



An Excerpt - Why we view the world differently

UCLA psychologist Matthew Lieberman explains why people don't view the world the same way others do.

SAMBODHAN (Together Towards Awareness)



Why are we so sure that the way we see people, situations and politics is accurate, and the way other people see them is foolishly wrong?

The answer, according to new research by UCLA psychology professor Matthew Lieberman, lies in a region of the brain he calls the “gestalt cortex,” which helps people make sense of information that is ambiguous or incomplete — and dismiss alternative interpretations.

The research, based on an analysis of more than 400 previous studies, [is published](#) in the journal Psychological Review.



People often mistake their own understanding of people and events as objective truth, rather than as merely their own interpretation. That phenomenon, called “naive realism,” leads people to believe that they should have the final word on the world around them.

“We tend to have irrational confidence in our own experiences of the world, and to see others as misinformed, lazy, unreasonable or biased when they fail to see the world the way we do,” Lieberman said. “The evidence from neural data is clear that the gestalt cortex is central to how we construct our version of reality.”

“When others see the world differently than we do, it can serve as an existential threat to our own contact with reality and often leads to anger and suspicion about the others,” Lieberman said. “If we know how a person is seeing the world, their subsequent reactions are much more predictable.”

Mental acts that are coherent, effortless and based on our experiences tend to occur in the gestalt cortex. For example, a person might see someone else smiling and without giving it any apparent thought, perceive that the other person is happy. Because those inferences are immediate and effortless, they typically feel more like “seeing reality” — even though happiness is an internal psychological state — than they do like “thinking,” Lieberman said.

“We believe we have merely witnessed things as they are, which makes it more difficult to appreciate, or even consider, other perspectives,” he said. “The mind accentuates its best answer and discards the rival solutions.

To read the complete article click here: <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/gestalt-cortex-why-people-see-things-differently>

About the Author

Matthew Dylan Lieberman is a Professor and Social Cognitive Neuroscience Lab Director at UCLA Department of Psychology, Psychiatry and Bio-behavioral Sciences.

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