



Working Harder Not Smarter: The Influence of Arousal on Parkinson's Law

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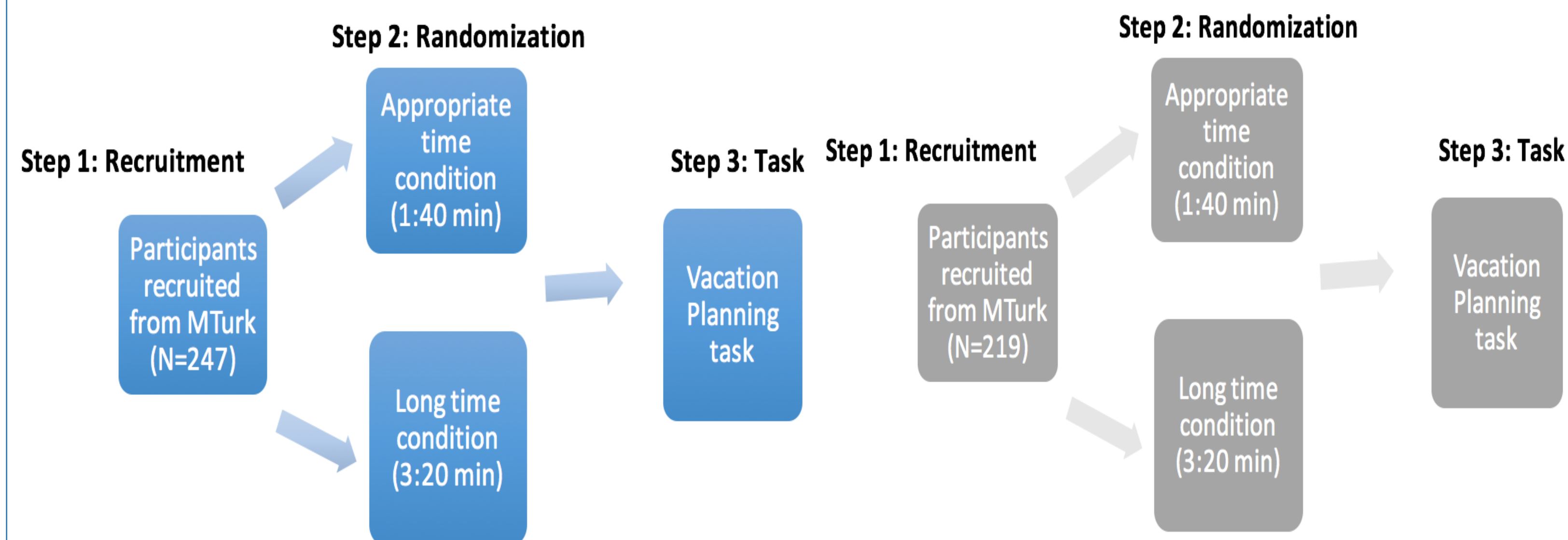
Introduction

- Cyril Parkinson, formulated an interesting hypothesis, called **Parkinson's Law**, that said that **work expands to fill the time available for its completion**, even if that time is unnecessary.
 - It is important to understand **how extra time affects individual's performance** and behavior, translating into more time effective strategies to ensure more optimal performance at work and at home.
 - Although the law has important implications, researchers still know **very little** about what **helps drive this effect**.
- How does **arousal** affects performance?
- Research suggests that **arousal** has the potential to **positively affect** an individual's **performance**.
 - According to the **Yerkes Dodson Law**, performance suffers when arousal is either too high or too low. The law states that increased levels of arousal will **improve performance**, but only until the **optimum arousal** level is reached.

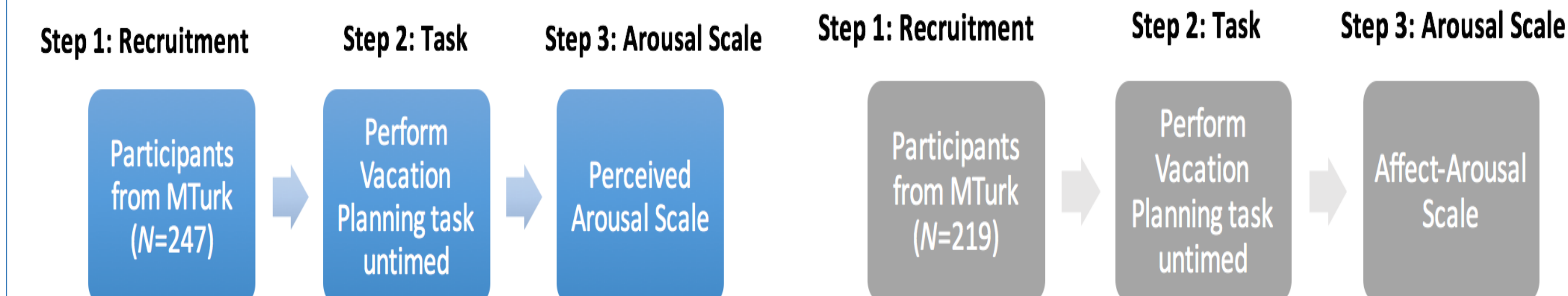
Methods

Experiment 1

Round 1:

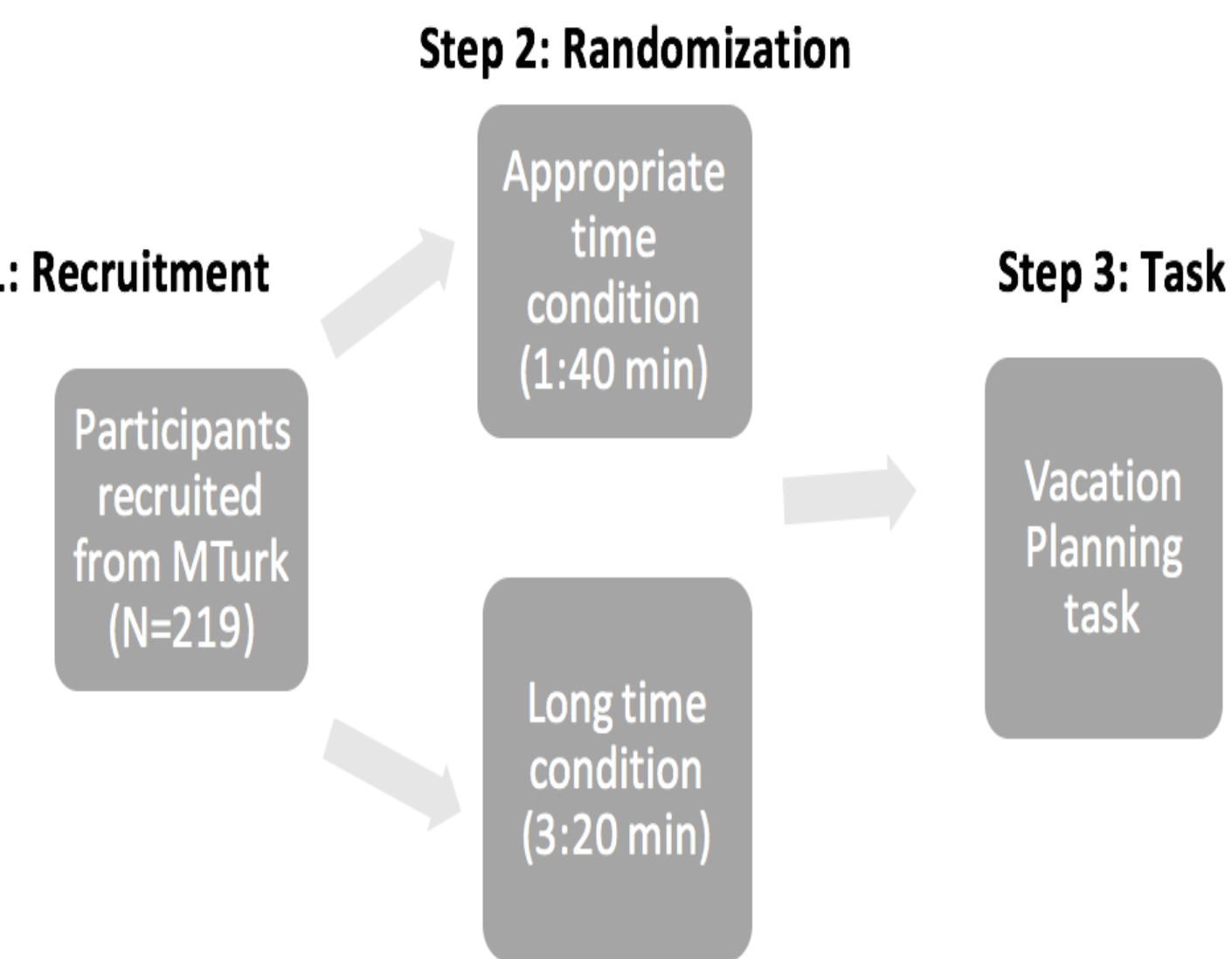


Round 2:

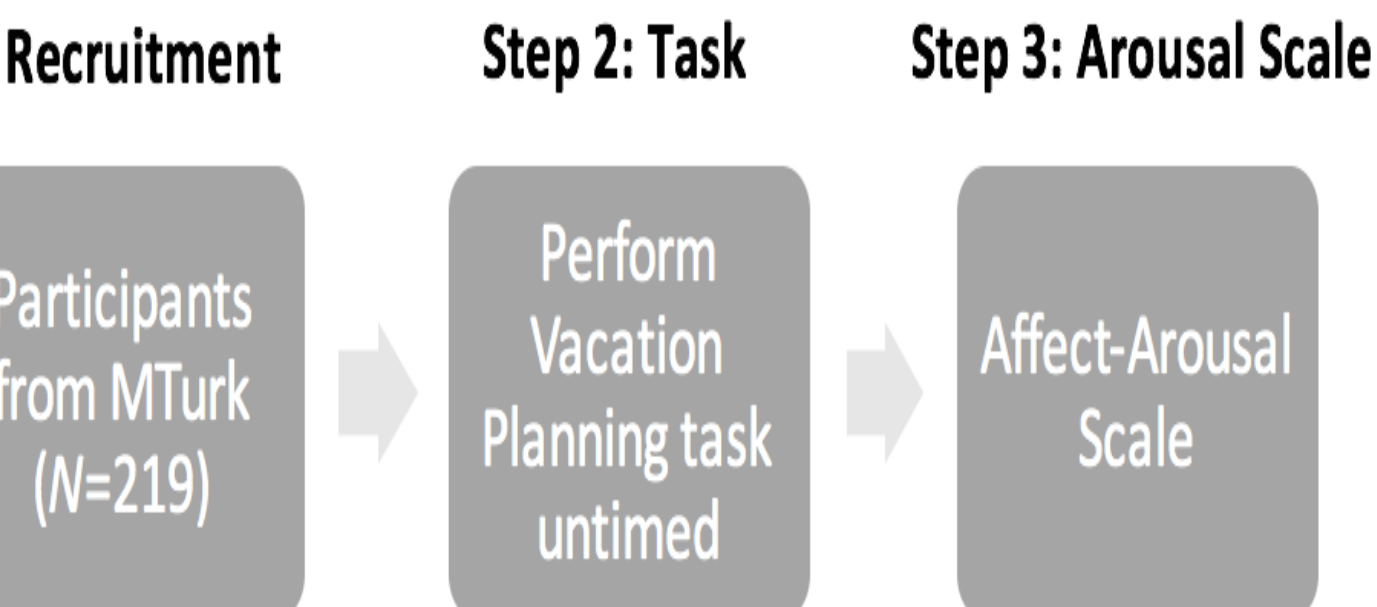


Experiment 2

Round 1:



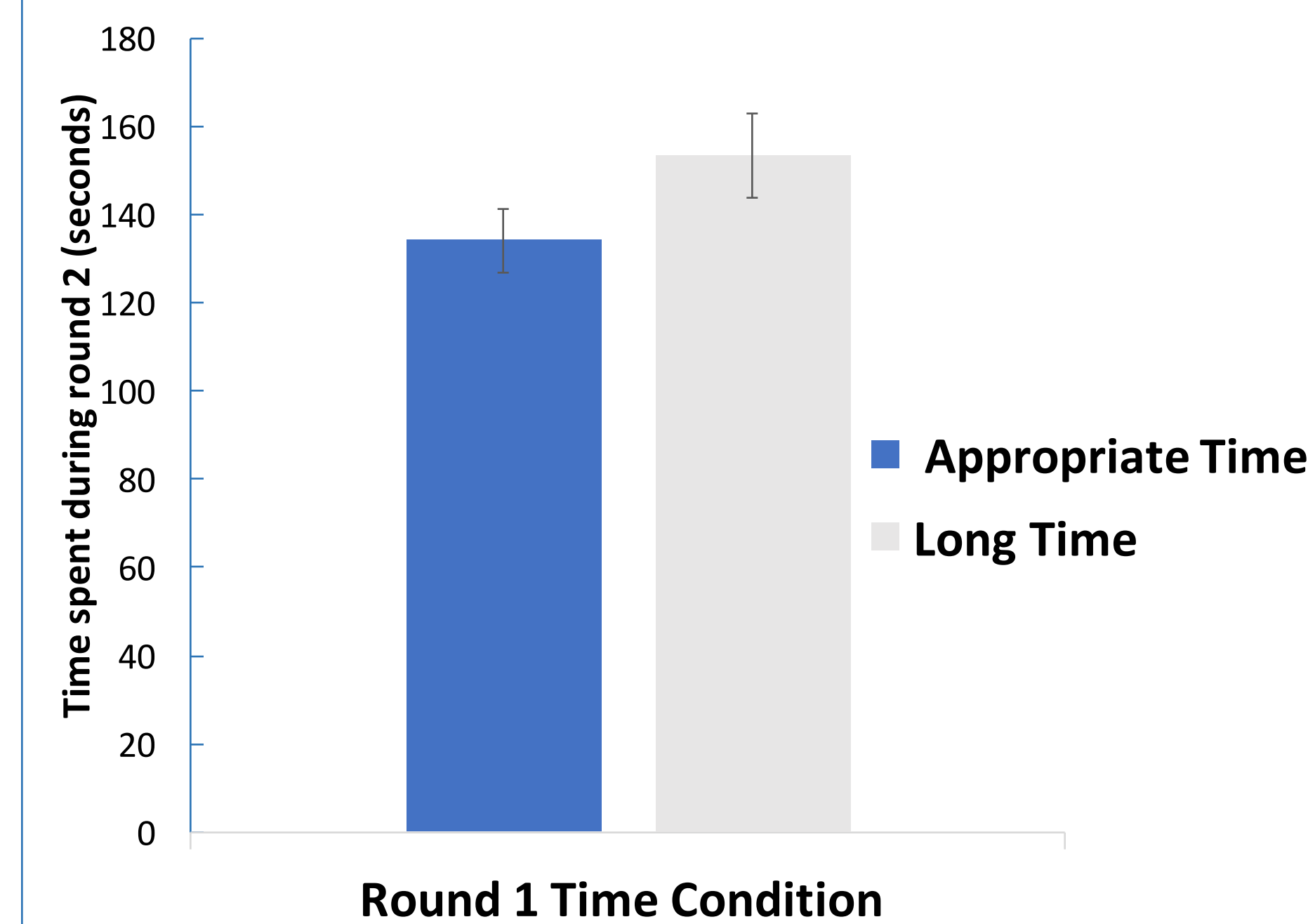
Round 2:



Results

Experiment 1

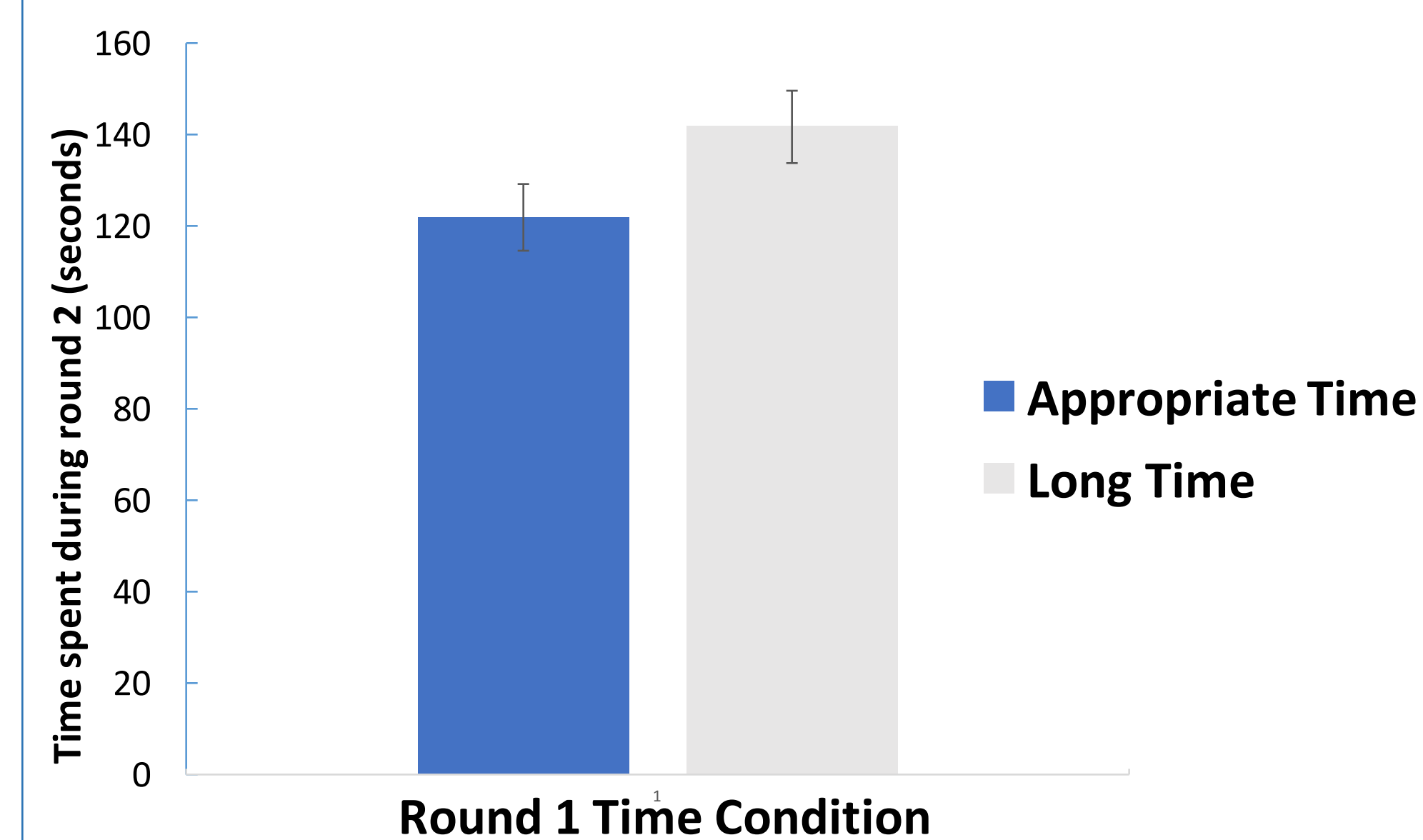
Parkinson's Law



Participants in the **long time condition in round 1** took marginally **longer in round 2** ($M = 153.30$, $SD = 103.44$) than participants who had just enough time in round 1 ($M = 134.13$, $SD = 75.34$), $t(30) = 1.61$, $p = .11$, $d = .21$.

Experiment 2

Parkinson's Law



Participants in the **appropriate time condition in round 1** took **less time to complete round 2** ($M = 121.70$, $SD = 72.01$) than participants in the long time condition ($M = 141.55$, $SD = 80.16$), $t(198) = 1.84$, $p = .07$, $d = .26$.

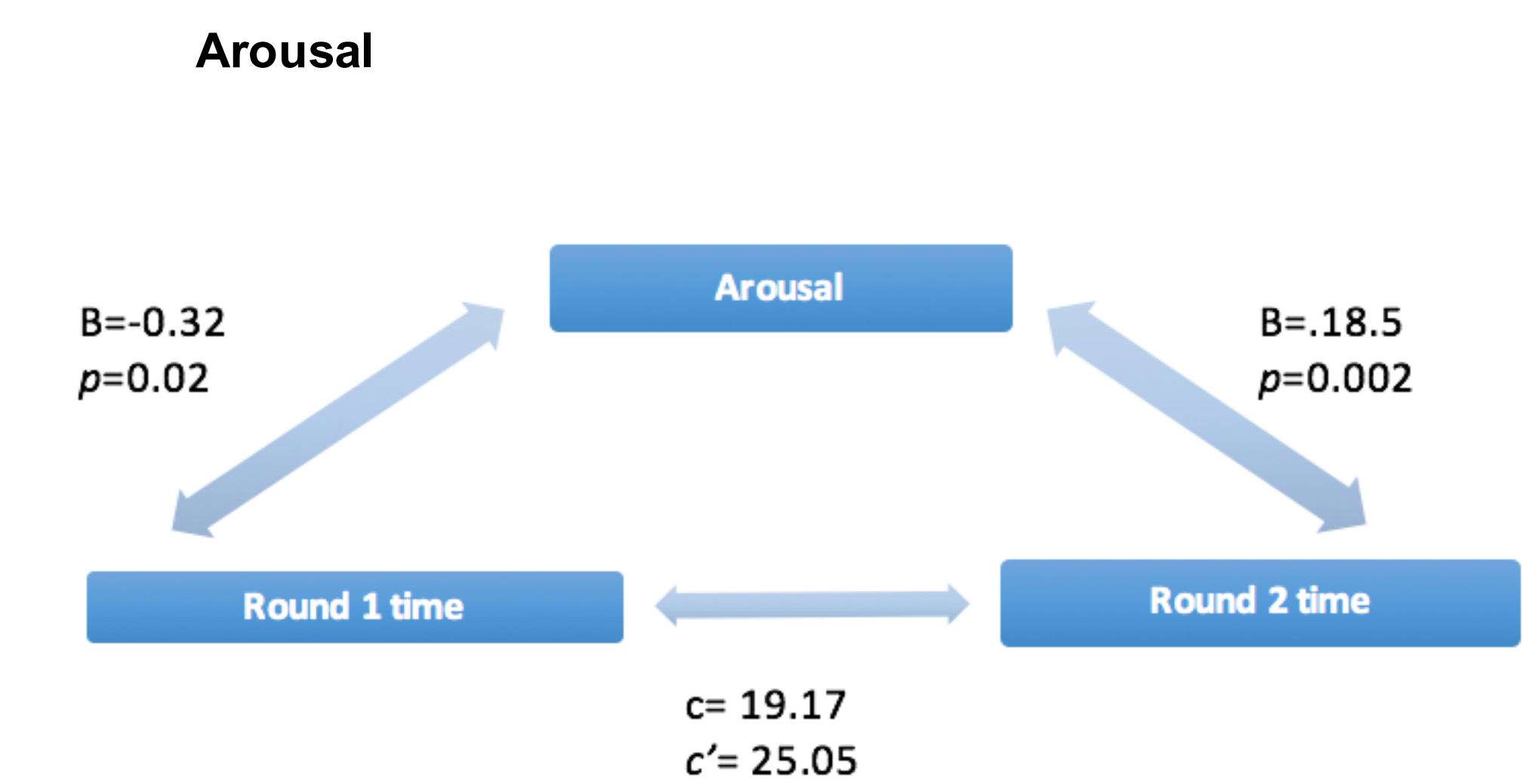


Figure 1. The proposed model demonstrating how round 1 time affects round 2 time.

B [95% CI] = -5.88[-13.25, -.62].

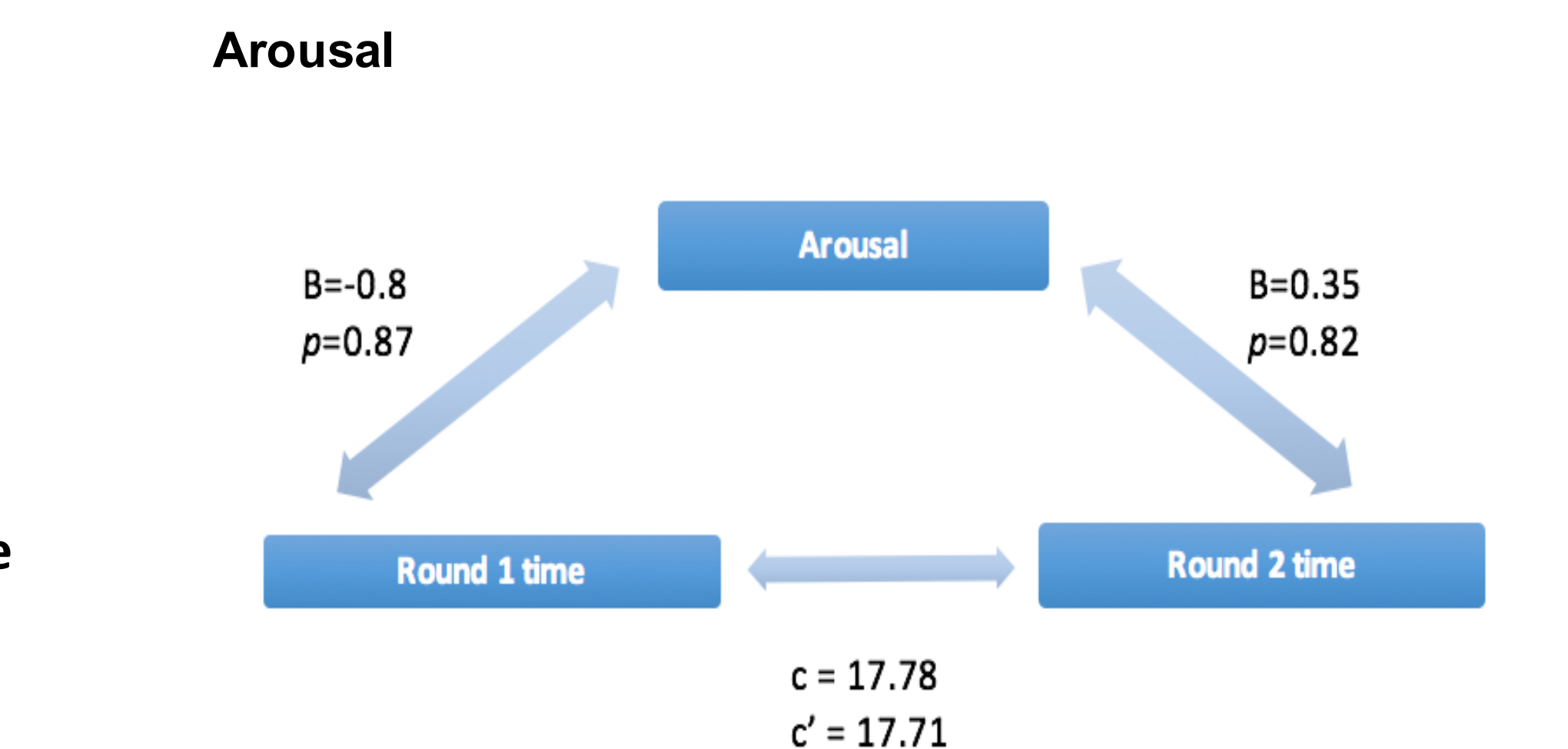


Figure 2. The proposed model demonstrating how round 1 time affects round 2 time in experiment 2.

B [95% CI] = -.03[-1.76, 1.69].

Conclusions

- The time assigned to complete round 1, of the vacation planning task, influenced the time individuals took to complete round 2 of the same task. **These results replicate past findings regarding Parkinson's Law.**
- The results that we observed with arousal's effect on Parkinson's Law were not in the direction that we expected. We found that individuals with higher arousal levels finished the task more slowly. Given these observations, **it is probable that arousal is not the underlining mechanism for Parkinson's Law.**

References

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