

Anxiety and Sensitivity to Inter-Turn Silences

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Introduction:

- Inter-turn silences = silences between the end of one speaker's turn and the start of the other's turn.
- Individuals tend to perceive longer inter-turn silences more negatively (Roberts et al., 2006).
- Increases in anxiety can disrupt the perception of time, leading to the theory that higher anxiety leads to overestimation of silence duration.
- In turn, anxious individuals tend to overestimate the duration of exposure to a stimulus compared to non-anxious individuals (Bar-Heim et al., 2010; Ishikawa & Okubo, 2016).
- Due to the focus on visual stimuli, a gap in the literature on how anxiety affects interpretations of inter-turn silences exists, which is what this study seeks to address.

Research Question:

- Is sensitivity to silence duration related to general and social anxiety?

Methodology:

Participants

- Current sample is 30.

Materials

- A question-answer bisection task (QABT) was devised and used to gather data.
- The QABT consists of 70 question-answer pairs with silence duration ranging from 400 ms to 1600 ms.
- For measurement of social anxiety, the self-report questionnaire LSAS was utilized (Maximum score of 144).
- For general anxiety the GAD-7 questionnaire was used.

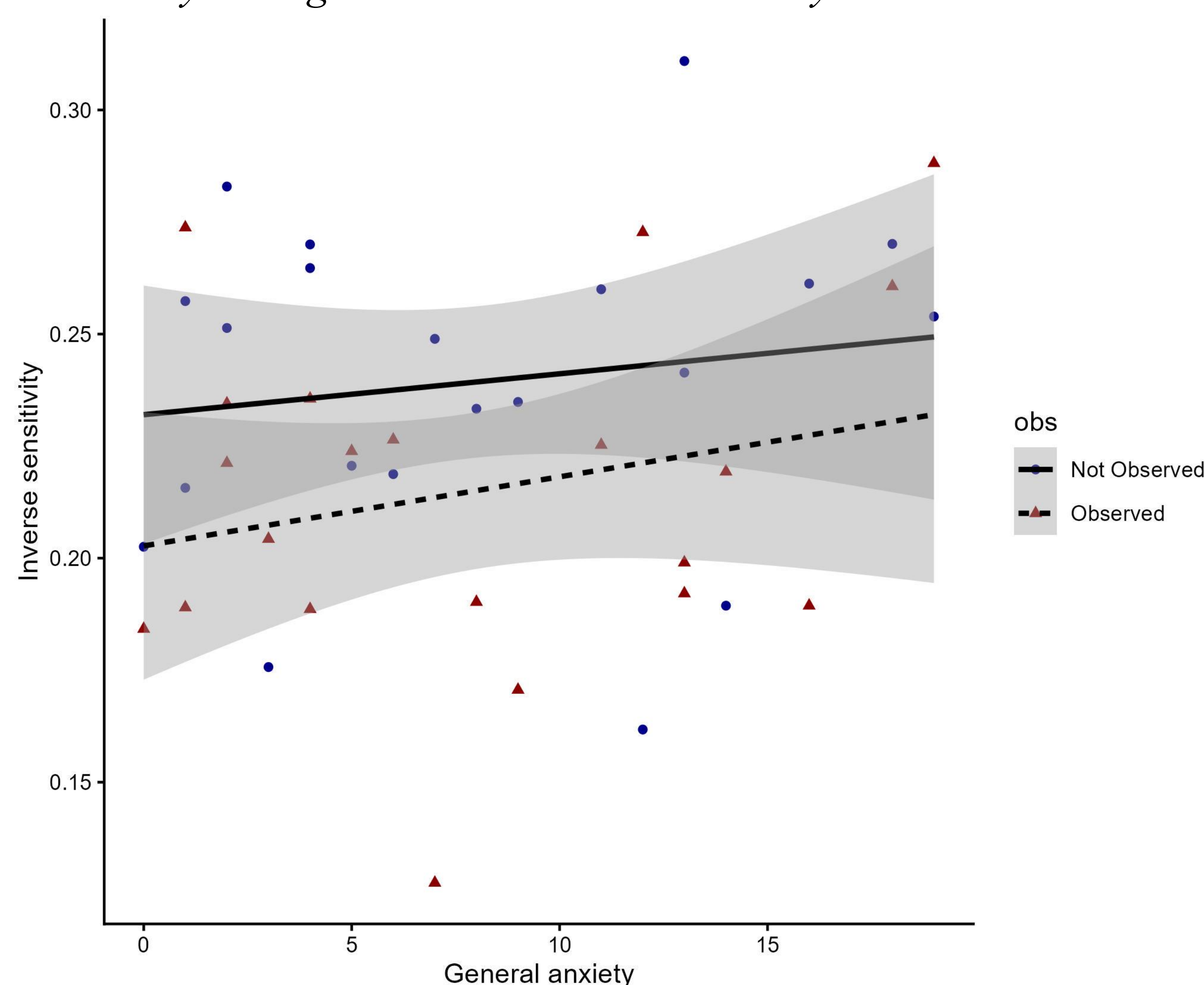
Procedure

- Acquired informed consent from participants, after which participants completed session one via computer alone in a testing room.
- Participants heard each question-answer pair and indicated whether the silence between the question and response was long or short.
- For session two the experimenter informed participants they would be staying in the room to make sure they were doing everything right.
- This was done with the purpose of inducing anxiety.
- After session two, participants completed a series of questionnaires on the computer alone, after which the experimenter came back into the room and debriefed them.

Preliminary Results:

Figure 1

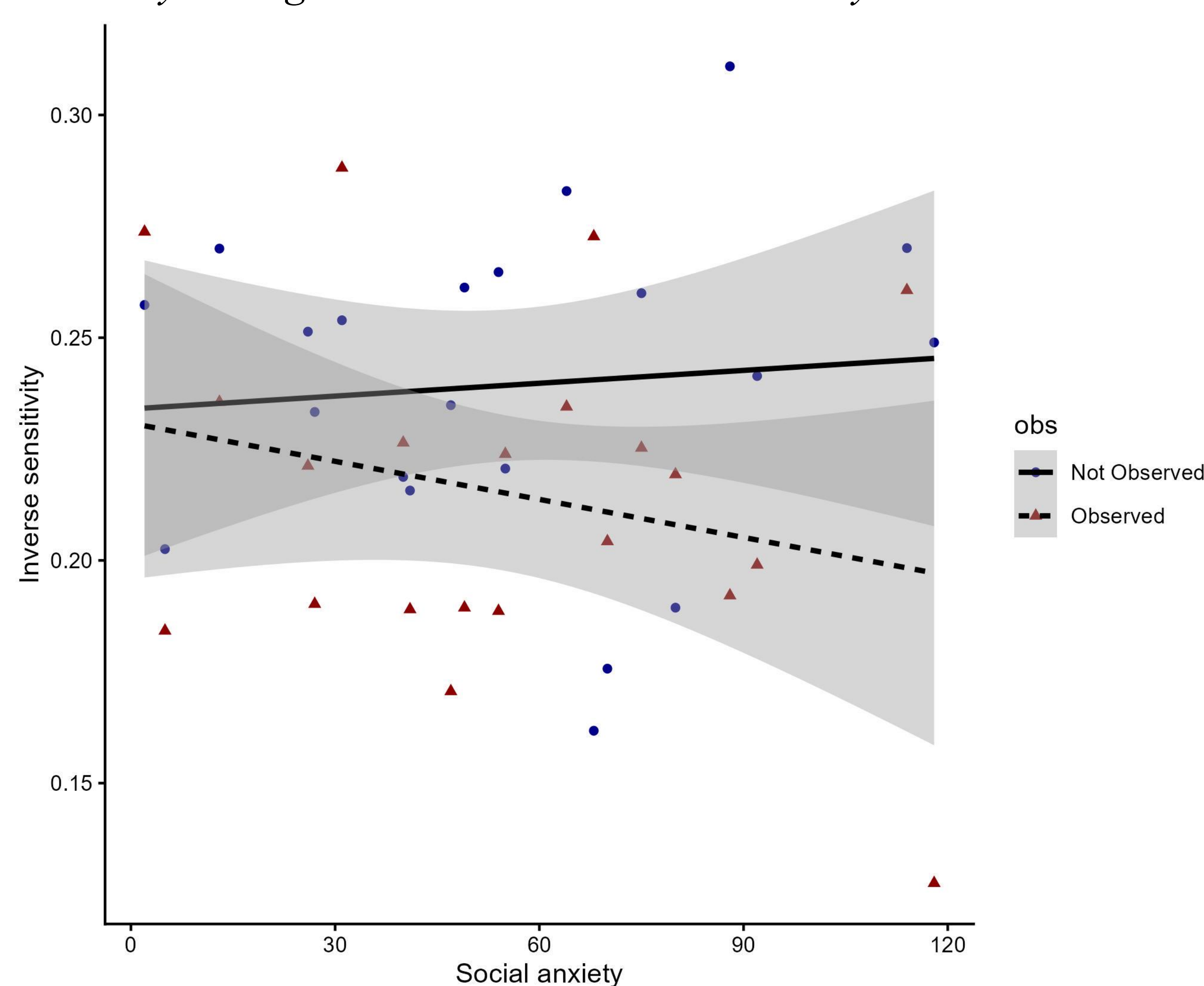
Sensitivity Changes Based on General Anxiety



Note. Lower values on the y-axis represent higher sensitivity to changes in time duration.

Figure 2

Sensitivity Changes Based on Trait Social Anxiety



Note. Lower values on the y-axis represent higher sensitivity to changes in time duration.

Preliminary Results Explained:

- General anxiety does not appear to affect sensitivity to small changes in time.
- Social anxiety appears to affect sensitivity to small changes in time, but only when people are being observed.

Conclusion:

- Situational anxiety leads to an increase in sensitivity to changes in time for people with higher social anxiety.
- Levels of general anxiety were associated with a decrease in sensitivity to changes in time regardless of whether situational anxiety was induced or not.
- As these are preliminary findings, it is advised that findings are interpreted cautiously.
- Lastly, a recommendation for future investigations of inter-turn silences and the effects of anxiety would be to use a greater number of tasks involving human made sounds and/or speech, rather than non-human sounds.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my mentors Dr. Michael Kaschak and Ms. Anuja Thomas, and the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program for this opportunity and for their continued support and guidance during the research process.

References:

