
Research Articles: Behavioral/Cognitive

Emotionally aversive cues suppress neural systems underlying optimal learning in socially anxious individuals

Payam Piray¹, Verena Ly², Karin Roelofs¹, Roshan Cools¹ and Ivan Toni¹

¹*Donders Institute, Radboud University, the Netherlands*

²*Department of Clinical Psychology; Leiden Institute for Brain and Cognition, Leiden University, the Netherlands*

<https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1394-18.2018>

Received: 1 June 2018

Revised: 19 November 2018

Accepted: 11 December 2018

Published: 17 December 2018

Author contributions: P.P., V.L., K.R., R.C., and I.T. designed research; P.P. and V.L. performed research; P.P. contributed unpublished reagents/analytic tools; P.P. analyzed data; P.P., R.C., and I.T. wrote the paper; V.L. and K.R. edited the paper.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no competing financial interests.

The authors would like to thank Nathaniel Daw for helpful advice. K.R. was supported by a starting grant from the European Research Council (ERC_StG2012_313749) and a VICI grant (#453-12-001) from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). R.C. was supported by a James McDonnell Scholar Award (grant number 220020328).

Corresponding author, current address: Princeton Neuroscience Institute, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08540, Email: ppiray@princeton.edu

Cite as: J. Neurosci 2018; 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1394-18.2018

Alerts: Sign up at www.jneurosci.org/alerts to receive customized email alerts when the fully formatted version of this article is published.

Accepted manuscripts are peer-reviewed but have not been through the copyediting, formatting, or proofreading process.

Copyright © 2018 the authors

1 **Emotionally aversive cues suppress neural systems underlying**
2 **optimal learning in socially anxious individuals**

3

4 Payam Piray^{1,*}, Verena Ly², Karin Roelofs¹, Roshan Cools^{1,+} and Ivan Toni^{1,+}

5 ¹ Donders Institute, Radboud University, the Netherlands

6 ² Department of Clinical Psychology; Leiden Institute for Brain and Cognition, Leiden
7 University, the Netherlands

8 *Corresponding author, current address: Princeton Neuroscience Institute, Princeton
9 University, Princeton, NJ 08540, Email: ppiray@princeton.edu

10 ⁺ These authors contributed equally to this work.

11

12 Conflict of Interest: the authors declare no conflict of interest.

13

14 Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank Nathaniel Daw for helpful advice. K.R.
15 was supported by a starting grant from the European Research Council
16 (ERC_StG2012_313749) and a VICI grant (#453-12-001) from the Netherlands Organization
17 for Scientific Research (NWO). R.C. was supported by a James McDonnell Scholar Award
18 (grant number 220020328).

19 **Abstract**

20 Learning and decision-making are modulated by socio-emotional processing and such
21 modulation is implicated in clinically-relevant personality traits of social anxiety. The present
22 study elucidates the computational and neural mechanisms by which emotionally aversive
23 cues disrupt learning in socially anxious human individuals. Healthy volunteers with low or
24 high trait social anxiety performed a reversal learning task requiring learning actions in
25 response to angry or happy face cues. Choice data were best captured by a computational
26 model in which learning rate was adjusted according to the history of surprises. High trait
27 socially anxious individuals employed a less dynamic strategy for adjusting their learning rate
28 in trials started with angry face cues and unlike the low social anxiety group, their dorsal
29 anterior cingulate cortex (dACC) activity did not covary with the learning rate. Our results
30 demonstrate that trait social anxiety is accompanied by disruption of optimal learning and
31 dACC activity in threatening situations.

32 **Significance statement**

33 Social anxiety is known to influence a broad range of cognitive functions. This study
34 tests whether and how social anxiety affects human value-based learning as a function of
35 uncertainty in the learning environment. The findings indicate that, in a threatening context
36 evoked by an angry face, socially anxious individuals fail to benefit from a stable learning
37 environment with highly predictable stimulus-response-outcome associations. Under those
38 circumstances, socially anxious individuals failed to use their dorsal anterior cingulate cortex,
39 a region known to adjust learning rate to environmental uncertainty. These findings open
40 the way to modify neurobiological mechanisms of maladaptive learning in anxiety and
41 depressive disorders.

42 Introduction

43 Economics, psychology, and neuroscience have often assumed that emotions
44 compete with reason during decision-making (Cohen, 2005; Kahneman, 2011). Recent
45 theories challenge this notion, suggesting that in fact emotions are deeply embedded within
46 decision-making computations (Phelps et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2015). For instance, recent
47 work has shown that trait-anxiety and stress sensitivity influence learning rate, a quantity
48 reflecting the rate at which decision values are updated by new information (Browning et al.,
49 2015; de Berker et al., 2016). These observations are in line with older descriptive studies
50 suggesting that emotions modulate cognitive flexibility (Dreisbach and Goschke, 2004; van
51 Steenberg et al., 2010). Although recent studies have revealed neural correlates of
52 dynamic learning rate (Behrens et al., 2007, 2008; Li et al., 2011), particularly in the dACC
53 (Behrens et al., 2007, 2008), the computational and neural mechanisms by which emotional
54 cues and emotion-related traits modulate learning rate are unknown.

55 Psychological models of conditioning, such as Rescorla-Wagner (Rescorla et al., 1972),
56 suggest that animals learn by computing prediction errors. Such errors are positive when an
57 outcome (reward or punishment) is better than expected and negative when the outcome is
58 worse than expected. According to these models, animals learn by updating their
59 expectation in proportion to the prediction error multiplied by a learning rate. In Rescorla-
60 Wagner models, the learning rate is assumed to be a constant parameter between zero and
61 one. Models of associative learning, such as Pearce-Hall (Pearce and Hall, 1980), however,
62 suggest that animals learn stimulus-outcome associations by tracking associability, a
63 quantity reflecting the extent to which each cue has previously been accompanied by
64 surprise (unsigned prediction errors). This quantity guides animals' attention towards cues
65 with large associability. According to these models, the associability signal gates the amount
66 of future learning about the cue on the basis of whether it has been a reliable or poor

67 predictor of reinforcement in the past. Bayesian or temporal difference models proposed for
68 learning in uncertain environments essentially combine the key features of both accounts, in
69 which error-driven learning depends on a dynamic learning rate closely resembling the
70 notion of associability (Behrens et al., 2007, 2008; Li et al., 2011; Iglesias et al., 2013). These
71 models indicate that when the environment is highly surprising, the learning rate should be
72 higher allowing expectations to get updated quickly. This causal inference about changes in
73 the environment might be particularly disrupted in anxiety and depressive disorders, which
74 are associated with self-blame symptoms. As noted by Beck (Beck, 1967), self-blame in a
75 depressed patient “expresses a patient’s notion of causality”. In other words, in an uncertain
76 environment, these patients might attribute negative outcomes to their own actions instead
77 of the stochasticity of the environment and change their decisions frequently. This view is
78 consistent with theories suggesting that emotion-related traits modulate associability
79 tracking in uncertain environments (Paulus and Yu, 2012; Mason et al., 2017). Relatedly, a
80 recent study has reported that trait anxiety is negatively correlated with the ability to adjust
81 learning rate in uncertain environment (Browning et al., 2015). However, the neural
82 mechanisms by which learning rate is related to trait anxiety are still unknown. Furthermore,
83 it is not clear whether emotionally aversive cues in the environment mediate such relation.

84 Here, we combine functional neuroimaging and computational modeling to
85 investigate whether and how emotions modulate learning rate and whether those
86 modulations depend on individual variation in the personality trait of social anxiety. A hybrid
87 computational model was considered, in which error-driven learning depends on a learning
88 rate containing both dynamic-, similar to Pearce-Hall, and constant-, similar to Rescorla-
89 Wagner, components. Model-based analysis of task-related fMRI data was conducted to
90 investigate the neural correlates of dynamic learning rate in the dACC, a region previously
91 shown to encode dynamic learning rate in uncertain environments (Behrens et al., 2007,

92 2008). We hypothesized that the dynamic adjustment of learning rate and its neural
93 correlates depend on emotional state and trait social anxiety.

94 **Methods**

95 **Participants**

96 Forty-five female volunteers gave written informed consent approved by the local
97 ethical committee (“Comissie Mensgebonden Onderzoek” Arnhem-Nijmegen) and
98 participated in the study. Only women have been recruited to have a relatively
99 homogeneous sample in terms of emotional reactivity (Koch et al., 2007; Domes et al.,
100 2010). Exclusion criteria were claustrophobia, neurological, cardiovascular or psychiatric
101 disorders, regular use of medication or psychotropic drugs, heavy smoking and metal parts
102 in the body. Participants were selected from an online pool of students based on their
103 scores on the Liebowitz social anxiety scale (Liebowitz, 1987). Thus, participants were
104 recruited to have either low (not greater than 13, n=23) or high scores (not smaller than 25,
105 n=22) on this test. One participant did not finish the experiment due to headache (from the
106 high score group). Data from all other 44 participants were analyzed (all right-handed, mean
107 age of 20.7). We used data from a previously published study (Ly et al., 2014) focused on the
108 association between emotional biasing of go/no-go responding and individual differences in
109 social avoidance. Unlike the current study, Ly et al. (2014) did not consider any form of
110 learning and only focused on behavioral inhibition.

111 **Probabilistic reversal learning task**

112 Each participant completed 480 trials of a probabilistic learning task in the scanner.
113 Each trial started with a face cue (happy or angry) presented on a color frame indicating the
114 type of outcome valence (reward or punishment) at the end of the trial. Thus, there were

115 four trial-types in a 2x2 factorial design with factors emotion (happy or angry) and valence
116 (reward or punishment). There were 120 trials per trial-type. Participants were instructed
117 that the combination of emotional content of the face cue and color frame distinguished the
118 four trial-types and that they had to learn the optimal response for each of the four cue-
119 types separately. The response-outcome contingency was probabilistic and independent for
120 each trial-type. The response-outcome contingency was reversed several times for each trial
121 type, resulting in different degree of volatility in the course of experiment, while remaining
122 counterbalanced across trial types. Specifically, each participant completed three sessions,
123 with a 1-min break in between the sessions. Each session consisted of 160 trials, with 40
124 trials per trial-type. For each trial-type within a session, the probability of a positive outcome
125 given a go-response could take one of the following combinations in two consecutive blocks:
126 (i) 0.5, 0.2, 0.5, 0.2; (ii) 0.5, 0.2, 0.5, 0.8; (iii) 0.5, 0.8, 0.5, 0.8, where each session was
127 associated with one of these combinations. The blocks with probability of 0.5 were short
128 blocks with average length of 5 trials, and other blocks were long blocks with average length
129 of 15 trials.

130 Emotional stimuli were adult Caucasian faces from 36 models (18 men) taken from
131 several databases (Ekman and Friesen, 1976; Matsumoto and Ekman, 1988; Lundqvist et al.,
132 1998; Martinez, and Benavente, 1998). Model faces were trimmed to exclude influence from
133 hair and non-facial contours (van Peer et al., 2007; Roelofs et al., 2009). Model identity was
134 counterbalanced, such that the model occurred equally often for each trial-type. The color
135 frame (yellow or grey) indicating the possibility of reward or punishment was also
136 counterbalanced across participants. On each trial, one of the face cues was presented
137 centrally. Participants were then allowed to make a response 100 ms after cue onset, where
138 they were required to make either a go- or a no-go-response within 1000 ms. If no response
139 was made within 1000 ms, then a no-go-response was recorded. After a response-outcome
140 delay of maximally 2000 ms (depending on the response time), the outcome was presented

141 for 1000 ms (+10 cents for reward, -10 cents for punishment, and 0 cents for omitted reward
142 or avoided punishment). The inter-trial interval was jittered (2500 to 4500 ms).

143 The relatively long time window for responding (1000 ms) ensured that no-go
144 responses are not due to failure in making a go response. To illustrate this point, we tested
145 each participant response-time separately for go-responses in every trial-type. This test
146 revealed that for all participants and all trial types, response-time are significantly lower
147 than 1000 ms window (t-test, all P -values $< 10^{-10}$).

148 Computational models

149 In this section, we describe the computational learning models compared in this study.
150 A common choice model was then used in combination with each of these learning models
151 to predict the probability of choices, which will be presented later.

152 All learning models track expected value x_t on trial t of each stimulus and action pair.
153 Thus, if s_t is the stimulus presented on trial t , c_t is the choice taken and o_t is the received
154 outcome, all models compute a prediction error signal and update the corresponding
155 expected value:

$$\delta_t = o_t - x_t(s_t, c_t)$$

$$x_{t+1}(s_t, c_t) = x_t(s_t, c_t) + \alpha_t \delta_t$$

156 where δ_t is the prediction error on trial t and α_t is the learning rate representing the degree
157 to which the prediction error influences the current expected value. The learning models are
158 different in how they conceptualize the learning rate.

159 **M1. Rescorla-Wagner model.** This model (Rescorla et al., 1972) is the simplest model
160 among the tested models, containing only one free learning parameter as constant learning

161 rate, κ , bounded in the unit range, $[0, 1]$. Therefore, for this model, α_t is equal to κ on all
 162 trials.

163 **M2. Hybrid model.** This model and its variant (M4) are the main models of interest in
 164 this study. The hybrid model quantifies associability, A_t , and constructs the learning rate
 165 accordingly in two steps. First, it constructs K_t :

$$K_t = wA_t + (1 - w)$$

166 where w is the weight parameter constrained to lie in the unit range. Therefore, K_t is a
 167 weighted combination of a constant- and a dynamic- component according to w . If $w = 0$,
 168 the dynamic component, A_t , has no influence on K_t and therefore the learning rate is a
 169 constant. Conversely, if $w=1$, K_t has no constant component and therefore it is fully dynamic.
 170 Note that, regardless of the value of w , the maximum possible value (i.e. the scale) of K_t is 1.
 171 The learning rate is then defined as

$$\alpha_t = \kappa K_t$$

172 where κ is another free parameter, which indicates the scale of learning rate. Thus, for any
 173 value of κ , the learning rate on every trial lies between 0 and κ .

174 In this model, the associability also gets updated. On every trial, two factors influence
 175 the associability update, similar to update rules in Bayesian dynamic models such as Kalman
 176 filter (e.g. see (Daw et al., 2006)). First, similar to the gain in the Bayesian models (e.g.
 177 Kalman gain), associability gradually reduces due to random diffusion:

$$A_t = \lambda A_t^{post}$$

178 Second, after observing the outcome of the trial, the associability gets updated according to
 179 the surprise (i.e. squared prediction error):

$$A_{t+1}^{post} = A_t + (1 - \lambda)\delta_t^2$$

180 Note that, on every trial, the learning rate, α_t , depends on A_t , which itself depends on
 181 squared prediction errors from the past trials, but not the current one. Therefore, δ_t is not
 182 double counted in the value update.

183 Taken together, this learning model contains three free learning parameters, κ , w and
 184 λ , which are all constrained to lie in the unit range. Moreover, since squared prediction
 185 errors in this task are between 0 and 1 (as outcomes are binary), associability will also
 186 always lie in the unit range. Consequently, learning rates will always be between 0 and 1
 187 ensuring that expected values are well-defined for any set of parameters.

188 **M3. Reinforcement learning model of Li et al (2011).** This model also combines error-
 189 driven learning with an associability signal. The important difference between this model
 190 and M2 is that whereas in M2 the learning rate is a weighted combination of a dynamic and
 191 a constant component, M3 only contains a dynamic component. Also, the way that M3
 192 quantifies surprise is slightly different compared with the M2 by updating associability
 193 according to the absolute value of previous prediction error (instead of squared value of
 194 prediction error).

$$A_t = (1 - \mu)A_{t-1} + \mu|\delta_{t-1}|$$

$$\alpha_t = \kappa A_t$$

195 where μ and κ are free parameters (bounded in the unit range) determining the step-size for
 196 updating associability and the scale of learning rate, respectively.

197 **M4. Hybrid emotion-specific w model.** This model is identical to M2 except that it
 198 assumes two different weight parameters, w_a and w_h , for angry and happy trials,
 199 respectively. Therefore, this model has one more free parameter compared with M2.

200 **M5. Hybrid emotion-specific κ model.** This model is also identical to M2 except that it
 201 assumes two different overall scale, κ , parameters for angry and happy trials.

202 **M6. Hybrid valence-specific w model.** This model is also identical to M2 except that it
 203 assumes two different weight, w , parameters for reward and punishment trials.

204 **Choice Model.** Each of the learning models was combined with a choice model to
 205 generate probabilistic predictions of choice data. Expected values were used to calculate the
 206 probability of actions, a_1 (go response) and a_2 (no-go response), according to a sigmoid
 207 (softmax) function:

$$p_t(a_1) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\beta(x_t(s_t, a_1) - x_t(s_t, a_2)) - b(s_t)}}$$

$$p_t(a_2) = 1 - p_t(a_1)$$

208 where β is the decision noise parameter encoding the extent to which learned contingencies
 209 affect choice (constrained to be positive) and $b(s_t)$ is the bias towards a_1 due to the
 210 stimulus presented independent from learned values. The bias is defined based on three
 211 free parameters, representing bias due to the emotional content (happy or angry), b_e , bias
 212 due to the anticipated outcome valence (reward or punishment) cued by the stimulus, b_v ,
 213 and bias due to the interaction of emotional content and outcome, b_i . No constraint was
 214 assumed for the three bias parameters. For example, a positive value of b_e represents
 215 tendencies towards a go response for happy stimuli and for avoiding a go response for angry
 216 stimuli (regardless of the expected values). Similarly, a positive value of b_v represents a
 217 tendency towards a go-response for rewarding stimuli regardless of the expected value of
 218 the go response. Critically, we also considered the possibility of an interaction effect in bias
 219 encoded by b_i . Therefore, the bias, $b(s_t)$, for the happy and rewarding stimulus is
 220 $b_e + b_v + b_i$, the bias for the angry and punishing stimulus is $-b_e - b_v + b_i$, the bias for the

221 happy and punishing stimulus is $b_e - b_v - b_i$ and the bias for the angry and rewarding
222 stimulus is $-b_e + b_v - b_i$.

223 Model fitting

224 We fitted parameters in the infinite real-space and transformed them to obtain *actual*
225 parameters fed to the models. Appropriate transform functions were used for this purpose:
226 the sigmoid function to transform parameters bounded in the unit range (the learning
227 parameters in all models) and the exponential function to transform the decision noise
228 parameter in the choice model. No transformation was needed for the bias parameters of
229 the choice model as they were not bounded.

230 Free parameters of each model were estimated in two stages. In the first stage, a set
231 of parameters, θ_{MAP}^n , maximizing log-likelihood of data plus log-prior (maximum a posteriori,
232 MAP) was estimated for every participant separately (n is the index of participant) similar to
233 our previous study (Piray et al., 2016). A wide Gaussian prior was assumed for all parameters
234 (with zero mean and a variance of 6.25). This initial variance is chosen to ensure that
235 the parameters could vary in a wide range with no substantial effect of prior. Specifically,
236 the log-effect of this prior is less than one chance-level choice (i.e $\log 0.5$) for any value of w
237 between 0.05 and 0.95. This is also the case for all other free parameters constrained in the
238 unit range. A non-linear derivative-based optimization algorithm (as implemented in the
239 `fminunc` routine in MATLAB, ©Mathwork) was used for fitting. To overcome bias of the
240 optimization algorithm to the initial point, the optimization was repeated multiple times and
241 the best set of parameters was selected.

242 In the second stage, a hierarchical fitting procedure was used to fit the models to
243 participants' choices. An expectation-maximization algorithm was used for optimizing
244 group- and individual- parameters in an iterative fashion, with Laplace approximation for
245 approximating the posterior distribution (Huys et al., 2011). This method estimates the

246 mean and the variance of parameters across all participants (group parameters) in the first
 247 step. In a subsequent step, that mean and variance is used to define a normal prior
 248 distribution of parameters and to estimate parameters of each individual participant using
 249 Laplace approximation. This procedure is then continued iteratively to reach convergence.
 250 Group parameters was initialized according to the mean and variance of the individual
 251 parameters, θ_{MAP}^n , fitted in the first stage. This procedure regularizes individual fitted
 252 parameters according to group parameters, thereby decreases fitting noise and protects
 253 against outliers. The final estimated values for the group parameters, Θ , were used to
 254 generate the regressors used in the fMRI analyses, as they are less biased by fitting noise.
 255 For details of the hierarchical fitting procedure, see Huys et al. (Huys et al., 2011).

256 All codes used for fitting are publically available online
 257 (https://github.com/payampiray/cbm_v0). The Gramm plotting tools (Morel, 2018) were
 258 used for visualization.

259 Model selection

260 We employed a Bayesian model comparison approach to assess which model better
 261 captures participants' choices. This approach selects the most parsimonious model by
 262 quantifying model evidence, a metric which balances between model fits and complexity of
 263 the model (MacKay, 2003). Notably, this procedure penalizes complexity induced by both
 264 group and individual parameters using Laplace approximation and Bayesian information
 265 criterion (BIC), respectively. For each model fitted using the hierarchical fitting procedure,
 266 the log-model evidence (LME) is penalized for complexities at both individual and group
 267 levels, which can be quantified using Laplace approximation and Bayesian information
 268 criterion, respectively (Piray et al., 2014):

$$LME = \sum_n \log P(D^n | \theta^n) + \sum_n \log N(\theta^n | \theta, \Sigma) + \frac{1}{2} dN \log 2\pi - \frac{1}{2} \sum_n \log |H_n| - d \log N$$

269 where D^n is the set of choice data for the n th participant θ^n , is the fitted individual
270 parameters for n th participant, θ and Σ is the mean and variance for the group distribution,
271 respectively, d is number of free parameters of the model, N is the number of participants
272 and $|H_n|$ is the determinant of the Hessian matrix of the log-posterior function at θ^n . The
273 log-likelihood function is the predicted probability of choice data given the model and
274 parameters defined as $\log p(D^n|\theta^n) = \sum_t \log p_t(c_t)$, where the sum is over all trials.
275 Therefore, the first term on the right-hand side of the equation is how well the model
276 predicts data. The sum of the next three terms together is the penalty due to individual
277 parameters. The last term represents the penalty approximated for $2d$ (mean and variance
278 together) group parameters as quantified using Bayesian information criterion.

279 fMRI data acquisition and preprocessing

280 Whole-brain imaging was performed on a 3T MR scanner (Magnetom Trio Tim;
281 Siemens Medical Systems) equipped with a 32-channel head coil using a multi-echo GRAPPA
282 sequence (Poser et al., 2006) [repetition time (TR): 2.32 ms, echo times (TEs, 4):
283 9.0/19.3/30/40 ms, 38 axial oblique slices, ascending acquisition, distance factor: 17%, voxel
284 size 3.3_3.3_2.5 mm, field of view (FoV): 211 mm; flip angle, 90°]. At the end of the
285 experimental session, high-resolution anatomical images were acquired using a
286 magnetization prepared rapid gradient echo sequence (TR: 2300 ms, TE: 3.03 ms, 192
287 sagittal slices, voxel size 1.0_1.0_1.0 mm, FoV: 256 mm).

288 Given the multiecho GRAPPA MR sequence (Poser et al., 2006), the head motion
289 parameters were estimated on the MR images with the shortest TE (9.0 ms), because these
290 images are the least affected by BOLD signals. These motion-correction parameters,
291 estimated using a least-squares approach with six rigid body transformation parameters
292 (translations, rotations), were then applied to the four echo images collected for each
293 excitation. After spatial realignment, the four echo images were combined into a single MR

294 volume using an optimized echo weighting method (Poser et al., 2006). Noise effects in data
295 were removed using FMRIB's ICA-based Xnoiseifier tool (FIX), which uses independent
296 component analysis (ICA) and classification techniques to identify noise components in data
297 (Salimi-Khorshidi et al., 2014). Other preprocessing steps were carried out in SPM12. The T1-
298 weighted image was spatially coregistered to the mean of the functional images. The fMRI
299 time series were transformed and resampled at an isotropic voxel size of 2mm into the
300 standard Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI) space using both linear and nonlinear
301 transformation parameters as determined in a probabilistic generative model that combines
302 image registration, tissue classification, and bias correction (i.e. unified segmentation and
303 normalization) of the coregistered T1-weighted image (Ashburner and Friston, 2005). The
304 normalized functional images were spatially smoothed using an isotropic 6mm full-width at
305 half-maximum Gaussian kernel.

306 Statistical analysis of imaging data

307 General linear model (GLM) was used to model effects at the single-subject level (first-
308 level analysis). Four sets of four regressors, each containing one regressor per trial-type,
309 were considered: one set was time-locked to the visual presentation of cues; one set was
310 time-locked to the visual presentation of outcomes; one set was parametrically modulated
311 by prediction error and time-locked to the presentation of the trial outcome; one set was
312 parametrically modulated by dynamic learning rate and time-locked to the presentation of
313 the trial outcome. Group parameters obtained through the hierarchical fitting procedure, θ ,
314 were used to generate these signals. Twelve motion regressors representing six motion
315 parameters obtained from the brain-realignment procedure and their first derivative were
316 also included.

317 Contrasts of interests were estimated at the subject-level. These contrast images were
318 then used in a second-level GLM to make inference at the group level (t-test). The region-of-

319 interest analysis in the dorsal anterior cingulate was performed in anatomically defined
320 mask of the rostral cingulate motor area, which has been shown to correlate with learning
321 rate and has distinct connectional fingerprints. The rostral cingulate motor area mask was
322 created based on a diffusion-parcellation atlas of human medial and ventral frontal cortex
323 (thresholded at $p < 0.25$) (Neubert et al., 2015).

324 **Results**

325 Forty-four participants carried out a probabilistic learning task. Participants were
326 selected from an online pool of students based on their scores on the Liebowitz social
327 anxiety scale (Liebowitz, 1987). Thus, participants were recruited to have either low (not
328 greater than 13) or high scores (not smaller than 25) on this test. Participants were
329 accordingly divided into two groups with low ($n=23$, mean=8.26, SE=0.76) or high ($n=21$,
330 mean=31.00, SE=1.37) social anxiety.

331 In the experiment (Figure 1), participants were presented with validated images of
332 faces (happy or angry) and were asked to make either a go- or a no-go- response (i.e. press a
333 button, or withhold a button press, respectively) for each of these facial cues in order to
334 obtain monetary reward or avoid monetary punishment. There were 4 trial types: happy
335 face – reward outcome trials, happy punishment, angry reward and angry punishment trials.
336 Participants were also informed about outcome valence at the start of each trial by
337 presenting the face image in a background color (yellow or white) indicating whether, at the
338 end of a trial, a win outcome consisted of obtaining a reward or avoiding a punishment.
339 Crucially, the response-outcome contingencies for the cues were probabilistic and
340 manipulated independently, and reversed after a number of trials, varying between 5 and 15
341 trials, so that the experiment consisted of a number of blocks with varying trial length
342 (Figure 1C). Within each block, the probability of a win was fixed. There were matched

343 numbers of action-outcome contingency reversals across trial types, with 120 trials in each
344 of the four trial types (see Methods for details).

345 [Figure 1 about here]

346 Participants learned the task effectively: performance quantified as the number of
347 correct decisions given the true underlying probability was significantly higher than chance
348 across the group ($t(43)=14.68$, $p<0.001$). Importantly, participants responded to reversals. As
349 Figure 2 shows, their performance was approximately at chance level immediately after
350 reversals and improved slowly for all trial types and both type of responses. Note that, as
351 Figure 2 shows, the effects of reversal learning on performance is not different between go
352 and no-go responses as the slope of the two curves is not substantially different.

353 The emotional cues did not influence overall task performance ($t(43)=-0.37$, $p=0.71$), nor
354 participants' bias towards go-responses ($t(43)=-1.39$, $p=0.17$). However, longer latencies of
355 go responses following the presentation of angry face cues relative to happy face cues
356 indicated that participants did process the emotional content of those cues ($t(43)= 3.72$,
357 $p<0.001$). Latencies of go responses, however, did not vary as a function of social anxiety
358 ($t(43)=0.68$, $p=0.5$).

359 [Figure 2 about here]

360 Emotional cues modulate adaptive learning rate

361 We tested whether participants adjusted their learning rate dynamically according to
362 the history of surprises. First, we considered a Rescorla-Wagner model in which expected
363 value is updated by the product of prediction errors and a constant learning rate (model M1).
364 We then focused on assessing the additional explanatory power of a class of an augmented
365 hybrid Pearce-Hall Rescorla-Wagner models in which the learning rate depends on another
366 variable, K_t , that combines the learning rate of Rescorla-Wagner with that of Pearce-Hall

367 model. The dynamic component of K_t was adjusted according to the history of surprises (or
368 sample variance equal to squared prediction error), similar to the Pearce-Hall associability
369 rule.

370 Therefore, we built a model (model M2) in which K_t is a weighted combination of a
371 constant- and a dynamic- component according to a weight parameter, w . The weight
372 parameter, w , indicates the degree to which this dynamic associability component
373 influences on K_t and thereby contributes to the learning rate. If $w=0$, the dynamic
374 component has no influence on K_t and therefore the learning rate is a constant. Conversely,
375 if $w=1$, K_t has no constant component and therefore the learning rate is fully dynamic.

376 On every trial, the product of K_t with another free parameter, κ , indicates the
377 learning rate on that trial, in which κ indicates the overall scale of learning rate (also
378 constrained to lie in the unit range). Thus, while w indicates the degree to which learning
379 rate is changing over time, κ determines the maximum of learning rate. In other words, on
380 every trial, learning rate lies between zero and κ . In sum, this augmented hybrid model
381 contains both a model with a constant learning rate (if $w=0$) for which the learning rate is
382 always κ , and a model with a fully dynamic learning rate (if $w=1$) as special cases.

383 We used a choice model to generate probability of choice data according to action
384 values derived for each model. Note that the choice model controlled value-independent
385 biases in making or avoiding a go response due to the emotional or reinforcing content of
386 the cues (see Methods for formal definition). We then used a hierarchical Bayesian
387 estimation algorithm (Huys et al., 2011, 2012; Piray et al., 2014) to obtain parameters of the
388 model given the data. This is an algorithm with the advantage that fits to individual subjects
389 are constrained according to the group-level distribution. For each model, this procedure
390 also calculates its evidence (Piray et al., 2014), a measure of goodness of fit of the model
391 penalized by the complexity of the model (MacKay, 2003), which can be used for Bayesian

392 model comparison. This analysis revealed that the hybrid model explains data better than
393 the simpler model with a constant learning rate (Table 1). As a control analysis, we
394 compared M2 with two other models. First, we considered the reinforcement learning
395 model implemented by Li et al. (2011) (model M3), which was inferior to our original model.
396 Unlike M2, this reinforcement learning model contains only a dynamic component in its
397 learning rate. Note that whereas the weight parameter of M2 enables us to quantify
398 individual differences in the degree to which participants followed the Pearce-Hall
399 associability rule, M3 does not have such parameter. In other words, under M3, all
400 individuals equally follow the Pearce-Hall associability rule.

401 We then asked whether emotional cues modulate learning rate. Specifically, we
402 considered a variant of the hybrid model M2 with emotion-specific weight parameters
403 (model M4). This dual weight model contains separate weight parameters for happy and
404 angry trials. We used the same Bayesian model comparison procedure to compare this
405 model with model M2. We found that this model outperformed M2 despite the penalty for
406 one extra parameter. We also used classical likelihood ratio tests for comparing this model
407 (M4) with the original hybrid model (M2), as M2 is nested within M4. The results confirmed
408 the Bayesian model comparison results indicating that the hybrid model with emotion-
409 specific w parameters (M4) is better given the data ($\chi^2(2)=21.84$, $p<0.0001$).

410 [Table 1 about here]

411 We also considered control analyses to test modulation of M2 parameters across
412 different factors. First, we fitted a model in which κ rather than w was assumed to be
413 emotion-specific (M5). This model tested the idea that emotions reduce or increase scale of
414 learning rate regardless of the dynamics of the environment. The evidence for this model,
415 however, was lower than that for the original one (M2) ruling out that emotions affect the
416 overall scale of learning rate rather than its sensitivity to environmental dynamics (Table 1).

417 Second, we tested a control model in which the weight parameters varied as a function of
418 the valence of the outcome (model M6). In this model, w was different for reward and
419 punishment trials. This model also did not outperform the original model, M2. Altogether,
420 these results suggest that emotional state modulates the degree to which people adapt their
421 learning rate dynamically as a function of the history of surprises.

422 [Table 2 about here]

423 Trait social anxiety predicts dynamic learning rate in states evoked by angry face
424 cues

425 Trait social anxiety is a predictor of vulnerability to depression and anxiety disorders
426 (Mineka and Oehlborg, 2008), pathologies hypothesized to be related to disrupted learning
427 in uncertain environments (Paulus and Yu, 2012; Huys et al., 2015). Furthermore, a recent
428 study has shown that variability in learning rate in a probabilistic learning task is associated
429 with individual differences in trait anxiety (Browning et al., 2015). Here, we build on these
430 prior findings by assessing whether individual differences in the effect of emotional cues on
431 the dynamic learning rate, w , are related to individual variability in social anxiety. To this end,
432 we tested how individual differences in parameters of the winning model, M4, are related to
433 social anxiety. We analyzed estimated weights, w , using individually fitted parameters.
434 Unlike parameters estimated by the hierarchical Bayesian procedure that are regularized
435 according to all subjects' data, the individually fitted parameters are independently
436 estimated and therefore can be used in regular statistical tests. Nonparametric Wilcoxon
437 rank (two-tailed) tests were employed, because of the non-Gaussian distribution of the
438 weight parameters (as they were constrained to lie in the unit range).

439 The weight, w , differed significantly between the low and high social anxiety groups
440 on angry trials ($p=0.001$, $z=3.20$; Figure 3A), but not on happy trials ($p=0.56$, $z=-0.59$; Figure
441 3B) and the difference in weights (angry vs. happy) was also significantly different between

442 the two groups ($p=0.033$, $z=2.14$). Thus, participants with high versus low social anxiety
443 exhibited reduced dynamic adjustment of learning rate on trials starting with an angry, but
444 not a happy, face. No significant difference between the two groups was found for the other
445 parameters of the model (all $p>0.05$).

446 [Figure 3 about here]

447 An obvious next question is how the low weight parameter in the high socially anxious
448 group affected their choice. Since the weight parameter, w , indicates sensitivity of the
449 learning rate to changes in the environment, its effects on learning is manifested in the
450 relative performance in the stable versus volatile epochs. For example, a model with a low
451 weight, w , would change its decisions on the basis of a few bad outcomes that could be due
452 to noise. This model feature can cause poor performance especially in relatively stable
453 conditions in which the action-outcome contingency does not change and optimal learning
454 relies on a reduced learning rate.

455 To demonstrate this quantitatively and in a relatively theory-neutral fashion, we
456 analyzed performance of participants on the angry trials in two different conditions. We
457 dissociated stable and volatile epochs, depending on whether there has been at least a
458 change in action-outcome contingencies in the last 10 preceding trials. Thus, a trial was
459 defined as stable if no change occurred in the action-outcome contingency in the last 10
460 trials. Otherwise, it was defined as a volatile trial. Performance in the stable and volatile
461 epochs was quantified in terms of the average optimal choice (i.e. the probability of
462 choosing the action with the highest probability of winning). Since our task is stochastic
463 (action-outcome probability is never more than 80% and there are frequent reversals) and
464 the average length of stable blocks (with probability of 80%) was 15 trials, the window of 10
465 trials provide a reasonable criterion for defining stability. Note that the modeling results
466 presented above are not sensitive to such criteria in defining stability versus volatility and

467 rather define volatility based on the sequences of choices and surprises. Nevertheless, to
468 ensure that the results presented here are robust against the 10-trial criterion, we
469 considered other definition of stability in which the window length was more than 10 trials.
470 The pattern of results found for those alternatives were consistent with the one presented
471 here.

472 First, we analyzed optimal choice probability on angry trials as a function of condition
473 (stable vs. volatile) using non-parametric Wilcoxon tests (due to its non-Gaussian
474 distribution, all tests are two-tailed). Across all participants, optimal choice probability was
475 higher for stable than volatile trials ($p < 0.0001$, $z = 4.04$). This is expected because making an
476 optimal choice after a change in action-outcome contingency (i.e. in volatile trials) is more
477 difficult than the stable condition in which there is no change in contingency. The important
478 question, however, is whether this analysis confirms the model-based results, which suggest
479 that social anxiety affects optimal choice probability differentially for the stable and volatile
480 conditions. As predicted, we found a significant interaction between social anxiety and
481 epoch, with the high social anxiety group showing less difference between optimal choice
482 probability in stable and volatile epochs than the low social anxiety group ($p = 0.02$, $z = 2.33$;
483 Figure 3C). Post-hoc tests revealed that the low social anxiety group benefited from stability
484 of the environment as their performance was significantly better in the stable than the
485 volatile epoch ($p < 0.0001$, $z = 3.83$). This effect was not present in the high social anxiety
486 group ($p = 0.12$, $z = 1.55$). Note that the difference in relative performance is not due to better
487 performance of the high social anxiety group in volatile conditions. Specifically, no significant
488 difference in optimal choice probability on the volatile epoch was found between the two
489 groups ($p = 0.88$, $z = -0.15$) indicating that the high social anxiety group did not perform better
490 in volatile conditions. Significant effects were found when we considered different window
491 length for defining stability (windows with 11 to 14 trials, all p -values < 0.05).

492 We also performed the same analysis for the happy trials, which, as predicted by the
493 model-based analyses, did not reveal any group by epoch interaction effect ($p=0.91$, $z=-0.11$;
494 Figure 3D).

495 Trait social anxiety predicts dorsal anterior cingulate cortex activity related to
496 learning rate in states evoked by angry face cues

497 The dACC has been proposed to contribute to learning from experience by computing
498 learning rate (Behrens et al., 2007, 2008; Rushworth et al., 2011). In nonhuman primates,
499 lesions to dACC results in an inability to use more than the most recent outcome to guide
500 decisions (Kennerley et al., 2006). In humans, blood oxygenation level dependent (BOLD)
501 responses in the dACC have been shown to correlate with learning rate in a probabilistic
502 learning task. Another study using the same task has reported that the dynamic learning rate
503 depends on trait anxiety scores (Browning et al., 2015). The next question we ask here is
504 whether learning rate-related signals in the dACC depend on emotion-related traits, such as
505 social anxiety, and emotional states, as manipulated using emotional facial cues.

506 To answer this question, we performed model-based fMRI analysis (Cohen et al., 2017)
507 to isolate BOLD signals that correlate with learning rate in different emotional contexts. Our
508 linear regression model included not just dynamic learning rate, but also prediction error to
509 control for prediction error-related effects. These model-derived time series were
510 considered as parametric regressors at the time of outcome, separately for each of the four
511 trial-types, leading to 8 regressors. Eight regressors of no-interest were added to account for
512 trial-type specific effects at the time of cue presentation (4 regressors) and of outcome
513 presentation (4 regressors). To generate regressors for fMRI analysis on a common scale, we
514 used the average parameters estimated by the hierarchical Bayesian procedure across all
515 subjects as the common values for all parameters. This is a common approach in model-
516 based neuroimaging, which enables us to draw inferences about individual differences in the

517 neural correlates of model-derived regressors (Daw et al., 2006; Daw, 2011). In other words,
518 any effect regarding individual differences in neural correlates should be attributed to neural
519 signal rather than the parameters used to generate regressors correlating with those signals.
520 Importantly, we used parameters of the hybrid model M2 (rather than M4) to ensure that
521 any difference in correlation between BOLD and learning rate in angry versus happy trials is
522 not confounded with different weight parameters. An anatomically defined mask of the
523 dACC (the rostral cingulate motor area in the connectivity-based parcellation atlas of medial
524 frontal cortex (Neubert et al., 2015)) was employed for region-of-interest analysis.

525 In line with previous findings, we found that BOLD signal in the dACC, across all trials
526 and participants, correlated with learning rate (bilaterally, peak at $x=8$, $y=26$ $z=42$, voxel-
527 level familywise small-volume corrected at $p<0.05$; Figure 4A). Post-hoc test at the peak
528 revealed that the effects are significantly stronger for the angry than happy trials ($t(43)=2.11$,
529 $p=0.041$; Figure 4B). Similar effects were found when considering activity of all voxels
530 showing a significant (at $p<0.001$ uncorrected) learning rate activity ($t(43)=2.11$, $p=0.041$).
531 Further tests also revealed that dACC correlation with learning rate was driven by the angry
532 trials. Specifically, BOLD signal in the dACC exhibited a significant correlation with learning
533 rate during angry trials (bilaterally, peak at $x=-8$, $y=24$ $z=40$, voxel-level familywise small-
534 volume corrected at $p<0.05$), but not during happy trials (no voxel survived uncorrected
535 threshold of 0.001). Therefore, we focused on angry trials and asked whether high social
536 anxiety individuals show weaker learning rate related activity than the low social anxiety
537 group, as suggested by the modeling findings.

538 We found that individual differences in social anxiety covaried strongly with learning
539 rate-related signals in the dACC on angry trials (Figure 4C). Specifically, the learning rate
540 signal in the dACC during angry trials (at the peak voxel $x=-8$, $y=24$, $z=40$) was stronger for
541 the low than the high social anxiety group ($t(42)=3.05$, $p=0.004$). Similar effects were found

542 when considering activity of all voxels showing a significant (at $p < 0.001$ uncorrected)
543 learning rate activity on angry trials ($t(42) = 2.37$, $p = 0.023$). Post-hoc tests at the peak voxel
544 revealed that the high social anxiety group did not show a significant correlation ($t(20) = 0.93$,
545 $p = 0.36$). These results demonstrate that, compared with the low social anxiety group, the
546 high social anxiety dynamically adapted their learning rate to a lesser degree on trials
547 involving presentation of an angry face. Moreover, unlike the low social anxiety group, their
548 dACC BOLD signal did not covary with the learning rate on these trials.

549 [Figure 4 about here]

550 We looked at two control contrasts in the above neuroimaging analysis. First, we
551 found strong prediction error related signal in the ventral striatum (bilaterally, peak at 14, 12,
552 -8, voxel-level familywise small-volume corrected at $p < 0.05$), consistent with previous
553 studies (McClure et al., 2003; O'Doherty et al., 2003; Daw et al., 2006). Second, we
554 performed a region-of-interest analysis in the amygdala. We focused on the amygdala given
555 its important role in emotional processing (Weiskrantz, 1956; Ledoux, 1996; Phelps and
556 LeDoux, 2005), and previous reports on amygdala sensitivity to learning rate (Li et al., 2011).
557 Despite the presence of clear emotion-related main effects of cue in the amygdala
558 (bilaterally, peak at -14, -8, -16, voxel-level familywise small-volume corrected at $p < 0.05$),
559 with stronger signal during the presentation of the angry faces, there were no significant
560 effects of learning rate in the amygdala ($p < 0.001$ uncorrected).

561 [Table 3 about here]

562 Discussion

563 In daily life, it is important to adaptively learn from the outcomes of our decisions,
564 even in environments with threat cues. The adaptation should depend on the history of

565 outcomes and the degree to which those previous outcomes were surprising. When the
566 environment is full of surprises, recent experiences are more predictive of future events
567 than remote experiences. In those circumstances, a higher learning rate is optimal. We
568 found evidence that social anxiety is associated with reduced adaptation of learning rate,
569 particularly in aversive states, such as those evoked here by exposure to images of angry
570 faces.

571 Our findings are in line with theories looking at psychiatric disorders linked to social
572 anxiety from the perspective of decision neuroscience (Hartley and Phelps, 2012; Paulus and
573 Yu, 2012; Huys et al., 2015). These disorders are hypothesized to be accompanied by deficits
574 in learning and decision making, particularly in uncertain environments requiring dynamic
575 learning (Paulus and Yu, 2012; Browning et al., 2015). Here, we focused on trait social
576 anxiety in healthy participants, as trait social anxiety is a factor predicting vulnerability to
577 anxiety and depression (Barlow, 2004; Mineka and Zinbarg, 2006; Mineka and Oehlberg,
578 2008). Our data indicate the presence of maladaptive biases in learning, at both
579 computational and neural levels, even in healthy individuals. These findings suggest a
580 particular computational mechanism by which social anxiety might impact decisions in
581 threatening situations. In those situations, the weight of dynamic learning rate is too low for
582 anxious individuals, making them oversensitive to noisy outcomes of their decisions.
583 Suboptimal decisions and oversensitivity to outcomes exacerbate each other, generating a
584 dysfunctional loop.

585 Inspired by these modeling results, we found signatures of disrupted adaptation of
586 learning rate in the behavioral data (Figure 3C). In threatening situations evoked by angry
587 face images, the high social anxiety group did not benefit from stability in the environment
588 and showed similar levels of performance in both stable and volatile situations. In contrast,
589 the low social anxiety group showed a much better performance in the stable situation

590 compared with the volatile situation. These results are consistent with a recent report by
591 Browning and colleagues (Browning et al., 2015). They showed that anxiety is associated
592 with inability to adjust learning in stable and volatile situations. Our data adds to those
593 findings by showing that inability in optimal learning is also a function of emotional cues.
594 Furthermore, our findings elucidate corresponding neural mechanisms in socially anxious
595 individuals by showing that disruption in optimal learning is accompanied by disruption in
596 dACC activity related to learning rate. The dACC has been argued to specifically contribute to
597 reinforcement learning by computing learning rate in uncertain environments (Behrens et al.,
598 2007, 2008; Rushworth et al., 2011). However, so far, it has remained unclear whether dACC
599 computations of learning rate are modulated by emotional cues or by traits such as social
600 anxiety. Showing those modulations is particularly important, because the dACC is a central
601 node of the brain system processing negative affect (Shackman et al., 2011), suggesting that
602 its computations might be sensitive to negative emotions. Here, we replicated previous
603 findings, namely covariation between dACC activity and learning rate (Behrens et al., 2007,
604 2008). Furthermore, we added to those reports by demonstrating that learning rate-related
605 computations are stronger when responding to emotional cues. More importantly, our
606 results suggest that high socially anxious individuals show disrupted dACC activity in relation
607 to learning rate.

608 Influences of emotional conditioned stimuli on optimal learning, as found in this study,
609 might be due to effects of those stimuli on emotions, and subsequent effects of negative
610 emotions on optimal learning and decision making. Another possibility is that social threat
611 cues disrupt optimal learning directly, even when they are not accompanied with negative
612 emotions. Future studies should address this question, in particular by analyzing choice data
613 and simultaneously-recorded physiological signals related to experienced emotions, such as
614 skin conductance response. Importantly, although current research on defensive behavior is
615 mainly focused on elicited reactions, new theories emphasize active responses to threat

616 cues (LeDoux and Daw, 2018). The neural processes underlying those active responses are
617 not yet clear, although amygdala is hypothesized to influence active decisions by signaling
618 threats to the striatum (LeDoux and Daw, 2018), which plays a key role in learning and
619 decision making. The role of the dACC in these neural processes are not yet known, although
620 dACC has dense connectivity with both the amygdala and the striatum (Draganski et al.,
621 2008; Shackman et al., 2011).

622 In this study, in addition to emotional content of conditioned stimuli, we manipulated
623 valence of outcomes independently. However, no significant effect of outcome valence on
624 optimal tuning of learning rate was found. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to
625 investigate effects of outcome valence on optimal learning. First, optimal learning might be
626 more sensitive to primary punishments such as shocks. In this study, however, we used
627 monetary `outcomes as instrumental reinforcers both as reward and punishment. Second,
628 the outcome manipulation of the present study might not be sufficiently powerful to be
629 detected in our sample size. Third, in our paradigm, the punishment is avoidable (outcome
630 contingency is instrumental), while the facial expression is not. This difference might lead to
631 potentiated effects for the negative facial expression versus the negative outcome.

632 In this study, unlike the recent study by Li et al. (2011), we did not find associability
633 related activity in the amygdala, even when we focused only on angry trials. However, there
634 are important differences between the paradigm used in this study and that of Li et al. First,
635 Li et al. used shocks as negative outcomes, whereas we used financial losses as negative
636 outcomes. Second, Li et al., fitted their model to skin conductance response data, whereas
637 we fitted models to choice data. Finally, Li and colleagues examined amygdala activation in
638 the context of a Pavlovian task that did not require making decisions, whereas the current
639 study required decision making. Consistent with our findings, a recent study in monkeys did
640 not find significant effects of amygdala lesions on associability in a stochastic two-arm

641 bandit task (Costa et al., 2016). It should be noted, however, that the role of amygdala
642 regarding associability computations in threat situations might be to signal presence of
643 threat to other regions (Fox et al., 2015), such as dACC.

644 The biases induced by threatening social cues, such as angry faces, reflect Pavlovian
645 biases in learning. These Pavlovian biases are not always the most rational responses, but
646 they are generally useful heuristics as they reflect predominant statistics of the environment
647 around us, for example threatening angry cues are more likely to be followed by negative
648 outcomes. Importantly, unlike Pavlovian response biases, such Pavlovian learning biases
649 affect causal inference. Therefore, our findings suggest that threatening angry cues affect
650 how high trait social anxiety individuals make causal inference. In the context of social threat
651 cues, those individuals are unable to dissociate a bad outcome that happened by chance
652 from an actual mistake caused by their own actions. This might be related to symptoms of
653 “self-blame” in anxiety and depression disorders (Beck, 1967), although further studies are
654 needed to investigate this somewhat speculative hypothesis.

655 Previous works have linked Pavlovian biases to neuromodulatory systems (den Ouden
656 et al., 2013; Swart et al., 2017), particularly dopaminergic (although see the recent study by
657 Rutledge et al. (Rutledge et al., 2017)) and serotonergic systems. Whether and how these, or
658 other neuromodulatory (Iglesias et al., 2013; Payzan-LeNestour et al., 2013), systems
659 modulate such Pavlovian biases in learning rate in socially anxious individuals are open
660 questions for future studies.

661 Psychological, temporal difference and Bayesian accounts of learning suggest that
662 learning rate is a crucial element of learning, which should be adaptively adjusted according
663 to the history of surprises to support optimal learning (Pearce and Hall, 1980; Yu and Dayan,
664 2005; Behrens et al., 2007; Li et al., 2011; Mathys et al., 2011; Iglesias et al., 2013). Here, we
665 used an augmented hybrid Rescorla-Wagner model in which learning rate was a weighted

666 combination of a dynamic and a constant component. The dynamic component was
667 gradually updated according to the sample variance (squared error) on every trial. The
668 hybrid model can be treated as a proxy model of fully Bayesian accounts, which has the
669 benefit to be close to classical psychological models. An important open question for future
670 studies is whether the inability to adjust learning rate in socially anxious individuals is caused
671 by disruptions in computationally higher levels of reasoning that are responsible for
672 detecting changes in the environment. Hierarchical Bayesian models are particularly useful
673 to address this question (Behrens et al., 2007). Another important question remained to be
674 addressed is whether these hierarchically-computed learning rates vary as a function of the
675 valence of prediction errors, which is shown to influence baseline learning rates in humans
676 (Frank et al., 2004, 2007; Piray et al., 2014) as well as monkeys (Piray, 2011) and supported
677 by neural models of prefrontal cortex–basal ganglia (Frank et al., 2004; O’Reilly and Frank,
678 2006) and mesostriatal circuits (Haber et al., 2000; Piray et al., 2017).

679 In this study, we characterized the computational and neural mechanisms by which
680 emotional context modulated optimal learning in an uncertain environment and how those
681 mechanisms are disrupted in high trait social anxious individuals. These findings open the
682 way to test and modify the neurobiological underpinnings of maladaptive learning in
683 pathologies related to social anxiety.

684

685 **References**

- 686 Ashburner J, Friston KJ (2005) Unified segmentation. *NeuroImage* 26:839–851.
- 687 Barlow DH (2004) *Anxiety and Its Disorders: The Nature and Treatment of Anxiety and*
688 *Panic*, 2 edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- 689 Beck AT (1967) *Depression: Clinical, Experimental, and Theoretical Aspects*. University of
690 Pennsylvania Press.
- 691 Behrens TEJ, Hunt LT, Woolrich MW, Rushworth MFS (2008) Associative learning of social
692 value. *Nature* 456:245–249.
- 693 Behrens TEJ, Woolrich MW, Walton ME, Rushworth MFS (2007) Learning the value of
694 information in an uncertain world. *Nat Neurosci* 10:1214–1221.
- 695 Browning M, Behrens TE, Jocham G, O’Reilly JX, Bishop SJ (2015) Anxious individuals
696 have difficulty learning the causal statistics of aversive environments. *Nat Neurosci*
697 18:590–596.
- 698 Cohen JD (2005) The Vulcanization of the Human Brain: A Neural Perspective on
699 Interactions Between Cognition and Emotion. *J Econ Perspect* 19:3–24.
- 700 Cohen JD, Daw N, Engelhardt B, Hasson U, Li K, Niv Y, Norman KA, Pillow J, Ramadge PJ,
701 Turk-Browne NB, Willke TL (2017) Computational approaches to fMRI analysis.
702 *Nat Neurosci* 20:304–313.
- 703 Costa VD, Dal Monte O, Lucas DR, Murray EA, Averbeck BB (2016) Amygdala and Ventral
704 Striatum Make Distinct Contributions to Reinforcement Learning. *Neuron* 92:505–
705 517.
- 706 Daw ND (2011) Trial-by-trial data analysis using computational models. In: *Decision Making,*
707 *Affect, and Learning: Attention and Performance XXIII* (Delgado MR, Phelps EA,
708 Robbins TW, eds), pp 3–38. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 709 Daw ND, O’Doherty JP, Dayan P, Seymour B, Dolan RJ (2006) Cortical substrates for
710 exploratory decisions in humans. *Nature* 441:876–879.
- 711 de Berker AO, Rutledge RB, Mathys C, Marshall L, Cross GF, Dolan RJ, Bestmann S (2016)
712 Computations of uncertainty mediate acute stress responses in humans. *Nat Commun*
713 7:10996.
- 714 den Ouden HEM, Daw ND, Fernandez G, Elshout JA, Rijpkema M, Hoogman M, Franke B,
715 Cools R (2013) Dissociable effects of dopamine and serotonin on reversal learning.
716 *Neuron* 80:1090–1100.
- 717 Domes G, Schulze L, Böttger M, Grossmann A, Hauenstein K, Wirtz PH, Heinrichs M,
718 Herpertz SC (2010) The neural correlates of sex differences in emotional reactivity
719 and emotion regulation. *Hum Brain Mapp* 31:758–769.

- 720 Draganski B, Kherif F, Klöppel S, Cook PA, Alexander DC, Parker GJM, Deichmann R,
721 Ashburner J, Frackowiak RSJ (2008) Evidence for Segregated and Integrative
722 Connectivity Patterns in the Human Basal Ganglia. *J Neurosci* 28:7143–7152.
- 723 Dreisbach G, Goschke T (2004) How positive affect modulates cognitive control: reduced
724 perseveration at the cost of increased distractibility. *J Exp Psychol Learn Mem Cogn*
725 30:343–353.
- 726 Ekman P, Friesen, WV (1976) *Pictures of Facial Affect*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting
727 Psychologist Press. Available at: [http://www.paulekman.com/product/pictures-of-](http://www.paulekman.com/product/pictures-of-facial-affect-pofa/)
728 [facial-affect-pofa/](http://www.paulekman.com/product/pictures-of-facial-affect-pofa/) [Accessed December 11, 2015].
- 729 Fox AS, Oler JA, Tromp DPM, Fudge JL, Kalin NH (2015) Extending the amygdala in
730 theories of threat processing. *Trends Neurosci* 38:319–329.
- 731 Frank MJ, Moustafa AA, Haughey HM, Curran T, Hutchison KE (2007) Genetic triple
732 dissociation reveals multiple roles for dopamine in reinforcement learning. *Proc Natl*
733 *Acad Sci U S A* 104:16311–16316.
- 734 Frank MJ, Seeberger LC, O’reilly RC (2004) By carrot or by stick: cognitive reinforcement
735 learning in parkinsonism. *Science* 306:1940–1943.
- 736 Haber SN, Fudge JL, McFarland NR (2000) Striatonigrostriatal pathways in primates form an
737 ascending spiral from the shell to the dorsolateral striatum. *J Neurosci* 20:2369–2382.
- 738 Hartley CA, Phelps EA (2012) Anxiety and decision-making. *Biol Psychiatry* 72:113–118.
- 739 Huys QJM, Cools R, Gölzer M, Friedel E, Heinz A, Dolan RJ, Dayan P (2011) Disentangling
740 the roles of approach, activation and valence in instrumental and pavlovian
741 responding. *PLoS Comput Biol* 7:e1002028.
- 742 Huys QJM, Daw ND, Dayan P (2015) Depression: a decision-theoretic analysis. *Annu Rev*
743 *Neurosci* 38:1–23.
- 744 Huys QJM, Eshel N, O’Nions E, Sheridan L, Dayan P, Roiser JP (2012) Bonsai trees in your
745 head: how the pavlovian system sculpts goal-directed choices by pruning decision
746 trees. *PLoS Comput Biol* 8:e1002410.
- 747 Iglesias S, Mathys C, Brodersen KH, Kasper L, Piccirelli M, den Ouden HEM, Stephan KE
748 (2013) Hierarchical prediction errors in midbrain and basal forebrain during sensory
749 learning. *Neuron* 80:519–530.
- 750 Kahneman D (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 751 Kennerley SW, Walton ME, Behrens TEJ, Buckley MJ, Rushworth MFS (2006) Optimal
752 decision making and the anterior cingulate cortex. *Nat Neurosci* 9:940–947.
- 753 Koch K, Pauly K, Kellermann T, Seiferth NY, Reske M, Backes V, Stöcker T, Shah NJ,
754 Amunts K, Kircher T, Schneider F, Habel U (2007) Gender differences in the
755 cognitive control of emotion: An fMRI study. *Neuropsychologia* 45:2744–2754.
- 756 Ledoux J (1996) *The EMOTIONAL BRAIN: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional*
757 *Life*, 1st ed. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- 758 LeDoux J, Daw ND (2018) Surviving threats: neural circuit and computational implications
759 of a new taxonomy of defensive behaviour. *Nat Rev Neurosci* 19:269–282.

- 760 Lerner JS, Li Y, Valdesolo P, Kassam KS (2015) Emotion and decision making. *Annu Rev*
761 *Psychol* 66:799–823.
- 762 Li J, Schiller D, Schoenbaum G, Phelps EA, Daw ND (2011) Differential roles of human
763 striatum and amygdala in associative learning. *Nat Neurosci* 14:1250–1252.
- 764 Liebowitz MR (1987) Social phobia. *Mod Probl Pharmacopsychiatry* 22:141–173.
- 765 Lundqvist D, Flykt A, Öhman A (1998) Karolinska Directed Emotional Faces (KDEF). CD
766 ROM from Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Psychology section, Karolinska
767 Institutet. Available at: <http://www.emotionlab.se/resources/kdef> [Accessed
768 December 11, 2015].
- 769 Ly V, Cools R, Roelofs K (2014) Aversive disinhibition of behavior and striatal signaling in
770 social avoidance. *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci* 9:1530–1536.
- 771 MacKay DJC (2003) *Information Theory, Inference, and Learning Algorithms*. Cambridge
772 University Press.
- 773 Martinez, AM, Benavente, R (1998) The AR Face Database. CVC Tech Rep No 24.
- 774 Mason L, Eldar E, Rutledge RB (2017) Mood Instability and Reward Dysregulation-A
775 Neurocomputational Model of Bipolar Disorder. *JAMA Psychiatry* 74:1275–1276.
- 776 Mathys C, Daunizeau J, Friston KJ, Stephan KE (2011) A bayesian foundation for individual
777 learning under uncertainty. *Front Hum Neurosci* 5:39.
- 778 Matsumoto D, Ekman P (1988) Japanese and Caucasian facial expressions of emotion
779 (JACFEE). San Francisco (CA): University of California: Human Interaction
780 Laboratory.
- 781 McClure SM, Berns GS, Montague PR (2003) Temporal prediction errors in a passive
782 learning task activate human striatum. *Neuron* 38:339–346.
- 783 Mineka S, Oehlberg K (2008) The relevance of recent developments in classical conditioning
784 to understanding the etiology and maintenance of anxiety disorders. *Acta Psychol*
785 (Amst) 127:567–580.
- 786 Mineka S, Zinbarg R (2006) A contemporary learning theory perspective on the etiology of
787 anxiety disorders: it's not what you thought it was. *Am Psychol* 61:10–26.
- 788 Morel P (2018) *Gramm: grammar of graphics plotting in Matlab*. *J Open Source Softw* 3:568.
- 789 Neubert F-X, Mars RB, Sallet J, Rushworth MFS (2015) Connectivity reveals relationship of
790 brain areas for reward-guided learning and decision making in human and monkey
791 frontal cortex. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 112:E2695-2704.
- 792 O'Doherty JP, Dayan P, Friston K, Critchley H, Dolan RJ (2003) Temporal difference models
793 and reward-related learning in the human brain. *Neuron* 38:329–337.
- 794 O'Reilly RC, Frank MJ (2006) Making working memory work: a computational model of
795 learning in the prefrontal cortex and basal ganglia. *Neural Comput* 18:283–328.
- 796 Paulus MP, Yu AJ (2012) Emotion and decision-making: affect-driven belief systems in
797 anxiety and depression. *Trends Cogn Sci* 16:476–483.

- 798 Payzan-LeNestour E, Dunne S, Bossaerts P, O’Doherty JP (2013) The neural representation
799 of unexpected uncertainty during value-based decision making. *Neuron* 79:191–201.
- 800 Pearce JM, Hall G (1980) A model for Pavlovian learning: variations in the effectiveness of
801 conditioned but not of unconditioned stimuli. *Psychol Rev* 87:532–552.
- 802 Phelps EA, LeDoux JE (2005) Contributions of the amygdala to emotion processing: from
803 animal models to human behavior. *Neuron* 48:175–187.
- 804 Phelps EA, Lempert KM, Sokol-Hessner P (2014) Emotion and decision making: multiple
805 modulatory neural circuits. *Annu Rev Neurosci* 37:263–287.
- 806 Piray P (2011) The role of dorsal striatal D2-like receptors in reversal learning: a
807 reinforcement learning viewpoint. *J Neurosci* 31:14049–14050.
- 808 Piray P, den Ouden HEM, van der Schaaf ME, Toni I, Cools R (2017) Dopaminergic
809 Modulation of the Functional Ventrodorsal Architecture of the Human Striatum.
810 *Cereb Cortex* 27:485–495.
- 811 Piray P, Toni I, Cools R (2016) Human Choice Strategy Varies with Anatomical Projections
812 from Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex to Medial Striatum. *J Neurosci* 36:2857–2867.
- 813 Piray P, Zeighami Y, Bahrami F, Eissa AM, Hewedi DH, Moustafa AA (2014) Impulse
814 control disorders in Parkinson’s disease are associated with dysfunction in stimulus
815 valuation but not action valuation. *J Neurosci* 34:7814–7824.
- 816 Poser BA, Versluis MJ, Hoogduin JM, Norris DG (2006) BOLD contrast sensitivity
817 enhancement and artifact reduction with multiecho EPI: parallel-acquired
818 inhomogeneity-desensitized fMRI. *Magn Reson Med* 55:1227–1235.
- 819 Rescorla RA, Wagner AR, Black AH, Prokasy WF (1972) A theory of Pavlovian
820 conditioning: Variations in the effectiveness of reinforcement. In: *Classical
821 Conditioning II: Current Research and Theory*, pp 64–69. New York: Appleton
822 Century-Crofts.
- 823 Roelofs K, Minelli A, Mars RB, van Peer J, Toni I (2009) On the neural control of social
824 emotional behavior. *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci* 4:50–58.
- 825 Rushworth MFS, Noonan MP, Boorman ED, Walton ME, Behrens TE (2011) Frontal cortex
826 and reward-guided learning and decision-making. *Neuron* 70:1054–1069.
- 827 Rutledge RB, Moutoussis M, Smittenaar P, Zeidman P, Taylor T, Hrynkiewicz L, Lam J,
828 Skandali N, Siegel JZ, Ousdal OT, Prabhu G, Dayan P, Fonagy P, Dolan RJ (2017)
829 Association of Neural and Emotional Impacts of Reward Prediction Errors With
830 Major Depression. *JAMA Psychiatry* 74:790–797.
- 831 Salimi-Khorshidi G, Douaud G, Beckmann CF, Glasser MF, Griffanti L, Smith SM (2014)
832 Automatic denoising of functional MRI data: combining independent component
833 analysis and hierarchical fusion of classifiers. *NeuroImage* 90:449–468.
- 834 Shackman AJ, Salomons TV, Slagter HA, Fox AS, Winter JJ, Davidson RJ (2011) The
835 integration of negative affect, pain and cognitive control in the cingulate cortex. *Nat
836 Rev Neurosci* 12:154–167.

- 837 Swart JC, Froböse MI, Cook JL, Geurts DE, Frank MJ, Cools R, den Ouden HE (2017)
838 Catecholaminergic challenge uncovers distinct Pavlovian and instrumental
839 mechanisms of motivated (in)action. *eLife* 6.
- 840 van Peer JM, Roelofs K, Rotteveel M, van Dijk JG, Spinhoven P, Ridderinkhof KR (2007)
841 The effects of cortisol administration on approach-avoidance behavior: an event-
842 related potential study. *Biol Psychol* 76:135–146.
- 843 van Steenbergen H, Band GPH, Hommel B (2010) In the mood for adaptation: how affect
844 regulates conflict-driven control. *Psychol Sci* 21:1629–1634.
- 845 Weiskrantz L (1956) Behavioral changes associated with ablation of the amygdaloid complex
846 in monkeys. *J Comp Physiol Psychol* 49:381–391.
- 847 Yu AJ, Dayan P (2005) Uncertainty, neuromodulation, and attention. *Neuron* 46:681–692.
- 848
849

850 **Legends**

851 Table 1. Bayesian model comparison. For each model, differential log-model evidence is
852 shown. Higher values indicate more evidence in favor of the model. The hybrid model with
853 emotion-specific w (M4) has the highest Bayesian model evidence among all models. Note
854 that models are only different in the number of learning parameters. Additionally, all models
855 contain 4 parameters for generating choice including 3 value-independent biases in making
856 a go or no-go response and 1 inverse-temperature parameter. See Methods for formal
857 definition of all models. See Table 2 for further statistics on fitted parameters of the winning
858 model.

859 Table 2. Fitted parameters of the winning model (Hybrid emotion-specific w model)
860 individually using maximum a posteriori (MAP) and the hierarchical fitting procedure (HFP).

861 Table 3. Statistics of the neuroimaging analysis of the main effects of learning rate in the
862 dACC mask (small-volume voxel-level familywise error corrected).

863 Figure 1. Probabilistic reversal learning task. A) Timeline of the task. Participants had to
864 respond (either go or no-go) after a face cue was presented. A probabilistic outcome was
865 presented following a delay. Importantly, the presented cues were used as conditioned
866 stimuli and the optimal response is a function of the probability of a win given a go, which
867 varied across trials, independent of the emotional content of the cue (see panel C). B) There
868 were four different trial-types in the task. The cue of each trial could vary in emotional
869 content (an angry or happy face) and in color (grey, yellow). The color indicates whether the
870 outcome of a trial is a reward or punishment. C) An example of probability sequence of win
871 given a go response for one of the four trial-types. The dots show the actual feedback seen
872 by the participant, which are drawn from this probability distribution. Probability of a win
873 given the no-go response is the reverse of the probability of a win given the go response (e.g.

874 when probability of a win given go is 0.8, probability of win given no-go is 0.2). Note that the
875 probability sequence (and thus the optimal response) is reversed multiple times for each cue.
876 The underlying probability sequence is manipulated independently for each cue.

877 Figure 2. Performance after reversals. Data has been shown separately for each trial type
878 and response type (go vs. no-go). Performance was about the chance level immediately
879 after reversal and improved over the course of learning. For each participant, a learning
880 curve is defined by averaging performance after multiple reversals occurred for the
881 corresponding trial type and response type. Mean learning curve across all participants and
882 corresponding standard error of the mean are plotted. Note that the x-axis displays trials
883 after reversals (reversal occurred at trial 0). Abbreviations: HR, happy and reward trial type;
884 HP, happy and punishment trial type; AR, angry and reward trial type; AP, angry and
885 punishment trial type.

886 Figure 3. Effects of social anxiety on learning rate: A and B) Effects of social anxiety (SA) on
887 the weight given to the dynamic component of the learning rate in angry (A) and happy (B)
888 trials. High socially anxious individuals showed less dynamic adjustment of learning rate
889 (indexed by parameter w) on angry trials. There was no effect of social anxiety on dynamic
890 learning rate on happy trials. C and D: Effects of social anxiety on performance in stable and
891 volatile epochs in angry (C) and happy (D) trials. In line with the weight parameter results,
892 high socially anxious individuals showed less benefit of stability in their performance than
893 the low social anxiety group on angry trials. There was no significant interaction on the
894 happy trials. Standard boxplots are plotted, in which the box is drawn between the 25 and
895 75 percentiles with a line indicating the median. The distribution of data is also shown.

896 Figure 4. Effects of social anxiety (SA) on learning rate-related activity in the dACC. A) Across
897 all trials, dACC correlated with the learning rate (LR), although B) the effects were stronger
898 during angry trials and was mainly driven by the angry trials. C) On angry trials, learning rate-

899 related activity in the dACC was present in the low SA group, which showed significantly
900 greater activity than the high SA group. For a, t -map (degrees of freedom=43) is shown with
901 all voxels within the anatomical mask of dACC with $p < 0.005$ (uncorrected for display). For B,
902 the effect size is defined as the beta coefficient at the peak voxel of learning rate-related
903 activity in the dACC. For C, the effect size is defined as the beta coefficient at the peak voxel
904 of learning rate-related activity in the dACC on angry trials. In C and C, the corresponding
905 mean and standard errors of the mean are plotted. The distribution of data is also shown.
906 See Table 3 for further details of statistical analysis.

907

908 **Tables**

	Model	No free parameters	Relative log model evidence
M1	Rescorla-Wagner	5	-15.02
M2	Hybrid	7	-7.13
M3	Li et al. (2011) model	6	-14.78
M4	Hybrid emotion-specific w	8	0
M5	Hybrid emotion-specific κ	8	-7.77
M6	Hybrid valence-specific w	8	-8.85

909

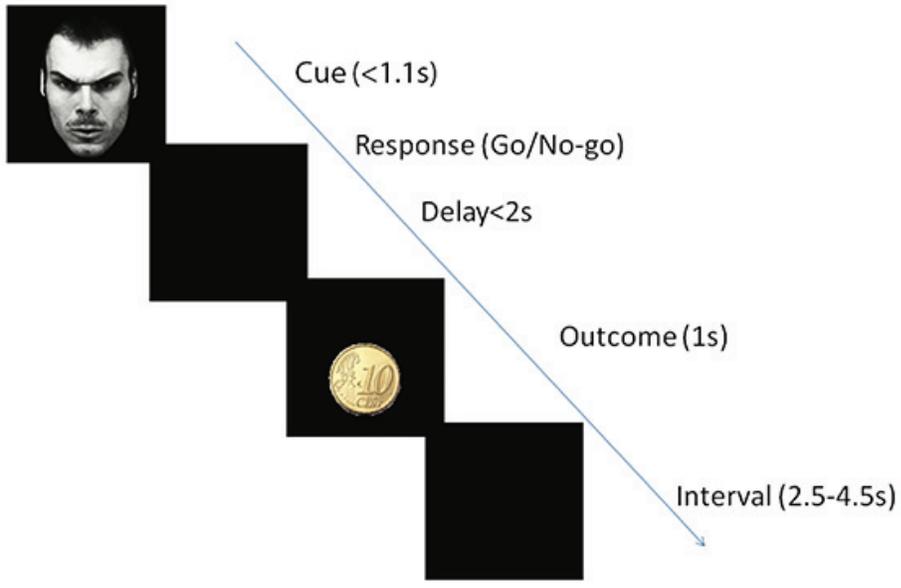
	MAP 25 th percentile	MAP median	MAP 75 th percentile	HFP group mean (\ominus)
w_h	0.2	0.372	0.546	0.397
w_a	0.21	0.426	0.649	0.403
κ	0.789	0.868	0.909	0.922
λ	0.404	0.539	0.673	0.458
β	1.321	1.822	2.619	1.646
b_v	0.021	0.181	0.339	0.152
b_e	-0.12	0.029	0.181	0.032
b_i	-0.052	0.056	0.14	0.045

910

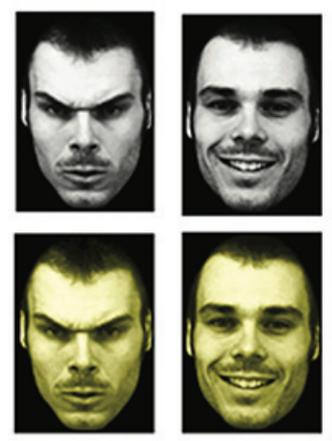
	Cluster-level statistics		Voxel-level statistics				
	P_{FWE}	k	P_{FWE}	T(43)	Peak (mm)		
Learning rate across all trials	0.034	38	0.032	+3.75	8	26	42
Learning rate in angry trials	0.038	32	0.035	+3.72	-10	18	44
Learning rate across all trials	0.017	77	0.013	+4.14	-8	24	40
Learning rate in angry trials	0.033	38	0.017	+4.03	10	28	42

911

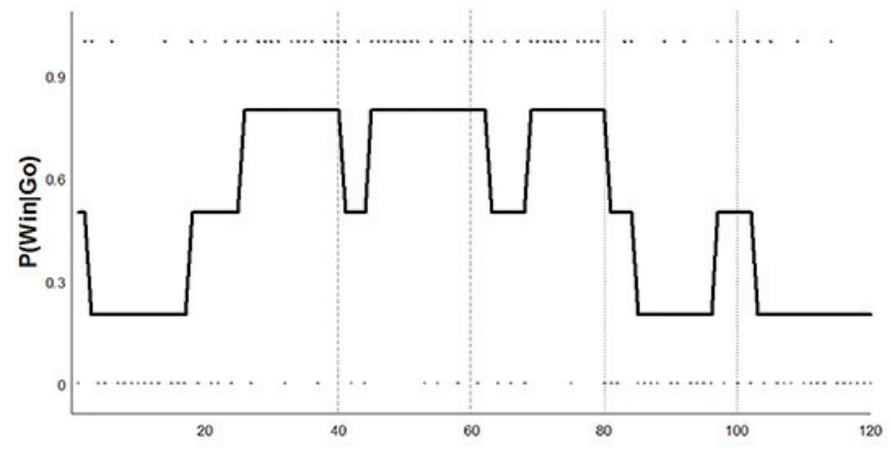
A

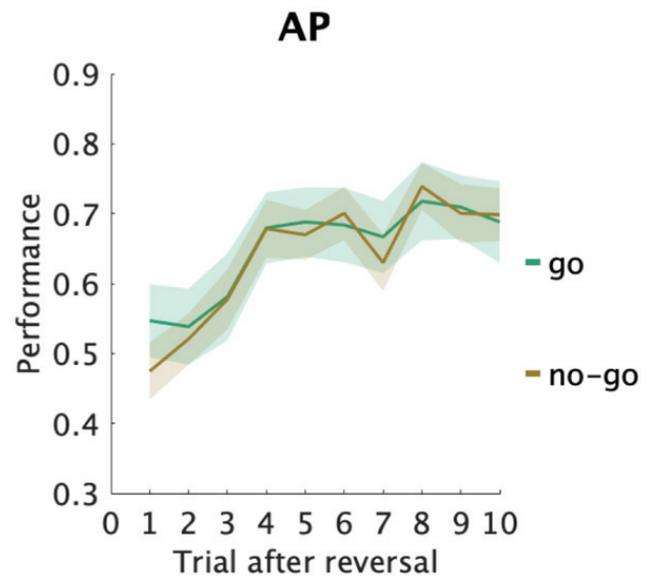
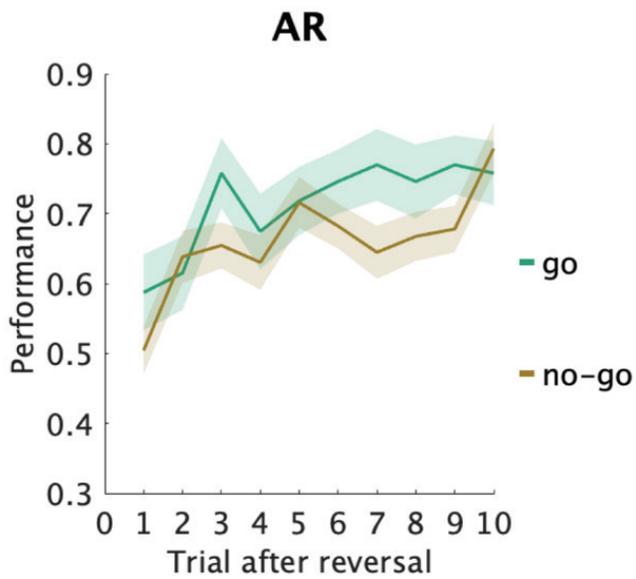
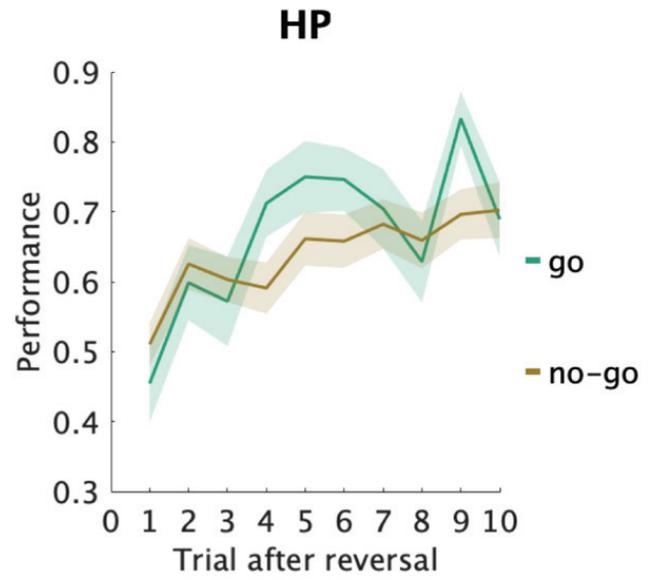
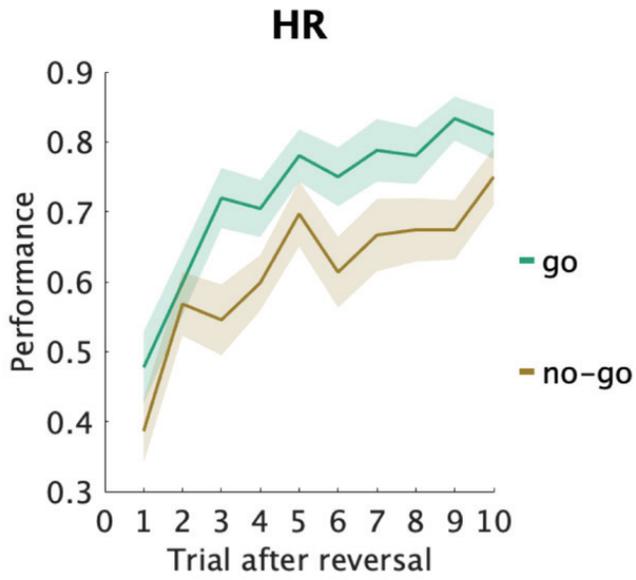


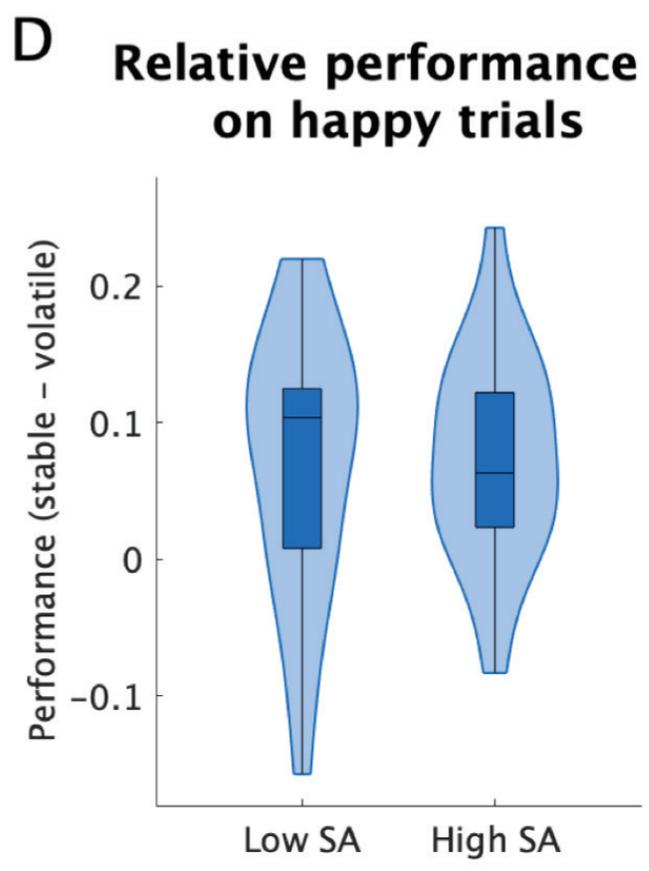
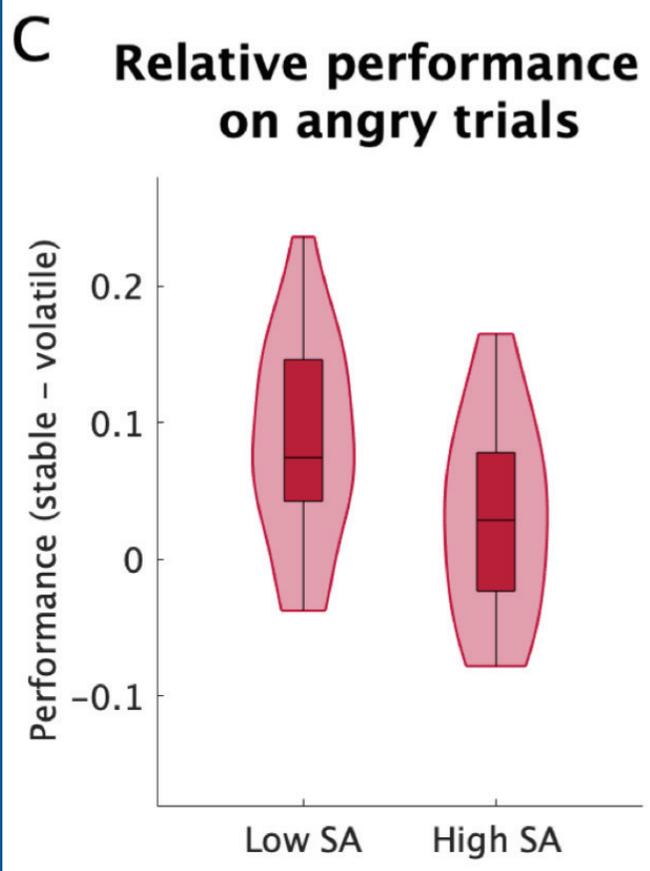
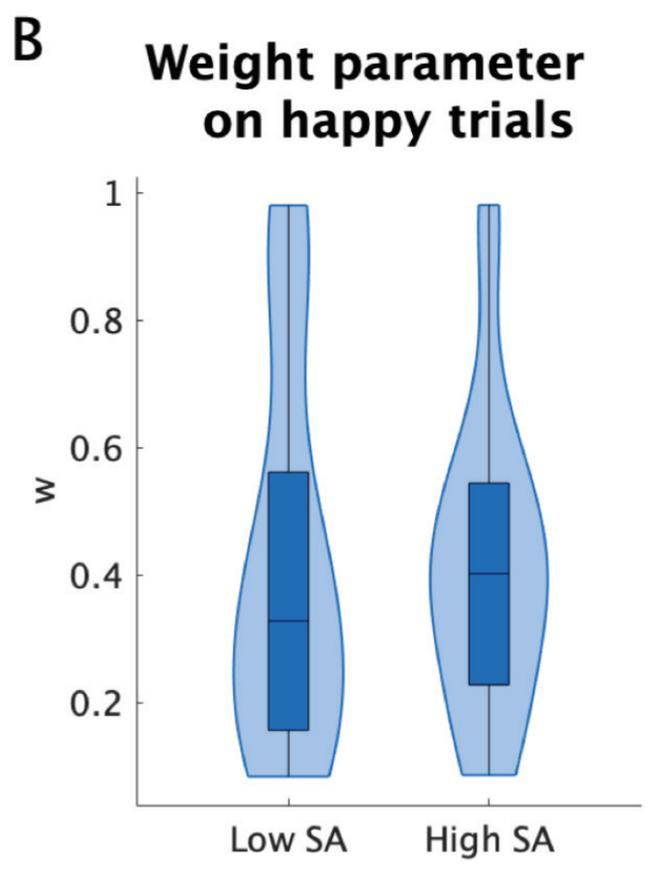
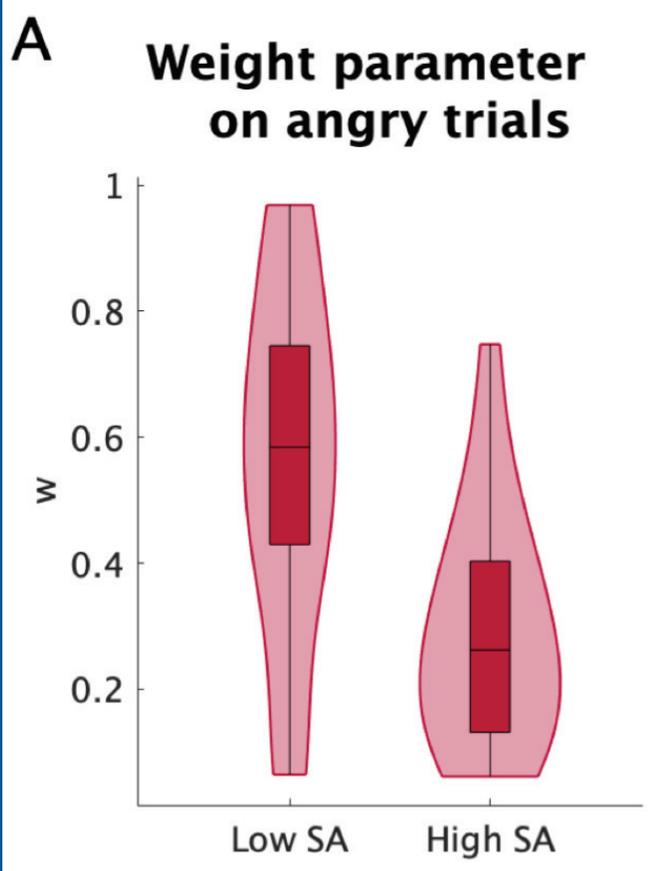
B



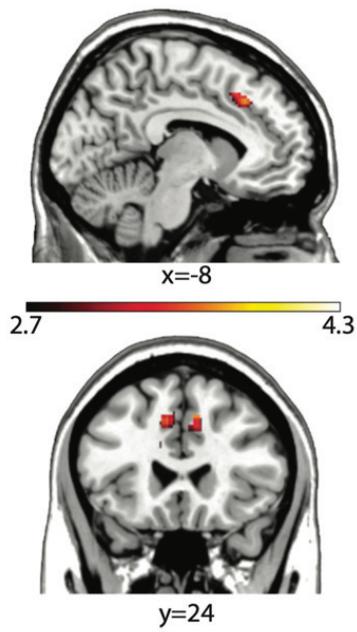
C



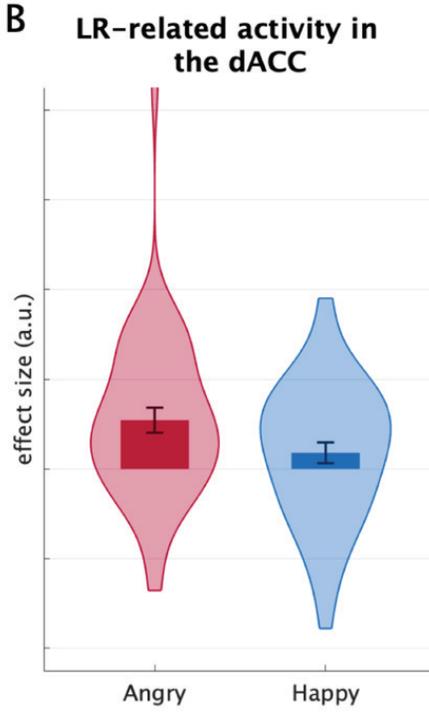




A



B



C

