SOC 364 RESEARCH REPORT #1 (of 3)

Study Assignment

- Imagine that you have just heard a UCLA student generalize that USC students are "apolitical, upper class kids who are interested in entertainment more than academics."
- Pick 3 variables from the dataset provided, that relate to the claim made, and use output about them from SPSS to answer the questions.
    - Select 1 or more of these claims (apolitical, upper class, or having other interests).
    - Use 3 variables from the data provided to examine the characterization(s) you select.
    - You must use one nominal, one ordinal variable, and one interval variable; you may recode or compute, *if necessary* – but you probably will *not*. (If you do, have a very good reason!)
- The whole report is structured around responding to that statement. You could choose variables that relate to being apolitical, or to being upper class, or to being more interested in entertainment than in academics, or to any combination of those three. At each junction in the report, after describing the variable's central tendency and dispersion and shape etc, you'll go back to that statement and assess whether, given what you've seen and said, the statement is supported or contradicted by the data in hand.

General Instructions

- This is open book, open notes. You may discuss this assignment with anyone *before you begin your computer work*, but after you begin, you may only ask questions of the instructor. (Ask *any* question, but recognize that there are some I can't answer for you.) You may not work together.
- Write "I have completed this assignment on my own, without assistance from anyone other than the instructor" at the top, and sign your name to pledge observance of this restriction.
- There is no time limit other than the due date. Late penalties will be enforced.
- Leave yourself plenty of time for both the computer work and answering the questions.
- The computer analysis will take anywhere from an hour to several, depending on how well you plan ahead. It may take several *more* hours to write your answers to all the questions.
- Save your work early & often, and keep in mind the general guidelines to which you agreed: You are responsible for computer problems, which do not excuse you from deadlines.

Managing Your SPSS Output

- Hand in both the computer output and *typed* answers in hard copy (printed, not emailed).
- Delete large sections of irrelevant output, though err on the side of caution.
- Type your answers directly into the output file, using INSERT – TEXT; or copy-and-paste the output you want to use into a word processing file where you're typing your answers
- Intersperse your text among the tables to which it refers, where possible, rather than putting everything at the bottom, but do not retype the tables. Organizing your findings is part of your assignment. For example, answer questions 1 and 2 at the top of your file, question 3-5 under the output relevant to each variable, and question 6 at the bottom of your file.

Answering the Questions

- Be certain to answer all questions listed; points are allotted for everything asked!
- Make certain that you have produced all the output you need before typing your answers.
- Explain each step, formula, and decisions clearly, and *interpret each result.*
- Do not simply repeat statistics from the output, and do not simply put a question and a number into a sentence. Interpret the results of each exercise, and use the data to describe the sample.
- Answer in prose form (i.e. sentences and paragraphs, not just numbers or short phrases) and try to come as close to the English explanations of the meaning of each number as possible.
- Do not forget that all numbers are measured in specific units; be clear what the unit of analysis is, and mention it wherever appropriate.
- <u>Do not answer questions for variables that do not apply to that particular question!</u>

Introduction

1. Briefly introduce your report, indicating what you will examine and what you expect to find.

Sampling

2. Define the population of interest, available sample, sample size, and sampling method – that, is to whom will you generalize, based on what group and how many of them, and how were the latter selected?
3. Comment on any strengths or weaknesses of the sample for your study, including the sample size, any biases you might suspect, any advantages or disadvantages of the sampling procedure, and anything you would change about that procedure.

Variables

4. For each variable you selected, what is the variable name, variable label, value labels (if appropriate), and level of measurement? (Note any changes introduced in any recoding.)
5. How might each variable indicate something about the claim you selected to investigate?

Distributions

6. Compute a frequency distribution and histogram for each variable.
7. State the minimum, maximum, and modes for each variable you have selected.
8. What shape is each distribution (e.g. unimodal, bimodal, uniform, or something else)?
9. Is the distribution bell-shaped or skewed (and, if the latter, which way?)
10. Why does the distribution have the shape it has? (You do not have to be right, just statistically plausible. Consider level of measurement and what's being measured.)
11. What does the shape of this data tell you about the characteristic you're studying?

Central Tendency

12. Report and interpret all appropriate measures of central tendency for each variable. Explain what each means and the method by which it is determined.

13. State which measure of central tendency is “best” for each variable, and explain why.

14. What does the central tendency of the data say about the characteristic(s) you’re studying?

Dispersion

15. Report and interpret all appropriate measures of dispersion for each variable. Explain what each means and the method by which it is determined.

16. State which of these measures is “best” for each variable, and explain why.

17. What does the dispersion of this data tell you about the characteristic you’re studying?

Tails & Outliers

18. If the tails are “straggly” when any observations are more than 1.5 x IQR above the 75th percentile or below the 25th, does your interval variable have straggly tails?

19. If the values in these tails are called “outliers” and “extreme values”, what values are outliers in your data, if any? If there are, how might they have affected your answers above?

Conclusions

Summarize what you have said in answering the previous questions:

20. What does your analysis suggest about the UCLA student’s claims?

21. Does any of the data in your study support or discredit those generalizations?

22. Is your data consistent, or do some support the generalization and others contradict it?