Between-Person Borderline Personality Symptom Structure Differs from Individuals’ Symptom Processes
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Introduction
Research has frequently made assumptions about individual experience of borderline personality disorder (BPD) using between-person analyses.

- **Between-person analyses** focus on how symptoms co-occur between persons: when one symptom is present, are other symptoms on average also likely to occur?

- **Within-person analyses** depict how the symptoms are correlated in individuals over time. Symptoms that frequently co-occur in the same person may actually be experienced at different times.

- **Within-person analyses** can describe individual’s or average experiences (chain within-person analyses).

Purpose: To determine how the within-person symptom structures of BPD compare to the between-person structure—both average within-person structure and individuals’.

Importance: To link the clinical research focus on the average individual with the clinical practice focus on individual patient experiences.

Method
- 282 participants sampled from community and clinical population, 77 met SIDP-IV criteria for BPD.
- Participants reported momentary experience of symptoms 5 times a day for two weeks.
- 171 Participants completed a second wave of similar data collection 18 months later for Wave 2.

Results
Symptom Loadings for Within- and Between-Person Structures

- Between-person factor analysis revealed one factor accounted for 66% of variance in Wave 1 and 71% of variance in Wave 2.
- Chain within-person factor analysis found one factor accounted for 40% of variance in Wave 1 and 41% of variance in Wave 2.

Two Example Participants’ Factor Structures

Conclusions
- The between-person structure generally reflects the average within-person structure.
- However, individuals have a greater diversity of patterns of symptom experience than is reflected in the chain within-person structure or the between-person structure.

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