

Brain Wide Associations (BWAS) to model the link between brain features and behavior.

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THE DEVELOPING BRAIN
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BWAS/PNRS to model the brain-behavior

- Motivation
- Description of the method
- Using BWAS we can disambiguate between focal or globally distributed effects
- Detailed description of the figures and tables we use to validate every step of the method
- Other potential applications and future directions

Acknowledgments

Development team

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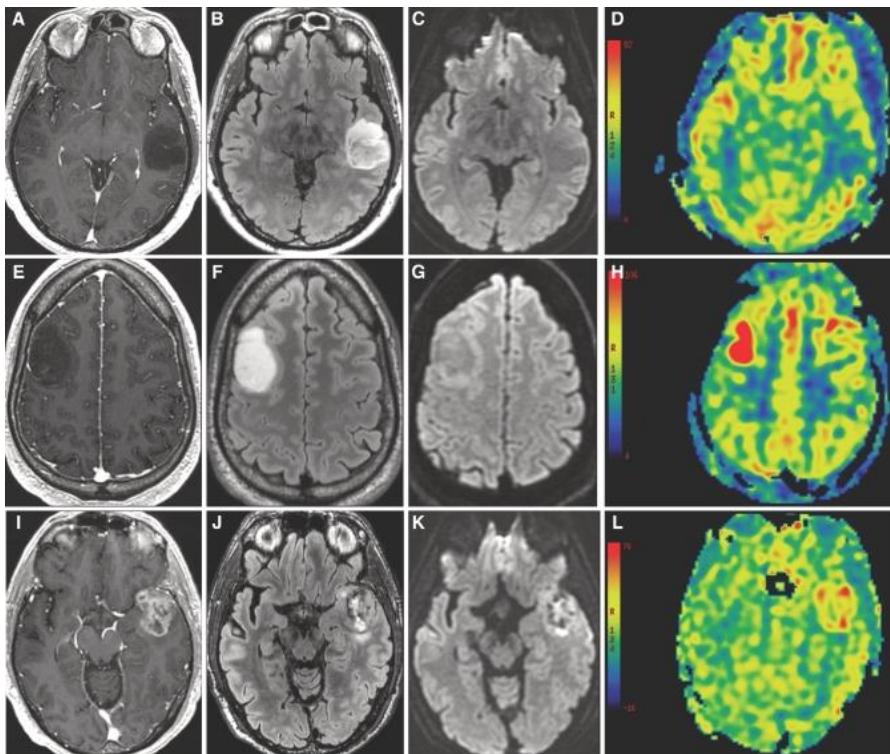
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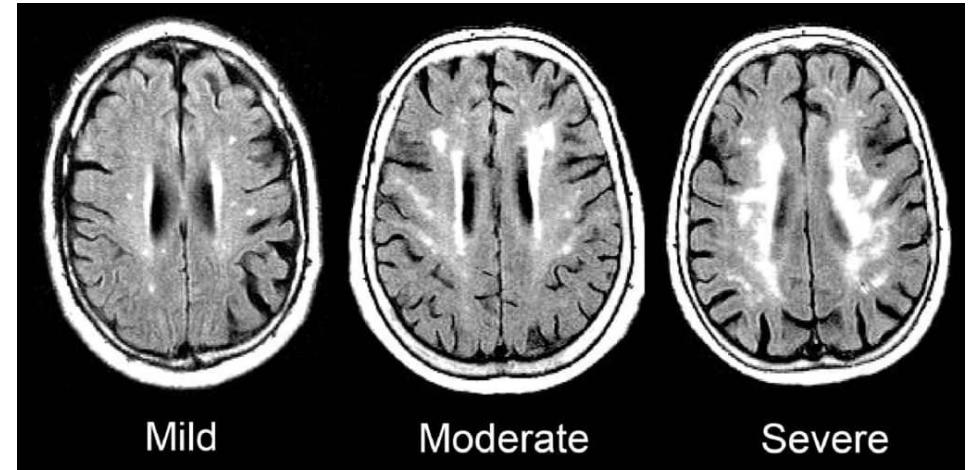
Neuroimaging is a very important tool in clinical practice

Diffuse astrocytic tumors



Presurgical MRI of 3 patients included axial T1 postcontrast **A, E, I**, axial FLAIR **B, F, J**, axial DWI **C, G, K**, and axial ASL perfusion **D, H, L** sequences. Villanueva-Meyer, et al 2017.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5581219/>

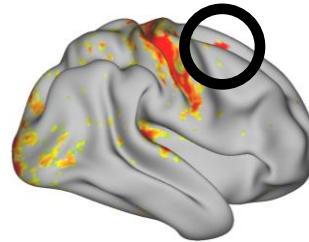
Signs of cerebral small vessel disease



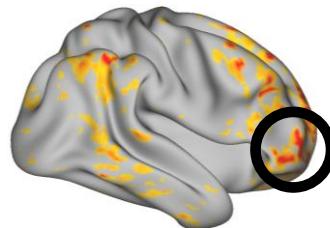
Signs of cerebral small vessel disease. From Inzitari et al, BMJ. 2009 Jul 6;339:b2477. doi: 10.1136/bmj.b2477
<https://betterhealthwhileaging.net/cerebral-small-vessel-disease/>

Associations between brain function and behavior, however, are dominated by small effects.

Given their small effects, it is hard to identify a “bright spot” in the brain indicative of a given behavior

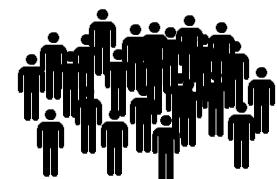
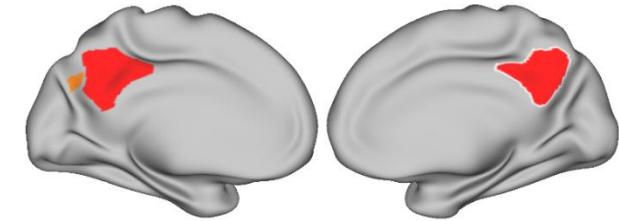
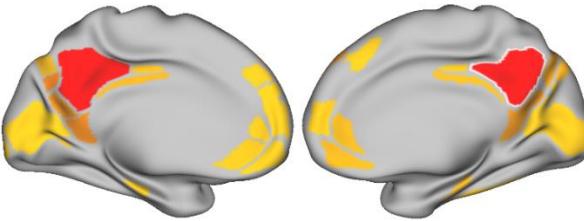
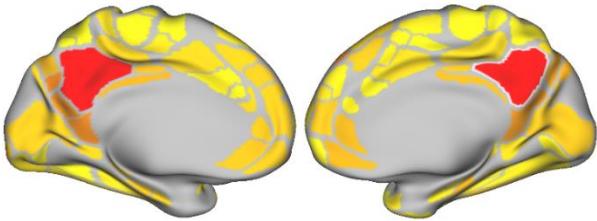
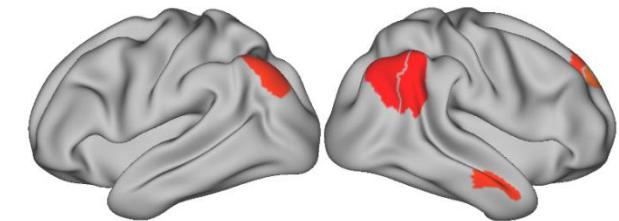
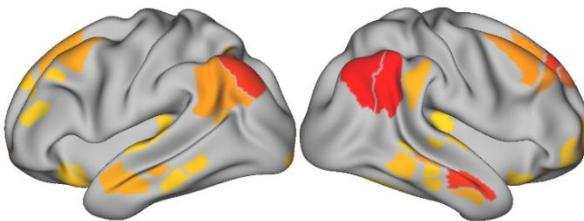
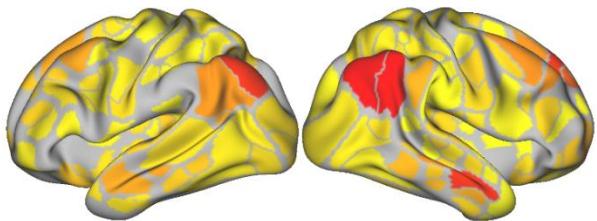


I see,
rumination and
internalizing
behavior



Aha, an
extrovert

One strategy is to pool data together from several participants to increase the signal to noise ratio and find those associations at the group level.



Following this approach, several groups have reported associations between atypical brain connectivity and different mental and neurological disorders.

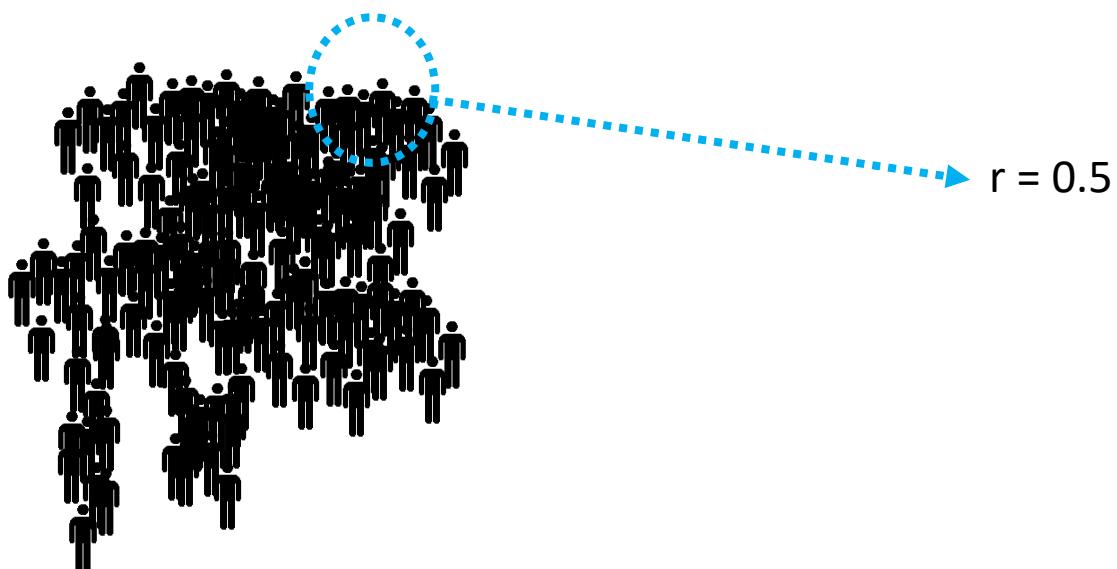
Most of the studies, however, are underpowered to model small effects

Towards Reproducible Brain-Wide Association Studies

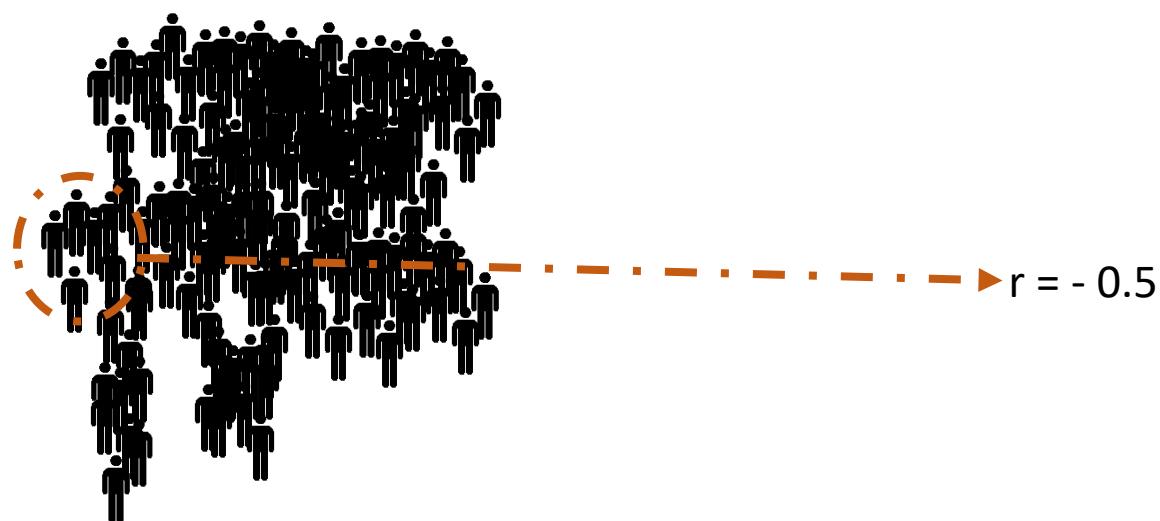
Scott Marek, Brenden Tervo-Clemmens, Finnegan J. Calabro, David F. Montez, Benjamin P. Kay, Alexander S. Hatoum, Meghan Rose Donohue, William Foran, Ryland L. Miller, Eric Feczko, Oscar Miranda-Dominguez, Alice M. Graham, Eric A. Earl, Anders J. Perrone, Michaela Cordova, Olivia Doyle, Lucille A. Moore, Greg Conan, Johnny Uriarte, Kathy Snider, Angela Tam, Jianzhong Chen, Dillan J. Newbold, Annie Zheng, Nicole A. Seider, Andrew N. Van, Timothy O. Laumann, Wesley K. Thompson, Deanna J. Greene, Steven E. Petersen, Thomas E. Nichols, B.T. Thomas Yeo, Deanna M. Barch, Hugh Garavan, Beatriz Luna, Damien A. Fair, Nico U.F. Dosenbach

For example, a small sample of 25 participants can lead to strong positive correlations

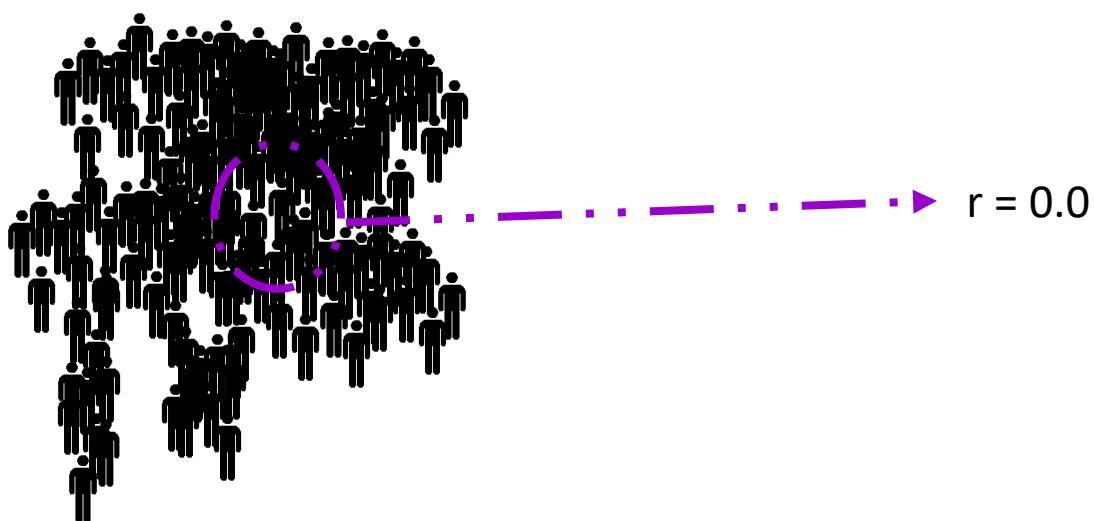
Predicting cognitive ability
using functional connectivity



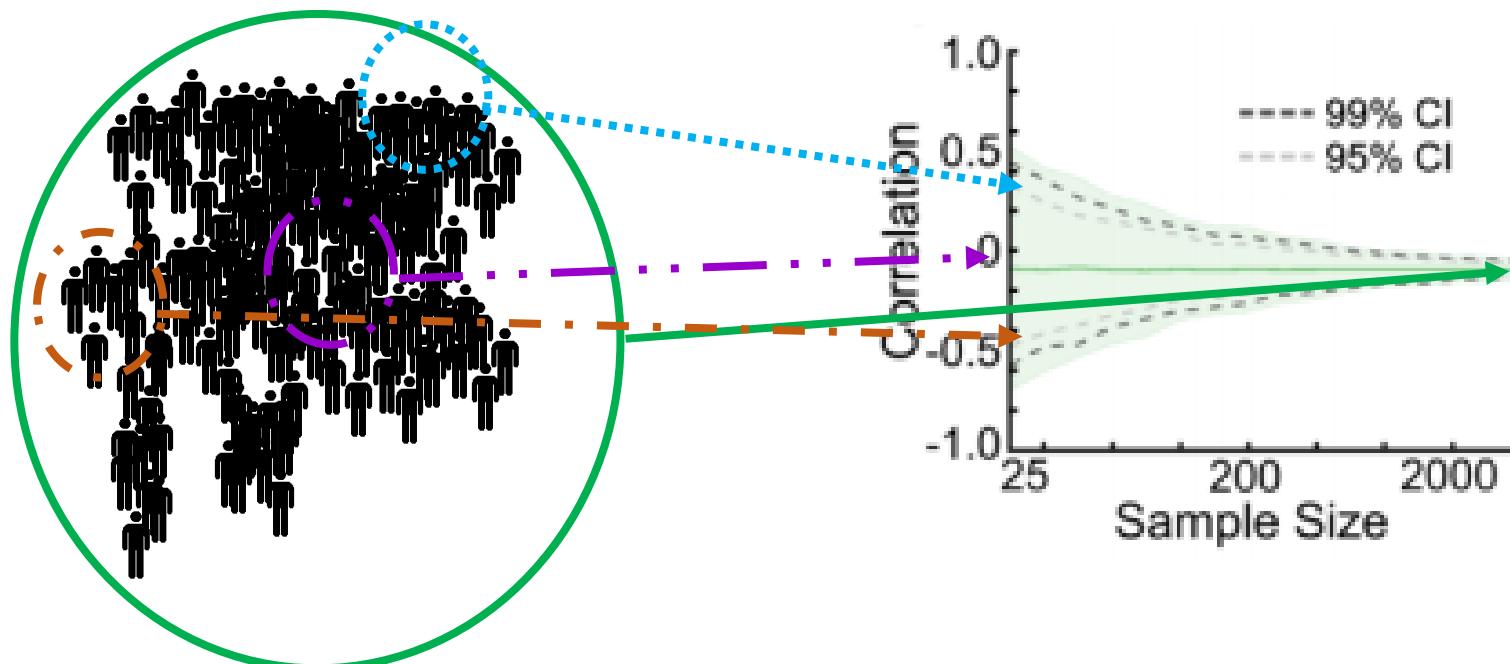
Another sample of the same size can lead to a strong negative correlation



Or even to a null correlation



You need a sample size in the order of thousands to characterize the real strength of the association



Underpowered studies and bias towards overreporting positive findings (among other factors) have led to a crisis in reproducibility



Cluster failure: Why fMRI inferences for spatial extent have inflated false-positive rates

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PMID: 24482835

NIH plans to enhance reproducibility

[Francis S. Collins](#), director and [Lawrence A. Tabak](#), principal deputy director

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Scanning the horizon: towards transparent and reproducible neuroimaging research

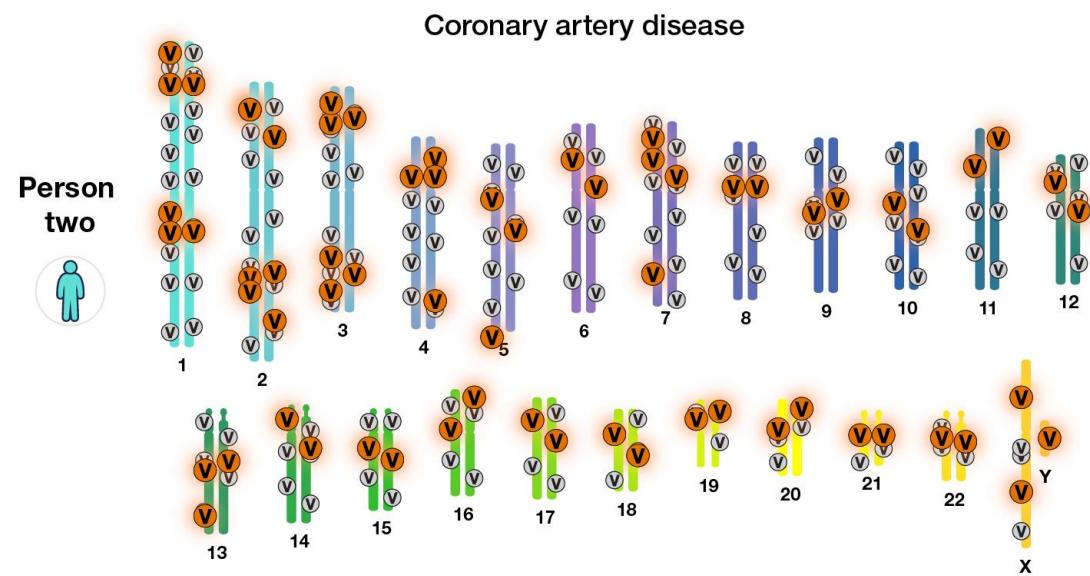
[Russell A. Poldrack](#),¹ [Chris I. Baker](#),² [Joke Durnez](#),^{1,3} [Krzysztof J. Gorgolewski](#),¹ [Paul M. Matthews](#),⁴ [Marcus R. Munafò](#),^{5,6} [Thomas E. Nichols](#),⁷ [Jean-Baptiste Poline](#),⁸ [Edward Vul](#),⁹ and [Tal Yarkoni](#)¹⁰

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Weak associations between variables are very common in science.

In genetics, for example, several illnesses are associated with changes in either one or many genes (and frequently coupled with environmental factors)

In genetics, a “**polygenic risk score**” is a method to determine the risk of developing a disease, based on the total number of changes related to the disease



Each red “v” represents variants in an individual’s genome that is associated with coronary artery disease. Each smaller gray “v” is a variant that is also present in the person’s genome but is not implicated in disease.

In that field, a large reference sample ($\sim 10^2 - 10^{10}$), whose sample size depends on the frequency of the genetic variant to be identified, is used to characterize the association between gene expression and disease

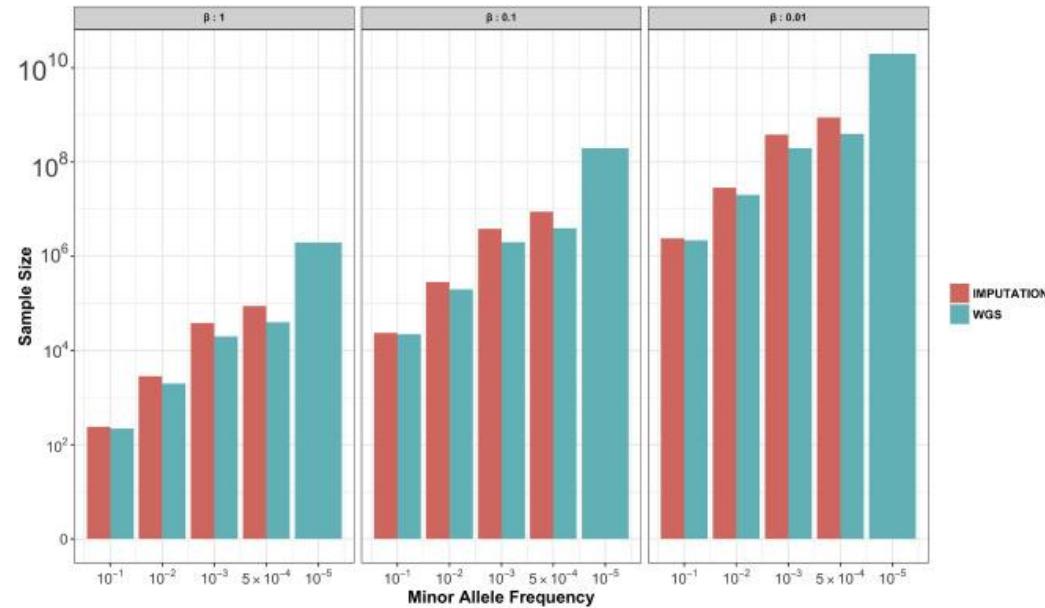
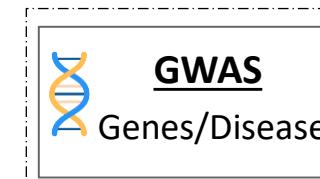
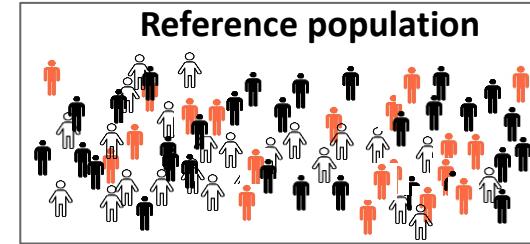


Figure 1. Minimum Sample Sizes for Detecting Trait-SNP Associations from Imputed and WGS Data

They model each individual effect in the large reference sample to obtain a Genome Wide Association

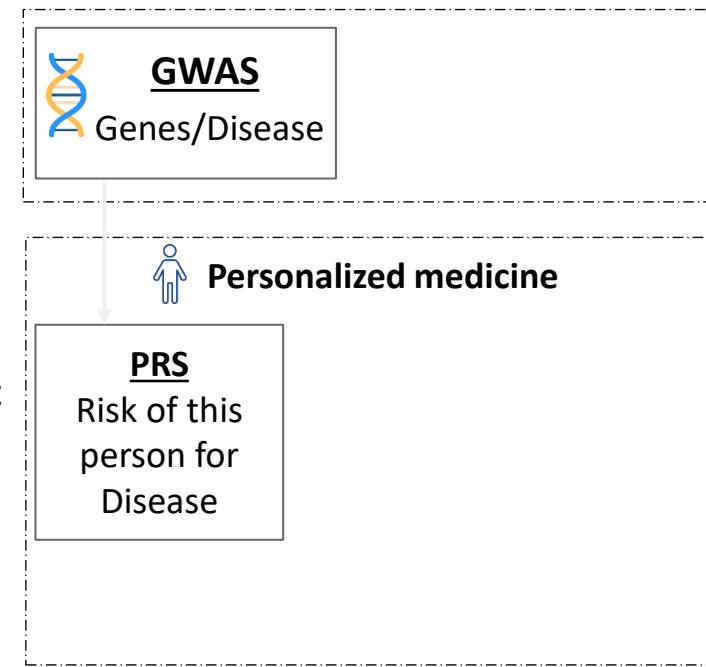
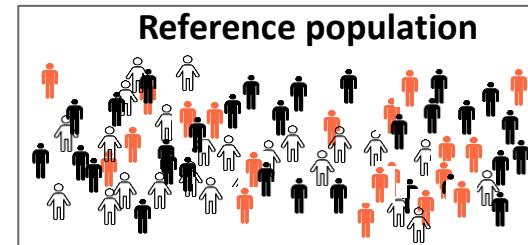
Those are known as
Genome Wide
Association Studies, or
GWAS



Resulting models can be used to predict the risk of a given disease in individuals

Based on the GWAS, a person's gene expression is used to calculate a polygenic risk score for a disease

PRS: Polygenic Risk Scores



Zhao among others adapted that methodology to neuroimaging

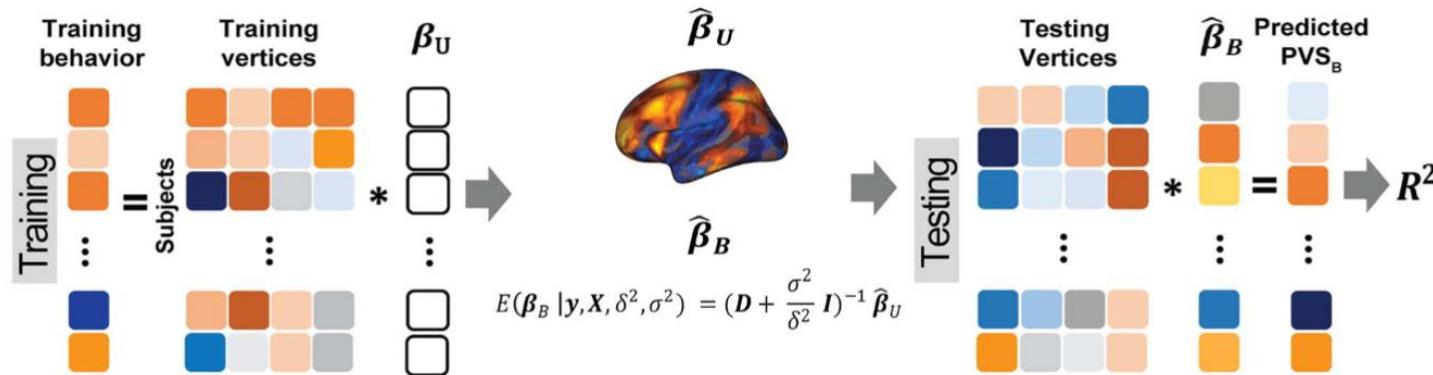


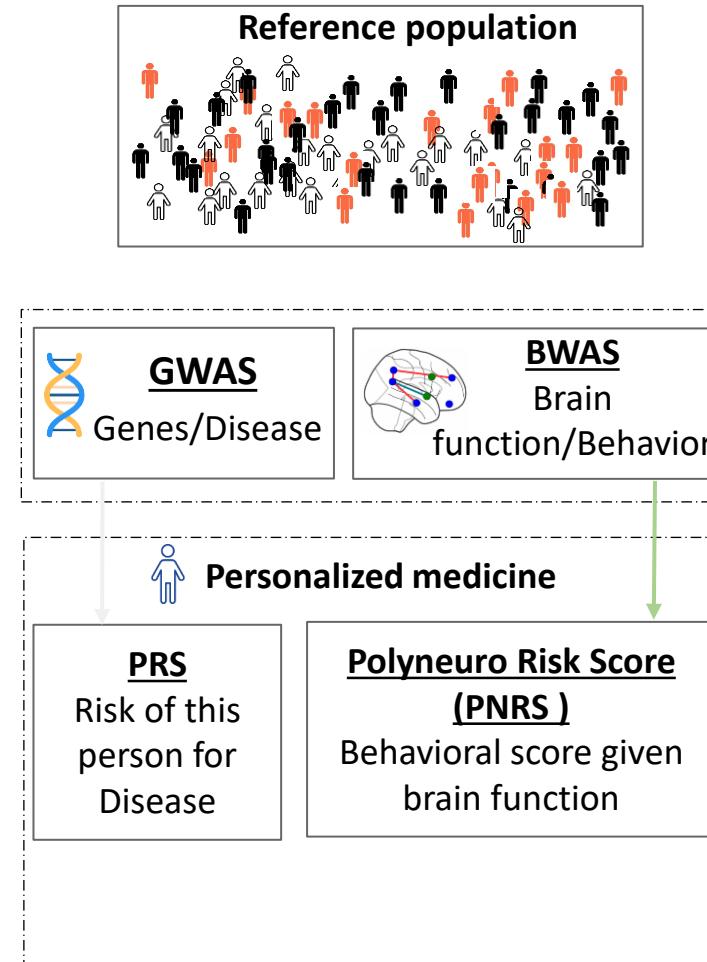
Figure 1. Overview of the PVS_B and the PVS_U algorithms. Ten-fold cross-validation was performed to obtain a PVS_B for each individual. For each fold, mass univariate summary statistics, $\hat{\beta}_U$, were obtained from the training set which contained 90% of the complete sample. Posterior mean effect sizes at each vertex, $\hat{\beta}_B$, were approximated by multiplying the mass univariate beta estimates, $\hat{\beta}_U$, by the inverse of the correlation structure of the brain, D , and a shrinkage factor that accounts for the number of vertices, V , and the total signal of the brain-behavior association. The PVS_B was subsequently calculated for the test set participants by multiplying their imaging phenotype with the $\hat{\beta}_B$. Simulations were conducted at three levels of total explainable signal, six levels of study sample size, and four levels of proportion of non-null vertices, yielding 60 instantiations of simulation conditions with 100 iterations per condition.

Zhao, Weiqi, Clare E. Palmer, Wesley K. Thompson, Bader Chaarani, Hugh P. Garavan, B. J. Casey, Terry L. Jernigan, Anders M. Dale, and Chun Chieh Fan. 2020. “Individual Differences in Cognitive Performance Are Better Predicted by Global Rather Than Localized BOLD Activity Patterns Across the Cortex.” *Cerebral Cortex* 31 (3): 1478–88.

We are using the same approach

Brain-Wide Association Studies (BWAS)| PolyNeuro Risk Scores (PNRS)

We assume that behavioral traits emerge from the cumulative effect of functional motifs distributed globally across the brain

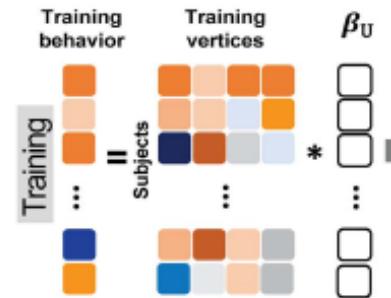
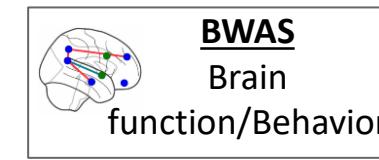
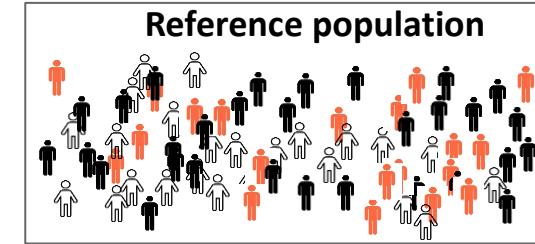


This is a two-step process:

1st, a Brain-Wide Association is estimated using a large reference sample

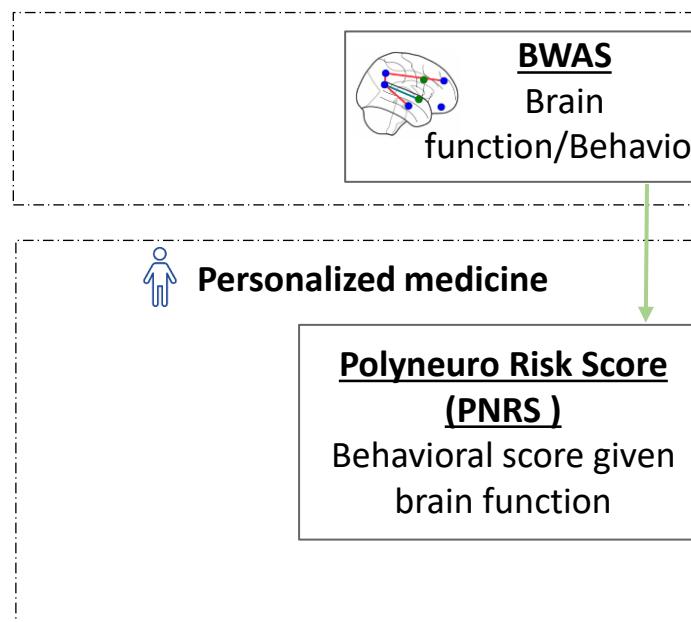
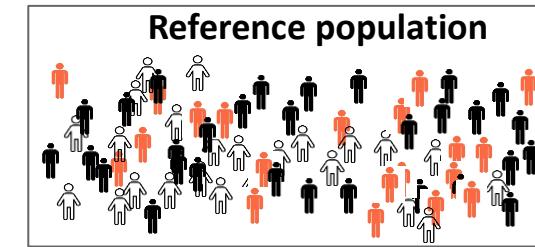
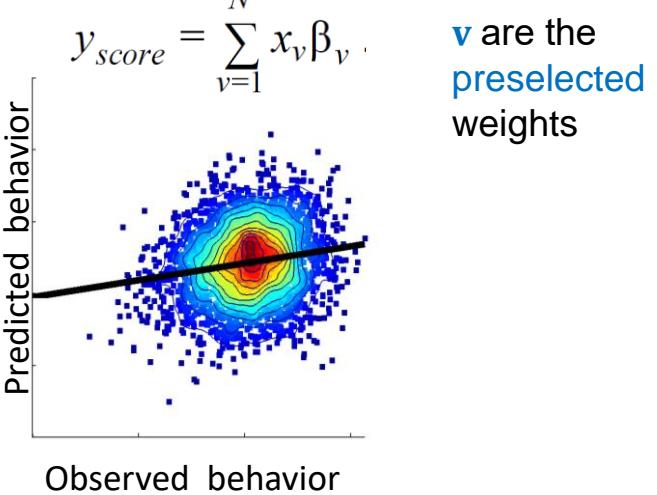
Massive Univariate models are fit to relate functional connectivity to behavior

Models are combined to estimate the beta-weights of the BWAS



$$\hat{y}_v = x_v \beta_v + \text{Covariate}_1 \beta_{v,1} + \text{Covariate}_2 \beta_{v,2} + \dots,$$

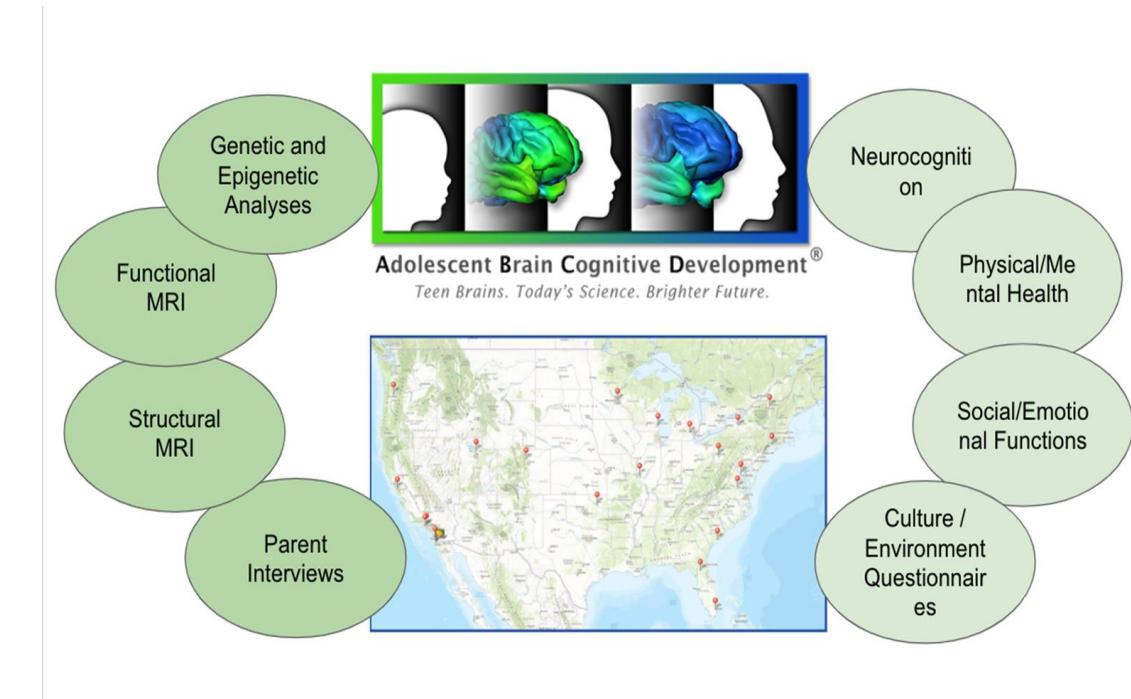
2nd, resulting models are **selectively combined** to estimate “behavioral” risk scores in individuals (PolyNeuro Risk Score, PNRS)



Example: Finding associations between functional connectivity and cognitive ability

Dataset: ABCD

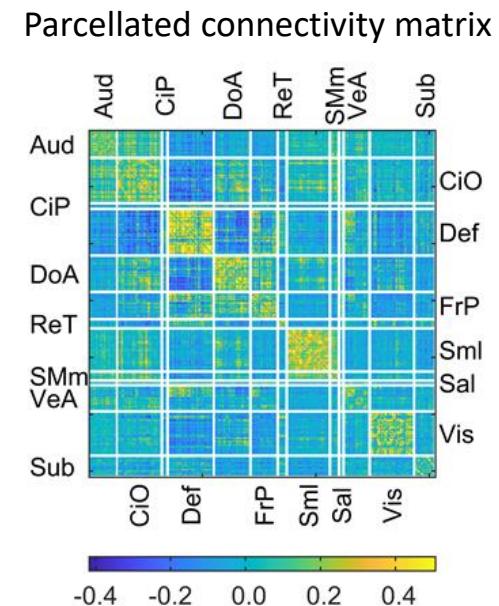
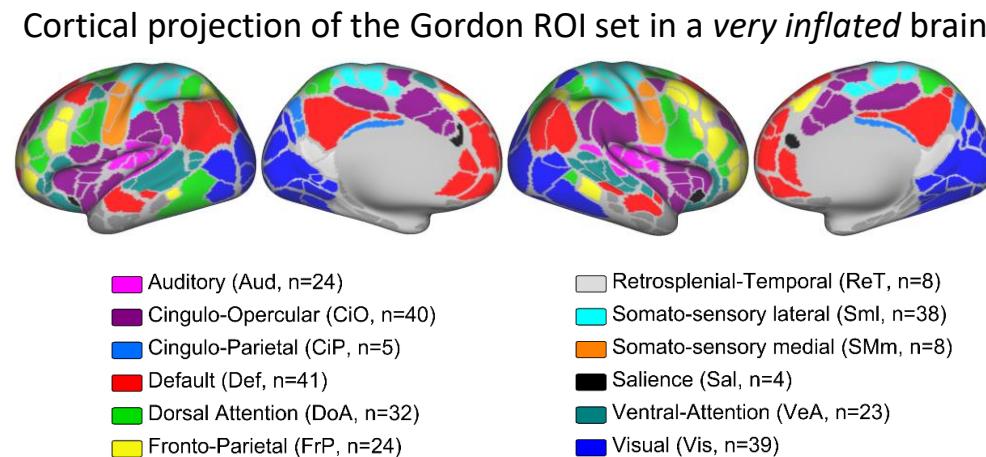
- ABCD (N= 11,877)
 - Data split in 2 halves (5,786 each)
ABCD Reproducible Matched Samples (ARMS [1])
- Covariates
 - site, gender, combined race, latin, highest parent education, interview age
- Motion censoring
 - Frame displacement <= 0.2
 - Time: 8 minutes
- Surviving participants
 - ARMS-1: 3,383
 - ARMS-2: 3,286



Brain features: Resting-State Functional Connectivity

For each participant

- Parcellated functional connectivity data using Gordon's ROI set [2]
 - 352 ROIs
 - 333 cortical areas + 19 subcortical
 - 14 functional networks
- **Resulting number of connections (Brain features)**
 - **61,776 connections**
 - **Grouped in 105 functional network pairs**
 - Aud-Aud
 - Aud –DoA
 - ...
 - Sub-Sub



Behavior: Cognitive Ability

- PCA on neurocognitive assessments [3]
 - NIH toolbox (Picture Vocabulary; Flanker Test; List Sort Working Memory Task; Dimensional Change Card Sort Task; Pattern Comparison Processing Speed Task; Picture Sequence Memory Task; Oral Reading Test)
 - Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Task;
 - Little Man Task percent correct.
- Top 3 components explained most of the observed variance
 - **Cognitive ability: 21.1%**
 - Oral Reading, Picture Vocabulary, and List Sort Working Memory tasks
 - Executive function: 20.4%
 - Learning and memory: 18.05

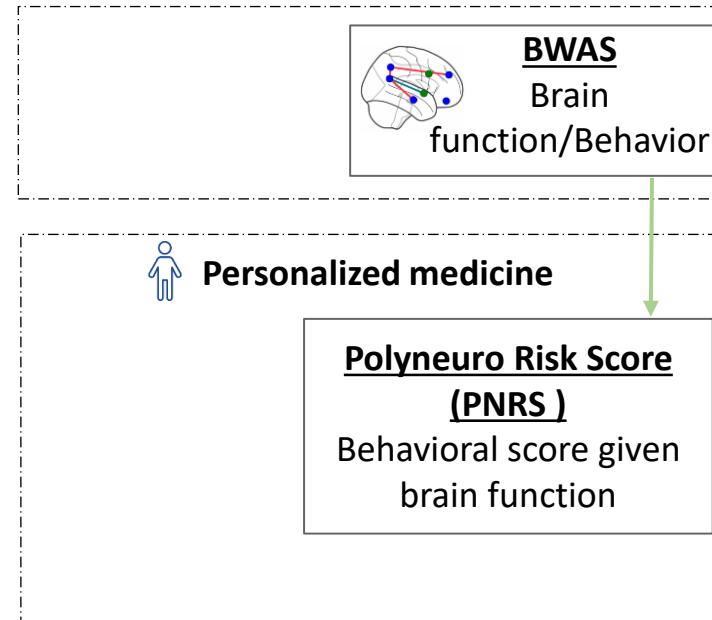
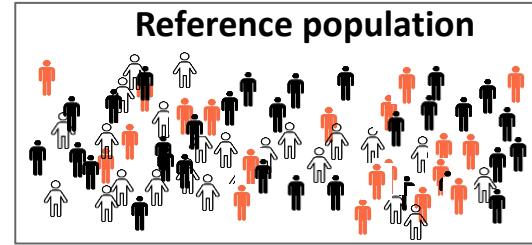
Table 3

Varimax Rotated Loadings for Three-Factor Model.

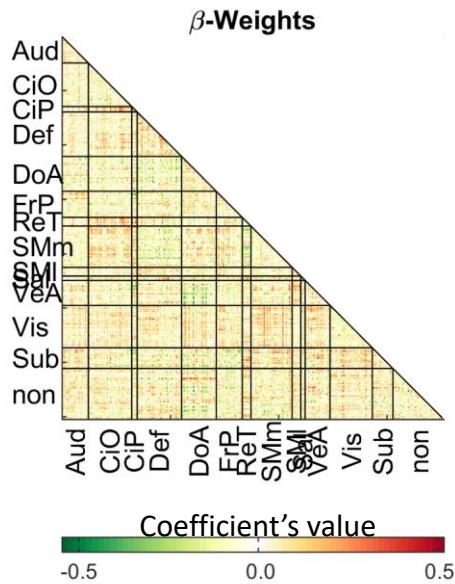
	PC1			PC2			PC3		
	.025	0.50	.975	.025	0.50	.975	.025	0.50	.975
Pic Vocab	0.706	0.754	0.799	0.029	0.065	0.102	0.133	0.19	0.252
Flanker	0.161	0.213	0.26	0.668	0.712	0.754	0.013	0.067	0.119
List	0.4	0.471	0.538	0.105	0.148	0.195	0.416	0.493	0.563
Card Sort	0.163	0.205	0.252	0.668	0.71	0.751	0.184	0.232	0.287
Pattern	-0.029	0.015	0.055	0.771	0.813	0.85	0.039	0.085	0.135
Picture	-0.023	0.012	0.049	0.102	0.135	0.171	0.816	0.863	0.904
Reading	0.782	0.82	0.86	0.084	0.12	0.16	0.067	0.122	0.173
RAVLT	0.253	0.306	0.364	0.085	0.125	0.163	0.663	0.712	0.76
LMT	0.424	0.5	0.57	0.246	0.299	0.36	0.002	0.068	0.144

Pic Vocab = Toolbox Picture Vocabulary; Flanker = Toolbox Flanker Test; List Sort = Toolbox List Sort Working Memory Task; Card Sort = Dimensional Change Card Sort Task; Pattern = Toolbox Pattern Comparison Processing Speed Task; Picture = Toolbox Picture Sequence Memory Task; Reading = Toolbox Oral Reading Test; RAVLT = Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Task, total correct; LMT = Little Man Task percent correct. For Toolbox measures, uncorrected scores were entered into the analysis. Loadings above 0.40 are highlighted; this is an arbitrary cutoff intended solely to assist with simple description of the factors, and does not enter into follow-up analyses in any fashion. Quantiles are from the posterior draws of the MCMC algorithm for each factor loading after varimax rotation and give the middle 95% of the distribution of the loadings (i.e., 95% posterior credible intervals).

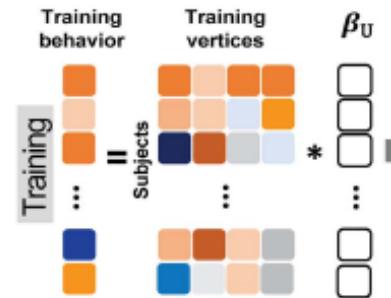
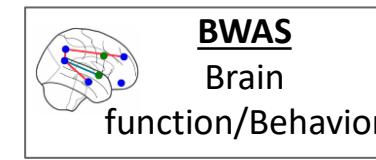
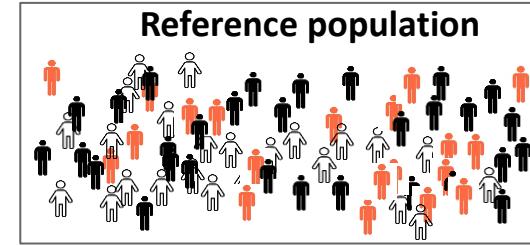
- In this example we first obtained a BWAS using data from the first half of the ABCD set
- We controlled for
 - site,
 - gender,
 - combined race,
 - latin
 - highest parent education
 - interview age



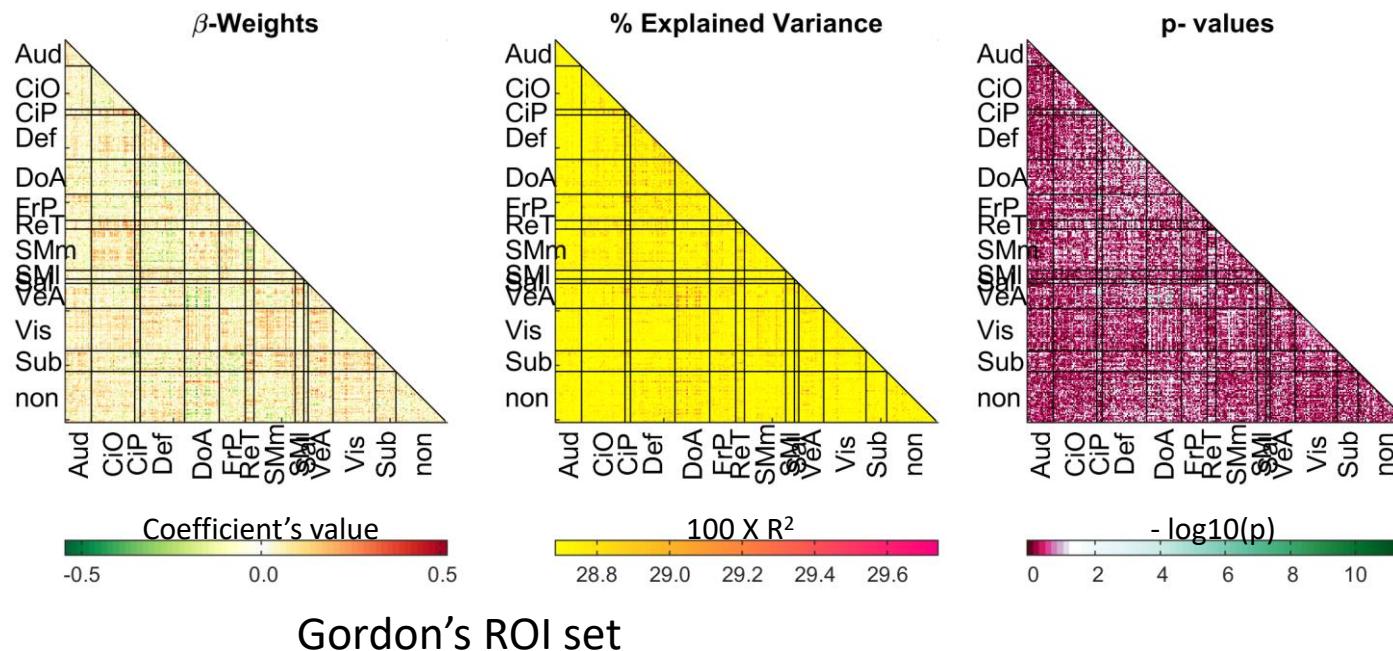
The first result of the BWAS corresponds to the β -weights per connection



Those weights ($N=61,776$)
can be grouped per
functional network pair

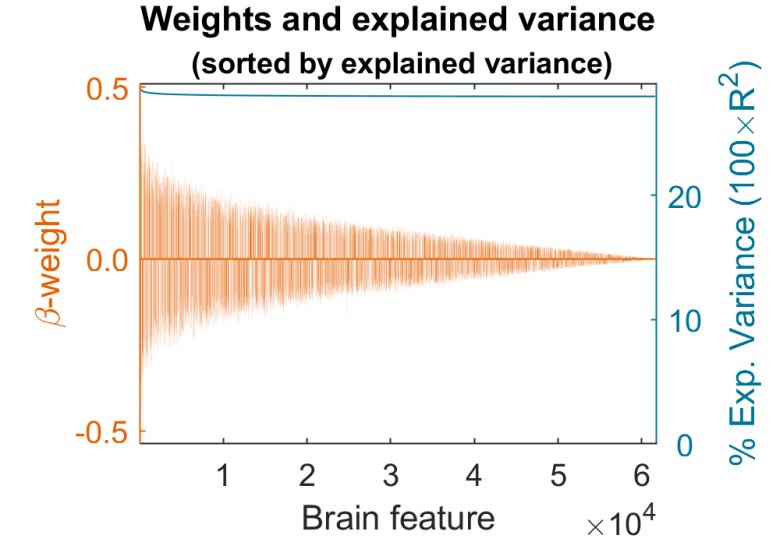
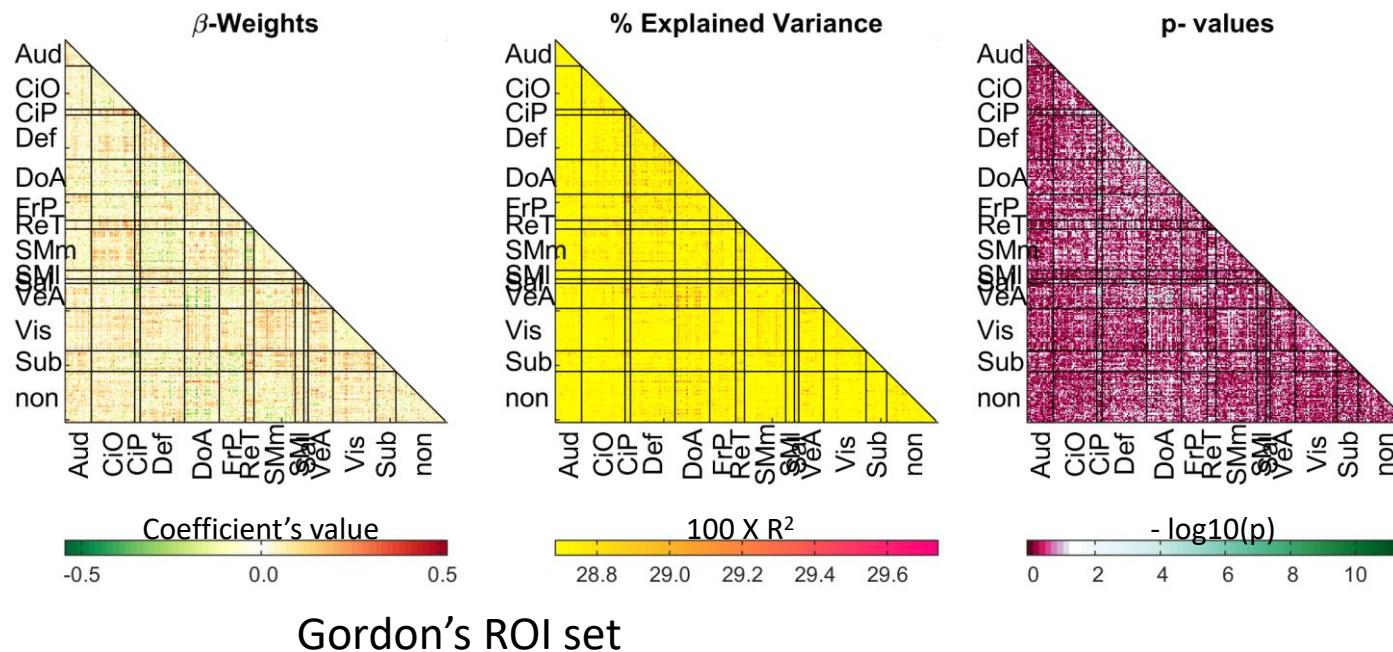


Each weight explains a given amount of **variance** in the training sample and has a corresponding ***p-value***



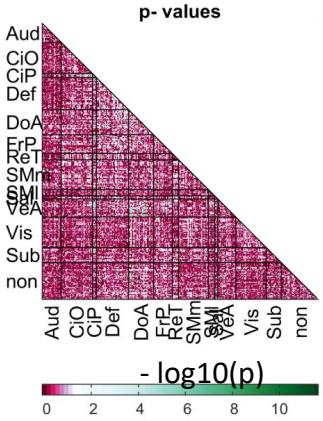
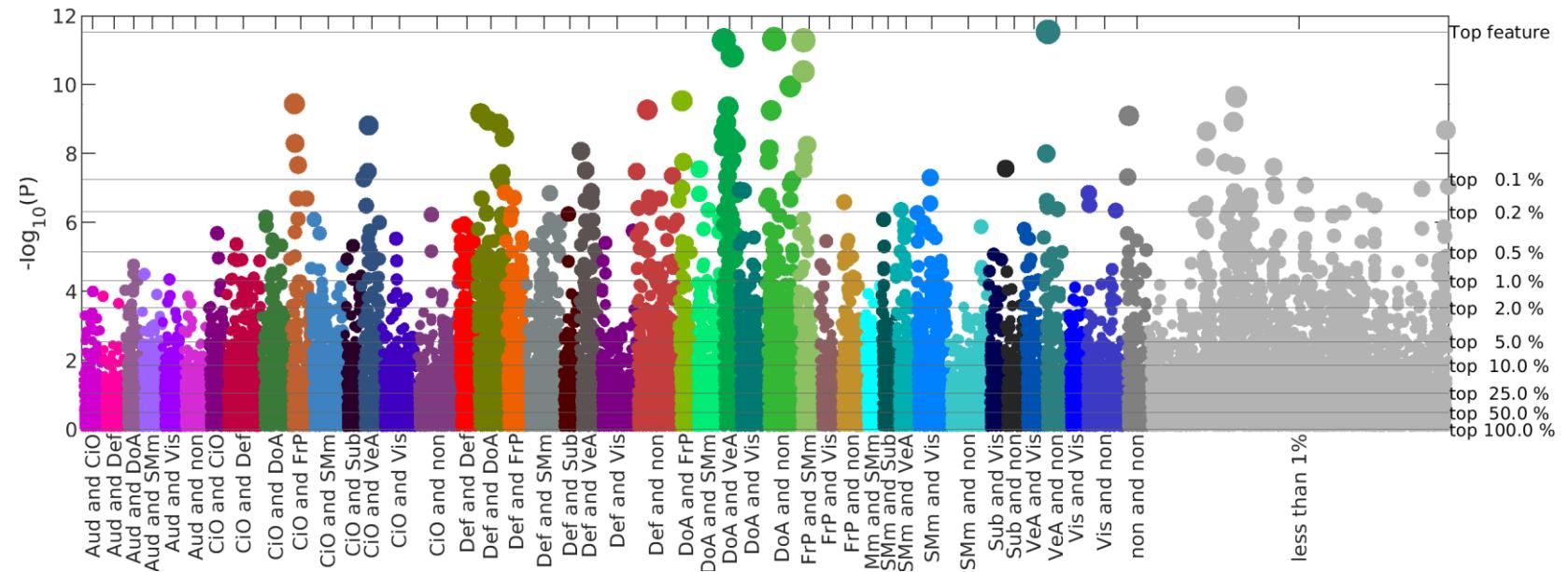
Visualization can be simplified by showing the weights and the explained variance in the same figure

Results can be summarized as follows



Strength of each connection can also be shown using Manhattan plots

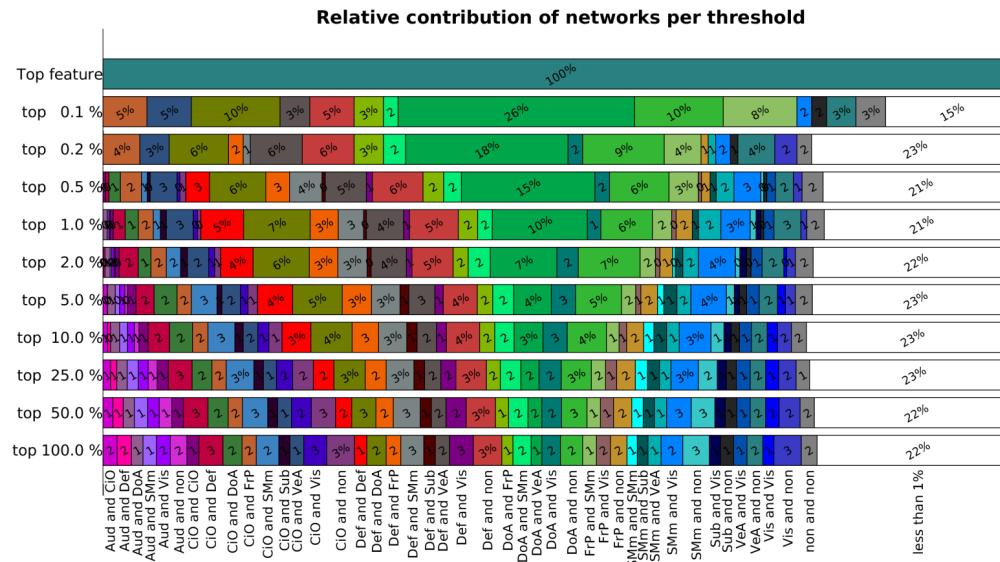
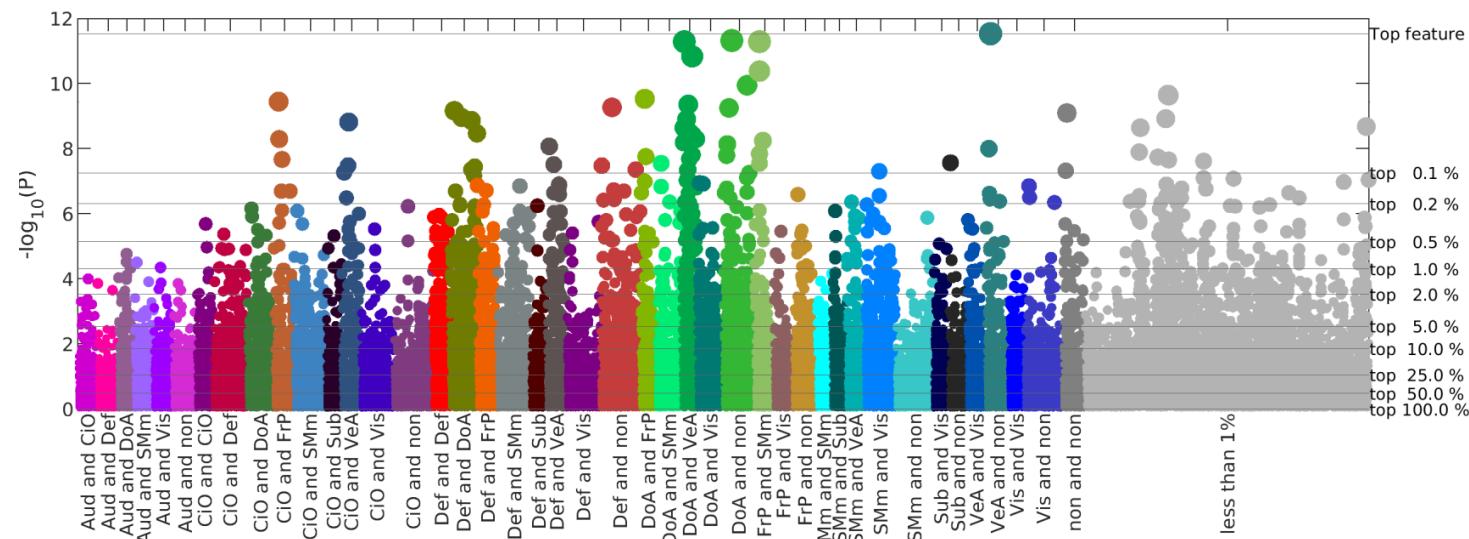
Connections are color-coded by functional network pair



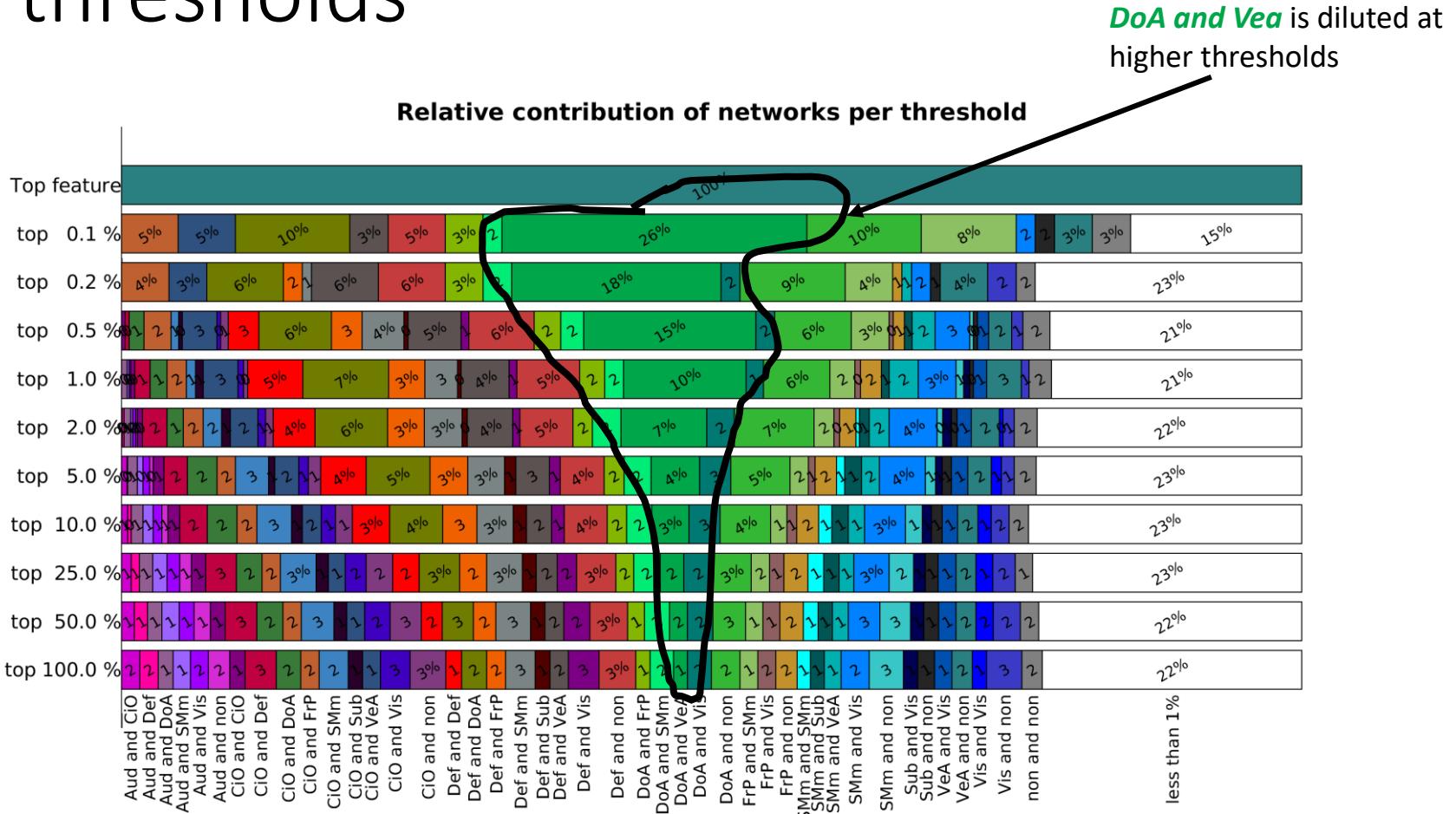
Horizontal lines indicate different thresholds based on p -values

We also have “Relative Contribution” Figures

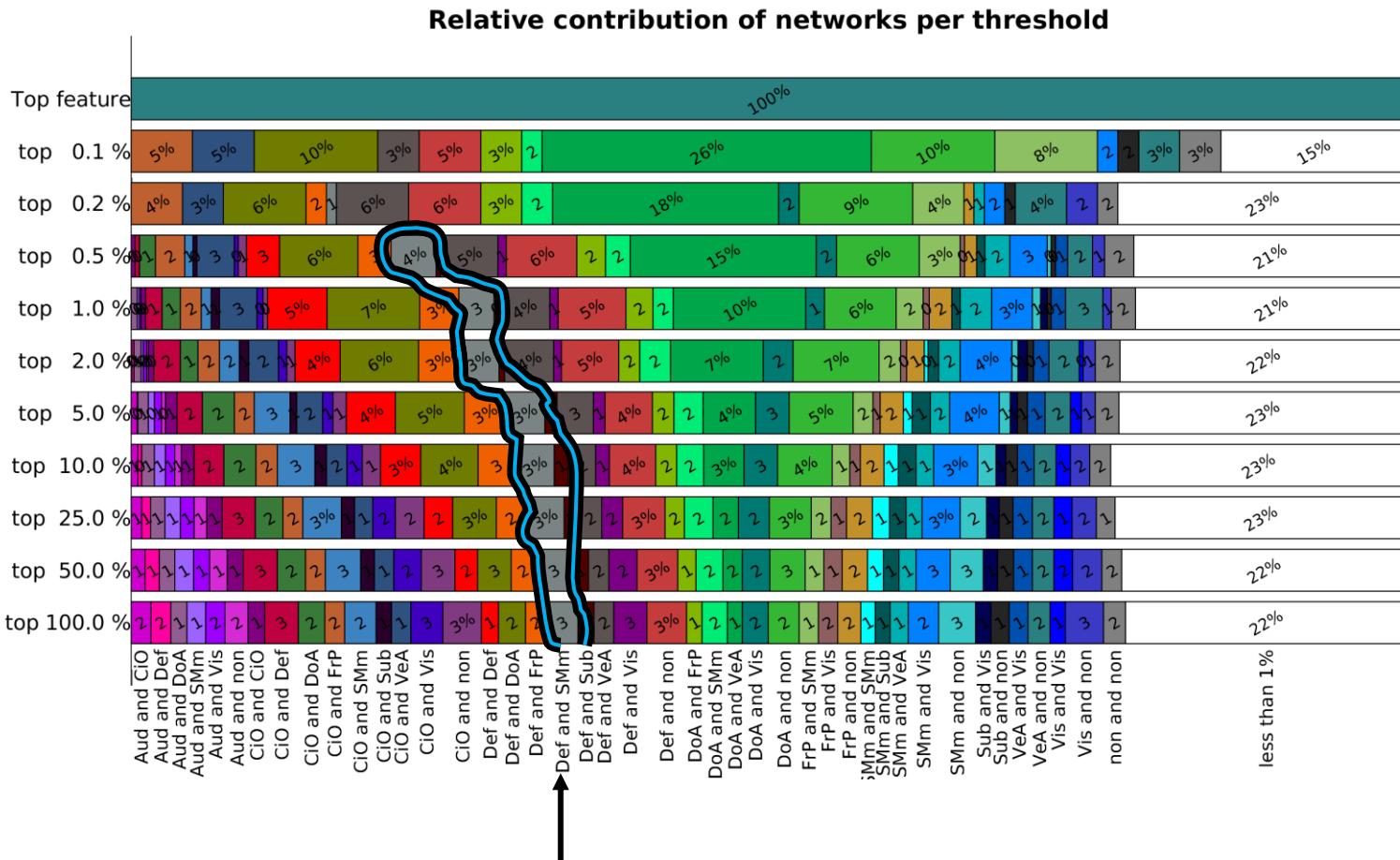
- There is one row per threshold
- Each block shows the relative contribution of each network per threshold
 - Calculated as $100 \times (\text{connections per network}) / \text{total count of connections at that threshold}$
- Blocks are color-coded by functional network pair



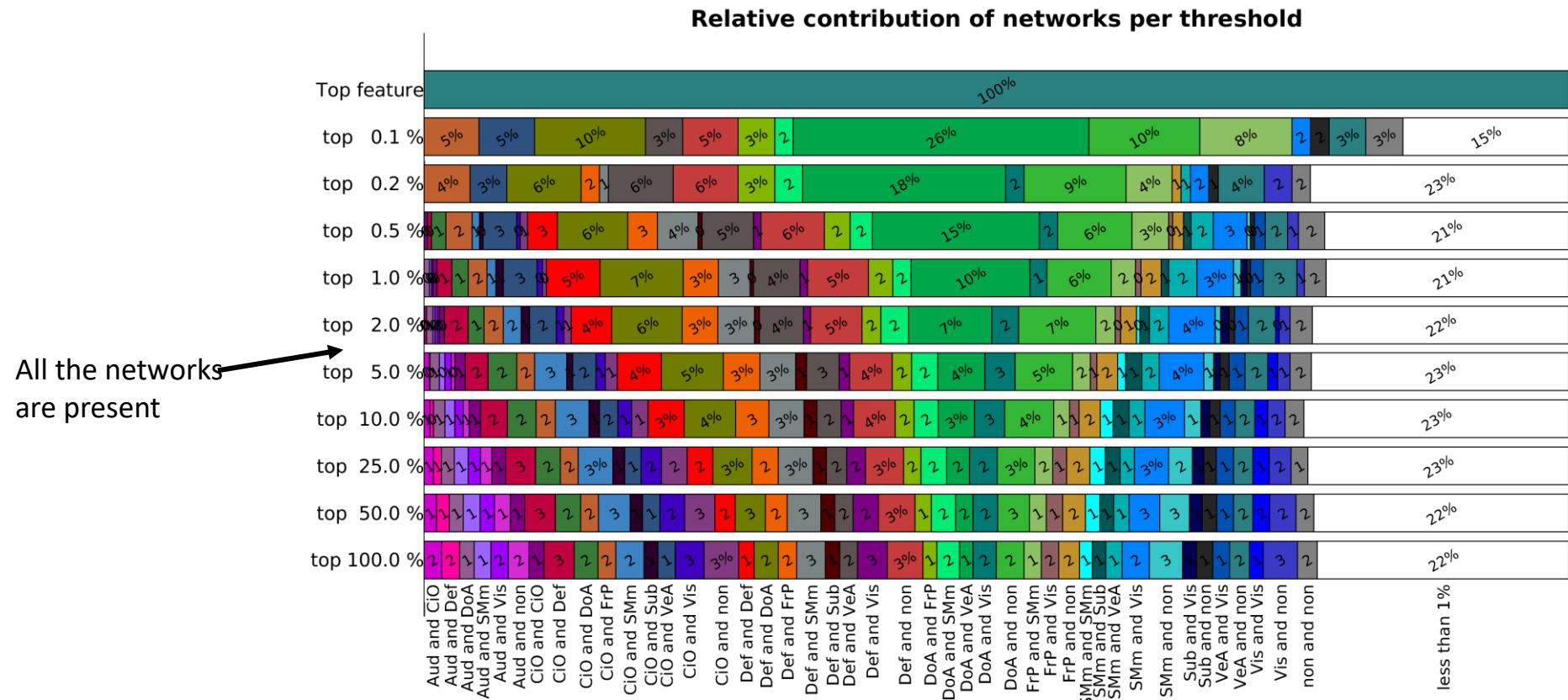
Relative Contribution Figures can help to visualize how stable the contribution of each network is across thresholds



In contrast, the relative contribution of *Def* and *SMm* (among others) is stable across thresholds



We can also identify at which threshold all the networks are present



Let's apply this!

Motivation

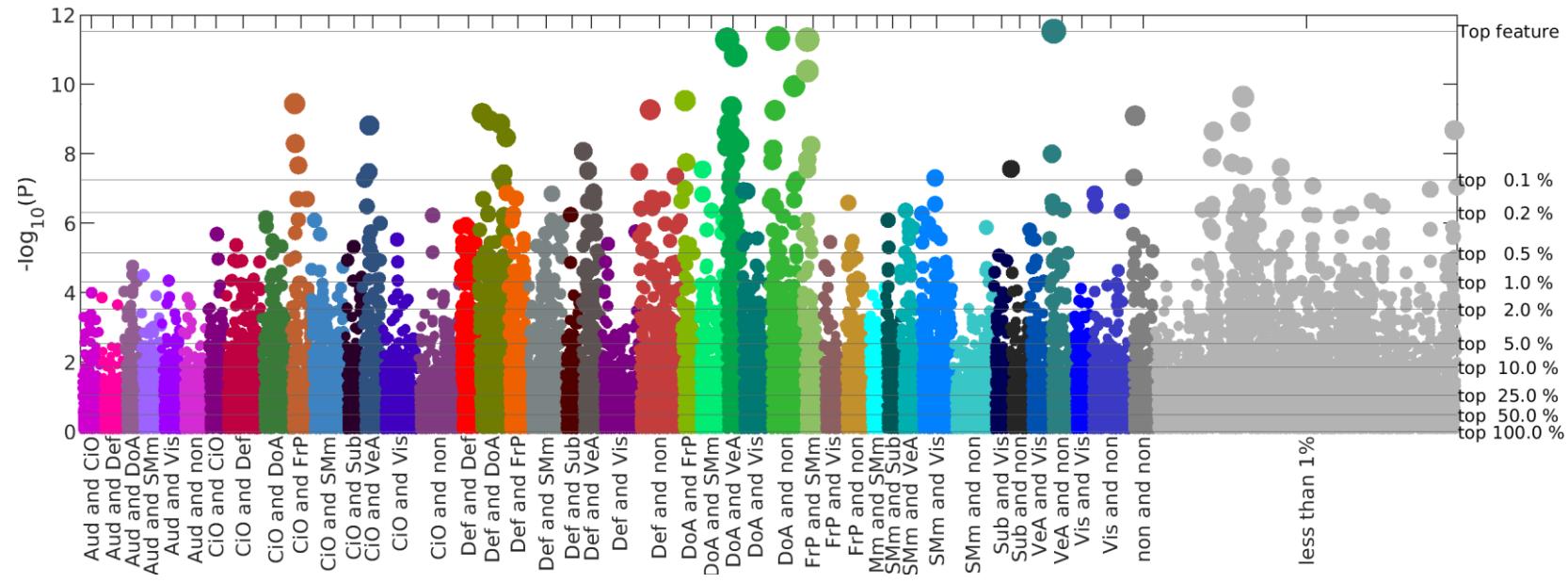
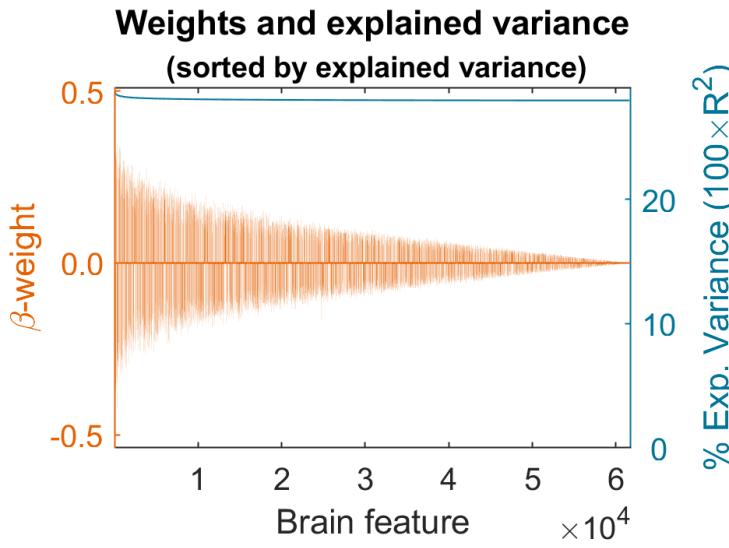
Description of the method

Using BWAS we can disambiguate between focal or globally distributed effects

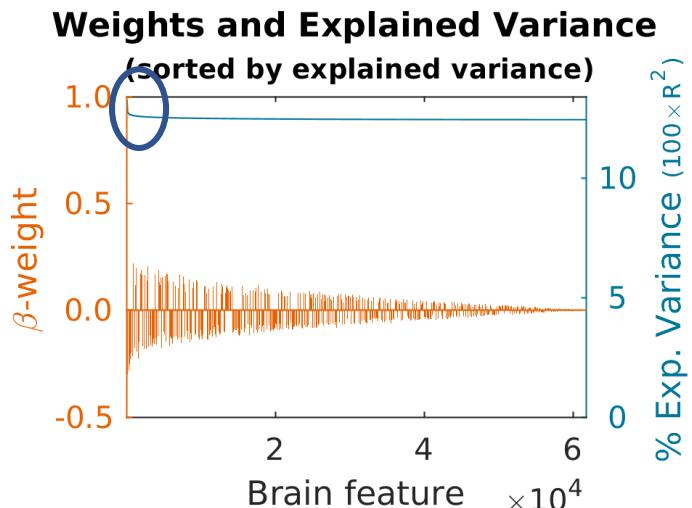
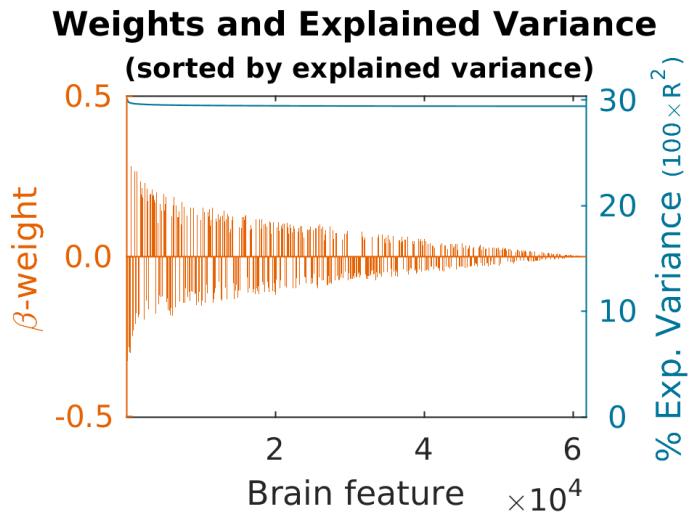
Detailed description of the figures and tables we use to validate every step of the method

Other potential applications and future directions

Manhattan-plots and Weights-and-Explained-variance figures can help with that (at least qualitatively)

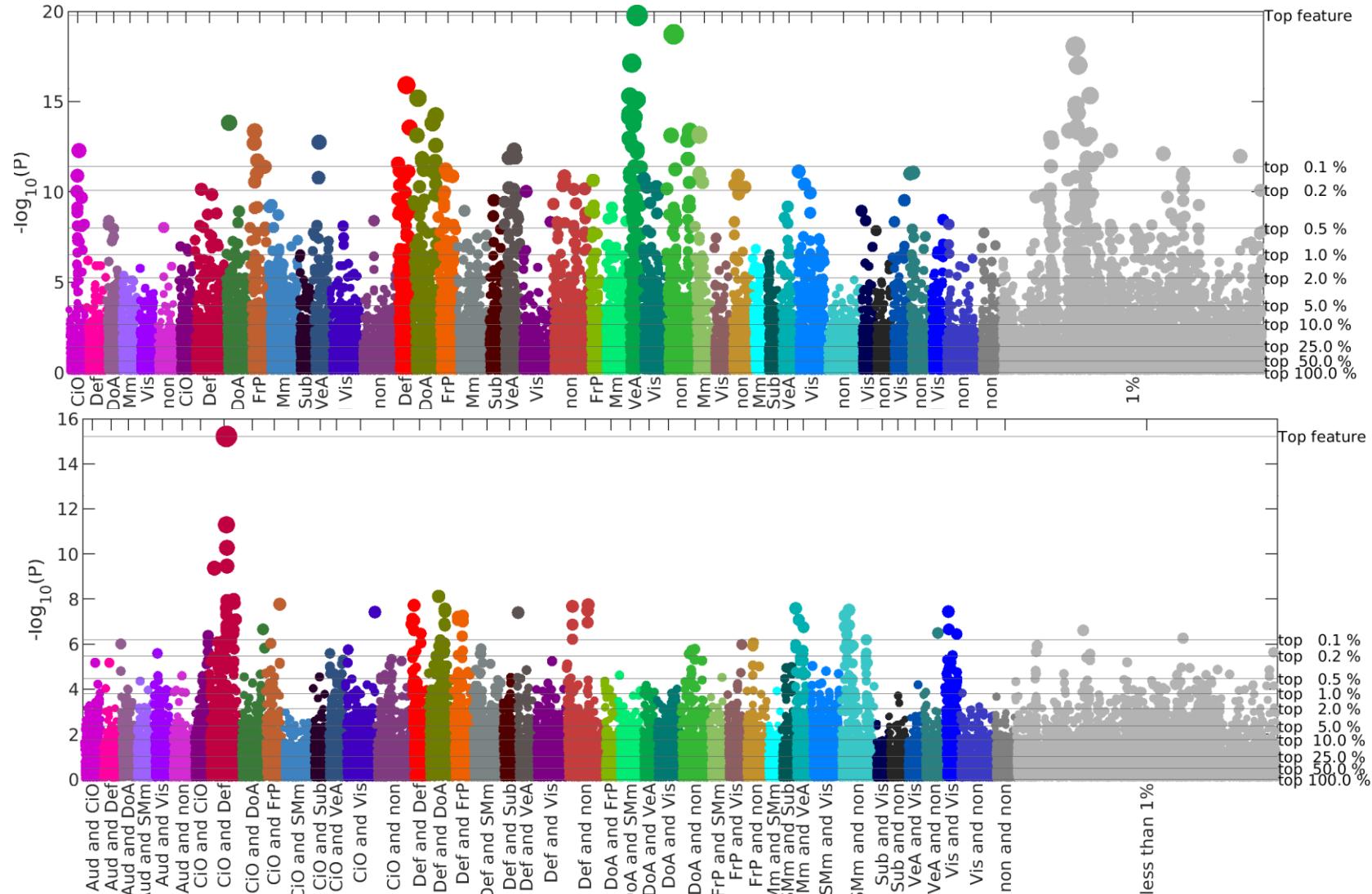
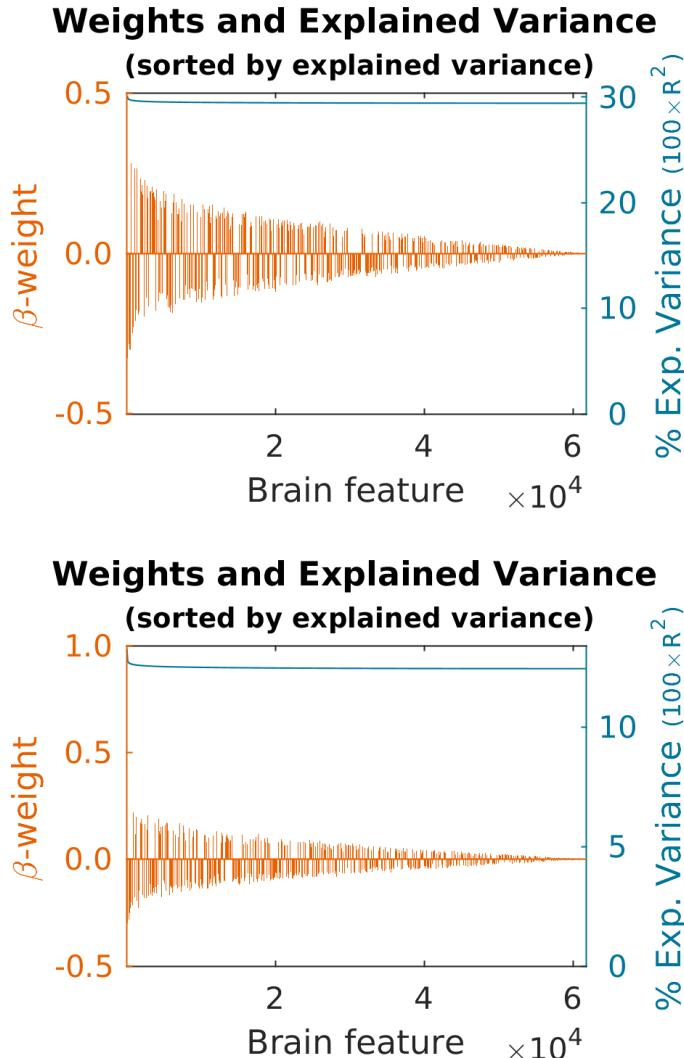


Compare the following results from two different BWAS

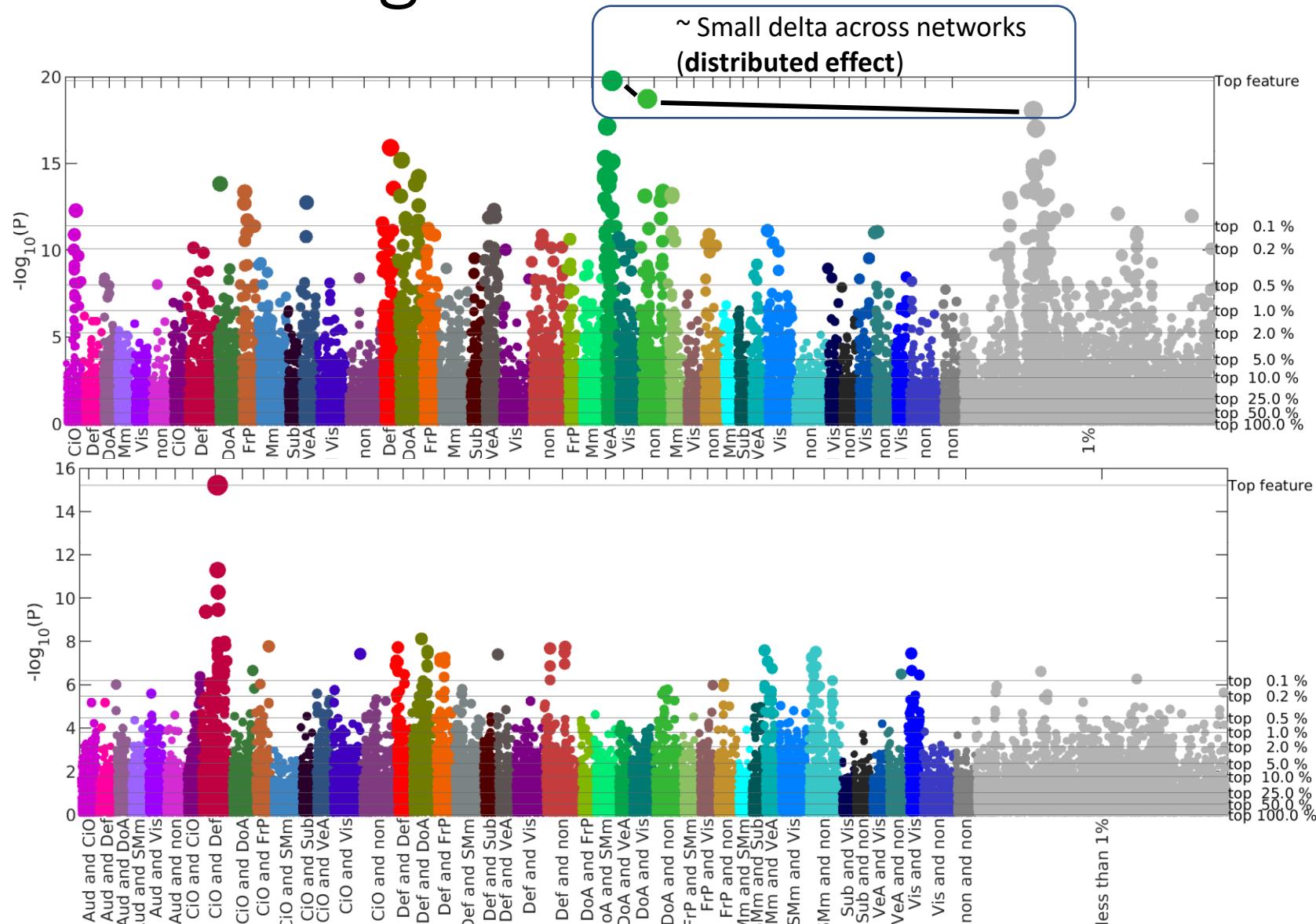
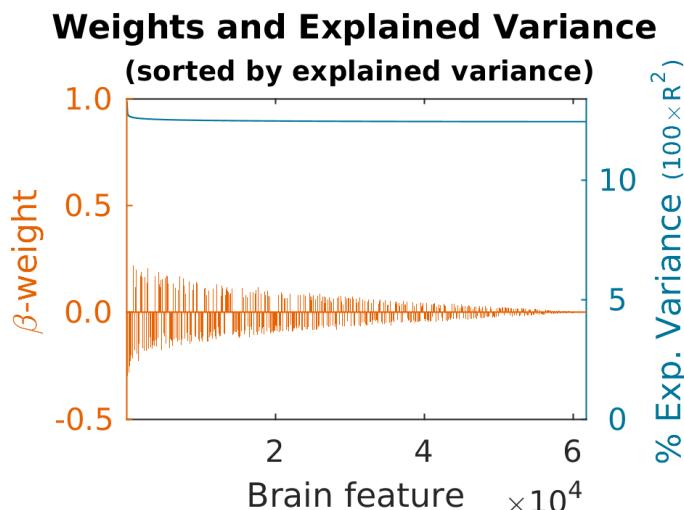
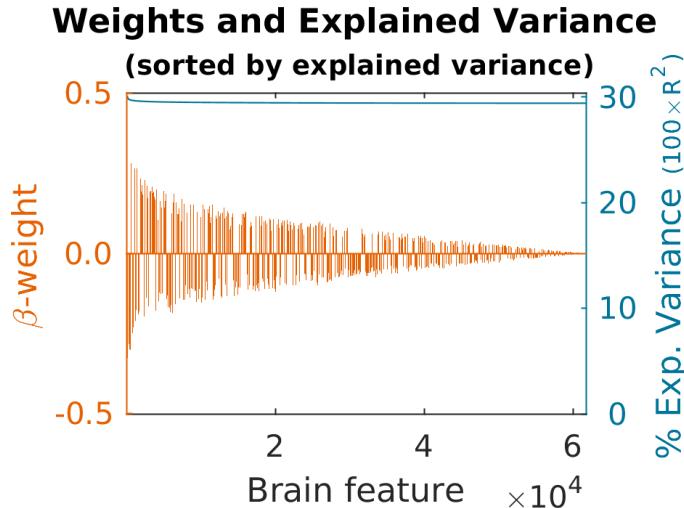


Bigger decay in predictive power, suggesting a more **focalized effect**

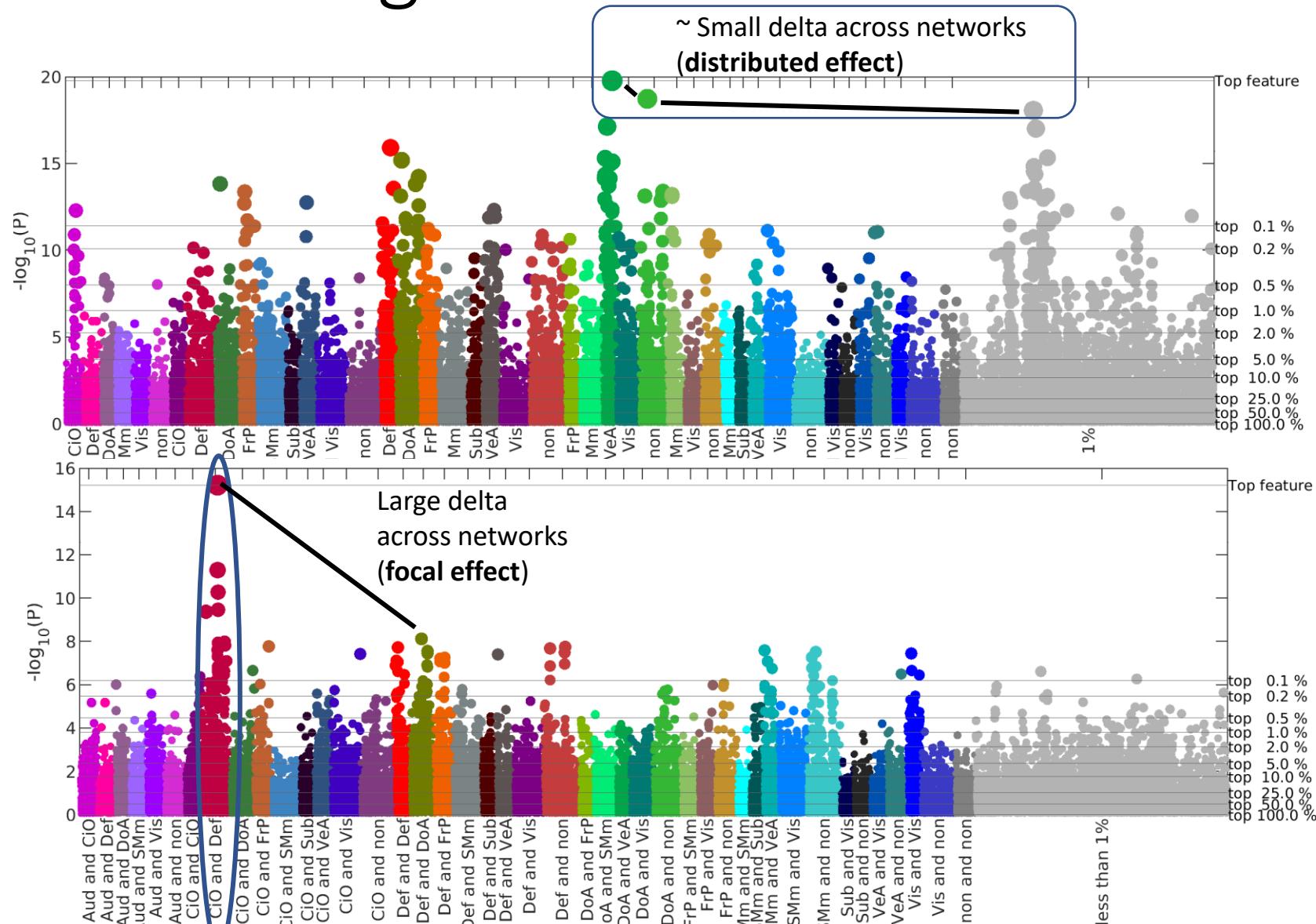
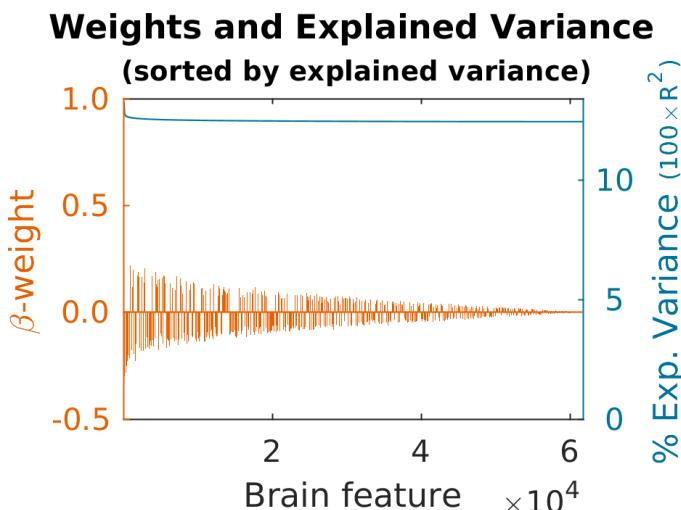
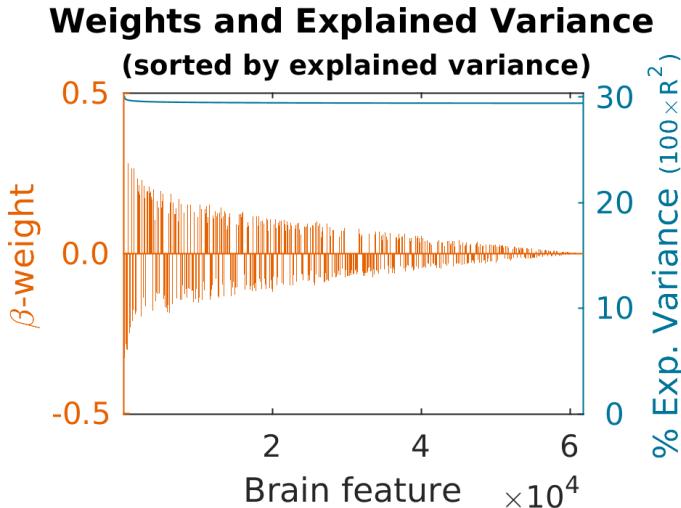
Height of the “towers” can also help to identify focalized versus global effects



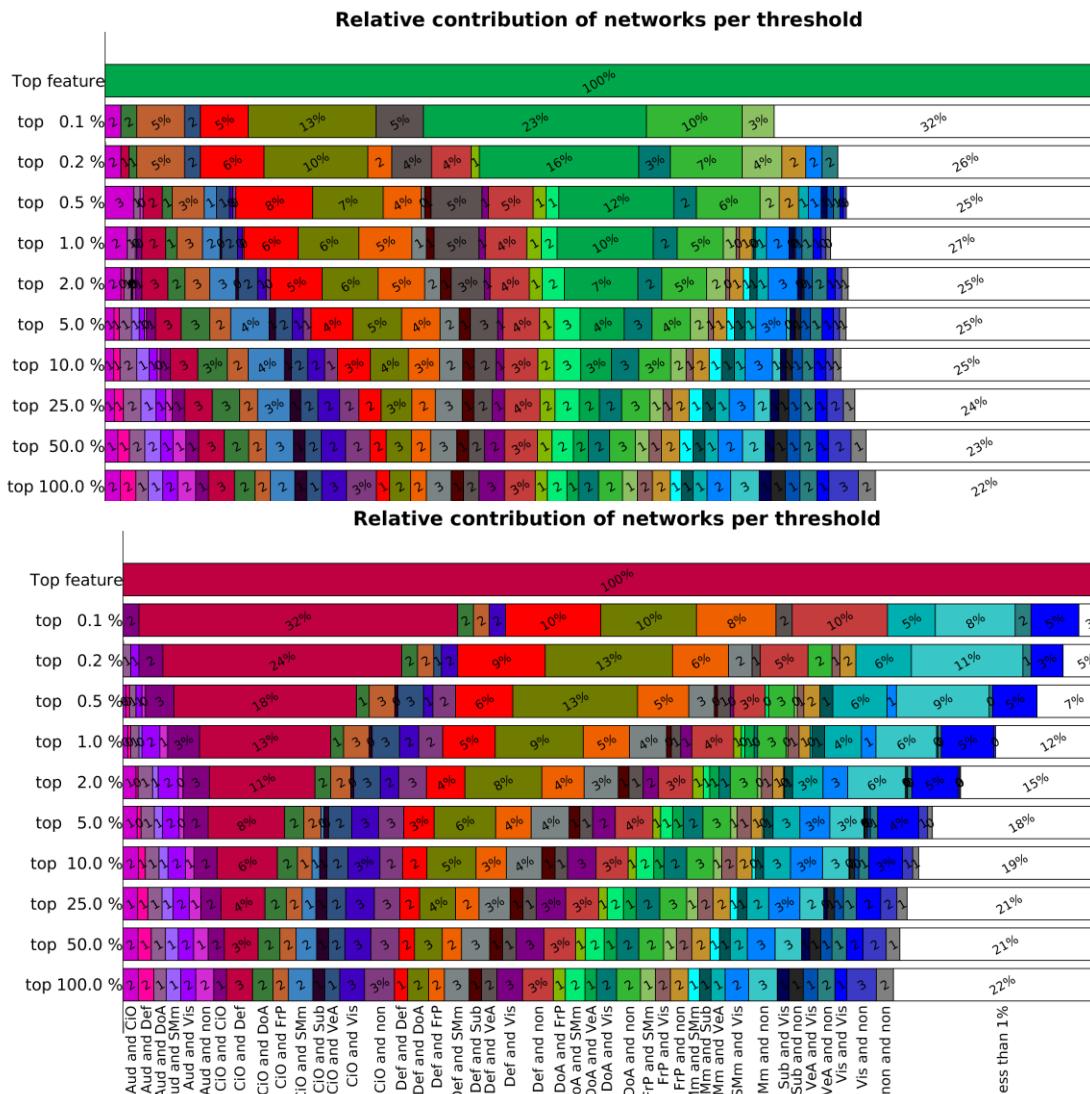
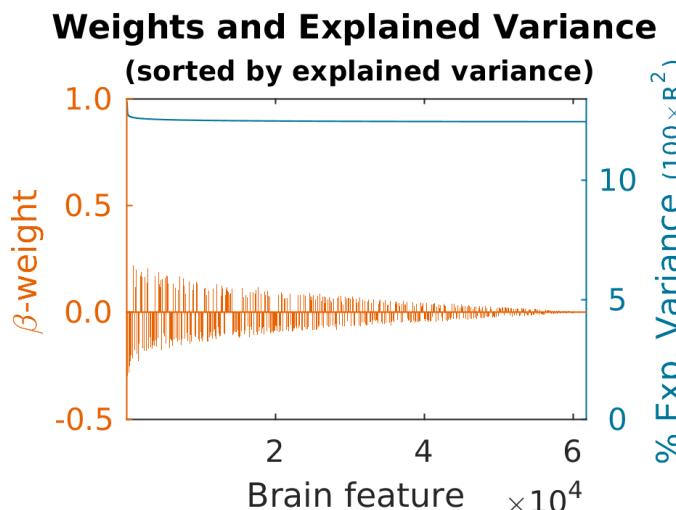
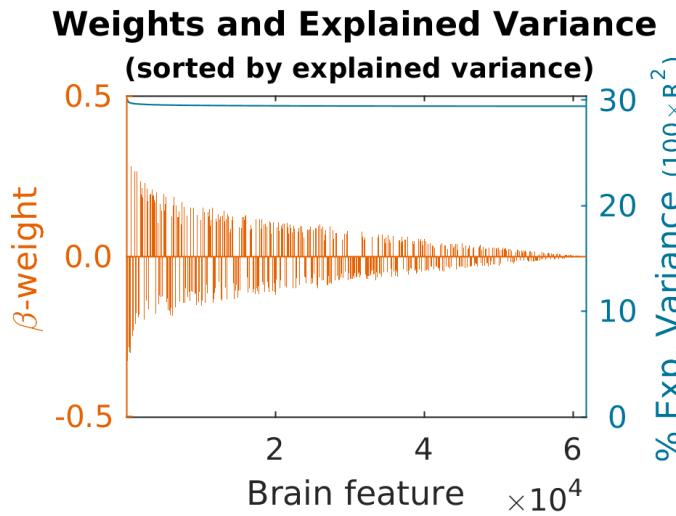
Height of the “towers” can also help to identify focalized versus global effects



Height of the “towers” can also help to identify focalized versus global effects



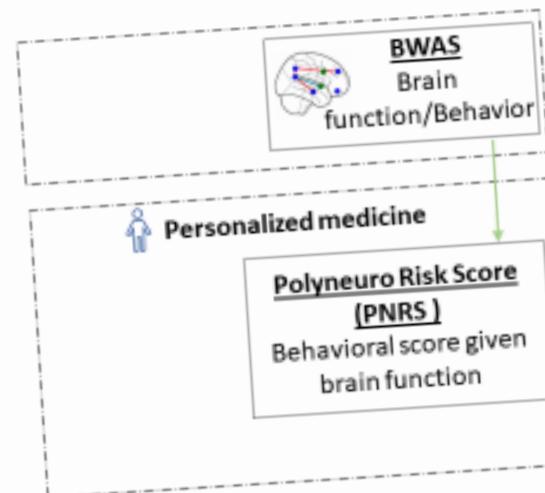
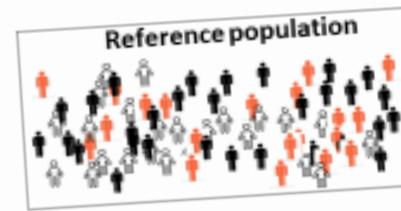
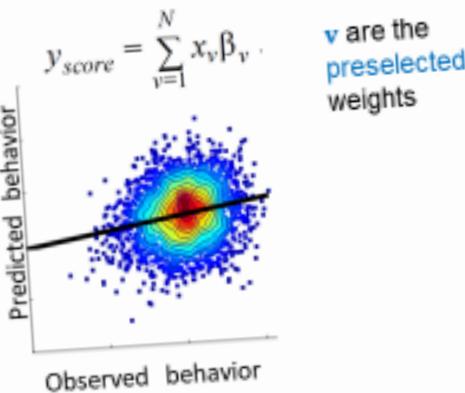
You can see how prominent each tower is at each threshold and how its relevance decays as more connections are added



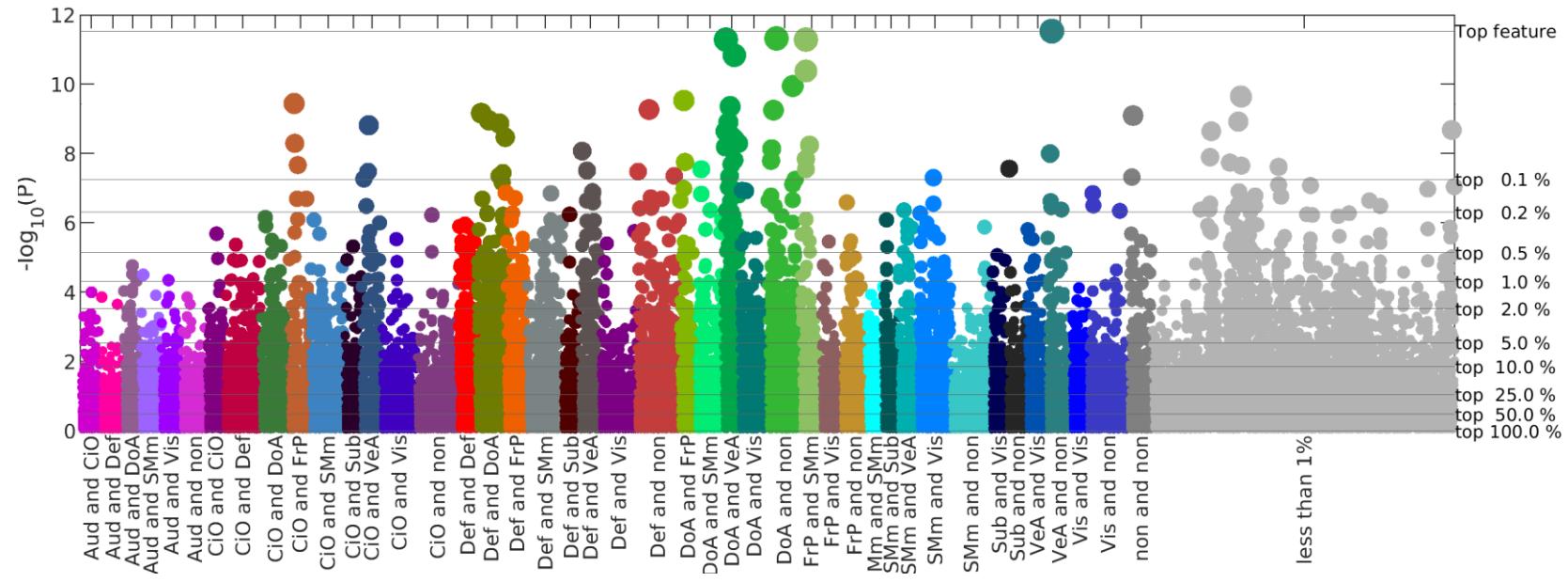
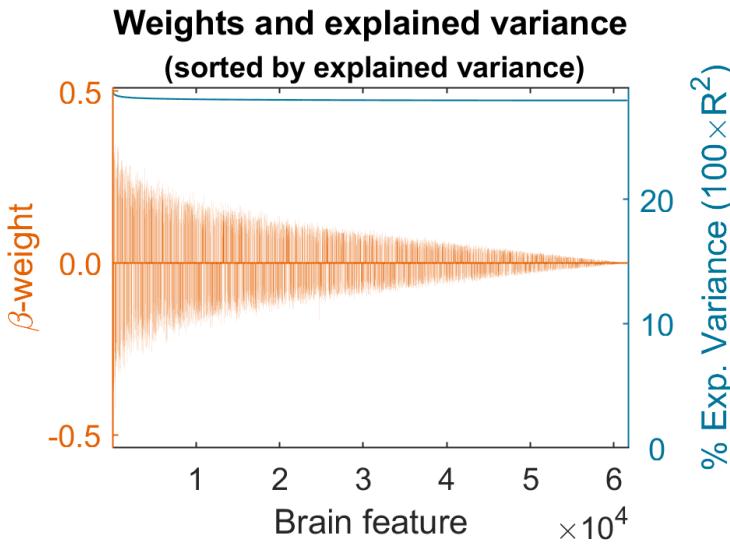
Now, let's move to the second step of the approach, which is predicting scores in an **independent sample**

Do you remember this slide?

2nd, resulting models are selectively combined to estimate “behavioral” risk scores in individuals (PolyNeuro Risk Score, PNRS)

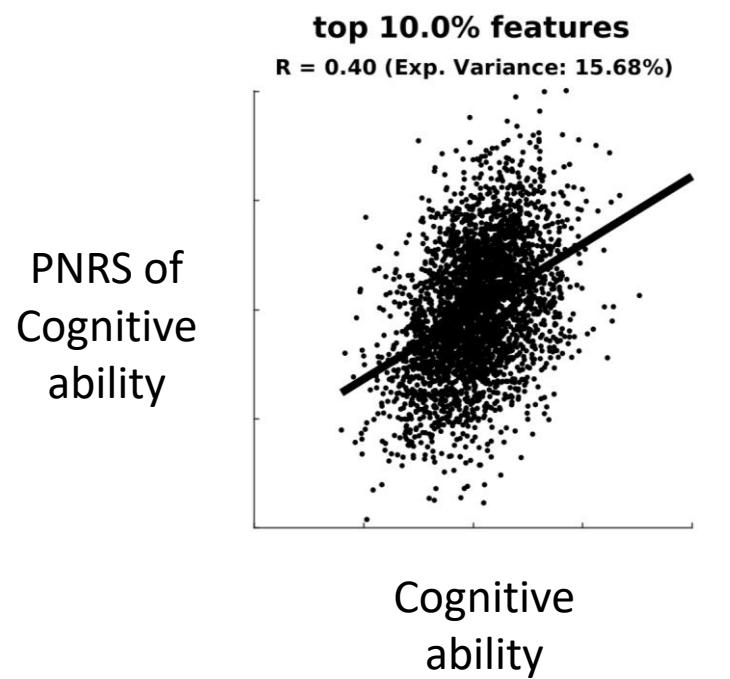


Beta-weights are selected by *top connections* (predictive power within the training sample) or by *networks*

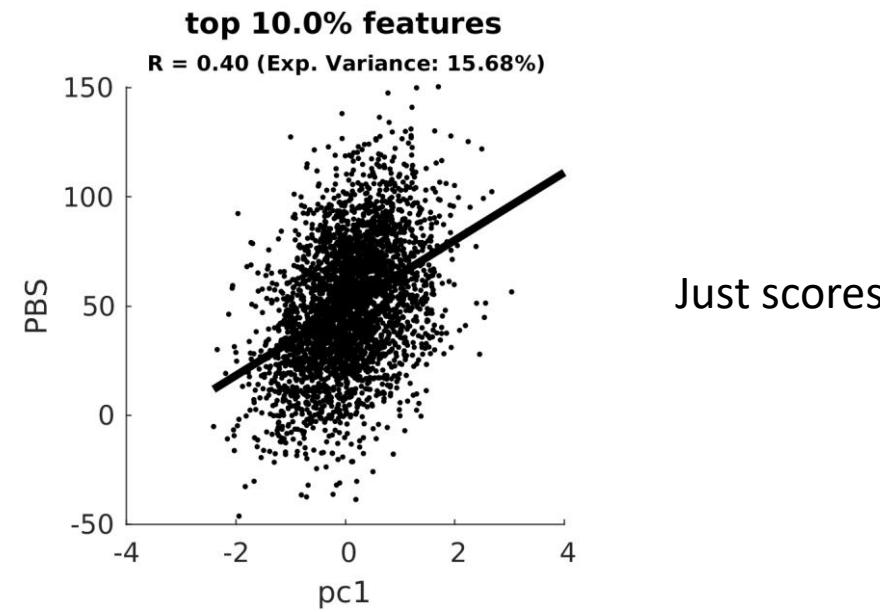


PNRS are calculated for each participant in the independent sample

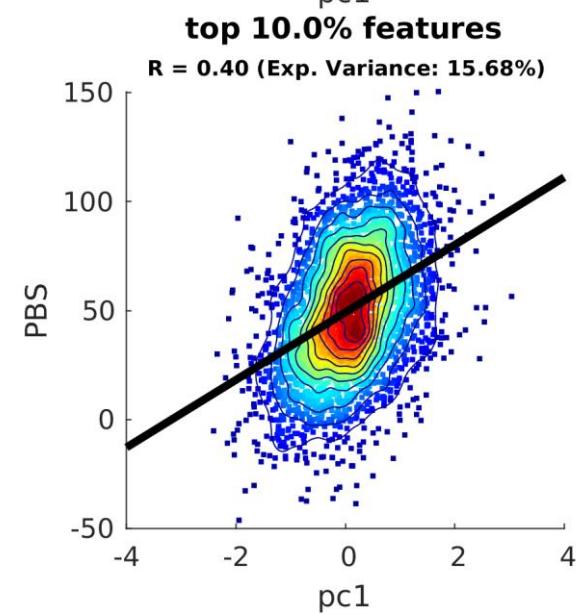
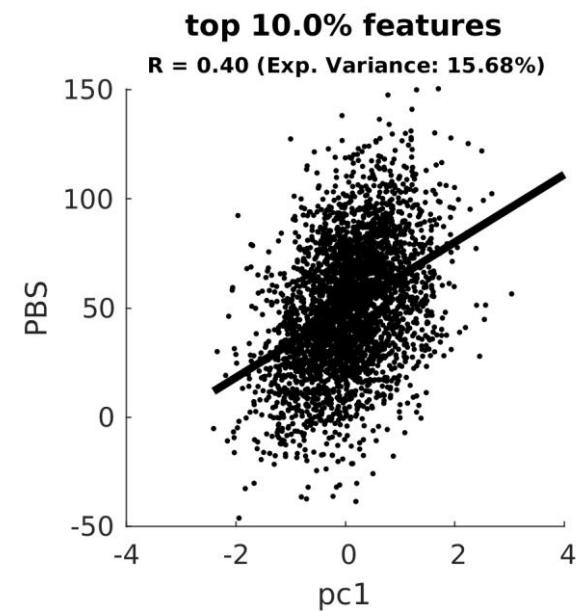
- For each threshold (or network), a PNRS is calculated for each participant
- Pearson's correlation is calculated between the PNRS and the corresponding score of cognitive ability



We generate scatter plots for each threshold

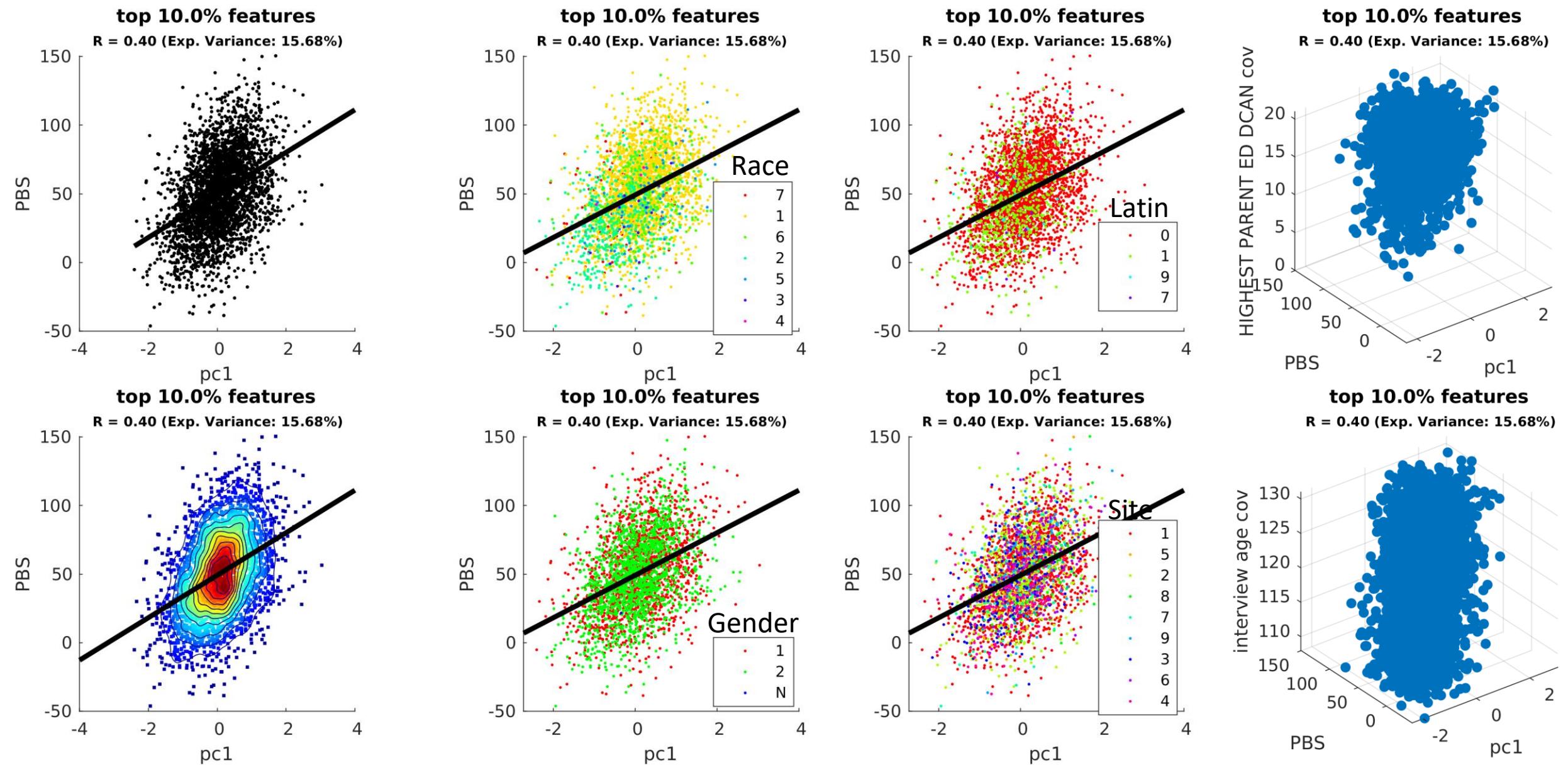


Showing a density map

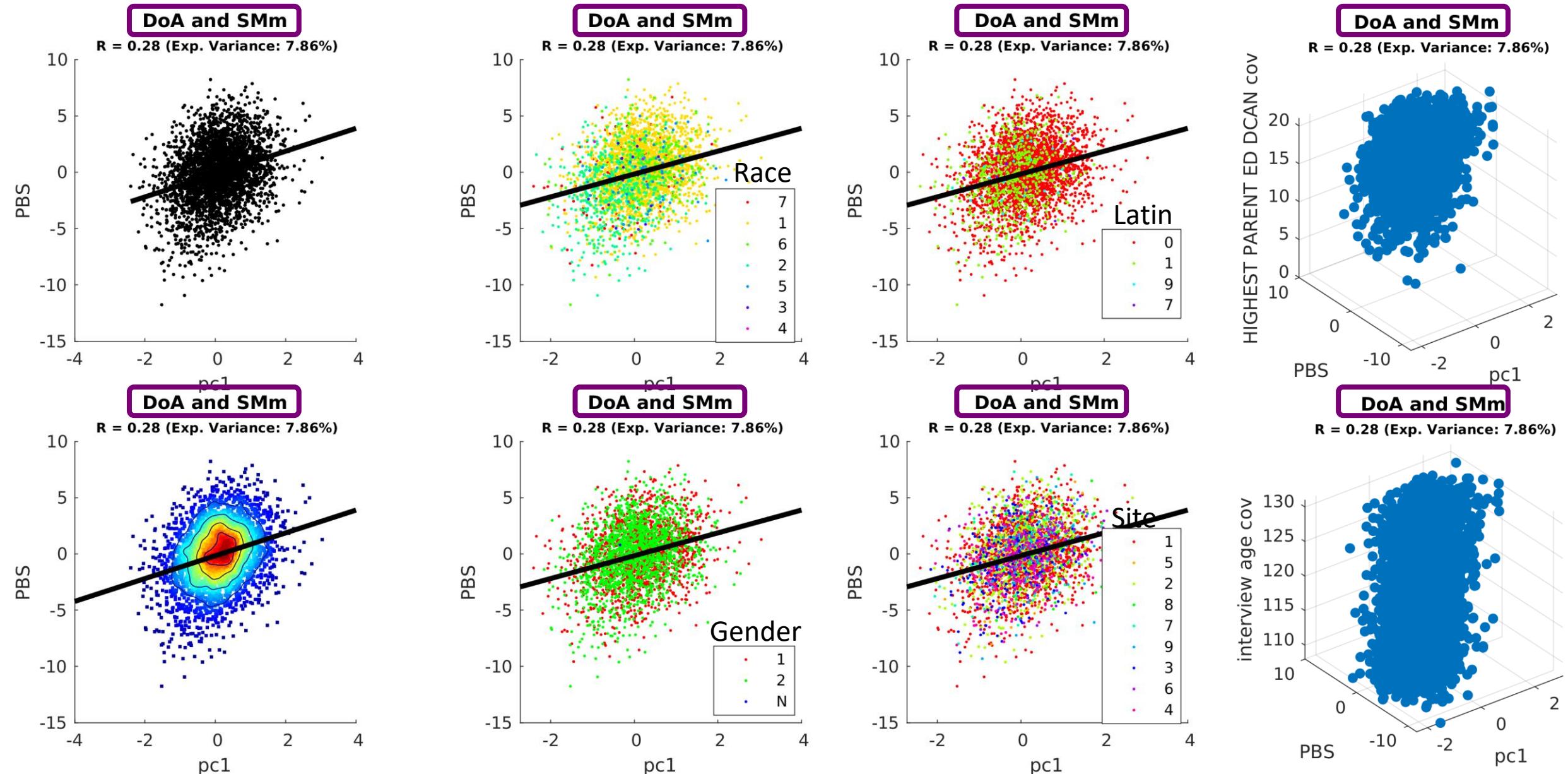


Showing a
density map

Showing covariates color-coding categorical values or using 3D scatter plots for continuous values

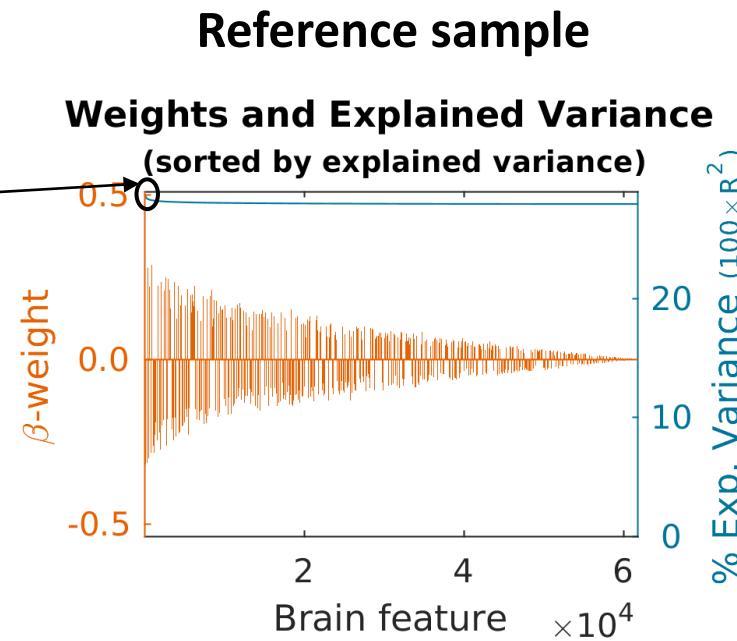


We also generate scatter plots for each functional network pair



Results

First, we will use **the best connection** in the training sample to predict PNRs in the independent sample

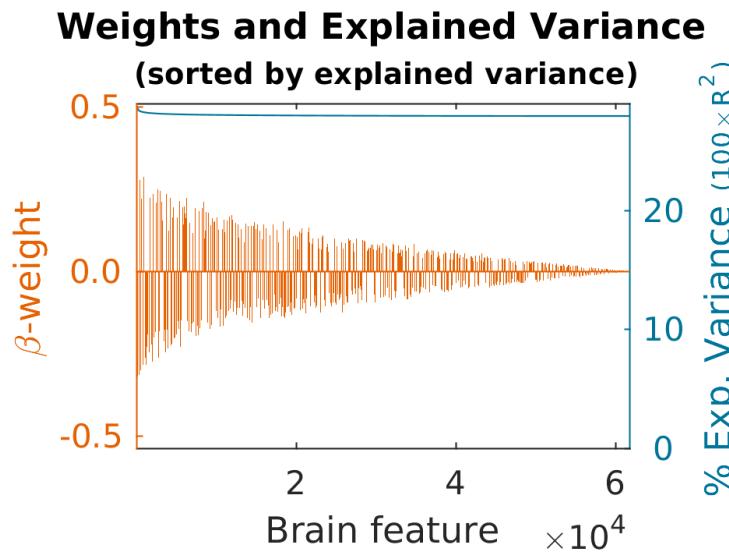


The best feature can only predict ~0.4% of the observed variance in the **independent sample**!

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 × R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389

Reference sample



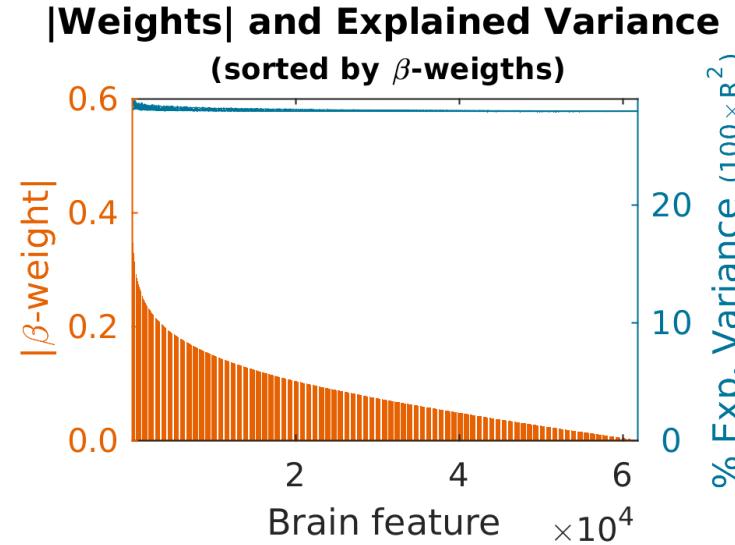
I will switch figures to facilitate the discussion

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation
Top feature	0.062

% Explained Variance (100 x R²)
0.389

Reference sample



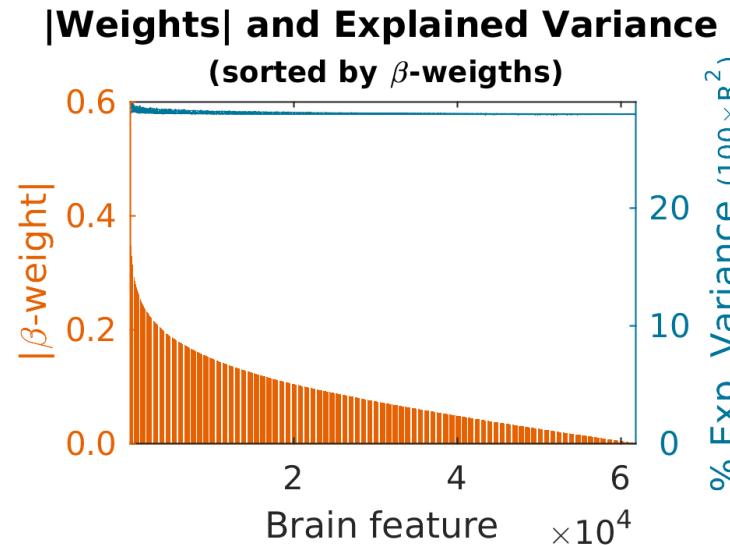
Data sorted by the absolute value of the weights

Now the question is, how much variance any other connection explains?

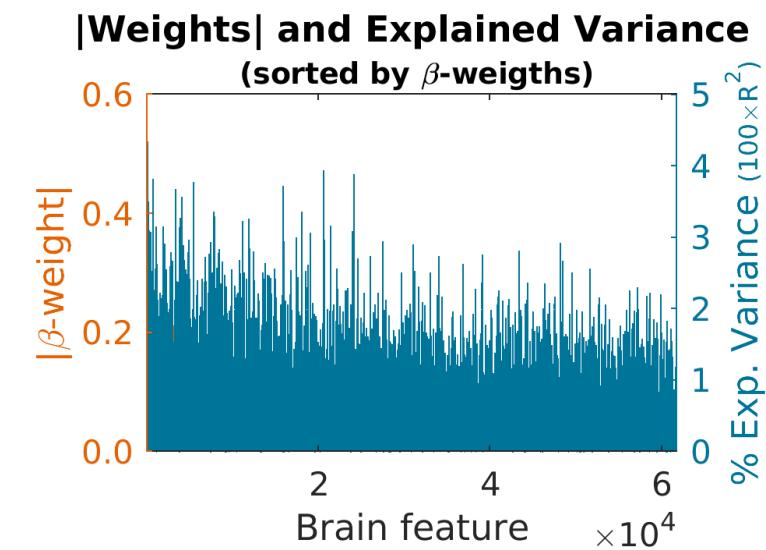
By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389

Reference sample



Independent sample



~0 to ~4%

What happen when we add more features?

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
top 00.1% features	0.288	8.267
top 00.2% features	0.330	10.916
top 00.5% features	0.347	12.045
top 01.0% features	0.361	13.039
top 02.0% features	0.373	13.929
top 05.0% features	0.392	15.328
top 10.0% features	0.396	15.681
top 25.0% features	0.393	15.438
top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852

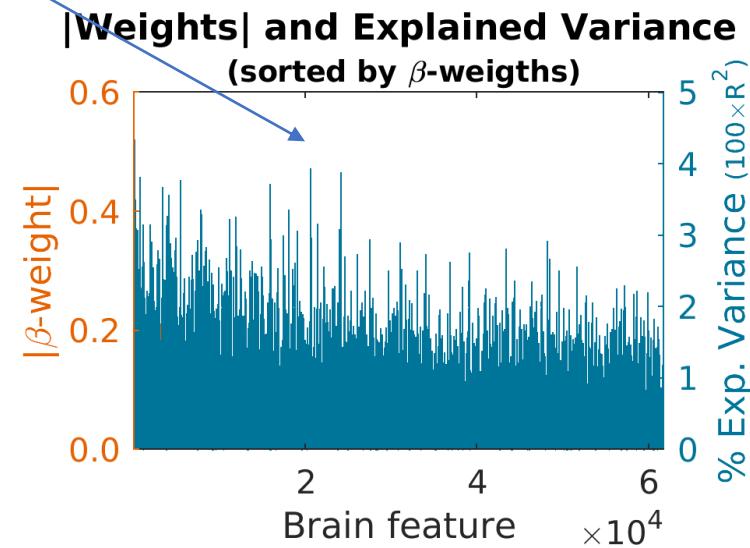
We can explain more variance!

Combined connections explain more variance than any individual connection

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance ($100 \times R^2$)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
top 00.1% features	0.288	8.267
top 00.2% features	0.330	10.916
top 00.5% features	0.347	12.045
top 01.0% features	0.361	13.039
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top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852

$(8.267 > 4\%)$



Peak at 10%

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
top 00.1% features	0.288	8.267
top 00.2% features	0.330	10.916
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top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852

Summary

- There is a decrease in predictive power across samples
- Adding connections improves the predictive power (~15.6% explained variance)

To test the specificity of the predictive power, we generate **null data** by selecting connections (or networks) randomly

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
top 0.1% features	0.288	8.267
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top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852

Null data (N replicas)

for 1:N

Connection (or network) order is randomized

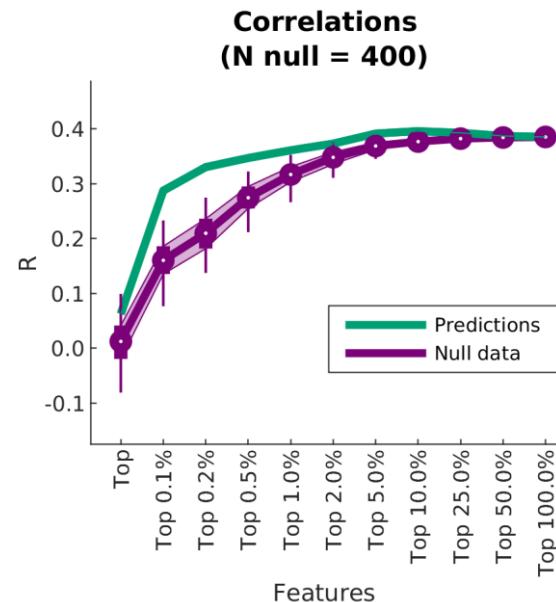
for 1: threshold (or network)

- Predict scores
- Correlation between predicted and real scores

Data visualization

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
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top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852



Predicted scores

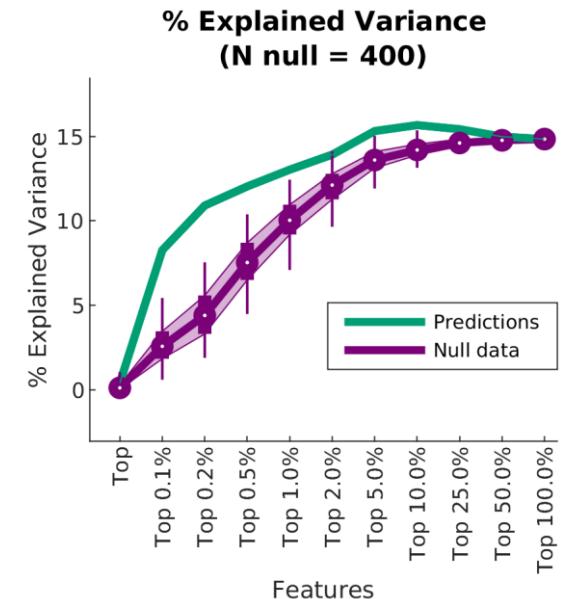
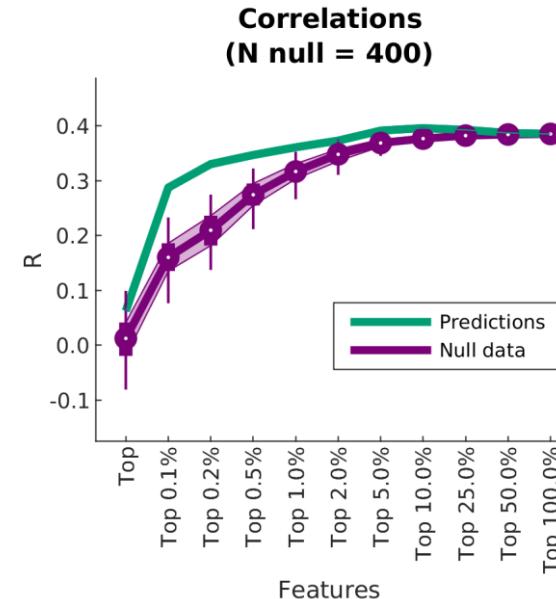
Boxplot showing distributions of null data

- Circle: median
- Wide line, percentiles 25-75
- Thin line, percentiles 2.5-97.5

We also generate a figure showing the % Explained Variance

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
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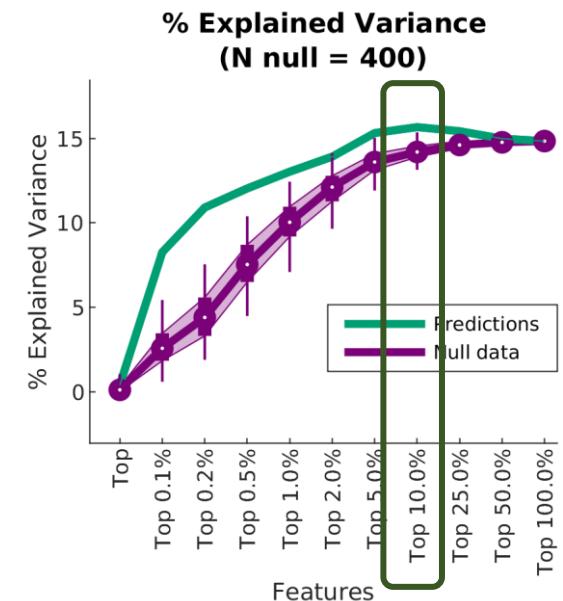
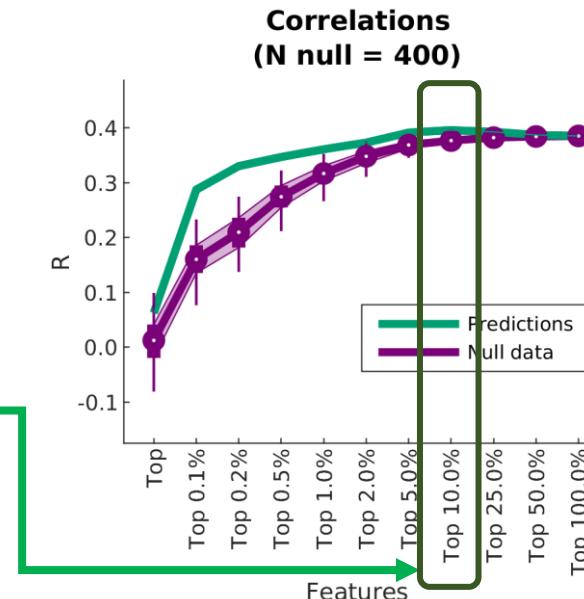


Using this figures, we can quickly visualize which threshold leads to the largest explained variance.

You can also see potential overlaps with any other set of random connections

By top connections

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Top feature	0.062	0.389
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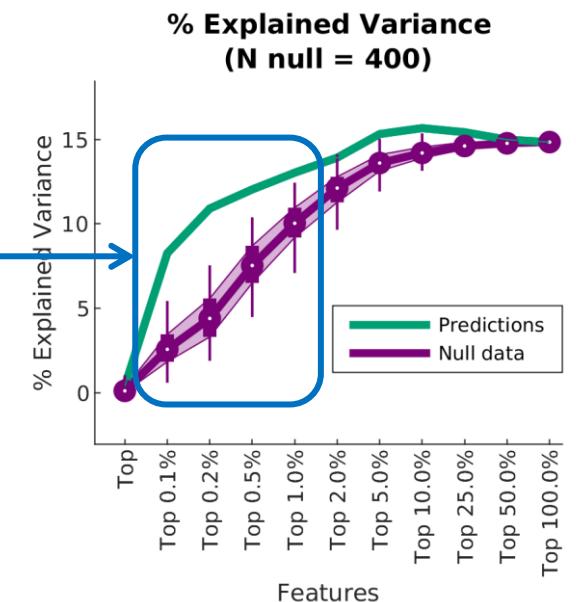
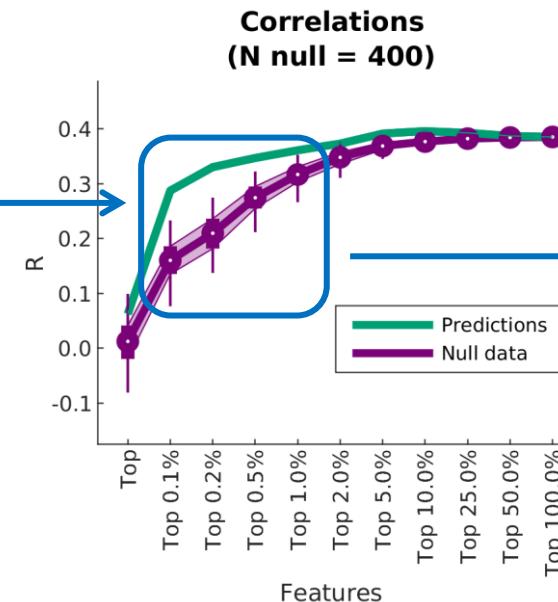


Overlap might suggest global versus focal effect

We can also identify the regions where no other set of connections lead to the same predictive power

By top connections

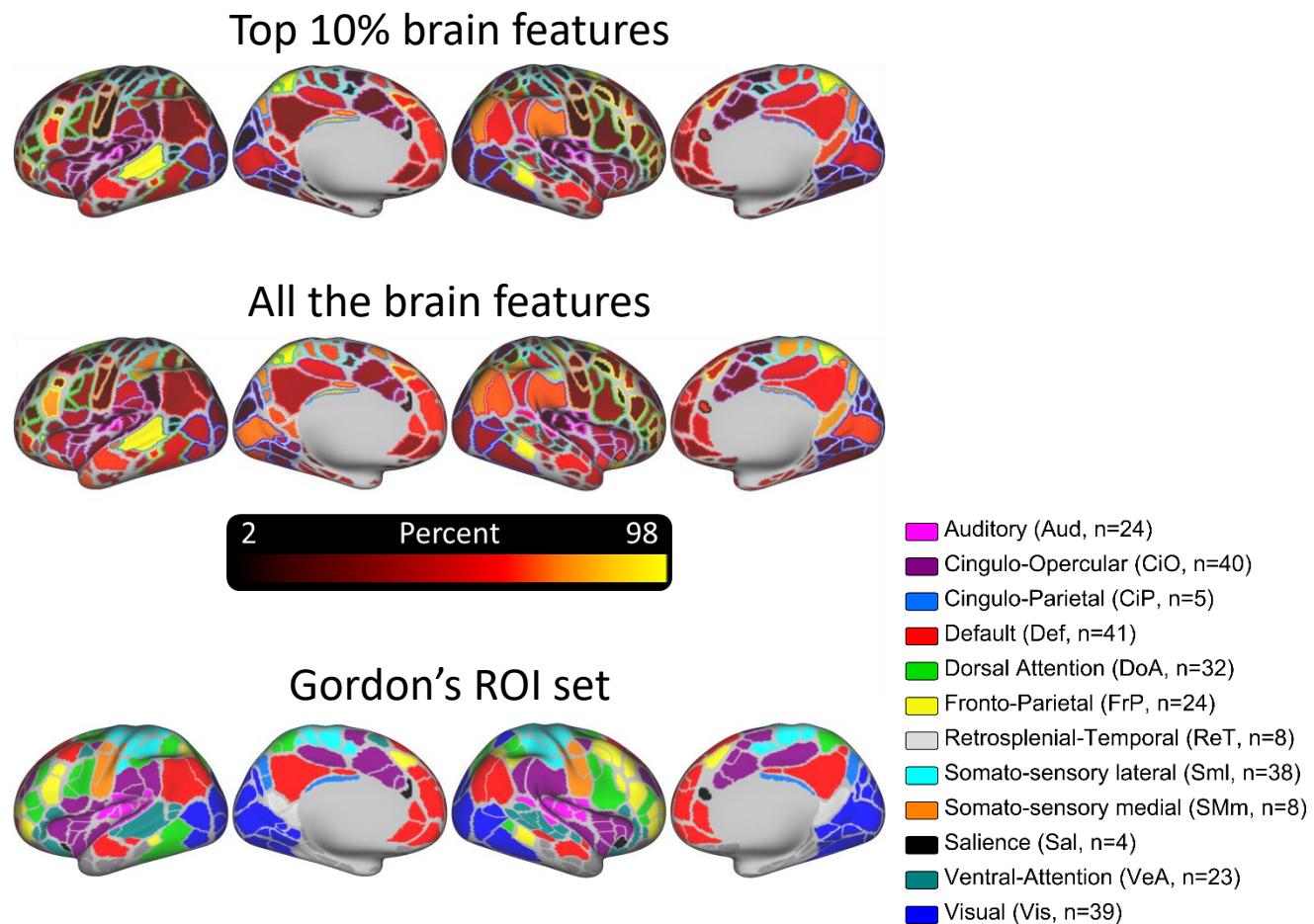
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top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852



We also generate *cifti* files to make the corresponding brain figures

By top connections

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
Top feature	0.062	0.389
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top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852



In addition, we also calculate the predictive power of each functional network pair

By top connections

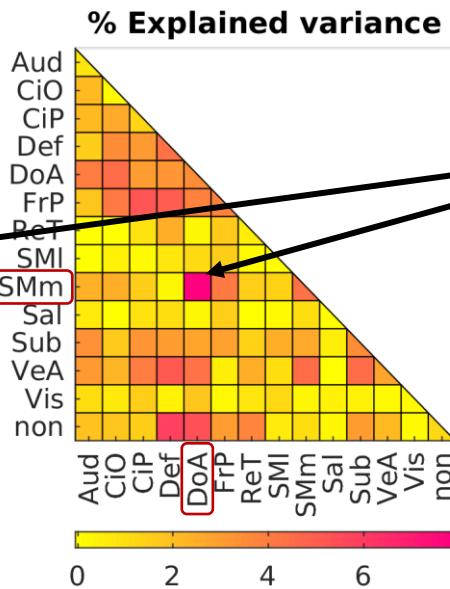
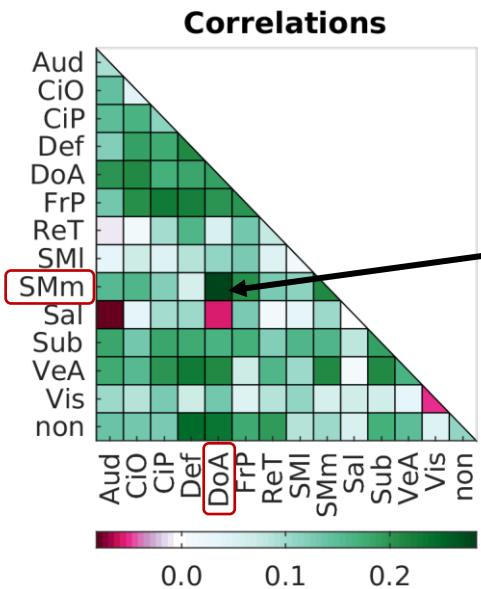
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top 25.0% features	0.393	15.438
top 50.0% features	0.387	14.997
top 100.0% features	0.385	14.852

By networks

Connections	Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
1) DoA and SMm	0.280	7.863
2) Def and non	0.242	5.837
3) DoA and non	0.232	5.404
4) CiP and FrP	0.228	5.217
5) Def and VeA	0.227	5.148
6) Def and FrP	0.223	4.990
7) CiO and DoA	0.213	4.517
8) Sub and VeA	0.212	4.475
9) SMm and VeA	0.211	4.469
10) SMm and SMm	0.210	4.425
11) DoA and VeA	0.209	4.369
...		
105) Aud and Sal	-0.079	0.624

And the corresponding visuals

By networks



Connections

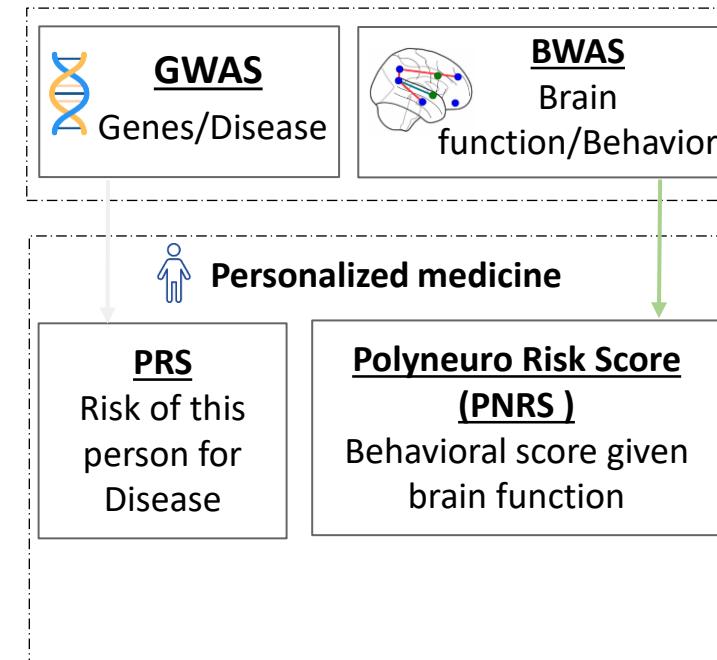
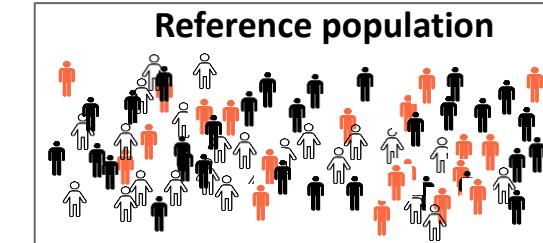
- 1) DoA and SMm
- 2) Def and non
- 3) DoA and non
- 4) CiP and FrP
- 5) Def and VeA
- 6) Def and FrP
- 7) CiO and DoA
- 8) Sub and VeA
- 9) SMm and VeA
- 10) SMm and SMm
- 11) DoA and VeA

- ...
- 105) Aud and Sal

Pearson's correlation	% Explained Variance (100 x R ²)
0.280	7.863
0.242	5.837
0.232	5.404
0.228	5.217
0.227	5.148
0.223	4.990
0.213	4.517
0.212	4.475
0.211	4.469
0.210	4.425
0.209	4.369
-0.079	0.624

Summary

- BWAS/PNRS can leverage small effects across the brain
- Using this approach, we can identify if associations between brain function and behavior are focal or globally distributed



Other uses of BWAS

01

Study associations
between PNRS of
behavior and
disease severity

02

Combine several
PNRS to predict
scores of *disease
severity*

03

Combine several
PNRS to study
heterogeneity

Future directions

- Brain features here were connectivity matrices calculated via Pearson's correlations. We can use instead connectotyping [1,2])
- Add regularization to the estimation of the beta-weights, such as partial least squares regression [3,4]

[1] Miranda-Dominguez, O., Mills, B. D., Carpenter, S. D., Grant, K. A., Kroenke, C. D., Nigg, J. T., & Fair, D. A. (2014). Connectotyping: model based fingerprinting of the functional connectome. *Plos One*, 9(11), e111048.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0111048>

[2] Miranda-Dominguez, O., Feczko, E., Grayson, D. S., Walum, H., Nigg, J. T., & Fair, D. A. (2018). Heritability of the human connectome: A connectotyping study. *Network Neuroscience (Cambridge, Mass.)*, 2(2), 175–199.

https://doi.org/10.1162/netn_a_00029

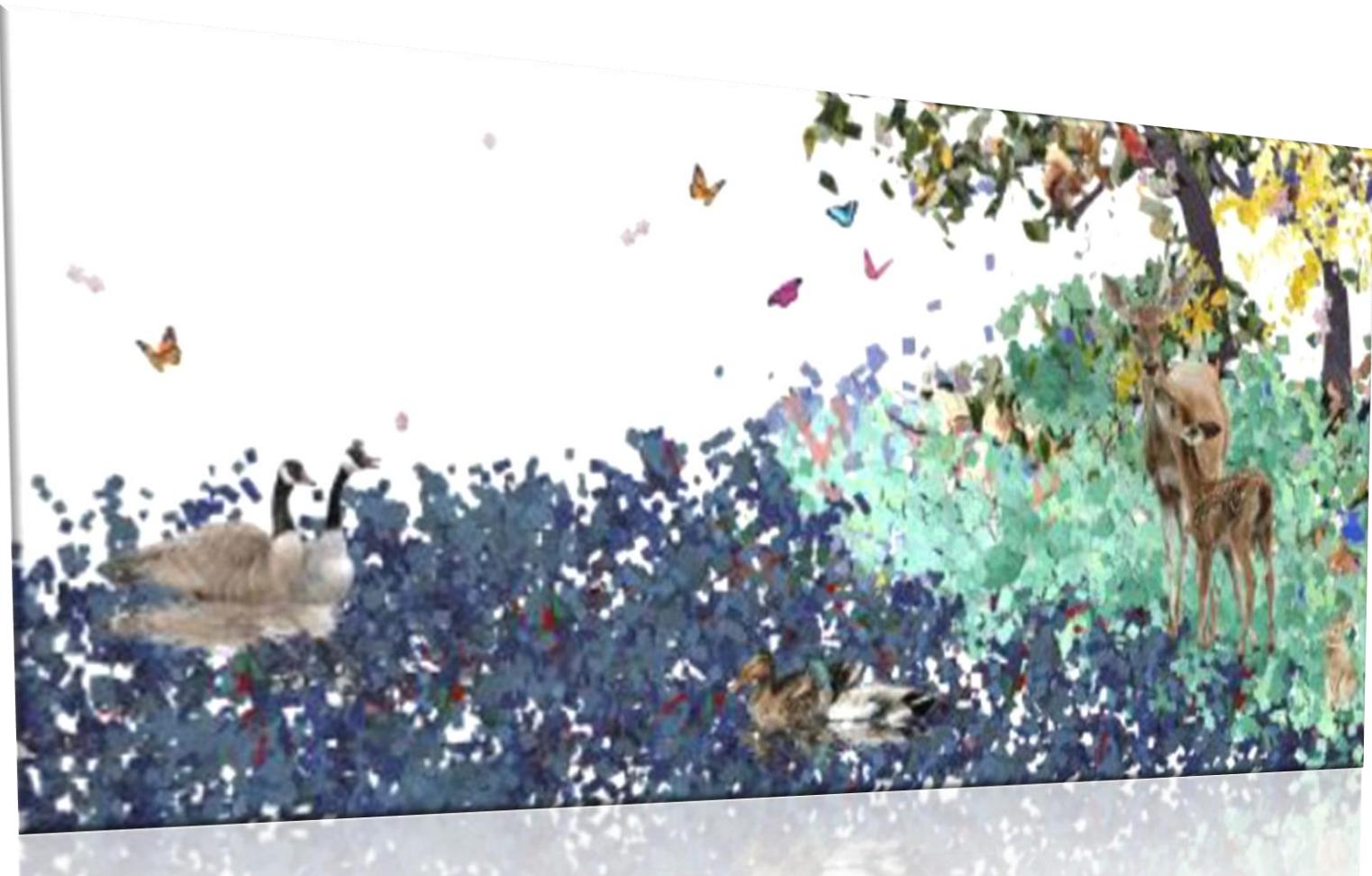
[3] Miranda-Domínguez, Ó., Ragothaman, A., Hermosillo, R., Feczko, E., Morris, R., Carlson-Kuhta, P., Nutt, J. G., Mancini, M., Fair, D., & Horak, F. B. (2020). Lateralized Connectivity between Globus Pallidus and Motor Cortex is Associated with Freezing of Gait in Parkinson's Disease. *Neuroscience*, 443, 44–58.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroscience.2020.06.036>

[4] Silva-Batista, C., Ragothaman, A., Mancini, M., Carlson-Kuhta, P., Harker, G., Jung, S. H., Nutt, J. G., Fair, D. A., Horak, F. B., & Miranda-Domínguez, O. (2021). Cortical thickness as predictor of response to exercise in people with Parkinson's disease. *Human Brain Mapping*, 42(1), 139–153.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.25211>

Thank you!



Art at the MIDB

Brain Wide Associations (BWAS) to model the link between brain features and behavior.

Oscar Miranda Domínguez, PhD, MSc

Assistant Professor | Department of Pediatrics | Medical School | University of Minnesota
Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain
Minnesota Supercomputer Institute



MASONIC INSTITUTE FOR
THE DEVELOPING BRAIN
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover®