Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Review of Autobiographical Memory Studies on Patients with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders

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Response to reviewers’ comments

Reviewer 1:
Comments: In Table 1, study 56, Nieto et al., 2018, you conclude that "the high number of no reported memories from childhood in patients appeared to go against the framework of the CARFAX model’s functional avoidance mechanism"

In my opinión, authors wanted suggest just the opposite, that that result (lack of memories from childhood in patients) suggest to support the functional avoidance hypothesis (they avoid remembering specific events from childhood). I would change the word "against" for some other word like "in agreement with", "appeared to support"...

Authors’ response: Thanks for identifying this typo. We have now corrected it (see Table 1, Study 56).

Reviewer 3:
Although the authors thoroughly reviewed the literature on that question, using several databases, the paper suffers from several limitations.
The first and most important one is the lack of novelty. This review is very similar to the recent work conducted by Ricarte and collaborators and published in 2017. To my opinion, authors' arguments to justify this additional review are too weak. The update of the literature is based on very few years (only three), which is probably not enough to move the field to other directions/towards new conclusions.

Authors’ response: We have added further rational for the current review (page 5, 2nd paragraph).

The authors might consider, instead of a review, to address one or two questions as a response to Ricarte et al., 2017 (short publication, letter to editor…). This review also replicates the findings from a meta-analysis published in 2016 (Berna et al.). Hence, the added-value of the present work is very limited, to my opinion.

Authors’ response: Thank you for recommending to write a Response to Ricarte et al. (2017) to address one or two questions. We, however, think that it is necessary to summarize the entire body of current knowledge about AMs of individuals suffering from schizophrenia spectrum disorder as fourteen new articles on this topic have appeared in the literature since the last review was published. We also found another fifteen articles that were published earlier than the last review, but had not been included. We have included these 29 articles (14+15) in our review to give an up-to-date overview of the findings. We think that a comprehensive systematic review following the PRISMA Statement Guidelines (also registered with PROSPERO) would be a fair treatment to this important research domain.

Second, the research question is not very well motivated in the introduction. The importance of autobiographical memory deficits in schizophrenia should be more clearly emphasized. Why is it so important to consider autobiographical memory impairment in those patients? Why not another cognitive deficit mentioned in the introduction? The motivation really needs to be reinforced in the introduction of the paper.

Authors’ response: We have clearly stated the reason why we were interested to review research on AMs of patients suffering from schizophrenia. The ability to recall personal life experiences (i.e. AMs) is crucial for maintaining an individual’s personal identity, learning from past experiences, and communicate effectively with other people to maintain relationships. We agree that other domains of cognition in which the patients show impairments are important, but we can’t focus on all those domains in one systematic review. We have added further rational for the current systematic review (page 4, 2nd paragraph)
Third, the section regarding future research needs to be improved as well. I think the review would benefit from a strong section on futures perspectives, highlighting how to move the field forward. What is yet to be investigated in patients with schizophrenia autobiographical memory? Which directions should be investigated in the near future (according the current review results)? The review should provide/open strong and concrete new roads for the field.

Authors’ response: Thanks for this recommendation. Although we previously offered some directions for future research in different places in the Discussion section, we have now written a separate section with a subheading to give specific recommendations for future research (see page 33-34).