



Causality

February 8, 2022

POLS 095

Drake University

ASKING *WHY?* (OR *HOW?*)

Proposing and testing explanations for political phenomena

- Examples?



We will never know why John Delaney ran for president

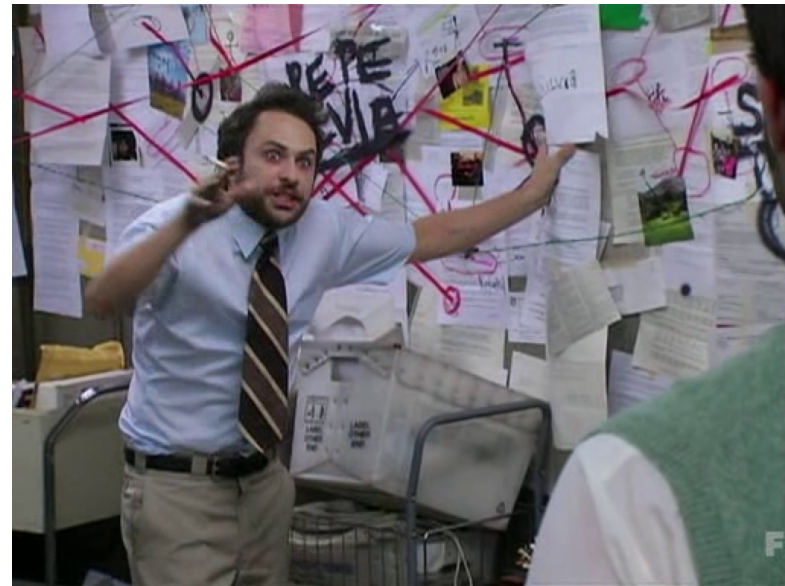
EXPLANATIONS

Key characteristics of questions

Explanations and creativity

Testable?

Role of hypotheses

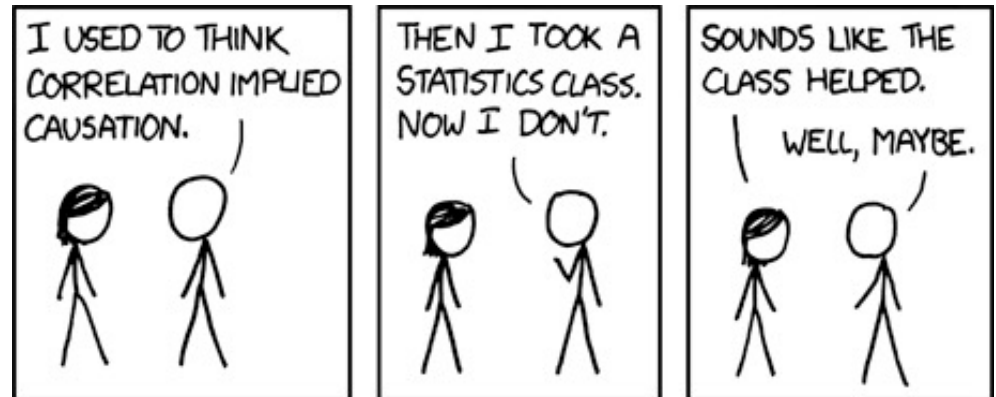


TYPES OF VARIABLES USED FOR EXPLANATION

The **dependent (response)** variable (Y)

The **independent (explanatory)** variable (X)

$X \rightarrow Y?$

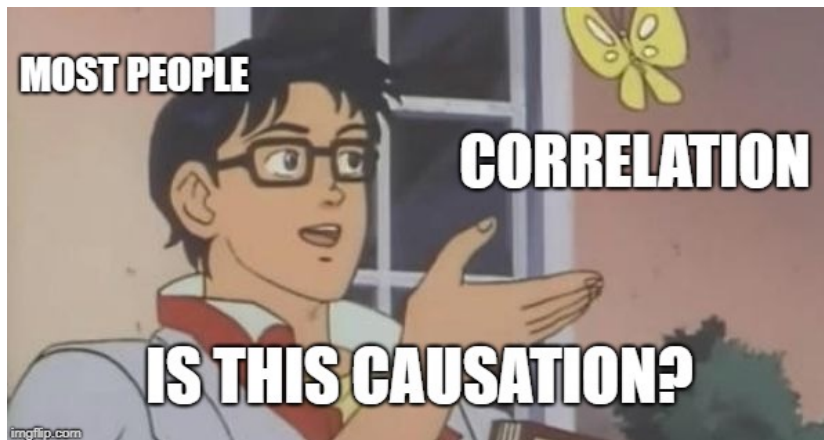


WHAT MAKES A GOOD EXPLANATION?

Q: Why are Cuban-Americans so much more likely to vote for Republican candidates than Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos?



FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)



Four rules of thumb

- 1. Plausible mechanism
- 2. Rule out $Y \rightarrow X$
- 3. Do X and Y covary in an identifiable way?
- 4. Rule out other causes

FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)

1. Is there a plausible mechanism connecting them?
Does any explanation make sense?

FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)

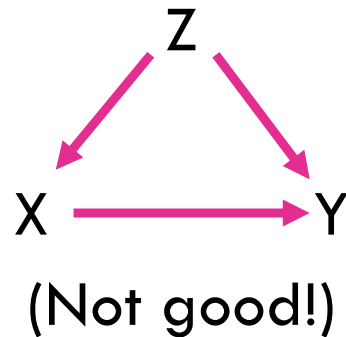
2. Can we rule out the possibility that $Y \rightarrow X$?

FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)

3. Do X and Y covary in an identifiable way?

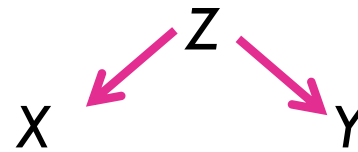
FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)

4. Can we eliminate any Z s related to X and Y that might cause Y ?



FOUR HURDLES TO INFERRING CAUSALITY ($X \rightarrow Y$?)

If two variables, X and Y *move together*, i.e., are associated, correlated, interdependent, what possible reasons could there be for this relationship?



Others?

THE PATH TO EVALUATING A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP

