

POLS 103 A

Comparative Politics

Class 2:

Introduction to comparative politics

Welcome back!

Reminders

- Download the Kahoot! app
- No class on January 21
- Textbook

Analysis assignment 1

- Question: are all states stationary bandits?
- Purpose:
 1. Demonstration of the knowledge of course material
 2. Development of higher order skills
- Structure:
 1. Thesis statement
 2. Argument
 3. Suggested empirical test (operationalization, independent and dependent variables, case selection, and research design)
 4. Conclusion

Analysis assignment 1

- Two drafts:
 - Initial, due February 10 → in-person feedback at the workshop on February 11 →
 - Final, due February 17 → written feedback

Some learning strategies

- Reading
 - <https://www.ameliahoovergreen.com/uploads/9/3/0/9/93091546/howtoread.pdf>
 - <http://blogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/permanent-features-advice-on-academia/how-to-read-in-college/>
 - <http://lsc.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Textbook-Reading-Systems.pdf>
 - <http://lsc.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Three-Ps-for-Effective-Reading-.pdf>
- Note-taking:
 - <http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html>
- Schedule:
 - <http://lsc.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Guidelines-for-Creating-a-Study-Schedule.pdf>

Recap

- What is:
 - Comparative politics?
 - Descriptive and causal inference?
 - Empirical and normative research?

Plan for today

- Concepts and conceptualization
- Research design
- Research project development

The concepts of concepts and conceptualization



Concepts and conceptualization

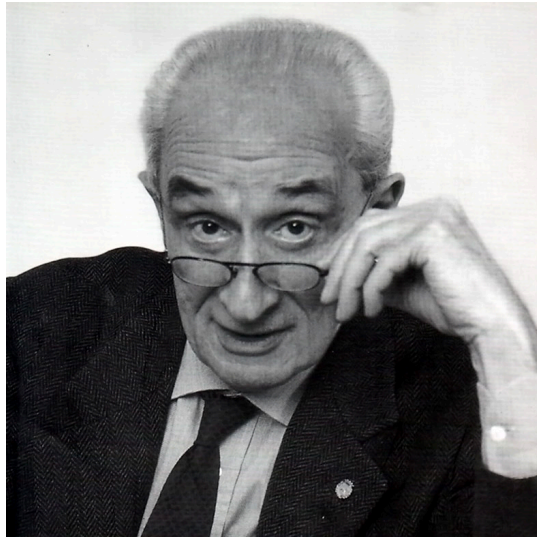
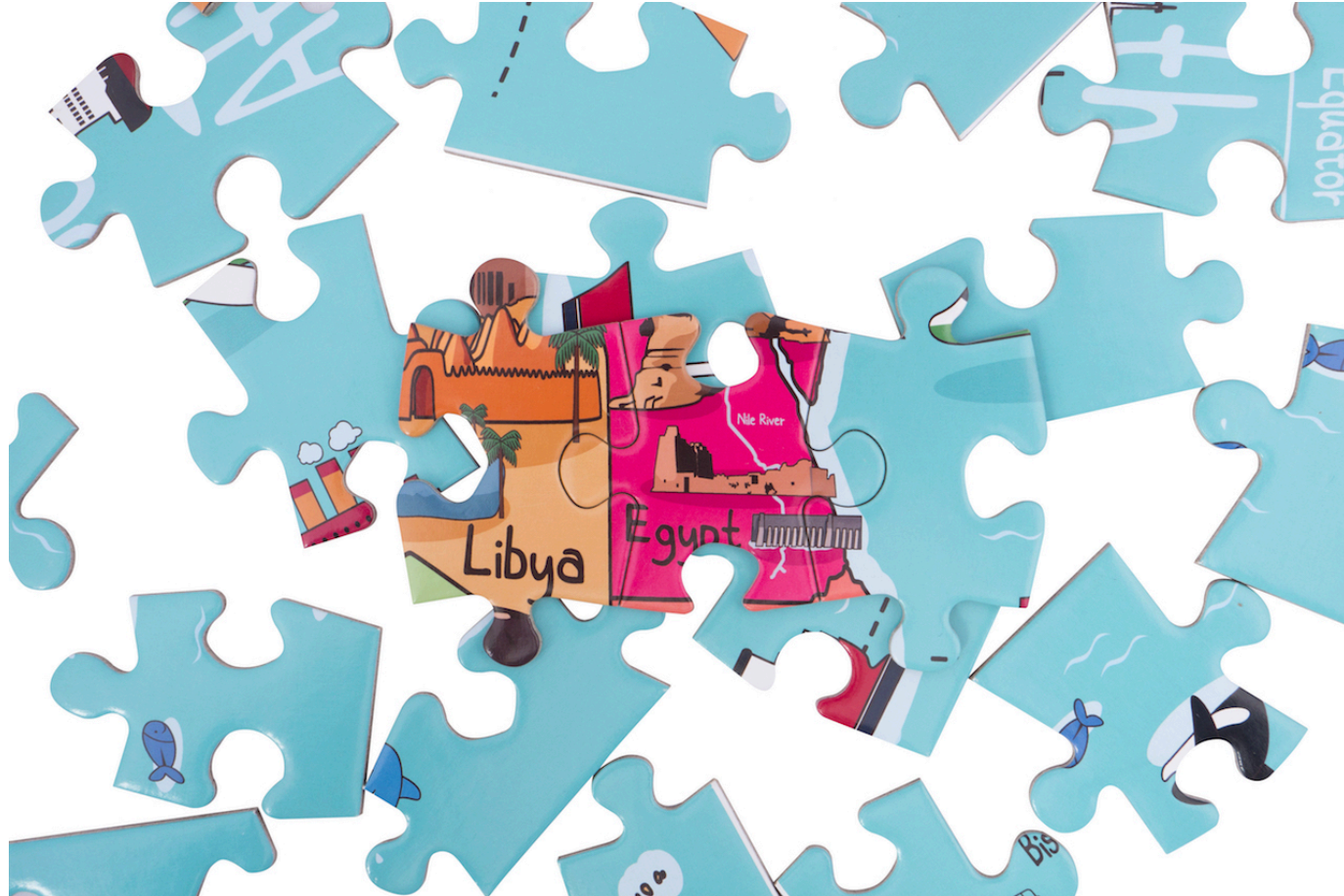


TABLE 1. LADDER OF ABSTRACTION

Levels of Abstraction	Major Comparative Scope and Purpose	Logical and Empirical Properties of Concepts
HL: <i>High Level Categories</i> Universal conceptualizations	Cross-area comparisons among heterogeneous contexts (global theory)	Maximal extension Minimal intension Definition by negation
ML: <i>Medium Level Categories</i> General conceptualizations and taxonomies	Intra-area comparisons among relatively homogeneous contexts (middle range theory)	Balance of denotation with connotation Definition by analysis, i.e. per genus et differentiam
LL: <i>Low Level Categories</i> Configurative conceptualizations	Country by country analysis (narrow-gauge theory)	Maximal intension Minimal extension Contextual definition

Empirical puzzles



Empirical puzzle

- Ghana and Togo
- Similarities: climate, income, ethnic and religious demography
- Why is Ghana a successful democracy, while Togo is governed by an authoritarian regime?



What are the next steps in
developing a research project?

The essentials of research design

- Literature review
- *Hypotheses and theories*
- Operationalization
- Variable identification
- Levels of analysis

Empirical testing

- Case selection:
 - Units of analysis
 - Small-N, large-N, and case studies
 - MSS vs. MDS

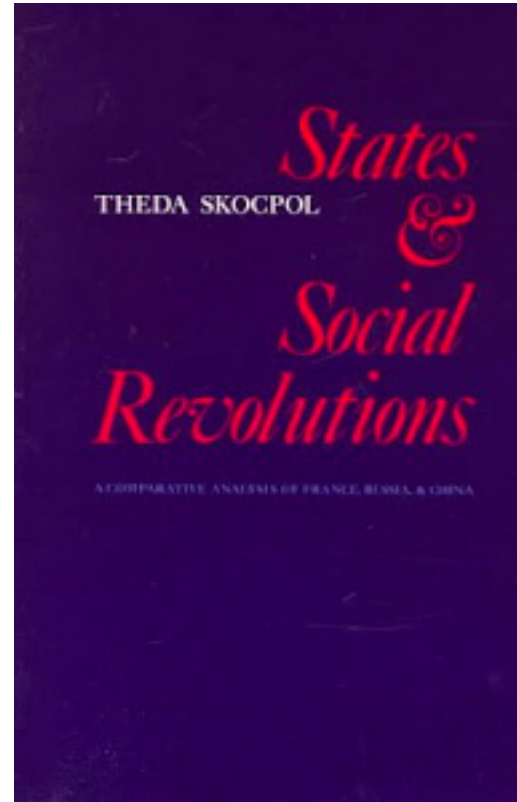
What research design is this?



Most similar systems design



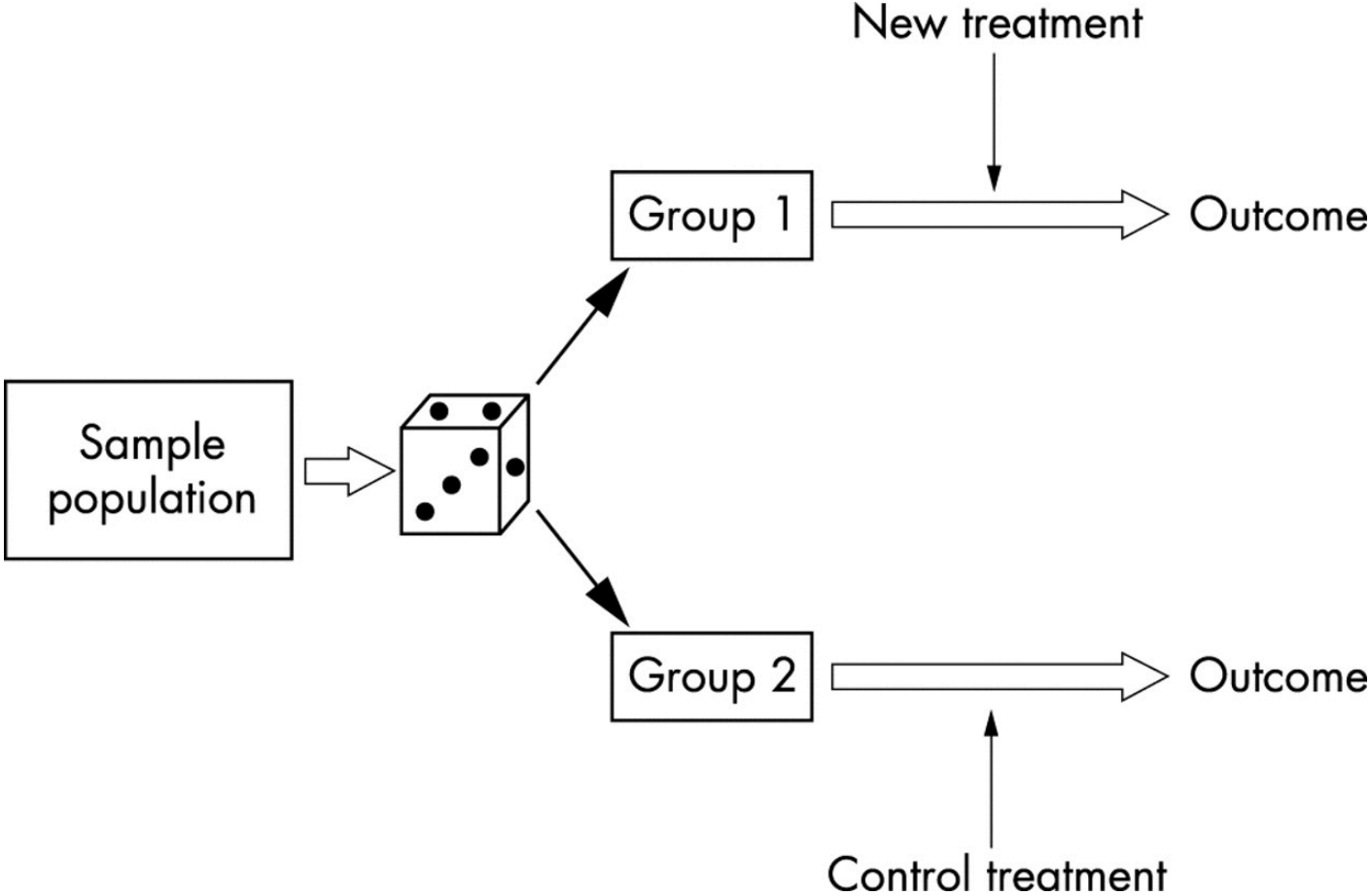
Most different systems design



Empirical testing

- Data collection:
 - Qualitative vs. quantitative
 - Interviews
 - Archival research
 - Systematic reviews and evidence synthesis
 - Surveys
 - Experiments:
 - Randomized controlled trials
 - Natural experiments

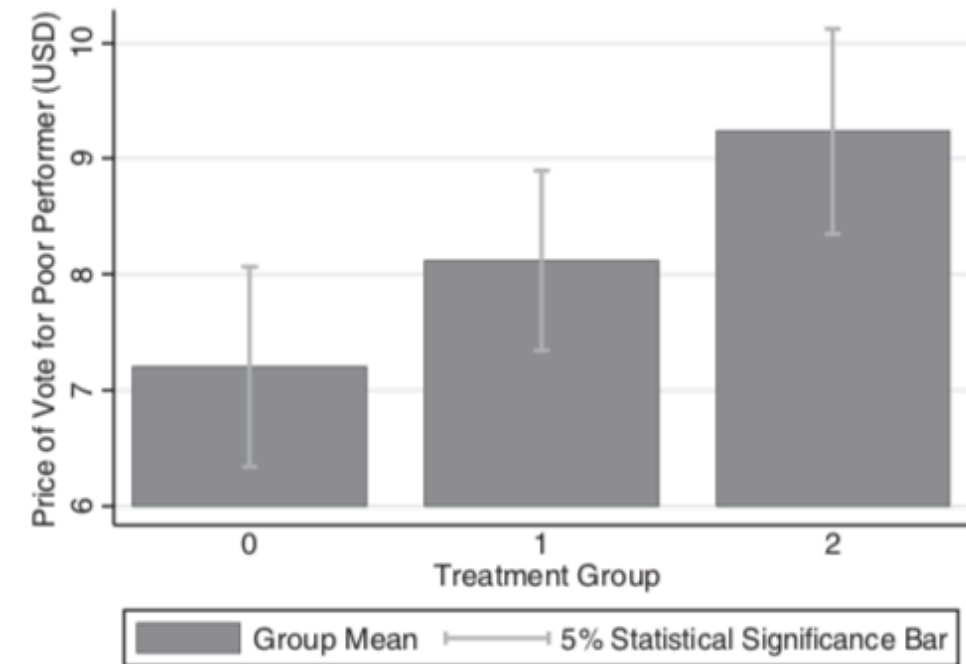
Randomized controlled trials



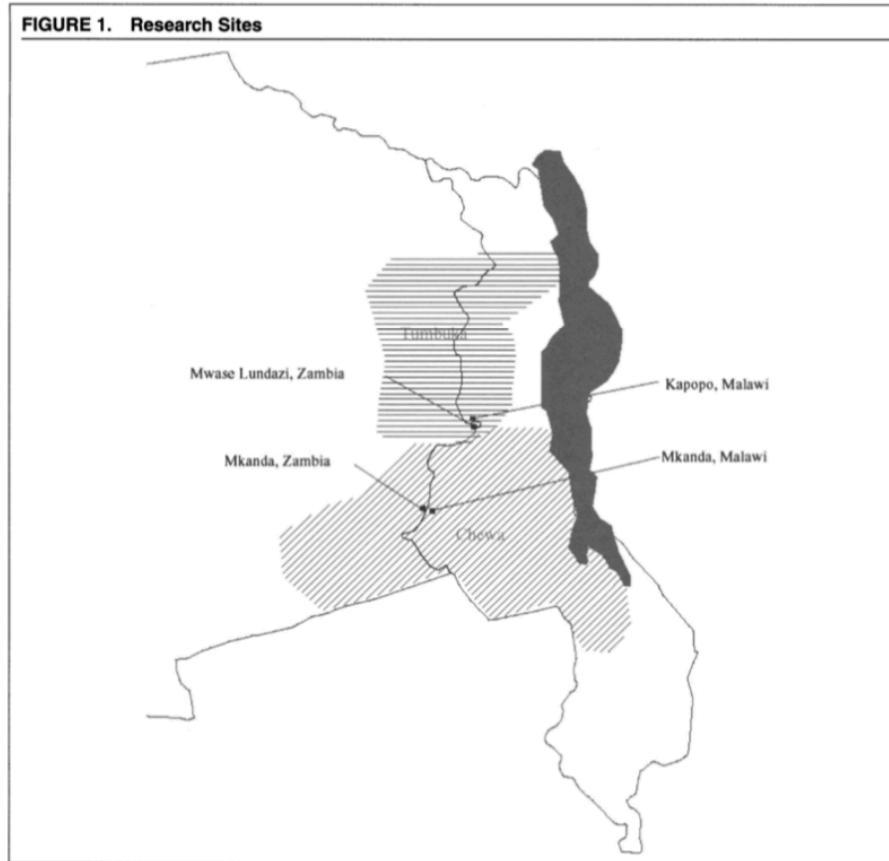
Randomized controlled trials



FIGURE 2 Votes More Expensive to Buy in Treated Groups



Natural experiments



Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529–45.

Natural experiments



Association vs. causation

Number of people who drowned by
falling into a pool

correlates with

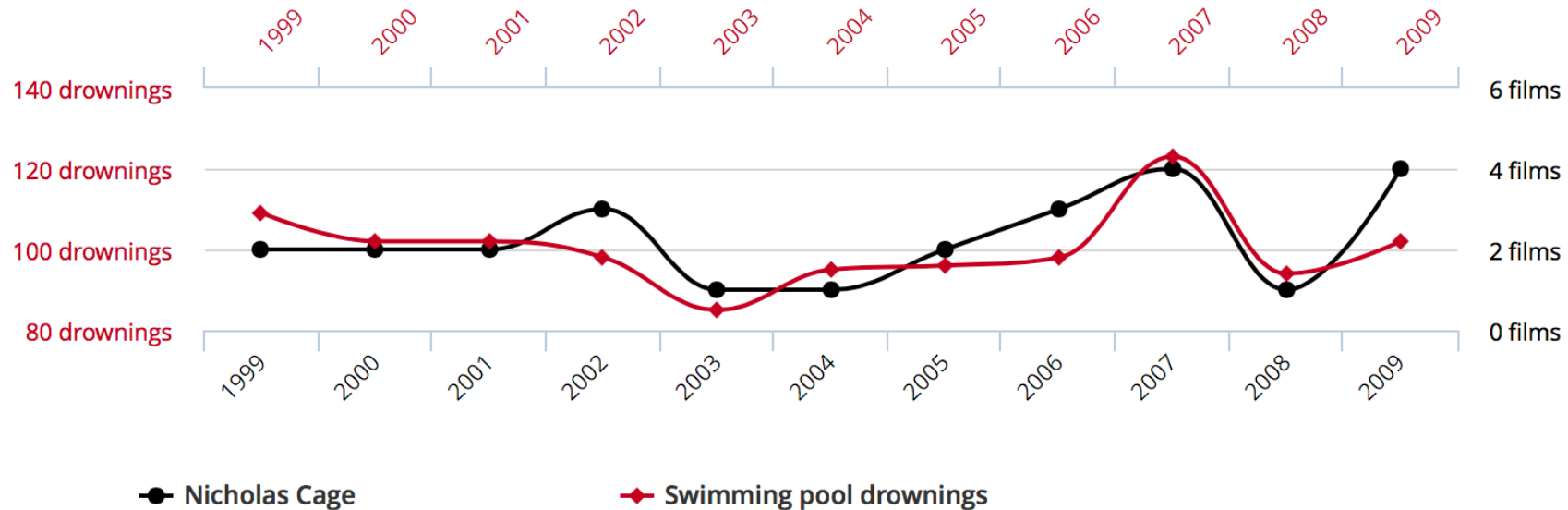
Films Nicolas Cage appeared in

Correlation: 66.6% ($r=0.666004$)



Nicholas Cage

Swimming pool drownings



tylervigen.com

Association vs. causation: modernization theory

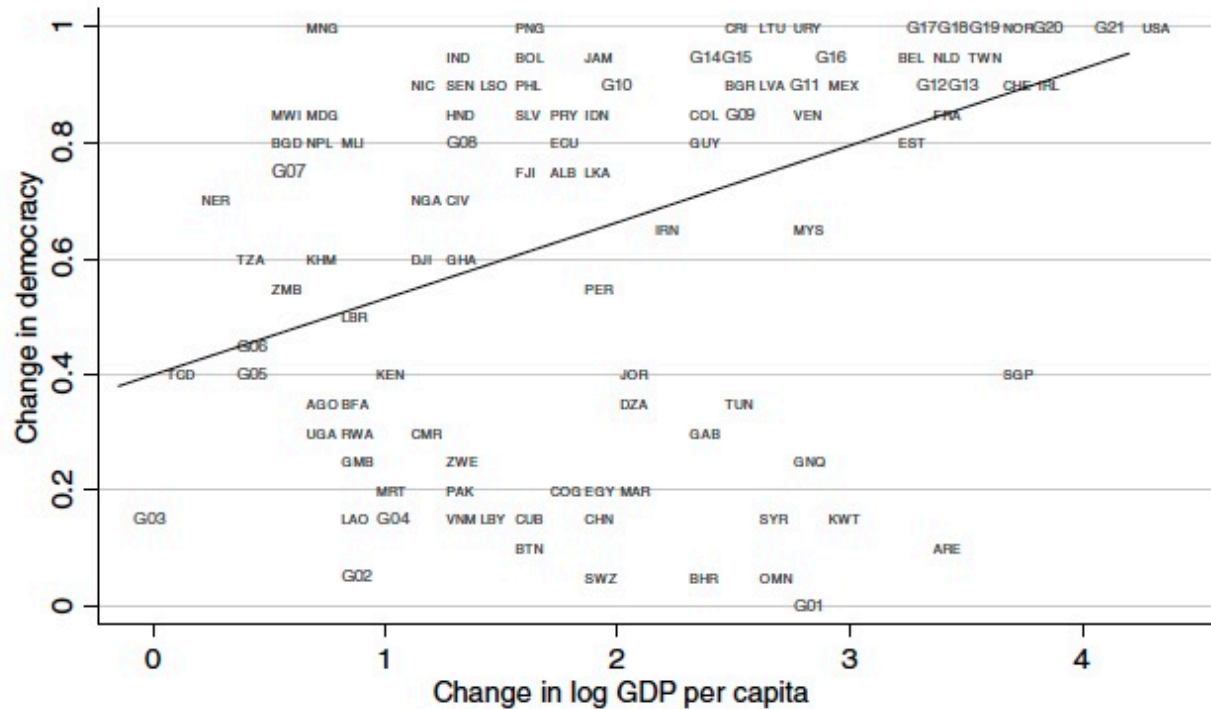


FIGURE 5. CHANGE IN DEMOCRACY AND CHANGE IN INCOME, 1500–2000



Association vs. causation



Developing a research project

- Empirical puzzle
- Research question
- *Hypotheses (and theory)*
- Independent and dependent variables
- Level and unit(s) of analysis
- Case selection and design type