

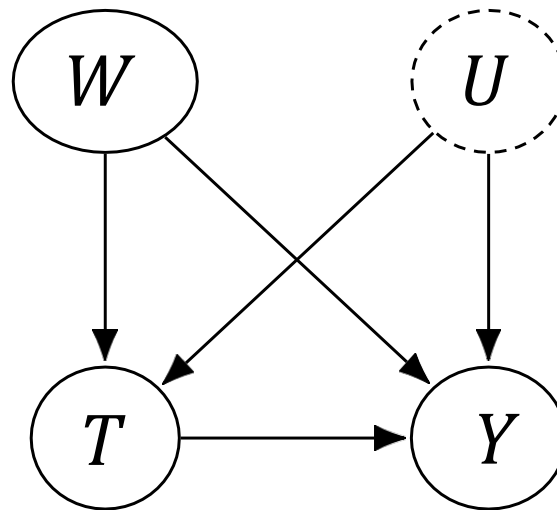
CSDS 452 Causality and Machine Learning

Lecture 7: Unobserved confounders (2)

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Fall 2024, CDS@CWRU

Recap: Unobserved Confounders



Unbiased:

$$E[Y(1) - Y(0)] = E_{W,U}[E[Y|T = 1, W, U] - E[Y|T = 0, W, U]]$$

Biased:

$$E_W[E[Y|T = 1, W] - E[Y|T = 0, W]]$$

(Cannot adjust for unobserved confounders U)

Recap: Weaker assumption of Unconfoundedness?

- Unconfoundedness assumption

$$E[Y(1) - Y(0)] = E_W[E[Y|T = 1, W] - E[Y|T = 0, W]]$$

Identify a “Point”

- Weaker assumption
 - Allow the existence of some unobserved confounders
 - Instead of a point, **identify an “interval”**
 - “Partial identification” or “set identification”

Recap: Observational-Counterfactual Decomposition

$$\begin{aligned} & E[Y(1) - Y(0)] \\ &= E[Y(1)] - E[Y(0)] \\ &= P(T = 1)E[Y(1)|T = 1] + P(T = 0)E[Y(1)|T = 0] \\ &\quad - P(T = 1)E[Y(0)|T = 1] - P(T = 0)E[Y(0)|T = 0] \\ &= P(T = 1)\boxed{E[Y|T = 1]} + P(T = 0)\boxed{E[Y(1)|T = 0]} \\ &\quad - P(T = 1)\boxed{E[Y(0)|T = 1]} - P(T = 0)\boxed{E[Y|T = 0]} \end{aligned}$$

Observational

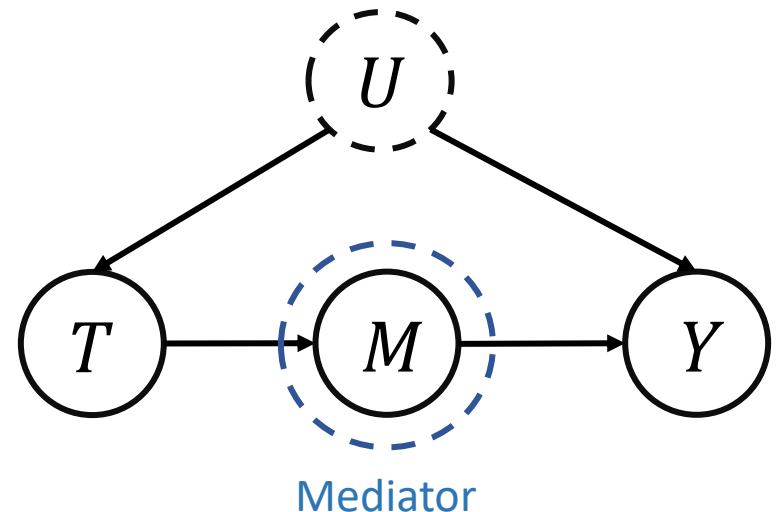
Counterfactual

Outline

- Front-door Adjustment (recap)
- Instrumental variables
 - What is Instrumental Variable
 - 3 Assumptions of Instrumental Variable
 - Linear setting
 - 2SLS
 - Non-parametric identification
- Proxy variables for unobserved confounders

Frontdoor Adjustment

- Step 1. Identify the causal effect of T on M
- Step 2. Identify the causal effect of M on Y
- Step 3. Based on the above two steps, identify the causal effect of T on Y



Outline

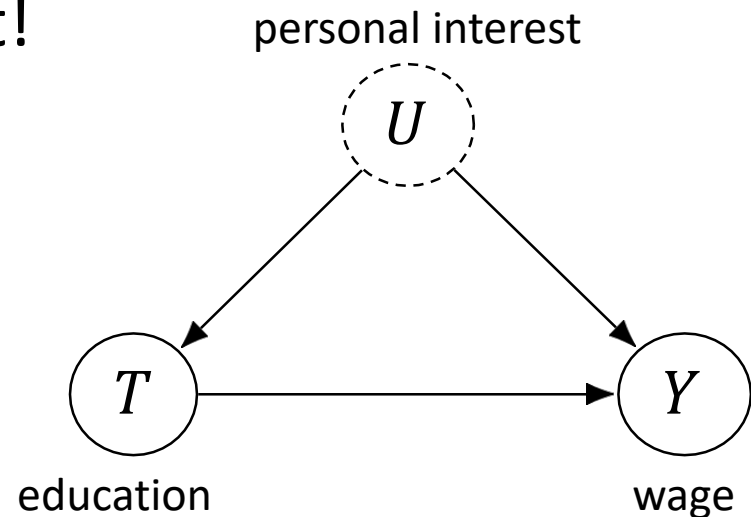
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Instrumental Variable (IV)

- What is Instrumental Variable?
- Why do we need IVs?

What is Instrumental Variable?

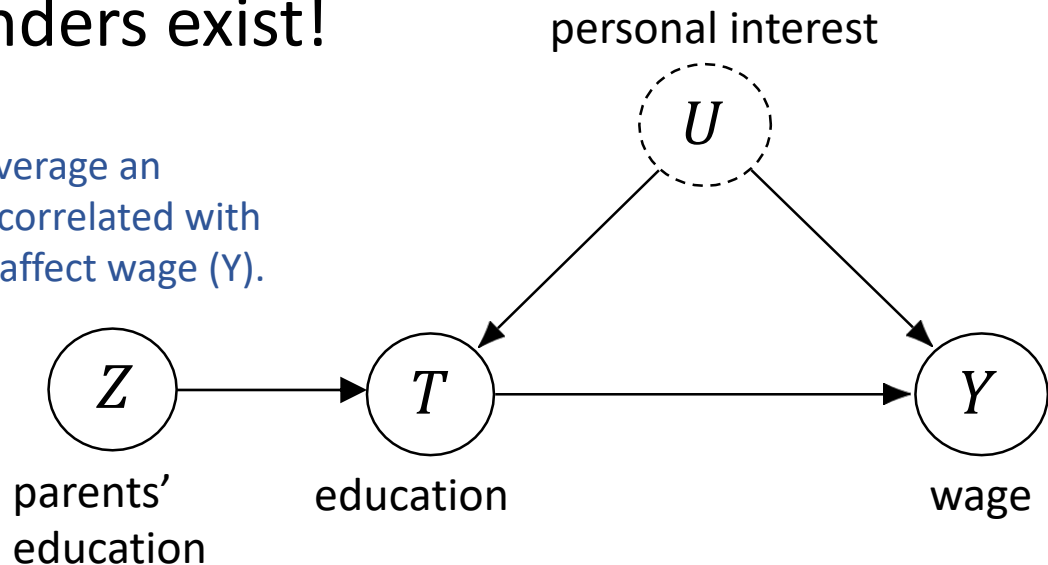
- Example: causal effect estimation of education on wage
- Hidden confounders exist!



What is Instrumental Variable?

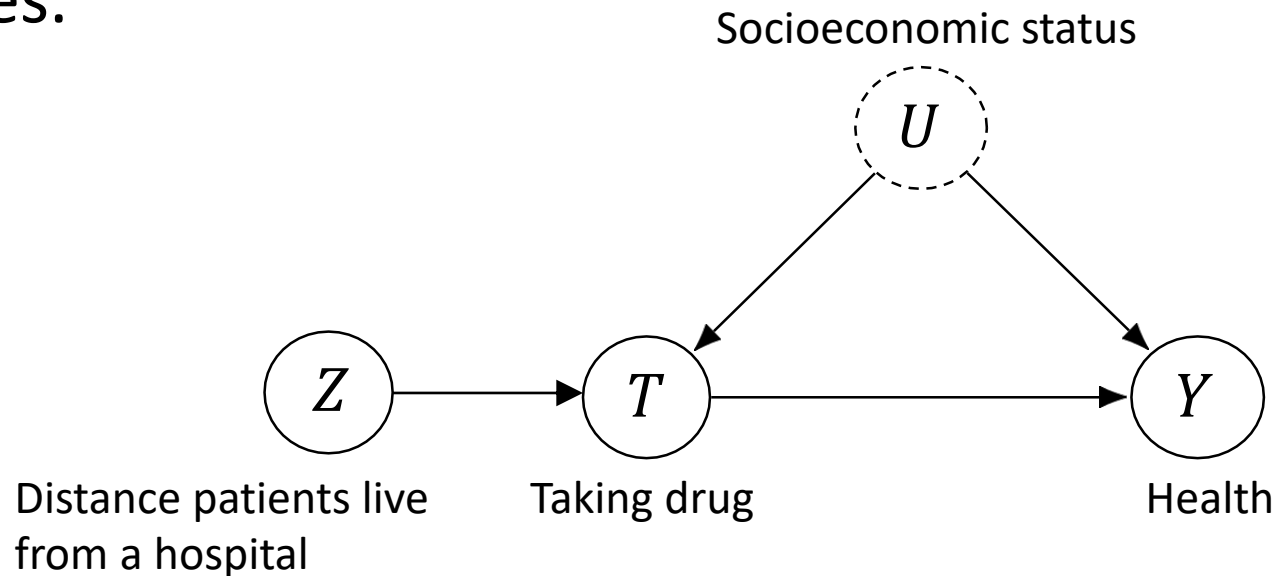
- Example: causal effect estimation of education on wage
- Hidden confounders exist!

To address this issue, you can leverage an instrumental variable (Z) that is correlated with education (X) but is not directly affect wage (Y).



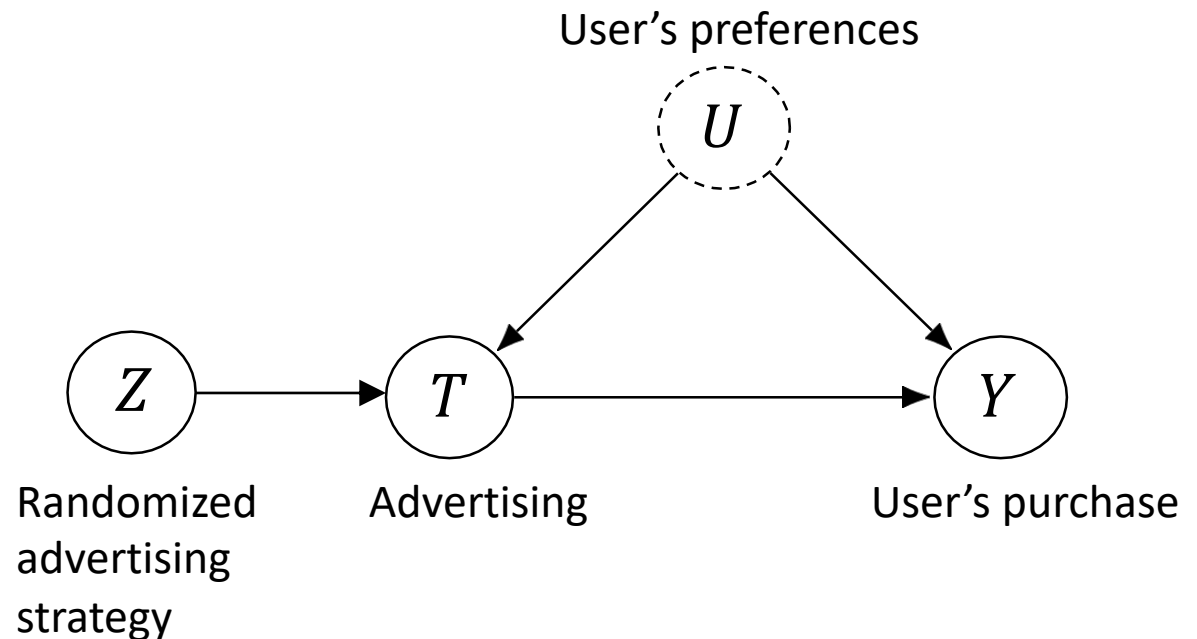
More Examples

- Example in Medicine: Estimating the Causal Effect of a new medication (Drug T) on patient's health outcomes.



More Examples

- Example in Economics: Estimating the Causal Effect of advertising on user's purchase.

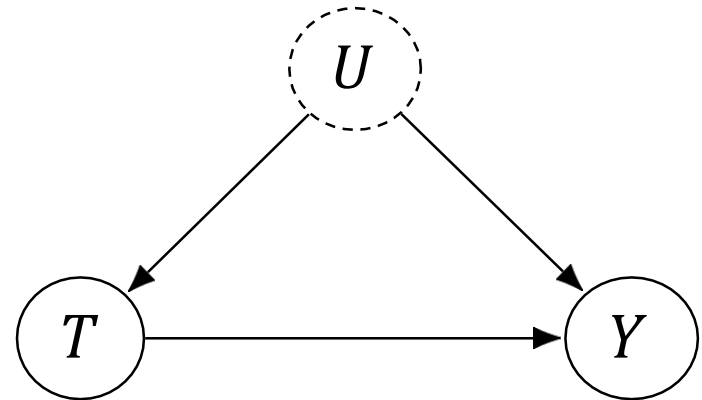


Why do we need IVs?

- Most causal inference methods rely on **unconfoundedness** assumption.
- Otherwise, there will be residual bias in causal estimates.
- Some methods can relax unconfoundedness assumption and enable causal effect estimation with unmeasured confounders.
 - IV-based estimation is one of them, and has been widely-used in real-world causal analysis!

Problem Setting

- Suppose we want to estimate the ATE of T on Y .
- Unobserved confounders U exist.



Outline

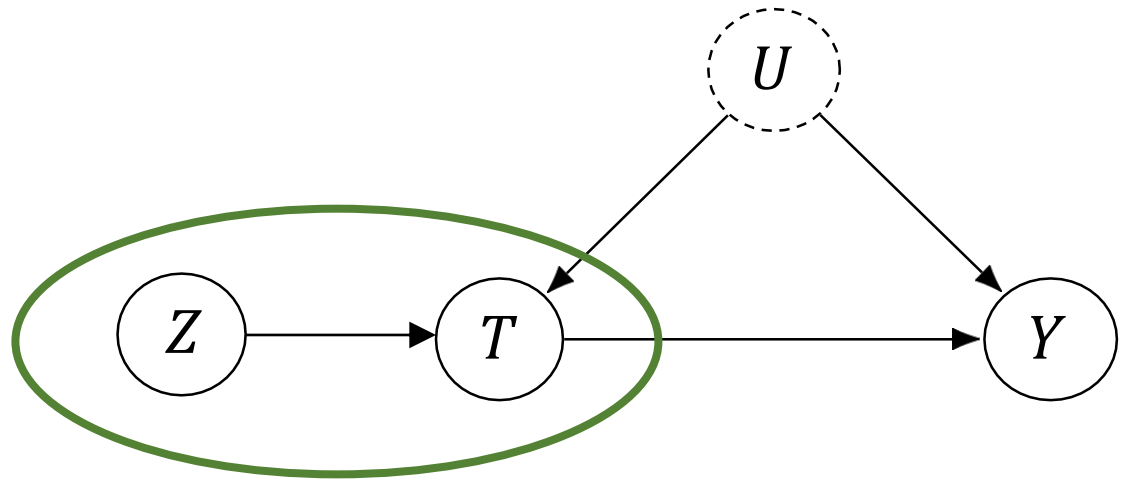
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3 Assumptions for IVs

- A variable Z is an instrument if it meets three instrumental assumptions:
 - Relevance

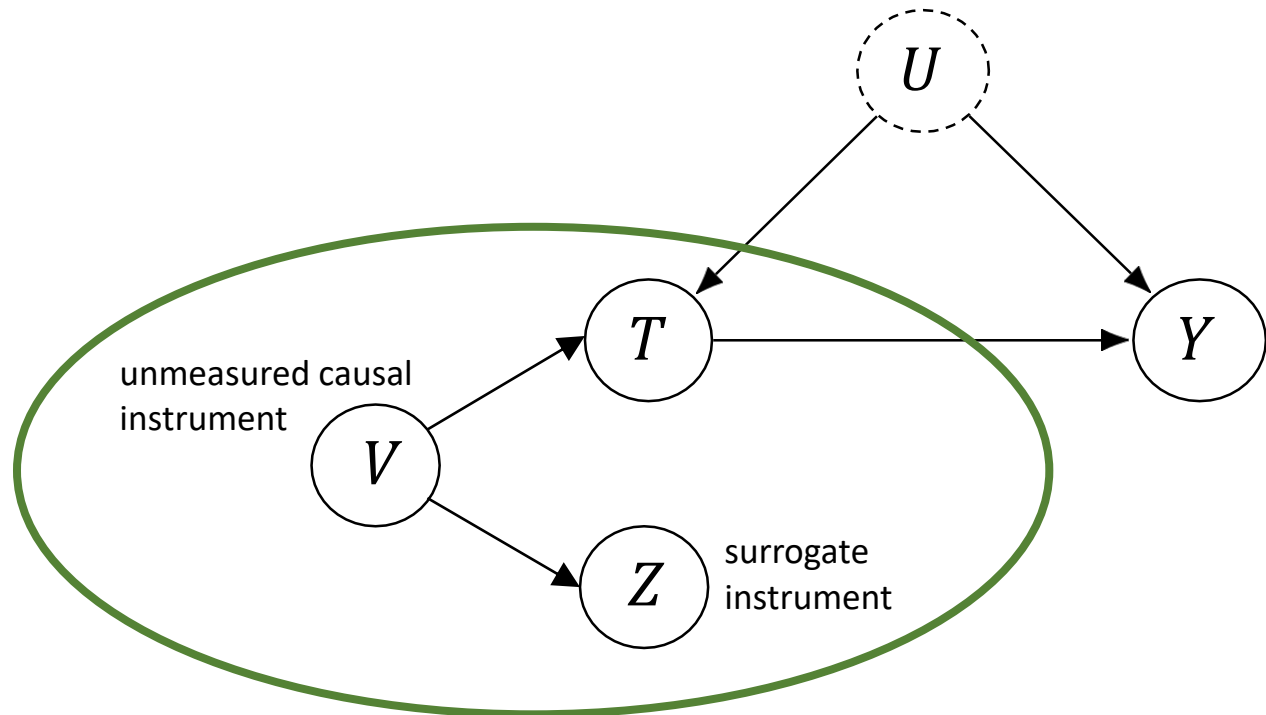
Assumption 1: Relevance

- Z is associated with T



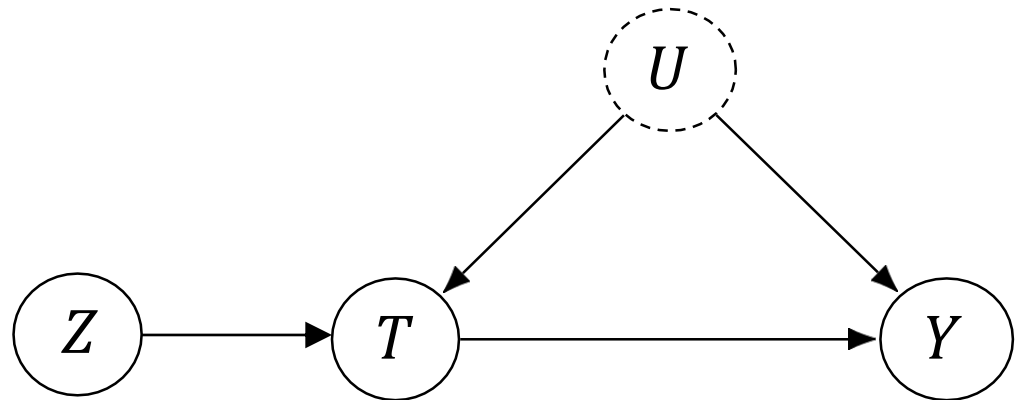
Assumption 1: Relevance

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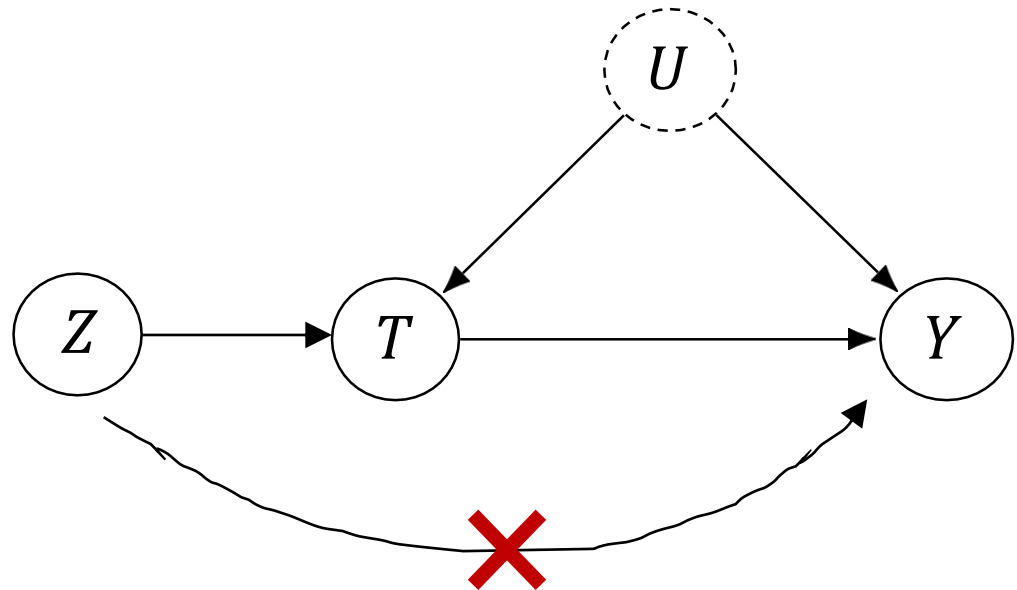
Assumption 2: Exclusion

- Z does not affect Y except through its potential effect on T . In other words, The causal effect of Z on Y is fully mediated by T



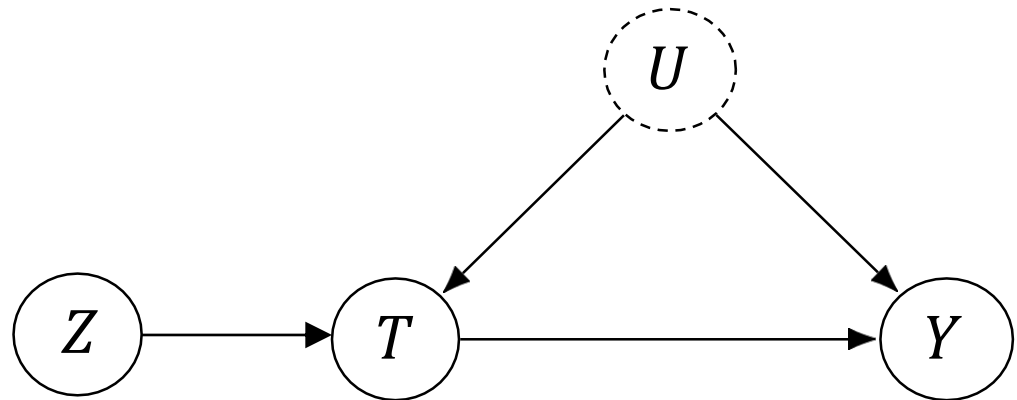
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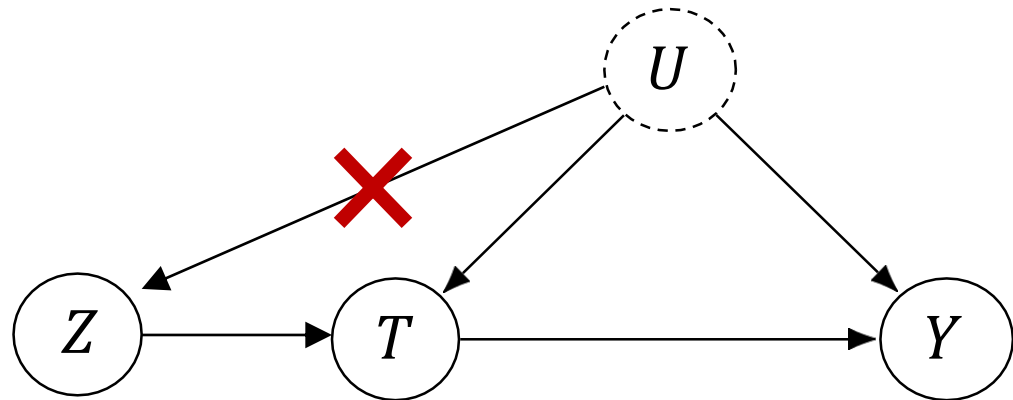
Assumption 3: Instrumental Unconfoundedness

- Z and Y do not share causes (i.e., Z is unconfounded)



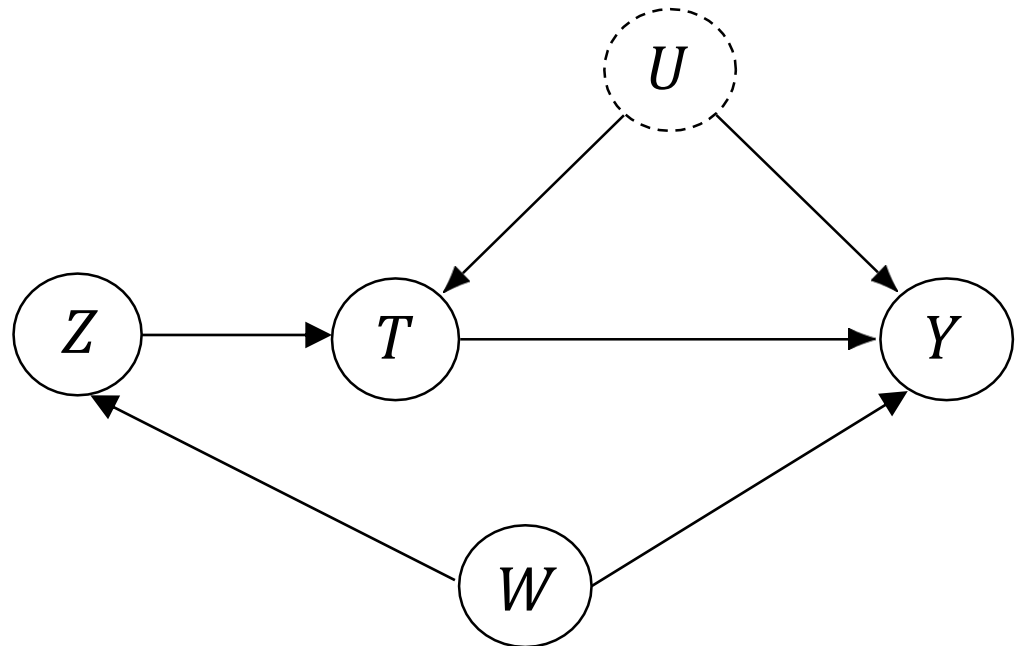
Assumption 3: Instrumental Unconfoundedness

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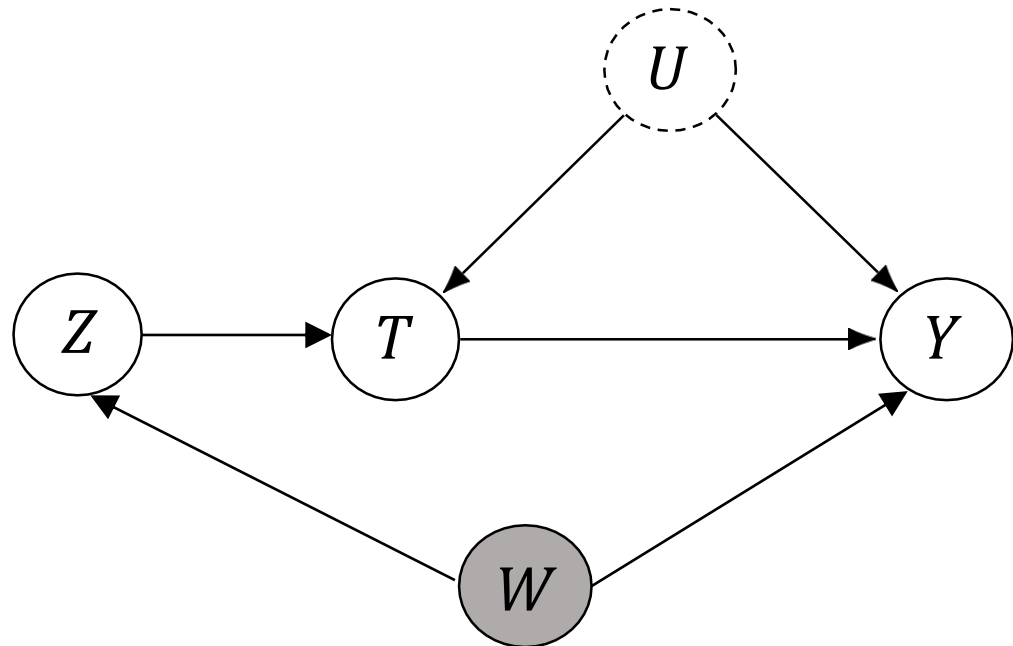
Weaker Assumption: Conditional Instruments

- A weaker version of Assumption 3:



Weaker Assumption: Conditional Instruments

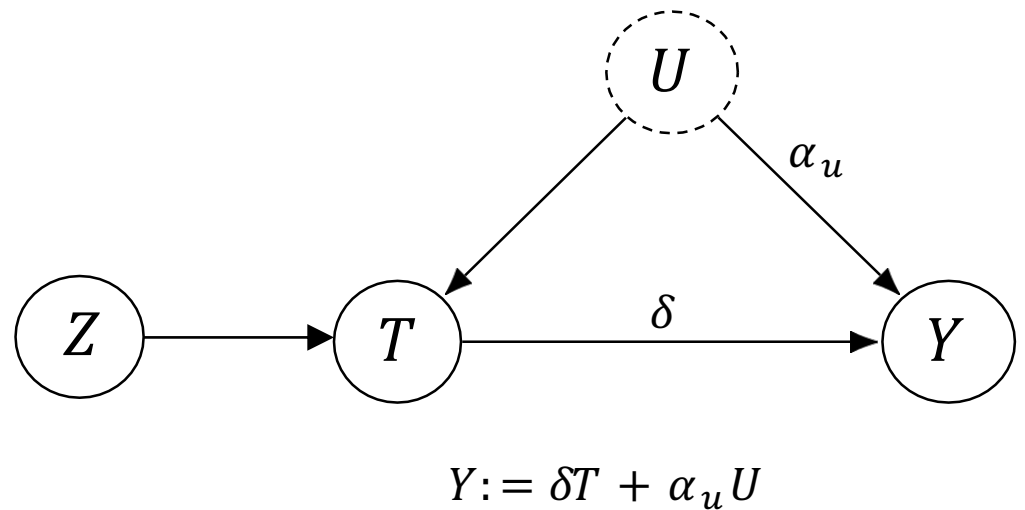
- A weaker version of Assumption 3:
Unconfoundedness after conditioning on observed variables



Outline

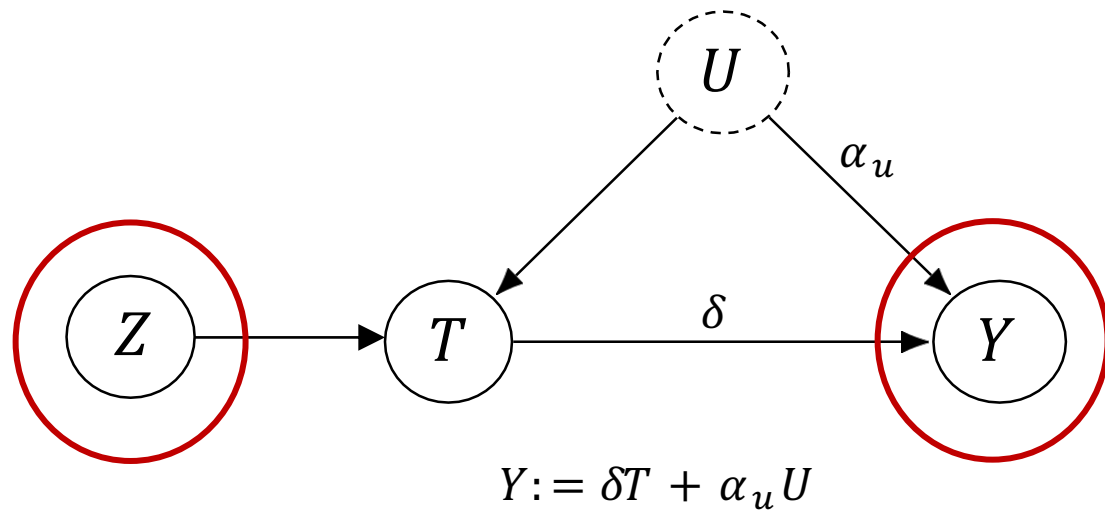
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Start from a Linear Setting



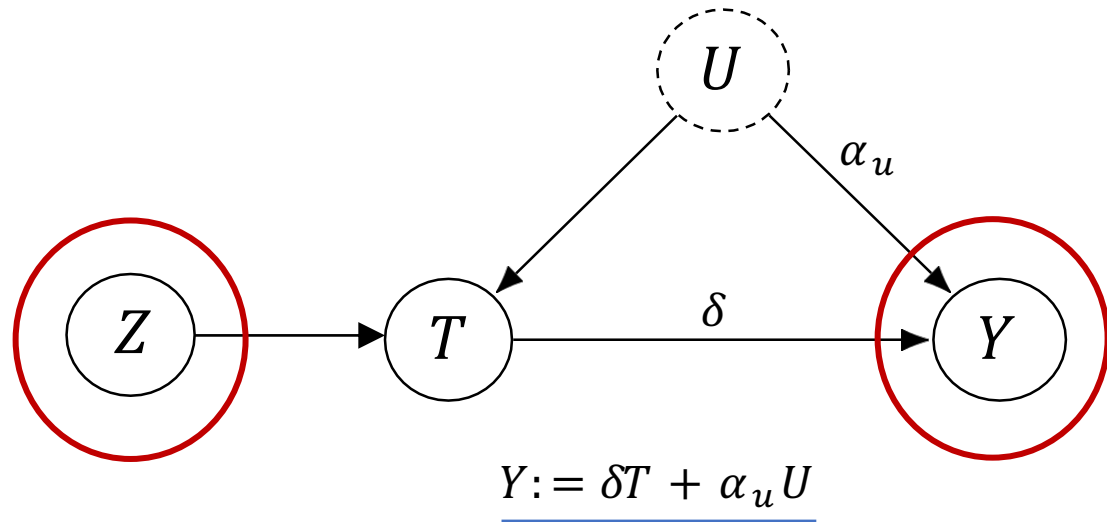
Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$



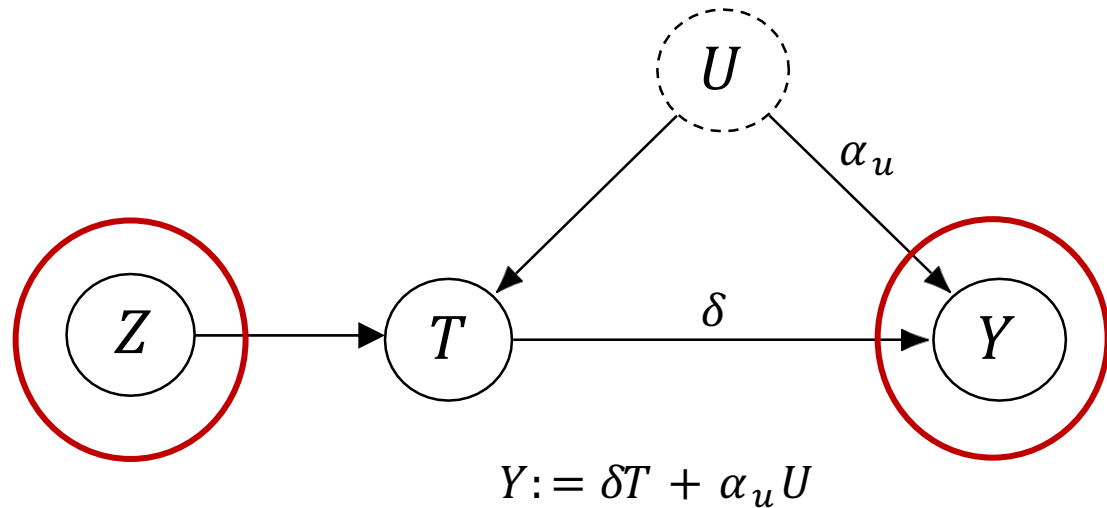
Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$
 $= E[\underline{\delta T + \alpha_u U}|Z = 1] - E[\underline{\delta T + \alpha_u U}|Z = 0]$



Start from a Linear Setting

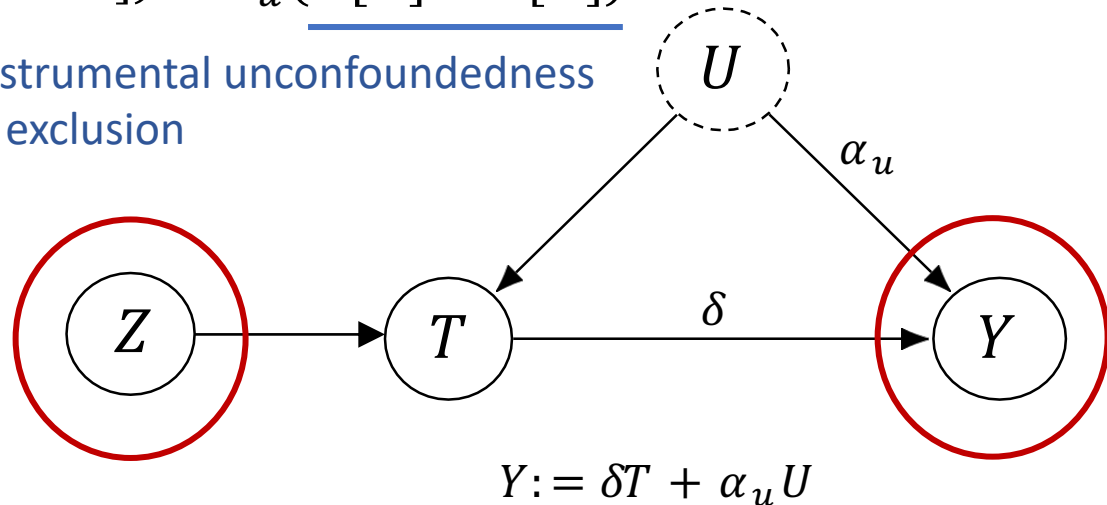
- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$
 $= E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 1] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 0]$
 $= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U|Z = 1] - E[U|Z = 0])$



Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$
= $E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 1] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 0]$
= $\delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u \underline{(E[U|Z = 1] - E[U|Z = 0])}$
= $\delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u \underline{(E[U] - E[U])}$

Instrumental unconfoundedness
& exclusion



Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$

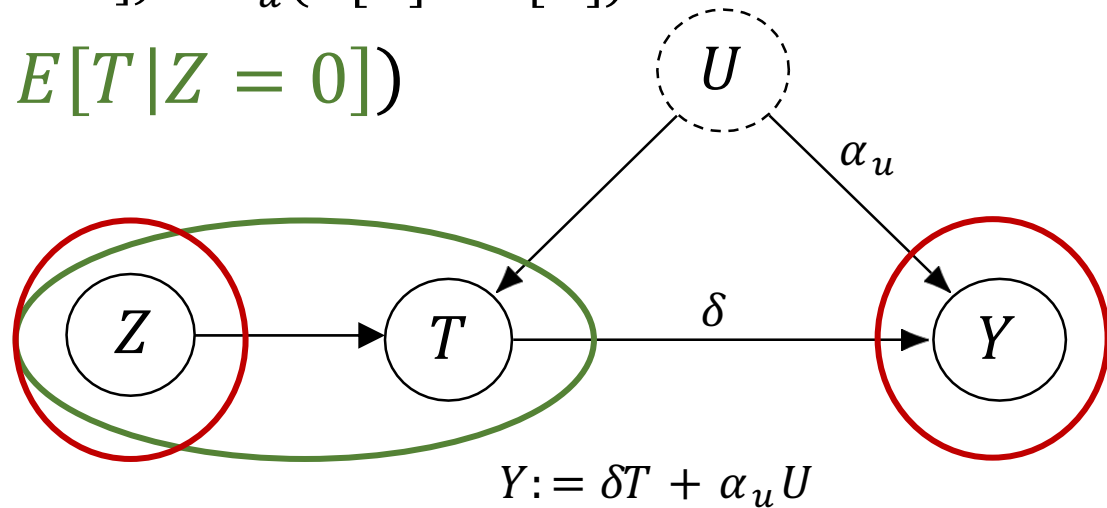
$$= E[\delta T + \alpha_u U | Z = 1] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U | Z = 0]$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U|Z = 1] - E[U|Z = 0])$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U] - E[U])$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0])$$

$\delta = ?$



Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$

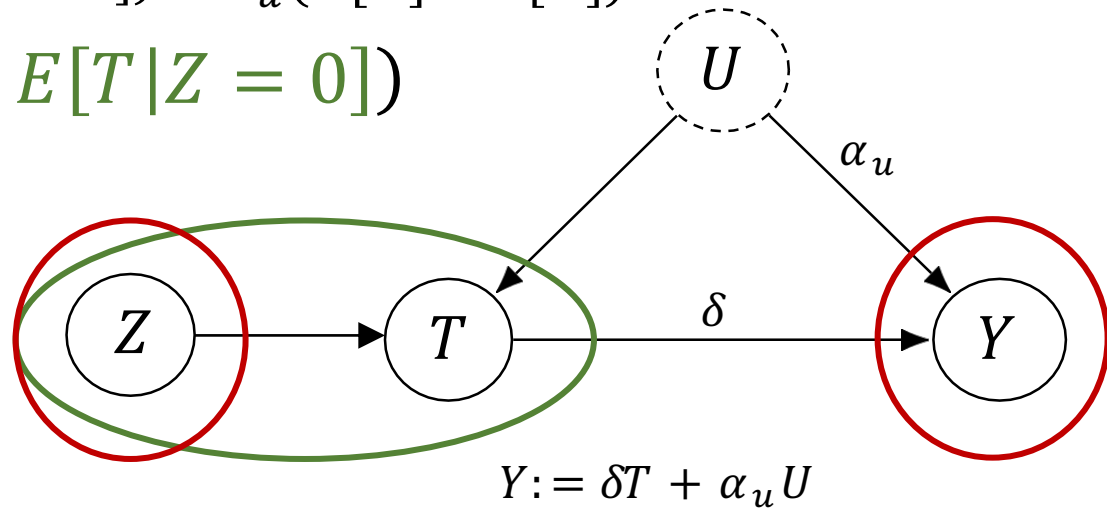
$$= E[\delta T + \alpha_u U | Z = 1] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U | Z = 0]$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U|Z = 1] - E[U|Z = 0])$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U] - E[U])$$

$$= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0])$$

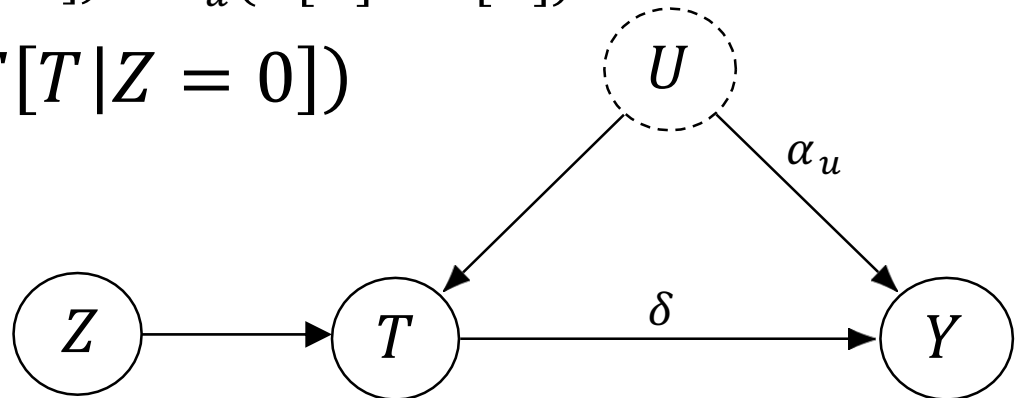
$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$



Start from a Linear Setting

- $E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]$
 $= E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 1] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U|Z = 0]$
 $= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U|Z = 1] - E[U|Z = 0])$
 $= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]) + \alpha_u(E[U] - E[U])$
 $= \delta(E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0])$

$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

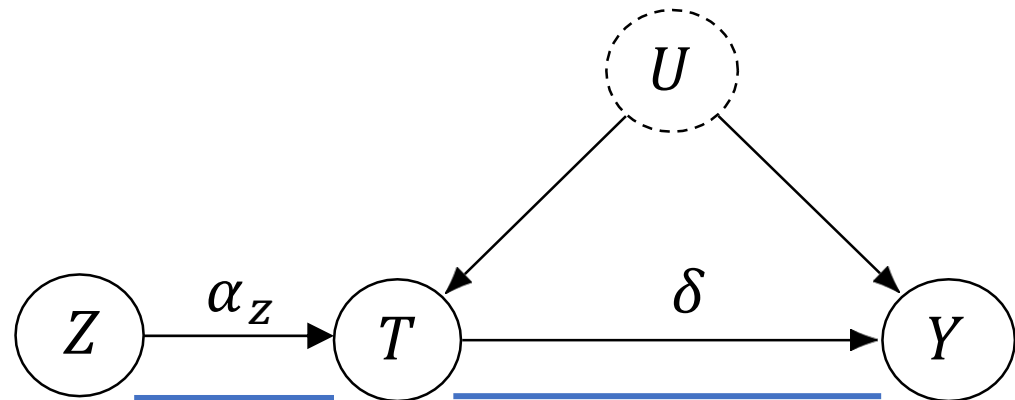


$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

The denominator is not 0, based on
relevance assumption

Multiplying Path Coefficients in Linear Setting

$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

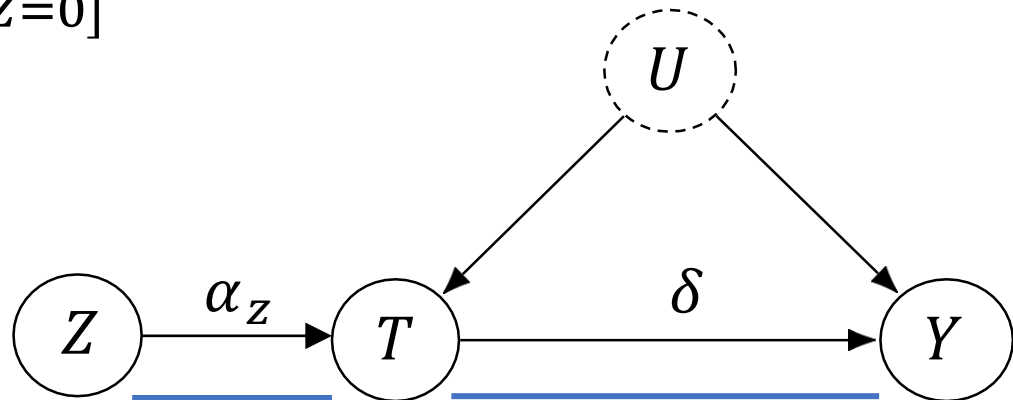


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Multiplying Path Coefficients in Linear Setting

$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

$$\delta = \frac{\alpha_Z \delta}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

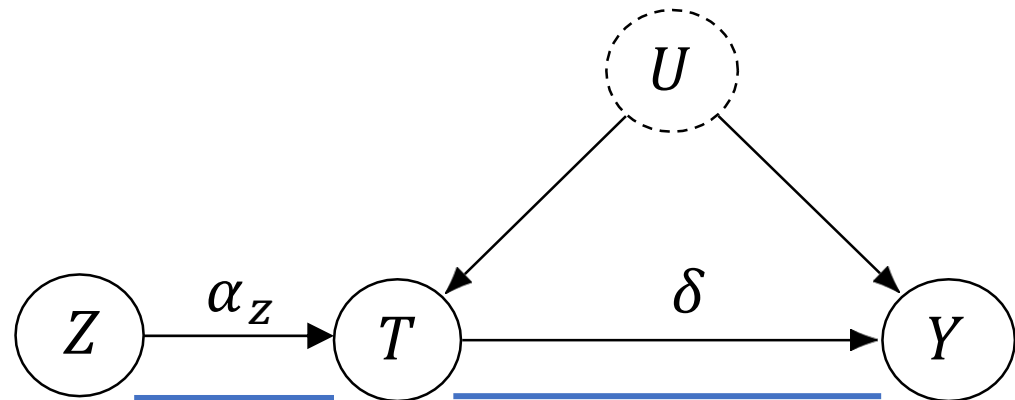


$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Multiplying Path Coefficients in Linear Setting

$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

$$\delta = \frac{\alpha_Z \delta}{\alpha_Z}$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

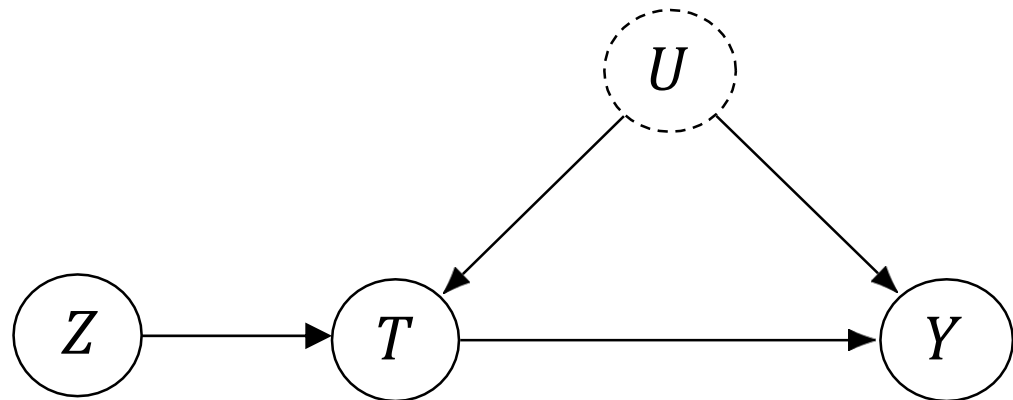
Wald Estimator

- Wald estimand: $\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$
- Wald estimator: $\hat{\delta} = \frac{\frac{1}{n_1} \sum_{i:Z_i=1} Y_i - \frac{1}{n_0} \sum_{i:Z_i=0} Y_i}{\frac{1}{n_1} \sum_{i:Z_i=1} T_i - \frac{1}{n_0} \sum_{i:Z_i=0} T_i}$

Continuous Linear Setting

$$\delta = \frac{E[Y|Z=1] - E[Y|Z=0]}{E[T|Z=1] - E[T|Z=0]}$$

What if T and Z are continuous?



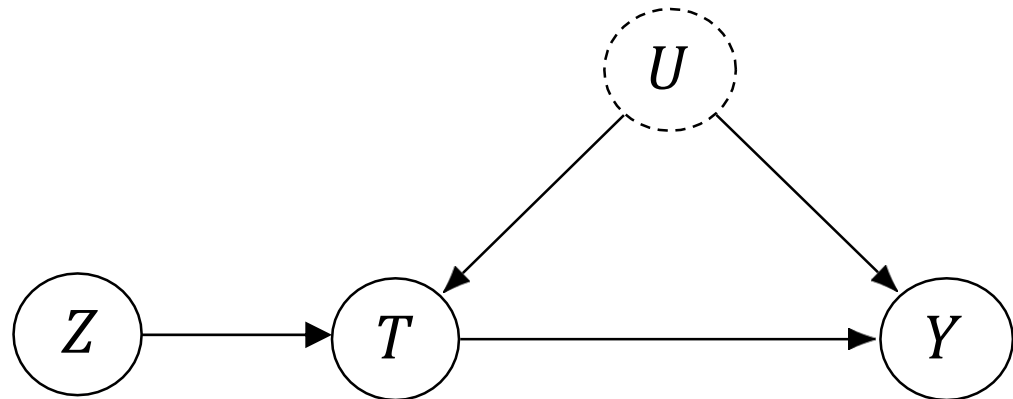
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Continuous Linear Setting

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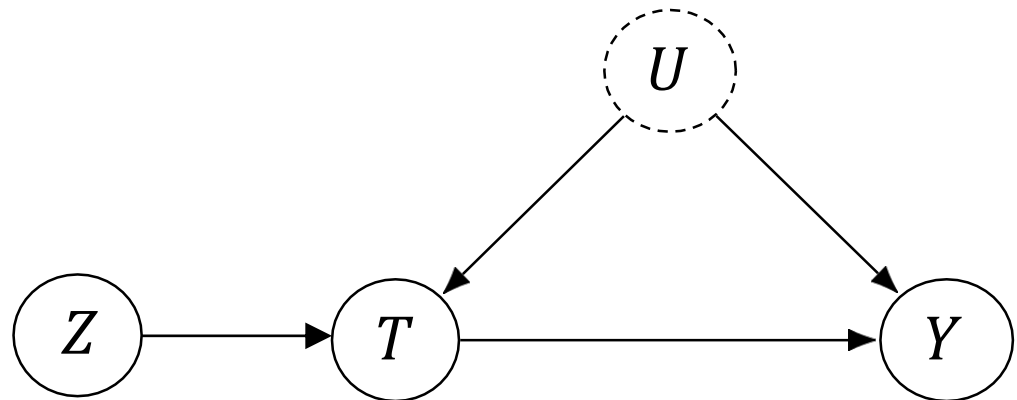
$$\delta = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y, Z)}{\text{Cov}(T, Z)}$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

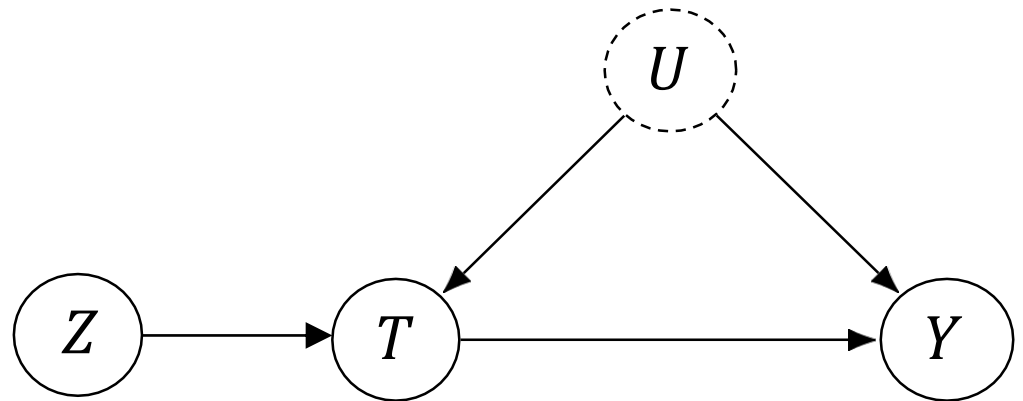
$\text{Cov}(Y, Z)$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

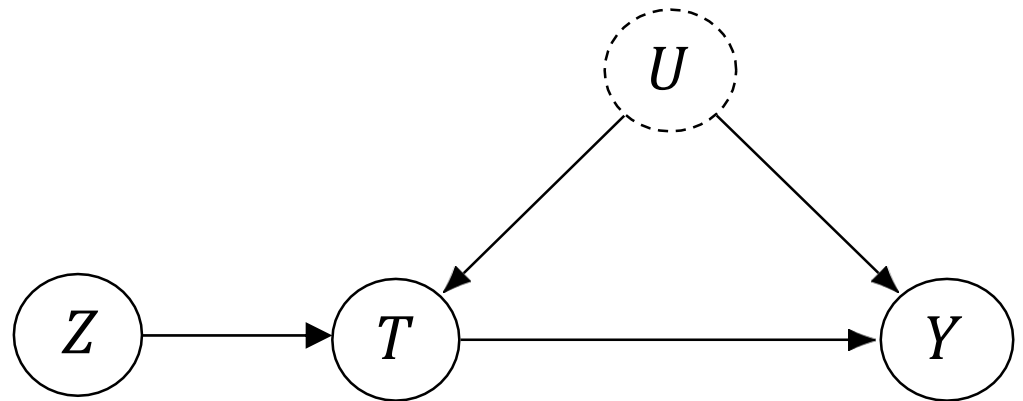
$$\text{Cov}(Y, Z) = E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z]$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

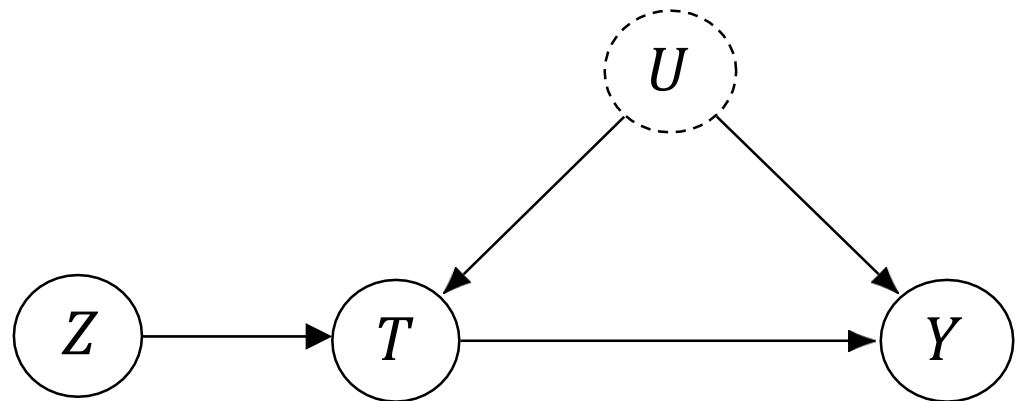
$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z]\end{aligned}$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

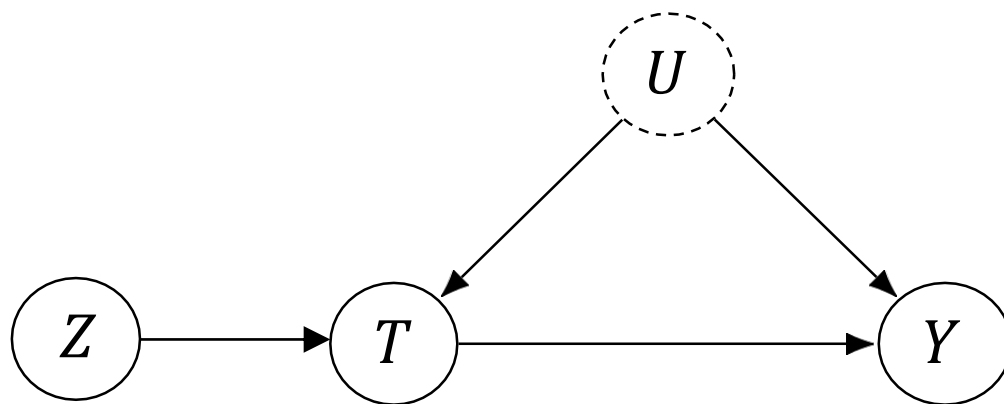
$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta E[TZ] + \alpha_u E[UZ] - \delta E[T]E[Z] - \alpha_u E[U]E[Z]\end{aligned}$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

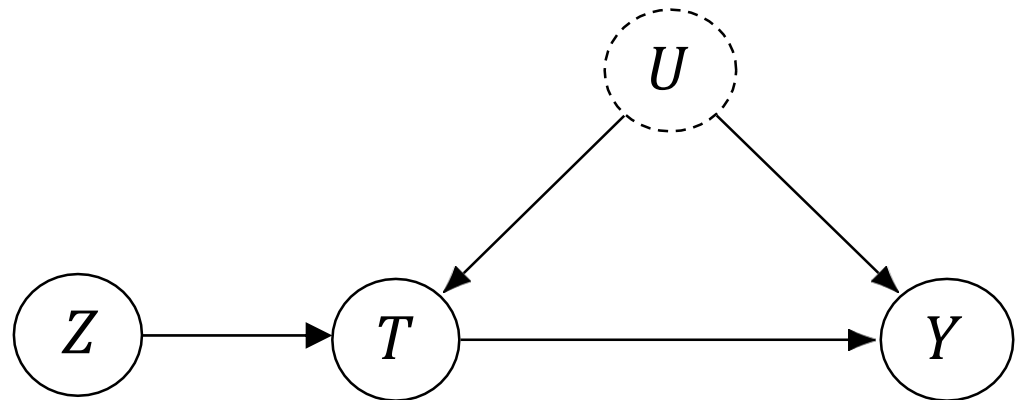
$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta E[TZ] + \alpha_u E[UZ] - \delta E[T]E[Z] - \alpha_u E[U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta(E[TZ] - E[T]E[Z]) + \alpha_u(E[UZ] - E[U]E[Z])\end{aligned}$$



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta E[TZ] + \alpha_u E[UZ] - \delta E[T]E[Z] - \alpha_u E[U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta(E[TZ] - E[T]E[Z]) + \alpha_u(E[UZ] - E[U]E[Z]) \\ &= \delta \text{Cov}(T, Z) + \alpha_u \text{Cov}(U, Z)\end{aligned}$$

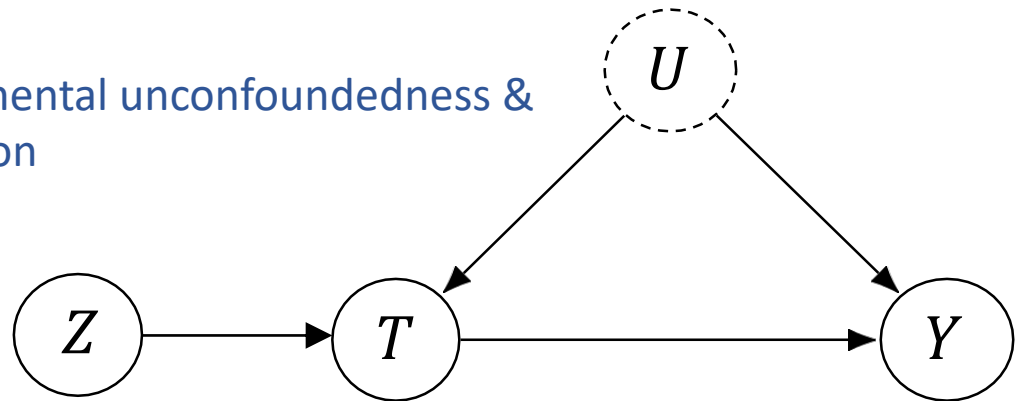


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Continuous Linear Setting

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Instrumental unconfoundedness & exclusion

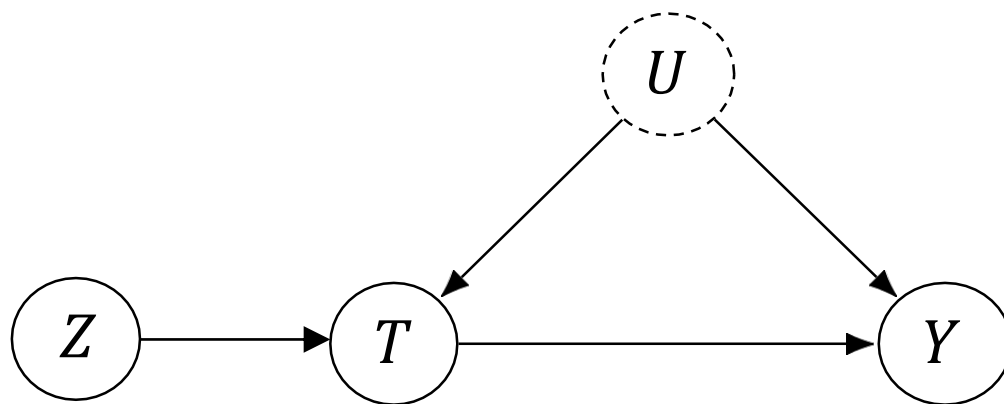


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Continuous Linear Setting

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta E[TZ] + \alpha_u E[UZ] - \delta E[T]E[Z] - \alpha_u E[U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta(E[TZ] - E[T]E[Z]) + \alpha_u(E[UZ] - E[U]E[Z]) \\ &= \delta \text{Cov}(T, Z) + \alpha_u \text{Cov}(U, Z) \\ &= \delta \text{Cov}(T, Z)\end{aligned}$$

$$\delta = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y, Z)}{\text{Cov}(T, Z)}$$



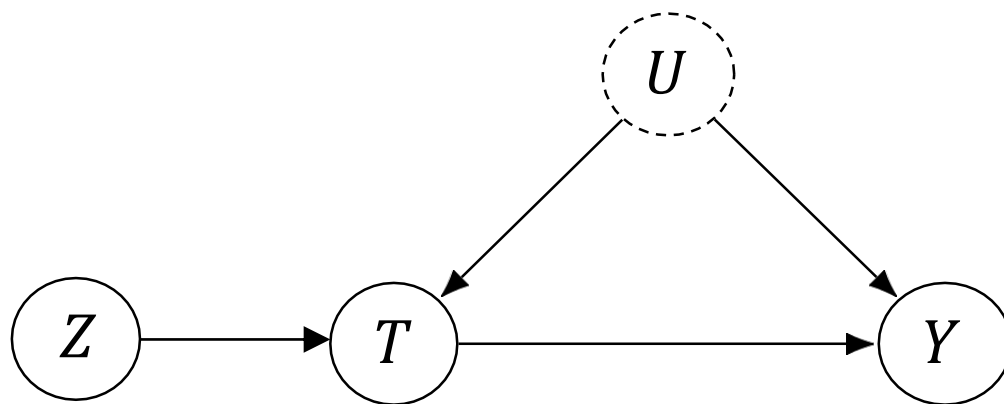
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Continuous Linear Setting

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cov}(Y, Z) &= E[YZ] - E[Y]E[Z] \\ &= E[(\delta T + \alpha_u U)Z] - E[\delta T + \alpha_u U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta E[TZ] + \alpha_u E[UZ] - \delta E[T]E[Z] - \alpha_u E[U]E[Z] \\ &= \delta(E[TZ] - E[T]E[Z]) + \alpha_u(E[UZ] - E[U]E[Z]) \\ &= \delta \text{Cov}(T, Z) + \alpha_u \text{Cov}(U, Z) \\ &= \delta \text{Cov}(T, Z)\end{aligned}$$

$$\delta = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y, Z)}{\text{Cov}(T, Z)}$$

The denominator is not 0, based on
relevance assumption



$$Y := \delta T + \alpha_u U$$

Continuous Linear Setting: Estimator 1

- Estimand:

$$\delta = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y,Z)}{\text{Cov}(T,Z)}$$

- Estimator:

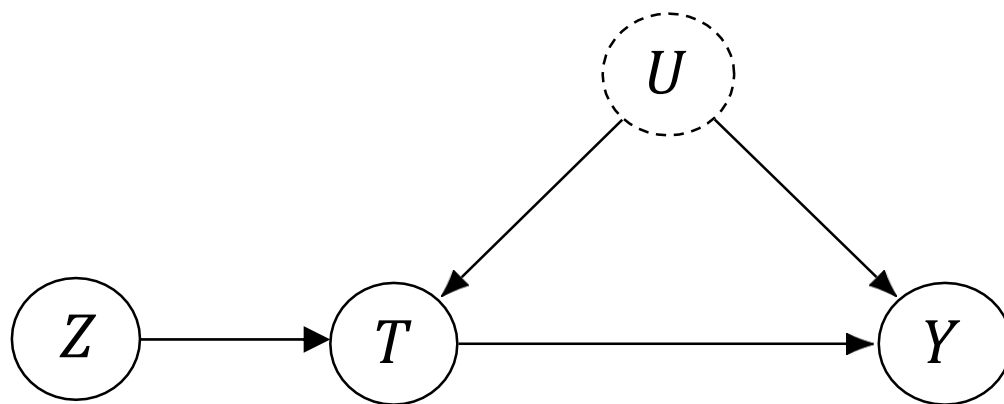
$$\hat{\delta} = \frac{\widehat{\text{Cov}}(Y,Z)}{\widehat{\text{Cov}}(T,Z)}$$

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Two-Stage Least Squares Estimator (2SLS)

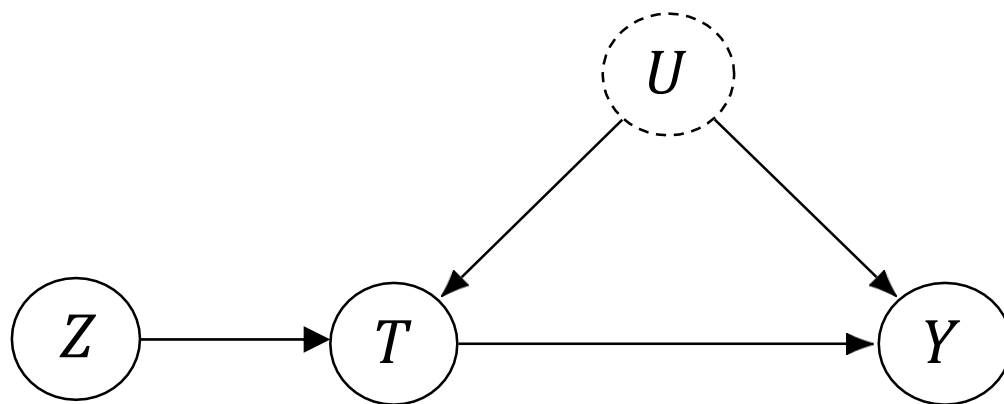
- 2SLS is one of the most widely-used IV-based causal effect estimation method
- 2 stages are included, which decompose the causal effect $Z \rightarrow Y$ into two parts:
 - $Z \rightarrow T$
 - $T \rightarrow Y$



Two-Stage Least Squares Estimator (2SLS)

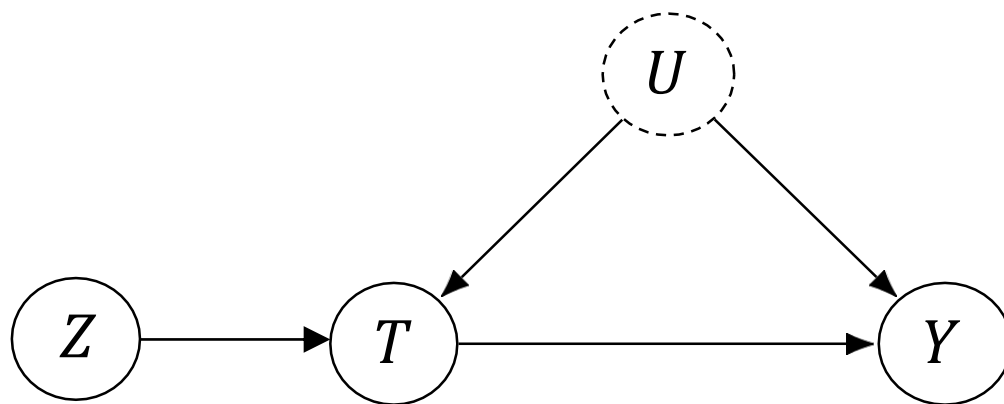
- Stage 1: Linearly regress T on Z to estimate $E[T|Z]$.
This gives us the projection of T onto Z : \hat{T}

$$\hat{T} = \hat{E}[T|Z]$$



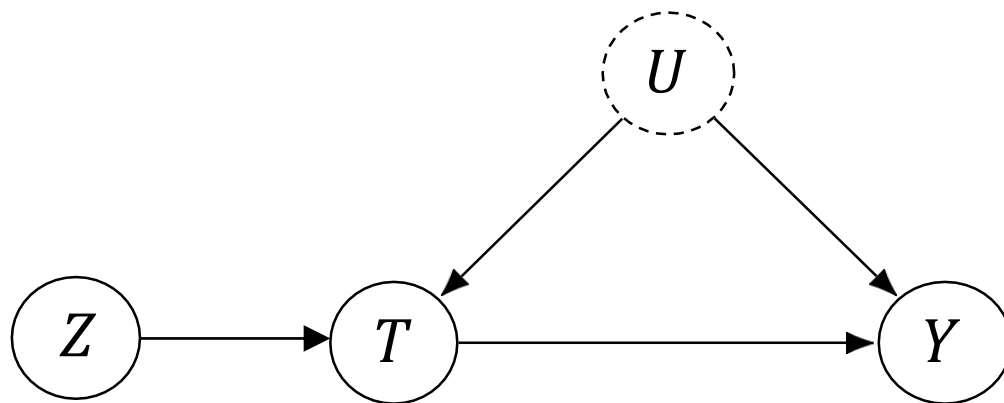
Two-Stage Least Squares Estimator (2SLS)

- Stage 1: Linearly regress T on Z to estimate $E[T|Z]$. This gives us the projection of T onto Z : \hat{T}
- Stage 2: Linearly regress Y on \hat{T} to estimate $E[Y|\hat{T}]$. Obtain the estimate $\hat{\delta}$ as the fitted coefficient in front of \hat{T} .



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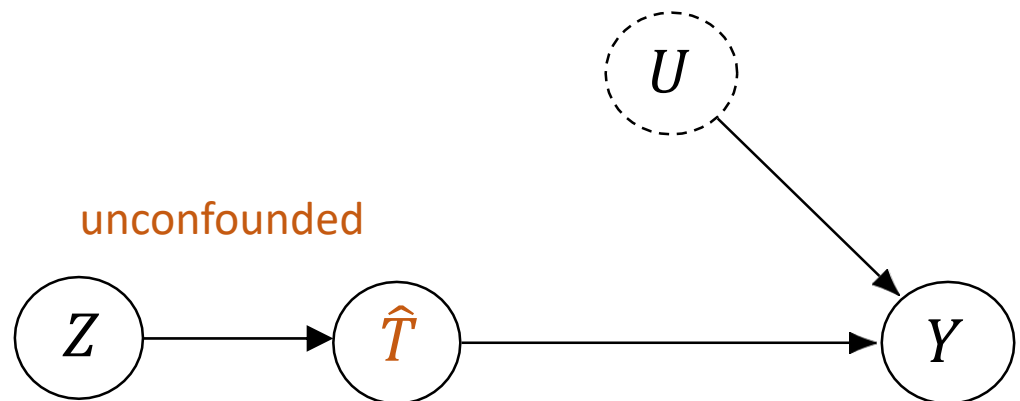


Also works in the
binary setting

Intuition of 2SLS

- The key intuition: as the IVs are **unconfounded**, the predicted treatment from the first stage can provide more **randomization**, and thus it can help mitigate the confounding bias brought by hidden confounders in the second stage.

$$\hat{T} = \hat{E}[T|Z]$$



Outline

- Front-door Adjustment (recap)
- Instrumental variables
 - What is Instrumental Variable
 - 3 Assumptions of Instrumental Variable
 - Linear setting
 - 2SLS
 - Non-parametric identification
- Proxy variables for unobserved confounders

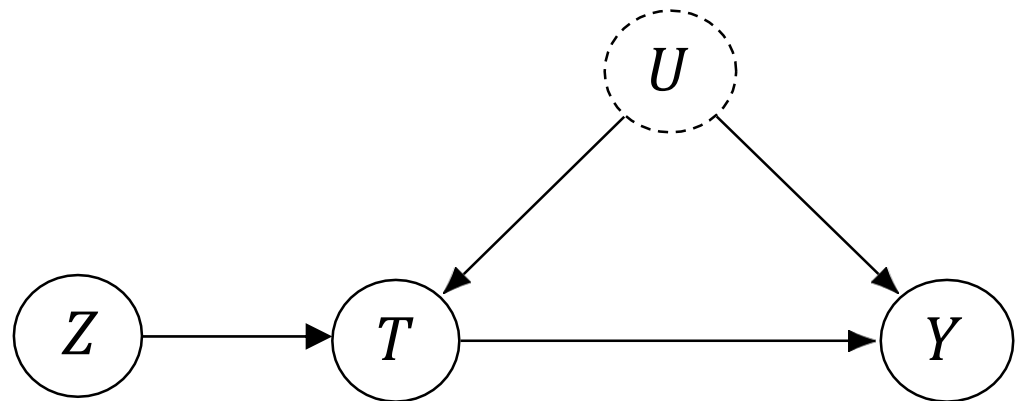
What about nonparametric case?

- We can identify ATE in linear case
- However, we cannot nonparametrically identify ATE.

Non-parametric Identification

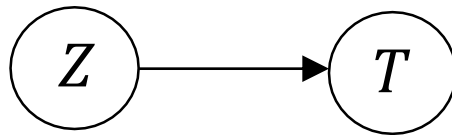
- Notations:

- $Y(1)$ and $Y(0)$ represent $Y(T = 1)$ and $Y(T = 0)$
- $T(1)$ and $T(0)$ represent $T(Z = 1)$ and $T(Z = 0)$



4 Strata

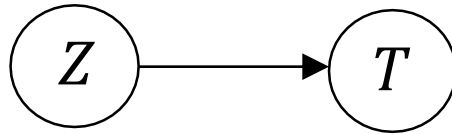
- The data can be divided into 4 strata (subgroups) based on how IV influence the treatment



- Compiles (always obey): $T(Z = 1) = 1, T(Z = 0) = 0$
- Defiers (always violate): $T(Z = 1) = 0, T(Z = 0) = 1$
- Always-takers: $T(Z = 1) = 1, T(Z = 0) = 1$
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- } Z does not influence T

Monotonicity Assumption

$$\forall i, \quad T_i(Z = 1) \geq T_i(Z = 0)$$

(No Defiers)

Local ATE Identification

- With Monotonicity Assumption, we can try to identify local ATE with instruments.

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$$\begin{aligned} & E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0)] \\ = & E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0] P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0) && \text{Compliers} \\ & + E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 0, T(0) = 1] P(T(1) = 0, T(0) = 1) && \text{Defiers} \\ & + E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 1, T(0) = 1] P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 1) && \text{Always-takers} \\ & + E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 0, T(0) = 0] P(T(1) = 0, T(0) = 0) && \text{Never-takers} \end{aligned}$$

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 + & E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 1, T(0) = 1] P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 1) && \text{Always-takers} \\
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Z does not causally influence T, so based on Exclusion Assumption, Z does not causally influence Y

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Local ATE (LATE) or Complier average causal effect (CACE):

$$E[Y(Z=1) - Y(Z=0) | T(1)=1, T(0)=0] = \frac{E[Y(Z=1) - Y(Z=0)]}{P(T(1)=1, T(0)=0)}$$

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Local ATE (LATE) or Complier average causal effect (CACE):

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Instrumental unconfoundedness

Local ATE Identification

$$E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0] = \frac{E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0)]}{P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0)} = \frac{E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]}{P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0)}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & P(T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0) \\ &= 1 - P(T = 0 | Z = 1) - P(T = 1 | Z = 0) \\ &= 1 - (1 - P(T = 1 | Z = 1)) - P(T = 1 | Z = 0) \\ &= P(T = 1 | Z = 1) - P(T = 1 | Z = 0) \\ &= E[T | Z = 1] - E[T | Z = 0] \end{aligned}$$

Local ATE Identification

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Wald estimand!

$$E[Y(Z = 1) - Y(Z = 0) | T(1) = 1, T(0) = 0] = \frac{E[Y|Z = 1] - E[Y|Z = 0]}{E[T|Z = 1] - E[T|Z = 0]}$$

Problems

- Monotonicity assumption may be violated in many occasions
- Even if Monotonicity assumption is satisfied, only CACE (for compliers) can be identified, not ATE for the whole population

More General Settings

- Nonparametric Outcome with Additive Noise

$$Y := f(T, W) + U$$



flexible model such as a deep neural network

More General Settings

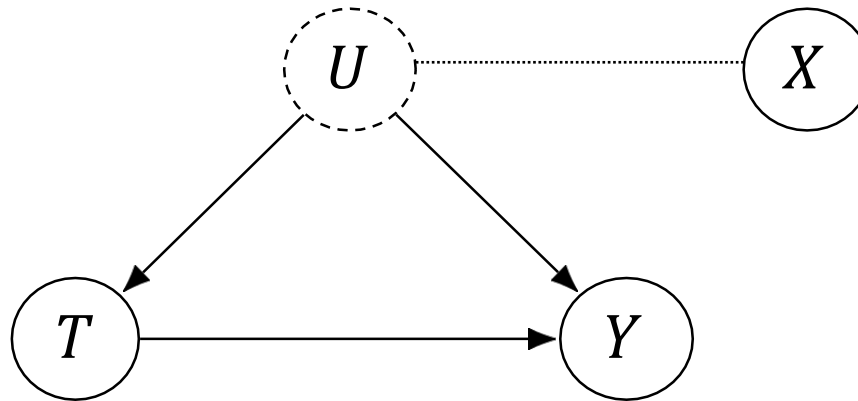
- Sometimes, even though we cannot point identify the ATE, we can still find bound it (set identification)

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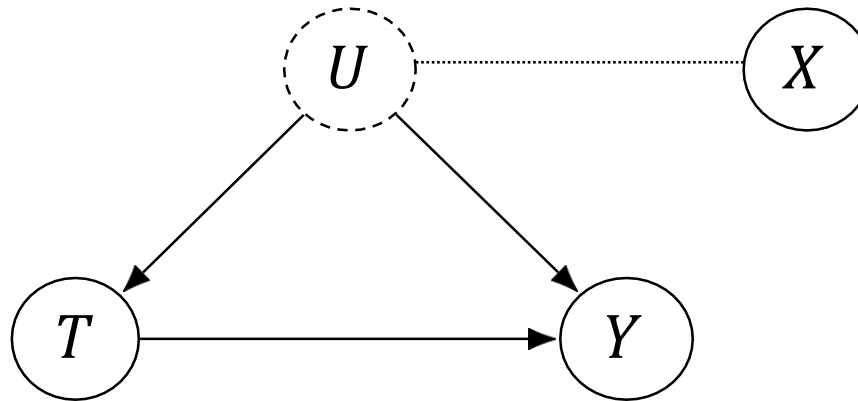
Proxy Variables for Unobserved Confounders

- Even though unobserved variables exist, there may be observed proxy variables X of the confounder available
- It has been proved that with at least two independent proxy variables satisfying a certain rank condition, the causal effect can be nonparametrically identified ^[1]



Intuition of Proxy Variables for Unobserved Confounders

- 1. Using proxy variables to infer the unobserved confounders
- 2. Adjusting for the inferred confounders, e.g., using backdoor adjustment



References

- Robins J, Hernan M A. Causal inference: what if[J]. Found Agnostic Stat, 2020: 235-281. Chapter 16
- Brady Neal. Introduction to Causal Inference. Chapter 9.
- Hartford J, Lewis G, Leyton-Brown K, et al. Deep IV: A flexible approach for counterfactual prediction[C]//International Conference on Machine Learning. PMLR, 2017: 1414-1423.
- Miao W, Geng Z, Tchetgen Tchetgen E J. Identifying causal effects with proxy variables of an unmeasured confounder[J]. Biometrika, 2018, 105(4): 987-993.

Reading Materials

- Hartford J, Lewis G, Leyton-Brown K, et al. Deep IV: A flexible approach for counterfactual prediction[C]//International Conference on Machine Learning. PMLR, 2017: 1414-1423.
- Robins J, Hernan M A. Causal inference: what if[J]. Found Agnostic Stat, 2020: 235-281. Chapter 16. Instrumental Variable Estimation.

Thank you!