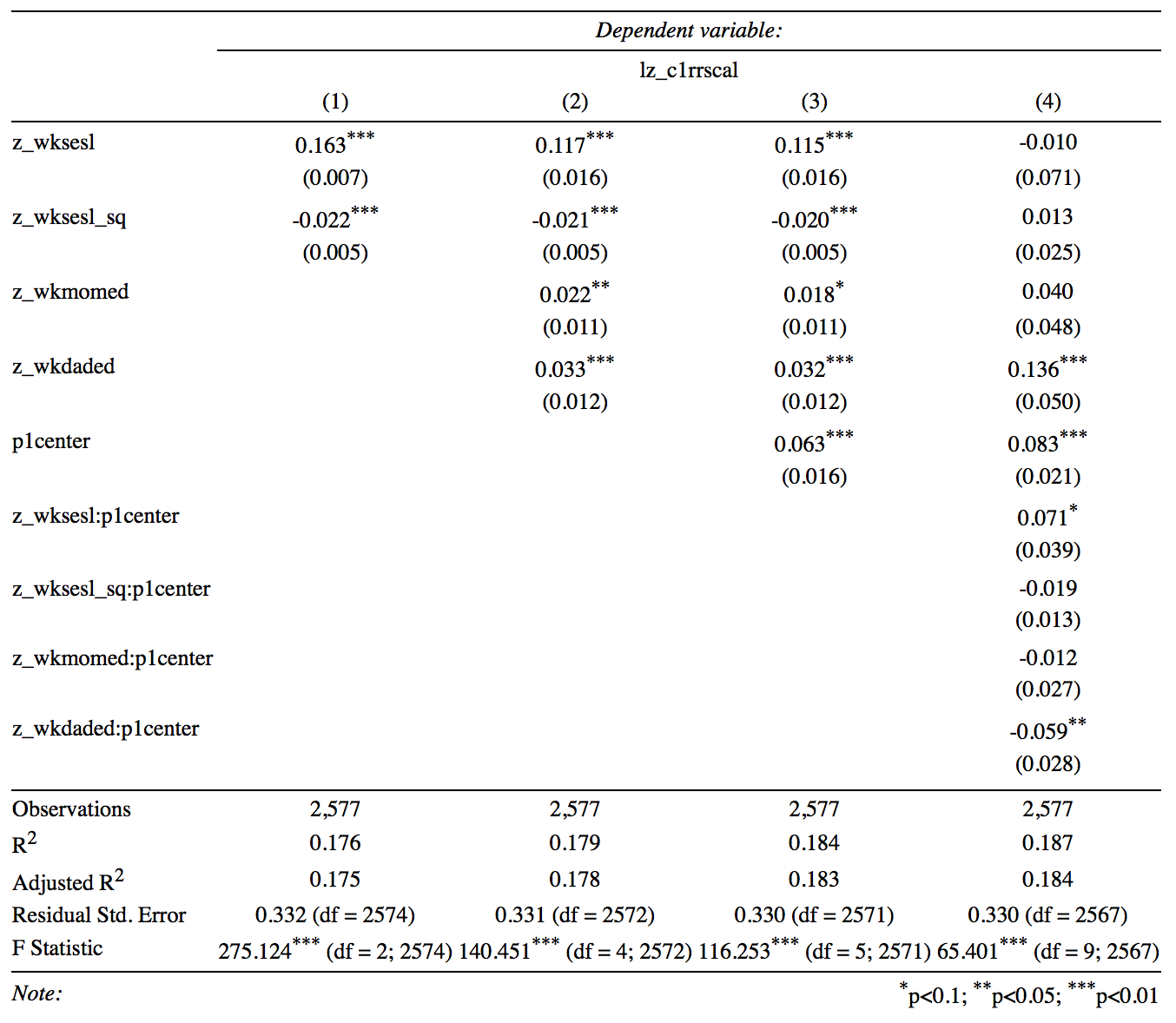
Before staring this section, you may find it useful to scroll to the top of the page, click on the “</> Code” menu, and select “Show All Code.”

First we set up the variables

# Clean up env. and load data  
#rm(list = ls())  
#load("ECLS2577.RData")  
#attach(ecls)  
  
# Recode variables  
p1center <- 2 - p1center  
z\_c1rrscal <- scale(c1rrscal)  
z\_wksesl <- scale(wksesl)  
z\_wksesl\_sq <- z\_wksesl^2  
z\_wkmomed <- scale(wkmomed)  
z\_wkdaded <- scale(wkdaded)  
log\_c1rrscal <- log(z\_c1rrscal - min(z\_c1rrscal) + 1)

Next, run the models.

# Run models  
mod1 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq)  
mod2 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded)  
mod3 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded + p1center)  
  
# Note the syntax here for interacting one variable with many  
mod4 <- lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ (z\_wksesl + z\_wksesl\_sq + z\_wkmomed + z\_wkdaded)\*p1center)  
  
# Regression table -- will discuss this in class  
# stargazer::stargazer(mod1, mod2, mod3, mod4, type = 'html', omit = "Constant")  
knitr::include\_graphics("files/images/stargazer.png")



The stargazer table doesn’t format nicely in markdown, it is attached as a screen shot instead. We will go through some different types of output with stargazer in class. You must install the stargazer package for the code to work.

The above table reports the for each model but does not provide the statistics or the corresponding F-tests. The statistics require some additional processing:

# Get R-squared   
R2\_1 <- summary(mod1)$r.squared  
R2\_2 <- summary(mod2)$r.squared  
R2\_3 <- summary(mod3)$r.squared  
R2\_4 <- summary(mod4)$r.squared  
rsquared <- c(0, R2\_1, R2\_2, R2\_3, R2\_4)  
  
# Compute R-squared change  
delta\_rsquared <- c(0, R2\_1, R2\_2 - R2\_1, R2\_3 - R2\_2, R2\_4 - R2\_3)  
  
# Set up for pretty printing  
results <- cbind(Rsquared = rsquared,   
 Delta.Rsquared = delta\_rsquared,   
 anova(lm(log\_c1rrscal ~ 1), mod1, mod2, mod3, mod4))  
   
knitr::kable(results, digits = 3)

| Rsquared | Delta.Rsquared | Res.Df | RSS | Df | Sum of Sq | F | Pr(>F) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0.000 | 0.000 | 2576 | 343.636 | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 0.176 | 0.176 | 2574 | 283.114 | 2 | 60.522 | 277.886 | 0.000 |
| 0.179 | 0.003 | 2572 | 282.032 | 2 | 1.083 | 4.970 | 0.007 |
| 0.184 | 0.005 | 2571 | 280.271 | 1 | 1.761 | 16.168 | 0.000 |
| 0.187 | 0.002 | 2567 | 279.538 | 4 | 0.733 | 1.683 | 0.151 |

The variance inflation factors for Model 3 and Model 4 are obtained use the vif function of the car package (you must install the car package for this code to work).

# install.pacakges("car")  
car::vif(mod3)

z\_wksesl z\_wksesl\_sq z\_wkmomed z\_wkdaded p1center   
 6.290370 1.206007 2.950358 3.377283 1.053738

car::vif(mod4)

there are higher-order terms (interactions) in this model  
consider setting type = 'predictor'; see ?vif

z\_wksesl z\_wksesl\_sq z\_wkmomed   
 60.867975 12.682305 28.145377   
 z\_wkdaded p1center z\_wksesl:p1center   
 31.720745 1.812096 59.296155   
z\_wksesl\_sq:p1center z\_wkmomed:p1center z\_wkdaded:p1center   
 12.217023 28.440378 30.766199

# clean up  
rm(list = ls())  
detach(ecls)