

CS375 / Psych 249:

Large-Scale Neural Network Models for Neuroscience

Lecture 9: Models of the Hippocampus (Memory, Navigation)

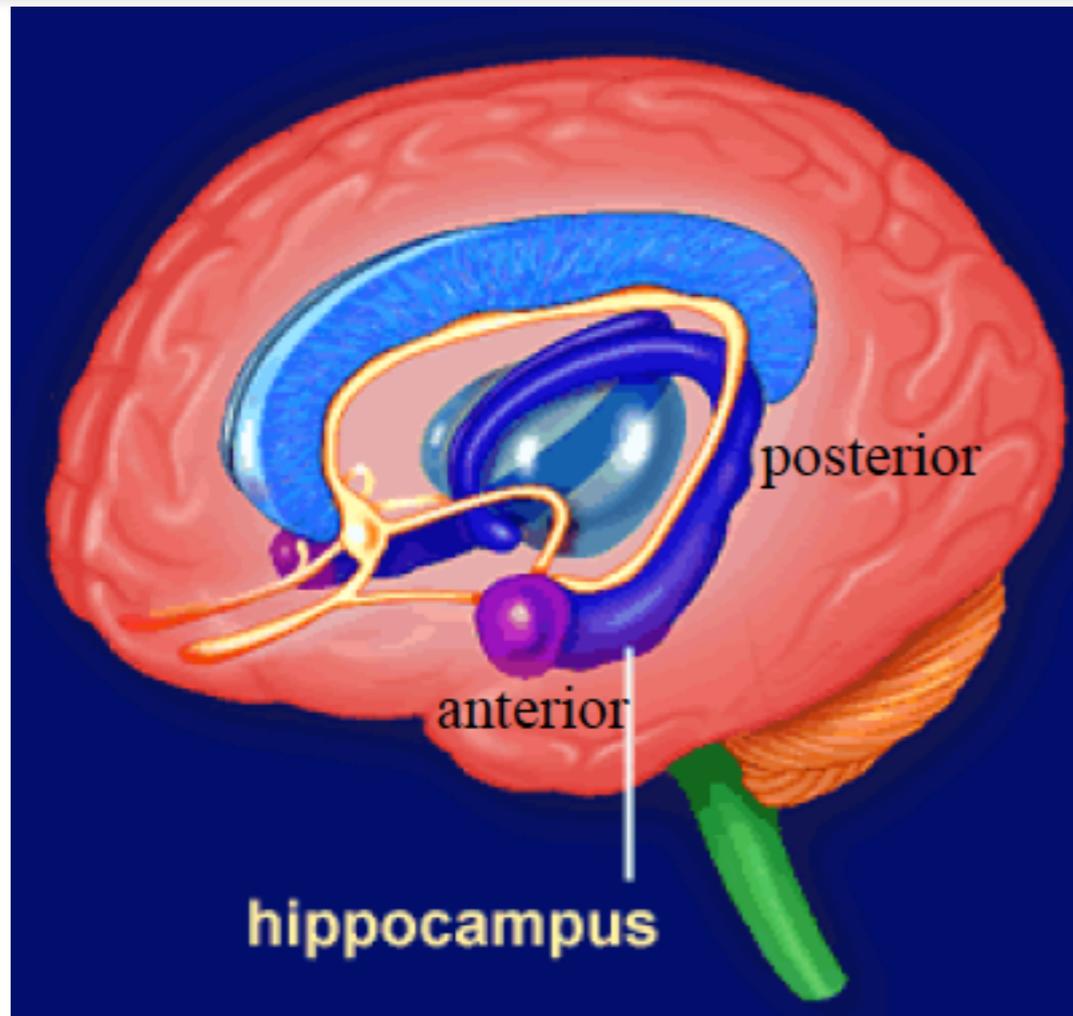
2026.02.18

Daniel Yamins

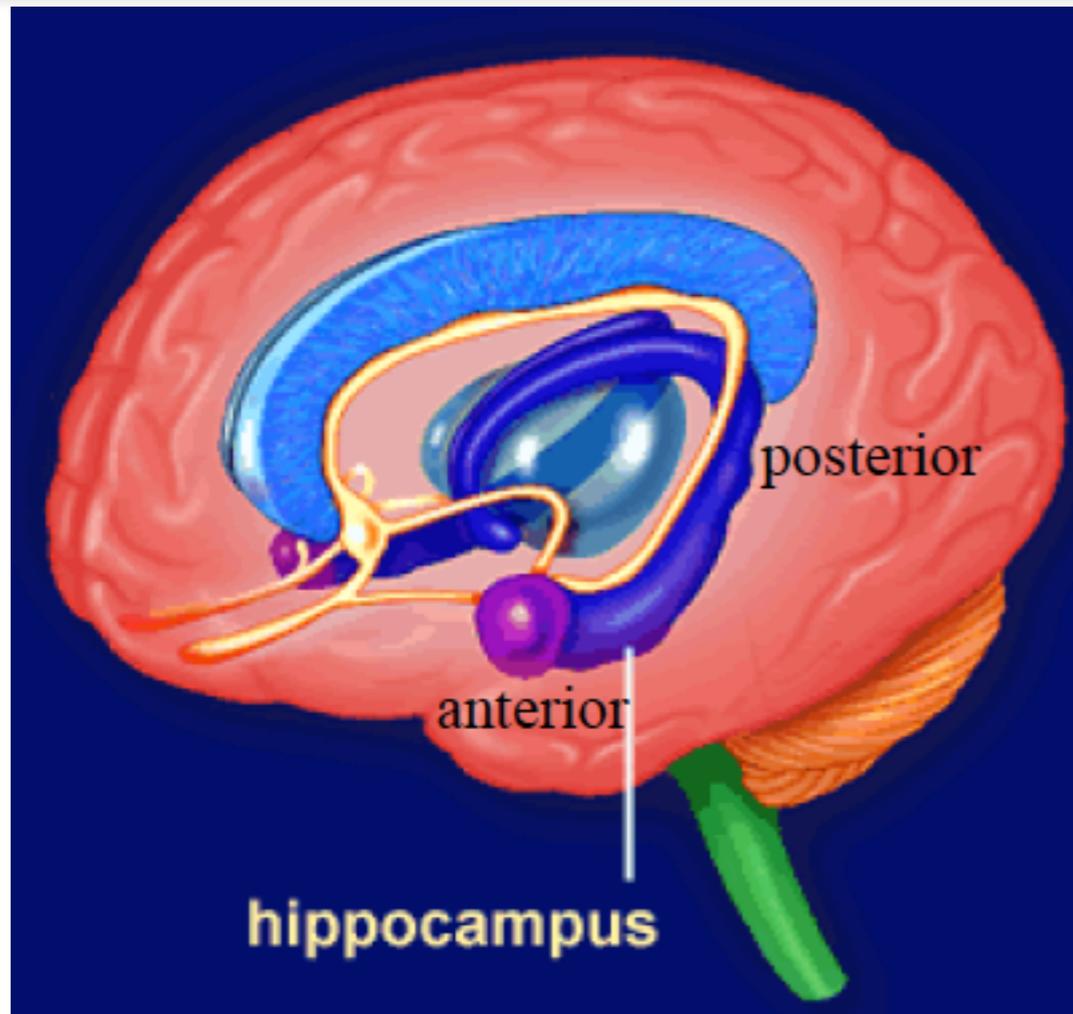
Departments of Computer Science and of Psychology
Stanford Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory
Wu Tsai Neurosciences Institute
Stanford University



The Hippocampus

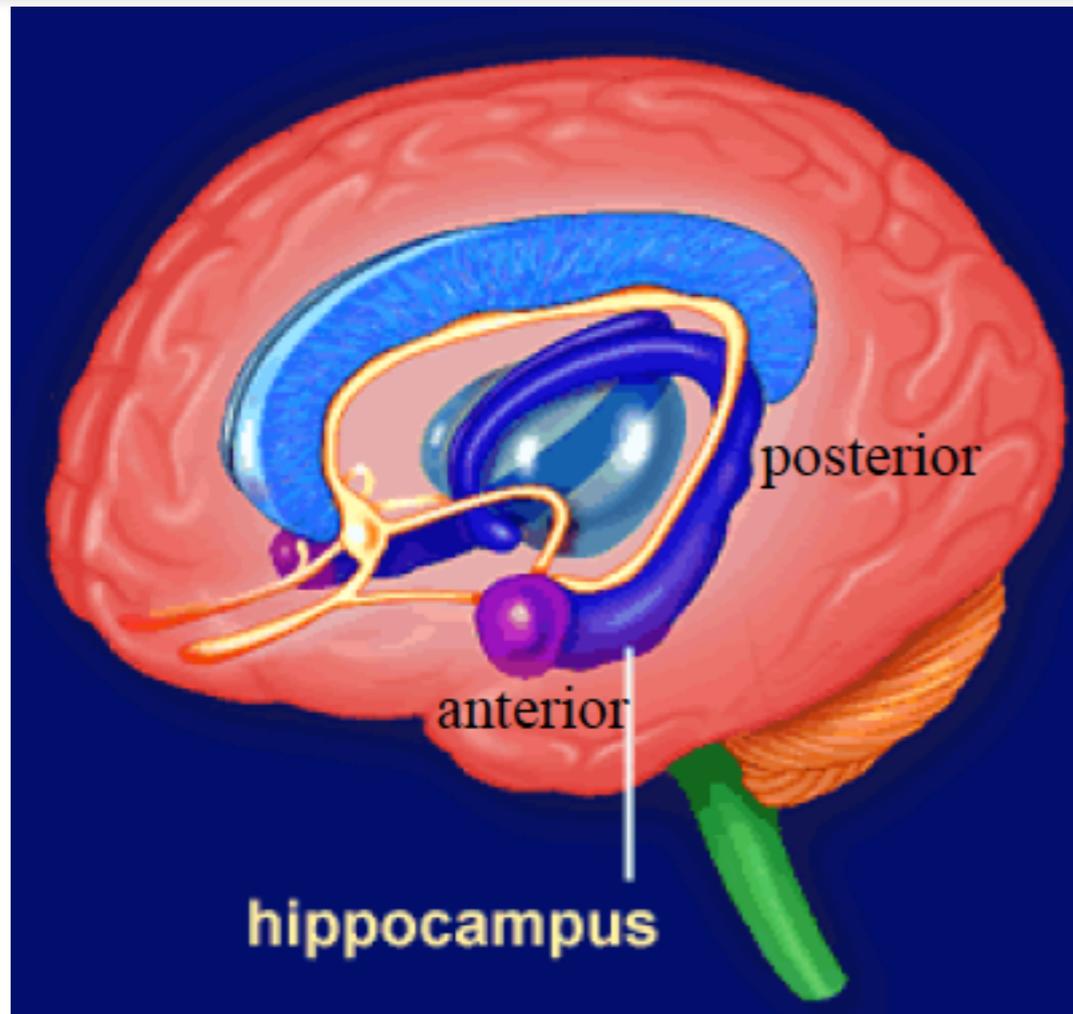


The Hippocampus



Latin for "seahorse"

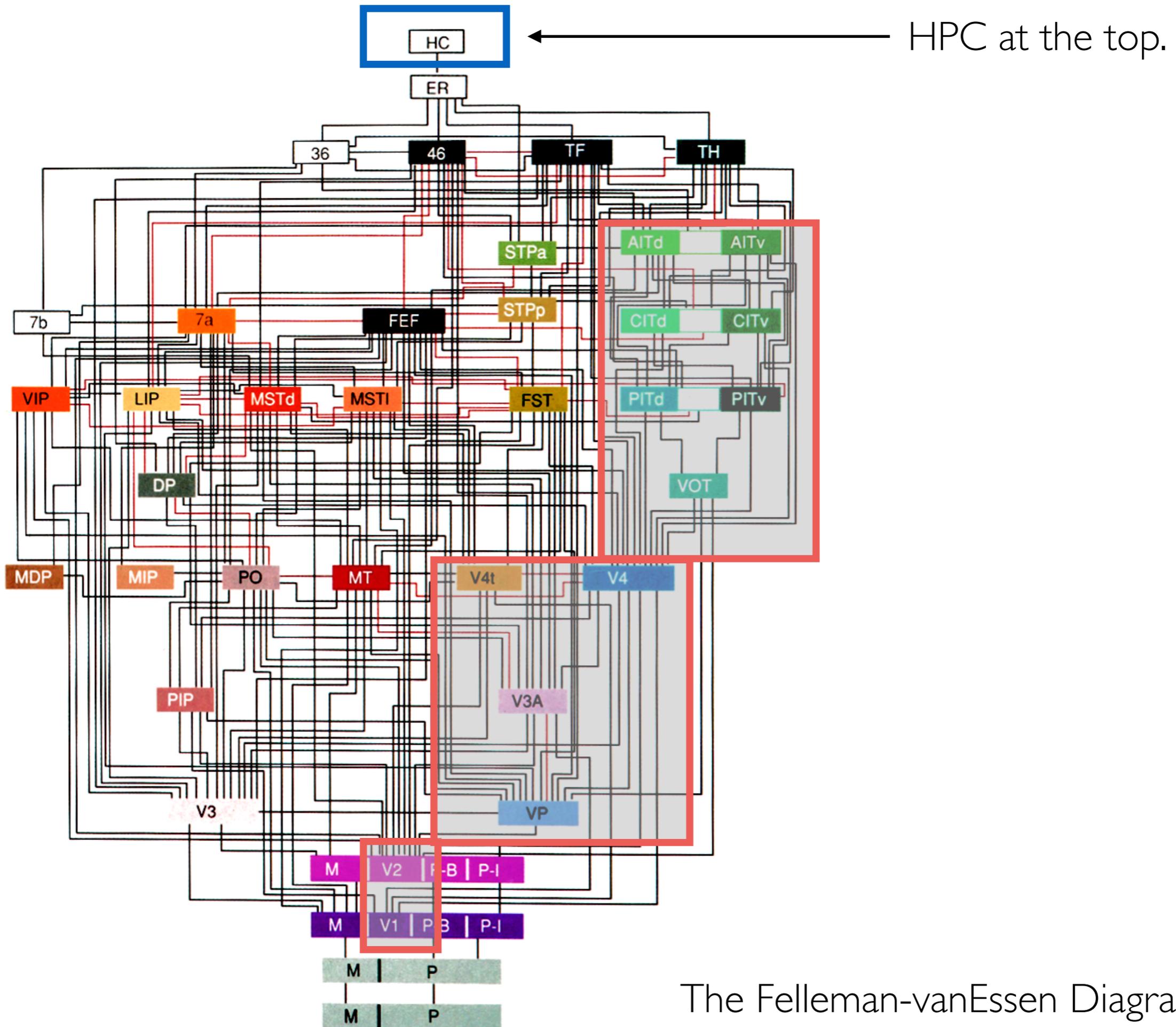
The Hippocampus



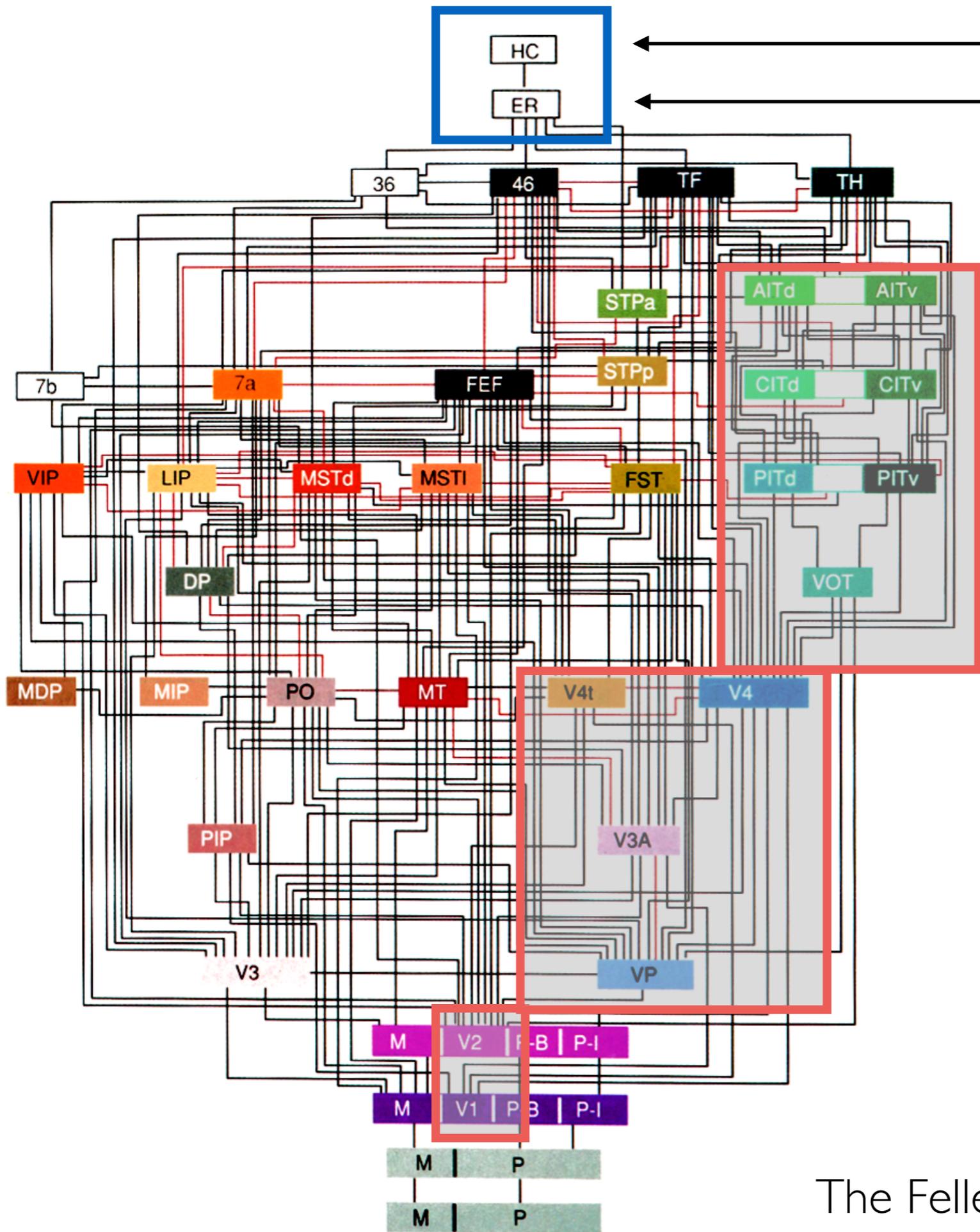
Latin for "seahorse"

"Cortex" = archicortex (hippocampus) +
neocortex (PFC, visual, etc)

archi = ancient, b/c earlier evolutionarily



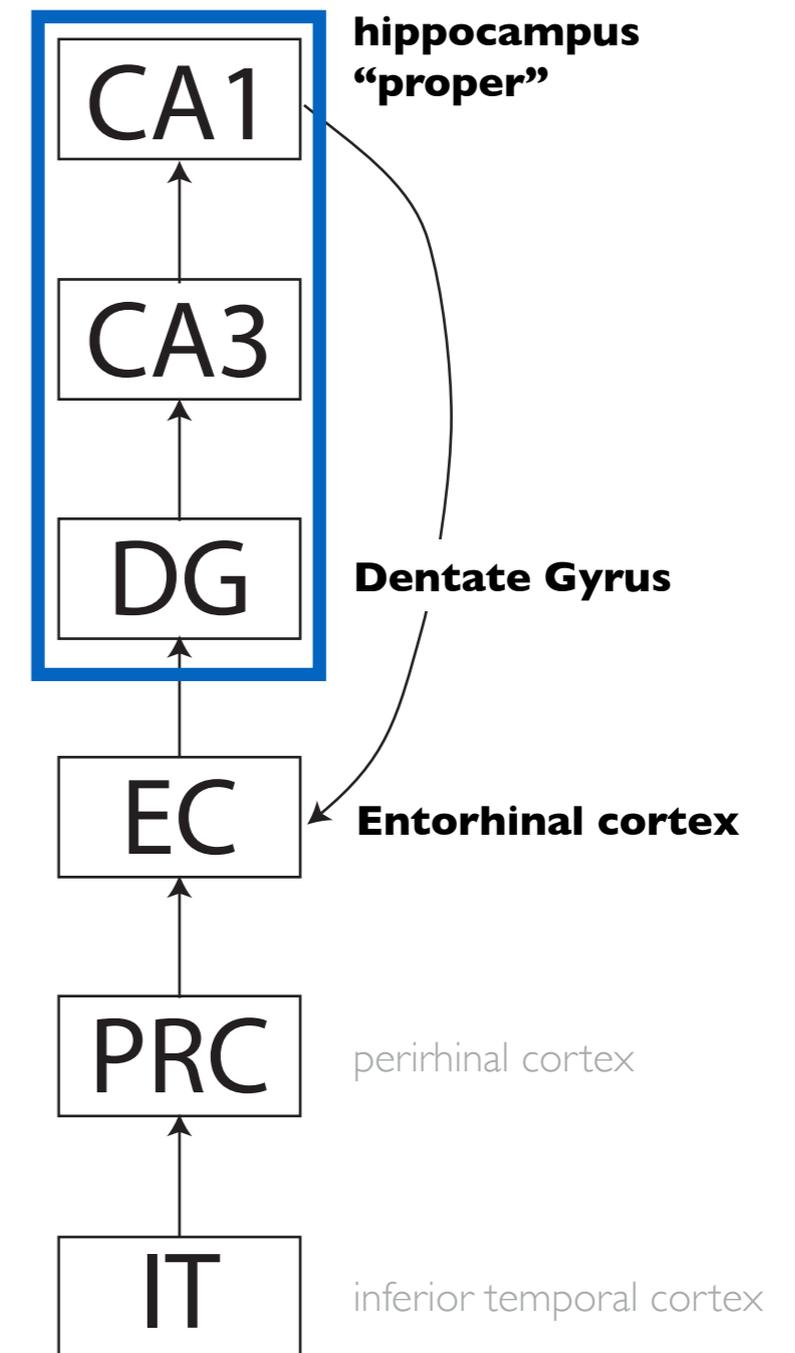
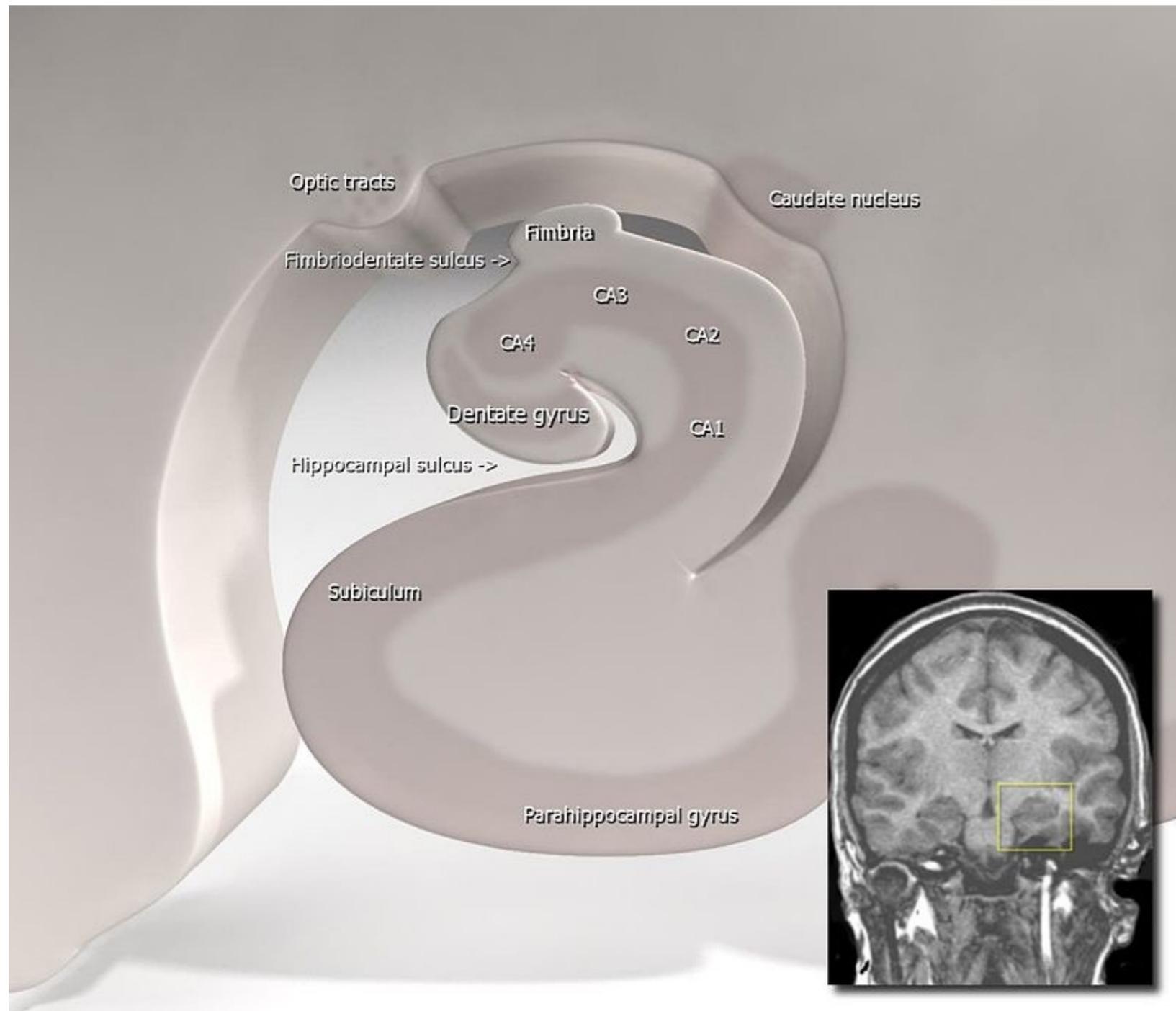
The Felleman-vanEssen Diagram



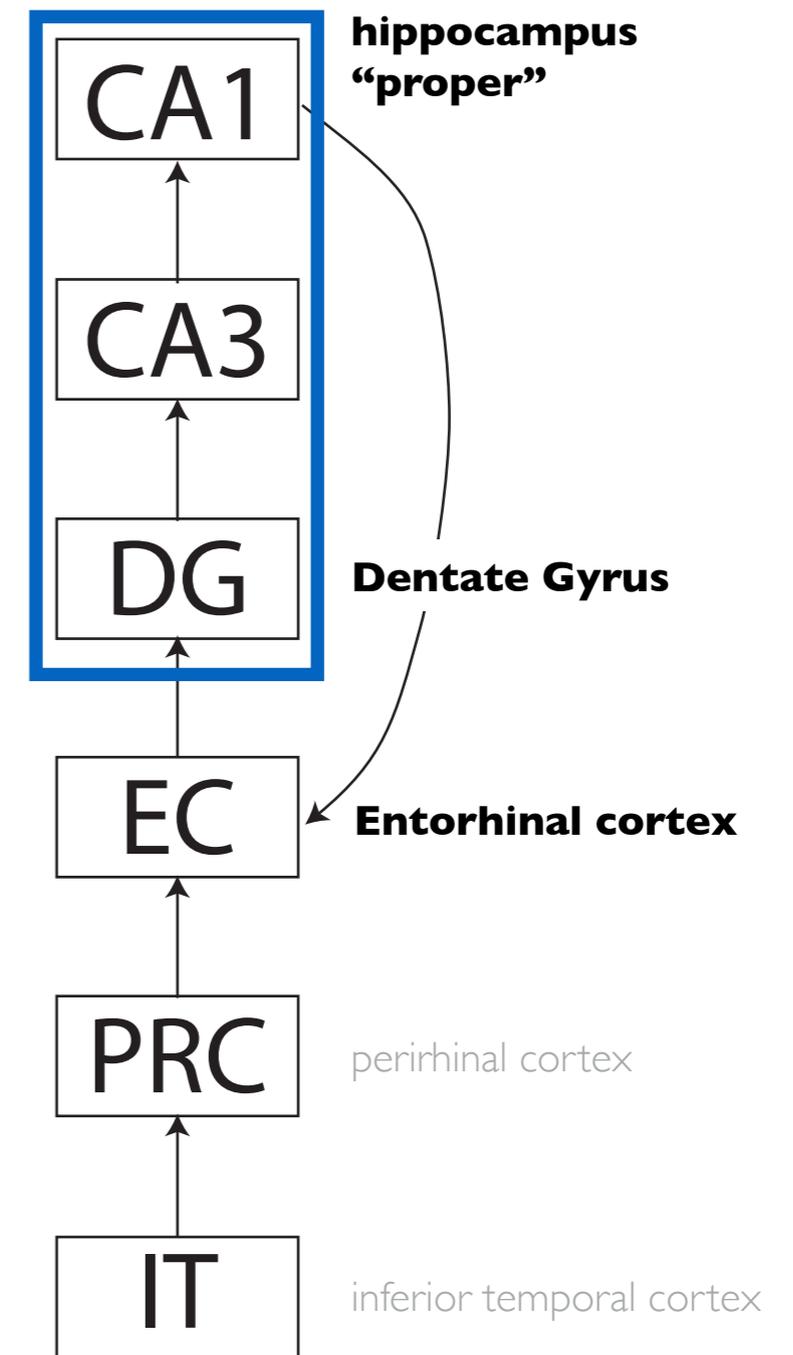
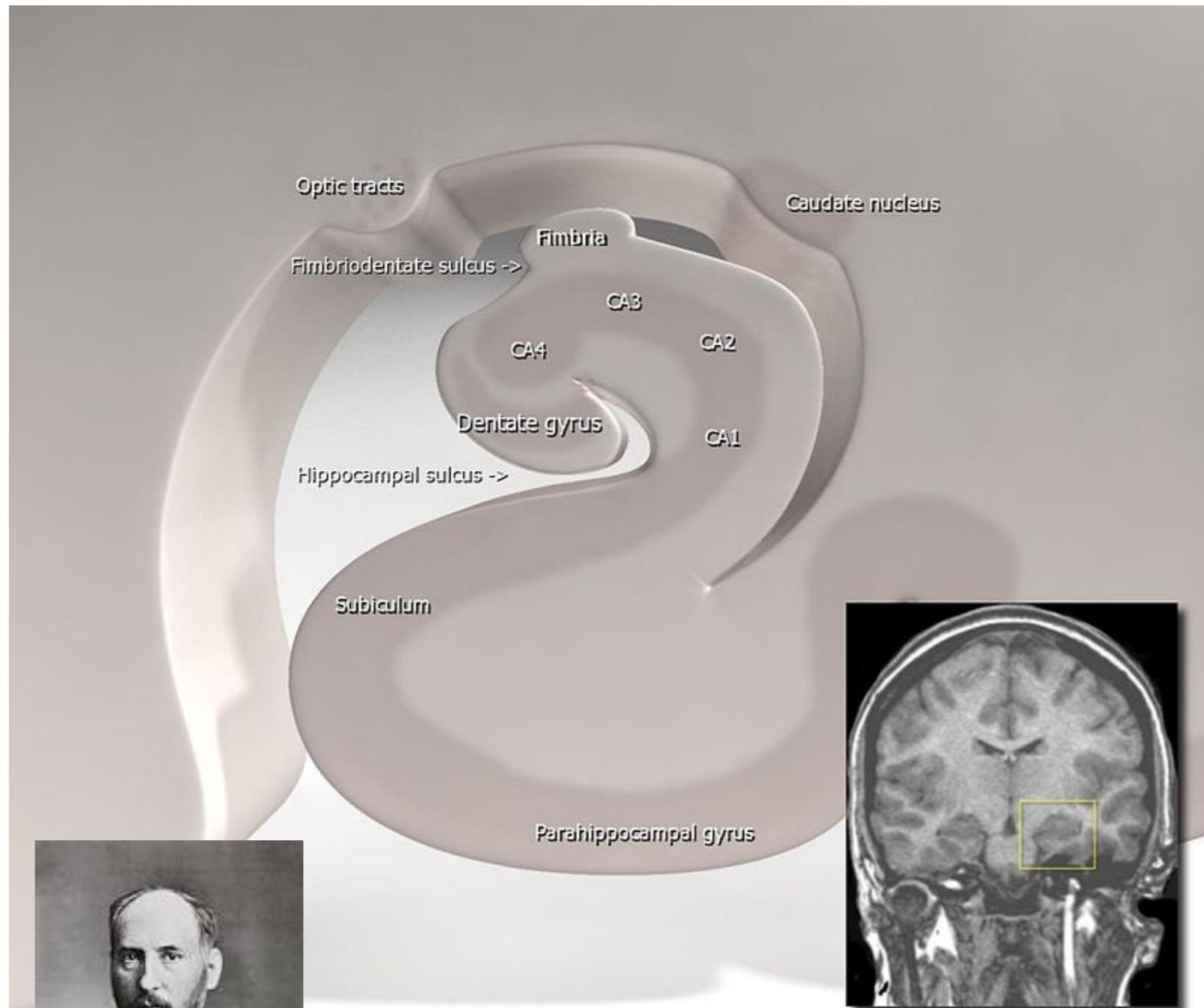
HPC at the top.
 Entorhinal cortex just below HPC, and above IT

The Felleman-vanEssen Diagram

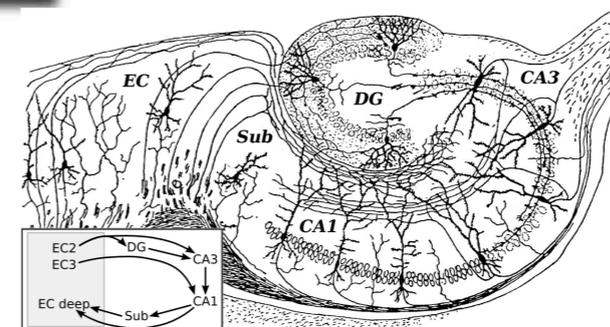
Anatomy of the Tri-synaptic circuit



Anatomy of the Tri-synaptic circuit

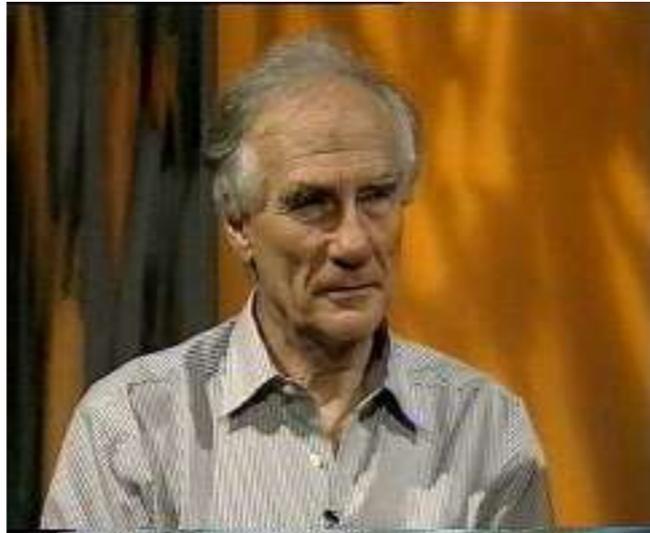


discovered in 1911 by the usual suspect: Ramon y Cajal



Functions of the hippocampus

I. Behavioral inhibition theory (“slam on the breaks”)



Jeffrey Gray

Functions of the hippocampus

1. Behavioral inhibition theory (“slam on the breaks”)

2. Memory

The Hippocampus

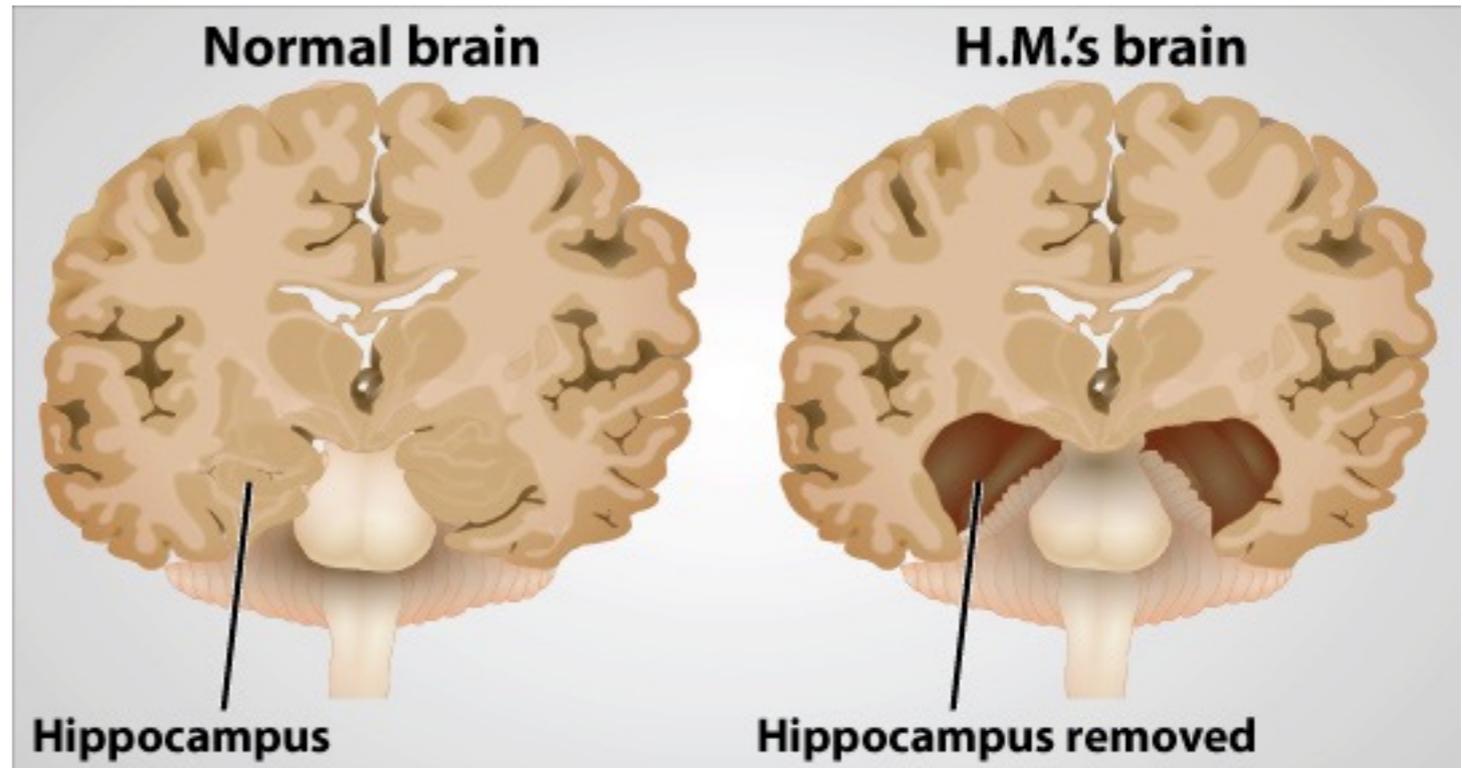


patient H.M.

The Hippocampus



patient H.M.



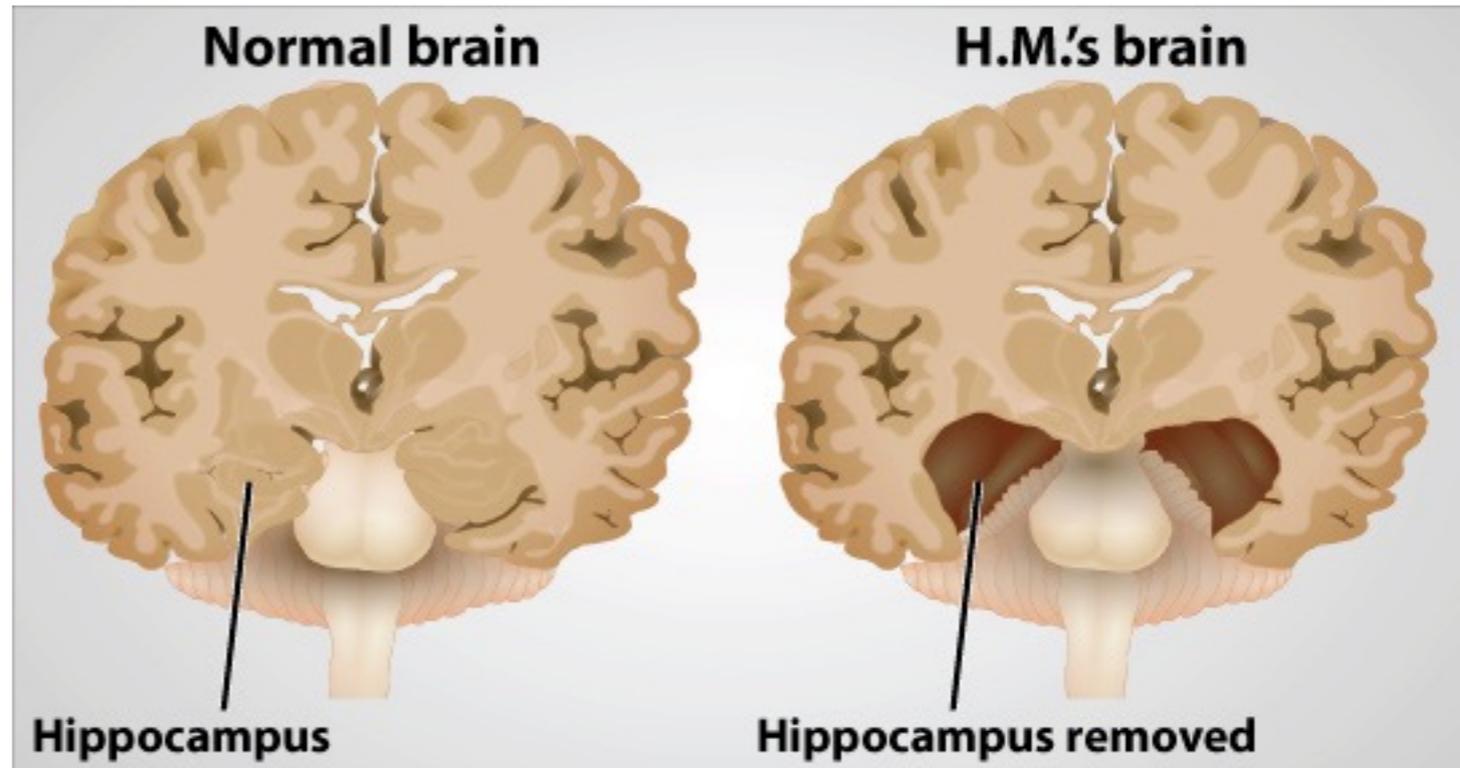
Temporal lobectomy (to treat epilepsy)

- resolved his epilepsy, but....

The Hippocampus



patient H.M.



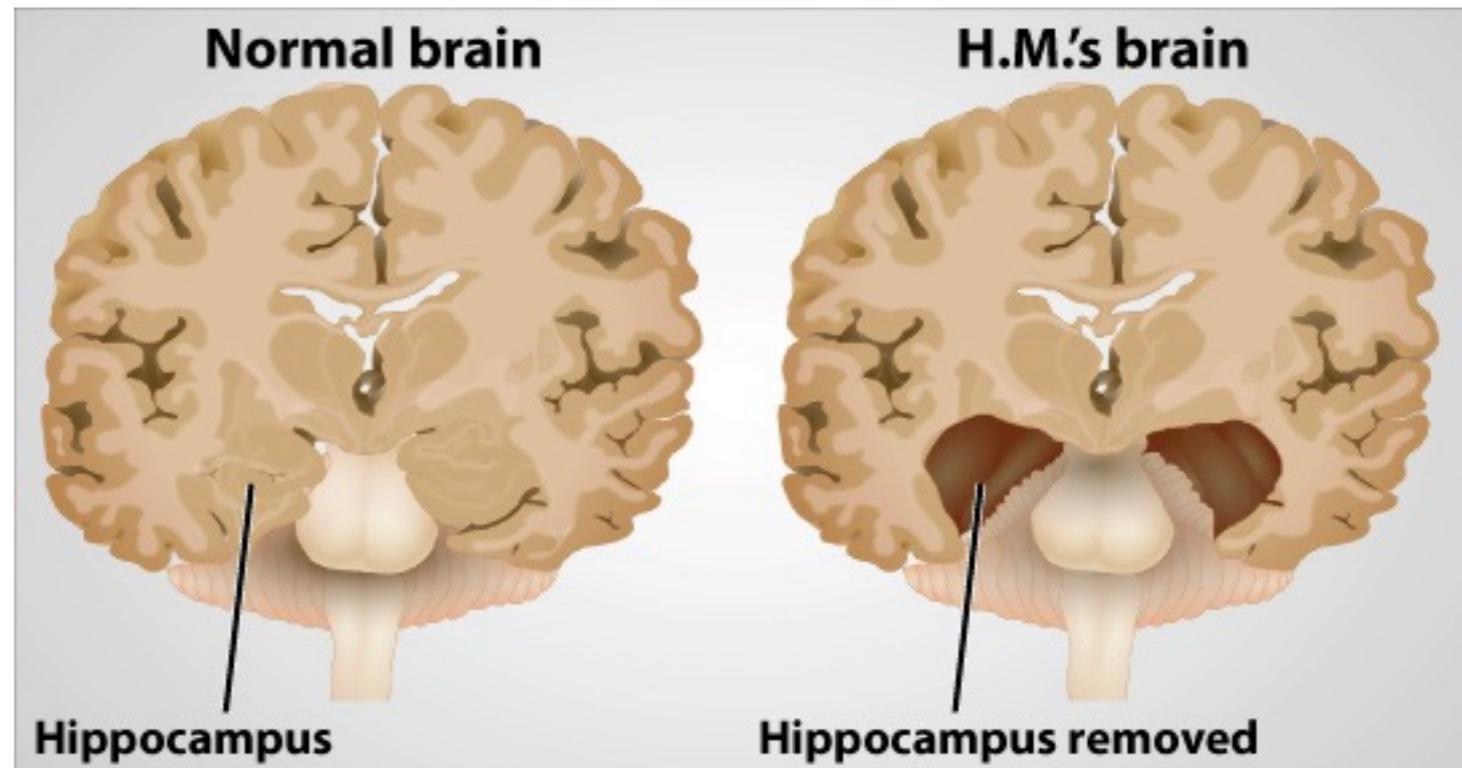
Temporal lobectomy (to treat epilepsy)

- resolved his epilepsy, but....
- could no longer form memories (though cognitive capabilities intact)

The Hippocampus



patient H.M.



Temporal lobectomy (to treat epilepsy)

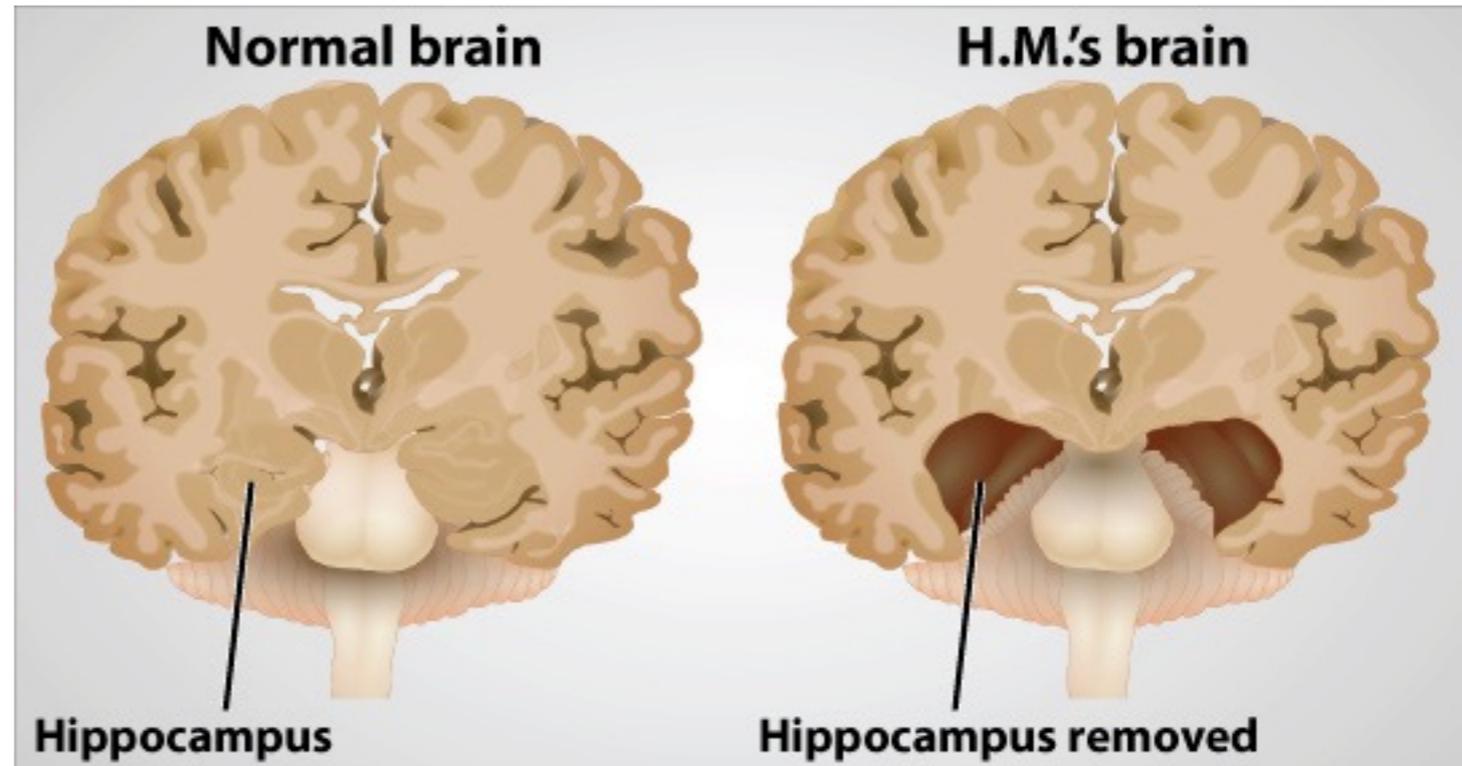
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Hippocampal dysfunction leaves old/semantic knowledge intact, but disrupts recent memory formation and new learning

The Hippocampus



patient H.M.



Temporal lobectomy (to treat epilepsy)

- resolved his epilepsy, but....
- could no longer form memories (though cognitive capabilities intact)

Hippocampal dysfunction leaves old/semantic knowledge intact, but disrupts recent memory formation and new learning

Consolidated old
memory



Not-yet-
consolidated

Anterograde amnesia

Functions of the hippocampus

1. Behavioral inhibition theory (“slam on the breaks”)
2. Memory (Milner & Scoville from HM)

Models: Marr

[23]

SIMPLE MEMORY: A THEORY FOR ARCHICORTEX

BY D. MARR

Trinity College, Cambridge

(Communicated by G. S. Brindley, F.R.S.—Received 27 July 1970—Revised 12 November 1970)



David Marr

(Tommy Poggio)

Models: Marr

SIMPLE MEMORY

(Communicated by G. S. Brindley,



David Marr

(Tommy Poggio)

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Models: Marr

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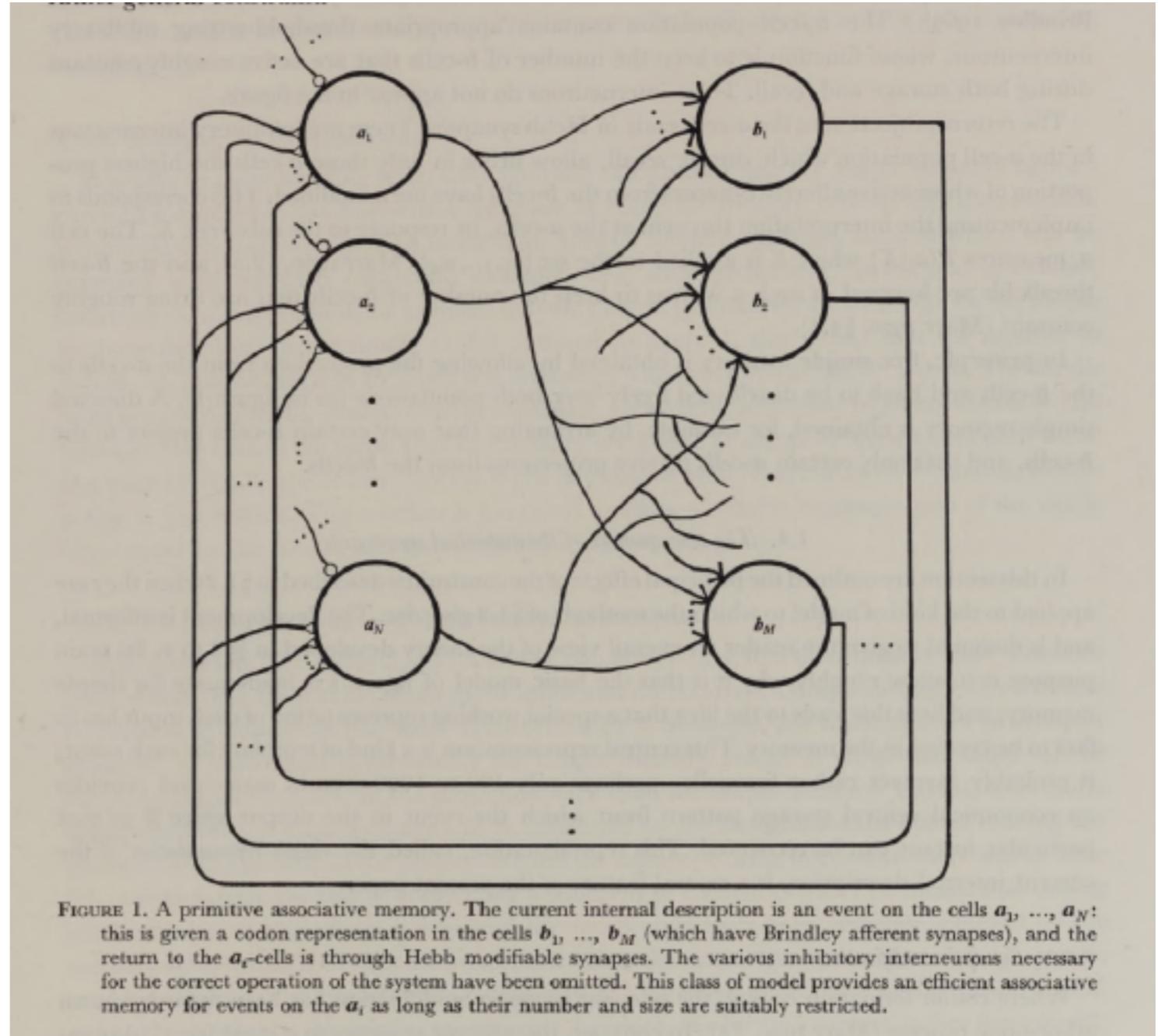
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HPC stores patterns immediately, w/o further analysis

Neocortex later picks out important features, might take a while ('consolidation')

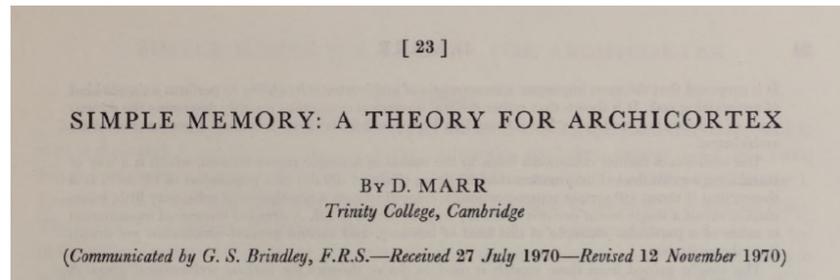
Can support sensory -> HPC construction of "codons" then, recovery of pattern from partial input

HPC as "medium-term storage for training" deep cortex.



Two-layer recurrent model

Models: Marr

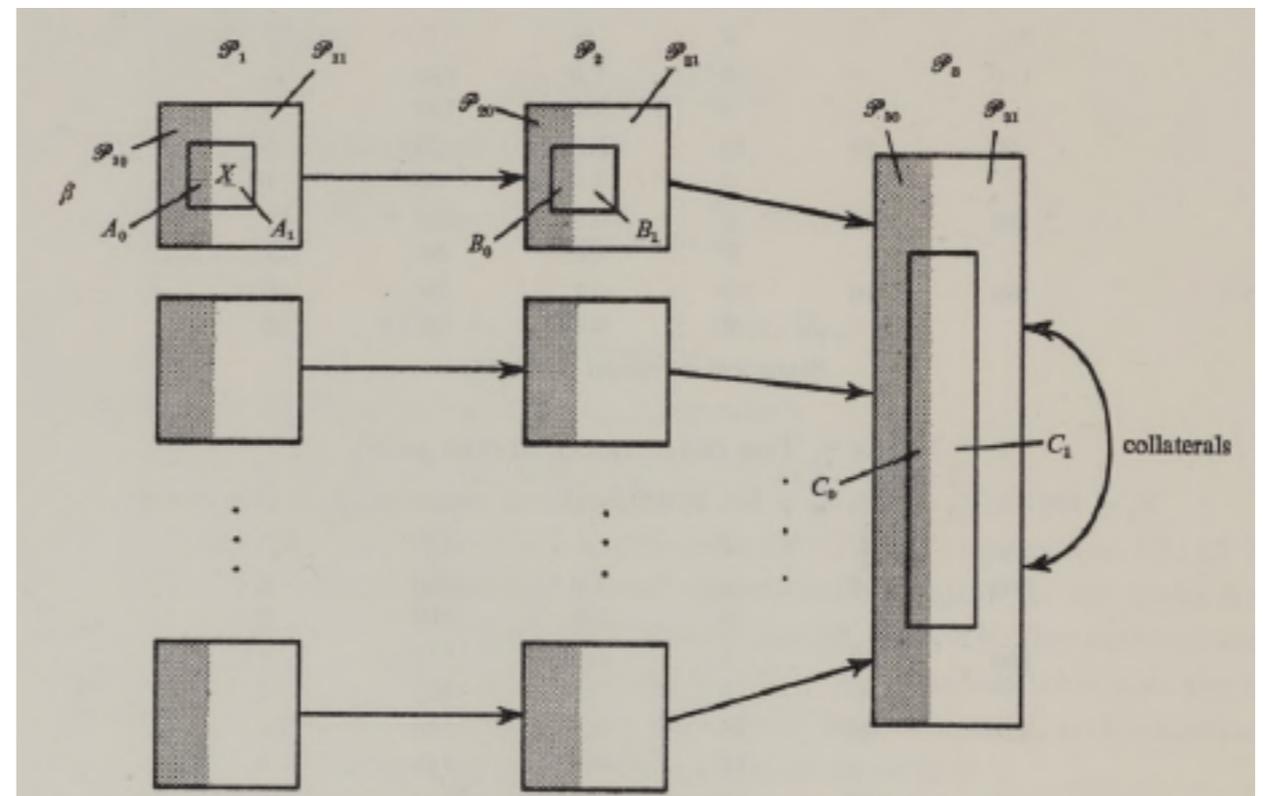


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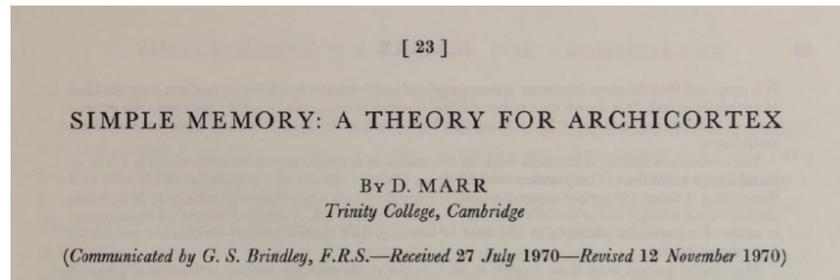
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Three-layer recurrent model

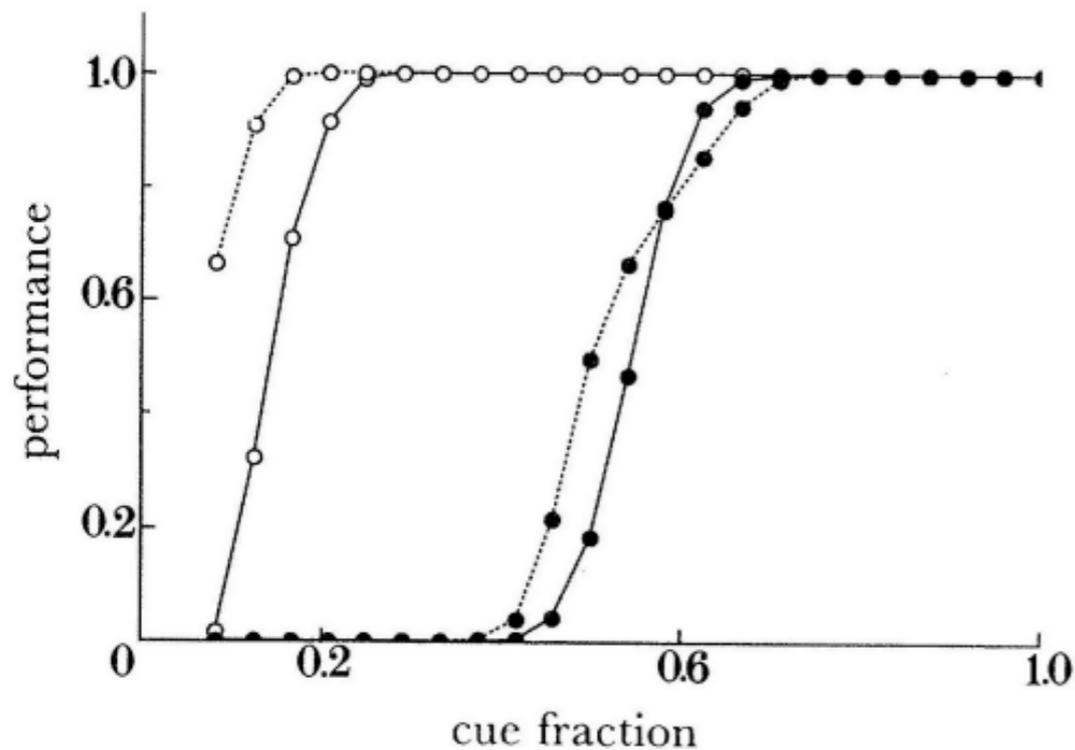
FIGURE 6. The recall problem. \mathcal{P}_1 , \mathcal{P}_2 and \mathcal{P}_3 are the populations of cells defined in table 1. Shading represents the parts of these populations involved in the storage of an event E_0 . A new subevent X is presented to one block of \mathcal{P}_1 , A_0 of whose cells were involved in E_0 , and A_1 of which were not. This produces activity in one block of \mathcal{P}_2 , and in \mathcal{P}_3 . B_0 of the active cells in \mathcal{P}_2 were active in E_0 , and B_1 were not; C_0 of the active cells in \mathcal{P}_3 were also active in E_0 , and C_1 were not. The numbers A_i , B_i , C_i , ($i = 1, 2$) are computed in the text.

Models: Marr



HPC as “medium-term storage for training” deep cortex.

HPC stores patterns immediately, w/o further analysis



- = partial cue
- = noisy cue

- = two-layer
- = three-layer

Third layer basically irrelevant

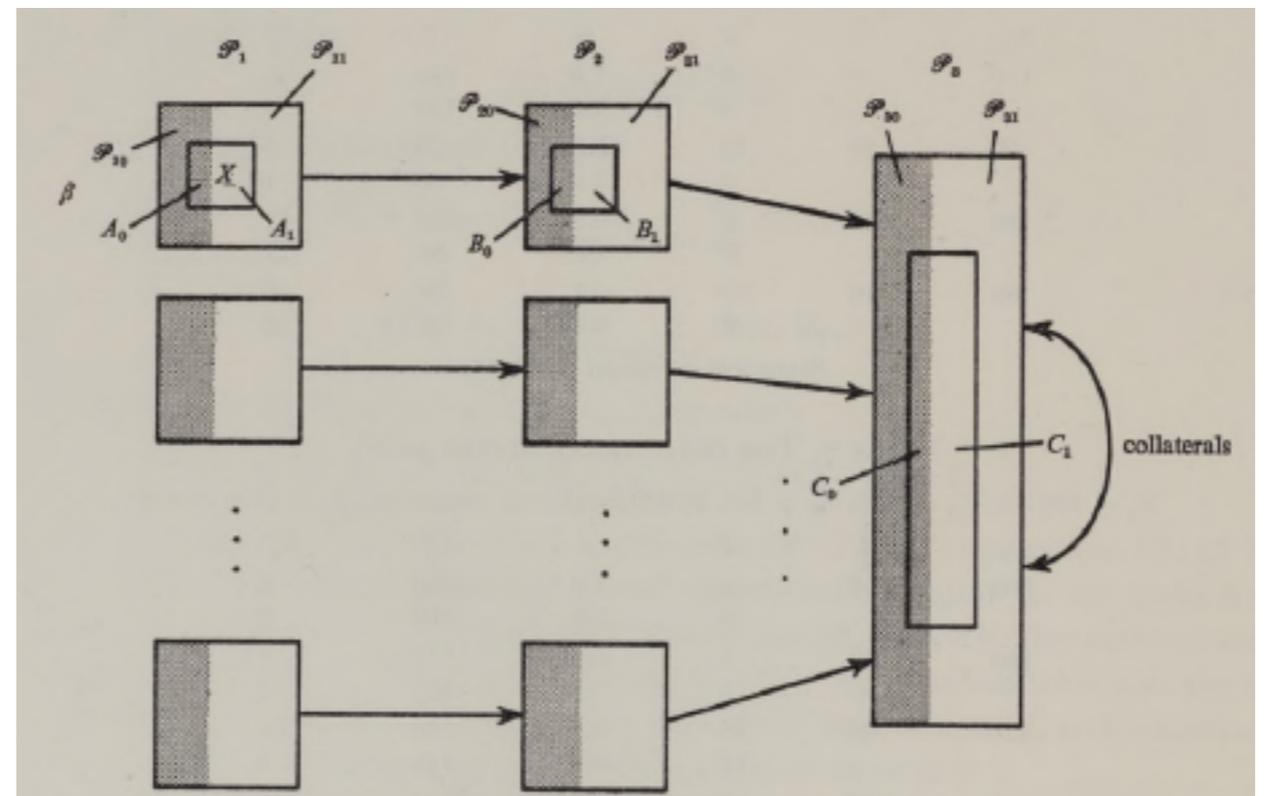


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Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

Why There Are Complementary Learning Systems in the Hippocampus and Neocortex: Insights From the Successes and Failures of Connectionist Models of Learning and Memory

James L. McClelland
Carnegie Mellon University
and the Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition

Bruce L. McNaughton
University of Arizona

Randall C. O'Reilly
Carnegie Mellon University
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HPC as “medium-term storage for training” deep cortex. ...

Q: What happens if you don't randomize ImageNet before training?

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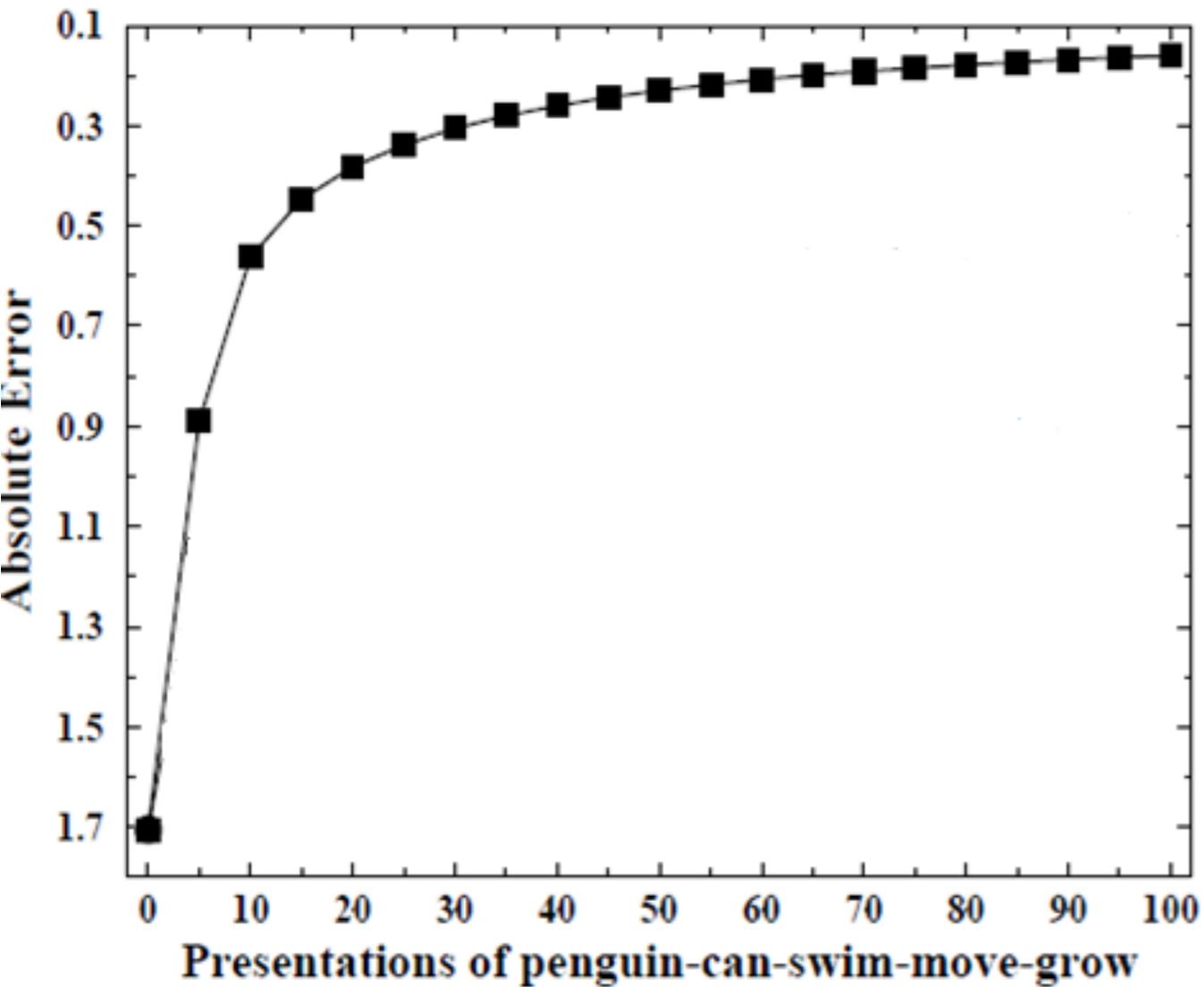
Q: What happens if you don't randomize ImageNet before training?

A: *catastrophic forgetting*.

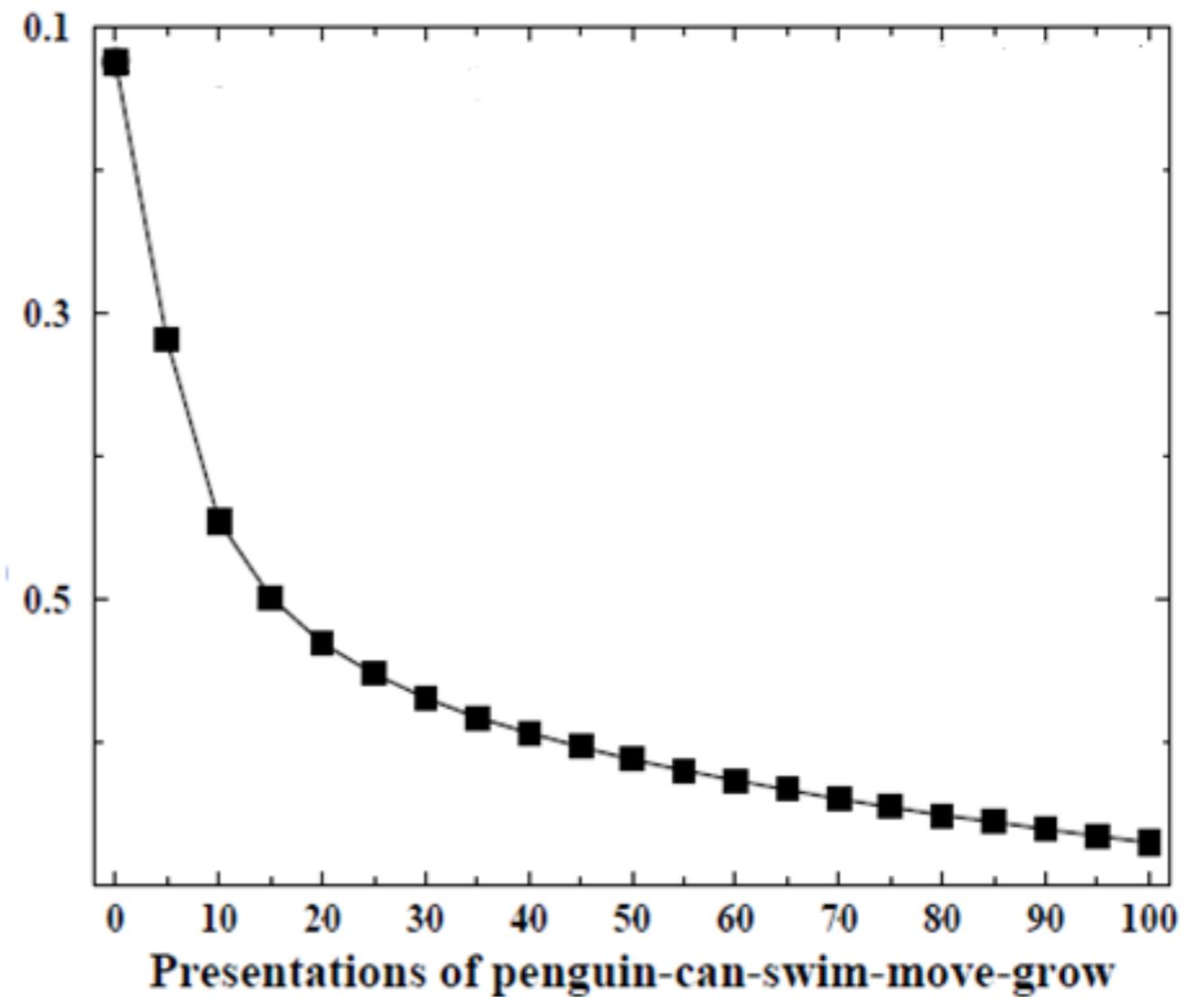
... because you want to avoid *catastrophic forgetting*.

Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

Aquisition of New Information



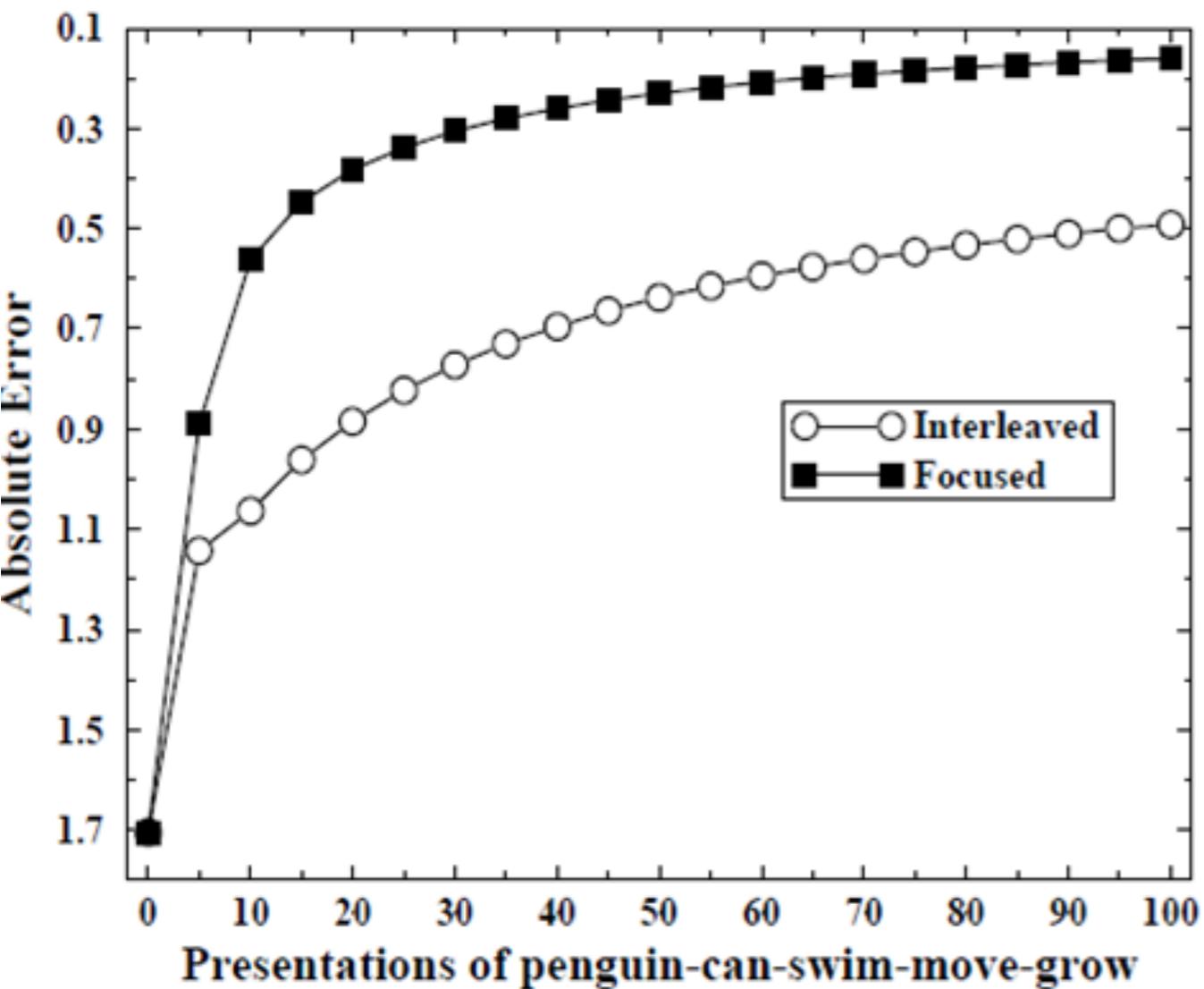
Interference with Existing Memories



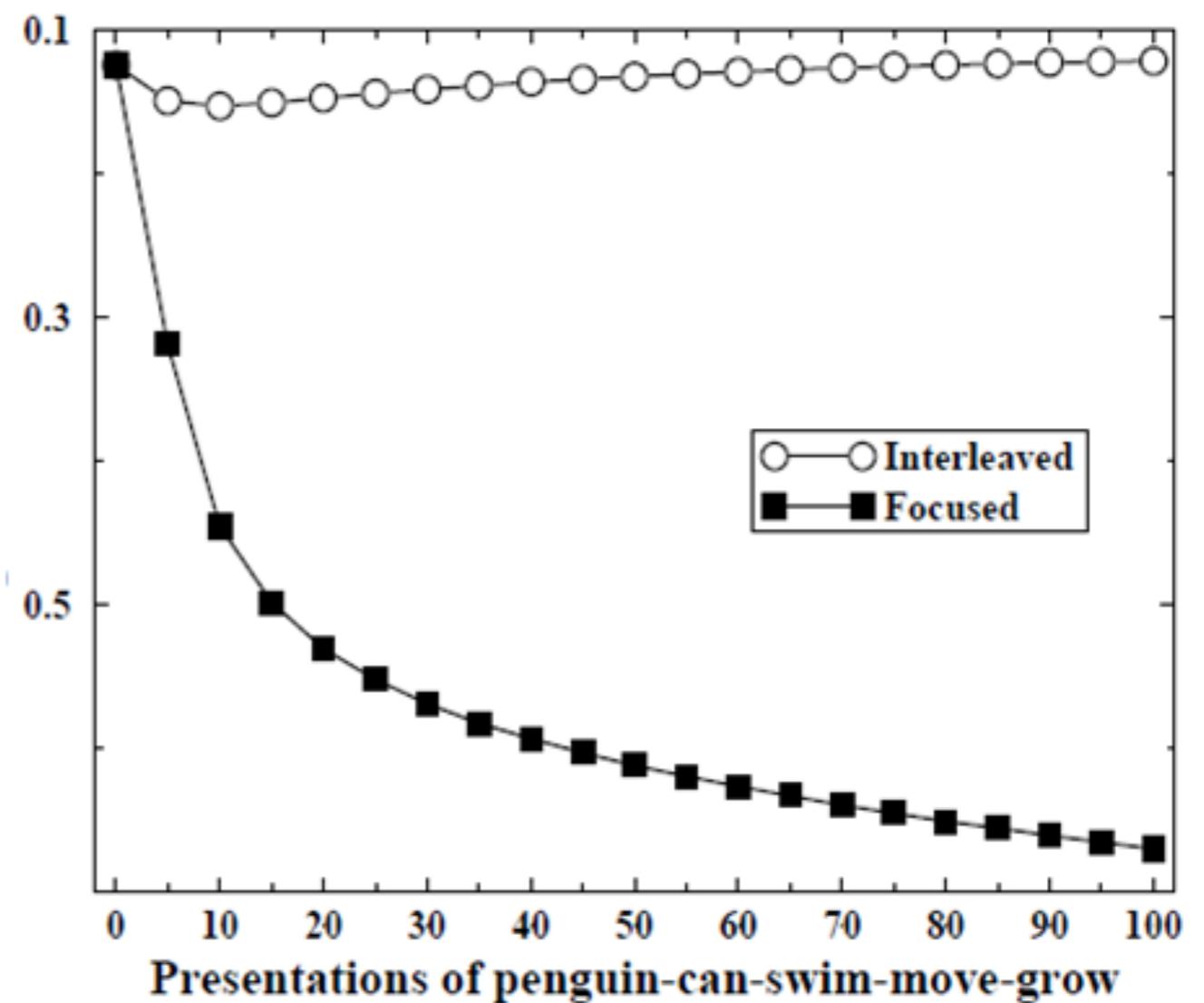
from McClelland 2013

Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

Aquisition of New Information



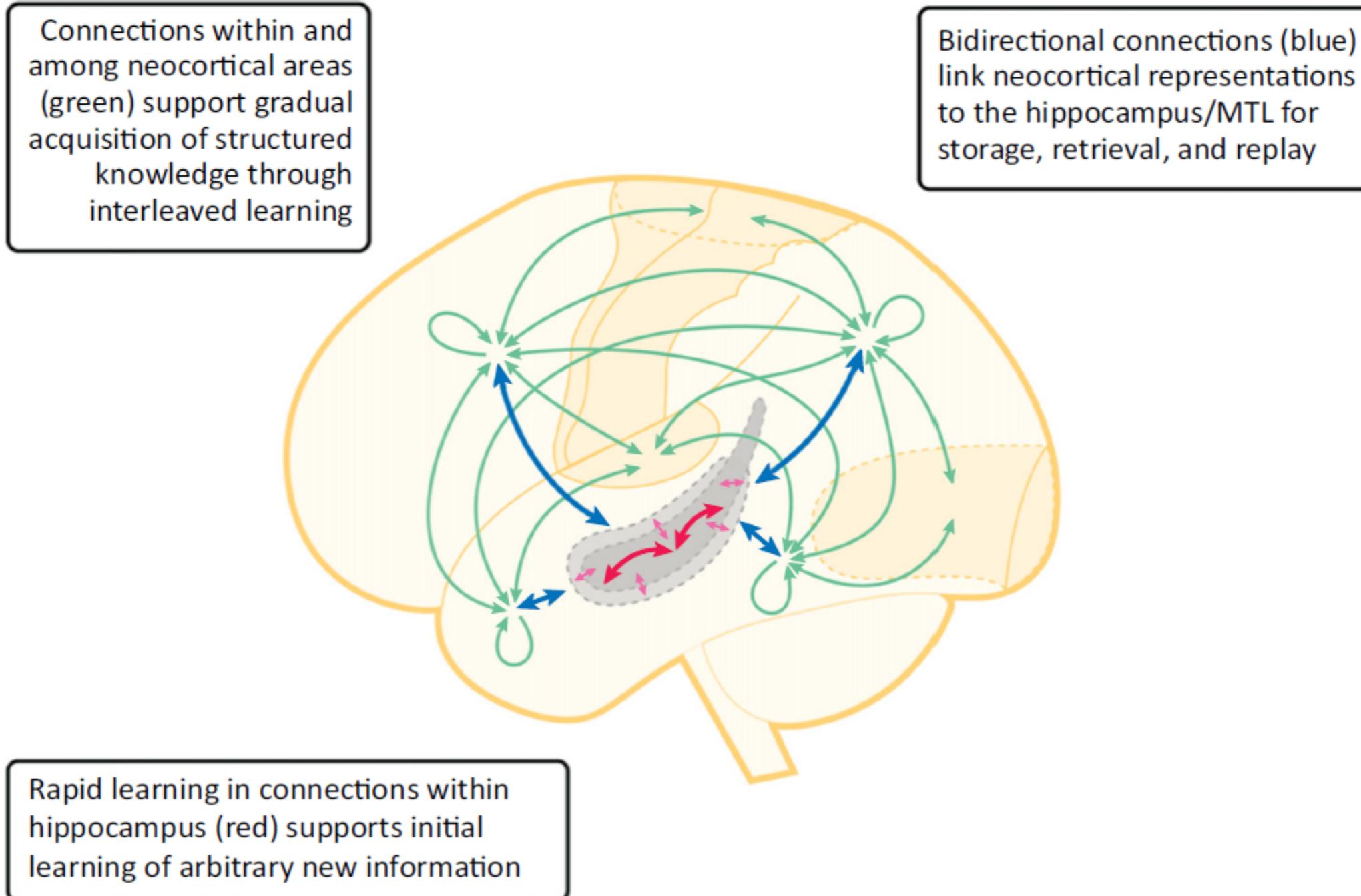
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from McClelland 2013

Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

Complementary Learning Systems (CLS) and their Interactions.

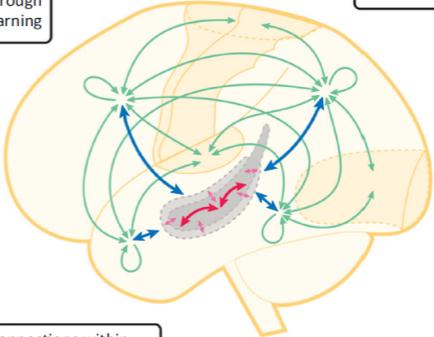


Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

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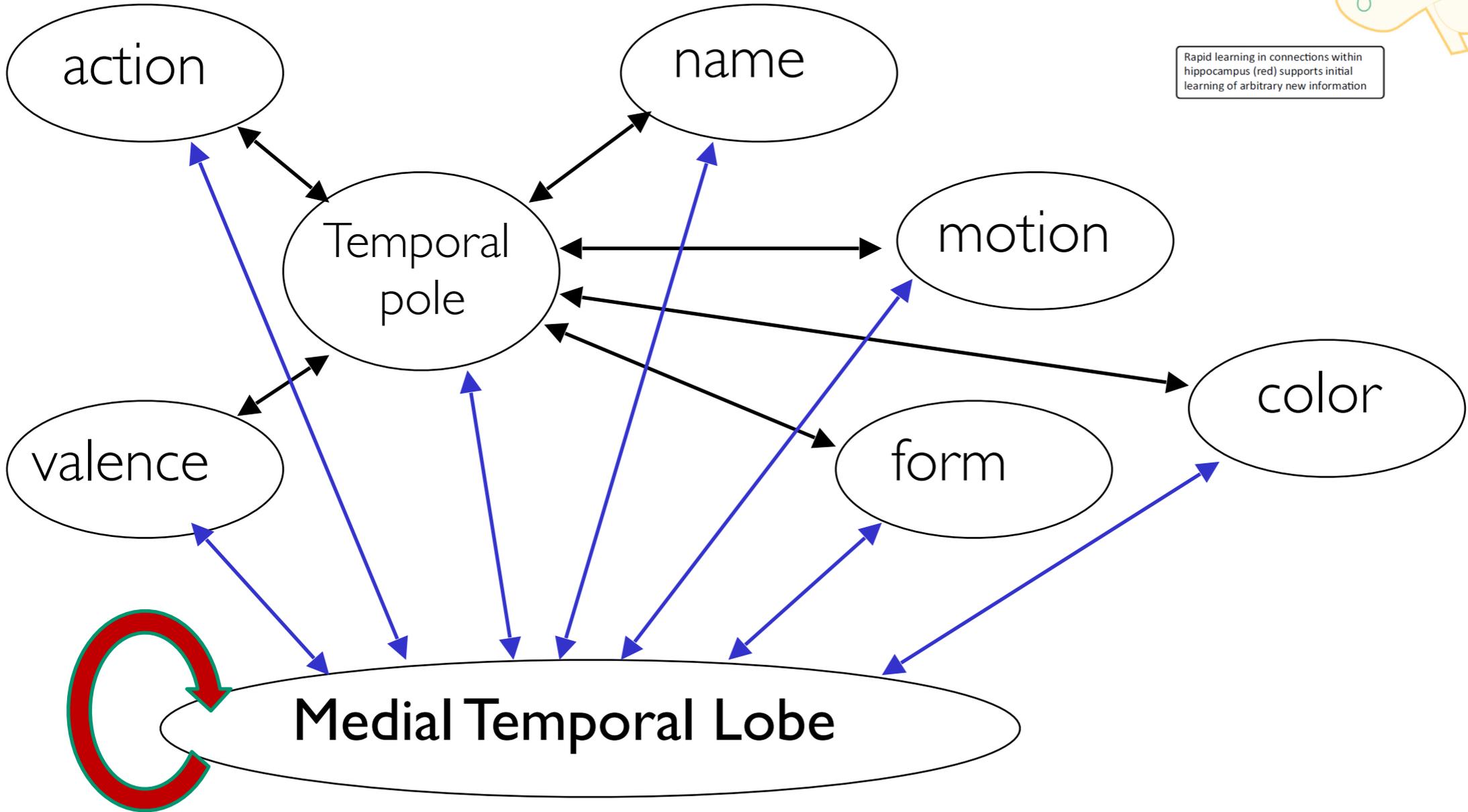
Connections within and among neocortical areas (green) support gradual acquisition of structured knowledge through interleaved learning

Bidirectional connections (blue) link neocortical representations to the hippocampus/MTL for storage, retrieval, and replay



Rapid learning in connections within hippocampus (red) supports initial learning of arbitrary new information

Trends in Cognitive Sciences



Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

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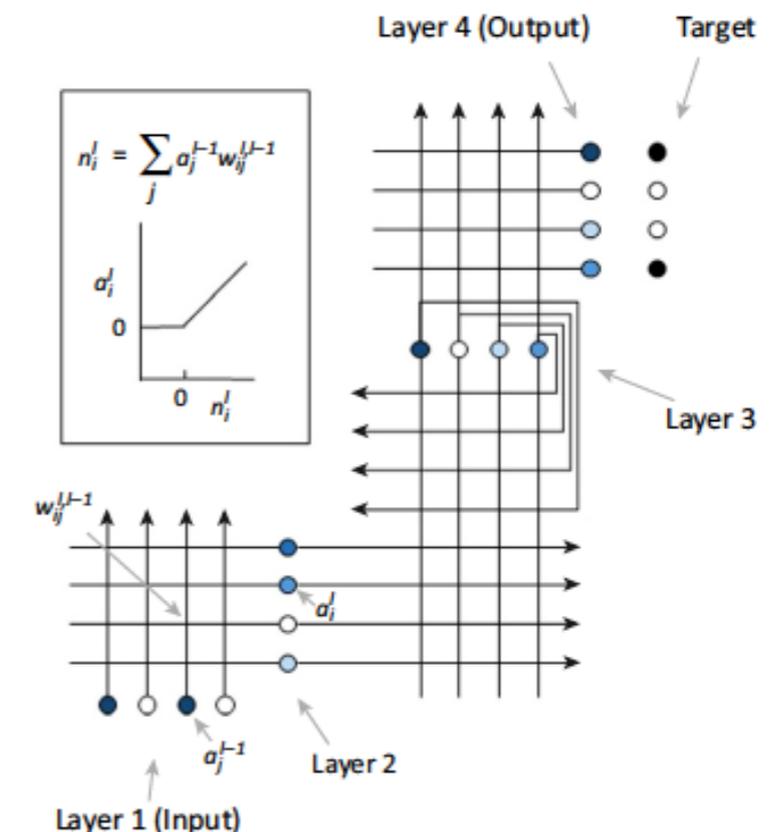
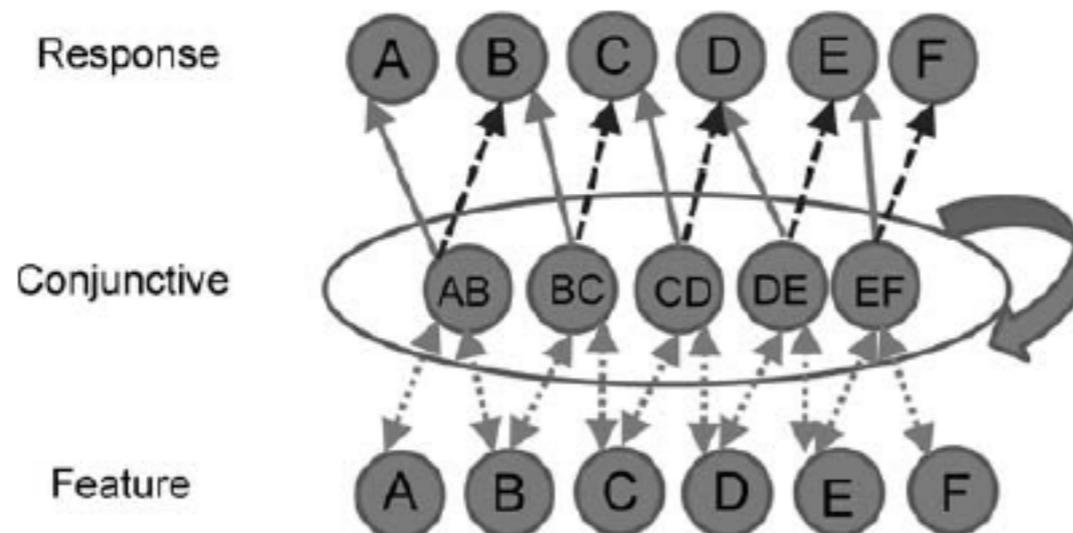
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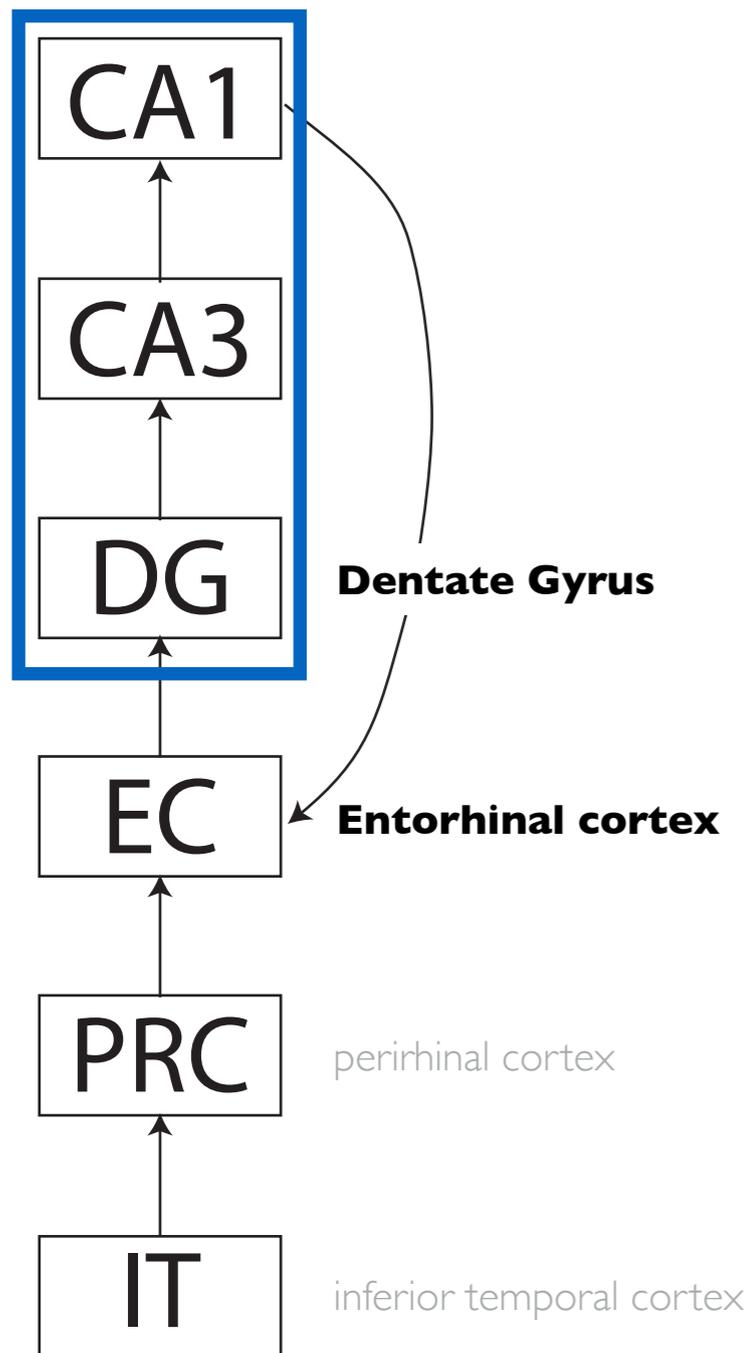
via experience replay and interleaving.



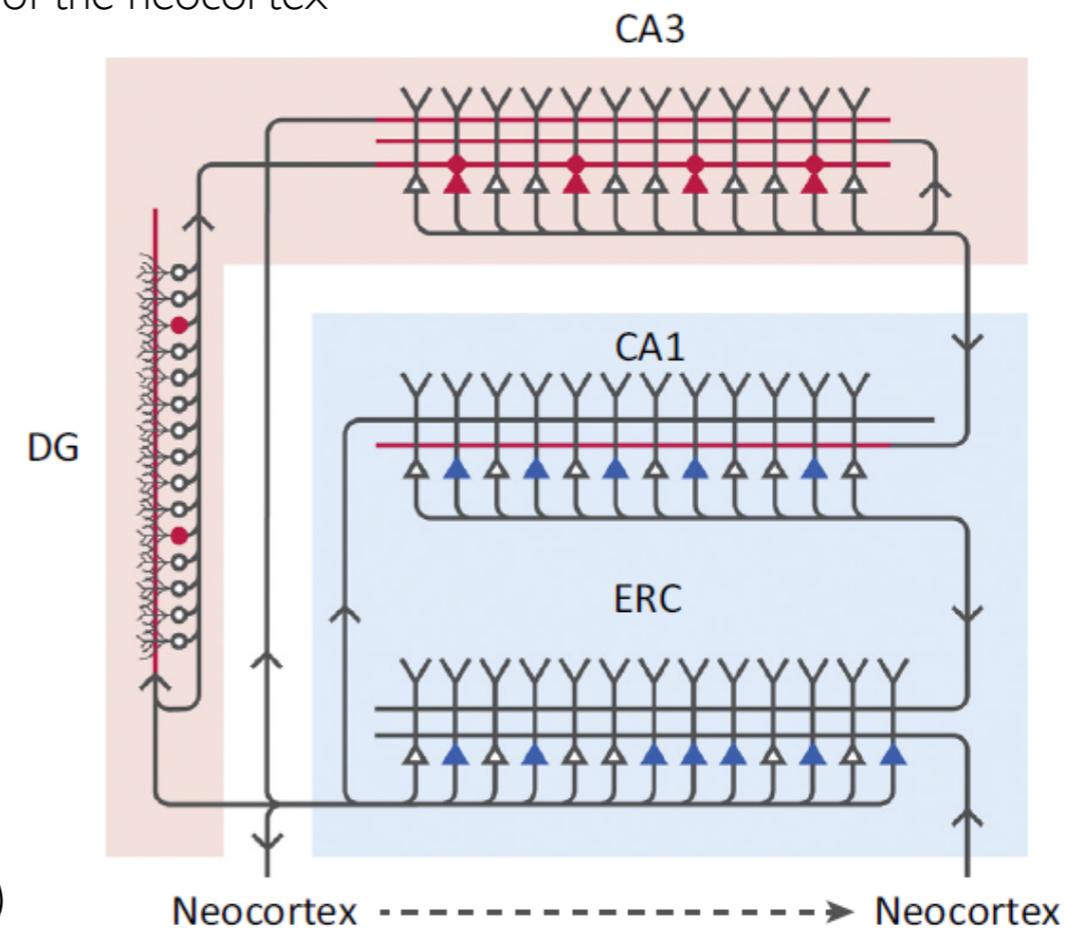
Trends in Cognitive Sciences

from Kumaran & McClelland (2012)

Models: Complementary Learning Systems (“CLS”)

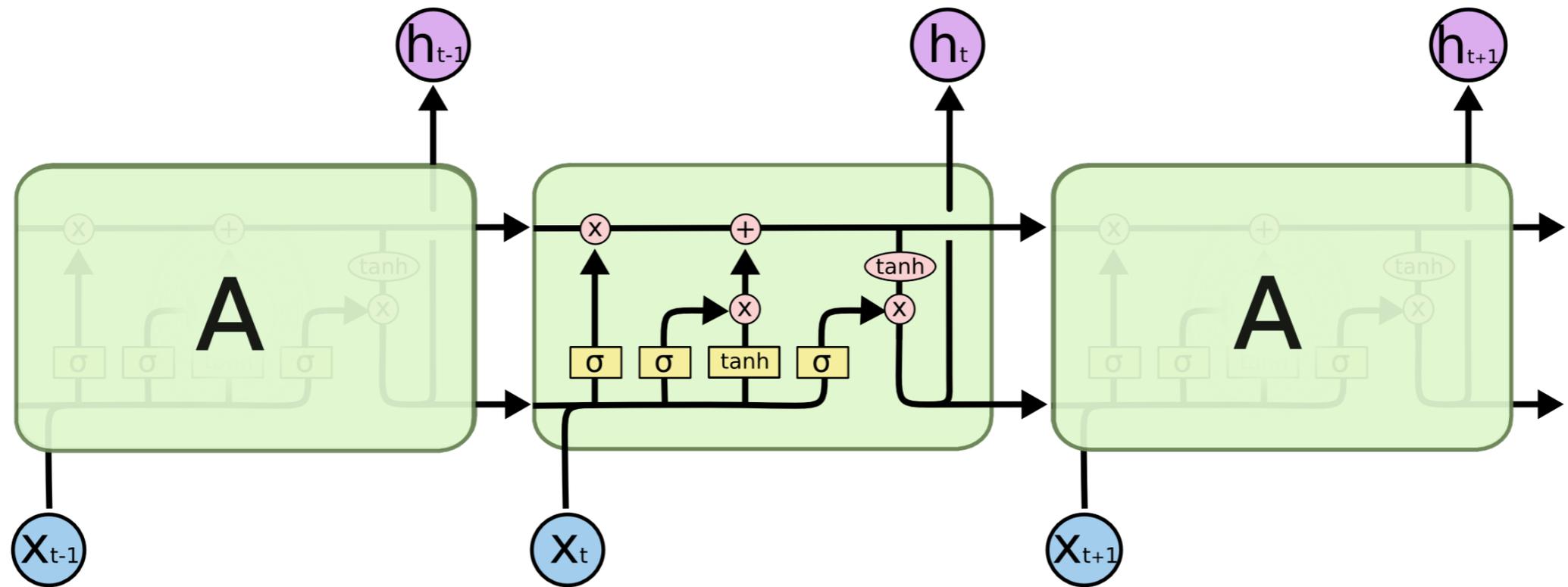


- Input from neocortex comes into EC; EC projects to DG, CA3, and CA1
- Drastic pattern separation occurs in DG
- Downsampling in CA3 assigns an arbitrary code
- Invertible somewhat sparsified representation in CA1
- Fewish-shot learning in **DG, CA3, CA3→CA1** allows reconstruction of ERC pattern from partial input.
- Other connections shown in black are part of the slow-learning neocortical network.
- Recurrence within CA3, through the hippocampal circuit shown, and through the outer loop also involving the rest of the neocortex



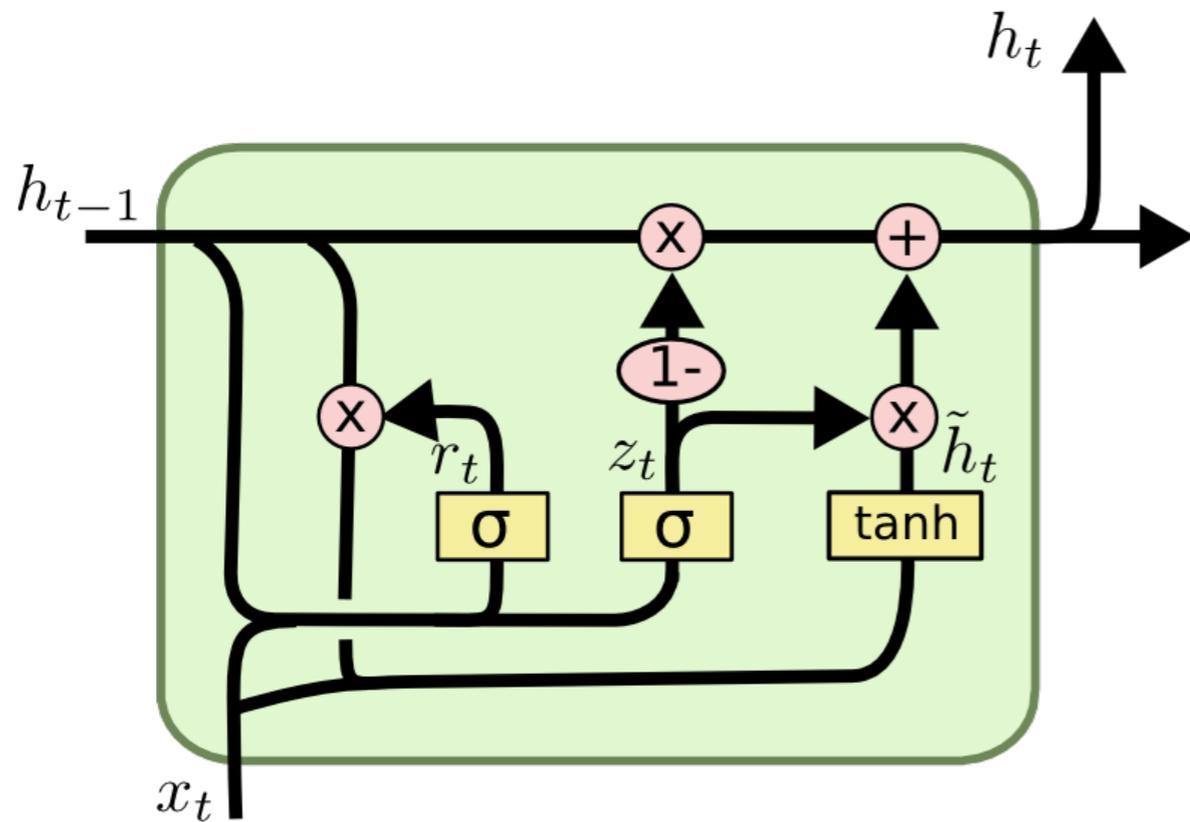
from Kumaran, Hassabis & McClelland (2016)

Long-Short Term Memory (LSTMs)



Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU)

combines forget and input gate:



$$z_t = \sigma(W_z \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t])$$

$$r_t = \sigma(W_r \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t])$$

$$\tilde{h}_t = \tanh(W \cdot [r_t * h_{t-1}, x_t])$$

$$h_t = (1 - z_t) * h_{t-1} + z_t * \tilde{h}_t$$

Neural Network Layer

Pointwise Operation

Vector Transfer

Concatenate

Copy

LSTMs and GRUs very useful in speech recognition and a variety of other problems with long time-scale dependencies.

... but have some severe limitations.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

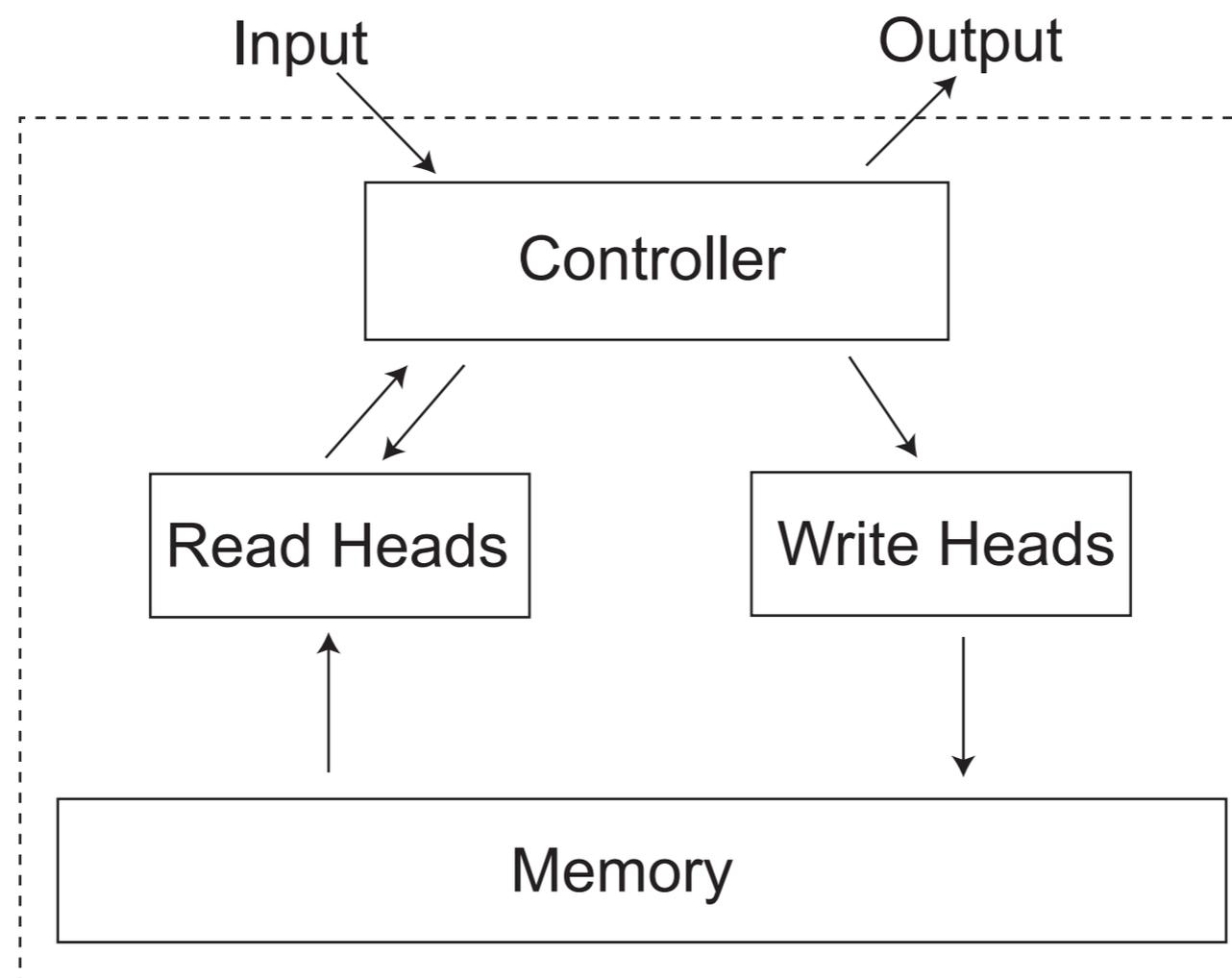
Neural Turing Machines

Alex Graves
Greg Wayne
Ivo Danihelka

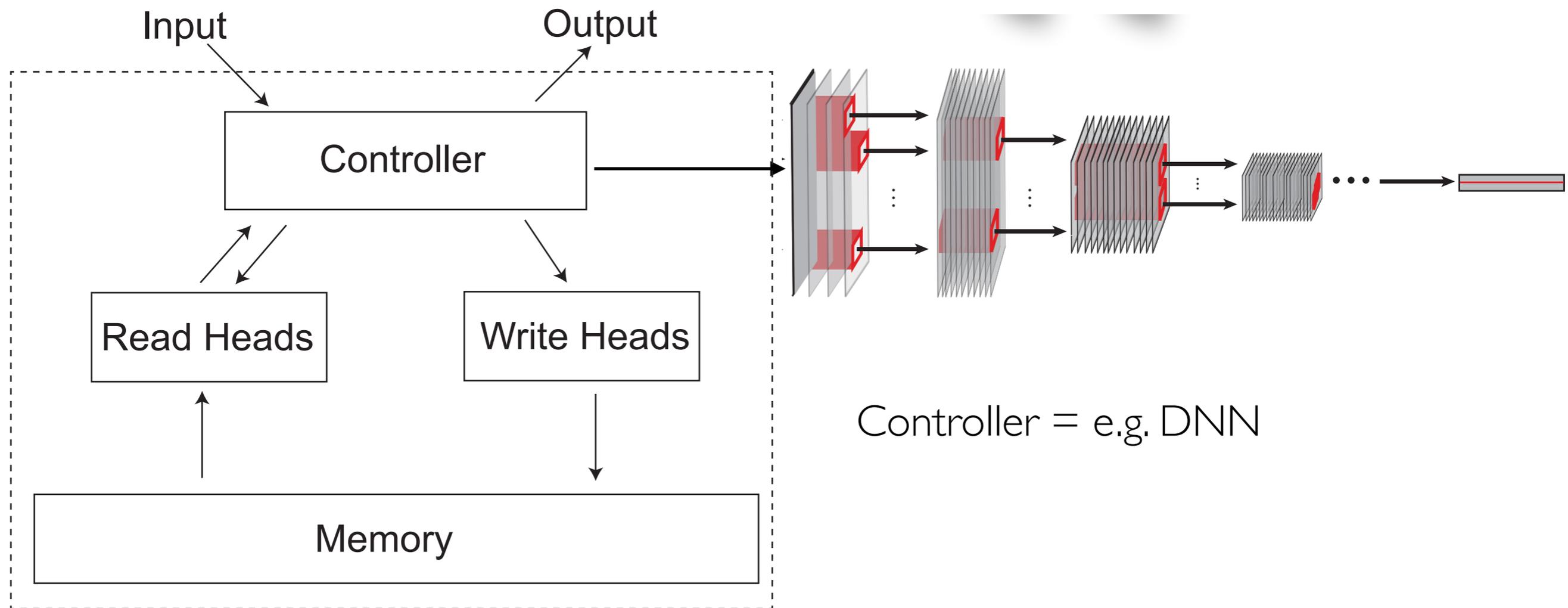
gravesa@google.com
gregwayne@google.com
danihelka@google.com

Google DeepMind, London, UK

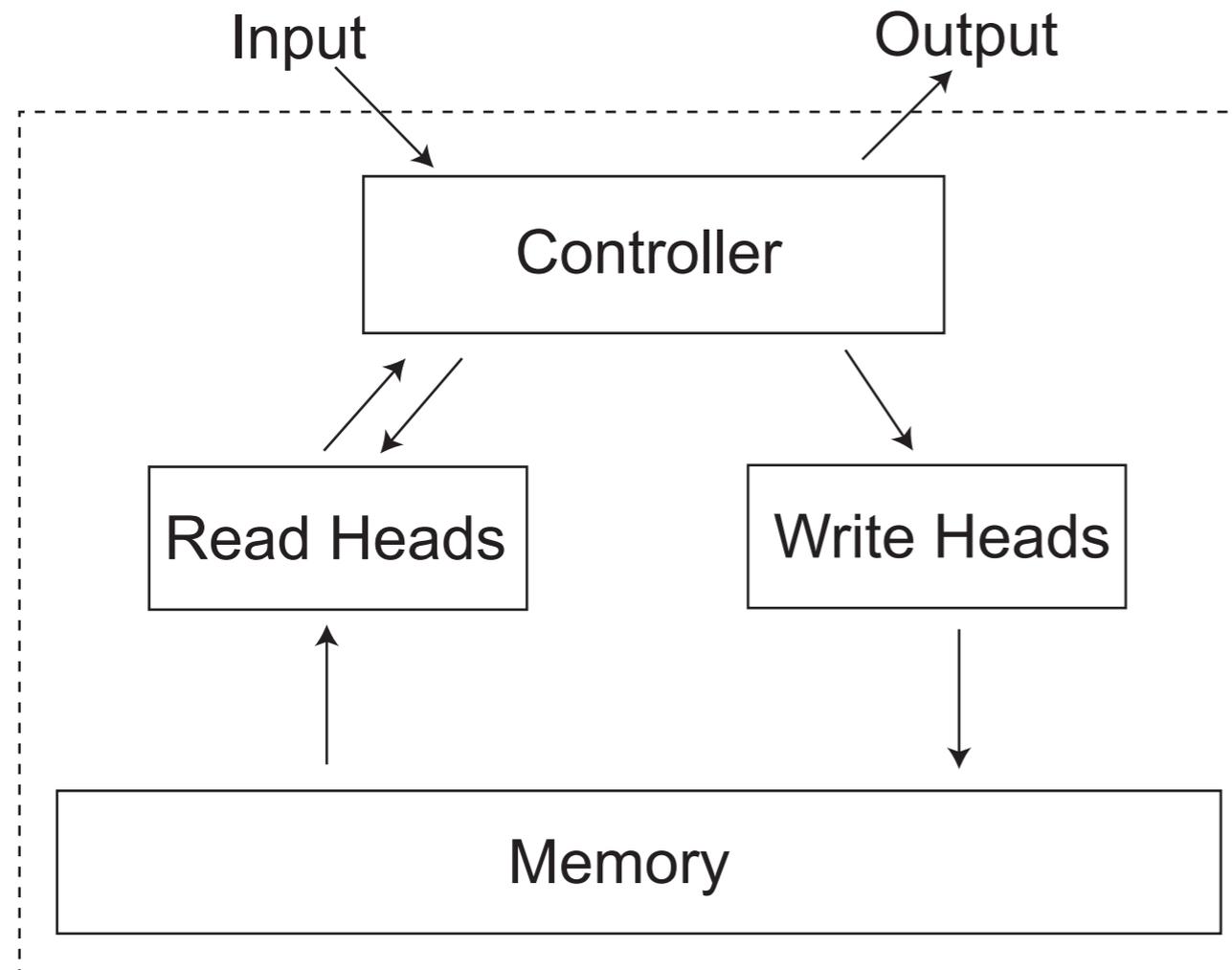
Approach: Learn parameters
(weights on read / write heads) via
gradient descent



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores



Reading: getting / interpretation memories from memory bank (RAM)

Writing: changing the contents of the memory bank as a function of what's in the active focus

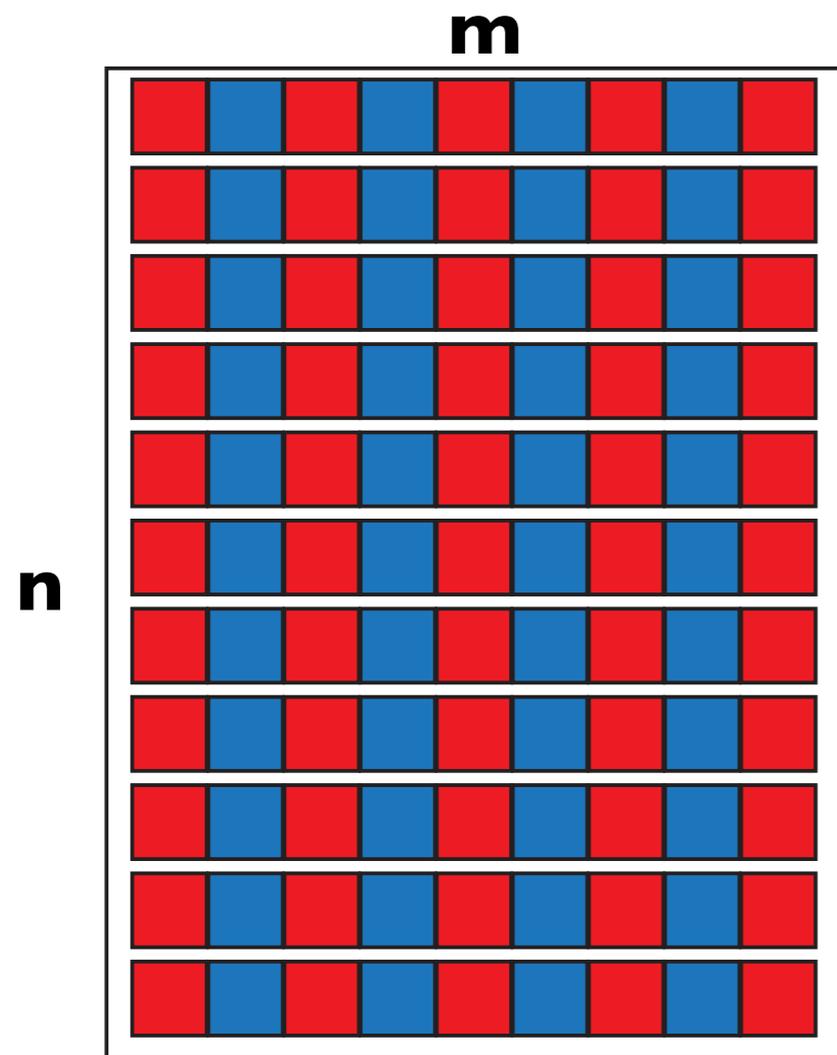
Addressing: changing the connection between the active focus and the memory bank

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

I. Reading

n = number of memory vectors

m = memory vector length



M_t = $n \times m$ memory matrix
at time t

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

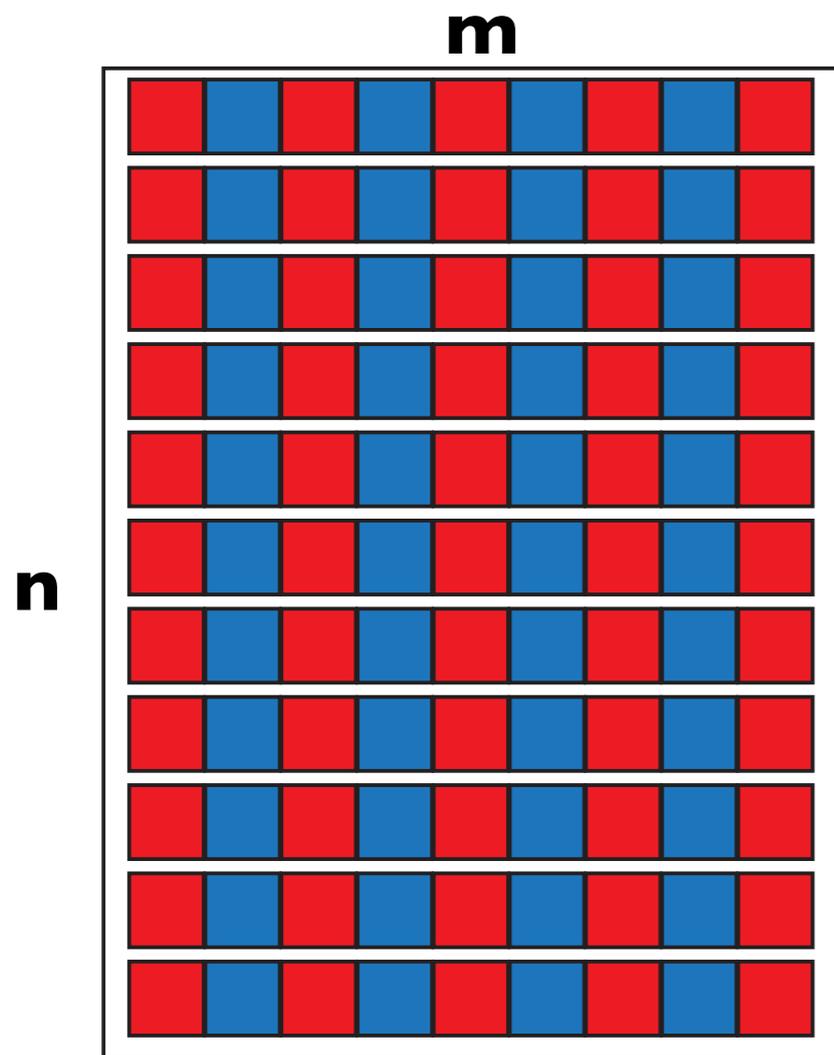
I. Reading

n = number of memory vectors

m = memory vector length

w_t = read weight vector of length n

$$w_t(i) \geq 0 \quad \sum_i w_t(i) = 1$$



M_t = $n \times m$ memory matrix
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Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

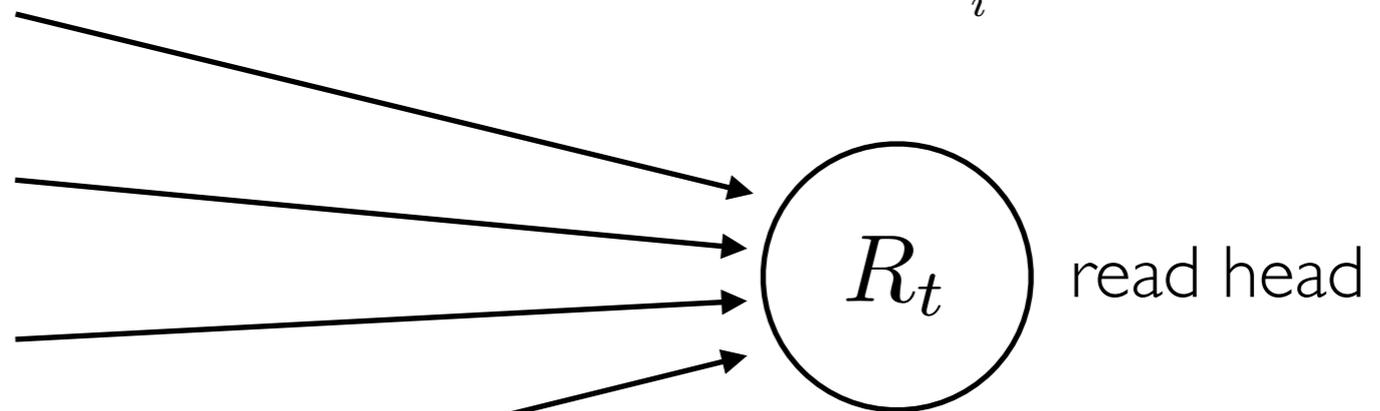
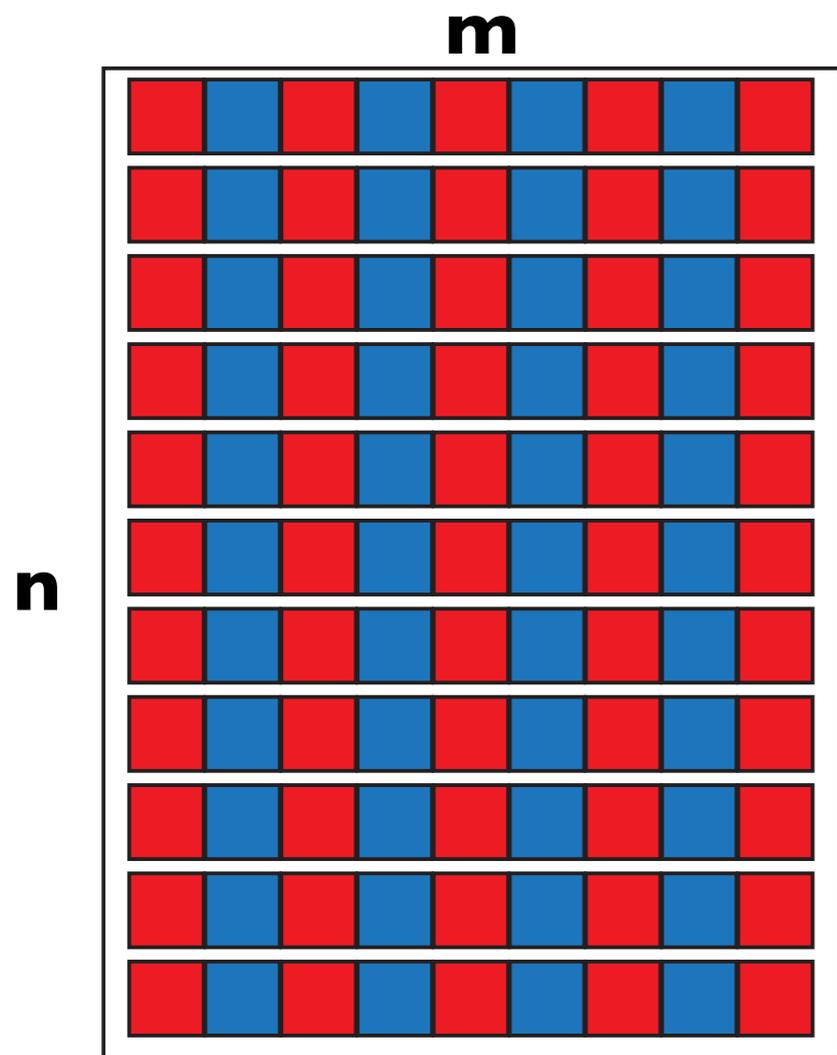
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$$R_t = M_t \cdot w_t$$

M_t = $n \times m$ memory matrix
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Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

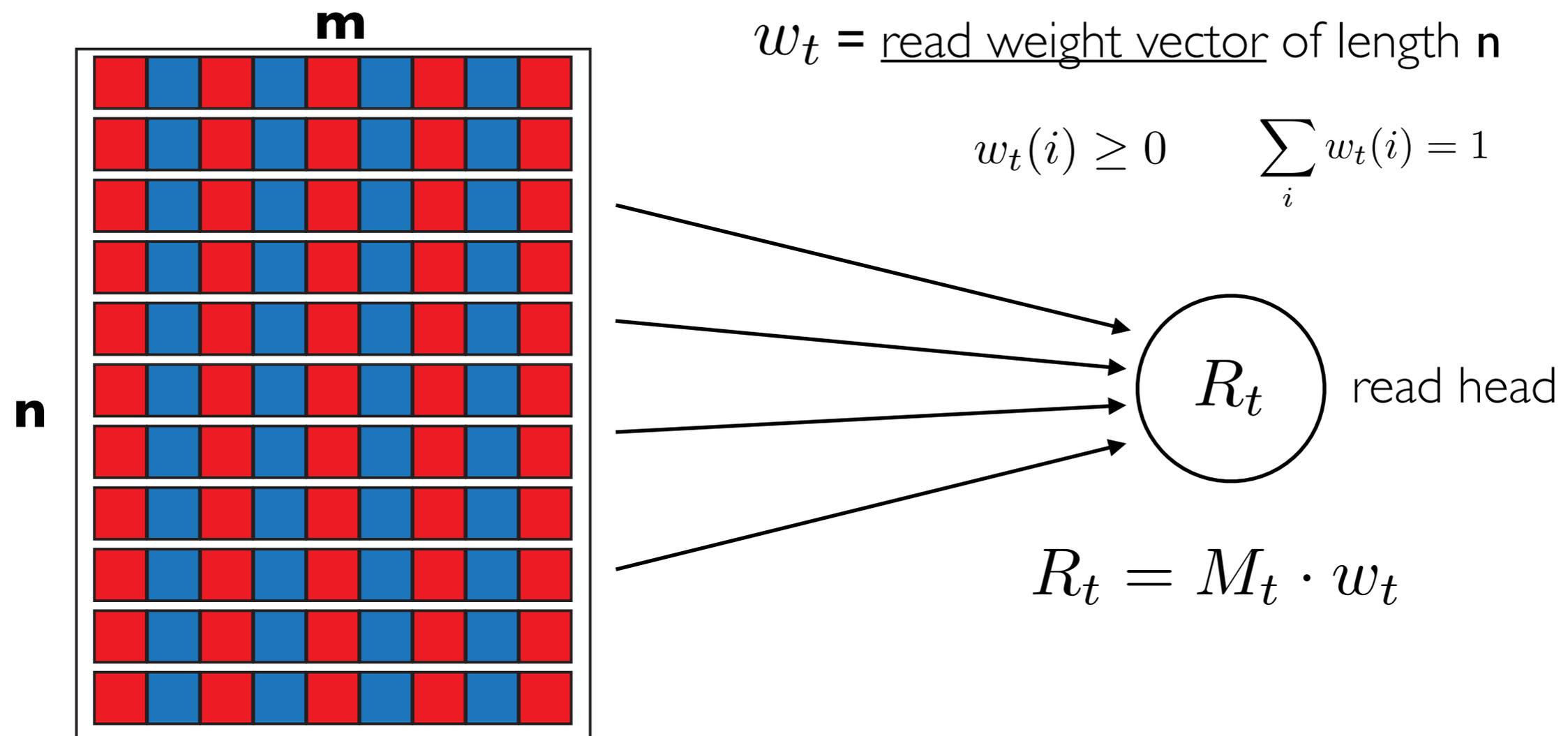
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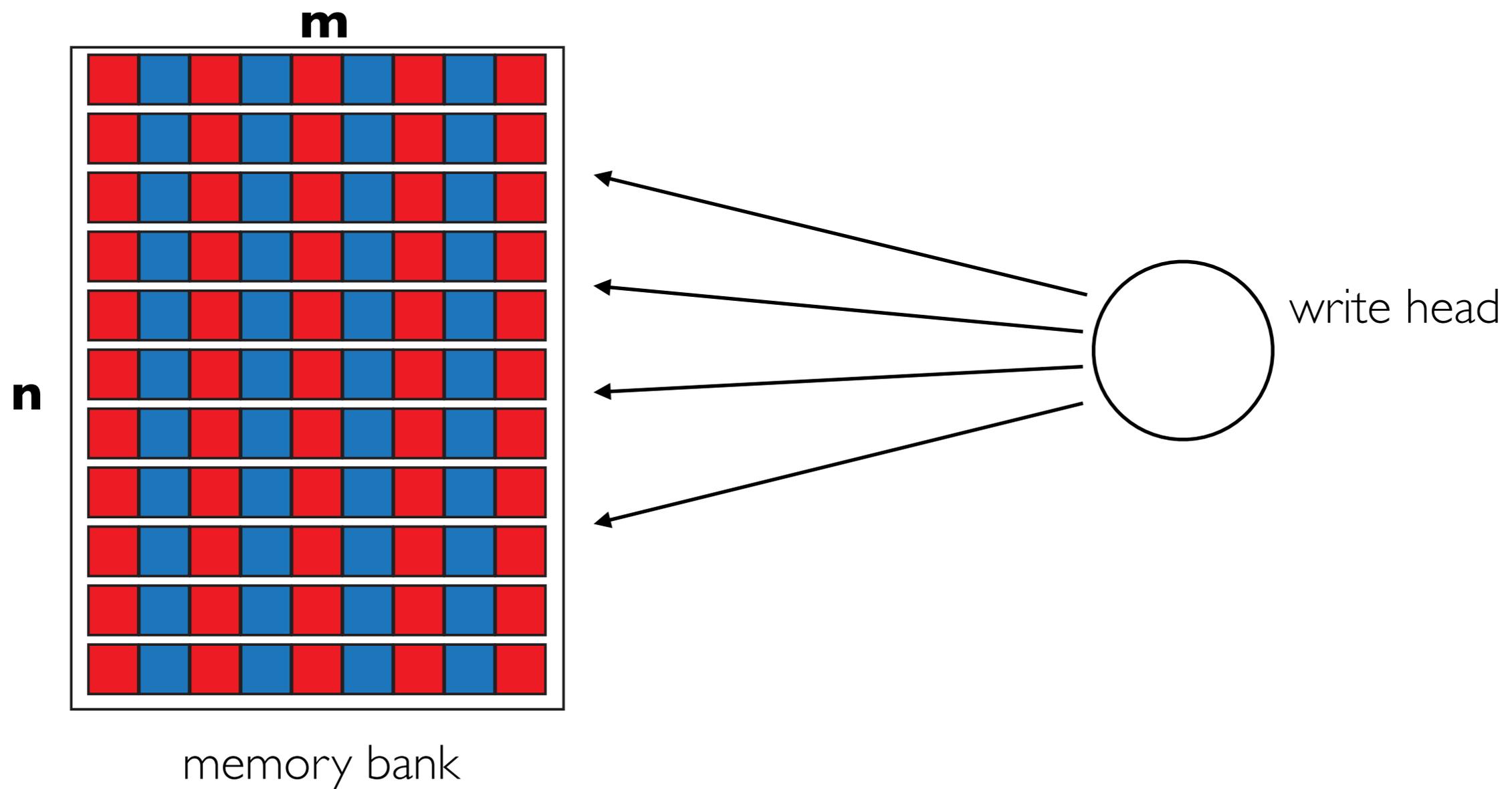
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at time t

NB: differentiable w.r.t. \mathbf{M} and \mathbf{w}

2. Writing



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

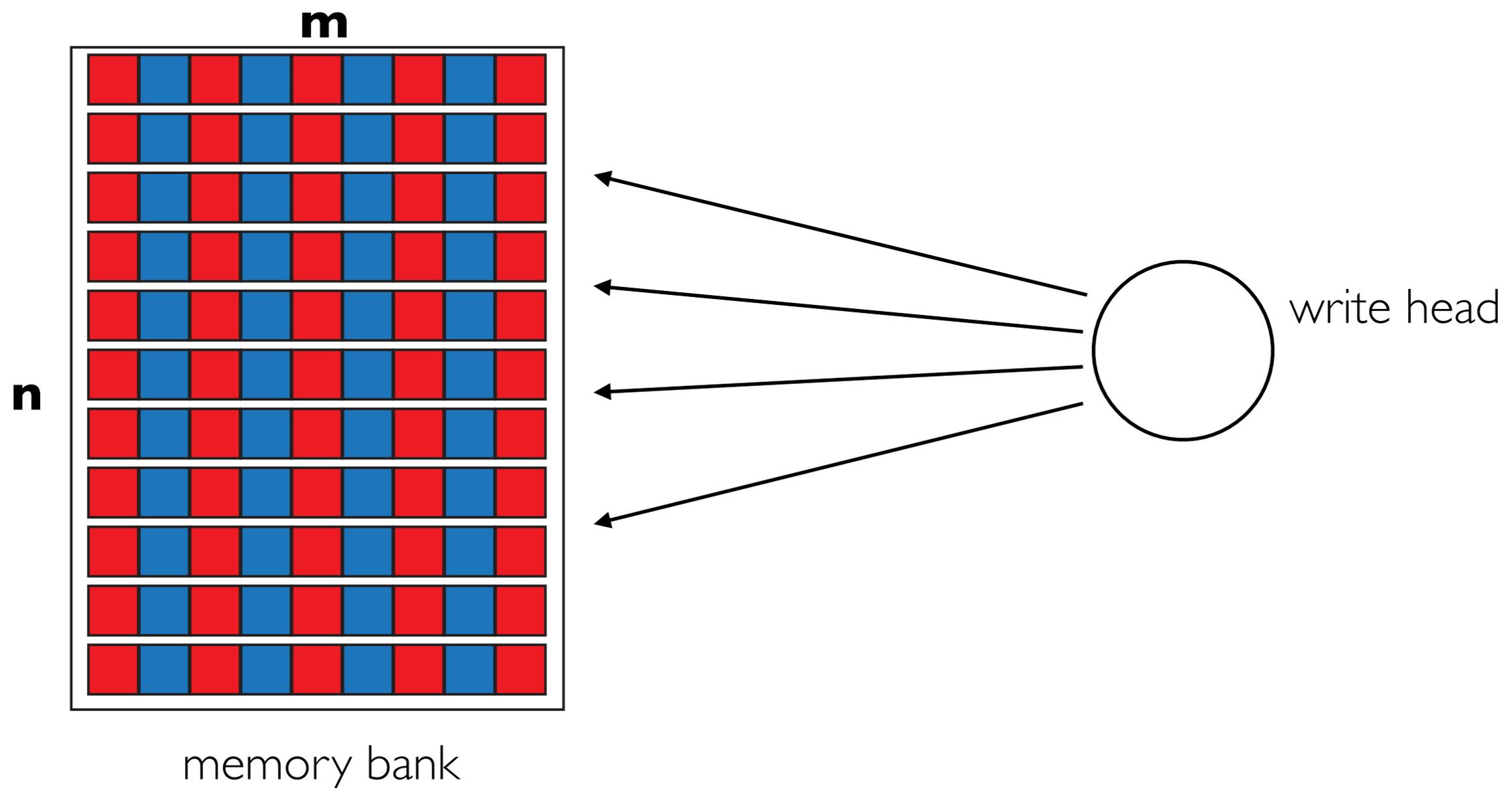
2. Writing

w_t = write weights of length n

e_t = erase vector of length m

a_t = add vector of length m

$$e_t(j), a_j(t) \in [0, 1], 0 \leq j < m - 1$$



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

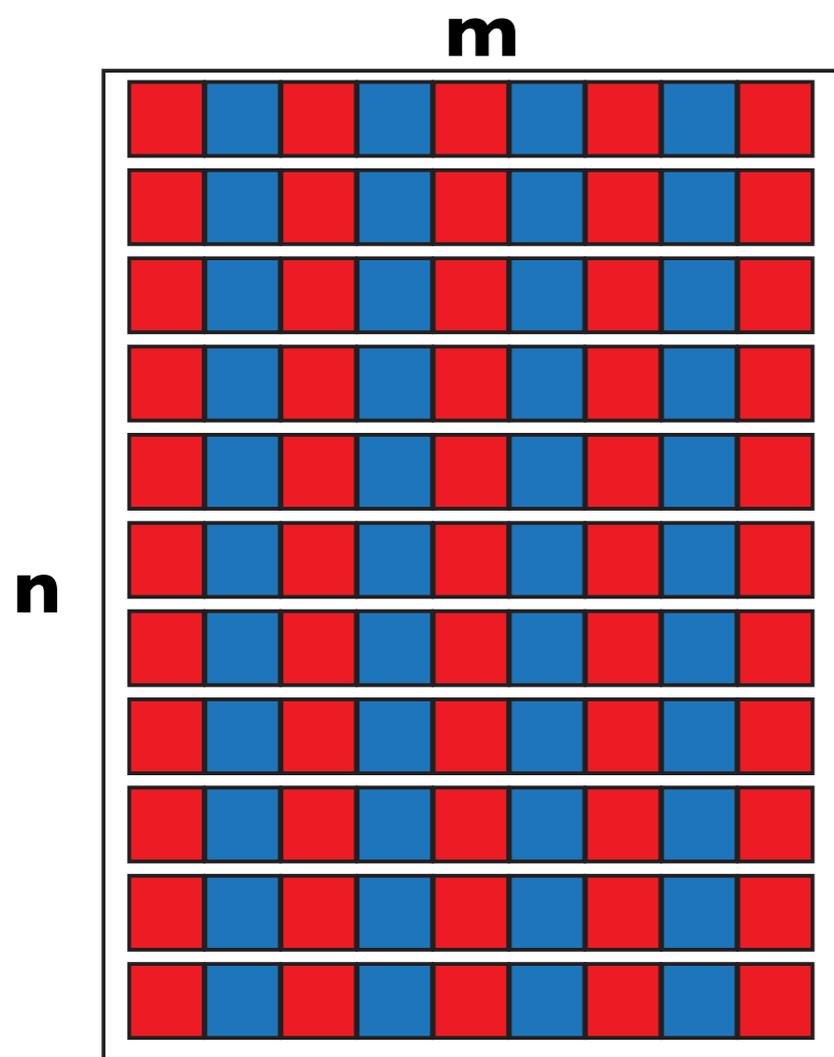
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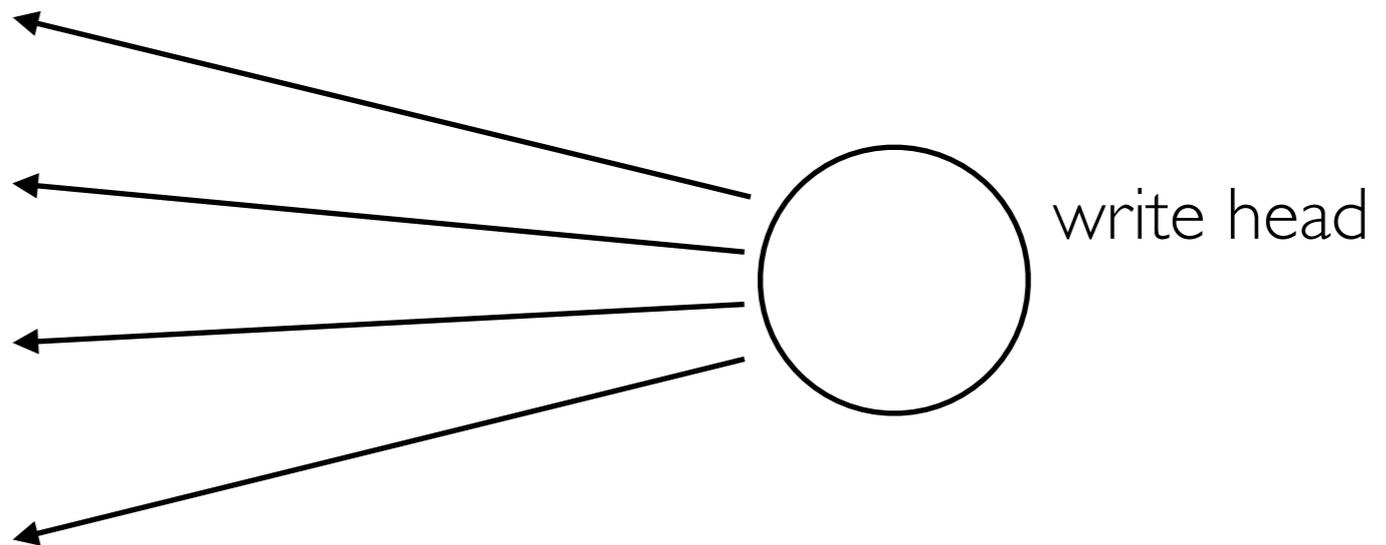
$$e_t(j), a_j(t) \in [0, 1], 0 \leq j < m - 1$$



memory bank

Update equation, separately for each i :

$$M_{t+1}(i) = M_t(i) \cdot (1 - w_t(i)e_t) + w_t(i)a_t$$



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

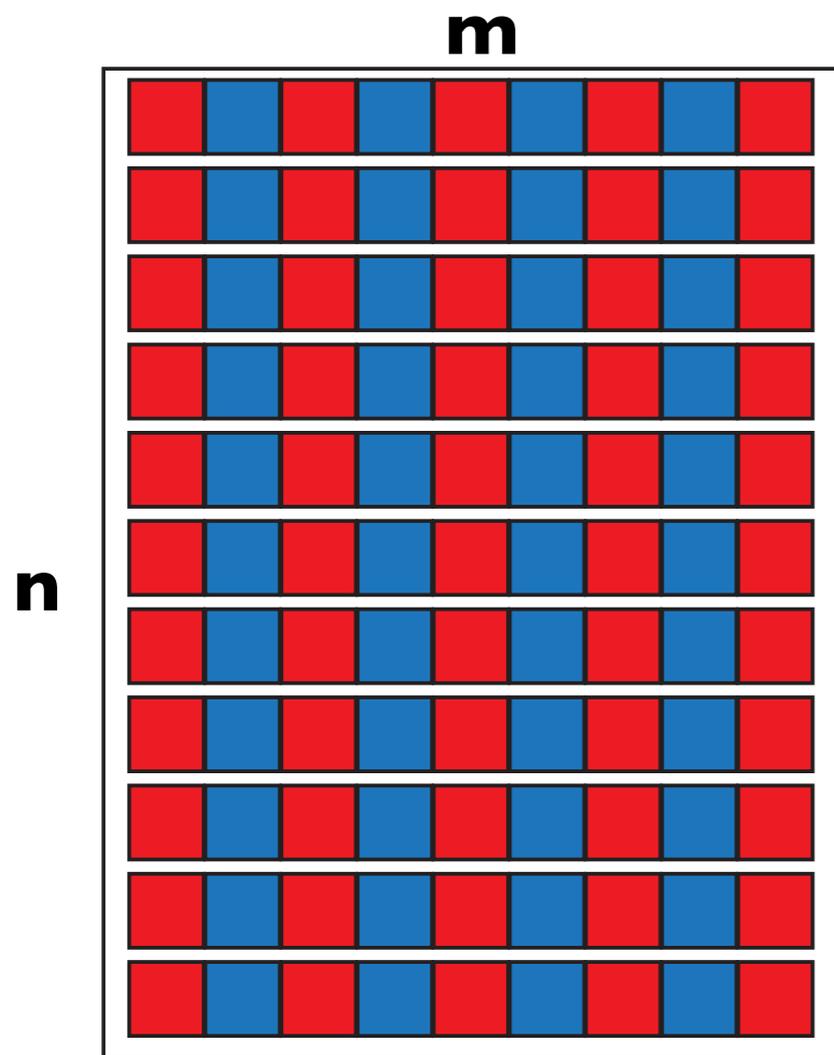
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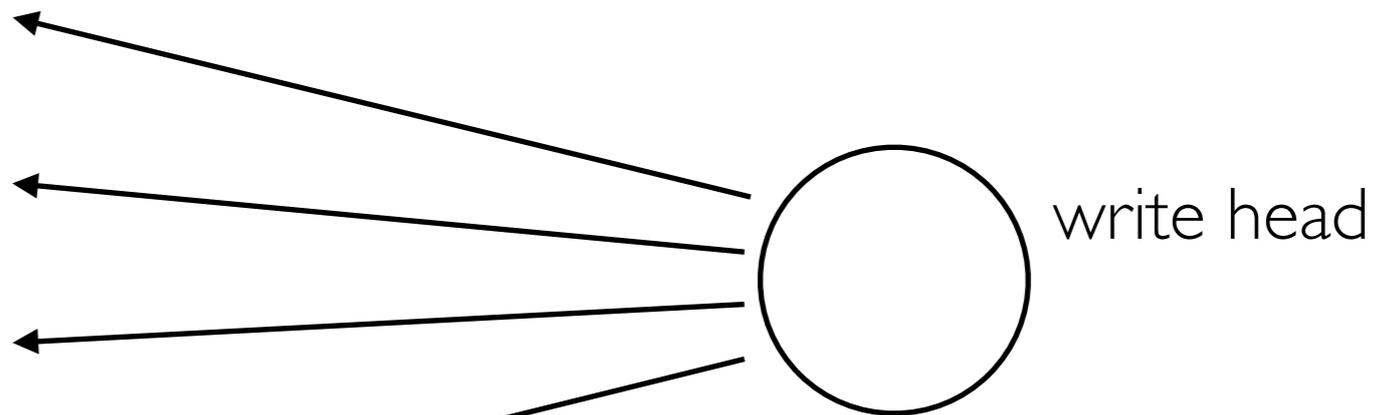
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memory bank

Update equation, separately for each i :

$$M_{t+1}(i) = M_t(i) \cdot (1 - w_t(i)e_t) + w_t(i)a_t$$



$$\implies \Delta M_{t+1} = w_t(i) \cdot (a_t - e_t M_t)$$

“correct” behavior in limit:

If $e_t = 1$ AND $w_t = 1$
memory is erased

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

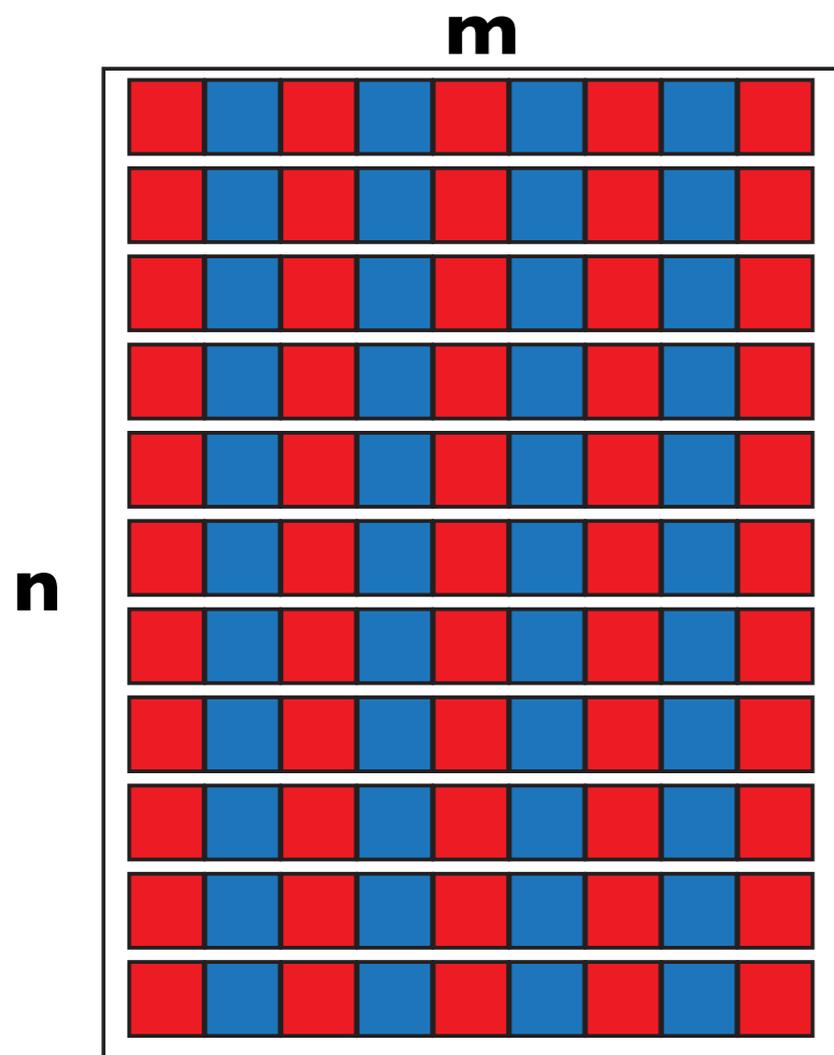
2. Writing

w_t = write weights of length n

e_t = erase vector of length m

a_t = add vector of length m

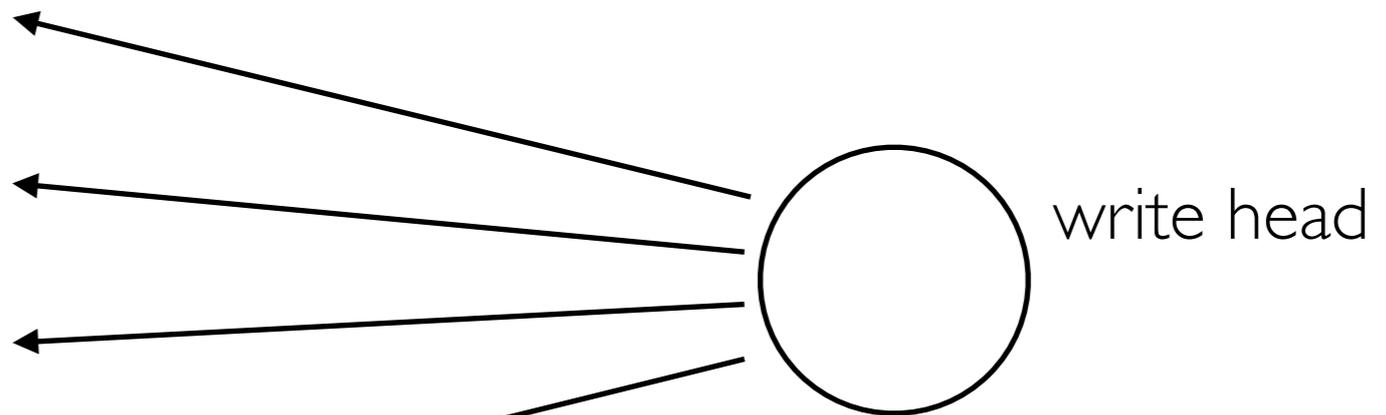
$$e_t(j), a_j(t) \in [0, 1], 0 \leq j < m - 1$$



memory bank

Update equation, separately for each i :

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If $e_t, a_t = 0$ OR $w_t = 0$
memory is unchanged

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

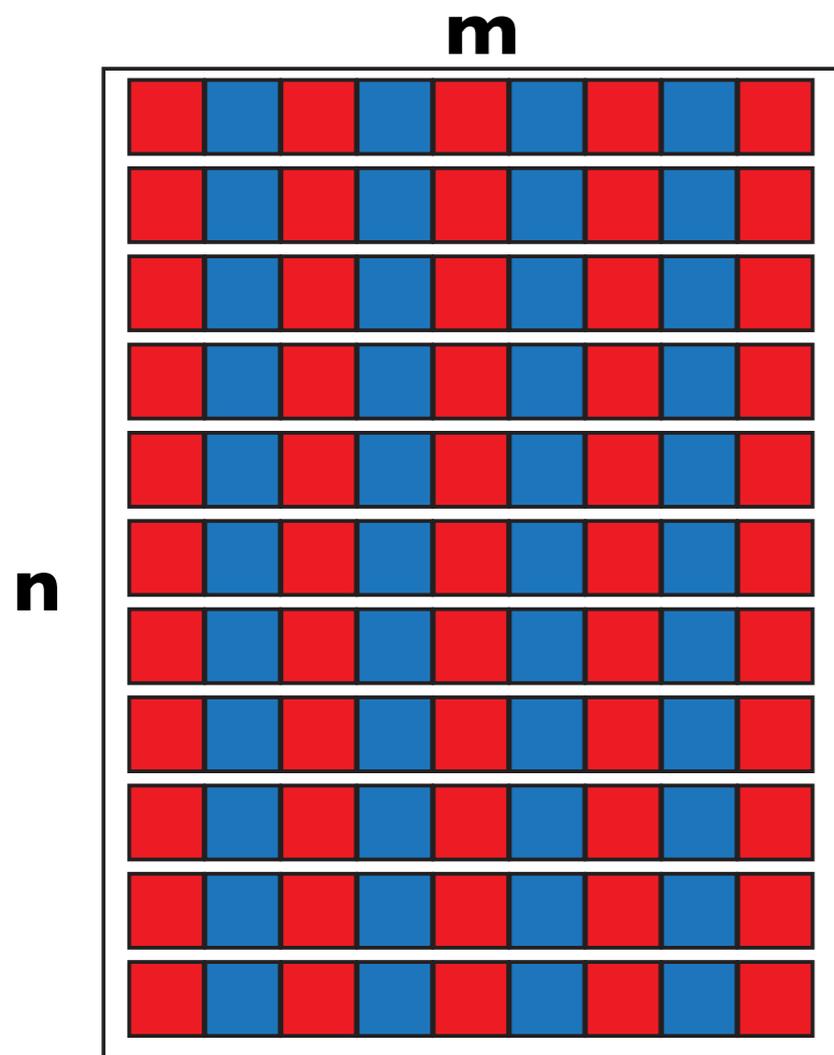
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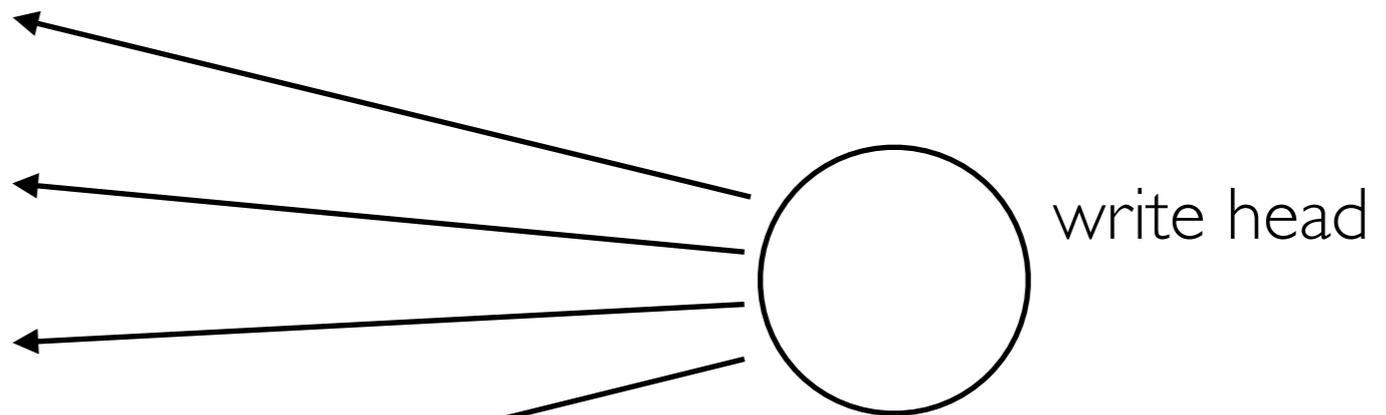
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memory bank

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“correct” behavior in limit:

If $e_t = 1$ AND $w_t = 1$
memory is erased

If $e_t, a_t = 0$ OR $w_t = 0$
memory is unchanged

formula smoothly interpolates two cases above

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from? **3. Addressing**

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from? **3. Addressing**

I. Content Addressing: Hopfield Networks (Hopfield, 1982)
Shiffrin, Hintzman (Minerva II, 1984)

address == similarity between
controller (DNN)
and
memory



John Hopfield

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

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memory

$$w_t^c(i) = \beta_t \cdot \langle k_t, M_t(i) \rangle$$

β_t = coupling strength

k_t = output from the controller (DNN)

$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ = similarity measure e.g. cosine distance



John Hopfield

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from? **3. Addressing**

I. Content Addressing: Hopfield Networks (Hopfield, 1982)
Shiffrin, Hintzman (Minerva II, 1984)

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John Hopfield

$$w_t^c(i) = \mathbf{Softmax}(\beta_t \cdot \langle k_t, M_t(i) \rangle)$$

β_t = coupling strength

k_t = output from the controller (DNN)

$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ = similarity measure e.g. cosine distance

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from? **3. Addressing**

I. Content Addressing: Hopfield Networks (Hopfield, 1982)
Shiffrin, Hintzman (Minerva II, 1984)



John Hopfield

address == similarity between
controller (DNN)
and
memory

$$w_t^c(i) = \frac{\exp(\beta_t \cdot \langle k_t, M_t(i) \rangle)}{\sum_j \exp(\beta_t \cdot \langle k_t, M_t(j) \rangle)}$$

← competition between memories

β_t = coupling strength

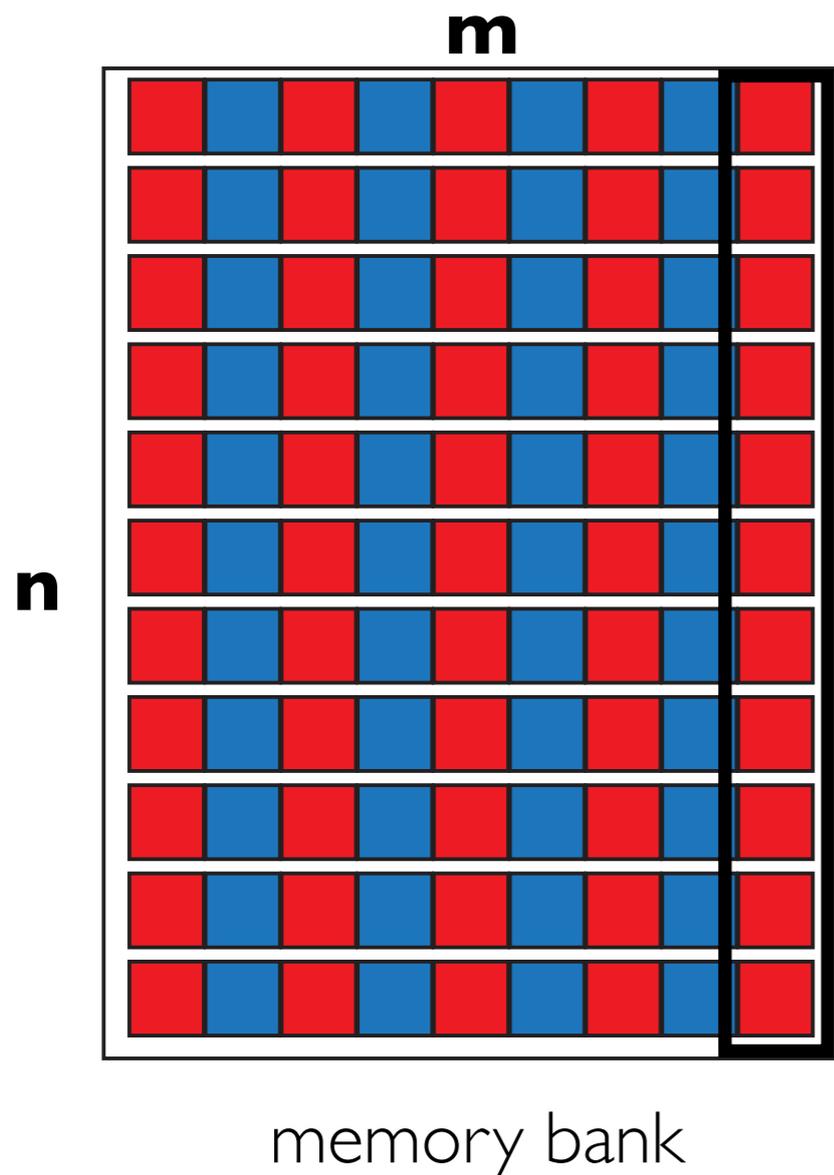
k_t = output from the controller (DNN)

$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ = similarity measure e.g. cosine distance

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from? **3. Addressing**

2. Location-based addressing:



convolution over vertical axis, separately for each column

$$w_t(i) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} w_t^c(j) \cdot s_t(i - j)$$

\mathbf{s}_t = learned probability distribution over locations

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

But where do the \mathbf{w}_t come from?

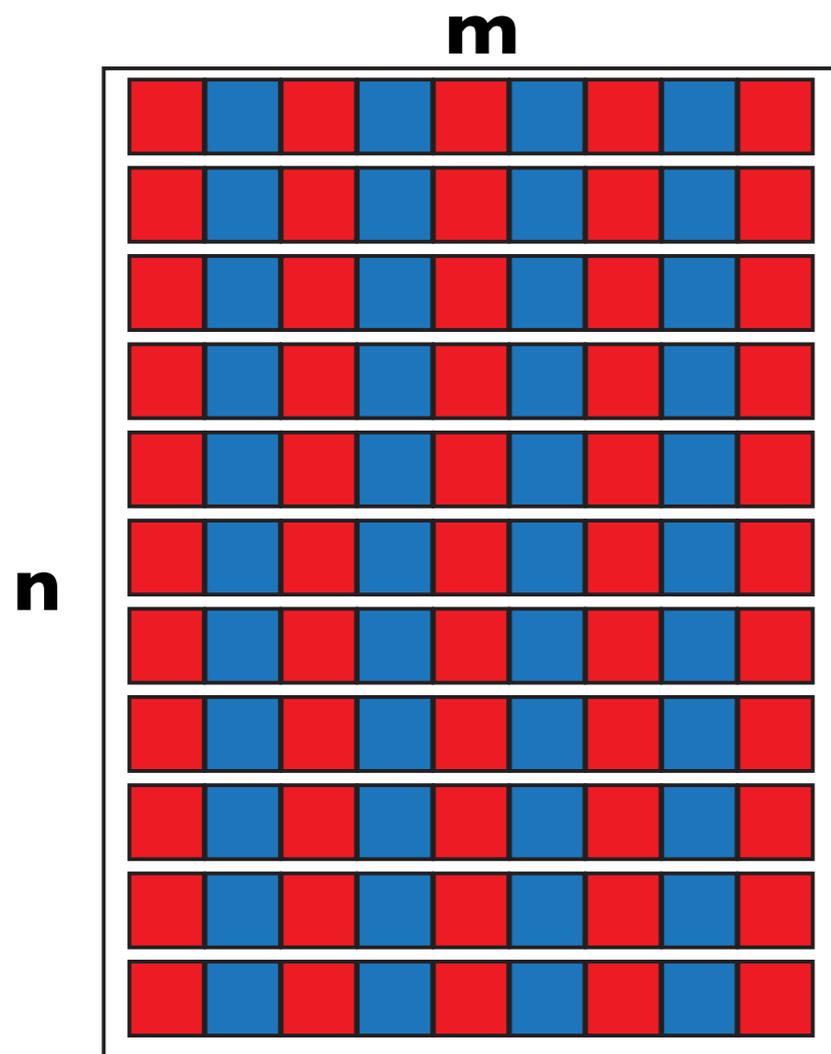
Technically:

2. Location-based addressing:

$$w_t^g(i) = g_t \cdot w_t^c(i) + (1 - g_t)w_{t-1}(i)$$

(gated interpolation)

$$g_t \in [0, 1]$$



memory bank

$$\tilde{w}_t(i) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} w_t^g(j) \cdot s_t(i - j)$$

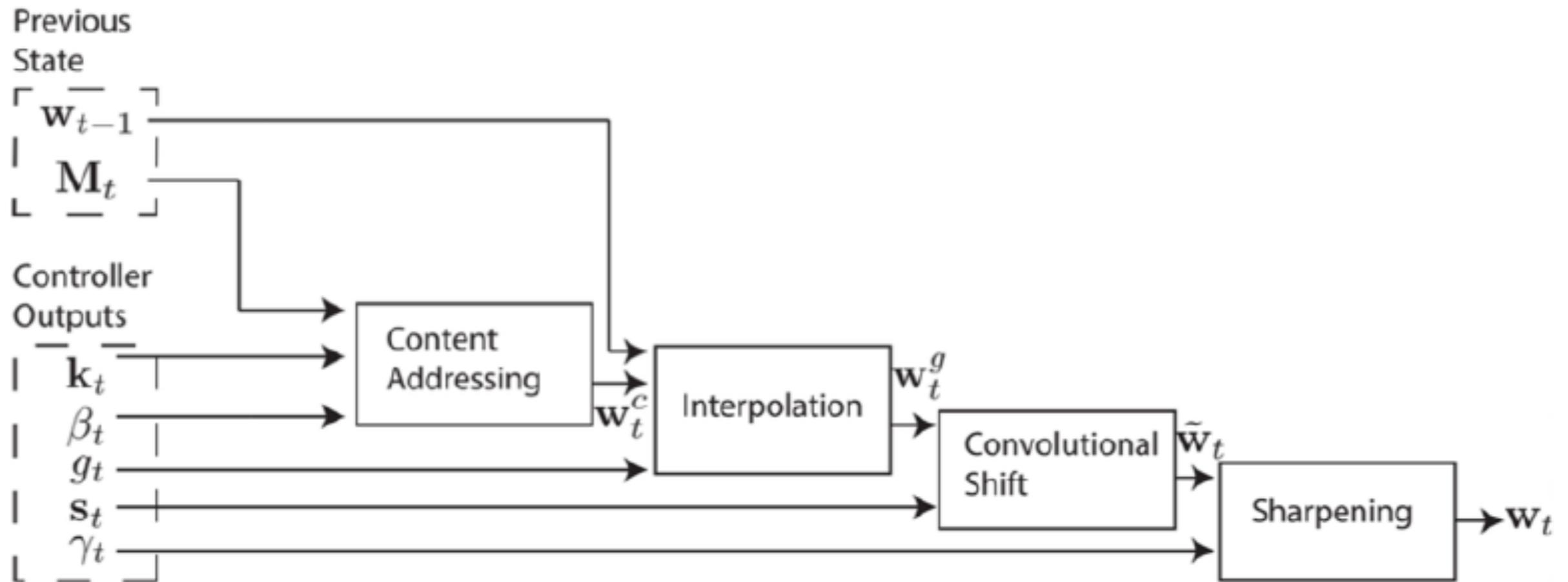
(addressing)

$$w_t(i) = \frac{\tilde{w}_t(i)^{\gamma_t}}{\sum_j \tilde{w}_t(j)^{\gamma_t}}$$

(sharpening)

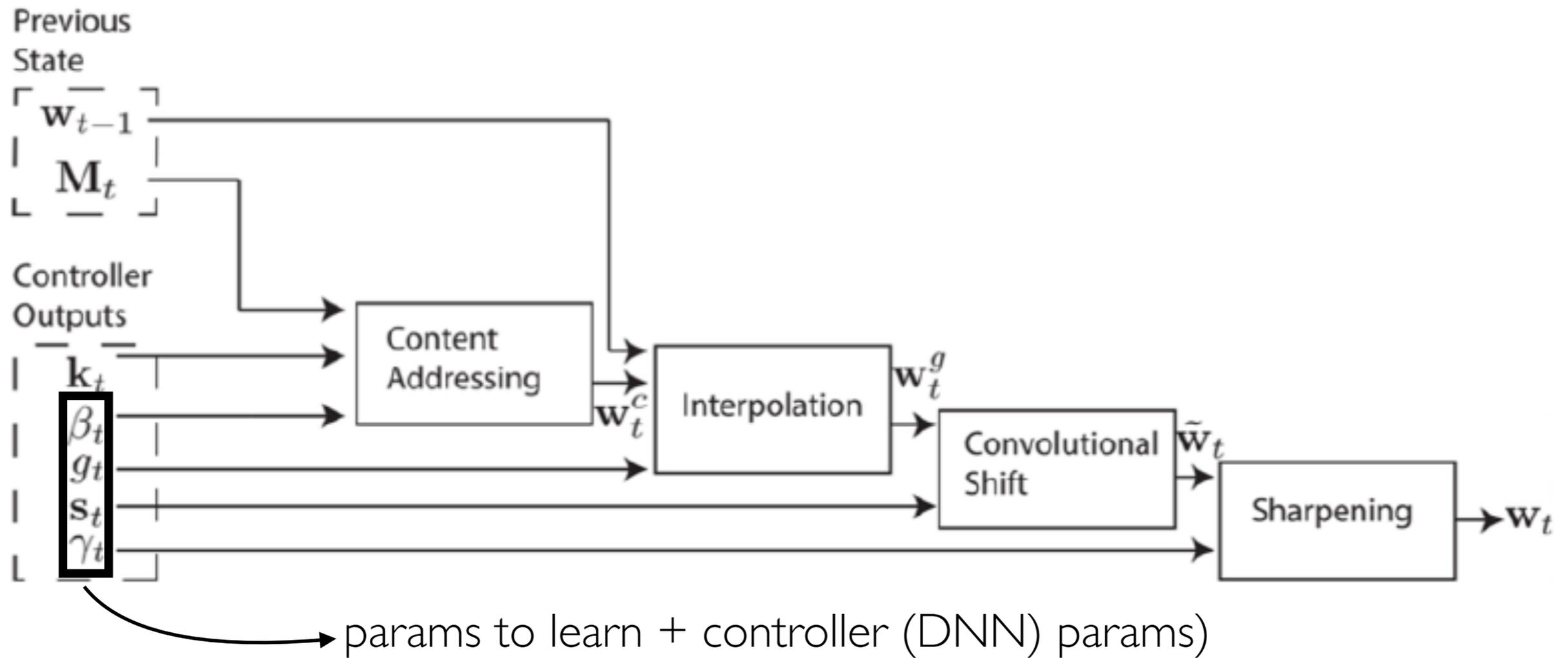
$$\gamma_t \geq 1$$

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores



NB: Location-based addressing is a special case of content addressing but easier to have explicit rather than learned.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

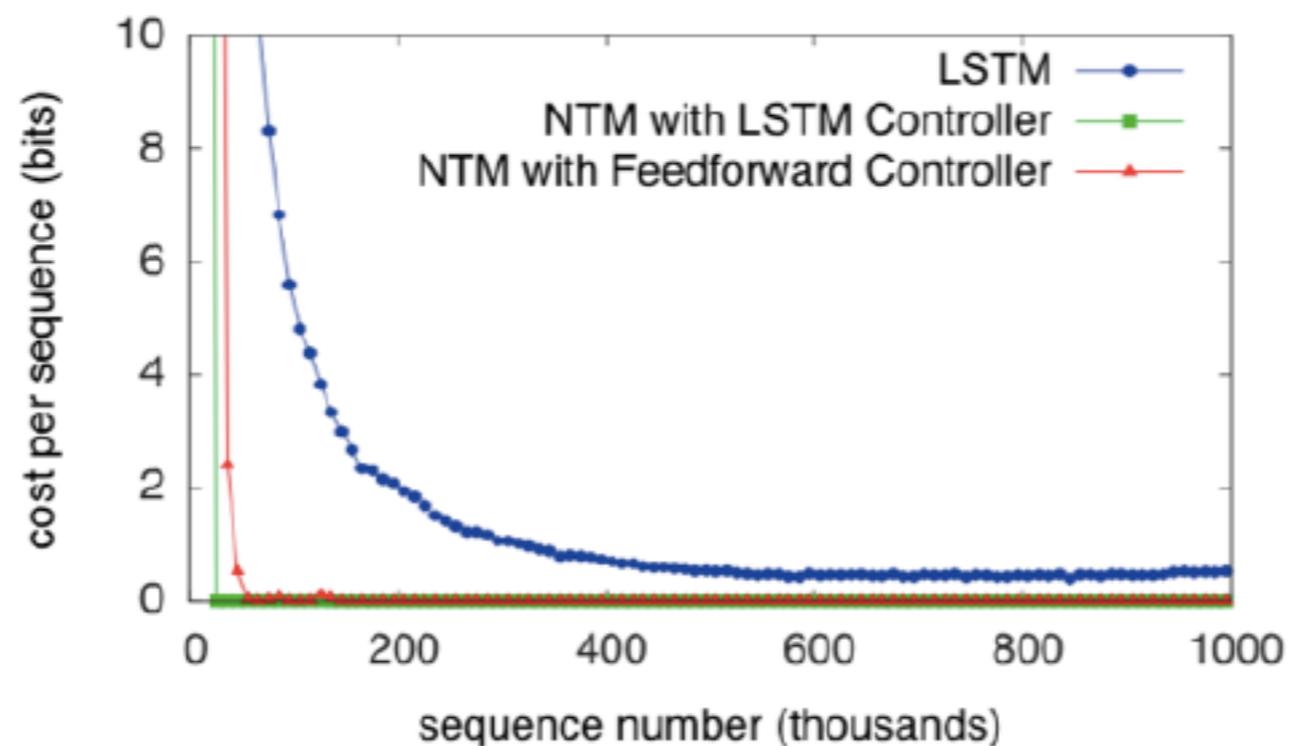


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp I: Copy

input: random binary vectors V (varying lengths) then delimiter

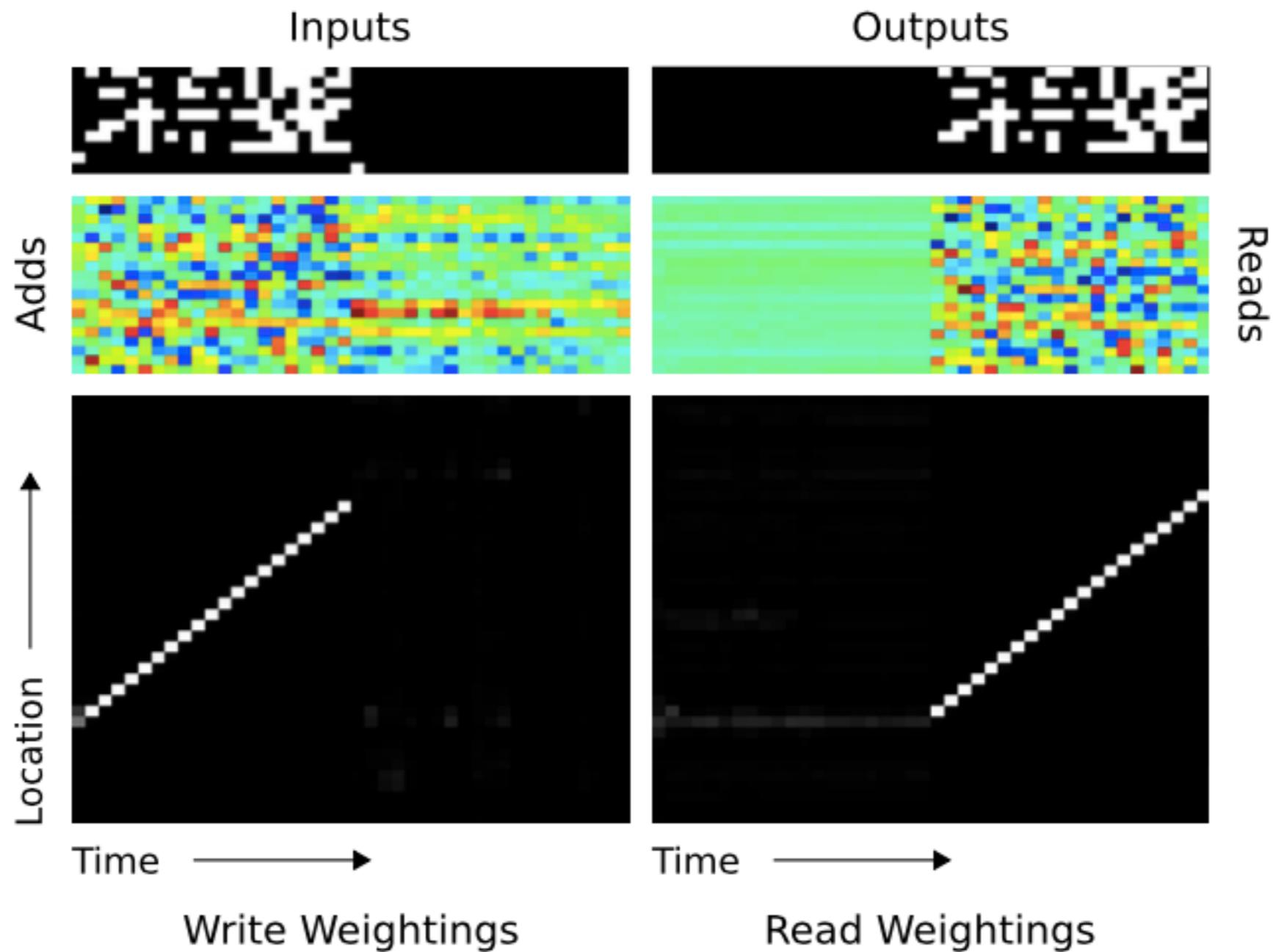
output: V



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp I: Copy

Memory usage patterns

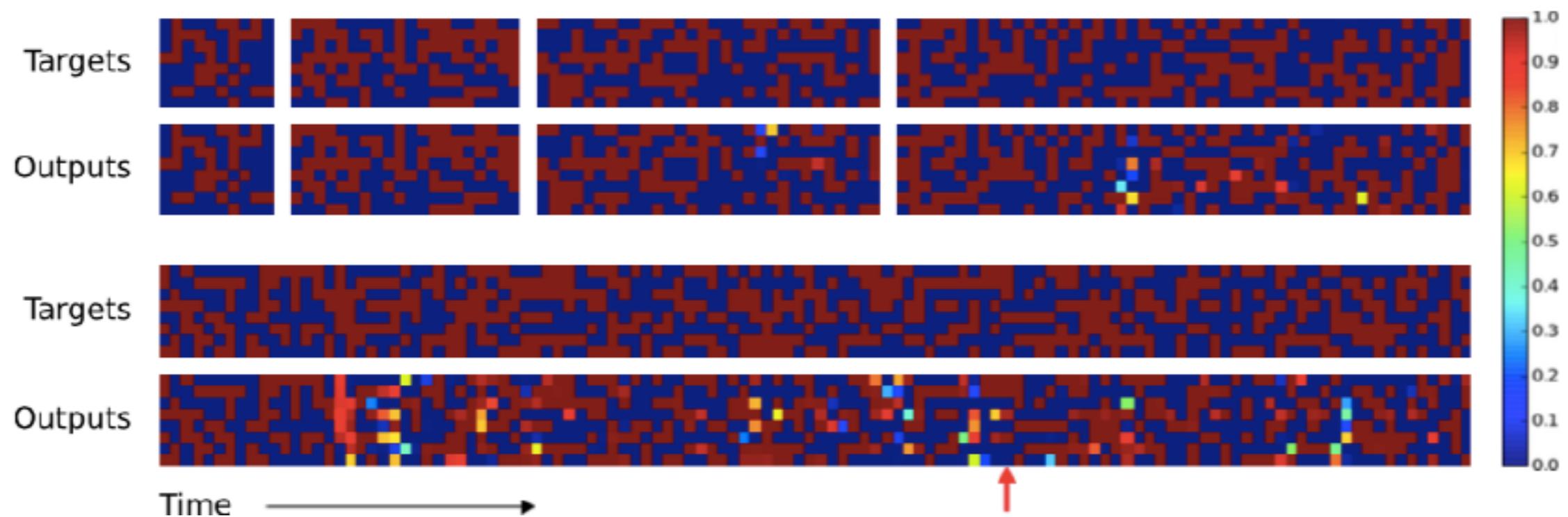


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 2: Copy Generalization

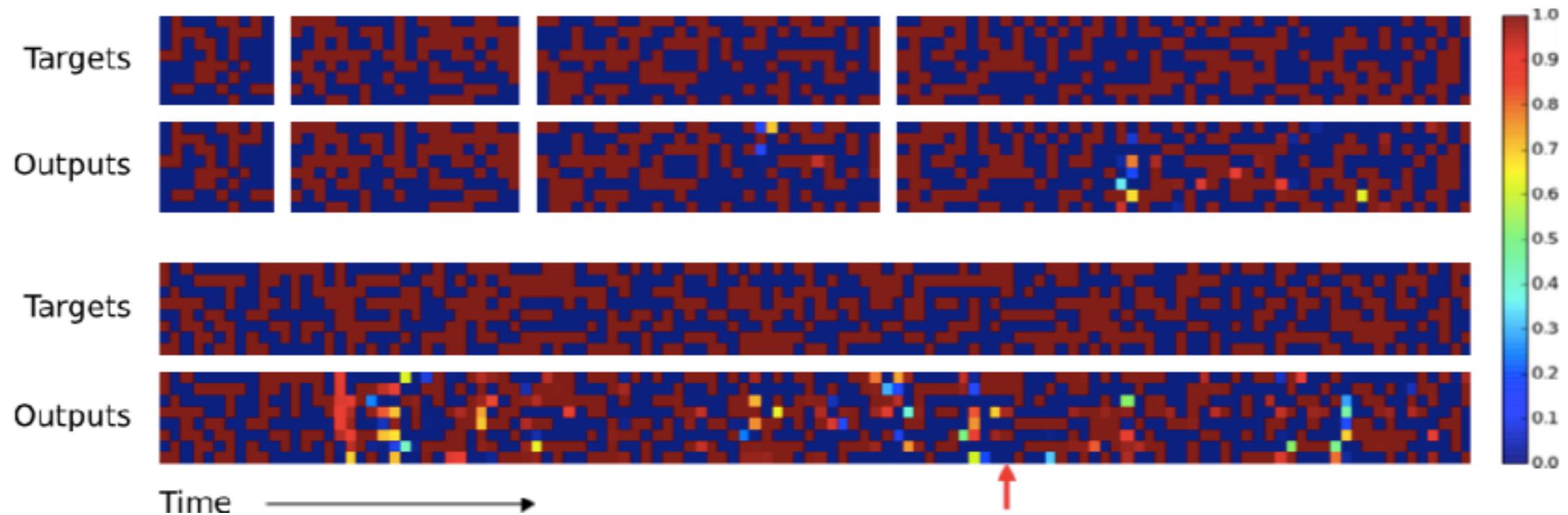
input: random binary vectors V (varying lengths $\leq N$) then delimiter

output: V , but in testing lengths $\geq N$

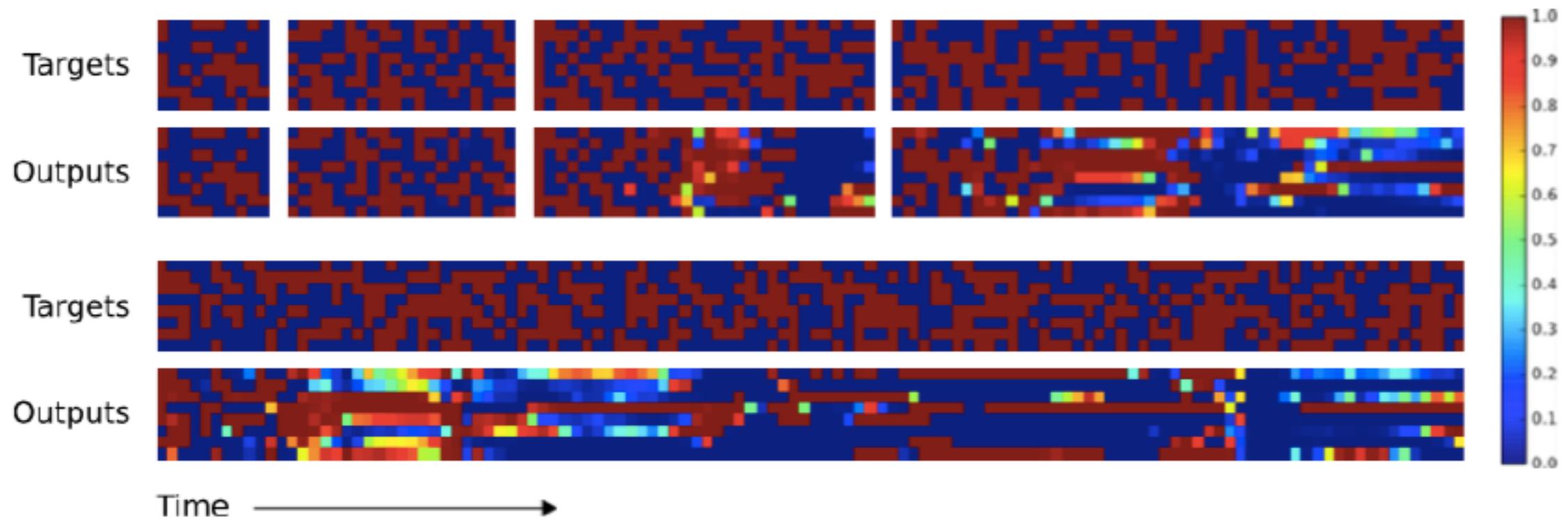


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

NTM



LSTM

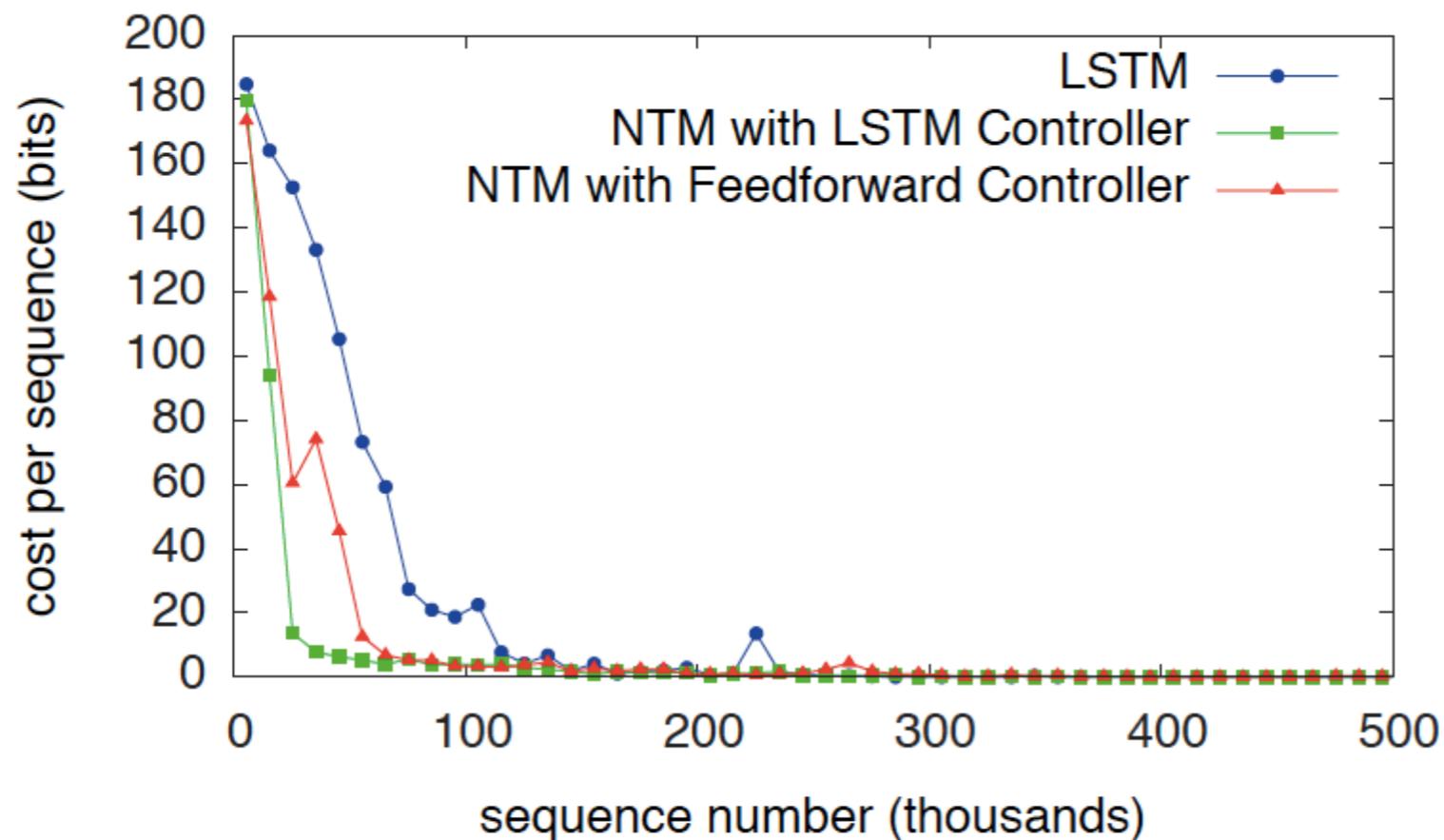


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 3: Repeat Copy

input: random binary vectors V (varying lengths $\leq N$), integer k

output: V repeated k times, then delimiter



it's been hard to get LSTMs to do well on this sort of task

Figure 7: Repeat Copy Learning Curves.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

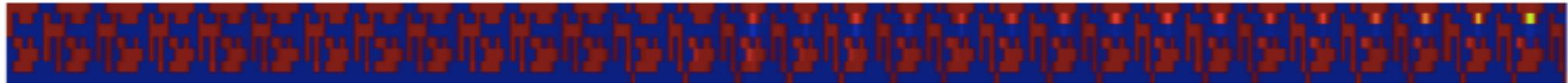
NTM

Length 10, Repeat 20

Targets



Outputs



Length 20, Repeat 10

Targets



Outputs



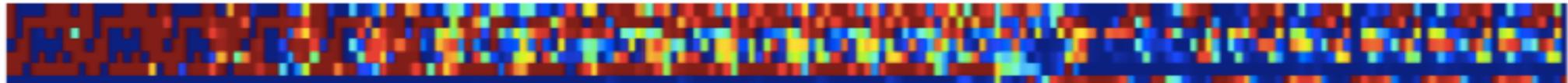
LSTM

Length 10, Repeat 20

Targets



Outputs



Length 20, Repeat 10

Targets



Outputs



Time →

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 4: Associative Recall

input: start codon + sequence of items (random binary) + stop codon

testing: random element of sequence, **output:** next element

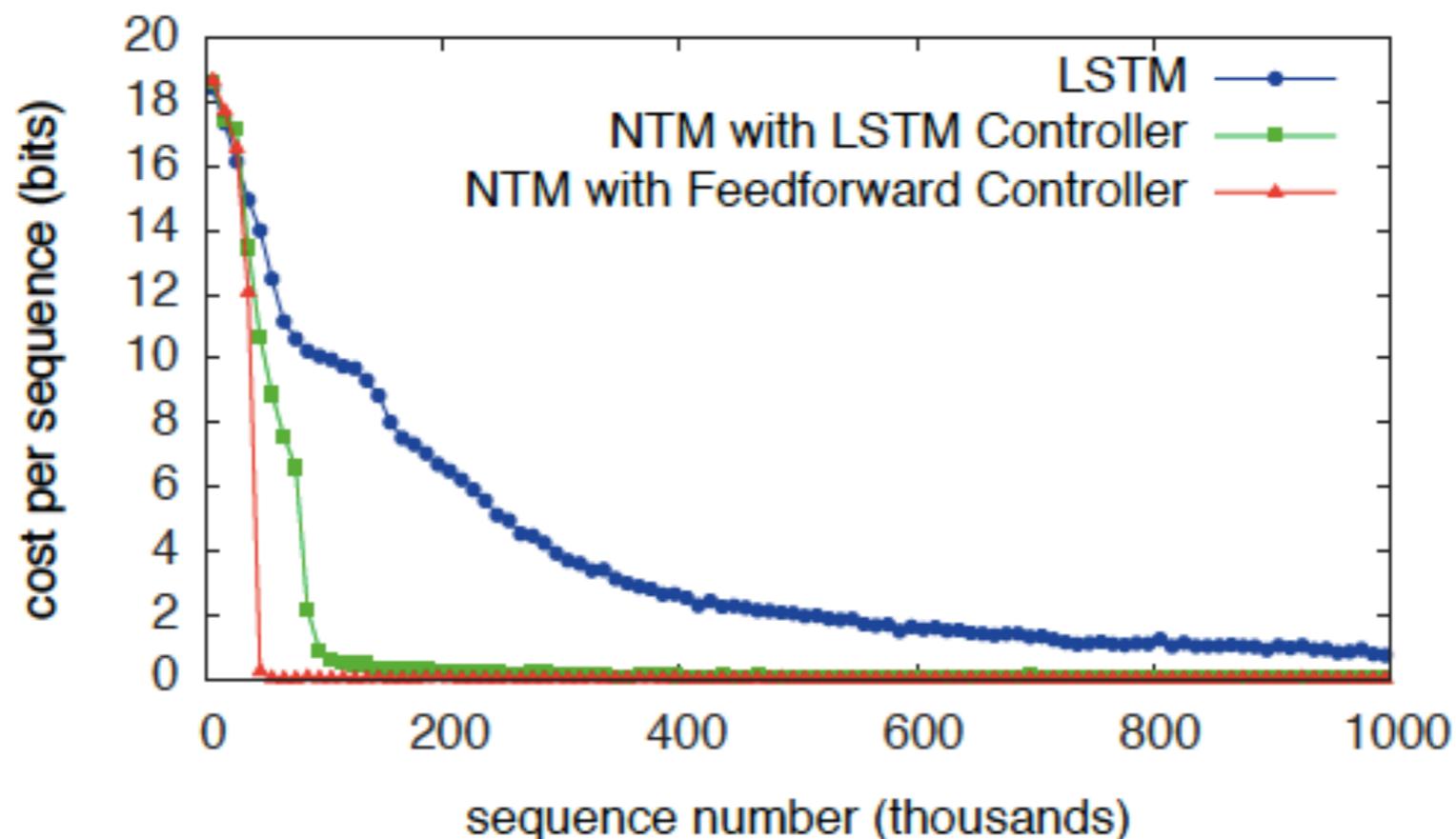


Figure 10: Associative Recall Learning Curves for NTM and LSTM.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 4: Associative Recall

input: start codon + sequence of items (random binary) + stop codon

testing: random element of sequence, **output:** next element

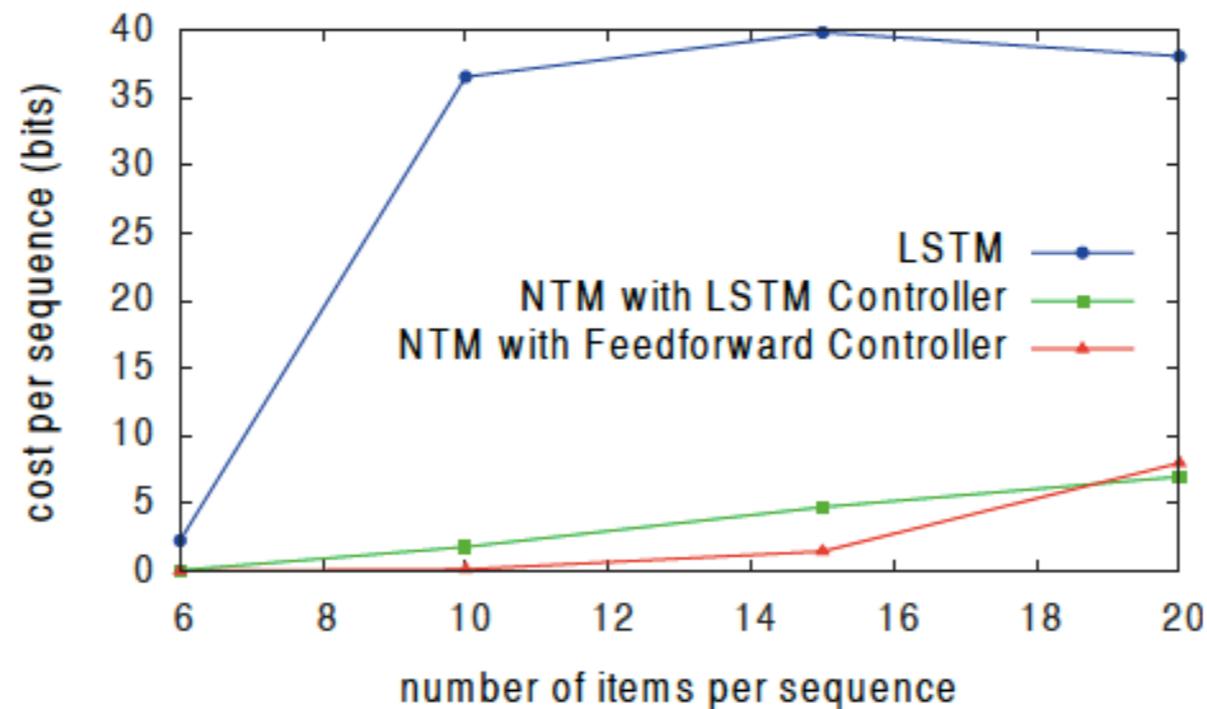
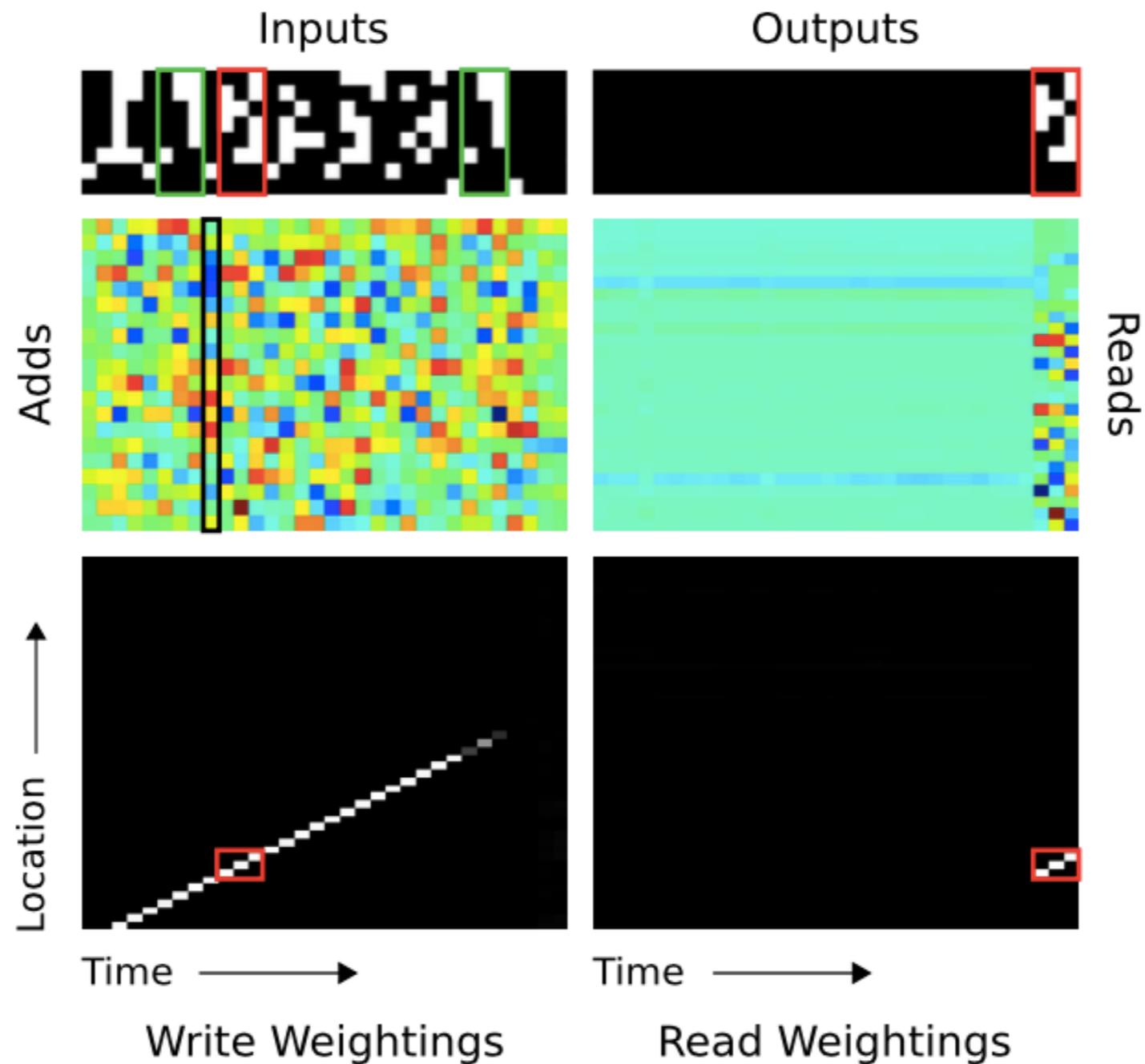


Figure 11: Generalisation Performance on Associative Recall for Longer Item Sequences. The NTM with either a feedforward or LSTM controller generalises to much longer sequences of items than the LSTM alone. In particular, the NTM with a feedforward controller is nearly perfect for item sequences of twice the length of sequences in its training set.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 4: Associative Recall

Memory usage patterns



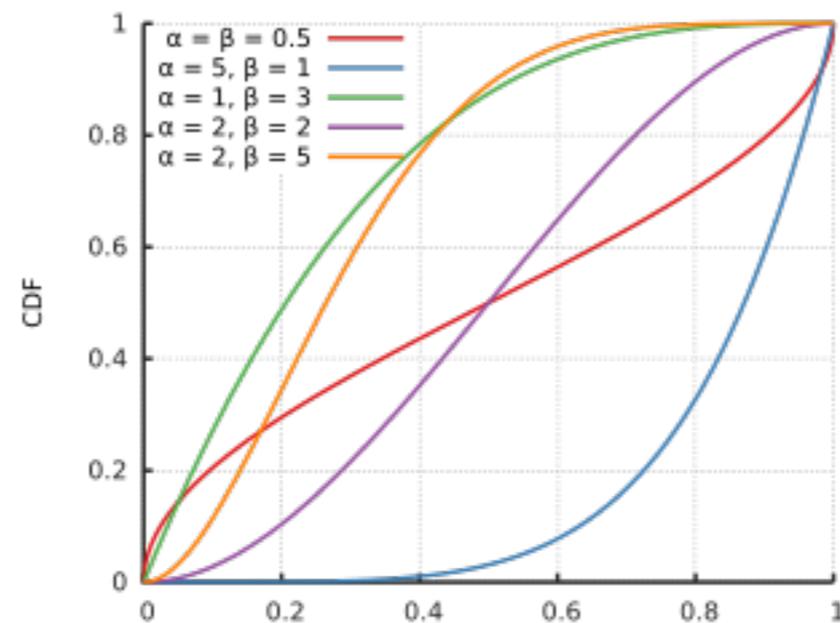
Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 5: Dynamic N-grams

input: stream generated by binary n-gram model

output: next element of sequence

specifically: 6-gram transition matrices (2x5) generated from beta(1/2, 1/2) distribution of 2x5s



Beta distribution chosen because it describes the statistics of a nice special case of how sequences of temporally-interrelated data often arise (e.g. the Chinese restaurant process, dirichlet distribution)

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 5: Dynamic N-grams

input: stream generated by binary n-gram model

output: next element of sequence

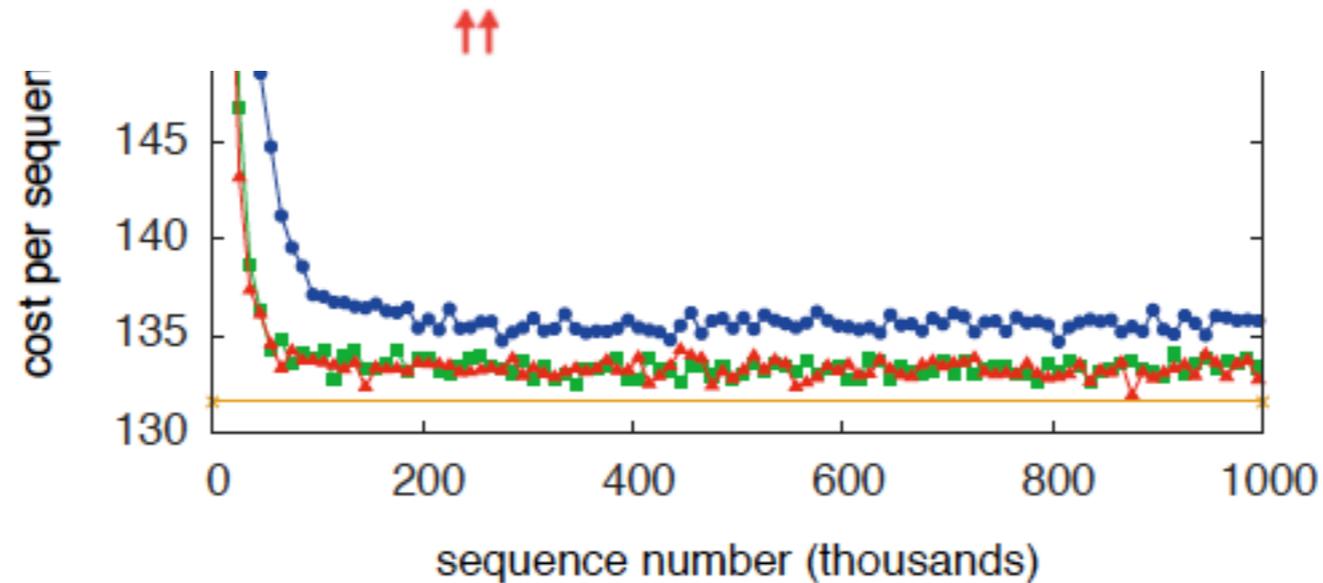
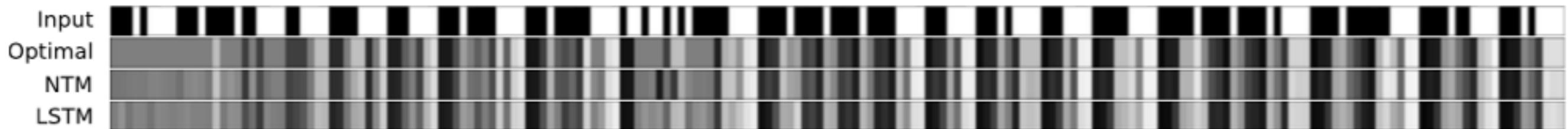
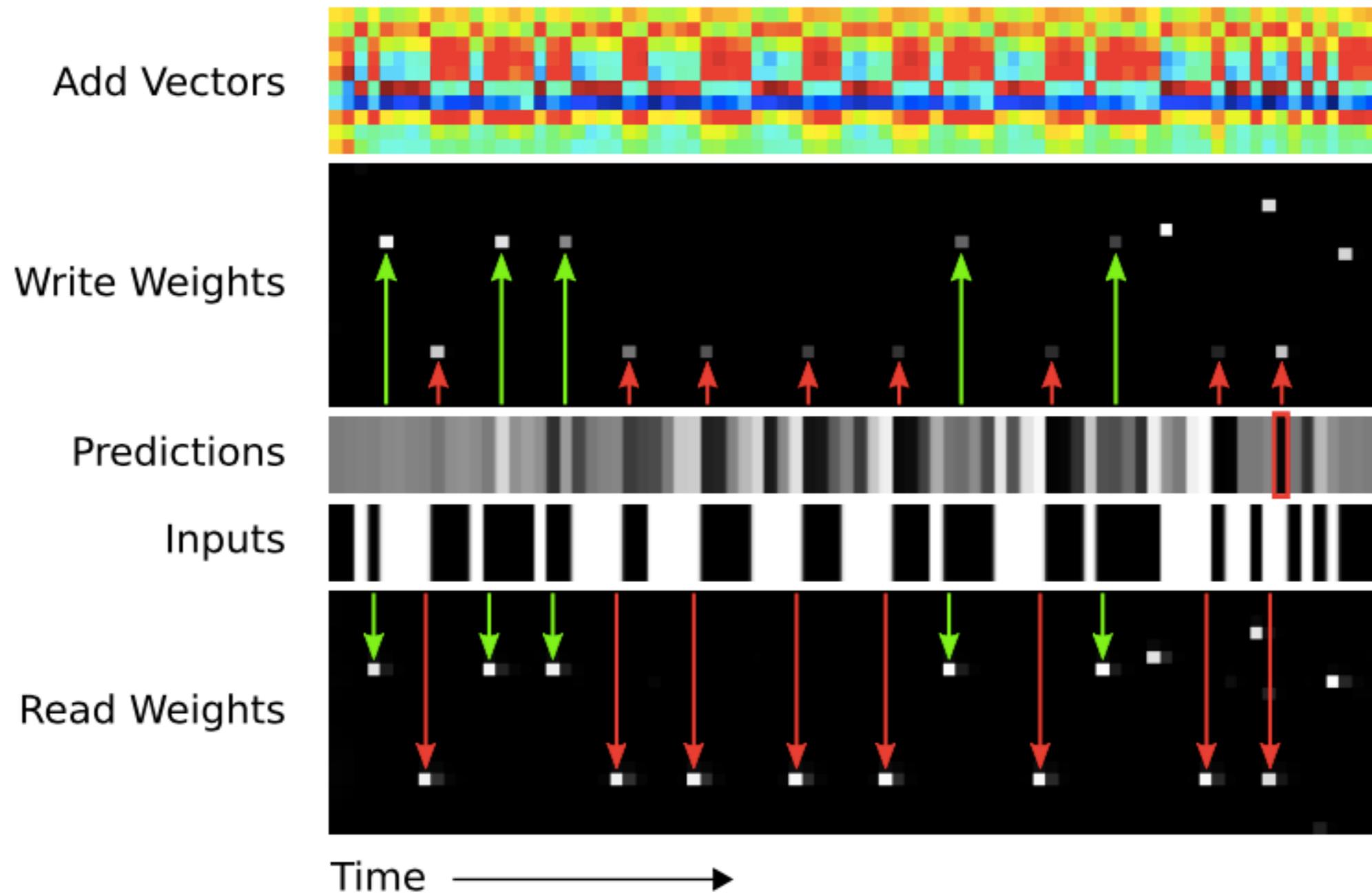


Figure 13: Dynamic N-Gram Learning Curves.

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 5: Dynamic N-grams

Memory usage patterns

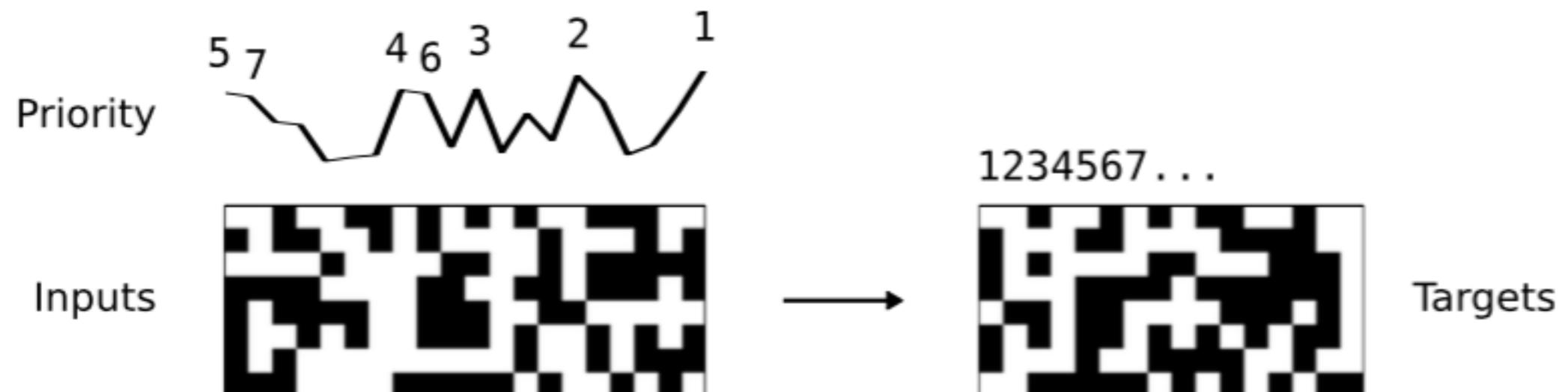


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 6: Sorting

input: sequence of binary vectors + scalar priority list

output: vectors sorted by priority

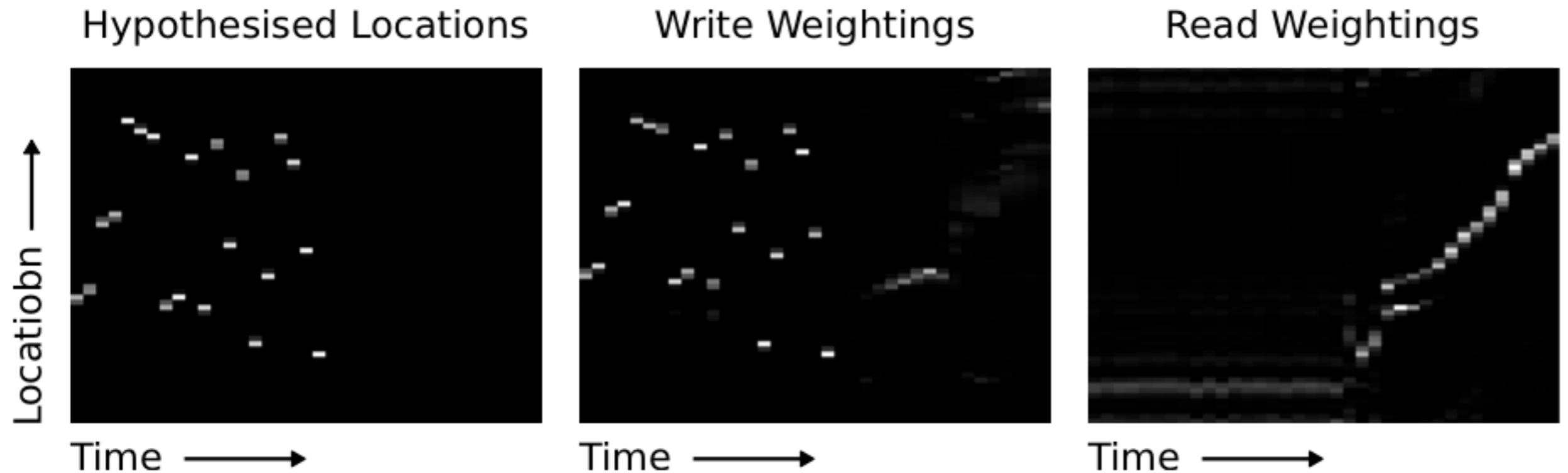


Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

Exp 6: Sorting

input: sequence of binary vectors + scalar priority list

output: vectors sorted by priority



Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

NTM experiment details:

Task	#Heads	Controller Size	Memory Size	Learning Rate	#Parameters
Copy	1	100	128×20	10^{-4}	17,162
Repeat Copy	1	100	128×20	10^{-4}	16,712
Associative	4	256	128×20	10^{-4}	146,845
N-Grams	1	100	128×20	3×10^{-5}	14,656
Priority Sort	8	512	128×20	3×10^{-5}	508,305

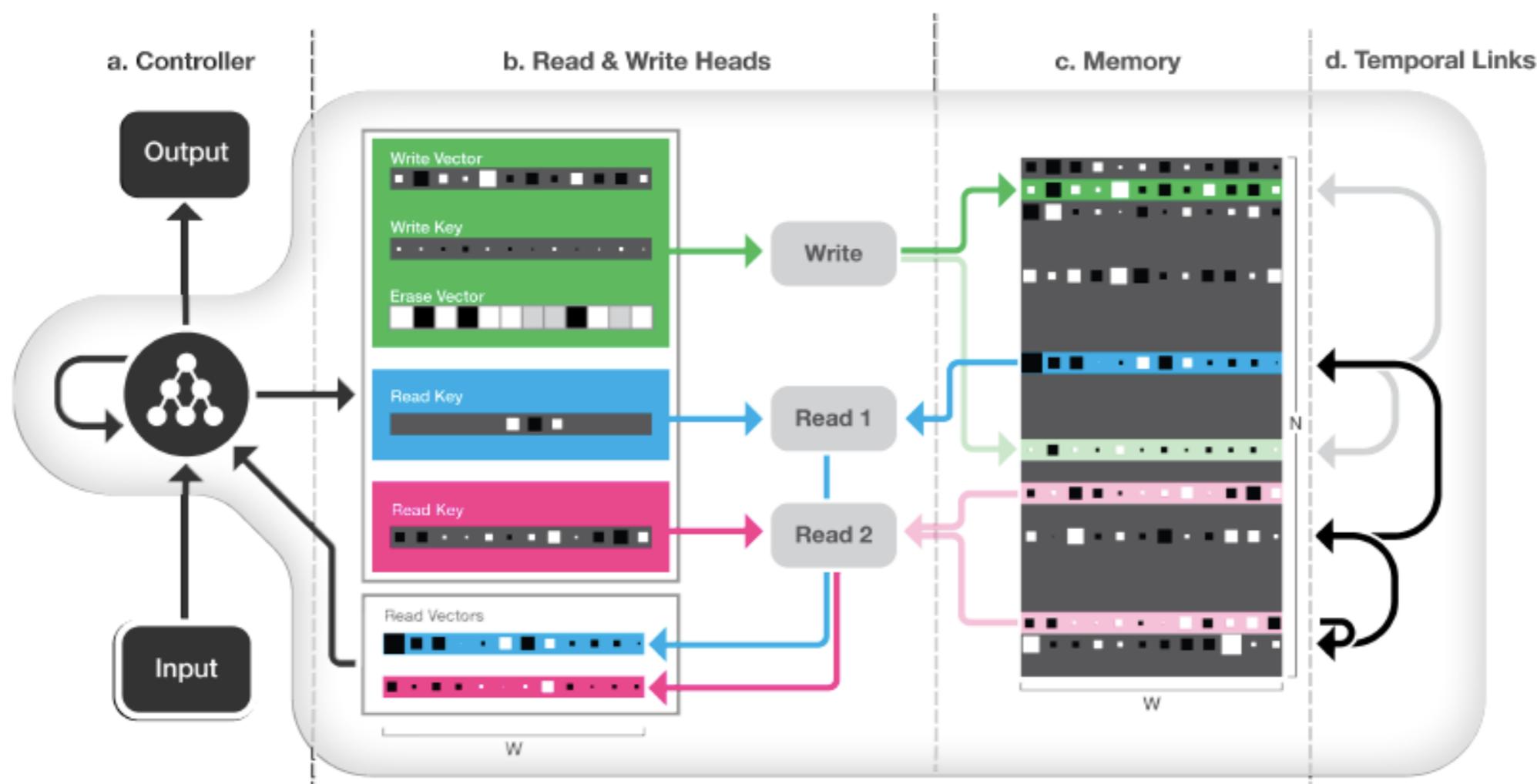
Table 1: NTM with Feedforward Controller Experimental Settings

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

More recent (somewhat more powerful) version:

Symbolic Reasoning with Differentiable Neural Computers

Alex Graves*, Greg Wayne*, Malcolm Reynolds, Tim Harley, Ivo Danihelka, Agnieszka Grabska-Barwińska, Sergio Gomez, Edward Grefenstette, Tiago Ramalho, John Agapiou, Adrià Puigdomènech Badia, Karl Moritz Hermann, Yori Zwols, Georg Ostrovski, Adam Cain, Helen



1

2

3

4

5

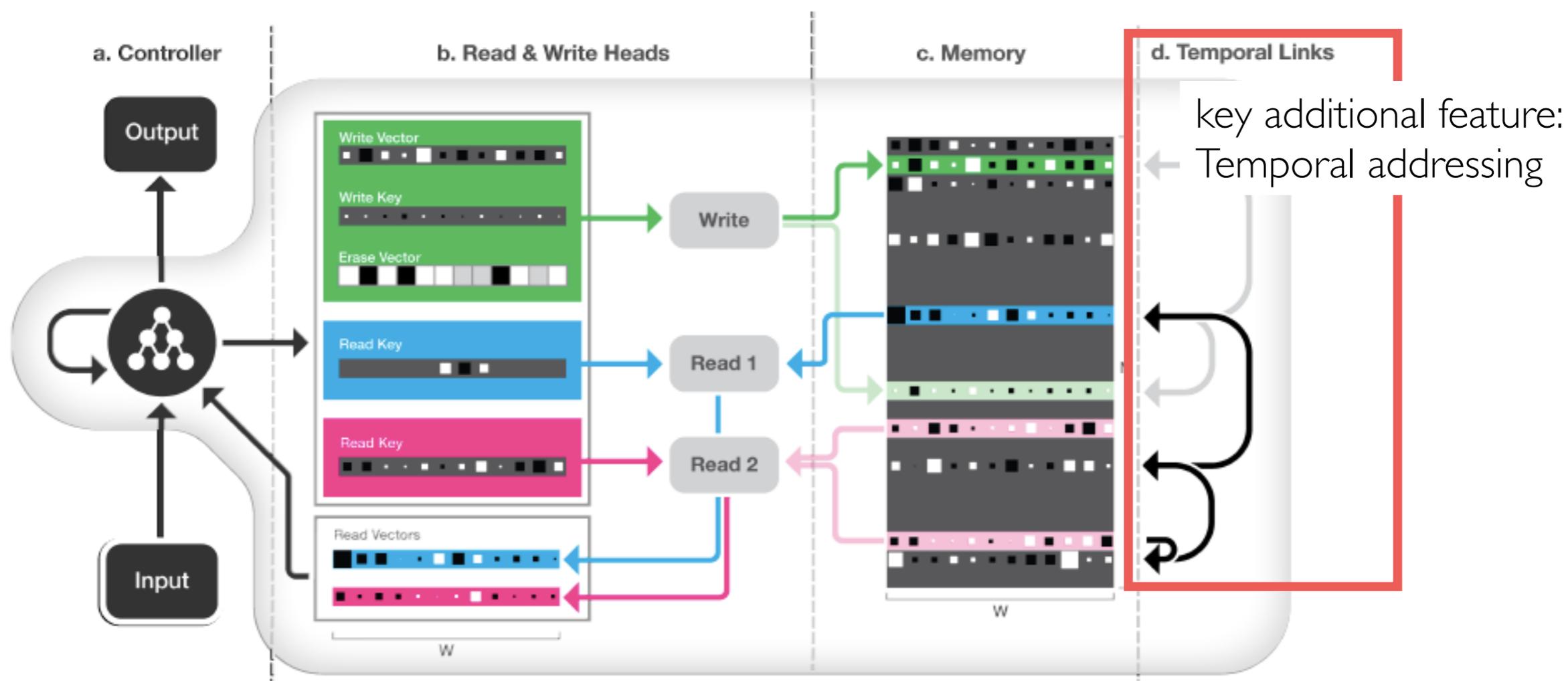
6

Models: Deep Networks with External Memory Stores

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Symbolic Reasoning with Differentiable Neural Computers

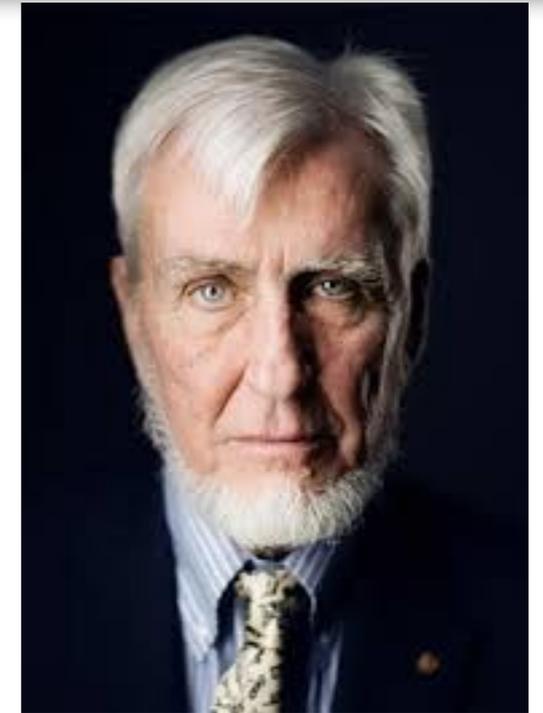
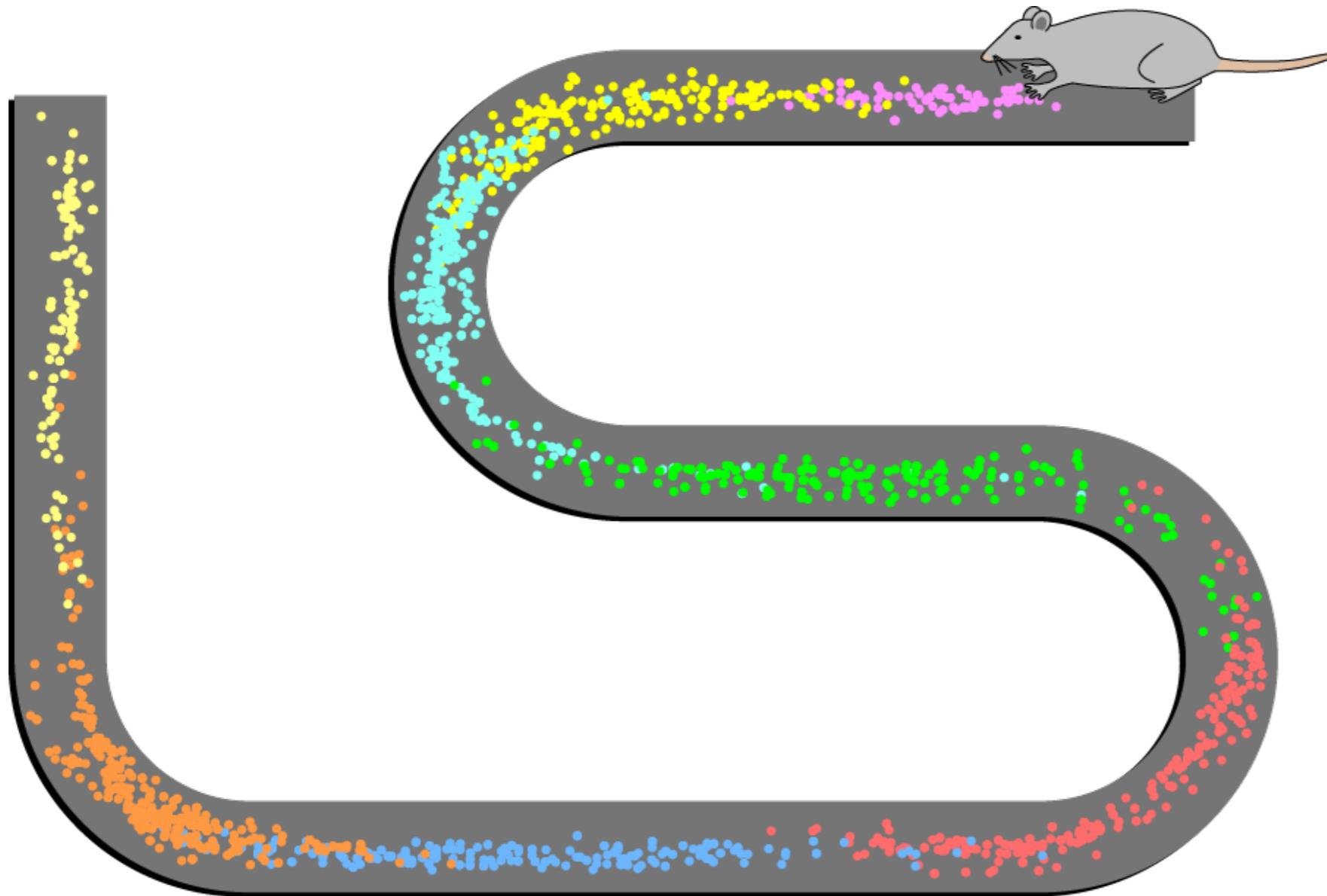
Alex Graves*, Greg Wayne*, Malcolm Reynolds, Tim Harley, Ivo Danihelka, Agnieszka Grabska-Barwińska, Sergio Gomez, Edward Grefenstette, Tiago Ramalho, John Agapiou, Adrià Puigdomènech Badia, Karl Moritz Hermann, Yori Zwols, Georg Ostrovski, Adam Cain, Helen



Functions of the hippocampus

1. Behavioral inhibition theory (“slam on the breaks”)
2. Memory (Milner & Scoville from HM)
3. Spatial cognition

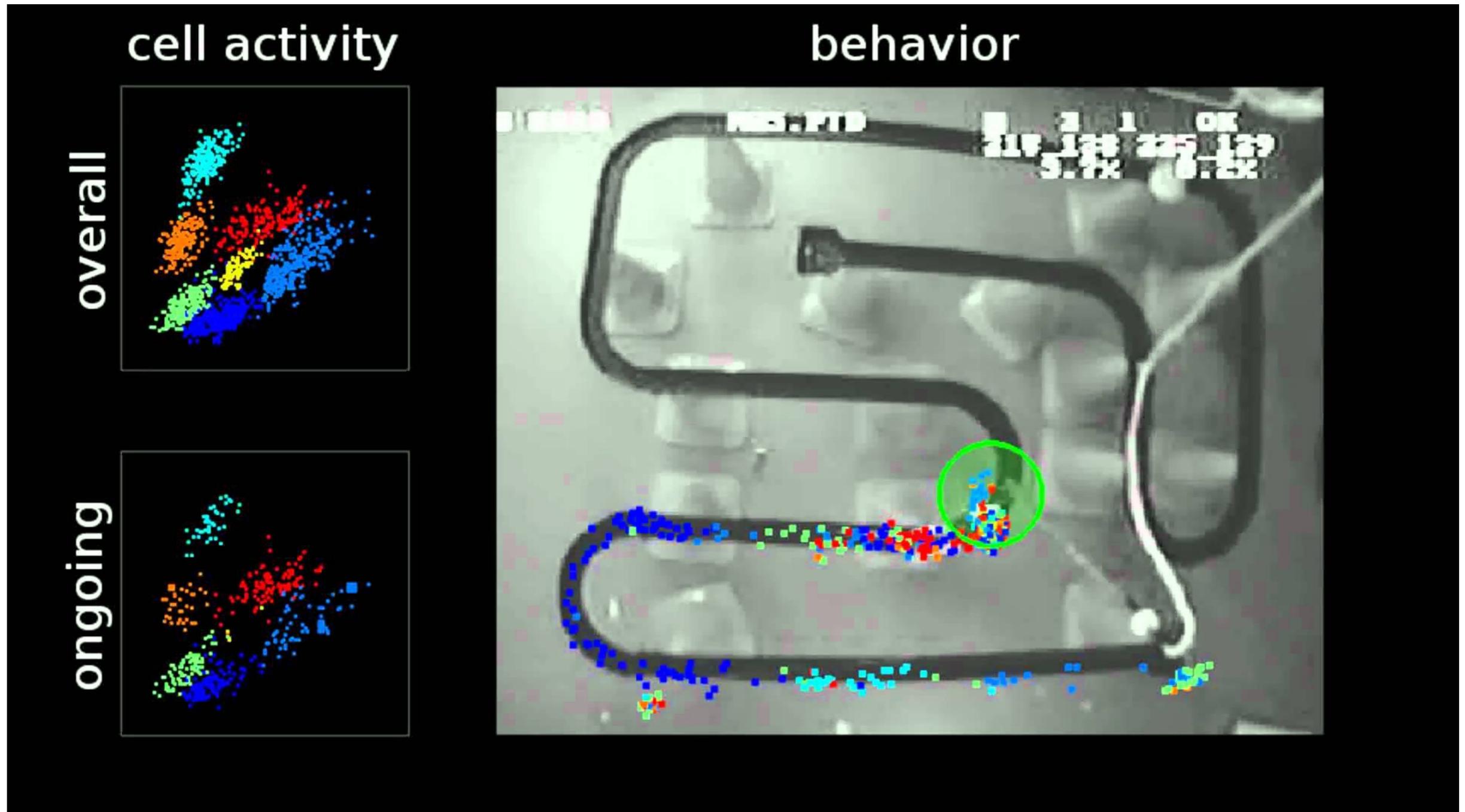
Hippocampus as a cognitive map



John O'Keefe

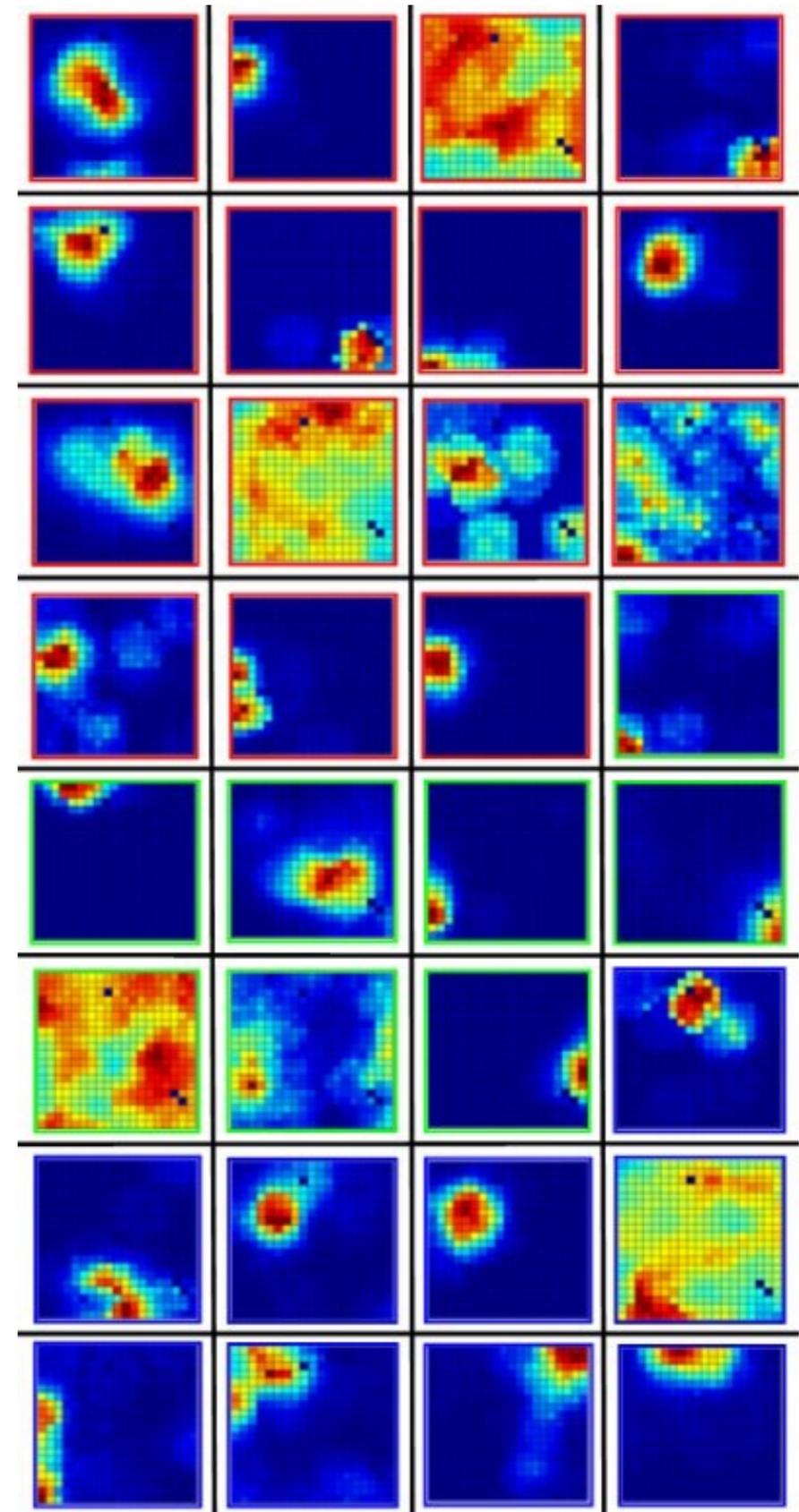
Hippocampus as a cognitive map

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfNVv0A8QvI>



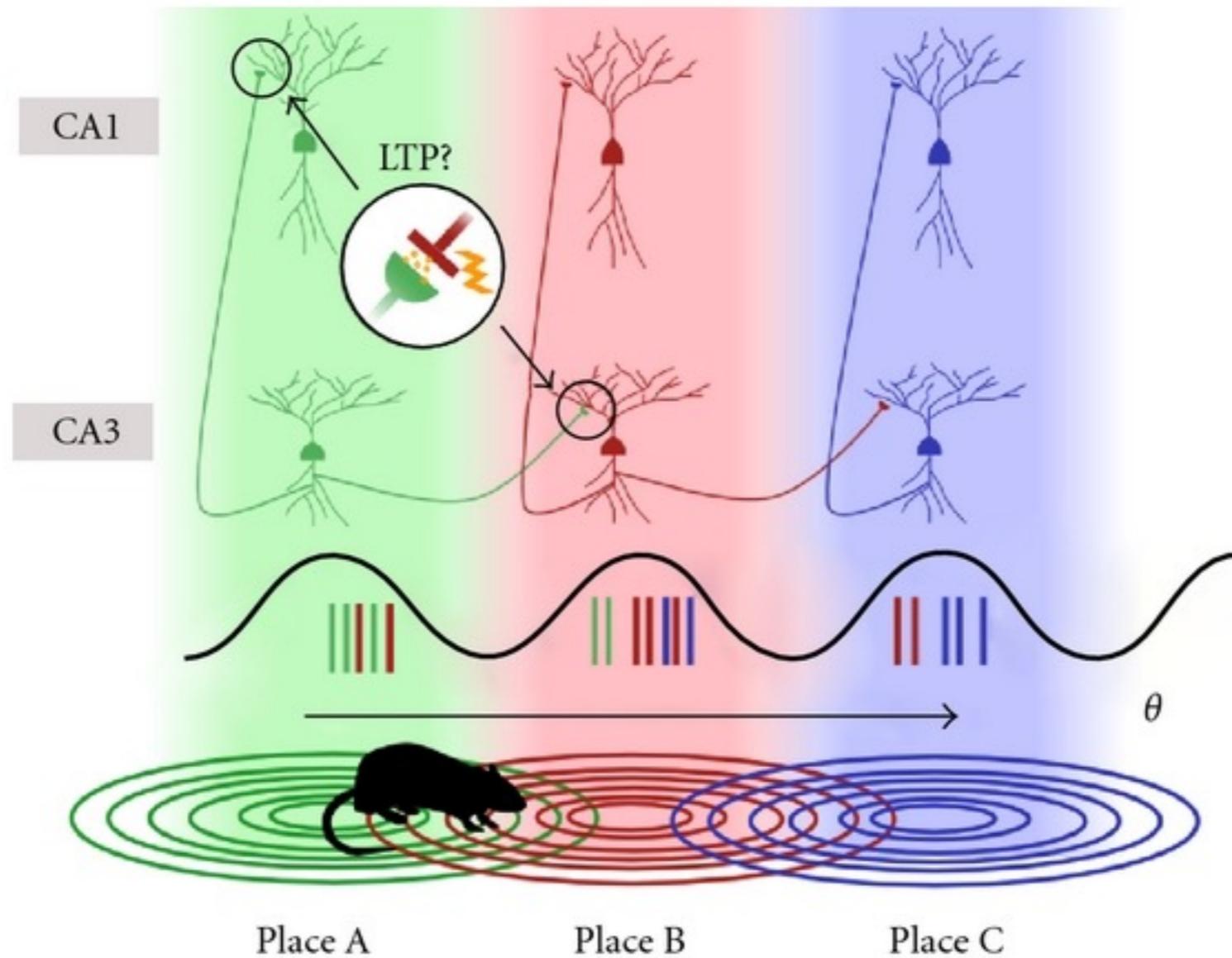
Hippocampus as a cognitive map

Hippocampal Place Cells (*O'Keefe & Nadel, 1970s*)



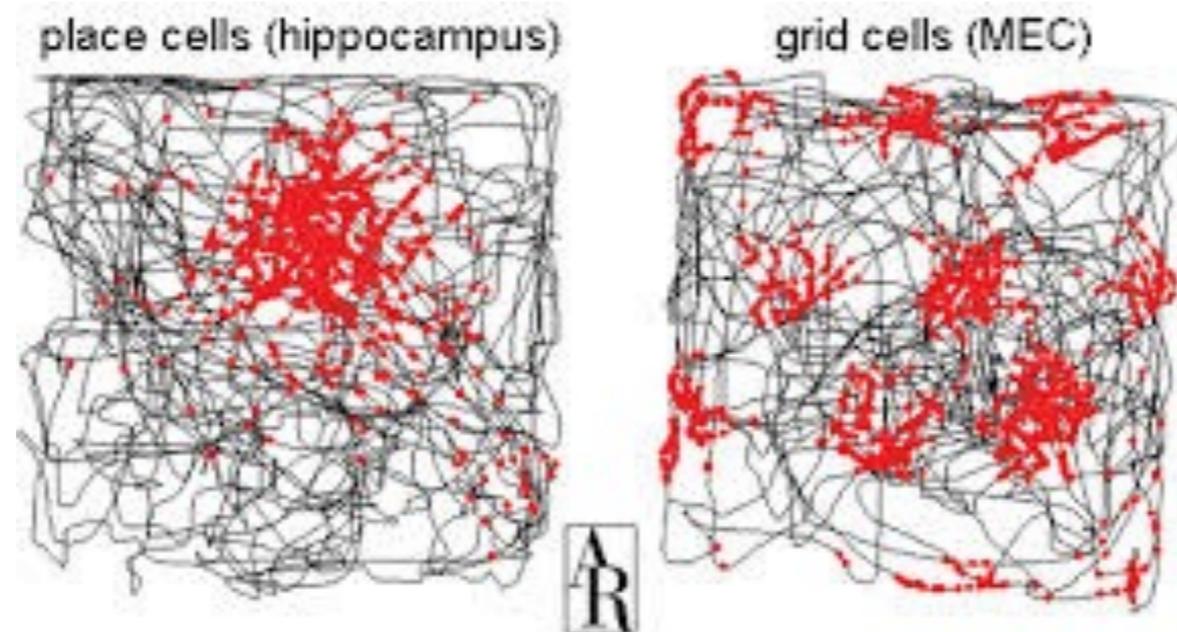
Hippocampal Place Cells

Get formed quickly and just a quickly remapped



Entorhinal Grid Cells

Entorhinal Grid Cells (Mozers, 2005)



Moser EI, et al. 2008. Annu. Rev. Neurosci. 31:69–89.



May-Britt Moser

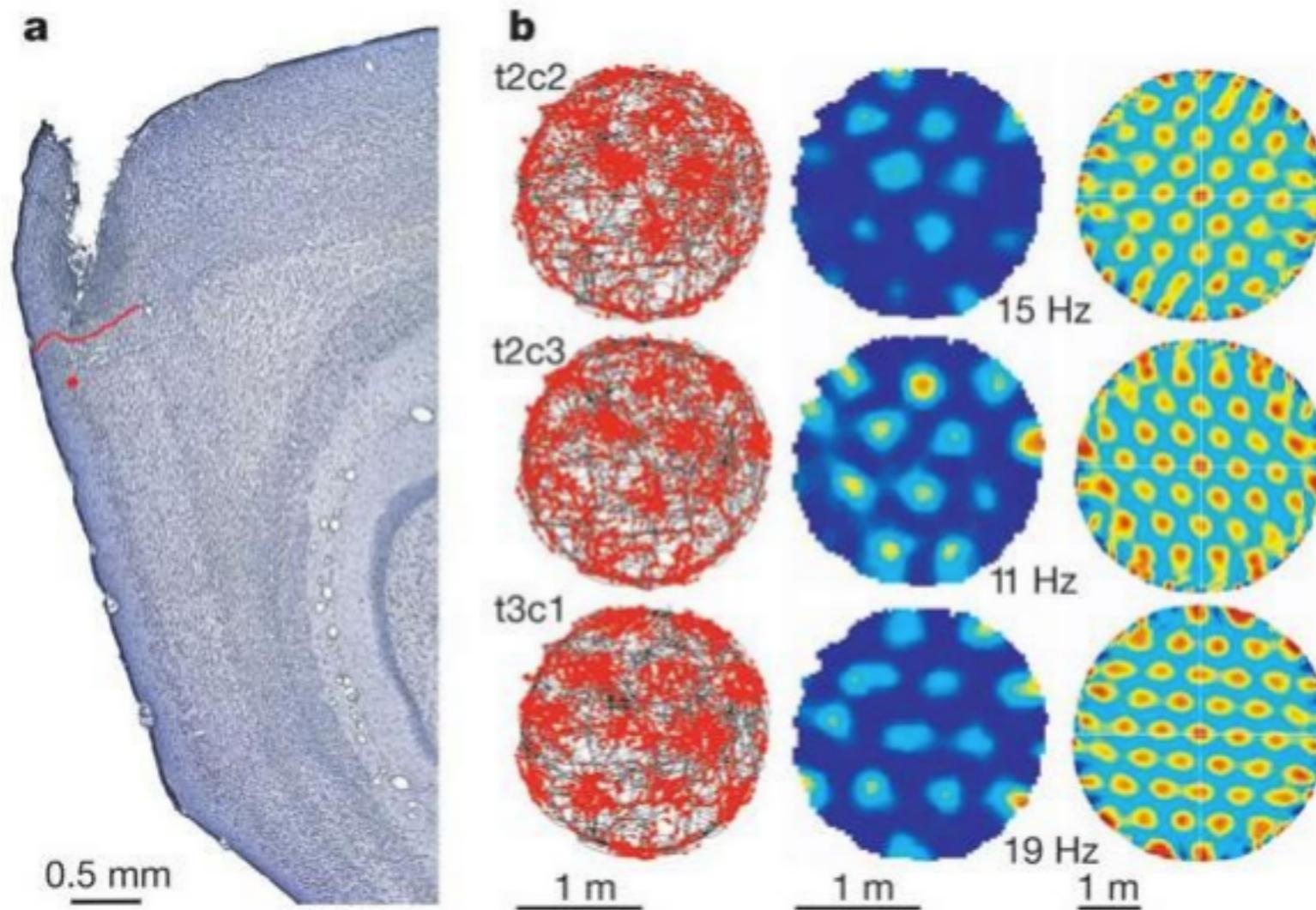


Edvard Moser

Entorhinal Grid Cells

Entorhinal Grid Cells (Mozers, 2005)

grids are hexagonal and independent of arena size



May-Britt Moser

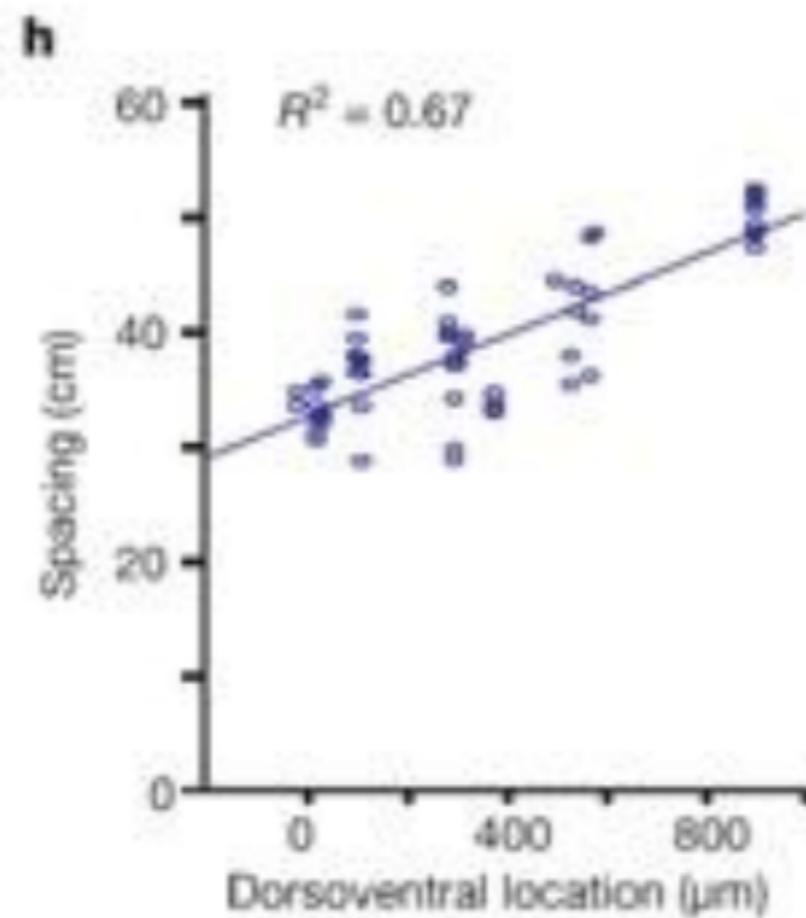
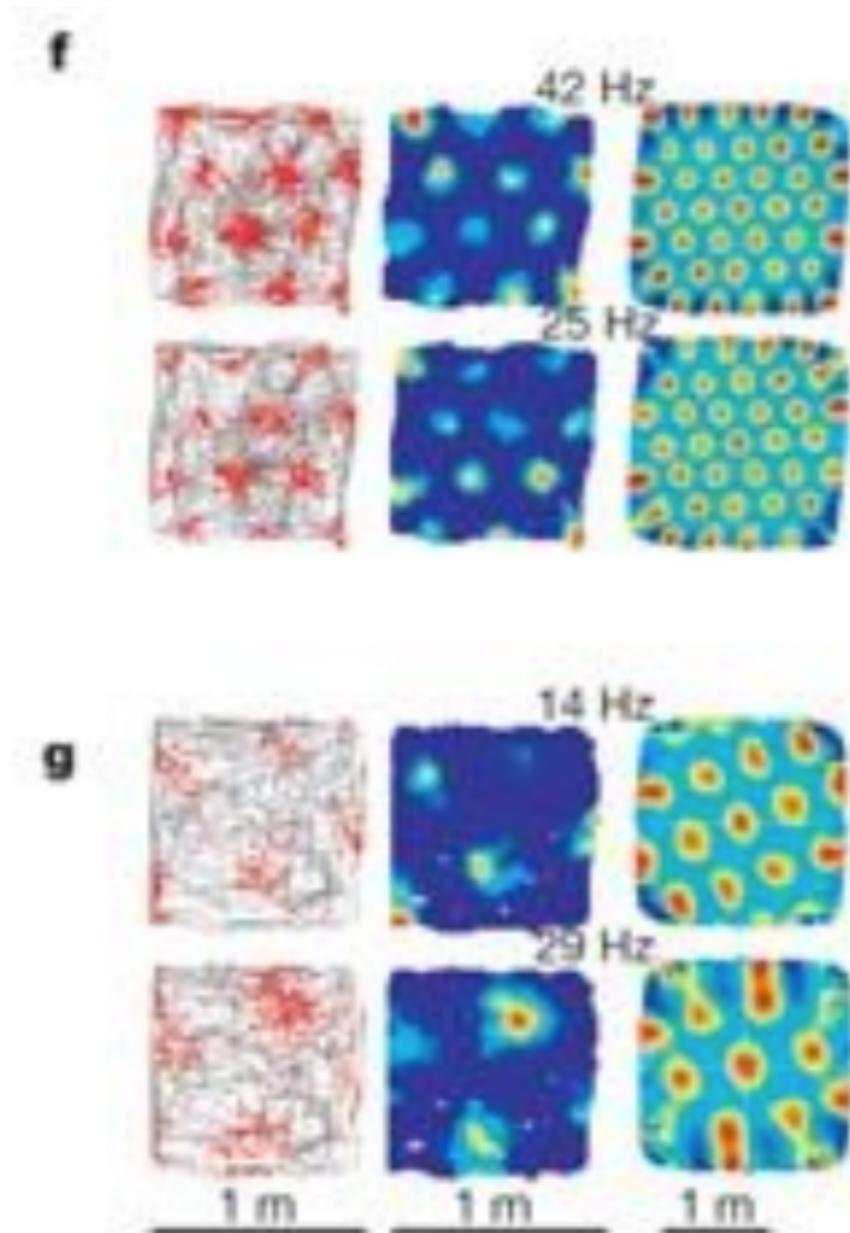


Edvard Moser

Maintain alignment with visual landmarks.

Entorhinal Grid Cells

Entorhinal Grid Cells (Mozers, 2005)



Hafting et al, 2005



May-Britt Moser

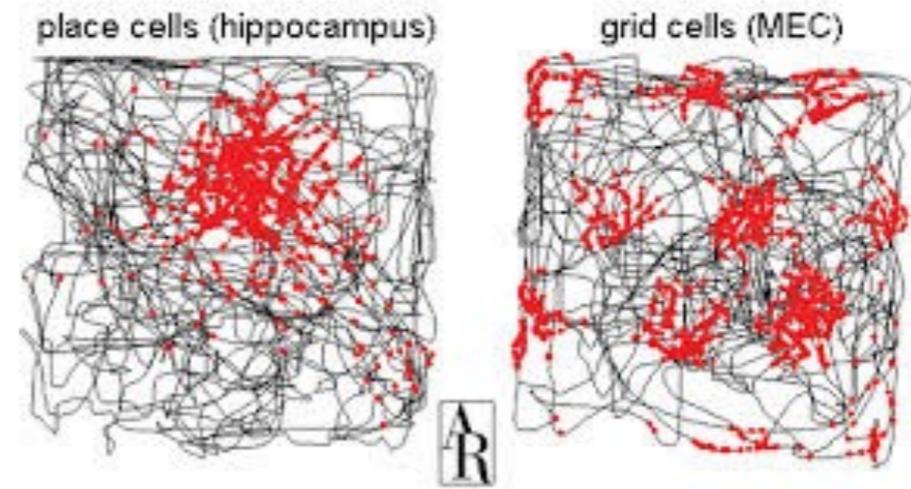


Edvard Moser

There are multiple maps of different grid spacings.

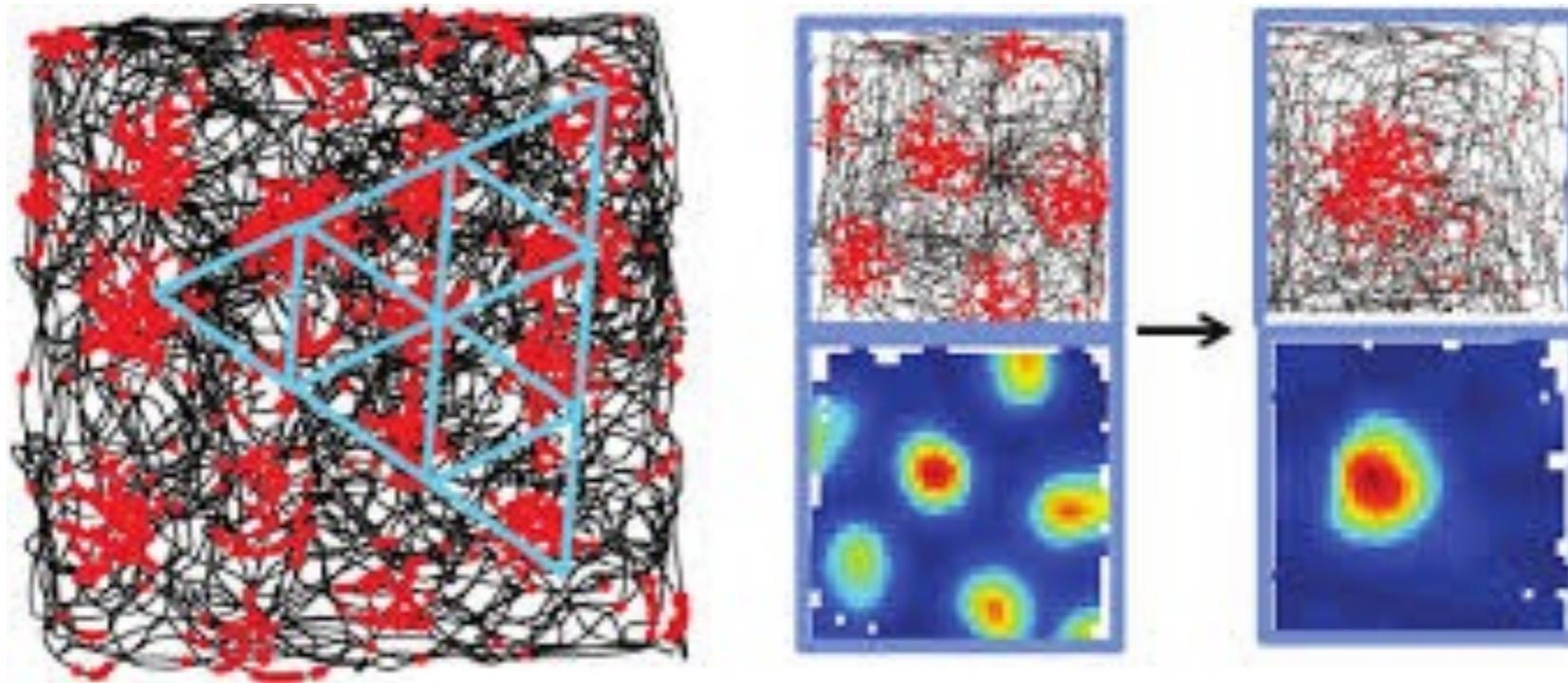
Entorhinal Grid Cells

Entorhinal Grid Cells (Mozers, 2005)



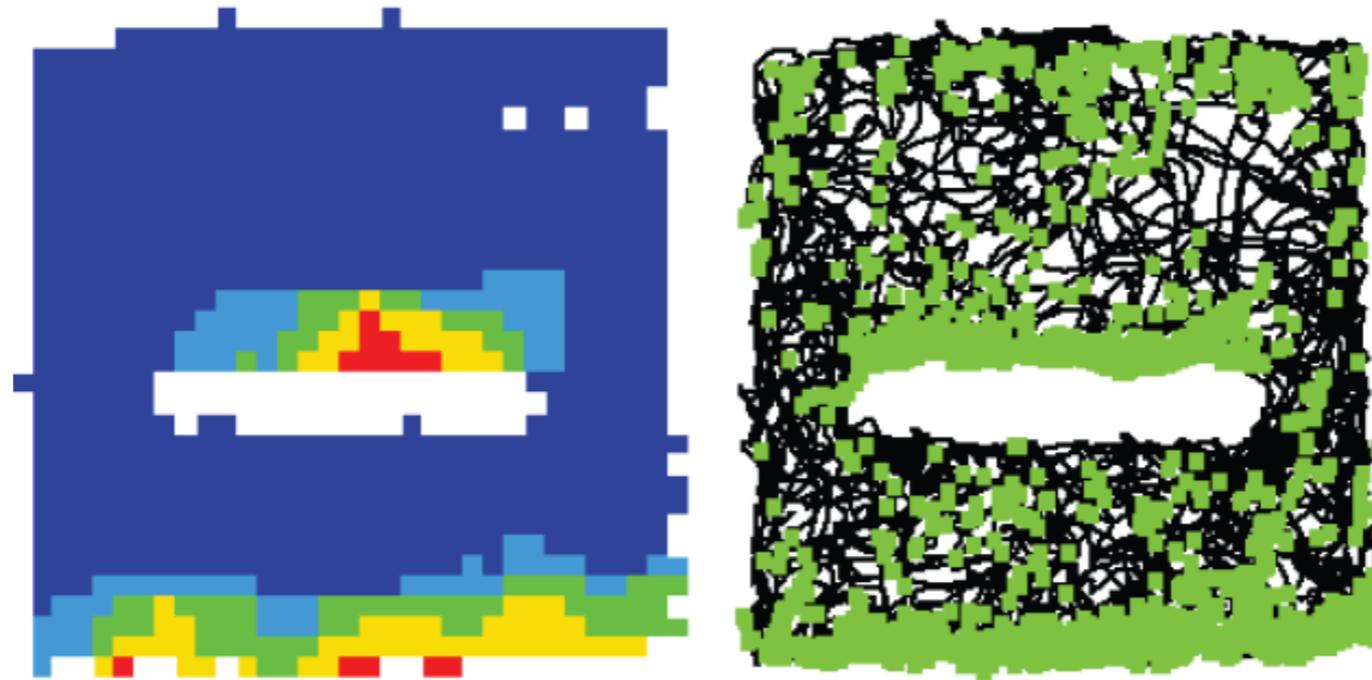
Moser EI, et al. 2008. Annu. Rev. Neurosci. 31:69-89.

ERC → HPC



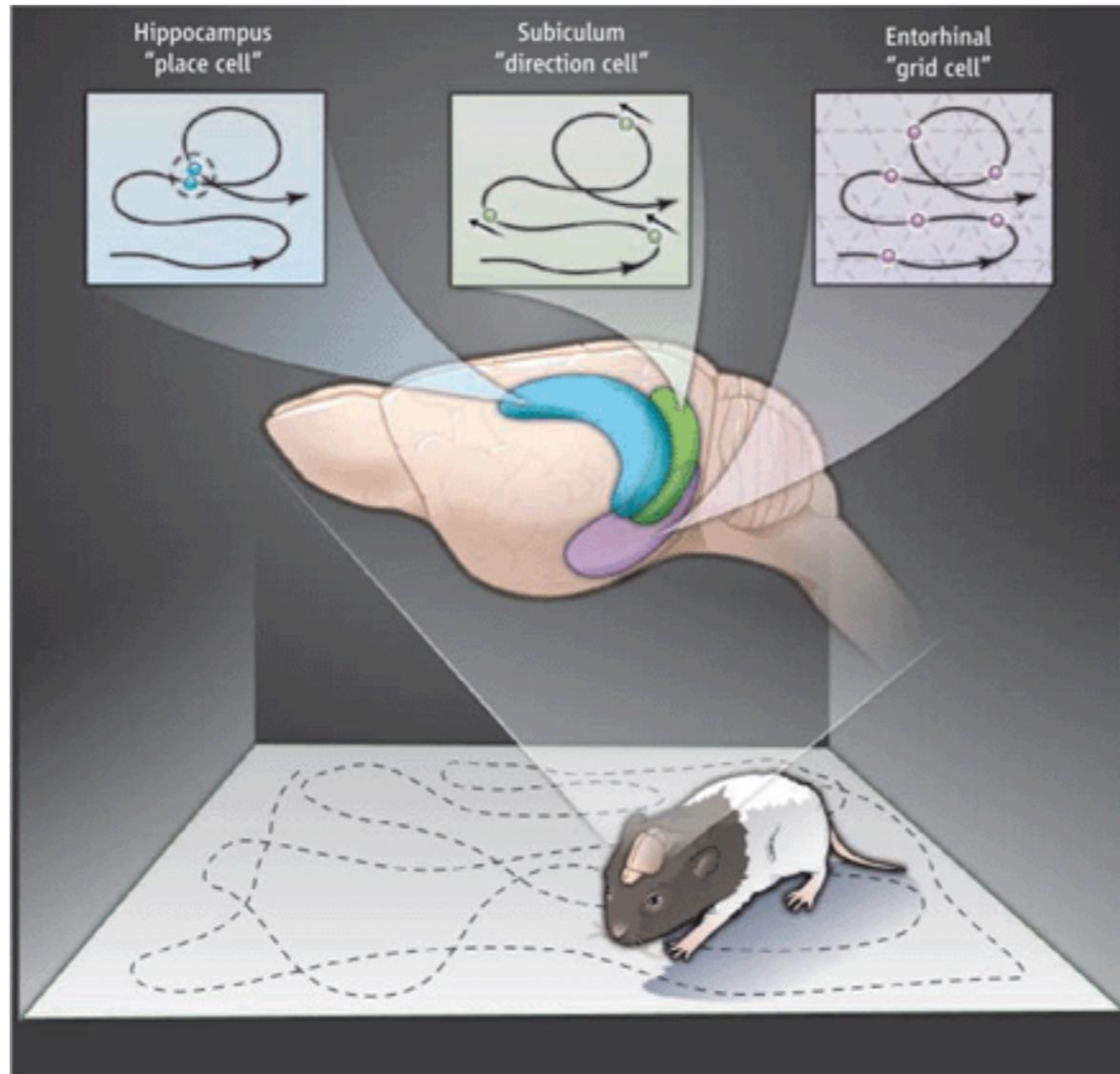
Hippocampus as a cognitive map

Boundary cells also found in subiculum (part of HPC) and ERC.

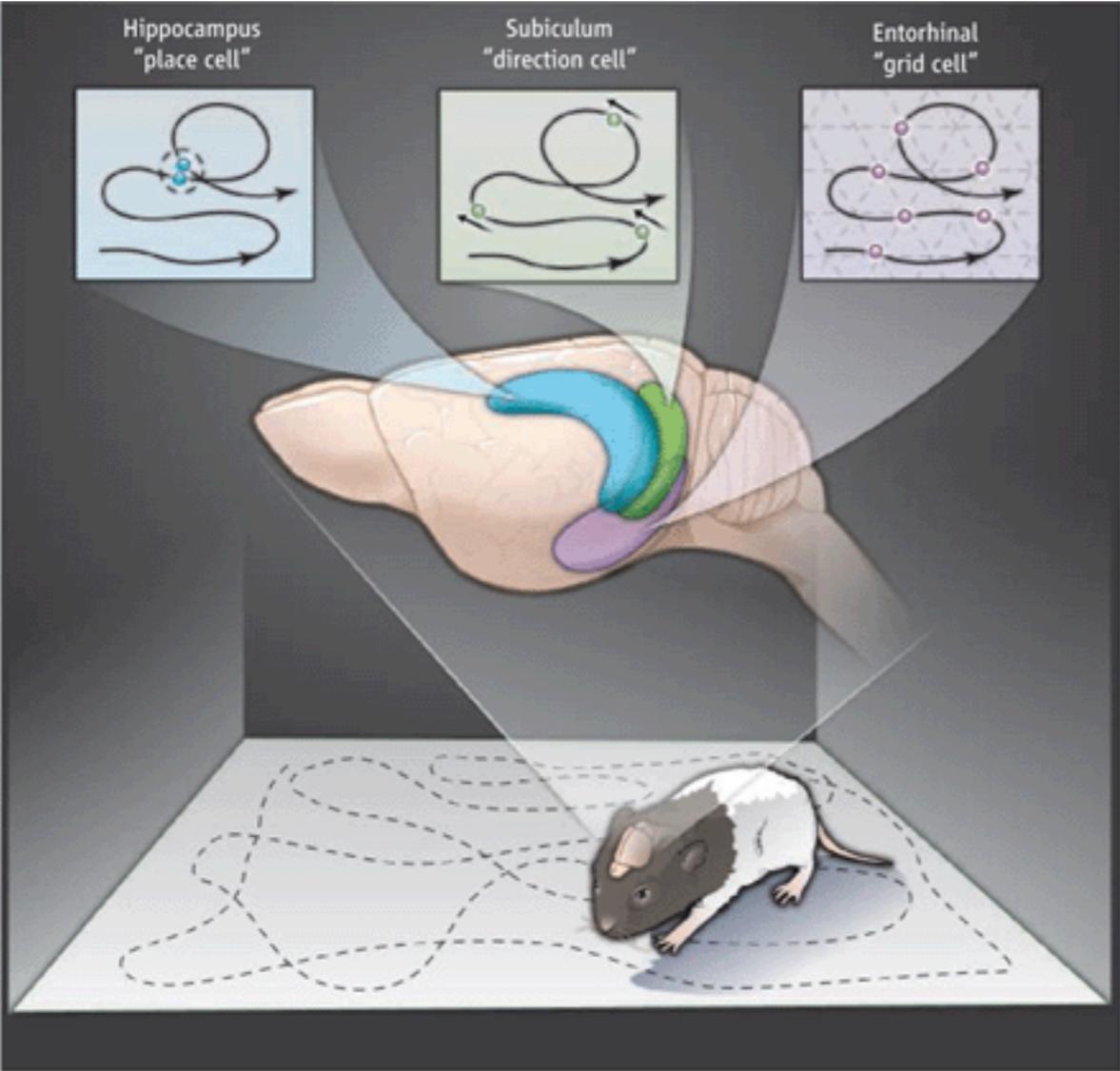


Firing of a boundary cell recorded in rat subiculum in 1 x 1 metre square-walled box with 50 cm-high walls. A 50 cm-long barrier inserted into box elicits second field along north side of barrier in addition to original field along south wall.

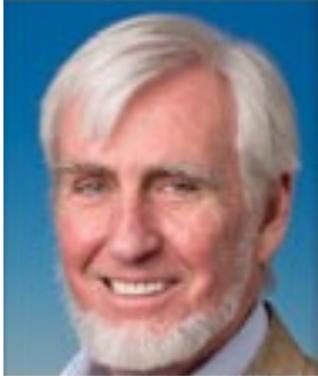
Hippocampus as a cognitive map



Hippocampus as a cognitive map

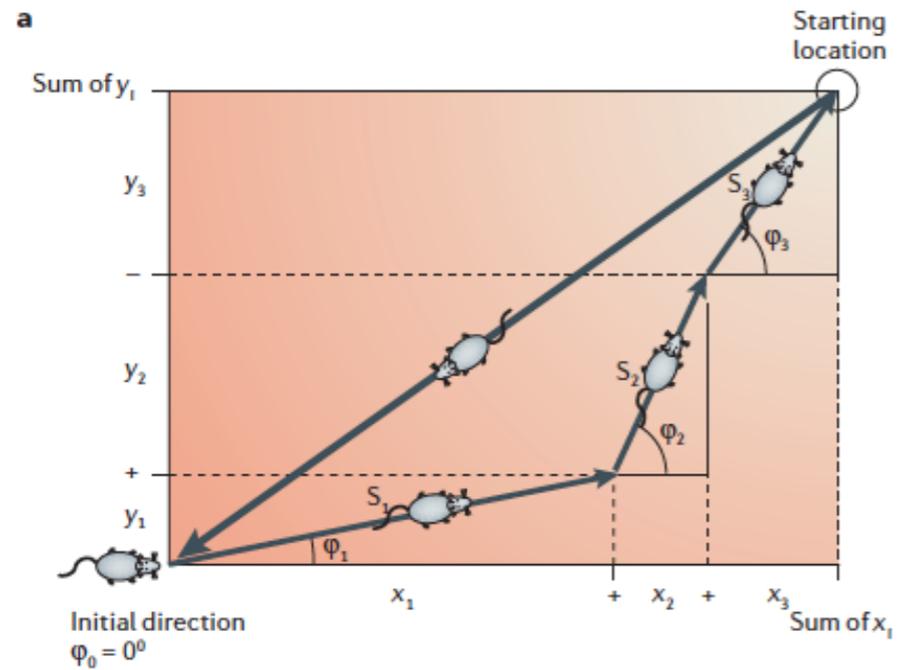


 The 2014 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

		
John O'Keefe University College London	May-Britt Moser	Edvard I. Moser
Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim		

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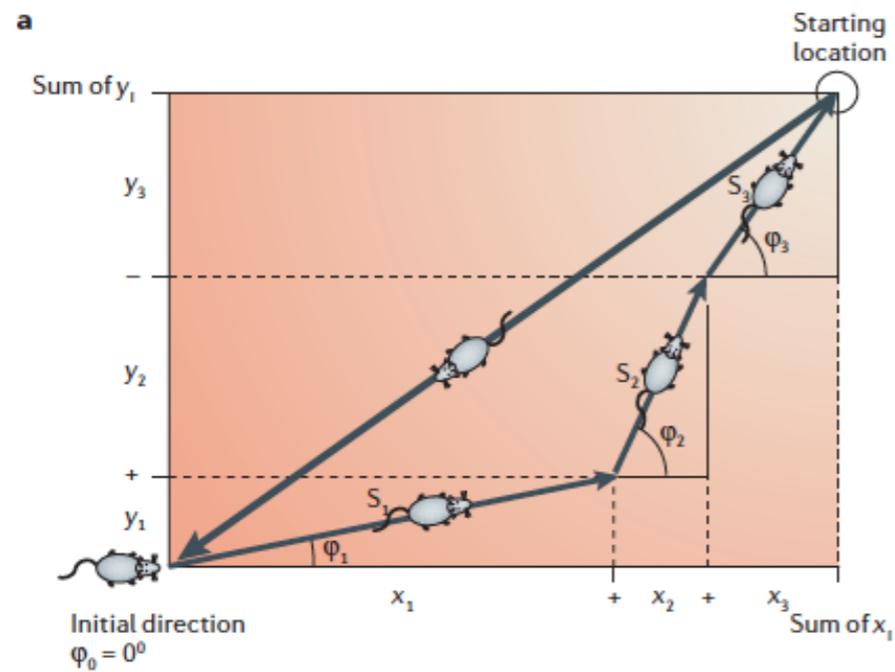
Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator



Path integration and the neural basis of the 'cognitive map'

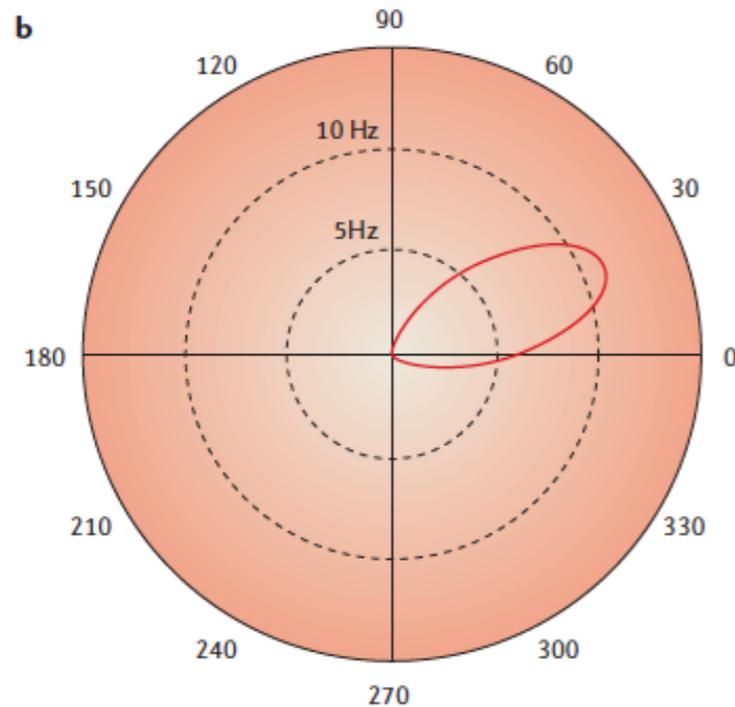
Bruce L. McNaughton^{*†}, Francesco P. Battaglia[§], Ole Jensen^{||}, Edvard I. Moser[†] and May-Britt Moser[†]

Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator

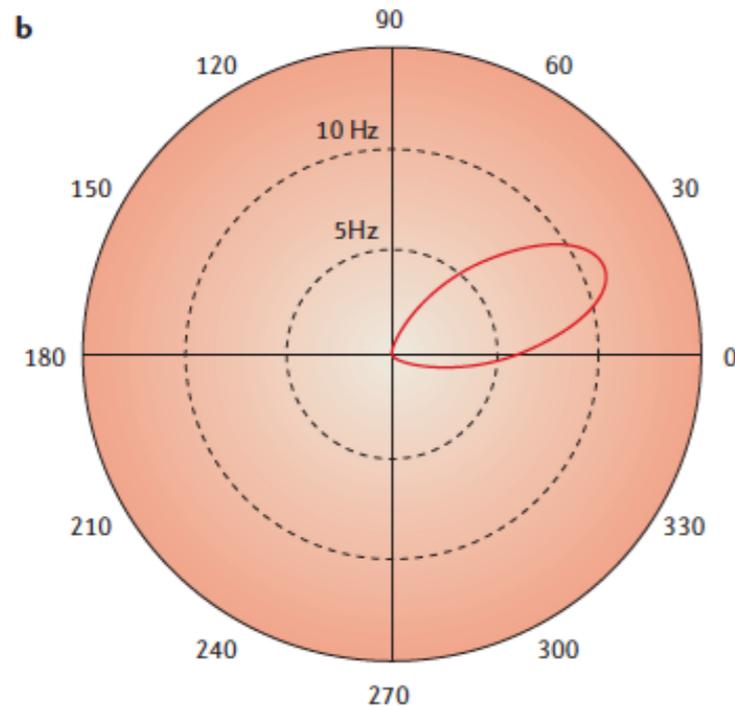
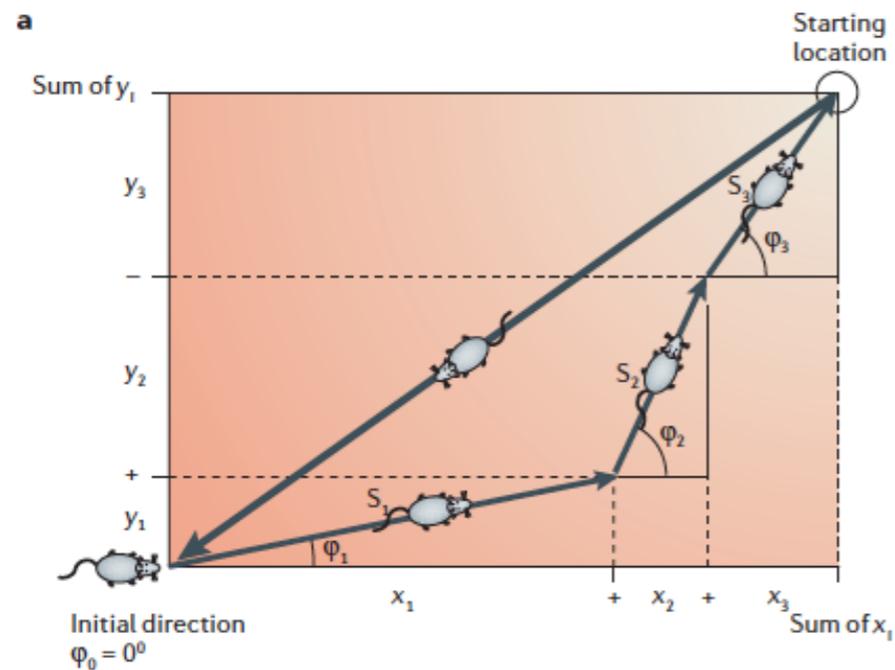


Path integration and the neural basis of the 'cognitive map'

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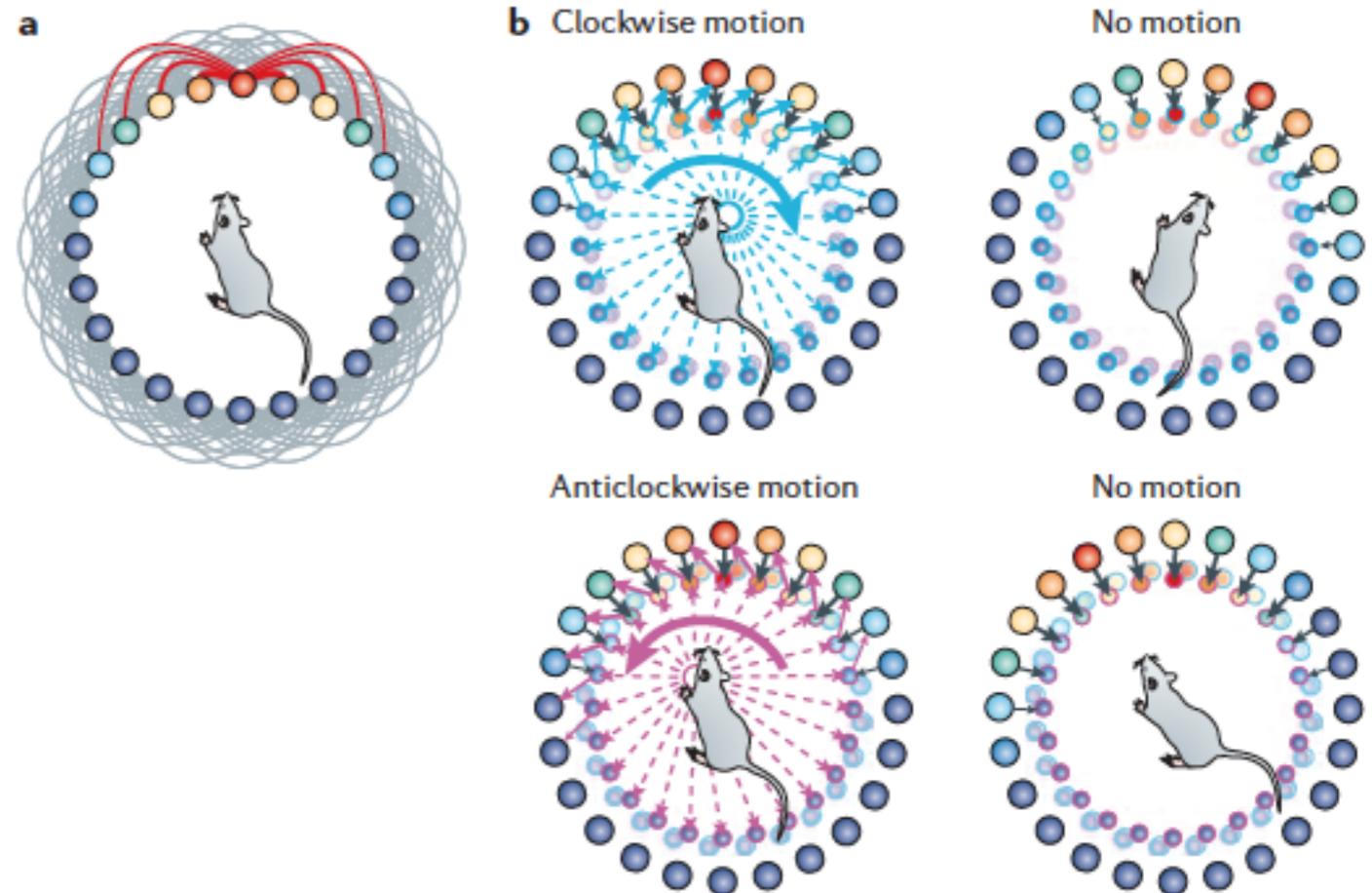
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One-d attractor map



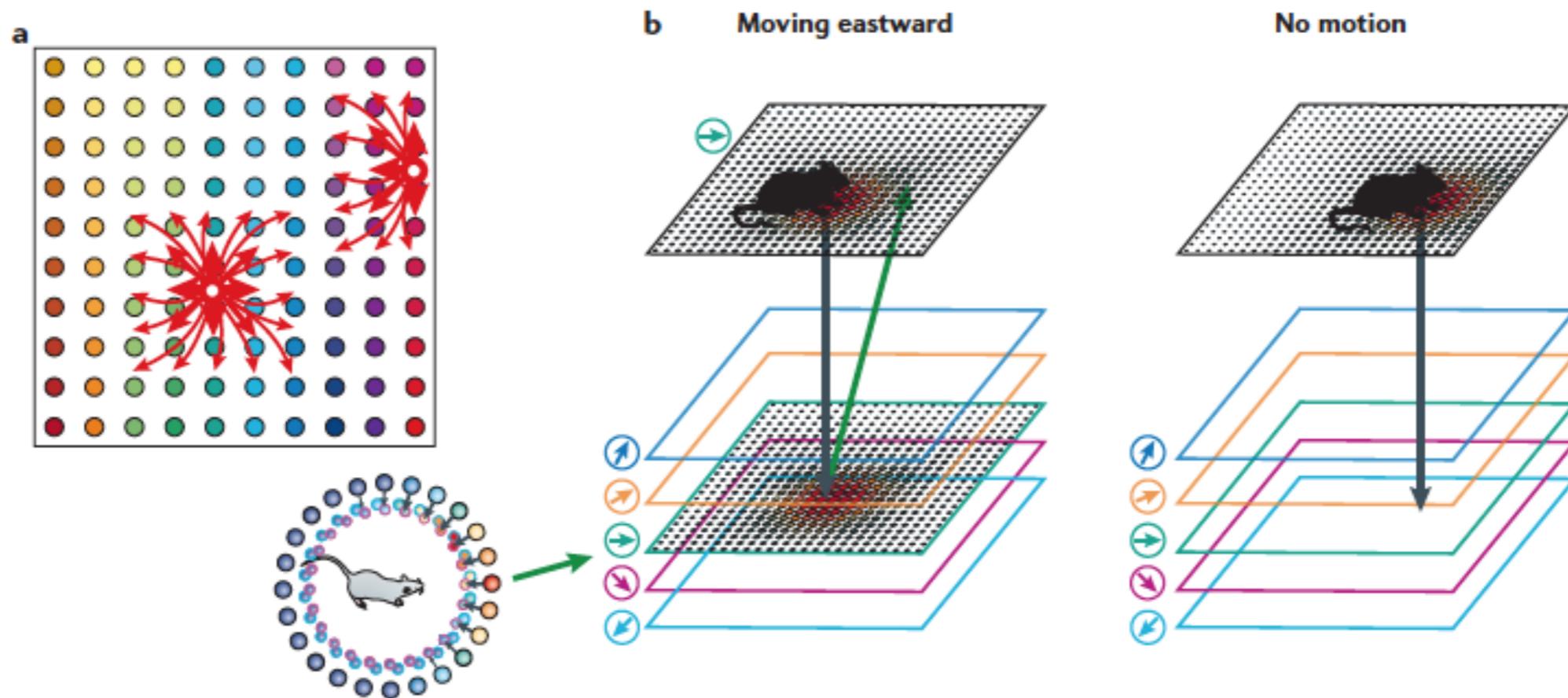
one ring of cells for clockwise,
one ring for counterclockwise

Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator

Path integration and the neural basis of the 'cognitive map'

Bruce L. McNaughton^{*1}, Francesco P. Battaglia⁵, Ole Jensen¹¹, Edvard I. Moser¹ and May-Britt Moser¹

Two-D grid version

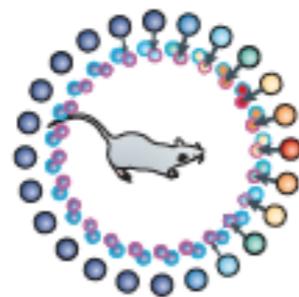
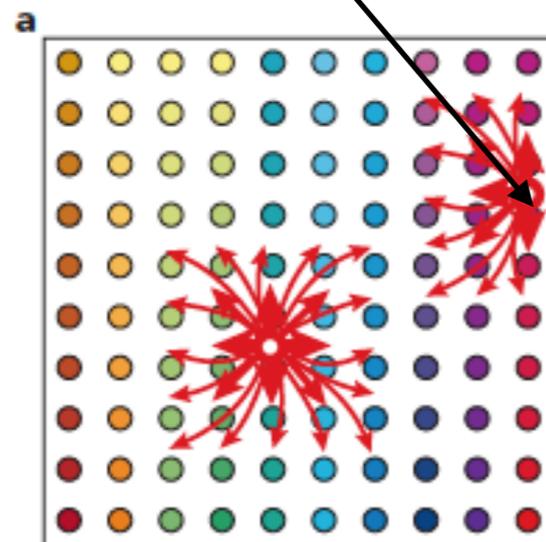


Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator

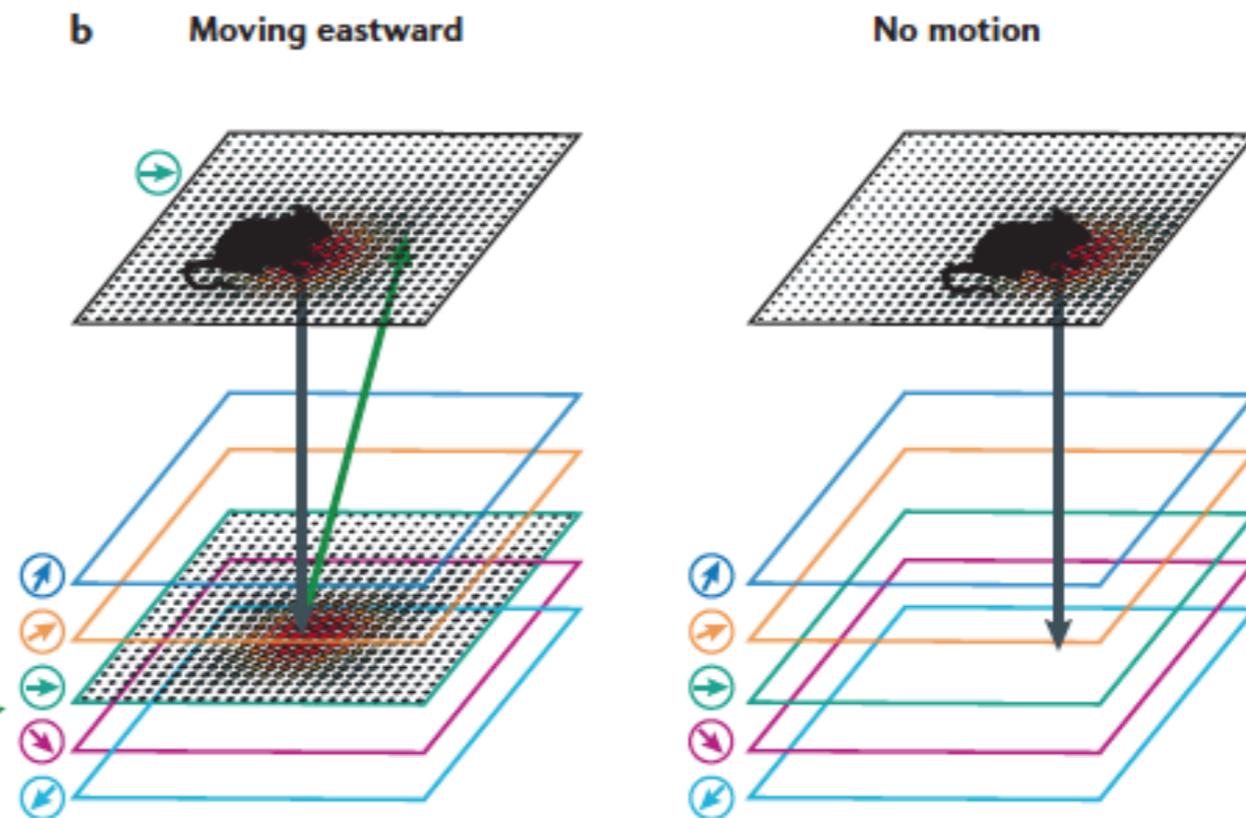
Path integration and the neural basis of the 'cognitive map'

Bruce L. McNaughton^{*1}, Francesco P. Battaglia⁵, Ole Jensen¹¹, Edvard I. Moser¹ and May-Britt Moser¹

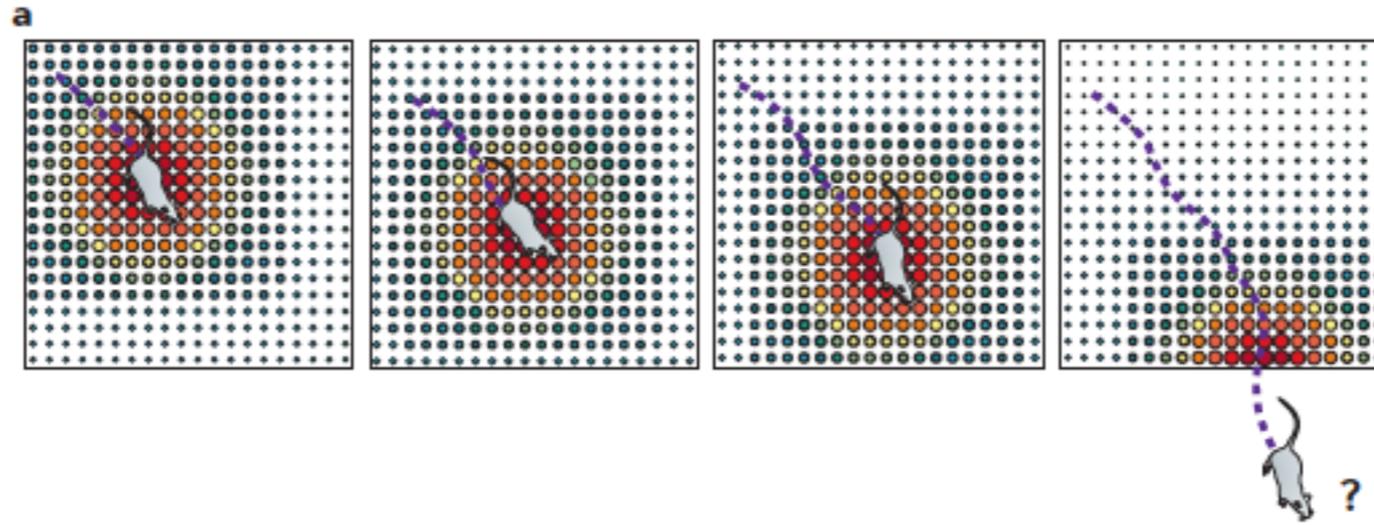
but *weirdness* at boundary



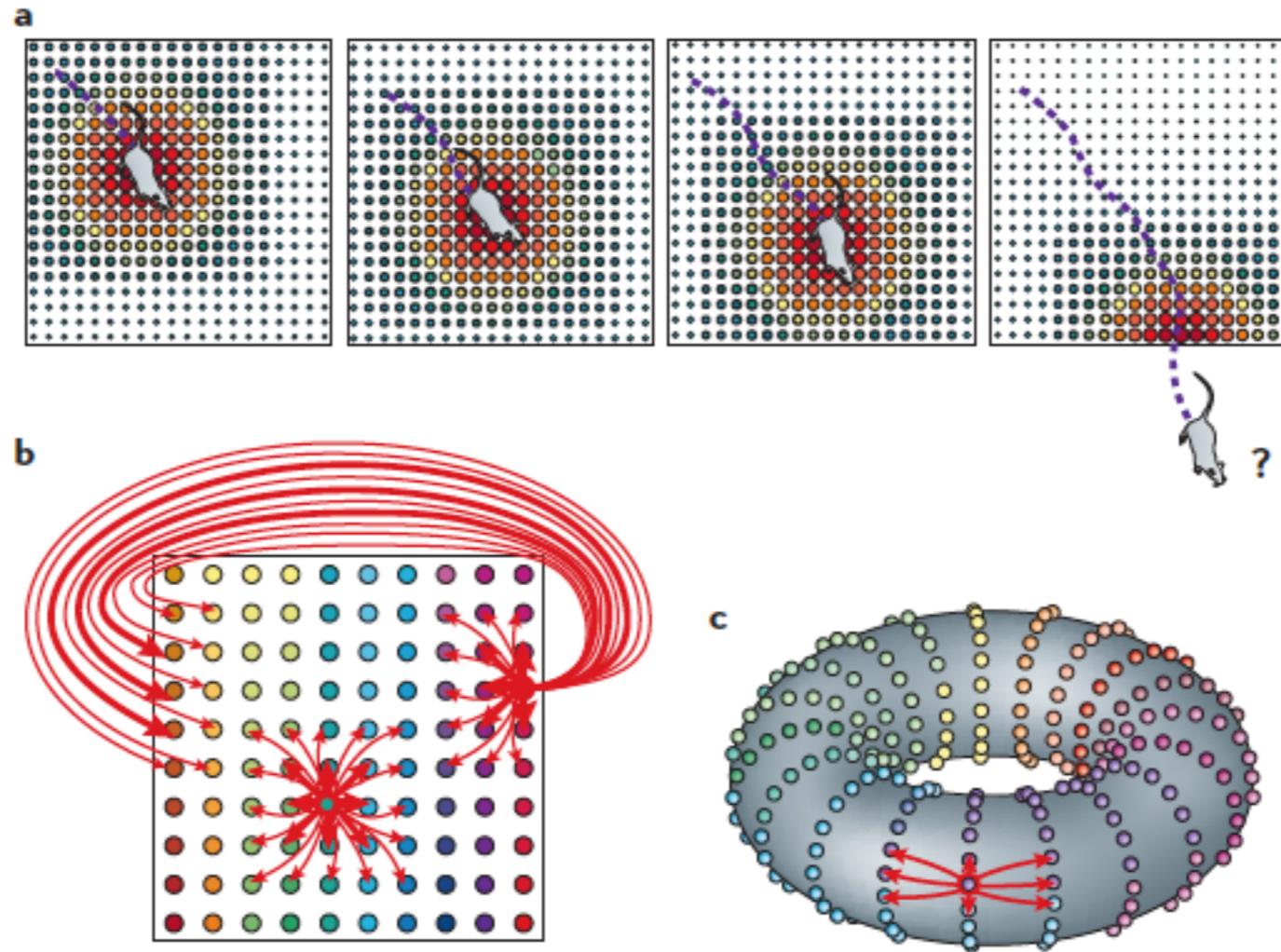
Two-D grid version



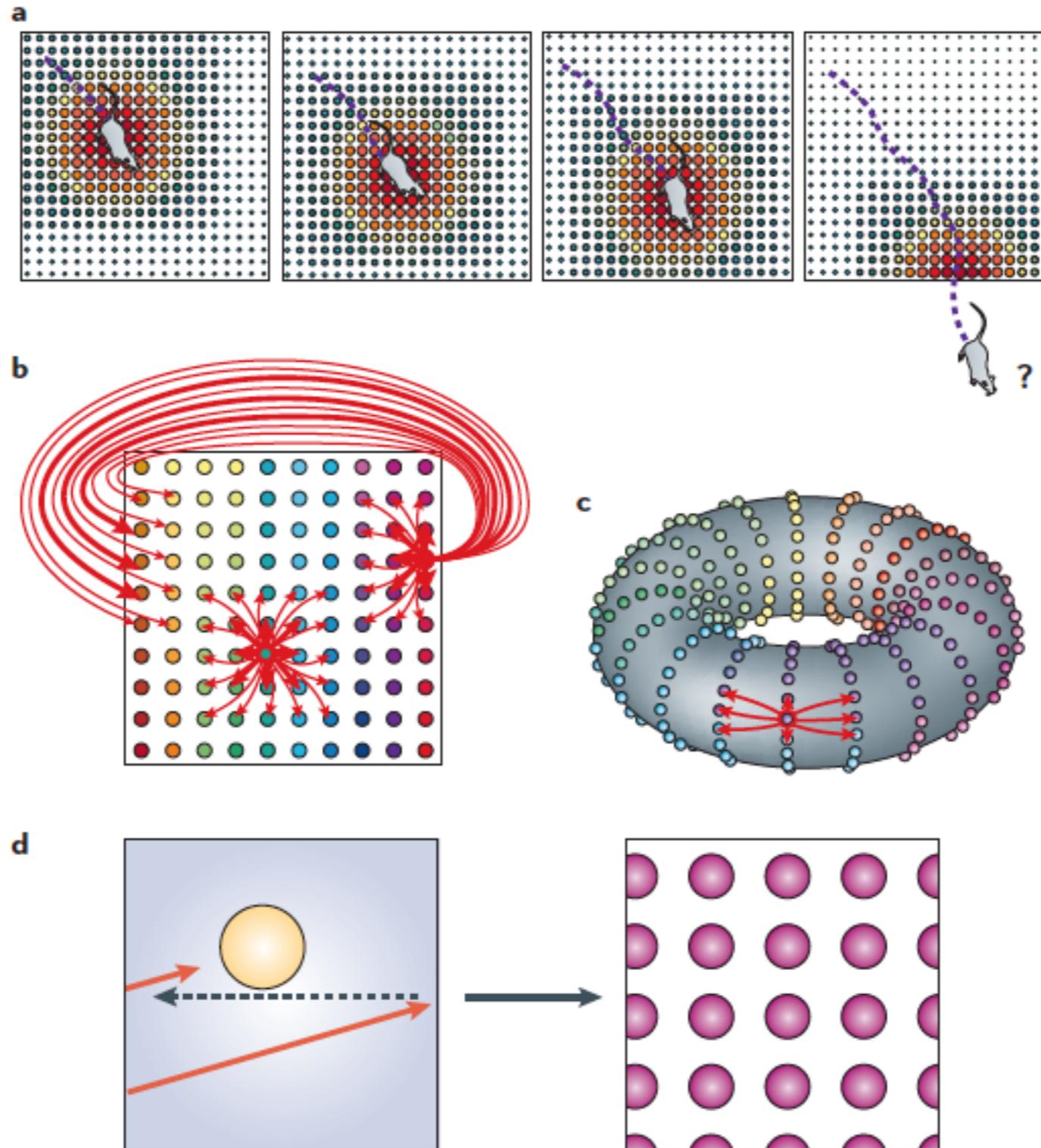
Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator



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Models: Spatial Attractor of Path Integrator



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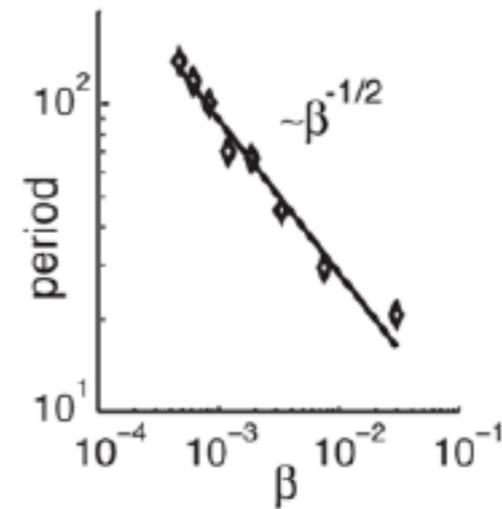
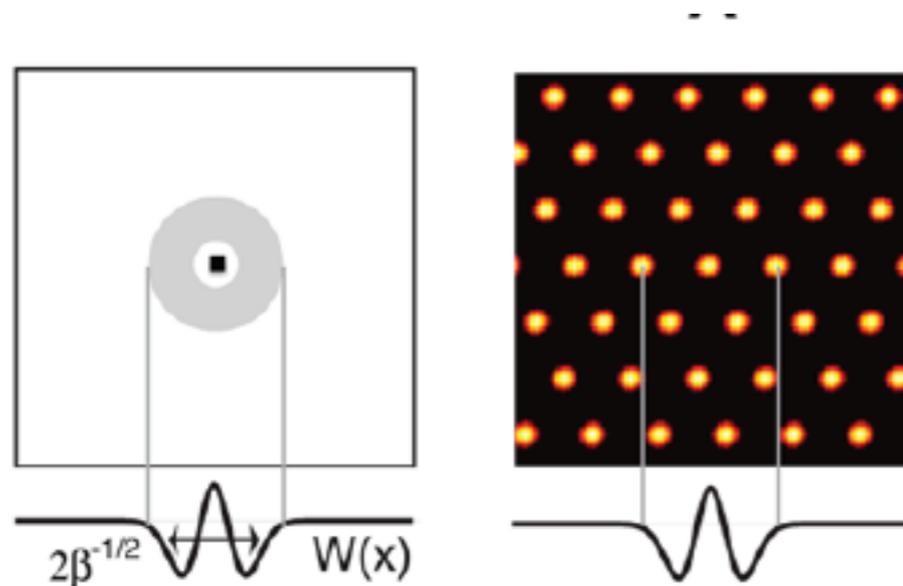
Accurate Path Integration in Continuous Attractor Network Models of Grid Cells

Yoram Burak^{1,2*}, Ilia R. Fiete^{2,3}

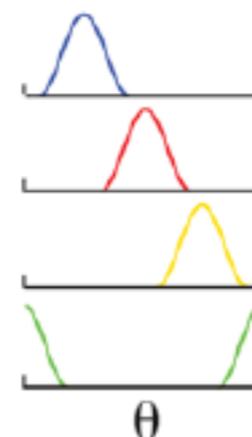
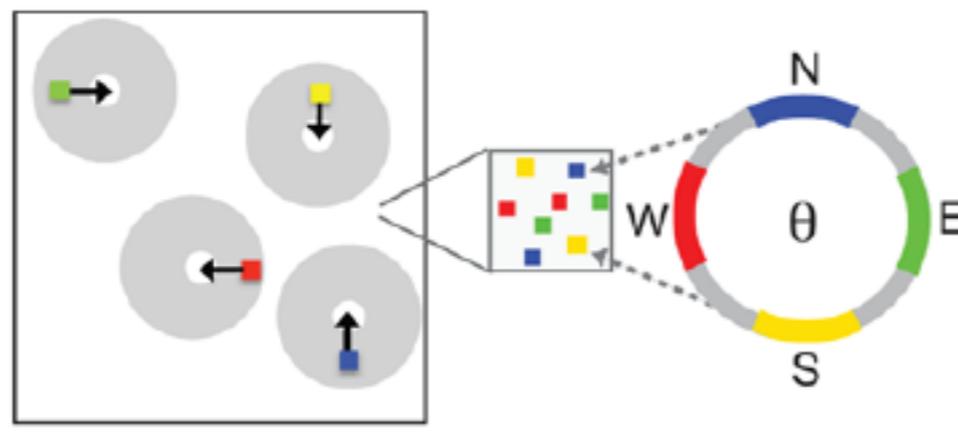
¹Center for Brain Science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States of America, ²Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California, United States of America, ³Computation and Neural Systems, Division of Biology, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California, United States of America

Square grid (128x128), with toroidal wraparound

inhibitory input from surround ring of neurons



dependence of emergent pattern on strength of inhibition

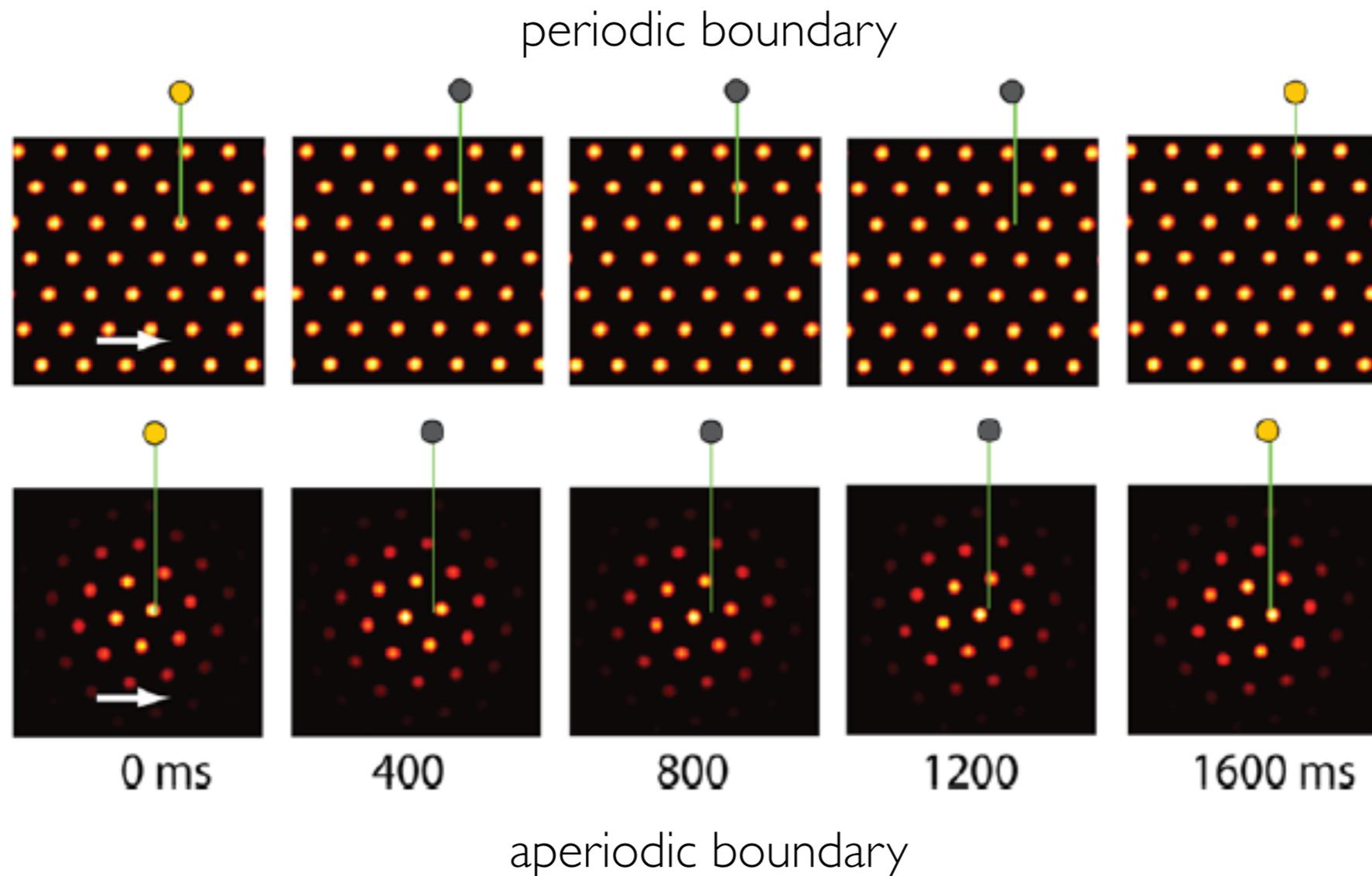


coupling to velocity (from subiculum?)

Accurate Path Integration in Continuous Attractor Network Models of Grid Cells

Yoram Burak^{1,2*}, Ila R. Fiete^{2,3}

¹ Center for Brain Science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States of America, ² Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California, United States of America, ³ Computation and Neural Systems, Division of Biology, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California, United States of America



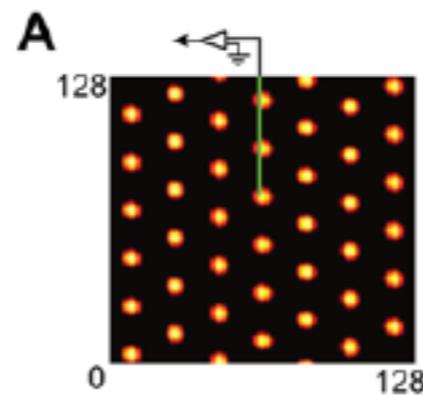
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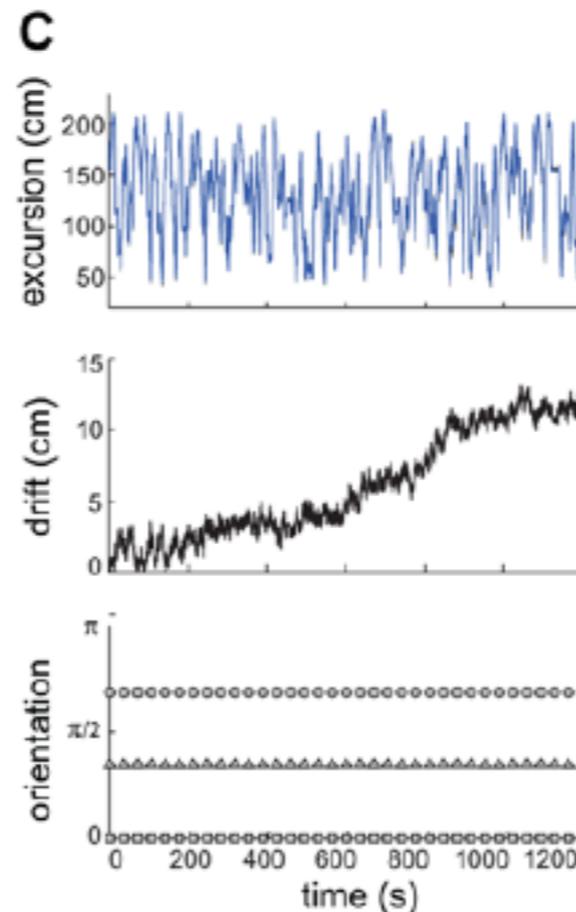
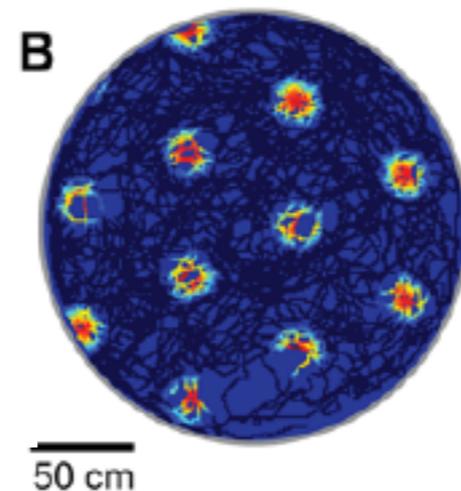
¹ Center for Brain Science, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States of America, ² Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California, United States of America, ³ Computation and Neural Systems, Division of Biology, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California, United States of America

Now driven by real rat motion data

instantaneous activity of model units



time-average grid-cell response of real rat



Published as a conference paper at ICLR 2018

EMERGENCE OF GRID-LIKE REPRESENTATIONS BY TRAINING RECURRENT NEURAL NETWORKS TO PERFORM SPATIAL LOCALIZATION

Christopher J. Cueva,* Xue-Xin Wei*
Columbia University
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{ccueva, weixxpku}@gmail.com

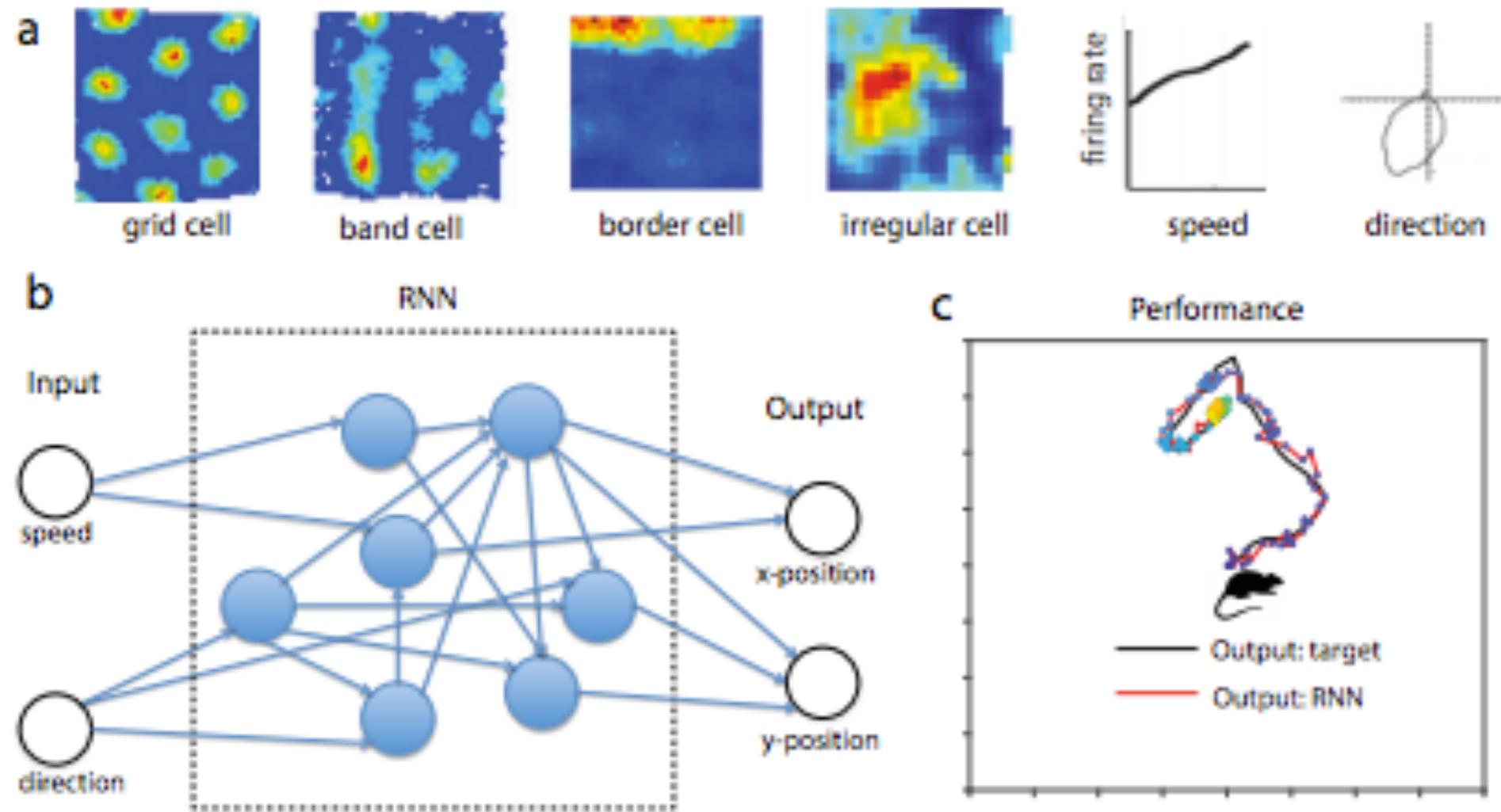
ABSTRACT

Decades of research on the neural code underlying spatial navigation have revealed a diverse set of neural response properties. The Entorhinal Cortex (EC) of the mammalian brain contains a rich set of spatial correlates, including grid cells which encode space using tessellating patterns. However, the mechanisms and functional significance of these spatial representations remain largely mysterious. As a new way to understand these neural representations, we trained recurrent neural networks (RNNs) to perform navigation tasks in 2D arenas based on velocity inputs. Surprisingly, we find that grid-like spatial response patterns emerge in trained networks, along with units that exhibit other spatial correlates, including border cells and band-like cells. All these different functional types of neurons have been observed experimentally. The order of the emergence of grid-like and border cells is also consistent with observations from developmental studies. Together, our results suggest that grid cells, border cells and others as observed in EC may be a natural solution for representing space efficiently given the predominant recurrent connections in the neural circuits.

Goal-Driven Models

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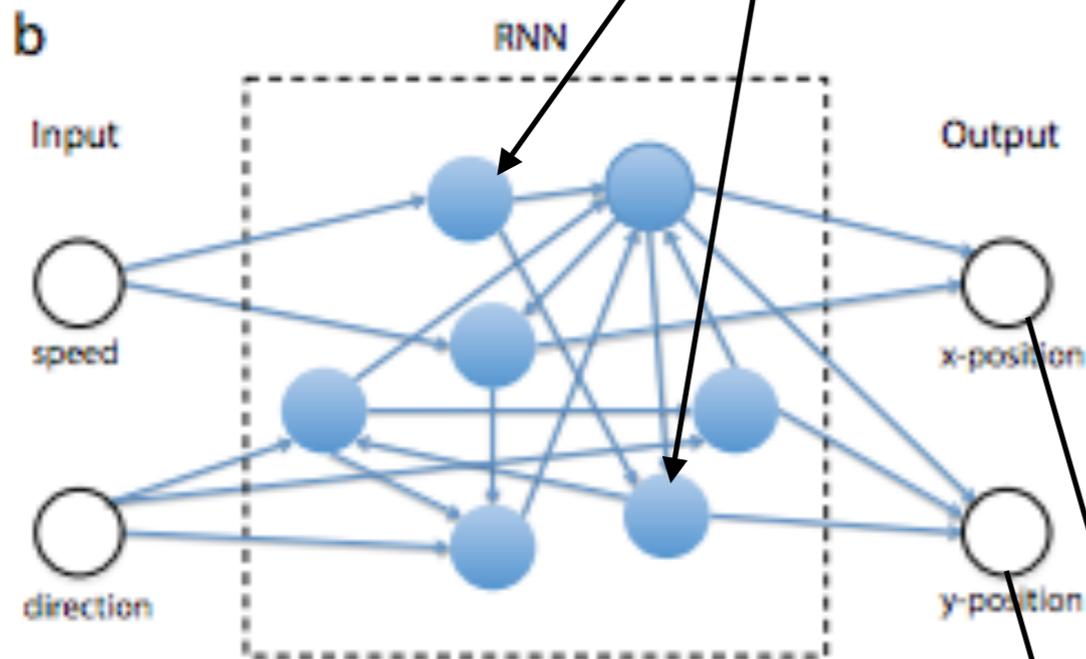
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RNN governing equation:

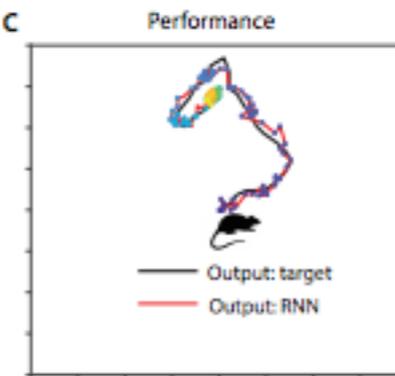
$$\tau \frac{dx_i}{dt} = -x_i(t) + \sum_{j=1}^{N_{rec}} W_{ij}^{rec} \tanh(x_j(t)) + \sum_{k=1}^{N_{inp}} W_{ik}^{inp} I_k(t) + \xi_i(t)$$



x_i 's are the internal neurons

$$N_{rec} = 10$$

weights and biases trained to produce desired outputs



y_j 's are the desired readouts

$$y_j(t) = \sum_{i=1}^{N_{rec}} W_{ji}^{out} \tanh(x_i(t))$$

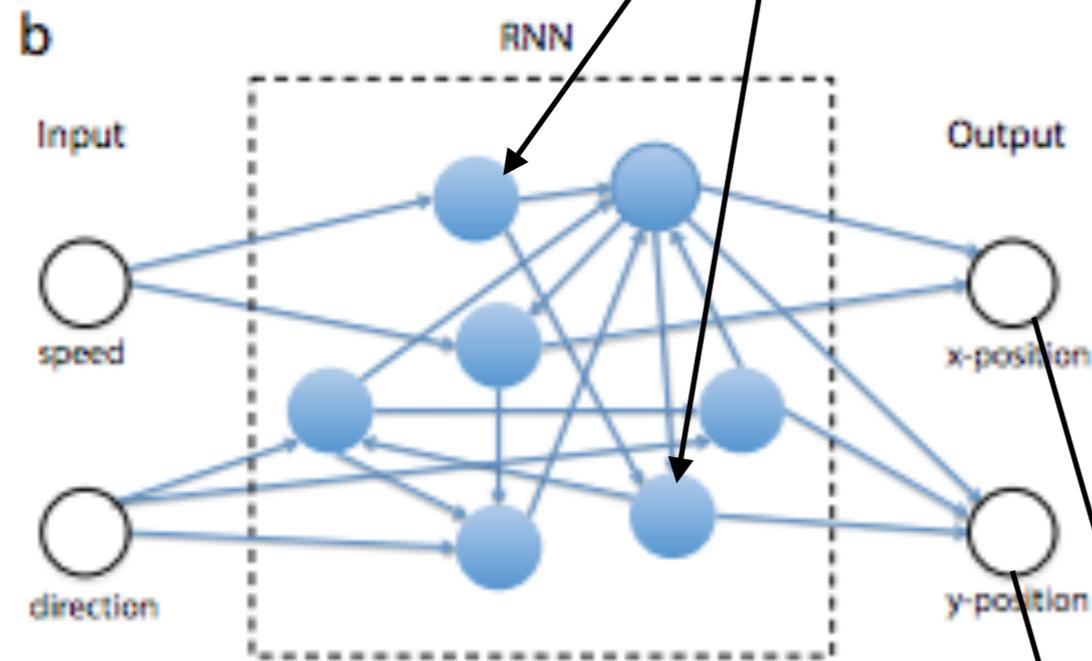
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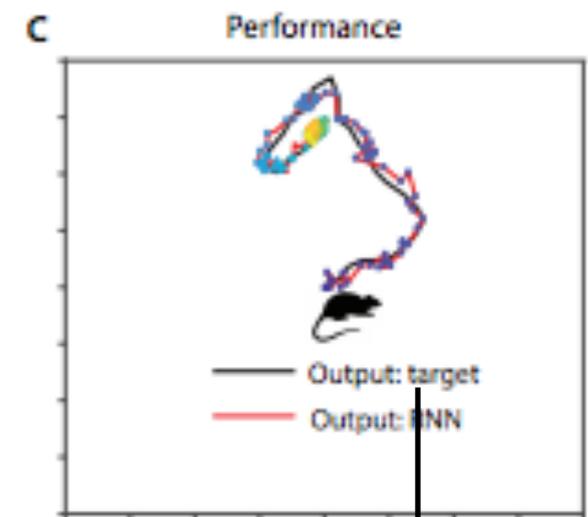
$$N_{rec} = 100$$

weights and biases trained to produced desired output →

y_j 's are the desired readouts

$$y_j(t) = \sum_{i=1}^{N_{rec}} W_{ji}^{out} \tanh(x_i(t))$$

generated as modified Brownian motion



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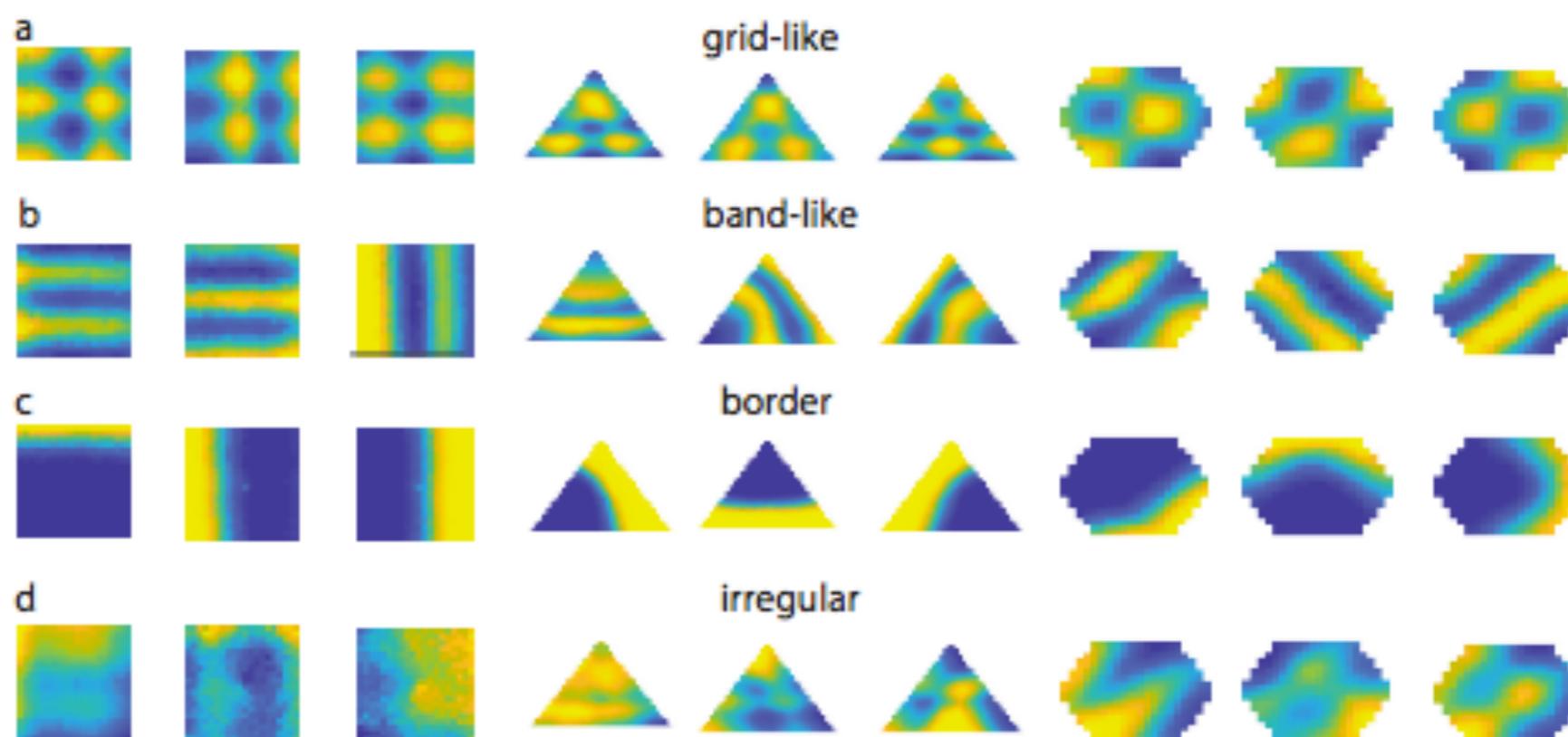


Figure 2: Different types of spatial selective responses of units in the trained RNN. Example simulation results for three different environments (square, triangular, hexagon) are presented. Blue (yellow) represents low (high) activity. **a)** Grid-like responses. **b)** Band-like responses; **c)** Border-related responses; **d)** Spatially irregular responses. These responses can be spatially selective but they do not form a regular pattern defined in the conventional sense.

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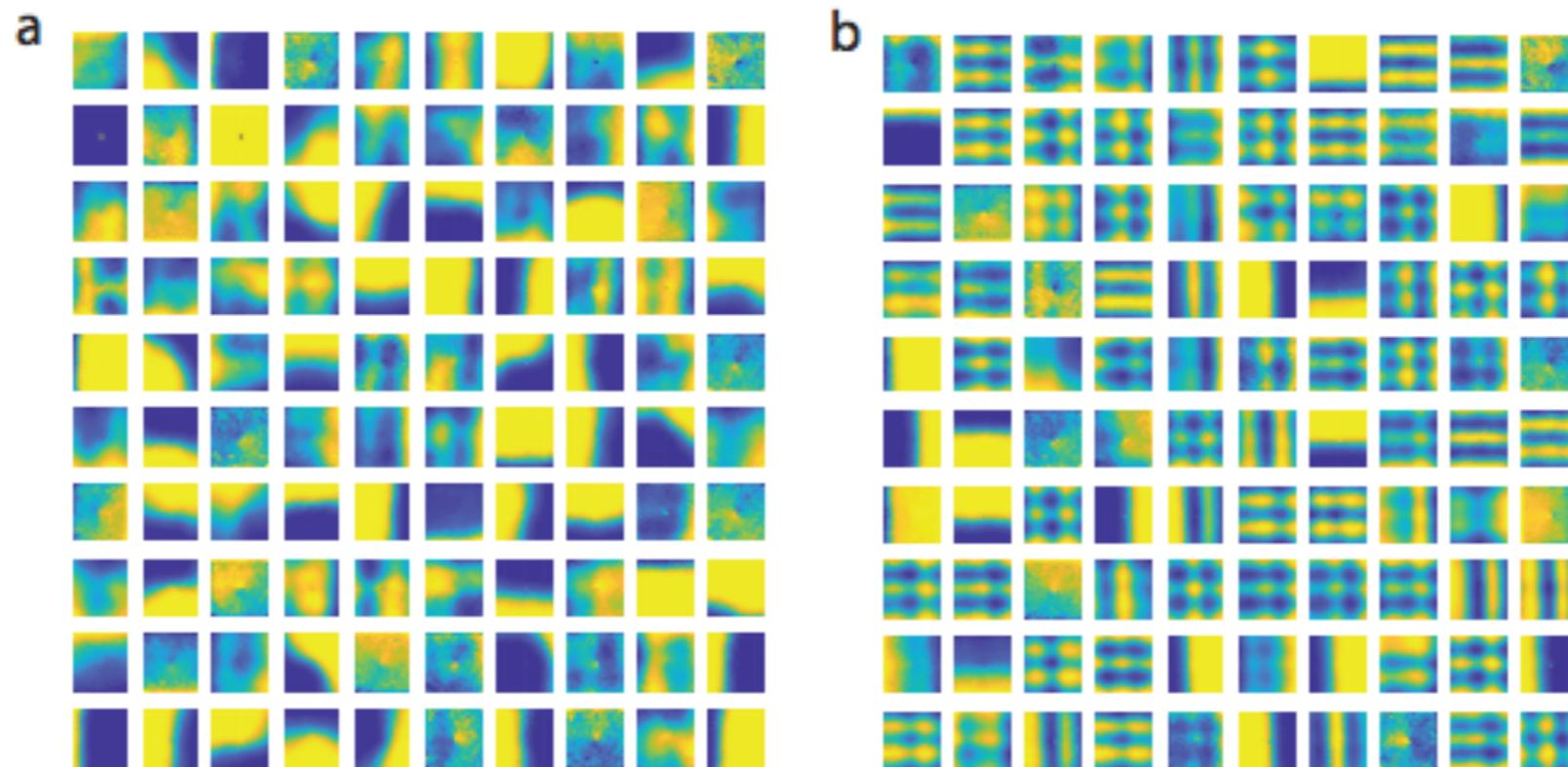


Figure 5: Complete set of spatial response profiles for 100 neurons in a RNN trained in a square environment. **a)** Without proper regularization, complex and periodic spatial response patterns do not emerge. **b)** With proper regularization, a rich set of periodic response patterns emerge, including grid-like responses. Regularization can also be adjusted to achieve spatial profiles intermediate between these two examples.

Goal-Driven Models

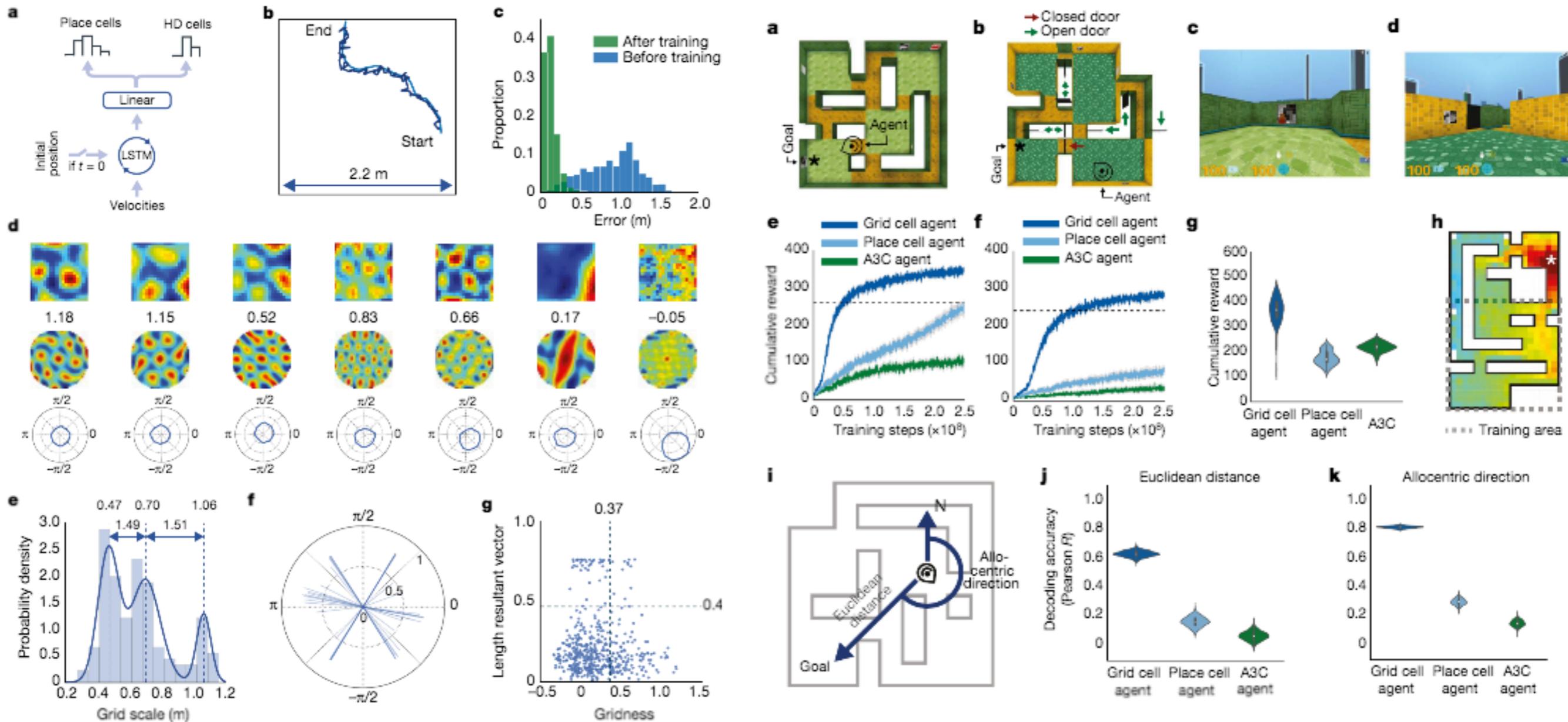
LETTER

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0102-6>

Vector-based navigation using grid-like representations in artificial agents

Andrea Banino^{1,2,3,5*}, Caswell Barry^{2,5*}, Benigno Uria¹, Charles Blundell¹, Timothy Lillicrap¹, Piotr Mirowski¹, Alexander Pritzel¹, Martin J. Chadwick¹, Thomas Degris¹, Joseph Modayil¹, Greg Wayne¹, Hubert Soyer¹, Fabio Viola¹, Brian Zhang¹, Ross Goroshin¹, Neil Rabinowitz¹, Razvan Pascanu¹, Charlie Beattie¹, Stig Petersen¹, Amir Sadik¹, Stephen Gaffney¹, Helen King¹, Koray Kavukcuoglu¹, Demis Hassabis^{1,4}, Raia Hadsell¹ & Dharshan Kumaran^{1,3*}

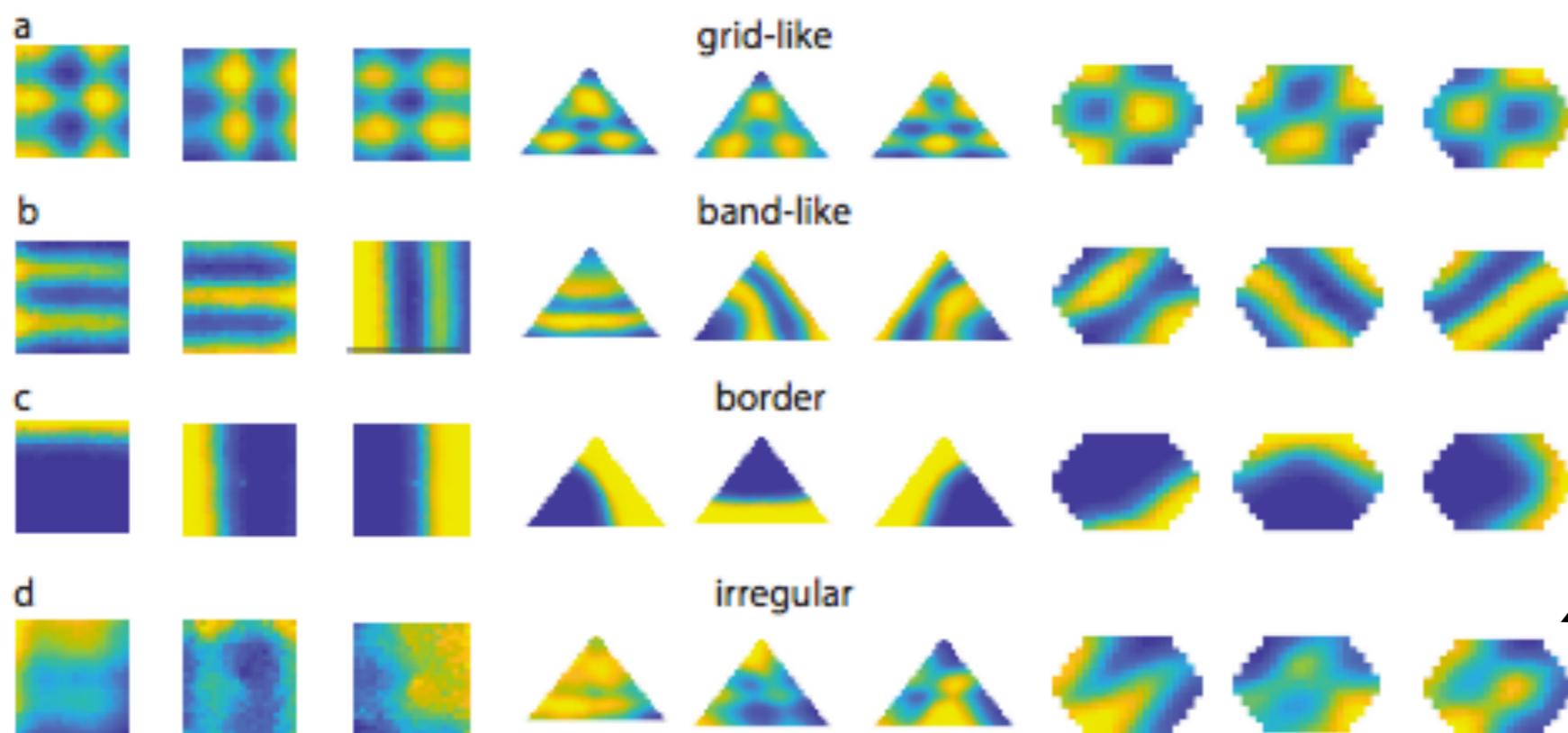
Similar results from another group about the same time.



Goal-Driven Models

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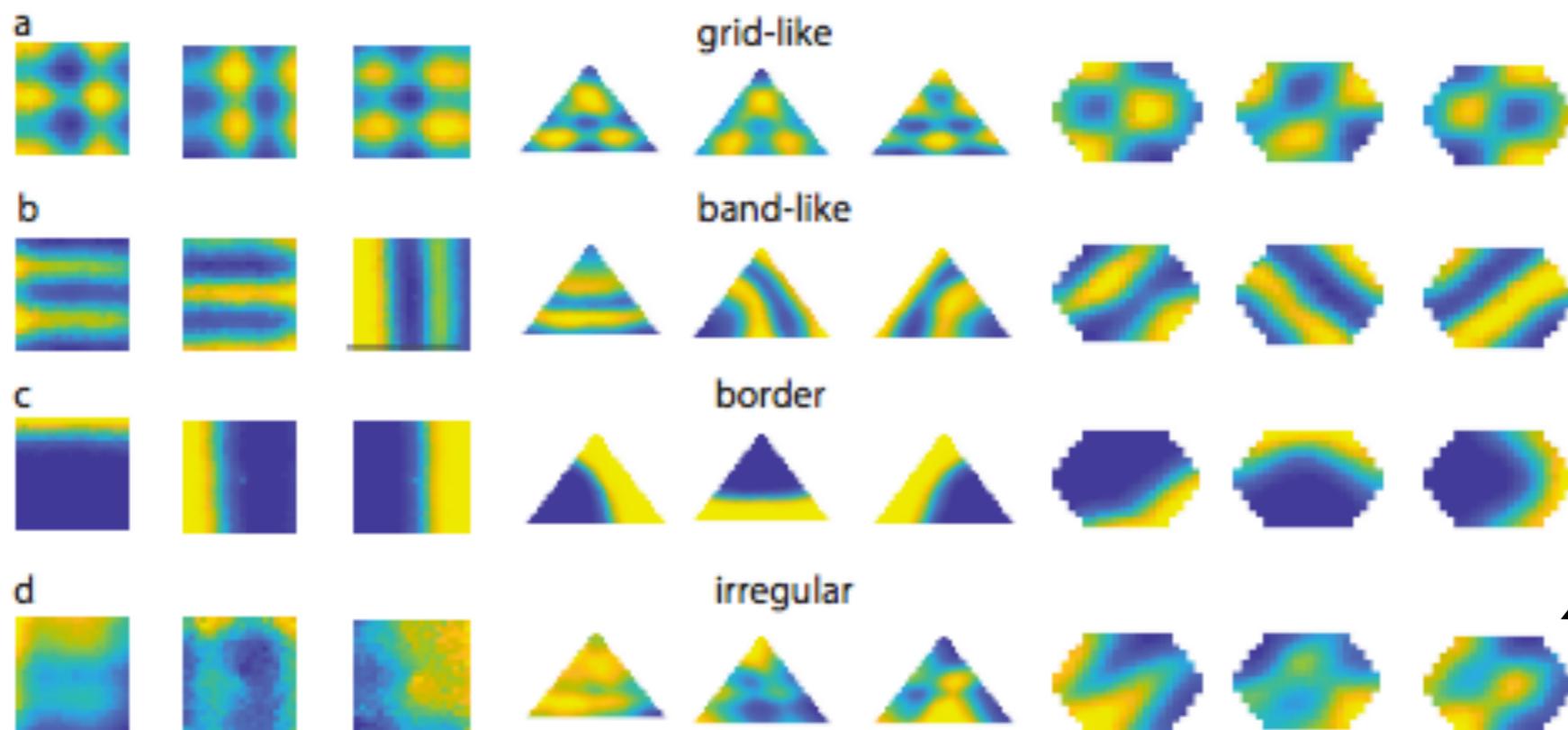
Many units in model are irregular — neither grid-like nor band-like nor border-like ...

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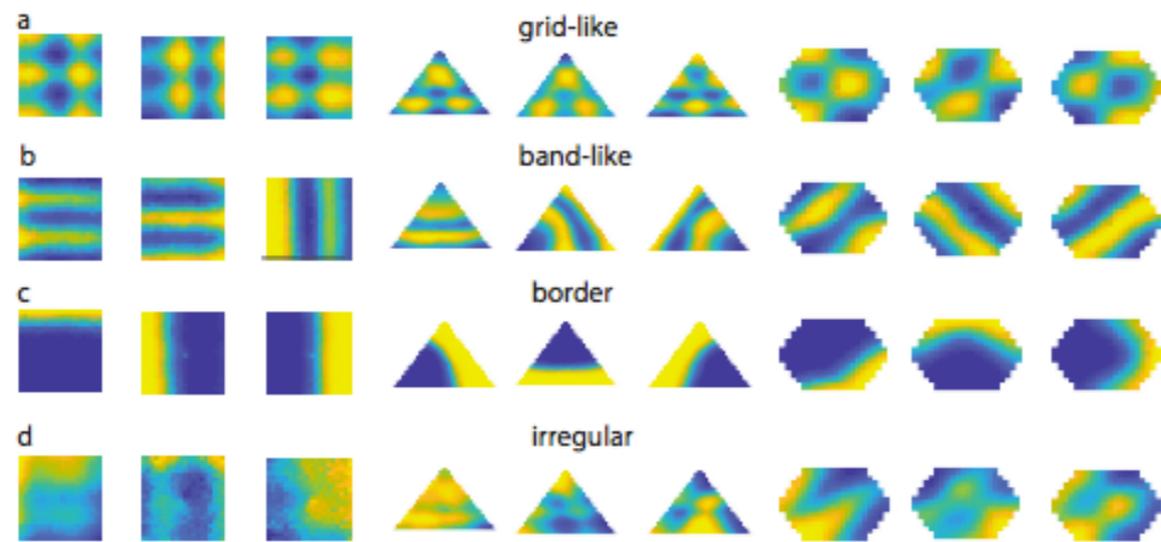
Many units in model are irregular — neither grid-like nor band-like nor border-like ...

... but this is actually true in real entorhinal cortex as well. According to Lisa Giacomo, perhaps 70% of ERC cells are “irregular”.

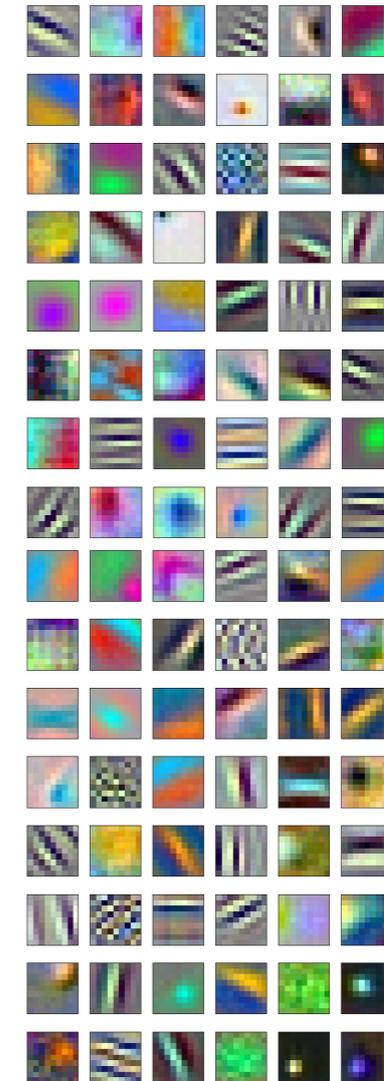
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Analogy to visual system results

In both cases, striking qualitative features of “characteristic neurons” that neuroscientists feel are important can be shown to just “emerge” from the system achieving down-stream computational goal ...



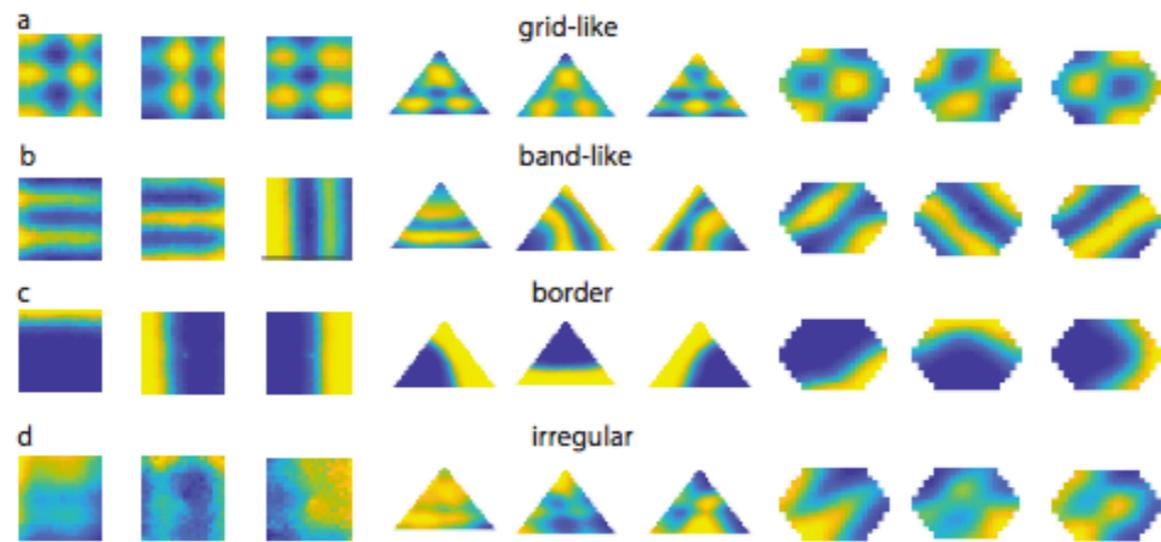
grid-cell-like tuning in navigation-based NN model of ERC



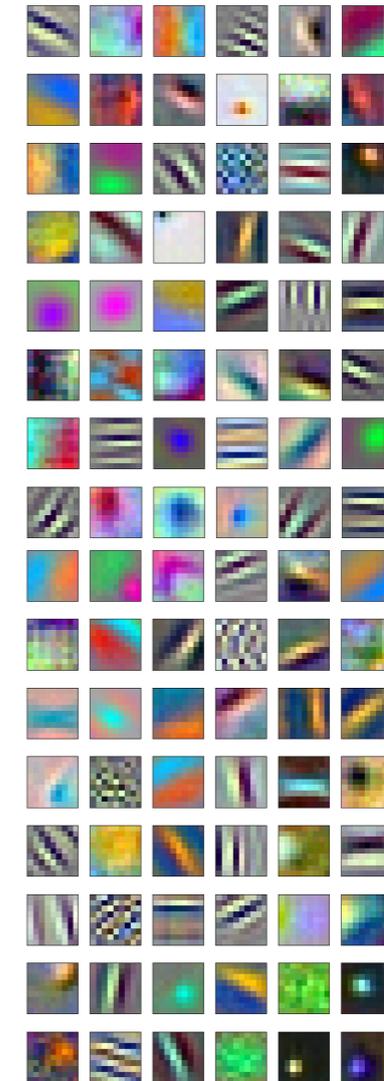
Gabor-like and center-surround tuning in early layer of categorization-based NN model of ventral stream

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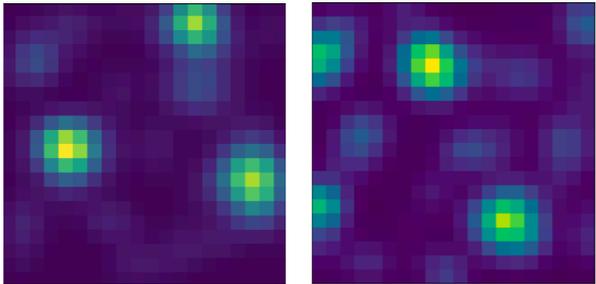
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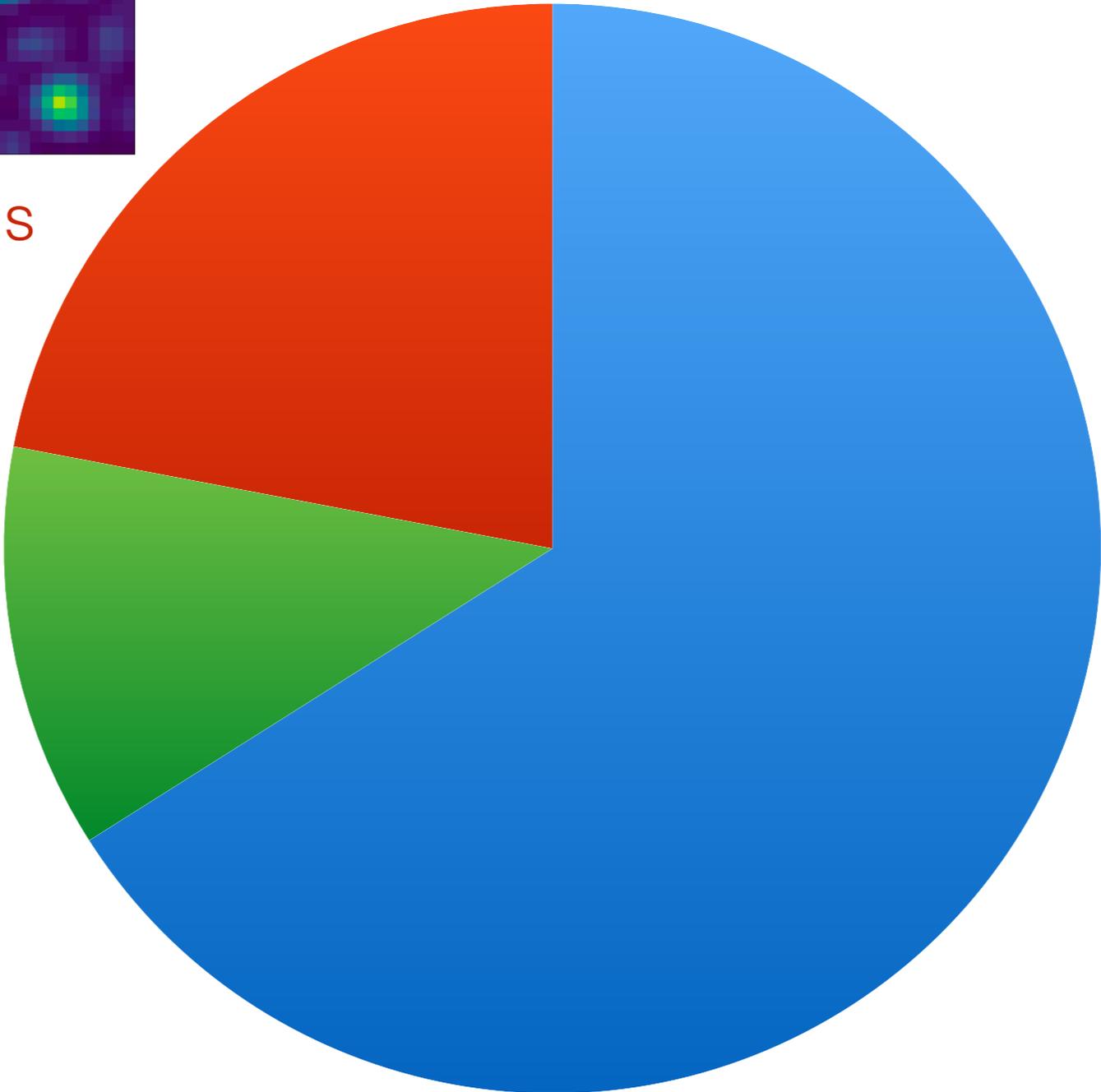
Gabor-like and center-surround tuning in early layer of categorization-based NN model of ventral stream

... but actually, just as interesting, these goal-driven NN models have many “non-characteristic” units that differ from the characteristic neurons — and in fact, **so do the real brain areas**. So, perhaps the goal-driven models go substantially beyond the intuitions of neuroscientists in a way that is brain-like.

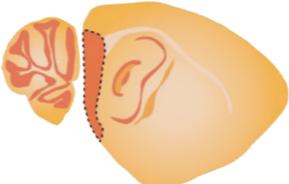
Accounting for heterogeneous code?



Grid Cells



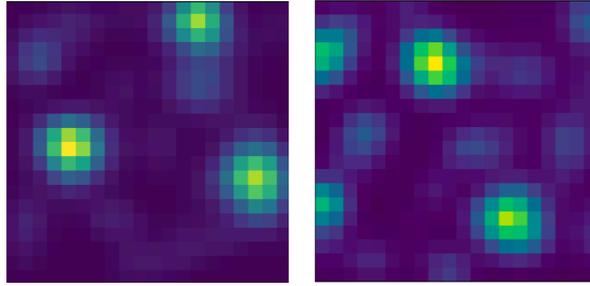
Data from: *Mallory et al. 2021*



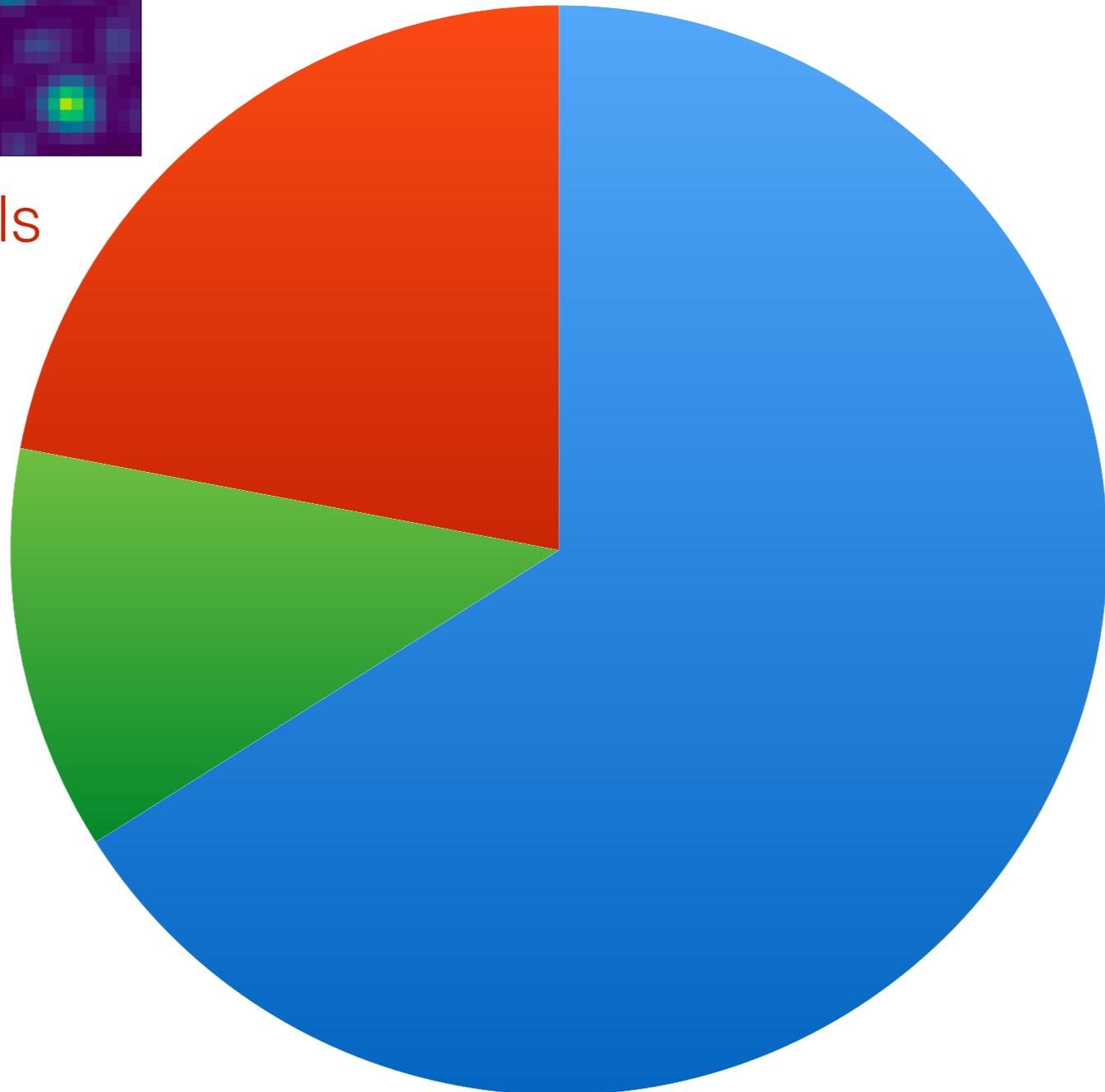
Caitlin Mallory

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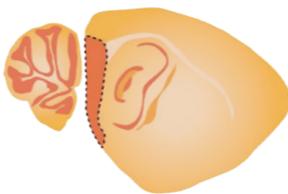
More like ~2-3%!



Grid Cells



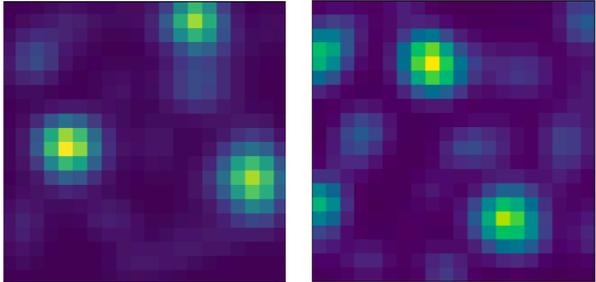
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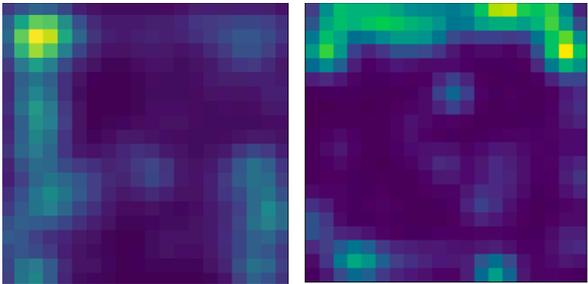
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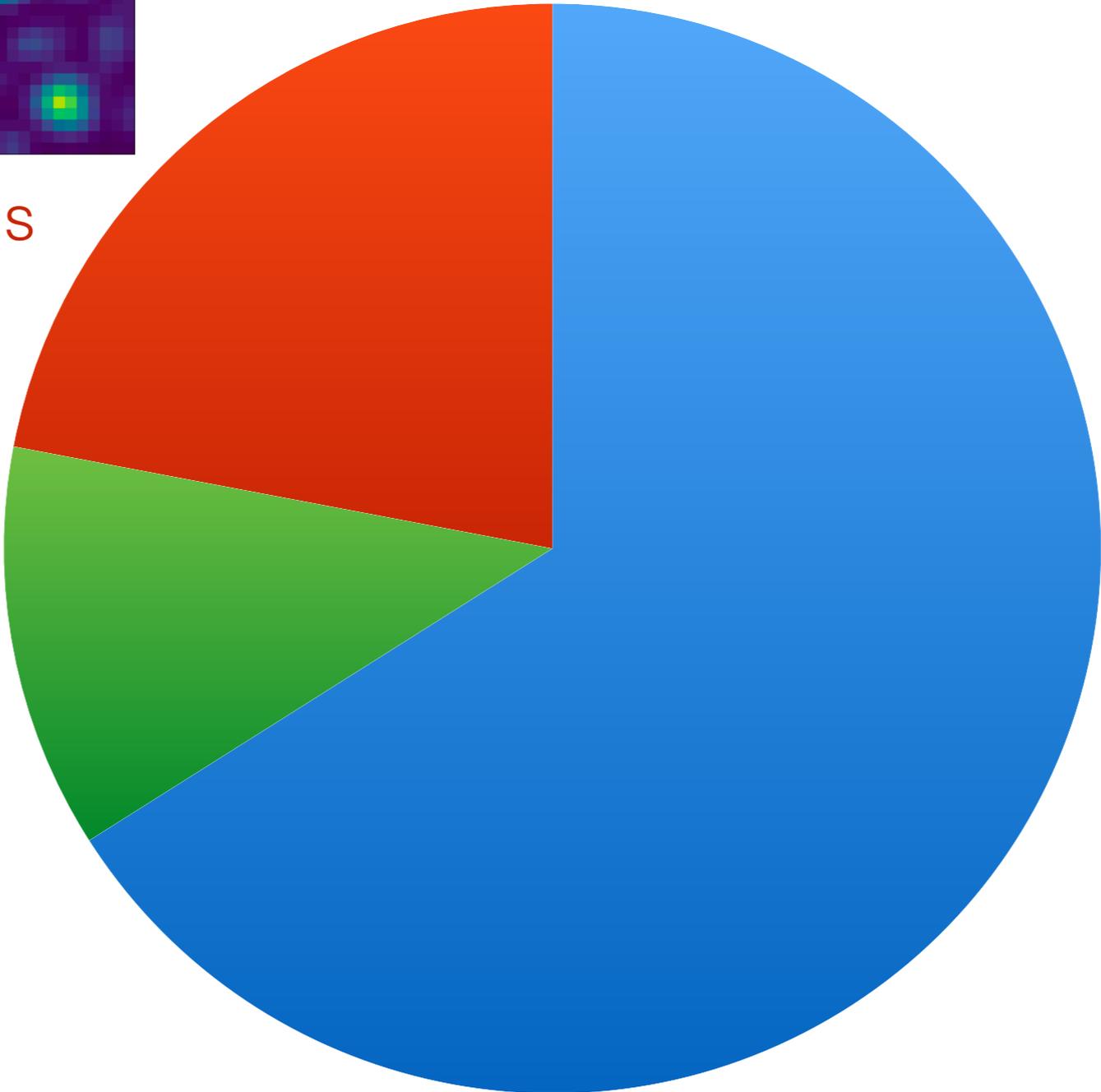
More like ~2-3%!



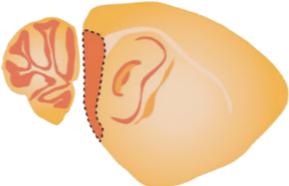
Grid Cells



Border Cells



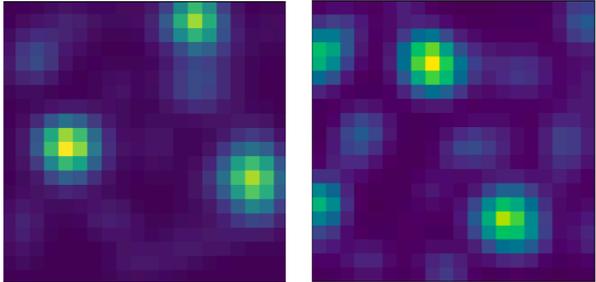
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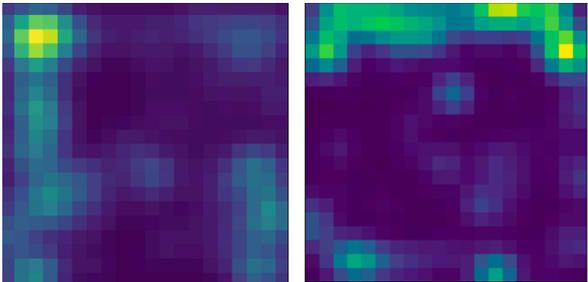
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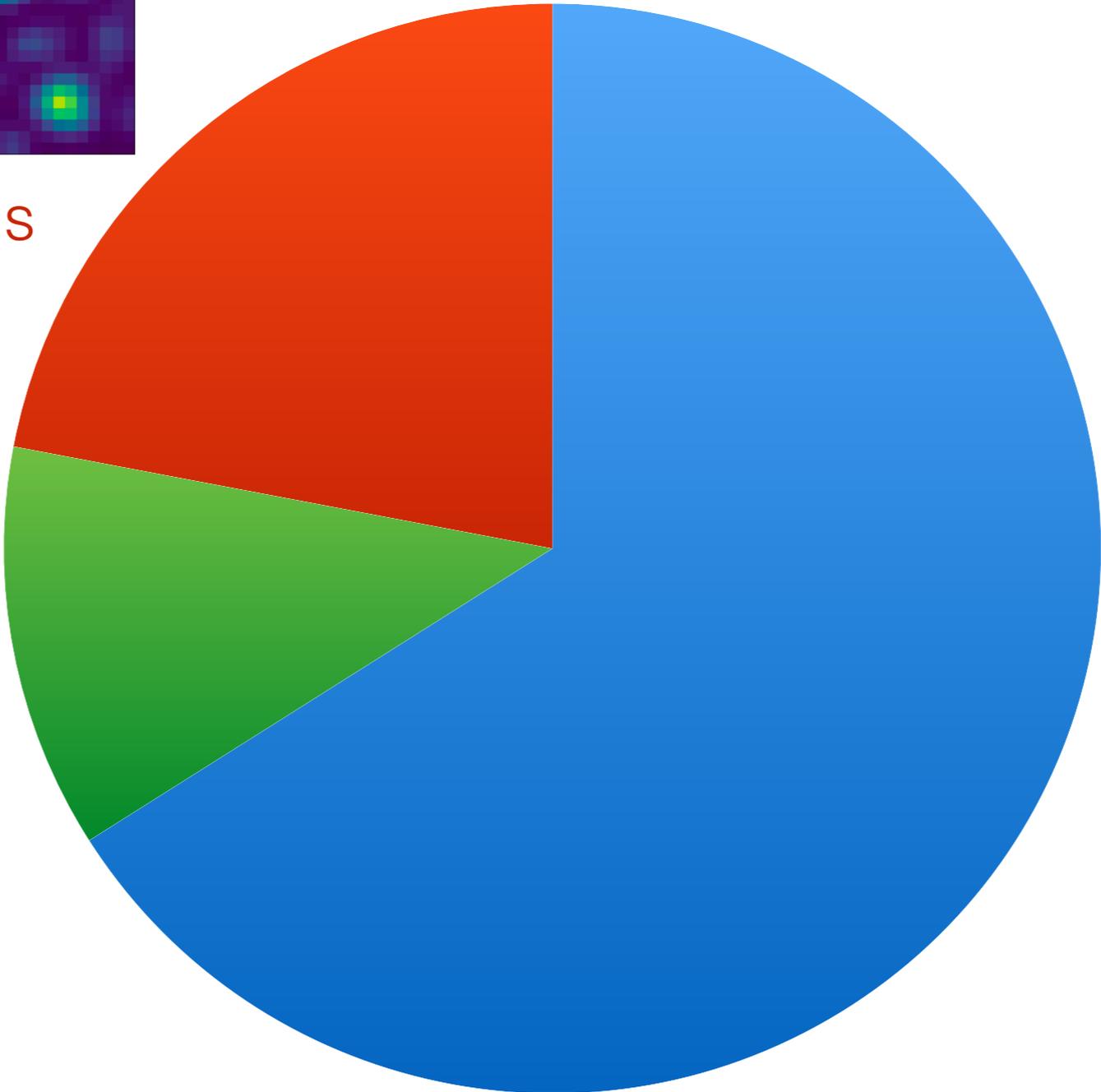
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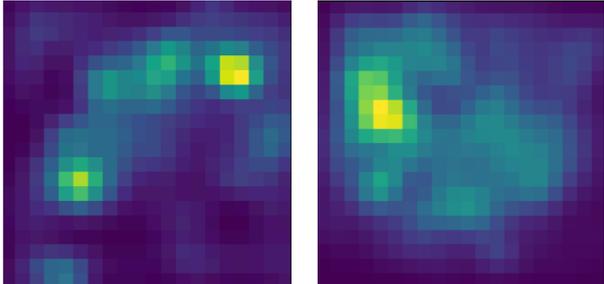
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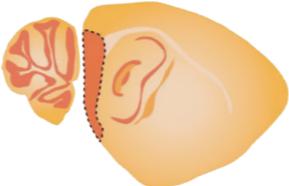
Border Cells



Heterogeneous Cells



Data from: *Mallory et al. 2021*

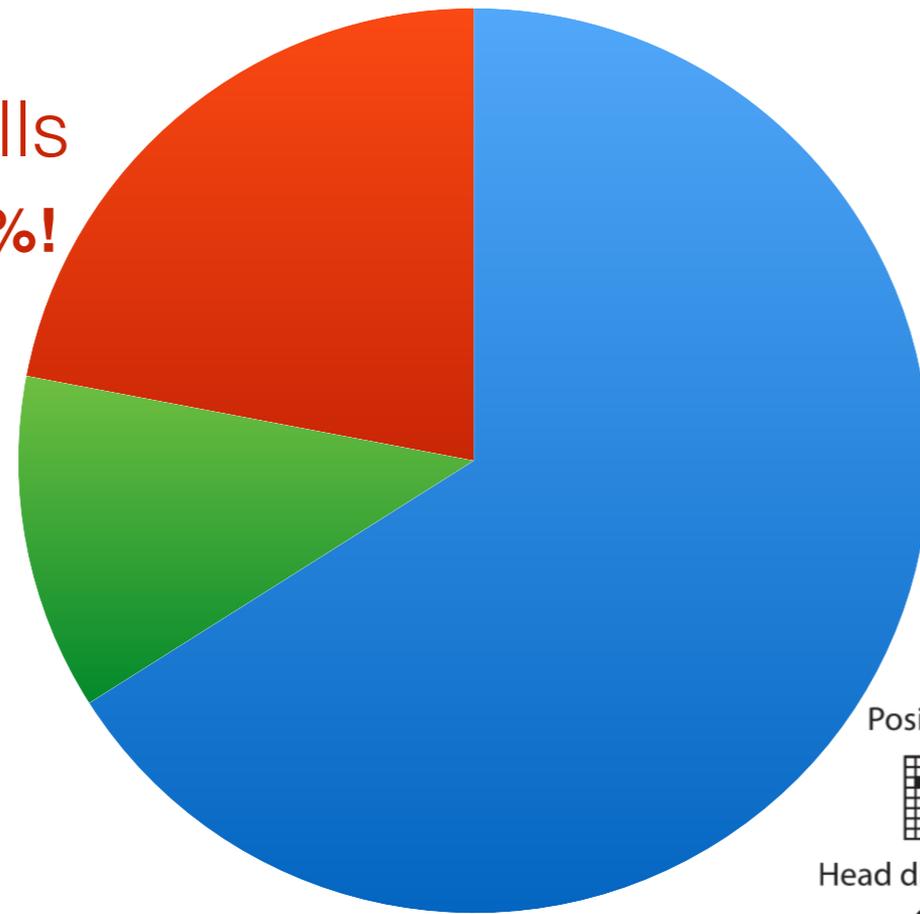


Caitlin Mallory

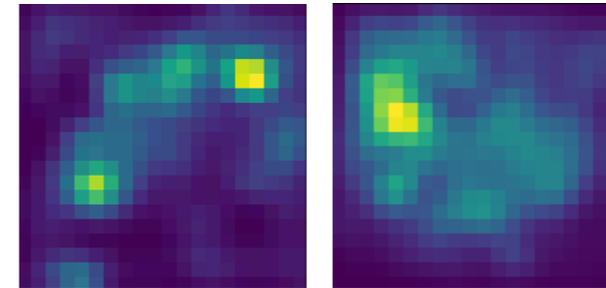
Accounting for heterogeneous code?

Grid Cells
More like ~2-3%!

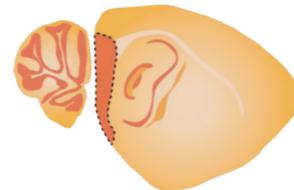
Border Cells



Heterogeneous Cells



Data from: Mallory et al. 2021



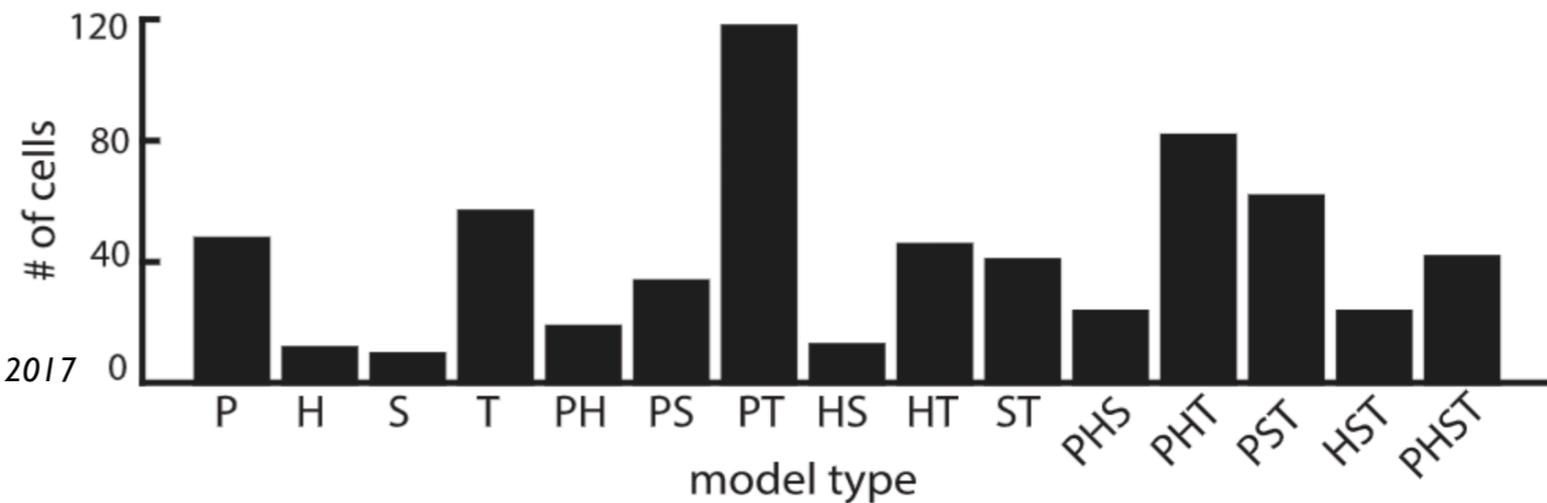
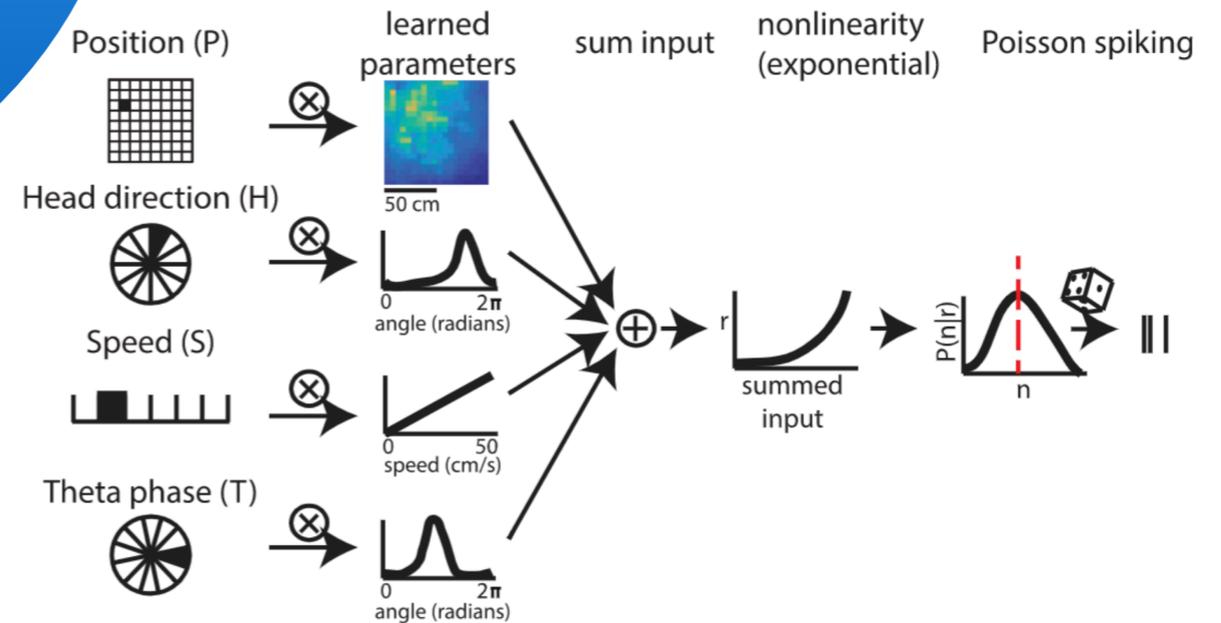
Kiah Hardcastle



Surya Ganguli



Lisa Giocomo

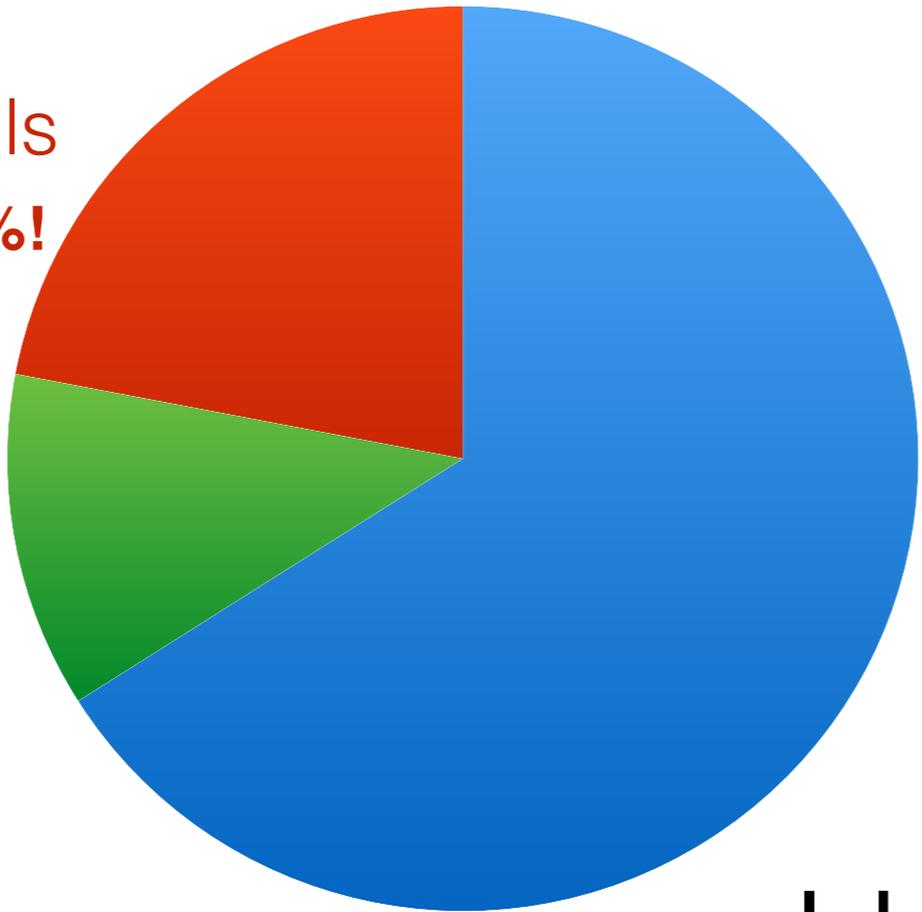


Hardcastle et al. 2017

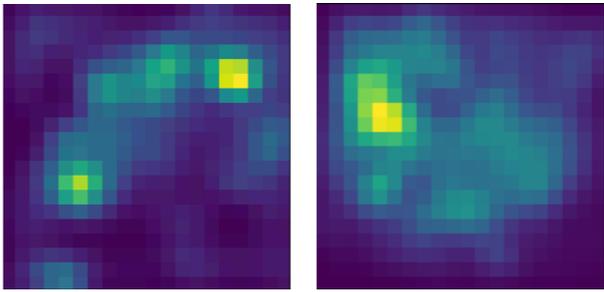
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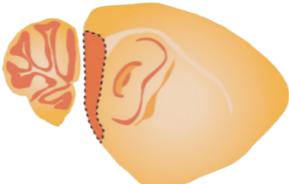
Heterogeneous
Cells



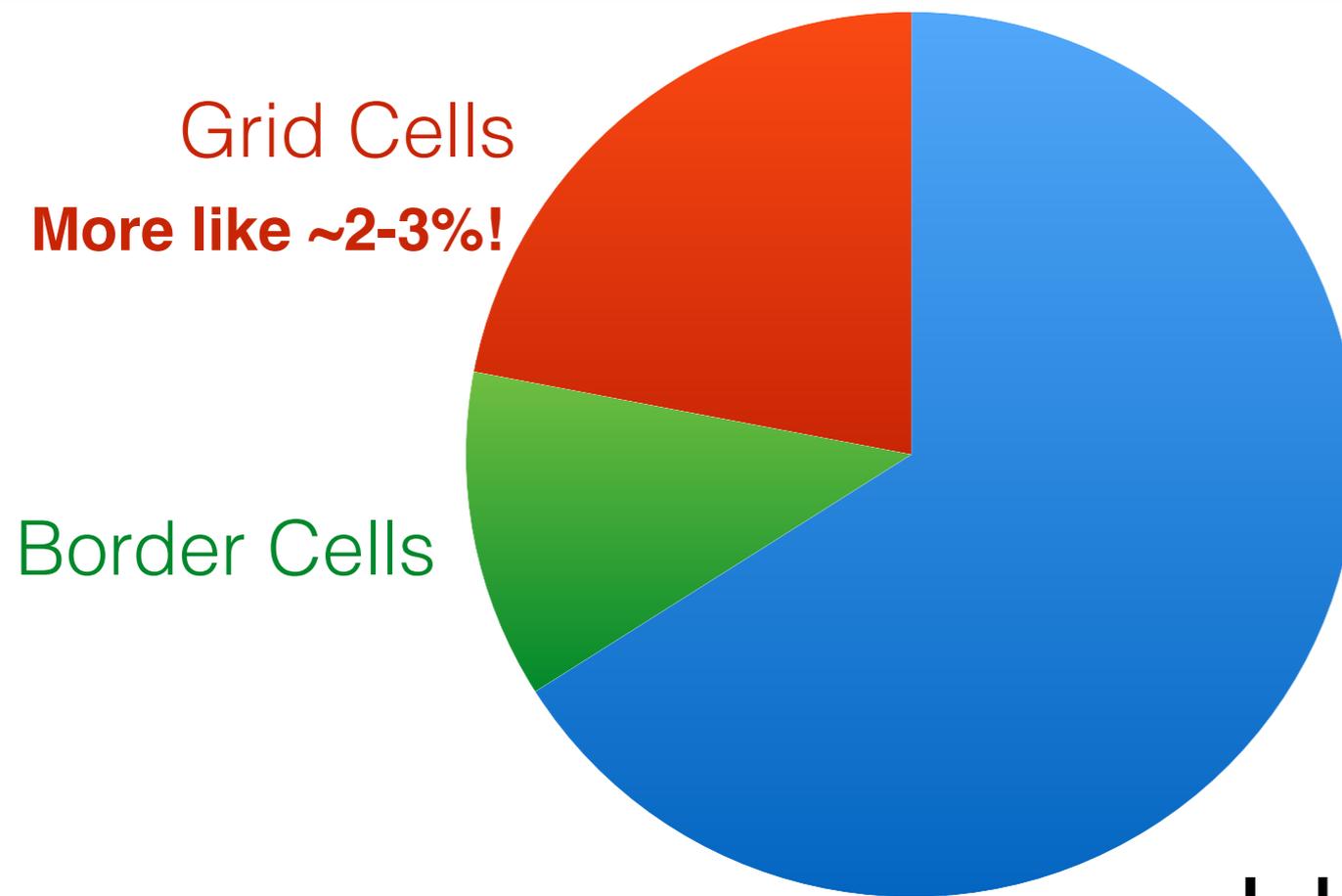
Neurobiological Puzzle(s):

I. How might we characterize what these heterogeneous cells do?

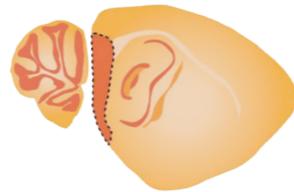
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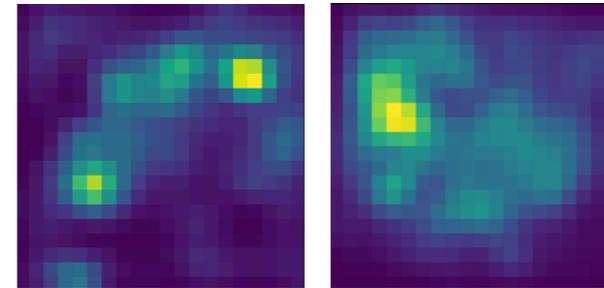
Accounting for heterogeneous code?



Data from: Mallory et al. 2021



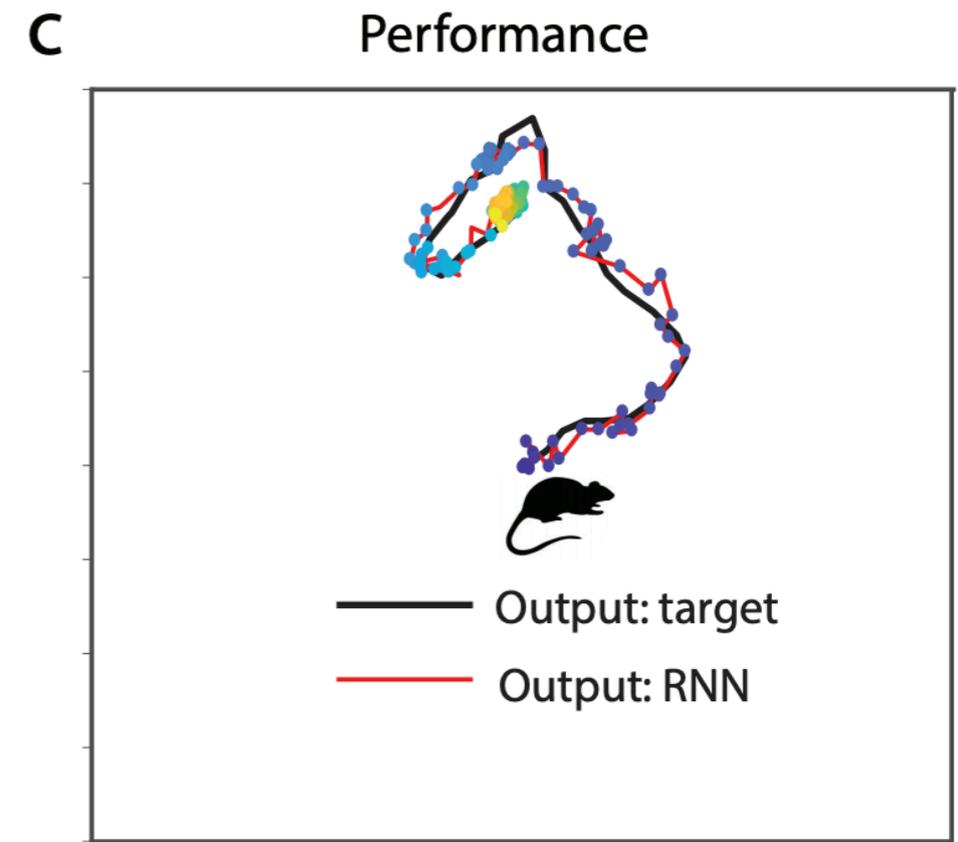
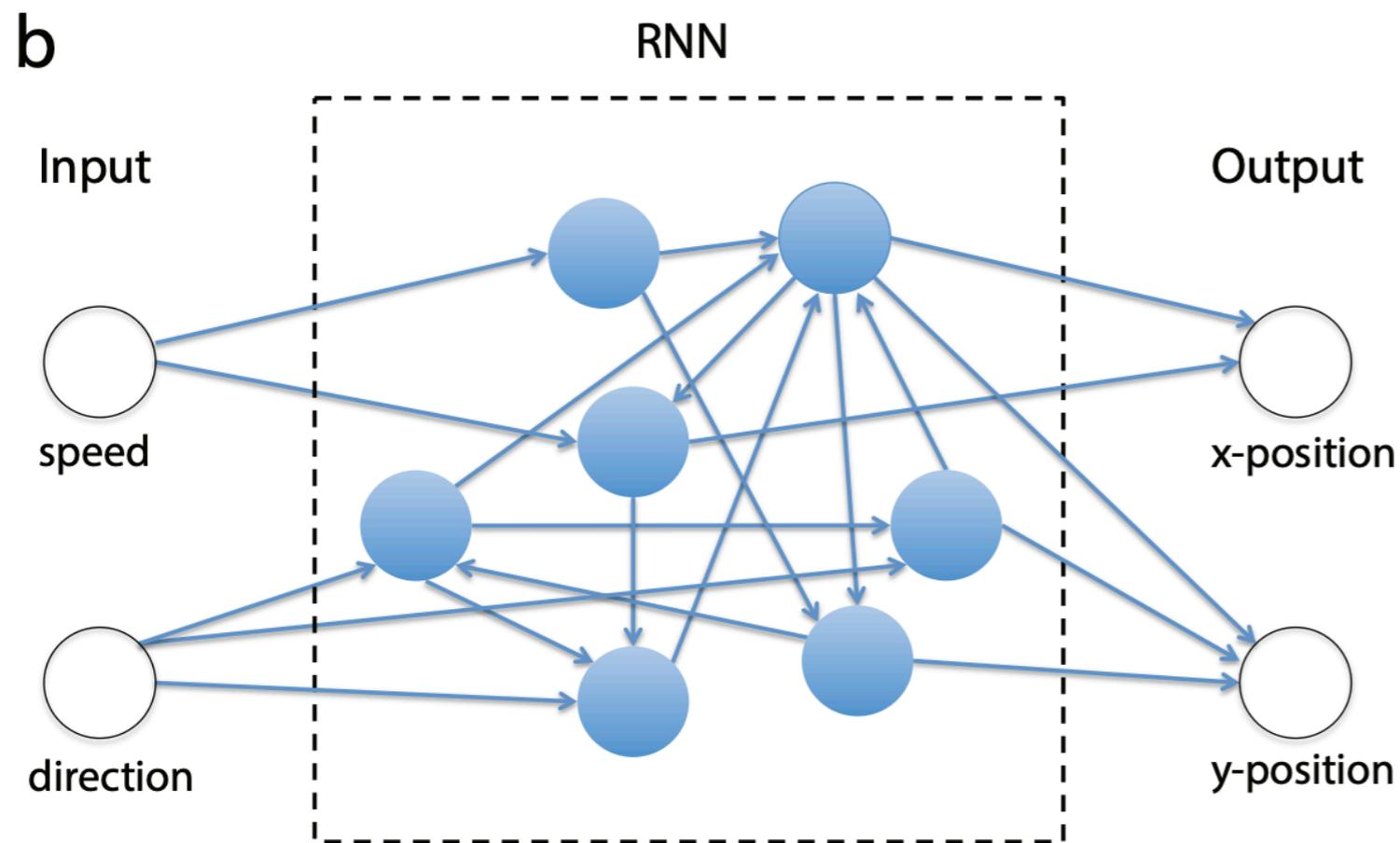
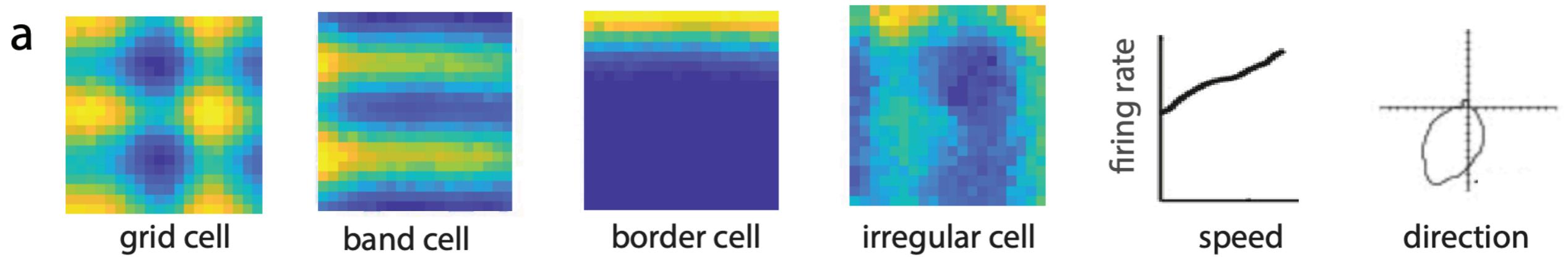
Heterogeneous
Cells



Neurobiological Puzzle(s):

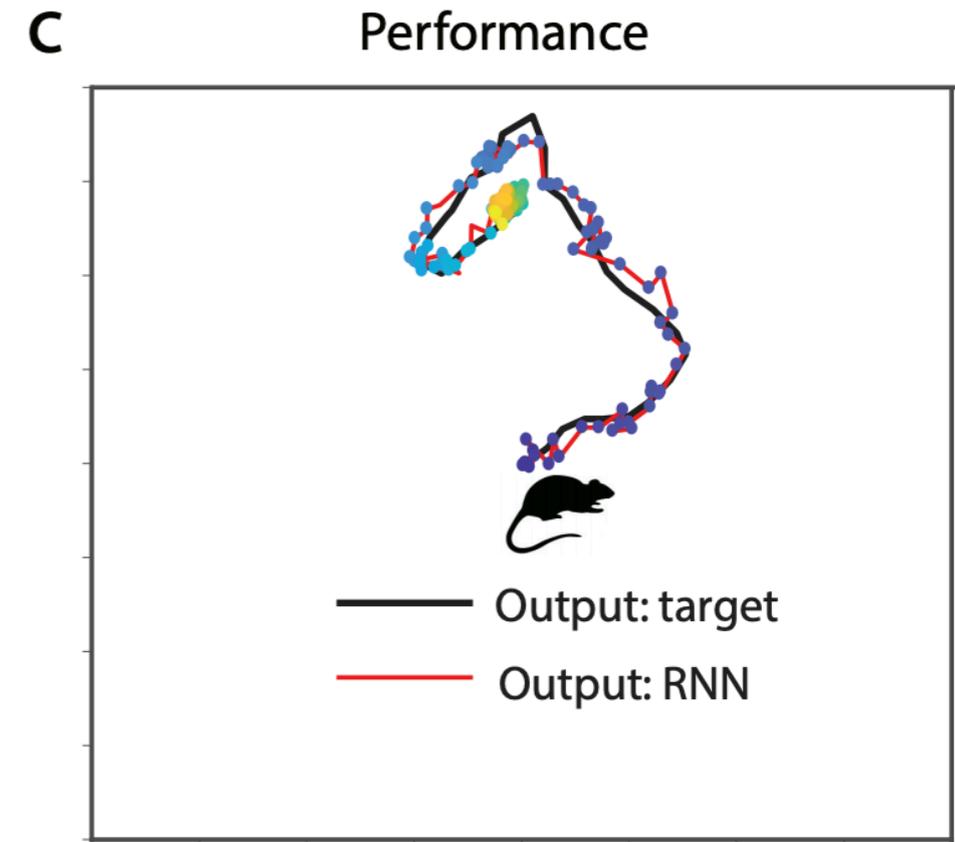
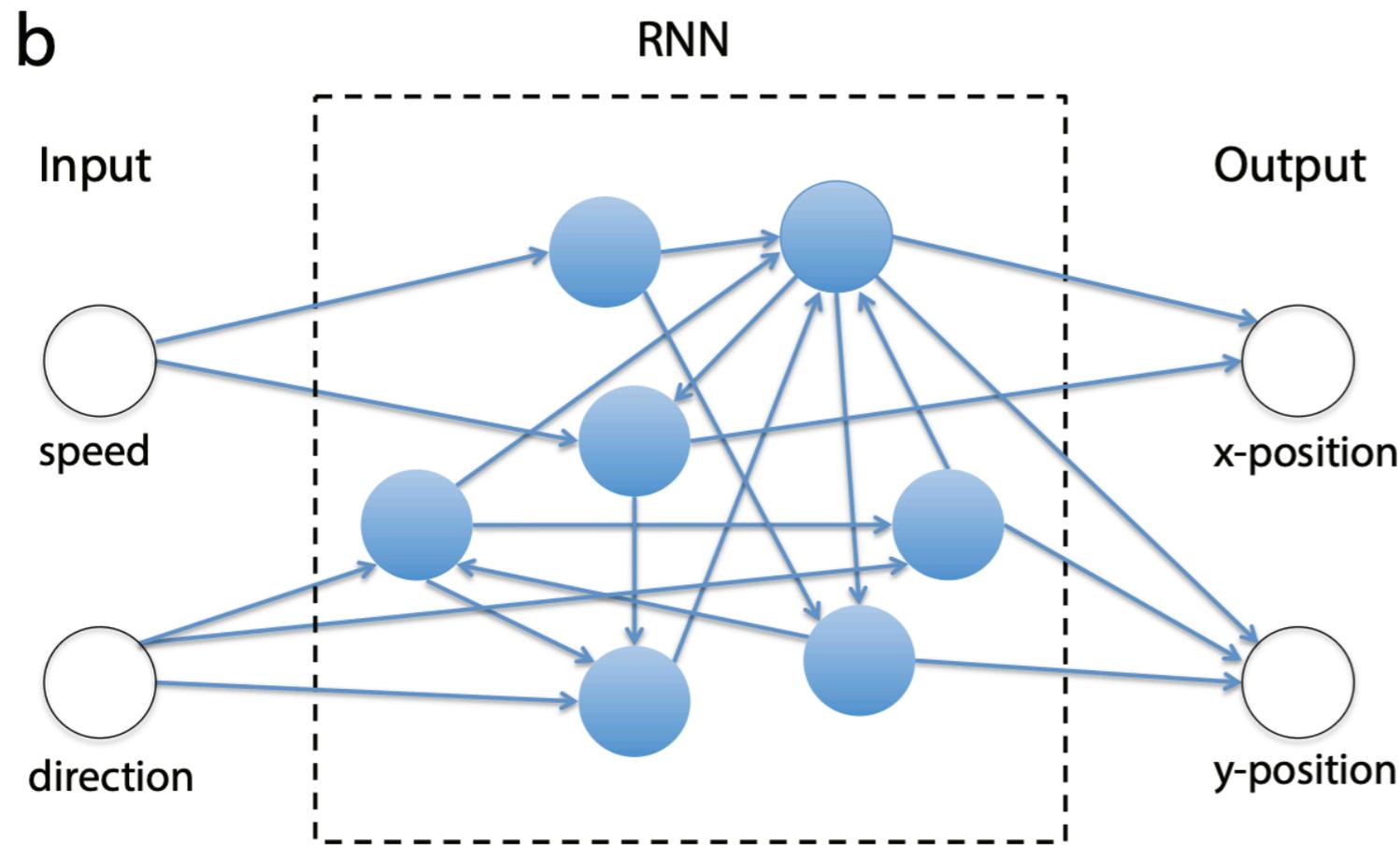
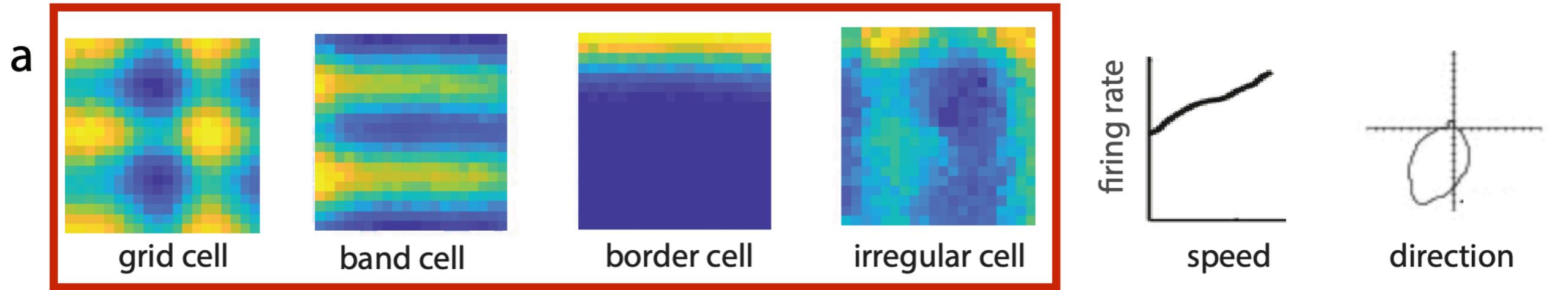
1. How might we characterize what these heterogeneous cells do?
2. What functional role do these cells serve in the circuit, if any?

But more recently there are neural network models that “develop” these cells...



Cueva & Wei* 2018*

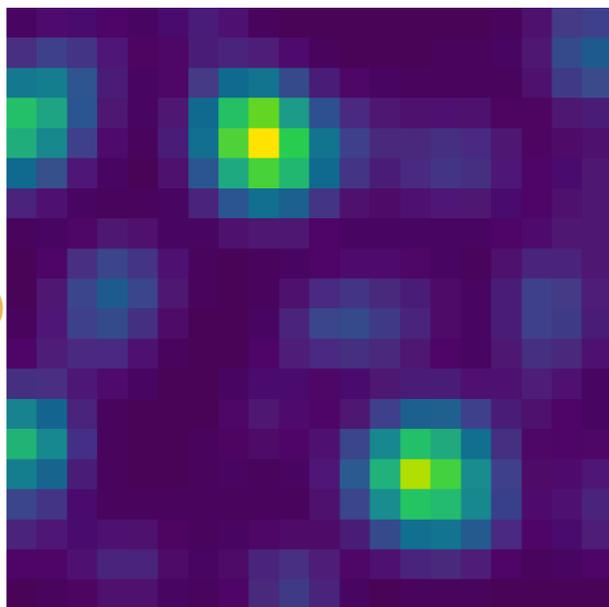
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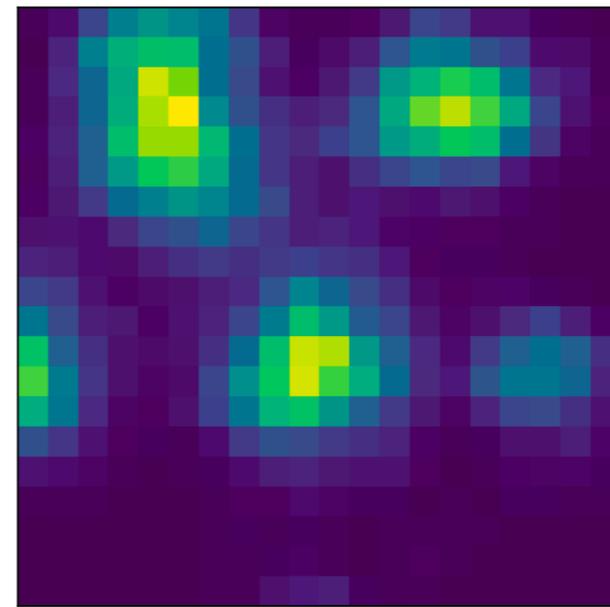
Goal-Driven Approach

But are they a good **quantitative** model of these responses?

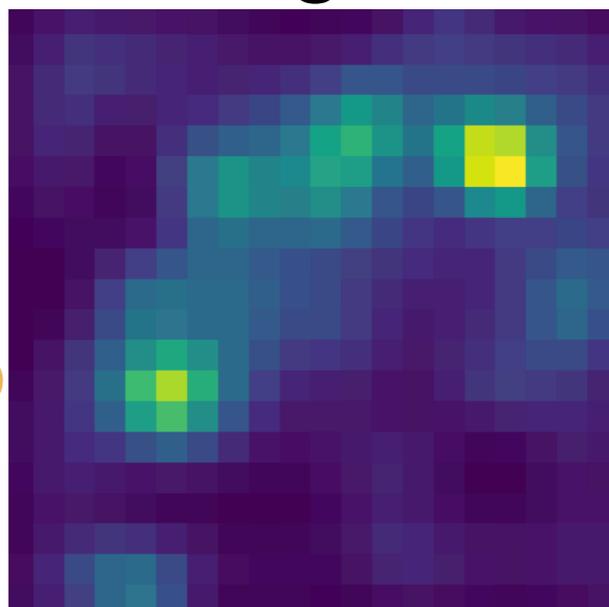
MEC Grid Cell



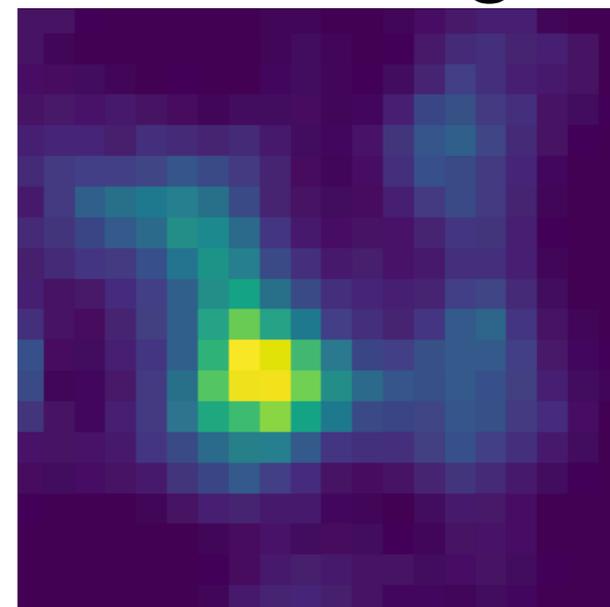
Model Grid Cell



MEC Heterogeneous Cell



Model Heterogeneous Cell

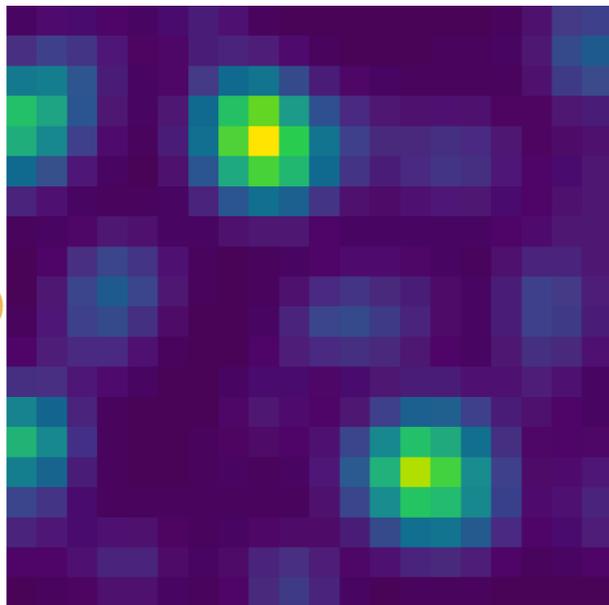


?

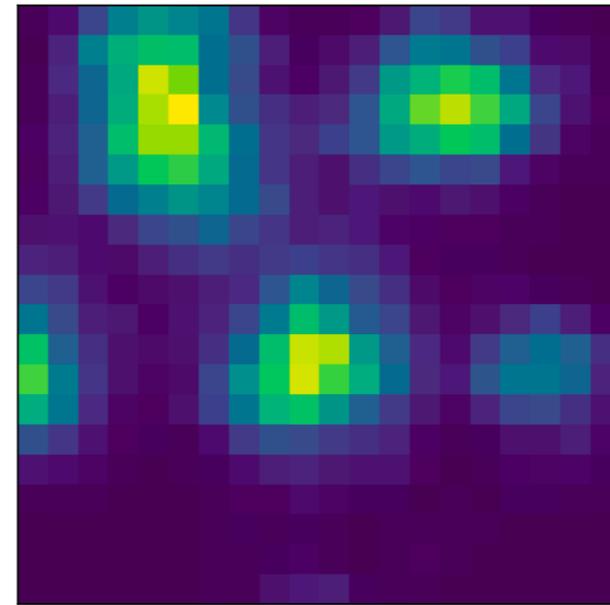
Goal-Driven Approach

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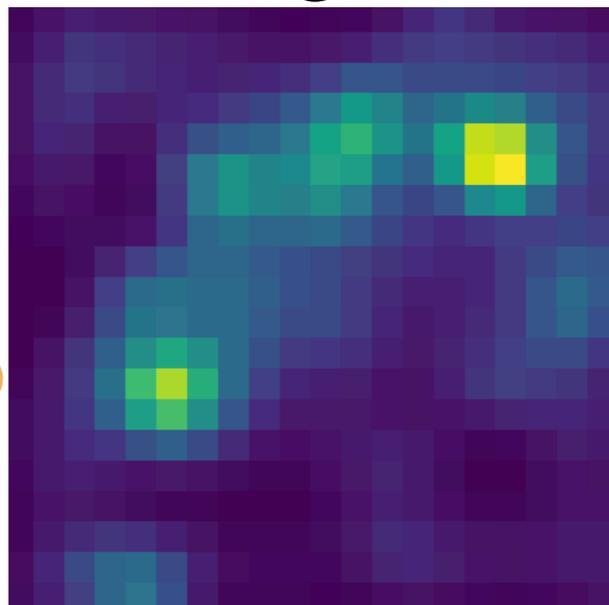
MEC Grid Cell



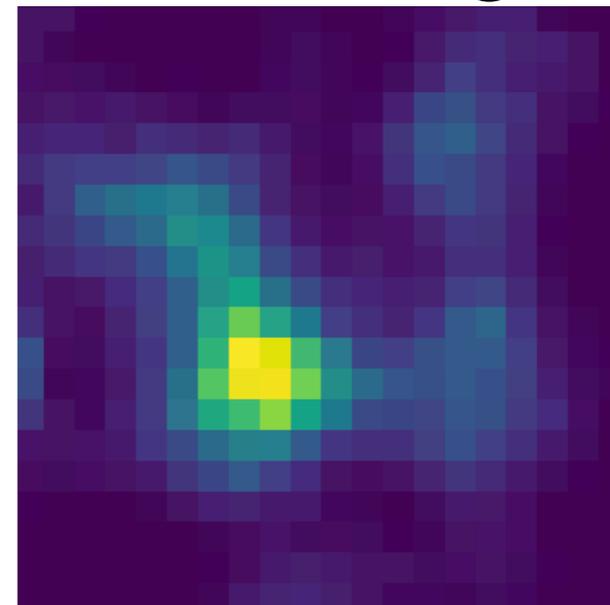
Model Grid Cell



MEC Heterogeneous Cell



Model Heterogeneous Cell



**Not all
models
are equal!**

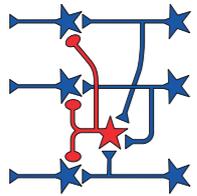
Goal-Driven Approach

A = architecture class

T = task loss

1.

"Circuit"

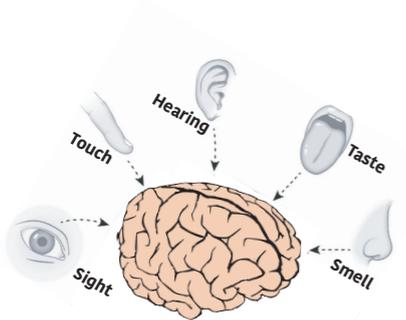
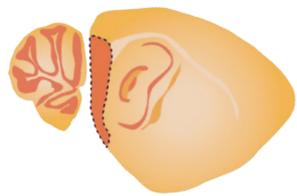
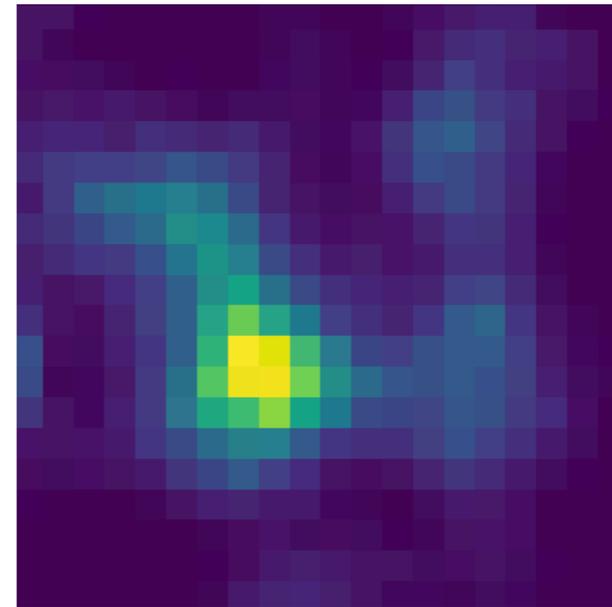
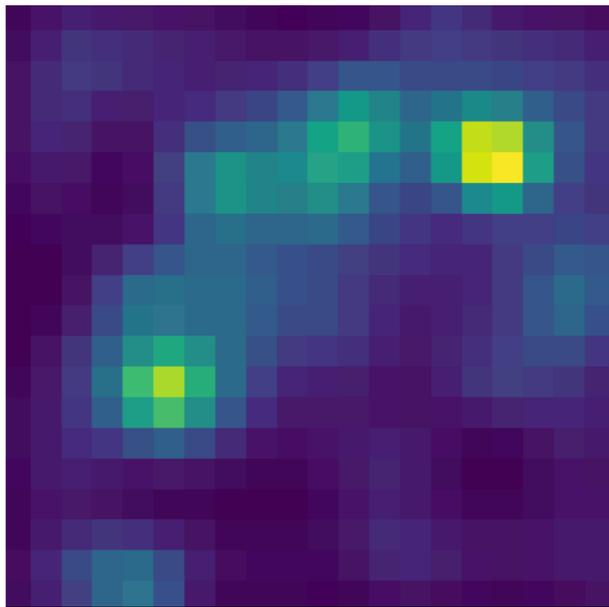


3. "Ecological niche/behavior"



MEC Heterogeneous Cell

Model Heterogeneous Cell

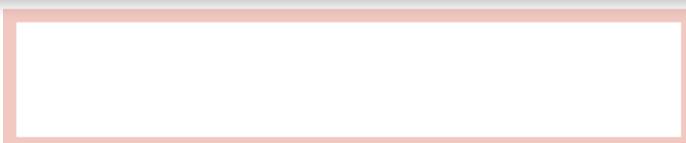


2.

"Environment"

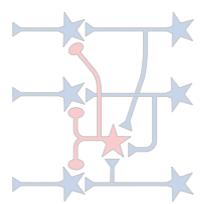
D = data stream

Goal-Driven Approach



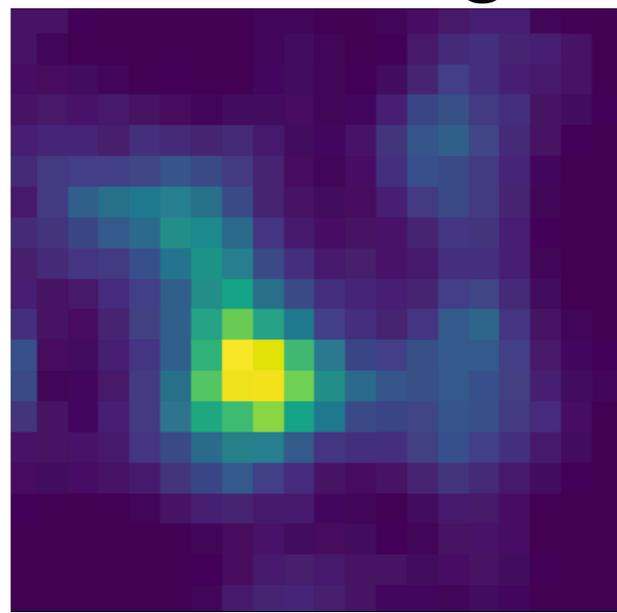
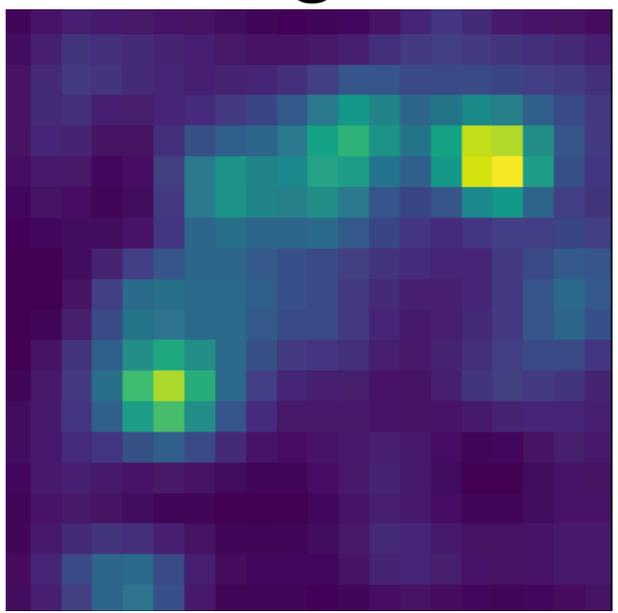
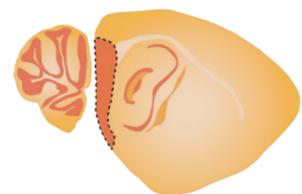
$T = \text{task loss}$

3. "Ecological niche/behavior"



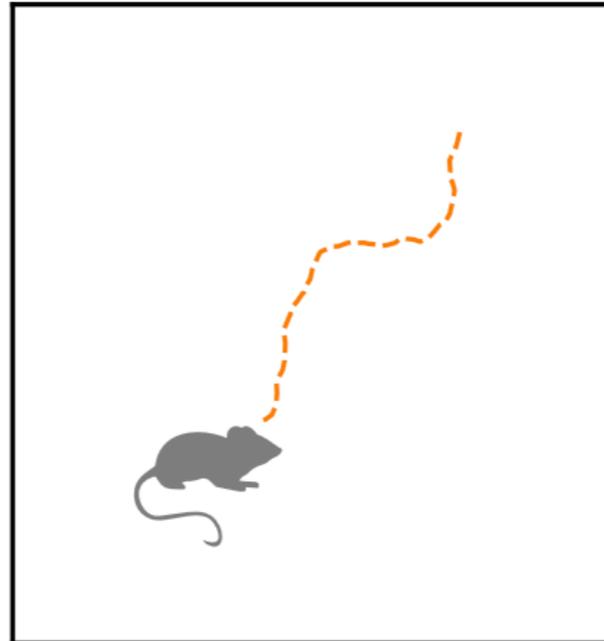
MEC Heterogeneous Cell

Model Heterogeneous Cell

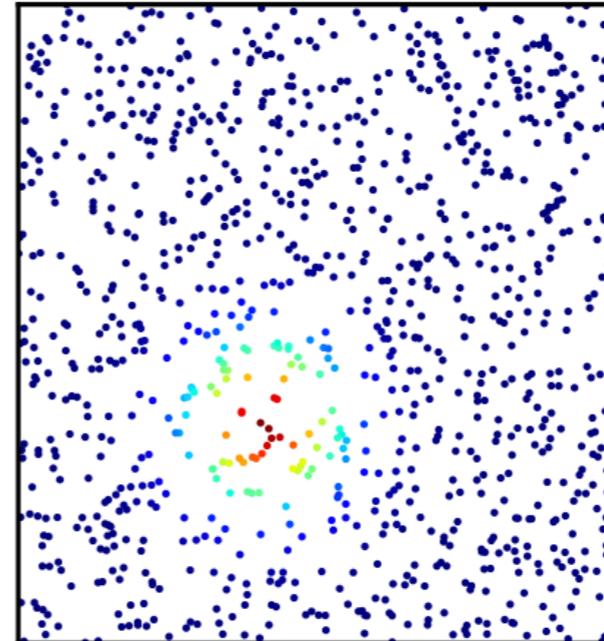


A spectrum of tasks

Simulated trajectory



Place cell centers

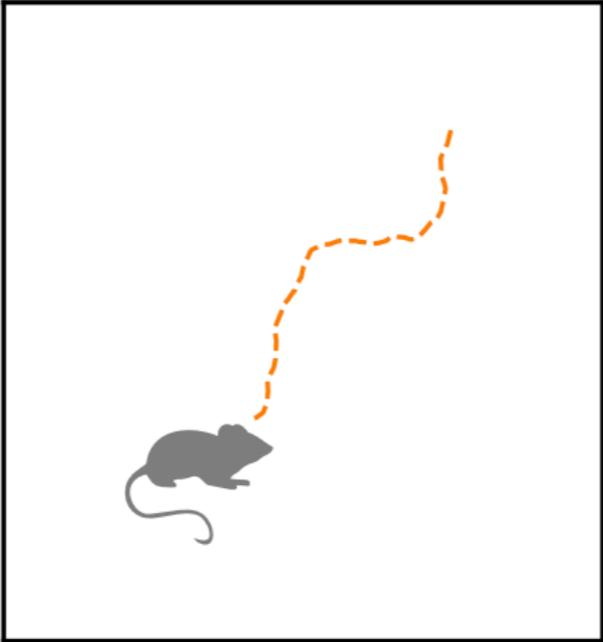


Banino, Barry* et al. 2018*

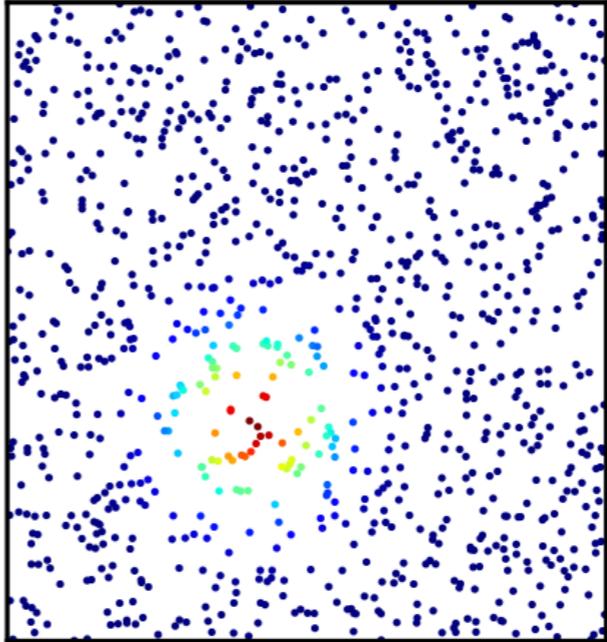
Sorscher, Mel* et al. 2019*

A spectrum of tasks

Simulated trajectory



Place cell centers



Banino, Barry* et al. 2018*

Sorscher, Mel* et al. 2019*



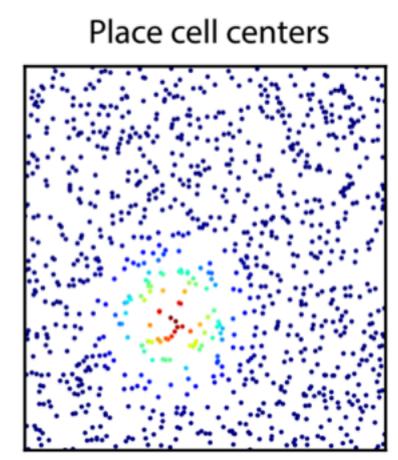
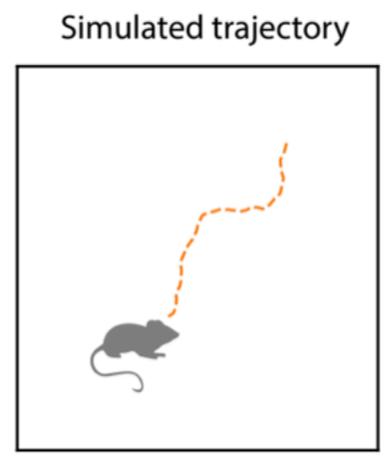
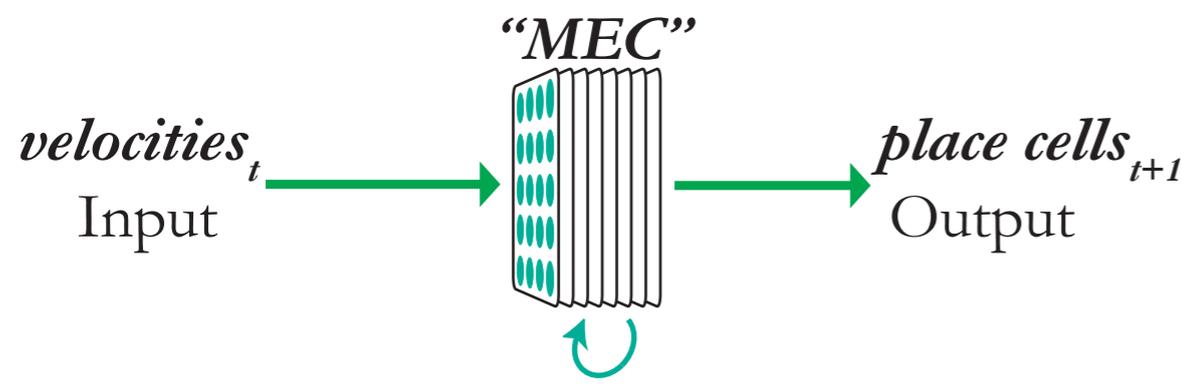
A spectrum of tasks

Simplest “model”



A spectrum of tasks

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \sum_{i=1}^{N_p} p_i^t \log \hat{p}_i^t \quad \text{Banino}^*, \text{Barry}^* \text{ et al. 2018}$$



Velocity → MEC → Place Cells → Position (x,y)

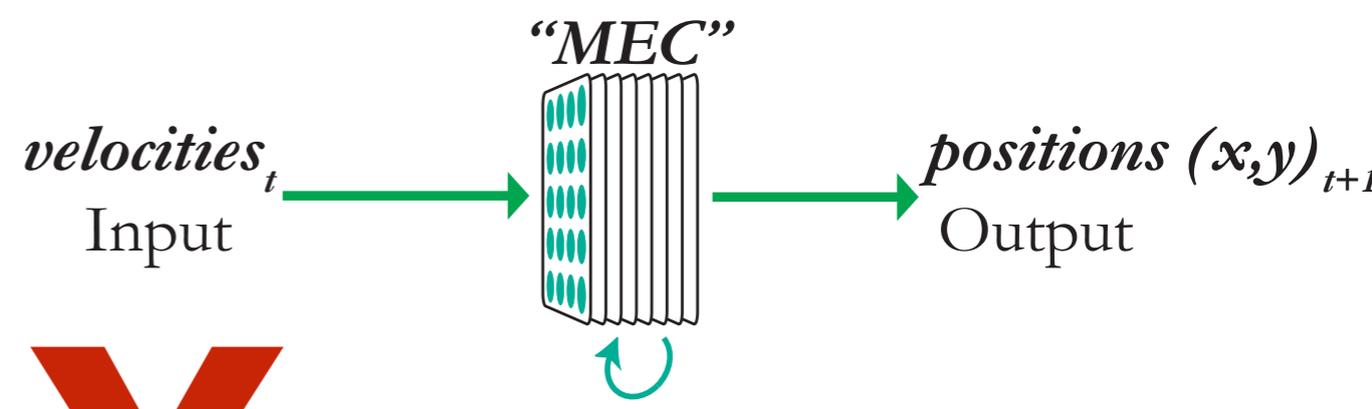
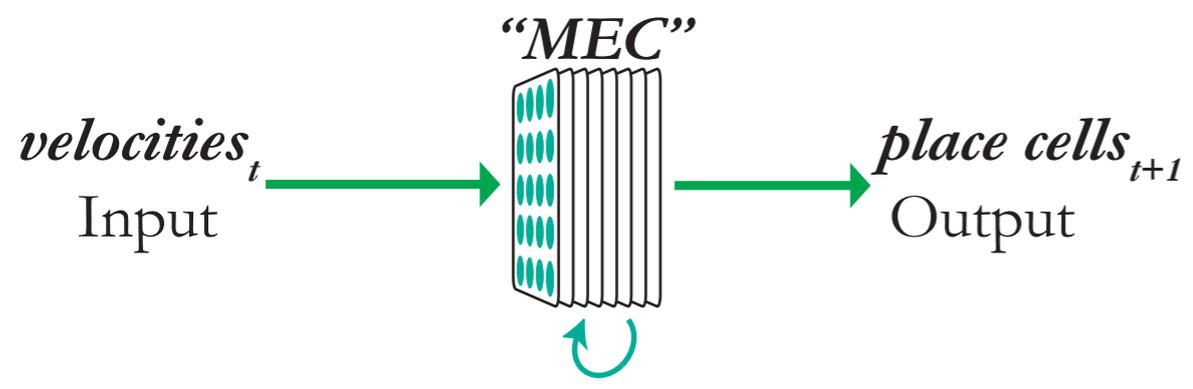
A spectrum of tasks

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \sum_{i=1}^{N_p} p_i^t \log \hat{p}_i^t$$

Banino*, Barry* et al. 2018

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \left((p_x^t - \hat{p}_x^t)^2 + (p_y^t - \hat{p}_y^t)^2 \right)$$

Cueva* & Wei* 2018



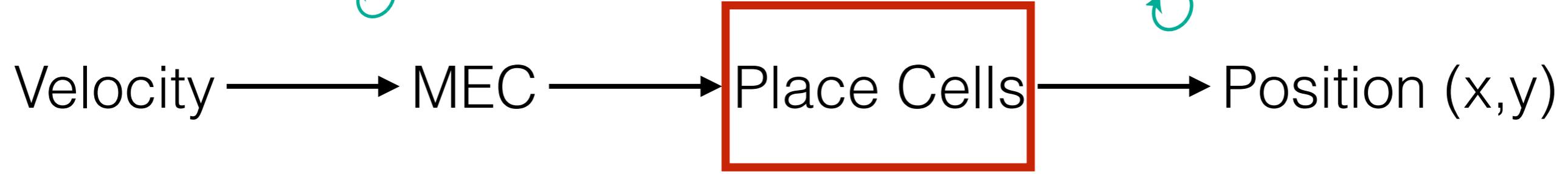
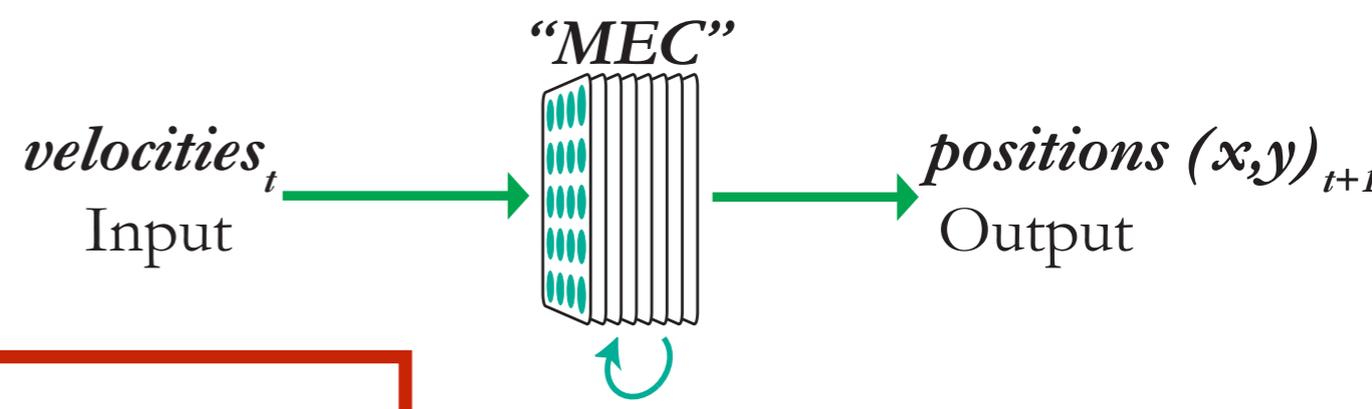
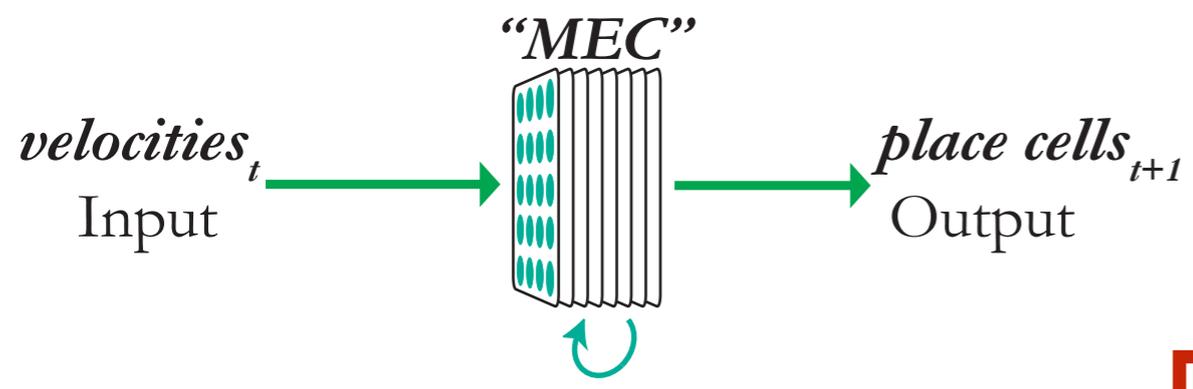
A spectrum of tasks

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Cueva* & Wei* 2018



Output-based models

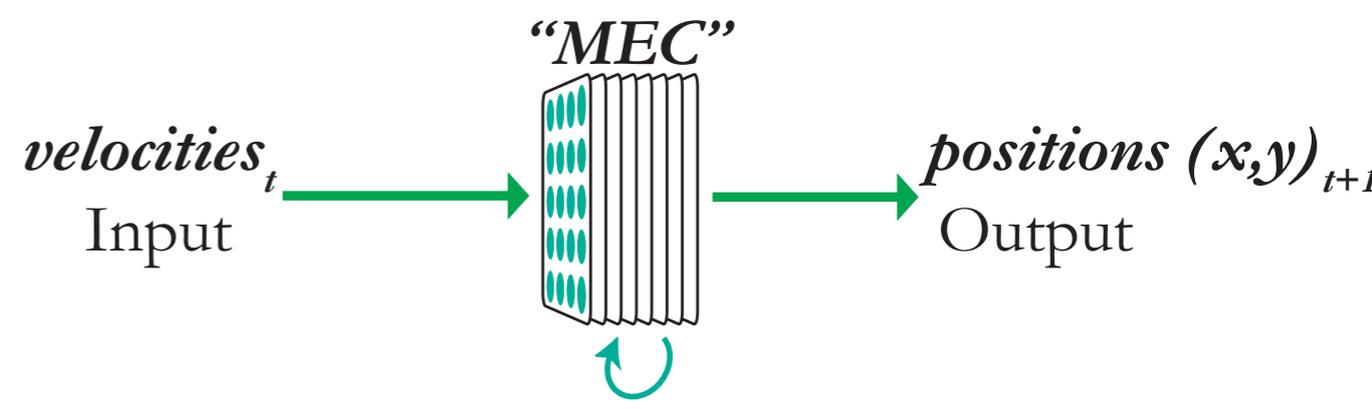
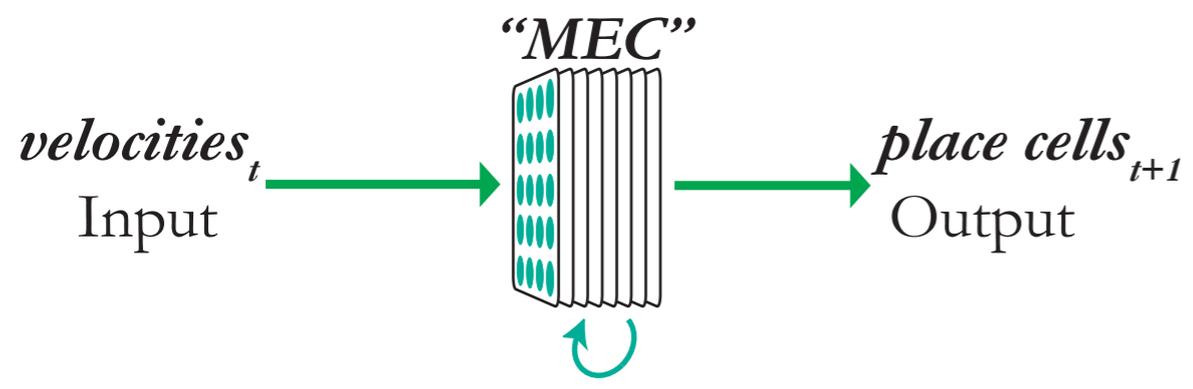
A spectrum of tasks

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \sum_{i=1}^{N_p} p_i^t \log \hat{p}_i^t$$

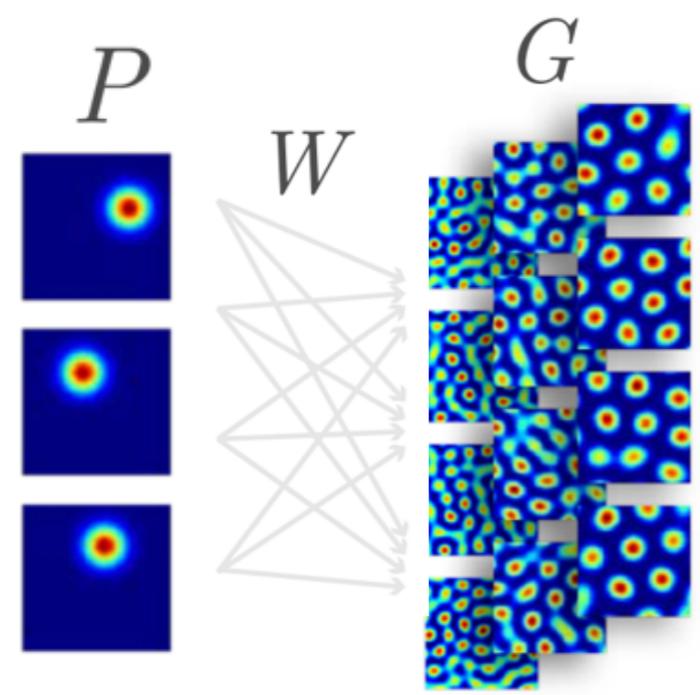
Banino*, Barry* et al. 2018

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \left((p_x^t - \hat{p}_x^t)^2 + (p_y^t - \hat{p}_y^t)^2 \right)$$

Cueva* & Wei* 2018



NMF
(Place Cell Input)



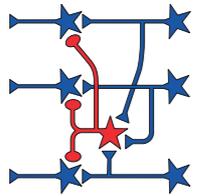
Dordek et al. 2016

Goal-Driven Approach

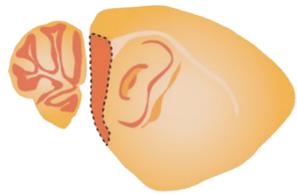
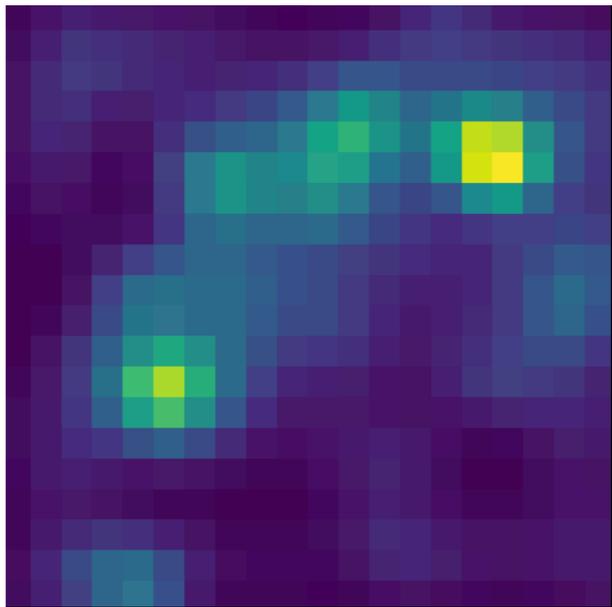
A = *architecture class*

1.

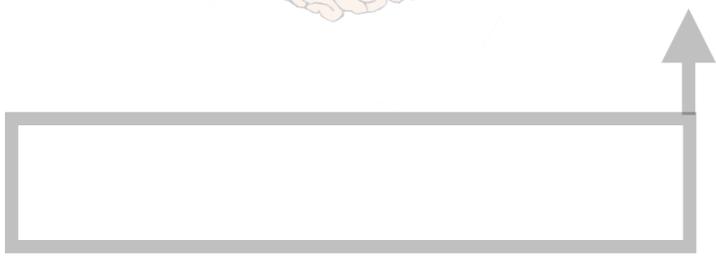
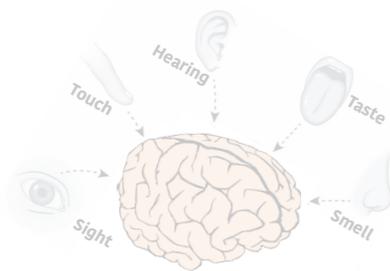
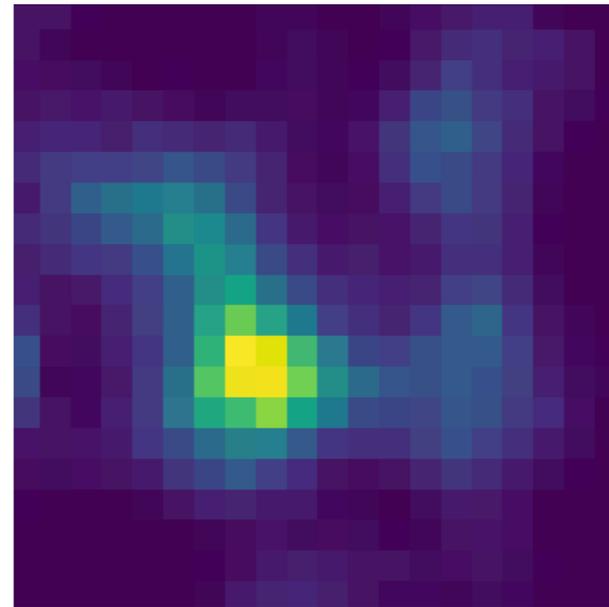
"Circuit"



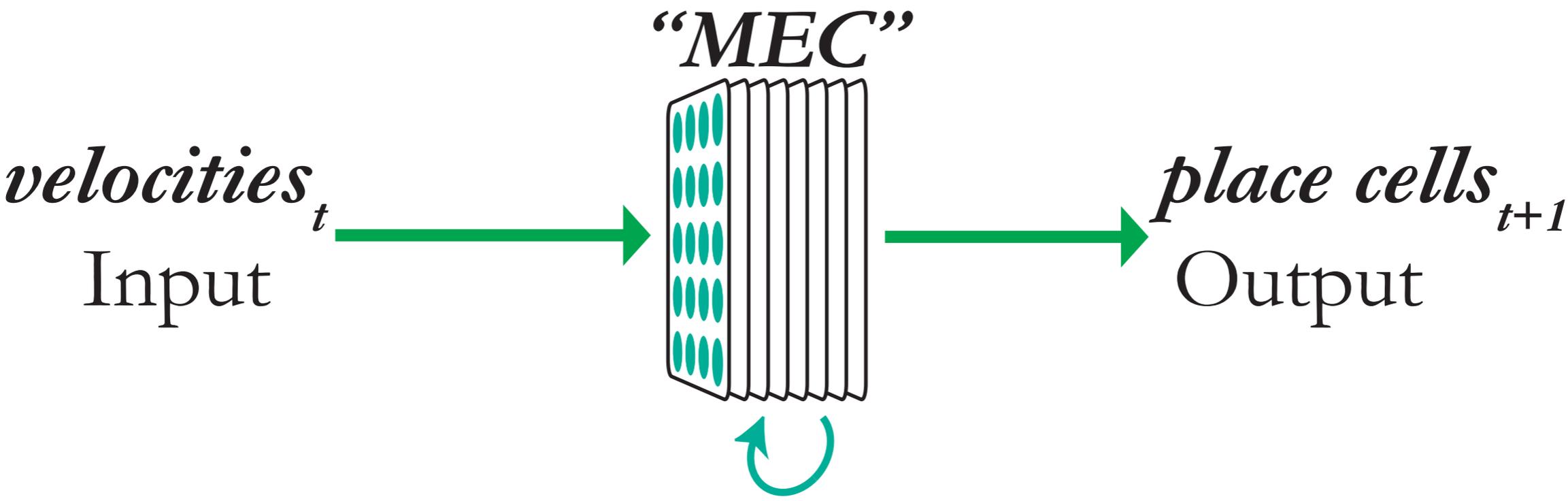
MEC Heterogeneous Cell



Model Heterogeneous Cell

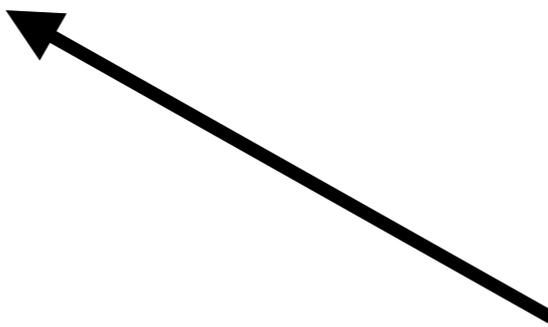
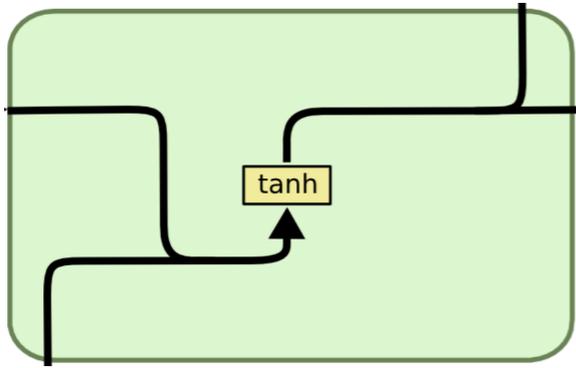


A spectrum of circuits



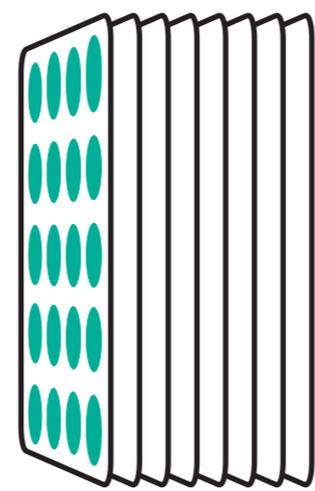
A spectrum of circuits

SimpleRNN



“MEC”

*velocities*_t
Input

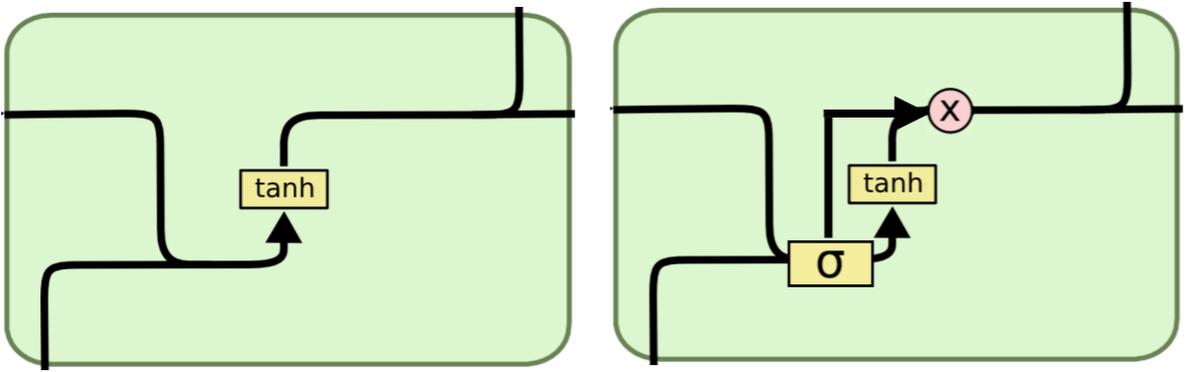


*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — learnable modulation (“gating”)

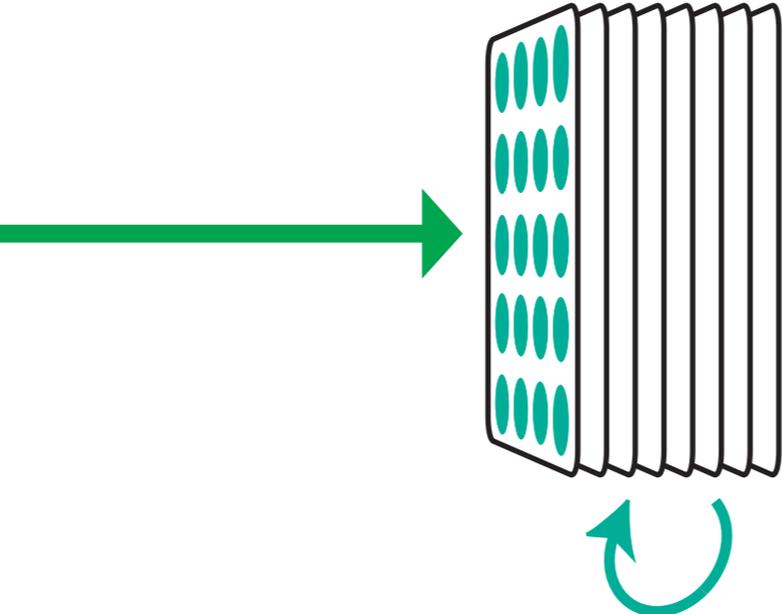
SimpleRNN

UGRNN



“MEC”

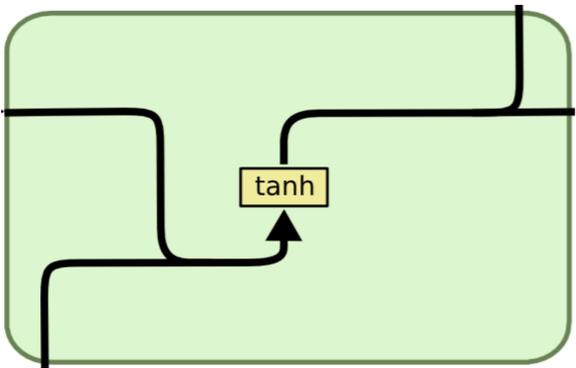
*velocities*_t
Input



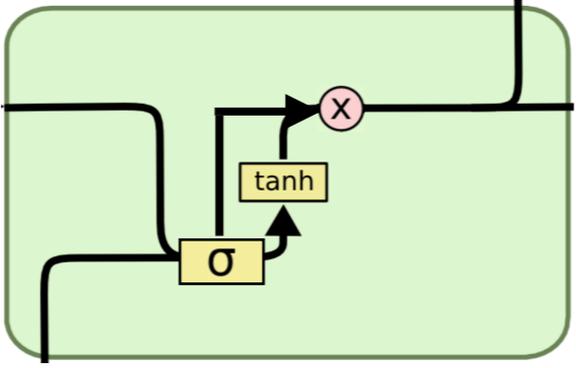
*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — learnable modulation (“gating”)

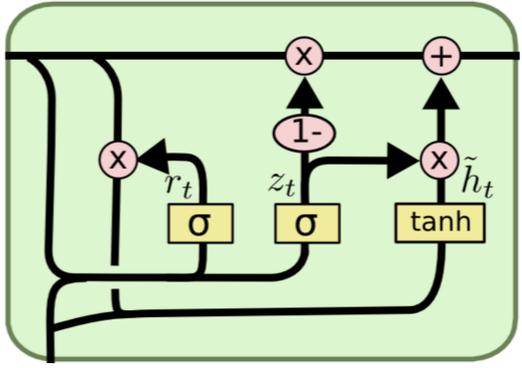
SimpleRNN



UGRNN

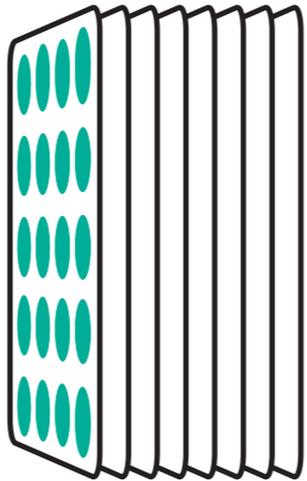


GRU



“MEC”

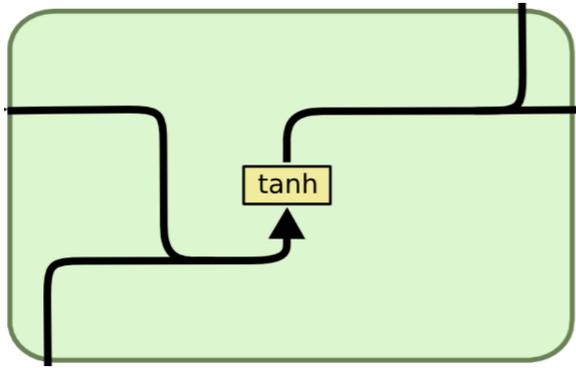
*velocities*_t
Input



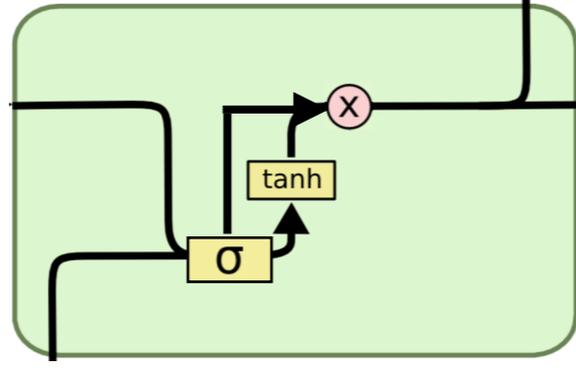
*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — learnable modulation (“gating”)

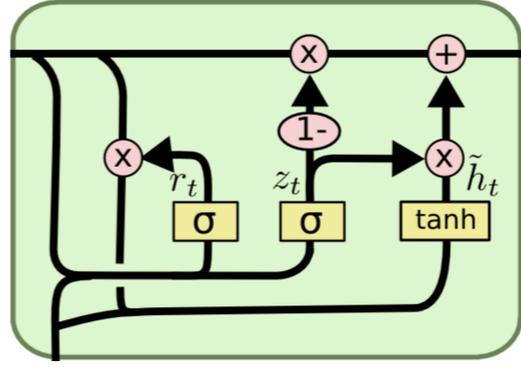
SimpleRNN



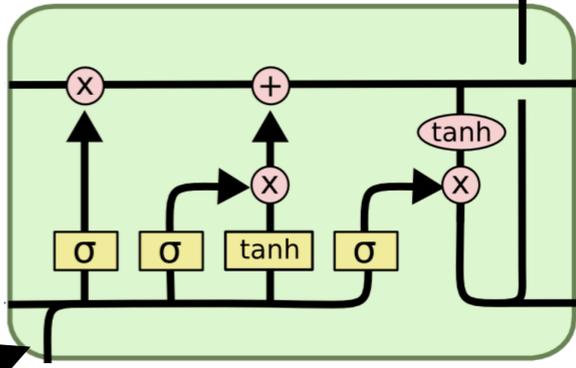
UGRNN



GRU

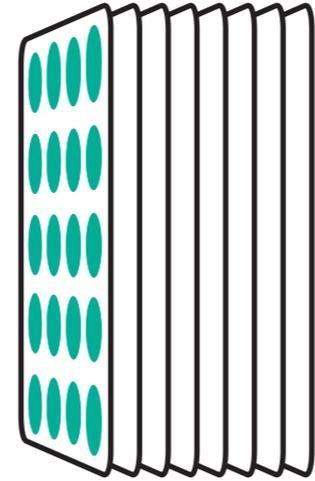


LSTM



“MEC”

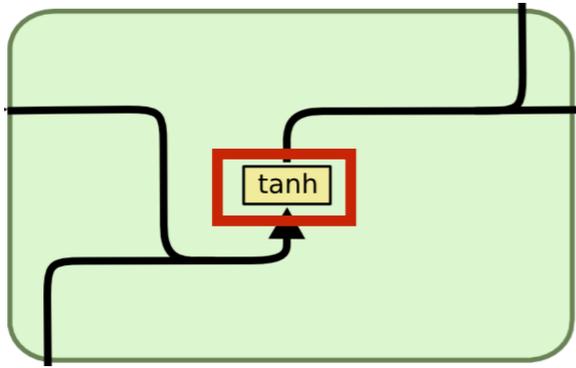
*velocities*_t
Input



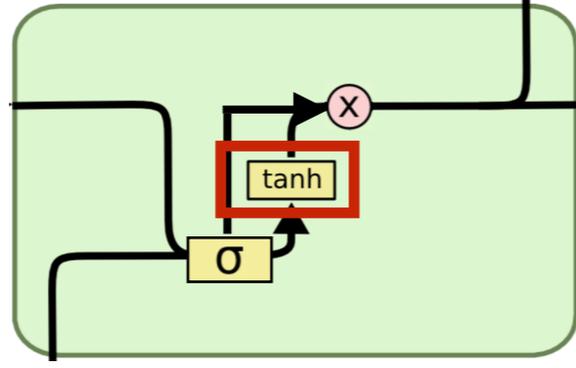
*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — output nonlinearity

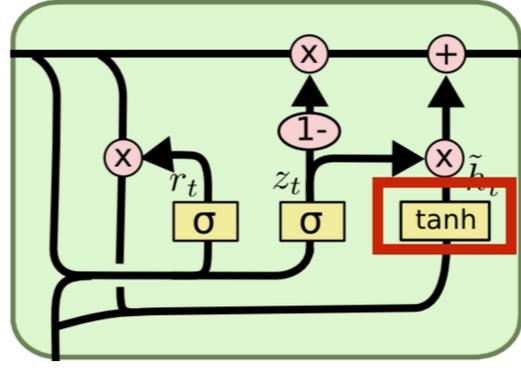
SimpleRNN



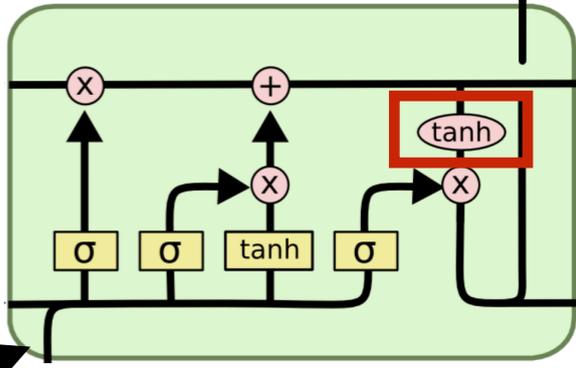
UGRNN



GRU

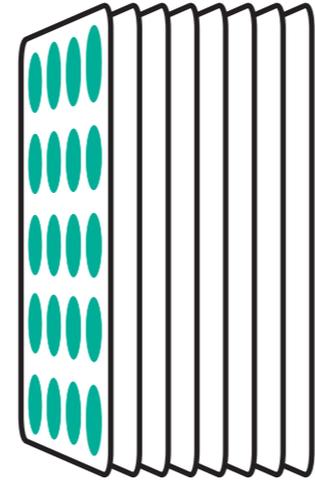


LSTM



“MEC”

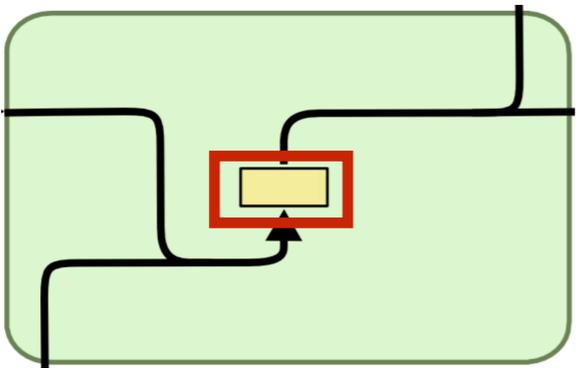
*velocities*_t
Input



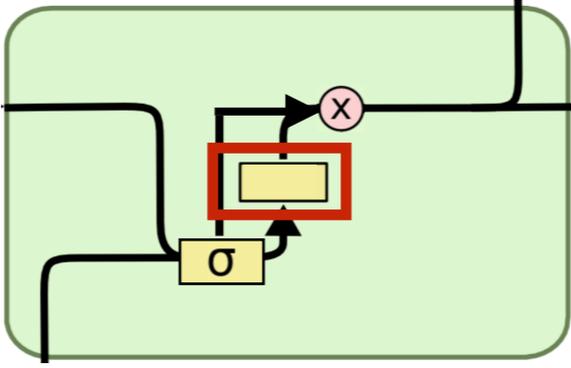
*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — output nonlinearity

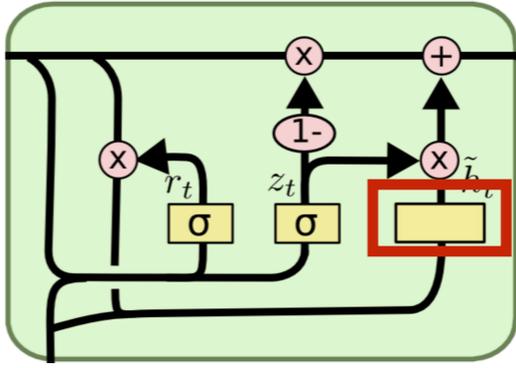
SimpleRNN



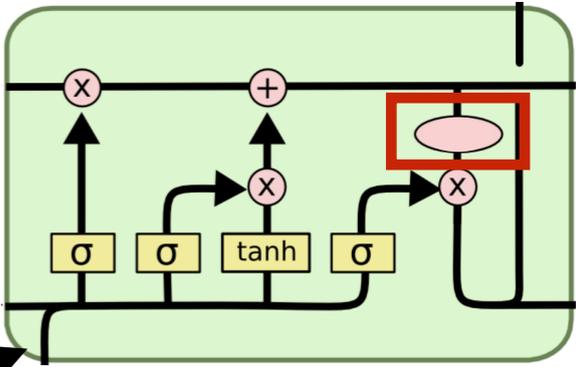
UGRNN



GRU



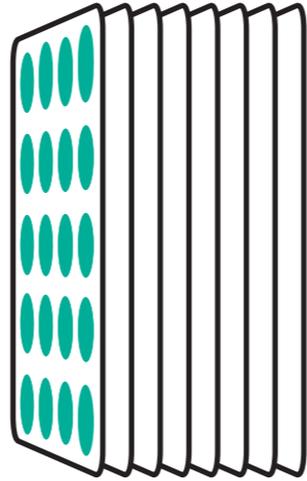
LSTM



- Linear
- Tanh
- Sigmoid
- ReLU

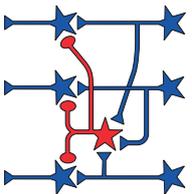
“MEC”

*velocities*_t
Input

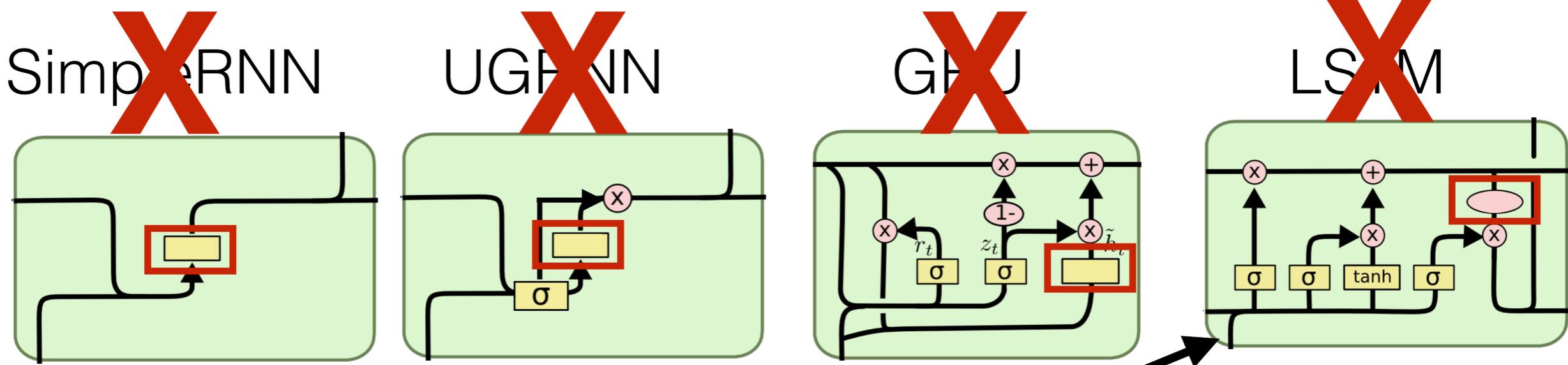


*place cells*_{t+1}
Output

A spectrum of circuits — output nonlinearity

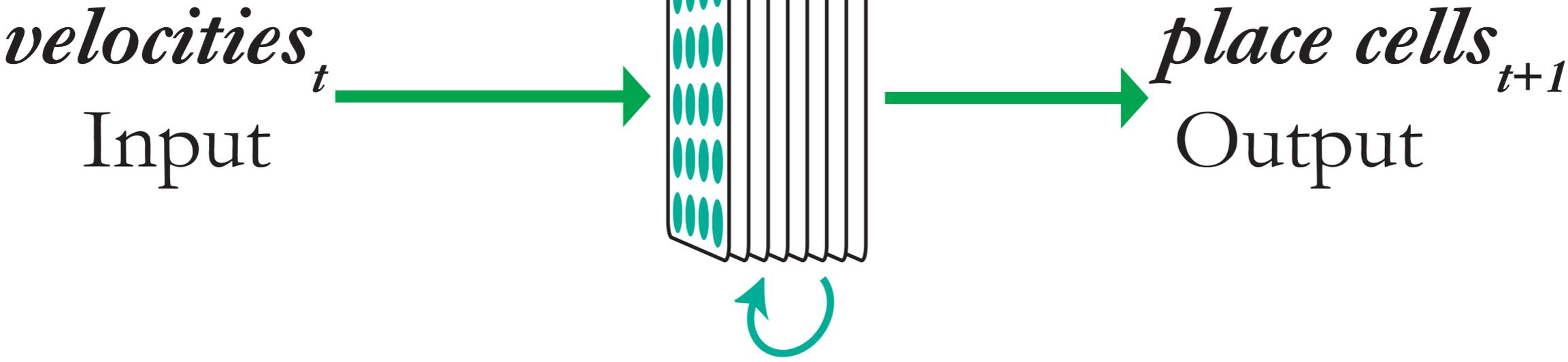


Circuit busting!

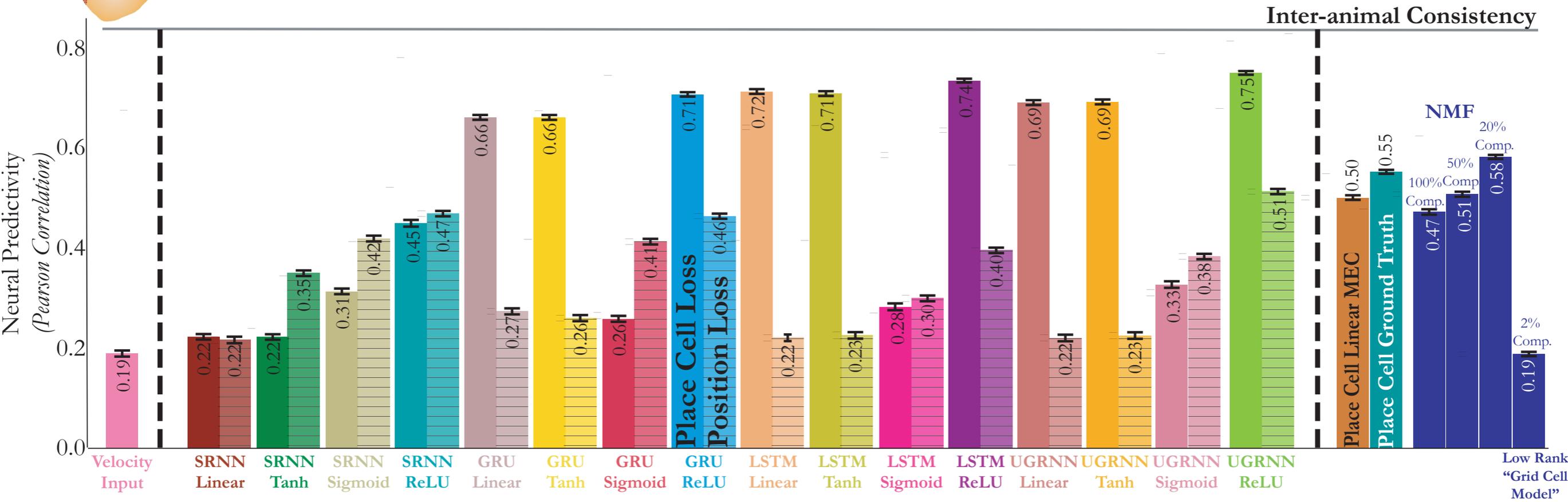
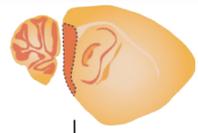


- Linear
- Tanh
- Sigmoid
- ReLU

“MEC”

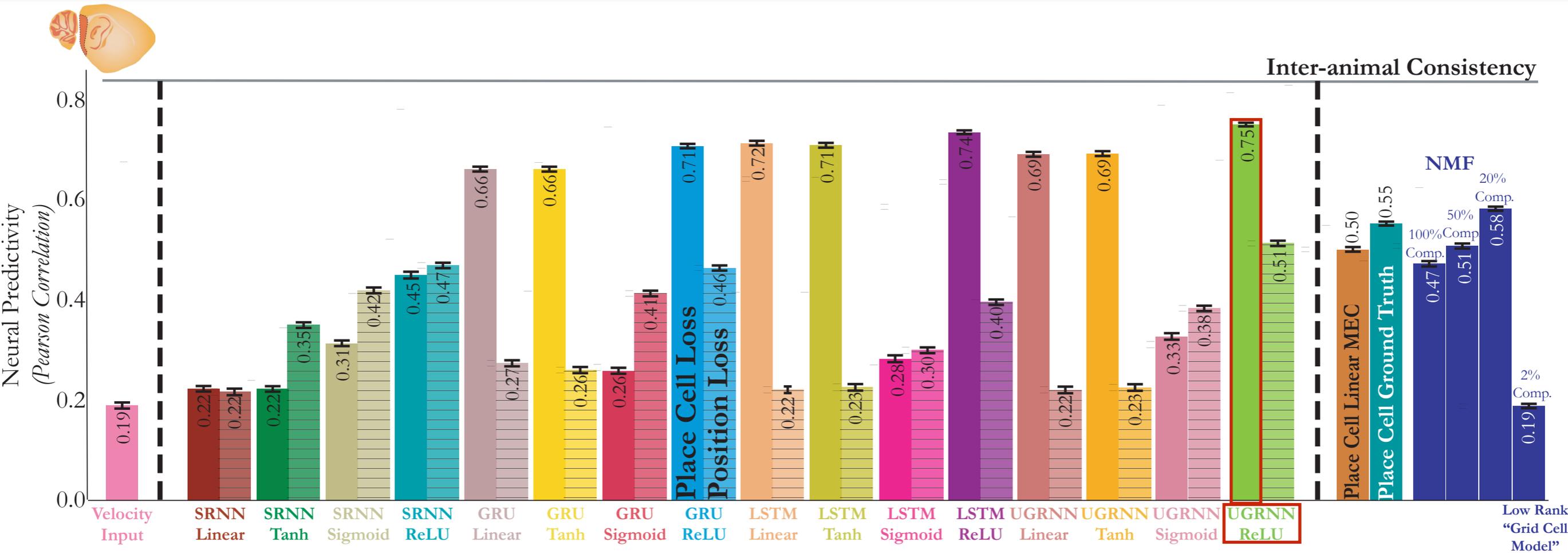


Benchmarking models with the same transform as between animals

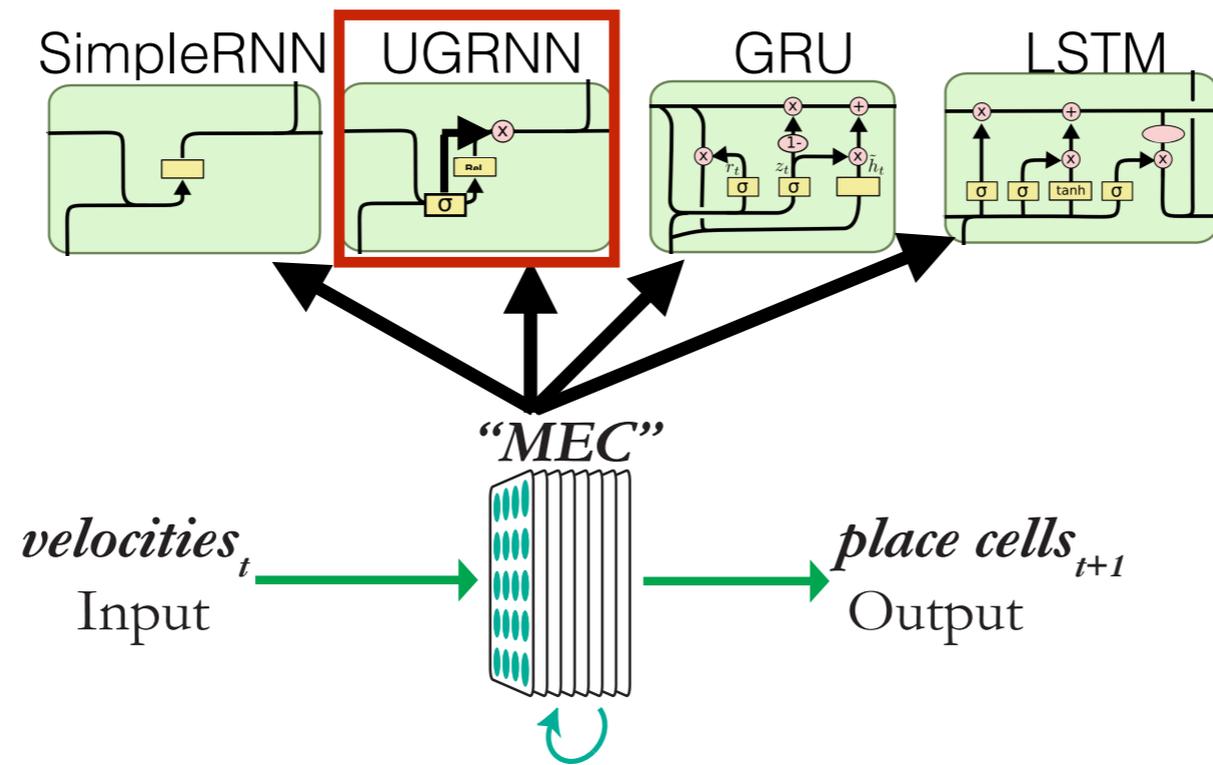


Caitlin Mallory

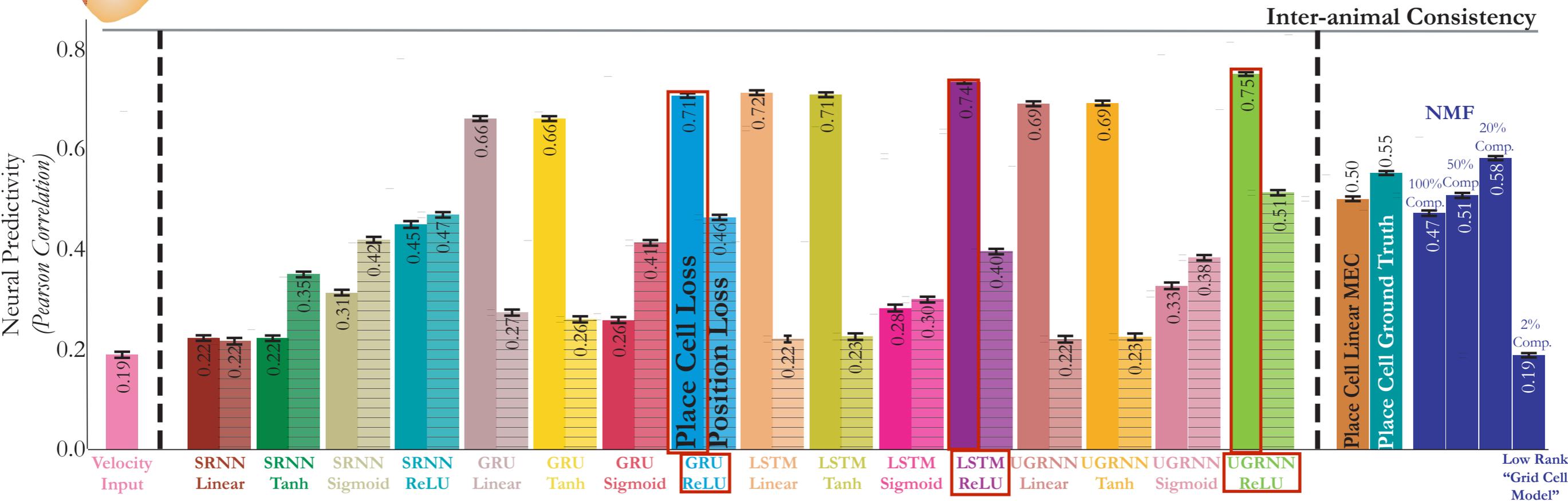
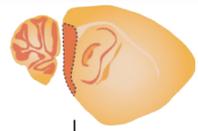
Task-optimized navigational models best predict the *entire* MEC population



Best task-optimized models explain almost all of the neural variability

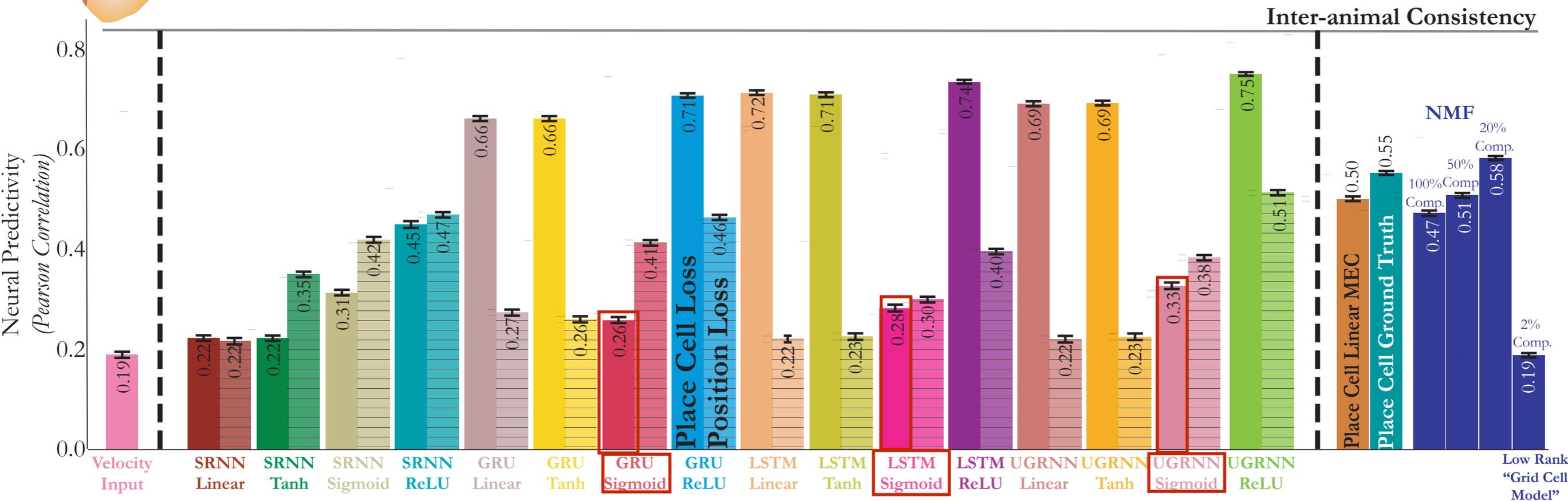
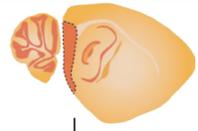


Nonlinearity type affects generalization



Nonnegativity constraint + gating aids in generalization across environments

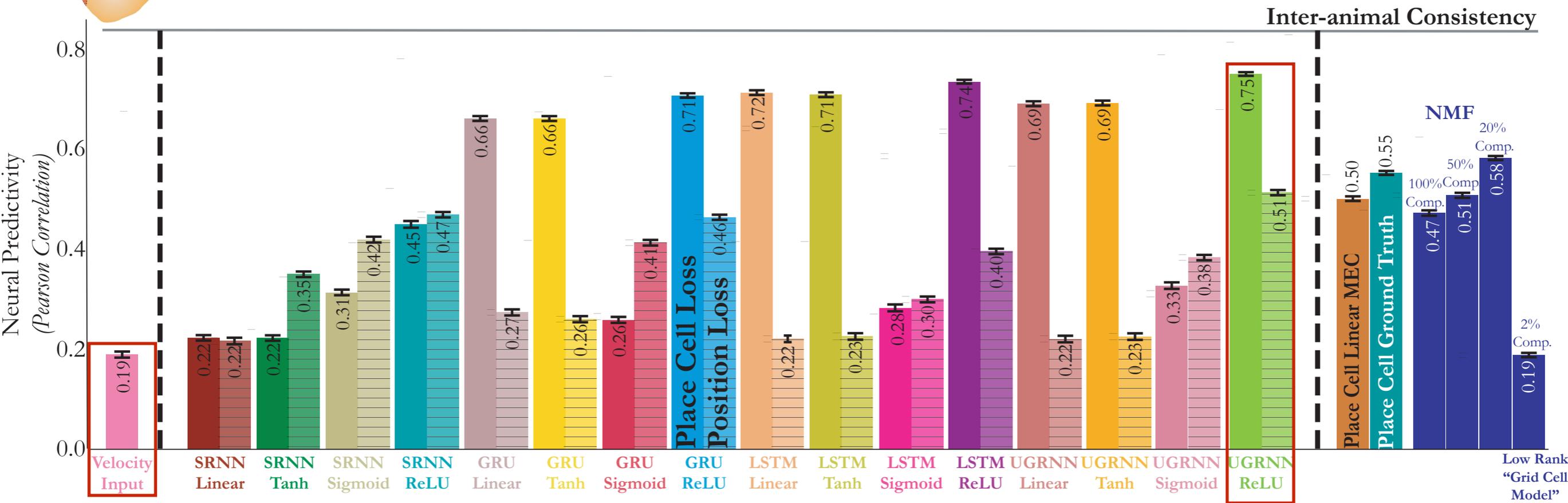
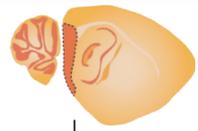
Nonlinearity type affects generalization



Nonnegativity constraint + gating aids in generalization across environments

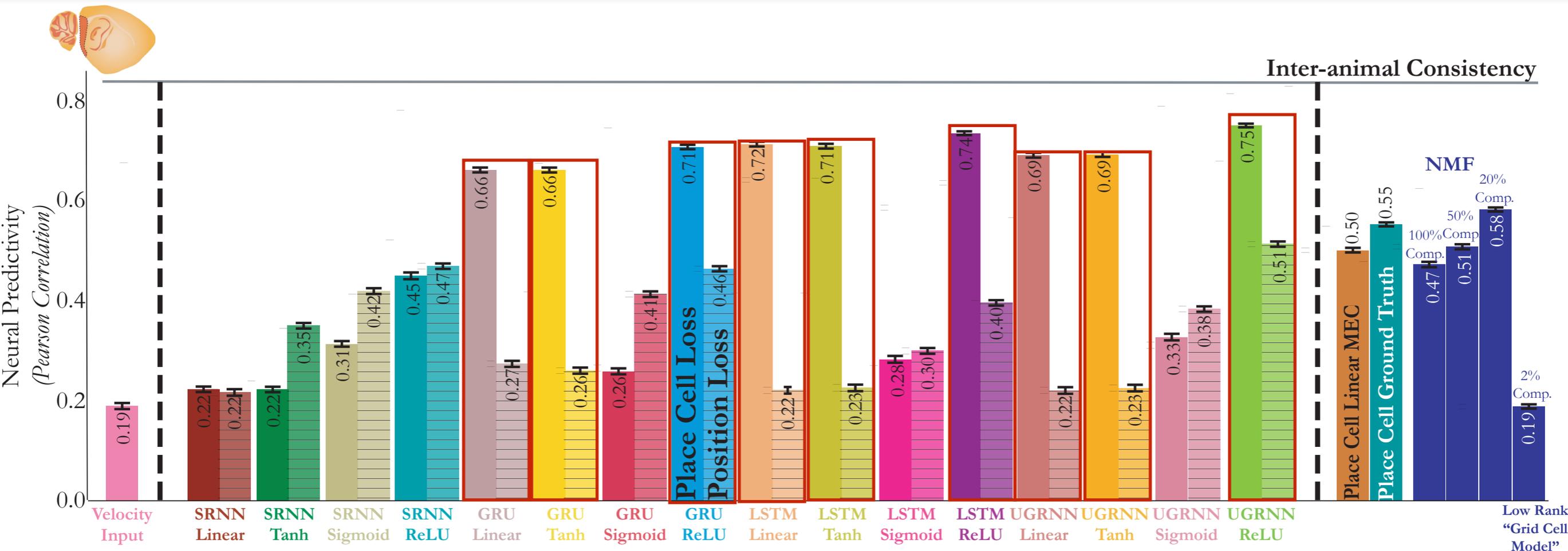
But this nonnegativity constraint must *not* saturate either!

Model input is a poor predictor of population



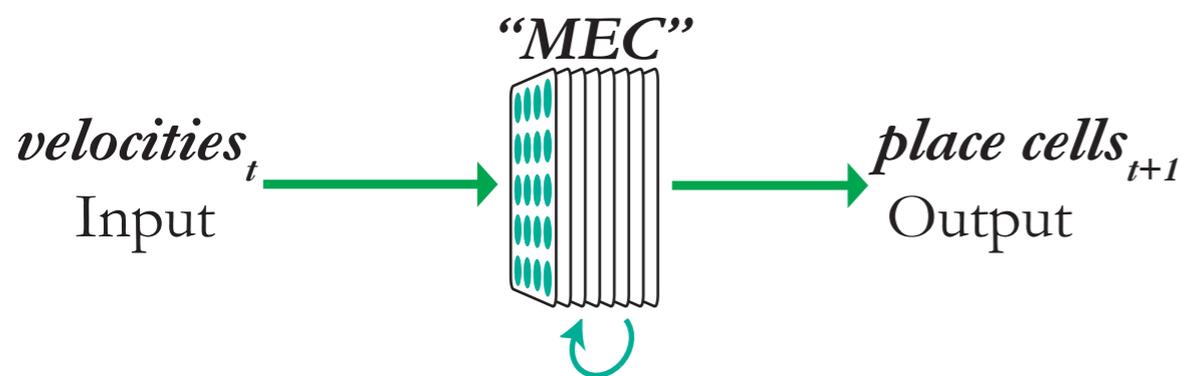
Models add a lot of predictive power to their inputs

Direct path integration *fails* to generalize

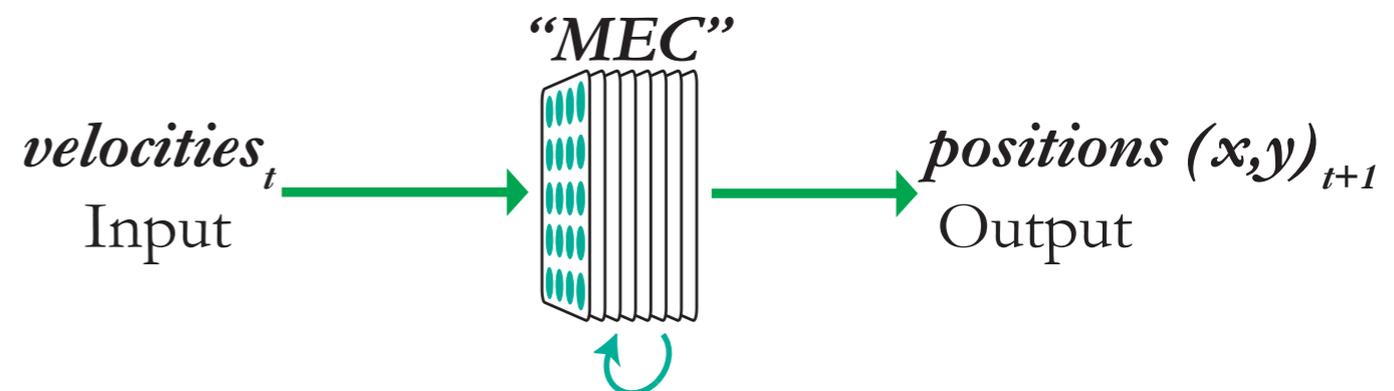


Output place cell supervision provides better generalization over direct supervision of position (path integration)

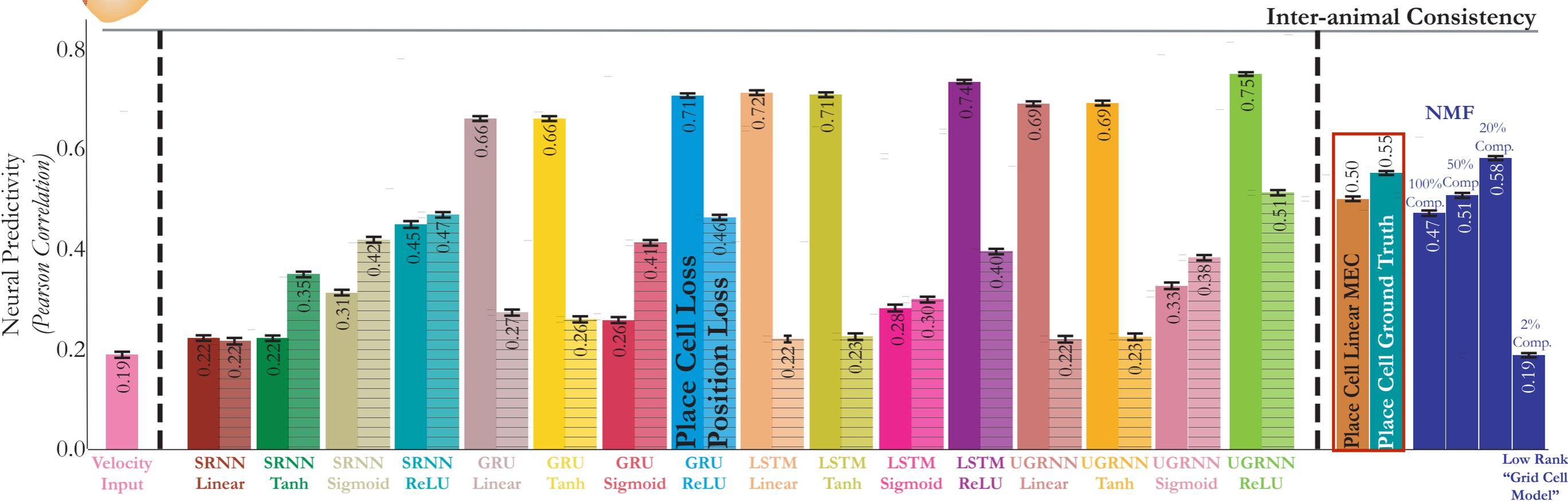
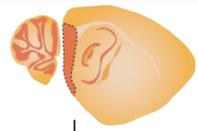
$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \sum_{i=1}^{N_p} p_i^t \log \hat{p}_i^t$$



$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{p}, p) := \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \left((p_x^t - \hat{p}_x^t)^2 + (p_y^t - \hat{p}_y^t)^2 \right)$$

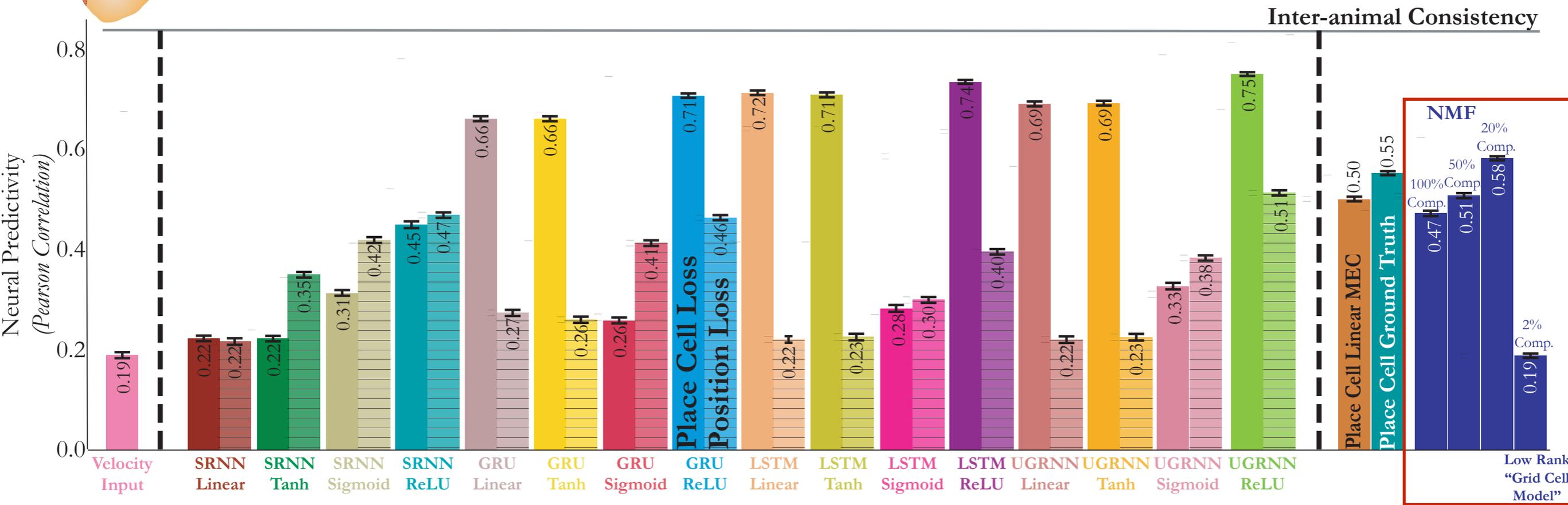
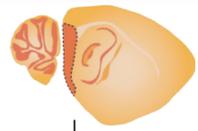


Place cells alone are a poor predictor



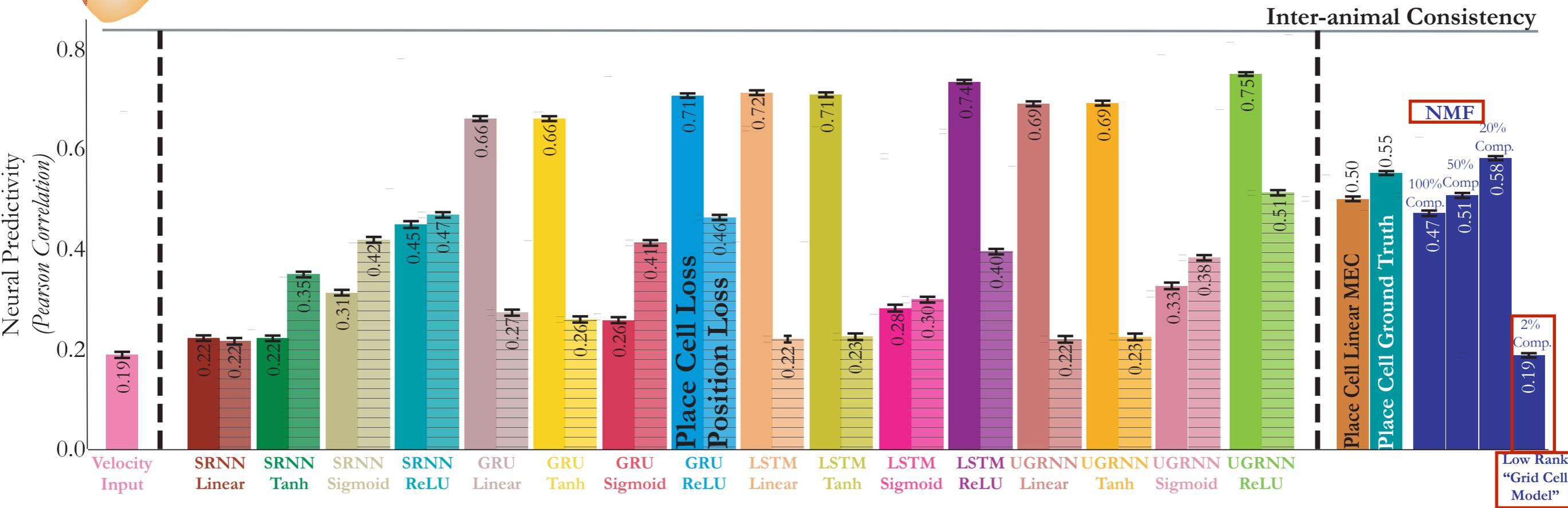
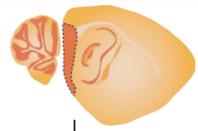
But place cells alone are *not* a good predictor of MEC (good!)
 You actually need to integrate them!

NMF is also a poor predictor



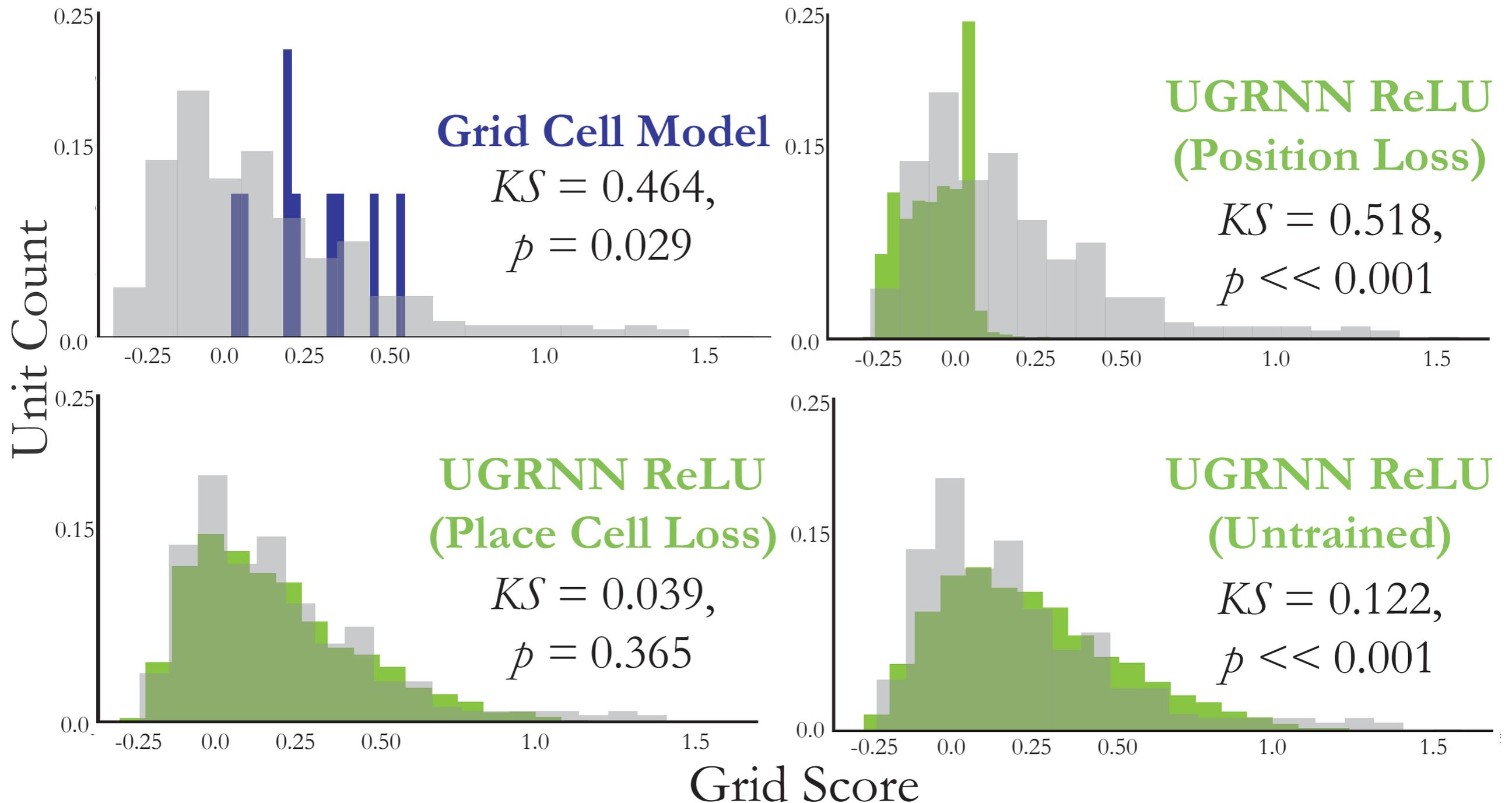
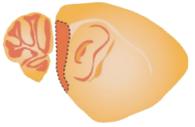
Dimensionality reduction on place cells is *not* a good predictor of MEC either

Grid cell oriented NMF is a poor predictor

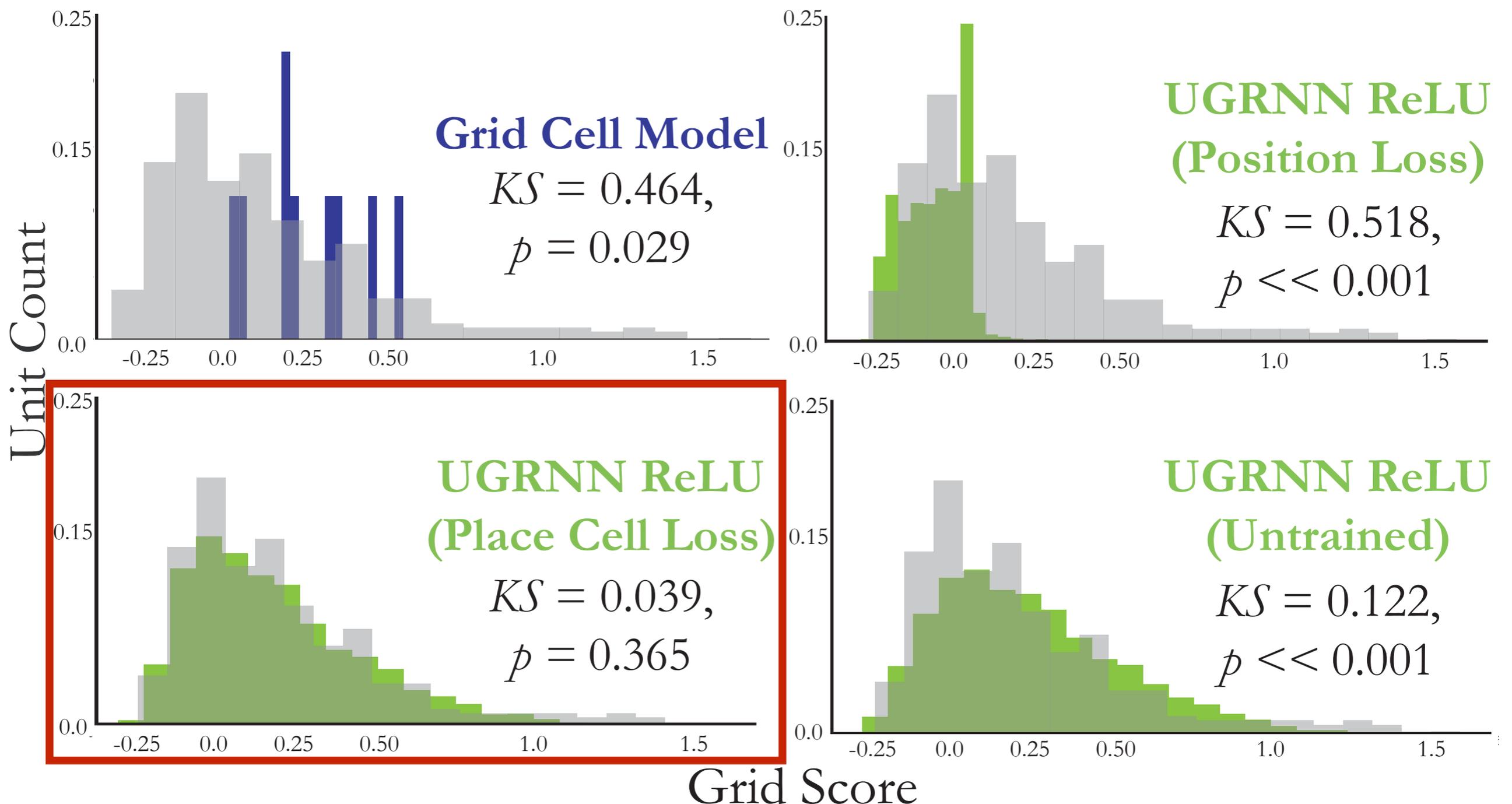
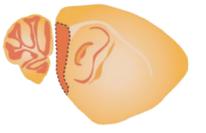


Grid cell oriented model is an especially *poor* predictor!

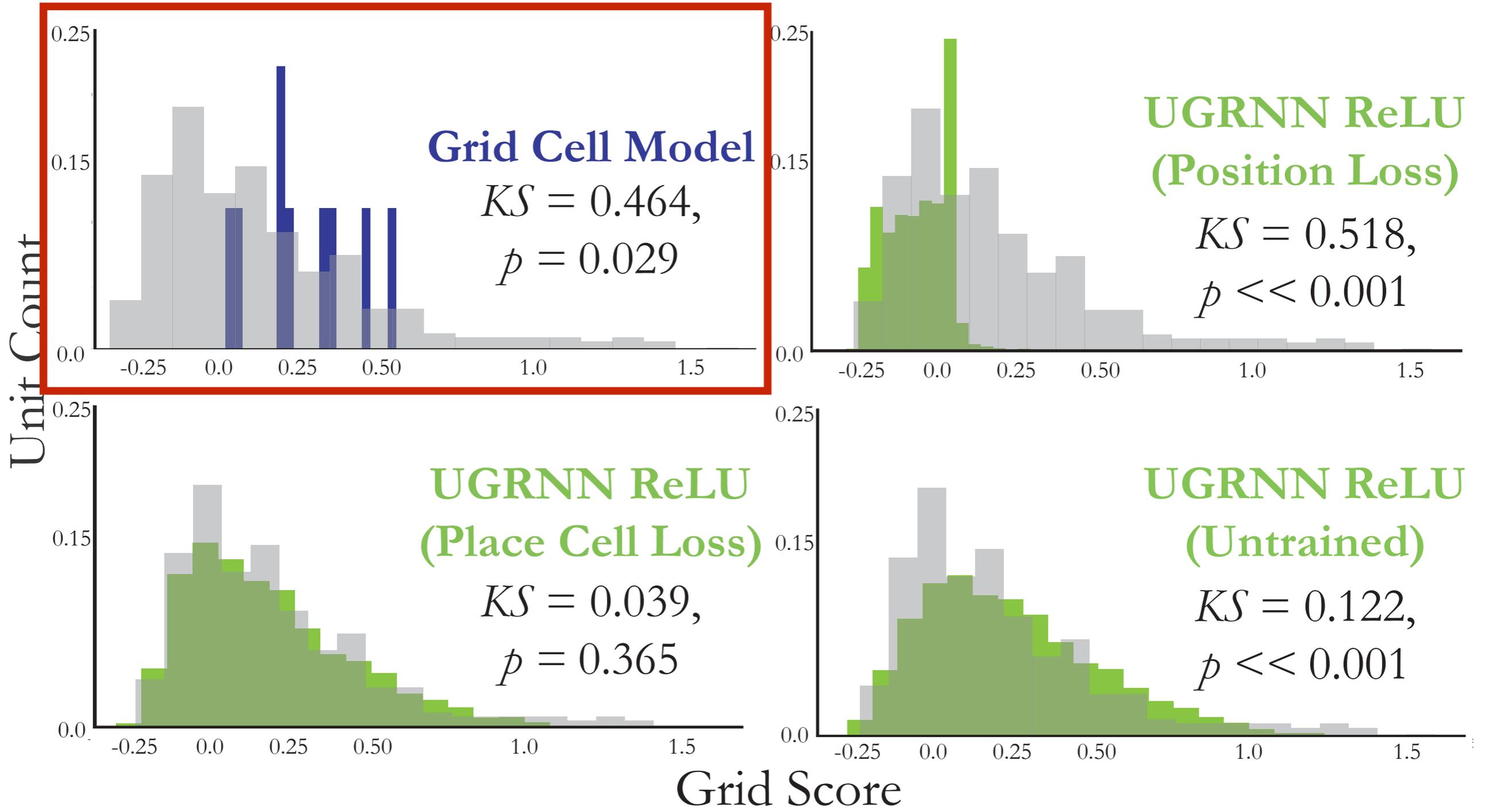
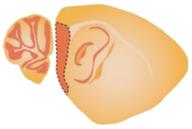
Grid score distribution does not require any parameter fitting



Best model class in terms of neural predictivity also matches grid score distribution in its own synthetic population

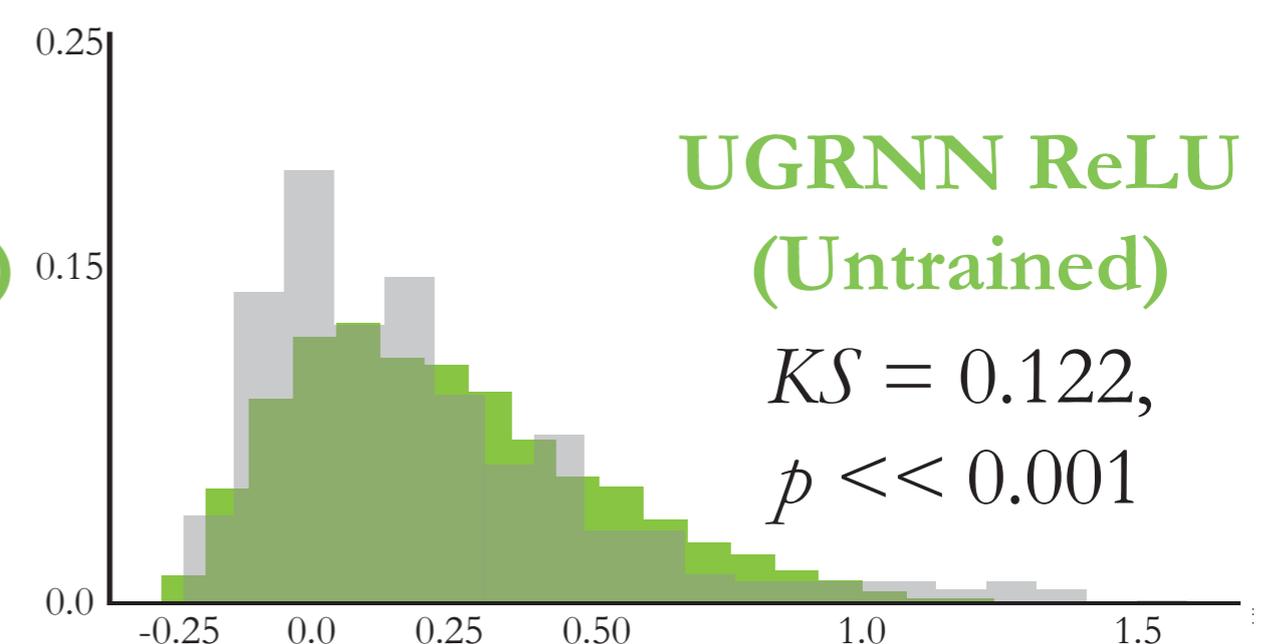
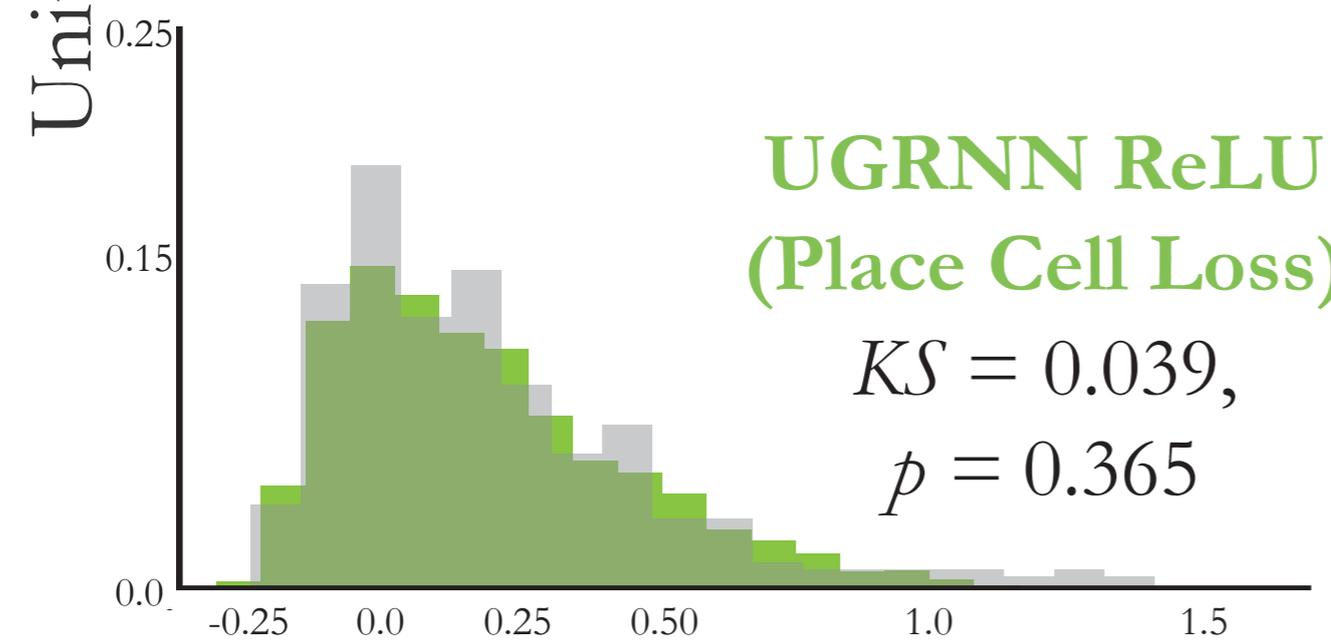
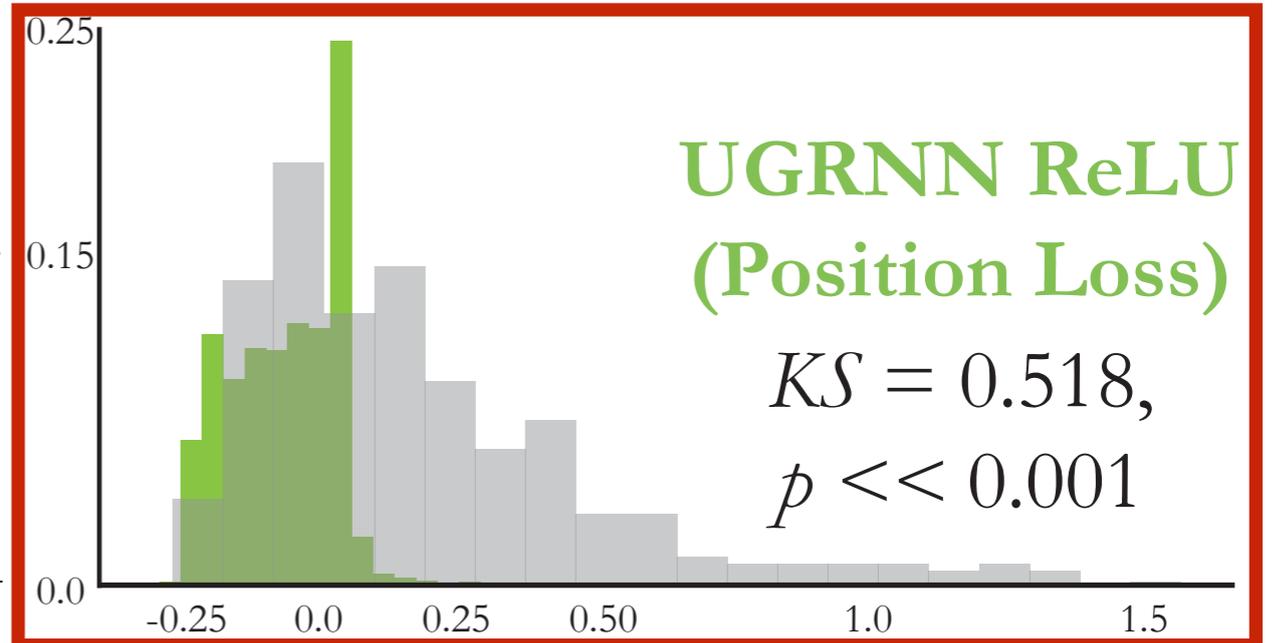
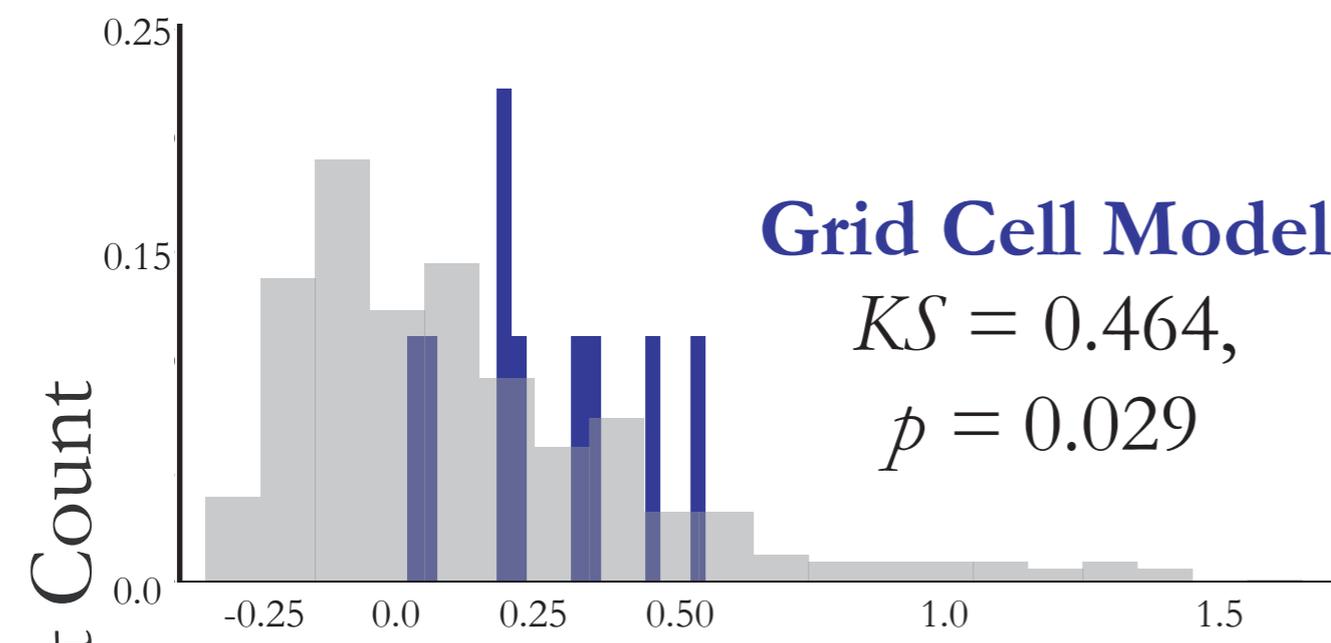
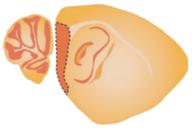


Low-rank model is too biased towards grid-like units



Task-optimized navigational models best predict the *entire* MEC population

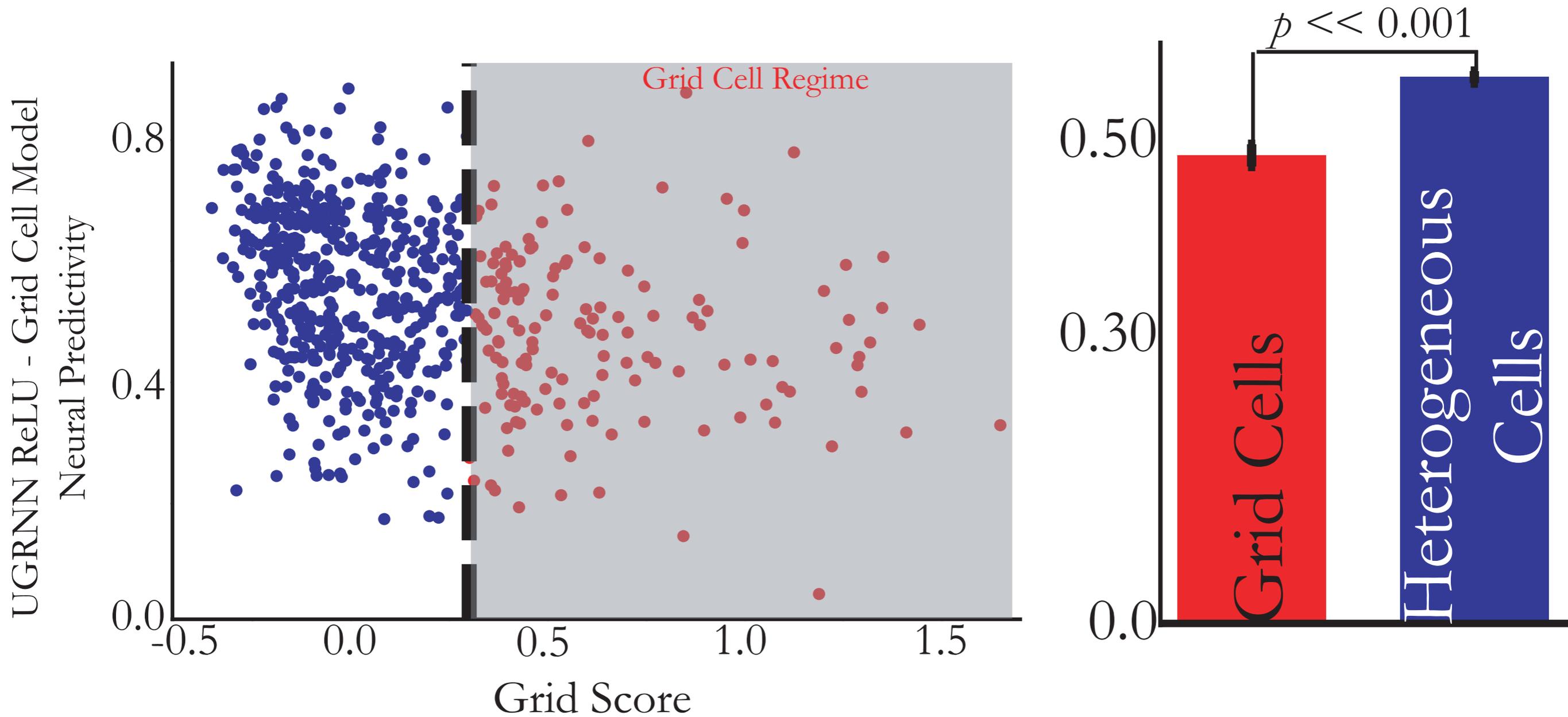
Without place cell integration, the model is too biased towards *non* grid-like units



Grid Score

Neural network model better predicts heterogeneous cells

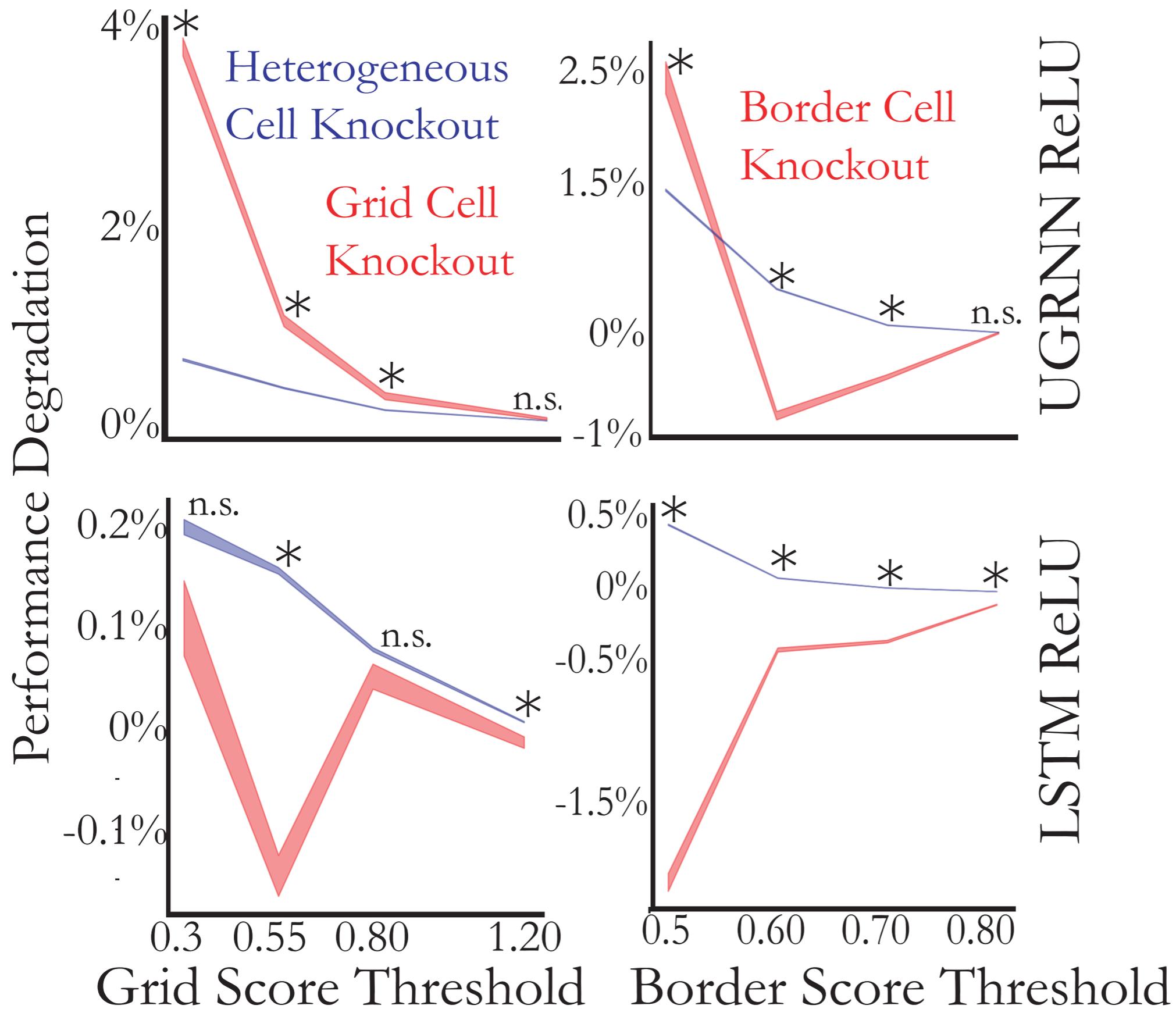
Neural network models are differentially better at heterogeneous cells than NMF



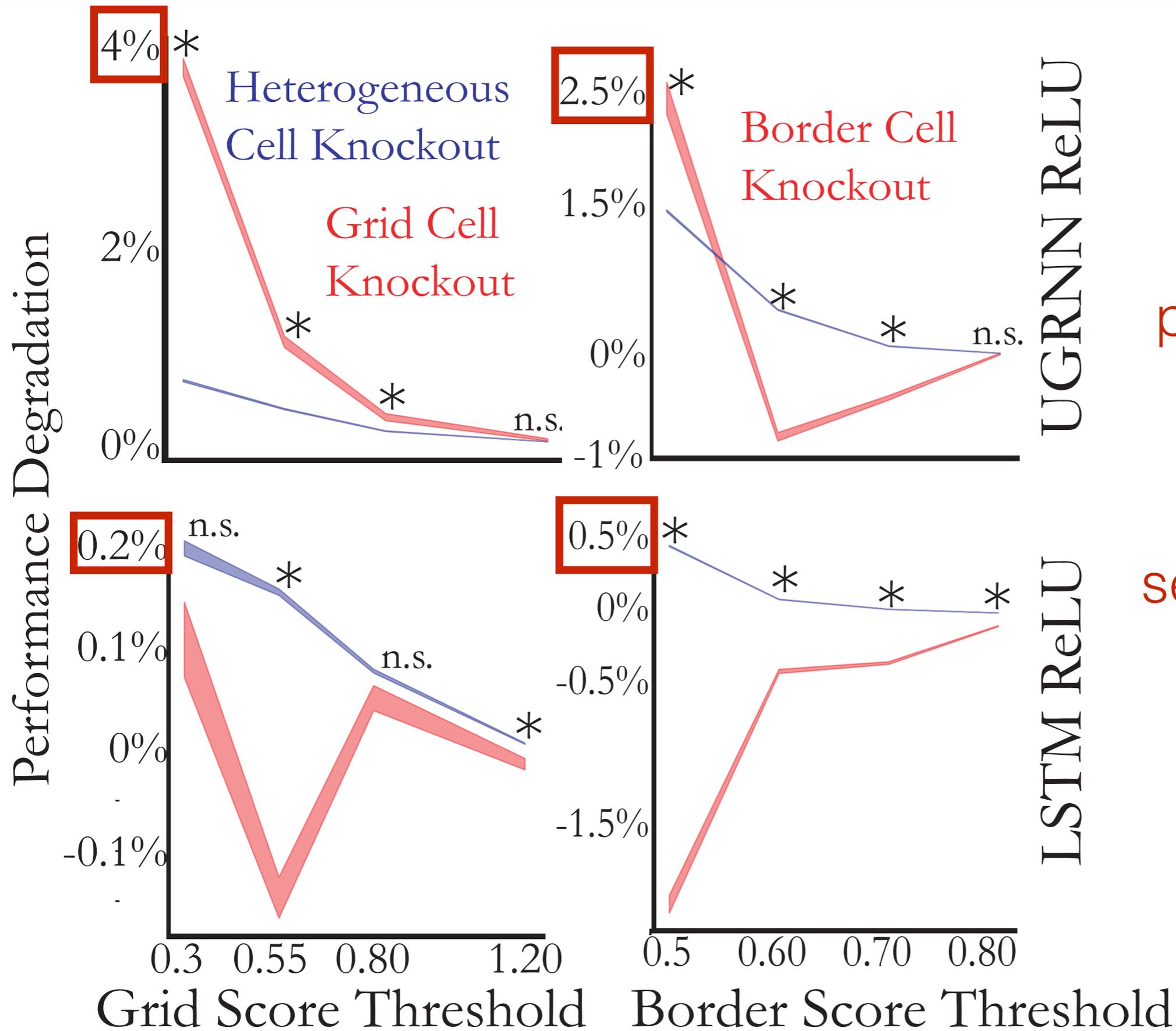
Knockout experiments

Given that we have a model that exhibits close similarity to MEC, we can use it to generate predictions for experiments that are very difficult to do

Knockout experiments

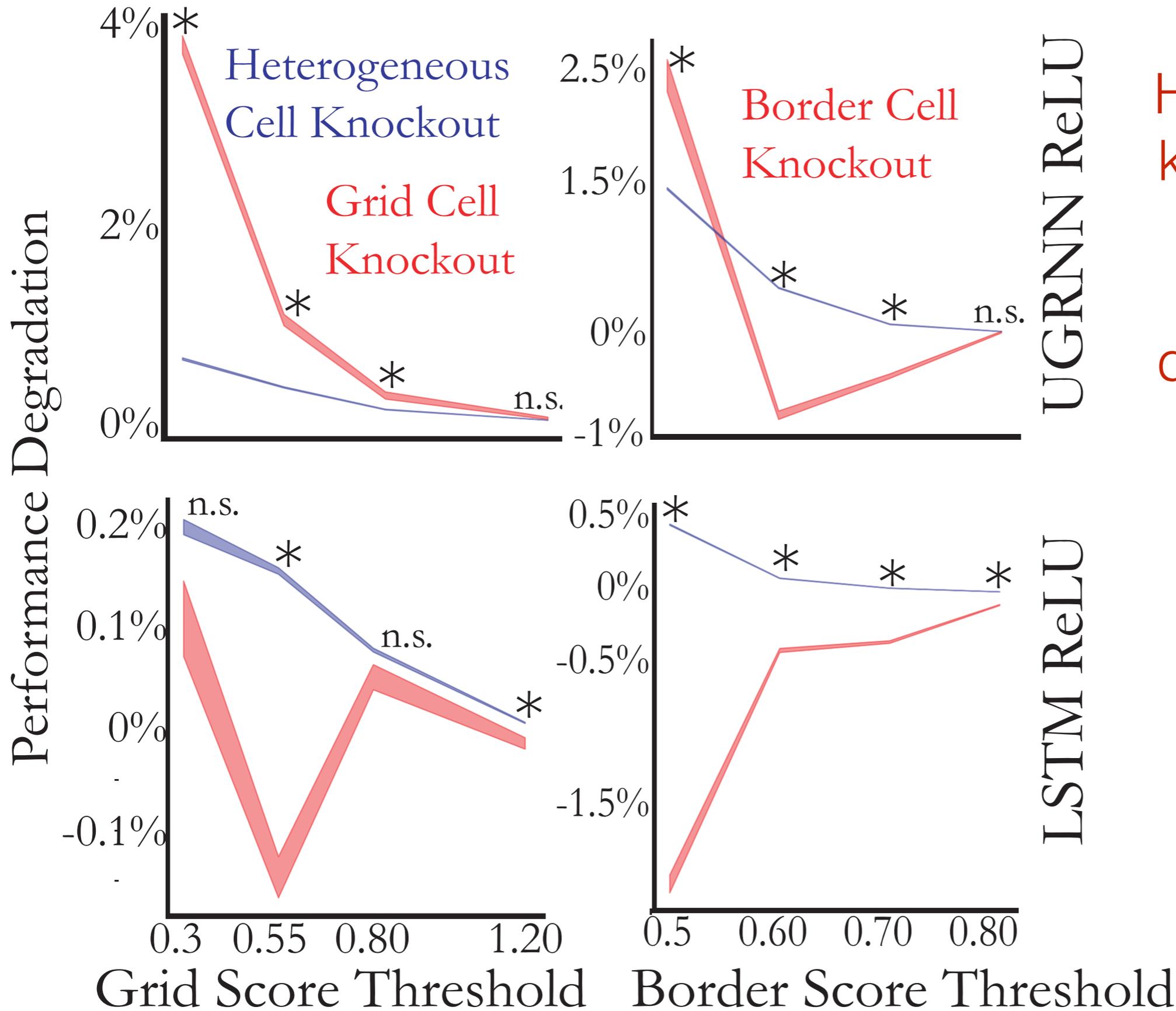


Networks are robust to knockouts



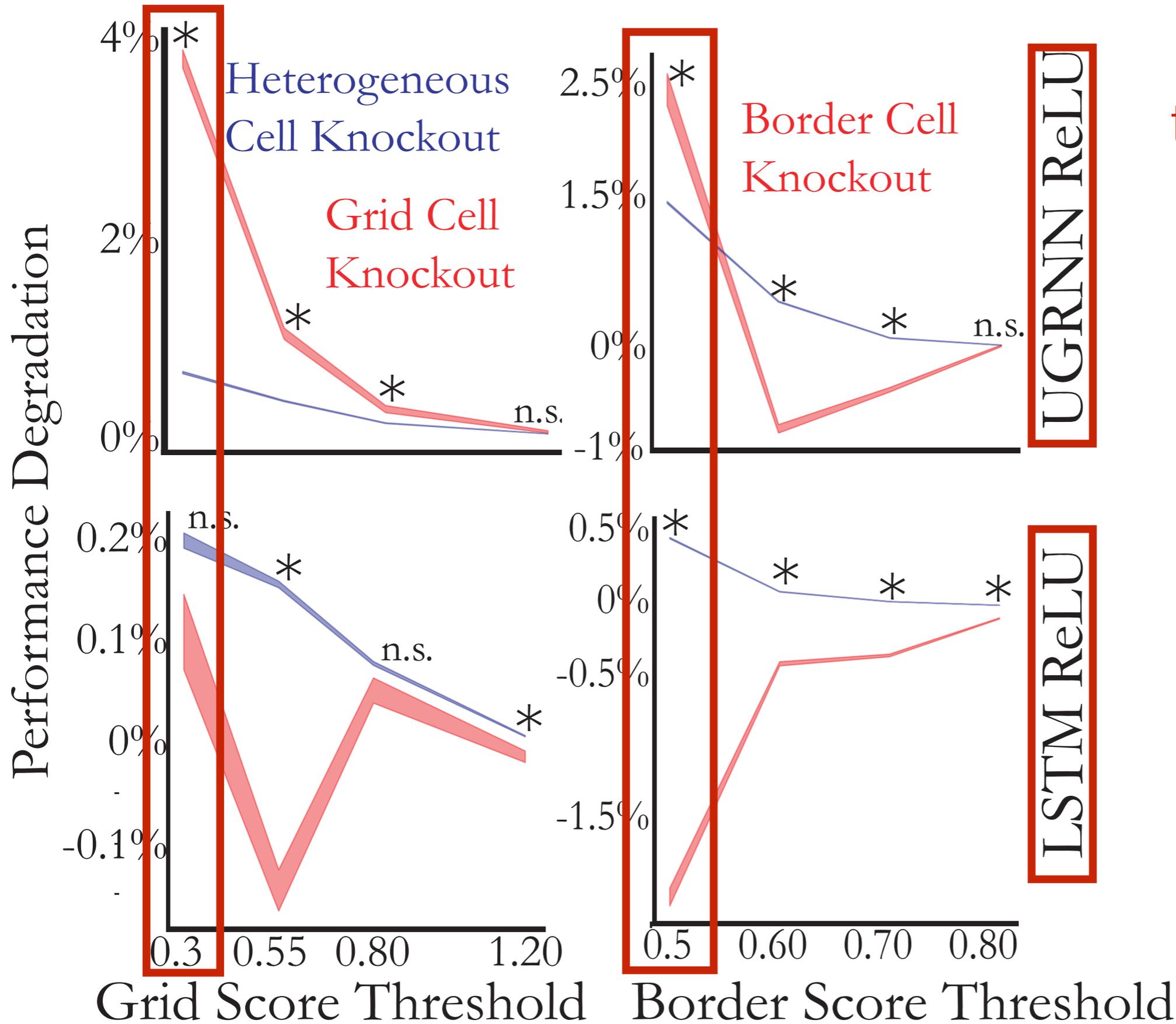
Network performance is robust to knockouts on the order of several hundred units

Heterogeneous cells are relevant to navigation



Heterogeneous knockout gives similar performance degradation as cell type specific knockout, especially as threshold increases

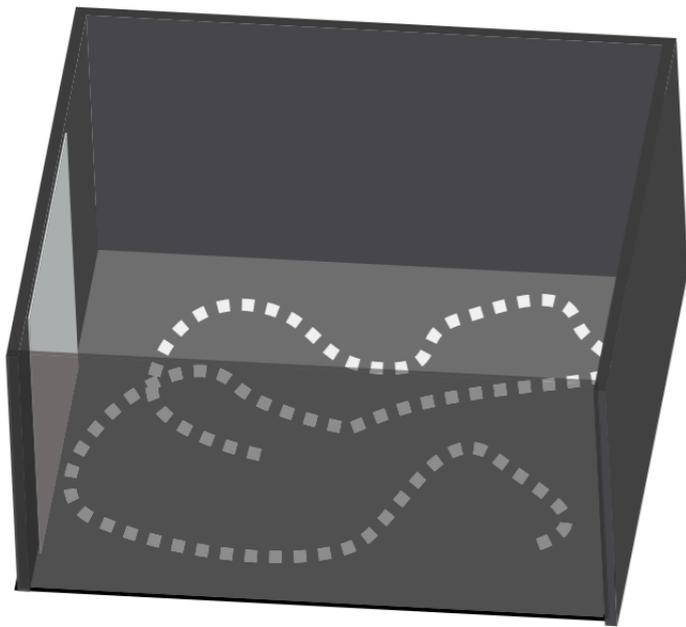
Differences in gating architecture



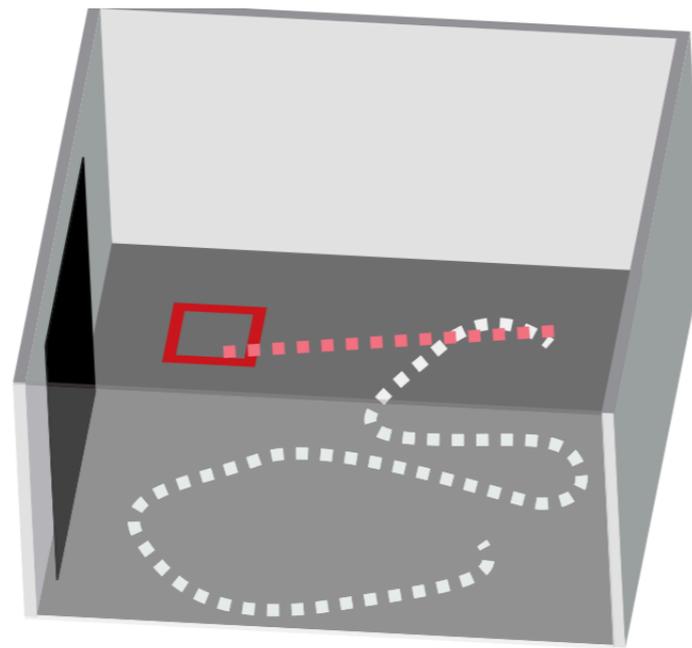
At the lowest threshold of cell type specificity, different gating architectures give somewhat different predictions, which may be useful to gather evidence for in future experiments

Remembered reward locations restructure entorhinal spatial maps

William N. Butler*, Kiah Hardcastle*, Lisa M. Giocomo†



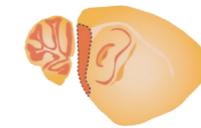
free foraging (ENV1)



spatial task (ENV2)

Remembered reward locations restructure entorhinal spatial maps

William N. Butler*, Kiah Hardcastle*, Lisa M. Giocomo†



rate maps

ENV1

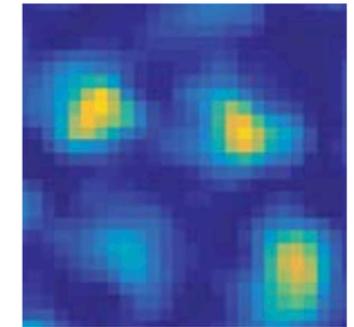
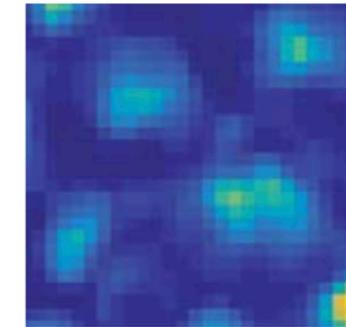
ENV2

6.86 Hz

0.96

9.62 Hz

1.06

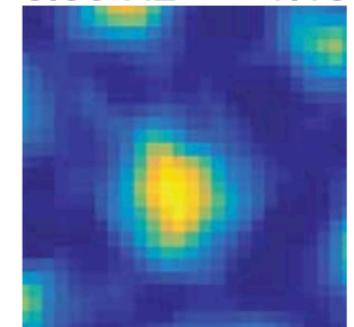
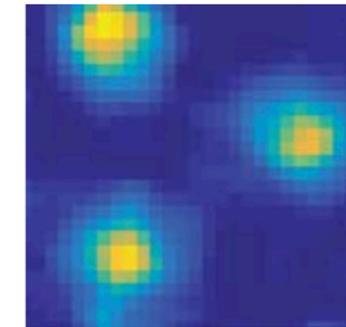


5.91 Hz

1.21

8.30 Hz

1.15

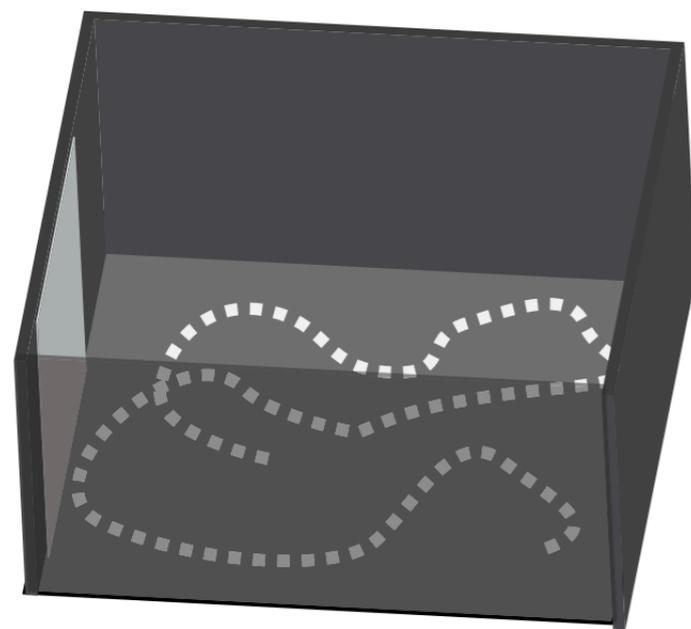
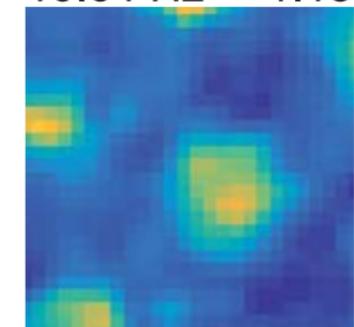
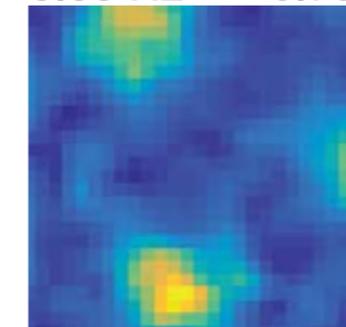


3.55 Hz

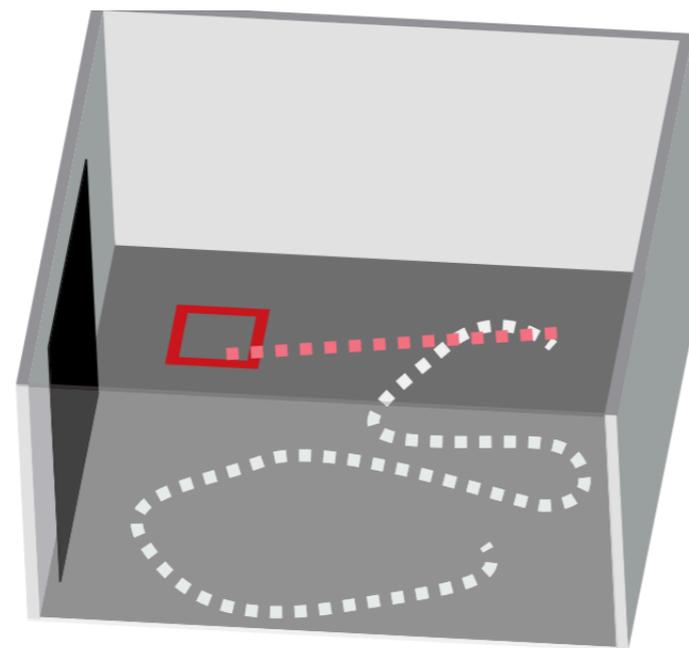
0.79

10.64 Hz

1.13

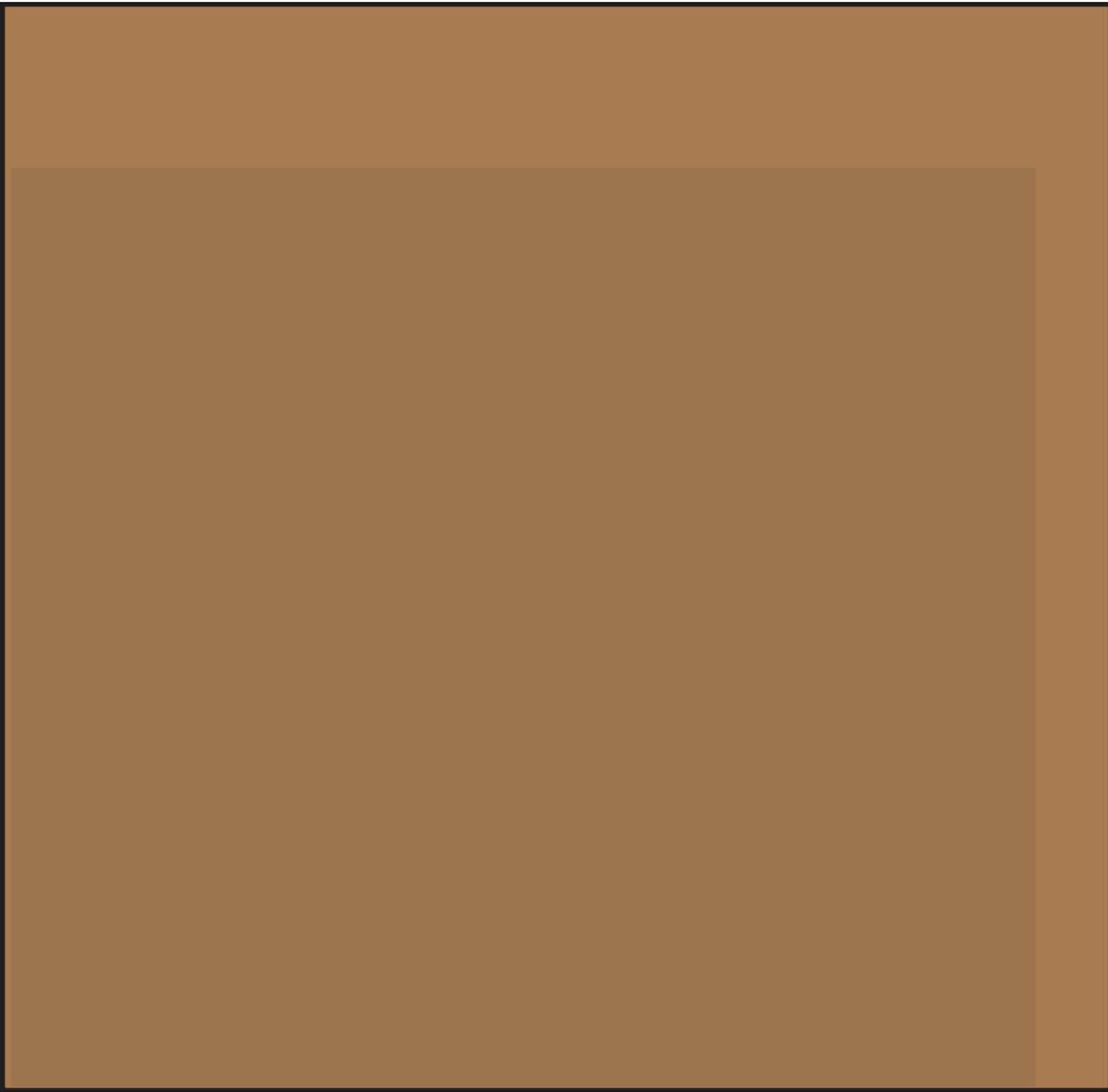


free foraging (ENV1)

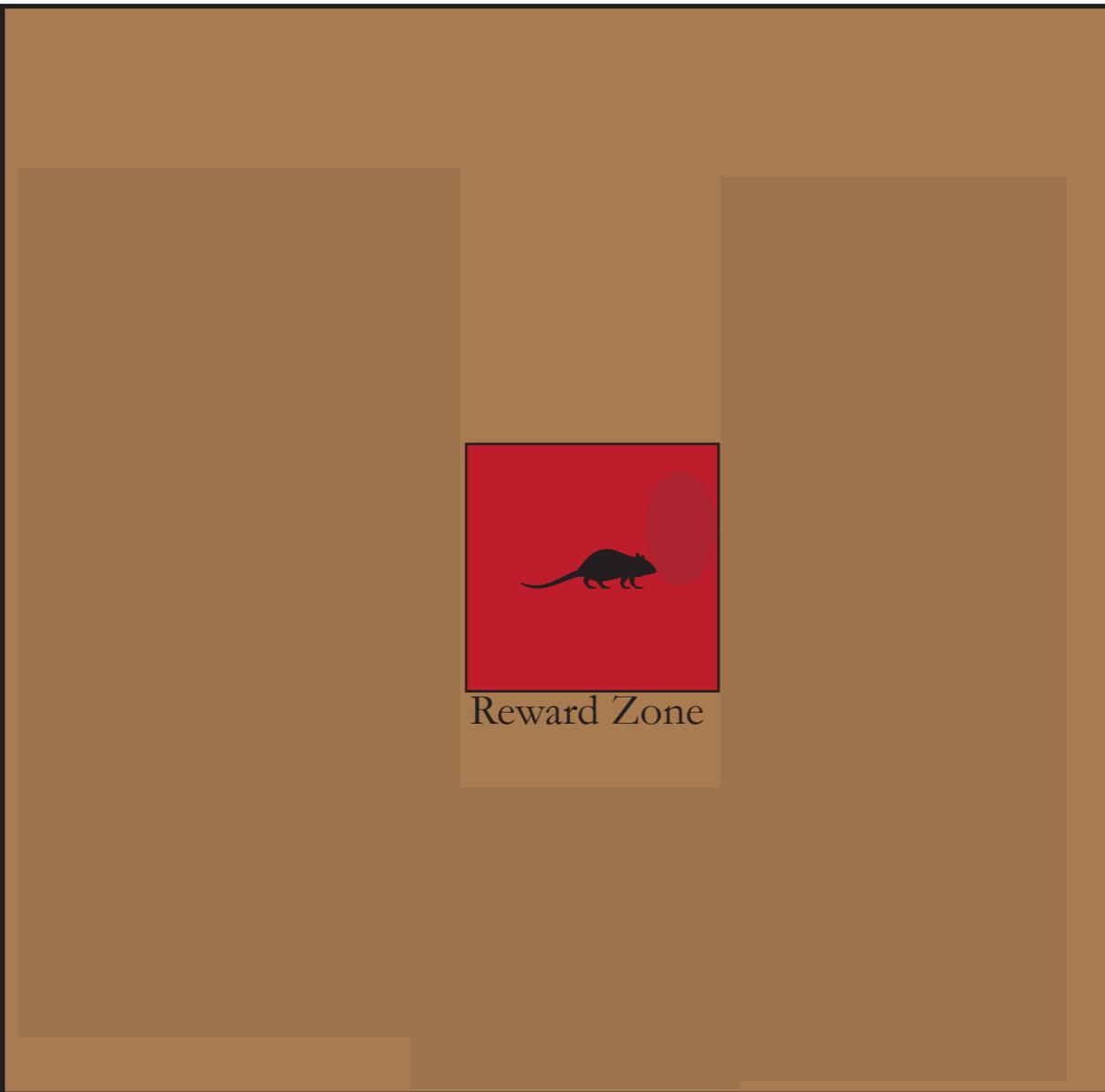


spatial task (ENV2)

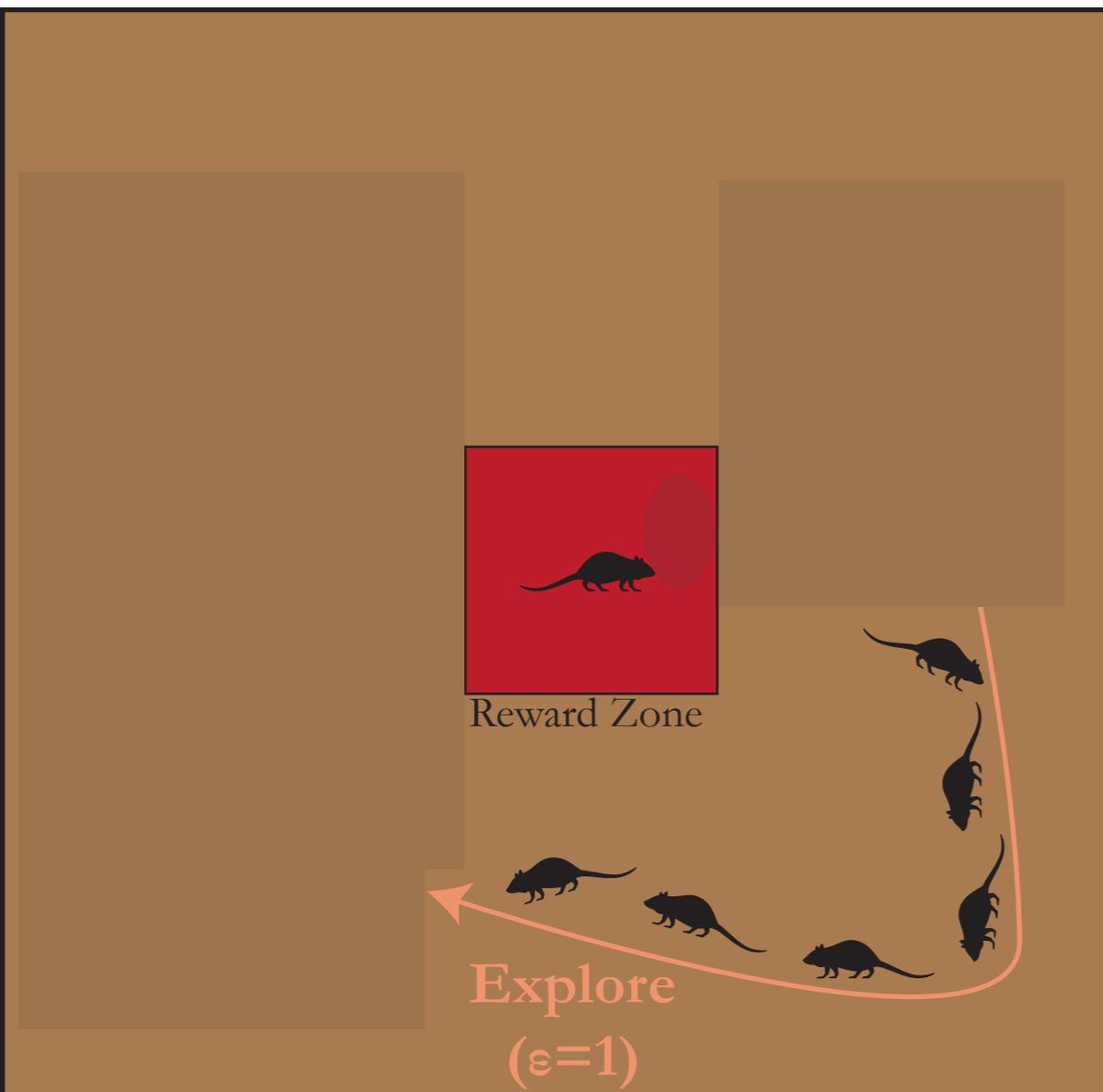
Modeling rewards



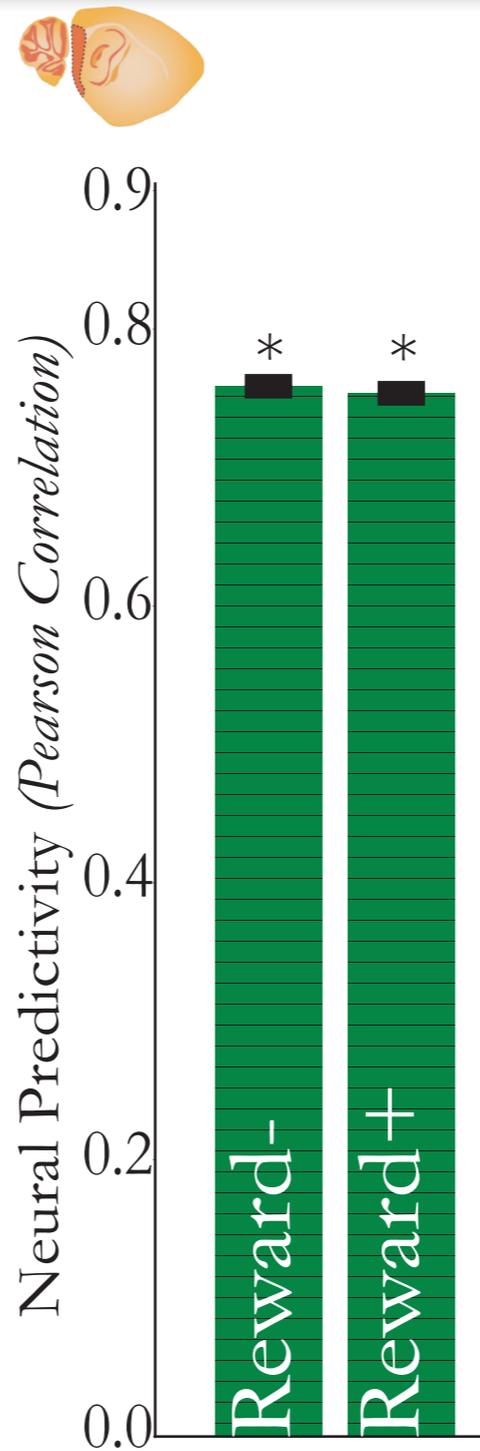
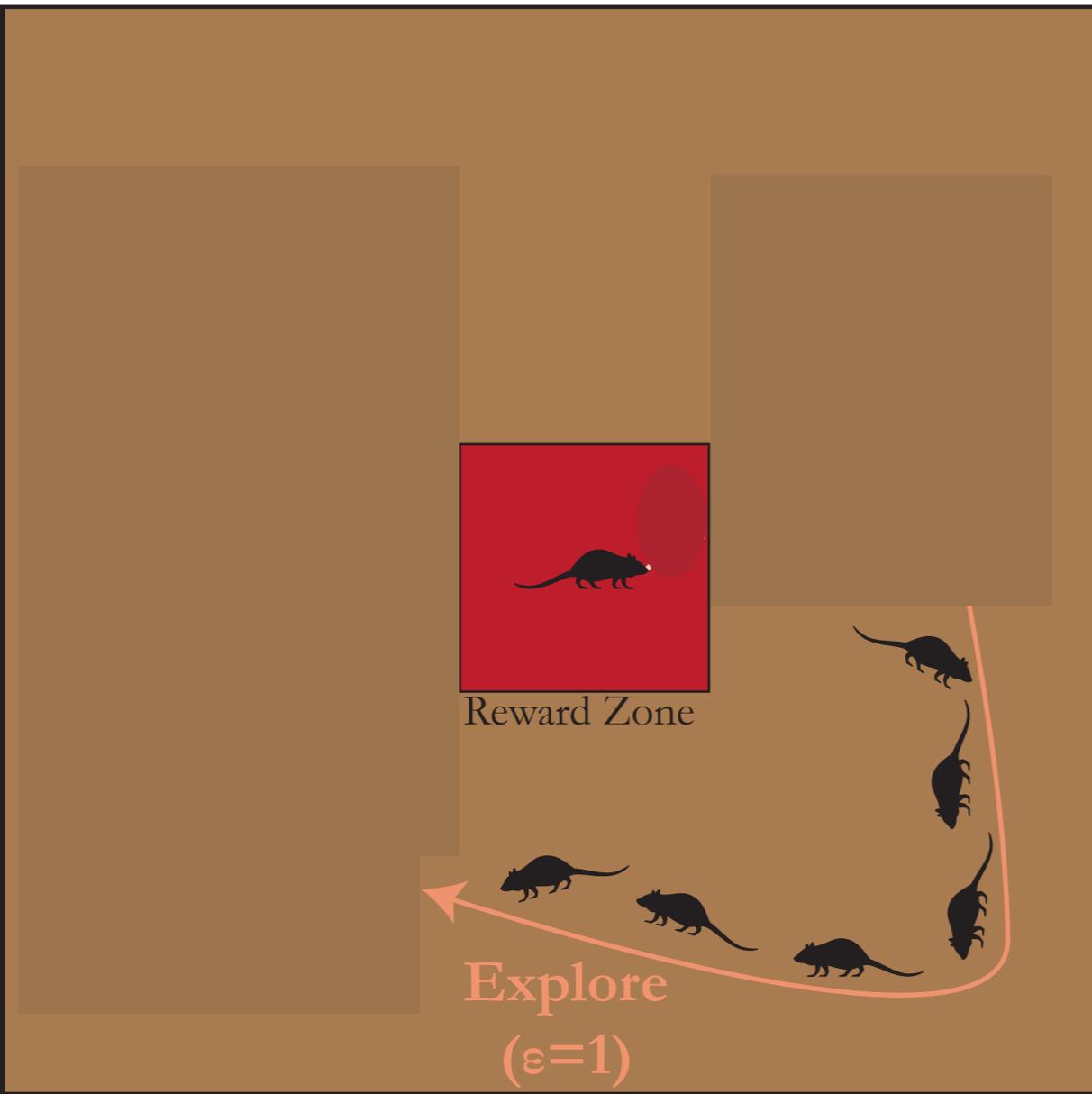
Modeling rewards



Modeling rewards - What we have done previously

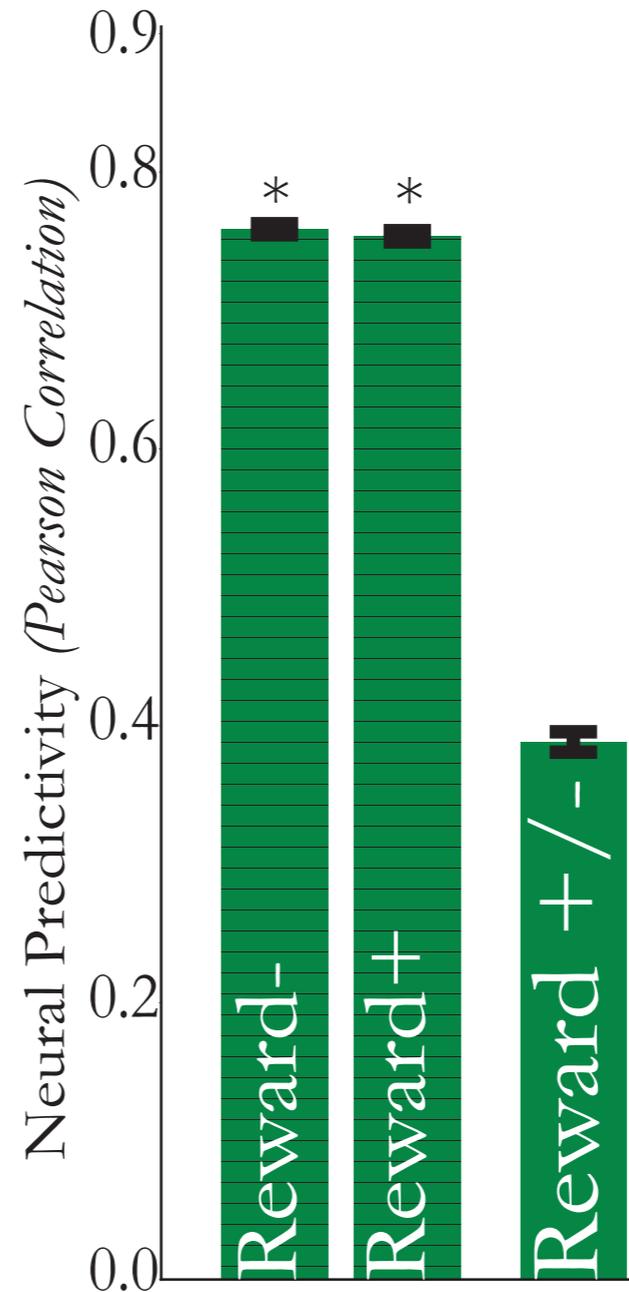
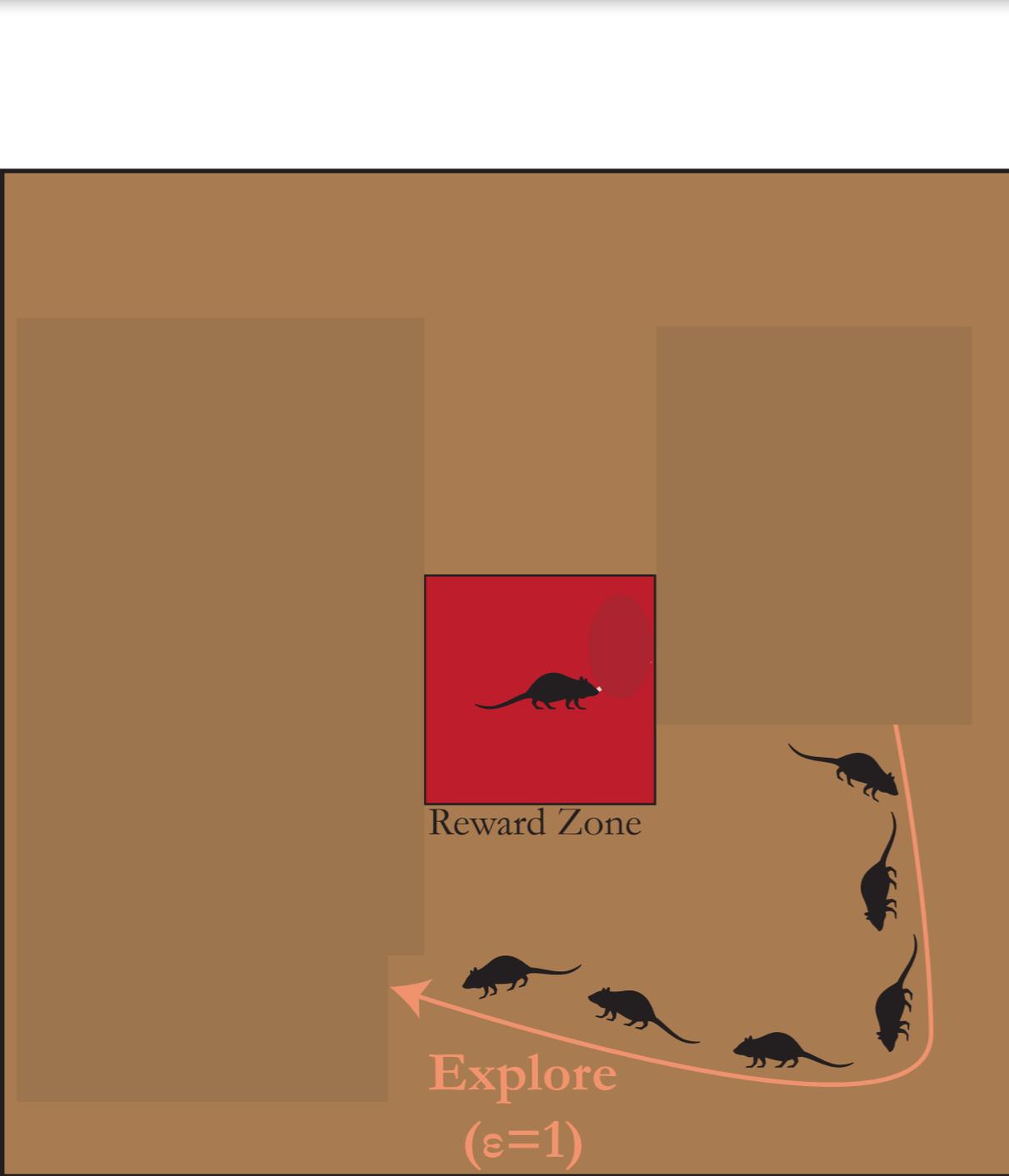


Exploration only model captures each condition *separately*



Inter-animal Consistency

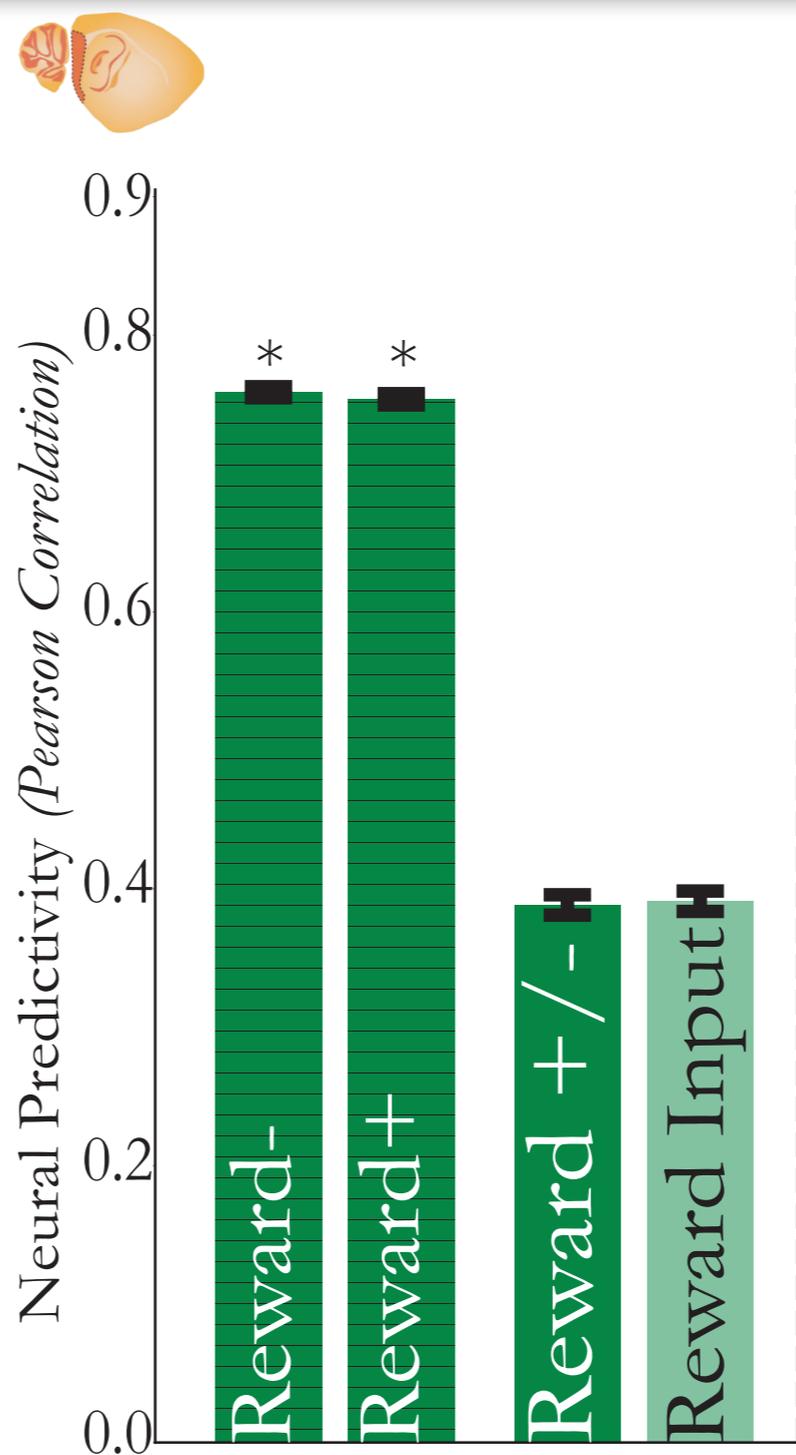
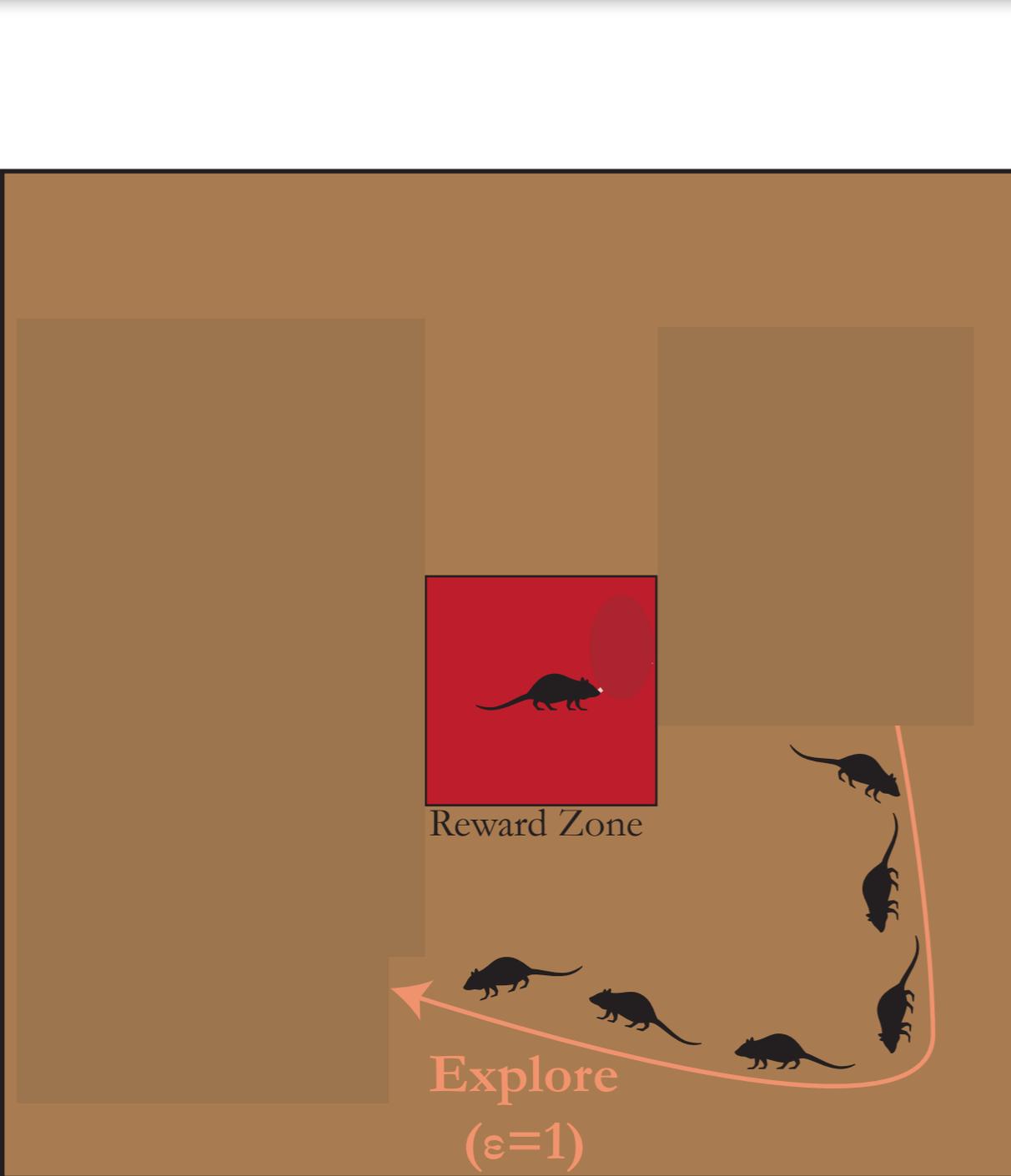
Exploration only model fails to capture remapping



Inter-animal Consistency

Failure of pure exploration!

Reward must be extrinsically modeled



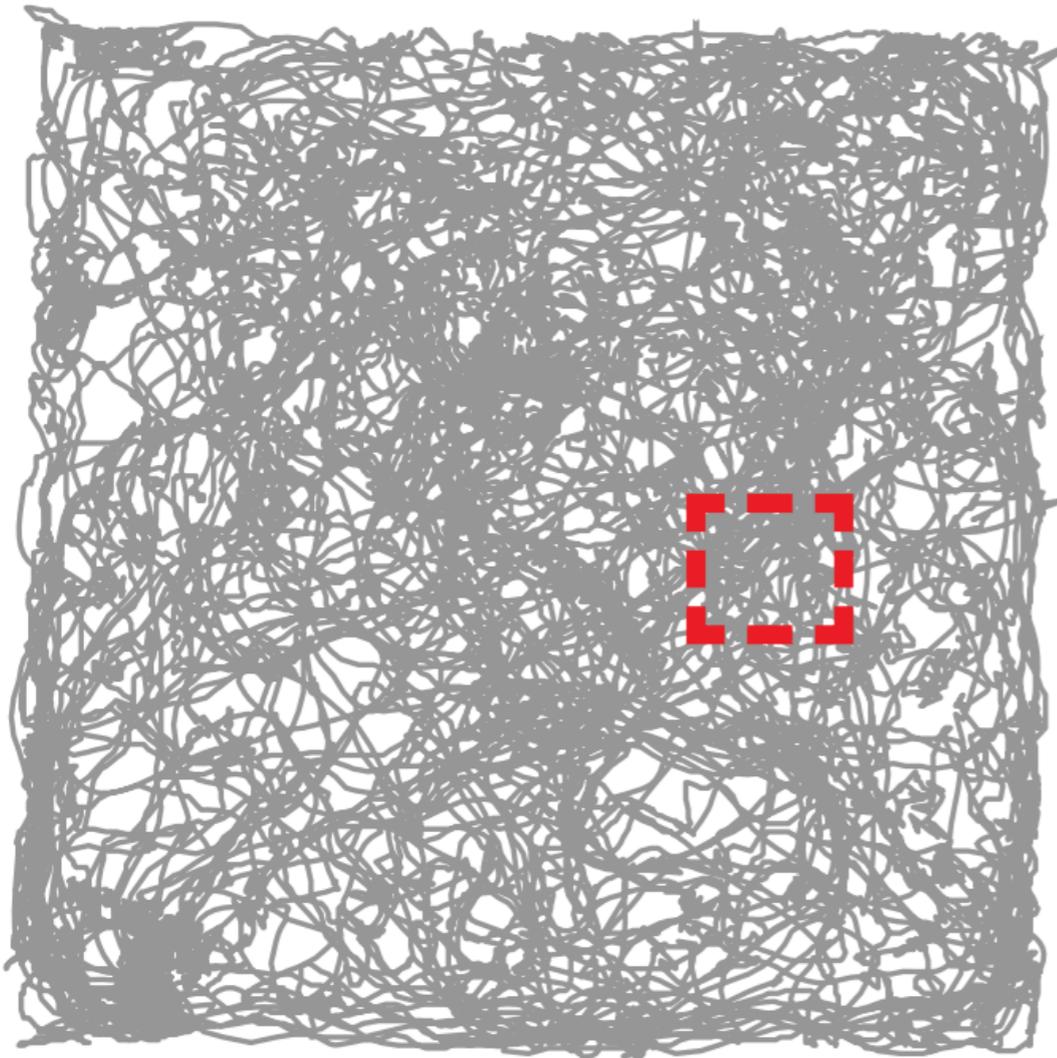
Inter-animal Consistency

Simply augmenting inputs does not help either

Inspiration from animal behavior — rapid, direct paths

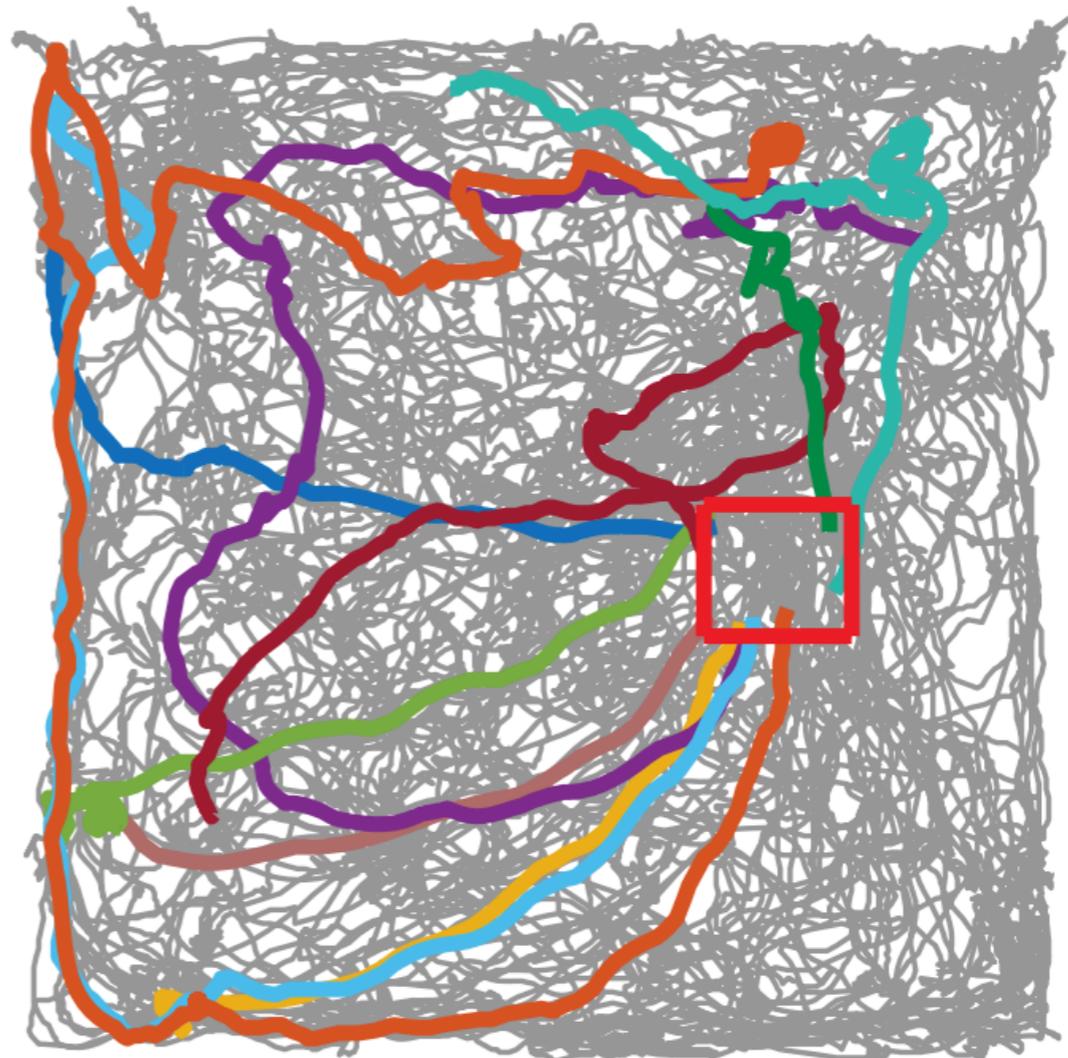
Animals tend to take rapid, direct paths to reward zone

ENV1



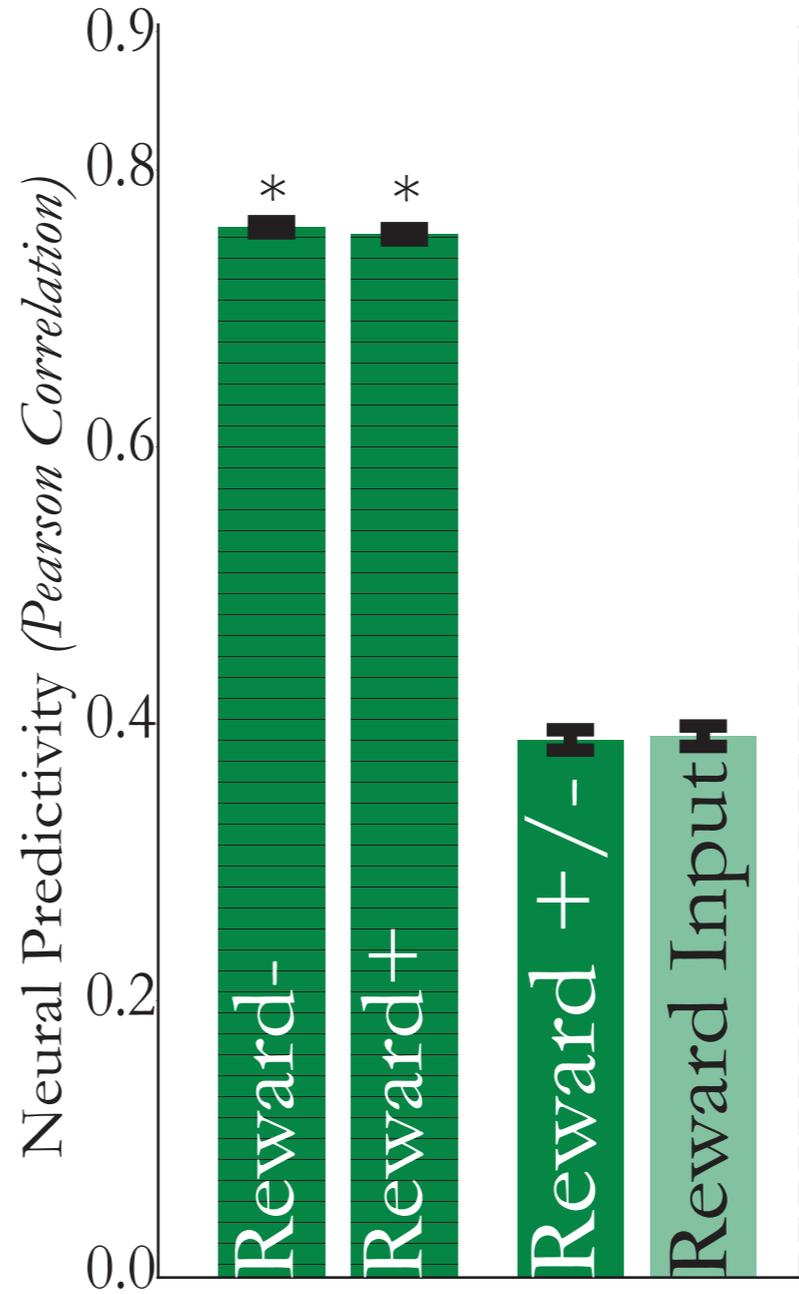
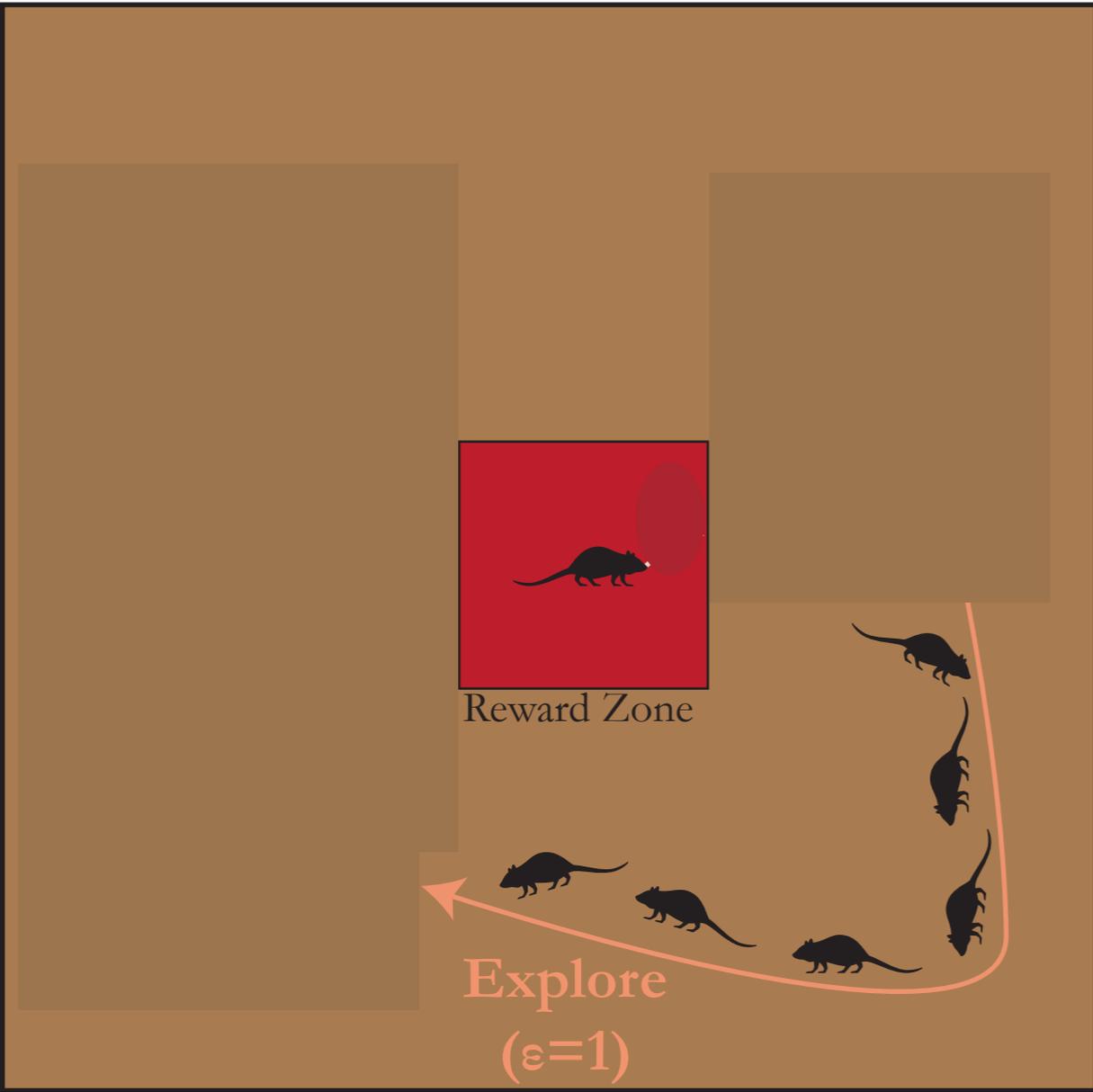
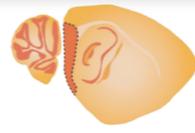
0.5m

ENV2



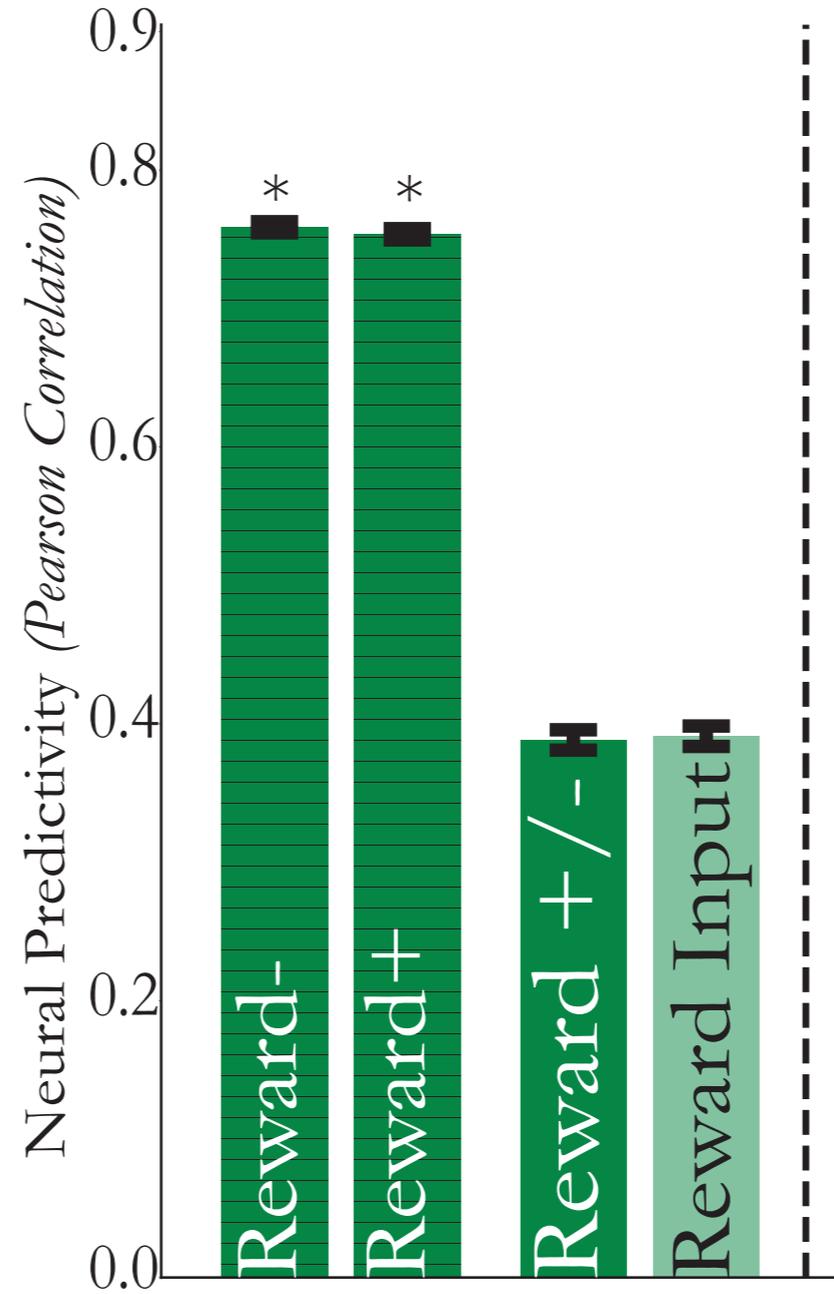
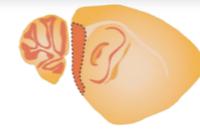
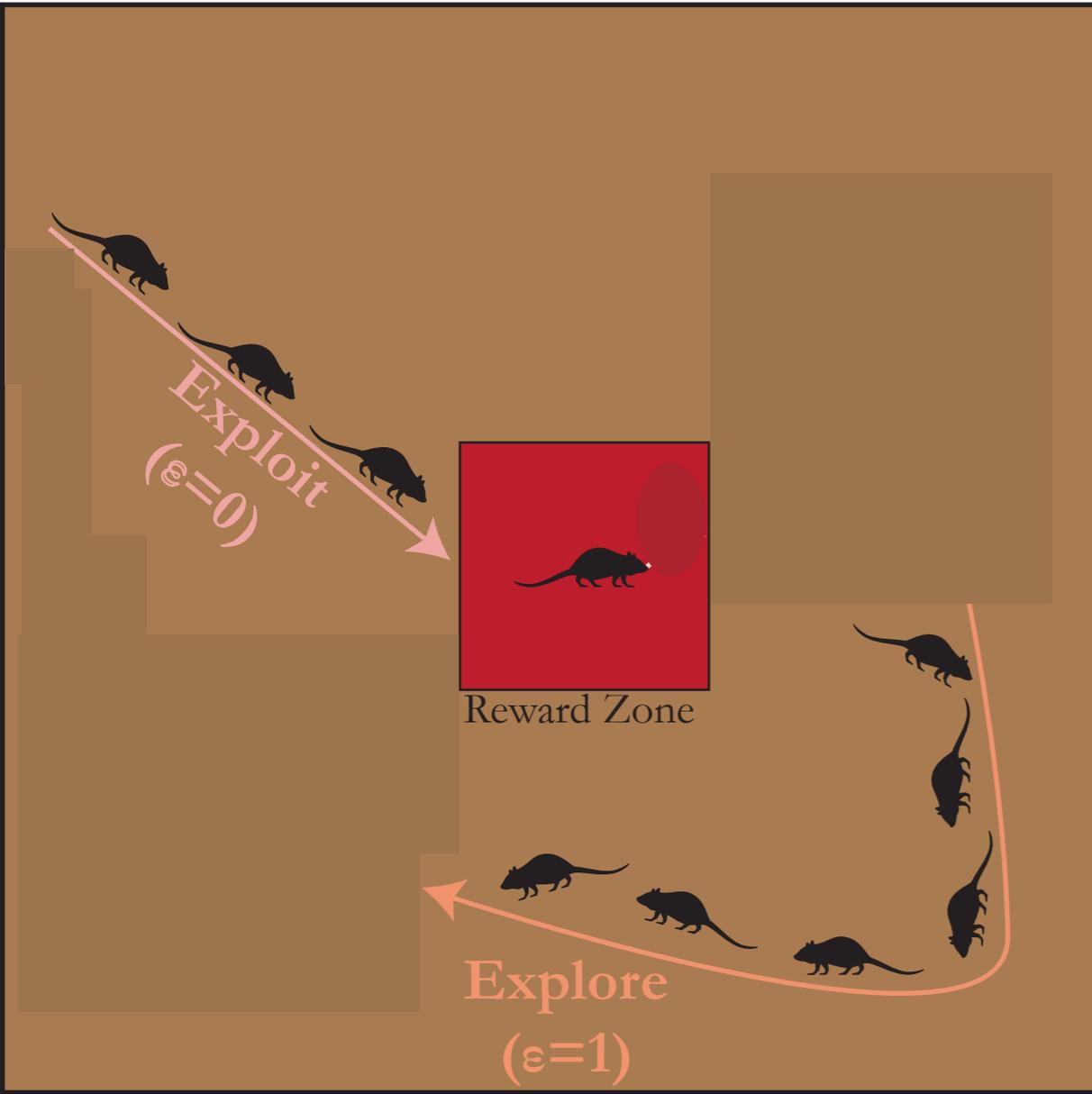
circuitry = 0.42
time = 7.4 s

Reward must be extrinsically modeled



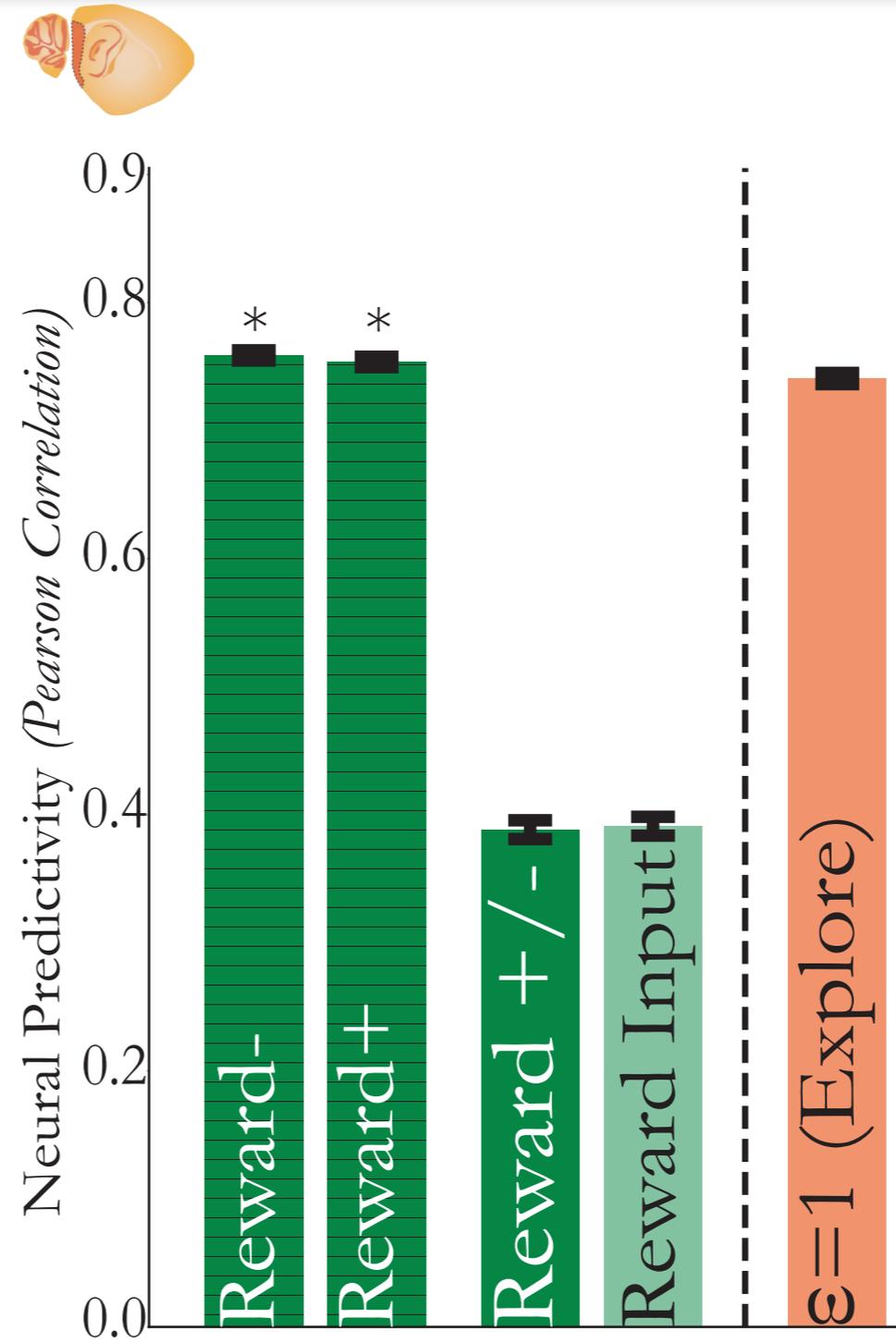
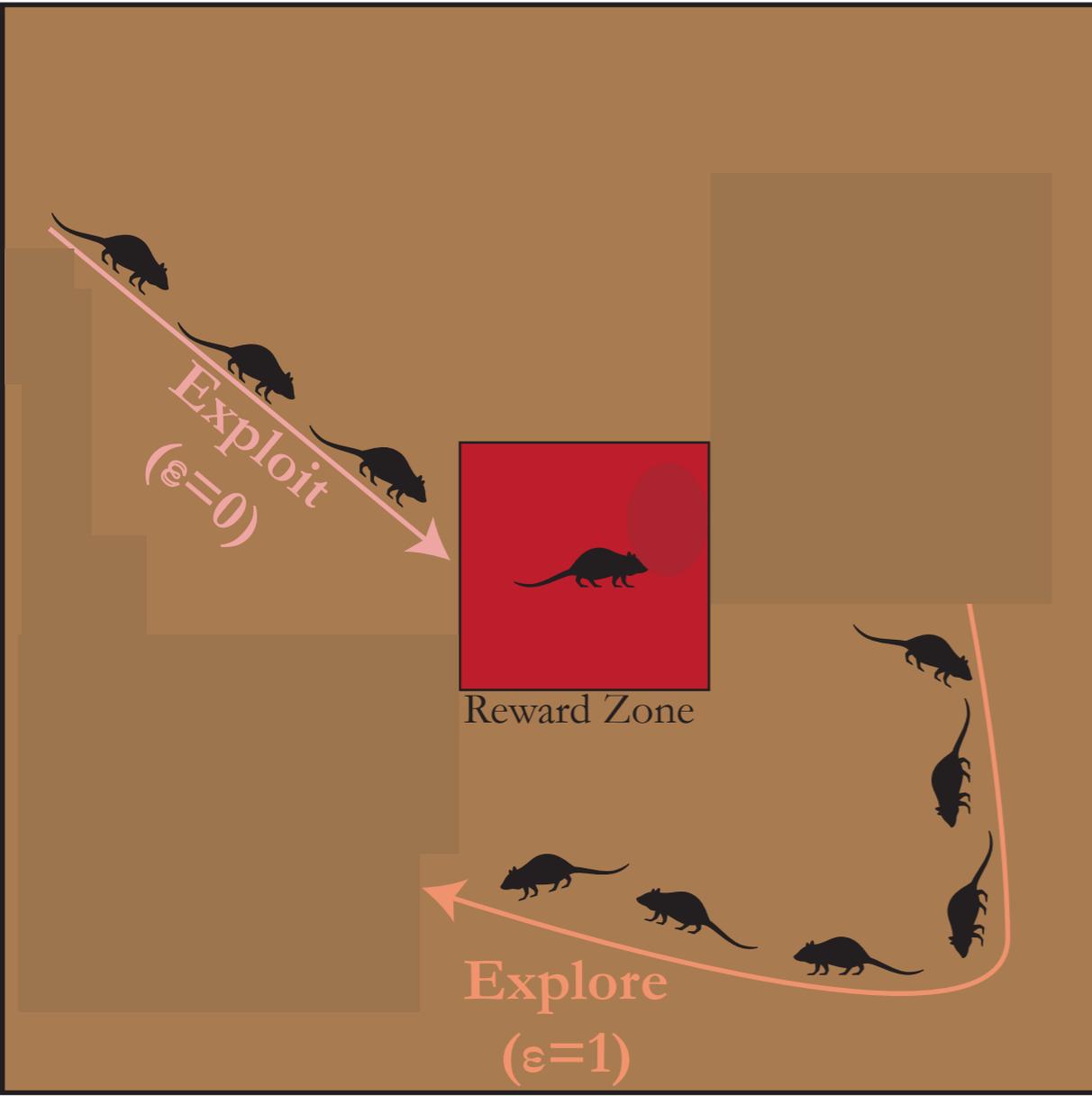
Inter-animal Consistency

Modeling rewards as biased path integration



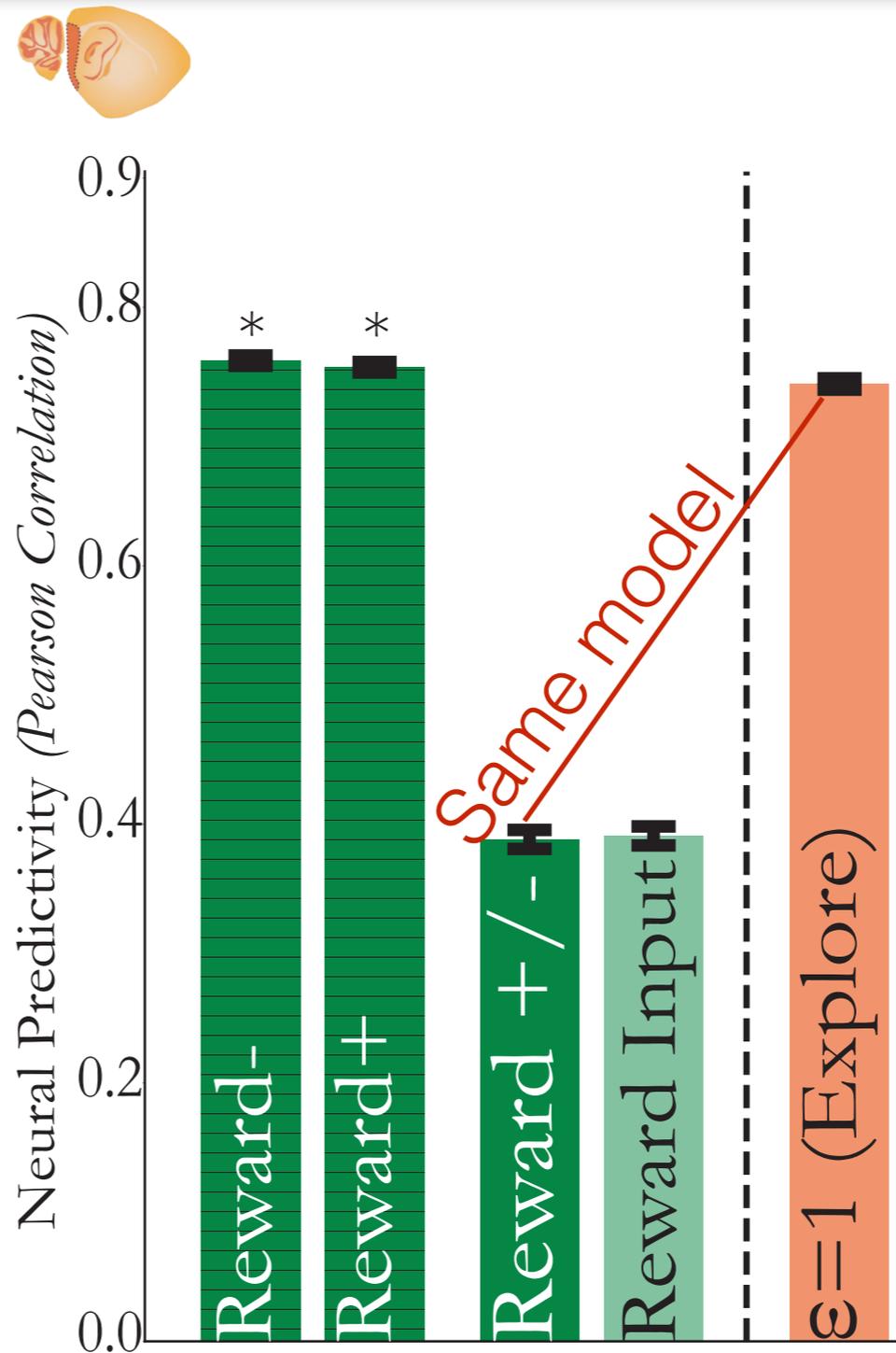
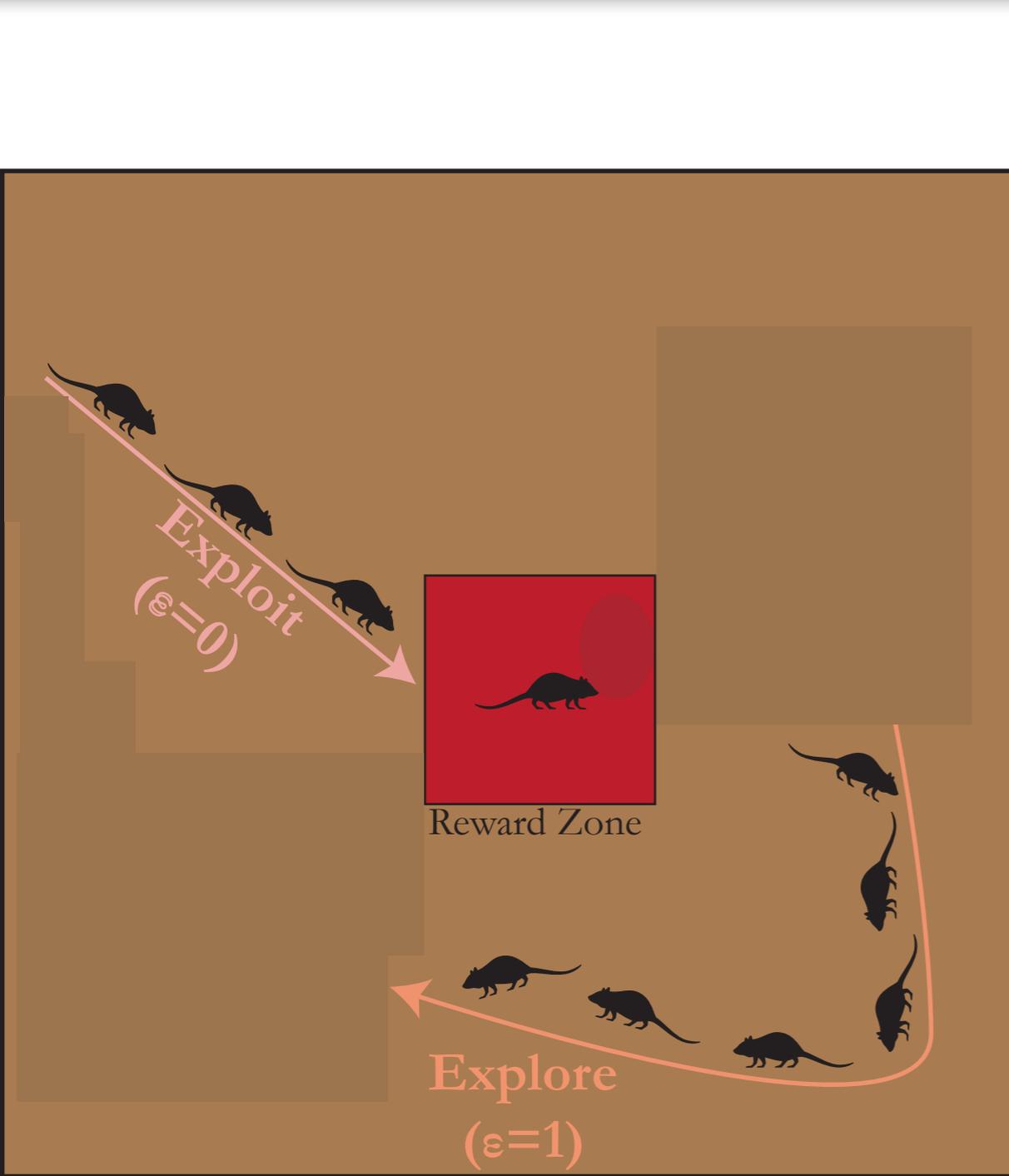
Inter-animal Consistency

Modeling rewards as biased path integration



Inter-animal Consistency

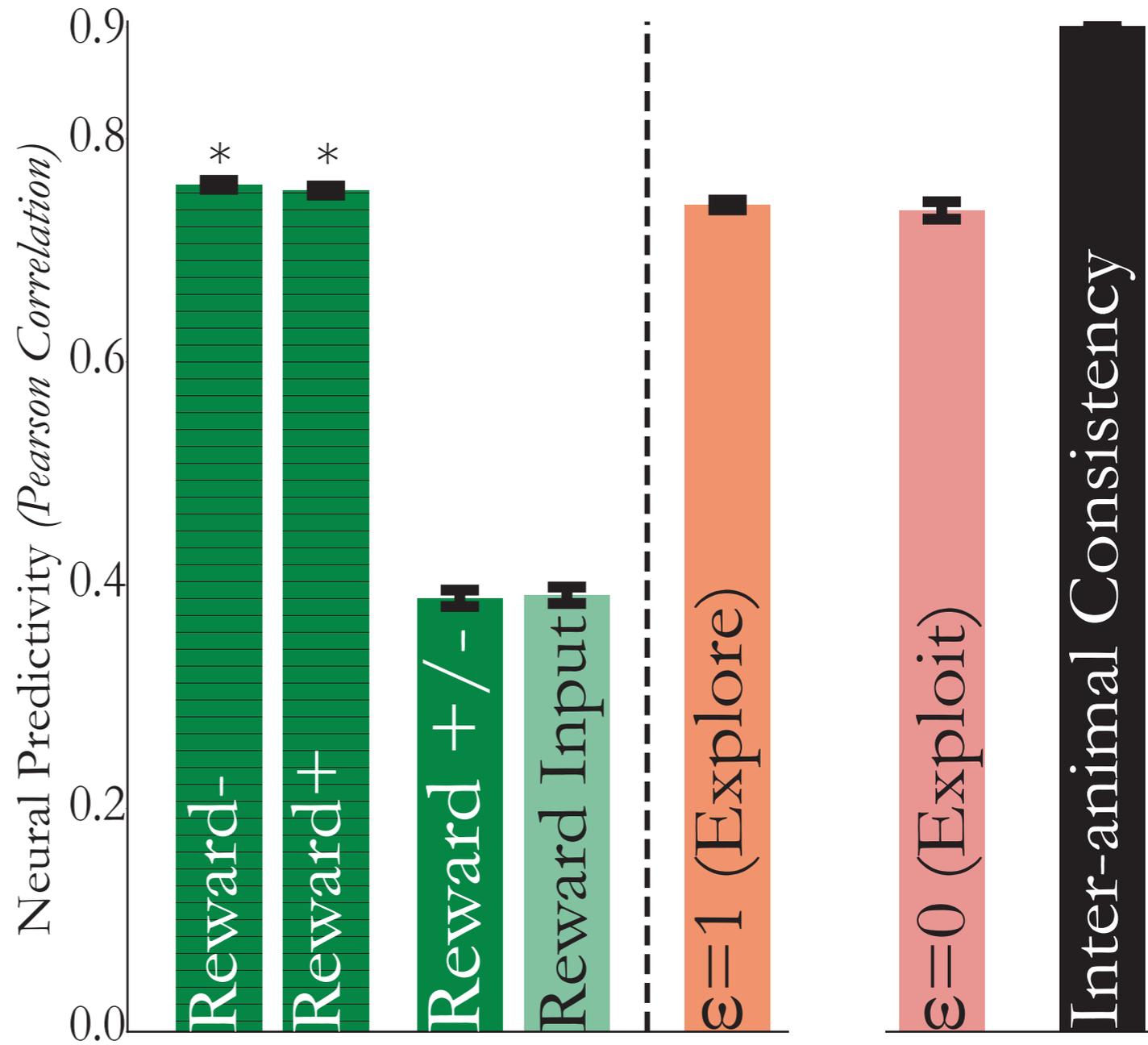
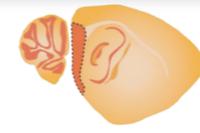
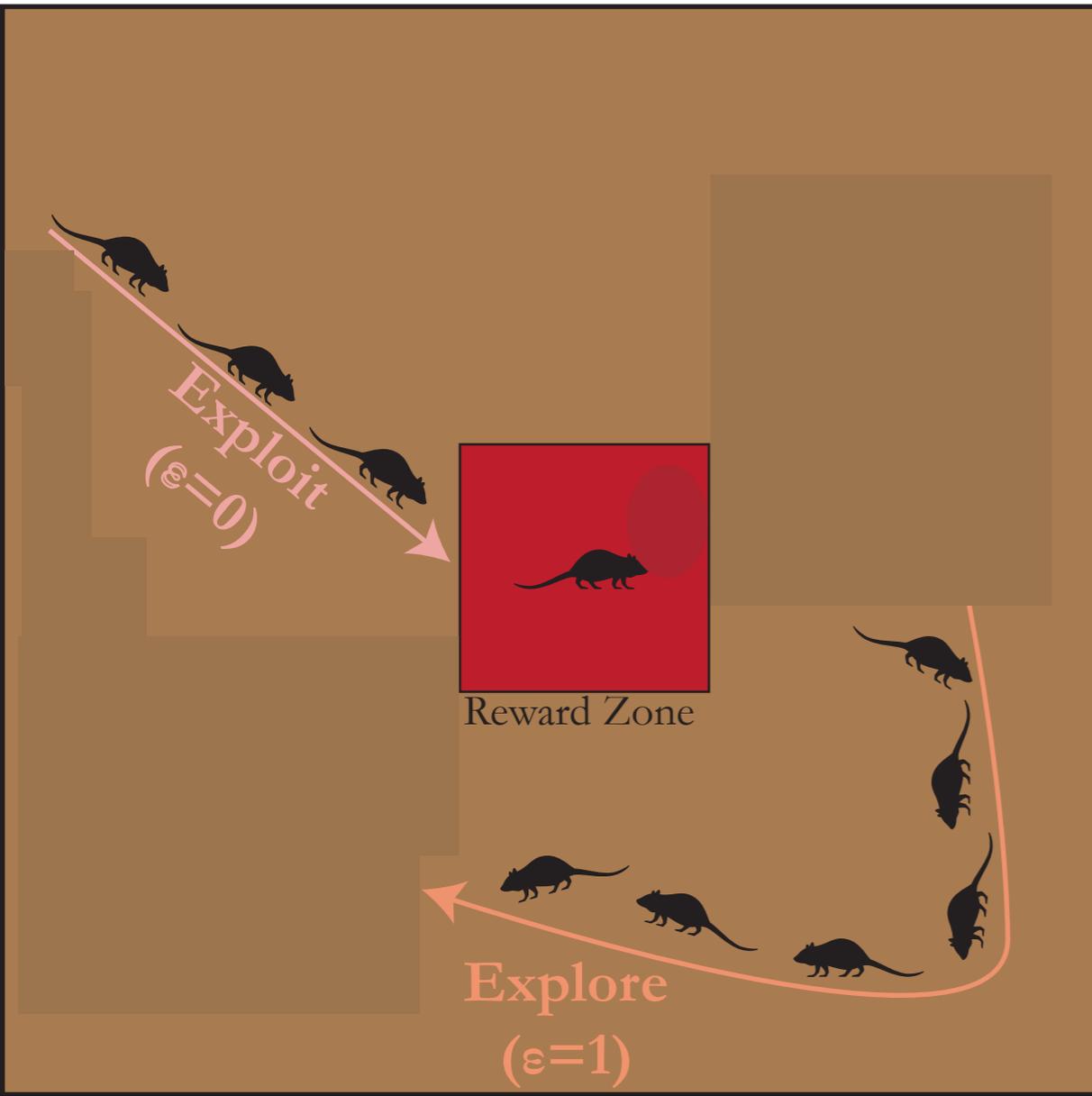
Modeling rewards as biased path integration



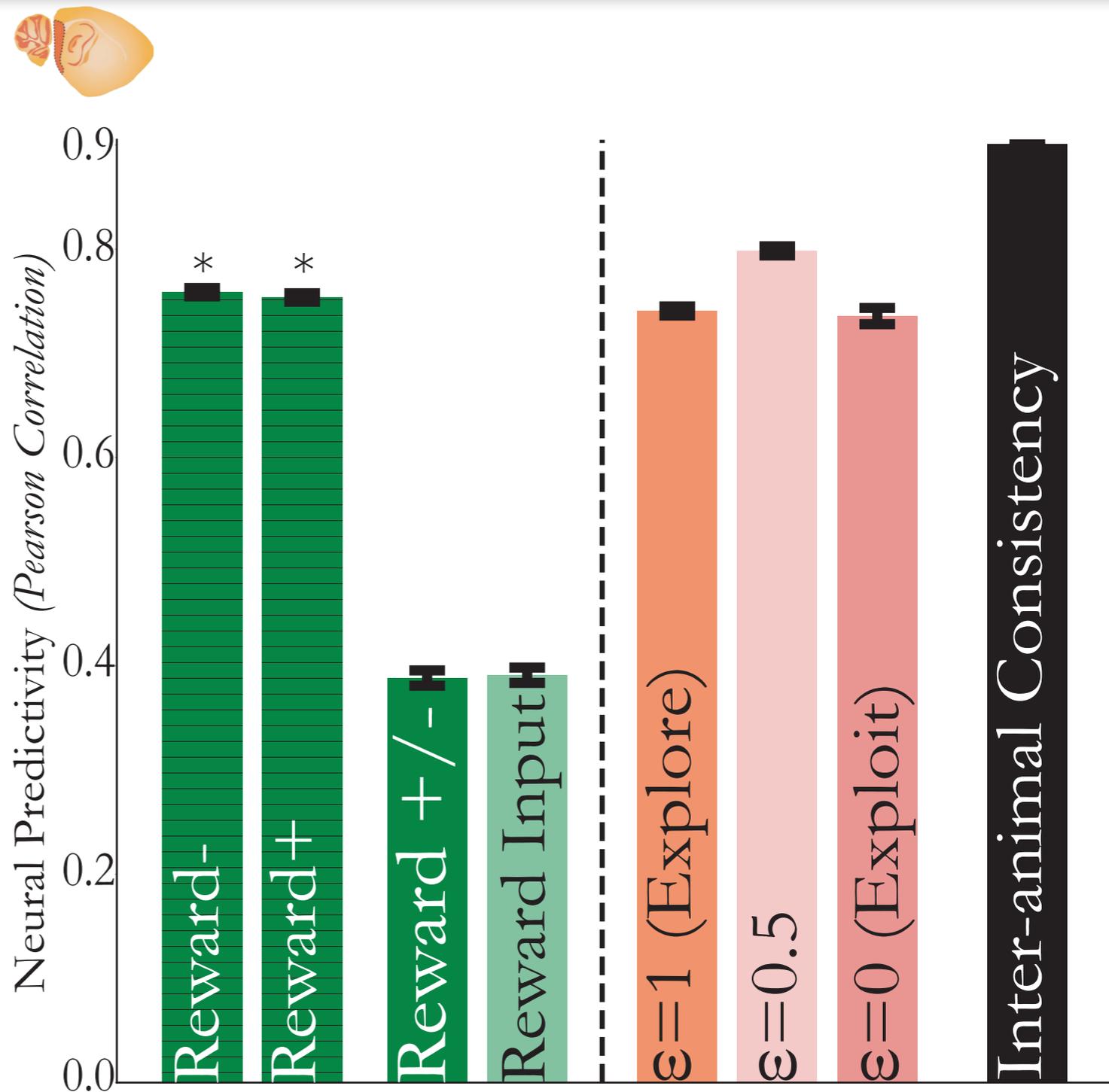
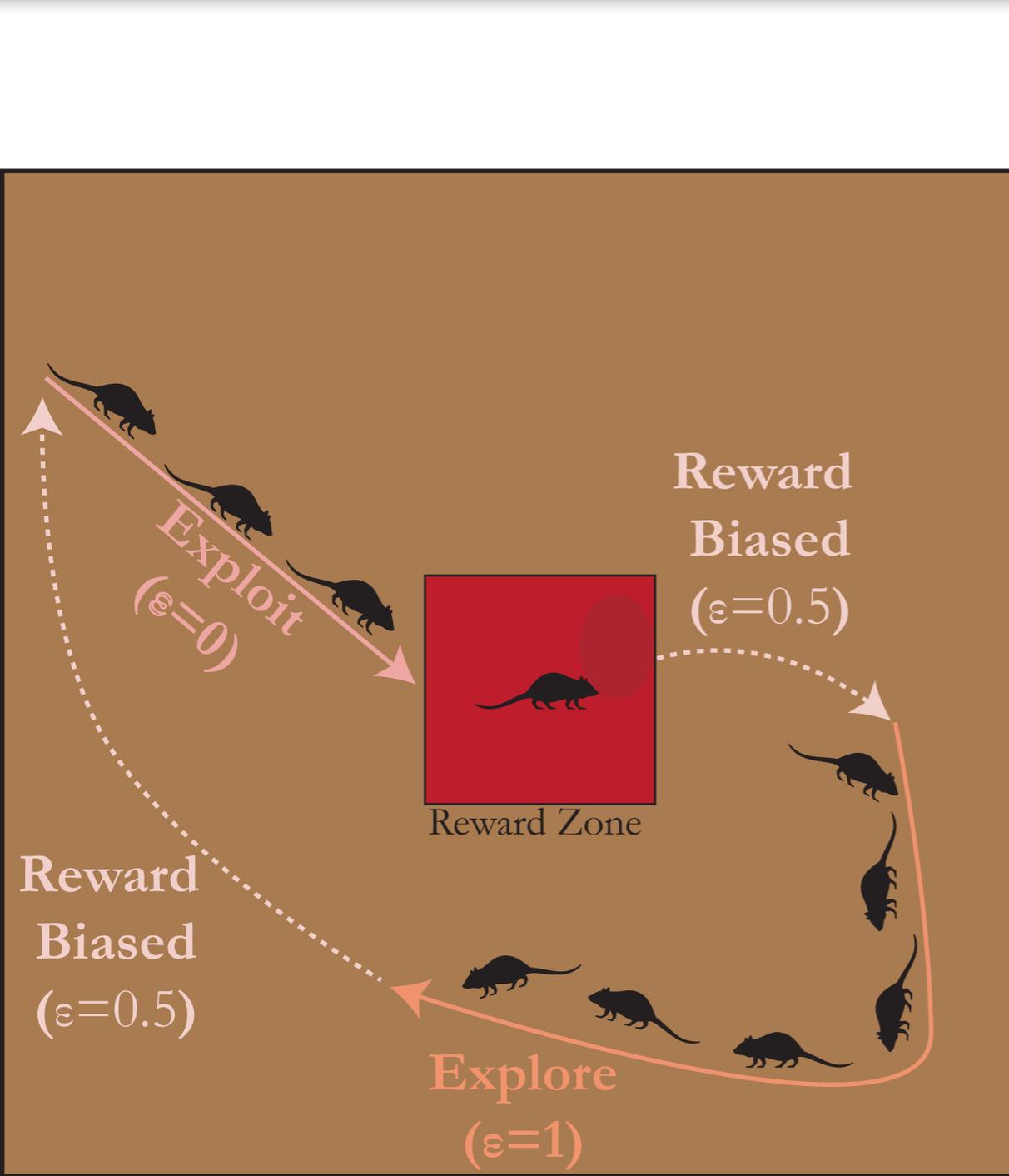
Inter-animal Consistency

Reward remapping strongly input driven!

Pure exploitation isn't any better

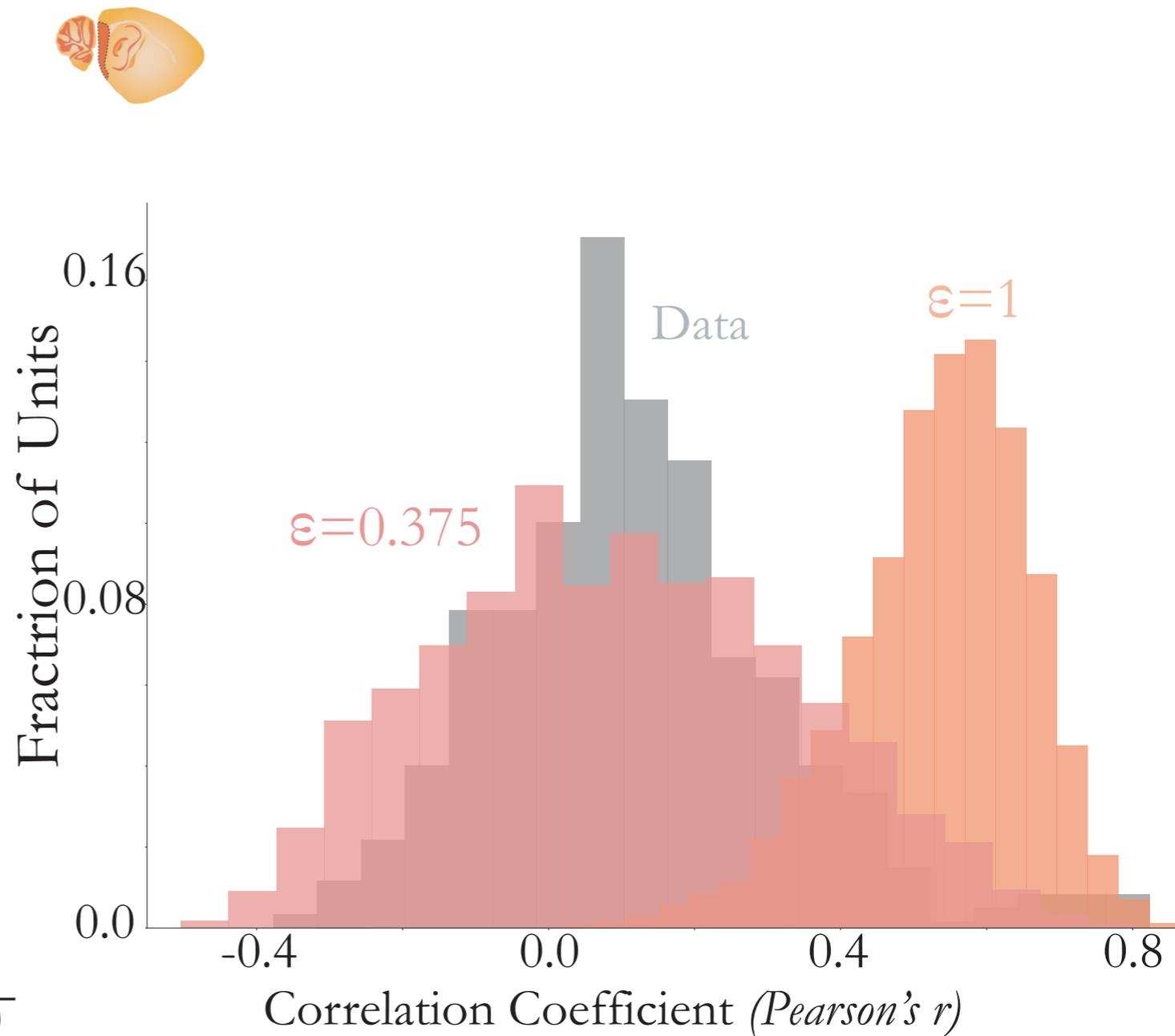
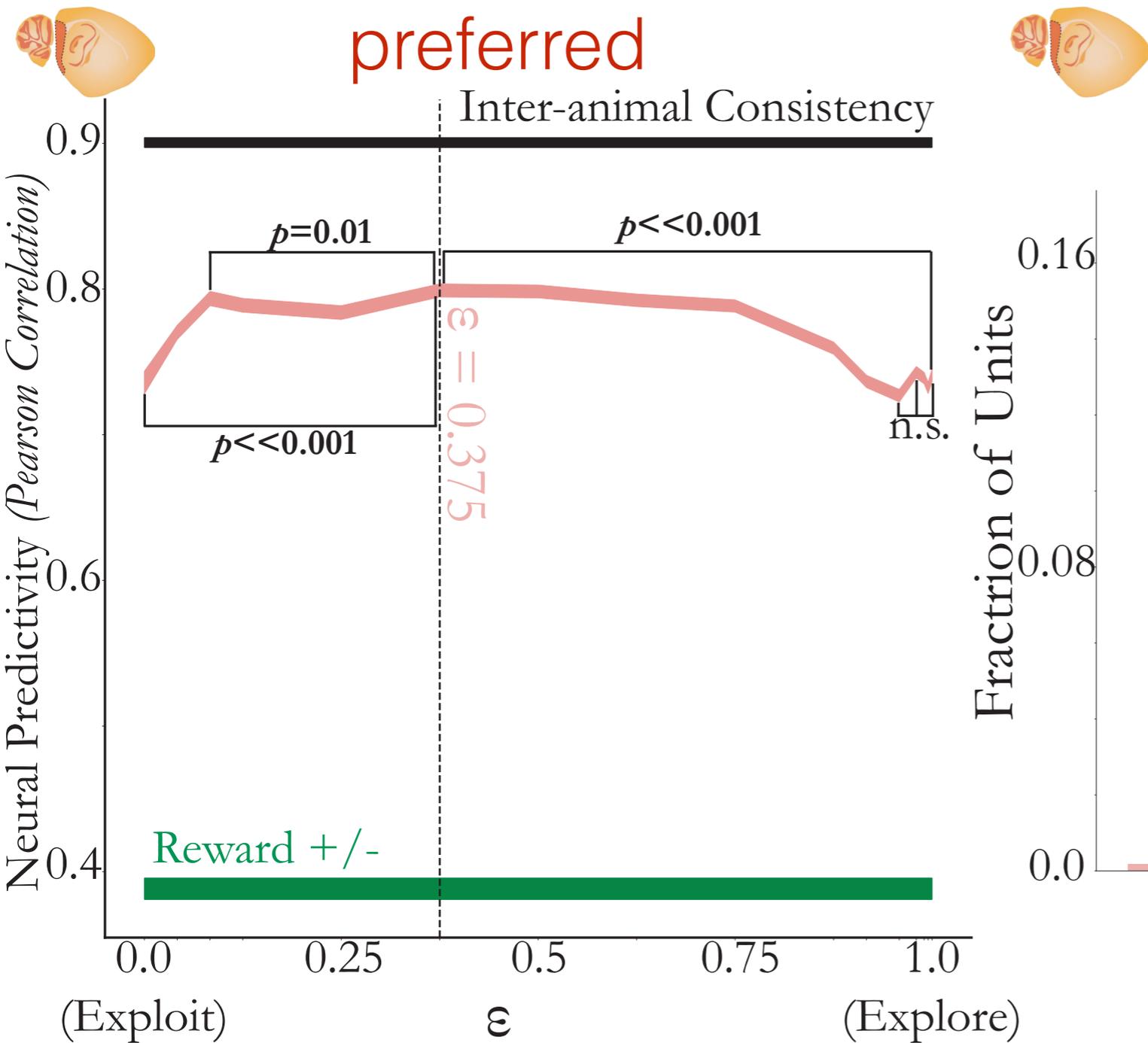


Reward-biased path integration captures remapping of responses in the presence of reward



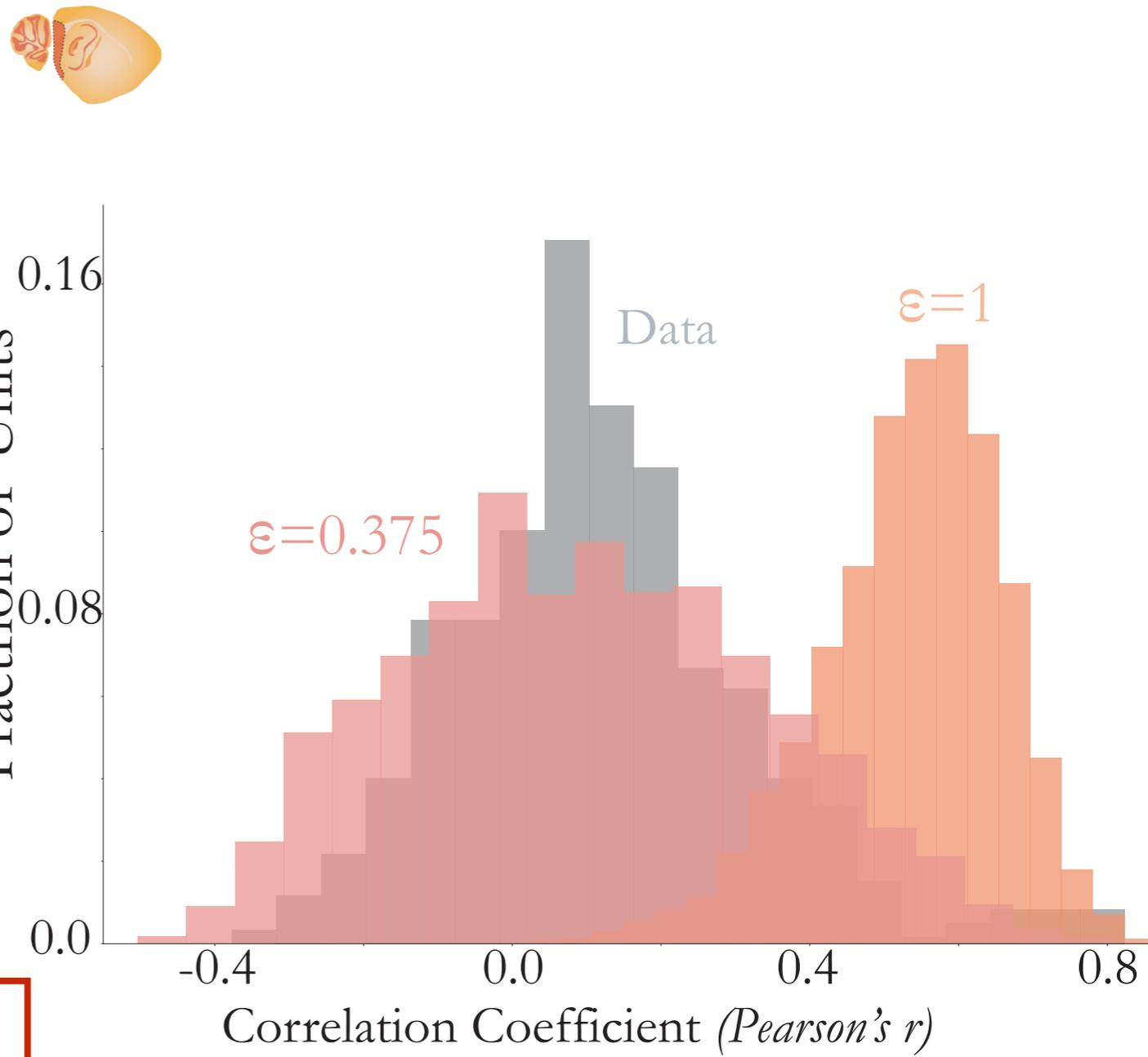
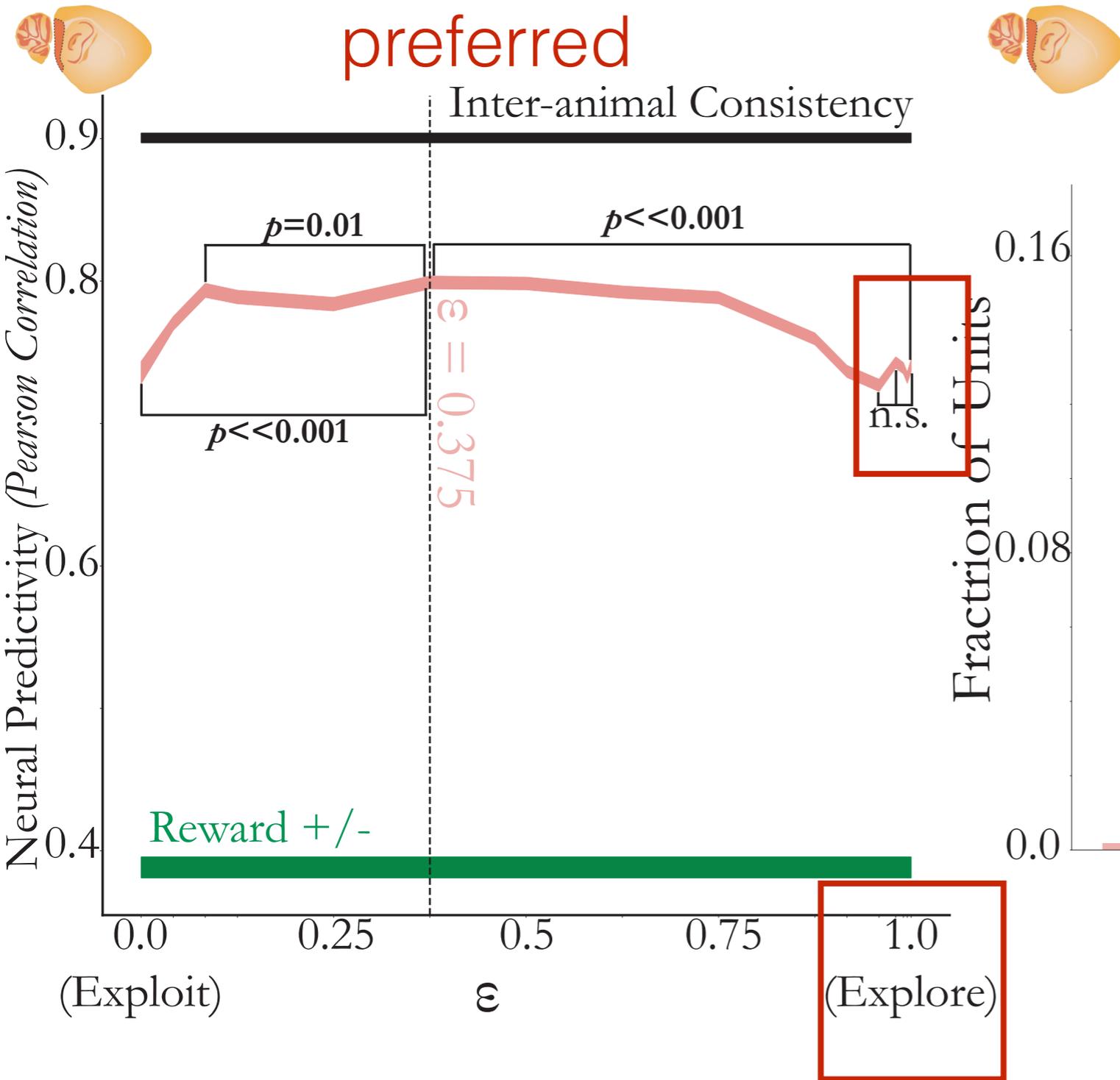
Reward-biased path integrator best captures remapping

Slight bias to exploitation preferred



Reward-biased path integrator best captures remapping

Slight bias to exploitation preferred



Reward remapping strongly input driven (but not completely)

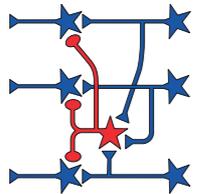
Takeaways

A = architecture class

T = task loss

1.

“Circuit”



3. “Ecological niche/behavior”



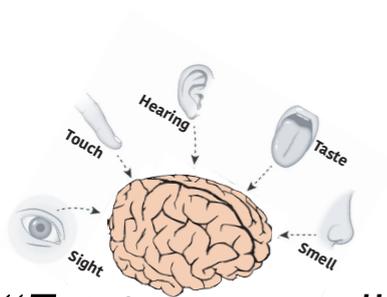
Neurobiological Puzzle(s):

1. How might we characterize what these heterogeneous cells do?
2. What functional role do these cells serve in the circuit, if any?

2.

“Environment”

D = data stream



Takeaways

A = architecture class

1. "Circuit"
gating + nonnegativity

T = task loss

3. "Ecological niche/behavior"
place cell integration
~~path integration~~

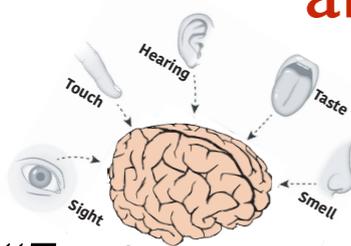
Neurobiological Puzzle(s):

1. How might we characterize what these heterogeneous cells do?
2. What functional role do these cells serve in the circuit, if any?

Partial Resolution:

1. Characterization: Close to perfect neural predictivity with the above constraints — more complex environments are needed!

2. Functional Role: Grid cells are not functionally unique! Both heterogeneous and grid cells arise jointly through task optimization.



2. "Environment"

D = data stream

Functions of the hippocampus

1. Behavioral inhibition theory (“slam on the breaks”)

2. Memory (Milner & Scoville from HM)

3. Spatial cognition

2.5: memory as map of conceptual space.

LETTER

doi:10.1038/nature21692

Mapping of a non-spatial dimension by the hippocampal–entorhinal circuit

Dmitriy Aronov¹, Rhino Nevers¹ & David W. Tank¹

“During spatial navigation, neural activity in the hippocampus and the medial entorhinal cortex (MEC) is correlated to navigational variables such as location, head direction, speed, and proximity to boundaries⁵. These activity patterns are thought to provide a maplike representation of physical space. However, the hippocampal–entorhinal circuit is involved not only in spatial navigation, but also in a variety of memory-guided behaviours. . . .

A conceptual framework reconciling these views is that spatial representation is just one example of a more general mechanism for encoding continuous, task-relevant variables.”

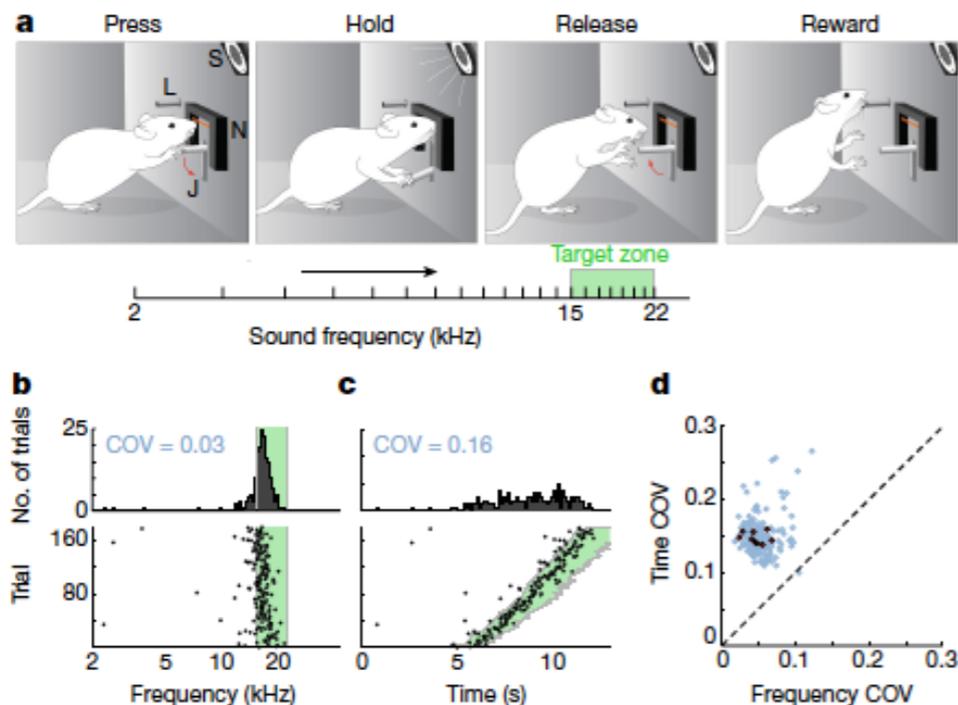
Hippocampus as a cognitive **non-spatial** map

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Figure 1 | Sound modulation task. **a**, Schematic of the SMT. Rat deflects a joystick to increase sound frequency and must release it in a target zone. J, joystick; L, lick tube; N, nosepoke; S, speaker. **b**, For a single session, frequencies at which the joystick was released on individual trials (bottom), and the distribution of these frequencies across trials (top). Most releases occurred early in the target zone (green). **c**, Same data as in **b**, but plotted as a function of time. The COV indicates a bigger spread of the distribution. **d**, COV values of frequencies and times at the joystick release across all 189 sessions from 9 rats (blue). Red circles, median values across sessions for each of the rats.

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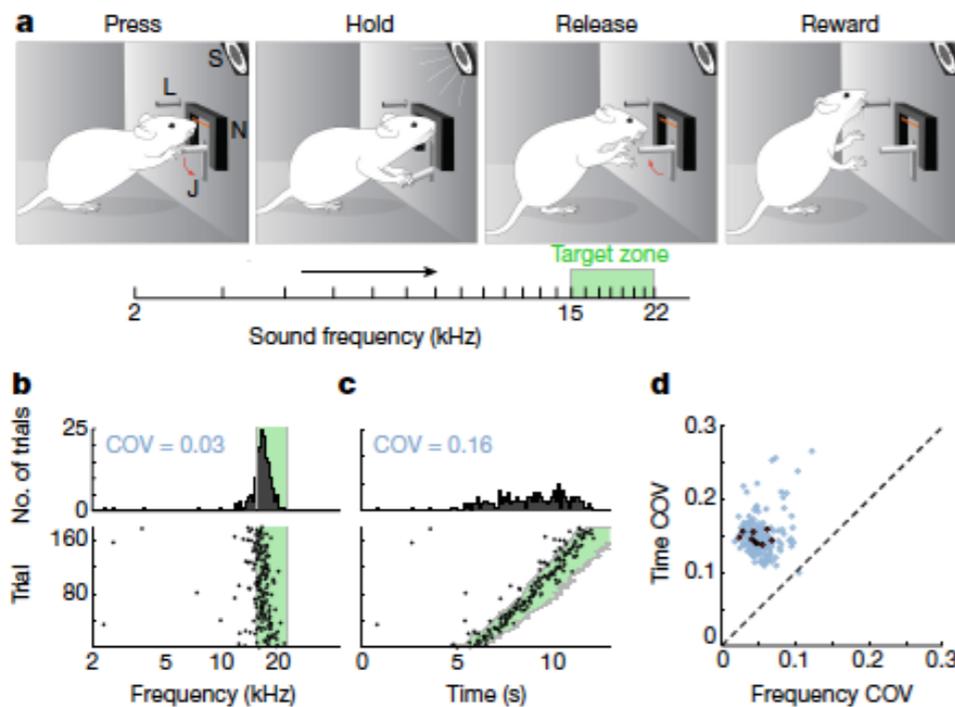


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