

1 **Title:**

2 Oscillatory stimuli differentiate adapting circuit topologies
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35 **Abstract**

36 Adapting pathways consist of negative feedback loops (NFLs) or incoherent feedforward loops (IFFLs),
37 which we show can be differentiated using oscillatory stimulation: NFLs but not IFFLs generically show
38 'refractory period stabilization' or 'period skipping'. Using these signatures and genetic rewiring we
39 identified the circuit dominating cell cycle timing in yeast. In *C. elegans* AWA neurons we uncovered a
40 Ca²⁺-NFL, difficult to find by other means, especially in wild-type, intact animals. (70 words)
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44 **Introduction**

45 A complementary approach to the gene-by-gene approach of molecular biology is to test for response
46 signatures (i.e., characteristic input-output features) that are associated with specific circuit motifs. A
47 confirmed signature establishes the outlines of a biological network before the components are known.

48 The requirements for measuring response signatures are minimal: an experimentally controlled stimulus
49 and a measurable output; biochemical or genetic manipulations are not inherently necessary. This makes
50 the approach attractive for many biological systems that are difficult to manipulate or have many
51 possible genes to pursue. For example, bistability, hysteresis, or irreversibility are signatures of positive
52 feedback loops and their detection has supported specific mechanisms(1-3).

53

54 Adaptation is a dynamic feature of biological systems, in which the output returns to (near) baseline
55 after stimulation onset. For circuit motifs capable of adaptation, generic response signatures are
56 currently unknown, even though adaptation is ubiquitous and serves important biological functions(4).

57

58 Only two basic types of circuits can exhibit adaptation: incoherent feedforward loops (IFFLs) and
59 negative feedback loops (NFLs)(5-7) (Fig. 1 A-D). **In adapting pathways, the stimulus S (e.g., an odor)**
60 **causes the temporary build-up of the response element R (e.g., intracellular Ca²⁺), and the subsequent**
61 **decrease in R, which is the hallmark of adaptation, is either independent of R / direct (IFFL) or**
62 **dependent on R / indirect (NFL):** In IFFLs, S also generates an inhibitor I independently of R, and I
63 interrupts the build-up of R or depletes R (Fig. 1 A). Alternatively, a factor X, which contributes to the
64 build-up of R, is depleted independently of R (Fig. 1 B). In an NFL, the generation of the inhibitor I (or
65 depletion of X) depends on the response R itself, i.e., I (or X) is downstream of R (Fig. 1 C, D). (The
66 output O of the pathway can be R itself or downstream of R (Fig. 1 A-D).) These 2x2 fundamental
67 options for adaptation (inhibition by I or depletion of X; dependence on R (NFL) or independence
68 (IFFL)) are logically exhaustive, which is supported by computational exploration(6) and rigorous
69 mathematical proofs(7). **(Ours and previous definitions(6,7) of IFFLs and NFLs agree.)** Thus, all models
70 describing individual adaptation mechanisms, including integral control(5,8) and state-dependent
71 inactivation(9,10) models, can be subsumed in these two categories; rewriting the models in
72 mathematically equivalent forms can help expose their topologies, see Results and Supplementary Notes.
73 (In real pathways, we expect and find that different circuits with different topologies dominate at
74 different timescales.)

75

76 Response signatures for IFFLs and NFLs would help elucidate a wide spectrum of poorly understood
77 biological systems; for example, such measurements ought to resolve contrasting mechanisms which
78 have been proposed for the same systems, e.g., the gonadotropin-releasing hormone pathway(11,12).
79 The distinction between IFFLs and NFLs is itself biologically important because each can lead to
80 different system behavior, e.g., steady state or oscillations.(13)

81

82 Dynamical stimuli have been used to explore biological pathways(14) and to uncover interesting new
83 biology(15-18). Specifically, step-like and ramp-like inputs were applied to distinguish specific
84 models(8,19-23). In an attempt to explore the general applicability of these approaches, we simulated
85 simple adapting models and found various counterexamples, which show that it is at least unclear how
86 previous discriminants can be used generally (Fig. S1 A-H). Also, varying stimulus strengths, e.g.,
87 ramps, can be problematic: many inducible promoters are all-or-nothing and thus threshold the stimuli;
88 furthermore, at different concentrations or strengths, stimuli may activate different subnetworks(24),
89 confounding the analysis.

90

91

92

93 **Results**

94 We found that a single on-off stimulus pulse does not suffice for discriminating adapting circuit types
95 since IFFL and NFL models fit the same experimental adaptation time course equally well (Fig. S1 I, J).

96

97 **Refractory period stabilization**

98 The next more complicated on-off stimulation pattern consists of two or more pulses. Considering two
99 simple representations of IFFLs and NFLs (Fig. 1 E, F, also see Fig. S1 K, L), we noticed a fundamental
100 difference in their responses to a second stimulus pulse: In an IFFL, the inhibitor I grows (activator X
101 decreases) independently of the response (up to saturation) (Fig. 1 A, B), and, therefore, the response to
102 a second stimulus pulse should be smaller, the longer the first stimulus pulse was (Fig. 1 E). Considering
103 NFLs (Fig. 1 F), on the other hand, we see that if the first stimulus was long enough for adaptation to
104 ‘kick in,’ the entire circuit can be effectively shut off and the inhibition mechanism (I or X) can begin to
105 reset; lengthening the first stimulus pulse further matters little for the second response (Fig. 1 F). So, the
106 recovery time or the “refractory period” should always be increasing with the stimulus duration in IFFLs,
107 and should be stabilized (robust) in NFLs.

108

109 We needed a general, rigorous definition for the refractory period, and thus considered repeated on-off
110 stimuli of duration d and period T ; we defined the refractory period $T_{\max}(d)$ as the period at which the
111 time-averaged output $\langle O(t, d, T) \rangle =: O(d, T)$ is maximal for fixed d (Fig. 1 G, H). At the refractory
112 period, the stimuli produce maximal output. This generalizes the common understanding of the
113 refractory period, where for T below T_{\max} , stimulus pulses are too fast for the system to recover due to
114 adaptation ($O(d, T)$ decreases with decreasing $T < T_{\max}$), and above T_{\max} , the responses recover but their
115 time average decreases ($O(d, T) \sim 1/T$ for $T \gg T_{\max}$).

116

117 For the IFFL and NFL models in Fig. 1 E, F, we calculated $T_{\max}(d)$ analytically and found that the slope
118 of $T_{\max}(d)$ is >1 everywhere for the IFFL model while the NFL model’s $T_{\max}(d)$ is flat (slope=0) for
119 intermediate d (Fig. 1 I, J), which describes refractory period stabilization in Fig. 1 E, F quantitatively.
120 To check more complicated models numerically, we set $1/2$ as a practical threshold for the slope
121 $\partial T_{\max}/\partial d$, in-between the minimum slopes in Fig. 1 I, J. We consider the refractory period ‘stabilized,’ if
122 its slope is below $1/2$ in an appropriate range of pulse durations d (to be determined by numerical
123 exploration, see below).

124

125 There are a number of inherent advantages to defining the refractory period by way of periodic stimuli
126 and the maximum of the time-averaged output (see Supplementary Notes), including for the
127 mathematical analysis and for the experimental data analysis. Crucially, this paradigm allows us to only
128 explicitly analyze the refractory periods of small circuits; the same results hold ($T_{\max}(d)$ is invariant) for
129 an infinite number of additions to these circuits (Fig. 1 K and Supplementary Notes).

130

131 **Period skipping**

132 Another response signature can be deduced by considering that when an NFL adapts to a stimulus, the
133 entire circuit can be shut off from the stimulus until the inhibition resets and the system recovers (Fig. 1
134 L). Any stimuli administered while the circuit is insulated ought to have little effect. This would result in
135 responses ‘skipping’ stimulus pulses (a simple response pattern being 0-1-0-1-0-... (Fig. 1 L), although
136 more complicated patterns are possible (Fig. S1 M, N)).

137

138 IFFLs cannot exhibit such dynamics because of the following properties (mathematical proofs in
139 Supplementary Notes): (1) Period skipping cannot occur in purely feedforward systems (such as the
140 IFFLs modeled in this work including Fig. 1 E, I) because these systems entrain to the stimulus period T .
141 (2) Adding positive feedback loops (PFLs) to a (purely feedforward) IFFL does not produce period
142 skipping because a PFL system of two species cannot show period skipping, and (3) general PFL
143 systems cannot access period skipping solutions with on-off stimuli. These results rule out period
144 skipping in biologically realistic IFFL circuits, leaving that possibility generically to NFLs.

145

146 **Generality and uniqueness of discriminants**

147 To explore how generic or unique these response signatures are (uniqueness of period skipping in NFLs
148 is guaranteed), we systematically analyzed nonlinear IFFL and NFL models numerically. (Linear
149 systems entrain and their $O(d, T)$ are monotonic.)

150
151 First, we ruled out that the observed differences between IFFLs and NFLs were particular to the abrupt
152 nature of the inhibition function or to the output functions in Fig. 1 I, J. So, we replaced the step function
153 $\theta(I_0 - I)$ by Michaelis-Menten terms with Hill coefficients ≥ 1 and varied parameters and output functions
154 (see Table S1). None of the IFFL models showed refractory period stabilization or period skipping,
155 while 71% of the NFL models, which showed sufficient adaptation (see Methods), did. Thus, the two
156 NFL signatures were robust to such variations.

157
158 For a more comprehensive exploration of model space, we generated $>6 \cdot 10^5$ implementations of IFFLs
159 and NFLs with 86 differing wiring diagrams, interaction types, and numbers of nodes. Specifically, we
160 analyzed systems with i) inhibitors I or activators X (Fig. 1 A-D), ii) inhibitors that block the increase of
161 a target or degrade the target, iii) nonzero baseline activities, iv) saturation due to Michaelis-Menten
162 kinetics, v) nonlinearities due to cooperativity, and vi) additional dynamical nodes (Fig. S2). We varied
163 parameters in an unbiased manner (0.1, 1, 10 for most parameters). We focused particularly on finding
164 false positives (IFFL loops showing refractory period buffering) rather than minimizing false negatives
165 (NFL loops failing to show signatures), which underestimates the generality of period skipping in NFLs
166 (see Methods). For this reason also, we limited ourselves to 4 subtypes of NFLs with 3+1 nodes (+1 for
167 output node) but covered all 82 possible IFFLs with 3+1 or 4+1 nodes. As expected, none of the IFFL
168 circuits exhibited period skipping. A small number of IFFL circuits showed refractory period
169 stabilization when the stimulus duration d was small, where our previous argument based on
170 intermediate pulse durations d (Fig. 1 E, F) does not apply. Requiring that refractory period stabilization
171 occurs when d is large enough (1.5x adaptation time, i.e., time to peak when a step stimulus is turned on),
172 left few false positives, and the likelihood of assigning an NFL circuit correctly would be 150:1 (Table
173 1). (See Fig. S3 for examples of $T_{\max}(d)$ plots.)

174
175 Surprisingly, both signatures occurred with or without cooperativity. Also, refractory period stabilization
176 was detected about as often as period skipping in our computational searches (0.8:1 in the data
177 underlying Table 1, see Methods), suggesting that neither is rare.

178
179 **Published models**

180 We also analyzed two classes of models from the literature that are thought to describe a wide spectrum
181 of different biological systems (see Supplementary Notes for details): 1) The state-dependent
182 inactivation model(9,10) is essentially an IFFL and neither showed period skipping nor refractory period
183 stabilization, as expected. 2) Fold-change detection models(25) can be either IFFLs or NFLs. Using the
184 models in ref.(26), we detected period skipping in the NFLs, but neither NFL signature in the IFFLs, as
185 expected.

186
187 **Application to experimental systems**

188 Experimentally, we began with trial runs to establish the pulse widths and periods that were appropriate
189 for the biological system at hand. We chose the smallest and the largest appropriate pulse durations to
190 find T_{\max} at those pulse durations. (By the mean value theorem, it suffices to determine the slope of a
191 straight line through two data points to infer the slope of any smooth interpolation at a point in-between,
192 which suffices to show refractory period stabilization.) In that process, we also detected period skipping
193 around the smallest pulse periods we applied, which an analysis of the simple NFL models in Fig. 1 F, J
194 suggested (Fig. S4).

195

196 **Circuits dominating cell cycle timing in *S. cerevisiae***

197 The cell cycle control system in budding yeast involves dozens of interacting genes and consists at its
198 core of at least the CDK-APC/C oscillator(27) (Fig. 2 A, subcircuits in B-F) and a proposed ‘global
199 transcriptional oscillator’ (GTO)(28-31), a cyclical chain of transcription factors (Fig. 2 G). Given the
200 many different subsystems, it is unclear which one(s) predominantly set(s) cell cycle dynamics, i.e.,
201 timing and robustness, if any.

202

203 By deleting *CLN1-3* cyclins and introducing a *MET-CLN2* construct (Start cyclin *CLN2* expressed
204 during methionine withdrawal (-Met)), we eliminated the PFL and the early NFL 1 (Fig. 2 B, D) and
205 placed cell cycle Start under exogenous control in *clnΔ*(=cln1-3Δ MET-CLN2)* cells(32) (Fig. 2 H-K).
206 With a long *MET-CLN2* pulse which stops short of initiating a second cell cycle, transcription of cell-
207 cycle periodic genes rises and falls once(32), demonstrating that the system adapts to Cln2, which rules
208 out the simplest version of the GTO lacking IFFLs or NFLs. We also introduced a *CLN2pr-YFP*
209 construct to report Start (SBF) cluster gene activity, which turns on roughly with budding (Fig. 2 H).

210

211 We administered five -Met (Cln2 on) pulses of varying durations d and periods T (Fig. 2 I, J). For long
212 periods, cells responded to all five pulses ($\approx 60\%$ ($n=102$) at $d=50'$, $T=65'$) (Fig. 2 I). In contrast, with
213 short periods, cells commonly skipped stimulus pulses (14% ($n=126$) performed 5 cell cycles with $d=50'$,
214 $T=55'$) (Fig. 2 J). Given our mathematical results, we concluded that the overall dynamic was governed
215 by NFLs, e.g., the early (2), late, or GTO NFLs (Fig. 2 E-G); the IFFLs (Fig. 2 C, G) played a minor
216 role, if any. (For skipping in a related context, see ref.(33))

217

218 In this system, the refractory period describes the time it takes for the cell cycle to reset, potentially
219 correlated with cell cycle completion. Which subcircuits, if any, make this timing robust is unknown.
220 We defined the output $O(d, T)$ as the fraction of consistently responding (non-skipping) cells, multiplied
221 by their *CLN2pr-YFP* signal (see Methods and Fig. S5). The peak in $O(d, T)$, defining the refractory
222 period, was due to fast pulses lowering the fraction of cells that responded to *MET-CLN2* pulses and
223 large periods decreasing the time-averaged *CLN2pr-YFP* signal. T_{\max} was remarkably stable ($73'-74'$,
224 \approx cell cycle period for mother cells in SC glucose) as we changed d ($=30', 50'$) (Fig. 2 L-N, slope $T_{\max}(d)$
225 $< 1/2$ with $>99.9\%$ confidence). So, in addition to period skipping, refractory period stabilization also
226 indicated that cell cycle dynamics was set by NFLs (e.g., early (2), late, or GTO), not the IFFLs.

227

228 We wondered whether refractory period robustness was a consequence of the interlocking NFLs in the
229 system (Fig. 2 A, K). So, we deleted *CLB1-6* cyclins and induced mitotic cyclin *CLB2* constitutively in
230 *clnΔ*clbΔ*(=clnΔ*clb1-6Δ GALL-CLB2)* cells in galactose, which eliminated the early NFL 2 (Fig. 2 E)
231 as well as any transcriptional control of mitotic cyclins (Fig. 2 O). Again, the refractory period turned
232 out to be well-stabilized ($128'-135'$, \approx cell cycle period in SC galactose) when d ($=50', 90'$) changed (Fig.
233 2 P-R, slope $T_{\max}(d) < 1/2$ with $>98\%$ confidence). Thus, the early NFL 2, in addition to the early NFL 1
234 and the IFFLs, was unnecessary for normal overall timing and robustness in the cell cycle control
235 system.

236

237 To investigate whether the late NFL (Fig. 2 F) between B-type cyclins and APC was responsible for
238 refractory period stabilization, we constructed a *clnΔ* GALI-CLB2kd* strain, in which a pulse of
239 galactose/-Met simultaneously induced cell cycle entry, Start transcription, and a pulse of undegradable
240 Clb2kd, which blocks mitotic exit (plausibly ultimately overcome by autonomous Cdc14 pulses)(34,35).
241 This system constituted an artificial IFFL (Fig. 2 S). Now, $T_{\max}(d)$ changed markedly between $132'$ at
242 $d=40'$ and $>167'$ at $d=75'$ (Fig. 2 T-V, slope $T_{\max}(d) > 1/2$ with $> 99.9\%$ confidence). This was due to
243 longer Clb2kd induction blocking Start transcription for longer periods, as expected for an IFFL (Fig. 1

244 E). So, this artificial IFFL revealed the predicted $T_{\max}(d)$ signature for IFFLs; thus, our procedure was
245 effective at detecting IFFLs, if they existed. Furthermore, breaking or overriding all three CDK-APC/C
246 NFLs, including the late Clb1,2-CDK-APC/C loop, finally eliminated refractory period stabilization; the
247 late Clb1,2-CDK-APC/C NFL dominated the dynamics; the other circuits, including the GTO adaptation
248 loops, played a minor role in the overall cell cycle dynamics.

249

250 **Circuit for adaptation in *C. elegans* AWA neurons**

251 Response adaptation is a core feature of most neurons and plays a key role in behavior.(4) We turned to
252 sensory neurons in *C. elegans*, several of which, e.g., AWA, ADL, and ASH, show a spike and
253 subsequent adaptation in intracellular Ca^{2+} upon step-like odor stimulation. Ca^{2+} adaptation,
254 specifically, is thought to play a key role in *C. elegans* behavior(24,36). We focused on the AWA
255 neuron pair, which is one of two main chemoattractive olfactory sensory neuron pairs in *C. elegans*(37).
256 Although many genes involved in *C. elegans* sensory processing have been discovered, a molecular
257 circuit-level understanding of adaptation, a key neuronal computation, is currently lacking.

258

259 We analyzed odor-evoked Ca^{2+} responses in intact, wild-type animals (Fig. 3 A). We stimulated worms
260 expressing an AWA-specific Ca^{2+} sensor (GCaMP)(24,38), with periodic on-off pulses of diacetyl, a
261 known AWA odor(38) (Fig. S6 A-G and Methods for details). We measured total AWA Ca^{2+} output for
262 seven different pulse periods T at two pulse durations d ($=10''$, $20''$) (Fig. 3 B-D, see E for a sample
263 trace). (We first administered a series of 10 preparatory odor pulses allowing responses to
264 stabilize(24,38) and for calibration across recordings (Methods).) The output peaked at refractory period
265 $T_{\max}=37''$ - $38''$ at both pulse durations (Fig. 3 B-D); thus, the slope of $T_{\max}(d)$ was close to zero in-
266 between ($<1/2$ with confidence 0.96) and was therefore stabilized, indicating an NFL.

267

268 Also, with fast odor pulses ($T=15''$ or $20''$), many of the worms showed clearly noticeable period
269 skipping (Fig. 3 F). We devised a statistical test (p_{osc}) for detecting low-frequency modulations(32)
270 (Methods) and observed a significant jump in the number of worms with low-frequency response
271 modulations in our $T=15''$ or $T=20''$ recordings compared to other periods (Fig. 3 G). According to our
272 mathematical analysis, this was another indicator of an NFL.

273

274 We wondered whether Ca^{2+} forms an NFL onto itself. In the absence of our measurements, we had no
275 particular reason to pursue this hypothesis given that previous results, if anything, suggested an
276 IFFL(39,40). We tested for a Ca^{2+} -NFL in AWA by dynamically manipulating Ca^{2+} levels using
277 thapsigargin, a widely-used inhibitor of SERCA Ca^{2+} -pumps, which remove Ca^{2+} from the cytosol(41).
278 We added thapsigargin to the media for ten odor pulses (Fig. 3 H). The odor-induced Ca^{2+} responses
279 surged initially, as expected for thapsigargin; however, the responses adapted again within 5-7 odor
280 pulses, consistent with Ca^{2+} boosting its own inhibition mechanism. Removal of thapsigargin caused a
281 depression of Ca^{2+} levels (hyper-adaptation) compared to the no-drug control (Fig. 3 I, J), which is
282 consistent with the inhibition mechanism decaying slowly, reflecting a memory of elevated Ca^{2+} levels.
283 (In contrast, elevated Ca^{2+} would not increase inhibition in an IFFL, and after thapsigargin removal,
284 odor responses would be at normal levels.) Subsequent recovery showed that over-adaptation was not
285 due to (permanent) damage. Furthermore, longer thapsigargin treatment excluded Ca^{2+} depletion or
286 non-specific cell exhaustion for causing adaptation (Fig. S6 H). Thapsigargin itself did not act
287 noticeably as an odor itself (Fig. S6 I). Since the changes in Ca^{2+} were at biologically relevant time
288 scales and magnitudes, these results provide evidence for a physiological Ca^{2+} -NFL causing adaptation
289 in AWA neurons in intact *C. elegans* worms.

290

291

292

293 **Discussion**

294 The refractory period is a natural way of characterizing adapting systems, in part, because it involves
295 quantities with intuitive units (d , T_{\max} : time, $\partial T_{\max}/\partial d$: unitless). It is also germane to biology and not
296 derived from other fields of science or engineering.

297
298 Our approach has inherent limitations: not all IFFLs and NFLs can be distinguished by dynamical
299 measurements(42), and the detection of circuit motifs does not, for example, specify biochemical species.
300 However, our response signatures were reliable and useful in practice, and the same limitations apply to
301 bistability, hysteresis, and irreversibility, which do not identify all PFLs(43), but have proven their
302 usefulness nevertheless.

303
304 A stabilized refractory period implies that NFLs have robust timing, which may be an advantageous
305 feature, e.g., rendering cell cycle timing robust to noise. We speculate that this leads to NFLs
306 predominating in nature, which may also be why the dependence of the refractory period on stimulus
307 duration has been overlooked. Skipping in NFLs represents a strong high-frequency filter, which ignores
308 fast pulses. For the cell cycle, this may be advantageous but for other systems, the failure to track inputs
309 might represent a trade-off in exchange for other NFL properties, e.g., a stable refractory period.

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323 **Author Contributions**

324 Conceptualization and writing: all authors. Experiments and data analysis: SJR, JL, KP. Mathematical
325 proofs: SJR and EDS.

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329 **Competing Financial Interests Statement**

330 I declare that the authors have no competing interests as defined by Springer Nature, or other interests
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468
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470

471 **Figure Legends**

472 **Figure 1:**

473 Discriminating IFFLs and NFLs. A-D: Four fundamental wiring diagrams for adaptation. Here, arrows
474 can represent multiple intermediate nodes. E, F: Stimuli always turn on at the same times 0 and t₁. Red
475 arrows indicate when the inhibitor I begins to decay. E: An IFFL system (same model as in panel I)
476 receives two consecutive stimulus pulses of different widths but with the same onset times. F: Same as E
477 except NFL instead of IFFL (same model as in panel J). G: Periodic stimulus pulses of duration d and
478 period T produce output O(t)=O(t, d, T). H: The time average of O(t) is denoted by O(d, T). O(d, T) has
479 a maximum at T_{max}(d). Periodic solutions shown for stimuli that are faster, exactly at, or slower than
480 T_{max} (left to right). I, J: $\theta(x)$ is the step function which is 0 for x < 0 and 1 otherwise. I: IFFL model as in
481 panel A (IFFL 1 in Fig. S2 with n→∞). Model parameters: $\lambda I_0 = 0.01, 0.1, 0.5, 0.75$ (dark → light). J:
482 NFL model as in panel C (NFL 1 in Fig. S2 with n→∞). NFL parameters: $(\lambda, \lambda I_0) = (0.1, 0.3), (0.1, 0.1),$
483 $(0.4, 0.1), (0.1, 0.01)$ (dark → light). T_{max}(d) plot is terminated when the pulse duration d exceeds the
484 absolute refractory time, above which the circuit would be activated twice for each stimulus pulse. K:
485 Schematic showing equivalent classes of circuits with the same T_{max}(d). The asterisk denotes the specific

486 nature of the nonlinear transformations analyzed (see Supplementary Notes). L: Period skipping in an
487 NFL circuit (mathematical model in panels F, J).

488

489 **Figure 2:**

490 Signatures identify dynamically important NFLs in yeast cell cycle control mutants and can be abolished
491 by an artificial IFFL. All cells have the same *CLN2pr-YFP* construct by crossing. Abbreviations:

492 *clnΔ**=*cln1-3Δ MET-CLN2*, *clbΔ**=*clb1-6Δ GALL-CLB2*, -Met/+Met = absence/presence of methionine
493 in the media, Gal = galactose. A: Schematic of the wild-type CDK-APC/C cell cycle control system. B-

494 F: Subcircuits from panel A with blue arrows indicating the intermediate steps which the black arrows
495 summarize. G: Schematic of global transcriptional oscillator (GTO) model adapted from ref.(30,31). H:

496 A *clnΔ** cell undergoes one cell cycle after *MET-CLN2* is induced from 0' to 30' in -Met medium.

497 Nuclei marked by Htb2-mCherry. Scale bar (white): 5 μm. I: Sample time course of *CLN2pr-YFP* in a
498 *clnΔ** cell subjected to five -Met pulses of duration d=30' and period T=85' (black bars) inducing five
499 complete cell cycles. J: A *clnΔ** cell showing period skipping (-Met pulses d=30', T=65' (black bars)).

500 The cell cycle starts (and completes) only in response to pulses 1, 3, 5, as determined by budding,
501 nuclear division, and cytokinesis. K, O, S: Schematic of CDK-APC/C cell cycle control system in

502 indicated strains, with stimulus (S), inhibitor (I), and output (O) indicated. Crossed-out, dashed arrows
503 indicate the circuits and interactions that have been eliminated or crippled. L,M,P,Q,T,U: Output

504 (fluorescence from fraction of consistently responding (non-skipping) cells) mean +/- SEM vs. stimulus
505 period T for fixed pulse duration d, shown together with smooth spline fit used for estimating the peaks.

506 Number of cells (about 100-200) underlying each data point specified in Methods. N,R,V: Best fit
507 $T_{max}(d)$ (diamond), central 90% confidence interval (box), and linear interpolation (dashed line).

508

509

509 **Figure 3:**

510 A Ca²⁺-NFL leads to adaptation in *C. elegans* AWA neurons. A: *C. elegans* worms expressing GCaMP
511 in the AWA olfactory sensory neurons pulsed with diacetyl. "?" indicates that the detailed molecular
512 mechanism of Ca²⁺ adaptation, including circuit type and the adapting node R, were unknown. Scale

513 bar: 100 μm. B, C: Output mean +/- SEM vs. stimulus period T for fixed pulse duration d, shown
514 together with smooth spline fit used for estimating the peaks. Number of worms underlying each data

515 point: 28,15,28,28,35,24,11 (B), 29,49,62,37,31,27,11 (C) (left to right). Experiments repeated to ensure
516 sufficiently small SEM/mean ratio. D: Mean $T_{max}(d)$ (circle), central 90% confidence interval (box), and

517 linear interpolation (dashed line). For d=10'': mean=38'', interval=36''-40''; for d=20'': mean=37'',
518 interval=35''-42''. E, F: Recordings without (E) or with (F) detectable period skipping at relatively low

519 or high stimulus frequencies, respectively. The first ten preparatory pulses have the same period and
520 duration across all trials. G: Fraction of worms +/- SEM showing significant period skipping ($p_{osc}<0.05$)

521 at d=10''. (≥*): Differences between fractions are at least significant with respect to p=0.05 threshold --
522 or lower. H, I: Pulses under brackets compared in panel J. H: Ca²⁺ levels before, during, and after

523 thapsigargin application (magenta bar). The last preparatory pulse is the first pulse shown. Beginning
524 with the second pulse shown, the pulse duration and period were switched to d=20'', T=39''.

525 Normalization by the average of the last two prep response pulse peak heights. (Normalization by mean
526 of the last two prep response pulses yields similar results.) Media contain 0.3% DMSO throughout.

527 Mean over 25 worms. I: Same as H except DMSO-only control. Mean over 13 worms. J: Time-average
528 of the response pulses after removal of thapsigargin in H (black), compared to control in I (green),

529 showing continued depression of the responses. Circle: mean, triangles: mean +/- SEM, box: 1st, 2nd,
530 and 3rd quartiles. (Analyzed pulses indicated by black or green bracket in H and I, respectively.) *:

531 p<0.05, **: p<0.01, ***: p<0.001. All p value tests one-sided.

532

533

534

535 **Tables**

536 **Table 1:**

537

circuit type	total # tested	# adapting	# skipping + # refrac. period stabilization
NFL	315549	22188	9712 (44%)
IFFL	307584	16502	48 (0.29%)
Ratio:			150:1

538

539 Period skipping and refractory period stabilization are generic in NFLs but not in IFFLs. These results
540 are based on a computational analysis of the set of circuit models in Fig. S2. (For details, see Methods.)

541

542

543

544 **Online Methods**

545 **1 Computational exploration of model circuits**

546 The following algorithm was implemented in Matlab R2010b (code available upon request):

547

548 1. Ordinary differential equations (ODEs) with parameters and interactions described in Fig. S2 or Table
549 S1 were generated.

550

551 2. Steady-state levels were calculated for the dynamic variables at $S=0$ and $S=1$ (only $S=0$ for NFLs) by
552 plugging the model parameters into formulas for the steady-state solutions, which had been derived for
553 each model by hand. If the steady-state levels were not defined (i.e., $=\pm\infty$), the model was not analyzed
554 further.

555

556 3. To quantify how well the model adapted, the ODEs were solved numerically for a step stimulus ($S=0$
557 to $S=1$). Nine output nonlinearities ($O=R$, $O=R^2$, $O=R^3$, ...) corresponding to the output functions in Fig.
558 S2 and Table S1 were tested. Only those models and output functions were pursued further, in which
559 adaptation was sufficiently strong (after a transient peak, the output declined by more than 80%).

560

561 4. The ODEs were then solved with repeated on ($S=1$) and off ($S=0$) stimuli of duration d and period T
562 using Matlab's ode45 function. We employed various means to speed up the calculations, such as
563 interpolating initial conditions based on neighboring solutions and extrapolating exponential
564 convergence. The computations were stopped if the solution vector $\mathbf{x}(t)$ converged $\|\mathbf{x}(t_i) - \mathbf{x}(t_i - T)\| / \|\mathbf{x}(t_i)\| < 10^{-12}$, where t_i is the time point right after the i 'th $S=1$ stimulus, before 20000/ T repetitions.
565 If the solutions did not converge, a test for period skipping was performed and, if positive, the model
566 was counted toward the number of adapting models in Tables 1 and S1, but otherwise not analyzed
567 further. For period skipping, the solutions to the last $n = \{1, \dots, 5\}$ stimulus pulses were simply checked
568 for convergence to the n prior solutions (fractional error $< 10^{-12}$). We focused particularly on finding
569 false positives (IFFL loops showing refractory period buffering) rather than minimizing false negatives
570 (NFL loops failing to show signatures) by gearing our computer code primarily to calculating $T_{\max}(d)$
571 and detecting period skipping only if it occurs in that process. Since the search algorithm stopped when
572 period skipping was detected, the number of models with period skipping includes models which may
573 also stabilize refractory periods, see main text.

574

575
576 5. Initially, a fixed set of pulse durations $d = \{0.05, 0.15, \dots, 0.55, 0.75, \dots, 2.15, 2.65\}$ and a set of periods T
577 ranging from $d+0.005$ to 10 or 30 (depending on d) were studied. If $O(d, T)$ was increasing for the
578 largest values of T in this set, T was increased incrementally (up to a maximum value of 1000) until $O(d,$

579 T) decreased. If $O(d, T)$ had a maximum as a function of T , the intervals around the maximum were
580 bisected to identify the maximum more accurately. If $O(d, T)$ had multiple maxima as a function of T ,
581 the largest period corresponding to a maximum was taken for $T_{\max}(d)$. Only those models were pursued
582 further, in which $O(d, T)$ showed a maximum for $T > d$, i.e., where $T_{\max} > d$, for some d in the initial set.
583 The number of these models was added to the number of adapting models from step 4., and the sums are
584 indicated in Tables 1 and S1. (Thus, we counted as the number of adapting models those that adapted
585 sufficiently to a step function and showed either a nontrivial T_{\max} refractory period or period skipping.)
586
587 6. If $O(d, T)$ had a maximum for $T > d$ for any of the initial d values (5.), d was increased and $T_{\max}(d)$
588 calculated until the slope of $T_{\max}(d)$ ($\partial T_{\max}(d)/\partial d$) approached 1 or until T_{\max} exceeded the maximum
589 allowed T . Then, $T_{\max}(d)$ was smoothed everywhere by calculating additional $T_{\max}(d)$ points on a denser
590 set of d where the slope of $T_{\max}(d)$ changed rapidly.
591
592
593

594 **2 Strains**

595 **2.1 S. cerevisiae strains**

596 Standard methods were used throughout. All strains were W303-congenic. Strains SJR14a4d and
597 SJR12a5a were used previously(32). The *CLB2kd* mutation and the *GAL1-CLB2kd* construct have been
598 used in ref.(34) and ref.(35), respectively.
599

600 Genotypes:

601 SJR14a4d: *cln1Δ cln2Δ:CLN2pr-Venus:TRP1 cln3Δ:LEU2 trp1Δ:TRP1:MET3-CLN2 HTB2-*
602 *mCherry:HIS5*

603
604 SJR12a5a: SJR14a4d background, *clb1Δ-clb6Δ:KanMX clb2Δ:GALL-CLB2:URA3-clb5Δ:KanMX*
605 *clb3Δ:TRP1 clb4Δ:his3:KanMX*

606
607 SJR82c10b: SJR14a4d background, *ura3Δ:GAL1-CLB2kd:URA3*
608

609 **2.2 C. elegans strains**

610 We used the N2-based CX14887 strain with integrated *gpa-6::GCaMP2.2b* which has been described in
611 ref.(24). Animals were raised at 20C on nematode growth medium (NGM) plates, seeded with
612 Escherichia coli OP50 bacteria as a food source. All experiments were performed with young adults,
613 age-synchronized by picking L4 stage animals to fresh food plates 12-24 h before the experiment.
614
615
616

617 **3 Experimental set-up**

618 **3.1 S. cerevisiae experiments**

619 Cells were grown overnight and diluted to $OD \approx 0.02$ about 6 hrs before the experiment to ensure return
620 to log-phase. Fluorescence microscopy was performed on cells trapped in a microfluidic device
621 (CellASIC) while the media were changed. Initially, cells were synchronized by arresting in off (S=0)
622 medium for 120'. Then, the media were switched periodically between on (S=1) and off (S=0) pulse
623 media.
624

625 SJR14a4d: Overnight medium: D-Met; On (S=1) pulse medium: D-Met; Off (S=0) pulse medium:
626 D+Met

627
628 SJR12a5a: Overnight medium: G-Met; On (S=1) pulse medium: G-Met; Off (S=0) pulse medium:
629 G+Met
630

631 SJR82c10b: Overnight medium: R-Met; On (S=1) pulse medium: RG-Met; Off (S=0) pulse medium:
632 R+Met
633

634 Abbreviations: D=Glucose, G=galactose, R=raffinose, -Met=absence of methionine, +Met=presence of
635 methionine. The sugars complemented synthetic complete medium.
636

637 Images were taken every 5'.

638

639 **3.2 C. elegans experiments**

640 The experimental set-up was basically as described in ref.(38) for paralyzed worms. In all pulsing
641 experiments, we switched between S basal medium with 1 mM (-)-tetrasimole hydrochloride (Sigma-
642 Aldrich) with (odor on) or without (odor off) 1.15 μ M diacetyl (Sigma-Aldrich).
643

644 The time interval between images was 0.1''. In every experiment, 10 preparatory odor pulses were
645 administered (10'' duration, 60'' period) before switching to the main measurement pulses of duration d
646 and period T. (The 11'th pulse followed 60'' after the beginning of the 10'th pulse.)
647

648 For the thapsigargin experiments, we dissolved the drug (Santa Cruz Biotech) at 10 mg/ml in DMSO
649 and then dissolved the solution at 0.3% by volume in S basal. The final concentration of thapsigargin
650 was about 46 μ M. We spun the thapsigargin-S basal solution down in Eppendorf tubes at 13200 rpm for
651 1 min and saw no precipitation. For the DMSO-only controls, we added DMSO at 0.3% by volume to S
652 basal.
653

654

655

656 **4 Image and data analysis**

657 **4.1 S. cerevisiae experiments**

658 Automated image segmentation and fluorescence quantification of yeast grown under time-lapse
659 conditions were performed as previously described.(3)
660

661

662 To find $T_{\max}(d)$ for each yeast mutant, we needed to measure the time-averaged output $O(d, T)$ for fixed
663 pulse duration d as the pulse period T was varied. In brief (details below), we defined the system output
664 $O(d, T)$ as the fraction of cells $p(d, T)$ that underwent normal cell cycles at least until some time point t,
665 multiplied by their time-averaged *CLN2pr-YFP* fluorescence $y(d, T)$ just before t. We estimated $T_{\max}(d)$
666 by fitting a spline through the means of the $O(d, T)$ data points, and calculated the uncertainty based on
667 the standard errors in $O(d, T)$. (All times are relative to the onset of the first stimulus pulse at 0'.)
668

669

670 In all experiments, we applied 5 on-off pulses, which allowed us to follow and quantify about 100-200
671 cells for each d and T. (More than 5 pulses generally led to overgrowth in the imaging arena since each
672 stimulus pulse about doubled the number of cells.) The exact number of cells analyzed for each data
673 point were (left to right): Fig. 2 L: 201, 136, 194, 125; M: 126, 102, 100, 70; P: 130, 150, 123, 174, 67;
674 Q: 110, 123, 97, 162, 62; T: 69, 273, 287, 129, 61; U: 389, 346, 212, 95. The number of cells was
675 determined by the noise in each data point: additional cell colonies were analyzed when the SEM was
676 too large compared to the mean to allow a reasonable comparison with other data points.
677

678

676 To define and compare the output $O(d, T)$ for different T , we needed a specific, fixed time point t in our
677 recordings, which was late so that sufficiently many pulses had been administered but which also
678 occurred in all of the recordings with the same strain. (With the number of pulses fixed, the experiments
679 with shorter periods are overall shorter.) We chose the onset of the last stimulus pulse $t = 4 T_2$ of the
680 second-shortest stimulus period T_2 for each strain ($T_2=65'$ for *clnΔ**, $T_2=105'$ for *clnΔ*clbΔ**, $T_2=120'$
681 for *clnΔ* GALI-CLB2kd*) because it was a late time point, contained in all related recordings, and
682 allowed the following quantification: We counted the number of cells $n(d, T)$ that replicated in response
683 to every stimulus pulse prior to t and at least budded in response to the first stimulus pulse starting after t ,
684 if any. (These cells skipped no stimulus pulses at least until t and the following stimulus pulse.) For
685 example, cells pulsed with period T had to undergo four normal, on-time cell cycles and at least bud a
686 fifth time to be counted. Cells pulsed with period $2T$ had to undergo two normal, on-time cell cycles and
687 at least bud in response to the third stimulus pulse. The ratio of these cells compared to the initial
688 number of cells $N(d, t)$ defined $p(d, T)=n(d, T)/N(d, T)$, and the standard error was $\Delta p=(P(1-P)/N)^{1/2}$,
689 where $P=(n+2)/(N+4)$ takes into account the Agresti-Coull correction. (We suppress the dependence
690 on d and T , i.e., $P=P(d, T)$, when the notation becomes too cumbersome otherwise.)
691

692 The *CLN2pr-YFP* fluorescence time courses of these (non-skipping) cells ($F_i(t)$) were averaged ($\langle F_i(t) \rangle_i$)
693 and the height of the first peak in $\langle F_i(t) \rangle_i$ was computed ($=F_{\text{norm}}$) to normalize each recording. (F_{norm} was
694 obviously independent of T). The running average of $F_i(t)/F_{\text{norm}}$ was computed over a time window of
695 size T (average from $t-T/2$ to $t+T/2$ assigned to t). The running average was again averaged from $3T_2$ to
696 $3.5T_2$ for the *clnΔ** and *clnΔ*clbΔ** experiments and from $2T_2$ to $3T_2$ for the *clnΔ* GALI-CLB2kd*
697 experiment to yield y_i . (Using these running averages ensured that mostly only fluorescence
698 measurements from before t were taken into consideration, which ensures that these cells are not
699 skipping and performing on-time and normal cell cycles.) The mean (y) and standard error (Δy) of the
700 y_i 's were computed.
701

702 The mean of the output was defined as $O(d, T)=p(d, T)y(d, T)$ with standard error $\Delta O(d, T)=[\Delta p(d,$
703 $T)^2y(d, T)^2 + p(d, T)^2\Delta y(d, T)^2]^{1/2}$, where we neglected the small $\Delta p(d, T)^2\Delta y(d, T)^2$ term. We
704 approximated the distribution of $O(d, T)$'s by a Gaussian with standard deviation $\Delta O(d, T)$ and
705 generated 10^4 random configurations of different outputs at each T . Using matlab, we fit smoothing
706 splines through each one of the configurations. The maximum of the spline was taken as the T_{max} for
707 each sampled configuration. The whole distributions of $T_{\text{max}}(d)$ generated for the two pulse durations d
708 for each strain were compared to each other. The confidence values that we report are the fraction of
709 T_{max} slopes smaller than 0.5. (We varied the smoothing parameter for the smoothing spline over a wide
710 range (0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 0.3) but the confidences for the slope of $T_{\text{max}}(d)$ hardly changed.) For the plots,
711 we used smoothing parameters 0.1, 0.01, 0.001 for *clnΔ**, *clnΔ*clbΔ**, *clnΔ* GALI-CLB2kd*,
712 respectively, reflecting the different distances between data points in T .
713

714 4.2 C. elegans experiments

715 4.2.1 Tracking AWA neurons

716 The images were processed basically as described in ref.(38). Occasionally, the worms moved despite
717 general paralysis due to tetramisole in the media. To determine the coordinates of the AWA neurons in
718 time, we tracked GCaMP fluorescence in each frame computationally (residual fluorescence, sufficient
719 to identify AWA, was detectable even when the odor was off); the previously described NeuroTracker
720 software suite ref.(38) was used (see Fig. S6 A for a sample frame). We tried to track the AWA neurons
721 of every worm in the arena, for which, in some instances, repeated manual readjustments of the
722 brightness threshold to identify the AWA neurons were necessary. We gave up tracking individual
723 worms if the AWA detection could not be stabilized despite repeated manual interventions. This was the

724 case for about 1 in 15 worms in each experiment, where, usually, another close-by worm interfered with
725 and diverted the tracker.

726

727 **4.2.2 Background and baseline subtraction**

728 For each worm i , the average raw intensity $F_{R,i}(t)$ was read out of a 13x13 pixel square window (4
729 $\mu\text{m}/\text{pixel}$) centered on the tracked AWA neurons' coordinates (Fig. S6 A). In order to correct for
730 background, the median intensity $F_{BG,i}(t)$ in a ring around worm i 's AWA neurons (ring inner radius: 10
731 pixels, outer radius: 19 pixels) was also read out and subtracted to yield $F_{noBG,i}(t)=F_{R,i}(t)-F_{BG,i}(t)$ (Fig. S6
732 B).

733

734 Next, we corrected for baseline fluorescence, which can drift during the course of the recordings; so, we
735 constructed a time-dependent baseline function (Fig. S6 C). Here and elsewhere, we used a 5'' time
736 window from -7.5'' to -2.5'' before odor pulses reached the microfluidic chamber to define the baseline
737 fluorescence preceding each odor pulse and we defined the center of the window (at -5'') as the
738 beginning of each output pulse. We calculated the average of $F_{noBG,i}(t)$ over each such time window
739 preceding each odor pulse. A piecewise linear function $F_{BL,i}(t)$ was fit through these baseline averages,
740 which were assigned to the beginning of each odor pulse. Between these points, $F_{BL,i}(t)$ interpolated
741 linearly. Thus, $F_{BL,i}(t)$ reflected shifts in the baseline fluorescence in time. Using this time-dependent
742 baseline function, we normalized the signal, $F_i(t) = (F_{noBG,i}(t)-F_{BL,i}(t))/F_{BL,i}(t)$ (Fig. S6 D).

743

744 **4.2.3 Exclusion of poorly responding worms**

745 We tried to record and compute the responses of every worm in our experiments but we excluded 10%
746 of the worms from further analysis because their responses were obviously problematic. To filter worms
747 in an objective fashion, we set up quantitative criteria. We applied these tests to $F_{noBG,i}(t)$, that is, after
748 background correction but before baseline correction (Fig. S6 B). The first 10 preparatory odor pulses
749 (of 10'' duration and 60'' period), which preceded the main measurement pulses in every experiment,
750 allowed the worms to be evaluated before and independently of their responses to the main odor pulses
751 and in a consistent manner across all experiments. The responses to prep pulses 9 and 10 were especially
752 important because we used them to calibrate the rest of the responses, as explained in section 4.2.4.

753

754 We filtered out worms whose output pulses 9 and 10 varied too much from one another; we eliminated 8
755 (of 463 total) worms because the baseline $F_{BL,i}(t)$ changed by more than 6% before and after pulse 9 (or
756 before and after pulse 10) with respect to the average of $F_{BL,i}(t)$ before and after pulse 9 (or 10).

757 (Exclusion if $|F_{BL,i}(t_j)-F_{BL,i}(t_{j+1})|/(F_{BL,i}(t_j)/2+F_{BL,i}(t_{j+1})/2)>0.06$ where t_j is the start of pulse j , and j is
758 either 9 or 10.) One such trace is plotted in red in Fig. S6 B.

759

760 Of the remaining, we filtered out 40 worms because the signal-to-noise ratio was too low; we defined
761 the signal-to-noise ratio as the height of pulse 9 or 10 divided by the standard deviation of the baseline
762 ($F_{noBG,i}(t)$ over the preceding 5'' time window) before or after pulses 9 or 10. (Exclusion if

763 $\sigma(F_{noBG,i}(t))_{t=\{t_j-2.5'', \dots, t_j+2.5''\}}/(F_{noBG,i}(t_k)-F_{BL,i}(t_j))>0.11$ for at least two of the four possible combinations
764 where t_j is the start of pulse 9, 10, or 11 and t_k is the time of the peak of the closest output pulse 9 or 10.)

765 One such trace is plotted in orange in Fig. S6 B.

766

767 These thresholds are, of course, ultimately arbitrary, however, i) since they were used in a consistent
768 manner across all experiments, ii) since we applied them to preparatory pulses before and independently
769 of the responses to the main odor pulses, iii) since we only excluded the 'worst' 10% of all of the worms
770 in our experiments, iv) since we included all of the worms that we could track initially, e.g., despite
771 weak AWA responses, and v) since all of the response traces that were discarded were visibly
772 problematic and unusual, we believe that these criteria were reasonable.

773

774 **4.2.4 Calculation of average responses**

775 For the worms that passed the two filters, we calculated $F_{\text{norm},i}$, the average of $F_i(t)$ over the responses to
776 pulses 9 and 10, i.e., over a time window starting at the beginning of odor pulse 9 and extending to the
777 start of odor pulse 11. $F_{\text{norm},i}$ serves to normalize the AWA responses for each worm (Fig. S6 E). (Again,
778 odor pulses 9 and 10 are the last prep pulses; beginning with pulse 11, we switched to odor pulse
779 duration d and period T .) Next, we computed the running average of $F_i(t)$ from pulse 11 onward over a
780 time window of size T (Fig. S6 E). We normalized the running average of each worm by $F_{\text{norm},i}$ (Fig. S6
781 F). We fit a linear least-squares regression through the normalized running average, starting 100'' after
782 the start of odor pulse 11 and ending 700'' thereafter (Fig. S6 F). (For $T=39''$ pulses, about three full
783 odor pulses had been administered ($2 \times 39''+10''$ or $2 \times 39''+20''$) before the start of the linear fit. The
784 span of 700'' is fairly long (about $18 \times 39''$ period pulses, for example) and it allowed us to include all
785 of our recordings, including some experiments that aborted early.) For each worm, we took as the output
786 $O_i(d, T)$ the estimated response at 100'' by calculating the value of the linear fit at 100'' (Fig. S6 G).
787 The mean and the SEM over $O_i(d, T)$ are shown in Figs. 3 and S6 G. Taking points later than 100'' from
788 the same linear fit as the output $O_i(d, T)$ yielded similar results: The confidence that the slope of T_{max}
789 between $d=10''$ and $d=20''$ is less than 0.5 is 0.96 at 100'', 0.96 at 200'', 0.94 at 300'', 0.87 at 400''.
790 The gradual loss of confidence at later times can be due to experimental artifacts, accumulation of
791 random noise with time, loss of correlation to the prep pulses, or, potentially and more interestingly, the
792 activation of pathways with slower time scales, etc. (As shown in Fig. S5 A, it is important to compare
793 the output at a specific time after the onset of stimulation.) Given the high confidence of our results up
794 to about 300'' after the onset of the main odor pulses, we did not investigate these issues further.

795

796 **4.2.5 Calculation of T_{max} , slopes, and confidence intervals**

797 Based on the mean and SEM of the output $O_i(d, T)$ over all worms i for each T for any fixed d , we
798 approximated the distribution by a Gaussian and generated 10^4 random configurations of different
799 outputs at each T . Using matlab, we fit a smoothing spline with smoothing parameter 0.1 through each
800 one of the configurations. With noticeably smoother (smoothing parameter: 0.01, resulting confidence:
801 0.94) or more flexible (smoothing parameter 0.3, resulting confidence: 0.96) splines, we arrived at
802 essentially the same results (confidences in the slope of T_{max}). The maximum of the spline was taken as
803 the T_{max} for each configuration. The whole distribution of T_{max} thus generated for pulse duration $d=10''$
804 was compared to the distribution of T_{max} for pulse duration $d=20''$. The confidence values that we report
805 are the fraction of T_{max} slopes smaller than 0.5.

806

807 **4.2.6 Statistical test for period skipping**

808 The test for period skipping used here was developed from a related statistical oscillation test in ref.(32).
809 The basic idea is to 1) find the best fit of an enveloping sinusoidal function of period $T' > T$ for each
810 recording, and 2) compare the goodness of the fit to best fits for random reshufflings of the same
811 recording. The fraction of random reshufflings that produce better fits than the original recording defines
812 the p value p_{osc} . Specifically, for each recording, we calculated Fourier-type coefficients $c_i(T') = \sum_t F_i(t)$
813 $e^{i2\pi t/T'}$, where the \sum_t only includes time points t beginning with the first odor pulse at least 100'' after
814 the beginning of odor pulse 11. (As before (4.2.4), ignoring the first 100'' of the main odor responses
815 served as a rough way to allow some of the initial transients to dissipate.) $c(T')$ was calculated for
816 skipping periods T' ranging from 0'' to 600'' by 1'' increments. The largest possible skipping period
817 600'' was chosen so as to allow at least two full skipping periods to fit into most of our recordings. As
818 the best fit, we chose the largest $|c(T')|^2$ peak after the peak at $T'=T$. Then, we created 10^3 reshufflings
819 of the original recording by cutting up each recording in intervals of length T beginning with the first
820 odor pulse after 100'' after the beginning of pulse 11 and permuting them. For each reshuffled recording

821 we computed the largest $|c(T')|^2$, as before. We finally ranked the largest $|c(T')|^2$ for the original
822 recording against the reshuffled data to obtain p_{osc} .

823

824 Note that because there is no noise in the numerical analysis of circuit models and because we were
825 willing to accept false negatives (missing period skipping in some NFLs) for faster computations, the
826 periodicity test that we applied in our computational search of model space was much simpler.

827

828

829

830 **5 Data availability**

831 The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon
832 reasonable request.

833

834

835

836 **6 Supplementary References**

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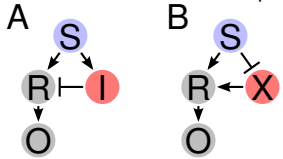
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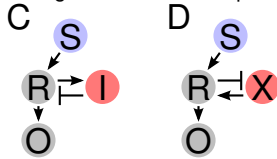
IFFLs

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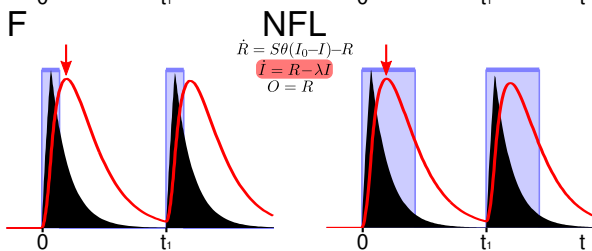
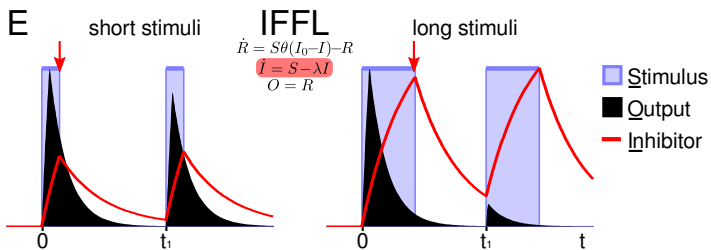
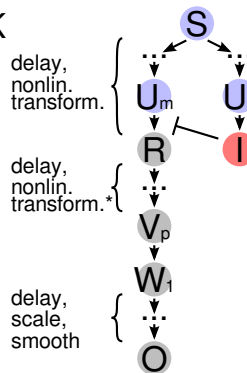


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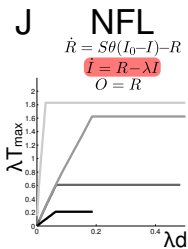
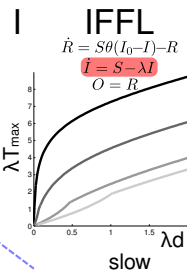
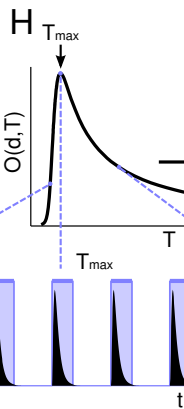
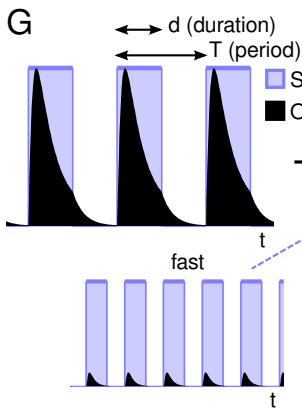
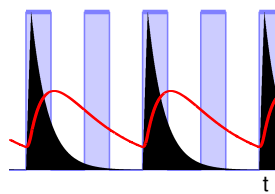
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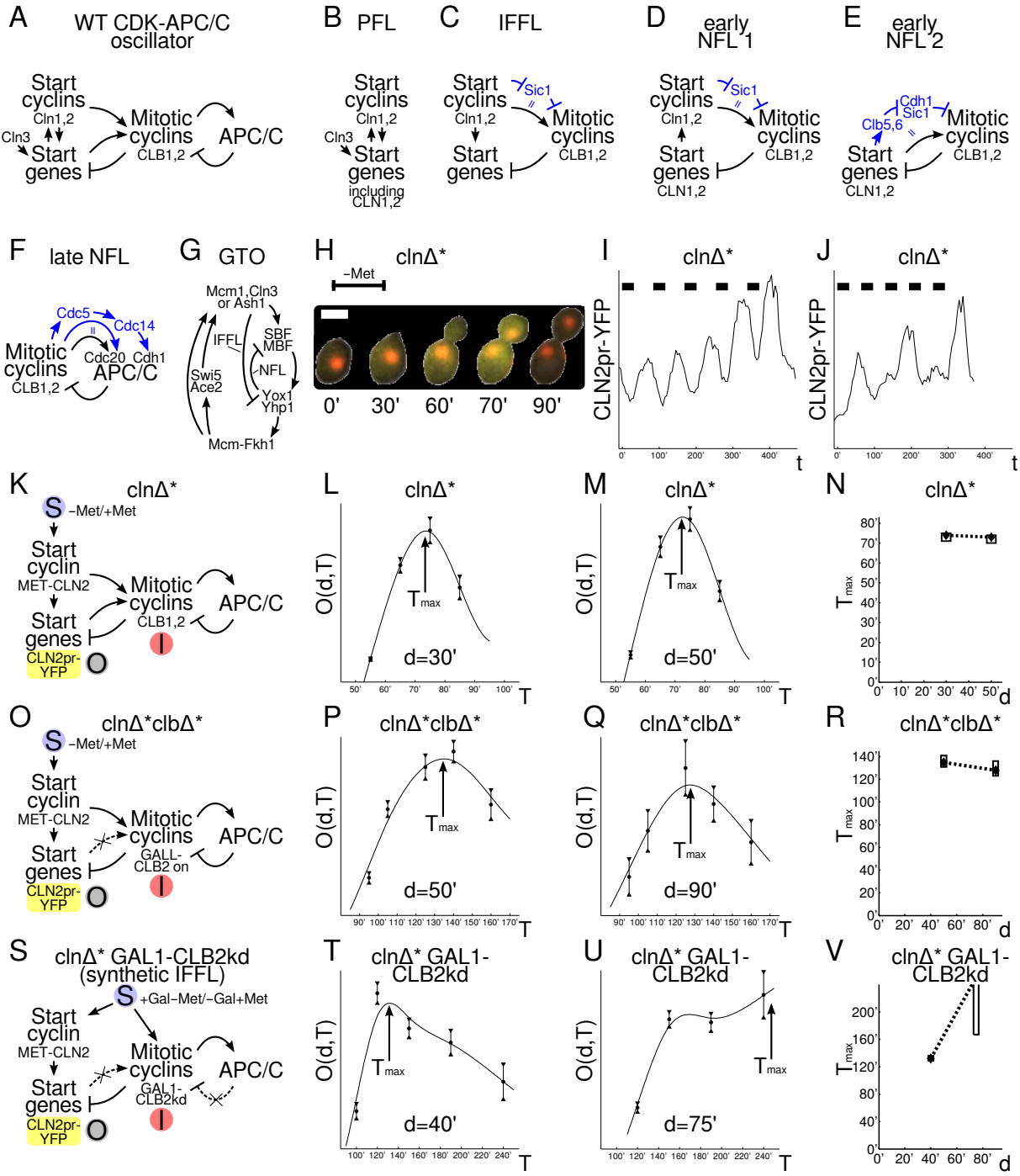


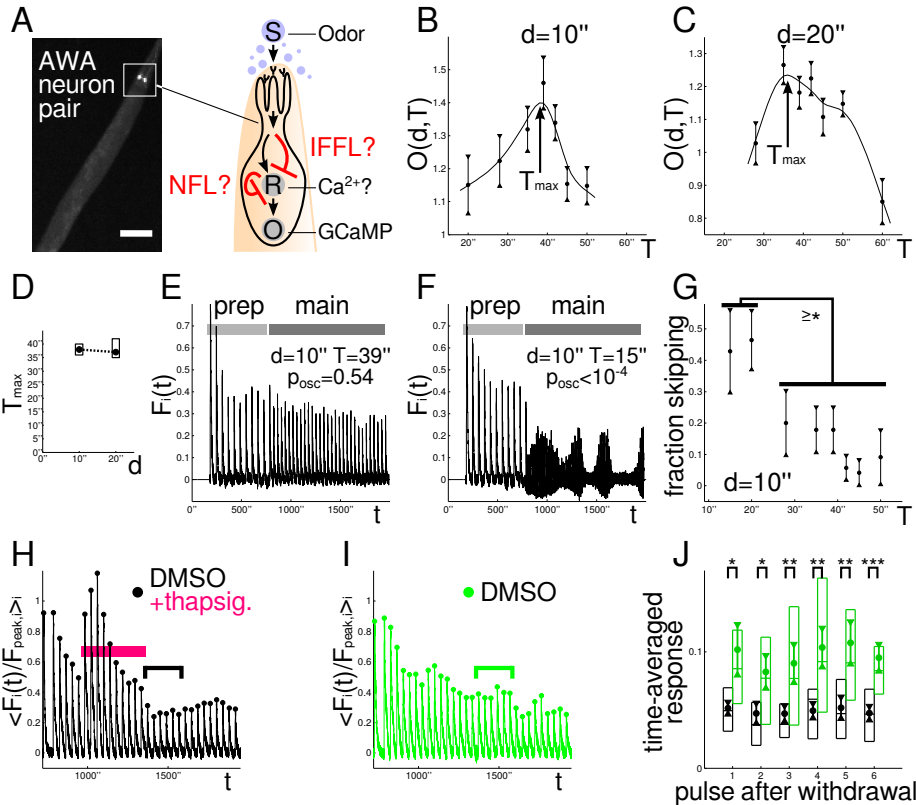
K



L skipping







All circuits:
 Parameters explored:
 $i_0, R_0, S_0, S_1, Z_0, Z_1, r_0, r_1, r_2, r_3, r_4, r_5, r_6, r_7, r_8, r_9, r_{10}; \lambda, \lambda_Z \in \{0,1,0.5,1\}$

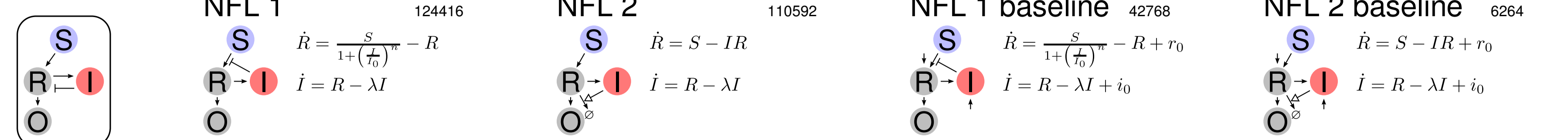
Output functions explored:

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$\dot{O} = \frac{R}{1+\frac{R}{R_0}} - \lambda_Z O$ $\dot{O} = \frac{R^2}{1+\frac{R^2}{R_0}} - \lambda_Z O$

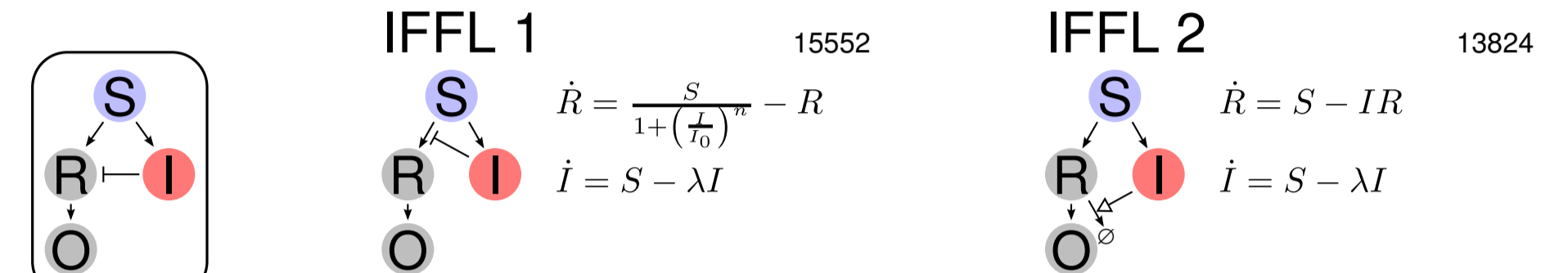
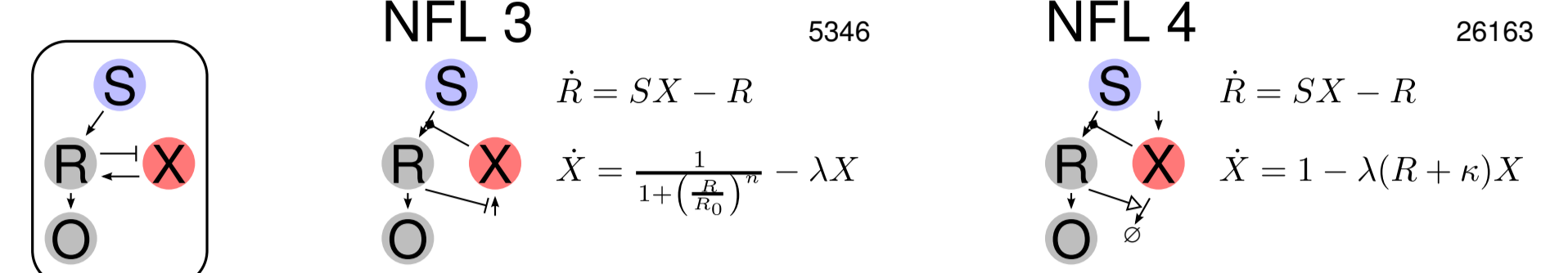
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$\dot{O} = \frac{R}{1+\frac{R}{R_0}} - \lambda_Z O$ $\dot{O} = \frac{R^2}{1+\frac{R^2}{R_0}} - \lambda_Z O$



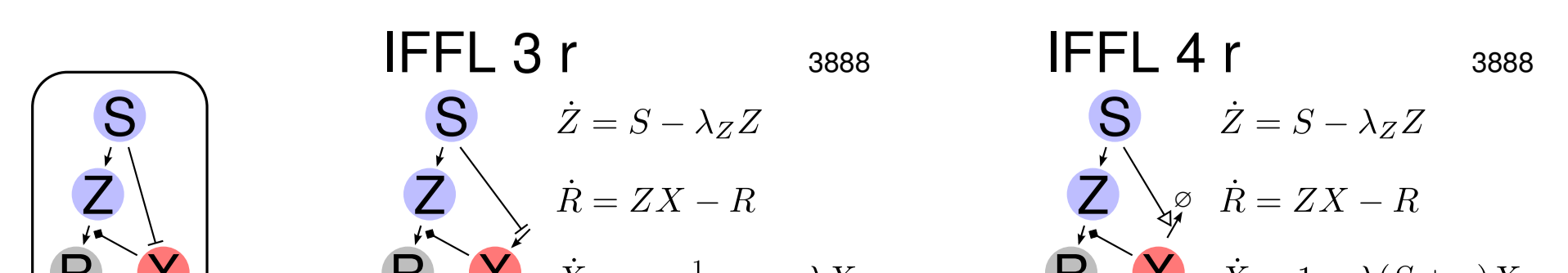
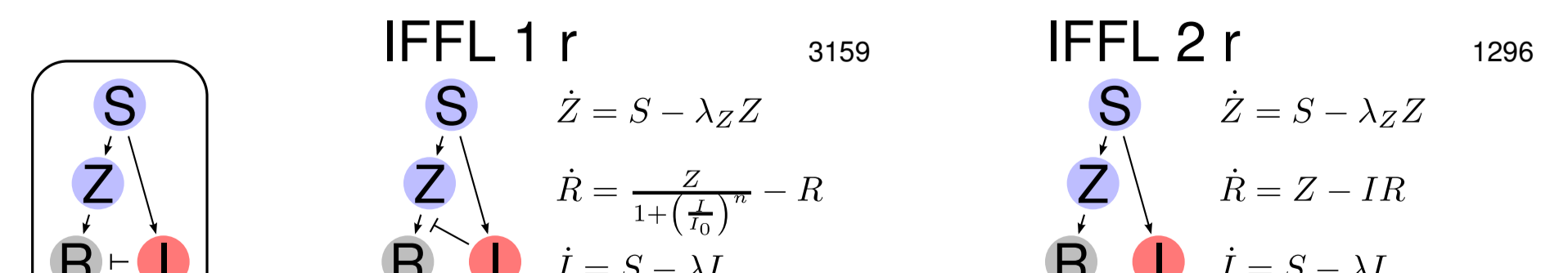
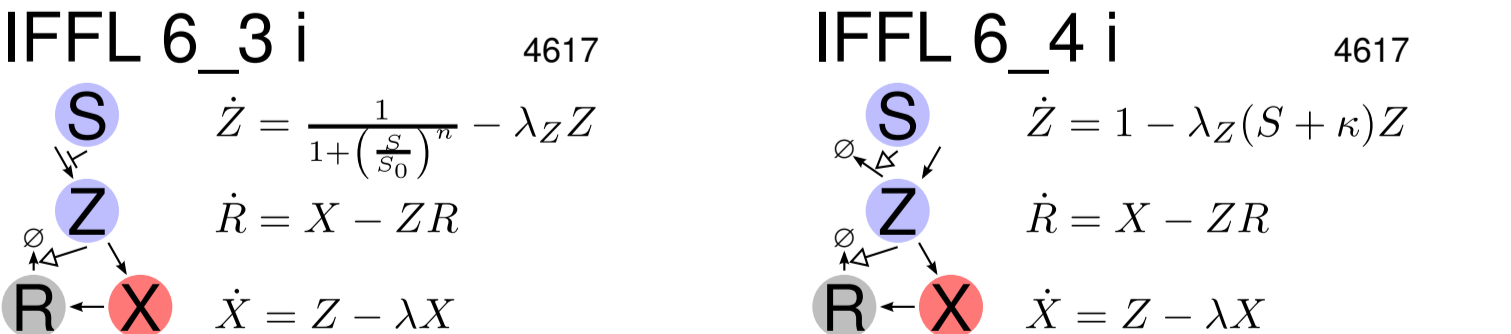
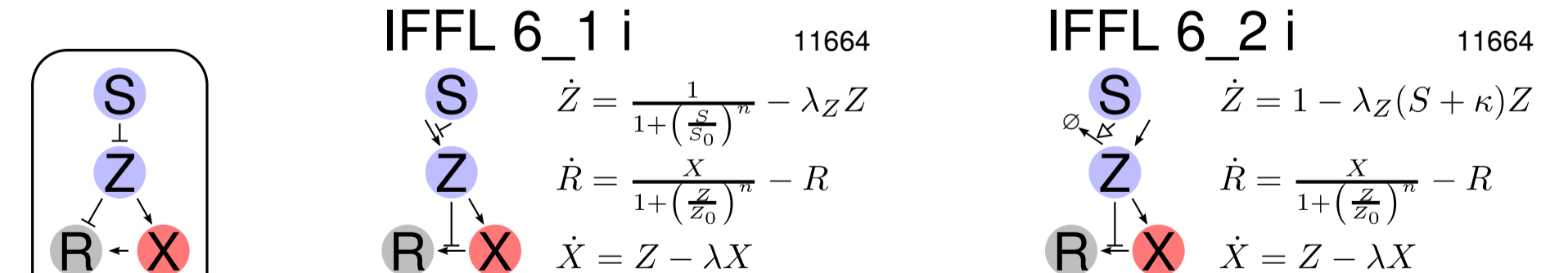
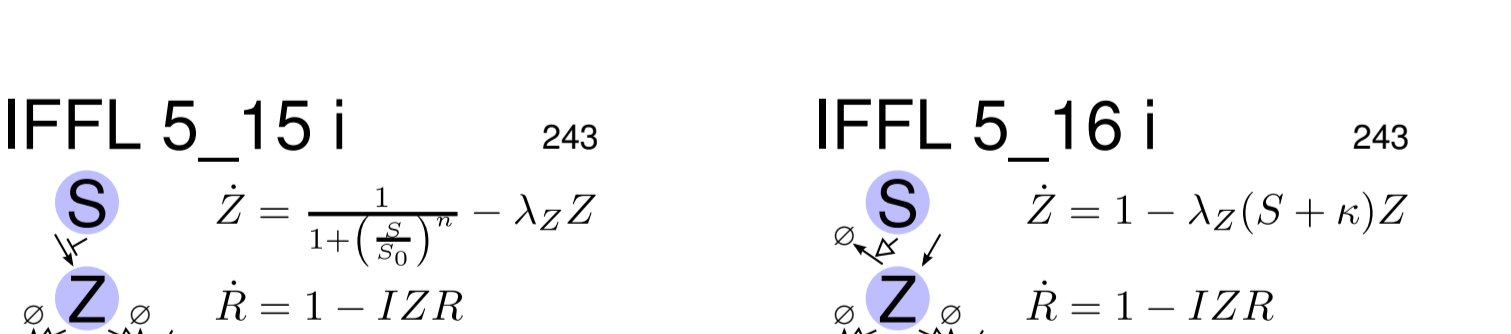
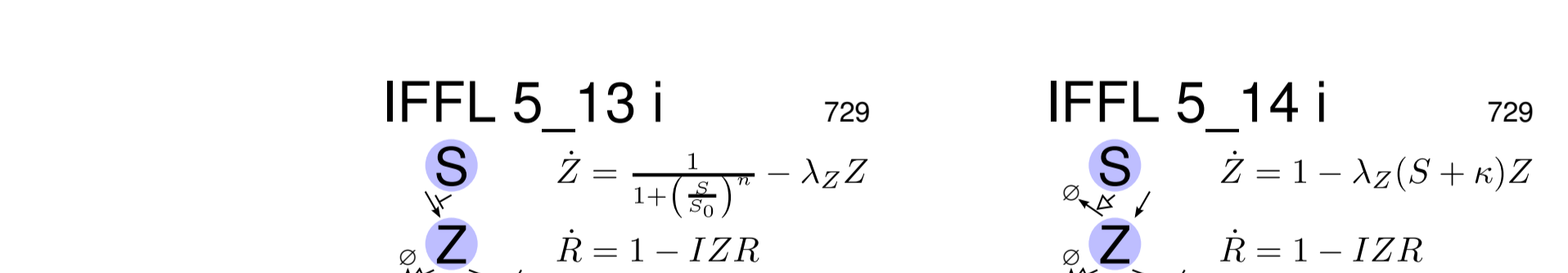
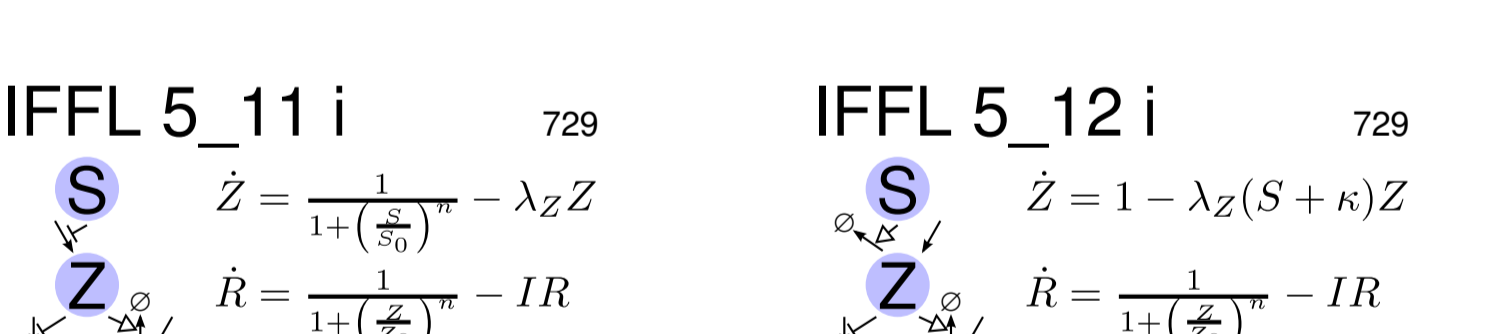
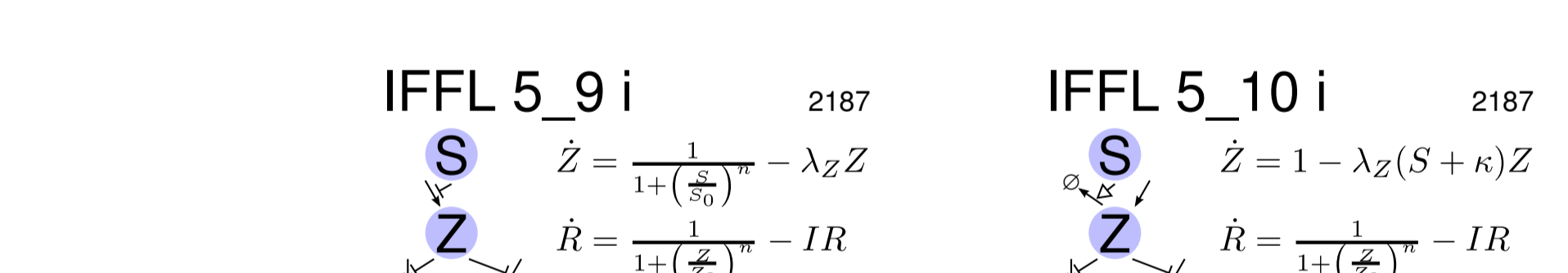
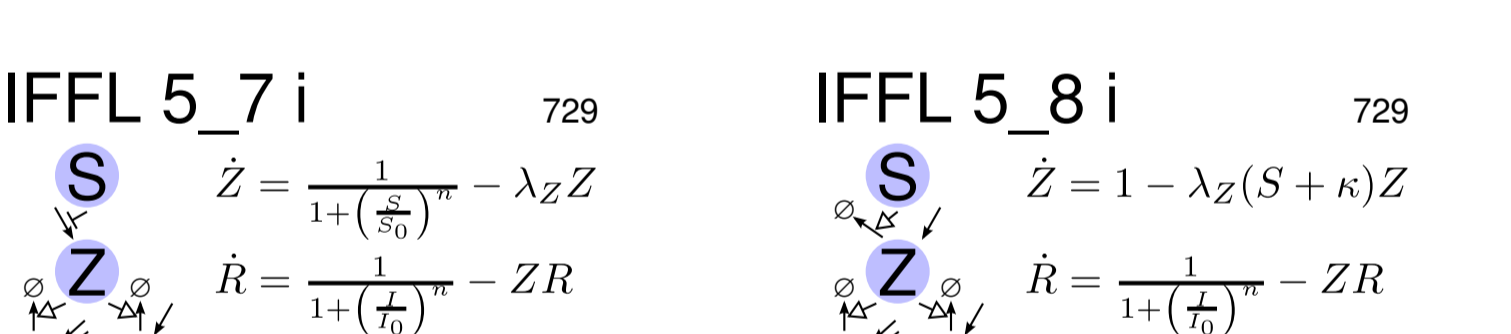
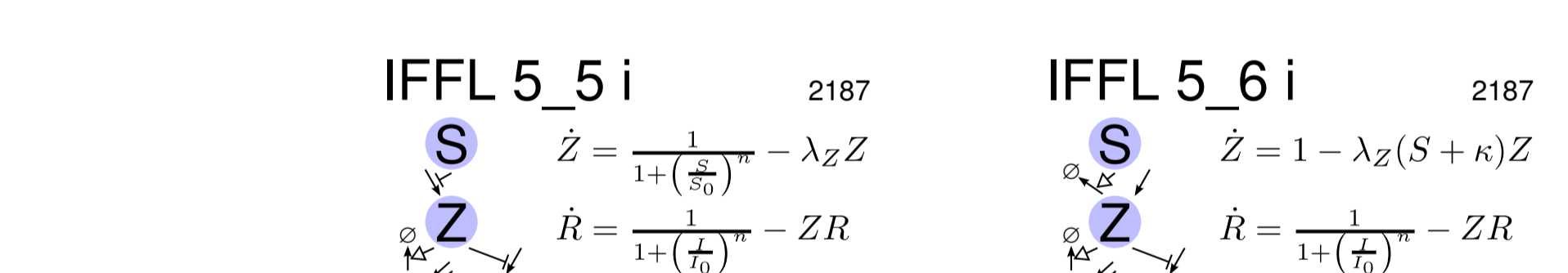
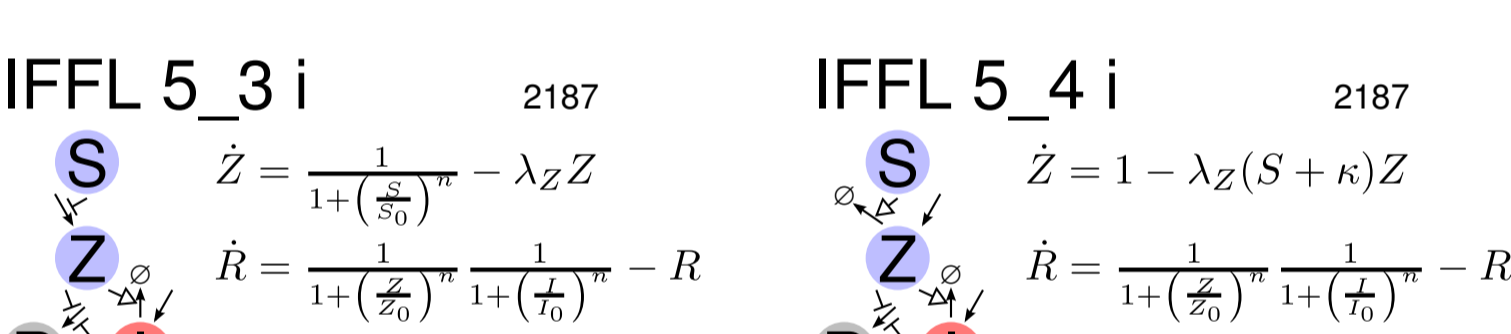
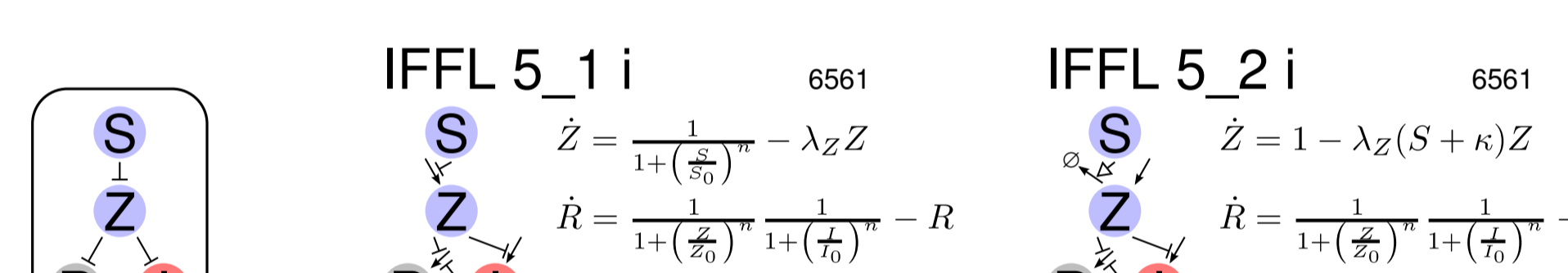
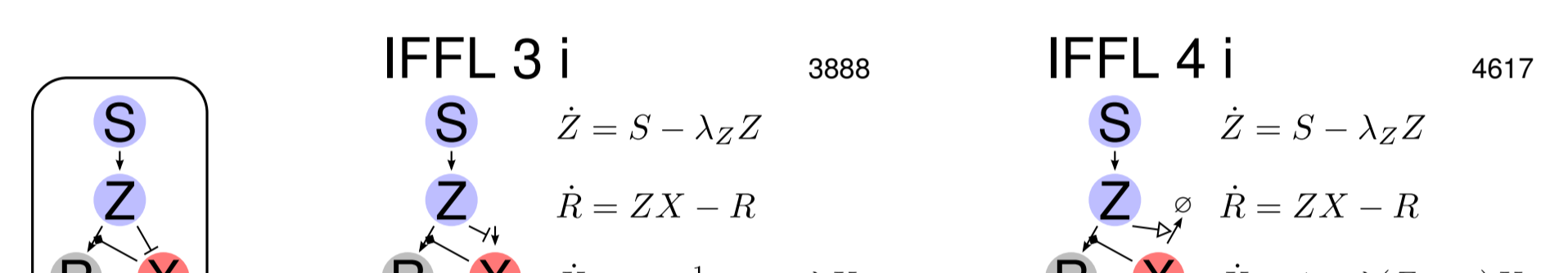
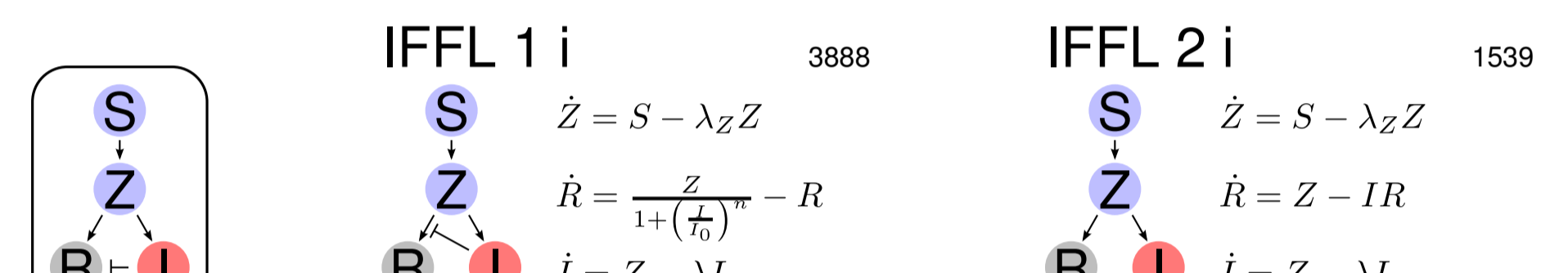
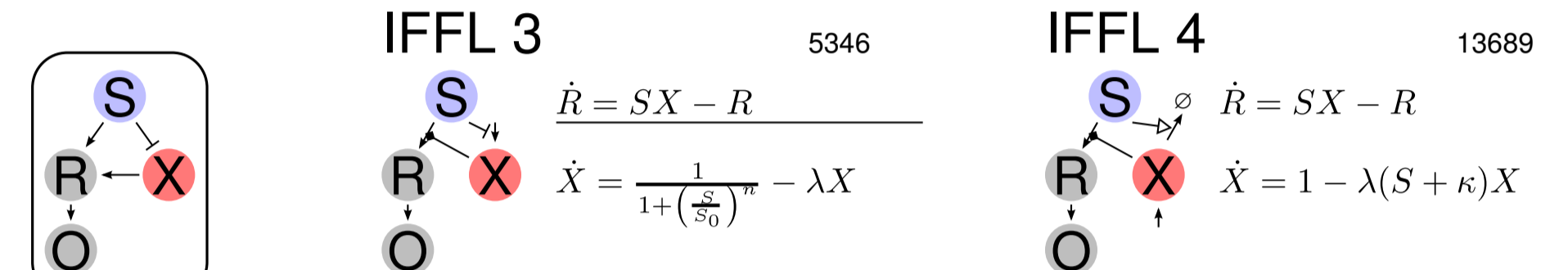
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