

****SAMPLE DEBRIEFING STATEMENT****

The purpose of this (project, investigation, experiment, study)* was to examine how words are organized in your mind. We are interested in the idea that when you see or hear a word, related words are also “turned on” in your brain.

In the (project, investigation, experiment, study)*, you were presented with two words on each trial. You read the first word and then said the second one aloud as quickly as possible. In many (projects, investigations, experiments, studies)* of this kind, the words that are presented are related in meaning. For example, you might see SHEEP followed by GOAT. The fact that GOAT is related to SHEEP might help you to say GOAT faster. That is, you might be able to say GOAT faster following a related word (e.g. SHEEP) than following a completely unrelated word (e.g. TABLE). We would then conclude that seeing SHEEP “turned on” GOAT in your mind.

In this particular (project, investigation, experiment, study)*, we were interested in a less obvious kind of relatedness. Some words were related in a way you probably didn’t notice. Instead of pairs of words like SHEEP-GOAT, we had pairs like GOAT-GOAL. In this case, the idea is that SHEEP could “turn on” GOAT, and then GOAT could “turn on” GOAL. SHEEP would “turn on” GOAT because they are related in meaning, and then GOAT would “turn on” GOAL because they are related in sound. So, as you can see, SHEEP and GOAL are only indirectly related. Of course, we don’t know yet if these indirectly related words get “turned on” in your mind, but our (project, investigation, experiment, study)* should help us to find out.

This (project, investigation, experiment, study)* is part of a series of studies of what is sometimes called the “mental dictionary” or “lexicon.” We expect to publish a paper on this research (or submit the research to the Undergraduate Research Symposium) that will clarify the particular roles of sound and meaning in the mental dictionary.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the experimenter(s) (Experimenter’s (s’) name and contact information). If you would like more information on this topic, the best place to find relevant background is in the section on the organization of semantic memory in any good cognitive psychology textbook. (Better yet, give a specific text or journal article).

If you have any problems concerning your participation in this experiment, please contact (faculty supervisor’s name and contact information) or Dr Laura Lansing in Academic Hall room 106 or at 814-886-6435. (If there are possible negative psychological effects, ask Marisa Evans at 886-6515 if you can include her name and phone number here.)

Thank you for your participation.

*Select the appropriate term and use throughout

** The purpose of the debriefing is to explain the overall purpose of the experiment and the procedures used in a manner that the participants (undergraduate students) can understand. It is also another opportunity to let participants know where to go if they encounter problems as a result of their participation. When participants are students (and even when they aren’t), it’s a good practice to try to make their participation an educational experience for them as well as you, the experimenter. Consequently, it’s a

good idea to give participants a resource for further information if they are interested in the topic. This also gives them a feeling of being more than a “guinea pig.”