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1 Mapping the principal gradient onto the corpus callosum

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3

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9

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11

12

13 **Abstract**

14 Gradients capture some of the variance of the resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging
15 (rsfMRI) signal. Amongst these, the principal gradient depicts a functional processing hierarchy that
16 spans from sensory-motor cortices to regions of the default-mode network. While the cortex has
17 been well characterised in terms of gradients little is known about its underlying white matter. For
18 instance, comprehensive mapping of the principal gradient on the largest white matter tract, the
19 corpus callosum, is still missing. Here, we mapped the principal gradient onto the midsection of the
20 corpus callosum using the 7T human connectome project dataset. We further explored how
21 quantitative measures and variability in callosal midsection connectivity relate to the principal
22 gradient values. In so doing, we demonstrated that the extreme values of the principal gradient are
23 located within the callosal genu and the posterior body, have lower connectivity variability but a
24 larger spatial extent along the midsection of the corpus callosum than mid-range values. Our results
25 shed light on the relationship between the brain's functional hierarchy and the corpus callosum. We
26 further speculate about how these results may bridge the gap between functional hierarchy, brain
27 asymmetries, and evolution.

28

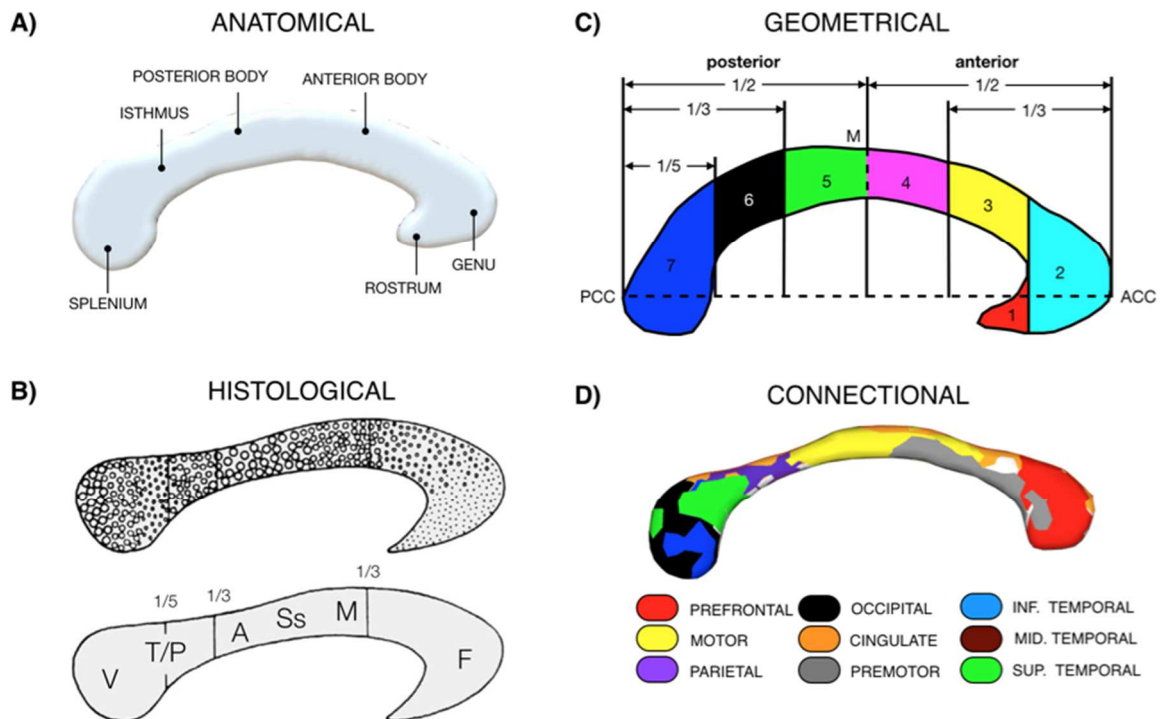
29 **Introduction**

30 Cognitive neurosciences assume that cognition is embedded within and constraint by the
31 organization of the brain. The advent of neuroimaging methods granted novel insights into the
32 functional organization of the living human brain. Resting-state functional connectivity (rsfMRI), in
33 particular, has proven useful for mapping multiple functional networks without relying on
34 participants to perform functional tasks in the scanner (Smith et al., 2009; Power et al., 2011; Biswal
35 et al., 1995). rsfMRI networks reveal different time courses and spatially correspond to tasks-related
36 functional activations (Tavor et al., 2016). This spatial correspondence suggests an underlying
37 organization that adheres to fundamental principles. For instance, Mesulam (1998) proposes that
38 brain regions can be organised along a gradient ranging from sensory-motor to higher-order brain
39 processes. In line with Mesulam, most of the variance of rsfMRI resembles a gradient that spans
40 from sensory-motor cortices to regions of the default-mode network (i.e. latter is referred to as the
41 principal gradient, Margulies et al., 2016). Sensory-motor cortices are primary cortices (i.e. idiotypic
42 areas Mesulam, 1998) and the default-mode network has been associated with transmodal higher-
43 order functions (Margulies et al., 2016, Alves et al. 2019). The principal gradient may thus represent
44 one fundamental principle driving a hierarchical organisation of cognitive functions (Huntenburg,
45 Bazin, & Margulies, 2018).

46 While this principal gradient is putatively the same for both hemispheres (Margulies et al., 2016)
47 little is known on the connections between the left and the right principal gradient. With 200 to 300
48 millions axons (Tomasch 1954), the largest white matter commissure in the primate brain is the
49 corpus callosum (Burdach 1826). Other routes of interhemispheric interactions are also possible (e.g.
50 anterior commissure, Risse et al., 1978), however surgically severing callosal connections severely
51 interrupts interhemispheric functional connectivity in monkeys (Johnston et al., 2008; O'Reilly et al.
52 2013) and humans (Roland et al., 2017). Concordantly, studies in split-brain patients present with
53 severe behavioral manifestations such as Alien hand syndrome (Akelaitis 1945; Bogen, 1993)
54 hemispatial Neglect (Kashiwagi *et al.*, 1990; Heilman and Adams, 2003; Lausberg *et al.*, 2003; Park *et*
55 *al.*, 2006; Tomaiuolo *et al.*, 2010) optic aphasia (Freund, 1889; Luzzatti *et al.*, 1998) or pure alexia
56 (Dejerine, 1892; Geschwind and Fusillo, 1966) amongst others. The corpus callosum is hence
57 considered critical for the collaborative integration of functions relying on both hemispheres. Despite
58 its crucial role in functions of various hierarchical order, current parcellation approaches divide the
59 corpus callosum based on its cytoarchitecture, geometry and topological projections, with little
60 regard to the callosum functional organization

61 Several methods have been proposed to parcellate or segment the corpus callosum. Amongst these
 62 methods, four main classifications are still currently applied. Post mortem studies identified
 63 anatomical features along the midsagittal section of the corpus callosum, including the rostrum,
 64 genu, anterior and posterior body, isthmus and splenium (Crosby et al., 1962 ; figure 1A). While this
 65 classification is still widely used today, it does not define clear boundaries between the different
 66 segments. A second tentatively sharper parcellation was based on histological measures of the
 67 midsagittal axonal diameter but it fails to systematically generalise across individuals (Aboitiz &
 68 Montiel, 2003, 1992, figure 1B). The enforcement of a geometrical grid of seven parcels has been
 69 used to somewhat circumvent the limitations of generalisation (Wittelson, 1989; figure 1C). All these
 70 anatomical, histological and geometrical parcellations of the midsection of the corpus callosum do
 71 however not consider the functional organisation of the brain areas it connects.

72 Since the functions of the corpus callosum are defined by the areas that it connects to, tract-tracing
 73 in non-human primates (Schmahmann and Pandya 2009) or diffusion weighted imaging tractography
 74 in humans (Huang et al., 2005; Hofer and Frahm, 2006, figure 1D), is likely the most promising
 75 approach to investigate the functional organisation of the corpus callosum. However, a
 76 comprehensive mapping of the hierarchical organization of cognitive functions on the corpus
 77 callosum is still missing. Such a mapping would help to better understand the functional impact of
 78 brain lesions that disconnect the corpus callosum.



79

80 **Figure 1.** Parcellations of the corpus callosum along the midsection (right view). A) Anatomical
81 division: depicts the anatomical classification (rostrum, genu, anterior and posterior body, isthmus,
82 splenium) based on gross anatomical features. B) Histological division: the dots in this schematic
83 diagram indicate the range of axonal density and associate them with cortical projections to cortical
84 areas (F: Frontal, M: Motor, SS: Somato-Sensory, A: Auditory, T/P: Temporo-Parietal and V: Visual
85 (from Aboitiz & Montiel, 2003). C) Geometrical division: This parcellation generates seven parcels by
86 equally dividing the midsection (from Wittelson, 1989). ACC: most anterior point of the corpus
87 callosum, PCC: most posterior point of the corpus callosum, M: middle of the corpus callosum. D:
88 Connectional division: Shows the parcellation of the cortex based on diffusion tractography (from
89 Catani & Thiebaut de Schotten 2012).

90 In this study we propose a novel topography of the corpus callosum based on the projection of the
91 principal gradient onto the callosal midsection. We also explored how variability in connectivity and
92 quantitative measures of this connectivity relate to the principal gradient values along the callosal
93 midsection.

94

95 **Methods**

96 **Dataset**

97 All 7T rsfMRI and diffusion-weighted data used in this study were based on the Human Connectome
98 Project (HCP; Van Essen et al, 2013), which is publicly available and anonymized. For rsfMRI data, we
99 used an averaged map of the principal gradient published in Margulies et al. (2016), which can be
100 found under: <https://neurovault.org/collections/1598/>. The minimal preprocessed diffusion-
101 weighted data consisted of 164 participants (age: mean = 29.44 (3.29); females: 100) from the HCP.
102 Participant recruitment procedures and informed consent forms, including consent to share de-
103 identified data, were previously approved by the Washington University Institutional Review Board

104 **Gradient percentage maps**

105 We used an averaged map of the principal gradient published (Margulies et al., 2016). In Margulies
106 et al. (2016), functional connectivity matrices were calculated from the HCP dataset and the gradient
107 extracted using nonlinear dimensionality reduction via diffusion embedding (Coifman et al., 2005). In
108 order to assess callosal connections to cortical regions along the principal gradient, we segregated
109 voxels within the cortex based on their location along the principal gradient. We parcellated the
110 principal gradient map into 100 units where each unit represents one percentage of the principal
111 gradient. All operations were conducted using FSL (www.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl). The gradient intensities
112 range between -7.52 and +10.07. A central value of 0 denoted areas not defined along the gradient.
113 For computational reasons, we transposed the gradient values by multiplying the minimum intensity

114 value by -1 and adding the result to all values, thus shifting all values into positive values. We
115 subsequently masked the results with a binarized map of the principal gradient. The resulting image
116 was masked with a cortical grey matter template (i.e. Fast applied to MNI152 template). This
117 resulted in 100 distinct gradient percentage maps, each one presenting a 1% range of the gradient
118 (see figure 2B).

119 **Mapping the principal gradient onto the corpus callosum.**

120 In order to map the gradient along the white matter connections, we employed the *Disconnectome*
121 within the BCBtoolkit (Foulon et al. 2018) using a study-specific HCP dataset of 164 participants to
122 generate the underlying white matter tractograms (Karolis et al. 2019). The scanning parameters have
123 been described previously (Vu et al. 2015). In brief, diffusion-weighted imaging consisted of a total of
124 132 near-axial slices acquired with an acceleration factor of 3 (Moeller et al., 2010), isotropic (1.05
125 mm³) resolution and whole head coverage with a TE of 71.2 ms and a TR of 7000 ms. These images
126 were acquired with 65 uniformly distributed gradients in multiple Q-space shells (Caruyer et al., 2013)
127 with 6 b₀ images. The acquisition was repeated four times with a b-value of 1000 and 2000 s mm⁻² in
128 pairs with left-to-right and right-to-left phase-encoding directions. The default HCP preprocessing
129 pipeline (v3.19.0) was applied to the data (Andersson et al., 2012; Sotiropoulos et al., 2013), which
130 consists of susceptibility-induced distortion correction (Andersson et al., 2003), TOPUP (Smith et al.,
131 2004) and subsequent motion and geometrical distortion correction via the EDDY tool implemented in
132 FSL.

133 For each gradient percentage map, the Disconnectome filtered tractography of the white matter
134 tractograms. The resulting filtered tractography (i.e. streamline passing by the gradient percentage
135 maps) were visually inspected and transformed into visitation maps (i.e. binary mask of the voxels
136 including more than 1 streamline, Thiebaut de Schotten et al., 2011). To generate a group-level
137 visitation map, all normalised individual visitation maps were averaged voxel-by-voxel. This group-
138 level visitation map represents the connection probability per voxel, and thus accounts for the
139 interindividual variability of the anatomical representation of tracts for the respective gradient
140 percentage map (see Figure 2C).

141 This study focused on the relationship between the functional gradient and the interhemispheric
142 commissural connections of the corpus callosum. We manually delineated the corpus callosum
143 midsection on the midsagittal slice of the MNI152 template. To project the cortical gradient onto the
144 corpus callosum, we subsequently created a weighted average map based on the following equation:

$$145 \quad \textit{weighted average connectivity} = \sum \left(\frac{\textit{connectivity map}}{\sum \textit{connectivity maps}} \right) * \textit{gradient \%}$$

146 Each of the divided visitation maps was then multiplied by the respective level of the gradient (1% =
147 times 1, 2% = times 2, etc.). This resulted in 100 weighted connectivity maps, one for each gradient
148 percentage. To obtain one single unified callosal connectivity gradient map, we summed the
149 weighted connectivity maps and masked the result with the midsection of the corpus callosum. The
150 resulting weighted average callosal connectivity map is shown in Figure 2E. The complete weighted
151 average tractogram is available here: <https://neurovault.org/collections/7797/>. In addition, we
152 provide a hard-border segmentation approach based on similarity of voxels in their connection
153 profile across the gradient in the supplementary material. For this, we used UMAP (McInnes et al.,
154 2018) to reduce the dimensions of the data. Subsequently, we clustered callosal voxels to separate
155 groups via HDBSCAN (McInnes et al., 2017). Results are available as supplementary figure S1.

156 **Statistical analyses**

157 Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 24.0. Armonk, NY: IBM
158 Corp.). In order to avoid spurious measurements, we truncated the distribution of the gradient
159 percentage maps at either end to avoid including maps with less than 300 voxels (supplementary
160 figure S2). Included percentage maps ranged from 13% to 82% (equivalent original gradient values: –
161 5.23 to +6.90). We explored how variability in connectivity and quantitative measures of callosal
162 connectivity relates to the principal gradient values. The connectivity probability between the corpus
163 callosum and the gradient percentage was calculated by averaging each callosal connectivity map.
164 The callosal space occupied by each percentage was defined as the number of non-zero voxels for
165 each callosal connectivity map. To explore the relationship between the corpus callosum and the
166 principal gradient, we plotted the connection probability against the residuals of the gradient value
167 and the number of voxels of the respective gradient percentage map. To assess the relationship
168 between the value of the gradient and the spatial extent on the corpus callosum unbiased by the
169 number of voxels for each percentage value we regressed out the number of voxels in the
170 scatterplot. The same procedure was applied to plot the callosal space occupied by each percentage.
171 The two distributions were visually inspected and scrutinised with either linear or quadratic
172 regression as applicable.

173

174 **Results**

175 **Corpus callosum gradient map**

176 The principal gradient projections on the corpus callosum are displayed below (Figure 2E). Results
177 indicate a structured distribution of the principal gradient along the midsection of the corpus

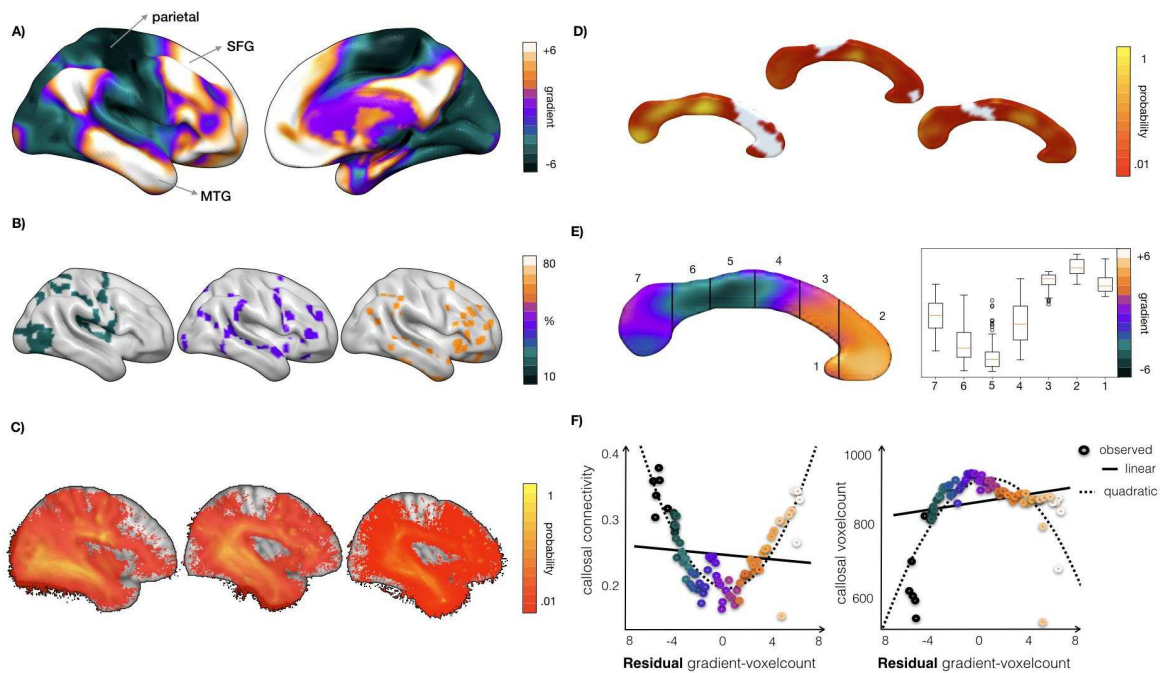
178 callosum where the anterior corpus callosum is more likely connected to areas of higher principal
179 gradient values compared to posterior areas. Accordingly, the negative spectrum of the principal
180 gradient peaked in the isthmus and the posterior body, whereas the positive spectrum occupied the
181 anterior part of the body, the genu and the rostrum. In some parts of the splenium a small peak of
182 positive values was also evident.

183 **Relationship between the principal gradient and callosal connectivity**

184 Visual inspection of the data clearly indicated a U-shaped distribution. Using a curve-fit estimation,
185 we investigated the possibility for either a linear or quadratic relationship between connection
186 probability and the principal gradient. A linear regression model was fitted onto the distribution ($Y_i =$
187 $0.229 + -0.002 * X_i$), which did not match the data ($F_{(1, 68)} = 0.698$, $r^2 = 0.010$, $p = 0.406$). However, both
188 a quadratic regression revealed a highly significant ($r^2 = 0.739$, $p < 0.001$; ($Y_i = 0.174 + -0.006 * X_i +$
189 $0.004 * X_i^2$)) relationships between callosal connection probability and the principal gradient as
190 illustrated in Figure 2F.

191 **Relationship between the principal gradient and associated callosal area**

192 Similar to the previous analysis, a curve-fit estimation was employed to investigate a linear or
193 quadratic relationship between the number of callosal voxels that may connect to a certain gradient
194 value. A linear regression model ($Y_i = 840.029 + 5.280 * X_i$) failed to reach significance ($F_{(1, 68)} = 3.147$, r^2
195 $= 0.044$, $p = 0.081$), while the quadratic model reached significance ($Y_i = 906.792 + 10.801 * X_i + -$
196 $5.387 * X_i^2$ with $F_{(2, 67)} = 41.708$, $r^2 = 0.555$, $p < 0.001$). The inverted U-shaped distribution of associated
197 callosal areas across the principal gradient is depicted below (Figure 2F).



198
 199 **Figure 2.** Mapping the principal gradient on the corpus callosum. A) Visualisation of the principal gradient on
 200 the cortical surface. B) Examples for percentage maps (20-40-60%) depicting associated cortical areas. C)
 201 Percentage-specific tractograms as derived from the percentage gradient maps shown in B. D) Midsagittal
 202 display of callosal connectivity based on the tractograms for the 20th, 40th and 60th gradient percentages.
 203 Callosal areas with low probabilities (red) indicate that fewer participants showed connections to the particular
 204 gradient percentage in this area. The prevalence across gradient values for 12 exemplary voxels is depicted in
 205 supplementary figure S1-A. E) Callosal gradient map (left), which was computed as the weighted average of
 206 callosal connectivity across all percentage maps of the gradient with the 7 Wittelson regions parcellation
 207 superimposed. The distribution of gradient values along the Wittelson parcellation scheme is shown on the
 208 right. For a hard-border classification of voxels to gradient values please see supplementary figure S1-B. F)
 209 Scatterplots showing the relation between callosal connectivity (left) or number of non-zero connectivity
 210 voxels (right) and the residual between the gradient corrected for the number of voxels in the respective
 211 gradient percentage map. By callosal connectivity, we mean interindividual probability of connection.

212

213 Discussion

214 The current study investigated the relationship between the principal gradient and cortical
 215 projections of the corpus callosum. We reveal three main results: First, the apexes of the principal
 216 gradient span from the genu to the posterior body. Second, the individual variability of callosal
 217 connectivity is lowest at the apexes of the gradient. Lastly, the number of connected voxels in the
 218 callosal midsection showed a decrease at both ends of the gradient, while gradient values in the
 219 middle appeared more similar. We discuss these results in light of evolutionary theories, thus
 220 potentially shedding light onto evolutionary processes involved in changes of callosal connectivity.

221 Previous research investigated the topography of callosal connections solely based on atlases that
 222 parcellate the cortex into areas (Chao et al., 2009) or gyri (Park et al., 2008) that are not defined by

223 their functional role nor their hierarchy in the brain. Our study circumvents this limitation by utilizing
224 the principal gradient that has been linked to functional hierarchy (Margulies et al., 2016). To depict
225 the principal gradient on the callosal midsection, we mapped each percentage of the gradient
226 independently. The callosal gradient (Figure 2E, left) indicates that the negative spectrum of the
227 principal gradient peaks in the posterior body, whereas the positive spectrum peaks in the genu.
228 Previous research demonstrated that the posterior midbody contains fibers that project to lower-
229 level processing areas (e.g. somatosensory areas; Schmahmann and Pandya 2009). The genu
230 connects to higher-level associative regions (i.e. prefrontal and orbitofrontal cortices; Schmahmann
231 and Pandya 2009). Gradient values in the splenium were heterogeneous with highest values for a
232 region previously shown as connecting the angular gyrus (Park et al., 2008; Chao et al., 2009) well
233 known for its high values in the principal gradient (Margulies et al. 2016) and central structure of the
234 default mode network (Zuo et al, 2012). Hence the spatial layout of the callosal gradient map is
235 concordant with a previously hypothesised anatomical-functional organisation of the corpus
236 callosum (Catani & Thiebaut de Schotten 2012). Gradient values in the different portion of the
237 Wittelson parcellation (Figure 2E, right) indicated a heterogeneous distribution of gradient along the
238 corpus callosum. With some regions (3,2, 1) being highly consistent in terms of gradient values and
239 region 7 to 4 being more distributed. A higher distribution of values might be related to a wider
240 range of neuropsychological syndromes associated with disconnections of the same regions of the
241 corpus callosum (Catani and Thiebaut de Schotten 2012). Additionally, the callosal gradient
242 resembles previous work mapping the diameter and myelination of callosal fibres (Aboitiz et al,
243 1992; Aboitiz & Montiel 2003). Accordingly, the genu contains poorly myelinated fibers of thin
244 diameter compared to callosal fibers that connect to the posterior midbody. Diameter and
245 myelination are contingent on conduction speed (Hursh, 1939; Waxman & Bennett, 1972).
246 Furthermore, a study comparing conduction delay in various callosal segments showed a fastest
247 speed in unimodal areas (motor, somatosensory and premotor areas) but a longer delay in
248 transmodal temporal, parietal and occipital areas (Caminiti et al., 2013). This would suggest a
249 different interhemispheric conduction speeds of unimodal (i.e. faster) and transmodal areas (i.e.
250 slower). As such, the callosal gradient may putatively be related to different conduction speeds,
251 which needs to be addressed by future research.

252 There is reason to believe that the general principle demonstrated at the group level might hold on
253 the individual level, given that interindividual variability in callosal connectivity was lowest for the
254 apexes of the gradient. These findings feed into a recent hypothesis in which structural variability is
255 associated with evolutionary stability (Croxson, Forkel, & Thiebaut de Schotten, 2017). The observed
256 callosal connectivity results may thus be linked to the phylogenetic age of cortical areas. Based on

257 the dual origin theory, it has been suggested that multimodal, prefrontal and paralimbic cortices may
258 have evolved in parallel to sensory and motor cortices (Pandy, Petrides, & Cipolloni, 2015). With
259 regards to the gradient architecture, support for this assumption comes from non-human primate
260 studies. For instance, a comparison between resting-state based gradients in human and structural
261 connectivity-based gradients in macaque monkeys displayed similar spatial layouts spanning from
262 primary sensory-motor to fronto-parietal regions (Oligschläger et al, 2019). In humans, this
263 transmodal end of the gradient concurs with the default mode network (DMN) that is also present
264 in chimpanzees (Barks, Parr, and Rilling, 2013) and macaque monkeys (Mantini et al., 2011). Hence
265 several pieces of evidence converge towards phylogenetic older apexes of the gradient. While these
266 arguments may support the interpretation that callosal connectivity may be a proxy for evolutionary
267 stability, comparative studies may compare the callosal gradient architecture across primate species
268 and derive phylogenetic models in order to test this assumption.

269 In addition, our results complement the latest model on the DMN anatomy (Alves et al. 2019), since
270 the positive end of the principal gradient was highly connected with the contralateral hemisphere via
271 the corpus callosum. This would suggest that the core of the DMN (i.e. located at the positive end of
272 the principal gradient, Waymel et al. 2020) would be phylogenetically more ancient than its
273 periphery as areas highly connected by the corpus callosum might have appeared earlier on the
274 evolutionary tree (Karolis et al. 2019). Clinical studies further hint at a link between the DMN and the
275 corpus callosum, given that disrupted callosal white matter leads to decreases in DMN functional
276 connectivity (Sharp et al., 2011). This link may appear unsurprising, since interhemispheric functional
277 connectivity is lost shortly after complete transection of the corpus callosum (Johnston et al., 2008).
278 In contrast, other studies suggest a preserved bilateral resting state networks (e.g. the DMN) in split-
279 brain patients several years after surgery (Uddin et al., 2008; for a comprehensive overview see
280 Mancuso et al., 2019). Together these findings point towards contribution of the corpus callosum to
281 the DMN, which, in split brain patients may recover with time.

282 With regards to functional laterality, a more symmetrical functional organization is found for higher
283 probability in callosal connectivity (Karolis et al. 2019) and corresponds to the apexes of the gradient
284 in the present study. This is in line with studies showing that stronger callosal connections are
285 associated with a decrease in perceptual processing asymmetries. The corpus callosum has a long
286 history as an underlying factor of functional hemispheric asymmetries (Ocklenburg et al., 2016) and
287 appears to decrease asymmetries in perceptual processes (e.g. Friedrich et al., 2017). However, this
288 result does not hold true systematically as studies investigating speech processes (i.e.: word fluency
289 and semantic decision making) indicate that 'stronger' corpus callosum increase asymmetries

290 between the two hemispheres (Westerhausen et al., 2006, Josse et al., 2008). Hence, the callosal
291 gradient map may be a useful new framework to clarify contrasting results in the role of the corpus
292 callosum in functional hemispheric asymmetries.

293 A decrease in the variability of callosal connectivity at either end of the gradient was in part
294 accompanied by a decrease of the number of voxels connected in the callosal midsagittal area on
295 both ends of the gradient (Figure 2F, right side). Inversely, callosal connectivity was more variable
296 and involved more voxels in the corpus callosum when distant from the gradient's apexes. According
297 to the tethering hypothesis, evolutionary expansion of the human cortex may have untethered large
298 portions of the cortex from the constraints of early sensory activation cascades and molecular
299 gradients (Buckner & Krienen, 2013). Similarly, the dual origin suggests that evolution progressively
300 expended two cortical trends, one of which emerges from the hippocampocentric division (Pandya
301 et al. 2015) and forms the limbic system that is cortically represented by the default mode network
302 (Alves et al. 2019). In other words, evolutionary expansion would have created regions less
303 functionally restricted than the apexes of the gradient. This, in turn, could have led to a more diverse
304 pattern of connectivity (i.e. higher number of voxels in the associated callosal area) which is in
305 accordance with the observed higher individual variability and the tethering as well as the dual origin
306 hypotheses.

307 Mapping the principal gradient onto the corpus callosum grants insight into the distribution of
308 callosal connections across functions of various hierarchical levels. Contrary to categorical
309 segmentation methods, our approach visualizes a transient gradient of areas in the callosal
310 midsection based on the connectivity of unimodal and transmodal cortical areas. Therefore, this map
311 may guide clinical investigation of brain lesions that disconnect the corpus callosum with a novel
312 gradient-based perspective. It is important to stress that the current work is not a new parcellation
313 of the CC. In the current work we aimed to avoid a categorical parcellation in favour of a map that
314 shows smooth transitions of gradient with high and low values. As we work in the group average
315 space, a continuum of values would be more accurate than a categorical parcellation. Future
316 research might explore the variability of division of the corpus callosum using gradients values and
317 advanced tractography at the individual level. However, some limitations need to be noted. While
318 we describe the first corpus callosum principal gradient map, this map depicts the weighted average
319 of structural connectivity, based on an averaged map of the principal gradient. The weighted average
320 of structural connectivity allowed us to assess - to some extent - the variability of callosal
321 connectivity, however, individual patterns of the principal gradient are yet unavailable. Therefore,
322 the effect of individual variability of the principal gradient's spatial layout on callosal projections

323 could not be assessed in this study. Addressing the extent to which the principal gradient and its
324 callosal connections differ across individuals for example via new softwares (e.g. Vos de Wael et al.,
325 2020) will be a matter of future research. Furthermore, revealing the individual variance of the
326 gradient will allow us to investigate the relationship between individual variability and behavior,
327 similarly to other studies (e.g. Marquand et al., 2017).

328 Another limitation comes from the tractography approach. Tractography analyses can produce
329 inaccurate results (Jones and Cercignani, 2010; Maier-Hein et al., 2017). To avoid these caveats, we
330 employed methods that have previously demonstrated high anatomical reliability when compared to
331 axonal tracing (Thiebaut de Schotten et al. 2011a; 2012) and with post-mortem dissections (Catani et
332 al., 2012; Thiebaut de Schotten et al., 2011; Catani et al., 2017; Vergani et al, 2014). In the
333 disconnectome tool, all image matrices were binarized depending on the existence of absence of
334 streamlines connecting the corpus callosum with a given gradient percentage mask. In line with
335 other studies (Gong et al., 2009; Shu et al., 2011), we chose a binarization threshold of 1 because the
336 number of streamlines does not reflect the connectivity strength or the true number of axonal
337 projections between two brain regions (Gong et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2013) and previous work
338 shows that changing streamline count threshold for binarization does not change the overall results
339 of network connectivity analyses (Shu et al., 2011). However, this approach does not prevent that
340 each streamline may cross voxels of different gradient values, leading to potential overlap, especially
341 if gradient values are partially asymmetric. The current approach does not allow to assess gradient
342 asymmetries because of methodological limitations inherent to the gradient estimation (including
343 for instance asymmetries of the seeding regions, asymmetrical template, contamination of the
344 functional connectivity by the other hemisphere, white matter asymmetries). Future studies may
345 wish to circumvent all these limitations to investigate hemispheric asymmetries of the principal
346 gradient along the callosal connectivity.

347 **Conclusion**

348 Our study provides the first comprehensive map of the callosal cross-section that displays the
349 distribution of callosal connections according to a hierarchical organisation of cognitive functions,
350 without enforced boundaries. Our findings align with previous considerations about the evolutionary
351 changes in the brain. Future studies may utilize the map of the callosal gradient to bridge the gap
352 between brain asymmetries and functional hierarchy.

353 **Data and code availability statement:**

354 The processed data including the callosal gradient map, the hard-border segmentation and the
355 weighted and averaged tractogram can be found in <https://neurovault.org/collections/7797/>. The
356 code for creating the hard-border segmentation of the corpus callosum is available in the following
357 repository: https://github.com/PatFriedrich/ccGradient_hardBorder. For further requests please
358 contact the corresponding author.

359

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363

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