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A preregistered, direct replication attempt of the retrieval-extinction effect in cued fear conditioning in rats

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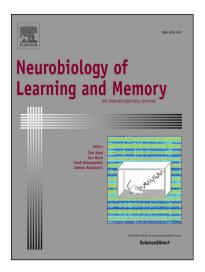
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### **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT**

#### Title

## A preregistered, direct replication attempt of the retrieval-extinction effect in cued fear conditioning in rats

#### Running title

Preregistered replication of the retrieval-extinction effect

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#### **Abstract**

In 2009, Monfils and colleagues proposed a behavioral procedure that was said to result in a permanent attenuation of a previously established fear memory, thereby precluding a possible return of fear after extinction (Science 2009; 324:951-5). By presenting a single retrieval trial one hour before standard extinction training, they found an enduring reduction of fear. The retrieval-extinction procedure holds great clinical potential, particularly for anxiety patients, but the findings are not undisputed, and several conceptual replications have failed to reproduce the effect. These failures have largely been attributed to small procedural differences. This preregistered study is the first endeavor to exactly replicate three key experiments of the original report by Monfils et al. (2009), thereby gauging the robustness of their seminal findings.

Despite adhering to the original procedures as closely as possible, we did not find any evidence for reduced return of fear with the retrieval-extinction procedure relative to regular extinction training, as assessed through spontaneous recovery, reinstatement and renewal. Behavior of animals in the control condition (extinction only) was comparable to that in the original studies and provided an adequate baseline to reveal differences with the retrieval-extinction condition. Our null findings indicate that the effect sizes in the original paper may have been inflated and question the legitimacy of previously proposed moderators of the retrieval-extinction effect. We argue that direct experimental evaluation of purported moderators of the retrieval-extinction effect will be key to shed more light on its nature and prerequisites.

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