

Appendix 1: Stimuli for Experiment 1

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| Denial of Assertion | When interviewed by investigators shortly after the deadly police shooting, Officer McMillan reported that he had fired his weapon “[about] 20 times over a period of several minutes”. This was contradicted by witnesses in the officer’s trial. A ballistics expert testified that the officer had actually fired 37 times, not [about] 20. Defense attorneys are expected to call further witnesses to dispute this evidence. |
| Denial of Assertion | Asked whether he’s ready to finally retire, actor and screenwriter Henry Gordon says with a laugh: “I’ve probably worked on [about] a hundred movies, and I’m still not tired of this job in the slightest.” After all these years, the 84-year-old’s determination is still only matched by his tendency for understatement. His resume of film work certainly is not limited to [about] a hundred films. As any film buff knows, Gordon is credited on over 250 Hollywood productions during his seven-decade career. |
| Denial of Assertion | A report from the National Commission on Teaching distorts the evidence on teacher hiring, claiming for example that “[about] 15 percent of all newly hired teachers have no training in pedagogy and teaching methods.” Other data show a different picture. A recent national survey found that only 4 percent – not [about] 15 percent – of newly hired teachers had taken no courses in teaching methods. The commission’s claim regarding the hiring of teachers with emergency certificates is also exaggerated. |
| Denial of Assertion | Local businessman Garrett Hampton was widely praised for his generosity when he announced publicly that he had donated “[about] 600 fully stocked first-aid kits” to the local Red Cross. The agency is one of several charities assisting families affected by the recent hurricane. However, the Red Cross said today that it didn’t receive [about] 600 first-aid kits from Mr. Hampton. In reality, the agency claims he donated no more than 50. |
| Explicit Contrast | A hundred years ago, there were only something like 50 pages of laws and legal statutes on the books in the town of New Chesterfield. The changes since then reflect the ways in which our society has grown more complex, more interconnected, and perhaps even more dangerous. Needless to say, New Chesterfield’s legal code isn’t [about] 50 pages long anymore. Take a trip to City Hall today and you’ll find over 2,000 pages of laws regulating everything from cell phone use to automatic weapons. |
| Explicit Contrast | This year, the Jefferson County Fair featured a special showcase on wool farming, at which local farmers were invited to exhibit around 25 sheep of their preferred breed. Apparently farmer John Wyeth didn’t receive the booklet of instructions for exhibitors. On the day of the event he didn’t bring [about] 25 sheep. Instead, he brought 40, which made him seem like he was trying to show off. |

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| Explicit Contrast | Political commentator James Cusack was asked to write an article of around 400 words for the Wall Street Journal about his hopes for the new president. It had been a polarizing election, and Cusack considered virtually all of the president-elect's policy proposals misguided and needlessly divisive. He told the paper's editor that he didn't have [about] 400 words to say on the topic. In fact, he only had four: "I hope he fails." |
| Explicit Contrast | Educational experts have determined that high school students need approximately twenty pages of daily reading to be adequately prepared for college. Diane Harlan, an English teacher at Lincoln High School, is trying hard to build a curriculum that reflects these recommendations. But her students simply will not read [about] twenty pages a night. She usually assigns them ten pages and a short writing task instead. |
| Implicit Contrast | For most prestigious sports awards, the winners are selected by small committees made up of prominent coaches and officials. For these awards, an athlete does not necessarily need national media exposure in order to be a serious contender. The Heisman trophy is different, because the winner is not selected by [about] 25 voters. Rather, a total of 920 journalists and athletes from around the country will decide who wins college football's most desired accolade. |
| Implicit Contrast | When Pete Castro was just starting out as a blues guitarist, he played three shows a night in rundown clubs that few fans had ever heard of. Laughing, he recalls: "I remember I'd feel on top of the world if someone came up after my set to buy a CD." These days, Castro doesn't play to audiences of [about] 15 people anymore. Last night there were over 10,000 people at his sold-out show at the Lightning Dome. |
| Implicit Contrast | There was a time when buffalo were ubiquitous in what is now Oklahoma. That's not the case anymore, but new conservation projects are transforming old ranch land into tall-grass prairies big enough to sustain buffalo herds. Of course, the state will never have [about] two million buffalo again. But wildlife experts are hopeful that these measures will increase the number of these majestic animals, which now stands at less than five thousand in the entire state. |
| Implicit Contrast | When Fred Daniels made bean collecting into a full-time hobby, he started a bean catalog that soon became a "must have" for avid gardeners. He is equally passionate about the history of bean cultivation in America. As he points out with enthusiasm, back at the time of Christ there weren't [about] 1,200 varieties of beans in this country. In those days there were only a few, but as the Indians traded them across the country, certain changes took place. |
| Unlicensed | American Woodmark is a manufacturer of kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities. Home centers, including Home Depot, Lowe's, and Builder's Square, account for most of the company's business. The Virginia-based company currently doesn't produce [about] 100 styles of cabinets. As demand for new housing continues to rise, American Woodmark hopes to expand their range of products in the coming years. |
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| Unlicensed | Burger Palace is an enduring local institution. Eisenhower was in the White House when the restaurant served the very first of its now famous hamburgers. A small location sandwiched between a bookstore and the local bank, Burger Palace doesn't cater to [about] forty diners on a typical weekday. The clientele includes locals, families, friends, tour groups and workers from nearby businesses. |
| Unlicensed | A local man in his thirties was sentenced to ninety days in jail for shoplifting at Southtown Pharmacy. The man is seen on surveillance cameras stuffing candy bars into a canvas bag. In total, the man did not steal [about] twenty candy bars. In issuing the jail sentence, judge Horace Mackey cited the man's extensive past history of theft and apparent lack of remorse for his crime. |
| Control - Good | Clothing firm Timberland markets to shoppers who care about the outdoors, but also about style. The 'outdoor lifestyle', as they dub their target consumer, is a city dweller who goes for a casual afternoon hike or bike ride. It's someone who wants versatile clothes that blend in rather than stand out. In pursuing this segment, Timberland is able to tap into a growing trend in the fashion marketplace. |
| Control - Good | Federal Reserve chairperson Janet Yellen is urging a go-slow approach on Social Security reform. Testifying on Capitol Hill today, Yellen said she supports the idea of reform, but she said she is concerned about keeping the financial markets stable. But she did not offer any concrete ideas on how to fix the Social Security system long term. Congressional Democrats have been hammering the president's Social Security plan for days. |
| Control - Good | Investors and industry analysts are worried that Volvo's factories are too inefficient for the company to withstand foreign competition. However, Volvo executives point to their big assembly factory in Ghent, Belgium, as a sign that they can be competitive. About 40 hours of labor are required to weld, paint and assemble a car at the plant. That is fairly good compared with other European luxury car plants. |
| Control - Good | In Afghanistan, America's war effort is supplied by civilian convoys traveling via Central Asia or Pakistan. The military's power needs in Afghanistan, a landlocked country divided by steep mountains, are vast. America's largest air base in the country uses roughly 50 megawatts of power, equivalent to a small American city. Much of the fuel for the military's power generators comes from Russia, says Sharon Burke, assistant secretary of Defense for energy matters. |
| Control - Good | Like many parents, Marc Brown likes to tell his children stories before bedtime. Brown's most recognizable character, an aardvark named Arthur, started as a bedtime story to his oldest son. Today, Brown's books about Arthur have sold nearly 10 million copies. Brown also has the highest-rated children's show on PBS, and is collaborating on a soon to be released animated film about Arthur and his animal friends. |
| Control - Good | For years, a state title in girls' basketball seemed out of reach for Jonestown High School. However, with sophomore phenom Kelly Green leading the state in scoring, the Spartans have a real shot at this year's championship. Green has scored 300 points since the start of the season, and she has a strong record of assists and rebounds. With good coaching and teamwork, victory could belong to Jonestown this spring. |

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| Control - Good | Ateeco, one of the nation's largest pierogi manufacturers, is Shenandoah, Pennsylvania's biggest employer. While large and small companies everywhere are laying off workers, word already is out that Ateeco will be expanding this year. Not many people in Shenandoah had heard of pierogies a decade ago. Now, nearly everyone in town knows about the flaky vegetable- or meat-filled turnovers from Poland. |
| Control - Bad | On the second day of the NFL draft, the Redskins used one of their five selections to pick Stanford quarterback Todd Husak. The Redskins bypassed another quarterback they liked, Georgia Tech's Joe Hamilton, to select Husak. According to Coach Norv Turner, the Redskins haven't made some decisions about their backup quarterback situation. But last week's signing of Jeff George almost certainly meant the end of Rodney Peete's tenure with the Redskins. |
| Control - Bad | The first time a street of model homes was used to sell a subdivision, couples walked in and out of the row of nine model houses. They waited in line later, and when it was their turn, they went inside the barn-like sales office with its rows of desks, behind each of which sat a member of the sales team. The salesmen did not encourage someone to linger. The buyers signed a sales contract, looked at a map of the tract, selected a floor plan, and accepted the house they were assigned. |
| Control - Bad | Before the invention of the stethoscope, doctors listened to the sound of the heart by placing their ear against a patient's chest. But they needed a way to hear these sounds better. In 1876, a French doctor, Rene Laennec, was watching any children play. One child had her ear pressed against a long piece of wood, while another made a pinging sound with a pin at one end of the wood. At the opposite end, the child could hear the pin clearly. That gave Laennec the idea for the stethoscope. |
| Control - Bad | Despite the approaching forest fire, animal life had not completely disappeared from heart of the forest. Blue grouse were picking away at the roasted pinecones, and mice and chipmunks scurried about. The rangers saw any larger animals running from the flames. But after five days, the serenity gave way to shock, as a spot of burning debris flew across White Cap Creek and ignited the north-facing slope. |
| Control - Bad | There is construction taking place all over Jose Marti High School, including in the lobby that serves as the school's art gallery. With classes scheduled to start at the end of this month, a demolition crew is hard at work removing old drywall and tile. School administrators expect that it will take much time to re-carpet and repaint the lobby. Unfortunately, it appears that the work will not be complete before the start of the school year. |