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Misinformation was the theme of a recent American Political Science Association annual meeting. The World Economic Forum assessed that misinformation is the most pressing global risk, surpassing interstate war and climate change. The World Health Organization proclaimed an "infodemic" marked by rising popular distrust in public health communication. Misinformation and citizens' psychological responses to it are the foremost concerns of scientific bodies and government agencies globally. Fifteen years ago, however, political scientists working on misinformation were researching an emergent but still fringe question. This new literature's democratic stakes were high: could people acquire factual information, or would they be at the credulous whims of those who provide politically attractive falsehoods? Adam Berinsky, the author of *Political Rumors: Why We Accept Misinformation and How to Fight It* has been at the forefront of this research since 2012. His excellent book serves two key functions.

It is first an excellent synthesis of Berinsky's research on misinformation, full of clearly explicated experiments on the ways people respond to being misinformed, and the ways they respond to being corrected. Other chapters are more theoretical and provide revealing intuitions for conceiving of misinformation as a stone causing ripples among a possible audience. Second, the book is an absorbing intellectual history of the shifting academic consensus around the science of misinformation. Along with Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, Berinsky is the uncontested pioneer of the political science literature on this topic, and any reader interested in the interplay of different researchers coalescing on a new scientific consensus will enjoy this book.

The book is structured into three broad sections. Berinsky opens the book by making a claim that the term misinformation, widely used to describe this area, would be better replaced with "rumors." In Berinsky's telling, this is not an inconsequential distinction. Rumors better evoke the mechanism by which people become systematically misinformed—as the result of a largely social process, and he evokes the analogy of rumors spreading across a population as if they were waves following a disturbance in a pond. At the core of the pond are motivated misinformation entrepreneurs. Proximate to them are the consumers who are hungry for a salacious, politically amenable rumor. Distant to the entrepreneurs, found at the pond's periphery, are the skeptics. These people are both cognitively equipped to evaluate improbable claims and are unlikely to find them politically amenable. Finally, in the middle, are those undecided people who are not expressly seeking

political falsehoods but who are also ill-equipped to test rumors' accuracy. It's among this group where rumors gain their social potency. In formulating the rumor diffusion process as largely social, Berinsky distinguishes himself from scholars who emphasize the vital role of elite rhetoric in misinforming the public. Berinsky's account has a role for elites, but their influence will most come on the question of corrective efficacy.

The next section studies the traits of those inclined to accept misinformation, and those subjects responsive to various countermeasures. Berinsky addresses the possibility that survey respondents are merely indulging a researcher and providing "expressive responses" when addressing misinformation survey items. Rather than expressing a truly held belief, these answers might be an evocation of distrust and political hostility. Across an array of techniques intended to measure this possibility, Berinsky finds that agreement with misinformation is as sincere and as temporally stable as other commonly measured political attitudes. Contra Richard Hofstadter's pioneering work on a conspiratorial style of American conservatism, Berinsky reports that while the specific rumors popular among partisans differ, both Republicans and Democrats adopt rumors they perceive as advantageous. Alongside this partisan story, three personality dimensions are found to predict rumor adoption along the political spectrum: political disengagement (measured with items tapping distrust in elected officials), political dogmatism (measured with items that prefer political certainty over indecision), and political information. Using correlational evidence, dogmatism and disengagement promote rumor acceptance, while political information hinders it.

By studying the efficacy of rumor correction, Berinsky returns to the topic of his most famous misinformation paper, which alleged that attempts to correct misinformation can inadvertently entrench the misinformation through repetition of the false claim, even when debunking it. In this book, Berinsky largely disclaims these effects' prevalence. While numerous of Berinsky's experiments condition the magnitude of the correction effects or their durability, he establishes that corrective information does not tend to separately compound subjects' factual inaccuracy. The one exception is an experiment that attempts to replicate a backfire when conservatives are corrected on the topic of weapons of mass destruction absence. In this case, Berinsky finds "the substantive effect suggests that … correction leads to a worldview backfire effect among the most conservative respondents," and yet the statistical imprecision of the finding leaves the reader uncertain as to what they should conclude from this suggestive result. Berinsky also finds that what he calls "surprising" sources of correction—statements of correction against a speaker's political interest—are unusually effective.

The book's final chapter provides a compelling description of the partisan asymmetries in the behavior

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of Democratic and Republican elites, and the difference in both parties' information environment. Republican elites are shown to be much more likely to tweet low-integrity news media outlets. When providing corrective information in news media, Republican elites are found to be far more ambiguous or to provide wiggle room in the audience's interpretation of a debunked claim. Interestingly, Berinsky's experiments in this chapter do not find that correction ambiguity affects the corrections' efficacy, nor does he find that the partisanship of the correction source influences subjects' accuracy. This evidence demonstrates that much theorizing about political context remains important for the study of misinformation adherence.

Fourteen years ago, Berinsky was a skeptic as to the effectiveness of corrective interventions. Reflecting the experimental consensus in the interim, this book finds that corrections' effectiveness seems stubbornly robust, despite concerted efforts to locate heterogeneity. Berinsky wisely counsels that no single informational countermeasure should be regarded as a "silver bullet." To this end, researchers continue to develop interventions designed to familiarize subjects with the rhetorical particularities of misinformation, and with the kinds of news media outlets where misinformation sources are more likely to be found. In this context, Berinsky's most important contribution might be against the conclusion of the most pessimistic researchers, who might conclude that misinformation poses an existential threat to democratic vitality and citizens' basic factual competence. Instead, this book powerfully affirms the multiple opportunities for academics, journalists, and government agencies to better arm democratic citizens with the necessary tools to acquire accurate information. *Political Rumors* serves as both an enlightening synthesis of Berinsky's extensive research and a beacon of hope, illustrating the many ways we can empower democratic citizens to discern and reject misinformation.