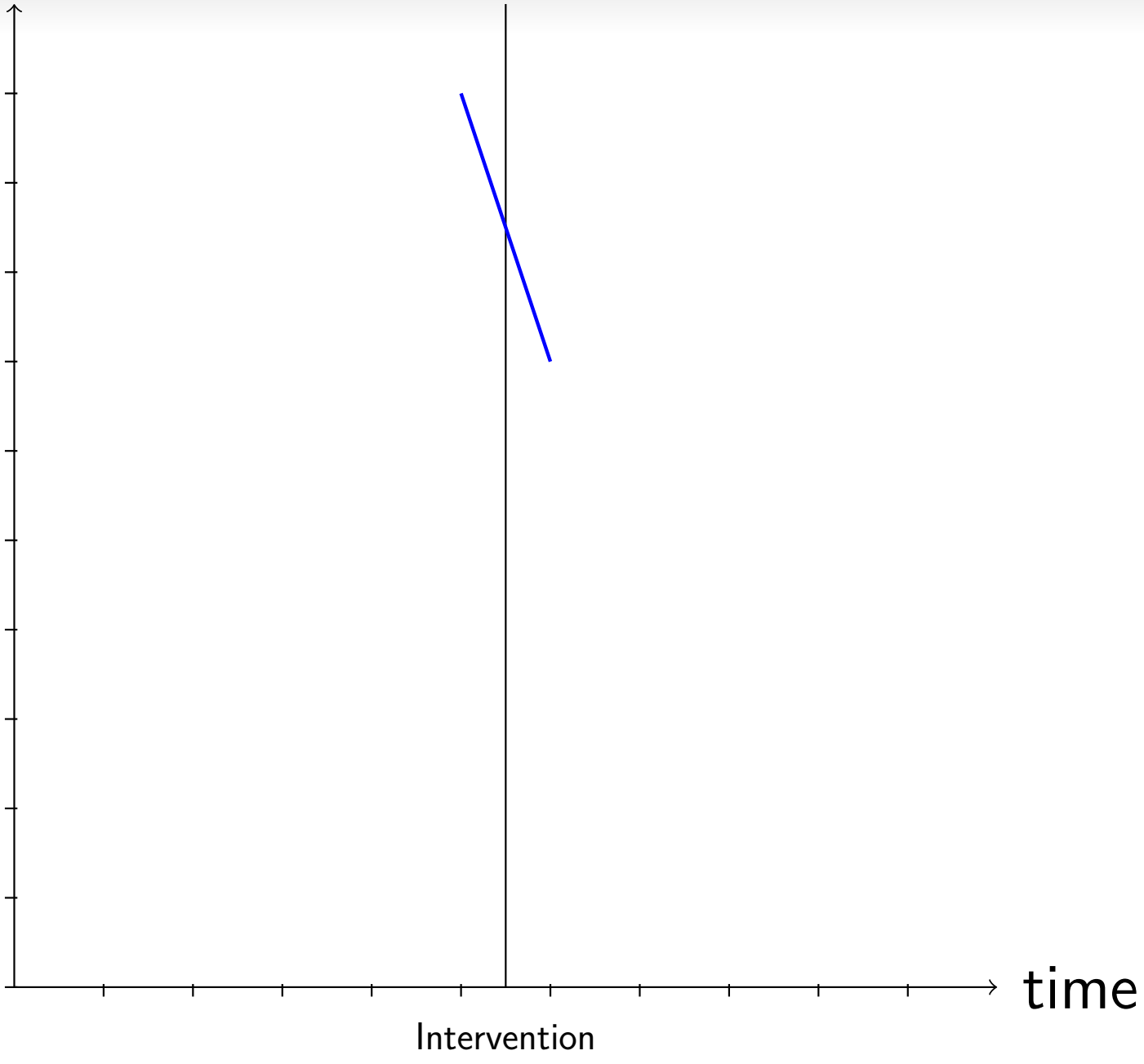
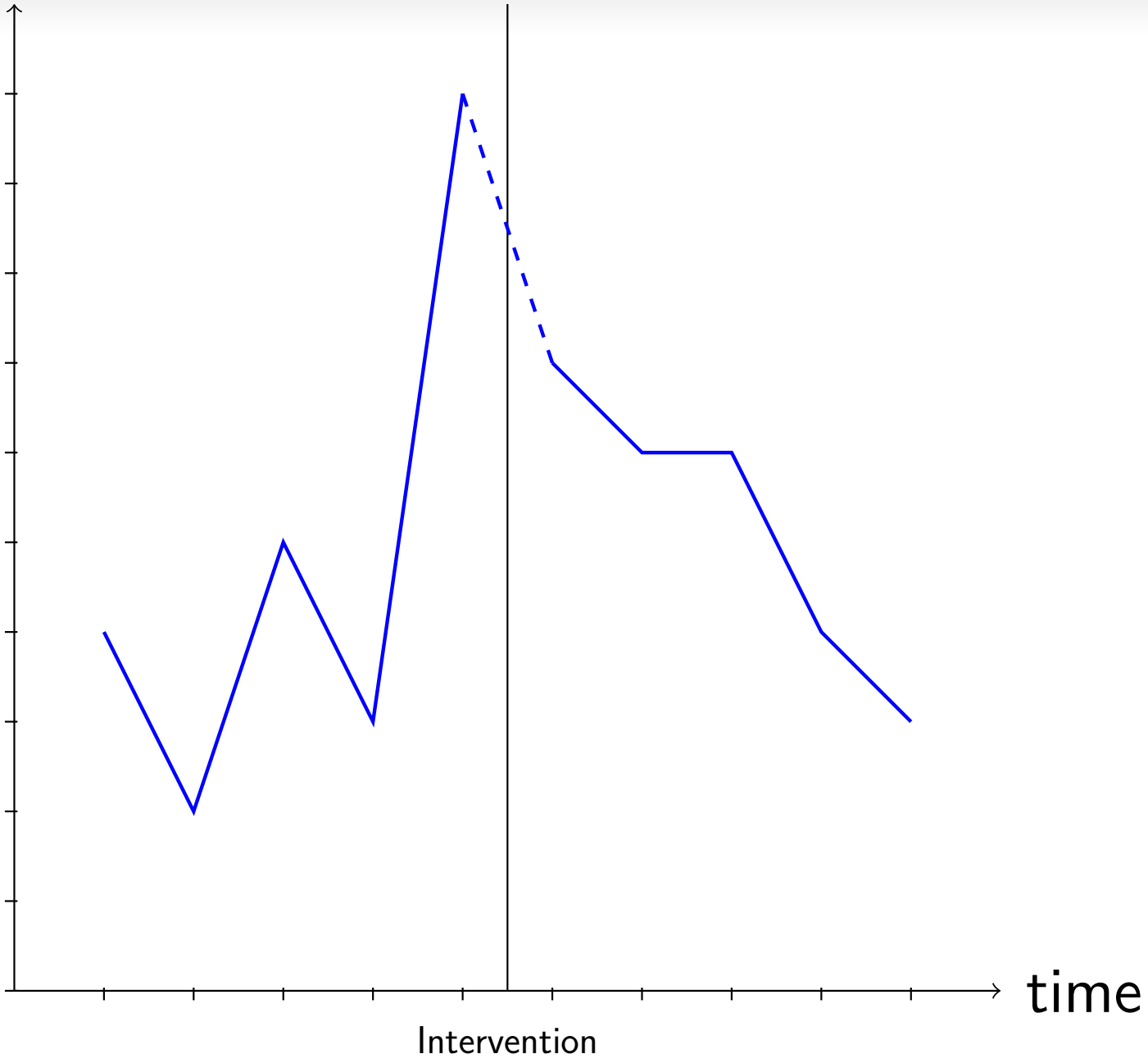
# Research Ethics

Department of Government
London School of Economics and Political Science

# How ITS Works

- Identify an exogenous shock in $X$ that might affect $Y$
- Look at $Y$ before $(t)$ and after $(t+1)$ the shock
- We only observe one manifest outcome at each point in time


time
Intervention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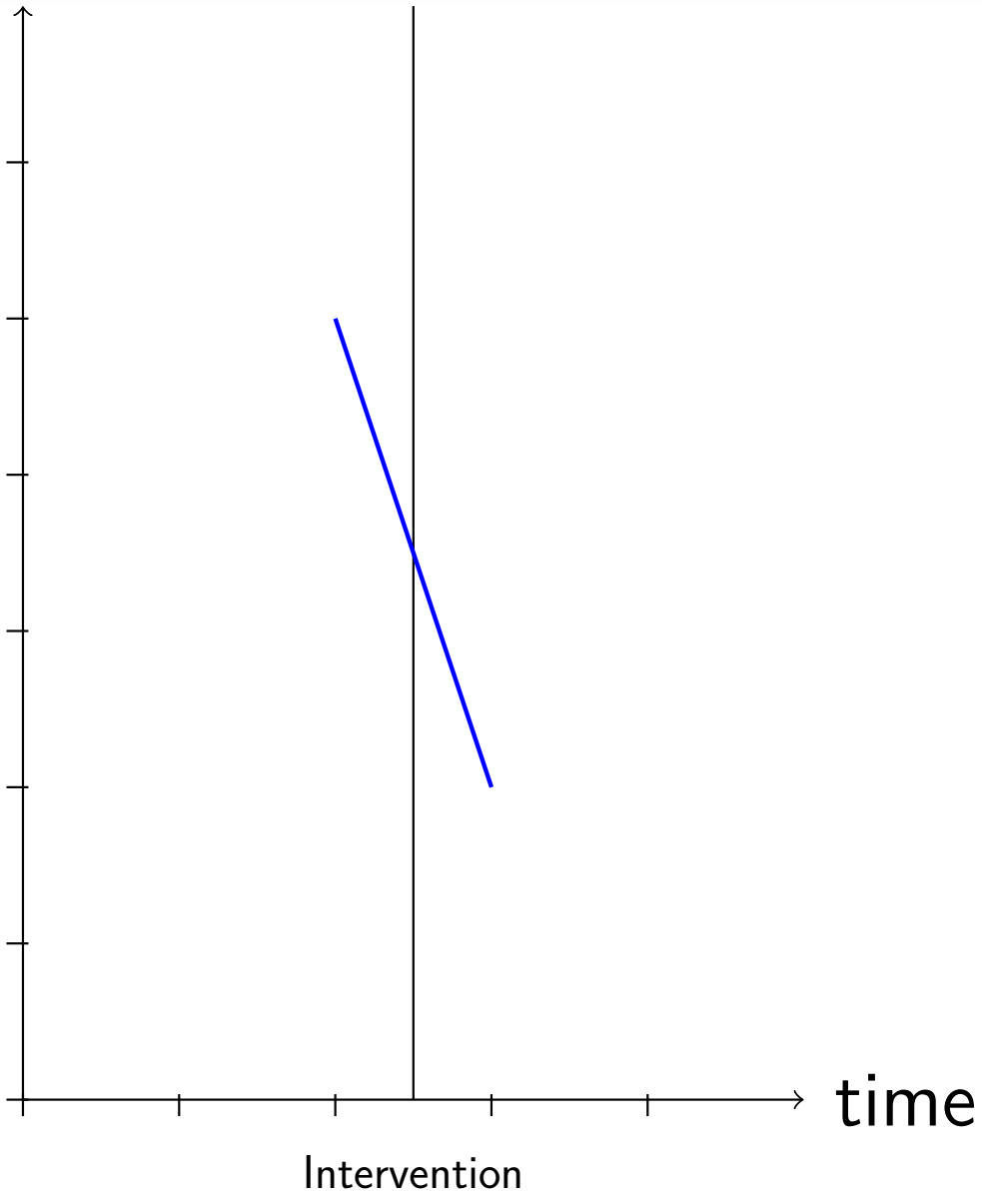
- To make a causal inference, we need:
  - $Y_{0,t}$ and $Y_{1,t}$, or
  - $Y_{0,t+1}$ and $Y_{1,t+1}$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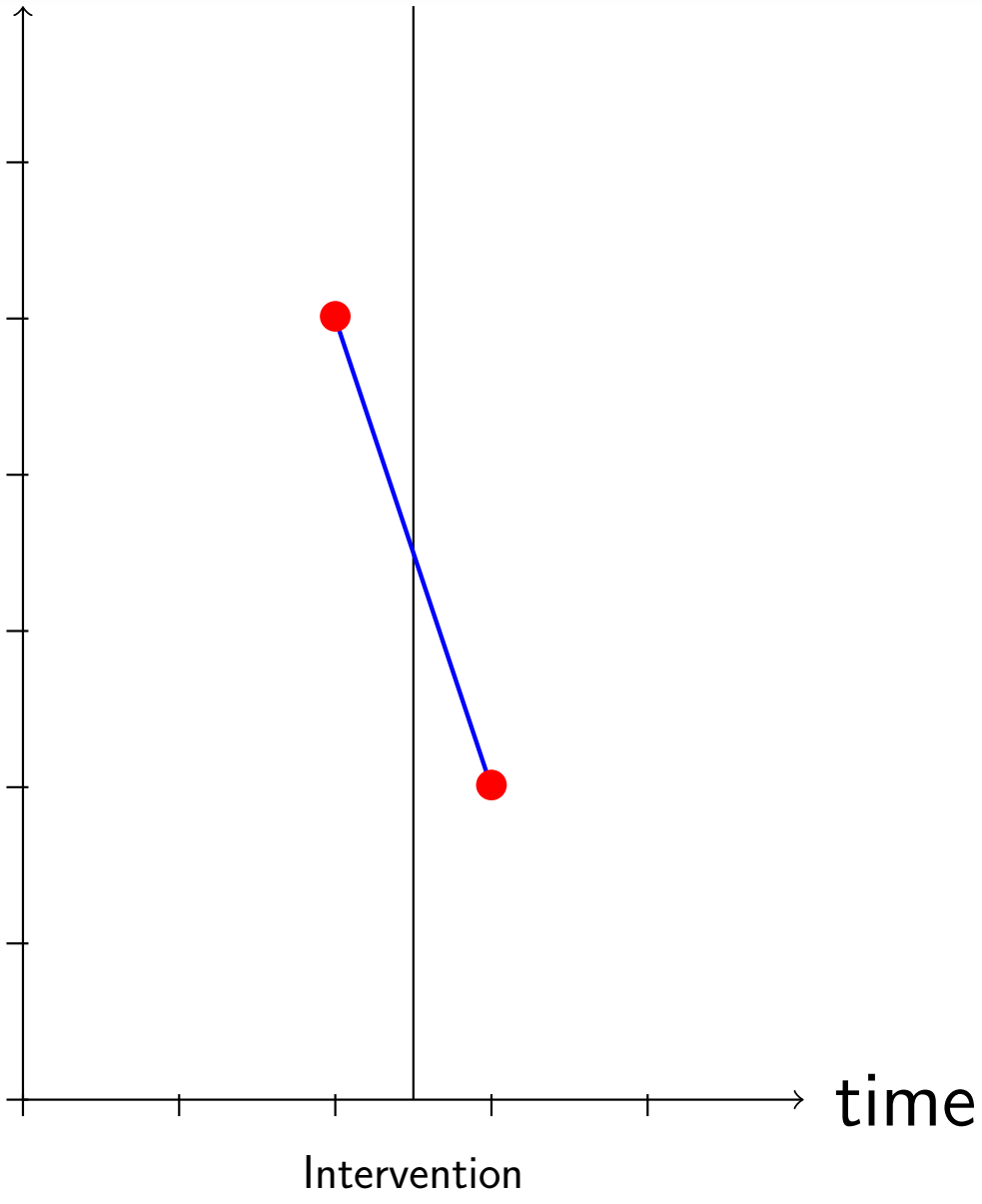
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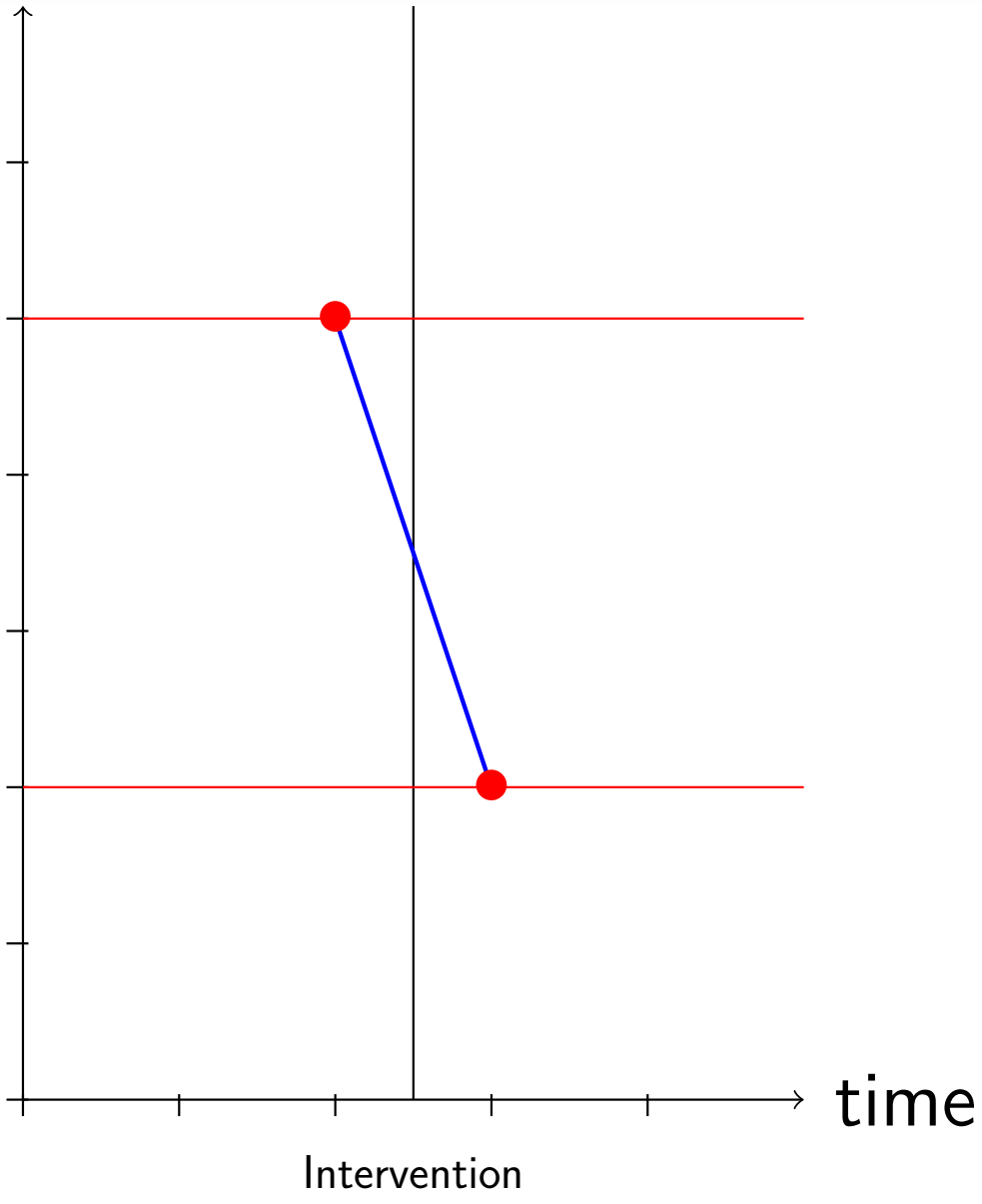
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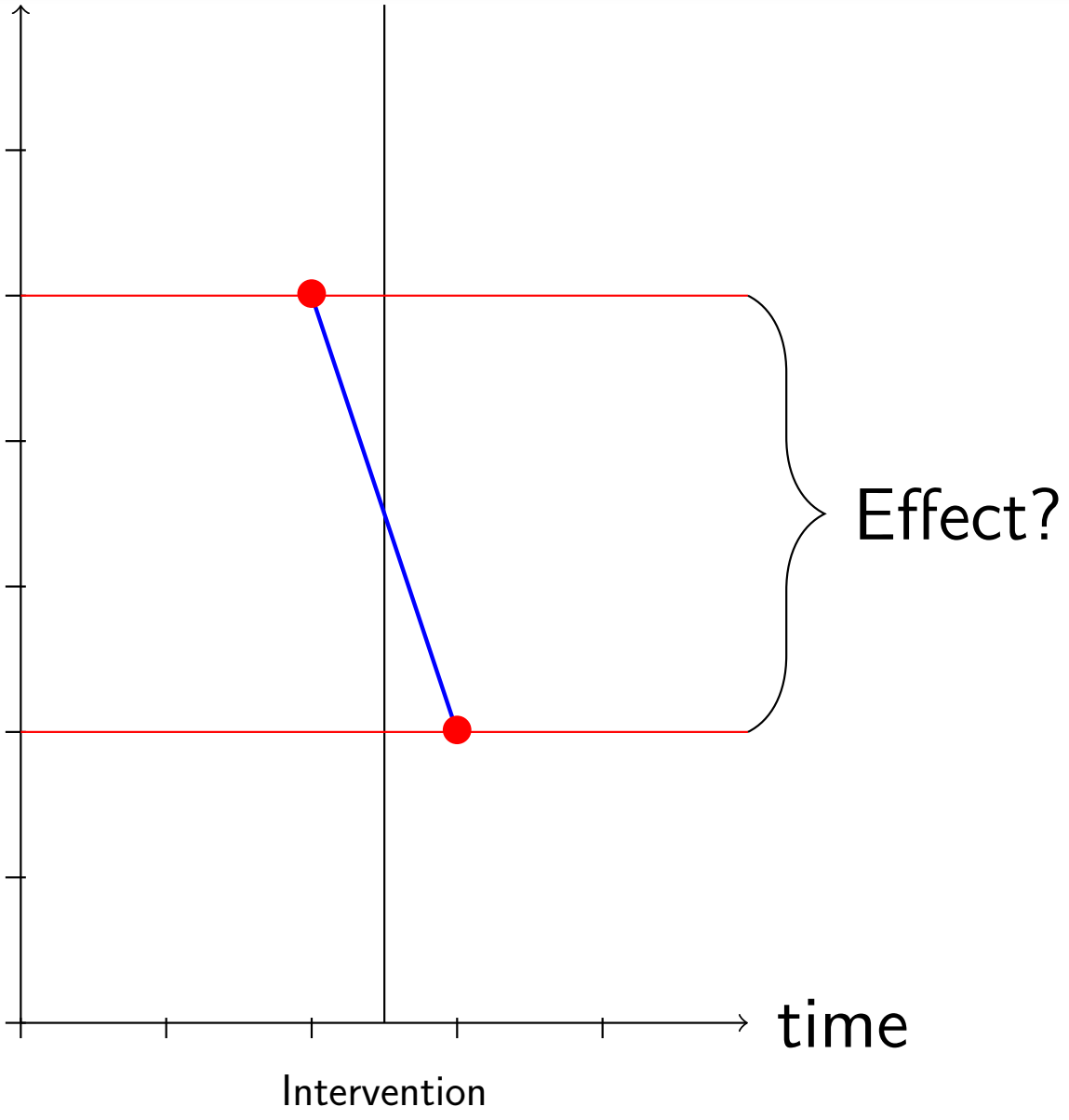
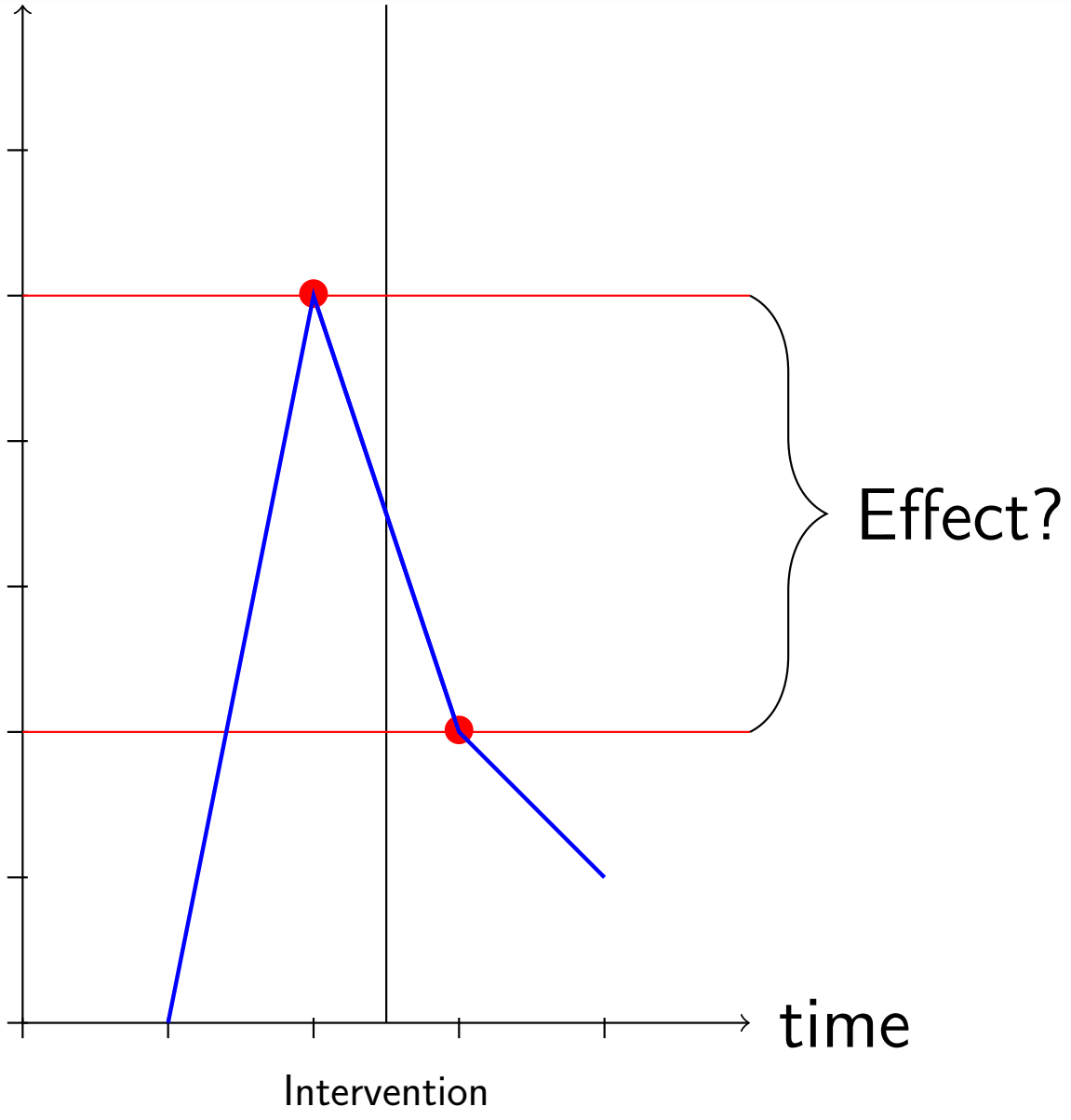

Effect?
time
Intervention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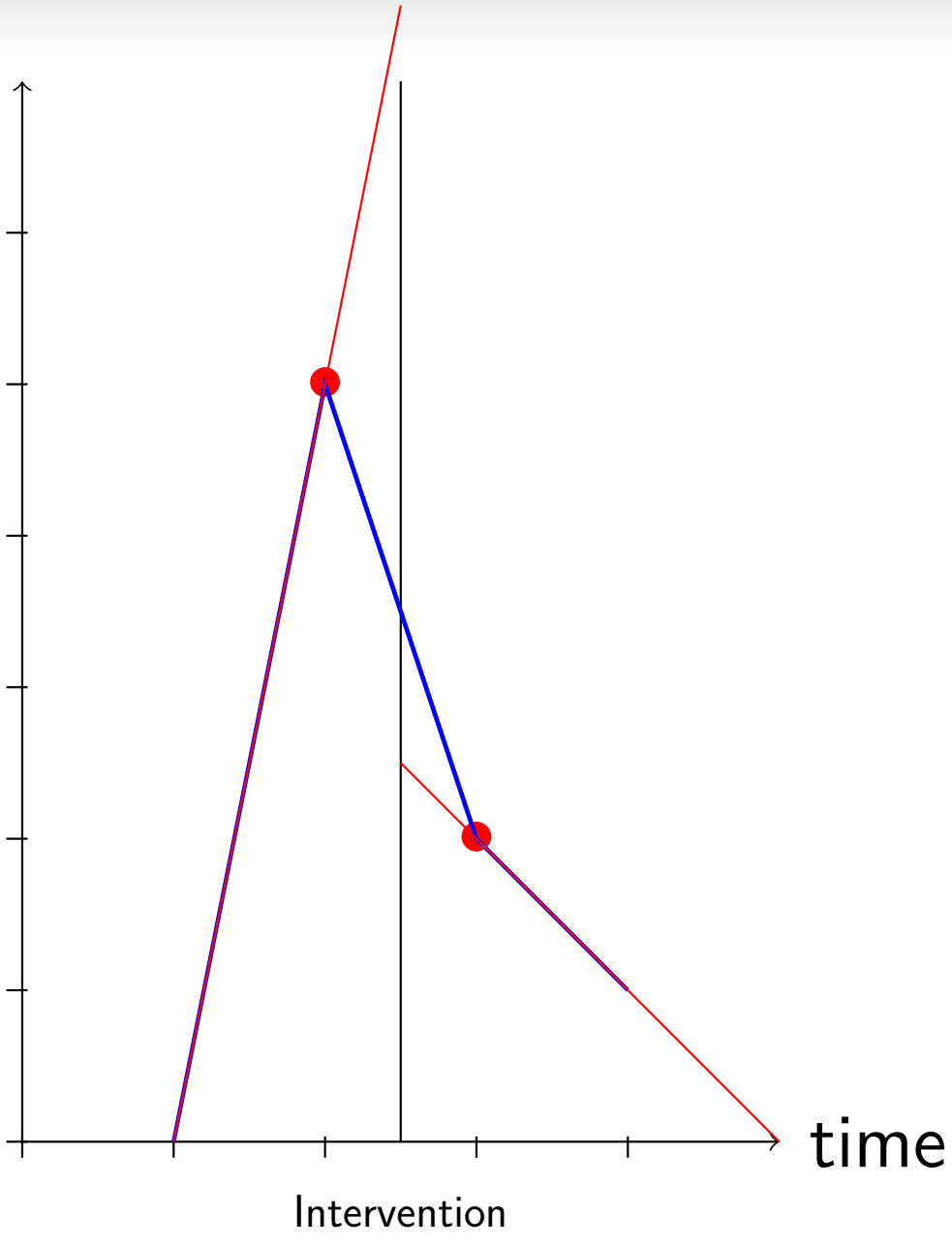
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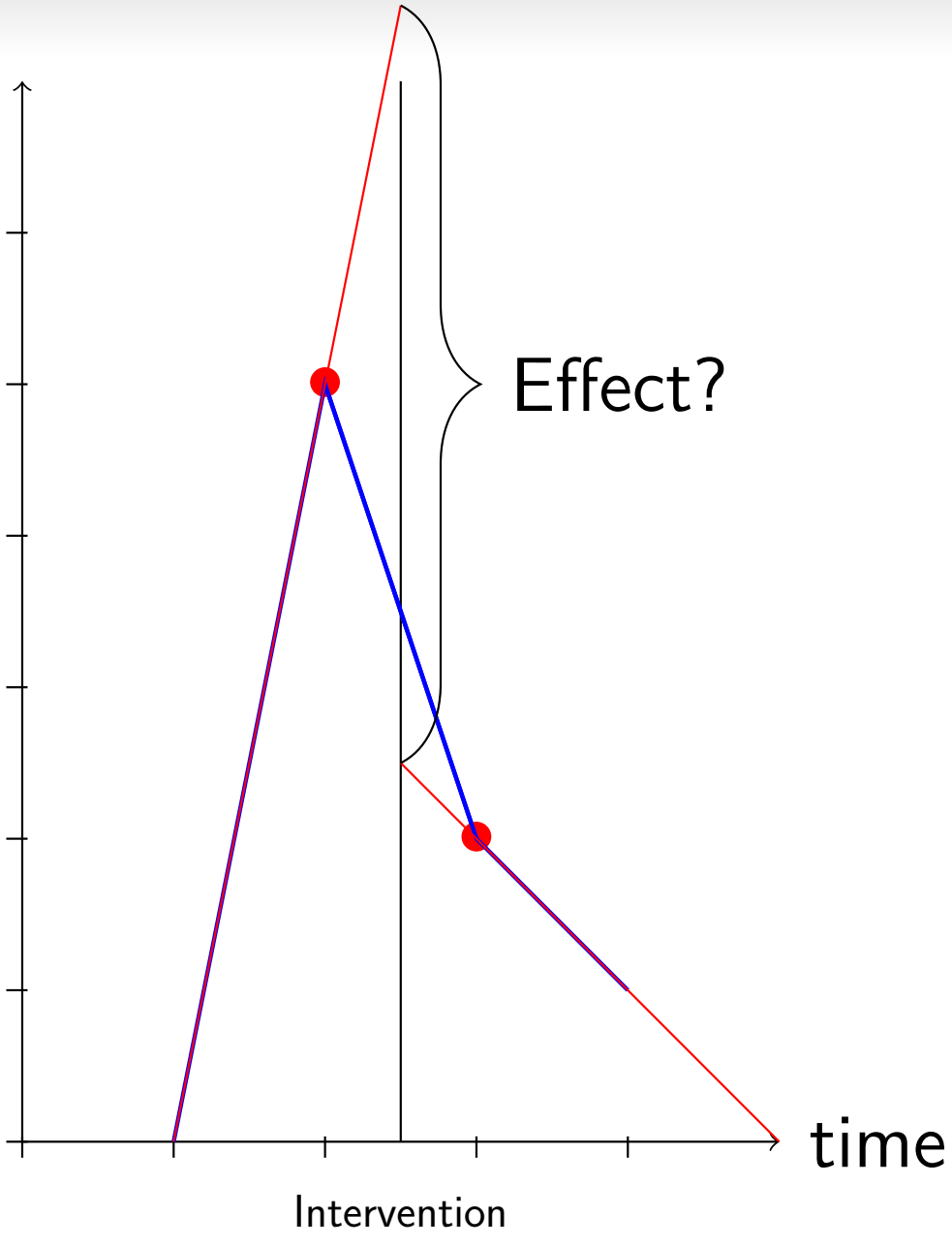
Effect?
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# Difference-In-Differences

- How do we know change in $Y$ wasn't due to something else?
  - How do we know $Y_{0,t}$ is a good stand-in for $Y_{0,t+1}$?

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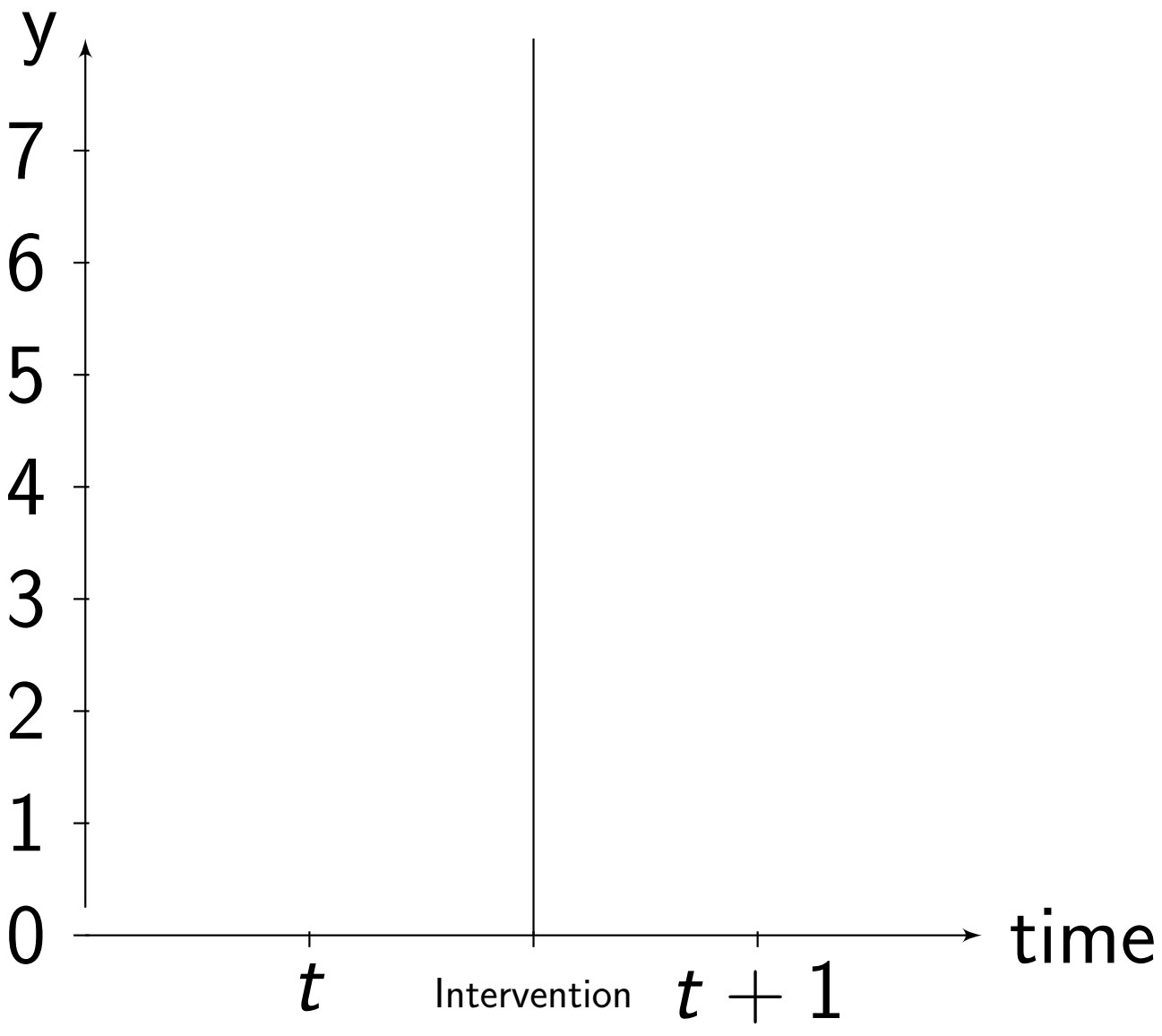
  - How do we know $Y_{0,t}$ is a good stand-in for $Y_{0,t+1}$?
- Use a comparison case (or cases)!
- Instead of using the pre-post difference in $Y_i$ to estimate the causal effect, use the difference in pre-post differences for two units $i$ and $j$:

$$(Y_{i,t+1} - Y_{i,t}) - (Y_{j,t+1} - Y_{j,t})$$


y
7
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5
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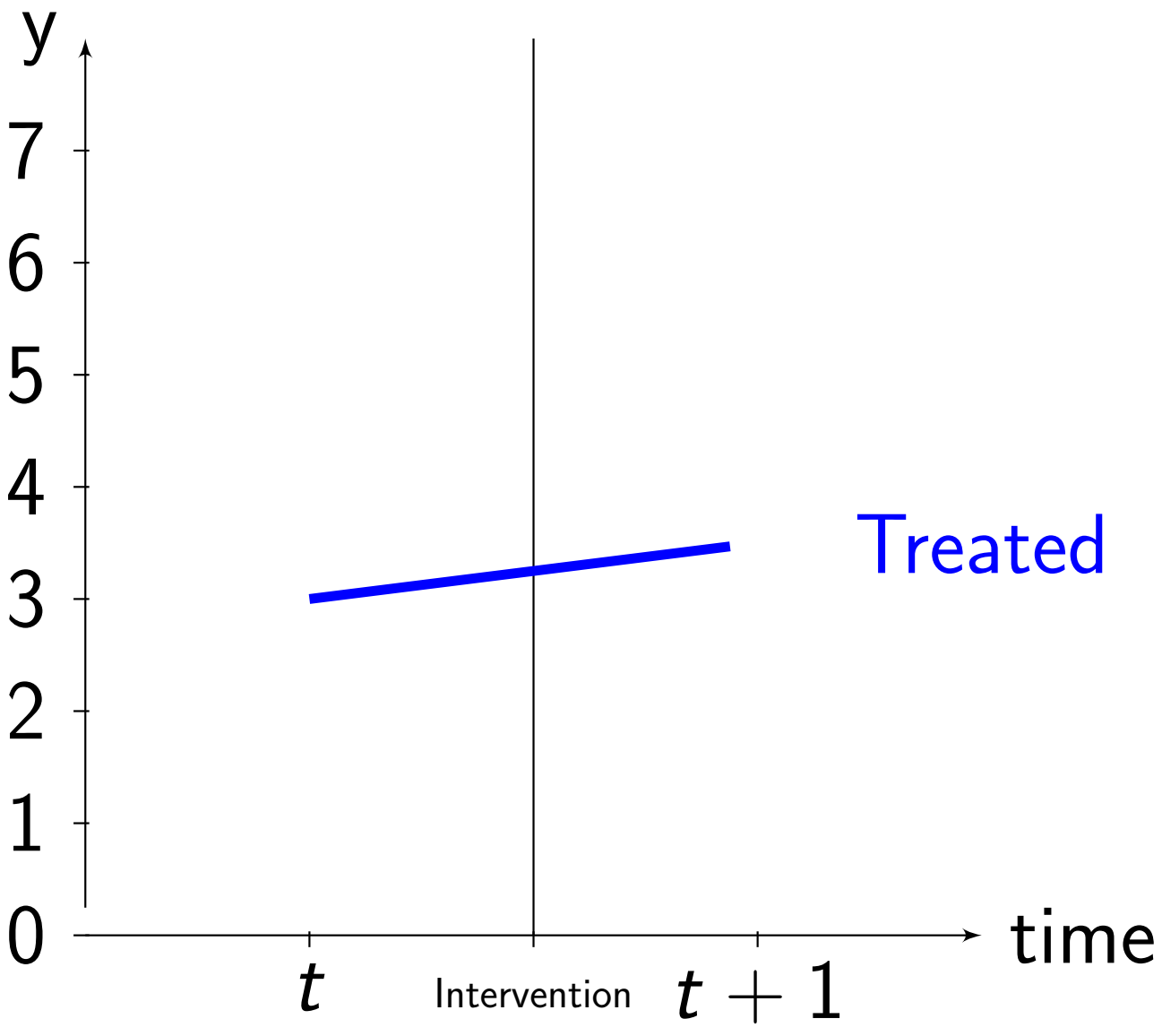
time
$t$
Intervention
$t+1$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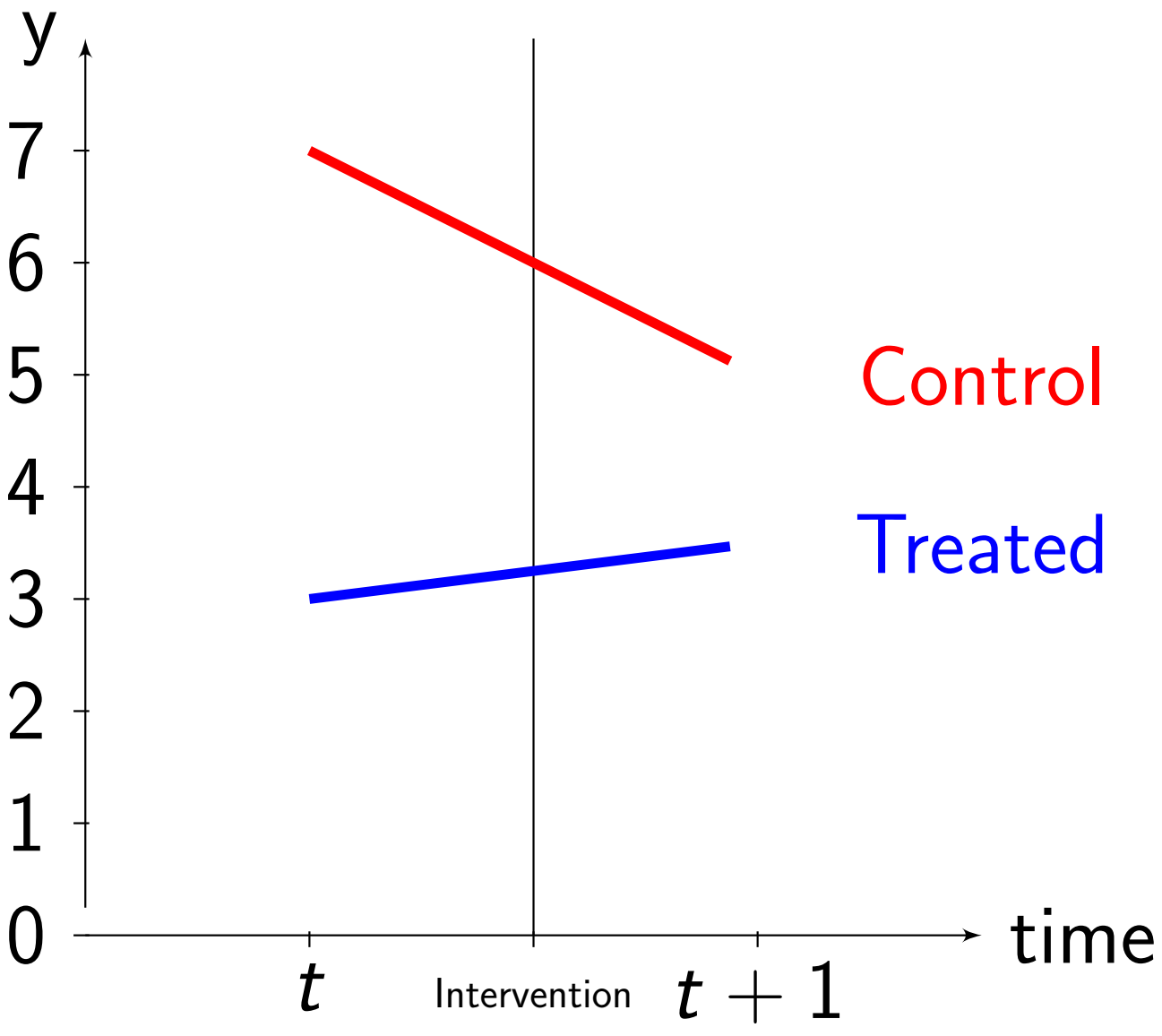
$t+1$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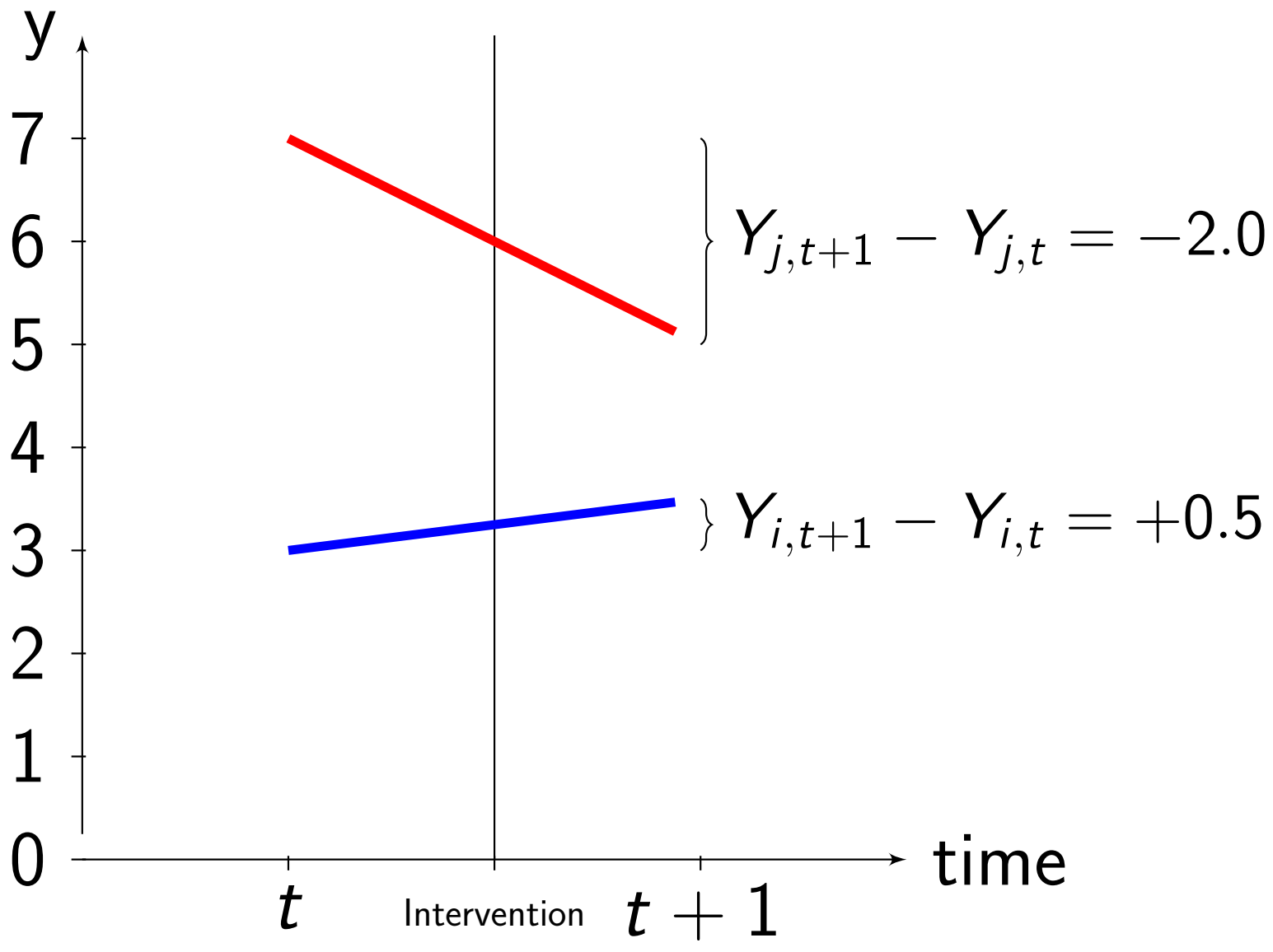
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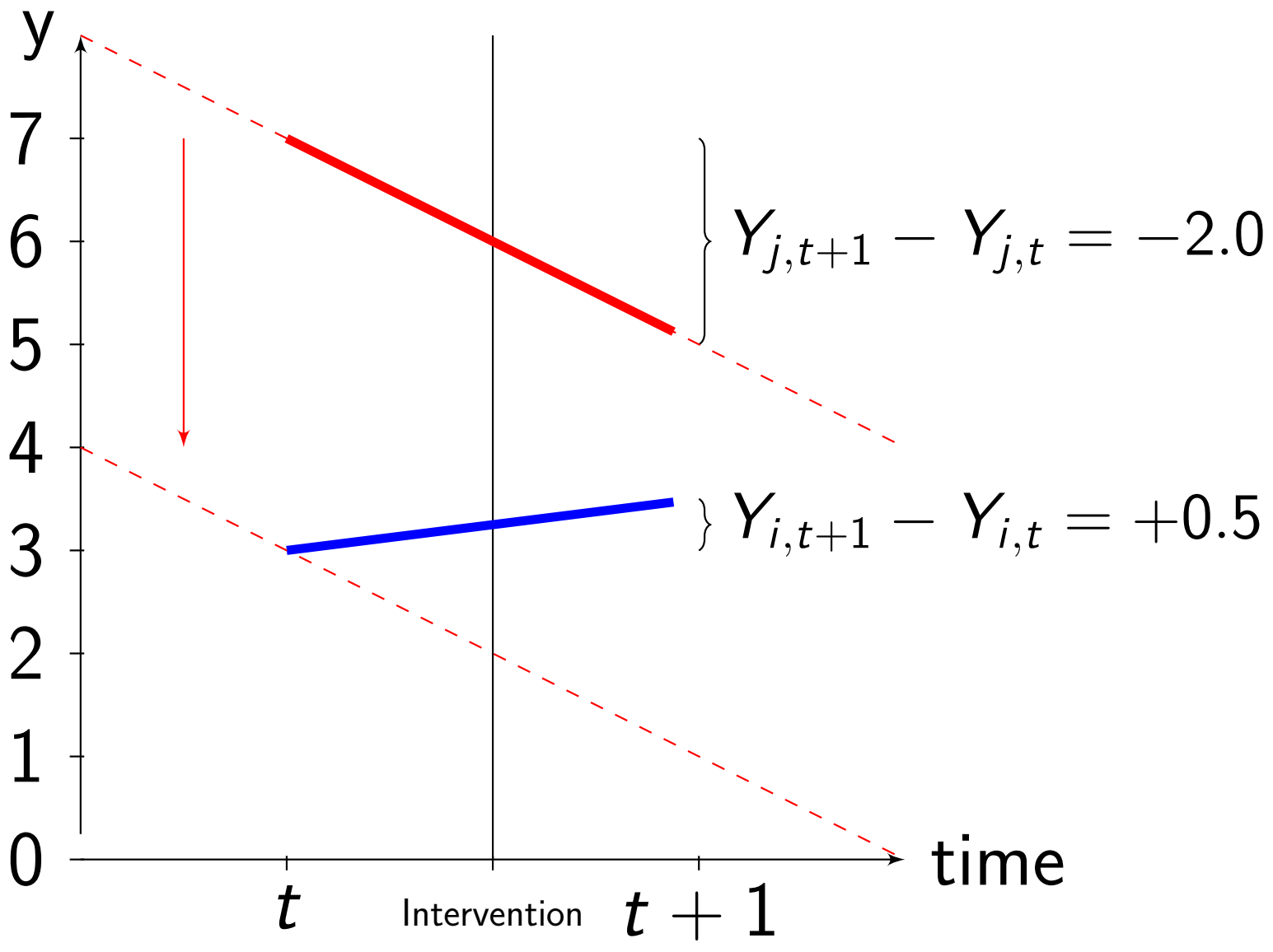
$Y_{j,t+1} - Y_{j,t} = -2.0$
$Y_{i,t+1} - Y_{i,t} = +0.5$
time
$t$
Intervention
$t + 1$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time
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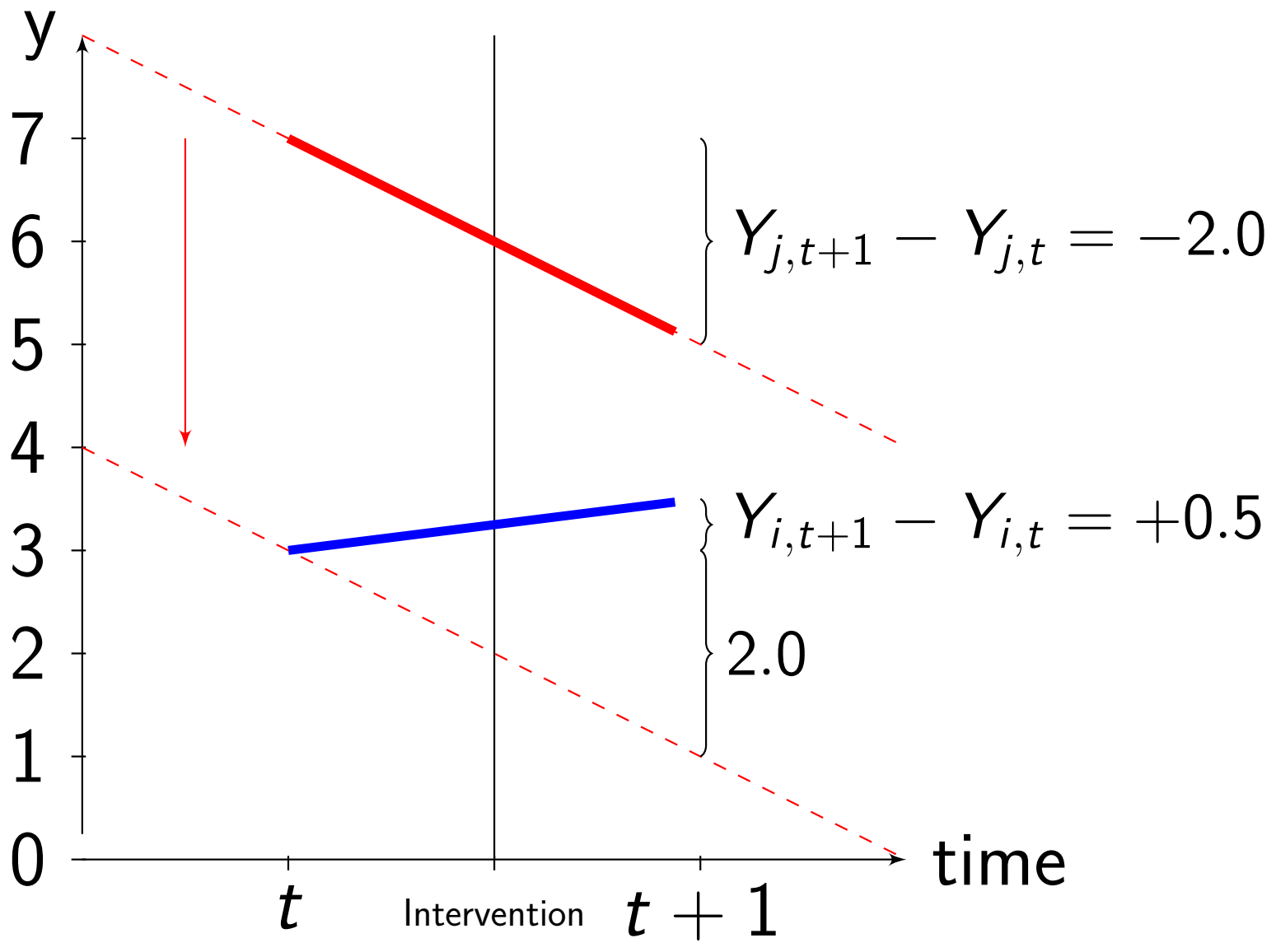
Intervention
$t + 1$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$Y_{j,t+1} - Y_{j,t} = -2.0$
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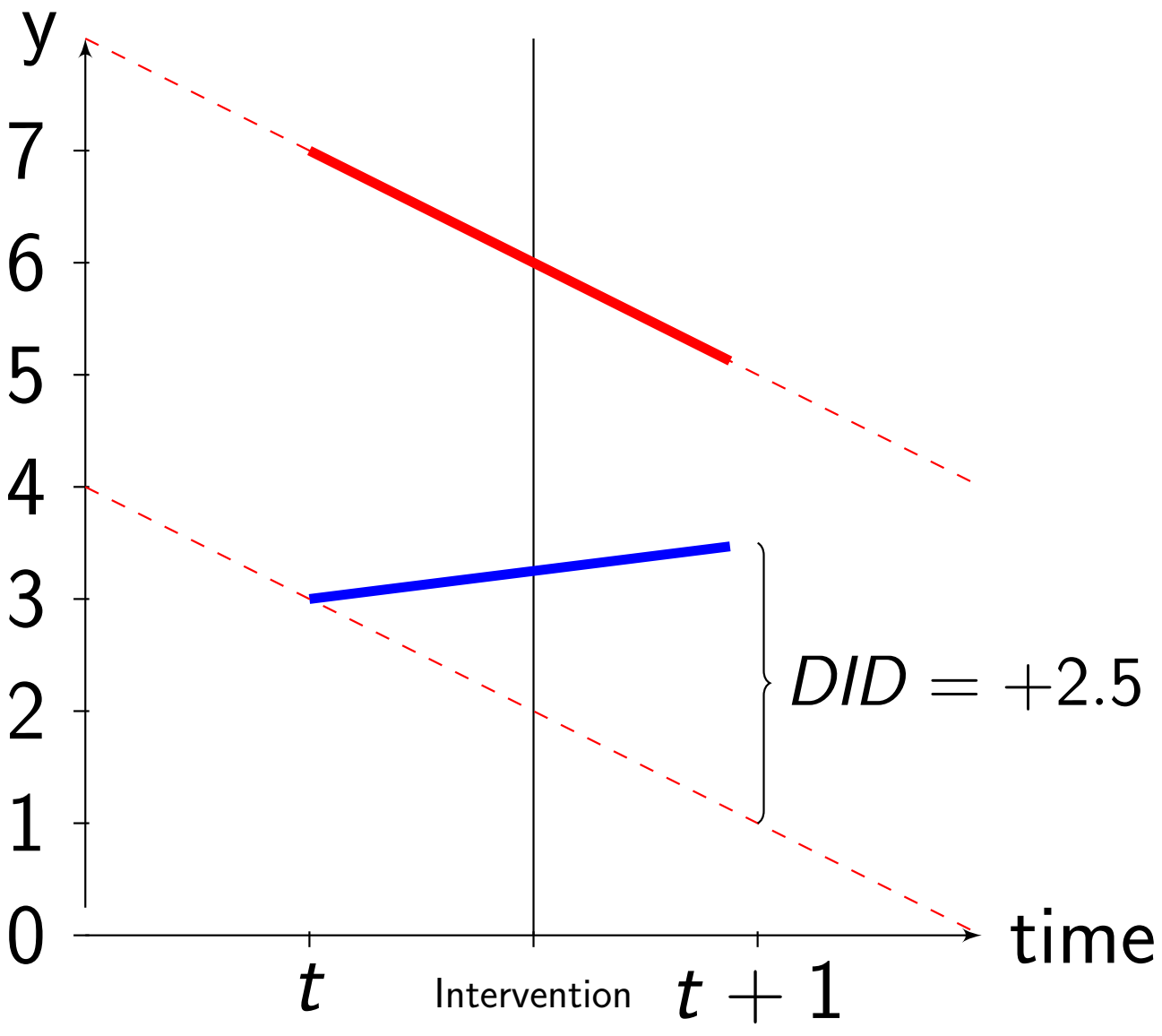
time
$t$
Intervention
$t + 1$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time
$t$
Intervention
$t + 1$

# Threats to Validity

1. History
2. Maturation
3. Testing
4. Instrumentation
5. Instability
6. Regression to the mean

# History: Key Moments

1. Tuskegee (1932-1972) and Guatemala (1946-1948) Studies
2. Nuremberg Code (1947)
3. Helsinki Declaration (1964)
4. U.S. 45 CFR 46 (1974) and "Common Rule" (1991)
5. The Belmont Report (1979)
6. EU Data Protection Directive (1995; 2012)
    - UK Data Protection Act (1998)

# Helsinki Declaration

- Adopted by the World Medical Association in 1964[1]
- Narrowly focused on medical research
- Expanded the Nuremberg Code
  - Relaxed consent requirements
  - Risks should not exceed benefits
  - Institutionalization of ethics oversight

[1] http://www.bmj.com/content/2/5402/177

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- Do these rules apply to non-experimental research? To non-medical research?

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# Social Science Examples

1. Milgram Obedience Study (1961)
2. Stanford Prison Study (1971)

# The Belmont Report

- Commissioned by the U.S. Government in 1979[2]
- Three overarching principles:
  1. Respect for persons
  2. Beneficence
  3. Justice
- Three policy implications:
  - Informed consent
  - Assessment of risks/benefits
  - Care for vulnerable populations

[2]

# Informed Consent

- Persons must consent to being a research subject

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- What this means in practice is complicated
  - What is research?
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  - What is "informed" consent?
- Cross-national variations
  - Consent forms required in U.S.
  - Not required in UK

# Benefits and Harm

- What is a “benefit”?
- What is a “harm”?
- How do we balance the two?

# Privacy

- EU Data Protection Directive (1995) and UK Data Protection Act (1998)
- Deals with "personal data"
- Data can be processed when:
  - Consent is given
  - Data are used for a "legitimate" purpose
  - Anonymous or confidential
- Data cannot leave the EU except under conditions

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7. Others?

# Research Ethics at LSE

- Ethics Code [3]
- Research Ethics Policy [4]
- Levels of review:
  1. Staff: Self-certification
  2. Students: Supervisor certification
  3. LSE Research Ethics Committee
  4. External review

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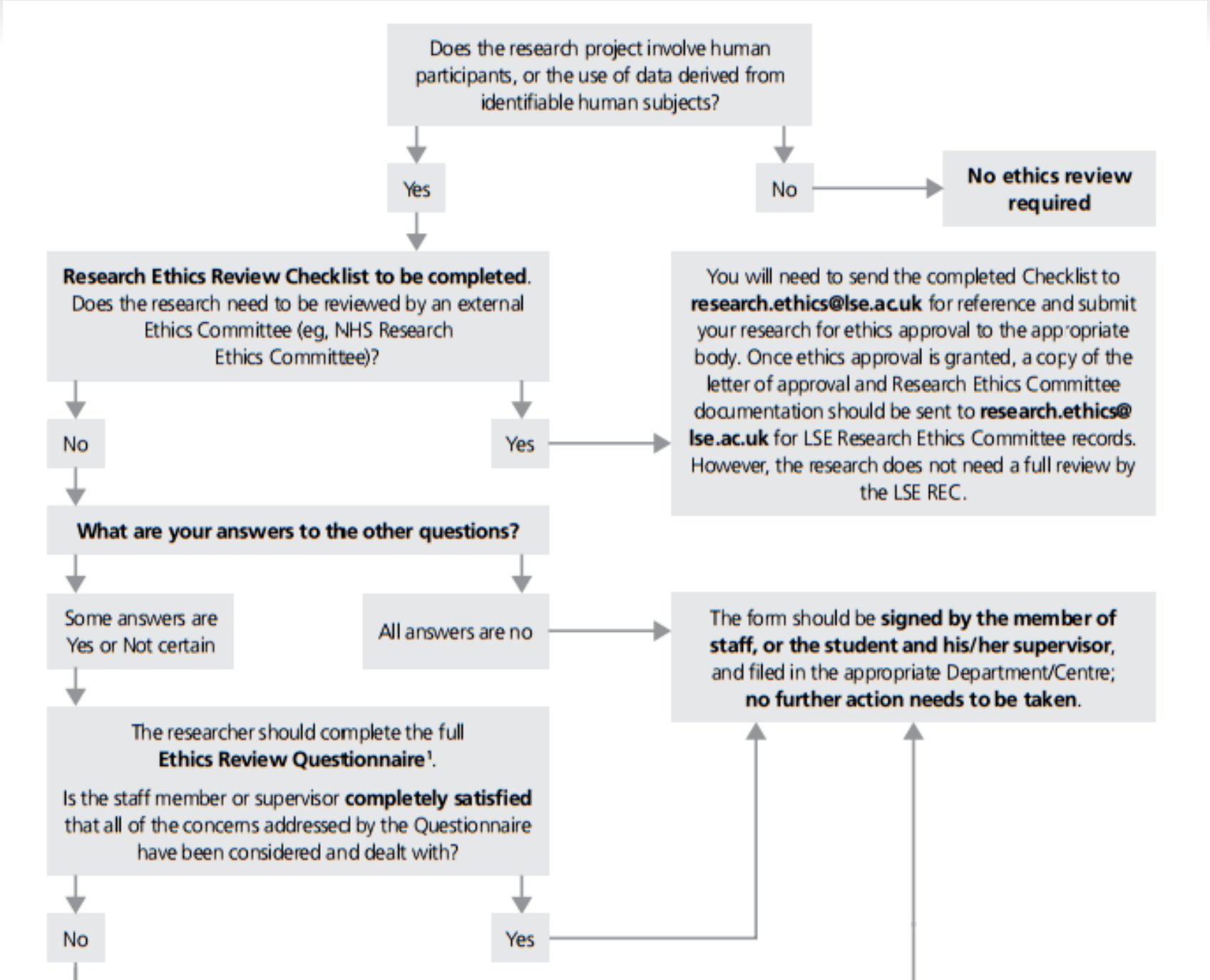
[3] http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/ethics/home.aspx

[4] http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/policies/pdfs/school/resEthPolPro.pdf


Does the research project involve human participants, or the use of data derived from identifiable human subjects?
Yes
No
No ethics review required
Research Ethics Review Checklist to be completed. Does the research need to be reviewed by an external Ethics Committee (eg, NHS Research Ethics Committee)?
No
Yes
You will need to send the completed Checklist to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk for reference and submit your research for ethics approval to the appropriate body. Once ethics approval is granted, a copy of the letter of approval and Research Ethics Committee documentation should be sent to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk for LSE Research Ethics Committee records. However, the research does not need a full review by the LSE REC.
What are your answers to the other questions?
Some answers are Yes or Not certain
All answers are no
The form should be signed by the member of staff, or the student and his/her supervisor, and filed in the appropriate Department/Centre; no further action needs to be taken.
The researcher should complete the full Ethics Review Questionnaire[1].
Is the staff member or supervisor completely satisfied that all of the concerns addressed by the Questionnaire have been considered and dealt with?
No
Yes

# Ethics at LSE

- Complete an LSE Ethics form for your proposed research project

- What did you like about this course?
- What would you change?