

### Introduction

Higgins (1987) said people set their own standards for their ideal self based on the social constructs around them. When discrepancies are found between oneself and the standard it can impact someone's mental health. He named this the Self-Discrepancy Theory. "Normal" is a standard that people use to define themselves and compare themselves to others. Nickerson (2001) said that people project their knowledge onto other people they do not know, using their own understanding of the world and the "norm" to do this. The current study assessed peoples' definitions of "normal" for an array of common traits including physical, personality and health conditions, and compared the participants to their perceived norms.

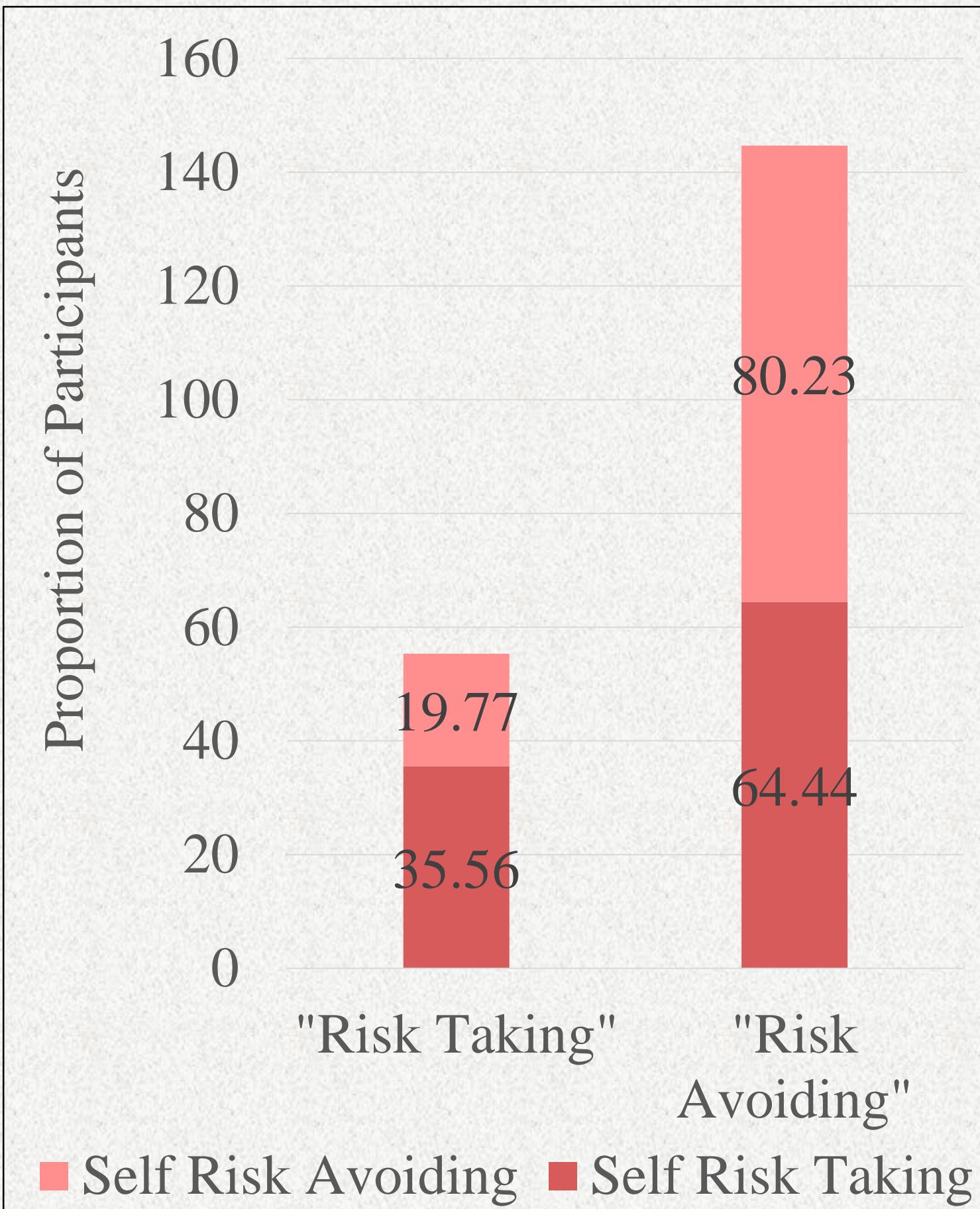
### Participants, Procedure & Design

Eighty-seven males and 44 females from the United States between the ages 18 to 69 (M=34.5) participated. The 15-20 minute survey created on PsychData was posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk.) Participants were paid \$1.25. When the participants opened the survey they were first asked to complete a consent form. The survey questions pertaining to what the participant thought the norm was for physical and personality traits along with medical conditions. Then they filled out the demographics section, and answered the physical and personality questions about themselves. Finally, they were asked to check all of the medical conditions for whom they knew someone personally with the condition.

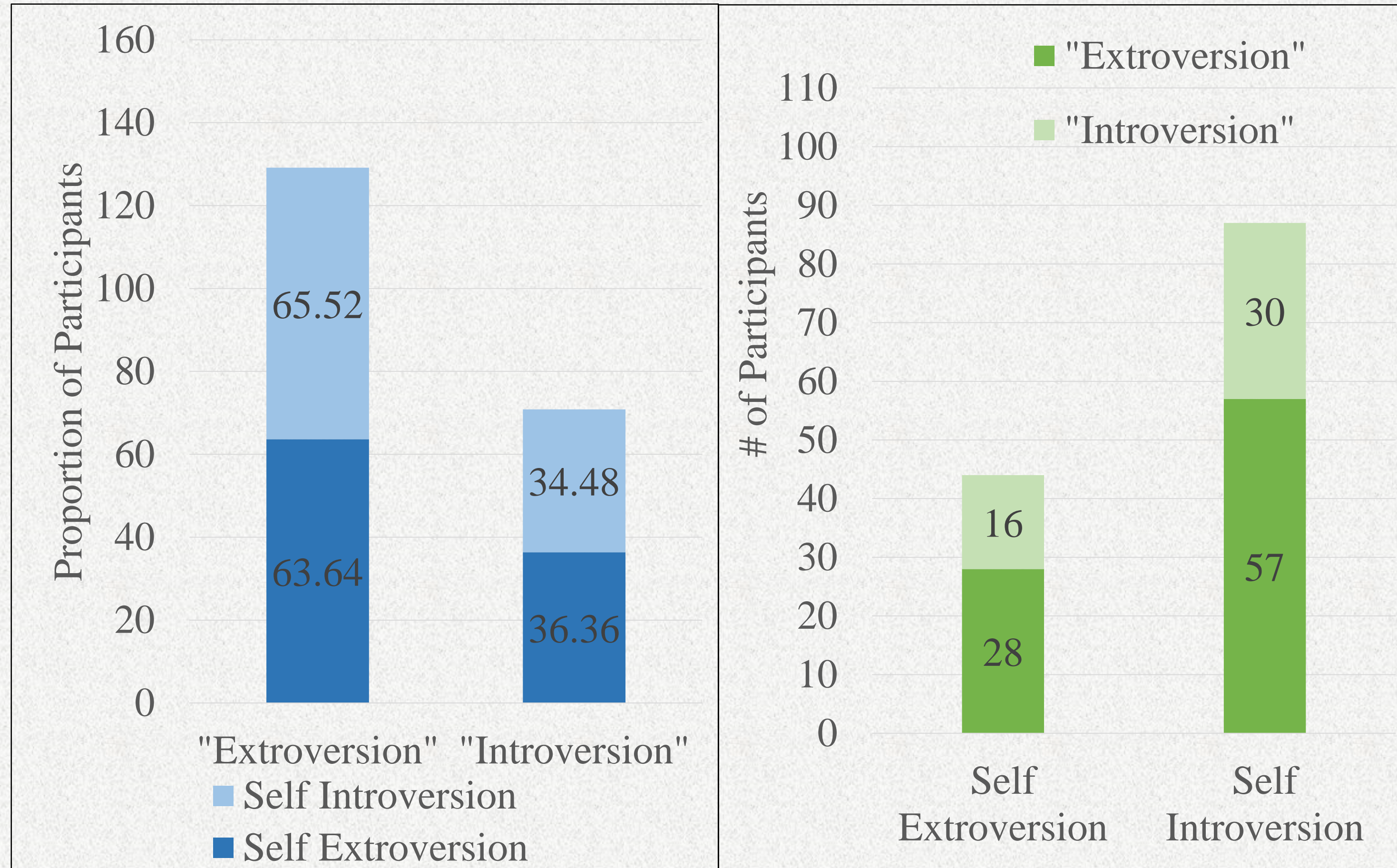
### Physical Traits Results

Actual Height Males x Normal Height Males	.491**
Actual Height Females x Normal Height Females	.475**
Actual Weight Males x Normal Weight Males	.559**
Actual Weight Females x Normal Weight Females	.495**
Actual # of Tattoos x Normal # of Tattoos	.452**
Actual # of Piercings x Normal # of Piercings	.495**

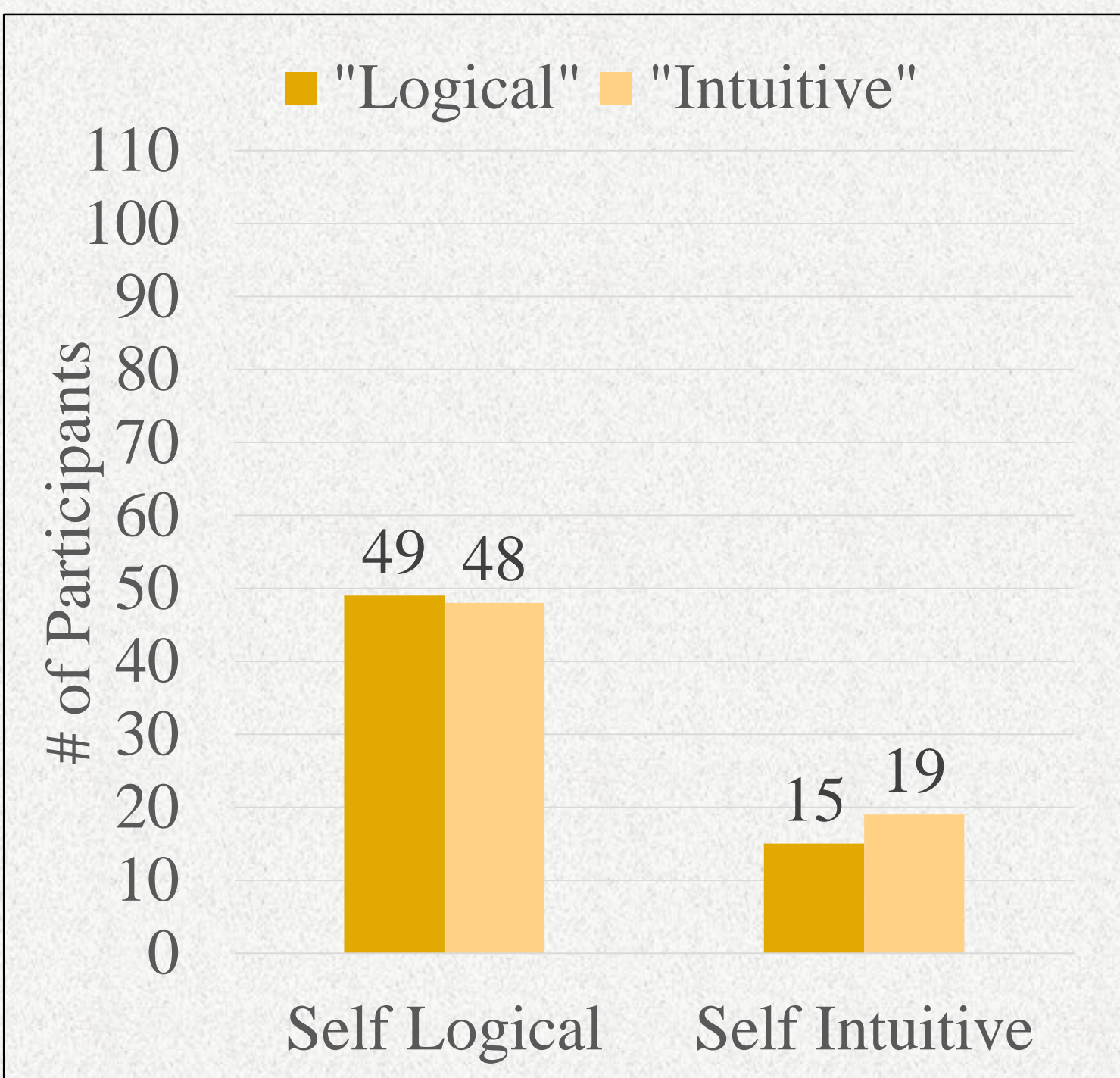
### Personality Traits Results: Sig. Projection of Oneself



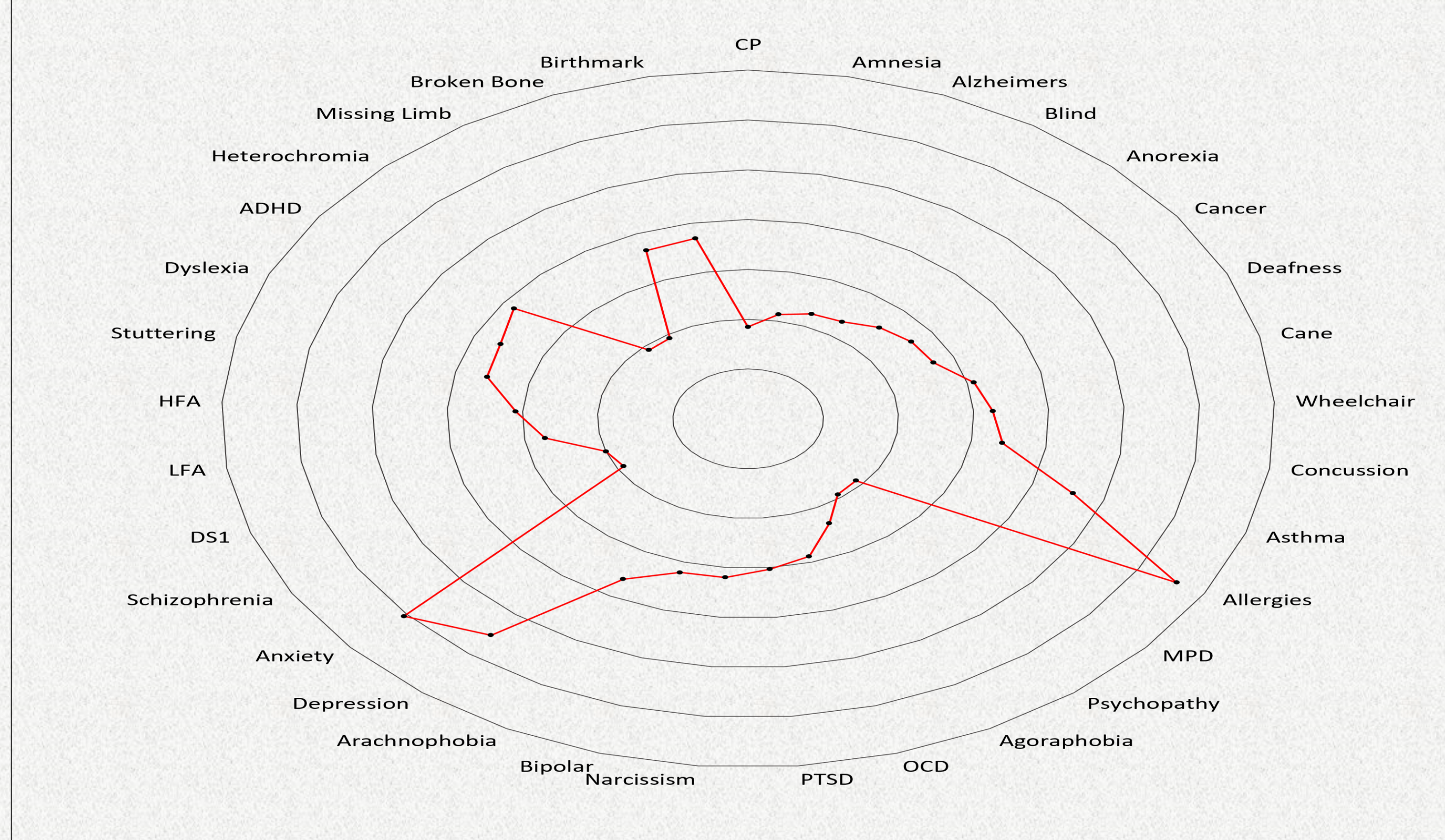
### Personality Traits Results: Opposite from the Norm



### Personality Traits Results: Split-Norm



### Medical Conditions Results: Radar Graph

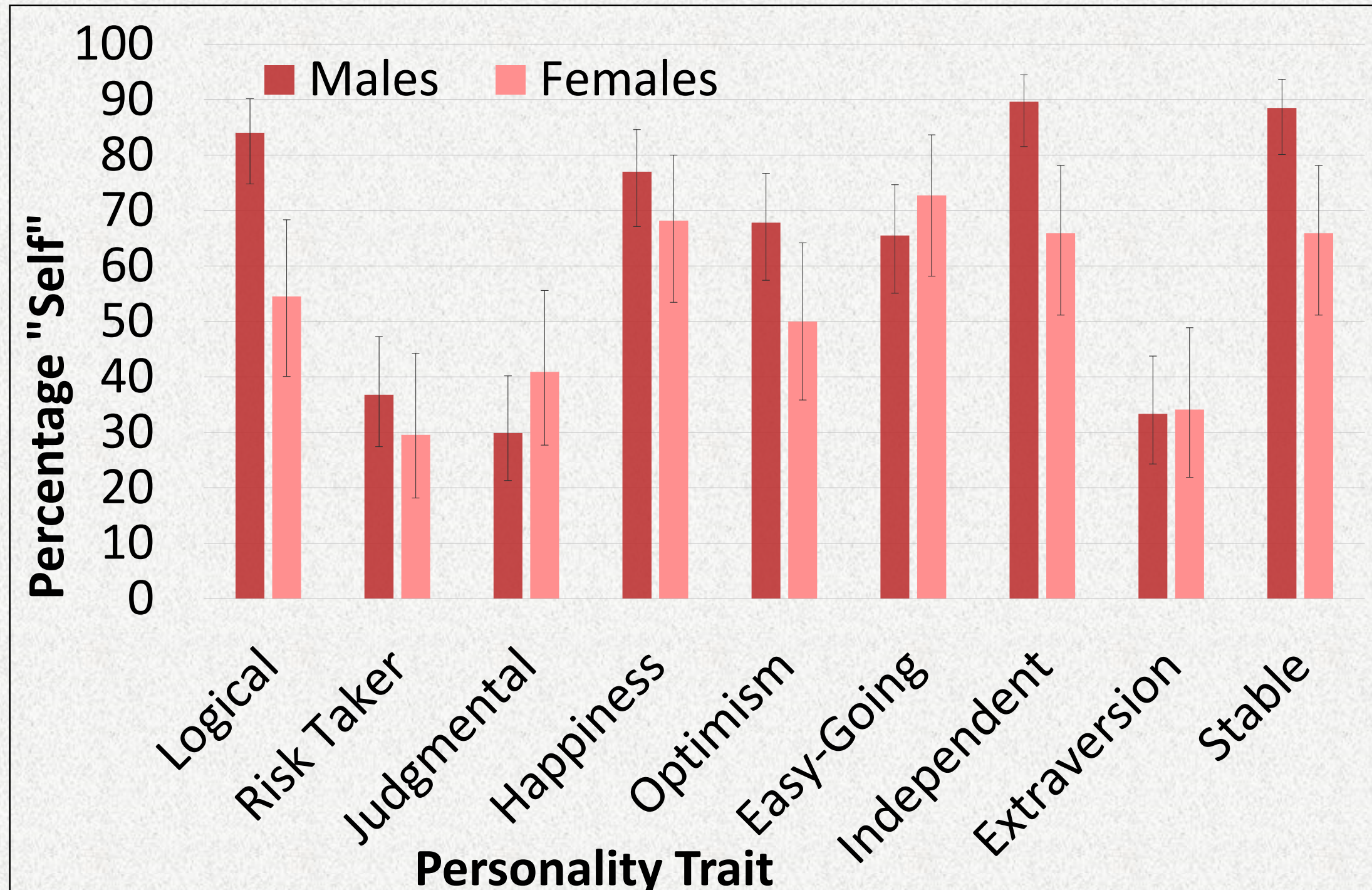


### Personality Traits Results: Four Pattern Types

**Significant Projection of Oneself** is data that had a significant positive correlation between what one says they are and what they say is the norm.  
**Non-Significant Projection of Oneself** is data that was statistically non significant but shows the pattern of projecting what one says they are onto what they perceive the norm to be.  
**Split-Norm** is when most participants self-reported as being one trait but the norm was said to be split almost evenly.  
**Opposite of the Norm** is when most participants self-reported as being one trait but most of the participants chose the opposite trait as the norm.

Significant Projection of Oneself	Non-Sig. Projection of Oneself	Split-Norm	Opposite from the Norm
Risk-Taking Risk-Avoiding	Optimistic Pessimistic	Independent Dependent	Extroversion Introversion
Happy Sad	Easy-going Stubborn	Logical Intuitive	
Stable Neurotic		Judgmental Understanding	

### Personality Traits Results: Gender Differences



### Most Normal to Most Abnormal Conditions

Condition	Ratio	Selected	% Selected
Allergies	3.29	74	56.49
Anxiety	3.03	68	51.91
Depression	2.76	69	52.67
Asthma	2.28	53	40.46
ADHD	1.91	35	26.72
Birthmark	1.85	30	22.90
Broken Bone	1.82	33	25.19
Dyslexia	1.82	14	10.69
Arachnophobia	1.81	26	19.85
Stuttering	1.78	19	14.50
Concussion	1.71	16	12.21
Wheelchair	1.63	28	21.37
Bipolar	1.61	37	28.24
Narcissism	1.60	27	20.61
Cane	1.55	32	24.43
HFA	1.54	22	16.79
PTSD	1.52	31	23.66
OCD	1.44	30	22.90
LFA	1.36	9	6.87
Deafness	1.36	17	12.98
Cancer	1.33	42	32.06
Anorexia	1.26	8	6.11
Agoraphobia	1.18	13	9.92
Blind	1.16	9	6.87
Alzheimers	1.13	17	12.98
Amnesia	1.07	2	1.53
Down Syndrome	1.00	11	8.40
Psychopathy	0.97	2	1.53
Missing Limb	0.96	6	4.58
Heterochromia	0.95	3	2.29
Schizophrenia	0.95	10	7.63
MPD	0.95	4	3.05
CP	0.92	6	4.58

### Discussion

Every person has a different perception of "normalcy." It is influenced by projecting oneself onto the norm and what the social construct is in each person's mind. The projection of the "norm" influences both how you interpret yourself and how you interpret others in society. For example, it was found that people projected their physical traits and their personality traits. Men self-reported being more logical, optimistic, independent and emotionally stable than their female counterparts, which happens to also be what our participants said was the "norm." Projecting yourself is not always accurate. Sometimes people think they are not the norm, which was seen between extroverted and introverted personality types. The self-norm projection heuristic can be helpful but can also lead to miscommunications and be detrimental to mental health.

### References

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94, 319-340.

Nickerson, R. (2001). The projective way of knowing: A useful heuristic that sometimes misleads. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, 168-172.

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