

Revised October 5, 2010

**Instructions for Preparing the Debriefing Form  
for the  
Psyc 100 Subject Pool Application**

The debriefing process is a critical aspect of running participants in the Psychology 100 Subject Pool. Its purpose is to provide Introductory students with a description of the experiment that is educational, and thus, informative. At the same time, it needs to satisfy the ethical concerns of the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board (GREB). Whether written or oral, the debriefing process should normally include the following points for the application to be accepted. Clearly there will be times when one or more of these points of information may not be appropriate, and you may wish to consult with the Subject Pool Officer. A good general guide is to keep in mind both its educational and ethical functions.

In this file, you will find the following information:

- Instructions for Oral debriefing script
- Samples
- Subject Pool application checklist
- Timelines

**WRITTEN DEBRIEFING FORM**  
(LENGTH: normally 1 page)

a) Include the following at the top of the page:

*Written Debriefing Form*

**Title of Experiment**

b) After thanking the participant, briefly explain the purpose of the study, the logic, what you predict and possible applications of this work, if relevant. Make sure that you use simple language throughout -- your purpose is to educate, not to bury the participant in uninformative jargon.

c) *If deception has been used,*

- *it is mandatory that the nature of the deception be carefully explained, together with the reason(s) for using it.*
- *suggest where they can get counselling if they feel this is necessary.*
- *inform them that if they are uncomfortable with having being deceived, they are free to withdraw their data from the sample.*
- *remind them that their results are confidential to the experimenters, and that all results are published anonymously as a group data.*

d) *If the study involves any kind of possible stress, however mild it might seem (e.g., as in c, or in answering a depression or anxiety questionnaire), the participant must be told where they can talk to a counsellor (e.g., Student Counselling Service, etc.).*

e) Inform participants that if they would like any information about the results of the study once it is completed, they should feel free to contact you. Provide a name – your own or that of your supervisor, along with up-to-date contact information that they can take with them.

f) You should provide one or two complete and easily accessible general references for those interested in learning more about your topic. The articles should be obtainable from a Website or from the Queen’s library facilities. Conference proceedings, book chapters and technical reports are all harder to access and therefore should not be included unless available in PDF form from the author or supervisor.

g) Should you need to ask participants to refrain from talking about the experiment while you are still running it, you should explain why.

h) Make sure you provide the appropriate names (Research Investigator, and Chair of GREB) and contact information (phone number and email address) in case a participant wishes to express concern about the experiment . For details, please check sample Debriefing forms)

i) Include the statement “This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.”

**NOTE:**

If the student requests contact information or reading materials (i.e., c-f), provide on a separate take-away page.

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**ORAL DEBRIEFING FORM**

The following instructions apply if you want to debrief the subject orally. Because oral debriefing is in the form of a conversation, the length of the instructions may be a little longer than the written debriefing form.

a) Include the following at the top of your debriefing sheet:

*Oral Debriefing Script*

**Title**

b-g) The remaining must be included in your submission, as above. It is assumed this information will be delivered orally to the participant, rather than in written form. Each participant should be offered a take-away sheet containing written contact information and the details of the suggested reference(s), should he or she indicate an interest in retaining this information.

**NOTE:**

*Signing this form commits you to present the “cleared” information during the oral debriefing process.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## *SAMPLES OF DEBRIEFING FORMS*

### **Sample 1:**

*Written Debriefing Form*

### **Predicting Suicidal Behaviours: Lack of Meaning in Life**

Suicide is a serious problem among all age groups. The proportion of suicide victims who are adolescents and young adults, however, is on the rise. Improving the accuracy of suicide prediction can have a positive impact on both prevention and intervention strategies and, consequently, is of vital importance for researchers, clinicians, and society. The questionnaires you answered included two measures of life meaning, a measure of hopelessness, a coping inventory, and a scale assessing suicidal manifestations. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not a lack of meaning in life, in addition to coping strategies involving attempts to regulate emotion or distract oneself, are predictive of suicidal behaviours.

It is difficult to answer these types of questions, and your generosity and willingness to participate in this study are greatly appreciated. Your input will help contribute to the advancement of the field of suicide research. Sometimes people find the subject matter of these questionnaires disturbing. If answering any of these questions led you to feel distressed and you would like to speak to someone about your thoughts, please contact one of the following:

	<b>Phone Number</b>
<b>Queen's Student Counselling Service</b>	***
<b>TALK Distress &amp; Information Line</b>	***
<b>Canadian Mental Health Association</b>	***

We would ask you to maintain confidentiality about the purpose of the experiment since any pre-knowledge of the purpose will bias the data for that person and thus cannot be used.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact, the <research investigator> at <contact info>. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at <613-533-6081 or Chair.GREB@queensu.ca>.

If you are interested in this area of research, you may wish to read the following references:

- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baumeister, R.F. (1990). Suicide as escape from self. *Psychological Review*, 97, 90-113.
- Frankl, V. (1967). *Psychotherapy and existentialism: Selected papers on logotherapy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Thank you very much for participating!

## Sample 2:

*Written Debriefing Form*

### **Reflexive Attentional Orienting Elicited by Eyes and Arrows**

The purpose of this research is to determine whether differences exist in the pattern of neural activation when you look at an eye as compared to an arrow. It has been demonstrated that both eyes and arrows cause you to respond faster when a target appears in the cued location, that is the location congruent with the direction of the stimulus. While eyes and arrows elicit the same behavioral effect, it has been shown through research on a neurological patient that different parts of the brain may be responsible for these two effects.

In this study we presented you with an ambiguous picture that could be perceived as an eye or an arrow. This way, if we find any differences in your ERPs (**E**vent-**R**elated **P**otentials) to the two conditions, we will be able to attribute them to the way you are looking at the picture, rather than to differences between two pictures. We will also be looking at whether there are differences in your ERPs to the target when it was in the cued as opposed to the un-cued location.

If you are interested in this area of research, the following introductory sources are available at the library:

- Ristic, J., Friesen, C. K., & Kingstone, A. (2002). Are eyes special? It depends on how you look at it. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 9, 507-513.
- Mangun, G. R., & Hillyard, S. A. (1991). Modulation of sensory-evoked brain potentials provide evidence for changes in perceptual processing during visual-spatial priming. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 17, 1057-1074

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact, the <research investigator> at <contact info>. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at <613-533-6081 or Chair.GREB@queensu.ca>.

Finally, thank you again for helping us with this research.

### Sample 3:

### *Written Debriefing Form*

#### **The Impact of Cognitive Load on Intentions to Use Condoms**

The purpose of this project is to assess the effects of cognitive load, or "cognitive busyness" on intentions to use condoms. Based on past research, we expect that people who are under conditions of cognitive load will be more likely to report intentions to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse than those in a control (no cognitive load) condition. This is because individuals in the cognitive load condition lack the capacity to process both the inhibiting cues (factors that would make them less inclined to have unprotected sex) and the impelling cues (factors that would make them more inclined to have unprotected sex) inherent in the situation, and will consequently focus their attention on the cues that are the most salient (i.e., the impelling cues).

This study is experimental in nature. Participants were randomly assigned to each condition. Participants in the high cognitive load condition were asked to attend to a number of words in a dichotomous listening task while they listened to the audio tape, whereas those in the no load condition simply listened to the audio tape. The dependent variable was reported intentions to use condoms.

As stated earlier, your responses to all of the questionnaires will be absolutely confidential. Your name will be converted to a code number, and only people who are associated with this research will see your name or your responses. In return, we want you to honour our confidentiality -- please do not tell anyone about the details of this study. If the other students know about the study before they participate, their data will be biased and thus cannot be included.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. If you'd be interested in obtaining a copy of the results once the study is complete, you may contact the primary researcher, \*add name\* at \*add email address\*. If you have a more general interest in this area of research, you may also wish to consult the following references:

Gilbert, D. T., & Osborne, R. E. (1989). Thinking backward: Some curable and incurable consequences of cognitive busyness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 940-949.

Ward, A., & Mann, T. (2000). Don't mind if I do: Disinhibited eating under cognitive load. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 753-763.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact, the <research investigator> at <contact info>. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at <613-533-6081 or Chair.GREB@queensu.ca>.

Thank you very much for your participation!!

#### **Sample 4:**

*Written Debriefing Form*

#### **Causal Uncertainty and Stereotyping**

The purpose of the experiment is not only for us to collect data, but also for you to learn what psychology research is like. It gives you a chance to see how experiments really work and an opportunity to learn how we test hypotheses.

I only gave you a brief idea at the beginning of the study of the experiment's purpose. Sometimes when we are studying how people think about social issues (as in this experiment) we don't give people a full description of what we are studying. That way we are able to get natural responses. Not every psychology study does this. However, there are a few things about this experiment that I would like to explain.

One of the scales that you completed at the end of the study is part of this experiment. It is designed to tap how certain or uncertain people are in their understanding of a variety of social situations. There are a variety of factors that can lead us to be certain or uncertain. For example, situations that we typically run into may be very complicated in terms of what causes particular outcomes. In this study, we examined your analyses of and decisions for the academic misconduct case. Some people were given an additional piece of information about the defendant that may have activated a stereotype. At any rate, we wanted to see whether people who were more certain generally would also be more certain about the potential causes of specific events, and if their uncertainty would make them more or less susceptible to the additional information. We also wanted to see if this varied by the particular goal that you had -- some participants were told they should judge the person's honesty while others were told to focus on his guilt. People may be more or less likely to be influenced by the additional information depending on their judgement objective.

There really is no right or wrong analysis of the case. We were just interested in how certain you were about whatever cause or causes you thought were relevant to the defendant's behaviour and what outcome you thought was fair.

We will be running this experiment for some time. We would really appreciate it if you would not talk to anyone about the study. Sometimes if people know what the study is about, that knowledge will affect their responses even when they don't mean for it to, and then the data are not valid.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact, the <research investigator> at <contact info>. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at <613-533-6081 or Chair.GREB@queensu.ca>.

If you would like to learn more about this experiment and its results, please contact Dr. \*name\* at the phone number above or at \*add email address\*. In addition, you might want to read the following article available at Stauffer Library or on-line through PsycARTICLES:

Weary, G., Jacobson, J. A., Edwards, J. A., & Tobin, S. J. (2001). Chronic and temporarily activated causal uncertainty beliefs and stereotype usage. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *81*, 206-219.

Thanks for helping us with this research!

**Sample 5:**

*Oral debriefing script*

**The Effects of Self-Construal on Motivated Skepticism**

Before we go on to talk about this experiment, I just need to ask you a few questions:

**Do you have any questions or comments about anything so far?**

**Anything strike you as particularly interesting or unusual?**

**How did your TAA test turn out?** (*check to see if they understood the manipulation – i.e., What did the test strip turning brown mean? What did TAA-positivity mean? Was it a good thing or a bad thing?*)

The study actually is over now, but before I tell you more about it, I need to ask you some questions about your experience.

**First, do you have any ideas about what we were actually interested in studying?**

**Do you think that anything you did on one task affected what you did on any other task?** YES NO

***IF YES, how exactly did it affect you?***

The purpose of the experiment is not only for us to collect data, but also for you to learn what psychological research is like. It gives you a chance to see how experiments really work and an opportunity to learn how we test hypotheses. I only gave you a brief idea at the beginning of the study of what the experiment's purpose was. Sometimes when we are studying how people think about certain things, we don't give them a full description of what we are interested in. That way we are able to get natural responses. Not every psychology study does this. However, there are a few things about this experiment that I would like to explain.

The first thing I need to tell you is that the results of your TAA test really don't mean anything. In fact, the TAA test is something that we just made up. There actually is no such thing as TAA and no such thing as TAA-positivity. It is a completely fictitious condition that we created for this study (*if necessary, continue to reassure the unfavourable test result participants that they are fine.*)

**Did you ever suspect that the condition or test might not be real?**

**If so, what tipped you off?**

In this study we were interested in how people react to favourable and unfavourable medical diagnoses. We believe that if we understand how people think about illness, we can better understand their health-related behaviour and how they cope with such information. You can see that this has many real world applications such as genetic testing, HIV tests, etc.

In this study, we were also interested in how people's reactions might vary as a function of their self-construal. There are two types of self-construal. One who has an independent

self-construal stresses an independent view of the self that encompasses the uniqueness, separateness, and internal attributes of individuals. An individual, who has an interdependent self-construal, characterizes his or her self-concept by connectedness, relationships, and social context. Everyone has access to both types of self-construals; one just tends to predominate depending on the situation. In order to influence which self-construal was accessible to you during this study, we either had you focus on what you had in common with or how you differed from your friends and family.

Although we are doing things at a very low level here, we'd like to be able to address these more serious conditions like genetic testing. Therefore, it really is important that we do get people's natural reactions. For that reason, please do not talk to anyone about the details of the study especially any of your friends who are in Psychology 100. We will be running this study for at least a couple of terms, and sometimes if people know what the study is about it can bias their responses even when they don't mean for it to. If your friends have already been in the study, then that's fine, and you can talk all you want. But with your friends who haven't been in the study yet, we just ask that you refrain from giving them the details about TAA or the relationship between the two experiments. Like I said, it really is important that we know how people actually respond if we want to be able to say anything about these more serious conditions. Any questions?

If you feel concerned or uncomfortable about the fact that you were intentionally deceived, you may tell us to withdraw your data from the sample. Remember that your results are confidential to me and my supervisor, and that all results are published anonymously as group data. If participating in this experiment has caused sufficient distress you that you wish to speak to a counsellor, please contact one of the following:

	<b>Phone Number</b>
<b>Queen's Student Counselling Service</b>	***
<b>TALK Distress &amp; Information Line</b>	***
<b>Canadian Mental Health Association</b>	***

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If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact the <research investigator> at <contact info>. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at <613-533-6081 or Chair.GREB@queensu.ca>.

If you would like to learn more about this experiment and its results, please contact Dr. \*add faculty name, phone number and email address\*. In addition, you might want to read the following article available at Stauffer Library or on-line through PscARTICLES:

Ditto, P. H., Scepanky, J. A., Munro, G. D., Apanovitch, A. M., & Lockhart, L. K. (1998). Motivated sensitivity to preference-inconsistent information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 75, 53-69.

Thank you for helping us in this research!

### ***SUBJECT POOL APPLICATION CHECKLIST:***

- Completed Subject Pool Application form
- Up-to-date copy of your original or renewal GREB clearance letter (**no one will be allowed access to the Subject Pool without it**)
- Debriefing form

### ***TIMELINES:***

Keep in mind that there are a number of stages through which your application must pass. The following information should prove helpful in successfully planning your timeline.

- A reply to your initial GREB application can be expected in ~ 6 weeks.
- 1 month before your current approval is to expire, the GREB office will send out a reminder that you must renew if you wish to continue the project. ***It is your responsibility to ensure that the renewal request is filed on time.*** If this procedure is followed and the changes are minor, you can expect a response from the GREB office within 1 week.
- You can expect a response from the Subject Pool officer within ~ 4 days

Revised 05Oct10