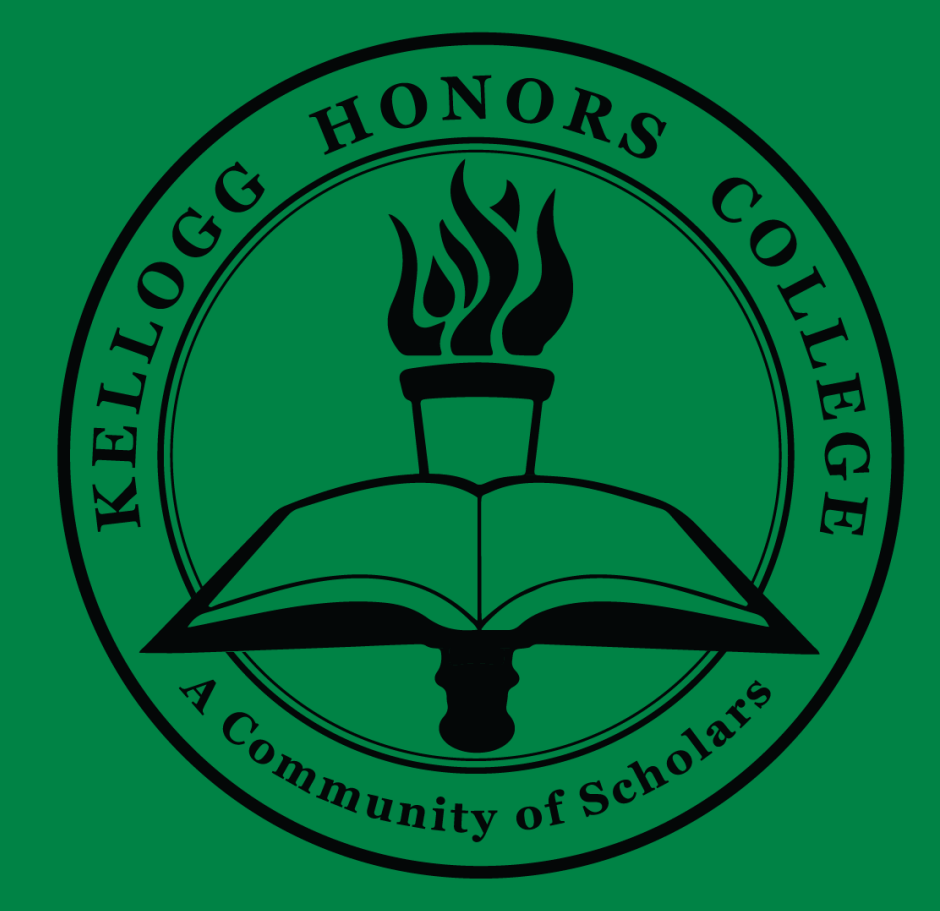




Misinformation Correction in Preschoolers: Exploring the Backfire Effect to Unlicensed Negation

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Introduction

- Previous research has demonstrated the continued influence effect, in which the first piece of information someone receives is generally what they'll believe in (Johnson & Seifert, 1994).
- No technique has been found to eliminate belief in misinformation completely. Techniques such as retraction can only minimize, not eliminate belief in misinformation.
- A backfire effect can occur when attempting to correct misinformation, leading an individual to more strongly believe that the misinformation is true.

Purpose & Hypothesis

The present aims to study whether the presence of misinformation influences the effects of negative corrections on preschool-aged children.

We hypothesized that:

1. When children are exposed to misinformation, negative corrections will reduce belief in misinformation relative to no correction.
2. When not exposed to misinformation, negative corrections are expected to increase mentions of the target item relative to no correction.

Method

Materials: An animated slideshow was presented to each subject. Each video depicted one of eight colorful boxes, animated teacher character, and several animated child characters in a classroom setting. Information regarding the contents of the boxes was presented auditorily.

Procedure: Children individually met with the experimenter to watch a brief slideshow depicting the contents of eight colorful boxes.

1. Box was presented by teacher figure.



“Here is the pink box”

2. Child #1 either did or did not make a false statement regarding the contents of the box



“There are marbles in the box”

3. Child #2 provided a correction or no correction



“Actually, there are not marbles in the box”

4. After each sequence, the child was asked what they thought was inside the box.

Subject Recruitment

Subjects were recruited from the following:

- Cal Poly Pomona’s Children’s Center with parental consent and they received a small toy as compensation. Children provided their assent before participating in the study.
- Online social media ads with parental consent and they received \$10 in gift card form as compensation. Children provided their assent before participating in the study.

Discussion

- The misinformation effect extends to adults as well as children, with preschoolers having been found to be the most susceptible to misinformation (Bruck & Ceci, 1999)
- These anticipated results would demonstrate a backfire effect in which a corrections can potentially increase belief in misinformation without prior exposure, particularly in young children who are frequently being exposed to new information and corrections.

Contact

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