

# The Person in Psychology: The Importance of Idiographics and Nomothetics

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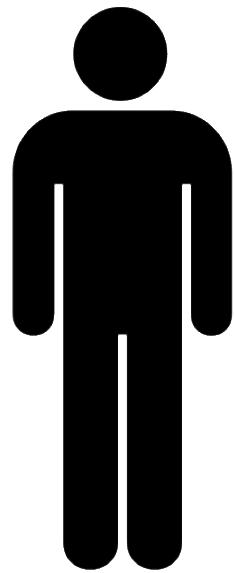
@EmorieBeck



**Description**

**Prediction**

**Explanation**



**Thoughts**

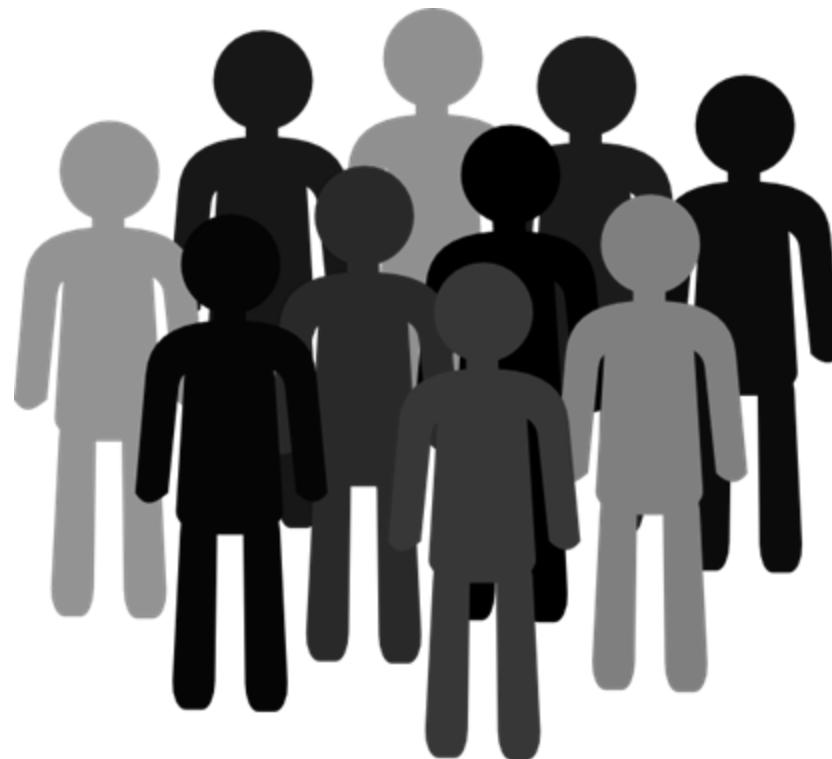
**Feelings**

**Behaviors**

**Description**

**Prediction**

**Explanation**



**Thoughts**

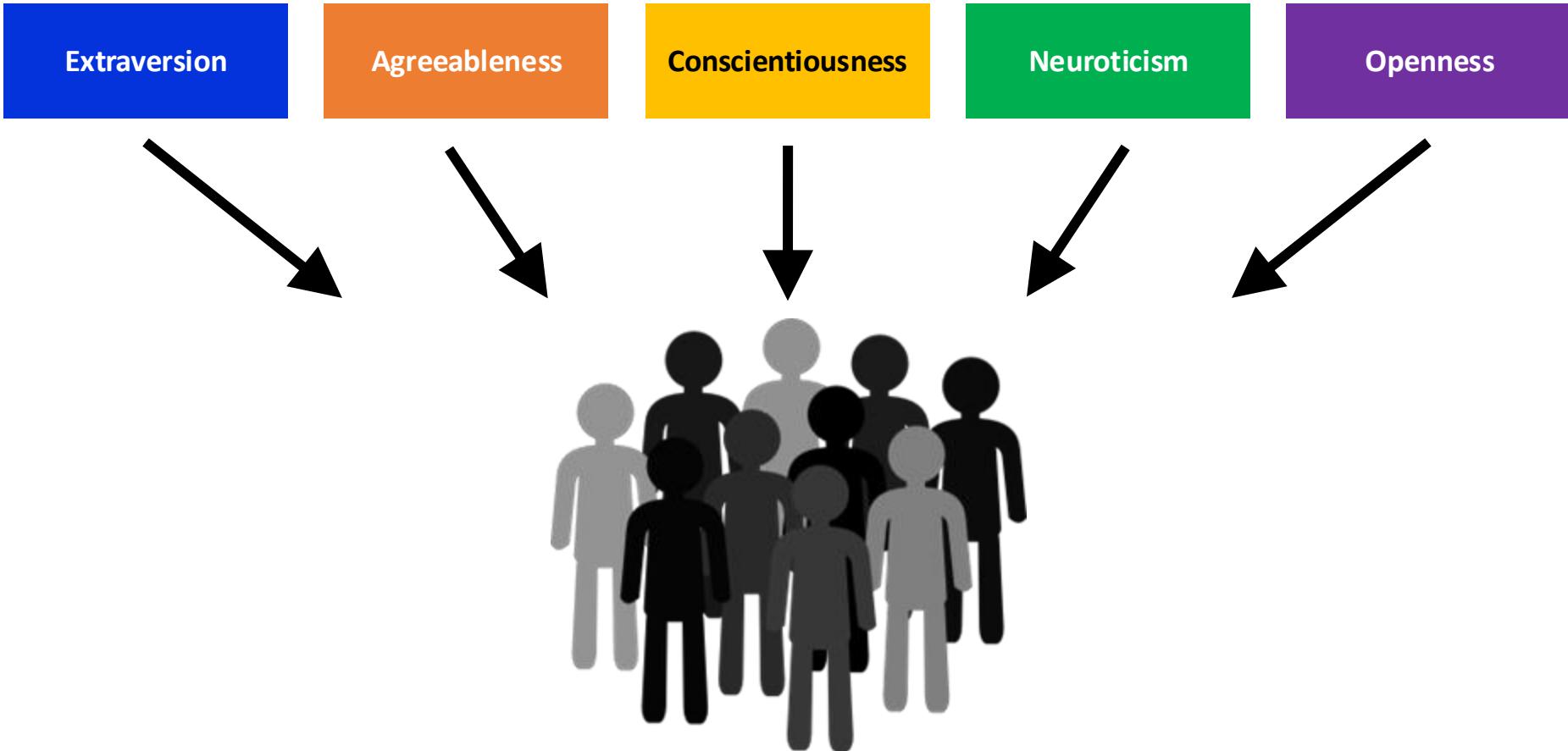
**Feelings**

**Behaviors**

# What is personality?

“Personality refers to those **characteristics** of the person that account for **consistent patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaving.**”

(Pervin, Cervone & John, 2005, p. 6)



**Nomothetic  
Between-Person  
Variable Centered**

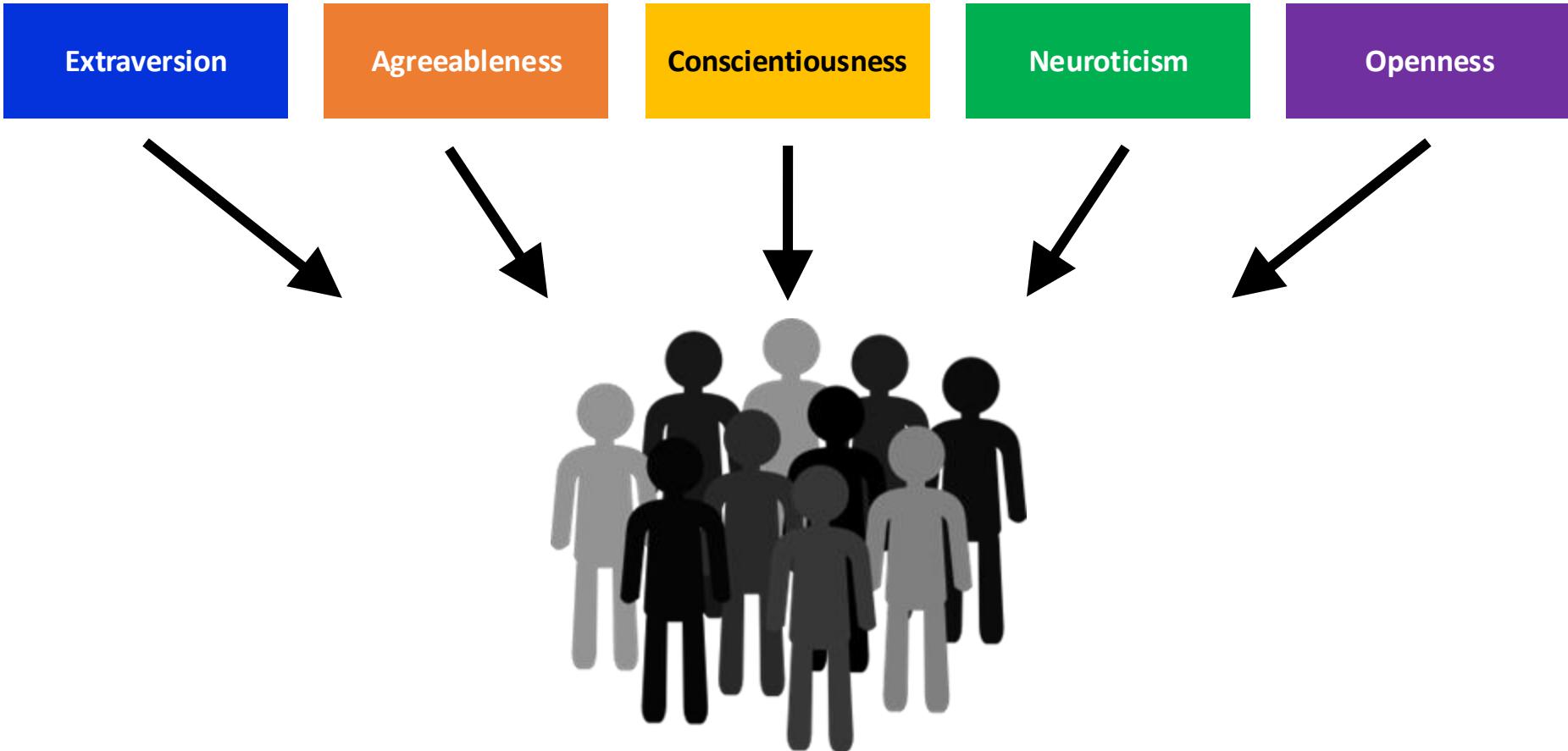


EJP  
@EJPBlog

"We assessed personality with the Big Five - As seductive as it is to make such statements, they are only a bit true... personality is not just the Big Five." Read [@rauthmann](#) blog post and memes here. [ejp-blog.com/blog/2024/9/17...](http://ejp-blog.com/blog/2024/9/17...)



12:07 PM · Sep 17, 2024 · 275 Views

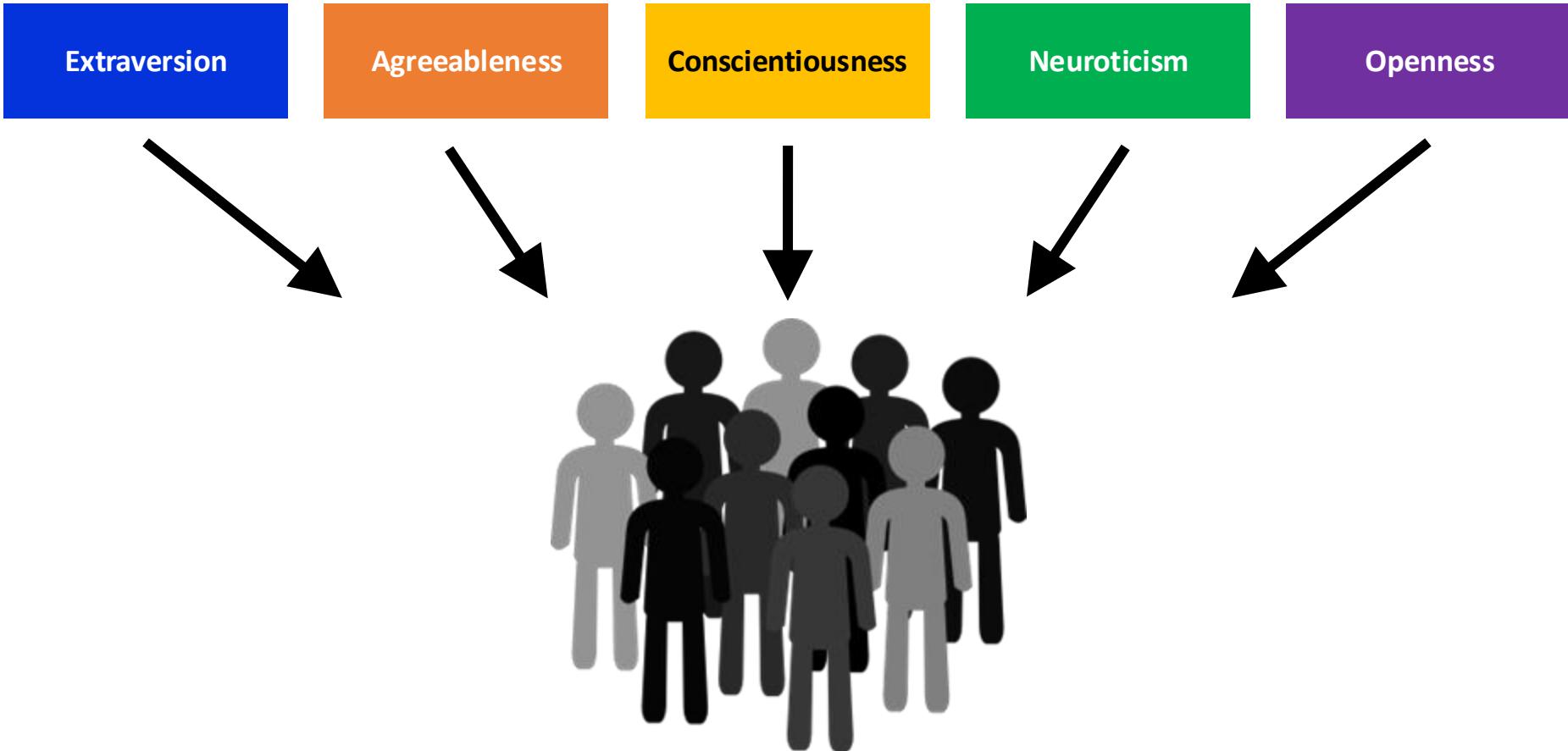


**Nomothetic  
Between-Person  
Variable Centered**

# What is personality?

**Personality is what personality tests test.**

(Jack Wright, personal communication, 2013)



**Nomothetic  
Between-Person  
Variable Centered**

# What is personality?

“Personality is the **dynamic organization** within the individual of those **psychophysical systems** that determine his **unique adjustments to the environment**.”



(Allport, 1937, p. 32)

e.g., Allport, 1937, 1961, 1968

# What is personality?

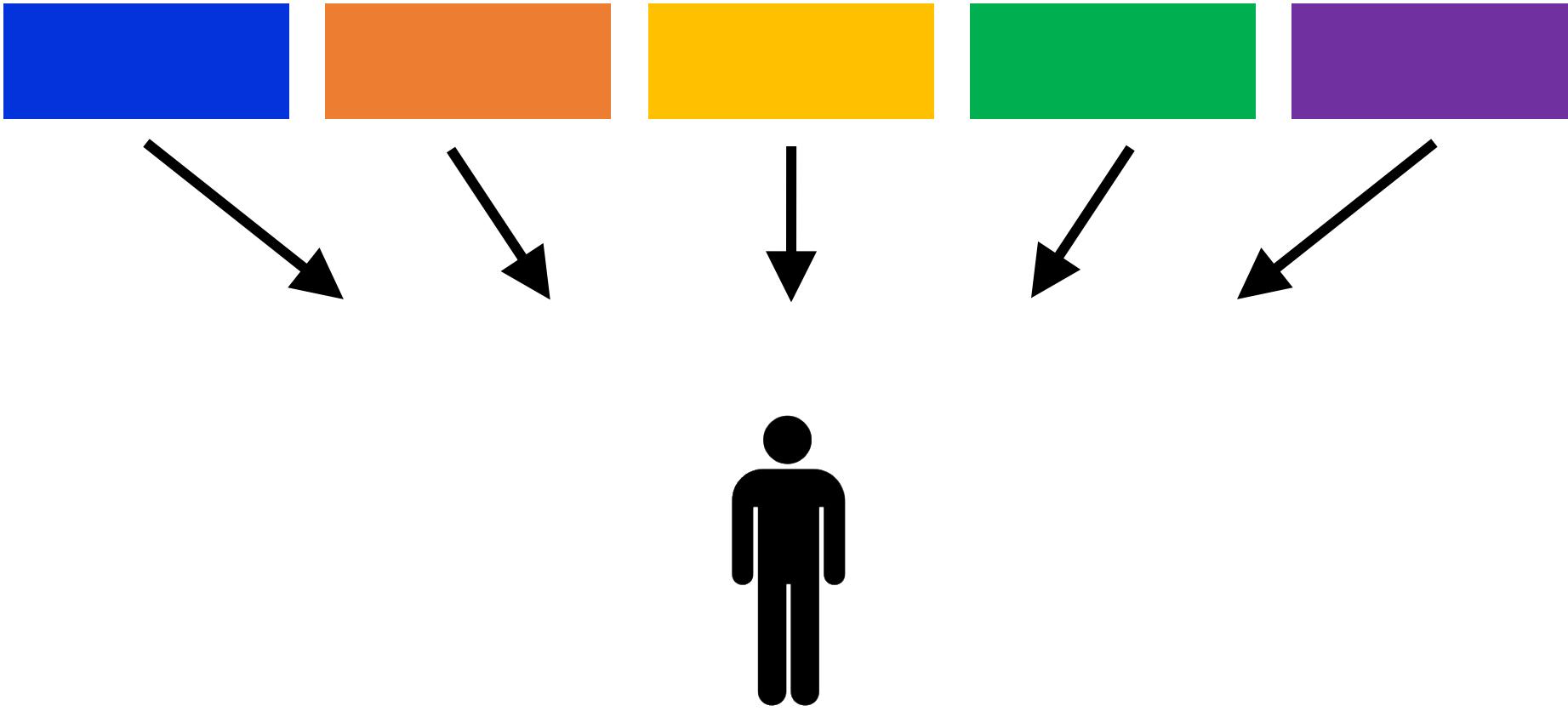
**Personality is what personality tests test.**

(Jack Wright, personal communication, 2013)

Individuals  
(idiographic)

Contexts & Time

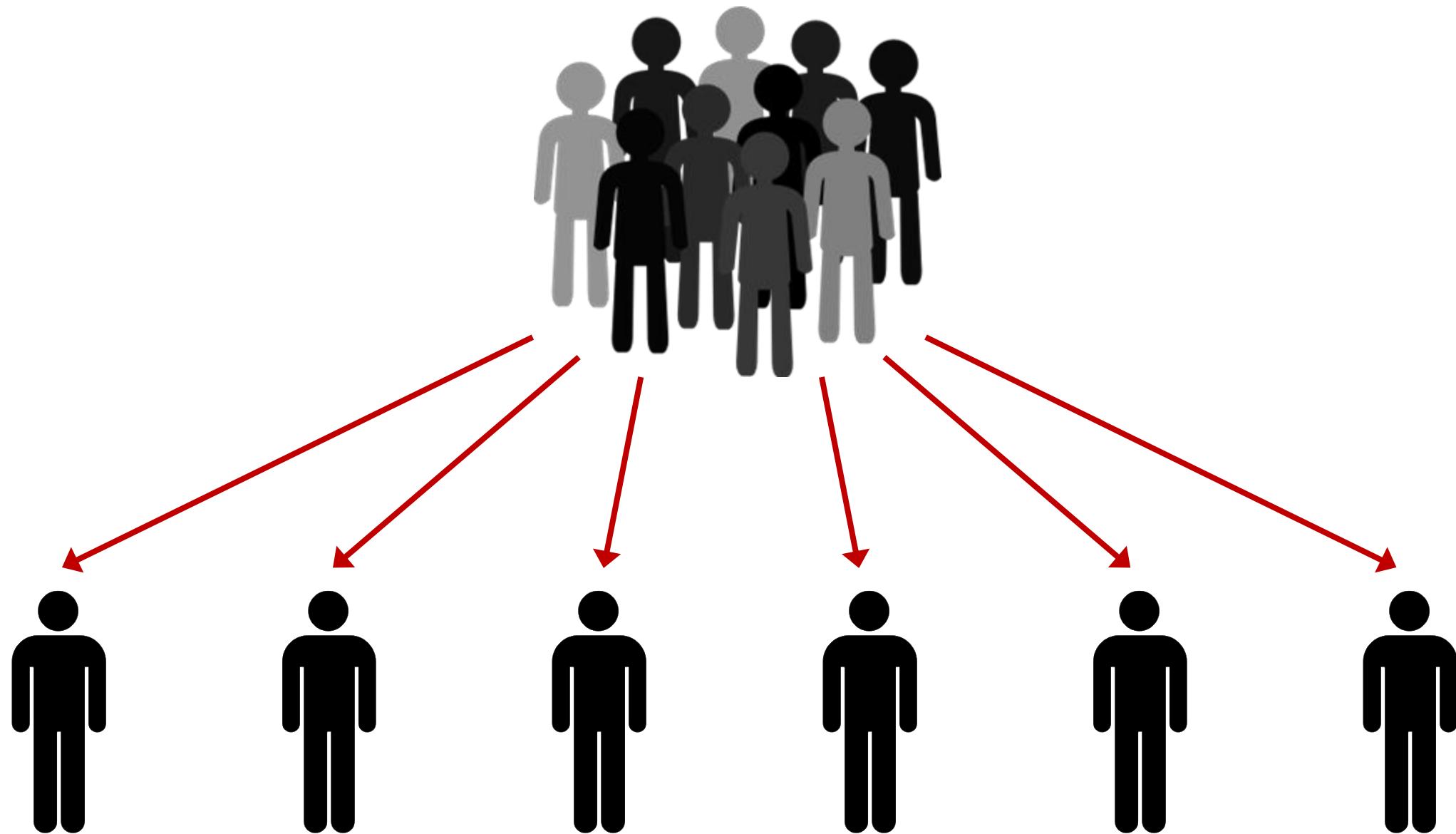
Dynamics &  
Systems



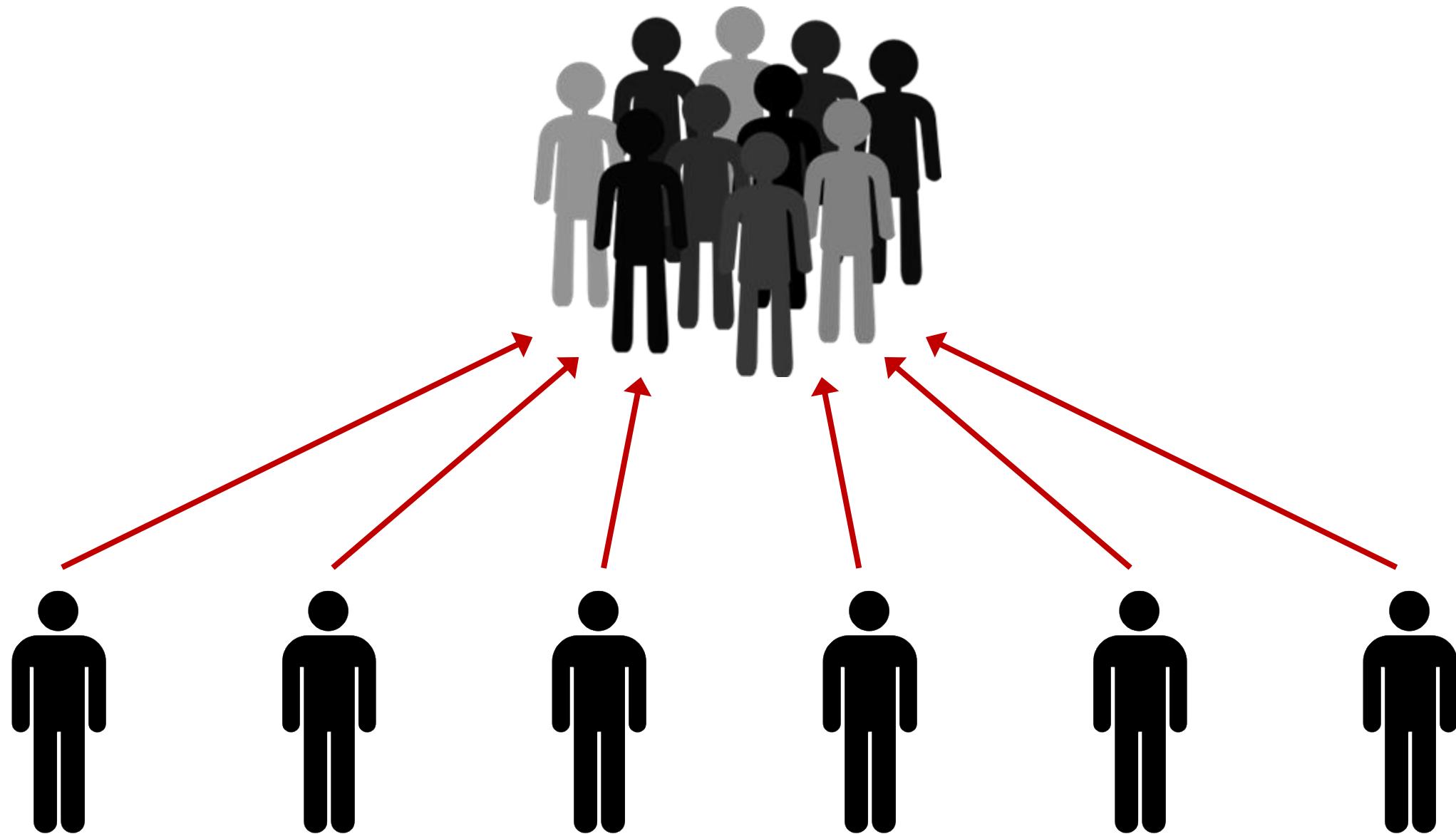
**Idiographic  
Person-Specific  
 $N = 1$**

e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a, *JPSP*; 2020b, *CDPS*

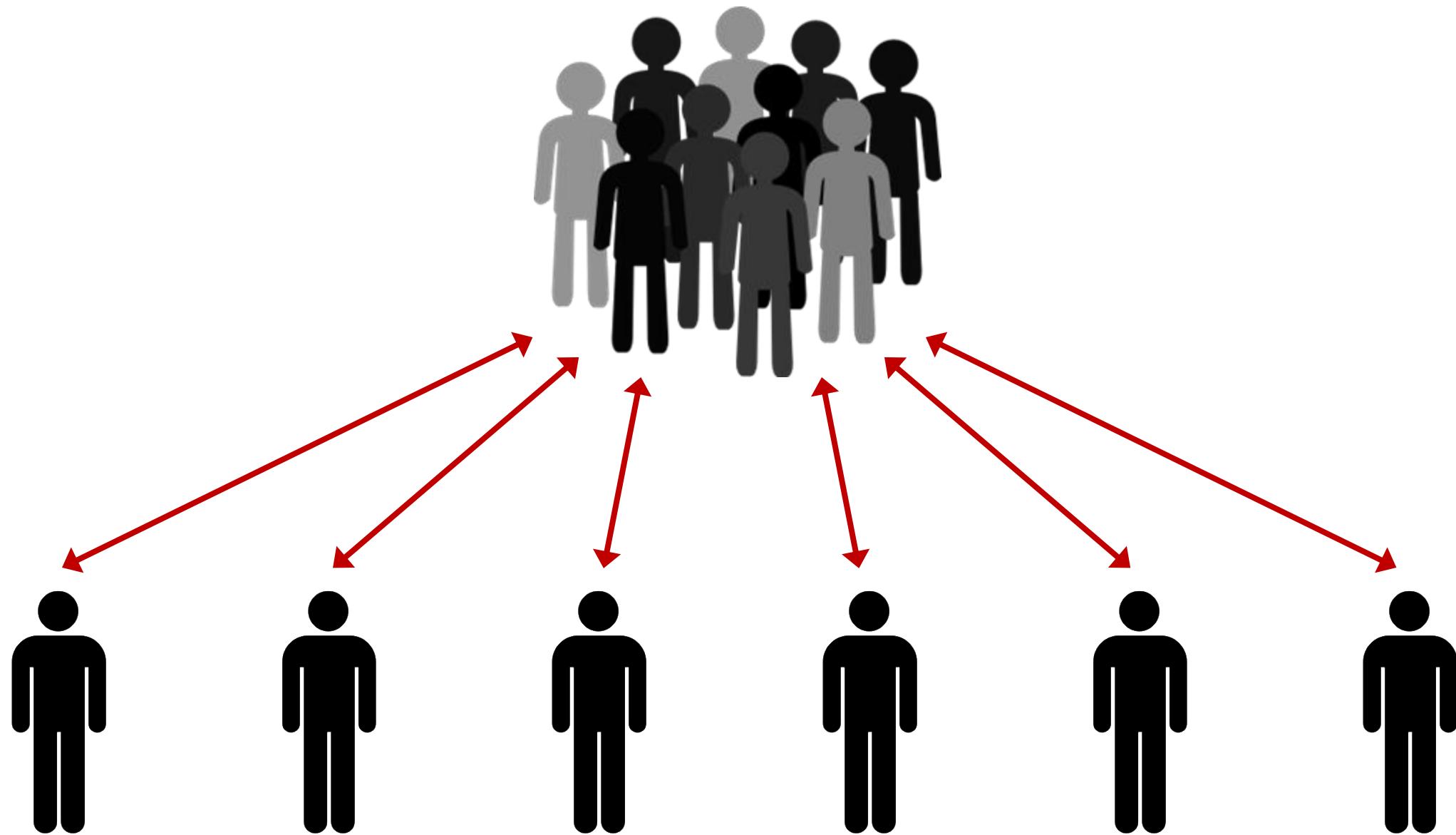
# Bottom-Up Psychological Science



# Bottom-Up Psychological Science



# Bottom-Up Psychological Science





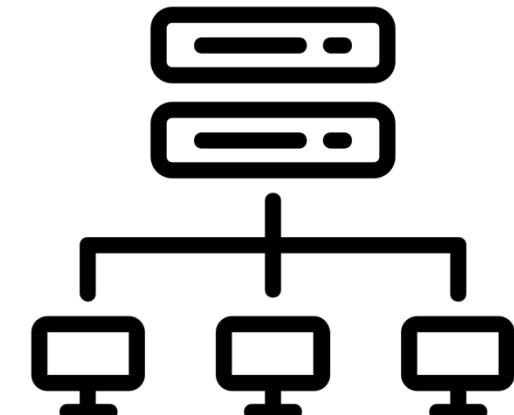
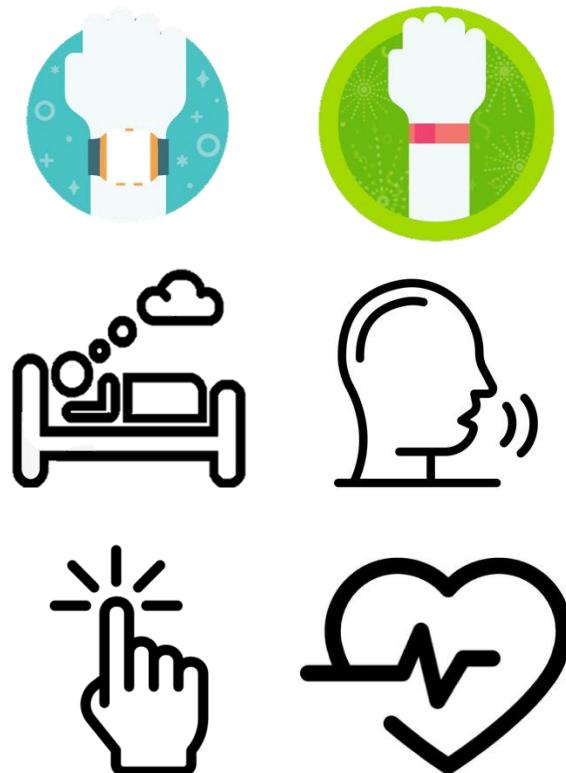
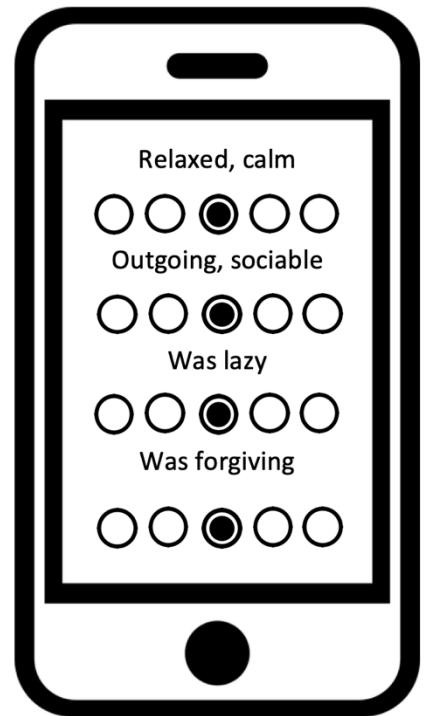
# Modern Opportunities for $N = 1$ Research

ESM / EMA

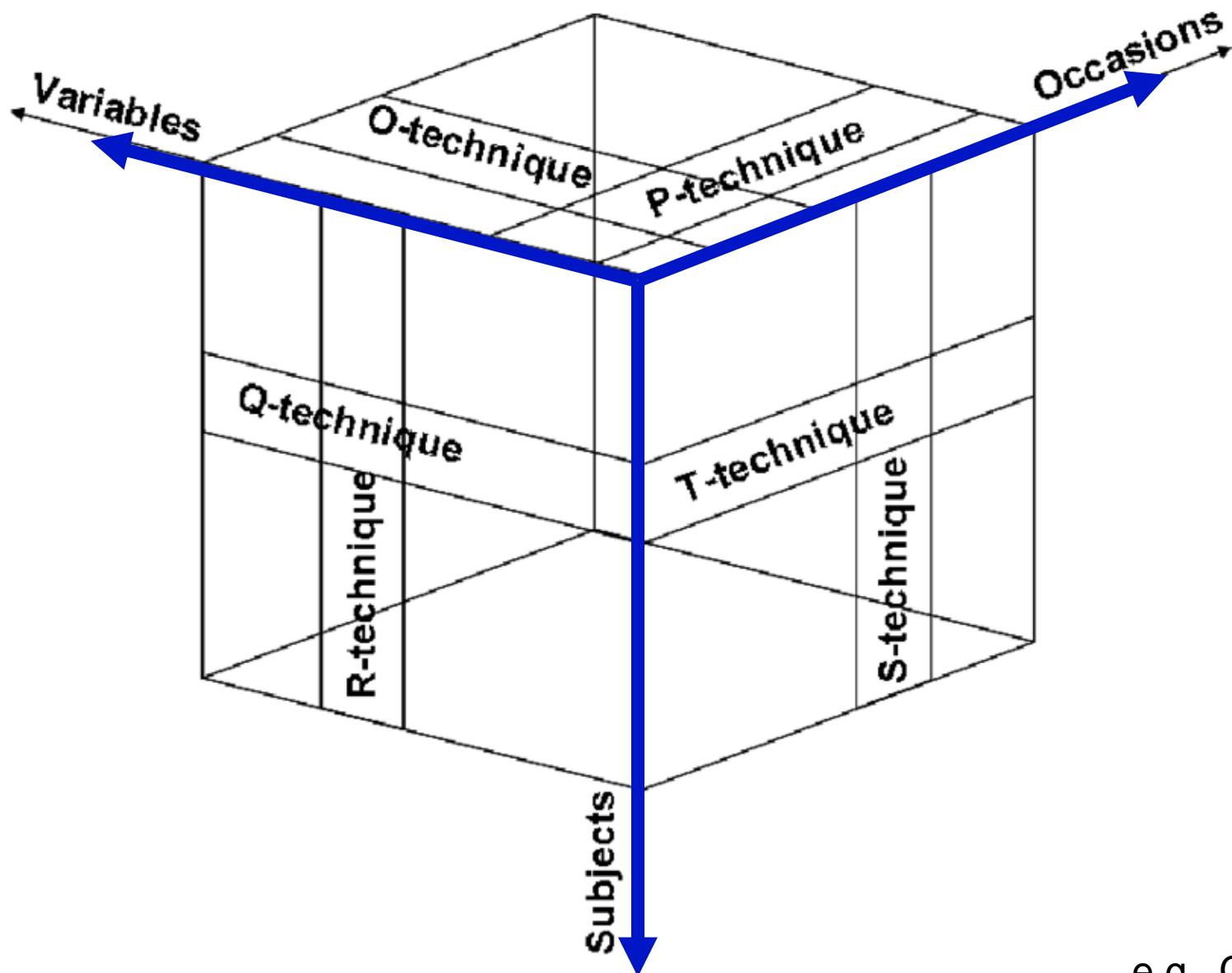
Mobile Sensing

Open-Ended  
Responses

Computing  
Power

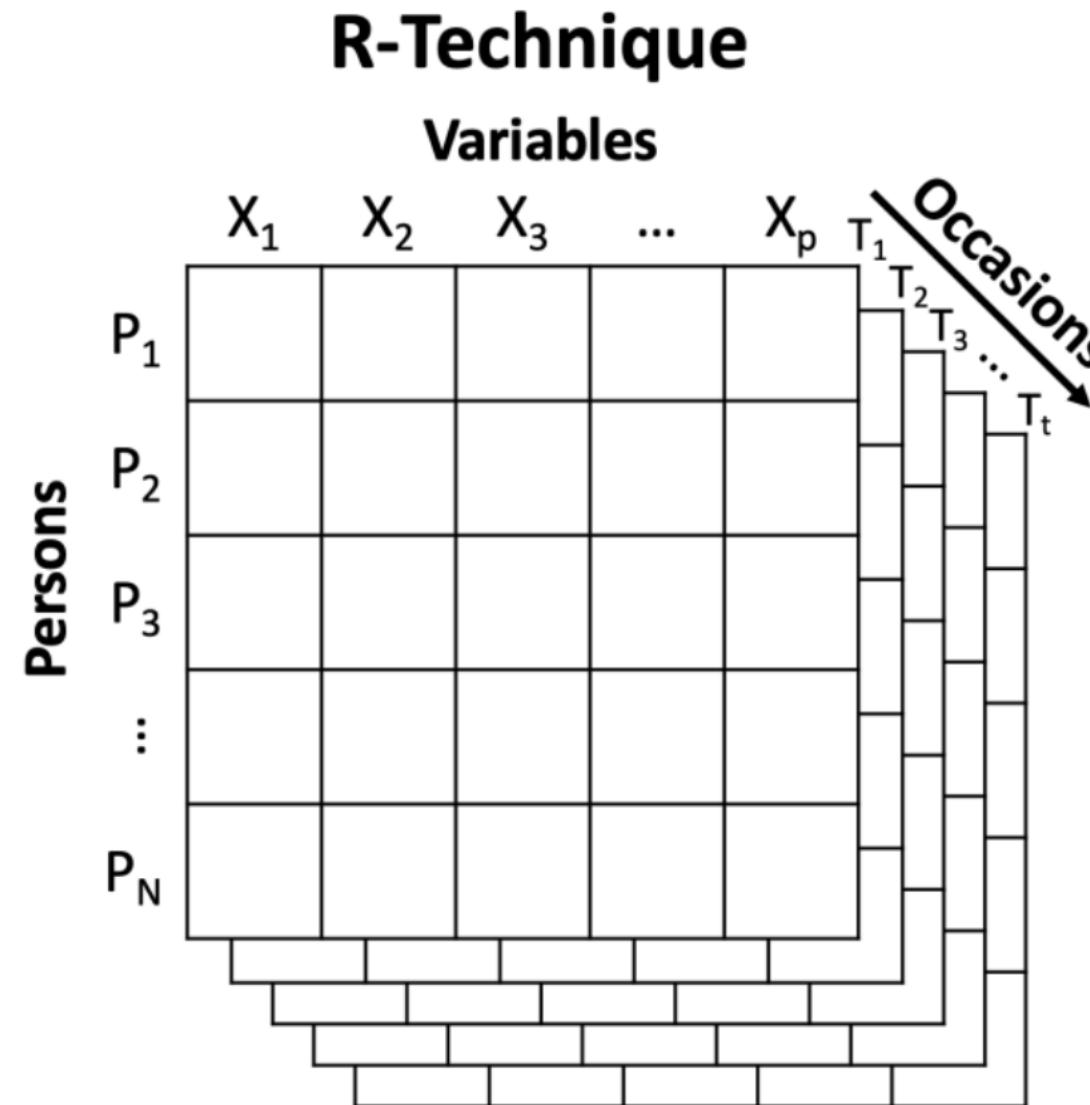


# What is personality?



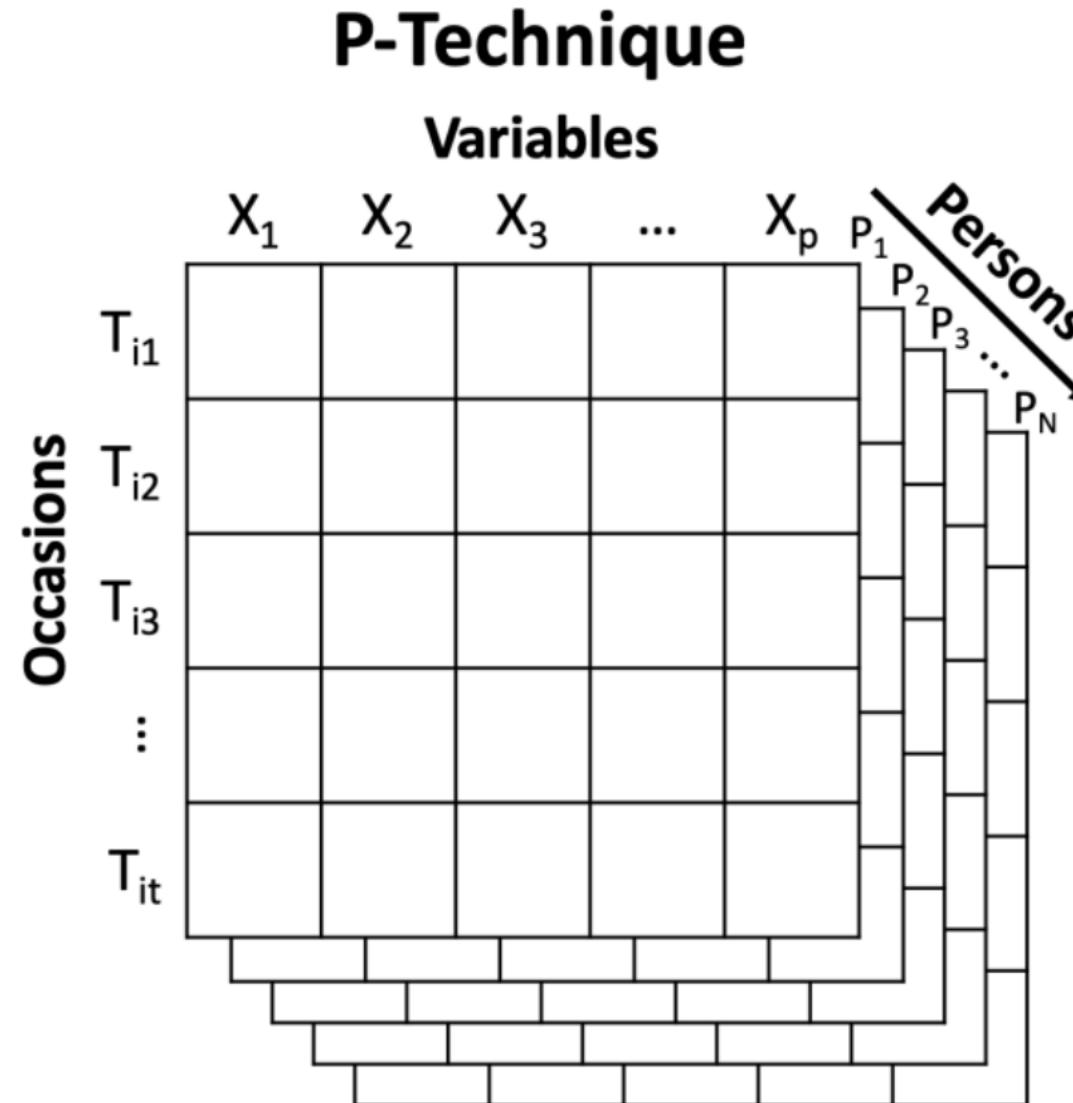
e.g., Cattell, 1943, 1946, 1957

# What is personality?



e.g., Cattell, 1943, 1946, 1957

# What is personality?



e.g., Cattell, 1943, 1946, 1957



# What is personality?

***if***

***...***

***then***

***Context***

***Situation perception***

***Experience***

***Etc.***

***Behavior***

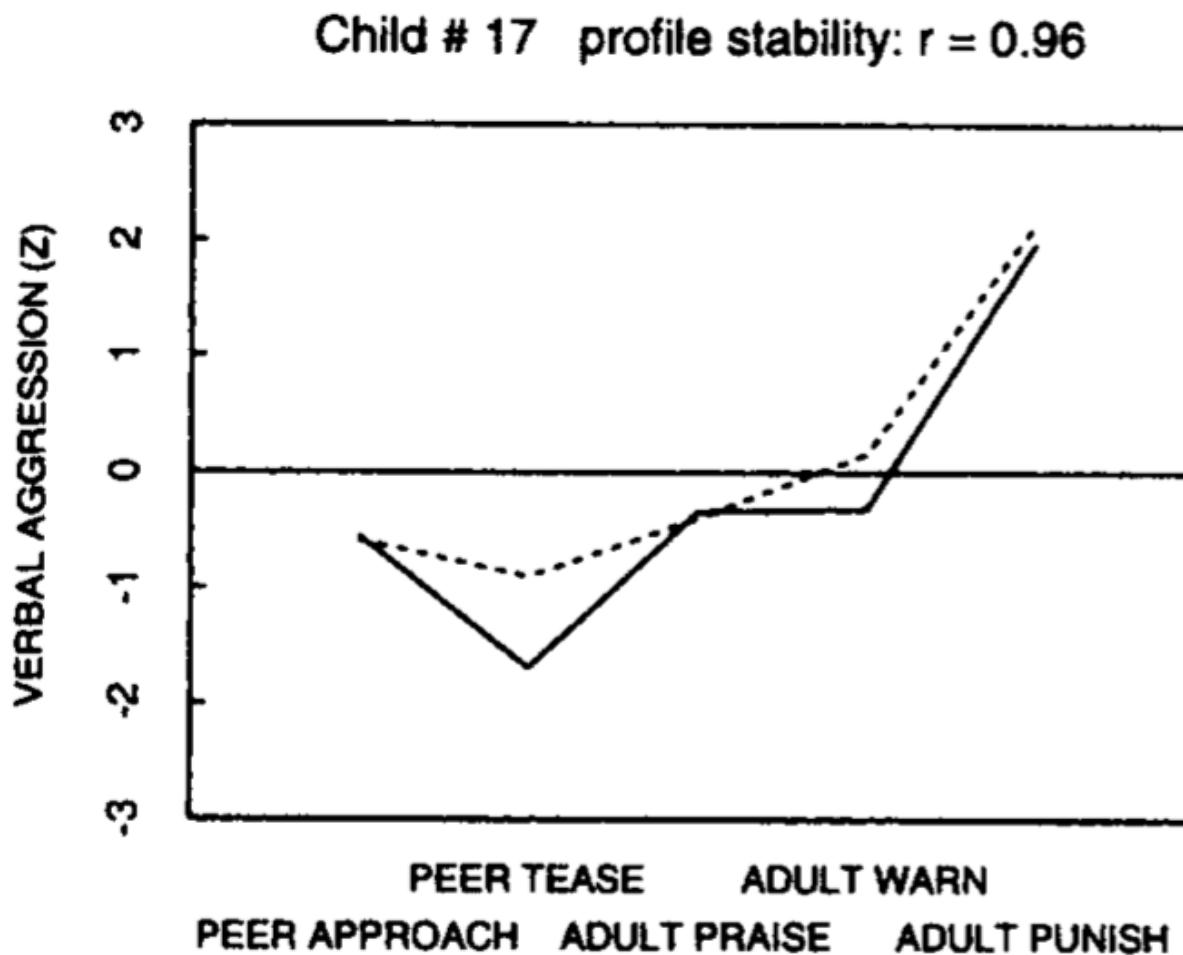
***Experience***

***Etc.***

e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 2005; Wright & Mischel, 1987;  
Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993; Mischel, 1973



# What is personality?



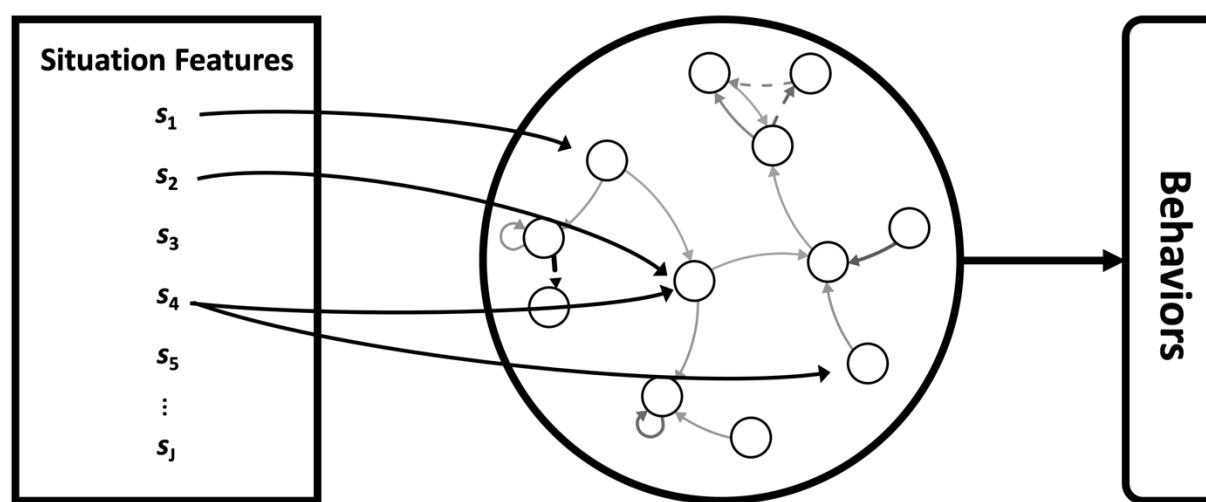
e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 2005; Wright & Mischel, 1987;  
Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993; Mischel, 1973

# Persons in Context: Systems Theories

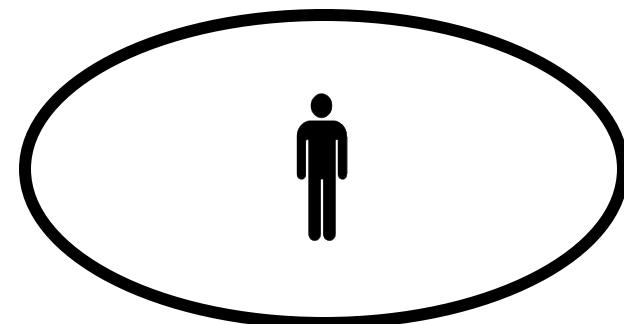
**Ecological Systems Theory**  
(e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979)



**Cognitive Affective Personality System**  
(e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 1995)



**Field Theory**  
(e.g., Lewin, 1936)

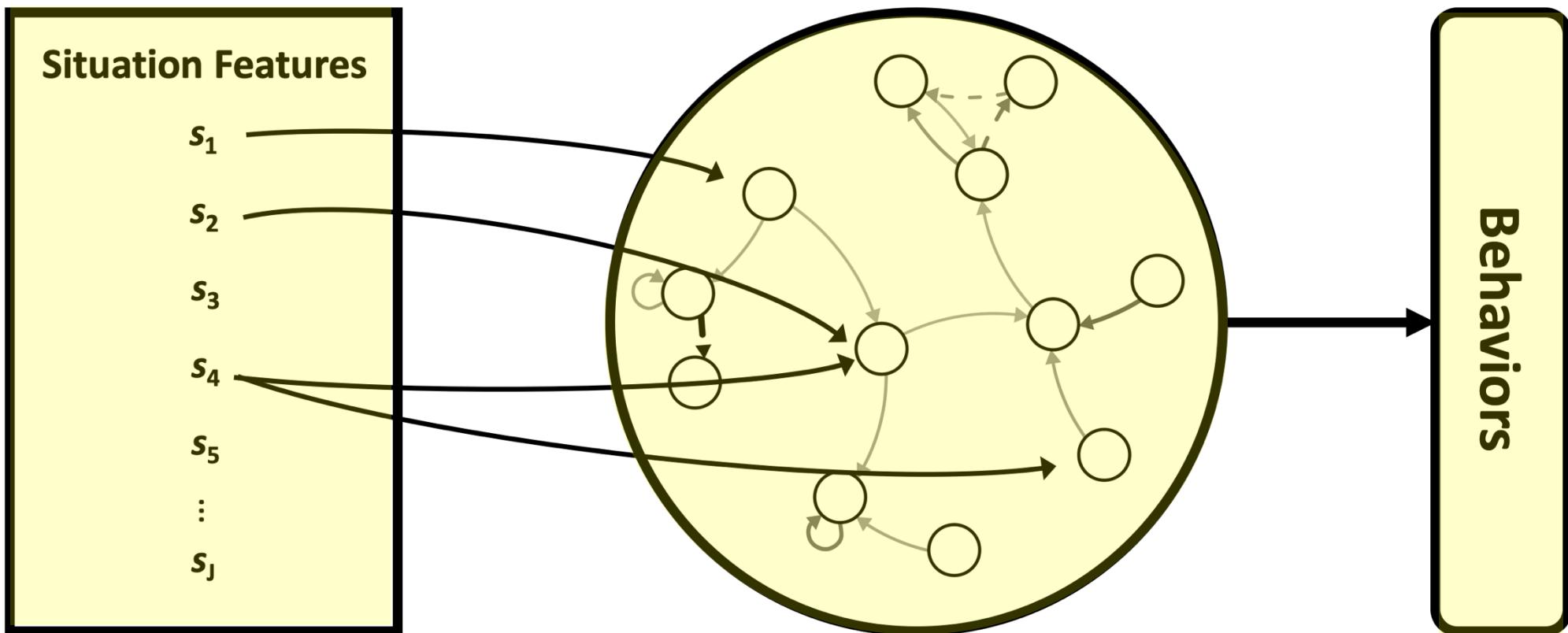


e.g., Lewin, 1936

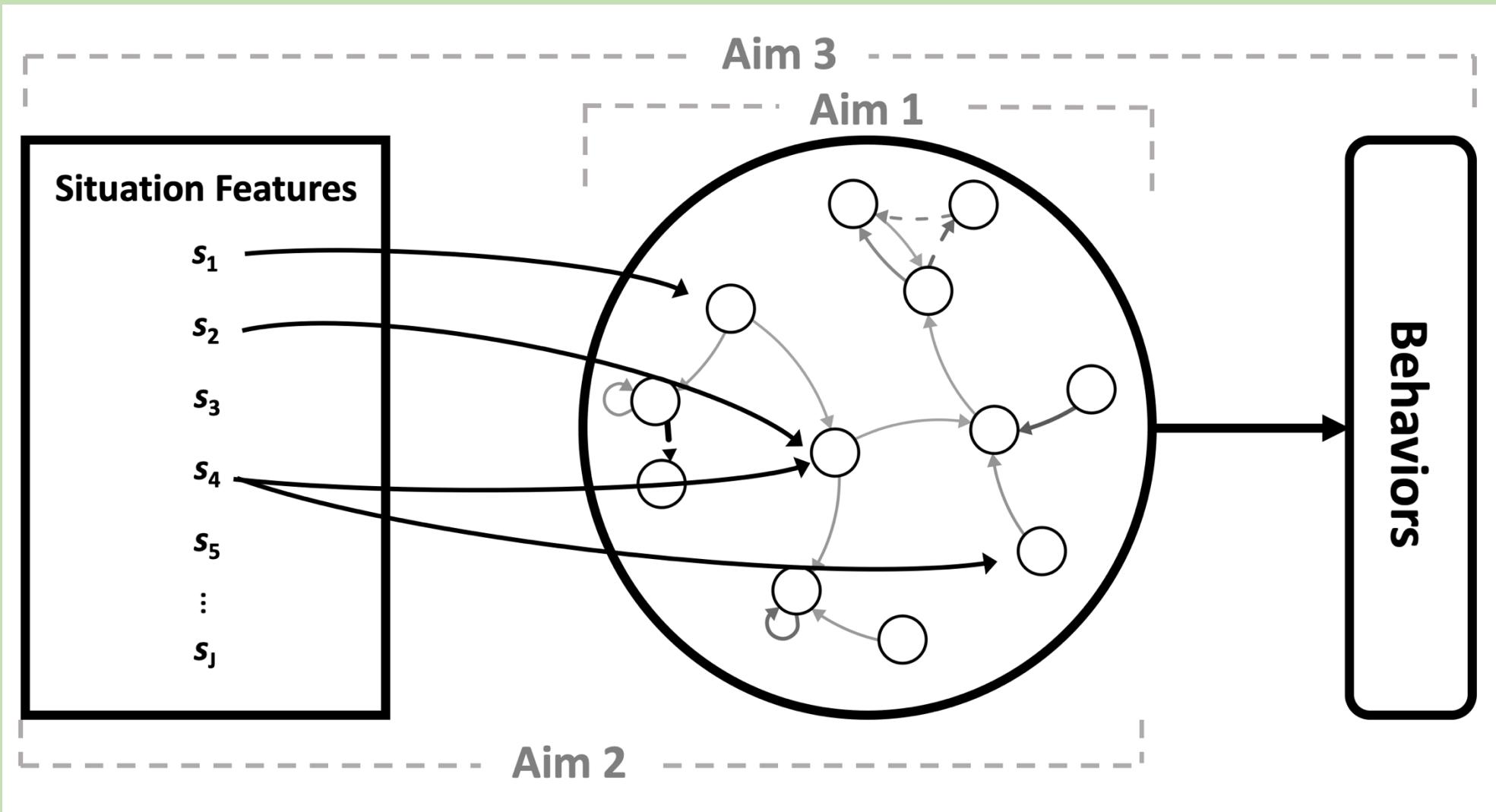


# What is personality?

A Cognitive Affective Processing System (CAPS)



e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 2005; Wright & Mischel, 1987;  
Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993; Mischel, 1973



**Aim 1:** Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.

Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

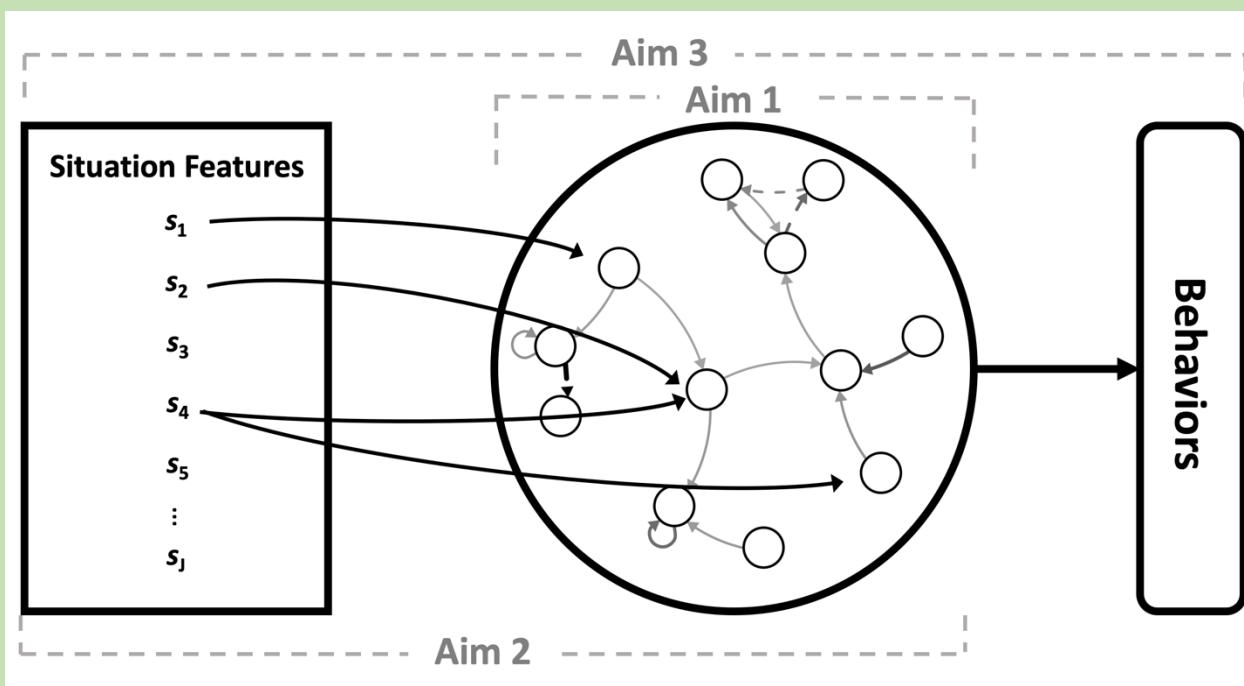
**Aim 2:** Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck, et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Predicting behavior using machine learning.

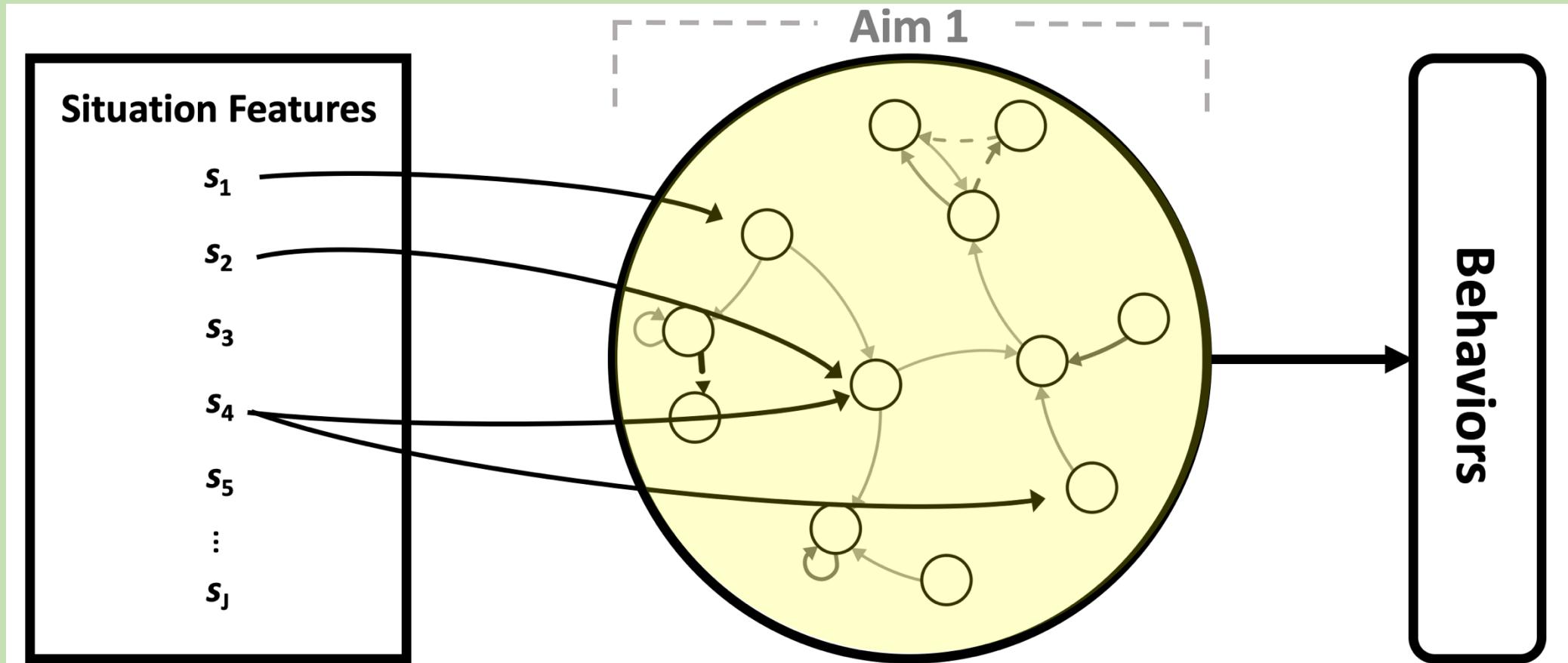
Beck & Jackson  
(2023, *Psych Science*)

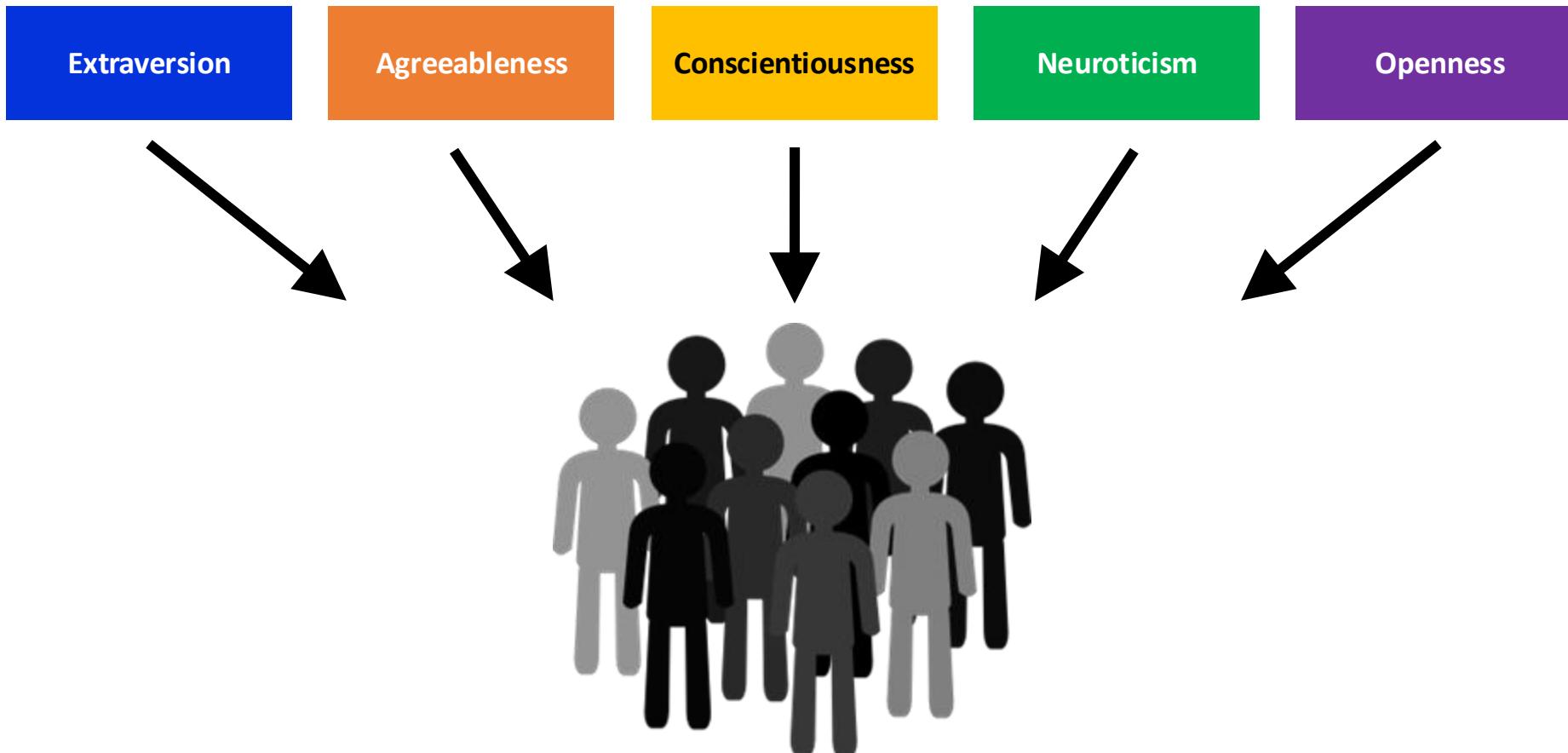
## Ongoing Directions



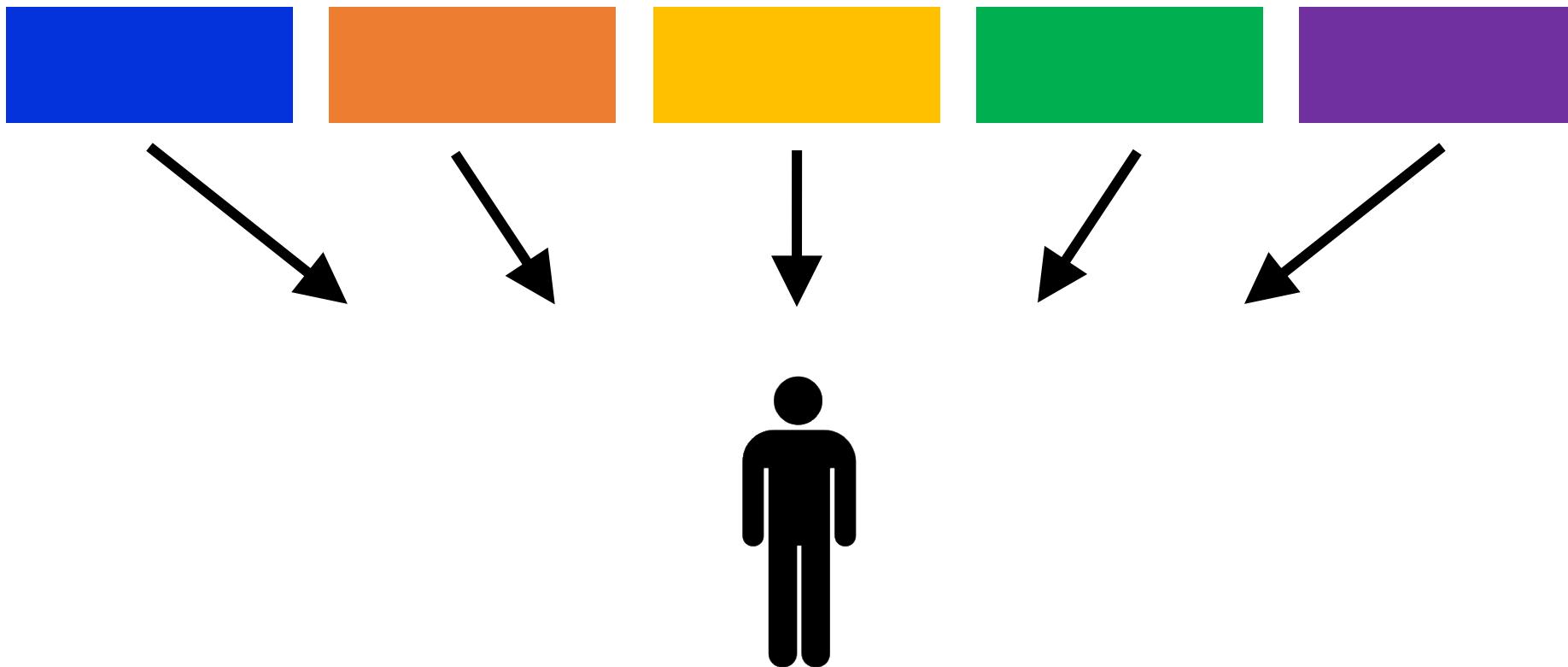
**Aim 1:** Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.

Beck & Jackson  
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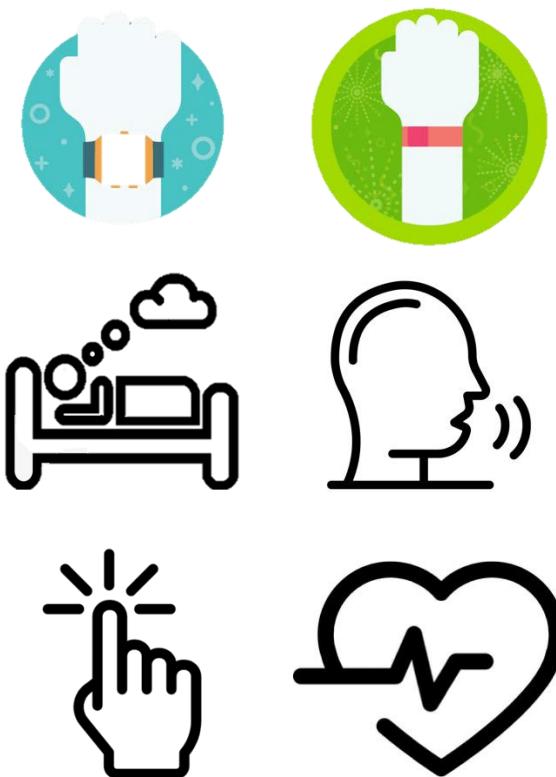
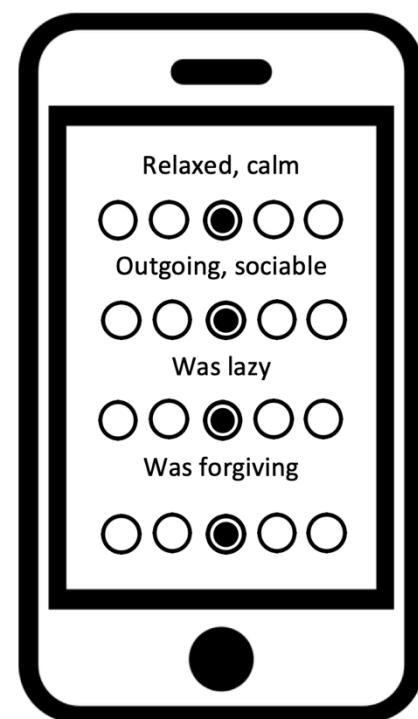
Nomothetic  
Variable-Centered



# Idiographic Person-Specific

## ESM / EMA

## Mobile Sensing



# Methods

2 years of ESM responses from the Personality and Interpersonal Roles Study (PAIRS)

N = 372 Wash U undergrads, total assessments N = 17,715

## Measures

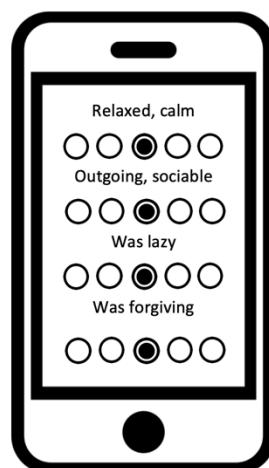
9 items from the Big Five Inventory (BFI)

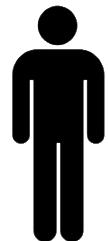
## Procedure

4 assessments / day for 15 days

## Modeling

Graphical vector autoregression

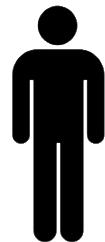




time	E	A	C	N	O
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					

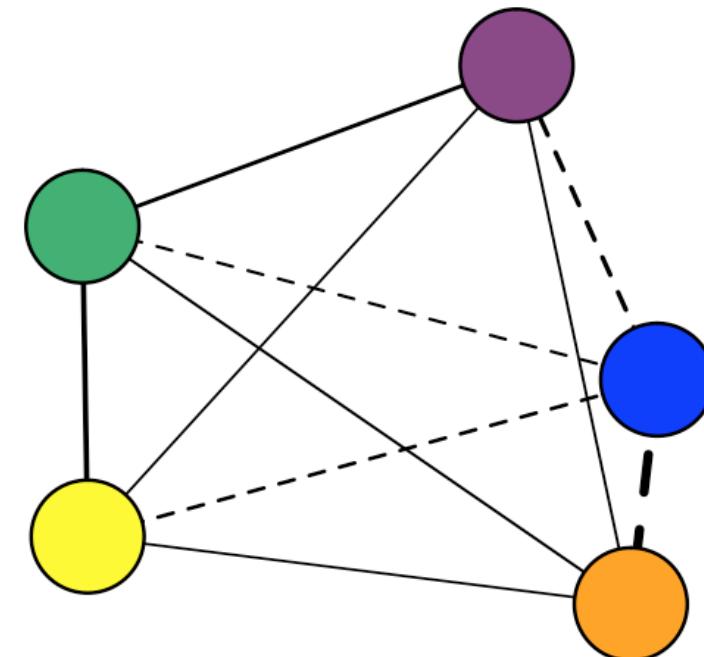
E				
A	0.02			
C	-0.05	0.08		
N	0.64	-0.12	-0.10	
O	0.26	-0.27	0.43	0.07

Contemporaneous: Within Time-Points  
 $x_{it} \leftrightarrow x_{jt}$

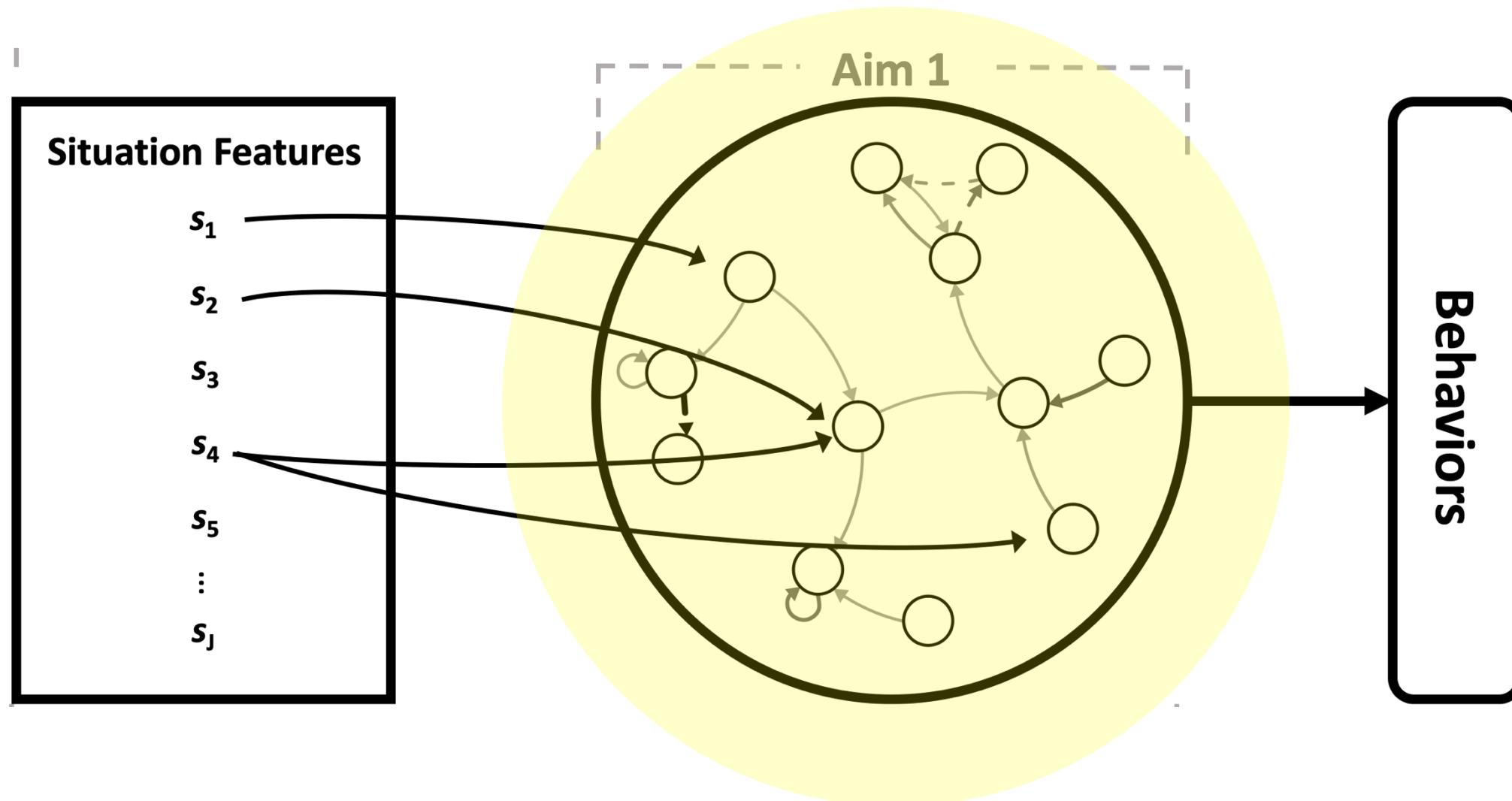


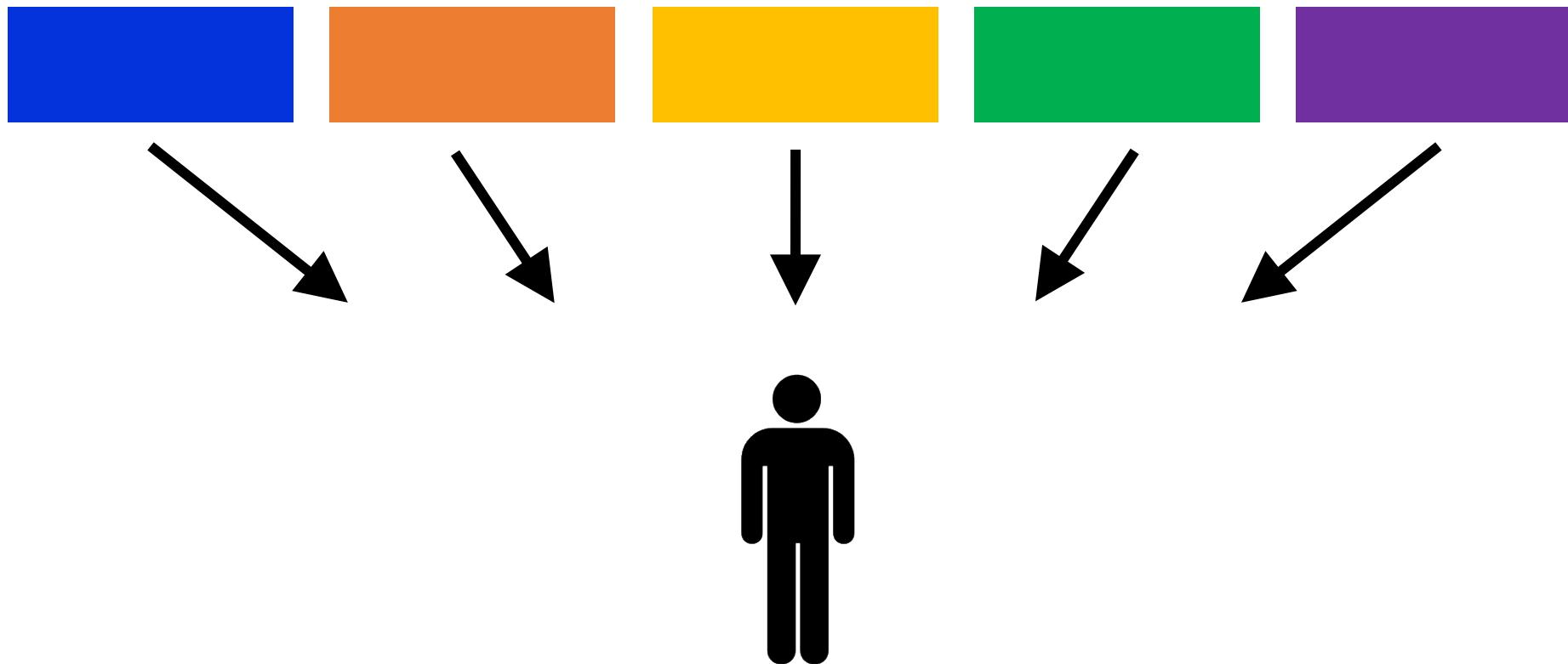
time **E A C N O**

1	4	2	3	2	4
2	2	3	4	1	4
3	3	3	2	2	4
4	3	1	3	2	3
5	4	4	3	2	2
6	4	1	2	3	4
7	2	2	2	2	1
8	4	2	3	3	4
9	3	2	2	1	2
10	4	2	3	3	3
11	3	1	3	2	5

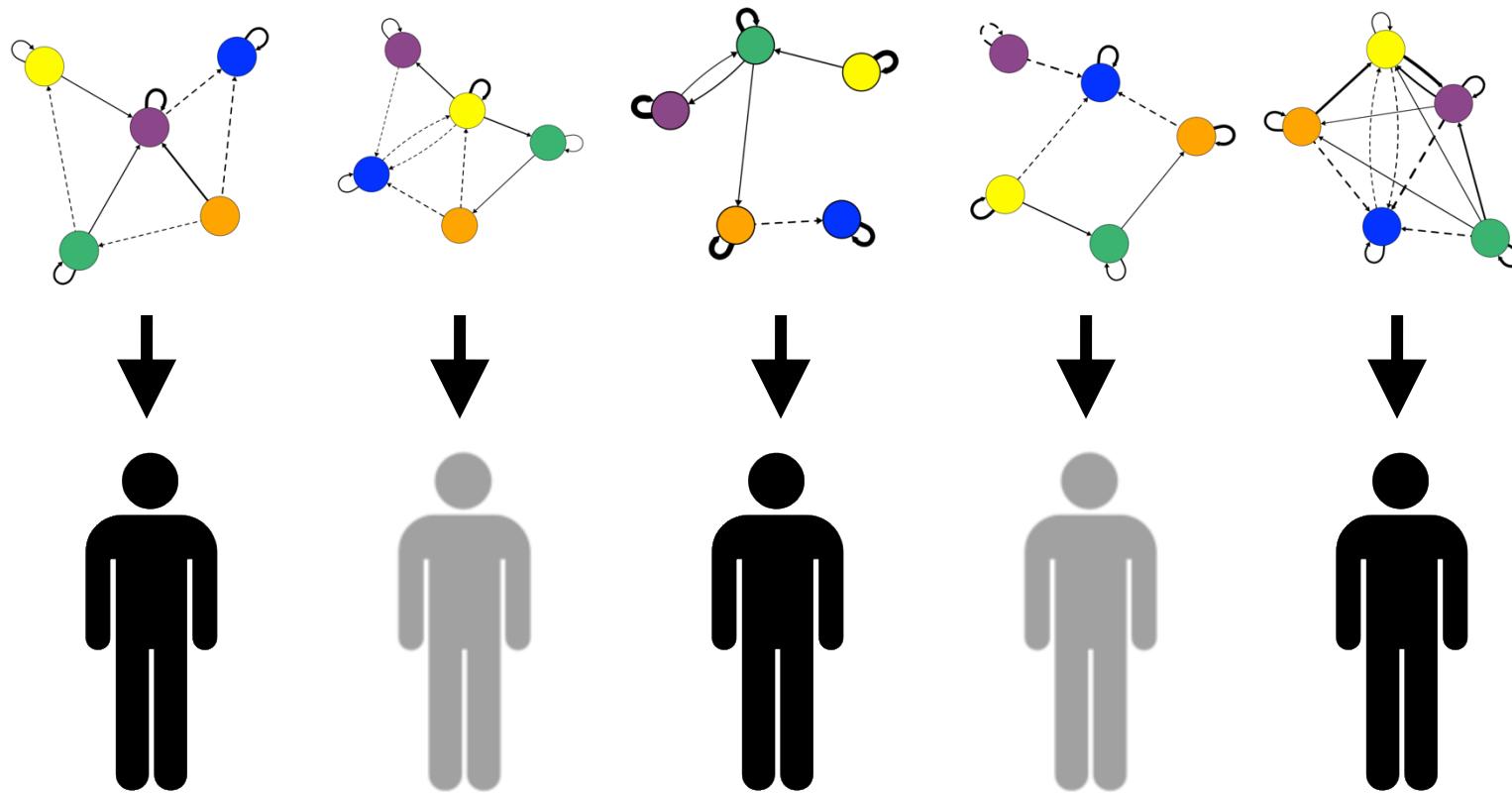


**Contemporaneous: Within Time-Points**  
 $x_{it} \leftrightarrow x_{jt}$





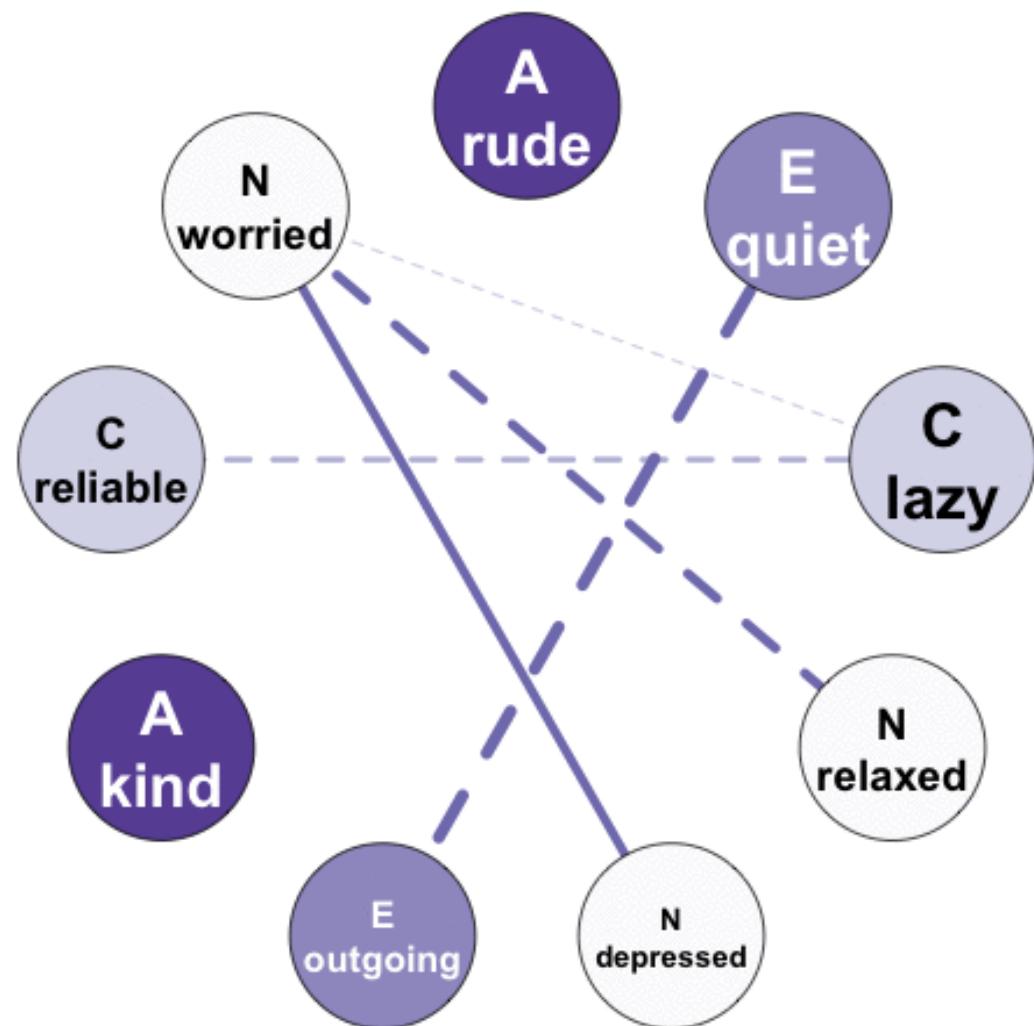
# Idiographic Person-Specific

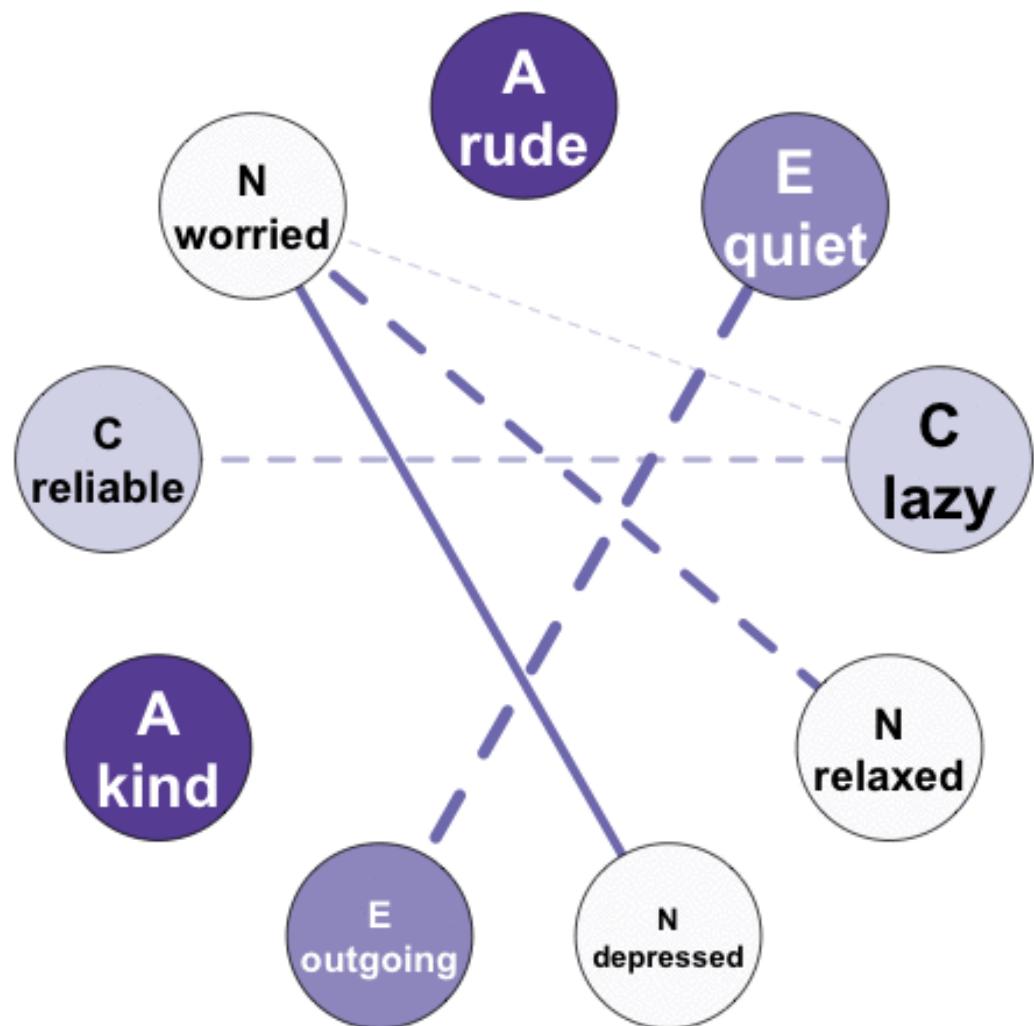


**Idiographic  
Person-Specific**

# RESULTS

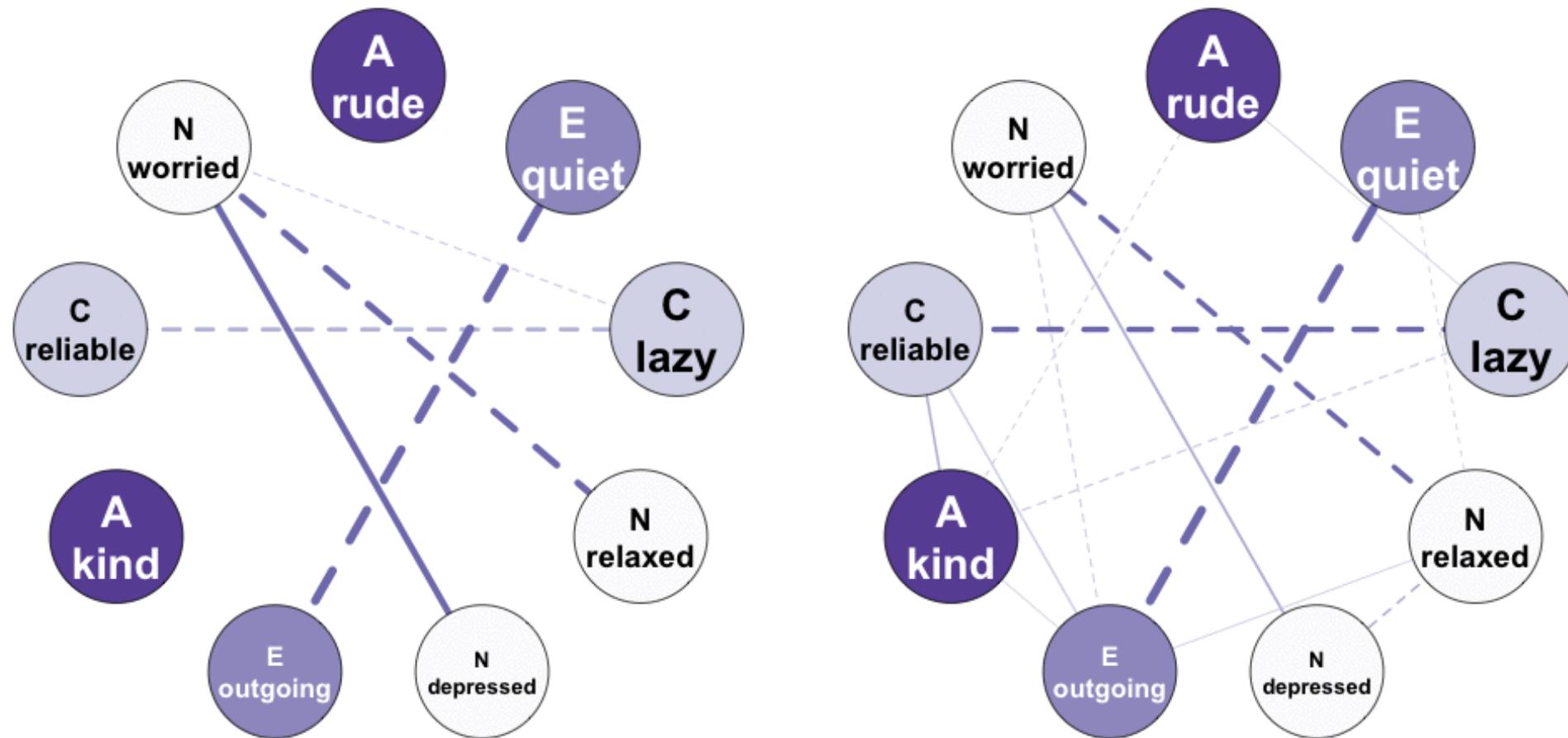
Aim 1

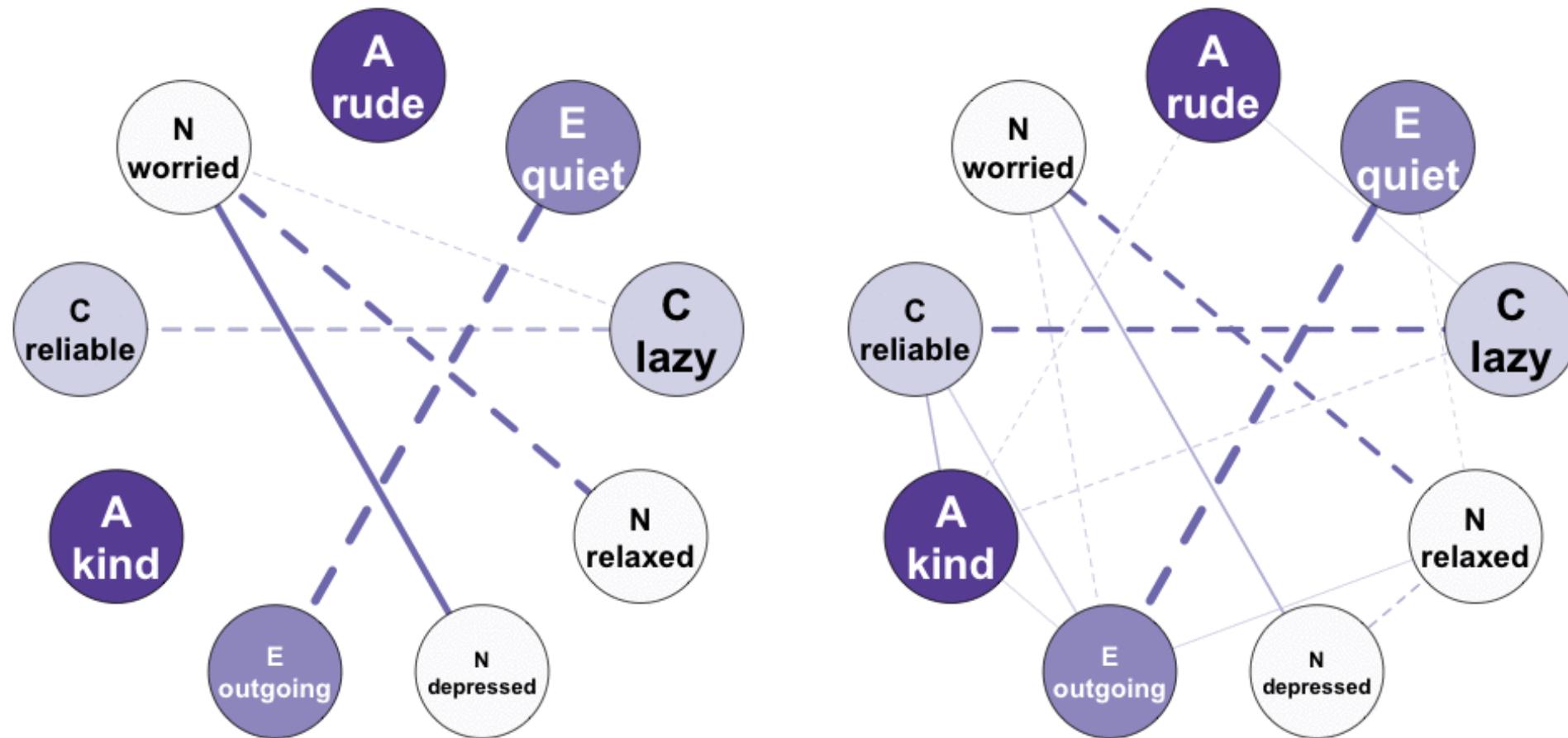


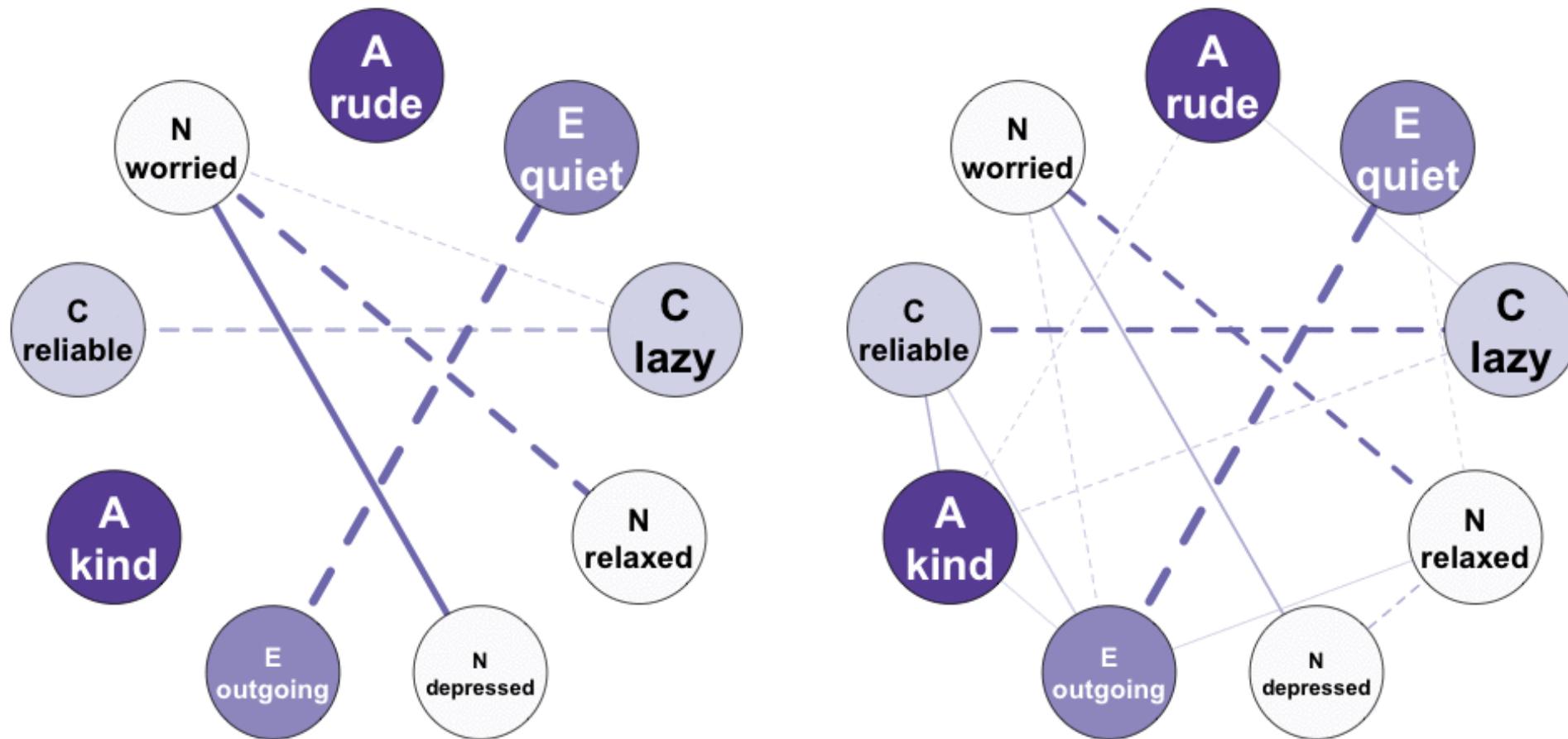


The structures differ across people.

But do they show expected longitudinal consistency?



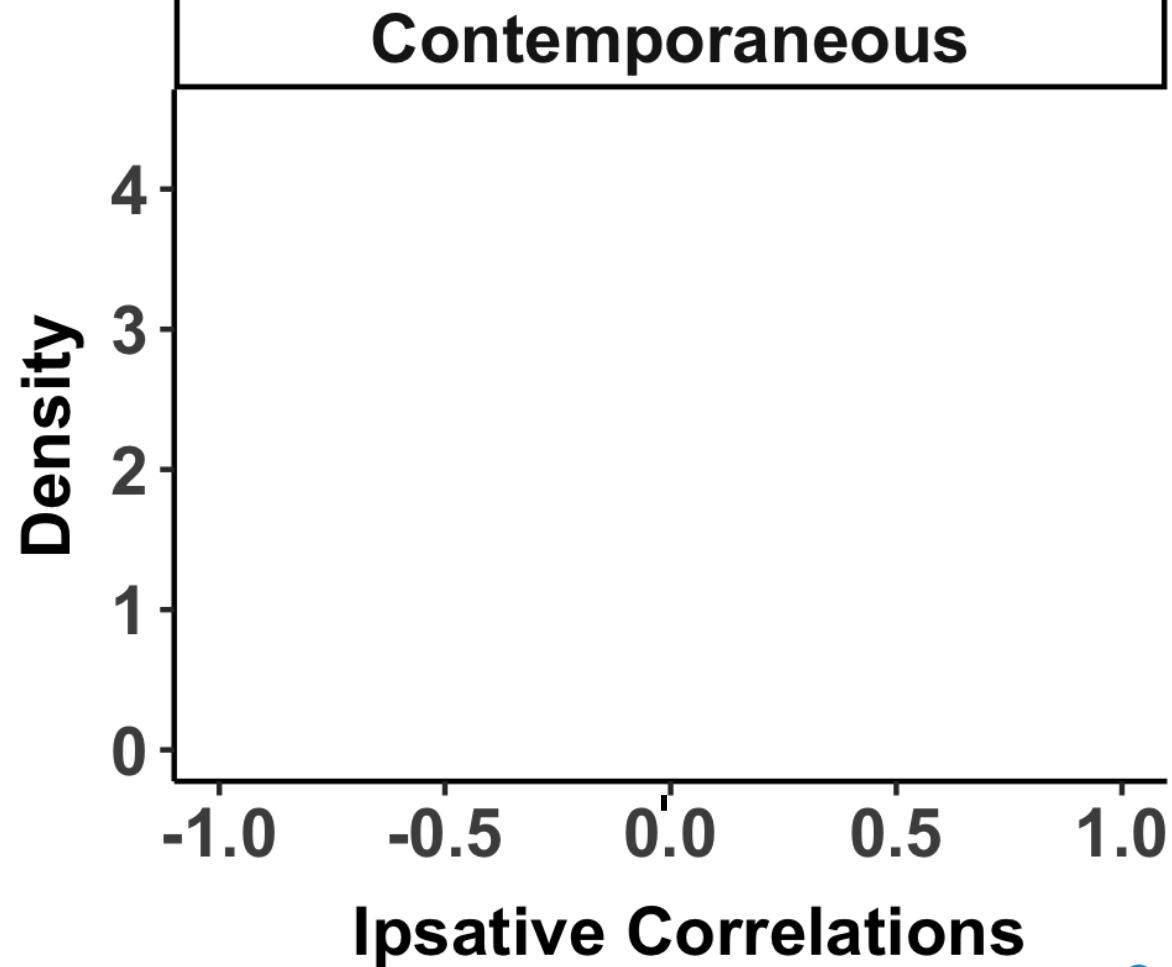




How consistent is  
idiographic personality  
across two  
years?

## Ipsative Network Consistency

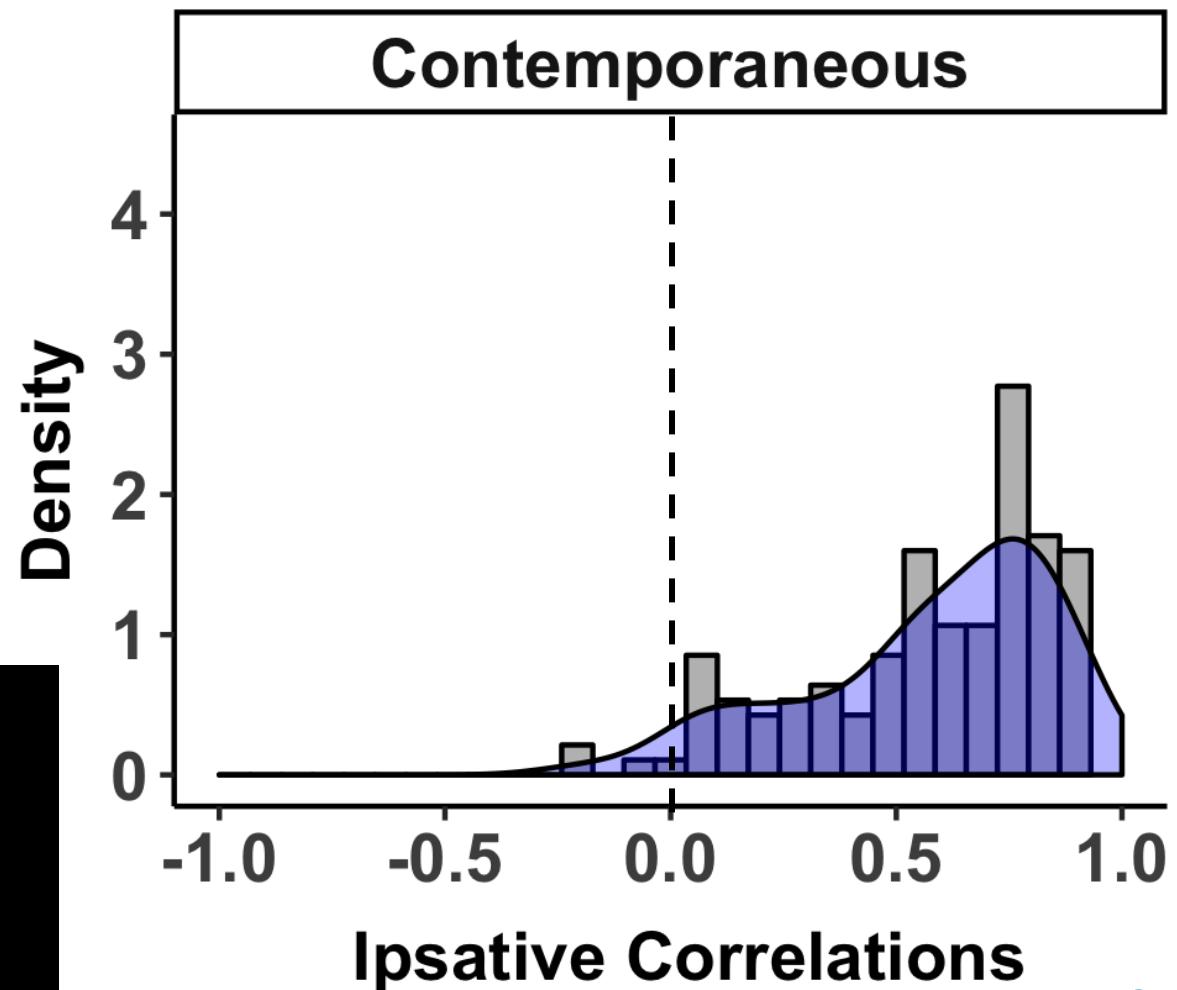
Contemporaneous



How consistent is  
idiographic personality  
across two  
years?

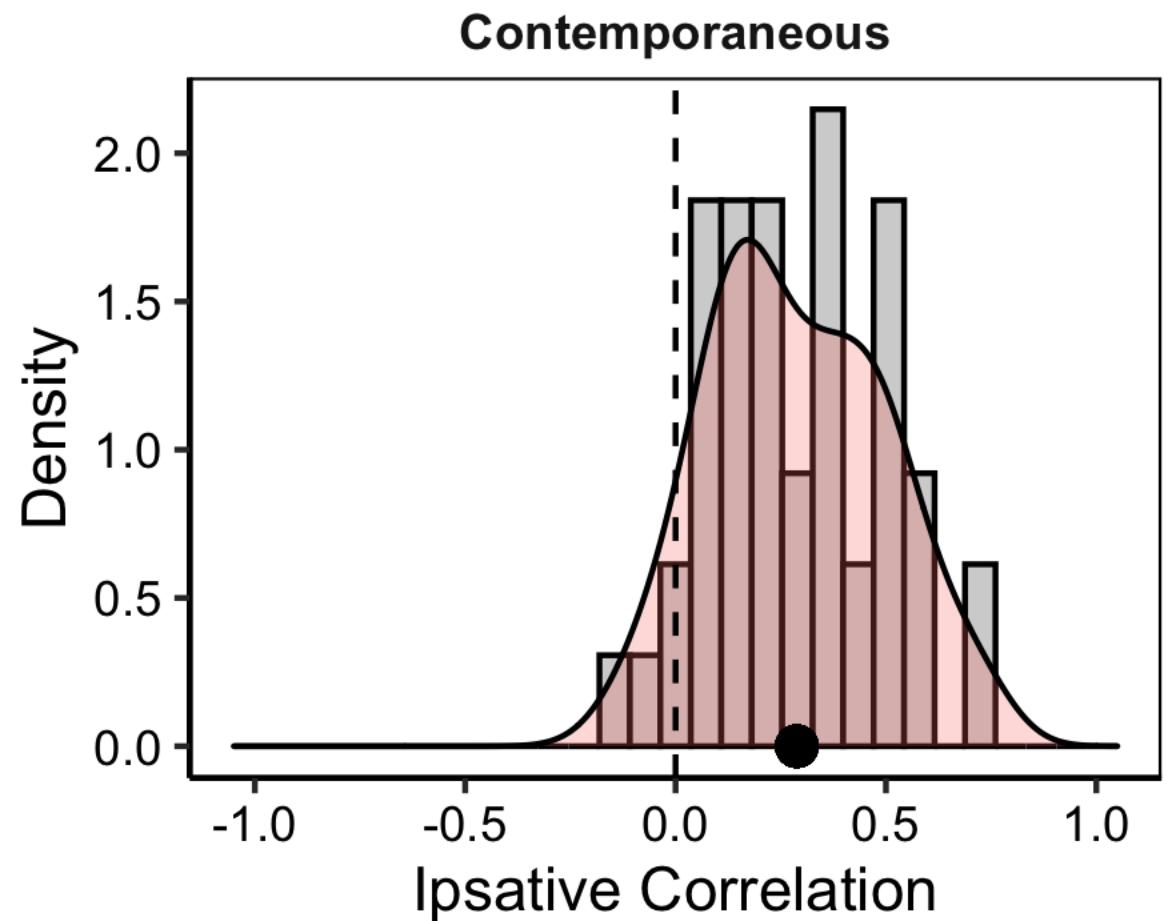
Idiographic Personality is  
consistent over two years.

## Ipsative Network Consistency



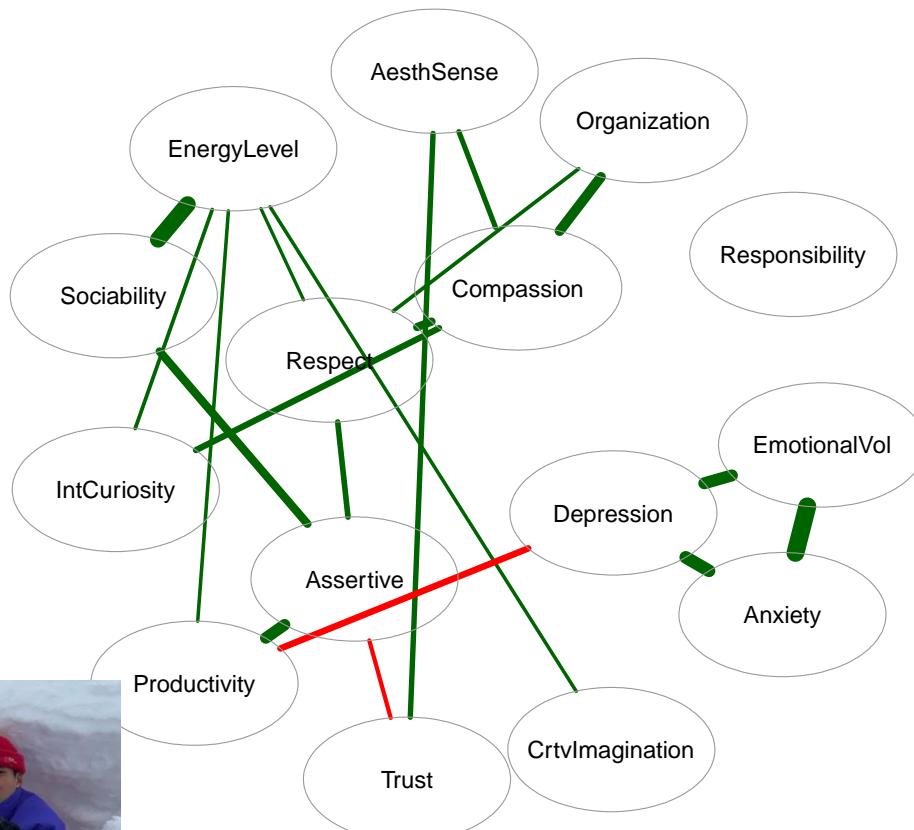
How consistent is  
idiographic personality  
across two  
years?

Idiographic Personality is  
consistent over two years AND  
global events.



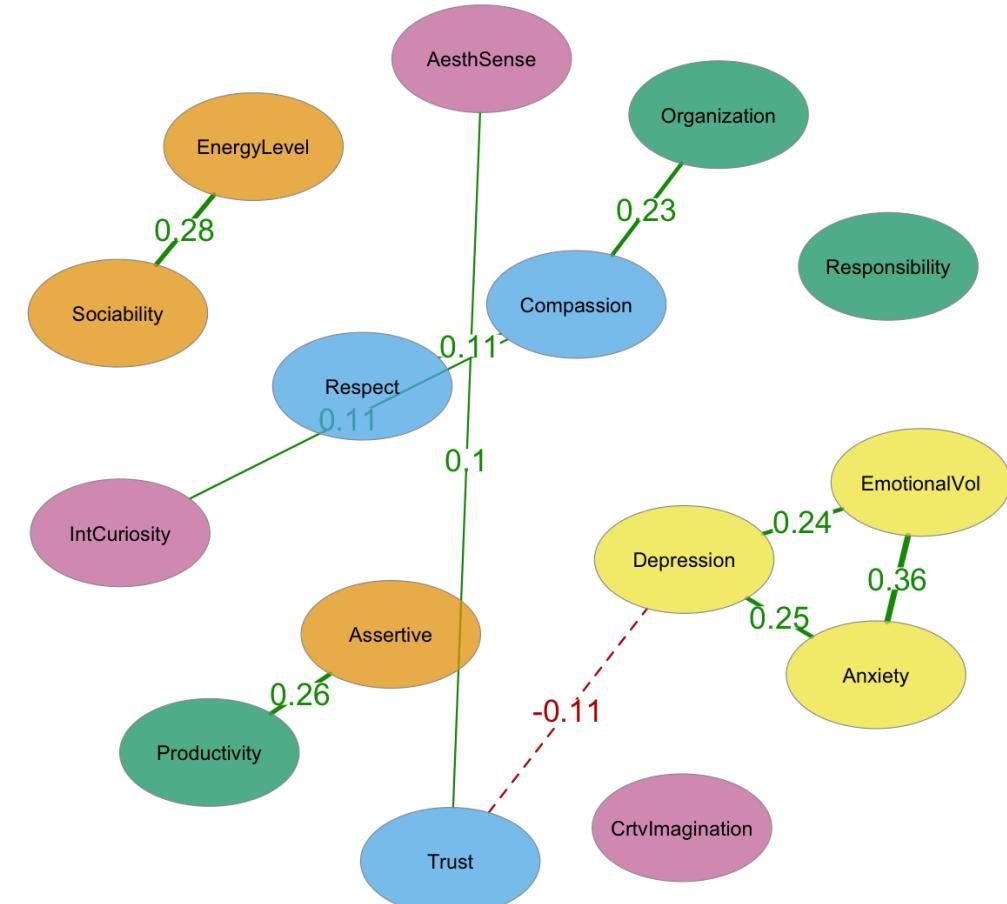
# Extension: Time-Varying Networks

Stationary Network



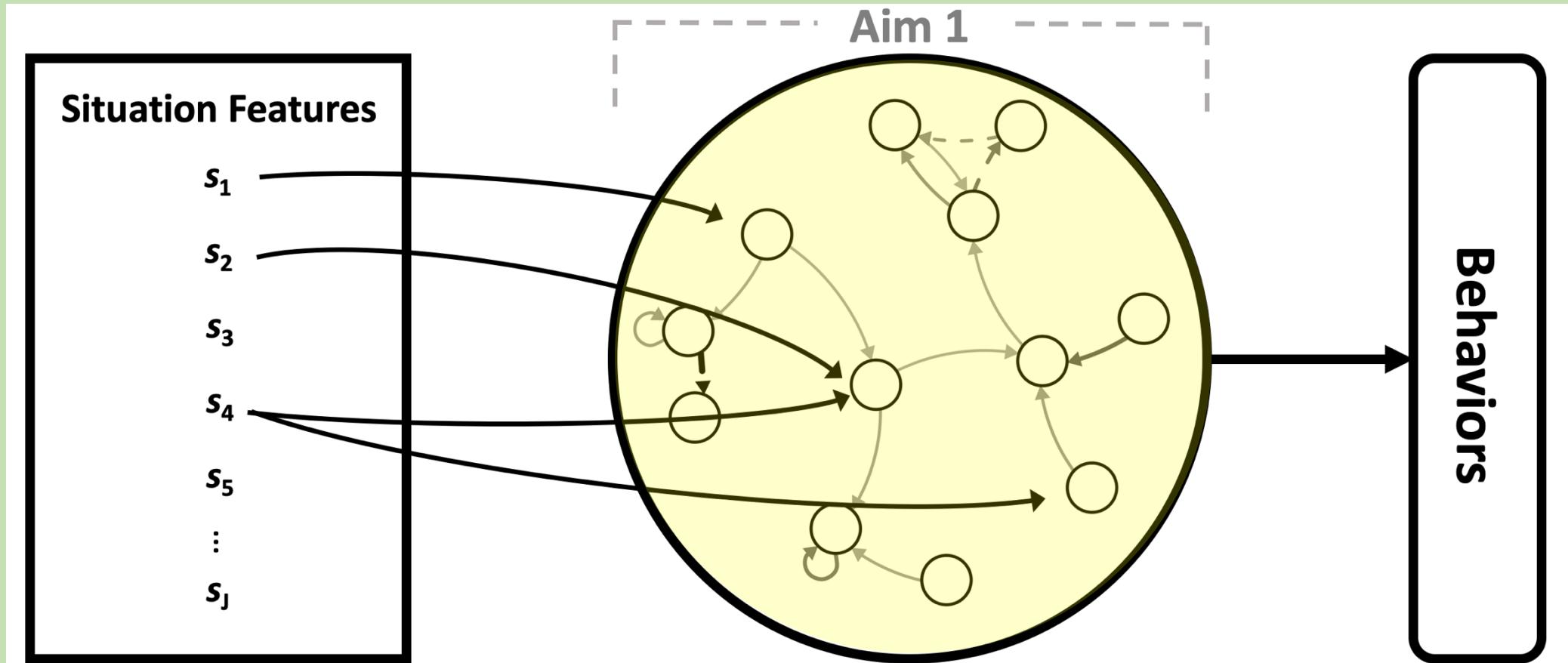
Colin J Lee

Estimation Point 1



**Aim 1:** Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.

Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)



**Aim 1:** Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.

**Beck & Jackson**  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

**Idiographic personality structures are:**

**Unique (i.e. differ across people).**

**Relatively consistent over time.**

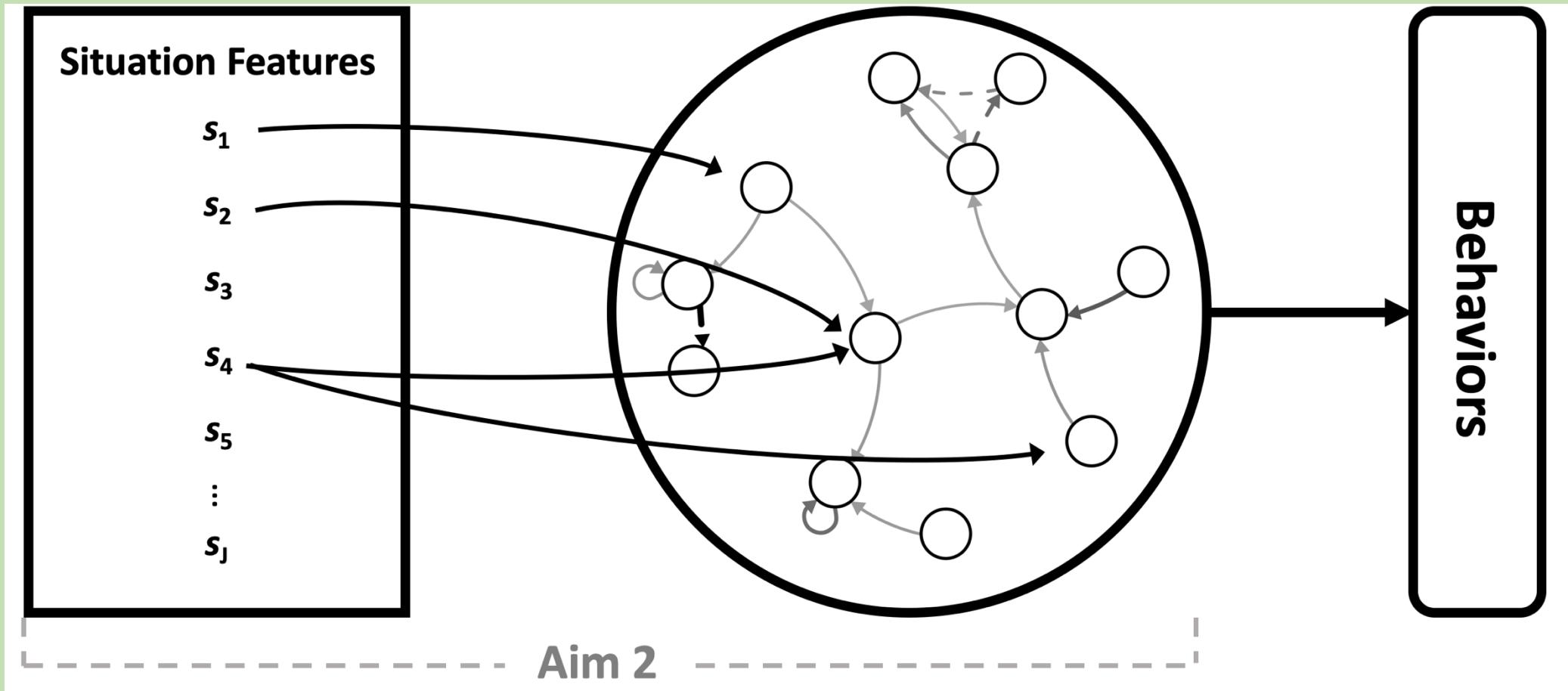
**Relatively consistent across global events.**

**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck, et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

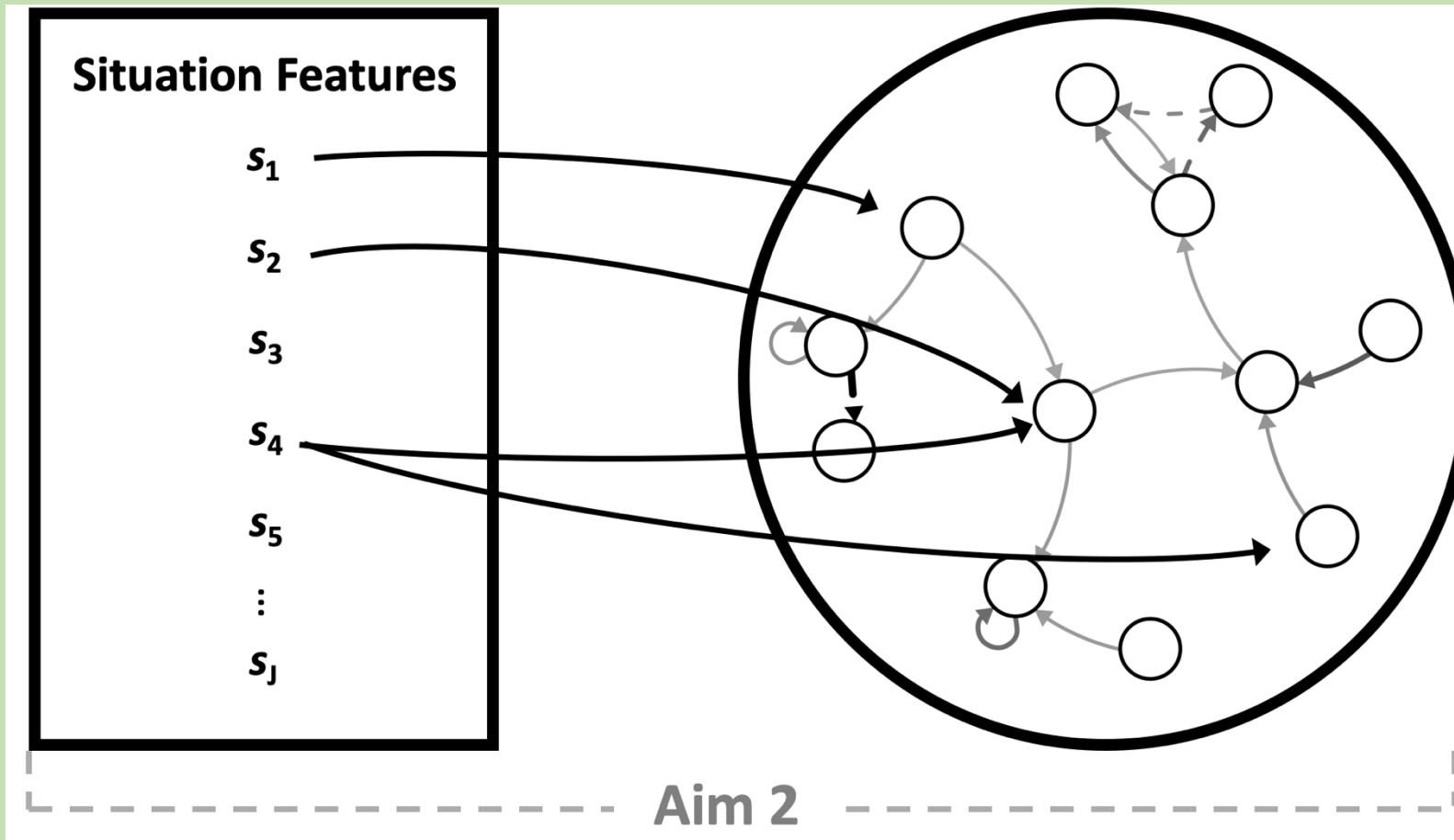


**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

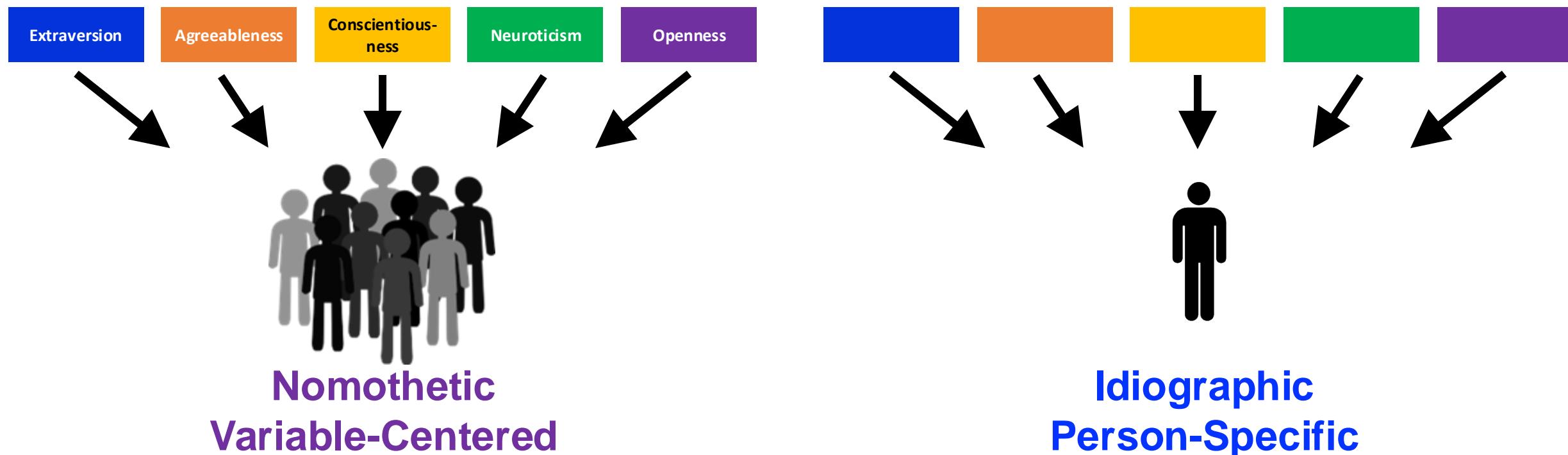
Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck, et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)



\* = shared first authorship.



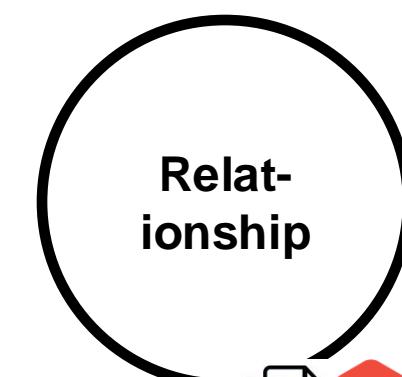
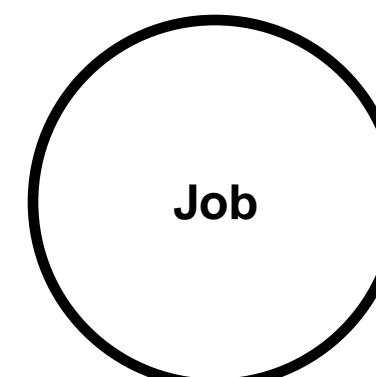
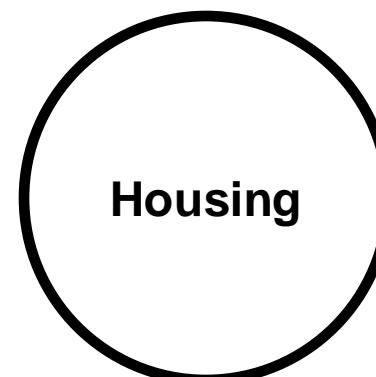
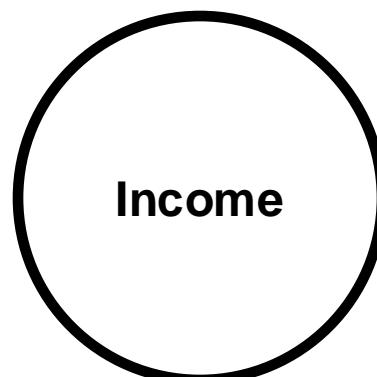
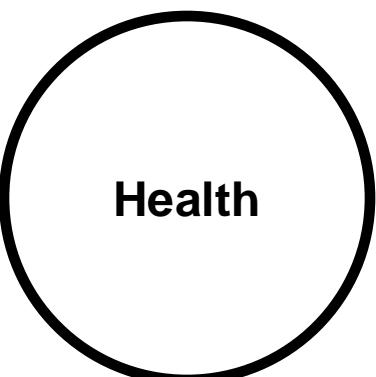


**Strong Theoretical Models**

**Rich longitudinal data**

**Unique patterns ignored**

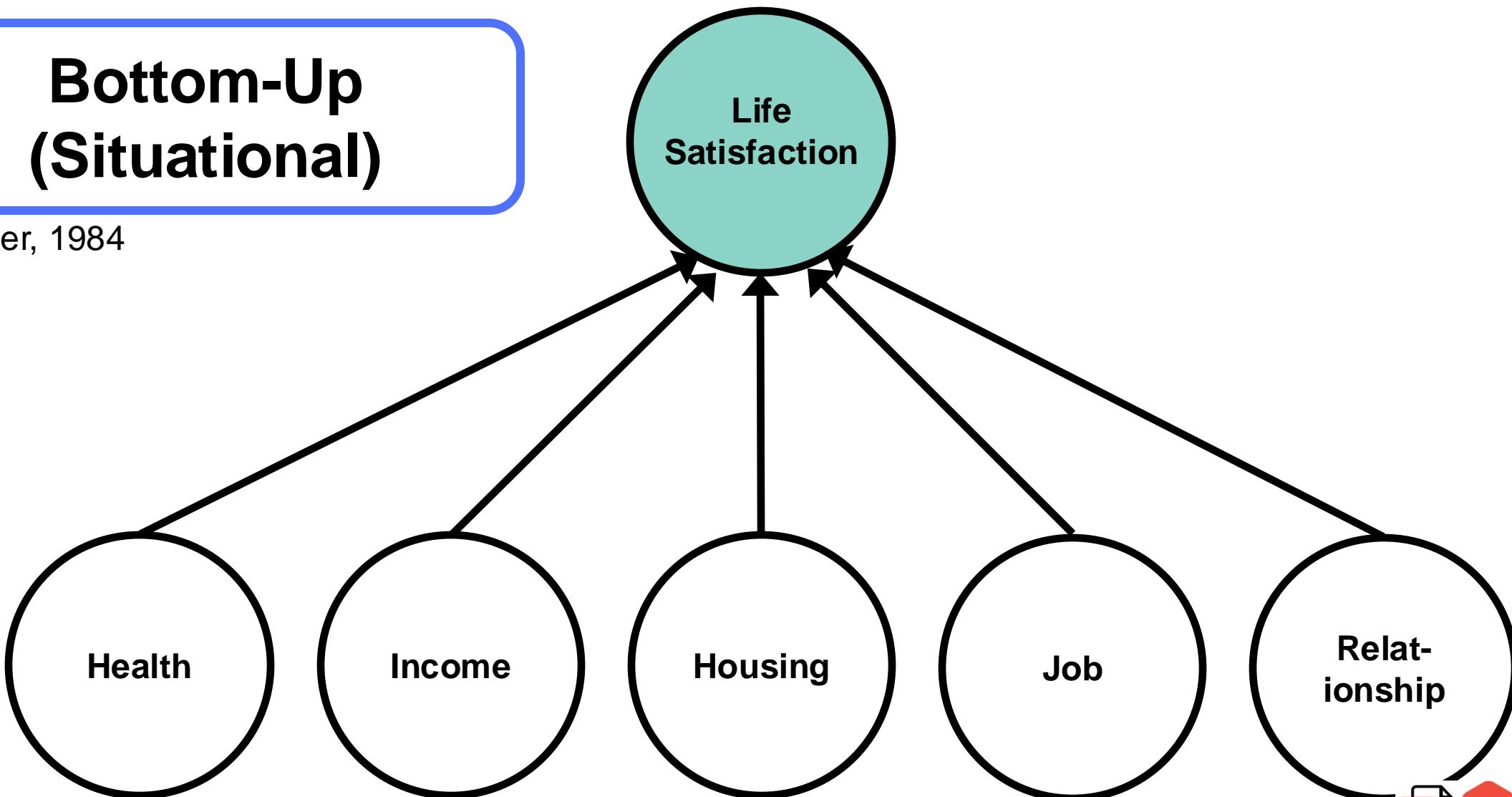
**Domain Satisfaction**



## Bottom-Up (Situational)

Diener, 1984

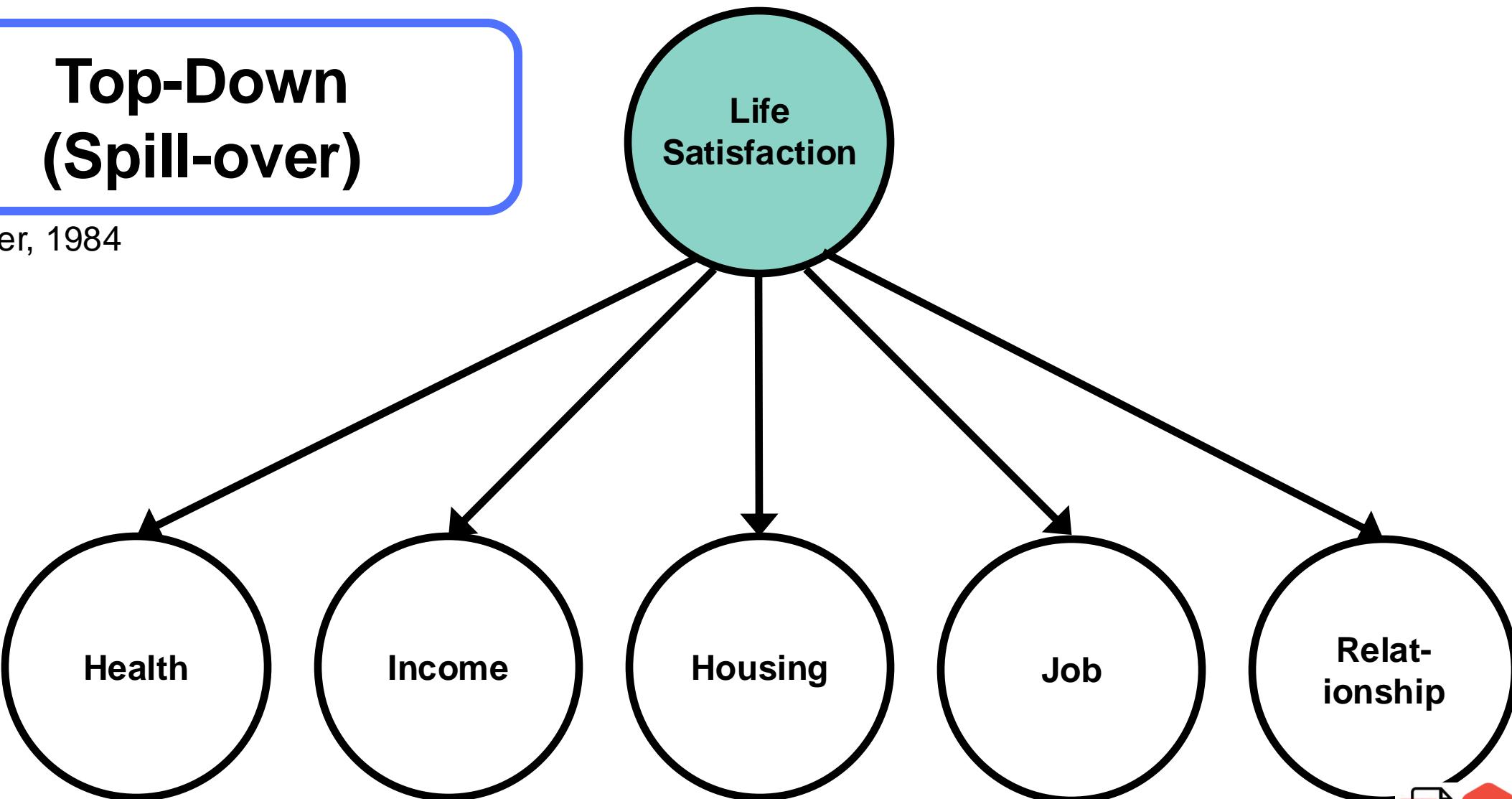
Domain Satisfaction



## Top-Down (Spill-over)

Diener, 1984

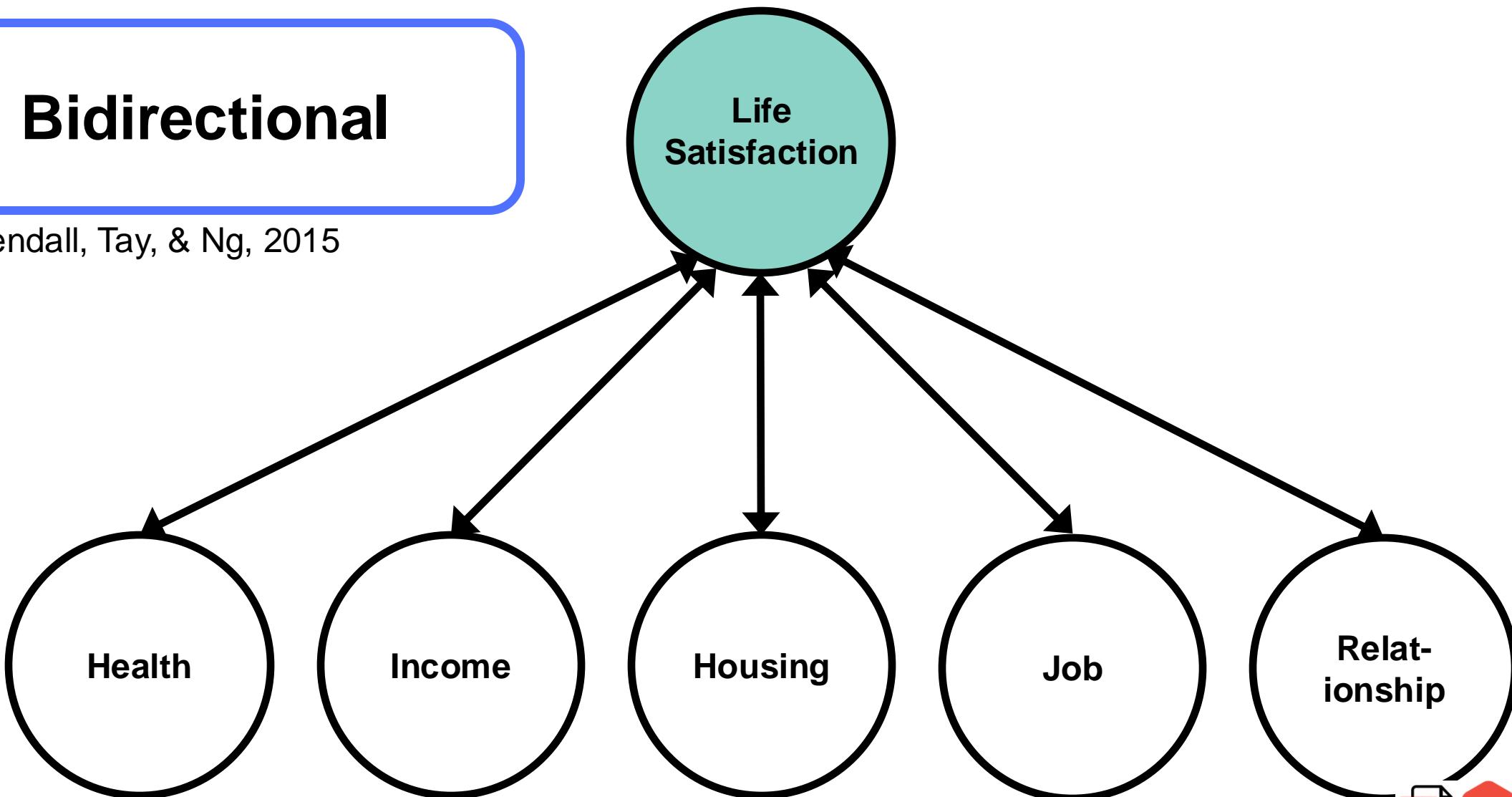
Domain Satisfaction



**Bidirectional**

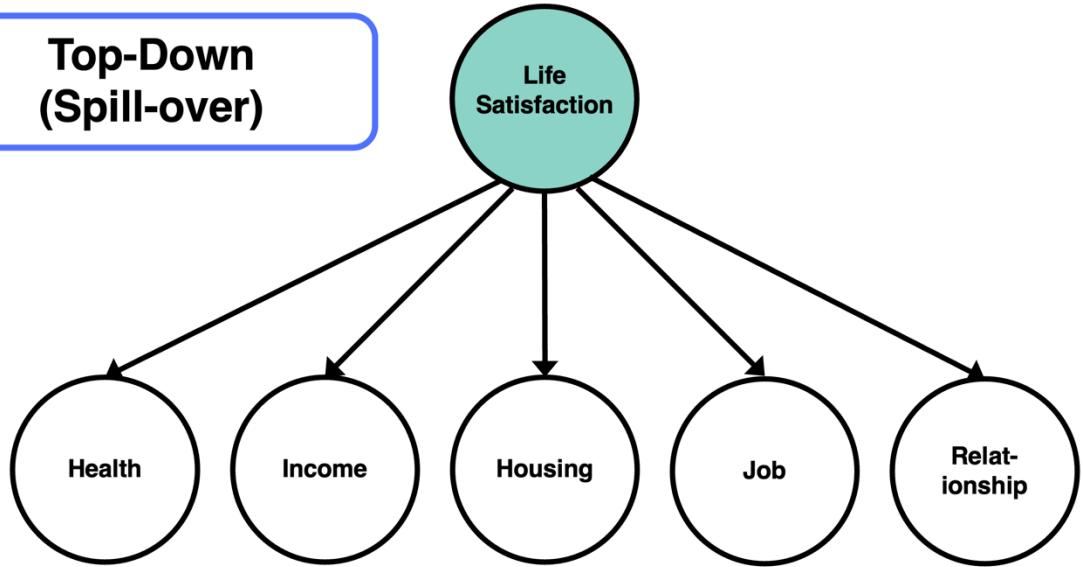
Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015

Domain Satisfaction



### Top-Down (Spill-over)

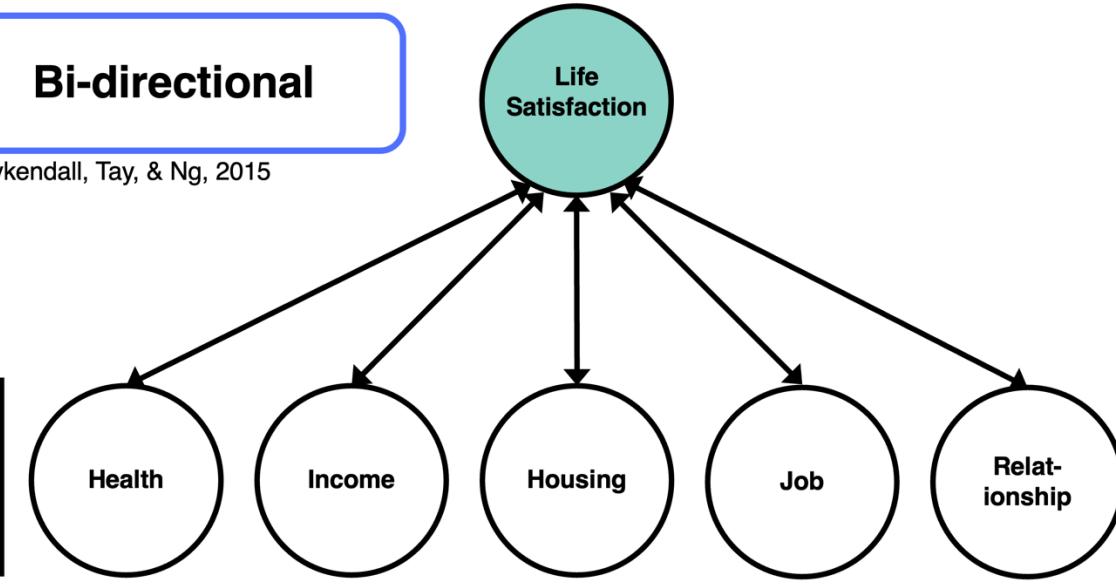
Domain Satisfaction



### Bi-directional

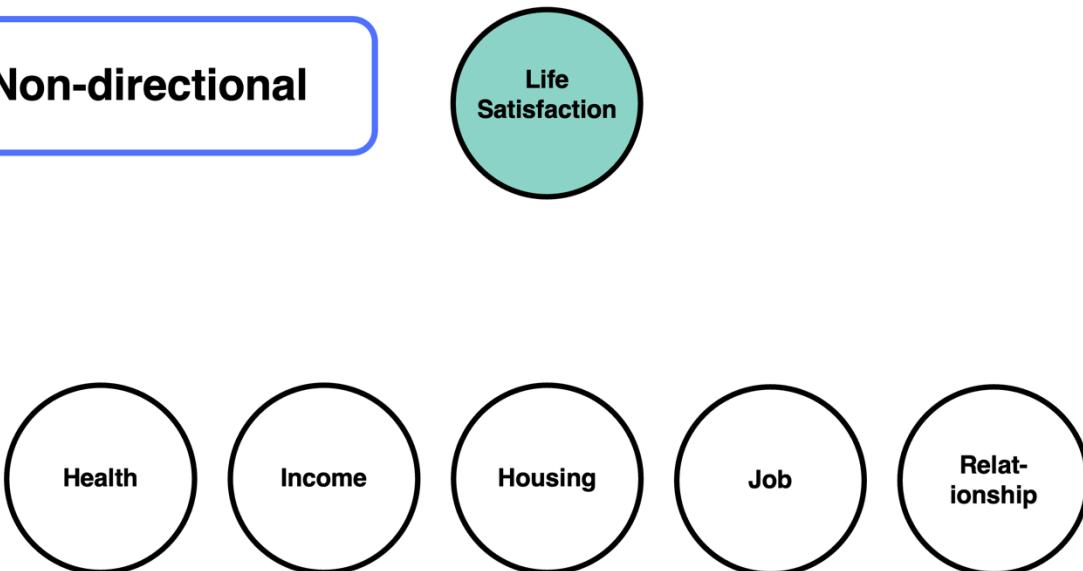
Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015

Domain Satisfaction



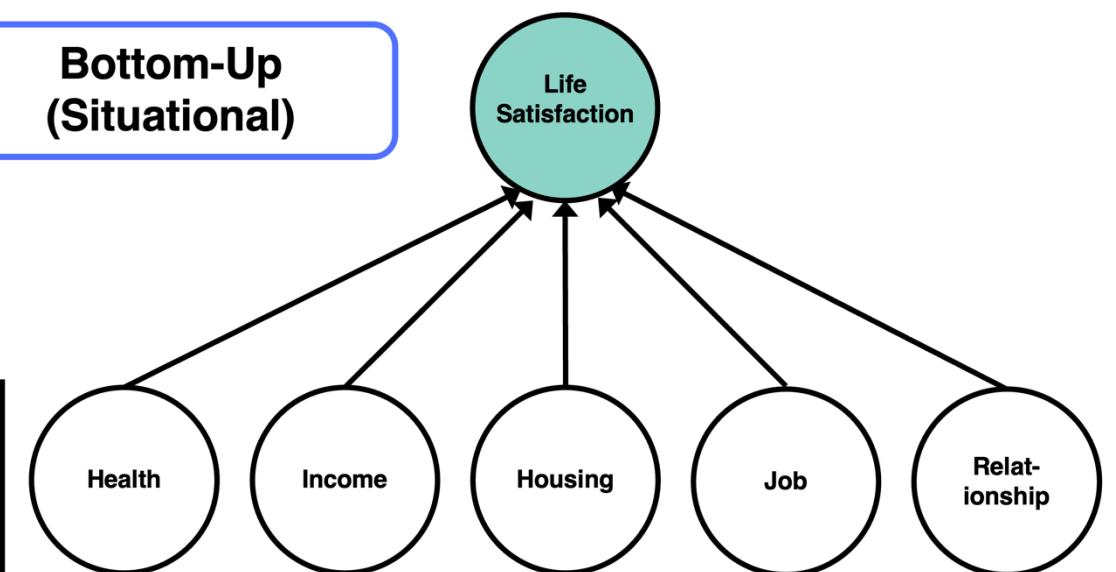
### Non-directional

Domain Satisfaction

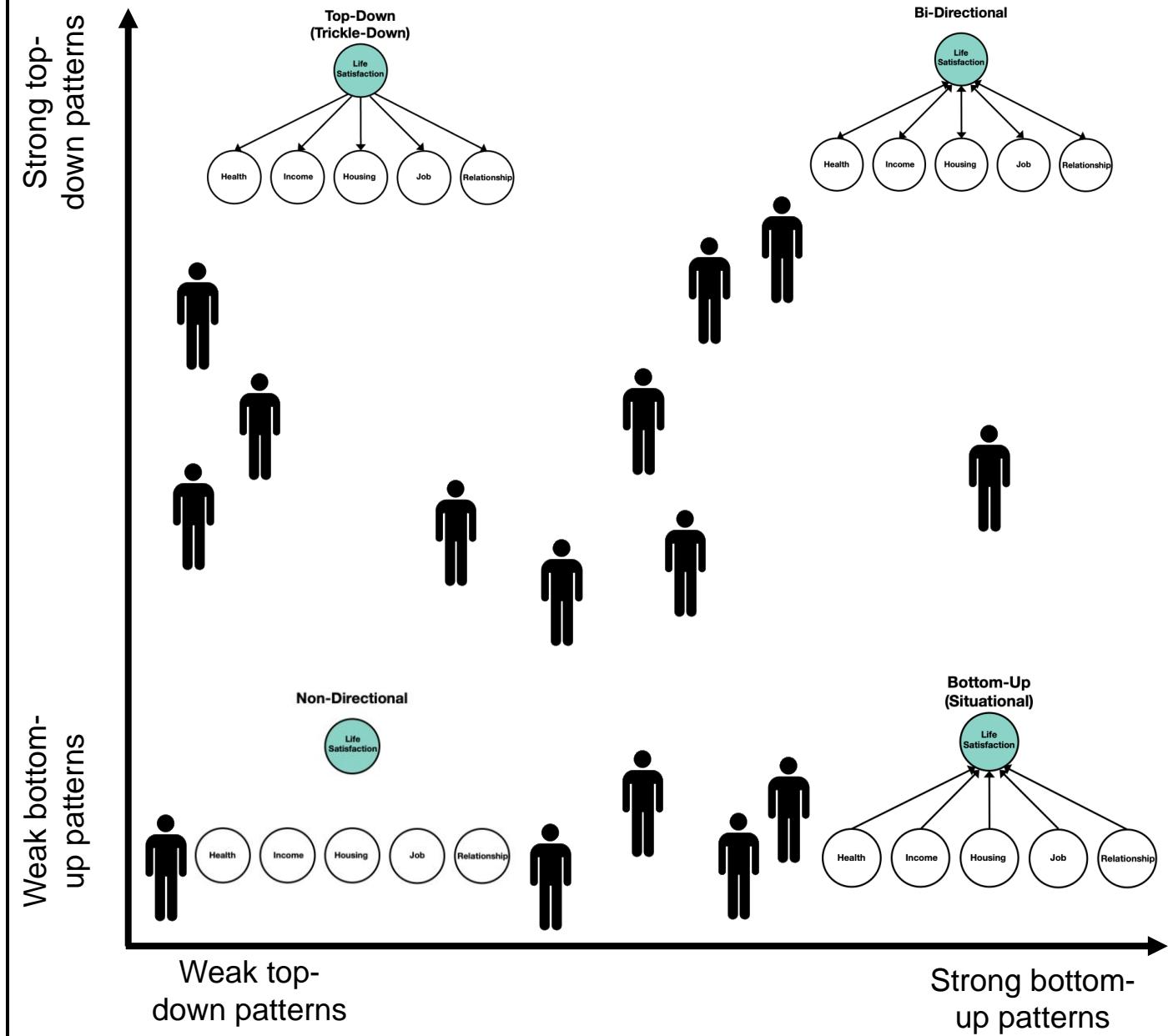


### Bottom-Up (Situational)

Domain Satisfaction



# Personalised Perspectives on Happiness: For whom is each theory correct?



**GSOEP****HILDA****SHP****BHPS****LISS****Multilevel VAR(1) Models**

Epskamp et al., 2018

**Level 1:**

$$Y_{ptj} = \beta_{0pj} + \beta_{1pj} * V_{1,p,t-1} + \dots + \beta_{kpj} * V_{k,p,t-1} + \varepsilon_{ptj}$$

**Level 2:**

$$\beta_{0pj} = \gamma_{00j} + \gamma_{01j} * \bar{V}_{1,p} + \dots + \gamma_{01j} * \bar{V}_{kp} + r_{0pj}$$

$$\vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots$$

$$\beta_{kpj} = \gamma_{k0j} + \gamma_{k1j} * \bar{V}_{p,1} + \dots + \gamma_{kkj} * \bar{V}_{pj} + r_{kpj}$$

**Between-Person Effects  
(Level 2)**

$$\gamma_{01j} - \gamma_{0kj}$$

**Within-Person Effects  
(Level 1)**

$$\gamma_{10j} - \gamma_{kkj}$$

**Person-Specific Effects  
(Level 2 random effects)**

$$r_{0pj} - r_{kpj}$$

**GSOEP****HILDA****SHP****BHPS****LISS****Multilevel VAR(1) Models**

Epskamp et al., 2018

**Level 1:**

$$Y_{ptj} = \beta_{0pj} + \beta_{1pj} * V_{1,p,t-1} + \dots + \beta_{kpj} * V_{k,p,t-1} + \varepsilon_{ptj}$$

**Level 2:**

$$\beta_{0pj} = \gamma_{00j} + \gamma_{01j} * \bar{V}_{1,p} + \dots + \gamma_{01j} * \bar{V}_{kp} + r_{0pj}$$

$$\vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots \quad \vdots$$

$$\beta_{kpj} = \gamma_{k0j} + \gamma_{k1j} * \bar{V}_{p,1} + \dots + \gamma_{kkj} * \bar{V}_{pj} + r_{kpj}$$

**Between-Person Effects  
(Level 2)**

$$\gamma_{01j} - \gamma_{0kj}$$

**Within-Person Effects  
(Level 1)**

$$\gamma_{10j} - \gamma_{kkj}$$

**Person-Specific Effects  
(Level 2 random effects)**

$$r_{0pj} - r_{kpj}$$

# RESULTS

Aim 2

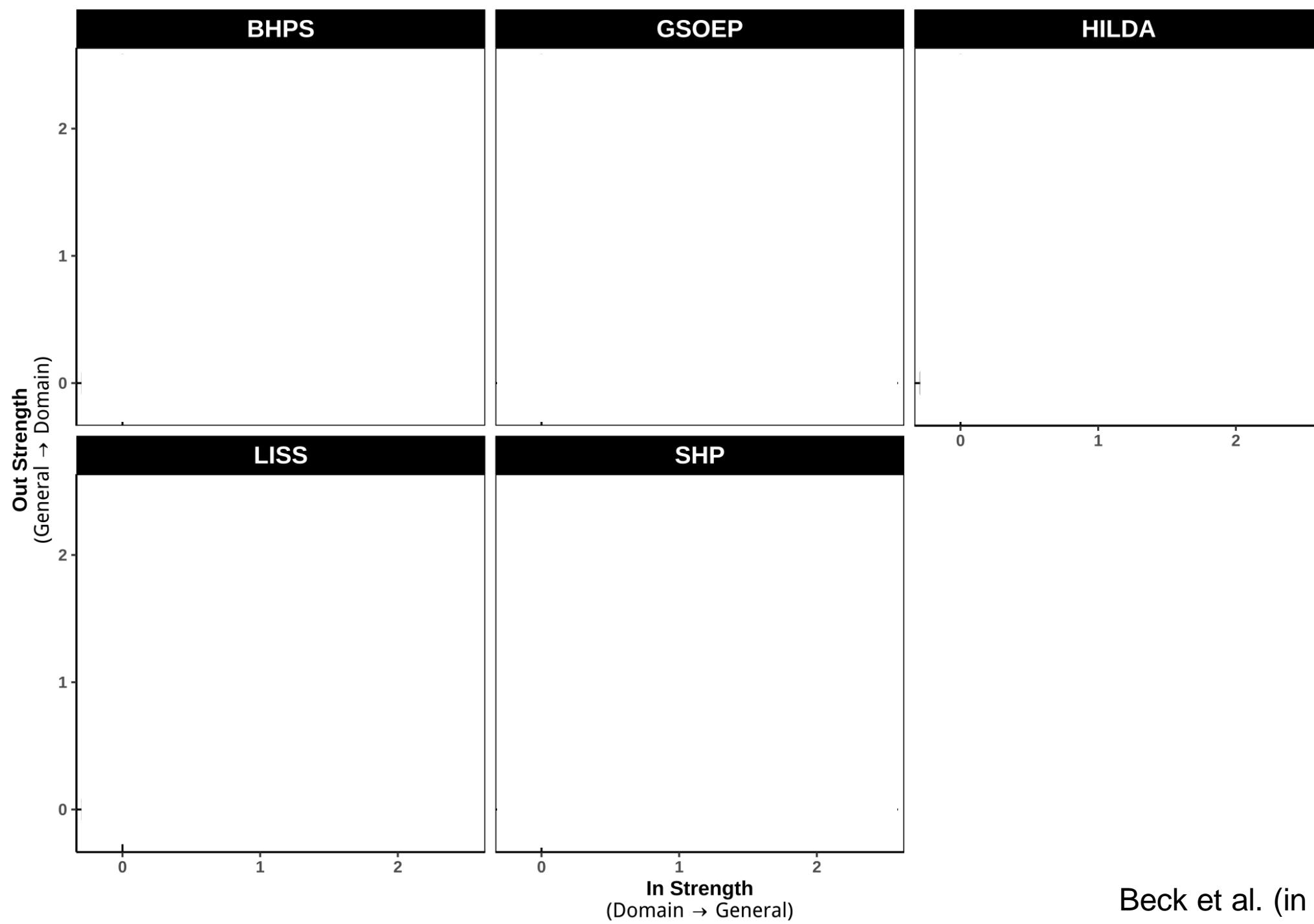
Top Down

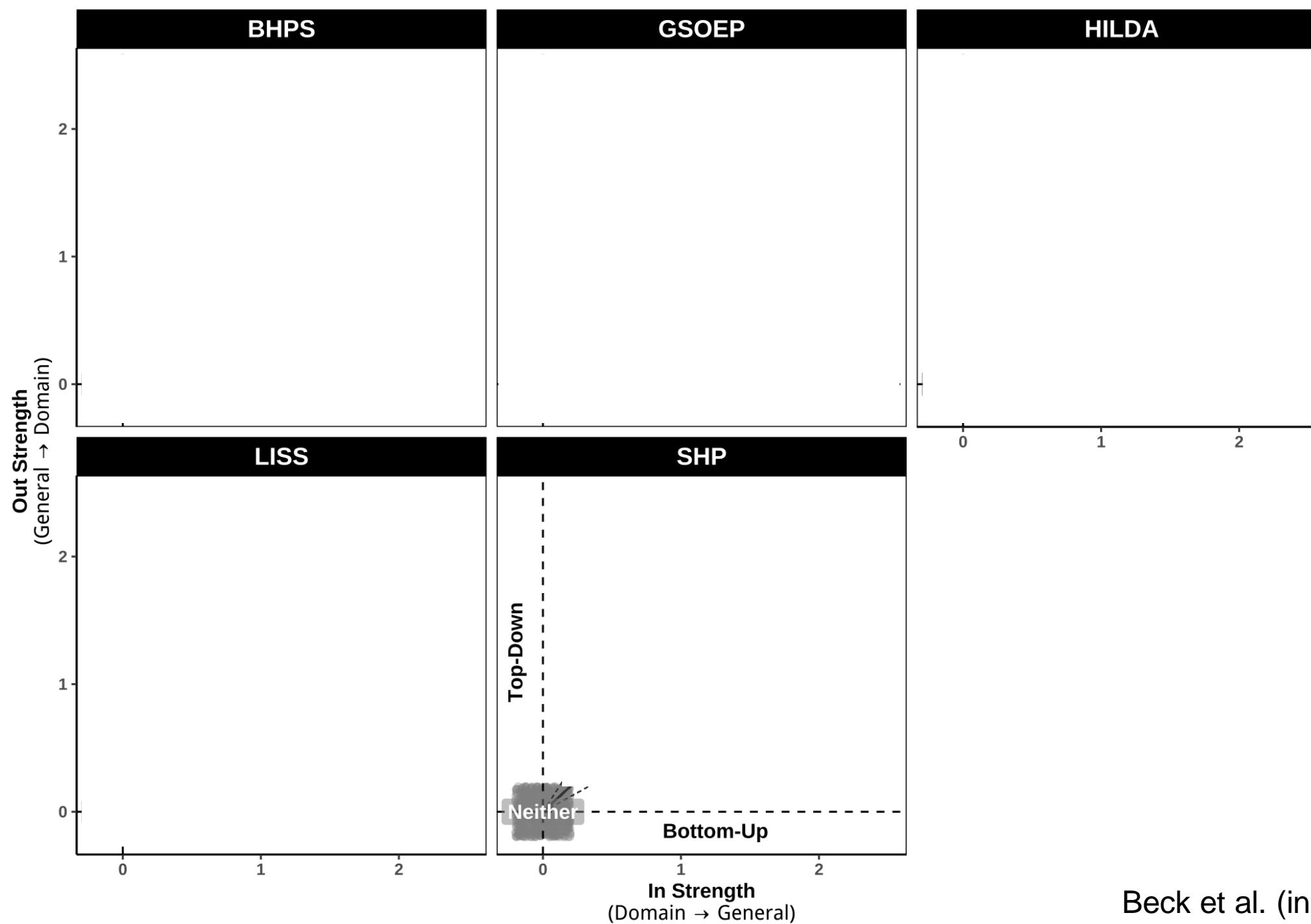
Bi-directional

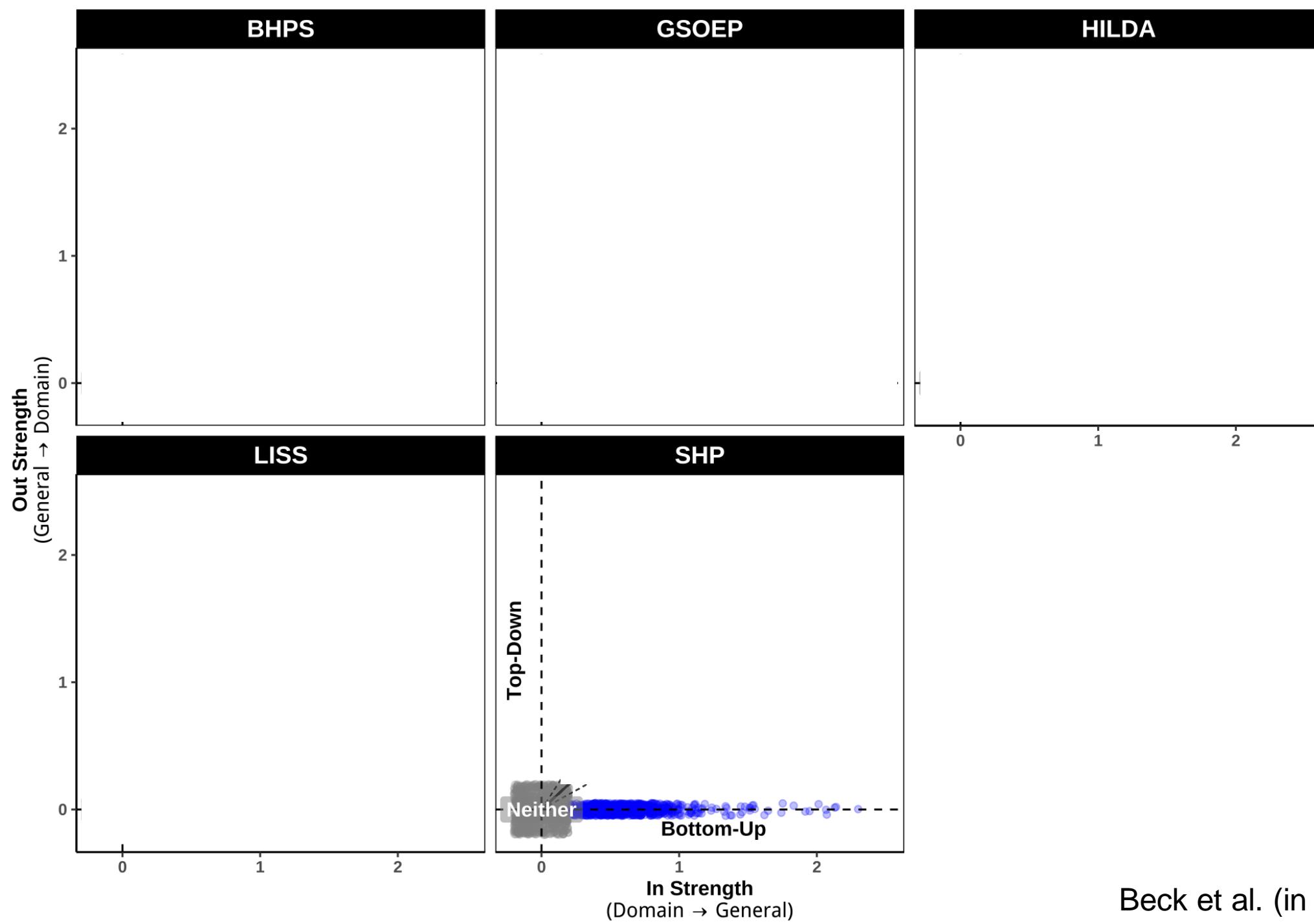
Non-Directional

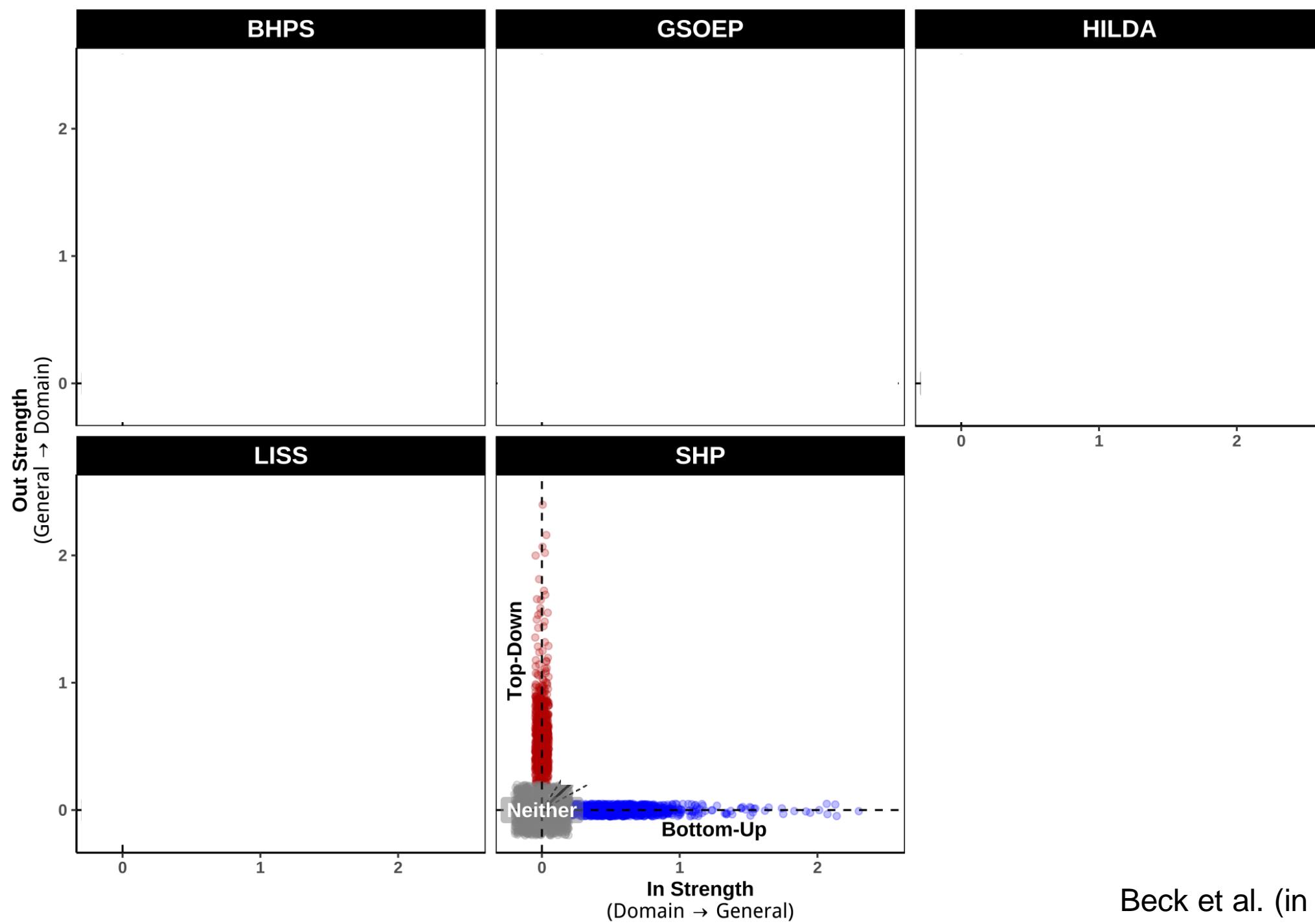
Bottom Up

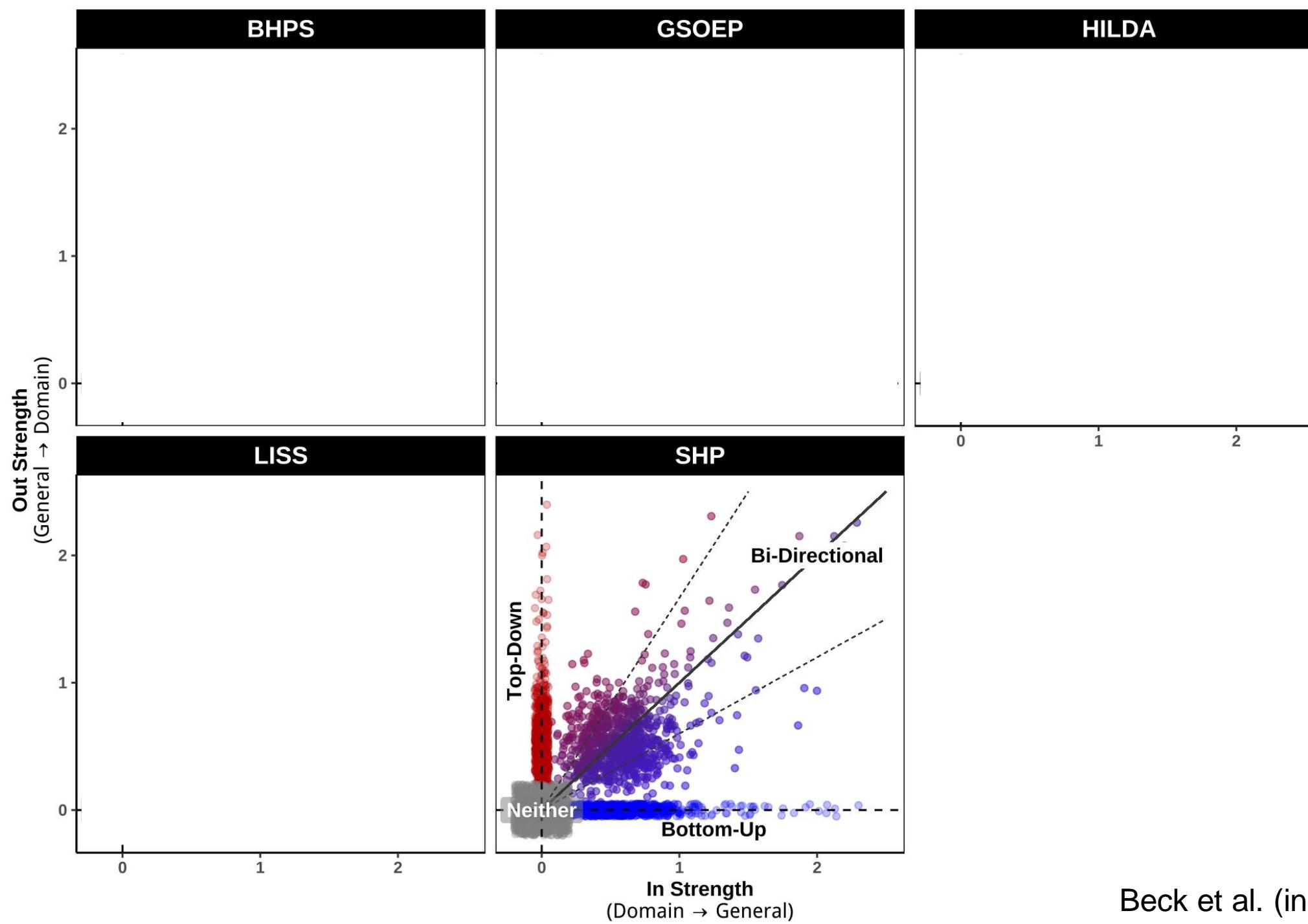


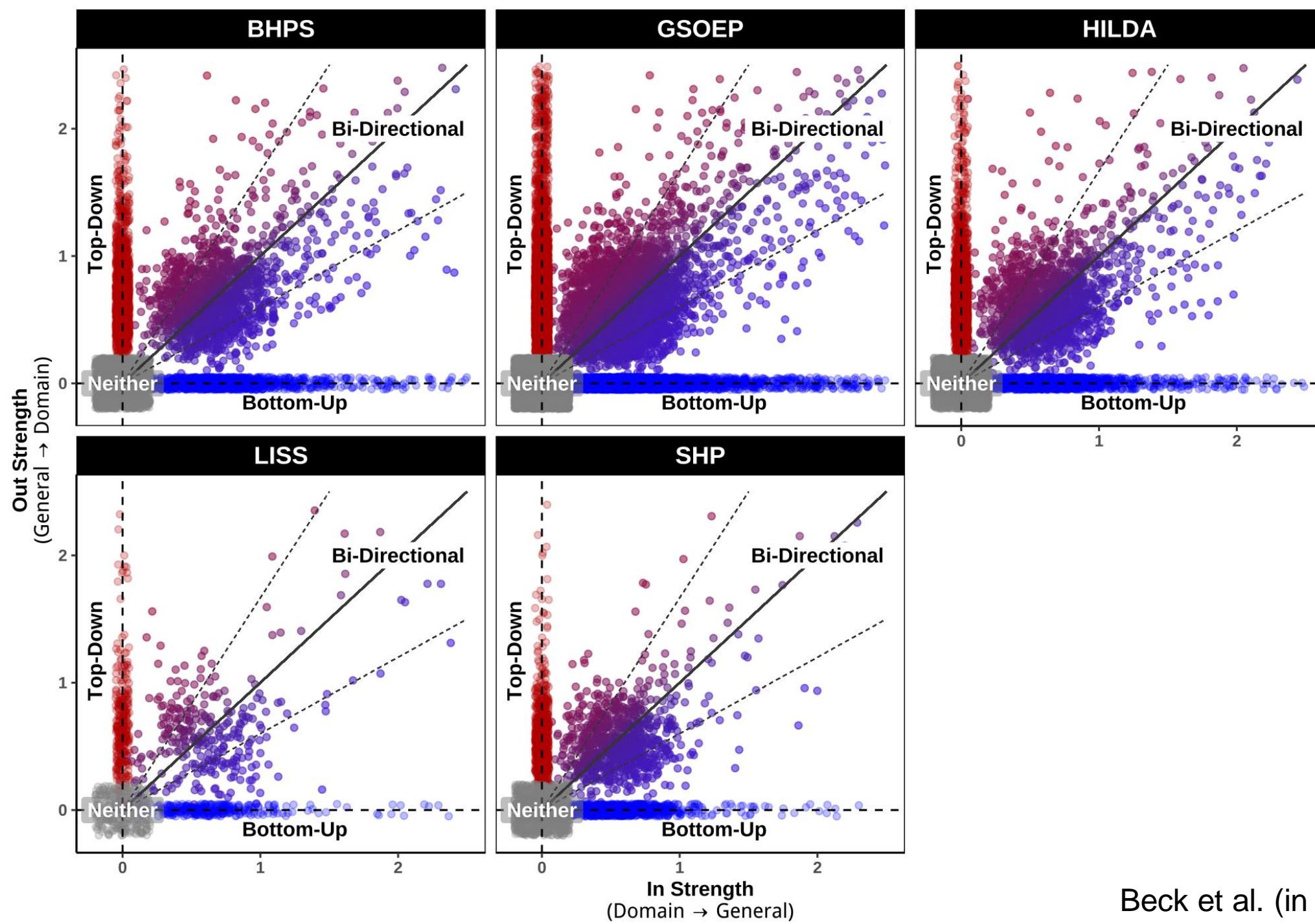


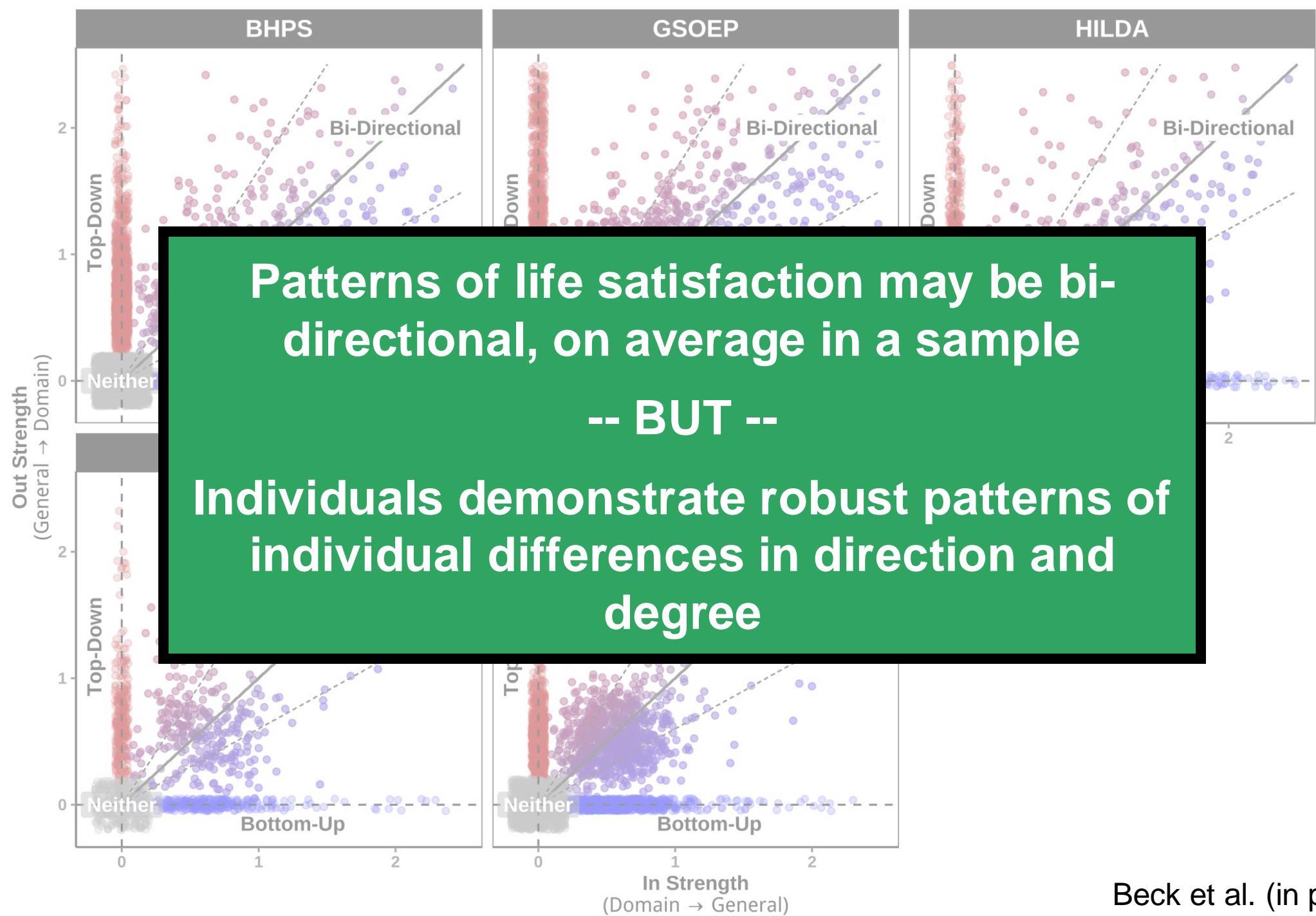










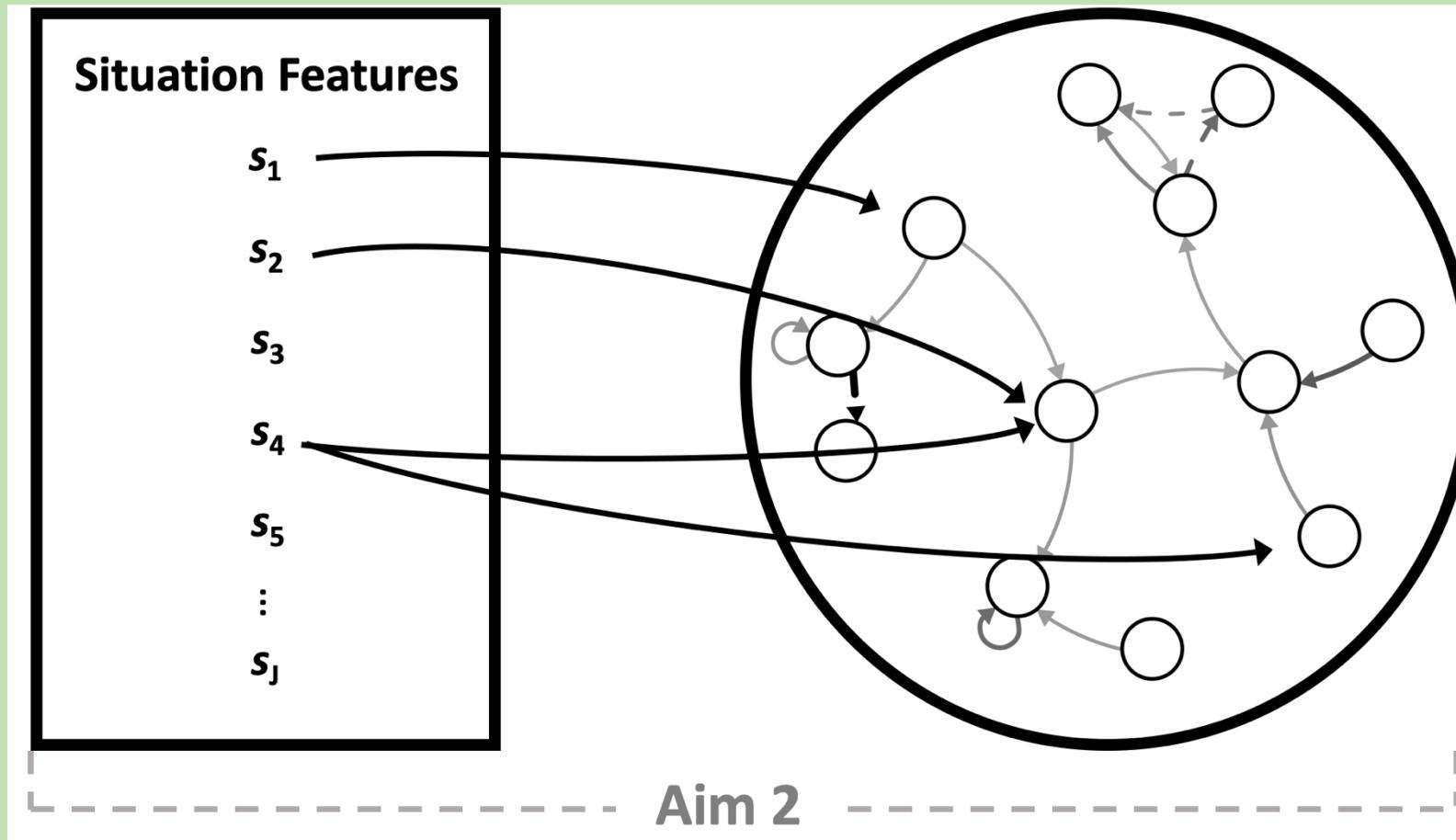


**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b, *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)



\* = shared first authorship.

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(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b, *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

The dynamics of life and domain satisfaction:

Unfold differently across people

Do not appear well-captured by sample averages of idiographic dynamics

Have similar patterns of individual differences across samples

**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

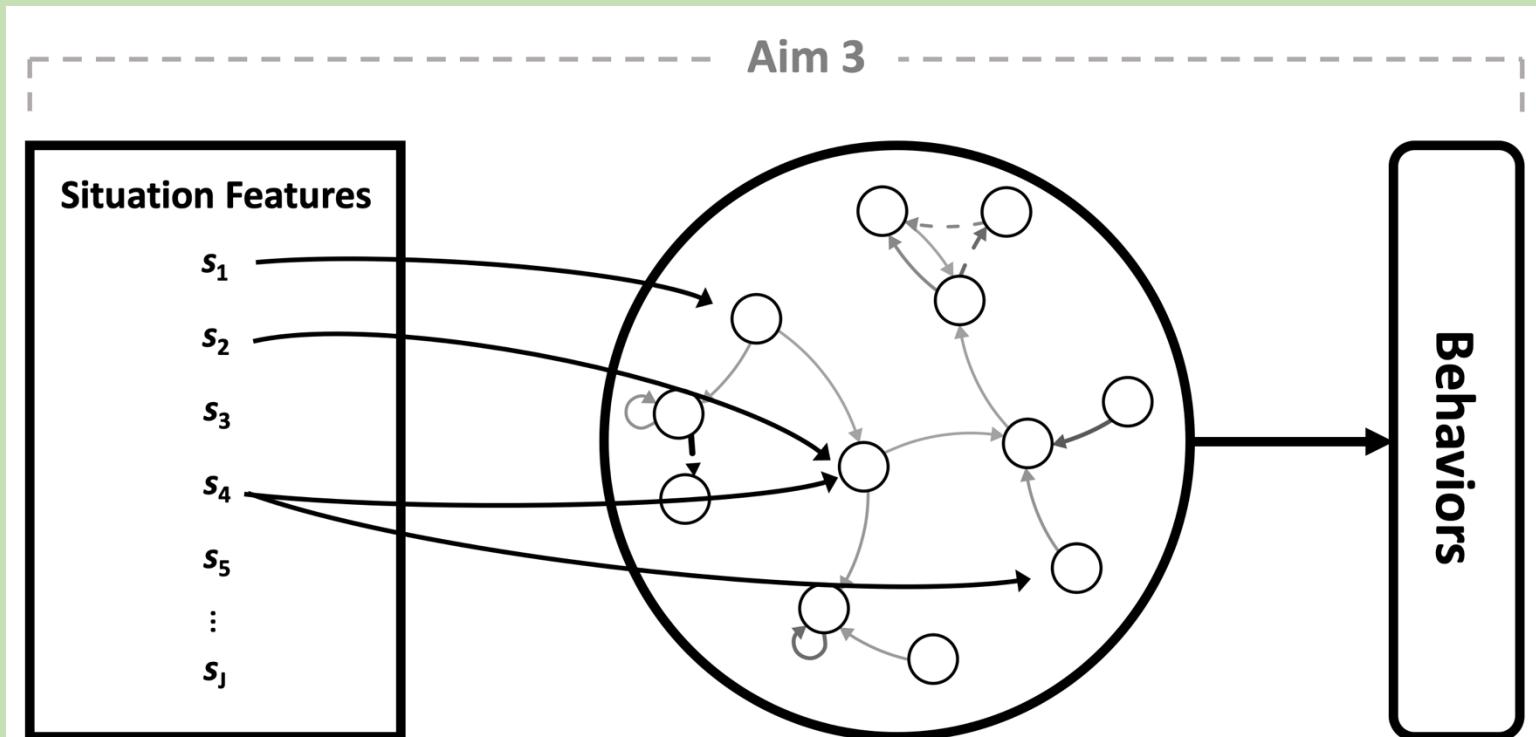
Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b, *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** The dynamics of well-being unfold differently across people.

Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Predicting behavior using machine learning.

Beck & Jackson  
(2023, *Psych Science*)



Psychological

Situations

Behavior /  
Experiences

# Critical Assumption

**Situations and experiences  
should have similar  
consequences across people.**

**People with similar levels of a  
personality characteristic  
should behave in similar ways.**

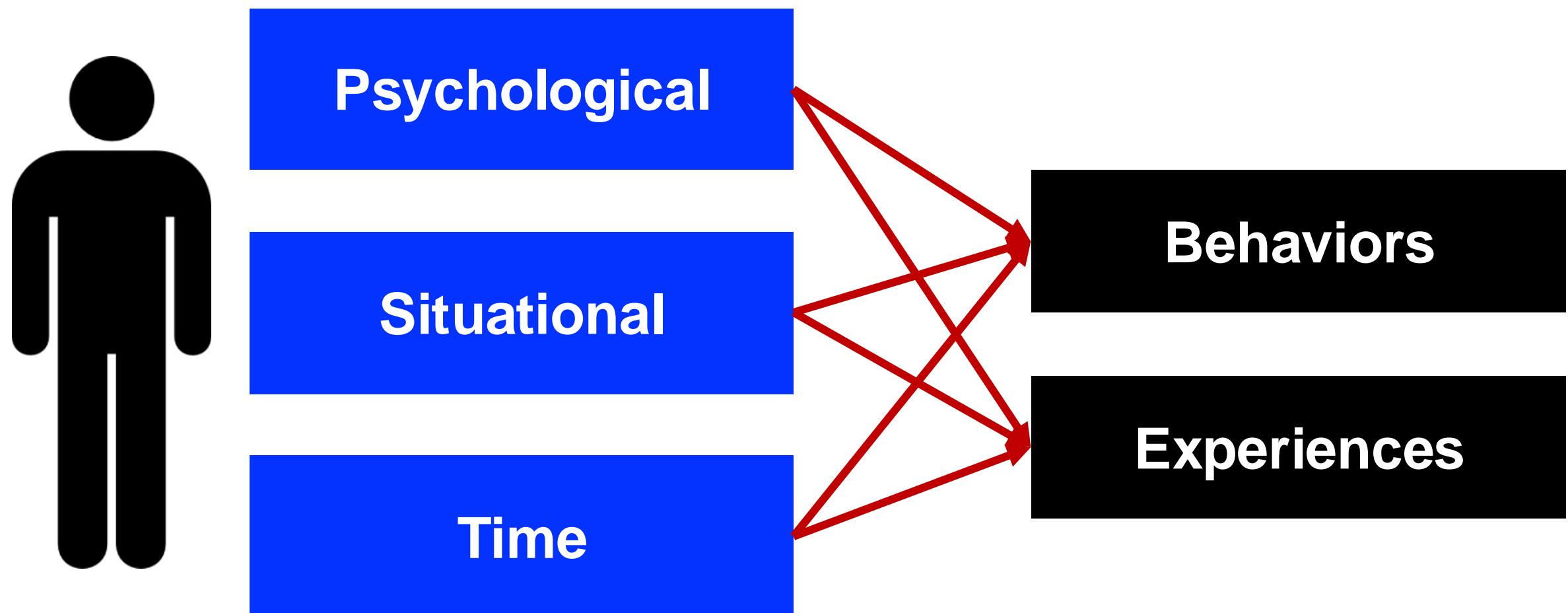


# Alternative Assumption

Situations and experiences  
should have *different*  
consequences across people.

People with similar levels of a  
personality characteristic *may*  
*not* behave in similar ways.

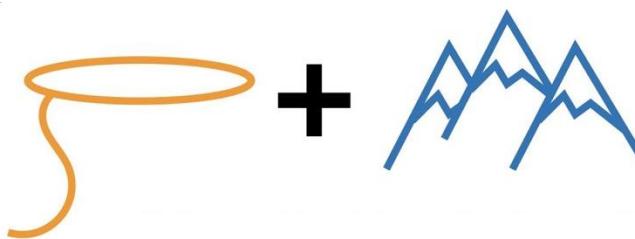




# Analytic Plan

## 3 machine learning classification methods:

### Elastic Net



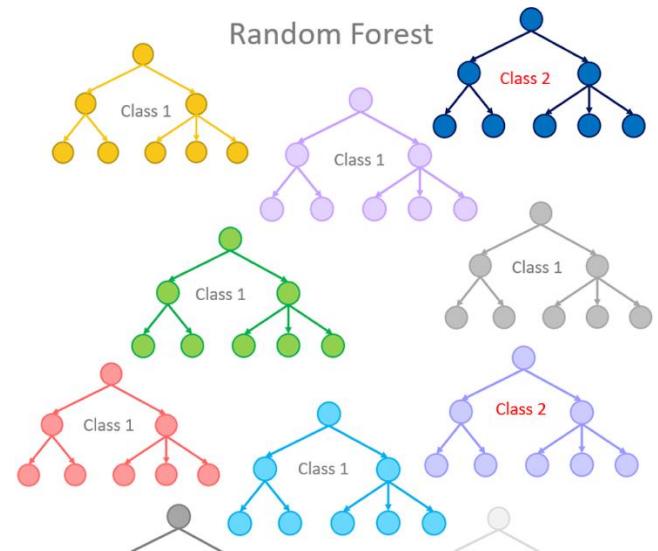
- Classification Accuracy
- Area under the receiver operating curve (AUC)

### BISCWIT

#### Now that takes the BISCUIT!



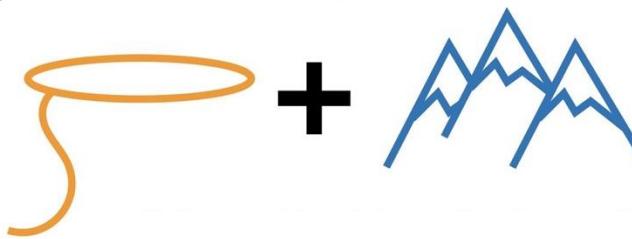
### Random Forest



# Analytic Plan

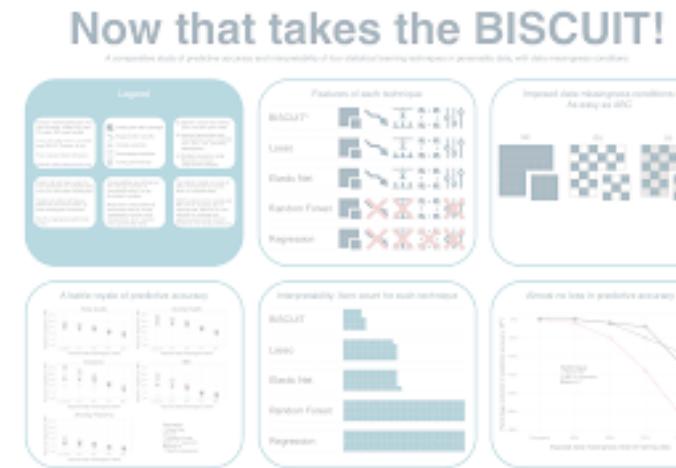
## 3 machine learning classification methods:

### Elastic Net

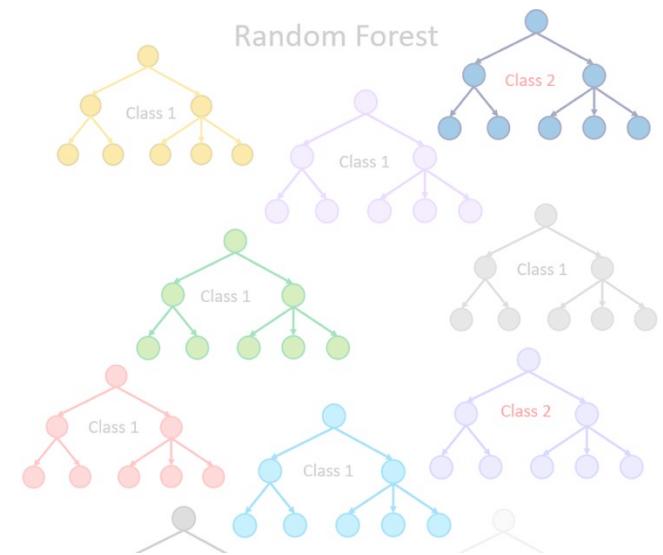


- Classification Accuracy
- Area under the receiver operating curve (AUC)

### BISCWIT



### Random Forest



# RESULTS

Aim 3

# Classification Accuracy

## Elastic Net

Median (SD)	N
-------------	---

---

**Procrastination**

**Loneliness**

**Argument**

**Interacted**

**Studying**

**Sick**

**Tired**



## Classification Accuracy

Elastic Net

**Classification accuracy was high, on average, with some variability across outcomes.**

Sick

Tired

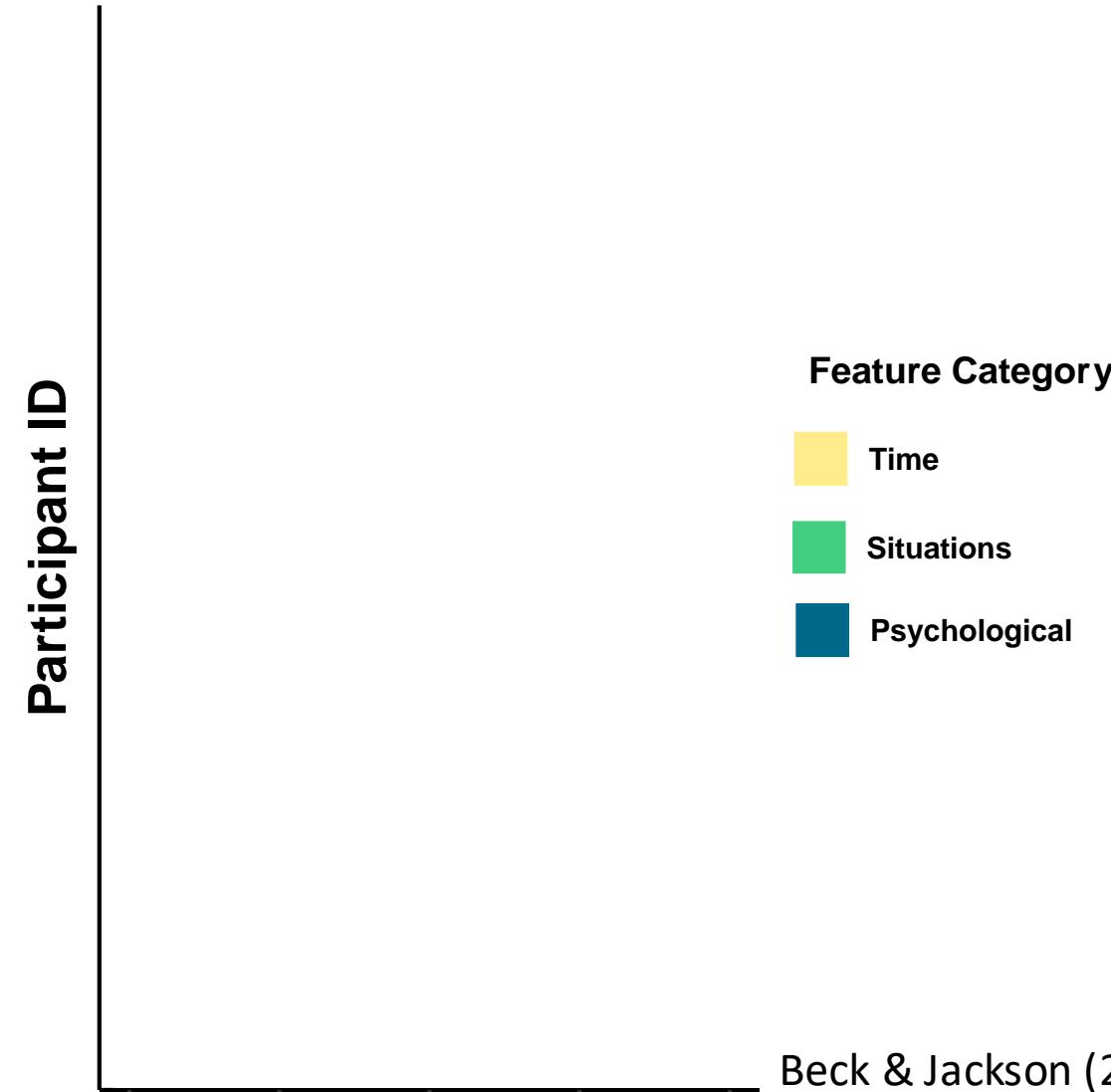


Do certain categories of features out-predict others?

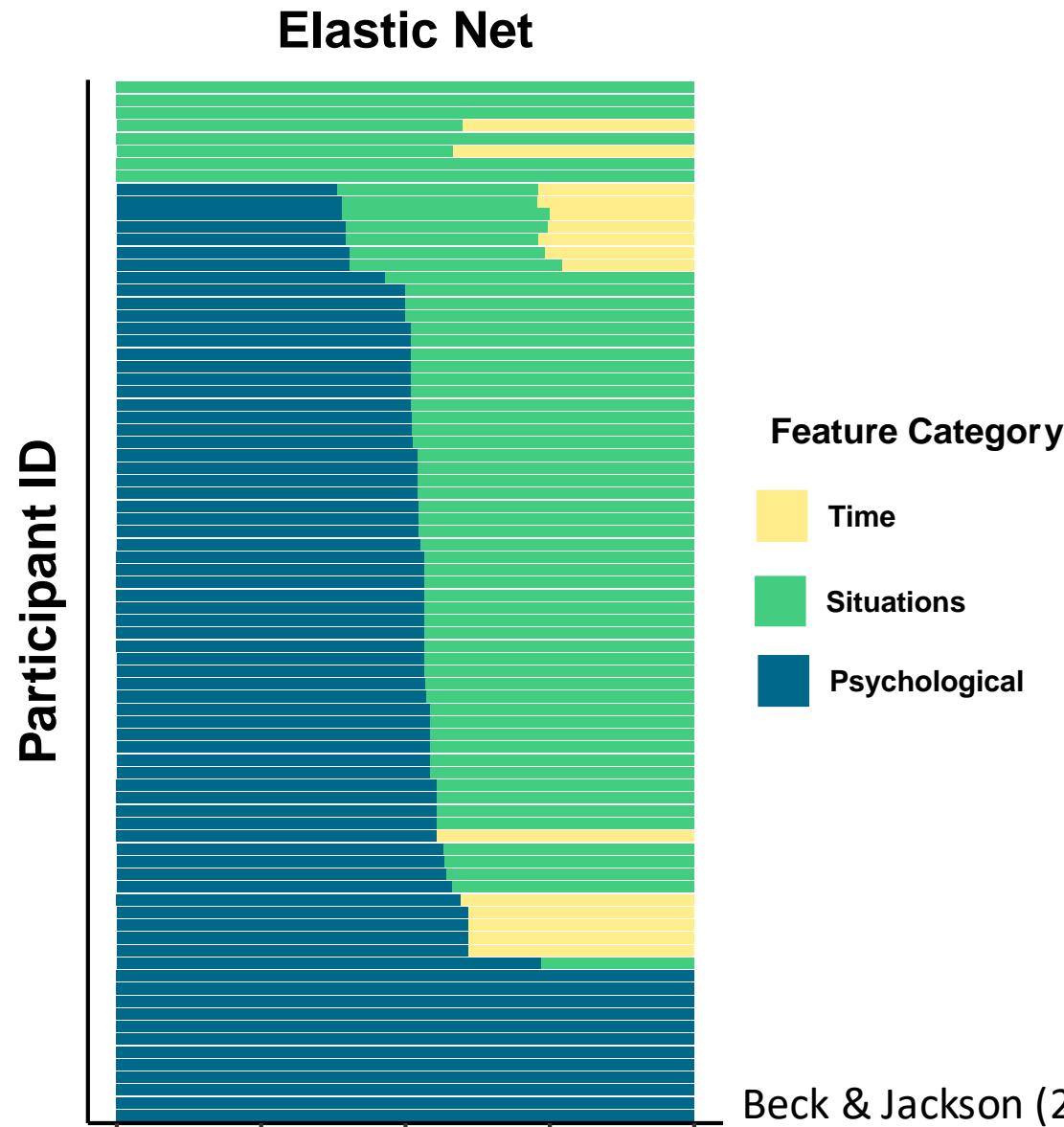


Do certain categories of features out-predict others?

### Elastic Net



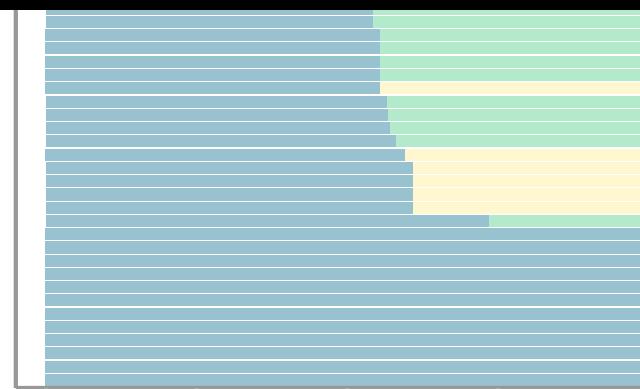
Do certain categories of features out-predict others?



## Do certain categories of features out-predict others?

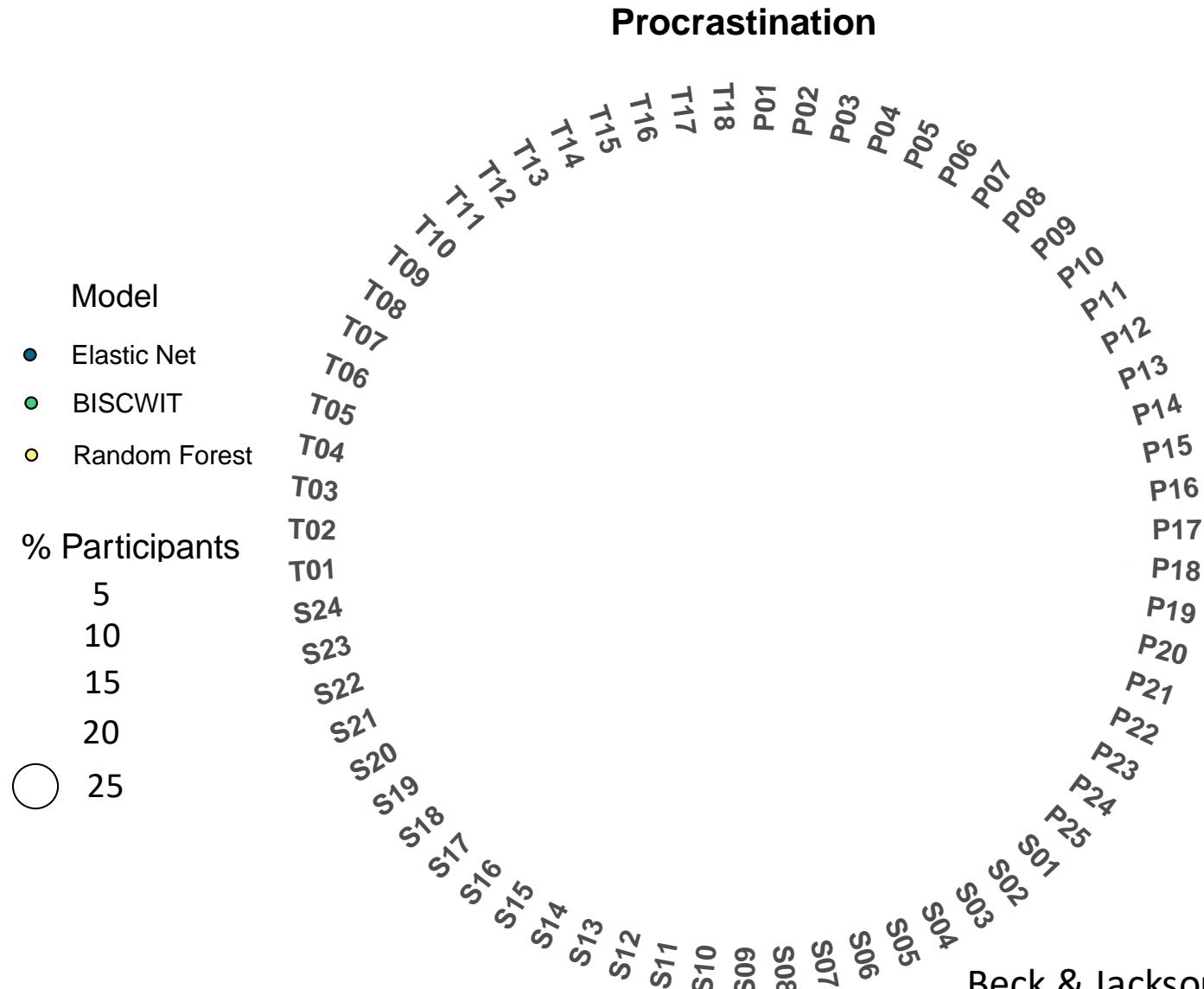
### Elastic Net

The relative contribution of person, situation, and timing features varies across people.

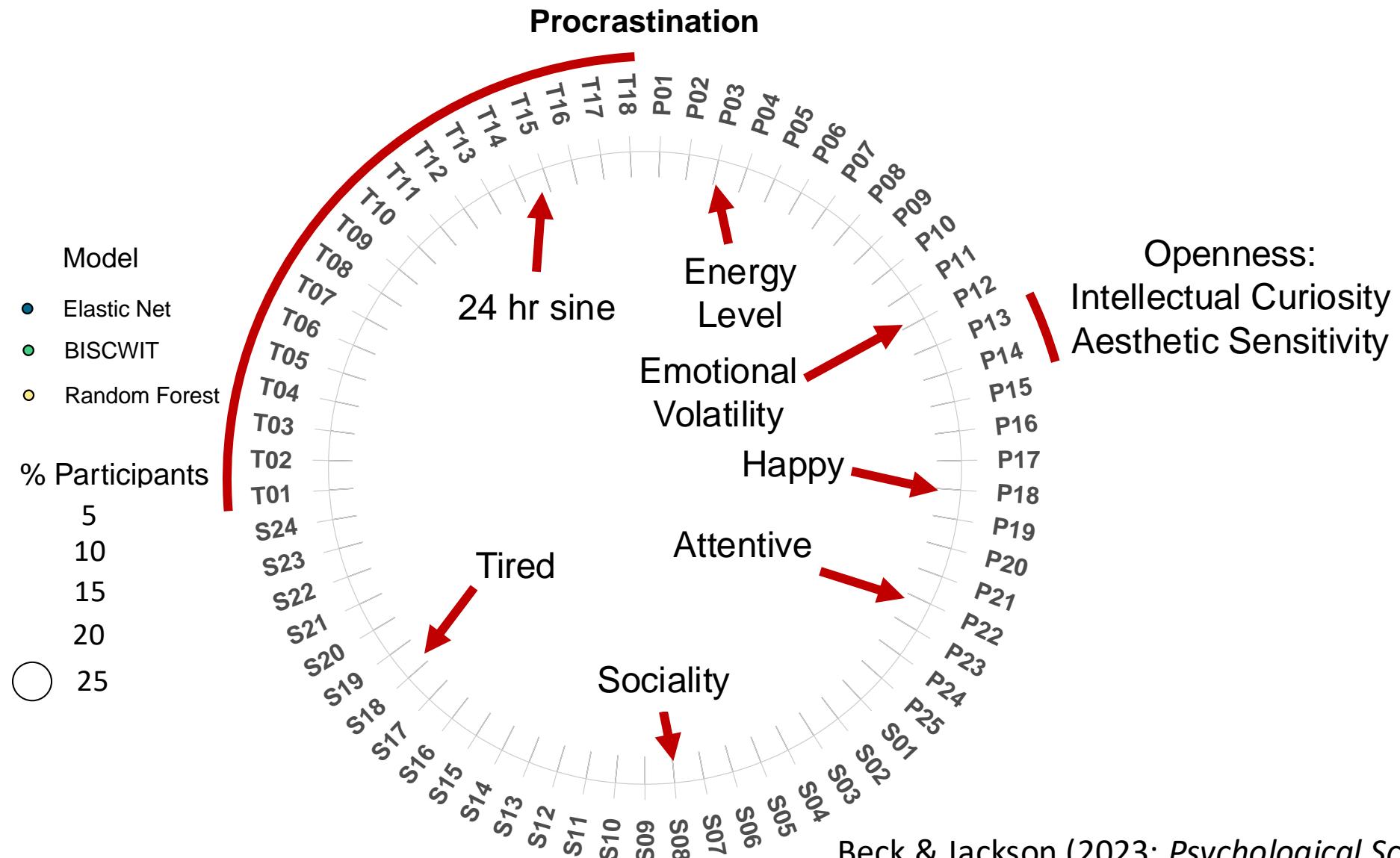


Which features play the strongest roles?

# Which features play the strongest roles?



## Which features play the strongest roles?



## Which features play the strongest roles?

Procrastination

No one feature dominated the prediction of any outcome (max ~35%).

Behaviors & experiences have unique antecedents.

○ 25

S<sub>20</sub>  
S<sub>19</sub>  
S<sub>18</sub>  
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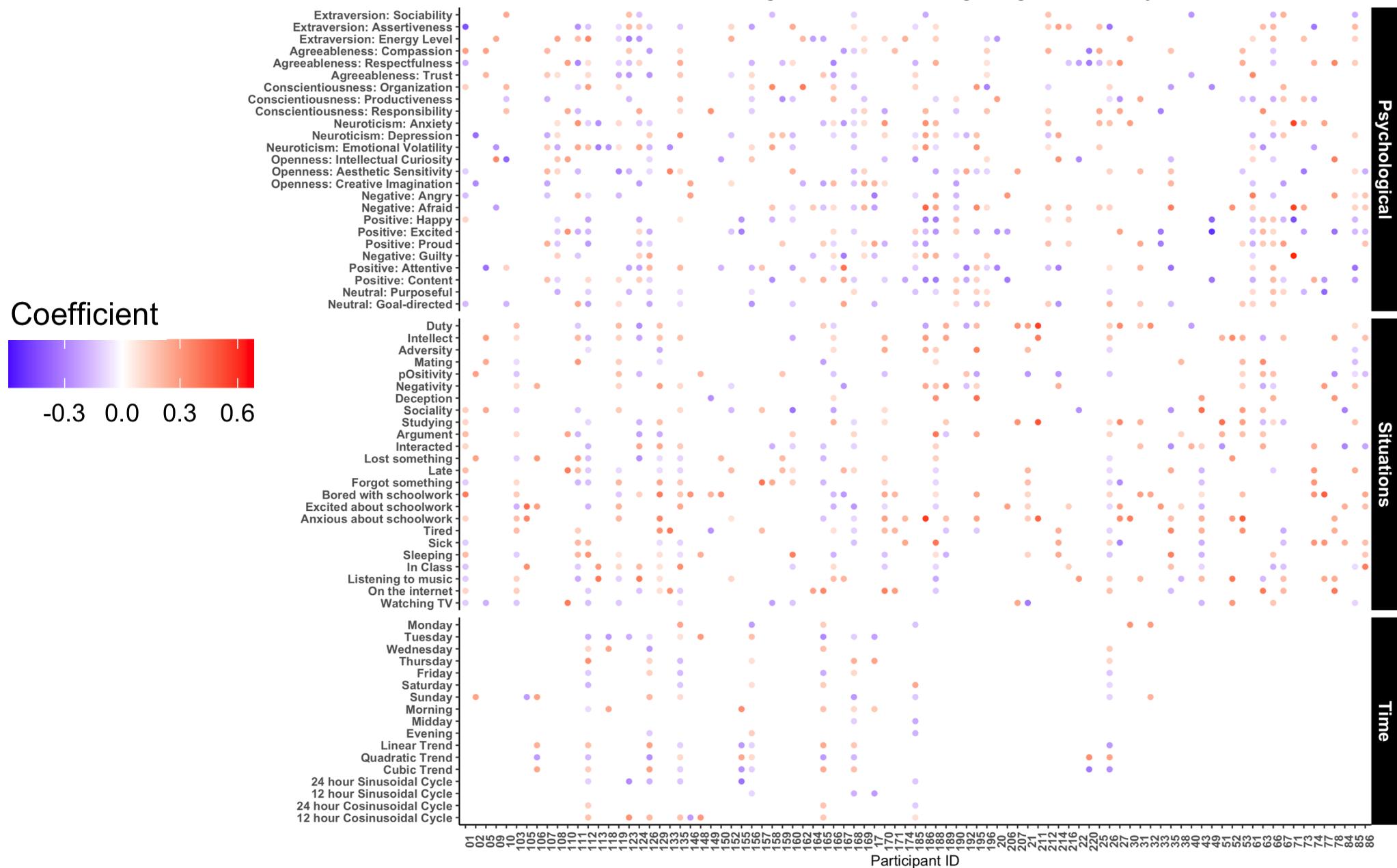
## Aim 1: Individuals

## Aim 2: Dynamics

## Aim 3: Integration

## Future Directions

BISCWIT Predicting Future Procrastinating Using Best Accuracy Models



## Aim 1: Individuals

## Aim 2: Dynamics

## Aim 3: Integration

## Future Directions

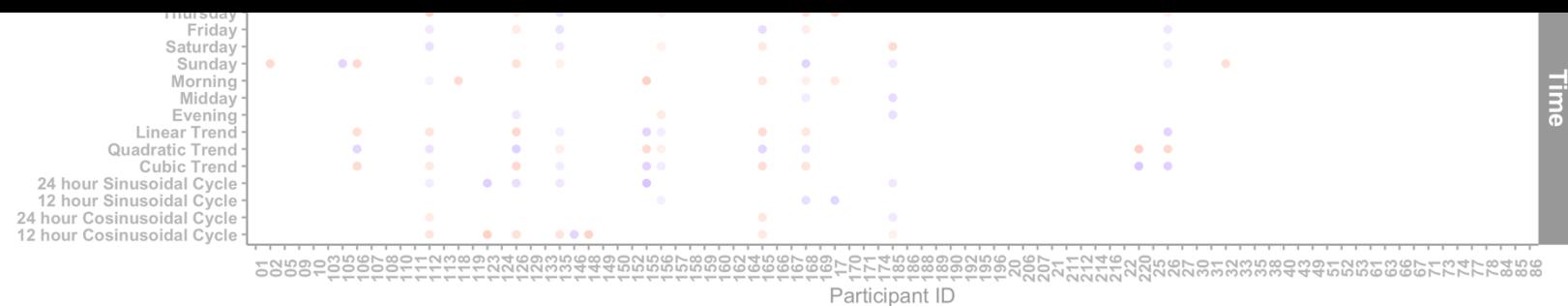
BISCWIT Predicting Future Procrastinating Using Best Accuracy Models



Coefficient



**Individuals' profiles of antecedents differed in presence and direction.**



**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

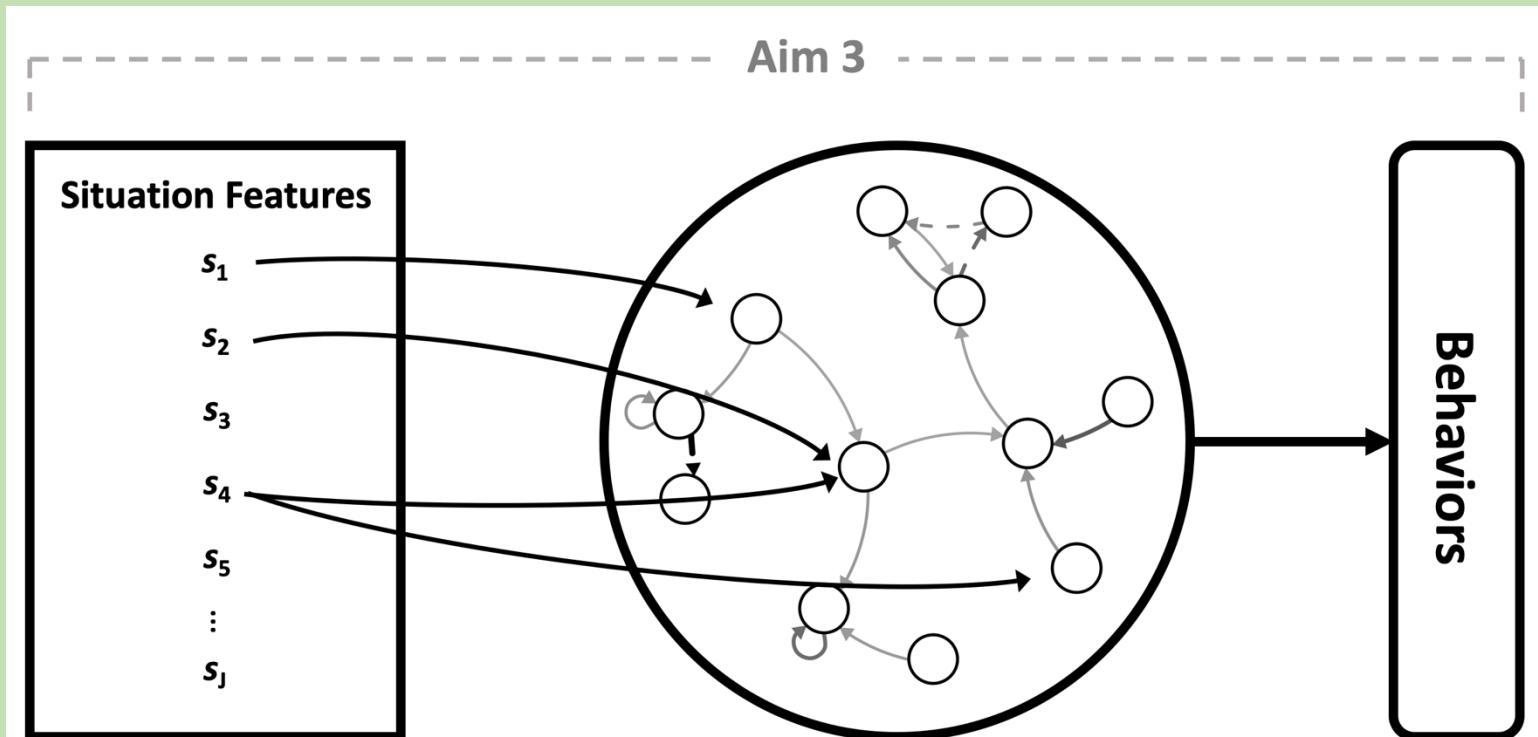
Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** The dynamics of well-being unfold differently across people.

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**Aim 3:** Predicting behavior using machine learning.

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Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Predicting behavior using machine learning.

Beck & Jackson  
(2023, *Psych Science*)

The antecedents of behaviors and experiences:

Can be used to accurately predict those behaviors and experiences

Differ across people

Vary in the degree of psychological, situational, and timing antecedents

**Aim 1:** Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

**Beck & Jackson**  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)

**Aim 2:** The dynamics of well-being unfold differently across people.

**Beck et al.**  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Psychological and situational antecedents of behaviors and experiences vary across people.

**Beck & Jackson**  
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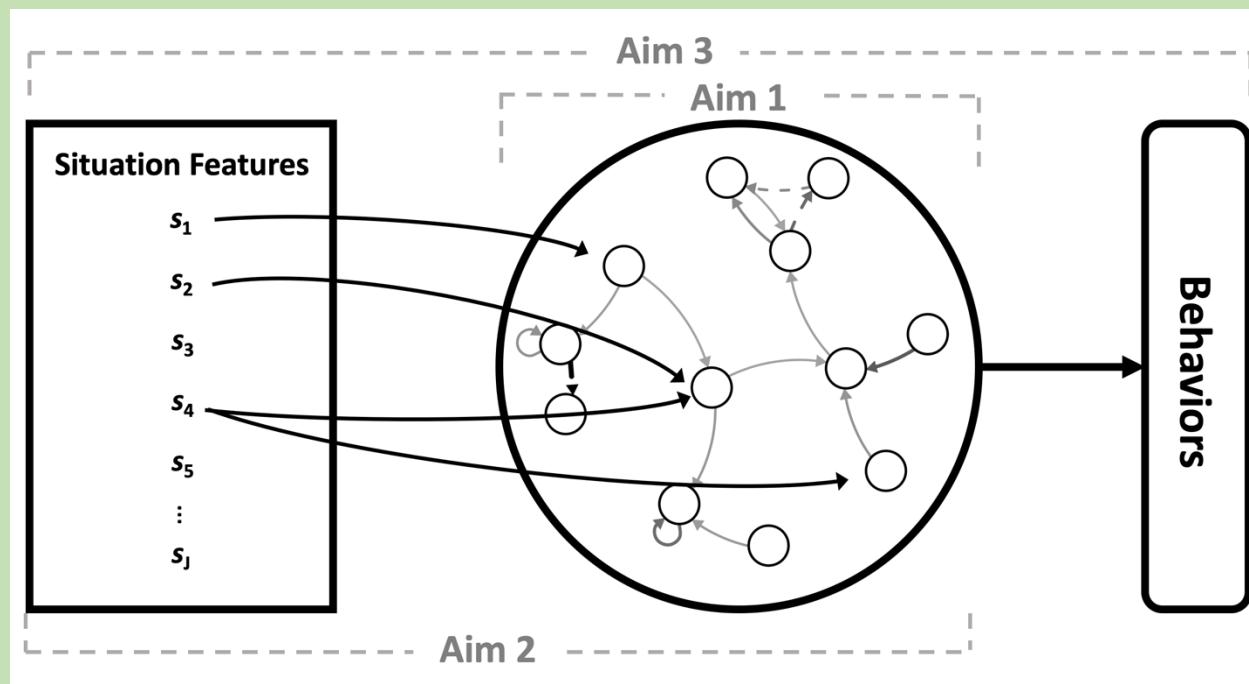
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Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Psychological and situational antecedents of behaviors and experiences vary across people.

Beck & Jackson  
(2023, *Psych Science*)

## Ongoing Directions



# Ongoing and Future Directions

**Integrating idiographic and between-person approaches via bottom-up psychological assessment**

**Using heterogeneous dynamics to link traits and states**

**Introducing the Personality Consortium on Research in Idiographics and Nomothetics (PECORINO)**

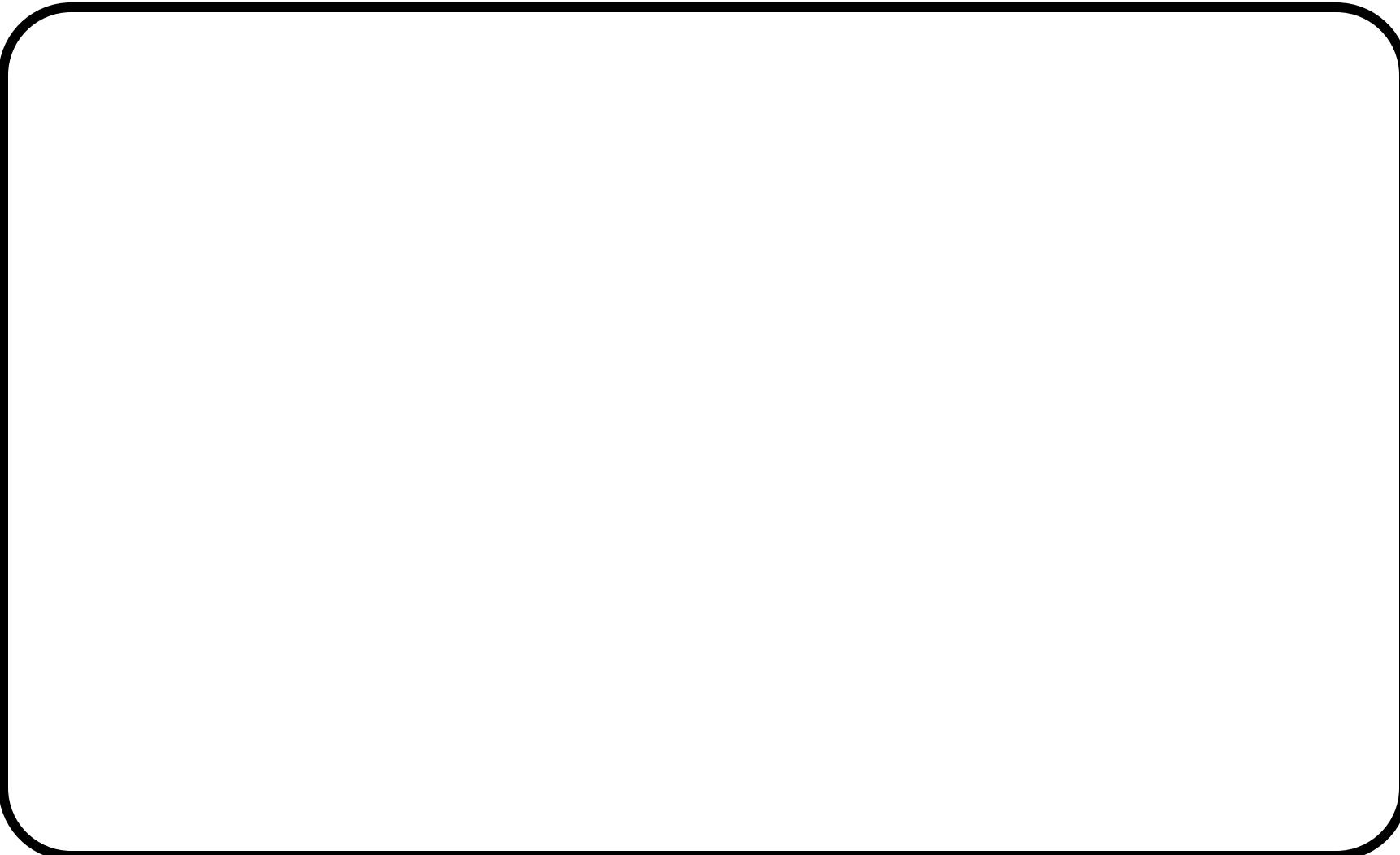
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**Integrating idiographic and between-person approaches via bottom-up psychological assessment**

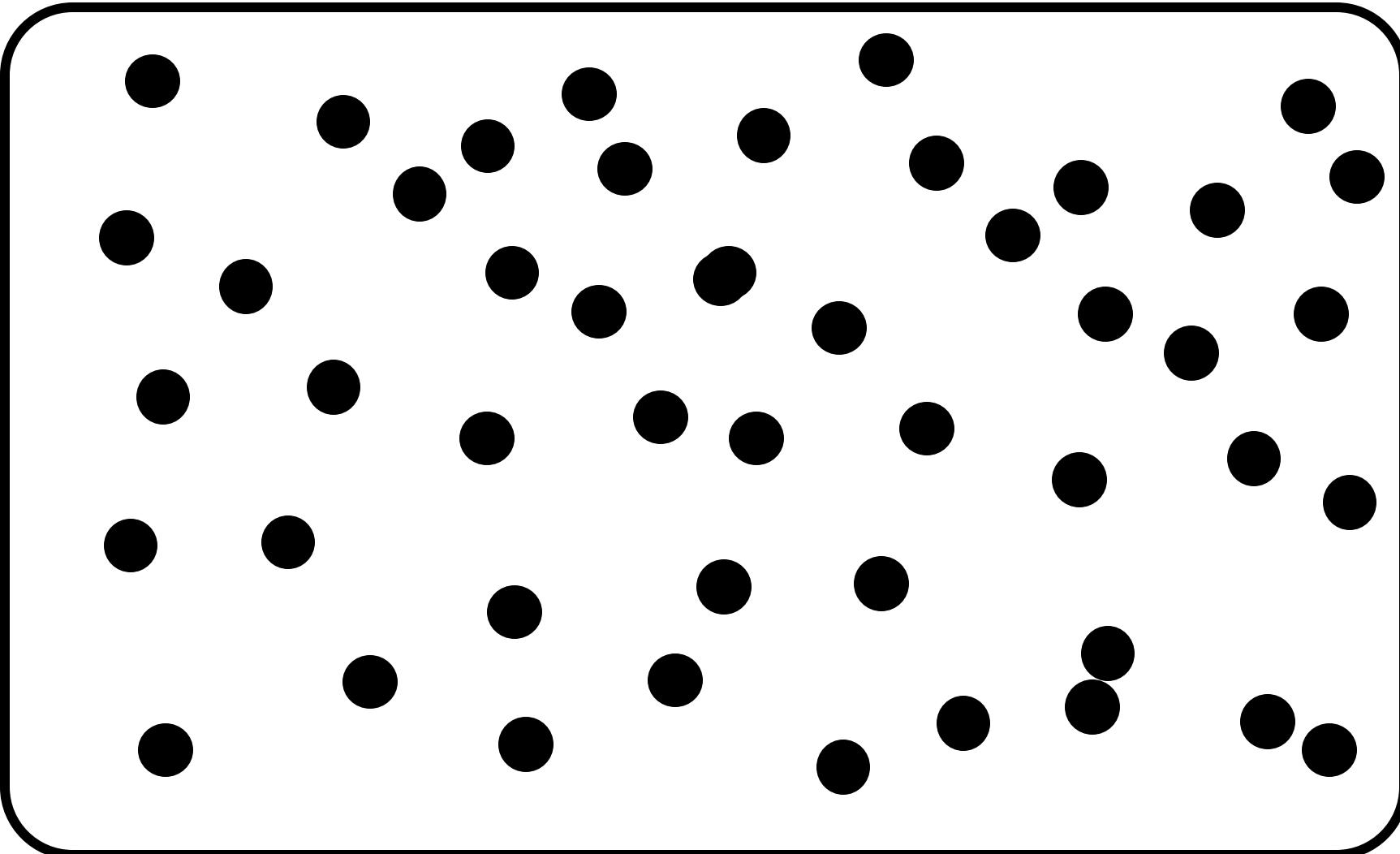
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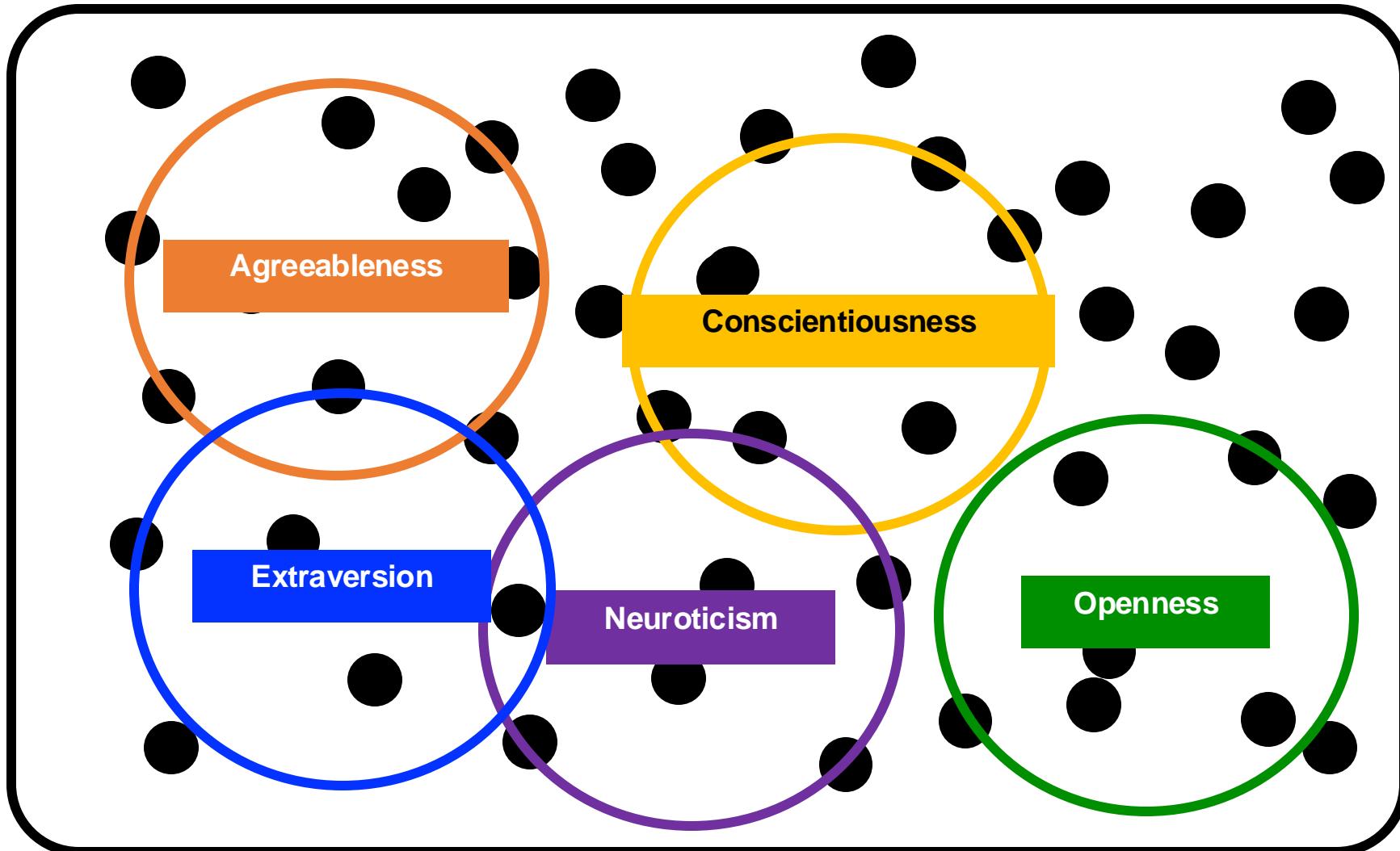
# The Essential Trait Approach



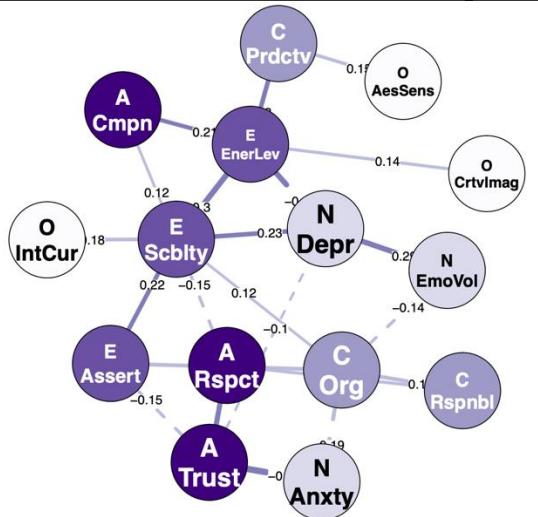
# The Essential Trait Approach



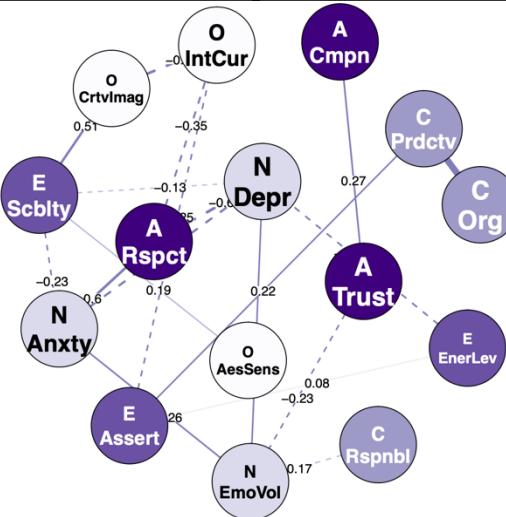
# The Essential Trait Approach



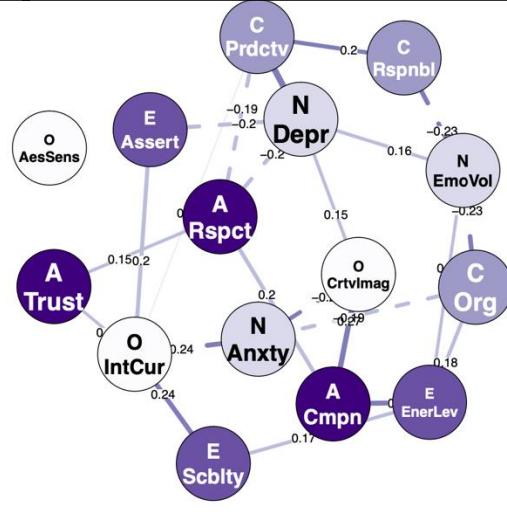
## Aim 1: Individuals



## Aim 2: Dynamics

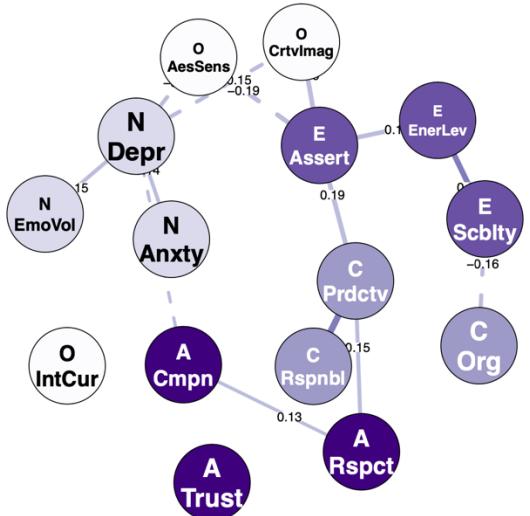


## Aim 3: Integration

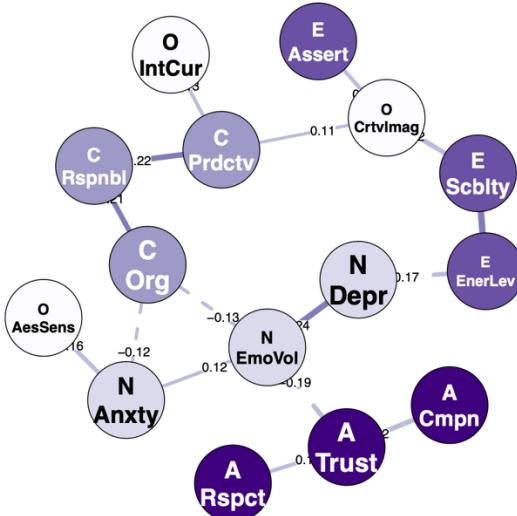


## Ongoing Directions

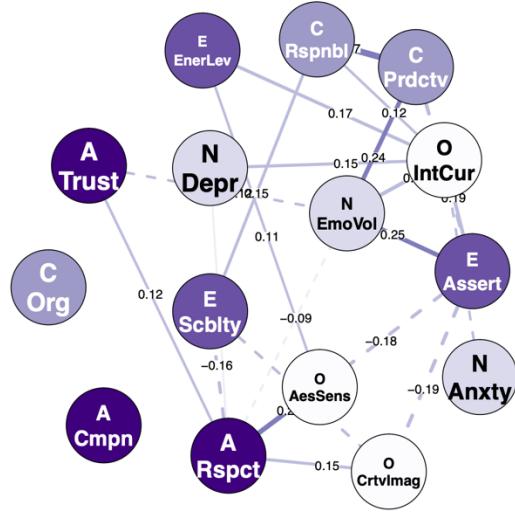
Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S16



Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S22



Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S29



# **What are we missing when we use the same measures for everyone?**

We have no idea. That's an empirical question!

# What are we missing when we use the same measures for everyone?

## Content

**Hypothesis:** People will generate content that doesn't overlap with the Big Five or other typical shared indicators we measure.

## Variability

**Hypothesis:** People will show more variability and use the full scale more for unique items than shared items, on average.

## Predictive Utility

**Hypothesis:** Unique items will improve predictive utility and play important roles in personalized prediction models.

# The Personalizing Personality Pilot Study

Study Design

**UCDAVIS**

● N = 200

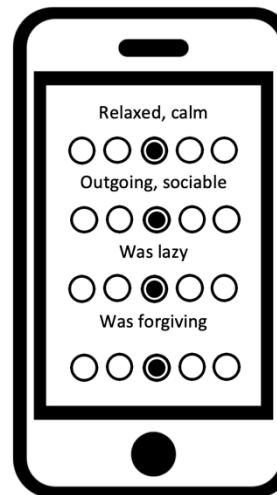


## Baseline Surveys

- Big Five Personality
- Cardinal Traits
- Demographics
- **Unique Item Generation**
- ...
- etc.



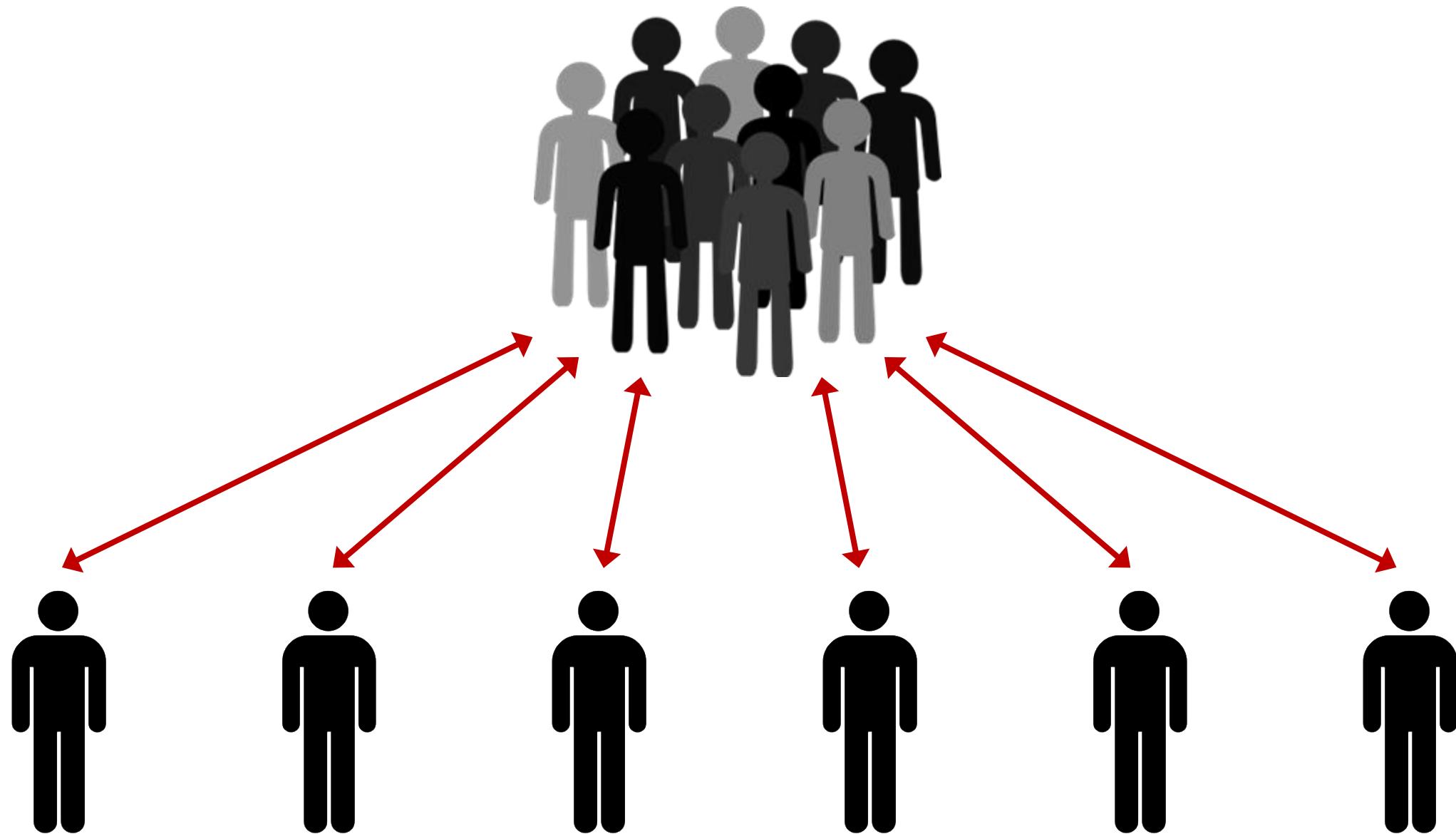
BCS-2336406



## Experience Sampling Method (ESM)

- 5 x / day for 3 weeks ( $\max n = 105$ )
- Big Five Personality States
  - Unique, participant generated “Cardinal States”
  - DIAMONDS Situation Characteristics
  - Binary Behavior Indicators
  - Passive Sensing

# Bottom-Up Psychological Science



# Between-Person

Extraversion

Agreeableness

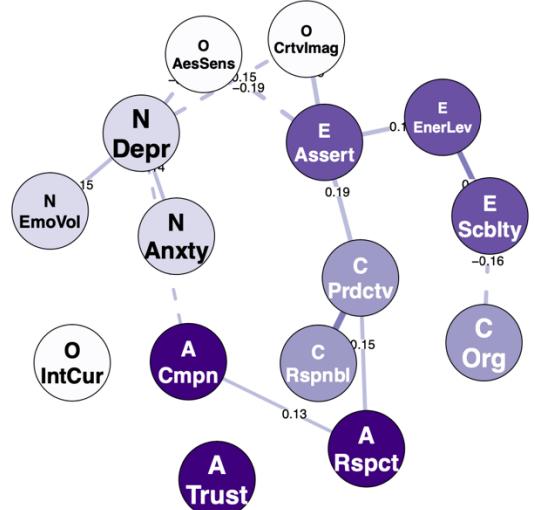
Conscientiousness

Neuroticism

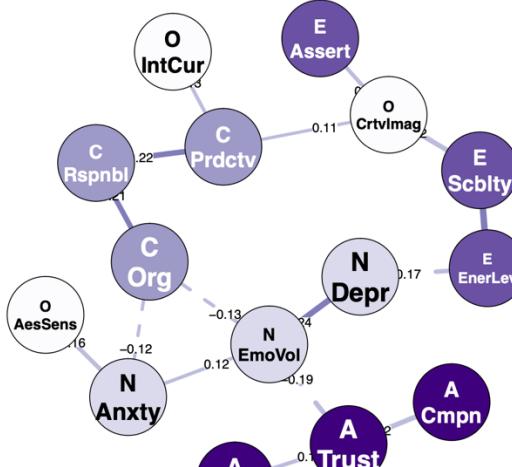
Openness



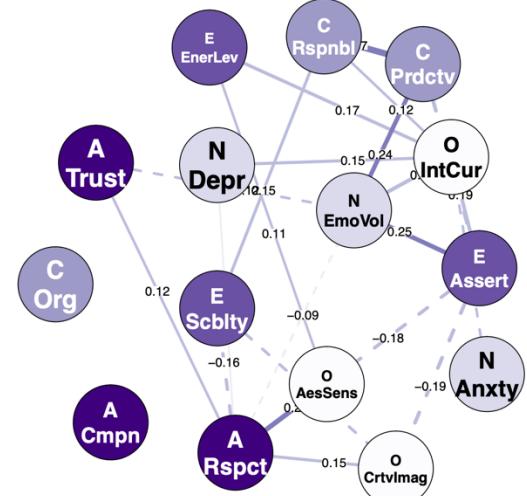
Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S16



Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S22



Wave 1: Contemporaneous for S29



Idiographic

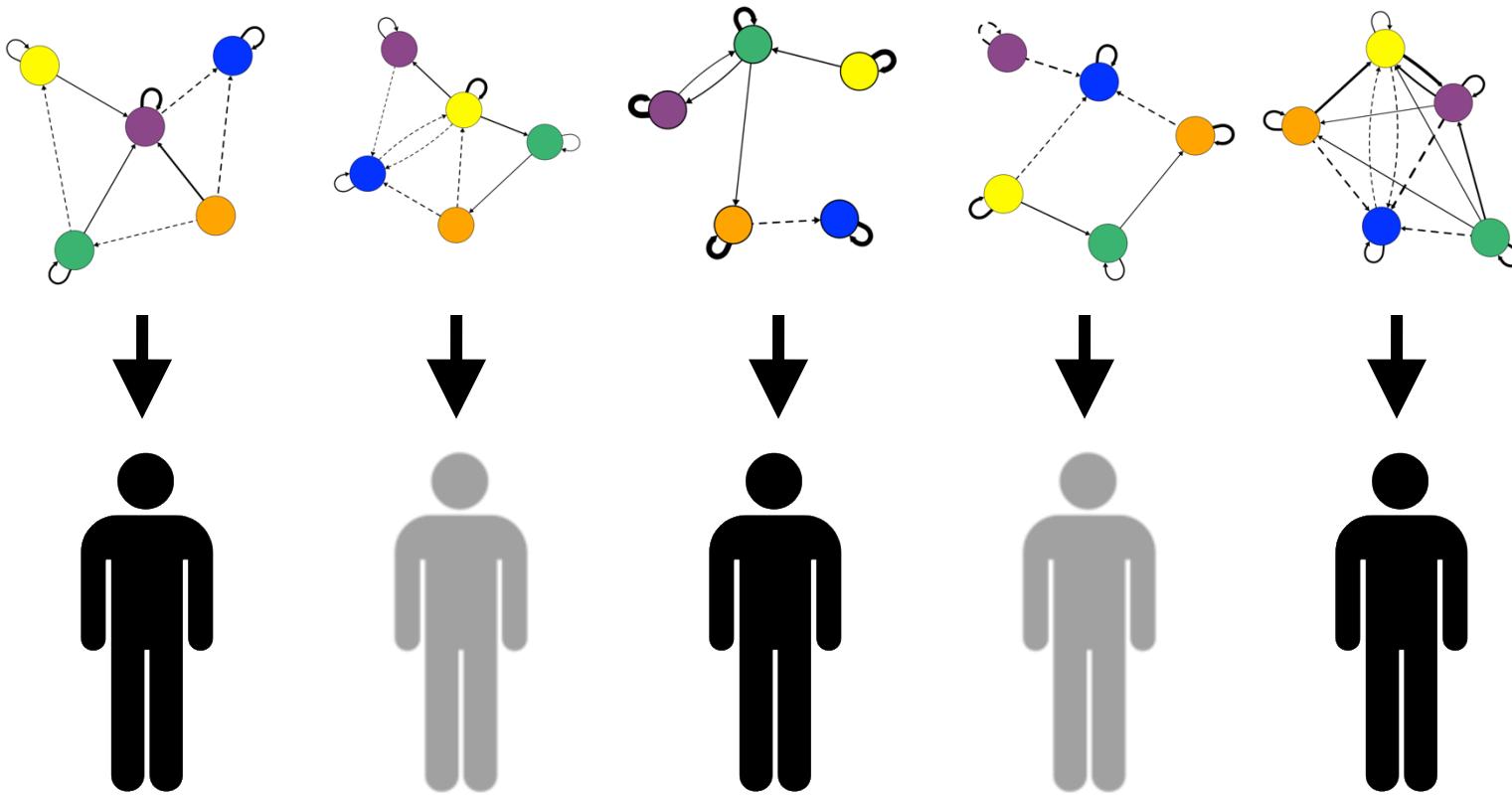
# Ongoing and Future Directions

**Integrating idiographic and between-person approaches via bottom-up psychological assessment**

**Using heterogeneous dynamics to link traits and states**

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# Using personality dynamics to link idiographic systems to personality trait change



**Idiographic  
Person-Specific**

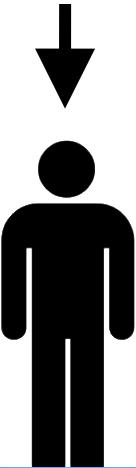
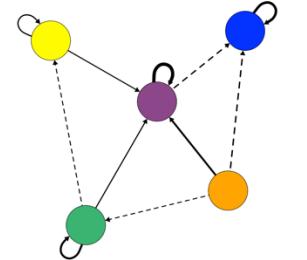
Extraversion

Agreeableness

Conscientiousness

Neuroticism

Openness

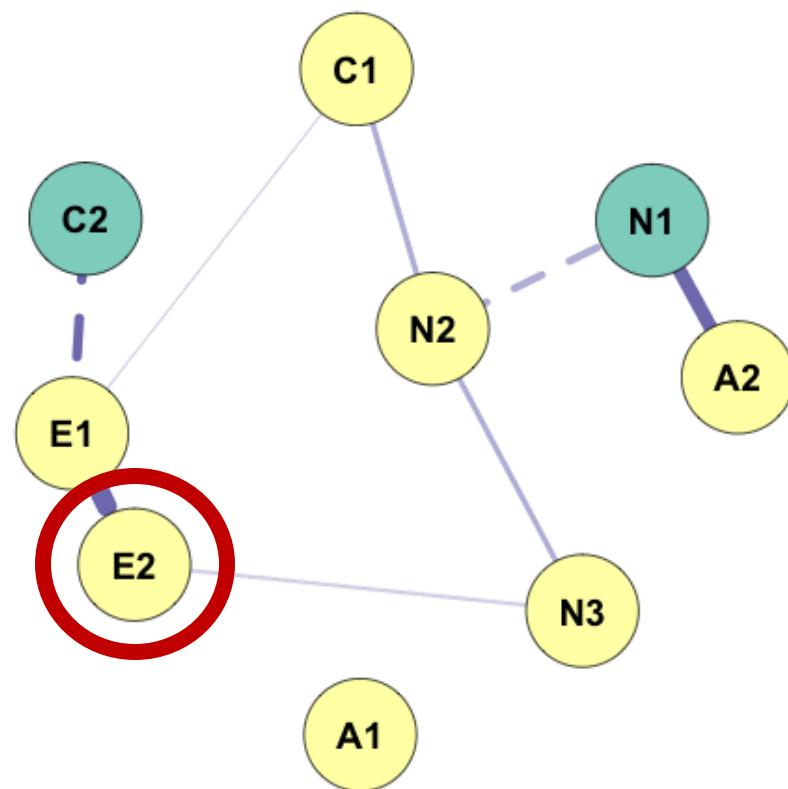


Adam Nissen

Nissen & Beck (in press, *JPSP*)

## Low Density, Degree

Contemporaneous Wave 1 for S62



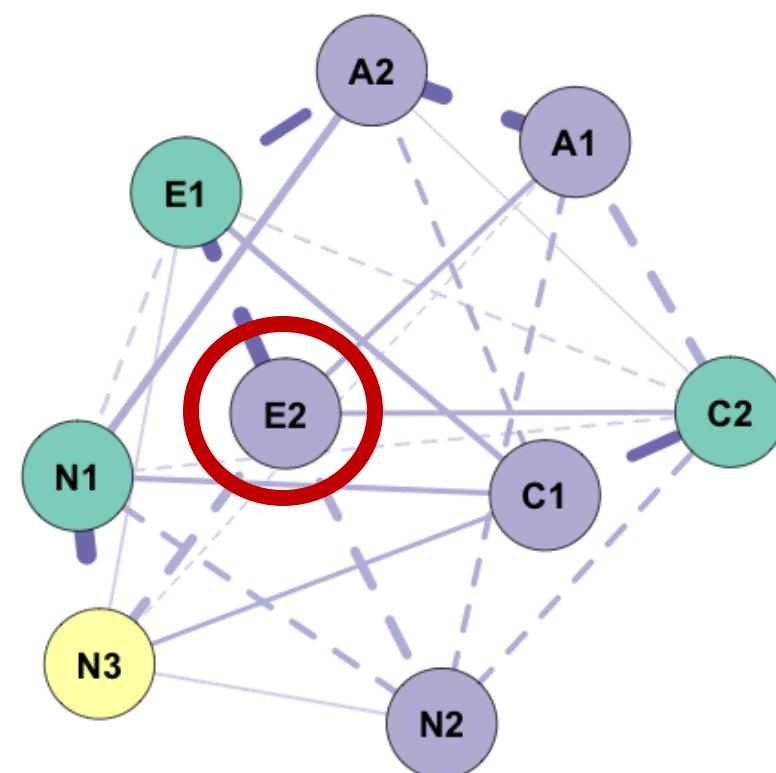
RIGIDITY



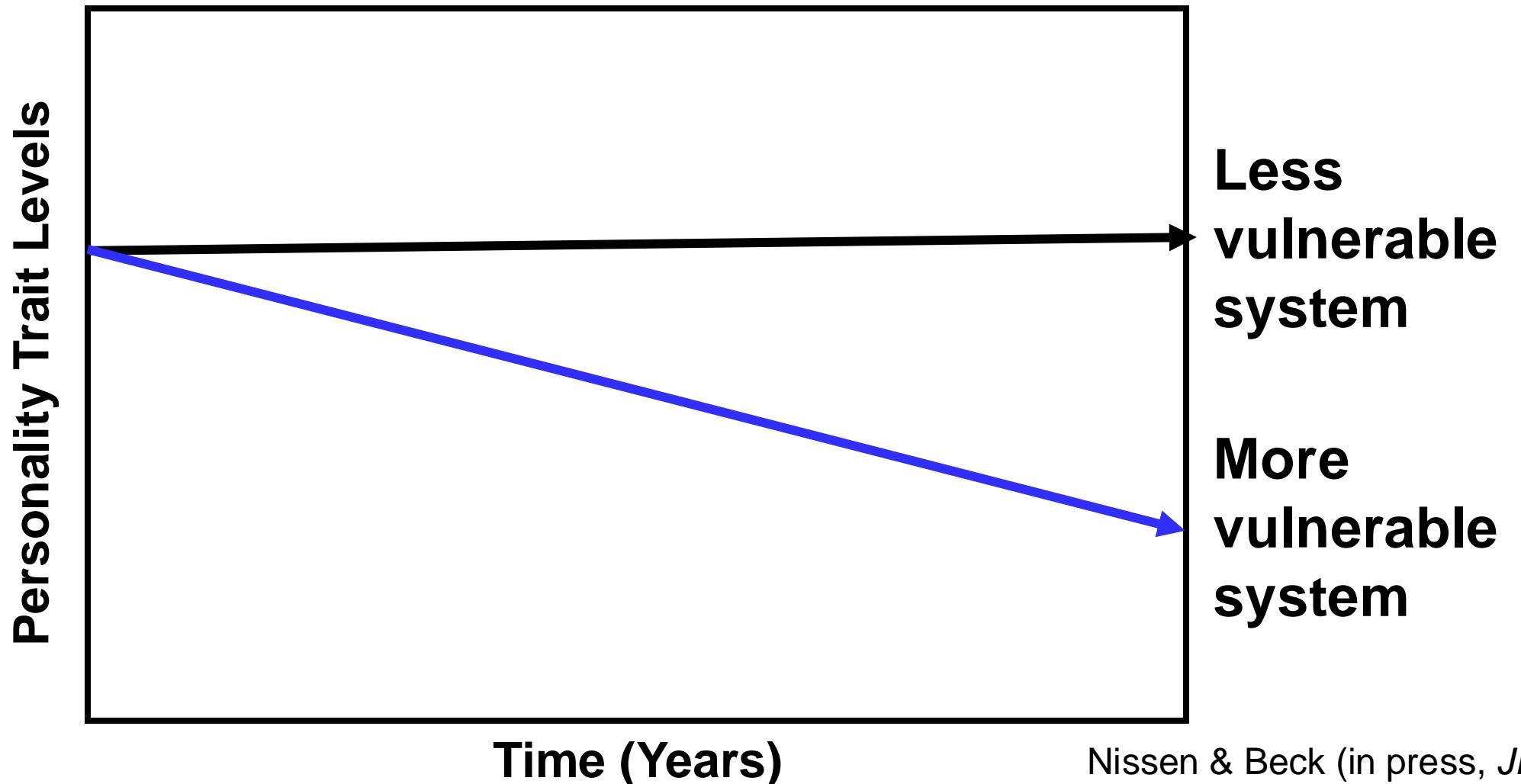
CHAOS

## High Density, Degree

Contemporaneous Wave 1 for S95



# Systems Perspectives: Persons in Context



Adam Nissen

Nissen & Beck (in press, *JPSP*)

# Using personality dynamics to link idiographic systems to health risk and AD/ADR

Received: 17 May 2023

Revised: 18 September 2023

Accepted: 4 October 2023

DOI: 10.1002/alz.13523

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Alzheimer's & Dementia®  
THE JOURNAL OF THE ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

## Personality predictors of dementia diagnosis and neuropathological burden: An individual participant data meta-analysis

Emorie D. Beck<sup>1,2</sup> | Tomiko Yoneda<sup>1,2</sup> | Bryan D. James<sup>3</sup> | David A. Bennett<sup>4</sup> |  
Jason Hassenstab<sup>5</sup> | Mindy J. Katz<sup>6</sup> | Richard B. Lipton<sup>6</sup> | John Morris<sup>4</sup> |  
Daniel K. Mroczek<sup>1,7</sup> | Eileen K. Graham<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Medical Social Sciences, Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, USA

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, University of California, Davis, Davis, California, USA

<sup>3</sup>Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center, Department of Internal Medicine, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois, USA

<sup>4</sup>Department of Neurology, Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois, USA

<sup>5</sup>Department of Neurology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, USA

<sup>6</sup>Department of Neurology, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York, USA

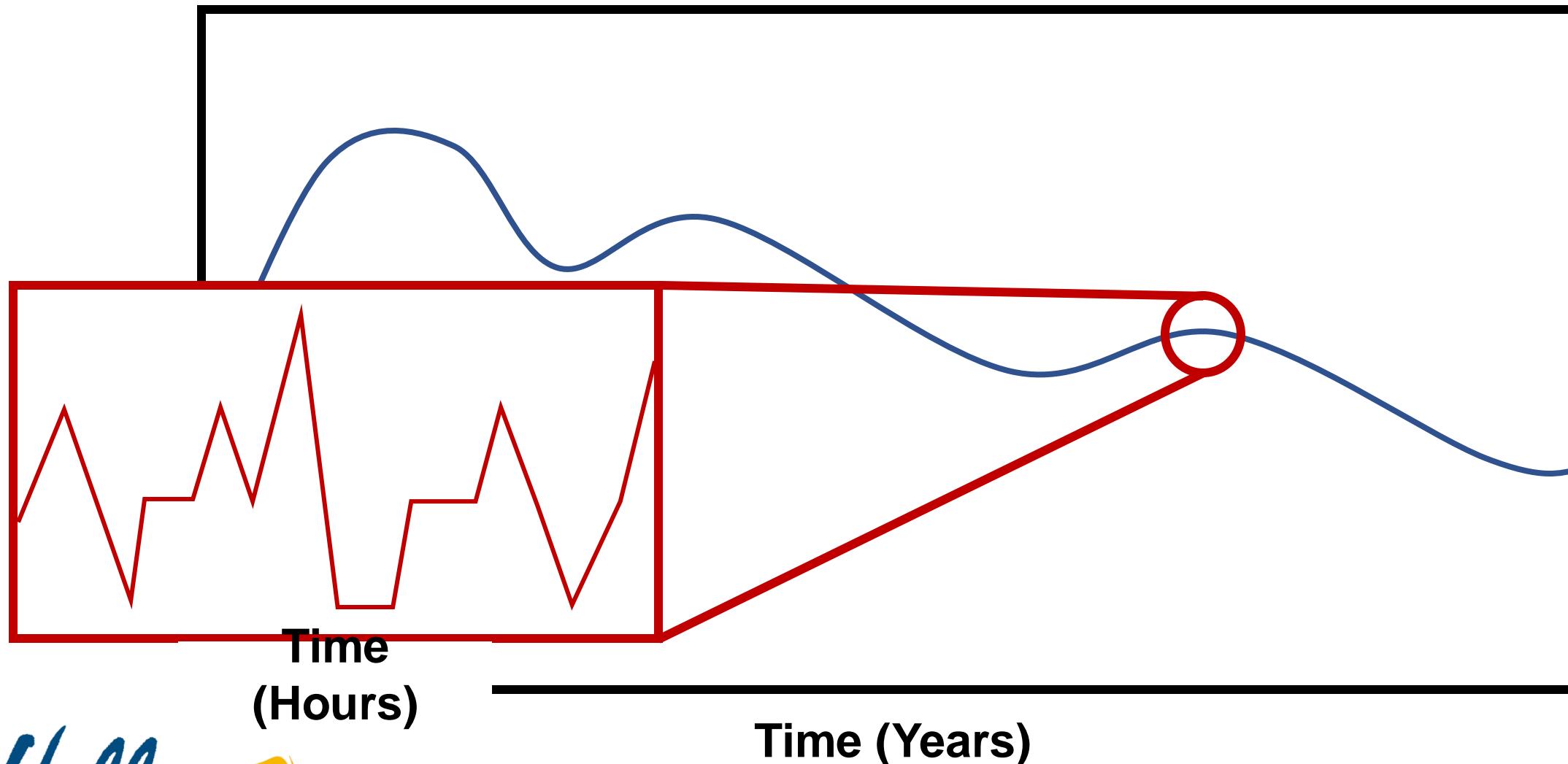
<sup>7</sup>Department of Psychology, Northwestern University, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences, Evanston, Illinois, USA



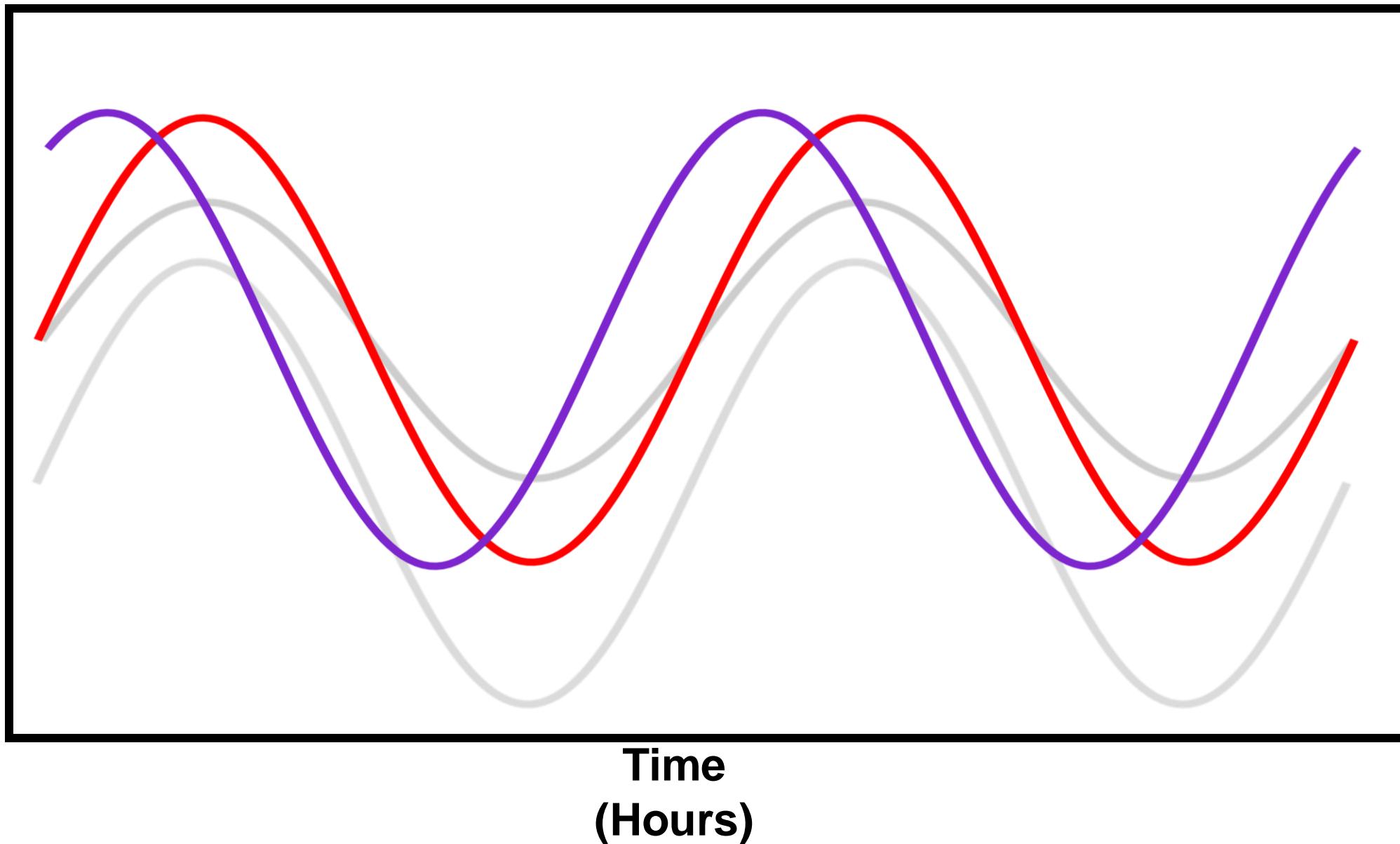
National Institute  
on Aging

Beck et al. (2024;  
*Alzheimer's and Dementia*)  
Beck et al. (under revision; JPSP)

# Lifespan Cognitive Variability



# Individual Differences in Cognitive Variability

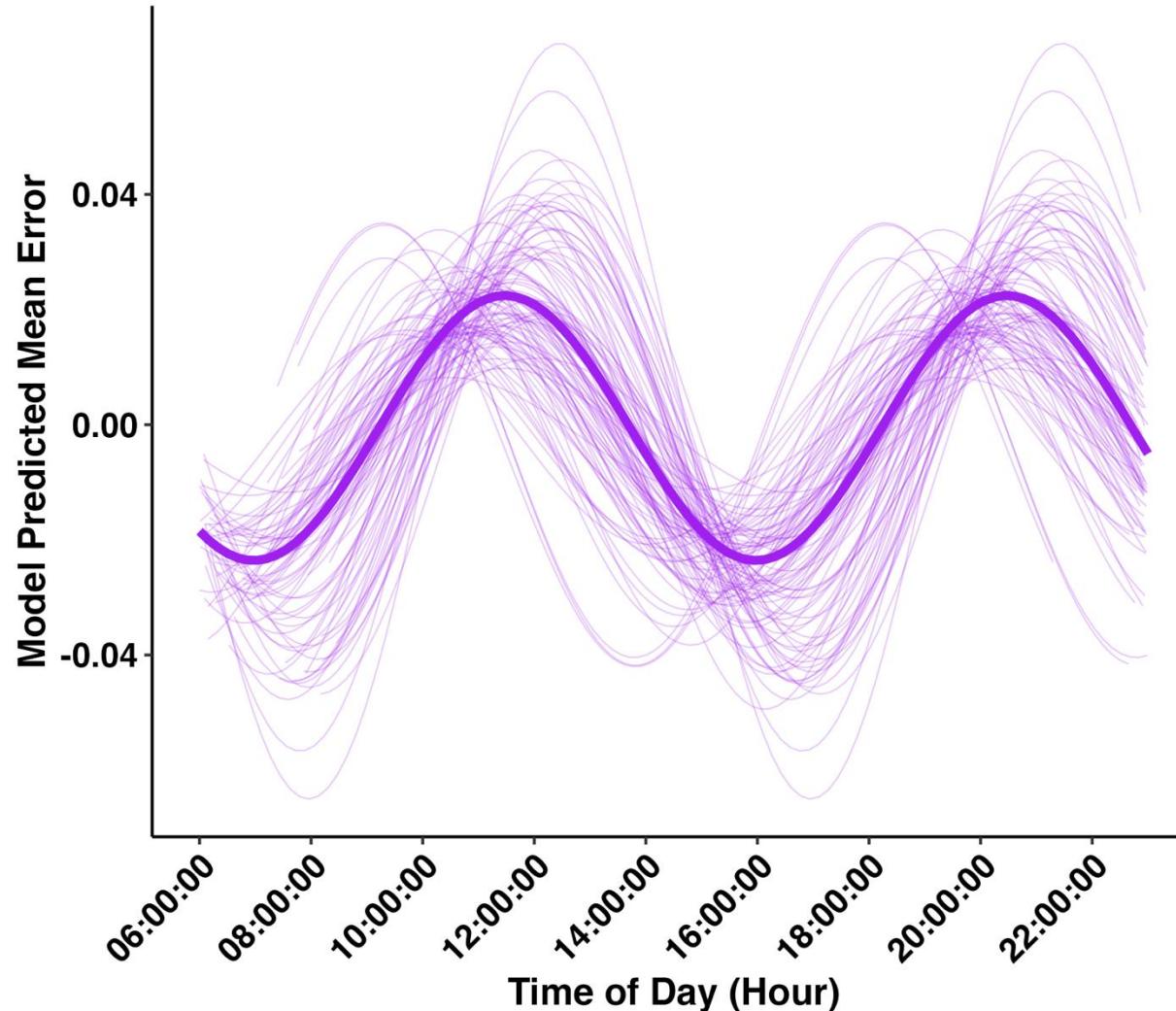


# Individual Differences in Daily Cycles of Cognitive Function

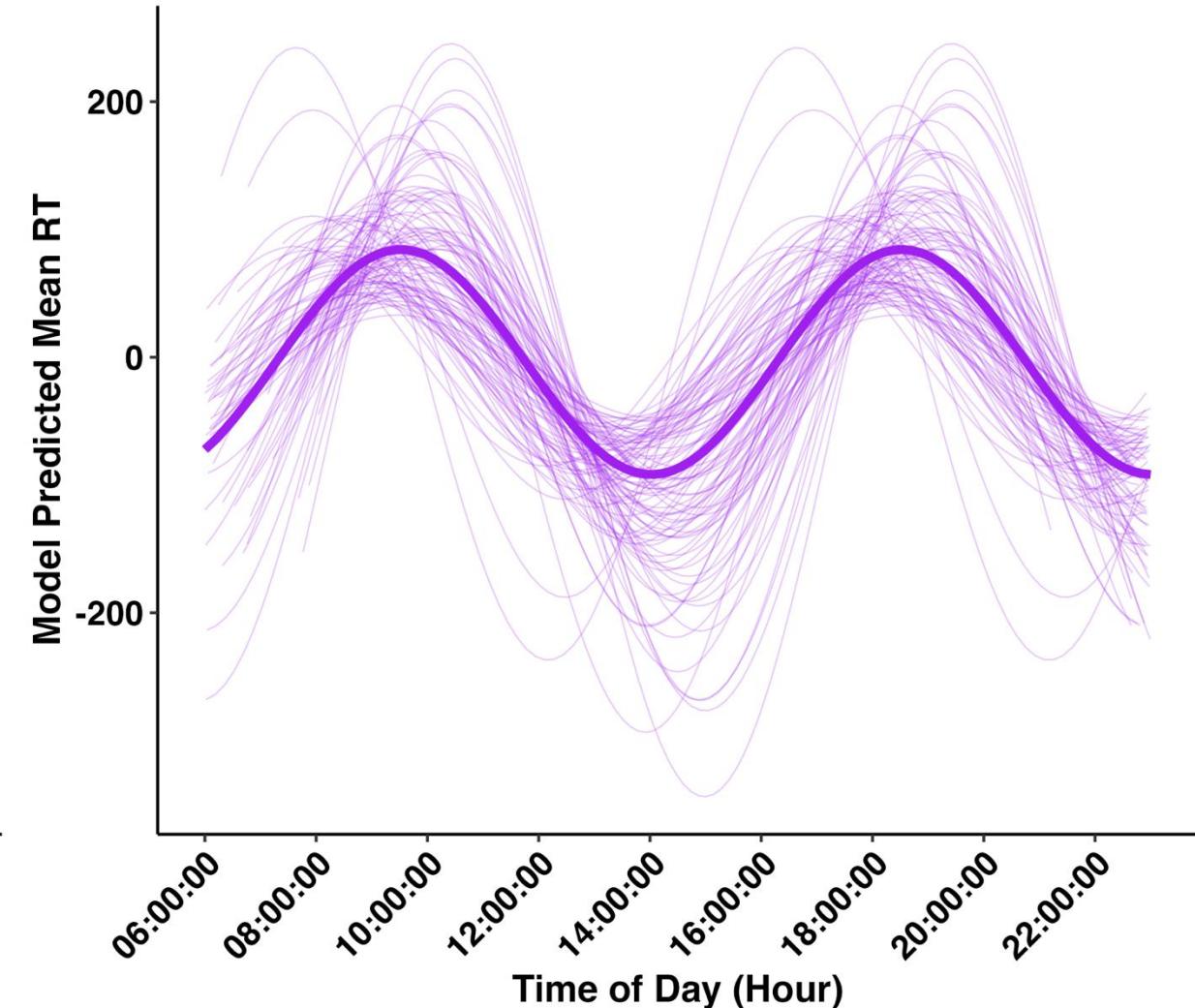
Dot Memory: Daily Rhythms

*Cosinor Trends Within Day*

Mean Error (Euclidean Distance)

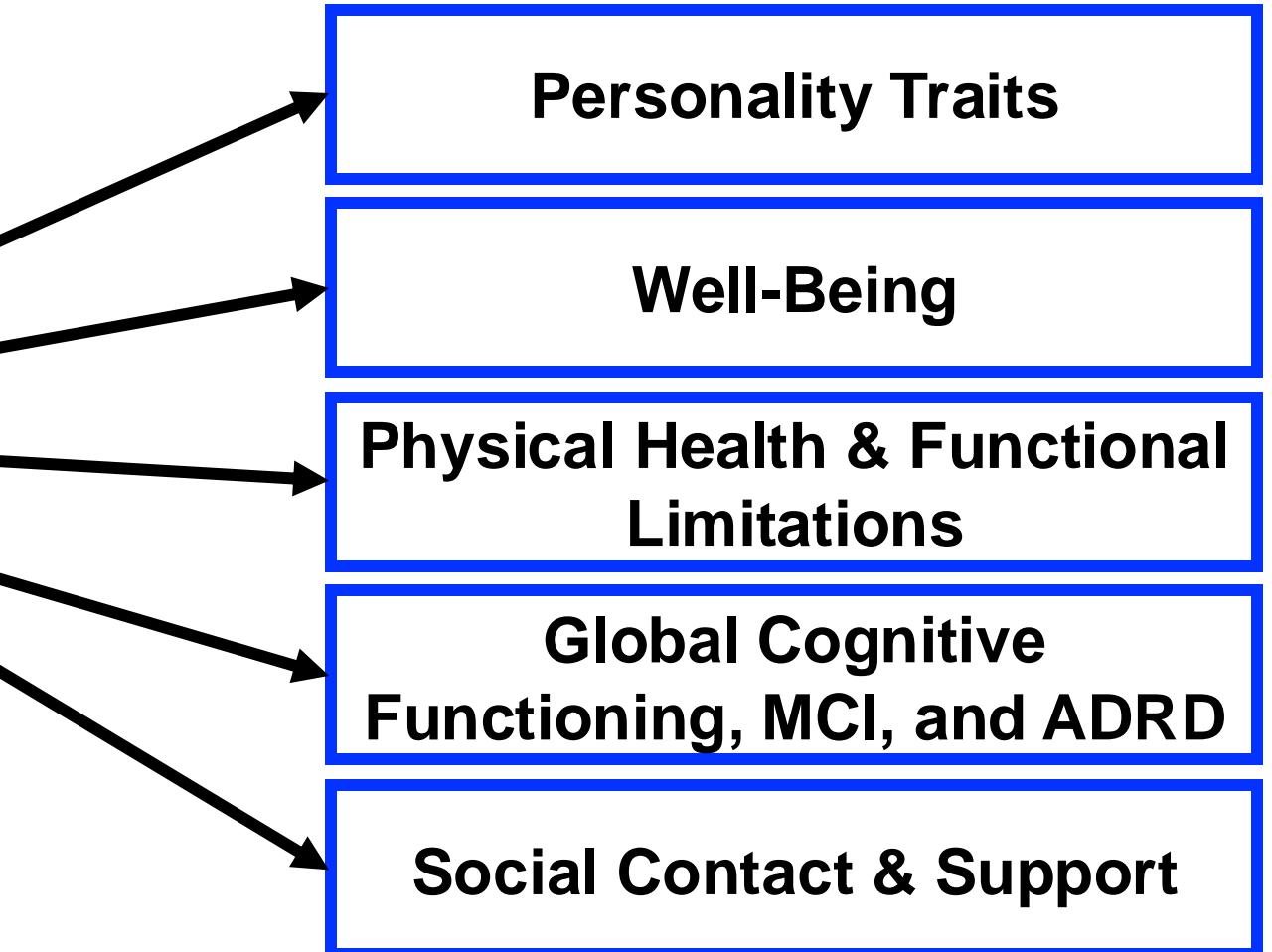
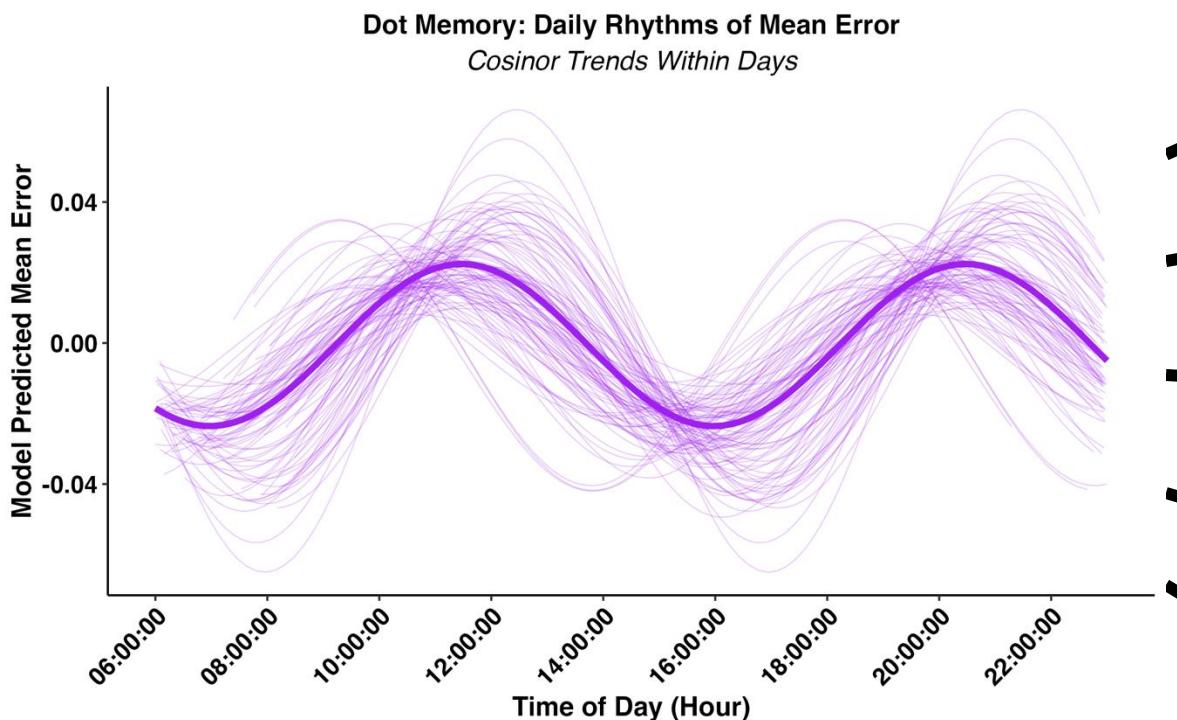


Mean Response Time



# Next Steps

What are individual differences in cognitive cycles associated with?



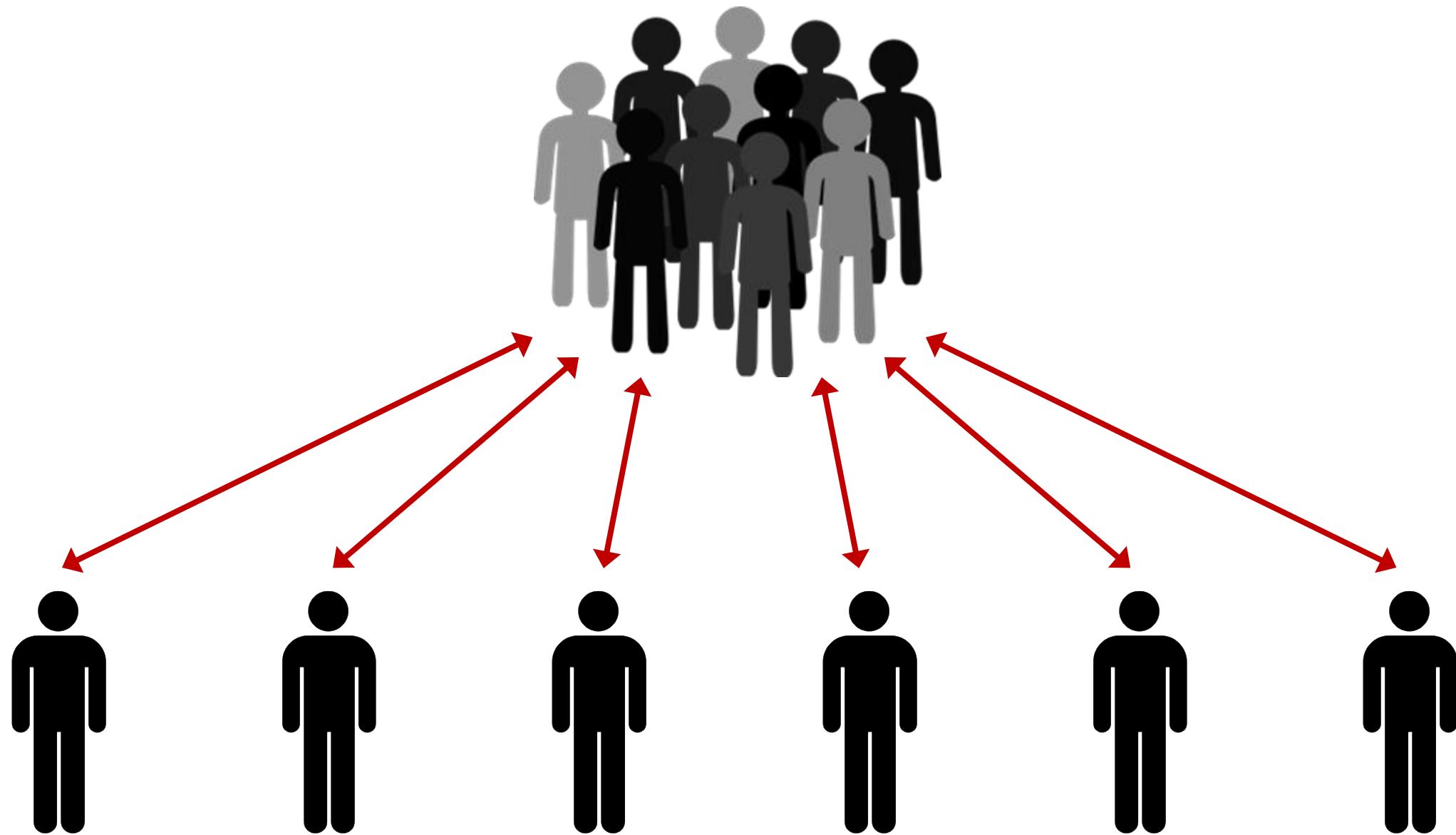
# Ongoing and Future Directions

**Integrating idiographic and between-person approaches via bottom-up psychological assessment**

**Using heterogeneous dynamics to link traits and states**

**Introducing the Personality Consortium on Research in Idiographics and Nomothetics (PECORINO)**

# Bottom-Up Psychological Science



# Introducing PECORINO

## Personality Consortium on Research in Idiographics and Nomothetics

- **Mission statement:** PECORINO is dedicated to advancing the field of personality science by bridging the gap between the study of individual persons and the exploration of general laws of personality functioning. Our mission is to integrate idiographic and nomothetic approaches to create a more comprehensive understanding of personality.

# Introducing PECORINO: Organization

President: Emorie Beck

Vice President: Charlie Renner

Organizational Team:

Niclas Kuper

Nick Modersitzki

Le Vy Phan

John Rauthmann

## Upcoming Events

ARP Preconference, June  
2025

ISSID Workshop, July  
2025

# Introducing PECORINO: Get Involved!

## Mailing List



## Contact Us

[pecorino.consortium@gmail.com](mailto:pecorino.consortium@gmail.com)

## Website

<http://pecorinoconsortium.wixsite.com/pecorino>

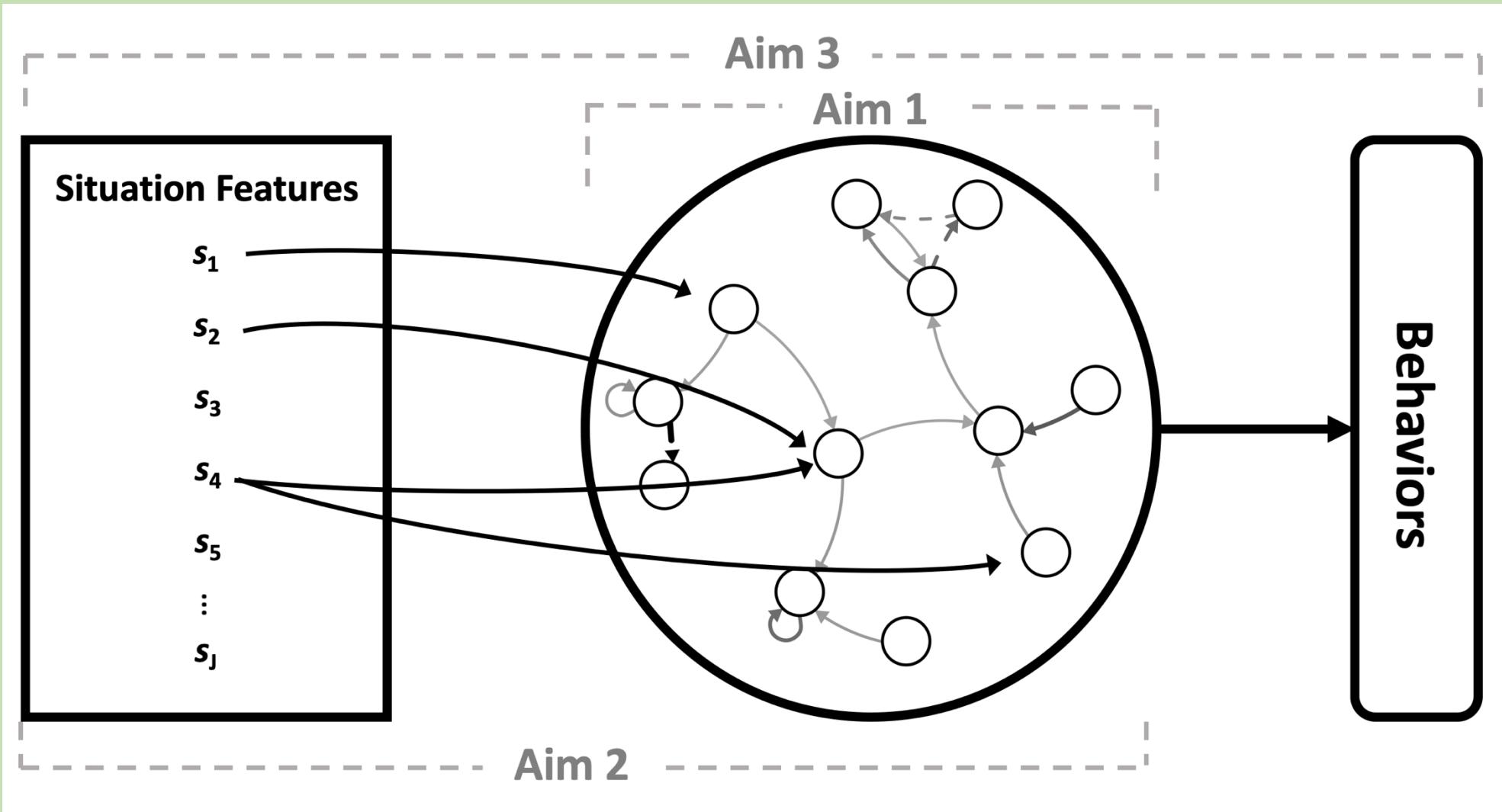
The consortium emerged out of an expert meeting and pre-conference on the topic “Dynamics of Personality: Integrating Nomothetic and Idiographic Approaches into a Synthetic Framework” funded by the European Association of Personality Psychology and organized by Niclas Kuper, Nick Modersitzki, Le Vy Phan, Markus Quirin, and John Rauthmann.

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\* = shared first  
authorship.

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Beck & Jackson  
(2020, *JPSP*; 2021b, *EJP*)

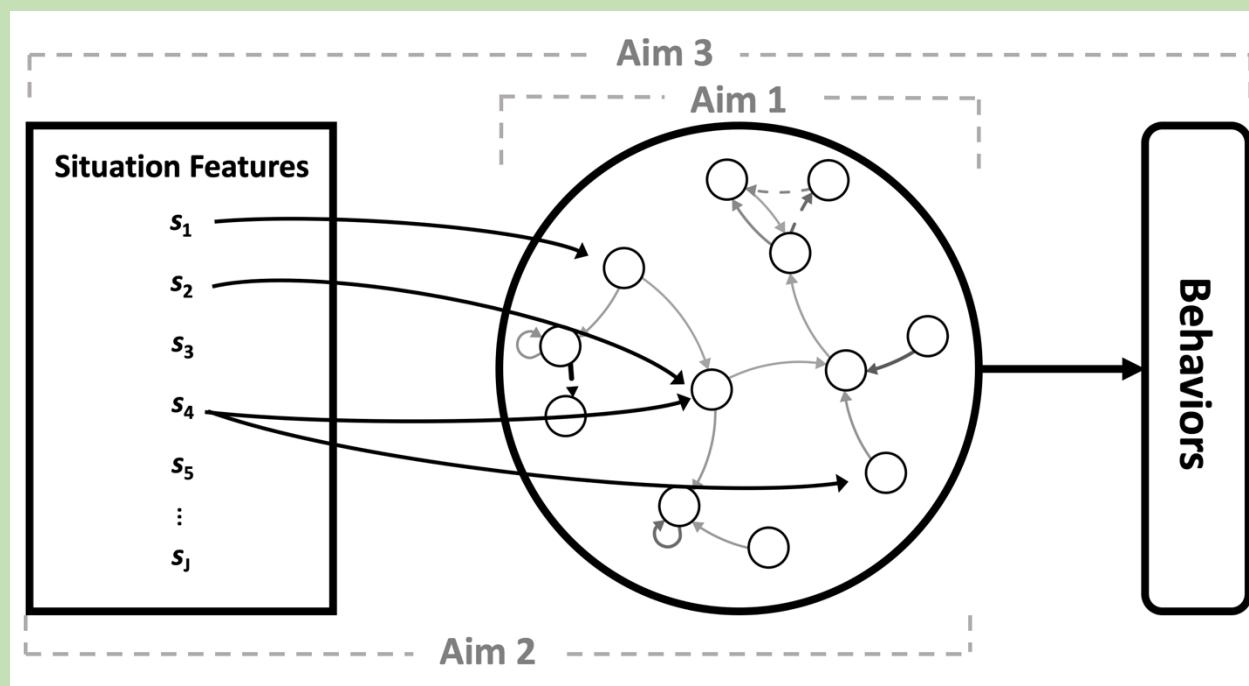
**Aim 2:** The dynamics of well-being unfold differently across people.

Beck et al.  
(in press, *NHB*)

**Aim 3:** Psychological and situational antecedents of behaviors and experiences vary across people.

Beck & Jackson  
(2023, *Psych Science*)

## Ongoing Directions



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