

# Race and the Machine

Re-examining Race in Data Analysis

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# First, some links:

Tweet: @mpetitchou

Paper: [bit.ly/racepaper](http://bit.ly/racepaper)

#d4gx

# What is Race?



# Essentialist

fixed, immutable, pre-determined.

# Constructionist

contextual, behavioral, social.

# TL;DR

1. If you are a Data Scientist, be a Social Constructionist\*
2. Algorithms can be racist, but we can do better!

# Why?

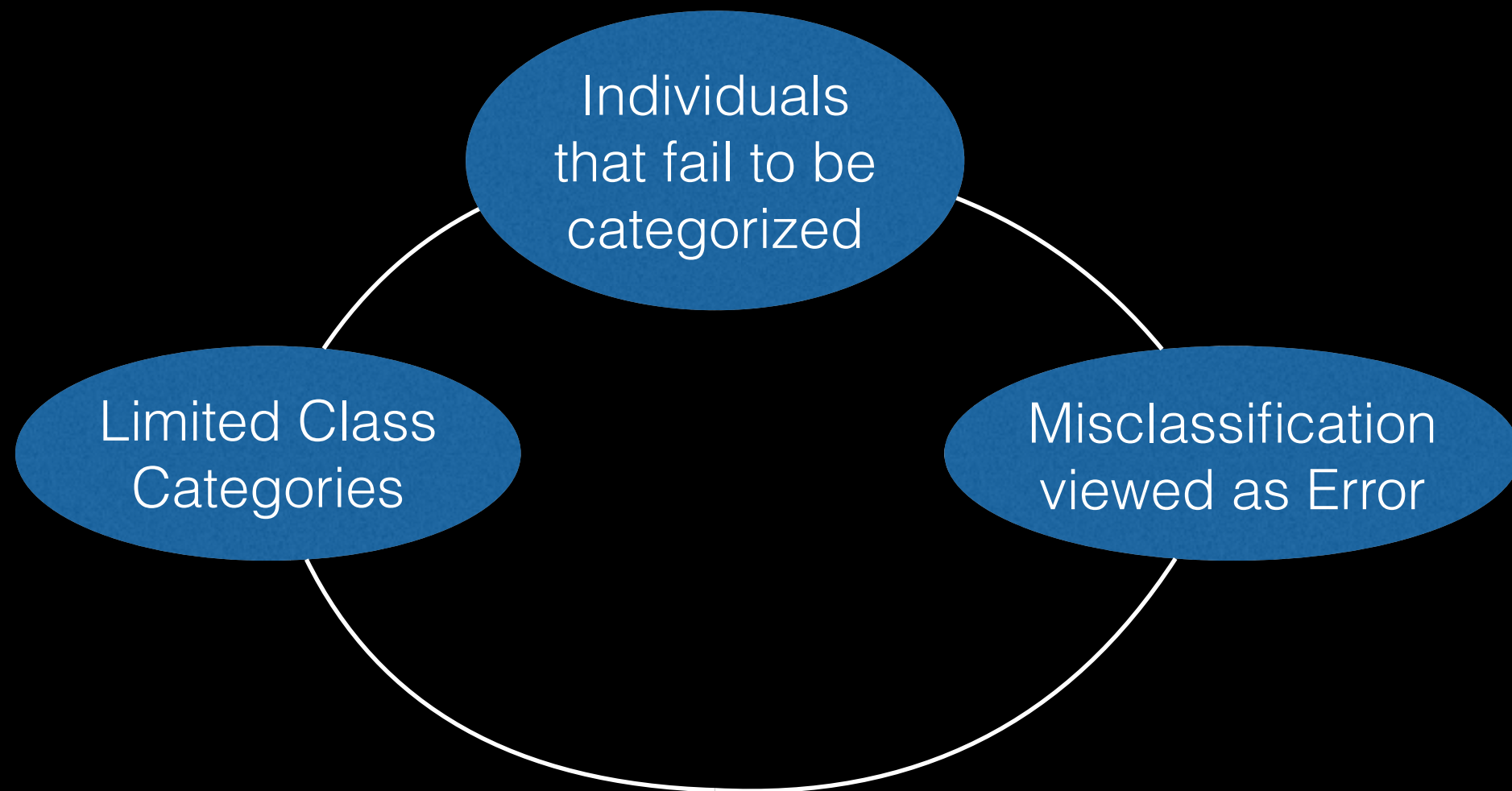
By definition, data mining\* is the *mining of observed behaviors within a social context*.

Data isn't static, and neither are people's behavior.

Making the assumption that race *is not* performative limits analysis.

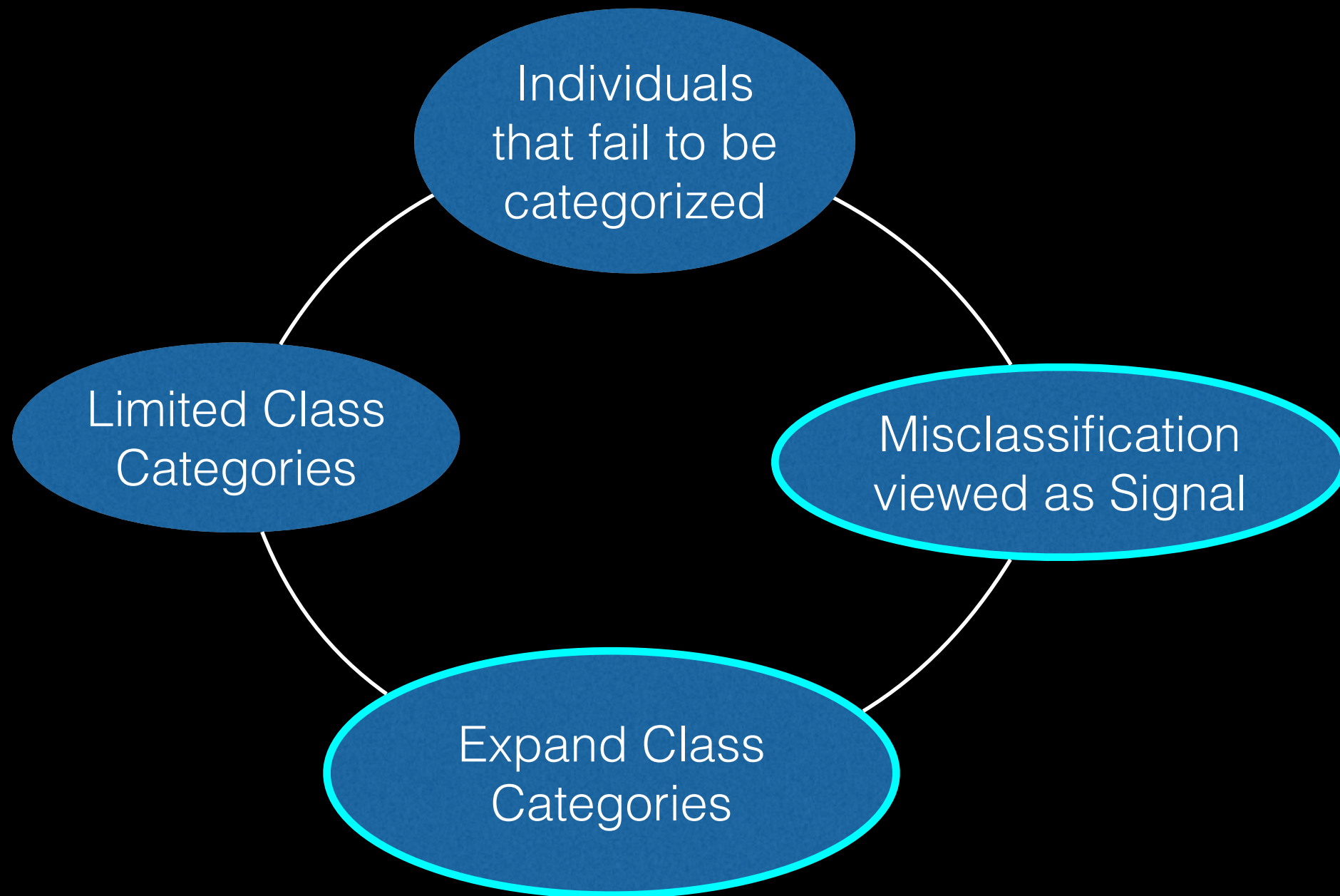
Social constructionism takes that into account.

# Stereotyping



Assumption that behavior explains race, rather than race **is behavioral**.

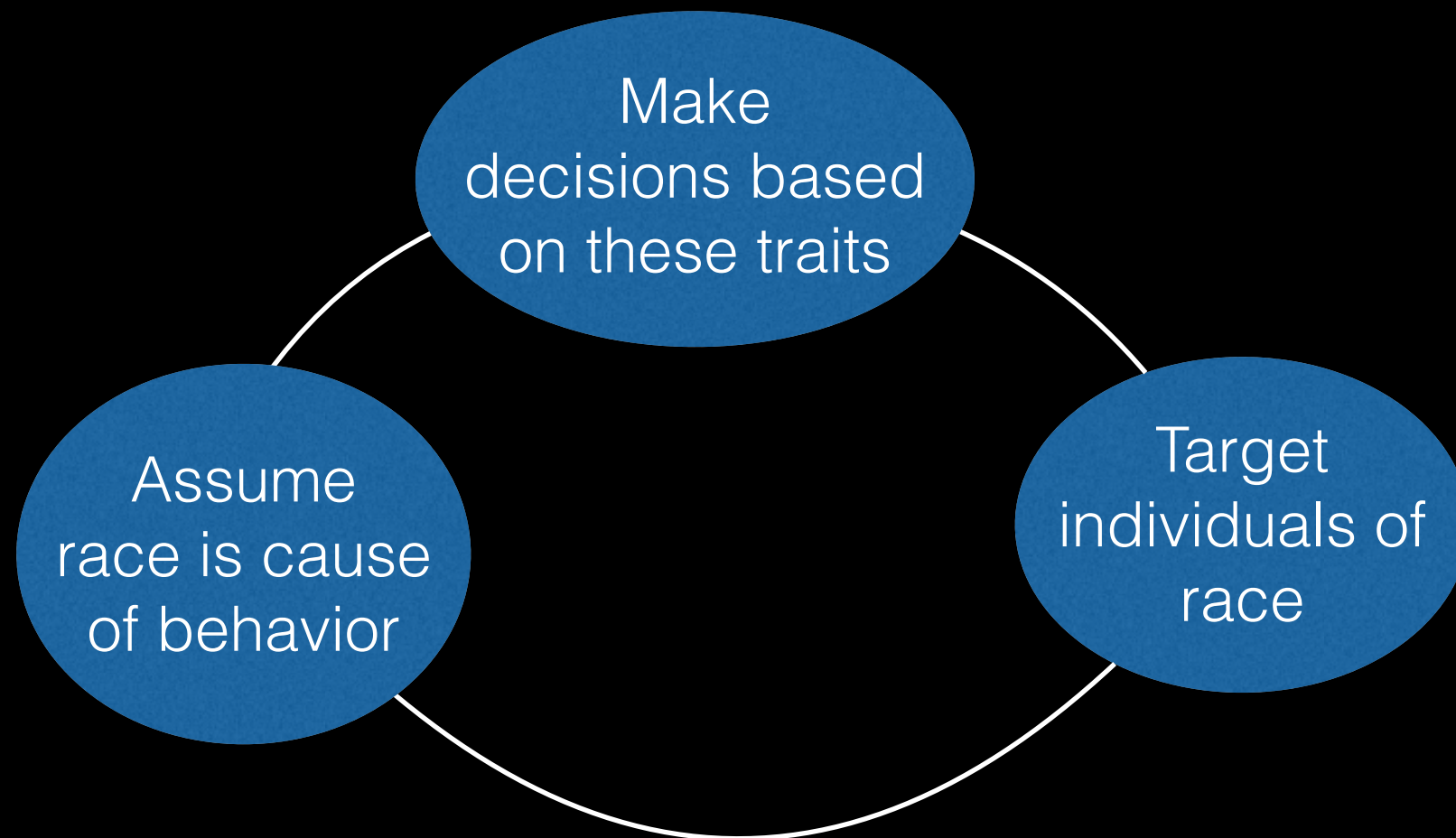
# Breaking the Cycle



Behavior is a **snapshot in time**.  
People might belong to several classes.

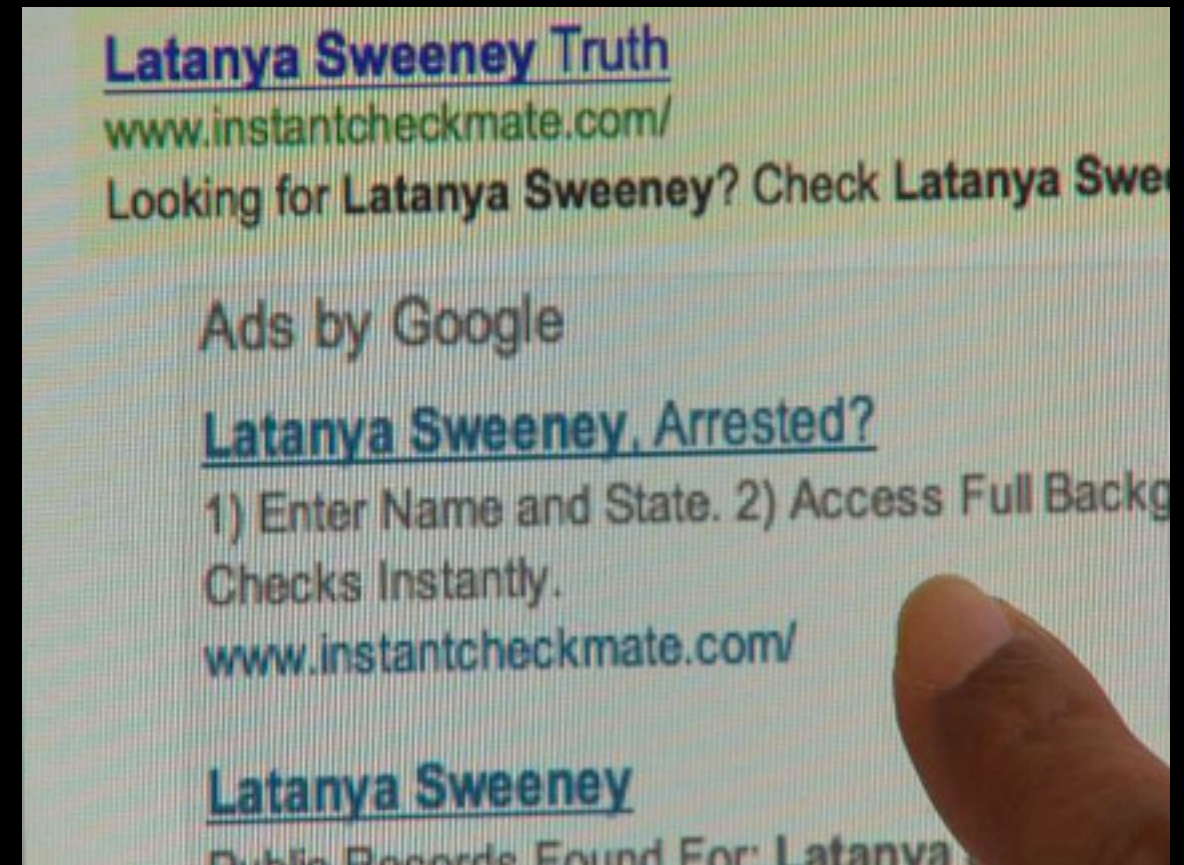


# Direct Profiling



Assumption that race causes behavior,  
not that **race is behavioral**.

# Profiling by Proxying Race



Make  
decisions based  
on these traits

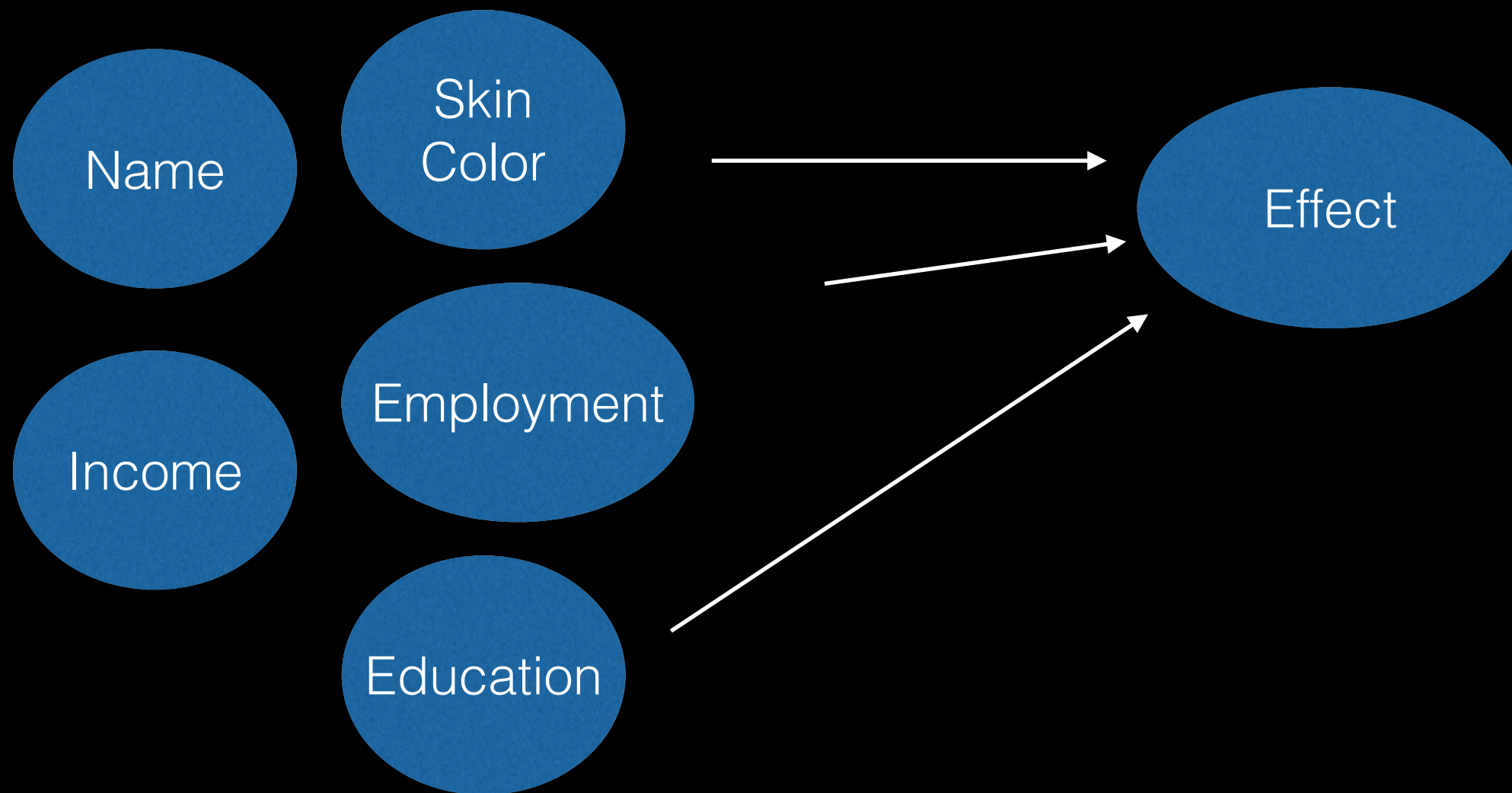
Examine  
traits which  
proxy race

Racial  
profiling

# Solutions: Unbundling Race



# Unbundling Race



# How can we do better?

- View outliers as signal
- Include contextual, temporal considerations
- Unbundle race
- Monitor Algorithms
- Your idea here!