



# Trust Mindsets

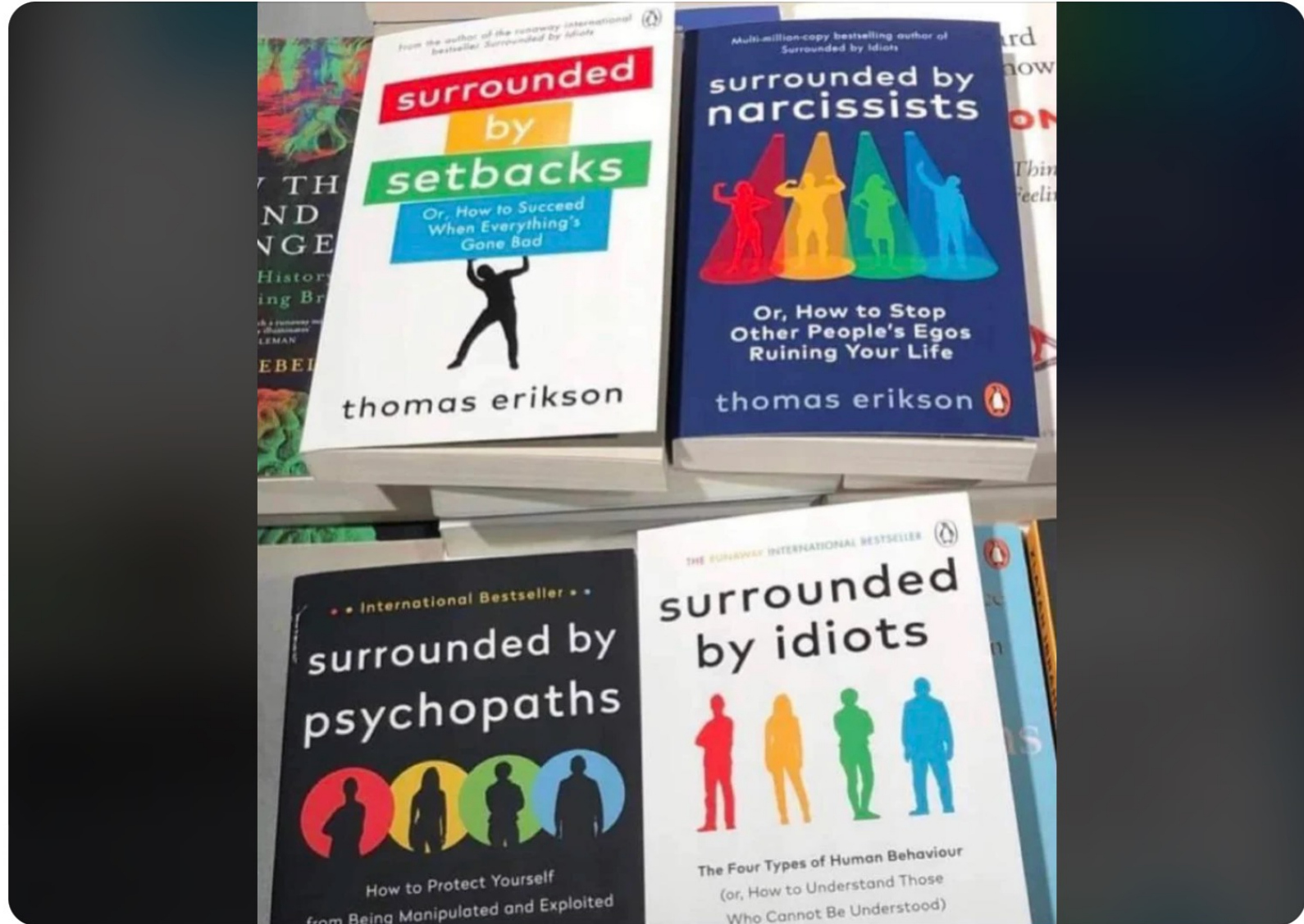
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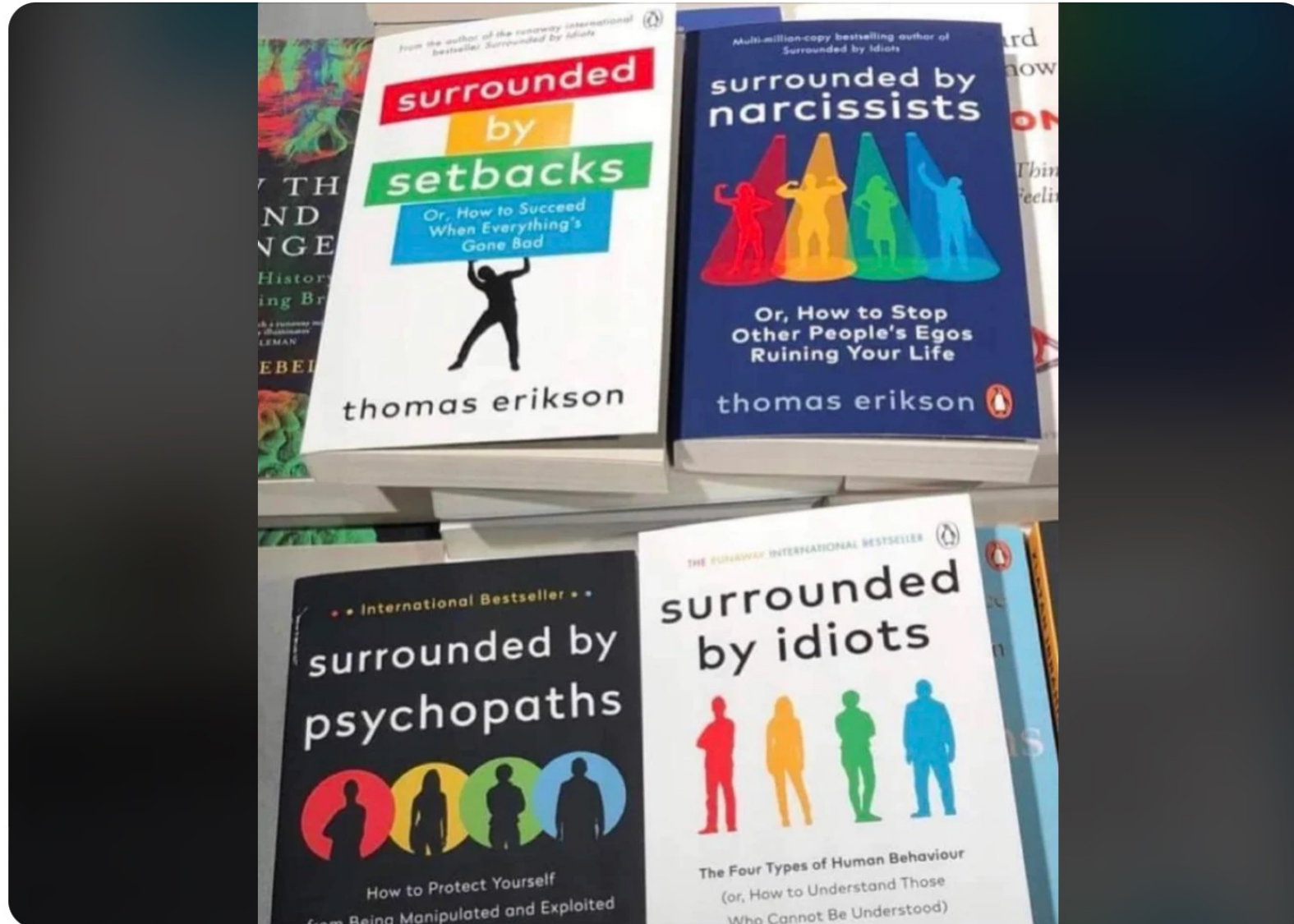
Twitter: @EricNeumannPsy

SJDM Conference, 11/18/2023





# Has it occurred to Thomas that he might be the problem?



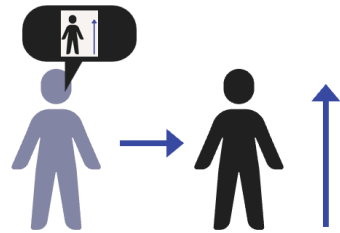
# Trust can be self-fulfilling

- People can shape how trustworthy others are to them:
  - Trust: risk vulnerability expecting trustworthiness from someone.
  - Trustworthiness (here): benevolence, i.e., with concern for trustor.
  - Trust as social signal: People generally like being seen as trustworthy.
  - People often do not want to let down the person who trusted them.
  - Self-fulfilling effects in diary studies, at work, between rival groups...
  
- Trust Mindsets: **Do people know this? Might they trust more if they do?**

# Do people know trust can be self-fulfilling?

## Mindset

- Self-fulfilling



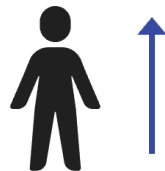
How to change **trustworthiness**  
short, easy, *interpersonal* change

- Fixed



no change possible

- Growth



long, hard, *intrapersonal* change

# Research

- Hypotheses: People with a self-fulfilling mindset...
  - Study 1: self-report more generalized trust,
  - Study 2: encourage others to trust more,
  - Study 3: risk more trust in an economic game.
- Fixed mindset as comparison in experimental studies 2-3.

# Study 1: Self-reported generalized trust

- Correlational design:

- Mindsets

- fixed/growth

- “ You can improve your trustworthiness considerably.”

- self-fulfilling

- “People actually become more trustworthy when they are trusted.”

- Correlates

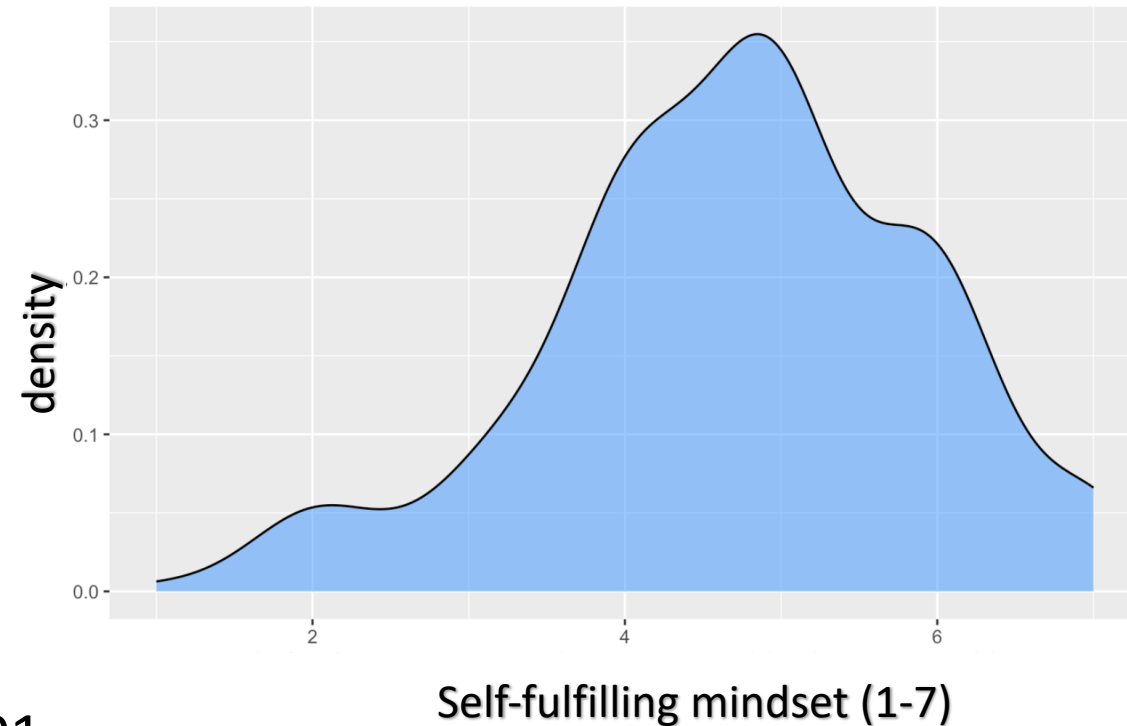
- Generalized trust

- “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted?”

- Bovitz, n = 307, US sample representative of age, gender, ethnicity

# Study 1: Self-reported generalized trust

- Validate self-fulfilling mindset:
  - Reliable, 5 items:  $\alpha = .91$ ,  
95% confidence interval (CI) = [.89, .93].
  - 7-point scale disagree – agree:  
M = 4.72, SD = 1.20.
  - Predictor: subj. status,  $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ .
  - Factor analyses: distinct from  
fixed/growth mindsets.
  - (Multiple) regression: only mindset  
tracking generalized trust,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ .





# Study 2: Encouraging others to trust

- Experimental design:
  - IV: Mindset interventions,
  - Read hypothetical scenarios: person unsure whether to trust someone,
  - DVs: should this person trust?
- Pre-registered, Prolific, n = 340

# Study 2: Encouraging others to trust

- Mindset intervention: article providing evidence for...

## fixed mindset

“fixed level of trustworthiness”

“proself” vs “prosocial” people

genetic markers

stable across contexts

## self-fulfilling mindset

“trust as a self-fulfilling prophecy”

“trust as a gift”

“people do not want to let us down”

context (amount of trust) matters

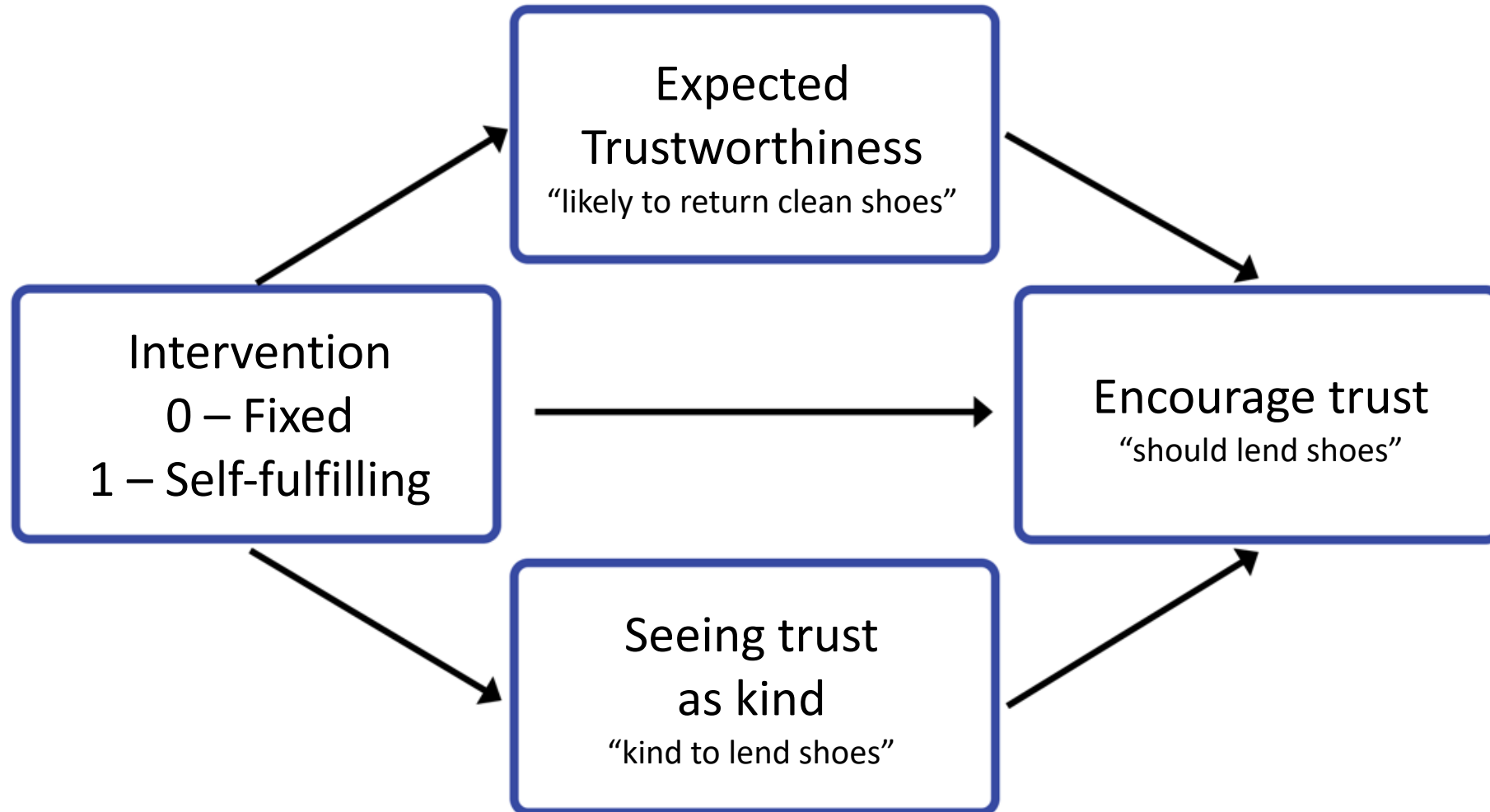
- Participants write about applying mindset in their own lives.

# Study 2: Encouraging others to trust

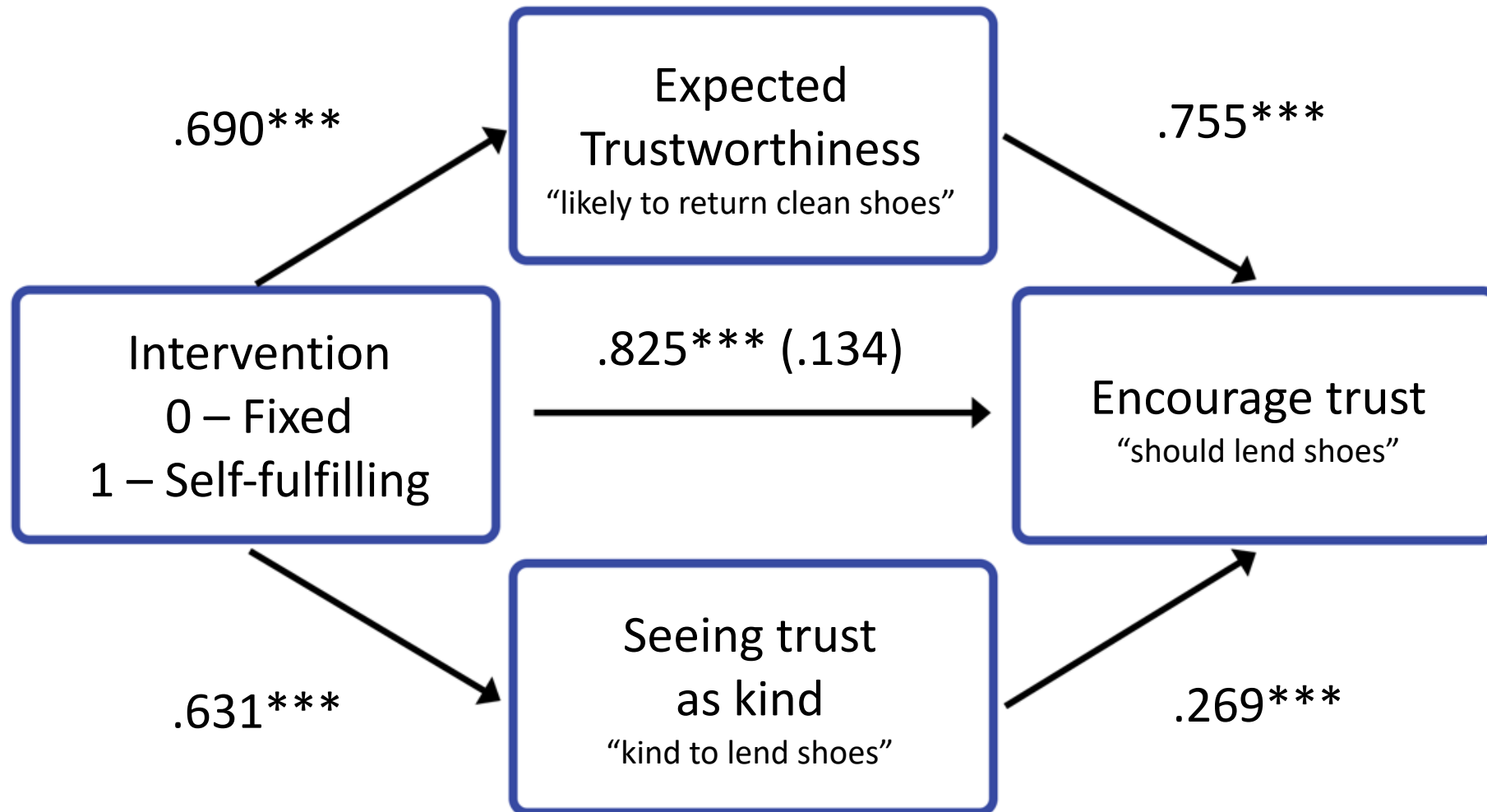
- Hypothetical scenarios such as:
  - “Santiago overhears his new neighbor Anthony apologize to someone on the phone for forgetting to buy hiking shoes for their hiking trip today. Santiago is considering lending Anthony his costly new hiking shoes, feeling unsure if Anthony will return them in good condition. But Santiago also thinks it might be a nice way to bond with the new neighbor.”



# Study 2: Encouraging others to trust



# Study 2: Encouraging others to trust

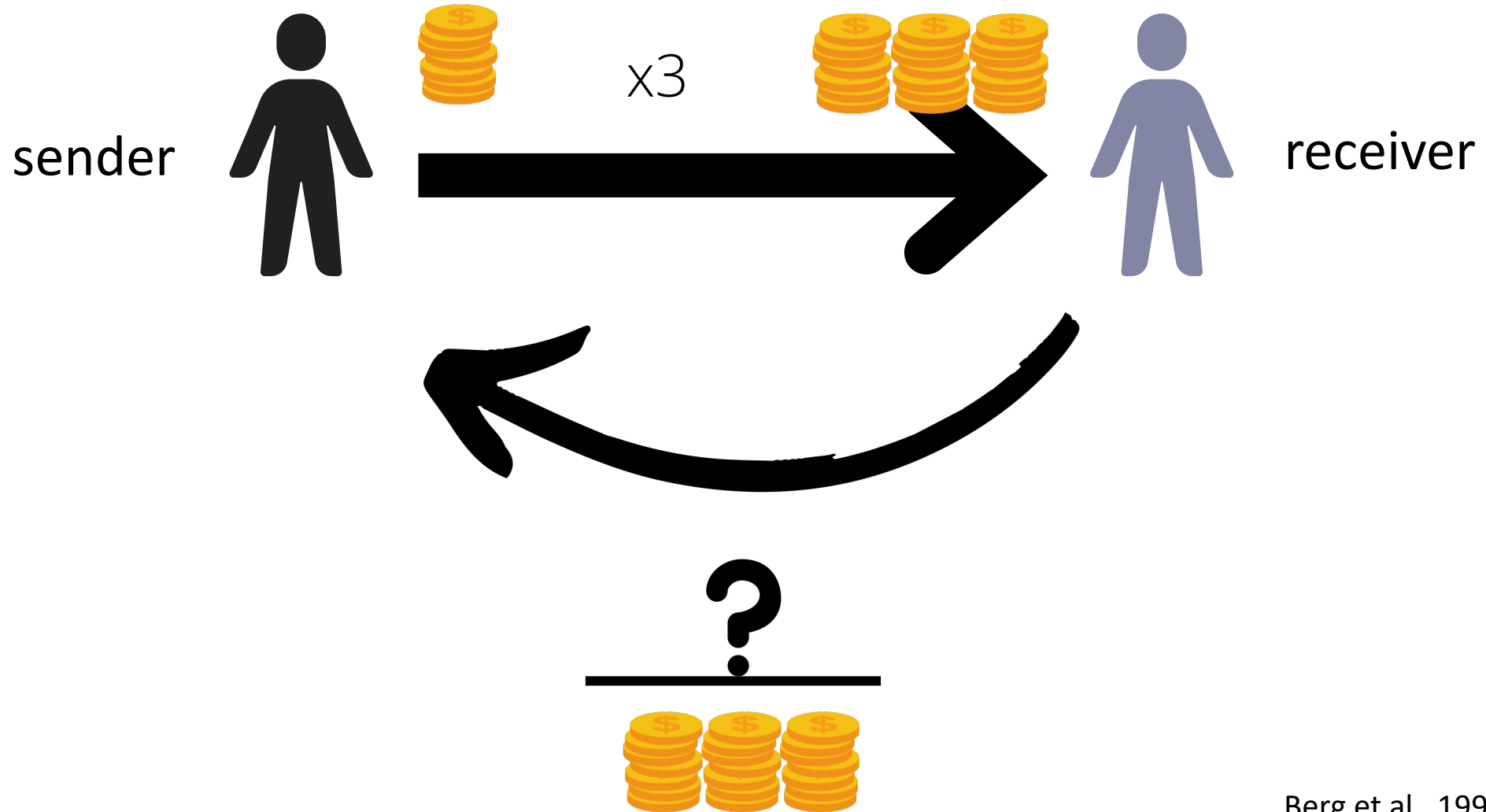


\* $p < .05$ ,  
\*\* $p < .01$ ,  
\*\*\* $p < .001$

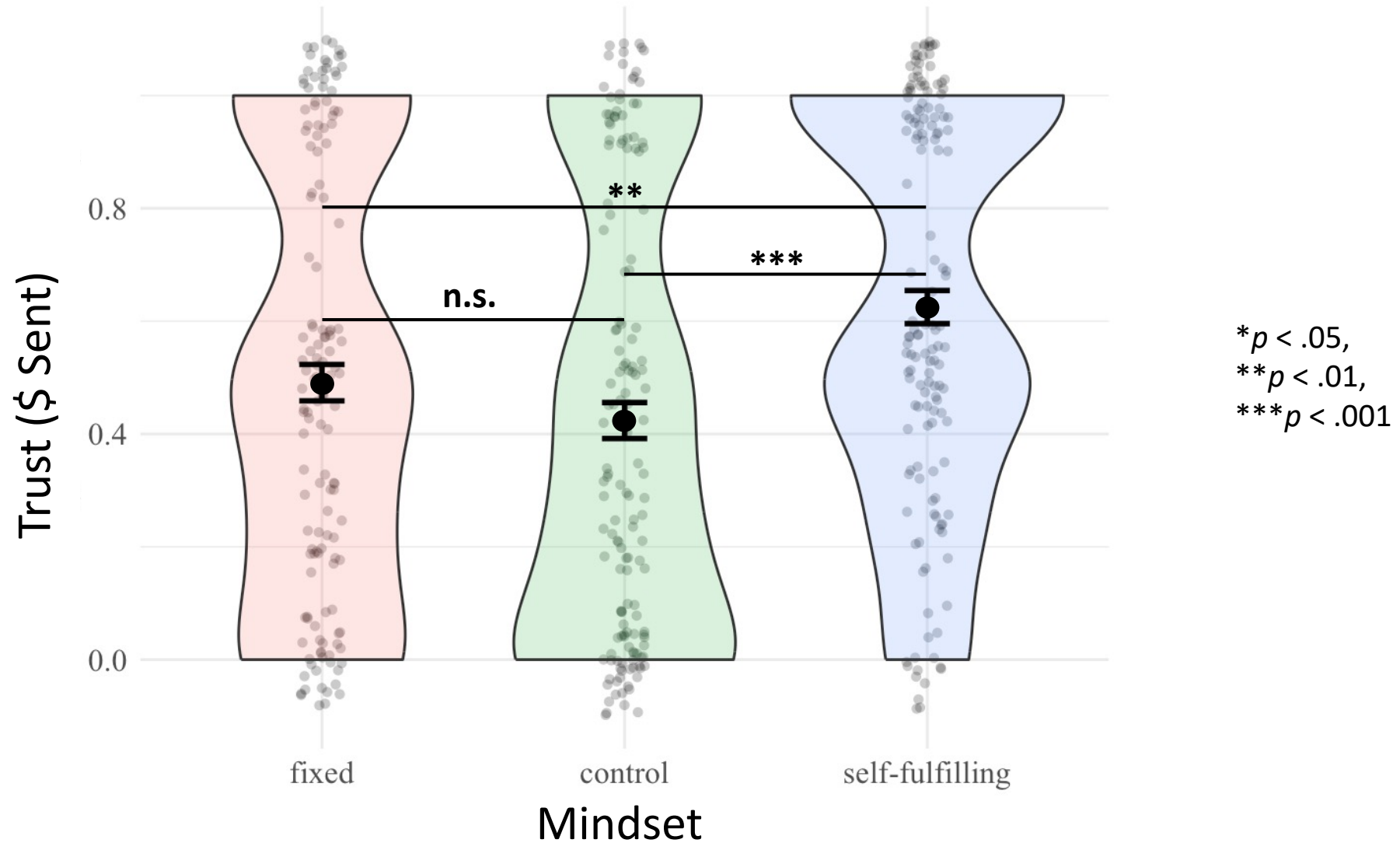
# Study 3: Trust in trust game

- Experimental design:
  - IV: Mindset interventions (+ control),
  - DV: trust in trust game,
  - Bonus: did trust become self-fulfilling?
- Pre-registered, Prolific, n = 872

# Study 3: Trust in trust game

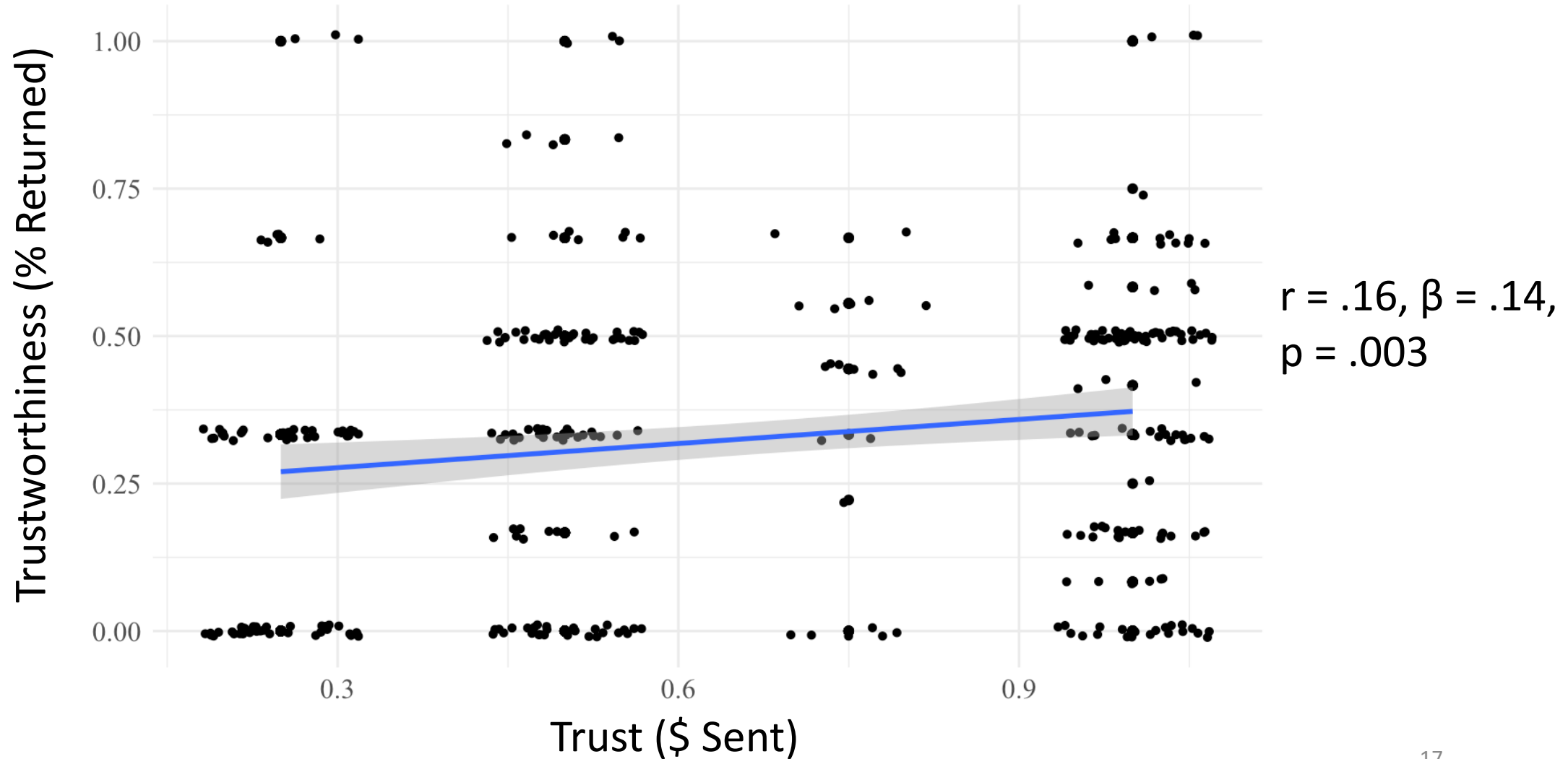


# Study 3: Trust in trust game





# Study 3 Bonus: Trust becomes self-fulfilling



# Conclusion

- People can shape the trustworthiness they receive without knowing it.
- People trusted more when seeing the self-fulfilling potential of trust.
- Future work: multiple interactions with betrayal; close others; natural contexts...



“Instead of trying to find the perfect cell mate, try being the perfect cell mate.”

Thanks!

