Debriefing

We would first like to sincerely thank you for your valued participation in this research study.

This study is part of an important line of research in educationalpsychology, which will benefit instructors who teach courses, as well as students who take these courses. Essentially, we are investigating the effects of certain instructor characteristics on teacher evaluation ratings (on scales such as the evaluation scale that you completed today) and on student learning (as measured by test questions such as the multiple-choice questions that you answered today).

Regarding instructor characteristics, for this particular study, you were in only one of three instructor conditions. In the first condition, the lecturer smelled like cigarette smoke. This person does not actually smoke; rather, before the lecture, this person was outside wafting cigarette smoke onto their clothes, so that people would think that the person was a smoker. In the second condition, the lecturer smelled like alcohol. This person did not actually drink alcohol; rather, before the lecture, a spray bottle was used to spray a mist of beer onto their clothes, so that people would think that the person perhaps carelessly drank alcohol before giving the lecture. In the third condition, the lecturer did not smell like cigarette smoke or like alcohol.

This research will shed more light on prejudicial biases (whether explicit or implicit) and their impact on learning. Past research shows that, on instructor evaluation forms, students give lower ratings to instructors in minority groups (e.g., Crandall & Cohen, 1994; Ewing et at., 2003; Russ et al., 2002), reflecting prejudicial biases. Given that students report learning less from instructors who they deem as not credible (Beatty, Behnke, & Henderson, 1980; Teven & McCroskey, 1997), then these prejudicial biases may result in students learning less in a course. However, research has not yet assessed the impact of such prejudices on actual learning.

If we find that students provide lower evaluation ratings to the lecturers who smell like smoke and if the students learn less from those lecturers, for instance, then instructors who smoke may decide to adjust their behavior upon discovering these negative effects. Those instructors may either try to hide their smoking, or more optimistically, those instructors may be provided with an additional incentive to quit smoking. The students, then, may think more highly of the instructor than they otherwise would have. In turn, they may learn more and subsequently earn higher grades in the course, and they may provide the instructor with higher evaluation ratings that impact raises and promotions. In contrast, if we find that students do *not* provide lower evaluation ratings to the lecturers who smell like smoke and if the students do *not* learn less from those lecturers, then this research will positively show that people, instead of holding prejudicial biases toward others, are accepting and tolerant of others.

Given the predictions and implications above, I hope that you understand why the consent form withheld the specific research question that is being investigated. If we initially told the participants that they would hear a lecture given by either a lecturer who smells like normal, a lecturer who smells like smoke, or a lecturer who smells like alcohol; then the participants would have been less likely to believe that the lecturer actually smoked or drank alcohol before giving the lecture. If they do not believe that the person smokes, for instance, then there is no reason to feel prejudiced against them for smoking, and the integrity of the study would have been jeopardized. For these reasons, we ask that you not share the true purpose of this study with your friends and peers who may be participating in this study at a later date.

After all data have been collected for this study, by June 1, a written summary of the findings will be posted online at the following address: <http://www.psych.txstate.edu/research/debriefing.php> I hope that you find the results interesting and educational. If you would like additional information about the study, please contact me (Dr. Crystal Oberle) by email at [oberle@txstate.edu](mailto:oberle@txstate.edu) or by phone at 512-245-3166.

As indicated on the consent form, if you experience any distress from your participation in this study, you may want to contact the Texas State Counseling Center. Mental health services at the Counseling Center are free to registered students, though the number of sessions allowed may be limited. If you seek another mental health provider, any costs incurred for these mental health services are your sole responsibility. Contact information for the Counseling Center and for three outside mental health providers are provided below.

* Texas State Counseling Center / phone: 512-245-2208 / email: counselingcenter@txstate.edu / location: 5-4.1 LBJ Student Center on the campus of Texas State University in San Marcos, TX
* Kathie Cleveland, LPC / phone: 512-353-3103 / location: 829 N. LBJ, Suite #207 in San Marcos, TX
* Winston Haun, PsyD / phone: 512-396-1722 / location: 13 Pampass Pass in San Marcos, TX
* Trini Rodriguez, LPC / phone: 512-396-7170 / location: 205 Chetham St., Suite #1 in San Marcos, TX

Thank you again for participating in this study. I hope that you found the information interesting and educational.