Editorial: Shared reality

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Shared reality is ubiquitous. We are incessantly confronted with situations that evoke and demand judgments, beliefs, emotional responses about a vast variety of objects, topics, or issues. Achieving confident inner states (evaluations, judgments, feelings) about the world is a constant challenge, especially when the incoming information is novel, complex, or ambiguous. A key means for coping with this challenge is to create a shared reality with others [1–3]. The contributions to the present special issue span building blocks of shared reality (shared attention, inferences of others' inner states, perspective taking, automatic tuning of attitudes, shared memory processes, conversational synchrony), its motivational underpinnings, shared reality in interpersonal, intergroup and cultural contexts, the development and evolution of shared reality, and domains of shared reality (e.g. politics, organizations, ethics). Taken together, the contributions cover an unprecedented scope of research relevant to shared reality.

Shteynberg discusses shared attention, which is a key building block of shared reality, including applications in mass media, social media, and clinical psychology. Shared attention among subjectively similar individuals makes the object of attention collectively relevant, which is reflected by enhanced memory as well as increased cognitive and emotional processing. Liszkowski traces the roots of shared reality in early childhood, reviewing research on how children and their interaction partner share an experience about something in the world. What is shared is not just looking at the same thing but an awareness of the joint mental activity in reference to that thing. The paper describes how this ability, evident in children's pointing at something, is established around 12 months-of-age, is supported by caregivers' assisting children in their goal-directed activities.

Another building block of shared reality development is shared thinking. Mejía-Arauz *et al.* identify two different modes of sharing: firstly, *Negotiation*, where partners are independent individuals who engage in a gradual approximation of separate positions through perspective taking and persuasion; and secondly, *Collaboration*, where the shared reality emerges as members of a group engage in mutual coordination of roles and resources. Some of the reviewed studies suggest cultural difference in the prevalence of these modes.

Heiphetz expands the analysis of shared-reality development to the sharing of opinions, moral views, and religious beliefs, which play a critical role in various conflicts around the world. Late elementary school children not only prefer others who share their religious beliefs, like they do for moral beliefs, but for religious beliefs they also have a positivity bias when judging those who agree with them, selectively attributing pro-social behaviors to them and evaluating their actions more positively.

he received the APS *William James Fellow Award* and the APA *Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions*.

Heleven and Van Overwalle review research on the neural substrates of representations of other people's inner states, including inferences of others' beliefs (temporo-parietal junction, inferior frontal gyrus) and of their action goals (cerebellum). Additionally, the medial prefrontal cortex is involved in the understanding of another person's traits and competencies, which facilitates cooperation and shared task achievement.

Hodges *et al.* discuss the double-edged role of perspective taking (i.e. recognizing the difference between one's own and another person's inner state about an object). On the one hand, the construal or inference of someone else's perspective, be it accurate or biased, allows subsequent alignment with the other's inner state about a topic. On the other hand, perspective taking can inhibit shared reality to the extent that it highlights divergent views or triggers biased, stereotype-consistent inferences about distant others' experiences.

The creation of shared reality helps individuals to satisfy important needs, including the needs for connectedness and belonging. As Pinel shows in her contribution, humans' sense of existential isolation, which threatens affiliative needs, can be overcome by I-sharing — the instantaneous sense of having the same experience of a stimulus as another person. I-sharing not only fosters interpersonal closeness and sympathy, including promoting client-therapist alliances in psychotherapy, but it can also reduce intergroup biases and conflict. In reviewing the epistemic underpinnings of shared-reality formation in groups, Dugas and Kruglanski discuss the epistemic need for cognitive closure as it relates to the perception of others as epistemic authorities. As one striking example of the social-cognitive-motivational scaffolding of shared realities, they show that group members' need for cognitive closure is associated with enhanced ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation.

The achievement of shared reality can also be promoted by the automatic tuning of socially relevant attitudes to those of others. In their review, Skorinko and Sinclair focus on how affiliative, but also epistemic, motivation induces people to spontaneously reduce their implicit prejudice level to match the perceived egalitarian attitude of an interaction partner. Conversely, individuals can achieve shared reality by affiliating with others whose ostensible beliefs match their own degree of implicit prejudice, a phenomenon dubbed implicit homophily.

Johnston *et al.* carve out distinct characteristics of humans' shared reality via intriguing comparisons between humans and domesticated dogs, with dogs being an ideal comparison species because of their long evolved coordination and cooperation with humans. Dogs exhibit shared attention and shared reference with humans, tune into others' inner states (perceptions, emotions), and are motivated to communicate about novel events with humans. Differences lie in humans' ability to create shared realities without co-present, one-to-one interaction and to glean relevant information by 'eavesdropping' on others' interactions.

The review by Slepian and Liu discusses an important exception to the human motivation to create shared realities: keeping secrets from others. The exception proves the rule because when people avoid sharing their inner states with others, the secrets become highly accessible, intrude on their thinking, and create distress. Consistent with shared-reality theory, the paper highlights both the relational and the epistemic needs underlying shared reality creation: Secrecy undermines both one's feeling of connection to others and one's understanding of what is happening in one's life.