

THE EFFECT OF MOTIVATION ON POLITICAL SELECTIVE EXPOSURE AND
SELECTIVE PERCEPTION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA GRADUATE COLLEGE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research project reported in this volume is a product of four years research and study at University of Arizona under the guidance of Prof. Kate Kenski. I had the great fortune to work with Prof. Kate Kenski, who taught me not only lessons in academia but also the right attitudes in life. Your diligence and seriousness in research has set up a great model for me to follow, which will benefit me for the rest of my life. It was a great pleasure to work on the Kenski research team, and I am looking forward to future collaborations.

I would like to thank my other committee members, Prof. Steve Rains and Prof. Kyle Tusing. Despite your busy schedules, you were always available and patient. Your suggestions and guidance has greatly improved my work. It was an honor to have you in my committee members, and I am very grateful for your time and effort in helping me to foster my career.

I would also like to thank my family members, my fiancé, Wei-Ming Huang, and my mom, Guirong Shang, without whose love and support, I would not have finished the doctoral study abroad so smoothly.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends, Qiuli Shen, Yang Bai, Baijie Gu, Shulei Zhang and my host family, Cynthia and John, who gave me great emotional support and instrumental support. I feel so lucky to have you as my friends and will cherish these friendships forever.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Wei-Ming Huang—the love of my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of motivation on political selective exposure and selective perception using an online experiment. Studies have found that though people have a preference for like-minded political information over counter-attitudinal information, they do not avoid counter-attitudinal political information altogether (Garrett, 2009; Garrett, Carnahan, & Lynch, 2011; Stroud, 2008). This study examines under what conditions people are likely to expose themselves to more like-minded information than counter-attitudinal information and under what conditions people are likely to seek out more counter-attitudinal information than like-minded information. Based on the theory of motivated reasoning and Hart et al. (2009)'s model, I proposed a model that explained selective exposure and selective perception based on motivation. Defense motivation, the motivation to hold attitude-consistent cognitions with one's original attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors, was predicted to increase selective exposure and selective perception. Accuracy motivation, the motivation to arrive at the correct conclusion, was predicted to reduce selective exposure and selective perception. Finally, information utility motivation, the motivation to choose information that has the highest utility, was predicted to reduce selective exposure when counter-attitudinal information was equally useful as attitude-consistent information, but increase selective exposure when attitude-consistent information was more useful than counter-attitudinal information. In both cases, it was predicted that the selective perception pattern would not be changed. The study also tested the additive effect of the three motivations and examined which

motivation can override other motivations in determining selective exposure and selective perception. Results showed that accuracy motivation was effective in reducing selective exposure for both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans. Accuracy motivation can override defense motivation in affecting selective exposure. Information utility alone, defense motivation alone, and the combination of the three motivations produced mixed results. Accuracy motivation was effective in reducing selective perception for those who were not strong partisans. The link between selective exposure and selective perception was not found.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Whether people selectively expose themselves to attitude-consistent political information and avoid counter-attitudinal political information has been debated in the literature. Recent studies using both experiment and survey methods have mostly supported the finding that people tend to show a preference of attitude-consistent political information over counter-attitudinal political information (Garrett, 2009; Garrett, Carnahan & Lynch, 2011; Stroud, 2008). If we agree that showing a preference for attitude-consistent information over counter-attitudinal information is selective exposure, then there is agreement in the literature that this phenomenon exists. Scholars have pointed out the harm of political selective exposure on the society (Mutz, 2002, Prior, 2007; Stroud, 2011; Sunstein, 2001). The next step in selective exposure research is to figure out how to reduce it. Although several theories and theoretical perspectives have attempted to explain the mechanisms behind selective exposure and explore ways to reduce it, a comprehensive model that can predict under what conditions selective exposure to attitude-consistent information is more likely and under what conditions people would prefer counter-attitudinal information to attitude-consistent information has yet to be developed. What is more, selective exposure has often been studied separately from selective perception, and the relationship between the two concepts has been understudied in the literature as well. This study fills these gaps by integrating the theory of motivated reasoning and other theories into a model that examines the effect of motivation on selective

exposure and selective perception. An online experiment was conducted to test the effect of motivation on political selective exposure and selective perception.

Significance of the Present Study

Uncovering the mechanisms of political selective exposure and selective perception is of great importance. Seeking only congenial information and avoiding uncongenial information could lead to fragmentation and polarization (Stroud, 2011; Sunstein, 2002). If citizens continuously expose themselves to congenial information and avoid uncongenial information, they may blindly support their own party's policy and oppose the policy proposed by the other party, regardless of the benefits to the society (Crosby & Taylor, 1983). Exposure to alternative views, on the other hand, could potentially lead to understanding of competing political perspectives (Mutz, 2006) and tolerance of the other party (Mutz, 2002; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). Balanced exposure may not always lead to positive outcomes. Some studies have found that exposure to counter-attitudinal information can lead to boomerang effects meaning that after exposure to disconfirming arguments, people tend to rebut the arguments, which reinforces their former beliefs (Lord, Ross & Lepper, 1979; Meffert et al., 2006; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Thus, we need to know under what conditions balanced exposure will increase understanding and tolerance and under what conditions exposure to counter-attitudinal information will increase polarization.

Motivation might be one of the factors that can achieve such a goal. If people's motivation is defensive, exposure to counter-attitudinal information may only reinforce their pre-existing attitudes. If people's motivation is accuracy, however,

there is a greater chance that attitude change can take place. Finally, if people's motivation is seeking useful information for future decisions, then even if they engage in balanced exposure, the perception may still be biased, as one may counter-argue with uncongenial information, only to reinforce their original beliefs.

The contribution of this research is not limited to the communication discipline. It can also inform political science, political psychology, journalism and public relations. Political scientists can make use of the findings to change voters' information exposure patterns and potentially change people's political opinions and behaviors. Political psychologists can take advantage of the findings to help in their understanding why people prefer attitude-consistent information to counter-attitudinal information and why people judge the former to be higher in credibility than the latter. If the results of the study show which motivations are most useful for changing people's selective exposure and selective perception patterns, then journalists and public relations professionals could write more reports or press releases encouraging those motivations.

The findings are not only important in an academic sense but also in a pragmatic sense. If we can understand what factors can change selective exposure and selective perception, we can reduce these biases and make people more tolerant of those who hold different opinions and help the society progress accordingly.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

Communication scholars have observed long ago that people tend to selectively expose themselves to like-minded information, which was called selective exposure. If people cannot avoid exposing themselves to uncongenial information, they can selectively perceive the information to make it more consistent with their original belief, which is called selective perception (Jacobson, 2010). This study focused on understanding the mechanisms of these two phenomena and attempted to uncover the relationship between the two in the political environment.

Selective Exposure

Though the idea of selective exposure appeared as early as the 1940s (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), it was first systematically studied by Festinger (1957) resulting in the cognitive dissonance theory. The cognitive dissonance theory predicted that after people have made a decision, such as deciding to register as a certain political party's member, they will selectively expose themselves to information that reflects their political beliefs and avoid information that conflicts with their political beliefs to reduce cognitive dissonance. The bias related to selective exposure has been called a congeniality bias (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998, 2005) or confirmation bias (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001). In this study, the term confirmation bias is used.

The definition of selective exposure is controversial. Festinger (1957) defined

selective exposure as seeking attitude-consistent information and avoiding counter-attitudinal information. This definition was challenged by Stroud (in press), who argues that if we define selective exposure as solely seeking attitude-consistent information and avoiding all counter-attitudinal information, then selective exposure cannot exist in reality, as it is hard to avoid all counter-attitudinal information. For instance, even partisan media report views from their opponent's side, though the motivation of such reports could be to inoculate viewers and provide them with counter-arguments (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). What is more, people may be motivated to seek out opponent's views to laugh at them, to counter-argue with them or to gain an appreciation for the other's viewpoint (Stroud, in press). This argument is supported by the literature as many studies have found that though people exposed themselves to like-minded political information more than uncongenial political information, they do not selectively avoid all political information that is not consistent with their political beliefs (Garrett, 2009; Garrett, Carnahan & Lynch, 2011). Stroud (2008) analyzed data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey and also found that though partisans preferred media that was consistent with their political views, there were still a proportion of partisans (26% liberal Democrats and 43% conservative Republicans) who used at least one counter-attitudinal political media (Stroud, 2008). Thus Stroud (in press) defined selective exposure as a preference for attitude-consistent information over counter-attitudinal information. In fact, most research has operationalized selective exposure this way (for a review, see Frey, 1986).

Even when one defines selective exposure as preferring attitude-consistent information to counter-attitudinal information, the literature is still mixed. People have been found to show a preference for supportive over unsupportive evidence (Freedman & Sears, 1963), pay equal attention to both (Mills & Ross, 1964), and prefer non-supportive evidence (Brodbeck, 1956).

An early critique of selective exposure came from Sears and Freedman's review, which pointed out that the evidence of selective exposure might only reflect *de facto* selective exposure, that is, the evidence only showed a correlation between audiences' viewpoints and that of the communicator, yet no causal relationship have been established (Sears & Freedman, 1967). They also pointed out the measurement problems of previous studies, that is, most findings were based on self-reports of attitudes and media exposure based on one interview. Accordingly, previous studies did not establish the causal relationship between political attitude and media selection. The correlation between political attitude and media selection could be caused by a common third variable, such as education, church attendance, etc. Sears and Freedman (1967) concluded that the literature on selective exposure was mixed and that most selective exposure studies have only found correlational, rather causal evidence of selective exposure.

Later studies overcame some of the methodological problems Sears and Freedman (1967) pointed out and follow-up reviews showed that selective exposure indeed exists, but only under certain circumstances (Frey, 1986; Hart et al. 2009). A meta-analysis showed that selective exposure effects are stronger for political topics

than for other topics (Hart et al. 2009), which suggests that political context is a good area to study selective exposure.

Early studies of political selective exposure mostly used self-reports to measure media exposure. Though most studies found voters selectively attend to attitude-consistent information (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Stroud, 2008; Ziemke, 1980), some studies could not find evidence for selective exposure (Chaffee & McLeod, 1973; Chaffee & Miyo, 1983).

Other studies overcame the self-report biases of surveys and measured selective exposure by observation. Studies that asked people to choose from pamphlets or newspapers found a preference for one's preferred candidate (Atkin, 1971; Freedman & Sears, 1963; Rhine, 1967). More recent studies have used computers to track selective exposure in the election context (Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, & Walker, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). Iyengar et al. (2008) sent a CD with information on political candidates to voters before the 2000 American presidential election and found selective exposure occurred only among conservative partisans but not among liberal partisans. Research by Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman (2012) found that conservative/Republican leaning voters exhibited selective exposure in the 2008 election, while liberal/Democrats did not. Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman (2012) argued that information utility could explain the inconsistent findings. They proposed that because before the 2000 election, the Republican Party was a potential winner, it was more useful for both conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats to seek information about the potential winner. Whereas before the 2008 election, the

Democratic Party led the poll, thus, it was more useful to seek information about the Democratic Party. This explanation can be challenged because whether the Democratic Party was likely to lose in the 2000 presidential election is open to debate. The Democratic candidate, Al Gore actually won the popular vote in the 2000 election (Pew, 2012a), which showed the election was in fact a close one. Besides this weakness, this explanation was based on subjective arguments, rather than empirical evidence.

The discrepant findings point to the necessity of understanding the mechanisms behind the selective exposure phenomenon. Below I shall review theories that offered explanations of the psychological underpinnings of selective exposure and then compare their strength and weakness, and finally propose my own model based on these theories.

The Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The cognitive dissonance theory was the first theory that attempted to systematically explain the selective exposure phenomenon. Festinger (1957) argued that people strive to remain consistent within themselves. Thus when people hold inconsistent cognitions, they are motivated to reduce this uncomfortable state of cognitive dissonance (Brehm & Cohen, 1962). An individual could reduce dissonance by one or several of the following ways: adding consonant cognitions to the cognition system by selectively exposing to supportive information and avoiding unsupportive information; decreasing the importance of the elements involved in the dissonant relationship; or changing one of the dissonant elements—attitude, opinion, or

behavior (Brehm & Cohen, 1962). According to the theory, selective exposure is one of the methods to reduce cognitive dissonance, but the theory did not predict that cognitive dissonance will inevitably lead to selective exposure.

In addition to reducing existing dissonance, Festinger (1957) predicted that a person will try to avoid anticipated dissonance and selective exposure is the way to avoid this anticipated dissonance. Because cognitions about negative aspects of the chosen object are inconsistent with having chosen it and cognitions about the positive aspects of the non-chosen alternative are incompatible with having given it up, to avoid dissonance, people will seek more attitude-consistent information and avoid counter-attitudinal information (Brehm & Cohen, 1962). Part of this prediction has been disproved by studies that found though people prefer attitude-consistent political information to counter-attitudinal information, they do not avoid counter-attitudinal information altogether (Garrett, 2009; Garrett, Carnahan & Lynch, 2011; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). In face of the evidence that people do not avoid counter-attitudinal information, Festinger (1964) revised the cognitive dissonance theory and added that a series of moderators including information utility, confidence, and familiarity with the information, etc., could lead to preference of counter-attitudinal information. Adding these moderators, however, did not make the cognitive dissonance theory systematic or parsimonious in explaining when people would prefer like-minded information, and when people would prefer counter-attitudinal information.

As the cognitive dissonance theory has limitations in explaining the selective exposure phenomenon, other theories and theoretical perspectives have been

proposed to explain it.

The Cognitive Miser Perspective

The Cognitive Miser Perspective provides another explanation for selective exposure. The assumption is that people want to minimize their cognitive effort when possible. Elaboration likelihood model suggests that when people have both the motivation and the ability to process information, they will use central processing; if they lack motivation and ability to process information, they will rely on heuristics to save cognitive effort (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Attitude-consistent information is considered to be easier to process than counter-attitudinal information, and accordingly, people have more ability and motivation to process the former than the latter. This perspective proposes that lack of motivation is one of the reasons why people engage in selective exposure. If people have higher motivation to process the more difficult counter-attitudinal information, then those who are highly motivated should be less biased. Contrary to this hypothesis, research has found the opposite results. It has been found that highly motivated people are actually more prone to biases (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Stroud, 2011). To sum up, though the Cognitive Miser Perspective explanation can explain one scenario why people who have low motivation and ability to process information would seek out attitude-consistent information, it cannot explain why those high motivation and ability are still likely to be biased. It also cannot explain why people do not avoid counter-attitudinal information. We need other theories in order to have a more complete explanation on selective exposure.

The Perceptions of Information Quality Perspective

When asked why they select certain information and neglect others, people tend to report that their selection is based on information quality. People tend to judge information that is consistent with their predisposition as higher in quality than information that is inconsistent with their predisposition (Miller, McHoskey, Bane, & Dowd, 1993; Munro & Ditto, 1997). It is predicted that people tend to select like-minded information because they judge them as higher in quality. Once again, though this explanation can explain selective exposure to like-minded information, it cannot explain why people do not avoid counter-attitudinal information.

The Theory of Motivated Reasoning

The theory of motivated reasoning posits that two motivations, directional motivation and accuracy motivation, influence reasoning differently (Kunda, 1990).¹ Directional motivation is the motivation to come to a conclusion that one wants to believe. Accuracy motivation is the motivation to find a correct conclusion.

Defense motivation is predicted to increase selective exposure (Beauvois & Joule, 1996; Festinger, 1964). Revisions of the cognitive dissonance theory stated that people are strongly motivated to hold attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with

¹ Kunda (1999) added closure goals as a third motivation that influences information seeking and judgment, which comes from the theory of lay epistemology. A need for closure is the need to get an unambiguous answer or solution as quickly as possible (Kruglanski, 2004). A need to avoid closure refers to the situation where unambiguous knowledge is avoided and judgmental noncommitment is valued. This closure motivation can be explained by other motivations. For instance, the need for non-specific closure could come from lack of motivation to process information (e.g., time pressure, or finding the decision-task tedious). Therefore, it can be considered as similar to the “cognitive miser” perspective. The other closures can be explained by outcome relevance and defense motivations. For instance, the need for specific closure could be motivated by ego-defense (Kruglanski, 1989), and the need to avoid closure can originate from accuracy goals, as scholars argued that accountability, which is related to outcome relevance motivation, leads to need to avoid closure (Tetlock, 1985). For these reasons, the need for closure motivation was not included in the discussion.

their self-concept (Aronson, 1969; Steele, 1988; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Kunda (1990) argued that although people with directional motivation want to come to a conclusion that they want to believe, they also need to make a rational argument for this conclusion. In doing so, they conduct a number of biased cognitive processes that include selective exposure. In selective exposure studies, defense motivation has been induced by situational instructions (Frey, 1986), by activating subjects' enduring values or by selecting subjects based on their existing value involvement (Johnson & Eagly, 1990). Situational instructions include asking subjects to report an attitude or a belief, engage in a behavior, or read challenging (vs. supporting) information prior to information selection (Frey, 1986). Activating subjects' enduring values can be done by reminding subjects of their enduring values before their information selection. Selecting subjects based on their existing value involvement is the easiest, as it does not need experimental manipulations.

In politics, the strength of partisanship is one of the most common ways of measuring political commitment. Party identification is related to ego-involvement (Stroud, 2011). According to the social judgment theory, highly ego-involved partisans should show more assimilation and contrast effects when making political judgments than those who are not highly ego-involved. Consistent with the social judgment theory, studies have found that partisans exhibit an overall preference for information that aligned with their partisanship (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012) and biased to their party's advantage in their perceptions of specific political figures and events (Bartels, 2002). These findings show that the strength of

partisanship can be used as an indicator of defense motivation in politics.

Accuracy motivation is predicted to lead to balanced exposure, reducing confirmation bias (Hart et al., 2009). Accuracy motivation has often been operationalized as outcome-relevant involvement, which refers to “attitudes, beliefs, and decisions linked to an important outcome” (Hart et al., 2009, p. 558). Outcome relevance motivation can be manipulated by telling subjects that correct judgments will have a real impact on their own lives (e.g., they will receive monetary benefits for making the correct judgment) (Frey, 1982; Jonas & Frey, 2003). It can also be activated by making recipients feel that they will be accountable for the accuracy of their judgments even when the topics are low in personal relevance, by inducing pressures to justify one’s judgments to others or informing subjects that their judgments will be made public (Kunda, 1999; Tetlock, 1983b). It can also be activated by making recipients feel accountable to others because the issue is of great importance, such as making judicial judgments or noting that their judgments will have a real impact on other people’s lives. Subjects who were informed that they will be judged by accuracy spent equal amounts of time on counter-attitudinal information and attitude-supporting information (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). By outcome relevance, Hart et al. (2009) was referring to non-directional outcome relevance rather than directional outcome relevance. Directional outcome relevance is the same as defense motivation and often leads to more confirmation bias. For instance, Lundgren and Prislin (1998) presented their experiment as a survey of students’ opinions about a proposed 30 percent tuition increase the next fall that would help the board of

regents to decide about the issue. Tuition increase is of great outcome relevance to students, yet because students only want to make a judgment that is to their own advantage, the outcome relevance is directional. It is not surprising that their findings showed that people with high “outcome relevance” spent more time on attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information and this exposure only reinforced their original attitude.

In addition to the two variables mentioned in the theory of motivated reasoning, Hart et al. (2009) proposed another important variable that is related to selective exposure: information utility. They defined it as “the extent to which information can be used to facilitate good decisions” (p. 558). “Good decisions” may not necessarily be the “accurate decisions” as the goal is to collect information that is useful for future decisions. When congenial information is useful (e.g., writing a supporting essay), people should show more confirmation bias. Whereas when uncongenial information is as useful as congenial information (e.g., expecting to participate in a debate), less confirmation bias is expected (Canon, 1964; Freedman, 1965). Information utility should direct people to choose information that has the highest utility, whether it is congenial or uncongenial to one’s original belief. This is the place where I disagree with Hart et al. (2009)’s argument. Hart et al. (2009) argued that information utility should reduce confirmation bias in general, but studies have shown that people still show confirmation bias when congenial information is useful (Canon, 1964; Freedman, 1965; Hills & Crano, 1973). Therefore, unlike outcome relevance motivation that always reduces confirmation bias, information utility may

or may not reduce confirmation bias depending on the utility of congenial and uncongenial information. Accordingly, information utility is another motivation different from accuracy motivation.

The three motivations are additive and have been compared about their relative strength in affecting selective exposure. When accuracy motivation and defense motivation are combined, defense motivation has been found to override accuracy motivation in determining information selection and attitude change (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). Lundgren and Prislin (1998)'s experiments revealed that the group that held accuracy motivation showed no preference for either attitude-consistent information or counter-attitudinal information. The group that held defense motivation preferred attitude-consistent information to counter-attitudinal information. The group that was induced to hold a combination of accuracy motivation and defense motivation showed similar information seeking patterns as the defense motivation only group, but showed different selection patterns from the accuracy motivation only group. Like the defense motivation group, they spent significantly more time reading attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information.

When information utility motivation and defense motivation are combined, it has been found that information utility motivation overrides defense motivation in predicting selective exposure (Canon, 1964; Freedman, 1965; Hills & Crano, 1973). Hills and Crano (1973) asked subjects to view information on abortion in order to prepare themselves to make either a pro-abortion or an anti-abortion speech. They found utility motivation overrode defense motivation in predicting selective exposure

to pro-abortion and anti-abortion information. That is, no matter what participants' prior attitude, they selected more information that was the most useful to their immediate goals. When counter-attitudinal information had greater utility than attitude-consistent information, participants showed a preference for the useful information over the consonant information. When attitude-consistent information had greater utility than counter-attitudinal information, participants also showed a preference for the useful consonant information over the not useful dissonant information.

Previous literature did not combine accuracy motivation with information utility. Based on the current literature that found information utility motivation overrode defense motivation in predicting selective exposure (Canon, 1964; Freedman, 1965; Hills & Crano, 1973) and defense motivation overrode accuracy motivation in determining information selection and attitude change (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998), I hypothesize that information utility can override accuracy motivation. As this hypothesis has not been tested, the current study shall combine all three motivations and examine which one predicts selective exposure the most.

Linking all explanations together

The explanations reviewed above are not mutually exclusive and can be linked together. In Figure 1, I propose a selective exposure model. In this model, motivation is the first step in deciding whether one will engage in selective exposure. If people do not have any motivation to expose themselves to information, they will not get information except through incidental exposure. This scenario is excluded in the

model. When people have low motivation to process information, the cognitive miser perspective suggests that people will minimize their effort in information selection and seek more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information because the former is easier to process than the latter (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

When people are sufficiently motivated, the theory of motivated reasoning comes into play. When people hold defense motivation, the cognitive dissonance theory predicts that they will seek more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information. They will perceive information that is consistent with their attitudes to be higher in credibility than information that is counter-attitudinal (The Perceptions of Information Quality perspective). When accuracy motivation is activated, people tend to conduct balanced information seeking (Thompson, Roman, Moskowitz, Chaiken & Bargh, 1994). When information utility motivation is activated, people tend to seek information that is most useful, whether it is congenial or uncongenial (Hills & Crano, 1973).

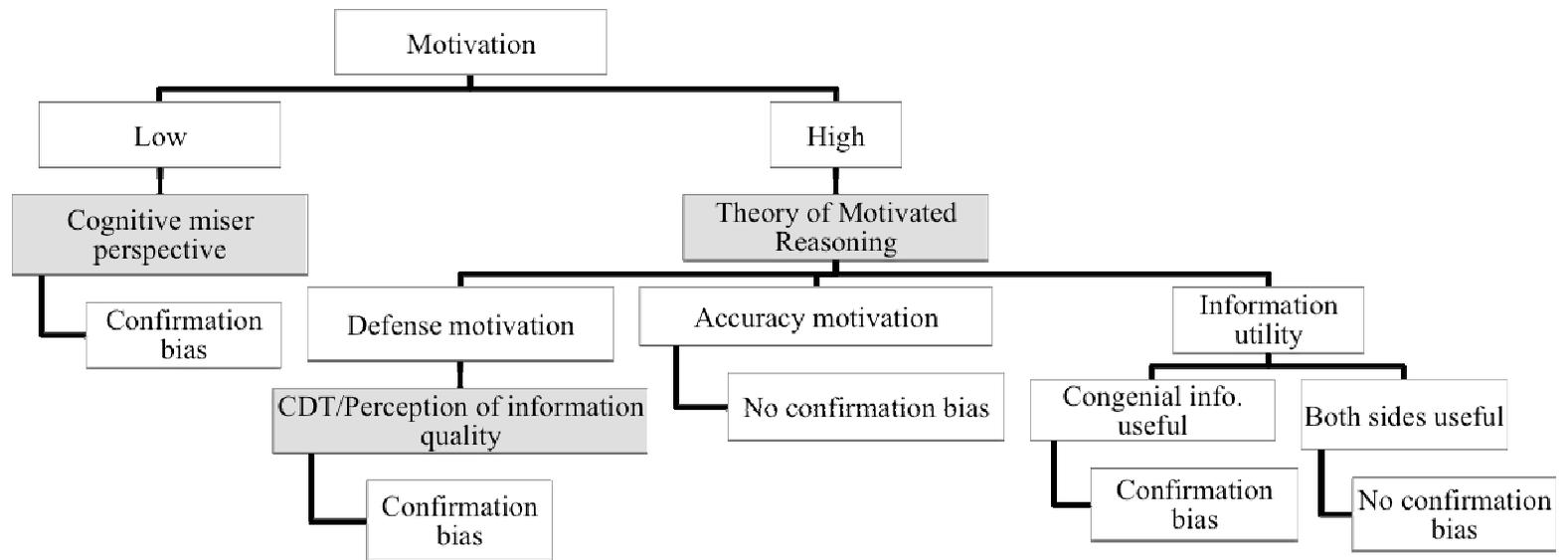


Figure 1. The effect of motivation on selective exposure model (linking four explanations on selective exposure).

Collectively, the cognitive dissonance theory, the cognitive miser perspective, and perceptions of information quality explanation all provide some reasons why people prefer like-minded information. None provides systematic explanations on why people do not avoid uncongenial information. The theory of motivated reasoning provides explanations on both the conditions of people selectively expose themselves to like-minded information and the conditions of people prefer uncongenial information. This study shall apply the theory of motivated reasoning as the basic theoretical framework for selective exposure.

Moderators of Selective Exposure

Many variables have been found to moderate the relationship between cognitive dissonance and selective exposure (Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009). Stroud (in press) divided these moderators into two categories: individual characteristics and environmental characteristics.

Several individual level moderators have been found to strengthen defense motivation and lead to more confirmation bias, such as commitment (Brock & Balloun, 1967; Schwarz, Frey, & Kumpf, 1980; Sweeney & Gruber, 1984), value relevance (Chaiken et al., 1996; Johnson & Eagly, 1989), close-mindedness (Hart et al., 2009), dogmatism (Clarke & James, 1967; Kleck & Wheaton, 1967) and political knowledge/sophistication (Stroud, 2011), while other personal factors have been shown to reduce selective exposure, such as confidence (Albarracín & Mitchell, 2004; Canon, 1964) and the need for cognition (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005).

Environmental characteristics, such as information quality, information quantity,

decision reversibility, information valence and audience also affect selective exposure (Frey, 1986; Hart et al., 2009). Information quality affects selective exposure differently depending on one's motivation. People with defense motivation tend to seek high quality congenial information and avoid high quality uncongenial information, while people with accuracy motivation are predicted to prefer information that is of high quality regardless of its congeniality (Hart et al., 2009). The number of information options also affects selective exposure. Selective exposure is higher when there are more options to choose from than when there are fewer options (Fischer, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2008). Similarly, limiting the amount of information that can be searched increases selective exposure (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt, 2005). The reversibility of decisions also affects selective exposure. People are more likely to seek dissonant information following reversible than irreversible decisions (Frey, 1981; Frey & Rosch, 1984). Finally, the sequence of information has also been found to influence selective exposure. Selective exposure is more pronounced when information is presented sequentially than when it is presented simultaneously (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001).

The valence of message also affects selective exposure. Selective exposure effect is more pronounced when both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal information are positive than when they are both negative (Mills, Aronson, & Robinson, 1959). When both positive and negative information are provided, people exhibit confirmation bias in their selection of positive information about a politician but no confirmation bias has been found for selection of negative information (Donsbach,

1991). Inconsistent with this finding, Meffert, Chung, Joiner, Waks and Garst (2006) found people prefer negative information about their preferred candidate to positive information. Meffert et al. (2006) argued that perhaps this is because negativity bias is stronger and more automatic than confirmation biases are. Though the literature is still mixed on which valence is more likely to lead to selective exposure, one thing is certain: It is important to take valence into consideration when creating selective exposure stimuli.

Besides messages and choice, the presence of an audience may influence selective exposure. It has been found that trying to appear as resolute or trying to maintain a friendly relationship with an attractive group can lead to balanced information seeking (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998; Jonas et al., 2005; Schlenker, 1980, 1985, 2003). When people are in homogeneous groups, they are more likely to seek attitude-consistent information than when they are in heterogeneous groups (Schulz-Hardt, Frey, Lüthgens, & Moscovici, 2000).

The above findings suggest that when developing selective exposure stimuli, we should take considerations of the environmental moderating variables as well as individual level variables. As this study conducted an experiment that randomly assigned participants into different conditions, these variables are considered to be equal in different conditions. To make sure the random assignment was truly random, some of the above variables were measured to ensure that the differences between experimental conditions were indeed due to different manipulations rather than due to these moderating variables.

Selective Perception

As with selective exposure, scholars observed long ago that people tend to make biased evaluations to arrive at a conclusion that is consistent with their preconceived theories or beliefs (Allport, 1954; Bruner, 1957; Chapman & Chapman, 1967; Hamilton, 1979; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Ross & Lepper, 1980; Snyder, 1981). These egocentric biases have been found in self-relevant attribution (Pettigrew, 1979; Ross & Sicoly, 1979), evaluation of one's own characteristics (Taylor, 1991; Tesser, 1988), and evaluation of evidence on ideologically and personally significant issues (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Pomerantz, Chaiken, & Tordesillas, 1995; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Holt, 1985). For instance, Sanitioso, Kunda and Fong (1990) found that people who are motivated to see themselves as extraverted or introverted are more likely to recall past experiences that are consistent with their desired self-view, though this motivated construction of self-image is constrained by prior self-knowledge. Kunda (1987) found that participants developed self-serving theories about the role of mother's working condition on her children's marital success, that is, those who were raised by working mothers believed working mothers will benefit their children more than housewife mothers and those who were raised by stay-home mothers believed housewife mothers will benefit their children more than working mothers. Dunning, Leuenberger, and Sherman (1995) found this self-serving selective perception tendency was stronger for participants who had experienced failure than those who had not experienced failure.

Selective perception is also prevalent in politics. Studies have found that voters

tend to selectively perceive their preferred candidates' position in a way to make it consistent with their own (Kinder, 1978; Sherrod, 1971-1972). They also selectively perceive their preferred candidates to be better than their opponents by predicting their preferred candidates have a higher chance of winning the election (Babad, 1997). Koziellecki (1966) found people tend to judge decision-consistent information as more credible and reliable than decision-inconsistent information.

In terms of selective perception of media message, researchers have documented a tendency for people who are highly involved in an issue to rate neutral reports of that issue as biased against their own point of view. This phenomenon is called hostile media effect (Gunther, Christen, Libhart & Chia, 2001). For instance, Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985) found students who were pro-Arab and pro-Israeli interpreted the same stories as biased against their own group. Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken (1994) found partisans on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict tend to judge news coverage as biased against their own side. On the abortion issue, however, they found that the hostile media effect is less consistent for partisans on both sides of the issue. Most studies have found that involvement, which is usually operationalized as party identification or group identification, is the strongest predictor of the hostile media effect (Gunther, 1992; Gunther et al., 2001).

Gunther et al. (2001) proposed that given that most news articles have a degree of slant, we should test selective perception of news articles with an apparent slant instead of neutral articles. Articles with an apparent slant will inevitably be judged as biased. The difference is the direction and the degree of biases. They defined this as

“relative hostile media perception,” that is, two groups of partisans give the same media coverage significantly different evaluations, one in an unfavorable direction relative to the other. Using news articles with slant, Gunther et al. (2001) found that when proponents of one side of an animal rights issue read unfavorable reports on that issue, they judged those reports as more biased than did opponents of the issue. Following Gunther et al. (2001)’s suggestion, this study will also use articles with an apparent slant to test selective perception.

Selective perception can be explained by the social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). The social judgment theory suggests that individuals tend to use their own positions as anchors when making judgments. When the message’s position is perceived to fall within their acceptance level, an assimilation effect is hypothesized to occur. That is, the message’s position is judged as being closer to the person’s own position than it actually is. By contrast, when the message’s position is perceived to fall within the latitude of rejection, contrast effects are hypothesized to happen. That is, recipients judge the message’s position as more discrepant from their own position than it actually is. This assimilation-contrast effect is greater when individuals have higher levels of ego-involvement. Study by Lord, Ross and Lepper (1979) found evidence of contrast effects in media evaluation. They asked subjects who support capital punishment and those who oppose capital punishment to evaluate two studies, one confirming their beliefs and one disconfirming their beliefs. Results showed that both proponents and opponents of capital punishment rated the study that confirmed their own beliefs to be more convincing and probative. Exposure to counter-

attitudinal information also produced a “rebound effect,” that is, subjects reported more polarized attitude after exposure to unsupportive results. Taber and Lodge (2006)’s study found similar results with the gun control issue and affirmative action issue.

The social judgment theory can explain why people engage in selective perception. It cannot explain under what conditions people are more likely to engage in selective perception and under what conditions they are more likely to engage in objective processing. The theory of motivated reasoning fills this gap. The theory of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1999) posits that motivation may affect which memories, beliefs, inferential rules as well as the amount of effort people invest in searching relevant beliefs and rules in their belief construction. Without motivation, perceivers may only rely on the most accessible cues and “freeze” on the decision earlier (Chaiken et al., 1989; Tetlock, 1992). When people are sufficiently motivated, depending on which motivation they hold, they may or may not conduct selective perception. On one hand, when people are motivated by accuracy, they are more likely to process systematically all available information. Accordingly, they are more likely to extract multiple interpretations from the messages, generate more hypotheses, and evaluate those hypotheses more carefully, before making a final interpretation (Chaiken et al., 1989; Kruglanski, 1990; Taylor & Fiske, 1978; Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989). Researchers have tried to reduce selective perception by giving people accuracy instructions. Lord, Lepper and Preston (1984)’s study showed that induction of the consider-the-opposite strategy, the strategy that asks people to

consider alternative possibilities that are at odds with their beliefs at the moment, had greater corrective effect than the instructions to be as fair and unbiased as possible. In several studies, monetary incentives or admonitions to be accurate failed to eliminate perception bias (Babad, 1997; Fischhoff, 1977). Kunda (1999) argued that accuracy motivation might not lead to accurate judgment when people do not possess a superior reasoning strategy or when they could not recognize its relevance and superiority. On the other hand, when people are motivated to defend their attitudes or beliefs, they are likely to engage in biased perception, which is the selective perception phenomenon mentioned above (Chaiken, Wood, & Eagly, 1996; Kunda, 1990; Liberman & Chaiken, 1992). This study shall apply the theory of motivated reasoning and test the effect of motivation on relative hostile media perception.

The Relationship between Selective Exposure and Selective Perception

Previous literature did not touch much on the relationship between selective exposure and selective perception. For instance, does selective exposure lead to selective perception, or is selective perception self-generated? Frey (1986) argued that selective perception is generated from within, but he did not provide any empirical evidence for this argument. Based on the theory of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1999) and Hart et al. (2009)'s development, I argue that the relationship between selective exposure and selective perception may depend on motivations. If people are motivated by the goal to defend their opinions, they will prefer attitude-consistent information to counter-attitudinal information. They will perceive information that is consistent with their attitudes to be higher in credibility. If people are motivated by

accuracy goals, they are likely to conduct balanced information searching. Exposure to counter-attitudinal information may change their existing attitudes. Finally, if people are motivated by information utility goals, they may or may not conduct balanced information searching depending on which side of information is more useful. If attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information, such as preparing to write an article supporting their original belief, people will expose themselves to more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information. This biased exposure may reinforce their original attitudes. If counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information, such as preparing to debate about the issue, then they are equally likely to seek out attitude-consistent information and counter-attitudinal information. In this case, exposure to counter-attitudinal information serves to reinforce their existing attitudes.

In terms of selective exposure, I hypothesize that information utility overrides defense motivation, which overrides accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. In terms of selective perception, all participants are hypothesized to conduct selective perception. Motivations are predicted to influence the relative strength of selective exposure. In terms of selective perception, defense motivation overrides accuracy motivation in predicting selective perception. Information utility is predicted to have no effect on selective perception. For strong partisans, accuracy motivation and information motivation will not have impact on selective perception. Selective perception will not be different for experimental groups and the control group. For those who are not strong partisans, their selective perception may be

changed by different motivations. Selective perception in experimental groups may be different from that in the control groups. When the three motivations are crossed with one another, I make the following predictions (See Figure 2 and 3):

For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (Condition A), defense motivation will override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure and selective perception, it is hypothesized that:

H1: For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (Condition A), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles, (b) and spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition B), information utility motivation is hypothesized to add to defense motivation in predicting selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

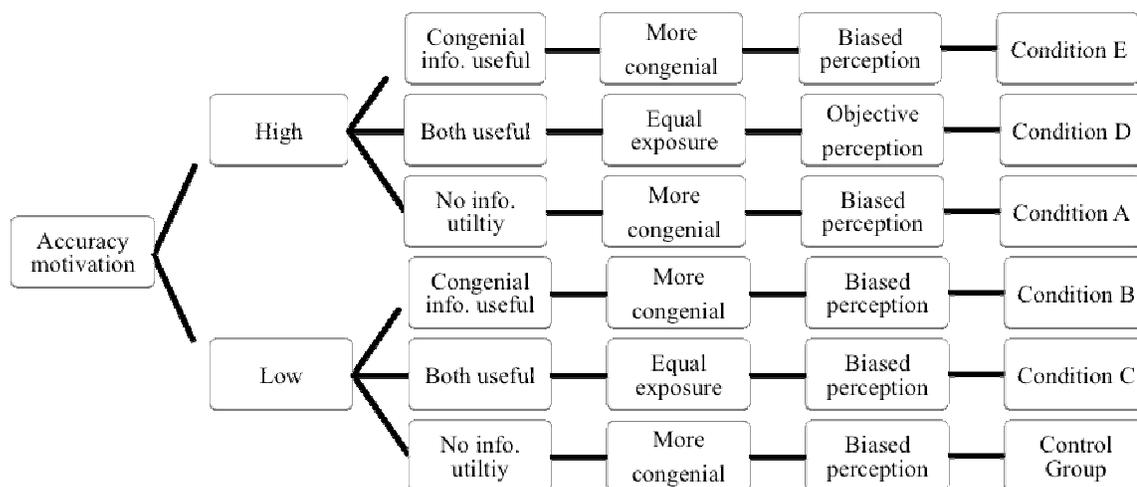


Figure 2. The effect of motivations on selective exposure and perception for strong partisans.

H2: For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition B), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), information utility will override defense motivation in predicting selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H3: For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom

counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), (a) they will seek out equal number of attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spent equal amount of time on the two; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), accuracy motivation and information utility motivation will override defense motivation in predicting selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H4: For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), (a) they will seek out equal number of attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spent equal amount of time on the two; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal

information (Condition E), information utility motivation and defense motivation will override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H5: For strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition E), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles, and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group), defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective exposure and selective perception.

H6: For strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles.

For those who were not strong partisans that have high accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (Condition A), accuracy motivation was hypothesized to dominate in predicting selective exposure and selective perception.

H7: For those who were not strong partisans who have high accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (Condition A), (a) they will seek out equal number of attitude-consistent articles and (b) counter-attitudinal articles and spent equal amount of time on the two; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will be lower than the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

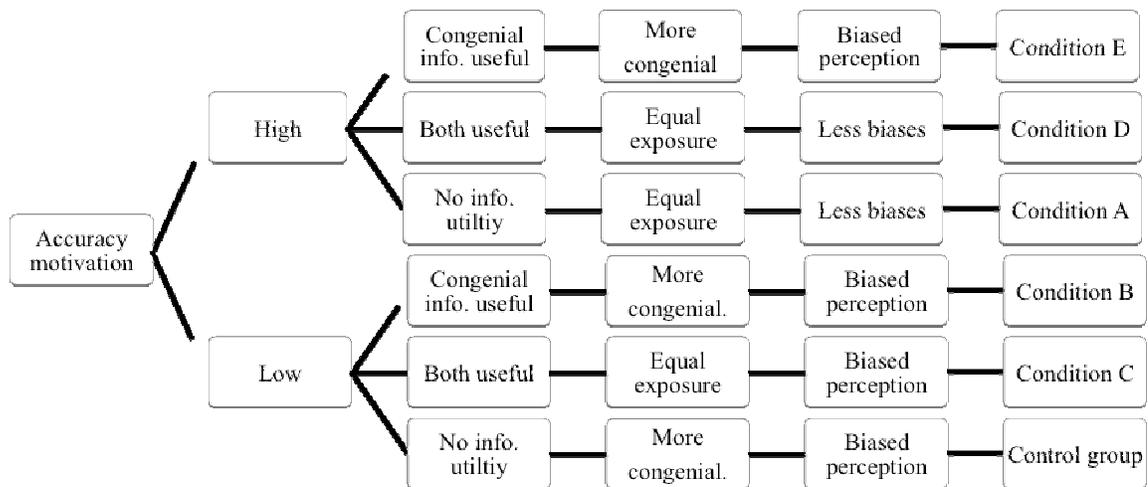


Figure 3. The effect of motivations on selective exposure and perception for those who were not strong partisans.

For those who are not strong partisans that have low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information was more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition B), information utility motivation will dominate in predicting

selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H8: For those who are not strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition B), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For those who are not strong partisans that have low accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), information utility motivation will dominate in predicting selective exposure; defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H9: For those who are not strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), (a) they will seek out equal number of attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend equal amount of time on the two; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will not be different from the selective perception of those who have low accuracy

motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For those who are not strong partisans that have high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), information utility motivation will add to accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure; accuracy motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H10: For those who were not strong partisans that have high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), (a) they will seek out equal number of attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend equal amount of time on the two; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will be lower than the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For those who were not strong partisans that have high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition E), information utility motivation will override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure; accuracy motivation will dominate in predicting selective perception:

H11: For those who were not strong partisans that have high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition E), (a) they will seek out more

attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles; (d) their selective perception will be lower than the selective perception of those who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group).

For those who were not strong partisans that have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group), the low defense motivation will dominate in predicting selective exposure and selective perception:

H12: For those who were not strong partisans who have low accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation (the control group), (a) they will seek out more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and (b) spend more time on the former than the latter; (c) their evaluations of attitude-consistent articles will be higher than counter-attitudinal articles.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Overview

An online experiment was conducted to test the effect of motivations on selective exposure and selective perception. The experiment had three steps. Participants were asked to read and evaluate partisan articles on a political forum website and answer a questionnaire immediately before and after the website experience. Before viewing the website, they were randomly assigned different instructions to manipulate different motivations. To test whether the articles on the same issue used in the experiment were different in position but equal in interest, writing quality and argument strength, a pilot test was conducted before the main study took place.

Respondents

Participants were found via referrals from students from several Communication classes at a large Western university in exchange of class extra credit. In order to draw a sample that closely matched that of the U.S. population, students were asked to refer American citizens who were 18 years old or older to participate in the study.

For the pilot study, seventy-eight U.S. adults participated. Of whom, forty-five were females (57.7%) and thirty-three were males (42.3%), fifty-seven were White (73.1%), seventeen were Asians (21.8%), one was African American (1.3%), and one was a mixed race (1.3%). The average age was 35.67 years old ($SD = 17.48$). The

average of year of education was 15.58 years ($SD = 2.30$). Among the seventy-eight participants, thirty-two participants considered themselves Democrats or leaned toward the Democratic Party (41%), and forty-six participants self-identified as Republicans or leaned toward the Republican Party (59%).

For the main study, eight hundreds and ninety-nine adults were recruited. Of those participants, eighty-six finished step 1 but did not finish step 2 and step 3 of the study, fifty-eight finished step 1 and step 2 but did not finish step 3 of the study, and ten were not U.S. residents. In addition, 8 participants who did not click on any article in step 2 were excluded from the analysis because they did not seem to have engaged in browsing the articles. These participants were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in seven hundreds and thirty-seven eligible participants. Of these seven hundreds and thirty-seven participants, three hundreds and seventy-seven (51.1%) were female, three hundreds and sixty (48.8%) were male, one was neuter (0.1%). The average age was 41.08 ($SD = 18.08$) years old.

Study Design

An online experiment was conducted because computers can unobtrusively document selective exposure rather than relying on retrospective self-reports of media exposure that may be biased (Sears & Freedman, 1967). With the facilitation of the computer, it is less likely that subjects are able to guess the purpose of the study.

The design was a $2 \times 3 \times 2$ factorial experiment. The primary independent variables were accuracy motivation (high versus low), information utility (congenial information more useful than uncongenial information motivation *vs.* both sides equally useful motivation *vs.* no information utility motivation) and defense motivation (high/strong partisan *vs.* low/those who were not strong partisan). The dependent variables were selective exposure and selective perception.

Motivations can either be temporarily activated by situational variables (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987; Tetlock, 1983a, 1983b; Webster, 1993) or measured as chronic motives that can be characterized as individual differences in personality (e.g., Burger & Cooper, 1979; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986; Thompson et al., 1994; Webster, 1993). In this study, defense motivation was manipulated by selecting subjects based on their existing value involvement: partisanship (Johnson & Eagly, 1990). As partisanship is deeply rooted in one's value system and is not easily manipulated, it was treated as a chronic motivation. Strong partisans were considered to have high defense motivation when reading partisan articles and those who were not strong partisans were considered to have low defense motivation when reading partisan

articles.

Accuracy motivation was manipulated by situational factors, as previous research found participants' self-report of holding accuracy motivation was biased (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998). Accuracy motivation was activated by giving (versus not giving) money to participants who make the most accurate judgments. High accuracy motivation was induced by telling the participants that they will receive \$20 gift card for making accurate judgments. Those who did not receive such instructions were considered to have lower accuracy motivation.

Information utility motivation was manipulated by situational factors. Information utility has three levels: congenial information more useful than uncongenial information motivation, both-sides information equally useful motivation, and no information utility motivation. The three different motivations were manipulated by giving participants different instructions about writing an article about Obama's second-term presidency. Congenial information more useful than uncongenial information motivation was manipulated by telling participants that they were going to write an article consistent with their political attitudes. Both-sides information equally useful motivation was manipulated by informing the participants that they would be asked to write an article debating about whether Obama's second-term presidency was going to be successful. Finally, the no-information-utility group did not receive instructions on writing articles.

The three motivations were crossed with each other to create six versions of instructions. As congenial information more useful than uncongenial information

motivation differed by party identification, two versions were created for the two “congenial information more useful than uncongenial information” motivation manipulations. This results in eight different versions of instructions representing six different experimental conditions.

Experimental Procedure

The experiment consisted of three steps. Participants were asked to finish all three steps in one sitting. Step 1 was a questionnaire that asked participants about their partisanship, ideology, and social demographic characteristics (see Appendix A).

Before going to step 2, they were given the different versions of instructions to step 2 and step 3. All instructions told the participants that they were asked to evaluate a test version of an online political forum that was not yet available on the Internet, followed by different versions of the instructions. To make sure they actually read the instructions, after they have done reading the instructions, a multiple-choice question that asked them which of the following instructions were mentioned in the last page would pop up. They were provided four choices to choose from. After submitting their answer, they were provided with the correct answer. This question served to remind participants what the instructions were.

After the instruction question, participants were automatically directed to step 2. Step 2 was an online political forum that was designed for this study by a professional website development company to look like a real online political forum. Participants could click on any article that interested them and could take as much time as possible on the article they clicked. When they clicked on the “back to the home

page” button, a questionnaire would pop up and ask four questions on the credibility of the article. After answering the article questionnaire and clicking submit, they were directed back to the home page. This process repeated for each article. The time they spent on each article was recorded.

After six minutes² of browsing the website, a pop up window appeared on the whole screen with the sentence “Thank you for your feedback on the website, please proceed to step 3.” There was a “step 3” button below this sentence. Once the participant clicked on the “step 3” button, they were directed to step 3, the post-test questionnaire. The post-test questionnaire included questions about the participants’ opinions about the four political issues mentioned in the articles on the website as well as questions assessing the respondents’ levels of the need for cognition and close-mindedness. The last page showed the debriefing information (See Appendix B).

Pilot Test

In order to test whether the articles in the main test had an unambiguous stance while being equally interesting, possessing equal argument strength, and being equally well written, a pilot test was conducted. In the pilot test, step 1 and step 3 were the same as the main test. The only difference was step 2. The step 2 instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added. Right now, we are only concerned with your opinion of the articles in this website. Please read each article carefully, leave comments

² In the pilot test, the average time spent on an article was about six minutes. To ensure that participants can finish reading at least one article, the time limit for viewing the website was set for six minutes in the main study.

and evaluate ALL the articles in the pop up questionnaire.

After 20 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments in step 3. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

For step 2 of the pilot test, participants were asked to read all of the eight articles on the website and answer four questions for each article in the pop up questionnaire after reading each article. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the level of interest in the article they just read on a 7-point scale (*not at all interesting* = -3, *extremely interesting* = 3), the level of writing skill on a 7-point scale (*not at all well-written* = -3, *extremely well-written* = 3), and the strength of arguments on a 7-point scale (*not at all strong arguments* = -3, *extremely strong arguments* = 3). Participants were shown a bar that had the numbers -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, and 3. The two extreme labels were shown at the end of each bar. Finally, they were asked to write what the stance of the article they just read was. Correct answers were coded as 1 and incorrect answers were coded as 0. For pilot test step 2, the website lasted for 20 minutes.

Paired *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether the stances of the two articles on the same topic were significantly different and whether the two articles on the same topic were equally interesting, equally well-written, and equal in argument strength. Results showed that there were no significant differences between the two articles for each issue in terms of the level of interest, argument strength and writing skills (Table 1). The two articles' stances on the same issues were equally likely to be

correctly judged.

Motivation Manipulations

The different instructions before the website browsing served as motivation manipulations in this study. Different conditions received different instructions (or no instruction in the control condition).

There were two steps in the assignment of conditions. To ensure that there were equal numbers of strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans in each condition, strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans were first identified. In the second step, strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions separately (See Table 2).

Table 1

Pilot Test Results on Perceptions of Issue Stands, Level of Interest, Strength of Arguments and Level of Writing Quality

Issue News Lead Heading	Perceived Issue Stands			Interest			Strong argument			Well-written		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	<i>M</i> (-3 to 3)	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	<i>M</i> (-3 to 3)	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	<i>M</i> (-3 to 3)	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test
Abortion ^b			0.00 (39) ^a			0.33 (40)			0.97 (40)			-0.08 (40)
Abortion1	0.98	0.16		1.27	1.60		1.02	1.78		1.22	1.61	
Abortion2	0.98	0.16		1.39	1.96		1.44	2.06		1.20	2.04	
Gun Control			-0.81 (29)			-0.56 (33)			-0.89 (33)			-1.76 (33)
Gun1	0.87	0.35		1.71	1.38		1.47	1.44		1.53	1.26	
Gun2	0.93	0.25		1.88	1.41		1.82	1.78		2.00	1.26	
Obamacare			-1.00 (31)			0.89 (32)			0.22 (32)			1.49 (32)
Obamacare1	0.97	0.18		1.76	1.37		1.39	1.52		1.94	1.17	
Obamacare2	1.00	0.00		1.42	1.60		1.30	1.69		1.45	1.50	
Tax			0.00 (30)			-0.29 (33)			-1.81 (33)			-1.51 (33)
Tax1	0.90	0.30		1.53	1.80		1.00	1.83		1.35	1.92	
Tax2	0.90	0.30		1.62	1.30		1.74	1.76		1.88	1.17	

Note. a. The numbers of participants are reported in the parentheses.

b. Abortion1=pro-choice, abortion 2=pro-life, Gun1= gun control, Gun2=anti-gun control, Obamacare1=pro-Obamacare, Obamacare2=anti-Obamacare, Tax1=increase tax for the rich, Tax2=equal tax for the rich

Table 2

Condition Divisions Based on Motivation

	Accuracy motivation High		Accuracy motivation Low	
Congenial info. useful	Strong partisan (E)	Those who are not strong partisans (E)	Strong partisan (B)	Those who are not strong partisans (B)
Both useful	Strong partisan (D)	Those who are not strong partisans (D)	Strong partisan (C)	Those who are not strong partisans (C)
No information utility	Strong partisan (A)	Those who are not strong partisans (A)	Strong partisan (the control group)	Those who are not strong partisans (the control group)

Because for those who had liberal leanings (Democrats and those who leaned toward the Democratic Party) and those who had conservative leanings (Republicans and those who leaned toward the Republican Party), the congenial information more useful than uncongenial information condition was different, and the instructions for the two groups in Condition B and Condition E were different as well. Accordingly, the instructions had eight variations: A, B (conservative), B (liberal), C, D, E (conservative), E (liberal), and the control group (See Table 3).

Different instructions were given to participants based on which condition the participant was assigned. For Condition A (high accuracy motivation and no information utility), the instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added. Right now, we are only concerned with your opinions of the articles in this website. Please spend 6 minutes browsing the

website.

After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you find most interesting, as you normally would.

Participants in Condition B (low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information more useful than counter-attitudinal information) were told that they would be asked to write an article that was consistent with their party identification. Depending on their party identification, they were given different instructions:

Table 3

Condition Division Operationalization

Condition	\$20 Amazon gift card for accurate judgment		No accuracy manipulation	
The positive prospects of Obama's second term presidency ^a /what to worry about Obama's second term presidency _b	Strong partisan (E)	Those who are not strong partisans (E)	Strong partisan (B)	Those who are not strong partisans (B)
Whether Obama's second term presidency will be successful	Strong partisan (D)	Those who are not strong partisans (D)	Strong partisan (C)	Those who are not strong partisans (C)
No information utility	Strong partisan (A)	Those who are not strong partisans (A)	Strong partisan (the control group)	Those who are not strong partisans (the control group)

Note. a. If the participant was a Democrat or leaned toward the Democratic Party.
b. If the participant was a Republican or leaned toward the Republican Party.

Condition B1: If the participant was a Democrat or leaned toward the Democratic Party, the instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 6 minutes browsing the website.

After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.” We will edit it and add it to the forum. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Condition B2: If the participant was a Republican or leaned toward the Republican Party, they were asked to write about things to worry about Obama’s second term presidency. The instructions stated that:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 6 minutes browsing the website. After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you.

In the questionnaire, please write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.” We will edit it and add it to the forum. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Participants in Condition C (those who have low accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information) were told that they would be asked to write an article debating about whether Obama would do a good job for his second term. The instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added.

After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article about “whether Obama’s second term presidency will be successful.” We will edit and add it to the

forum. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Participants in Condition D (high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information) were told that they would be asked to write an article debating whether Obama's second term presidency will be successful and they would receive money reward for making accurate evaluations. The instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added.

After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article debating about "whether Obama's second term presidency will be successful." Please make as accurate evaluations as possible. Please justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Participants in Condition E (high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information) were told that they would be asked to write an article that was consistent with their partisanship and they would receive money reward for making accurate evaluations. Depending on their party identification, they were given different instructions:

Condition E1: If the participant was a Democrat or leaned toward the Democratic Party, the instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added.

Please spend 6 minutes browsing the website. After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.” Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Condition E2: If they were a Republican or leaned closer to the Republican Party, they would be asked to write about things to worry about Obama’s second term presidency. The instructions were:

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The pictures and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 6 minutes browsing the website.

After 6 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire (step 3), please write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.” Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each. Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

After participants finished reading the instructions, they could click on the “step 2” button and browse the website. The control group did not receive any instructions.

In the step 3 post-test questionnaire, the first question asked participants to write the article as they were instructed before browsing the website. Participants who identified themselves as Democrats or leaned toward the Democratic Party in Condition B and Condition E were asked: “Please give your opinion about the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.” Participants who identified themselves as

Republicans or leaned toward the Republican Party in Condition B and Condition E were asked: “Please give your opinion about what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.” Finally, participants in Condition A, C, D and the control group were asked: “Please give your opinion on whether Obama will do a good job in his second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.”

Stimulus: Online Magazine

The online magazine, “National Politics Forum,” was built by a professional website developing company. On its home page, participants saw the title of the website “National Politics Forum” and the list of eight articles, each had a headline, lead, author name, date and time (See Figure 4 and Table 4). The eight articles covered four issues. Half of the articles’ headlines and leads indicated liberal issue positions while the other half of the articles titles indicated conservative issue positions. To control the effect of valence, half of the articles on each side used positive wording and half of the articles on each side used negative wording. The articles were culled from partisan websites and shortened to be relatively equal in length, 499 to 507 words ($M = 504$, $SD = 3.18$). The positions of headlines and leads of the eight articles on the home page were randomized by the computer for every participant to prevent position effects from occurring.

To make the website look like a real website, six buttons were created below the website title: HOME, FEATURED, BLOG, ARCHIVES, ABOUT US and SUBSCRIBE. These buttons are commonly seen in real online political forum. When

participants clicked on these buttons, they were notified that the page was under construction. Finally, a search tool bar was also created to look like a real website. Participants could type key words in it, however, when they hit enter, they were also notified that the function was under construction. Making these buttons dysfunctional was designed to remove distraction from reading the articles.

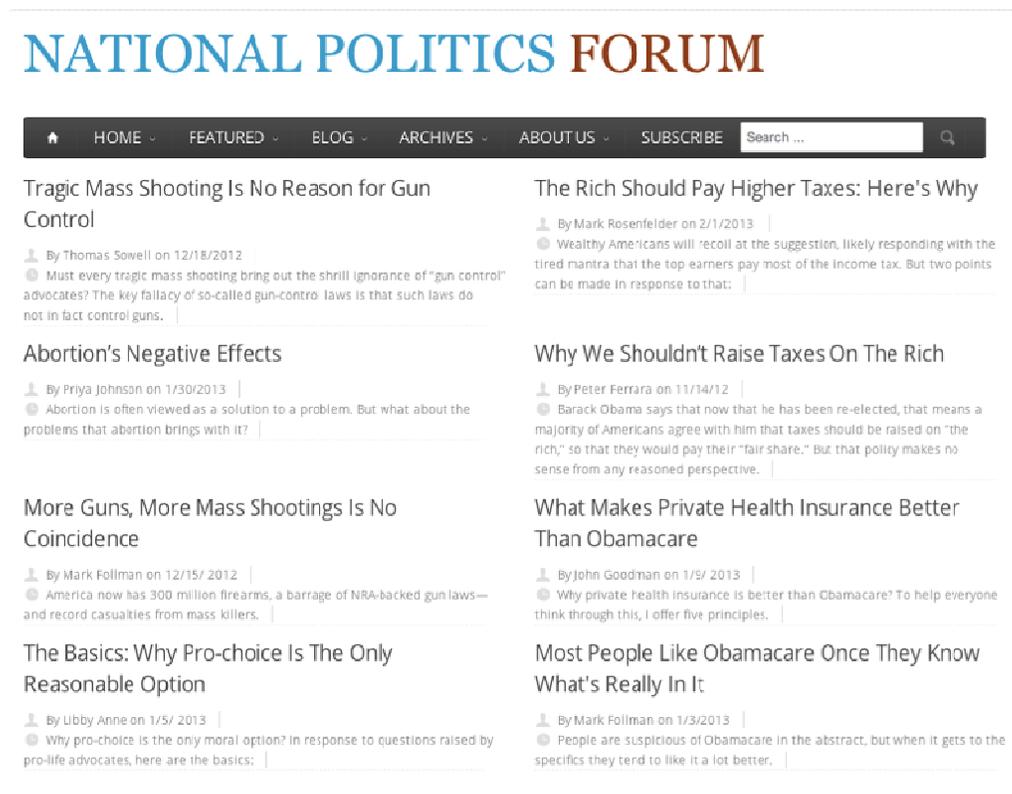


Figure 4. Screenshot of the online magazine

Table 4

Headlines and Leads of the Articles on the Website

Issue	Liberal headlines and leads	Conservative headlines and leads
Abortion	<p>The Basics: Why Pro-choice Is The Only Reasonable Option By Libby Anne on 1/5/ 2013 Why pro-choice is the only moral option? In response to questions raised by pro-life advocates, here are the basics:</p>	<p>Abortion's Negative Effects By Priya Johnson on 1/30/2013 Abortion is often viewed as a solution to a problem. But what about the problems that abortion brings with it?</p>
Gun Control	<p>More Guns, More Mass Shootings Is No Coincidence By Mark Follman on 12/15/ 2012 America now has 300 million firearms, a barrage of NRA-backed gun laws—and record casualties from mass killers.</p>	<p>Tragic Mass Shooting Is No Reason for Gun Control By Thomas Sowell on 12/18/2012 Must every tragic mass shooting bring out the shrill ignorance of “gun control” advocates? The key fallacy of so-called gun-control laws is that such laws do not in fact control guns.</p>
Obamacare	<p>Most People Like Obamacare Once They Know What's Really In It By Mark Follman on 1/3/2013 People are suspicious of Obamacare in the abstract, but when it gets to the specifics they tend to like it a lot better.</p>	<p>What Makes Private Health Insurance Better Than Obamacare By John Goodman on 1/9/ 2013 Why private health insurance is better than Obamacare? To help everyone think through this, I offer five principles.</p>
Tax policy	<p>The Rich Should Pay Higher Taxes: Here's Why By Mark Rosenfelder on 2/1/2013 Wealthy Americans will recoil at the suggestion, likely responding with the tired mantra that the top earners pay most of the income tax. But two points can be made in response to that:</p>	<p>Why We Shouldn't Raise Taxes On The Rich By Peter Ferrara on 11/14/12 Barack Obama says that now that he has been re-elected, that means a majority of Americans agree with him that taxes should be raised on “the rich,” so that they would pay their “fair share.” But that policy makes no sense from any reasoned perspective.</p>

Independent Variables

Accuracy Motivation. High accuracy motivation was manipulated by making the correct judgments of high relevance to the participant. Participants were informed that the top 10 writers would receive a \$20 Amazon gift card for the most accurate judgment before browsing the website. The low accuracy motivation group did not receive instructions on accuracy.

Information Utility Motivation. The information utility motivation manipulation had three versions: congenial information more useful than uncongenial information motivation, both-sides information equally useful motivation, and no information utility motivation. The congenial information more useful motivation condition had two versions. If the participants identified as Democrats or leaned toward the Democratic Party, they were told that they were going to write about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.” If participants identified as Republicans or leaned toward the Republican Party, they were told that that they were going to write “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.” The both-sides information equally useful motivation condition was manipulated by informing the participants that they were going to write an article about whether Obama’s second-term presidency would be successful after browsing the website. Participants in the no information utility condition did not receive any instructions on information utility.

Defense Motivation. In this study, defense motivation was manipulated by selecting subjects based on their existing value involvement: the strength of

partisanship. Strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans were first identified based on their answers to two questions. “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or something else?” If participants identified as a Republican or a Democrat, they were asked “Do you consider yourself a strong or not a very strong Republican/Democrat?” Those who answered that they were strong Republicans or strong Democrats were grouped into the strong partisan group. The rest were treated as not strong partisans. Those who thought of themselves as Independent or something else were asked “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?” A dummy variable, party leaning, was created by recoding the answers to the two questions above (*those who identified as a Democrat or leaned toward the Democratic Party = 1; those who identified as a Republican or leaned toward the Republican Party = 2; else = missing*).

To make sure the assumption that party identification reflected attitudes toward the president was met, feeling toward the president, Barack Obama, the Republican Party, the Democratic Party was measured on a 1 to 100 scale (*extremely unfavorable/cold = 1, extremely favorable/warm = 100*).

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were the number of attitude-consistent/inconsistent articles read, time spent reading attitude-consistent/inconsistent articles, and evaluation of credibility of each article. To determine which articles were attitude-consistent and which articles were counter-attitudinal, issue positions were measured

in step 3, after viewing the articles.

Issue Position.

Issue positions were used to compare with participants' party identification (see manipulation check section) as well as used to determine which articles were attitude-consistent and which articles were counter-attitudinal. In step 3, issue positions were measured by asking participants' attitudes toward the four issues (tax, gun, healthcare, and abortion) on a five-point scale. Similar to the 2008 American National Election Studies questionnaire, for each issue, there was a statement about two opposing attitudes on the same issue, point 1 reflected the liberal view and point 5 reflected the conservative view. The pattern was reversed for the gun control issue. For instance, on the abortion issue, the question stated:

There is much debate about abortion. Some people feel abortion should be available to anyone who wants it. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that abortion should not be permitted under any circumstances. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale?
 _____ Yourself (*pro-choice* = 1, *pro-life* = 5)

For other issue position question wording, please refer to post-test questionnaire in the Appendix B.

Next, the four issue position variables were recoded into four dummy variables where 1= liberal, 2 = conservative, and else=missing: abortion attitude (*pro-choice* = 1, *pro-life* = 2, *else* = missing); gun policy (*support gun control* = 1, *anti-gun control* = 2, *else* = missing); healthcare (*support Obamacare* = 1, *support private care* = 2, *else* = missing); and tax (*support raising tax for the rich* = 1, *support equal tax for the*

rich = 2, *else* = missing).

Selective Exposure Measures

The website kept record of participants' exposure time in seconds by logging every hyperlink use. Selective exposure was operationalized as article choice (clicked on hyperlink leading to article or not) and reading time in seconds, as previous studies have found that the two indicators have slightly different patterns (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012).

Preliminary analysis showed that on average, participants clicked on 4.05 articles ($SD = 2.62$). The maximum number of articles participants clicked was 16 and the minimum number of articles participants clicked was 1. On average, participants spent 273.85 seconds ($SD = 75.31$) on the homepage. The minimum time spent on the home page was 6 seconds, and the maximum time spent on the homepage was 359 seconds.

Participants' issue positions were compared with the positions of the eight articles. Each article clicked was coded as consistent (1) or inconsistent (0) to the participant's attitude. To calculate the number of attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles each participant read, time spent on each article was coded as a dummy variable first. If the time spent on an article did not equal to 0, it was coded as 1. If the time equaled to 0, it was coded as 0. The number of attitude-consistent articles read was computed by summing the number of attitude-consistent articles read on the four issues. The number of counter-attitudinal articles read was computed by summing the number of counter-attitudinal articles read on the four issues.

Because some participants clicked on the same article more than once, and each clicking was considered a different selection, the number of articles clicked could exceed 8.

Similarly, to calculate the time spent on attitude-consistent articles and time spent on counter-attitudinal articles, for each issue, attitude-consistent articles were identified based on the dummy variable of issue position. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles on each issue was calculated as the sum of all the time spent on attitude-consistent article(s). The time spent on counter-attitudinal articles was calculated as the sum of all the time spent on counter-attitudinal article(s).

Following Pomerantz, Chaiken, and Tordesillas (1995), a selective exposure time index was computed by subtracting the time participants spent reading counter-attitude articles from that spent reading attitude-consistent articles. Similarly, a selective exposure choice index was computed by subtracting the number of counter-attitude articles from the number of attitude-consistent articles.

Selective Perception Measures

After reading each article, subjects were asked to evaluate the article they just read on a scale from 1 to 5: reliability (*extremely unreliable* = 1 to *extremely reliable* = 5); expertise (*extremely inexpert* = 1 to *extremely expert* = 5); honesty (*extremely dishonest* = 1 to *extremely honest* = 5); and sin (*extremely virtuous* = 1 to *extremely sinful* = 5). Virtue was recoded from sin (*extremely sinful* = 1 to *extremely virtuous* = 5). Credibility was computed by averaging the score of reliability, expertise, honesty, and virtue. If one article was evaluated more than once, an average score was

calculated. A selective perception index was computed by subtracting a person's the average credibility rating of counter-attitude articles from his or her average credibility rating of attitude-consistent articles.

Moderating Variables and Socio-Demographic Variables

In this study, individual level variables that have been found to affect selective exposure (Albarracín & Mitchell, 2004; Canon, 1964; Clarke & James, 1967; Kleck & Wheaton, 1967; Stroud, 2011; Tsfati & Cappella, 2005) were measured to make sure that these variables were equivalent among the different groups so that differences in the dependent variables were not due to the moderating variables. In addition, socio-demographics variables measured to see whether the sample resembled that of the U.S. population.

Socio-demographics

Socio-demographic variables were asked in the pretest, including gender (*female* = 1, *male* = 0), age (years), African American (*African American* = 1, *else* = 0), Hispanic (*Hispanic* = 1, *else* = 0), education (*years of schooling*), marriage status (*married* = 1, *else* = 0), and household income (*in thousands*).

Attitude Certainty

Attitude certainty has been found to be negatively related to seeking counter-attitudinal information and positively related to spending time on attitude-consistent information (Knoblock-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Participants were asked to indicate how certain they were about the four political issues on a five-point scale, where 1 meant *not at all certain* and 5 meant *extremely certain*. An attitude certainty

scale was computed using the average score of the answers to the four issue certainty questions.

Issue Importance

Knoblock-Westerwick and Meng (2009) found issue importance was positively related to seeking counter-attitudinal information. In the present study, participants were asked to indicate how important the four issues were to them personally on a five-point scale, where 1 meant *not at all important* and 5 meant *extremely important*. An issue importance scale was computed using the average score of the answers to the four issue importance questions.

Political Efficacy

Confidence has been found to reduce selective exposure (Albarracín & Mitchell, 2004; Canon, 1964). In terms of politics, internal political efficacy reflects political confidence. Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) defined internal efficacy as “beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics,” (pp. 1407-1408).

Internal political efficacy were measured with five questions in the pre-test: (1) “Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on”; (2) “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country”; (3) “I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics”; (4) “I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people”; (5) “I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.” Respondents were asked if they *strongly agreed* (1),

somewhat agreed (2), *neither agreed nor disagreed* (3), *somewhat disagreed* (4), or *strongly disagreed* (5) with each of these statements. Internal political efficacy scale was computed by averaging the score of the five questions.

Political Interest

As political interest has been found to be a significant predictor of political selective exposure (Knoblock-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Two questions in the pre-test asked survey participants how interested they were in information in news about presidential election last year and in information about what's going on in government and politics. Both questions were on a five-point scale (*extremely interested* = 1, *very interested* = 2, *moderately interested* = 3, *slightly interested* = 4, *not interested at all* = 5). Political interest was computed by averaging the score of the two questions.

Political Knowledge

Political sophisticated people have been found to be more likely to engage in selective exposure (Stroud, 2011) and biased systematic information processing, as political sophisticated people's knowledge may be skewed and may be used to counter-argue uncongenial information (Wood, 1982; Wood & Kallgren, 1988; Wood, Kallgren, & Preisler, 1985). General political knowledge and current event political knowledge were separately measured in the pre-test and post-test. In pre-test, general political knowledge was measured following the 2008 National Annenberg Election Survey questionnaire. The following four questions were asked (1) Who has the final responsibility to determine if a law is constitutional or not, the president, the

Congress, or the Supreme Court? (2) How much of a majority is required for the US Senate and House to override a presidential veto, one third, two thirds, all, or other? (3) Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the United States House of Representatives? (4) To the best of your knowledge, do you happen to know how Supreme Court justices are chosen, nominated by congressional committee, elected, nominated by president and confirmed by Senate, or appointed by two-thirds of justices? A four-point general political knowledge index was created using the sum of the number of correct answers. In the post-test, participants were asked Obama's issue stance on the four political issues mentioned on the website: abortion, healthcare, gun control and tax issue. Each question was on a five-point scale where 1 stood for the liberal position and 5 stood for the conservative position, except the gun control question, which was reverse coded. A four-point current event political knowledge scale was computed using sum of the number of correct answers. Time spent on answering each of the political knowledge question were measured to make sure that participants did not look up the keys online to answer these questions. Results showed that participants spent similar amounts of time on these political knowledge questions as other questions.

News Media Use Frequency

In the pre-test, participants were asked how many days in the past week they had used four different types of media for news: television, talk radio, newspaper, and the Internet. Answers ranged from 0 to 7 days per week.

The Need for Cognition

The need for cognition was defined as “an individual’s tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors” (Cacioppo, Petty & Kao, 1984, p. 306). Tsfati and Cappella (2005) found that those with a low need for cognition do not consume news they do not trust, but for those with a high need for cognition, the association between news skepticism and exposure disappears. It was measured using the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo, Petty & Kao, 1984). Four items that has the highest loading (Forsterlee & Ho, 1999) were selected (See Appendix 2). Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 to 5.

Close-mindedness

Close-mindedness has been found to be positively associated with confirmation bias (Hart et al., 2009). It was measured by five questions extracted from the Need for Cognitive Closure Scale (Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993). These five questions had the highest loading on close-mindedness (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Participants were asked how much they agree with five statements from 1 to 5, where 1 meant *strongly disagree* and 5 meant *strongly agree*. The statements were: “Even after I’ve made up my mind about something, I am always eager to consider a different opinion.” (Q2); “When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.” (Q24); “When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.” (Q28); “I always see many possible solutions to problems I face.” (Q38); and “I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.” (Q40). The first four

questions were reverse coded. A close-minded score was computed using the average score of the five items.

Many of the above moderating variables were measured with multiple questions, they were condensed and reported in the result section.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analyzing Procedures

Manipulation checks were first conducted to make sure that individuals' identified party's stance aligned with their attitude toward the president. Correlations were run to check this assumption. To test whether participants in different conditions were equivalent on variables that have been shown in prior research to impact selective exposure and selective perception, individual level variables were first regressed on the number of attitude-consistent articles clicked, the number of counter-attitudinal articles clicked, time spent on attitude-consistent articles and time spent on counter-attitudinal articles, the evaluation of attitude-consistent articles, and the evaluation of counter-attitudinal articles controlling for the strength of partisanship in the control group. ANOVAs were also run to test whether these variables were significantly different across conditions.

To test the research hypotheses, ANOVAs were run with defense motivation, accuracy motivation and information utility motivation as factors and selective exposure number index, selective exposure time index, and selective perception index as dependent variables. For strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans, paired t-tests were conducted to compare the number of attitude-consistent articles and the number of counter-attitudinal articles read, length of time spent on attitude-consistent articles and the length of time spent on counter-attitudinal articles, evaluation of credibility of attitude-consistent articles and evaluation of counter-

attitudinal articles among six different conditions. Test of equivalence was conducted when non-significant result was found to examine whether the non-significant results were due to lack of power or real equivalence. Finally, to test the selective perception hypotheses, ANOVAs with planned comparisons were conducted with conditions as factors and attitude towards counter-attitudinal articles as dependent variable for both partisans and non-partisans.

Condensing Variables

Several variables were measured with multiple questions. They were condensed in scale and indices by summing or averaging the scores of all the related questions. The five questions used to measure close-mindedness were condensed in a scale for close-mindedness. The item “I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view” was excluded from the scale as it lowered the reliability of the scale. The final scale for close-mindedness was based on the rest of the four items, $\alpha = 0.70$. On average, participants were more open-minded than not, as their score on close-mindedness was 2.06 out of 5.0 ($SD = 0.73$).

The need for cognition scale was computed by averaging the sum of three questions, $\alpha = 0.68$. The item “I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve” was excluded because it lowered the reliability of the scale. On average, participants had a strong need for cognition, scoring 3.82 out of 5.0 ($SD = 0.96$). The two questions measuring political interest were averaged to create a political interest index, $r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$. On average, participants were moderately interested in politics ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.93$). An internal political efficacy scale was created by

averaging the scores of five internal efficacy questions ($\alpha = 0.82$, $M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.90$). Participants' knowledge of the general political issue index was created by averaging the score of four questions on general institutional political knowledge ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 2.22$) and their knowledge about current event index was created by averaging the score of four questions on Obama's positions on four issues ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.17$).

The credibility score of the eight different articles was created by averaging the score of the four questions on credibility for each article. The last question on virtue was reverse coded. The average score of the credibility for the article "The Basics: Why Pro-choice Is The Only Reasonable Option" was 3.07 ($SD = 0.99$, $\alpha = 0.80$); for the article "Abortion's Negative Effects," it was 3.06 ($SD = 0.97$, $\alpha = 0.78$); for the article "More Guns, More Mass Shootings Is No Coincidence," it was 3.31 ($SD = 0.88$, $\alpha = 0.77$); for the article "Tragic Mass Shooting Is No Reason for Gun Control," it was 3.25 ($SD = 0.87$, $\alpha = 0.80$); for the article "Most People Like Obamacare Once They Know What's Really In It," it was 3.09 ($SD = 0.93$, $\alpha = 0.79$); for the article "What Makes Private Health Insurance Better Than Obamacare," it was 3.32 ($SD = 0.84$, $\alpha = 0.76$); for the article "The Rich Should Pay Higher Taxes: Here's Why," it was 3.23 ($SD = 0.82$, $\alpha = 0.70$); for the article "Why We Shouldn't Raise Taxes on the Rich," it was 3.27 ($SD = 0.85$, $\alpha = 0.74$).

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

An overview of the sample is shown in Table 5 and Table 6. There were slightly more Republicans (39.5%) than Democrats (34.4%) in the sample. About 23.4 percent of the sample reported as Independent. For those who described themselves as Democrat or Republican, 163 of them (20.1%) identified themselves as strong Democrats and 173 of them (21.3%) identified themselves as strong Republicans. Strong partisans were 336 (41.4%) in total and the rest 476 participants (58.6%) were categorized as not strong partisans. After recoding, 395 participants (48.6%) identified as a Democrat or leaned towards the Democratic Party, 417 participants (51.4%) identified as a Republican or leaned towards the Republican Party.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample (Socio-Demographic Variables)

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
Gender	738				
Female	377	51.1			
Male	360	48.8			
Other	1	0.1			
Age	736		41.08	18.08	44.00
Race	738				
White	564	76.4			
Asian	35	4.7			
African American	23	3.1			
Education (years)	737		15.61	2.22	16.00
Married	319	43.2			
Household income (in thousands of US dollar)	737		91.93	71.78	62.50

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample (Individual Level Moderating Variables)

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Party identification	738	
Democrat	255	34.6
Republican	296	40.1
Independent	167	22.6
Other	20	2.7
Strength of partisanship	550	
Strong Democrat	157	21.3
Not very strong Democrat	97	13.1
Strong Republican	169	22.9
Not very strong Republican	127	17.2
Party leaning	738	
Liberal leaning	362	49.1
Conservative leaning	376	50.9
Party strength	738	
Strong partisan	326	44.2
Those that are not strong partisan	412	55.8

Note: 1. Five-point scale, where 5 means high.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample (Individual Level Moderating Variables)

(Continued)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
Political interest (1-5) ¹	736	3.74	0.93	4.00
Internal political efficacy (1-5) ¹	733	3.44	0.90	3.40
Close-mindedness (1-5) ¹	733	2.06	0.73	2.00
The need for cognition	730	3.82	0.96	4.00
General political knowledge (0-4) ²	738	2.97	2.22	3.00
Current event political knowledge (0-4)	738	2.77	1.17	3.00
TV exposure (days per week)	738	4.82	2.34	5.00
Radio exposure (days per week)	738	3.79	2.72	4.00
Newspaper exposure (days per week)	738	3.59	2.80	3.00
Internet exposure (days per week)	737	4.87	2.44	6.00

Note: 1. Five-point scale, where 5 means high. 2. Four-point scale, where 4 means high.

Table 7 showed participants' issue attitudes. On average, participants wanted stricter gun control policy ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.10$, five-point scale), held diverse views on abortion, healthcare and tax issue. They considered the four issues to be important and felt quite certain that their attitude towards the four issues were right.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Attitude Measures

	<i>Attitude^a</i>		<i>Attitude^b</i>		<i>Attitude Importance</i>		<i>Attitude Certainty</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gun	1.32	0.47	1.91	1.10	4.24	0.96	4.19	0.99
Abortion	1.38	0.48	2.62	1.60	3.95	1.18	4.07	1.13
Healthcare	1.66	0.48	3.40	1.37	4.48	0.77	3.83	1.08
Tax	1.50	0.50	3.04	1.45	4.07	1.03	3.62	1.16

Note. a. Two-point scale where 1 = liberal stance, 2 = conservative stance; b. Five-point scale where 1 = extremely liberal stance, 5 = extremely conservative stance.

Manipulation Check Measures

The assumption of the study was that individual's identified party stances aligned with their attitude toward the president, Barack Obama. Support for this assumption is important because the manipulation of attitude-consistent goals were based on participants' party identification (or party leaning if they did not identify as a partisan). If someone who identified as a Republican also favored Obama, then having him/her write what to worry about Obama's presidency was not the attitude-consistent information useful motivation that was intended to induce. Pearson correlations were run between party identification, feeling thermometer of Barack Obama, feeling thermometer of the Republican Party and feeling thermometer of the Democratic Party. Results showed that conservative party identification (Republican

or leaned toward the Republican Party) was significantly negatively related to feeling of Barack Obama, $r = -0.74$, $p < 0.001$; feeling toward the Democratic Party, $r = -0.75$, $p < 0.001$ and positively related to feeling toward the Republican Party, $r = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, the assumption that party identification reflects feeling toward the president was supported.

To test whether different groups were equivalent in terms of important moderating variables, linear regressions were run with selective exposure choice index, selective exposure time index and selective perception index as dependent variables and the moderating variables as independent variables controlling for the strength of partisanship in the control group. Results showed that strength of partisanship was significantly negatively related to selective exposure time index. As can be seen in Table 8, strong partisans were less likely to engage in selective exposure in terms of the time spent on articles than those who were not strong partisans, $\beta = -2.22$, $p < 0.05$. Internal political efficacy, current event political knowledge, and newspaper use frequency were significantly related to selective perception. Those with higher need for cognition were more likely to evaluate attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles than those with low internal political efficacy, $\beta = 2.77$, $p < 0.01$. Those who read newspapers frequently were less likely to engage in selective perception, $\beta = -2.80$, $p < 0.01$.

Table 8

*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Trait Variables Predicting
Selective Exposure and Selective Perception*

	Selective Exposure Article Choice Index	Selective Exposure Time Index	Selective Perception Index
Strength of partisanship		-2.22*	
Need for Cognition			2.77**
Newspaper Exposure			-2.80**

One-way ANOVAs were run with conditions as factors and strength of partisanship, internal political efficacy, current event political knowledge, newspaper use frequency as dependent variables among strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans separately. Results showed that these variables were not significantly different among the six groups for both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans (See Table 9 and Table 10). That is, these moderating variables were not different in the six experimental conditions for both strong partisans and those who were not partisans. In other words, these variables were associated with the outcome variables in different ways but were not moderating variables with the experimental conditions.

Table 9

One Way ANOVA Table for Current Event Political Knowledge and Newspaper Exposure Among Strong Partisans

Factor	Dependent Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	Current Event Political Knowledge	1.81	5	320	0.11
Condition	Newspaper Exposure	0.83	5	316	0.53

Table 10

One Way ANOVA Table for Current Event Political Knowledge and Newspaper Exposure Among Those Who Were Not Strong Partisans

Factor	Dependent Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	Current Event Political Knowledge	0.81	5	406	0.55
Condition	Newspaper Exposure	0.80	5	402	0.55

Results

Selective Exposure.

Selective exposure was determined by (1) comparing the number of attitude-consistent articles read and the number of counter-attitudinal articles read and (2) comparing time spent on attitude-consistent articles and time spent on counter-attitudinal articles. When experimental conditions and the strength of partisanship were not distinguished, participants conducted selective exposure in general.

Participants read significantly more articles on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.31$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.33$), $t(736) = 4.28$, $p < 0.001$, and spent significantly more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 130.59$, $SD = 99.49$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 99.97$, $SD = 93.48$), $t(735) = 5.08$, $p < 0.001$.

When the strength of partisanship was distinguished and experimental conditions were not distinguished, strong partisans were significantly more likely to click on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.31$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 1.30$), $t(325) = 2.55$, $p < 0.05$. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 135.15$, $SD = 97.92$) was significantly greater than the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 102.27$, $SD = 93.15$), $t(325) = 3.59$, $p < 0.001$. Those who were not strong partisans were also significantly more likely to click on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.32$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.36$), $t(410) = 3.49$, $p < 0.001$. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 126.99$, $SD = 100.69$) was significantly more than the time spent on counter-

attitudinal articles ($M = 98.15$, $SD = 93.82$), $t(410) = 3.60$, $p < 0.001$. In general, people preferred attitude-consistent articles to counter-attitudinal articles.

Selective exposure number index and selective exposure time index were created to compare selective exposure across different experimental conditions. Selective exposure number index was created by deducting the number of counter-attitudinal articles read from the number of attitude-consistent articles read. Selective exposure time index was created by deducting the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles from the time spent on attitude-consistent articles.

To test the main effect and the interaction effect of the three motivations on selective exposure, ANOVAs were run with accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility motivation as factors and selective exposure number index and selective exposure time index as dependent variables. Results showed that there were no main effect or interaction effect of accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility motivation on selective exposure number index (See Table 11).

Table 11

Accuracy × Utility × Defense Motivation Factorial Analysis of Variance for Selective Exposure Number Index

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
(A) Accuracy	0.84	1	725	0.36
(B) Utility	1.72	2	725	0.18
(C) Defense	0.05	1	725	0.82
A × B	1.15	2	725	0.32
A × C	0.24	1	725	0.62
B × C	1.46	2	725	0.23
A × B × C	0.78	2	725	0.46

Table 12 showed that there were no main effects of accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility motivation on selective exposure time index either. There was an interaction between information utility and strength of partisanship in predicting selective exposure time index such that for strong partisans, selective exposure time index was higher when both sides of information was equally useful ($M = 62.99$, $SD = 150.44$) than when congenial information was useful ($M = 30.12$, $SD = 163.18$), or when no information utility motivation was induced ($M = 9.07$, $SD = 176.79$); for those who were not strong partisans, selective exposure time index was lower when both sides of information was equally useful ($M = 18.01$, $SD = 154.78$) than when congenial information was useful ($M = 27.58$, $SD = 173.99$), or when no information utility motivation was induced ($M = 40.62$, $SD = 158.09$), $F(2, 724) = 3.11$, $p < 0.05$ (See Figure 5).

Table 12

Accuracy × Utility × Defense Motivation Factorial Analysis of Variance for Selective Exposure Time Index

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
(A) Accuracy	0.60	1	724	0.44
(B) Utility	0.46	2	724	0.63
(C) Defense	0.16	1	724	0.69
A × B	0.13	2	724	0.88
A × C	0.00	1	724	0.98
B × C	3.11	2	724	0.045
A × B × C	1.70	2	724	0.18

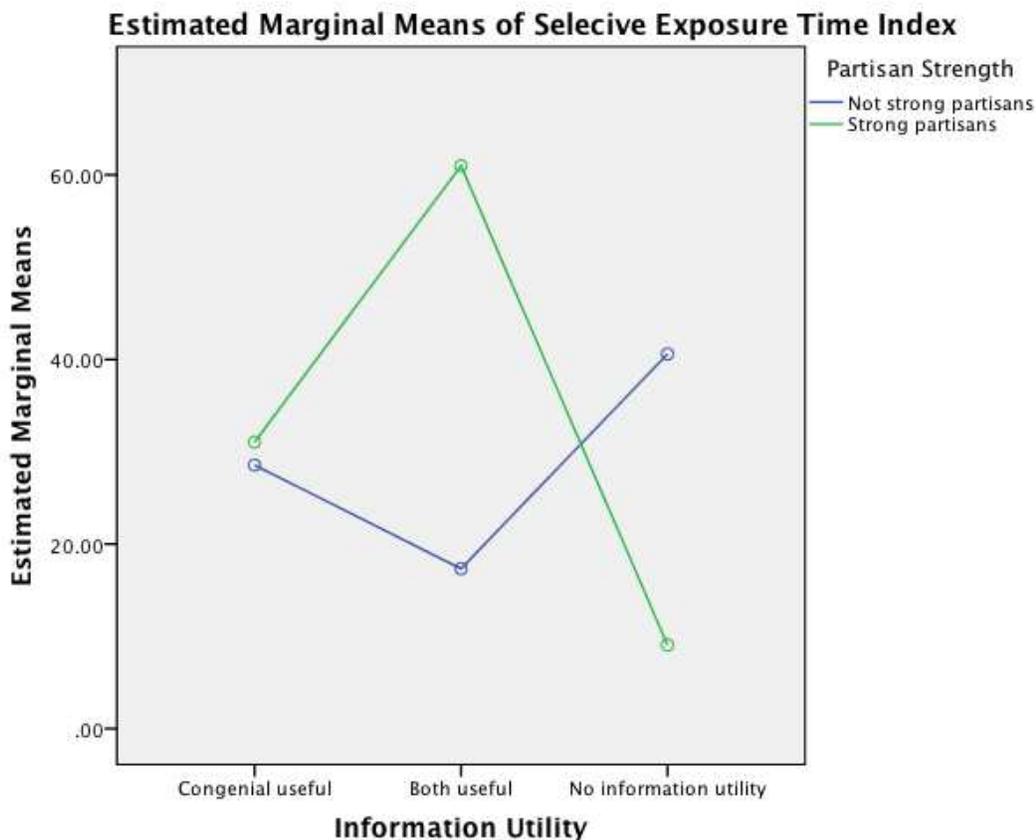


Figure 5. Interaction Effect of Partisan Strength and Information Utility On Selective Exposure Time Index.

To test the selective exposure hypotheses, paired *t*-tests were conducted within each condition (Table 13 and Table 14). For strong partisans, H1 predicted that when accuracy motivation was high and no information utility was induced (Condition A), defense motivation would override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information (H1a) and spend more time on the former (H1b). Results of paired *t*-tests showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.16$) and the number of counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.16$)

strong partisans in Condition A selected were not significantly different from each other, $t(51) = -0.52, p = 0.61$. Their time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 124.96, SD = 117.37$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 115.94, SD = 108.63$) were not significantly different either, $t(50) = 0.32, p = 0.75$.

Test of equivalence was further conducted to see whether the lack of significant finding was indeed showing that strong partisans' evaluation of counter-attitudinal articles in different groups were equivalent. Following the study by Stegner, Bostrom and Greenfield (1996), if the experimental group mean are within 20% of the control group mean, the two groups are considered equivalent to each other. Thus two ranges meet this criterion:

$$\mu_T - \mu_R \leq 0.2\mu_R \quad (1)$$

or

$$\mu_R - \mu_T \leq 0.2\mu_R \quad (2)$$

Table 13

*Paired t-test Results Comparing Article Choice Number, Article Viewing Time
between Attitude-Consistent Articles and Counter-Attitudinal Articles in Six
Conditions among Strong Partisans*

Condition	<u>Article Choice</u>			<u>Exposure Length</u>		
		Congenial	Uncongenial		Congenial	Uncongenial
A (accuracy)	<i>M</i>	1.44	1.54	<i>M</i>	124.96	115.94
	<i>SD</i>	1.16	1.16	<i>SD</i>	117.37	108.63
	<i>t</i> -test	-0.52(51)		<i>t</i> -test	0.32(50)	
B (congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	1.75	1.44	<i>M</i>	130.50	106.97
	<i>SD</i>	1.33	1.15	<i>SD</i>	102.55	97.40
	<i>t</i> -test	1.77(63)		<i>t</i> -test	1.09(63)	
C (both useful)	<i>M</i>	1.94	1.50	<i>M</i>	158.89	75.81
	<i>SD</i>	1.09	1.40	<i>SD</i>	100.50	79.20
	<i>t</i> -test	2.36(53)*		<i>t</i> -test	3.93(53)***	
D (accuracy + both useful)	<i>M</i>	1.98	1.64	<i>M</i>	139.87	100.98
	<i>SD</i>	1.32	1.25	<i>SD</i>	83.58	82.25
	<i>t</i> -test	1.75 (44)		<i>t</i> -test	1.83(44)	
E (accuracy+ congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	1.84	1.70	<i>M</i>	130.90	92.34
	<i>SD</i>	1.35	1.46	<i>SD</i>	91.25	90.94
	<i>t</i> -test	0.78(49)		<i>t</i> -test	1.80 (49)	
The control group	<i>M</i>	1.98	1.95	<i>M</i>	127.56	118.44
	<i>SD</i>	1.50	1.35	<i>SD</i>	87.73	92.97
	<i>t</i> -test	0.18(60)		<i>t</i> -test	0.45(60)	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 14

Paired t-test Results Comparing Article Choice Number, Articles Viewing Time between Attitude-Consistent Articles and Counter-Attitudinal Articles in Six Conditions among Those Who Were Not Strong Partisans

Condition	<u>Article Choice</u>			<u>Exposure Length</u>		
		Congenial	Un- congenial		Congenial	Un- congenial
A (accuracy)	<i>M</i>	1.50	1.26	<i>M</i>	139.01	99.43
	<i>SD</i>	1.24	1.13	<i>SD</i>	103.92	98.42
	<i>t</i> -test	1.62(67)		<i>t</i> -test	1.89(67)	
B (congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	1.59	1.14	<i>M</i>	141.82	93.92
	<i>SD</i>	1.19	1.28	<i>SD</i>	107.91	105.87
	<i>t</i> -test	2.67(65)*		<i>t</i> -test	2.12(65)*	
C (both useful)	<i>M</i>	1.55	1.45	<i>M</i>	127.98	117.22
	<i>SD</i>	1.08	1.16	<i>SD</i>	101.25	94.30
	<i>t</i> -test	0.60(59)		<i>t</i> -test	0.50(59)	
D (accuracy + both useful)	<i>M</i>	1.97	1.66	<i>M</i>	117.07	93.18
	<i>SD</i>	1.49	1.50	<i>SD</i>	94.00	92.82
	<i>t</i> -test	2.12 (73)*		<i>t</i> -test	1.42 (73)	
E (accuracy+ congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	1.63	1.39	<i>M</i>	111.10	101.88
	<i>SD</i>	1.39	1.40	<i>SD</i>	95.70	93.98
	<i>t</i> -test	0.28 (72)		<i>t</i> -test	0.48(72)	
The control group	<i>M</i>	2.21	2.06	<i>M</i>	127.51	85.90
	<i>SD</i>	1.33	1.46	<i>SD</i>	101.94	76.64
	<i>t</i> -test	1.14 (69)		<i>t</i> -test	3.37(169)*	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Equation (1) and (2) represent equivalence hypothesis, their complimentary hypotheses are the null hypotheses. That is,

$$\mu_T - \mu_R > 0.2\mu_R \quad (3)$$

and

$$\mu_R - \mu_T > 0.2\mu_R \quad (4)$$

Thus if we reject both equation (3) and (4), we can demonstrate that equation (1) and (2) are met, and accordingly the two groups are equivalent.

In terms of the number of articles clicked, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were -2.17 and 0.89 respectively (See the formula below and Table 15).

$$t = (\mu_T - \mu_R - 0.2\mu_R) / [SD_{(pooled)} \times (1/N_1 + 1/N_2)^{1/2}]$$

$$t = (\mu_T - \mu_R + 0.2\mu_R) / [SD_{(pooled)} \times (1/N_1 + 1/N_2)^{1/2}]$$

Table 15

The Number of Attitude-Consistent Articles and The Number of Counter-Attitudinal Articles Clicked, Time Spent on Attitude-Consistent Articles and Counter-Attitudinal Articles For Both For Strong Partisans in Condition A

	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
The number of attitude-consistent articles clicked	1.4423	52	1.16170
The number of counter-attitudinal articles clicked	1.5385	52	1.16251
Total	1.4904	104	0.94708 _(pooled)
Time spent on attitude-consistent articles	124.9608	51	117.37273
Time spent on counter-attitudinal articles	115.9412	51	108.62549
Total	119.8173	102	52.67157 _(pooled)

The critical value of $t_{0.05} (51+51-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (100)$ is 1.6602, which is larger than 0.89 but smaller than 2.17. Therefore, the null hypotheses that the number of attitude-consistent articles clicked is greater than the number of counter-attitudinal articles clicked by 20% of the latter (Equation 3) was rejected, but the null hypothesis that the number of attitude-consistent articles clicked is less than the number of counter-attitudinal articles clicked by 20% of the latter (Equation 4) was accepted. As we cannot reject both extremes, the two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition A clicked on more counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.16$) than attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.16$). Accordingly, H1a was rejected.

Similarly, in terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t

value for the two extremes were -1.36 and 4.95 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}$ (52+52-2) or $t_{0.05}$ (102) equals 1.66, which is bigger than 1.36 and smaller than 4.95. Once again, as we cannot reject both extremes, the two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition A spent more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 124.96$, $SD = 117.37$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 115.94$, $SD = 108.63$). Accordingly, H1b was accepted.

H2 predicted that for strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was low and attitude-consistent information was useful (Condition B), information utility motivation would add to defense motivation in predicting stronger selective exposure. Strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information (H2a) and spend more time on the former (H2b). Results of paired t -tests showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.33$) and the number of counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.15$) strong partisans in Condition B selected was not significantly different from each other, $t(63) = 1.77$, $p = 0.08$. The difference between the time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 130.50$, $SD = 102.55$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 106.97$, $SD = 97.40$) were also not significantly different, $t(63) = 1.09$, $p = 0.28$.

The two pairs were further examined with test of equivalence to see whether they were indeed equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were 0.14 and 0.09 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}$ (64+64-2) or $t_{0.05}$ (126) equals to 1.657, so we cannot reject both

extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition B clicked more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.75, SD = 1.33$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.44, SD = 1.15$). H2a was accepted.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were 0.24 and 0.86 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (64+64-2)$, or $t_{0.05} (126)$ is 1.657, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition B spent more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 130.50, SD = 102.55$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 106.97, SD = 97.40$). H2b was accepted.

H3 predicted that for strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was low and counter-attitudinal information was as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), information utility would override defense motivation in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans would select an equal number of counter-attitudinal articles and attitude-consistent articles (H3a) and spend equal time on the two (H3b). Results of paired t -tests showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.94, SD = 1.09$) were significantly higher than the number of counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.50, SD = 1.40$) clicked by strong partisans in Condition C, $t(53) = 2.36, p < 0.05$. H3a was rejected. In terms of time spent on articles, strong partisans spent significantly more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 158.89, SD$

= 100.50) than on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 75.81$, $SD = 79.20$), $t(53) = 3.93$, $p < 0.001$. H3b was rejected as well.

H4 predicted that for strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was high and counter-attitudinal information was as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), the additive effect of accuracy motivation and information utility would override defense motivation in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans were predicted to select an equal number of counter-attitudinal articles and attitude-consistent articles and spend equal time on the two. Results of paired t -test showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.32$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.25$) strong partisans in Condition D selected were not significantly different from each other, $t(44) = 1.75$, $p = 0.09$, nor was the time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 139.87$, $SD = 83.58$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 100.98$, $SD = 82.25$) significantly different from one another, $t(44) = 1.83$, $p = 0.08$.

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were 0.12 and 0.13 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(45+45-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(88)$ equals to 1.6623, so we cannot reject both extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition D clicked more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.32$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.25$). H4a was rejected.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were 2.08 and -3.64 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (45+45-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (88)$ equals to 1.6623, so we can reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was accepted. The two values are equivalent: strong partisans in Condition D spent equal time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 130.50, SD = 102.55$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 106.97, SD = 97.40$). H4b was accepted.

H5 predicted that for strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was high and attitude-consistent information was useful (Condition E), information utility motivation and defense motivation would override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information. Results of paired t -test showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles clicked ($M = 1.84, SD = 1.35$) and counter-attitudinal articles clicked ($M = 1.70, SD = 1.46$) were not significantly different, $t (49) = 0.78, p = 0.44$. Time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 130.90, SD = 91.25$) and time spent on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 92.34, SD = 90.94$) were also not significantly different, $t (49) = 1.80, p = 0.08$.

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -0.80 and 0.46 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (45+45-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (88)$ equals to 1.6623, so we cannot reject

both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in Condition D clicked on more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.35$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 1.46$). H5a was accepted.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were 1.99 and -3.89 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (45+45-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (88)$ equals to 1.6623, so we can reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was accepted. The two values were equivalent: strong partisans in Condition D spent equal time on attitude-consistent articles and on counter-attitudinal articles. H5b was rejected.

H6 predicted that for strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was low and no information utility was induced (the control group), defense motivation would dominate in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information. Results of paired t -tests showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.50$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.35$) strong partisans in the control group read were not significantly different, $t(60) = 0.18$, $p = 0.86$. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.56$, $SD = 87.73$) and the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 118.44$, $SD = 92.97$) were also not significantly different, $t(60) = 0.60$, $p = 0.65$.

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.61 and 0.77 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (61+61-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (120)$ equals to 1.65767, so we can reject both extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: strong partisans in the control group clicked more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.50$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.35$). H6a was accepted.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t values for the two extremes were -1.79 and 5.74 respectively. The critical value $t_{0.05} (61+61-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (120)$ equals to 1.65767, so we can reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was accepted. The two values were equivalent: strong partisans in the control group spent equal time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.56$, $SD = 87.73$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 118.44$, $SD = 92.97$). H6b was rejected.

For those who were not strong partisans, H7 predicted that when accuracy motivation was high and no information utility was induced (Condition A), accuracy motivation would dominate in predicting selective exposure. Those who were not strong partisans were predicted to select an equal number of counter-attitudinal articles and attitude-consistent articles and spend equal time on the two. Results of paired t -test showed that those who were not strong partisans in Condition A selected

similar number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 1.24$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 1.13$), $t(67) = 1.62$, $p = 0.11$. Their time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 139.01$, $SD = 103.92$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 99.43$, $SD = 98.42$) were not significantly different from each other either, $t(67) = 1.89$, $p = 0.06$.

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -0.10 and 0.15 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(68+68-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(134)$ equals to 1.6563 , so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition A clicked more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 1.24$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 1.13$). H7a was rejected.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were 2.17 and -3.91 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(68+68-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(134)$ equals to 1.6563 , so we can reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was accepted. The two values were equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition A spent similar time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 139.01$, $SD = 103.92$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 99.43$, $SD = 98.42$). H7b was accepted.

H8 predicted that for those who were not strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was low and attitude-consistent information was useful (Condition B), information utility motivation would dominate in predicting selective exposure. Those who were not strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles and spend more time on the former. Results of paired *t*-test showed that those who were not strong partisans in Condition B selected significantly more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.59, SD = 1.19$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.14, SD = 1.28$), $t(65) = 2.67, p < 0.05$. They also spent more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 141.82, SD = 107.91$) than on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 93.92, SD = 105.87$), $t(65) = 2.12, p < 0.05$. H8a and H8b were supported.

H9 predicted that for those who were not strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was low and counter-attitudinal information was as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition C), information utility motivation would dominate in predicting selective exposure. Those who were not strong partisans would select an equal number of counter-attitudinal articles and attitude-consistent articles and spend equal time on the two. Results of paired *t*-test showed that the difference between the number of attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.55, SD = 1.08$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.45, SD = 1.16$) selected by those who were not strong partisans in Condition C was not significantly different, $t(59) = 0.60, p = 0.55$. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.98, SD = 101.25$) and the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 117.22, SD = 94.30$) were not significantly different either, t

$(59) = 0.50, p = 0.62.$

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.14 and 0.51 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (60+60-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (118)$ equals to 1.6579, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition C clicked on more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.55, SD = 1.08$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.45, SD = 1.16$). H9a was rejected.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were -1.37 and 4.88 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (60+60-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (118)$ equals to 1.6579, so we cannot reject both extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition C spent more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.98, SD = 101.25$) than on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 117.22, SD = 94.30$). H9b was rejected.

H10 predicted that for those who were not strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was high and counter-attitudinal information was as useful as attitude-consistent information (Condition D), information utility motivation would add to accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. Strong partisans would select an

equal number of counter-attitudinal articles and attitude-consistent articles and spend equal time on the two. Results of paired t -test showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles read ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.49$) was significantly higher than the number of counter-attitudinal articles read ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 1.50$), $t(73) = 2.12$, $p < 0.05$. H10a was rejected. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 117.07$, $SD = 94.00$) and counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 93.18$, $SD = 92.82$) were not significantly different from one another, $t(73) = 1.42$, $p = 0.16$.

To test whether this lack of significant difference was really showing the two values are equivalent, test of equivalence was run for the time spent on attitude-consistent articles and the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles. In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were -1.37 and 4.88 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(74+74-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(146)$ equals to 1.6554, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition D spent more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.98$, $SD = 101.25$) than on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 117.22$, $SD = 94.30$). H10b was rejected.

H11 predicted that for those who were not strong partisans, when accuracy motivation was high and attitude-consistent information was useful (Condition E), information utility motivation would override accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. Those who were not strong partisans would select more attitude-

consistent information than counter-attitudinal information (H11a) and spend more time on the former than the latter (H11b). Results of paired t -test showed that the number of attitude-consistent articles read ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 1.39$) was not significantly different from the number of counter-attitudinal articles read ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(72) = 0.28$, $p = 0.78$. The time spent on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 111.10$, $SD = 95.70$) was also not significantly different from the time spent on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 101.88$, $SD = 93.98$), $t(73) = 0.48$, $p = 0.63$.

Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.34 and 0.63 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(73+73-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(144)$ equals to 1.6555, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition E clicked on more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.08$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.16$). H11a was accepted.

In terms of the time spent on articles, two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were run. Results showed that the t value for the two extremes were -1.33 and 4.49 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(73+73-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(144)$ equals to 1.6555, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in Condition E spent more time

on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 111.10$, $SD = 95.70$) than on counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 101.88$, $SD = 93.98$). H11b was accepted.

H12 predicted that for those who were not strong partisans, when no accuracy motivation and no information utility was induced (the control group), the low defense motivation of those who were not strong partisans will dominate in predicting selective exposure. Those who were not strong partisans would select more attitude-consistent information than counter-attitudinal information. Results of paired t -test showed that those who were not strong partisans in the control group spent significantly more time on attitude-consistent articles ($M = 127.51$, $SD = 101.94$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 85.90$, $SD = 76.64$), $t(69) = 2.42$, $p < 0.05$. H12b was accepted. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the number attitude-consistent articles ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.33$) those who were not strong partisans read was not significantly different from the number of counter-attitudinal articles read ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.46$), $t(69) = 2.85$, $p = 0.26$. Test of equivalence was run to see whether the two pairs were equivalent. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.18 and 0.62 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05}(70+70-2)$ or $t_{0.05}(138)$ equals to 1.6560, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the control group clicked on more attitude-consistent articles ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.33$) than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.46$). H12a was accepted.

Selective Perception

Selective perception was determined by comparing a person's evaluations of attitude-consistent articles with his/her evaluations of counter-attitudinal articles. When experimental conditions and the strength of partisanship were not distinguished, participants exhibited selective perception in general. They evaluated attitude-consistent articles ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.74$) to be more credible than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.81$), $t(356) = 12.53$, $p < 0.001$.

When the strength of partisanship was distinguished and experimental conditions were not distinguished, strong partisans evaluated attitude-consistent articles ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.79$) to be more credible than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.83$), $t(164) = 11.44$, $p < 0.001$. Those who were not strong partisans also evaluated attitude-consistent articles ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.68$) to be more credible than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.75$), $t(191) = 6.64$, $p < 0.001$.

To compare selective perception across experimental conditions, selective perception index was created by deducting a person's the average credibility rating of counter-attitude articles from his or her average credibility rating of attitude-consistent articles. ANOVAs were run with accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility motivation as factors and selective perception index as the dependent variable to test the main effect and the interaction effect of the three motivations on selective perception. Results showed that there was a main effect of defense motivation on selective perception index. Strong partisans were more likely to selectively perceive attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than

counter-attitudinal articles than those who were not strong partisans, $F(1, 345) = 26.09, p < 0.001$. Accuracy motivation had no significant effect on changing selective perception, $F(1, 345) = 0.10, p = 0.75$. Information utility did not have a significant impact on selective perception, either, $F(2, 345) = 1.11, p = 0.33$. There was no significant interaction between the three variables in predicting selective perception (See Table 16).

Table 16

Accuracy × Utility × Defense Motivation Factorial Analysis of Variance for Selective Perception Index

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
(A) Accuracy	0.05	1	345	0.82
(B) Utility	1.84	2	345	0.16
(C) Defense	5.04	1	345	0.03
A × B	0.80	2	345	0.45
A × C	0.01	1	345	0.91
B × C	1.54	2	345	0.22
A × B × C	0.24	2	345	0.78

To test H1c through H12c, paired *t*-test were run within each condition (Table 17 and Table 18). Results showed that strong partisans rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles in all five experimental

groups and the control group, which supported H1c through H6c. For those who were not strong partisans, participants rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in

Table 17

Paired t-test Results Comparing Credibility Evaluations between Attitude-Consistent Articles and Counter-Attitudinal Articles in Six Conditions among Strong Partisans

Condition		Congenial	Uncongenial
A (accuracy)	<i>M</i>	3.58	2.51
	<i>SD</i>	0.94	0.83
	<i>t</i> -test	3.89 (21)***	
B (congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	3.48	2.75
	<i>SD</i>	0.65	0.81
	<i>t</i> -test	4.42 (28)***	
C (both useful)	<i>M</i>	3.73	2.68
	<i>SD</i>	0.76	0.84
	<i>t</i> -test	4.61 (25)***	
D (accuracy + both useful)	<i>M</i>	3.57	2.68
	<i>SD</i>	0.86	0.81
	<i>t</i> -test	4.38 (28)***	
E (accuracy+ congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	3.76	2.61
	<i>SD</i>	0.78	1.01
	<i>t</i> -test	4.51 (25)***	
The control group	<i>M</i>	3.72	2.52
	<i>SD</i>	0.80	0.75
	<i>t</i> -test	6.07(32)***	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 18

Paired t-test Results Comparing Credibility Evaluations between Attitude-Consistent Articles and Counter-Attitudinal Articles in Six Conditions among Those Who Were Not Strong Partisans

Condition		Congenial	Uncongenial
A (accuracy)	<i>M</i>	3.48	3.01
	<i>SD</i>	0.69	0.74
	<i>t</i> -test	2.91 (25)**	
B (congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	3.42	2.77
	<i>SD</i>	0.52	0.67
	<i>t</i> -test	3.84 (22)***	
C (both useful)	<i>M</i>		3.84 (22)***
	<i>SD</i>	0.52	
	<i>t</i> -test	0.67	
D (accuracy + both useful)	<i>M</i>	3.30	2.89
	<i>SD</i>	0.78	0.77
	<i>t</i> -test	2.51(29)*	
E (accuracy+ congenial useful)	<i>M</i>	3.42	0.62
	<i>SD</i>	2.83	0.85
	<i>t</i> -test	3.18 (27)**	
The control group	<i>M</i>	3.52	3.05
	<i>SD</i>	0.66	0.74
	<i>t</i> -test	3.37 (46)**	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

credibility than counter-attitudinal articles in all the conditions and the control group except those in Condition D.

To test whether the lack of significant t -test result really showed equivalence, test of equivalence was run for participants who were not partisans Condition D. In terms of the number of articles clicked, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -3.67 and 1.41 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (38+38-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (74)$ equals to 1.6557, so we cannot reject both extremes, our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. The two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition D rated attitude-consistent articles ($M = 3.22, SD = 0.71$) as higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles ($M = 3.09, SD = 0.73$). H7c through H12c were accepted.

To examine whether selective perception was different across groups (H1d through H5d and H7d through H11d), selective perception index score in each experimental condition was compared to that of the control group. Selective perception index was created by deducting the average credibility score of counter-attitudinal articles from the average credibility score of attitude-consistent articles. For strong partisans, H1d, H2d, H3d, H4d, and H5d predicted that strong partisans' evaluation of counter-attitudinal articles in experimental conditions would not differ from their counterparts' evaluations in the control group. ANOVAs with planned comparison contrast test were run with conditions as factors and selective perception as the dependent variable. Results showed that none of the experimental groups

differed significantly from the control group in terms of selective perception index score for strong partisans (See Table 19).

Table 19

Planned Contrast of Evaluation of Selective Perception Index for Strong Partisans

	Contrast	Value of Contrast	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Assume equal variances	1 & 6	-.1250	.31538	-.396	159	.692
	2 & 6	-.4628	.29165	-1.587	159	.115
	3 & 6	-.1465	.30047	-.488	159	.627
	4 & 6	-.3054	.29165	-1.047	159	.297
	5 & 6	-.0407	.30047	-.136	159	.892
Does not assume equal variances	1 & 6	-.1250	.33871	-.369	40.951	.714
	2 & 6	-.4628	.25776	-1.795	59.378	.078
	3 & 6	-.1465	.30131	-.486	53.141	.629
	4 & 6	-.3054	.28336	-1.078	59.410	.285
	5 & 6	-.0407	.32359	-.126	49.674	.900

To test whether lack of significant *t*-test results were showing real equivalence, test of equivalence was conducted. For strong partisans in Condition A, the results of the two *t*-tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.28 and 0.60 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (29+33-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (60)$ equals to 1.6706, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition B ($M = 1.07, SD = 1.29$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 1.20, SD = 1.13$), which rejected H1d.

For strong partisans in Condition B, the results of the two *t*-tests that represent

the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -2.64 and 1.18 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (29+33-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (60)$ equals to 1.6706, so we cannot reject both extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition B ($M = 0.73$, $SD = 0.89$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 1.13$), which rejected H2d.

For strong partisans in Condition C, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.15 and 0.59 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (26+33-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (57)$ equals to 1.6720, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition C ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 1.16$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 1.13$), which rejected H3d.

For strong partisans in Condition D, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.49 and 0.72 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (29+33-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (60)$ equals to 1.6706, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition D ($M = 0.89$, $SD = 1.10$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 1.20$,

$SD = 1.13$), which rejected H4d.

For strong partisans in Condition E, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -1.31 and 0.68 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (26+33-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (57)$ equals to 1.6720, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition E ($M = 1.16$, $SD = 1.31$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 1.13$), which rejected H5d.

For those who were not strong partisans, H7d, H9d and H10d hypothesized that those who were not strong partisans' would conduct less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. H8d and H11d hypothesized that those who were not strong partisans' would conduct similar selective perception as their counterparts in the control group. ANOVAs with planned comparison contrast test were run with conditions as factors and the credibility score of attitude-consistent articles and the credibility score of attitude-consistent articles as dependent variables. Results showed that none of the experimental groups differed significantly from the control group (See Table 18).

For those who were not strong partisans, H7d, H10d and H11d predicted that participants in experimental condition A, D and E would conduct less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. H8d and H9d predicted that participants in the experimental condition B and C would conduct similar selective

perception as their counterparts in the control group. ANOVAs with planned comparison contrast test were run with conditions as factors and selective perception as the dependent variable. Results showed that none of the experimental groups differed significantly from the control group in terms of selective perception index score for those who were not strong partisans (See Table 20).

Table 20

Planned Contrast of Evaluation of Selective Perception Index For Those Who Were Not Strong Partisans

	Contrast	Value of Contrast	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Assume equal variances	1 & 6	-.0069	.22006	-.031	186	.975
	2 & 6	.1769	.22912	.772	186	.441
	3 & 6	-.0570	.21041	-.271	186	.787
	4 & 6	-.3411	.19642	-1.737	186	.084
	5 & 6	.1199	.21494	.558	186	.578
Does not assume equal variances	1 & 6	-.0069	.21253	-.032	59.091	.974
	2 & 6	.1769	.21931	.807	51.067	.424
	3 & 6	-.0570	.21635	-.264	64.633	.793
	4 & 6	-.3411	.19790	-1.724	82.021	.089
	5 & 6	.1199	.23278	.515	55.723	.609

To test whether lack of significant *t*-test results were showing real equivalence, test of equivalence was conducted. For those who were not strong partisans in Condition A, the results of the two *t*-tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -0.46 and 0.21 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (26+47-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (71)$ equals to 1.6666, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore

we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition A ($M = 0.46$, $SD = 0.82$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.96$), which supported H7d.

For those who were not strong partisans in Condition B, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were 0.36 and -0.10 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (23+47-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (68)$ equals to 1.6676, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition B ($M = 0.65$, $SD = 0.81$) conducted more selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.96$), which rejected H8d.

For those who were not strong partisans in Condition C, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -0.69 and 0.30 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (30+47-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (75)$ equals to 1.6654, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition C ($M = 0.42$, $SD = 0.96$) conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.96$), which rejected H9d.

For those who were not strong partisans in Condition D, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were -2.15

and 0.82 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (38+47-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (83)$ equals to 1.6634, so we cannot reject both extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition D ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.86$) conducted less selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.96$), which supported H10d.

For those who were not strong partisans in Condition E, the results of the two t -tests that represent the tests of the two null hypotheses (equation 3 and 4) were 0.11 and -0.003 respectively. The critical value of $t_{0.05} (28+47-2)$ or $t_{0.05} (73)$ equals to 1.6660, so we can reject neither extremes. Our hypothesis that the value lies within the equivalence region was rejected. Therefore we can conclude that the two values were not equivalent: those who were not strong partisans in the Condition E ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.96$) conducted more selective perception than those in the control group ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.96$), which rejected H11d.

The hypotheses and results of the whole study are shown in Table 21. As can be seen in Table 21, most of the hypotheses (27 of the 48 hypotheses) were supported but still a good portion of hypotheses was rejected.

Table 21

Research Hypotheses and Results

Partisan strength	Condition	Number	Content	Hypotheses	Results	Supported or rejected
Strong partisans	A (accuracy)	H1a	Number	C>I ³	C<I	Rejected
		H1b	Time	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H1c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H1d	PC ⁴	A=F ⁵	A<F	Rejected
	B (Consistent useful)	H2a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H2b	Time	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H2c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H2d	PC	B=F	B<F	Rejected
	C (both useful)	H3a	Number	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H3b	Time	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H3c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H3d	PC	C=F	C<F	Rejected
	D (accuracy+ both useful)	H4a	Number	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H4b	Time	C=I	C=I	Supported
		H4c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H4d	PC	D=F	D<F	Rejected
	E (accuracy+ Consistent useful)	H5a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H5b	Time	C>I	C=I	Rejected
		H5c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H5d	PC	E=F	E<F	Rejected
F (Control)	H6a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported	
	H6b	Time	C>I	C=I	Rejected	
	H6c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported	

³ C stood for Attitude consistent, I stood for Counter-attitudinal.

⁴ PC stood for perception comparison.

⁵ A stood for Condition A, F stood for Condition F. Similarly, B stood for Condition B, C stood for Condition C, etc.

Table 21 (Continued)

Research Hypotheses and Results

Partisan strength	Condition	Number	Content	Hypotheses	Results	Supported or rejected
Those who were not strong partisans	A (accuracy)	H6c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H7a	Number	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H7b	Time	C=I	C=I	Supported
		H7c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
	B (Consistent useful)	H7d	PC	A<F	A<F	Supported
		H8a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H8b	Time	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H8c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
	C (both useful)	H8d	PC	B=F	B>F	Rejected
		H9a	Number	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H9b	Time	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H9c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
	D (accuracy+ both useful)	H9d	PC	C=F	C<F	Rejected
		H10a	Number	C=I	C>I	Rejected
		H10b	Time	C=I	C=I	Rejected
		H10c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
	E (accuracy+ Consistent useful)	H10d	PC	D<F	D<F	Supported
		H11a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H11b	Time	C>I	C>I	Supported
		H11c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported
F (Control)	H11d	PC	E<F	E>F	Rejected	
	H12a	Number	C>I	C>I	Supported	
	H12b	Time	C>I	C>I	Supported	
		H12c	Perception	C>I	C>I	Supported

The Relationship between Selective Exposure and Selective Perception

The hypothesized relationship between selective exposure and selective perception was based on motivation. Defense motivation was predicted to lead to a preference for attitude-consistent information to counter-attitudinal information, both in exposure and perception. Accuracy motivation was predicted to lead to balanced information exposure, and the exposure to counter-attitudinal information as a result of accuracy motivation was likely to change people's existing attitude. Information utility motivation was predicted to lead to the selection of the most useful information, but the exposure to counter-attitudinal information as a result of information motivation was not likely to change people's existing attitude.

These hypotheses were tested in the study. For the defense motivation, though there is a significant main effect of defense motivation on selective perception, there was no main effect of defense motivation on selective exposure number index or selective exposure time index, we cannot conclude that selective exposure mediates the relationship between defense motivation and selective perception. For the defense only group (strong partisans in the control group), they showed a preference for attitude-consistent articles over counter-attitudinal articles in terms of the number of articles clicked, but not in terms of the time spent on articles, and they also evaluated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles. The results partially supported our hypothesis that defense motivation lead to a preference for attitude-consistent information over counter-attitudinal information, both in exposure and perception in the defense motivation only group.

For the accuracy motivation, there was no main effect of accuracy motivation on selective exposure or selective perception thus, there was no mediating effect of accuracy motivation on selective exposure and selective perception. When we look at specific experimental groups, accuracy only group (those who were not partisans in Condition A) spent similar time on attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles, and they also conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. Thus, we can tentatively say the hypothesis on accuracy motivation was partially supported in the accuracy only group.

Finally, information utility motivation had no main effect on selective exposure index or selective perception index, thus no mediation effect has been found between information utility motivation on selective exposure and selective perception. For information utility motivation only groups (those who were not strong partisans in Condition B and C), when congenial information was more useful, participants were more likely to click on and spend time on congenial information than counter-attitudinal information. They engaged more selective perception than their counterparts in the control group; when articles on both sides were equally useful, participants still engage selective exposure in terms of both the number of articles clicked and time spent on articles. They engaged less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. This showed that information utility had an effect on selective perception but is not a reliable predictor of selective exposure. Accordingly, we cannot conclude that information utility motivation had any mediating effect on the relationship between selective exposure and selective

perception.

The findings of the study suggest that it is likely that there is a link between selective exposure and selective perception based on motivation. However, as the relationship only exists within specific groups and was not consistent across all motivations, a link between selective exposure and selective perception was not established.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of motivation on selective exposure and selective perception among strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans. Results showed that in general, people preferred like-minded information to counter-attitudinal information and evaluated the former to be higher in credibility than the latter. This finding is consistent with previous findings on selective exposure and selective perception (Knoblock-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Koziellecki, 1966). The finding still held when the analysis was run with strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans separately. Both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans showed a preference of attitude-consistent information over counter-attitudinal information. For instance, strong partisans spent thirty-two percent more time on attitude-consistent articles than on counter-attitudinal articles. Those who were not strong partisans also spent twenty-nine percent more time on attitude-consistent articles than on counter-attitudinal articles. Both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans rated the attitude-consistent articles higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles.

When motivations were manipulated by giving different instructions, the selection pattern changed. For the accuracy motivation only group (Condition A), strong partisans still conduct selective exposure in terms of exposure time, but clicked on more counter-attitudinal articles than attitude-consistent articles. On the other hand, those who were not strong partisans in Condition A still conduct selective exposure in

terms of the number of articles read but spent similar amount of time on attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles. Taken together, results on article viewing time supported our hypotheses that accuracy motivation can lead to less selective exposure and defense motivation overrode accuracy motivation in predicting selective exposure. However, in terms of the number of articles clicked, accuracy motivation and the combination of accuracy motivation and defense motivation cannot reliably predict selective exposure. In terms of selective perception, both strong partisans and nonpartisans rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles. Both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans in Condition A conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. This showed accuracy motivation was effective in changing selective perception pattern and accuracy motivation can override defense motivation in affecting selective perception.

For information utility motivation only groups (B and C), when attitude-consistent information was more useful than counter-attitudinal information (Condition B), both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans conducted selective exposure and selective perception. Strong partisans conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group while those who were not strong partisans conducted more selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. When attitude-consistent information was equally useful as counter-attitudinal information (Condition C), both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans still conducted selective exposure, which was contrary to

our hypotheses. Strong partisans in Condition C conducted more selective perception than their counterparts in the control group while those who were not strong partisans conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. This finding was consistent with our hypothesis on selective perception. Taken together, these findings suggested that information utility motivation cannot reliably predict the selective exposure pattern or the selective perception pattern of both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans.

When accuracy motivation and information utility motivation was combined, the results were mixed. In Condition D (the accuracy plus both sides equally useful motivation condition), both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans clicked on more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles yet spent similar amount of time on both sides. In terms of selective perception, both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans in Condition D rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles. Both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. These results showed that the combination of accuracy motivation and information utility (both sides information useful) was effective in changing people's selective exposure pattern (only in terms of exposure time) and selective perception pattern and the combination motivation overrode defense motivation in affecting selective exposure and selective perception.

In Condition E (the accuracy plus attitude-consistent information more useful than counter-attitudinal information motivation condition), both strong partisans and

those who were not strong partisans clicked on more attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles. Strong partisans spent similar amount of time on both sides. Those who were not strong partisans spent more time on attitude-consistent articles than counter-attitudinal articles. These results were generally consistent with our hypotheses that information utility motivation override accuracy motivation in affecting selective exposure, and the additive defense motivation and information utility motivation also overrides accuracy motivation in affecting selective exposure. In terms of selective perception, both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans in Condition E rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles. Strong partisans conducted less selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. Those who were not strong partisans conducted more selective perception than their counterparts in the control group. Taken together, the results showed that combination of accuracy motivation and information utility (attitude-consistent information more useful than counter-attitudinal information) cannot reliably predict selective perception, nor can the combination of defense motivation, accuracy motivation and information utility (attitude-consistent information more useful than counter-attitudinal information) reliably predict selective perception.

Finally, in the control group, for defense motivation only group (strong partisans in the control group), strong partisans still conduct selective exposure in terms of the number of articles clicked, but spent similar time on attitude-consistent articles and counter-attitudinal articles. They rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in

credibility than counter-attitudinal articles. Those who were not strong partisans conducted selective exposure both in terms of the number articles clicked and in terms of time spent on articles, and they also rated attitude-consistent articles to be higher in credibility than counter-attitudinal articles.

In sum, the results showed that accuracy motivation alone and the combination of accuracy motivation and defense motivation can reduce selective exposure and selective perception. Information utility motivation alone and the combination of information utility motivation and defense motivation cannot reliably predict selective exposure or selective perception. When accuracy motivation and information utility were combined, information utility overrode accuracy in predicting selective exposure. The combination of accuracy motivation and information utility motivation cannot reliably predict selective perception. The combination of accuracy motivation, information utility motivation and defense motivation cannot reliably predict selective exposure or selective perception. No consistent link was established between selective exposure and selective perception.

These findings have both theoretical and practical implications for selective exposure and selective perception. In terms of theory advancement, previous studies have investigated the effect of accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility's motivation on selective exposure in different studies. This study is the first attempt to examine three motivations' comparative effect and their additive effect on selective exposure *and* selective perception in one study. The results generally supported theory of motivated reasoning in that most of the hypotheses

related to accuracy motivation and defense motivation were supported. Hart et al. (2009)'s addition of information utility motivation was partially supported and partially rejected. When two or three motivations are combined together, some combinations yielded the intended selection change, but other combinations were not as successful.

The practical implications of the findings are fourfold. Firstly, the finding that accuracy motivation can change the selective exposure pattern and selective perception pattern for both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisan is good news. Many scholars are worried that in a highly polarized American media environment, if people only selectively expose themselves to like-minded information, the society might become even more polarized than it already is (Mutz, 2002; Prior, 2007; Sunstein, 2001). This finding showed that if we were to create campaigns to advocate for accurate political judgments, we can potentially change this selection bias. The working of accuracy motivation may not depend on the money incentive, but on the priming of the word "accurate." As this was an online study, participants might not have bought the idea that they would indeed receive \$20 for giving the most "accurate" judgments. By priming them to view the website in an "accurate" view, they tended to spend equal amounts of time on both sides of the issue or even more time on counter-attitudinal articles. If this priming explanation were true, then media practitioners can take advantage of this priming effect and write news headlines and leads advocating accuracy.

Secondly, the findings on information utility motivation showed that we can

potentially use information utility motivation to change the selective perception pattern of people who were not enthusiastic about politics. By making both sides of an argument equally useful for the audience, we can lead the audience favor less of attitude-consistent information and escalate their judgment towards counter-attitudinal information.

Thirdly, combining several motivations at the same time may confuse people and the opposite forces may cancel each other's effect, making the result unpredictable. Therefore it is recommended to give motivation instructions one at a time.

Finally, though we failed to find a direct link between selective exposure and selective perception, we still found motivations have separate effects on selective exposure and selective perception. The results pointed to the possibility that selective exposure and selective perception may be two processes that are separate from each other. Frey (1986) argued that selective perception was generated from within, not as a result of selective exposure. Even though the two processes may not be directly linked, the good news is through motivation manipulation, we may be able to change both the selective exposure pattern and selective perception pattern. Even though people still engage in selective perception with accuracy motivation and information utility motivation (both sides useful condition), but they engaged in relatively less selective perception under these motivation instructions. This relative selective media perception change may still be not enough to reverse people's selective perception pattern, but over time, it could potentially make people's political attitude less extreme and even change their political attitude.

The experimental design of the current study offered a clean environment to detect the effect of different motivations on selective exposure and selective perception. However, when interpreting the results, we also need to take into considerations the drawbacks of the experimental design.

First, participants in this study were shown both attitude-consistent and counter-attitudinal articles side by side. In everyday life, people are less likely to be exposed to articles on both sides at the same time. They can selectively subscribe to only like-minded political media. Accordingly, there is a higher chance of viewing counter-attitudinal information in this study than in the real world.

Second, the design of the study required participants to read and evaluate articles on the experiment website for six minutes. During the six minutes, participants were captive audiences who had to read articles, even though they might not be interested in some or any of the articles they selected. For those who read quickly, they might have finished reading all the articles they were interested in, but the six-minute time limit had not ended, they might have clicked on articles that they were not interested in reading, just to wait for the next step. This possibility also points out that there was a higher chance of selecting counter-attitudinal articles in this study than in the real world. This problem can be addressed by allowing participants to spend as much time as they want on the website. Yet this may bring out another problem: careful participants may want to click on all eight articles to finish the task of evaluating articles without being interested in any of them while participants who are not very serious about the study may choose not to read any of the articles. Weighing the pros

and cons of the two options, giving participants a time limit is considered a better choice than giving no time limit, though we need to take the limitations of time limit into consideration.

Third, because the study was an online experiment, the researcher cannot know whether participants actually read the articles they clicked, or they simply clicked on the articles and paused to do other business and then returned to click on another article. Future research can address this limitation by bringing participants to the lab so that their behavior can be monitored closely. In the lab, researchers can take notes on whether the participants are actually reading the articles when they click on the articles. They can also take notes on whether there are environmental factors that affect participants' article selection and reading. For instance, whether there are background noises during the experiment, whether the participants were in a rush to leave for an important exam, etc. These factors are important to participants' mood and patience. If we can catch these abnormal data and remove them from the analysis, the results could be more accurate than the current online study without monitoring.

Overall, this study provided clear evidence that people showed a preference for like-minded information over counter-attitudinal information, both in exposure and perception, both for strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans. Of the three motivations under study (accuracy motivation, defense motivation and information utility motivation), accuracy motivation was found to have the most consistent effect in reducing selective exposure for both strong partisans and those who were not strong partisans. Defense motivation, information utility motivation and

the combination of two or three motivations yielded inconsistent or even opposite effect. No consistent relationship between selective exposure and selective perception was detected.

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APPENDIX A. PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Step 1 is a survey that will take about 10 minutes. Please consider the questions carefully and finish all questions at once. If you stop for too long, the system will automatically time out your session.

First Name_____Last name (family name)_____

Please type in your preferred email address_____

Q1. For which class do you want your participation to count as extra credit?

Q2. Who referred you to participate in this study?

First Name_____

Last name (family name)_____

Q3. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or something else?

1. Republican

2. Democrat

3. Independent

4. Other_____

If Q5=1 or Q=2, then go to Q6:

Q4. Do you consider yourself a strong or not a very strong: Republican / Democrat?"

(Based on Q5, if the answer is Republican, the question will show Republican, if the answer is Democrat, the question will show Democrat)

1. Strong

2. Not very strong

If Q5=3 or 4, then go to Q7

Q5. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?

1. Republican Party

2. Democratic Party

Q6. Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as very conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, or very liberal?

1. Very conservative

2. Somewhat conservative

3. Moderate

4. Somewhat liberal

5. Very liberal

Q7. The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

1. Ideology

2. Media use

3. Name

4. Age

Q8. Please indicate your feelings toward the following subjects using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the subject. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the subject and that you don't care

too much for that subject. You would rate the subject at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the subject. Please rate your feeling toward Barack Obama from 0 to 100.

Q9. Please indicate your feelings toward the following subjects using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the subject. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the subject and that you don't care too much for that subject. You would rate the subject at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the subject. Please rate your feeling toward the Republican Party from 0 to 100.

Q10. Please indicate your feelings toward the following subjects using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the subject. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the subject and that you don't care too much for that subject. You would rate the subject at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the subject. Please rate your feeling toward the Democratic Party from 0 to 100.

POLITICAL EFFICACY

Q11. Please indicate if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement:

Sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.

Q12. Please indicate if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement:

I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

Q13. Please indicate if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement:

People like me have no say over what the government does.

Q14. Please indicate if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement:

Public officials don't care much what people like me think.

POLITICAL INTEREST

Q15. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you?

How interested were you in information in news about presidential election last year?

1. Extremely interested
2. Very interested
3. Moderately interested
4. Slightly interested
5. Not interested at all

Q16. How interested are you in information about what's going on in government and politics?

1. Extremely interested
2. Very interested
3. Moderately interested
4. Slightly interested
5. Not interested at all

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Q17. To the best of your knowledge, do you happen to know how Supreme Court justices are chosen?

1. Nominated by congressional committee
2. Elected
3. Nominated by president and confirmed by Senate
4. Appointed by two-thirds of justices
5. Don't know

Q18. Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the United States House of Representatives?

1. Democratic
2. Republican
3. Don't know

Q19. How much of a majority is required for the US Senate and House to override a presidential veto?

1. One-third
2. Two-thirds
3. All
4. Other _____
5. Don't know

Q20. Who has the final responsibility to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?

1. President
2. Congress
3. Supreme Court

Q21. How many days in the past week did you see news on broadcast or cable television? This includes seeing programs on television, on the Internet, your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

0-7

Q22. How many days in the past week did you hear news on the radio? This includes hearing the shows on the radio, or on the Internet, your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

0-7

Q23. How many days in the past week did you read a newspaper for news? This includes reading a paper copy of the newspaper, an online copy, or a newspaper item downloaded on your cell phone, iPod, or PDA.

0-7

Q24. How many days in the past week did you see or hear news on the Internet? This may include accessing the Internet through your cell phone, iPod, or PDA, etc.

0-7

Q25. What is your age? _____

Q26. I think of myself as:

1. Male

2. Female

3. Other _____

Q27. What is your race?

1. White or white Hispanic

2. Black, African American, or black Hispanic

3. Asian

4. American Indian

5. Hispanic, no race given

6. Mixed race

7. Other

Q28. How many years of school have you completed?

Q29. What is your marital status?

1. Married

2. Divorced

3. Single

4. Other _____

Q30. Last year, what was the total income before taxes of all the people living in your house or apartment?

1. Less than \$10,000

2. \$10,000 to less than \$15,000
3. \$15,000 to less than \$25,000
4. \$25,000 to less than \$35,000
5. \$35,000 to less than \$50,000
6. \$50,000 to less than \$75,000
7. \$75,000 to less than \$100,000
8. \$100,000 to less than \$150,000
9. \$150,000 or more

Q31. If Q6= strong Republican/Democrat then, they will be grouped into partisan group. All others will be grouped into those who are not strong partisans group. Strong partisans will be randomly assigned to the 6 conditions and those who are not strong partisans will be randomly assigned to the 6 conditions as well.

Condition A (those who have high accuracy motivation and no information utility motivation):

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. Right now, we are only concerned with your opinion of the articles in this website. Please spend 5 minutes browsing the website.

After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you find most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition A). The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

- A. By making the most critical evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.
- B. By making the smartest evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.
- C. By making the most intelligent evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.
- D. By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

Correct answer: D. By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card. They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: "Please read the instructions carefully." If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: "Thank you for reading the instructions carefully."

Condition B: Participants who have low accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent information is more useful than counter-attitudinal information would be told that they would be asked to write an article that is consistent with their party identification:

Condition B1: If participants are Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party, the instruction will be:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 5 minutes browsing the website.

After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.” We will edit it and add it to the forum.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition B1): The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

- A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.”
- D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to expect of Obama’s second term presidency.”

Correct answer: B. They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

Condition B.2: If participants are Republican or lean toward the Republican Party, they will be asked to write about things to worry about the new president. The instructions will state:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 5 minutes browsing the website. After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you.

In the questionnaire, please write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.” We will edit it and add it to the forum.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition B2): The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

- A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.”
- D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to expect of Obama’s second term presidency.”

Correct answer: C. They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

Condition C: Participants who have low accuracy motivation is low and for whom both sides information is equally useful will be told that they will write an article debating about whether the Obama will do a good job for his second term. The instructions will state:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added.

After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire, please write an article about “whether Obama’s second term presidency will be successful.” We will edit and add it to the forum.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition C). The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

- A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”
- C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.”
- D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “whether Obama’s second term presidency will be successful.”

Correct answer: D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “whether Obama’s second term Presidency will be successful.” They will be

given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

Condition D: Participants who have high accuracy motivation and for whom counter-attitudinal information is as useful as attitude-consistent information will be told that they will write an article debating about whether the Obama would do a good job for his second term with money incentive. The instructions will state:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you.

In the questionnaire, please write an article debating about “whether Obama’s second term presidency will be successful.”

Please make as accurate evaluations as possible. Please justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition D). The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.”

B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.”

C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term Presidency.”

D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “whether Obama’s second term Presidency will be successful.”

Correct answer: D. They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

Participants in Condition E (for those who have high accuracy motivation and for whom attitude-consistent consistent information was more useful than counter-attitudinal information) will be told that they would be asked to write an article that was consistent with their partisanship:

Condition E1: if participants were Democrats or leaned closer to the Democratic Party, the instruction would state:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 5 minutes browsing the website. After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you.

In the questionnaire, please write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency.”

Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.

Question (Condition E1): The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to expect of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card.

Correct answer: B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, I will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card. They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment will appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

Condition E2: If participants are Republican or lean to the Republican Party, they will be asked to write about things to worry about the new president. The instructions will state:

Please read the following instruction carefully.

You are invited to evaluate an online news magazine, the National Politics Forum, which is still under construction. The picture and other parts are yet to be added. Please spend 5 minutes browsing the website.

After 5 minutes, a questionnaire (step 3) will upload automatically for you. In the questionnaire (step 3), please write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency.”

Please make as accurate evaluations as possible and justify all your evaluations with good arguments. We will rate the 10 best comments to add them into the forum and the writers of the best comments will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

Please note, time does not allow you to read all the articles, thus you should just browse the articles that you found most interesting, as you normally would.”

Question (Condition E2): The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

A. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the negative prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations, the best writers will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

B. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, the best writers will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, the best writers will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

D. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to expect of Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, the best writers will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

Correct answer: C. After browsing the website, I will be asked to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term Presidency.” By making the most accurate evaluations of the article, the best writers will be given a \$20 Amazon gift card each.

They will be given the correct answer no matter what they answer. If they answer it wrong, a comment will appear: “Please read the instructions carefully.” If they answer it correct, a comment appear: “Thank you for reading the instructions carefully.”

The control group will not receive any instructions.

APPENDIX B. POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Depending on which group they are assigned to, they will receive different instructions:

For those who are Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party and assigned to Condition B or Condition E, the first question will be:

Q1 Please give your opinion about the positive prospects of Obama's second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.

For those who were Republicans or leaned toward the Republican Party and assigned to Condition B or Condition E, the first question was:

Q2 Please give your opinion about what to worry about Obama's second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.

For those who were assigned to condition A, C, D and F, the first question will be:

Q3 Please give your opinion on whether Obama will do a good job in his second term presidency. Note: please provide some justifications for your opinion.

Q4. Please provide your feedback toward the National Politics Forum.

What bugs did you detect during your view of the website? Do you have any suggestions to make the website better?

TAX

Q5. In face of the budget crisis or the Fiscal Cliff, some people feel the rich should pay more taxes. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that the rich should be paying the same tax rates as the middle class. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **YOURSELF** on this scale?

Q6. In face of the budget crisis or the Fiscal Cliff, some people feel the rich should pay more taxes. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that the rich should be paying the same tax rates as the middle class. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **BARACK OBAMA** on this scale?

Q7. Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way Barack Obama is handling tax?
 _____ Obama's handling of tax (1=extremely oppose—extremely favor=5)

Q8. How important to you personally is the issue of tax?
 _____ Importance (1=not at all important—extremely important=5)

Q9. How certain are you that your opinions about the issue of tax are right?
 Certainty (1=not at all certain—extremely certain=5)

HEALTH CARE

Q10. There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **YOURSELF** on this scale?

_____ Yourself (1=Govt insurance plan--Private insurance plan=5)

Q11. There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **BARACK OBAMA** on this scale?

_____ BARACK OBAMA on health care (1=Govt insurance plan--Private insurance plan=5)

Q12. Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way Barack Obama is handling health care?

_____ Obama's handling of health care (1=extremely oppose—extremely favor=5)

Q13. How important to you personally is the issue of health care?

_____ Importance (1=not at all important—extremely important=5)

Q14. How certain are you that your opinions about health care are right?

Certainty (1=not at all certain—extremely certain=5)

ABORTION

Q15. There is much debate about abortion. Some people feel abortion should be available to anyone who wants it. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that Abortion should not be permitted under any circumstances. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **YOURSELF** on this scale?

_____ Yourself (1=Pro choice—Pro-life=5)

Q16. There is much debate about abortion. Some people feel abortion should be available to anyone who wants it. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that Abortion should not be permitted under any circumstances. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, or 4.

Where would you place **BARACK OBAMA** on this scale?

_____ Barack Obama(1=Pro choice—Pro-life=5)

Q17. The following question is for quality control purpose. Please answer what the last page you just read is about:

- A. Which number of the scale about HEALTH CARE comes closest to Barack Obama's view.
- B. Which number of the scale about TAX comes closest to Barack Obama's view.
- C. Which number of the scale about ABORTION comes closest to Barack Obama's view.
- D. Which number of the scale about GUN POLICY comes closest to Barack Obama's view.

Q18. Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way Barack Obama is handling abortion?

_____ Obama's handling of abortion (1=extremely oppose—Extremely favor=5)

Q19. How important to you personally is the issue of abortion?

_____ Importance (1=not at all important—Extremely important=5)

Q20. How certain are you that your opinions about abortion are right?

Certainty (1=not at all certain—extremely certain=5)

GUN CONTROL ISSUE

Q21. Do you think the federal government should make it MORE DIFFICULT for people to buy a gun than it is now (at point 5), make it EASIER for people to buy a gun (at point 1), or keep these rules ABOUT THE SAME as they are now (at point 3)?

_____ Your view on gun (1= Make it easier—More difficult=5)

Q22. What do you think is Barack Obama's gun policy: make it MORE DIFFICULT for people to buy a gun than it is now (at point 5), make it EASIER for people to buy a gun(at point 1), or keep these rules ABOUT THE SAME as they are now(at point 3)?

_____ Obama's view on gun (1= Make it easier—More difficult=5)

Q23. Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way Barack Obama is handling gun control?

_____ Obama's handling of gun control (1=extremely oppose—5=extremely favor)

Q24. How important to you personally is the issue of gun control?

_____ Importance (1=not at all important—extremely important=5)

Q25. How certain are you that your opinions about gun control are right?

Certainty (1=not at all certain—extremely certain=5)

NEED FOR CLOSURE SCALE

Q26. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

“When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.”

(1 to 5)

Q27. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

“When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.”

(1 to 5)

Q28. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

“I always see many possible solutions to problems I face.”

(1 to 5)

Q29. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

“I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.”

(1 to 5)

Q30. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

“Even after I've made up my mind about something, I am always eager to consider a different opinion.”

(1 to 5)

NEED FOR COGNITION

Q31. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: “I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.”

(1 to 5)

Q32. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: “Thinking is not my idea of fun.”

(1 to 5)

Q33. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: “I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.”

(1 to 5)

Q34. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements: “I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.”

(1 to 5)

Q35. Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this research on the effect of motivation on partisan selective exposure and selective perception. The extra credit will be posted by the last week of this semester. As this study is still on-going, please do not disclose any information about the study to anyone.

Activities and Purpose

During this research, you were asked to fill out two surveys and browse an online politics forum. Some people were instructed to make as accurate evaluations as possible, some people were instructed to write an article about “the positive prospects of Obama’s second term presidency,” some people were instructed to write an article about “what to worry about Obama’s second term presidency” and some were instructed to write an article about “whether Obama’s second term presidency will be successful.” There were also some people who did not receive any instructions that serve as a control group. We are interested in learning how these different motivations affect how people seek information and perceive information. Our analyses will help us learn which type of motivation is more effective at reducing selective exposure and selective perception.

Contact Information

If you have questions, you may contact the researcher at wangd877@email.arizona.edu.