

Title: “You Are What You Read:”**Is Selective Exposure a Way People Tell Us Who They Are?**Short title: *You Are What You Read*William Hart¹, Kyle Richardson^{1*}, Gregory K. Tortoriello¹, Allison Earl²¹*Department of Psychology, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487, USA*²*Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA*

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Abstract:

Selective exposure is the tendency to gather viewpoint-congenial vs. -uncongenial information. Extant models of selective exposure suggest this tendency occurs because people anticipate reading congenial (vs. uncongenial) information will cause more favorable intrapersonal consequences. However, these models ignore the notion that people’s information choices are, in part, symbolic gestures designed to convey identity-relevant beliefs *to an audience* through information display. Drawing from perspectives that emphasize human consumption as symbolic and a way to signal one’s identity, we suggest that selective exposure pertains not only to information processing but also to conveying identity through information display. Experiment 1 showed that people characterize information display as a way to communicate their views to an audience. Experiments 2-4 showed that people are averse to displaying uncongenial vs. congenial information (without processing the information), anticipate feeling more uncomfortable and more inauthentic merely displaying (without processing) uncongenial vs. congenial information, and that people’s intentions to engage in selective exposure in daily life are a function of their belief that selective-exposure displays convey their identity. None of these studies or findings can be generated from extant selective exposure theories. Thus, selective exposure theories are likely incomplete because they ignore people’s beliefs and goals regarding *information display*.

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Data and study materials for the present research are posted at (link is anonymized):

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“You Are What You Read¹.”

Is Selective Exposure a Way People Tell Us Who They Are?

Selective exposure is the tendency to predominantly gather information that supports (congenial information) rather than challenges (uncongenial information) one’s views.² This tendency constricts people’s understanding of reality to existing notions and precludes opportunities for changing inaccurate views. Given these implications, selective exposure has long interested social scientists (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015) and philosophers (Bacon, 1602/1960; James, 1890). Despite much interest from multiple fields such as marketing, communications, political science, and psychology, we believe that extant theories of selective exposure are incomplete (Donsbach & Mothes, 2012; Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015; Stroud, 2017). Specifically, extant theories recognize that preferences for congenial versus uncongenial information can be driven by beliefs that processing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information will confer some intrapsychic benefit (e.g., feeling good, strengthened view-points, etc.). However, extant theories fail to recognize that people can also prefer congenial (vs. uncongenial) information because they anticipate displaying this information will signal identity-relevant information. To highlight the role of display in selective exposure, consider two hypothetical scenarios:

Carl is a devout Catholic. One day while browsing at the local bookstore, he sees a best-selling book that criticizes Catholicism. He finds the premise intriguing, and he is curious why this author would view Catholicism as problematic. He is interested in buying the book. But, to do so, he realizes he will need to carry it to the checkout counter and, worse still, hand it to a clerk for purchase. He imagines, “People will think I am an atheist!” and considers his own insecurities about this categorization. He decides to not purchase this

¹ This quote is attributed to Oscar Wilde.

² Selective exposure can also be based in people’s greater access to congenial information in their environment. This type of selective exposure—called “de facto selective exposure” (Freedman & Sears, 1965)—is not relevant to the current investigation. We focus on selective exposure informed by people’s views.

book; instead, he finds a book touting Catholicism, which also seems interesting, and purchases that book.

Joanne is a staunch liberal, yet she enjoys watching conservative news stations such as Fox News. Although she often disagrees with the commentary, she enjoys considering alternative views and finds some of the Fox News personalities entertaining. While waiting for her doctor's appointment, the TV in the waiting room is set to CNN (a rather liberal news station). She finds the discussion boring. No one in the waiting room seems to be paying attention to the TV, so she considers switching it to Fox News. But, she holds back, thinking to herself, "*I don't want to come across as the right-wing authoritarian 'type' that would watch Fox.*" She begrudgingly continues watching CNN.

What do these examples have in common? In each case, a person is not being drawn to congenial over uncongenial information based on what s/he wants to process (i.e., read or hear). Rather, each person (a) feels that displaying uncongenial vs. congenial information sends an inaccurate or suboptimal message about his/her identity and, in turn, each person (b) avoids the uncongenial information for congenial information. As we explain, we think there is reason to believe that Carl and Joanne's psychological experience is a plausible cause of selective exposure. Yet, modern theorizing on selective exposure fails to account for this psychological experience. In our view, this omission constrains a full understanding of why selective exposure happens in daily life and prevents the generation of novel ideas on how to describe or combat it.

It is useful to consider why Carl's and Joanne's psychological experience is likely to reflect a general phenomenon. First, information display can be considered a signal of coalitional affiliation (e.g., carrying a Bible implies affiliative ties to the Christian faith; Kahan, 2013), and, most often, people should be concerned with signaling an accurate affiliation. Accurate signaling plays the critical role of advertising the formidability of one's affiliation (or views) while simultaneously repelling rivals (Fessler, Holbrook, & Dashoff, 2015), attracting teammates (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005; Van Vugt & Park, 2010), and ingratiating oneself with ingroup members (Cohen, 2003). Second, attitude expression via information display can be considered a useful way to cultivate a desired identity (Baumeister, 1982; Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980, 2012). For example, because people's attitudes, particularly on subjectively important matters

(e.g., abortion, euthanasia), are often a feature of desired identities (e.g., attitudes can be used to appear moral, smart, healthy; Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980), people should generally wish to express these attitudes accurately (vs. inaccurately) to make a subjectively good impression. In sum, for various reasons, people should feel that displaying uncongenial vs. congenial information sends a suboptimal message about their affiliations or identity, which can foster predominant gathering of congenial information for display.

Based on our conceptualization, then, people view information sources (e.g., books, magazines, articles, news programs) as more than objects that can activate thoughts and feelings about the sources' content. People also see information sources as objects that can be displayed to convey identity-relevant beliefs to others (e.g., displaying religious texts suggests one is religious; Schlenker, 1980). In this sense, information gathering is no different than other forms of consumption behavior (e.g., buying clothes). Theories of consumer behavior recognize that people's choices of goods and services are not merely based on intrapsychic functions (e.g., people do not buy clothes merely to protect their skin from the elements) but are also based on the symbolic identity functions that the entities serve via their display (e.g., clothes can make people look sophisticated, sexy, athletic; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Mathur, 2013; Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017; Shavitt, Torelli, & Wong, 2009). People presumably choose goods and services that, through their display, effectively and accurately communicate desired qualities of the self, such as one's cherished values or personality characteristics. This position is hard to counter-argue and is consistent with any number of theories in social-personality psychology such as self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), and impression management (Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 2012), which specify that, as social-cultural creatures, people use material objects as symbols to externally represent the self.

Given this framework, people are likely highly strategic in what information preferences they willingly display in public. Indeed, people are likely aware that the information with which they associate can project their attitudes, values, and goals to others (e.g., a newspaper preference can be a telling indicator of one's ideology). This idea may hold important implications for understanding people's information choices. For example, when one's stances are controversial and could alienate others, people might generally avoid displaying their information preferences (i.e., information avoidance; Cialdini et al., 1973; Pillaud et al., 2013).

But, people might be particularly likely to avoid displaying uncongenial controversial information in public because such information also sends the wrong signal about one's identity and affiliations. Indeed, uncongenial information misrepresents the self, so displaying uncongenial information has greater potential to evoke negative emotions such as shame and embarrassment that signal a spoiled impression (Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980). The fictional stories of Carl and Joanne highlight this point. Hence, we extracted two ideas that were of interest to us here: First, people might wish to avoid displaying their information choices on controversial issues (to avoid seeming partisan and controversial); second, people might be particularly likely to avoid displaying uncongenial (versus congenial) information on controversial issues because such information can alienate one's own side (i.e., signal the wrong coalitional affiliation) and, more generally, send the wrong message about one's values.

Some work on information gathering supports the possibility that people consider information displays' signaling implications. For example, Earl, Nisson, and Albarracín (2015) found that people were less likely to read stigmatizing health information in public than private. Presumably, participants were concerned that displaying stigmatizing health information in public might suggest to an audience that they had the condition, so they avoided it (see also Earl, Crause, Vaid, & Albarracín, 2016). Recently, Adams, Hart, Richardson, Tortoriello, and Rentschler (2018) showed that participants who were told that (congenial) selective exposure does not indicate people's commitments subsequently engaged in less (congenial) selective exposure than participants who were told that it does indicate people's commitments. In other words, when participants believed that congenial displays were not appropriate symbols for expressing attitudes, selective exposure lost its luster. Also, Gabielkov, Ramachandran, Chaintreau, and Legout (2016) indicated that up to 60% of links shared on Twitter were not clicked on by the original poster. Thus, people sometimes display information to others without reading it, which suggests information gathering may involve considerations beyond merely processing ones. Although these studies seemingly support our conception of selective exposure as reflecting display considerations, none of these studies directly addressed this issue.

In four experiments, we tested the notion that information displays on controversial topics likely provoke information avoidance tendencies and selective exposure tendencies. In Experiment 1, we first sought evidence that people conceptualize information gathering as a way to convey one's views to others. Experiment 2 tested whether people anticipate negative

emotional and cognitive consequences based in merely displaying controversial information in public and whether such negative consequences are stronger for uncongenial vs. congenial information. Experiment 3 tested whether people's tendencies to avoid uncongenial vs. congenial displays (without processing the information) are commensurate to their tendencies to avoid uncongenial vs. congenial processing (without displaying the information). Experiment 4 tested whether participants believed that being seen with congenial (vs. uncongenial) information sent a more accurate message about their identity to an audience, and whether this belief, in turn, related to intentions to engage in selective-exposure bias in daily life. Hence, Experiments 2-4 separated display considerations from processing considerations (e.g., reading was not at stake but display was) to address whether display considerations could uniquely contribute to selective-exposure tendencies.

Experiment 1

Central to our theory is that people conceptualize (congenial) selective exposure as a form of attitude expression, but we were unaware of any data conclusively showing this. Hence, Experiment 1 aimed to confirm this central premise. Specifically, participants believed they were participating in a study on people's ability to communicate and miscommunicate their attitudes to others via only their behavior. Participants indicated their view on gun control and were told they would engage in various behaviors in the session that may or may not be useful to reveal their attitudes to future participants (i.e., "guessers" in a different study). In one within-subjects condition, participants were asked to engage in behavior on a task to fake their true views so future "guessers" would incorrectly guess their view (fake-attitude condition); in the other within-subjects condition, participants were asked to engage in behavior to reveal their true attitude (true-attitude condition). In each instruction context, all participants completed an information search selecting from amongst pro- and anti-gun control speech titles. If participants perceive information gathering as a means to express their attitudes, then, in the true-attitude condition, we should find a positive correlation between pro-gun control attitudes and enhanced gathering of pro-gun control (vs. anti-gun control) material; in the fake-attitude condition, we should find the opposite pattern.

Method

Participants and Design

A sample size of $N = 115$ is required to detect a small effect size ($f^2 = .07$) in our experimental design with power set to .80 and alpha to .05; we anticipated a large effect but chose to be conservative in our estimation. One-hundred-sixteen undergraduate students in the United States (US) participated for partial fulfillment of course requirements; two participants failed to complete the study and were removed from analyses ($N = 114$; 99 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.93$, $SD_{\text{age}} = .99$; 77.2% White). The design had two conditions (true-attitude vs. fake-attitude expression) that were delivered within participants. The dependent variable was the predominant gathering of attitude-consistent vs. -inconsistent information.

Procedure and Materials

After consent and an attention check (preventing participation if failed), participants were told the study examined their proficiency at completing tasks to either enable or prevent others from knowing their true view on gun control without using their words. Participants were also told that their (anonymized) responses during the tasks would be shown to future participants (“guessers”) who would try to guess their true view in a future study. First, participants indicated their true views on gun control (defined as “*the set of laws or policies that regulate the manufacture, sale, transfer, possession, modification, or use of firearms by civilians*”) via four items. One item asked how America should approach gun control laws (1 = very lenient; 8 = very restrictive); one item asked whether gun control laws should be made more or less strict (1 = much less strict; 8 = much more strict); and two items assessed agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 8 = strongly agree) to two separate statements: “*Armed citizens are the best defense against criminals*” [r] and “*It should be easier for law-abiding citizens to carry concealed handguns*” [r]. After reverse-scoring, higher average scores indicated stronger pro-gun control attitude ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.55$; $\alpha = .80$).

Next, participants were told that they would engage in behaviors that would be more or less relevant to either misleading or not misleading the future “guessers” on the participants’ views toward gun control. Participants were told they could decide whether a particular task would be relevant to misleading or not misleading guessers about their attitudes. In that context, participants were told that one behavior future guessers would see is how they select information on gun control from an information buffet. Participants were shown eight speech titles on a single page that were either clearly pro-gun control (four titles) or anti-gun control (four titles). Participants were told to select only the titles that they think would satisfy task instructions: In

the true-attitude condition, participants were instructed to select the titles as if they wanted others to correctly guess their true view on gun control; in the fake-attitude condition, participants were instructed to select the titles as if they wanted others to incorrectly guess their true view on gun control. Thus, each participant completed the title-selection task twice—once following the true-attitude condition instructions and once following the fake-attitude condition instructions. The order of the task instructions was randomized across participants. Also, in both conditions, a comprehension check was placed between task instructions and the title-selection task to ensure participants understood the instructions. Specifically, on a separate page immediately after reading the task instructions in each condition, participants completed a comprehension check that presented a multiple-choice list of six different task instructions, and participants were instructed to identify which task instructions they had read on the previous page. Only one answer choice included the correct instructions: in the true-attitude condition, the correct answer described the instructions as *‘To select information in a way that would make others correctly guess my true view on gun control’*; in the fake-attitude condition, the correct answer described the instructions as *‘To select information in a way that would make others incorrectly guess my true view on gun control’*. Participants could not complete the title-selection task until they identified the correct task instructions in each condition.

Within each condition, we measured the number of pro- and anti-gun control titles selected; to index participants’ information-selection bias for each condition (our dependent variables), we subtracted the number of selected anti-gun control titles from the number of selected pro-gun control titles (positive difference scores indicated pro-gun-control information-selection bias; see Table 1 for descriptives). Relations between these difference scores and participants’ self-reported true attitude indexed selective-exposure bias (i.e., positive relations indicated congenial information selection; negative relations indicated uncongenial information selection). After the title-selection tasks, the study abruptly ended, and participants reported demographics and were debriefed.

Results and Discussion

We suspected that participants in the true-attitude condition would select more congenial information, but participants in the fake-attitude condition would select more uncongenial information. Consistent with this possibility, the relation between true views (higher scores indicating stronger pro-gun control attitudes) and information-selection bias favoring pro- (vs.

anti-) gun control information was large and positive in the true-attitude condition ($r = .65$, $p < .001$) but large and negative in the fake-attitude condition ($r = -.59$, $p < .001$). Indeed, a 2 (reveal condition: true attitude vs. fake attitude; within-subjects) \times true view (continuous) regression analysis revealed that these two discrepant correlations significantly differed from each other, $F(1, 112) = 76.53$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .41$ (see Figure 1). In sum, participants engaged in uncongenial information selection when they wanted to fake their true views but engaged in congenial information selection when they wanted to reveal their true views to others. This evidence supports the possibility that people conceptualize information display as a form of attitude expression and can modulate selection in an appropriate way to convey attitudes. The present experiment has weaknesses that could limit conclusions. For example, because participants were presented with information search as an option to convey their views, it remains unclear whether people would choose this means naturally. Nonetheless, because participants were told (falsely) that they would be given multiple methods to express their view that can range in efficacy, people's use of information selection to convey their views is unlikely a mere artifact of demand or feeling constrained to only this method.

Our theory predicts that people should anticipate greater discomfort displaying uncongenial (vs. congenial) information in public, even if they never process the information. Presumably, the thought of uncongenial vs. congenial information display should arouse an admixture of negative cognitive (e.g., "I am being inauthentic.") and affective experiences (e.g., shame, embarrassment, humiliation) consistent with making the wrong impression on others. Experiment 2 tested this idea.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, participants indicated their view on a divisive topic of their choice that they cared about (e.g., abortion, religion, and gun control were popular choices). They then read two vignettes depicting a situation in which they publicly displayed (but did not process/read) a book conspicuously containing either congenial or uncongenial information with their views on the divisive topic. After reading each vignette, participants rated their anticipated feelings of identity inauthenticity and socially-relevant emotions. We also assessed participants' relative aversion to uncongenial (vs. congenial) information as a function of whether consumption of information was public (i.e., on display) or private (i.e., not on display). Specifically, participants indicated: (a) the extent to which they would feel discomfort purchasing a(n) uncongenial and

congenial book from the internet (no display) vs. from a store clerk (display); (b) the extent to which they would feel pride not displaying vs. displaying an uncongenial and congenial book; and (c) their willingness to read uncongenial and congenial information in private (no display) vs. public (display).

We hypothesized that participants would anticipate merely displaying (without reading/processing) uncongenial information would make them feel more inauthentic and more negative affect than displaying congenial information in public. We speculated further that participants would anticipate publically purchasing, owning, or reading books on controversial topics would be less pleasant than doing these behaviors in private (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1973), but, critically, we anticipated this effect would be strengthened in the context of uncongenial (vs. congenial) information.

Method

Participants and Design

We began running this experiment during the last week of a semester and allowed data to collect until the semester ended. This yielded participation from 348 US college students, which surpassed the sample size of $N = 199$ required to detect a small two-tailed effect (Cohen's $d = .20$; partial $\eta^2 = .01$) with power set to .80 and alpha .05. Participants completed this online study in exchange for course credit. Five participants failed to complete the study, leaving 343 participants for data analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 18.67$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 0.92$; 252 female). The study included multiple dependent variables and analyses, which were of a 2 (social context: private vs. public) \times 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated-measures form.

Procedure and Measures

After consenting and reviewing study instructions, participants were asked to consider any controversial topic on which they hold a strong position. Participants indicated (a) their selected topic, (b) their position on said topic, (c) the extent to which people they care about share their position ($M = 6.99$, $SD = 2.32$; 1 = “*They do not at all share my position.*”; 10 = “*They completely share my position.*”), (d) the extent to which their view is important to them ($M = 8.36$, $SD = 1.84$; 1 = “*My view is not at all important to me.*”; 10 = “*My view is extremely important to me.*”), and (e) the extent to which their view (position) is central to their identity ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 2.53$; 1 = “*My view is not at all central to my identity.*”; 10 = “*My view is extremely central to my identity.*”). Items c-e were included to verify that participants followed the

instruction to list a cherished belief. Cherished positions on controversial topics should have greater concordance within one's social circle, be perceived as important, and be considered central to one's identity. Three one-sample t-tests revealed the means on the three items statistically varied from the scale midpoint (5.5; $t_{ave.} = 14.89$; $p_{ave.} < .001$).

Next, we manipulated information type (congenial vs. uncongenial) as a within-subjects factor and had participants report responses for each condition. Participants read the following vignette stem:

“Imagine that, for a study, you were asked to sit in a busy public space and display a book that very clearly [supported (i.e., validated, confirmed)]/[contradicted (i.e., invalidated, disconfirmed)] your view on this issue for all to see. The book is rather well-known, and the book is rather large and attention-grabbing. You don't read the book; you just keep the book in your lap. Imagine a lot of people are noticing you and can certainly see your choice of reading material. Try to vividly picture where you are sitting and all the people passing by and noticing you.”

In the congenial-information condition, participants read about displaying a book that supported their view. In the uncongenial-information condition, participants read about displaying a book that contradicted their view. Following each condition, participants rated on 10-point scales (1 = not at all; 10 = extremely) their negative affect (15 items; e.g., embarrassed, anxious, proud [r], contented [r]) and perceptions of identity inauthenticity (four items; e.g., misrepresenting oneself, presenting one's authentic self [r]). For each condition, we collapsed items into their respective indices of negative affect ($\alpha_{congenial} = .91$; $\alpha_{uncongenial} = .91$) and identity inauthenticity ($\alpha_{congenial} = .85$; $\alpha_{uncongenial} = .89$).

Next, participants indicated (a) their willingness (1 = not at all; 10 = extremely) to read congenial and uncongenial information on their cherished belief in private vs. public settings, (b) the extent to which they would feel discomfort (1 = not at all; 10 = extremely) purchasing an uncongenial and congenial book on their cherished belief from the internet (private) vs. from a store clerk (public), and (c) the extent to which they would feel pride (1 = not at all; 10 = extremely) to not display vs. display an uncongenial and congenial book on their cherished belief. For exploratory purposes, we also assessed the extent to which each participant would feel uncomfortable if friends and family discovered s/he owned each type of book. These items did

not have a matched private-comparison scenario and were included for our own curiosity. Finally, participants completed demographics and were debriefed.

Results

Mere Information Display on Perceived Inauthenticity and Negative Affect

We speculated that participants would anticipate merely displaying (but not reading/processing) uncongenial (vs. congenial) information in public would make them feel more inauthentic and more negative affect. Findings supported both ideas. Paired-samples t-tests revealed that participants anticipated feeling (a) more inauthentic in the uncongenial-information condition ($M = 8.01$, $SD = 2.32$) than in the congenial-information condition ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 2.12$), $t(342) = 25.10$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.36$ (see Figure 2, Panel A), and (b) more negative affect in the uncongenial-information condition ($M = 6.26$, $SD = 1.80$) than in the congenial-information condition ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.54$), $t(342) = 21.28$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.15$ (see Figure 2, Panel B). Of note, the extent to which participants anticipated feeling relatively inauthentic was nearly (statistically) redundant with negative affect, $r = .74$. Hence, feeling inauthentic highly corresponds with feeling negative, which people presumably wish to avoid via congenial information display.

Display (Public) vs. No Display (Private) Manipulations on Anticipated Affective Reactions to Information Gathering and Exposure Willingness

Purchasing and owning congenial vs. uncongenial books. We speculated that participants would anticipate enhanced discomfort with (a) purchasing uncongenial (vs. congenial) books, (b) purchasing books on display (vs. not on display), but that the effect of purchasing uncongenial (vs. congenial) books on negative affect would be enhanced when display (vs. no display) of the information was relevant. We submitted discomfort to a 2 (social context: display vs. no display) \times 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated-measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed a main effect of social context, $F(1, 342) = 97.15$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$, showing discomfort ratings were higher in the display (vs. no display) condition, and a main effect of information type, $F(1, 342) = 57.08$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .14$, showing discomfort ratings were higher in the uncongenial-information (vs. congenial-information) condition. But, as anticipated, these main effects were qualified by the significant interaction, $F(1, 342) = 29.41$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$, (see Figure 3, Panel A). We examined simple effects of information type on discomfort at each level of social context. As expected,

discomfort ratings in the uncongenial-information (vs. congenial-information) condition was larger in the display ($M = -1.74$, $SD = 3.91$) than no-display condition ($M = -0.71$, $SD = 3.03$). We also examined simple effects of social context on discomfort at each level of information type. As expected, discomfort ratings in the uncongenial-information condition were higher in the display ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 2.87$) than the no-display condition ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 2.72$); the same pattern was observed in the congenial-information condition (for display: $M = 3.22$, $SD = 2.90$; for no-display: $M = 2.56$, $SD = 2.75$), but the difference between the means was smaller. Put plainly, people anticipated that buying information in public would be more unpleasant than buying the same information in private (i.e., online), but this effect of social context on discomfort was magnified for uncongenial versus congenial information.

We speculated that participants would anticipate more pride with owning books containing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information, but such an effect would be more pronounced when book ownership was on display (vs. not on display). We submitted pride to a 2 (social context: display vs. no display) \times 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated-measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed a main effect of social context, $F(1, 342) = 8.98$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, suggesting greater pride in the no-display (vs. display) condition, and a main effect of information type, $F(1, 342) = 631.72$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .65$, suggesting greater pride in the congenial-information (vs. uncongenial-information) condition. These main effects were qualified by the significant interaction, $F(1, 342) = 28.89$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$ (see Figure 3, Panel B). As anticipated, pride ratings from owning a congenial (vs. uncongenial) book were greater in the display ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 3.41$) than the no-display condition ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 3.51$). We also examined simple effects of social context on pride at each level of information type. As expected, pride ratings in the uncongenial-information condition were lower in the display ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 2.17$) than no-display condition ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 2.37$); the pattern reversed in the congenial-information condition (for display: $M = 7.38$, $SD = 2.48$; for no display: $M = 7.19$, $SD = 2.56$).³

Willingness to select information. We speculated that participants would indicate greater willingness to read information not on display or private (vs. on display or public),

³ The simple effect of social context on pride in the congenial-information condition seems inconsistent with the simple effect of social context on discomfort in the congenial-information condition. Indeed, the discrepancy was not anticipated, so it could be statistical noise. Or, it could suggest that participants might feel conflicted about advertising their true positions publically. For example, value affirmations can create a sense of pride but might alienate others, which can arouse worrying and other negative affect.

greater willingness to read congenial (vs. uncongenial) information, but that this enhanced willingness to read congenial information would increase when reading is on display or public (vs. not on display or private). We submitted willingness to a 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) \times 2 (social context: display vs. no display) repeated-measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed a main effect of information type, $F(1, 342) = 290.95, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .46$, suggesting heightened willingness in the congenial-information (vs. uncongenial-information) condition, and a main effect of social context, $F(1, 342) = 122.73, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .26$, suggesting heightened willingness in the no-display (vs. display) condition. These main effects were qualified by the significant interaction, $F(1, 342) = 84.06, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$ (see Figure 3, Panel C). As anticipated, the enhanced willingness to read congenial (vs. uncongenial) information was greater in the display ($M = 2.96, SD = 3.01$) than the no-display condition ($M = 1.76, SD = 2.64$). We also examined simple effects of social context at each level of information type. As expected, willingness to read uncongenial information was lower in the display ($M = 4.82, SD = 2.65$) than the no-display condition ($M = 6.53, SD = 2.60$); the pattern was directionally similar in the congenial-information condition, but the means were closer (for display: $M = 7.19, SD = 2.56$; for no display: $M = 7.38, SD = 2.48$).

Discussion

Participants imagined that merely displaying uncongenial (vs. congenial) information would make them feel less authentic and arouse more negative affect. The effects of the display vs. no-display manipulations on information exposure variables provided additional support for our ideas. Participants anticipated more discomfort and less pride associated with owning or purchasing uncongenial (vs. congenial) information, but these effects were accentuated when the purchase or ownership was on display (vs. private). And, participants indicated a greater bias toward reading congenial (vs. uncongenial) information, but this bias was accentuated when reading was in public (vs. private) and, therefore, on display. Notably, participants would rather read uncongenial information than also display it. In sum, Experiment 2 suggested that people are mightily more uncomfortable with displaying uncongenial vs. congenial information on controversial issues, which suggests why they are prone to congenial selective exposure. Extant notions of selective exposure are unable to account for these findings because such theories fail to specify any role for people's attention to the symbolic functions of information display.

Also, we obtained main effects of private vs. public display context on discomfort, pride, and exposure willingness. Generally, the effects suggested that participants would feel less comfortable with purchasing, owning, or reading information on controversial issues, whether congenial or uncongenial, in public. Presumably, people perceive their information choices as communicating a controversial stance that can influence how they are perceived and treated by others. Indeed, when controversial issues are at stake, people view attitudinal ambivalence as socially desirable presumably because ambivalence is easy to defend, suggests one is open-minded, and is less likely to arouse conflict from rivals (Cialdini et al., 1973; Pillaud et al., 2013).

Experiment 3 was designed to advance Experiment 2 in a key way and provide further conceptual support for our idea. Experiment 3 sought to compare the effect of congenial vs. uncongenial display (without processing) on anticipated information selection and affect against the effect of congenial vs. uncongenial processing (without display) on these variables. Indeed, people might anticipate similar selective-exposure tendencies from displaying (without processing) congenial (vs. uncongenial) information in public as processing (without displaying) congenial (vs. uncongenial) information in private. Such a finding would help highlight how a focus on mere processing considerations as a cause of selective-exposure bias tendencies would be profoundly incomplete.

Experiment 3

Participants simulated scenarios depicting exposure to either congenial or uncongenial information in (a) private settings that involved processing but not displaying the information (processing-only condition) and (b) public settings that involved displaying but not processing the information (display-only condition). Participants indicated whether they would prefer experiencing the processing-only or display-only version of the congenial- and uncongenial-information scenarios, and they reported their anticipated affect in each scenario. We speculated participants would (a) indicate a preference for the processing-only setting that would be larger in the context of uncongenial information, (b) anticipate that processing congenial information would induce more positive affect than processing uncongenial information, and (c) anticipate that displaying congenial information would induce more positive affect than displaying uncongenial information. All these hypotheses would conceptually replicate the findings of Experiment 2. But, most importantly, the experimental design allowed us to compare the size of

these latter two hypothesized effects. The anticipated relative hedonic benefit associated with processing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information is widely studied and discussed in the context of information search; however, the anticipated relative hedonic benefit associated with merely displaying congenial (vs. uncongenial) information has not been discussed until now and may be just as large in size.

Method

Participants and Design

A power analysis for detecting a small effect (partial $\eta^2 = .01$) with power set to .80 and alpha at .05 suggested recruiting $N = 199$ participants. This experiment was completed as part of a two-study session where participants always first completed a study about political attitudes in which we needed at least $N = 365$ for adequate power analyses for that study. To that end, 412 US participants were recruited on MTurk in exchange for \$.60; four participants failed to complete the study and were removed from analyses ($N = 408$; 231 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.93$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.10$; 72.3% White). The experiment was a 2 (social context: display-only vs. processing-only) \times 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated measures design.

Materials and Procedure

Participants indicated a controversial topic on which they held a strong position and their view on said topic. Next, they used a 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely) scale to rate (a) whether people they care about shared their view ($M = 7.52$, $SD = 1.97$), (b) their view was important to them ($M = 8.48$, $SD = 1.81$), and (c) their view was central to their identity ($M = 7.13$, $SD = 2.47$). Participants seemed to select an important topic. The means on each of the three items (items a-c) differed from the scale midpoints ($t_{\text{ave.}} = 22.41$; $p_{\text{ave.}} < .001$).

Next, participants responded to four scenarios dealing with either mere display or mere processing of either congenial or uncongenial information on their chosen topic. The four scenarios, delivered within-subjects, were as follows: display-only congenial, display-only uncongenial, processing-only congenial, and processing-only uncongenial. The display-only scenario described the participant sitting in a busy public place for 20 minutes clearly displaying a well-known, easily-identified, attention-grabbing book that was either congenial or uncongenial with their view on their chosen topic; the processing-only scenario described the participant sitting in private for 20 minutes reading a book containing strong arguments that were either congenial or uncongenial with their view on their chosen topic. The four scenarios were

presented to participants in two separate, randomized pairs according to information type. That is, participants read the display-only-congenial scenario paired with the processing-only-congenial scenario and the display-only-uncongenial scenario paired with the processing-only-uncongenial scenario. We paired the scenarios this way to assess participants' preference for display-only (vs. processing-only) as a function of whether the information was congenial and uncongenial. Thus, within each pair of congenial- and uncongenial-information scenarios, participants first selected whether they would prefer experiencing the display-only or processing-only version of the scenario (for congenial information: 280 [69%] participants preferred processing-only; for uncongenial information: 323 [79%] participants preferred processing-only), and then they used three bipolar scales (-5 = [bad]/[unpleasant]/[negative]; +5 = [good]/[pleasant]/[positive]) that we averaged to describe their anticipated affect in each scenario (anticipated affect scales within each scenario pairing were randomized; see Table 2 for descriptives).⁴

Results and Discussion

Preferences for Display-only vs. Processing-only as a Function of Congenial and Uncongenial Information

To examine participants' preference for display-only or processing-only social contexts for exposure to congenial and uncongenial information, we submitted participants' scenario preference selections to two chi-square tests (one test for congenial information; one test for uncongenial information). Consistent with our hypothesis, both chi-square tests revealed that participants preferred processing-only to display-only contexts for both congenial and uncongenial information, $\chi^2_{\text{congenial}} = 56.63, p < .001$; $\chi^2_{\text{uncongenial}} = 138.83, p < .001$. We also examined whether this preference was greater for uncongenial (vs. congenial) information using a Wilcoxon sign test. As anticipated, this test revealed participants preferred processing-only contexts significantly more for uncongenial (vs. congenial) information, $Z = -3.79, p < .001$. Thus, participants preferred to process than display both types of information, but this preference was stronger for uncongenial (vs. congenial) information.

Anticipated Affect in Each Scenario

⁴ Lastly, for exploratory purposes, participants completed the brief fear of negative evaluation scale (Leary, 1983). This measure failed to change any of the effects we report here.

We submitted anticipated affect ratings to a 2 (social context: display-only vs. processing-only) \times 2 (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated-measures ANOVA. The ANOVA revealed a main effect of information type, $F(1, 407) = 288.63$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .42$, suggesting participants anticipated more positive affect (i.e., greater hedonic benefit) in the congenial- (vs. uncongenial-) information condition. It also revealed a main effect of social context, $F(1, 407) = 210.38$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .34$, suggesting participants anticipated more positive affect in private (vs. public). The interaction was null, $p = .886$, meaning the anticipated affect associated with processing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 3.29$) was approximately similar in magnitude to the anticipated affect associated with merely displaying congenial (vs. uncongenial) information ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 3.60$; see Figure 4).

In sum, Experiment 3 revealed that: (1) participants preferred private processing (vs. public display) contexts for information exposure but were less averse to public display if the information was congenial, and (2) participants anticipated that merely displaying congenial (vs. uncongenial) information would result in enhanced hedonic benefit commensurate to merely processing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information. Selective exposure theorists have reasonably assumed that information-exposure choices originate from hedonic motivation (i.e., to feel good vs. bad; Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009) but have focused their analysis on hedonic implications of information processing and neglected hedonic implications of information display. Given these data, these theoretical approaches seem profoundly incomplete.

Nonetheless, none of the findings so far necessarily support our idea that display concerns are an impetus for selective-exposure behavior in daily life. Indeed, we would argue that people often turn to selective exposure to intentionally convey their views on important issues via display (e.g., people watch Fox News [CNN] to signal their conservatism [liberalism] to audiences). Hence, as people show greater endorsement of the belief that selective exposure on a topic facilitates authentic identity-conveyance, they should intend higher levels of selective exposure on the topic in daily life. Experiment 4 examined this prediction.

Experiment 4

Participants in Experiment 4 indicated the extent to which reading congenial and uncongenial information on a cherished topic would allow them to signal their true view on the topic to others. Participants also indicated their intent to read congenial and uncongenial

information on the topic in daily life. There are of course pros and cons of assessing behavioral intentions rather than using, for example, in-lab behavioral measures. Although in-lab behavioral measures may be less open to response biases than self-reported intentions, in-lab behavioral measures can be of questionable external validity. Behavioral intentions, however, ask about intended real-world behavior and are more inclusive than a single behavior assessment in the lab. Moreover, behavioral intentions are often very good indicators of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Sheeran, 2002; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). For these reasons, we wished to study behavioral intentions.

We predicted participants would indicate greater intent to select congenial (vs. uncongenial) information and rate the congenial (vs. uncongenial) information as more effective to signal their true view to others. Finally, we predicted that participants' intention to select more congenial (vs. uncongenial) information (i.e., selective-exposure intent) would correlate positively with their belief that congenial (vs. uncongenial) information more effectively conveys their true view to others. For breadth, participants also rated the extent to which reading congenial and uncongenial information on the topic would strengthen/weaken their view and be informative.

Method

Participants and Design

Based on the results of Experiments 1-3, we anticipated moderate-to-large effect sizes (Cohen's $d \geq .50$) for analyses of intent to select congenial (vs. uncongenial) information and rate congenial (vs. uncongenial) information as more effective in identity conveyance, but, we anticipated a more modest effect ($r = .21$; Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003) when testing the relation between these two indices. Thus, to be conservative in our sample size estimation and ensure adequate power across all analyses, we based our power analysis on the smaller effect ($r = .21$; one-tailed) with power set to .80 and alpha to .05, which suggested collecting 136 participants. We oversampled to account for possible participant attrition and data exclusions and collected data from 172 undergraduate students from the US who participated for partial fulfillment of course requirements. One participant failed to complete the study and was removed from analyses ($N = 171$; 151 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.19$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.60$; 77.2% White). The experiment was a two-group (information type: congenial vs. uncongenial information) repeated-measures design.

Procedure and Materials

Similar to Experiments 2-3, after consent and an attention check (preventing participation if failed), participants identified a controversial topic on which they held a strong position and wrote a brief explanation of their view on the topic. Participants then indicated their likelihood (-5 = not likely at all; +5 = extremely likely) of reading in daily life (a) information that was congenial with their view on the topic (one item; $M = 1.57$, $SD = 2.46$) and (b) information that was uncongenial with their view on the topic (one item; $M = -.41$, $SD = 2.78$). By subtracting the latter rating from the former rating, we derived a selective-exposure-intent score (numbers greater than 0 indicate an intent to engage in selective exposure). Next, participants responded to items assessing the extent to which: (1) reading congenial [uncongenial] information would weaken/strengthen their views on the topic (-5 = weaken; +5 = strengthen; one item each; $M_{\text{congenial}} = 2.94$, $SD_{\text{congenial}} = 1.80$; $M_{\text{uncongenial}} = .80$, $SD_{\text{uncongenial}} = 2.23$), (2) reading congenial [uncongenial] information would be informative on the topic (-5 = not at all informative; +5 = extremely informative; one item each; $M_{\text{congenial}} = 2.78$, $SD_{\text{congenial}} = 1.89$; $M_{\text{uncongenial}} = .95$, $SD_{\text{uncongenial}} = 2.82$), and (3) reading congenial [uncongenial] information in public would convey their views/identity (three items per the two information types; $M_{\text{congenial}} = 2.85$, $SD_{\text{congenial}} = 1.90$; $\alpha_{\text{congenial}} = .90$; $M_{\text{uncongenial}} = -1.38$, $SD_{\text{uncongenial}} = 2.42$; $\alpha_{\text{uncongenial}} = .90$). These six “identity-conveyance” items began with the stem “*If I am reading material that supports [contradicts] my position in public (e.g., at a coffee shop), I think I am:*” to which participants responded on bipolar scales (-5 = [giving people the wrong idea about my beliefs]/[misrepresenting my views]/[supporting a view I do not embrace]; +5 = [giving people the right idea about my beliefs]/[accurately representing my views]/[supporting a view I do embrace]; answering “0” would mean public information exposure conveys nothing about identity). Finally, participants answered demographics and were debriefed.

Results and Discussion

Main Analyses

Selective-exposure intent ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 3.19$) was higher than the midpoint of zero, $t(170) = 8.14$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 0.62$, suggesting participants intended to collect more congenial (vs. uncongenial; see Figure 5) information. As anticipated, participants rated congenial (vs. uncongenial) information as higher in identity conveyance ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 3.56$; $t[170] = 15.52$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.19$; see Figure 6). We anticipated that the relative

advantage given to congenial information on identity conveyance would relate to selective-exposure intent. Indeed, the correlation between selective-exposure intent and the relative advantage given to congenial information on identity conveyance was positive ($r = .27, p < .001$).

Exploratory Analyses

Participants also rated congenial (vs. uncongenial) information as higher in view-strengthening ($M = 2.15, SD = 2.64; t[170] = 10.64, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.81$; see Figure 7) and informativeness ($M = 1.83, SD = 3.17; t[170] = 7.56, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.58$; see Figure 8). The relative advantage given to congenial information on these beliefs related positively and about moderately to selective-exposure intent (view-strengthening: $r = .27, p < .001$; informativeness: $r = .34, p < .001$).

Discussion

Participants believed that congenial information more effectively conveys their views to others than uncongenial information, and the extent of this belief related positively to selective-exposure intent. Participants also believed that congenial (vs. uncongenial) information would be more informative and strengthen their views to a greater extent, and these beliefs also correlated positively with selective-exposure intent. Thus, selective-exposure intentions are likely complex and logically follow from beliefs about the consequences associated with information processing (strengthening vs. weakening views and reaching accurate conclusions) and information display (correctly asserting one's public identity via information-display decisions).

General Discussion

To summarize, in Experiment 1, participants used selective exposure to express or conceal their views, suggesting people perceive selective exposure as a method for attitude expression. In Experiment 2, although participants indicated a preference for processing rather than displaying information, participants indicated that displaying (without processing) congenial (vs. uncongenial) information would enhance feelings of authenticity and reduce negative affect. These participants also anticipated more discomfort purchasing an uncongenial than congenial book in public than in private, more pride owning a congenial than uncongenial book on public display than kept in private, and greater avoidance of uncongenial information when the exposure is on display. Likewise, in Experiment 3, participants showed enhanced preferences for processing information in private than displaying it in public, but this preference was reduced for

congenial than uncongenial information. These participants also anticipated that merely displaying congenial (vs. uncongenial) information would create hedonic benefit commensurate to processing congenial (vs. uncongenial) information. In Experiment 4, participants indicated that displaying congenial (vs. uncongenial) information more accurately conveyed their identity to an audience, and this belief related to selective-exposure intentions in their daily lives. This set of findings supports the possibility that the selection of congenial and uncongenial information can reflect people's considerations about information display.

Extant selective exposure theories fail to acknowledge the role of information display (Festinger, 1957; Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Frey, 2008; Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt, 2005; Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009; Mastro et al., 2002), which makes these theories incomplete. These theories stress that people consider the processing implications of information gathering, which implicate people's presumptions about information consumption. For example, people gather more congenial information on the grounds that processing it will feel better and be more informative. There is no reason to challenge these processes, but, in daily life, selective exposure should also be conceptualized as a form of consumption that revolves around information display. When in public, people wish to display information that correctly vs. incorrectly identifies the self to others, so they assemble more congenial than uncongenial information to suit this wish. People are reluctant to display information on controversial issues in public, but displaying uncongenial information is exceptionally aversive because it sends the wrong message about one's identity and can provoke greater negative affect relative to congenial information.

The present findings are likely reflective of broader principles of self-presentation that apparently dictate most forms of human behavior (Baumeister, 1982; Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980, 2012). As social animals, people's outcomes are largely dictated by their social reputations (e.g., one cannot be considered incompetent to get a job); hence, people seek to strategically modify their social reputations via use of symbolic gestures to win desired treatment (e.g., via behavior, material possessions). For example, Hardy and Van Vugt (2006) provided evidence that people might behave "altruistically" for the reputational benefits (e.g., seeming powerful) associated with the implications of this behavior. Likewise, Griskevicius, Tybur, and Van den Bergh (2010) provided evidence that people select "green" products over less expensive and higher quality alternatives to suggest they can accept a "handicap" for the betterment of

humanity and are therefore powerful people. The present findings can be broadly construed in this vein and suggest that certain acts of selective exposure can also be designed for a self-presentational benefit (e.g., to convey a desired identity or connect with an in-group). Moreover, because information display on controversial topics might be generally perceived as costly (e.g., information displays can invite conflict from dissenters), people might sometimes use congenial information display to highlight their own formidability and fearlessness to their in-group (Fessler et al., 2015), which can make such individuals seem highly valuable to the in-group. Such ideas deserve future examination.

The present ideas suggest a need to more critically analyze the effects of moderators on selective exposure. As a few examples, selective exposure is amplified when individuals (a) are highly committed to an attitude or behavior (Jonas & Frey, 2003); (b) are dealing with information relevant to enduring, personally-defining values (McFarland & Warren, 1992); (c) are reminded of their mortality (Jonas, Greenberg, & Frey, 2003); and (d) do not feel self-affirmed (Klein & Harris, 2009) or are placed in a negative mood (Jonas, Graupmann, & Frey, 2006). All of these effects have been understood in conventional selective-exposure terms: People prefer congenial information when processing uncongenial information would be particularly likely to sting and congenial information would seem particularly satisfying. But, all these effects can also reflect changes to concerns about information display, too. For example, people who are selecting information based on important values should be oriented toward displaying these views with predominantly congenial information choices, particularly when not self-affirmed. Hence, moderators of selective exposure might work on distinct processes that can influence selective exposure.

Although the present set of experiments possesses strengths such as using varied manipulations and measures and relatively large sample sizes, they also possess limitations that can be addressed in future work. The present studies were limited to self-reports often assessed in the context of simulated situations in which the participant would know the topic under investigation (albeit not the researchers' hypotheses) and therefore could manipulate their responses to make a desired impression. Hence, future research that uses surreptitious methods to test our theory, or includes conditions under which responding is incentive-compatible, are needed. Moreover, future research should examine the full scope of this selective exposure analysis. To be sure, concerns about information display need not necessarily be confined to

public information-gathering behavior. Indeed, the notion of self-signaling implies that people will engage in behavior that is a signal (merely to the self) of a desired state (Bodner & Prelec, 2002). Specifically, to the extent people wish to impress an internal audience, they might consider how their behavior reflects on desired images in private settings (Schlenker, 2012). For example, a devout Republican might feel uneasy about watching CNN (a news network with a generally liberal bent), even if no one will ever know, because the person feels as if s/he is “not acting like a Republican” or is otherwise misrepresenting oneself (to oneself). This can arouse self-conscious feelings of guilt or shame conceptually distinct from other concerns a Republican might have about privately processing information from CNN (e.g., concerns that CNN is biased or presents arguments that provoke anger). Hence, display considerations may be present in private information-selection settings, albeit the concerns are likely attenuated because an external audience is not present to judge the person. Also, numerous ideas for future work arise from considering the apparently complex interplay between audience characteristics (e.g., audience views), the selector’s self-presentation goals, and the social meaning of information gathering. As one example, in much the same way people change their views to appear more similar to an important audience (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Pittman, 1982), we imagine information selectors might gather information to imply more similarity to an important audience (that is otherwise ignorant of their stance). Hence, if a gun control advocate is publically gathering information and perceives his/her audience, which s/he hopes to impress, as anti-gun control, s/he will temper his/her search for pro-gun control information as an ingratiation technique. As another example, people might engage in information gathering to express identities that are not directly tied to their particular views on issues. For example, if Carl knows Alex is aware of his stance on gun control, Carl may selectively display information on gun control in Alex’s presence to appear “curious and open” (by displaying more uncongenial information), “unbiased and systematic” (by displaying even-handedness), or “committed and resolute” (by displaying more congenial information) to Alex. Presumably, Carl’s approach to information gathering will be dictated by his evaluation of these different identities and, if he wishes to impress Alex, his perception of how Alex might evaluate these identities (e.g., would Alex like someone that is curious, even-handed, or resolute?). Our analysis offers numerous interesting and novel ideas for studying how people gather congenial information, which we hope will be addressed in future work.

Selective-exposure bias has been researched for decades, and hundreds of studies have examined selective-exposure effects (Hart et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the underlying causes of and functions for selective-exposure bias are still being formulated. Here, we provided evidence that selective-exposure bias is not merely about reading/processing preferences but also reflects a way to self-present one's authentic views to audiences. This novel position suggests a potentially promising approach to understanding and influencing selective exposure.

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Table 1
Descriptives for the Title-Selection Task in Experiment 1

	True-attitude Condition	Fake-attitude Condition
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Shavitt,
S., Torelli,
C. J., &
Wong, J.
(2009).
Identity
based
motivation
:
Constraint
s and

opportunities. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19, 261–266.

doi:10.1016/j.jcps.2009.05.009

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	M	SD	M	SD
Pro-GC Titles Selected	1.31	1.30	.89	1.25
Anti-GC Titles Selected	.92	1.28	1.50	1.46
Pro-GC Bias (Difference Anti-Selected Affect For Each Scenario in Experiment)	39	236	01	243

Note. GC = gun control. Positive difference scores indicate pro-gun-control information-selection bias. Maximum possible difference score is +/- 4.

	M	SD	α	M	SD	α
Display-only	.86	2.78	.97	-1.65	2.83	.98
Processing-only	2.67	2.05	.96	.15	2.60	.96

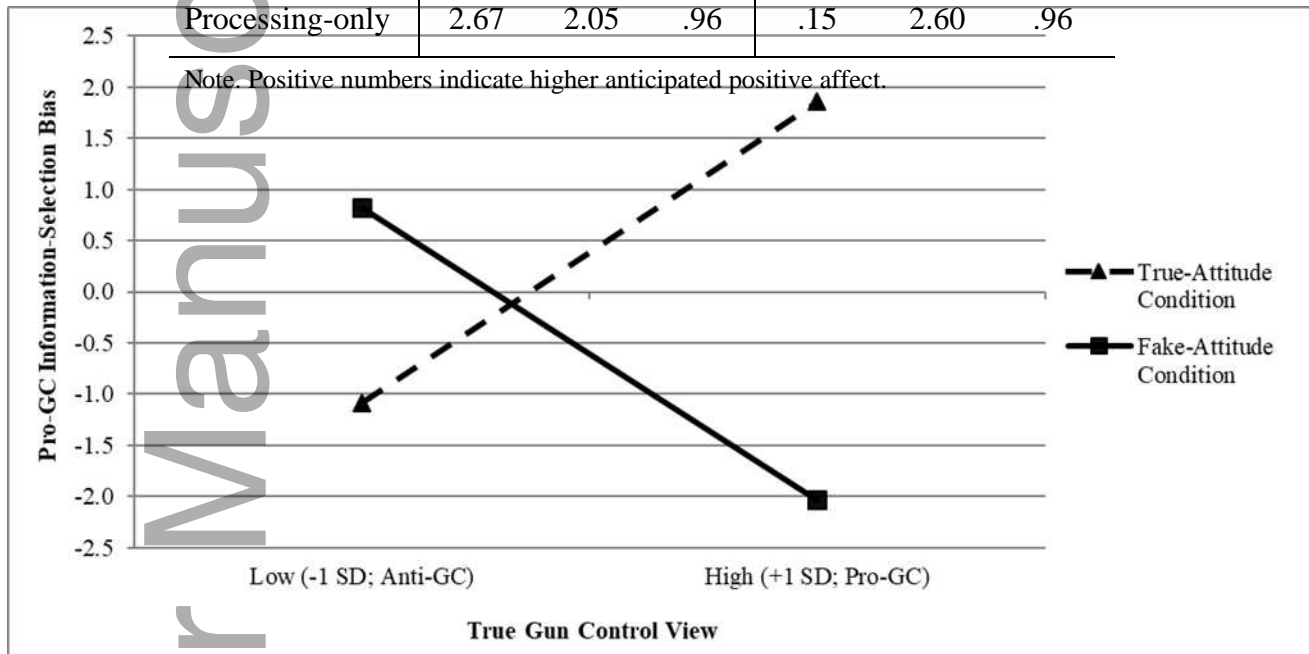


Figure 1. Information-selection bias as a function of true gun control view and reveal condition (true attitude vs. fake attitude). Positive information-selection bias scores indicate pro-gun control information-selection bias. Pro-GC = pro-gun control; Anti-GC = anti-gun control.

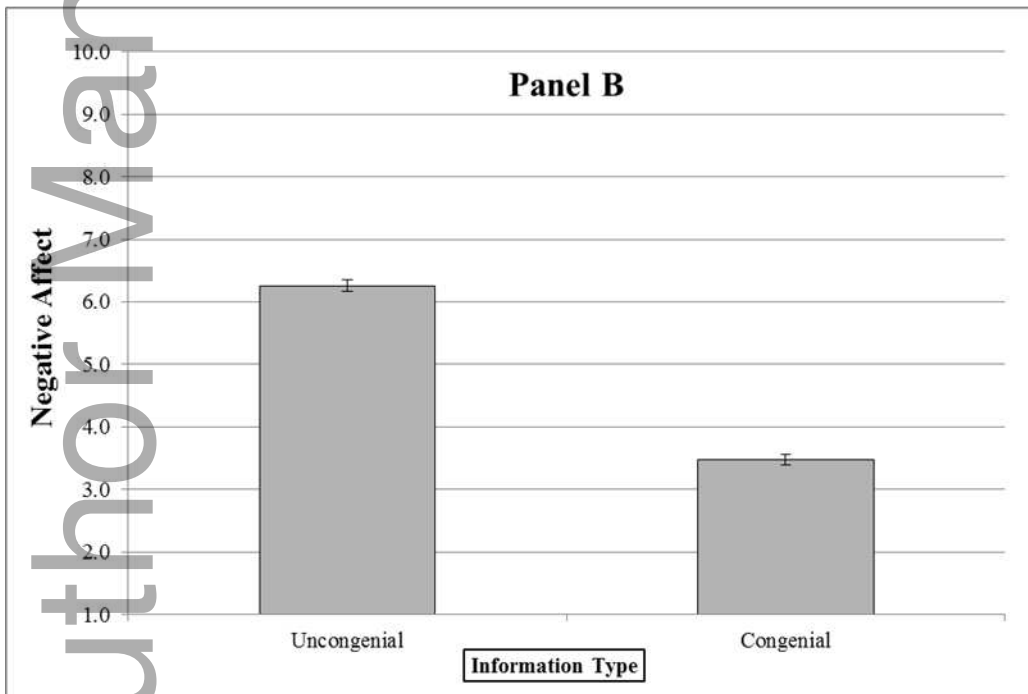
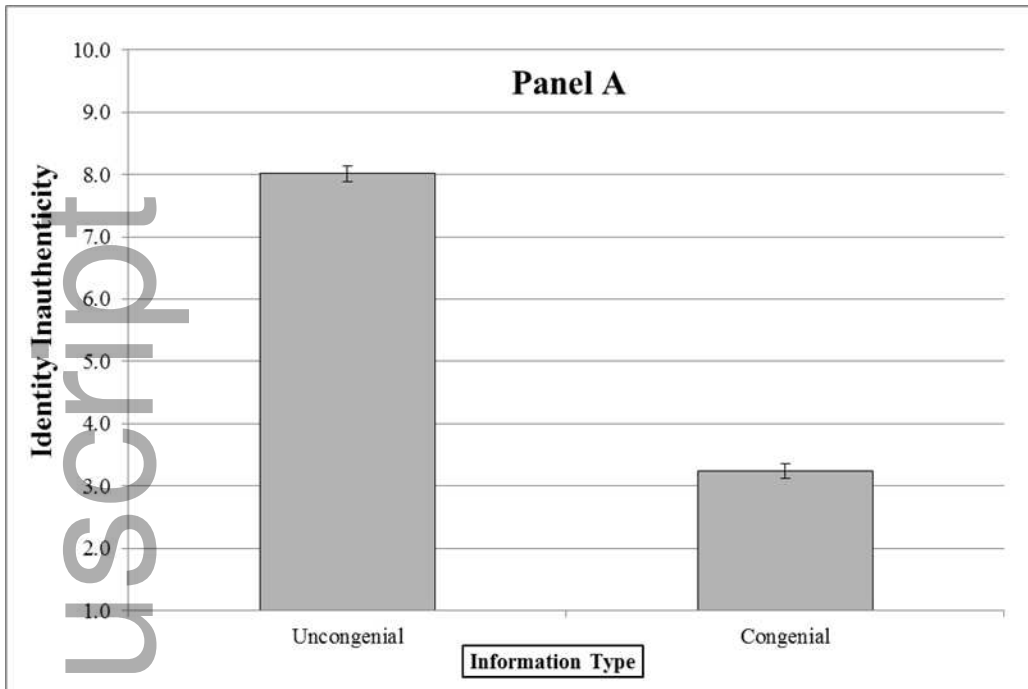


Figure 2. The effect of information type on identity inauthenticity (Panel A) and negative affect (Panel B).

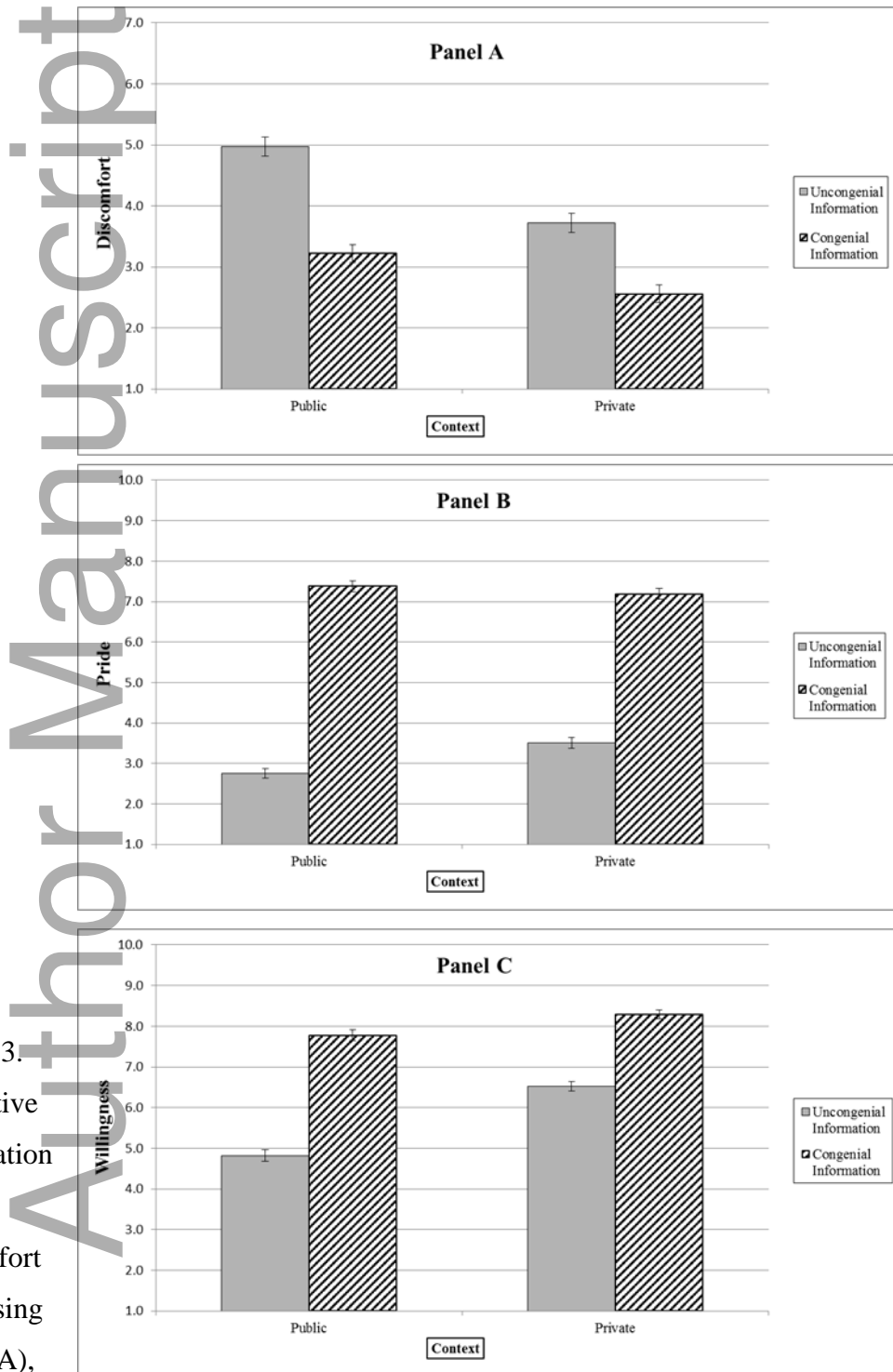


Figure 3. The effect of type and context on interactive information social discomfort purchasing (Panel A), owning a book (Panel B), and willingness to read information (Panel C).

The effect of type and context on interactive information social discomfort purchasing (Panel A), owning a book (Panel B), and willingness to read information (Panel C).

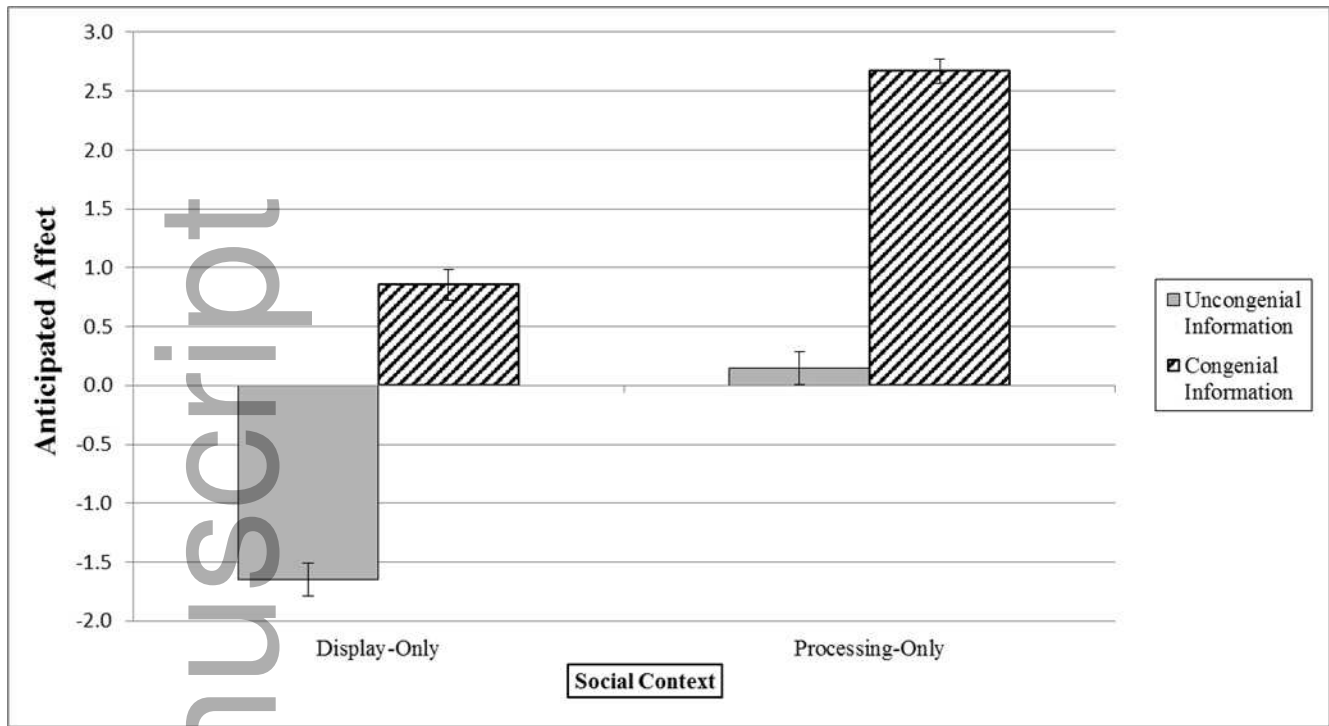


Figure 4. Anticipated affect as a function of information type and social context.

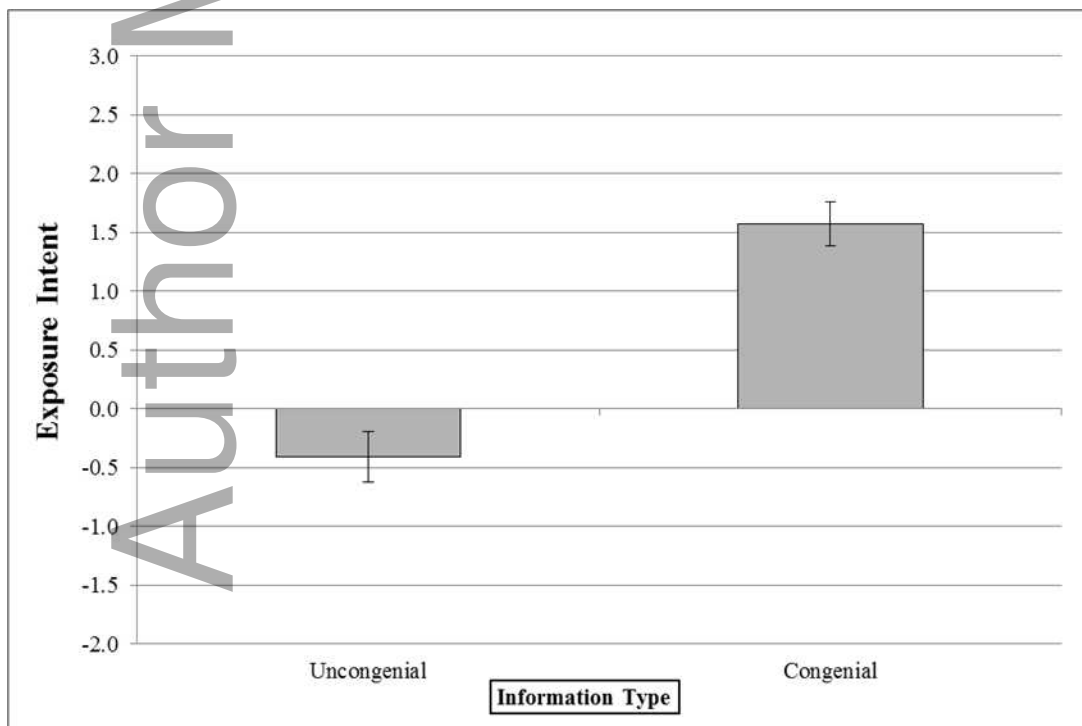


Figure 5. Intent to expose the

self to uncongenial and congenial information. Higher numbers indicate greater intent for exposure.

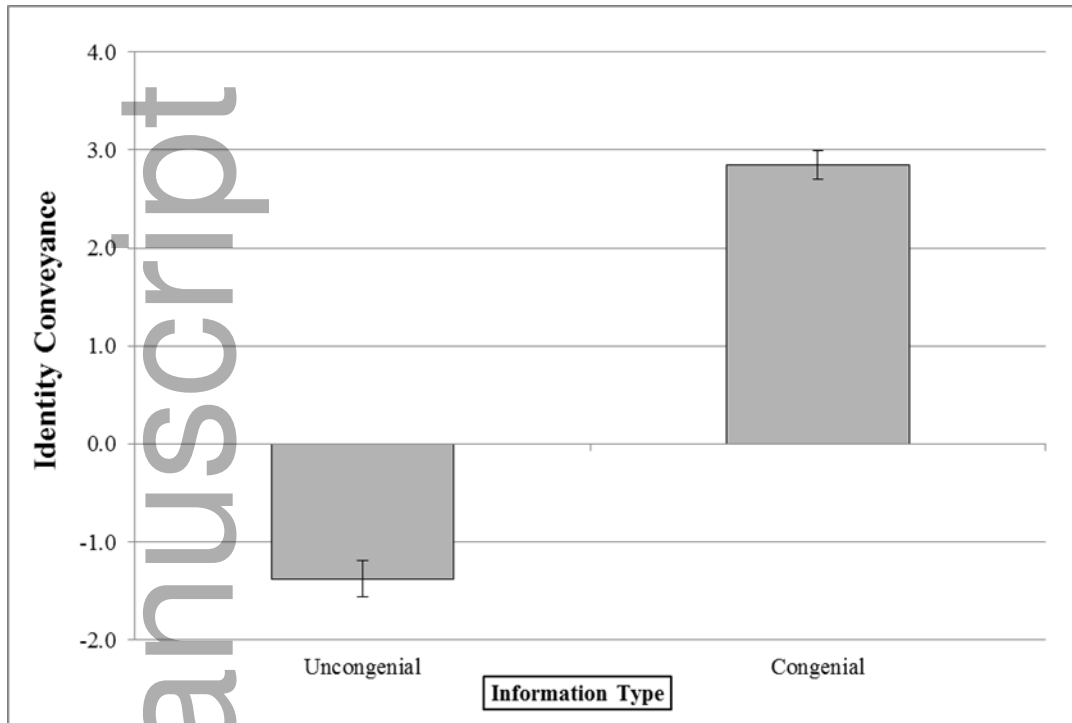


Figure 6. Perceived identity conveyance as a function of information type.

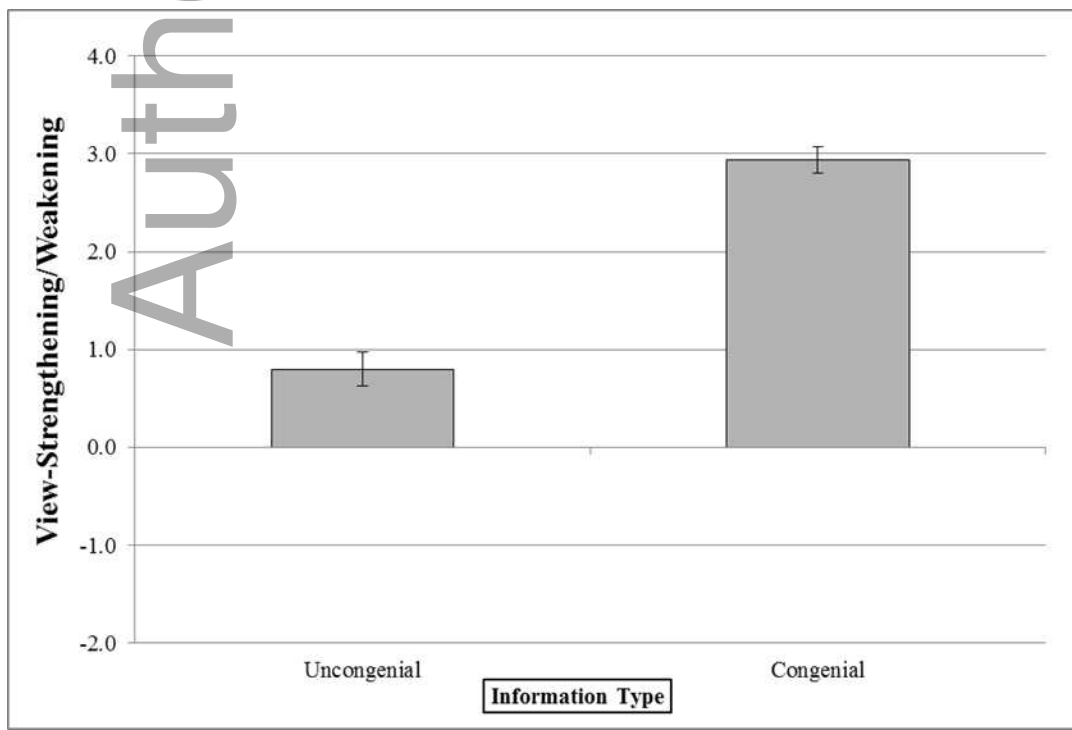


Figure 7. Perceived view-strengthening or weakening as a function of information type. Scores above (below) 0 indicate strengthening (weakening).

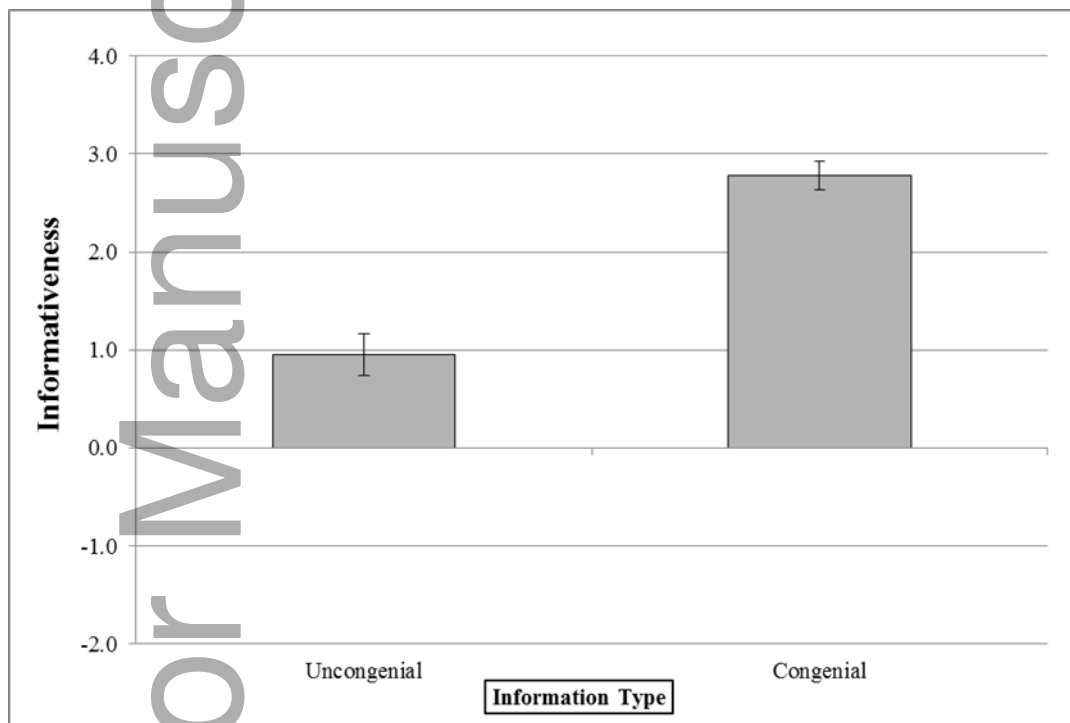


Figure 8. Perceived informativeness as a function of information type.