Building a Personality Science of the Whole Person

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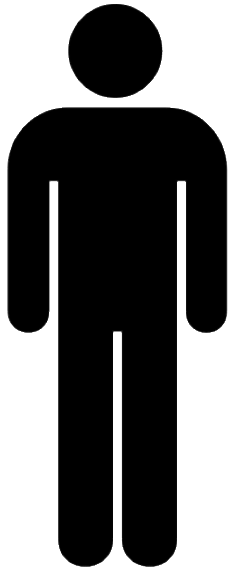
Description

Prediction

Explanation



Thoughts

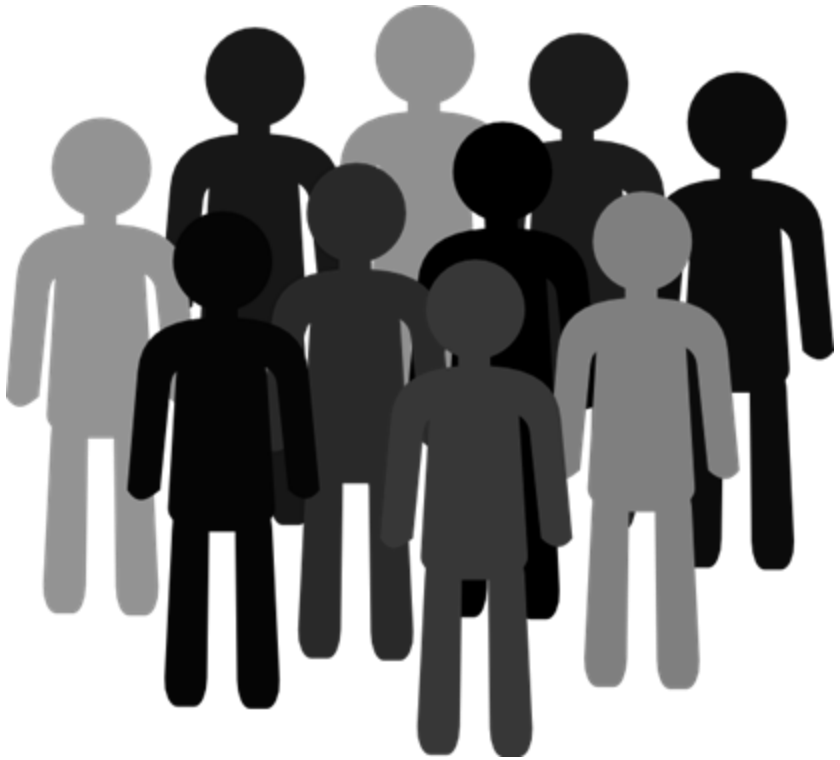
Feelings

Behaviors

Description

Prediction

Explanation



Thoughts

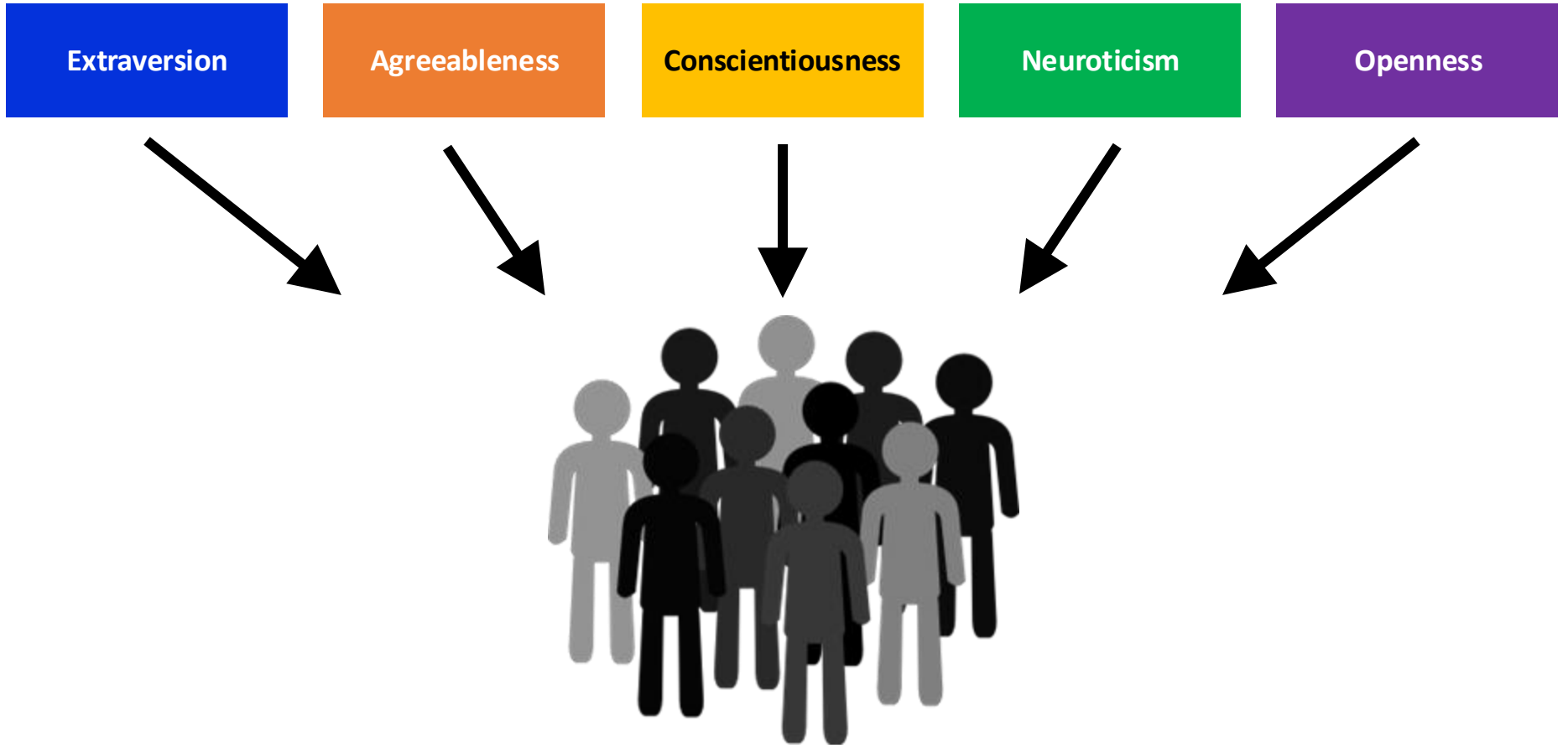
Feelings

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)

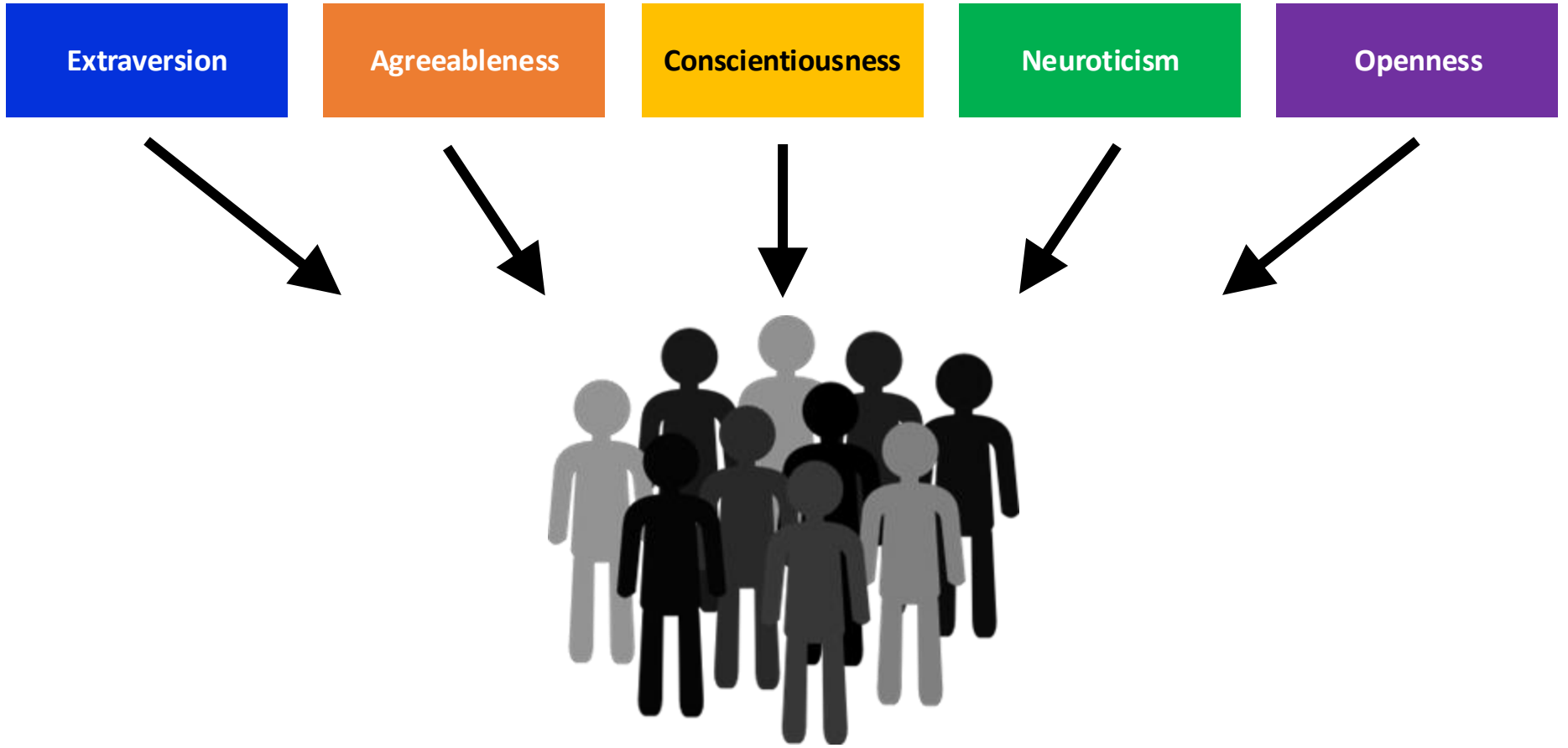


Nomothetic
Between-Person
Variable Centered

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...

12:07 PM · Sep 17, 2024 · **275** Views

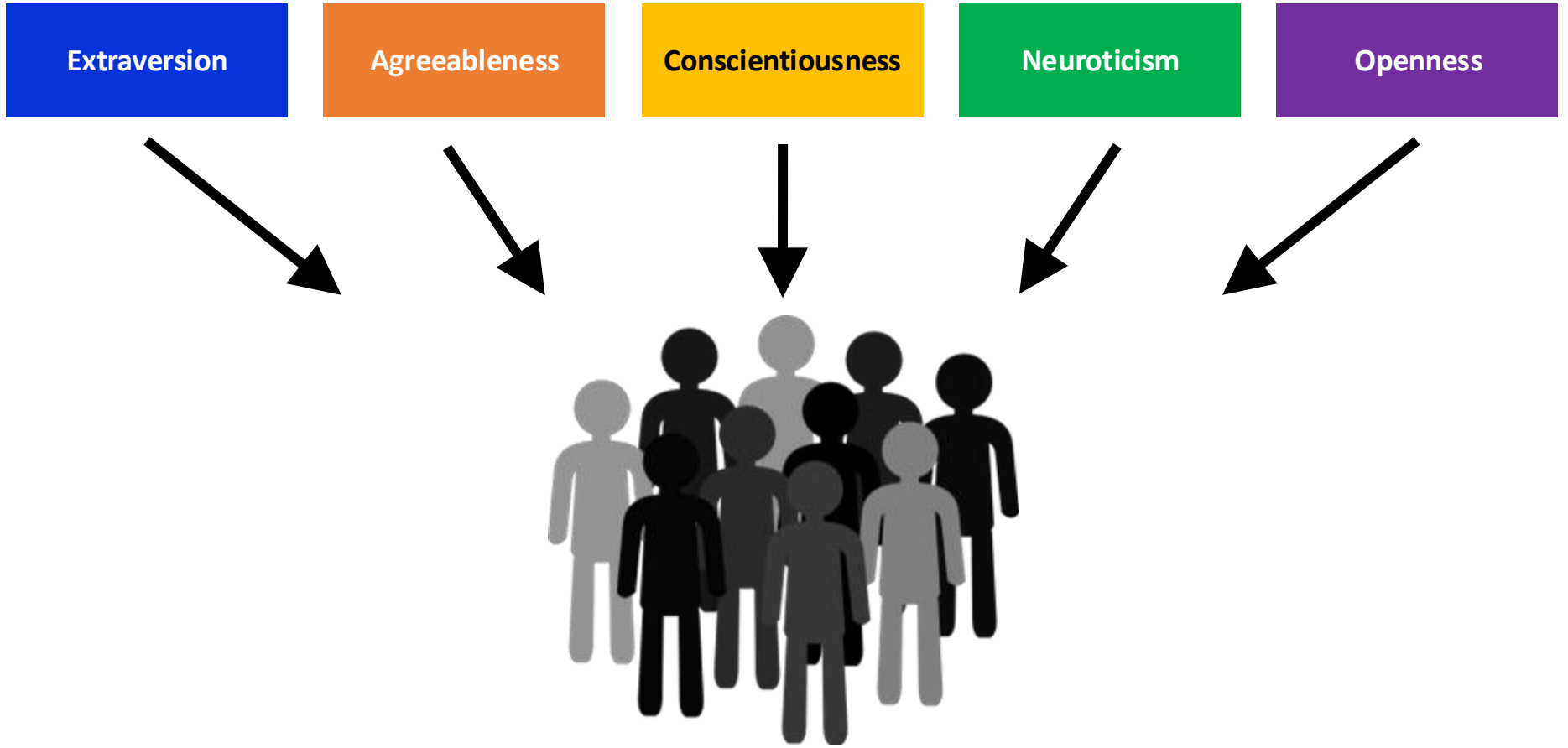


Nomothetic
Between-Person
Variable Centered

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)

The Whole Person

Contexts

Dynamics & Systems

e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a, *JPSP*; 2020b, *CDPS*; Lee & Beck, 2025, *JPSP*; Nissen & Beck, 2025a,b, *JPSP*, *SPPC*

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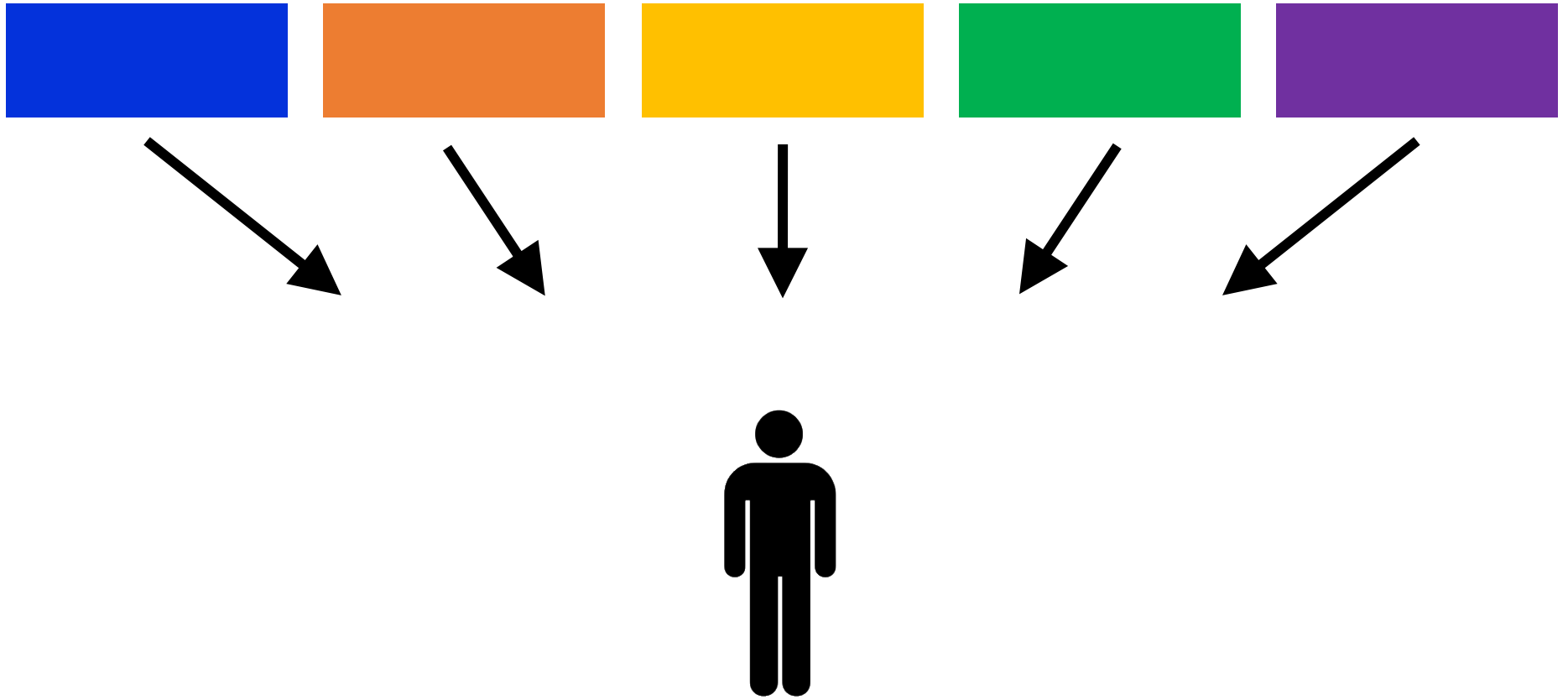
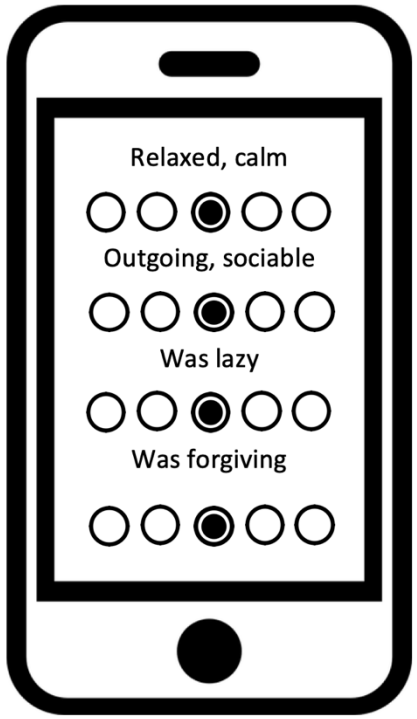


Idiographic
Person-Specific
N = 1

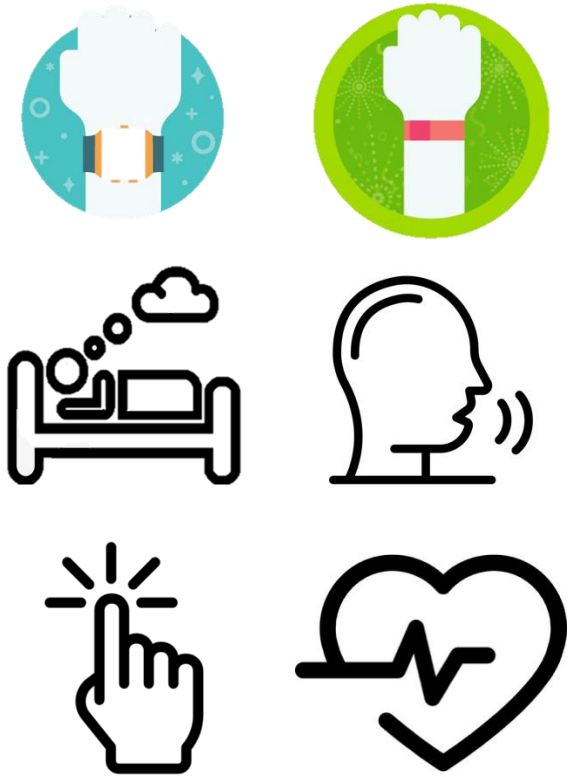
e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a, *JPSP;* 2020b, *CDPS*

Modern Opportunities for *N* = 1 Research

ESM / EMA

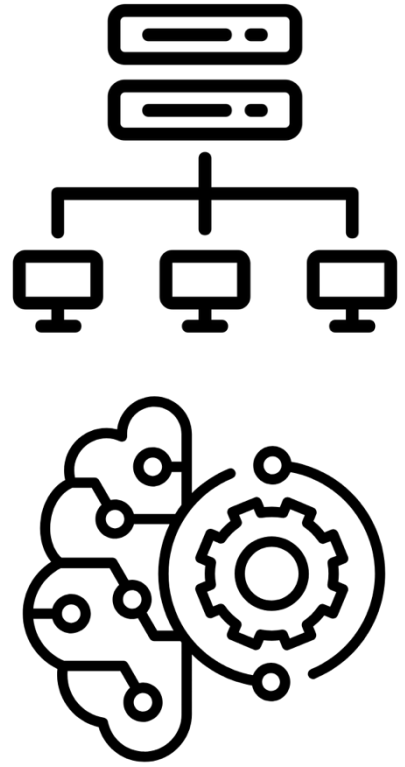


Mobile Sensing

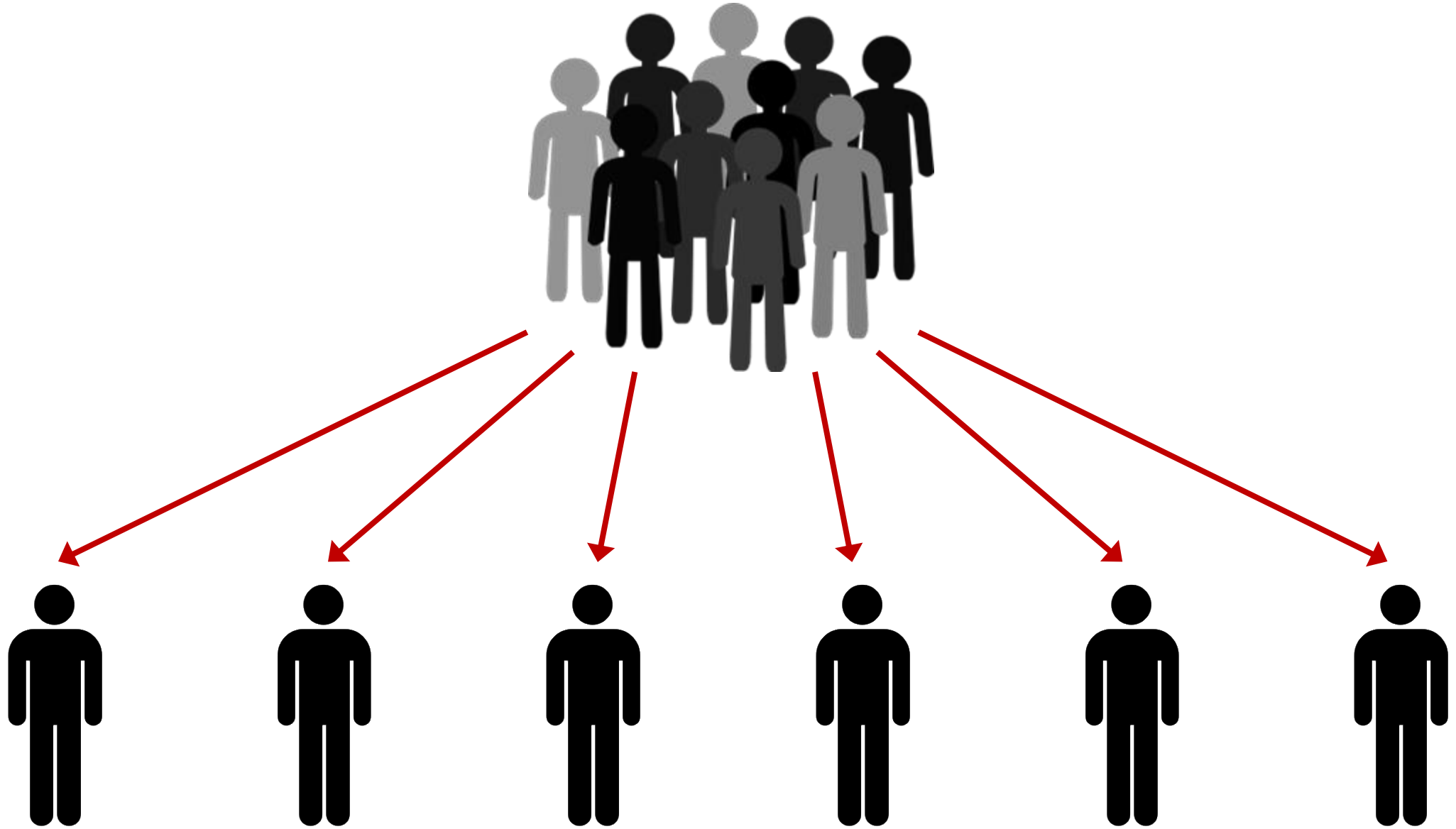


Open-Ended Responses

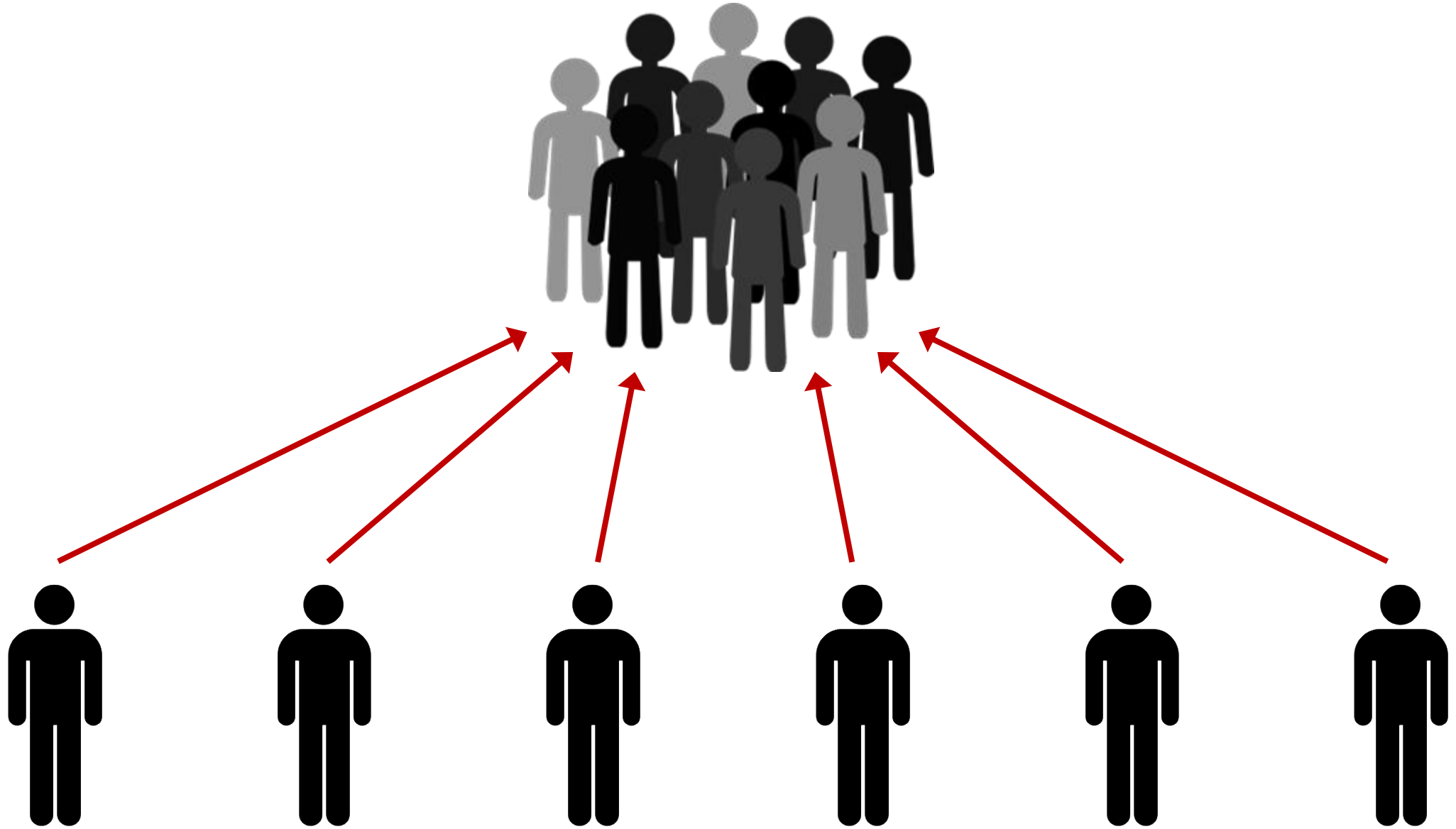
Computational Tools



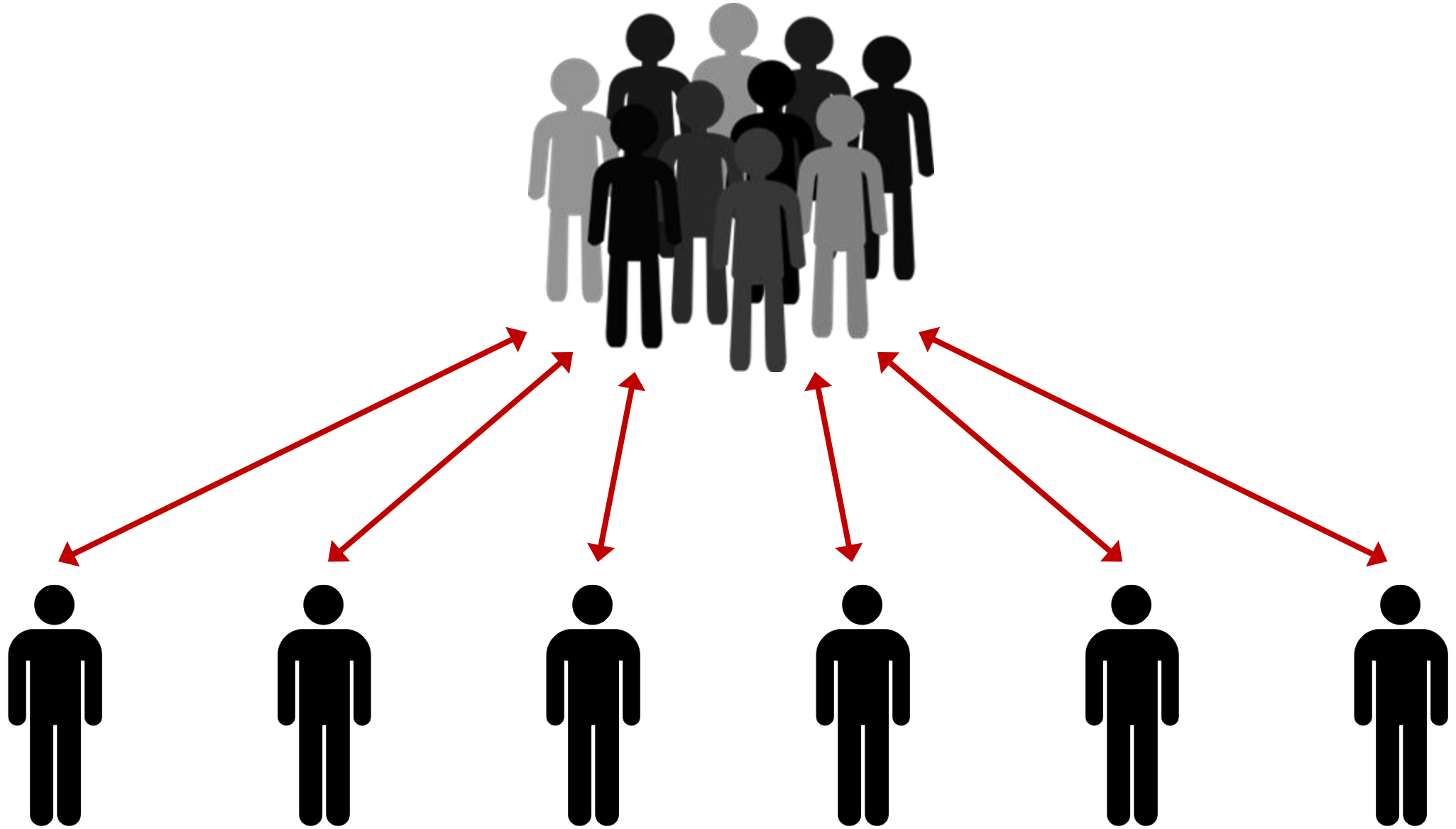
Top-Down Psychological Science



Bottom-Up Psychological Science



Bottom-Up Psychological Science



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The Whole Person

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e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a, *JPSP*; 2020b, *CDPS*; Lee & Beck, 2025, *JPSP*; Nissen & Beck, 2025a,b, *JPSP*, *SPPC*

What is personality?

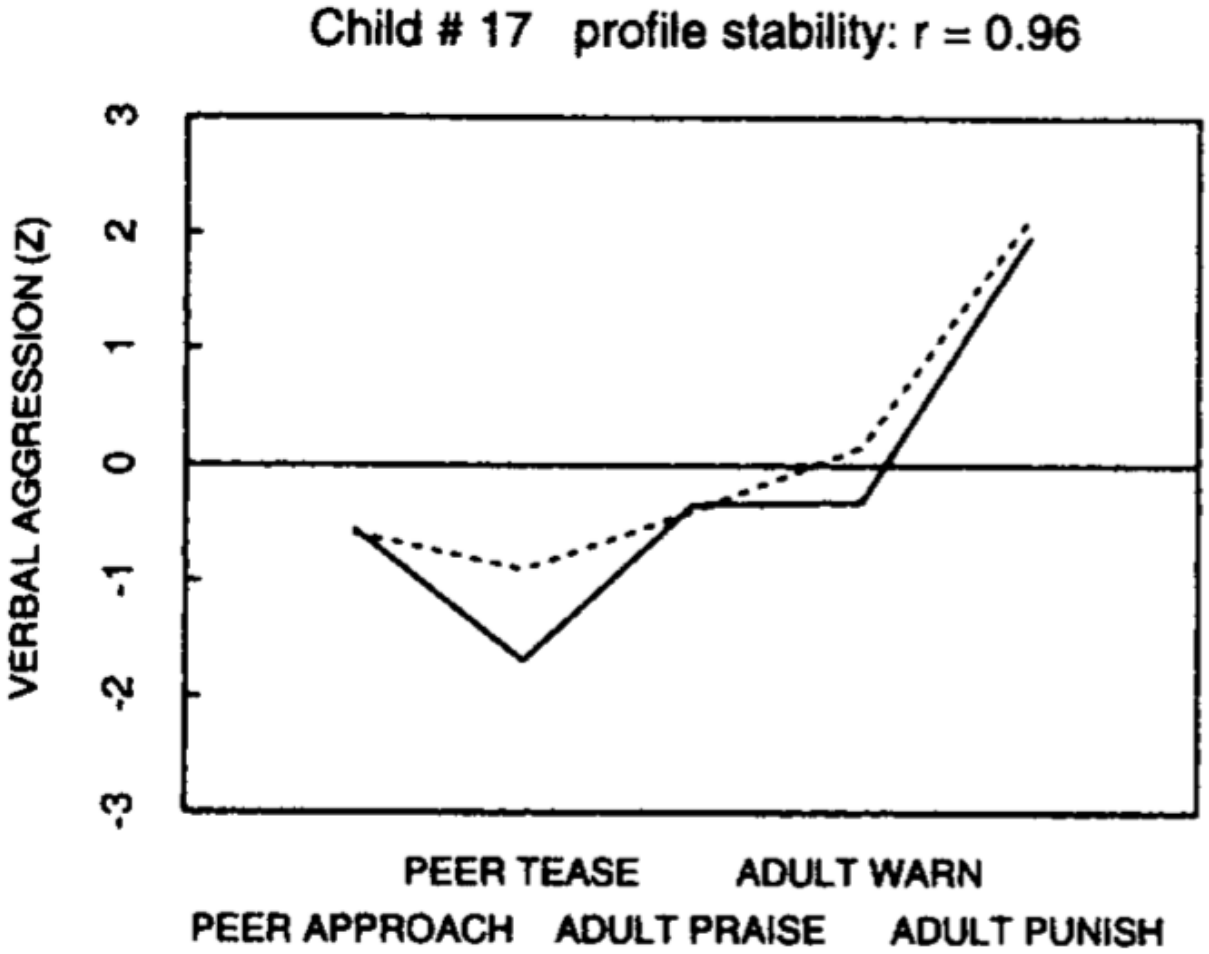
if ***...*** ***then***

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?



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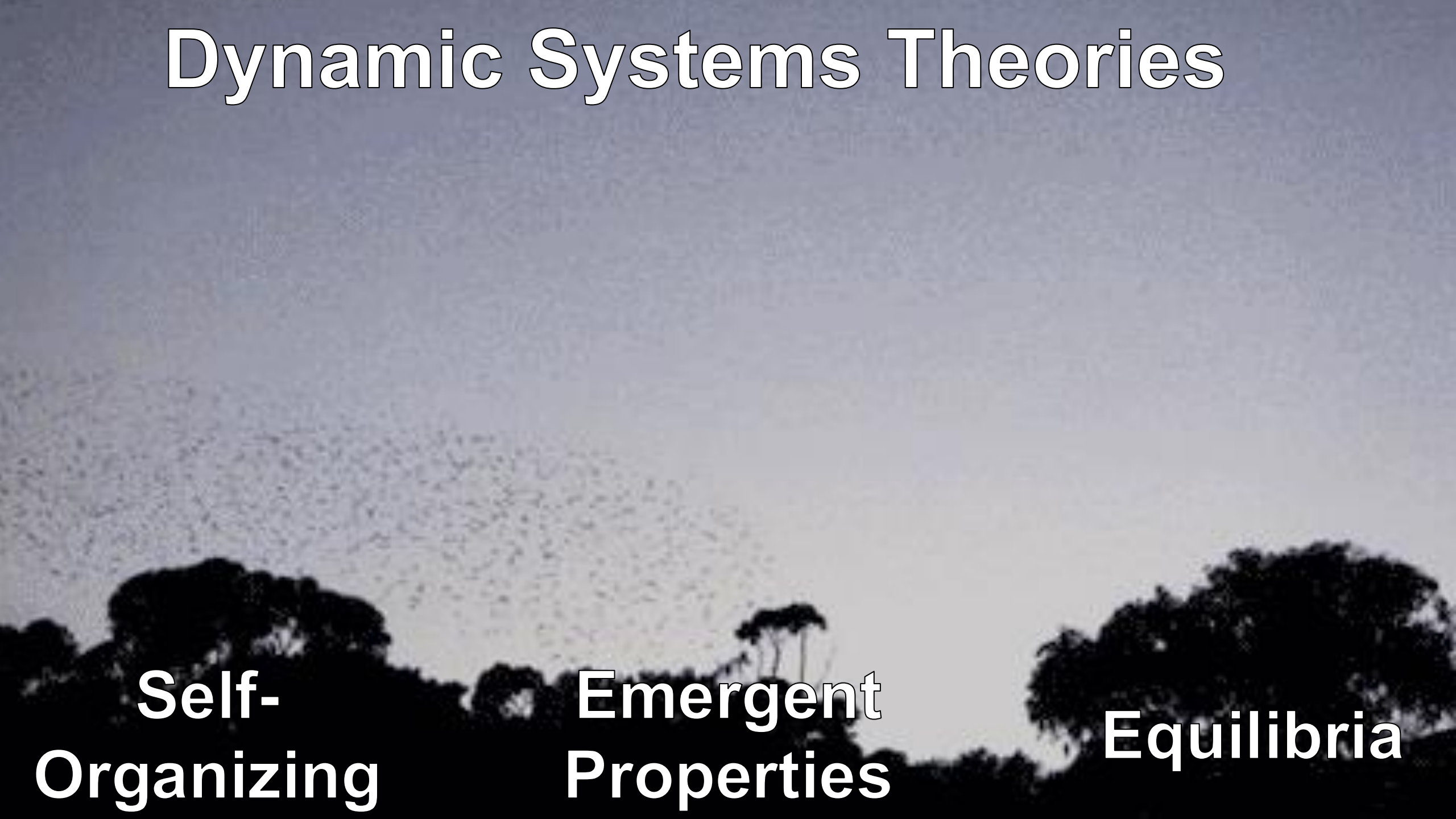
Dynamic Systems Theories



Self-Organizing

Emergent Properties

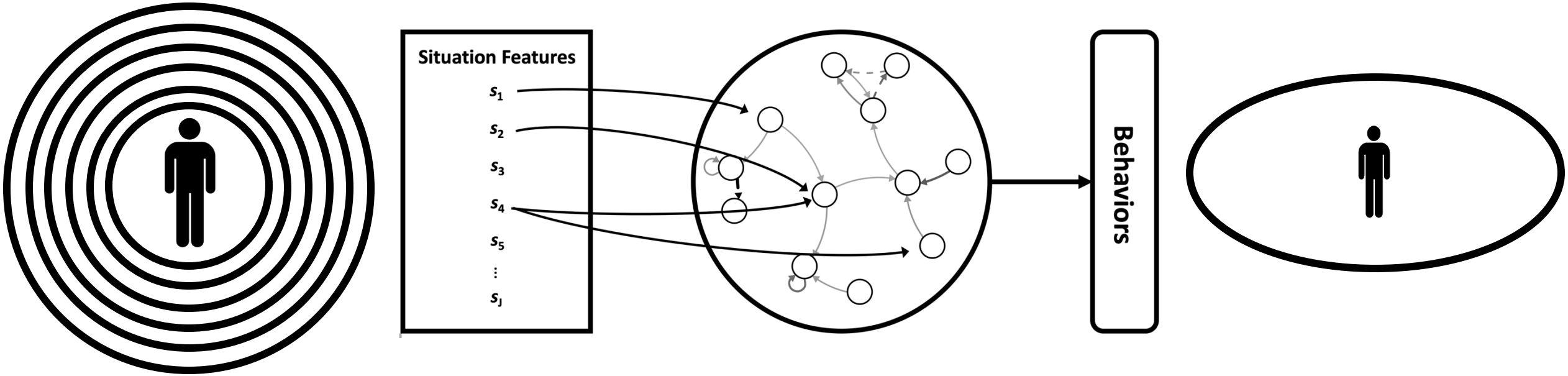
Equilibria

Persons in Context: Systems Theories

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

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

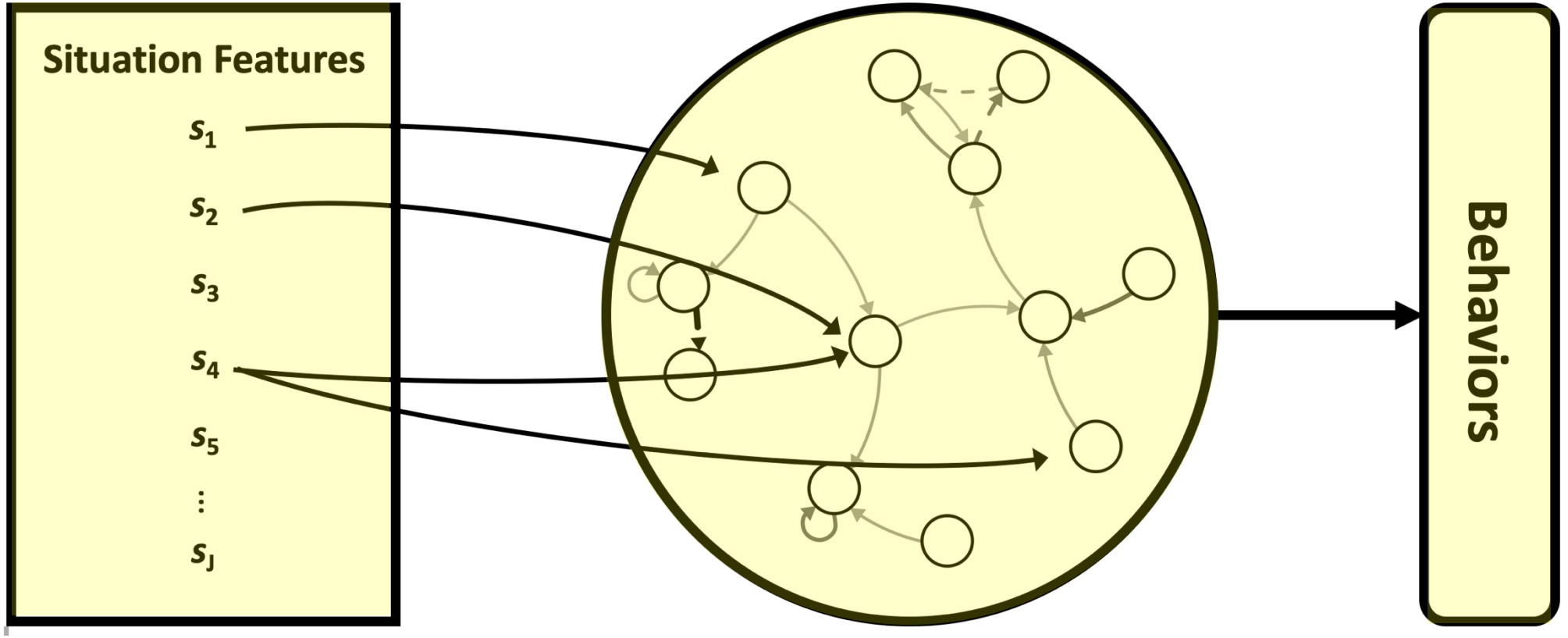
Field Theory
(e.g., Lewin, 1936)



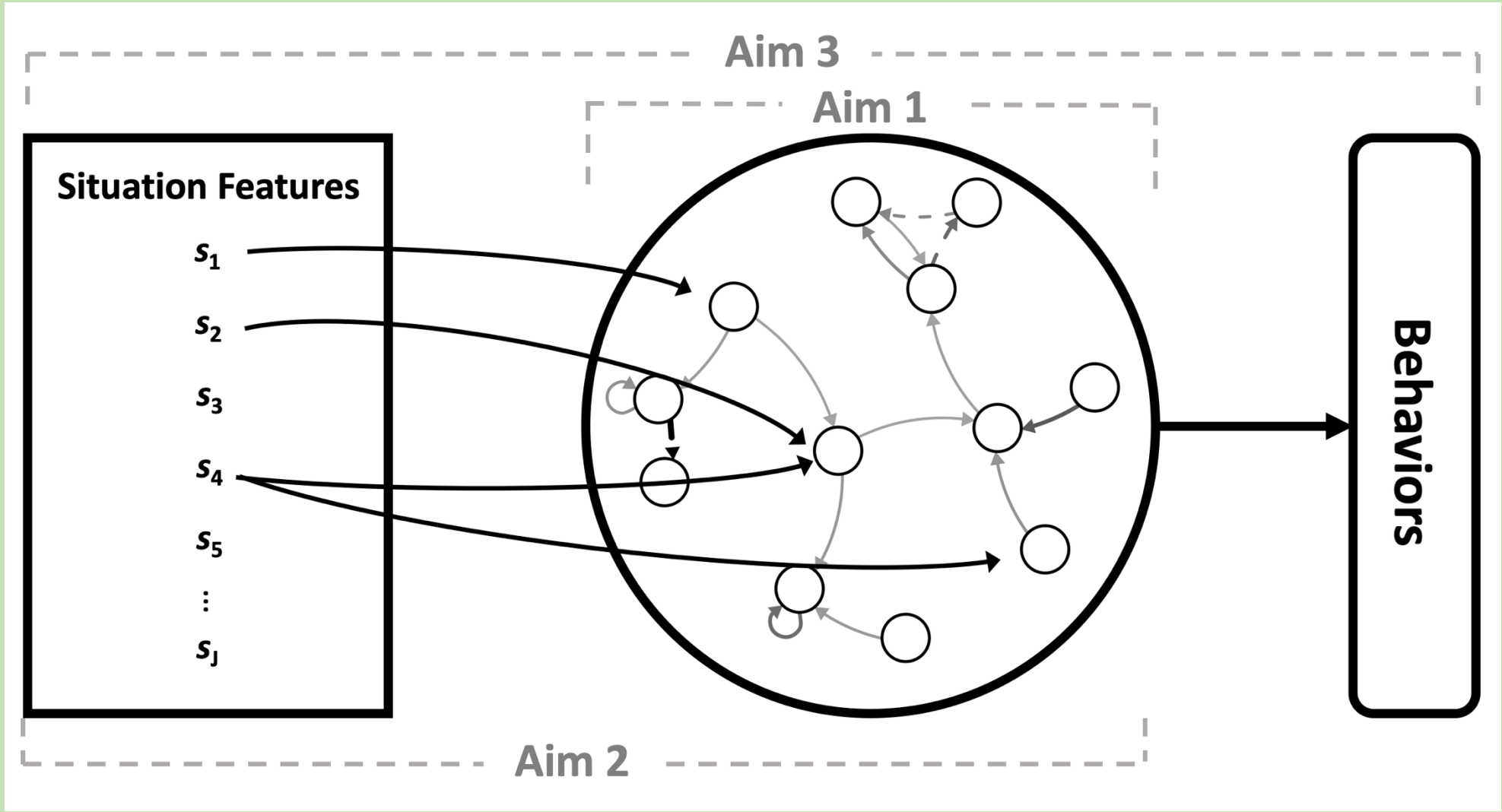
e.g., Lewin, 1936

What is personality?

A Cognitive Affective Processing System (CAPS)

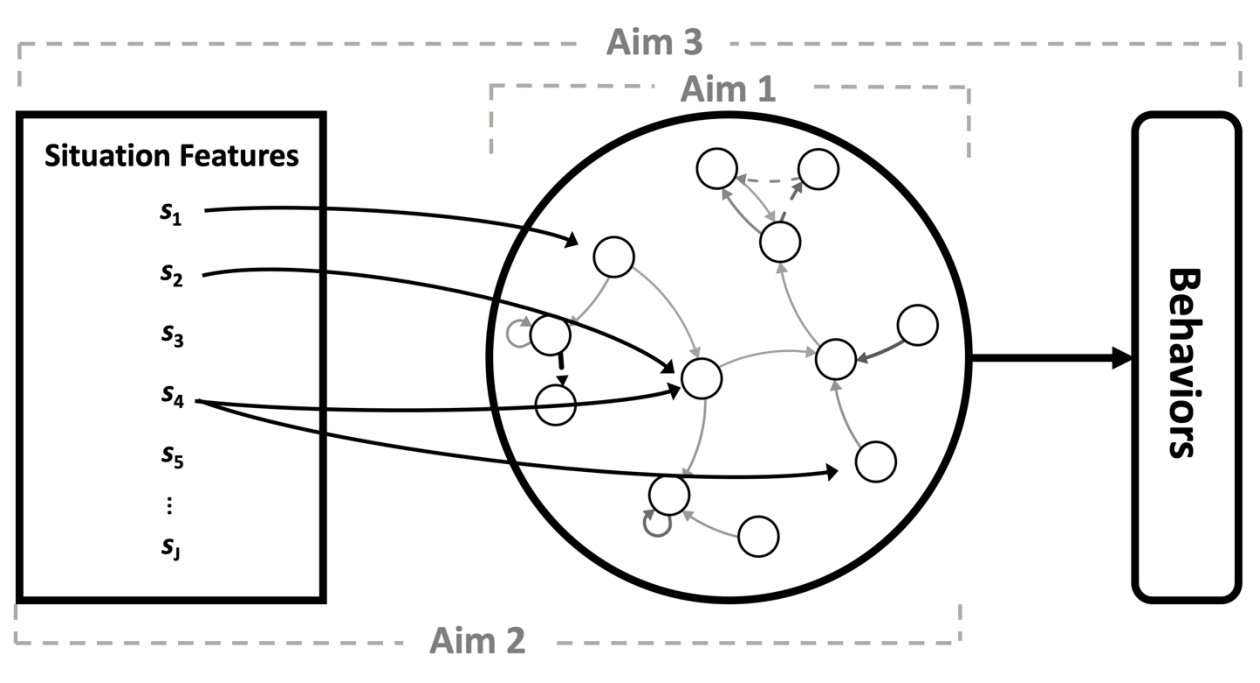


e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 2005; Wright & Mischel, 1987; Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993; Mischel, 1973


Aim 3
Aim 1
Situation Features
s_1
s_2
s_3
s_4
s_5
s_J
Behaviors
Aim 2

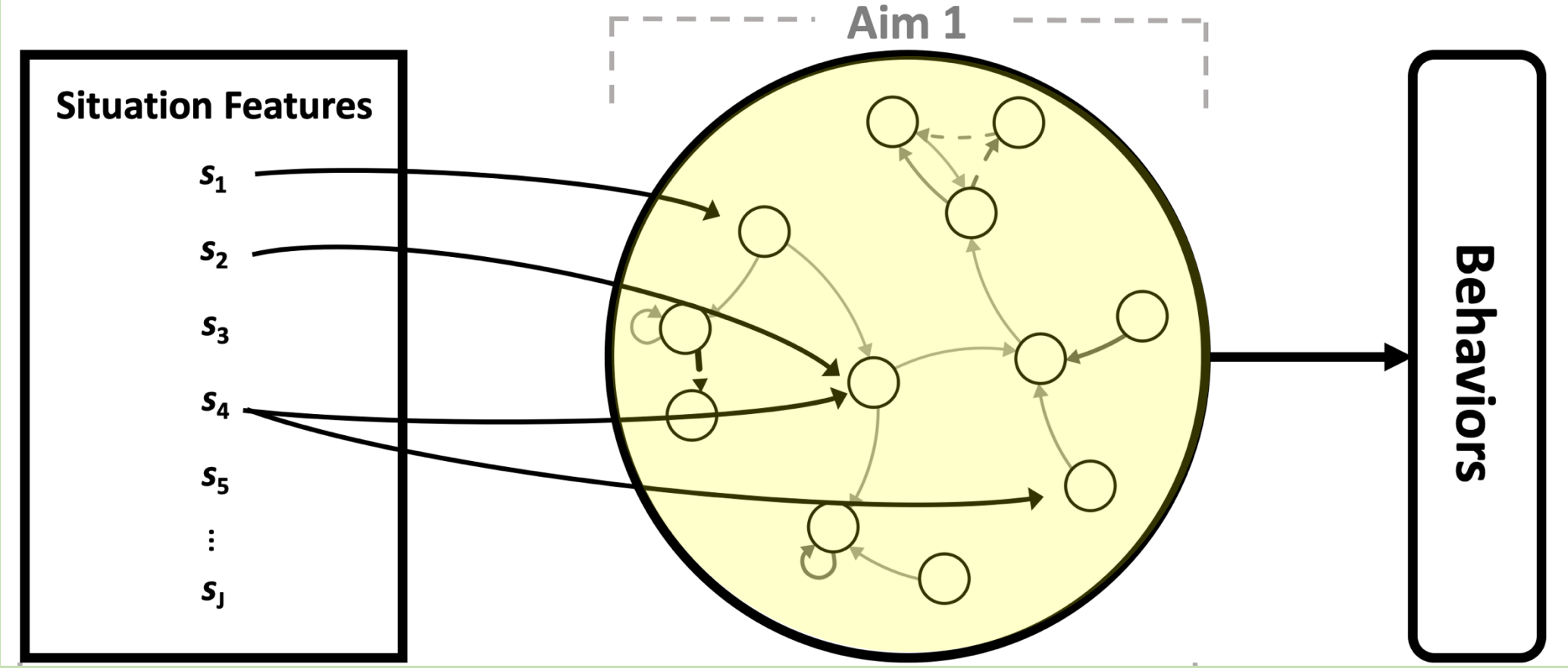
Aim 1: Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.	**Beck & Jackson** (2020, *JPSP*; 2021b; *EJP*)
Aim 2: Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.	**Beck, et al.** (2025, *Nature Human Behaviour*)
Aim 3: Predicting behavior using machine learning.	**Beck & Jackson** (2023, *Psych Science*)

Ongoing Directions



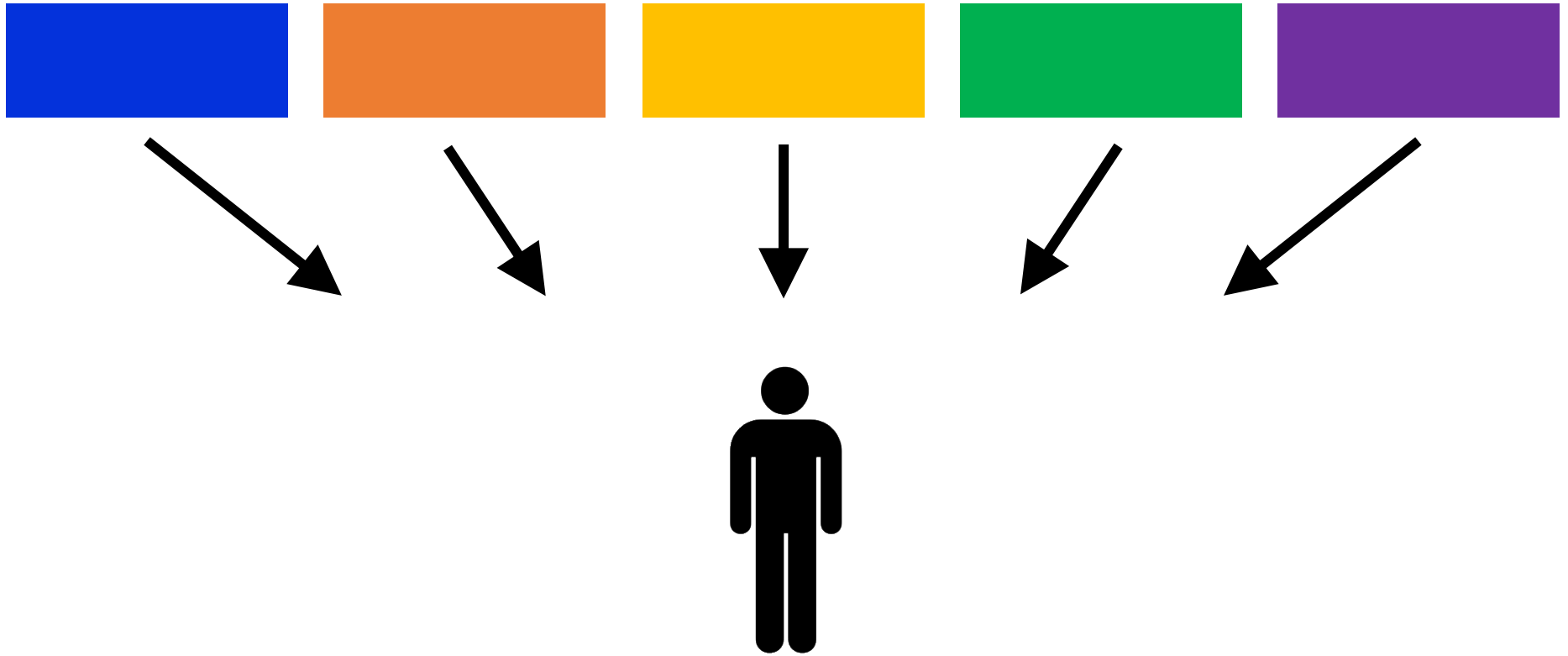
Aim 1: Bringing the individual back in the study of personality structure and change.

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



Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Neuroticism | Openness

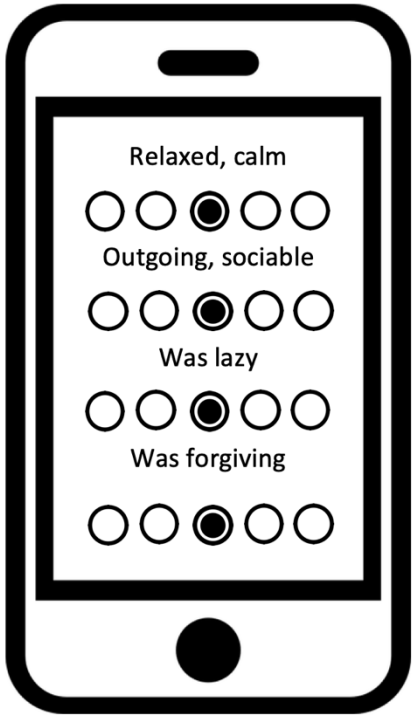
Nomothetic
Variable-Centered



Idiographic
Person-Specific

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

ESM / EMA



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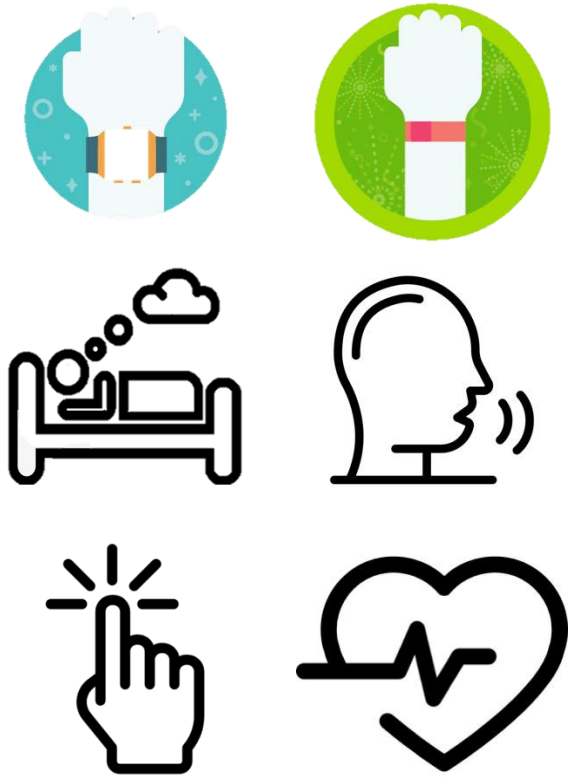


Methods

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

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

Measures

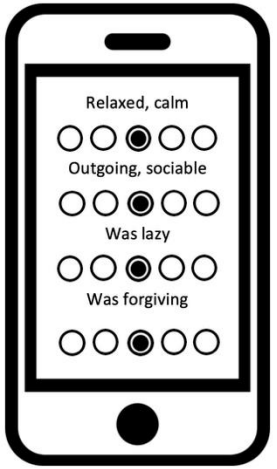
9 items from the Big Five Inventory (BFI)

Procedure

4 assessments / day for 15 days

Modeling

Graphical vector autoregression



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

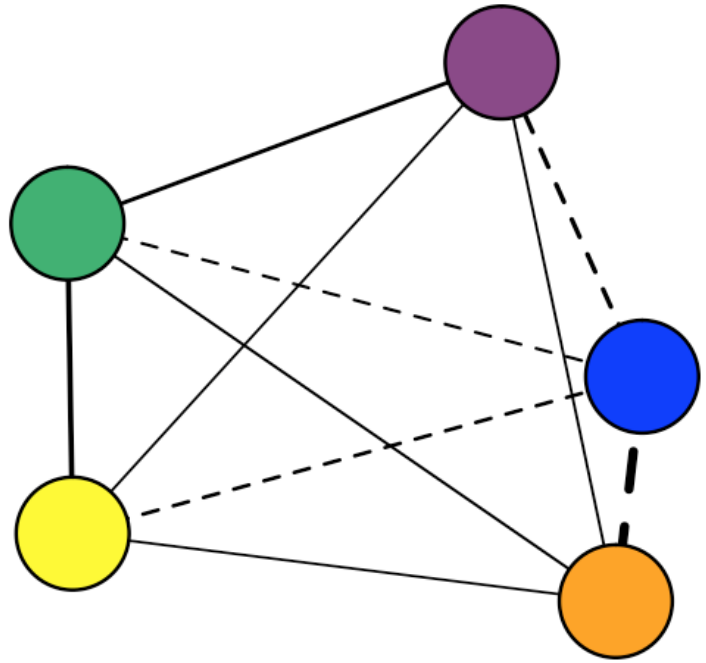
time	E	A	C	N	O
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					

	E	A	C	N	O
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

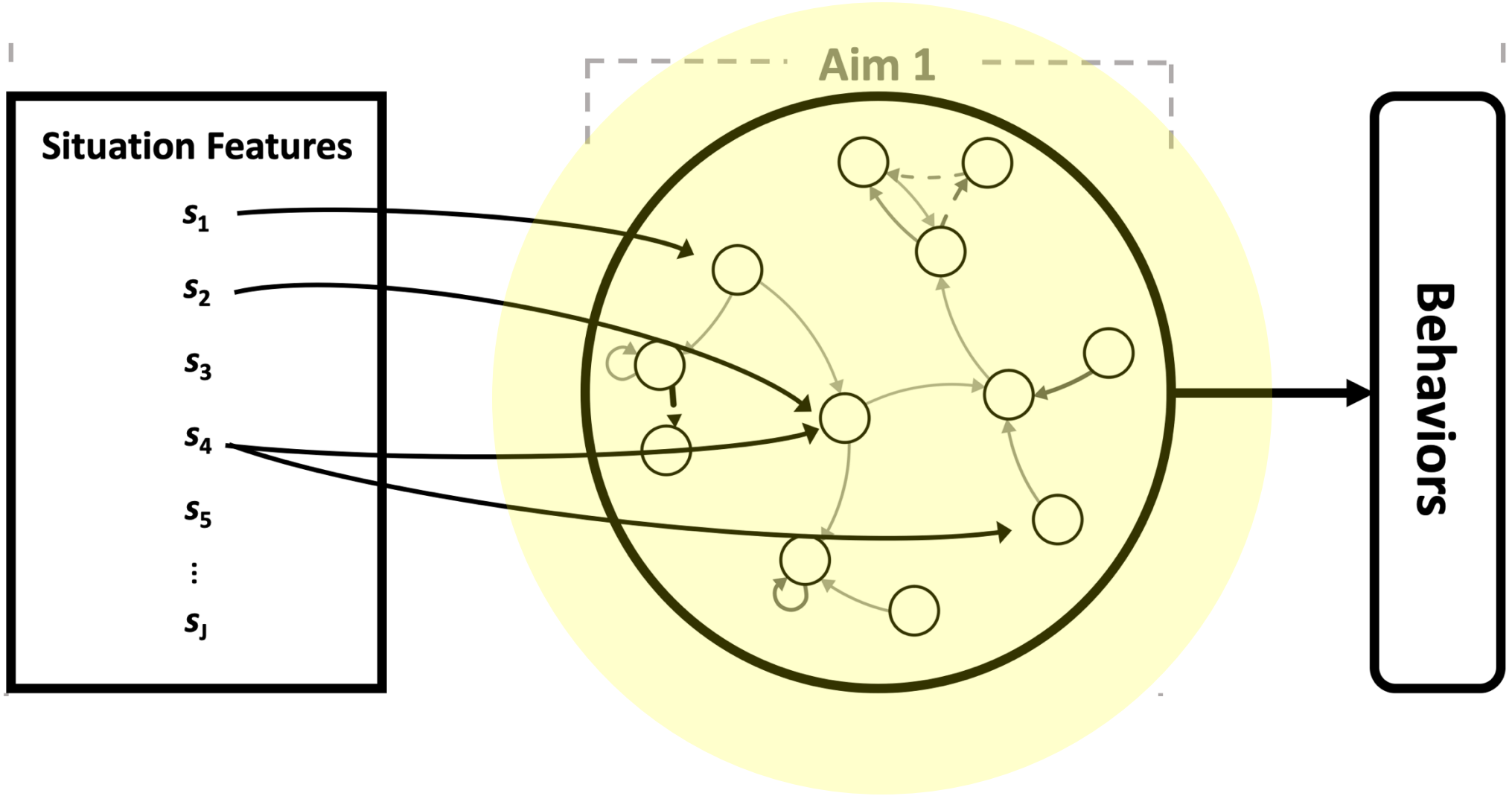
$X_{it} \leftarrow\rightarrow X_{jt}$

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

$X_{it} \leftrightarrow X_{jt}$


Aim 1
Situation Features
s_1
s_2
s_3
s_4
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s_J
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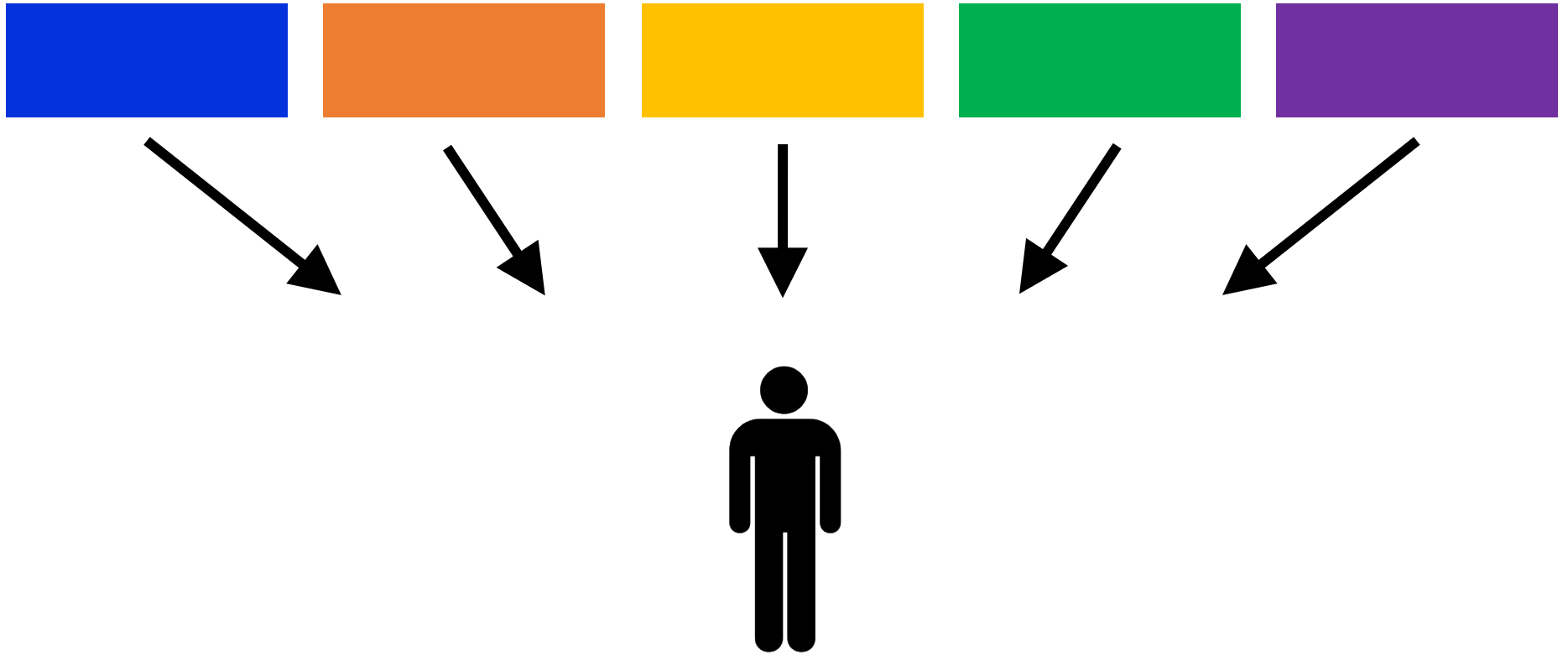

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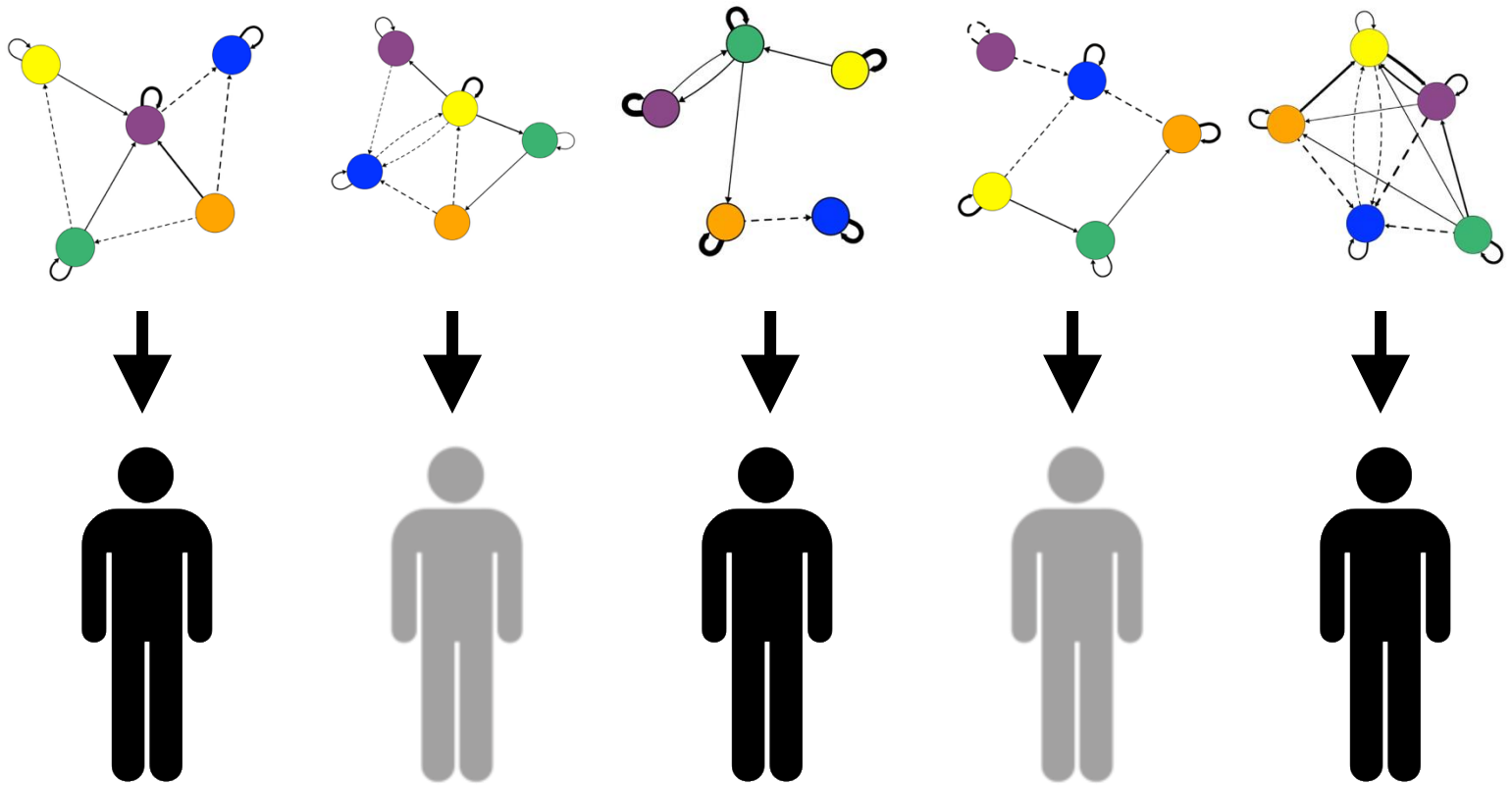
e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a, *JPSP;* 2020b, *CDPS*

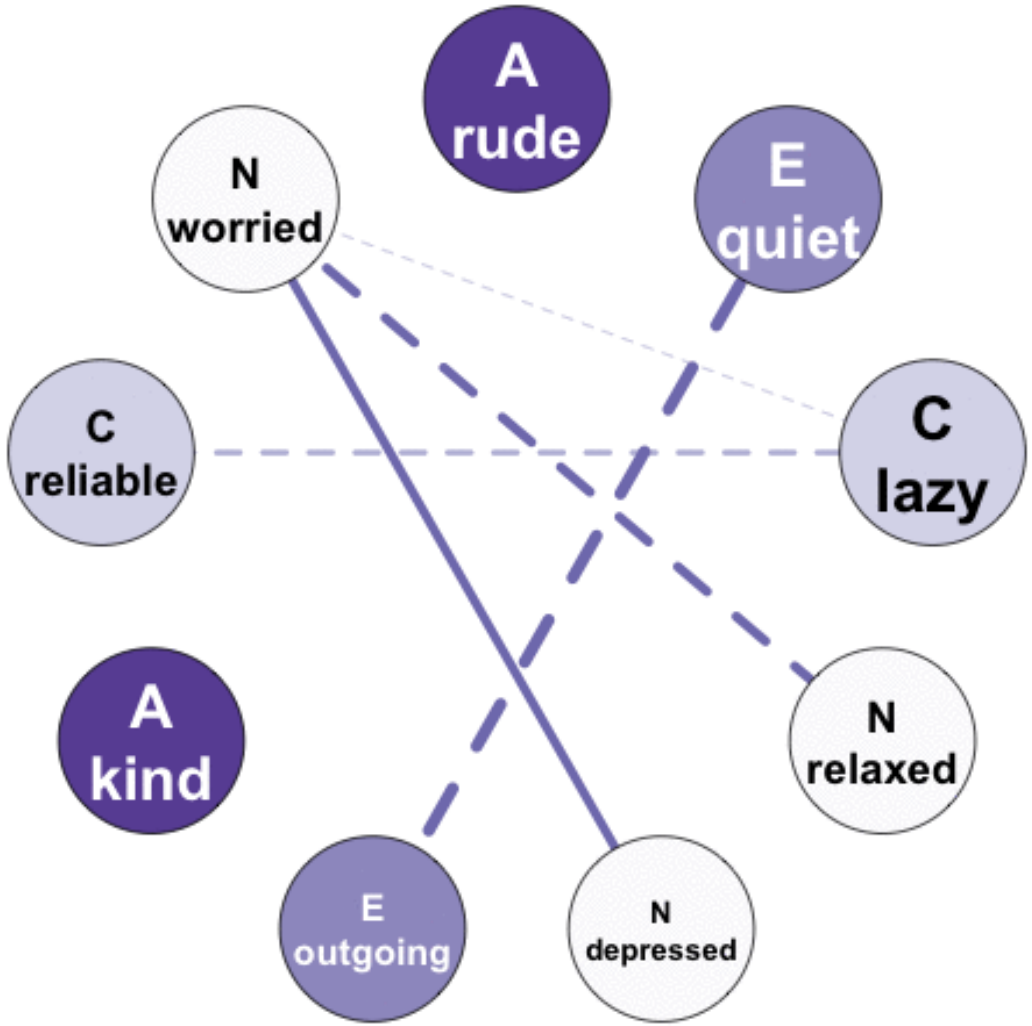


Idiographic
Person-Specific

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

RESULTS

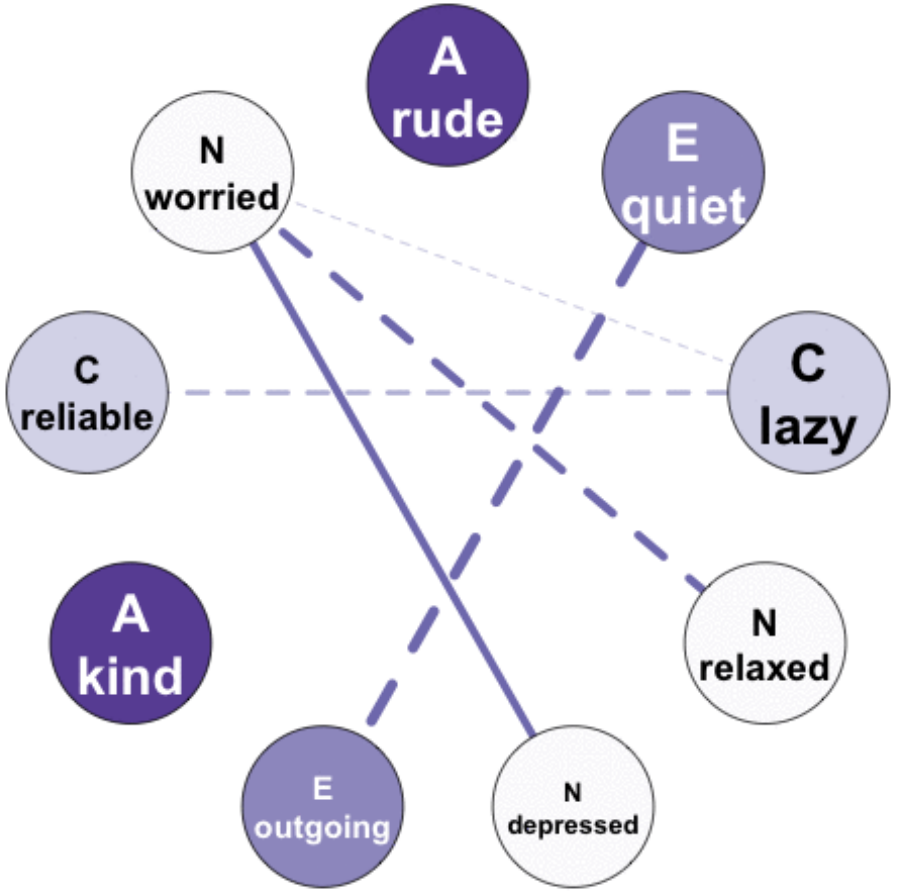
Aim 1

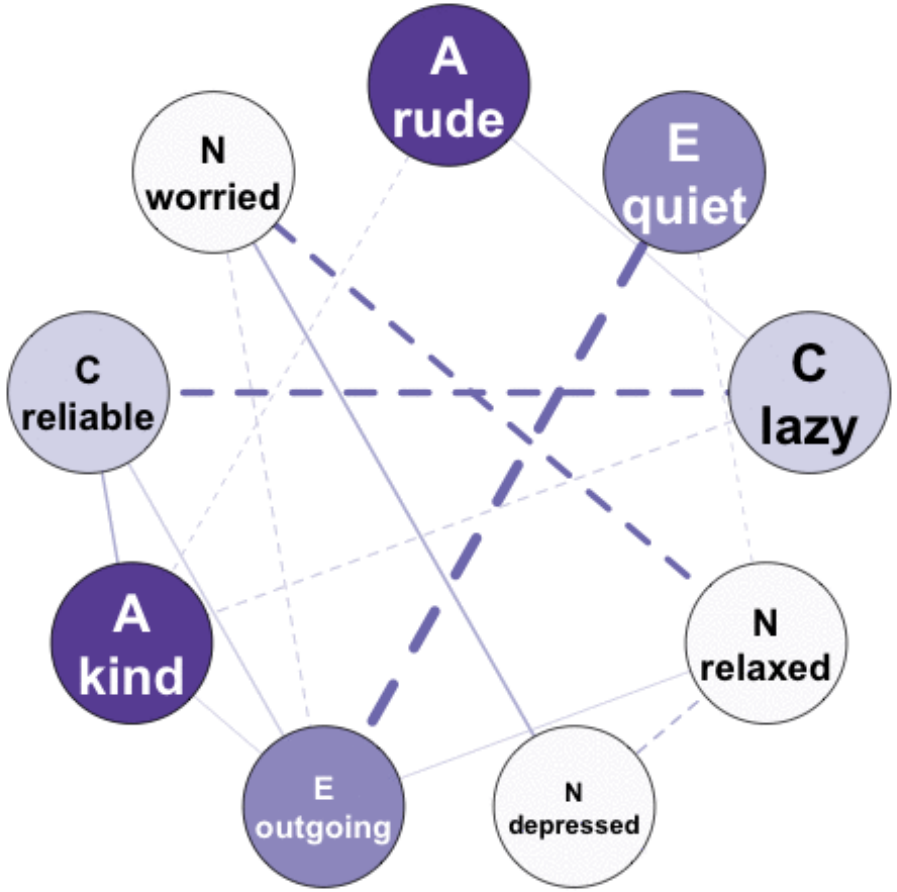


The structures differ across people.

But do they show expected longitudinal consistency?

Beck & Jackson (2020a, *JPSP*)





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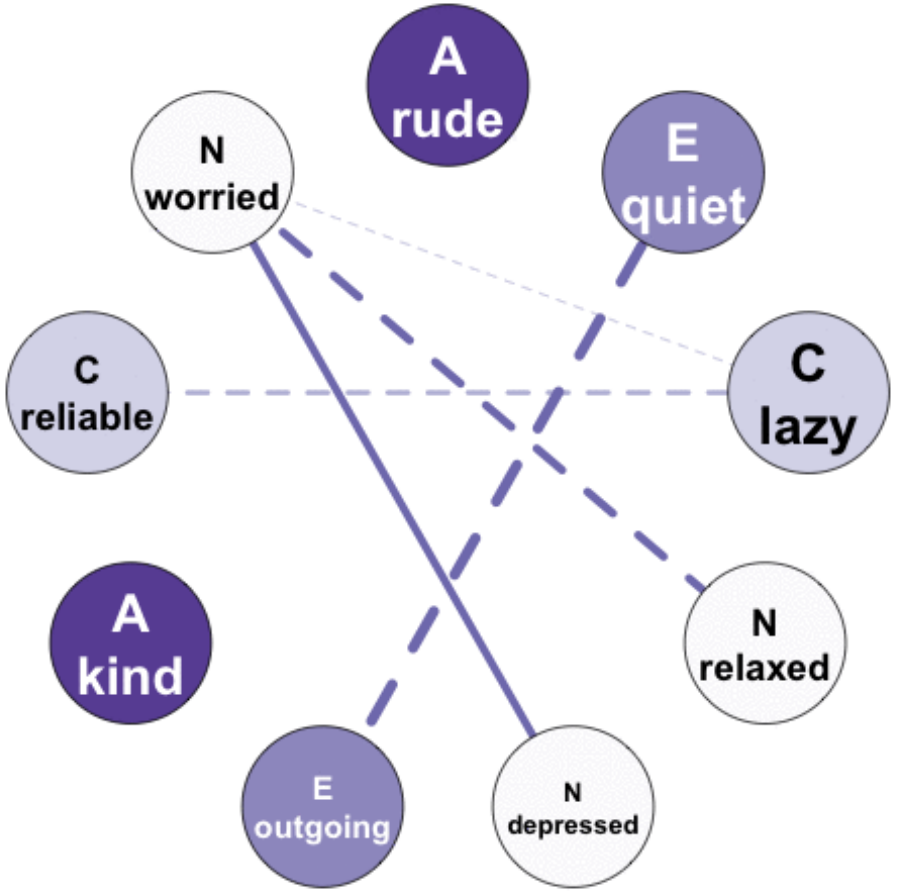

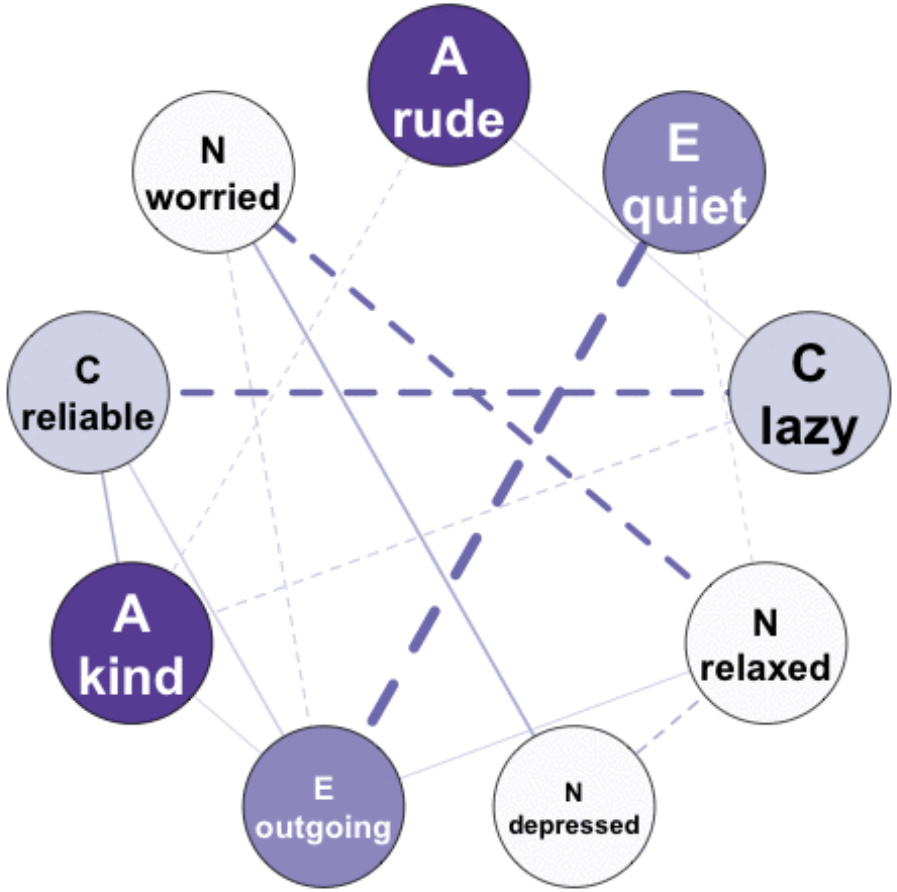

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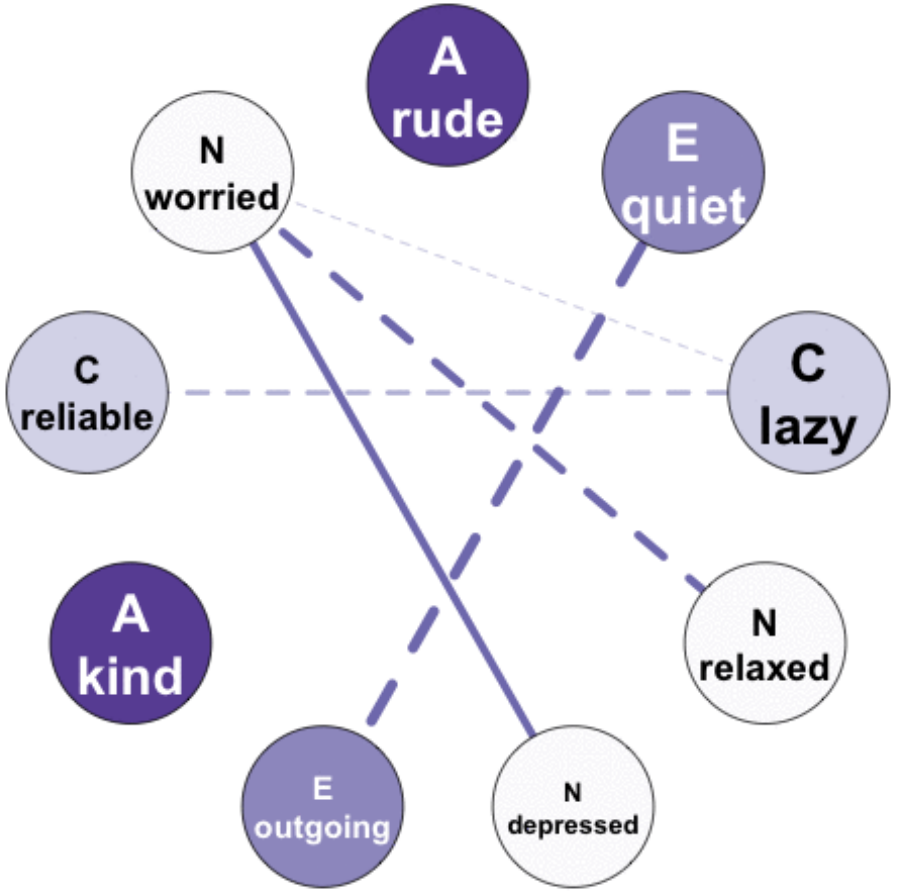
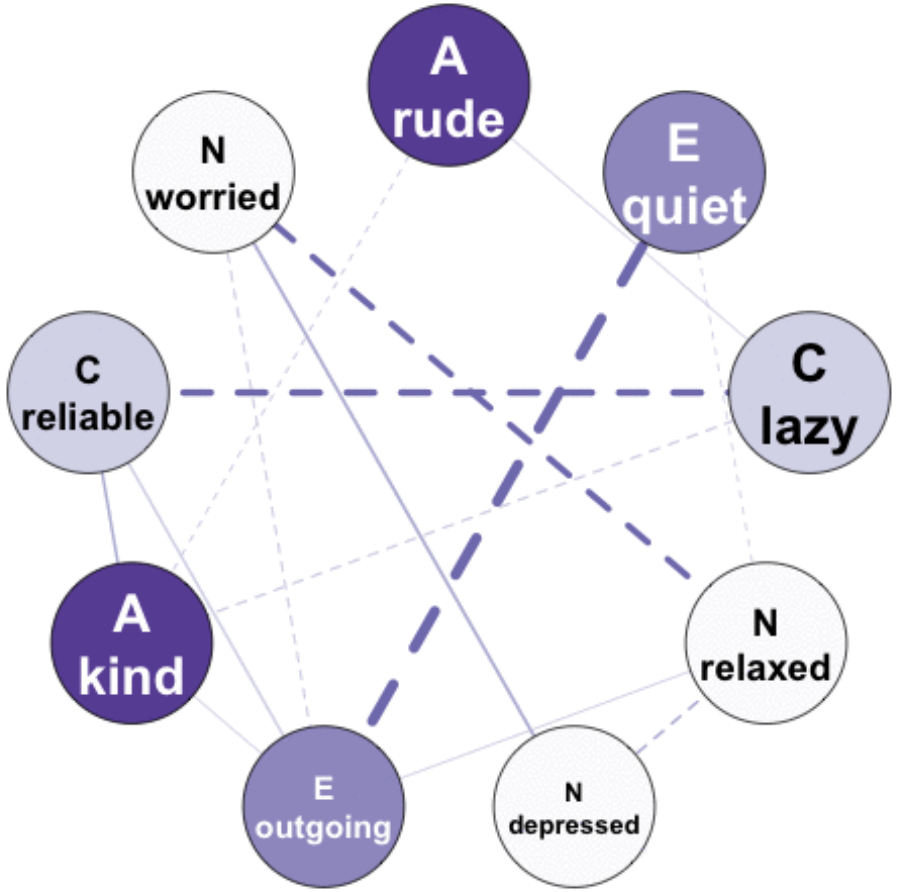
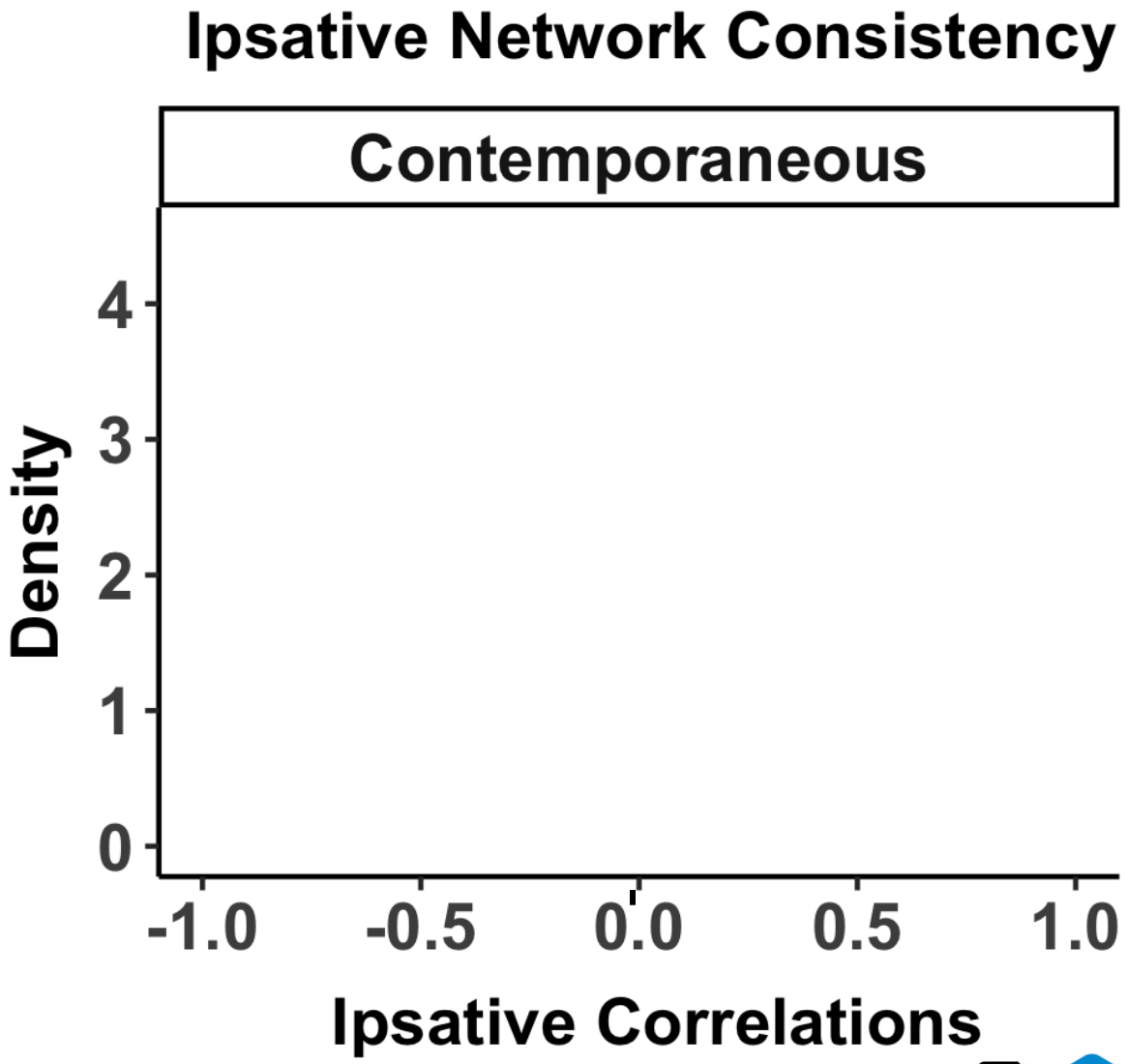




Beck & Jackson (2020a, *JPSP*)

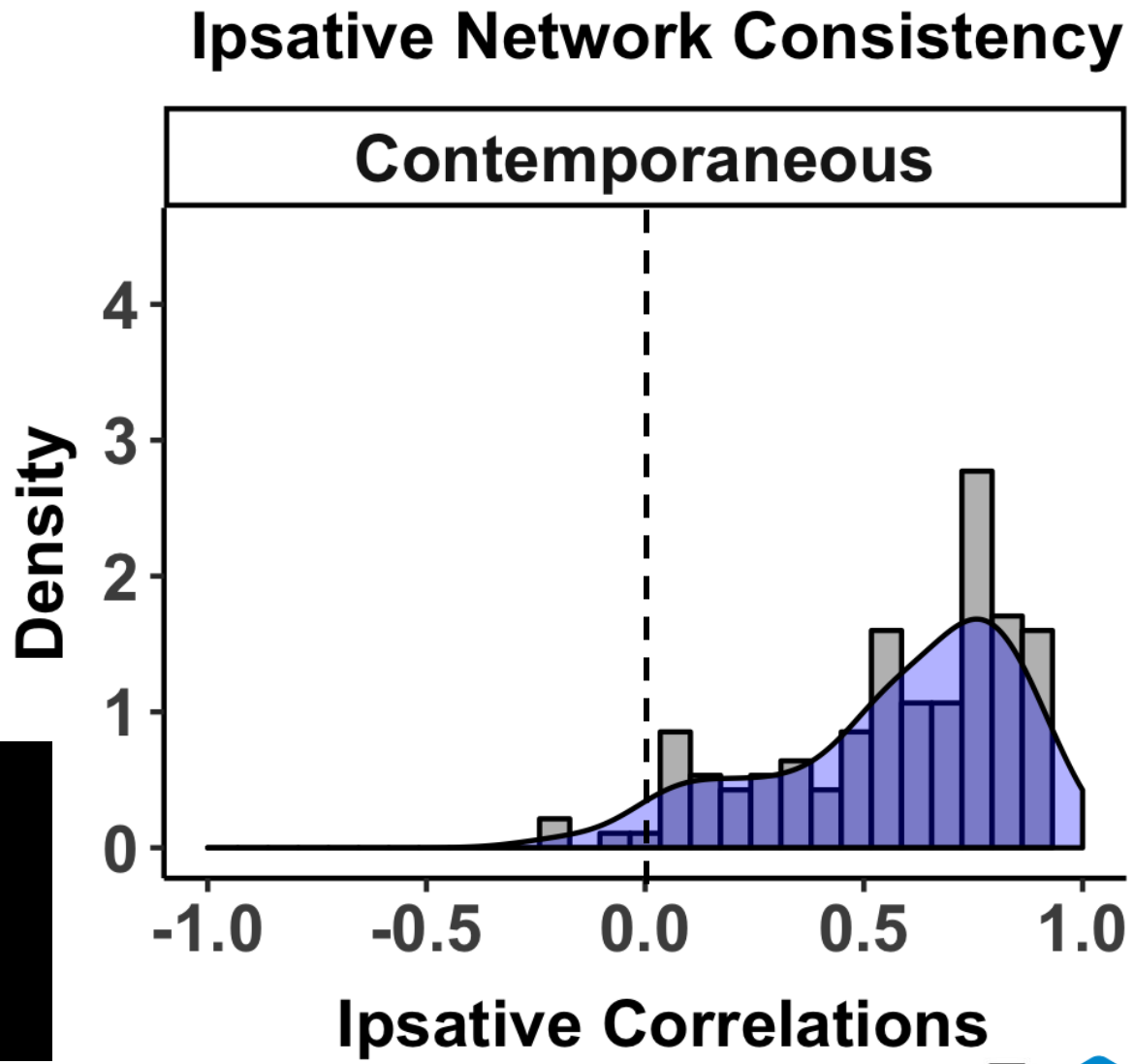
How consistent is idiographic personality across two years?



Beck & Jackson (2020a, *JPSP*)

How consistent is idiographic personality across two years?

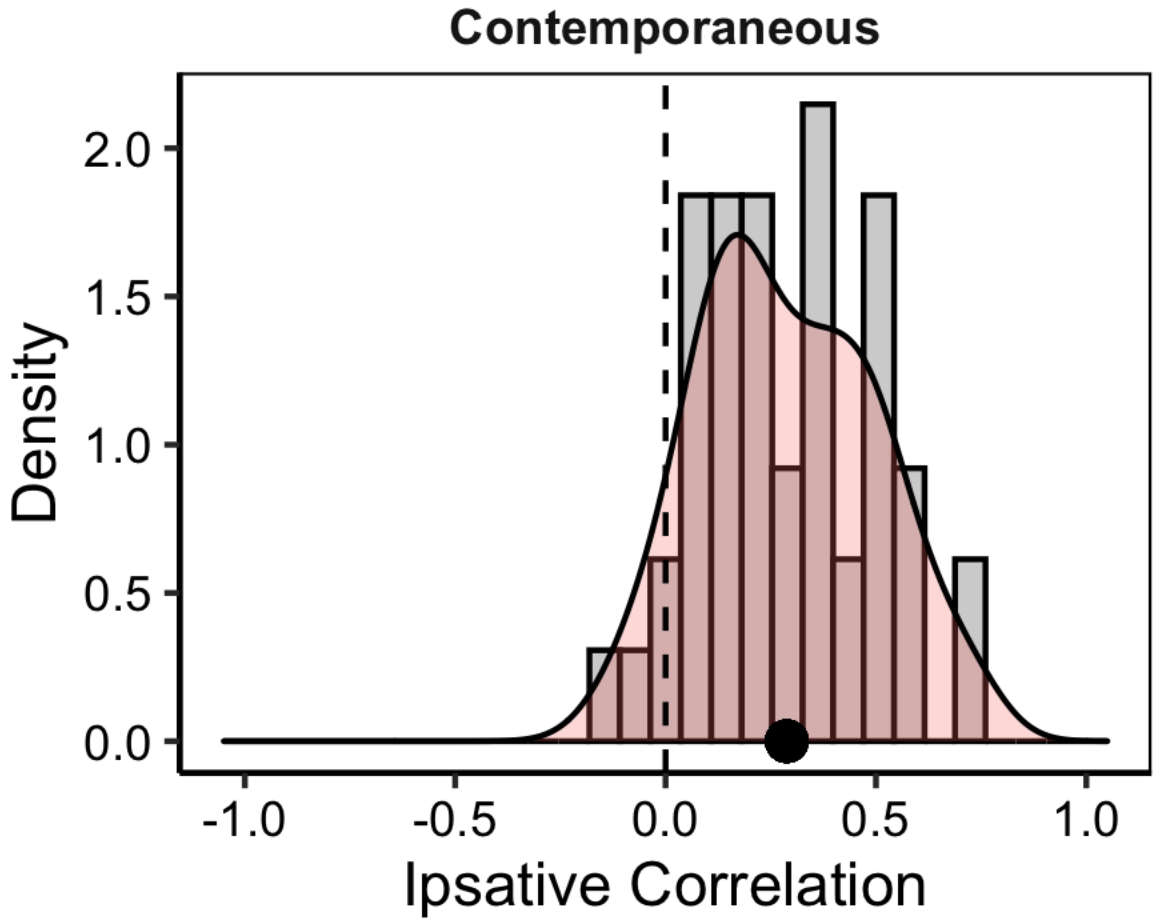
Idiographic Personality is consistent over two years.



Beck & Jackson (2020a, *JPSP*)

How consistent is idiographic personality across two years?

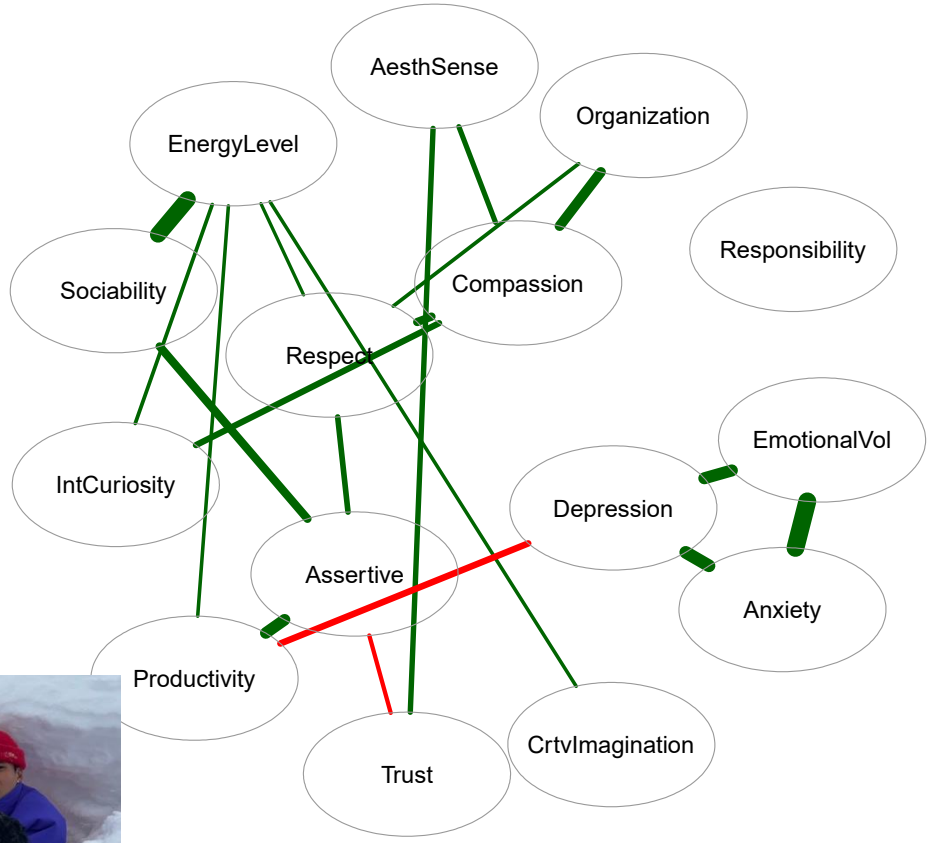
Idiographic Personality is consistent over two years AND global events.



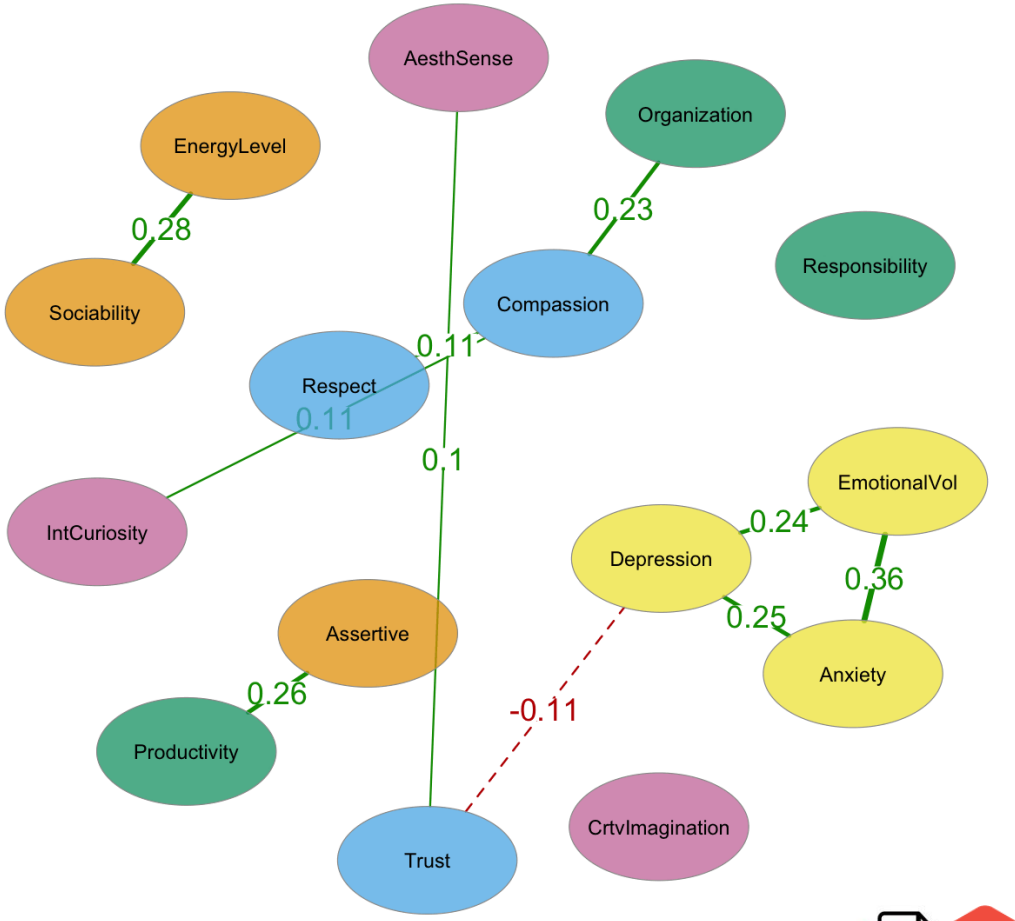
Beck & Jackson (2021b, *EJP*)

Extension: Time-Varying Networks

Stationary Network

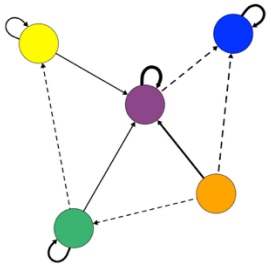


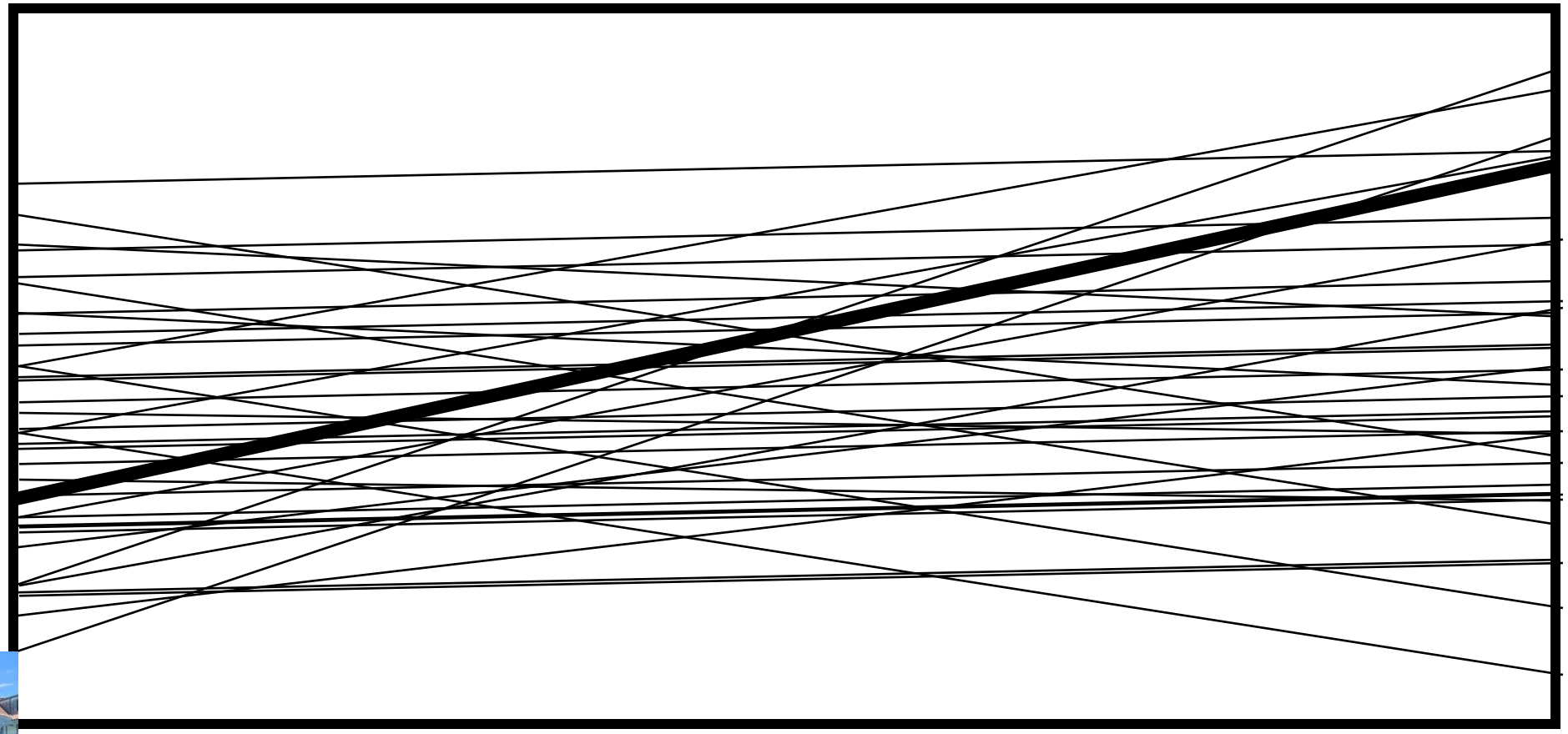
Estimation Point 1



Lee & Beck (under review)

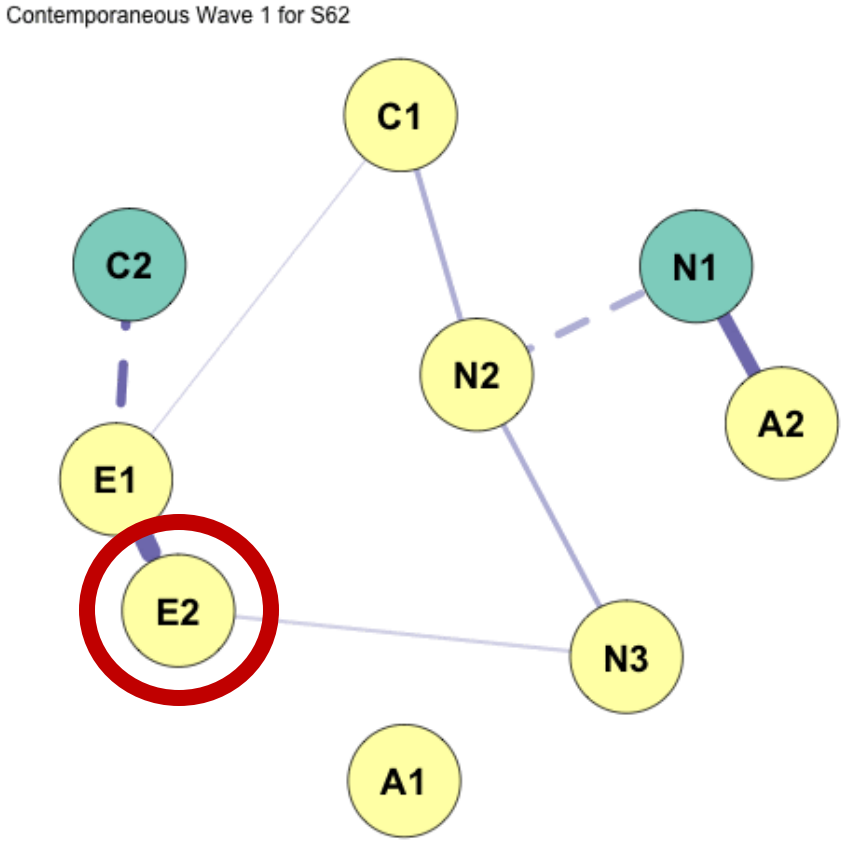
Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Neuroticism | Openness



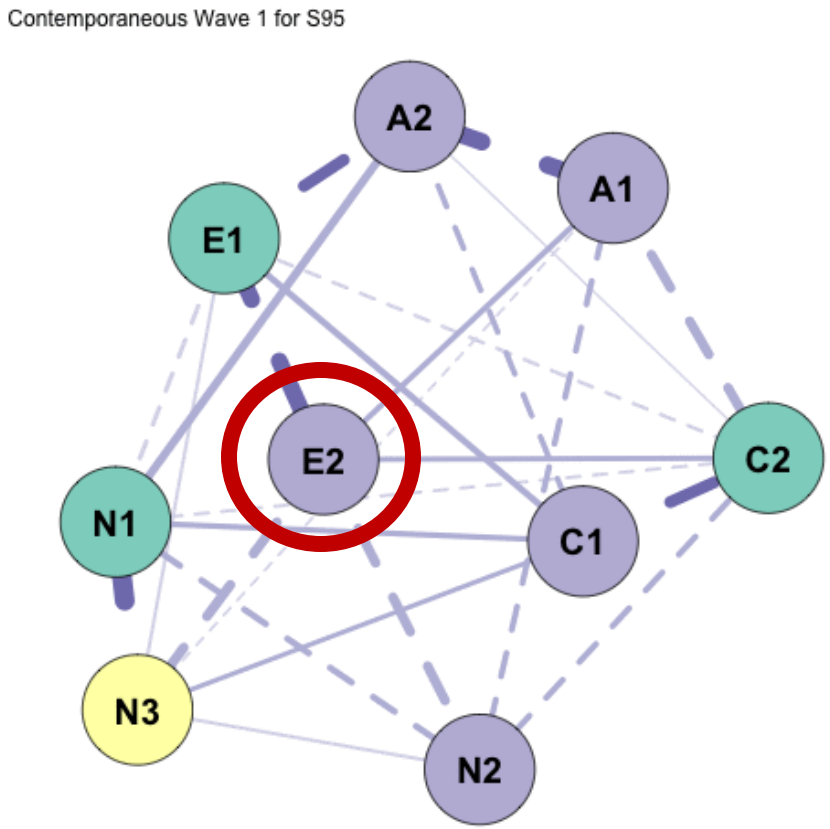


Nissen & Beck (2025, *JPSP*)

Low Density, Degree



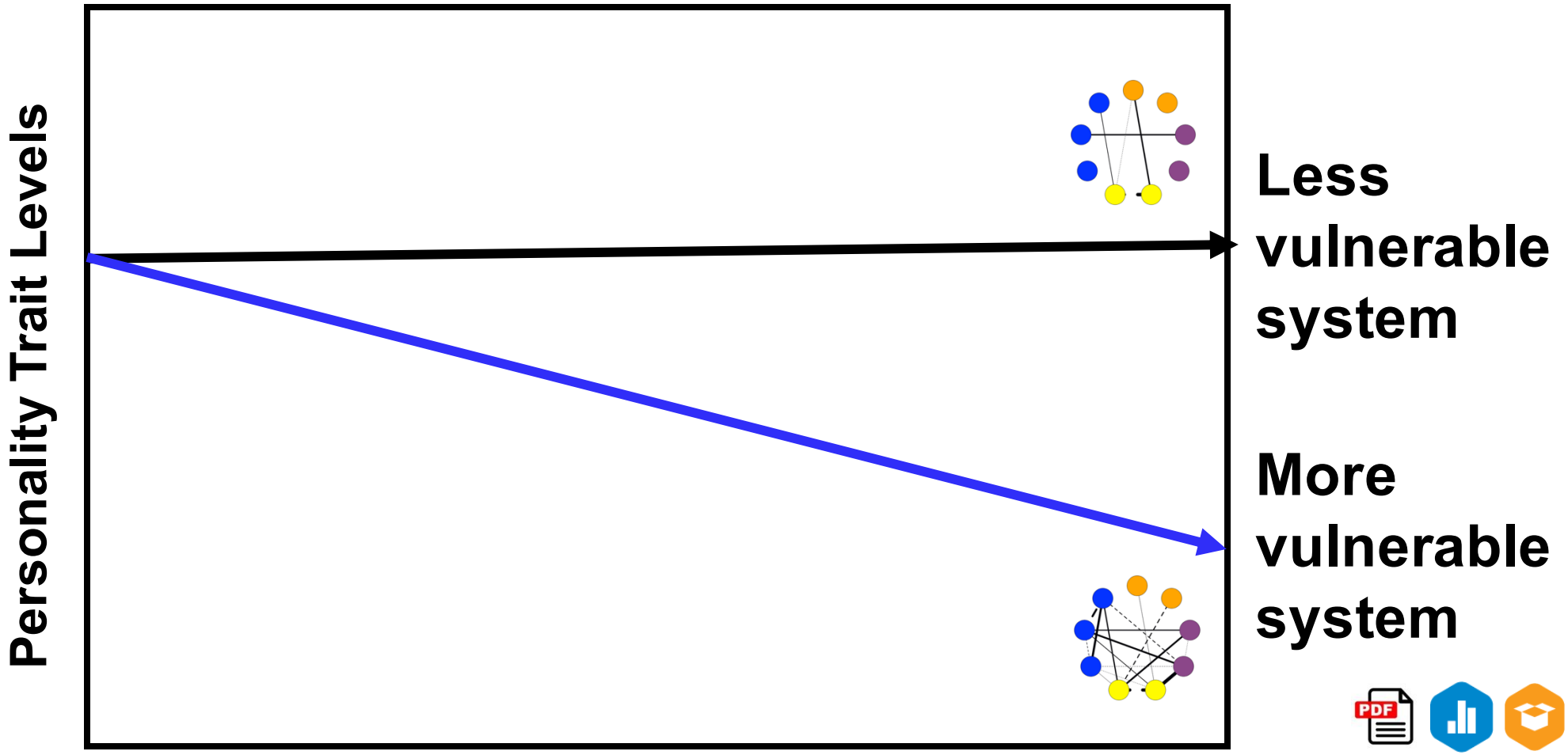
High Density, Degree



RIGIDITY ◀ ● ▶ CHAOS

Nissen & Beck (2025, *JPSP*)

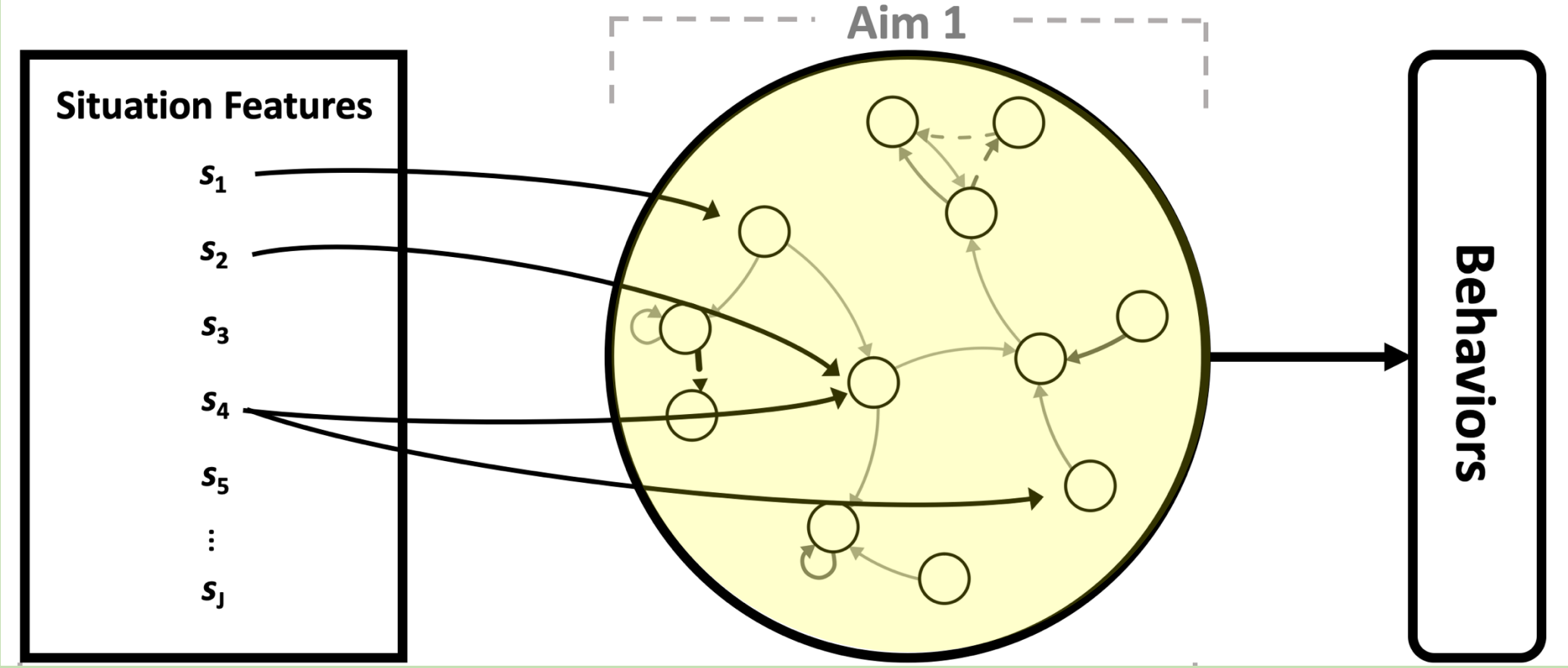
Systems Perspectives: Persons in Context



Nissen & Beck (2025, *JPSP*)

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:

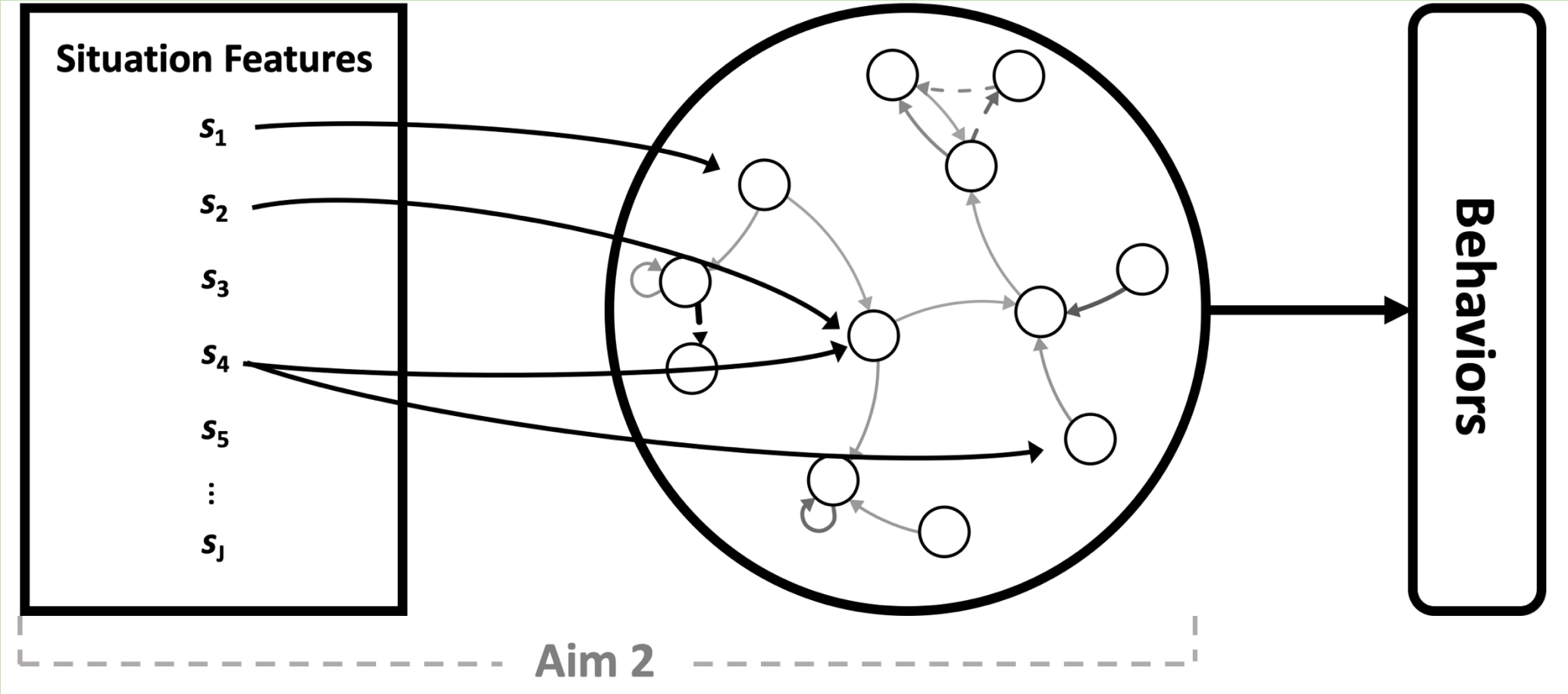
- **Unique (i.e. differ across people).**
- **Relatively consistent over time.**
- **Relatively consistent across global events.**

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.
(revision submitted, *NHB*)



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

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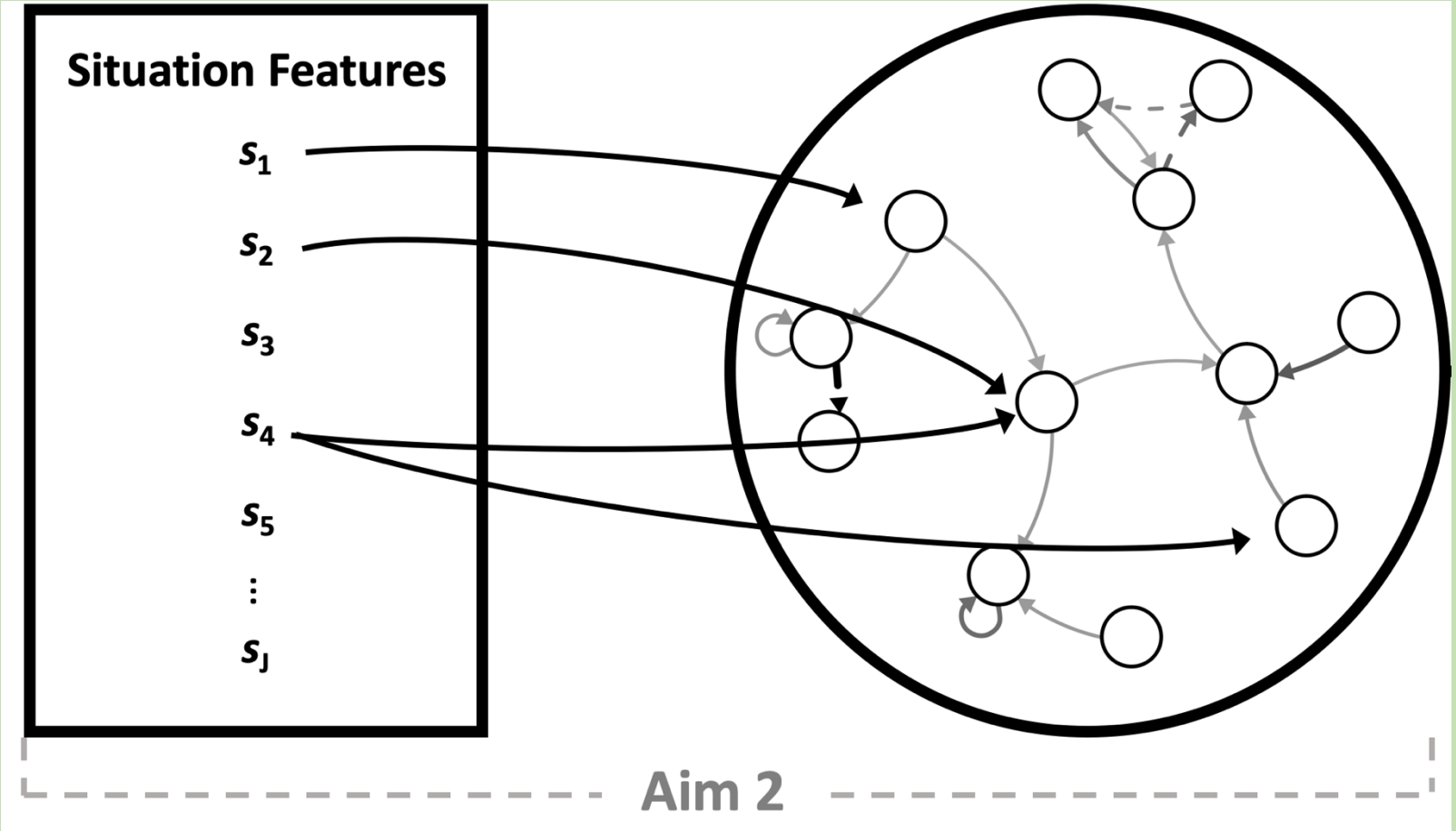
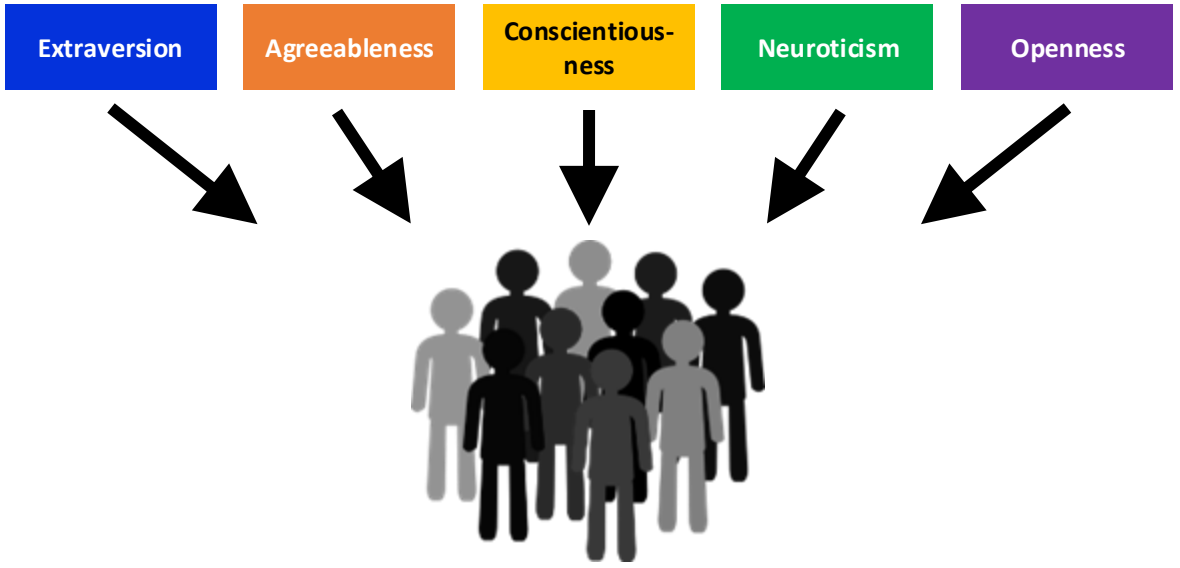
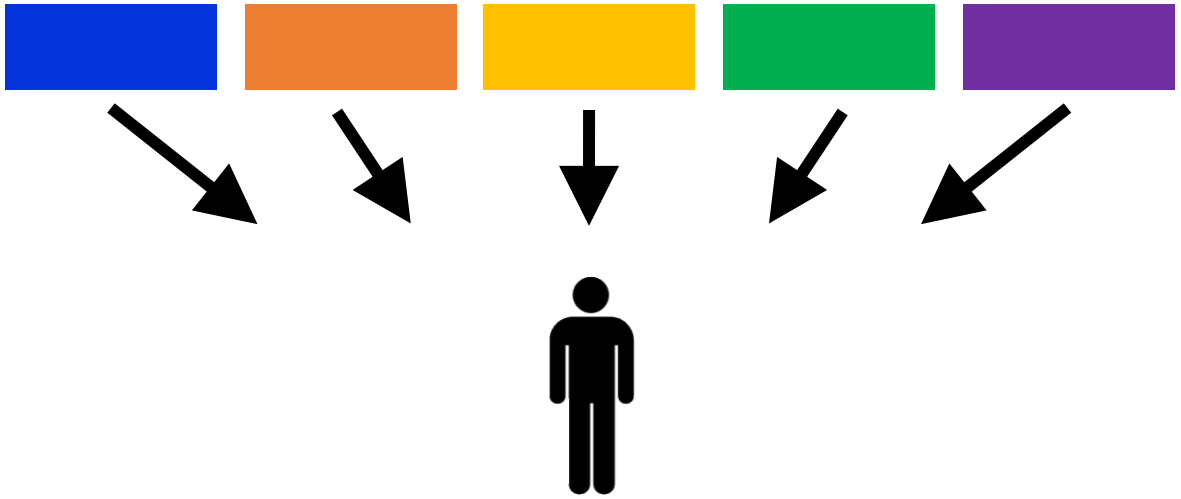


* = shared first authorship.



Nomothetic
Variable-Centered

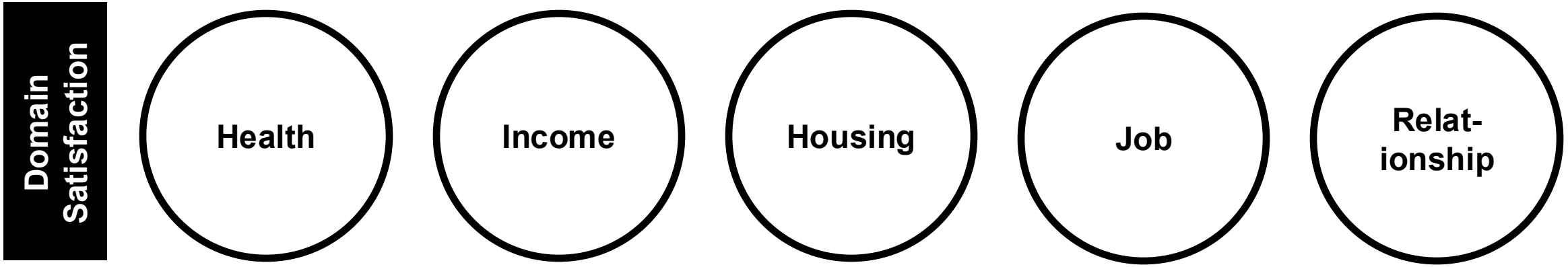


Idiographic
Person-Specific

Strong Theoretical Models

Rich longitudinal data

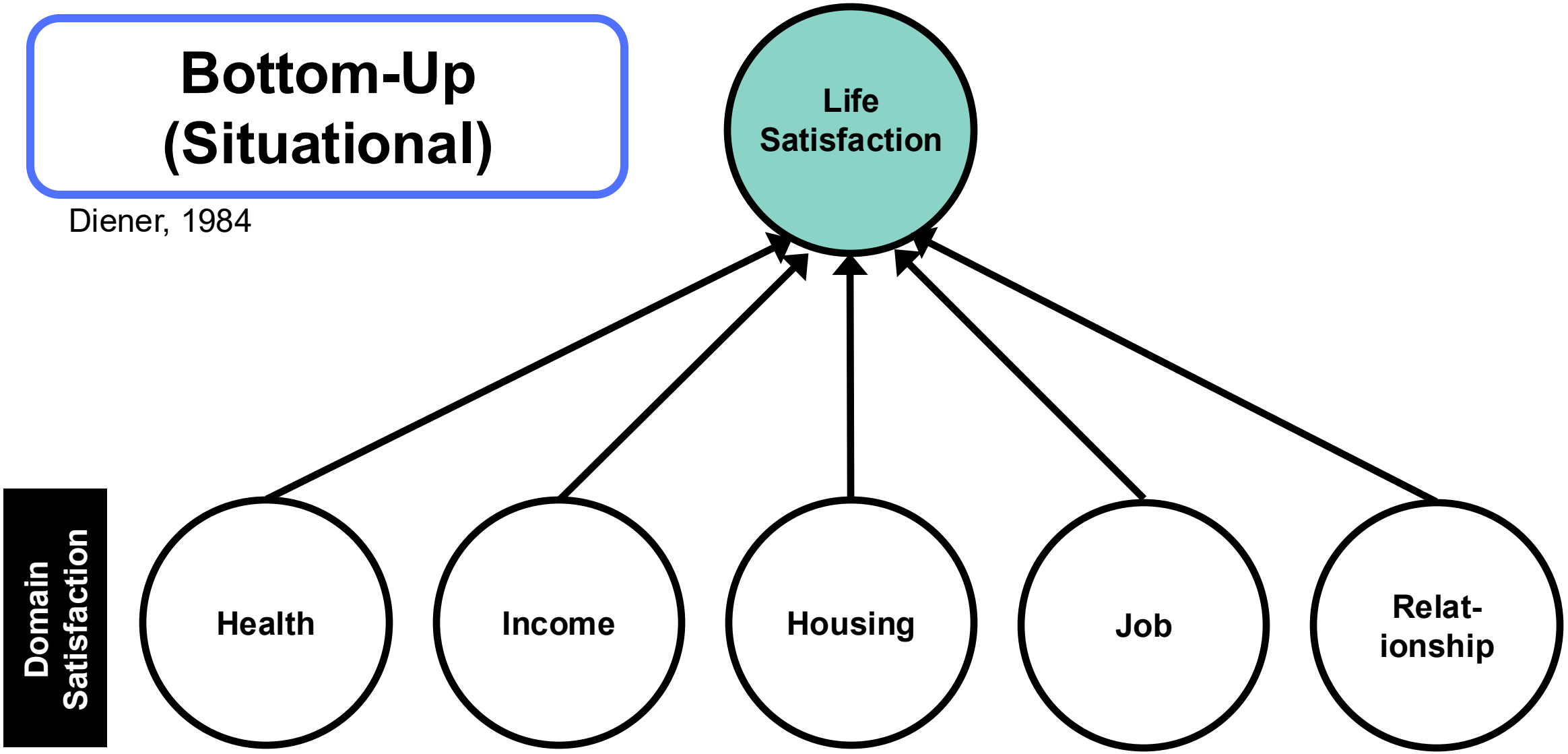
Unique patterns ignored



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

Bottom-Up (Situational)

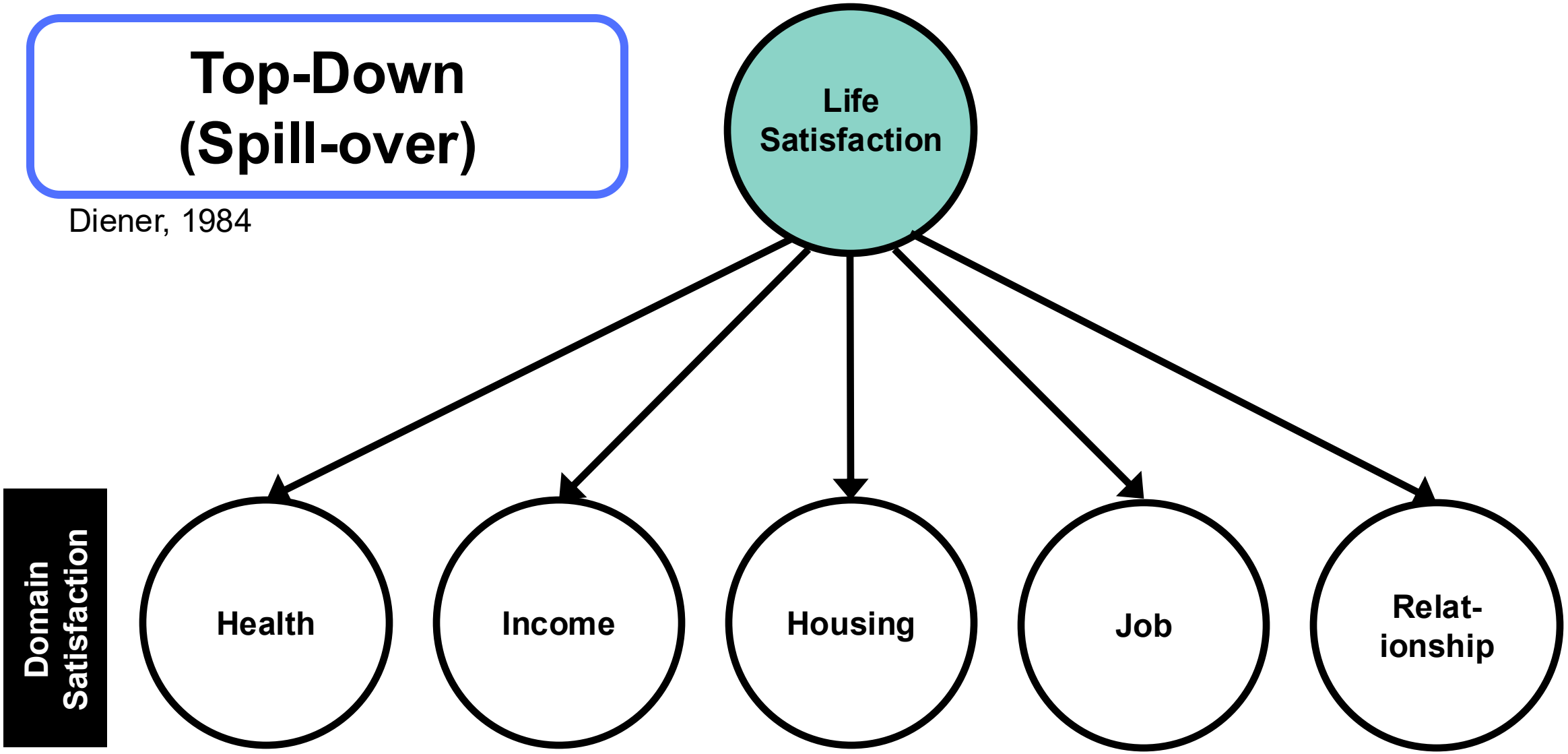
Diener, 1984



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

Top-Down (Spill-over)

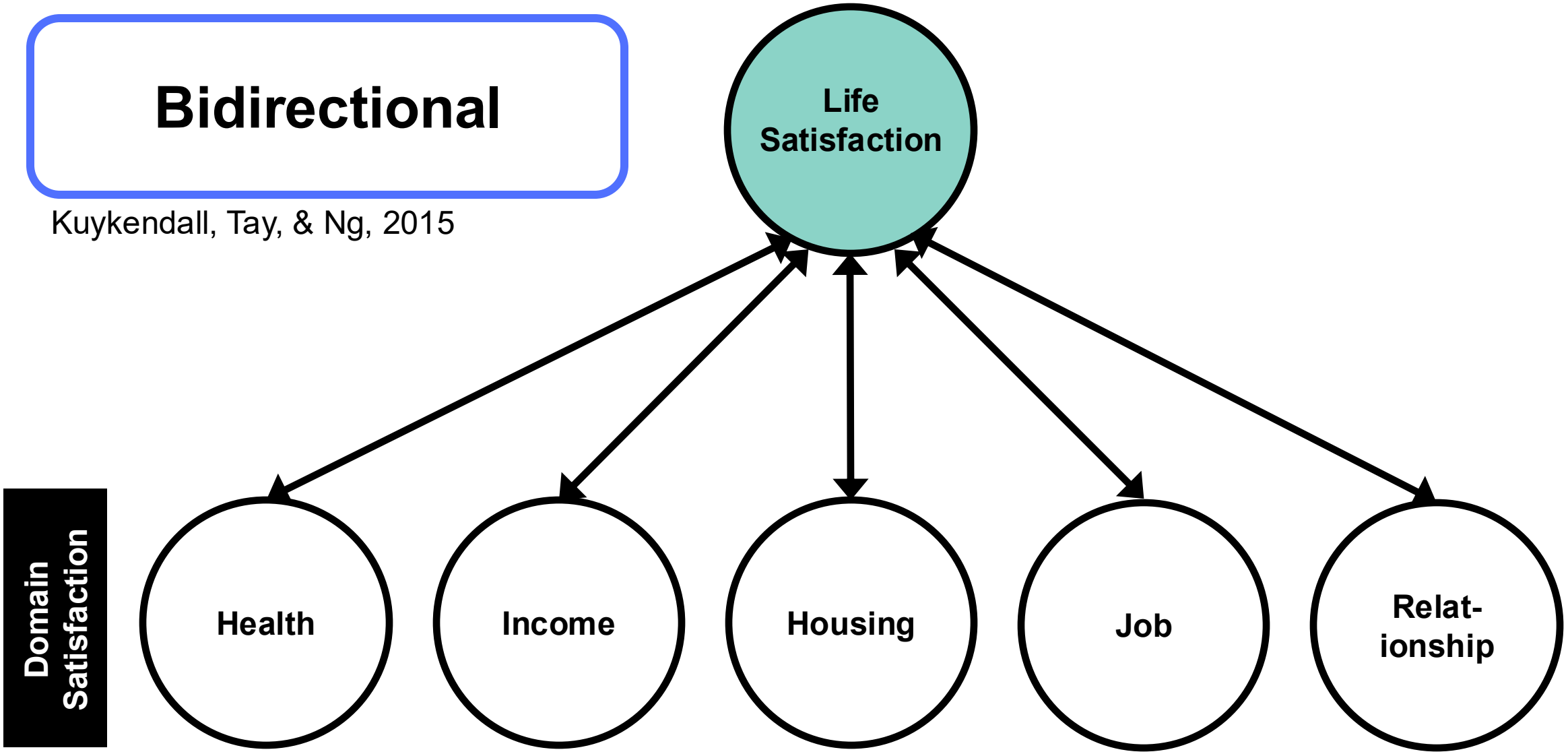
Diener, 1984



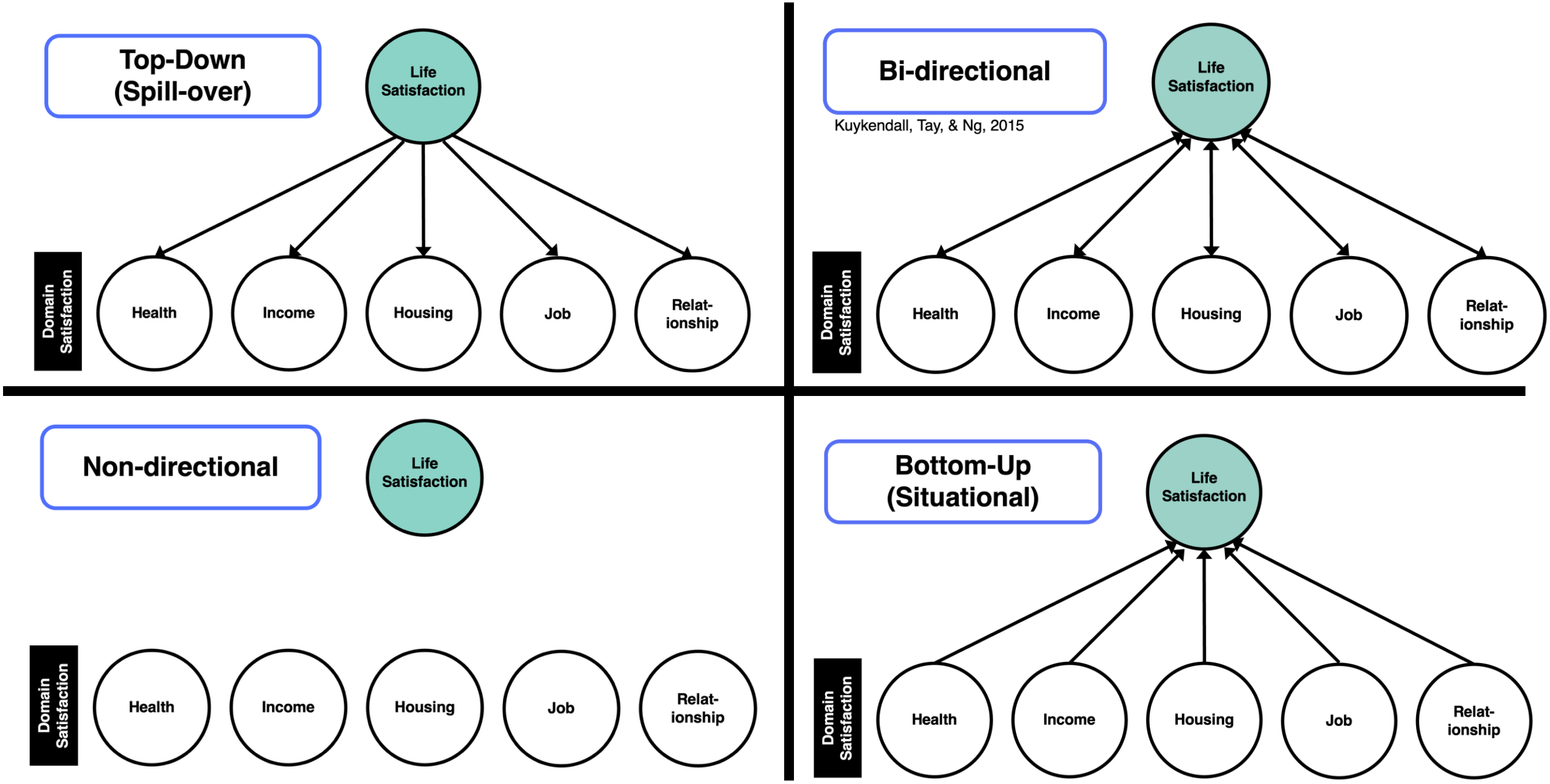
Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

Bidirectional

Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015

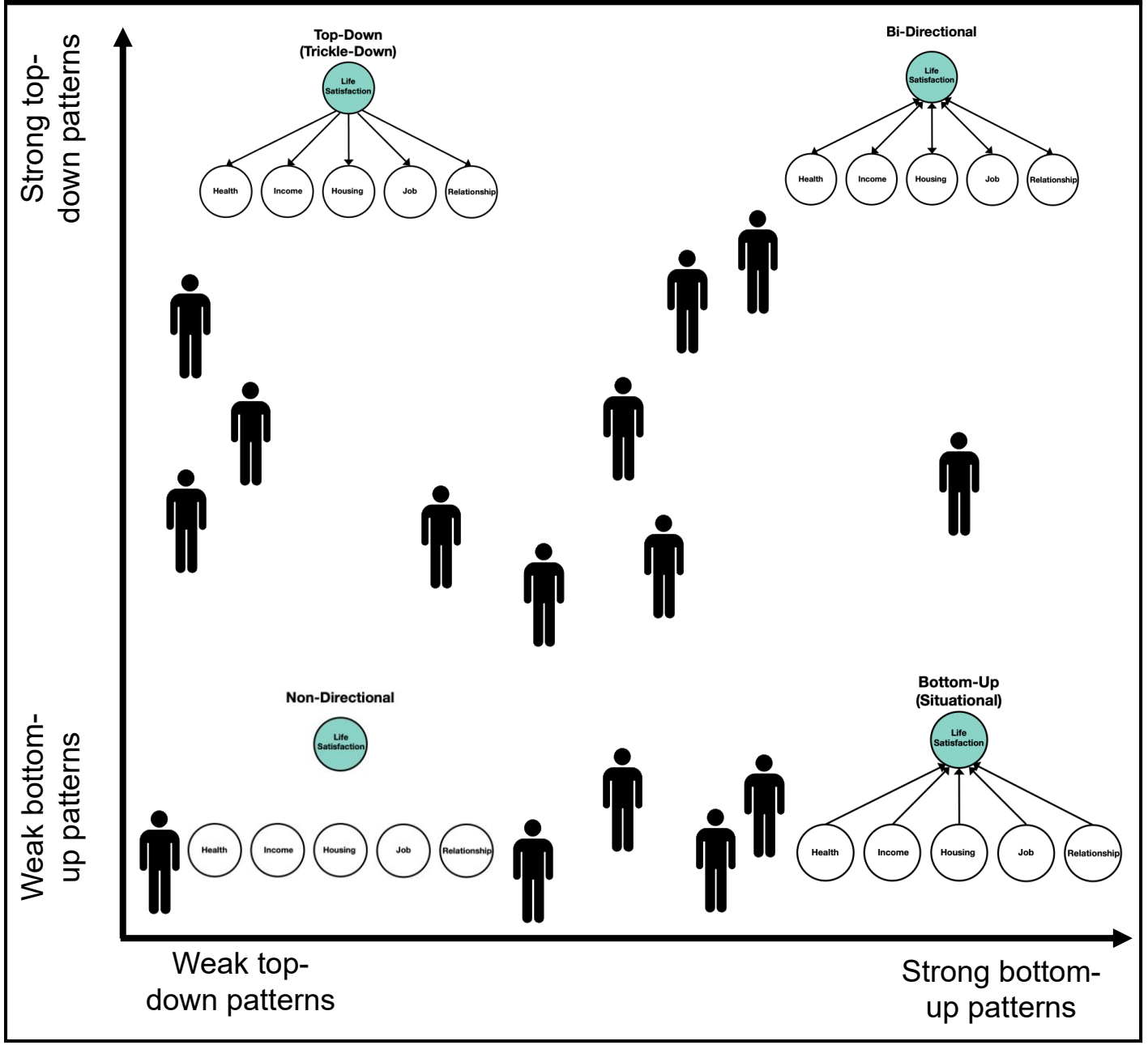


Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

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



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

GSOEP | HILDA | SHP | BHPS | LISS

Multilevel VAR(1) Models

Epskamp et al., 2018

Level 1:

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

Level 2:

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

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

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

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

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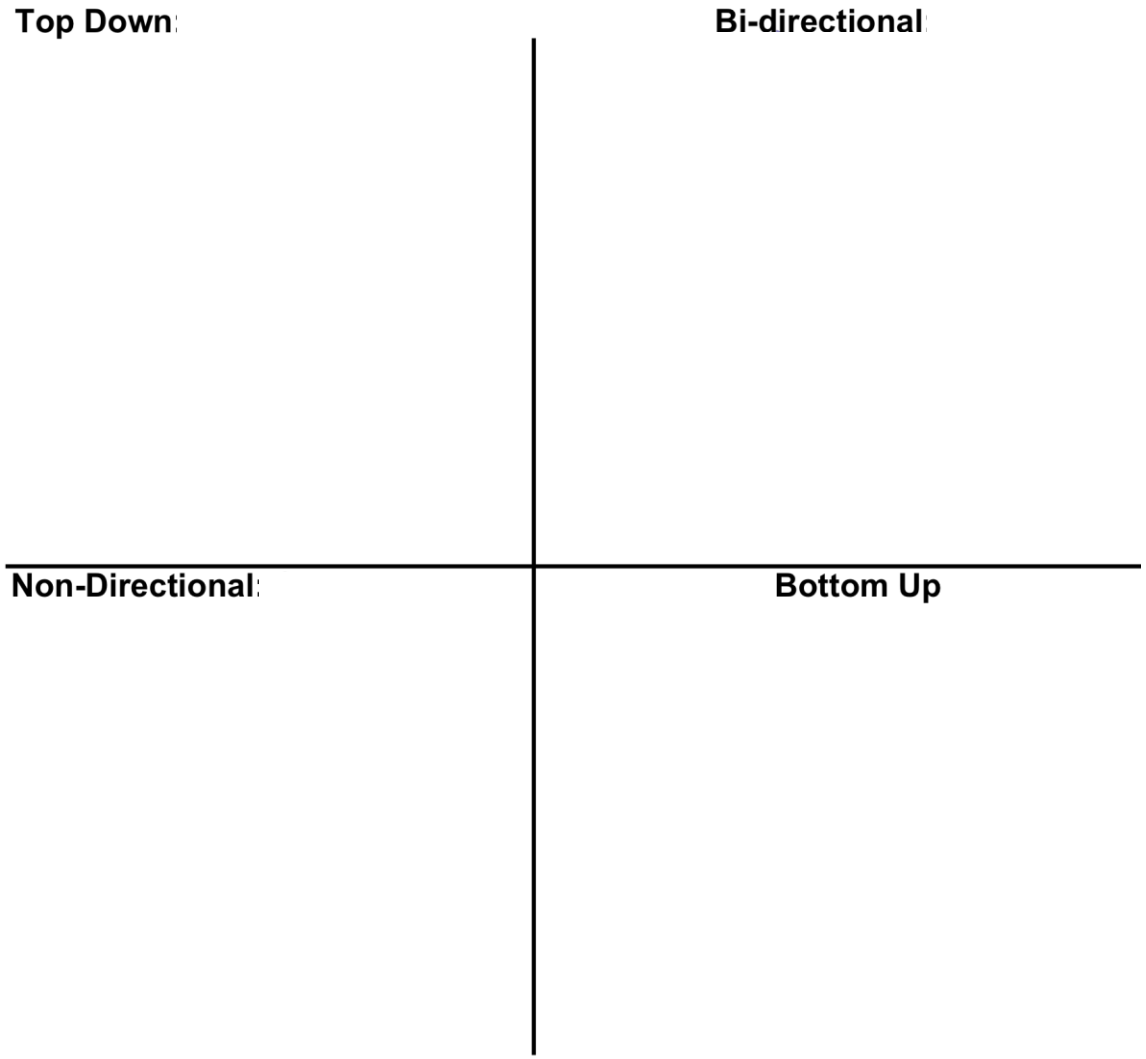
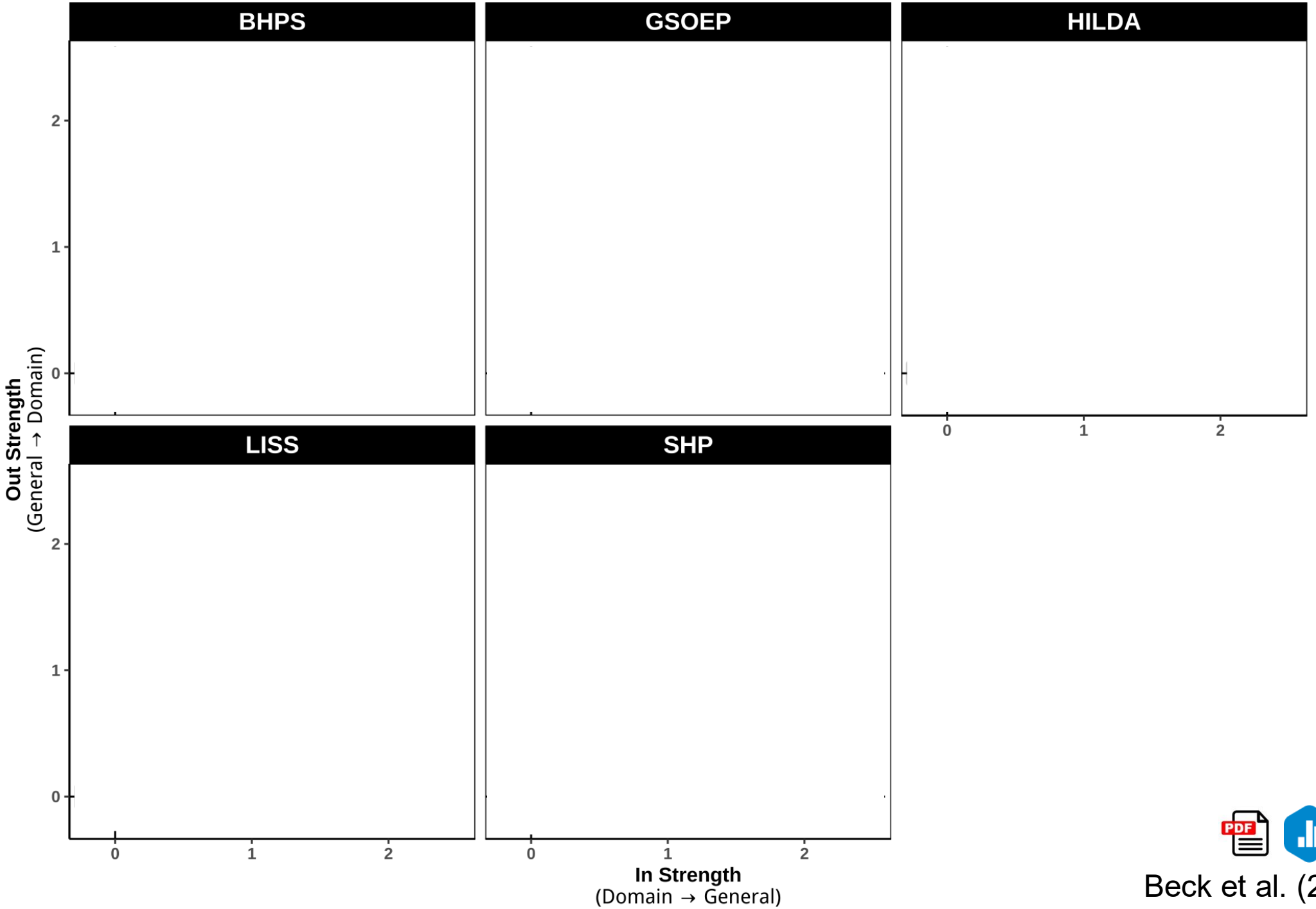
Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

RESULTS

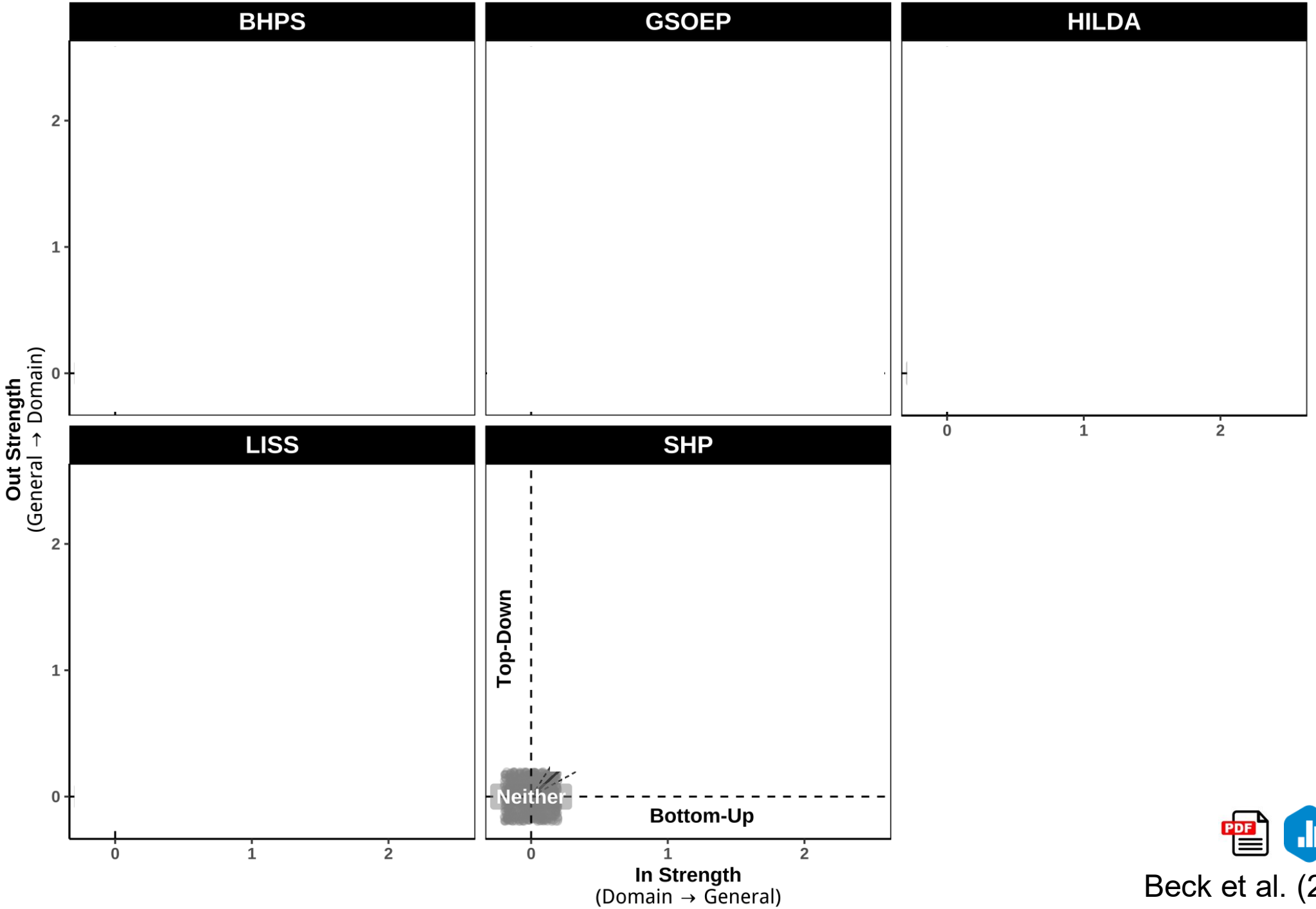
Aim 2



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)



Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)



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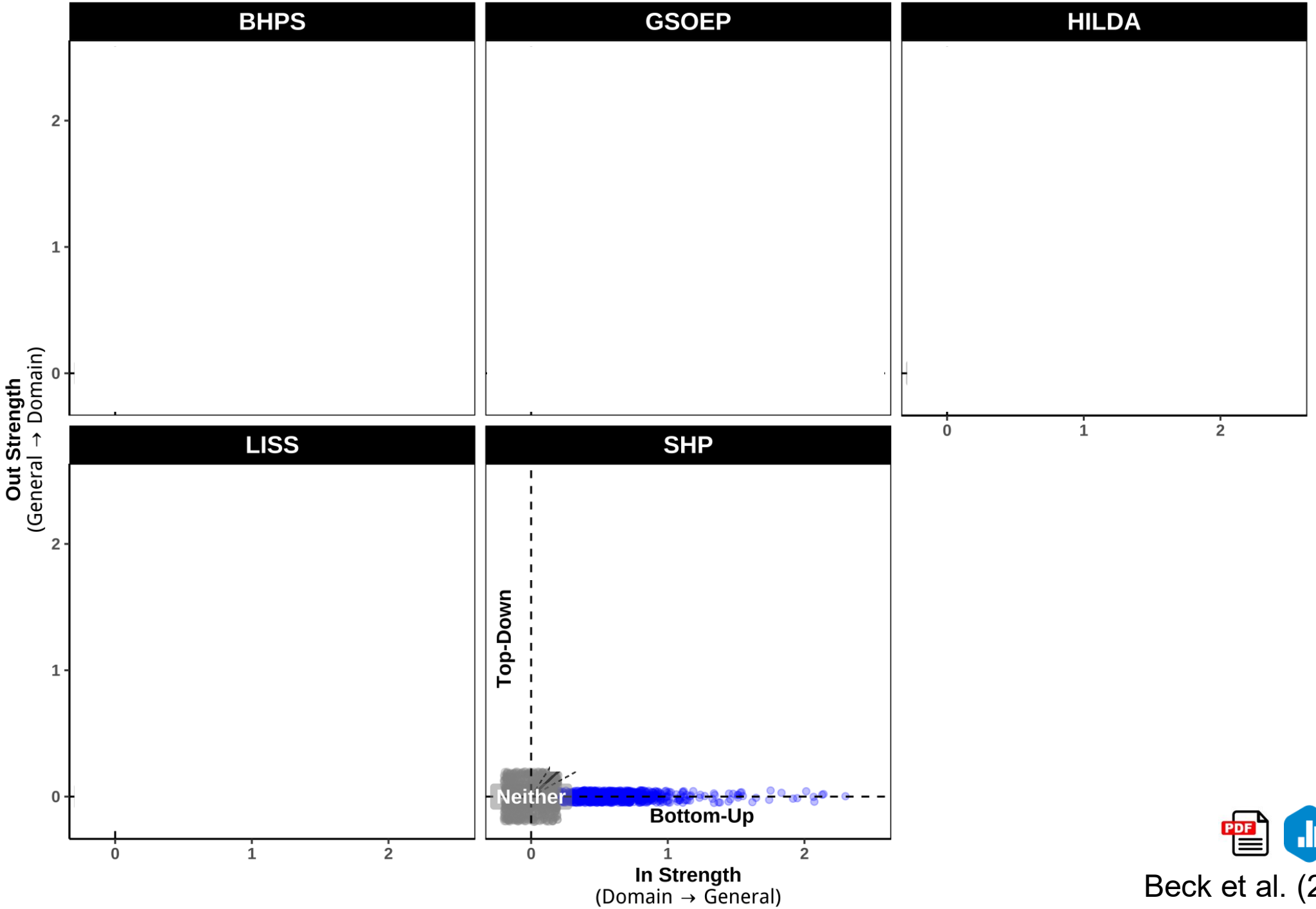

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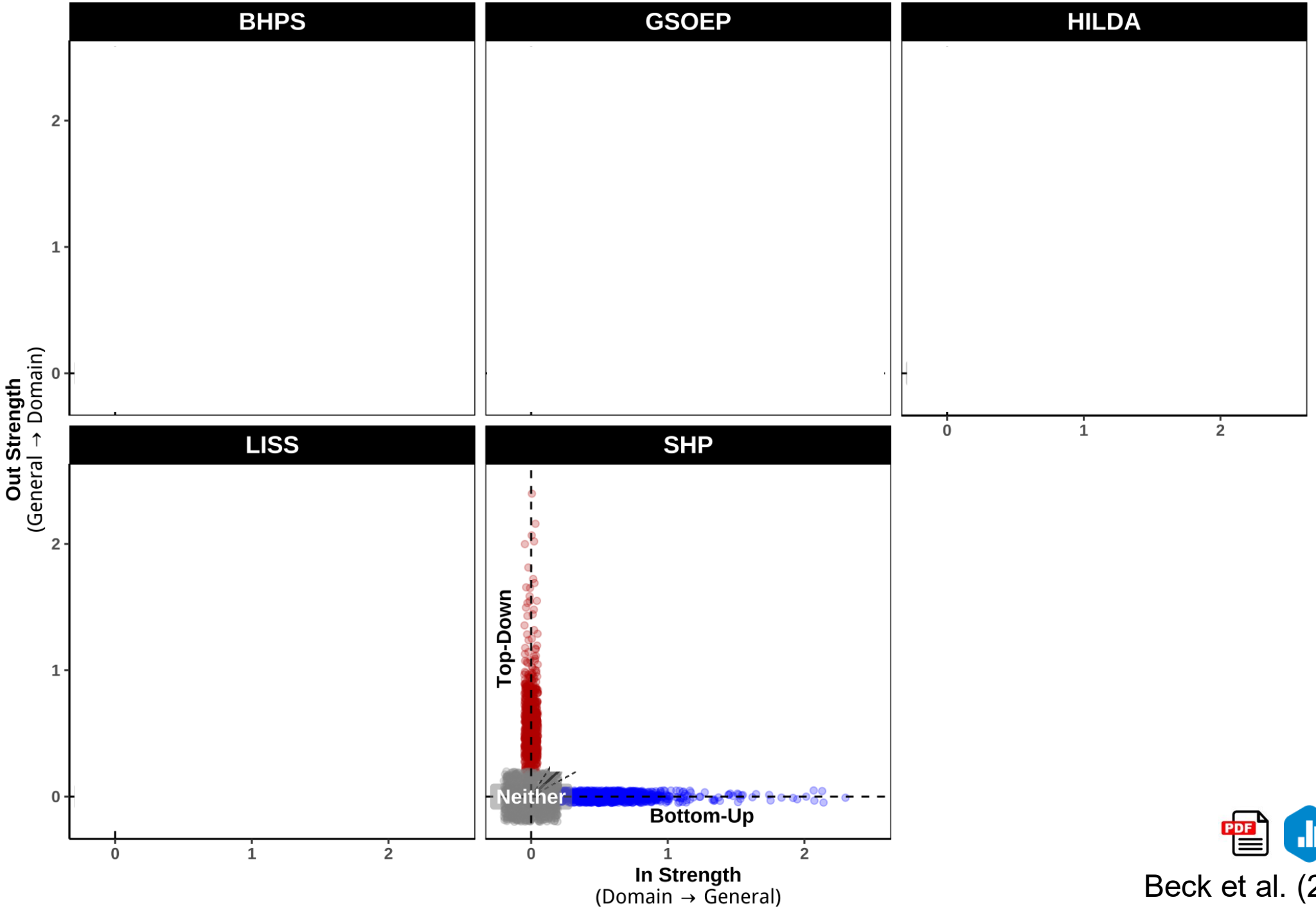

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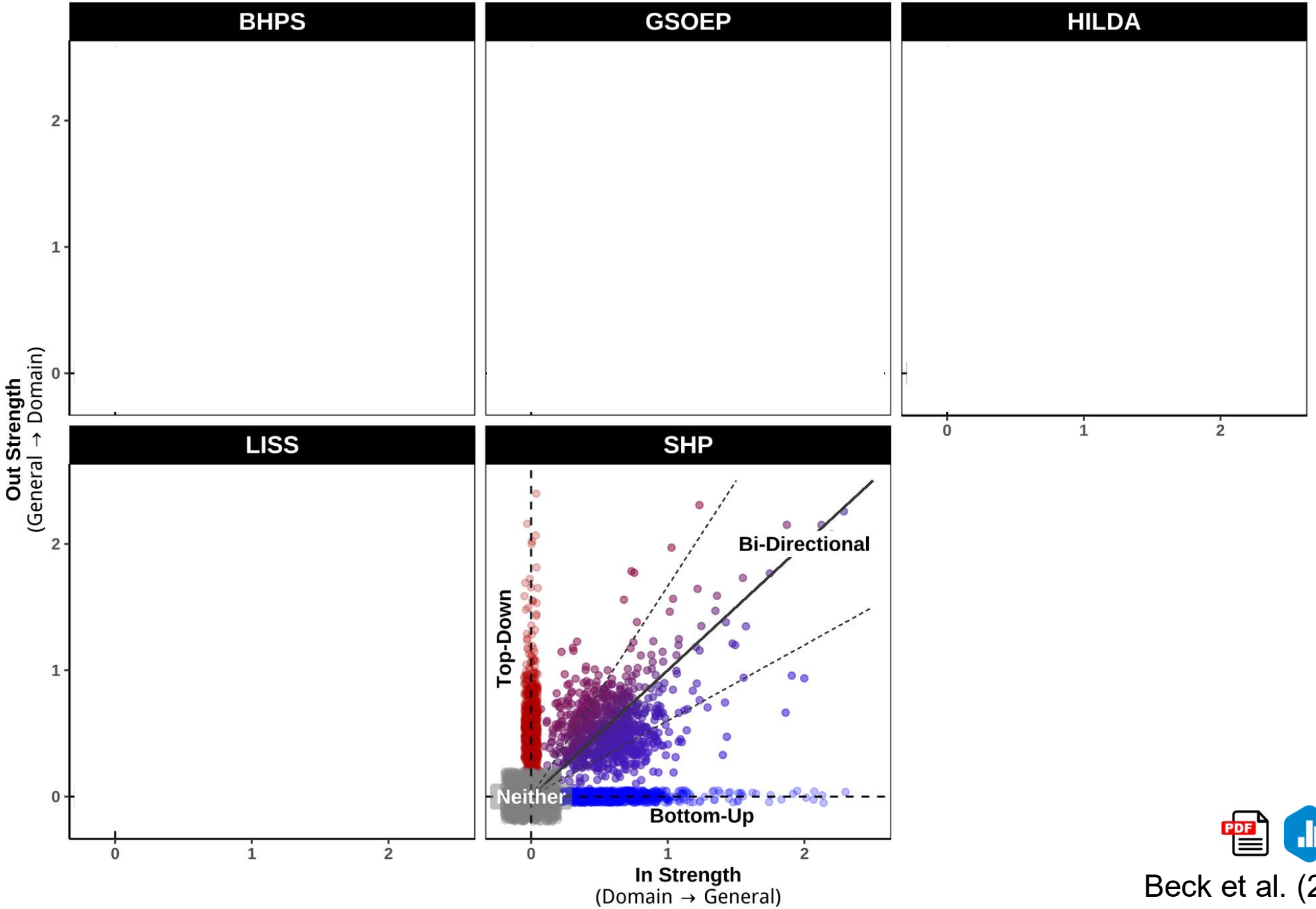

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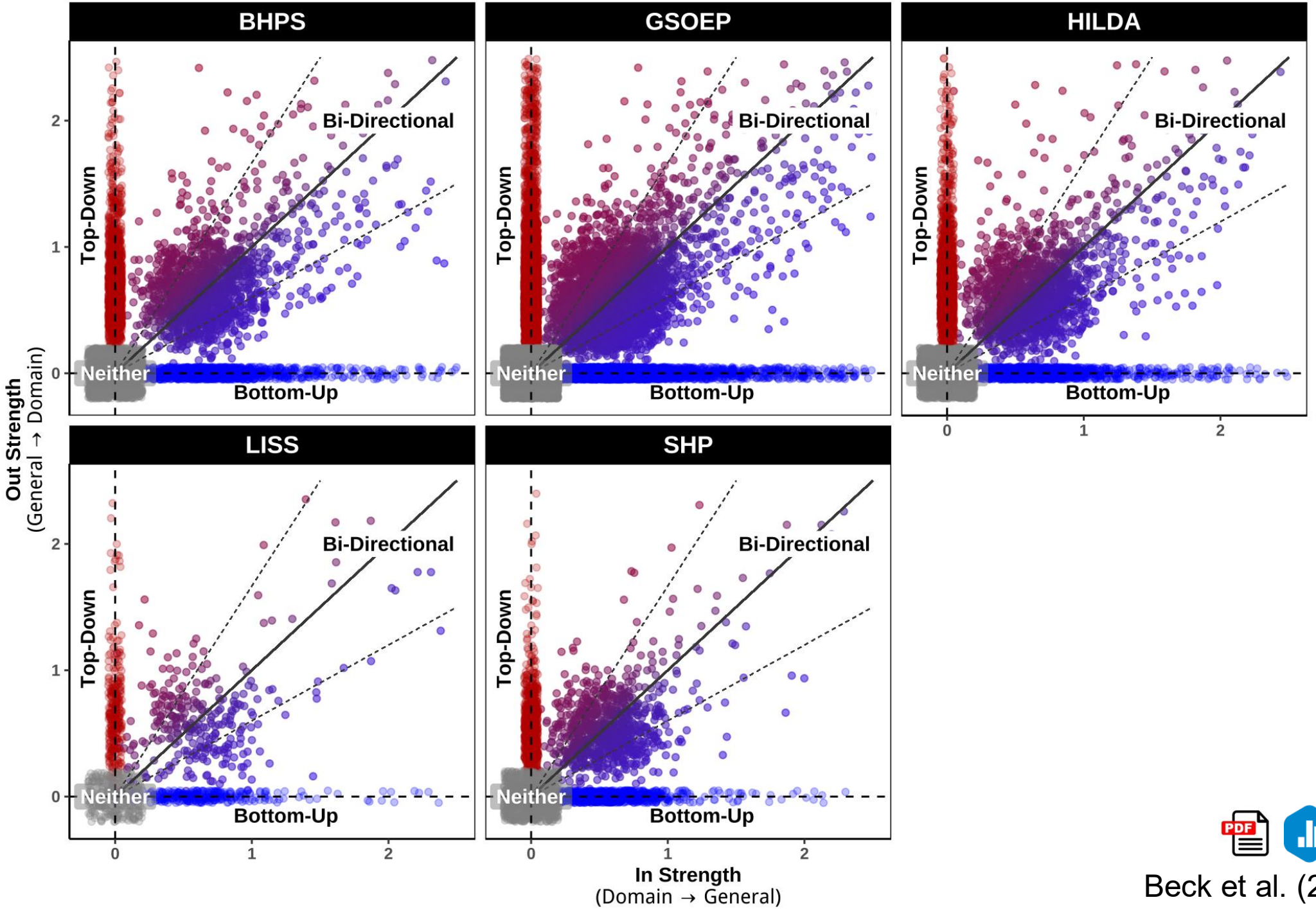

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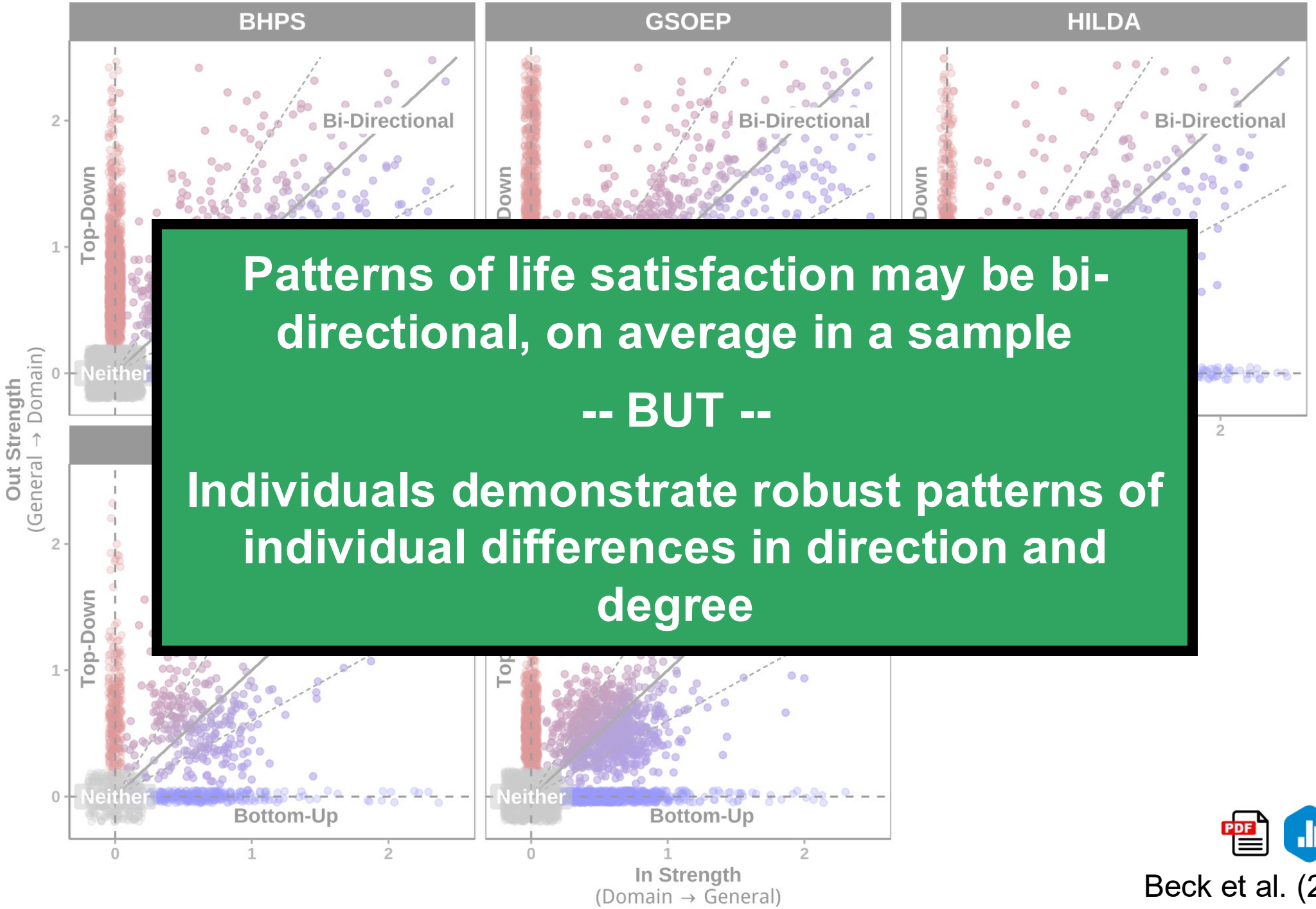


Patterns of life satisfaction may be bi-directional, on average in a sample

-- BUT --

Individuals demonstrate robust patterns of individual differences in direction and degree

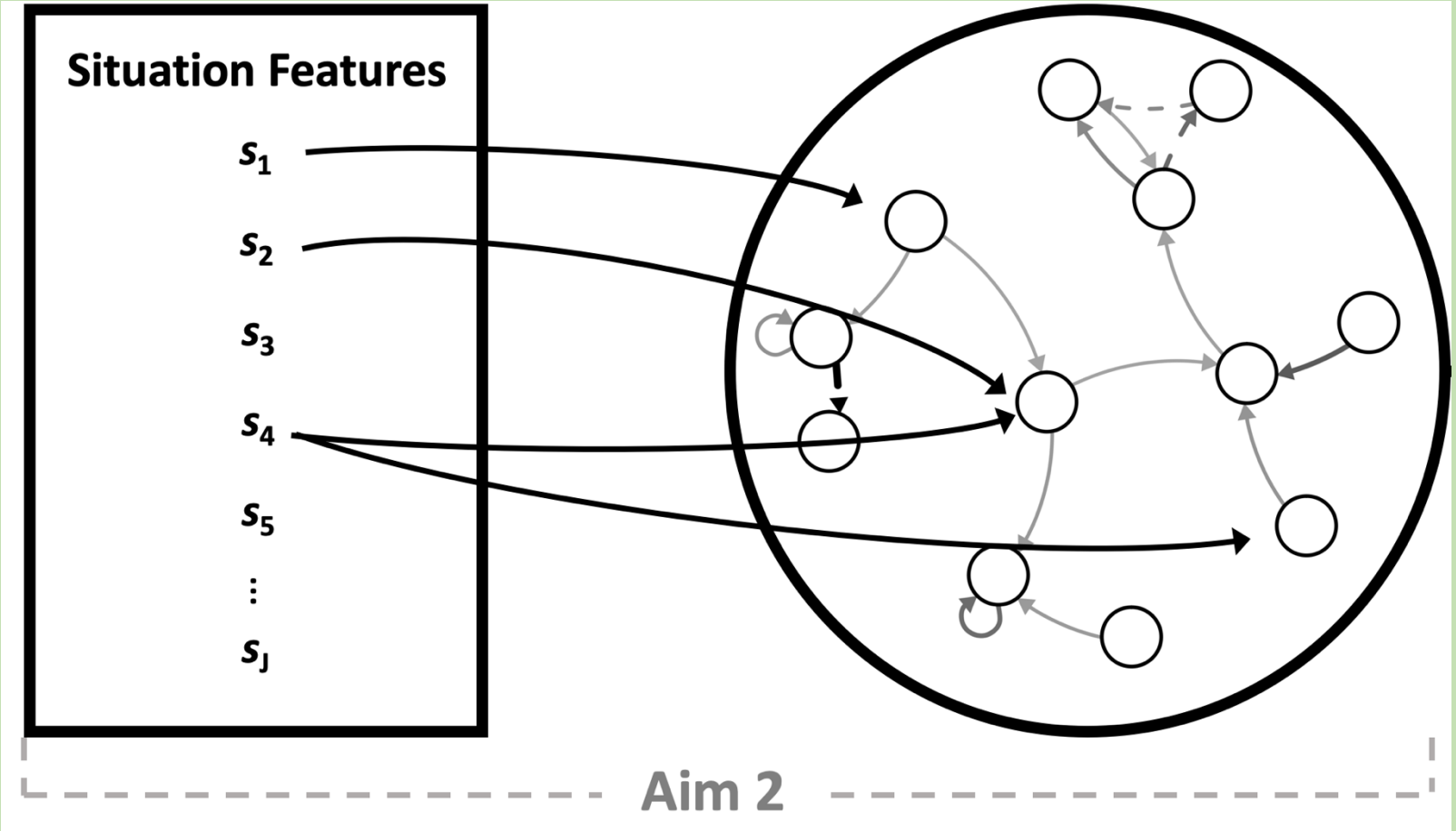
Beck et al. (2025, *NHB*)

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.
(revision submitted, *NHB*)



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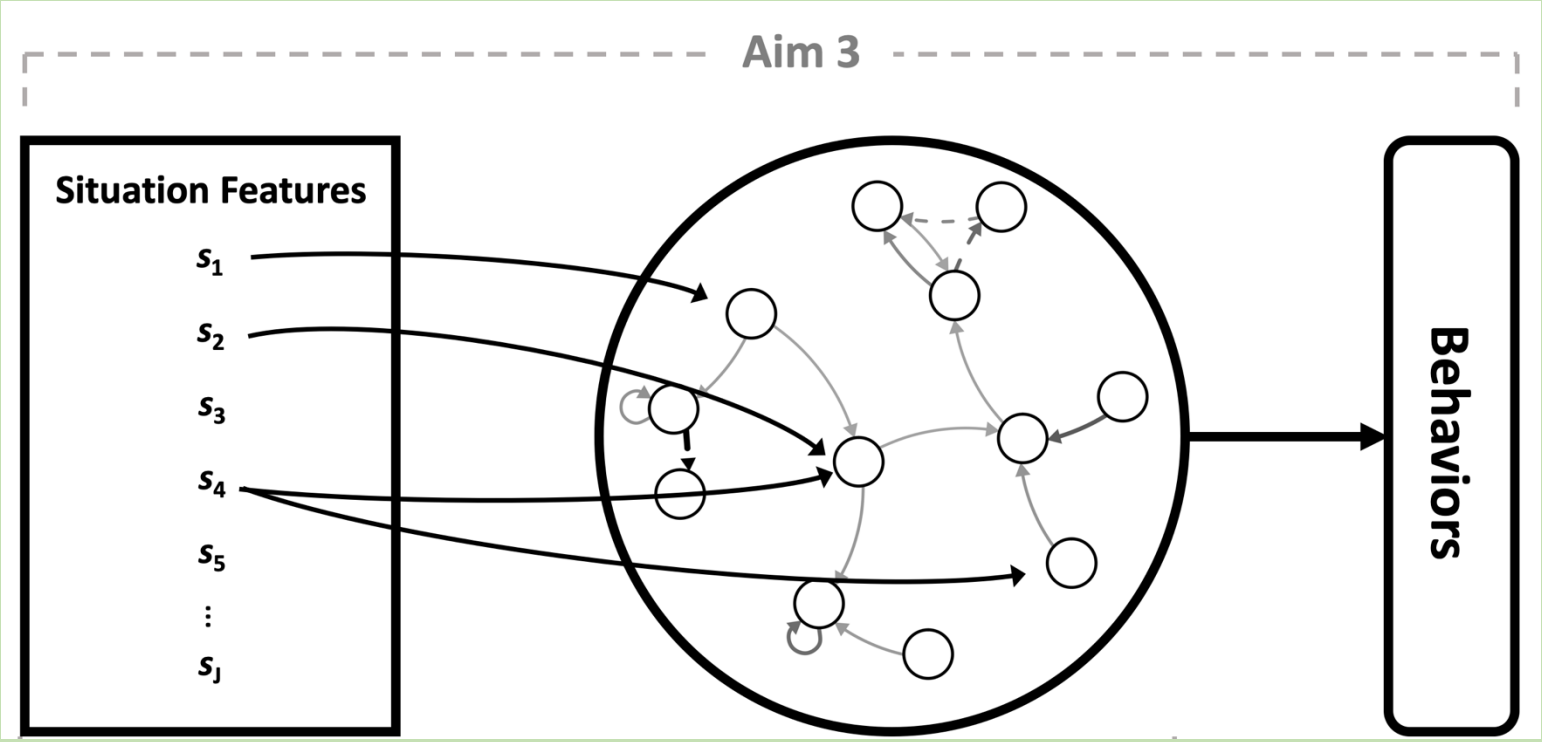
Aim 2: Using longitudinal data to understand how well-being unfolds across contexts.

Beck et al.
(revision submitted, *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.** (revision submitted, *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.

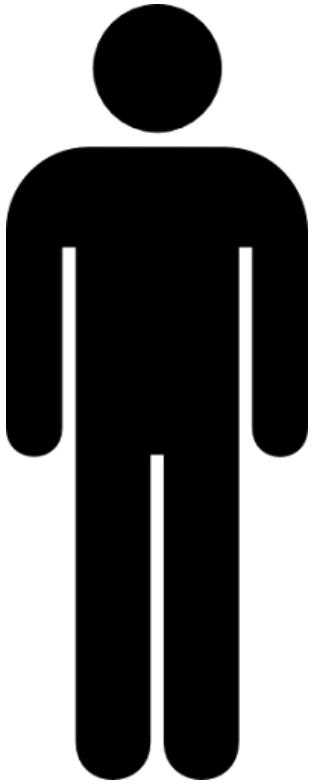
Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

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.

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)



Psychological

Situational

Time

Behaviors

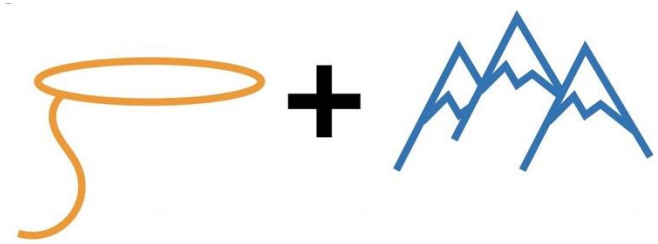
Experiences

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Analytic Plan

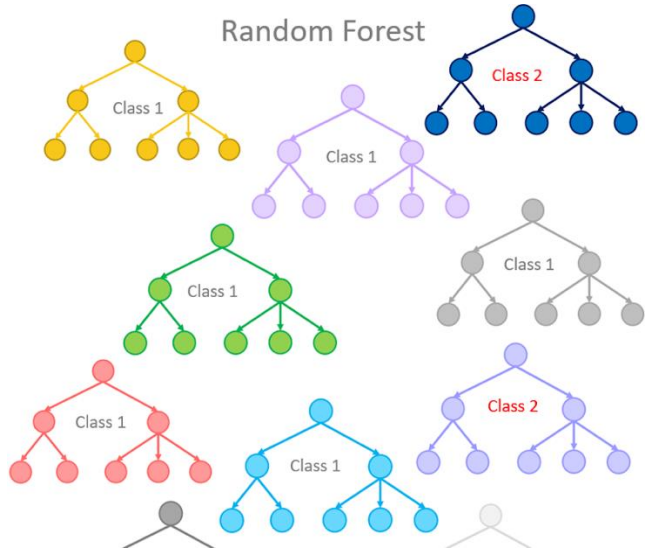
3 machine learning classification methods:

Elastic Net



BISCWIT

Random Forest



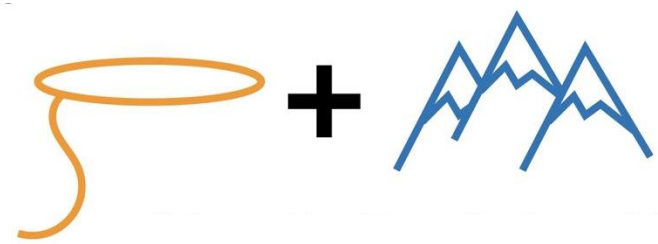
- Classification Accuracy
- Area under the receiver operating curve (AUC)

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

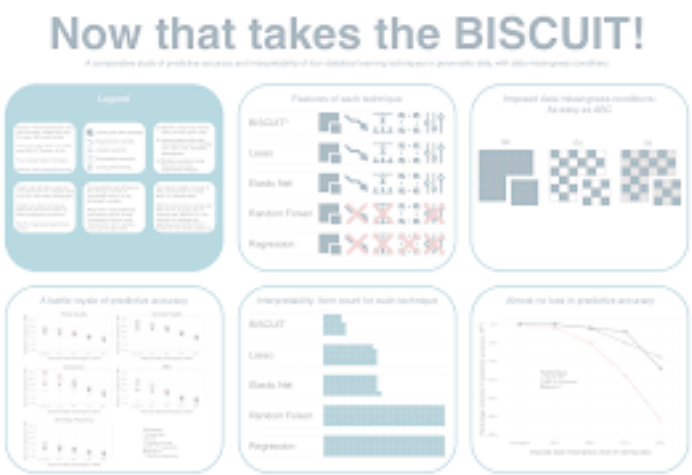
Analytic Plan

3 machine learning classification methods:

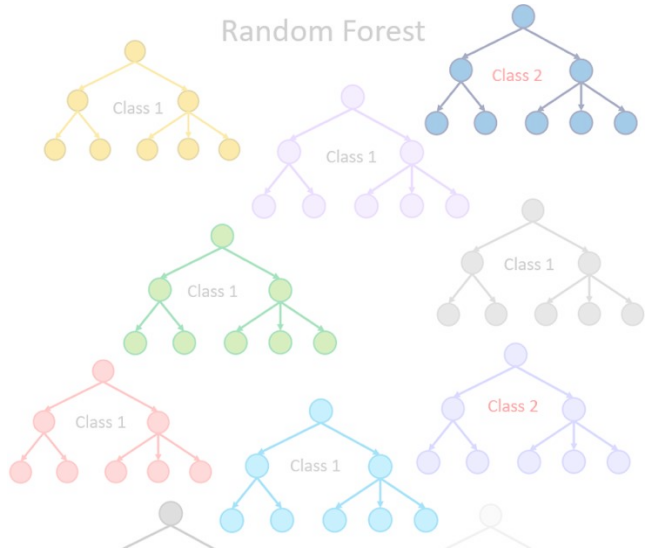
Elastic Net



BISCWIT



Random Forest



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

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

RESULTS

Aim 3

Classification Accuracy

	Elastic Net	
	Median (SD)	N
Procrastination		
Loneliness		
Argument		
Interacted		
Studying		
Sick		
Tired		

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Classification Accuracy

Elastic Net

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

Sick

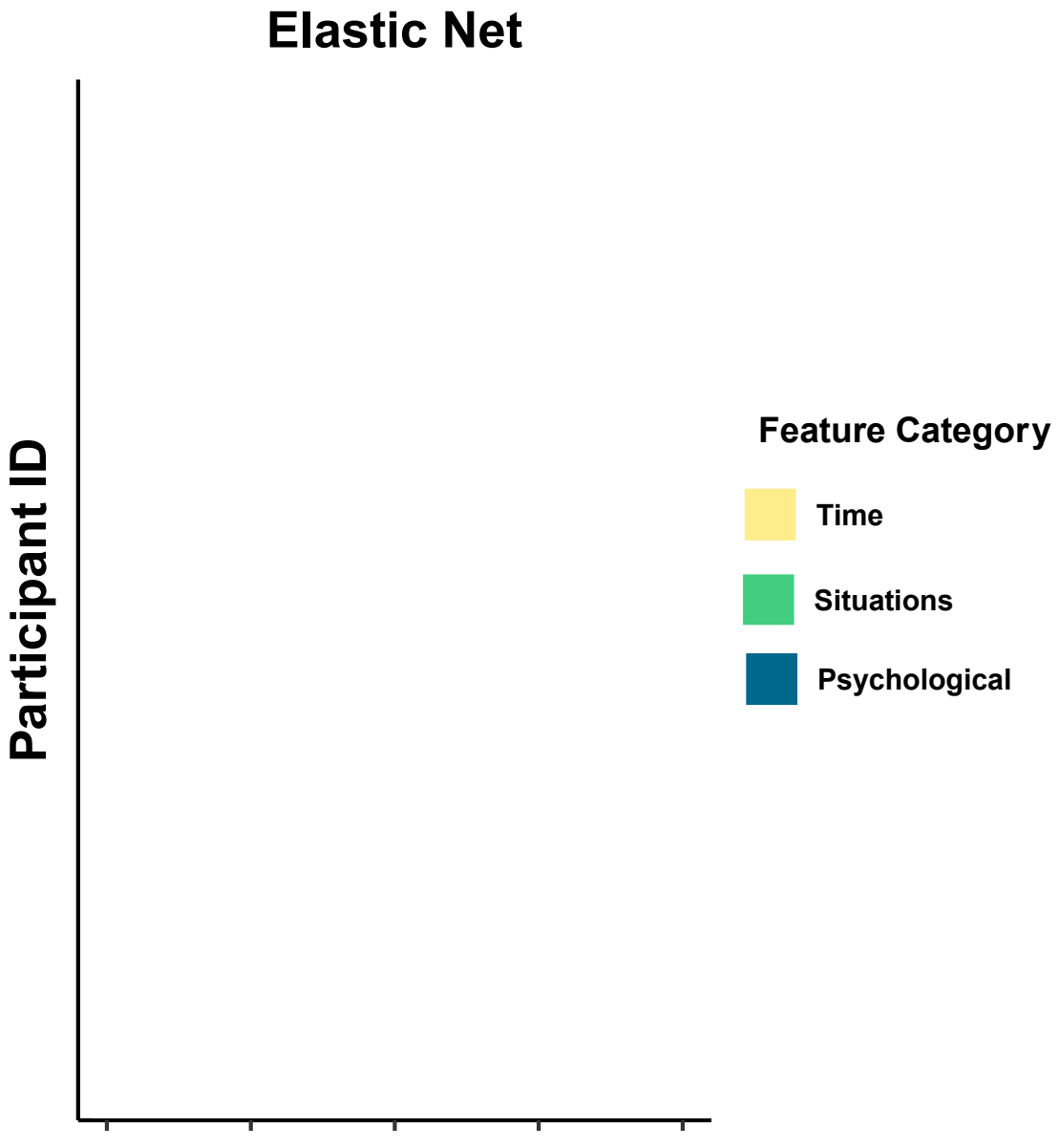
Tired

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Do certain categories of features out-predict others?

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Do certain categories of features out-predict others?



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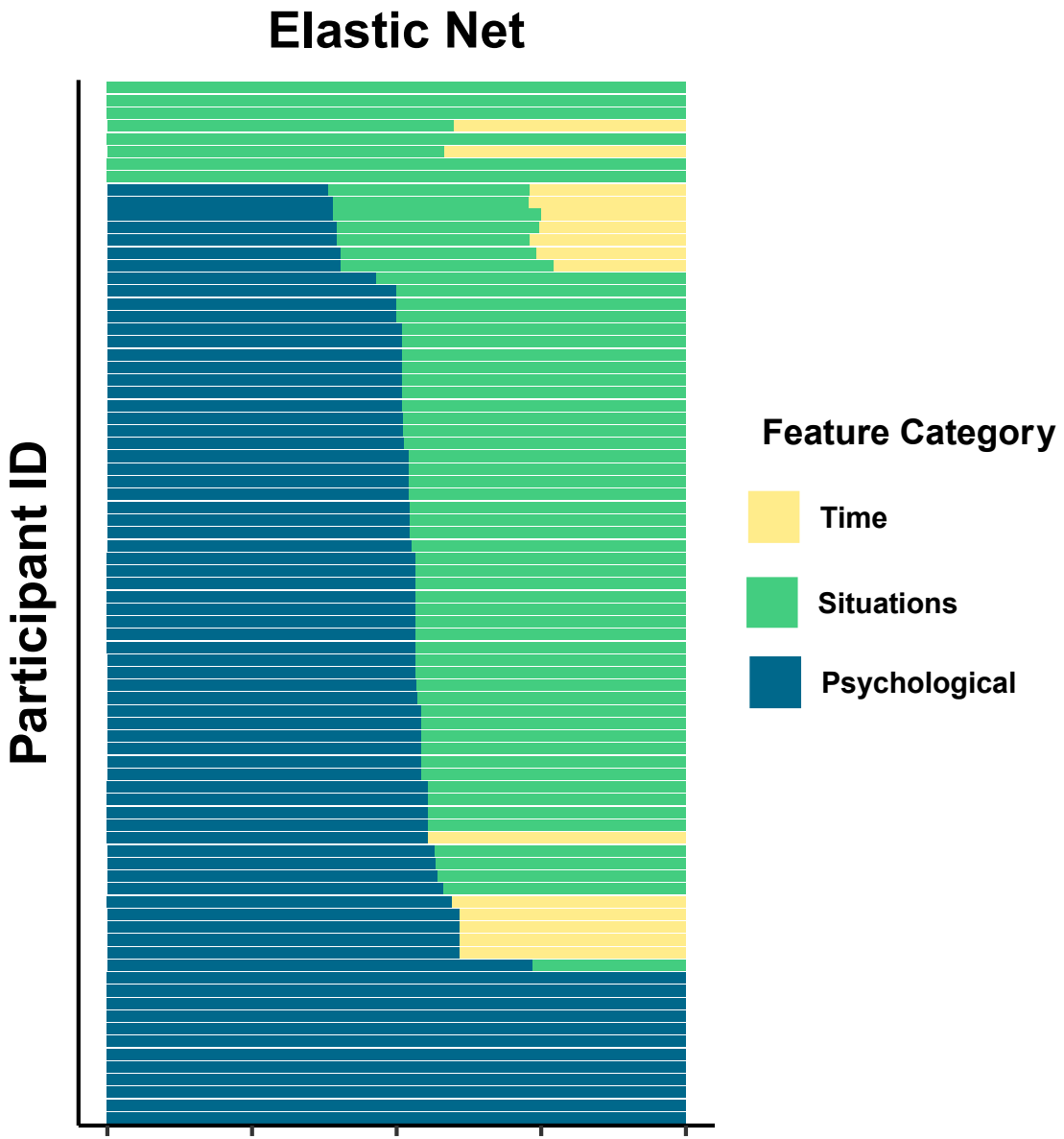

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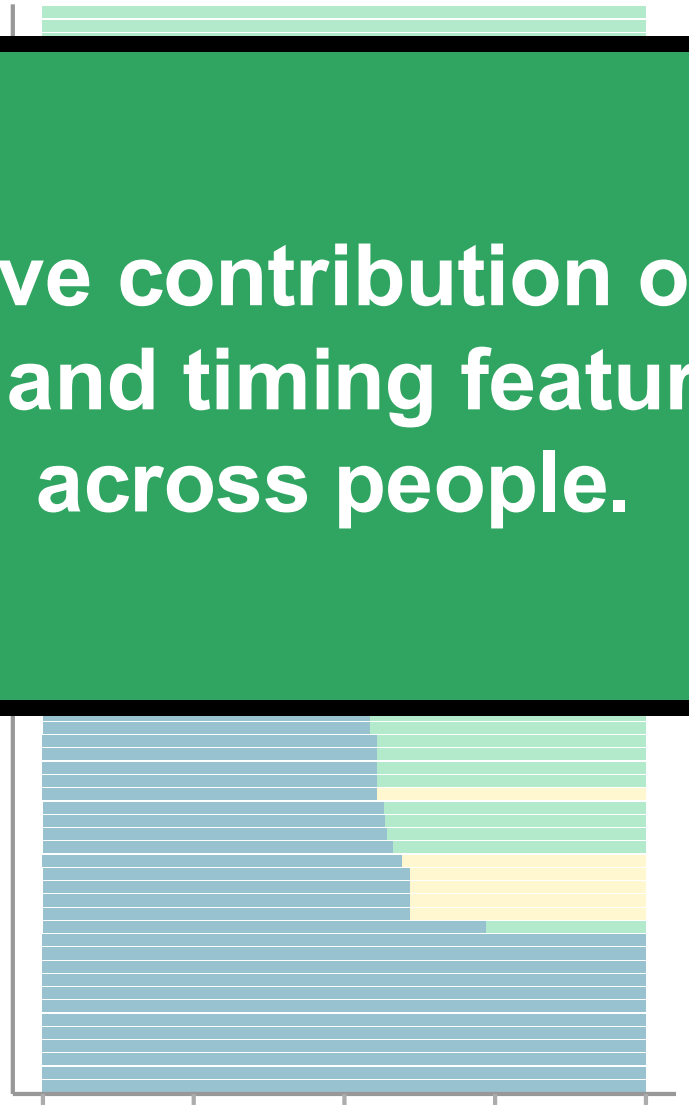
Elastic Net



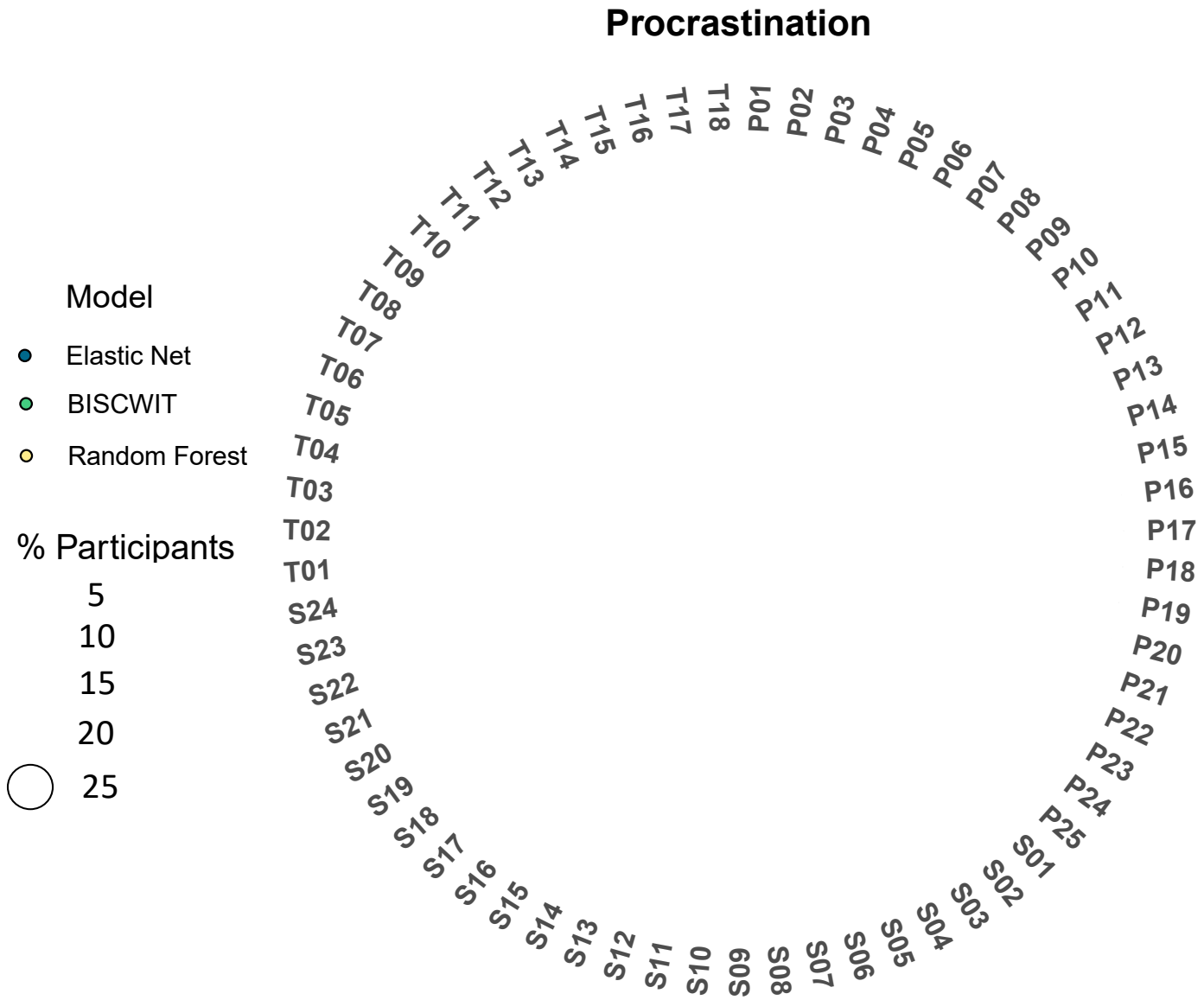
The relative contribution of person, situation, and timing features varies across people.

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Which features play the strongest roles?

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

Which features play the strongest roles?



Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

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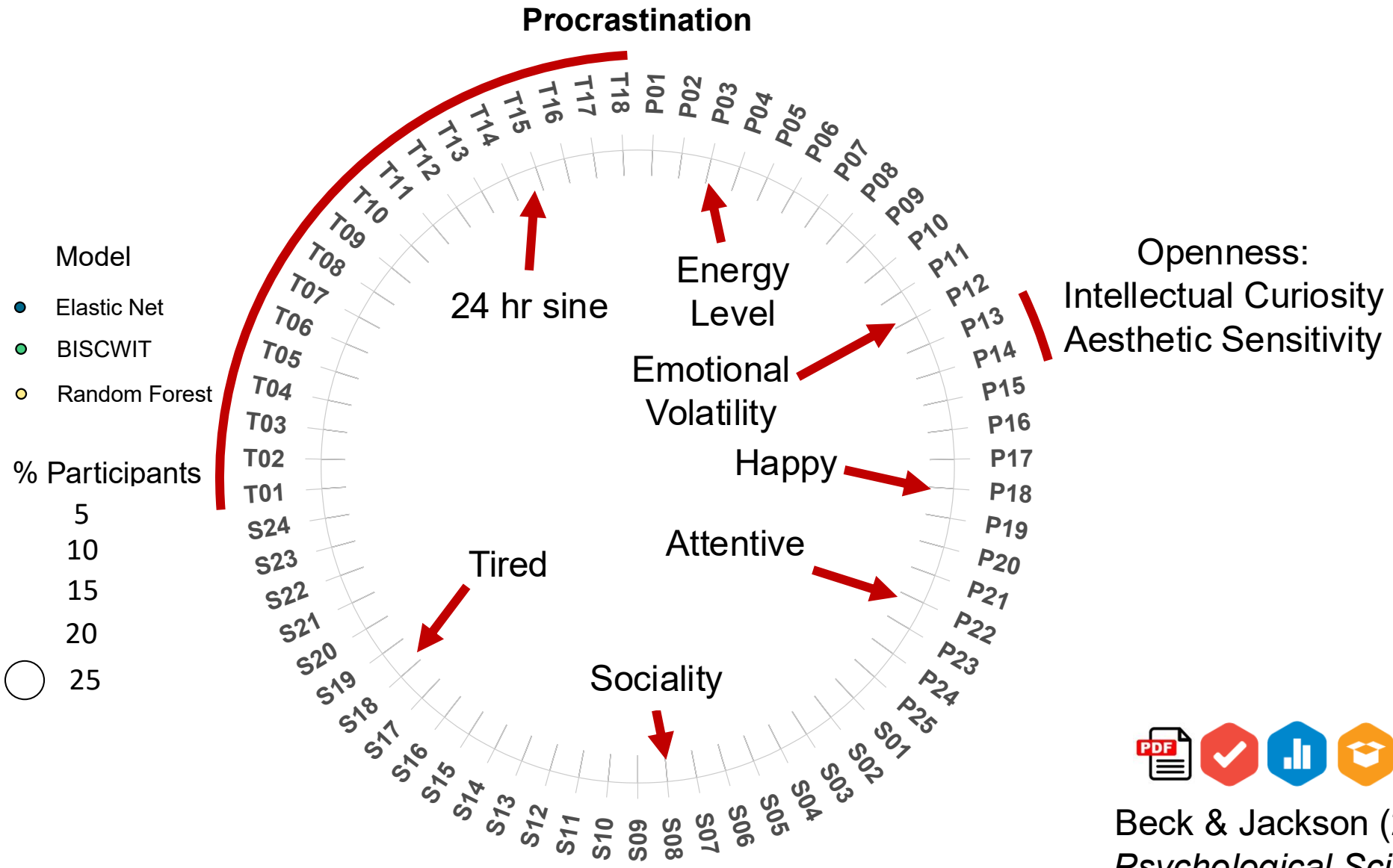

Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)

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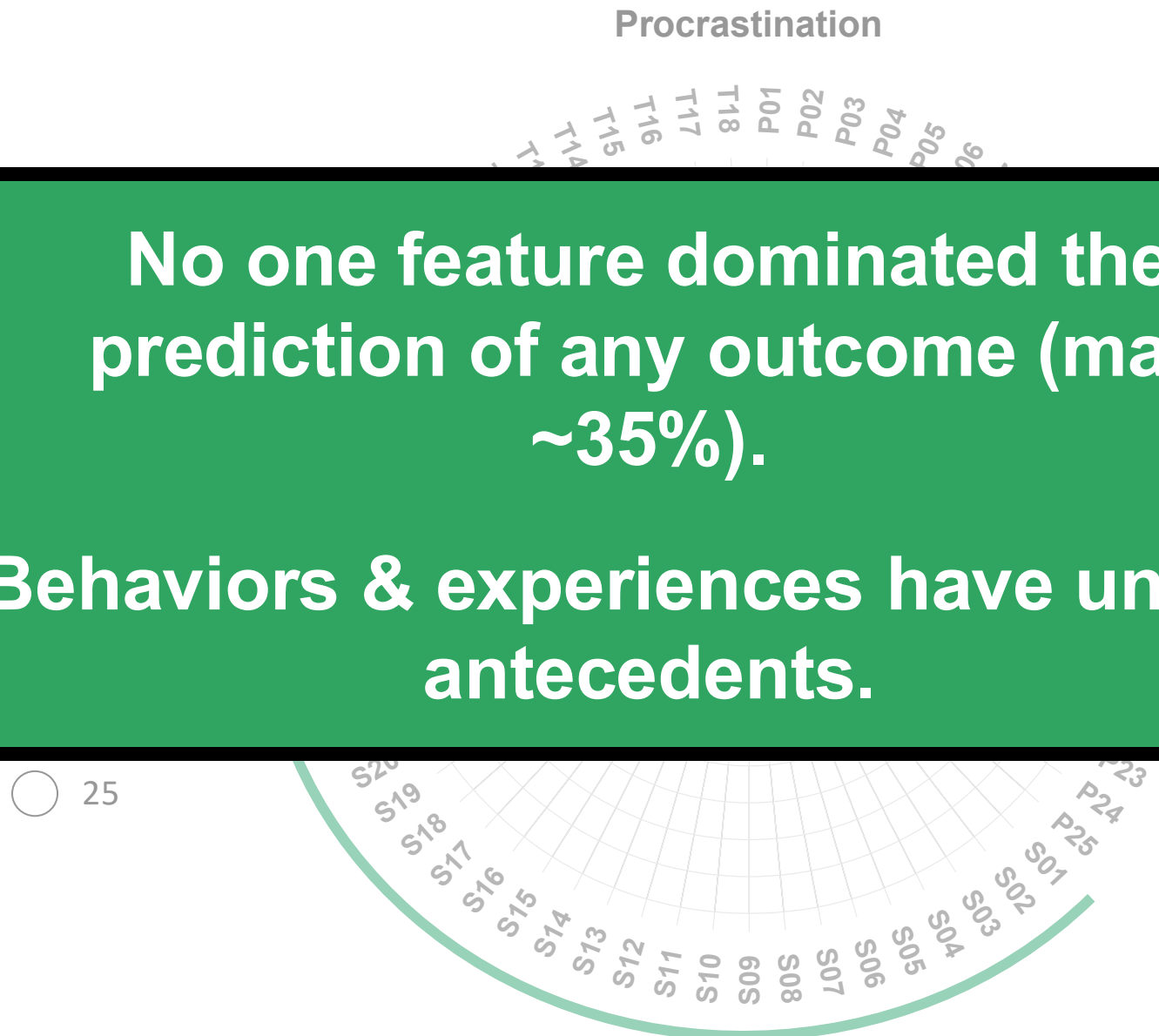
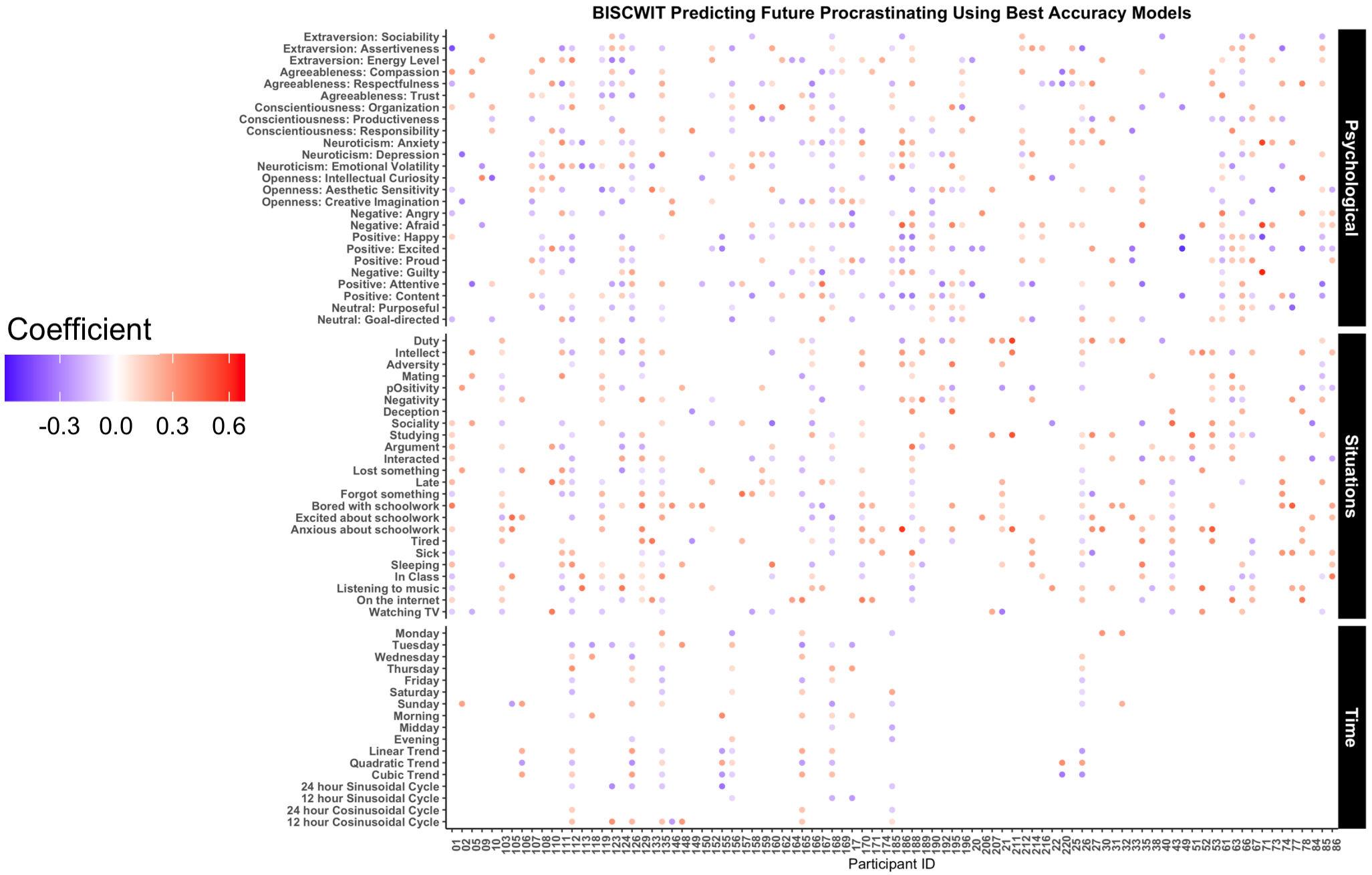
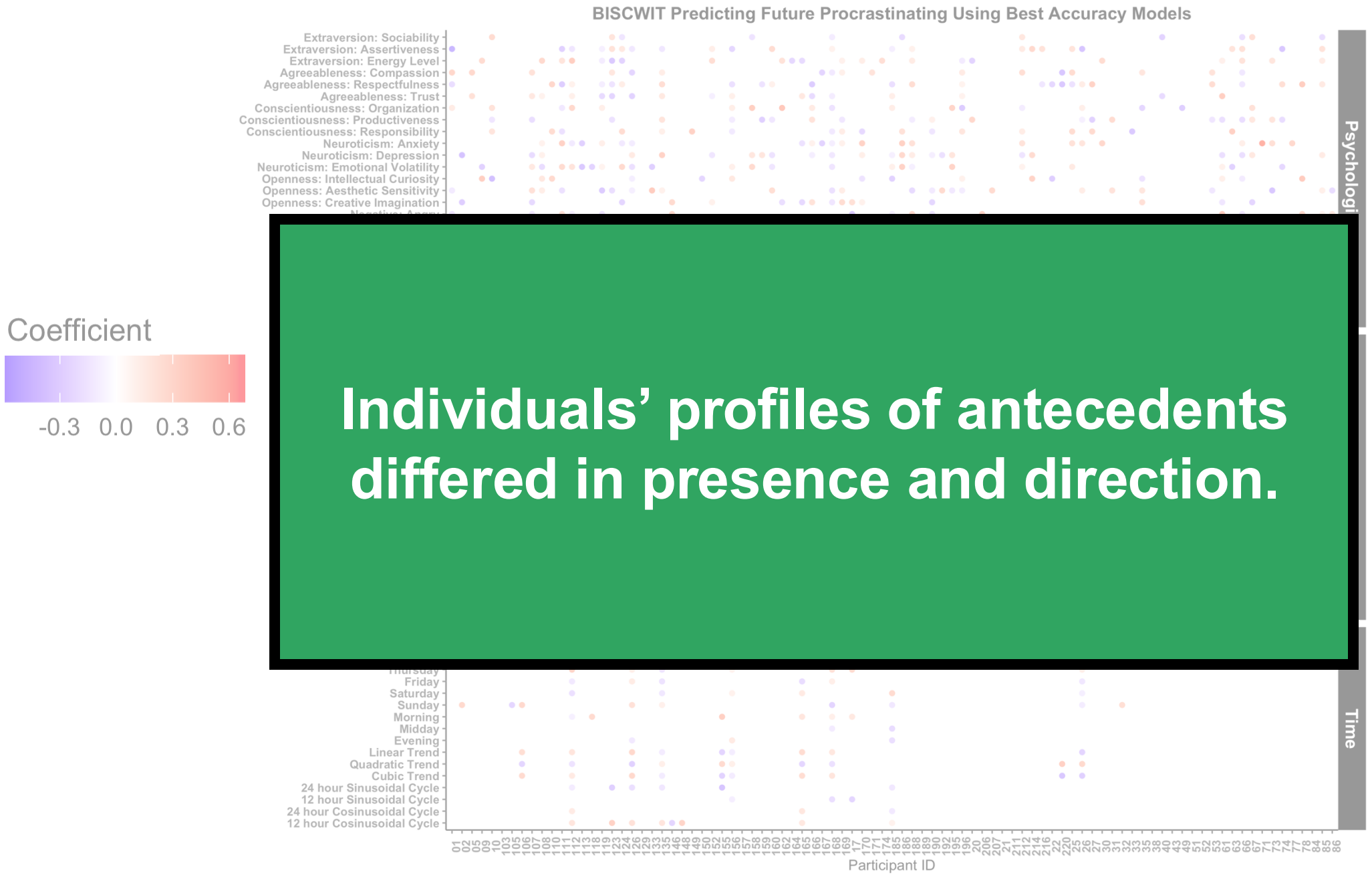


No one feature dominated the prediction of any outcome (max ~35%).

Behaviors & experiences have unique antecedents.

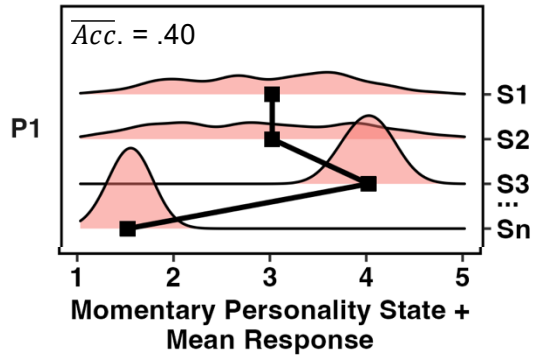
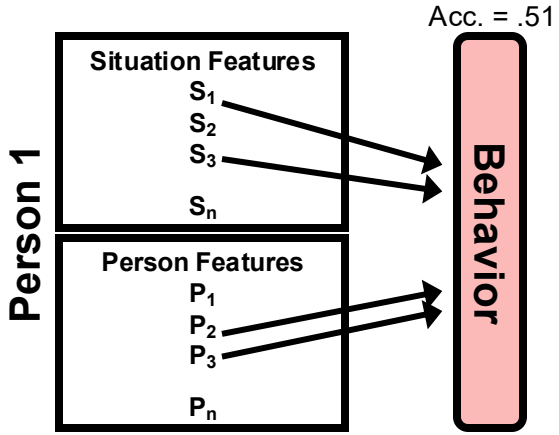
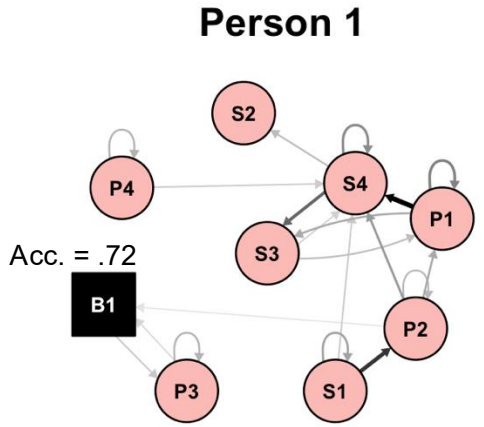
Beck & Jackson (2023; *Psychological Science*)


BISCWIT Predicting Future Procrastinating Using Best Accuracy Models
Coefficient
-0.3 0.0 0.3 0.6
Extraversion: Sociability
Extraversion: Assertiveness
Extraversion: Energy Level
Agreeableness: Compassion
Agreeableness: Respectfulness
Agreeableness: Trust
Conscientiousness: Organization
Conscientiousness: Productiveness
Conscientiousness: Responsibility
Neuroticism: Anxiety
Neuroticism: Depression
Neuroticism: Emotional Volatility
Openness: Intellectual Curiosity
Openness: Aesthetic Sensitivity
Openness: Creative Imagination
Negative: Angry
Negative: Afraid
Positive: Happy
Positive: Excited
Positive: Proud
Negative: Guilty
Positive: Attentive
Positive: Content
Neutral: Purposeful
Neutral: Goal-directed
Duty
Intellect
Adversity
Mating
pOsitivity
Negativity
Deception
Sociality
Studying
Argument
Interacted
Lost something
Late
Forgot something
Bored with schoolwork
Excited about schoolwork
Anxious about schoolwork
Tired
Sick
Sleeping
In Class
Listening to music
On the internet
Watching TV
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday
Morning
Midday
Evening
Linear Trend
Quadratic Trend
Cubic Trend
24 hour Sinusoidal Cycle
12 hour Sinusoidal Cycle
24 hour Cosinusoidal Cycle
12 hour Cosinusoidal Cycle
Psychological
Situations
Time
Participant ID



Individuals' profiles of antecedents differed in presence and direction.

AIM 3: Which assessment + conceptual framework is the most accurate model of behavior prediction?

	AIM 2A	AIM 2B	AIM 2C
Conceptual Frameworks	*Conditional Frameworks* (e.g., Wright & Mischel, 1987) 	*Person x Situation Interaction Frameworks* (e.g., Funder, 2006) 	*Systems Frameworks* (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) 
Traditional Model	**Predicting *mean levels*** Mixed Effects Models with Situations Predicting Behavior (e.g., Sherman et al., 2015)	***Univariate* PxS** Mixed Effects Models w/ Trait x Situation Interactions Predicting Behavior (e.g., Sherman et al., 2015)	***Static* Dynamics** Vector Autoregressive Models (VAR) (e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2020a)
Model Innovation	**Predicting *variability*** Bayesian Univariate Generalized Mixed Effects Location Scale Models (e.g., Williams et al., 2021)	***Multivariate* PxS** 2 Machine Learning Classification Models: (1) Elastic Net Regression and (2) BISCWIT (e.g., Beck & Jackson, 2022)	***Time-Varying* Dynamics** Time-Varying Mixed Vector Autoregressive Models (mVAR) (e.g., Haselbeck et al., 2021)

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.** (revision submitted, *NHB*)
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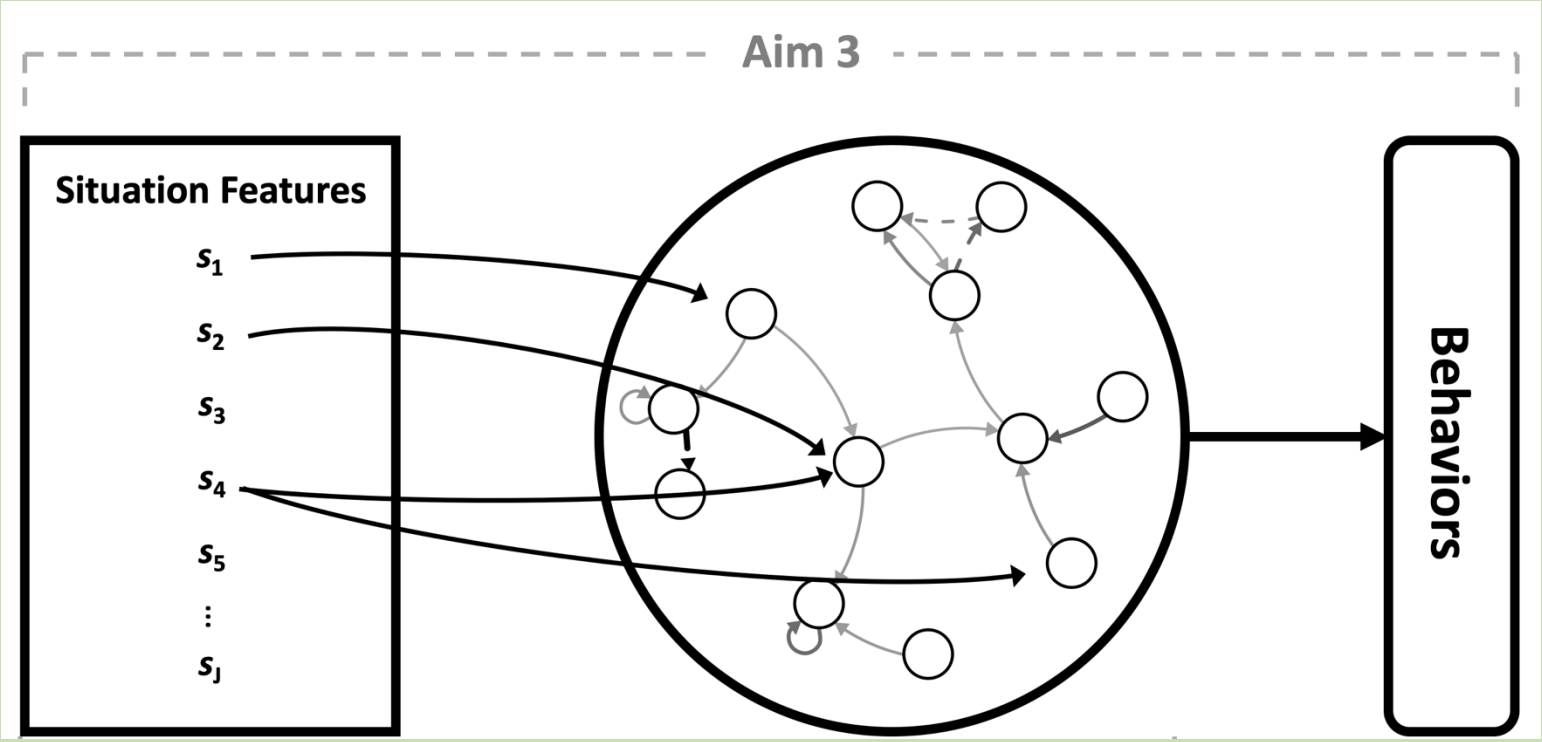

Aim 1: Individuals show unique personality structures that are relatively consistent across time and events.

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

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

Beck et al.
(revision submitted, *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

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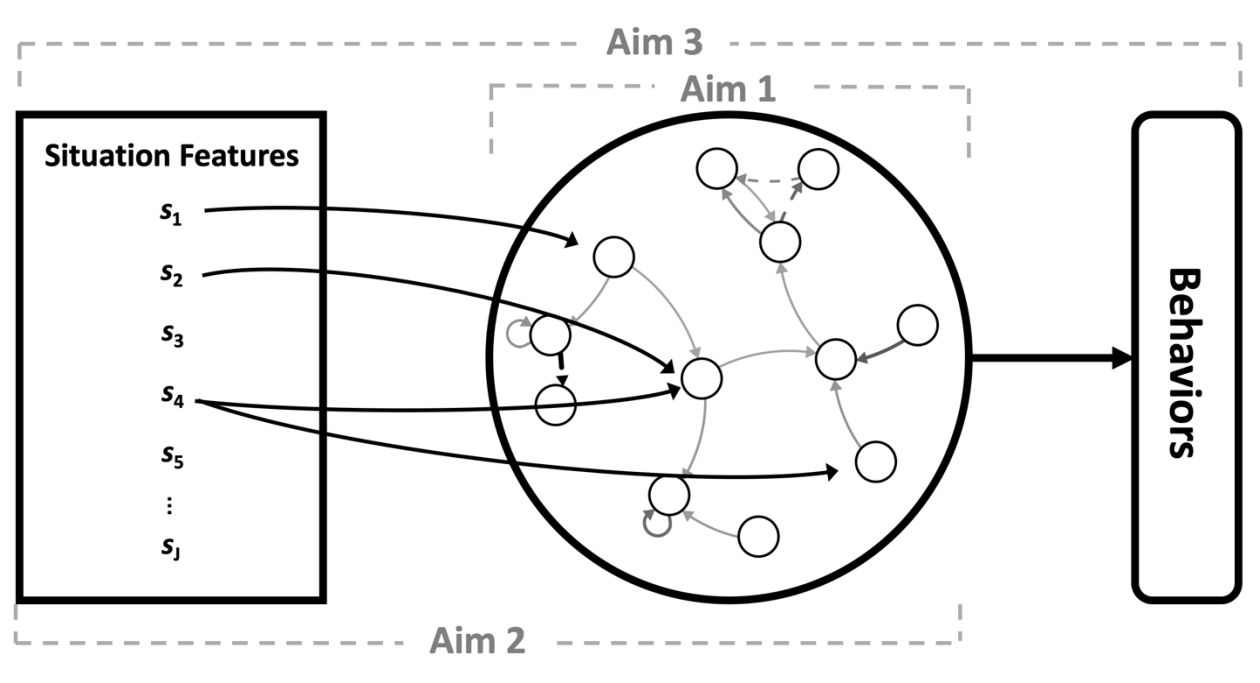
Ongoing Directions



Other Ongoing Directions

Multilevel Structure

Personality as a Dynamic System

Personalized Assessment

Revisiting Cattell's Data Box

Integrating Across Time Scales

Revitalizing Grand Theories of Personality

Personalized Assessment

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	Variability	Predictive Utility
Hypothesis: People will generate content that doesn't overlap with the Big Five or other typical shared indicators we measure.	**Hypothesis**: People will show more variability and use the full scale more for unique items than shared items, on average.	**Hypothesis:** Unique items will improve predictive utility and play important roles in personalized prediction models.

The Personalizing Personality Study

Study Design

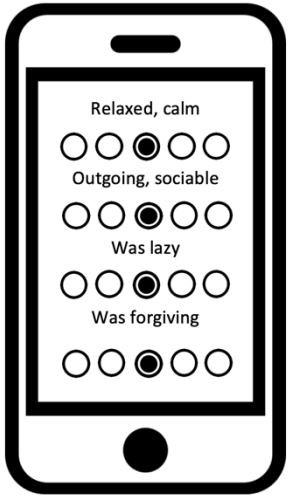
UC DAVIS — N = 200

Washington University in St. Louis — N = 200

PREREGISTERED | OPEN DATA | OPEN MATERIALS

Baseline Surveys

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



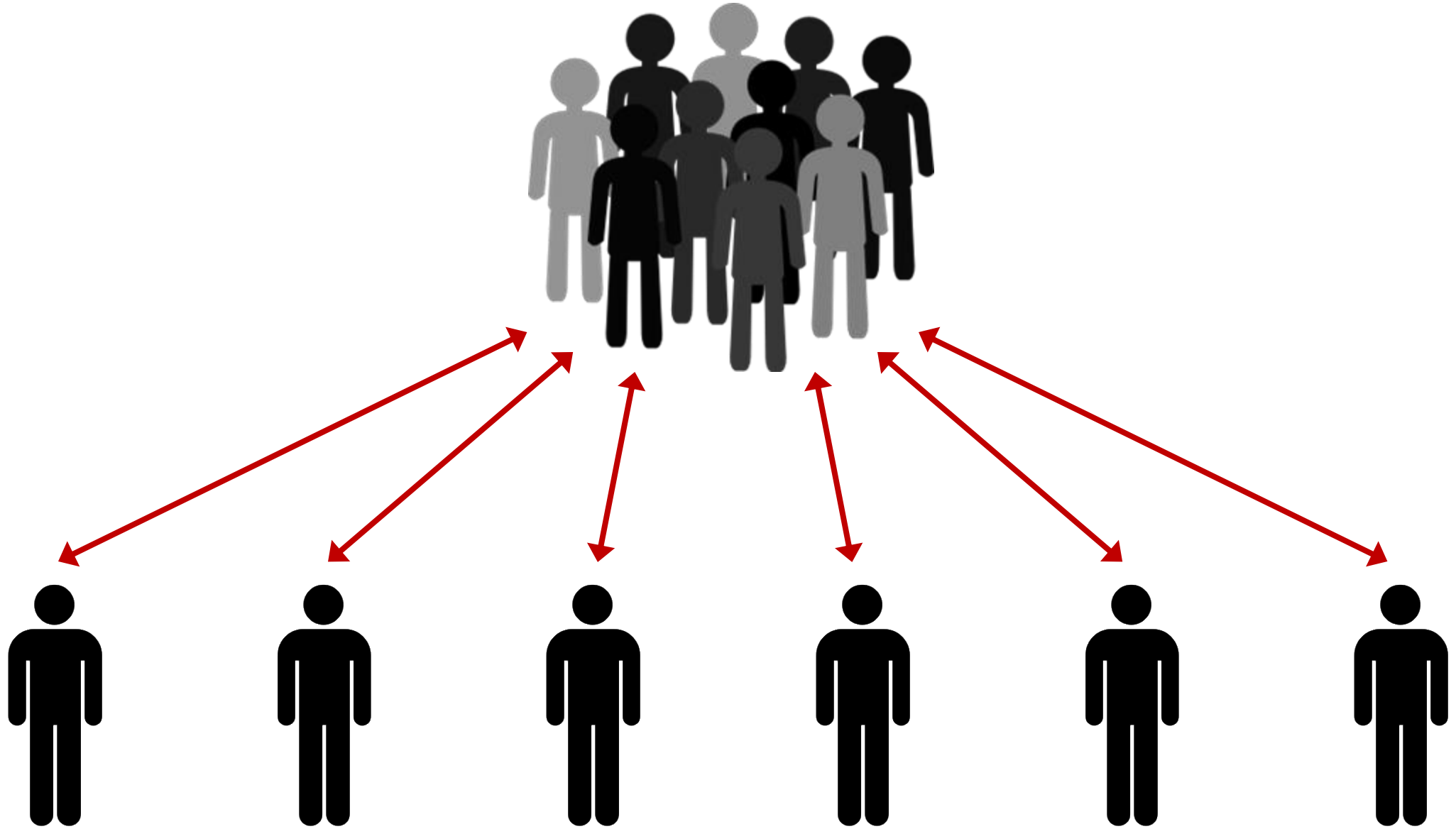
Experience Sampling Method (ESM)

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

NSF BCS-2336406

Bottom-Up Psychological Science

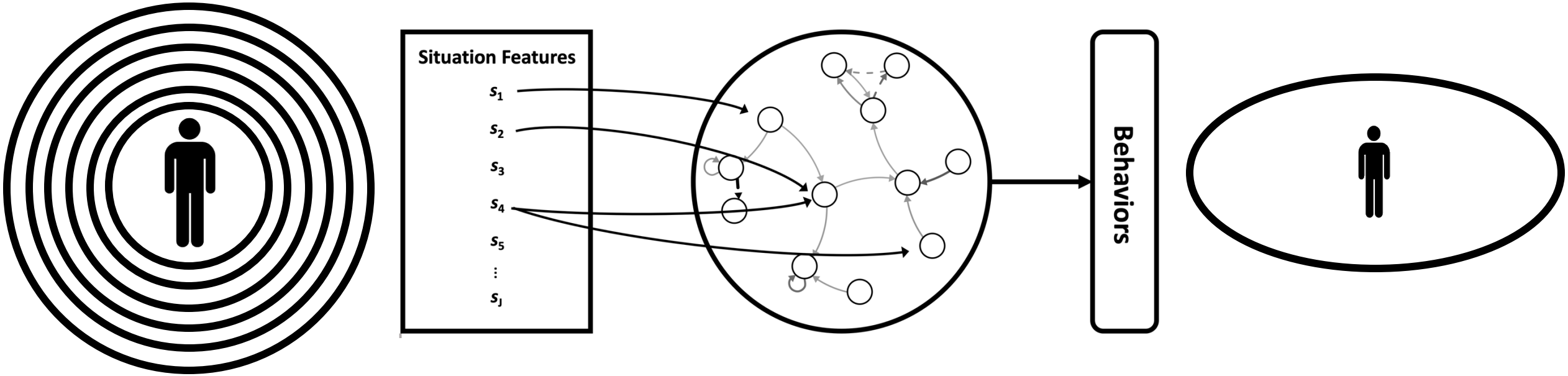


Persons in Context: Systems Theories

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

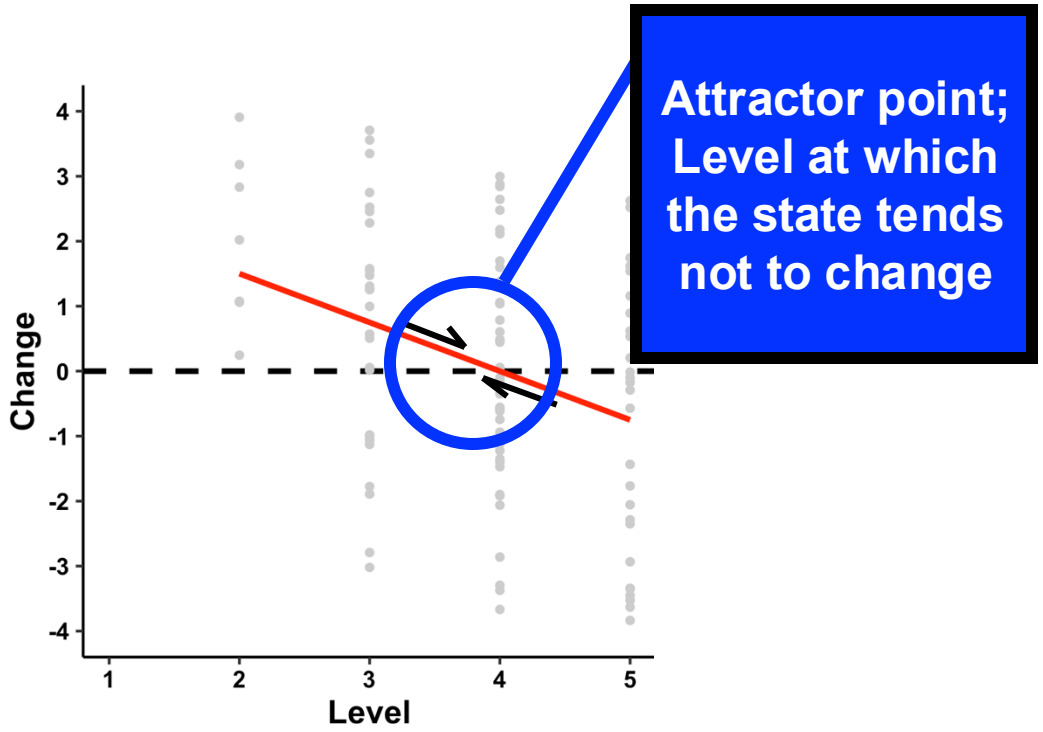
Personality As a System: Habits, Goals, and Tendencies

Looking across individuals, individual differences appear in:

Attractor location
(x at which change is 0)

Attractor strength
(slope; b_1)

$$\frac{dp}{dt} = b_0 + b_1 p$$



Springstein et al.; Lee et al.; Long & Beck; Beck, in prep

Butner et al., 2014; Danvers et al., 2019

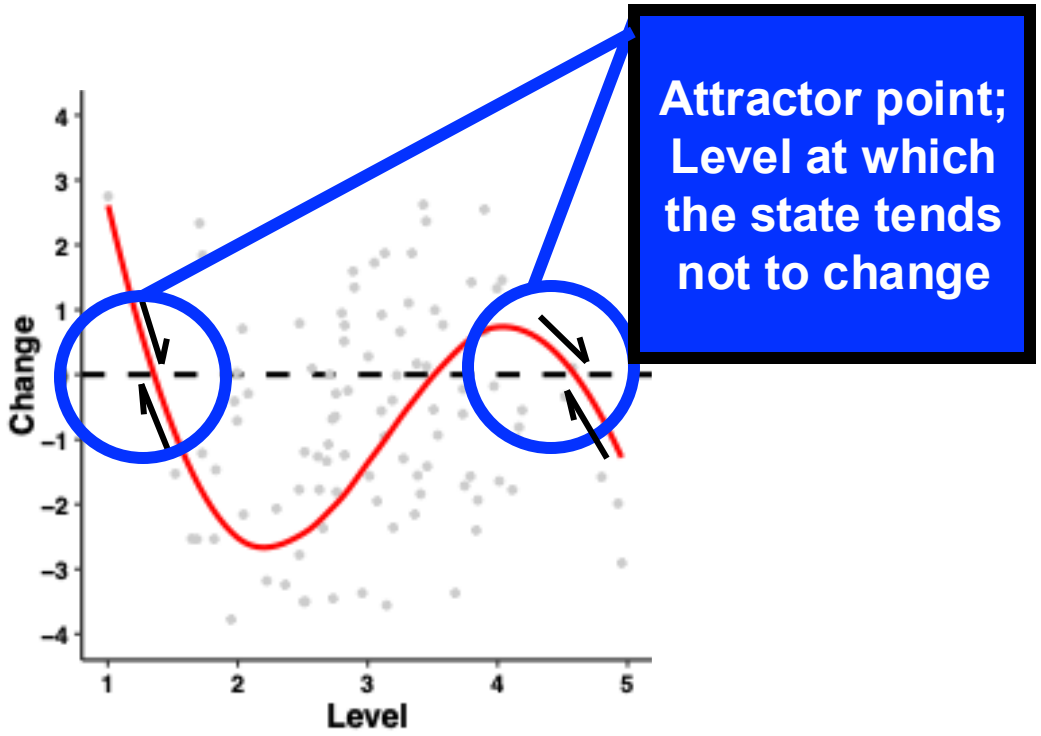
Personality As a System: Habits, Goals, and Tendencies

Looking across individuals, individual differences appear in:

$$\frac{dp}{dt} = b_0 + b_1 p + b_2 p^2 + b_3 p^3$$

Attractor location
(x at which change is 0)

Attractor strength
(slope; b_1)



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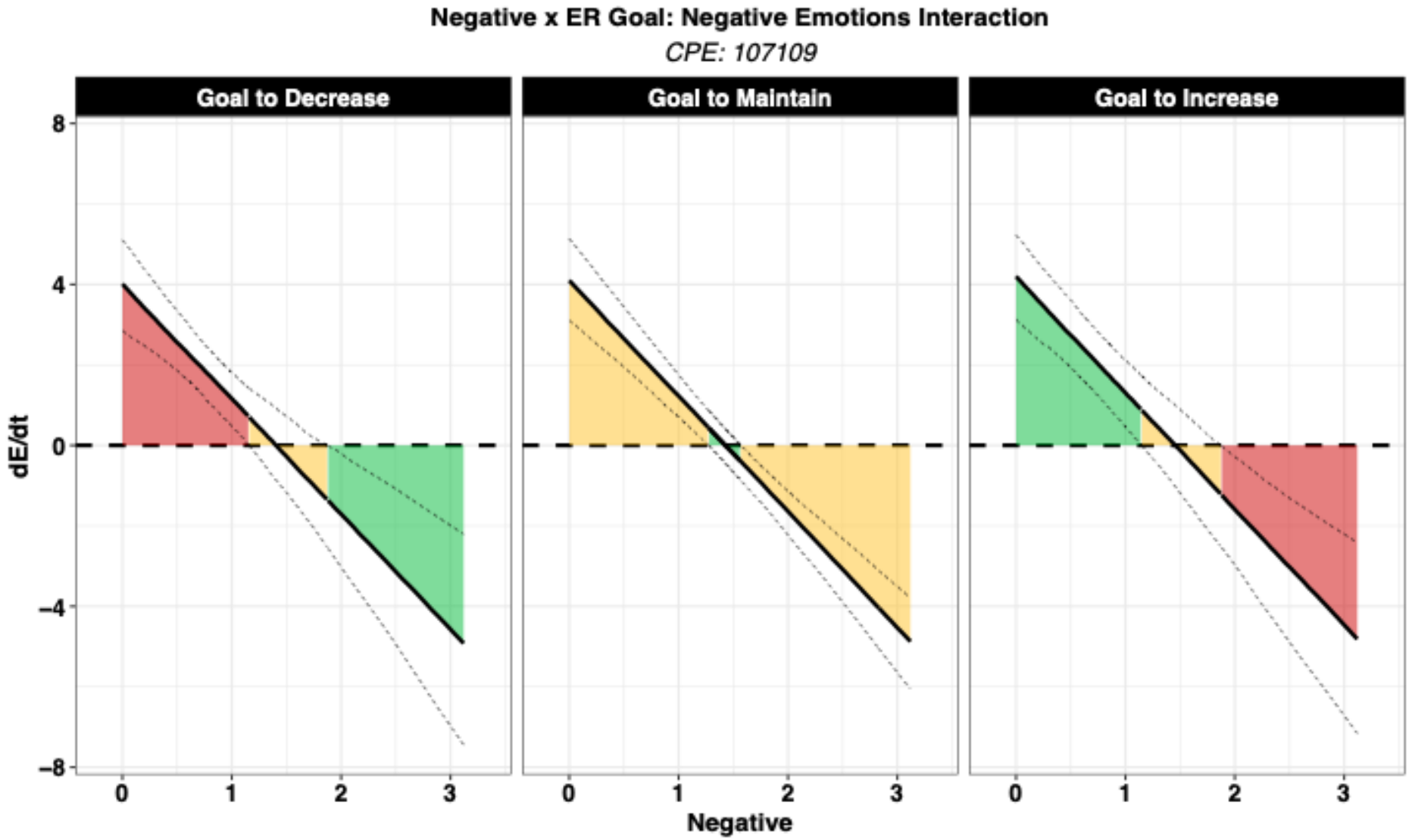

Springstein, Batra, & Beck (in prep)

Ongoing Work in My Lab

Adam Nissen

Persons-in-contexts and systems perspectives on well-being of sexual and gender minorities

Winkie Ma

Unique structure of narcissism in daily life and antecedents and consequences of narcissism

Colin Lee

Person-specific personality state profiles and multivariate dynamic systems models of personality

Evan Warfel

Text-based analysis and merging qualitative and quantitative methods

Elizabeth Long

Cardinal / central traits; linking central traits to dynamic theories of personality

Anabel Büchner

Personality as attractors, utility of unique assessment

Introducing PECORINO

Personality **C**onsortium **o**n **R**esearch in **I**diographics and **No**mothetics

- **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: Get Involved!

Mailing List

pecorino_group@googlegroups.com

Contact Us

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.

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

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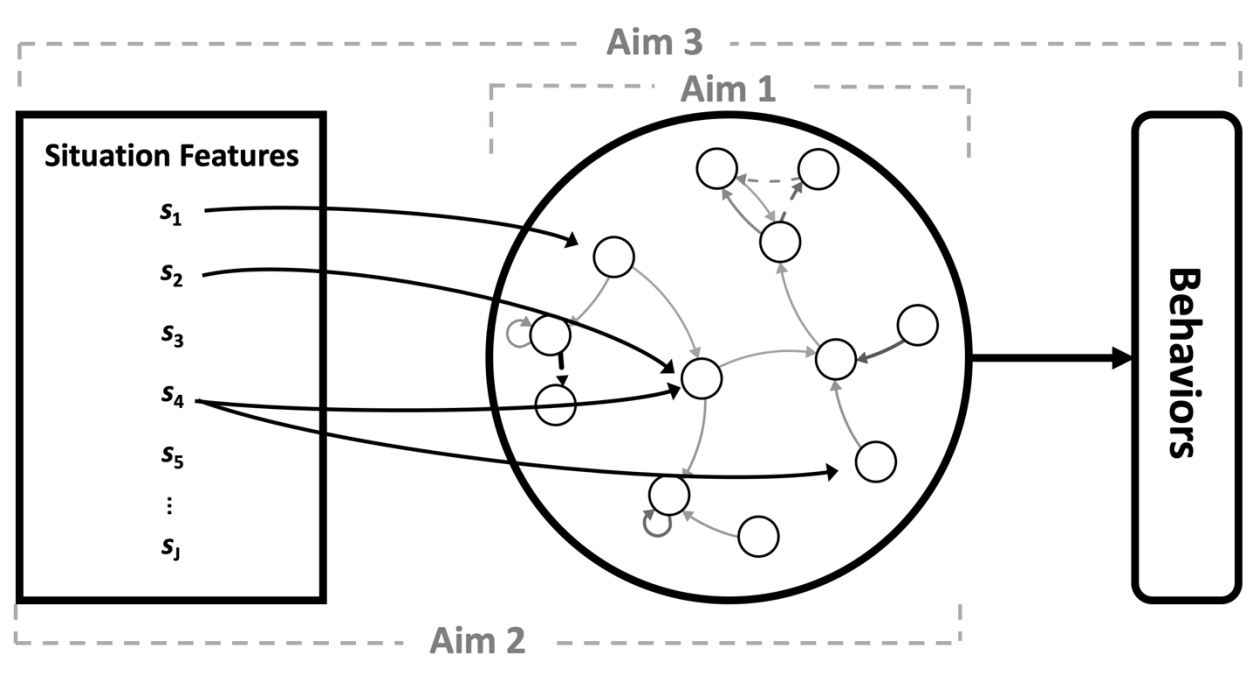
Ongoing Directions



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Collaborators

(on presented work)

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SCAN ME

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