

# Quant 2, Lab 3

## DAGs, Sensitivity Analysis

Sylvan Zheng

2025-02-13

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  - ▶ Nodes ( $X, D, Y$  etc.) are random variables

# DAGs

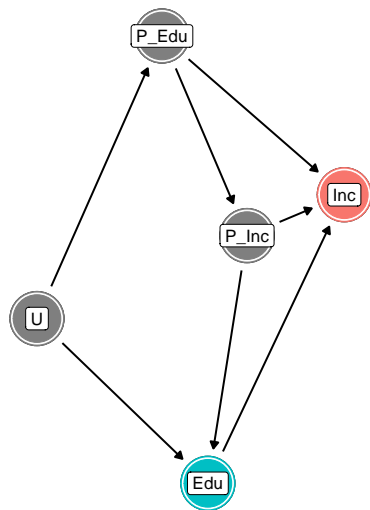
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  - ▶ Nodes ( $X, D, Y$  etc.) are random variables
  - ▶ Edges ( $X \rightarrow Y$ ) denote a direct causal effect of  $X$  on  $Y$
- ▶ Tools to help understand whether a research design can identify a causal relationship

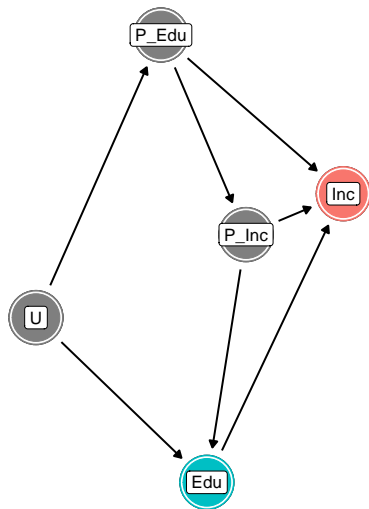


## Example: Becker, 1994



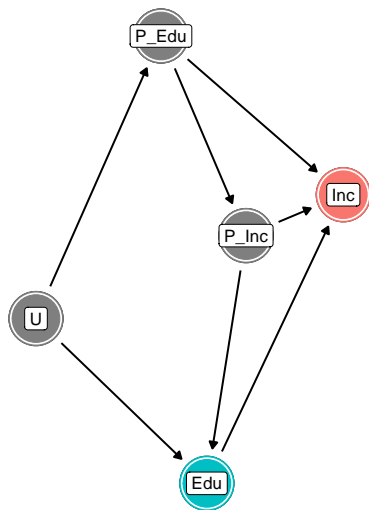
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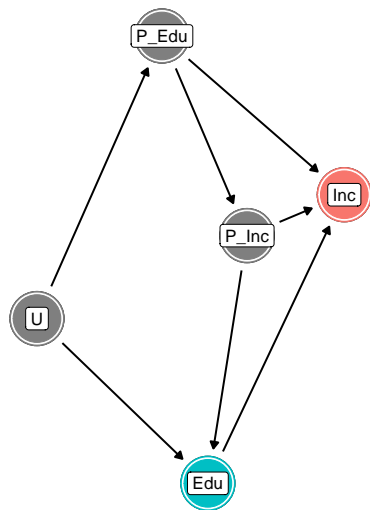
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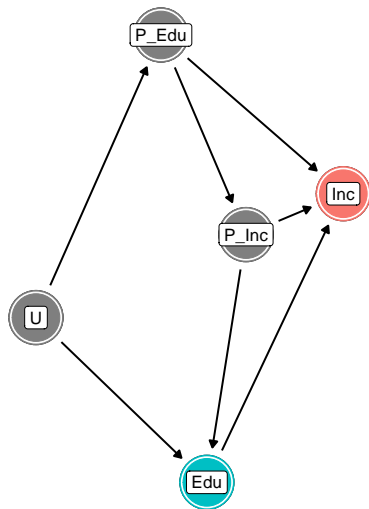
- ▶ Main relationship of interest: Education effect on Income
- ▶ Parental effects (income, education) affect both child income and education
- ▶ Unobserved **family specific** factors (ie, genetics) affect parent and child education

## DAGs and Identification



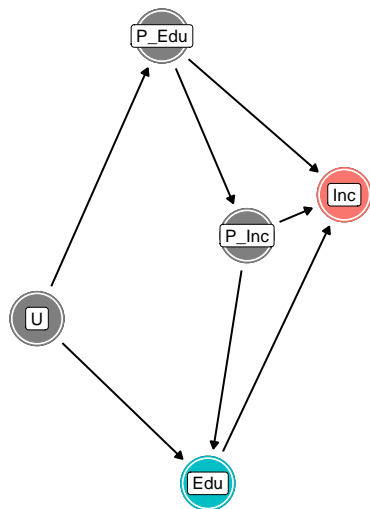
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## DAGs and Identification



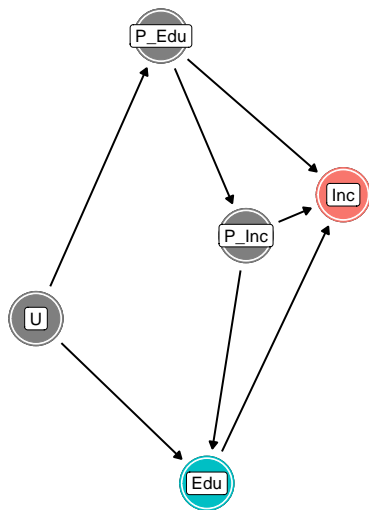
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# DAGs and Identification



- ▶ To identify the effect of some D on Y
- ▶ DAG **must** satisfy the **backdoor criterion** (no backdoor paths)
  - ▶ A **backdoor path** is an alternate path between D and Y that does not go through a collider (more on these later)

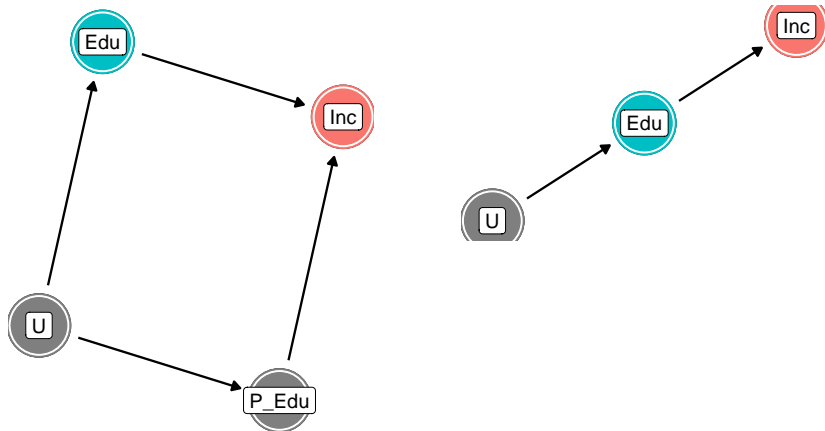
## DAGs and Identification



- ▶ To identify the effect of some D on Y
- ▶ DAG **must** satisfy the **backdoor criterion** (no backdoor paths)
  - ▶ A **backdoor path** is an alternate path between D and Y that does not go through a collider (more on these later)
- ▶ Eg, we cannot identify the effect of Edu on Inc because there is a **backdoor path**, eg through P\_Inc

## Controlling for a variable

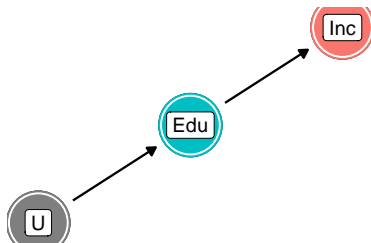
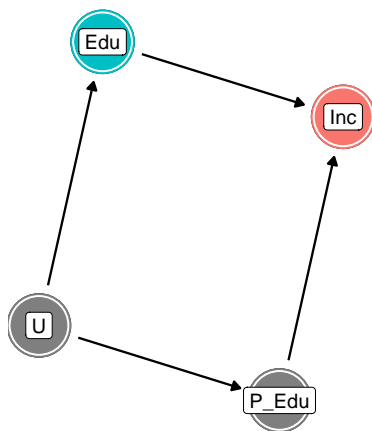
- If we *control for a variable* in a DAG, we **remove its node and corresponding edges**





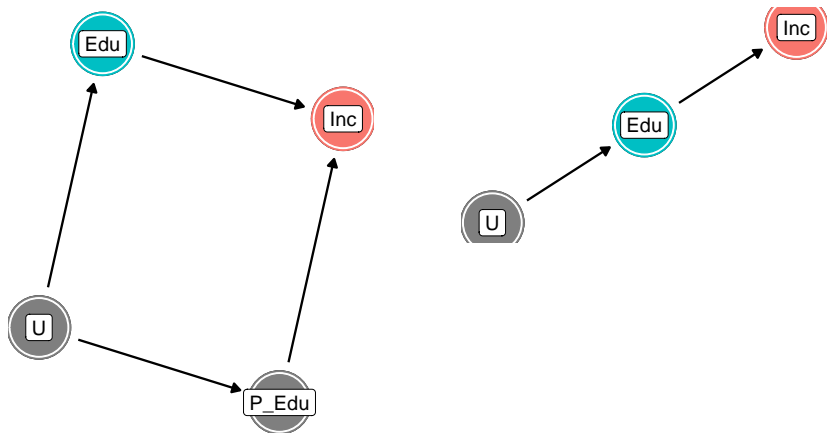
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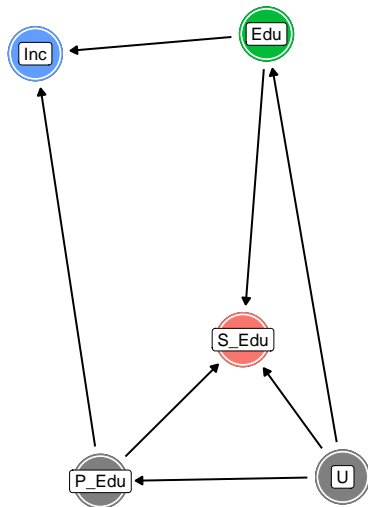
## Controlling for a variable

- ▶ If we *control for a variable* in a DAG, we **remove its node and corresponding edges**
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- ▶ Ex, if we control for P\_Inc and P\_Edu, we get the following DAGs:



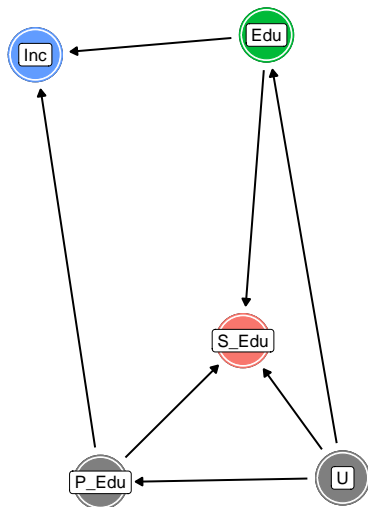
# Colliders

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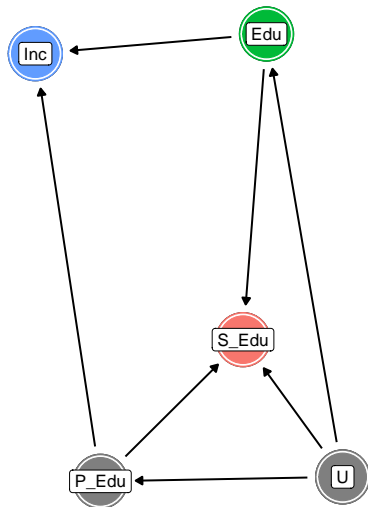
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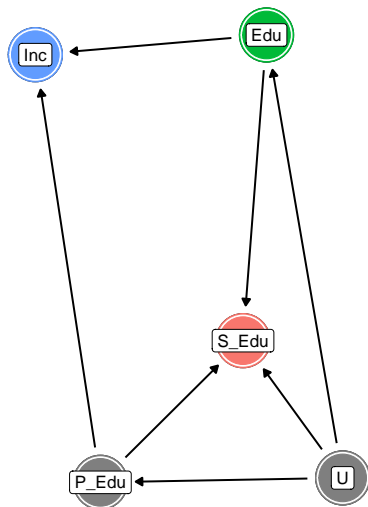
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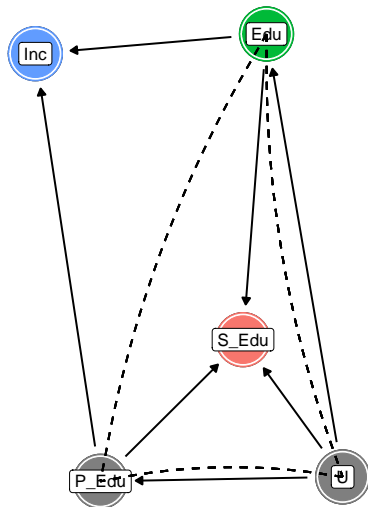
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- ▶ Should we control for Inc?



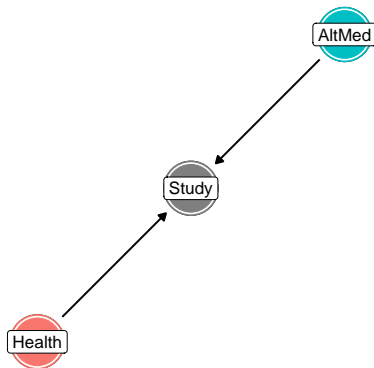
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- ▶ Suppose we are interested in understanding the relationship between sibling education ( $\text{Edu} \rightarrow \text{S\_Edu}$ )
- ▶ Should we control for Inc?
  - ▶ No. Because Inc is a collider, the backdoor path is closed.



## Colliders | Sample Selection

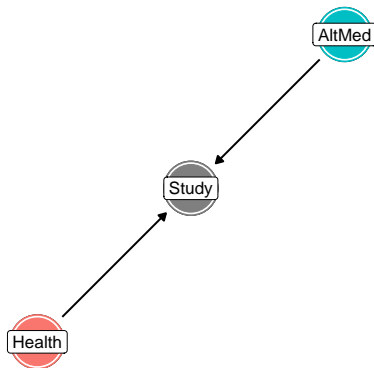
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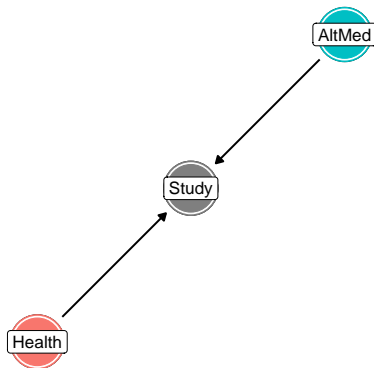
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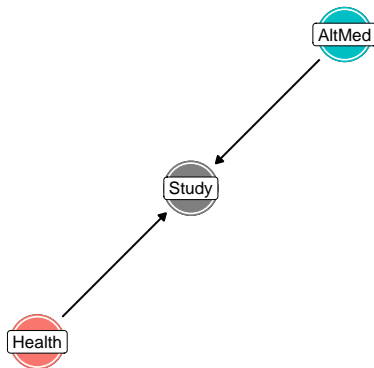
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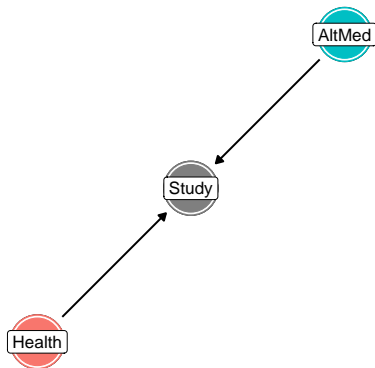
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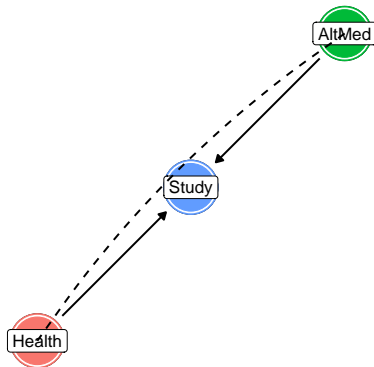
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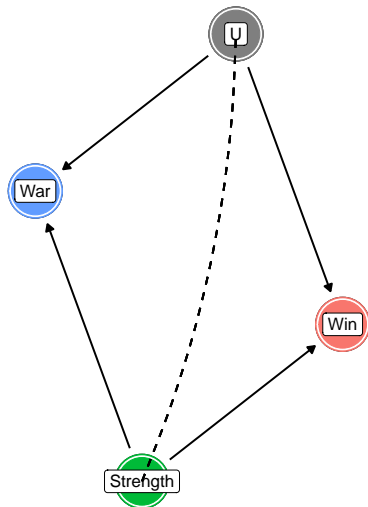
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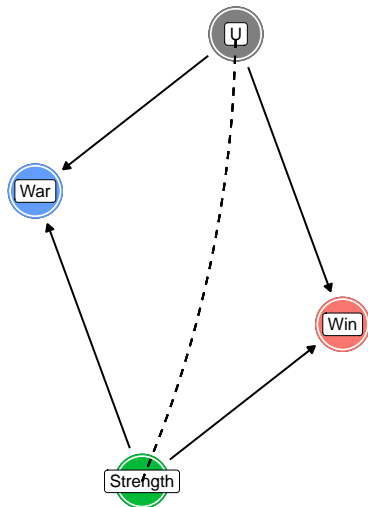
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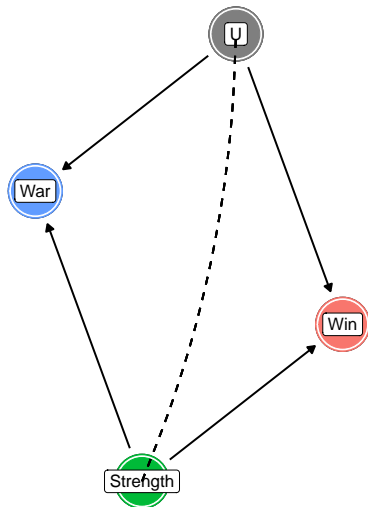
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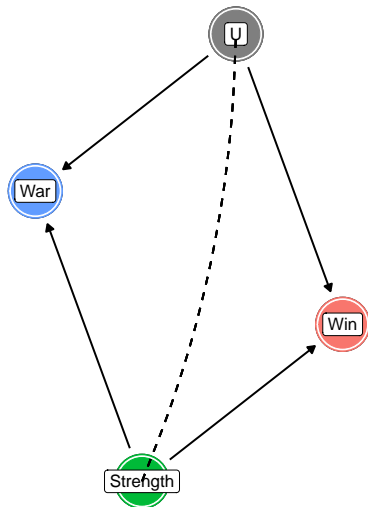
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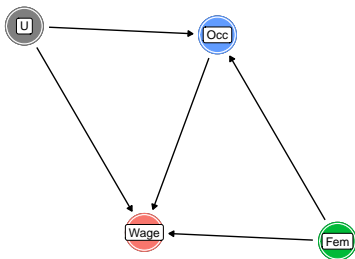


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  - ▶ Conditioning on War opens a backdoor path through  $U$

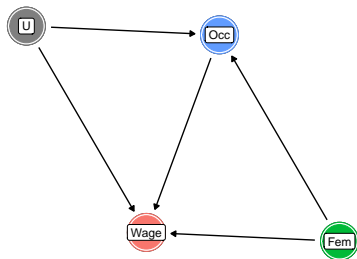


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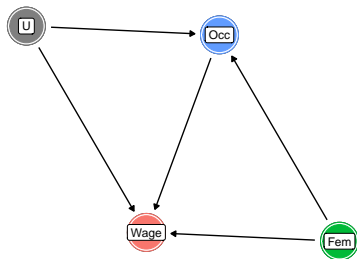
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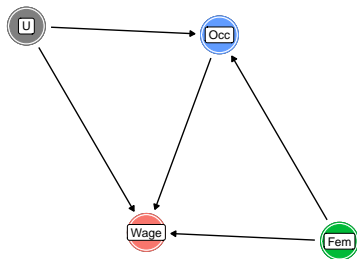
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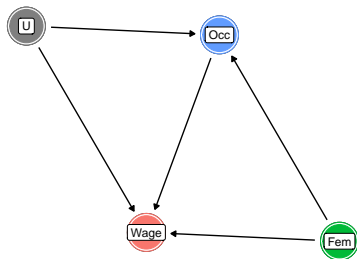
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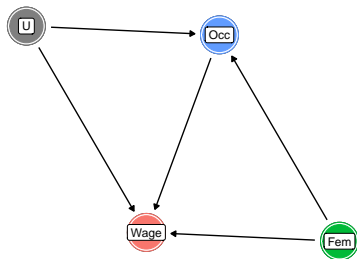
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  - ▶  $Occ = -0.1 * Fem + u + \epsilon_1$

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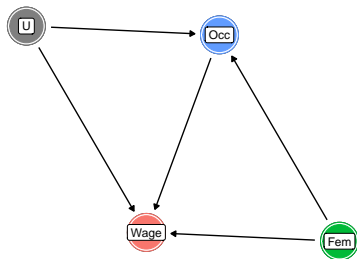
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  - ▶  $\epsilon_1, \epsilon_2, u \sim N(0, 1)$



# Colliders | Gender Wage Gap

## Simulation Setup

```
N <- 10000
tb <- tibble(
  # Gender is exogenous
  female = sample(c(0, 1), N, replace = T),
  # U is exogenous
  u = rnorm(N),
  # Occupation choice a function of u and gender
  occupation = u - 0.1 * female + rnorm(N),
  # Wage is a function of u and occupation
  # AND very slightly directly affected by gender
  wage = -0.1 * female + occupation + 2 * u + rnorm(N)
)
```

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## Simulation Results

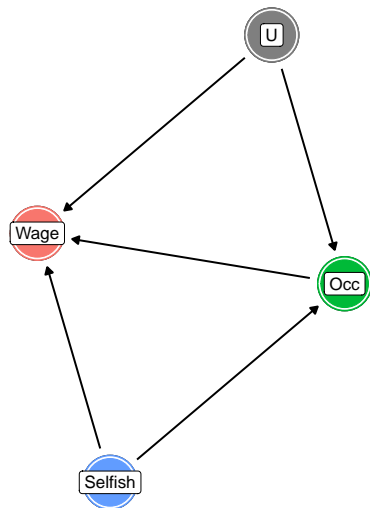
Dependent Variable: wage			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Variables</i>			
Constant	-0.0563 (0.0461)	-0.0285 (0.0244)	-0.0012 (0.0142)
female	-0.1045 (0.0653)	0.0197 (0.0346)	-0.0986*** (0.0202)
occupation		1.969*** (0.0123)	0.9759*** (0.0101)
u			2.007*** (0.0144)
<i>Fit statistics</i>			
Observations	10,000	10,000	10,000

*IID standard-errors in parentheses*

*Signif. Codes: \*\*\*: 0.01, \*\*: 0.05, \*: 0.1*

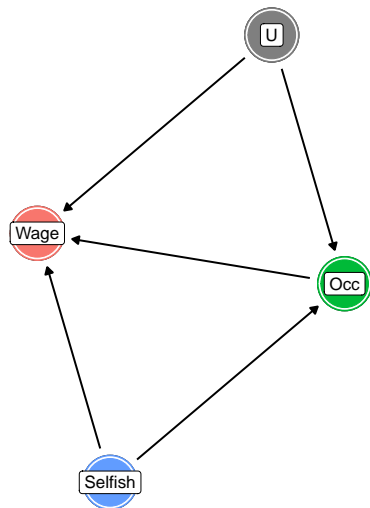
## Bias Amplification

- Same DAG as before, but let's say we are now interested in  $\text{Occ} \rightarrow \text{Wage}$



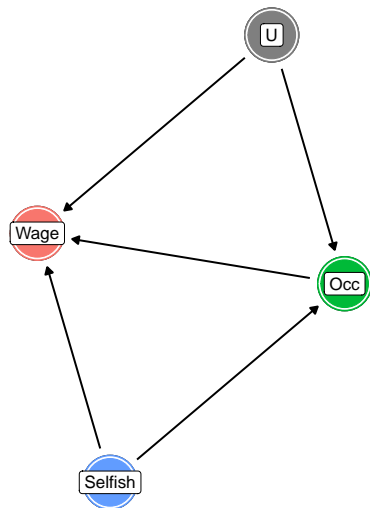
# Bias Amplification

- ▶ Same DAG as before, but let's say we are now interested in  $Occ \rightarrow Wage$
- ▶ Suppose **Selfish** increases **Occ** but decreases **Wages**



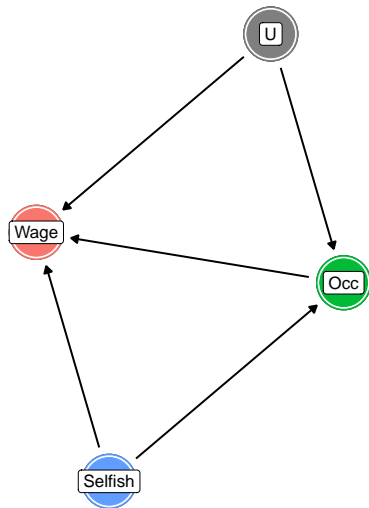
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## Bias Amplification

- ▶ Same DAG as before, but let's say we are now interested in  $Occ \rightarrow Wage$
- ▶ Suppose Selfish increases Occ but decreases Wages
- ▶ Suppose we observe Selfish
- ▶ Should we control for Selfish?



# Bias Amplification

## Simulation Setup

```
tb <- tibble(  
  # U and Selfish exogenous  
  u = rnorm(N),  
  selfish = rnorm(N),  
  # Selfish positively affects occupation  
  occupation = u + selfish + rnorm(N),  
  # Selfish negatively affects wages  
  wage = occupation + 2 * u - 0.5 * selfish + rnorm(N)  
)
```

# Bias Amplification

## Simulation Results

Dependent Variable: wage		
Model:	(1)	(2)
<i>Variables</i>		
Constant	-0.0374* (0.0213)	-0.0313* (0.0175)
occupation	1.495*** (0.0123)	1.985*** (0.0124)
selfish		-1.485*** (0.0215)
<i>Fit statistics</i>		
Observations	10,000	10,000

*IID standard-errors in parentheses*

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- ▶ Pepinsky, Goodman, Ziller (2023, APSR) argue that “state-level differences confound the relationship between distance to camps and out-group intolerance”
  - ▶ They add state level fixed effects and show that the original effect disappears.
  - ▶ “Länder cannot be posttreatment variables unless we assume that the creation of Länder was caused by their distance from concentration camps.”
- ▶ HPT (2024, APSR) rebuttal. “contemporary state fixed effects induce post-treatment bias if any factor (observable or not) that varies across German Länder is a direct or indirect descendant of proximity to concentration camps.” ”

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- ▶ Don't control enough => Omitted variable bias
- ▶ Control on a collider => Collider bias
- ▶ Control on post treatment => Post treatment bias
- ▶ Control on something innocuous => Bias Amplification, sometimes

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  - ▶ (Double ML next week)

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- ▶ General idea - quantify **how large** an omitted variable would have to be to mess up your results
  - ▶ Roman and D'Urso show a correlation between anti LGBTQ attitudes and dislike for “Latinx” group label, controlling for several factors
  - ▶ Sensitivity analysis: Omitted variable would have to have as large an effect on “Latinx” favorability as partisanship



## Sensitivity analysis: Attitudes in Darfur (Hazlett, 2019)

- ▶ 2003-2004 government violence against civilians

```
library(sensemakr)
data("darfur")
darfur.model <- feols(
  peacefactor ~ directlyharmed + female +
    age + farmer_dar + herder_dar + pastvoted +
    hhsize_darfur | village,
  data = darfur
)
```

## Sensitivity analysis: Attitudes in Darfur (Hazlett, 2019)

- ▶ 2003-2004 government violence against civilians
- ▶ Outcome (Y): attitudes toward peace

```
library(sensemakr)
data("darfur")
darfur.model <- feols(
  peacefactor ~ directlyharmed + female +
    age + farmer_dar + herder_dar + pastvoted +
    hhsize_darfur | village,
  data = darfur
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- ▶ Treatment (D): exposure to violence

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## Sensitivity analysis: Attitudes in Darfur (Hazlett, 2019)

- Specification with lots of controls shows a positive relationship

Dependent Variable: Model:	peacefactor (1)
<i>Variables</i>	
directlyharmed	0.0973*** (0.0238)
female	-0.2321*** (0.0244)
age	-0.0021*** (0.0007)
farmer__dar	-0.0404 (0.0296)
herder__dar	0.0143 (0.0365)
pastvoted	-0.0480* (0.0269)
hhsize__darfur	0.0012 (0.0022)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>	
village	Yes

## Sensitivity analysis: Attitudes in Darfur (Hazlett, 2019)

```
darfur.sensitivity <- sensemakr(  
  model = darfur.model,  
  treatment = "directlyharmed",  
  benchmark_covariates = "female",  
  kd = 1:3,  
  ky = 1:3,  
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- ▶ sensemakr package lets us conduct sensitivity analysis **relative to a covariate of choice**

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- ▶ sensemakr package lets us conduct sensitivity analysis **relative to a covariate of choice**
- ▶ Ex, gender played an important role in exposure to violence: women were specifically targeted
- ▶ kd and ky arguments: we investigate a hypothetical confounder **1-3x** as strong as female

# Sensitivity Analysis

ovb\_minimal\_reporting(darfur.sensitivity)

Outcome: *peacefactor*

Treatment:	$R^2_{Y \sim D \mathbf{X}}$	$RV_{q=1}$	$RV_{q=1, \alpha=0.05}$
<i>directlyharmed</i>	2.2%	13.9%	7.6%
<i>Bound (1x female): <math>R^2_{Y \sim Z \mathbf{X}, D} = 12.5\%</math>, <math>R^2_{D \sim Z \mathbf{X}} = 0.9\%</math></i>			



## Sensitivity Analysis

```
summary(darfur.sensitivity)
```

- ▶ Partial R<sup>2</sup> of the treatment with the outcome: an extreme confounder (orthogonal to the covariates) that explains 100% of the residual variance of the outcome, would need to explain at least 2.19% of the residual variance of the treatment to fully account for the observed estimated effect.

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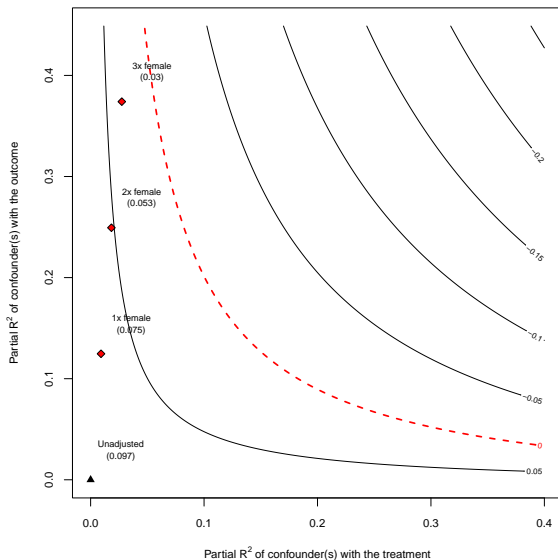
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- ▶ Robustness Value,  $q = 1$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ : unobserved confounders (orthogonal to the covariates) that explain more than 7.63% of the residual variance of both the treatment and the outcome are strong enough to bring the estimate to a range where it is no longer 'statistically different' from 0 at the significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

# Sensitivity: Plots

```
plot(darfur.sensitivity)
```



# HW1

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  - ▶ So  $V(\bar{Y}_N) \rightarrow 0$  and now we can say unbiased = consistency for  $\bar{Y}_n$

## HW1 | Q8 (Simulation question)

$N$	$\text{Var} [\bar{Y}_N]$	$\text{Var} [\hat{\mu}]$	$\text{Var} [\bar{Y}_N] - \text{Var} [\hat{\mu}]$	$(\frac{1}{N} - \frac{1}{n})\mu^2$	$\mu$
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  do stuff  
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