The Persistence of Erroneous Information in Memory: The Effect of Valence on the Acceptance of Corrected Information

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Summary: People often have difficulty changing previously held, but erroneous, beliefs. This finding is particularly worrisome in politics where misinformation is regularly distributed about political candidates. We examined whether initial inferences about a fictional political candidate could be corrected, and whether people's willingness to accept a correction was influenced by the valence of the information being corrected. Participants read a list of statements describing a politician running for re-election in which a negative, positive or neutral piece of information about the politician was later corrected. Results showed that receiving a correction reduced reliance on the original information for all types of information: positive, negative and neutral. Results also showed that participants tended to rely on negative information the most when answering inference questions, regardless of whether it was corrected or not. Results have implications for decision-making in politics and other applied areas. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

In his book *The Assault on Reason*, Al Gore wrote, 'A free press is supposed to function as our democracy's immune system against...gross errors of fact and understanding' (Gore, 2007). However, the demand for 'fresh information' can be greater than the supply, and often, the public does not want to wait for the full story to develop. Instead, they want on-the-scene reports, which may or may not be accurate. This delivery of prompt information can lead to an abundance of misinformation. Often, news sources provide retractions and corrections to the misinformation. Yet, research shows that these retractions are frequently ineffective. Despite the retraction or correction, people often continue to rely on the initial inferences they make about others and events, even in the face of subsequent counter-information.

The lasting effects of inferences on memory have been studied in several different ways. In the most common approach, participants read a series of reports in which a piece of information is retracted (e.g. Guillory & Geraci, 2010; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988). For example, participants may read about a fire including information about a potential cause of the fire, which is eventually retracted. Later, participants are asked to answer both questions requiring factual recall of the previous news story (e.g. 'What time was the fire department dispatched?') and questions requiring inferences (e.g. 'What could have caused the explosions?'). Results generally show that people answer the inference questions using inferences based on the original but corrected information. And, this effect occurs even though people can recall that the information was corrected. This sort of scenario occurs in politics too, where erroneous information is distributed about a politician and this information is later corrected, either by the politician herself or by others. Using a laboratory paradigm, previous research has shown that people often continue to rely on negative information about hypothetical politicians, even after that information

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has been corrected (Guillory & Geraci, 2013). Imagine that the corrected information was either positive (that the politician donated money to a good cause) or negative (that the politician accepted bribe money). It is likely that the valence of the corrected information will influence the extent to which people are able or willing to accept a correction. In the current study, we examined whether the valence of the information (whether it was negative, positive or neutral) influenced whether people continued to rely on the information after a correction.

Previous studies have examined the effectiveness of corrections for generally negative events: for example, the cause of a warehouse fire (Guillory & Geraci, 2010; Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988; Wilkes & Reynolds, 1999), misconceptions about the Iraq war (Lewandowsky, Stritzke, Oberauer, & Morales, 2005; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010), the cause of a plane crash (Ecker, Lewandowsky, & Apai, 2011) and the details of a robbery (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Fenton, & Martin, 2014). In these studies, the entire event is generally negative, and what is of interest is whether people can accept a correction that is not necessarily negative or positive (e.g. that the side room did not contain flammable materials in the warehouse fire example). The present study differs from these previous studies in that we examined the effect of correcting positive, negative or neutral information. The correction of negative information is frequently seen in political smear campaigning, where politicians refute negative information about themselves. The correction of positive information is also a popular tactic in political campaigning. For example, there are times when politicians, or those associated with their campaigns, take credit for positive events (e.g. job creation, reducing the federal deficit and reducing crime), and there are often attempts by opponents to counter this information.

Previous research on the continued influence effect has examined a related issue: whether information can be corrected if it evokes an emotional reaction (Ecker et al., 2011). In the study by Ecker and colleagues, participants were presented with two potential causes of a plane crash, one that was designed to evoke an emotional response (a terrorist attack) and one that was designed not to evoke an emotional response (bad weather). Results showed that the emotionality of the event did not affect the continued influence of misinformation. This finding is somewhat surprising in that one might expect that a terrorist attack would be more difficult to correct than the nature of the weather, but as the authors note, emotionality may boost memory for the event occurring, rather than boosting memory accuracy and updating.

In a related line of research on directed forgetting, there is mixed evidence regarding whether positive and negative information can be equally well overwritten or forgotten. For example, in a study using the list-method, directed forgetting of negative and neutral words occurred to a similar extent (Wessel & Merckelbach, 2006). In contrast, other research has shown that negatively valenced words were more likely to be recalled than neutral words following a prompt to forget these items (Minnema & Knowlton, 2008). However, it should be noted that the directed forgetting and continued influence paradigms differ in some ways. In the directed forgetting paradigm, participants are explicitly told to forget the cued information, whereas in the continued influence paradigm, participants are simply told that the information is incorrect. Using the continued influence paradigms (e.g. Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988) results show that people continue to be influenced by the corrected information, whereas in the directed forgetting paradigm, results tend to show that participants can 'forget' the key information (e.g. Bjork & Woodward, 1973; MacLeod, 1975). Also, the continued influence effect may depend on having a coherent, casually related account where a single or minimal correction has a significant impact on the meaning of the story. Indeed, in directed forgetting studies using sentences (Geiselman, 1974), as opposed to lists of unrelated words, participants forget the to-be-forgotten sentences less effectively when they are thematically related to the 'to be remembered' sentences, or each other than when they are not.

The current study examined the role of valence on the presence of the continued influence effect. We wondered, is it as easy to correct negative information as it is to correct positive or neutral information? There are reasons to predict that negative information may have a more lasting influence on memory and thus may be more difficult to correct compared with positive or neutral information. For example, research shows that people often show a 'negativity bias', such that they give greater weight to negative information relative to equally likely positive information in a variety of information processing tasks (Lau, 1985). This effect has been found increasingly in political behaviour, where negative campaigning tends to be highly memorable and often lowers public trust in the government, as well as feelings of political efficacy and overall public mood (Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007). Lau (1985) offers two primary explanations for the negativity bias. The perceptual 'figure-ground' hypothesis suggests that negative information stands out against a generally positive background of information. Negative information may also be weighted more heavily than positive information because it is more unexpected and therefore more credible and informative (Fiske, 1980; Jones & Davis, 1965). According to the motivational 'cost-orientation' hypothesis, the negativity bias occurs because there is a significant survival value of avoiding costs compared with approaching gains (Lau, 1985). A survival processing view of memory (Nairne, 2010; Nairne, Pandeirada, & Thompson, 2008) would also predict that people are predisposed to remember and not forget negative information. Indeed, we know that, relative to positive information, people have a preference for attending to (Fiske, 1980; Pratto & John, 1991; Steiner, 1979) and remembering (Pratto & John, 1991) negative information. Thus, the current study examined whether the valence of the original information (whether it was negative, positive or neutral) would influence participants' reliance on that information following a correction. Would people be less likely to accept a correction to negative information, relative to positive or neutral information?

METHOD

Participants

Fifty-eight undergraduates (M age = 20.19, SD = 1.18) from Spelman College (n=45 women; M education = 14.79 years) and Morehouse College (n = 13 men; M education = 14.08 years) participated in the study in return for a small honorarium.

Design

The study used a within-subjects design with the valence of the corrected information (negative, positive and neutral) and condition (correction and no correction) serving as the independent variables. Participants read three stories each about a different politician running for re-election. In *at least one* of the stories (conditions counterbalanced across participants), a piece of information about the politician was later corrected. This information was negative, positive or neutral. The dependent variable of interest was the extent to which participants used the original information (that was negative, positive or neutral) to answer inference questions about the story when the original information had been corrected versus when it had not been corrected.

Materials and procedure

Participants read three stories about three different politicians running for re-election. One of the three stories was used previously in Guillory and Geraci (2013). Each story contained a critical piece of information about the political candidate. The stories consisted of 13 messages. The critical piece of information appeared in the sixth message of the story and was corrected (in the correction condition) in the 12th message. In the negative condition, the sixth message stated that the politician was seen taking bribe money. In the positive condition, it stated that the politician made a sizable donation to a domestic violence organization. In the neutral condition, the message stated that the politician launched a campaign website. In at least one of the three stories that participants read, this critical piece of information (negative, positive or neutral) was corrected in the 12th message of the story. The same unnamed reporter who was referenced throughout the stories also provided the correction. The message stated that, 'his previous report was incorrect and (the politician) did not (do what he was previously charged with doing)'. In the no correction condition, no correction message appeared in the story. Instead, the 12th message provided additional information about the campaign coverage. A Latin square was used to counterbalance condition (correction, no correction), valence (negative, positive, neutral) and politician (H. Light, R. Harris, D. Morgan) across participants.

Participants were informed at the outset of the study session that they would be asked to read and recall three stories about three different politicians who were running for reelection. Participants were given unlimited time to read each of the three stories. Each story was presented as a series of messages, with each message printed on a separate page. Participants were instructed not to turn back and re-read any previous information. Following standard procedure (Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988), after reading each story, participants were given an initial free recall test in which they were asked to write down everything they could remember from the report. The free recall test (and factual questions, mentioned later) ensures that any difference in use of information to answer inference questions is not simply the result of overall memory differences. Then participants received a 20-item questionnaire that included specific questions about the story. Consistent with previous studies examining the continued influence effect (Guillory & Geraci, 2010; Guillory & Geraci, 2013; Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988; Wilkes & Reynolds, 1999), half (10) of the questions were designed so that participants could answer them by recalling the factual content of the story (e.g. 'When did the politician announce his campaign for re-election?'), and half (10) were designed so that participants could answer them by using inferences about the story (e.g. negative condition inference question: 'Is there any reason to believe that the politician will not be re-elected?'; positive condition inference question: 'Do you think the politician believes family is important? Why or why not?'; neutral condition inference question: 'Did the politician make his issues known to the public? Explain'; see Appendix A for the list of inference questions used in each of the three conditions). The inference questions, while the same for each politician, differed across each of the three valence conditions and *could* have been answered using the critical information. The factual questions for each politician were consistent across the three valence conditions and were specific to the details of that politicians' campaign story. None of the factual questions asked about or made reference to the critical information. In the correction conditions, at the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked about the correction message (e.g. 'What was the point of the second message from the reporter?'). The order of the test questions was randomized, except for the question concerning the reason for the second message from the reporter (the correction message), which always came at the end. As previously mentioned, in studies examining the continued influence effect, it is typical protocol to ask participants to recall the story as well as answer factual and inference questions about

what they read. As Wilkes & Leatherbarrow (1988) stated in their discussion,

had free recall alone been used to assess the manner in which the editing (correction) subjects responded, it could have easily been assumed that they had indeed done what was required of them (p. 378).Research examining the correction of misinformation frequently shows that participants can recall the factual content of the stories and even the correction itself when asked explicitly. However, when further probing is used, as seen in the inference questions, participants continue to rely on the original information in reasoning and 'decision making', suggesting that there could be many instances where a correction is viewed to be effective when it has not been (Seifert, 2002, offers several explanations for why people may fail to edit inferences in memory).

After completing the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate how likely they would be to vote for the politician, on a scale of 1–7, where 1 is *highly unlikely* and 7 is *highly likely*. Next, the entire procedure was repeated with the second and third stories. Once this series was completed, participants were given a post-test questionnaire that asked them to rate the valence of the corrected critical information (which was presented again) on a scale of 1–7, where 1 was *extremely negative* and 7 was *extremely positive*. Finally, all participants were given a brief demographic questionnaire to complete.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The alpha level was set at p < .05 for the following analyses. The free recall, factual questions and inference questions were scored by two judges acting independently, using a sample of 18 questionnaires. Inter-rater reliability was high (r = .97, .95 and .84, respectively). There were no differences on any of the dependent variables across politicians, so the results are collapsed across each of the three politicians.

Post-test questionnaire

As a manipulation check, participants were asked to rate the valence of the corrected critical piece of information on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is extremely negative and 7 is extremely positive. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in the valence ratings across conditions, F(2,84)=64.91, MSE=1.84, $\eta_p^2=0.61$, p<.001. Participants rated the negative information about the politician as significantly more negative (M=2.19, SD=1.30) than the positive information (M = 6.03, SD = 1.35), t(58) = -11.22, p < .001, and the neutral information (M=5.04, SD=1.43), t(56)=-7.93, p < .001. They also rated the positive information as more positive than the neutral information, t(54) = 2.69, p = .01. Note that the neutral rating did not fall exactly in the middle of the scale (neutral = 5.04 on the 1-7 scale); this information was scored slightly on the positive side. However, the negative information and positive information were scored as equally extreme on the scale. The average distances for the positive condition from 7 (M = 0.97, SD = 1.35) and the negative condition from 1 (M = 1.20, SD = 1.32) were not significantly different, t(57) < 1, p = .50, from each other. That is, the positive information was seen as being as positive as the negative information was seen as negative.

Free recall

The free recall test was scored using 'idea units'. An idea unit was recorded as being recalled if the participant reproduced all or a substantial part of its content; otherwise, it was scored as absent. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the free recall results showed that overall recall performance did not differ across correction conditions, F(1, 26) < 1 or valence, F(2, 52) < 1. There was also no significant interaction between correction condition and valence, F(2, 52) < 1 (correction: negative 56%, positive 61%, neutral 60%; no correction: negative 56%, positive 57%, neutral 59%).

We also examined free recall of just the critical piece of information (the statement about the bribe in the negative condition, the statement about donating money in the positive condition and the statement about launching a campaign website in the neutral condition). A 2×3 ANOVA on the effect of the correction condition and valance on recall yielded a main effect of condition, F(1, 26) = 22.75, MSE = 0.12, $\eta_p^2 = 0.47$, p < .001, showing that recall was higher in the correction condition overall compared with the no correction condition. There was also a main effect of valence F(2, 52) = 12.47, MSE = 0.09, $\eta_p^2 = 0.32$, p < .001, showing that people had higher recall for the positive and negative information compared with the neutral information. The interaction between condition and valence was significant, F(2, 52) = 5.20, MSE = 0.08, $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$, p = .01. In the no correction condition, people had better memory for the negative information relative to the neutral, t(52) = -2.69, p=.01, and positive, t(53)=-2.27, p=.03 (which did not differ). In the correction condition, people had better memory for the positive information compared with the neutral information, t(54) = -2.28, p = .03, whereas the negative information did not differ from the positive, t(58) = 1.42, p = .16, or neutral, t(56) < 1, p = .37.

Questionnaire responses

Next, we examined responses to the questionnaires. Half of the questions on the questionnaires were inference questions and the other half were factual questions. For the factual questions, there was a main effect of condition, F(1, 26)= 6.03, MSE=4.06, η_p^2 =0.19, p=.02, showing that participants had better memory for factual information when there was a piece of information that was corrected in the story than when there was no correction, t(85)=3.08, p<.01. Memory for factual information did not differ across valence conditions, F(2, 52) < 1, which was expected as the valence refers only to the critical message that was queried by the inference questions. The interaction between condition and valence was not significant, F(2, 52)=1.62, MSE=2.89, η_p^2 =0.06, p=.21.

Turning to the main issue at hand, we examined responses to the inference questions. Of interest was whether participants answered inference questions using information from the original, but incorrect, message. Responses to the inference questions were scored as using either the original information or some other response (including responses about 'rumours' or 'alleged' activities). Inference questions were only scored as using the original information if participants explicitly mentioned the critical piece of information from the story (that the politician took bribe money, donated money or launched a campaign website). For example, if a participant answered the inference question, 'Is there any reason to believe that the politician will not be re-elected?' by saying, 'Yes, because he was caught accepting a bribe', then this would be scored as indicating that the participant used the original information to answer the question. However, if the participant answered the same question by saying, 'Yes, because he was accused of accepting a bribe' or 'Yes, because he refused to release his campaign meeting transcripts', then these would both be scored as indicating that the participant used 'other' information to answer the question. In the correction conditions, following the questionnaire, participants were asked to state the purpose of the second message from the reporter (the correction message). Only participants who correctly recalled the correction statement were included in the analyses. Thus, the results do not reflect differences in participants' ability to recall the critical message. It should be noted that only seven participants were excluded from the analyses, and the results did not differ when these participants were included.

We examined the effect of receiving a correction on the use of the negative, positive and neutral information to answer inference questions (Figure 1). Results showed that there was a significant interaction between condition and valence, F(2, 52)=13.67, MSE=0.01, $\eta_p^2=0.35$, p < .001 (Figure 1). There was also a main effect of valence, F(2, 52)=101.22, MSE=0.01, $\eta_p^2=0.80$, p < .001, showing that participants used negative information (M=0.32, SD=0.22) more than positive information (M=0.07, SD=0.10), when answering inference questions, t(57)=8.76, p < .001; and they used negative more than neutral information (M=0.04, SD=0.10) when answering inference questions, t(56)=9.40, p < .001. There was no significant difference between the



Figure 1. Proportion of inference questions answered using the original (critical) piece of information by condition (correction, no correction) and valence (neutral, positive, negative). The no correction conditions served as a baseline

use of positive and neutral information to answer inference questions, t(56) = 1.57, p = .12. Finally, there was a main effect of condition, F(1, 26) = 49.50, MSE = 0.02, $\eta_p^2 = 0.66$, p < .001. Consistent with previous research, when participants received a correction, they were significantly less likely to use the original information to answer inference questions compared with when they did not receive a correction, t(85) = -6.69, p < .001.

Despite the fact that there was a significant interaction between condition and valence on inferences, one must be cautious in interpreting this interaction because of potential floor effects in the positive and neutral conditions. As can be seen in Figure 1, people made many more inferences based on negative information relative to the positive or neutral information in the no correction (baseline) condition, F(2, 56) = 63.84, MSE = 1.27, p < .001. And the correction was effective overall. But, given the high baseline use of negative information, the negative information continued to have a substantial influence on participants' inferences after a correction, whereas the positive and neutral information had little effect on baseline inferences and even less of an effect following a correction. So, this interaction could have occurred because negative information is differentially affected by a correction compared to positive or neutral information or because baseline inferences were higher in the negative condition relative to the positive and neutral conditions. What we can clearly conclude is that people tended to rely on negative information more than positive or neutral information when making inferences and that the correction was effective overall.

One might wonder whether the responses to the inference questions simply demonstrate that people have overall better memory for negative information. The recall data are relevant in this regard. Results showed that in the no correction condition, recall was highest for the negative information about the political candidate, compared with the positive or neutral information. Whereas in the correction condition, recall was highest for the positive information followed by the negative and then neutral information. Thus, at least in the correction condition, recall was higher for the positive information, which does not readily explain the higher levels of influence of the negative compared with positive and neutral information on the subsequent inferences questions.

Voting question

After completing the questionnaire, participants rated how likely they would be to vote for each of the three politicians, on a scale of 1–7, where 1 is *highly unlikely* and 7 is *highly likely*. Results of a 2×3 ANOVA (condition×valence) showed that there was no effect of condition, F(1, 26) < 1, showing that participants who received a correction were not more likely to vote for the politician than those who did not receive a correction. There was a borderline significant main effect of valence, F(2, 52)=3.12, MSE=2.93, η_p^2 =0.11, p=.05, showing that, oddly enough, regardless of whether participants received a correction or not, they were more likely to indicate that they would vote for a politician when they had originally read negative information about the politician (M=5.12, SD=1.38) than neutral (M=4.39, SD=1.53) or positive information (M=4.64, SD=1.44). There was no significant interaction between condition and valence, F(2, 52) < 1. Thus, having received a correction about positive, negative or neutral information about a politician did not influence participants' hypothetical voting judgments.

Overall, these findings indicate that, consistent with the negativity bias, participants were the most likely to use negative information to answer inference questions, regardless of whether it was corrected or not, followed by positive information and neutral information. Further, we found that receiving a correction reduced people's reliance on original erroneous information overall.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We examined whether the valence of a piece of information (whether it is negative, positive or neutral in nature) influenced people's willingness to accept a correction of that information. Based on previous research supporting the negativity bias (Klein & Ahluwalia, 2005; Lau, 1985), we hypothesized that people would rely heavily on negative information when making inferences about a politician. As predicted, results showed that participants were the most likely to use negative information to answer inference questions in both the corrected and non-corrected conditions, followed by positive information and neutral information. These results suggest that if negative information about a politician is distributed, as is often the case in smear campaigns, it will have a substantial influence on the inferences people make about the politician regardless of whether this negative information is corrected. We also predicted that simply providing a correction would reduce people's reliance on the original information, as seen in previous research on the continued influence effect (Ecker et al., 2011; Ecker et al., 2014; Ecker, Lewandowsky, & Tang, 2010; Guillory & Geraci, 2010; Guillory & Geraci, 2013; Wilkes & Reynolds, 1999). As predicted, the results showed that people who received a correction relied on the original information less than people who did not receive a correction. So simply receiving a correction statement (regardless of the type of information being corrected) reduced the use of that information when participants were asked inference questions about what they read. Following a correction, participants reduced their reliance on the negative information by about half, and they reduced their reliance on the positive and neutral information to essentially zero.

These findings add to the growing literature delineating the conditions under which people will accept corrections. Other factors that appear to increase the effectiveness of retractions include repeating retractions (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Swire, & Chang, 2011), providing a plausible alternative explanation for the original information (Johnson & Seifert, 1994), providing warnings ahead of time along with plausible alternatives for the original erroneous information (Ecker et al., 2010) and delivering the correction from a credible source (Guillory & Geraci, 2013). In these studies, the average use of the critical information to answer inference questions without correction (baseline) is approximately 48%. These methods reduce

participants' use of the original information to approximately 11-26% but do not eliminate the effect. However, as noted by Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz, and Cook (2012), two of the aforementioned methods require an alternative explanation, which may not always be available. Also, all of the studies assessed memory for events that could be viewed as negative (warehouse fire, bus accident and smear reports during political campaigning). In the current study, while the baseline use of the target information was comparatively low in the positive and neutral conditions, we did find that the correction reduced the use of this information to near zero (3% and 1% in the positive and neutral conditions), virtually eliminating misinformation effects. In fact, in the neutral correction condition, only two participants made a single reference to the corrected misinformation. A similar elimination of misinformation can be seen in a recent study examining the influence of pre-existing attitudes in correcting misinformation (Ecker et al., 2014). In this study, the retraction eliminated the continued influence effect in a group whose pre-existing beliefs were incongruent with the original information. The current results similarly demonstrate conditions under which corrections are effective.

The present study may be limited in that it used fictitious politicians in a hypothetical campaign scenario. So, the results may not generalize to other scenarios or to actual political campaigns. Perhaps as a result of using a hypothetical political candidate, we did not find that correcting negative information increased voting judgments. In fact, results showed a borderline significant effect of valence, where participants were slightly more likely to vote for the politician in the negative condition (regardless of whether or not the critical information was corrected) in comparison with positive or neutral information. Future studies may benefit from examining the effect of corrections on negative information about real politicians. Future research might also examine the influence of political ideology on participants' willingness to accept a correction about a candidate that is or is not affiliated with their preferred party. Recent research has shown that conservatives, in comparison with liberals, tend to register greater physiological responses and devote more psychological resources to negative stimuli (Hibbing, Smith & Alford, 2014). While not the focus of the current study, future research might examine the influence that political ideology plays in the correction of misinformation, particularly when it is negative or positive in nature.

Another potential limitation of the current study is that there were differences in participants' use of positive, negative and neutral information to answer inference questions when there was no correction. Future studies might attempt to equate the influence of negative, positive and neutral information in the no correction inference question condition and examine the effect of a correction on the use of the different types of information on inferences. Often, people will rely heavily on negative information, particularly when it has important consequences for 'decision making', as in the case with our study. But, equating baseline use of information would allow researchers to examine whether different types of information are equally amenable to correction. For now, the current study demonstrates that people rely heavily on negative information when answering inference questions about politicians and their campaigns and that people can reduce their reliance on erroneous information following a correction.

Political campaigning is just one of many different contexts in which negative information is both propagated and corrected. Even during brief exposure to news media, audiences are inundated with breaking news reports that will later be corrected or retracted. The current results demonstrate that corrections can be effective in reducing or even eliminating the influence of various types of erroneous information.

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APPENDIX A

Inference questions

Negative condition

- 1. Why do you think [politician] refuses to release his campaign meeting transcripts?
- 2. Do you think [politician]'s campaign was successful? Why or why not?
- 3. Is there any reason to believe that [politician] will not be re-elected? If so what?
- 4. Why do you think only the members of [politician]'s campaign team are allowed to access the meeting transcripts?
- 5. What role did the media play in the campaign?

- 6. What is a possible reason for why people would not vote for [politician]?
- 7. Are there any reasons to believe that [politician] is not a good politician?
- 8. Do you think [politician] expected to win the election? Why or why not?
- 9. How do you think the local citizens felt about [politician]?
- 10. Do you think money is important to [politician]? Explain.

Positive condition

- 1. What issues do you think [politician] and his opponent discussed on the local television show?
- 2. Do you think [politician]'s campaign was successful? Why or why not?
- 3. Why do you think [politician] took his political position so seriously?
- 4. Do you think [politician] believes family is important? Why or why not?
- 5. What role did the media play in the campaign?
- 6. What is a possible reason for why people would vote for [politician]?
- 7. What role did [politician]'s upbringing play in his campaign?
- 8. Do you think [politician] cared about the local citizens? Why or why not?
- 9. Based on what you read, what issues do you think are important to [politician]? Why?
- 10. Do you think [politician] did more for his community than the typical politician? Why or why not?

Neutral condition

- 1. Why do you think [politician] fired his campaign manager?
- 2. Do you think [politician]'s campaign was successful? Why or why not?
- 3. Do you think [politician] made an effort to connect with the citizens? Why or why not?
- 4. Did [politician] make his issues known to the public? Explain.
- 5. What role did the media play in the campaign?
- 6. Do you think [politician] campaigned more than the typical politician? Why or why not?
- 7. Do you think [politician] could have done more to make his views public?
- 8. What advantages did [politician] have over his opponent?
- 9. Do you think [politician] reached young voters? Why or why not?
- 10. What do you think about [politician]'s campaign tactics?