New Research From Psychological Science

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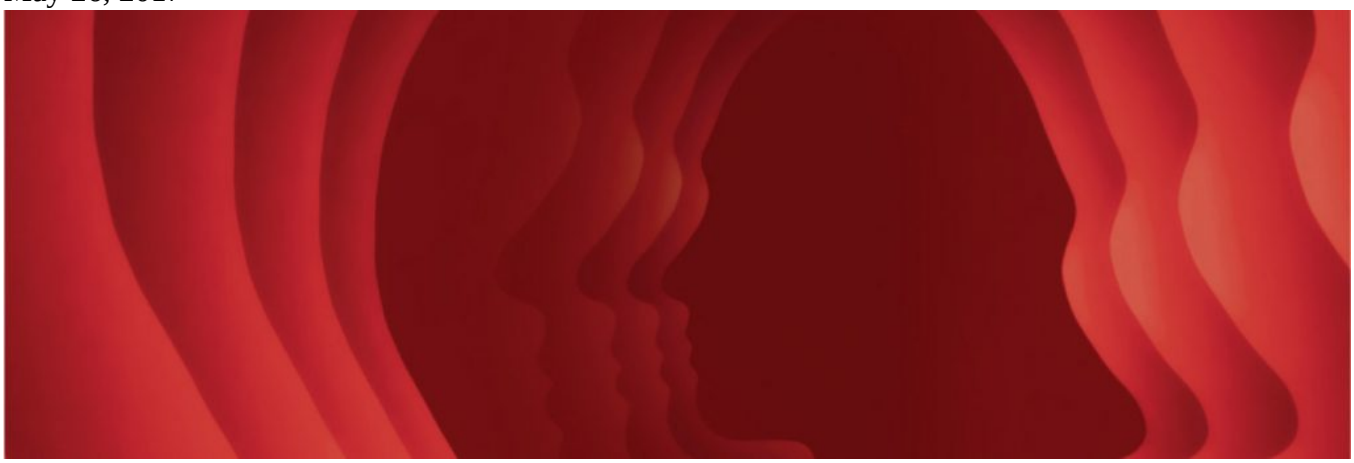

Read about the latest research published in *Psychological Science*:

Time Order as Psychological Bias

Laetitia Grabot and Virginie van Wassenhove

Researchers have found that there is a high level of interindividual variability in temporal order perception. Titchener's law of prior entry states that attention prioritizes the perception of an event. As such, attention may manage people's perception of subjective timing and help them adjust neural latencies across senses; however, no study has examined whether attention is fully sufficient to compensate for individual biases in order perception. The researchers examined participants' sense of temporal order by having them complete a temporal-order judgment task four times over a 4-month period. In this task, participants were presented with lateralized stimuli: either two audio stimuli, two visual stimuli, or one audio stimulus and one visual stimulus. Participants were instructed to indicate whether the first stimulus they perceived appeared on the right or left. On some trial blocks, participants were instructed to pay attention to only audio stimuli, only visual stimuli, or to split their attention equally between both types of stimuli. Interindividual variability was found regardless of whether participants split their attention or not and was stable over time, suggesting that temporal order is a psychological bias that may result from structural constraints.

Don't Underestimate the Benefits of Being Misunderstood

Edward Gibson, Caitlin Tan, Richard Futrell, Kyle Mahowald, Lars Konieczny, Barbara Hemforth, and Evelina Fedorenko

Past research suggests that when people understand a language, they may combine prior information on what is probably being communicated with information on how a message may be corrupted by noise (i.e., errors). Because native speakers expect nonnative speakers to make more language errors, they

may give nonnative speakers the benefit of the doubt when interpreting utterances. The authors conducted a language-comprehension study across six experiments; each experiment used different types of syntactic alterations. Studies 1 and 4 used double object and preposition phrases, Studies 2 and 5 used transitive and intransitive verbs, and Studies 3 and 6 used active and passive voices. Two speakers presented target and filler materials with or without an accent; the first three experiments used only implausible sentence constructions and the last three used plausible and implausible constructions. The authors found more plausibility-based inferences for sentences produced with an accent than for those produced without, suggesting that people may be more likely to give nonnative speakers the benefit of the doubt when interpreting statements.