DEBRIEFING FORM

Project Title: Mechanisms of Attention

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Dana Hayward (dana.hayward@ualberta.ca)

Thank you for your participation in our study. Your time and commitment to psychological research at the University of Alberta is greatly appreciated. The goal of this study was to investigate how we process, attend and ignore various items. Although there has been much research investigating the ways in which people pay attention, there is still much that remains unknown. For example, researchers have found that people pay attention to (i) regions of space (Posner, 1980) (ii) specific objects (Lavie & Driver, 1996), and (iii) moments in time (Hayward & Ristic, 2016), however attention does not always prioritize one method over another. Likewise, some investigations have found that people prioritize certain content (social faces, reward information, etc) more than other, nonsocial content (e.g., Anderson et al., 2011; Friesen & Kingstone, 1998; Hayward et al., 2018), yet this isn't always the case (e.g., Vecera & Rizzo, 2006; Tipples, 2008). Further, while some theories have been put forth to predict level of distractibility based on perceptual features in the environment (e.g., Load theory, Lavie & Tsal, 1994), this theory has recently come under criticism (e.g., Benoni & Tsal, 2010). Thus, the proposed line of research is designed to get a better sense of the mechanisms underlying attention and distraction.

One way we manipulated attention and distraction was to present an array of items on the screen and ask you to find a particular target. Level of distraction was altered through choosing items that were either similar or dissimilar to the target, and by choosing categories of items that are generally more or less distracting for people, such as faces, animals, vehicles and foods. We also collected various questionnaire measures in order to see whether different personality traits relate to attention and distraction.

If you have any further questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact the PI, Dr. Dana Hayward, at dana.hayward@ualberta.ca. If you would like to withdraw your data from the study after testing is completed you may do any time up until 30 days after your testing session was completed. This can be done by contacting the PI. If you have any questions about research participation, contact our Research Participation Coordinator at (780) 492-5689, or rescred@ualberta.ca.

For further reading on similar issues you may want to consult this interesting article:

Langton, S.R.H., Law, A.S., Burton, A.M., & Schweinberger, S.R. (2008). Attention capture by faces. *Cognition, 107,* 330-342.

Thank you very much for participating. Without the help of volunteers like you, we could not answer many important scientific questions in psychology. We have one last request: **Please don't tell other people about what we asked you to do in this study, as it is very important that they approach the study as you originally did, i.e., without expectations and without full awareness of our objectives.** This is important because it is the only way we can obtain objective and valid information.

Yours truly,
Dr. Dana Hayward
Assistant Professor