WHEN FRIENDS DON'T CARE ABOUT FACTS:

BELONGING MOTIVATION DRIVES UNTRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION SHARING

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Christian Moeykens, who inspires and encourages me to pursue my dreams.

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ABSTRACT

Understanding when and why consumers share untrustworthy information is increasingly important in a digital, social media age where mis- and disinformation pose a significant societal threat. In this context, I suggest a focus on the human motive to belong as a powerful driver of untrustworthy information sharing. Prior work on information processing and transmission has primarily focused on judgmental mistakes or self-directed goals to explain consumer interactions with information that deviate from normatively accurate behavior. In contrast, I look to the digital phenomena of commingled information and social environments to suggest that the motive to belong may have a consequential impact on contemporary information sharing behavior. In six studies I demonstrate that a motive to belong is at the center of untrustworthy information sharing behavior. The studies reveal that holding a motive to belong leads consumers to be just as likely to share information from untrustworthy as compared to trustworthy sources. When consumers believe that the social group with whom they are sharing information values accuracy, untrustworthy information sharing behavior is tempered. The current research suggests that interventions targeting mis- and disinformation would benefit by considering that, from the consumer's point of view, an accuracy motive is auxiliary to the belonging-oriented social information sharing environments we inhabit.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Imagine a person browsing their social media feed comes across an article that they feel one of their friends would enjoy reading. The source, “The National Enquirer”, is displayed in all capital letters underneath the article headline. When deciding whether to share this article with their friend, will the person in this example prioritize their knowledge of the source’s lack of trustworthiness and refrain from sharing, or will they prioritize some other potential benefit and share the article regardless of the source?

Our intuition may tell us it is highly unlikely that a person would share an article promoted by a flagrantly untrustworthy source, especially if this lack of trustworthiness is known to the individual. Decades of research on information processing and transmission support this intuition and lead us to expect that a desire to behave accurately will drive interactions with information (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken 1993). However, this conclusion clashes with the incidences of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news that surround us in a digital, social media age (e.g., Albright 2017; Allcott and Gentzkow 2017; Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018). If people are primarily concerned with accuracy when interacting with information, why do these incidences exist? It is possible that judgmental mistakes are to blame (e.g., Dawes 1976), but this explanation weakens in the face of research that suggests methods that help people correct for mistakes are not entirely effective in halting the spread of misinformation (Ecker, Hogan, and Lewandowsky 2017; Ecker, Lewandowsky, and Tang 2010). In light of this surprising reality, I suggest that consumer researchers should reconsider our own accuracy-orientation and assumptions where interactions with information are concerned.

If we are to consider that people may not be primarily driven by accuracy when interacting with information, where might we look for answers to understand and describe information sharing behavior? One direction would be to look to literature on motivated information processing (for review, see Kunda 1990). This work has investigated how information processing is affected by self-based goals, such as self-defense or self-esteem (e.g., Chaiken et al. 1989; Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla, and Chen 1996; Chen, Duckworth, and Chaiken 1999; Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1987) and self-presentation or impression motivation (e.g., Chaiken et al. 1989; Chaiken et al. 1996; Chen et al. 1999). When motivated to be accurate, people tend to employ more complex and lengthy inferential information processing strategies (Kruglanski, 1980; Kruglanski and Ajzen, 1983), but when a person wants to arrive at a particular conclusion, they can distort information to fit that conclusion (Kunda 1990). For example, when told that a given trait (extraversion or introversion) was conducive to academic success, participants in one study were more likely to view themselves as having higher levels of that trait compared to other participants (Kunda and Sanitioso 1989). Such self-serving information biases can be important for mental health (Taylor and Brown 1988) but can be concerning when an outcome or decision is consequential.

Although this work is helpful in understanding interactions with information driven by self-serving motives other than accuracy, I suggest a shift in thinking to focus on a different fundamental driver of human behavior: the need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995). In the age of digital and social media, the Internet provides speedy access to news and other information while simultaneously offering the benefit of social communication and interaction (e.g., Albright 2017; Shirky 2009). The benefit of human connection is not lost on consumers, who report using websites on the Internet to connect and interact with social others (e.g., Haridakis and Hanson 2009). Especially for social networking sites such as Facebook, engagement seems to be primarily driven by a desire to participate in various forms of social interaction (e.g., Joinson 2008). I suggest that the uniquely social nature of the contemporary digital information environment has consequential implications for the motivations that drive consumers in their interactions with information online, especially when that information is potentially untrustworthy. Specifically, I propose that the need to belong and connect with other humans (Baumeister and Leary 1995) will affect whether people prioritize their connections with others over their knowledge of the potential trustworthiness of a piece of information when deciding whether to share the information with others online.

Past research on information processing and transmission has primarily examined the impact of accuracy compared to self-directed goals on interactions with information. For example, this work has demonstrated that information congruent with one's belief system is judged more favorably than information that conflicts with, and threatens, one's belief system (e.g., Lord, Ross, and Lepper, 1979; Pyszczynski and Greenberg, 1987). In contrast, I focus on identifying the relative impact of accuracy compared to belonging goals in sharing environments. In this way, I approach a view of information that is more consistent with early studies on social influence and conformity (e.g., Asch 1951, 1956), in that I see interactions with information as susceptible to direct social influence. However, my work differs from conformity studies in that I do not present situations where consumers are pressured to imitate the inaccurate actions of discernable others. Rather, I present situations in which consumers might, unconsciously and of their own accord, behave in a way that fulfils a belonging goal at the potential cost of neglecting accuracy. I build from a philosophy that defines the human experience of reality – and thus interactions with information that describe and verify this reality – as fundamentally social in nature (Hardin and Higgins 1996). In other words, I view information sharing behavior as a phenomenon that should be studied through the lens of social and belonging motives, especially if the ultimate outcome is to understand transmission of normatively inaccurate information. By encouraging this shift in thinking about the important consumer resource of information, I break a boundary long held by information researchers in the fields of marketing and economics. If we are to address the question of misinformation in a world of digital social media, where social others play a prominent role in consumer interactions with information, we must begin to think deeply and systematically about the need to belong. In the next section, I outline my view of information, contrasting the research on belonging and shared reality with research that prioritizes accuracy. I then test the conceptual framework to determine whether and how a motivation to belong affects the spread of untrustworthy information. The results of six studies all suggest that the default state for sharing information with others revolves around a need to belong rather than an innate need to be accurate. Moreover, absent an artificially induced accuracy cue, being motivated to belong leads consumers to be more likely to share untrustworthy information, even when the information is recognized to be untrustworthy.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

(Faulty) Human Computers or (Socially) Functional Consumers?

Information has been conceptualized as a resource, or commodity, that has value and can be exchanged in the marketplace (e.g., for review, see Cooper 1983; Eaton and Bawdin 1991; MacInnis 2017). Traditionally, the value of information has been associated with improvements in problem-solving (e.g., Brinberg 1982; Marschak 1968) and uncertainty reduction (e.g., Repo 1989).When consumers make decisions that fail to maximize the likelihood they will be correct, they are thought of as “faulty computer[s]” (e.g., Dawes 1976), “naïve scientists” (Kelly 1969) or “cognitive misers” (Fiske and Taylor 1991). For example, failure to collect information before voting has been blamed on lack of cognitive resources (Redlawsk 2004). Aside from this view of humans-as-machines, there may be many other explanations for a “failure” to interact with information in a normatively accurate manner. From a motivational perspective, consumers may simply hold other, more salient desires. For example, much research explores the information processing impact of holding the goals to defend one’s beliefs and opinions, or to convey a particular impression of those beliefs and opinions to other people (Chaiken et al. 1989; Chaiken et al. 1993; Ditto and Lopez 1992; Hilton and Darley 1991; Kunda 1990; Liberman and Chaiken 1992; Neuberg et al. 1993; Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1987; Schlenker and Weigold 1992; Stangor and Ford 1992). In the current work, I look to the recent phenomena of online information environments and digital social media to suggest that one important and underexplored value of information lies in the promotion of social relationships.

From the beginning, the Internet has been a domain wherein information reigns supreme. Like traditional media, people engage with the Internet for access to news and non-news information (e.g., Atkin, Jeffres and Neuendorf 1998; Lin 2001; LaRose and Eastin 2004). In recent years, the explosion of social networking sites has created an online information environment that is inextricably mingled with a social environment (Lane and Levy 2019; Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade 2004; Parslow 1998). Consumers increasingly report using the Internet for social communication and interaction (e.g., Haridakis and Hanson 2009; Joinson 2008) and describe networking to be the primary focus of their ventures onto social media (e.g., Beer 2008; Chi 2011). Unlike traditional media, people exposed to information online are simultaneously exposed to the views and opinions of hundreds (if not thousands) of other people. Whereas a more social information environment offers the potential benefit of diverse viewpoints (Dahlberg 2011), it also exposes consumers to untrustworthy information from sources that distribute misleading or outright false stories (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). Unfortunately, false news tends to spread much farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than truthful news online (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018).

Unsurprisingly, researchers from a wide variety of disciplines have begun to investigate how consumers respond to false and misinformation, in hopes of developing effective tools to combat its spread. Despite the decades of research which suggest that susceptibility to false or otherwise untrustworthy information is not solely the product of cognitive processing failures (Kunda 1990), an ideological view of consumers as accurate information processors (who fail for a variety of reasons) remains strong. For example, research on susceptibility to misinformation has shown a positive relationship between a consumer's propensity to think analytically and the ability to differentiate fake news from real news (Pennycook and Rand 2018, 2019). The prevalence of this view obscures the potential impact of our human need to function in social information environments, as described above. In contrast to work which focuses on failures of accuracy as the cause of misinformation spread, I look to the role of feeling connected to social others in driving untrustworthy information sharing online.

The Centrality of Social Others to Information Sharing Behavior

Other people are central to our understanding of the worlds around us and within us (Hardin and Higgins 1996; Higgins 1996; Jost, Ledgerwood and Hardin 2008; Sinclair et al. 2005a, 2005b). We form beliefs about ourselves and other people by finding shared realities – agreement with others who also believe what we believe (Hardin and Higgins 1996). These shared realities are especially powerful when formed with those people who are close to us (Echterhoff, Higgins, and Levine, 2009a; Hardin and Higgins 1996) and strongly contribute toward the experience of having a meaningful life (Cornwell, Franks, and Higgins 2017). At the center of our shared realities lie two important fundamental motivations: a relational motive to connect and belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995) and an epistemic motive to make sense of the world (Kruglanski 1989, 1990). By finding agreement with others, we can transform the subjective experience into an "objective" experience and create meaning in (and of) our lives (Hardin and Higgins 1996).

The centrality of the need to belong with others in the way that we shape, organize, and understand information is an important recognition that implies consumers' value for information should extend past normative accuracy and self-interest. The need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister and Leary 1995). To satisfy this drive, we engage in frequent, pleasant interactions with others in the context of stable and enduring relationships where each party is concerned for the other's welfare (Baumeister and Leary 1995). While much work in psychology – from Freud (1930) to Maslow (1968) to Bolby's attachment theory (e.g., 1969, 1973) – has explored the human need to belong, Baumeister and Leary's (1995) "belonging hypothesis" suggests this need prompts the behaviors of frequent social interaction and persistent caring. I find this conceptualization particularly useful in the context of contemporary social media information environments. First, many consumers interact frequently with others via social media (Perrin 2015; Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan 2016). Second, consumers tend to interact the most with their close friends and family members online (Jones et al. 2013), or in other words, people they care about. Especially when sharing information online, consumers seem to focus on their social bonds and relationships. For example, feeling attached and committed to another person online positively affects the amount of information shared to that person (Ma and Chan 2014). This link between bonding and information sharing is also present in marketing contexts. For example, the desire to connect and bond with others is a primary function of word-of-mouth (Berger 2014; Rimé 2009), and consumers with social goals are more likely to spread brand rumors in order to entertain others (Aditya and Darke 2020).

In sum, whereas information exchange has traditionally been considered a vehicle for accumulating and distributing normatively accurate knowledge, much work suggests that information sharing is simultaneously a vehicle for social bonding. In the current work, I explore the implications of holding a motivation to belong on the sharing of untrustworthy information. Because the activation of a goal is determined by the features of the situation and the stream of associations that the situation brings to mind (Bargh 2017), I suggest that the context of information sharing will bring to mind social others and activate a desire to belong. Furthermore, I suggest that holding a belonging motive will lead consumers to prioritize their relationship with social others and deprioritize potential accuracy considerations when sharing information. Although information has the potential to convey knowledge that is normatively accurate, people primarily care about connecting with other people and should thus be less concerned with the potential trustworthiness of what they share. I more fully develop my predictions, below.

Belonging vs. Accuracy: Predictions for Behavioral Conflict and Convergence

The current research investigates the impact of a motivation to belong on the sharing of untrustworthy information. In addition, I investigate the impact of cues that prompt accuracy motivation on sharing untrustworthy information with affiliative groups. In my studies, untrustworthy information is operationalized as article headlines that are normatively accurate (i.e., true), but contain claims that, when paired with an untrustworthy source, could seem implausible. For example, "Teen discovers rare new planet 3 days into NASA internship" paired with the source *The National Enquirer* should strike one as potentially dubious (this perception is confirmed in a series of pre- and post-tests). I compare sharing of these headlines paired with untrustworthy sources (e.g., The National Enquirer) to sharing of the same headlines paired with trustworthy sources (e.g., PBS News). Ambiguous, rumor-like articles have been associated with social goals in the context of brand rumors (Aditya and Darke 2020). On the other hand, implausible evidence has been found to evoke elaborate and critical scrutiny that is the hallmark of a salient accuracy motivation (Sherman and Kunda 1989). Thus, the use of these headlines in a sharing context directly tests the relative impact of belonging and accuracy motivations on the likelihood of sharing untrustworthy information. See table 1 in Appendix A for a full list of the headlines and sources used in the studies.

In this context of information sharing, I predict that a salient motive to belong will lead to behavioral conflict with a motive to be accurate. Because consumers are more sensitive to social cues when they are motivated to belong (Pickett et al. 2004) and behave in line with the expectations of significant others to whom they feel attached (Ryan and Deci 2000), they should be primarily focused on the social value of sharing the information. When focused on the social value of sharing the information, consumers should behave in a way that helps them to connect and bond with other people, for example by spreading entertaining information (Aditya and Darke 2020). In contrast, when motivated to be accurate consumers should behave in a way that helps them to make sense of the world in a normatively objective manner (Kruglanski 1989, 1990). In the case of untrustworthy information sharing, behavior that would satisfy a motive to belong theoretically conflicts with behavior that would satisfy a motive to be accurate. In other words, I expect no difference between the sharing of untrustworthy and trustworthy information when a motive to belong is salient (figure 1).

H1: Consumers with a salient belonging motive will be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to trustworthy articles.

In contrast, when given cues that the affiliative group values accuracy, I predict that a salient motive to belong will lead to behavioral convergence with a motive to be accurate. Because consumers prefer to choose behaviors that satisfy multiple goals when those goals are activated simultaneously (Köpetz et al. 2011; Fernandez and Kruglanski 2019), they should shift their focus to the social value of being accurate when sharing information. Therefore, I expect lower levels of sharing untrustworthy, as compared to trustworthy, information when motives to belong and to be accurate are both salient. In other words, I expect a belonging motive to work in concert with an accuracy motive to drive behavior and reduce the sharing of untrustworthy information.

H2: Consumers with simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives will be less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles.

Because convergent motives for belonging and accuracy could be quite important for reducing the spread of untrustworthy information, I more deeply investigate this relationship. To begin, I consider the strength of the accuracy cue. Stronger or weaker cues in the environment may activate goals, and prompt appropriate behaviors, to a greater or lesser degree (Speigel, Grant-Pillow, and Higgins 2004). Therefore, sharing information with an affiliative group who makes it very clear that the spread of normatively inaccurate information within the group is frowned upon should result in stronger behavioral convergence between motives for belonging and accuracy. In other words, I expect explicit cues that the affiliative group values accuracy, and punishes inaccuracy, to result in even stronger behavioral convergence and further reduce the sharing of untrustworthy information.

H3: An explicit accuracy cue delivered by the affiliative group will amplify the effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, leading consumers to be even less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles.

It would be of practical important to understand not only the impact of a strong accuracy cue delivered by the affiliative group, but also the impact of a weaker accuracy cue. If practitioners and policymakers are concerned with designing interventions to curb the spread of misinformation, it is imperative to ask whether an implicit motive for accuracy would converge or conflict with a motive for belonging. For example, is it enough to simply know that the group members with whom you're sharing value accurate information, in general? Because I expect a salient belonging motive to lead consumers to focus on social others (Pickett et al. 2004; Ryan and Deci 2000) and to be primarily focused on the social value of sharing the information (H1), I predict that an implicitly primed motive for accuracy will result in weak behavioral convergence. Instead, I expect the belonging motive will dominate and drive behavior in a direction that conflicts with accuracy-motivated behavior. This prediction of suppression is central to my theorization and represents an important contribution to the literature by demonstrating the strength of belonging needs in driving the spread of misinformation, but also the bounds of accuracy-based interventions.

H4: A belonging motive will suppress the convergent behavioral effect of an accuracy cue when the cue is implicit, leading consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles compared to trustworthy articles.

Taking the above predictions together, my work tells a story of untrustworthy information sharing that is explained by a strong motivation to belong with other people rather than accuracy-based mistakes. In addition, these predictions suggest that aligning motives for belonging and accuracy can curb untrustworthy information sharing, within certain bounds. To increase confidence in these predictions, and the empirical evidence, I combine my hypotheses into one model. Whereas I expect an explicit accuracy cue delivered by the affiliative group to result in behavioral convergence, and thus less sharing of untrustworthy compared to trustworthy information (H2; H3), I expect that the addition of a social isolation prime will suppress the effect of behavioral convergence created by the explicit accuracy cue. In other words, even after receiving an explicit cue that the affiliation group cares about accuracy, feelings of isolation will increase belonging needs (Baumeister and Leary 1995) that will then suppress accuracy-motivated behavior.

H5: Feelings of isolation will suppress the convergent behavioral effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, compared to when feelings of isolation are absent.

The current research proposes a motivational framework (figure 1) for the sharing of untrustworthy information (i.e., digital articles shared online) by highlighting conflicting and convergent behaviors prompted by the motives for belonging versus accuracy (Lane and Brucks

2018). My findings suggest that consumers who are motivated to belong are just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information (study 1, 3a-4). Artificially inducing a motivation to be accurate can curb sharing of untrustworthy information (studies 1-2b, 4), but only if the accuracy cue is extremely explicit (2a-2b). Furthermore, even with an explicit accuracy cue, consumers who feel isolated (i.e., a lack of belonging) revert to sharing behaviors that are less sensitive to source trustworthiness (study 4). These findings suggest that in an age of digital, social media, consumer research investigations into information sharing behavior will be well-served by a shift away from an accuracy-orientation and towards a focus on the powerful and deep-seated human motivation to belong with others. This shift represents a critical, boundary-breaking step in understanding why consumers share untrustworthy information online and in developing strategies that mitigate the effects that the virtual social others can have on consumers' likelihood of sharing untrustworthy information.

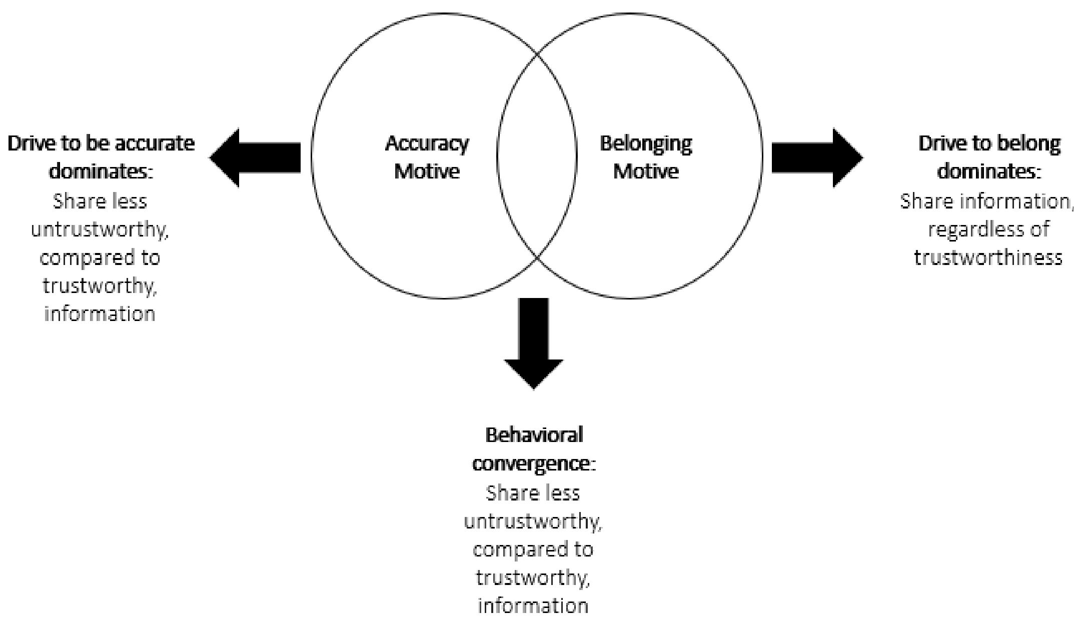

Figure 1. Motivational Framework for Untrustworthy Information Sharing

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

Overview of Studies

I test these hypotheses in five studies. In each of the studies, I activate the motives of belonging and/or accuracy and measure the likelihood of sharing articles with either untrustworthy or trustworthy sources. I initially identified real-world trustworthy and untrustworthy sources based on consumer polls (Chang, 2017; Elder 2017; Eritrea profile 2019; Kovalev 2017; Mitchell et al. 2020) and confirmed these perceptions in posttests at the end of each study. The resulting trustworthy sources include the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, BBC, and PBS, and the untrustworthy sources include the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, and the Funny Times. In study 1, I included a different set of untrustworthy news sources: Rossiya Segondya and Hadas Eritrea, a Russian and an Eritrean state-owned news agency, respectively. Including these foreign news agencies increases the generalizability of the results to sharing information from untrustworthy sources both within and outside of the U.S.

I test hypotheses 1 and 2 by asking participants how likely they would be to share a series of trustworthy versus untrustworthy article headlines with a group of people who value connecting and socializing versus a group of people who value accuracy (studies 1 and 4). I test hypothesis 3 by asking participants how likely they would be to share a series of trustworthy versus untrustworthy article headlines with a group of people who were pre-tested to be perceived as valuing accuracy, but in one condition are explicitly described as being willing to punish inaccuracy (studies 2a-2b). Next, I test hypothesis 4 by comparing article sharing with the group of people who were pre-tested to be perceived as valuing accuracy versus a group of people who were pre-tested to be perceived as valuing belonging (studies 3a-3b). Finally, I test hypothesis 5 by comparing article sharing with a group of people who explicitly punish inaccuracy among participants who have, versus have not, completed an isolation manipulation, and a belonging-motivated control group (study 4). I find that consumers are less sensitive to source trustworthiness when they are motivated to belong versus to be accurate (studies 1 and 4) but more sensitive to source trustworthiness when they have been given an explicit group accuracy cue (studies 2a-2b). Furthermore, a weaker implicit group accuracy cue (studies 3a-3b) and the feeling of isolation (study 4) can suppress sensitivity to source trustworthiness. These findings suggest that a motive for belonging, and not accuracy-based mistakes, drives untrustworthy information sharing. The implications are that consumers tend to be less sensitive to source trustworthiness and just as likely to share information from untrustworthy sources as they are to share information from trustworthy sources. For a summary of the main results, see table 2 in Appendix B.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1

Study 1 provides a preliminary test of the hypotheses that consumers with a salient belonging motive will be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to trustworthy articles (H1), whereas consumers with simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives will be less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles (H2). In this study, the belonging motive condition represents a scenario in which participants are focused on connecting and belonging, whereas the accuracy motive condition represents a scenario in which participants know that other group members care about accuracy. A behavioral conflict with accuracy-based behavior emerges in the former case, because people who are motivated to connect with others should want to share articles (e.g., Ma and Chan 2014), regardless of source trustworthiness. On the other hand, knowing that group members care about accuracy should allow information sharing behavior to converge to satisfy both motives (Kopetz et al. 2011; Fernandez and Kruglanski 2019). In other words, participants in this condition should be less likely to share untrustworthy information in order to serve both accuracy and belonging motives. To manipulate participants' motivation, I ask them to write about the importance of being accurate with, versus affiliating and connecting with, members of their own social group. I then show participants four article headlines and ask them to indicate the extent to which they would share each article with members of their social group. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated source was either trustworthy (WSJ, The Economist) or untrustworthy (Rossiya Segondya, Hadas Eritrea).

Method

Four hundred and one MTurk workers completed this study in exchange for $.70. Eighty-three participants who did not complete the manipulation (i.e., wrote irrelevant responses) were excluded from the analysis. The analysis was conducted on the remaining three hundred and eighteen participants (53.8% female; M_{age} = 39.03 years, *SD* = 12.54). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) between subjects design. Participants were first asked to describe a real scenario involving their own friends and family members. In the Belonging Motive condition, participants were instructed, "Think about how important it is to connect with and support close friends and family. Describe a recent time when information you provided to friends or family members helped you feel more connected to them." In the Accuracy Motive condition, participants were similarly instructed, "Think about how important it is to provide factual and accurate information to close friends and/or family. Describe a recent time when you felt good about accurately informing your friends and/or family members." In this condition, I simultaneously activate an accuracy motive and a belonging motive that can be satisfied through behavioral convergence by emphasizing the importance of being *accurate* for the *affiliative group.* After completing this writing prompt, participants saw a set of four headlines (randomized) and were asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with a friend and/or family member (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Please see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of the headlines used in the studies. Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). In other words, participants saw the same headlines involving either trustworthy or untrustworthy sources. Trustworthy sources included the Wall Street Journal and the Economist, whereas the untrustworthy sources included Rossiya Segondya and Hadas Eritrea. Finally, participants indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (1-Extremely untrustworthy, 8-Extremely trustworthy), answered demographic questions, and were debriefed, thanked, and paid. Source trustworthiness perceptions for the articles that participants were exposed to were always measured (in randomized order) before asking trustworthiness perceptions for articles from the condition they were not exposed to (in randomized order).

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness. Across both conditions, a paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 5.89, SD = 1.40; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.57, SD = 1.43; $t(318) = 21.67$, $p = .000$). This pattern held regardless whether participants were assigned to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 5. 29, SD = 1.49; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.55, SD = 1.47; $t(163) = 15.67$, $p = .000$) or the Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 5.84, SD = 1.30; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.58, SD = 1.39; $t(155)$ = 14.95, $p = .000$), and a one-way ANOVA confirmed that participants in each of these conditions were not significantly different in their perceptions of trustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 5.80, SD = 1.50; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 5.85, SD = 1.26; $F(1, 399) = .10$, $p = .76$), or untrustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 3.71, SD = 1.50; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 3.77, SD = 1.51; $F(1, 399) = .13$, $p = .72$). See figure 2.

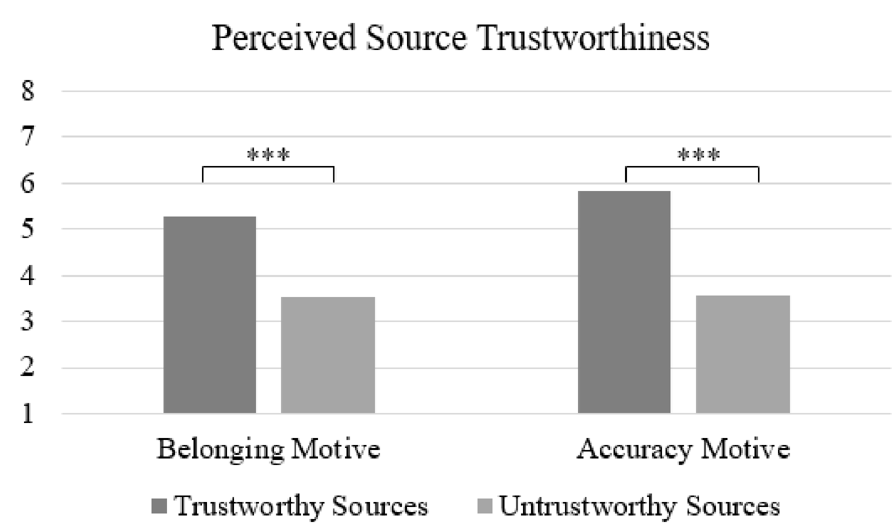

Figure 2. Study 1: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Article Sharing. As predicted, a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) ANOVA on likelihood of article sharing revealed the hypothesized interaction ($F(1, 314) = 4.10$, $p = .04$). Despite their own perceptions of source trustworthiness reported above, participants in the Belonging Motive condition were just as likely to share untrustworthy articles as they were to share trustworthy articles ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.11$, $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.23$, $SD = 1.53$; $F(1, 314) = .22$, $p = .64$). However, the simultaneous activation of an accuracy motive led participants to behave consistently with their perceptions of source trustworthiness, and were less likely to share articles from untrustworthy, as compared to trustworthy, sources ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.26$, $SD = 1.51$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 3.65$, $SD = 1.64$; $F(1, 314) = 5.62$, $p = .02$). Building on these results, although participants were equally likely to share articles from trustworthy sources regardless whether they were assigned to the Belonging Motive or Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive/Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.11$, $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive\ /Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.26$, $SD = 1.51$; $F(1, 314) = .37$, $p = .55$), they were significantly less likely to share articles from untrustworthy sources in the Accuracy Motive condition compared to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive/Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.23$, $SD = 1.53$; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive/Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 3.65$, $SD = 1.64$; $F(1, 314) = 5.02$, $p = .03$). See figure 3.

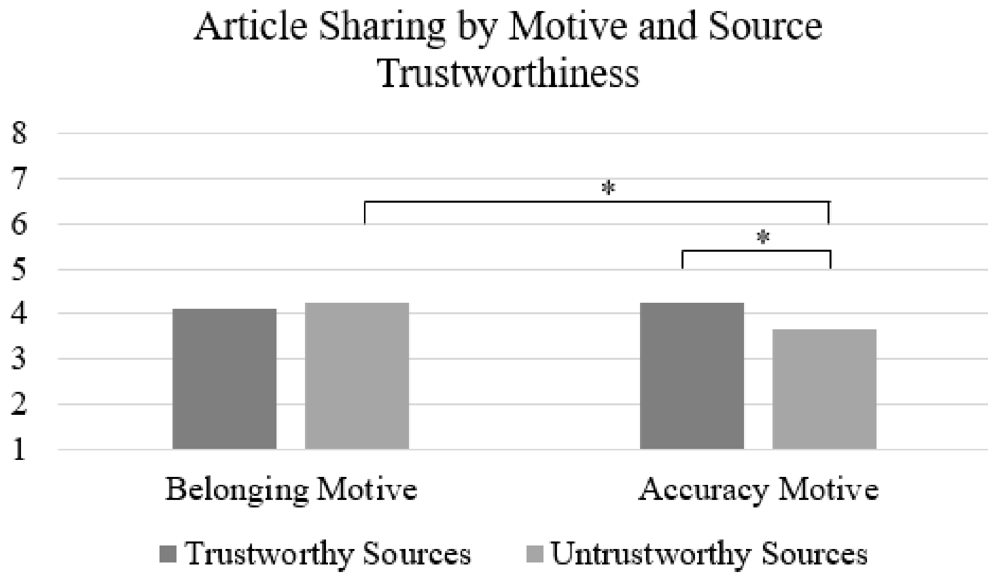

Figure 3. Study 1: Article Sharing by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness, but only shared information in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate, I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

This study highlights the importance of a belonging motive in an information sharing context. The findings provide preliminary evidence that a desire to belong leads consumers to be relatively insensitive to source trustworthiness when sharing information. This effect emerges in the face of consumer's own accurate perceptions about source trustworthiness. Encouraging consumers to consider the social value of accuracy results in sharing behavior that is more consistent with source trustworthiness perceptions, leading to a decrease in sharing information articles from untrustworthy sources. In the rest of the studies, I investigate these effects by randomly assigning participants to share information with groups pretested to have a higher value for belonging compared to a higher value for accuracy. Whereas the manipulation in study 1 allowed participants to write about any information sharing experience with any friend or family member and then allowed participants to indicate likelihood of sharing articles to any friend or family member (not necessarily those listed in the prompt), the manipulations in studies 2-4 better control elements of the relationship and information sharing scenario. Before presenting studies 2-4, I first describe the pretest conducted to determine two different affiliative groups that are perceived by consumers to have either a higher value for belonging or accuracy.

CHAPTER 5: PRETEST FOR MOTIVE MANIPULATION

I designed the motive manipulation pretest to identify a pair of affiliative groups that varied on the perceived value of sharing information that bonds group members compared to sharing information that accurately informs the group. It is important to my theory that participants in all conditions in my studies perceive themselves to desire belonging with the recipient of the information they share. Therefore, I designed descriptions of groups that emphasize the affiliative, social nature of the group. In order to test my hypotheses about the impact of an accuracy motive that results in behavioral convergence with a desire to belong, I decided that one of the groups should be built around an activity or interest that requires group members to be accurate. By comparing information sharing behavior between two such groups, I test the impact of a desire to belong, but also the impact of an accuracy motive that converges with a desire to belong, on the sharing of untrustworthy information

Method

Eighty Amazon Mechanical Turk workers (35% female; M_{age} = 33.75 years, *SD* = 9.61) completed this study in exchange for $.25. Participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario about a trivia night affiliative group or a happy hour affiliative group. Participants in the trivia night affiliative group condition read the following prompt,

> *Imagine you are a long-time member of a trivia night social group. As a dedicated member of this group, you meet at least once a week to participate in trivia competitions at local bars and restaurants. People in this trivia night group compete against other teams on their collective knowledge of a wide range of topics. Trivia competitions involve teamwork, in which group members work together and over time build lasting friendships.*

Participants in the happy hour affiliative group condition read a similar prompt that varied on only a few key phrases,

> *Imagine you are a long-time member of a happy hour social group. As a dedicated member of this group, you meet at least once a week to socialize at local bars and*

restaurants. People in this happy hour group come together to talk about their lives and shared interests. Happy hour groups involve lively conversation, in which group members talk together and over time build lasting friendships.

After reading the affiliative group prompt, participants were then asked to keep their group in mind and answer the following four questions: "When people share information with this group, it is more important that the information is:" (1-Verifiably correct, 6-Entertaining); "How fun would it be to be a member of this group?" (1-Not at all fun, 6-Very fun); "How close are the members of this group?" (1-Not at all close, 6-Very close); "How easy is it to imagine being a member of this group" (1-Not at all easy, 6-Very easy). For the first question, the selection of the scale point "Entertaining" represents a focus on belonging and social goals (Aditya and Darke 2020). Finally, participants answered demographic questions and were debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Results

A one way ANOVA of Motive condition on each of the four questions revealed that participants who read the trivia night group scenario indicated that it would be more important to share information with this group that is verifiably correct (M = 3.2, SD = 1.70) compared to participants in the happy hour affiliative group (M = 4.63, SD = 1.10; $F(1, 78) = 19.83$, p = .000)[1]. However, perceptions of the two groups did not differ on fun ($M_{\text{Trivia Night Affiliative Group}}$ =

[1] The "Information Value" question had a scale of 1-Verifiably correct, 6-Entertaining. Higher scores on this measure indicate the participant thinks it is more important to share entertaining information with the group. Lower scores indicate that the participant thinks it is more important to share verifiably correct information with the group.

4.88, SD = 1.24; $M_{\text{Happy Hour Affiliative Group}}$ = 5.00, SD = 1.06; $F(1, 78) = .23$, $p = .63$), closeness of the group members ($M_{\text{Trivia Night Affiliative Group}}$ = 4.68, SD = .80; $M_{\text{Happy Hour Affiliative Group}}$ = 4.68, SD = 1.02; $F(1, 78) = .00$, $p = 1.00$), or ease of imagining the scenario ($M_{\text{Trivia Night Affiliative Group}}$ = 5.05, SD = 1.01; $M_{\text{Happy Hour Affiliative Group}}$ = 4.90, SD = 1.37; $F(1, 78) = .31$, $p = .58$). See figure 4.

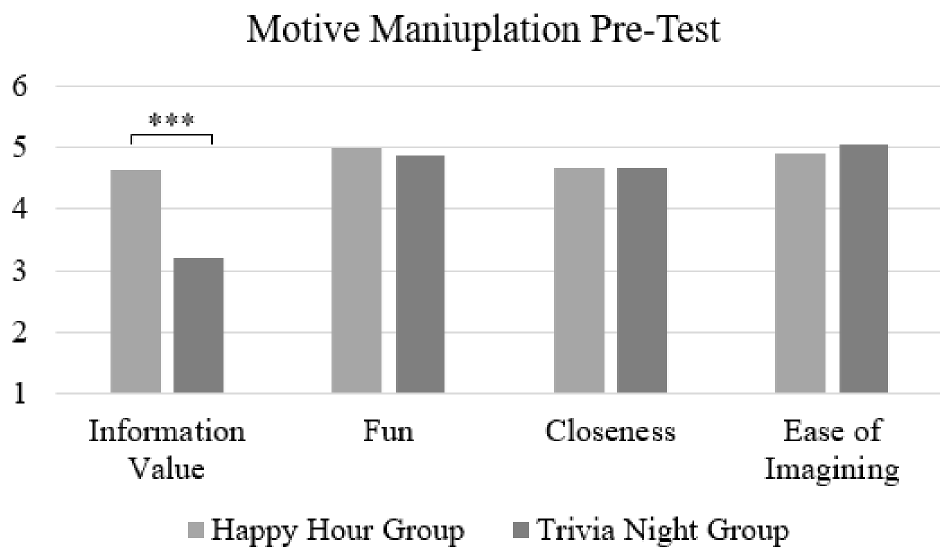

Figure 4. Pre-Test: Motive Manipulation Pre-Test

Discussion

Given the above results, in the remaining studies (2-4) I utilize the trivia night scenario to activate an accuracy-oriented affiliative motivation, and the happy hour scenario to activate a belonging-oriented affiliative motivation. Throughout the studies I will refer to these conditions as the Accuracy Motive condition and Belonging Motive condition, respectively.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2A

Study 2a utilizes the pre-tested Accuracy Motivation manipulation to more deeply pursue the hypothesis that consumers with simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives will be less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles (H2). In this study, I confirm the finding from the study 1 Accuracy Motive condition by comparing likelihood of sharing untrustworthy and trustworthy information with members of the trivia night affiliative group. To ensure participants understand that the group members with whom they are interacting value accuracy, I provided an additional explicit description of the group as being willing to socially punish inaccuracy. Participants were then shown a set of eight article headlines (randomized) and asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with members of the trivia night group. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated sources were either trustworthy (the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, BBC News) or untrustworthy (the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, the Funny Times).

Method

Ninety-seven Prolific workers (59.8% female; M_{age} = 34.09 years, SD = 13.08) completed this study in exchange for $.95. Participants were randomly assigned to either the Trustworthy Source or Untrustworthy Source condition. Participants were first asked to imagine being a member of a trivia night group using the same prompt from the pre-test. To make explicit the importance of accuracy to the trivia night group, an additional description was next presented: "The trivia night group encourages members to contribute interesting facts to use in their competitions, but frowns on members who share items that do not pass a fact check." Thus, participants were given an explicit cue of the group's value for accuracy by indicating that the group socially punishes inaccuracy. After familiarizing themselves with the scenario, participants saw a set of eight headlines and were asked to indicate the extent to which they would share each of the articles with members of the trivia night group (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources that are perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). In other words, participants saw the same headlines involving either trustworthy or untrustworthy sources. Trustworthy sources included the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, and BBC News. Untrustworthy sources included the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, and the Funny Times. Source trustworthiness perceptions for the articles that participants were exposed to were measured (in randomized order) before asking trustworthiness perceptions for articles from the other condition (in randomized order). Finally, participants indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (0-100% trustworthy), answered demographic questions, and were debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness. A paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 75.62%, SD = 16.85%; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 32.66%, SD = 18.73%; $t(96) = 18.31$, $p = .000$). See figure 5.

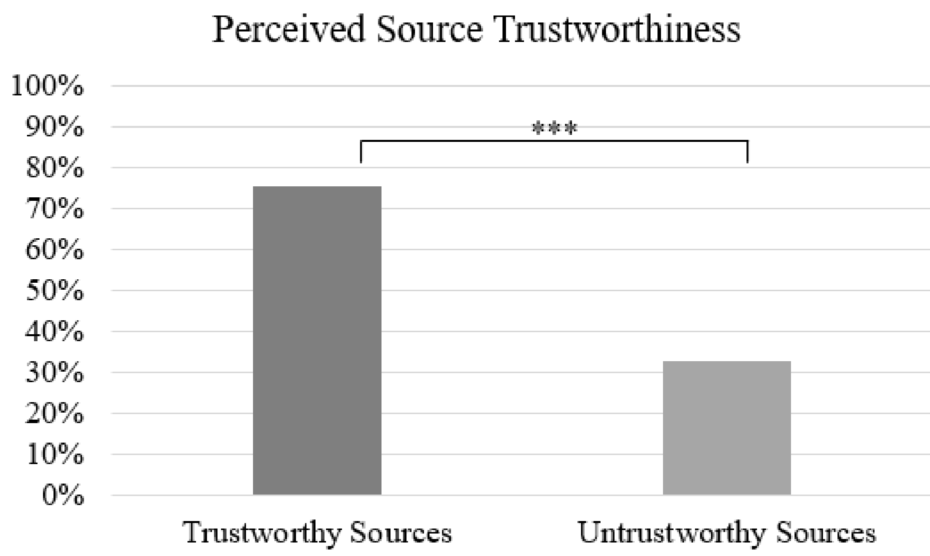

Figure 5. Study 2a: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Source Trustworthiness

Article Sharing. As predicted, a one-way ANOVA revealed that these participants, who simultaneously held accuracy and belonging motives, were more likely to share articles from trustworthy, as compared to untrustworthy, sources ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.91, SD = 1.30; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.07, SD = 1.50; $F(1, 95) = 8.77$, $p = .004$). See figure 6.

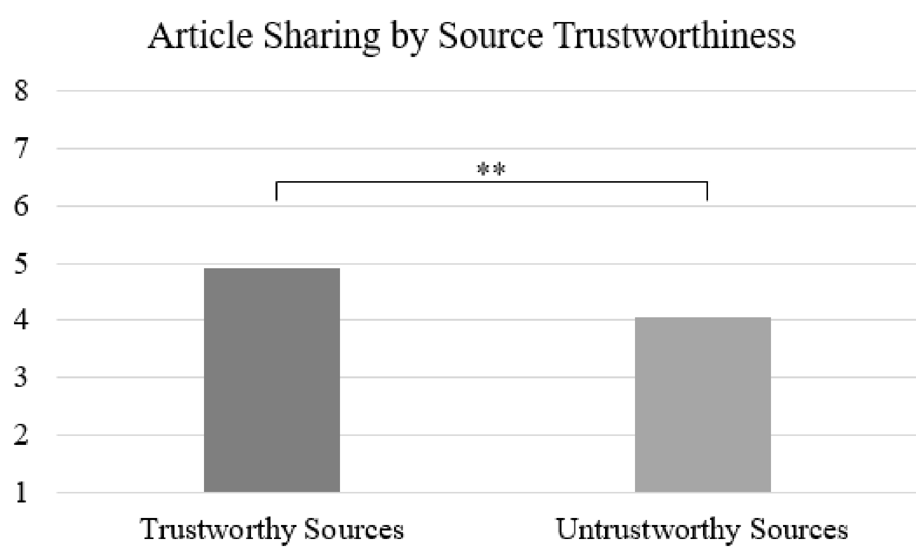

Figure 6. Study 2a: Article Sharing by Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness and shared information in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate, I conducted a mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, Source Trustworthiness condition was the between subjects variable and the within subjects variables included extent of article sharing and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

Using a more controlled manipulation, this study confirms the finding from the study 1 Accuracy Motive condition by comparing likelihood of sharing untrustworthy to trustworthy articles with members of a trivia night affiliative group that was pretested to be perceived as valuing accuracy. When participants are led to explicitly consider the social value of being accurate, and thus simultaneously hold salient belonging and accuracy motives, they are less likely to share articles from untrustworthy, as compared to trustworthy, sources. Although these findings are encouraging, it is of practical importance to understand the impact of a strong affiliation group accuracy motive in comparison to a weaker affiliation group accuracy motive. I compare the relative impact of stronger compared to weaker accuracy motives on untrustworthy information sharing in the next study.

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 2B

Study 2b builds on study 2a to test the hypothesis that an explicit affiliative group accuracy cue will amplify the effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, leading consumers to be even less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles (H3). In other words, this study investigates the relative impact of an explicit, compared to implicit, cue that the affiliative group values accuracy on behavioral convergence with a belonging motive. This question is important for designing untrustworthy information sharing interventions. If untrustworthy information sharing may be curbed by simply knowing that group members with whom an individual is sharing value accurate information, then interventions might focus on encouraging social groups to value and prioritize accuracy. If, however, an explicit reminder that the group is willing to socially punish inaccuracy is necessary (as in study 2a), then interventions might focus instead on encouraging social groups to take action against violators (e.g., exclusion from the group) to curb untrustworthy information sharing. To provide an answer to this question, all participants in the current study read about the trivia night social group from study 2a, but only half of the participants received the addition explicit description of the group as being willing to socially punish inaccuracy. Participants were then shown the same set of eight article headlines (randomized) from study 2a and asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with members of the trivia night group. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated source was either trustworthy (the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, BBC News) or untrustworthy (the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, the Funny Times).

Method

Nine hundred and ninety-eight Prolific workers (48.5% female; M_{age} = 35.40 years, *SD* = 13.06) completed this study in exchange for $.95. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) between subjects design. As in study 2a, participants were first asked to imagine being a member of the trivia night affiliative group pretested to value accuracy. In the Explicit Cue condition, participants were provided with the additional description from study 2a. In the Implicit Cue condition, participants did not receive this additional prompt. After familiarizing themselves with the trivia night affiliative group scenario, participants saw the same set of eight headlines from study 2a and were asked to indicate the extent to which they would share each of the articles with members of the trivia night social group (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources that are perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). The same sources as used in study 2a were used in the current study. Finally, participants indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (0-100% trustworthy), answered demographic questions, and were debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness. Across both conditions, a paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 74, *SD* = 18.53; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 31.89, *SD* = 17.42; *t*(996) = 56.39, *p* = .000). This pattern held regardless of whether participants were assigned to the Explicit Cue condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 74.95, *SD* = 17.83; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 31.74, *SD* = 17.84; *t*(495) = 39.16, *p* = .000) or the Implicit Cue condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 73.04, *SD* = 19.18; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 32.04, *SD* = 17; *t*(500) = 40.62, *p* = .000), and a one-way ANOVA confirmed that participants in each of these conditions were not significantly different in their perceptions of trustworthy articles ($M_{Explicit\ cue}$ = 74.95, *SD* = 17.83; $M_{Implicit\ cue}$ = 73.04, *SD* = 19.18; *F*(1, 996) = 1.2.65, *p* = .10), or untrustworthy articles ($M_{Explicit\ cue}$ = 31.74, *SD* = 17.84; $M_{Implicit\ cue}$ = 32.04, *SD* = 17; *F*(1, 996) = .07, *p* = .79). See figure 7.

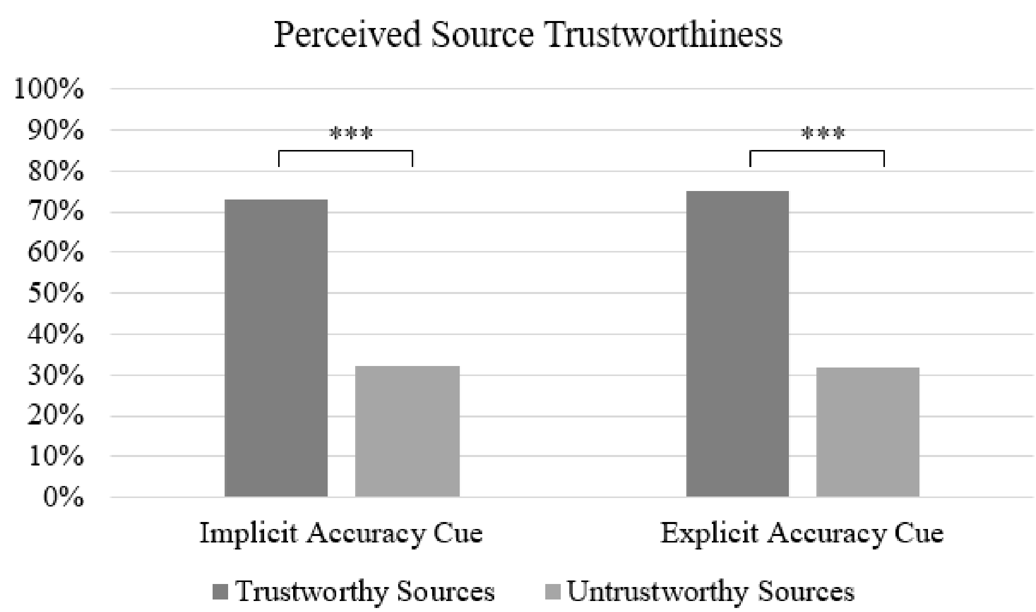

Figure 7. Study 2b: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Article Sharing. As predicted, a 2 (Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) ANOVA on likelihood of article sharing revealed the hypothesized interaction ($F(1, 993) = 9.2$, $p = .002$). Replicating the results from study 2a, participants in the Explicit Cue condition were more likely to share articles from trustworthy, as compared to untrustworthy, sources ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.47$, $SD = 1.30$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.33$; $F(1, 993) = 41.08$, $p = .000$). This effect is mirrored in the Implicit Cue condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.62$, $SD = 1.38$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.36$, $SD = 1.41$; $F(1, 993) = 4.41$, $p = .04$). However, although participants were equally likely to share articles from trustworthy sources regardless whether an explicit or implicit accuracy cue was presented ($M_{Explicit\ cue/Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.47$, $SD = 1.30$; $M_{Implicit\ cue/Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.62$, $SD = 1.38$; $F(1, 993) = 1.41$, $p = .24$), they were significantly less likely to share articles from untrustworthy sources when the explicit accuracy cue was present compared to when an implicit accuracy cue was present ($M_{Explicit\ cue/Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.33$; $M_{Implicit\ Cue/Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.36$, $SD = 1.41$; $F(1, 993) = 30.18$, $p = .000$). See figure 8.

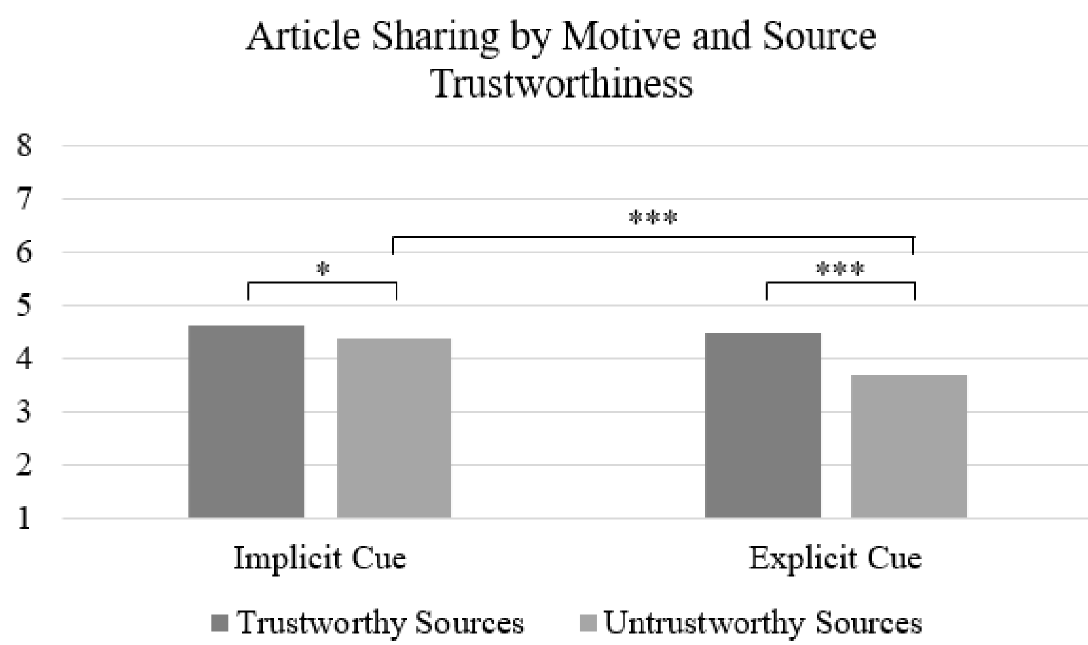

Figure 8. Study 2b: Article Sharing by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness and shared information in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate, I conducted a 2 (Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

Study 2b supports the hypothesis that an explicit accuracy cue delivered by the affiliative group will amplify the effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, leading consumers to be even less likely to share untrustworthy compared to trustworthy articles (H3) as compared to an implicitly primed motive for accuracy. Although participants in both the Explicit Cue and Implicit Cue conditions were less likely to share untrustworthy as compared to trustworthy articles, participants in the Explicit Cue condition were significantly less likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to participants in the Implicit Cue condition. This finding suggests that interventions that not only encourage affiliative groups to value and prioritize accuracy, but also encourage these groups to take action against members who violate this value might be more effective in curbing sharing of untrustworthy information. Because an implicit, compared to explicit, accuracy motive resulted in weaker behavioral convergence with a belonging motive in study 2b, studies 3a and 3b further investigate the reliability of an implicitly primed motive for accuracy in reducing the sharing of untrustworthy information.

CHAPTER 8: STUDY 3A

Study 3a tests the hypothesis that a belonging motive will suppress the convergent behavioral effect of an accuracy cue when the cue is implicit, leading consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles compared to trustworthy articles (H4). In this study, I utilize the belonging motive and accuracy motive manipulations from the pre-test. The accuracy motive manipulation does not include the additional explicit cue that was included in studies 2a and 2b. Although study 2b found a significant difference between sharing untrustworthy and trustworthy information among participants who received an implicit accuracy cue, I wanted to test the robustness of this finding. Because a salient motive to belong should lead consumers to focus on social others (Pickett et al. 2004; Ryan and Deci 2000), it is possible that an implicitly primed value for accuracy does not always results in strong behavioral convergence. As in studies 2a and 2b, after completing the manipulation participants were shown the same set of eight article headlines (randomized) and asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with members of the group to which they have been assigned. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated source was either trustworthy (the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, BBC News) or untrustworthy (the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, the Funny Times).

Method

One thousand one hundred and ninety-six Prolific workers (49.7% female; M_{age} = 36.02 years, *SD* = 11.89) completed this study in exchange for $.95. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) between subjects design. Participants were first asked to imagine being a member of a trivia night social group (Implicit Accuracy Motivation condition) or a happy hour social group (Belonging Motivation condition). In the pretest described earlier, participants recognized the trivia night affiliative group to have a greater value for accuracy, whereas the happy hour affiliative group was recognized to have a greater value for belonging. After familiarizing themselves with the affiliative group scenario, participants saw the same set of eight headlines from studies 2a and 2b and were asked to indicate the extent to which they would share each of the articles with members of the trivia night social group (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources that are perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). The sources were the same as in studies 2a and 2b. Next, participants answered a manipulation check question assessing their perception that the social group to which they were assigned values accuracy compared to belonging ("When people share information with this group, it is more important that the information is:" 1-Verifiably correct, 6-Entertaining) and indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (0-100% trustworthy). Finally, participants answered demographic questions before being debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness and Group Values. Across both conditions, a paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 76.17, *SD* = 18.26; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 33.69, *SD* = 18.07; $t(1195) = 62.27$, $p = .000$). This pattern held regardless of whether participants were assigned to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 75.28, *SD* = 17.89; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 34.35, *SD* = 17.83; $t(597) = 43.15$, $p = .000$) or the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 77.06, *SD* = 18.61; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 33.03, *SD* = 18.29; $t(597) = 45.05$, $p = .000$). Although a one-way ANOVA revealed that participants in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition found trustworthy articles to be marginally more trustworthy than participants in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 75.28, *SD* = 1.89; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 77.06, *SD* = 18.61; $F(1, 1195) = 2.84$, $p = .09$), there was no difference between perceived trustworthiness of untrustworthy articles between condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 34.35, *SD* = 17.83; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 33.03, *SD* = 18.29; $F(1, 1192) = 1.58$, $p = .20$). In addition, a one-way ANOVA revealed that the manipulation was successful[2]: participants assigned to the trivia night group perceived the group to value accuracy more than participants assigned to the happy hour group ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.51, *SD* = 1.38; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 3.22, *SD* = 1.67; $F(1194) = 211.80$, $p = .000$). See figure 9.

[2] Because the scale for this question ranged from 1-Verfiably Correct to 6-Entertaining, lower Mean scores represent a higher perceived value for accuracy.

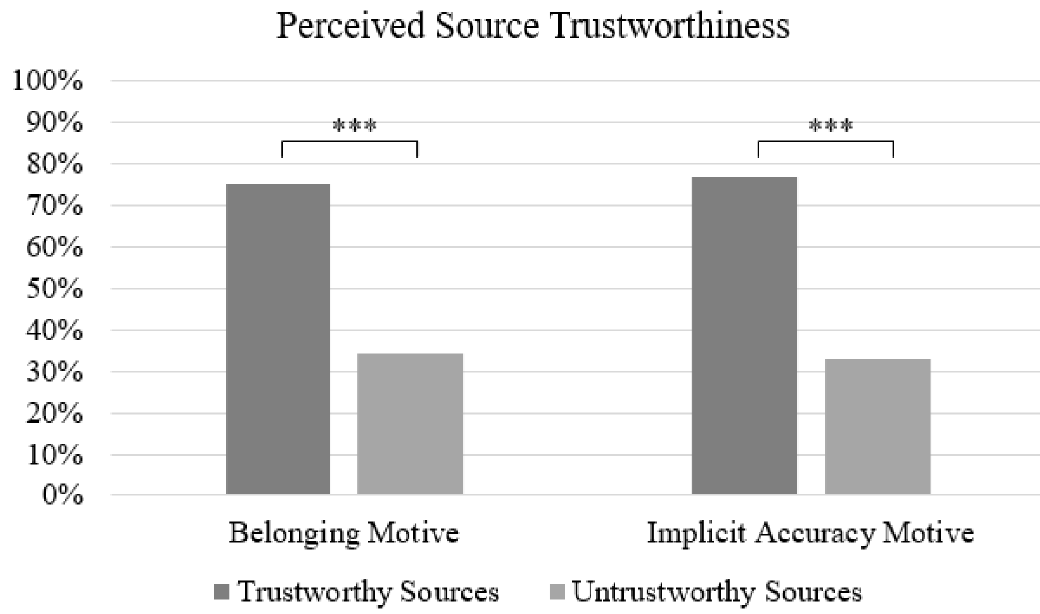

Figure 9. Study 3a: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Article Sharing. A 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) ANOVA on likelihood of article sharing did not reveal a significant interaction ($F(1, 1192) = 1.74$, $p = .19$). Although the interaction is not significant, I report pairwise comparisons that are consistent with the hypotheses. Replicating the Belonging Motive condition from Study 1, despite their own perceptions of source trustworthiness, participants in the Belonging Motive condition were just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they were to share trustworthy information ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.70$, $SD = 1.33$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.70$, $SD = 1.35$; $F(1, 1192) = .007$, $p = .93$). Interestingly, when an Implicit Accuracy Motivation was simultaneously activated, participants were only marginally less likely to share untrustworthy information as they were to share trustworthy information ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.70$, $SD = 1.44$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.55$; $F(1, 1192) = 3.18$, $p = .08$). Building on these results, although participants were equally likely to share articles from trustworthy sources regardless whether they were assigned to the Belonging Motive or Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.70, SD = 1.33; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 4.70, SD = 1.44; $F(1, 1192) = .01$, $p = .93$), they were marginally less likely to share articles from untrustworthy sources in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition compared to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive/Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.70, SD = 1.35; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive/Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.49, SD = 1.55; $F(1, 1192) = 3.15$, $p = .08$). See figure 10.

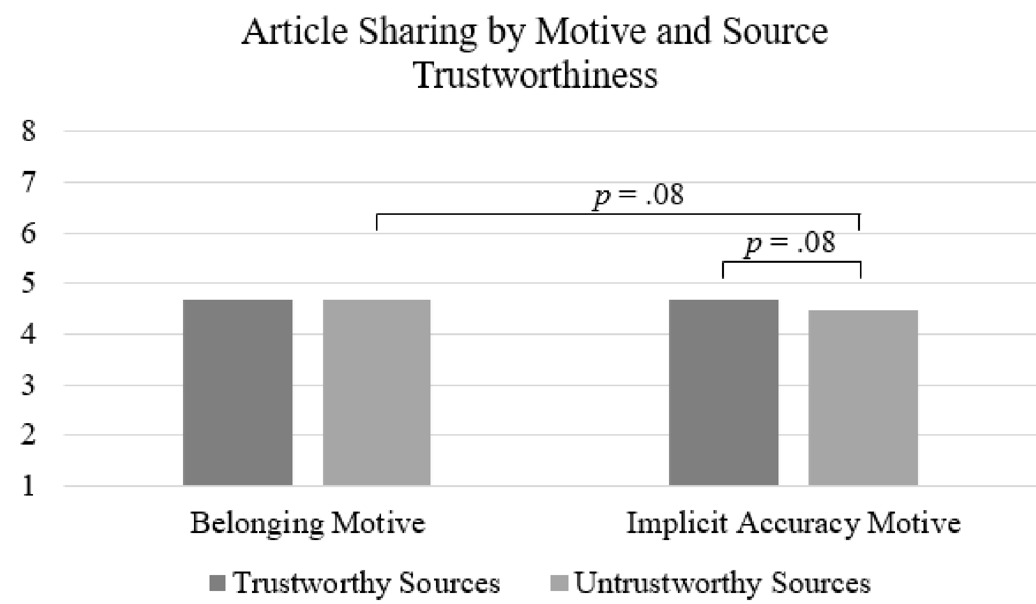

Figure 10. Study 3a: Article Sharing by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that although participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness, they did not shared information in-line with these perceptions, I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

This study emphasizes the importance and power of a motive to belong and connect with others in an information sharing context. Although participants in this study have accurate perceptions about source trustworthiness, they are just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information when a motive to belong is activated. Simultaneously activating an implicit motive to be accurate has a marginal effect on sharing behavior and leads participants to be slightly less likely to share untrustworthy as compared to trustworthy information, mirroring the patterns found for Accuracy Motive conditions in studies 2a-2b. However, as predicted (H4), the effect is weak. These findings suggest that when a motive to belong is present, an implicitly primed motive for accuracy may not be strong enough to curb untrustworthy information sharing. Study 3b replicates these findings using a different population and a slightly altered manipulation.

CHAPTER 9: STUDY 3B

Study 3b replicates study 3a using a different population (i.e., University students) and a different affiliative group (i.e., fraternities/sororities). As in study 3a, study 3b tests the hypothesis that a belonging motive will suppress the convergent behavioral effect of an accuracy cue when the cue is implicit, leading consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles compared to trustworthy articles (H4). I utilize the Belonging Motivation and Accuracy Motivation manipulations from study 3a, with slight alterations to fit the new affiliative group. In the Belonging Motivation condition, the fraternity/sorority is focused on building friendships through socializing. In the Accuracy Motive manipulation, the fraternity/sorority is focused on building friendships through academic and professional development. As in the prior studies, after completing the manipulation participants are shown the same set of eight article headlines (randomized) and asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with members of the group to which they have been assigned. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated source was either trustworthy (the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, BBC News) or untrustworthy (the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, the Funny Times).

Method

Two hundred and ninety-one students at a major University (43.7% female; M_{age} = 19.85 years, *SD* = 1.55) completed this study in exchange for partial course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) between subjects design. Participants were first asked to imagine being a member of a fraternity/sorority that was focused on socializing and making friends (Belonging Motive condition[3]) or on academics and professional

[3]"Imagine you are a member of a fraternity/sorority at the University of Arizona. As a dedicated member of this group, you meet at least once a week to socialize at local bars, restaurants, and fraternity/sorority houses on campus. People in this fraternity/sorority come together to socialize and spend time with one another. Being a part of this fraternity/sorority involves hanging out at

development (Implicit Accuracy Motive condition[4]). After familiarizing themselves with the affiliative group scenario, participants saw the same set of eight headlines from the prior studies and were asked to indicate the extent to which they would share each of the articles with members of the fraternity/sorority affiliative group (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources that are perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). The sources were the same as in study 2a-3a. Next, participants answered a manipulation check question assessing their perception that the social group to which they were assigned values accuracy compared to belonging ("When people share information with this group, it is more important that the information is:" 1-Verifiably correct, 6-Entertaining) and indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (0-100% trustworthy). Finally, participants answered demographic questions before being debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness and Group Values. Across both conditions, a paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources

social events and parties, where group members enjoy life together and over time build lasting friendships."

[4]"Imagine you are a member of a co-ed academic fraternity at the University of Arizona. As a dedicated member of this group, you meet at least once a week to work on projects and participate in extra-curricular events. People in this academic fraternity come together to build important skills and develop themselves academically and professionally. Academic fraternities involve teamwork, in which group members work together and over time build lasting friendships."

condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 76.18, SD = 17.47; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 38.69, SD = 17.30; $t(290) = 31.34$, p = .000). This pattern held regardless of whether participants were assigned to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 77.71, SD = 16.38; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 38.88, SD = 19.96; $t(147) = 24.03$, p = .000) or the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 74.60, SD = 18.46; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 38.48, SD = 17.70; $t(142) = 20.43$, p = .000), and a one-way ANOVA confirmed that participants in each of these conditions were not significantly different in their perceptions of trustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$= 77.71, SD = 16.38; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$= 74.60, SD = 18.46; $F(1, 290) = 2.34$, p = .13), or untrustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$= 38.88, SD = 16.96; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$= 38.48, SD = 1.48; $F(1, 290) = .04$, p = .85). In addition, a one-way ANOVA revealed that the manipulation was successful[5]: participants assigned to the academic fraternity/sorority perceived the group to value accuracy more than participants assigned to the social fraternity/sorority ($M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 3.22, SD = 1.51; $M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.53, SD = 1.31; $F(289) = 62.74$, p = .000). See figure 11.

[5] Because the scale for this question ranged from 1-Verfiably Correct to 6-Entertaining, lower Mean scores represent a higher perceived value for accuracy.

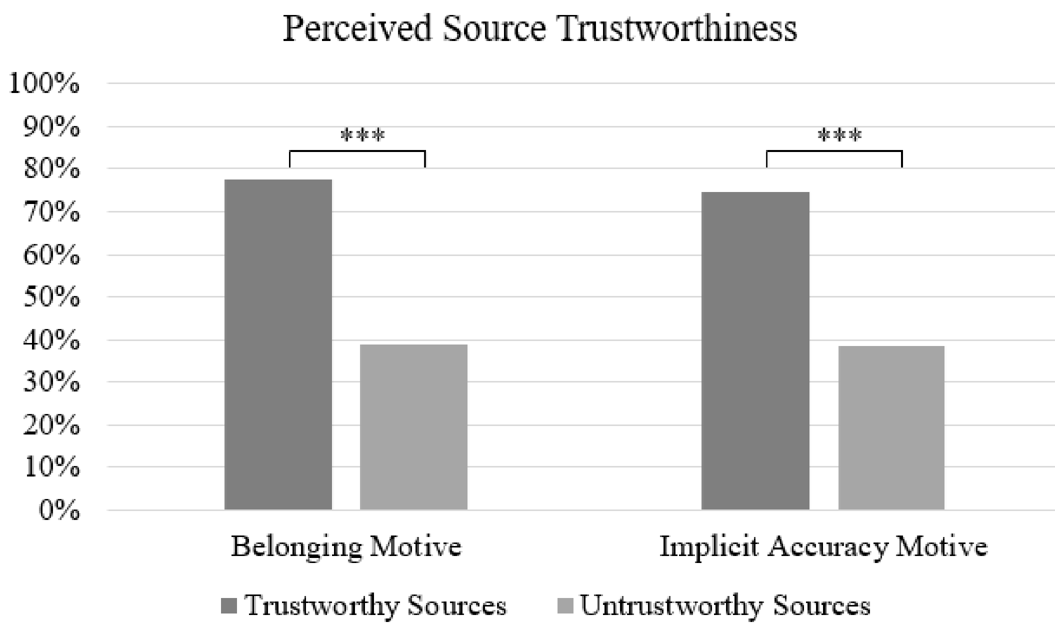

Figure 11. Study 3b: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Article Sharing. A 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) ANOVA on likelihood of article sharing did not reveal a significant interaction ($F(1, 287) = .56$, $p = .45$). Although the interaction is not significant, I report pairwise comparisons that are consistent with the hypothesis. Despite their own perceptions of source trustworthiness, participants in the Belonging Motive condition were just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they were to share trustworthy information ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.75$, $SD = 1.24$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.60$, $SD = 1.34$; $F(1, 287) = .52$, $p = .47$). When an Implicit Accuracy Motivation is simultaneously activated, participants were likewise just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they were to share trustworthy information ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 4.47$, $SD = 1.04$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 4.54$, $SD = 1.33$; $F(1, 287) = .12$, $p = .73$). Building on these results, regardless whether they were assigned to the Belonging Motive or Implicit Accuracy Motive condition, participants were equally likely to share articles from trustworthy sources ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.75, *SD* = 1.24; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 4.47, *SD* = 1.04; $F(1, 287) = 1.78$, $p = .18$), and untrustworthy sources ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.60, *SD* = 1.3; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 4.54, *SD* = 1.33; $F(1, 287) = .08$, $p = .78$). See figure 12.

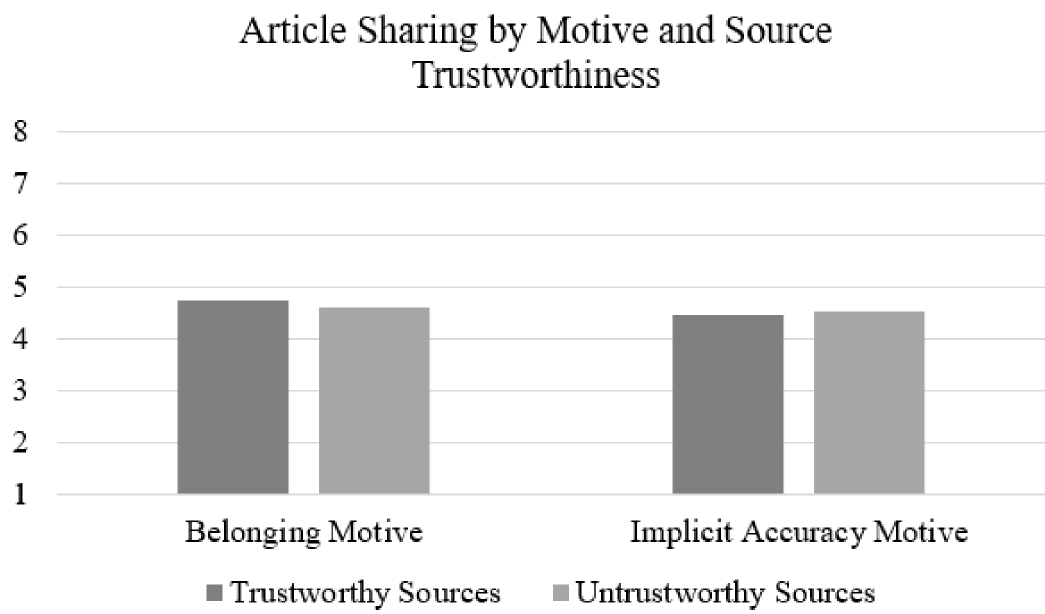

Figure 12. Study 3b: Article Sharing by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that although participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness they did not shared information in-line with these perceptions, I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

Following study 3a, this study emphasizes the importance and power of a motive to belong and connect with others in an information sharing context. Although participants in this study have accurate perceptions about source trustworthiness, they are just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information when a motive to belong is activated. In this study, simultaneously activating an implicit motive to be accurate has no effect on sharing behavior. However, these results must be considered in light of the small sample size. It is possible that with enough power, I would have detected a marginal effect for the Implicit Accuracy condition similar to those found in studies 2b and 3a. Because these null effects do not allow me to draw proper conclusions about the impact of a belonging motive when an accuracy motive is simultaneously present, I designed study 4 to investigate belonging motive as a moderator of information sharing behavior when an accuracy motive is present.

CHAPTER 10: STUDY 4

Study 4 tests the hypothesis that feelings of isolation will suppress the convergent behavioral effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, compared to when feelings of isolation are absent (H5).Thus far, I have demonstrated that a motive to belong leads consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to trustworthy articles but that a group-focused accuracy cue reduces their sharing of untrustworthy articles. Underlying the findings is the explanation that a strong motive to belong, rather than accuracy-based mistakes, drives sharing of untrustworthy information. To bolster this explanation, study 4 introduces an isolation manipulation after participants have received the explicit accuracy cue from studies 2a and 2b. I chose to use a social isolation manipulation because feelings of isolation directly increase the need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995). I predict that even after receiving an explicit cue that the affiliation group cares about accuracy, the convergent behavioral effect (i.e., sharing less untrustworthy, compared to trustworthy, information) will be suppressed when participants feel isolated. As in the prior studies, after completing the Motivation manipulation participants are shown the same set of eight article headlines (randomized) and asked how likely they would be to share each of the articles with members of the group to which they have been assigned. The headlines were the same in each condition, but the associated source was either trustworthy (the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, PBS News, BBC News) or untrustworthy (the National Enquirer, Quora.com, Reddit.com, the Funny Times).

Method

Seven hundred and four Prolific workers (50.6% female; M_{age} = 29.73 years, *SD* = 9.97) completed this study in exchange for $.95. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (Motivation: Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Accuracy-Isolation) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) between subjects design. As in studies 2a-3b, participants were first asked to imagine being a member of a trivia night group (Accuracy Motivation condition; Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition) or a happy hour group (Belonging Motivation condition). In the Accuracy Motivation and Accuracy-Isolation Motivation condition, participants were then provided with the additional explicit accuracy description from study 2a. After familiarizing themselves with the affiliative group scenario, participants in the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition completed an additional task in which they were asked to write about feelings of loneliness they have experienced during the 2020 COVID-19 quarantine period[6]. Next, all participants saw the same set of eight headlines from the prior studies and were asked to indicate the extent to which they would share each of the articles with members of the affiliative group (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share). Based on condition, the headlines participants saw were paired with sources that are perceived as generally trustworthy (Trustworthy Source condition) or untrustworthy (Untrustworthy Source condition). The sources were the same as in study 2a-3b. Next, participants answered a manipulation check question assessing their perception that the social group to which they were assigned values accuracy compared to belonging ("When people share information with this group, it is more important that the information is:" 1-Verifiably correct, 6-Entertaining) and indicated how trustworthy they perceived the sources to be (0-100% trustworthy). Finally, participants answered demographic questions before being debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

Results

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness. Across both conditions, a paired-samples t-test revealed that participants rated sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy than sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources} = 74.44$, $SD = 18.68$; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources} = 32.67$, $SD = 19.45$; $t(703) = 45.71$, $p = .000$). This pattern held

[6] "Below, please write a few sentences about what it is like to be in quarantine. Describe how it feels to not be able to physically see and meet with other people the way you would like. Describe any feelings of loneliness you experience from this social separation."

regardless of whether participants were assigned to the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 74.95, *SD* = 17.44; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 34.65, *SD* = 19.67; *t*(236) = 26.78, *p* = .000), Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 74.91, *SD* = 19.13; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 30.96, *SD* = 19.64; *t*(233) = 27.38, *p* = .000), or the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 73.45, *SD* = 19.47; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 32.39, *SD* = 18.96 *t*(232) = 25.13, *p* = .000), and a one-way ANOVA confirmed that participants in each of these conditions were not significantly different in their perceptions of trustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 74.95, *SD* = 17.44; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$= 74.91, *SD* = 19.13; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$= 73.45, *SD* = 19.47; *F*(1, 703) = .48, *p* = .62), or untrustworthy articles ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 34.65, *SD* = 19.69; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$= 30.96, *SD* = 19.63; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$= 32.39, *SD* = 18.96; *F*(1, 703) = 2.17, *p* = .12). See figure 13.

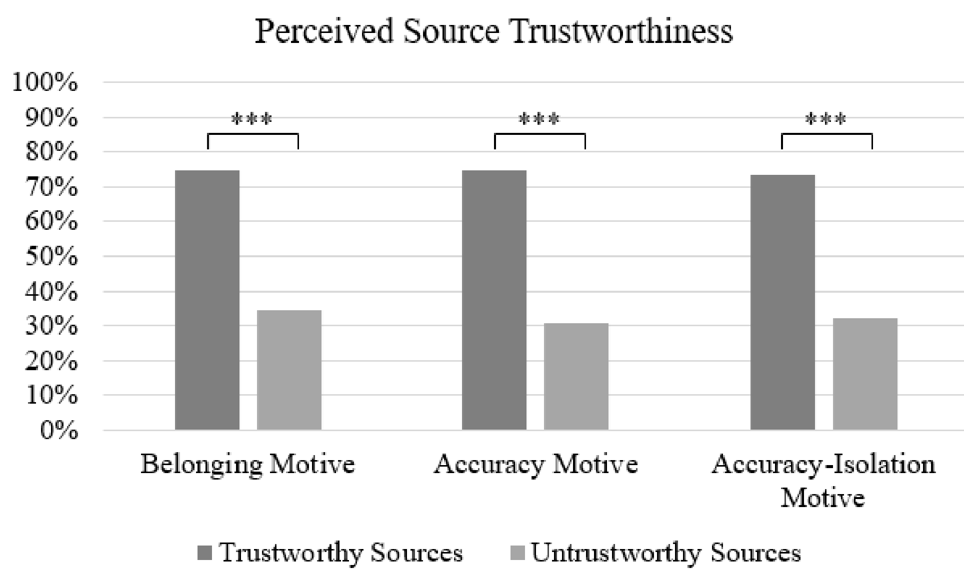

Figure 13. Study 4: Perceived Source Trustworthiness by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Group Values. In addition, a one-way ANOVA revealed accuracy value perceptions of the group significantly differed between the Motive conditions ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.45, *SD* = 1.41; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$= 2.30, *SD* = 1.39; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$= 2.58, *SD* = 1.67; *F*(1,

701) = 144.16, p = .000). A series of t-test contrasts revealed that the manipulation was successful[7]: compared to the Belonging condition, both the Accuracy condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.45, SD = 1.41; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 2.30, SD = 1.39; t(701) = 15.59, p = .000) and Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$ = 2.58, SD = 1.67; t(701) = 13.58, p = .000) perceived the group to have a higher value for accuracy, and participants in the Accuracy condition perceived the group to have a higher value for accuracy compared to participants in the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 2.30, SD = 1.39; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$ = 2.58, SD = 1.67; t(701) = 2.00, p = .05). Thus, participants in the Accuracy Motive condition perceived the group to have the highest value for accuracy, followed by the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition, and finally by the Belonging Motive condition.

Article Sharing. A 3 (Motivation: Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Accuracy-Isolation) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) ANOVA on likelihood of article sharing revealed a marginally significant interaction (F(1, 698) = 2.71, p = .067). As predicted, and despite their own perceptions of source trustworthiness, participants in the Belonging Motive condition were just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they were to share trustworthy information ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.86, SD = 1.20; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.75, SD = 1.13; F(1, 698) = .49, p = .49). The simultaneous activation of an accuracy motive led participants to behave consistently with their perceptions of source trustworthiness, and were more likely to share articles from trustworthy, as compared to untrustworthy, sources ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.43, SD = 1.39; $M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.77, SD = 1.44; F(1, 698) = 15.42, p = .000). Participants induced to feel isolated after activating an accuracy motive were also less likely to share articles from trustworthy, as compared to untrustworthy, sources ($M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.72, SD = 1.12;

[7] Because the scale for this question ranged from 1-Verfiably Correct to 6-Entertaining, lower Mean scores represent a higher perceived value for accuracy.

$M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.25, *SD* = 1.42; *F*(1, 698) = 7.67, *p* = .006), but the pairwise comparisons below tell a more comprehensive story of the impact of the isolation manipulation on sharing.

Consistent with my hypothesis, pairwise comparisons reveal that although participants in the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition were less likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to participants in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$ = 4.25, *SD* = 1.42; $M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.75, *SD* = 1.13; Mean Difference: -.50, *p* = .003), participants in the Accuracy Motive condition were less likely to share untrustworthy articles as compared to participants in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Accuracy\ Motive}$ = 3.77, *SD* = 1.44; $M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = 4.75, *SD* = 1.13; Mean Difference: -.97, *p* = .000) and the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Motive}$ = 4.25, *SD* = 1.42; Mean Difference: -.48, *p* = .005), These results suggest that feelings of isolation can suppress the information sharing behavior driven by a motive to be accurate. Thus, this study provides strong evidence that a motive to belong leads consumers to be less sensitive to source trustworthiness when sharing information with others.

Finally, looking at comparisons among trustworthy sources, participants in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Belonging\ Motive}$= 4.86, *SD* = 1.20; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Motive}$ = 4.43, *SD* = 1.39; Mean Difference: .43, *p* = .01) and the Accuracy-Isolation condition ($M_{Accuracy\text{-}Motive}$ = 4.43, *SD* = 1.39; $M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Manipulation}$ = 4.72, *SD* = 1.12; Mean Difference: -.28, *p* = .09) were significantly more likely to share trustworthy articles compared to participants in the Accuracy Motive condition, but participants in the Belonging Motive condition Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition did not differ from one another ($M_{Accuracy\text{-}Isolation\ Manipulation}$ = 4.72, *SD* = 1.12; Mean Difference: .15, *p* = .38). This pattern may reflect an overall boost in social information sharing when the salience of a belonging motive is increased. See figure 14.

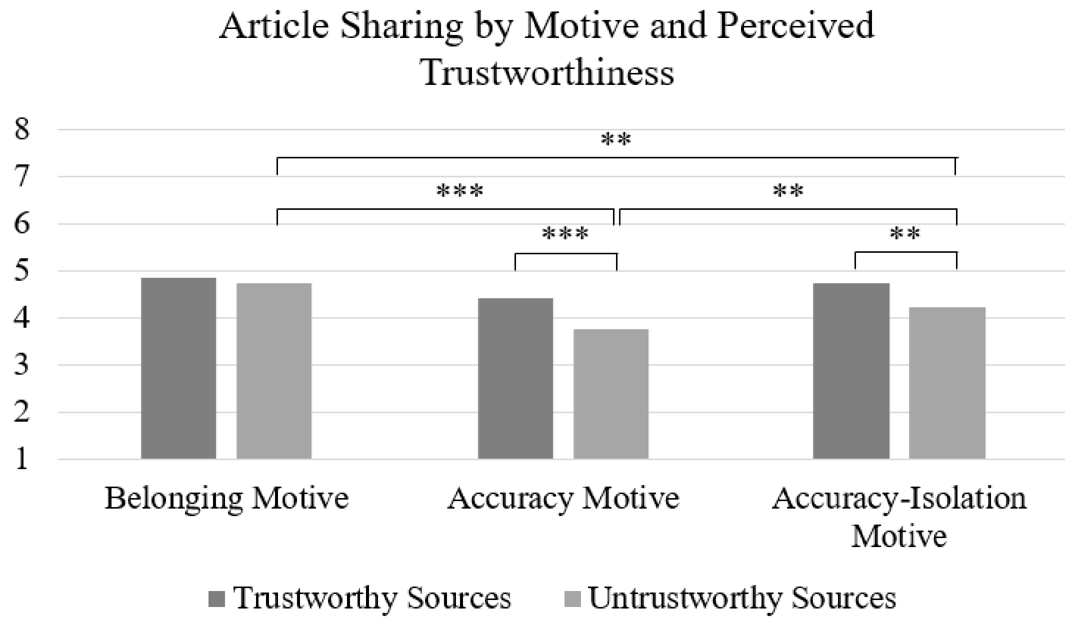

Figure 14. Study 4: Article Sharing by Motive and Source Trustworthiness

Perceptions of Source Trustworthiness Compared to Article Sharing. In order to further increase confidence that participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness and shared information in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate, I conducted a 2 (Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which the participant was exposed. The results of this ANOVA support the results above and are detailed in Appendices C and D.

Discussion

Study 4 combines the previous hypotheses into one model and provides support for the claim that a motive to belong drives sharing of untrustworthy information. This is evidenced by the finding that feelings of isolation suppress the convergent behavioral effect of simultaneously salient belonging and accuracy motives, compared to when feelings of isolation are absent (H5). This study provides stronger evidence that when consumers are motivated to belong, they will be less sensitive to the trustworthiness of the information they share. Even when participants in this study were motivated to be accurate, feelings of isolation led them to share comparatively more untrustworthy information as compared to when they are motivated to be accurate but did not feel isolated. In other words, they reverted to sharing behaviors that were less sensitive to source trustworthiness. This study is important because it builds on studies 3a and 3b to emphasize the power of a desire to belong in driving untrustworthy information sharing by moderating the effect of accuracy motivation. The implications are discussed next.

CHAPTER 11: GENERAL DISCUSSION

In a digital, social media age, the likelihood that an individual would share a piece of untrustworthy information is an issue that impacts the spread of societally harmful mis- and disinformation. Especially because false news spreads farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than truthful news online (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018), understanding when and why individuals are likely to share untrustworthy information, and what types of interventions might curb this behavior, are important and timely questions. In the current work, I investigate these questions in the context of sharing digital articles. In six studies, I ask consumers to describe or imagine themselves in affiliative group scenarios that are designed to prime motives to belong and to be accurate. Taken together, the studies suggest that holding a motive to belong leads consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information (studies 1, 3a-4). Although the behavior of sharing untrustworthy information can be curbed with explicit reminders that the group does not tolerate inaccuracy (studies 2a-2b), less explicit cues (studies 3a-3b) and/or the feeling of being isolated (i.e., a lack of belonging) render this type of intervention less effective (study 4). With these findings, I argue that a need to belong, and not accuracy-based mistakes, is at the center of untrustworthy information sharing behavior. In other words, accuracy is not central in consumers' minds when they are engaged with sharing information. Rather, consumers are more focused on belonging and connecting with other people. Thus, from the consumer's point of view, accuracy-based considerations are auxiliary to belonging-oriented, social information sharing environments. Marketers and policymakers interested in developing more effective mis- and disinformation interventions will benefit by more deeply considering the role of the fundamental human motive to belong.

Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to work that investigates the powerful role of belonging motivation in information environments, motivated information sharing behavior, and the spread of untrustworthy information in the digital marketplace. First, a great deal of research on information processing and transmission has created expectations that interactions with information will be dominated by a desire to behave accurately (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Explanations for inaccurate information behavior that center around judgmental mistakes (e.g., Dawes 1976) or self-based goals (e.g., Kunda 1990) are helpful, but do not provide the full picture. In a digital age, the overwhelming presence of socially oriented communication technology should lead us to consider the impact of social others on consumer interactions with information (e.g., Lane and Levy 2019). The importance of belonging with other cared-for humans is at the center of how we shape, organize, and understand information (Hardin and Higgins 1996). This desire to belong is prominent in online information environments that allow for frequent interaction (e.g., Greenwood et al. 2016) with close friends and family members (e.g., Jones et al. 2013). In such social environments, where information and social interaction are comingled (e.g., Albright 2017), I argue that a belonging motive will dominate. In the current work, I shift the focus away from accuracy and self-based motives and onto belonging motives to promote a deeper understanding of this understudied information value.

Next, I advance understanding about information sharing behavior under a belonging motive. When consumers are motivated to belong, they become more sensitive to social cues (Pickett et al. 2004) and tend to behave in line with the expectations of significant others to whom they feel attached (Ryan and Deci 2000). Therefore, I argue that being motivated to belong should lead consumers to focus on the social value of information. When focused on the social value of information, behavior should be geared toward connecting and bonding (e.g., Aditya and Darke 2020). In contrast, a focus on the accuracy value of information should gear behavior toward making sense of the world in a normatively objective manner (Kruglanski 1989, 1990). Therefore, the finding that consumers with a salient belonging motive are just as likely to share untrustworthy as compared to trustworthy articles can be explained by the activation of a belonging motive, instead of accuracy-based or cognitive failure. This finding contributes to the information sharing literature by suggesting that belonging, and not accuracy, is at the center of untrustworthy information sharing. When consumers have a belonging focus, it is unlikely that they will spontaneously, and simultaneously, focus on the accuracy-value of an information item. In other words, the issue of accuracy is outside the consumer's motivational focus; in many cases, when sharing information, friends simply don't care about facts.

Finally, I demonstrate boundaries on the impact of a simultaneously activated accuracy motive in curbing untrustworthy information sharing behavior. Consistent with work that has demonstrated the difficulty of helping consumers correct for accuracy-based mistakes in reducing the spread of misinformation (e.g., Ecker et al. 2017), I find that inducing an accuracy motive when a belonging motive is present is helpful in reducing untrustworthy information sharing within certain bounds. Explicit accuracy cues that the group with whom information will be shared not only cares deeply about accuracy but is willing to socially punish inaccuracy reduces sharing of untrustworthy, as compared to trustworthy, information (study 2a). Likewise, spending time to meditate on the importance of providing accurate information to close others reduces sharing of untrustworthy, as compared to trustworthy, information (study 1). However, more implicit cues that a group values accuracy reduce the effectiveness of these interventions (studies 2b-3b). These findings contribute to efforts that seek to slow or halt the spread of mis- and disinformation online. Encouraging groups of consumers to spend time thinking about the importance of keeping their loved ones accurately informed, and even to socially punish inaccuracy, will be more effective than simply providing reminders to be accurate (e.g., flagged posts). At the beginning of this manuscript, I suggested that consumer researchers should reconsider our own accuracy-orientation where interactions with information are concerned. Perhaps a better representation of our field is one of an affiliative group that is willing to punish inaccuracy. Thus, as academics, we have a first-hand understanding of the power that a peer group who punishes inaccuracy has in curbing the distribution of mis- or disinformation; in extreme cases, discovery of normatively inaccurate research practices can and has led to retraction of papers and exclusion from the field (i.e., affiliation group) altogether (Ducharme 2018; Oransky, September 19, 20, December 5, 2018; Rosenberg and Wong 2018).

Overall, my work presents a new way of conceptualizing the spread of mis- and disinformation via the sharing of untrustworthy information. In short, accuracy is not the point. Rather, consumers' deep-seated motives to belong with one another reduce attention given to source trustworthiness cues and lead to information sharing regardless whether the source of the information is untrustworthy or trustworthy. This work has theoretical and practical applications that extend past the realm of consumer research and into a more global understanding of information behavior in general, but especially as applied to behavior involving untrustworthy information.

Limitations and Future Research

This research examined the likelihood that consumers would share an article based on a headline. This is a situation that consumers encounter innumerable times each day when scrolling through their social media feeds. In the current paper, where experimental control is prioritized, I find that participants are just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information when they are motivated to belong. However, this likelihood measure does have limitations, some of which may be explored in future research. First, this measure does not represent a dichotomous choice to share (or not share) the articles. A dichotomous choice, and even the addition of a deferral option (Dhar 1997), would more realistically represent the type of information sharing decision consumers experience in their daily lives. In addition, conducting a field experiment on a social media website would further improve the external validity of the findings. I will pursue each of these research avenues in the future.

In addition to concerns about external validity, the current study does not present established measures of belonging and accuracy to serve as manipulation checks. In studies 3a-4, a semantic differential scale anchored by 1-Verifiably correct to 6-Entertaining assessed participant's perception that the group to which they were assigned finds it more important to share verifiably correct compared to entertaining information. This scale was used primarily because of the difficulty of separately assessing two motivations that consumers are likely to think are (or should be) always activated, and thus likely to rate high on the scale for both motivations regardless of condition. In study 1, after indicating how likely they would be to share the series of articles, participants were asked to answer a question assessing belonging motive[8], and a question assessing accuracy motive[9]. A one-way ANOVA of Motive condition (Belonging vs. Accuracy) on each of these questions revealed no significant difference for either the question assessing belonging ($M_{Belonging\ Motive} = 6.22$, $SD = .95$; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive} = 6.07$, $SD = 1.10$; $F(1, 316) = 1.70$, $p = .19$) or the question assessing accuracy ($M_{Belonging\ Motive} = 6.50$, $SD = .78$; $M_{Accuracy\ Motive} = 6.50$, $SD = .82$; $F(1, 316) = .005$, $p = .94$). For the question assessing belonging motive, I suspect that there was no difference because both conditions emphasize social others. In other words, a belonging motive should be active in both conditions. Furthermore, I suspect that there was no difference between the conditions in the question assessing accuracy motive because of social desirability bias (Fisher 1993) and the general feeling that accuracy is an important value. Because of these difficulties, I developed the

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[8] How important do you think it is to be closely connected with your friends and family members? (1-Not at all important, 7-Extremely important)

[9] How important do you think it is to be factual and accurate with your friends and family members? (1-Not at all important, 7-Extremely important)

semantic differential scale manipulation check described above. Even so, the current manipulation check could be improved to better represent the theoretical foundation on which I build (i.e., Need to Belong, Baumeister and Leary 1995). Namely, a more appropriate check for belonging motivation would be to use the Need to Belong scale (Leary et al. 2013). In future studies, I will utilize the Need to Belong scale as a manipulation check alongside the semantic differential measure that is reported. Together, these items may provide confidence that there is a significant motivational difference in the value of accuracy between conditions (i.e., using the sematic differential scale), but that the theoretical construct of a Need to Belong is significantly correlated with both experimental conditions.

Finally, recent research suggests that age is a moderator of fake news sharing behavior (Brashier and Schacter 2020). This research indicates that the shifting social goals of older consumers, including less emphasis on accuracy when communicating, leads them to be more likely to share fake news. In future research, I will include age as a moderator of my effect, with the expectation that the effect of holding a belonging motivation on untrustworthy information sharing will be exacerbated among older consumers. In other words, I expect older consumers will share more information overall, regardless of source trustworthiness, and possibly show less responsiveness to a simultaneously activated accuracy motive. More importantly, I will consider utilizing older consumers as a target group in which I expect accuracy goals to be suppressed during instances of communication. Deeper investigation of this target group may further reveal the importance of belonging motivation in driving untrustworthy information sharing and lead to the discovery of psychological mechanisms that suggest more sophisticated interventions for the contemporary, digital mis- and disinformation problem.

Conclusion

Reconsidering key assumptions about consumers' value for information is the first step toward clarifying when and why consumers will share untrustworthy information with others in the digital marketplace. My research takes this step and suggest that consumers hold a motive to belong when they are engaged in information sharing. This motive to belong leads consumers to be just as likely to share untrustworthy information as they are to share trustworthy information. A belonging motive may be tempered by explicit cues that the affiliative group recipients of the information value accuracy and are willing to punish inaccuracy. The current work is important to advancing our collective appreciation of the role that belonging plays in the digital marketplace; especially because individuals who are most at risk for sharing fake news have been recently demonstrated to deemphasize accuracy in favor of other social goals (Brashier and Schacter 2020). The power of a belonging motive over information sharing behavior should by this time be clear and suggest to consumer researchers the critical need for future research on belonging motive in social information environments. More than ever, the central role of social others to information suggests that friends, and not facts, may be the driving force behind the problems of mis- and disinformation.

APPENDIX A – LIST OF STUDY HEADLINES

Table 1. List of Study Headlines and Sources

Study	Headline	Trustworthy Source Pairing	Untrustworthy Source Pairing
1	"Lab grown meat to be introduced at major grocery chains"	The Economist	Hadas Eritrea
	"Area 51 may hold classified US military information for NASA missions"	The Wall Street Journal	Rossiya Segodnya
	"Social security running out of funds faster than expected: Bad news if you are under 65"	The Economist	Hadas Eritrea
	"Karaoke might be the best way to bond with your friends"	The Wall Street Journal	Rossiya Segodnya
2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4	"World's Smallest Gold Coin Features Albert Einstein Sticking Out Tongue"	The Wall Street Journal	The Funny Times
	"Authorities Scramble To Find Stolen Solid Gold Toilet"	The Wall Street Journal	The Funny Times
	"Applications To Become Japanese Billionaire Yusaku Maezawa's Girlfriend Have Topped 20,000"	The Economist	Quora.com
	"Woman Boards Flight to Find Her Seat Assignment Is In The Plane's Bathroom"	The Economist	Quora.com
	"Kansas Man Asks Judge To Allow Him To Have Sword Fight With Ex-Wife"	PBS News	The National Enquirer
	"Teen Discovers Rare New Planet 3 Days Into NASA Internship "	PBS News	The National Enquirer
	"Two Elderly Men Sneak Out Of Nursing Home To Attend Heavy Metal Festival"	BBC News	Reddit.com
	"Spotify Launches Playlists For Dogs Left Home Alone"	BBC News	Reddit.com

APPENDIX B – MAIN RESULTS SUMMARY

Table 2. Main Results Summary

Study	Design	Results			
			M = Share Trustworthy	**M = Share Untrustworthy**	**p-value**
Study 1	2(Motivation: Belonging vs. Accuracy)*2(Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); N=318	Belonging Motive	4.11	4.23	.64
		Accuracy Motive	4.26	3.65	.02
Study 2a	2(Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); N=97	Accuracy Motive	4.91	4.07	.004
Study 2b	2(Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit)*2(Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); N=998	Explicit Cue	4.47	3.70	.000
		Implicit Cue	4.62	4.36	.04
Study 3a	2(Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy)*2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); N=1196	Belonging Motive	4.70	4.70	.93
		Implicit Accuracy Motive	4.70	4.49	.08
Study 3b	2(Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy)*2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy sources); N=291	Belonging Motive	4.75	4.60	.47
		Implicit Accuracy Motive	4.47	4.54	.73
Study 4	3(Motivation: Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Accuracy-Isolation) X 2(Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); N=704	Belonging Motive	4.86	4.75	.49
		Accuracy Motive	4.43	3.77	.000
		Accuracy-Isolation Motive	4.72	4.25	.006

APPENDIX C – MIXED-DESIGN ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Table 3. Mixed-Design Analysis Summary

Study	Design	Results		
		DV	**Motive*Source Trustworthiness**	**p-value**
Study 1	2(Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy)*2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 314) = .09$	$p = .76$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 314) = 4.10$	$p = .04$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(1, 314) = 2.64$	$p = .11$
Study 2a	2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 95) = 91.07$	$p = .000$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 95) = 8.77$	$p = .004$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(1, 95) = 18.54$	$p = .000$
Study 2b	2(Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit)*2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 993) = .04$	$p = .85$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 993) = 9.2$	$p = .002$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(1, 993) = 9.33$	$p = .002$
Study 3a	2(Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy)*2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 1192) = 7.92$	$p = .005$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 1192) = 1.74$,	$p = .19$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(1, 1192) = .37$	$p = .55$
Study 3b	2(Motivation: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy)*2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 287) = 1.35$	$p = .25$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 287) = .56$	$p = .45$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(1, 287) = .01$	$p = .92$
Study 4	3(Motivation: Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Isolation) X 2(Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy); Within-Ss DV: Perceived Trustworthiness; Article Sharing	Perceived Trustworthiness	$F(1, 698) = .69$	$p = .50$
		Article Sharing	$F(1, 698) =2.70$	$p = .067$
		Within-Ss DV	$F(2, 698) = 2.33$	$p = .09$

APPENDIX D – MIXED-DESIGN ANALYSIS DETAILS

Overview of Studies

Appendix D presents the details of the mixed-design analyses conducted for studies 1-4 and summarized in Appendix C. In the main study results, participants across Motive conditions (Belonging vs. Accuracy) were shown to perceive sources in the Trustworthy Sources condition to be more trustworthy and sources in the Untrustworthy Sources condition to be less trustworthy. Therefore, there should not be significant an interaction between Motive condition and Source Trustworthiness condition on the dependent variable of Perceived Trustworthiness in the mixed-design analyses. On the other hand, participants were generally less likely to share untrustworthy articles in the Accuracy Motive condition as compared to the Belonging Motive condition. Therefore, there should be a significant interaction between Motive condition and Source condition on the dependent variable of Article Sharing in the mixed-design analyses. Because participants do not differ in perceptions of source trustworthiness but do engage in divergent article sharing behavior, there should be a significant three-way interaction of Motive condition, Source condition, and the Within-subjects variables of Perceived Trustworthiness and Article Sharing.

These predictions are generally supported (studies 1, 2b, 4). In addition to the results from the main analyses, the results from the mixed-design analyses should increase confidence that participants accurately perceived source trustworthiness, but only shared information in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate. The findings for each study are summarized in table 3. Please note that in study 2a, the two cell-design alters the predictions. In this study, all participants were induced to hold an accuracy motive, and asked to share articles that were either trustworthy or untrustworthy. In this case, participants should perceive a significant difference between source trustworthiness and be less likely to share untrustworthy information. This prediction is supported in both the main analysis and in the mixed-design analysis. In addition, studies 3a and 3b compared perceived trustworthiness and article sharing between participants assigned to either a Belonging Motive or Implicit Accuracy Motive condition. In these studies, a non-significant interaction between Motive condition and Source Trustworthiness condition on Article Sharing was expected, in addition to a non-significant interaction between Motive condition and Source Trustworthiness on Perceived Trustworthiness. Therefore, a significant three-way interaction of the Between-subjects variables on the Within-subjects variables was not expected. Details on the mixed-design analysis for each study is provided below.

Study 1: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post article sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing and perceived trustworthiness were measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share; 1-Extremely untrustworthy, 8-Extremely trustworthy), the variables were entered into the within-subjects analysis as-is.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made four *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between untrustworthy and trustworthy sources for both the Belonging Motive and Accuracy Motive conditions. This prediction was supported in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.60, *SD* = 3.28; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 5.83, *SD* = 5.51; $F(1, 314) = 96.52$, $p = .000$) and the Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.55, *SD* = 3.21; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 5.88, *SD* = 5.57; $F(1, 314) = 99.55$, $p = .000$). Second, consistent with the main analysis, I expected to find a significant difference in sharing articles from untrustworthy compared to trustworthy sources in the Accuracy Motive condition, but not in the Belonging Motive condition. This prediction was supported in both the Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 3.65, *SD* = 3.28; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.26, *SD* = 3.92; $F(1, 314) = 5.62$, $p = .02$), and in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.23, *SD* = 3.89; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = 4.11, *SD* = 3.75; $F(1, 314) = .21$, $p = .64$).

Third, I expected the interaction of Motive condition (Belonging vs. Accuracy) and Source Trustworthiness condition (Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) to significantly affect article sharing, but not perceived source trustworthiness. As reported in the main analysis, there is a significant between-subjects interaction of Motive and Source Trustworthiness on article sharing ($F(1, 314) = 4.10$, $p = .04$), but not on perceived source trustworthiness ($F(1, 314) = .09$, $p = .76$). Fourth and finally, I expected to find a significant three-way interaction of Motive condition, Source Trustworthiness condition, and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was marginally supported ($F(1, 314) = 2.64$, $p = .11$). The marginal support for this last prediction is not surprising, given that the study is not adequately powered for a three-way interaction analysis.

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed-design ANOVA should increase confidence that participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, yet they only shared articles in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy and were less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive but did not make this distinction between sharing untrustworthy and trustworthy articles when a belonging motive was salient.

Study 2a: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a mixed-design ANOVA with Source Trustworthiness condition as the between subjects variable. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post article sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing was measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share) and perceived trustworthiness was measured on a scale of 0-100%, the variables were first standardized before being entered into the analysis.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made three *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between the Untrustworthy Sources condition and the Trustworthy Sources condition. This prediction was supported ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.72; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .68; $F(1, 95) = 91.07$, $p = .000$). Second, consistent with the main analysis, I expected to find a significant difference in sharing articles between the Untrustworthy Sources condition and the Trustworthy Sources condition. This prediction was supported ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.30; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .28; $F(1, 95) = 8.77$, $p = .004$). Third and finally, I expected to find a significant interaction of

Source Trustworthiness condition and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was supported ($F(1, 95) = 18.54$, $p = .000$).

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed-design ANOVA should increase confidence that participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy, and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, and shared articles in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy and were less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive.

Study 2b: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a 2 (Accuracy Cue: Explicit vs. Implicit) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post-article-sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing was measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share) and perceived trustworthiness was measured on a scale of 0-100%, the variables were first standardized before being entered into the analysis.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made four *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between untrustworthy and trustworthy sources for both the Explicit Cue and Implicit Cue conditions. This prediction was supported in both the Explicit Cue condition

($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.73, SD = .68; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .77, SD = .66; $F(1, 993) = 629.07$, p = .000) and the Implicit Cue condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.77, SD = .64; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .74, SD = .67; $F(1, 993)$ = 99.636.11, p = .000). Second, consistent with the main analysis I expected to find a significant difference in sharing articles from untrustworthy compared to trustworthy sources in both the Explicit Cue and the Implicit Cue condition. In addition, I expected the effect to be stronger in the Explicit Cue condition. This prediction was supported in both the Explicit Cue condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.42, SD = .95; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .14, SD = .93; $F(1, 993)$ = 41.08, p = .000), and in the Implicit Cue condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = .06, SD = 1.01; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .24, SD = .99; $F(1, 993) = 4.41$, p = .004).

Third, I expected the interaction of Accuracy Cue condition (Explicit vs. Implicit) and Source Trustworthiness condition (Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) to significantly affect article sharing, but not perceived source trustworthiness. As reported in the main analysis, there is a significant between-subjects interaction of Accuracy Cue and Source Trustworthiness on article sharing ($F(1, 993) = 9.2$, p = .002), but not on perceived source trustworthiness ($F(1, 993)$ = .04, p = .85). Fourth and finally, I expected to find a significant three-way interaction of Accuracy Cue condition, Source Trustworthiness condition, and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was supported ($F(1, 993) = 9.33$, p = .002).

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed-design ANOVA should increase confidence that participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy, and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, and shared articles in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy and were less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive.

Study 3a: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post article sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing was measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share) and perceived trustworthiness was measured on a scale of 0-100%, the variables were first standardized before being entered into the analysis.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made three *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between untrustworthy and trustworthy sources for both the Belonging Motive and Implicit Accuracy Motive conditions. This prediction was supported in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.64, SD = .67; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .67, SD = .69; $F(1, 1192)$ = 527.93, p = .000) and the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.78, SD = .69; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .76, SD = . 47; $F(1, 1192)$ = 726.93, p = .000). Second, consistent with the main analysis, I expected to find a marginally significant difference in sharing articles from untrustworthy compared to trustworthy sources in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition, but no significant difference in the Belonging Motive condition. This prediction was supported in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = .04, SD = .95; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .03, *SD* = .93; *F*(1, 1192) = .01, *p* = .93), and in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.10, *SD* = 1.09; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .04, *SD* = .1.01; *F*(1, 1192) = 3.18, *p* = .08).

I did not have an *a priori* prediction for the relationship between Motive condition (Belonging vs. Accuracy) and Source Trustworthiness condition (Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) on perceived source trustworthiness. The results suggest that there is a significant between-subjects interaction of Motive condition and Source Trustworthiness on perceived source trustworthiness (*F*(1, 1192) = 7.92, *p* = .005), but not on article sharing (*F*(1, 1192) = 1.74, *p* = .19). Breaking this interaction down, it seems that participants in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition who were assigned to share articles from the Untrustworthy Sources found these articles to be less trustworthy than participants in the Belonging Motive condition $M_{Belonging\ Motive}$ = -.64, *SD* = .67; $M_{Implicit\ Accuracy\ Motive}$ = -.78, *SD* = .69; *F*(1, 1192) = 5.87, *p* = .02. This result may be explained by considering that the trustworthiness of the untrustworthy sources should be more prominent to participants who received the implicit accuracy prime. This result suggests that participants' use of the sources as indicators of trustworthiness depends on their value for accuracy. In other words, if participants do not have an active motive to be accurate when sharing articles, then they are less likely to recognize that untrustworthy sources are untrustworthy. However, this finding must be taken alongside the main analysis, which suggests that, in general, the participants understood untrustworthy sources to be untrustworthy as compared to trustworthy sources. Third and finally, given the prior results, I did not expect to find a significant three-way interaction of Motivation condition, Source Trustworthiness condition, and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was supported (*F*(1, 1192) = .37, *p* = .55).

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed-design ANOVA should increase confidence that although participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy, and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, they did not share articles in-line with these perceptions. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy but were no less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an implicit accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive.

Study 3b: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a 2 (Motive: Belonging vs. Implicit Accuracy) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post article sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing was measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share) and perceived trustworthiness was measured on a scale of 0-100%, the variables were first standardized before being entered into the analysis.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made three *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between untrustworthy and trustworthy sources for both the Belonging Motive and Implicit Accuracy Motive conditions. This prediction was supported in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.67, SD = .69; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .75, SD = .70; $F(1, 287) = 133.62$, $p = .000$) and the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.55, SD = .73; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .56, SD = . 87; $F(1, 287) = 94.57$, $p = .000$). Second, consistent with the main analysis, I did not expect to find a significant difference in sharing articles from untrustworthy compared to trustworthy sources in either the Belonging Motive condition or the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition. This prediction was supported in both the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = .002, *SD* = 1.07; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .12, *SD* = .99; *F*(1, 287) = .52, *p* = .47), and in the Implicit Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.04, *SD* = 1.07; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .10, *SD* = .84; *F*(1, 287) = .12, *p* = .73).

I did not have an *a priori* prediction for the relationship between Motive condition (Belonging vs. Accuracy) and Source Trustworthiness condition (Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) on perceived source trustworthiness. The results suggest that there is no significant between-subjects interaction of Motive condition and Source Trustworthiness on perceived source trustworthiness (*F*(1, 287) = 1.35, *p* = .25) or article sharing (*F*(1, 287) = .56, *p* = .45). This is likely because participants across the Belonging and Implicit Accuracy conditions had similar perceptions of source trustworthiness, and also similar article sharing behavior (i.e., were just as likely to share untrustworthy articles as they were to share trustworthy articles). Third and finally, given the prior results, I did not expect to find a significant three-way interaction of Motivation condition, Source Trustworthiness condition, and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was supported (*F*(1, 287) = .01, *p* = .92).

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed-design ANOVA should increase confidence that although participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy, and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, they did not share articles in-line with these perceptions. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy but were no less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an implicit accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive.

Study 4: Mixed-Design Analysis

I conducted a 3 (Motive: Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Accuracy-Isolation) X 2 (Source Trustworthiness: Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) mixed-design ANOVA. In this analysis, the within-subjects variables included extent of article sharing (i.e., the dependent variable from the main analysis) and the post article sharing perceptions of source trustworthiness for the sources to which that the participant was exposed. Because article sharing was measured on a scale of 1-8 (1-I would definitely not share, 8-I would definitely share) and perceived trustworthiness was measured on a scale of 0-100%, the variables were first standardized before being entered into the analysis.

Based on my theorization and the empirical results from the main analysis, I made four *a priori* predictions. First, I expected to find a significant difference in perceived source trustworthiness between untrustworthy and trustworthy sources for the Belonging Motive, Accuracy Motive, and Accuracy-Isolation Motive conditions. This prediction was supported in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.65, SD = .78; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .74, SD = .66; $F(1, 689)$ = 221.11, p = .000), the Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.74, SD = .70; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .73, SD = .70; $F(1, 689)$ = 242.97, p = .000), and the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.70, SD = .66; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .61, SD = .79; $F(1, 689)$ = 192.93, p = .000). Second, consistent with the main analysis, I expected to find a significant difference in sharing articles from untrustworthy compared to trustworthy sources in the Accuracy Motive condition and Accuracy-Isolation condition, but not in the Belonging Motive condition. This prediction was supported in the Belonging Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = .21, SD = .84; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .30, SD = ..90; $F(1, 689)$ = .49, p = .49), the Accuracy Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.52, *SD* = 1.08; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.02, *SD* = 1.04; *F*(1, 689) = 15.42, *p* = .000), and the Accuracy-Isolation Motive condition ($M_{Untrustworthy\ Sources}$ = -.16, *SD* = 1.06; $M_{Trustworthy\ Sources}$ = .19, *SD* = .84; *F*(1, 689) = 7.67, *p* = .006).

Third, I expected the interaction of Motive condition (Belonging vs. Accuracy vs. Accuracy-Isolation) and Source Trustworthiness condition (Trustworthy vs. Untrustworthy) to significantly affect article sharing, but not perceived source trustworthiness. As reported in the main analysis, there is a marginally significant between-subjects interaction of Motive and Source Trustworthiness on article sharing (*F*(1, 698) =2.70, *p* = .067), but not on perceived source trustworthiness (*F*(1, 698) = .69, *p* = .50). Fourth and finally, I expected to find a significant three-way interaction of Motive condition, Source Trustworthiness condition, and the within-subjects dependent variable that compares article sharing and perceived source trustworthiness. This prediction was marginally supported (*F*(2, 698) = 2.33, *p* = .09). The marginal support for this last prediction is not surprising, given that the study is not adequately powered for a three-way interaction analysis.

Together with the main analysis, the results of the mixed- design ANOVA should increase confidence that participants understood untrustworthy sources to be less trustworthy, and trustworthy sources to be more trustworthy, yet they only shared articles in-line with these perceptions when they had been led to consider the social value of being accurate. In other words, participants recognized untrustworthy articles to be untrustworthy and were less likely to share them (compared to trustworthy articles) when an accuracy motive was salient alongside a belonging motive. However, when the accuracy motive was accompanied by feelings of isolation this effect was weakened.

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