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**Research Articles: Systems/Circuits**

**Temporal contingencies determine whether adaptation strengthens or weakens normalization**

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# Temporal contingencies determine whether adaptation strengthens or weakens normalization

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**ABSTRACT**

A fundamental and nearly ubiquitous feature of sensory encoding is that neuronal responses are strongly influenced by recent experience, or adaptation. Theoretical and computational studies have proposed that many adaptation effects may result, in part, from changes in the strength of normalization signals. Normalization is a ‘canonical’ computation in which a neuron’s response is modulated (normalized) by the pooled activity of other neurons. Here we test whether adaptation can alter the strength of cross-orientation suppression, or masking, a paradigmatic form of normalization evident in primary visual cortex (V1). We made extracellular recordings of V1 neurons in anesthetized male macaques, and measured responses to plaid stimuli composed of two overlapping, orthogonal gratings, before and after prolonged exposure to two distinct adapters. The first adapter was a plaid consisting of orthogonal gratings, and led to stronger masking. The second adapter presented the same orthogonal gratings in an interleaved manner, and led to weaker masking. The strength of adaptation’s effects on masking depended on the orientation of the test stimuli relative to the orientation of the adapters, but was independent of neuronal orientation preference. Changes in masking could not be explained by altered neuronal responsivity. Our results suggest that normalization signals can be strengthened or weakened by adaptation, depending on the temporal contingencies of the adapting stimuli. Our findings reveal an interplay between two widespread computations in cortical circuits—adaptation and normalization—that enables flexible adjustments to the structure of the environment, including the temporal relationships among sensory stimuli.

73

74 **SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT**

75 Two fundamental features of sensory responses are that they are influenced by  
76 adaptation, and that they are modulated by the activity of other nearby neurons via  
77 normalization. Our findings reveal a strong interaction between these two aspects of  
78 cortical computation. Specifically, we show that cross-orientation masking—a form of  
79 normalization—can be strengthened or weakened by adaptation, depending on the  
80 temporal contingencies between sensory inputs. Our findings support theoretical  
81 proposals that some adaptation effects may involve altered normalization, and offer a  
82 network-based explanation for how cortex adjusts to current sensory demands.

83

84 **INTRODUCTION**

85 Sensory statistics vary over time, imposing changing demands on the brain. Sensory  
 86 neuronal responses adjust to the recent pattern of inputs, or adaptation. This  
 87 adjustment is a fundamental and nearly ubiquitous feature of sensory encoding (Clifford  
 88 et al., 2007; Kohn, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2007; Wark et al., 2007; Rieke and Rudd,  
 89 2009; Solomon and Kohn, 2014; Webster, 2015).

90  
 91 Adaptation has diverse effects on sensory neurons, including changes in responsivity  
 92 and altered tuning or selectivity (see Solomon and Kohn, 2014 for review). Theoretical  
 93 and computational work has proposed that much adaptation phenomenology could be  
 94 explained through adjustments of normalization signals (Heeger, 1992; Wainwright et  
 95 al., 2002; Lochmann et al., 2012; Solomon and Kohn, 2014; Snow et al., 2016; Westrick  
 96 et al., 2016). Normalization is a ‘canonical’ computation, in which a neuron’s response is  
 97 divisively modulated by the activity of other neurons, a normalization pool (Heeger,  
 98 1992; Carandini and Heeger, 2012). Normalization can explain non-linear response  
 99 properties of cortical visual neurons, such as cross-orientation suppression (hereafter,  
 100 masking; Morrone et al., 1982; Carandini et al., 1997a; Priebe and Ferster, 2006) and  
 101 spatial contextual effects (surround suppression; Cavanaugh et al., 2002; Coen-Cagli et  
 102 al., 2012, 2015). Normalization has also been invoked to explain phenomena as varied  
 103 as olfactory encoding in *Drosophila* and value encoding in primates (Carandini and  
 104 Heeger, 2012).

105  
 106 Previous work has provided some evidence that adaptation alters the suppression  
 107 attributed to normalization. For instance, adaptation of the receptive field surround  
 108 weakens the suppression it provides in the lateral geniculate nucleus (LGN) and primary  
 109 visual cortex (V1), leading to response facilitation (Webb et al., 2005; Camp et al., 2009;  
 110 Wissig and Kohn, 2012; Patterson et al., 2013). How adaptation affects masking within  
 111 the receptive field is unclear. One study found masking was unaltered in V1 after  
 112 adaptation (Freeman et al., 2002), but others reported it was weakened (Li et al., 2005;  
 113 Dhruv et al., 2011; see also Kaliukhovich and Vogels, 2016). Critically, no systematic  
 114 study has reported that the suppression attributed to normalization can be strengthened

by adaptation. The ability of recent sensory experience to strengthen normalization is a critical component of most normalization-based models of adaptation effects.

The Hebbian normalization model (Westrick et al., 2016) was proposed to explain adaptation effects in visual cortex, and provides clear predictions about when normalization should be strengthened or weakened by adaptation. Specifically, it predicts that changes in normalization signals between neurons depend on their recent history of co-activation (also see Barlow and Földiák, 1989; Wainwright et al., 2002 and Hosoya et al., 2005 for related suggestions). When the normalization pool and a target neuron are consistently co-active, normalization should be strengthened. Conversely, when the neuron and normalization pool are driven asynchronously, normalization should be weakened.

We tested these predictions using extracellular recordings of macaque V1 neurons. We compared the strength of masking before and after consistent pairing of a target grating and mask (contingent adaptation), or the asynchronous presentation of these stimuli. We show that masking can be strengthened or weakened, depending on whether mask and target are consistently paired or separated in time.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Surgery:** We made recordings from 5 adult male macaque monkeys (*Macaca fascicularis*). Animals were administered glycopyrrolate (0.01 mg/kg) and diazepam (1.5 mg/kg) shortly before the induction of anesthesia with ketamine (10 mg/kg). Animals were then intubated and provided isoflurane (1-2%). Intravenous catheters were placed in the saphenous veins of each leg. Animals were positioned in a stereotaxic device and a craniotomy and durotomy were performed over V1 (approximately 5 mm posterior to the lunate sulcus and 10 mm lateral to the midline). A 10x10 microelectrode array (400  $\mu$ m spacing, 1 mm length; Blackrock Microsystems) was implanted and the craniotomy was covered with agar to prevent desiccation. Post-surgical anesthesia was maintained with a venous infusion of sufentanil citrate (6-24  $\mu$ g/kg/hr, adjusted as needed) in Normosol solution with dextrose. Vecuronium

146 bromide (150 µg/kg/hr) was provided intravenously to minimize eye movements. Vital  
 147 signs, including heart rate, SpO<sub>2</sub>, ECG, blood pressure, EEG, end-tidal CO<sub>2</sub> partial  
 148 pressure, core temperature, urinary output, and airway pressure were constantly  
 149 monitored to ensure adequate anesthesia and physiological state. Heating pads  
 150 maintained rectal temperature near 37° Celsius. Topical atropine was used to dilate the  
 151 pupils. Corneas were protected with gas-permeable contact lenses. Supplementary  
 152 lenses were used to bring the retinal image into focus. Antibiotics (Baytril, 2.5 mg/kg)  
 153 and a corticosteroid (dexamethasone, 1 mg/kg) were administered daily.

154  
 155 All procedures were approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee of  
 156 the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and were in compliance with the guidelines set  
 157 forth in the National Institutes of Health *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory*  
 158 *Animals*.

159  
 160 *Recording and visual stimuli:* Extracellular voltage signals were filtered from 0.5-  
 161 7.5 kHz. Waveforms that exceeded a user-defined voltage threshold (usually 5 times  
 162 the root-mean-square signal on each channel) were digitized at 30 kHz. Waveforms  
 163 were classified using the Plexon Offline Sorter into single- and multi-unit clusters. We  
 164 computed signal-to-noise ratios (SNRs) for each unit as the ratio of the amplitude of the  
 165 average waveform to the standard deviation of the individual waveforms (Kelly et al.,  
 166 2007). Units with an SNR  $\geq 3.5$  were classified as single units. Results were similar for  
 167 these single units (13% of units) and for multi-unit clusters and are therefore presented  
 168 together (see also Wissig and Kohn, 2012). Due to the duration of the adaptation  
 169 experiments—roughly two hours—each recording was sorted separately.

170  
 171 Visual stimuli were generated with custom software based on OpenGL (EXPO; P.  
 172 Lennie) and displayed on a calibrated cathode ray tube monitor (HP p1230; 1024 x 768  
 173 pixels; 100 Hz frame rate, ~40 cd/m<sup>2</sup> mean luminance), viewed at a distance of 110 cm  
 174 and subtending ~20° of visual angle. Spatial receptive fields (RFs) of each unit were  
 175 estimated by occluding one eye and presenting small patches of drifting gratings (0.5°  
 176 diameter; 4 orientations, 1 cycle/°, 3 Hz drift rate, 250 ms presentation) at 225 distinct



positions spanning a  $3^\circ \times 3^\circ$  region of visual space. Subsequent stimuli were centered in the aggregate RF of the recorded units.

Stimulus orientations for subsequent experiments were determined by presenting a continuous, pseudorandom sequence of 16 full-contrast sinusoidal gratings ( $1.5^\circ$  patch diameter, 1 cycle/ $^\circ$ , 3 Hz drift rate) at equally spaced orientations ( $22.5^\circ$  steps; 1 s presentation). Gratings were presented monocularly, in a hard-edged circular window.

To characterize normalization, we measured masking (or cross-orientation suppression; Morrone et al., 1982; Bonds, 1989; DeAngelis et al., 1992; Carandini et al., 1997a) by presenting a drifting, sinusoidal grating (the target) with an overlapping, orthogonal grating (the mask). Both gratings were presented monocularly, in a hard-edged circular window  $1.5^\circ$  in diameter, with a spatial frequency of 1.5 cycle/ $^\circ$  and drift rate of 3 Hz. On each trial the contrast of the target and mask gratings varied independently over 5 values (0%, 6.25%, 12.5%, 25% and 50%), generating a matrix of 25 test stimuli (Figure 1A). For each neuron, we defined the target as the grating that evoked the stronger response at 50% contrast when presented alone.

<Figure 1: Stimuli>

To measure the strength of masking in control conditions (i.e., before adaptation), we used 1 s presentations of each of the 25 test stimuli, interleaved with 5 s presentations of a uniform gray screen (Figure 1C). The order of presentation was randomized within each block of trials and each stimulus was presented 20 times. We refer to these as pre-adaptation responses, though they are more accurately termed responses measured during adaptation to a gray, uniform screen. We then measured responses after adaptation, using an 'adapt-test-top-up' paradigm (Figure 1C; Kohn and Movshon, 2004). After 40 s of initial exposure to the adapter, we presented each of the 25 test stimuli for 1 s (block randomized, as above), interleaved with 5 s presentations of the adapter. Each stimulus was presented 20 times.



208 We used two types of adapters (Figure 1B). For asynchronous adaptation, the target  
 209 and mask grating (each 50% contrast) alternated in time, with each drifting grating  
 210 displayed for 250 ms and no inter-stimulus interval. For contingent adaptation the same  
 211 two gratings were presented simultaneously (forming a plaid) for 250 ms, alternated  
 212 with 250 ms of a uniform gray screen. The presentation of a blank screen between  
 213 plaids ensured the time-averaged contrast of each adapter type was equal between  
 214 adaptation paradigms.

215  
 216 To assess the stimulus (orientation) specificity of adaptation effects, we measured  
 217 responses to mask and target stimuli that were rotated relative to the adapter by 45°  
 218 (e.g., the effects of adaptation to 0-90° plaids were evaluated with 45-135° plaids).

219  
 220 Finally, to determine how adaptation effects depended on the orientation preference of  
 221 the recorded unit, we conducted additional experiments in which masking was  
 222 measured with a reduced test-stimulus ensemble, combined with interleaved  
 223 presentations of gratings of different orientations. Specifically, we presented the target  
 224 and mask at contrasts of 0%, 6.25%, 12.5%, 25% and 50%, either in isolation or paired  
 225 with the 50% contrast orthogonal grating. Tuning was measured with 50% contrast  
 226 gratings spanning 180° of orientation in 22.5° steps. The temporal structure of these  
 227 experiments was identical to that described above.

228  
 229 *Analyses:* Data analysis was performed in MATLAB (MathWorks). We measured  
 230 responses for two cycles of the grating (666 ms), beginning 333 ms after stimulus onset.  
 231 For each neuron, we measured both the mean response (F0) and its modulation by the  
 232 grating drift frequency (F1), for the high-contrast target. We used the response measure  
 233 (F0 or F1) that gave the higher value for all subsequent analyses.

234  
 235 We quantified masking strength with an index based on the area-under-the-curve (AUC)  
 236 of the contrast response functions for the target grating, in the presence and absence of  
 237 the mask (similar to Carandini et al., 1997b,1998; Wissig and Kohn, 2012; using log  
 238 contrast values as the x-axis except for the placement of zero contrast, as in Figure 2).

239 We used this approach, rather than fitting descriptive functions to the data (as in  
 240 Freeman et al., 2002; Dhruv et al., 2011), because post-adaptation responses often  
 241 showed little evidence of contrast saturation, leaving model parameters poorly  
 242 constrained by the data.

243

244 We measured the AUC for each mask contrast separately ( $AUC_{TM}$ ), after subtracting the  
 245 response to the mask when presented alone. The AUC for the target alone ( $AUC_T$ ) was  
 246 that obtained for masks of zero contrast. Negative  $AUC_{TM}$  values were set to zero, so  
 247 that our masking index was constrained to lie between -1 and 1. The masking index was  
 248 defined as:

$$249 \quad MI = \frac{(AUC_T - AUC_{TM})}{(AUC_T + AUC_{TM})} \quad (\text{Eq. 1})$$

250 A masking index near 1 indicates strong masking ( $AUC_T \gg AUC_{TM}$ ), whereas a value  
 251 near 0 indicates little masking ( $AUC_T \approx AUC_{TM}$ ). Negative values indicate that the  
 252 response to the target alone ( $AUC_T$ ) was smaller than the difference between the  
 253 response to the plaid and the response to the mask alone ( $AUC_{TM}$ ).

254

255 To ensure we could measure masking, if it occurred, we only analyzed data from cells  
 256 for which the response to the 50% contrast target was greater than the mean + 3  
 257 standard errors of the mean (SEM) of the spontaneous firing rate, both before and after  
 258 adaptation (38% of units excluded for contingent-adaptation experiments; 57% for  
 259 asynchronous adaptation). The relatively high proportion of excluded units arose  
 260 because we presented gratings at only two orientations, and one spatial and temporal  
 261 frequency. Thus, these stimuli failed to drive robust responses in many of the recorded  
 262 units.

263

264 Note that more units were excluded for asynchronous adaptation experiments than for  
 265 contingent adaptation, because responses were more strongly reduced after  
 266 asynchronous adaptation (Figures 4 and 5). Further, we found that units with  
 267 particularly weak responses after adaptation tended to have higher pre-adaptation  
 268 masking indices. As a result, the pre-adaptation masking index was lower for  
 269 asynchronous than contingent adapters among the units analyzed. To ensure that this

mismatch in pre-adaptation masking index did not contribute to the observed differences in the effects of contingent and asynchronous adaptation, we repeated our analyses after matching the pre-adaptation masking indices for the two data sets. Specifically, we binned the pre-adaptation masking indices (bin width of 0.2) in each data set, and then randomly selected for each bin the same number of units in the two data sets. This matching led to pre-adaptation masking values that were statistically indistinguishable. All of the differences between the effects of contingent and asynchronous adaptation that are reported in the manuscript were equally evident in this subset of data (data not shown).

To control for any confounds due to adaptation-induced changes in responsivity, we performed additional analyses. We first calculated a suppression index from the post-adaptation responses defined as:

$$SI = 1 - \frac{R_{TM}}{R_T + R_M} \quad (\text{Eq. 2})$$

where  $R_T$  and  $R_M$  are the responses to the 50% contrast target and mask, respectively, and  $R_{TM}$  is the response to the two presented together (i.e., the plaid).

We then identified target and mask contrasts in the pre-adaptation condition that produced responses equivalent to those observed after adaptation. To do so, we needed to interpolate the pre-adaptation measurements, so we fitted those data for each cell with a descriptive function:

$$B + \frac{(A_T * T_c + A_M * M_c)^n}{1 + (d_T * T_c)^n + (d_M * M_c)^n} \quad (\text{Eq. 3})$$

where  $T_c$  and  $M_c$  are the contrasts of the target and mask, respectively;  $B$  is the spontaneous firing rate;  $A_T$  and  $A_M$  determine the drive provided by each grating;  $n$  approximates an expansive nonlinearity; and  $d_T$  and  $d_M$  capture the weight of each grating in the normalization signal. These parameters ( $A_T$ ,  $A_M$ ,  $d_T$ ,  $d_M$ , and  $n$ ) were estimated by maximizing the log likelihood of the data given the model predictions, assuming Poisson spiking statistics (El-Shamayleh and Movshon, 2011). Fit quality was characterized by the normalized log likelihood, where the lower bound (a value of 0) was the likelihood of a model with predicted responses equal to the average response

300 across all conditions, and the upper bound (a value of 1) was the likelihood calculated  
 301 by using the data as the model (Stocker and Simoncelli, 2006). The mean fit quality of  
 302 the analyzed units (see below) was 0.86.

303

304 We used the model fit to (1) identify contrasts of the target and mask that generated  
 305 predicted responses equal to those observed after adaptation [ $R_T$  and  $R_M$  of Eq. 2]; and  
 306 (2) estimate responses to plaid stimuli composed of the target and mask at these ‘rate-  
 307 matched’ contrasts. We then calculated a pre-adaptation rate-matched suppression  
 308 index (SI), as in Eq. 2, from these responses. This analysis allowed us to compare SI  
 309 values before and after adaptation for which, by definition, responsivity to the  
 310 component gratings was equal. Thus, we could compare how summation was affected  
 311 by adaptation, when the efficacy of the individual gratings was identical before and after  
 312 adaptation.

313

314 For this analysis, we included units only if: (1) The pre- and post-adaptation responses  
 315 to both the 50% contrast mask and the 50% target were at least 3 SEMs above the  
 316 mean spontaneous rate, since we could only measure summation for mean-matched  
 317 responses when both stimuli generated measurable responses. This criterion excluded  
 318 57% of units in the contingent-adaptation experiment, and 77% in the asynchronous-  
 319 adaptation experiments. (2) The model fit quality to the pre-adaptation data was at least  
 320 0.7, so that the matching to pre-adaptation responses was meaningful (18% of  
 321 remaining units excluded). (3) We could identify a contrast that evoked a matched  
 322 response in the pre-adaptation epoch (30% of the remaining units excluded). Because  
 323 of these requirements, we were able to perform this analysis on 12% of the recorded  
 324 units.

325

326 To estimate neuronal orientation preference, we fitted the responses to gratings  
 327 spanning a 180° range of orientations with a von Mises function, using the maximum-  
 328 likelihood fitting procedure described above. To ensure that our measurements of  
 329 preference were meaningful, we only analyzed responses for which fit quality exceeded  
 330 0.7 (mean fit quality of selected neurons was 0.86). We also used the fitted functions to

331 estimate tuning-curve gain, before and after adaptation, defined as the maximum  
 332 predicted evoked response.

333

334 To quantify statistical significance, we used *t*-tests (two-tailed), unless otherwise  
 335 indicated. All error estimates indicate one standard error from the mean, unless  
 336 indicated otherwise.

337

338 *Response-product homeostasis model:* We performed simulations to compare our  
 339 neurophysiological results to those predicted by a recently proposed rule for updating  
 340 normalization weights based on stimulus history ('Hebbian normalization model' of  
 341 Westrick et al., 2016).

342

343 Our variant of the Hebbian normalization model consisted of 120 neurons with preferred  
 344 orientations equally spaced from 0-178.5°. Responses were simulated by computing a  
 345 feedforward drive for each neuron, and then normalizing by the feedforward drive to the  
 346 other neurons. Specifically, the feedforward drive for cell *i* was defined as:

$$347 \quad F_i(\theta) = C * \exp[k * \cos(\theta - \theta_i) - 1] + B \quad (\text{Eq.4})$$

348

349 where  $\theta$  is the grating orientation and  $C$  is its contrast,  $\theta_i$  is the preferred orientation of  
 350 cell *i*, and  $B$  is an offset. The response of the cell was then computed as:

$$351 \quad R_i(\theta) = \frac{F_i(\theta)^2}{\sigma^2 + \sum_{j=1}^N W_{ij} F_j(\theta)^2} \quad (\text{Eq. 5})$$

352 where  $W_{ij}$  is the weight which defines unit *j*'s contribution to *i*'s normalization pool; and  $\sigma$   
 353 is the contrast saturation constant.

354

355 The normalization weight between each pair of neurons was updated based on their  
 356 responses to the current stimulus:

$$357 \quad W_{i,j}^{t+1} = W_{i,j}^t + \alpha(R_i^t R_j^t - H_{i,j}) \quad (\text{Eq. 6})$$

358 where  $\alpha$  is a factor that determines the update rate, and  $H_{i,j}$  is a homeostatic target  
 359 defined as the mean response product of the pair.

360

361 We also considered a variant of the model which included a 'fatigue' factor, which was  
 362 defined as:

$$363 \quad G_i^{t+1} = G_i^t + \beta(R_i^t/Rmax_i) \quad (\text{Eq 7})$$

364 where  $Rmax_i$  is the response of the neuron to its preferred grating at full contrast. The  
 365 response of each neuron,  $R_i$  as defined in Eq. 5, were then scaled by  $1-G_i$ , at each time  
 366 step. The initial value of  $G_i$  was 0, for all units.

367  
 368 For the model simulations without fatigue (Figures 6 and 7), we used the following  
 369 parameters:  $k$  was 3, producing a bandwidth (full width at half height) of  $\sim 40^\circ$ ;  $B$  was  
 370 0.1,  $\sigma$  was 0.35;  $\alpha$  was 0.005;  $H_{ij}$  was defined as the mean of the pre-adaptation  
 371 response product of the pair to gratings of all orientation presented at 36% contrast; the  
 372 initial normalization weights were 0.027; and the model was run for 200 time steps. For  
 373 the simulations with fatigue (Figure 7), the parameters were as above, except:  $B$  was  
 374 0.3;  $\alpha$  was 0.01,  $H_{ij}$  was defined with gratings at 50% contrast; and the model was run  
 375 for 1000 time steps. For fatigue, the parameter  $\beta$  was set to 0.015 and values of  $G > 0.55$   
 376 were set to 0.55.

377  
 378 *Code Availability:* All Matlab code and analysis will be made available upon reasonable  
 379 request to the corresponding author.

## 381 RESULTS

382 We recorded neurons in the superficial layers of V1 in anesthetized macaque monkeys,  
 383 using microelectrode arrays. Spatial receptive fields were located in the lower visual  
 384 field, at an eccentricity of 2-4 degrees. Recordings consisted of both well-isolated single  
 385 units (13% of cases) and small multi-unit clusters that passed inclusion criteria (see  
 386 Methods). Results for single- and multi-unit clusters were not distinguishable and are  
 387 reported together.

388  
 389 We first measured responses to a drifting sinusoidal grating (target), alone and when  
 390 paired with an overlapping, orthogonal grating (mask). These stimuli have been used  
 391 extensively in previous work to measure masking in visual cortex (e.g., Morrone et al.,

1982; Bonds, 1989; DeAngelis et al., 1992; Carandini et al., 1997b,1998; Freeman et al., 2002). As expected, the mask reduced responses to target stimuli, particularly those of low contrast, as shown for an example unit in Figure 2A. To quantify the strength of masking, we computed a masking index, for which a value of 0 indicates no masking and a value of 1 indicates complete suppression of responses to the target (see Methods). For the example unit of Figure 2A, the masking index before adaptation was 0.15 for a 6% contrast mask, and 0.49 for a 50% mask. Across units, the average masking indices before adaptation were  $0.21 \pm 0.01$  (6% mask),  $0.30 \pm 0.01$  (12% mask),  $0.38 \pm 0.02$  (25% mask) and  $0.58 \pm 0.01$  (50% mask).

<Figure 2: Example cells>

We then tested the effect of contingent adaptation by consistently presenting the mask and target grating together (Figure 1B,C). For the example unit, contingent adaptation increased the suppressive influence of the mask; for the 25% contrast mask, the masking index increased from 0.33 to 0.55 after adaptation (compare the light and dark shaded areas in Figure 2A, top vs bottom). Across the population, contingent adaptation caused a consistent increase in the masking index. For the 25% contrast mask, the index increased by  $0.21 \pm 0.02$ , or more than 50% (Figure 3A, green;  $p < 0.001$ ). With the exception of the lowest contrast mask, for which masking is weakest, contingent adaptation consistently strengthened the suppressive effect of the mask (Figure 3B, green;  $p < 0.001$  for 12%, 25% and 50% masks).

<Figure 3: Population results >

In stark contrast to the effects of contingent adaptation, asynchronous adaptation—interleaving the presentation of the target and mask—reduced masking. In the example unit of Figure 2B, the masking index for the 25% contrast mask was reduced from 0.39 before adaptation to 0 after adaptation. Across the population, the masking index for the 25% mask was reduced by  $0.32 \pm 0.04$ , or nearly 85% (Figure 3A, blue). Similar effects



were evident for masks of other contrasts (Figure 3B, blue;  $p < 0.001$  for 6%, 25%, and 50% masks,  $p = 0.04$  for the 12% mask).

As evident for the example cells of Figure 2, both contingent and asynchronous adaptation also reduced responsivity to all stimuli. We consider the influence of altered responsivity on our measurements of masking below.

We tested the orientation specificity of adaptation-induced changes in masking by making separate measurements of masking with test stimuli that were rotated  $45^\circ$  relative to the adapters. Contingent adaptation weakened masking for rotated test stimuli on average, except for the highest contrast masks (Figure 3C,D, green;  $p = 0.09$  for 6%,  $p = 0.02$  for 12%,  $p = 0.05$  for 25%, and  $p = 0.64$  for 50% masks). Contingent adaptation's effect on masking strength was significantly affected by test stimulus orientation ( $F(1,2096) = 58.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , ANOVA), with a significant interaction between mask contrast and stimulus orientation ( $F(3,2096) = 9.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , ANOVA). Asynchronous adaptation weakened masking for rotated test stimuli, particularly at higher mask contrasts (Figure 3C,D, blue,  $p = 0.23$  for 6%,  $p = 0.38$  for 12%, and  $p < 0.001$  for 25% and 50% masks). The degree to which masking was weakened depended on whether test stimuli were matched in orientation to the adapters ( $F(1,1236) = 16.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , ANOVA). There was no significant interaction between contrast and test stimulus orientation on the change in masking index ( $F(3,1236) = 1.03$ ,  $p = 0.38$ , ANOVA).

In summary, the suppression recruited by a mask can be strengthened by consistently pairing the mask with a target (contingent adaptation), or weakened by interleaving its presentation with the target (asynchronous adaptation). These effects were orientation-specific: when test and adapting stimuli had different orientations, we saw less adaptation-induced change in masking. The orientation specificity of adaptation-induced changes in masking was consistent with similar orientation specificity for adaptation effects on contrast sensitivity (Sengpiel and Banhoeffer, 2002; Crowder et al., 2006; Dhruv et al., 2011) and orientation tuning (Müller et al., 1999; Dragoi et al., 2000; Patterson et al., 2013), and suggests a cortical contribution.

*Dependence of adaptation effects on neuronal response properties*

In the preceding analyses, we focused on average changes in masking across our entire sample. We now ask whether adaptation's effect on masking can be predicted by the functional properties of V1 neurons: their phase sensitivity (i.e., whether they are simple vs. complex), their orientation preference, and the properties of masking before adaptation.

Previous work has shown that the effects of adaptation may depend on whether neurons are simple or complex (Giaschi et al., 1993; but see Ohzawa et al., 1985 and Crowder et al., 2006), and that masking may be stronger in simple cells (Bonds, 1989). More critically, sensitivity to grating phase may influence measurements of masking, when cells are sensitive to both grating components. We thus tested for a relationship between a cell's phase sensitivity (the logarithm of the F1/F0 ratio; Skottun et al., 1991) and masking, both before and after adaptation. We found little relationship between the cell's phase sensitivity and the masking index before contingent ( $r=0.11$ , Spearman correlation;  $p=0.05$ ) or asynchronous ( $r=0.04$ ,  $p=0.53$ ) adaptation in contrast to Bonds (1989). We also found no relationship between phase sensitivity and the change in masking after either contingent ( $r=-0.03$ ,  $p=0.48$ ) or asynchronous adaptation ( $r=0.06$ ,  $p=0.39$ ; Figure 4A). In cells with weak phase sensitivity ( $F0>F1$ ), masking was stronger after contingent adaptation (increased by  $0.24\pm0.03$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $n=217$ ), and weaker after asynchronous adaptation (decreased by  $0.38\pm0.03$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $n=140$ ). In cells with strong phase sensitivity ( $F1>F0$ ), masking was also stronger after contingent adaptation (increased by  $0.13\pm0.05$ ,  $p=0.02$ ,  $n=100$ ) and weaker after asynchronous adaptation (decreased by  $0.16\pm0.09$ ,  $p=0.07$ ,  $n=53$ ), though the latter effect was not statistically significant due likely to a smaller number of cells.

<Figure 4: Dependence of masking change on neuronal properties>

Previous studies have found that the effects of adaptation on V1 tuning depend on the relationship between the adapter and a neuron's stimulus preference (e.g., Dragoi et al., 2000; Crowder et al., 2006; Dhruv et al., 2011; Wissig and Kohn, 2012; Benucci et al.,

2013; Patterson et al., 2013). To assess whether adaptation-induced changes in masking depended on neuronal orientation preference, we recorded additional data in which we presented a reduced ensemble of test and mask gratings, interleaved with gratings of different orientations (see Methods).

We found that changes in masking were largely independent of neuronal orientation preference (Figure 4B). After contingent adaptation, masking was strengthened in cells whose preference was within  $22.5^\circ$  of either component of the plaid adapter (defined as  $0^\circ$  and  $90^\circ$ , thin black lines in Figure 4B), as well as in cells preferring orientations away from the plaid components (preferences offset by more than  $22.5^\circ$ ). For the 50% mask, masking increased by  $0.12 \pm 0.05$  ( $p=0.007$ ,  $n=53$ ) and  $0.31 \pm 0.06$  ( $p<0.001$ ,  $n=62$ ), respectively ( $p=0.02$  for the comparison). Similarly, asynchronous adaptation led to weaker masking in cells with aligned ( $-0.18 \pm 0.07$ ,  $p=0.03$ ,  $n=47$ ) and offset preferences ( $-0.22 \pm 0.07$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $n=65$ ;  $p=0.69$  for the comparison). We conclude that adaptation-induced changes in masking depend little, if at all, on neuronal orientation preference.

Our finding that changes in masking are evident in neurons with widely different preferences stands in contrast to the strong dependence of adaptation-induced changes in V1 tuning on preference, reported in previous studies. This divergence in outcome could reflect different specificity of adaptation-induced changes in masking and tuning. Alternatively, the different outcomes could arise because our masking experiments involved adapting with two orthogonal gratings, instead of single gratings as in previous work (Dragoi et al., 2000; Crowder et al., 2006; Dhruv et al., 2011; Wissig and Kohn, 2012; Patterson et al., 2013). To distinguish between these possibilities, we measured how changes in tuning gain depend on neuronal preference (see Methods), for contingent and asynchronous adapters. Gain was slightly weakened after contingent adaptation (Figure 4C, green), but this effect was indistinguishable in cells with well-aligned (geometric mean ratio of 0.92,  $p=0.003$ ) and offset preferences (0.95,  $p=0.009$ ;  $p=0.97$  for comparison between groups). Similarly, asynchronous adaptation caused a decrease in tuning gain which was similar in cells with aligned and offset preferences (Figure 4C, blue; 0.61,  $p<0.001$  vs 0.64,  $p<0.001$ ;  $p=0.21$  for comparison between

groups). Thus, changes in tuning curve gain are also broadly shared across neurons with different preferences.

Finally, we assessed whether the change in masking with adaptation depended on the strength of masking observed before adaptation. Specifically, we sought to determine whether the strengthening of masking after contingent adaptation was driven by cases in which the cross-oriented mask was facilitatory rather than suppressive (i.e., the pre-adaptation masking index less than 0). Carandini et al. (1998) reported that adaptation with plaids caused a specific reduction in V1 responsivity to plaids—which could contribute to an apparent increase in masking. The reduction in plaid responsivity in that study was particularly prevalent in neurons whose responses to targets were enhanced by the co-presentation of a mask (i.e., those that showed cross-orientation facilitation). In our data, masks were rarely facilitatory (5-15% of cases, depending on mask contrast). Further, we found that contingent adaptation strengthened masking, even after excluding units showing cross-orientation facilitation in control conditions (increase of  $0.10 \pm 0.02$ ,  $0.17 \pm 0.02$ , and  $0.05 \pm 0.02$  for masks of 12, 25, and 50% contrast, respectively;  $p < 0.02$  for all cases; and decrease in masking of  $0.08 \pm 0.02$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for 6% masks). We conclude that the strengthening of masking after contingent adaptation cannot be attributed to a loss of cross-orientation facilitation, as in Carandini et al. (1998).

#### *Controlling for adaptation-induced changes in responsivity*

A notable consequence of both contingent and asynchronous adaptation is reduced neuronal responsivity. Since both adapters reduced responsivity, their opposite effects on masking cannot be trivially explained by altered responsivity. Additionally, adaptation's effect on responsivity (defined as the change in response to the high-contrast target after adaptation) was not related to the change in masking after contingent adaptation (Figure 5A; green, Spearman correlation of -0.06,  $p = 0.26$ ), and only weakly related to the change in masking after asynchronous adaptation (blue,  $r = 0.18$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ).

546 <Figure 5: Rate adaptation vs masking + rate match analysis>

547

548 The reduced responsivity after adaptation may nevertheless complicate inferences  
549 about how masking is altered by adaptation. For instance, adaptation might weaken  
550 masking because it fatigues the normalization pool rather than because it alters the  
551 interaction between the neuron and its normalization pool. We thus sought to determine  
552 how adaptation altered masking for stimuli of equal potency before and after adaptation.

553

554 To do so, we measured suppression through response summation. Specifically, we  
555 applied a ‘rate-matched’ suppression index, defined as:

$$SI = 1 - \frac{R_{TM}}{R_T + R_M}$$

556 where  $R_{TM}$  is the response to the full contrast plaid and  $R_T$  and  $R_M$  are the responses to  
557 the component gratings presented in isolation (Carandini et al., 1997b; Wissig and  
558 Kohn, 2012; Ruff et al., 2016). SI values near 0 indicate near-linear summation of  
559 responses to the component gratings (consistent with weak normalization); values near  
560 1 indicate the response to the plaid is much weaker than expected from the responses  
561 to the component gratings (consistent with strong normalization).

562

563 We calculated the SI after adaptation using responses to the 50% contrast mask, the  
564 50% contrast target, and the plaid made by their combination. We compared this SI to  
565 one measured before adaptation, obtained from target and mask gratings that  
566 generated responses equal to those observed for the 50% contrast gratings after  
567 adaptation (i.e., matched for response strength rather than for contrast; Figure 5B).  
568 Because the set of measured pre-adaptation responses rarely contained a perfect  
569 match to the post-adaptation responses, we fitted the pre-adaptation responses to a  
570 descriptive model and used the model to identify the necessary target and mask  
571 contrasts (see Methods). The model also allowed us to estimate responses to plaid  
572 stimuli composed of these rate-matched target and mask gratings. Thus, by comparing

the SI before and after adaptation we could test if adaptation alters response summation (i.e., normalization), even for component gratings of matched potency.

Contingent adaptation caused the rate-matched SI to increase by  $0.15 \pm 0.03$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), from an initial value of  $0.06 \pm 0.03$ , a more than three-fold increase (Figure 5C, green;  $n=58$  units that passed selection criteria, see Methods). This increase is consistent with a substantial strengthening of normalization. Asynchronous adaptation, conversely, caused the SI to decrease by  $0.36 \pm 0.08$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) from an initial value of  $-0.13 \pm 0.03$ , consistent with substantial weakening of normalization (Figure 5C, blue,  $n=51$  units). Note that pre-adaptation SI values were different for contingent and asynchronous adapters ( $0.06$  vs  $-0.13$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This is because asynchronous adaptation reduced responsivity more than contingent adaptation, so that the rate-matched pre-adaptation responses were from lower contrasts for asynchronous adaptation. As masking is weaker for low contrast stimuli, the pre-adaptation SI was lower in the asynchronous adaptation condition.

For responses to rotated test stimuli, contingent adaptation caused no significant change in SI (Figure 5D, green;  $-0.04 \pm 0.03$  vs.  $0.01 \pm 0.04$ ;  $p=0.4$ ). Asynchronous adaptation caused a nearly two-fold reduction in SI (Figure 5D, blue; from  $-0.21 \pm 0.07$  to  $-0.43 \pm 0.08$ ;  $p=0.003$ ), consistent with a substantial weakening of normalization.

In summary, contingent adaptation caused responses to plaids to be even weaker than expected from the linear sum of the component gratings, consistent with stronger normalization; asynchronous adaptation, instead, caused summation to become more linear, or even more supralinear, consistent with weaker normalization. Thus, adaptation-induced changes in response summation are evident even for stimuli that are equally potent before and after adaptation.

#### *Modeling adaptation's effect on normalization strength*

Westrick et al. (2016) proposed a specific learning rule for updating normalization signals based on stimulus history. Their model posits that (1) the normalization signal

received by a target neuron arises from the response of a neuronal population, with the response of each neuron in the pool receiving a distinct 'weight'; (2) the weights are strengthened between the target neuron and the pool neurons that are consistently co-activated, and weakened between those that are driven asynchronously (Figure 6A). More precisely, the pairwise weight increases when the product of two neurons' responses is greater than their homeostatic target, defined as their expected average pairwise response (see Methods). Westrick et al. (2016) showed that the resultant changes in normalization could capture a range of adaptation effects on tuning and responsivity (Benucci et al., 2013). We therefore sought to determine whether this model could also predict the adaptation-induced changes in masking that we observed.

<Figure 6: Model intuition>

The behavior of the model for contingent and asynchronous adaptation is illustrated in Figure 6. During contingent adaptation, neurons that prefer orientations near  $0^\circ$  and  $90^\circ$ , the orientations of the target and mask, will be strongly co-activated (Figure 6C, arrow, lighter colors indicate stronger response products). Because the response product of these neurons is larger than typical—that is, larger than their homeostatic target (Figure 6D, arrow)—the normalization weights for these neurons will be strengthened (Figure 6E, arrow, red indicates strengthening). Now consider neurons that prefer orientations near  $45^\circ$ . The contingent adapter provides little drive to these neurons (Figure 6C, left, white circle), so their response products are smaller than their homeostatic target. Consequently, the normalization weights for these neurons weaken after contingent adaptation (Figure 6E, blue). Note that the manner in which the normalization weights change after adaptation is not equivalent to that predicted by the initial response product. The change depends also on the homeostatic target; further, as the normalization weights adjust, the neurons' responses evolve as well.

The effect of asynchronous adaptation can be understood similarly. These adapters provide strong drive to neurons preferring orientations near  $0$  and  $90^\circ$ , but the two sets of neurons are active at different phases of the adapter (Figure 6G). Thus, normalization



635 weights are strengthened for pairs responding to either 0 or 90° orientations, but  
 636 weakened between 0-90° pairs (Figure 6I).

637

638 Both contingent and asynchronous adaptation strengthen some normalization weights  
 639 and weaken others, but the pattern of weight changes across the population of units  
 640 differs between adapters, resulting in different effects on masking. For a neuron whose  
 641 preference is matched to the target (0°), masking is strengthened after contingent  
 642 adaptation (Figure 6F), compared to the masking evident before adaptation (Figure 6B).  
 643 There is more masking because the weights between neurons preferring 0° (the target)  
 644 and 90° are strengthened, resulting in greater suppression. After asynchronous  
 645 adaptation, these same weights are weakened, resulting in less masking (Figure 6J). In  
 646 addition, asynchronous adaptation strengthens weights between neurons whose  
 647 preferences are near 0°, resulting in weaker responses to the target itself (Figure 6J).  
 648 Note that this change in responsivity—also evident in our neurophysiological data—  
 649 arises solely from altered normalization, as the model contains no other mechanism for  
 650 adjusting to prolonged sensory input.

651

652 <Figure 7: Model results>

653

654 Across the population of units, the model predicts that contingent adaptation should  
 655 strengthen masking (Figure 7A, green, dashed line), particularly for higher mask  
 656 contrasts, as in the neuronal data. Asynchronous adaptation leads to weakened  
 657 masking (Figure 7A, blue, dashed line). However, this instantiation of the model  
 658 underestimates the magnitude of altered masking in the data. Further, although  
 659 changes in masking in the model depend on whether the test stimuli are matched to the  
 660 adapter (compare dashed lines in Figure 7A and Figure 7B, which illustrates changes in  
 661 masking for test stimuli offset by 45° from the adapter), the predicted effects are  
 662 different from those we observed. Finally, the model predicts that the degree to which  
 663 masking is altered by adaptation depends strongly on neuronal preference (dashed  
 664 lines in Figure 7C,D), which was not the case in our data.

665

666 The behavior of the model depends critically on several parameters, including the tuning  
 667 widths of the units (which may or may not be equivalent to V1 tuning, depending on the  
 668 source of normalization), the time scale of the model, the contrast saturation of the  
 669 model neurons, and the training contrast, which determines the homeostatic response  
 670 target for each pair. For many parameter settings that produced stronger changes in  
 671 normalization, the model tends to predict unrealistic response facilitation in units whose  
 672 normalization signals are weakened. We therefore considered a simple extension to the  
 673 model to mitigate this behavior (see Methods): a ‘fatigue’ mechanism that reduces  
 674 responsivity in proportion to recent activity levels, as described in previous  
 675 neurophysiological studies (Schwindt et al., 1988; Sanchez-Vives, 2000a, 2000b; see  
 676 Carandini and Ferster, 1997 for related work). With this mechanism, the model was able  
 677 to produce changes in masking similar to those in our data (Figure 7A, solid lines),  
 678 including the dependence on test stimulus orientation (Figure 7B, solid lines), with  
 679 limited response facilitation for moderate contrast stimuli. However, this model still  
 680 incorrectly predicts that changes in masking depend on neuronal preference (Figure  
 681 7C,D; solid lines).

682  
 683 In summary, a simple learning rule for updating normalization weights—developed to  
 684 account for an entirely distinct set of adaptation phenomena—qualitatively matched  
 685 many of our key physiological observations: opposite changes in masking after  
 686 contingent and asynchronous adaptation; and a dependence of the changes in masking  
 687 on stimulus contrast and the relative orientation of the adapters and test stimuli; and  
 688 stronger loss of responsivity after asynchronous than contingent adaptation;. An  
 689 unresolved mismatch with the data is the model’s prediction that changes in masking  
 690 depend strongly on neuronal preference. One explanation for this discrepancy is that  
 691 the V1 neurons with offset preferences for which we measured masking all had  
 692 appreciable responses to the target grating—a requirement for measured masking. As a  
 693 result, these cells were well driven by the adapter and might be predicted to show  
 694 stronger masking after adaptation. In the model, masking can be measured for  
 695 arbitrarily small responses; thus, the change in masking for units with offset preferences  
 696 includes poorly driven units. We note that the model might be made to better fit our data

697 (e.g., through a more exhaustive search of parameters), but such a data-fitting exercise  
 698 would only be meaningful if it were constrained by a broader set of adaptation  
 699 phenomena, including those used to develop the original model.

700

## 701 **DISCUSSION**

702 We found that masking is enhanced when a mask and target grating are consistently  
 703 paired, but weakened when those stimuli are presented asynchronously. Changes in  
 704 masking depend on the orientation of the stimulus relative to the orientation of the  
 705 adapter, but are shared broadly across the population, independent of neuronal  
 706 preference. Altered masking cannot be attributed to weaker stimulus potency after  
 707 adaptation, or to changes in neuronal responsivity. Our results thus show that a  
 708 paradigmatic form of normalization in visual cortex can be either strengthened or  
 709 weakened, depending on the temporal contingencies between different visual inputs.

710

### 711 *Relation to previous work*

712 Previous reports have provided conflicting evidence for adaptation's effect on masking.  
 713 Freeman et al. (2002) found no change in masking in cat V1 after adaptation with the  
 714 mask grating. Li et al. (2005) found that dichoptic but not monoptic masking was  
 715 reduced by adaptation. The authors concluded that there are two mechanisms of  
 716 masking: one subcortical, monocular, and unadaptable; the other cortical, binocular,  
 717 and adaptable. It is unclear why the cortical mechanism was not evident in their  
 718 monocular adaptation experiments, but the adaptable mechanism of masking they  
 719 identified might underlie the weakened masking we observe after asynchronous  
 720 adaptation. In related work, Dhruv et al. (2011) measured the effects of adaptation in  
 721 macaque V1. After adaptation with orthogonally-oriented gratings, responses to high-  
 722 contrast preferred stimuli were often elevated. By fitting a descriptive model to their  
 723 data, the authors inferred that this facilitation was due to weakened normalization after  
 724 adaptation, consistent with our measurements with asynchronous adapters. Previous  
 725 evidence that adaptation can strengthen masking is scant. In a brief report, Carandini et  
 726 al. (1998) measured the effect of adapting to plaids or gratings in 8 cat V1 cells. They  
 727 showed that adaptation altered cross-orientation interactions in 5 of these cells,

including weakening of cross-orientation facilitation and strengthening of suppression. These observations are consistent with our more extensive and systematic observations, although we found little role for reduced cross-orientation facilitation in our results.

Our finding that masking can be strongly influenced by adaptation is consistent with recent reports that surround suppression—another form of normalization (Heeger, 1992; Cavanaugh et al., 2002; Carandini and Heeger, 2012; Coen-Cagli et al., 2012, 2015)—can be altered by adaptation (Webb et al., 2005; Camp et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2014). Specifically, these studies showed that adaptation with an annular grating, a form of asynchronous adaptation in which the surround but not the center receives visual input, leads to weaker suppression. However, it has also been shown that adapting with large gratings—which should provide ‘contingent’ co-activation of the receptive field and its surround—can lead to response facilitation (Wissig and Kohn, 2012; Patterson et al., 2013, 2014), implying weaker suppression. This may indicate that there are distinct rules by which suppressive signals within the receptive field and from the surround are updated by adaptation, consistent with their having distinct underlying mechanisms (Sengpiel et al., 1998). Alternatively, adaptation with large gratings may potentiate the suppression of normalization signals within the receptive field by the surround (i.e., a stronger suppression of suppression, leading to facilitation; Trott and Born, 2015).

Stronger masking was evident after the contingent display of the mask and target. Numerous perceptual studies have also reported contingent adaptation effects. Perhaps the most well-known is the ‘McCollough effect’ in which adaptation to colored, oriented gratings induces an orientation-dependent color aftereffect (McCollough, 1965; see also Hepler, 1968; Held and Shattuck, 1971; Favreau et al., 1972; Lovegrove and Over, 1972). The large number of possible stimulus contingencies makes it unlikely that these perceptual effects arise from the fatigue of cells selective for each pairing. Instead, they could be explained by altered interactions between neurons selective for different stimulus features (Barlow and Földiák, 1989; Barlow, 1990).

<Figure 8: Recovery>

759

760 The attribution of contingent perceptual aftereffects to altered neuronal interactions is  
 761 similar in spirit to the altered normalization suggested by our masking experiments,  
 762 since normalization is likely a network phenomenon. However, it is unlikely our  
 763 observations underlie the types of perceptual contingent aftereffects cited above. First,  
 764 most of the perceptual effects persist for many hours, even after relatively brief (tens of  
 765 seconds) adaptation (McCollough, 1965; Vul et al., 2008). The changes in masking we  
 766 observe are more transient, as shown in Figure 8: the effects of contingent (green) and  
 767 asynchronous (blue) adaptation entirely dissipated after a 10-15 minute recovery period.  
 768 Second, the perceptual experiments involve a single adapter (consisting of paired  
 769 stimuli) which induces distinct aftereffects depending on the test stimulus. We show,  
 770 instead, distinct changes in masking with different adapters using a single ensemble of  
 771 test stimuli.

772

773 Although our results are unlikely to underlie classic contingent aftereffects, our findings  
 774 do have a direct perceptual correlate in human observers: contingent adaptation leads  
 775 to greater perceptual masking, whereas asynchronous adaptation leads to weaker  
 776 masking (Yiltiz et al., 2018; see also Foley and Chen, 1997).

777

#### 778 *Mechanisms*

779 The biophysical and circuit mechanisms underlying masking within the RF (i.e., cross-  
 780 orientation suppression) are not fully understood. Some have suggested that masking  
 781 involves depression of thalamocortical synapses (Carandini et al., 2002; Freeman et al.,  
 782 2002; but see Li et al., 2006). Others have suggested that masking arises from  
 783 rectification and weak contrast saturation in LGN responses (Li et al., 2006), perhaps  
 784 amplified by a non-linear input-output transformation in cortex (Priebe and Ferster,  
 785 2006).

786

787 The changes in masking we observe during adaptation are difficult to reconcile with any  
 788 of these proposed mechanisms. Both contingent and asynchronous adapters should  
 789 recruit robust responses in the LGN (Priebe and Ferster, 2006) and thus depress

790 thalamocortical synapses. In this adapted state, presenting a target and mask together  
 791 would likely produce little additional depression (Boudreau and Ferster, 2005; Reig et  
 792 al., 2006). Thus, synaptic-depression models may predict weaker masking after  
 793 adaptation but cannot account for stronger masking after contingent adaptation. If,  
 794 instead, cortical masking is largely inherited from the LGN, our results would require  
 795 that geniculate neurons adapt differently to contingent and asynchronous adapters.  
 796 However, neurons in cat and monkey LGN adapt weakly (Movshon and Lennie, 1979;  
 797 Ohzawa et al., 1985; Nelson, 1991; Sanchez-Vives et al., 2000a; but see Shou et al.,  
 798 1996 and Duong and Freeman, 2007) except when driven by stimuli of much higher  
 799 temporal frequency than those we used (Solomon et al., 2004). In addition, adaptation  
 800 effects in the LGN show no evidence of the orientation specificity we observe for altered  
 801 masking (Solomon et al., 2004).

802  
 803 Our results are qualitatively consistent with a recently-proposed rule for updating  
 804 normalization weights based on stimulus history (Westrick et al., 2016; see also related  
 805 work by Hosoya et al., 2005). The model correctly predicts that masking is strengthened  
 806 by contingent adaptation and weakened by asynchronous adaptation. It captures these  
 807 effects solely through modulating the normalization weights between units with different  
 808 tuning, based on their degree of co-activation during adaptation. Because the model's  
 809 behavior only depends on the pattern of response co-activation, it could also be used to  
 810 predict changes in normalization for more complex stimuli (e.g., natural scenes), if  
 811 based on receptive field models that accurately capture responses to those stimuli.

812  
 813 Although the mechanisms responsible for masking remain unclear, our finding that  
 814 changes in masking depend on the temporal relationship between adapters suggests a  
 815 Hebbian-like mechanism is responsible for their updating (Westrick et al., 2016). There  
 816 is, of course, extensive evidence for Hebbian plasticity of synaptic strength, on a range  
 817 of time scales (Abbott and Regehr, 2004; Abbott and Nelson, 2000). Masking may thus  
 818 be modified by the synaptic plasticity between target neurons and those neurons  
 819 providing suppressive input. This synaptic plasticity could involve changes in inhibitory

820 synapses, or a more complex rebalancing of excitatory and inhibitory input (Sato et al.,  
821 2016; Nassi et al., 2015; Rubin et al., 2015).

822

823 We note that the masking we measured was driven primarily by suppressive signals  
824 within the RF, because we used small stimuli (1.5° diameter) centered on the aggregate  
825 RF of the recorded units. However, the size of our stimuli was slightly larger than the  
826 average spatial RF of V1 neurons at the targeted eccentricity (Cavanaugh et al., 2002).  
827 As a result, our stimuli may have recruited some surround suppression. However, as  
828 noted above, surround signals are modified by adaptation in a manner seemingly  
829 distinct from the effects we report here. Thus, it is unlikely that the adaptation-induced  
830 changes in masking involved altered suppression from the RF surround.

831

### 832 *Implications*

833 Our results have several important implications for our understanding of normalization  
834 and of adaptation.

835

836 Although initially developed to account for non-linear response properties of V1  
837 neurons, normalization has now been shown to be useful for explaining a broad set of  
838 phenomena (Carandini and Heeger, 2012). Across these contexts, normalization is  
839 often portrayed as a largely static computation, although recent work has shown that  
840 attention may modulate normalization signals dynamically (Lee and Maunsell, 2009;  
841 Reynolds and Heeger, 2009). Our results, and those on adaptation effects in the  
842 surround, indicate that normalization can also be modulated dynamically based on  
843 recent sensory input (Solomon and Kohn, 2014). In so far as our results are consistent  
844 with the updating rule of Westrick et al. (2016), our results also provide an indication as  
845 to how the set-point of normalization signals may be calibrated to match the dominant  
846 statistics of the sensory environment.

847

848 Normalization is thought to be critical for a number of inter-related cortical functions,  
849 including improving representational efficiency (Schwartz and Simoncelli, 2001; Coen-  
850 Cagli et al., 2012); performing marginalization, a basic computation in probabilistic



851 inference (Beck et al., 2011); implementing predictive coding (Spratling, 2010;  
 852 Lochmann et al., 2012); and determining stimulus salience (Itti and Koch, 2000).  
 853 Because normalization signals are strongly shaped by adaptation, a primary purpose of  
 854 adaptation effects may be to modulate these computations. For instance, changes in  
 855 neuronal tuning and responsivity may maintain or improve representational efficiency  
 856 (Barlow and Földiák, 1989; Barlow, 1990; Wainwright et al., 2002) or highlight novel  
 857 features of the environment (Hosoya et al., 2005; Solomon and Kohn, 2014). Alternative  
 858 hypotheses of the functional benefits of adaptation would need to account for the strong  
 859 modulation of normalization that occurs with adaptation.

860  
 861 Our finding that the updating of normalization-based suppressive signals is sensitive to  
 862 temporal contingencies between visual inputs offers cortical networks the ability to  
 863 adjust not only to the persistence or frequency of occurrence of individual stimuli, but  
 864 also to the relationships among stimuli. Neurons in higher visual cortex are known to  
 865 become sensitive to temporal (sequential) pairings of stimuli through learning that  
 866 occurs over weeks (Meyer and Olson, 2011). Our results show that sensitivity to  
 867 temporal relationships among stimuli can emerge after much briefer exposures, even in  
 868 the earliest stages of cortical visual processing.

869  
 870 Finally, our findings lend credence to frameworks in which adaptation effects arise, in  
 871 part, from altered normalization (Heeger, 1992; Wainwright et al., 2002; Lochmann et  
 872 al., 2012; Solomon and Kohn, 2014; Snow et al., 2016; Westrick et al., 2016). While  
 873 such frameworks have been shown to account for a broad set of adaptation  
 874 phenomena, their key assumption—that adaptation alters normalization—has received  
 875 limited experimental support, except for demonstrations that surround suppression can  
 876 be weakened by adaptation. Our finding that normalization can be robustly  
 877 strengthened or weakened opens the door to the development of a normalization-based  
 878 framework for understanding adaptation. Such a framework might be able to predict  
 879 effects for a much broader set of adaptation paradigms than usually considered (e.g.,  
 880 natural scenes, natural viewing), as well as offering new mechanistic, network-based  
 881 explanations for how cortex adjusts to current sensory demands.

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## FIGURE LEGENDS

**Figure 1.** Stimulus protocol. **(A)** The ensemble of test stimuli ("T"). **(B)** The temporal structure and form of the contingent and asynchronous adapters ("A"). **(C)** The temporal structure of the experiment, which involved measuring responses before adaptation, adapting, and then measuring responses using a top-up/test paradigm.

**Figure 2.** Example neurons **(A)** Example unit for contingent adaptation. (Top) Contrast-response functions for target stimuli presented in isolation or with masks of different contrasts (indicated by symbols with different shades of gray). Responses are measured relative to the response evoked by each mask. Fill indicates the area-under-the-curve, used to calculate the masking index. Position of the symbols along the abscissa have been jittered slightly to improve visibility. (Bottom) Responses of the same cell after contingent adaptation. **(B)** Example unit for asynchronous adaptation, following the conventions of **(A)**. The error bars show 1 SEM.

**Figure 3.** Population summary. **(A)** Change in masking index for the 25% contrast mask (post-adaptation values minus pre-adaptation values) when test stimuli are matched in orientation to the adapter. Data for contingent adaptation are shown in green; for asynchronous adaptation, in blue. Values larger than zero indicate stronger masking; less than zero indicates weaker masking. Arrowheads indicate mean of the distributions. **(B)** Mean change in masking index after contingent (green) or asynchronous (blue) adaptation, as a function of mask contrast. **(C,D)** Effects of contingent and asynchronous adaptation on test stimuli whose orientation is rotated by 45° from the adapter, following the conventions of **(A,B)**. The error bars show 1 SEM.

**Figure 4.** Dependence of changes in masking on neuronal properties. **(A)** Relationship between adaptation-induced changes in masking index and phase sensitivity, as measured by the F1/F0 response ratio. Each dot represents effects for 25% contrast masks for one unit. **(B)** Relationship between adaptation-induced changes in masking index and each neuron's orientation preference, where 0° and 90° indicate

preferences aligned with the component gratings (indicated by vertical thin black lines).  
 (C) Relationship between adaptation induced changes in tuning gain and each neuron's  
 orientation preference, following the conventions of (B).

**Figure 5.** Controlling for rate adaptation. (A) The relationship between the change in  
 masking index and responsivity change, measured as the ratio of response to the high  
 contrast target after vs. before adaptation. Masking was measured using 25% contrast  
 masks. Each dot indicates one unit. (B) Method for calculating rate-matched  
 suppression index (SI). Filled symbols in the right panel indicate the measured  
 responses to the 50% contrast target (black), the 50% contrast mask (cyan), and the  
 plaid formed by their combination (yellow). Filled symbols in the left panel indicate the  
 target and mask contrasts that evoked matched responses (indicated by dashed  
 horizontal lines), and the plaid formed by their combination. (C) Histogram of the  
 change in rate-matched SI after contingent (green) and asynchronous (blue) adaptation.  
 Arrowheads indicate distribution mean. (D) Histogram of the change in rate-matched SI  
 for test stimuli whose orientation was rotated by 45° from the adapters. Conventions as  
 in (C).

**Figure 6.** Hebbian normalization model. (A) Schematic of the normalization model  
 and the learning rule (see Westrick et al., 2016). The normalization signal received by  
 each neuron arises from the weighted responses of other neurons in the population.  
 The weights between neurons that are consistently co-activated (white triangles) are  
 strengthened (red dots), whereas the weights are weakened between neurons that are  
 driven asynchronously (blue dots). (B) Simulated contrast-response function before  
 adaptation to the target alone (light gray) and the target presented with a 50% mask  
 (dark gray) for a neuron preferring the orientation of the target grating. (C) Response  
 products to the plaid contingent adapter. Lighter color indicates stronger response  
 products. Arrow indicates neuron-pair preferring 0 and 90°. Circle indicates neuron-pair  
 preferring 45°. (D) The homeostatic target defined as the average response products to  
 a uniform distribution of oriented gratings. Markers indicate the same neuron pairs as C.  
 (E) Change in normalization weights after contingent adaptation. Markers indicate the

same pairs as **C**. (**F**) Contrast response function after contingent adaptation in the same convention as **B**. (**G-J**) Same conventions as **C-F** after asynchronous adaptation.

**Figure 7.** Model predictions for changes in masking after contingent or asynchronous adaptation. (**A**) (Left) Changes in masking index in simulated neurons, as a function of mask contrast, after contingent (green) and asynchronous (blue) adaptation for test stimuli matched in orientation to the adapters. Dotted lines indicate mean of simulated population of model neurons, averaged across all orientation preferences. Solid lines indicate mean of simulated population of neurons from the extended model (i.e., with a fatigue mechanism). Shading indicates standard deviation across model neurons with different orientation preferences. (**B**) Same as **A** for test stimuli offset in orientation from the adapters. Dashed curve for asynchronous adaptation has been scaled slightly for visualization. (**C**) Change in masking index for the 50% contrast mask, as a function of model unit orientation preference, for test stimuli matched in orientation to the adapter. (**D**) Same as **C** for test stimuli offset in orientation from the adapters. Dashed curve for asynchronous adaptation has been scaled slightly for visualization.

**Figure 8.** Recovery from adaptation. The average masking index for the 25% contrast mask before adaptation, after contingent (green) or asynchronous (blue) adaptation, and 10-15 minutes later, after the continuous presentation of a gray screen. Adaptation-induced changes in masking dissipated entirely during the recovery period; in fact, they often showed a slight rebound effect, with masking in the recovery period slightly weaker (stronger) than the pre-adaptation measurements for contingent (asynchronous) adaptation. The error bars show 1 SEM. Contingent and asynchronous lines were separated by which adaptation paradigm was recorded first (both were always run back-to-back). Units shown are a subset of the full data set, representing neurons whose isolation was stable throughout the recovery period.

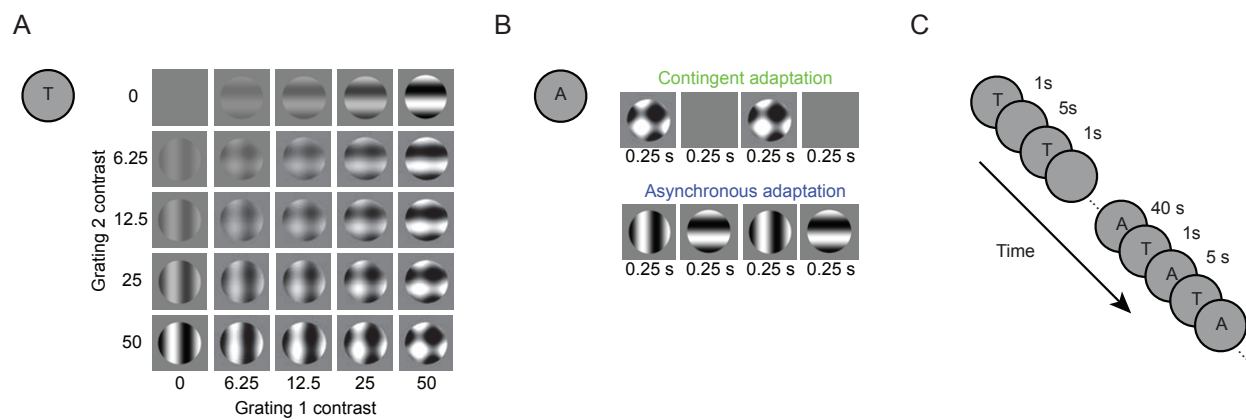


Figure 1

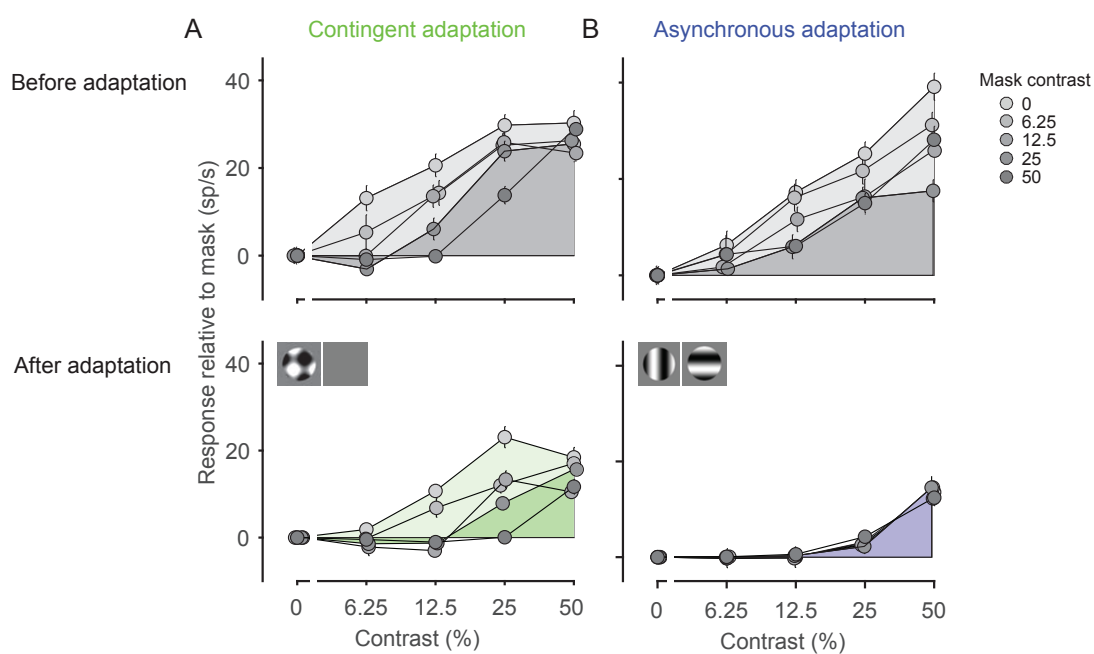


Figure 2



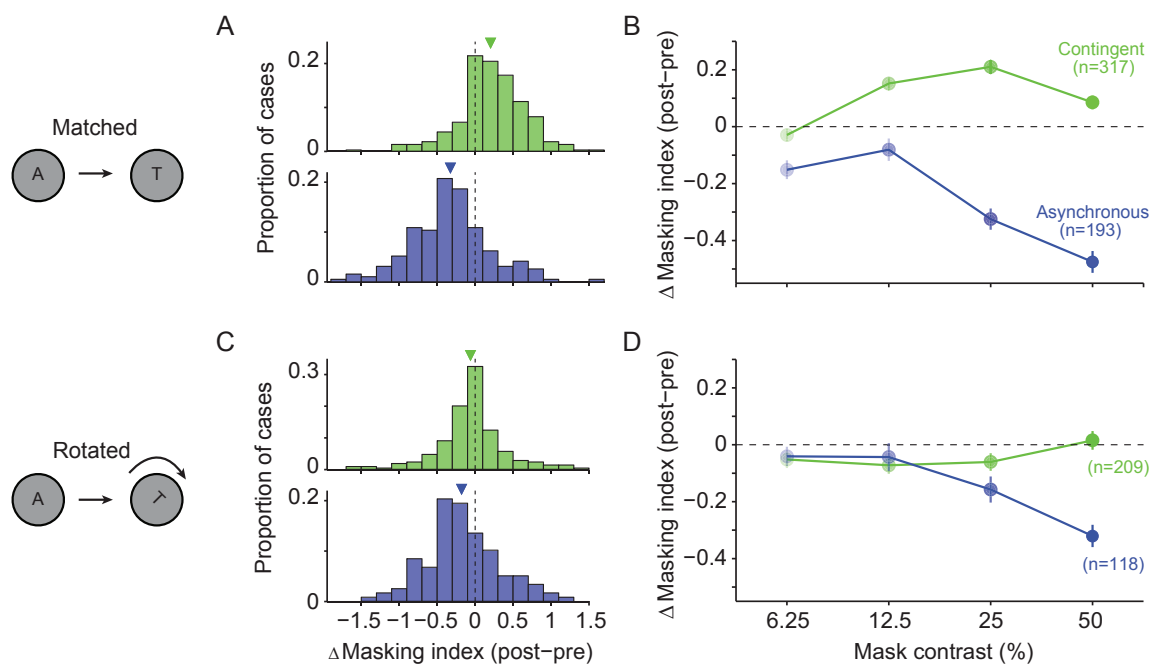


Figure 3

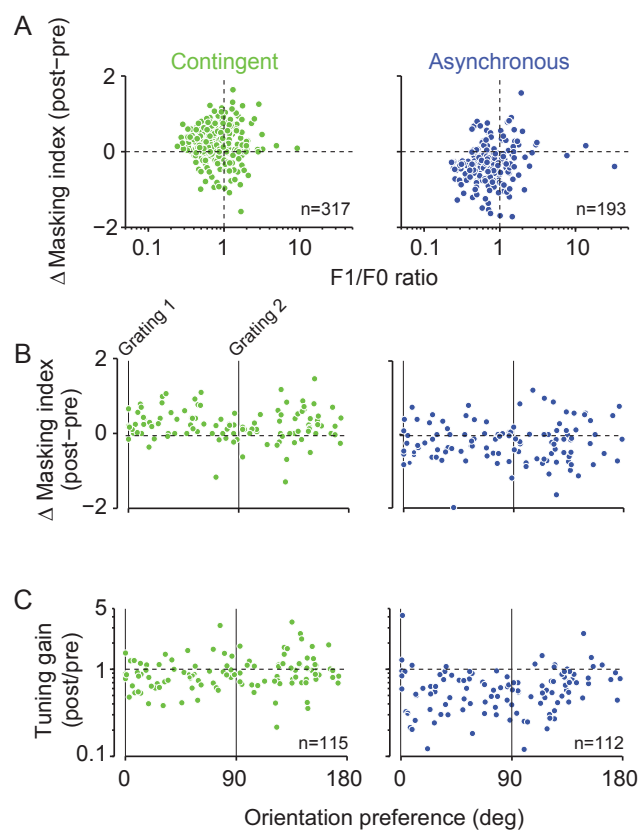


Figure 4

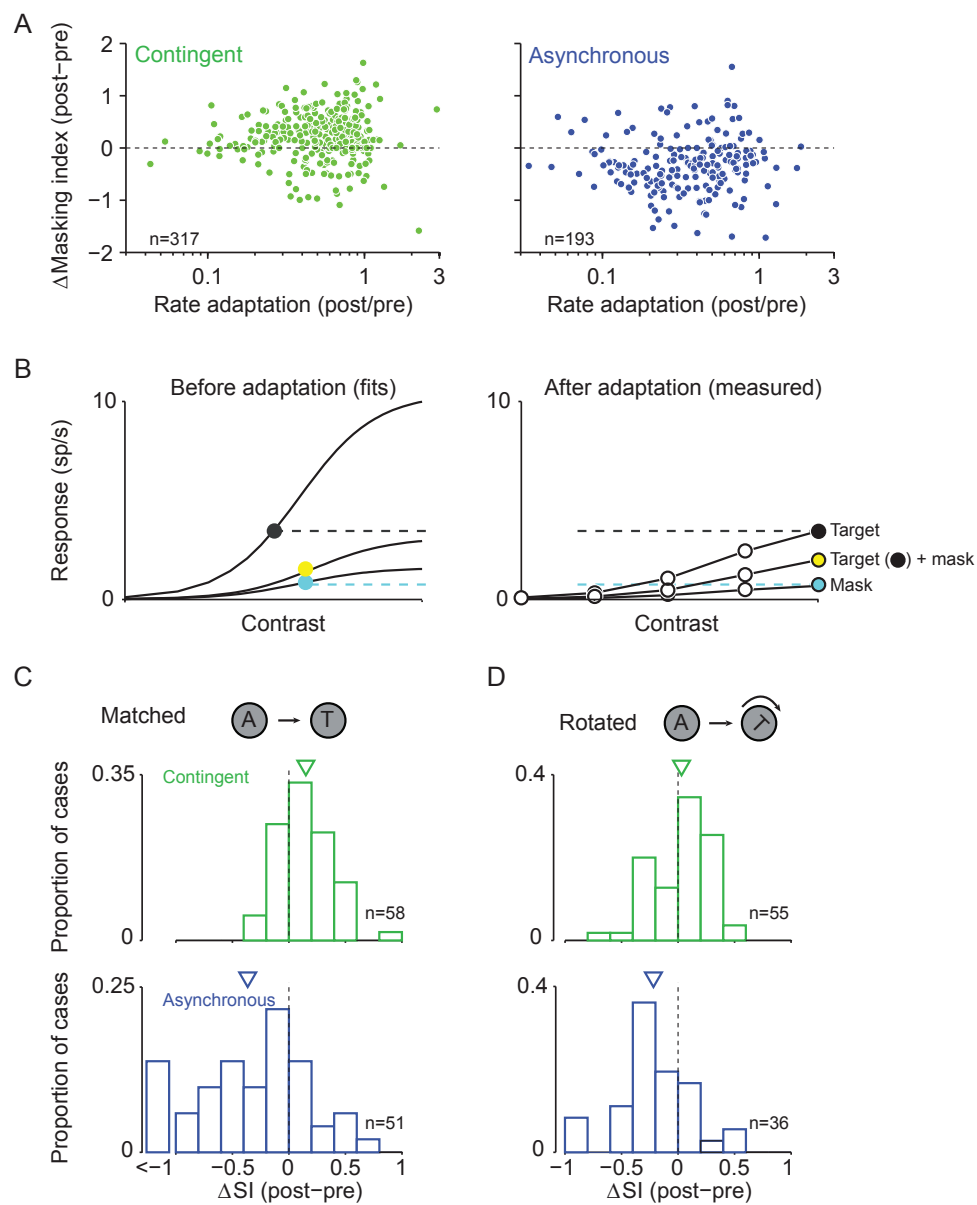


Figure 5

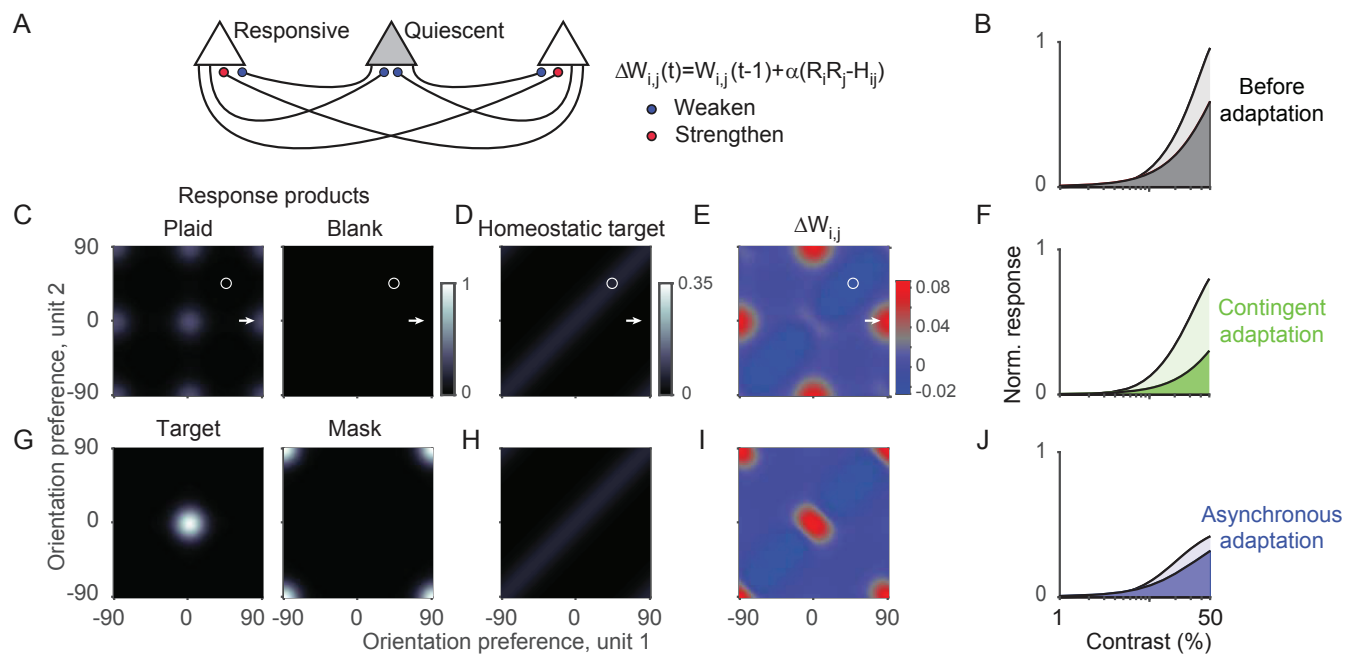


Figure 6

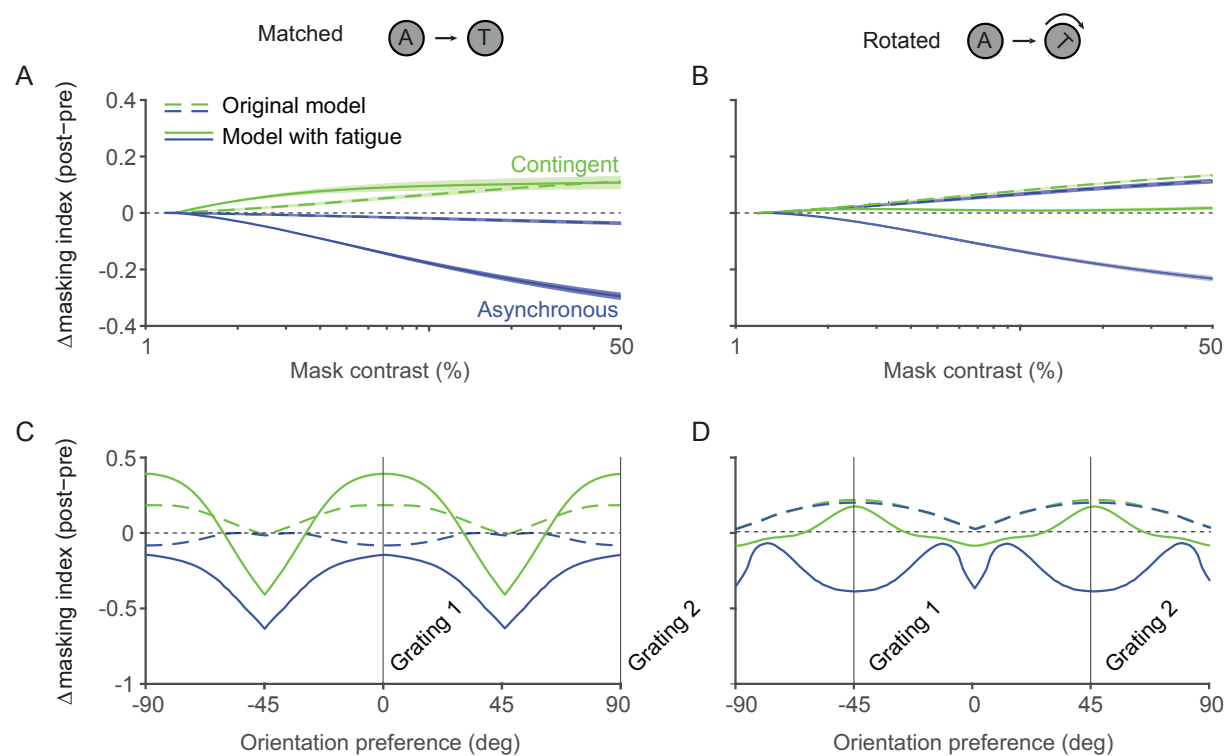


Figure 7

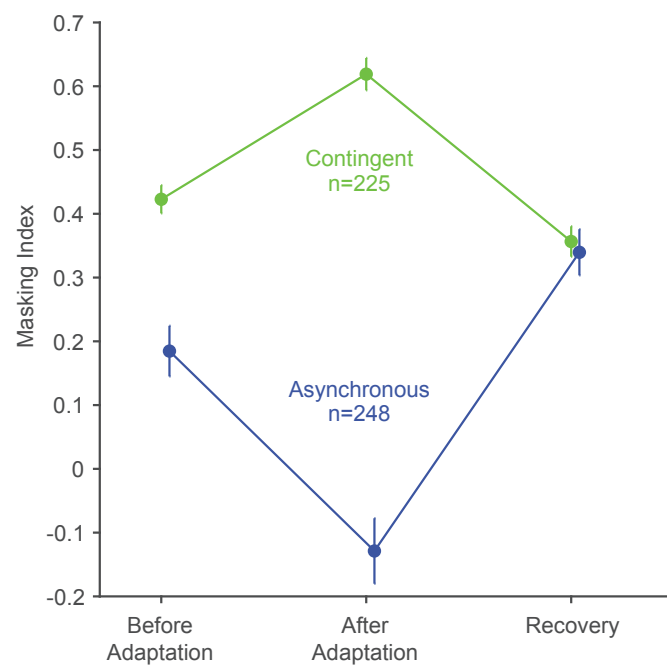


Figure 8