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Introduction

The visual perspective (Field or Observer) adopted during autobiographical memory retrieval has received increasing interest in clinical research, as it reflects individuals' self-attitude when they re-experience past personal events. Several autobiographical memory deficits have been shown in schizophrenia. However, visual perspective during autobiographical retrieval has not been investigated in these patients. During Field perspectives, the rememberer sees the scene through his own eyes, as in the original event, whereas during Observer perspectives, he sees himself in his memories from the point of view of an external observer. Field perspective is mainly reported for recent, vivid, specific and detailed events that can be mentally re-experienced, while Observer perspective is associated with remote, non specific and less detailed events.

Hypothesis

Patients with schizophrenia would adopt fewer Field visual perspectives when recalling their past personal events

Due to impaired ability of conscious recollection and lack of specificity and details in memories

Methods



Field

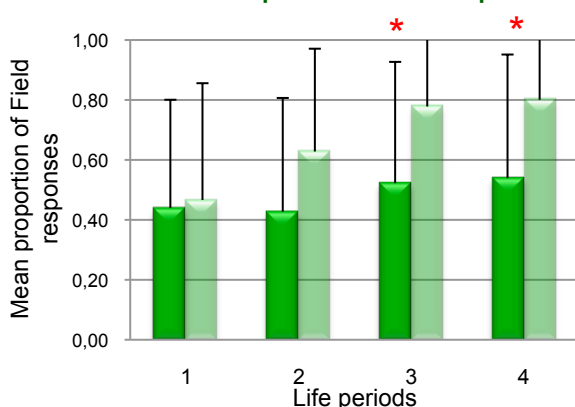
- 30 patients with schizophrenia & 30 comparison participants
- 4 life periods explored
- 1: 0-9 years old; 2: 10-19 years old; 3: 20-1years before test; 4: current year
- Recall of 6 autobiographical events per period
- Associated visual perspective reported: Field or Observer
- Assessment of memory specificity by 2 independent raters



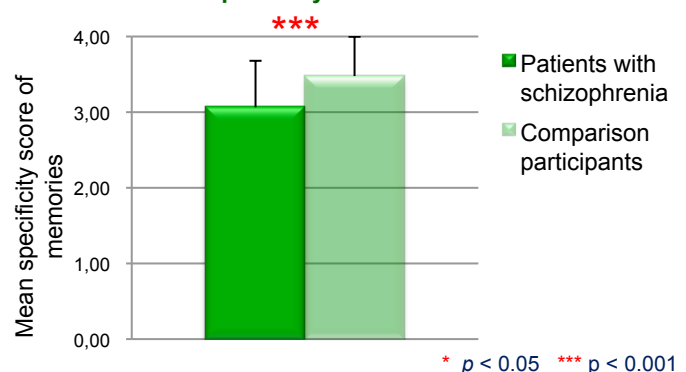
Observer

Results

Field responses across life periods



Specificity of memories



- Significantly less Field perspectives in patients, specially for events which occurred after the age of 20
- Patients' memories were significantly less specific and detailed than those of comparison participants

Discussion & Conclusion

Our study is the first to show that during autobiographical recall, patients with schizophrenia visualized themselves as less active individuals in their memories by adopting fewer Field perspectives. It is apparent that all the important phenomenological aspects of re-experiencing autobiographical events are impaired in these patients. Our results indicate a weakened sense of self in patients with schizophrenia, suggesting that patients experience a distant self-position when recalling their memories. This comforts the notion of passive self-experience well described in this pathology.