# Causal Inference for Complex Observational Data Using Stata

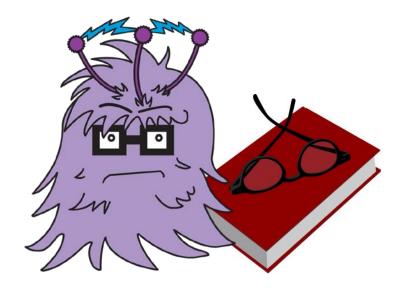
Chuck Huber
StataCorp
chuber@stata.com

#### **ERMs Outline**

- Description of the dataset
- Unobserved confounding and endogeneity
- Nonrandom treatment assignment
- Missing not at random (MNAR) and selection bias
- Treatment effects

#### The Research Question

 Fictional State University (FSU) has developed a new study-skills program with the goal of improving the grade point averages of their students.



```
. use gpa.dta, clear
(Simulated GPA Dataset for ERMs seminars)
```

. describe

Contains data from gpa.dta

obs: 1,000 vars: 9 size: 22,000 Simulated GPA Dataset for ERMs seminars

22 Jan 2018 16:06 ( dta has notes)

variable name	storage type	display format	value label	variable label
id	int	%9.0g		Student Identification Number
gpa	float	%9.0g		Final College Grade Point Average
hsgpa	float	%9.0g		High School Grade Point Average
program	byte	%9.0g	YesNo	Student participated in the study skills program?
graduate	byte	%9.0g	YesNo	Did the student graduate college?
income	float	%9.0g		Parent's Income (x \$100,000)
hs comp	float	%9.0q		High School Competitiveness
roommate	byte	%9.0q	YesNo	Students's roommate is also a student?
scholarship	byte	%9.0g	YesNo	Student received scholarship funds?

Sorted by: id



#### . summarize

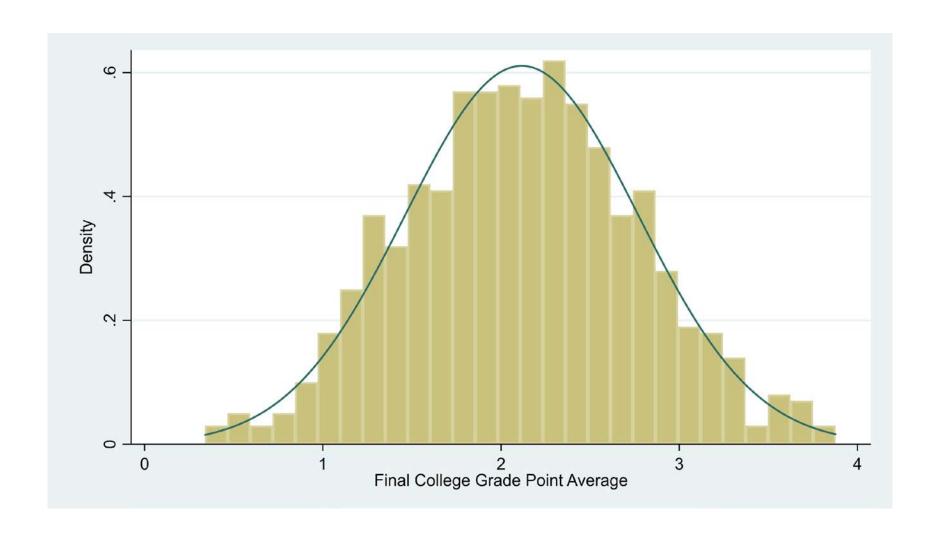
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
id gpa hsgpa program graduate	1,000 792 1,000 1,000 1,000	500.5 2.115962 2.294384 .3 .792	288.8194 .6529961 .5714525 .4584869 .4060799	1 .3392706 .6758502 0 0	1000 3.876919 3.786486 1
income hs_comp roommate scholarship	1,000 1,000 1,000 1,000	.5031867 .4946027 .321	.2848887 .286164 .4670944 .4667096	.0004344 .0001878 0	.9969745 .9985294 1

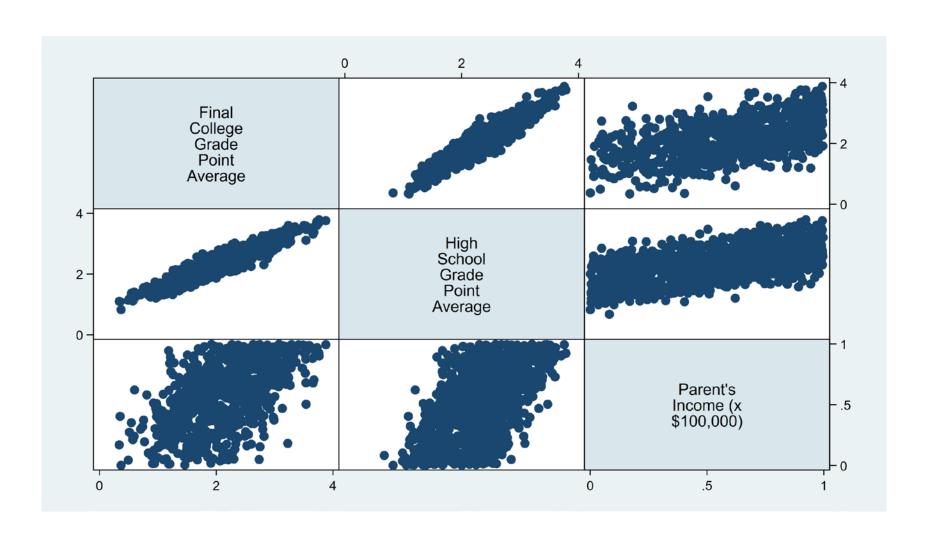


. tab graduate

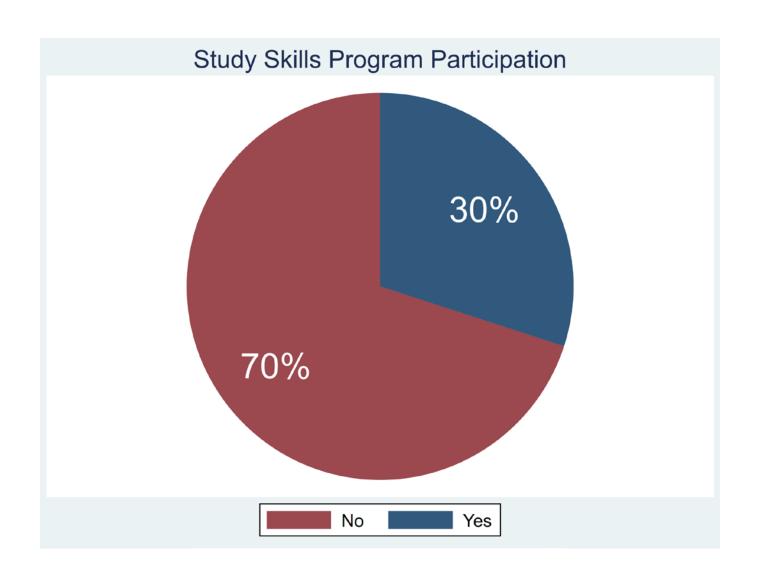
Cum.	Percent	Freq.	Did the student graduate college?
20.80 100.00	20.80 79.20	208 792	No Yes
	100.00	1,000	Total

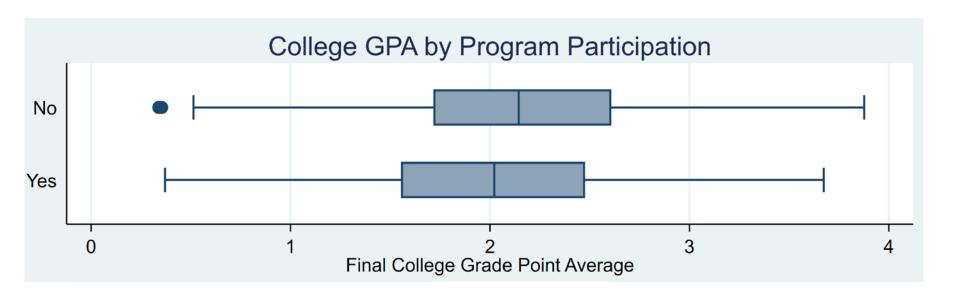










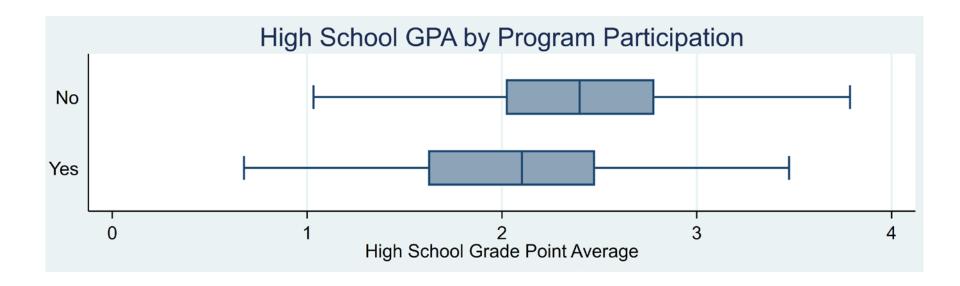


. regress gpa i.program

Source	SS	df	MS		er of obs	=	792 5.74
Model Residual	2.43242384 334.853048	1 790	2.43242384 .423864618	Prob R-sq	F(1, 790) Prob > F R-squared Adj R-squared		0.0168 0.0072 0.0060
Total	337.285472	791	.426403884	_	-	= =	.65105
gpa	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% C	onf.	Interval]
program Yes _cons	1259343 2.149036	.05257 .0269406	-2.40 79.77	0.017 0.000	22912 2.0961		0227409 2.201919

. estimates store univar

Students who participated in the program had lower GPAs?!?!?





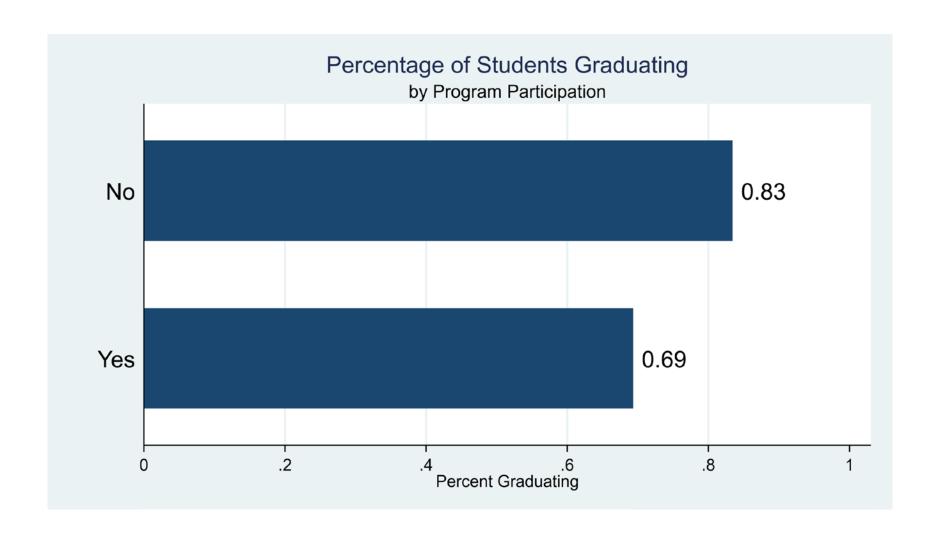
. regress gpa i.program hsgpa

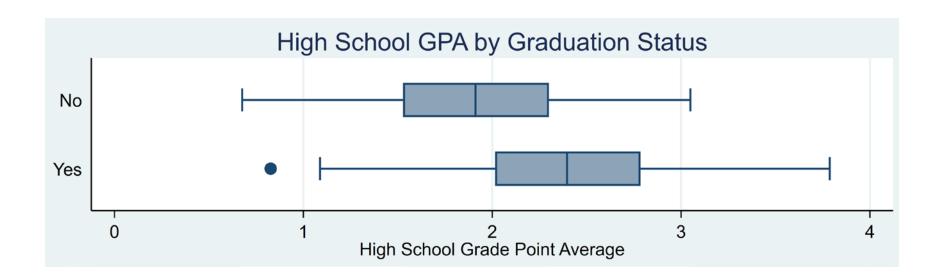
Source	SS	df	MS		er of ob		792
Model Residual	301.753841 35.5316304	2 789	150.876921 .045033752	l Prob 2 R-sq	789) > F uared R-square	= = = d =	3350.31 0.0000 0.8947 0.8944
Total	337.285472	791	.426403884	_	_	=	.21221
	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[958	Conf	Interval]
gpa	coer.	bca. EII.		1/ 0	[ ] ] 8	COIII.	
program Yes hsgpa _cons	.2002776 1.144457 6744815	.0175963 .0140378 .035729	11.38 81.53 -18.88	0.000 0.000 0.000	.1657 1.116 7446	901	.2348187 1.172013 6043464

. estimates store hsgpa

Students who participated in the program had higher GPAs when we account for high school GPA.







What was the effect of the study program on students GPAs?

#### Outline

- - Description of the dataset
    - Unobserved confounding and endogeneity
    - Nonrandom treatment assignment
    - Missing not at random (MNAR) and selection bias
    - Treatment effects

#### Observed and Unobserved Factors

```
y = all factors that influence y
```

y = observed factors + unobserved factors

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \cdots + \beta_k x_k + \varepsilon$$



# Endogeneity

"An explanatory variable in a multiple regression model that is correlated with the error term..." (Wooldridge\*, pg 838).

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \beta_2 z + \varepsilon$$

$$\rho_{z\varepsilon} \neq 0$$



#### Omitted Variable Bias

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \beta_2 z + \varepsilon$$

$$\rho_{xz} \neq 0$$

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \varepsilon^*$$

$$\varepsilon^* = z + \varepsilon$$

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \varepsilon^*$$

$$\rho_{x\varepsilon^*} \neq 0$$



# Confounding

"...X and Y are confounded when there is a third variable Z that influences both X and Y..." (Pearl\*, pg 193).

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \beta_2 z + \varepsilon$$



# **Unobserved Confounding**

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + (z + \varepsilon)$$



#### Observed and Unobserved Factors

gpa = all factors that influence gpagpa = observed factors + unobserved factors

$$gpa = \begin{cases} \text{High school GPA} \\ \text{SAT Scores} \\ \text{Parents Income} \\ \text{Sex} \\ \text{etc...} \end{cases} + \begin{cases} \text{Ability} \\ \text{Motivation} \\ \text{Sleep} \\ \text{Support} \\ \text{etc...} \end{cases}$$

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \cdots + \beta_k x_k + \varepsilon$$

# **Unobserved Confounding**

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 hsgpa + \varepsilon_{total}$$

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 hsgpa + (Ability + \varepsilon)$$



$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (hsgpa) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)$$

$$hsgpa = \pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp + (Ability + \varepsilon_2)^*$$

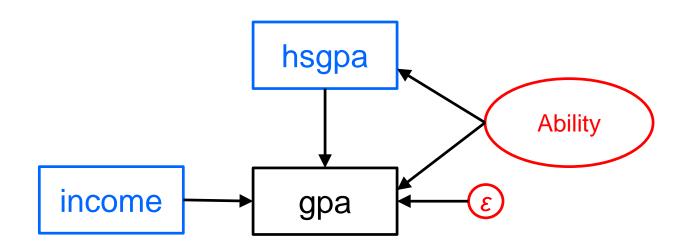
$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (\pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)^*$$

$$where \ \rho_{\varepsilon_1^* \varepsilon_2^*} \neq 0$$

hsgpa = (factors NOT related to Ability) + (Ability + error)

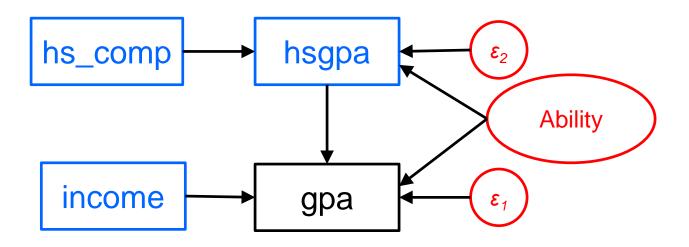


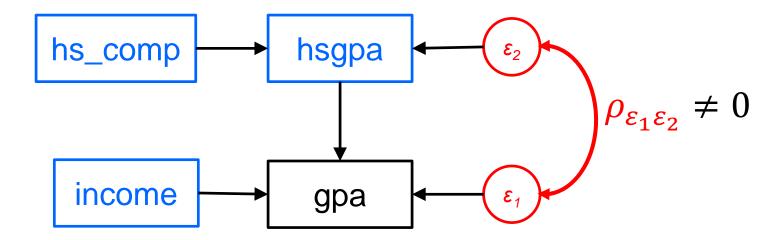
$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 hsgpa + (Ability + \varepsilon)$$



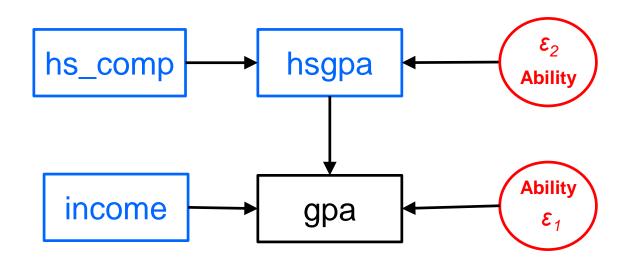
$$hsgpa = \pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp + (Ability + \varepsilon_2)^*$$

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (\pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)^*$$





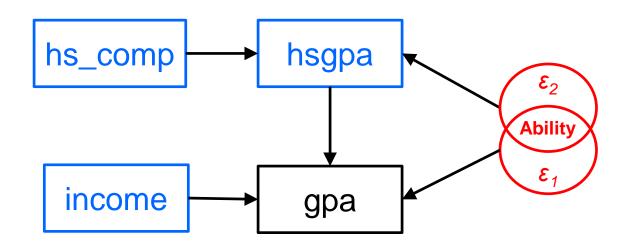
$$hsgpa = \pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp + (Ability + \varepsilon_2)^*$$
$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (\pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)^*$$

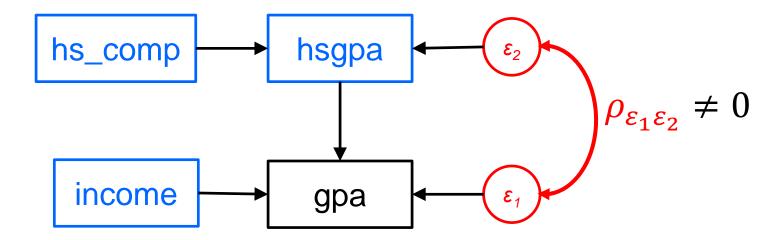


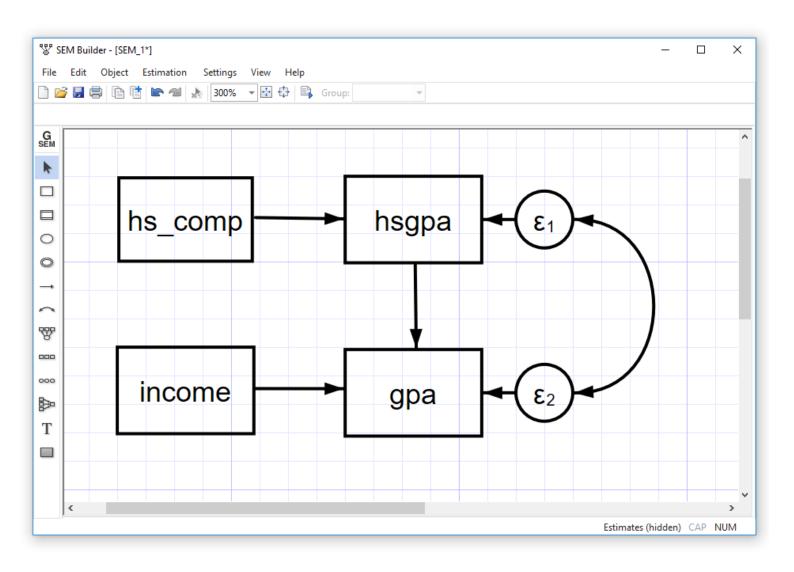


$$hsgpa = \pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp + (Ability + \varepsilon_2)^*$$
$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (\pi_0 + \pi_1 hs\_comp) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)^*$$

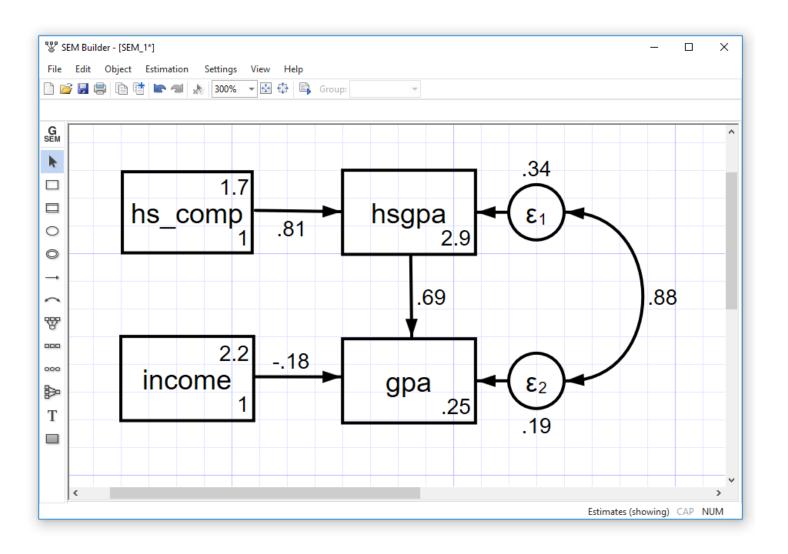
where  $\rho_{\boldsymbol{\varepsilon_1^*}\boldsymbol{\varepsilon_2^*}} \neq 0$ 

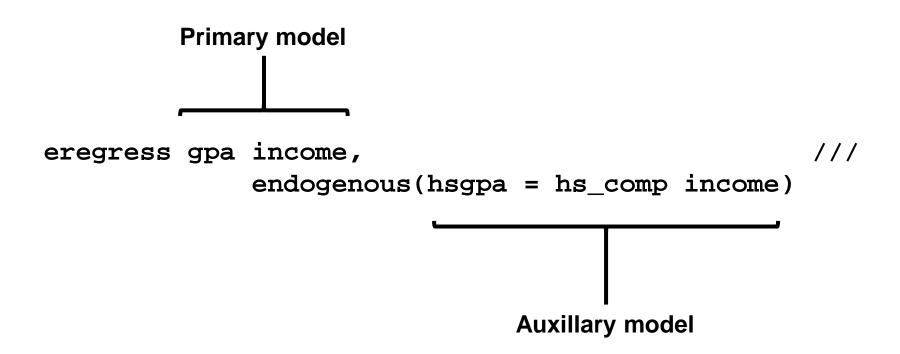












```
///
. eregress gpa income,
                endogenous (hsqpa = hs comp income) nolog
Extended linear regression
                                                   Number of obs
                                                                                792
                                                   Wald chi2(2)
                                                                            3951.76
Log likelihood = 519.11827
                                                   Prob > chi2
                                                                             0.0000
                             Coef.
                                     Std. Err.
                                                           P>|z|
                                                                      [95% Conf. Interval]
                                                      Z
gpa
              income
                          .3702125
                                      .0384969
                                                   9.62
                                                           0.000
                                                                        .29476
                                                                                   .4456649
               hsgpa
                          .9064316
                                      .0193174
                                                  46.92
                                                           0.000
                                                                      .8685702
                                                                                    .944293
                         -.2665693
                                      .0397868
                                                  -6.70
                                                           0.000
                                                                                  -.1885887
                                                                     -.3445499
               cons
hsgpa
             hs comp
                          1.524814
                                      .0244398
                                                  62.39
                                                           0.000
                                                                      1.476913
                                                                                   1.572715
                          .9898417
                                                  36.86
                                      .0268549
                                                           0.000
                                                                      .9372069
                                                                                   1.042476
              income
               cons
                          1.072201
                                      .0203047
                                                           0.000
                                                                      1.032404
                                                                                   1.111997
                                                  52.81
          var (e.gpa)
                          .0554234
                                      .0030877
                                                                      .0496902
                                                                                    .061818
        var (e.hsqpa)
                          .0381556
                                      .0019174
                                                                      .0345767
                                                                                   .0421049
                          .7503328
 corr (e.hsgpa, e.gpa)
                                                  44.05
                                                                      .7149879
                                                                                   .7818521
                                      .0170348
                                                           0.000
```

. estimates store endog

var(e.gpa) var(e.hsgpa)	.0554234 .0381556	.0030877			.0496902 .0345767	.061818
corr(e.hsgpa,e.gpa)	.7503328	.0170348	44.05	0.000	.7149879	.7818521

where 
$$\rho_{\varepsilon_1^*\varepsilon_2^*} \neq 0$$

#### Unobserved Confounding and Endogeneity

. estimates table univar hsgpa endog, stats(N) equations(1) keep(#1:) b(%9.4f)

Variable	univar	hsgpa	endog
program 1	-0.1259	0.2003	
hsgpa income _cons	2.1490	1.1445 -0.6745	0.9064 0.3702 -0.2666
N	792	792	792

#### **Outline**

- Description of the dataset
- Unobserved confounding and endogeneity
  - Nonrandom treatment assignment
  - Missing not at random (MNAR) and selection bias
  - Treatment effects

# Random Treatment Assignment



# Nonrandom Treatment Assignment



## Nonrandom Treatment Assignment

A student's decision to enroll in the study program is based on observed and unobserved factors.

P(program = 1) = observed factors + unobserved factors



## **Unobserved Confounding**

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 program + \varepsilon_{total}$$

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 program + (Ability + \varepsilon)$$



$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (program) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)$$

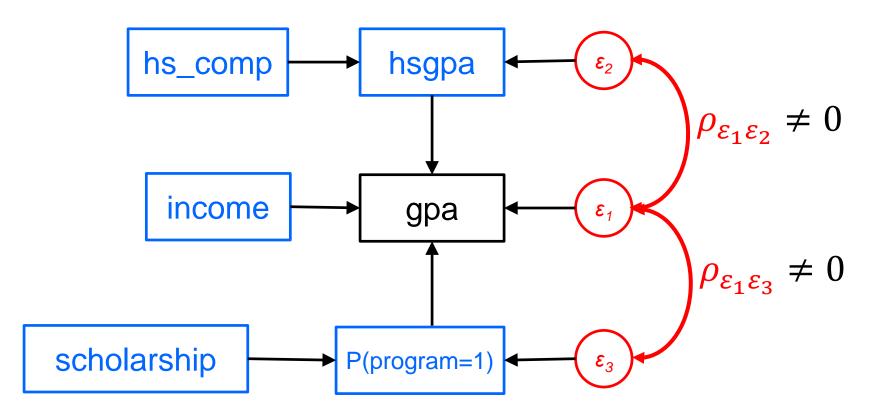
$$P(program = 1) = \pi_0 + \pi_1 scholarship + (Ability + \varepsilon_3)^*$$

$$gpa = \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (\pi_0 + \pi_1 scholarship) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1)^*$$

$$where \ \rho_{\varepsilon_1^* \varepsilon_3^*} \neq 0$$

P(program=1) = (factors NOT related to Ability) + (Ability + error)





```
Primary model

eregress gpa income, ///
endogenous(hsgpa = hs_comp income) ///
entreat(program = income scholarship, nointeract)

Auxillary model
```



	Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P> z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
gpa		1				
income	.6876358	.0368212	18.67	0.000	.6154676	.7598041
hsgpa	.9021844	.0150525	59.94	0.000	.872682	.9316869
program						
Yes	.3040315	.019458	15.62	0.000	.2658944	.3421685
_cons	5198319	.0352035	-14.77	0.000	5888295	4508344
program						
income	-5.868551	.401813	-14.61	0.000	-6.65609	-5.081012
scholarship	1.814856	.1636187	11.09	0.000	1.49417	2.135543
_cons	1.503659	.1629857	9.23	0.000	1.184213	1.823106
hsgpa						
hs comp	1.528458	.0236304	64.68	0.000	1.482144	1.574773
income	.989619	.0268526	36.85	0.000	.9369889	1.042249
_cons	1.070543	.0201056	53.25	0.000	1.031136	1.109949
var(e.gpa)	.0358984	.0020787			.0320469	.0402127
var(e.hsgpa)	.0381566	.0019175			.0345776	.0421062
corr(e.program,e.qpa)	.4511304	.0772058	5.84	0.000	.2877691	.5889813
corr(e.hsgpa,e.gpa)	.8093104	.0134908	59.99	0.000	.7811792	.8341618
corr(e.hsgpa,e.program)	.480631	.0565509	8.50	0.000	.3624217	.5836218

. estimates store entreat

var(e.gpa) var(e.hsgpa)	.0358984 .0381566	.0020787 .0019175			.0320469 .0345776	.0402127
corr(e.program,e.gpa) corr(e.hsgpa,e.gpa) corr(e.hsgpa,e.program)	.4511304	.0772058	5.84	0.000	.2877691	.5889813
	.8093104	.0134908	59.99	0.000	.7811792	.8341618
	.480631	.0565509	8.50	0.000	.3624217	.5836218

where 
$$\rho_{\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}_1^*\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}_3^*} \neq 0$$

. estimates table univar hsgpa endog entreat, stats(N) equations(1) keep(#1:) b(%9.4f)

Variable	univar	ivar hsgpa endog		entreat
program Yes	-0.1259	0.2003		0.3040
hsgpa income _cons	2.1490	1.1445 -0.6745	0.9064 0.3702 -0.2666	0.9022 0.6876 -0.5198
N	792	792	792	792

#### Outline

- Description of the dataset
- Unobserved confounding and endogeneity
- Nonrandom treatment assignment
  - Missing not at random (MNAR) and selection bias
  - Treatment effects

# No Missingness



#### Missing Completely at Random (MCAR)



#### Missing at Random (MAR)



#### Missing Not at Random (MNAR)



#### **MNAR** and Selection Bias

. tab graduate

Cum.	Percent	Freq.	Did the student graduate college?
20.80 100.00	20.80 79.20	208 792	No Yes
	100.00	1,000	Total

A student's decision to drop out of school is based on observed and unobserved factors.

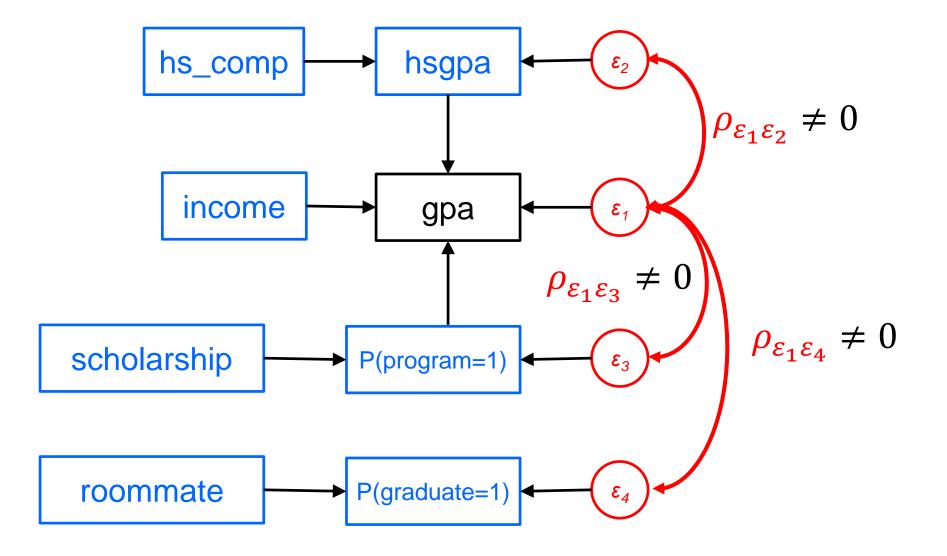
P(graduate = 1) = observed factors + unobserved factors

$$gpa = \begin{cases} \beta_0 + \beta_1 income + \beta_2 (program) + (Ability + \varepsilon_1) * & \text{if graduate=1} \\ missing & \text{if graduate=0} \end{cases}$$

 $P(graduate = 1) = \pi_0 + \pi_1 roommate + (Ability + \varepsilon_4)^*$ 

where  $\rho_{\varepsilon_1^* \varepsilon_4^*} \neq 0$ 





```
Primary model

eregress gpa income, ///
endogenous(hsgpa = hs_comp income) ///
entreat(program = income scholarship, nointeract) ///
select(graduate = income roommate)

Auxillary model
```

```
///
. eregress gpa income,
               endogenous(hsgpa = hs comp income)
                                                                  ///
               entreat(program = income scholarship, nointeract) ///
               select(graduate = income roommate) nolog
Extended linear regression
                                                                          1,000
                                                Number of obs
                                                      Selected
                                                                            792
                                                      Nonselected =
                                                                            208
                                                Wald chi2(3)
                                                                        8866.38
Log likelihood = 323.23691
                                                Prob > chi2
                                                                         0.0000
```

Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P> z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
.8220509	.0333135	24.68	0.000	.7567576	.8873443
.8935782	.0136619	65.41		.8668013	.9203551
.2976643	.0168041	17.71	0.000	.2647288	.3305998
6071633	.029947	-20.27		6658583	5484682
4.010154	.2557017	15.68	0.000	3.508988	4.51132
1.412072	.1320596	10.69	0.000	1.15324	1.670904
-1.053694	.1059937	-9.94	0.000	-1.261438	8459504
-4.889741	.2935974	-16.65	0.000	-5.465181	-4.3143
1.791084	.1291875	13.86	0.000	1.537881	2.044287
.8297874	.1047466	7.92	0.000	.6244878	1.035087
1.512085	.0202588	74.64	0.000	1.472378	1.551791
1.0879	.0221946	49.02	0.000	1.044399	1.1314
.9990863	.0161398	61.90	0.000	.9674529	1.03072
.040487 .0399236	.0023354 .0017858			.0361589	.0453332
.7609452 .5402021 .8221551 .85115 .5633432 .5265467	.0402982 .0577087 .0119073 .0432119 .0408602	18.88 9.36 69.05 19.70 13.79 12.07	0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000	.6700487 .4175545 .797394 .7411121 .4780104 .435811	.8293596 .6435181 .8441524 .9166561 .6381415 .6066872
	.8220509 .8935782 .2976643 6071633 4.010154 1.412072 -1.053694 -4.889741 1.791084 .8297874 1.512085 1.0879 .9990863 .040487 .0399236 .7609452 .5402021 .8221551 .85115 .5633432	.8220509 .0333135 .8935782 .0136619 .2976643 .0168041 6071633 .029947 4.010154 .2557017 1.412072 .1320596 -1.053694 .1059937 -4.889741 .2935974 1.791084 .1291875 .8297874 .1047466 1.512085 .0202588 1.0879 .0221946 .9990863 .0161398 .040487 .0023354 .0399236 .0017858 .7609452 .0402982 .5402021 .0577087 .8221551 .0119073 .85115 .0432119 .5633432 .0408602	.8220509 .0333135 24.68 .8935782 .0136619 65.41  .2976643 .0168041 17.716071633 .029947 -20.27  4.010154 .2557017 15.68 1.412072 .1320596 10.69 -1.053694 .1059937 -9.94  -4.889741 .2935974 -16.65 1.791084 .1291875 13.86 .8297874 .1047466 7.92  1.512085 .0202588 74.64 1.0879 .0221946 49.02 .9990863 .0161398 61.90  .040487 .0023354 .0399236 .0017858  .7609452 .0402982 18.88 .5402021 .0577087 9.36 .8221551 .0119073 69.05 .85115 .0432119 19.70 .5633432 .0408602 13.79	.8220509 .0333135 24.68 0.000 .8935782 .0136619 65.41 0.000 .2976643 .0168041 17.71 0.000 .029947 -20.27 0.000 .029947 -20.27 0.000 .029947 -20.27 0.000 .029947 -20.27 0.000 .000 .000 .000 .000 .000 .00	.8220509 .0333135 24.68 0.000 .7567576 .8935782 .0136619 65.41 0.000 .8668013  .2976643 .0168041 17.71 0.000 .26472886071633 .029947 -20.27 0.0006658583  4.010154 .2557017 15.68 0.000 3.508988 1.412072 .1320596 10.69 0.000 1.15324 -1.053694 .1059937 -9.94 0.000 -1.261438  -4.889741 .2935974 -16.65 0.000 -5.465181 1.791084 .1291875 13.86 0.000 1.537881 .8297874 .1047466 7.92 0.000 .6244878  1.512085 .0202588 74.64 0.000 1.472378 1.0879 .0221946 49.02 0.000 1.044399 .9990863 .0161398 61.90 0.000 .9674529  .040487 .0399236 .0017858 .0365726  .7609452 .0402982 18.88 0.000 .6700487 .5402021 .0577087 9.36 0.000 .797394 .85115 .0432119 19.70 0.000 .7411121 .5633432 .0408602 13.79 0.000 .4780104

. estimates store endsel

var(e.gpa) var(e.hsgpa)	.040487 .0399236	.0023354			.0361589 .0365726	.0453332
corr(e.graduate,e.gpa) corr(e.program,e.gpa) corr(e.hsgpa,e.gpa) corr(e.program,e.graduate) corr(e.hsgpa,e.graduate) corr(e.hsgpa,e.program)	.7609452 .5402021 .8221551 .85115 .5633432 .5265467	.0402982 .0577087 .0119073 .0432119 .0408602 .0436265	18.88 9.36 69.05 19.70 13.79 12.07	0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000	.6700487 .4175545 .797394 .7411121 .4780104 .435811	.8293596 .6435181 .8441524 .9166561 .6381415 .6066872

. estimates table univar hsqpa endog entreat endsel, stats(N) equations(1) keep(#1:) b(%9.4f)

Variable	univar	hsgpa	endog	entreat	endsel
program Yes	-0.1259	0.2003		0.3040	0.2977
hsgpa income _cons	2.1490	1.1445 -0.6745	0.9064 0.3702 -0.2666	0.9022 0.6876 -0.5198	0.8936 0.8221 -0.6072
N	792	792	792	792	1000

#### True Model (simulated)

gpa = -0.6 + 0.3\*treatment + 0.9\*hsgpa + 0.8\*income

#### **Outline**

- Description of the dataset
- Unobserved confounding and endogeneity
- Nonrandom treatment assignment
- Missing not at random (MNAR) and selection bias
  - Treatment effects

#### **ERM Postestimation**

- estat teffects
- margins
- marginsplot
- predict

#### estat teffects

. estat teffects

Predictive margins Number of obs = 1,000 Model VCE : OTM

		Delta-method Std. Err.	Z	P> z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
ATE program		l				
program (Yes vs No)	.2976643	.0168041	17.71	0.000	.2647288	.3305998

Note: Standard errors treat sample covariate values as fixed and not a draw from the population. If your interest is in population rather than sample effects, refit your model using vce(robust).

#### estat teffects, atet

. estat teffects, atet

Predictive margins

Number of obs = 1,000Subpop. no. obs = 300

Model VCE : OIM

	Margin	Delta-method Std. Err.	Z	P> z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
ATET program		1				
(Yes vs No)	.2976643	.0168041	17.71	0.000	.2647288	.3305998



#### margins

. margins i.program, at(hsgpa=(1.5(0.5)4)) predict(fix(hsgpa program)) vsquish

Predictive margins Number of obs = 1,000

Model VCE : OIM

Expression : mean of gpa, predict(fix(hsgpa program))

1. at : hsgpa 1.5 2.\_at : hsgpa 2 2.5

3.\_at : hsgpa = 4.\_at 3

: hsgpa : hsgpa 5.\_at 3.5

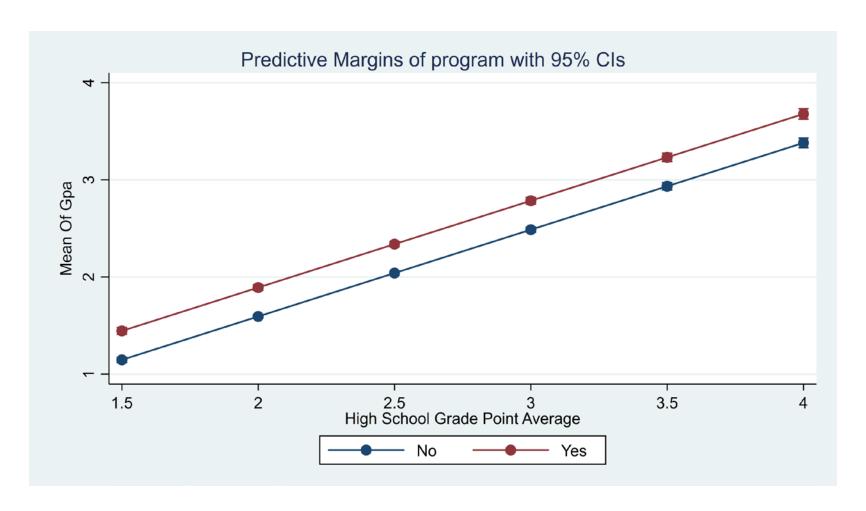
: hsgpa 6. at 4

	]	Delta-method	 [			
	Margin	Std. Err.	Z	P>   z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
_at#program						
1#No	1.146849	.0134979	84.96	0.000	1.120394	1.173305
1#Yes	1.444513	.0178228	81.05	0.000	1.409581	1.479446
2#No	1.593638	.0092729	171.86	0.000	1.575464	1.611813
2#Yes	1.891303	.0146207	129.36	0.000	1.862646	1.919959
3#No	2.040427	.0091161	223.83	0.000	2.02256	2.058294
3#Yes	2.338092	.0142549	164.02	0.000	2.310153	2.366031
4#No	2.487216	.0131736	188.80	0.000	2.461397	2.513036
4#Yes	2.784881	.0169105	164.68	0.000	2.751737	2.818025
5#No	2.934006	.0189026	155.22	0.000	2.896957	2.971054
5#Yes	3.23167	.0214953	150.34	0.000	3.18954	3.2738
6#No	3.380795	.0251872	134.23	0.000	3.331429	3.430161
6#Yes	3.678459	.0270455	136.01	0.000	3.625451	3.731467



#### marginsplot

. marginsplot



#### More ERMs

- eregress continuous outcomes
- eintreg interval outcomes
- eprobit binary outcomes
- eoprobit ordinal outcomes

#### **ERMs For Panel Data**

- xteregress continuous outcomes
- xteintreg interval outcomes
- xteprobit binary outcomes
- xteoprobit ordinal outcomes

#### More About ERMs

- ERMs can include:
  - polynomials of endogenous covariates
  - interactions of endogenous covariates
  - interactions of endogenous with exogenous covariates

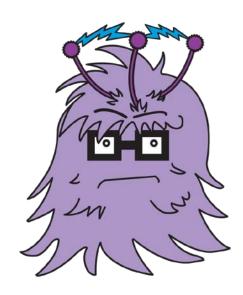
## Cautionary Note

 Nothing about ERMs magically extracts causal relationships.

 As with any regression analysis of observational data, the causal interpretation must be based on a reasonable underlying scientific rationale.

# Thanks for coming! Questions?

chuber@stata.com



You can download the slides, datasets, and do-files here: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2019CausalInference">https://tinyurl.com/2019CausalInference</a>