

## Table of contents

List of abbreviations .....	4
1.1 Fear, anxiety and the stress response .....	7
1.2 Maintenance of homeostasis.....	8
1.3 CRH system and the critical role of the amygdala .....	10
1.4 Epigenetics - the missing link in psychopathology? .....	14
1.5 From normal to pathological anxiety.....	17
1.6 Limitation of actual treatment strategies for pathological anxiety .....	20
1.7 The beneficial effects of enriched environment .....	21
1.8 High anxiety-related behavior mice - a mouse model of pathological anxiety. ....	24
2 Aims of the thesis .....	27
3 Material and Methods.....	29
3.1 Animals and housing conditions.....	29
3.2 Behavioral Testing.....	30
3.3 <i>in silico</i> and molecular analyses .....	37
3.4 Pharmacological manipulation: .....	48
3.5 Statistical analyses .....	51
4. Results.....	53
4.1.1. Effect of EE on anxiety-related behavior .....	53
4.1.2. Effects of EE on exploratory behavior and locomotion .....	58
4.1.3. Effects of EE on coping style and stress reactivity .....	62
4.2 Variability and reproducibility of EE: a meta-analysis of beneficial effects .....	63
4.2.2. Meta-analysis of locomotion .....	66
4.2.3 Meta-analysis of coping style.....	67
4.3 Impact of enrichment on “normal” anxiety-related behavior animals .....	67
4.4.2. Impact of EE on exploratory behavior .....	73
4.3.3 Effect of environmental enrichment on coping style and anhedonia .....	74
4.4 Impact of environmental enrichment on anxiety-related behavior of outbred CD1 mice. .....	75
4.5 Impact of duration on the effects elicited by environmental enrichment .....	76
4.5.2 Impact of prolonged enrichment on coping style .....	82
4.6 Comparison of the impact of environmental enrichment between NABs and HABs receiving either 4 or 10 weeks of EE.....	85

4.7 Contribution of maternal, pup and adolescent behavior to the anxiolytic effect elicited by environmental enrichment in HABs. ....	86
4.7.1 Impact of maternal behavior on anxiety-related behavior during enrichment. ....	86
4.7.2 Effect of EE on pup behavior .....	87
4.7.3 Impact of EE on adolescent behavior .....	89
4.8 Identification of candidate genes related to anxiety-related behavior. ....	91
4.8.2 Western Blot .....	93
4.9 Pharmacological validation of CRHR1 via an $\alpha$ -helical antagonist .....	94
4.10 Assessment of Crhr1 promoter methylation by pyrosequencing .....	95
4.11 Identification of transcriptional regulators by <i>in silico</i> analysis .....	96
4.12 Modulation of behavior by epigenetic drugs .....	98
4.13 Evaluation of transgenerational effects .....	101
5 Discussion and future experiments .....	109
6 References .....	121
7 Acknowledgements .....	134
8 Curriculum vitae .....	135
9 Affidavit (Eidesstattliche Erklärung) .....	136