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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/90g995vs>

### Journal

Journal of Neuroscience, 38(19)

### ISSN

0270-6474

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### Publication Date

2018-05-09

### DOI

10.1523/jneurosci.0394-18.2018

Peer reviewed

# **Long-term depression is independent of GluN2 subunit composition.**

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Abbreviated Title: LTD is GluN2 independent

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Number of Pages: 29; Number of Figures: 5; Number of Tables: 0

Number of Words: Abstract: 180; Introduction: 480; Discussion: 1498

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no competing financial interests

*Acknowledgements:*

This work was supported by NIH Grant K08MH100562 and a pilot grant through the UC Davis Alzheimer's Disease Center P30AG010129. We thank Zaiyang "Sunny" Zhang and Haley Martin for their assistance with mouse breeding and genotyping.

## 1 **Abstract**

2 NMDA receptors (NMDARs) mediate major forms of both long-term potentiation (LTP) and long-term  
3 depression (LTD) and understanding how a single receptor can initiate both phenomena remains a major  
4 question in neuroscience. A prominent hypothesis implicates the NMDAR subunit composition,  
5 specifically GluN2A and GluN2B, in dictating the rules of synaptic plasticity. However, studies testing  
6 this hypotheses have yielded inconsistent and often contradictory results, especially for LTD. These  
7 inconsistent results may be due to challenges in the interpretation of subunit-selective pharmacology  
8 and in dissecting out the contributions of differential channel properties versus the interacting proteins  
9 unique to GluN2A or GluN2B. In this study, we address the pharmacological and biochemical challenges  
10 by utilizing a single-neuron genetic approach to delete NMDAR subunits in both male and female  
11 conditional knock-out mice. In addition, emerging evidence that non-ionotropic signaling through the  
12 NMDAR is sufficient for NMDAR-dependent LTD allowed the rigorous assessment of unique subunit  
13 contributions to NMDAR-dependent LTD while eliminating the variable of differential charge transfer.  
14 Here we find that neither the GluN2A nor the GluN2B subunit is strictly necessary for either non-  
15 ionotropic or ionotropic LTD.

16

17

## 18 **Significance Statement**

19 NMDA receptors are key regulators of bidirectional synaptic plasticity. Understanding the mechanisms  
20 regulating bidirectional plasticity will guide development of therapeutic strategies to treat the  
21 dysfunctional synaptic plasticity in multiple neuropsychiatric disorders. Because of the unique properties  
22 of the NMDA receptor GluN2 subunits, they have been postulated to differentially affect synaptic  
23 plasticity. However, there has been significant controversy regarding the roles of the GluN2 subunits in

24 synaptic long term depression (LTD). Using single neuron knock-out of the GluN2 subunits, we show that  
25 LTD is subunit-independent.

26

27

## 28 **Introduction**

29 NMDARs play prominent roles in bidirectional synaptic plasticity, mediating major forms of both long-  
30 term potentiation (LTP) and long-term depression (LTD) (Collingridge et al., 1983; Dudek and Bear,  
31 1992). Most NMDARs are heterotetramers containing two obligatory GluN1 subunits and two GluN2  
32 subunits, with GluN2A and GluN2B being the predominant subunits in the mammalian forebrain,  
33 including the hippocampus (Gray et al., 2011). Because the functional and regulatory properties of  
34 NMDARs are largely determined by their GluN2 subunit composition (Cull-Candy and Leszkiewicz, 2004),  
35 many studies have explored the hypothesis that different NMDAR subunits dictate the rules of synaptic  
36 plasticity (Shipton and Paulsen, 2014), though results have been inconsistent and often contradictory,  
37 especially for studies of long-term depression (LTD).

38

39 There are a number of potential reasons for the inconsistencies in LTD studies. First, interpretation of  
40 GluN2 subunit-selective pharmacology is problematic. GluN2 subunit-selective antagonists are limited  
41 by poor subunit selectivity (e.g. the GluN2A “selective antagonist” NVP-AAM077 is only 5-fold selective  
42 over GluN2B) (Neyton and Paoletti, 2006), incomplete blockade (e.g. ifenprodil only reduces currents  
43 from pure GluN2B-containing receptors about 80%) (Fischer et al., 1997; Hatton and Paoletti, 2005; Gray  
44 et al., 2011), and complex effects on glutamate affinity (e.g. ifenprodil increases glutamate affinity and  
45 prolongs NMDAR synaptic currents) (Kew et al., 1996; Gray et al., 2011; Tovar and Westbrook, 2012).  
46 Second, recent evidence has demonstrated that a high proportion of synaptic NMDARs are  
47 triheteromeric, containing GluN2A and GluN2B (Gray et al., 2011; Rauner and Kohr, 2011; Tovar et al.,

48 2013). These triheteromeric receptors are only modestly responsive to GluN2-selective pharmacology  
49 (Hatton and Paoletti, 2005), further complicating the interpretation of these studies. Finally,  
50 conventional knock-out (KO) studies of GluN2 subunits have serious limitations as the GluN1 and  
51 GluN2B KO mice die perinatally (Forrest et al., 1994; Kutsuwada et al., 1996) and broad deletion of  
52 NMDARs results in altered network activity (Li et al., 1994; Iwasato et al., 2000).

53  
54 Here we utilized a single-neuron genetic approach to isolate individual GluN2 subunits and assess their  
55 contributions to LTD. This approach avoids both the network-wide disruptions found in previous genetic  
56 manipulations as well as the difficult-to-interpret subunit specific pharmacology. Importantly however,  
57 even the interpretation of the effects of pure GluN2A or GluN2B receptor populations on synaptic  
58 plasticity can be problematic. Specifically, are effects of pure GluN2 subunit populations related to large  
59 differences in charge transfer (including  $Ca^{2+}$ ) or to critical associations with their divergent intracellular  
60 C-terminal tails? The inability to separate these variables further limits interpretations of NMDAR  
61 subunit-specific plasticity. Recently however, NMDAR-mediated LTD has been shown to occur in the  
62 absence of ion flux through the NMDAR (Nabavi et al., 2013; Stein et al., 2015; Carter and Jahr, 2016;  
63 but see Babiec et al., 2014), providing the opportunity to rigorously examine the GluN2 subunit-  
64 dependence of LTD while eliminating charge transfer as a variable. Surprisingly, we show no  
65 dependence of GluN2 subunit composition on either non-ionotropic or ionotropic NMDAR-dependent  
66 LTD.

67

68

## 69 **Materials and Methods**

### 70 *Animals and postnatal viral injection*

71 Animals were housed according to IACUC guidelines at the University of California Davis. *Grin2a*<sup>fl/fl</sup> (Gray  
72 et al., 2011), *Grin2B*<sup>fl/fl</sup> (Mishina and Sakimura, 2007; Akashi et al., 2009), and *Grin1*<sup>fl/fl</sup> mice (Li et al.,  
73 1994; Adesnik et al., 2008) are all as previously described. Neonatal (P0-1) mice of both sexes were  
74 stereotaxically injected with high-titer rAAV1-Cre:GFP viral stock (~1-5x10<sup>12</sup> vg/ml) with coordinates  
75 targeting CA1 of hippocampus as previously described (Gray et al., 2011). Transduced neurons were  
76 identified by nuclear GFP expression. Cre expression was generally limited to the hippocampus within a  
77 sparse population of CA1 pyramidal neurons.

78

### 79 ***Electrophysiology***

80 Mice were anesthetized in isoflurane and decapitated. Brains were rapidly removed and placed in ice-  
81 cold sucrose cutting buffer, containing (in mM) 210 sucrose, 25 NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, 2.5 KCl, 1.25 NaH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 7  
82 glucose, 7 MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 0.5 CaCl<sub>2</sub>. Transverse 300µm hippocampal slices were cut on a Leica VT1200 vibratome  
83 (Buffalo Grove, IL) in ice-cold cutting buffer. Slices were recovered in 32°C artificial cerebrospinal fluid  
84 (ACSF) solution, containing (in mM) 119 NaCl, 26.2 NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, 11 glucose, 2.5 KCl, 1 NaH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 2.5 CaCl<sub>2</sub>  
85 and 1.3 MgSO<sub>4</sub>, for 1 hour before recording. Slices were transferred to a submersion chamber on an  
86 upright Olympus microscope, perfused in room temperature normal ACSF containing picrotoxin (0.1  
87 mM) and saturated with 95%O<sub>2</sub>/5%CO<sub>2</sub>. CA1 neurons were visualized by infrared differential  
88 interference contrast microscopy and GFP+ neurons were identified by epifluorescence microscopy.  
89 Cells were patched with 3-5MΩ borosilicate pipettes filled with intracellular solution, containing (in mM)  
90 135 cesium methanesulfonate, 8 NaCl, 10 HEPES, 0.3 Na-GTP, 4 Mg-ATP, 0.3 EGTA, and 5 QX-314 (Sigma,  
91 St Louis, MO). Excitatory postsynaptic currents (EPSCs) were evoked by electrical stimulation of Schaffer  
92 collaterals with a bipolar electrode (MicroProbes, Gaithersburg, MD). AMPAR-EPSCs were measured at a  
93 holding potential of -70 mV, and NMDAR-EPSCs were measured at +40 mV in the presence of 10 µM  
94 NBQX. LTD was induced using a standard low-frequency stimulation protocol of 900 stimuli at 1 Hz (15

95 min) and holding the neuron at -40mV. Series resistance was monitored and not compensated, and cells  
96 were discarded if series resistance varied more than 25%. All recordings were obtained with a  
97 Multiclamp 700B amplifier (Molecular Devices, Sunnyvale, CA), filtered at 2 kHz, digitized at 10 Hz..  
98 Analysis was performed with the Clampex software suite (Molecular Devices, Sunnyvale, CA).

99

### 100 ***Experimental design and statistical analysis***

101 All data represents the mean  $\pm$  SEM of n = number of neurons or pairs or neurons. With the exception of  
102 the drug titrations, a minimum of three mice were used per group. All experimental groups include both  
103 males and females. Data were analyzed using Clampfit 10.4 (Axon instruments) and Prism 7 software  
104 (GraphPad). LTD experiments were analyzed by averaging the final 10 minutes of the recording and  
105 normalizing as a percent of the baseline AMPAR-EPSC amplitude. Paired amplitude and decay data were  
106 analyzed with a paired two-tailed *t* test and comparisons of LTD experiments were analyzed by unpaired  
107 two-tailed *t* test both with  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

108

109

## 110 **Results**

111 NMDAR glycine-site antagonists, which prevent channel opening, provide a key means to study non-  
112 ionotropic LTD. 7-chlorokynurenic acid (7CK) is a competitive NMDAR glycine-site antagonist that we  
113 and others have previously used to examine non-ionotropic LTD (Nabavi et al., 2013; Dore et al., 2015;  
114 Stein et al., 2015; Carter and Jahr, 2016). However, at concentrations needed for complete NMDAR  
115 block in acute brain slices (100  $\mu$ M), 7CK also significantly inhibits AMPAR-EPSCs (**Figure 1**, purple,  $74.9 \pm$   
116  $6.0\%$ ,  $n=4$ ) making whole cell LTD recordings challenging. Thus, we have characterized the use of  
117 L689,560 (L689), a competitive glycine-site antagonist with higher potency and selectivity than 7CK  
118 (Leeson et al., 1992; Grimwood et al., 1995). A dose response of L689 on acute hippocampal slices found

119 rapid, complete block of NMDAR-EPSCs by 10  $\mu$ M L689 (**Figure 1A**), a concentration that blocks only  
120  $\sim$ 10% of AMPAR-EPSCs (**Figure 1B,C**; 10  $\mu$ M L689,  $10.7 \pm 4.3\%$ ,  $n=4$ ).

121

### 122 ***Non-ionotropic LTD is NMDAR-dependent***

123 Consistent with 100  $\mu$ M 7CK ((Nabavi et al., 2013; Stein et al., 2015), non-ionotropic LTD occurs in the  
124 presence of 10  $\mu$ M L689 and remains NMDAR-dependent as it was blocked by concurrent incubation  
125 with the competitive glutamate-site antagonist AP5 (**Figure 1D-F**; L689,  $68.9 \pm 3.6\%$ ,  $n=8$ ; +AP5,  $100.7 \pm$   
126  $5.5\%$ ,  $n=8$ ;  $t_{(14)}=4.854$ ,  $p=0.0003$ ,  $t$  test). To further test the NMDAR-dependence of non-ionotropic LTD,  
127 we removed the obligatory GluN1 subunit in a sparse subset of CA1 pyramidal neurons by stereotaxic  
128 injection of adeno-associated virus, serotype 1 expressing a Cre recombinase GFP fusion protein (AAV1-  
129 Cre:GFP) into GluN1 conditional knockout mice (*Grin1<sup>fl/fl</sup>*) on postnatal day 0 (P0) (**Figure 2A**). This  
130 mosaic deletion allows for simultaneous whole-cell recordings from Cre-expressing (Cre:GFP<sup>+</sup>) and  
131 untransfected neighboring cells, providing a rigorous comparison while controlling for presynaptic  
132 input. Consistent with our previous work (Gray et al., 2011), GluN1 deletion ( $\Delta$ GluN1) results in a  
133 complete loss of NMDAR-EPSCs by P15 (**Figure 2B,C**; control,  $82.1 \pm 15.7$  pA;  $\Delta$ GluN1,  $1.75 \pm 0.53$  pA;  
134  $n=5$ ,  $t_{(4)}=5.021$ ,  $p=0.007$ , paired  $t$  test). As expected, deletion of GluN1 prevented LTD in the presence of  
135 L689 (**Figure 2D-F**; control,  $73.7 \pm 3.5\%$ ,  $n=8$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN1,  $99.8 \pm 5.2\%$ ,  $n=8$ ;  $t_{(14)}=4.194$ ,  $p=0.0009$ ,  $t$  test).  
136 Together, these results demonstrate that non-ionotropic LTD is dependent on NMDARs.

137

### 138 ***Non-ionotropic LTD is independent of GluN2 subtype***

139 We next assessed the contribution of individual GluN2 subtypes to non-ionotropic LTD using single  
140 neuron deletion of GluN2A and GluN2B. As with GluN1, we performed simultaneous whole cell  
141 recordings of CA1 pyramidal neurons in *Grin2A<sup>fl/fl</sup>* and *Grin2B<sup>fl/fl</sup>* mice transduced with AAV1-Cre:GFP at  
142 P0. Deletion of GluN2A ( $\Delta$ GluN2A) resulted in no change in the NMDAR-EPSC amplitude (**Figure 3A,B**;



143 control,  $102.8 \pm 15.2$  pA;  $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $96.4 \pm 11.9$  pA;  $n=6$ ,  $t_{(5)}=0.9913$ ,  $p=0.367$ , paired  $t$  test) but a greatly  
144 prolonged EPSC decay (**Figure 3A,C**; control,  $230.4 \pm 8.5$  ms;  $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $414.4 \pm 13.3$  ms;  $n=6$ ,  $t_{(5)}=13.35$ ,  
145  $p<0.0001$ , paired  $t$  test). This is consistent with our previous results (Gray et al., 2011) and represents a  
146 pure population of GluN2B-containing NMDARs. Deletion of GluN2A did not affect the expression of  
147 non-ionotropic LTD (**Figure 3D-F**; control,  $77.1 \pm 5.8\%$ ,  $n=6$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $65.1 \pm 6.2\%$ ,  $n=6$ ;  $t_{(10)}=1.431$ ,  
148  $p=0.183$ ,  $t$  test). Importantly, in interleaved experiments, AP5 continued to block LTD (**Figure 3G-I**;  
149 control,  $97.0 \pm 9.0\%$ ,  $n=6$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $96.7 \pm 6.0\%$ ,  $n=6$ ;  $t_{(10)}=0.0274$ ,  $p=0.979$ ,  $t$  test) demonstrating that  
150 NMDAR-dependence is maintained.

151  
152 Single neuron deletion of GluN2B ( $\Delta$ GluN2B) resulted in a significant speeding of the NMDAR-EPSC  
153 decay time (**Figure 4A,C**; control,  $233.7 \pm 8.2$  ms;  $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $79.0 \pm 2.9$  ms;  $n=6$ ,  $t_{(5)}=20.10$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ,  
154 paired  $t$  test) consistent with a pure population of GluN2A-containing NMDARs (Gray et al., 2011).  
155 Additionally, there was also a 30-40% reduction in the NMDAR-EPSC amplitude (**Figure 4A,B**; control,  
156  $90.1 \pm 12.8$  pA;  $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $58.1 \pm 7.2$  pA;  $n=6$ ,  $t_{(5)}=3.078$ ,  $p=0.028$ , paired  $t$  test), as described previously  
157 (Gray et al., 2011). The simultaneous changes in NMDAR-EPSC amplitude and decay leads to a large  
158 decrease in charge transfer that could affect the interpretation of subunit dependence in LTD. However,  
159 deletion of GluN2B did not affect the expression of non-ionotropic LTD (**Figure 4D-F**; control,  $76.1 \pm$   
160  $6.8\%$ ,  $n=8$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $74.3 \pm 8.1\%$ ,  $n=9$ ;  $t_{(15)}=0.1662$ ,  $p=0.870$ ,  $t$  test) and this LTD remained NMDAR-  
161 dependent (**Figure 4G-I**; control  $98.8 \pm 7.3\%$ ,  $n=4$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $96.9 \pm 8.6\%$ ,  $n=4$ ;  $t_{(6)}=0.1717$ ,  $p=0.869$ ,  $t$   
162 test). Together, these results show that the expression of NMDAR-dependent non-ionotropic LTD is not  
163 dependent on the identity of the GluN2 subunit.

164

165 ***Ionotropic LTD is independent of GluN2 subtype***

166 The physiological relevance of non-ionotropic NMDAR-mediated LTD remains controversial (Gray et al.,  
167 2016). Thus, we examined the role of GluN2A and GluN2B in classical “ionotropic” LTD experiments in  
168 the absence of L689. Again, we found that both GluN2A-lacking and GluN2B-lacking neurons expressed  
169 LTD that was indistinguishable from control neurons (**Figure 5**; control,  $75.5 \pm 5.7\%$ ,  $n=8$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $68.9$   
170  $\pm 6.5\%$ ,  $n=9$ ;  $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $81.6 \pm 8.9\%$ ,  $n=9$ ; control: $\Delta$ GluN2A,  $t_{(15)}=0.7582$ ,  $p=0.460$ ,  $t$  test;  
171 control: $\Delta$ GluN2B,  $t_{(15)}=0.5557$ ,  $p=0.556$ ,  $t$  test). Taken together, these findings provide rigorous  
172 evidence that NMDAR-mediated LTD is independent of GluN2 subunit composition.

173

174

## 175 **Discussion**

176 Because major forms of both LTP and LTD are mediated by the NMDAR, it has long been hypothesized  
177 that the GluN2 subunit composition dictates the directionality of synaptic plasticity. This was an  
178 attractive hypothesis for a number of reasons. First, GluN2A and GluN2B confer distinct kinetic  
179 properties to synaptic NMDARs (Cull-Candy and Leszkiewicz, 2004) that could lead to the different levels  
180 of postsynaptic  $Ca^{2+}$  influx thought to underlie LTP and LTD (Dudek and Bear, 1992; Cummings et al.,  
181 1996; Yang et al., 1999; Rubin et al., 2005). Second, there is an activity-dependent developmental switch  
182 in synaptic NMDAR subunit composition in which predominantly GluN2B-containing NMDARs are  
183 replaced or supplemented by GluN2A (Sheng et al., 1994; Roberts and Ramoa, 1999). This subunit  
184 switch is thought to be a form of metaplasticity that alters the threshold and possibly the directionality  
185 of NMDAR-mediated synaptic plasticity (Quinlan et al., 1999; Dumas, 2005; Yashiro and Philpot, 2008;  
186 Gray et al., 2011). And third, GluN2A and GluN2B have long, highly divergent intracellular C-terminal  
187 domains that mediate an array of distinct protein-protein interactions that could be coupled to different  
188 downstream signaling pathways (Sanz-Clemente et al., 2013).

189

190 Numerous studies have set out to test the hypothesis that bidirectional plasticity is dictated by the  
191 GluN2 subunit composition, but their results have been inconsistent and conflicting, especially for LTD  
192 (reviewed by (Shipton and Paulsen, 2014). These inconsistent results are likely due to issues with GluN2  
193 subunit-selective pharmacology (Neyton and Paoletti, 2006), thus we have utilized a mosaic genetic  
194 approach to delete NMDAR subunits in individual hippocampal neurons. Importantly however,  
195 genetically dissecting the relative roles of GluN2 subunits in synaptic plasticity is further complicated by  
196 altering two variables simultaneously: (1) differential postsynaptic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  dynamics between GluN2A and  
197 GluN2B, and (2) unique protein-protein interactions with their highly divergent C-terminal domains. The  
198 recent discovery of non-ionotropic NMDAR-mediated LTD (Nabavi et al., 2013), in which conformational  
199 changes in response to repetitive glutamate binding, but not channel opening or  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  influx is posited to  
200 trigger LTD has provided a unique opportunity to reexamine the relative roles of GluN2A and GluN2B in  
201 synaptic plasticity. By removing  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  influx as a variable, non-ionotropic LTD allows for a rigorous  
202 analysis of the subunit dependence of LTD. Our results here demonstrate conclusively that neither  
203 GluN2A nor GluN2B is strictly necessary for NMDAR-dependent LTD.

204

### 205 ***Role of GluN2B in LTD***

206 GluN2 subunit selective inhibition is confounded by poor selectivity, incomplete blockade, and complex  
207 effects on glutamate affinity (Kew et al., 1996). For GluN1/GluN2B receptors, ifenprodil and Ro 25-6881  
208 antagonists are selective negative allosteric modulators that bind to the extracellular N-terminal  
209 domains (Hatton and Paoletti, 2005). Some studies have reported block of LTD by ifenprodil or Ro 25-  
210 6981 (Liu et al., 2004; Massey et al., 2004; Fox et al., 2006; Izumi et al., 2006; Gerkin et al., 2007; Ge et  
211 al., 2010; Dong et al., 2013; Izumi and Zorumski, 2015; Mizui et al., 2015; Yasuda and Mukai, 2015),  
212 though others report no effect (Hendricson et al., 2002; Bartlett et al., 2007; Li et al., 2007; Morishita et

213 al., 2007; Kollen et al., 2008; Hanson et al., 2015; Yasuda and Mukai, 2015). However, these inhibitors  
214 display partial activity-dependence and only block a fraction (~80%) of synaptic GluN1/GluN2B  
215 diheteromers (Fischer et al., 1997; Hatton and Paoletti, 2005; Gray et al., 2011), which could result in  
216 variable effects based on drug concentration, slice activity, and pre-incubation time. Furthermore, N-  
217 terminal domain inhibitors only block about a quarter of the current in triheteromeric NMDARs (Hatton  
218 and Paoletti, 2005; Hansen et al., 2014) that make up a large proportion of synaptic NMDARs (Gray et  
219 al., 2011; Rauner and Kohr, 2011; Tovar et al., 2013). Another interesting consideration is that N-  
220 terminal domain inhibitors like ifenprodil decrease the glutamate dissociation rate (Kew et al., 1996;  
221 Gray et al., 2011; Tovar and Westbrook, 2012) that may have unknown effects on non-ionotropic LTD.  
222 For example, increasing glutamate affinity while preventing channel opening may promote non-  
223 ionotropic LTD, and one study reported that ifenprodil actually enhanced the magnitude of LTD  
224 (Hendricson et al., 2002). Taken together, the complexity of GluN2B-selective pharmacology makes firm  
225 conclusions on the role of GluN2B in LTD difficult.

226

### 227 ***Role of GluN2A in LTD***

228 For GluN2A-containing NMDARs, subunit-selective pharmacology is even more problematic. The most  
229 widely used antagonist, NVP-AAM007 (NVP), is a competitive glutamate-site antagonist that has only 10-  
230 fold selectivity for GluN2A over GluN2B (Neyton and Paoletti, 2006). As such, many LTD studies have  
231 used concentrations of NVP that antagonize a significant proportion of GluN2B (Liu et al., 2004; Massey  
232 et al., 2004; Izumi et al., 2006; Li et al., 2007). By titrating NVP to concentrations that block LTP, some  
233 groups found no inhibition of LTD (Liu et al., 2004; Gerkin et al., 2007; Ge et al., 2010), suggesting a key  
234 role for GluN2A in LTD, though other studies contradict this finding (Bartlett et al., 2007; Li et al., 2007).  
235 Given that NVP is a competitive glutamate site antagonist, NVP should consistently block LTD if only  
236 GluN2A is required; however, it remains unknown how NVP affects the triheteromeric receptors that

237 predominate at earlier developmental points when LTD is most reliable. At “selective” concentrations,  
238 NVP should bind to the GluN2A glutamate site in triheteromers and block channel opening and LTP.  
239 However, it is unknown whether non-ionotropic LTD requires both glutamate sites to be occupied. Thus,  
240 continued glutamate binding to the GluN2B subunit in triheteromers could be sufficient to induce non-  
241 ionotropic LTD. Indeed, higher NVP concentrations consistently block LTD (Fox et al., 2006; Bartlett et  
242 al., 2007). Recently, more selective GluN2A inhibitors have been developed (e.g. TCN201) (Bettini et al.,  
243 2010; McKay et al., 2012) that block LTD (Izumi and Zorumski, 2015). Interestingly, these inhibitors have  
244 been shown to bind allosterically to the dimer interface between GluN1 and GluN2 (Hansen et al., 2012)  
245 which may impair conformational-based signaling. Overall, there remains no clear consensus on the role  
246 of GluN2A in LTD.

247

#### 248 ***Genetic studies of GluN2 subunits in LTD***

249 In addition to pharmacological studies, a few genetic studies have addressed the GluN2 subunits in LTD.  
250 GluN2B KO mice die perinatally due to loss of suckling (Kutsuwada et al., 1996), but can survive by  
251 handfeeding. A loss of LTD was observed in hippocampal slices from three day old GluN2B KO mice  
252 (Kutsuwada et al., 1996), though at this age, a loss of GluN2B would result in a near complete loss of  
253 synaptic NMDARs (Gray et al., 2011). Selective deletion of GluN2B impaired LTD (Brigman et al., 2010) in  
254 14-22 week old mice, though LTD required block of glutamate transporters to induce spillover,  
255 presumably to activate extrasynaptic receptors. Importantly, these studies were at the developmental  
256 time points that widely deviate from the standard LTD literature making generalization difficult.  
257 Interestingly, acute disruption of the interaction of GluN2B with PSD95 using a cell-permeable peptide  
258 reduced synaptic GluN2B levels and impaired LTP but had no effect on LTD (Gardoni et al., 2009),  
259 consistent with our findings that GluN2B is not necessary. Fewer studies have examined GluN2A, though

260 germline GluN2A KO mice have normal NMDAR-dependent LTD in CA1 (Longordo et al., 2009;  
261 Kannangara et al., 2015).

262

### 263 ***Mechanism of non-ionotropic LTD***

264 The widely-accepted model for bidirectional synaptic plasticity mediated by NMDAR activation posits  
265 that large, rapid increases in synaptic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  leads to LTP and prolonged, modest increases in  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  leads to  
266 LTD (Lisman, 1989; Malenka, 1994; Neveu and Zucker, 1996). This model has recently been challenged  
267 with the finding that repetitive glutamate binding to the NMDAR is sufficient to induce LTD and spine  
268 shrinkage, independent of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  influx (Nabavi et al., 2013; Stein et al., 2015; Carter and Jahr, 2016; Gray  
269 et al., 2016), though this remains controversial (Babiec et al., 2014). Importantly, a role for  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  in the  
270 expression of LTD remains, as intracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  chelators inhibit non-ionotropic LTD (Nabavi et al., 2013).  
271 However, clamping intracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  at baseline concentrations while preventing  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  elevations rescued  
272 the expression of non-ionotropic LTD (Nabavi et al., 2013). These findings suggest that non-ionotropic  
273 LTD involves glutamate-mediated conformational changes in the NMDAR (Dore et al., 2015).

274

275 Conformation-based signaling by the NMDAR suggests modulation of receptor interacting partner(s),  
276 and the long intracellular C-terminal tails of the GluN2 subunits were the most likely candidates. For  
277 example, the death-associated protein kinase 1 (DAPK1) competes with the binding of CaMKII to GluN2B  
278 promoting LTD over LTP (Goodell et al., 2017). However, our current results suggest that these  
279 interactions are not strictly necessary for LTD and that the minimum sufficient LTD signal is not based on  
280 the divergence of the GluN2 subunits. So, without  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  influx or unique GluN2 interacting proteins, what  
281 could be the crucial receptor-proximal factor for LTD? Possibilities include shared interactions between  
282 GluN2A and GluN2B, interactions with GluN1, or transmembrane or extracellular interactions. For  
283 example, protein phosphatase 1 (PP1) is a key intermediary protein which is displaced from GluN1

284 following NMDA binding suggesting a GluN1-proximal mechanism (Dore et al., 2015). Further studies are  
285 needed to identify the minimum NMDAR determinates necessary for LTD and to examine whether  
286 ionotropic and non-ionotropic LTD are identical or parallel processes.

287

288

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290

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451

452

## 453 **Figure Legends**

454

455 **Figure 1. The NMDAR glycine-site antagonist L689 blocks NMDAR currents but not NMDAR-mediated**  
456 **LTD. A,** Dose response of NMDAR-EPSC block by L689 in acute mouse hippocampal slices. NMDAR-EPSCs  
457 were fully inhibited by 10  $\mu$ M and 100  $\mu$ M L689 within 5 min (n=3 per dose). **B-C,** Inhibition of AMPAR-  
458 EPSCs by NMDAR glycine-site antagonists. (B) Time course of AMPAR-EPSC inhibition by 7CK and L689  
459 normalized to baseline amplitude. (C) Percent block of AMPAR-EPSCs by 7CK and L689 averaging from  
460 20-30 min after drug application. 100  $\mu$ M 7CK and L689 inhibited AMPAR-EPSCs by  $74.9 \pm 6.0\%$  and  $55.2$   
461  $\pm 5.7\%$ , respectively, while 10  $\mu$ M L689 inhibited only  $10.7 \pm 4.3\%$  (n=4 for each condition). **D-F,** Non-  
462 ionotropic NMDAR-mediated LTD occurs in the presence of 10  $\mu$ M L689 and is blocked by 50  $\mu$ M AP5.  
463 (D) Averaged whole cell LTD experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (E) Cumulative  
464 distribution of experiments in (D). (F) 10  $\mu$ M L689 alone resulted in LTD ( $68.9 \pm 3.6\%$  of baseline, n=8). In

465 contrast, addition of AP5 significantly inhibits this LTD ( $100.7 \pm 5.5\%$  of baseline,  $n=8$ ) ( $t_{(14)}=4.854$ ,  
466  $p=0.0003$ ,  $t$  test). All data represents mean  $\pm$  SEM.

467

468 **Figure 2. Single neuron deletion of GluN1 prevents non-ionotropic long term depression.** **A**, Schematic  
469 of experimental preparation. Conditional knockout mice were injected with AAV1-Cre:GFP at P0. After  
470 15-21 days, dual whole cell recordings were made from neighboring transduced and control neurons. **B**-  
471 **C**, NMDAR-EPSCs are eliminated by 15-21 days. (B) Scatterplot of individual neuron pairs (open circles)  
472 and averaged pair  $\pm$  SEM (solid circle). Sample trace scale bars indicate (100 ms, 40 pA). (C) Average  
473 NMDAR-EPSC amplitudes for control ( $82.1 \pm 15.7$  pA,  $n=5$ ) and Cre:GFP+ neurons ( $1.75 \pm 0.53$  pA,  $n=5$ );  
474 ( $t_{(4)}=5.021$ ,  $p=0.007$ , paired  $t$  test). **D-F**, Deletion of GluN1 prevents LTD. (D) Averaged whole cell LTD  
475 experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (E) Cumulative distribution of experiments in (D).  
476 (F) Average percent depression relative to baseline; control neurons ( $73.7 \pm 3.5\%$ ,  $n=8$ ), Cre:GFP+  
477 neurons ( $\Delta$ GluN1;  $99.8 \pm 5.2\%$ ,  $n=8$ ), ( $t_{(14)}=4.194$ ,  $p=0.0009$ ,  $t$  test).

478

479 **Figure 3. Single neuron deletion of GluN2A does not prevent non-ionotropic long term depression.** **A**-  
480 **C**, Single neuron deletion of GluN2A. (A) Scatterplot of individual neuron pairs (open circles) and  
481 averaged pair  $\pm$  SEM (solid circle). Sample trace scale bars indicate (100 ms, 40 pA). (B) Average NMDAR-  
482 EPSC amplitudes for control ( $102.8 \pm 15.2$  pA,  $n=6$ ) and Cre:GFP+ neurons ( $96.4 \pm 11.9$  pA,  $n=6$ );  $p=0.48$ .  
483 (C) GluN2A deletion results in significantly longer decay kinetics (control  $230.4 \pm 8.5$  ms, Cre:GFP+  $414.4$   
484  $\pm 13.3$  ms;  $p<0.0001$ ). **D-F**, GluN2A deletion does not block LTD. (D) Averaged whole cell LTD  
485 experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (E) Cumulative distribution of experiments in (D).  
486 (F) Average percent depression relative to baseline; control neurons ( $77.1 \pm 5.8\%$ ,  $n=6$ ), Cre:GFP+  
487 neurons ( $\Delta$ GluN2A;  $65.1 \pm 6.2\%$ ,  $n=6$ ), ( $t_{(10)}=1.431$ ,  $p=0.183$ ,  $t$  test) **G-I**, LTD after GluN2A deletion is still

488 blocked by AP5. (G) Averaged whole cell LTD experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (H)  
489 Cumulative distribution of experiments in (G). (I) Summary graph of average percent depression relative  
490 to baseline; control neurons ( $97.0 \pm 9.0\%$ ,  $n=6$ ), Cre:GFP+ neurons ( $\Delta$ GluN2A;  $96.7 \pm 6.0\%$ ,  $n=6$ ),  
491 ( $t_{(10)}=0.0274$ ,  $p=0.979$ ,  $t$  test).

492

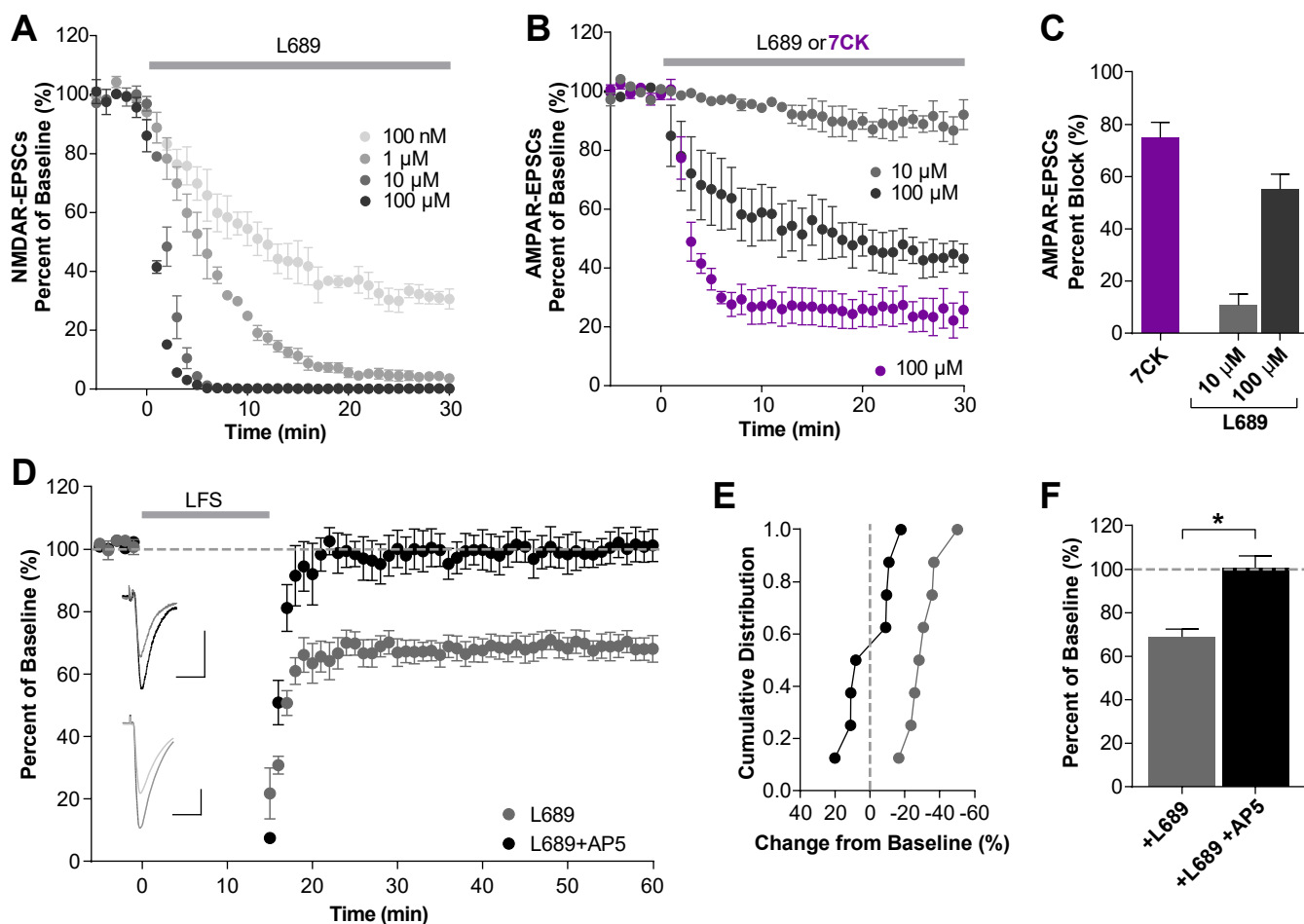
493 **Figure 4. Single neuron deletion of GluN2B does not prevent non-ionotropic long term depression. A-**  
494 **C, Single neuron deletion of GluN2B. (A)** Scatterplot of individual neuron pairs (open circles) and  
495 averaged pair  $\pm$  SEM (solid circle). Sample trace scale bars indicate (100 ms, 40 pA). (B) Average NMDAR-  
496 EPSC amplitudes for control ( $90.1 \pm 12.8$  pA,  $n=6$ ) and Cre:GFP+ neurons ( $58.1 \pm 7.2$  pA,  $n=6$ );  $p=0.016$ .  
497 (C) GluN2A deletion results in significantly faster decay kinetics (control  $233.7 \pm 8.2$  ms, Cre:GFP+  $79.0 \pm$   
498  $2.9$  ms;  $p<0.0001$ ). **D-F, GluN2B deletion does not block LTD. (D)** Averaged whole cell LTD experiments  
499 and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (E) Cumulative distribution of experiments in (D). (F) Average  
500 percent depression relative to baseline; control neurons ( $76.1 \pm 6.8\%$ ,  $n=8$ ), Cre:GFP+ neurons  
501 ( $\Delta$ GluN2B;  $74.3 \pm 8.1\%$ ,  $n=9$ ), ( $t_{(15)}=0.1662$ ,  $p=0.870$ ,  $t$  test). **G-I, LTD after GluN2B deletion is still**  
502 **blocked by AP5. (G)** Averaged whole cell LTD experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). (H)  
503 Cumulative distribution of experiments in (G). (I) Summary graph of average percent depression relative  
504 to baseline; control neurons ( $98.8 \pm 7.3\%$ ,  $n=4$ ), Cre:GFP+ neurons ( $\Delta$ GluN2B;  $96.9 \pm 8.6\%$ ,  $n=4$ ),  
505 ( $t_{(6)}=0.1717$ ,  $p=0.869$ ,  $t$  test).

506

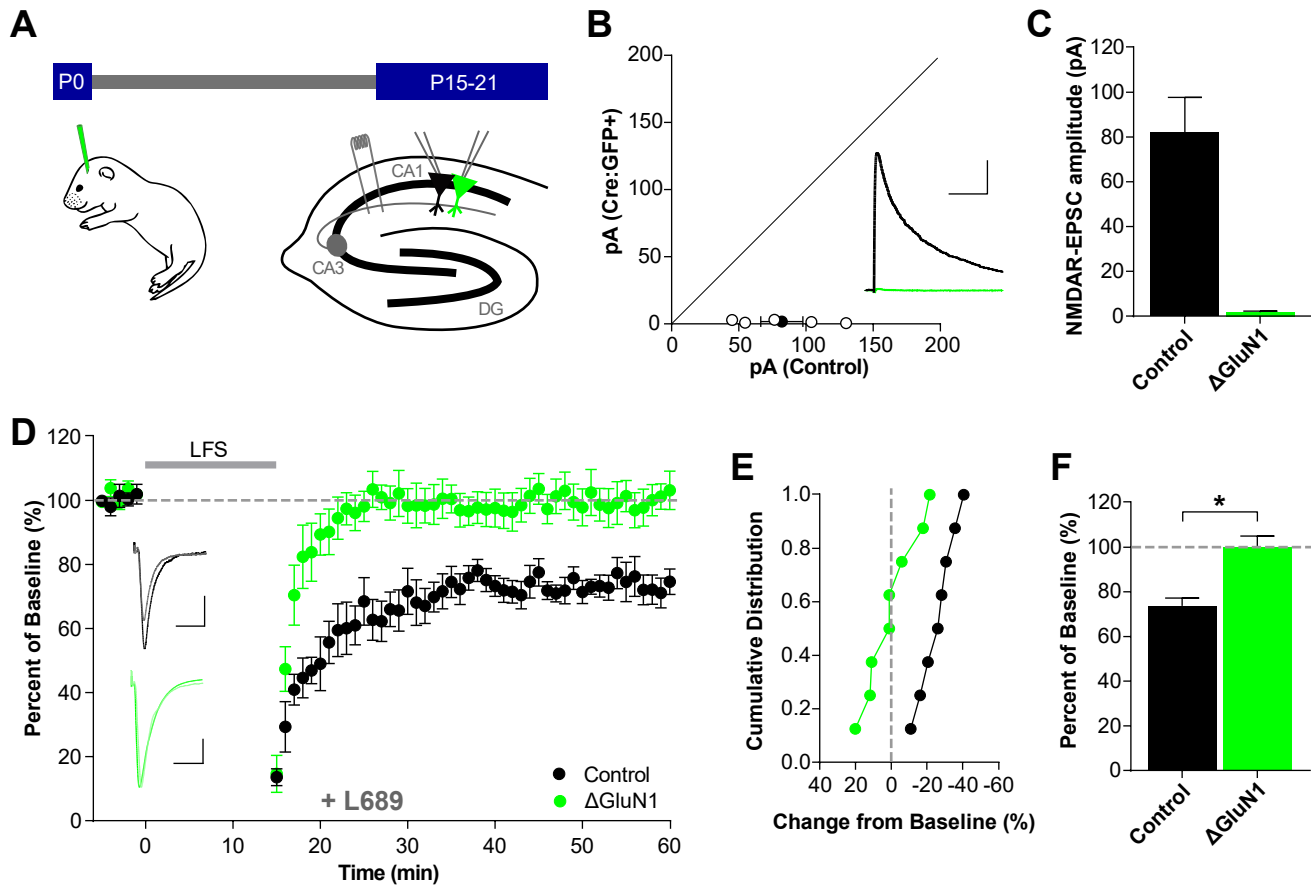
507 **Figure 5. Single neuron deletion of either GluN2A or GluN2B does not prevent ionotropic long term**  
508 **depression. A, Averaged whole cell LTD experiments and representative traces (10 ms, 50 pA). B,**  
509 **Cumulative distribution of experiments in (A). C, Average percent depression relative to baseline;**  
510 **control neurons ( $75.5 \pm 5.7\%$ ,  $n=8$ ),  $\Delta$ GluN2A neurons ( $68.9 \pm 6.5\%$ ,  $n=9$ ),  $\Delta$ GluN2B neurons ( $81.6 \pm$**



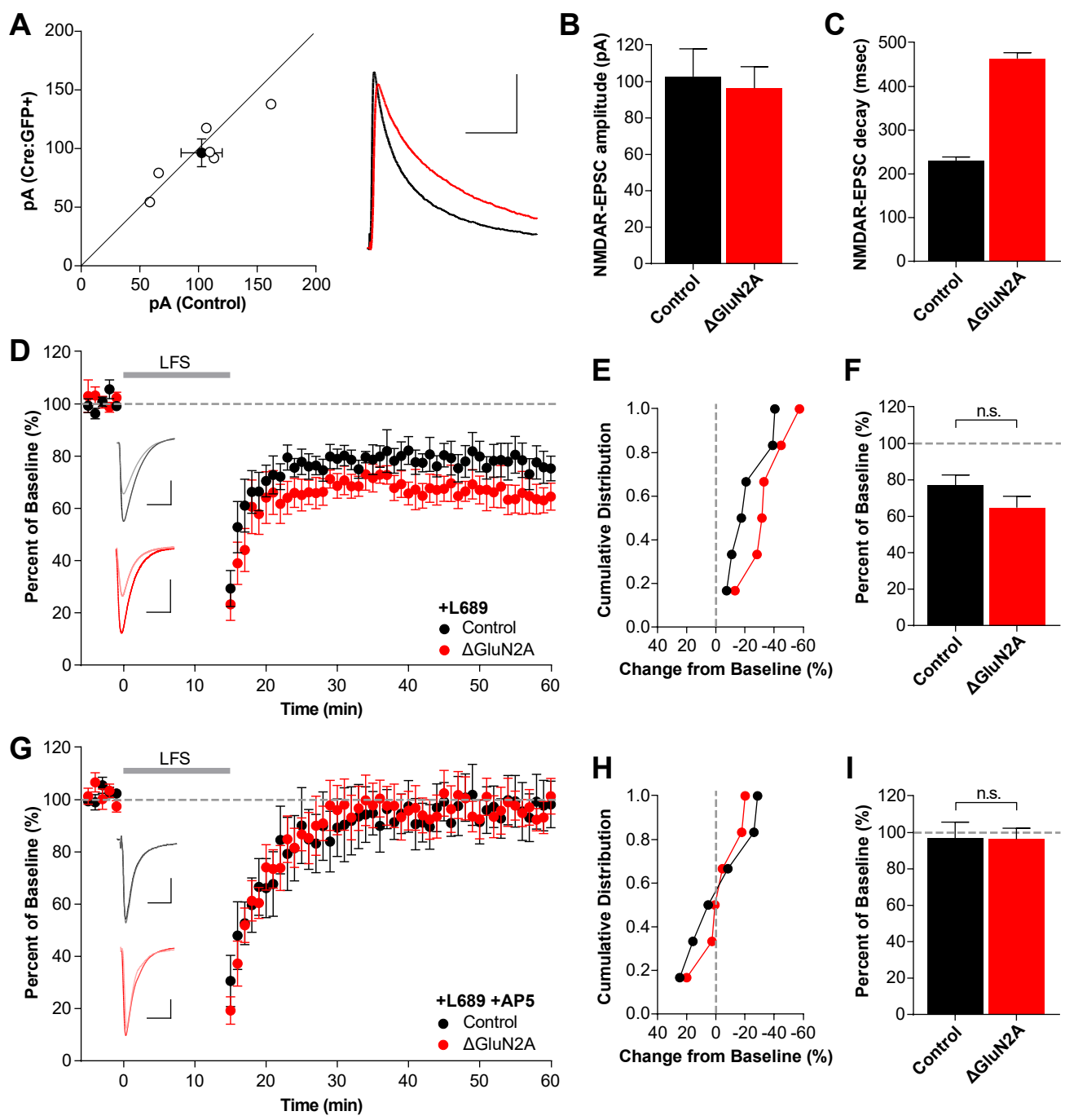
511 8.9%, n=9). There were no significant differences between control experiments and either GluN2A  
512 deletion ( $t_{(15)}=0.7582$ ,  $p=0.460$ ,  $t$  test) or GluN2B deletion ( $t_{(15)}=0.5557$ ,  $p=0.556$ ,  $t$  test), or between  
513  $\Delta$ GluN2A and  $\Delta$ GluN2B ( $t_{(16)}=1.151$ ,  $p=0.267$ ,  $t$  test).



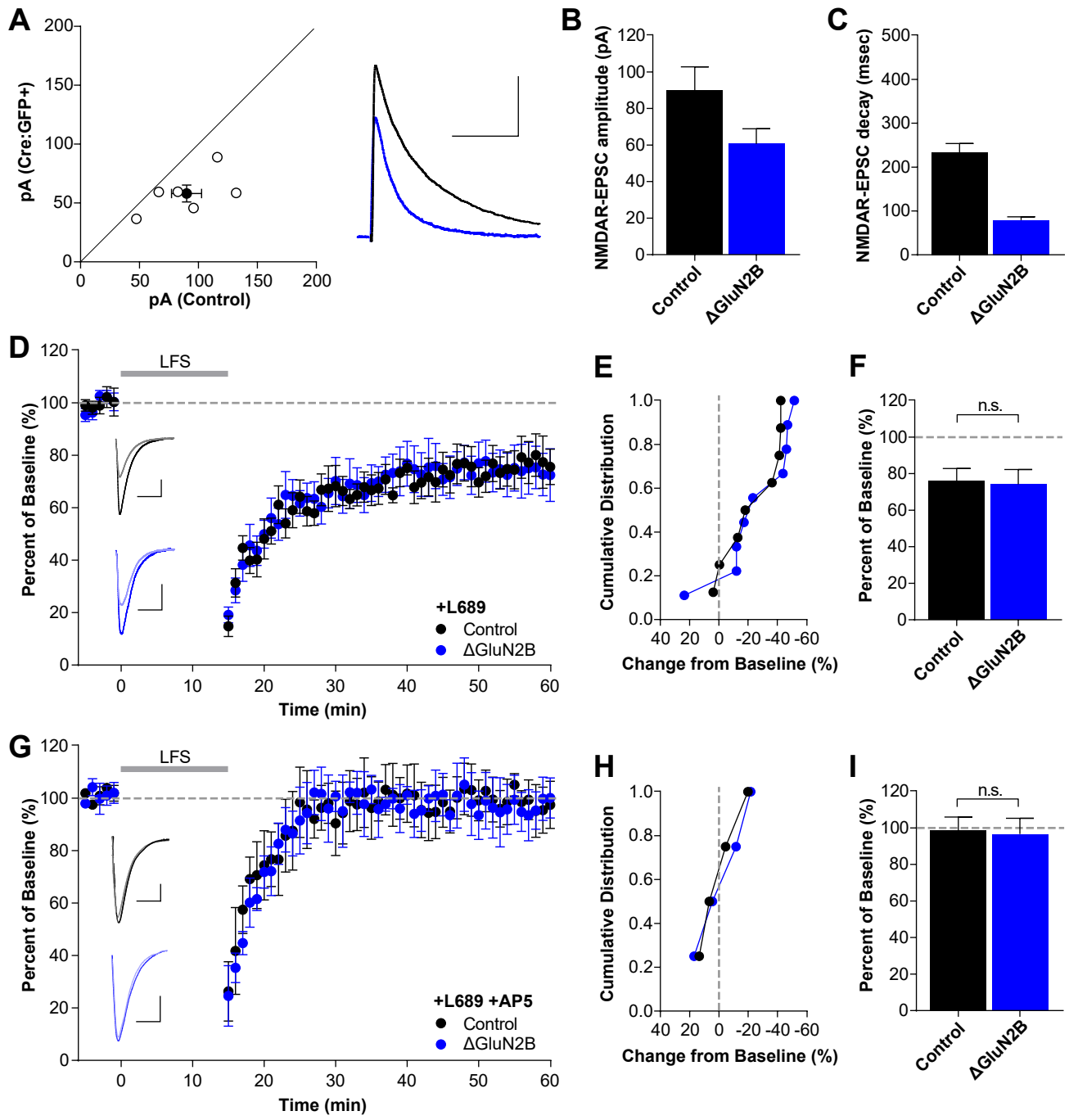
**Figure 1**



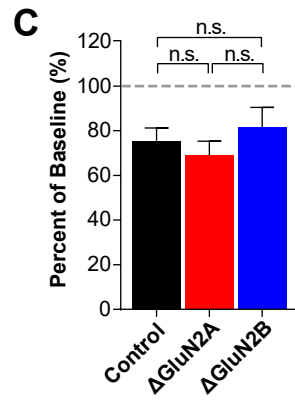
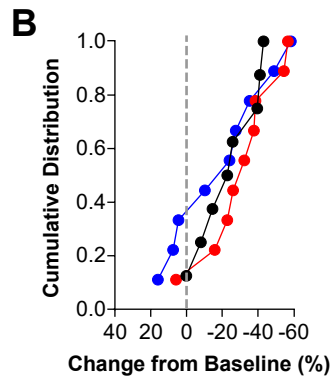
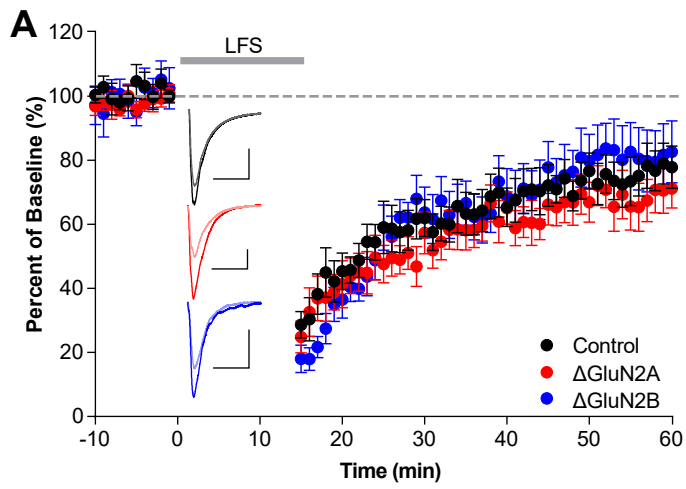
**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**