Updating with Others: Testing the Effect of Informational Social Influence on Political Attitudes

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What role does information concerning the beliefs of others play in the correction, or persistence, of misperceptions? Can social pressure affect whether someone will change their mind on a salient political issue? Building on the "backfire effect" and informational context literatures, we theorize that informational social influence can affect one's willingness to accept new information. Specifically, when individuals receive partisan cues, their attitudes will be different compared to individuals without similar social influence. We test our theory and hypotheses using a unique experimental between-subjects design using a student sample (N = 839) as well as a nationally representative sample (N = 777). Using the salient debate over voter identification laws, we find some evidence for our theory. We conclude by considering the policy implications of our analysis and directions for future research.

Keywords: Informational Social Influence, Voter Identification, Public Opinion, Experimental Methods, Empirical Political Theory/Methodology, Political Communications/Media, Voting Behavior.

Related Articles:

Caillier, James. 2010. "Citizen Trust, Political Corruption, and Voting Behavior: Connecting the Dots." *Politics & Policy* 38 (5): 1015-1035. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2010.00267

Dettrey, Bryan J. 2013. "Relative Losses and Economic Voting: Sociotropic Considerations or 'Keeping up with the Joneses?'" *Politics & Policy* 41 (5): 788-806. https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12038

Nielson, Lindsay. 2017. "Ranked Choice Voting and Attitudes toward Democracy in the United States: Results from a Survey Experiment." *Politics & Policy* 45 (4): 535-570. https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12212

Actualización con otros: prueba del efecto de la influencia social de la información en las actitudes políticas

¿Qué papel juega la información sobre las creencias de otros en la corrección o persistencia de las percepciones erróneas? ¿Puede la presión social afectar si alguien cambiará de opinión sobre un tema político importante? Sobre la base del "efecto contraproducente" y la literatura del contexto informativo, teorizamos que la influencia social informativa (ISI) puede afectar la voluntad de uno para aceptar nueva información. Específicamente, cuando los individuos reciben señales partidistas, sus actitudes serán diferentes en comparación con individuos sin una influencia social similar. Probamos nuestra teoría e hipótesis utilizando un diseño experimental único entre sujetos utilizando una muestra de estudiantes (N = 839) así como una muestra representativa a nivel nacional (N = 777). Utilizando el debate destacado sobre las leyes de identificación de votantes, encontramos alguna evidencia para nuestra teoría. Concluimos considerando las implicaciones políticas de nuestro análisis y las direcciones para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras Clave: Influencia social informativa, Identificación de votantes, Opinión pública, Métodos experimentales, Teoría/Metodología Política Empírica, Comunicaciones políticas/Medios de comunicación, Comportamiento de voto.

向他人提供最新信息：检验信息性社会影响对政治态度产生的效果

有关他人信念的信息在错误感知的纠正或持续中发挥着什么作用？社会压力能否影响个体改变其对某个显著政治议题的看法？基于"逆火效应"和信息情境文献，我们建立理论，认为信息性社会影响（*ISI*）能影响个体对新信息的接受意愿。特别地，当个体收到党派信息（*partisan cues*）时，他们的态度将不同于未受到相似社会影响的个体。通过使用一个包括学生样本（*n=839*）和国家代表性样本(*n=777*)的独特被试间实验设计，我们检验了所提的理论和假设。通过使用关于选民身份识别法律的激烈辩论，我们发现了一些支持所提理论的证据。我们的结论考量了本研究的政策意义以及未来研究的方向。

关键词: 信息性社会影响, 选民身份识别, 舆论, 实验方法, 实证政治理论/方法论, 政治传播/媒介, 投票行为.

Citizens of democracies across the globe are awash in information, and sorting the good from the bad is a challenge for individuals and the societies they govern. Committed democrats' optimism gives them hope that citizens can identify good information—accurate, precise, and relevant—amid the many, often-contradictory messages; committed partisans' cynicism gives them hope that voters can be manipulated to accept messages promoting a certain end result.

Starting from the political science and social psychology literatures on the "backfire effect" and informational context, we examine how people process information by investigating how they use new, corrective information. We propose a theoretical framework where informational social influence (ISI) provides one mechanism of information processing used by individuals in democracies. We predict people confronted with a choice to accept or reject new information will look to the actions of other members of relevant social groups—in the case of politics, co-partisans. Much as each starling in a murmuration looks to its neighbors' trajectories before choosing its own flight path, individual citizens use knowledge concerning others' information updating when deciding how to process new information, resulting in a coordinated change of direction. We test this theory in the context of U.S. politics by attempting to activate the ISI mechanism via a survey experiment concerning the salient and contentious issue of voter identification (voter ID).

In the end, we find ideology consistently influences attitudes related to voter ID, however, the effect of corrective information only moderates opinions in certain circumstances. Encouragingly, we find limited evidence of a backfire effect and several instances where respondents resist negative social influence in favor of corrective information. Although our results are mixed, they underscore the importance of considering ISI when studying misperceptions, but also the need for additional research to better understand the nuance we uncover.

Ideologically Congruent Misperceptions

Misperceptions present a problem for most theories of democracy, which assume voters can accurately transform their normative values into accurate choices or attitudes. Misinformed voters cannot reliably do this. Deepening our understanding of the psychology of misperceptions is an important step in minimizing their influence over democratic decision making. That voters have trouble updating their misperceptions is well documented. Kuklinski and others (2000) and Sides and Citrin (2007) show the persistence of misperceptions create

myriad problems for correcting misperceptions and dealing with the policy consequences of those beliefs.

While there are numerous potential causes of misperceptions, one of the most prominent is confirmation bias. Misperceptions are often colored by the partisan and ideological attachments inherent in any set of attitudes (Bullock *et al*. 2013), so individuals are likely to hold inaccurate factual beliefs that align congruently with their worldview.[1] That is, misperceptions are likely to have a partisan valence that results in differences in prevalence across partisan groups. For instance, leading up to the Iraq War in 2003, Nyhan and Reifler (2010) find liberals were more likely to believe that the Saddam Hussein regime never held weapons of mass destruction (he had), and conservatives were more likely to believe that Iraq assisted al-Qaeda on 9/11 (it had not). Both false beliefs were congruent with the respondents' ideologies.

Ideologically congruent misperceptions are problematic because they are difficult to correct; partisans have little incentive to do so, even at the expense of democratic principles (Carey *et al*. 2020). All else equal, individuals may desire to hold accurate beliefs, but in the case of ideologically congruent perceptions, all else is not equal—those beliefs are comfortable, even *comforting*. Humans are predisposed to cognitively organizing newly encountered information to confirm prior attitudes (Kuklinski *et al*. 2000; Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2000), and significant evidence shows partisans resist corrections to ideologically congruent misperceptions (see e.g., Amazeen *et al*. 2018; Cobb, Nyhan, and Reifler 2013). Moreover, efforts to correct misperceptions may even generate a so-called "backfire effect," where individuals who held the false belief express greater confidence in the false belief *after* receiving information designed to correct the inaccuracy (Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Nonetheless, there may be hope for advocates of democracy.

Recent work calls into question the extent to which the backfire effect exists (Wood and Porter 2018). Nyhan and Reifler (2015) show that elected officials will correct errors in response to fact-checks on their statements, and Agadjanian (2020) finds that partisans are likely to follow opinion leaders even when they take seemingly counter-attitudinal positions. We still lack a full understanding of precisely how this works—Nyhan and others (2019) find that corrections reduce misperceptions but with little effect on candidate evaluations, and Aird and others (2018) reveal the number of corrections relative to affirmations matters for their rejection. Corrections alone seem insufficient to explain exactly how individuals update their beliefs. Attributes of the corrections—and of the correctors—matter. We add to this discussion by investigating political misperceptions in a social context. Specifically, we test the effect of ISI to see how individuals react to corrections when they learn how others like them have done so.

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[1] In some cases, the factual beliefs may precede—and cause—the ideological beliefs; in other cases, the ideological beliefs may precede—and cause—the factual beliefs.

The Role of ISI

While scholars have examined whether elite cues matter with mixed results (see e.g., Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler 2017; Nieminen and Rapeli 2019), what is lacking is research looking into the impact of peer-led updating on misperceptions. We theorize that ISI, defined "as an influence to accept information obtained from another as *evidence* about reality" (Deutsch and Gerard 1955, 629), is a relevant mechanism for understanding how individuals process corrective information. When confronting information from another person with common attributes, an individual may be more likely to accept it and adjust prior attitudes. Likewise, when told that others like them have rejected information as false, individuals may be more likely to reject the information.

ISI is well established in psychology (see e.g., Wood 2000) and generally falls under the "persuasion" literature in political science (see e.g., Huckfeldt 2007). Panagopoulos and van der Linden (2016) find that even subtle forms of social influence—a postcard with eyes—can impact political behavior. ISI affects environmental policy attitudes (Bolsen 2013) and political engagement (Bond *et al.* 2012; Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008; Panagopoulos 2010). Our theory identifies ISI as a relevant mechanism for how individuals process information relevant to political beliefs. ISI, when activated, interacts with other factors to increase the likelihood an individual will accept—or reject, depending on the context—information correcting a misperception.

The How and Why of ISI Effects on Misperceptions

Figure 1 depicts our theoretical model of how ISI affects correcting misperceptions. First, Arrow A shows that, absent corrective information, agreement with a misperception is a function of its political valence—that is, whether it is liberal or conservative. People are more likely to accept ideologically congruent misperceptions.

Second, Arrow B shows how the availability of corrective information affects misperceptions. We expect the existence of corrective information to reduce support for misperceptions. However, if a backfire effect exists, it would manifest as an interaction between the valence of the misperception and the availability of the corrective information (Arrow C). Correcting an ideologically congruent misperception may cause ideologues to mediate their attitudes or perhaps even express stronger support for the misperception. For ideologically incongruent misperceptions corrective information should strengthen the tendency to reject the misperception.

The third aspect of our framework—and the novel contribution of this project—proposes that ISI, in the form of information concerning co-partisans' acceptance or rejection of corrective information, interacts with corrective information to affect levels of agreement with misperceptions—an interaction

Figure 1.
Theoretical Factors of Misperceptions
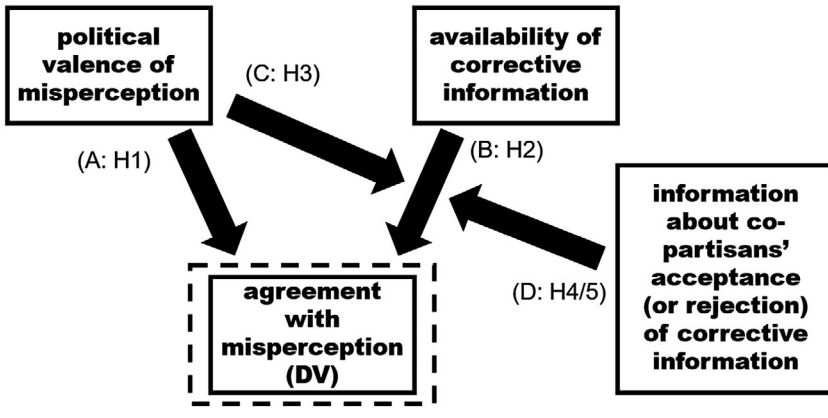
depicted by Arrow D in Figure 1. That is, ISI matters for how people use corrective information. With knowledge that co-partisans have *accepted* the corrective information, people will be more likely to accept the corrective information themselves. By contrast, information describing co-partisans as having *rejected* the corrective information will lead people to likewise reject or resist the corrective information and exhibit support for the misperception—perhaps even exhibiting a backfire effect.

Our theory yields several testable hypotheses, which correspond to the arrows on Figure 1.[2] First, we expect the ideological divide on salient political issues will generate significant differences in levels of agreement with misperceptions (Arrow A in Figure 1)[3]:

> Hypothesis 1: An individual's level of agreement with a misperception varies (positively) with the extent to which the misperception is ideologically congruent.

Hypothesis 2 expresses our expectation that individuals use credible corrective information as most normative theories would hope—they update

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[2] We pre-registered our hypotheses with Open Science Foundation: https://osf.io/wby76

[3] We theorize that ideology, rather than partisanship, plays a moderating role when it comes to reactions to ISI. While these attitudes are increasingly homogenous in American politics (Pew Research 2007), we think—following Nyhan and Reifler (2010)—ideology will be the relevant mechanism to cause attitude change because of the subtle difference in the way these two concepts work on attitudes. While partisanship is obviously a crucial predictor for behavior (Campbell *et al.* 1960), partisans generally follow their leaders. Ideologues are different given a coherent worldview and policy prescripts that follow, but there are very few people in the general public who meet this standard (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992). To the extent anyone adjust their attitudes, it should happen among those who are best able to contextualize the information they receive concerning their peers.

their beliefs by discarding their misperceptions (Arrow B in Figure 1). The corrective information could take many forms—it might identify the belief as "false," "inaccurate," or "unsupported by the best available evidence" or present facts that are obviously inconsistent with the misperception:

> Hypothesis 2: An individual's level of agreement with a misperception varies (negatively) with the extent to which they are exposed to corrective information.

While this is normatively pleasing, our theory adds nuance, anticipating a more complicated process of evaluating corrective information. We expect that individuals' use of corrective information is mediated by ideology. Just as different ideologues are likely to evince different levels of agreement with misperceptions based on their ideological congruence (Hypothesis 1), ideologues are likely to use corrective information differently (Arrow C in Figure 1):

> Hypothesis 3: The effects of corrective information on reducing an individual's level of agreement with a misperception vary (negatively) with the extent to which the misperception is ideologically congruent.

We expect to find between-group differences in the effects of corrective information. Those not ideologically disposed to adopt the misperception will more frequently use the information to correct their beliefs (or reject the misperception) compared to ideologues for whom the misperception is ideologically congruent. For ideologues predisposed to believe the misperception, the effects of the correction could be reduced or muted, or—taken to the extreme—could result in a backfire effect where the correction leads individuals to hold tighter to their misperceptions.

The story of ideological congruence is complicated because most individuals are notoriously bad at coherently and consistently applying their declared ideology to political issues (see e.g., Bartels 2005, 2007; Converse 1964). Voters may wish to behave as partisans or ideologues, but they lack the information processing abilities to do so properly (see e.g., Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Instead they rely on signals concerning what people "like them" are "supposed to" think and do. They seek direction from opinion leaders in the form of media, political elites, or in-group partisans—as well as out-group partisans—to determine their proper reaction (see e.g., Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015). For many, ideological congruence is not something that exists outside and independent of the context of their own information environment. Most conservative citizens do not thoughtfully evaluate policy proposals against an abstract philosophy of limited government, they adopt the beliefs of other conservatives; the story is similar for liberals. Accordingly, our theory posits an additional factor affecting agreement with misperceptions: ISI.

ISI can take two forms. The first, what we call "positive ISI," is when members of a group with a likely misperception are confronted with corrective information and told that fellow group members have accepted new information as accurate and updated beliefs accordingly. The second, "negative ISI," happens when members of a group with a likely misperception are confronted with new information, but they learn that fellow group members resist or reject the new information. This is the relationship illustrated by Arrow D in Figure 1; individuals use ISI to determine whether the corrective information is ideologically congruent (or not) and therefore acceptable (or not):

> Hypothesis 4: The effects of corrective information on reducing an individual's level of agreement with a misperception vary (positively) with the presence of information that co-partisans have accepted that corrective information.

> Hypothesis 5: The effects of corrective information on reducing an individual's level of agreement with a misperception vary (negatively) with the presence of information that co-partisans have rejected that corrective information.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 express our expectations that individuals will use signals concerning how others interact with new, corrective information to determine how they themselves use the corrective information.[4] The perception that co-partisans accept corrective information will lead to greater acceptance of the corrective information (less agreement with the misperception). By contrast, the perception that co-partisans reject or resist the corrective information will lead to less acceptance of the corrective information (more agreement with the misperception). In other words, the causal effect of corrective information on agreement with misperceptions is mediated by ISI. Positive ISI will cause individuals to use corrective information to correct misperceptions; negative ISI will reduce (and possibly reverse) the corrective effects of corrective information.

In sum, we ask: how do individuals process factual information designed to correct political misperceptions when told how *others* have processed the same factual information? Is someone more likely to correct their beliefs if they have been told that other people receiving the same facts have done so? And does the identity of the "other people" matter for the direction and/or magnitude of the belief adjustment?[5] We expect that ISI matters for the processing of corrective

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[4] We specify partisan groups rather than ideological groups because partisanship is the most enduring heuristic in American politics (see e.g., Campbell *et al.* 1960; Lewis-Beck *et al.* 2009), and most Americans are not ideologues (see e.g., Converse 1964; Zaller 1992).

[5] These questions implicate two distinct cognitive processes: (1) an individual chooses whether and how to accept the factual information as accurate, empirical evidence of their world; and (2) an individual adjusts their normative political beliefs regarding the policy implications of the factual information. Any investigation into how people update beliefs in response to others' updated beliefs, must be mindful of these processes and attempt to measure them separately.

information, and in the following section, we outline our strategy to test these hypotheses to better understand the interaction between misperceptions, corrective information, and social context.

Research Design and Data

We operationalize and test these hypotheses by applying them to a specific policy issue that is both politically salient and, relatedly, polarized in contemporary U.S. politics: election integrity and voter ID laws. Republicans tend to support laws requiring voters to present ID prior to voting, and Republican politicians have enacted numerous voter ID laws in states across the country (see Fogarty *et al.* 2015)—whereas Democrats tend to oppose voter ID. In debates over these policies, members of both parties make claims that are not consistently supported by the best available empirical evidence (Lopez 2017). Republicans, for instance, regularly insist that voter ID is needed to combat the problem of in-person voter fraud, but multiple studies have failed to find any evidence of widespread in-person voter fraud.[6] Conversely, Democrats criticize voter ID as delivering elections to Republicans by suppressing turnout among groups who tend to vote Democratic, especially members of historically and/or economically disadvantaged groups. However, as with in-person voter fraud, multiple studies have failed to find evidence that voter ID has a significant effect—and no study to date has shown that any given election would have had a different result but for voter ID.[7] Voter ID is an ideal issue for testing our theory because it features misperceptions—or at least un- or under-supported beliefs—among both liberals and conservatives.

We use a survey experiment to examine the effects of information correcting common misperceptions concerning voter ID. We focus on two principal dependent variables (DVs):

> DV1: "Voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States."
>
> DV2: "Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating in elections."

Each DV articulates a political misperception with a particular ideological valence: DV1's valence is conservative, DV2's is liberal. Each respondent was asked to rate their level of agreement with both statements (using 7-point Likert scales, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). We randomly varied the

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[6] Lopez (2016, 2017) highlights there is simply no evidence that widespread fraud occurs.

[7] Some Republicans may share this belief, such as the Pennsylvania official who believed the PA voter ID law would deliver the state to Romney in 2012 (Blake 2016), but there is little to no conclusive evidence at this time that voter ID laws affect election outcomes (Lopez 2016, 2017).

information presented to respondents via the survey to assess how our various experimental treatments affected support for each of the DV statements.

We use four experimental conditions to test the effect of ISI on these DVs: control, treatment with correction, positive ISI, and negative ISI (Table 1). Subjects in each condition are randomly assigned to one of two mock newspaper vignettes framing voter ID laws as either: (1) important for combating voter fraud—a frame by former Attorney General Jeff Sessions (a Republican) that is consistent with DV1—or (2) a hindrance for turnout—a frame by former Attorney General Eric Holder (a Democrat) that is consistent with DV2. Both politicians voice a political misperception—Holder that voter ID suppresses turnout, Sessions that voter fraud is rampant.[8] See Appendix A for the text of each condition/frame.

In the control group, respondents read an article that contains an elite message. In the first experimental treatment condition, respondents read the vignette, but also get information from the mock reporter correcting the false statement from the elite message.[9] In the third and fourth experimental conditions, respondents also see the article containing the elite message as well as the corrective information. Additionally, these subjects receive ISI in the form of partisan cues after they finish reading the article.[10] In the positive ISI condition, respondents are presented with information describing that a group of people exposed to the correction had updated their beliefs in a manner consistent with their *acceptance* of the corrective information. In the negative ISI condition, these respondents receive follow-up information describing that a group of people exposed to the correction had updated their beliefs in a manner consistent with their *rejection* of the corrective information—indeed, these others actually evinced stronger support for the misperception in light of the corrective information.[11]

The data we analyze come from two different samples, which we discuss in tandem.[12] The first sample includes 839 students from a large, public university

[8] Our dependent variables are subjective assessments of attitudes that are consistent with the views of Sessions (DV1) and Holder (DV2). While these appear closely related, these attitudes are not highly correlated with one another within our sample, even within ideological subgroups.

[9] In other words, the correction is not coming from the designers of the experiment; rather, the subjects receive the elite message that is contradicted by corrective information presented by the journalist in the same article that is covering the political elite.

[10] The information social influence occurs after the reading of the article on the following page of the survey. This ISI comes from the researchers as opposed to the journalist.

[11] That is, these fictional others exhibited the backfire effect.

[12] As noted in Table 1, the conditions available to each sample differed. The national sample did not include the true control condition where the stated misperceptions were not corrected within the article. We initially thought that this condition might give us a useful baseline for comparison purposes, but we decided to eliminate these treatments from the national-sample survey to increase the statistical power of our treatment groups.

Table 1. Summary of Experimental Conditions, Elite Messaging, and Corrections

Sessions—Voter Fraud Frame	Student Sample	National Sample
Article w/Elite Message	105	–
Article w/Correction	105	192
Positive ISI: Article w/Correction + 7 of 10 Republicans ACCEPT	105	166
Negative ISI: Article w/Correction + 7 of 10 Republicans REJECT	104	183

Elite Message: Fraud is rampant and IDs will prevent it
Correction: In-person fraud rarely happens

Holder—Voter Suppression Frame	Student Sample	National Sample
Article w/Elite Message	105	–
Article w/Correction	105	186
Positive ISI: Article w/Correction + 7 of 10 Democrats ACCEPT	105	173
Negative ISI: Article w/Correction + 7 of 10 Democrats REJECT	105	180

Elite Message: Voter ID laws suppress voters and can change elections
Correction: Limited impact on turnout and outcomes

in the southeastern United States.[13] The second sample is a nationally representative group of 777 adults from across the United States.[14] In both cases, respondents took the survey online.[15] The demographics of both samples are largely representative of the country with respect to several important attributes including age (although the student sample, unsurprisingly, skews young), race, gender, party identification, and ideology (Table 2). The diversity of our samples, along with the random assignment of respondents to treatment conditions,

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[13] The school has a total enrollment of 35,000 students. This survey was in the field in March and April of 2019. The student subjects were made available by being part of an introductory political science course, which is required of all students before they graduate.

[14] Qualtrics provided this sample by inviting individuals in their online panel to participate; in return, those who successfully complete the task receive a small monetary reward. This survey was in the field from July 27 to August 9, 2018.

[15] Online surveys are a useful and legitimate source for political scientists' samples for behavioral research (see e.g., Chang and Krosnick 2009). While generalizability is always a concern, the quality of the sample and the nature of the experimental design help to ensure sample-population congruence as well as unit homogeneity across conditions. We took several steps to maximize response quality: the requirement that subjects' consent to participate, they were at least 18 years old, and they pass an attention check question. To improve internal validity, each respondent was required to spend at least 30 seconds on the assigned article.

Table 2. Demographics of Two Samples of Respondents

Student Sample (N = 839)			National Sample (N = 777)			2018 CCES (N = 60,000)[a]		
Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Gender			*Gender*			*Gender*		
Male	322	40.1	Male	369	47.5	Male	29,100	48.5
Female	476	59.2	Female	407	52.4	Female	30,899	51.5
Other	6	.8	Other	1	.1			
Age			*Age*			*Age*		
18-20	468	57.9	18-24	106	13.6	18-24	7,081	11.8
21-23	186	23.0	25-44	281	36.2	25-44	19,966	33.3
24-26	51	6.3	45-64	256	33.0	45-64	202,778	33.8
27+	103	12.7	65+	134	17.3	65+	12,675	21.1
Race/Ethnicity			*Race/Ethnicity*			*Race/Ethnicity*		
White, non-Hispanic	436	53.6	White, non-Hispanic	464	59.7	White, non-Hispanic	40,932	68.2
Black, non-Hispanic	171	21.0	Black, non-Hispanic	106	13.6	Black, non-Hispanic	7,482	12.5
Hispanic	85	10.5	Hispanic	131	16.9	Hispanic	7,454	12.4
Asian	63	7.8	Asian	50	6.4	Asian	2,395	4.0
Am. Indian/AK Native	28	3.4	Am. Indian/AK Native	7	.9	Am. Indian/AK Native	380	.6
Other	30	3.7	Other	19	2.5	Other	1,357	2.3
Class Standing			*Education*			*Education*		
Freshman	360	42.9	<High School	4	.5	No High School	5,655	9.4
Sophomore	300	35.8	Some High School	18	2.3			
Junior	114	13.6	High School Grad	198	25.5	High School Grad	17,127	28.5

(Continues)

Table 2.   (Continued)

Student Sample (N = 839)			National Sample (N = 777)			2018 CCES (N = 60,000)[a]		
Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Senior	65	7.8	Some College	205	26.4	Some College	13,110	21.9
Major			Two-yr Degree	105	13.5	Two years	6,169	10.3
Poli Sci	12	1.4	Four-yr Degree	166	21.4	Four years	11,392	19.0
Other	827	98.6	Graduate Degree	81	10.4	Post-grad	6,547	10.9
Income (Parents)			*Income (Family)*			*Income (Family)*		
$15K or less	32	4.2	$20K or less	136	17.5	Less than $20K	8,874	16.5
$15K-$29,999	65	8.5	$20,001-$34,999	157	20.2	$20K-$39,999	12,605	23.5
$30K-$59,999	137	17.8	$35K-$49,999	140	18.0	$40K-$59,999	10,204	19.0
$60K-$74,999	96	12.5	$50K-$74,999	147	18.9	$60K-$79,999	7,930	14.8
$75K-$99,000	114	14.8	$75K-$99,000	74	9.5	$80K-$99,000	4,784	8.9
$100K-$124,999	110	14.3	$100K-$124,999	59	7.6	$100K-$120,000	3,159	5.9
$125K or more	214	27.9	$125K or more	64	8.2	$120K or more	6,112	11.4
Party ID (incl. leaners)			*Party ID (incl. leaners)*			*Party ID (incl. leaners)*		
Democrat	353	49.4	Democrat	384	52.2	Democrat	26,489	44.2
Independent	51	7.1	Independent	105	14.3	Independent	8,015	13.4
Republican	311	43.5	Republican	247	33.6	Republican	23,001	38.4
Ideology			*Ideology*			*Ideology*		
Liberal	283	35.3	Liberal	280	36.0	Liberal	16,806	28.1
Moderate	247	30.8	Moderate	254	32.7	Moderate	16,739	28.0
Conservative	271	33.8	Conservative	243	31.3	Conservative	20,879	34.9

[a]Weighted using "commonweight."

Table 3. Attitudes on Voter ID and the Integrity of Elections in the United States

"Voter fraud is a significant problem…"

Student Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Liberal	281	7%	12%	16%	13%	23%	20%	9%	100%
Moderate	244	4%	9%	12%	14%	25%	26%	8%	100%
Conservative	268	6%	8%	12%	6%	29%	29%	11%	100%
Total	793	6%	10%	13%	11%	26%	25%	9%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 24.33   p = .018

National Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Liberal	280	25%	17%	10%	13%	13%	10%	12%	100%
Moderate	254	9%	8%	12%	19%	26%	13%	12%	100%
Conservative	243	4%	8%	7%	12%	28%	19%	21%	100%
Total	777	13%	11%	10%	15%	22%	14%	15%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 152.35   p = .000

(Continues)

Table 3.   (Continued)

"Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating…"

Student Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		79	129	102	152	164	122	42	790
Liberal	**278**	2%	10%	12%	21%	26%	23%	7%	**100%**
Moderate	**244**	5%	14%	14%	20%	25%	16%	6%	**100%**
Conservative	**268**	23%	25%	12%	18%	12%	7%	3%	**100%**
Total	**790**	**10%**	**16%**	**13%**	**19%**	**21%**	**15%**	**5%**	**100%**

Chi Sq(12) = 134.37 p = .000

National Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		118	118	87	157	116	98	83	777
Liberal	**280**	6%	10%	11%	19%	16%	20%	17%	**100%**
Moderate	**254**	7%	17%	11%	30%	18%	9%	6%	**100%**
Conservative	**243**	33%	19%	11%	12%	10%	7%	8%	**100%**
Total	**777**	**15%**	**15%**	**11%**	**20%**	**15%**	**13%**	**11%**	**100%**

Chi Sq(12) = 152.35 p = .000

Note: Each table displays row percentages with totals in bold; cells are shaded within each row from low (red) to high (green) to symbolize the variance within each ideological group.

Table 4. Testing for a Backfire Effect on Attitudes toward Issue of Voter ID Laws

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

	Student Sample			
Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.376*	(.220)	−.384†	(.271)
Ideology	.552**	(.233)	.540†	(.337)
Interaction	–	–	.023	(.467)
Constant	4.682***	(.171)	4.686***	(.187)
	N = 201		N = 201	
	R-squared = .039		R-squared = .039	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

	Student Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	.169	(.228)	.436†	(.285)
Ideology	1.322***	(.237)	1.678***	(.330)
Interaction	–	–	−.730†	(.472)
Constant	3.257***	(.187)	3.117***	(.207)
	N = 200		N = 200	
	R-squared = .137		R-squared = .148	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving corrective information after receiving elite message (Control is only elite message). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States."* Holder Frame: *"Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating in elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

gives us confidence that the design of our experiment possesses sufficient internal and external validity to test our hypotheses.

Analysis

Testing Ideological Polarization (Hypothesis 1)

We expect agreement with a given misperception will vary with ideology, and thus ideologues will endorse ideologically congruent misperceptions at a significantly higher rate: liberals will agree that voter ID suppresses turnout and conservatives will believe voter fraud is a problem. Table 3 shows cross-tabulations,

Table 5. The Impact of Positive Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.453*	(.236)	−.574*	(.295)	−.003	(.251)	.141	(.300)
Ideology	.731**	(.246)	.563†	(.346)	1.239***	(.274)	1.461***	(.372)
Interaction	–	–	.338	(.492)	–	–	−.485	(.550)
Constant	4.240***	(.190)	4.302***	(.211)	3.496***	(.194)	3.426***	(.210)
	N = 201		N = 201		N = 263		N = 263	
	R-squared = .061		R-squared = .063		R-squared = .073		R-squared = .076	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.171	(.249)	−.010	(.306)	−.118	(.221)	−.071	(.273)
Ideology	.844***	(.263)	.948**	(.368)	1.194***	(.232)	1.262***	(.329)
Interaction	–	–	−.213	(.528)	–	–	−.137	(.465)
Constant	3.587***	(.195)	3.552***	(.214)	3.427***	(.171)	3.404***	(.187)
	N = 197		N = 197		N = 271		N = 271	
	R-squared = .053		R-squared = .053		R-squared = .090		R-squared = .090	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving positive ISI that seven of ten partisans accepted corrective information (Control only receives correction). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States."* Holder Frame: *"Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating in elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

including a chi-square test, for both samples and both dependent variables; higher numbers mean greater support of the misperceptions; Hypothesis 1 has significant support.[16]

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[16] We use a three-point scale for ideology, but the substantive results remain with alternative specifications (e.g., a 7-point scale). In Appendices B and C, we include parallel analyses using two different statements as dependent variables. While the statements we analyze in the main text are specifically concerning attitudes respondents have on this issue, the statements in the appendices focus on what respondents believe should be done: "Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies…" and "Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws…" The table in Appendix B corresponds to the data presented in Table 3, while Appendix C includes similar tables to the regression models presented in Tables 4–7.

Table 6. The Impact of Negative Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.001	(.244)	.143	(.291)	.352†	(.242)	.574*	(.286)
Ideology	.355†	(.265)	.563†	(.350)	1.120***	(.266)	1.461***	(.355)
Interaction	–	–	−.486	(.535)	–	–	−.773†	(.534)
Constant	4.379***	(.195)	4.302***	(.213)	3.534***	(.186)	3.426***	(.200)
	N = 195		N = 195		N = 260		N = 260	
	R-squared = .010		R-squared = .014		R-squared = .070		R-squared = .077	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.133	(.235)	−.111	(.289)	−.029	(.233)	.193	(.278)
Ideology	.915***	(.249)	.948**	(.354)	.932***	(.252)	1.262***	(.338)
Interaction	–	–	−.065	(.499)	–	–	−.742†	(.507)
Constant	3.563***	(.187)	3.552***	(.205)	3.511***	(.178)	3.404***	(.192)
	N = 203		N = 203		N = 260		N = 260	
	R-squared = .065		R-squared = .065		R-squared = .051		R-squared = .059	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving negative ISI that seven of ten partisans rejected corrective information (Control only receives correction). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States."* Holder Frame: *"Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating in elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Nearly 70 percent of conservatives in each sample offer some level of agreement with DV1. While a slight majority of liberals report some level of disagreement (52 percent) with DV1, liberals in the student sample are actually more likely than not to report that voter fraud is a significant problem. The two samples are more comparable with respect to DV2. Liberals (conservatives) are more (less) likely to believe that ID laws hinder electoral participation.

Testing the Effect of Corrections on Voter ID Beliefs (Hypotheses 2 and 3)

We hypothesize that respondents who receive corrective information will be more likely to bring their own attitudes in line with factual information compared to those who do not receive corrective information (Hypothesis 2). Nevertheless,

Table 7. Negative Versus Positive Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.480*	(.255)	−.717**	(.301)	−.355†	(.252)	−.433†	(.295)
Ideology	.545*	(.279)	.077	(.424)	.837**	(.283)	.688*	(.408)
Interaction	–	–	.824†	(.562)	–	–	.289	(.567)
Constant	4.331***	(.194)	4.444***	(.208)	3.961***	(.194)	4.000***	(.209)
	N = 196		N = 196		N = 247		N = 247	
	R-squared = .033		R-squared = .044		R-squared = .042		R-squared = .043	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.037	(.246)	.012	(.302)	−.072	(.234)	−.264	(.283)
Ideology	.811***	(.261)	.882**	(.365)	.856***	(.250)	.520†	(.374)
Interaction	–	–	−.148	(.524)	–	–	.605	(.502)
Constant	3.465***	(.192)	3.441***	(.211)	3.503***	(.182)	3.597***	(.198)
	N = 198		N = 198		N = 253		N = 253	
	R-squared = .047		R-squared = .048		R-squared = .045		R-squared = .051	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving positive ISI that seven of ten partisans accepted corrective information (Control receives negative ISI). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States."* Holder Frame: *"Voter ID laws significantly inhibit voters from participating in elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

we expect this effect to be mediated by ideology such that corrections to ideologically congruent misperceptions will be less effective (Hypothesis 3).

To test these hypotheses, we examine the data from the student sample for both the Session Frame (Voter Fraud) and the Holder Frame (Voter IDs Limit Voting).[17] As shown in Table 4, we use OLS regression, where the dependent variable is the level of agreement with the statement of interest. For each frame, we first regress the dependent variable on the treatment condition (in this case, *Treatment* signifies a respondent receiving the article that includes corrective

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[17] We did not include this condition in the national sample in an effort to maximize the number of participants in the treatment conditions focused on ISI.

information contradicting the misperception) as well as an indicator variable for ideology, *Ideology*. For the Sessions Frame, this variable is coded "1" for conservatives and "0" for nonconservatives. For the Holder Frame, this variable is "1" for liberals and "0" for nonliberals. Then we estimate a model that includes an interaction of these variables (*Interaction = Treatment x Ideology*).

Here, we expect a negative coefficient on *Treatment* to indicate that respondents are less likely to agree with the attitudinal statement which is in line with the elite message after receiving the corrective information (Hypothesis 2). In terms of *Ideology* (and as an additional test of Hypothesis 1), we expect a positive coefficient on this variable, which would indicate that ideologues are more likely to believe the misperception (conservatives for voter fraud and liberals for voter suppression). We expect a positive coefficient on *Interaction*, meaning that ideology limits the effectiveness of corrections to ideologically congruent misperceptions.

The results presented in Table 4 for the Sessions Frame support the hypotheses related to the *Treatment* and *Ideology*. In the first model, respondents who receive corrective information to the Sessions-expressed misperception are less likely to agree with the misperception by over a third of a point on a 7-point scale. Within this group, conservatives are significantly more likely (.552 points) to agree with the misperception compared to nonconservatives. The direct effects of the treatment and ideology are comparable in the second model; however, the interaction term is not significant. In other words, the impact of the treatment does not vary with ideology.

The lower panel in Table 4 examines the Holder Frame. As expected, the positive coefficient on *Ideology* suggests that liberals are significantly more likely than nonliberals to agree with the misperception expressed in DV2. *Treatment* in the initial model is not significant, however, in the second model it is statistically significant but in the opposite direction of our prediction. Also, against our expectation, the interaction term is actually negative. In other words, the treatment condition leads to greater agreement with the misperception for nonliberals (*Treatment*) but less agreement for liberals in the treatment condition (*Interaction*), meaning liberals are accepting corrective information. Specifically, this model predicts a nonliberal in the control group would report a dependent variable of 3.117, or slight disagreement with the misperception, however, a nonliberal in the treatment group who receives the correction would actually report a higher score of 3.553, indicating more agreement with the misperception. So nonliberals actually move away from the corrective information and closer to the position of Holder. This model predicts that an average liberal in the control group will report a DV of 4.795, or slight disagreement with the misperception, and a score of 4.501 in the treatment group. At least for liberals, this suggests corrective information leads to normatively encouraging results.

Testing ISI and Partisan Pressure (Hypotheses 4 and 5)

We contend that individuals look to others within social groups when deciding how to use new information—particularly when it is contrary to ideologically congruent beliefs. Citing the theory of ISI, we believe that ideologues receiving partisan social cues will be more likely to "follow the crowd" compared to those who did not receive social pressure. To test this, we compare respondents who receive corrective information alone with respondents who receive that same corrective information plus a signal whether other partisans accepted (Hypothesis 4: positive ISI) or rejected (Hypothesis 5: negative ISI) the corrective information. The models analyzed below take an identical form as those discussed above: we first regress the level of agreement as the dependent variable on *Treatment* and *Ideology*, and then we add in the *Interaction* term.

Positive ISI

In general, we expect the average respondent to follow social pressure, thus we expect a negative coefficient on *Treatment* when respondents are told seven of ten partisans *accept* corrective information. This means positive ISI produces less agreement with the misperception. We still anticipate ideological predispositions to color the level of agreement with misperceptions (positive coefficient on *Ideology*), but we think liberals (conservatives) who receive social pressure from Democrats (Republicans) will be more likely to follow the social influence in the treatment condition than nonideologues. As such, we expect a negative coefficient on the *Interaction* term, which would indicate support for Hypothesis 4.

Across both frames and in both samples, *Ideology* continues to be significant and positive (Table 5). For *Treatment*, we see significant results for only the Sessions Frame in the student sample. Here, regardless of whether the interaction term is included, receiving social pressure via a cue that seven of ten Republicans accept the corrective information leads respondents in the treatment condition to report less agreement that voter fraud is a significant problem (support for Hypothesis 4). The interaction term's lack of significance in each of the models shows that ideologues and nonideologues react to the treatment condition in the same fashion. In sum, Table 5 shows that ideology continues to influence attitudes on voter ID, however, positive ISI does not occur consistently; when it does occur, the effects of partisan signals are not unique for ideologues.

Negative ISI

In Table 6, we compare respondents who receive the elite vignette and correction alone with respondents who also receive negative ISI, or, a message that seven of ten partisans *reject* the correction. Here, we still expect a positive coefficient on *Ideology*, which we find consistently. We still expect the average respondent to follow social pressure, however, given that pressure doubles down on the misperception, here we expect a positive coefficient on *Treatment*. When

ideologues receive a message that the corrective information elicited a backfire effect among co-partisans, the impact of the correction will be reduced. As such, we expect a positive coefficient on *Interaction*. In these models, the effect of negative ISI is only significant and in the expected direction for the national sample using the Sessions Frame. When respondents in this treatment condition learn that seven of ten Republicans reject the corrective information and double down on the idea that voter fraud is a significant problem, respondents are more likely to agree with the misperception compared to respondents who do not receive the social pressure.

Interestingly, in the national sample for both frames, the interaction term is actually negative, which means that when liberals (conservatives) in the Holder (Sessions) Frame learn that a majority of Democrats (Republicans) reject the corrective information, these ideologues actually go in the opposite direction by about three-quarters of a point. In other words, these ideologues are accepting corrective information that contradicts a political elite as well as a majority of partisans that they would likely identify with. That is, these subjects are resisting elite messages as well as social pressure by accepting corrective information, which is normatively pleasing.[18]

As an alternative test of the impact of ISI, we compare the experimental conditions where respondents receive negative ISI (as the baseline condition) with those who receive positive ISI (*Treatment*) in Table 7. In line with the predictions for Table 5, we expect a negative coefficient on *Treatment*, a positive coefficient on *Ideology*, and a negative coefficient on *Interaction*. Table 7 shows that receiving positive ISI (that partisans accept corrective information) leads respondents to reduce agreement with the misperception in the Sessions Frame, but the treatment is never significant in the Holder Frame. *Ideology* is significant in all but one model.

Interestingly, in the Sessions Frame when the interaction term is included, the coefficient on *Interaction* is significant and in the opposite direction of our prediction. In comparing conservatives who learn that other Republicans accepted the corrective information to conservatives who learn that other Republicans rejected the corrective information, we find that the former are more likely to agree with the misperception that fraud is a significant problem. In other words, learning that a majority of Republicans are softening their beliefs on the problem of voter fraud generates a slight backfire effect to social pressure (p < .10). So, while we failed to find significant instances of a backfire effect to correction information alone, we do see one instance of a small backfire effect to social pressure that stems from such a correction.

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[18] It is always possible that this is an example of the Hawthorne Effect where subjects suspect the behavior we are expecting to elicit with a treatment and go in the opposite direction.

Discussion

We find support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, but the support for the other hypotheses is not consistent across our samples or frames. The fundamental takeaway from this project is that, on voter ID laws, the backfire effect happens mainly with negative information social influence, but ideology does not exacerbate it. In fact, ideologues seemed to temper their misperceptions even with negative ISI. Most of the time, we find that when people encounter corrective information, they update their attitudes to reflect the truth rather than anchor in their misperceptions. Here, we consider what our analysis and mixed results mean for scholarship on information processing and for our theoretical framework regarding ISI.

First of all—and least surprisingly—we find evidence of polarized support of misperceptions with a particular political valence (Hypothesis 1). Liberal (conservative) respondents expressed greater support for a misperception with a liberal (conservative) valence. This also suggests that our experiment was designed and worked as intended in this respect—selection of voter ID as an issue and our articulation of particular misperceptions did seem to activate some aspect of ideology among respondents. Next, we have evidence that corrective information can have corrective effects (Hypothesis 2). Respondents exposed to ideologically congruent misperceptions expressed by partisan elites showed lower levels of agreement with the misperception when exposed to corrective information, which is encouraging for normative theories of democracy: corrections and fact-checking had their intended effects of reducing false beliefs. We find limited evidence of backfire effects, consistent with other recent research (see e.g., Wood and Porter 2018).

We make a further contribution to the understanding of misperceptions, however, by considering the social dynamics of corrective information. Positive ISI can reduce agreement with misperceptions, yet this effect is not consistently different for ideologues. Our negative ISI experimental treatment provided respondents with stronger pressure to exhibit a backfire effect—in addition to the corrective information, they received a signal that partisans for whom the misperception was ideologically congruent rejected the corrective information in favor of the misperception. Counter to expectations, yet positive in a normative sense, evidence from our national sample suggests the public may be resistant to this pressure. There is also little evidence to suggest this negative ISI led to a backfire effect.

The evidence regarding our novel theory of how ISI affects information processing is decidedly indeterminate. We found support for some of our hypotheses, but this support was mixed across frames and samples. While our evidence cannot conclusively say whether ISI is a relevant mechanism for voters processing new information, several factors may explain our results. Perhaps citizens are careful, independent thinkers, as democratic theorists hope; individuals may care more about being factually accurate than toeing their party's line. In fact, this is almost certainly true in the abstract—no one takes

pride in being a mindless conformist. The social psychological mechanisms we are attempting to explore surely vary significantly across various contexts. It is likely that corrections are less effective when misperceptions are strongly entrenched, and corrections may vary in credibility. The effects of social pressure are sensitive to a variety of factors—how strongly individuals identify with the group providing ISI (e.g., if a "true" conservative feels the Republican Party has abandoned its conservative roots), how strongly individuals believe a person or subgroup represents the group as a whole, and how strongly connected a particular belief or behavior is to group belonging.

As a consequence, our results may be an artifact of the precise specifications of our design rather than providing more generalizable evidence concerning how people update their beliefs in light of social pressure. For example, there are some differences between our samples, which were gathered several months apart. The salience of voter ID across our samples may have also impacted our results, and it is also possible partisans did not feel an attachment to the stated misperceptions and/or to the partisan elites giving voice to them. Also, our seven of ten partisans cue may have been too vague to signal meaningful information concerning what the partisan social group believes. Given our ambiguous results, we suspect that our experimental specification was ultimately too abstract to activate the ISI mechanisms our theory articulates—a conclusion that is interesting on its own—and also too limited in statistical power when dissecting ideological groups. Nonetheless, our results suggest that Americans are not as susceptible to a backfire effect on voter ID attitudes as we might have thought, and that is a potential win for democracy. To be sure, the evidence we collected was interesting and suggestive enough to warrant further testing of our theoretical expectations via improved research designs.

Despite the limitations, we believe the findings presented here are important in their own right, but also show a path for future research on the effects of ISI and the role of misperceptions in a democracy, both in the United States and abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted much of the debate around voter ID in the United States to the appropriateness of voting by mail in the 2020 elections. Early evidence suggests the debate was both salient and polarized (Younis 2020), likely enhanced by rhetoric from political elites, including Donald Trump and Joe Biden (Garrison 2020). Yet, even outside of these issues, scholars may consider the potential impact of ISI within other contexts. For example, scholars could apply a similar experimental design when studying misperceptions concerning climate change (Nisbet, Cooper, and Garrett 2015), police violence and the criminal justice system (Esberg, Mummolo, and Westwood n.d.), immigration (Hopkins, Sides, and Citrin 2019), or issues related to health-care response (Deslatte 2020; Lewandowsky *et al.* 2012). Outside of the U.S. context, scholars who focus on issues related to "fact checking" or propaganda (Graves and Cherubini 2016; Huang 2018) may also benefit from considering the role of ISI in modifying the effects of misperceptions. Regardless of the issue domain or

context, our research encourages scholars to further consider the social context within which misinformation and corrections are embedded.

Appendix A

Holder—Voter Suppression Frame
Eric Holder Rips Republicans for Trying to Make it More Difficult to Vote
Washington (AP)—As of January, 34 states have enacted laws obligating voters to show a photo ID at the polls. Republicans who have pushed the legislation say the requirement will reduce fraud, but Democrats insist the laws are a GOP effort to reduce Democratic turnout on Election Day.

In response to these efforts, Eric Holder, the former Attorney General under the Obama Administration, says it's "shameful" Republicans are seeking to implement photo ID laws and other measures that make it more difficult to vote.

Holder accused Republicans of trying to suppress potential voters who are less likely to support them:

"Some Republicans have declared, 'If you can't beat 'em, change the rules.' Make it more difficult for those least likely to support Republican candidates to vote," he said. "This is done with the knowledge that by simply depressing the votes of certain groups, not even winning the majority vote of these groups, elections can in fact be effective."

CORRECTIVE INFORMATION (included in newspaper article) Contrary to Holder's statements, however, a large body of evidence raises a number of questions about these conclusions. One study finds that the true number of registered voters without photo identification is usually much lower than what Holder would suggest.

The demographic profile of voters without identification—young, nonwhite, poor, immobile, elderly—is similar to the profile of voters who do not usually vote anyway.

Multiple studies conducted over several years, have generally found that voter ID laws have little to no effect on voter turnout, even when looking at specific racial groups. In fact, voters who lack photo ID at the polls on Election Day will still cast provisional ballots.

While some research shows voter ID has a small negative effect on turnout (less than 1 percent), this reduction of turnout would only matter in the closest elections. To date, there is no evidence to suggest voter ID laws have changed any election outcome.

DEMOCRATS ACCEPT INFO (Positive ISI) What do you think about the scientific evidence suggesting voter ID laws do not significantly affect voter turnout and elections in the United States? We presented similar information to a focus group of Democrats, and then we asked how this information impacted their views. Many of them started to question their beliefs about voter ID laws.

"That's different from what I believed," said one Democrat, "but I guess those are the facts."

Another agreed, "I used to think voter ID laws suppressed turnout, but if they don't, maybe requiring voter IDs isn't as problematic as I once thought."

In all, seven of ten Democrats presented with this information about the limited effect of voter ID laws said that they were now skeptical about whether requiring voter IDs is really a significant problem in the United States.

DEMOCRATS BACKFIRE (Negative ISI) What do you think about the scientific evidence suggesting voter ID laws do not significantly affect voter turnout and elections in the United States? We presented similar information to a focus group of Democrats, and then we asked how this information impacted their views. Many of them were just as concerned (or even more concerned) about voter ID laws.

"Those may be the facts," said one, "but I know what I believe." Another agreed, "The impact of voter ID laws is real whether those 'facts' say it is or not. With politics these days, you can't always trust what you read."

In all, seven of ten Democrats presented with information about the limited effect of voter ID laws actually increased their concern about requiring voter IDs in in United States.

Sessions—Voter Fraud Frame

Jeff Sessions Endorses Stronger Voter ID Laws to Prevent Voter Fraud
Washington (AP)—As of January, 34 states have enacted laws obligating voters to show a photo ID at the polls. Republicans who have pushed the legislation say the requirement will reduce fraud, but Democrats insist the laws are a GOP effort to reduce Democratic turnout on Election Day.

In support of these efforts, Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General for the Trump Administration, says it's "shameful" Democrats are seeking to fight photo ID laws and other measures that protect the integrity of elections.

"Voter ID is a logical, even necessary, solution to combat the plague of voter fraud," Sessions declared to resounding applause. "There were likely millions of illegal ballots cast in 2016 because no one can verify that voters are who they say they are."

Defending voter ID requirements, subsequent Republican speakers echoed Sessions' concerns about voter fraud, claiming that the problem is widespread. State voter identification laws, they argue, will make it much more difficult to cast fraudulent votes by impersonating another voter.

CORRECTIVE INFORMATION (included in newspaper article) Contrary to Sessions' statements, however, there is a large body of evidence raising a number of questions about his claims. Studies suggest both voter fraud and voter impersonation are so exceedingly rare they are nearly nonexistent.

Research looking into issues of voter fraud found that in the few instances of voters voting under the wrong name or in the wrong precinct, these events were all inadvertent mistakes due to clerical or other nonintended errors.

Additionally, in several court cases at the appellate and Supreme Court levels, courts have consistently declared that evidence for in-person voter fraud is basically nonexistent in the United States.

Finally, at various times, the United States and other state governments have convened special taskforces or commissions to investigate voter fraud and voting irregularities. These commissions all conclude that voter fraud, to the extent it happens at all, is never substantial enough to change an election, and is almost never intentional.

REPUBLICANS ACCEPT INFO (Positive ISI) What do you think about the scientific evidence suggesting the rarity of voter fraud in elections in the United States? We presented similar information to a focus group of Republicans, and then we asked how this information impacted their views. Many of them started to question their beliefs about voter fraud.

"That's different from what I believed," said one Republican, "but I guess those are the facts." Another agreed, "I used to think voter fraud was a serious problem, but if it isn't, maybe requiring voter IDs isn't as necessary as I once thought."

In all, seven to ten Republicans presented with this information about voter fraud's rarity said that they were now skeptical about whether voter fraud is really a significant problem in United States.

REPUBLICANS BACKFIRE (Negative ISI) What do you think about the scientific evidence suggesting the rarity of voter fraud in the United States? We presented similar information to a focus group of Republicans, and then we asked how this information impacted their views. Many of them were just as concerned (or even more concerned) about voter fraud.

"Those may be the facts," said one, "but I know what I believe." Another agreed, "Voter fraud is real whether those 'facts' say it exists or not. With politics these days, you can't always trust what you read."

In all, seven to ten Republicans presented with information about voter fraud's rarity actually increased their concern about voter fraud as a problem in the United States.

Appendix B

Table B. Attitudes on Voter ID and the Integrity of Elections in the United States

"Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies…"

Student Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		34	74	75	152	134	209	109	787
Liberal	281	7%	18%	14%	21%	16%	19%	6%	100%
Moderate	242	4%	7%	10%	22%	17%	27%	12%	100%
Conservative	266	2%	4%	4%	15%	18%	34%	24%	100%
Total	789	4%	10%	10%	19%	17%	26%	14%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 107.55 p = .000

National Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		68	54	69	149	139	131	167	777
Liberal	280	17%	13%	13%	19%	15%	11%	13%	100%
Moderate	254	5%	5%	9%	27%	20%	16%	18%	100%
Conservative	243	4%	2%	4%	12%	19%	24%	36%	100%
Total	777	9%	7%	9%	19%	18%	17%	21%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 131.60 p = .000

(Continues)

Appendix B. (Continued)

"Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws…"

Student Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		113	158	124	199	83	82	27	786
Liberal	277	5%	12%	16%	34%	14%	14%	5%	100%
Moderate	244	9%	20%	18%	28%	13%	10%	2%	100%
Conservative	265	29%	28%	14%	15%	5%	7%	3%	100%
Total	786	14%	20%	16%	25%	11%	10%	3%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 125.37 p = .000

National Sample	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
		154	103	93	186	92	76	73	777
Liberal	280	7%	9%	14%	27%	13%	19%	13%	100%
Moderate	254	16%	14%	15%	32%	11%	5%	8%	100%
Conservative	243	39%	18%	7%	13%	12%	5%	7%	100%
Total	777	20%	13%	12%	24%	12%	10%	9%	100%

Chi Sq(12) = 148.53 p = .000

Note: Each table displays row percentages with totals in bold; cells are shaded within each row from low (red) to high (green) to symbolize the variance within each ideological group.

Appendix C

Table C1. Testing for a Backfire Effect

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

	Student Sample		National Sample	
Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	$-.331^{\dagger}$	(.228)	$-.437^{\dagger}$	(.279)
Ideology	1.057***	(.242)	.890**	(.350)
Interaction	–	–	.320	(.485)
Constant	4.593***	(.176)	4.643***	(.192)
	N = 199		N = 199	
	R-squared = .095		R-squared = .097	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

	Student Sample		National Sample	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	.273	(.221)	.503*	(.276)
Ideology	1.192***	(.230)	1.497***	(.319)
Interaction	–	–	$-.631^{\dagger}$	(.459)
Constant	2.755***	(.183)	2.632***	(.203)
	N = 195		N = 195	
	R-squared = .116		R-squared = .134	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving corrective information after receiving elite message (Control is only elite message). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of our elections."* Holder Frame: *"Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws to ensure the integrity of our elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Table C2. The Impact of Positive Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

	Student Sample				National Sample			
Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.250	(.230)	−.268	(.287)	−.170	(.239)	.001	(.285)
Ideology	1.236***	(.240)	1.210***	(.339)	1.489***	(.261)	1.751***	(.353)
Interaction	–	–	.051	(.481)	–	–	−.574	(.523)
Constant	4.197***	(.185)	4.206***	(.205)	4.105***	(.184)	4.021***	(.200)
	N = 199		N = 199		N = 263		N = 263	
	R-squared = .125		R-squared = .125		R-squared = .114		R-squared = .119	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	−.098	(.226)	−.057	(.277)	.154	(.209)	.087	(.258)
Ideology	.803***	(.240)	.866**	(.341)	1.019	(.220)	.922**	(.312)
Interaction	–	–	−.124	(.482)	–	–	.195	(.440)
Constant	3.155***	(.177)	3.134***	(.194)	3.202***	(.162)	3.234***	(.177)
	N = 197		N = 197		N = 271		N = 271	
	R-squared = .055		R-squared = .056		R-squared = .077		R-squared = .078	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving positive ISI that seven to ten partisans accepted corrective information (Control receives negative ISI). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1–7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of our elections."* Holder Frame: *"Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws to ensure the integrity of our elections."* One-tailed significance tests where
†$p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Table C3. The Impact of Negative Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

	Student Sample				National Sample			
Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	.316[†]	(.236)	.442[†]	(.282)	.356[†]	(.218)	.534*	(.258)
Ideology	1.028***	(.256)	1.210***	(.340)	1.478***	(.239)	1.751***	(.319)
Interaction	–	–	−.423	(.518)	–	–	−.620[†]	(.481)
Constant	4.273***	(.188)	4.206**	(.205)	4.108***	(.167)	4.021***	(.180)
	N = 193		N = 193		N = 260		N = 260	
	R-squared = .081		R-squared = .084		R-squared = .134		R-squared = .140	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

	Student Sample				National Sample			
Variable	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	.212	(.212)	.286	(.268)	.032	(.224)	−.039	(.269)
Ideology	.749***	(.234)	.866**	(.335)	1.027***	(.243)	.092**	(.327)
Interaction	–	–	−.227	(.469)	–	–	.236	(.490)
Constant	3.172***	(.174)	3.134***	(.469)	3.200***	(.172)	3.234***	(.186)
	N = 202		N = 202		N = 260		N = 260	
	R-squared = .054		R-squared = .055		R-squared = .065		R-squared = .066	

Notes: *Treatment* represents receiving negative ISI that seven to ten rejected corrective information (Control receives negative ISI). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of our elections."* Holder Frame: *"Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws to ensure the integrity of our elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
[†]p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Table C4. Negative versus Positive Informational Social Influence

Sessions Frame—Voter Fraud

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	-.572**	(.231)	-.709**	(.274)	-.521*	(.244)	-.533*	(.286)
Ideology	1.056***	(.252)	.787*	(.383)	1.156***	(.274)	1.132**	(.395)
Interaction	–		.475	(.509)	–		.045	(.550)
Constant	4.582***	(.176)	4.648***	(.190)	4.549***	(.188)	4.556***	(.202)
	N = 194		N = 194		N = 247		N = 247	
	R-squared = .101		R-squared = .106		R-squared = .083		R-squared = .083	

Holder Frame—Voter IDs Limit Voting

Variable	Student Sample				National Sample			
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Treatment	-.309†	(.223)	-.343	(.274)	.113	(.220)	.126	(.267)
Ideology	.689**	(.236)	.639*	(.332)	1.135***	(.235)	1.158***	(.353)
Interaction	–		.103	(.474)	–		-.041	(.473)
Constant	3.404***	(.174)	3.420***	(.191)	3.202***	(.171)	3.195***	(.187)
	N = 201		N = 201		N = 253		N = 253	
	R-squared = .050		R-squared = .050		R-squared = .088		R-squared = .088	

Notes: Treatment represents receiving positive ISI that seven to ten partisans accepted corrective information (Control receives negative ISI). *Ideology* represents conservatives (vs. nonconservatives) in the Sessions Frame and liberals (vs. nonliberals) in the Holder Frame. DV (1-7, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree): Sessions Frame: *"Legislators should seek to put in place stronger voter ID policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of our elections."* Holder Frame: *"Legislators should seek to eliminate voter ID laws to ensure the integrity of our elections."*
One-tailed significance tests where
†p ≤ .10; * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** ≤ .001.

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