

Brain activity underlying successful memory retrieval: A comparison of young and older adults



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TEN YEARS OF SUCCESS

Project in a nutshell...

- We use ***functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)*** to investigate brain activation and connectivity whilst participants lie in an MRI-scanner and perform a visual associative memory test.

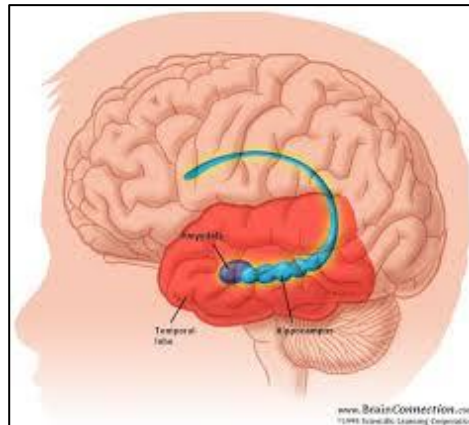


This presentation

- Age-differences in the hippocampal – neocortical connectivity during memory retrieval.

Participants: 19 young adults (21 – 32 years of age; M = 24.32)
19 older adults (59 – 81 years of age; M = 66.21)

- **Hippocampus:** - implicated in memory retrieval
- acts as a collector of information from the neocortex
(Diana et al., 2007; Montaldi and Mayes, 2010; Squire and Wixted, 2011).

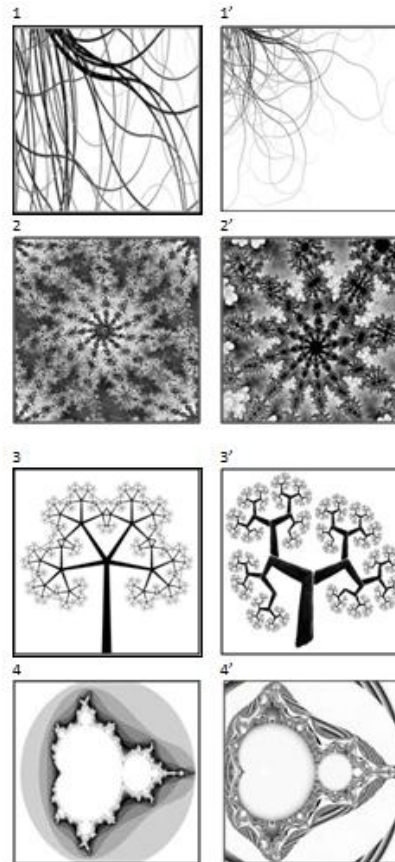


Associative memory task

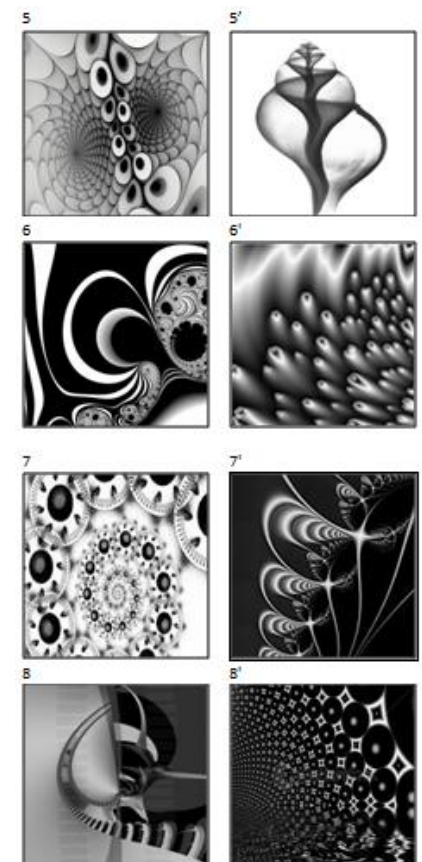
Stimuli

- 8 achromatic pair-associates were learned to 87.5% performance criterion prior to scanning.

Similar pairs
= low memory load



Dissimilar pairs
= high memory load

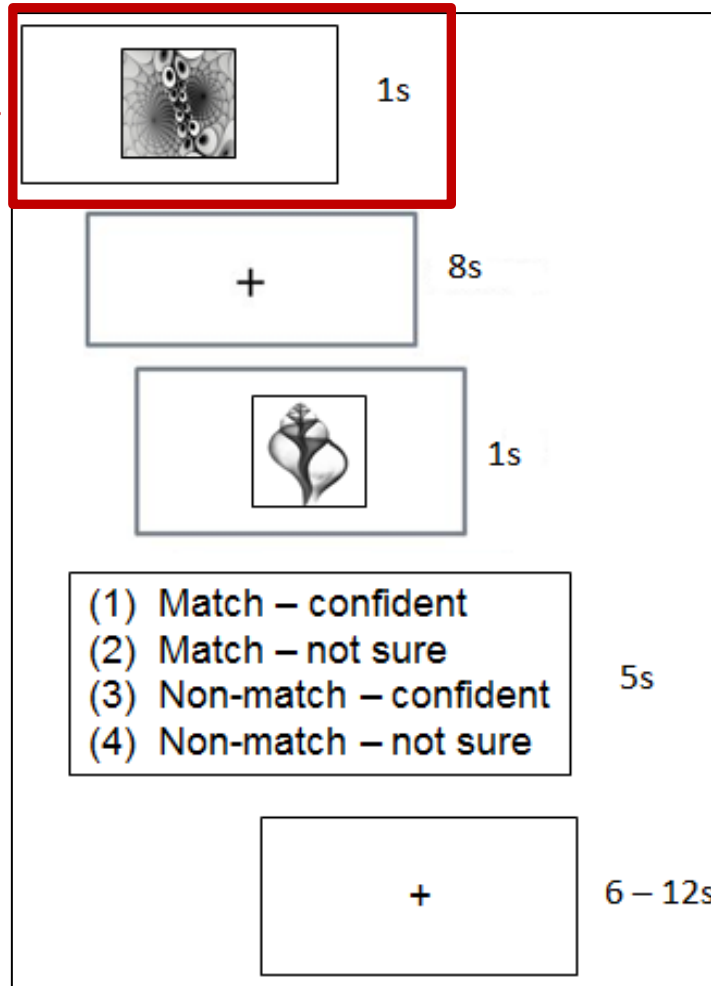


Procedure

In the MRI-scanner:

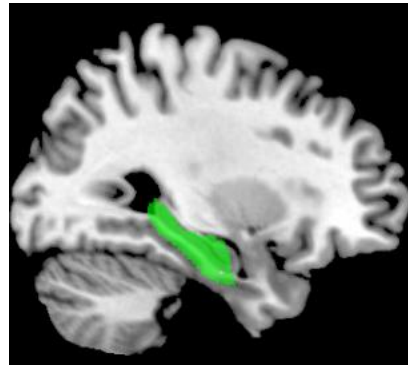
Delayed pair-associative retrieval task

*Only correct and confident responses during cue period were included in the analyses.



Connectivity analyses

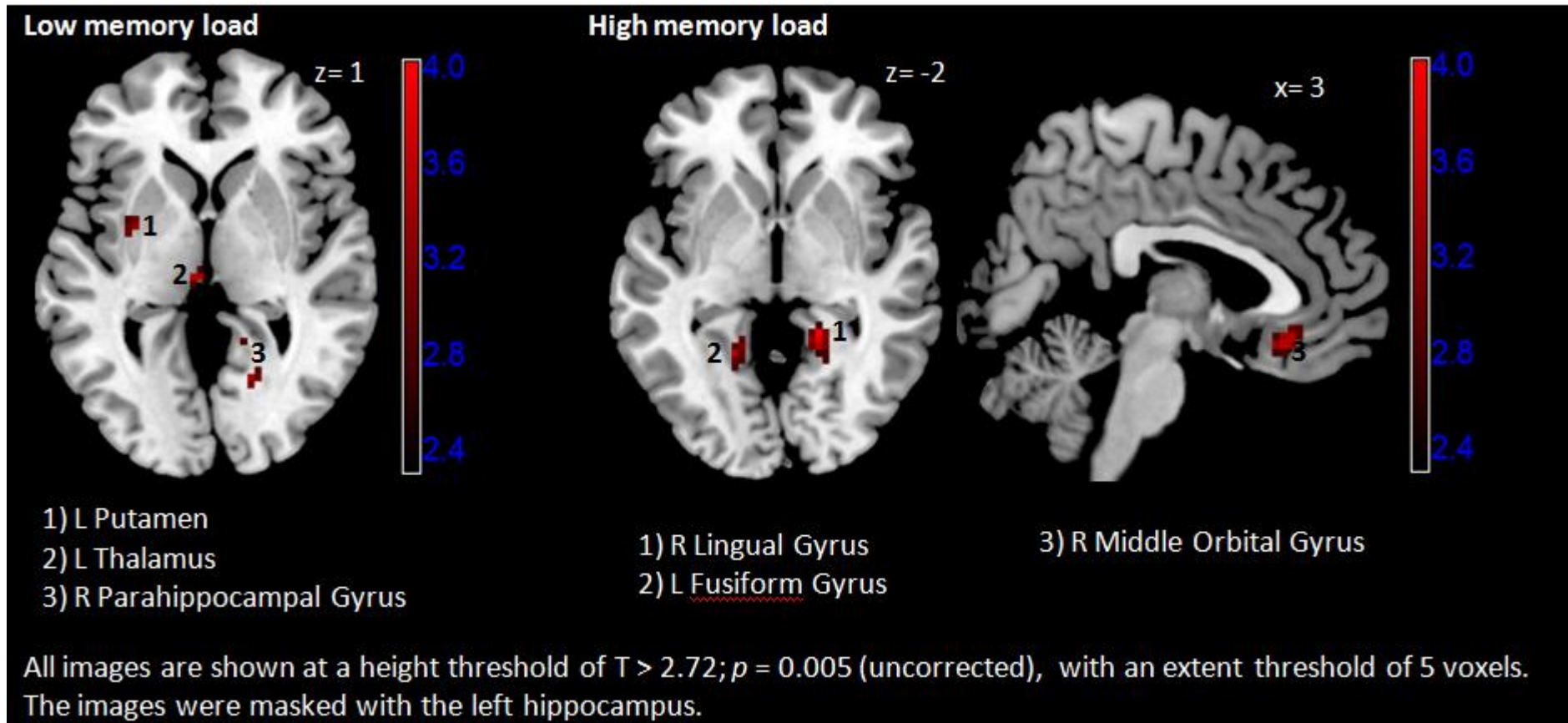
- Seed Region: left Hippocampus.



- Exploratory seed-to-voxel regression for each group/condition.
- Regression of the average activation of the Hippocampus with every other voxel in the brain.

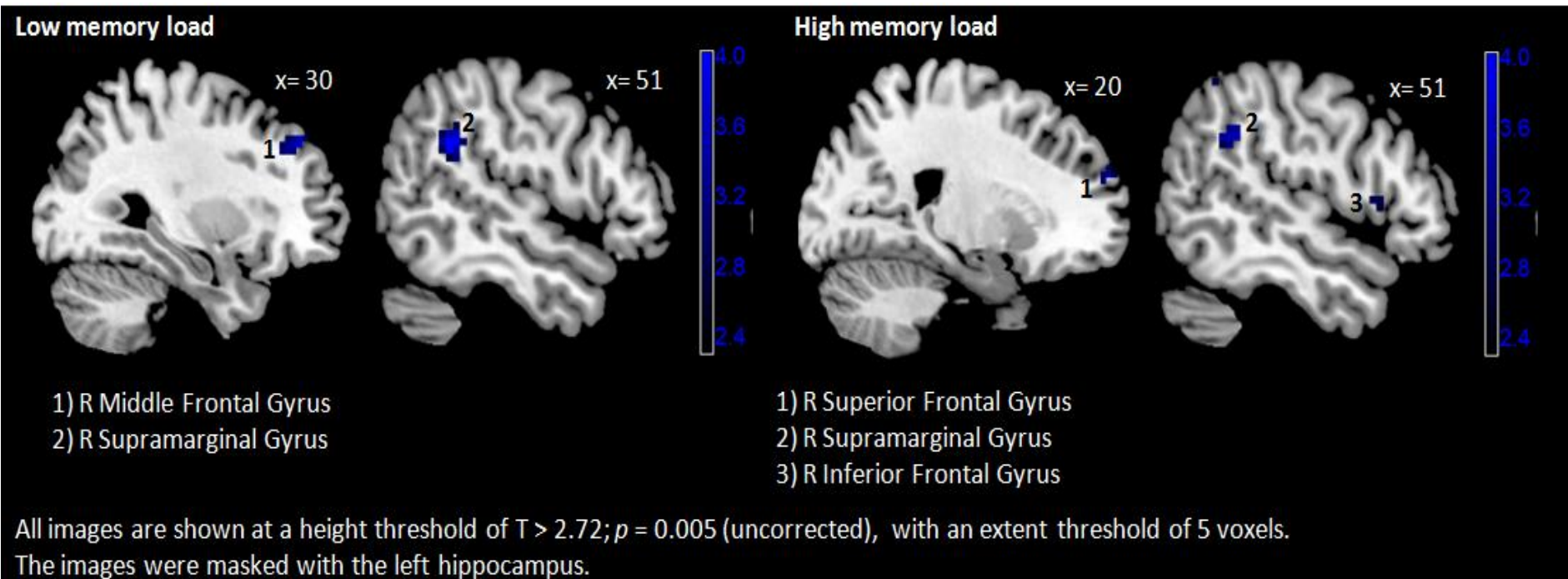
Connectivity Results

- YOUNG > OLDER adults:



Connectivity Results

- **OLDER > YOUNG** adults:



Summary

- **Older adults** have an altered resource allocation, involving hippocampal connectivity with a frontal-parietal control network, even when memory load is low.
- **Young adults** show greater network flexibility from low to high task demands.

Conclusion

- Brain imaging can reveal age-related changes that are undetectable with behavioural measures.
- Knowledge about network-changes in older adults can be used to inform cognitive interventions.
- E.g. Teaching explicit associative memory strategies, such as using perceptual cues and visual imagery (Hampstead et al., 2011) to re-engage a memory-related rather than executive control-related network.

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