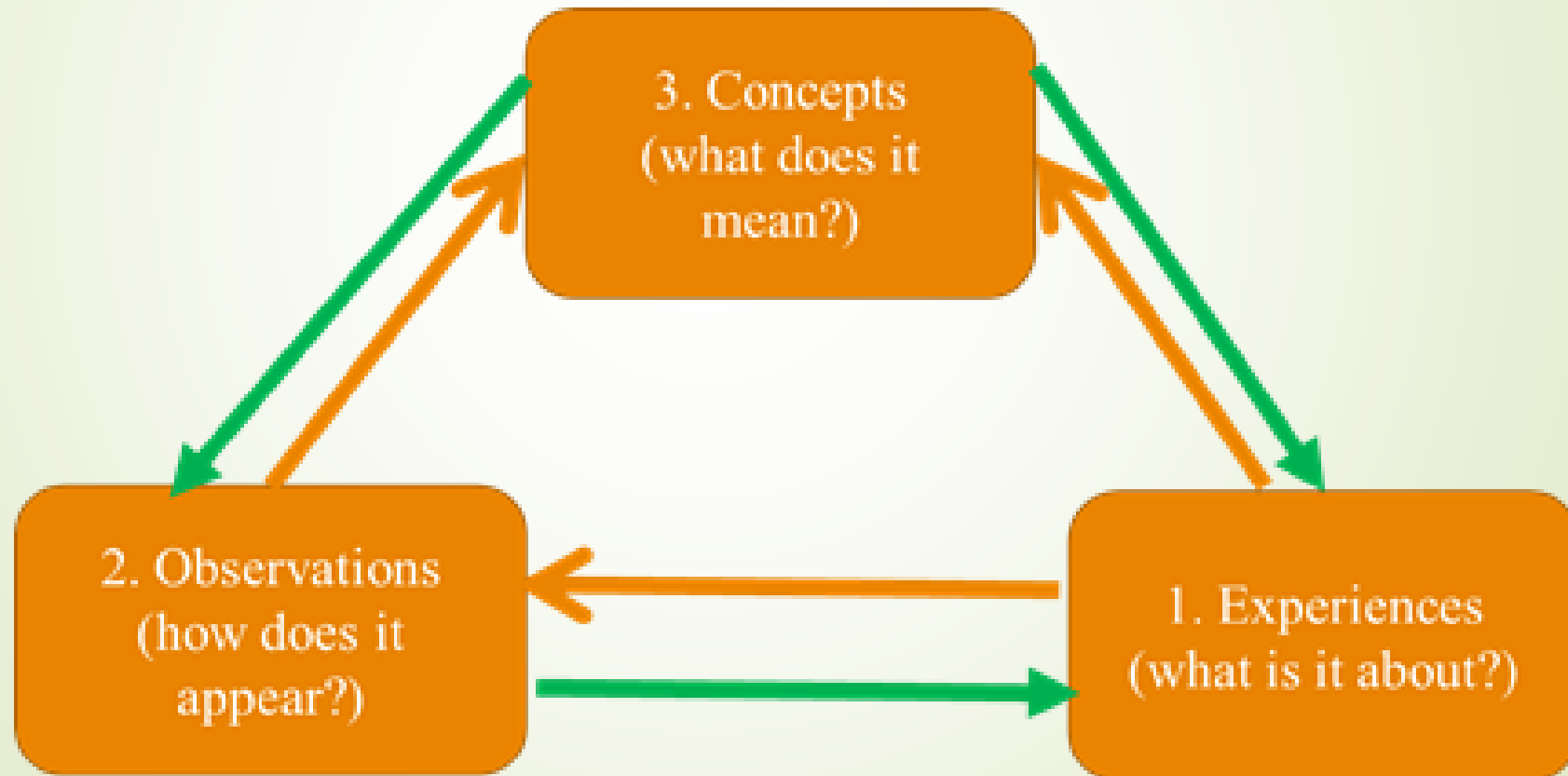



# Lecture 3: Observing personality





# Today

- 
- I. Measuring self-reported traits
  - II. Interpreting covariance of traits
  - III. Coding narratives
  - IV. Other methods of observation



# The lexical hypothesis


I. Measuring self-reported traits

# TRAITS

- 
- Absent-minded
  - Adaptable
  - Aggressive
  - Aloof
  - Altruistic
  - Angry
  - Approval-seeking
  - Assertive
  - Calm
  - Charismatic
  - Charming
  - Cheerful
  - Clever
  - Compassionate
  - Compliant
  - Confident
  - Conforming
  - Conscientious
  - Considerate
  - Contemplative
  - Courageous
  - Creative

- Cruel
- Curious
- Cynical
- Decisive
- Dishonest
- Dramatic
- Emotionally stable
- Empathetic
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic
- Extroverted
- Friendly
- Forthright
- Gregarious
- Honest
- Impulsive
- Introverted
- Irritable
- Kind
- Loyal
- Moody
- Narcissistic

- Neat
- Needy
- Nervous
- Neurotic
- Obedient
- Open to experience
- Optimistic
- Orderly
- Resilient
- Rigid
- Risk-taking
- Self-control
- Selfish
- Sensation-seeking
- Serious
- Shy
- Sociable
- Tidy
- Timid
- Trustworthy
- Understanding
- Vindictive
- Warm



Traits are words in natural language to describe individual characteristics

**Lexical hypothesis:**

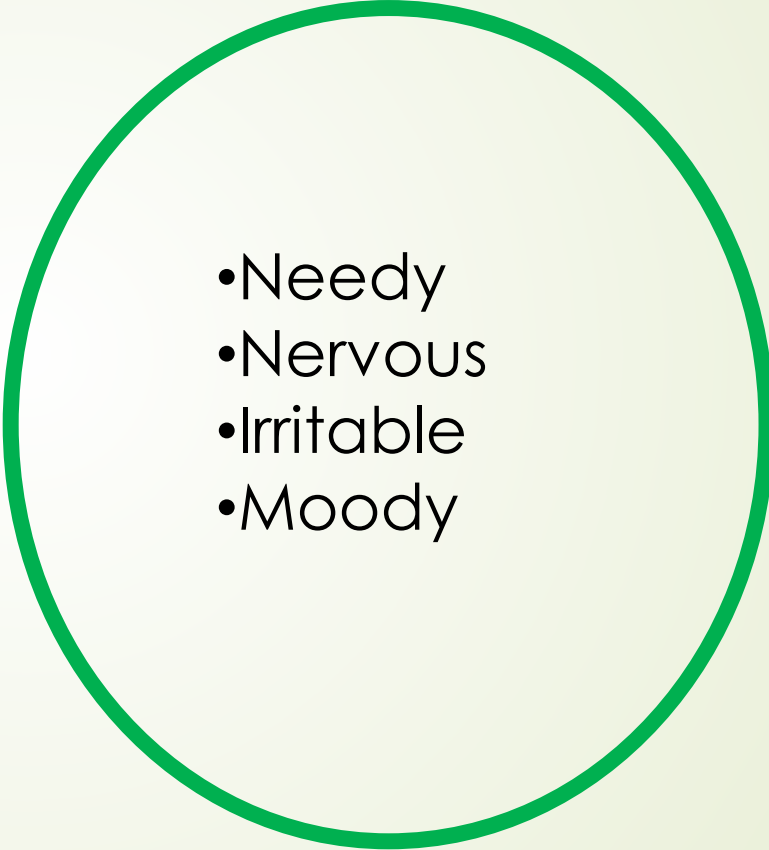
**Hypothesis 1:** Those personality characteristics that are important to a group of people will eventually become a part of that group's language.

**Hypothesis 2:** more important personality characteristics are more likely to be encoded into language as a single word.




# Covariance

- 
- Assertive
  - Charismatic
  - Charming
  - Cheerful
  - Energetic
  - Enthusiastic

- 
- Needy
  - Nervous
  - Irritable
  - Moody



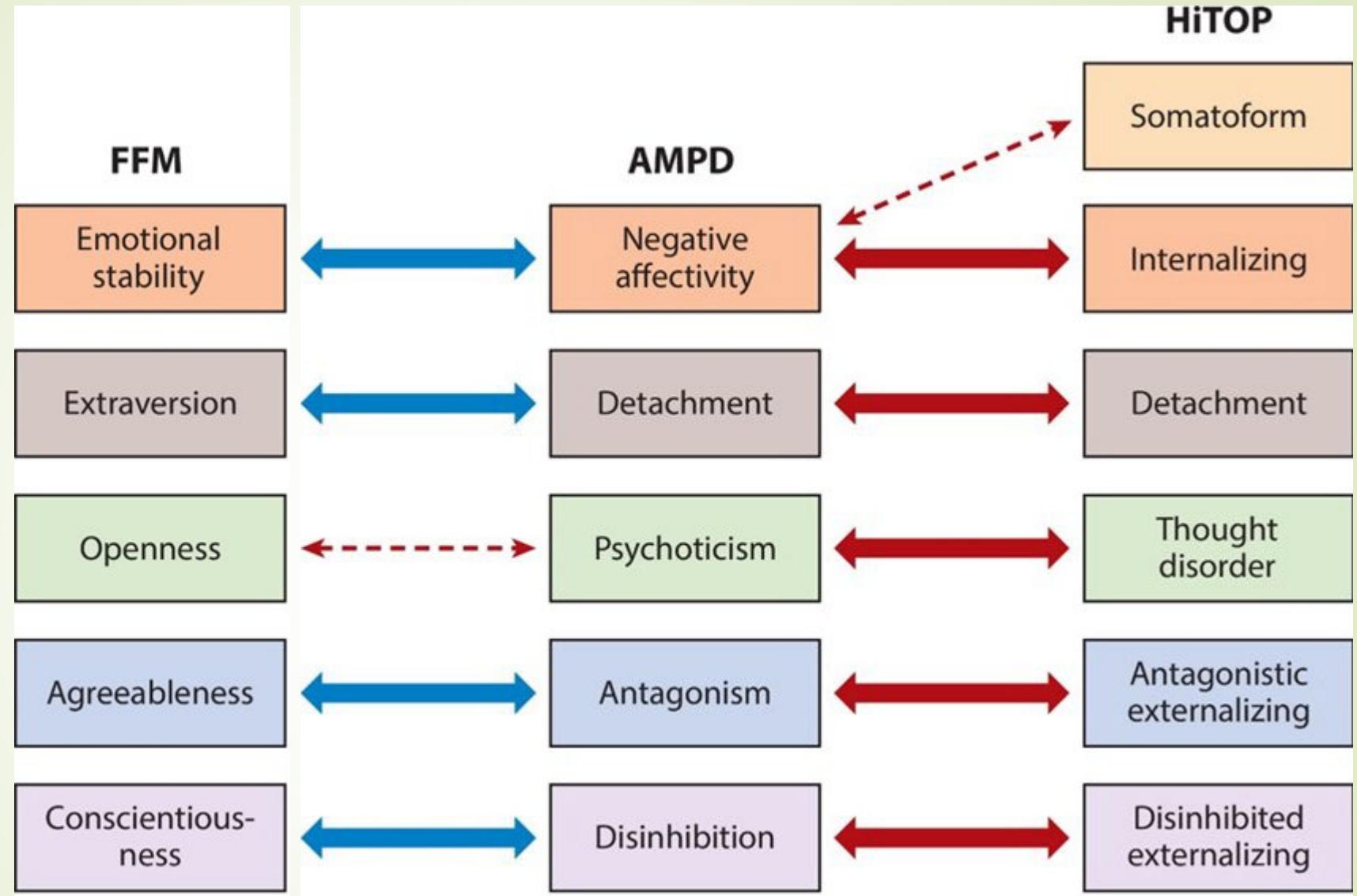
# Method for studying covariance patterns

1. Take a large list of trait words in a language (from dictionaries)
  2. Use a method to derive Principal Components (or factors) on these traits
  3. Arrive at a factor structure of 5 to 7 factor
- 



- Needy
- Nervous
- Irritable
- Moody

- Assertive
- Charismatic
- Charming
- Cheerful
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic







# Why do we find OCEAN?

II. Interpreting covariance structures




# Four questions for discussion

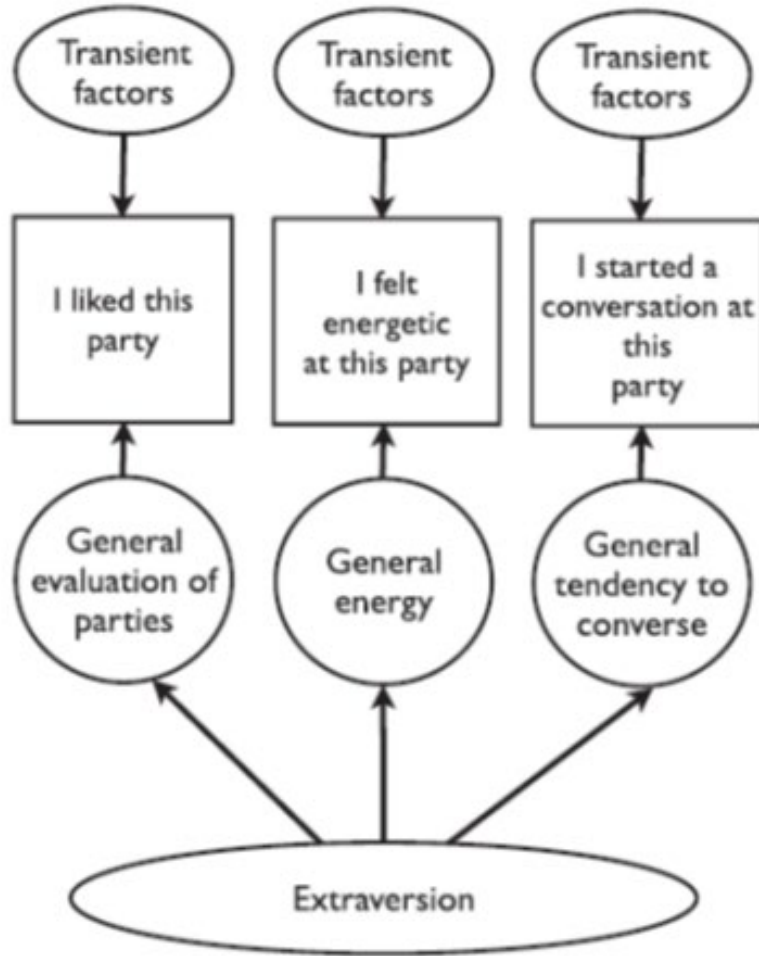
- Why do we so often find these 5 (or 6 or 7) principle components in lexical studies across the world?
- What is the reason for covariance between specific traits?
- Why do we find **persistence** – i.e. consistency across time?
- (Why) do we find **pervasiveness** – i.e. consistency over situations?



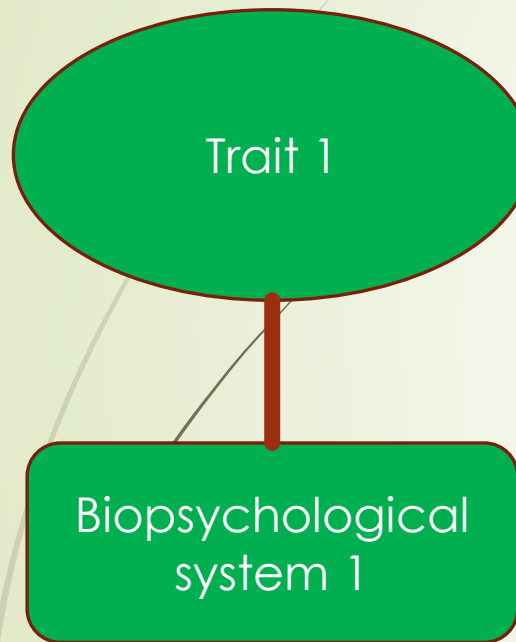
# Interpreting covariance structures

- 
1. Trait realism and temperament
  2. Situationism
  3. Network stability
  4. The self as an actor

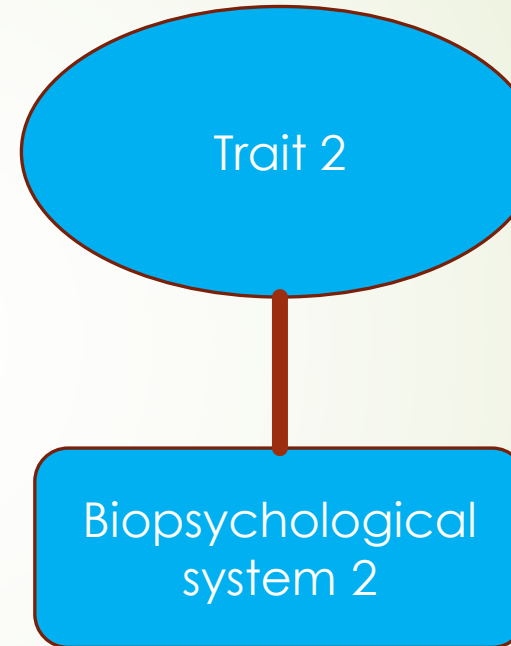
# 1. Trait realism and temperament



One can define a trait as an inferred organismic (psychological, psychobiological) structure underlying an extended family of behavioral dispositions. These dispositions are not meant to be viewed as generalized action tendencies, but as inclinations to behave in certain ways in a set of trait-relevant situations (Tellegen, 1991).

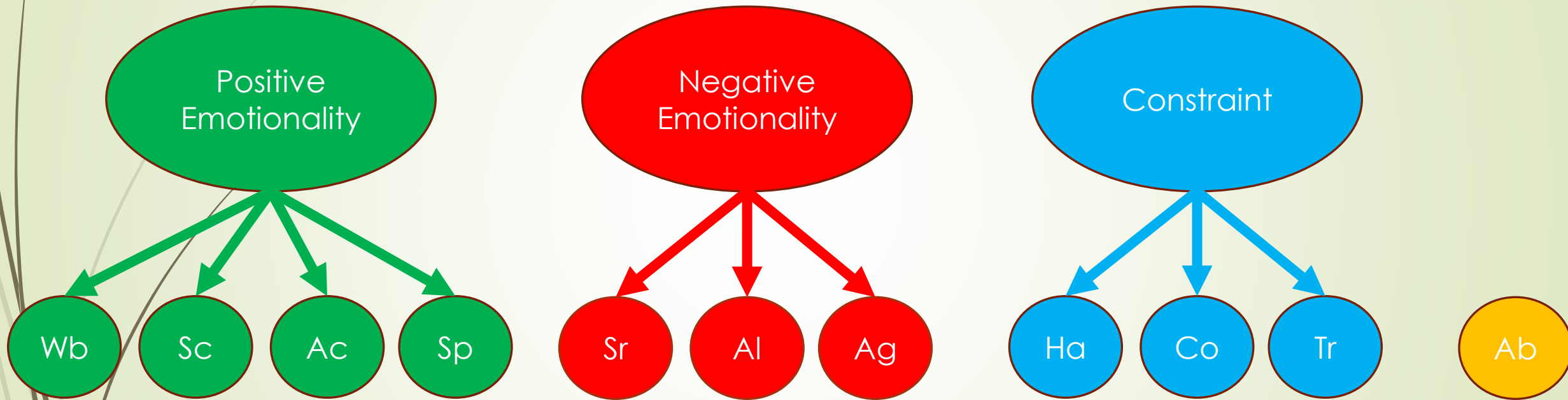


- Assertive
- Charismatic
- Charming
- Cheerful
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic



- Needy
- Nervous
- Irritable
- Moody

# Adult personality: The Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire



Wb=Well-being; Sc= Social Closeness, Ac=Achievement, Sp = Social Potency;

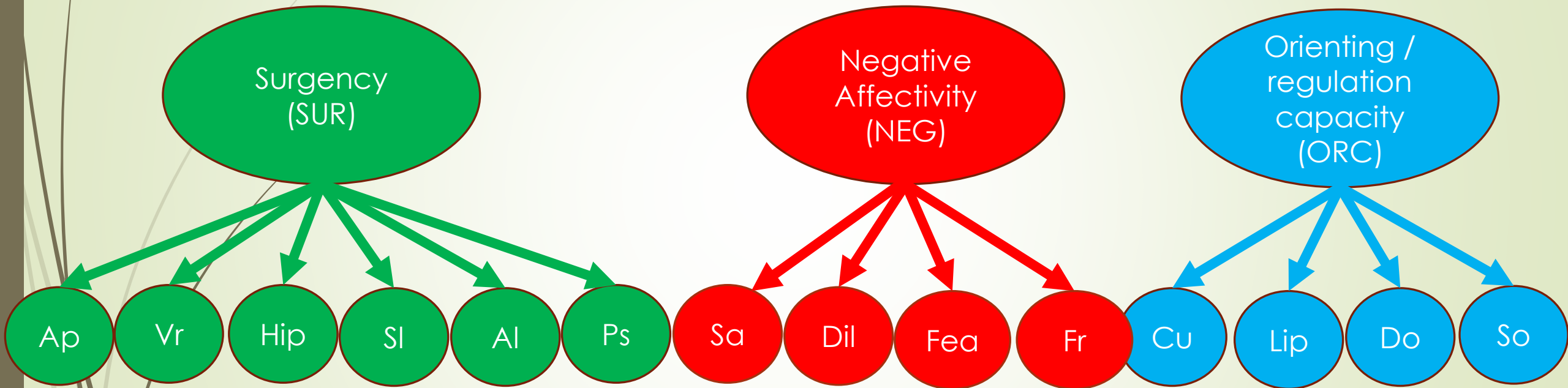
Sr =Stress reactivity; Al = Alienation; Ag= Aggression

Ha=Harm Avoidance; Co=Control; Tr = Traditionalism; Ab = Absorption

Patrick, Curting & Tellegen (2002). Development and validation of a brief form of the multidimensional personality questionnaire. *Psychological Assessment*, vol. 14(2), 150-163.



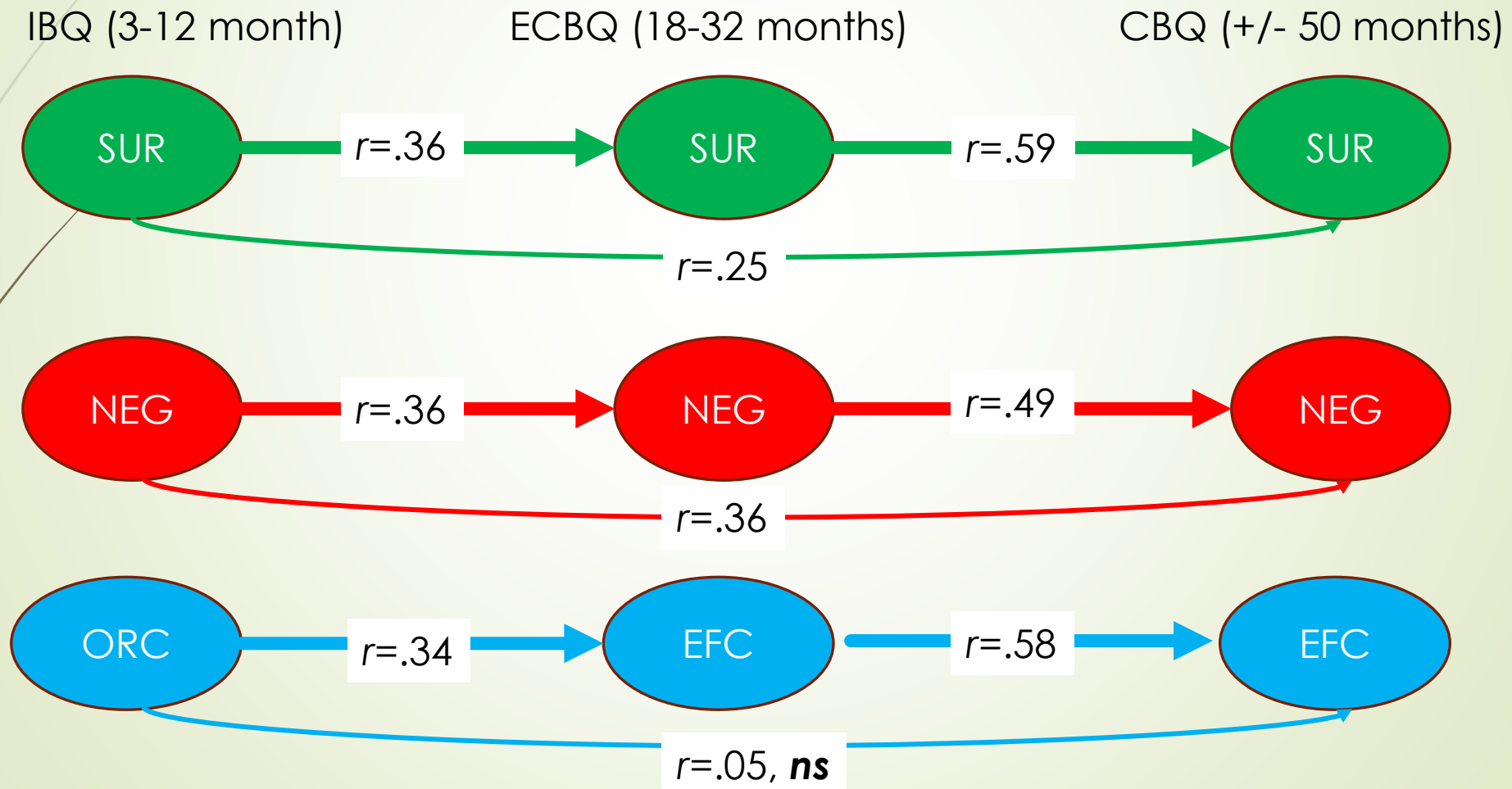
# Temperament Infant Behavior Questionnaire



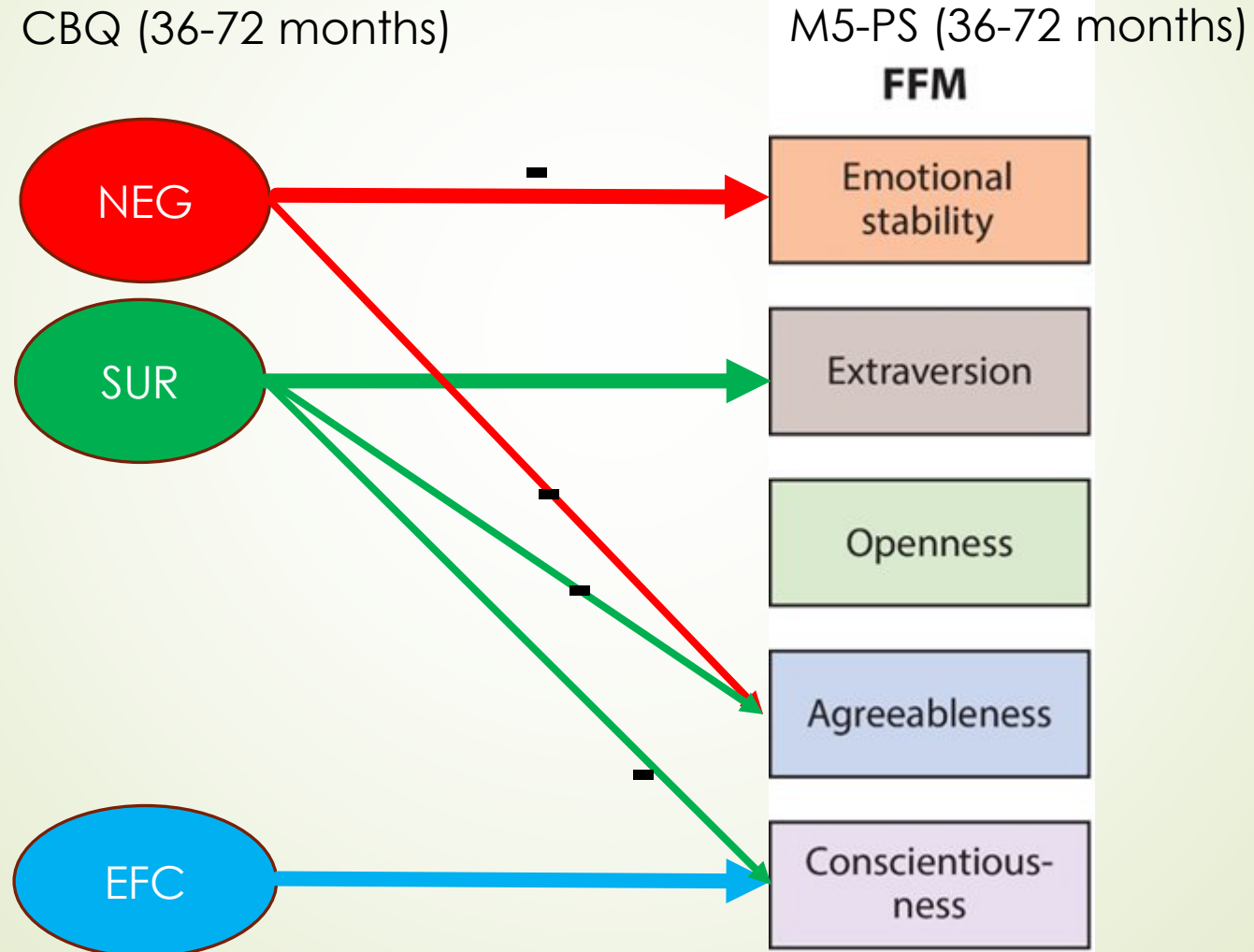
Ap = approach; Vr= vocal reactivity; Hip = high intensity pleasure; SI = Smile and laughter; AI= activity level; Ps = perceptual sensitivity; Sa = Sadness, Dil = distress to limitation, Fea = fear, Fr = Falling reactivity (rate of recovery from stress), Cu = Cuddliness, Lip = Low intensity pleasure, Do=duration of orienting; So=Soothability

Gartstein & Rothbart (2003). Studying infant temperament via the Revised Infant Behavior Questionnaire. *Infant Behavior & Development*, vol. 26, 64–86,

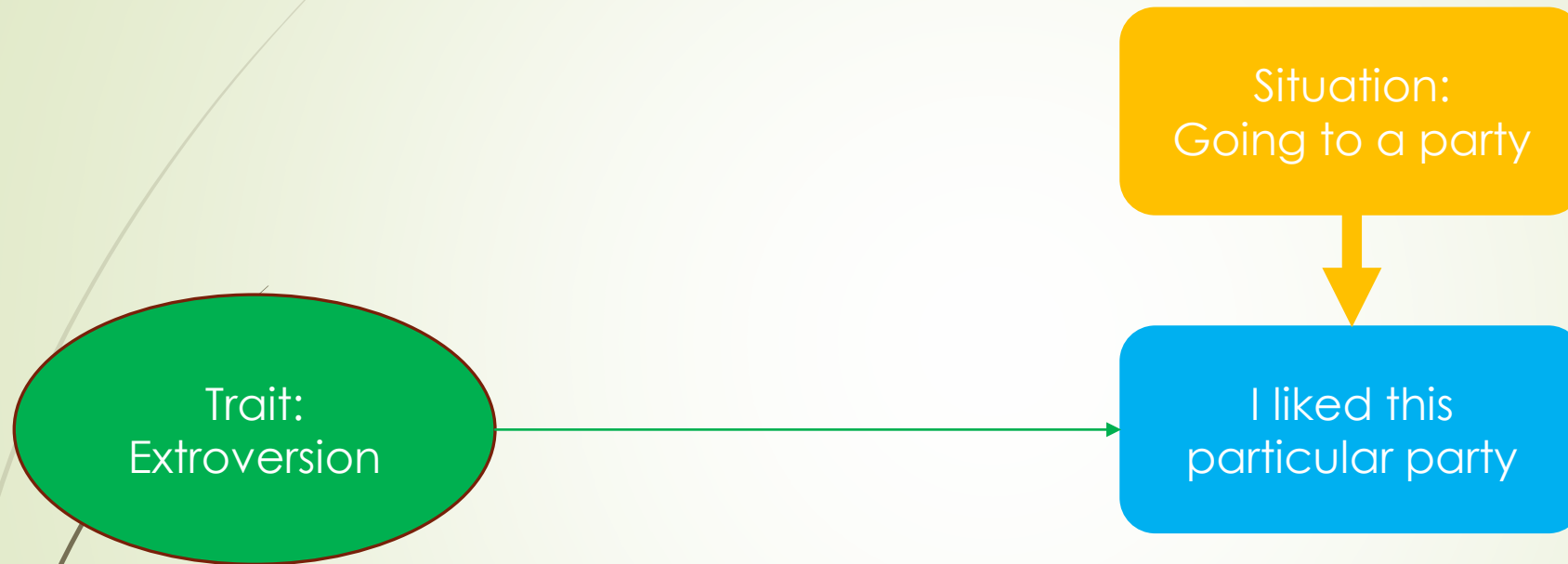
# Continuity and discontinuity of temperament



# From temperament to OCEAN



## 2. Situationism



**Walter Mischel (1968):**

**"...with the possible exception of intelligence, highly generalized behavioral consistencies have not been demonstrated, and the concept of personality traits as broad dispositions is thus untenable."**

This strong position is no longer compatible with the evidence. A weaker version may be maintained.



# The solution

## Moving Personality Beyond the Person-Situation Debate

The Challenge and the Opportunity of Within-Person Variability

William Fleeson

### Step 1: Evidence for situations

People act very differently on different occasions

### Step 2: Evidence for persons

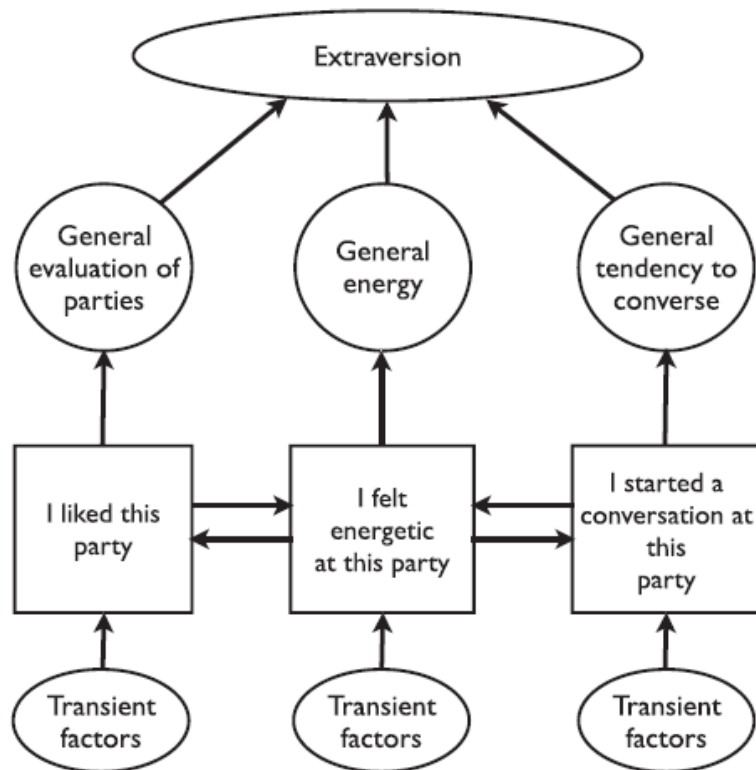
People act very similar from one week to the next

### Step 3: Both are correct

- Traits are best regarded as **person-specific distributions** of certain states-of-mind. Thus they indicate the likelihood of such states over a certain time-period.
- These person-specific distributions are quite stable (personality)
- The specific outcomes at any particular moment vary a great deal (situationism)

### 3. Network stability

**Interaction of particular acts, feelings, thoughts -> covariance  
-> emergence of generalized traits**



**Dimensions of Normal Personality as Networks in Search of Equilibrium: You Can't Like Parties if You Don't Like People**

ANGÉLIQUE O. J. CRAMER<sup>1\*</sup>, SOPHIE VAN DER SLUIS<sup>1,2</sup>, ARJEN NOORDHOF<sup>1</sup>, MARIEKE WICHERS<sup>3</sup>, NICOLE GESCHWIND<sup>3,4</sup>, STEVEN H. AGGEN<sup>5,6</sup>, KENNETH S. KENDLER<sup>5,6</sup> and DENNY BORSBOOM<sup>1</sup>

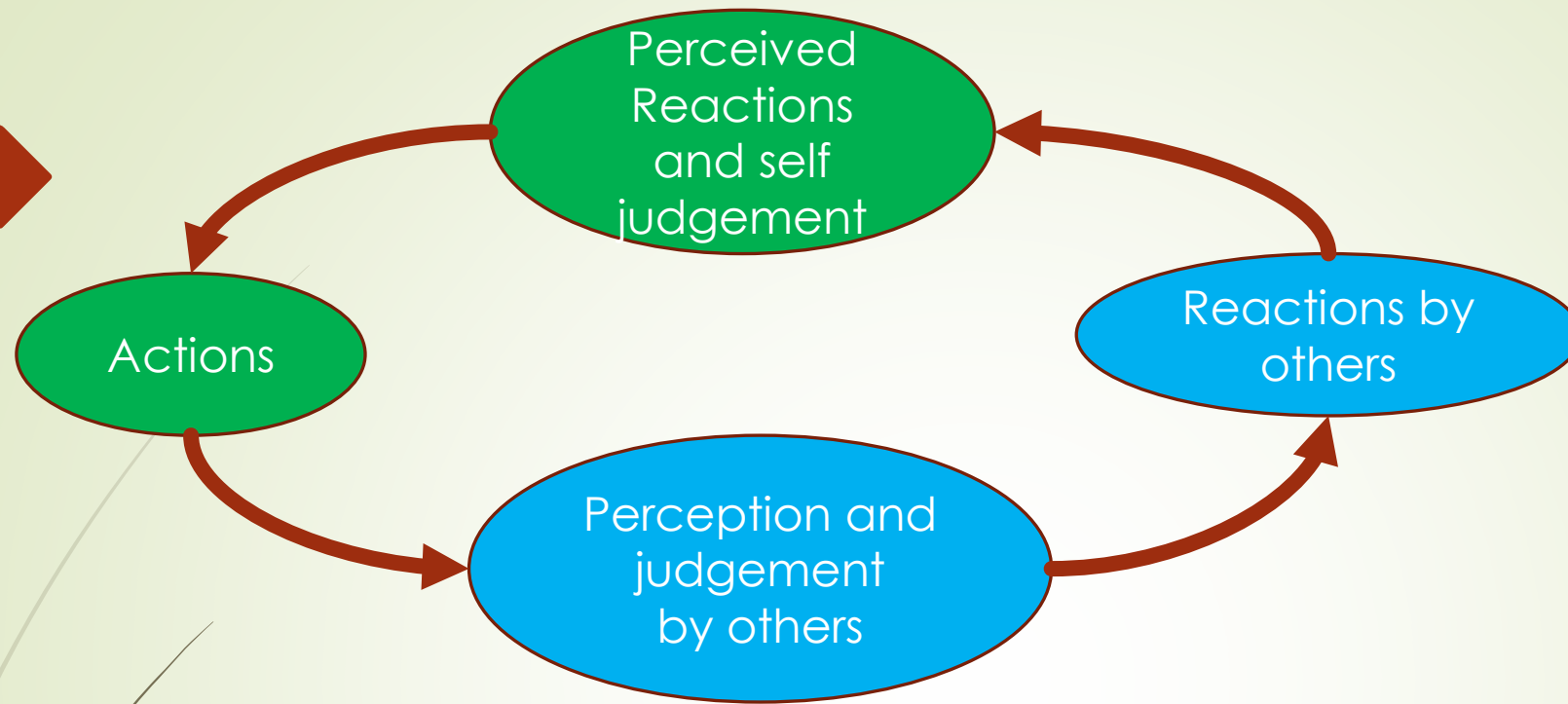
<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands



## 4. Stability in the performance of the actor

- McAdams (2013): "... the self as *social actor*, encompassing semantic representations of traits, social roles, and other features of self that result in and from repeated performances on the social stage of life."
- Persona: mask, character.
- Appearance, i.e. the way one appears to others.





Emergence of stable character of an actor

- Assertive
- Charismatic
- Charming
- Cheerful
- Energetic
- Enthusiastic

- Needy
- Nervous
- Irritable
- Moody



# The self as an author

III. Coding narratives



# Your life story interview

- ▶ Do you think these narratives are relevant for understanding personalities? Why (not)?
- ▶ What aspects of the stories would you find interesting to study? What themes or sequences?
- ▶ How would you do it?



## Goals:

- Creating a scientific database of interviews on experiences of mental health and mental health care
- Developing new methods for analyzing these narratives
- Initiate possibilities for improving mental health care
- Creating educational material for students in mental health care
- Working against taboo and stigma
- Offering comfort, strength and inspiration to fellow patients (lotgenoten)



# Content



- 138 narratives of (ex)patients, people in their network, and workers in mental health care.
- Transcripts of the interviews are kept private in a scientific database
- From these transcripts narratives are written by an editor and then revised on the basis of input from the interviewer and the person being interviewed.
- These are published online and can be freely used.
- In this course we use three narratives from this database.





# Example of coding narratives

## Agency and Communion

“I have adopted the terms **“agency”** and **“communion”** to characterize two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms, agency for the existence of an organism as an individual, and communion for the participation of the individual in some larger organism of which the individual is a part. Agency manifests itself in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion; communion manifests itself in the sense of being at one with other organisms. Agency manifests itself in the formation of separations; communion in the lack of separations. Agency manifests itself in isolation, alienation, and aloneness; communion in contact, openness, and union. Agency manifests itself in the urge to master; communion in noncontractual cooperation.”

- David Bakan (1966)



# Agency

Agency encompasses a wide range of psychological and motivational ideas, including the concepts of strength, power, expansion, mastery, control, dominance, autonomy, separation, and independence.

1. **Self- mastery (SM):** The story protagonist strives successfully to master, control, enlarge, or perfect the self. Through forceful or effective action, thought, or experience, the protagonist is able to strengthen the self, to become a larger, wiser, or more powerful agent in the world.
2. **Status / Victory (SV):** The protagonist attains a heightened status or prestige among his or her peers, through receiving a special recognition or honor or winning a contest or competition.
3. **Achievement / Responsibility (AR):** The person reports substantial success in the achievement of tasks, jobs, instrumental goals, or in the assumption of important responsibilities.
4. **Empowerment (EM):** The subject is enlarged, enhanced, empowered, ennobled, built up, or made better through his or her association with *someone or something larger and more powerful than the self*. The self is made even more agentic by virtue of its involvement with an even more powerful agent of some sort.



# Examples of Self-mastery

## ➤ Through "insight":

- A man comes into contact with the spiritual dimensions of his life at a weekend retreat designed to stimulate psychological growth.
- A man accepts the awful truth that he is indeed an alcoholic.
- A subject responds that her most important goal in life is the attainment of wisdom, which she describes as "the re-creation of myself as a better person."

## ➤ Through "control":

- A woman reports feelings of deep satisfaction in being able to manage the pain of labor during childbirth. She is able to master the self by controlling her own pain.
- A divorce frees up a woman to take control of her own life and the life of her son.

## ➤ Other:

- A married couple go through tremendous hardships in their first year of marriage, experiencing the death of both sets of parents. They emerge from this period strengthened and better able to cope with life's problems.
- A musician experiences a sense of power or mastery during a performance.
- An army recruit feels "strong" after finishing basic training.

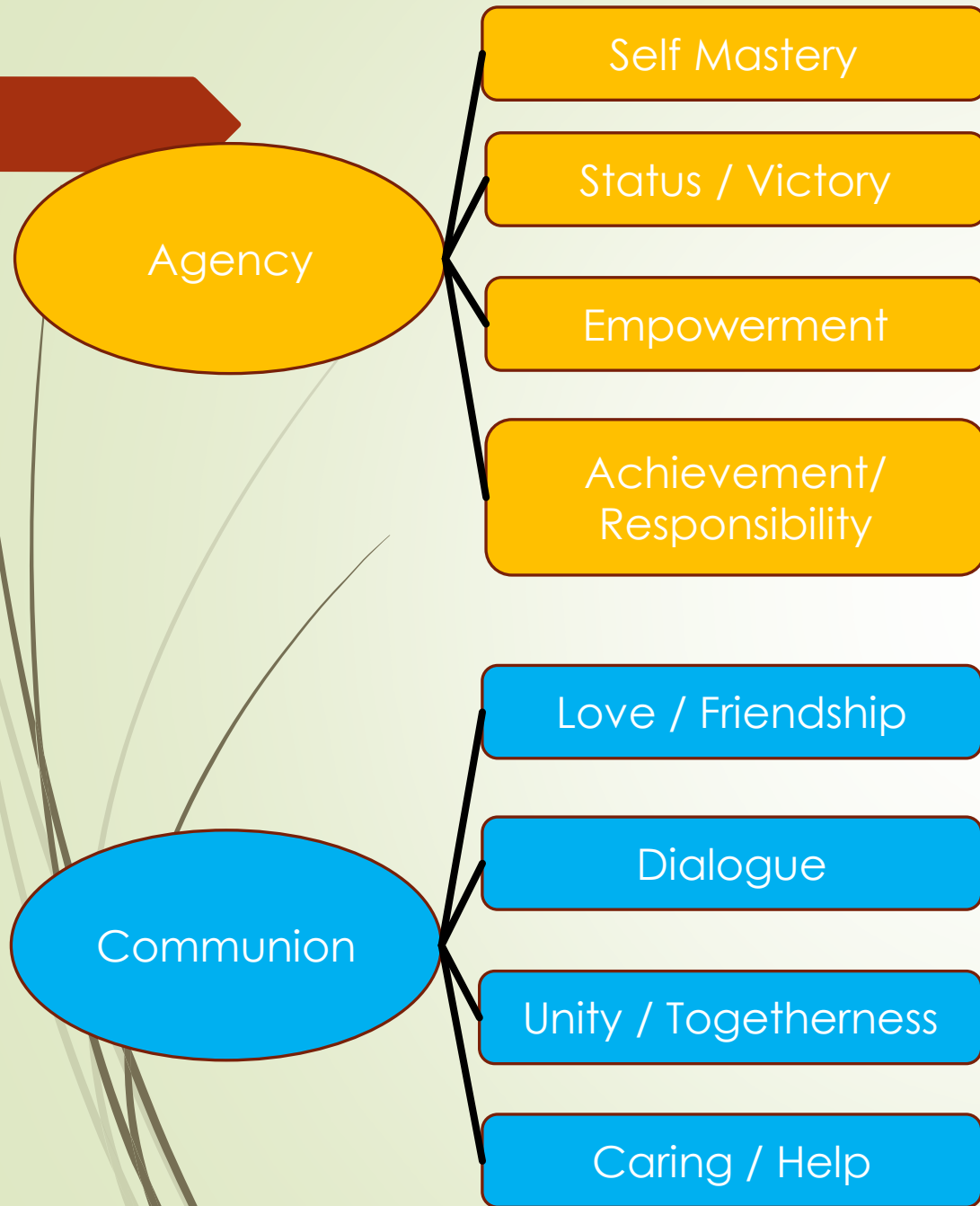


# Communion

Communion encompasses psychological and motivational ideas concerning love, friendship, intimacy, sharing, belonging, affiliation, merger, union, nurturance, and so on. At its heart, communion involves different people coming together in warm, close, caring, and communicative relationships.

1. **Love / Friendship (LF):** A protagonist experiences an enhancement of erotic love or friendship toward another person. LF refers primarily to love and friendship between peers, as in heterosexual or homosexual relationships and same-sex as well as opposite-sex platonic friendships.
2. **Dialogue (DG):** A person experiences a reciprocal and noninstrumental form of communication or dialogue with another person or group of others.
3. **Caring / Help (CH):** The individual reports that he or she provides care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy for another, providing for the physical, material, social, or emotional welfare or well-being of the other.
4. **Unity/Togetherness (UT):** Whereas the communal themes of LF, DG, and CH tend to specific particular relationships between the protagonist and one or a few other people, the theme of Unity/Togetherness captures the communal idea of being part of a larger community.





A musician experiences a sense of power or mastery during a performance.

A person is granted an important position or awarded a prestigious job.

A person feels empowered by contact with a guru or spiritual guide.


A secretary takes over an office and turns it into a model of efficiency and productivity.

A young couple enjoy lovemaking on a Saturday afternoon.

“Sara and I had been writing letters to each other all summer.

“I was warm, surrounded by friends and positive regard that night. I felt unconditionally loved.”

Providing assistance or care for spouses, siblings, parents, friends, co- workers, and colleagues may be included, as well.



# Strengthened agency in the narrative of Naomi

“I found it difficult to consider myself important. At our home one was easily regarded as selfish and that was not allowed. It had to be cozy; "Tell me how much fun it was at school?"



The turning point came when a therapist told me she gave me permission not to adjust. Then it dawned on me that I could also be busy with myself. Something tilted in me and I started to learn to guard my limits. It took some time getting used to that, for me and the people around me. But if someone couldn't accept my limits, then I also felt that that person wasn't right for me. I learned to take a bit more of a 'fuck you ' attitude.





# Changing experiences of communion in the narrative of Naomi


If I was sad, it was quickly brushed aside. .



Even though the people around me cared about me, I didn't show myself.



therapy, and the therapists did see through me. They said things like, 'You're way too preoccupied with others. What's going on with you?' Because of all the confrontations with others it felt like a mirror maze. I found that intense but instructive. I learned to be vulnerable, that my emotions are allowed to be there and how I can connect with others.




# Communion themes in the novel of Baldwin

But I cannot leave it at that ; there is more to it than that. In spite of everything, there was in the life I led a zest and a joy and a capacity for facing and surviving disaster that are very moving and very rare. Perhaps we were, all of us – pimps, whores, racketeers, church members, and children – bound together by the nature of our oppression, the specific and peculiar complex of risks we had to run ; if so, within these limits we sometimes achieved with each other a freedom that was close to love. I remember, anyway, church suppers and outings, and, later, after I left the church, rent and waistline parties where rage and sorrow sat in the darkness and did not stir, and we ate and drank and talked and laughed and danced and forgot all about ‘the man’. We had the liquor, the chicken, the music, and each other, and had no need to pretend to be what we were not. This is the freedom that one hears in some gospel songs, for example, and in jazz. In all jazz, and especially in



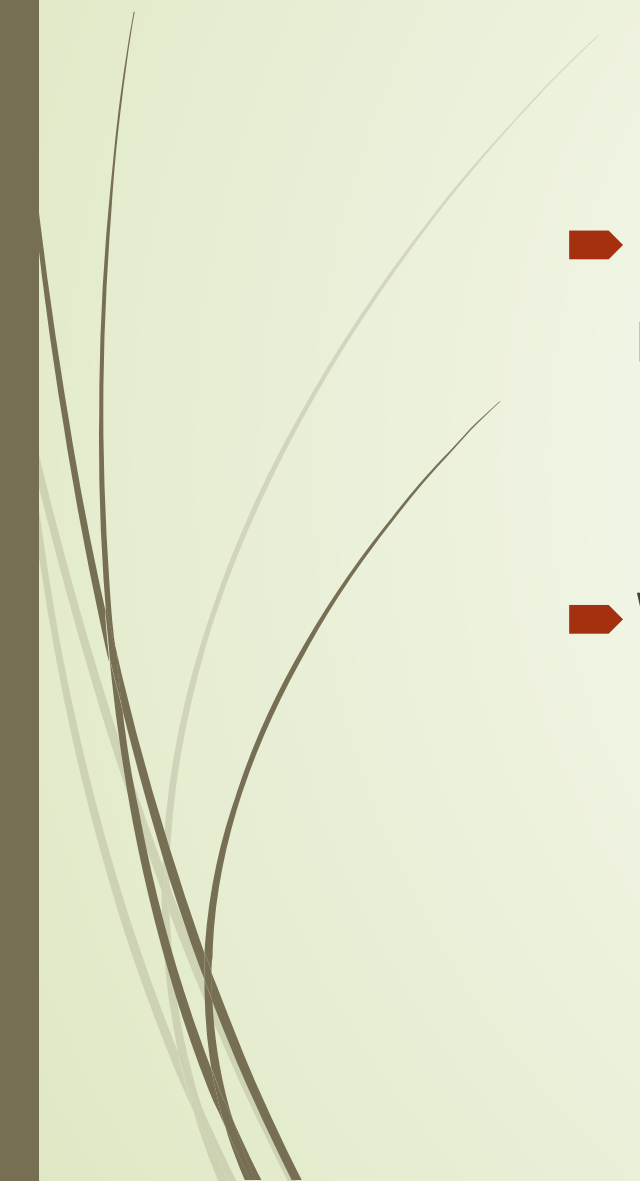
# Agentic themes in the novel of Baldwin



existent. I certainly could not discover any principled reason for not becoming a criminal, and it is not my poor, God-fearing parents who are to be indicted for the lack but this society. I was icily determined – more determined, really, than I then knew – never to make my peace with the ghetto but to die and go to Hell before I would let any white man spit on me, before I would accept my ‘place’ in this republic. I did not intend to allow the white people of this country to tell me who I was, and limit me that way, and polish me off that way. And yet, of course, at the same time, I was being spat on and defined and described and limited, and could have been polished off with no effort whatever. Every Negro boy – in my situation during those years, at least – who reaches this point realizes, at once, profoundly, because he wants to live, that he stands in great peril and must find, with speed, a ‘thing’, a gimmick, to lift him out, to start him on his way. And it does not matter



# Point of discussion

- **Is it just okay to do this coding to someone's narrative?**
  - **Why could that be problematic?**
- 



# Other coding schemes

Motivational themes	Agency <sup>a</sup>	The degree to which the protagonist can initiate changes on his or her own, achieve some degree of control over the course of his or her experiences, and affect his or her own life. This is often exemplified by aspects of self-mastery and control, status striving, achievement, and power.
	Communion <sup>a</sup>	The degree to which the protagonist aims to have a sense of togetherness and harmony with other people or their environment, to share, help, connect to, and care for others.
	Growth goals	The degree to which the protagonist makes intentional efforts to guide his or her self-development in a personally meaningful direction, oriented toward personal growth.
Affective themes	Contamination <sup>a</sup>	The protagonist describes an event that moves from a good, affectively positive scene to a bad, affectively negative scene, in which good things turn into bad outcomes.
	Redemption <sup>a</sup>	The protagonist describes an event that moves from a bad, affectively negative scene to a subsequent good, affectively positive scene. The bad is redeemed, salvaged, mitigated, or made better in light of the ensuing good.
	Positive resolution <sup>a</sup>	The protagonist is able to come to peace with, or let go of, a challenging event.
Themes of integrative meaning	Accommodative processing	The degree to which the protagonist has been forced to change, centrally and qualitatively, his or her views of the self and world, by actively experiencing a paradigmatic shift that requires a revision of structures and/or important changes in response to the environment.
	Exploratory processing <sup>a</sup>	The degree to which the protagonist makes an active and engaged effort to explore, reflect on, or analyze a difficult experience with openness to learning from it and incorporating a sense of change into the life story.
	Meaning-making <sup>a</sup>	The degree to which the protagonist learns something or gleans a message from an event (e.g., no meaning, vague meaning, learning concrete lessons, gaining deep insights).
Structural elements of narratives	Coherence	The degree to which the narrator situates the characters of his story and their actions in a specific context, the story follows a temporal sequence of goal-oriented actions that are culturally recognized, emotions are clearly expressed in support of the point of the narrative, and narrative is integrated into larger life themes and meanings.
	Complexity	The degree of engagement in the narrative processing, as shown by depth of thought and nuance, such as seeing a variety of perspectives or emotions.

# Variation in Narrative Identity Is Associated With Trajectories of Mental Health Over Several Years

Jonathan M. Adler  
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering

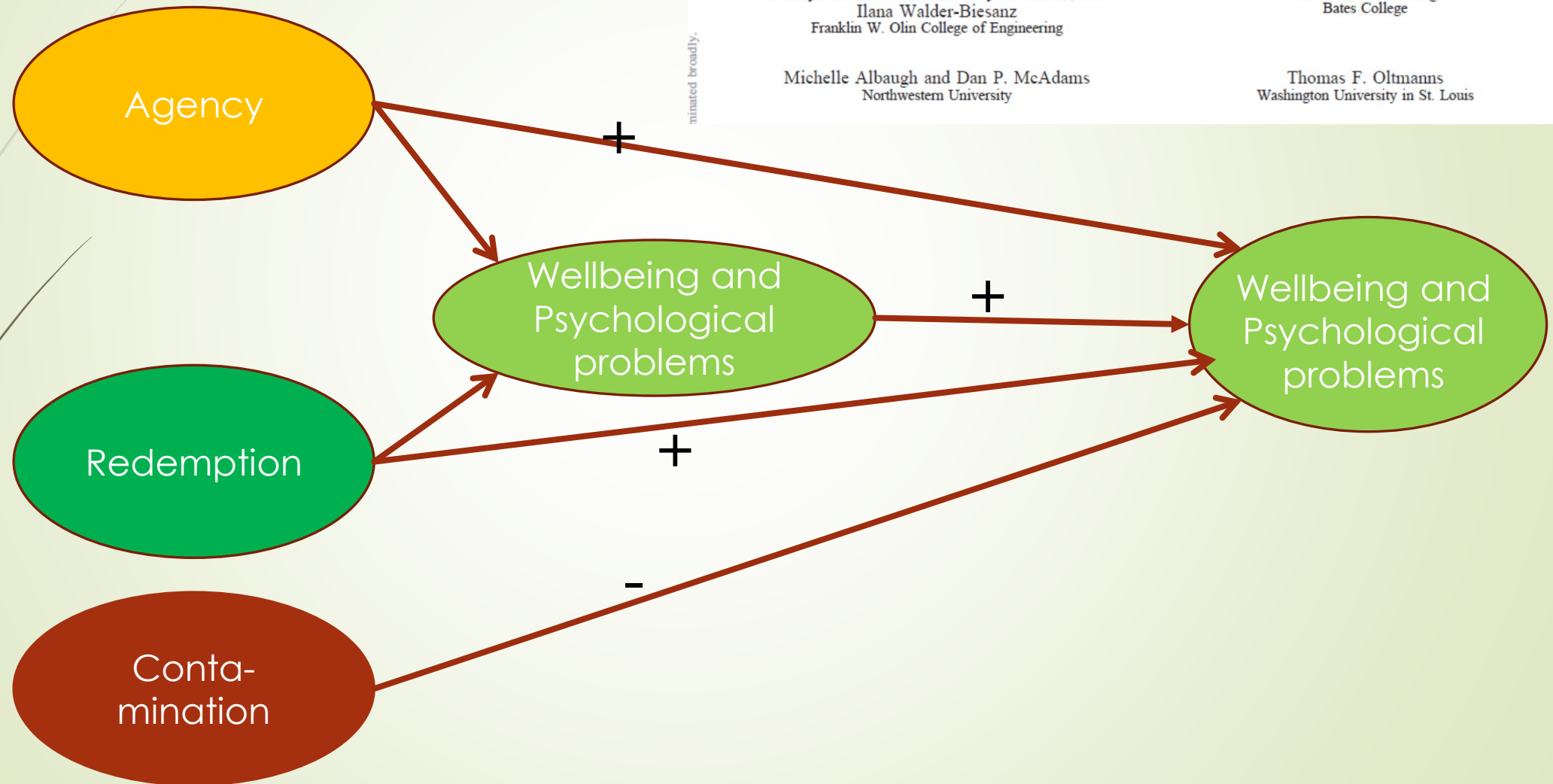
Ariana F. Turner  
Scripps College

Kathryn M. Brookshier, Casey Monahan, and  
Ilana Walder-Biesanz  
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering

Luke H. Harmeling  
Bates College

Michelle Albaugh and Dan P. McAdams  
Northwestern University

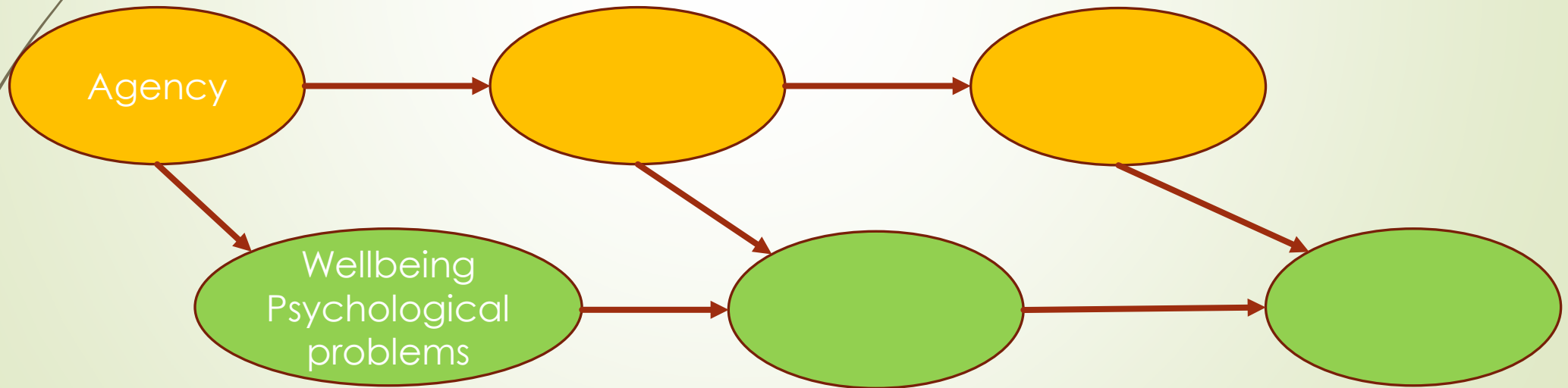
Thomas F. Oltmanns  
Washington University in St. Louis



# PERSONALITY PROCESSES AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

## Living Into the Story: Agency and Coherence in a Longitudinal Study of Narrative Identity Development and Mental Health Over the Course of Psychotherapy

Jonathan M. Adler  
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering







# Qualitative analysis of narratives and other materials

These coding schemes are a way of quantifying narratives, but there are also non-quantitative methods for data analysis, such as:

- ▀ Thematic analysis
- ▀ Grounded theory
- ▀ Case-wise narrative analysis
- ▀ Phenomenological analysis
- ▀ Etc.



# Beyond self-report

IV. Other methods of observation

# Reports by other informants

		Context	
		Nonhome	Home
Perspective	Self	Child	Child
	Other	Teacher	Mother

# Clinical judgement

**SWAP**

*Shedler-Westen **Assessment Procedure***

Your clinical insight  
Our science

# Observation of infants and children



# Animal observation



# Projective tests

