

**The Application of Data Mining and Machine Learning in the Diagnosis of Mental Disorders**

by

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## Abstract

Autism is a developmental disorder that is currently diagnosed using behavioral tests which can be subjective. Consequently, objective non-invasive imaging biomarkers of Autism are being actively researched. The common theme emerging from previous functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies is that Autism is characterized by alterations of fMRI-derived functional connections in certain brain networks which may provide a biomarker for objective diagnosis. However, identification of individuals with Autism solely based on these measures has not been reliable, especially when larger sample sizes are taken into consideration. There is a lack of objective biomarkers to accurately identify the underlying etiology and related pathophysiology of disparate brain-based disorders that are less distinguishable clinically. Brain networks derived from resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging (R-fMRI) has been a popular tool for discovering candidate biomarkers. Specifically, independent component analysis (ICA) of R-fMRI data is a powerful multivariate technique for investigating brain networks. However, ICA-derived brain networks that are not highly reproducible within heterogeneous clinical populations may provide mean statistical separation between groups, and yet not be very discriminative at the individual subject level. We hypothesize that functional brain networks that are most reproducible in subjects within clinical and control groups separately, but not when the two groups are merged, may possess the ability to discriminate effectively between the groups.

In this study, we propose a “discover-confirm” scheme based upon the assessment of the reproducibility of independent components (representing brain networks) obtained from R-fMRI

(discover phase) using the gRAICAR (generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility) algorithm followed by unsupervised clustering analysis of these components to evaluate their ability to discriminate between groups (confirm phase). followed by a clustering analysis of these components to evaluate their ability to discriminate between groups in an unsupervised way (confirm).

Furthermore, we present gMedICA, a software package that implements the methodology in support of our hypothesis. The unique feature of our software package is its ability to seamlessly interface with other software packages such as FSL so that all related analyses utilizing features of other software can be performed within the same package, thus providing a one-stop software solution starting with raw DICOM images to the results.

We obtained cluster purity of up to 0.971 or 97.1% accuracy in a data set of 799 subjects comprising Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and healthy controls acquired from multiple sites, using our proposed methodology. In addition, we showcase our software using R-fMRI data acquired from US Army soldiers returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who were clinically grouped into the following groups: PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), comorbid PCS (post-concussion syndrome) + PTSD, and matched healthy combat controls. Using our methodology, we obtained cluster purity of up to 1 or all groups were identified with 100% accuracy.

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## List of Abbreviations

AC	Aligned Component
ADDM	Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AN	Auditory Network
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
BOLD	Blood Oxygenation Level Dependent signal
CEN	Central-executive network
DLPFC	Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex
DMN	Default Mode Network
DPARSF	Data Processing Assistant for Resting-State fMRI
DTI	Diffusion Tensor Imaging
fMRI	Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
FSL	fMRIB Software Library
FSM	Full Similarity Matrix
FT	Functional Trees
FWHM	Full-Width at Half-Max
gRAICAR	Generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility
HRF	Hemodynamic Response Function
IC	Independent Components

ICA	Independent Component Analysis
IPL	Inferior parietal lobe
LMT	Logical Model Trees
MELODIC	Multivariate Exploratory Linear Optimized Decomposition into Independent Components
MLP	Multi-layer Perceptron
MNI	Montreal Neurological Institute
MPFC	Medial prefrontal cortex
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
mTBI	Mild-Traumatic Brain Injury
MVPA	Multi-voxel pattern analysis
NIfTI	Data Format
NMI	Normalized Mutual Information
NSI	Neurobehavioral Symptom Inventory
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
RB	Realization Block
RZ	Realization Component (Used interchangeably)
PCL5	PTSD Checklist-5 score
PCS	Post-Concussion Syndrome
PTSD + PCS	Comorbid PTSD and PCS (subjects with both these disorders)
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

ROI	Region of Interest
R-fMRI	Resting-State fMRI
SBL	Subject Block
SBM	Surface-based Morphometry
SMN	Somato Motor Network
SOM	Self-organizing Map
SPM	Statistical Parametric Mapping
SVM	Support Vector Machine
TC	Typical Control
TE	Echo Time
TPN	Task-positive Network
TR	Repetition Time
VN	Visual Network

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation

It is a very challenging task to fully comprehend the workings of the human brain. Non-invasive techniques to study cognitive functions unique to humans are required to understand the human brain in vivo from a functional perspective. Technical advances have made it possible to eliminate the invasive nature of conventional neuroimaging techniques and study human brain functionality with high spatiotemporal resolution [1]. While magnetic resonance imaging of anatomic structures has long been considered an integral part of the diagnostic process, functional magnetic resonance imaging or fMRI methodologies to localize brain activity are significantly increasing the clinical role of MRI [2]. These methodologies are sensitive to cerebral blood flow, cerebral blood volume and blood oxygenation which may then be used to build functional maps of mental processes and define activity in the healthy and diseased human brain. fMRI can detect local fluctuations or increases in relative blood oxygenation, most likely indicating neurotransmitter action and local neuronal signaling. It can be utilized to characterize normal or pathological patterns of brain functioning, classify pathological traits, and measure treatment responses among others [3]. Since its introduction, fMRI has been successfully used in a wide variety of settings from identifying human brain language areas [4], detecting changes in the brain in response to complex human movements [5], measuring signal changes accompanying sensory stimulation [6] to such monumental tasks as studying brain networks shaping religious beliefs [7]. Its application has not been

limited to humans and recently been expanded to canines studying the enhancement of odor-induced activity in the canine brain [8] as an example.



**Fig. 1.1** Siemens Magnetom 7T Actively-Shielded MRI Scanner at the Auburn MRI Research Center

The utilization of fMRI in diagnostics has significantly expanded. We provide some recent examples of how it is being applied in the fields of general diagnostics, psychiatry and neurology. Brain activity changes in patients with Crohn's disease were detected by blood oxygenation level dependent fMRI or BOLD-fMRI [9]. fMRI studies showed that patients with bulimia nervosa do not have characteristic neurodevelopment of cognitive control under emotional influences [10]. Hubbard et al. [11] investigated a new diagnostic marker, visual-

evoked cerebral metabolic rate of oxygen ( $veCMRO_2$ ), to classify patients with multiple sclerosis using fMRI. Jin et al. [12] studied the characterization of patients with post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD using resting-state fMRI. Rangaprakash et al. [13] presented a diagnostic biomarker of mild-traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. fMRI studies have also been providing valuable insight into the diagnostics and management of Autism Spectrum Disorders or ASD [14] [15] [16] [17]. This leads us to another challenge which is the diagnostics of heterogeneous neurological disorders such as Autism. A heterogeneous medical disorder is defined as having several etiologies or causes. In more generalized terms, this also refers to a group of patients where the disease is not the same for all of them, yet they all share some loosely defined common characteristics. Neurological/Psychiatric conditions that are categorized as such pose diagnostic challenges since we are not defining the condition pathologically (such as a lesion, inflammation etc.) or clinically (such as pain, excessive vomiting etc.), but by a broad set of behavioral manifestations.

Autism is considered a developmental disability that can lead to significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. Considering the societal implications of Autism, it is imperative that this disorder is diagnosed early and definitively. Autism is currently diagnosed using behavioral tests that can be subjective but objective non-invasive biomarkers of Autism are being actively researched. Previous and current research studies have been focusing on combining functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) with machine learning and data mining techniques to reach definitive classification of Autism. The common theme emerging is that Autism is characterized by alterations of functional connections in certain brain networks and that appropriately using MRI-based methods to characterize this altered connectivity may provide a biomarker for classification and objective diagnosis. However, identification of

individuals with Autism solely based on these measures has not been reliable especially when larger sample sizes are taken into consideration.

Similarly, Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Post-concussion syndrome (PCS) are heterogeneous neurological disorders where fMRI connectivity metrics derived from them may not be highly reproducible, leading to poor generalizability and consequently lower classification accuracies. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD symptoms can either start soon after experiencing a traumatic event or years after the event thus leading to its classification as a heterogeneous disorder not only from the standpoint of the occurrence following a trauma but also from that of symptoms experienced. Mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) presents a broad range of clinical features indicating that its underlying pathologic features are highly heterogeneous. Military service members sustaining mTBI are also at the risk of developing post-concussion syndrome (PCS) and PTSD. Even though PTSD can be characterized by functional hyper-connectivity, making such a determination in PCS has led to mixed or inconclusive results.

We surmise that one of the contributing factors may be that these disorders are highly heterogeneous, hence metrics derived from the affected group may not be highly reproducible within that group leading to poor generalizability, which in turn leads to lower classification accuracies.

We hypothesize that functional brain networks that are most reproducible within these groups and healthy Control groups separately, but not when the groups are merged, may possess the ability to distinguish effectively between the groups. In this dissertation, we propose a methodology to discover the biomarkers of such mental disorders using non-invasive imaging and neuroinformatics tools, and show that such biomarkers possess good discriminative ability

for classifying healthy individuals from those with the disorder. We combine data mining and machine learning techniques, by first assessing the reproducibility of independent components obtained from resting-state fMRI followed by a clustering analysis of these components to evaluate their ability to discriminate between groups in an unsupervised way. We also propose a self-organizing map (SOM) based approach to visualize high-dimension subject population and the separation between groups. Furthermore, we present gMedICA, a software package implementing this methodology to illustrate its power and utility.

Our proposed methodology produced cluster purities of up to 0.97 or 97.1% accuracy when applied to a subject population comprising Autism Spectrum Disorders and healthy controls. Cluster purities of up to 1 were obtained when we applied this methodology to a subject population comprising Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Post-concussion syndrome, and healthy controls. In other words, all 3 groups were identified with 100% accuracy.

## **1.2 This Work in Relation to Prior Literature**

Significant progress has been made towards investigating biomarkers in the diagnostics of heterogeneous neurological disorders including Autism and PTSD. Main deficits observed in ASD patients have been attributed to decreased functional connectivity in default mode subnetworks (DMN) [18]. Also, there is reduced activity in the ventral medial prefrontal cortex and ventral anterior cingulate cortex [19]. Adolescents with ASD were found to have visuospatial working memory deficiency within the DMN [20] and the regions of DMN functional connectivity are smaller in the bilateral inferior parietal lobule and posterior cingulate cortex in ASD patients [21]. Similarly, brain regions involved in executive control are impaired in PTSD and PCS [22] [23] [24] [25]. In addition, previous studies implicate the prefrontal

cortex [26] [27] [28] [29], parietal lobe [30] [31] [32] [33], and caudate [34] [35] [36] [37] in these disorders. Although we have these invaluable insights into such disorders, identifying patients based on these measures has not been reliable especially in larger sized samples [38] [39].

We attempt to generate reliable metrics, for both small and large samples, by delving deeper into the arena of data mining and machine learning. We employ independent component analysis, a blind source separation technique commonly used to extract functional brain networks [40] [41] [42] [18]. We examine the reproducibility of independent components separately using a novel algorithm, gRAICAR (Generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility) [43], within groups, and cluster results to discover the ability of highly reproducible components to distinguish between patients and healthy controls. In addition, we present a software package that implements this methodology.

### **1.3 Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation has a total of 6 chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and motivation behind this study. Chapter 2 presents general methods which in our case include an overview of the gRAICAR algorithm we have used to analyze the reproducibility of independent components. Chapters 3 and 4 present work on our projects. Each chapter first introduces the topic and the motivation behind the project followed by materials and methods used in the study, its results, and a discussion section. Chapter 3 presents our methodology to investigate brain connectomic alterations in Autism using the reproducibility of independent components derived from Resting State functional MRI. Chapter 4 presents an implementation of our methodology in gMedICA, a software package for assessing the reproducibility of brain networks and their discriminability across disorders, followed by its evaluation in a study involving PTSD, PCS and

healthy control subjects. Chapter 5 provides concluding remarks on our projects whereas chapter 6 lists peer-reviewed publications as a result of our studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### General Methods

In this chapter, we introduce the gRAICAR algorithm to review the reproducibility of independent components.

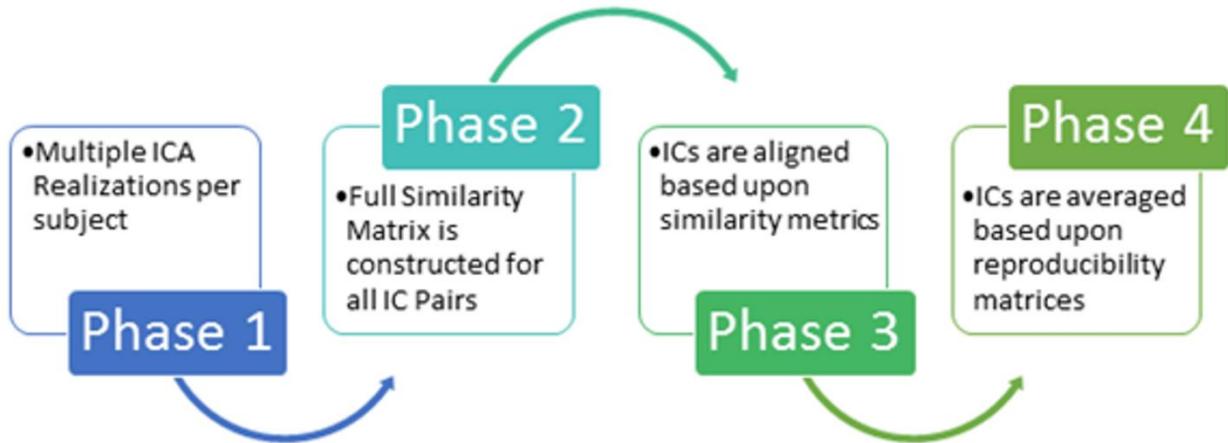
#### 2.1 gRAICAR Algorithm

In this section, we summarize the conceptual underpinnings of the gRAICAR algorithm. We refer our readers to the original paper by Yang et al. [43], should they need a more comprehensive review.

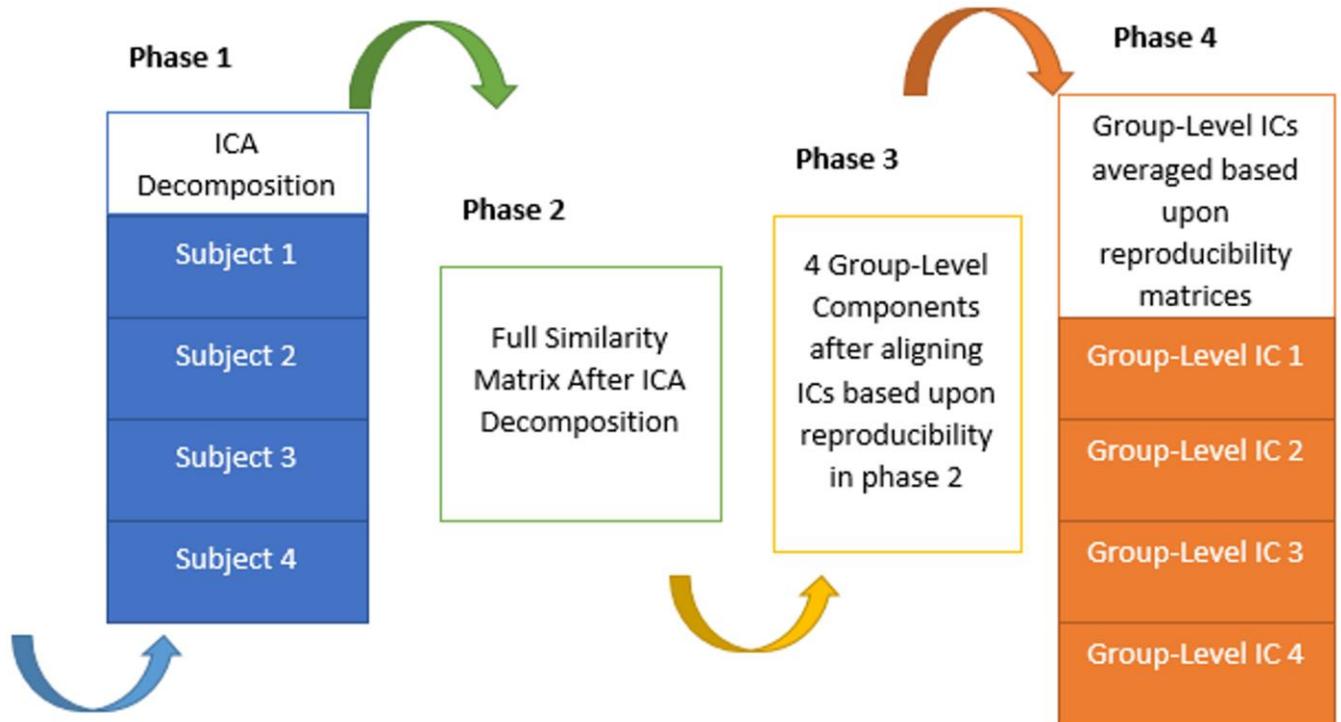
We can represent the pre-processed dataset from subject  $i$  ( $i=1,2,\dots,n$ ) as a matrix  $A_i$ , of dimensions  $\alpha_i \times \beta_i$ , with  $\alpha_i$  representing the number of time points and  $\beta_i$  the number of voxels.  $A_i$ , the data matrix, can now be decomposed into  $c_i$  independent components (ICs) in the spatial domain forming a matrix  $B_i$ , of dimensions  $c_i \times \beta_i$ , and their corresponding mixing time courses forming a matrix,  $C_i$ , of dimensions  $c_i \times \alpha_i$ .

The four main processing phases in the gRAICAR algorithm have been summarized in Fig. 2.1. We will include a high-level overview of this algorithm referring the readers to the original work by Yang et al. [43] for a more comprehensive description. The first phase involves performing ICA decomposition  $k$  ( $\sim 5000$  for this study) times for each subject using random initial values leading to  $k \times n$  realizations where  $n$  represents the number of subjects. We refer to these realizations as  $RZs$  where  $RZ_{ab}$  refers to the ICs obtained from the  $b^{th}$  realization of subject  $a$ . A full similarity matrix ( $FSM$ ) that has relational measures between all  $RZs$  is constructed in the second phase. Normalized mutual information or  $NMI$  quantifies the similarity between two  $RZs$  in this algorithm.  $RZs$  that are found to be highly reproducible

across subjects and ICA realizations are extracted and aligned in the third phase. Two related *RZs* are treated as individual-level components with the same primary group-level component or an aligned component, *AC*. For each *AC*, the algorithm generates a  $kn \times kn$  reproducibility matrix within which *NMIs* between all pairs of *RZs* relevant to the *AC* are collected. The algorithm now aligns *ACs* to obtain group-level component maps and examines the inter-subject consistency in the fourth phase. Fig. 2.1 demonstrates the algorithm in general terms and we illustrate the specific implementation of this algorithm for an example of three subjects in Fig. 2.2, each with a set of four subject-level ICs.



**Fig. 2.1** Work flow diagram illustrating the 4 phases of gRAICAR algorithm.



**Fig. 2.2.** An illustration of the implementation of gRAICAR algorithm using a sample data set of 3 subjects, each with 4 subject-level ICs. Phase 1 involves multiple ICA decompositions for each subject. Phase 2 involves creating a full similarity matrix (FSM). ICs are aligned based upon similarity metrics in phase 3. In phase 4, ICs are averaged based upon reproducibility matrices.

Continuing our discussion of the algorithm, we now delve into the high-level technical underpinnings of the algorithm. The FSM constructed in the second phase of the algorithm includes relational measures between all *RZs*. Block structure of this *FSM* shows subject blocks (*SBLs*) which in turn represent subject-wise relationships. Elements within these blocks are able to determine similarity between *RZs* from the same subject or pairs of *RZs* from different subjects depending upon the block location. In these *SBLs*, there are  $k \times k$  realization blocks (*RBs*) providing pair-wise similarity between *RZs* from different ICA realizations. Similarity between two *RBs* can be quantified by using normalized mutual information or *NMI*

[44]. If two variables are identical,  $NMI$  is set to 1 and 0 if the two variables are statistically independent. This reveals higher order statistical similarity as opposed to second order similarity as defined by correlation or covariance [45]. The gRAICAR algorithm computes  $NMI$ s between each IC pair using mutual information based upon the algorithm proposed by Kraskov et al. [46].  $NMI$ s are then standardized within an  $RB$ , leading to standardized  $NMI$  or  $SNMI$ . Fig. 2.3 shows the block structure as implemented in a  $FSM$  with 3 artificial subjects having two ICA realizations each i.e.  $n = 3$  and  $k = 2$ .

	SUBJECT 1	SUBJECT 2	SUBJECT 3
SUBJECT 1	RZ 11 – 11 RZ 11 – 12 RZ 12 – 11 RZ 12 – 12	RZ 11 – 21 RZ 11 – 22 RZ 12 – 21 RZ 12 – 22	RZ 11 – 31 RZ 11 – 32 RZ 12 – 31 RZ 12 – 32
SUBJECT 2	RZ 21 – 11 RZ 21 – 12 RZ 22 – 11 RZ 22 – 12	RZ 21 – 21 RZ 21 – 22 RZ 22 – 21 RZ 22 – 22	RZ 21 – 31 RZ 21 – 32 RZ 22 – 31 RZ 22 – 32
SUBJECT 3	RZ 31 – 11 RZ 31 – 12 RZ 32 – 11 RZ 32 – 12	RZ 31 – 21 RZ 31 – 22 RZ 32 – 21 RZ 32 – 22	RZ 31 – 31 RZ 31 – 32 RZ 32 – 31 RZ 32 – 32

**Fig. 2.3** Block structure of full similarity matrix (FSM) based upon an example set with 3 subjects and 2 sets of subject-level components (RZ, a set of ICs produced after two ICA decompositions). In this example, each block shows similarity between 2 pairs of RZs from the same subject or two different subjects. Also, RZ 11-31 indicates inter-subject similarity between RZ 1 of subject 1 and RZ 1 of subject 3. The first digit in 11 is an index to the subject whereas the second is an index to the RZ. Highlighted, on the diagonal blocks indicate similarity within the components of a subject or intra-subject similarity whereas off diagonal ones indicate that between the components of two different subjects.

In this representation, solid lines mark subject blocks or  $SBL$ s. Off the diagonal  $SBL$ s reflect the similarity between pairs of  $RZ$ s from different subjects whereas those on the diagonal reflect those from the same subject. The  $RB$  represented as a matrix,  $R_{ab-cd}$  with dimensions  $c_a \times c_c$ , reflects the similarity between  $RZ_{ab}$  and  $RZ_{cd}$  ( $a, c: 1, 2, \dots, n, b, d: 1, 2, \dots, k$ ).

In the algorithm,  $NMI$  for two  $RZ$ s is now calculated as:

$$RZ_{ab-cd}[y, z] = NMI(RZ_y \in RZ_{ab}, RZ_z \in RZ_{cd}) = \frac{H(RZ_y) + H(RZ_z)}{H(RZ_y, RZ_z)} - 1 \quad (2.1)$$

$H(RZ_y)$ ,  $H(RZ_z)$ ,  $H(RZ_y, RZ_z)$  in (2.1) represent the entropies of random variables,  $RZ_y$  and  $RZ_z$ , and the mutual entropy between  $RZ_y$  and  $RZ_z$  ( $1 \leq y \leq c_a$ ,  $1 \leq z \leq c_c$ ).

To obtain standardized *NMI* in the alignment procedure, the *NMIs* are further standardized using the formula:

$$RZ_{ab-cd}[y, z] = \frac{RZ_{ab-cd}[y, z] - \text{mean}(RZ_{ab-cd}[y, *] \cup RZ_{ab-cd}[*], z]}{\text{std}(RZ_{ab-cd}[y, .] \cup RZ_{ab-cd}[, z])} \quad (2.2)$$

\* denotes all *NMI* values in row  $y$  or column  $z$  of the *RB* in (2.2). This standardized *NMI* or *SNMI* is used to compute the specificity of individual similarity values related to a given *RZ* within the *RB*. Diagonal *RBs* are generally set to zero because they represent identity matrices and are not of interest.

The gRAICAR algorithm then extracts highly reproducible *RZs* across subjects and ICA realizations and aligns them in its third phase of execution. To accomplish this, the algorithm searches all *SNMI* values within *SBs* indicating the similarity between pairs of *RZs* from different subjects to find a global maximum. Two *RZs* found to be related are considered subject-level components but with the same underlying group-level component, which we refer to as an aligned component (*AC*). These *RBs* are then examined to locate the local maxima within them as this reflects possible locations of the aligned component within different ICA realizations and subjects. Rows and columns that contain these maxima are eliminated from the *FSM* after all *RZs* associated with this aligned component are located. This task is repeated until  $c_m = \max(c \mid 1 \leq i \leq n)$  *ACs* have been found where  $c$  represents the number of ICs. The number of components is not the same among subjects, and hence empty matches for some subjects are allowed. A  $kn \times kn$  reproducibility matrix for each *AC* is produced, thus collecting

*NMIs* between all pairs of *RZs* associated with the *AC*. *NMIs* are then utilized to provide a more direct interpretation of similarity. In order to form its reproducibility matrix, a maximum of one *RZ* is selected per *AC* in each ICA realization. The algorithm divides information contained within the reproducibility matrix into two metrics: inter-subject consistency and intra-subject reliability. Inter-subject consistency is defined as the mean of all *NMIs* within inter-subject blocks. The inter-subject consistency for a given *AC* between subjects  $a$  and  $c$  can be calculated as:

$$\alpha_{ac} = \text{mean}(RZ_{a'-c'}) = \frac{\sum_{b=1}^k \sum_{d=1}^k RZ_{ab-cd}[y^{(a,b)}, z^{(c,d)}]}{K^2}, \quad 1 \leq a, c \leq n, a \neq c \quad (2.3)$$

Equation (2.3) represents the mean *NMI* within the inter-subject block ‘ $a-c$ ’ in the reproducibility matrix, since it averages all the *NMI* values located at the intersection between realization  $b$  of subject  $a$  and realization  $d$  of subject  $c$ .

Fig. 2.4, a continuation of Fig. 2.3, provides an example of the third phase of the gRAICAR algorithm summarizing the description presented above using the same scenario as in Fig. 2.3. The circle mark represents a global maximum, which is computed by searching all *SNMIs* within the off-diagonal *SBs*. Doing so provides compatibility with larger variations across subjects than within subjects. In this example, the global maximum was located at  $RZ_{ab-cd}[y, z]$ , which represents the  $y$ -th row and the  $z$ -th column of the *RB*. Two related *RZs*,  $RZ_{y(a,b)}$  and  $RZ_{z(c,d)}$ , are treated as subject-level components with the same underlying group-level component or *AC*.  $RZ_{y(a,b)}$  is a representation of the  $y$ -th component of the  $b$ -th realization of the  $a$ -th subject.

	SUBJECT 1	SUBJECT 2	SUBJECT 3
SUBJECT 1	Intra-Subject Similarity Block	RZ 11 – 21 RZ 11 – 22 RZ 12 – 21 RZ 12 – 22	RZ 11 – 31 RZ 11 – 32 RZ 12 – 31 RZ 12 – 32
SUBJECT 2	RZ 21 – 11 RZ 21 – 12 RZ 22 – 11 RZ 22 – 12	RZ 21 – 21 RZ 21 – 22 RZ 22 – 21 RZ 22 – 22	RZ 21 – 31 RZ 21 – 32 RZ 22 – 31 RZ 22 – 32
SUBJECT 3	RZ 31 – 11 RZ 31 – 12 RZ 32 – 11 RZ 32 – 12	RZ 31 – 21 RZ 31 – 22 RZ 32 – 21 RZ 32 – 22	Intra-Subject Similarity Block

**Fig. 2.4** RZ 21-31 represents RZ 1 of subject 2 and RZ 1 of subject 3 and has been found to be the global maximum in this example.

This identifies the aligned component in different ICA realizations and subjects. These locations have been identified in Fig. 2.5 as  $R22-11[s, vI]$  and  $R11-31[wI, t]$  where  $vI$  and  $wI$  represent relevant  $RZ$  positions in individual  $RB$ s indicating the largest similarity with  $RZ_{y(a,b)}$  and  $RZ_{z(c,d)}$  respectively.  $vI = wI$  here means  $[y, vI]$  and  $[wI, z]$  favor the same  $RZ$  and the component formed as a result is considered to be related to the aligned component determined by  $RZ_{y(a,b)}$  and  $RZ_{z(c,d)}$ . If  $vI$  and  $wI$  are unequal, either  $vI$  or  $wI$  is chosen based upon a voting mechanism to determine the proximity of one or the other to more of those  $RZ$ s investigated as the  $vI = wI$  case.

	SUBJECT 1	SUBJECT 2	SUBJECT 3
SUBJECT 1	RZ 11 – 11 RZ 11 – 12 RZ 12 – 11 RZ 12 – 12	RZ 11 – 21 RZ 11 – 22 RZ 12 – 21 RZ 12 – 22	RZ 11 – 31 RZ 11 – 32 RZ 12 – 31 RZ 12 – 32
SUBJECT 2	RZ 21 – 11 RZ 21 – 12 RZ 22 – 11 RZ 22 – 12	RZ 21 – 21 RZ 21 – 22 RZ 22 – 21 RZ 22 – 22	RZ 21 – 31 RZ 21 – 32 RZ 22 – 31 RZ 22 – 32
SUBJECT 3	RZ 31 – 11 RZ 31 – 12 RZ 32 – 11 RZ 32 – 12	RZ 31 – 21 RZ 31 – 22 RZ 32 – 21 RZ 32 – 22	RZ 31 – 31 RZ 31 – 32 RZ 32 – 31 RZ 32 – 32

**Fig. 2.5** Determine block-wise maxima with highlighting in each block such as RZ 21-11 in row 2 and column 1. Global maximum in this figure has been highlighted in addition.

In its fourth phase, the gRAICAR algorithm estimates  $AC$  maps and corresponding mixing time courses by utilizing weighted averages of their related  $RZ$ s. To calculate the weighted

average of the  $RZ$ s, the first step is to define a subject load on inter-subject consistency reflecting the contribution or inter-subject centrality of a given subject to a given  $AC$ .

$$\gamma_i = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{c=1, c \neq a}^n \alpha_{ac} , 1 \leq a \leq n \quad (2.4)$$

Equation (2.4) can also be described as the inter-subject centrality of a subject in a given  $AC$ , and is the mean of the inter-subject consistency metrics between the given subject and the rest of the subjects. In (2.4),  $\alpha_{ac}$  is a reference to the inter-subject consistency metric between subjects  $a$  and  $c$ . Spatial maps and mixing time courses of an  $AC$  are calculated by merging this subject load on inter-subject consistency and the intra-subject reliability, as follows:

$$grpIC_{\tau} = \frac{\sum_{a=1}^n [\beta_a \gamma_a \sum_{b=1}^k RZ_{p(a,b,n)}]}{K \sum_{a=1}^n \beta_a \gamma_a} , 1 \leq \tau \leq c_m \quad (2.5)$$

$RZ_{p(a,b,n)}$  represents the  $RZ$  or the spatial map of the IC identified in the  $b$ -th realization of the  $a$ -th subject.  $p$  sets an index on the location of the  $RZ$ s and can differ with different realizations and subjects. The weights vary for each  $AC$ , calculated by the  $AC$ -specific reproducibility matrix.

The algorithm now statistically detects  $AC$ s found consistently across subjects. It explores the significance of cross-subject consistency of the resulting  $AC$  in two steps. It applies a non-parametric test to select the  $AC$  consistent across all subjects. One  $RZ$  from each ICA

realization in the *FSM* is randomly tested with replacement and the mean of inter-subject consistency metrics is calculated after a non-participating subject is artificially generated. This procedure is repeated ~500 times. The resulting means of inter-subject consistency metrics are combined to yield a null-distribution of the inter-subject consistency. The 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, equivalent to a significance level of  $p = 0.05$ , of the null distribution provides a threshold at this point. *ACs* with mean inter-subject consistency metrics greater than the threshold value mentioned earlier are treated as common *ACs* across subjects. Null distributions of the subject loads on inter-subject consistency and intra-subject reliability for each one of the *ACs* mentioned earlier are produced by randomly assigning *RZs* with replacement in the reproducibility matrix to subjects generated artificially. In the algorithm, thresholds for aforesaid metrics are determined at 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the equivalent null distributions, corresponding to a significance level of  $p = 0.05$ . Subjects above these two threshold levels are treated as representing the *AC* under consideration. The main tasks in the fourth phase of gRAICAR algorithm include estimating *AC* maps and corresponding time courses after weighted averaging of their related *RZs*, statistically detecting *ACs* that are consistent across all subjects, and constructing a graph for each *AC* to characterize relationships among subjects from the standpoint of inter-subject consistency.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Investigating Brain Connectomic Alterations in Autism using the Reproducibility of Independent Components derived from Resting State functional MRI Data**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized as a developmental disability leading to significant social, communication and behavioral challenges [47]. In 2010, an estimate from the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network involving 11 sites revealed that 14.7 per 1000 or 1 in 68 children aged 8 years were affected by this disorder [48] [49]. In addition, this study discovered that one in 54 males and one in 252 females in the ADDM communities had Autism. These disorders have been found to be very heritable [50]. In addition, approximately 18.7% of infants with at least one older sibling with Autism developed this disorder [51]. Given the societal implications of Autism, early diagnosis and intervention has become paramount. However, Autism is currently diagnosed using behavioral tests which can be subjective. Consequently, objective non-invasive biomarkers of Autism are being actively researched.

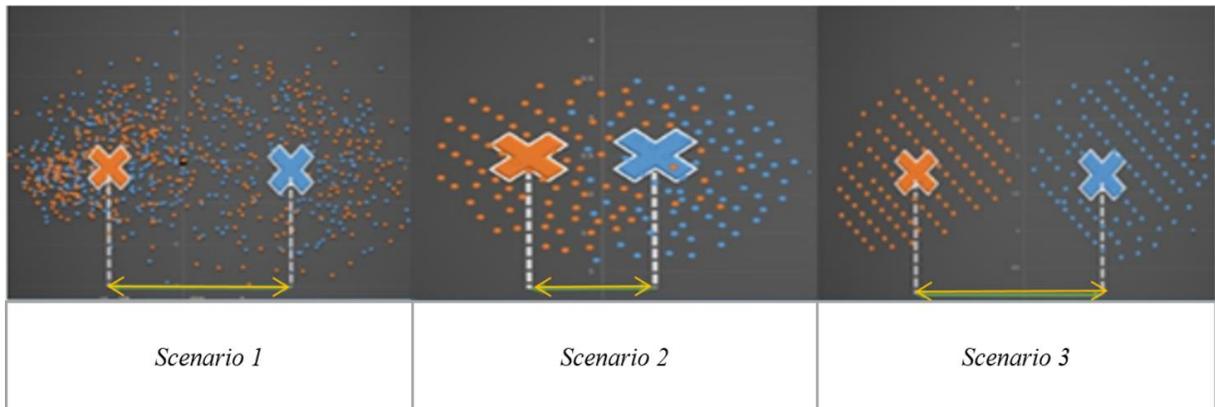
In order to find objective biomarkers of Autism, studies have used information from brain imaging techniques such as structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). Ecker et al. [52] used a multiparameter classification approach involving a support vector machine (SVM) to characterize the structural pattern of gray matter anatomy in adults with ASD and examined a set of five morphological parameters such as volumetric and geometric features at each spatial location on the cortical surface to discriminate between people with ASD and controls. Jiao et al. [53] built diagnostic models for ASD based upon regional thickness measurements extracted from

surface-based morphometry (SBM) and compared these models to diagnostic models based on volumetric morphometry using four machine learning techniques: support vector machines (SVM), multilayer perceptrons (MLPs), functional trees (FTs), and logistic model trees (LMTs). Voxel-based morphometry along with a multivariate pattern analysis approach was used by Uddin et al. [54] to determine multiple brain regions showing atypical structural organization in children with Autism. Calderoni et al. [55] examined whole brain volumes of female subjects with ASD using mass-univariate and pattern classification approaches. Sato et al. [56] extracted individual subject features from inter-regional thickness correlations based on structural MRI which were later used in a machine learning framework to obtain subject level prediction of severity scores based upon neurobiological criteria rather than behavioral information. Libero et al. [57] examined multiple brain imaging modalities to investigate the neural architecture in the same set of subjects using techniques such as decision tree classification analysis. Functional (as opposed to structural) MRI has been used in several studies on Autism as well. The feasibility of a functional MRI connectivity diagnostic assay for Autism was investigated by Anderson et al [38] after obtaining pairwise functional connectivity measurements from a lattice of 7266 regions of interest covering the entire gray matter and using a single resting state blood oxygen level-dependent scan of 8 minutes for classification in each subject. Coutanche et al. [58] used data from an fMRI study of the neural basis for face processing in subjects with ASD to illustrate that multi-voxel pattern analysis (MVPA) may provide a sensitive functional biomarker of clinical symptom severity. Wang et al. [59] used a multi-scale clustering methodology known as "data cloud geometry" to extract functional connectivity patterns from fMRI for the recognition of ASD subjects by applying it to correlation matrices of 106 regions of interest (ROIs) in subjects with ASD and controls. Deshpande et al. [60] used supervised machine learning and fMRI to show

alterations in causal connectivity in the brain could serve as a potential non-invasive neuroimaging signature for Autism. Nielsen et al. [61] also used pairwise functional connectivity measurements from a lattice of 7266 regions of interest covering the gray matter for 964 subjects to conclude that multisite classification based on functional connectivity derived from resting state fMRI of Autism performed better than chance using a simple leave-one-out classifier. Maximo et al. [62] used regional homogeneity and local density approaches at different spatial scales and examined local connectivity in ASD, while Supekar et al. [63] showed hyper-connectivity in a sample of relatively younger Autistic kids using resting state fMRI. The common theme emerging from the studies mentioned above is that Autism is characterized by altered functional connectivity in certain brain networks and that characterizing this appropriately using MRI-based methods may provide a biomarker for objective diagnosis.

Independent Component Analysis (ICA) is a blind source separation technique which is commonly employed for extracting brain networks involving spatially distributed regions with similar/correlated temporal activity [40], especially in the baseline resting state. Consequently, it has been applied to investigate altered brain networks in Autism using fMRI. Specifically, Von dem Hagen et al. [41] employed ICA to demonstrate that individuals with Autism had reduced functional connectivity within the Default Mode Network (DMN), an important resting state brain network [42]. Assaf et al. [18] studied the role of altered functional connectivity of the default mode sub-networks in ASDs using short resting fMRI scans and ICA. In spite of these studies showing reduced connectivity in certain brain networks in Autism, identification of individuals with Autism solely based on these measures has not been reliable, especially in samples of large sizes [61]. We surmise that one major factor contributing to this state of affairs may be that metrics derived from Autism and/or Control subjects may not be highly reproducible within their

respective group. Consequently, such metrics have poor generalizability, leading to lower cluster purities. Therefore, in this paper, we hypothesize that functional brain networks which are most reproducible separately within Autism and healthy Control groups, but not reproducible when both groups are merged, may possess the ability to effectively discriminate between the groups. The basis for this hypothesis is illustrated in Fig. 3.1 which shows an imagined feature space where we want to discriminate between the two groups (Autism and healthy Control). Please note that Fig. 3.1 has not been drawn to scale and is an illustrative schematic.



**Fig. 3.1.** Imaginary feature space showing three different scenarios while discriminating between two groups (indicated by two colors orange and blue): Autism and Healthy Control. Scenario 1: Significant group difference in means, say,  $x$ . Scenario 2: Non-significant difference in group means. Scenario 3: Significant mean difference comparable to  $x$  in scenario 1.

Scenario-1 corresponds to the situation wherein the two groups have significantly different means (say,  $x$ ) in the feature space. However, within each group, the features have poor reproducibility (i.e. they are more scattered in the feature space), likely due to the heterogeneity of the disorder. Therefore, even if the group means are statistically separated, such features will give poor cluster purity. Scenario-2 is a situation where there is no significant difference between means, but the features are reproducible in the combined group (i.e. Autism + Control group), i.e. they are less scattered in the feature space even when both groups are combined. These two

scenarios indicate that features which are highly reproducible separately in each group but are not reproducible in the combined (Autism + Control) group are likely to provide purer clusters while discriminating between the Autism and Control groups. In the third scenario, the features are not only statistically separated between the groups (with the difference between the group means comparable to “x” in Scenario-1), but also reproducible within each group, i.e. less scattered in feature space within each group. In order to test our hypothesis, traditional ICA-based characterization of the functional brain needs to be modified such that reproducibility information is considered while choosing independent components. Therefore, we propose a methodology involving assessment of reproducibility of independent components, followed by clustering analysis of such components for evaluating their discriminability between groups in an unsupervised way. Accordingly, we applied a recently introduced algorithm, “generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility” (gRAICAR, <https://github.com/yangzhi-psy/gRAICAR>) [64], which can provide independent components that are highly reproducible within a given group of subjects. This technique is an extension of a framework previously developed for single subject analysis called Ranking and averaging independent component analysis by reproducibility – RAICAR [65] and has been successfully used in a number of applications [66] [67]. In this work, gRAICAR was applied to Autism Brain Imaging Data Exchange (ABIDE) data [68] to estimate the independent components which are most reproducible, in Autism and Control groups, respectively, but not reproducible in the combined group. We input the spatial maps of such independent components into a k-means clustering algorithm and determined the purity of each cluster with respect to the a priori clinical diagnosis received by subjects.

### 3.2 Composition of the Subject Sample

We utilized resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging (R-fMRI) data from 799 individuals provided by Autism Brain Imaging Data Exchange (ABIDE). The data we used had 392 individuals with Autism spectrum disorders and 407 age- and sex-matched typical controls (TCs). These data came from 13 different imaging sites and included 700 male and 99 female subjects (Table. 3.1) between 7 and 64 years of age. Data were fully anonymized wherein all 18 HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability)-protected health information identifiers were removed. Data contributions were based on studies approved by the local Institutional Review Boards. Detailed information regarding the imaging data sets and associated phenotypic protocols can be found at [http://fcon\\_1000.projects.nitrc.org/indi/abide](http://fcon_1000.projects.nitrc.org/indi/abide). Data acquisition parameters and individual site details are also available on this web site.

**Table 3.1.** Institute names used in our study from ABIDE data and subject distribution by diagnosis code, Autism and Control.

ID	Institute Name	Autism	Control
1	California Institute of Technology	19	19
2	Kennedy Krieger Institute	22	33
3	University of Leuven	29	35
4	Ludwig Maximilians University Munich	24	33
5	Oregon Health and Science University	12	14
6	University of Pittsburgh	30	27
7	Social Brain Lab UMC Groningen NIN	15	15
8	San Diego State University	14	21
9	Stanford University	17	18
10	Trinity College Dublin	24	25
11	University of California Los Angeles	62	47
12	University of Michigan	68	77
13	University of Utah	56	43

### **3.3 Data Pre-processing**

#### **3.3.1 Acquisition and Conversion of Raw Data Set**

We first converted the data downloaded from ABIDE database, which was in DICOM format, to Neuroimaging Informatics Technology Initiative (NIfTI) format. In order to complete the first step, we used dcm2nii software which is freely available at <http://www.mccauslandcenter.sc.edu/mricro/mricron/dcm2nii.html>.

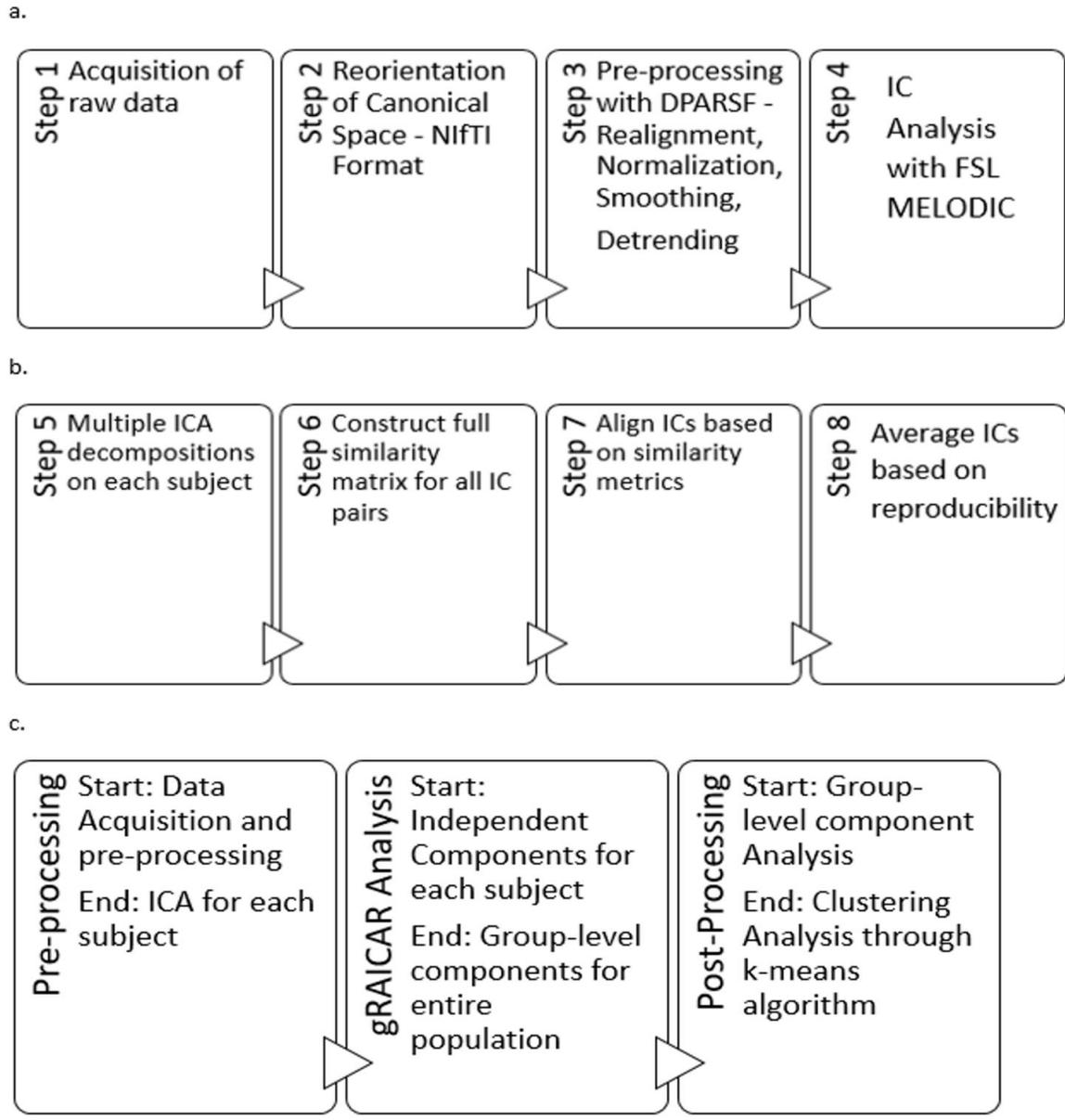
#### **3.3.2 Standardization Process**

In the next step, we used a combination of Data Processing Assistant for Resting-State fMRI [69] (DPARSF, <http://www.restfmri.net>), which is a plug-in software based on Statistical Parametric Mapping or SPM (<http://www.fil.ion.ucl.ac.uk/spm>), and uses functionality from Resting-State fMRI Data Analysis Toolkit (REST 1.7) [70], both of which run on MATLAB. DPARSF was used to perform realignment of 3D brain volumes at each instant relative to the initial volume using 6-parameter rigid body registration, normalization to MNI (Montreal Neurological Institute) template using nonlinear warping, spatial smoothing using a Gaussian kernel with full width at half maximum of  $4 \text{ mm} \times 4 \text{ mm} \times 4 \text{ mm}$ , de-trending using linear polynomial and temporal band-pass filtering using the frequency range of 0.01 – 0.1 Hz.

#### **3.3.3 Independent Component Analysis**

Four Dimensional NIfTI-1 format images (<http://nifti.nih.gov/nifti-1>) from the pre-processing described above were then used in FMRIB Software Library v5.0 [71] [72] (FSL by Analysis Group, FMRIB, Oxford, UK) to obtain a set of independent components for each subject using Multivariate Exploratory Linear Optimized Decomposition into Independent Components

(MELODIC) algorithm [73] [74]. FSL provides analysis tools for fMRI, MRI and DTI brain imaging data, including ICA for decomposing single or multiple 4D data sets into linearly independent spatial components. More information on MELODIC is available at <http://fsl.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl/fslwiki/MELODIC>. We used the MELODIC analysis tool to perform standard 2D spatial ICA on each subject resulting in time courses (one per component) in the mixing matrix and spatial maps (one per component). The number of components for each subject was determined by MELODIC through automatic dimensionality estimation. We saved MELODIC results for each subject and used them in the algorithm we describe in the following section, for finding reproducible independent components.

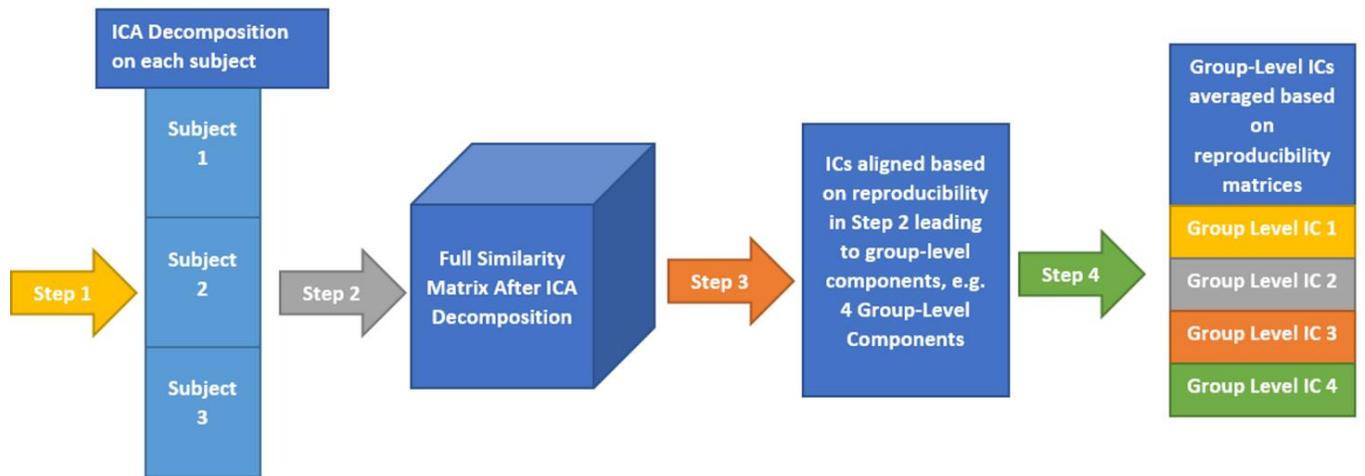


**Fig. 3.2.** a. Steps used in our pre-processing methodology have been summarized. Step 1 involved obtaining raw multi-site data for each subject in .nii.gz format. Step 2 involved converting raw data to NiftI format which resulted in pairs of header and image files (hdr/.img) for each subject, using dcm2nii software. Step 3 involved processing data for each subject using a combination of MATLAB, DPARSF, SPM and REST to obtain a 4D .nii file for each subject based upon the input .hdr/.img files. Step 4 included the processing of 4D files obtained from step 3 in FSL - MELODIC using group ICA for each site leading to independent components or ICs to be used in our algorithm. Step 4 was the last step in our pre-processing methodology. b. Schematic illustrating the 4 steps (5-8) of the gRAICAR algorithm once the pre-processing is complete. c. Workflow of our analysis

## 3.4 Methods

### 3.4.1 The Application of gRAICAR Algorithm

We applied the gRAICAR algorithm separately to Autism, Control and Combined groups. This process involved performing ICA decomposition  $d$  (~5000 for this study) times for each subject using random initial values leading to  $d \times n$  realizations where  $n$  is the number of subjects. Specifically,  $d \times n$  or  $d \times 392$  realizations of ICs for Autism group,  $d \times 407$  realizations in the TC group and  $d \times 799$  realizations in the combined group were obtained. These ICA realizations are named  $REs$  and  $RE_{ij}$  is used to denote the set of ICs from the  $j^{\text{th}}$  realization of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  subject. All steps of the gRAICAR algorithm were completed according to the flow described earlier.



**Fig. 3.3** This illustrates the implementation of gRAICAR algorithm using 3 subjects with 3 subject-level components each as an example. As discussed in fig. 4, step 1 involves multiple ICA realizations for each subject. Step 2 is used to create a full similarity matrix (FSM). In step 3, ICs are aligned based upon similarity metrics. In step 4, ICs are averaged based upon reproducibility matrices.

### 3.4.2 Clustering Analysis

K-means algorithm has been previously used in fMRI analysis in several studies [75] [76] [77].

We used this algorithm to examine the level of separation between Autism and TC groups for the

ICs which were reproducible within each group, but not reproducible in the combined group. Clustering was unsupervised without using *a priori* subject groupings. We determined cluster purity per cluster as shown below:

$$Purity = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^k \max_j |c_i \cap t_j| \quad (3.1)$$

In (3.1),  $N$  represents the number of data points or subjects,  $k$  the number of clusters,  $c_i$  the cluster in our analysis, and  $t_j$  the classification with maximum count for cluster  $c_i$ .

Equation (3.2) shows our approach to determine sensitivity values where  $SEN$  represents sensitivity,  $TP$  true positive, and  $FN$  true negative.

$$SEN = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (3.2)$$

Equation (3.3) shows our approach to determine specificity values where  $SPC$  represents specificity,  $TN$  true negative, and  $FP$  false positive.

$$SPC = \frac{TN}{TN+FP} \quad (3.3)$$

### 3.4.3 Analysis Workflow

This section presents our implementation and workflow. For technical details and the rationale behind every step, we have included a technical discussion in earlier sections of this paper. We

applied the gRAICAR algorithm thrice: first on the Autism group, second on the Control group, and then on the combined group. For the Autism and Control groups, we had 54 and 49 group-level components, respectively. For the combined (Autism + Control) group, we had 54 group-level components. We then examined these group-level components using criteria presented above describing the steps of gRAICAR algorithm and inter-subject consistency. These criteria gave us 11 group-level components in the Autism group and 3 in the Control group. For all subjects, we accessed post-MELODIC analysis results and retrieved spatial maps associated with the ICs corresponding to each selected group-level component. MELODIC analysis was a part of data pre-processing and described earlier in this paper. We then processed these spatial maps in MATLAB wherein the spatial map associated with the IC index of the current subject was retrieved and singleton dimensions were removed. The resulting array was reshaped using MATLAB's reshape function (<http://www.mathworks.com/help/matlab/ref/reshape.html>) thus giving us an  $m \times n$  matrix where  $m$  is 1 for the current subject and  $n$  is  $61 \times 73 \times 61$  (=271633) which was the size of each spatial map associated with the current IC index. After all subjects were processed, we had a  $392 \times 271633$  matrix for the Autism group and  $407 \times 271633$  matrix for the Control group. Suppose the resulting matrix for Autism is  $A$  while that for TC is  $C$ . We then combined  $A$  and  $C$  giving us a  $799 \times 271633$  matrix. We applied the k-means algorithm using this matrix to examine how subjects were clustered based on their spatial maps without *a priori* groupings. The aforementioned process was repeated for all permutations of group-level components selected based on pairing a component from the Autism group with one from the Control group resulting in 33 k-means clustering analyses (Autism Group: 11  $\times$  Control Group: 3). We had set up the algorithm to partition the data set into two clusters since we had two subject groups, Autism and Control. For each of these clustering permutations, the purity of clusters was

identified based on how many subjects were correctly (or wrongly) clustered along with other subjects with the same diagnosis.

### 3.4.4 Covariance Analysis and Post-processing

From the above analysis, the pair with maximum cluster purity was identified. Let the corresponding components be  $A^x$  and  $C^x$  in Autism and Control groups, respectively. The component in Controls with maximum spatial correlation with  $A^x$  (say,  $C_a^x$ ) and the component in Autism with the maximum spatial correlation with  $C^x$  (say,  $A_c^x$ ), were identified using the following approach:

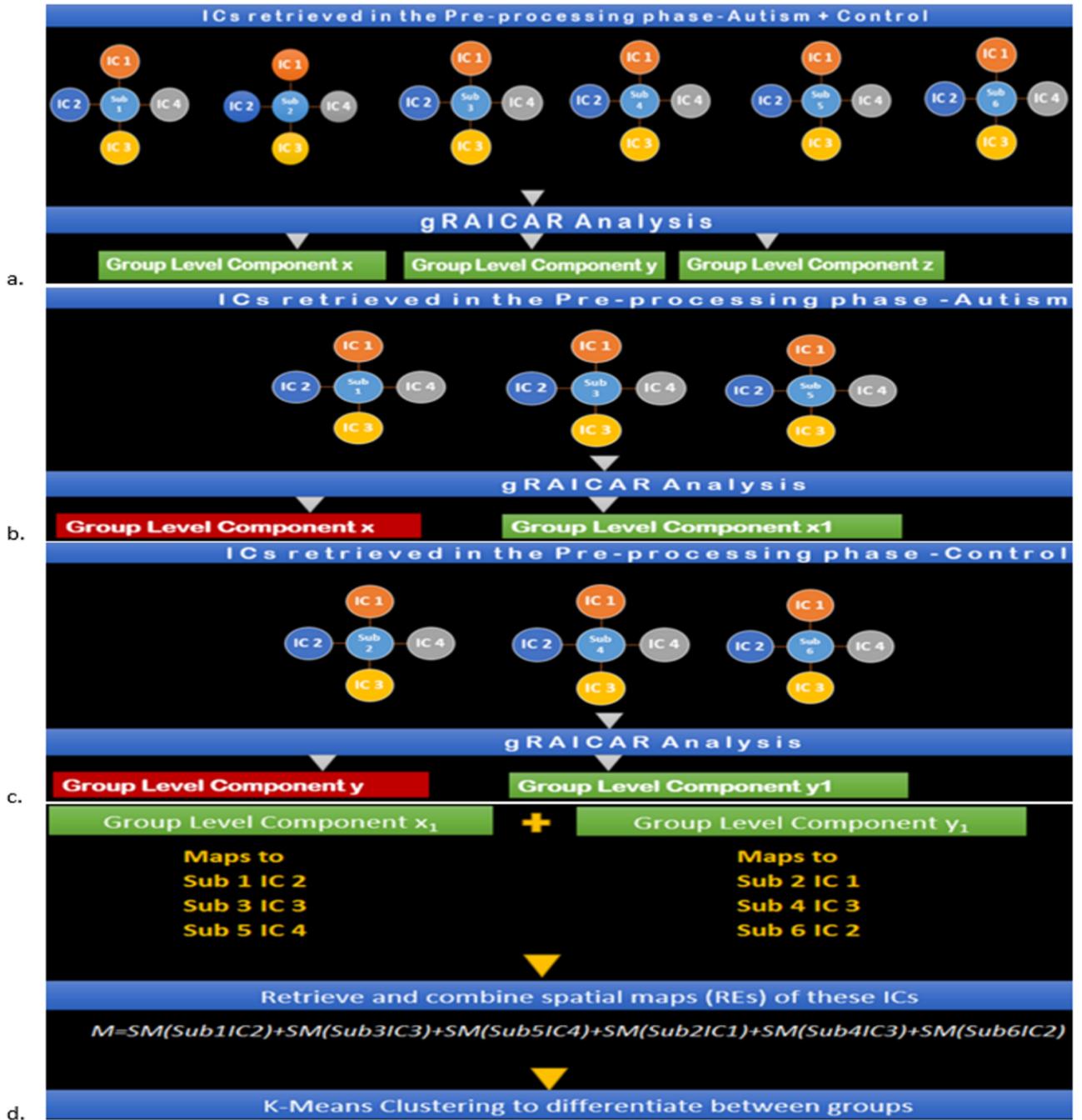
$$\lambda = \max \sum_{i=1}^k \text{cov}(\omega, \omega_i) \quad (3.4)$$

$\lambda$  represents maximum covariance in (3.4), between group level component,  $\omega$ , from the group being analyzed and  $\omega_i$ , that from the opposite group with  $k$  being the total number of group level components in the opposite group.

Two more k-means clustering analyses were performed by pairing  $A^x$  with  $C_a^x$ , and  $C^x$  with  $A_c^x$ . This analysis was carried out to ascertain whether the reproducible components in each group, when paired with the corresponding component with similar spatial distribution in the other group, can effectively discriminate between the groups. The entire analysis pipeline is illustrated in Fig. 7(a-d).

Steps I-IV presented in Fig. 7 illustrate the concepts and summarize the processing by gRAICAR algorithm and k-means clustering analysis. For demonstration purposes, 6 artificial subjects, 3 from the Autism group (denoted by A) and the other 3 from Control group (denoted by C) are shown. Each example subject is assigned 4 ICs as shown. This is an arbitrary number

illustrating the concept and the number of ICs was not constant in actual processing. In actual processing, 799 subjects were used with a variable number of ICs. (I) This step shows gRAICAR processing on all subjects in the combined group (Autism + Control groups) and the resulting list of group-level components, 3 in this case:  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ . (II) This step shows gRAICAR analysis on Autism group only from the example and the list of group-level components obtained as in step I. Component  $x$  was found in step I as well and is discarded after visual examination. (III) This step shows gRAICAR analysis on Control group only and the list of group-level components obtained as in steps I and II. Component  $y$  was found in step I hence discarded. (IV) In this step, we completed multiple tasks. We combined the group-level components  $x_I$  and  $y_I$  by mapping these to individual ICs for each subject. We then retrieved spatial maps for each IC representing a subject under the group-level component and linearly combined them using MATLAB creating a matrix we called ' $M$ '. Finally, we used k-means clustering algorithm in MATLAB using  $M$  to investigate the separation of components between groups.



**Fig. 3.4.** a. Step I: gRAICAR Analysis on Combined (Autism + Control) Group producing group level components x, y, and z. b. Step II: gRAICAR Analysis on Autism Group Only, producing group-level components, x and x<sub>1</sub>. x is discarded since it was produced in step I. c. Step III: gRAICAR Analysis on Control Group Only, producing group-level components, y and y<sub>1</sub>. y is discarded since it was produced in step I. d. Step IV: Group level components from Steps II and III were combined by retrieving spatial maps corresponding to ICs these group-level components represented for each subject within each group as shown in the figure. Group level components reproducible in the combined group also found in individual analysis (steps II and III) were excluded.

Once the clustering was complete, we constructed an inter-subject Euclidean distance matrix within both Autism and Control groups using spatial maps associated with each subject for component pairings  $(C^x, A^x)$ ,  $(A_c^x, C^x)$ , and  $(C_a^x, A^x)$ . A self-organizing map or SOM analyzes input vectors in the input space and learns, in an unsupervised manner, to classify them accordingly [78] [79]. The result includes a low-dimensional (one- or two-) discretized representation of the input space of the training samples referred to as a map.

Neighboring neurons in SOMs learn recognizing neighboring sections of the input space which leads them to not only learn the distribution but the topology of the training vectors used as input. These neurons are arranged in physical positions based upon a topology function and distances between them are calculated using a distance function.

Adjacent neurons in the topology generally are close in the input space as well. In our study, we used SOMs to visualize the reproducibility and separation of the subjects in feature-space in addition to the numerical values given by k-means. High dimensionality in k-means was scaled using SOMs for optimal visualization. We obtained individual spatial maps for  $A^x$  and  $C^x$  and stacked them into a matrix. We then used this matrix as input to a  $5 \times 5$  SOM for visualization as described earlier. This process was repeated for  $(A^x, C_a^x)$  and  $(A_c^x, C^x)$ .

### **3.5 Results**

Let us first examine the most reproducible group-level components within each group. We found 54 group-level components within the Autism group and 49 such components within the Control group. By combining selected components as described earlier, the range of cluster purity was 0.69 – 0.97 using unsupervised k-means clustering over all permutations of 11 group-level

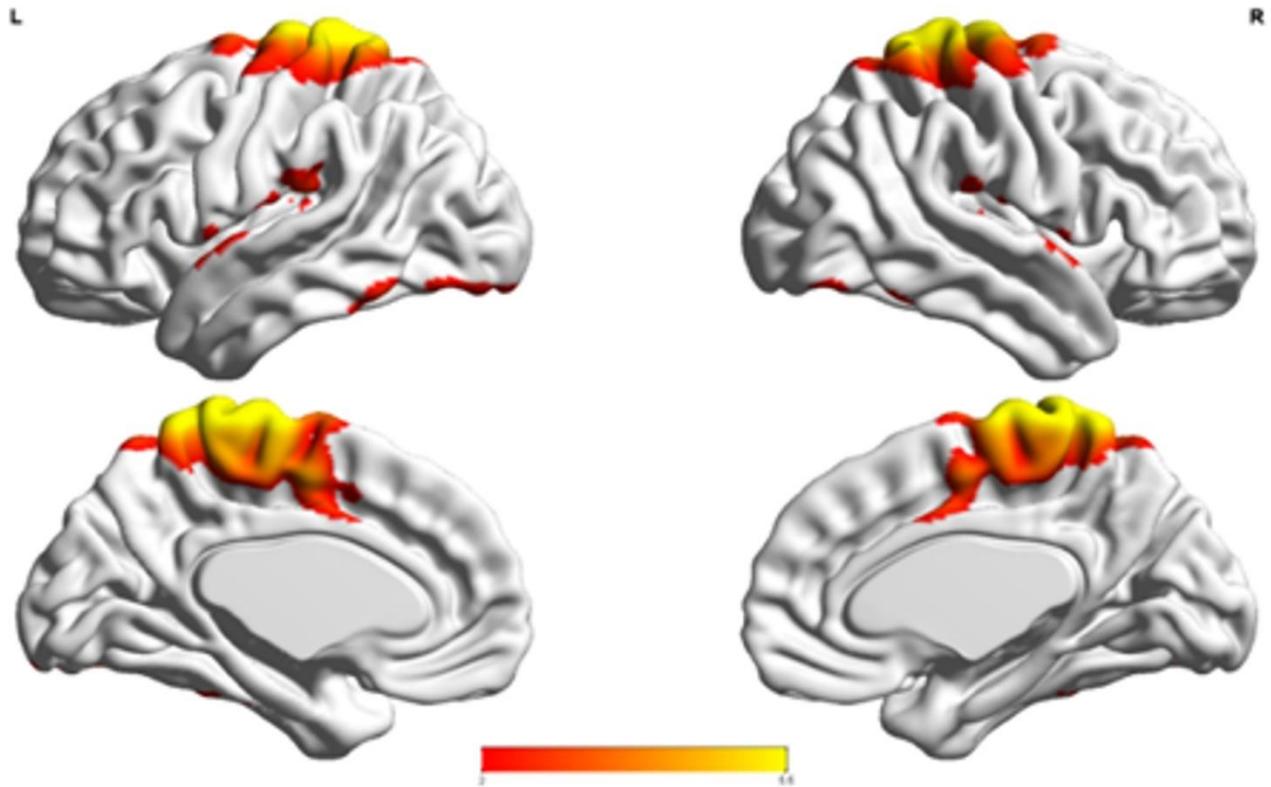
components from Autism and 3 from Controls. The average purity value was 0.89 with a standard deviation of 0.06.

Figs. 3.5 and 3.6 show the spatial maps of  $A^x$  and  $C^x$ , respectively. The highest cluster purity value was 0.97 obtained by combining these two group-level components. Fig. 3.7 presents a map of pie charts based on a  $5 \times 5$  SOM to visualize the reproducibility and separation of the two groups using  $A^x$  and  $C^x$  as described earlier. Each pie chart represents the number of subjects from a given group, Autism or Control. As an example, a solid red chart represents all subjects from the Autism group whereas a solid blue all from the Control group.

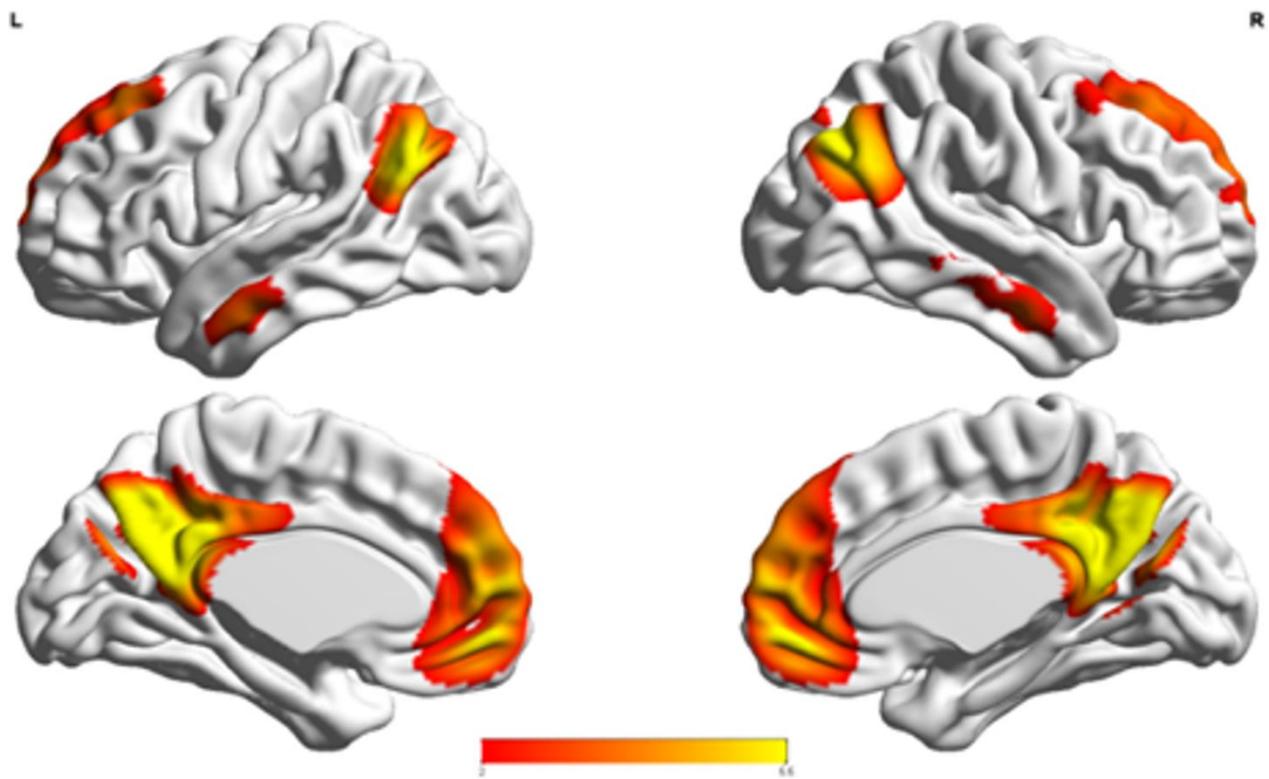
In the next step, we ascertained which group-level components in the opposite group had the highest spatial correlation to  $A^x$  and  $C^x$ , using all 54 components from Autism and 49 from Control groups depending upon the comparison being carried out.  $A^x$  was found to have the highest spatial correlation value of 0.29 ( $p < 0.001$ ) with  $C_a^x$  in the Control group while  $C^x$  had the highest spatial correlation value of 0.63 ( $p < 0.001$ ) with  $A_c^x$  in the Autism group. We then combined  $C^x$  with  $A_c^x$  and subjected them to k-means clustering analysis. This produced cluster purity of 0.895 with a sensitivity of 0.893 and a specificity of 0.897. Similarly, we combined  $A^x$  with  $C_a^x$  as described earlier and completed k-means clustering analysis. This resulted in a cluster purity of 0.607 with a sensitivity of 0.43 and specificity of 0.77. Figs. 3.8 and 3.9 show the spatial profiles of  $A_c^x$  and  $C_a^x$ , respectively.

We also used pie charts to visualize the reproducibility and separation of subjects using  $5 \times 5$  SOMs for these combinations:  $A^x + C_a^x$  and  $C^x + A_c^x$ . These visualizations are presented in Figs. 3.10 and 3.11. In both cases, a dotted line represents the approximate separation observed between the two groups. Numbers on each pie chart represent the neuron in the SOM. It can be observed that the purity of individual pie charts drops when using spatial equivalents (Figs 3.10

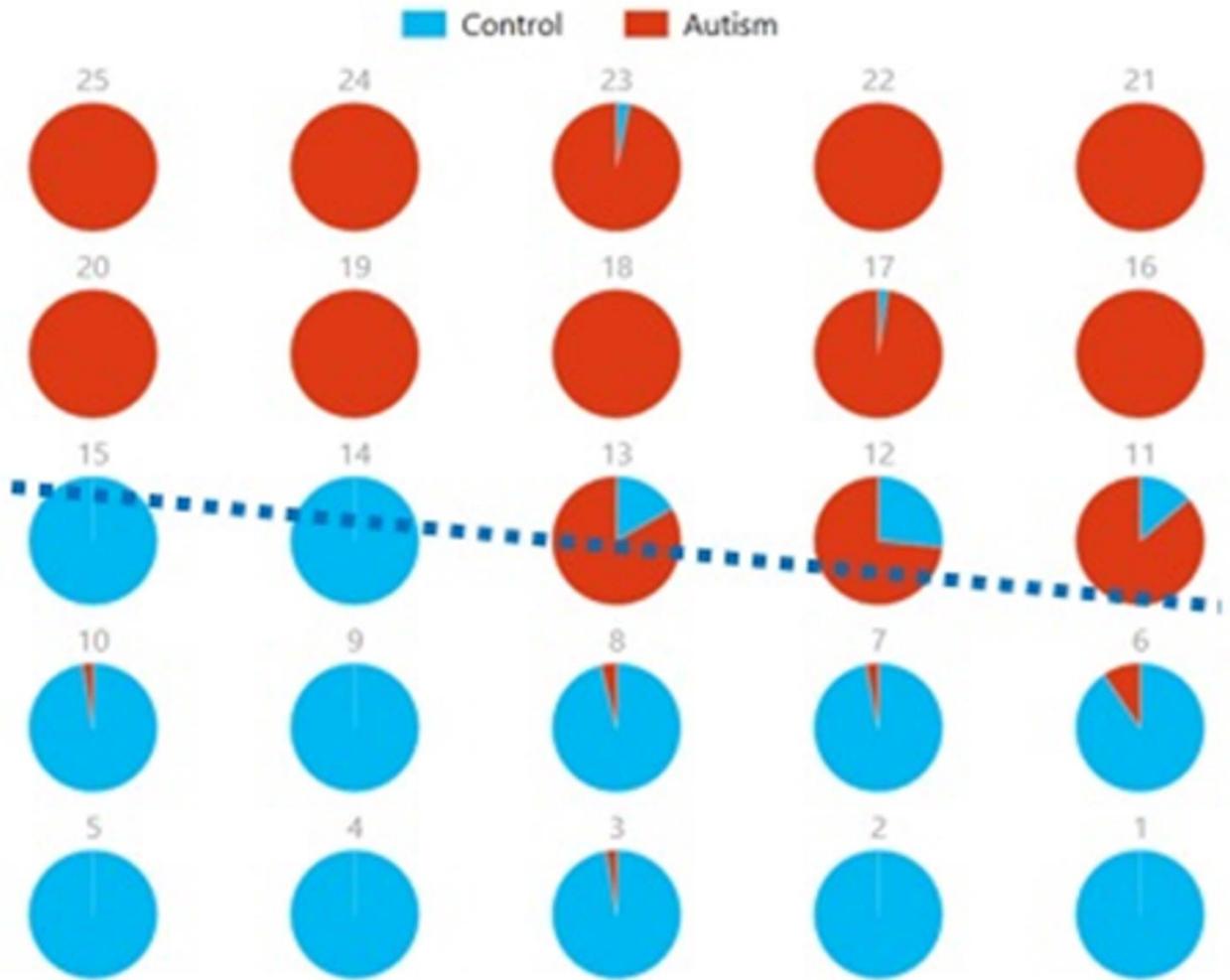
and 3.11) as compared to the most reproducible components in each group (Fig. 3.7). This is a reflection of higher purity and separation in Fig. 9 (97.1%) to lower purity values and hence lower separation in Figs. 3.10 and 3.11 (0.607 and 0.895 respectively).



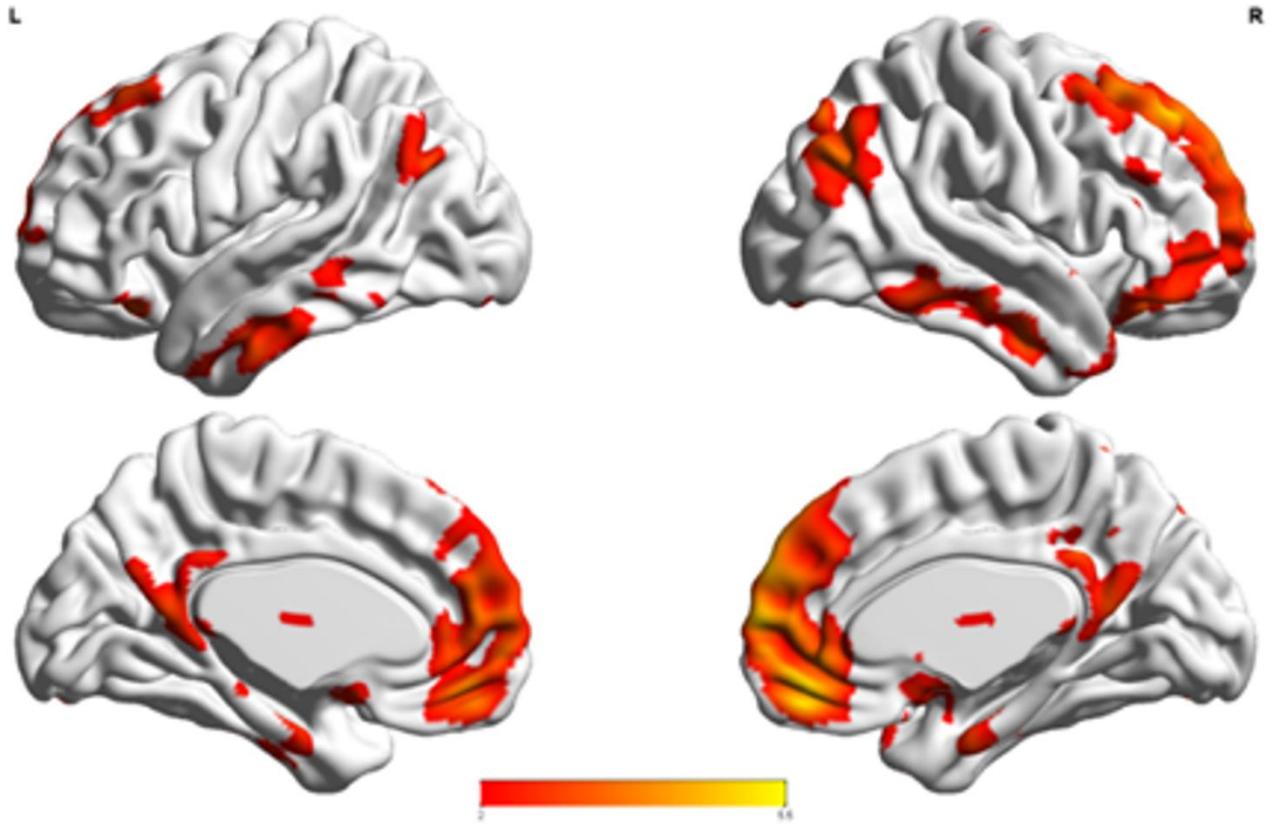
**Fig. 3.5.** The group-level component,  $A^x$ , from Autism group that produced the highest cluster purity value of 0.971 when combined with another group-level component from the Control group,  $C^x$ .



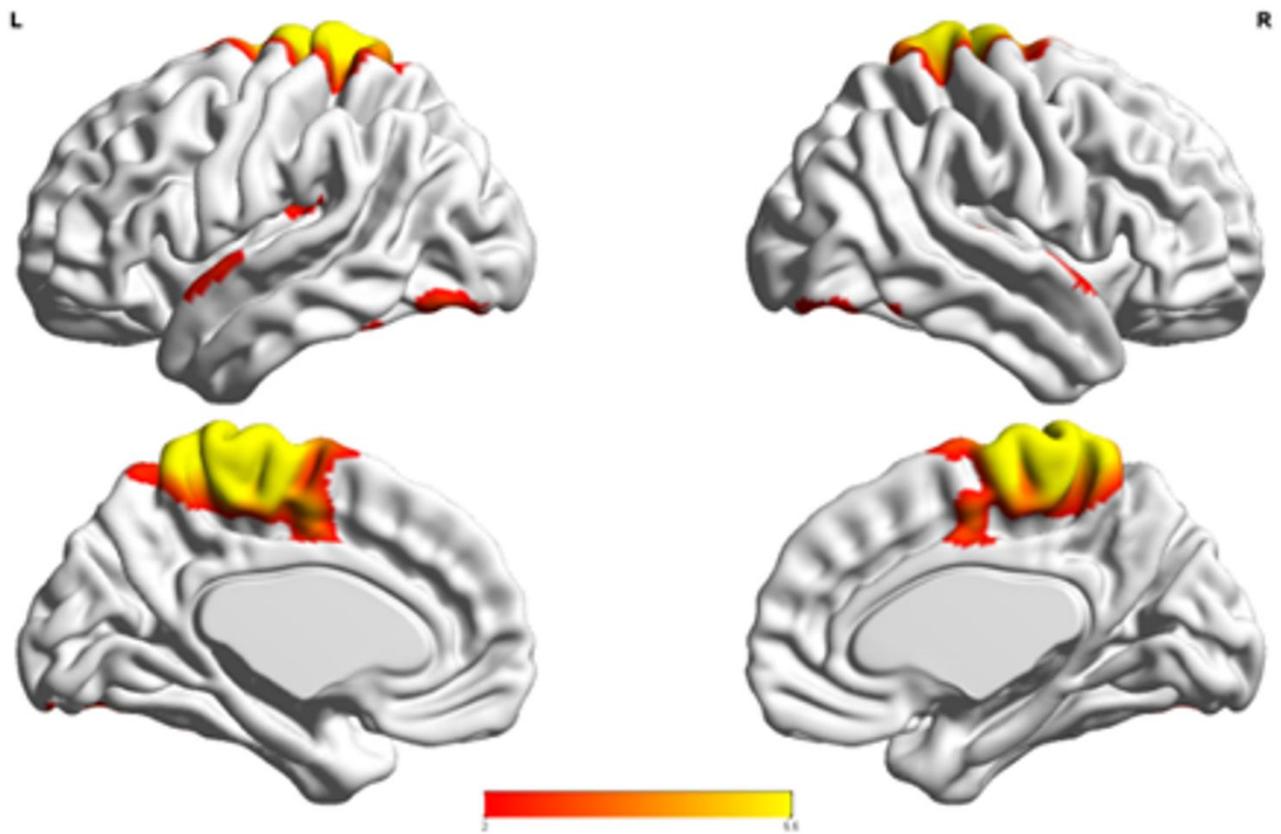
**Fig. 3.6.** The group-level component,  $C^x$ , from Control group that produced the highest cluster purity value of 0.971 when combined with another group-level component from the Autism group,  $A^x$ .



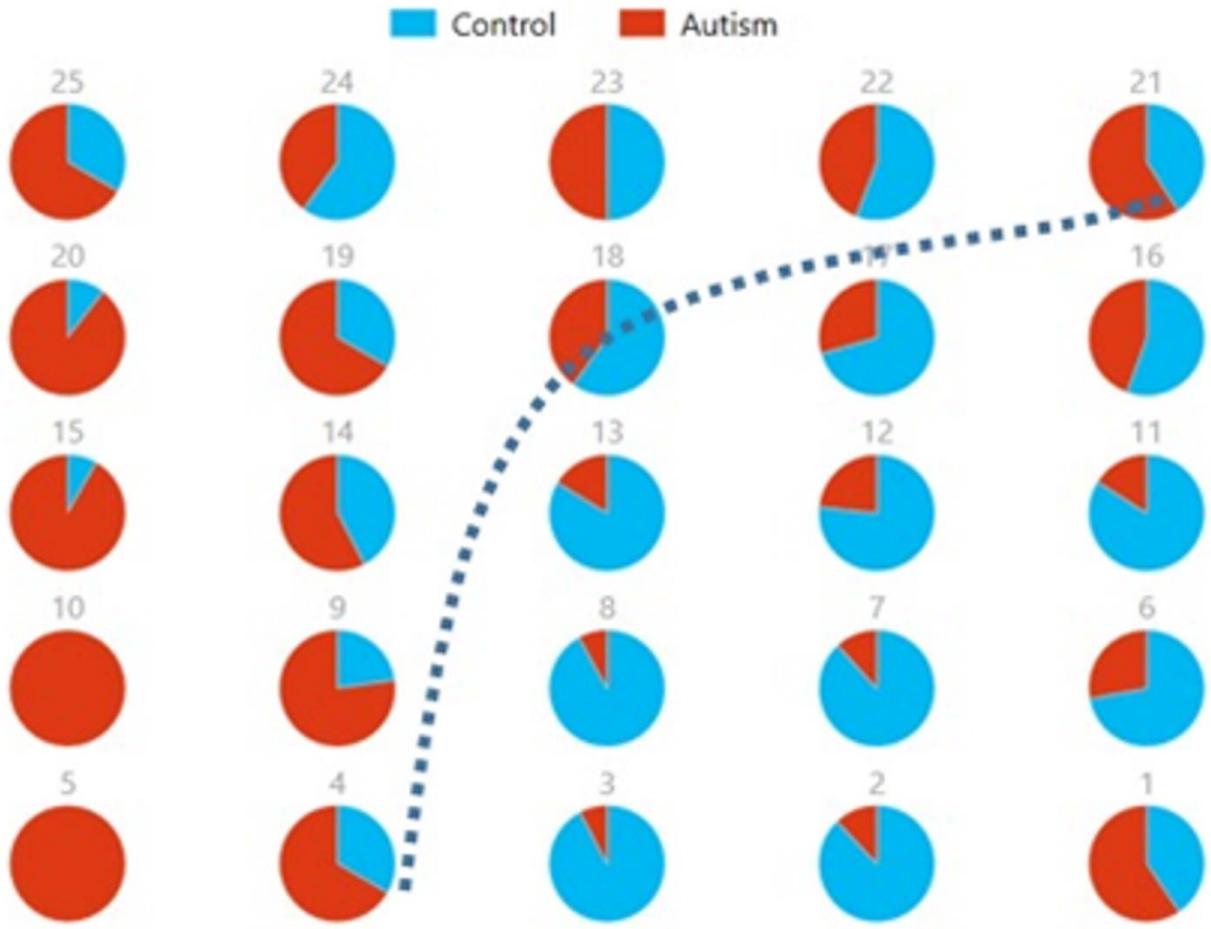
**Fig. 3.7.** Pie chart visualizations based on a 5×5 SOM for  $A^x$  and  $C^x$  showing Autism and Control groups by neuron. Each pie chart corresponds to a neuron, represented by the number on each chart, in the SOM map for these components. This map indicates group separation approximately in the middle with Autism group populating the upper while Control the lower half of the SOM, represented by the dotted blue line.



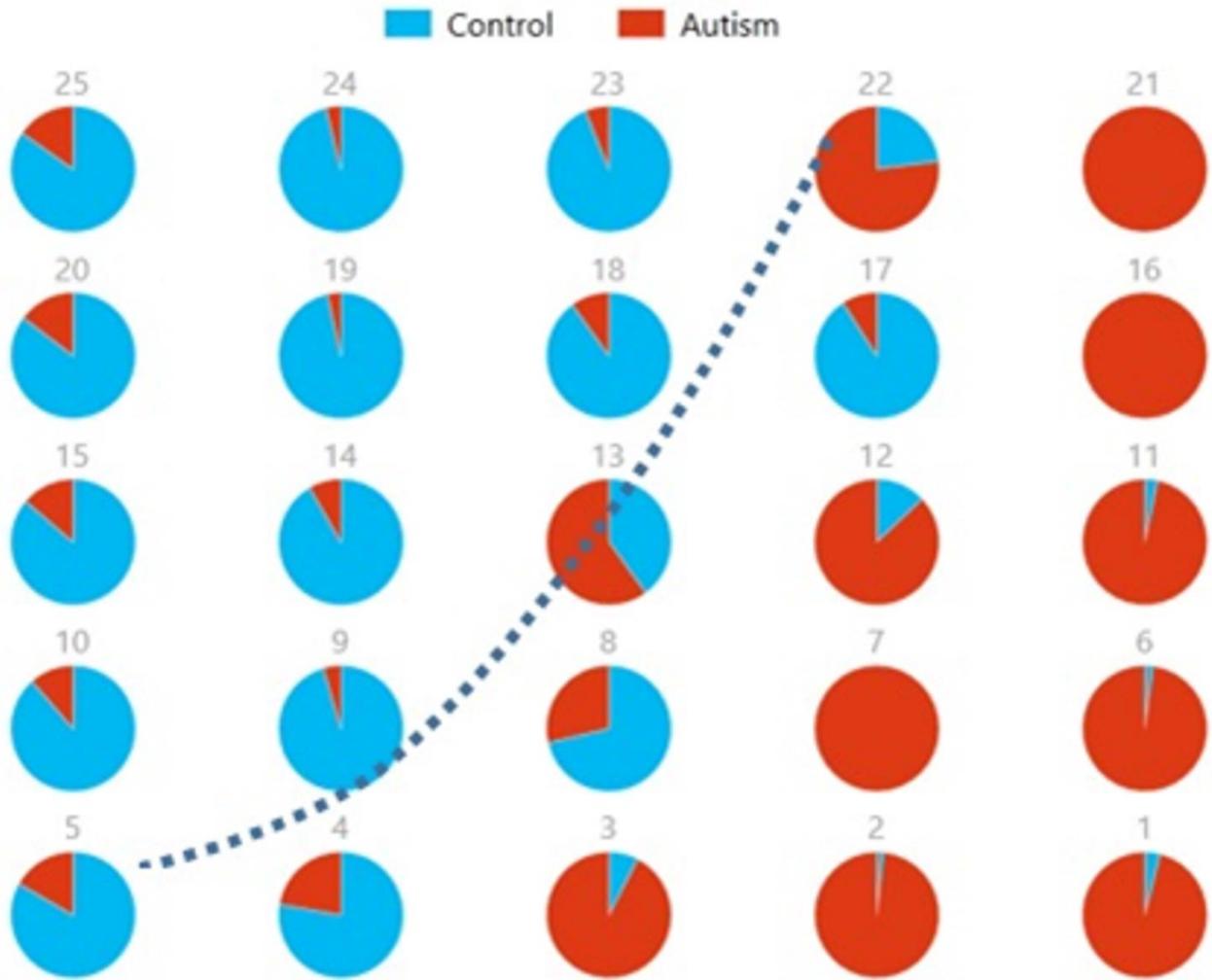
**Fig. 3.8.** This figure represents the spatial map for  $A_c^x$ , the group-level component in the Autism group with the highest spatial correlation with  $C^x$ .



**Fig. 3.9.** This figure represents the spatial map for  $C_a^x$ , the group-level component in the Control group with the highest spatial correlation with  $A^x$ .



**Fig. 3.10.** Pie chart visualizations based on a  $5 \times 5$  SOM for  $A^x$  and  $C_a^x$  showing Autism and Control groups by neuron where the number on each chart corresponds to a neuron in the SOM. The dotted line represents approximate separation between the two groups.



**Fig. 3.11.** Pie chart visualizations based on a 5x5 SOM for  $A_c^x$  and  $C^x$  showing Autism and Control groups by neuron where the number on each chart corresponds to a neuron in the SOM.. The dotted line represents approximate separation between the two groups.

### 3.6 Discussion

We used a discover-confirm scheme wherein during the “discover” phase, we used gRAICAR to retrieve reproducible components in each group and during the “confirm” phase, we used unsupervised clustering to determine the separation between groups based on the reproducible components in each group. Further, the separation was visualized using self-organizing maps or SOMs. This is a novel methodological framework for investigating discriminative features between diagnostic groups as opposed to performing group-wise statistical tests or supervised classification.

Even though multiple studies have shown altered fMRI-based connectivity in certain brain networks in Autism using machine learning techniques, identifying individuals with Autism based on these measures has not been reliable especially in larger sized samples [38] [39]. We hypothesized that functional brain networks which are most reproducible separately within Autism and Control groups, but not reproducible when analyzing both groups as merged, may lead to effective discrimination between the groups. We tested the above hypothesis by finding the most reproducible ICA components (which represent brain networks) first in the merged and then in separate Autism and Control groups. Our results, shown in the previous section, indeed support the above hypothesis. SOM visualizations provided along with spatial maps of the group-level components give further insight into the reproducibility of certain brain networks as well as their differences between groups based on our proposition.

The overall cluster purity we obtained from our multisite fMRI data set, obtained by averaging the results obtained from the three scenarios was 0.824 with a sensitivity of 0.77 and specificity of 0.87. Previous studies using the same data set, but supervised classification methods

instead of unsupervised clustering methods, have reported classification accuracies between 0.6 and 0.8 depending on whether they used a larger or smaller sub-sample of the ABIDE database [38] [61]. Given the fact that the methods used here are different from the previous studies mentioned above, it would not be fair to directly compare our cluster purity with theirs. Instead, we would like to make the point that characterizing reproducibility of brain networks in different groups as well as the merged sample is a novel idea which may hold promise, especially in the context of disorders such as Autism. This is because the most discriminative features identified via the proposed method are more likely to be generalizable to a larger sample given the reproducibility constraint.

$C_x$  and  $A_c^x$ , which provided highest discriminability between the groups, represent the default mode network (DMN) in Control and Autism groups, respectively. The DMN in Autism appears less prominent and incohesive. Decreased functional connectivity in default mode subnetworks contributes to core deficits observed in ASD patients [18] whereas activity was reduced in the autism group in the ventral medial prefrontal cortex/ventral anterior cingulate cortex [19]. Visuospatial working memory deficiency within the DMN was discovered in adolescents with ASD [20] and the regions of DMN functional connectivity in the bilateral inferior parietal lobule and posterior cingulate cortex were found to be smaller in ASD patients [21]. On the other hand,  $A^x$  and  $C_A^x$  represent regions of the motor network, mid cingulate cortex and temporal-parietal junction. Even though these regions have been implicated in autism [80] [81] [82] [83], it was not as discriminatory as the DMN. To summarize, our methodology first discovered highly reproducible components separately in Autism and Control groups pointing to functional networks described in this section. These components or functional networks they pointed to from both groups, when combined and analyzed in clustering analysis as described, provided high

cluster purities, hence the ability to distinguish between the two groups. Functional networks discovered by applying our methodology separately in groups confirm earlier findings on alterations involving these networks in Autism. Results obtained from analyzing these networks support our hypothesis that functional networks highly reproducible separately in groups lead to higher cluster purities and discriminability.

### **3.6.1 Limitations and Future Directions**

Despite the fact that the ABIDE database provides invaluable means to analyze multisite resting state fMRI data sets with significant statistical power, there are certain inherent limitations to this data set. Site to site variability in acquisition parameters, subject populations, scanner performance, and research protocols may all be confounding factors when it comes to the sensitivity for detecting abnormalities [61]. It could be argued that the analysis of individual site data sets separately may provide a higher cluster purity. However, such results may be less easily translatable to the clinic because inter-site variability is something any potential clinical method will have to cope with. Both groups in ABIDE, Autism and healthy Control, appeared to have subjects with average to above-average range of IQ in addition to variation in diagnostic subtypes (Asperger's and PDD-NOS) across sites. A broader range of IQ levels need to be included in further studies since R-fMRI studies allow the inclusion of individuals with lower IQ than task based studies. In addition, not all sites spanned childhood to middle adulthood but further studies can include a deeper examination of the development of brain providing insight into developmental dynamics of Autism [68].

We used a novel analysis framework involving gRAICAR as described earlier [64]. Despite its robustness, there are several limitations including computational and physical memory costs. We were able to mitigate computational and physical memory concerns by using parallel processing and cloud computing. gRAICAR further provides the ability to parallelize one of the processing stages hence reducing the computational time and increasing efficiency. We had used gRAICAR code in a UNIX/ MATLAB environment. Also in the absence of a threshold in gRAICAR to determine the existence of a relationship, the RZs are forced to align with a group-level component even if there is low similarity with other RZs. In future studies, it would be interesting to investigate how gRAICAR performs in site-level analytics within Autism and ABIDE data sets. Our methodology can also be expanded to other neurological disorders to determine the utility of this algorithm in future studies.

## CHAPTER 4

### **gMedICA: A Software Package for Assessing Reproducibility of Brain Networks and their Discriminability across Disorders**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Independent Component Analysis (ICA) is a blind source separation technique that is commonly employed for extracting brain networks involving spatially distributed regions with similar/correlated temporal activity [84], especially in the baseline resting state. Consequently, it has been applied to investigate altered brain networks in various heterogeneous neurological disorders using fMRI. Von dem Hagen et al. [85] employed ICA to demonstrate that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) have reduced functional connectivity within the Default Mode Network (DMN), an important resting state brain network [86]. Assaf et al. [87] studied the role of altered functional connectivity of the default mode sub-networks in ASDs using short resting fMRI scans and ICA. von Rhein et al. [88] showed that subjects with ADHD exhibit alterations in connectivity of the salience and executive control networks and associated brain regions during task performance by using ICA as a part of their methodology. Patriat et al. [89] used ICA and discovered higher inverse correlation between the whole DMN and TPN networks in pediatric post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Shang et al. [90] showed using ICA and chronic earthquake-related PTSD patients that the salience network (SN), central executive network (CEN), default mode network (DMN), somato-motor network (SMN), auditory network (AN), and visual network (VN) have both an increase and a decrease in functional connectivity in PTSD. Enhanced coupling of the amygdala and the insula within the SN was observed by Thome et al. [91] in subjects with PTSD by using ICA to evaluate connectivity within SN. The effects of

developing PTSD in combat personnel with mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) exhibiting abnormal activation of distributed brain networks including the emotion network and DMN were studied by Shu et al. [92] using ICA as a part of their methodology. Cisler et al. [93] used ICA in a study involving the characterization of the relationships of assault and PTSD severity with the organization of networks that are identified in emotion processing.

Another perspective we take into consideration is the general crisis of lack of reproducibility of findings reported in a given study using a different sample [94]. Often, preclinical research outcomes generate significant media attention while failing to translate into successful diagnoses or treatments [95] [96]. Although, there may be multiple potential reasons for these problems, basic scientific results frequently turn out to be irreproducible. A recent survey of more than 1500 scientists revealed that 70% had tried but failed to reproduce another scientist's experiment, whereas 52% thought that there was a crisis of reproducibility [96]. Up to 85% of the resources were wasted while producing and reporting research relevant to clinicians and patients [97]. Major contributors to research waste have been identified as irrelevant research questions, research design and conduct, inefficient regulation and management of research, failure to provide access to full research reports, and the lack of unbiased and useable reports [98]. Sharing code written to analyze neuroimaging data improves transparency and reproducibility in neuroimaging research, as this code is necessary for interpreting and validating results, and addressing new research questions [99]. Methods, in general, need to address the issue of reproducibility of results, at least within their sample. In this paper, we not only provide a methodology that analyzes the reproducibility of independent components obtained from resting state fMRI (representing brain networks), but also implements it in a software package which is freely distributed along with this article.

We surmise that the lack of reproducibility of brain networks across heterogeneous spectrum disorders not only hinders replicability of results as mentioned above, but also the ability of potential biomarkers based on such brain networks to effectively discriminate between disease groups and healthy controls. Therefore, we hypothesize that the functional brain networks most reproducible separately within disease and healthy control groups, but not reproducible when both groups are merged, can effectively discriminate between the groups.

Recently, an algorithm was proposed for modifying traditional ICA-based characterization of the functional brain networks such that reproducibility information is taken into consideration when we choose independent components. We utilize this method, namely “generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility” (gRAICAR, <https://github.com/yangzhi-psy/gRAICAR>) [43], which can provide independent components that are highly reproducible within a given group of subjects. This methodology extends a framework developed initially for single subject analysis called “Ranking and averaging independent component analysis by reproducibility – RAICAR” [100], which has been used before in various neuroimaging applications [101] [102].

Our study builds upon these previous works by introducing gMedICA, a software package that implements a “discover-confirm” approach, wherein the “discover” phase entails estimating the reproducibility of independent components using the gRAICAR (generalized Ranking and Averaging Independent Component Analysis by Reproducibility) algorithm [43], and subsequently the “confirm” phase involves evaluating the ability of highly reproducible components thus obtained to effectively discriminate between groups of subjects or participants with heterogeneous neurological disorders. This software package implements a work flow not available previously in literature, and utilizes a system-of-systems design approach [103] that

minimizes user workload. It accepts fMRI data from individual participants as input, completes pre-, para-, and post-processing of these data sets, and presents results to the user. Using results obtained from gMedICA, we can examine the reproducibility of group-level independent components, alterations in functional connectivity, and the ability of functional brain networks discovered by gMedICA to discriminate between different groups of participants in an unsupervised way.

## 4.2 Materials and Methods

This section is organized as follows. First we present a conceptual explanation of data pre-processing, main analysis and post-processing, including clustering. Next, the details of the software package which implements these conceptual steps are presented. Finally, we illustrate the conceptual steps as well as the capabilities of the software package using experimental fMRI data obtained from Soldiers with PTSD and mTBI.

### 4.2.1 Pre-processing

In the first step of our pre-processing phase, we utilize a combination of Data Processing Assistant for Resting-State fMRI [104] (DPARSF, <http://www.restfmri.net>), which is a plug-in software based upon Statistical Parametric Mapping or SPM version 8 (<http://www.fil.ion.ucl.ac.uk/spm>), Resting-State fMRI Data Analysis Toolkit (REST 1.7) [105], and MATLAB. Input data in this phase can either be in DICOM or .img/ .hdr file pair format, which is converted to NIFTI-1 format images (<http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1>, .nii files) before further processing. We use DPARSF to perform realignment of 3D brain volumes relative to the initial volume using 6-parameter rigid body registration, normalization to MNI (Montreal

Neurological Institute) template using nonlinear warping, spatial smoothing using a Gaussian kernel with full width at half maximum of  $4 \text{ mm} \times 4 \text{ mm} \times 4 \text{ mm}$ , de-trending using linear polynomial and temporal band-pass filtering in the frequency range of 0.01 – 0.1 Hz.

The next step of this phase picks up four dimensional NIfTI-1 format images (<http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1>, .nii files) from the previous step, and use them as input to FMRIB Software Library v5.0 [106] [107] (FSL by Analysis Group, FMRIB, Oxford, UK) to derive a set of independent components for each subject using Multivariate Exploratory Linear Optimized Decomposition into Independent Components (MELODIC) algorithm [108] [109]. Analysis tools for ICA are available within FSL for decomposing single or multiple 4D data sets into linearly independent spatial components. More information on MELODIC can be obtained at <http://fsl.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl/fslwiki/MELODIC>. In our pre-processing, we use MELODIC analysis tool to perform standard 2D spatial ICA on each subject. In addition to one spatial map per component, this analysis also results in corresponding time course and a mixing matrix. MELODIC determines the number of components internally within FSL through a dimensionality estimation mechanism including principal component analysis technique or PCA [110]. We use MELODIC results for each subject in the main analysis section to determine the reproducibility of these components, and therefore, the highly reproducible ones within each group. One of the highlights of our proposed software, gMedICA is that the users do not have to deal directly with individual software packages mentioned in this phase since our software automates these tasks by seamlessly communicating with other software packages.

### 4.2.2 Main Analysis

Our main analysis comprised of the implementation of gRAICAR algorithm described earlier in this dissertation.

### 4.2.3 Post-processing

To review our workflow after gRAICAR processing, we present an example case with two diagnostic groups, 4 subjects in each group and 4 IC realizations per subject. For brevity, we assume gRAICAR produces two group-level components per group,  $grpIC_{1,1}$  and  $grpIC_{1,2}$  in group 1 as shown in Fig. 4.1, as well as  $grpIC_{2,1}$  and  $grpIC_{2,2}$  in group 2, as shown in Fig. 4.2. In this example, the first digit represents group enumeration and the second digit represents group-level component index. Suppose group-level components  $grpIC_{1,1}$  and  $grpIC_{2,2}$  had the highest inter-subject consistency according to gRAICAR analysis in groups 1 and 2, respectively, as shown in equations (4.1) and (4.2).

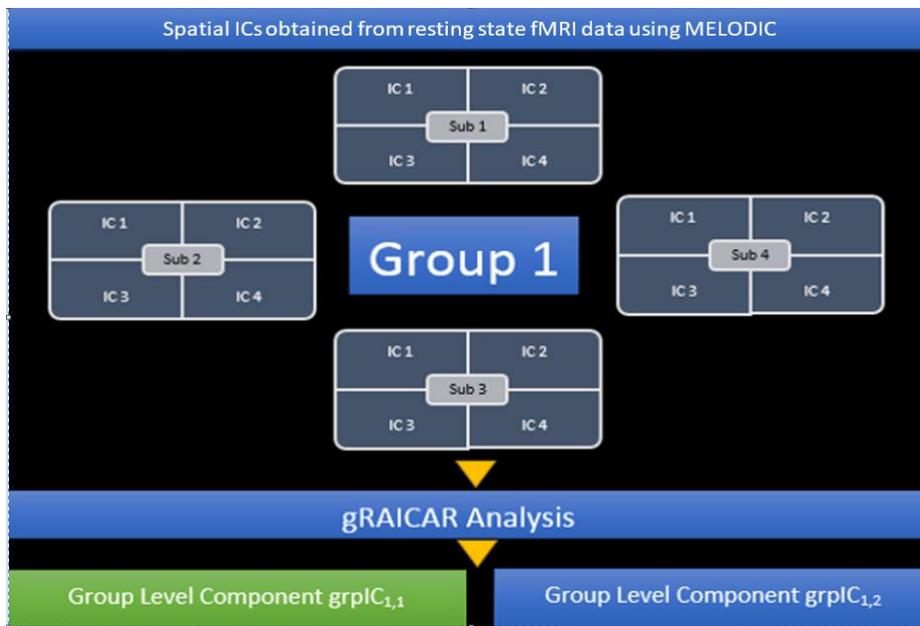
$$\alpha_{(Sub\ 1 \dots Sub\ 4)}(grpIC_{1,1}) > \alpha_{(Sub\ 1 \dots Sub\ 4)}(grpIC_{1,2})$$

(4.1)

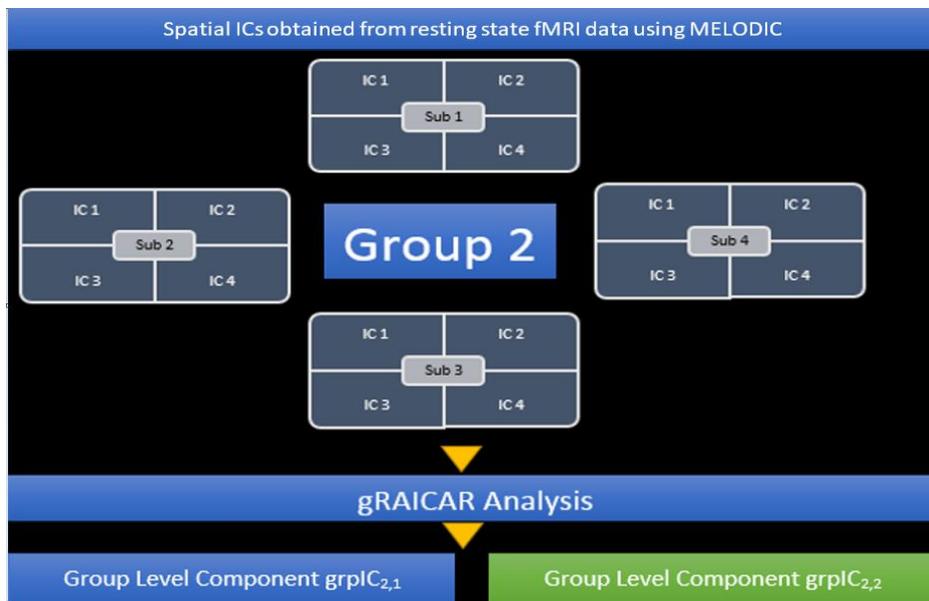
$$\alpha_{(Sub\ 1 \dots Sub\ 4)}(grpIC_{2,2}) > \alpha_{(Sub\ 1 \dots Sub\ 4)}(grpIC_{2,1})$$

(4.2)

We now select these two components for further processing.



**Fig. 4.1** A toy illustration of the analysis workflow. gRAICAR analysis on ICs estimated from fMRI data corresponding to Group 1 is assumed to produce group-level components  $grpIC_{1,1}$  and  $grpIC_{1,2}$ . Let us suppose that  $grpIC_{1,1}$  has highest inter-subject consistency in Group 1 and hence be selected for further processing.



**Fig. 4.2** A toy illustration of the analysis workflow. gRAICAR Analysis on ICs estimated from fMRI data corresponding to Group 2 is assumed to produce group-level components  $grpIC_{2,1}$  and  $grpIC_{2,2}$ . Let us suppose that  $grpIC_{2,2}$  has highest inter-subject consistency in Group 2 and hence be selected for further processing.

#### 4.2.4 Clustering Analysis

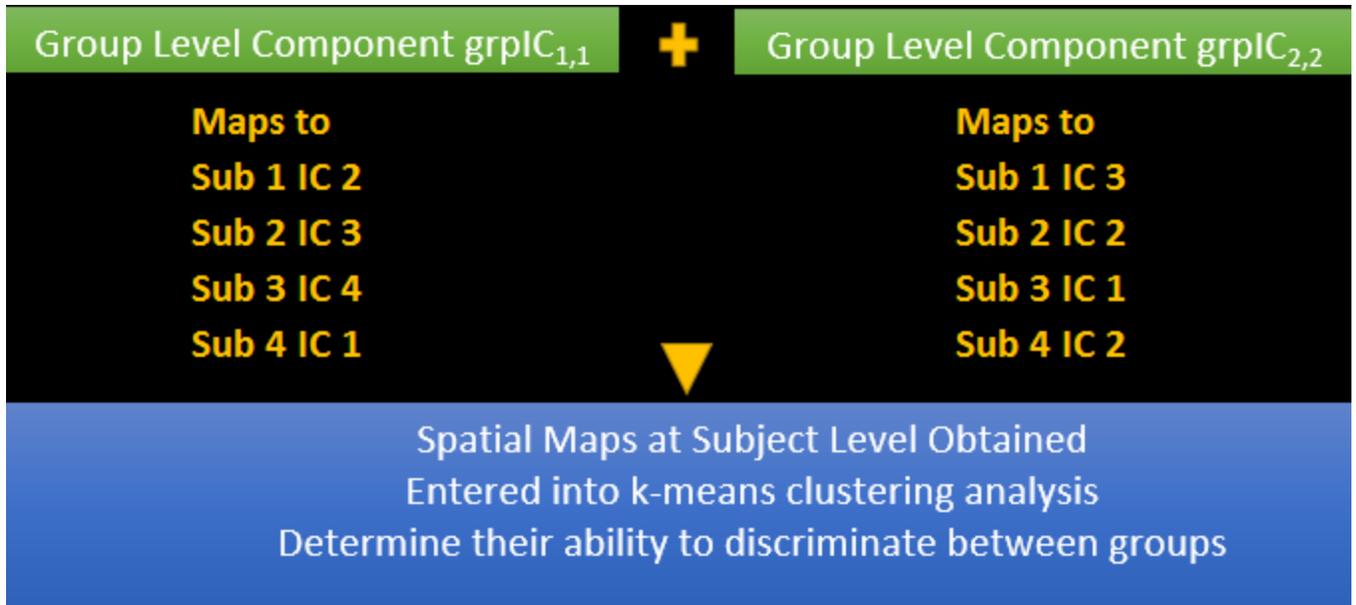
For all subjects, we access post-MELODIC analysis results and retrieve spatial maps associated with the ICs for each subject corresponding to each selected group-level component. We then process these spatial maps in MATLAB wherein the spatial map associated with the IC index of the current subject is retrieved and singleton dimensions are removed. The resulting array is reshaped using MATLAB's reshape function (<http://www.mathworks.com/help/matlab/ref/reshape.html>) thus giving us a matrix  $\phi_x$  with dimensions  $p_x \times q$  where  $p_x$  is the number of subjects in group  $x$  and  $q$  is the size of each spatial map associated with the current IC index. Suppose the size of the spatial map size for each subject in this example is  $61 \times 73 \times 61$ . For group 1 with 4 subjects,  $\phi_1$  is  $4 \times 61 \times 73 \times 61$  and the same for group 2 and  $\phi_2$ . After all subjects in both groups are processed, we combine  $\phi_1$  and  $\phi_2$  matrices from groups 1 and 2 resulting in  $\phi_e$ , an  $8 \times 271633$  matrix representing all individual subject-level maps from all groups. We apply the k-means algorithm, utilized by several studies in the analysis of fMRI data [111] [112] [113], to  $\phi_e$  to examine how subjects were clustered based upon their spatial maps without *a priori* groupings, and how this corresponds to clinically determined diagnostic clusters. We minimize the objective function,  $M$ , as follows:

$$M = \sum_{b=1}^x |\Phi_b - C_b|^2$$

(4.3)

$\phi_b$  represents combined spatial maps from all subjects in group b,  $C_b$  represents the mean of all points in group b, and  $x$  represents the number of groups in the analysis.

We set up the k-means algorithm to partition  $\phi_c$  into two clusters since we have two example subject groups, continuing with the example we presented earlier. Cluster purity, referring to true positive rate obtained through k-means clustering analysis, provides us insight into the ability of  $grpIC_{1,1}$  and  $grpIC_{2,2}$  to accurately distinguish between the two diagnostic groups. If  $grpIC_{1,1}$  and  $grpIC_{2,2}$  do not represent the same functional brain network in both groups, or the spatial correlation value between the two group-level components is less than 0.9, we take  $grpIC_{1,1}$  from group 1 and find the group-level component,  $grpIC_{2,\cdot}$ , in group 2 having the highest spatial correlation with it thus giving us the same functional network in group 2. The ‘.’ in  $grpIC_{2,\cdot}$  represents the index value of this new-found component. We then find  $grpIC_{1,\cdot}$ , the group-level component in group 1 with the highest spatial correlation with  $grpIC_{2,2}$  in group 2, or the component representing the same network as  $grpIC_{2,2}$  in group 1. We now merge ( $grpIC_{1,1}$   $grpIC_{2,\cdot}$ ) and ( $grpIC_{1,\cdot}$ ,  $grpIC_{2,2}$ ) and examine cluster purity in both cases using the k-means algorithm. The rationale behind this second round of analysis is to examine cluster purity values if similar functional brain networks from all groups are combined. In other words, this second round of analysis provides insight into the ability of similar functional networks to distinguish between the two groups. Having determined these reproducible networks and their ability to effectively discriminate between the groups also supports furthering our “discover-confirm” approach introduced earlier in this paper. In the following section, we review the implementation of this methodology in a software package named gMedICA.



**Fig. 4.3** The spatial maps at the individual subject level corresponding to group-level components from Fig. 4.1 and Fig. 4.3, i.e. the most reproducible ICs within each group, are obtained and entered into a k-means clustering analysis in order to determine their ability to discriminate between the groups.

### 4.3 Implementation

We have designed gMedICA software to allow users to examine their fMRI data sets using the “discover-confirm” approach we have proposed using the reproducibility of independent components. It is meant to provide functionality described in our analysis workflow and resulting components with minimal effort. The main application was developed in MATLAB with wrapped subsidiary applications. We have provided two starting formats for users, DICOM or .img/ .hdr file pairs.

#### 4.3.1 Prerequisites

The first version of gMedICA was developed in MATLAB environment and hence MATLAB is required to run the software. Another pre-requisite is to define the location of FSL software

directory in the host system. If this has been accomplished per instructions in FSL software (FMRIB Software Library v5.0; <https://fsl.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl/fslwiki>), the following command – “*echo \$FSLDIR*” – should display the location of the above-mentioned directory. This gives the ability to run FSL’s ‘*FEAT*’ command described later in FSL analysis. Once the FSL location has been established in the environment, the user can execute gMedICA.

In order to utilize this approach, GMedICA is designed to read the following directory structure, which the user needs to create:

*Main Directory*

*Group 1*

*Sub 1*

*Sub 2*

*Sub 3*

*Sub 4*

.

.

.

*Group 2*

*Sub 1*

*Sub 2*

*Sub 3*

*Sub 4*

.

.

In this structure, each subject directory contains DICOM or NIfTI Hdr/Img pair files. The current version of gMedICA has been limited to three diagnostic groups due to external processing constraints. This limitation is discussed later in this paper. An example structure has been discussed under gRAICAR algorithm and we continue with the same example that includes two groups – Group 1 and Group 2. Consequently, the data structure should be set up as follows:

*Main Directory/Group 1/Sub 1, Sub 2, Sub 3...*

and

*Main Directory/Group 2/Sub 1, Sub 2, Sub 3...*

Under each subject, we may have

*Sub 1/ 1.dcm,2.dcm,3.dcm,...*

or

*Sub 1/1.img,1.hdr,2.img,2.hdr,...*

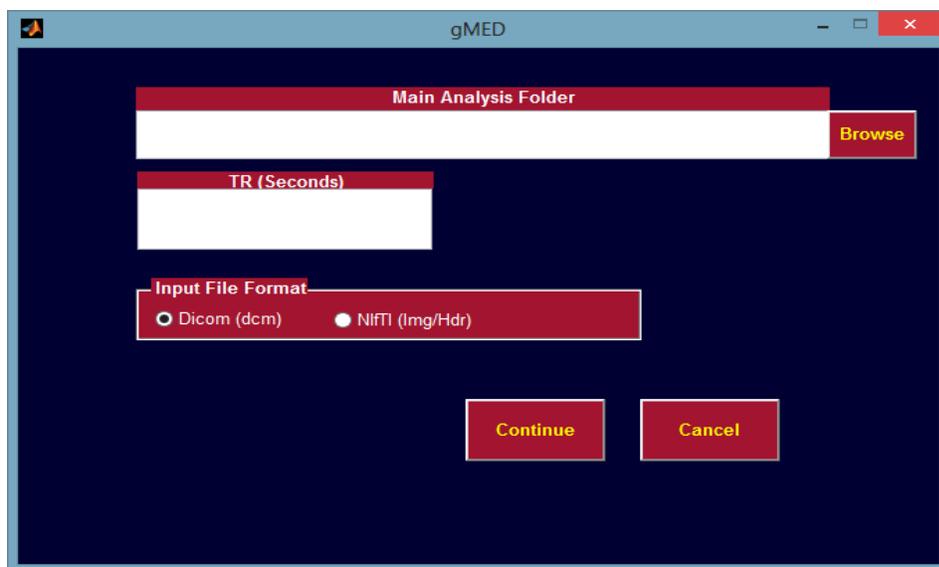
#### **4.3.2 Packaged Software**

gMedICA wraps two software packages in addition to its native programming. These two packages are Data Processing Assistant for Resting-State fMRI [104] (DPARF, <http://www.restfmri.net>) and fMRIB Software Library v5.0 [106] [107] (FSL by Analysis Group, FMRIB, Oxford, UK). DPARF uses libraries from Statistical Parametric Mapping or SPM (<http://www.fil.ion.ucl.ac.uk/spm>) and Resting-State fMRI Data Analysis Toolkit (REST 1.7) [105]. DPARF, SPM and REST are bundled with gMedICA software. This not only helps standardize inter-process communications, such as those to and from the gMedICA software

itself, but also resolves possible software conflicts. One of the highlights of gMedICA is that users do not have to deal directly with software packages mentioned in this section as gMedICA automates pre-processing whilst minimizing user effort.

### 4.3.3 User Interface

Minimal user effort was the philosophy behind gMedICA's user interface design. Fig. 4.4 shows the user interface corresponding to the starting point of the software. It was designed to accomplish its goals through methodology proposed in our paper with minimal effort on the user's part. Single stage user interface allows users to enter the location where the entire analysis is set to execute. This refers to the main directory as described in the prerequisites section. The user then enters repetition time (TR) and selects an input format. There are two input format options available: DICOM and .img/ .hdr file pairs. Once the user clicks 'Continue', background processing takes over.



**Fig. 4.4** gMedICA's user interface with options described under "User Interface" section of this paper.

#### 4.3.4 Main Analysis

The software now ascertains a uniform number of input images or time points (DICOM or NIfTI) and alerts the user if any discrepancies are found, discontinuing the progress. If a uniform number of images or time points is found for each subject, the software sets the location of SPM, REST and DPARSF along with any NIfTI processing files necessary for the pre-processing phase. The program includes a separate interface to allow users to customize most DPARSF settings. Default settings are available in case customization is not needed. It communicates with DPARSF and completes the following tasks:

- Sets SPM, REST and DPARSF locations
- Disables options in these other software packages not used in our methodology
- Sets Time Points by examining files per subject
- Sets TR provided by the user
- Sets Slice Timing
- Sets Realignment
- Sets Normalization with Bounding Box [-90 -126 -72;90 90 108] and voxel size of 2×2×2
- Sets smoothing with FWHM of 4×4×4
- Sets de-trend and filter range 0.01 – 0.1 Hz

Once started, the software triggers SPM, REST and DPARSF. This processing completes steps set in the DPARSF module while the progress can be monitored through SPM and REST interfaces. Upon completion, the resulting 3D Img/Hdr pairs are saved in the following directory structure per subject:

*MainDirectory/Group1/FuncImgNormalizedSmoothedDetrendedFiltered/Subject1, Subject2, Subject3...*

A similar structure is created for other groups. Once DPARSF steps are completed, the software finds locations as described above and collapses all 3D images per subject to a single 3D Img/ Hdr pair. This collapsed 3D Img/Hdr pair is now converted to 4D NIfTI format. The software now creates a directory per group under the main directory called ‘Melodic’ as:

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic*

4D NIfTI images created per subject are now moved to this directory. The software prepares to run the Multivariate Exploratory Linear Optimized Decomposition into Independent Components (MELODIC) algorithm [108] [109] which will decompose 4D data sets using Independent Component Analysis. More information on the MELODIC algorithm can be obtained at <http://fsl.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl/fslwiki/MELODIC>. In order to run FSL MELODIC through gMedICA, the software first creates a design script file with the extension ‘*fsf*’ (.fsf). This file defines the following steps, some of which are set by MELODIC as defaults:

- Location of each subject’s 4D NIfTI (nii) file which is edited and adjusted by gMedICA
- High pass frequency cut off point at 100 seconds
- Linear Registration on input data using FEAT functionality before the statistical analysis with 12 degrees of freedom

- Resampling resolution which refers to the desired isotropic voxel dimension of the resampled data set to 4mm
- Variance normalize time courses so that the estimation is more influenced by voxel-wise temporal dynamics than a voxel's mean signal
- Automatic dimensionality estimation to avoid overfitting. This is achieved by using Bayesian estimators for the model order and PCA (principal component analysis) to reduce the data prior to IC estimation
- Single-session ICA
- Threshold IC maps at 0.5. MELODIC carries out inference on the estimated maps by default using a mixture model and an alternative hypothesis testing approach. This threshold level in alternative hypothesis testing refers to a voxel that survives thresholding as soon as the probability of being in the active class – modelled by the Gamma densities – exceeds the probability of being in the background noise class.

This design file is run in the environment using the ‘*FEAT*’ command of FSL which reads the design script file (.fsf) and starts MELODIC IC analysis, e.g. ‘*feat design.fsf*’. MELODIC ICA results are stored under the ‘*Melodic*’ directory where new directories are created by MELODIC for each subject. In this case, the file we specifically need for gRAICAR analysis is stored under each subject’s MELODIC ICA directory created by FSL MELODIC and called ‘*melodic\_IC.nii.gz*’. A sample location is as follows:

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/Subject1.ica/filtered\_func\_data/melodic\_IC.nii.gz*

In this location, *Subject1.ica* is a directory based upon Subject 1's 4D NIfTI file and holds FSL MELODIC analysis' results.

We now prepare to run the gRAICAR algorithm. In order to do so, the software creates a directory under '*Melodic*' called '*gR*'. All ICA directories are moved to *gR* directory as follows:

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/Subject1.ica...*

The software then creates a shell script to calculate the average mask of the group based upon individual masks created by FSL and stored in each subject's ICA directory. As mentioned earlier, users do not have to directly interact with FSL and once the script is created, it is run as an environment command from within the software. The result is a file called '*mask.nii.gz*' stored under *gR* directory of the group. In addition, the software creates a list file, *subjects.list*, that stores the names of subject directories. This list file is used by the gRAICAR algorithm. As an example, if we had four subjects in Group 1, the *gR* directory would have the following structure:

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/Subject1.ica*

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/Subject2.ica*

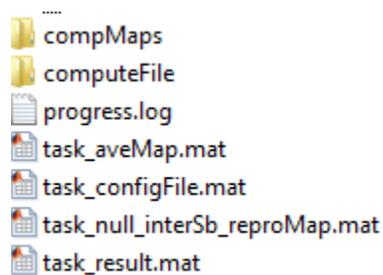
*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/Subject3.ica*

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/Subject4.ica*

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/mask.nii.gz*

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/subjects.list*

Once the preparation is complete, the software calls the gRAICAR algorithm with the location of ‘gR’ directory in addition to those of average mask and the subjects list which are also under ‘gR’. It also specifies an output directory name, *gROutput*, for the algorithm to store results in. Once gRAICAR processing is complete, results are stored under ‘gROutput’ directory for each group. If we had two groups as an example, we should now have the structure created by the gRAICAR algorithm shown in Fig. 4.5 for each group:



**Fig. 4.5** Directory structure created by the gRAICAR algorithm in MATLAB

In our example, this structure is created under the following two directories:

*MainDirectory/Group1/Melodic/gR/gROutput*

*MainDirectory/Group2/Melodic/gR/gROutput*

The gRAICAR algorithm is run at the group-level and ‘*computeMaps*’ directory holds NIfTI (.nii) files of group-level components discovered by the algorithm.

#### 4.3.5 Post-Processing

Once the gRAICAR results are available, the software completes the following tasks:

- 1) Loads the '*task\_result.mat*' file for each group looking at the result object in this file and, specifically, the field *obj.result.beta\_rank\_subjLoad*. The lower the value of a group-level component in this field, the greater the inter-subject consistency.
- 2) Picks the most reproducible component.
- 3) For this group-level component, it looks at the '*obj.result.foundComp*' field of the result object to determine which subject level component this group-level component maps to.
- 4) It then retrieves spatial maps for each subject's IC forming the group-level component and combines them. We can call this combination *x\_vec*.
- 5) Steps 1-4 are repeated for the second and third group (if we have three groups).
- 6) *y\_vec* is the result of step 4 from Group 2 and the software now combines *x\_vec* and *y\_vec*, resulting in a combined matrix, *A*.
- 7) The software now runs k-means algorithm on *A* after defining the centroids as the average of *x\_vec* and *y\_vec* respectively. We set the number of clusters equal to the number of groups in the analysis.
- 8) These steps are summarized by Eq. 6 or Deshpande-Syed's Equation for group distinction using ICA reproducibility and clustering.
- 9) The result of step 7 is a column vector where each row represents a subject along with the index of the cluster this subject has been assigned to. These indices help us determine cluster purity. Continuing our earlier example of two groups and 4 subjects in each group, k-means results refer to the following structure:

*Group 1 Subject 1 – Cluster 1*

*Group 1 Subject 2 – Cluster 1*

*Group 1 Subject 3 – Cluster 1*

*Group 1 Subject 4 – Cluster 1*

*Group 2 Subject 1 – Cluster 2*

*Group 2 Subject 2 – Cluster 2*

*Group 2 Subject 3 – Cluster 2*

*Group 2 Subject 4 – Cluster 2*

In this example, cluster purity is 1 as all subjects have been identified correctly.

If the most reproducible components selected per group do not represent the same network based upon their spatial correlation values being less than 0.9, the software can take the best component from Group 1 used in k-means and calculate its covariance against all group-level components in Group 2. This step provides the group-level component in Group 2 that represents the same functional network as and, therefore, has the highest covariance with our starting component from Group 1. This step is then repeated for the best component from Group 2 that was used in k-means. Now we have the group-level component in Group 1 that has the highest covariance value with the selected component in Group 2. This additional step ensures that the best components we had selected for k-means are matched with a component within the same brain network in the opposite group. In this case, the software runs k-means after combining an initial component from Group 1 and its counterpart from Group 2 and cluster purity is examined. The step is repeated for the initial component from Group 2. In our example, we have three cluster purity values. The software, therefore, calculates  $x+1$  cluster purity values, where  $x$  is the number of groups.

## **4.4 Example Application**

### **4.4.1 Data Overview**

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is categorized as an anxiety disorder and develops after a traumatic event has been experienced [114]. Veterans are at a higher risk for developing PTSD as many experience traumatic events during deployment and combat. The prevalence of PTSD among veterans deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan evaluated anonymously through questionnaires was found to be 6.2 – 12.9% [115]. We used a study that included 71 male participants who were also active duty soldiers, to evaluate gMedICA. Of these 71 participants, 15 had PTSD, 30 had both PTSD and PCS (post-concussion syndrome, a chronic sequelae of mild traumatic brain injury - mTBI), and 26 combat controls. All three groups were matched in age, race and education. In addition, all participants had combat experience in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom, OIF) and/or Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, OEF). In this study, PTSD Checklist-5 (PCL-5) score, clinician referral, post-concussive symptoms using the Neurobehavioral Symptom Inventory (NSI), and medical history including documentation of mTBI(s) were used when grouping the subjects [23]. Details regarding inclusion and exclusion criteria for defining the three groups can be obtained from Rangaprakash et al, 2017.

### **4.4.2 Data Acquisition**

A 3T Siemens MAGNETOM Verio scanner (Siemens Healthcare of Erlangen, Germany) was used for participant scanning using T2\* weighted multiband echo planar imaging (MB-EPI) sequence in resting state. The participants were asked to keep their eyes open and fixated on a

white cross displayed with dark background on the screen using an Avotec projection system and not think of anything specific. Scanning parameters used included a TR (repetition time) of 600ms, TE (echo time) of 30ms, FA (flip angle) at 55°, multiband factor of 2, anterior to posterior phase encoding direction, voxel size of 3×3×4 mm<sup>3</sup> and 1000 volumes or time points. We used a TR of 1900 ms, TE of 2.5ms, FA at 9° and voxel size of 1×1×1 mm<sup>3</sup> for acquiring anatomical scan using an MPRAGE (magnetization-prepared rapid gradient echo) sequence. Brain coverage was limited to the cerebral cortex, subcortical structures, midbrain and pons, excluding the cerebellum

#### **4.4.3 Technical Implementation**

In order to examine our PTSD dataset, gMedICA was provided three (3) input directories representing three subject groups: PTSD, PTSD + PCS, and matched combat controls. Each subject had 1000 time points saved in the form of DICOM (.dcm) images within each directory, as described in the pre-requisites section. All software and processing settings were the same as described in the workflow, processing and implementation phases of gMedICA. During the first stage, gMedICA pre-processed these sets using DPARSF. This step created a 4D NIfTI format output file per subject. gMedICA then used these 4D NIfTI images to run independent component analysis using FSL's MELODIC functionality. Once the ICs had been computed per subject, gMedICA used that information per subject in the gRAICAR algorithm to calculate group-level components per group. The most reproducible components were then selected as explained earlier by gMedICA, one component per group was then retrieved, combined with all selected ones in the other two groups, and k-mean clustering was performed for different combinations,  $\phi_e$ , where  $e$  represents the permutational spatial combinations of 127 such components from the PTSD, 82

from the PTSD + PCS, and 111 from matched control groups. Resulting cluster purities were then determined for the three groups. The combination of group-level components,  $P^x$  from the PTSD group,  $S^x$  from the PTSD + PCS group, and  $C^x$  from the control group, which gave the the highest cluster purities was then examined further. We denote these as the primary group-level components. We examined the spatial correlation values of  $P^x$  with all group-level components in PTSD + PCS and control groups, those of  $S^x$  with all group-level components in PTSD and control groups, and finally those of  $C^x$  with all group-level components in the PTSD and control groups. Secondary group-level components with the highest spatial correlation with primary components were identified using the following approach.

$$\xi = \max \sum_{i=1}^{n_s} cov(\psi, \psi_i)$$

(4.4)

In Eq. (4.4),  $\xi$  denotes the highest covariance between the primary group-level component, and the secondary group-level component,  $\psi_i$ , from the opposite group with  $n_s$  identifying the total number of components in the opposite group. Secondary group-level components thus identified are presented in Table 2.

**Table 4.1** Notations used to refer to group-level components used in our analysis and described in the technical implementation section. This table shows the secondary components, the groups they belong to, and the primary component most significantly spatially correlated to each secondary component.

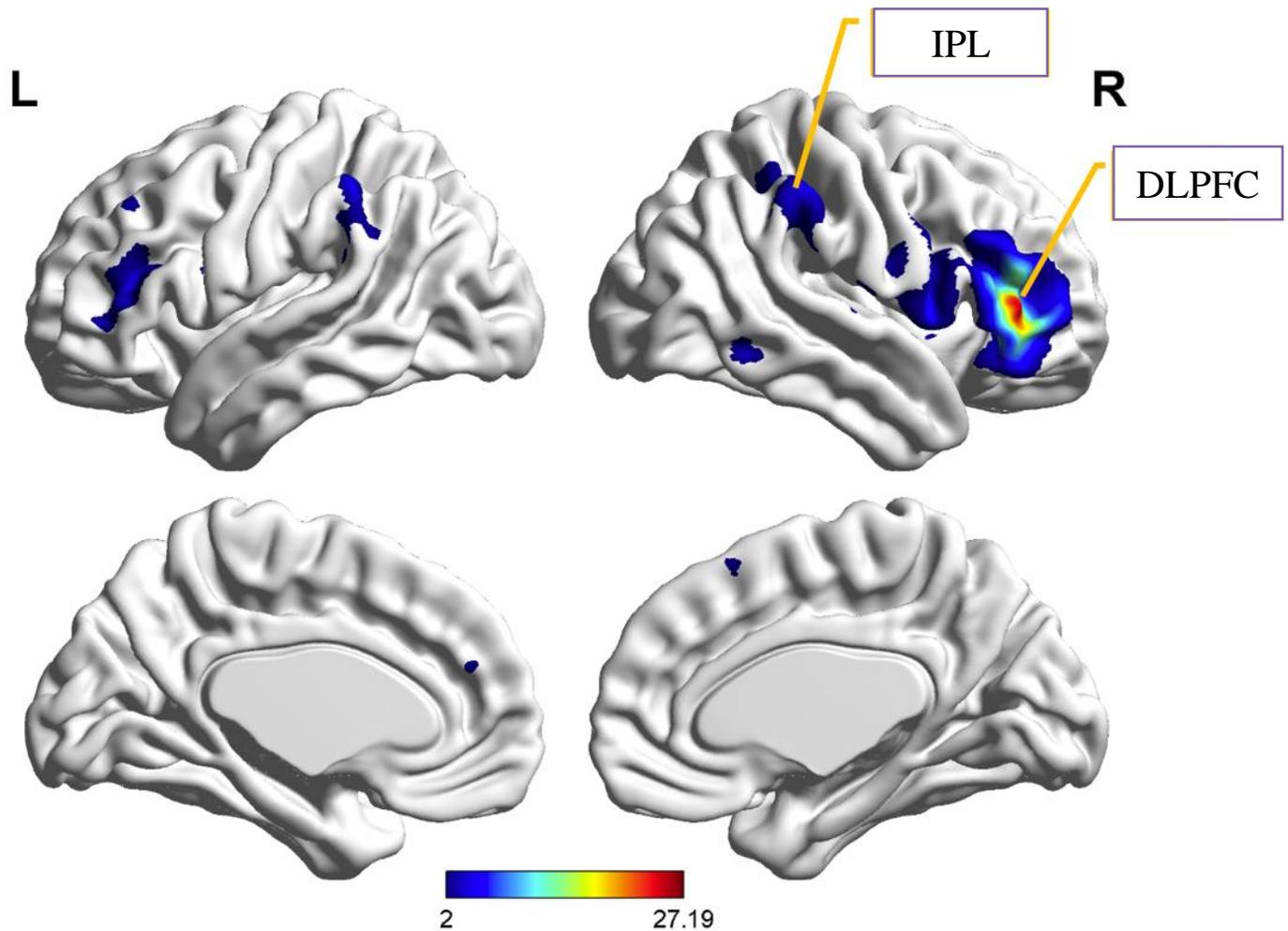
Secondary Component	Group	Primary Component
$S_p^x$	<i>PTSD + PCS</i>	$P^x$
$C_p^x$	<i>Control</i>	$P^x$
$P_c^x$	<i>PTSD</i>	$C^x$
$S_c^x$	<i>PTSD + PCS</i>	$C^x$
$P_s^x$	<i>PTSD</i>	$S^x$
$C_s^x$	<i>Control</i>	$S^x$

We then performed another set of clustering analyses, on  $P^x$  combined with  $S_p^x$  and  $C_p^x$ , on  $S^x$  combined with  $P_s^x$  and  $C_s^x$ , and finally on  $C^x$  combined with  $P_c^x$  and  $S_c^x$ . This second round of analyses determined whether the reproducible components in each group, when paired with the corresponding components with similar spatial distribution in the other groups, effectively discriminated between the groups. Finally, for components that effectively discriminated between the groups, we performed two-sample t-tests to determine whether they were stronger or weaker in the disease groups as compared to the control group.

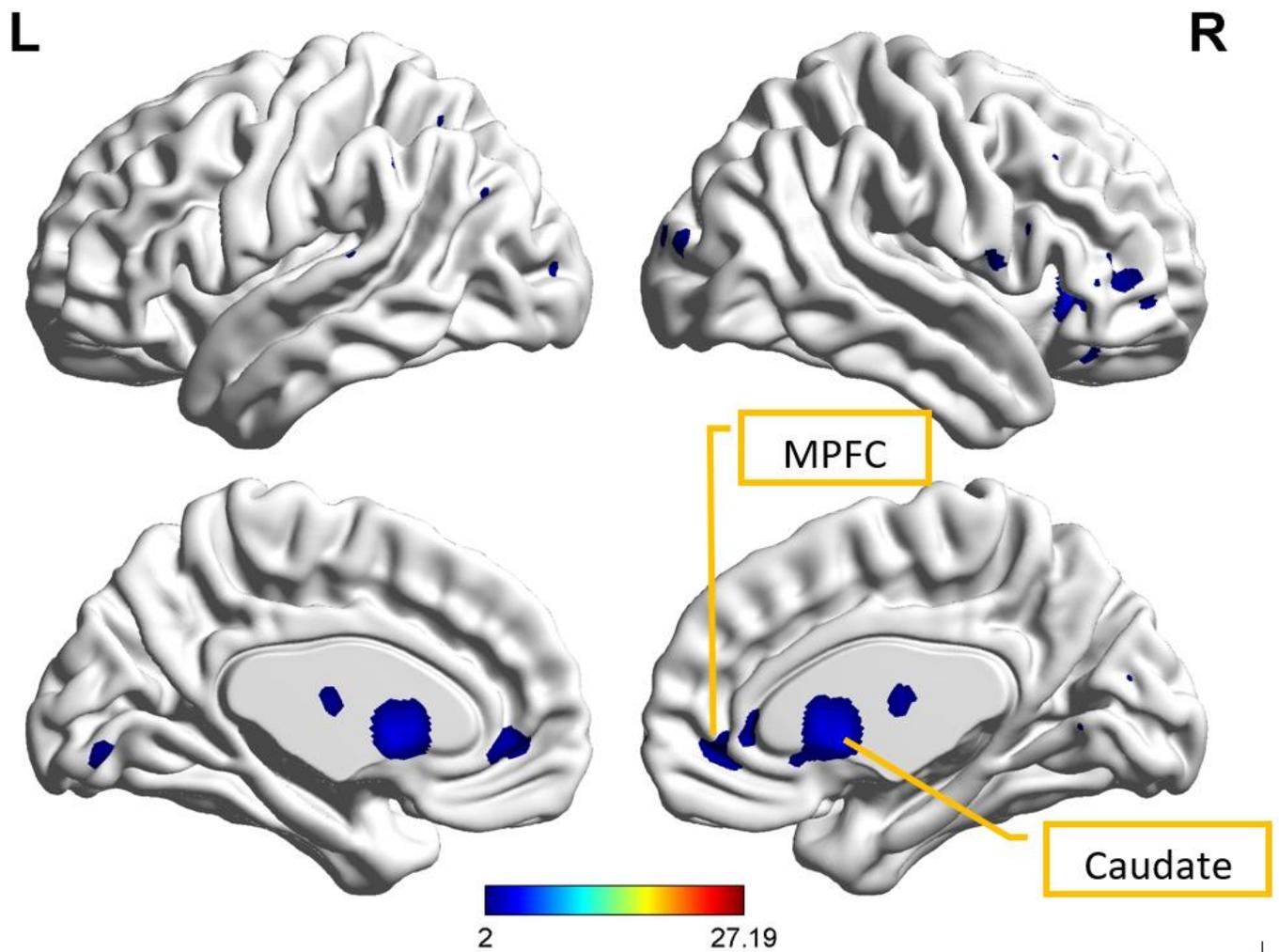
## 4.5 Results

We first present the most reproducible components in the PTSD, PCS+PTSD and control groups, i.e.  $P^x$ ,  $S^x$ , and  $C^x$ , respectively (Figs 4.6-4.8). These group-level components, when

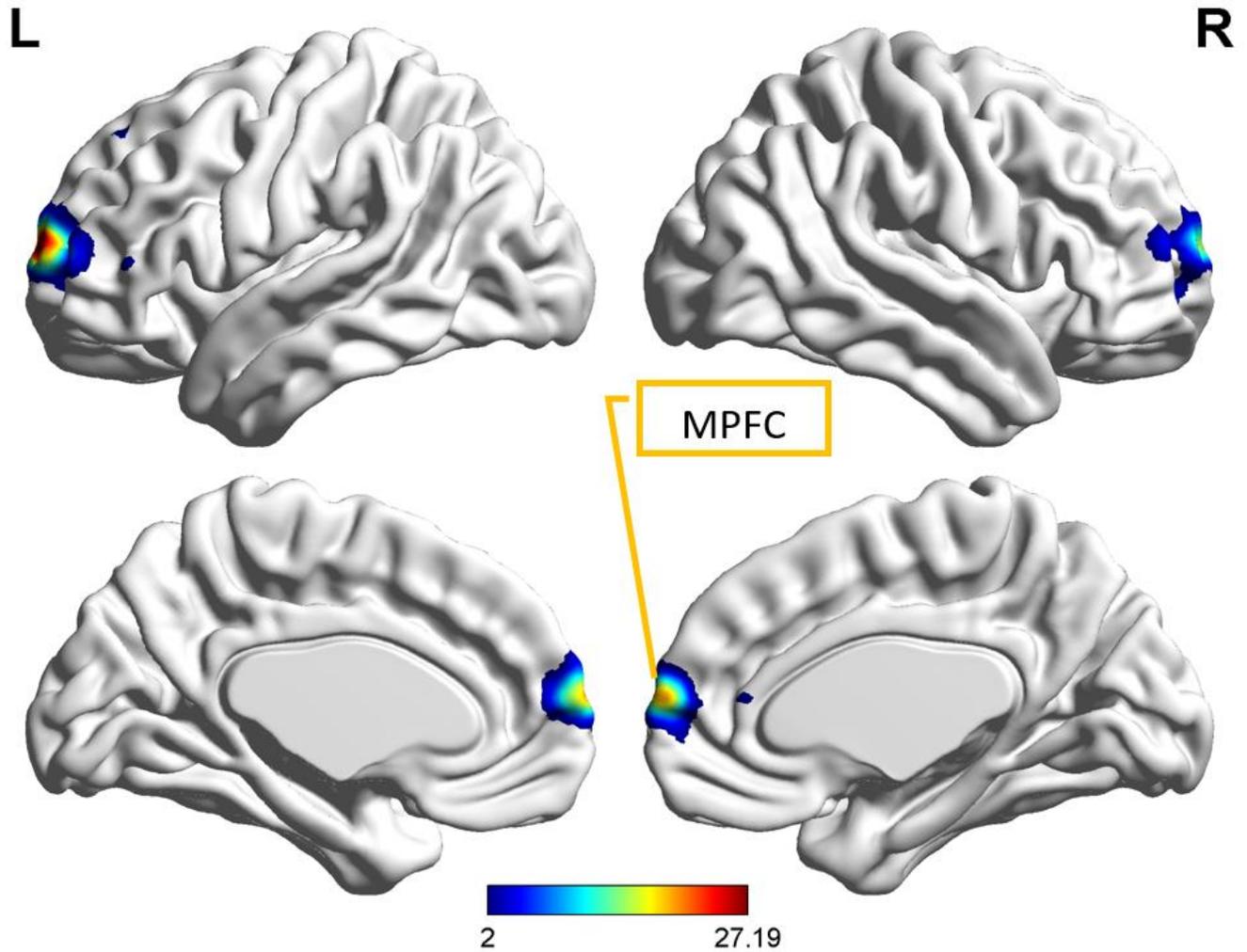
combined and examined using k-means clustering, yielded a cluster purity value of 1 for all three clusters, one cluster per group. All three groups were identified with 100% accuracy.



**Fig. 4.6** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $P^x$  from PTSD group, that was most reproducible within the PTSD group as well as produced the highest cluster purity when combined with  $S^x$  from PTSD + PCS group and  $C^x$  from the controls group. DLPFC (Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) and IPL (inferior parietal lobe) have been identified as well.

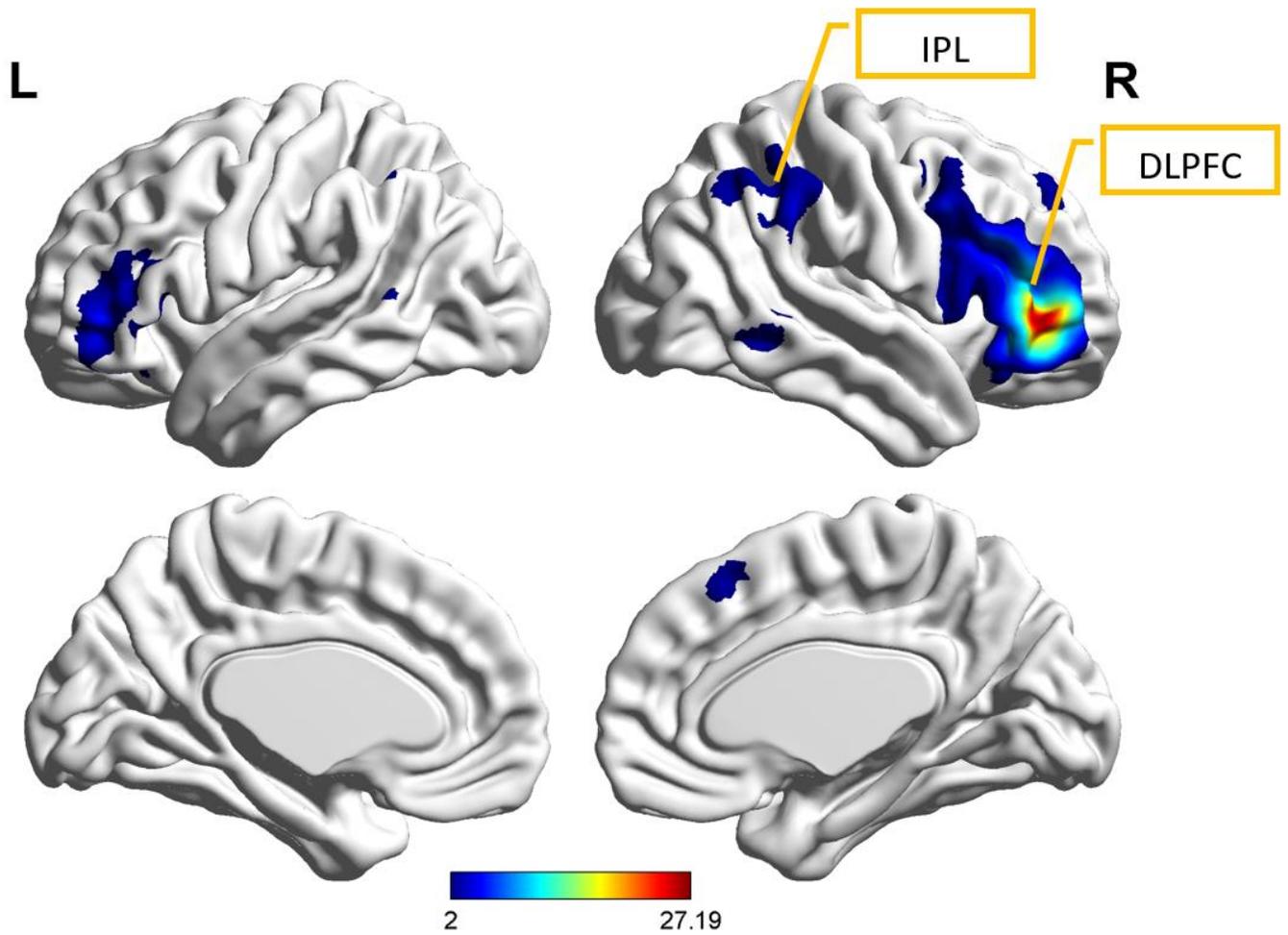


**Fig. 4.7** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $S^x$  from PTSD + PCS group, that was most reproducible within the PCS+PTSD group as well as produced the highest cluster purity value when combined with  $P^x$  from PTSD group and  $C^x$  from the controls group. Caudate and MPFC (medial prefrontal cortex) have been identified as well.

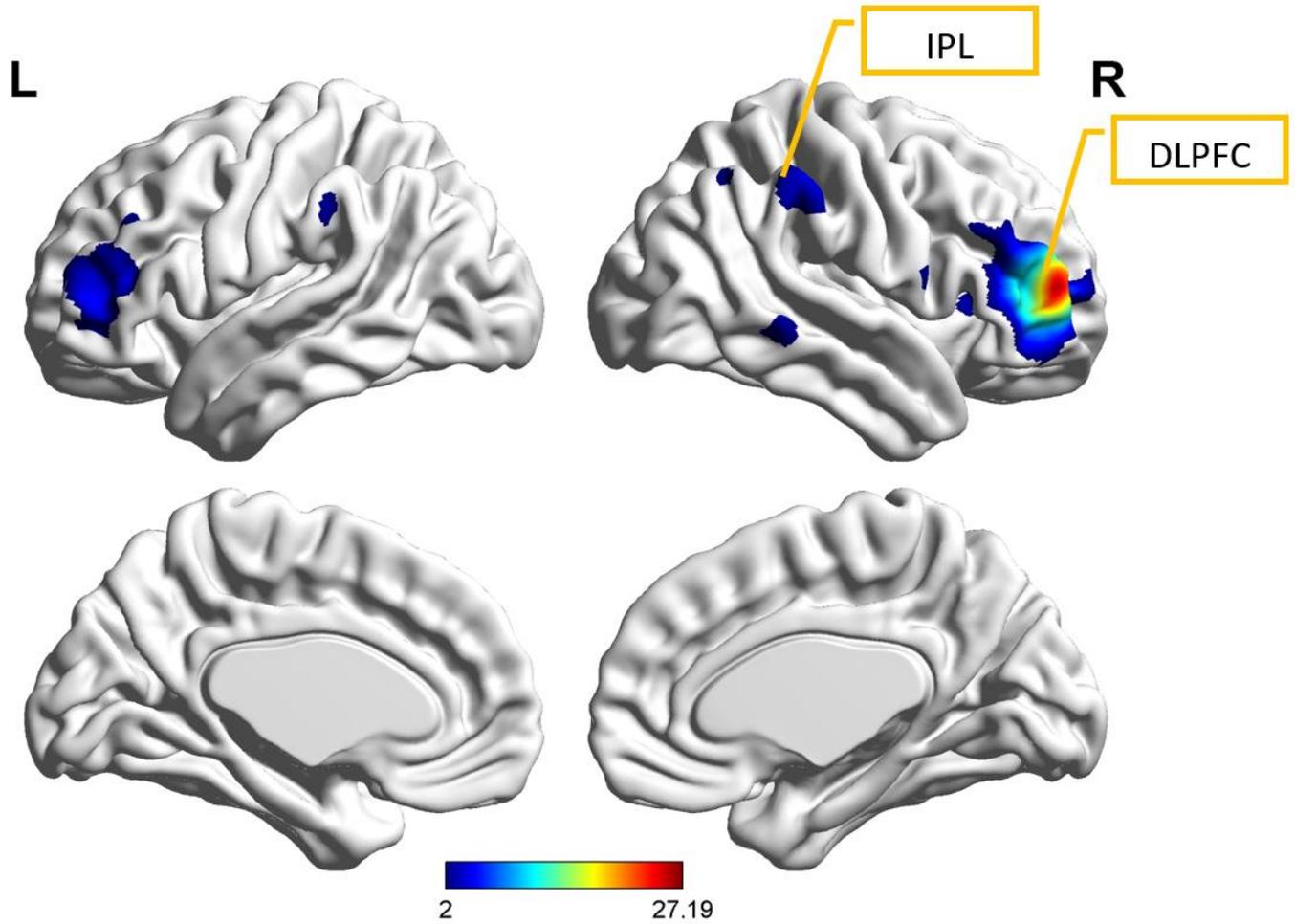


**Fig. 4.8** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $C^x$  from controls group, that was most reproducible within the control group as well as produced the highest cluster purity value when combined with  $P^x$  from PTSD group and  $S^x$  from PTSD + PCS group. MPFC (Medial prefrontal cortex) has been identified as well.

We then combined  $P^x$  with  $S_p^x$  and  $C_p^x$  and examined this combination using k-means clustering. This combination produced cluster purity values of 0.93 for PTSD group, 0.83 for PTSD + PCS group, and 0.85 for the control group. The spatial correlation coefficient value between  $P^x$  and  $S_p^x$  or  $\rho(P^x, S_p^x)$  was 0.68 ( $p < 0.005$ ) while  $\rho(P^x, C_p^x)$  was 0.51 ( $p < 0.005$ ).

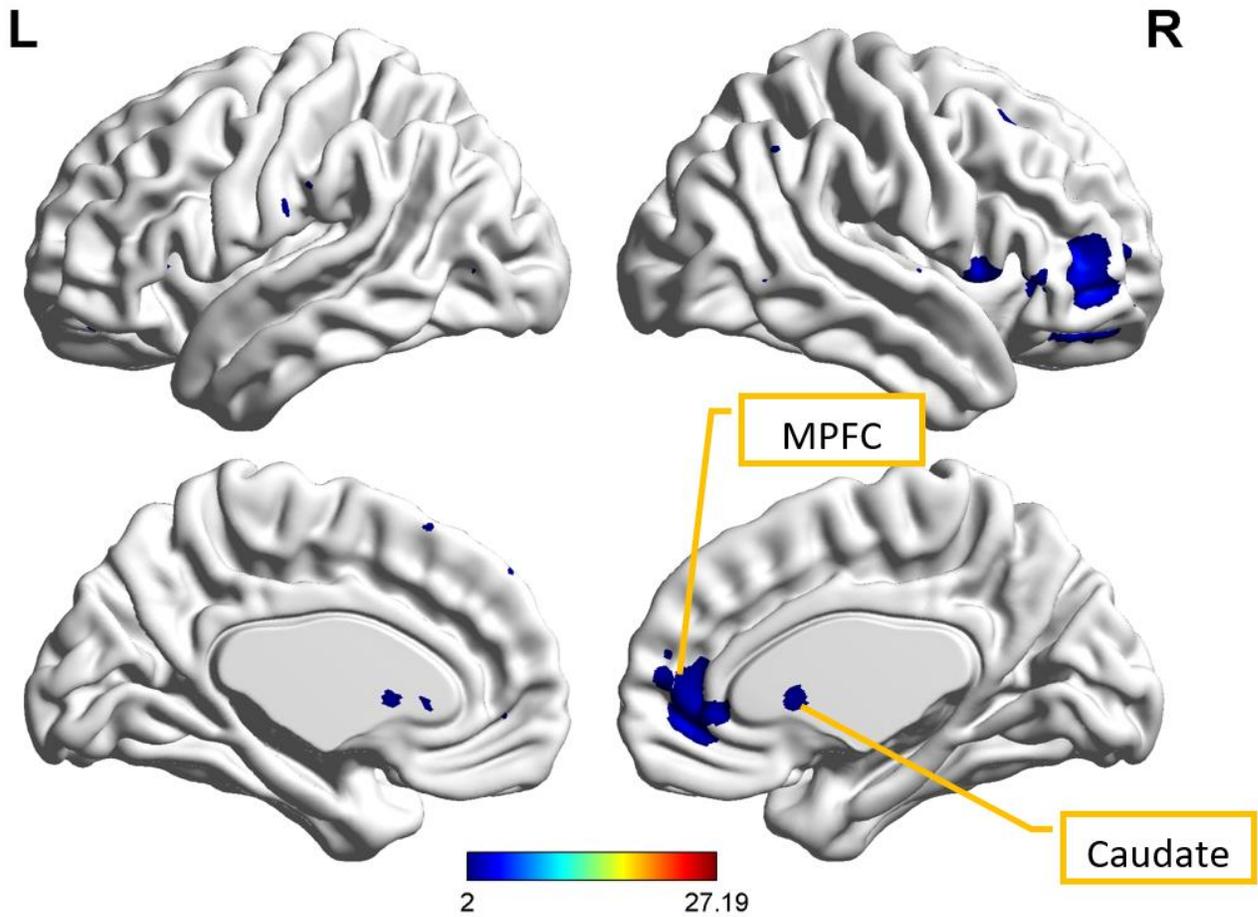


**Fig. 4.9** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $S_p^x$  from PTSD + PCS group, that was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $P^x$ . DLPFC (Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) and IPL (inferior parietal lobe) have been identified.

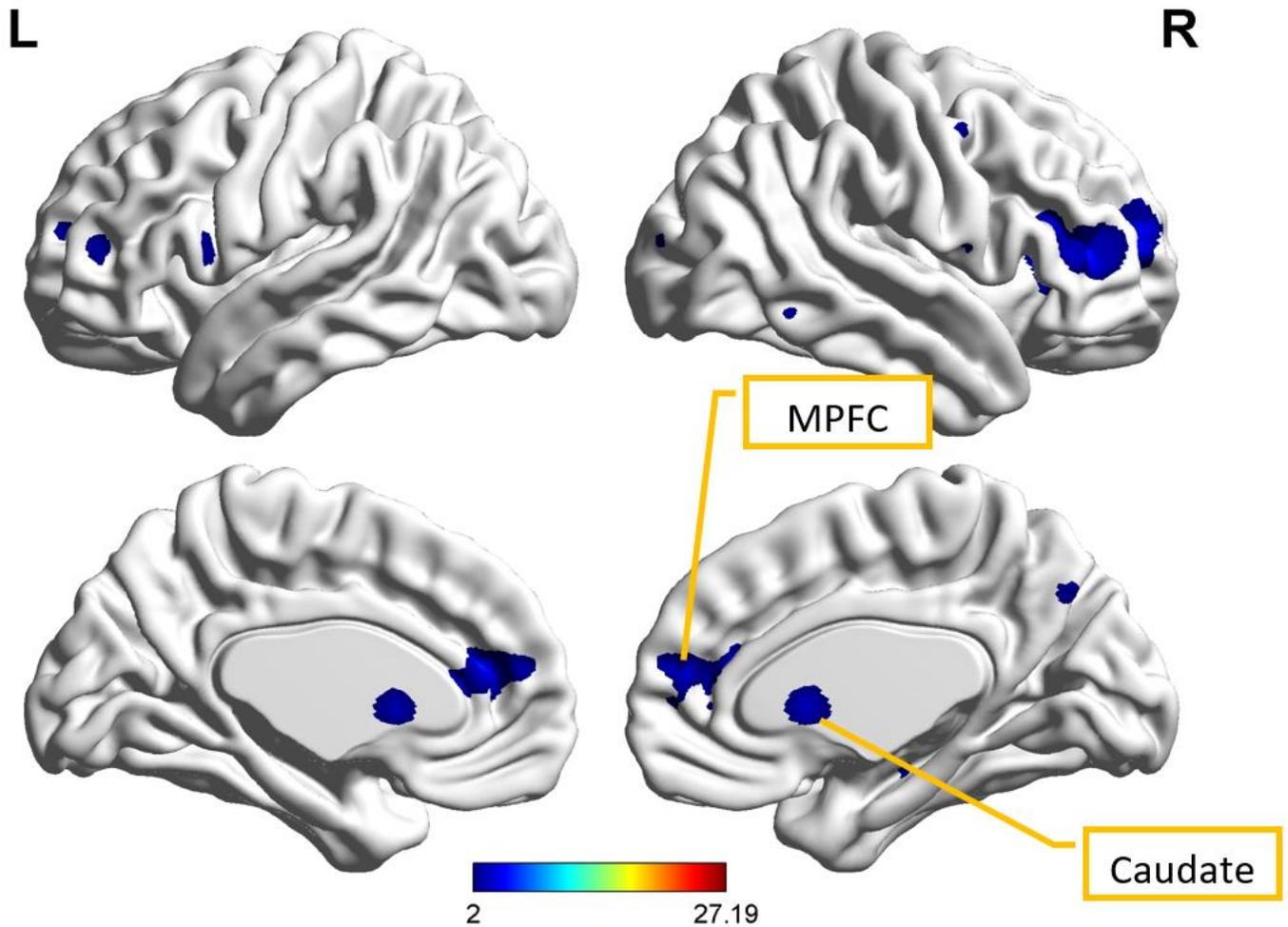


**Fig. 4.10** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $C_p^x$  from the controls group, that was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $P^x$ . DLPFC (Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) and IPL (inferior parietal lobe) have been identified.

$S^x$  was then combined with  $P_s^x$  and  $C_s^x$  and examined using k-means clustering. This combination produced cluster purity values of 1 for PTSD group, 0.97 for PTSD + PCS group, and 1 for the control group. The correlation coefficient value between  $S^x$  and  $P_s^x$  or  $\rho(S^x, P_s^x)$  was 0.55 ( $p < 0.005$ ) while  $\rho(S^x, C_s^x)$  was 0.49 ( $p < 0.005$ ).

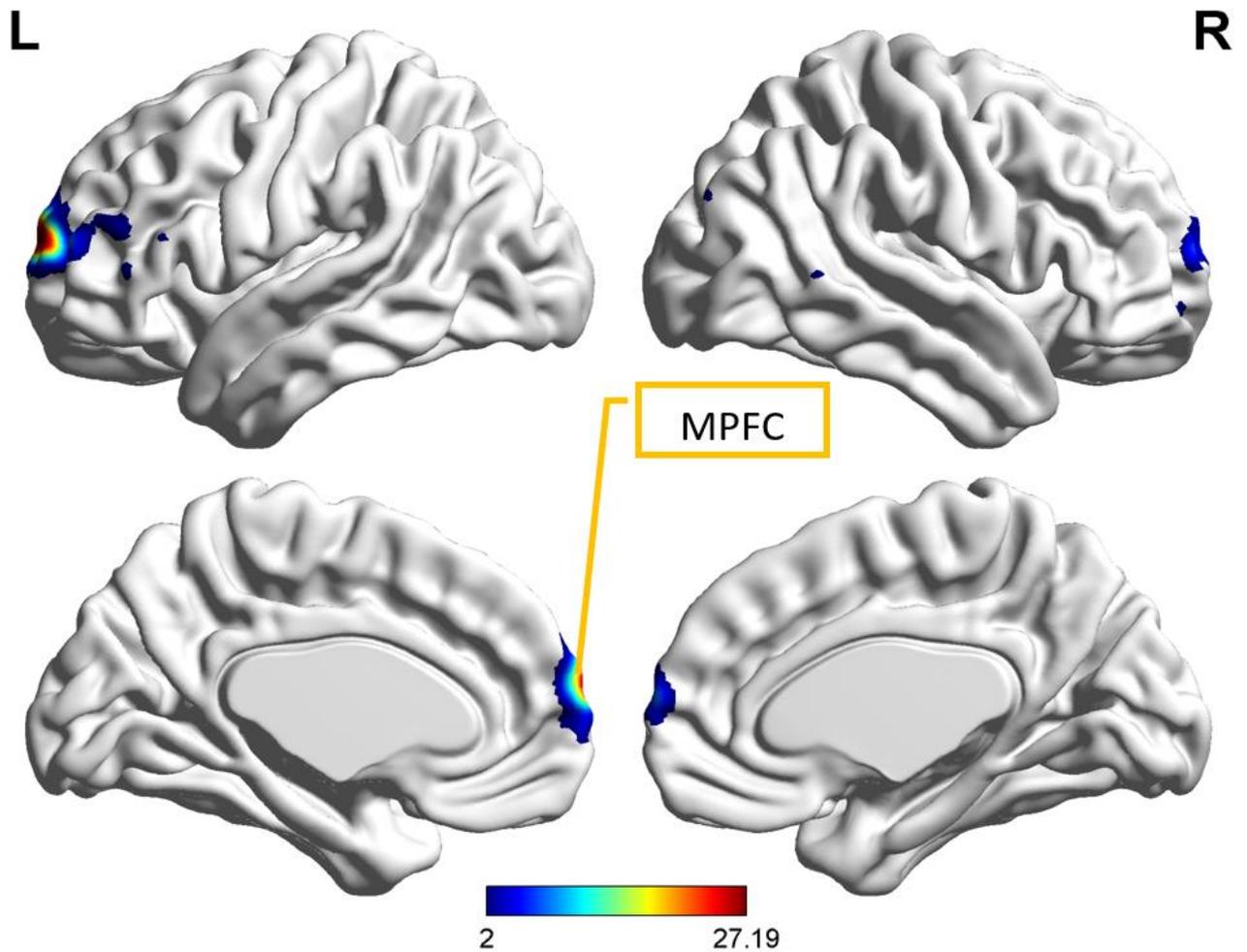


**Fig. 4.11** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $P_s^x$  from PTSD group, which was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $S^x$ . Caudate and MPFC (medial prefrontal cortex) have been identified as well.

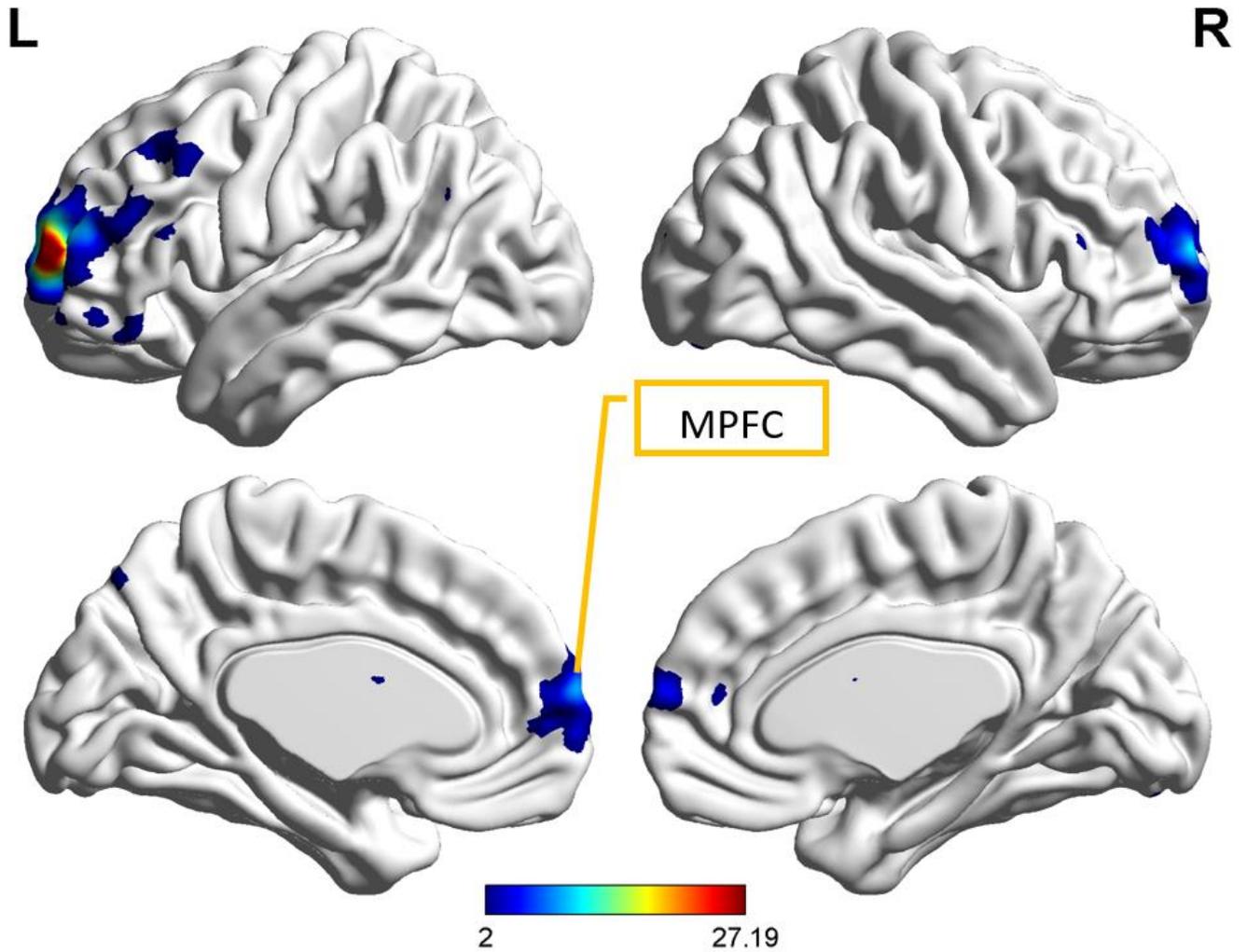


**Fig. 4.12** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $C_s^x$  from the controls group, which was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $S^x$  (shown in Fig.12). Caudate and MPFC (medial prefrontal cortex) have been identified as well.

Finally, we combined  $C^x$  with  $P_c^x$  and  $S_c^x$  and examined this combination using k-means clustering. This combination produced cluster purity values of 0.87 for PTSD group, 0.97 for PTSD + PCS group, and 0.92 for the control group. The correlation coefficient value between  $C^x$  and  $P_c^x$  or  $\rho(C^x, P_c^x)$  was 0.65 ( $p < 0.005$ ) while  $\rho(C^x, S_c^x)$  was 0.62 ( $p < 0.005$ ).



**Fig. 4.13** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $P_c^x$  from PTSD group, which was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $C^x$ . MPFC (Medial prefrontal cortex) has been identified as well.



**Fig. 4.14** Spatial map of the group-level component,  $S_c^x$  from PTSD + PCS group, that was found to have the highest spatial correlation with and correspondence to  $C^x$  (shown in Fig.13). MPFC (Medial prefrontal cortex) has been identified as well.

We then completed a series of two sample t-tests as described in the previous section. The goal was to examine whether there were significant between-group differences in the strength of the reproducible network(s) discovered in  $P^x$ ,  $S^x$ , and  $C^x$ , as well as their spatial homologues. This round of tests indicated that these networks comprising medial prefrontal cortex as shown in  $C^x$

were significantly stronger in controls as compared to both PTSD ( $p < 0.05$  unc.,  $t = 1.67$ ) and PTSD + PCS ( $p < 0.05$  unc.,  $t = 1.67$ ) groups. Also, functional networks comprising dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and inferior parietal lobe, shown in  $P^x$ , were significantly stronger as compared to PTSD + PCS ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.68$ ).

## 4.6 Discussion

In this section, we discuss the main findings of our study. We first present the unique and beneficial features of our gMedICA software package. Next, we discuss the significance of the results we have obtained from gMedICA analysis of resting state fMRI data acquired from PTSD, PTSD + PCS and controls groups, and whether they support the hypotheses described earlier in this paper. gMedICA provides users the ability to examine the reproducibility of group-level independent components using the gRAICAR algorithm, and the ability of these group-level components to distinguish between groups using unsupervised learning algorithms such as k-means clustering. A variety of neuroimaging software provide the ability to view and analyze fMRI data. Functionality in existing software packages include, but are not limited to, viewing fMRI data, format conversions such as from DICOM to NIfTI, brain extraction, tissue-type segmentation, segmentation of subcortical structures, linear and nonlinear registration, voxelwise analysis of multi-subject grey-matter density, longitudinal and cross-sectional analysis of structural changes, and structural analysis and include well respected packages such as DPARSF, SPM, FSL, Mango, AFNI, Brainnetviewer, and Brain Voyager among others [44] [45] [46] [111] [116] [117] [118]. Taking analyses a step further are standalone packages and sub-packages of the aforementioned ones, such as Sci-kit based software, MELODIC, GIFT, and CONN, a functional connectivity toolbox, among others, that apply various multivariate functional connectivity

techniques to fMRI data sets including ICA and group ICA to fMRI data sets [119] [112] [120] [121] [122] .

We are implementing our methodology in its entirety in gMedICA with no such implementation available in the literature currently. Therefore, a direct comparison with packages mentioned earlier is beyond the scope of the current report. However, we highlight how our software takes analyzing fMRI data sets a step further. In addition to providing and automating all phases of pre-processing, it incorporates mechanisms or systems to determine and analyze the reproducibility of group-level independent components using the gRAICAR algorithm [43] and k-means clustering. In gMedICA, the user just needs to complete two tasks to setup the analysis: a pre-determined directory structure where individual subject level images are arranged in group-level directories that the subjects belong to and the availability of the required analysis environment. Other tasks are accomplished seamlessly by gMedICA in the background and user responsibilities are minimized. gMedICA completes all pre-processing steps emulating our approach and processing parameters we used. It then uses a “discover-confirm” approach wherein, during the “discover” phase, it uses gRAICAR to retrieve reproducible components in each group. During the “confirm” phase, it uses unsupervised learning to determine the separation between groups based on the reproducible components in each group. This is a novel methodological framework for investigating discriminative features between diagnostic groups, as opposed to performing group-wise statistical tests or supervised classification. gMedICA then compares group-level components to find the ones that produce high cluster purities. Once a combination with one group-level component from each group that produces the highest cluster purity has been identified, group-level components with similar networks in opposite groups for each component in this combination are identified using spatial correlation. The software

combines components with similar networks (i.e. spatial distributions) and determines cluster purity once more, per network, to evaluate separation between groups based upon these networks. The current version of gMedICA has been written in MATLAB version 2014a but tested with the 2016 version as well. It runs on a UNIX platform (although, it can run on Windows platform with some modifications, which will be forthcoming in the future) and takes advantage of multi-processor environments for faster processing.

The brain regions involved in the most reproducible components in the three groups, i.e.  $P^x$ ,  $C^x$  and  $S^x$ , are frontal regions including the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and medial prefrontal cortex, the caudate and inferior parietal lobe. These regions are generally known to be involved in executive control. Furthermore, t-tests indicated that these networks were the strongest in controls, weaker in PTSD, and the weakest in PTSD + PCS. This observation is in agreement with the fact that brain regions involved in executive control are impaired in these disorders [22] [23] [24] [25]. PTSD + PCS appears to be more extreme than PTSD, mirroring prior findings [23]. The functional connectivity patterns were comparable in general to previous studies [123] [124] [125]. Specifically, they are in agreement with previous studies which implicate the prefrontal cortex [26] [27] [28] [29], parietal lobe [30] [31] [32] [33], and caudate [34] [35] [36] [37] in these disorders.

We now point out some technical limitations of the current version of gMedICA. This version has been developed in MATLAB 2014a and 2016, and is not standalone in its current shape and form. It also has dependencies on pre-processing software such as DPARSF, FSL, SPM, and REST. Even though these software are provided as a part of the gMedICA package, technical and performance impediments in these software, such as processing times, unavoidably affect the overall performance of gMedICA. The current version has been limited to the evaluation of up to

three groups, as illustrated in our example application described in this paper. This and other limitations will be reviewed in future versions and, hopefully, mitigated.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate brain network alterations in heterogeneous mental (neurological, psychiatric) disorders such as Autism, PTSD and PCS. Not only did we apply a novel approach to accomplish this goal, but also produced a software package that implements our methodology.

We can summarize the main contributions of this work as follows:

- i. We hypothesized that functional brain networks that are most reproducible within patients and healthy controls separately, but not when the groups are merged, may possess the ability to distinguish effectively between the groups. We then proposed a methodology based upon the assessment of the reproducibility of independent components obtained from resting state fMRI followed by a clustering analysis of these components to evaluate their ability to discriminate between groups. We demonstrated that the aforementioned networks were successfully able to distinguish between patients with a heterogeneous neurological disorder and healthy controls.
- ii. We presented a self-organizing map (SOM) based approach to visualize high-dimension subject population and its ability to display separation between the groups based upon clustering analysis of the population. The approach has been demonstrated in chapter 3

where not many intuitive ways existed to visualize a large subject sample in the feature space.

- iii. We produced a software package, gMedICA, which implements our methodology to examine the reproducibility of independent components obtained from resting state fMRI followed by a clustering analysis of these components to evaluate their ability to discriminate between groups. This package provides a graphical user interface (GUI) accepting group imaging data. It then pre-, para-, and post-processes the data producing results for the users, automating our proposed work flow, and minimizing user effort.
- iv. We demonstrated the power and utility of our approach through this software package, gMedICA, by applying it to a subject population comprised PTSD, PCS and healthy controls. We include results of this analysis in this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 6

### Information on Published and Submitted Papers

#### 6.1 Peer-reviewed *Journal Publications*

Accepted:

- i. *Mohammed A. Syed, Zhi Yang, Xiaoping Hu and Gopikrishna Deshpande, "Investigating Brain Connectomic Alterations in Autism using the Reproducibility of Independent Components derived from Resting State functional MRI Data", Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2017*

Under construction:

- ii. *Mohammed Syed, D Rangaprakash, Xiaoping Hu Michael N. Dretsche, Thomas S. Denney Jr., Jeffrey S. Katz and Gopikrishna Deshpande, "Investigating Brain Connectomic Alterations in PTSD and PCS using the Reproducibility of Independent Components obtained from Resting State Functional MRI Data"*

#### 6.2 Peer-reviewed *Conference Proceedings (Published)*

- i. *Mohammed Syed, Zhi Yang, and Gopikrishna Deshpande, "Investigating Brain Connectomic Alterations in Autism using Reproducibility of Independent Components derived from Resting State fMRI", Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine, ISMRM 2015, Toronto, ON, Canada, May 2015*
- ii. *Mohammed Syed, D Rangaprakash, Xiaoping Hu, Michael N. Dretsche, Thomas S. Denney Jr., Jeffrey S. Katz and Gopikrishna Deshpande, "Investigating Brain Connectomic Alterations in PTSD and PCS using the Reproducibility of Independent Components obtained from Resting State Functional MRI Data", Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine, ISMRM 2017, Hawaii, HI, U. S. A., April 2017*

### 6.3 Author Contributions

#### *Author Abbreviations:*

M. S.	Mohammed Syed
Z. Y.	Zhi Yang
G. D.	Gopikrishna Deshpande
S. B.	Sanjeev Baskiyar
X. H.	Xiaoping Hu
T. S. D.	Thomas S Denney Jr.
D. R.	D Rangaprakash
M. N. D.	Michael N Dretsch
J. S. K.	Jeffrey S Katz

#### *Contributions:*

PTSD Project Conceptualization:	G. D., M. N. D., T. S. D. and J. S. K.
Funding Acquisition:	S. B., T. S. D., M. N. D. and G. D.
Data Acquisition:	T. A. D. and G. D.
Resting-state fMRI Data Pre-processing:	<b>M. S.</b> and D. R.
Imaging Data Analysis Methodology:	G. D., Z. Y., X. H. and <b>M. S.</b>
Resting-state fMRI Data Analysis:	<b>M. S.</b>
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