EMPIRICAL POLITICAL RESEARCH

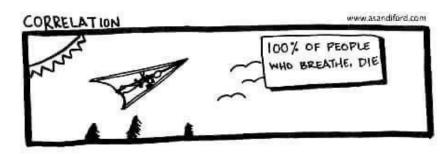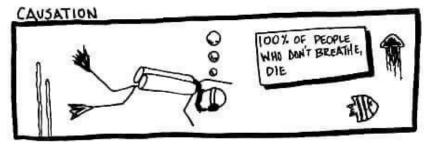Experiments in Political Science / Tutorial 2
by Aleksandra Butneva

BY THE WAY, WHAT WERE FOUR CONDITIONS OF CAUSALITY?

1. Association

2. Time ordering

3. Causal mechanism

4. No alternative explanations

… and how do we conduct research in Political Science (wheel of science)?

Research question – Theory – Hypotheses – Operationalisation – Data Collection – Analysis

WHAT TYPES OF EXPERIMENTS DO YOU KNOW?

LABORATORY

FIELD

NATURAL

HOW DO I DISTINGUISH BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXPERIMENTS?

Solution:

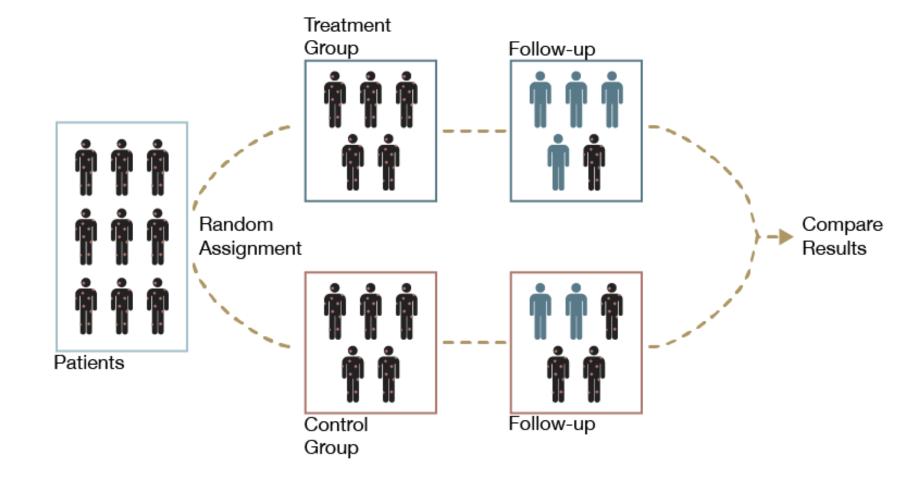**Look at the variables involved in your experiment.**

- Are both variables manipulated? (lab)

- Is only IV (=stimulus) manipulated? (field)

- Is there no manipulation at all? (natural)

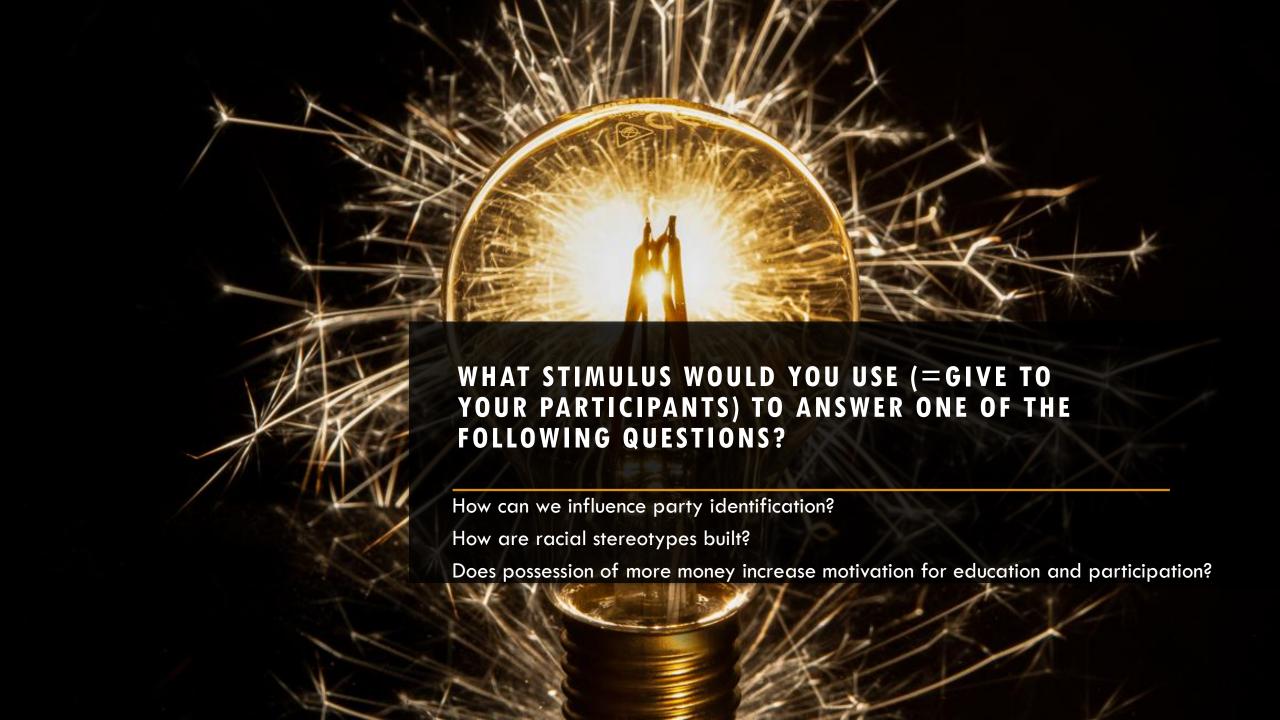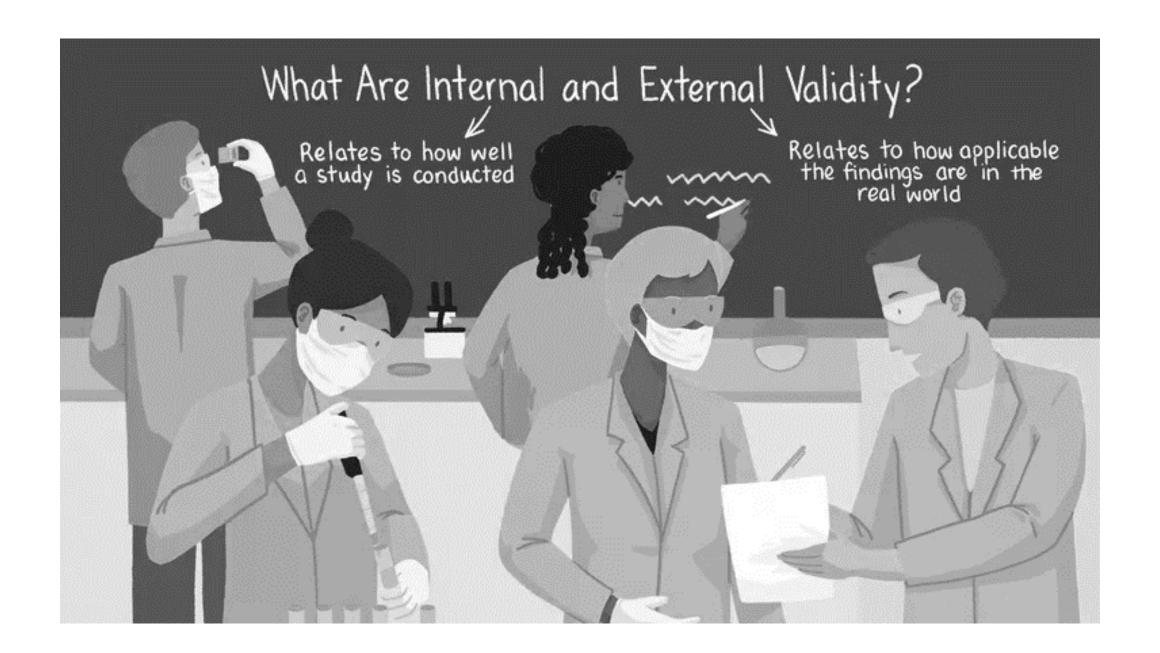**So, thinking about ethical aspects of manipulation is pivotal!**

HOW DO WE DESIGN EXPERIMENTS?

if you want to read more about experiments: https://sites.duke.edu/niou/files/2012/04/McDermott_Experiments_2002.pdf

WHAT STIMULUS WOULD YOU USE (=GIVE TO YOUR PARTICIPANTS) TO ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS?

How can we influence party identification?

How are racial stereotypes built?

Does possession of more money increase motivation for education and participation?

EXPERIMENTS ARE IMPERFECT AND THREATENED BY MANY FACTORS

Threats to Internal Validity

History=external events, personal history

Intersession history=things happen outside of experiments and influence participants

Maturation=people change/grow up over time

Performance effects=participants learn from experiments and change their behaviour

Regression to the mean=effect of stimuli converges to the average

Subject self-selection=people can decide whether they want to participate or not

Mortality=respondents can die

CONTROL

EXPERIMENTS ARE IMPERFECT AND THREATENED BY MANY FACTORS

Threats to External Validity

Testing effects=no pre-testing makes generalisation problematic, because you do not know the status quo (true for field and natural experiments)

Unrepresentative sample=selection bias, often self-selection

Artificiality=experimental environments and setting do not exist in the real world

'Professional' subjects= e.g., genies who are not representative for everybody else

Reactivity or Hawthorne effect=people tend to intentionally change their behaviour when they know that they are being watched

CONTROL