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The contingent reputational benefits of selective exposure to partisan information

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Abstract (244/250)

Individuals often preferentially avoid information that contradicts their prior beliefs – a tendency referred to as "selective exposure." Beyond obvious decision-making costs, this phenomenon has consequences for partisan polarization. Traditionally, prior research has focused on *intrapersonal* drivers of selective exposure, including avoidance of cognitive dissonance. We take a complementary approach by investigating the conditions under which *interpersonal* concerns drive selective exposure. Drawing on a large literature on impression management, we test a social signaling model of selective exposure, which predicts that (1) individuals shift their information selection decisions to signal to observers and (2) observers reward such shifts. We test this model in the domain of partisan politics in the United States across five financially-incentivized, pre-registered experiments (N = 3,360). Our results extend prior theory by identifying three key contingencies: the type of task on which observers expect to collaborate with actors, alignment of group membership between actors and observers, and the magnitude of demonstrated selective exposure. Overall, we find that tailoring one's information selection decisions can indeed have strategic value – but only under certain theoretically-predictable conditions. Our work also identifies an actor-observer misalignment: while observers are sensitive to the type of future interaction, actors do not intuit this sensitivity. In the era of social media, when information selection decisions are more public than ever and the spread of misinformation is pervasive, understanding the ways in which reputational considerations shape decision making illuminates not only why selective exposure persists, but also suggests novel mitigation strategies.

Keywords: Selective exposure, reputation, trust, cognitive dissonance, judgment and decision making

Introduction

A large theoretical and empirical literature argues that consuming information from a diversity of sources improves judgment and decision making (Akerlof, 1970; Blackwell, 1953; Galton, 1907; Golman et al., 2017; Janis, 1982; Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005; Page, 2008; Peterson & Pitz, 1986; Stewart, 1988; Stigler, 1961; Sunstein, 2001; Surowiecki, 2005). Yet, individuals frequently select information that aligns with, rather than contradicts, their prior beliefs – a phenomenon referred to as "selective exposure," or the "congeniality bias" (Adams, 1961; Akerlof & Dickens, 1982; Dorison et al., 2019; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Frey, 1986; Frey & Rosch, 1984; Frimer et al., 2017; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010; Hart et al., 2009; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Jonas et al., 2001; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; Stroud, 2008).

Engaging in selective exposure has important consequences for judgment and decision making. Preferential consumption of ideologically-aligned information can increase divergence of political opinions (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948), create increasingly partisan information silos (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010; Sunstein, 2001), and prevent individuals from forming accurate beliefs about the world (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019). Therefore, to the extent that biased information consumption can lead to increased polarization and inferior decision-making outcomes, understanding the causes and consequences of selective exposure continues to be a pressing concern for individuals, groups, and even democracy itself.

Prior research has focused on *intrapersonal drivers of selective exposure*, with explanations primarily centered around individuals' desire to avoid negative emotions (Adams, 1961; Dorison et al., 2019; Festinger, 2001; for review, see Hart et al., 2009; Sharot & Sunstein, 2020). Specifically, researchers have theorized that exposure to information that contradicts one's prior beliefs triggers the negative affective state of cognitive dissonance, which individuals

are in turn motivated to avoid (Hart et al., 2009). However, a narrow focus on intrapersonal drivers may neglect other important causes of the phenomenon. For example, an extensive literature demonstrates that people care deeply about their reputations and the impressions they leave on others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Berman et al., 2015; Dorison & Heller, 2022; Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Tetlock, 2000, 2002; Westphal & Graebner, 2010). Indeed, much of our decision making takes place in social settings, under the watchful eyes of both friends and foes.

The Present Research

In the present research, we thus examine the *interpersonal drivers of selective exposure*. Across five pre-registered experiments, we assess both how social environments shape information selections (i.e., the reputational *causes* of selective exposure; Experiments 1 and 3) and how these selections are subsequently evaluated by observers (i.e., the reputational *consequences* of selective exposure; Experiments 2, 4 and 5). Our overarching goal is to test both the extent to which selective exposure is driven by interpersonal concerns and whether such concerns are justified.

We first draw upon conventional selective exposure paradigms to explore these questions (i.e. observing the choices participants make when offered a menu of information sources such as news articles or websites of politicians; Experiments 1-2). We then develop a novel, incentive-compatible paradigm which allows us to explicitly consider a common trade-off between impression-management goals and decision quality (Experiments 3-5).

In these experiments, we also go beyond the prior literature to test three situational features that might moderate the reputational causes and consequences of selective exposure.

First, we test the congruence of group membership (i.e., aligned vs. unaligned). Second, we examine the type of future interaction between the actor and the observer (i.e., one focused on trust vs. judgment skill). Finally, we test whether the magnitude of selective exposure demonstrated by an actor moderates these effects. Together, our experiments explore whether engaging in selective exposure when others are watching can have strategic value under a variety of theoretically-derived conditions. We develop these theoretically-derived hypotheses below.

Selective Exposure

Research on selective exposure – the preferential consumption of information likely to support existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and preferential avoidance of information likely to challenge them (Hart et al., 2009)[1] – boasts a rich history across multiple disciplines. As early as the 1940 United States presidential election, researchers documented partisan effects on Americans' media choices (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). Later work in social psychology operationalized selective exposure in terms of alignment between an individual's information selection decisions and their personal beliefs (Adams, 1961; Stroud, 2014). And more recently, researchers have extended this framework by demonstrating that people are also more likely to consult experts who share their beliefs (Johnson et al., 2021).

Rather than focusing on alignment of sought-after information with *personal* beliefs, work in political science has focused on the alignment of information with *ingroup* beliefs – as one's ideology is often widely shared by the members of one's ingroup. For example, Iyengar and Hahn (2009) found that while Republicans preferred to read information from Fox News (a news source typically associated with a conservative viewpoint) compared to CNN and NPR

[1] Selective exposure has been defined both in terms of seeking confirming information *and* avoiding disconfirming information (Hart et al., 2009). The two are often inextricably linked in both theory and experimental paradigms (Stroud, 2014).

(news sources typically associated with a liberal viewpoint), this pattern reversed among Democrats (for related work, see Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005).

Importantly, across fields, and different methodological and theoretical perspectives, research exploring the causes of selective exposure has predominantly focused on intrapersonal drivers of the phenomenon (e.g. Dorison et al., 2019; Frimer et al., 2017; Golman et al., 2017; for reviews, see Hart et al., 2009; Stroud, 2014; Sharot & Sunstein, 2020). In particular, this work has highlighted the idea that avoiding opposing views reduces cognitive dissonance, an unpleasant state of psychological tension evoked by the presence of contradictory thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes (Adams, 1961; Festinger, 2001; Frimer et al., 2017). Based on this theorizing, selective exposure is thought to be most prominent when individuals expect conflict between new information and important views or decisions (Frey & Rosch, 1984; Jonas et al., 2001).

Social Signaling Model of Selective Exposure

In contrast to a large interdisciplinary literature on the intrapersonal drivers of selective exposure, a much smaller body of work has theorized that there could also be *interpersonal* drivers (Hart et al., 2020; Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). Whether browsing at a news stand, choosing who to "like" on social media, deciding what events to attend, or which websites to browse at work, we make many information selection decisions in full view of others. Given that individuals care deeply about their reputations, beyond simply attending to the instrumental value of information, people are likely to also be mindful of the impressions they are creating on those around them. Specifically, because members of ingroups are viewed more favorably on a variety of dimensions (Fiske, 2015; Foddy et al., 2009; Rand et al., 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 2001), people may choose to expose themselves to certain information in public to signal group

membership. Even in cases where group membership is known, preferentially selecting ingroup-aligned information might signal the strength of one's affiliation.

Classic research in economics (Spence, 1973) proposes that if an individual has a characteristic that is desirable to others, (1) the individual will send a signal associated with the relevant characteristic and (2) others will reward the individual that sends such a signal. According to the model, this equilibrium is maintained because the reward reinforces the signal. This model has been used to explain a variety of behaviors, including but not limited to: paying for highly conspicuous goods to signal wealth and attain status (Veblen, 1899), cooperating with others without looking at costs to signal trustworthiness (Hoffman et al., 2015; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, et al., 2016), and escalating commitment to failing courses of action to avoid appearing hypocritical (Dorison et al., 2021). Extending this logic to the domain of information, scholars have proposed that people selectively process specific information (Kahan, 2013) and express particular opinions (Chen et al., 1996; Earl et al., 2019; Ekstrom & Lai, 2021; Silver et al., 2021) to manage the impressions they leave on valued observers.

Comprehensively testing social signaling hypotheses requires a two-step methodological approach (for recent examples, see Dorison et al., 2021; Jordan, Hoffman, Bloom, et al., 2016; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, et al., 2016; for review, see Leary et al., 2015; Schwardmann & van der Weele, 2019). First, to determine whether an individual is engaging in signaling behavior, researchers typically manipulate whether the focal behavior is conducted publicly or privately. If the person is more likely to undertake the behavior in public, then it is concluded that the behavior is at least partly attributable to a signaling motivation. Second, to determine whether the signaling behavior carries social benefits, researchers measure the reactions of observers toward individuals who do or do not engage in the focal behavior. Finally, a thorough understanding of

the role of signaling in a particular context requires knowing under what contextual conditions both effects are most likely to emerge.

Prior research has not comprehensively examined this model in the domain of selective exposure. In an early experiment, Lundgren and Prislin (1998) tested the impact of three different goals (impression management, defense, or accuracy) on information selection behaviors. This study did not find any effect of impression motivations on information selection (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). More recently, Hart and colleagues (2020) revisited this hypothesis, showing that giving participants an explicit goal of convincing an observer that they held a particular belief prompted participants to select more information sources aligned with that belief. Given this small number of studies, a recent review concluded that the research on impression-related motivations behind selective exposure did not "offer sufficient evidence" (Hart et al., 2009).

In the present work, we go beyond prior experimental tests to examine a comprehensive signaling model of selective exposure to information in the context of American politics. Specifically, we explore the following hypotheses: (1) people engage in selective exposure at least partly to send a signal to observers, and (2) observers reward those that send such a signal. Additionally, we consider whether the following elements impact people's information selection decisions and/or observer evaluations: the congruence of group membership between the actor and observer, whether the decision context under which an individual is being evaluated relies on trust or judgment skill, and the magnitude of exhibited selective exposure. We consider each of these hypotheses below.

Reputational causes and consequences of selective exposure. Prior research argues that any effect of observation on selective exposure "should depend on the characteristics of the

audience that one intends to impress" (Schlenker, 1980; as cited in Hart et al., 2009). Within the political context, ingroup membership is widely beneficial: interpersonally, people are more likely to collaborate with political ingroup members (Lelkes & Westwood, 2017); professionally, political ingroup members are believed to have superior professional judgment (Yeomans et al., 2020) and are more likely to be interviewed for desirable positions (Gift & Gift, 2015); economically, sellers will even offer lower prices to political ingroup members for the same good (Michelitch, 2015). Selecting information aligned with the observer's known group membership could serve as a signal of group membership or the strength of one's affiliation. This suggests that selective exposure will be magnified when actors are surrounded by ingroup evaluators but attenuated (or even reversed) in the presence of outgroup evaluators.[2]

From the observer perspective, knowing whether someone is part of your ingroup is also valuable for predicting their behavior toward you (Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Yamagishi et al., 1998) as people are more cooperative toward ingroup members (Balliet et al., 2014). Consequently, we predict that observers will reward those actors who consume more of the observer's ingroup information.

Congruence of group membership. So far, we have theorized that (1) individuals will shift their information selection decisions to align with observer's beliefs and (2) observers will reward them for doing so. But might such patterns depend on whether the person's group membership is already known – or strongly suspected? In situations where someone's group membership is already known, information consultation choices might instead signal the *strength* with which they identify with their group (Abrams & Hogg, 1990).

[2] Importantly, this is a departure from economic theories of signaling which have largely ignored the role of observer identity (Spence, 1973).

For example, when a liberal observer is evaluating the behavior of an actor who is known to be a liberal, the actor could benefit by consuming liberal information sources if this signals their thorough commitment to liberal ideas. By contrast, if the actor is known to be conservative, consulting liberal sources might be a sign that they are receptive to a diversity of viewpoints (Minson et al., 2020). As one's initial expectations of a known outgroup member are likely to be negative (Moy & Ng, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 2001), the latter case might powerfully violate observer expectations. Thus, signaling a willingness to seek out observer-aligned information may be particularly beneficial for outgroup members. To address this possibility, we systematically vary group membership (ingroup, outgroup, unknown) across studies.

Decision context. Individuals evaluate ingroup members and those who more strongly subscribe to ingroup ideologies more favorably than outgroup members on a number of dimensions. For example, ingroup members are typically perceived to be high on both warmth and competence (Fiske, 2015). And in economic games, observers are more likely to trust (Foddy et al., 2009) and cooperate with them (Rand et al., 2009). However, the relevance of any given dimension of social evaluation naturally varies with the context. For example, in some interactions we might seek individuals who are "on our side," irrespective of any other skillset that individual may or may not possess. In other interactions, we might want to collaborate with an individual who is an astute perceiver of the world, even if their observations might lead them to unfavorable conclusions. This suggests that while signaling group affiliation is beneficial in some decision contexts, it may be less so in others.

However, prior literature does not offer clear predictions regarding whether actors or observers recognize these distinctions. For example, it could be the case that people engage in selective exposure to impress observers even in contexts where this would be inappropriate (i.e.,

contexts where observers value unbiased evaluation of all available information). Yet, this strategy may be effective if observers are insensitive to the fit between the characteristics being signaled (ingroup affiliation) and the characteristics necessary for success in a given context (ability to consider a variety of perspectives), and instead simply rewarded group affiliation across the board.

We address this question by examining signaling behavior across two contexts in which observers are likely to value different characteristics: one that relies on trustworthiness and one that relies on judgment accuracy. This allows us to test both whether actors anticipate that signaling ingroup affiliation is more or less beneficial in different environments, as well as whether observers are sensitive to these distinctions.

Magnitude of selective exposure. Whereas prior research has treated selective exposure as a bias, the signaling model suggests that some selective exposure might be appropriate when taking reputational rewards into account. In other words, a decrease in decision quality may, theoretically, be offset by benefits to one's reputation. But what level of selective exposure will observers reward? In contexts where group affiliation is valued, should people avoid *all* counter-attitudinal views to maximally signal group affiliation? Recent research demonstrates that people value co-partisan perspective seekers (Heltzel & Laurin, 2021), which suggests there might be a benefit to maintaining a balance between signaling group affiliation and consuming a diverse information diet. But do both actors and observers recognize this? And what should decision makers do in contexts when the identity of observers is unknown or when they represent a mix of ideological perspectives, as is often the case in the real world?

While prior research has focused on the presence or absence of selective exposure, our paradigm allows us to look at reputational consequences as a function of the extremity of this

tendency. By looking at observers' reactions to actors who engage in different levels of selective exposure, we can evaluate not only the overall costs versus benefits of signaling through information selection decisions, but also identify the ideal amount of observer-aligned information that one should select to gain maximum social benefits.

Research Overview

In the present research, we experimentally tested whether selective exposure is partly driven by people's desire to signal information to observers and under what conditions observers reward people for such signaling (i.e., we test a comprehensive "signaling model" of selective exposure). To do so, we conducted five pre-registered, financially incentivized laboratory experiments. Experiments 1 and 3 examined the reputational causes of information selection, whereas Experiments 2, 4, and 5 examine the reputational consequences of such choices.

Experiments 1-2 test these hypotheses using traditional selective exposure paradigms. Specifically, Experiment 1 tested whether individuals differentially engaged in selective exposure when observed by political ingroup or outgroup members. We examined this question across two types of information sources: information arising from an individual with a specific partisan identity (e.g. the website of a United States senator) and information arising from an organization with a specific partisan identity (e.g. a news story from a specific outlet). Experiment 2 tested the contingent wisdom of this strategy by examining whether observers reward people based on their information selection.

Experiments 3-5 develop a novel, incentivized, experimental-economic paradigm to introduce a competing accuracy benefit to consuming varied information. Experiment 3 used this paradigm to test whether individuals are willing to forego useful information in order to impress an audience. Experiment 3 also examined whether any audience effect on selective exposure

depends on the nature of the future collaborative task that the actor anticipates engaging in with the observer.

Experiments 4-5 switched to the observer's perspective, allowing us to test when and why observers reward actors for selective exposure – even in contexts where there are apparent tradeoffs between accuracy and selective exposure. Whereas Experiment 4 leaves the actor's group membership ambiguous, in Experiment 5, we experimentally vary whether or not the actor belongs to the observer's ingroup. In both Experiments 4-5, we also assess how the magnitude of information selection impacted observer decisions. We thus identify important boundary conditions to the reputational benefits of selective exposure.

Scientific Transparency

We pre-registered all studies before beginning data collection. The pre-registrations, data, code, and survey materials are available on the Open Science Framework here. In each study, we report all pre-registered analyses (both primary and secondary) and explicitly label any deviations or analyses that are exploratory. We report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and all measures in all experiments (Logg & Dorison, 2021; Simmons et al., 2012).

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 investigated the reputational causes of selective exposure to partisan information using a traditional selective exposure paradigm. Our procedure builds upon prior research methodologies that evaluate selective exposure by offering participants (whom we call "actors") a diverse menu of information choices (Dorison et al., 2019; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; for review, see Stroud, 2014). In line with prior work (e.g., Dorison et al., 2019), selecting more than chance levels of information aligned with one's own prior beliefs or group affiliation is

considered to be evidence of selective exposure. All participants had the opportunity to select five out of ten pieces of information, evenly balanced between information arising from ingroup versus outgroup sources. We systematically varied whether actors' information selection decisions were observed by members of their political ingroup or members of their political outgroup. In both conditions, actors learned that the observer would choose whether or not to send them money in a financially-incentivized trust game (described below) based on their selections. Based on the social signaling model, we hypothesized that actors being evaluated by ingroup observers would select more ideologically-aligned information than actors being evaluated by outgroup observers.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of United States residents from Cloud Research (Litman et al., 2017) to participate in a 3-4-minute experiment in exchange for $0.50, with further opportunities for a bonus. Our final sample consisted of 364 participants (M_{age} = 39.7, 47.5% women, 64.0% liberal). In order to achieve 80% power to detect a small to medium-sized main effect (d = .40), we aimed to recruit 100 participants per experimental condition.[3]

Procedure. Upon entering the study, participants first reported basic demographic information, including gender, age, and education. Following prior research (The American National Election Studies, 2016), they indicated their political ideology on a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative." After reporting demographics, participants had the option to select five of ten information sources presented to them and were told that an observer would evaluate their choices. At the end of the study, participants reported how much

[3] We recruited using the following criteria: 90% HIT approval rate, greater than 500 HITs previously approved, and included on CloudResearch's approved participants list. Due to irregularities with Cloud Research, we collected responses from 420 people. Before random assignment to condition, we then excluded 56 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Our final sample consisted of 364 participants.

they would return to an observer in a trust game and were redirected to view these information sources.

Dependent variable. All actors were presented with a balanced set of five liberal sources and five conservative information sources. Adapting methodology from Dorison and colleagues (2019), actors' selection of the number of ingroup information sources to view served as our key dependent variable. This number ranged from zero to five.

Independent variables. All participants learned that their choices in the study would be communicated to an observer who would use that information to make decisions in a trust game (Berg et al., 1995). Specifically, the observer would have the opportunity to send the actor between 0-10 cents and that we (the experimenters) would triple whatever amount was sent by the observer. The actors would then have the opportunity to send back any amount of money they felt appropriate.[4] In this manner, our paradigm closely tied the reputational gains that might arise from signaling specific information preferences to financial incentives for the actors. This method of tying reputational incentives to financial rewards via economic games such as the trust game is common (Dorison et al., 2021; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, et al., 2016) as previous research has identified a link between lab and field generalizability, specifically within the domain of trust and prosociality (Camerer, 2011).

Before making information selection decisions, participants were randomly assigned to one of four between-subjects experimental conditions in a 2x2 factorial design. For the first factor, we varied whether the observer was described as a political ingroup member (ingroup condition) or a political outgroup member (outgroup condition).

[4] In order to not have to re-recruit participants, at the end of the actor study, participants were asked what percentage of the money sent to them that they would be willing to return to an observer. Therefore, if an observer sent all ten cents (which was then tripled by us, the experimenters) and an actor decided to return 50%, both participants would end up with 15 cents.

The second factor varied the type of information sources from which the actors were selecting. Specifically, we instructed actors to select five information sources from a list of ten current United States Senators' press pages (senators condition) or from a list of ten news stories (news condition). In the senators condition, the list included five Democratic senators (e.g., Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar) and five Republican senators (e.g., Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham) with the most Twitter followers at the time of the study. In the news articles condition, we chose stimuli from the website allsides.com which presents arguments for multiple perspectives on a variety of current policy issues. We selected the featured political issue at the time with at least five conservative and five liberal articles (topic: forgiving student loan debt). In both conditions, we provided participants with links to view their selected information sources at the end of the survey.

Analysis plan. We used a linear regression, using the lm function in R to predict the number of ingroup information sources selected by participants as a function of experimental condition. We entered dummy codes to separately contrast the ingroup and outgroup conditions. Similarly, we entered dummy codes to contrast the senators and news conditions.

Results

Reputational causes of selective exposure. We began by examining the level of selective exposure between the ingroup and outgroup conditions. If selective exposure was purely driven by individuals' affective and cognitive responses to the relevant information (c.f., Hart et al., 2009), observer group membership should not affect outcomes. However, if selective exposure was driven at least in part by individuals' desire to appeal to observers (e.g. Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 2000, 2002), we should see actors in the ingroup condition consulting a greater number of ingroup advisors than actors in the outgroup condition.

We found evidence consistent with the latter hypothesis. On average, actors in the ingroup condition selected 4.14 ingroup information sources (SD = 1.10). In contrast, participants in the outgroup condition selected 2.37 ingroup information sources (SD = 1.58), on average. This difference was substantial and significant ($t(321) = 12.35$, $p < .001$). Results are presented in Figure 1 below and Table A2 of the Appendix. To put these results in perspective, we ran a simulation in which we randomly drew 10,000 pairs of participants, one in the ingroup condition and one in the outgroup condition. For each pair, we then assessed how often one in the ingroup condition selected more ingroup sources (McGraw & Wong, 1992). Participants in the ingroup condition selected more ingroup sources than their randomly selected match in the outgroup condition 72.9% of the time, and the reverse just 11.7% of the time (the remaining 15.5% of pairs indicated an equal number of ingroup sources). Taken together, our data are consistent with the hypothesis that, in partisan environments, reputational considerations powerfully drive information selection decisions.

It is worth noting that the overall average number of ingroup information choices chosen was 3.26, which is significantly above 2.50, the amount that would have represented an even exposure to ingroup and outgroup sources ($t(363) = 8.92$, $p < .001$). However, in the presence of an outgroup observer, this mean falls below the 2.50 baseline – suggesting that reputational incentives are powerful enough to eliminate this tendency.

Information source. We next conducted an exploratory analysis of whether the pattern of effects described above was contingent on the type of information (i.e., senators' webpages vs. news stories). This did not appear to be the case. First, we found no evidence of a significant main effect of information source ($M_{\text{news articles}} = 3.15$, $M_{\text{senators}} = 3.37$, $t(359) = 1.28$, $p = .20$) on selective exposure. In other words, people were no more averse to engaging with information

arising from a specific individual versus information that was broadly supportive of a point of view, but not specifically associated with one person. Second, we found no evidence of an interaction between social incentives and information type (β = -0.10, p = .73). Thus, it appears that signaling motivations for selective exposure generalize across multiple information types. We detail these results in Figure 1 below and Table A2 of the Appendix.

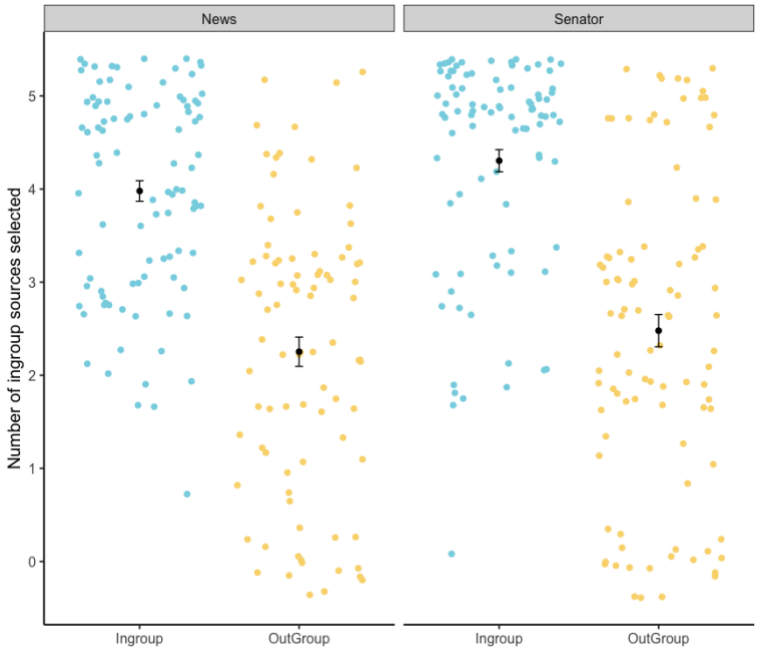

Figure 1: Number of chosen ingroup information sources by all conditions. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean. Participants in the ingroup conditions chose more ingroup information sources than those in the outgroup conditions, however there were no significant differences between the information type conditions.

Discussion

Experiment 1 supported the hypothesis that individuals' information selection decisions are sensitive to observation using a traditional selective exposure paradigm. Actors selected more ingroup information sources when observed by ingroup members in comparison to being observed by outgroup members. Of note, this effect persisted across information associated with specific individuals (United States senators) as well as more general information reported in news articles.

These results beg the question of whether there are in fact complementary reputational benefits accrued to those who engage in selective exposure. Do observers differentially respond to people's strategic information selection decisions, and if so, to what extent? We begin to address these questions in Experiment 2, where observers consider profiles of actors from Experiment 1 and choose whether or not to trust them in a financially-incentivized economic game.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we shifted our focus from testing whether individuals shift their information selection decisions to signal to observers to whether observers reward such shifts. Participants in Experiment 2 (whom we call "observers") chose how much money to send to participants from Experiment 1 (actors) in a financially-incentivized trust game based on the actor's information consumption choices. We were interested in whether observers were more likely to trust actors who selected more information sources congruent with the observer's own ingroup.

To get observers to consider the behavior of real actors from Experiment 1, we randomly exposed them to profiles of actors who had engaged in different levels of selective exposure (i.e., selected from 0 to 5 ingroup sources). This natural variation allowed us to also examine whether there is an optimal level of selective exposure that observers prefer.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of United States residents from Cloud Research to participate in a 3-4-minute experiment in exchange for $0.50, with further opportunities for a bonus. Our final sample consisted of 671 participants (M_{age} = 40.3, 56.3% women, 63.9% liberal). In order to achieve 80% power to detect a small to medium-sized main effect (d = .40)

across number of ingroup sources (collapsing across information type conditions), we aimed to recruit about 100 participants per experimental cell.[5]

Procedure. Upon entering the study, actors first reported basic demographic information, including gender, age, and education. Following prior research (The American National Election Studies, 2016), they indicated their political ideology on a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative." After reporting demographics, participants read about the trust game and had to correctly answer two comprehension check questions before proceeding through the study. Participants were then shown their partner's information selections and played a trust game, described in detail below.

Dependent variable. We informed participants that they could decide how much money to send to a partner based on the partner's choices in a previous task. Observers' choice of how much money to send to their partner (between 0-10 cents) served as our key dependent variable.

Independent variables. Before viewing their partner's information selections, observers were randomly assigned to one of two between-subjects experimental conditions: senators vs. news articles. In the senators condition, participants saw how many liberal vs conservative senators' press pages their partner chose to view (from a balanced set of ten). In the news articles condition, participants saw how many news articles representing the liberal vs. conservative point of view their partner chose to view from a balanced set of ten. Within each of these conditions, participants saw a partner who selected between 0-5 sources aligned with their own (observer's) ingroup perspective.

[5] We recruited using the following criteria: 90% HIT approval rate, greater than 500 HITs previously approved, and included on the Cloud Research approved participants list. Due to irregularities with Cloud Research, we collected responses from 844 people. Before random assignment to condition, we excluded 173 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Our final sample consisted of 671 participants.

Analysis plan. Our primary dependent measure was the amount of money that observers chose to send to the actor whose choices they observed. This number ranged from zero to ten cents. Thus, we used the lm function in R to regress how many cents the observer sent on the number of information sources aligned with the observer's ingroup that the actor selected. We predicted a positive relationship, such that increased consumption of ingroup aligned information sources would increase trusting behavior.

Results

Reputational consequences of selective exposure. We first examined whether observers sent more money to actors who chose more sources from the observer's ingroup. We found this to be the case: choosing one more source from the observer's ingroup increased the amount sent by an average of .56 cents ($R^2 = .07$, $F(1,669) = 54.75$, $p < .001$). Concretely, if an actor chose zero sources from the observer's ingroup, they were sent an average of 4.40 cents ($SD = 3.52$). However, if an actor selected all five sources from the observer's ingroup, this increased to an average of 7.13 cents ($SD = 3.14$). When looking at a binary variable of whether the observer trusted the actor at all (e.g. sent them any positive amount greater than zero), we see that for each additional ingroup source chosen, the odds of the observer trusting the actor increases by 1.57 ($p < .001$). Thus, catering information selection decisions toward an observer's point of view enhanced the observer's perceptions of the actor's trustworthiness and increased the actors' chances of earning a bonus. See Table A3 in the Appendix for full results and statistics.

Information source. In exploratory analyses, we examined whether there was a difference between the senators and news conditions. If observers were conditioning their trust on whether actors were information-seeking from individuals with a specific partisan identity (senators condition) versus from information arising from an organization with a specific

partisan identity (news articles condition), we would observe an interaction between the type of information source and trust. However, we found no evidence of such an interaction when testing this in a simple regression framework ($\beta = .04$, $p = .80$). See Table A3 in the Appendix for full results and statistics.

Magnitude of selective exposure. So far, our results have demonstrated that observers were more likely to choose actors who prefer advice from the observer's ingroup. However, does the extremity of the actor's preference matter? On the one hand, it could be the case that observers favor actors who fully embrace the observer's ingroup information at the expense of all outgroup opinions. On the other hand, it could be the case that observers, to at least some extent, value actors who balance ingroup and outgroup information sources.

To address this question, we examined the amount of money that an observer sent to an actor based on the number of sources from the observer's ingroup that the actor selected (a number that could range from 0 to 5) in exploratory analyses. Results are presented in Figure 2 below. To analyze the statistical significance of these results, we regressed how much the observer sent on an ordinal factor representing the number of observer's ingroup sources that the actor had selected. Furthermore, to test for differences between specific numbers of sources (e.g. 3 and 4), we ran subsequent linear hypothesis tests.

Two results clearly stand out from this visualization and are borne out by inferential analyses. First, as described above, we see a generally increasing line, showing that observers demonstrated the expected preference for actors who selected more information from the observer's ingroup.

Second, and perhaps more surprisingly, we found that there seem to be diminishing marginal returns to the number of observer's ingroup information sources selected. Specifically,

if an actor selected zero sources from the observer's ingroup, then the observer only sent 44% of their endowment, on average. However, if the actor selected just one source from the observer's ingroup, this significantly increased to 56% (p = .007). The further increased to 66% with choosing two (linear hypothesis test compared to one source: p = .04). The amount sent continued to follow a positive trend when choosing three (68% of the endowment; linear hypothesis test compared to two sources: p = .49) and four (73% of the endowment; linear hypothesis test compared to two sources: p = .31) sources from the observer's ingroup. When the actor selected the maximum possible number of sources from the observer's ingroup (five), the amount sent to them slightly *decreased* to 71% of the endowment (linear hypothesis test compared to four sources: p = .74). Overall, these results demonstrate a clear social reward to actors who viewed a greater number of sources aligned with the observer. However, while participants demonstrated a general preference for like-minded others, there seemed to be diminishing marginal returns to the social rewards based on number of the observer's ingroup sources chosen – returns that are eliminated, and directionally reversed, at the extreme. Full results and statistics presented in Table A4 of the Appendix.

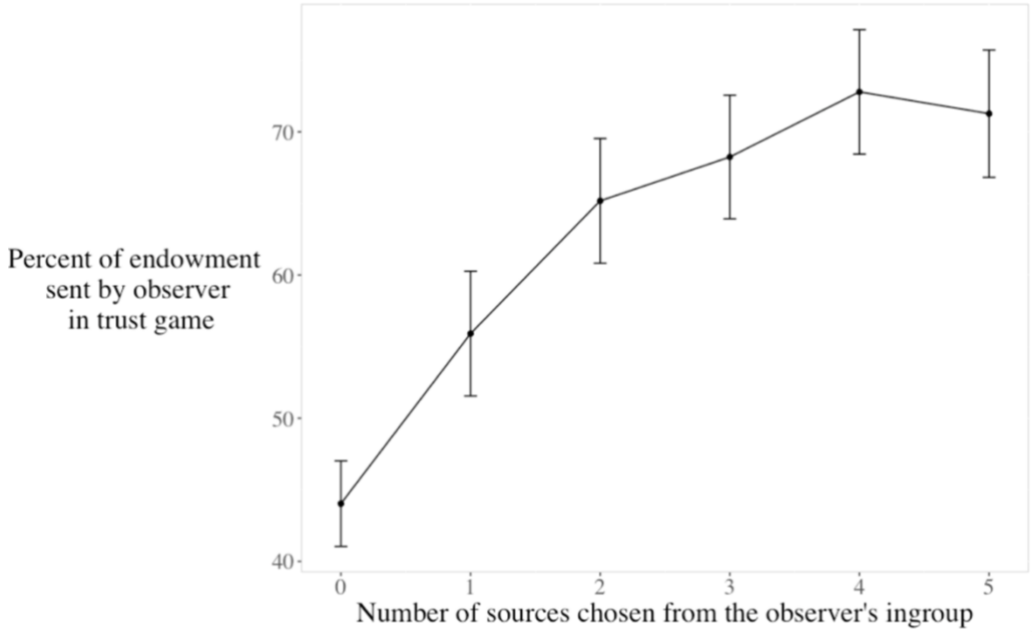

Figure 2: Average amount of money sent by the observers in the trust game as a function of the number of information sources aligned with the observer's ingroup chosen by the actor. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean. Actors who chose more sources from the observer's ingroup were generally trusted more, although these benefits declined with more ingroup sources.

Discussion

Experiment 2 demonstrated the reputational consequences of information selection decisions, providing additional evidence for the signaling model of selective exposure. Specifically, observers were more likely to reward actors who selected more sources from the observer's ingroup. This result was not dependent on whether the actor was selecting information from a specific person (a senator) or impersonal source (a news article).

Additionally, observers were responsive to the magnitude of selective exposure demonstrated by the actor. While observers tended to reward choosing more of their ingroup sources, there appear to be diminishing marginal returns to these choices. The recognition that although selective exposure is generally rewarded, but to a limit, adds important nuance to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Thus far we have examined contexts in which the actors only had one incentivized goal: to earn the trust of observers. However, information often has instrumental value, helping individuals to make better decisions or hold more informed opinions. Therefore, in Experiments 3-5, we develop a novel paradigm to explicitly include this tradeoff between reputational and accuracy incentives related to information selection. Additionally, we vary the type of future task that the actors and observers expect to collaborate on to explore additional moderators of the signaling model.

Experiment 3

Experiments 1-2 drew on standard selective exposure paradigms to provide an initial test of the reputational causes and consequences of selective exposure. In Experiments 3-5, we develop a novel, incentive-compatible paradigm that directly pits reputational incentives against accuracy incentives that are typically present outside of laboratory settings.

Experiment 3 begins by examining the actor side of the model (parallel to Experiment 1). In this experiment, all participants (actors) made incentivized estimates about the proportion of respondents in a prior survey who supported specific policies. Critically, before making their estimates, actors had the opportunity to consult additional information from ideologically aligned vs. unaligned others.

In addition to financial incentive for accuracy, Experiment 3 builds on Experiment 1 in two ways. First, while Experiment 1 documented differences in information selection under the gaze of ingroup vs. outgroup observers, it lacked a private control condition. Experiment 3 includes one, allowing us to assess whether shifts in behavior are due primarily to one type of observer (or both). Second, while Experiment 1 revealed that incentives to appear trustworthy shifted behavior, trustworthiness is not the only characteristic that people use to select

collaborators. Thus, in Experiment 3 we systematically manipulated whether participants expected to be evaluated for a future collaborative task that relied on trustworthiness or on quantitative judgment skill.

Based on the social signaling model, we hypothesized that: Actors being observed by ingroup members would select more ideologically-aligned information than actors in the private condition, who would in turn select more ideologically-aligned information that actors being observed by outgroup members.

Our procedure continues to build upon prior research methodologies that evaluate selective exposure by offering actors a diverse menu of information (Dorison et al., 2019; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; for review, see Stroud, 2014). Some prior research has manipulated the perceived usefulness of information (e.g. by asking participants to write a pro- or anti-attitudinal essay after making their information consumption choices), finding that an increased accuracy motivation decreases selective exposure (Freedman, 1965; Hart et al., 2009). We extend this prior methodology by providing actors with information which has a clear impact on the accuracy of their incentivized judgments – the opinions of individuals from the population whose attitudes they are trying to estimate. This allows us to capture the tension that individuals in the world may experience between the desire to form accurate beliefs and the desire to enjoy the reputational benefits of consuming information aligned with an observer's ingroup. Furthermore, we extend our prior studies by varying the type of future task that the actors are being evaluated for. Namely, we were curious whether actors would attempt to signal different characteristics when being evaluated for a task reliant on trustworthiness versus one reliant on judgment skill.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of United States residents from Cloud Research to participate in a 15-minute experiment in exchange for $1.50, with further opportunities for a bonus. Our final sample consisted of 883 participants (M_{age} = 42.2, 52% women, 52% liberal).[6] In a pilot study, we observed a standardized effect size of approximately 0.30 for the main hypothesis of interest; our final sample thus achieved greater than 80% statistical power.

Procedure. Upon entering the study, actors reported basic demographic information, including gender, age, education and the name of their hometown. As in Experiments 1-2, they indicated their political ideology on a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative."

Participants then read and indicated their own opinion ("Yes" or "No") on eight policy statements related to current social and political issues debated in the United States (e.g., "The death penalty should be abolished in all US states," see full list of issues in Table A1 of the Appendix). After indicating their own opinion, participants estimated the percentage of prior participants who reported agreeing or disagreeing with each of the eight policy statements. We truthfully informed participants that the people whose policy preferences they were estimating contained roughly equal proportions of liberal and conservative Cloud Research participants. Finally, when relevant, participants reported how much they would return to an observer in a trust game.

Dependent variable. Actors then engaged in the central task of the study: selecting advisors and revising their estimates based on the advice from other Cloud Research participants.

[6] As per our pre-registration, our goal was to collect data from approximately 1000 participants, roughly balanced between liberals and conservatives. We recruited using the following criteria: 98% HIT approval rate, greater than 500 HITs previously approved, and included on CloudResearch's approved participants list. Due to irregularities with Cloud Research, we collected responses from 993 people. Before random assignment to condition, we then excluded 110 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Our final sample consisted of 883 participants.

Specifically, we informed actors that in order to increase their accuracy, they could view the opinions of three advisors (participants from the sample whose opinion the participants were estimating). Their selection of which three advisors' opinions to view out of a possible set of six served as our key dependent variable.

For each policy statement, we presented the actors with basic information about six advisors including name, age, hometown and political affiliation. The actors were then required to select three advisors whose opinions ("Yes" or "No") they could view before revising their estimate.[7] In each set of six potential advisors, half were labeled as "conservative" and the other half were labeled as "liberal." The distribution of the "Yes" vs. "No" opinions attributed to each of the liberal or conservative advisors matched the real distribution of opinions from the Cloud Research participants solicited in the prior sample. For example, if a policy statement was supported by 67% of conservatives in the prior sample, then 2 out of 3 conservative advisors presented to participants also expressed support for the policy statement. The advisors were presented with fictional names, ages and hometowns so that this information could be counterbalanced between the liberal and conservative advisors. We incentivized estimation accuracy by entering actors into a raffle for $100 for estimates that were within 10% of the correct answer. Multiple accurate estimates led to multiple raffle entries.

Independent variables. Before making their advisor selections, actors were randomly assigned to one of five between-subjects experimental conditions in a 2x2 factorial design with an extra untreated control condition.

[7] In standard judge-advisor paradigms, the advisor typically tells the participant what they think the answer to the question at hand is. In contrast to this, rather than advisors giving an estimate of the percentage of people who agreed with particular policy statements, the actor was informed of the advisor's own actual opinion ("Yes" or "No") on the policy statement. Given that in our experimental paradigm the advisor is a member of the population being estimated, this information has clear value.

For the first factor, actors were truthfully told that their choices of advisors would be shown to observers who would then choose whether to work with them or another participant on a future task. We varied whether the observer picking them for the future task was described as a political ingroup member (public ingroup condition) or a political outgroup member (public outgroup condition). We truthfully told actors that being chosen for the future task by the observer would lead to an additional raffle entry. Thus, while all actors were financially incentivized for accuracy, the experimental conditions systematically tied the reputational gains that might arise from signaling to additional financial incentives.

The second factor varied the type of future collaborative task for which the actors were told they were being chosen. Specifically, the observers chose an actor for a future collaborative task reliant on either trustworthiness (trust condition) or judgment skill (judgment condition). Actors in the trust condition read a description of the trust game (Berg et al., 1995) and actors in the judgment condition read a description of an estimation task similar to the one they had just completed. If chosen, they were told that they would play a subsequent trust or estimation game with the observer. Being chosen by the observer would lead to a further bonus opportunity.

In the private control condition, actors were told that viewing the responses of the other participants could help them make more accurate estimates; however, they did not have to consider how their choices would be evaluated by another individual. Since there was no observer mentioned in this condition, we could not systematically vary the type of future collaboration task.[8] Therefore, this control condition only included the accuracy incentive and

[8] Note that while a 2x2x2 design might be expected here with the final factor varying whether an actor's choices of advisors are shown to observers or not, a mere presence of another can be enough to change behavior (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Therefore, we follow common practice in testing interpersonal explanations by not mentioning an observer at all in the private condition (Leary et al., 2015).

had no associated reputational incentives, allowing us to precisely identify the effect of those incentives on behavior.

In sum, actors in all conditions had an accuracy incentive. However, being observed by an ingroup or outgroup member also created a social incentive to the extent that actors viewed their selections as signaling information that may be relevant for a future bonus opportunity.

Analysis plan. Our primary dependent measure was the number of ingroup advisors that actors consulted for each of the eight estimates. This number ranged from zero to three. Thus, as detailed in our preregistration, we used an ordinal logistic regression, using the clm function in R (Christensen, 2018). We also included participant-clustered standard errors, necessary because each participant provided eight estimates. Since we had eight different policy topics, we used simple effects coding to control for the effect of each of these. This coding scheme allows us to interpret the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic (Hardy, 1993).[9] We entered dummy codes to separately contrast the public ingroup and public outgroup conditions. See Table A5 for these full results and statistics.

Results

Reputational causes of selective exposure. We began by examining selective exposure in the public conditions. We found evidence consistent with the results of Experiment 1. On average, actors in the public ingroup condition selected 1.56 ingroup advisors (SD = 1.00). In contrast, participants in the public outgroup condition selected just 1.15 ingroup advisors (SD = .92), on average. When using a simple t-test, we find that the number of ingroup advisors differs by condition ($t(5636) = 16.30$, $p < .001$). Applying the analysis strategy described above,

[9] Simple effects coding is very similar to dummy coding with one key difference: the interpretation of the intercept. In dummy coding, the intercept corresponds to the mean of a reference group (e.g. "The death penalty should be abolished in all US states"). With simple effects coding, the intercept of the regression model becomes the grand mean of all topics in the reference condition (UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, n.d.).

restricting to the two public conditions, for those in the public ingroup condition, the odds that they viewed more ingroup opinions increased by 2.16 compared to those in the public outgroup condition ($p < .001$).

Actors in the private control condition, on average, selected 1.35 ingroup advisors (SD = .94). Interestingly, the average number of ingroup advisors selected in the private condition fell somewhat below 50%. On the one hand, this pattern is in line with prior research demonstrating that selective exposure is attenuated in the presence of accuracy goals (Freedman, 1965; Hart et al., 2009). It is also worth considering, however, that participants already had access to one ingroup opinion – their own. Thus, to maximally diversify the information available to them, they perhaps should have relied even more heavily on outgroup information.

More centrally, we compared information selection in the private condition to the public conditions. The odds that those in the public ingroup condition viewed more ingroup opinions were 1.470 times that of those in the private control condition ($p < .001$). Additionally, the odds that those in the private control condition viewed more ingroup opinions were also 1.475 times those in the public outgroup condition ($p < .001$). Results are presented in Figure 3 below and in Table A5 of the Appendix. Taken together, our data are consistent with the hypothesis that, in partisan environments, reputational considerations drive information selection decisions – and this is true when being evaluated by both ingroup *and* outgroup observers.

Decision context. In an exploratory analysis, we next examined whether the actor's selections were contingent on their expectations of being chosen for a future trust game versus a future judgment task. If actors were attempting to signal a specific characteristic such as trustworthiness or judgment skill, we would observe an interaction between type of game and observation condition. To test this, we again used an ordinal logistic regression as described

above, restricting our analysis to the public conditions and employing dummy codes to contrast the trust game and estimation game conditions. Here, we found no evidence of such an interaction ($\beta_{interaction}$ = .03, p = .88).[10] Instead, actors selected more ingroup advisors when being observed by ingroup members, irrespective of the task for which they were being selected. Results are presented in Figure 3 below and Table A5 of the Appendix.

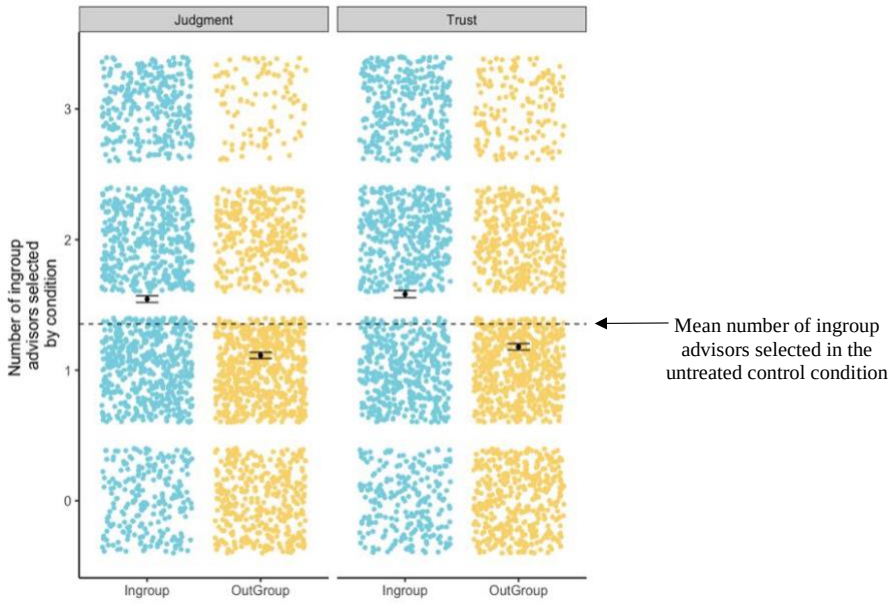

Figure 3: Number of ingroup advisors chosen by condition. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. The dotted line represents the mean number of ingroup advisors chosen in the private condition. Participants in the public ingroup conditions chose more ingroup advisors than those in the private condition, who chose more than those in the public outgroup conditions. However, there were no significant differences between game type or interaction between game type and observer identity.

Estimation Error. Finally, our experimental design allowed us to examine not only information selection decisions, but also the consequences of those choices for subsequent estimation error. To calculate error, we took the absolute difference between each estimate entered by the actor and the actual proportion of Cloud Research participants in the prior study

[10] While there is a directional main effect of the actor selecting more ingroup sources in the trust condition in comparison to the judgment condition, this pattern did not reach traditional levels of statistical significance.

who expressed a particular opinion. We then z-scored these absolute errors within estimation topic and across conditions. Thus, error scores ranged from -1.46 to 4.35, where lower numbers indicated lower error (and thus greater accuracy).

When regressing the number of ingroup advisors chosen on the z-scored error, we found that, on average, the selection of each additional ingroup advisor was associated with an increase in estimation error ($\beta = .07$, $p < .001$). Specifically, the lowest estimation error was associated with choosing all outgroup advisors, with a sharp increase in error associated with selecting just one ingroup advisor. Results are presented in Figure 4 below and Table A6 of the Appendix.

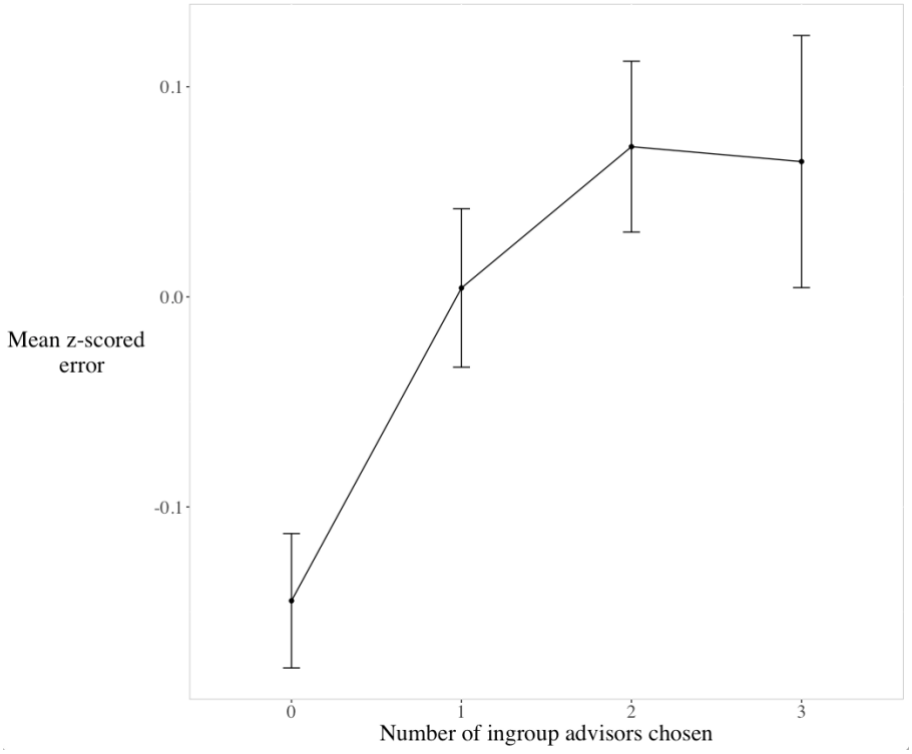

Figure 4: Mean of the z-scored errors (z-scored within topic and across conditions) by the number of ingroup advisors chosen. A z-score of zero, refers to the average level of error for that topic. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. Participants who chose a greater number of ingroup advisors produced estimates with higher error.

Surprisingly, in exploratory analyses, we did not observe differences in estimation error between the ingroup and outgroup conditions ($M_{ingroup} = .007$, $M_{outgroup} = .015$, $t(5662) = -0.33$, $p = .740$). These results are intriguing given that (1) we observed differences in information

selection decisions across conditions and (2) information selection decisions predicted estimation error. Why then, was there no effect of condition on accuracy?

While we were not well-powered to analyze this question, follow-up exploratory analyses allow us to further investigate this null effect. Specifically, we examined the weights that actors placed on the information they chose to select when formulating their estimates. Unsurprisingly, estimates were influenced by the advice that actors received. For every chosen advisor that said "Yes" to a particular policy issue, the actors' estimate of the number of Cloud Research participants that said "Yes" to that issue increased by an average of 2.06 points (*SD* = .48) relative to their initial estimate. This effect of advice was similar across conditions.[11]

Crucially, when looking at the two public conditions, we also observed that actors gave greater weight to the opinions of ingroup advisors than outgroup advisors. Specifically, for each outgroup advisor that said "Yes" to a particular policy statement, actors' estimates of the proportion of prior participants who said "Yes" increased by an average of 1.52 percentage points. By contrast, when an ingroup advisor said "Yes," the actor's estimate went up by an average of 2.79 percentage points. Similarly, for each outgroup advisor that said "No" to a particular policy statement, actors' estimates decreased by 2.30 percentage points. When an ingroup advisor said "No," the actor's estimate decreased by 4.13 percentage points. Taken together, these results show that participants placed significantly greater weight on ingroup advice than outgroup advice (interaction between an advisor saying "Yes" and the advisor being from the same side*:* $p < .001$; see Figure A1 and Table A7 of the Appendix).[12] Importantly,

[11] When we test the interaction between the selection of an advisor who said "yes" to a policy issue and public ingroup condition $\beta = .65$, $p = .61$; when we do the same for the public outgroup condition $\beta = 1.24$, $p = .34$.

[12] For these analyses, we restricted our data to participants in the public ingroup or public outgroup conditions. This pattern did not differ as a function of condition.

updating one's estimate– as measured by the change in one's estimate from before to after seeing the opinion of the advisor – was associated with less z-scored error ($\beta = -.004$, $p < .001$).

As our experimental manipulation was not designed to explicitly test this question of updating, it could also be the case that we were not well-powered enough to detect a difference in estimation error between conditions. However, one potentially more intriguing, but less parsimonious explanation is that while participants in the outgroup condition selected more outgroup sources, they also updated their estimates less based on these sources, foregoing the potential accuracy benefits. Taken together, although being observed led actors to select different numbers of ingroup and outgroup advisors, we see that their private judgment reflected a consistent level of bias toward the ingroup. Teasing apart these explanations would be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Discussion

Building on Experiment 1, Experiment 3 provided further support for the hypothesis that individuals' information selection decisions are sensitive to observation. Actors selected more ingroup advice when observed by ingroup members and more outgroup advice when observed by outgroup members – all compared to a private control condition. This effect persisted across tasks reliant on trustworthiness or judgment skill.

Although viewing more outgroup information sources reduced error on average, the accuracy of judgments in the outgroup condition did not increase because actors gave greater weight to ingroup advice even when making private estimates. These later results suggested that while individuals might expose themselves to uncongenial information to impress observers, they might be less willing to use it to update their beliefs. This may occur either because participants truly believe congenial information to be more accurate or because congenial

information more readily captured their attention. Regardless, simply viewing outgroup advice did not lead to more accurate estimates.

Our novel incentivized design directly pitted an accuracy incentive against possible reputational benefits. Not surprisingly, we found that greater selective exposure carried accuracy costs. In Experiments 4-5, we return to the observer side. Do observers respond to people's strategic information selection decisions, and if so, to what extent? Are observers sensitive to the type of task they are engaging with the actor on? Similar to the pairing of Experiments 1-2, Experiment 4's observers consider profiles of actors from Experiment 3 and choose an actor for a future bonus opportunity.

Experiment 4

In Experiments 4-5, we shift back to examining whether actors' beliefs about the reputational benefits of selective exposure are correct. That is, rather than considering the reputational causes of selective exposure, we again consider the reputational consequences. Specifically, participants in Experiment 4 (observers) picked a partner for a future collaborative task from among pairs of actors. We were interested in whether observers were more likely to choose actors who selected a greater number of information sources from the observer's own ingroup.

The extent to which observers are likely to favor collaboration partners who viewed more ingroup information could vary with the type of collaboration they expect to engage in. Therefore, in Experiment 4, we again varied the type of task for which the observers were picking partners (i.e., judgment skill vs. trust).

Finally, because observers considered the behavior of real actors from Experiment 3, they were exposed to profiles of actors who had engaged in different levels of selective exposure (i.e.,

selected from 0 to 3 ingroup advisors). This natural variation allowed us to further examine whether the diminishing returns to the greater levels of selective exposure that we observed in Experiment 2 would be robust to our new paradigm.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of United States residents from Cloud Research to participate in a 5-minute experiment in exchange for $0.50, with further opportunities for a bonus. Following our pre-registration, our final sample consisted of 459 participants (M_{age} = 43, 53% women, 54% liberal).[13] We chose our sample size to achieve greater than 80% statistical power to detect the effect size found in prior studies we conducted which tested a similar hypothesis.

Procedure. In Experiment 4 we showed a new sample of participants (observers) the choices that actors made in Experiment 3. We then examined how the observers reacted to the actors' information selection decisions.

Dependent variable. Observers learned that their goal in the study was to pick a partner for a future collaboration task from among two individuals. Recall that in Experiment 3, actors selected the advice of three individuals from a total of six possible advisors. We randomly selected two actors from Experiment 3 and showed their choices of liberal vs. conservative advisors to the observers in this study. The key dependent variable in Experiment 4 was whether the observer chose to work with an actor who had selected a greater number of advisors from the

[13] As per our pre-registration, our goal was to collect data from approximately 500 participants, roughly balanced between liberals and conservatives. We first recruited N = 300 using the following criteria: 98% HIT approval rate, greater than 500 HITs previously approved, and included on Cloud Research's approved participants list. We then excluded 66 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Next, in order to get roughly 250 participants of each political ideology, we directly recruited N = 81 self-reported liberals and N = 185 self-reported conservatives. From those, we excluded N = 41 who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Our final sample consisted of 459 participants. (M_{age} = 43, 53% women, 54% liberal).

observer's ingroup than their counterpart. Observers made eight choices corresponding to the policy topics used in Experiment 3. We truthfully told observers that we would implement the outcome of one of their eight choices (picked at random).[14]

Independent variable. As in Experiment 3, we varied the future collaborative task for which the observer was choosing the actor. Participants either chose actors to be future collaborators on a task reliant on trustworthiness (trust condition) or a task reliant on judgment skill (judgment condition). Participants in the trust condition read a description of the trust game and learned that they would play a subsequent incentivized trust game with one of the eight actors who they picked. By contrast, participants in the judgment condition read a description of the estimation task from Experiment 3 and learned that their bonus would be tied to the judgment accuracy of one of the eight actors who they chose.

After making eight choices between potential partners, observers reported demographics, which included the same political ideology measure used in prior experiments: a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative."

Analysis plan. We re-coded the choices made by actors in Experiment 3 to reflect how many of their selected advisors belonged to the observer's ingroup (i.e., the participant in the present experiment). The two actors displayed to each observer were randomly chosen. There were 998 pairings where the two actors selected identical numbers of observer ingroup advisors, which were dropped from the subsequent analyses. This resulted in a final set of 2,674 choices made by observers.

[14] In case they were chosen by observers, we elicited actor's responses on the trust game (e.g. how much they would send back to their partner) at the end of their survey. This allowed us to pair up participants from across experiments to financially incentivize these studies.

Our primary dependent variable was binary (1 = observer chose the actor who consulted more of the observer's ingroup advisors, 0 = observer chose the actor who consulted fewer of the observer's ingroup advisors). Thus, in all of the analyses below, we used an ordinal logistic regression, using the clm function in R (Christensen, 2018). As in Experiment 3, we also included participant-clustered standard errors, necessary because each participant made eight choices. Since we had eight different policy topics, we again used simple effect coding in order to interpret the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic (Hardy, 1993).

Results

Reputational consequences of selective exposure. We first examined whether observers preferred to collaborate with actors who consulted more advisors from the observer's ingroup. We found this to be the case 70.9% of the time, a frequency substantially greater than chance ($t(2573) = 23.8$, $p < .001$). When using the analytic strategy described above, results revealed that the odds that the actors who selected a greater number of the observer's ingroup advisors were chosen for future collaboration increased by 2.44 compared to their counterpart ($p < .001$). Thus, catering information selection decisions to the observer greatly enhanced actors' chances of being chosen for an additional bonus opportunity.

Decision context. We next examined the effect of selecting advisors from the observer's ingroup when choosing a partner for a future trust game versus a future judgment task. To test this, we included a dummy-coded variable for task type in the regression model. Although participants picked the actor who consulted more ingroup sources at greater than chance levels in both conditions, this tendency was substantially more pronounced in the trust condition (log odds = 1.93, $p < .001$). Specifically, in the trust condition, observers chose the actor who had selected

more of the observer's ingroup advisors 77.1% of the time. However, in the judgment condition, observers chose the actor who had selected more of the observer's ingroup advisors only 63.5% of the time (see Figure 5 below and Table A8 of the Appendix). This difference suggests that although individuals prefer collaborators who favor information from their ingroup, they recognized that judgment accuracy demands some exposure to a variety of perspectives.

Of note, actors in Experiment 3 appeared insensitive to this difference, expecting observers to equally favor selection of ingroup information for both tasks. Thus, while both actors and observers appreciated that selecting sources congruent with observers' preferences would yield reputational rewards, actors' choices appeared insufficiently sensitive to the context (in this case, the nature of the upcoming collaboration task), perhaps leading them to sacrifice judgment accuracy for little reputational gain. We discuss potential causes and consequences of such an asymmetry in the General Discussion.

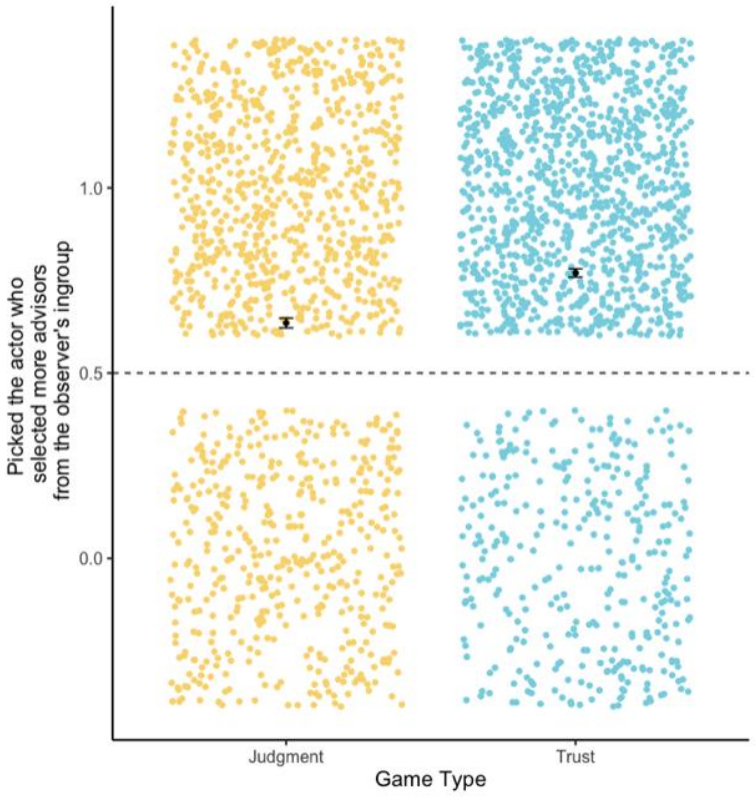

Figure 5: The mean probability that observers chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup, by condition. The dotted line at .50 represents chance levels. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant.

Magnitude of selective exposure. So far, our results have demonstrated that observers were more likely to choose actors who prefer advice from the observer's ingroup. However, does the extremity of the actor's preference matter? To address this question, in exploratory analyses, we examined the probability of an observer choosing an actor based on the number of advisors from the observer's ingroup that the actor selected (a number that could range from 0 to 3).[15] Results are presented in Figure 6 below. Using this alternative analytical approach, we again

[15] In our pre-registration, we detailed testing this question by comparing whether an actor's choice to view at least one information source from the observer's ingroup would be a better predictor than the difference score between actors' choices. However, upon reflection, we think that the below analyses and graphs are a clearer representation of our results. We include the pre-registered analyses in the Appendix.

found that observers demonstrated the expected preference for actors who selected more advisors from the observer's ingroup, similar to the results reported above.

Perhaps more surprisingly, and replicating the pattern in Experiment 1, we also found that observers showed a preference for some information diversification – punishing those actors who selected *all* of their advisors from the observer's ingroup. Specifically, if an actor selected zero advisors from the observer's ingroup, then the probability that this actor was selected over their counterpart was only 18.7%. However, if the actor selected just one advisor from the observer's ingroup, this probability dramatically increased to 45.4%. The probability of being chosen further increased to 71.3% if the actor selected two advisors from the observer's ingroup. These increases demonstrated a clear social benefit to actors who consulted a greater number of advisors aligned with the observer. However, when the actor selected the maximum possible number of advisors from the observer's ingroup (three), the probability that they were chosen decreased to 58.1%. Thus, while participants demonstrated a general preference for like-minded others, this preference was tempered by a surprising willingness to reward those who selected at least some information from the outgroup. To test the statistical significance of these results, we regressed a binary variable indicating whether or not the actor was chosen for the collaborative task on an ordinal factor representing the number of observer's ingroup advisors that the actor had selected, finding that each of these means were statistically different from each other (results presented in Table A9 of the Appendix).

Although this general pattern persisted across game type, when expecting to play a future trust game, actors received a greater benefit for each additional advisor selected from the observer's ingroup than when expecting to play an estimation game (see Figure 6 and Table A9 of the Appendix). Furthermore, when expecting to play a trust game, actors who selected all of

their advisors from the observer's ingroup were penalized less than in the estimation game. This suggests that observers valued an actor's information diversification more when anticipating performing a task reliant on the actor's judgment skill rather than their trustworthiness.

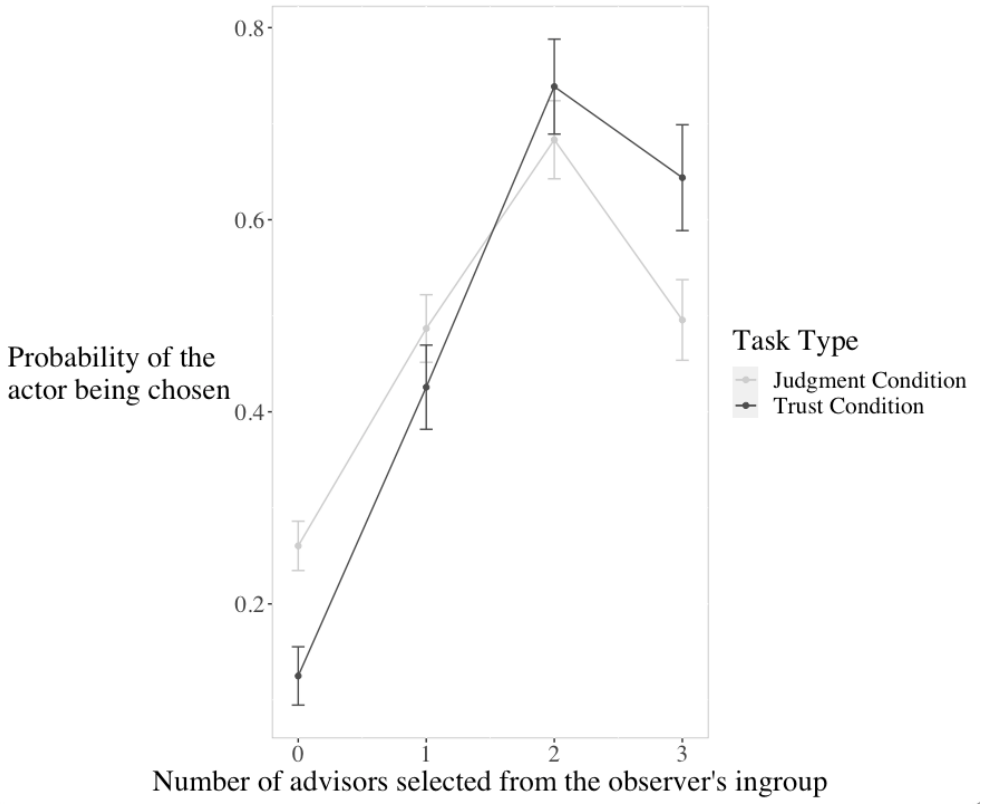

Figure 6: Mean probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that they selected from the observer's ingroup, as a function of game type. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

One concern with the above analysis is that the reported result could depend on the frequency with which observers evaluated particular pairings of actors. For example, actors might have more frequently chosen one advisor from the observer's ingroup than three. Since we randomly presented two real actors' selections of advisors to observers, this would imply that observers would be faced with the decision between an actor who selected one ingroup advisor and an actor who selected two ingroup advisors more frequently than the decision between an actor who selected two ingroup advisors paired with an actor who selected three ingroup

advisors. Thus, a simple preference for the actor who chose more ingroup advisors could yield the graph above.

To address this concern, we examined the observer's choice depending on the selections of both actors in a given pair (see Table 1 below). When one actor in a pair chooses zero ingroup advisors, the other actor is more likely to be picked if they selected one or two advisors from the observer's ingroup than if they selected three. In other words, the other actor is worst off if they chose all three advisors from the observer's ingroup. When one actor chooses one ingroup advisor, the other actor is again worst off by choosing three advisors from the observer's ingroup. Finally, when one actor chooses two advisors from the observer's ingroup, the same pattern persists. Irrespective of what one's counterpart does, there appears to be a reputational benefit to diversifying one's information selection decisions.

Actor's choices of observers' ingroup advisors	0 vs 1	0 vs 2	0 vs 3	1 vs 2	1 vs 3	2 vs 3
Percent of observers who chose the actor with more ingroup cards	84%	81%	76%	76%	59%	47%
N	456	407	232	743	429	407

Table 1: The top row represents all possible combinations of the two actors' selections (e.g. in the "0 vs 1" column, the observer chose between an actor who selected zero advisors from their ingroup and an actor who selected one advisor from their ingroup). The middle row represents the percentage of observers who chose the actor selecting a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup. The bottom row is the number of times each pairing appeared. Due to our random sampling strategy, observers were presented with the choice between an actor who selected one and an actor who selected two advisors from the observer's ingroup most often.

Discussion

Experiment 4 demonstrated the reputational consequences of information selection decisions, providing additional evidence for the signaling model of selective exposure. Critically, and in contrast to the apparent expectations of actors in Experiment 3, this relationship was

contingent on the type of collaboration that observers expected to engage in. Specifically, observers were more likely to reward actors who selected advisors from the observer's ingroup for tasks reliant on trust (vs. judgment skill).

Additionally, observers were responsive to the magnitude of selective exposure demonstrated by the actor. While they tended to reward choosing more ingroup advisors, observers also seemed to display a preference for some information diversification. In neither game type did observers demonstrate a preference for actors who exclusively relied on advice from the observer's ingroup. This finding is important given that individuals make repeated information selection decisions in front of their families, friends, and colleagues. The recognition that selective exposure is rewarded, but to a limit, adds important nuance to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Of note, Experiment 4 examined a situation in which observers were not aware of the group affiliation of their two potential partners. Thus, observers might have been using the advisors that a given actor consulted to infer the actor's group identity. It could be the case that observers preferred to choose actors who had selected more ingroup advisors because they interpreted this to mean that the actor was an ingroup member as well. This interpretation aligns with the hypothesis that individuals engage in selective exposure to signal belonging to a particular group.

However, people often find themselves in scenarios in which they know quite a bit about the person with whom they are interacting. This may mean that either explicitly know the other person's group affiliation or have a strong prior belief about it. When one's group membership is already known, an actor's information selection decisions may be more a signal of *strength* of group affiliation.

For known ingroup members who begin in good standing, selecting even more ingroup information could signal high levels of group loyalty. For a known outgroup member who starts in bad standing, selecting information from the opposing side could indicate openness to cooperation. In Experiment 5, we explore these questions by again assessing observer collaboration choices, while also directly and explicitly varying whether the actors under consideration are ingroup or outgroup members.

Experiment 5

In Experiment 5 we continued to examine the reputational consequences of information selection decisions. As in Experiment 4, participants (whom we will continue to call observers) chose a partner for a future collaborative task from among two actors who had participated in a prior study.[16] We again varied the type of collaborative task.

In addition, the design of Experiment 5 varied whether the actors under consideration reported holding the same or opposing political ideology as the observer. Thus, whereas Experiment 4 allowed us to investigate contexts where an individual's group membership is ambiguous and their information selection decisions can function as a signal of that membership, Experiment 5 tests whether information selection decisions provide value above and beyond knowledge of group membership. On the one hand, when one's group membership is known, advisor selections from an ingroup member may be interpreted as a signal of strength of affiliation. On the other hand, to the extent that individuals have had more contact with (and thus stronger positive expectations of ingroup members), the information selection decisions of outgroup members may be particularly informative for observers. To the extent that we generally have negative expectations of outgroup members and expect them to be unwilling to learn about

[16] This previous pilot study is similar to Experiment 3, although in it we did not vary future collaboration task type.

our perspective (Collins et al., 2022), a demonstrated willingness to select information from our side may send a particularly positive signal.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of United States residents from Cloud Research in August 2020 to participate in a 10-minute experiment in exchange for $1.00, with further opportunities for a bonus. Following our pre-registration, our final sample consisted of 983 participants (M_{age} = 42, 50% women, 51% liberal).[17] In a pilot study, we observed a standardized effect size of approximately 0.30 for the effect of whether observers preferred to collaborate with actors who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup; our final sample thus achieved greater than 90% statistical power to test this hypothesis.

Procedure. Participants (observers) first answered demographic questions, which included reporting their political ideology on a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative." From here, Experiment 5 closely mirrored the procedure of Experiment 4 with participants learning that their task in the study was to choose a partner for a future collaboration task, and then proceeding to make eight partner choices, one of which would be implemented.

Building on Experiment 4, this study featured a between-subjects 2 x 2 factorial design. We again varied the future collaborative task for which the observer was choosing the actor – the trust game or the estimation game. Extending Experiment 4, we additionally varied whether the

[17] As per our pre-registration, our goal was to collect data from approximately 1000 participants, roughly balanced between liberals and conservatives. We first recruited N = 700 using the following criteria: 98% HIT approval rate, greater than 500 HITs previously approved, and included on the Cloud Research approved participants list. We then excluded 90 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Next, in order to get roughly 500 participants of each political ideology, we directly recruited N = 90 self-reported liberals and N = 300 self-reported conservatives. From those, we excluded N = 17 who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." Our final sample consisted of 983 participants. (M_{age} = 42, 50% women, 51% liberal).

actors whose advisor choices the observers evaluated reported the same political ideology as the observer (ingroup condition), or the opposing political ideology (outgroup condition). Thus, observers in the ingroup condition viewed eight pairs of actors, all reporting their own political ideology, and chose one actor from each pair as a potential future collaboration partner. In contrast, observers in the outgroup condition viewed eight pairs of actors reporting the opposite political ideology.

Analysis plan. We followed the same analysis plan as in Experiment 4. Thus, we again dropped data from pairs of actors where both selected the same number of the observer's ingroup advisors. Our primary dependent variable was again binary, such that for any pair of actors (1 = observer chose the actor who consulted more of the observer's ingroup advisors, 0 = observer chose the actor who consulted fewer of the observer's ingroup advisors). Thus, we used an ordinal logistic regression, using the clm function in R (Christensen, 2018). As in Experiments 3-4, we also included participant-clustered standard errors, necessary because each participant provided eight estimates. Since we had eight different policy topics, we used simple effects coding to control for the effect of each of these. This coding scheme allows us to interpret the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic (Hardy, 1993).[18]

Results

Reputational consequences of selective exposure. We first examined whether observers preferred to collaborate with actors who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup. Replicating the pattern of results in Experiment 4, we found this to be the case 66% of the time, a frequency greater than chance ($t(5517) = 25.89$, $p < .001$). When using

[18] While we did not pre-register the simple effects coding, this empirical strategy allows us to interpret the intercept of the regression model as the grand mean of the reference topics. Quantitively, the patterns of statistical significance remain identical whether we use this method or not.

the analytic strategy described above, the odds that the actors who selected a greater number of the observer's ingroup advisors were chosen for future collaboration increased by 1.98 compared to their counterpart ($p < .001$).

Congruence of group membership. We next examined a question that was new to Experiment 5: whether our effect differed for pairs of ingroup versus outgroup actors. Although participants chose the actor who selected more ingroup advisors at greater than chance levels in both conditions, this tendency was substantially more pronounced when choosing among actors with the *opposing* political ideology (log odds = .42, $p < .001$). In the ingroup condition, observers chose the actor who had selected more advisors from the observer's and actor's shared ingroup 61.7% of the time. In contrast, in the outgroup condition, observers chose the actor who had selected more advisors from the observer's ingroup 71.0% of the time (see Figure 7 below and Table A10 of the Appendix). Thus, although individuals displayed a preference for collaborators who selected advice from their ingroup in both conditions, this was especially important for outgroup members.

Given that people tend to hold overly negative perceptions and beliefs about outgroup members (Moore-Berg et al., 2020; Lees & Cikara, 2021), seeing an outgroup member view ingroup information may have been an especially salient signal of open-mindedness and receptiveness to opposing views (Minson et al., 2020; Minson & Chen, 2022). Alternatively, if observers interpret actors' selections are a sign of their commitment to existing beliefs, this interaction could indicate that it's more important for observers to know that an outgroup member is malleable in their beliefs than it is to know that an ingroup member is fully committed. Examining this distinction would be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Decision context. In examining the effect of selecting advisors from the observer's ingroup when choosing a partner for a future trust game or a future estimation game, we replicated the results from Experiment 4. Although participants chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup at levels above chance in both conditions, this tendency was substantially more pronounced when choosing a partner for a trust game rather than an estimation game (log odds = .35, $p < .001$; see Figure 7 below and Table A10 of the Appendix).

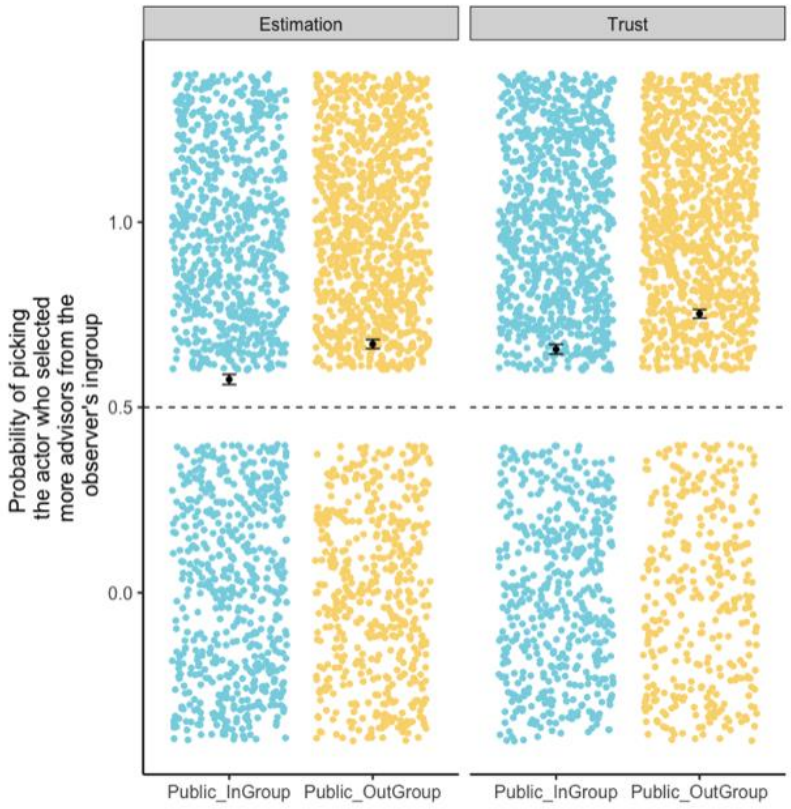

Figure 7: The probability that observers chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup, by condition. The dotted line at .50 represents chance levels. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. In all conditions, the actors who selected more of the observer's ingroup advisors were more likely to be chosen, but this tendency was more pronounced in the trust game and outgroup conditions.

Magnitude of selective exposure. In Experiment 5 we were again able to examine the effect of actors' information diversification on observer choices. While exploratory, these results are in line with those from Experiment 2 and directly replicate those from Experiment 4 with (1)

that observers demonstrating a preference for actors who selected more advisors from the observer's ingroup, but also (2) showing a preference for diversification by punishing those actors who selected *all* of their advisors from the observer's ingroup. These results are presented in Figure A2 and Table A11 in the Appendix.[19]

When examining the data by ingroup versus outgroup condition, observers were sensitive to ideological alignment when evaluating potential partners based on their advisor selections (See Figure 8 below and Table A11 in the Appendix). Specifically, when evaluating an outgroup member, actors receive a greater benefit for each additional advisor selected from the observer's ingroup. However, for both ingroup and outgroup actor selections, observers clearly favored those who demonstrated some openness to outgroup information.

[19] As in Experiment 4, in our pre-registration, we detailed testing this question with different analyses, however we think that the presented analyses and graphs better represent our results. We include the pre-registered analyses in the appendix.

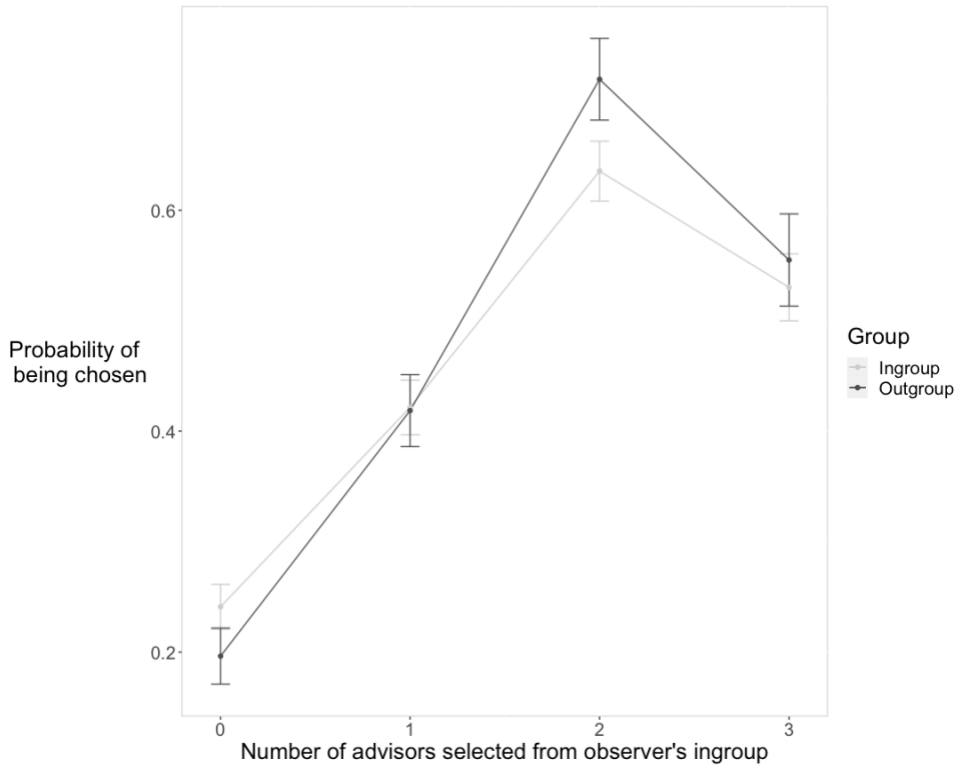

Figure 8: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that they selected from the observer's ingroup, by condition. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

Trade-offs between observers. In a final set of exploratory analyses, we examined the reputational trade-offs that consumers of information face when confronted with an audience whose group affiliation is unknown. While participants in Experiment 3 had accurate information regarding whether the observer belonged to their ingroup or the outgroup, outside of controlled laboratory experiments (e.g., on social media), such information is often unavailable. Further, audiences often include a mixed set of evaluators. In Experiment 5, our data capture how the range of possible information selection decisions of actors were evaluated by both ingroup and outgroup observers. Thus, in a final set of analyses, we assessed the information selection strategy actors might employ when audience affiliation is unknown.

Our results revealed a nuanced trade-off that actors must navigate in choosing whether to appeal to ingroup or outgroup observers. To the extent that observers reward actors who select

information sources from the observer's own side, it seems impossible to please both. That is, selecting more sources from one group necessarily means selecting fewer from the other. Yet, our data suggest that it may be possible to improve on this zero-sum approach. Figure 9 plots evaluations of actors by both ingroup and outgroup observers as a function of advisor selection. The figure axes correspond to the probability of being chosen for future collaboration by ingroup and outgroup members, respectively. The points on the graph represent the number of information sources chosen by the actor belonging to the *actor's* ingroup. Note that this is a departure from Experiments 4 and 5, where we referred to the information sources belonging to the observer's ingroup as "ingroup sources." This departure is necessitated by the fact that Figure 8 presents observers from both the actor's ingroup as well as the actor's outgroup.

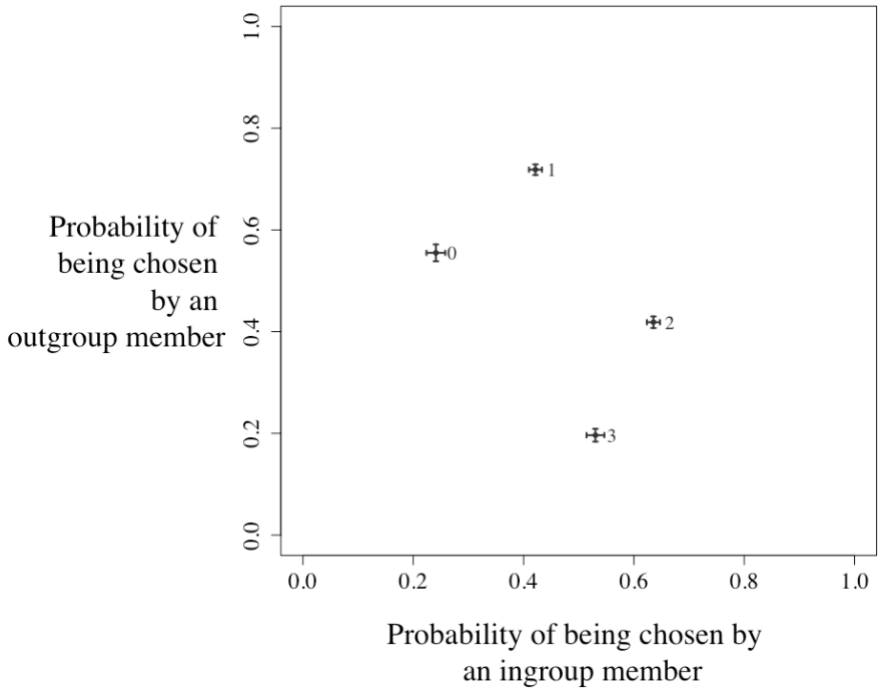

Figure 9: The points on the graph represent the number of advisors from the actor's ingroup that he or she selected. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad. Note that points further from the origin are better, representing a clear case for diversification. For example, choosing one advisor from the ingroup is a pareto improvement over choosing zero. Similarly, choosing 2 advisors from the ingroup is a pareto improvement over choosing three.

If we consider an actor who selected zero of their own ingroup information sources, we observe a 26% probability of this individual being chosen for future collaboration by their ingroup members, and a 55% probability of them being chosen by their outgroup members. However, if this actor selected a single ingroup source, their standing improved in the eyes of both types of observers, with the chance of being chosen by an ingroup member going up to 42% and the chance of being chosen by an outgroup member going up to 71%. Similarly, if we consider an actor who selected three of their own ingroup information sources, we observe a 53% probability of this individual being chosen for future cooperation by their ingroup members, and a 20% probability of them being chosen by their outgroup members. However, if this actor selected a single outgroup source, their standing improved in the eyes of both types of observers, with the chance of being chosen by an ingroup member going up to 64% and the chance of being chosen by an outgroup member going up to 42%.

This analysis demonstrates that selecting a diverse set of information sources yielded reputational benefits in all conditions. While observers had a general tendency to prefer those who selected more of their own ingroup information, we found that, surprisingly, the optimal response for individuals concerned with managing their reputation was to diversity their information portfolio.

Discussion

Experiment 5 provided further support for the hypothesis that observers reward actors who consult more advisors from the observer's ingroup. However, unlike in Experiments 2 and 4, the actor's group identity was known to observers. Our data demonstrate that even in situations where group affiliation is known (as is often the case when we interact with family members, friends, and colleagues), information selection decisions are perceived as informative.

Experiment 5 also provided evidence that observers' preference for individuals who engage in selective exposure is moderated by congruence of group membership. Specifically, observers were more likely to reward the selection of advisors from the observer's ingroup when the actor belonged to the outgroup. An outgroup member consulting more of the observer's ingroup sources might be interpreted as a sign of persuadability. However, this result could also indicate that a willingness to cross the aisle is especially important when trying to make a positive impression on an outgroup member, and perhaps less reputationally consequential than demonstrating loyalty to one's own ingroup. Future research is needed to tease apart these explanations. Additionally, we replicated the results from Experiment 4, finding that the observer's preference was again moderated by the type of future collaboration they expected to engage in.

Finally, and perhaps most counter-intuitively, we also found that observers demonstrated a preference for those actors who primarily, but not exclusively, selected information aligned with the observer's ingroup. This result provides a path forward for individuals who wish to balance judgment accuracy with the reputational benefits of demonstrating selective exposure as it appears that the reputational benefits are in fact bounded.

General Discussion

Across a range of personal and professional contexts, individuals must rely on diverse information to maximize the quality of their decision-making. Yet, research suggests that they often avoid information that contradicts their prior beliefs. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in political contexts where such information avoidance can foster increased polarization and undermine the welfare of individuals and entire societies (Finkel et al., 2020). Why, then, do people fail to seek out the broadest possible set of facts and opinions?

Prior research in this area has primarily focused on intrapersonal answers to this question (most notably avoidance of cognitive dissonance). In the current work, we provide robust evidence for a social signaling model of selective exposure. We hypothesize and find that (1) people make information selection decisions at least partly to send a signal to observers, and (2) observers reward people who send such signals.

Across five well-powered, financially-incentivized, pre-registered experiments, our work simultaneously supports a social signaling model of selective exposure and paints a nuanced picture of information selection decisions and their interpersonal consequences under a variety of conditions. Specifically, our results reveal that while individuals are largely rewarded for selecting information aligned with the observer's ingroup, observers also attended to multiple other features of the situation: including (1) the type of future engagement they are likely to have with the actor, (2) the actor's known group membership, and (3) the magnitude of selective exposure demonstrated. Our experiments allowed us to capture a tension between individuals' desire to make accurate judgments and their desire to manage the perceptions of others – a tension that is present in many contexts outside of the laboratory. Our findings thus offer insights for understanding the basic drivers of selective exposure, as well as avenues for mitigating its occurrence.

Theoretical Contribution

Our approach extends prior theory on reputational influences on behavior and offers insights about the psychological underpinnings of selective exposure. We build on impression management research by applying this lens to information selection decisions. Across social science disciplines, impression management has grown into a burgeoning area of research as scholars recognize the role that reputational concerns play in an array of seemingly irrational

behaviors (Dorison, 2022; Dorison et al., 2021; Dorison & Heller, 2022; Jackson & Dorison, 2022; Jordan, Hoffman, Bloom, et al., 2016; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, et al., 2016; Tenney et al., 2019). However, thus far, explanations of selective exposure have been primarily focused on *intrapersonal* reasons, often rooted in avoidance of negative emotions (Dorison et al., 2019; Frimer et al., 2017). In the present research we provide evidence for a complementary *interpersonal* account. This adds to a vast body of research on impression management concerns by applying this framework to the area of information selection decisions.

By explicitly testing both sides of a social signaling model of information selection decisions, our work contributes to research on reputational accounts for behavior more generally. An examination of an interpersonal explanation requires looking at both reputational causes as well as reputational consequences of the behavior, something that prior research on selective exposure has not attempted to do. This functional approach allows us to answer whether a seemingly irrational behavior might actually be appropriate for a given environment.

The social signaling lens illuminates a key tradeoff for decision makers. Selective exposure is traditionally considered to be a bias since people should consider information from a variety of sources in order to improve judgment accuracy (Akerlof, 1970; Blackwell, 1953; Galton, 1907; Golman et al., 2017; Janis, 1982; Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005; Page, 2008; Peterson & Pitz, 1986; Stewart, 1988; Stigler, 1961; Sunstein, 2001; Surowiecki, 2005). However, our results provide an important qualification to this traditional view. Specifically, we find that observers reward actors who select more of the observer's ingroup information. Thus, information selection decisions may be serving two purposes: maximizing judgment accuracy and maximizing reputational benefits. Our results suggest that when considering the relevant

social rewards, tailoring one's information selection decisions to the audience may actually be an effective, rational strategy.

Our results also identify theoretically derived conditions under which signaling is more vs. less likely to be effective. We find that observers reward individuals more for consuming the observer's ingroup information when expecting to engage a future interaction reliant on interpersonal trust than reliant on judgment skill. We also find that observers reward outgroup individuals more for consuming the observer's ingroup information than ingroup members. Neither of these factors have been considered in prior work relating to impression management and selective exposure (Hart et al., 2020; Lundgren & Prislin, 1998).

Whereas prior research has focused on documenting the presence or absence of selective exposure, we find that observers are also sensitive to the magnitude of the phenomenon. Both ingroup and outgroup observers displayed a preference for actors who signaled a willingness to engage with a variety of perspectives by choosing to view at least some information from both sides. Our work thus paints a more nuanced portrait of the reputational consequences of information selection decisions, identifying the conditions under which selective exposure is more or less socially rewarded.

Finally, our findings speak to why selective exposure is so persistent. Given that our results indicate that people tailor their information selection decisions to the identity of the *observer*, one might question how they speak to the most commonly studied operationalization of selective exposure – selecting information consistent with one's *own* identity. However, individuals spend most of their lives ensconced in neighborhoods and social networks comprised of politically like-minded others (Bakshy et al., 2015; Brown & Enos, 2021). Given that people

are most often observed by ingroup members, our pattern of results illustrate a powerful social force leading to the persistence of selective exposure that we see in the world.

Practical Contribution

Our work also holds important practical implications for individuals, organizations, and society. From the perspective of the individual decision maker, our results offer insights for managing the tension between judgment accuracy and reputational concerns across different contexts. Given that systematic avoidance of opposing views carries important accuracy costs, our results can also inform policy makers seeking to design interventions to encourage more balanced information consumption.

We consistently find that individuals can benefit reputationally from conspicuously consuming information aligned with the beliefs and values espoused by their audience. This result holds across multiple types of information and elicitations. However, our work goes beyond prior research by adding considerable nuance to this basic strategy. The observers in our studies also attended to multiple other features of the signal: including the type of task, the actor's group membership, and the diversity of the selected set of information sources. Thus, actors benefitted more from consuming outgroup-aligned information sources when they sought to signal trustworthiness and/or were being observed by ideological opponents. Importantly however, irrespective of the observer's identity, individuals benefitted from diversifying their information selection decisions – which was valued by observers from both sides of the aisle.

In addition to informing the best strategy for an individual decision maker, our research holds important implications for leaders seeking to reduce selective exposure. This could be especially important given the high levels of political polarization in the United States and around the world today (Boxell et al., 2022). To the extent that individuals appear concerned

with the reputational consequences, leaders and policy makers may wish to design interventions to explicitly encourage specific behaviors. For example, communicating a preference for receptiveness to opposing views (Minson et al., 2020) or highlighting decision accuracy as a key goal may increase the range of information individuals consult, ultimately leading to less polarization, reduced spread of misinformation, and improvements in societal decision-making.

Limitations and future directions

As our experiments test the specific predictions of the social signaling model, some key limitations and future research directions should be noted. Scholars should examine the generalizability of these key results in more naturalistic settings. We find that our results hold across multiple types of information (i.e. selection of politicians' web pages, news articles, and advisors). This is in line with prior research on selective exposure, which has been documented across a variety of behaviors ranging from who one discusses politics with, to the types of media outlets one chooses, to the content of messages one selects (Stroud, 2014). These information types differ across many dimensions including whether the information arises from a specific outgroup member (e.g. an individual's opinion) or supports an outgroup point of view (e.g. the results of a study). These differences between information types might, in turn, change the balance of social versus accuracy incentives in any given situation and should be more thoroughly explored in a greater number of consequential real-world settings.

Additionally, these paradigms were developed as an experimental test with precise control over the decision environment (Falk & Heckman, 2009) and the reputational incentives were directly tied to financial benefits. This is common in the experimental economics literature, where the trust game, among others, is often used to measure social preferences (Levitt & List, 2007). While there are a number of studies which link the generalizability of lab experiments to

those in the field (Camerer, 2011), there are elements of reputation and impression management concerns which might not be captured by our use of financial incentives.

In designing our experiments, we follow prior selective exposure research methodologies by presenting participants with a balanced menu of choices and asking them to select a certain number of sources among them. This method equates the selection of confirming evidence with avoidance of disconfirming evidence. Future research should examine whether the reputational causes or consequences of information seeking vs. information avoidance behaviors might differ. This question is particularly intriguing as information *selection* decisions might be more likely to be observable than information *avoidance* decisions.

Relatedly, whether observers reward or punish actors based on their information selection decisions is an interesting future question, similarly to other studies on impression management (for further discussion, see Dorison & Heller, 2022; Levitt & List, 2007). Given our design, there are four possible pathways for reputation to matter: (1) penalties for seeking outgroup information, (2) rewards for seeking ingroup information, (3) penalties for avoiding ingroup information, and/or (4) rewards for avoiding outgroup information. Given that selection decisions might be more observable, options one and two might be more applicable. Especially in today's culture where outgroup hate has become stronger than ingroup love (Finkel et al., 2020), this might be a particularly interesting question.

Furthermore, our experiments featured two decision contexts in which participants could easily signal certain characteristics (i.e., trustworthiness and judgment skill). As our theorizing suggests, the relevance of any given dimension of social evaluation naturally varies with the context. We chose to test two dissimilar decision contexts which could be operationalized in an incentive-compatible manner. Future extensions could also examine how information selection

decisions might be strategically employed to signal other characteristics such as likability, cooperativeness, or intelligence.

Our results also raise intriguing questions about when actors can predict the social rewards associated with their information selection decisions and when they cannot. When looking across our five experiments to compare actor behavior with observer rewards, we see that actors adjust their information selection decisions depending on the identity of the observer. However, actors do not anticipate the varied social rewards based on the type of task the observer expects to engage with them on. Future research should thus further explore when and why actors can accurately predict the reputational benefits of specific information consumption choices.

Finally, our paradigm could also be extended to feature other topics of disagreement beyond partisan political issues, as the social signaling model presented here would apply to any group context with correlated belief structures (for related work, see Minson & Dorison, 2022). For example, many organizations must manage disagreement between groups organized around functional or geographic divisions. While disagreement along the lines of political ideology builds on prior selective exposure research by leveraging naturally occurring ingroup versus outgroup belief structures and has important societal consequences, additional insight could be gleaned by examining other common topics of conflict such as those in organizations, or in families.

Conclusion

Taken together, our results demonstrate the relevance of interpersonal factors in driving selective exposure to political information. In the era of social media and the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation, when many choices are public than ever before,

understanding the features of social contexts under which people are more or less likely to display selective exposure is crucial for both theory and practice. Our work extends prior thinking in this area and points to specific avenues toward greater engagement across ideological divides.

Context

This article fits into a program of research that considers the role of impression management concerns in the domain of information selection, consumption, and sharing. Specifically, here we highlight how reputational concerns can rationally impact selective exposure to information, which has traditionally been studied as a bias. However, we also find hope in the result that observers value people who show at least some open-mindedness. This research is particularly timely given the high levels of political polarization in the world, helping us to best understand what drives decisions regarding media consumption and sharing, as well as the possibility of fostering cross-party interactions.

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Appendix
Pilot Study

Table A1: Below are all eight topics which the participants in the Pilot Study indicated agreement ("Yes" or "No") and the proportion of self-identified liberals (column 2) and conservatives (column 3) who reported agreement. These proportions were estimated by actors in Experiment 3.

Topic	Liberals	Conservatives
The death penalty should be abolished in all US states.	0.72	0.28
I approve of the job that Joe Biden is currently doing as President.	0.78	0.22
I support the national legalization of marijuana for recreational use.	0.67	0.33
All US civilians should have to undergo a psychiatric evaluation before purchasing a firearm.	0.61	0.39
If a woman wishes to terminate a pregnancy, she should first be required to undergo a fetal ultrasound in order to make a fully informed decision.	0.23	0.77
The public reaction to recent confrontations between police and minority crime suspects has been overblown.	0.10	0.90
Although the #metoo movement has provided a useful forum for women to discuss sexual harassment, it is also creating a zero-tolerance mentality of blame and finger-pointing.	0.36	0.64
A physical barrier along the southern border will have no effect on illegal immigration.	0.79	0.21

Experiment 1

Table A2: Regression results for the number of ingroup sources chosen by condition. Outgroup is an indicator for being in the outgroup condition. Senators is an indicator for being in the senators condition. Both columns are linear regressions using the lm function in R.

	Dependent variable:	
	Number of ingroup sources chosen	
	(1)	(2)
senators		0.325
		(0.201)
outgroup	−1.766***	−1.726***
	(0.143)	(0.202)
senators x outgroup		−0.099
		(0.285)
Constant	4.137***	3.979***
	(0.101)	(0.140)
Observations	364	364
R^2	0.297	0.305
F Statistic	153.006*** (df = 1; 362)	52.550*** (df = 3; 360)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Experiment 2

Table A3: Regression results for the observer's trust in the actor based on their number of sources chosen from the observer's ingroup. Senators is an indicator for the senators condition. Number of ingroup sources refers to the number of sources an actor chose from the observer's ingroup (ranging from 0-6). Columns 1 and 2 are linear regressions using the lm function in R, where trust is measured as the number of cents sent to the actor. Columns 3 and 4 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R, where trust is measured as a binary variable of whether or not the observer sent a positive amount to the actor or not.

	Dependent variable:			
	Trust			
	OLS		*CLM*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
senators		−0.139		−0.053
		(0.449)		(0.359)
number of ingroup sources	0.558***	0.539***	0.451***	0.460***
	(0.075)	(0.108)	(0.085)	(0.125)
number of ingroup sources x senators		0.038		−0.014
		(0.151)		(0.171)
Constant	4.894***	4.959***		
	(0.224)	(0.307)		
Observations	671	671	671	671
R^2	0.076	0.076		
F Statistic	54.755*** (df = 1; 669)	18.231*** (df = 3; 667)		
AIC			432.79	436.70
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A4: Linear regression results for the observer's trust in the actor based on a factor variable representing the number of sources an actor chose from the observer's ingroup. Trust is measured as the proportion of the observer's endowment sent to the actor.

	Dependent variable:
	trust
one ingroup source	11.877***
	(4.356)
two ingroup sources	21.150***
	(4.356)
three ingroup sources	24.213***
	(4.315)
four ingroup sources	28.761***
	(4.345)
five ingroup sources	27.242***
	(4.445)
zero ingroup sources	44.032***
	(2.986)
Observations	671
R^2	0.088
F Statistic	12.883*** (df = 5; 665)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Experiment 3

Table A5: Regression results for the number of ingroup advisors that the Actor chose by condition. Public Ingroup is an indicator for being in the public ingroup conditions. Public Outgroup is an indicator for being in the public outgroup conditions. Trust Game is an indicator for being in the trust game conditions. Topic fixed effects accounts for the effect of the 8 different topics. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant and simple effects coding. Columns 1 and 2 include data from all participants. Columns 3-4 are restricted to those in the public conditions. Columns 1 and 3 are linear regressions using the lm function in R. Columns 2 and 4 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R.

	Dependent variable:			
	Number Ingroup Advisors Chosen			
	OLS	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Public Ingroup	0.208***	0.385***		
	(0.057)	(0.107)		
Public Outgroup	−0.206***	−0.388***	−0.431***	−0.784***
	(0.056)	(0.106)	(0.067)	(0.126)
Trust Game			0.037	0.077
			(0.069)	(0.131)
Public Outgroup * Trust Game			0.028	0.027
			(0.095)	(0.182)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intercept	1.354***		1.544***	
	(0.045)		(0.048)	
Intercept: 0 ingroup advisors |1 ingroup advisor		−1.357***		−1.693***
		(0.096)		(0.101)
Intercept: 1 ingroup advisor |2 ingroup advisors		0.327***		−0.017
		(0.084)		(0.090)
Intercept: 2ingroup advisors |3 ingroup advisors		1.793***		1.427***
		(0.097)		(0.105)

Note: standard errors clustered by participant *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A6: Linear regression results for z-scored error. Ingroup Advisors Chosen represents the number of ingroup advisors that the actor chose (0-3). Public Ingroup is an indicator for being in the public ingroup treatment. Public Outgroup is an indicator for being in the public outgroup treatment. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant.

	Dependent variable:	
	z-Scored Error	
	(1)	(2)
Ingroup Advisors Chosen	0.073***	0.063*
	(0.017)	(0.038)
Public Ingroup		−0.005
		(0.070)
Public Outgroup		0.067
		(0.072)
Ingroup Advisors Chosen * Public Ingroup		0.027
		(0.045)
Ingroup Advisors Chosen * Public Outgroup		0.003
		(0.045)
Constant	−0.099***	−0.130**
	(0.027)	(0.058)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table A7: Linear regression results for the change in the participant's estimate (second estimate – first estimate). Advisor Said Yes is an indicator for whether the advisor selected agreed with the policy statement or not. Ingroup Advisor is an indicator for whether the selected advisor belonged to the actor's ingroup or not. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant.

	Dependent variable:	
	Change in Estimate	
	(1)	(2)
Advisor Said Yes	5.031***	3.563***
	(0.479)	(0.587)
Ingroup Advisor		−1.814***
		(0.516)
Advisor Said Yes * Ingroup Advisor		3.245***
		(0.789)
Constant	−2.975***	−2.150***
	(0.335)	(0.419)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

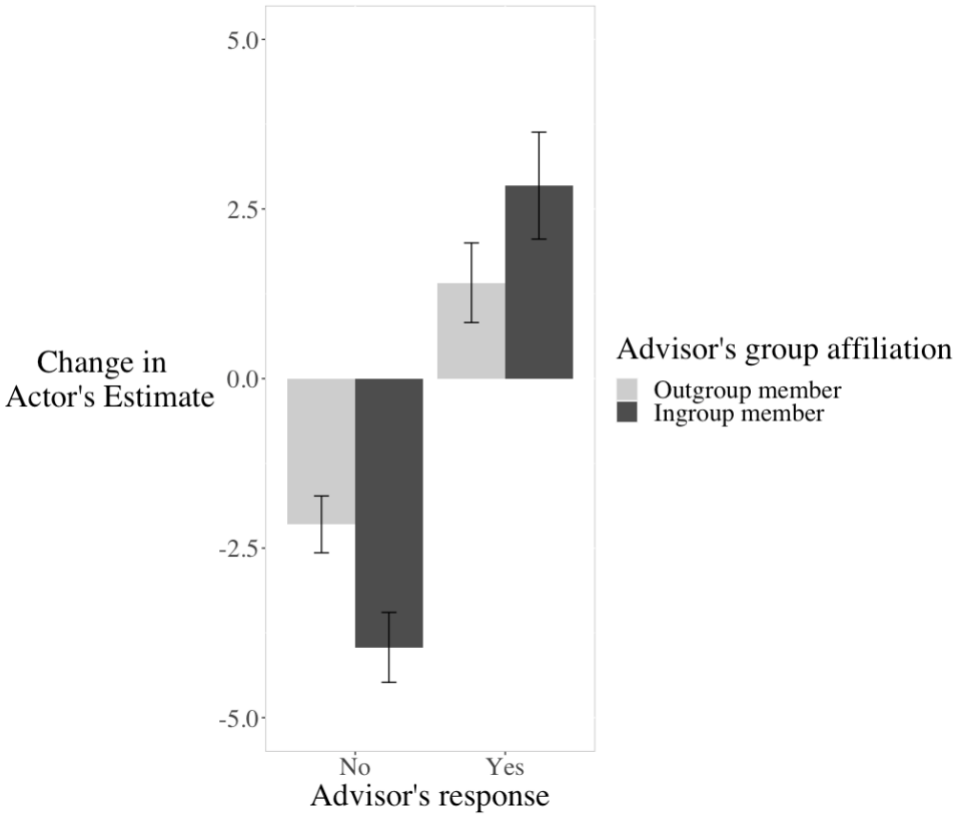

Figure A1: Mean change in actor's estimate, by condition and advisor's response. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. This indicates that when an ingroup advisor says no, actors lower their estimate by more than they do when outgroup advisors say no. When an ingroup advisor says yes, actors increase their estimate by more than if an outgroup advisor says yes. This indicates greater weight on ingroup advice.

Experiment 4

Table A8: Regression results for whether the observer chose the actor with more ingroup advisor selections. Trust Game is an indicator for being in the trust game condition as opposed to the estimation game condition. Topic fixed effects account for the effect of the 8 different topics. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant and simple effects coding. Columns 1 and 3 are linear regressions using the lm function in R. Columns 2 and 4 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R.

	Dependent variable:			
	Chose Actor with More InGroup Advisor Selections			
	OLS	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Trust Game			0.135***	0.655***
			(0.025)	(0.126)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.209***	0.892***	0.136***	0.557***
	(0.013)	(0.063)	(0.019)	(0.083)
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

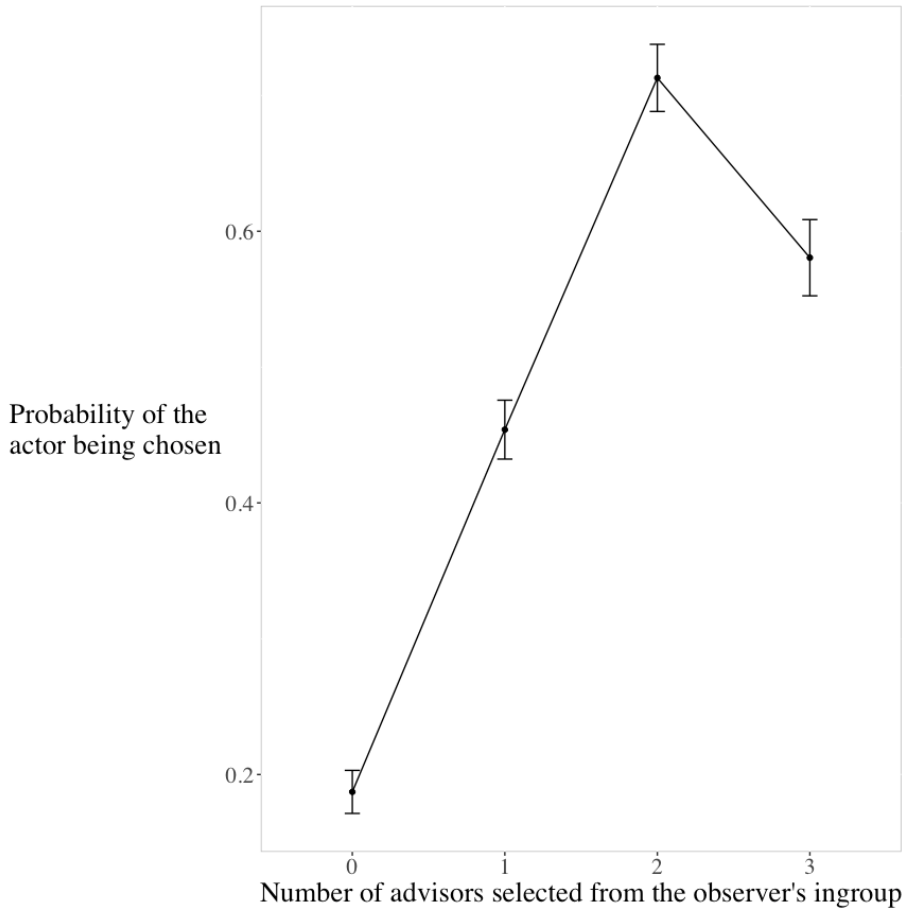

Figure A2: The mean probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad. As seen in this figure, the probability that observers chose a given actor increased when the actor goes from choosing zero to selecting one ingroup advisor (log odds = 1.28, $p < .001$) and when the actor goes from selecting one to selecting two ingroup advisors (χ^2 (1, N = 5348) = 213.75, $p < .001$). However, there was a penalty for selecting three advisors from the observer's ingroup rather than two as the probability of the actor being chosen for the bonus opportunity significantly decreased (χ^2 (1, N = 5348) = 49.14, $p < .001$).[20]

[20] This "U-shaped" relationship was confirmed by a two-lines test indicating that there is indeed a positive relationship between selecting a lower number of ingroup advisors and being chosen by the observer, but that this relationship reverses when selecting a greater number of ingroup advisors (Simonsohn, 2018).

Table A9: Regression results for whether the observer chose the actor with more ingroup advisor selections, by number of ingroup advisors selected. 1,2, and 3 Ingroup Advisors are indicators for the number of advisors from the observer's ingroup that the actor selected. Trust Game is an indicator for being in the trust game condition as opposed to the estimation game condition. Topic fixed effects account for the effect of the 8 different topics. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant and simple effects coding. Columns 1 and 3 are linear regressions using the lm function in R. Columns 2 and 4 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R.

	Dependent variable:			
	Chose Actor with More InGroup Advisor Selections			
	OLS	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1 Ingroup Advisor	0.268***	1.288***	0.227***	0.994***
	(0.022)	(0.119)	(0.035)	(0.167)
2 Ingroup Advisors	0.527***	2.384***	0.424***	1.818***
	(0.025)	(0.144)	(0.041)	(0.201)
3 Ingroup Advisors	0.394***	1.798***	0.236***	1.031***
	(0.028)	(0.144)	(0.042)	(0.190)
Trust Game			−0.136***	−0.905***
			(0.030)	(0.202)
1 Ingroup Advisor * Trust Game			0.075*	0.658***
			(0.044)	(0.240)
2 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.191***	1.174***
			(0.049)	(0.286)
3 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.284***	1.512***
			(0.055)	(0.291)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.192***	−1.448***	0.265***	−1.022***
	(0.016)	(0.101)	(0.026)	(0.133)
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Pre-registered analysis for magnitude of selective exposure hypothesis

In our pre-registration, we predicted that "an Actor's choice to view at least one information source from the Observer's ingroup will be a better predictor than the difference score between the two Actor's choices." To test this, we ran the following regression, where:

$$Logit(ChoseMoreInGroup - .5)_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(includeZero_i) + \beta_2(differenceScore_i) + Z_i + \varepsilon_i$$

- *IncludeZero* was binary variable representing when one of the Actors chose zero ingroup sources vs neither Actor chose zero ingroup sources
- *differenceScore* was an ordinal variable with three levels (3 = one Actor chose 3 more ingroup sources than the other, 2 = one Actor chose 2 more ingroup sources than the other, 1 = one Actor chose 1 more ingroup sources than the other).

Specifically, we predicted that β_1 would be larger than β_2 analyzed using a linear hypothesis test where the null hypothesis is that $\beta_1 - \beta_2 = 0$. We found evidence consistent with this hypothesis ($\chi^2 = 50.48$, $p < .001$), however decided that there was a more natural way to test this question by simply looking at the probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of sources that they selected, reported in the main text.

Experiment 5

Table A10: Regression results for whether the observer chose the actor with more ingroup advisor selections. Trust Game is an indicator for being in the trust game condition as opposed to the estimation game condition. Public Outgroup is an indicator for being in the outgroup condition as opposed to the ingroup condition. Topic fixed effects account for the effect of the 8 different topics. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant and simple effects coding. Columns 1, 3, and 5 are linear regressions using the lm function in R. Columns 2, 4 and 6 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R.

	Dependent variable:					
	Chose Actor with More InGroup					
	OLS	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	0.164***	0.744***	0.125***	0.514***	0.117***	0.477***
	(0.010)	(0.082)	(0.013)	(0.057)	(0.014)	(0.060)
Trust Game			0.078***	0.354***		
			(0.019)	(0.086)		
Public Outgroup					0.093***	0.420***
					(0.019)	(0.086)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

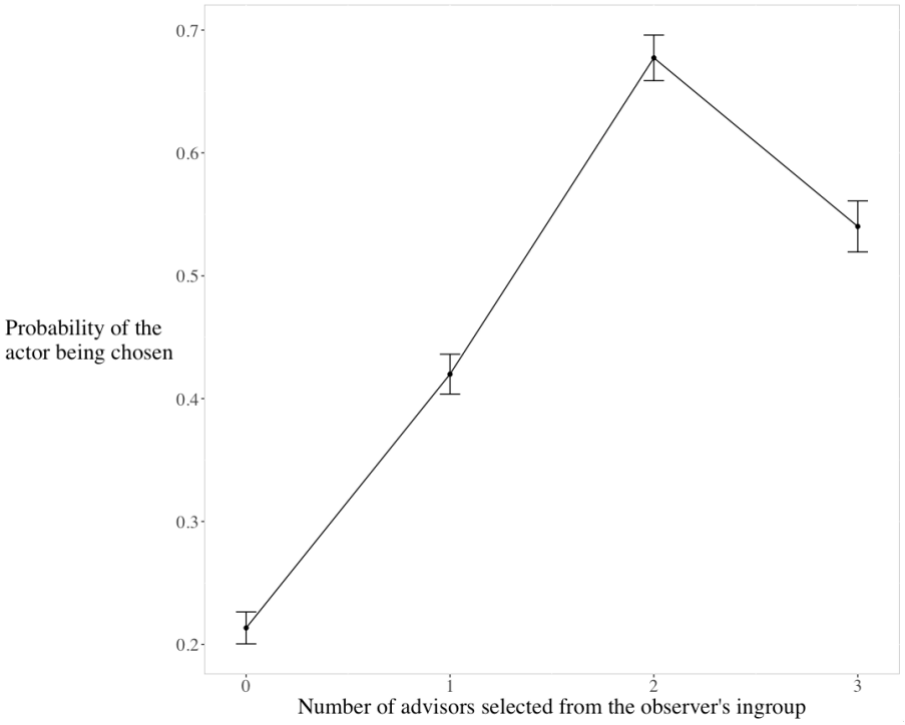

Figure A3: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

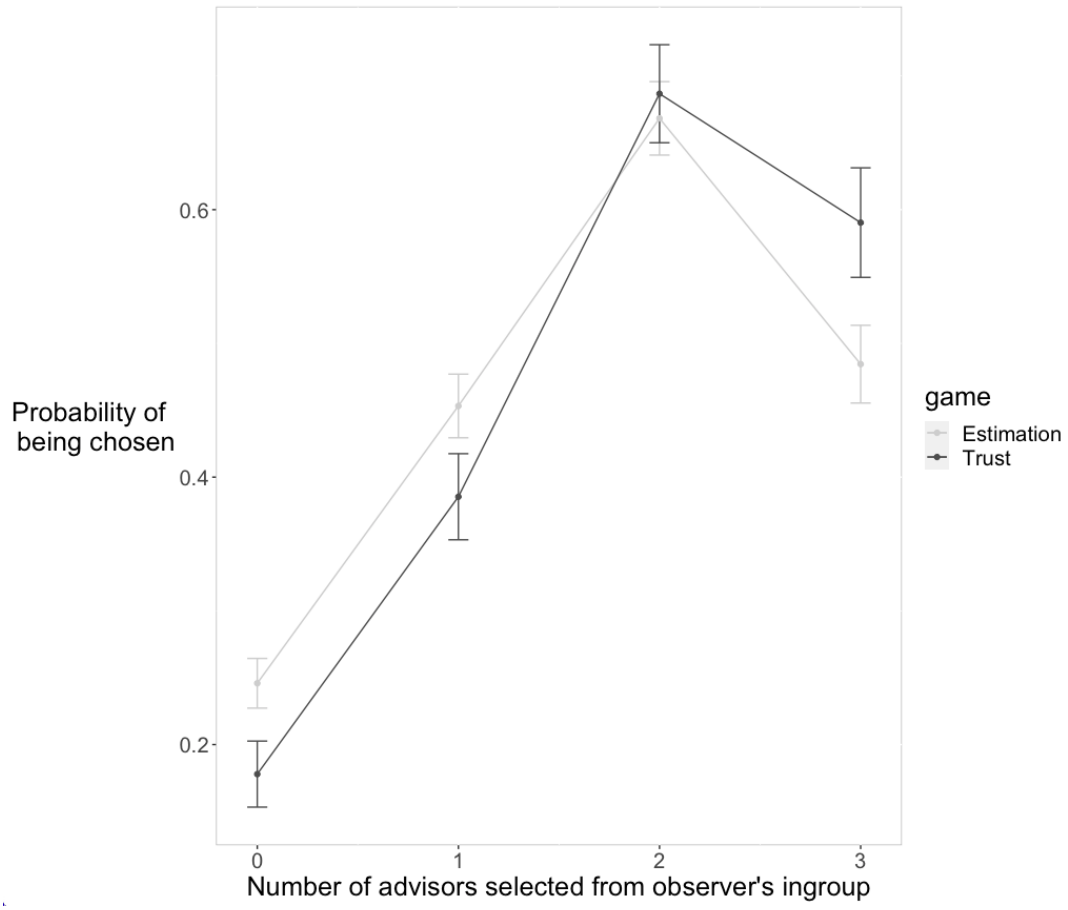

Figure A4: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup, by game type. Error bars represent ± one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

Table A11: Regression results for whether the observer chose the actor with more ingroup advisor selections, by number of ingroup advisors selected. 1,2, and 3 Ingroup Advisors are indicators for the number of advisors from the observer's ingroup that the actor selected. Trust Game is an indicator for being in the trust game condition as opposed to the estimation game condition. Public Outgroup is an indicator for being in the outgroup condition as opposed to the ingroup condition. Topic fixed effects account for the effect of the 8 different topics. All regressions include clustered standard errors by participant and simple effects coding. Columns 1, 3 and 5 are linear regressions using the lm function in R. Columns 2, 4 and 6 are logistic regressions using the clm function in R.

	Dependent variable:					
	Chose Actor with More InGroup					
	OLS	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*	*OLS*	*CLM*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1 Ingroup Advisor	0.209***	0.992***	0.210***	0.944***	0.183***	0.843***
	(0.016)	(0.086)	(0.024)	(0.117)	(0.025)	(0.124)
2 Ingroup Advisors	0.466***	2.057***	0.425***	1.832***	0.397***	1.713***
	(0.019)	(0.101)	(0.027)	(0.139)	(0.027)	(0.138)
3 Ingroup Advisors	0.329***	1.476***	0.241***	1.068***	0.291***	1.278***
	(0.021)	(0.103)	(0.029)	(0.136)	(0.030)	(0.145)
Trust Game			−0.068***	−0.411***		
			(0.025)	(0.151)		
Public Outgroup					−0.044*	−0.260*
					(0.025)	(0.148)
1 Ingroup Advisor * Trust Game			0.0002	0.131		
			(0.032)	(0.173)		
2 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.087**	0.495**		
			(0.037)	(0.201)		
3 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.174***	0.840***		
			(0.041)	(0.207)		
1 Ingroup Advisor * Public Outgroup					0.041	0.247
					(0.033)	(0.170)
2 Ingroup Advisors * Public Outgroup					0.128***	0.644***
					(0.037)	(0.200)
3 Ingroup Advisors * Public Outgroup					0.070*	0.365*
					(0.042)	(0.204)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.211***	−1.315***	0.244***	−1.132***	0.240***	−1.153***
	(0.013)	(0.076)	(0.019)	(0.100)	(0.020)	(0.110)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A12: This table presents results as a function of the information selection decisions made by both actors in a given pair. The top row represents the two actors' selections (e.g., in the "0-1" column, the observer chose between an actor who selected zero advisors from their ingroup and an actor who selected one). The middle row represents the percentage of observers who chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup. The bottom row is the number of times each pairing appeared. Due to our random sampling strategy, observers were presented with the choice between an actor who selected one and an actor who selected two advisors from the observer's ingroup most often.

Actor's choices of observers' ingroup advisors	0 vs 1	0 vs 2	0 vs 3	1 vs 2	1 vs 3	2 vs 3
Percent of observers who chose the actor with more ingroup cards	82%	78%	74%	72%	57%	46%
N	659	658	295	1959	885	1062

Pre-registered analysis for magnitude of selective exposure hypothesis

In our pre-registration, we predicted that "an Actor's choice to view at least one information source from the Observer's ingroup will be a better predictor than the difference score between the two Actor's choices." To test this, we ran the following regression, where:

$$Logit(ChoseMoreInGroup - .5)_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(includeZero_i) + \beta_2(differenceScore_i) + Z_i + \varepsilon_i$$

- *IncludeZero* was binary variable representing when one of the Actors chose zero ingroup sources vs neither Actor chose zero ingroup sources
- *differenceScore* was an ordinal variable with three levels (3 = one Actor chose 3 more ingroup sources than the other, 2 = one Actor chose 2 more ingroup sources than the other, 1 = one Actor chose 1 more ingroup sources than the other).

Specifically, we predicted that β_1 would be larger than β_2 analyzed using a linear hypothesis test where the null hypothesis is that $\beta_1 - \beta_2 = 0$. We found evidence consistent with this hypothesis ($\chi^2 = 86.59$, $p < .001$), however decided that there was a more natural way to test this question by simply looking at the probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of sources that they selected, reported in the main text.