

COGNITIVE NEUROPHYSIOLOGIC SYNCHRONIES: What Can They Contribute to the  
Study of Teamwork?

Ronald H. Stevens

Trysha L. Galloway

Peter Wang

UCLA IMMEX Project

5601 W. Slauson Avenue #184, Culver City, CA 90230

Telephone: (310) 987-7863, Email: immex\_ron@hotmail.com

Chris Berka

Advanced Brain Monitoring, Inc.

2237 Faraday Avenue, Suite 100, Carlsbad, CA 92008

*Cognitive Neurophysiologic synchronies (NS) are data streams derived from EEG measurements that can be collected and analyzed rapidly and in realistic settings. This study relates the expression of NS for Engagement to task changes and the frequency of conversation between team members during Submarine Piloting and Navigation (SPAN) simulations. The results indicate NS expression may complement rather than duplicate communication metrics as measures of team cognition.*

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ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Cognitive Neurophysiologic synchronies (NS) are low level data streams derived from Electroencephalography (EEG) measurements that can be collected and analyzed in near real time and in realistic settings. The objective of this study was to relate the expression of NS for Engagement to the frequency of conversation between team members during Submarine Piloting and Navigation (SPAN) simulations.

**Background:** If the expression of different NS patterns is sensitive to changes in the behavior of teams they may be a useful tool for studying team cognition.

**Method:** EEG-derived measures of Engagement (EEG-E) from SPAN team members were normalized and pattern classified by self-organizing artificial neural networks and hidden Markov models. The temporal expression of these patterns were mapped onto team events and related to the frequency of team members' speech. Standardized models were created with pooled data from multiple teams to facilitate comparisons across teams and levels of expertise, and to provide a framework for rapid monitoring of team performance.

**Results:** The neurophysiologic synchrony expression for Engagement shifted across task segments and internal and external task changes. These changes occurred within seconds and were affected more by changes in the task than by the person speaking. Shannon entropy measures of the NS data stream showed decreases associated with periods where the team was stressed and speaker entropy was high.

**Conclusions:** These studies indicate that expression of neurophysiologic indicators measured by EEG may complement rather than duplicate communication metrics as measures of team cognition.

*Keywords:* Team Neurodynamics, Neurophysiologic Synchrony, Artificial Neural Networks, EEG

### INTRODUCTION

Much of recent teamwork research has used externalized events focusing on who is a member of the team, how they work together and what they do to perform their work. There have been fewer studies looking at the when of teamwork interactions; although, the dynamics of team function are known to be complex (Marks, et al, 2001; Mathieu et al, 2008). One framework for studying the when of teams is macrocognition (Warner et al, 2005) defined as the externalized and internalized high-level mental processes employed by teams to create new knowledge. External processes are those associated with observable actions and measurable in a consistent, reliable, repeatable manner. Internalized processes are indirectly approached through qualitative metrics like think aloud protocols or surrogate quantitative metrics, (pupil size, EEG metrics, galvanic skin responses).

Speech provides a detailed and dynamic representation of teamwork. When team members interact their communication streams contain information about knowledge, uncertainty, awareness of the situation, stress and other cognitive states (Cooke et al, 2008). Speech has structure in the content of what is being said, flow, relating to who is speaking along with specific speech acts like questioning, answering, making a statement, etc. Speech is also sequential, temporal and relational as people tend to speak one after another and what is currently being said has temporal antecedents. (Marks et al., 2001; Gorman, 2005).

Communication streams are central for studying teamwork, yet additional measures would be useful which are relevant, unobtrusive, obtained in real-time, and can be practically implemented (Salas et al (2008). Neurophysiologic approaches may provide such measures.

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

Entrainment of human rhythms by stimuli in the environment is common, spanning time scales of milliseconds to days (Buzaki, 2006). For instance, brain activity in individuals (within brain) can be synchronized by visual or auditory streams where different brain rhythms become entrained by the frequencies of the stimuli (Will & Berg, 2007). Similarly, the neural synchronization of guitarists playing duets can become entrained by external auditory signals (i.e. a metronome) (Lindenberger et al, 2009).

We earlier hypothesized that as team members performed their duties, each would exhibit fluctuations in, and perhaps entrainment of cognitive components such as attention, workload, or engagement and the levels of these components might reflect aspects of teamwork. As a result we collected the simultaneous expression of EEG-derived cognitive measures from three person teams to begin to construct neurophysiologic models of teamwork (Stevens et al, 2009, 2010a, 2010b). The measures developed, termed Neurophysiologic Synchronies (NS) are low level data streams representing the second-by-second quantitative co-expression of the same neurophysiologic / cognitive measure by different team members. The cognitive measures modeled included engagement and workload derived from EEG data streams (Berka et al, 2007). These studies provided a proof of concept for the modeling approach and began to position NS into the broader context of teamwork. They established that NS were not uniformly expressed during all portions of the task, and also that they showed significant associations with speech flow (i.e. who was speaking, but not who was speaking to whom) and speech acts (i.e. questioning, responding, and making a statement).

The goal for the current study was to extend NS research to teams operating in real-world, complex situations. Three hypotheses were proposed:

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

1. NS models can be created that are sensitive to long term (minutes / hours) and short term (seconds / minutes) changes in the task.
2. NS models can be used for comparing NS dynamics across teams and training sessions.
3. The dynamics of NS expression relate to some established aspects of team cognition, yet contribute something new.

## METHODS

### **Tasks**

For this study we used navigation training tasks that are integral components of the Submarine Officer Advanced Course (SOAC) at the US Navy Submarine School, Groton, CT. Submarine Piloting and Navigation (SPAN) is a high fidelity simulation containing dynamically programmed situation events such as encounters with approaching ship traffic, changing weather conditions, and instrument failure. There are task-oriented cues to guide the mission, team-member cues providing information on how other members of the team are performing / communicating, and adaptive behaviors that help the team adjust.

The teams contain 11-12 members in positions Officer on Deck (OOD), Navigator (NAV), Assistant Navigator (ANAV), Contact Coordinator (CC), Fathometer (FATH), Helm (HELM), Quartermaster on Watch (QMOW), Radar Operator (RAD), Recorder (REC), Periscope Operator (SCOPE) and Captain (CAPT) and / or Instructor (INST). The simulations require a mixture of task work and teamwork. For example, the task work for the RAD would be adjusting the range and bearing line on the radarscope; while, the teamwork would be appropriately conveying this information to the CC in case of a new contact. While we have collected EEG-teamwork data from twenty-one SPAN sessions, the data reported here was derived from a subset of twelve of

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

those sessions selected as: 1) the persons in the same six crew positions were monitored by EEG, 2) there were no role or membership shifts in the teams across training sessions, and 3) there were three SOAC teams and three experienced submarine navigation teams that each performed two SPAN simulations. SOAC teams and sessions are designated with a 'T' for the team and 'S' for the session (i.e. T4S1); for expert teams, 'E' is substituted for the team designation (i.e. E1S1). Each SPAN session begins with a Briefing outlining the mission goals and providing information on position, contacts, weather and sea state. The Scenario segment is more dynamic and contains easily identified processes of teamwork along with others which are less well defined. One regular process is the updating of the ship's position termed 'Rounds'. Here, three navigation points are chosen, usually visually, and the bearing of each from the boat is measured and plotted on a chart. This process occurs every three minutes with a countdown from the 1 minute mark. The REC counts down to the 'fix' and logs the data. The regularity of this process is shown by the speech patterns of the REC for five SPAN sessions. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1.** Mapping the Periodic Updating of the Submarine Position with the Recorders' Speech. During Submarine Piloting and Navigation the Recorder uses a 5-step countdown (shown to the left) to the moment when a Round is taken. The timing of these 5 steps is shown for 5 teams where each row represents one of the steps. The team designations beginning with an 'E' are experienced submarine navigation teams, those with a 'T' are student teams.

The two expert sessions, E1S1 and E1S2 mostly show complete 5-step Rounds countdowns. The patterns were less regular for SOAC teams T4S2 and T5S5 where steps were omitted and occasionally fixes were missed. Another expert team E4S2 began the Scenario with four effective fixes and then began having difficulties conducting regular rounds. This example is

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

shown as it indicates there are likely levels of expertise. For all teams there were periods where the rhythm of Rounds was broken which was often indicative of stressful conditions.

Interleaved with these deterministic events are situations arising from new ship traffic, increased proximity to hazards, equipment malfunctions or reduced visibility. In contrast to the regular updating of the submarine's position, these events are more perturbations to the regular functioning of the team. Some are rapid like a man overboard, while others evolve over 5-10 minutes and may be based on previous decisions. The speech patterns of the team in response to the evolving situation are much less regular than those of the REC during rounds (Figure 2). The Debriefing is the most structured segment of the training with team members reporting in order, beginning with the Navigator. The task times ranged from 75-120 minutes and the proportion of time allocated to the Scenario and Debriefing was variable depending on the team.

**Figure 2.** Speech Patterns during Sample SPAN Team Performances. The dynamics of speech are shown for an experienced submarine navigation team (labeled E2S1), and one Junior Officer navigation team that was midway through their required SPAN training (labeled T5S5). The demarcations between the Briefing, Scenario and Debriefing segments are shown by arrows.

### **Electroencephalography**

The ABM, B-Alert® system contains an easily-applied wireless EEG system that includes intelligent software designed to identify and eliminate multiple sources of biological and environmental contamination, and allow real-time classification of cognitive state changes even in challenging environments. The 9-channel wireless headset includes sensor site locations: F3, F4, C3, C4, P3, P4, Fz, Cz, POz in a monopolar configuration referenced to linked mastoids. ABM B-Alert® software acquires the data and quantifies alertness, engagement and mental

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

workload in real-time using linear and quadratic discriminant function analyses with model-selected Power Spectral Density (PSD) variables in each of the 1-Hz bins from 1 – 40 Hz, ratios of power bins, event-related power and/or wavelet transform calculations.

The data processing uses eye-blink decontaminated EEG files containing second-by-second calculations of the probabilities of High EEG-Engagement (EEG-E), which is related to processes involving information-gathering, visual scanning and increased attention (Berka et al, 2004, 2007). This measure is generated from 22 PSD variables obtained from electrode combinations FzPOz and CzPOz over 1-40 Hz bins.

The neuropsychological tasks used to build the algorithm, and subsequently used to individualize the algorithm's centroids were presented using proprietary acquisition software. The algorithm was trained using EEG data collected during the Osler maintenance of wakefulness task (OSLER) (Krieger et al., 2004), eyes closed passive vigilance (EC), eyes open passive vigilance (EO), and 3-choice active vigilance (3CVT) tasks to define the classes of sleep onset (SO), distraction/relaxed wakefulness (DIS), low engagement (LE), and high engagement (HE), respectively.

Simple baseline tasks are used to fit the EEG classification algorithms to the individual so the cognitive state models can be applied to increasingly complex task environments. These methods have proven valid in EEG quantification of drowsiness-alertness during driving simulation, simple and complex cognitive tasks and in military, industrial and educational simulation environments (Berka et al, 2004, 2007; Stevens et al, 2007).

### **Layered Models of Neurophysiologic Synchronies**



## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

The first modeling step (Figure 3 A) normalizes the second-by-second EEG-E measures to a team member's average levels. This normalization identifies when a particular team member was experiencing above or below average levels of EEG-E, and by comparing across team members, whether the team as a whole was experiencing above or below their individual average levels for the session. In this normalization the EEG-E levels are partitioned into the upper 33%, the lower 33% and the middle 33%, and these are assigned values of 3, -1, and 1 respectively, values chosen to facilitate further processing and enhance visualizations (Stevens et al, 2010a) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Data Normalization and Modeling. The top panel (A) shows the raw levels of EEG-E being normalized into training vectors for neural network classification (Panel B).

The next step (Figure 3 B) combines these values at each epoch for each team member into a vector representing the EEG-E levels for the team as a whole; these vectors are used to train unsupervised artificial neural networks (ANN) to generate different NS\_E Patterns of the team (Stevens et al, 2010a). In this process EEG-E training vectors are repeatedly (2000-4000 times) presented to a 1 x 25 node ANN where the output neurons were organized in a linear architecture. Pilot studies with architectures varying from 16 to 100 nodes indicated that the 25 node architecture provided a balance of speed and sensitivity. The ANN acts as a classifier similar to K-means clustering with the advantage that each node competes with their neighbors to the left and right for the training vector and a topology develops where vectors most similar to each other become closer and more disparate vectors are pushed away. The output of this training is 25 histogram patterns, termed NS Patterns, showing the relative levels of EEG-E for each team member on a second-by-second basis. Profiles of three NS\_E Patterns are shown in Figure 4. Each pattern contains six histograms, one for each team member and the height shows

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

the relative levels of engagement. NS\_E Pattern # 1 represents a team where members 2 and 4 had average levels of engagement, team member 6 showed above average engagement levels and team members 1, 3, and 5 were below average. NS\_E Pattern # 10 represents a team where members 1, 4 and 6 had above levels of engagement and the other team members were below average. NS\_E Pattern # 24 was where all team members had above average levels of engagement except team member 5 who showed average engagement.

**Figure 4.** Examples of Neurophysiologic Synchrony Pattern Profiles. The Pattern designations above each figure are the same as in Figure 5. The High, Average and Low EEG-E designations are derived from the coding of the training vectors in Figure 3 A.

To enable comparisons across teams, ANN models were generated using pooled data from 8 six-person teams. This resulted in a training set of 31,450 team vectors (~ 9 hours of teamwork).

The resulting 25 NS\_E Patterns obtained following modeling are shown in Figure 5. NS\_E Patterns 1-4 represented times when most team members had low EEG-E levels while NS\_E Patterns 13-15 and 22-24 represented times where most team members had high EEG-E levels.

**Figure 5.** NS\_E Pattern and State Classifications. The NS\_E Patterns are numbered 1-5, 6-10, etc. row wise from the left to right. Each of the six histograms in each pattern represents the EEG-E levels of a team member. The order of team members is shown below the figure. The surrounding State squares with the 25 boxes show the most frequent associations of particular NS\_E Patterns with each NS\_E State.

Autocorrelation studies have suggested that there may be a temporal component to NS Pattern expression, a hypothesis supported by adding an additional modeling step using Hidden Markov modeling (HMM) (Stevens et al, 2010c). This process models temporal associations between

different symbols which are the 25 NS Patterns resulting from the ANN modeling. Like the ANN training process, HMM requires a training step. The input data for this training are 120 epoch long segments of NS Patterns obtained by segmenting the NS Pattern data stream. HMM generally requires an estimate of the number of states to model into and we have used 5 based on prior work and pilot studies (Soller & Stevens, 2007). The outputs of this HMM modeling are termed NS States and the mapping of the different NS\_E Patterns to NS\_E States is shown in Figure 5.

What do the different NS\_E States represent? Unfortunately there is no simple answer. We have conducted HMM modeling dozens of times but have failed to develop simple patterns like ‘team is fully engaged’ or ‘fully unengaged’. There is always heterogeneity of NS\_E Patterns in each State which is indicative of an underlying dynamics of NS data streams (Stevens & Gorman, 2011).

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis 1: NS models can be created that are sensitive to long term (minutes / hours) and short term (seconds / minutes) changes in the task?**

NS\_E Patterns and States can be visualized on a second-by-second basis or binned over multiple epochs for statistical analysis. Figure 6 illustrates a second-by-second mapping of the NS\_E Patterns and States for SPAN team T1S1. A consistent feature observed in all SPAN training sessions is the shift in NS\_E expression at the Scenario / Debrief junction (indicated by the arrow). Here team T1S1 showed an increased expression of NS\_E Patterns 1-5 and 17-21 which were previously expressed at low levels. The shift was more obvious for the HMM-derived NS\_E States where most of the Debriefing was dominated by NS\_E State 3. Similar shifts at the

Brief / Scenario junction are less pronounced which is not surprising, as one Briefing component is the determination of the ship's starting position which is similar to Rounds. Similar NS\_E State shifts at the task segment junctions are also shown for three other teams. These shifts illustrate that NS\_E expression is sensitive to major task changes.

**Figure 6.** Dynamic Expression of NS\_E Patterns and States during SPAN Training Sessions. The top figure shows the second-by-second expression of each of the NS\_E Patterns expressed by SPAN team T1S1 and immediately below it is the expression of the five NS\_E States. The expression of NS\_E States for three other teams are shown for comparison. The Briefing, Scenario and Debriefing segment junctions are shown by the arrows.

Another important feature illustrated in Figure 6 is that NS Pattern and State expressions are not homogeneous, but often punctuated by recurrent blocks that span shorter time scales. These 30-60 second state recurrences provide useful landmarks for relating NS expression with short-term simulation events, team responses or team speech. Figure 7 shows two experienced navigation teams where the boat's Skippers paused the simulation mid-Scenario to address the crews. For the first team (E1S2, Panel A) prior to epoch 2890 the team was mainly expressing NS\_E States 1, 2, and 3. Within seconds of the CAPT beginning to speak they transitioned through NS\_E State 4 to NS\_E State 5. The team remained in this State until the Scenario resumed when they returned to prior NS\_E State expressions. For the second team (E3S2, Panel B) the team was mainly expressing NS\_E State 2 which then switched to NS\_E States 3 and 4 while the Skipper was speaking.

**Figure 7.** Changes in NS\_E Expression during Pauses in Two Simulations. These figures focus on two ~10 minute segments during which the Skippers of two boats paused the simulation to

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

address their navigation teams. Panel A is team E2S1 and Panel B is team E3S2. The gray areas highlight the periods of the pauses.

**Hypothesis 2: NS models can be used for comparing NS dynamics across teams and training sessions.**

The next study compared the frequency distributions of the five NS\_E States across four teams that each performed two SPAN sessions (Figure 8). As expected from the shifts in NS\_E Pattern expression at task junctions as shown in Figure 5, there was a differential expression of NS\_E States during the Scenario and Debriefing with NS\_E State 2 being over expressed in the Scenario and NS\_E State 5 under expressed ( $\chi^2 = 1326$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $p = 0$ ).

For most teams NS\_E States 1 & 2 were most frequent during the Scenario. These represented periods when many of the team members were highly engaged (refer back to the NS Pattern / State classification diagram in Figure 5). The exception was Team 1 where NS\_E State 4 predominated; this State represents periods when many of the team members had below average engagement. There were no significant State frequency differences between SPAN sessions 1 and 2 for any of the teams. There was more across-team and across-session heterogeneity during the Briefing and Debriefing segments, and as expected from the data in Figure 6, the distributions in the Briefing were more similar to those in the Scenario than were the distributions in the Debriefing.

**Figure 8.** NS\_E State Frequencies for SPAN Sessions Segments. The frequency percentage of each of the five NS\_E States was calculated for the Scenario (top) Briefing (middle) and Debriefing (bottom) segments for eight SPAN sessions.

**Hypothesis 3: The dynamics of NS expression relate to some established aspects of teamwork, yet contribute something new.**

The content and flow of communication are often data sources for studying teamwork, and messages are generally regarded as a fundamental unit for analysis. The Debrief sections of SPAN simulations were initially chosen to explore linkages between NS\_E expression and speech, as there is a regular pattern of discussion where only one person speaks at a time. The dialog during the Debriefing from one SPAN session was transcribed, time coded and aligned with NS\_E expression (Figure 9). The gray bands emphasize the reports of different team members.

**Figure 9.** Mapping Discussion Units to NS\_E State Expression.

Initially the NAV summarized the simulation and illustrated and discussed areas for improvement. Next, the CC provided an alternative navigation solution to an issue that was raised by the NAV (“My personal comfort level would have been to shoot in between the two inbound merchants and have them be our front and back line backers”, etc.). In the next section (epochs 3776-3922) the CAPT contributed general comments (“My main point is don't wait until the last minute and then call that guy after you just messed with his own radar picture, etc.”). The Debriefing continued along similar lines changing topics with each NS transition.

From this example it appears that the major NS State transitions occurred around blocks of ideas or discussion units i.e. when closure of a topic was achieved and a new topic began. The NS\_E State shifts were not linked to a specific speaker as multiple team members contributed to each discussion unit. Also, while the team was predominately in NS\_E State 5 when the CAPT

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

spoke, there was a long period at the end of the Debrief where the CAPT was speaking and the team was in NS\_E State 1.

While the above approach may provide useful information regarding associations between NS\_E expression and speech, the process was not optimal for studying SPAN teamwork. First, most speech is highly asynchronous during the Scenario with intermixed conversations of the different members of the navigation team. Second, this approach required a time consuming analysis decreasing its usefulness as a rapid response monitor of the team to changing SPAN events.

The next studies addressed these challenges by combining speech and neurophysiologic analyses with entropy calculations and expert performance analysis.

**Figure 10.** Linking NS\_E Entropy with Team Speech and Performance Events. Panel (A) uses bar symbols to mark the second-by-second speech of the different members of a SPAN team (T4S2). Panel (B) shows the Rounds sequence for this team as described in Figure 1 and above it are markers referring to different events that are further described in Figure 11. Panel (C) shows the entropy profile for the speakers during the simulation and Panel (D) shows a similar entropy profile for the NS\_E.

The markers for speech frequencies and the NS\_E Patterns are both symbolic data and for quantitative comparisons it would be useful to have numeric metrics. One transformation is to calculate the Shannon entropy of the symbolic speech and NS\_E data streams (Shannon, 1951). This metric is derived from information science and measures the level of uncertainty or “amount of mix” in a symbol stream. The idea was that as teams organized themselves around significant task events, there may be changes in the entropies of NS\_E Patterns or speech reflecting this cognitive reorganization.

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

Entropy is expressed in terms of bits calculated from a data stream. Entropy was calculated at each epoch using a 90 second sliding window of the prior history. As 25 NS\_E Patterns are available for modeling the maximum entropy that we could expect from the 25 NS\_E patterns would be  $\log_2(25)$  or 4.64. For comparison, if a 90 second sequence of the data stream only contained 12 of the 25 patterns then the entropy would drop to 3.6, and if the data stream only contained a single NS\_E Pattern the entropy would be 0. Similar calculations were applied to speech. The entropy for speech was calculated by first assigning a numeric code to each of the 16 speakers in the SPAN; the extra 5 speaker symbols added to the 11 man team included a second instructor and / or evaluator, the technician as well as other speakers who could not be clearly identified from the audio stream. These symbols were substituted into the speech log and then the entropy was calculated as described for NS\_E.

Throughout the simulation there were significant Speaker and NS\_E entropy fluctuations, only some of which were associated with changes in the task boundaries. During the Scenario there were periods where the team was relatively quiet interspersed with periods where there was extensive speech by multiple team members. The speech of the REC provided evidence of when the team was not functioning smoothly as indicated by periods where the Round was missed or marked multiple times. To complement these data, a Lieutenant who was an instructor at the Submarine Learning Center summarized the teams' stress level and performance from an audio recording of the session. From this data, a summary of the teams' performance and dynamics was created (Figure 11) with the Event numbers relating to Panel B in Figure 10.

**Figure 11.** Summary of Team Events and Stress Levels of Team T4S2 in Figure 10. The Event column refers to the steps in Panel (B) of Figure 10. The LT Evaluation column is the LT's



## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

assessment of the stress level of the team and the Summary column provides an overview of the events occurring at different times.

## DISCUSSION

Three hypotheses were proposed in this study, which if supported would help to better position team neurodynamics research within the general framework of teamwork. Hypothesis 1 postulated that NS expression would be sensitive to long and short term task changes. Support for this hypothesis resulted in part from the nature of the task. SPAN contains task segments that differ significantly in their teamwork requirements. For all 12 SPAN sessions in this study there were major shifts in NS\_E Pattern and State expression at the Scenario / Debriefing junction (four examples were shown). Support for shorter term changes came from two situations where the Skipper of the sub put the simulation in pause mid-Scenario. In both cases there were rapid and significant shifts in NS\_E State expression. Less direct support was derived by the linking of team speech with the content of the discussion in Figure 9. Future studies on short term changes in the task will benefit from the measurement of the entropy in NS\_E Pattern streams as described below. While EEG metrics are often viewed as being useful over time scales of milliseconds – seconds, the shifts and more prolonged recurrences of NS\_E States are extending this window to minutes.

There was also support for Hypothesis 2, which postulated that NS models could be developed that would enable comparisons across teams. Our initial studies used a single-trial approach for developing NS models, i.e. the data from a single performance was used for deriving the ANN models for that performance. As new models were created for each task, comparisons across

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

teams or levels of experience were difficult as the ANN designations changed due to the probabilistic assignment of vectors to specific nodes. In this study we pooled the EEG-E data from eight of the twelve SPAN sessions selected for this study as described earlier, and all twelve teams were subsequently tested on these generic models. The NS\_E State frequency distributions shown in Figure 7 are important as they emphasize the long-term changes at task boundaries and also begin to document the neurodynamics of SPAN teams during the Scenario.

Across sessions, most teams preferentially expressed NS\_E State 2 during the Scenario which represented a moderately engaged team. This NS\_E State, perhaps along with NS\_E State 1, can be viewed as the normal operating mode(s) of the team because they were poorly expressed in the Briefing and Debriefing segments. In addition to the State transitions at the task junctions, there were 30-50 second periods during all Scenarios studied where only one NS\_E State was expressed. Most often this NS\_E State was not the normal operating mode, and their expression coincided with external perturbations to the task or periods where significant events were occurring (such as a man overboard or near collision).

The development of generic NS models also provides a possible framework for the rapid reporting of events of significance to the team. The data that could be reported are of several types. First, the periods where particular NS\_E States persist, such as the skipper break in Figure 7, can be reported as changes in the State recurrence frequencies (Zbilut et al, 1998). Alternatively the entropy measures for NS\_E Patterns shown in Figures 10 could be calculated. Entropy in particular could be important as preliminary studies have indicated that expert teams have fewer of these recurrent states than SOAC teams and overall higher NS\_E entropy levels during the Scenario (Stevens & Gorman, 2011). These measures may therefore provide a metric for following training progress over time.

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

Support for Hypothesis 3, where we began linking NS\_E expression with speech, is less obvious. From the limited number of mappings we have performed linking NS\_E State expression with the speech content during the Debriefing segments (i.e. Figure 9) there appears to be an association with the changing dynamics of the conversation. Speech during the Scenario however is much more dynamic than during the Debriefing and the data in Figure 10 and similar studies with other teams suggest that the NS\_E entropy is lowest when the speech entropy is highest, i.e. the team is more cognitively organized when the communication across team members appears the least organized.

Combining performance data (Rounds), evaluation data (LT's notes) and the frequency and diversity of speech with the changing levels of NS\_E entropy suggests that periods of decreased entropy represent times where the team is experiencing stress. One possibility is that the team has lost its flexibility and has locked itself into a more restrictive cognitive state. Alternatively the decreased entropy may represent the increased organization of the team in response to a difficult situation.

### KEY POINTS

- Cognitive neurophysiologic synchronies for engagement change rapidly in response to changes in the task and environment; the entropy of the NS data stream provides a quantitative measure of these changes.
- NS\_E expression is not closely associated with who is speaking, but rather with 'blocks of ideas' in the conversation.

## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

- Generic models of NS\_E Pattern and State expression can be used for comparing across teams and sessions.
- Expression of neurophysiologic indicators measured by EEG may complement rather than duplicate communication metrics as measures of team cognition.

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## MODELING TEAM NEURODYNAMICS

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