



# Interpersonal and Affective Variability in Relation to General and Specific Personality Pathology

WHITNEY R. RINGWALD & AIDAN G.C. WRIGHT

## INTRODUCTION

General and specific models of personality pathology reflect a theoretical structure in which self/interpersonal dysfunction manifests in different, characteristic trait styles.

A comprehensive model must account for **nomothetic structure and interpersonal processes** that define personality pathology clinically.

Variability is a necessary precondition for establishing the presence of process.

## METHODS

N = 298 undergraduate students  
n = 7,656 interactions

Dispositional measures:  
Personality Inventory for the DSM-5 (maladaptive traits)  
Levels of Personality Functioning Scale (general personality pathology)

10 day EMA protocol:  
Ratings during interactions of dominant/affiliative behavior, negative/ positive affect and behavior of other person.

## RESULTS

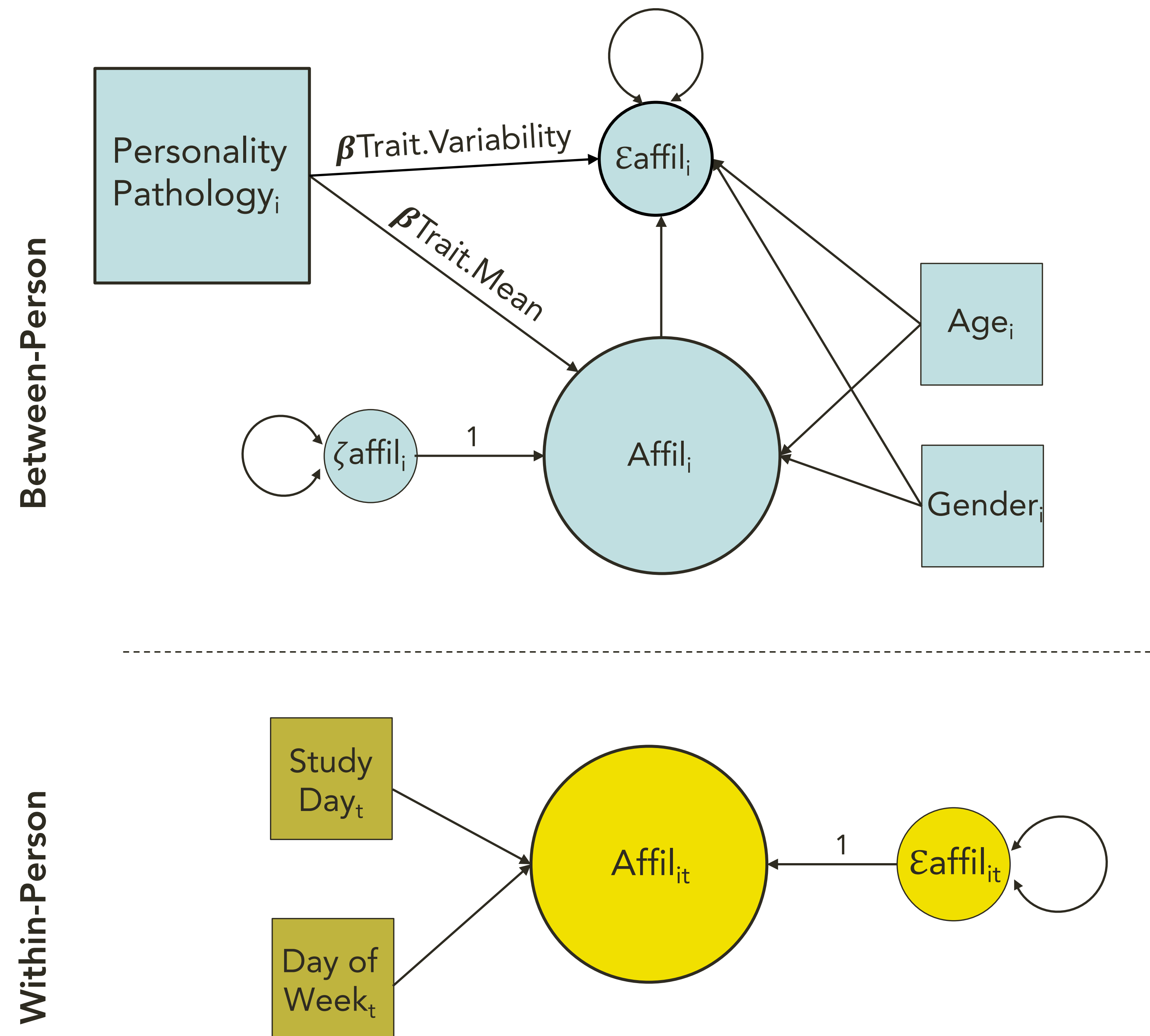
Maladaptive traits are associated with less affiliative behavior, less perceived affiliation, more negative affect and less positive affect during interactions.

|                      | $\beta$ Trait.Mean |       |           |             |      |       | $\beta$ Trait.Variability |       |           |             |       |       |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                      | Dom                | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA   | PA    | Dom                       | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA    | PA    |
| Antagonism           | 0.08               | -0.14 | -0.07     | -0.14       | 0.19 | 0.02  | 0.07                      | -0.03 | 0.09      | -0.02       | -0.05 | -0.07 |
| Detachment           | 0.04               | -0.14 | -0.01     | -0.14       | 0.08 | -0.22 | -0.04                     | 0.02  | -0.02     | 0.02        | -0.05 | -0.05 |
| Disinhibition        | -0.04              | -0.14 | 0.00      | -0.14       | 0.20 | -0.11 | 0.10                      | 0.06  | 0.11      | 0.07        | 0.03  | 0.00  |
| Negative Affectivity | -0.05              | -0.05 | 0.07      | -0.06       | 0.20 | -0.12 | 0.09                      | 0.10  | 0.11      | 0.12        | 0.11  | 0.10  |
| Psychoticism         | 0.03               | -0.06 | 0.01      | -0.09       | 0.16 | -0.02 | 0.08                      | 0.00  | 0.12      | 0.10        | 0.00  | -0.01 |

## ANALYTIC PLAN

We used multi-level structural equation modeling to examine associations between personality pathology and:

- mean interpersonal behavior, perception and affect during interactions
- amount of variability (i.e., how much an individual deviated from their mean) in those same variables



...But after accounting for covariation between traits, most of these associations are no longer significant suggesting these effects are driven by their shared variance.

|                      | $\beta$ Trait.Mean |       |           |             |       |       | $\beta$ Trait.Variability |       |           |             |       |       |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                      | Dom                | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA    | PA    | Dom                       | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA    | PA    |
| Antagonism           | 0.12               | -0.08 | -0.09     | -0.08       | 0.13  | 0.13  | 0.04                      | -0.06 | 0.06      | -0.10       | -0.07 | -0.07 |
| Detachment           | 0.03               | -0.12 | -0.01     | -0.09       | -0.02 | -0.25 | -0.12                     | 0.01  | -0.11     | -0.03       | -0.07 | -0.08 |
| Disinhibition        | -0.12              | -0.10 | 0.00      | -0.08       | 0.06  | -0.12 | 0.06                      | 0.06  | 0.04      | 0.03        | 0.03  | 0.00  |
| Negative Affectivity | -0.05              | 0.01  | 0.08      | 0.00        | 0.16  | -0.06 | 0.08                      | 0.10  | 0.09      | 0.09        | 0.13  | 0.14  |
| Psychoticism         | 0.05               | 0.07  | 0.02      | 0.03        | 0.01  | 0.13  | 0.05                      | -0.06 | 0.09      | 0.09        | -0.02 | -0.02 |

General personality pathology is most distinguished from specific traits by **variability** in interpersonal behavior and perception.

|   | $\beta$ Trait.Mean |       |           |             |      |       | $\beta$ Trait.Variability |       |           |             |      |       |
|---|--------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|------|-------|
|   | Dom                | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA   | PA    | Dom                       | Affil | Dom Other | Affil Other | NA   | PA    |
| LPFS  | 0.03               | -0.13 | -0.01     | -0.14       | 0.19 | -0.14 | 0.12                      | 0.09  | 0.16      | 0.16        | 0.07 | 0.06  |
| LPFS (accounting for shared variance w/ traits) | 0.06               | -0.06 | -0.02     | -0.05       | 0.09 | -0.07 | 0.14                      | 0.13  | 0.20      | 0.21        | 0.12 | 0.14  |
| Shared trait variance                           | 0.02               | -0.20 | -0.01     | -0.22       | 0.36 | -0.14 | 0.16                      | 0.05  | 0.20      | 0.12        | 0.03 | -0.05 |

Findings suggest processes (i.e., variability) underlying all maladaptive trait styles are associated with typically hostile interactions consistent with a core of interpersonal dysfunction.