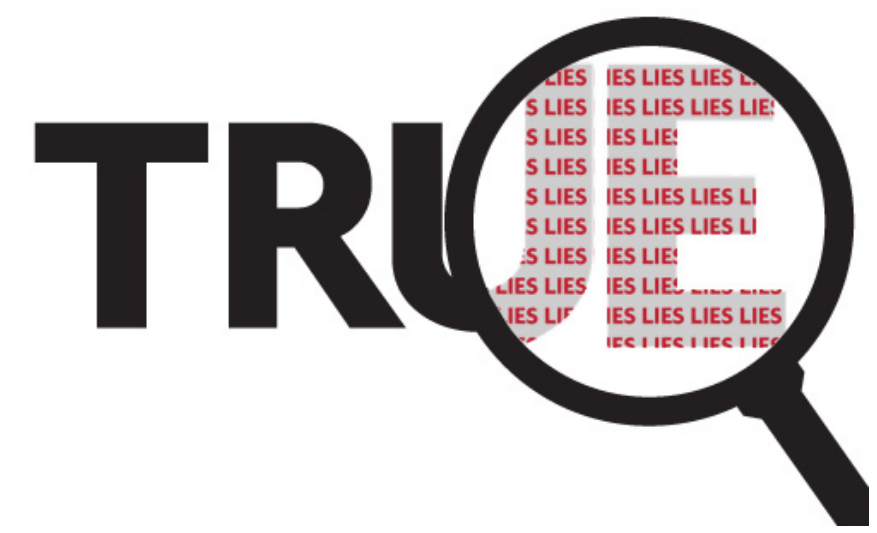


# “Anything is Better than Lies and Deceit”... Or Is It? Utilizing Deception in a First Week Class Activity to Increase the Perceptions and Experience of a Psychology Course

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## Introduction

Previous researchers have noted the importance of first day/week activities to increase engagement, motivation, and overall performance in a class (Hermann, Foster, & Hardin, 2010; Perlman & McCann, 1999; Wilson & Wilson, 2007). LoSchiavo, Buckingham, and Yurak (2002) utilized a deception based activity on the first day to spark intrigue for a social psychology course.

The purpose of this research was to examine student perceptions and reactions to a beginning of the semester class activity.

### Intentions of the True /False Deceptive Group Activity:

- 1) Encourage communication & sense of belonging in class
- 2) Increase interest in course content.
- 3) Encourage a healthy level of skepticism when evaluating arguments and the sources of those arguments.

**Hypotheses:** Students in the experimental class would express a greater sense of interest, perceived relevance, and belonging to the course relative to students in a control class.

## Method

**Participants:** Participants study were students taking one of two undergraduate psychology courses. Students taking a 200 level social psychology course ( $n = 33$ ) served as the experimental class, while students in a 300 level history of psychology course ( $n = 13$ ) served as the control class. Participants age ranged from 18 -56 ( $M = 21.39$ ,  $SD = 5.96$ ) Ethnicity of the participants was predominantly Caucasian (95.7%).

Table 1. Participants

	Experimental Class	Control Class
Sex: Female	23 (69.7%)	8 (61.5%)
Male	10 (30.3%)	5 (38.5%)
Year in School: First Year	4 (12.1%)	---
Sophomore	14 (42.4%)	---
Junior	9 (27.3%)	5 (38.5%)
Senior	5 (15.2%)	8 (61.5%)
Other	1 (3.0%)	---
Major: Psychology	22 (66.7 %)	13 (100%)
Other	11 (33.3%)	---

### Measures:

**Sense of Belonging in Class.** (Sandstrom & Rawn, 2015). 5 items. Example item, “I feel like I belong here.” 1 (*strongly disagree*) – 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha = .93; .91; .95.

**Critical Thinking.** 5 items. Example item, “Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion, I think about possible alternatives. Cronbach’s alpha = .75; .88.

**Rate your level of interest in this course.** 1 (*Not at all interested*) – 7 (*Extremely interested*).

**Rate how relevant you believe this course, overall, is to your life.** 1 (*Not at all relevant*) – 7 (*Extremely relevant*).

### Data Collection Procedure:

- Day 1 – Complete survey
- Day 2 - Experimental Class - True/False Group Activity  
- Control Class - Traditional lecture based class period
- Day 3 – Complete survey and reflect on True/False Group
- Last Week - Complete Survey and reflect on True/False Group Activity

## Week 1 True/False Deceptive Group Activity

- Individually answer the True/False Activity. Develop supporting arguments.
- Compare with a partner, debate and resolve any discrepancies.
- Merge with another group and repeat.
- First group to finish is presented with the deception challenge.  
\*\*\*Deception Challenge Time!\*\*\*
- Identify one question to develop a counter argument for.
- Make a plan to be convincing (behaviors and words).
- Individually infiltrate another group and convince them switch their answers.  
\*\*\*Group Discussion\*\*\*
- Discuss responses & rationale. Explain correct answers and link to course.
- Reveal deception and discuss strategies used and relevance to course.

## Results

Table 2. Perceptions of the True/False Activity

Measures	M	SD
Interest in Activity at Time 2	5.64	0.94
Perceptions about the Deception at Time 2	5.98	0.93

Note.  $N = 31$ .

The interest measure consisted of 5 items (Ex: This demonstration was interesting). The deception measure consisted of 4 items (Ex: I believe that the use of deception was justified during today’s classroom demonstration). For both measures, participants responded with one of the following options: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *somewhat disagree*, *undecided*, *somewhat agree*, *agree*, *strongly agree* (LoSchiavo, Buckingham, and Yurak, 2002).

### Quantitative Analyses:

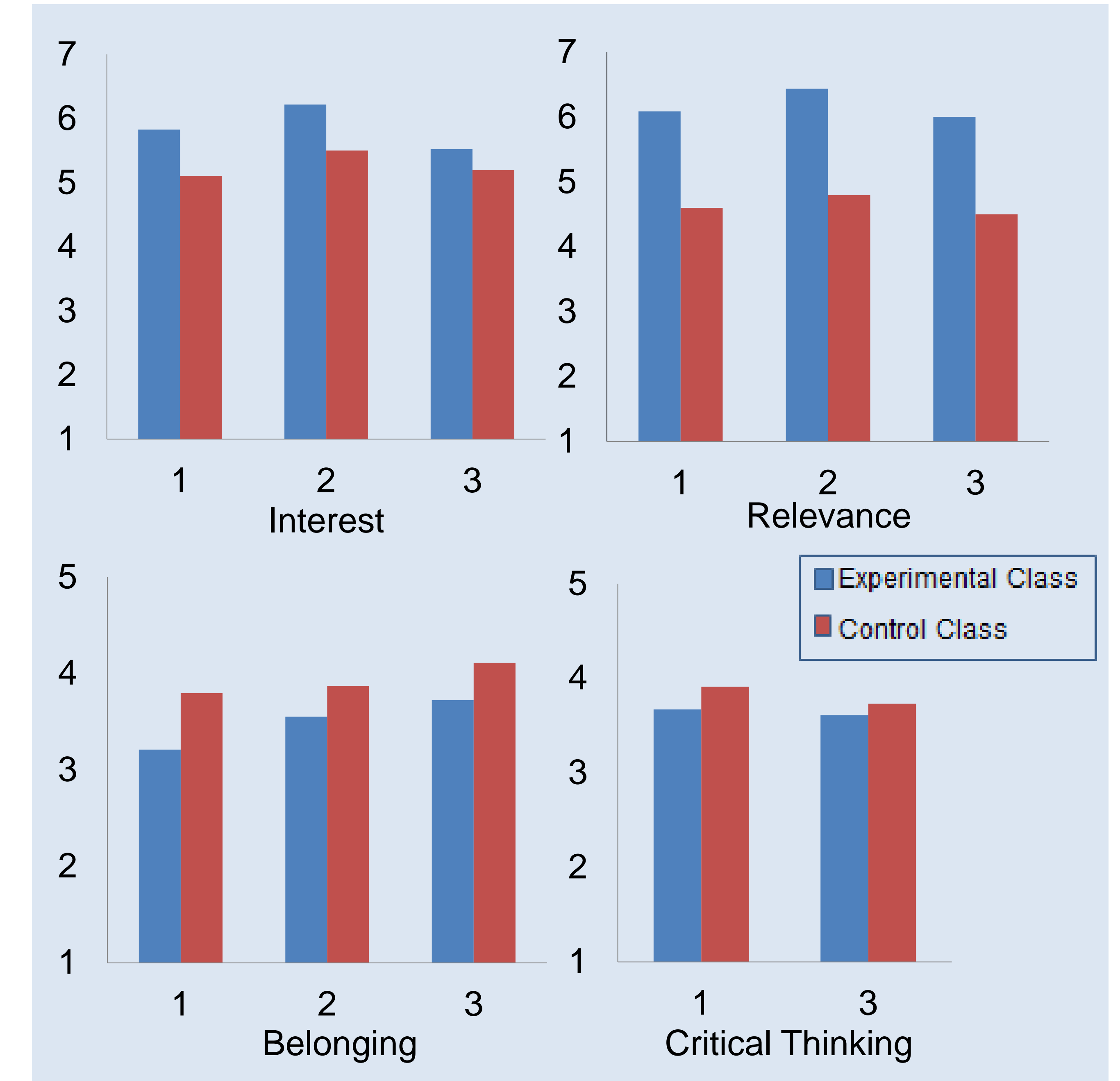
- For the variables of Interest and Relevance only a main effect of Course was found  $F(1,31) = 5.21$ ,  $p = .029$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.82$ ;  $F(1,31) = 30.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.98$ , respectively. These effects show that there were differences between the courses in their perceptions; however these differences were not influenced by the activity.
- For the variable of critical thinking, no significant differences were found.
- For the variable of Belonging a main effect of belonging was found  $F(2,60) = 4.64$   $p = .013$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.13$ . Contrasts revealed that belongingness significantly increased between Time 1 & Time 3,  $F(1,30) = 11.26$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.27$ , and was trending towards significance between Time 1 & Time 3,  $F(1,30) = 2.69$ ,  $p = .112$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.82$ .

### Time 3 Reflection:

- “Do you think that the activity provided any additional value to your experience of this course that you would not have gained without it?”
- **19 (79.2 %) = YES; 5 (20.8%) = NO**

## Conclusions

- Results of the quantitative analyses did not support a specific benefit to completing this activity relative to experiencing a lecture in another class. Qualitative analyses however, suggest that the activity did help to increase motivation and engagement throughout the semester.
- **Limitations:** Nature of the content of the two courses and the nature of the population that is drawn from each of these samples needs to be considered.
- **Future Directions:** Assess motivation and engagement. More explicitly examine the impact the group work task vs. the deceptive component has on the experience. Examine how grade performance may be influenced by experience with beginning of the semester activities.



### Time 3 –Student Value Quotes:

“Yes, because I feel like it kept me **more engaged throughout the course**. Things that I thought were true, ended up not being true, on the sheet, so I then related it to this class, which **made me more likely to listen.**”

“It made me realize what topics I really didn’t now much about. It **helped peak my curiosity** about what we were going to learn in the course.”

“This activity **showed me first hand** the powers of influence.”

“I think it gave some **insight into how our behaviors change when we are forced to work with others**. Acknowledging these differences **may prove helpful in future situations.**”

“I think that the activity **made me more present in class and in discussions** and that **made me more willing to read** and use the book for discussions.”

“It made me aware that **I need to be skeptical in this class, and more skeptical in life.**”

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