Week 6 reflection

The differences between projections and forecasts matter because they can be used in different ways for different scenarios. For example, a projection can be used in a more creative manner that considers hypothetical scenarios more openly whereas a forecast is a best estimate using past and current data. If one is looking to make the best prediction overall, a forecast is better because it steadily relies on data, which makes it reliable assuming that future patterns follow current pattens.

The implications of these differences for my own studies as a planner is that I can use forecasts to predict more accurately what the future may look like based on current trends. This can make my future work easier as I can use forecasts to predict future populations based on current trends. In the case of the pandemic however, a projection seems to be more appropriate as it was a situation in which people were not fully prepared for. As someone planning for the future and future populations, a projection can be used to figure out what *may* happen to the population if another pandemic of this scale were to occur. This is only one example of how a projection may be better suited than a forecast.

The resources that I may use to help me assess the accuracy of a forecast would be census data at the most basic level assuming I am using it to predict trends in populations. I would say that the census would be the most accurate because it is a snapshot at a particular point in time that tries to accurately predict the status of the current population. This can also be used as a tool to analyze trends over time to predict future trends. If possible, confidential data about the population of investigation may be more accurate. For example, some data sources more accurately depict a particular population such as medical record data, however those may be harder to access.

Aside from data itself, I think that resources such as historical context and background help one asses whether the forecast will be accurate. Current trends and topics may be able to help one better predict the future. For example, in some cases political climate may influence a change in a trend. Knowing confounding variables will help to better asses the forecast at hand especially when dealing with human behavior.