# The Effect of Negative Affect on Anxiety Trajectories

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Individuals with social anxiety disorder (SAD) are known to have significant anxiety surrounding feared social events. Prior research has shown that, compared to healthy controls, those with SAD show higher levels of anxiety in anticipation of and immediately after a speech. However, predictors of anxiety trajectory during a prolonged period after the occurrence of a stressful event and whether anxiety returns to baseline have yet to be explored. In this study, we examined the effect of trait negative affect (NA) on differences in anticipatory anxiety using latent trajectory models (LTMs) of state anxiety prior to a speech and attenuating anxiety after a speech. Participants were randomized into either the induced anticipatory anxiety (IAA) group or a no induced anxiety (NIA) group, and then completed computerized tasks and a speech task. The IAA group received reminders about the speech task prior to the speech, while the NIA group did not receive any reminders. We hypothesized that negative affect would predict higher intercept (baseline anxiety), steeper positive slope 1 (S1; change in anxiety from baseline to speech), and less steep negative slope 2 (S2; change in anxiety post-speech) in the IAA condition compared to NIA. We examined a piecewise LTM with Group x Negative Affect interaction as a predictor. There was a main effect of NA on the intercept, indicating higher levels of baseline anxiety were predicted by greater NA. However, NA did not predict S1 and no significant variance was found for S2, indicating little variation in post-speech rates of anxiety attenuation among subjects. Our results suggest clinical implications regarding interventions for managing anxiety in context of feared events. If post-event rate of decline in anxiety is not variable, perhaps it is more important to instead target the accumulation of anxiety in anticipation of the event.