**Context**
The late 20th century saw an unprecedented rise in incarceration in the United States. This affected:

- Political behavior of those locked up (Weaver & Lerman 2014).
- Their neighbors’ behavior? (Burch 2013).
- Social and economic outcomes of their children, even later in life (Johnson 2009).

**This project seeks to measure how parents’ incarceration shapes their children’s political behavior once they become adults.**

**Approach**
Use administrative data to link parents and children, and directly observe both parental sentencing outcomes and children’s political participation.

**Data Sources**
- Criminal court records from Harris County, TX, 1990-present
- Texas Birth Index from Ancestry, 1980-1995
- Recent Texas voter files, 2012-present
- National voter turnout records from Catalist, 2006-present
- Texas marriage/divorce records, 1960-present

**Linking Administrative Datasets**
- Parents’ data: criminal records, voter registration/turnout
- Children’s data: voter reg/turnout, political donations, criminal records

**Link using birth records:**
- Parents’ full name
- Children’s full name, DOB, birthplace

**Other records for better match:**
- Marriage/divorce, child support

**Combined dataset with children as units**

**Simplest Observational Approach**
With this data, could just regress children's turnout behavior (as adults) onto their parents' criminal sentencing outcomes:

\[ \text{Vote}_{2012, \text{child}} = \alpha + \beta \text{Parental Incarceration} + \epsilon_i \]

But this is obviously confounded (and I have few covariates).

**Using Random Judge Assignment**
- First-time defendants in Harris County criminal courts are randomly assigned to courtrooms (some with harsher judges than others)
- Economists use similar systems to instrument for sentence length or conviction
- Different setup here: interested in children whose parents face criminal charges
- Ultimately, find a LATE for children whose parents face prospect of criminal sanctions during their childhood

**Timeline**
- Apply for permissions, gather datasets
- Link datasets
- Run analysis

**Feedback**
This project is in progress, so it’s a good time to incorporate your thoughts!

- What other data should I collect?
- What are your concerns?
- Any particular thoughts on attrition?
- How to incorporate many judges into 2SLS?

**References**

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