

Can We Trust Our Perception? (S&P Pt.4)



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PSYCH 1101: DAY 12

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How Much Does *Cognition*
Influence *Perception*?

How Big Is A Quarter?



Assessing The “New Look”

- The “New Look” movement in psychology argued that desires and motives (i.e., “cognition”) infused perception: poor children *see* coins as larger
- New look research received a number of criticisms
 - Poor children less familiar with coins
 - Mixed results
 - Assessments were not of actual perception, but of other cognitive processes:
 - **Memory**
 - **Judgment**
 - **Attentional shifts**

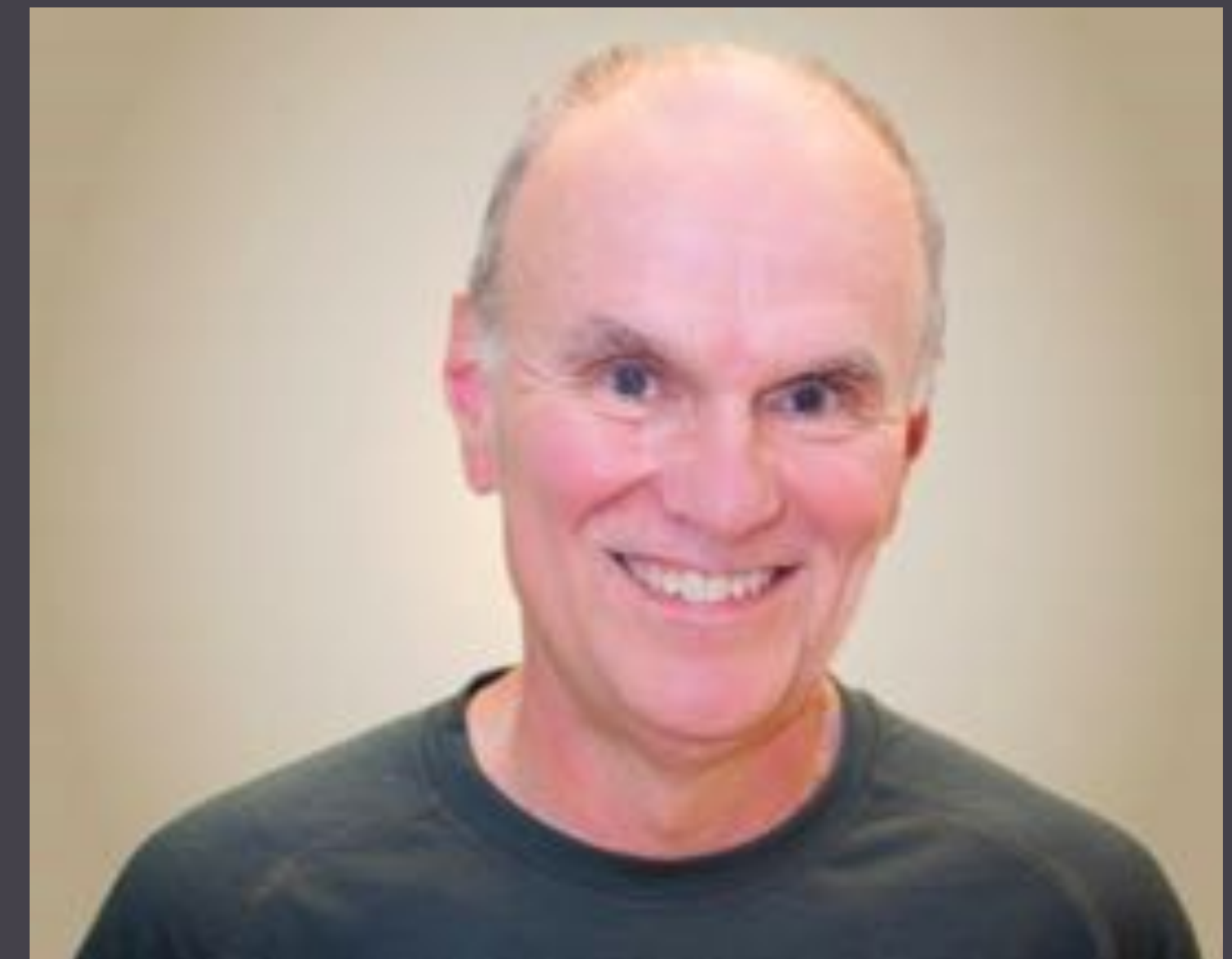
The “New” New Look



EMILY BALCETIS



DAVID DUNNING



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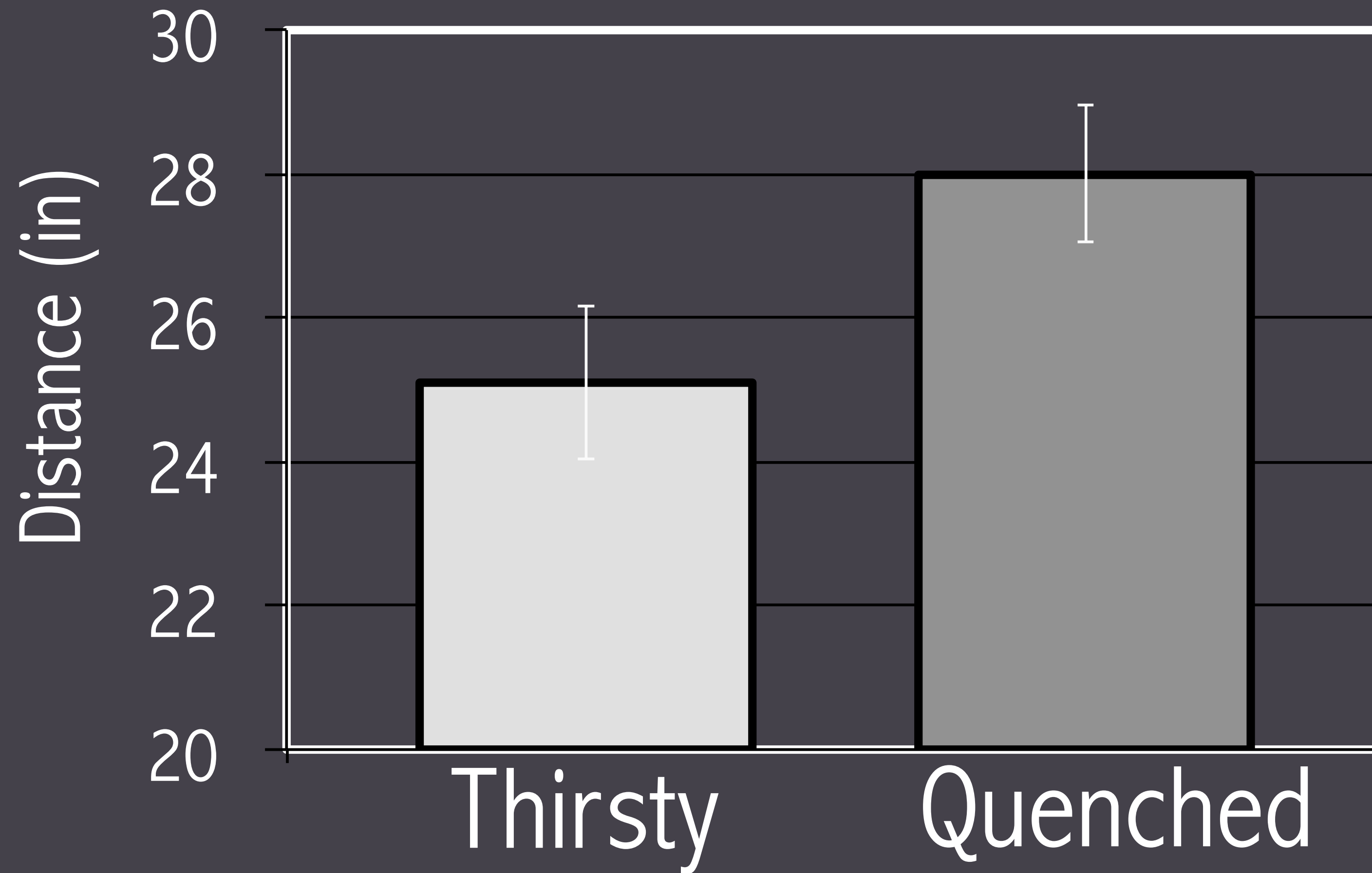
3. Motivated Perception Of Distance

Balci et al. & Dunning (2010)

- Are desirable things “perceived” to be closer?
- Manipulated how thirsty participants were
 - Thirsty: eat bowl of pretzels (40% of daily sodium)
 - Quenched: drank up to four 8-oz. glasses of water
- Distance to object: self-generated response

How Far Away Is The Water?

(Actual Distance = 36 Inches)



Beanbag Toss: Throwing Instead Of Reporting An Estimate

Valuable Gift Card



-9.1"

Worthless Gift Card



+1.3''

How Far Away Is The \$100 Bill?
(Actual Distance = 55 Inches)

CHANCE TO WIN! = 50.8 INCHES



How Far Away Is The \$100 Bill?

BELONGS TO EXPERIMENTER = 58.9 INCHES



4. Motivated Perception Of Steepness



Fatigue Influences Steepness Estimates (Proffitt)

- Joggers: Before vs. After a run
 - Before = 21 degrees
 - After = 28 degrees
- Wearing a backpack increases estimates of the steepness of a ramp

And So On...

- Estimates of a man's walking speed are biased after thinking about fast animals like cheetahs or slow animals like turtles (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2002)
- Interpretations of an ambiguous figure that can be seen as a woman's face or as a man playing a saxophone depend on whether perceivers have been recently primed with the concepts of "flirtation" or "music" (Balci et al., 2003)
- Perceptions of how steep a hill is become more extreme after participants jog vigorously for an hour (Bhalla & Proffitt, 1999)
- The distance to a goal seems longer if people strap on a heavy backpack (Proffitt, Stefanucci, Banton, & Epstein, 2003)

Conclusions?

- Motivations, beliefs, and desires can shape and bias what seem to be our basic processes involved in the way we attend to, remember, encode the world around us.
- Studies can show us when and how bias can creep in, but at a very basic level our perceptions are reliable enough to give us fairly accurate access to the world around us.