

Atypical salience functioning predicts greater creativity and flourishing in everyday life

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Background

Atypical Salience

- To help us decide what to prioritize in any given moment, the mind assigns meaning and significance to potential rewards – known as **motivational salience**
- Extremely dysregulated salience functioning can lead to hallucinations and delusions (seen in schizotypal disorders), but mild instability—referred to as **atypical salience**—may facilitate some cognitive abilities, like creativity
- Daily life research links atypical salience with mostly negative outcomes (suspiciousness, social impairment) whereas the potential upsides are unexplored
- Higher atypical salience may foster eudaimonic forms of well-being (i.e., flourishing), given the centrality of **meaning** in salience processes
- At a trait level, atypical salience is especially coupled with creativity for people with a **promotion focus** style of motivation, behavioral activation system (BAS)

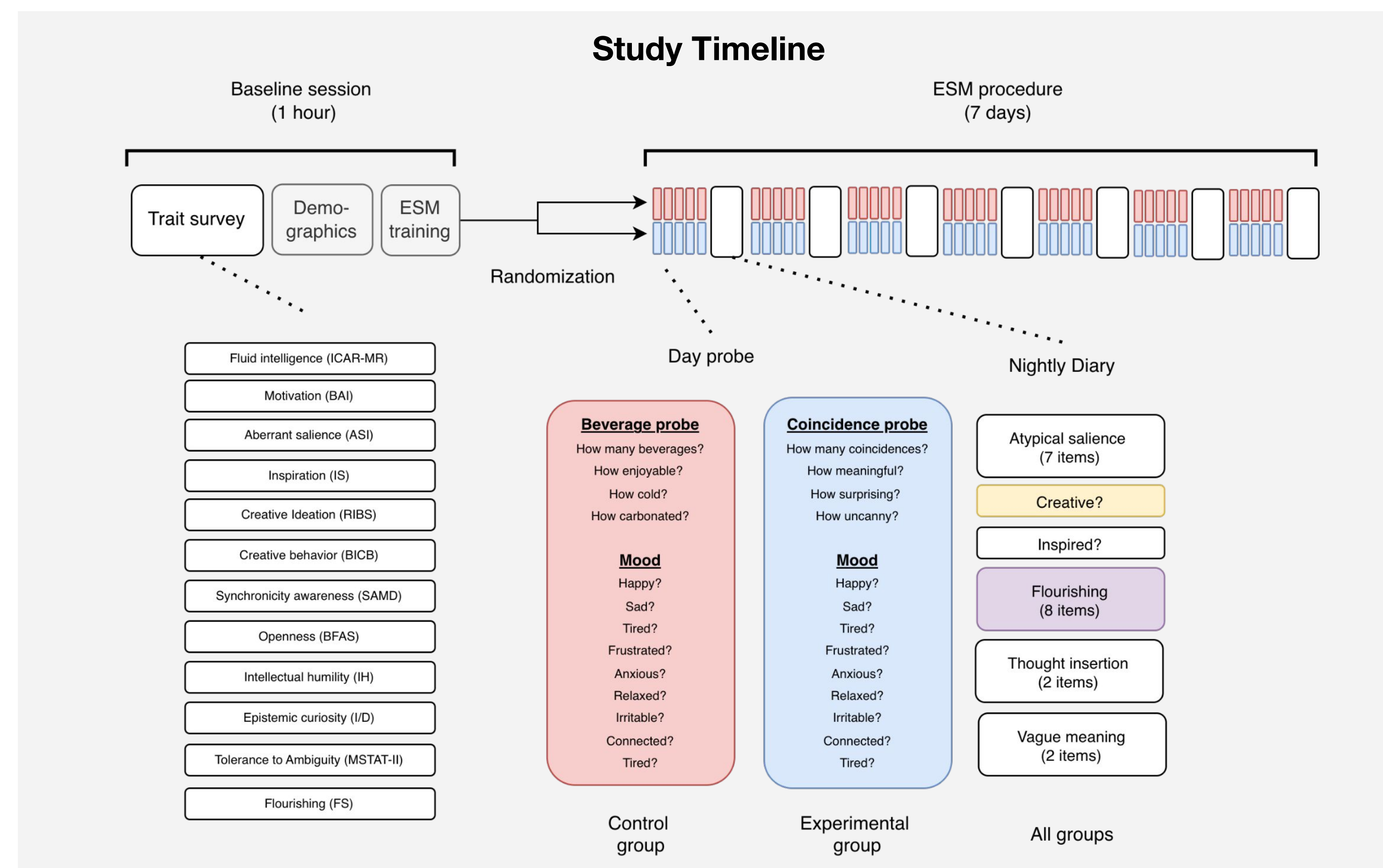
Meaningful Coincidences

- Related to atypical salience is the experience of **meaningful coincidences**, also known as patternicity or synchronicity
- A tendency to notice coincidences is tied with creative behavior and positive mood, but causal evidence for these relationships are lacking

Research Questions

- RQ 1: Does promoting meaningful coincidences enhance creativity or wellbeing?
 RQ 2: Do individual differences in atypical salience explain variation in creativity and wellbeing?
 RQ 3: Are day-to-day fluctuations in atypical salience tied with creativity and wellbeing?
 RQ 4: Does having a promotion focus make moments of atypical salience more conducive for creativity and well-being?

Method



Data Processing

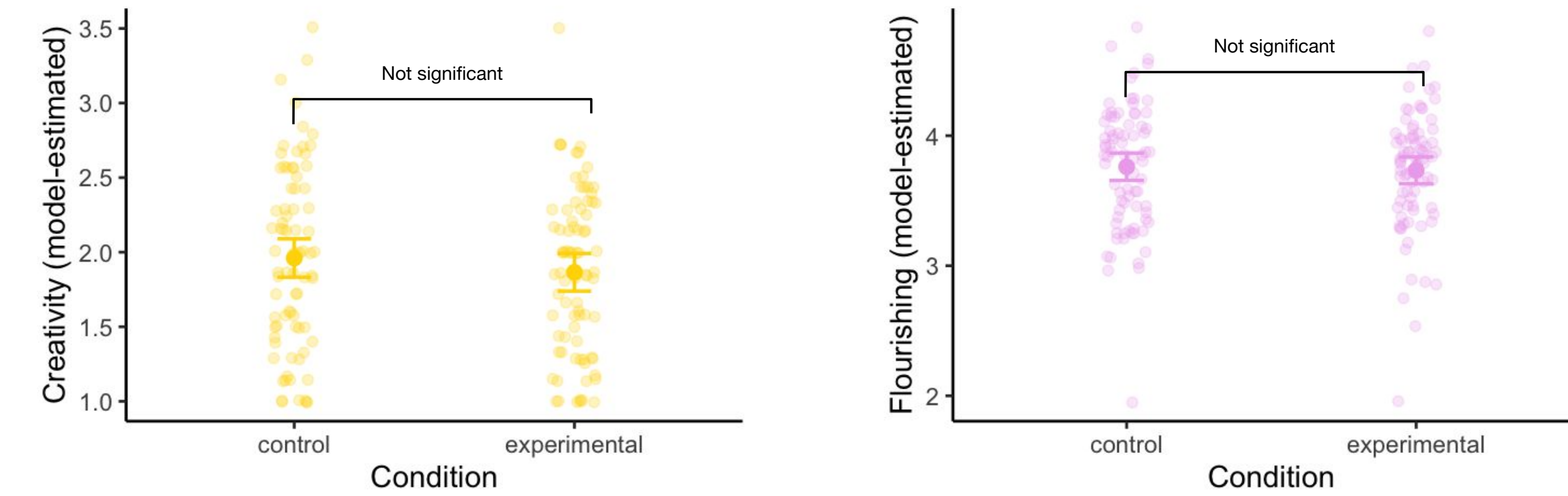
- Excluded participants with less than 3 diaries or 14 ESM probes
- Daily atypical salience → **person-centered observations** and overall **person-means**

Statistical models

- Linear mixed-effect models with participant ID as random effect
- Fluid IQ and time (day of probe) included as covariates
- For cross-level interactions (RQ 4), random slope added for state atypical salience

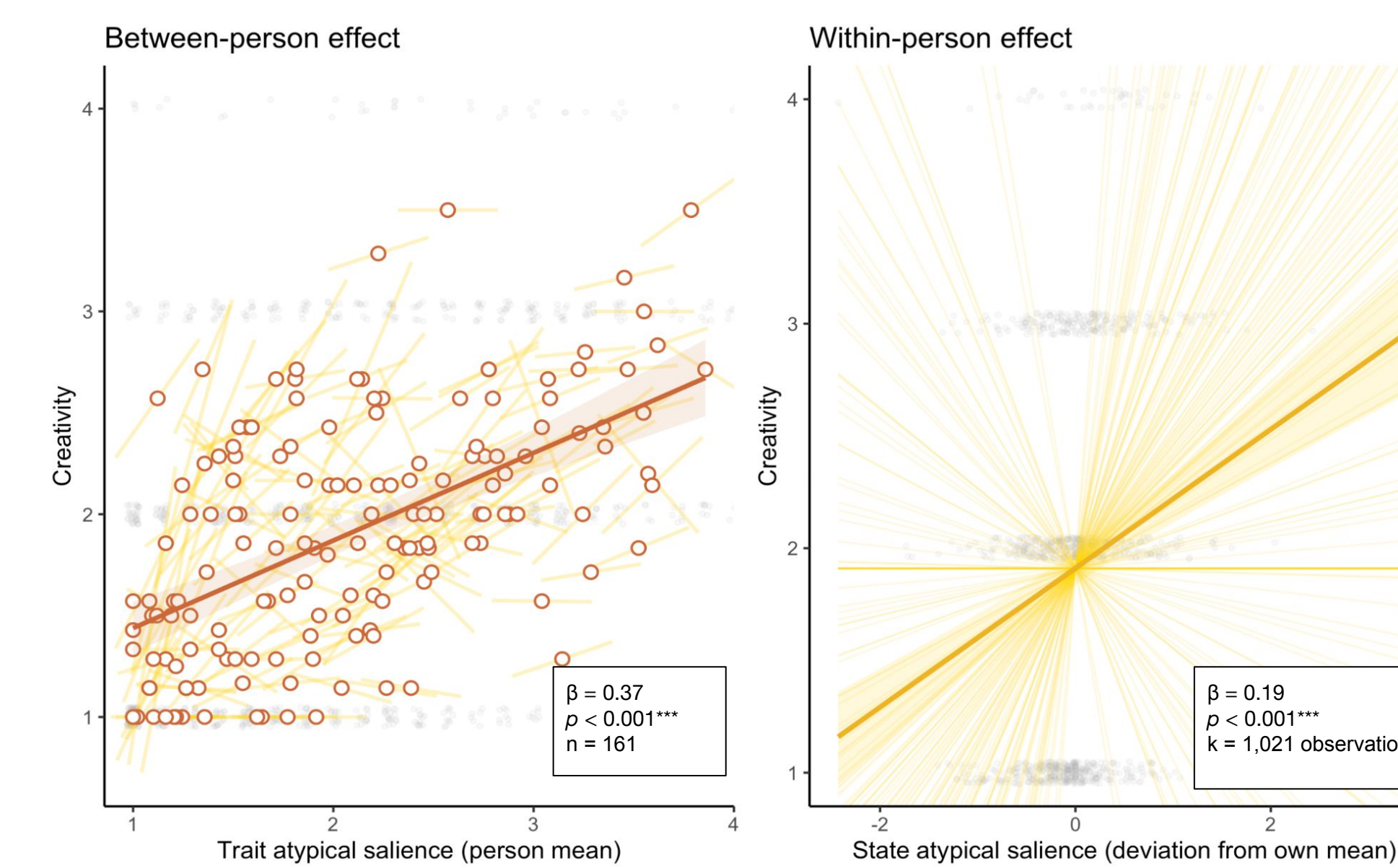
Results

Promoting coincidence awareness did not enhance creativity or flourishing



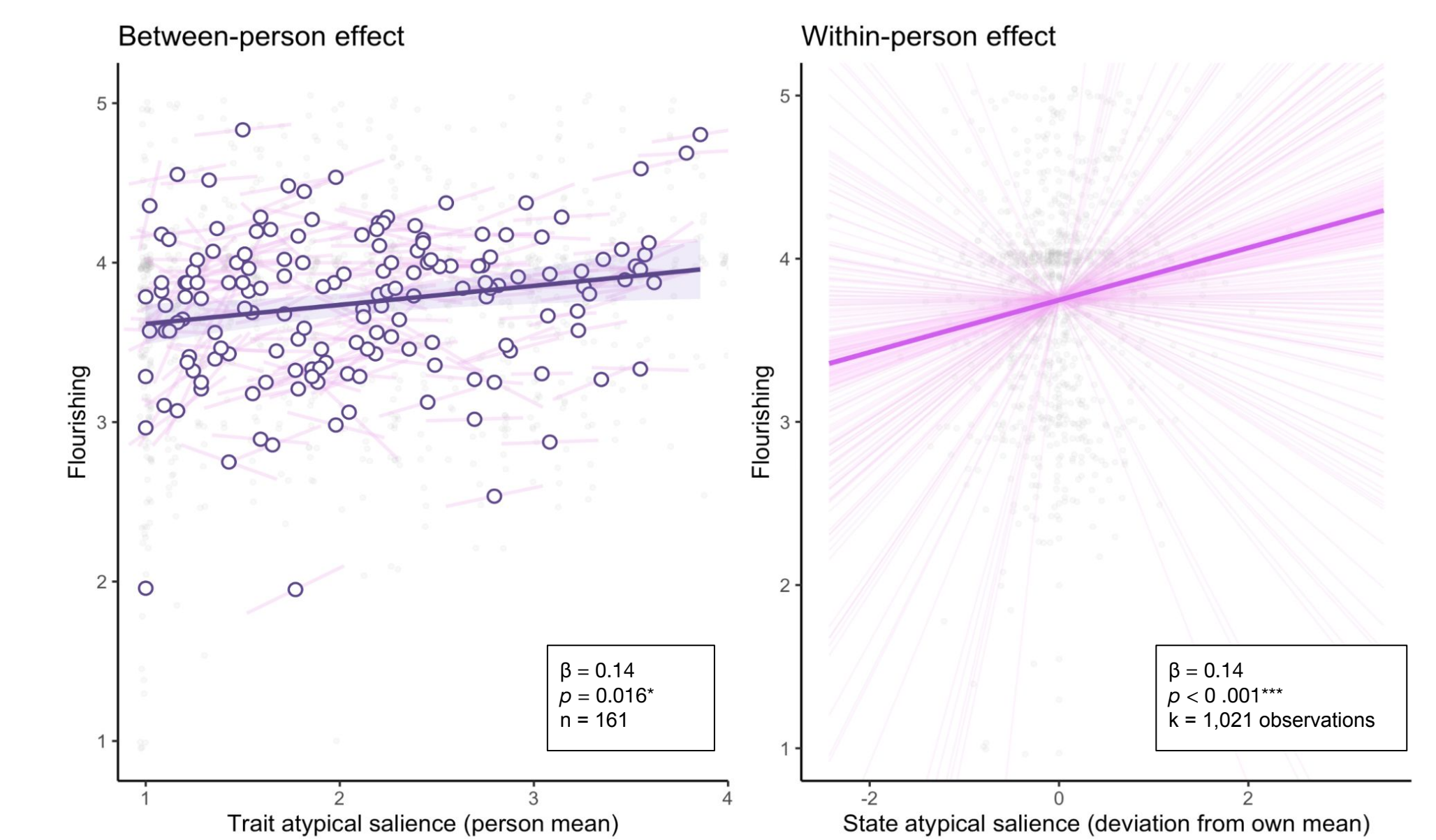
RQ 1

Atypical salience linked with higher creativity as a trait and a state

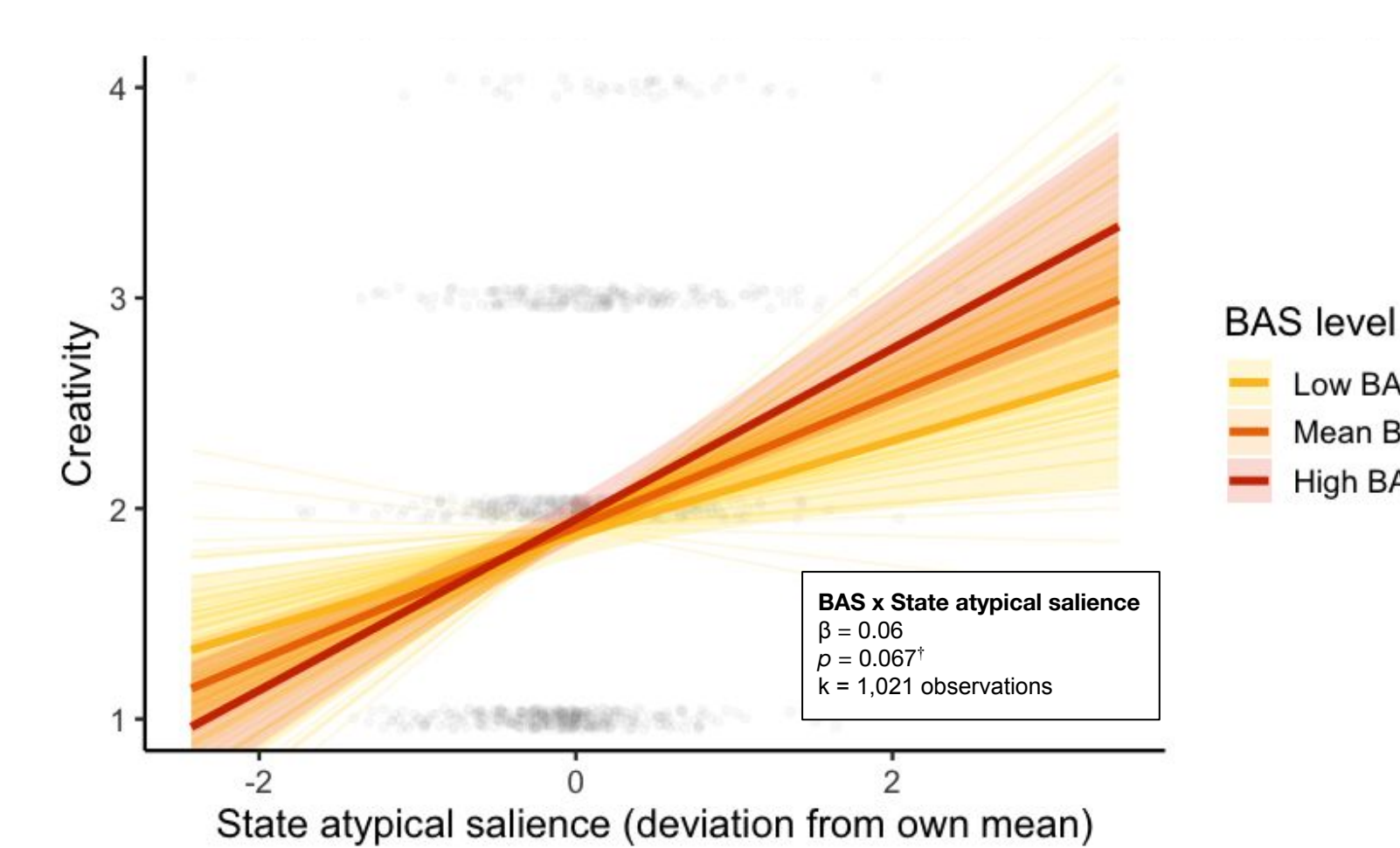


RQs 2 & 3

Atypical salience predicts greater flourishing as a trait and state

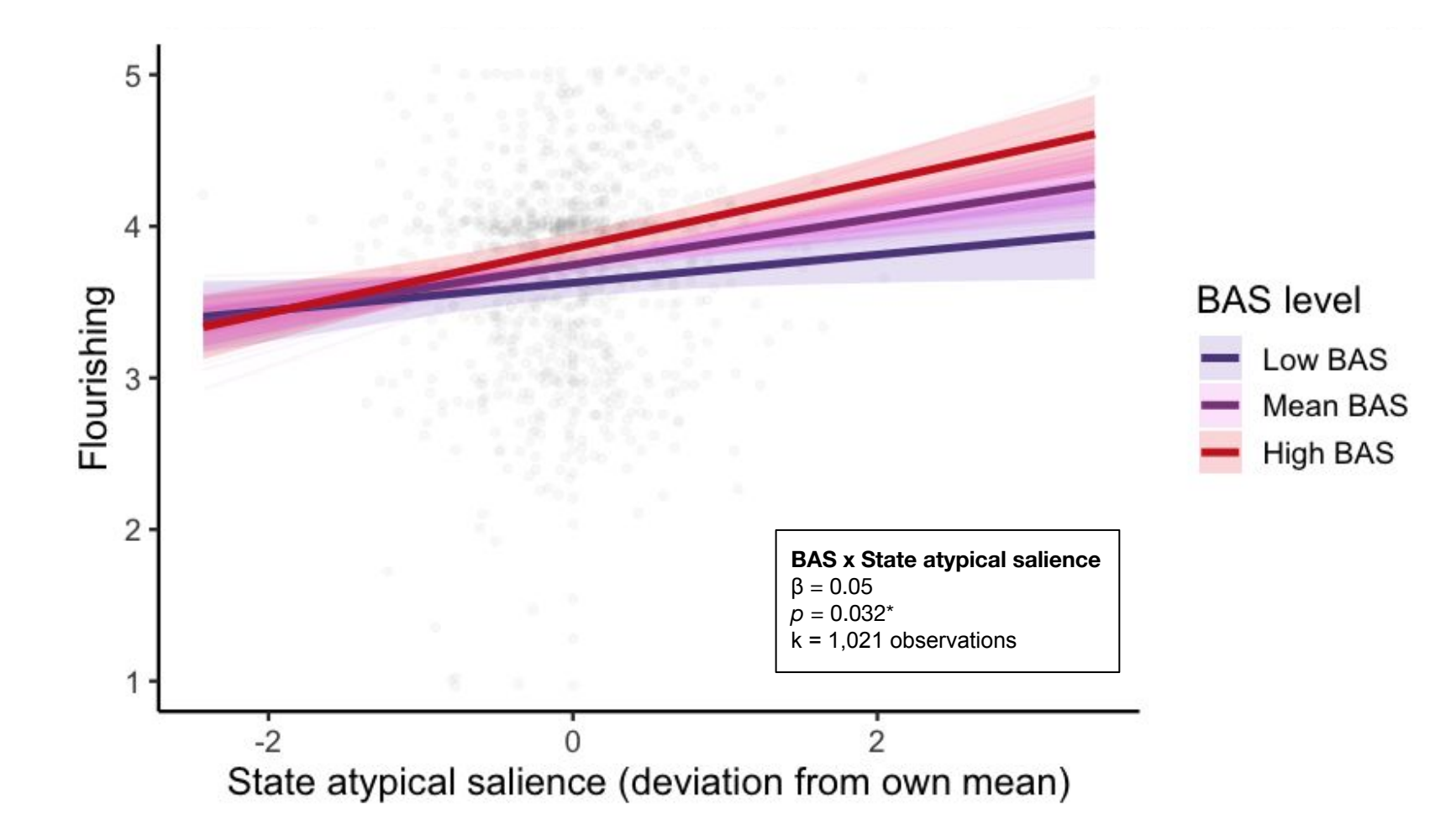


Promotion focus (marginally) strengthens within-person association between creativity and atypical salience



RQ 4

Promotion focus strengthens the within-person association between flourishing and atypical salience



Conclusions

- Paying attention to coincidences (versus non-alcoholic beverages) failed to promote creativity or wellbeing. However, it is not clear if the number or intensity of meaningful coincidences differed across groups
- People who feel heightened salience throughout the day tend to be creative and report a high degree of flourishing
- Creativity and flourishing are elevated on days when salience functioning is more atypical than usual
- Having a promotion focus may amplify the benefits of atypical salience in everyday life

PDF of poster

