

TWO STUDIES OF ATTENTIONAL PROCESSING IN SCHIZOTYPAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

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Background: We have previously reported that schizotypal personality disorder (SPD) patients, like schizophrenic patients, demonstrate impaired sustained attention on the Identical Pairs version of the Continuous Performance Task (CPT-IP) when compared to healthy volunteers (Roitman et al, 1997). We wanted to investigate whether these results would be replicated in a larger independent sample of patients with SPD and whether the attentional impairment is due to impaired context processing, i.e. whether SPD patients have difficulty filtering out 'irrelevant' information. **Method:** 53 SPD patients, and 41 healthy volunteers (HV) were tested on the CPT-IP (Cornblatt et al, 1988). A separate sample of 18 SPD and 19 HV participated in the AX version of the CPT (developed by Cohen et al) designed to investigate context processing through the relationship of AY to BX performance. Intact context representation should lead to greater AY than BX errors while impaired processing should lead to fewer AY errors but increased BX errors. **Results:** Replicating our previous finding, SPD patients were significantly impaired in the digit ($d' = 1.6 \pm 1.0$) and shape (1.3 ± 0.7) modalities of the CPT-IP compared to HV (2.3 ± 0.9 ; 1.8 ± 0.8 respectively; both $p < .006$). Consistent with context processing deficits, SPD patients demonstrated significantly greater BX than AY errors (17.8 ± 26.5 ; 11.4 ± 14.9) while HV demonstrated higher AY than BX errors (17.5 ± 15.5 ; 5.2 ± 10.0 ; grp X cond interaction $p < .02$). **Conclusions:** These results are consistent with our previous study reporting attentional differences between SPD and HV both in the verbal and spatial domains of the CPT-IP task. This impairment may be due to the SPD patients' inability to filter out 'irrelevant' information in