

Preface

There is a gap between raw data and statistical analysis. That gap, called data management, is often filled with a mix of pesky and strenuous tasks that stand between you and your data analysis. I find that data management usually involves some of the most challenging aspects of a data analysis project. I wanted to write a book showing how to use Stata to tackle these pesky and challenging data-management tasks.

One of the reasons I wanted to write such a book was to be able to show how useful Stata is for data management. Sometimes people think that Stata's strengths lie solely in its statistical capabilities. I have been using Stata and teaching it to others for over 10 years, and I continue to be impressed with the way that it combines power with ease of use for data management. For example, take the `reshape` command. This simple command makes it a snap to convert a wide file to a long file and vice versa (for examples, see section 8.3). Furthermore, `reshape` is partly based on the work of a Stata user, illustrating that Stata's power for data management is augmented by user-written programs that you can easily download (as illustrated in section 10.2).

Each section of this book generally stands on its own, showing you how you can do a particular data-management task in Stata. Take, for example, section 2.4, which shows how you can read a comma-delimited file into Stata. This is not a book you need to read cover to cover, and I would encourage you to jump around to the topics that are most relevant for you.

Data management is a big (and sometimes daunting) task. I have written this book in an informal fashion, like we were sitting down together at the computer and I was showing you some tips about data management. My aim with this book is to help you easily and quickly learn what you need to know to skillfully use Stata for your data-management tasks. But if you need further assistance solving a problem, section 10.3 describes the rich array of online Stata resources available to you. I would especially recommend the Statalist listserver, which allows you to tap into the knowledge of Stata users around the world.

If you would like to contact me with comments or suggestions, I would love to hear from you. You can write me at MichaelNormanMitchell@gmail.com, or visit me on the web at <http://www.MichaelNormanMitchell.com>. Writing this book has been both a challenge and a pleasure. I hope that you like it!

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