

## Change Blindness

### 1. Background

The ordinary view:

- Our consciousness of the world and of our own bodies is so rich that we cannot adequately put it into words
- In the case of vision, we see all those things in open view before our eyes (that are large enough for us to see)

Change blindness: Very large changes can be made in pictures (or scenes) without viewers noticing them.

Question: What best *explains* the phenomenon of change blindness? Should we reject the ordinary view?

### 2. Hypothesis

Here is one suggestion: the ordinary view is mistaken. Perhaps visual experience (and consciousness as a whole) is much sparser than is commonly supposed.

Preliminary sketch:

- We see only what we *notice*. The things to which we do not attend are not seen but only *potentially* seen
- Since in cases of change blindness, we don't notice the changes, we don't see them, even though they are in open view before our eyes
- We are under the impression that we see everything in the visual field, but that is an illusion. The reason is that if we "so much as faintly wonder whether we're actually seeing something, we turn our eye (and our attention) to that thing, and it becomes available for processing" (O'Regan 2001).
- Consider the refrigerator analogy

Question: Is the preliminary sketch too strong?

Hypothesis (weaker alternative): You see X only if you *can* attend to X without moving your eyes.

### 3. Implications

Perhaps the ordinary view is mistaken. If so, then consciousness might be less rich than we ordinarily suppose. We might understand visual consciousness as being more like a drawing than a clear snapshot.