

Person or Situation

Psychology

The debate about whether traits predict behaviour at all.

Situationist case

- Mischel: trait-behaviour correlations around 0.30
- Behaviour varies enormously by situation
- Milgram and Zimbardo as evidence
- Predicting one act from a trait fails

Trait case

- Aggregate across occasions and correlations rise
- Traits predict life outcomes over years
- Consistency appears at the pattern level
- 0.30 is not small in behavioural science

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Interactionism resolved it: behaviour is a function of the person and the situation together, and their interaction.

Strong situations — a funeral, a job interview — suppress trait expression. Weak situations reveal it.