



## City Research Online

### City, University of London Institutional Repository

---

**Citation:** Gorea, A. & Tyler, C. W. (2013). Dips and bumps: On Bloch's law and the Broca-Sulzer phenomenon. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(15), E1330. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1221807110

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

---

**Permanent repository link:** <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/12524/>

**Link to published version:** <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1221807110>

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

---

---

---

City Research Online:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/>

[publications@city.ac.uk](mailto:publications@city.ac.uk)

---

# 1,2 Dips and bumps: On Bloch's law and the Broca-Sulzer phenomenon

Using the pretext of the potential benefit of their fundamental study in improving artificial lighting (with “impact on the billions of people”), Rieiro et al. (1) put forth an unfounded premise, a questionable “contradiction” between two well-known psychophysical phenomena, Bloch's law (2) and the Broca-Sulzer effect (3). The authors presented this premise to advance an equally implausible hypothesis, according to which this discrepancy could be the result of an unspecified mechanism that they have termed “intrinsic expertise bias,” claimed to be present in Bloch's but not in Broca-Sulzer's measurements. Rieiro et al. (1) did not specify in which direction such bias is supposed to affect the measurements, the range in which it is supposed to operate, nor the basis of a differential effect between threshold (Bloch) and suprathreshold (Broca-Sulzer) conditions.

As it happens, of the (only) three reports cited as supportive of the supposed Bloch/Broca-Sulzer discrepancy, two (4, 5) in fact point to the effective equivalence of the two phenomena.

In referring to Bloch's law, Rieiro et al. (1) made two critical mistakes: they described it as an “appearance” (rather than “threshold”) phenomenon and characterized this function as monotonic. The opposition of this supposed monotonicity to the nonmonotonicity of the Broca-Sulzer function is the alleged “contradiction” motivating the Rieiro et al. study (1).

Despite the fact that Bloch's and Broca-Sulzer's functions describe, respectively, the threshold and suprathreshold visual behavior over time, a unitary view of visual temporal processing implies that these two functions should be governed by the same integration process within the same system (i.e., with the same temporal impulse response, TIR). In general, suprathreshold appearance is known to be approximately proportional to one's sensitivity (i.e., the inverse of the intensity or contrast threshold). Thus, to the extent that the visual processing is linear with intensity, the sensitivity and appearance functions of stimulus duration should be strictly equivalent, either both being monotonic or both nonmonotonic. Accelerating or compressive nonlinearities could change their respective amplitudes but not their equivalence in form.

Moreover, contrary to the Rieiro et al. (1) account, a number of published datasets clearly display a “dip” in Bloch's function (see figure 1 in ref. 4), even though this observation has remained generally underappreciated. When such function is inverted about a vertical axis (so that the threshold becomes sensitivity), the dip becomes a “bump,” just as for the Broca-Sulzer function. There is thus no discrepancy between the two domains. We have shown that the dip/bump results from the combination of a limited temporal integration window with a biphasic TIR at low spatial frequencies and that it

disappears for higher spatial frequencies that yield a monophasic TIR (4).

Instead of the account of the discrepancy that Rieiro et al. (1) offered between their blocked and unblocked conditions (with only a 5% bump in the latter, far smaller than typically reported), it is much more plausible that this discrepancy was caused by sequential effects in their experimental procedure (all subjects having been run in the unblocked before the blocked condition, and all in the same sequence in the blocked condition).

**Andrei Gorea<sup>a,1</sup> and Christopher W. Tyler<sup>b</sup>** **Q:5**

<sup>a</sup>Laboratoire Psychologie de la Perception, Université Paris Descartes and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 75006 Paris, France; and <sup>b</sup>Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute, San Francisco CA **Q:6**

**1** Rieiro H, et al. (2012) Optimizing the temporal dynamics of light to human perception. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 109(48):19828–19833.

**2** Bloch MA-M (1885) Expériences sur la vision. *Comptes Rendus de Séances de la Société de Biologie, Paris* 37:493–495. **Q:7**

**3** Broca A, Sulzer D (1902) La sensation lumineuse en fonction du temps. *J Physiol (Paris)* 4:632.

**4** Gorea A, Tyler CW (1986) New look at Bloch's law for contrast. *J Opt Soc Am A* 3(1):52–61.

**5** Georgeson MA (1987) Temporal properties of spatial contrast vision. *Vision Res* 27(5):765–780.

Author contributions: A.G. and C.W.T. analyzed data and wrote the paper. **Q:4**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

<sup>1</sup>To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: andrei.gorea@parisdescartes.fr.

# AUTHOR QUERIES

## AUTHOR PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUERIES

- Q: 1** Please contact PNAS\_Specialist.djs@sheridan.com if you have questions about the editorial changes, this list of queries, or the figures in your article. Please include your manuscript number in the subject line of all e-mail correspondence; your manuscript number is 201221807.
- Q: 2** Please (i) review the author affiliation and footnote symbols carefully, (ii) check the order of the author names, and (iii) check the spelling of all author names, initials, and affiliations. Please check with your coauthors about how they want their names and affiliations to appear. To confirm that the author and affiliation lines are correct, add the comment “OK” next to the author line. This is your final opportunity to correct any errors prior to publication. Misspelled names or missing initials will affect an author’s searchability. Once a manuscript publishes online, any corrections (if approved) will require publishing an erratum; there is a processing fee for approved erratum.
- Q: 3** Please review and confirm your approval of the short title: Dips and bumps. If you wish to make further changes, please adhere to the 50-character limit.
- Q: 4** Please review the information in the author contribution footnote carefully. Please make sure that the information is correct and that the correct author initials are listed. Note that the order of author initials matches the order of the author line per journal style. You may add contributions to the list in the footnote; however, funding should not be an author’s only contribution to the work.
- Q: 5** Author names may have been edited to match those provided during article submission; please check carefully and note your approval in the margin. (Your article cannot be published until your approval has been received.)
- Q: 6** Please provide a departmental affiliation for each affiliation listed and a postal code for affiliation “b.”
- Q: 7** Please provide an issue number for refs. 2 and 3, if possible.
- 
-