What binds us? Inter-brain neural synchronization and its implications for theories of human consciousness

Ana Lucía Valencia†1,2 and Tom Froese2,*,‡

1Psychobiology and Neuroscience Department, Faculty of Psychology, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico; 2Embodied Cognitive Science Unit, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, Okinawa, Japan

*Correspondence address. Embodied Cognitive Science Unit, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, 1919-1 Tancha, Onna-son, Okinawa, 904-0495 Japan. Tel: +81-98-966-8711; Fax: +81-98-966-1063; E-mail: tom.froese@oist.jp
†Ana Lucía Valencia, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4971-1578
‡Tom Froese, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9899-5274

Abstract

The association between neural oscillations and functional integration is widely recognized in the study of human cognition. Large-scale synchronization of neural activity has also been proposed as the neural basis of consciousness. Intriguingly, a growing number of studies in social cognitive neuroscience reveal that phase synchronization similarly appears across brains during meaningful social interaction. Moreover, this inter-brain synchronization has been associated with subjective reports of social connectedness, engagement, and cooperativeness, as well as experiences of social cohesion and ‘self-other merging’. These findings challenge the standard view of human consciousness as essentially first-person singular and private. We therefore revisit the recent controversy over the possibility of extended consciousness and argue that evidence of inter-brain synchronization in the fastest frequency bands overcomes the hitherto most convincing sceptical position. If this proposal is on the right track, our understanding of human consciousness would be profoundly transformed, and we propose a method to test this proposal experimentally.

Keywords: neural synchronization; hyperscanning; electroencephalography; EEG; social interaction; human mind; consciousness

Introduction

In social cognitive neuroscience, a shift toward embodied, enactive, and participatory approaches has started to take place, moving away from individual brains and focusing on a person’s interaction with the environment. In the context of social cognition a ‘second-person’ approach (Hari and Kujala 2009; Dumas 2011; Hasson et al. 2012; Hari et al. 2013; Schilbach et al. 2013; Redcay and Schilbach 2019) has gained popularity, emphasizing the interactive nature of human cognition (Szymanski et al. 2017; Varela et al. 2017), and even challenging the individualist notion of human experience (Thompson 2001; Hari and Kujala 2009; Torrance 2009; Dumas 2011; Kirchhoff 2014; Froese 2018; Kirchhoff and Riverstein 2019). These approaches open the space for neuroscience to experimentally address the constitutive role of brain-to-brain relationships in shaping the mind during moment-to-moment interactions (Hari and Kujala 2009; Dumas 2011; Hasson et al. 2012; Redcay and Schilbach 2019). Important philosophical topics, such as collective intentionality (Searle et al. 1990), can therefore be revisited.

However, there is also some notable resistance towards moving into this uncharted territory. Even the principal architect of the hypothesis of the extended mind, Andy Clark, has
remained sceptical about whether this hypothesis can be generalized to ‘the extended conscious mind’ (Clark 2009). For Clark, the most promising type of argument appeals to dynamic entanglement plus a unique temporal signature, which is based on a popular class of theories of conscious experience that require very fine-grained processes of temporal coordination to bind together meaningful neural activity. Yet he noted the lack of evidence for such processes operating outside an individual’s nervous system, and hence concluded that the case for the extended conscious mind ‘is at best unproven’ (Clark 2009). A decade on from Clark’s influential assessment it has become clear that the current best evidence from social cognitive neuroscience entails a more optimistic conclusion, with potentially far-reaching implications about what it means to be human.

Behavioural studies in psychology have consistently shown that synchrony during joint action (such as rocking, marching, walking, or dancing) promotes cooperative ability and increases empathy, liking, rapport, and prosocial behaviour (Hari and Kujala 2009; Hove and Risen 2009; Wiltermuth and Heath 2009; Valdesolo et al. 2010; Valdesolo and DeSteno 2011; Mogan et al. 2017). From such studies, it has been suggested that dynamics of neuronal coupling could play an important role in the emergence of such interactive synchrony (Wilson and Wilson 2005; Dumas et al. 2011; Hasson et al. 2009). Importantly, the development of the hyperscanning technique by Montague et al. (2002) has allowed for the measurement and analysis of such inter-brain dynamics (Babiloni and Astolfi 2014; Czeszumski et al. 2020). Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), electroencephalography (EEG) or magnetoencephalography (MEG), hyperscanning paradigms simultaneously record the brain activity of two or more individuals, thus permitting the assessment of neural activity during real-time social interaction (Babiloni and Astolfi 2014; Czeszumski et al. 2020).

In the past, the brain of only one participant in a group or dyad would be recorded at a time, obscuring any emerging phenomena of reciprocal embodied interaction (Dumas 2011; Hasson et al. 2012; Czeszumski et al. 2020). But as Montague very simply phrased it, ‘studying social interactions by scanning the brain of just one person is analogous to studying synapses while observing either the presynaptic neuron or the postsynaptic neuron, but never both simultaneously’ (Montague et al. 2002). Hyperscanning allows for the investigation of neural relations at the intra- and inter-brain level (Schilbach et al. 2013; Czeszumski et al. 2020), making it a relevant technique for understanding the neural basis of social interaction.

Keeping in mind that intra-brain neural oscillations are known to play a critical role in cognitive processes (since they represent the precise timing of neural activity Buzsáki 2006; Sauseng and Klimesch 2008) and, more importantly, that largescale phase synchronization has further been proposed as the neural basis of consciousness (Crick and Koch 1990; Thompson and Varela 2001; Ward 2003; Engel et al. 2016) (see below), reports of modifications on the ongoing oscillatory activity of several individuals due to social interaction (as measured using EEG-based hyperscanning) have important implications for our study of human behaviour.

This opinion piece aims to examine findings of EEG-based hyperscanning studies and highlight the importance of inter-brain neural synchronization for the study of consciousness. We discuss findings of brain-to-brain synchronization during cooperative social interaction, revealing that this phenomenon is not a general effect of a shared environment, but an emergent property of specifically social dynamics. This, together with the subjective reports of social connectedness and engagement that often accompany said findings, leads to a new outlook regarding the importance of inter-brain neural synchronization in understanding the nature of human consciousness.

Oscillations, synchronization and consciousness

Neural oscillations are considered to be causally responsible for information transfer and integration (Rosenblum et al. 2001; Herrmann et al. 2016) since they can change the functional interactions between areas of the brain (Varela et al. 2001; Buzsáki 2006; Sauseng and Klimesch 2008; Fries 2015; Bonnepofd et al. 2017), most probably through phase synchronization (Varela et al. 2001; Ward 2003; Buzsáki 2006; Uhlhaas et al. 2009). Since the phase of an oscillation reflects the exact timing of neural activity (Singer 1993; Buzsáki 2006; Cohen 2014), phase synchronization—both within and across EEG frequency bands—represents a window of functional communication and integration between neuronal populations (Sauseng and Klimesch 2008).

It is established that cognitive processes require the transient coalition of several, widely distributed, and interacting neuronal groups (Thompson and Varela 2001; Ward 2003; Siegel et al. 2012) and that this large-scale dynamical integration is accomplished precisely by phase synchronization of cell assemblies (Hebb 1949; Nicolelis et al. 1997; Rodríguez et al. 1999; Varela et al. 2001; Kelso and Engstrom 2006; Sauseng and Klimesch 2008; Kelso 2009; Tognoli and Kelso 2009; Fries 2015; Engel et al. 2016) (of course, synchronization is not the only mechanism underlying effective cognitive processing; for a discussion on importance of phase desynchronization, see Tognoli and Kelso 2009 and Varela et al. 2001). Analogously, the neural substrates of consciousness may not be localized to a single region or network of a person’s brain (Kelso 1995; Thompson and Varela 2001; Engel et al. 2016). Two decades ago, Crick and Koch (1990) suggested a link between synchronized neural oscillations and consciousness; today several authors support the claim that the neural basis of consciousness (specifically of phenomenal consciousness, i.e., the integrated flow of experience Block 1995) is likely to be at the level of large-scale interactions over several frequency bands of oscillatory neural activity (Engel et al. 1999, 2016; Buzsáki 2006; Thompson and Varela 2001; Varela et al. 2001; Ward 2003; Melloni et al. 2007; Uhlhaas et al. 2009; Revonsuo 2014). For example, Llinás suggested that our subjectivity is generated by temporally coherent neural activity (‘It binds, therefore I am’ Llinás 2001), while Engel and Singer proposed that neural synchronization could be the mechanism of different aspects of consciousness, and even what generates the global unity of the self and the world (Engel et al. 1999; Revonsuo 2014).

A large number of evidence further suggest that changes in the patterns of neuronal coherence, both locally and across regions, may lead to changes in mental functioning and the contents of consciousness (Engel et al. 2016). Abnormal oscillatory synchronization has not only been associated with conditions such as epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, essential and cerebellar tremors and coma (Schnitzler and Gross 2005; Buzsáki 2006)—it has also been linked to psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia. Both hallucinatory symptoms and the fragmented nature of these patients’ experience have been related to a disruption of synchronization (Tononi and
As a process crucial for consciousness, oscillations can cut across brain–body–world divisions, rather than being limited to neural activity in the head (Thompson and Varela 2001). An interesting and well-known example of their role in guiding cognition and conscious experience in the world is the adjustment of ongoing neural rhythms to external stimuli, also known as phase locking (Sauseng and Klimesch 2008). Critical to synchronization by oscillation (Buzsáki 2006), phase locking to external stimuli has been described as a ‘gating’ mechanism that can amplify or reduce neuronal responses to the events of an information stream (Bonnefon and Jensen 2012). It has also been related to task performance and conscious perception (Lakatos et al. 2008; Bonnefon and Jensen 2012; Rondoni et al. 2017; Solís-Vivanco et al. 2018). Therefore, its results are crucial for a person’s ability to retrieve information about the world and successfully interact with her/his environment (Hasson et al. 2012). In contrast, schizophrenia patients display reduced alignment of neural activity to external stimuli (Lakatos et al. 2008; Lakatos et al. 2013), and it has also been proposed that the disconnection between self and environment in these patients could be due to this abnormality (Lakatos et al. 2013).

Neural synchronization beyond an individual brain

The continuous modification of internal oscillatory dynamics is not limited to an individual’s interaction with the physical environment. A growing body of research examining neuronal processes in interacting individuals has revealed that social dynamics also play an important role in neuronal rhythms (Balconi and Vanutelli 2017; Stevens and Galloway 2017; Mu et al. 2018). For example, studies have revealed that individuals on the autistic spectrum disorder, who often have substantial problems connecting socially (Hari and Kujala 2009; Marsh et al. 2013; Redcay and Schilbach 2019), show a lack of neural synchronization with others (Tanabe et al. 2012; Salmi et al. 2013).

Furthermore, tasks requiring cooperation, coordination and joint attention in non-clinical individuals demonstrate that greater inter-brain oscillatory synchronization is associated with enhanced performance and can predict team efficiency (Mu et al. 2017; Szymanski et al. 2017; Balconi and Vanutelli 2018), and that tasks with a greater need for cooperation are associated with a higher level of inter-brain synchronization (Bezermanos et al. 2015; Mu et al. 2016; Sinha et al. 2016; Mu et al. 2017; Szymanski et al. 2017; Hu et al. 2018).

The behavioural gains associated with higher inter-brain synchronization subsequently make hyperscanning, and in particular EEG-based hyperscanning (Hari and Kujala 2009), specifically relevant for evaluating the neural oscillatory dynamics associated with social interactions (Liu et al. 2018).

As with other techniques, EEG-based hyperscanning is carried out during a real-time interaction paradigm (Babiloni and Astolfi 2014). Most commonly the paradigms used include tasks such as playing guitars in duets (Lindenberger et al. 2009; Sänger et al. 2012), imitation tasks (Dumas et al. 2010; Yun et al. 2012), visual search tasks (Szymanski et al. 2017), cooperation–competition games (Astolfi et al. 2010; De Vico Fallani et al. 2010; Cui et al. 2012; Sinha et al. 2016; Pan et al. 2017; Hu et al. 2018), verbal or motor interaction (Pérez et al. 2017), amongst others (for reviews see: Dumas et al. 2011; Babiloni and Astolfi 2014; Balconi and Vanutelli 2017; Liu et al. 2018; Czeszumski et al. 2020). Each member of the group or dyad is instrumented with the desired scalp electrode channels from separate EEG devices, and all devices are controlled through an online server (so as to make sure neural recordings run in parallel). A key advantage of EEG-based hyperscanning is that it is capable of maintaining high ecological validity, while capturing changes in the phase relationship between oscillatory signals of individual brains in the millisecond range (Mu et al. 2018; Czeszumski et al. 2020).

Inter-brain phase synchronization analysis under this technique uses adapted versions of intra-brain estimators, such as the Phase Locking Value (PLV) (Lachaux et al. 1999), Inter-brain Phase Coherence (IPC) (Lindenberger et al. 2009), and Partial Directed Coherence (PDC) (Astolfi et al. 2010). While PLV and IPC are measures of similarity between neural signals, PDC is used to estimate causal links between brains (Czeszumski et al. 2020). Other measures used include the Circular Correlation Coefficient (Ccorr), Coherence (COH) measure, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient, Spearman’s Correlation Coefficient, Total Interdependence (TI), and Wavelet Transform Coherence (WTC). Each estimator has advantages and limitations (Burgess 2013; Czeszumski et al. 2020); if used properly, they can reveal the existence of a functional relationship between neural signals of individual brains.

The functional meaning of inter-brain synchronization

‘True’ synchronization occurs when two oscillators reciprocally adjust their ongoing rhythms due to interaction, serving as a reliable marker of information flow between the elements of a system (Rosenblum et al. 2001; Burgess 2013). Thus, and this is key, inter-brain phase synchronization of neural activity potentially indicates functional integration across brains.

Nevertheless, ‘false’ synchronization between brain signals might appear, such as when oscillators are driven by an external influence, or when there is a coincidental phase relationship between individual rhythms. Therefore, careful consideration must be taken before formulating conclusions about their explanatory power (Burgess 2013). Induced synchrony (as opposed to true synchronization) could occur when participants are exposed to the same perceptual stimulus or exhibit similarity of movements, even without actually interacting with one another (Kaneshiro et al. 2020). Therefore, it can be difficult to conclude if synchrony is due to similar dynamics of individual brains driven by a shared perceptual context or if it is an emergent property of social interaction.

Fortunately, most hyperscanning studies today do not simply measure phase synchronization between individuals but compare it between different experimental conditions. To control for induced synchrony, experimental conditions remain identical in every way possible, except for one where participants are socially engaged and another when they are not (Burgess 2013). Many studies additionally use random pair analysis to account for spurious synchronization due to a shared environment (Osaka et al. 2015; Toppi et al. 2016). This analysis compares brain signals from real pairs of subjects (from those who did interact during the task) with signals from ‘random’ or ‘non-pairs’ (from pairs generated randomly based on their role in the task and not the actual pair they were a part of). By doing so, only the emergent neural synchronization that was due real interaction survives the analysis (Bilek et al. 2015; Osaka et al. 2015; Toppi et al. 2016).
True synchronization is associated with cooperation

Besides revealing that synchronized brain activity is neither due to a shared environment (Dikker et al. 2017) nor to similarities in stimulus input or motor output (Sänger et al. 2012; Pérez et al. 2017), EEG-based hyperscanning studies show that functional links appear across participant’s brains during cooperation, but not during competition or individual—yet simultaneous—task performance (De Vico Fallani et al. 2010; Mu et al. 2016; Sinha et al. 2016; Mu et al. 2017; Szymanski et al. 2017; Balconi and Vanutelli 2018a, b) (note that this link is not only observed with EEG-based hyperscanning; see Box 1). For example, pilots and co-pilots in flight simulations (where the environment remains the same, but the need for cooperation varies throughout the task) exhibit high inter-brain connectivity during cooperative phases (takeoff and landing); such interconnections break down during cruise, when the two participants act independently (Toppo et al. 2016). Another clue that such findings are not due to confounding factors (Burgess 2013) but are instead a marker of real synchronization, connectivity between random couples proved non-significant compared to real couples (Toppo et al. 2016). More interestingly, non-cooperative interactions can be predicted during the decision-making phase of a computerized cooperation–competition game, where individuals can either decide to cooperate, defect or choose a ‘tit-for-tat’ strategy (punish the other player for previous non-cooperative behavior). Prior to making the decision, defector couples already show significantly less inter-brain connectivity than couples playing cooperative or tit-for-tat strategies (De Vico Fallani et al. 2010). Interestingly, it has been suggested that this task requires a higher understanding of the other’s intentions when participants decide to cooperate or punish (Czeszumski et al. 2020).

Additionally, not only does cooperation foster inter-brain synchronization; it appears that believing you are ‘part of the same team’ has also an effect on hyper-connectivity. In a study with four participants playing a card game in two competing teams (where, to control for motor activity, experimenters assisted the participants on moving the cards), strong functional connectivity was observed between subjects belonging to the same team, but not between subjects from different teams (Astolfi et al. 2010). Similarly, pairs exposed to a context that represents an in-group threat have higher levels of inter-brain synchronization during a coordination task than those exposed to out-group threats or in-group no-threat control conditions. Importantly, this connectivity only appears when pairs are required to coordinate with a human partner and not a computer (Mu et al. 2017).

Moreover, a recent study revealed that participants playing a cooperation game face-to-face exhibit differences in brain-to-brain synchronization when they believe they are interacting with each other compared to when they believe their interaction is with a computer. In this experimental setup, the prompts ‘your partner is a human’ and ‘your partner is a computer’ were provided before each condition (human–human or human–machine), and every dyad went through both conditions in the same session. Even though in both conditions the interaction was with the partner, believing otherwise had a strong effect on hyper-connectivity (Hu et al. 2018). This may reflect the effects of different levels of engagement (Schilbach et al. 2013).

If, under correct experimental setups, hyperscanning studies are revealing reliable markers of oscillatory synchronization, then it appears that, just as in an individual brain, the dynamics of neural activity during interaction could provide functional integration between the interacting parts—across brains (Kelso and Engstrom 2006; Stevens and Galloway 2016, 2017; Stevens et al. 2017). This is supported by one of the most interesting, yet lesser explored aspects of EEG-based hyperscanning studies: an association between inter-brain neural synchronization and participants’ conscious experiences related to social cohesion.

Inter-brain synchronization and subjective experience of social closeness

Although several experimental paradigms do not explicitly take into account participant’s experience (Balconi and Vanutelli 2017), those that do have yielded interesting results. First, feelings of cooperativeness between participants appear to mediate the level of neural synchronization during cooperation (Hu et al. 2018). Additionally, feelings of engagement, affinity, empathy and social closeness can be predicted by the level of inter-brain synchronization (Dikker et al. 2017; Bevilacqua et al. 2019). Neural synchronization across pairs is also negatively associated with an individual’s reported attachment anxiety (Kinreich et al. 2017) and experience of pain, while it is positively associated with accurately rating another person’s pain experience (Goldstein et al. 2018). Interestingly, the feeling of another person’s touch or pain has been repeatedly reported in intra-brain

---

**Box 1. Beyond EEG**

The type of results described in this article is not limited to the EEG-based hyperscanning technique; MEG, fMRI and fNIRS hyperscanning studies reveal similar findings. Reviewing them all is beyond the purpose of this work. However, we recognize their importance in providing a more complete picture of the brain’s activity during social interaction and emphasize the relevance of future multimodal recording and analysis.

Of particular relevance for oscillatory dynamics, fNIRS-based hyperscanning studies, which do not directly register electrical dynamics but can uncover locally phase-locked neural behaviour, show that higher inter-brain neural synchronization is observed when, for example, participants play a computer game side by side and are required to cooperate, but not when they are required to play against each other (Cui et al. 2012).

The pioneering study by Funane et al. (2011) revealed that the spatiotemporal coherence of inter-brain signals in paired participants was associated with cooperative performance. Participants were instructed to mentally count to 10 after an auditory cue, and then simultaneously press a button. When the brain-activity patterns during the counting period were more synchronized, the time interval between their button-presses was shorter, a result not explained in terms of a motion artefact.

Greater neural synchronization also appeared between subjects completing a puzzle together, compared to when the same subjects completed identical puzzles individually, or watched others complete the puzzle (in front of them or through video recording) (Fishburn et al. 2018). A similar study revealed inter-brain synchronization between two individuals when singing together, but not when singing individually yet close to each other (this effect was not observed in random pairs) (Osaka et al. 2015).
studies, where a person’s own affective pain circuitry is activated while viewing another person receive painful stimuli (Hari and Kujala 2009). More importantly, shared pain experience has also been related to self-other confusion (Derbyshire et al. 2013) and appears to be absent in people in the autistic spectrum disorder (Minio-Paluello et al. 2009), which further supports brain-to-brain synchronization as a mechanism for sharing a social world (Hasson et al. 2012).

Moreover, the nature of the association between participants has an effect on neural synchronization (Pan et al. 2017) and the context under which it appears. During naturalistic nonverbal social interaction (gaze and positive affect), inter-brain neural synchronization appears selectively among romantic couples and not among strangers (this result is unrelated to other factors, such as verbal communication) (Kinreich et al. 2017).

These findings, summarized in Table 1, are consistent with behavioural studies that reveal that movement synchronization plays an important role in social cohesion (McNeill 1997; Valdesolo et al. 2010; Valdesolo and DeSteno 2011) and is associated with higher levels of empathy (Goldstein et al. 2017), less sensitivity to pain perception (Cohen et al. 2010) and experiences of self-other merging (Rabinowitch and Knafo-Noam 2015; Novembre et al. 2016; Galbusera et al. 2019)—on being ‘on the same wavelength’ with someone (Hari and Kujala 2009). More importantly, the changes in an individual’s conscious experience of social closeness that accompany hyper-connectivity are relevant for understanding the interactive nature of human cognition within a ‘second-person neuroscience’ (Schilbach et al. 2013; Varela et al. 2017) and can have important implications for our understanding of the social dimension of human consciousness and for better treating its disorders (Schilbach 2016; Redcay and Schilbach 2019).

Beyond individualist theories of consciousness

If the basis of consciousness is at the level of large-scale interactions of neural oscillatory activity (Crick and Koch 1990; Thompson and Varela 2001; Varela et al. 2001; Ward 2003; Engel et al. 2016), the modifications of oscillations that appear during meaningful social interaction—and their relation to the experiences of social closeness—result in a shift in our understanding of human consciousness. Although a still debated proposal (Clark 2009, 2012; Ward 2012; Kirchhoff 2014; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019), an ‘extension of consciousness’ could be possible in light of these findings.

Enactive and participatory approaches to social cognitive neuroscience view cognition as an interactive process, challenging the individualist notion of the human mind (Clark and Chalmers 1998; De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Torrance 2009; Kirchhoff 2014; Varela et al. 2017; Froese 2018; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019). These approaches establish the association between an individual, the world and others in terms of non-linear interactive dynamics (Beer 2000; Froese and Ikegami 2013). The boundaries that distinguish self from other, instead of being fixed and hard won, are under constant renegotiation (Clark and Chalmers 1998; Kirchhoff 2014; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019); they are observed as a result of self-organizing processes, which can also occur at a social level depending on the nature of the interaction (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Galbusera et al. 2019). Interestingly, the inter-brain synchronization found—at least in the studies considered in Table 1—does not appear to have an overall frequency-, region- or task-specificity. This potentially places embodied interpersonal interaction in general as playing a fundamental role in shaping joint experience and moves social cognition away from the head (Thompson and Varela 2001; Froese and Ikegami 2013).

Considering this, the impact of meaningful social interaction on individual’s self-organizing processes (i.e. ongoing neural oscillations) and, more importantly, the appearance of true phase synchronization between brains (a key coordination variable between interacting dynamical systems Kelso and Engstrom 2006) support the suggestion that when several agents interact, a form of social self-organization could take place, with properties irreducible to the individuals (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Froese et al. 2014; Galbusera et al. 2019). Consequently, the boundaries consciousness could also be under renegotiation during meaningful social interaction.

The main objection to this argument, put forward by Clark (2009), is that consciousness cannot extend outside an individual brain since it requires processes occurring on such a fast temporal scale that neural activity proves to be the only adequate ‘vehicle’. Moreover, the person’s body will act as a ‘low-pass filter’, ultimately ‘screening off’ all non-neural body and environmental elements from being part of the material realizers of consciousness experience. Therefore, entering signals can only play a casual, yet not constitutive, role (Clark 2009).

First, to be clear, when referring to an ‘extension of consciousness’, we are not suggesting that consciousness does not have any neural basis. Human consciousness requires mechanisms occurring within the brain (Thompson and Varela 2001; Engel et al. 2016); nevertheless, neural activity is also embodied in an individual’s interaction in and with the world (Buzsáki 2006; Néel 2009), including with other people (Hari and Kujala 2009). More importantly, inter-brain neural synchronization, as revealed through EEG-based hyperscanning studies, appears in all oscillatory frequency bands, including the faster gamma frequency (Astolfi et al. 2010; Dumas et al. 2010; Kinreich et al. 2017; Mu et al. 2017). There is therefore no empirical reason to limit the basis of conscious experience to very fast neural activity occurring within a single brain.

Additionally, communication within a single brain uses the hierarchical nesting of oscillations, where faster frequencies are embedded in, and modulated by, slower rhythms (Buzsáki 2006; Buzsáki and Draguhn 2004; Bonnefond et al. 2017). This line of reasoning can be extended to the even slower timescales of embodied action in the world (Haken 1980; Kelso 2009; Van Orden et al. 2012; Haken 2013). In this sense, even if the body acted as a ‘low-pass filter’, it remains possible for embodied social interaction to work as a slower rhythm in which neuronal oscillations become nested across two or more people (Hasson et al. 2012), and thus foster ‘interpersonal synergies’ (Riley et al. 2011; Hasson et al. 2012).

By eliminating Clark’s frequency-based objection, we propose that the boundaries of the conscious mind could also be subject to constant renegotiation during an individual’s interaction with his/her environment and with others, pointing to a mechanism that neurally binds us together and opens us up to an extended conscious mind in social interaction (Kelso and Engstrom 2006). An upshot of this proposal is that it can potentially validate our most intimate experiences: when we become aware that ‘we’ are sharing a moment with someone else, it is no longer necessarily the case that we are fundamentally separated by our distinct heads—we could really be two distinct individuals sharing in one and the same unfolding experience (Froese 2018).

The consequence of Clark’s claim that fast temporal integration of neural activity delimits the basis of consciousness, when viewed from the latest hyperscanning evidence, is that this
Table 1. List of studies mentioned includes EEG- and fNIRS-based hyperscanning methodologies

| Authors (year) | Method | Paradigm | Task | N | Frequencies recorded | Frequencies synchronized | Regions | Analysis | Findings |
|---------------|--------|----------|------|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Hu et al. (2018) | EEG | Cooperation | Prisoner’s Dilemma game, with high or low cooperation indexes and conditions of (believed) human-human or human-machine interaction. | 30 | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Theta, alpha | Theta: fronto-central, Alpha: centro-parietal. | PLVn | Higher cooperation rates and greater inter-brain synchrony were present when participants believed to be interacting with a human than with a machine. In human-human conditions, inter-brain coupling was higher in contexts with a high cooperation index. Participants’ reports of perceived cooperativeness mediated the relationship between game context (high or low cooperation) and alpha inter-brain synchrony. |
| Bezerianos et al. (2015) | EEG | Cooperation | Computer-based piloting task | 8 | Delta, theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Not evaluated | Centro-parietal and frontal. | PDC | Cross-brain coupling increased as task difficulty increased. |
| Sinha et al. (2016) | EEG | Cooperation | Computer-based cooperation-competition game | 24 | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Alpha, beta | | PCC | Inter-brain synchrony between the subjects was significantly higher when they cooperated with each other compared to the competitive scenario. |
| Toppi et al. (2016) | EEG | Cooperation | Flight simulation (takeoff, cruise and landing) | 12 | Theta, alpha | Theta, alpha | Alpha and theta: Fronto-parietal and centro-parietal. Theta: parieto-parietal. | PDC | A denser pattern of interconnections linking the dyads’ brain activities appeared during the two cooperative flight phases (takeoff and landing) with respect to the non-cooperative cruise phase (cruise). There was a density modulation according to the degree of cooperation between the two pilots. Results sustained random pair analysis. |
| Astolfi et al. (2010) | EEG | Cooperation | Card Game (Scopa) | 14 | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Alpha, beta, gamma | Prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex and parietal cortex. | PDC | Strong estimated functional connectivity was found in subjects belonging to the same team but not in subjects belonging to different teams. The functional connectivity links found were directional (i.e. the signals from the second players revealed a statistically significant Granger-causality with signals of the first players of the same team). |
| De Vico Fallani et al. (2010) | EEG | Cooperation | Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma game (dyads with option to defect, cooperate or choose a tit-for-tat strategy in each trial) | 58 | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Frontal and pre-frontal. | PDC | Non-cooperative interactions can be predicted during the decision-making phase. Prior to making the decision, defector couples already show significantly less interbrain connectivity than couples playing cooperative or tit-for-tat strategies. |
| Balconi and Vanutelli (2018) | EEG | Competition | Computer-based competition task | 30 | Delta, theta, alpha, beta | Delta, theta | Prefrontal. | PCC, ANOVA | Pair’s task performance (response times and error rates) was improved during competitive tasks with respect to control condition, with further improvement after receiving reinforcing feedback. Inter-brain functional connectivity was reduced during competition. |
| Mu et al. (2017) | EEG | Coordination | Mental counting task (with partner or with computer) after reading a text about in-group or out-group societal threats (with in-group no-threat control). | 90 | Delta, theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Gamma | Frontal, central and parietal. | PLVn | Greater inter-brain synchrony between participants under an in-group threat, which correlated with greater task coordination. Synchrony not present when each individual would try to mentally coordinate counting with a computer. Inter-brain synchrony mediated the effect of ingroup threat on interpersonal coordination. |
| Mu et al. (2016) | EEG | Coordination | Mental counting task | 68 | Alpha | Alpha | Central and posterior. | PLVn | Dyads showed smaller interpersonal time lags of counting and greater inter-brain synchrony during the coordination task compared to control task. These effects were observed in female but not male dyads. |
| Authors (year)         | Method | Paradigm     | Task                                                                                     | N   | Frequencies recorded | Frequencies synchronized | Regions                  | Analysis | Findings                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mu et al. (2016)      | EEG    | Coordination | Mental counting task (with intranasal oxytocin vs placebo administration).               | 60  | Alpha                 | Alpha                    | Central and posterior.   | PLVn     | Intranasal oxytocin (vs placebo) administration in male dyads improved interpersonal behavioral synchrony in both the coordination and control tasks but specifically enhanced inter-brain neural synchrony during the coordination task. |
| Szymanski et al. (2017) | EEG    | Joint attention | Enumeration visual search task.                                                           | 52  | Delta, theta, alpha, beta | Delta                    | Frontal, central and parietal. | PLVn, IPC | Higher phase synchrony when doing the task together (joint attention) than when doing the same task individually (individual attention). Team efficiency could be predicted by measures of synchronization during dyadic performance. |
| Balconi and Vanutelli (2018) | EEG    | Joint attention | Sustained selective attention task (cooperation of speed and accuracy was asked of each pair of subjects). | 32  | Delta, theta, alpha, beta | Delta, theta              | Left prefrontal.          | PCC, ANOVA | Cooperation correlated positively with inter-brain synchrony. External positive feedback increased both behavioral (higher reaction time and lower error rate) and brain synchronization. |
| Dikker et al. (2017)* | EEG    | Joint attention | High school students engaged in a semester during regular classroom activities.           | 12  | Alpha                 | Alpha                    | Not reported.            | TI       | Brain-to-brain synchrony predicted classroom engagement and social dynamics (group affinity, empathy and social closeness). Joint attention, and not passive co-presence, predicted brain-to-brain synchrony. |
| Bevilacqua et al. (2019)* | EEG    | Joint attention | High school students in class under different teaching styles (videos and lectures).     | 12  | Alpha                 | Alpha                    | Not reported.            | TI       | Brain-to-brain synchrony between teachers and students varied as a function of student engagement as well as teacher likeability. Students who reported greater social closeness to the teacher showed higher brain-to-brain synchrony with the teacher. This was only the case for lectures (compared to videos)—that is, when the teacher was an integral part of the content presentation. |
| Sänger et al. (2012)  | EEG    | Joint action  | Playing guitar in duets in a leader-follower fashion.                                    | 24  | Delta, theta           | Delta, theta             | Frontal and central.     | PLVn, IPC | Phase locking and both within-brain and between-brain phase coherence connection strengths were enhanced during periods that put particularly high demands on coordination. Phase locking was modulated in relation to the assigned musical roles of leader and follower. Inter-brain synchronization corresponded with interactional synchrony. |
| Dumas et al. (2010)   | EEG    | Joint action  | Spontaneous imitation of hand movements.                                                 | 18  | Theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Alpha-mu, beta, gamma    | Alpha-mu: right parietal, Beta: central and parieto-occipital, Gamma: fronto-central and parietal. | PLVn     | Increased inter-brain synchrony present between participants while speaking and listening (compared to surrogate data). The activity of the listener would become entrained to that of the speaker. These effects were not an epiphenomenon of auditory processing. |
| Pérez et al. (2017)   | EEG    | Communication | Speaking and listening.                                                                  | 30  | Delta, theta, alpha, beta | Delta, theta, alpha, beta | Alpha: fronto-central, Beta: fronto-temporal. | PLVi     |                                                                                               |
| Authors (year) | Method | Paradigm | Task | N | Frequencies recorded | Frequencies synchronized | Regions | Analysis | Findings |
|---------------|--------|----------|------|---|----------------------|--------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Kinreich et al. (2017)* | EEG | Positive affect | Nonverbal social behaviour (gaze and affect) between co-habiting romantic couples or strangers. | 104 | Delta, theta, alpha, beta, gamma | Gamma | Temporo-parietal | SPC | Inter-brain synchrony found in couples, but not in strangers. Among couples, neural synchrony was anchored in episodes of gaze and positive affect. Strangers’ synchrony did not show significant differences between moments of gaze-no gaze or positive affect-no affect, but a correlation was observed between the amount of time strangers spent in social gaze or positive affect and their gamma synchrony. In couples, synchrony was negatively correlated with attachment anxiety reports. For both couples and strangers, brain-to-brain synchrony was unrelated to episodes of speech-no-speech, speech duration, or general content of conversation. |
| Goldstein et al. (2018)* | EEG | Pain perception | Dyads (with a target and observer) under pain-no-pain and touch-no-touch conditions. | 44 | Alpha, beta | Alpha-mu | Target: central. Observer: right hemisphere. | Ccorr | Handholding during pain administration increased brain-to-brain synchrony, which correlated negatively with the target’s pain perception and positively with the observer’s empathetic accuracy. |
| Pan et al. (2017)* | fNIRS | Cooperation | Computer-based cooperation game. | 98 | N/A | N/A | Right superior frontal cortex. | WTC | Cooperative behaviour was higher in lover dyads compared to friend and stranger dyads. Lower dyads demonstrated increased inter-brain coherence, which also covaried with task performance. |
| Cui et al. (2012) | fNIRS | Cooperation | Computer-based cooperation-competition game. | 22 | N/A | N/A | Superior frontal cortex. | WTC | Coherence between brain activation patterns increased significantly during cooperation, but not during competition. This increase accompanied an increase in cooperation performance in the cooperation game. |
| Funane et al. (2011) | fNIRS | Cooperation | Cooperative button-press task (with prior individual mental count after auditory cue). | 12 | N/A | N/A | Pre-frontal cortex. | Covariance | Spatiotemporal coherence of inter-brain signals of paired participants associated with cooperative performance. When the brain-activity patterns during the counting period were more synchronized, the interval between their button-press times was shorter, a result not explained in terms of a motion artefact. |
| Osaka et al. (2015) | fNIRS | Coordination | Singing/humming | 58 | N/A | N/A | Left inferior frontal cortex. | WTC | Significant increase in neural synchronization for cooperative singing or humming (regardless of being face-to-face or face-to-wall) compared to singing or humming alone or listening to the other participant sing or hum. Interpersonal neural synchronization was greater when completing the puzzle together than when completing the same puzzle individually, watching a pair complete the puzzle or watching a movie of other people completing the puzzle. |
| Fishburn et al. (2018) | fNIRS | Joint attention | Completing a puzzle (together or individually). | 57 | N/A | N/A | Prefrontal cortex. | PCC, WTC | |

*The studies that took into account the participants’ subjective experience or their relationship nature (e.g., lover dyads vs strangers).

PLVn, phase locking value (trial averaged); PLVt, phase locking value (time averaged); IPC, interbrain phase coherence; PCC, Pearson correlation coefficient; ANOVA, analysis of variance; PDC, partial directed coherence; TI, total interdependence; SPC, spearman correlation coefficient; CCorr, circular correlation; WTC, wavelet transform coherence; N/a, non-applicable.
basis can indeed become extended across two brains during social interaction. For Clark, and for us, this is a constitutive claim, not a causal claim. Importantly, this does not necessarily mean that individual perspectives will be obliterated and merged into a single supra-individual perspective (Stapleton and Froese 2015). We propose that the fact that the basis of an individual’s perspective now integrates some neural activity from another person’s brain provides a suitable explanation for the qualitative experiential transition from a purely first-person perspective to a second-person perspective, which is also sometimes referred to as the ‘we’ perspective (Zahavi 2015). If this proposal is on the right track, then there could be a genuinely collective basis to collective intentionality (Searle et al. 1990), thereby overcoming difficulties stemming from the individualist assumption of traditional theories in philosophy. There are also experimental consequences: presumably, the larger the cross-brain neural integration, the larger the qualitative sense of sharing an experience together, and this could potentially be tested.

**Testing the hypothesis: a possible experimental setup**

We have proposed that inter-brain phase synchronization of neural oscillatory activity is a candidate mechanism for the conscious extended mind, potentially explaining the known association of synchronization with the feeling of being together with someone else. Although consciousness is notoriously difficult to investigate scientifically, here we suggest that our proposal could be experimentally tested through transcranial alternating current stimulation (tACS). Arguably, the best method known to date that assesses the causality of brain oscillations in human cognition (Cohen 2014), tACS can directly modulate the ongoing rhythms of neural activity in an individual brain by passing an electrical current between two electrodes placed on the scalp, entraining specific oscillations and thereby influencing cognitive processes (Cohen 2014; Zaehle et al. 2010; Helfrich et al. 2014; Herrmann et al. 2013) and large-scale network dynamics (Ali et al. 2013).

When used in individual brains, this method has been reported to induce changes in subjective experience (Meiron and Lavidor 2014), such as self-awareness (Voss et al. 2014). In addition, its therapeutic applications on individuals with disorders of consciousness, such as on patients with schizophrenia, are already demonstrated (Kallel et al. 2016; Mellin et al. 2018; Ahn et al. 2019). These findings support this method’s relevance for investigating the extension of consciousness during social interaction.

From the available literature it appears that simultaneous brain stimulation, or hyper-tACS, is associated with an enhancement of interpersonal movement synchrony (Novembre et al. 2017). In a study conducted by Novembre et al. (2017), in-phase 20Hz stimulation across two individuals’ motor cortices enhanced behavioural synchrony in a joint finger-tapping task, compared with anti-phase or sham stimulation. This was seen even after controlling for stimulus induced synchronization and performing random pair analysis (Novembre et al. 2017).

Under a setup of social interaction similar to those utilized in the aforementioned EEG-based hyperscanning studies (where true synchronization between participant’s brains takes place (Burgess 2013), hyper-tACS could be used to either enhance or diminish pre-existing inter-brain synchronization during a cooperative task to study its effects on the participant’s subjective experience of social connectedness and engagement. We expect that hyper-tACS conditions that foster brain-to-brain synchronization during cooperative action would lead to higher experienced cohesion, compared to hyper-tACS conditions that inhibit neural synchronization across participant’s brains.

TACS-EEG co-registration is still in its early stages, but promises to ‘open a new frontier in oscillatory brain rhythms investigations’ (Feurra et al. 2012). Even though there is no established hyper-tACS/EEG method to date, it has proven an effective method for manipulating on-going inter-brain phase synchronization during joint action (Novembre et al. 2017; Szymanski et al. 2017). However, results are still inconclusive. As opposed to Novembre’s study, Szymanski et al. (2017) found that only dyadic performance asynchrony, compared to dyadic synchrony and individual synchronization to a metronome, was modulated by hyper-tACS. Due to TACS dependence on the power of individual endogenous oscillations at the targeted frequency (Ruhnau et al. 2016), this study’s electrode placement left room for individual differences within each dyad, so unique dyad differences might have resulted in an unprecise inter-brain phase synchronization.

Further hyper-tACS studies, with more precise stimulation protocols, are needed in order to ensure that oscillations in the same frequencies are synchronized in the brains of individuals engaged in social interaction (Szymanski et al. 2017). Only then could the subjective experience of social connectedness be manipulated in a valid experimental setup. If this turned out to be the case, it would establish inter-brain neural synchronization as the basis for the conscious extended mind, at least for situations where it matters most—during meaningful social interaction.

**Conclusion**

An influential position in the philosophy of mind articulated by Clark had appealed to the lack of empirical evidence regarding very fast binding processes outside the nervous system to conclude that the possibility of the conscious extended mind is at best unproven. As we have shown, the current evidence no longer supports such a sceptical assessment. With these theoretical doubts removed, we conclude that the time is right to marshal the best contemporary hyperscanning practices in cognitive neuroscience in order to move beyond the still widespread traditional assumption that all aspects of consciousness are necessarily private and first-person singular. It is time to bring the sciences of the mind in line with the social nature of human experience.

**Conflict of interest statement.** None declared.

**References**

Ahn S, Mellin JM, Alagapan S, et al. Targeting reduced neural oscillations in patients with schizophrenia by transcranial alternating current stimulation. *Neuroimage* 2019;186:126–36.

Ali MM, Sellers KK, Frohlich F. Transcranial alternating current stimulation modulates large-scale cortical network activity by network resonance. *J Neurosci* 2013;33:11262–75.

Astolfi L, et al. Neuroelectrical hyperscanning measures simultaneous brain activity in humans. *Brain Topogr* 2010;23:243–56.

Babiloni F, Astolfi L. Social neuroscience and hyperscanning techniques: past, present and future. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev* 2014;44:76–93.
Balconi M, Vanutelli ME. Cooperation and competition with hyperscanning methods: review and future application to emotion domain. Front Comput Neurosci 2017;11:86.

Balconi M, Vanutelli ME. EEG hyperscanning and behavioral synchronization during a joint action. Neuropsychol Trends 2018a; 23:47.

Balconi M, Vanutelli ME. Functional EEG connectivity during competition. BMC Neurosci 2018b;19:63.

Beer RD. Dynamical approaches to cognitive science. Trends Cogn Sci 2000;4:91–9.

Bevisalca D, Davidesco I, Wan L, et al. Brain-to-brain synchrony and learning outcomes vary by student–teacher dynamics: evidence from a real-world classroom electroencephalography study. J Cogn Neurosci 2019;31:401–11.

Bekerianos A, Sun Y, Chen Y, et al. Functional EEG connectivity during cooperation. J Neurosci 2020;40:11418–21.

Bereznians A, Sun Y, Chen Y, et al. Cooperation driven coherence: brains working hard together. In: 2015 37th Annual International Conference of the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society (EMBC). Milan, Italy: IEEE, 2015, 4696–9. doi: 10.1109/EMBC.2015.7319442.

Bilek E, Ruf M, Schäfer A, et al. Information flow between interacting human brains: identification, validation, and relationship to social expertise. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA 2015;112: 5207–12.

Block N. On a confusion about a function of consciousness. Behav Brain Sci 1995;18:227–47.

Bonnefond M, Jensen O. Alpha oscillations serve to protect working memory maintenance against anticipated distractors. Curr Biol 2012;22:1969–74.

Bonnefond M, Kastner S, Jensen O. Communication between brain areas based on nested oscillations. eNeuro 2017;4.

Burgess AP. On the interpretation of synchronization in EEG hyperscanning studies: a cautionary note. Front Hum Neurosci 2013;7:881.

Buzsáki G, Draguhn A. Neuronal oscillations in cortical networks. Science 2004;304:1926–9.

Buzsáki G. Rhythms of the Brain. New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Clark A, Chalmers D. The extended mind. Analysis 1998;58:7–19.

Clark A. Dreaming the whole cat: generative models, predictive processing, and the enactivist conception of perceptual experience. Mind 2012;121:753–71.

Clark A. Spreading the joy? Why the machinery of consciousness is (probably) still in the head. Mind 2009;118:963–93.

Cohen MX. Analyzing Neural Time Series Data: Theory and Practice. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014.

Crick F, Koch C. Towards a neurobiological theory of consciousness. Semin Neurosci 1990;2:263–75.

Cui X, Bryant DM, Reiss AL. NIRS-based hyperscanning reveals increased interpersonal coherence in superior frontal cortex during cooperation. Neuroimage 2012;59:2430–7.

Czeszumski A, Eustergerling S, Lang A, et al. Hyperscanning: a valid method to study neural inter-brain underpinnings of social interaction. Front Hum Neurosci 2020;14.

De Jaegher H, Di Paolo E. Participatory sense-making. Phenomenol Cogn Sci 2007;6:485–507.

De Vico Fallani F, Nicosia V, Sinatra R, et al. Defecting or not defecting: how to “read” human behavior during cooperative games by EEG measurements. PLoS One 2010;5:e14187.

Derbyshire SWG, Osborn J, Brown S. Feeling the pain of others is associated with self-other confusion and prior pain experience. Front Hum Neurosci 2013;7.
Herrmann CS, Rach S, Neuling T, et al. Transcranial alternating current stimulation: a review of the underlying mechanisms and modulation of cognitive processes. Front Hum Neurosci 2013;7:279.

Herrmann CS, Strüber D, Helfrich RF, et al. EEG oscillations: from correlation to causality. Int J Psychophysiol 2016;103:12–21.

Hove MJ, Risen JL. It’s all in the timing: interpersonal synchronization increases affiliation. Soc Cogn 2009;27:949–61.

Hu Y, Pan Y, Shi X, et al. Inter-brain synchrony and cooperation context in interactive decision making. Biol Psychol 2018;133:54–62.

Kallèl L, Mondino M, Brunelini J. Effects of theta-rhythm transcranial alternating current stimulation (4.5 Hz-tACS) in patients with clozapine-resistant negative symptoms of schizophrenia: a case series. J Neural Transm 2016;123:1213–7.

Kaneshiro B, Nguyen DT, Norcia AM, et al. Natural music evokes correlated EEG responses reflecting temporal structure and beat. NeuroImage 2020;214:116559.

Kelso JAS. Coordination dynamics. In: Meyers RA (ed.), Encyclopedia of Complexity and System Science. New York, USA: Springer, 2009, 1537–64.

Kelso JAS. Dynamic Patterns: The Self-organization of Brain and Behaviour. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

Kelso JAS, Engstrom DA. The Complementary Nature. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

Kineich S, Djalovski A, Kraus L, et al. Brain-to-brain synchrony during naturalistic social interactions. Sci Rep 2017;7:17060.

Kirchhoff M. Extended cognition & constitution: re-evaluating the constitutive claim of extended cognition. Philos Psychol 2014;27:258–83.

Kirchhoff MD, Kiverstein J. Extended Consciousness and Predictive Processing. New York, USA: Routledge, 2019. doi: 10.4324/9781315150420.

Lachaux J-P, Rodriguez E, Martinerie J, et al. Measuring phase synchrony in brain signals. Hum Brain Mapp 1999;8:194–208.

Lakatos P, Nortcia AM, et al. Natural music evokes correlated EEG responses reflecting temporal structure and beat. NeuroImage 2020;214:116559.

Lakens J, Vezzosi M, et al. Neural alpha oscillations in I of the Vortex: From Neurons to Self. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Marsh KL, Isenhower RW, Richardson MJ, et al. Autism and social disconnection in interpersonal rocking. Front Integr Neurosci 2013;7:4.

McNeill WH. Keeping Together in Time. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Meiron O, Lavidor M. Prefrontal oscillatory stimulation modulates access to cognitive control references in retrospective metacognitive commentary. Clin Neurophysiol 2014;125:77–82.

Melloni L, Alagapan S, Lustenberger C, et al. Randomized trial of transcranial alternating current stimulation for treatment of auditory hallucinations in schizophrenia. Eur Psychiatry 2018;51:25–33.

Melloni L, Molina C, Pena M, et al. Synchronization of neural activity across cortical areas correlates with conscious perception. J Neurosci 2007;27:2858–65.

Minio-Paluello I, Baron-Cohen S, Avenanti A, et al. Absence of embodied empathy during pain observation in Asperger Syndrome. Biol Psychiatry 2009;65:55–62.

Mogan R, Fischer R, Bubulia JA. To be in synchrony or not? A meta-analysis of synchrony’s effects on behavior, perception, cognition and affect. J Exp Soc Psychol 2017;72:13–20.

Montague PR, Berns GS, Cohen JD, et al. Hyperscanning: simultaneous fMRI during linked social interactions. NeuroImage 2002;16:1159–64.

Mu Y, Cerritos C, Khan F. Neural mechanisms underlying interpersonal coordination: a review of hyperscanning research. Soc Personal Psychol Compass 2018;12:e12421.

Mu Y, Guo C, Han S. Oxytocin enhances inter-brain synchrony during social coordination in male adults. Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci 2016;11:1882–93.

Mu Y, Han S, Gelbard M. The role of gamma interbrain synchrony in social coordination when humans face territorial threats. Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci 2017;12:1614–23.

Nicolieu MA, Faselhew EE, Ghazanfar AA. Hebb’s dream: the resurgence of cell assemblies. Neuron 1997;19:219–21.

Noë A. Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness. New York, USA: Hill and Wang, 2009.

Novembre G, Knoeblich G, Dunne L, et al. Interpersonal synchrony enhanced through 20 Hz phase-coupled dual brain stimulation. Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci 2017;12:662–70.

Novembre G, Sammler D, Keller PE. Neural alpha oscillations index the balance between self-other integration and segregation in real-time joint action. Neuropsychologia 2016;89:414–25.

Osaka N, Minamoto T, Yaoi K, et al. How two brain make one synchronized mind in the inferior frontal cortex: fNIRS-based hyperscanning during cooperative singing. Front Psychol 2015;6:1811.

Pan Y, Cheng X, Zhang Z, et al. Cooperation in lovers: an fNIRS-based hyperscanning study. Hum Brain Mapp 2017;38:831–41.

Pérez A, Carreiras M, Duranteita JA. Brain-to-brain entrainment: EEG interbrain synchronization while speaking and listening. Sci Rep 2017;7:4190.

Rabinowitch T-C, Knafo-Noam A. Synchronous rhythmic interaction enhances children’s perceived similarity and closeness towards each other. PLoS One 2015;10:e0120878.

Redcay E, Schilbach L. Using second-person neuroscience to elucidate the mechanisms of social interaction. Nat Rev Neurosci 2019;20:495–505.

Revensou A. Binding problem. In: Bayne T, Cleeremans A and Revonsuo A (eds), What binds us? Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Riley MA, Richardson MJ, Shockley K, et al. Interpersonal synergies. New York, USA: Front Psychol 2011;2:38.

Rodriguez E, George N, Lachaux JP, et al. Perception’s shadow: long-distance synchronization of human brain activity. Nature 1999;397:430–3.

Ronconi L, Oosterhof NN, Bonmassar C, et al. Multiple oscillatory rhythms determine the temporal organization of perception. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA 2017;114:13435–40.

Rosenblum M, Pikovsky A, Kurths J, et al. Phase synchronization: from theory to data analysis. In: Moss F and Gielen S (eds), Handbook of Biological Physics. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 2001, 279–321.
Ruhnau P, Neuling T, Fuscá M, et al. Eyes wide shut: transcranial alternating current stimulation drives alpha rhythm in a state dependent manner. Sci Rep 2016;6:27138.

Salmi J, Roine U, Gleran E, et al. The brains of high functioning autistic individuals do not synchronize with those of others. Neuroimage Clin 2013;3:489–97.

Sänger J, Müller V, Lindenberger U. Intra- and interbrain synchronization and network properties when playing guitar in duets. Front Hum Neurosci 2012;6:312.

Sauseng P, Klimesch W. What does phase information of oscillatory brain activity tell us about cognitive processes? Neurosci Biobehav Rev 2008;32:1001–13.

Schilbach L, Timmermans B, Reddy V, et al. Toward a second-person neuroscience. Behav Brain Sci 2013;36:393–414.

Schilbach L. Towards a second-person neuropsychiatry. Philos Trans R Soc B Biol Sci 2016;371:20150081.

Schnitzler A, Gross J. Normal and pathological oscillatory communication in the brain. Nat Rev Neurosci 2005;6:285–96.

Searle JR. Collective intentions and actions. In: Cohen PR, Morgan J, Pollack M (eds), Intentions in Communication. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, 401–15.

Siegel M, Donner TH, Engel AK. Spectral fingerprints of large-scale neuronal interactions. Nat Rev Neurosci 2012;13:121–34.

Singer W. Synchronization of cortical activity and its putative role in information processing and learning. Annu Rev Physiol 1993;55:349–74.

Sinha N, Masaczky T, Wanxuan Z, et al. EEG hyperscanning study of inter-brain synchrony during cooperative and competitive interaction. In: 2016 IEEE International Conference on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, Budapest, Hungary, 2016. 4813–8.

Solís-Vivanco R, Jensen O, Bonnefond M. Top-down control of alpha phase adjustment in anticipation of temporally predictable visual stimuli. J Cogn Neurosci 2018;30:1157–69.

Stapleton M, Froese T. Is collective agency a coherent idea? Considerations from the enactive theory of agency. In: Misselhorn C (ed.) Collective Agency and Cooperation in Natural and Artificial Systems. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015, 219–36.

Stevens RH, Galloway TL, Willemsen-Dunlap A. A team’s neurodynamic organization is more than the sum of its members. Proc Hum Factors Ergon Soc Annu Meet 2017;61:2010–4.

Stevens RH, Galloway TL. Are neurodynamic organizations a fundamental property of teamwork? Front Psychol 2017;8.

Stevens RH, Galloway TL. Tracing neurodynamic information flows during teamwork. Nonlinear Dyn Psychol Life Sci 2016;20:271–92.

Szymanski C, Pesquita A, Brennan AA, et al. Teams on the same wavelength perform better: Inter-brain phase synchronization constitutes a neural substrate for social facilitation. Neuroimage 2017;15:425–36.

Szymanski C, Müller V, Brick TR, et al. Hyper-transcranial alternating current stimulation: experimental manipulation of inter-brain synchrony. Front Hum Neurosci 2017;11.

Tanabe HC, Kosaka H, Saito DN, et al. Hard to “tune in”: neural mechanisms of live face-to-face interaction with high-functioning autistic spectrum disorder. Front Hum Neurosci 2012;6.

Thompson E, Varela F. Radical embodiment: neural dynamics and consciousness. Trends Cogn Sci 2001;5:418–25.

Thompson E. Empathy and consciousness. J Conscious Stud 2001;8:1–32.

Thut G, Minissi C, Gross J. The functional importance of rhythmic activity in the brain. Curr Biol 2012;22:R658–663.

Tognoli E, Kelso JAS. Brain coordination dynamics: true and false faces of phase synchronization and metastability. Prog Neurobiol 2009;87:31–40.

Tononi G, Edelman GM. Schizophrenia and the mechanisms of conscious integration. Brain Res Rev 2000;31:391–400.

Toppi J, Borghini G, Petti M, et al. Investigating cooperative behavior in ecological settings: an EEG hyperscanning study. PLoS One 2016;11:e0154236.

Torrance S. Contesting the concept of consciousness. J Conscious Stud 2009;16:111–26.

Ulhaas PJ, Pipa G, Lima B, et al. Neural synchrony in cortical networks: history, concept and current status. Front Integr Neurosci 2009;3:17.

Ulhaas PJ, Singer W. Abnormal neural oscillations and synchrony in schizophrenia. Nat Rev Neurosci 2010;11:100–13.

Valdesolo P, DeSteno D. Synchrony and the social tuning of compassion. Emotion 2011;11:262–6.

Valdesolo P, Ouyang J, DeSteno D. The rhythm of joint action: synchrony promotes cooperative ability. J Exp Soc Psychol 2010;46:693–5.

Van Orden G, Hollis G, Wallot S. The blue-collar brain. Front Physiol 2012;3:207.

Varela F, Lachaux JP, Rodriguez E, et al. The brainweb: phase synchronization and large-scale integration. Nat Rev Neurosci 2001;2:229–39.

Varela FJ, Thompson E, Rosch E. The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience. Revised Edition. MIT Press, 2017.

Voss U, Holzmann R, Hobson A, et al. Induction of self awareness in dreams through frontal low current stimulation of gamma activity. Nat Neurosci 2014;17:810–2.

Ward D. Enjoying the spread: conscious externalism reconsidered. Mind 2012;121:731–51.

Ward LM. Synchronous neural oscillations and cognitive processes. Trends Cogn Sci 2003;7:553–9.

Wilson M, Wilson TP. An oscillator model of the timing of turn-taking. Psychon Bull Rev 2005;12:957–68.

Wiltermuth SS, Heath C. Synchrony and cooperation. Psychol Sci 2009;20:1–5.

Yun K, Watanabe K, Shimojo S. Interpersonal body and neural synchronization as a marker of implicit social interaction. Sci Rep 2012;2:1–8.

Zaehle T, Rach S, Herrmann CS. Transcranial alternating current stimulation enhances individual alpha activity in human EEG. PLoS One 2010;5,e13766.

Zahavi D. You, me and we: the sharing of emotional experiences. J Conscious Stud 2015;22:84–101.