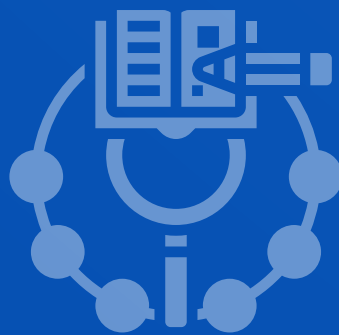


EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

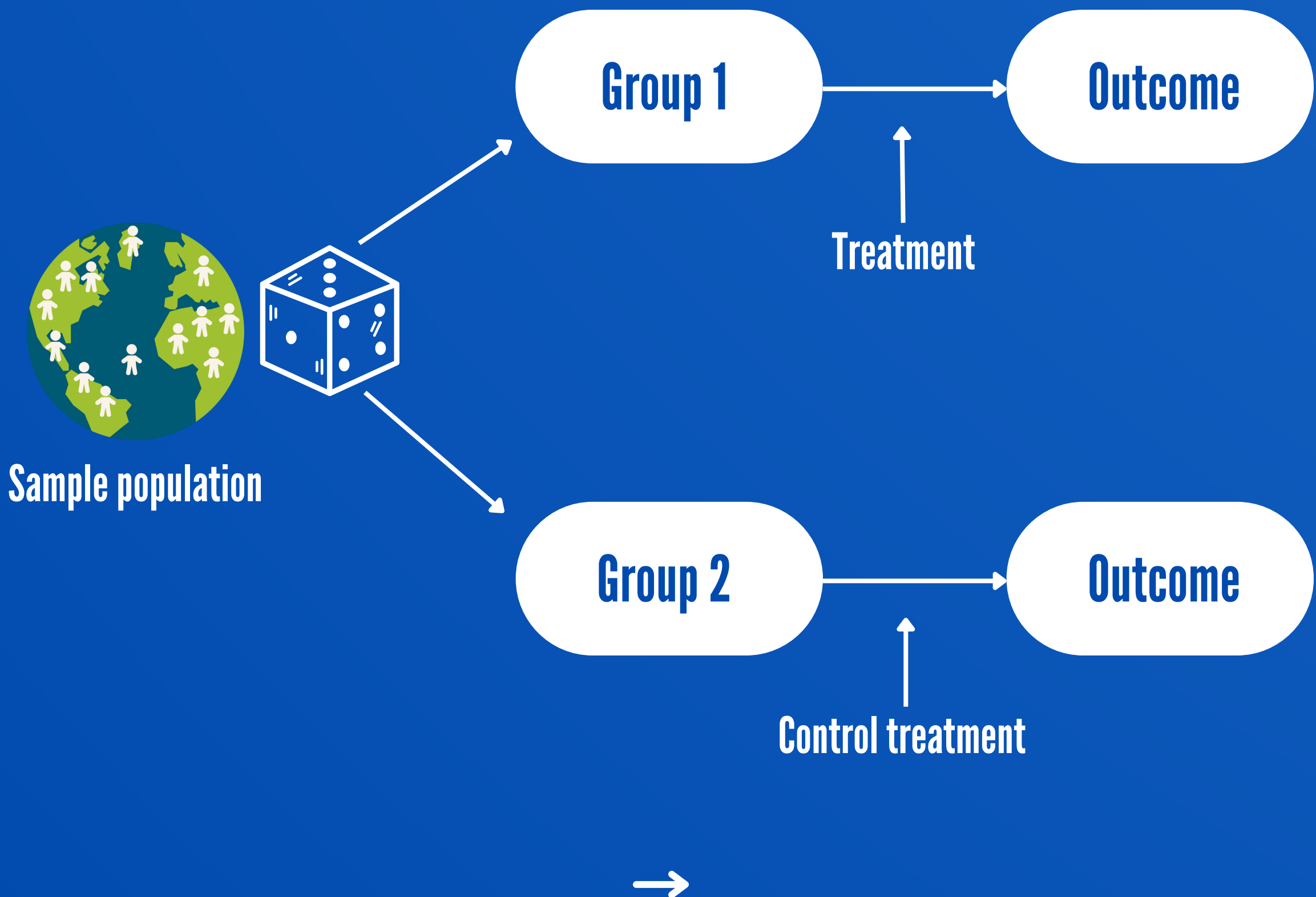
EMPIRICAL TAKEAWAYS



**AS AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCHER,
YOU CAN CHOOSE FROM A WIDE
ARRAY OF METHODS**



WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENT?



Participants are divided in at least two groups:

An experimental group that receives an 'intervention' or 'treatment'



A control group that does not receive that intervention

Chance determines who ends up in which group

We call this random assignment

Randomisation ensures that both groups are *similar on other factors*

Hence: isolation of factor of interest



COMPARISON OF GROUPS

Between-subjects design

Each person is exposed to a single condition
Participants are compared to a control group

Within-subjects design

All participants are exposed to the same conditions
Participants are compared to themselves

Example: pre-and post-tests on the same subjects
when a new law is introduced



WHY USE AN EXPERIMENT?

Whenever you are interested in making causal statements

- about the effectiveness of an intervention
- about the effect of variable X on variable Y

The difference between the experimental and control group on [changes in] the outcome(s) reflects the effect of the intervention or X



THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF EXPERIMENTS

Randomized controlled experiment

Researcher controls the assignment of respondents to groups and administers the intervention
(i.e., experimental manipulation)

Field experiment

Behavior is examined in its natural environment, but people are randomly divided into groups and subjected to different interventions

Natural experiment

Experimental and control conditions are due to a naturally occurring, preferably unforeseeable, external event or invention outside of the control of respondents that approximates random assignment

Quasi-experiment

Existing groups are assigned treatment at random by the researcher, but the researcher does not assign respondents randomly to groups



A VERY COMMON TYPE: VIGNETTE EXPERIMENTS

Participants get hypothetical case descriptions or scenarios

Participants imagine themselves in the described scenario

The properties of the cases have been altered purposely from case to case and respondents receive versions at random

OTHER EXAMPLES

Economic games

Abstract settings

Participants need to make decisions with social and economic consequences

Different experimental manipulations are possible, e.g. the pay-off structure

Conjoint experiments

An object of choice is broken down into its components and different combinations are tested

All participants need to choose several times between two options
(e.g., two products, two contracts, two laws)

The different attributes of the object of choice are randomly varied

WHY NOT?

Although (randomized controlled) experiments are the gold standard for evaluation research...

the main drawback is that the external validity may be low making it difficult to generalize the findings to real-life situations

Also, many things cannot be examined experimentally due to ethical concerns or for practical reasons





WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Next month, the ELS Academy offers a workshop on the use of experimental vignettes in empirical legal research

When? February 12, 13:00-15:00

Where? VU Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1077,

Initium Building, room IN 2a 45-47

