

The reputational benefits of selective exposure to partisan information

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Authors' note. The authors appreciate helpful comments from the members of Minson Lab. We would like to especially thank David Hagmann and Michael Yeomans for their help in coding of the studies. The authors thank the Program on Negotiation at Harvard, the Mind, Brain, Behavior Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School and Northwestern University for funding. Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Molly Moore, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, 79 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. E-mail: mollymoore@g.harvard.edu.

Abstract

Individuals often avoid information that contradicts their prior beliefs, a tendency referred to as selective exposure, with consequences for increasing partisan polarization. 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 the domain of partisan politics in the United States across three financially-incentivized, pre-registered experiments (N = 2,325). Our results extend prior theory by identifying three key contingencies: the type of task on which observers expect to collaborate with actors, congruence of group membership between actors and observers (aligned vs. unaligned), 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. Importantly, 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 has argued 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 avoid information that contradicts, rather than affirms, 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). For example, a recent Pew Research Center report on political polarization in the United States revealed a strong correlation between individuals’ political views and the media that they consume (Dimock et al., 2014).

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 (Hart et al., 2009). However, this 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; Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; for reviews, see 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.

In the present research, we take a novel perspective by examining the *interpersonal drivers of selective exposure*. Across three pre-registered experiments, we assess both how social environments shape information selection decisions (i.e., the reputational *causes* of selective exposure) and how these choices are subsequently evaluated by others (i.e., the reputational *consequences* of selective exposure). Our goal is to first test the extent to which selective exposure is driven by interpersonal concerns and then, secondly, to test whether such concerns are justified. We develop a novel, incentive-compatible paradigm which allows us to explicitly consider the common trade-offs between what is optimal for decision quality and one's impression-management goals. This paradigm goes beyond prior research on selective exposure which has usually simply measured the extent to which individuals prefer to select congenial information without considering the tension between accuracy costs and possible reputational benefits.

Our novel paradigm also allows us to test three factors that might moderate the reputational causes and consequences of selective exposure. First, we examine whether people

are sensitive to the type of future interaction that they expect to engage in with a particular individual. 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 viewer of the world, even if their observations might lead them to unfavorable conclusions. Thus, in our studies, we manipulate whether observers will collaborate with another individual on a future task reliant on trustworthiness or on judgment skill, and measure whether this distinction affects individuals’ decisions or observers’ tendency to reward selective exposure.

Second, we test whether the congruence of the actor and observer’s group membership impacts the reputational causes or consequences of selective exposure. When an ingroup member versus an outgroup member chooses to select information aligned with our ingroup, the signals they send are different. Thus, we examine both whether individuals select different information when observed by an ingroup or an outgroup member and whether selecting information aligned with the observer’s ingroup confers the same reputational benefits for outgroup members as it does for ingroup members.

Finally, we go beyond the prior literature to test whether the magnitude of selective exposure demonstrated by a particular individual moderates these reputational consequences. 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 the bias. Together, our experiments test whether engaging in selective exposure when others are watching can have strategic value under a variety of theoretically-derived conditions.

Selective Exposure

Research on selective exposure – the avoidance of information that is likely to challenge existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and the seeking of information likely to be supportive (Hart et al., 2009) – boasts a rich history across multiple disciplines. As early as the 1940 United States presidential election, researchers began to document 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 (Stroud, 2017). For example, early laboratory research offered mothers a choice of information supporting or opposing their stated beliefs on child rearing and found that mothers preferentially consumed information that aligned with, rather than contradicted, their prior beliefs (Adams, 1961).

By contrast, work in political science has focused on the alignment of information with one's political ideology – a set of beliefs that 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 (news sources typically associated with a liberal viewpoint), this pattern reversed among Democrats (for related work, see Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005). More recently, political scientists have considered the role of media organizations, and social media in particular, on selective exposure decisions and political polarization (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2019). This work illuminates the interplay between the information selection decisions that individuals make and the overarching information ecosystem (e.g. social media) which enables them to avoid consuming conflicting information with ever increasing ease. Scholars in this space raise grave concerns regarding the increasing accessibility of partisan media (Baum &

Groeling, 2008) which may have disastrous consequences by further polarizing political attitudes (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2020) and reinforcing ideological silos (Sunstein, 2001).

Across fields, and despite the different methodological and theoretical perspectives, prior 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, 2017; 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 (Festinger, 2001; Frimer et al., 2017). Based on this theorizing, selective exposure is thought to be most prominent when individuals experience increased dissonance between their prior beliefs and new information (Adams, 1961) or expect to experience conflict between new information and important views or decisions (Frey & Rosch, 1984; Jonas et al., 2001).

The Social Signaling Model of Selective Exposure

A much smaller body of work has theorized that there could also be *interpersonal* concerns driving selective exposure to information (Hart et al., 2020; Lundgren & Prislun, 1998). Information selection decisions are often made under the watchful eyes of others. People attend to other's behavior when watching other customers browsing at a bookstore or by noting who follows whom on social media. We look over each other's shoulders when reading the news on the subway or in our cubicles at work, and we and take note when others attend events promoting a particular perspective. Given that individuals care deeply about the impressions they make on others, 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 group identification.

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 signaling. This model has been used to explain a variety of behaviors, revealing that what initially seems irrational for a lone individual may be beneficial for a social actor. For example, in consumer contexts, individuals pay for highly conspicuous goods to signal their wealth and attain higher social status (Veblen, 1899). In contexts where trustworthiness matters, people may cooperate with others without looking at the costs and benefits to themselves (Hoffman et al., 2015; Jordan, Hoffman, Nowak, et al., 2016) or escalate commitment to failing courses of action in order to avoid looking 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) in order to manage the impressions that they leave.

Testing social signaling hypotheses requires a two-step 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 decision makers who do or do not engage in the focal behavior. In other words, do individuals signal to observers? And do observers reward signaling in a way that is consistent with the signaler's apparent expectations? Finally, a thorough understanding of the role of signaling in a particular context requires knowing under what conditions both effects are most likely to emerge.

Prior research on selective exposure has not adequately examined this model. For example, in an early experiment, Lundgren and Prislin (1998) tested the impact of three different goals (impression management, defense, or accuracy) on information selection behaviors. They prompted an impression management motivation among participants by telling them that other people would be rating their agreeableness in a subsequent discussion. This early 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. Additionally, the authors found that participants anticipated feeling more negative affect when reading a vignette wherein they displayed a book incongruent with their personal beliefs in public than in private (Hart et al., 2020). 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 for a meta-analysis” (Hart et al., 2009).

In the present work, we go beyond prior experimental tests to examine a complete signaling model of selective exposure to information. First and foremost, prior research has not tested whether the signaling motivations reported by information consumers are justified. To do this, we must assess how observers actually evaluate individuals based on their information selection decisions. In other words, do observers reward selective exposure when they see it? Furthermore, how extreme should a decision maker's preference for congenial information be in order to maximally impress observers?

Secondly, prior research has not examined the conditions under which reputation is likely to play a role. Yet, 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). Relatedly, work on accountability suggests that the direction of any audience effect depends on an individual's beliefs about the observer's preferences and expectations (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Imagine for example, a candidate for a construction job arriving to the interview in a pair of designer heels. Although the choice of footwear might signal wealth and status – two characteristics generally considered desirable – it would likely be out of step with audience expectations in this context – and thus be a poor signal.

Finally, in assessing the reputational drivers of selective exposure, prior work has not used incentive-compatible behavioral measures. This is critical because many scholars have argued that one should always choose to view information if it is free and available due to its intrinsic value for decision making (Blackwell, 1953; Golman et al., 2017; Stigler, 1961). Thus, in order to robustly test whether selective exposure is partially driven by signaling concerns, reputational incentives should be pitted against informational incentives as is often the case in the world outside of the experimental laboratory.

Testing the social signaling model

In the present research, we apply the social signaling lens to selective exposure to information in the domain of American politics. Specifically, we hypothesize that (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: (1) the identity of the observer, (2) the congruence of group membership between the actor and observer, (3) whether the decision context under which the decision maker is being evaluated relies on trust or judgment skill, and (4) the magnitude of exhibited selective exposure.

Reputational causes and consequences of selective exposure. Imagine a young woman named Betty who just got a new job. Upon arrival to headquarters, Betty notices a prominently displayed photograph of the company president shaking hands with Barack Obama. At a company happy-hour, Betty's colleagues begin discussing recent legislation regulating textbook content in Florida. Betty isn't sure where she stands on this issue herself, but chooses to ask Inez (who is well-known for her liberal opinions and support of Democratic causes), what she thinks. Does Betty consulting Inez signal her support for liberal ideas more generally? Relatedly, what inferences will her colleagues make based on whose opinion she solicits?

People often seek political ingroup members' opinions on issues to inform their own opinions (Gilens & Murakawa, 2002; Marks et al., 2019). To the extent that this behavior is performed publicly, it can serve as way to signal one's affiliation. Within the political context, believing that someone is an ingroup member can trigger a myriad of downstream benefits: 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). Therefore, being believed to be an ingroup member is widely beneficial. If selecting information aligned with the observer's perspective is a signal of group affiliation or the strength of one's ingroup beliefs, selective exposure will be magnified when actors are surrounded by ingroup evaluators but attenuated (or even reversed) in the presence of outgroup evaluators. Importantly, this is a departure from economic theories of signaling which have largely ignored the role of observer identity (Spence, 1973).

From the observer perspective, knowing whether someone is part of your ingroup is valuable for predicting their behavior toward you (Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Yamagishi et al., 1998). If Betty consults an outspoken liberal, her colleagues might infer that she is liberal herself. Therefore, we hypothesize that when the opportunity to signal is present, actors will be more likely to seek information aligned with the observer's assumed ingroup. Subsequently, observers will reward those actors who engage with 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? Returning to the Betty example, would the observer's inferences differ if Betty had moved to join the company from California or from Texas? Because coming from either of these locations would likely influence the observer's prior belief about Betty's political affiliation, her information consultation choices might instead signal the *strength* with which she identifies with her group (Abrams & Hogg, 1990).

When flying in from California, consulting her liberal friend Inez could still confer benefits by signaling that Betty is thoroughly committed to liberal ideas. By contrast, if Betty is flying in from Texas, consulting Inez might be a sign that she is open to a diversity of viewpoints and receptive to the outgroup perspective (Minson et al., 2020). As one's expectations of a known outgroup member are likely to be negative at the onset (Moy & Ng, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 2001), the latter case might be more salient in its violation of observer expectations. Thus, signaling a willingness to seek out observer-aligned information may be particularly beneficial for outgroup members.

Decision context. Prior research has demonstrated that 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 dimensions (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. Going back to Betty, imagine that her new job is in the marketing department of a textbook publisher. Whereas in another social context Betty might be more concerned with characteristics such as trustworthiness or likeability, when surrounded by her new colleagues, Betty wants to first and foremost appear competent and well-informed. Knowing that her company has a vested interest in knowing whether certain textbooks might be banned in particular states, Betty may want to demonstrate her decision-making acumen and ability to integrate diverse perspectives. Although consulting James, a colleague known for his conservative views, might lead an observer to infer that Betty's politics lean further to the right,

Betty may still be reputationally better off demonstrating an interest in the viewpoints of the outgroup if her awareness of those views would lead to more sound decision making for the firm.

The above example suggests that whereas signaling group affiliation is beneficial in some decision contexts, it may be less so in others. Yet, prior literature does not offer clear predictions regarding whether either 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 actually value unbiased evaluation of all available information). On the other hand, this strategy could be fitting if observers were insensitive to the fit between the characteristics being signaled and the characteristics necessary for success in a given context, and instead simply rewarded an affinity for ingroup ideas 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 quantitative judgment skill. This allows us to test both whether actors anticipate that signaling ingroup affiliation is more or less beneficial in different environments, as well as and whether observers are sensitive to these distinctions.

Magnitude of selective exposure. Whereas prior research treated selective exposure as a bias, the signaling model suggests that some selective exposure might be beneficial. But just how much selective exposure will observers reward? In contexts where group affiliation is valued, should people avoid *all* counter-attitudinal views to maximally signal group affiliation? Or do both actors and observers recognize the benefits of maintaining a balance between signaling and consuming a diverse information diet (and thus maintaining some amount of objectivity in judgments and decisions)? And what should actors do in contexts when the identity of observers

is unknown or when they belong to a mix of ideological factions, as is often the case in the real world?

We examine these dynamics by exposing observers to both ingroup and outgroup actors who engage in different levels of selective exposure across the two different tasks described above. By looking at observers' reactions to actors who engage in different levels of selective exposure, we are able to 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 the full "signaling model" of selective exposure). To do so, we conducted three pre-registered, financially incentivized laboratory experiments.

Experiment 1 tested whether individuals differentially engaged in selective exposure when observed by political ingroup members, political outgroup members, or in private. Are individuals willing to forego useful information, even when incentivized for making accurate judgments, in order to impress an audience? And, does any effect depend on the nature of the future collaborative task that the individuals anticipated engaging in?

Experiments 2-3 tested the contingent wisdom of this strategy by examining when and why observers reward people based on their information selections. First, are there reputational benefits from selecting information aligned with the observer's ingroup? And are these benefits dependent on the nature of the collaboration task? In Experiment 3, we further varied whether or not the focal individual belonged to the observer's ingroup or outgroup. Does consuming

information aligned with the observer's ingroup affect the willingness to collaborate differentially for ingroup or outgroup members? Importantly, in both Experiments 2-3, we are also able to assess how the magnitude of information selection impacted collaboration 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](#). 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. 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 ideology aligned vs. unaligned others. We varied whether actors' information selection decisions were private, observed by members of their political ingroup, or observed by members of their political outgroup. In both observed conditions, actors learned that the observer would choose whether to pick them for a future collaborative task (which varied in its description to focus on trust or judgment skill).

Based on the social signaling model, we hypothesized that:

- (1) Actors being observed by ingroup members would select more ideologically-aligned information than actors being observed by outgroup members.

- (2) Actors being observed by ingroup members would select more ideologically-aligned information than actors in the private condition.
- (3) Actors being observed by outgroup members would select less ideologically-aligned information than actors in the private condition.

Our procedure builds upon prior research methodologies that evaluate selective exposure by offering actors a diverse menu of information to consider (Dorison et al., 2019; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; for review, see Stroud, 2017). In such studies, picking more information aligned with one's own prior beliefs or group affiliation is considered evidence of selective exposure. 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 methodology by providing actors with a diverse menu of information to consider 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.

Method

Participants. We recruited a large sample of United States residents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) 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).¹ 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 first reported basic demographic information, including gender, age, education and the name of their hometown. 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 and indicated their own opinion (“Yes” or “No”) on eight policy statements related to current US social and political issues (e.g., “The death penalty should be abolished in all US states,” see full list of issues in Table S3 of the Supplementary Materials). After indicating their own opinion, they then estimated the percentage of people 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 MTurkers.

Dependent variable. Actors then engaged in the central task of the study: revising their estimates based on the advice from other MTurkers. Specifically, we informed actors that in order to increase their accuracy, they could view the opinions of three advisors (participants from the sample being estimated). Their selection of which three advisors’ opinions to view out of a possible set of six served as our key dependent variable.

¹ 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 MTurk, 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 ($M_{age} = 42.2$, 52% women, 52% liberal).

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.² 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 MTurkers 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.

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 for a future collaboration 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

² 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.

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.³ Therefore, this control condition only included the accuracy incentive and had no associated reputational incentives, allowing us to cleanly 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 being chosen for a future bonus.

³ 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).

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, we used an ordinal logistic regression, using the `clm` function in R (Christensen, 2018). We also included fixed effects to control for the effect of the eight specific policy topics and participant-clustered standard errors, necessary because each participant provided eight estimates. Additionally, we used simple effects coding in order to interpret the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic (Cohen et al., 1983). We entered dummy codes to separately contrast the public ingroup, public outgroup, and private conditions. Similarly, we entered dummy codes to contrast the trust game and estimation game conditions. See Table S4 for this full model.

Results

Reputational causes of selective exposure. We began by examining selective exposure in the public conditions. If selective exposure was purely driven by individuals' affective and cognitive responses to the relevant information (c.f., Hart et al., 2009), then there should be no differences between the number of ingroup advisors consulted in the public ingroup condition and the public outgroup condition. However, if selective exposure was driven at least in part by individuals' desire to appeal to those observing them (e.g. Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 2000, 2002), we should see actors in the public ingroup condition consulting a greater number of ingroup advisors than actors in the public outgroup condition.

We found evidence consistent with the latter hypothesis. 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 1.15 ingroup advisors ($SD = .92$), on average. Applying the analysis strategy described above, the odds that those in the public ingroup condition viewed

more ingroup opinions were 2.16 times greater than 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.

The odds that those in the public ingroup condition viewed more ingroup opinions were 1.47 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 1.47 times those in the public outgroup condition ($p < .001$). Results are presented in Figure 1 below and in Table S4 and Figure S8 of the Supplementary Materials. Taken together, our data are consistent with the hypothesis that, in partisan environments, reputational considerations drive information selection decisions.

Decision context. 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. However, we found no evidence of such an interaction ($\beta = .03, p = .88$).⁴ Instead, actors selected more

⁴ 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.

ingroup advisors when being observed by ingroup members, irrespective of the task for which they were being selected. Results are presented in Figure 1 below and Table S4 of the Supplementary Materials.

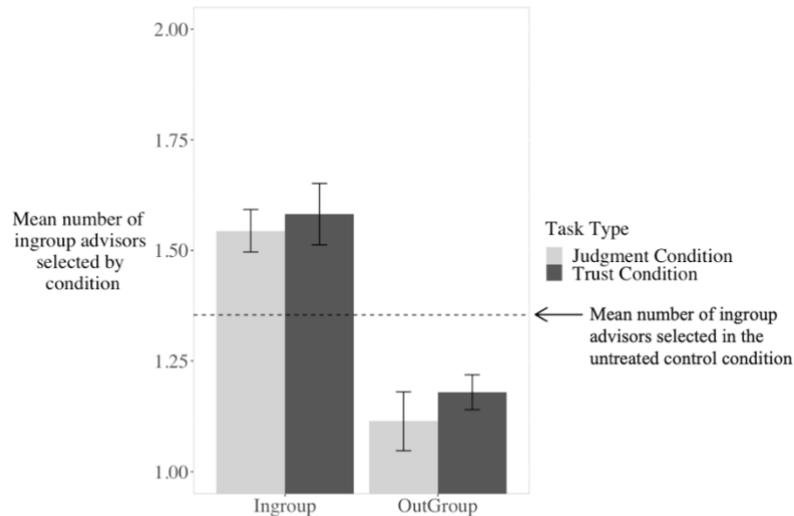


Figure 1: Mean number of chosen ingroup advisors by condition. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. The dotted line represents the mean number of ingroup advisors chosen in the private condition. Participants in the public ingroup conditions chose more 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. Our 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 MTurkers in the prior study 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 4.36, where lower numbers indicated lower error (and thus greater accuracy).

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 2 below and Table S5 of the Supplementary Materials.

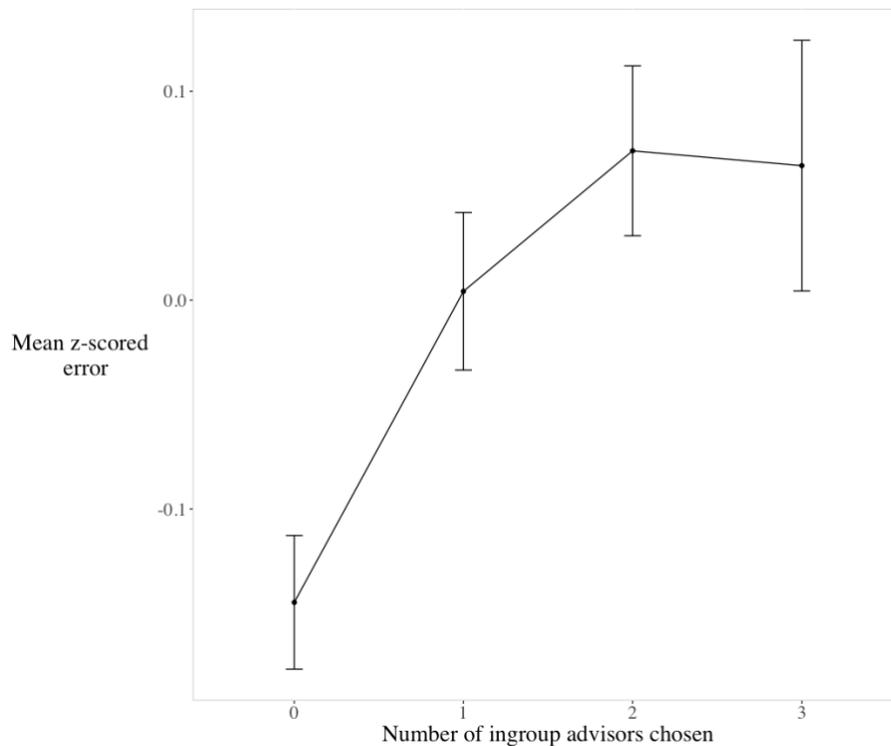


Figure 2: Mean of the z-scored errors (z-scored within topic and across conditions) by the number of ingroup advisors chosen. A z-score of zero, refers to the average level of error for that topic. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. Participants who chose a greater number of ingroup advisors produced estimates with higher error.

Surprisingly, we did not observe differences in estimation error between the ingroup and outgroup conditions ($p = .740$). 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?

Follow-up exploratory analyses allow us to provide a tentative answer to this question. 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 MTurkers 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.⁵

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 reflect significantly greater weight being placed on ingroup advice (interaction: $p < .001$, clustered standard errors by participant; see Figure S9 and Table S6 of the Supplementary Materials).⁶

Importantly, updating one’s estimate was associated with less error ($\beta = -.004$, $p < .001$). Thus, 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 observation led actors to select different numbers of ingroup and outgroup advisors by condition, their private judgment reflected a consistent level of bias toward ingroup advice.

Discussion

⁵ When we test the interaction between the selection of an advisor who said “yes” to a policy issue and public ingroup condition $b = .65$, $p = .61$; when we do the same for the public outgroup condition $b = 1.24$, $p = .34$.

⁶ 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.

Experiment 1 supported the hypothesis that individuals' information selection decisions were sensitive to observation. Actors selected more ingroup advice when observed by ingroup members and more outgroup advice when observed by outgroup members. Of note, this effect persisted across tasks reliant both on trustworthiness and 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 are less willing to use it to update their beliefs. This could have occurred either because participants truly believe congenial information to be more accurate or because congenial information was better able to capture 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. These results beg the question of whether there are in fact complementary reputational benefits accrued to those who engage in selective exposure. Do observers 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 Study 1 and choose an actor for a future bonus opportunity.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we shifted our focus from testing whether selective exposure is partly driven by beliefs about reputational benefits to examining whether such beliefs are accurate. That is, rather than considering the reputational causes of selective exposure, we consider the

reputational consequences. Specifically, participants in Experiment 2 (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 more 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 2, 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 Study 1, 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 examine whether there is an optimal level of selective exposure that observers prefer.

Method

Participants. We recruited a sample of US residents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in March 2021 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).⁷ We chose our sample size to achieve greater than 80% statistical power to detect the effect size found in Experiment 3, which was run chronologically *before* Experiment 2 and tested a similar primary confirmatory hypothesis.

⁷ 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 CloudResearch's approved participants list. We then excluded 66 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." After, 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).

Procedure. Our procedure builds upon Experiment 1 by showing a new sample of participants (observers) the choices that actors made in the earlier study. 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 1, actors selected the advice of three individuals from a total of six possible advisors. We randomly selected two actors from Experiment 1 and showed their choices of liberal vs. conservative advisors to the observers in this study. The key dependent variable in Experiment 2 was whether the observer chose to work with an actor who had selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup than their counterpart. Observers made eight choices corresponding to the policy topics used in Experiment 1. We truthfully told observers that we would implement the outcome of one of their eight choices (picked at random).

Independent variable. As in Experiment 1, 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 1 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 Experiment 1: a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative."

Analysis plan. We re-coded the choices made by actors in Experiment 1 to reflect how many of their selected advisors belonged to the observer's ingroup. The two actors displayed to the observer were randomly chosen. There were 998 pairings where the two actors made identical selections, which were dropped from the subsequent analyses. This resulted in a final set of 2,674 choices made by observers.

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 a logistic regression. As in Experiment 1, we included fixed effects to control for the effect of the eight specific policy topics and participant-clustered standard errors, necessary because each participant made eight choices. Additionally, we used simple effects coding to allow interpretation of the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic.

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. When using the analytic strategy described above, results revealed that actors who selected a greater number of the observer's ingroup advisors were, on average, 2.44 times more likely to be chosen for future collaboration than 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. 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 3 below and Table S7 of the Supplementary Materials). This difference suggested that although individuals prefer collaborators who favor information from their ingroup, they recognized that judgment accuracy demands exposure to a variety of perspectives.

Of note, actors in Experiment 1 appeared insensitive to this difference, expecting observers to favor their selection of information from the observer's ingroup to the same extent 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, perhaps leading them to sacrifice judgment accuracy for little reputational gain (in this case, the nature of the upcoming collaboration task). We discuss potential causes and consequences of such an asymmetry in the General Discussion.

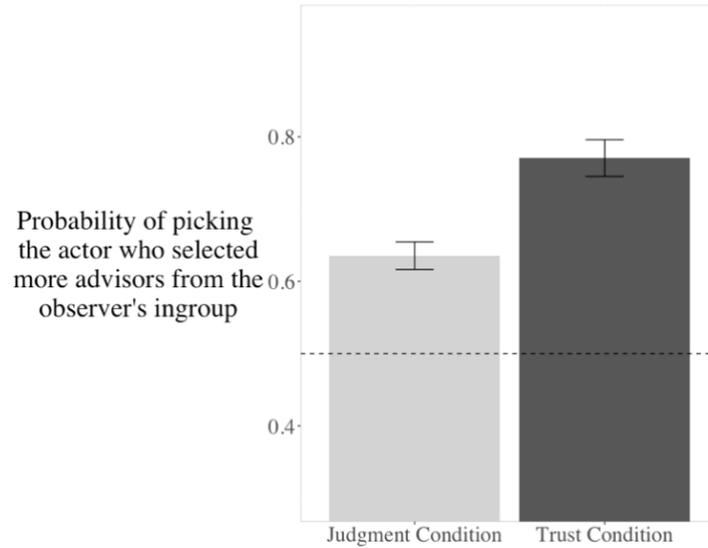


Figure 3: The mean probability that observers chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup, by condition. The dotted line at .50 represents chance levels. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant.

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? 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 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). Results are presented in Figure 4 below. Two results clearly stand out from this visualization and are borne out by inferential analyses. First, using this alternative analytical approach we again found that observers demonstrated the expected preference for actors who selected more advisors from the observer's ingroup, similar to the results reported above.

Second, and perhaps more surprisingly, we 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. This increase demonstrated a clear social reward 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 socially reward those who selected at least some information from the outgroup. To analyze 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 S8 of the Supplementary Materials).

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 4 and Table S8 of the Supplementary Materials). This result aligned with the earlier reported finding that observers were on average more likely to choose the actor who selected more advisors from the observer’s ingroup when expecting to play a trust game than an estimation game. 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 in the condition reliant on the actor's judgment skill rather than their trustworthiness.

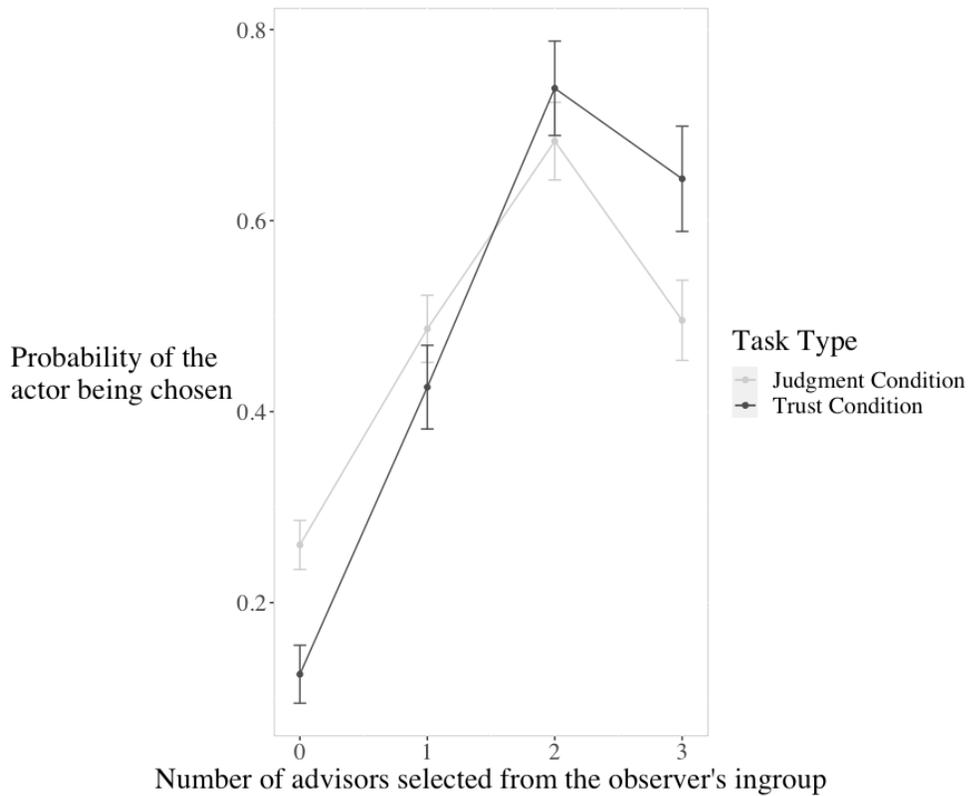


Figure 4: Mean probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that they selected from the observer's ingroup, as a function of game type. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

One concern with the above analysis is that the reported result could depend on the frequency with which observers evaluated particular pairings of actors. Thus, a simple preference for the actor who chose more ingroup advisors could yield the graph above.⁸ To address this

⁸ 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.

concern, we look at 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 the other person does, there is a 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: This table presents results from Experiment 2. 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 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.

Discussion

Experiment 2 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 1, 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, since in the world outside of the laboratory, individuals make repeated information selection decisions in front of their families, friends and colleagues. The recognition that although selective exposure is rewarded, but to a limit, adds an important nuance to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Of note, Experiment 2 examined a situation in which observers were not aware of the group affiliation of their two potential partners. Thus, the advisors that a given actor consulted could be used 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, which can exacerbate the partisan divide even further (Westfall et al., 2015). 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 3, 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 3

In Experiment 3 we continued to examine the reputational consequences of information selection decisions. As in Experiment 2, 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.⁹ We again varied the type of collaborative task.

In addition, the design of Experiment 3 varied whether the actors under consideration reported holding the same or opposing political ideology as the observer. Thus, whereas Experiment 2 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 3 tests whether information selection decisions provide value above and beyond knowledge of group membership. For example, 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 our perspective (Collins et al., 2022), a demonstrated willingness to select information from our side may send a particularly positive signal.

⁹ This previous pilot study is similar to Experiment 1, although in it we did not vary future collaboration task type.

Method

Participants. We recruited a large sample of US residents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) 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).¹⁰ 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 3 closely mirrored the procedure of Experiment 2 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 2, this study featured a between-subjects 2 x 2 factorial design. As in the previous study, we varied the future collaborative task for which the observer was choosing the actor – the trust game or the estimation game. Extending Experiment 2, we additionally varied whether the actors whose advisor choices the observers evaluated reported the same political ideology as the observer (ingroup condition), or the opposing political

¹⁰ 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 CloudResearch's approved participants list. We then excluded 90 participants who reported their political ideology to be "middle of the road." After, 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).

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 2. Thus, we again dropped 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, in all of the analyses below, we used a logistic regression. As in Experiment 1, we included fixed effects to control for the effect of the eight specific policy topics and participant-clustered standard errors. Additionally, we used simple effects coding in order to interpret the intercept as the grand mean rather than the mean of the reference topic.¹¹

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 2, we found this to be the case 66% of the time, a frequency greater than chance. When using the analysis plan described above, actors who selected a greater number of ingroup advisors were, on average, 1.98 times more likely to be chosen for future collaboration than their counterparts ($p < .001$).

¹¹ While we did not pre-register the simple effects coding, this is the correct empirical strategy in order to interpret the intercept of the regression model. Quantitatively, the results remain the same whether we use this method or not.

Congruence of group membership. We next examined a question that was new to Experiment 3: 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 5 below and Table S9 of the Supplementary Materials). 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 (Lees & Cikara, 2021), seeing an outgroup member view ingroup information may have been especially salient.

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 2. 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 5 below and Table S9 of the Supplementary Materials).

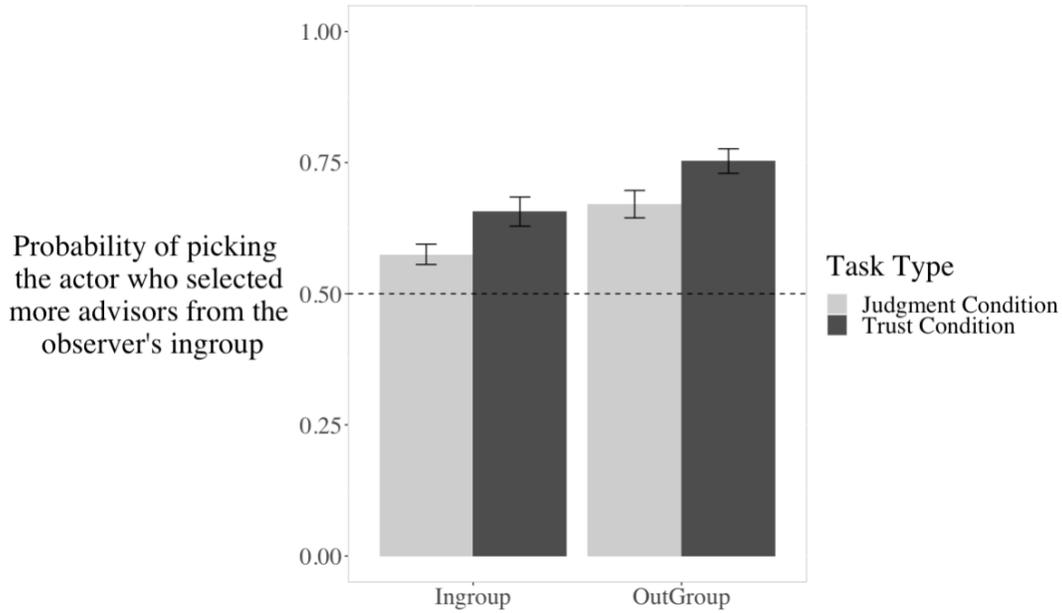


Figure 5: The mean probability that observers chose the actor who selected a greater number of advisors from the observer's ingroup, by condition. The dotted line at .50 represents chance levels. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. In all conditions, the actors who selected more of the observer's ingroup advisors were more likely to be chosen, but that this tendency was more pronounced in the trust game and outgroup conditions.

Magnitude of selective exposure. In Experiment 3 we were again able to examine information diversification (i.e., the extent to which actors supplemented information from the observer's ingroup with some information from the outgroup), and the effect this had on observer choices. Our results replicated those from Experiment 2 as we again found (1) that observers demonstrated the preference for actors who selected more advisors from the observer's ingroup, but also (2) that observers showed a preference for diversification – punishing those actors who selected *all* of the advisors from the observer's ingroup. These results are presented in Figure S10 and Table S10 in the Supplementary Materials. When examining the data by ingroup versus outgroup condition, observers appear to be sensitive to ideological alignment when evaluating potential partners based on their advisor selections (See Figure S12 and Table S10 in the Supplementary Materials). 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.

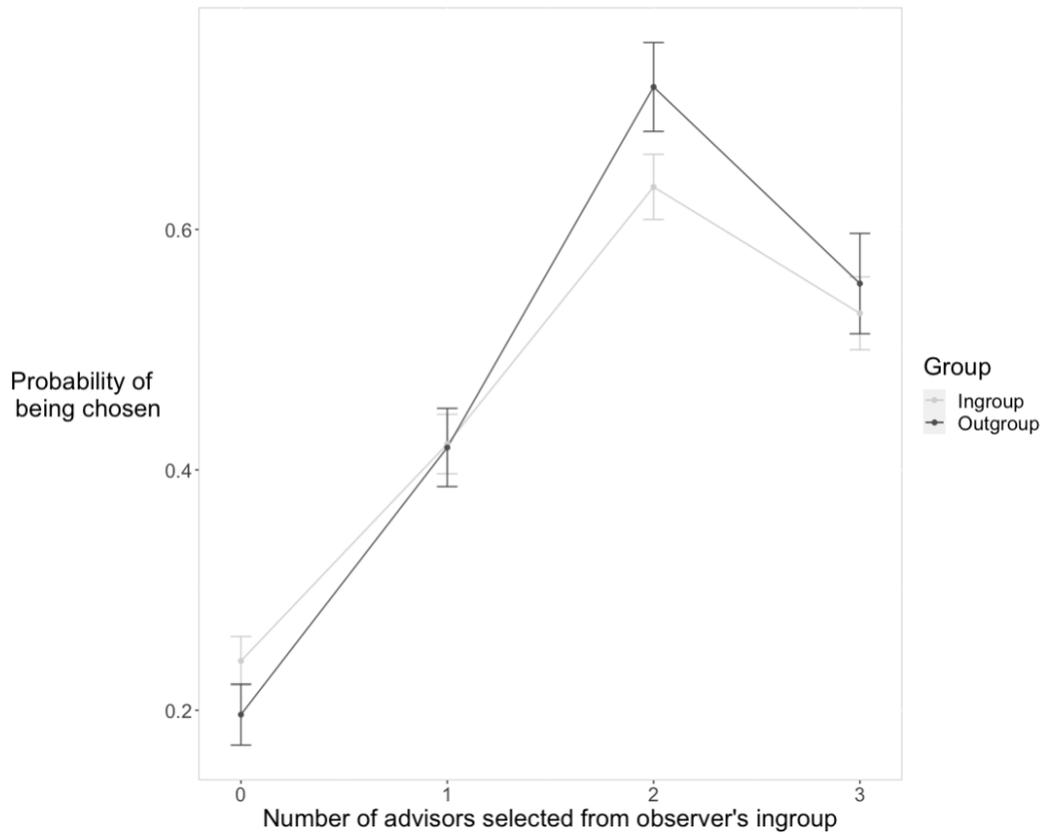


Figure 6: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup, by condition. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

We can again verify the robustness of this last result by looking at the observers' choices as a function of the pair of actors presented in any given choice set (see Table 2 below). When one actor 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. The same pattern holds when conditioning on the other actor selecting one or two sources.

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

Table 2: This table presents results from Experiment 3 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 advisor from their ingroup). 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.

Trade-offs between observers. The results of this experiment also allowed us to speak to the reputational trade-offs that consumers of information face when confronted with an audience whose group affiliation is unknown. While participants in Experiment 1 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 3, 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 observers or outgroup observers. On one hand, 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. On the other hand, however, it may be possible to improve on this zero-sum approach. Figure 7 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.¹²

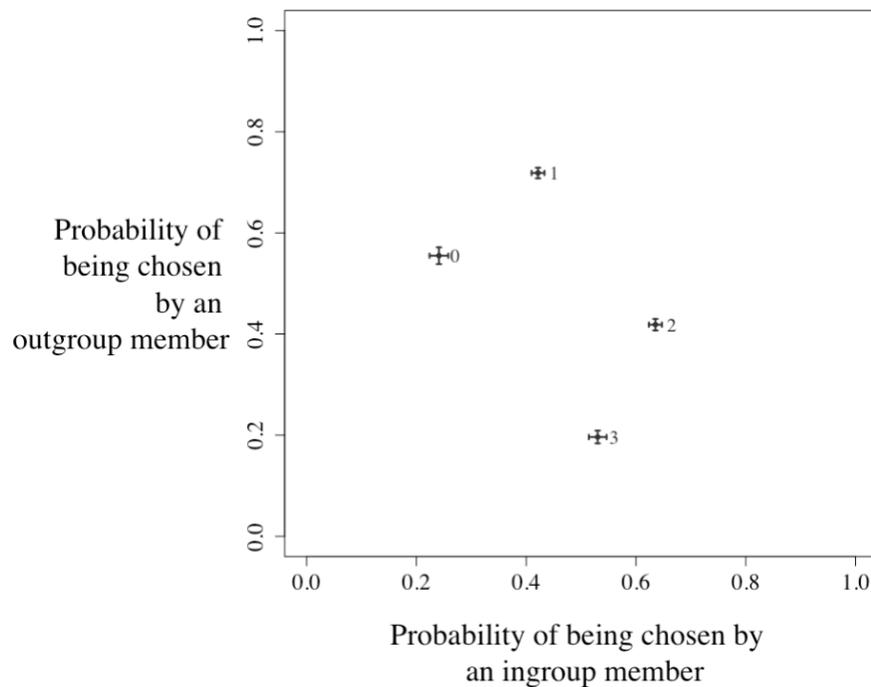


Figure 7: The points on the graph represent the number of advisors from the actor's ingroup that he or she selected. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad. Note that points further from the origin are better, representing a clear case for 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.

¹² Note that this is a departure from Experiments 2 and 3, 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.

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 diversify their portfolio of information sources.

Discussion

Experiment 3 provided further support for the hypothesis that observers reward actors who consult more advisors from the observer's ingroup. However, unlike in Experiment 2, 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 3 also provided evidence that observers' preference for individuals who engage in selective exposure is contingent on the 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. A willingness to cross the aisle appeared especially important when trying to make a positive impression on an outgroup member, and perhaps less consequential than demonstrating loyalty to one's own ingroup. Additionally, we replicated the results from Experiment 2, 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, most frequently selecting actors who engaged in information diversification. 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 undermines 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 this paper, we propose and provide 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 three 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 revealed 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. First, our work builds 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 et al., 2021; Dorison & Heller, 2021; 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 propose and provide evidence for a complementary *interpersonal* explanation for selective

exposure. This adds to research on impression management concerns by providing a novel application area of information selection decisions.

Second, 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. In our research, we examined both sides of the signaling model and systematically varied features of the environment to test their effects on behavior.

Third, with respect to selective exposure research, the social signaling lens illuminates a novel tradeoff for decision makers. Selective exposure is traditionally considered to be a bias based on the logic that 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 decision makers 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.

Importantly, however, 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).

Importantly, 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 selected a diversity of information 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. However, our work goes beyond prior research by adding considerable nuance to this basic recommendation. 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 group members 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., 2020). 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, explicitly communicating a value of information diversification 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

While our experiments employed a well-controlled paradigm to test the specific predictions of the social signaling model, some key limitations leading to future research should be noted. First, future research should examine the generalizability of these key results. Our paradigm was developed as a strict test of concept, allowing us to rigorously assess the financial tradeoffs between accuracy and reputational incentives. Thus, the ultimate conclusion of whether selective exposure is an effective strategy depends on the balance of social versus accuracy incentives in any given situation. This balance in turn, should further be thoroughly explored in more naturalistic settings.

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

Our results from the different decision contexts we examined 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 three 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 future decision context. Future research should thus further explore in what contexts actors are aware of reputational benefits versus not.

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 consequences in itself, additional insight could be gleaned by examining common topics of organizational conflict.

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 spread of misinformation, when everything we choose to read and view is more 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.

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Supplementary Materials

Pilot Study

Table S3: 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 1.

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 S4: 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.

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

Note: standard errors clustered by participant

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

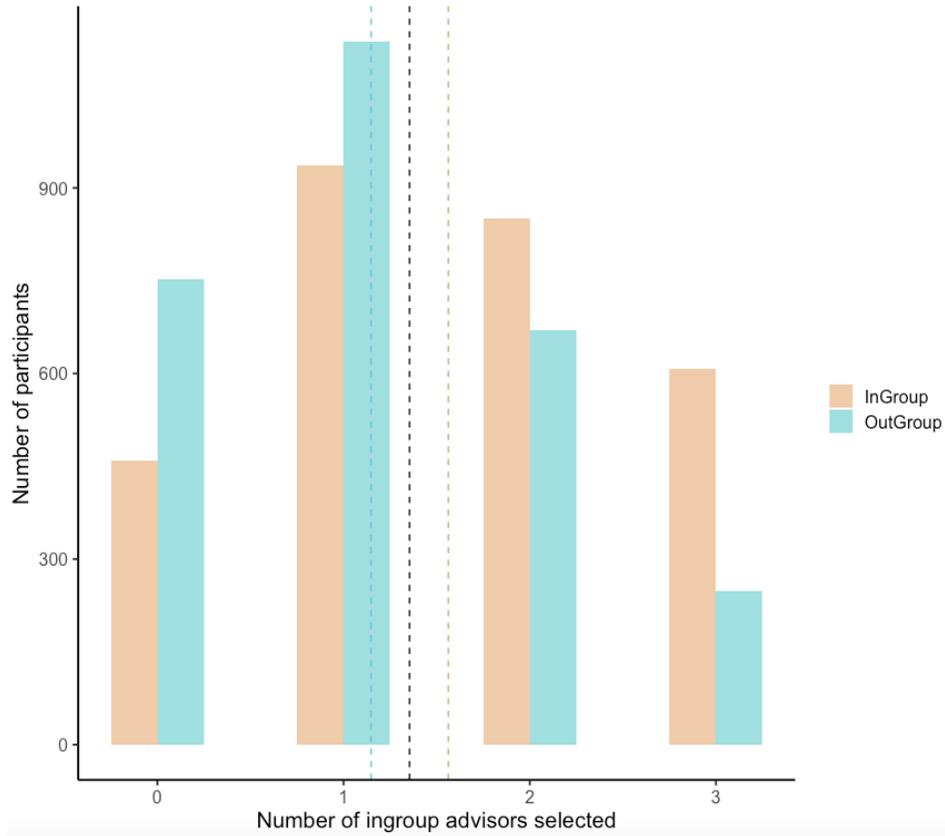


Figure S8: Histogram of the number of ingroup advisors chosen, by public ingroup and public outgroup conditions. The dotted lines are the means. The dotted black line represents the mean number of ingroup advisors chosen in the private condition. Participants in the public ingroup conditions chose more ingroup advisors than those in the private condition, who chose more than those in the public outgroup conditions.

Table S5: 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.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	z-Scored Error	
	(1)	(2)
Ingroup Advisors Chosen	0.073*** (0.017)	0.063* (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*** (0.027)	-0.130** (0.058)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table S6: 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.

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

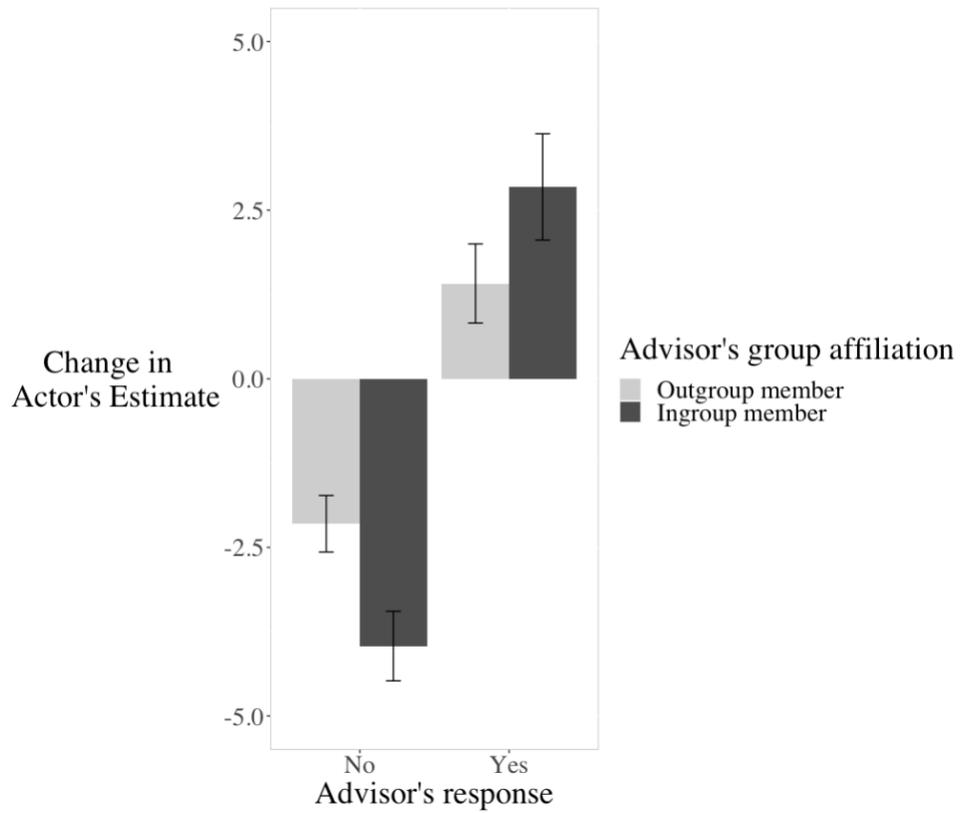


Figure S9: Mean change in actor's estimate, by condition and advisor's response. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant. This indicates that when an ingroup advisor says no, actors lower their estimate by more than they do when outgroup advisors say no. 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 2

Table S7: 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.

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

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

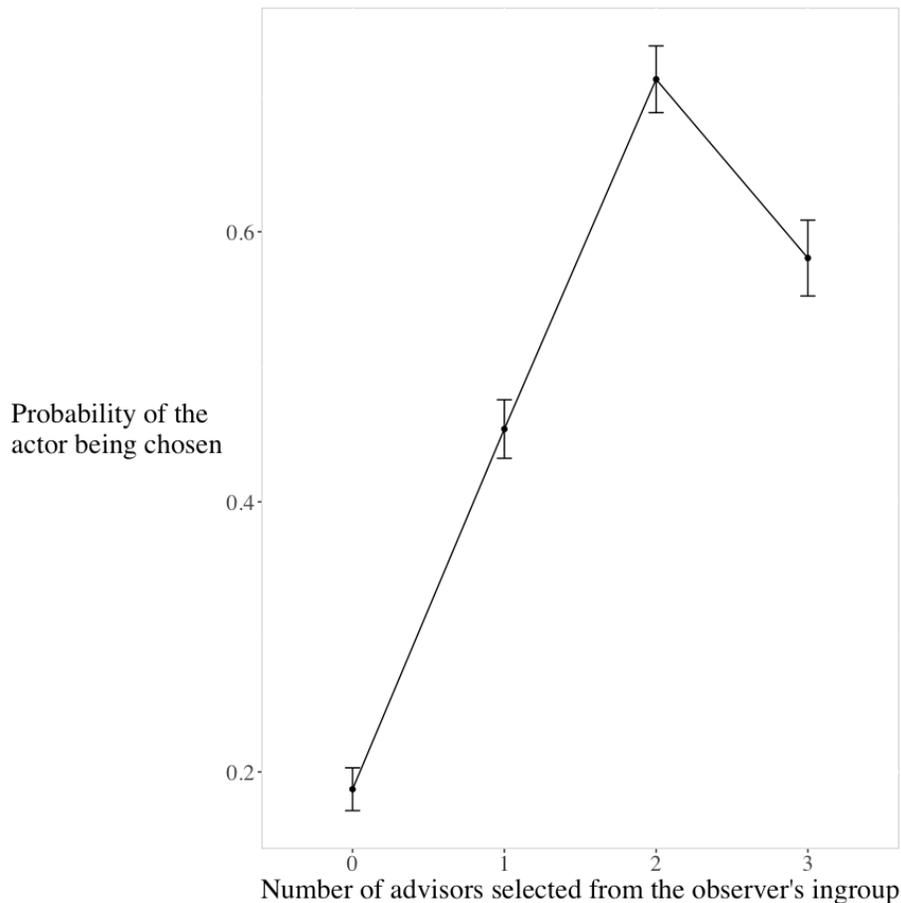


Figure S10: The mean probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

As seen in Figure S10, 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 ($\chi^2(1, N = 5348) = 213.75, p < .001$). 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 ($\chi^2(1, N = 5348) = 49.14, p < .001$).¹³

¹³ 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 S8: 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			
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>CLM</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>CLM</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1 Ingroup Advisor	0.268*** (0.022)	1.288*** (0.119)	0.227*** (0.035)	0.994*** (0.167)
2 Ingroup Advisors	0.527*** (0.025)	2.384*** (0.144)	0.424*** (0.041)	1.818*** (0.201)
3 Ingroup Advisors	0.394*** (0.028)	1.798*** (0.144)	0.236*** (0.042)	1.031*** (0.190)
Trust Game			-0.136*** (0.030)	-0.905*** (0.202)
1 Ingroup Advisor * Trust Game			0.075* (0.044)	0.658*** (0.240)
2 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.191*** (0.049)	1.174*** (0.286)
3 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.284*** (0.055)	1.512*** (0.291)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.192*** (0.016)	-1.448*** (0.101)	0.265*** (0.026)	-1.022*** (0.133)

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

Experiment 3

Table S9: 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.

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

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

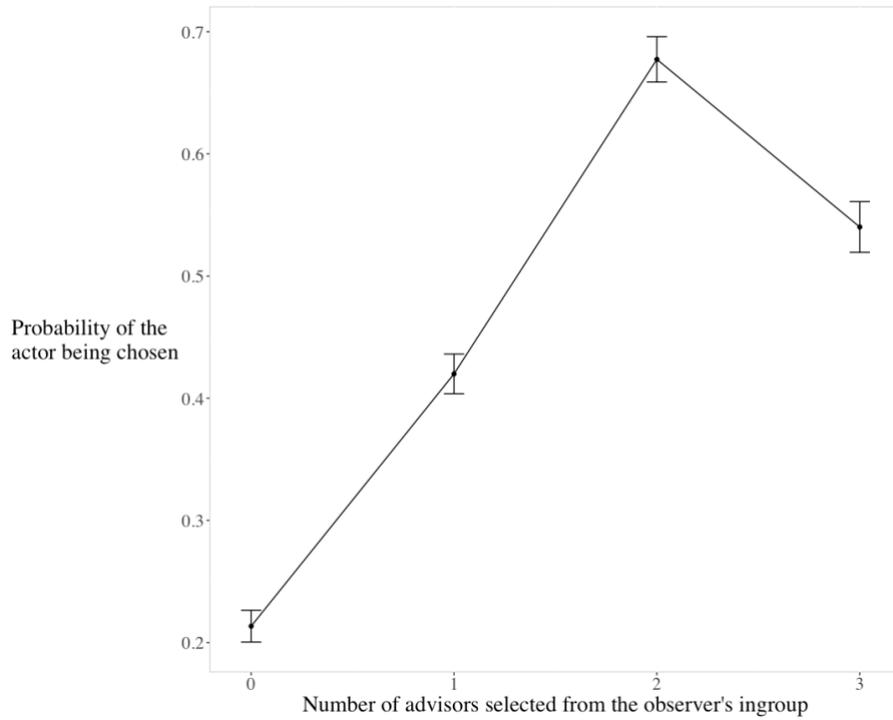


Figure S11: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

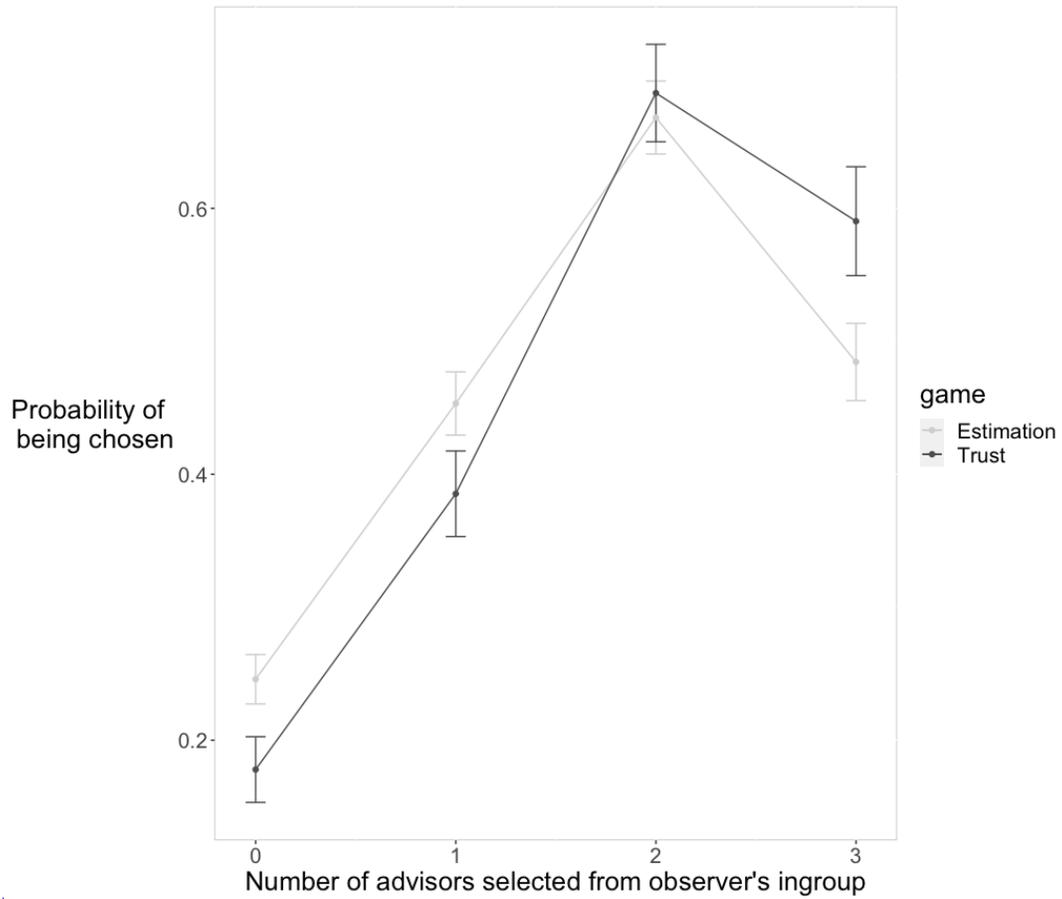


Figure S12: Probability that an actor was chosen based on the number of advisors that the actor selected from the observer's ingroup, by game type. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the group mean, clustered by participant and actor dyad.

Table S10: 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 (1)	CLM (2)	OLS (3)	CLM (4)	OLS (5)	CLM (6)
1 Ingroup Advisor	0.209*** (0.016)	0.992*** (0.086)	0.210*** (0.024)	0.944*** (0.117)	0.183*** (0.025)	0.843*** (0.124)
2 Ingroup Advisors	0.466*** (0.019)	2.057*** (0.101)	0.425*** (0.027)	1.832*** (0.139)	0.397*** (0.027)	1.713*** (0.138)
3 Ingroup Advisors	0.329*** (0.021)	1.476*** (0.103)	0.241*** (0.029)	1.068*** (0.136)	0.291*** (0.030)	1.278*** (0.145)
Trust Game			-0.068*** (0.025)	-0.411*** (0.151)		
Public Outgroup					-0.044* (0.025)	-0.260* (0.148)
1 Ingroup Advisor * Trust Game			0.0002 (0.032)	0.131 (0.173)		
2 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.087** (0.037)	0.495** (0.201)		
3 Ingroup Advisors * Trust Game			0.174*** (0.041)	0.840*** (0.207)		
1 Ingroup Advisor * Public Outgroup					0.041 (0.033)	0.247 (0.170)
2 Ingroup Advisors * Public Outgroup					0.128*** (0.037)	0.644*** (0.200)
3 Ingroup Advisors * Public Outgroup					0.070* (0.042)	0.365* (0.204)
Topic Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.211*** (0.013)	-1.315*** (0.076)	0.244*** (0.019)	-1.132*** (0.100)	0.240*** (0.020)	-1.153*** (0.110)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01