DEBRIEFING LETTER FOR STUDIES INVOLVING DECEPTION (IN-LAB)

*This sample is for researchers to use as a guide in developing their study materials. Instructions to the researchers are written* *in* ***[square brackets in bold italics]*** *and should be deleted. Instructions that are* *in* ***[square brackets, bold italics, and are blue]*** *need to be replaced with details specific to the study and changed to* black, un-bolded, un-italicized*, and removed from square brackets before uploading the material to the research ethics application.****Please also delete this instructional paragraph.***

**\*\*Please review the Guide to Creating an Information Letter and Consent Form for additional details\*\***

Study Title: *[insert study title]*

**Faculty Supervisor**: ***[insert name, department, phone, University of Waterloo email address]***

**Student Investigator(s)**: ***[insert name(s), department, University of Waterloo email address]***

We greatly appreciate your participation in our study and thank you for spending the time helping us with our research. When you began the study, you were told that the purpose of this study was to examine decision making in various situations. However, the study was more complicated than we explained at the beginning. People are motivated to feel they are in control of their outcomes, and threats to this sense of personal control can be stressful and uncomfortable. We are interested in whether people feel a reduced sense of personal control over their outcomes when they have been treated unfairly, and whether they then try to restore their sense of personal control by seeking to penalize the harm doer. In this study, we were investigating whether a weakened sense of control following unfair treatment will lead to penalizing the harm doer, and whether this penalty helps people regain their sense of control.

In this study, each participant worked with a partner, who was a student working for the researchers (a ‘confederate’). Participants were deliberately treated unfairly by the confederate, who was told by the researchers to behave in a specific way and to take the money. We then gave half the participants an opportunity to penalize the unfair participant by evaluating an essay they had ostensibly written. The other half of participants had no opportunity to penalize, and simply evaluated an essay completed by a different student. Finally, to test whether penalizing the unfair participant restored people’s sense of personal control, we had all participants read an article created by the researchers for the purpose of this study. This article was ostensibly based on a Harvard conference paper, indicating that people’s outcomes are not under their control. We are interested in the extent to which people agree with the items as greater disagreement would indicate greater need to perceive personal control. We also had participants read and evaluate an article on revenge against AIG executives who received bonuses to assess participants’ endorsement of revenge. We want to emphasize that neither of these articles were real. The article on the Harvard conference was completely fabricated by the researchers, and the article on the populist desire for revenge against bonus recipients was based on a published article but altered by the researchers for the purposes of the study. Throughout the study, we also assessed your emotions by asking you to indicate how much you felt like various emotions depicted in photographs.

***[If using criteria or randomization to place participants in certain groups or conditions include something like]***: “Some people in this study were ***[selected*** ***or randomized]*** because they had experienced ***[insert description of condition]***, and others were ***[selected or randomized]*** because they had not experienced any of these situations. You were in the ***[insert criteria]*** condition. This means you were ***[insert explanation of condition]***.

We could not give participants complete information about the study before their involvement because it may have influenced participants’ behaviour during the study in a way that would make investigations of the research question invalid. The reason that we used deception in this study was because we needed participants’ behaviour and attitudes to be unaffected by the study objectives. We apologize for omitting details and for providing you with fictional information about the purpose of and tasks in our study. We hope that you understand the need for deception now that the purpose of the study has been more fully explained to you. We would also like to assure you that most Psychology research does not involve the use of deception.

We would just like to re-iterate a few things:

1. The purpose of this study was to test whether being treated unfairly causes people to feel a reduced sense of control and whether penalizing the harm doer is one way of restoring this sense of control.
2. The articles and essay used in this study were written solely for the purpose of this study by the researchers and were not actually published anywhere.
3. The other participant in the study was a confederate instructed by us to act as he/she did.
4. The confederate did not actually receive any of the money he/she took.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB ***[####] [Replace#### with the file number that is listed at the top of your ethics application]***). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or [reb@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reb@uwaterloo.ca).

For all other questions contact***[insert researcher name and contact information]***.

If any of the questions or exercises in this study caused you to feel uncomfortable, please feel free to contact ***[insert name of investigator]***, anytime at ***[insert phone number (for privacy reasons, do not include personal contact number for Student Investigator)]*** or email at ***[insert University of Waterloo email address]***. You can also contact my faculty supervisor, ***[insert Faculty Supervisor name]***, at ***[insert phone number and University of Waterloo email address]***.

Your identity is confidential. The data will be stored with all identifying or potentially identifying information removed. Data will be stored for at least ***[insert time period]*** and no one other than the researchers will have access.You can request your data be removed from the study up until ***[insert date]*** as it is not possible to withdraw your data once papers and publications have been submitted to publishers. ***[If data may be shared in an online repository, please see the ICL guide for details about what information and language to include]****.*

Because the study involves some aspects that you were not told about before starting, it is very important that you not discuss your experiences with any other students who potentially could be in this study until after the end of the term. If people come into the study knowing about our specific predictions, as you can imagine, it could influence their results, and the data we collect would not be useable. Also, since you will be given a copy of this feedback letter to take home with you, please do not make this available to other students. Moreover, because some elements of the study are different from what was originally explained, we have another consent form for you to read and sign if you are willing to allow us to use the information that you have provided. This form is a record that the purpose of the study has been explained to you, and that you are willing to allow your information to be included in the study.

We really appreciate your participation, and hope that this has been an interesting experience for you.

***[Please check that all relevant study details are included, changes are made to the document to accurately describe the study and procedures, and delete the instructional text printed in bold italics before submitting to the Office of Research Ethics for review.]***

**POST-DEBRIEFING CONSENT FORM FOR STUDIES INVOLVING DECEPTION (IN-LAB)**

Study Title: *[insert study title]*

**Faculty Supervisor**: ***[insert name, department, phone, University of Waterloo email address]***

**Student Investigator(s)**: ***[insert name(s), department, University of Waterloo email address]***

During the debriefing session, I learned that it was necessary for the researchers to disguise the real purpose of this study. I realize that this was necessary since having full information about the actual purpose of the study might have influenced the way in which I responded to the tasks, and this would have invalidated the results. To ensure that this did not happen, some of the details about the purpose of the study initially were not provided (or were provided in a manner that slightly misrepresented the real purpose of the study).

I have now received a complete verbal and written explanation as to the actual purpose of the study and have had an opportunity to ask any questions about this and to receive acceptable answers to my questions.

I have been asked to give permission for the researchers to use my data (or information I provided) in their study and agree to this request. I am aware that I may withdraw this consent by notifying the Faculty Supervisor of this decision.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB ***[####] [Replace#### with the file number that is listed at the top of your ethics application]***). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or [reb@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reb@uwaterloo.ca).

For all other questions contact ***[insert researcher name and contact information].***

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***[Please check that all relevant study details are included, changes are made to the document to accurately describe the study and procedures, and delete the instructional text printed in bold italics before submitting to the Office of Research Ethics for review.]***