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### ► To cite this version:

Charles-Etienne Benoit, Oleg Solopchuk, Guillermo Borragán, Alice Carbonnelle, Sophie van Durme, et al.. Cognitive task avoidance correlates with fatigue-induced performance decrement but not with subjective fatigue. *Neuropsychologia*, 2019, 123, pp.30-40. <10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2018.06.017>. <hal-02407891>

**HAL Id: hal-02407891**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02407891v1>**

Submitted on 6 Jan 2021

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4 **Cognitive task avoidance correlates with fatigue-induced performance**  
5 **decrement but not with subjective fatigue**  
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## Abstract

Mentally demanding tasks feel effortful and are usually avoided. Furthermore, prolonged cognitive engagement leads to mental fatigue, consisting of subjective feeling of exhaustion and decline in performance. Despite the intuitive characterization of fatigue as an increase in subjective effort perception, the effect of fatigue on effort cost has never been tested experimentally. To this end, sixty participants in 2 separate experiments underwent a forced-choice working memory task following either a fatigue-inducing (i.e. cognitive task involving working memory, conflict and switch costs) or a control manipulation. We measured fatigue in terms of subjective feeling and performance decrement and assessed effort in terms of subjective perception and task avoidance. Surprisingly, we found that task avoidance did not systematically change following the fatigue manipulation. However, variations in task avoidance correlated with fatigue-induced performance decline, while the other measures of fatigue and effort were unrelated to each other. Our findings indicate that subjective fatigue develops independently of effort perception and suggest an “anticipatory regulation” model in which fatigue urges subjects to stop in anticipation of possible, future adverse consequences.

Keywords: Fatigue, Cognitive Effort, Neuroeconomics, N-Back task

## 1. Introduction

Demanding cognitive activities are typically aversive and lead to the percept of effort (Inzlicht et al., 2015; Westbrook and Braver, 2015). The subjective, introspective dimension of cognitive effort is assessed by means of self-report questionnaires, such as the NASA task-load index (Hart and Staveland, 1988), but cognitive effort can also be evaluated behaviorally by assessing task avoidance. This can be done by asking participants to choose between alternative options involving tasks of varied difficulty, associated with rewards of varied magnitude and by using neuroeconomic models to evaluate the effort cost of each task, i.e. how much performing the task discounts the associated reward (Hosking et al., 2014; Westbrook et al., 2013).

While the existence of a cost to cognition appears intuitively obvious, its origin remains unknown (Kurzban et al., 2013; Shenhav et al., 2017; Westbrook and Braver, 2015). What is clear, however, is that prolonged cognitive engagement leads to the subjective feeling of fatigue (Ackerman and Kanfer, 2009; Campagne et al., 2004; Deluca, 2005) and can also deteriorate performance (Holtzer et al., 2011; Schwid et al., 2003; Tanaka, 2015), sometimes referred to as objective fatigue (Bailey et al., 2007). The nature of these behavioral manifestations of cognitive

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4 fatigue is diverse, including disruption of inhibition mechanisms (Kato et al., 2009), planning  
5 (Lorist, 2008; Lorist et al., 2000; van der Linden et al., 2003), processing of new information  
6 (Massar et al., 2010), attention (Boksem et al., 2006; Dorrian et al., 2007; Holtzer et al., 2011;  
7 Lim et al., 2010), working memory (Gergelyfi et al., 2015) or task switching (Borragán et al.,  
8 2017). Like cognitive effort, the origin of cognitive fatigue remains unclear. Some have proposed  
9 that cognitive fatigue would result from metabolic depletion (Christie and Schrater, 2015;  
10 Fairclough and Houston, 2004; Gailliot and Baumeister, 2007) but this view has been strongly  
11 disputed (Carter et al., 2015; Vadillo et al., 2016). Other hypotheses include the spreading of  
12 local sleep patterns in the brain (Krueger et al., 2008; Vyazovskiy et al., 2011), the buildup of a  
13 decision signal aimed at limiting the opportunity cost of engaging cognitive resources in the  
14 same task (Kurzban et al., 2013) or the extended use of high-consuming strategies aimed at  
15 maintaining performance (i.e. Compensatory Control Model (CCM); Hockey, 2013, 1997).

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26 One puzzling and pervasive observation in the fatigue literature is that the subjective dimension  
27 typically fails to correlate with the behavioral consequences of fatigue (Deluca, 2005). According  
28 to Hockey's influential CCM model (Hockey, 2013, 1997), this lack of relation between the  
29 subjective and behavioral dimensions would be explained by the fact that subjective fatigue is  
30 the manifestation of compensatory resource mobilization, needed to maintain performance  
31 despite the progressive deterioration of capacity induced by fatigue. Therefore, initially,  
32 subjective fatigue would predominate, while behavioral performance decrement would occur  
33 later on in the building up of fatigue. Subjective feelings of fatigue would appear as an indication  
34 that the resources needed to accomplish the ongoing demands are at risk or no longer  
35 available. In support of this view, subjective task aversion has been shown to increase  
36 concomitantly to time on task, even though it is unclear whether this increase is actually caused  
37 by fatigue (Lorist et al., 2000). Along the same line, cognitive fatigue increases blood pressure  
38 during cognitive task execution, but this effect has complex dependence on the likelihood and  
39 importance of the outcome (Stewart et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2007). Finally, neurophysiological  
40 activity suggestive of increased engagement during the compensatory phase of cognitive  
41 fatigue has also been recently reported (Wang et al., 2016).

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53 Phenomenologically, subjective fatigue is often reported as increased aversion for cognition and  
54 increased percept of effort (Arai, 1912). In addition, the CCM assumes that subjective fatigue  
55 should be accompanied with increased percept of cognitive effort, and presumably increased  
56 task avoidance caused by the compensatory engagement of resources. To the extent of our  
57 knowledge, the effect of fatigue on these behavioral correlates of effort has never been  
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4 experimentally assessed. We hypothesized that subjective fatigue would increase the cost of  
5 effort: a fatigued person would feel more effort performing a task of equivalent difficulty and  
6 would increase their preference for low-demand tasks. Sixty participants engaged in 2 separate  
7 experiments in which subjective effort and task avoidance were measured following either a  
8 fatigue-inducing or control manipulation. We evaluated fatigue both in its subjective dimension  
9 and in its behavioral manifestation as performance decline, and controlled for other variables  
10 such as sleepiness, arousal and motivation. We found that fatigue-related performance  
11 decrement correlated with task avoidance, while subjective feelings of fatigue and effort were  
12 unrelated to each other.  
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## 22 **2. Experiment 1**

### 23 **2.1. Materials and methods**

#### 24 **2.1.1. Participants**

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27 Thirty right-handed healthy participants took part in Experiment 1 (27 F, 3 M, Age: 22.8 +- 2.5,  
28 mean, SD), receiving monetary compensation for their participation (70 - 100€). Each  
29 experiment was performed over the span of three consecutive days. This included training on  
30 day 1 and fatigue/control manipulation followed by the working memory task on the  
31 experimental days 2 and 3, all occurring at the same time during the day, to control for circadian  
32 effects between sessions. All participants reported a normal or corrected-to-normal vision, had  
33 no auditory impairments or neurological disorders. Experiments were carried out according to  
34 the Declaration of Helsinki and were approved by the Ethics Committee of the Université  
35 catholique de Louvain. All participants provided a written informed consent.  
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#### 45 **2.1.2. Subjective evaluation**

46 Participant's fatigue was assessed using the French version of the multidimensional fatigue  
47 inventory (MFI) (Gentile et al., 2003), composed of fifteen statements to be rated on a 5-point  
48 Likert scale (from "1 - Yes, that is true" to "5 - No, that is not true"). The answers to all  
49 questions were summed to obtain a Fatigue Index, in which lower score reflected higher fatigue.  
50 MFI was evaluated at the beginning and at the end of both experimental days.  
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56 In order to assess sleepiness, we used the 9-point Karolinska sleepiness scale (KSS)  
57 (Åkerstedt et al., 2014; Åkerstedt and Gillberg, 1990). Participants had to select a number  
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4 corresponding to their level of sleepiness (from 1 = extremely alert to 9 = very sleepy, fighting  
5 against sleep). KSS was evaluated simultaneously with the MFI.  
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8 We also evaluated participants' intrinsic motivational state using intrinsic motivation inventory  
9 (IMI, <http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/intrinsic-motivation-inventory/>) (Ryan and Deci, 2000).  
10 The subjects provided the ratings on a 7-point Likert scale (from "Not at all true" to "Very true"),  
11 thus, higher scores represented higher task interest/enjoyment.  
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15 Subjective effort was evaluated using the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Task  
16 Load Index (NASA-TLX) rating scale (Hart and Staveland, 1988). It is divided in six subscales:  
17 mental demand, physical demand, temporal demand, performance, effort and frustration level.  
18 In the present study, we focused only on mental demand, performance and effort. Since the  
19 concepts of mental demand and effort were difficult to disentangle for participants, and since the  
20 scores strongly correlated with each other, we took the average of the mental demand and effort  
21 scores as an index of subjective effort cost. The participants had to score each of the items on a  
22 20-point scale presented directly on screen. Participants completed the NASA-TLX after each  
23 block of the working memory task on both experimental days.  
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### 31 32 33 **2.1.3. Fatigue/Control manipulation**

34 On experimental days, participants underwent 2h of either fatigue or control manipulation (see  
35 Figure 1). Fatigue was induced by performing a conflict-switch-working memory (CSWm) task in  
36 which subjects had to make decision on the basis of conflicting sources of information (i.e. a  
37 variant of the Stroop task (MacLeod, 1991)), an approach that has been used widely as a way  
38 of promoting cognitive fatigue (Moeller et al., 2012; Pageaux et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016). In  
39 addition, the CSWm task involved two different types of stimulus-response associations and  
40 participants had to switch regularly from one to the other, leading to switch costs, also known to  
41 promote fatigue (Lorist et al., 2000). Finally, the CSWm task required to maintain information in  
42 working memory, since the cue providing instruction for the task was given after the  
43 presentation of the stimulus. In the control session, participants watched emotionally neutral  
44 documentaries. The order of the sessions (fatigue/control) was counterbalanced between all  
45 participants. In the CSWm task, participants were instructed to be as accurate and fast as  
46 possible. The time between the cue onset and the initiation of the next trial was adapted to the  
47 performance of each participant, according to the following rule:  
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$$59 \mathcal{M} = \sum_{t=1}^T \mathcal{M} \times 0.75 + accuracy(t) \times 0.25$$
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$$responseTime = \begin{cases} responseTime \times 1.1 & \text{if } \mathcal{M} \leq 0.8 \\ responseTime \times 0.9 & \text{if } \mathcal{M} > 0.8 \end{cases}$$

with  $T$  being the current trial number,  $responseTime$  being initialized to 1500 ms at the beginning of each block,  $\mathcal{M}$  being initialized to zero, and  $accuracy(t)$  representing the accuracy of the response in trial  $t$  (one if correct, zero if incorrect).  $responseTime$  was 300 ms minimum and 3000 ms maximum. This procedure ensured that the task remained challenging for all subjects, independently of their capacity. Each block contained a total of 368 trials, distributed equally between 2 different tasks. In the number task, participants were presented with two numbers, on either side of the fixation point (left and right), and had subsequently to report the location of either the largest in value or the largest in size, depending on an instruction cue. In the arrow task, one arrow was presented either above or below the fixation point and participants were to report either its position or direction, depending on the instruction cue. Trials were equally divided into congruent (e.g. large digit with large value or upwards pointing arrow located on the upper half of the screen) and incongruent (e.g. large digit with small value or upwards pointing arrow located on the lower half of the screen) trials. The participants completed 8 blocks in 2 hours. Each trial proceeded as follows: the fixation cross appeared in the middle of the screen for 1000 ms, followed by 250 ms of stimuli presentation. After a delay, a blank screen appeared for 500-1000 ms (depending on the participant performance), and the instruction cue (“arrow” task: “direction” or “location”; “number” task: “value” or “size”) was presented for 550 ms. Participants had to answer within the cue presentation time, equal to the  $responseTime$  variable detailed above. The next trial began right after participants’ response. The probability of task switches (defined as a change in either congruency or task instruction) decreased geometrically with each successive trial, such that 45% of trials involved a task switch, 26% followed one trial with the same task, while 12%, 8%, 5% and 2% had 2, 3, 4 and 5 repetitions, respectively.

During the control session, participants watched animal documentaries on a computer for 2h. The documentaries were chosen according to their preference out of 7 different movies. Similar approaches have already been used in other experiments as a control condition (Badin et al., 2016; Van Cutsem et al., 2017; Zering et al., 2017).

#### 2.1.4. Effort discounting evaluation

All tasks were implemented using version 3.0.9 of the Psychtoolbox (Brainard, 1997) in Matlab 7.5 (The MathWorks, Inc. Natick, Massachusetts, United States). Participants faced a 19-inch

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4 CRT screen with a refresh rate of 100Hz. The distance between the screen and the chin support  
5 was 58 cm.  
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8 To evaluate effort and assess the consequences of fatigue, we used a variant of the auditory  
9 “N-back” working memory task, in which the subjects are required to judge whether the  
10 presented letter matches the one heard “N” letters before (Kirchner, 1958). Series of letters from  
11 the French alphabet, excluding F, J, M, P, W, Y, were presented aurally to participants. These  
12 letters were recorded from a young female voice and then normalized for consistency in pitch  
13 and volume. In each block, 25% of the letters were defined as targets, the others being  
14 considered as distractors. Task difficulty ‘N’ was calibrated individually during the training on the  
15 first day, and stayed constant during the whole experiment. The training included 15 blocks of  
16 increasing demand (N = 1 to 5), composed of 60 letters each. The letters were presented  
17 continuously while participants fixated the cross in the center of the screen. Response timeout  
18 was fixed to 1.5 seconds (indicated by change of fixation cross orientation), with an inter-  
19 stimulus interval of 2 to 3 seconds (uniformly distributed). A short pause was provided after  
20 every 5 blocks. The answers were collected via computer keyboard (distractor and target  
21 corresponded to button number ‘1’ and ‘2’ respectively). When the participant performance was  
22 greater than or equal to 70% (mean of the % of targets detected and the % of distractors  
23 correctly rejected) they progressed to the next level with a maximum difficulty level set to 5-  
24 back, otherwise they repeated the same level once more. The maximal difficulty reached by the  
25 participants in the last block was then used for all subsequent experimental acquisitions (see  
26 Figure 2C).  
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40 Following the fatigue or control manipulation on experimental days, participants performed the  
41 N-back tasks of different difficulty levels, presented in the context of a forced-choice paradigm,  
42 inspired from earlier studies (Westbrook et al., 2013). In order to avoid that participants’  
43 preference for difficulty-reward combinations would be influenced by their auto-evaluation of  
44 performance, rather than by effort perception, we defined task difficulty as the ratio of 1-back  
45 and N-back tasks in the block of 80 letters (actual ‘N’ depending on participants’ performance  
46 during training, cfr. supra). These ratios are referred to as the block difficulty level (DL): % of N-  
47 back: DL-1 = 25%, DL-2 = 37.5%, DL-3 = 50%, DL-4 = 62.5%, DL-5 = 75%). The difficulty was  
48 represented visually using horizontal color bars (blue = 1-back; orange = n-back; see Figure 1).  
49 A fixed amount of 2€ was always associated with the DL-5 block while a variable amount,  
50 ranging between 0 and 2 € (with 0.20 € intervals) was offered for the easy option (i.e. DL-1 to  
51 DL-4). Participants had to make the choice by pressing the right or left mouse button depending  
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4 on whether they wanted to execute the task with the DL presented on the right or left part of the  
5 screen. The side of easy and difficult offers was pseudo-randomized for every participant. All  
6 possible difficulty pairings were evaluated for each possible reward level, which resulted in 44  
7 forced-choices. Within these selections, participant had to perform the actual N-back task for 15  
8 randomly selected choices. Any of the forced-choices could be selected for execution since the  
9 randomization did not take into account the proposed difficulty levels. Participants had to  
10 perform the selected block immediately following the choice. In each block, the accuracy  
11 (average percentage of target hits and distractor correct rejections) was averaged between both  
12 difficulty levels (1-back and N-back) to calculate the performance. This particular procedure  
13 ensured that, regardless of DL, performance in the 1-back and in the N-back tasks had the  
14 same impact on the amount of money earned at the end of the block. For instance, if  
15 participants had average performance of 90% in the easy and 60% in the difficult task, their  
16 reward would be 75% of the proposed amount, irrespective of the relative proportion of easy  
17 and difficult trials (DL). This provided incentives for participants to disregard their relative  
18 performance in the easy and difficult tasks, and to consider only cognitive effort associated with  
19 the DL when making their choice. The remuneration was calculated by multiplying the  
20 performance by the reward attributed to the selected block (i.e. 0 to 2 €). This information was  
21 provided on the screen at the end of each block. Prior to receiving performance feedback,  
22 participants had to answer the NASA-LTX questionnaire, presented on the computer screen.  
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### 38 **2.1.5. Statistical analyses**

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40 We analyzed data with Matlab (The MathWorks, Inc., Natick, MA, USA) and performed  
41 statistical analyses with JASP (Version 0.8.2, JASP Team 2017). We performed both frequentist  
42 and Bayesian repeated-measure ANOVAs and Kendall correlations, to avoid undue influence of  
43 outliers. Results from the frequentist analyses are reported in terms of p-value (and F statistics  
44 for the ANOVA), whereas Bayesian analyses resulted in Bayes Factors (BF). BF represents the  
45 ratio of the likelihood of two different models with, most classically, one assuming the alternative  
46 hypothesis and the other assuming the null hypothesis. Bayesian analysis was used in the  
47 present study because it provides a better estimate of effect reliability (BF) than the p-value. In  
48 addition, it provides the ability to evaluate the probability that the null hypothesis is true. Finally,  
49 it mitigates considerably the issue of multiple comparison (Gelman and Tuerlinckx, 2000). The  
50 BF can be interpreted on the basis of the table proposed in Kass and Raftery (1995):  
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$\log BF_{10}$	$BF_{10}$	Evidence against $H_0$
0 to 1/2	1 to 3,2	Not worth more than a bare mention
1/2 to 1	3,2 to 10	Substantial
1 to 2	10 to 100	Strong
> 2	> 100	Decisive

For 1-way ANOVAs and correlation analyses, the  $BF_{10}$  is reported, which represents the comparison between the alternative and the null hypothesis. For 2-way ANOVAs,  $BF_{inclusion}$  is reported instead.  $BF_{inclusion}$  is obtained by comparing the likelihood of the model including, or excluding a given effect.

The behavior of the participant in the choice task was analyzed with a computational model of effort-based decision making inspired from earlier studies (Zénon et al., 2016)

$$Q(\alpha, \beta, R, D) = \alpha \left[ (1 - \beta) \frac{R - 100}{10} + \beta(D - 1) \right]$$

$$\alpha = \frac{1}{e^{temperature}}$$

$$\beta = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-weight}}$$

$$P(easy|temperature, weight, R, D) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-Q}}$$

with *temperature* and *weight* as free model parameters.  $R$  represented the amount of reward proposed for the difficult version of the task, and  $D$  accounted for the difficulty level (ranges of  $R$  and  $D$  in the model corresponded to their range in the actual experiment).  $Q$  represented an estimate of the net value of the proposed trial.  $P(easy)$  indicated the probability of choosing the easy option, which was a function of the temperature and weight parameters and of the reward and difficulty conditions. The model was fit with multidimensional nonlinear minimization (Nelder-Mead, `fminsearch`) with ridge regularization.

The *weight* parameter can be interpreted as representing the relative impact of the difficulty level on the decisions of the participants, while the *temperature* parameter indicated how noisy their choices were. Increasing the weight parameter results in more effort-discounting (the

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4 difficulty parameter  $D$  has more weight on the decision), while increasing the temperature  
5 parameter resulted in choices that were more stochastic (i.e. depended less on net value).  
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## 10 **2.2. Results**

### 11 CSWm task showed time-on-task increase in conflict and switch cost

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13 Performance in the CSWm task was  $92\pm 3\%$ ,  $93\pm 2\%$ ,  $45\pm 2\%$  and  $80\pm 3\%$  (mean $\pm$ 95%  
14 confidence interval) for congruent/switch, congruent/no-switch, incongruent/switch and  
15 incongruent/no-switch trials, respectively, confirming that the task was challenging for the  
16 participants. We measured the difference in average performance block by block between  
17 congruent and incongruent conditions, either in switch or no-switch trials. We found that this  
18 incongruency effect increased over time in the switch (Bayesian t-test on Kendal correlation  
19 coefficients with block number;  $BF_{10}=29637$ ), but decreased in no-switch trials ( $BF_{10}=5.34$ ).  
20 Conversely, we found that the effect of switch on accuracy increased also over time in the  
21 incongruent ( $BF_{10}=19.66$ ) but decreased in the congruent trials ( $BF_{10}=28.80$ ). We considered  
22 the increase in congruency and switch effect over time as potential indicators of fatigue buildup  
23 and correlated the corresponding correlation coefficients with the other subjective and  
24 behavioral measures (NASA scores, N-back performance scores, model parameters, MFI, IMI  
25 and KSS). However, none of these correlations were significant ( $BF_{10}<3$ ).  
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### 38 CSWm session increases MFI and subjective effort but not task avoidance or performance

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40 This first analysis aimed at assessing the effect of the fatigue-inducing task on our different  
41 dependent variables. We performed a one-way repeated-measure ANOVA on the post-pre  
42 difference in MFI, KSS and IMI scores with SESSION as factor (control vs fatigue). There was no  
43 effect of SESSION on either KSS ( $F(1,29)=2.188$ ,  $p=0.15$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.759$ ) or IMI ( $F(1,29)=1.965$ ,  
44  $p=0.172$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.672$ ) and a small influence of SESSION on MFI (see Figure 3A;  $F(1,29)=5.075$ ,  
45  $p=0.032$ ,  $BF_{10}=1.893$ ; i.e. significant according to frequentist statistics but anecdotal for  
46 Bayesian statistics). We then correlated these fatigue-related changes in subjective measures  
47 between each other. We found a very strong positive correlation between fatigue-control  
48 changes in MFI and KSS (Kendall's tau=0.508,  $p<0.0001$ ,  $BF_{10}=283.292$ ), suggesting that the  
49 subjects failed to distinguish clearly the subjective feeling of fatigue from that of sleepiness.  
50 Finally, neither KSS nor MFI correlated with IMI (all  $p > 0.555$ , all  $BF_{10} < 2.33$ ), indicating that  
51 subjects' intrinsic motivation was not affected by fatigue manipulation, in accordance with  
52 previous studies (Gergelyfi et al., 2015).  
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4 We then looked at the effect of fatigue and difficulty level on the NASA questionnaires. We  
5 found that the NASA subjective effort and performance scores changed as a function of the  
6 DIFFICULTY level (2-way RM-ANOVA: NASA effort:  $F(4,116)=9.564$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=4281$ ,  
7 NASA performance:  $F(4,116)=4.767$ ,  $p=0.001$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=17.9$ ). In addition, NASA effort, but not  
8 NASA performance changed with SESSION (see Figure 3C; NASA effort:  $F(1,29)=4.581$ ,  
9  $p=0.041$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=361$ , NASA performance:  $F(1,29)=0.963$ ,  $p=0.335$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.228$ ). There  
10 was no SESSION X DIFFICULTY interaction (NASA effort:  $F(4,116)=0.180$ ,  $p=0.949$ ,  
11  $BF_{inclusion}=0.025$ , NASA performance:  $F(4,116)=0.163$ ,  $p=0.956$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.027$ ). There was no  
12 correlation between the fatigue-related changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=-0.080,  
13  $p=0.547$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.284$ ).  
14

15 The temperature and weight parameters from the task avoidance models were also subjected to  
16 a one-way repeated-measure ANOVA with SESSION as factor (control vs fatigue). The weight  
17 parameter can be interpreted as an index of behavioral effort cost, while temperature indicates  
18 the level of randomness of participants' behavior. There was no change in either parameters  
19 between sessions (see Figure 2A, left panel, and Figure 3B; temperature:  $F(1,29)=0.179$ ,  
20  $p=0.676$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.285$ , weight:  $F(1,29)=0.677$ ,  $p=0.418$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.353$ ). There was a strong  
21 correlation between the fatigue-control changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=0.526,  
22  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{10}=704.0$ ). However, we noticed that many participants systematically picked the  
23 difficult task, irrespective of the reward value (13 subjects picked the difficult task in 100% of  
24 choices in at least one session). On average the percentage of choice of the difficult task was  
25  $86.4\pm 2.7\%$  and  $87.4\pm 2.6\%$  for the fatigue and the control sessions, respectively (mean $\pm$ CI).  
26

27 In terms of fatigue-related changes in task performance, a 2-way RM-ANOVA on the logit-  
28 transformed accuracy scores showed, besides the obvious difference between 1-back and N-  
29 back TASK (accuracy:  $F(1,29)=165.363$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{10}>10^{29}$ ; RT:  $F(1,29)=83.510$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  
30  $BF_{10}>10^{16}$ ), an absence of main SESSION effect (accuracy:  $F(1,29)=2.475$ ,  $p=0.127$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.374$ ,  
31 RT:  $F(1,29)=1.124$ ,  $p=0.298$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.354$ ) or interaction between the TASK and the SESSION  
32 effect (see Figure 2B; accuracy:  $F(1,29)=2.651$ ,  $p=0.114$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.550$ ; RT:  $F(1,29)=0.167$ ,  
33  $p=0.686$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.266$ ).  
34

### 35 Changes in performance correlate with changes in task avoidance

36 We investigated the link between the fatigue-related changes in task avoidance and the other  
37 effort and fatigue variables. We found strong evidence for a correlation between fatigue-induced  
38 changes in Model Weight and performance in the N-back task (see Figure 4A; Tau=-0.421,  
39  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{10}=39.4$ ) but not with 1-back performance (see Figure 4A; Tau=-0.108,  $p=0.415$ ,  
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4  $BF_{10}=0.33$ ). This correlation showed that participants exhibited larger effort-discounting when  
5 they had decreased performance in the fatigue session. In contrast, Model Weight failed to  
6 correlate with MFI (see Figure 4D;  $\text{Tau}=-0.005$ ,  $p=0.972$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.235$ ) or NASA scores (see  
7 Figure 4B; effort:  $\text{Tau}=0.122$ ,  $p=0.357$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.362$ ; performance:  $\text{Tau}=0.218$ ,  $p=0.094$ ,  
8  $BF_{10}=0.938$ ) changes.

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13 Given the correlation between fatigue-related changes in task avoidance and N-back  
14 performance, we also looked at the correlation between changes in subjective effort and N-back  
15 performance. None of the correlations were significant (neither 1-back nor N-back task  
16 performance correlated with NASA performance or effort scores; see Figure 4C;  $0.2 < BF_{10} < 0.3$ ).

### 17 18 19 20 Subjective fatigue correlates with changes in subjective effort and sleepiness

21  
22 We also looked at the relation between changes in subjective fatigue and the effort variables.  
23 There was a moderate correlation between NASA Effort and MFI ( $\text{Tau}=0.306$ ,  $p=0.018$ ,  
24  $BF_{10}=3.542$ ) and between NASA Effort and KSS ( $\text{Tau}=0.341$ ,  $p=0.011$ ,  $BF_{10}=6.798$ ). Finally, as  
25 classically reported in the literature, there was no correlation between the change in MFI and  
26 the change in performance (1-back:  $\text{Tau}=-0.133$ ,  $p=0.323$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.392$ ; N-back:  $\text{Tau}=-0.070$ ,  
27  $p=0.592$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.271$ ).

## 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 **2.3. Discussion**

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37 In experiment 1, we found only a moderate effect of the CSWm task on the subjective fatigue  
38 scores. However, the MFI questionnaire was provided at the end of the whole experiment and  
39 therefore, we suspected that the results were affected strongly by the performance of the  
40 intervening N-back task. In addition, MFI correlated strongly with KSS, suggesting that the  
41 participants failed to distinguish the concept of fatigue from that of sleepiness.

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4 findings in a more refined protocol. One supplementary MFI assessment was added right after  
5 the CSWm and documentary-watching sessions. The confound between sleepiness and fatigue  
6 was addressed by explaining in detail to each participant the difference between the 2 concepts  
7 (Borragán et al., 2017). In addition, in order to restore vigilance, we added an “arousal boost”  
8 after the CSWm and documentary-watching sessions and before the final evaluation (to  
9 equalize the conditions of questionnaire assessment). Also, we measured arousal by means of  
10 pupillometry. The assessment of task avoidance was improved by using virtual coins, rather  
11 than directly euros as rewards for the participants. These coins were translated into actual  
12 money at the end of the experiment but the participants were not aware of the conversion ratio.  
13 Moreover, instead of using all the combinations of difficulty and reward, we used an adaptive  
14 procedure to choose the conditions in each trial. Finally, the selection of N-back task difficulty  
15 during the training session was also less constrained, with no maximal value for the ‘N’ of the N-  
16 back.

### 27 28 **3. Experiment 2**

#### 29 30 **3.1. Materials and methods**

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34 Thirty right-handed healthy participants took part in Experiment 2 (19 F, 11 M, Age: 23.9±4.0). A  
35 larger proportion of male participants were sought after since males are known to consistently  
36 take more financial risks (Charness and Gneezy, 2012). MFI and KSS were assessed at the  
37 beginning and at the end of both experimental days, but also between the fatigue/control  
38 manipulation and behavioral effort-discounting task, following an arousal boost which consisted  
39 in running on the spot for 30 seconds. The arousal boost was introduced to minimize  
40 sleepiness. Since it was not expected to have any effect on fatigue, we expected this  
41 manipulation to make the MFI a purer measure of fatigue, dissociated from the confound of  
42 sleepiness. Each participant read the NASA-TLX instructions carefully prior to the experiment, in  
43 order to ensure their appropriate understanding of the different subscales.

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51 The first phase of the training session in Experiment 2 was similar to that of Experiment 1 and  
52 comprised 10 blocks, now with 80 letters each. Participants were then engaged in 6 blocks of N-  
53 back task with mixed difficulties, similar to those experienced during the following experimental  
54 sessions. Different ratios of 1 back & N-back tasks were performed, while the difficulty level of  
55 the N-back (i.e. the value of the N) was adapted as a function of participants’ individual ability  
56 (see Figure 2C). When the participants’ performance was greater than or equal to 75% (mean of  
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4 the % of targets detected and the % of distractors correctly rejected) they progressed to the next  
5 level. If their performance was below 60%, they reverted back to the inferior N value. Otherwise  
6 they kept practicing the same level. We did not impose maximum difficulty level for the n-back.  
7 One hundred and twenty letters were presented in these blocks. Only 3 DL were now evaluated  
8 (% of N-back: DL-1 = 20%, DL-2 = 50%, DL-3 = 80%). The monetary incentive was switched  
9 from actual money to a point-based system, and the conversion rate was not disclosed in  
10 advance to the participants.  
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16 At the beginning of each experimental session, participants performed one warm-up block (DL-  
17 3). They then had to respond to 40 forced choices, out of which 10 randomly selected blocks  
18 were actually performed.  
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22 Instead of an exhaustive screening of all possible pairings between difficulty and reward, an  
23 adaptive procedure was implemented (Kontsevich and Tyler, 1999; Watson and Pelli, 1983).  
24 The idea behind this procedure is to evaluate the expected gain in information (i.e. decrease in  
25 entropy) for each possible condition. The algorithm then chooses the reward/difficulty condition  
26 that maximizes this expected information gain. Participants' choices were modeled with the  
27 same 2-parameter effort-based decision making model as described in Experiment 1. The prior  
28 probability distribution  $P_0$  of the weight and temperature parameters were set to a normal  
29 distribution with mean zero and standard deviation equal to 5. In each trial, this probability  
30 distribution was updated as a function of participant's choice:  
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$$\begin{aligned} \log(P(\text{weight}, \text{temperature}|\text{choice}, R, D)) \\ &= \log(P(\text{choice}|\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, R, D)) + \log(P_0(\text{weight}, \text{temperature})) \\ &\quad - \log\left(\sum_w \sum_t P(\text{choice}|w, t, R, E) \times P_0(w, t)\right) \end{aligned}$$

$$P(\text{choice}|\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, R, D) = \begin{cases} P(\text{easy}|\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, R, D), & \text{if easy option chosen} \\ 1 - P(\text{easy}|\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, R, D), & \text{if difficult option chosen} \end{cases}$$

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44 Then the expected amount of information gained in the next trial was computed for each  
45 condition, each weight and temperature values and each possible choice, and allowed us to  
46 extract a probability of choosing a given reward and difficulty condition,  $P(R, D)$ , according to the  
47 following equations:  
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$$\begin{aligned} \log(P(\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, \text{choice}|R, D)) \\ &= \log(P(\text{choice}|\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, R, D)) + \log(P_0(\text{weight}, \text{temperature})) \end{aligned}$$

$$P(\text{choice}|R, D) = \sum_w \sum_t P(w, t, \text{choice}|R, D)$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \log(P(\text{weight}, \text{temperature}|\text{choice}, R, D)) \\ &= \log(P(\text{weight}, \text{temperature}, \text{choice}|R, D)) - \log\left(\sum_w \sum_t P(w, t, \text{choice}|R, D)\right) \end{aligned}$$

$$H(\text{choice}, R, D) = - \sum_w \sum_t P(w, t|\text{choice}, R, D) \times \log(P(w, t|\text{choice}, R, D))$$

$$H(R, D) = P(\text{easy}|R, D) \times H(\text{easy}, R, D) + P(\text{difficult}|R, D) \times H(\text{difficult}, R, D)$$

$$P(R, D) = \frac{e^{-100 \times (H(R, D) - \min(H(R, D)))}}{\sum_r \sum_d e^{-100 \times (H(r, d) - \min(H(r, d)))}}$$

All other parameters and procedures were identical to Experiment 1.

In order to monitor participant's level of arousal, we recorded pupil size during performance of the N-back task. Pupil size was acquired using an Eyelink 1000+ eye tracker video-based system (SR Research Ltd., Kanata, Ontario, Canada), with a sampling frequency of 500 Hz. We also evaluated maximal pupil dilation by asking the subjects to apply physical force (maximal voluntary contraction, MVC) through a handgrip on a dynamometer Jamar® Hydraulic Hand Dynamometer). This step was performed twice at the beginning and at the end of both experimental days. No pupillometry data were acquired on the training day.

### 3.2. Results

#### CSWm task showed time-on-task increase in conflict and switch cost

In Experiment 2, performance in the CSWm task was 93±1%, 95±1%, 44±2% and 84±2% (mean±95% confidence interval) for congruent/switch, congruent/no-switch, incongruent/switch and incongruent/no-switch trials, respectively. Similarly to Experiment 1, the incongruency effect increased over time in the switch (BF<sub>10</sub>>10<sup>6</sup>), but decreased in no-switch trials (BF<sub>10</sub>=8.33), while the effect of switch on accuracy increased over time in the incongruent (BF<sub>10</sub>>60000) but decreased in the congruent trials (BF<sub>10</sub>=924). Again, correlation of these correlation coefficients with the other subjective and behavioral measures (NASA scores, N-back performance scores, model parameters, MFI, IMI and KSS) resulted in no significant outcome (BF<sub>10</sub><3).

#### CSWm session increases MFI, decreases performance but leaves task avoidance unchanged

We investigated the effect of the fatigue-inducing task on the dependent variables. A repeated-measure ANOVA on the post-pre difference in MFI and KSS scores showed a strong effect of SESSION on KSS (see Figure 3D; F(1,29)=10.69, p=0.003, BF<sub>10</sub>=15.32) and a decisive effect on the MFI (F(1,29)=23.06, p<0.001, BF<sub>10</sub>=408.2). There was a moderate correlation between the fatigue-control changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=0.303, p=0.026, BF<sub>10</sub>=3.377),

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4 showing that the changes brought to Experiment 2 were only partly effective in separating  
5 fatigue and sleepiness (reduction of the correlation coefficient from 0.5 to 0.3). Similarly to  
6 Experiment 1, there was neither SESSION effect on IMI ( $F(1,29)=1.965$ ,  $p<0.172$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.657$ ),  
7 nor correlation between IMI and MFI (Kendall's tau=0.016,  $p=0.900$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.237$ ) or IMI and  
8 KSS (Kendall's tau=-0.015,  $p=0.914$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.237$ ).  
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12 Regarding the NASA-TLX variables, we confirmed that the NASA effort and performance scores  
13 changed as a function of the DIFFICULTY level (NASA effort:  $F(2,58)=26.654$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  
14  $BF_{inclusion}=2.880 \times 10^7$ , NASA performance:  $F(2,58)=14.884$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=10126$ ) but not  
15 SESSION (see Figure 3F; NASA effort:  $F(1,29)=0.294$ ,  $p=0.592$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.203$ , NASA  
16 performance:  $F(1,29)=0.124$ ,  $p=0.728$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.171$ ) or SESSION X DIFFICULTY interaction  
17 (NASA effort:  $F(2,58)=0.929$ ,  $p=0.401$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.166$ , NASA performance:  $F(2,58)=0.257$ ,  
18  $p=0.775$ ,  $BF_{inclusion}=0.116$ ). This time, there was a moderate, negative correlation between the  
19 fatigue-related changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=-0.343,  $p=0.007$ ,  $BF_{10}=7.037$ ).  
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27 We then looked at the task avoidance variables. The temperature and weight parameters from  
28 the task avoidance models were also subjected to a one-way Bayesian repeated-measure  
29 ANOVA with SESSION (control vs fatigue) as factor. There was no change in either parameters  
30 (see Figure 2A, right panel and Figure 3E; temperature:  $F(1,29)=1.868$ ,  $p=0.182$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.594$ ,  
31 weight:  $F(1,29)=0.001$ ,  $p=0.981$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.263$ ) between sessions. There was no correlation  
32 between the fatigue-control changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=0.222,  $p=0.092$ ,  
33  $BF_{10}=0.978$ ). The percentage of acceptance of the difficult option in Experiment 2 was  
34  $61.0 \pm 4.2\%$  in the control and  $58.4 \pm 5.4\%$  in the fatigue session (mean  $\pm$  CI). None of the  
35 participants picked systematically the difficult option (all acceptance percentages were below  
36 90%).  
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44 In Experiment 2, we found that fatigue had a significant impact on N-back task performance  
45 (see figure 2B). A RM-ANOVA on the logit-transformed accuracy scores showed, beside the  
46 difference between 1-back and N-back TASK (accuracy:  $F(1,29)=299.4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{10}>10^{37}$ , RT:  
47  $F(1,29)=56.587$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $BF_{10}>10^{15}$ ), a moderate interaction between the TASK and the SESSION  
48 effect on accuracy ( $F(1,29)=7.789$ ,  $p=0.009$ ,  $BF_{10}=4.979$ ). This interaction was absent from the  
49 RT data ( $F(1,29)=0.105$ ,  $p=0.748$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.255$ ). The main SESSION effect was only anecdotal  
50 (accuracy:  $F(1,29)=11.354$ ,  $p=0.002$ ,  $BF_{10}=2.593$ , RT:  $F(1,29)=8.024$ ,  $p=0.008$ ,  $BF_{10}=1.159$ ).  
51 Looking at the accuracy in each task individually, we found a strong decrease in performance  
52 with fatigue in the 1-back task ( $F(1,29)=10.34$ ,  $p=0.003$ ,  $BF_{10}=12.97$ ) but not in the N-back task  
53 ( $F(1,29)=0.132$ ,  $p=0.719$ ,  $BF_{10}=0.276$ ). There was no correlation between the fatigue-control  
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4 changes in the two variables (Kendall's tau=0.145, p=0.272, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.432).  
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#### 6 Decrease in performance correlates with changes in task avoidance and subjective effort

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9 In agreement with Experiment 1, we found strong evidence for a correlation between fatigue-  
10 induced changes in Model Weight and performance (see Figure 4E; N-back: Tau=-0.374,  
11 p=0.004, BF<sub>10</sub>=13.376; 1-back: Tau=-0.374, p=0.004, BF<sub>10</sub>=13.376). In contrast, Model Weight  
12 changes failed to correlate with MFI (see Figure 4H; Tau=-0.082, p=0.531, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.286), KSS  
13 (Tau=-0.223, p=0.110, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.999) or NASA score changes (see Figure 4F; effort: Tau=0.109,  
14 p=0.401, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.332; performance: Tau=-0.095, p=0.464, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.306).  
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19 There was also a positive correlation between fatigue-induced changes in performance in the N-  
20 back task and NASA performance score (see Figure 4G, blue; N-back: Tau=0.393, p=0.002,  
21 BF<sub>10</sub>=20.615; 1-back performance: Tau=0.264, p=0.041, BF<sub>10</sub>=1.784), and a moderate  
22 correlation of the performance changes with the NASA effort score (see Figure 4G, red; N-back:  
23 Tau=-0.306, p=0.018, BF<sub>10</sub>=3.531; 1-back: Tau=-0.149, p=0.256, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.450).  
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#### 28 No relation between fatigue and arousal

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30 In Experiment 2, we measured pupil size in order to disentangle cognitive fatigue from  
31 unspecific time-on-task effects on arousal. Baseline arousal levels remained unaffected by the  
32 fatigue manipulation, as indexed by average pupil size during the MVC task (F(1,29)=0.250,  
33 p=0.621, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.281). The change in pupil-indexed arousal correlated moderately with the  
34 change in KSS score but not with the MFI score change (KSS: Tau=0.302, p=0.025,  
35 BF<sub>10</sub>=3.294; MFI: Tau=-0.005, p=0.971, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.235).  
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41 A 2-way Bayesian RM-ANOVA on the peak pupil response during the task showed a moderate  
42 effect of session (F(1,29)=1.912, p=0.177, BF<sub>inclusion</sub>=3.157), with larger pupil responses in the  
43 fatigue session. There was no DIFFICULTY (F(2,58)=1.573, p=0.216, BF<sub>inclusion</sub>=0.092) or  
44 interaction (F(2,58)=2.662, p=0.078, BF<sub>inclusion</sub>=0.245) effect. The between-session change in  
45 pupil size failed to correlate with any of the fatigue measures (BF<sub>inclusion</sub> between 0.2 and 0.3).  
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#### 50 Subjective fatigue failed to correlate with the other fatigue or effort measures

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52 Beside the previous correlations reported above, there was no correlation between NASA Effort  
53 and MFI (Tau=-0.012, p=0.929, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.236) or KSS (Tau=-0.090, p=0.504, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.238). Finally,  
54 there was no correlation between the change in MFI and the change in performance (1-back:  
55 Tau=-0.100, p=0.442, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.357; N-back: Tau=0.063, p=0.629, BF<sub>10</sub>=0.264).  
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### 3.3. Discussion

Important methodological limitations from Experiment 1 were addressed in the second experiment. After observing that behavioral effort cost was not affected by fatigue, and that many participants never selected the easy task, we hypothesized that the N-back task may not have been challenging enough and that the value of reward was too high relative to effort cost. Therefore, in Experiment 2 we did not restrict the difficulty of the working memory task, such that some participants were able to perform a 9-back version of the task. In order to decrease the incentive value of reward, we switched from using actual money to a point-based system. Finally, instead of testing exhaustively every possible combination of task difficulty and reward, we implemented a Bayesian search procedure, in which the proposed options were adapted based on the previous responses. Despite these improvements, one remaining limitation is noteworthy. We tested young university students, who are generally strongly motivated by reward and this may have masked partly the increases in behavioral effort costs associated with fatigue.

In experiment 2, we found a decisive effect of the CSWm task on the subjective fatigue scores, evaluated immediately following the fatigue-inducing manipulation, and on N-back performance. In contrast to Experiment 1, MFI correlated only moderately with KSS, confirming that better explanation of the fatigue and sleepiness constructs to the participants and/or the arousal boost manipulation decreased the confounding effect of sleepiness on fatigue. Average tonic pupil size, used as an independent measure of arousal, showed no systematic change across sessions, but correlated with the subjective sleepiness measure. Interestingly, however, we found that peak pupillary responses, thought to be indicative of the phasic variations in noradrenaline and/or acetylcholine (Aston-Jones and Cohen, 2005; Joshi et al., 2016; Reimer et al., 2016), increased following the fatigue manipulation, in agreement with earlier studies (Wright et al., 2007).

Another difference with respect to Experiment 1 was that the fatigue manipulation failed to have any impact on the subjective effort perception measures. We can only speculate on the reason for this difference, but one may suggest that subjective effort increased in Experiment 1 following the CSWm task because of increased sleepiness, rather than because of cognitive fatigue. In Experiment 2, since the impact of sleepiness was decreased, subjective effort did not change significantly.

Finally, the most important outcome of Experiment 2 is that we were able to replicate the two main findings from Experiment 1: task avoidance correlated with fatigue-induced performance

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4 decrement but not with subjective fatigue.  
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#### 6 **4. General discussion** 7

8 In the present paper, we hypothesized that cognitive fatigue would increase the cost of  
9 cognitive effort. We evaluated fatigue and effort in terms of subjective feeling, as well as in  
10 terms of behavioral manifestation such as task performance and reward discounting,  
11 respectively. We found that extensive involvement in a cognitively demanding task increased  
12 the feeling of fatigue and impaired task performance in the easy version of the task. Throughout  
13 the experiment, preference of the participants between task options reflected the attribution of a  
14 cost to cognitive effort (Westbrook et al., 2013). However, contrary to the hypothesis, effort cost  
15 did not increase with subjective fatigue but increased rather in proportion to fatigue-induced  
16 decrease in performance.  
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23 The cognitive mechanisms and neural substrates of effort and fatigue remain poorly  
24 understood. If subjective fatigue was a protective mechanism against forthcoming resource  
25 depletion (Gergelyfi et al., 2015; Muraven and Slessareva, 2003), or if it was the manifestation  
26 of increased engagement to maintain performance despite resource disruption (Hockey, 1997),  
27 it should also have increased task avoidance. The present findings go clearly against this  
28 hypothesis, by showing an absence of link between subjective fatigue and task avoidance. It is  
29 worth mentioning that we found a positive correlation between subjective fatigue and subjective  
30 effort in Experiment 1. However, this correlation was weak and disappeared in Experiment 2, in  
31 which we addressed multiple methodological limitations. In contrast, task avoidance correlated  
32 in both experiments with fatigue-related performance decrement. These findings emphasize the  
33 dissociation between the subjective and behavioral manifestations of fatigue and effort. Indeed,  
34 in both experiments, subjective and behavioral assessments of fatigue and effort failed to  
35 correlate with each other.  
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46 Parts of the present findings rest on the exclusion of the alternative hypothesis. Bayesian  
47 statistics, by considering that probabilities can be attributed to hypotheses (e.g. there is a 10%  
48 chance of raining tomorrow), allow us to evaluate the differences in likelihood between the null  
49 and alternative hypotheses in terms of Bayes Factor. Here, the correlation between MFI and  
50 model weight, reflecting task avoidance, resulted in both experiments in substantial evidence for  
51 the null hypothesis (Bayes Factor <0.3). This replication of the null result provides, to our view,  
52 strong evidence that MFI, as a general measure of subjective fatigue, is not associated with  
53 increased cognitive task avoidance. However, it is important to note that this finding does not  
54 demonstrate that other phenomenological aspects of fatigue, that would fail to be captured by  
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4 the MFI, could not lead to increased task avoidance. Along the same line, it is possible that  
5 longer task performance, or more demanding tasks, could have led to increased task  
6 avoidance. Nevertheless, 2 hours of a task known to tax cognitive control resources, and in  
7 which difficulty was adjusted to lead to performance well below maximum, were not enough to  
8 induce increased task avoidance in the present experiment (BF below 0.3 in Exp2 and slightly  
9 above in Exp1).  
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14 We found that despite successful fatigue inducement, the participants maintained similar  
15 performance in the N-back task but showed significant decrease in 1-back performance. Our  
16 initial hypothesis was that fatigue was associated with disruption of vigilance, which typically  
17 leads to more mistakes in easy and monotonous tasks (Thiffault and Bergeron, 2003). We  
18 accounted for this possibility in Experiment 2, by adding an arousal boost manipulation to  
19 restore vigilance, by improving the dissociation between fatigue and sleepiness self-evaluation  
20 in participants, and by measuring participants' pupil size (Sara and Bouret, 2012; Zénon et al.,  
21 2014). We found neither change of arousal between the sessions nor any correlation with the  
22 measures of fatigue, sleepiness and performance. This suggests that the decrement in 1-back  
23 performance was not caused by decreased vigilance, even though measuring vigilance directly  
24 with psychomotor vigilance task would be necessary to confirm this claim more decisively.  
25 Therefore, understanding why fatigue disrupts specifically 1-back performance will require  
26 further investigation.  
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37 One potential issue with the neuroeconomical evaluation procedure is that the devaluation  
38 of reward value associated with task difficulty may be influenced by performance in the task,  
39 and not only by effort. This issue deserves a careful consideration in the present study, given  
40 that we found a correlation between fatigue-induced changes in task avoidance and  
41 performance. Previous attempts at solving this issue were based on persuading participants that  
42 their reward depended on task engagement, rather than on performance (Westbrook et al.,  
43 2013). Here, we relied on the design of the task-choice procedure to avoid any influence of  
44 performance on participants' decisions. Since block performance was computed by averaging  
45 accuracy in both the difficult and the easy tasks irrespective of their proportion in the block, a  
46 poor performance in the difficult task would have the same consequence on the reward,  
47 whatever choice the participants made. Therefore, there was no incentive for the participants to  
48 change their preference for the easy task ratio following fatigue. In fact, if participants task-  
49 choice depended on auto-evaluation of performance, decreased performance in N-back would  
50 have increased preference for low DL task conditions, whereas decreased performance in 1-  
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4 back would have increased preference for large DL tasks. However, we found that performance  
5 in both the 1-back and N-back tasks correlated with task avoidance. This indicates that task  
6 avoidance was affected by fatigue-induced performance decline rather than by the integration of  
7 performance as a cost in participants' decision. One question to address in future studies is  
8 whether the presence of the performance feedback at the end of each block is necessary to  
9 induce this relationship between performance decrements and task avoidance.  
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15 Another possible limitation of the present study is the reliance on the CSWm task to induce  
16 fatigue and N-back tasks to measure its effect. This choice was justified on the basis of several  
17 earlier studies of fatigue and effort discounting (Moeller et al., 2012; Pageaux et al., 2015; Wang  
18 et al., 2016; Westbrook et al., 2013). In addition, since we were interested in the link between  
19 the subjective feeling of fatigue - a task-independent subjective percept - and cognitive effort,  
20 there was no need to use the same task to induce and measure fatigue. Using different tasks  
21 has also the advantage of limiting the problem of boredom associated with the performance of  
22 the same monotonous task for several hours (Bench and Lench, 2013). Since little is known  
23 regarding the transferability of fatigue between different cognitive processes - available  
24 evidence point sometimes in the direction of global effect of fatigue, independent of the  
25 processes involved in fatigue induction (Arai, 1912; Wright et al., 2007), sometimes in the  
26 opposite direction (Persson et al., 2007) -, we decided to use a fatigue-inducing task involving a  
27 large range of cognitive processes, among which some should overlap with the ones involved in  
28 N-back performance. Along the same line, it could be argued that the N-back task was not  
29 demanding enough to lead to measurable effects on behavioral effort cost. We think it is unlikely  
30 because hit rate was only 80% on average in Experiment 2 and we found clear effect of task  
31 difficulty on reward discounting. Finally, the potential influence of the affective state of the  
32 participants (positive or negative) was not specifically evaluated following the completion of the  
33 fatigue / control manipulation (except for intrinsic motivation, which remained unaffected by  
34 fatigue induction). Affective state can indeed influence performance in cognitive tasks (Carver,  
35 C. S., & Scheier, 2011; Vohs et al., 2008) and should be considered as dependent variable in  
36 future studies.  
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52 It has been shown frequently that the feeling of fatigue occurs before any decrease of  
53 performance (Mullette-Gillman et al., 2015). Compensatory control hypothesis states that during  
54 the initial phase of cognitive fatigue, performance can be maintained at the cost of higher  
55 subjective effort (Hockey, 2013, 1997). However, the results of the present study failed to  
56 corroborate this hypothesis by showing a clear lack of relationship between subjective fatigue  
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4 and effort. We suggest that this lack of correlation of subjective fatigue with both performance  
5 decrement and effort is compatible with an alternative “anticipatory regulation” view, according  
6 to which cognitive fatigue would be an anticipatory protection mechanism, akin to anticipatory  
7 regulatory mechanisms described in the physical fatigue literature (Crewe et al., 2008; Tucker,  
8 2009; Tucker and Noakes, 2009). This protection mechanism would anticipate future adverse  
9 consequences associated with task execution and would urge subjects to stop before any actual  
10 consequence occurs (van der Linden, 2011). In other words, while the compensatory hypothesis  
11 assumes that fatigue would affect cognitive resources early on and would lead to compensatory  
12 increase in the recruitment of further resources in order to maintain performance (Hockey,  
13 2011), the anticipatory regulation hypothesis assumes that subjective fatigue occurs before any  
14 adverse consequence can be observed on the brain. According to this view, the engagement of  
15 resources would remain constant during the initial buildup of fatigue, which would thus not lead  
16 necessarily to increased subjective perception of effort or increased effort-discounting. Actual  
17 alteration of cognitive resources would occur if one continues to engage in the task despite  
18 subjective fatigue. At that point, performance would start to decrease and effortful control would  
19 be engaged to compensate that decrease. This, in turn, might explain our findings that task  
20 avoidance correlates with performance decrement.  
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33 This putative reliance of fatigue on such anticipatory mechanism points to several candidates in  
34 terms of potential neural substrates. Anterior insula and cingulate cortex, in particular, have  
35 been shown to encode anticipatory interoceptive signals (Barrett and Simmons, 2015).  
36 Interestingly, these same regions are also thought to be involved in the phenomenology of  
37 fatigue (Boksem and Tops, 2008; Dantzer et al., 2014; Pavese et al., 2010). Naturally, the  
38 present findings provide only indirect support for this anticipatory regulation view and further  
39 computational and neuroimaging studies are required to assess its validity in depth.  
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## 48 **Acknowledgements**

49  
50 This work was supported by Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS–FDP), Fondation  
51 Médicale Reine Elisabeth (FMRE), the Fondation Louvain and IdEx Bordeaux. The authors  
52 would like to acknowledge the contribution of Simon Van Hemelrijck for his support in data  
53 acquisition.  
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4 **Figure legends**  
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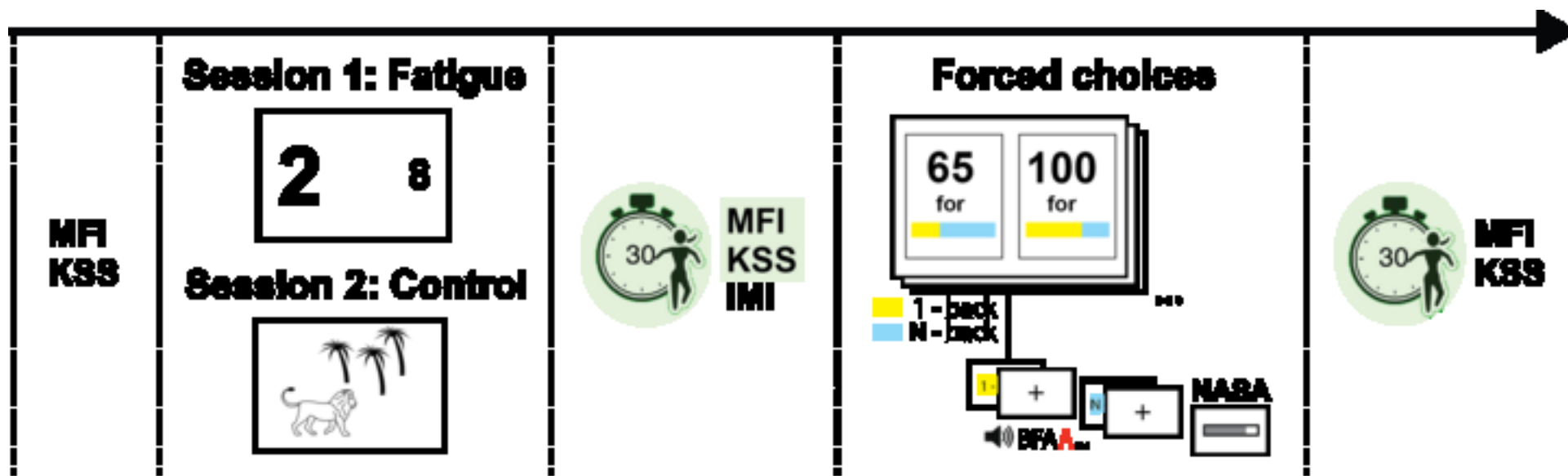
6 **Figure 1.** Schematic description of the protocol. Participants were first evaluated with the  
7 multidimensional fatigue inventory (MFI) and Karolinska sleepiness scale (KSS). Following  
8 fatigue-inducing or control manipulation they again completed the questionnaires (only intrinsic  
9 motivation inventory (IMI) in Exp 1), and performed a forced-choice working memory task  
10 followed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Task Load Index (NASA-TLX).  
11 Experiment 2 also included arousal boosts consisting of 30-second run on the spot, prior to  
12 questionnaires completion.  
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21 **Figure 2.** A. Fitting curves from the behavioral model, averaged across participants for each  
22 difficulty level and session. Task preferences indicate a clear effect of difficulty level on  
23 probability of accepting more difficult task, with no clear difference between fatigue and control  
24 sessions in both experiments. B. Average performance in the 1-back (blue) and N-back tasks  
25 (red) in fatigue and control conditions. Error bars indicate the 95% confidence interval. C.  
26 Histogram of N-back difficulty levels used in both experiments.  
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34 **Figure 3.** Subjective evaluations and free model parameters in fatigue (gray bars) and control  
35 conditions (white bars) for Experiment 1 (A-C) and 2 (D-F). Error bars indicate the 95 %  
36 confidence interval. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  
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41 **Figure 4.** Relationships between session changes in N-back performance, subjective  
42 evaluations and free model parameters for Experiment 1 (A-D) and Experiment 2 (E-H). \* $p <$   
43  $.05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  
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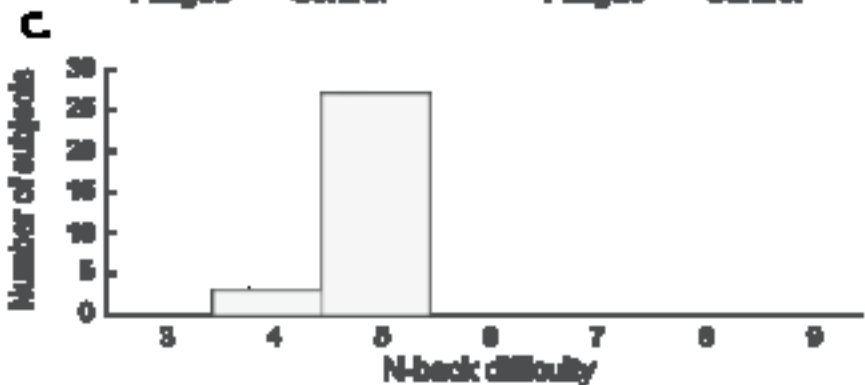
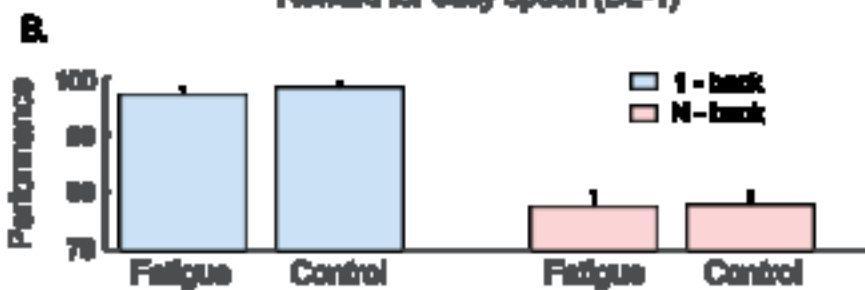
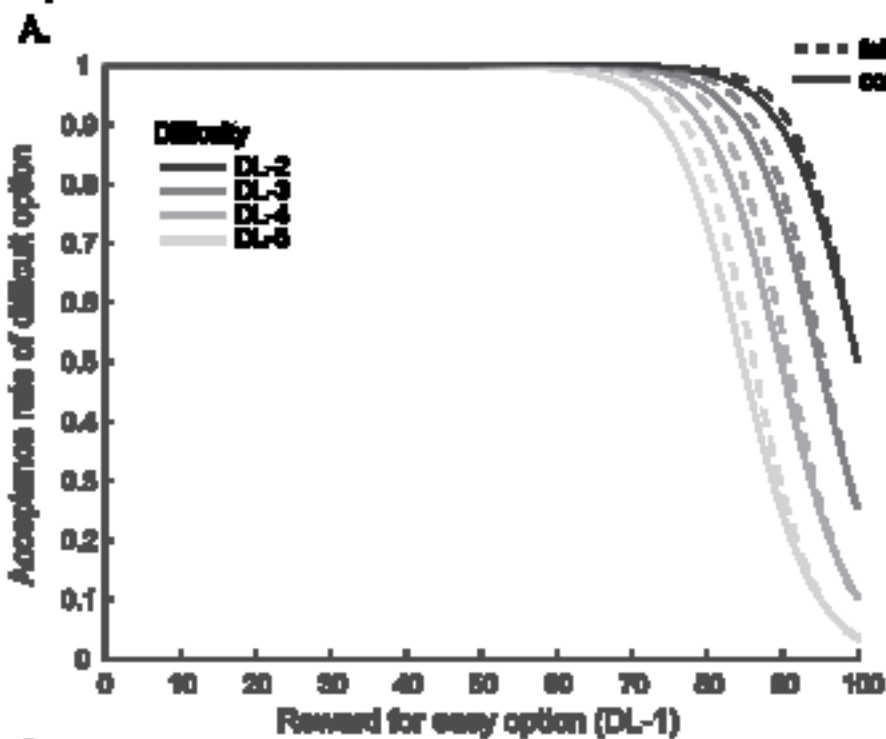
Figure 1  
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added in Exp. 2

Figure 2  
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### Exp. 1



### Exp. 2

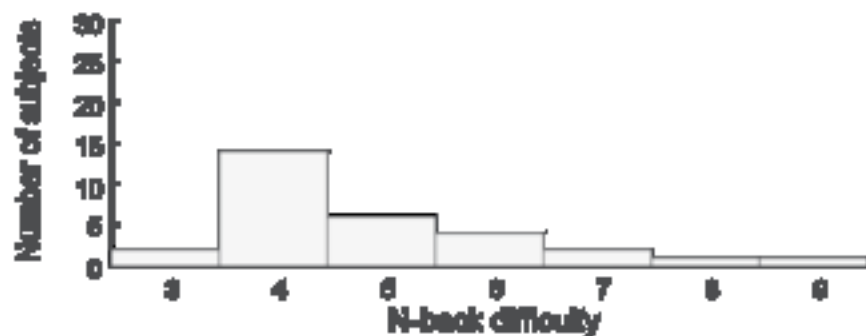
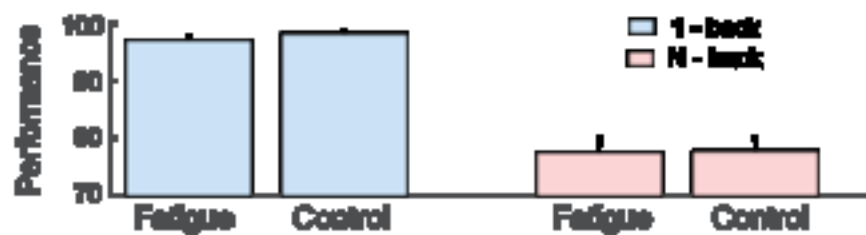
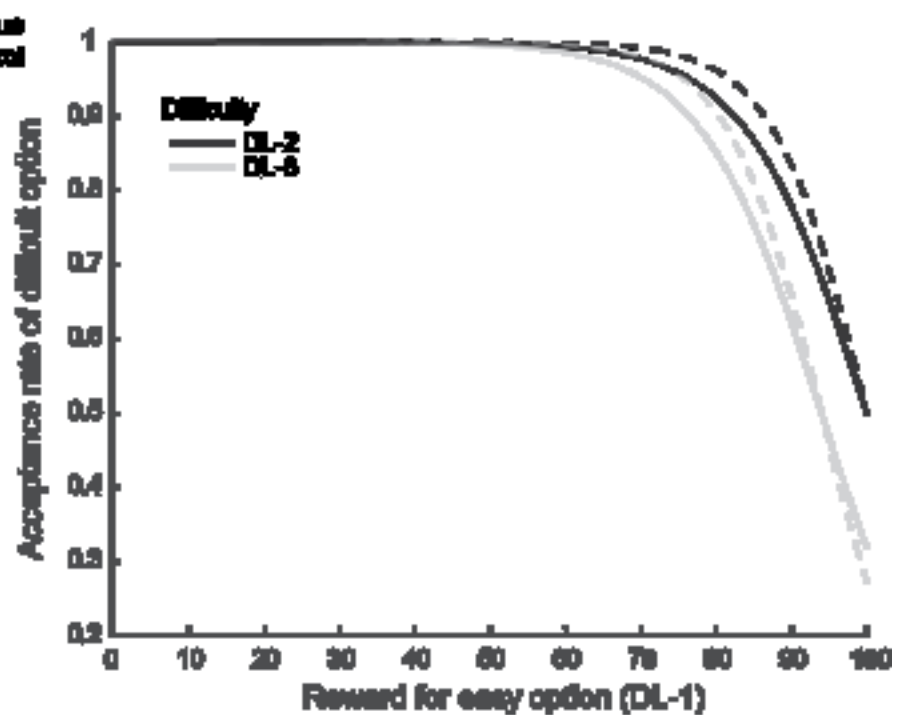
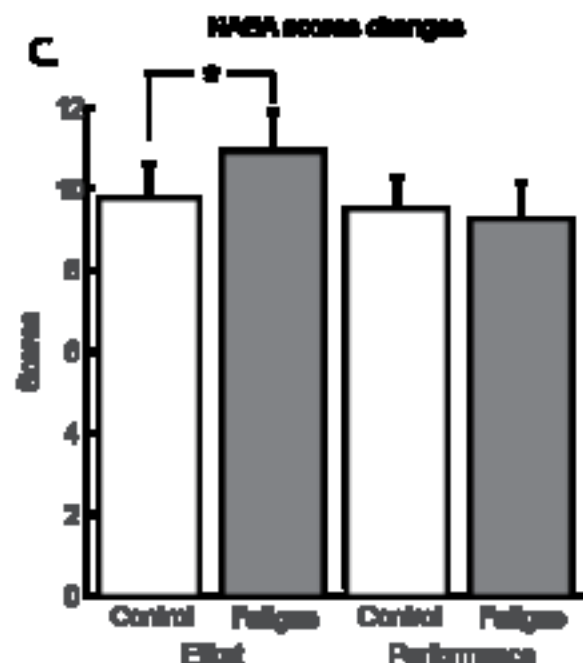
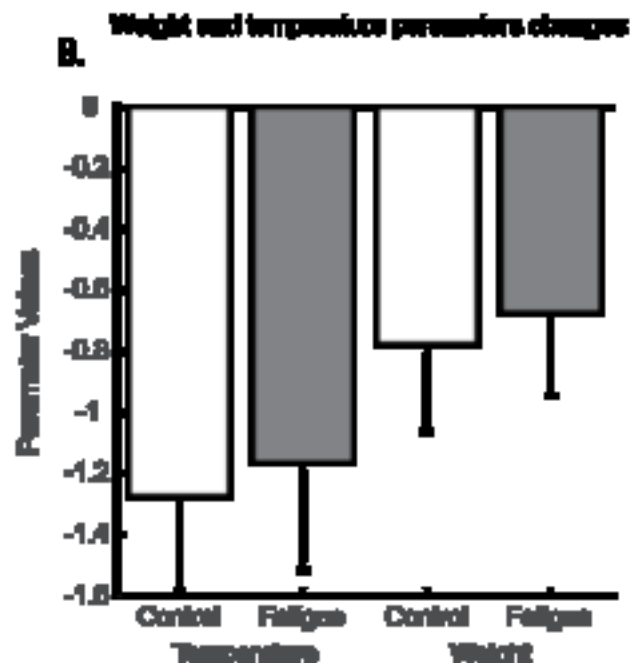
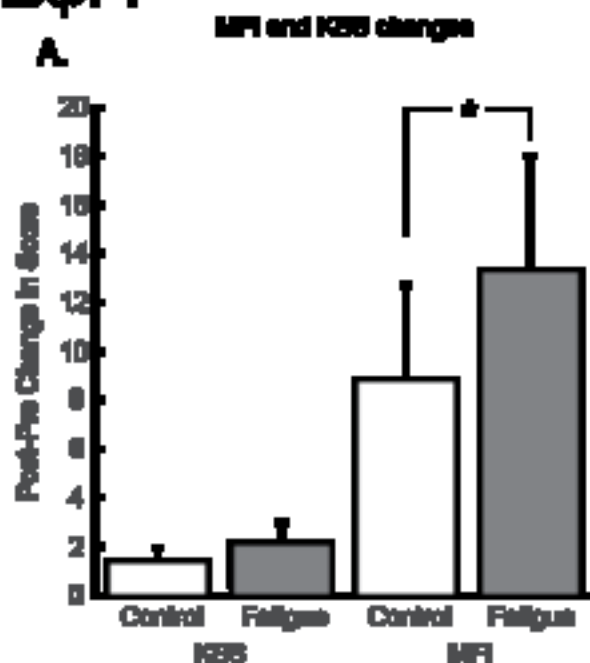


Figure 3  
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### Exp. 1



### Exp. 2

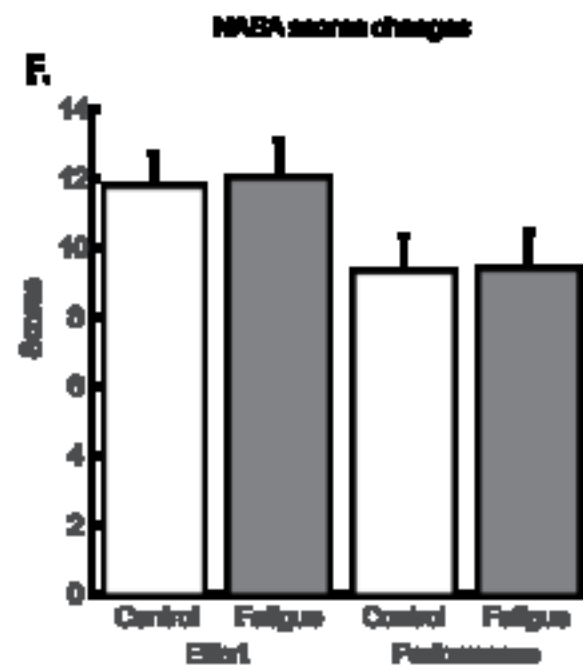
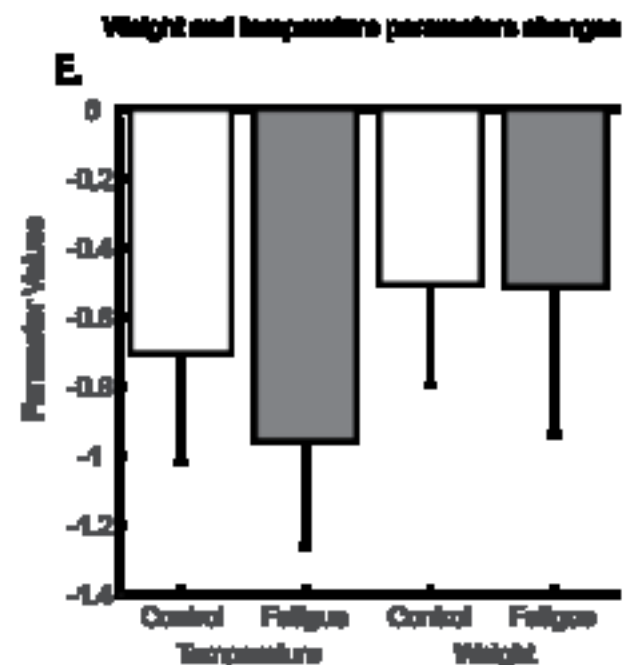
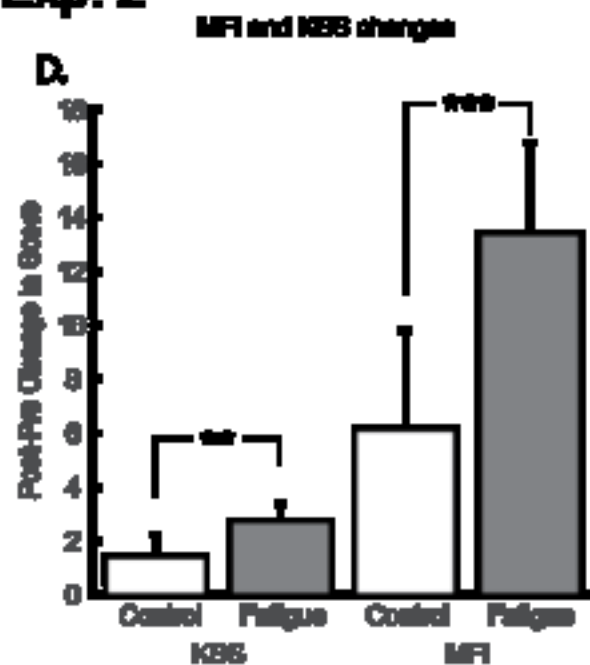
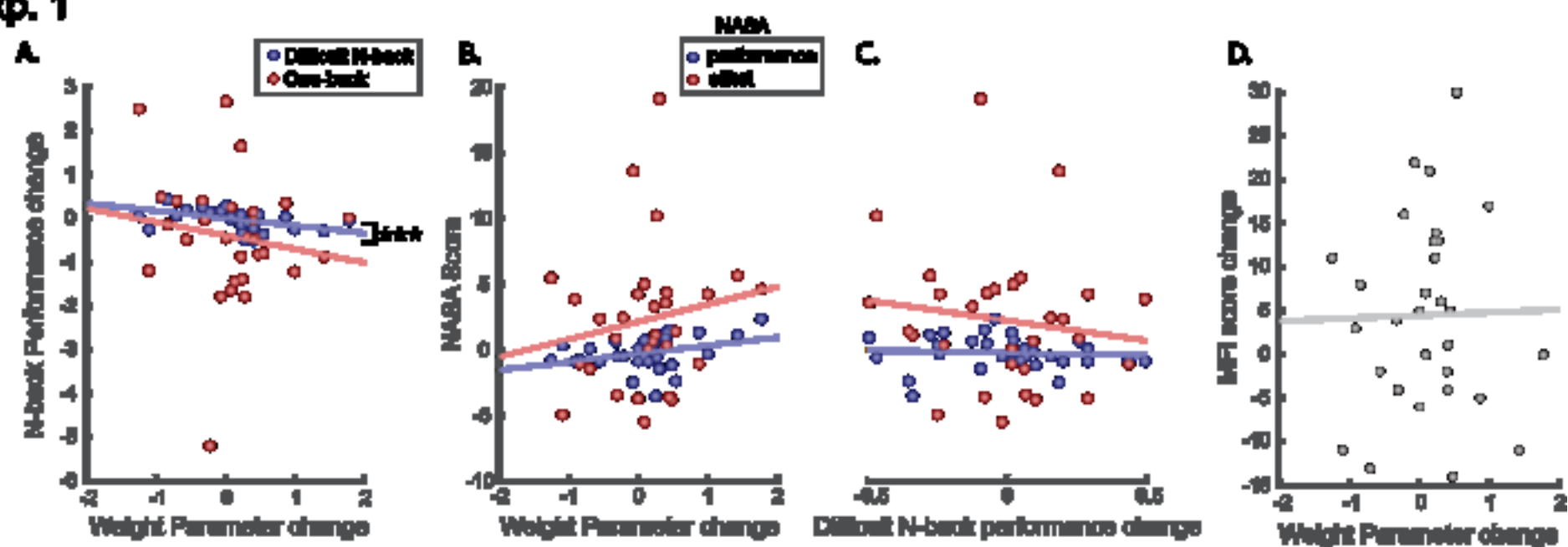


Figure 4  
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### Exp. 1



### Exp. 2

