



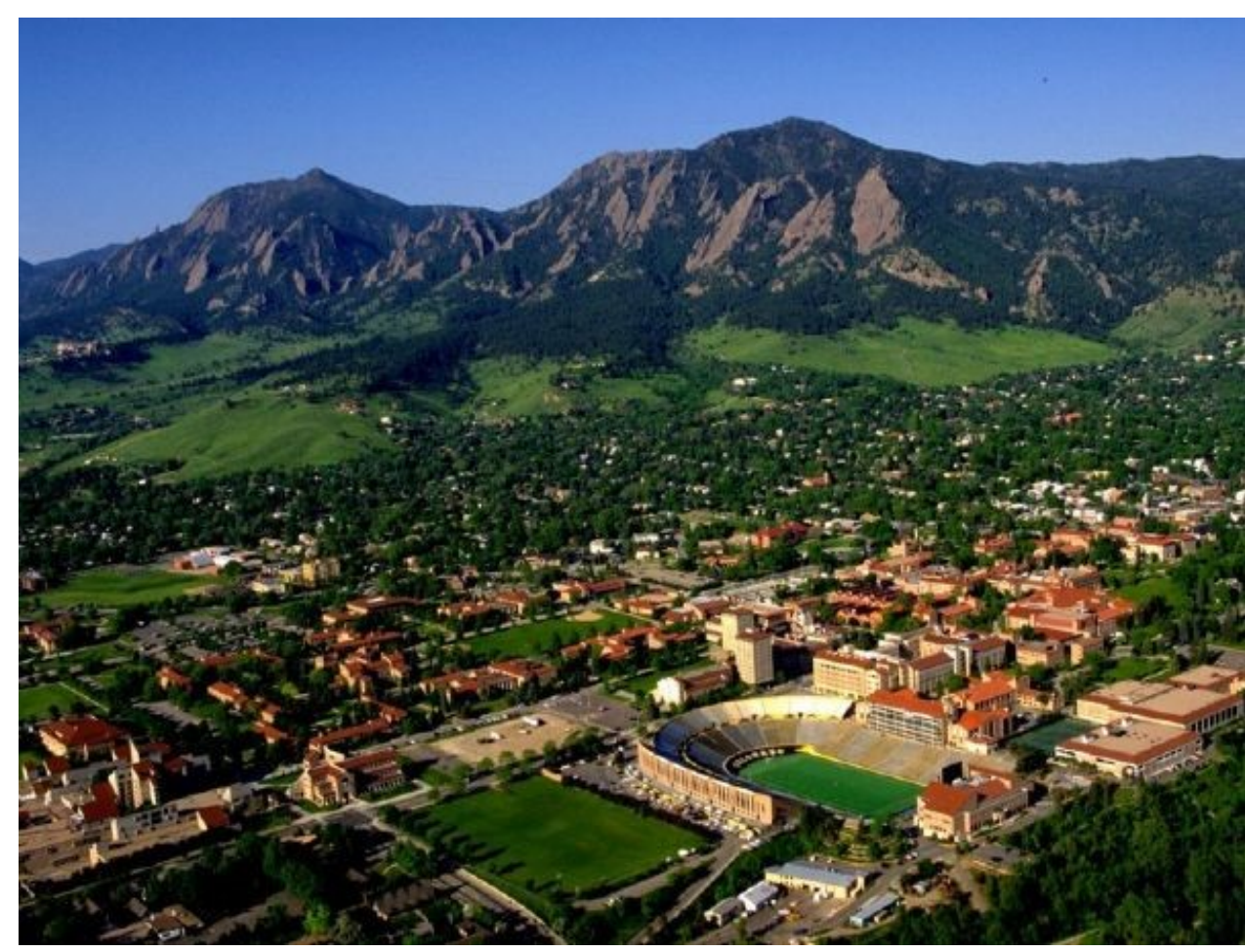
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Effect of Attention on Trust Behavior

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Zoom Link: <https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/93410644071>



Summary

Forming cooperative relationships is a fundamental part of human life. In navigating this social world, how do these meaningful relationships develop? It is likely that foundational psychological mechanisms influence our daily social interactions. At the most fundamental level, relationships are started when one person simply devotes their attention to another. Upon this foundation, an accumulation of memories, attitudes, and feelings build upon each other to form a relationship. What is the foundational role attentional processes play in building relationships? Because visual attention increases emotional intensity³, prioritization², risk perception¹, and attitude polarization³, **we hypothesized that visual attention increases trust when selecting who to trust.**

In two experiments (N = 403), we asked participants to choose one of two “players” to trust with \$1 in a Trust Game. The \$1 would then be multiplied by four and placed in the chosen player’s account. Participants were also told that the trusted player could then return none, some, or all the money to participants. Both players were represented by photos of CU Boulder students taken from an earlier study, displayed on either side of the screen. Faces displayed a welcoming closed-mouth smile. We cued visual attention to one of the players as part of an ostensibly unrelated letter search task.

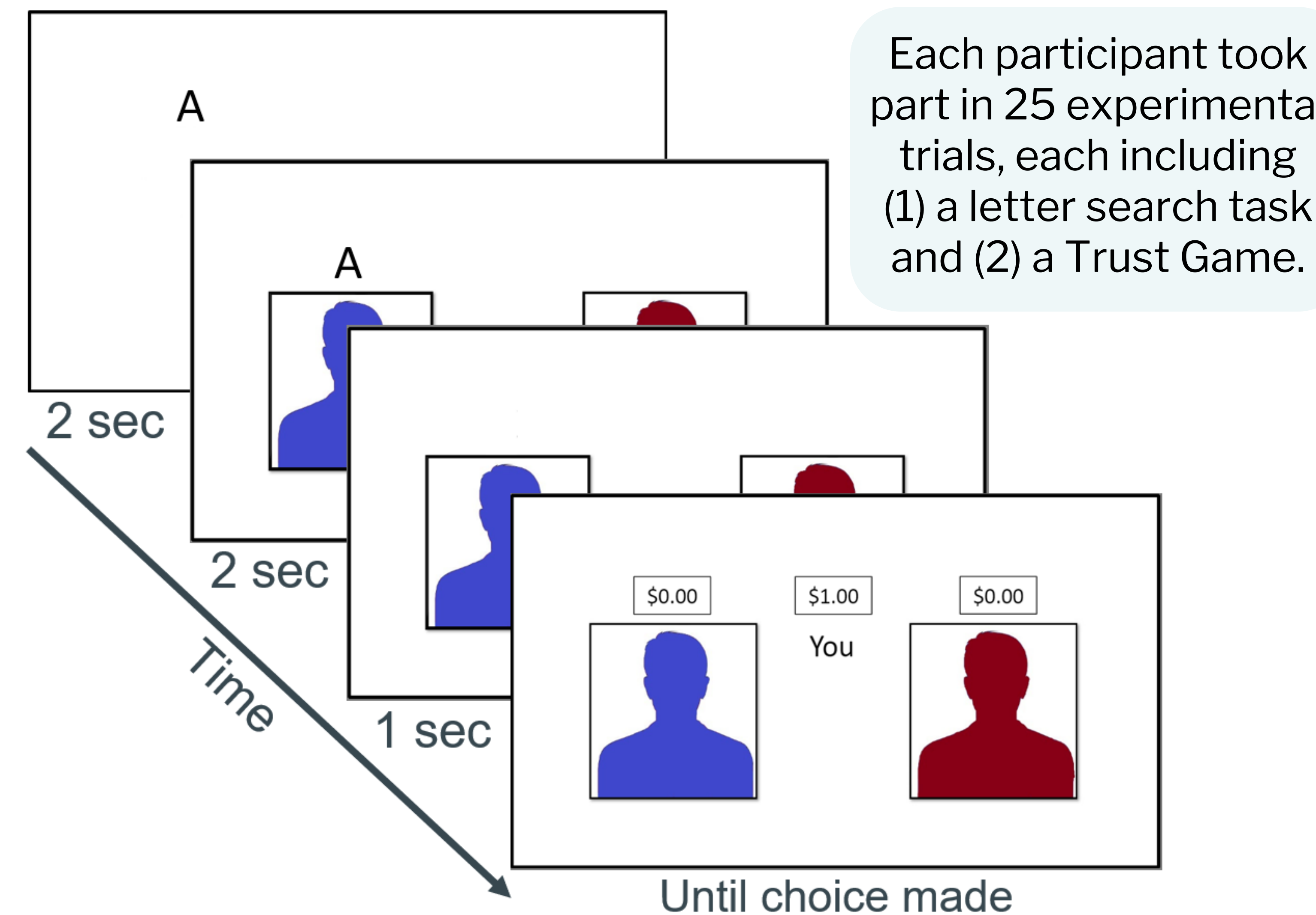
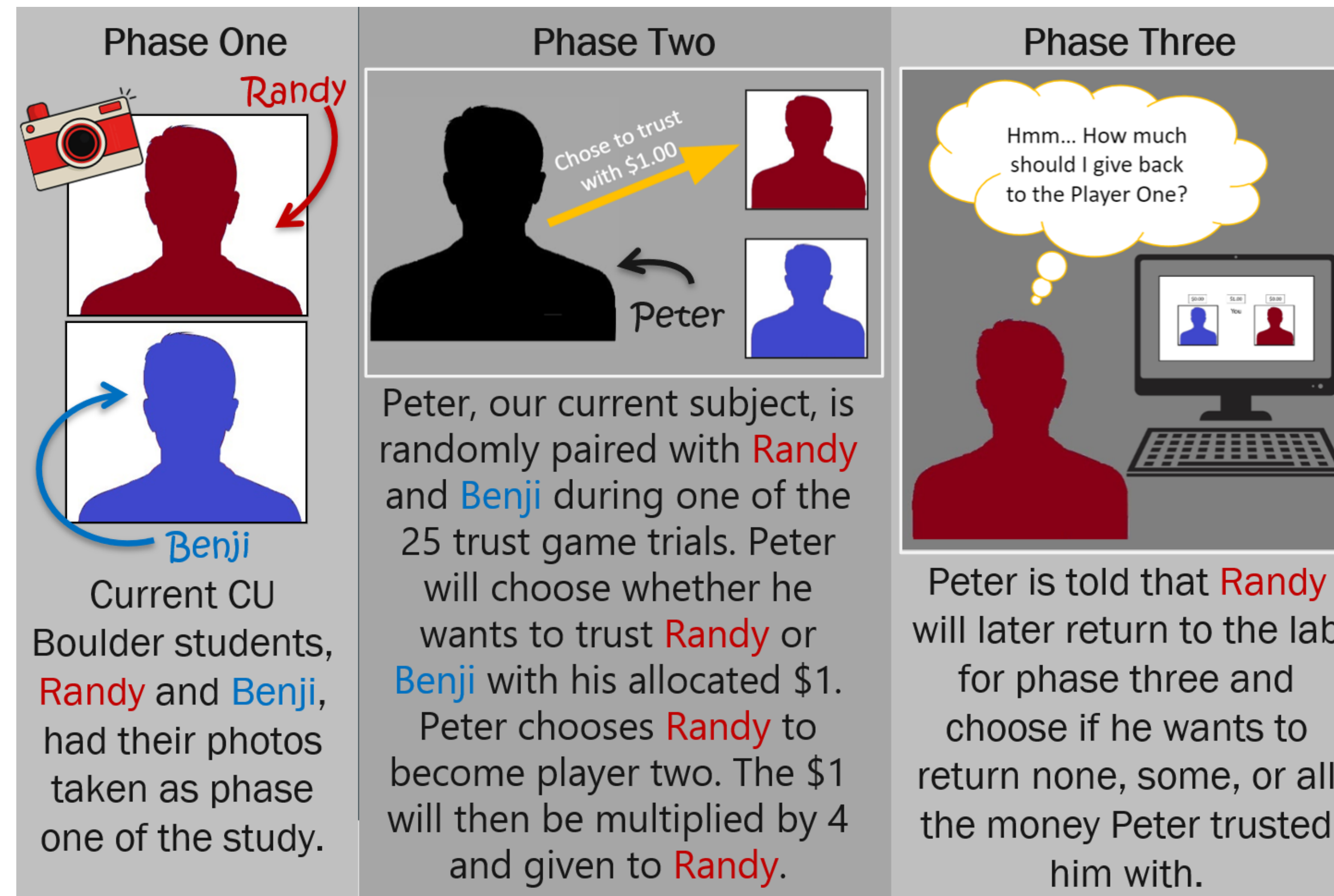
In both experiments, participants were more likely to trust the cued face when asked *who to trust*. In experiment two, however, participants were no more likely to trust the cued face over the uncued face when asked *who not to trust*. Our results suggest that attention cues selective processing in the direction of the question asked, who to trust or who to distrust.

Study 1 Hypothesis: Participants will more often trust the cued face over the uncued face

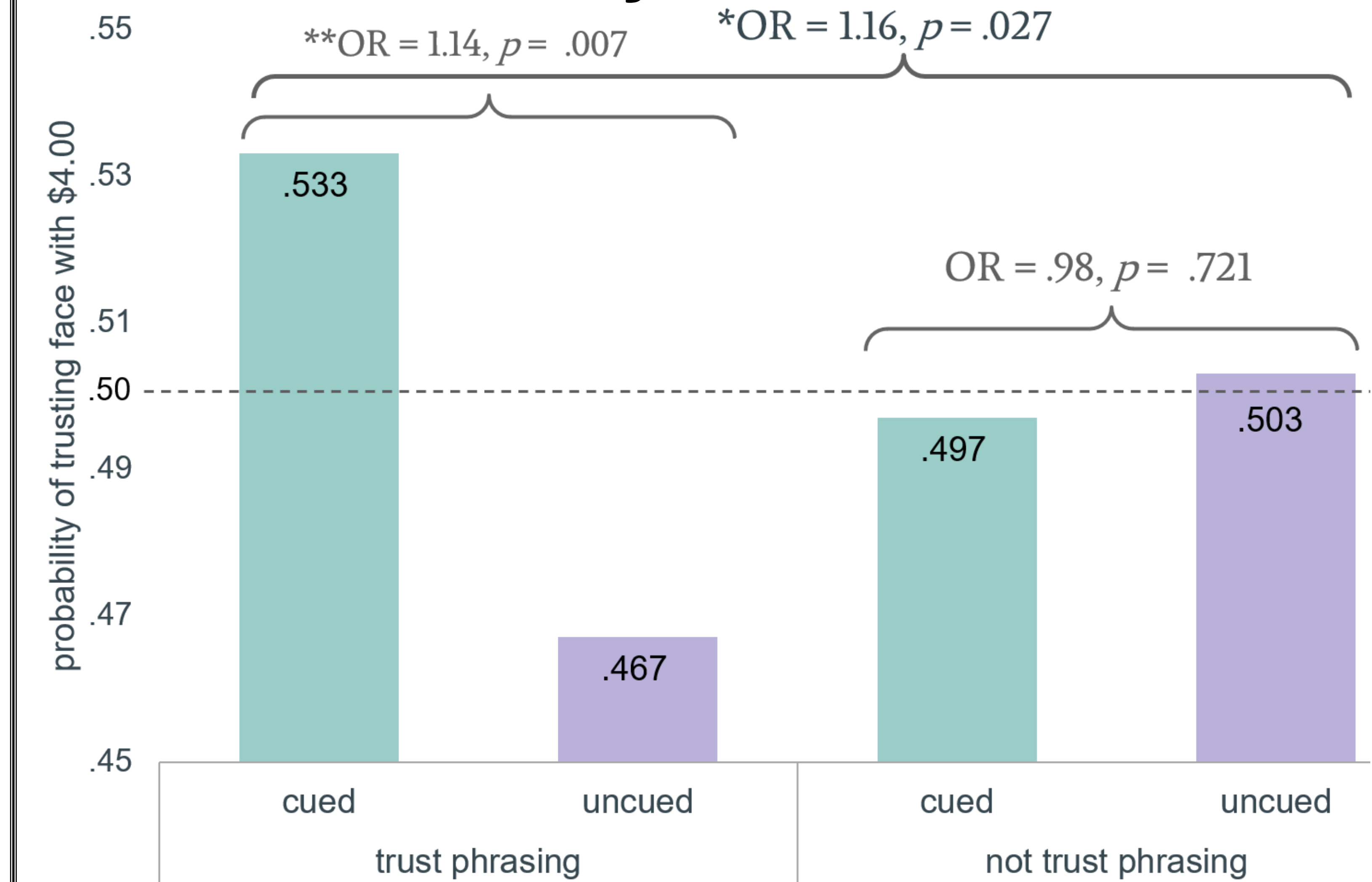
Study 2 Hypothesis: Participants will more often trust the cued face over the uncued face when ask “who to trust” and “who not to trust”

Methods

Participants were told they were participating in the second phase of a three-phase study.



Study 2 Results



Discussion

For both studies, when participants were asked *who to trust*, they significantly more often trusted the cued face. However, in study two, when participants were asked *who not to trust*, there was no significant difference between trusting cued and uncued faces. These results suggest that people attend to specific facial attributes and expressions when evaluating novel others. For example, participants placed in the *trust* framing condition may have searched for attributes indicating a stimulus was welcoming and trustworthy, while participants placed in the *not trust* framing condition searched for attributes that indicated a stimulus was threatening and untrustworthy. As a result, when evaluating *who not to trust*, the unexpected findings may be due to participants struggling to collect pertinent information to make the evaluation at hand.

References

- Mrkva, K., Cole, J., & Van Boven, L. (2020). Attention increases environmental risk perception. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
- Mrkva, K., & Van Boven, L. (2017). Attentional accounting: Voluntary spatial attention increases budget category prioritization. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
- Mrkva, K., & Van Boven, L. (2020). Salience theory of mere exposure: Relative exposure increases liking, evaluative extremity, and emotional intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.