



IACAPAP 2018

23rd WORLD CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY AND ALLIED PROFESSIONS



Temperament and the emergence of social anxiety in childhood: the roles of reactive and proactive cognitive control

Nathan Fox¹

¹University of Maryland, Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology, Maryland, USA

Temperament refers to individual differences in reactivity that can be identified in the first years of life. One such temperament, Behavioral Inhibition (BI), is marked by strong physiological, behavioral, and emotional responses to unfamiliar people and contexts. Data suggest that BI is a risk factor for development of social anxiety disorder. Despite this increased risk for psychopathology, only about half of inhibited children manifest clinically significant anxiety by late adolescence, suggesting that temperament constrains, but does not rigidly determine, developmental outcome. Our research examines the roles of both reactive and proactive cognitive control in exacerbating or mitigating risk for psychopathology in children with a history of BI. Reactive control involves processing information in an automatic, stimulus-driven, and reflexive way whereas proactive control involves more future-oriented and planful strategies. Our data suggest that children with a history of BI who are high in reactive control as indicated by strong physiological responses to immediately present cues signaling incompatible stimuli (inhibitory control), as well as unexpected, erroneous responses (error-monitoring), show particularly high levels of anxiety and impairment in social skills. In contrast, children with a history of BI who perform relatively well on planful cognitive control tasks show less anxious behavior. My talk with outline links between both types of cognitive control and emergent adaptive and maladaptive social behavior.

Learning objectives:

1. Understand the temperament of behavioral inhibition and its link to anxiety disorders
2. Understand differences in reactive and proactive cognitive control and its measurement
3. Understand the moderating roles of both reactive and proactive control between temperament and anxiety