Origins of Online Political Hostility - 2021 March - Change and selection (#59943)

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1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
1) People do not self-report more hostility in online political discussions than in offline political discussions.
2) There is a very high (r > 0.75) correlation between self-reported online and offline political hostility within individuals.
3) Is status-driven risk taking a better predictor of online vs offline political hostility? Mismatch implies yes, our previous findings suggest no.
4) Are respondents with high status-driven risk taking more likely to participate in online than offline political discussions? Mismatch implies yes, our previous findings suggest no.
5) Are respondents with low status-driven risk taking selecting out of online political discussions? Our previous findings suggest yes.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
For 1-3 we measure self-reported political hostility with a question asking “Please think about the past 30 days, specifically. How often did the following happen to you in political discussions…”. Then listing eight behaviors e.g. I made fun of my political opponents, I threatened or harassed my political opponents.

For 4-5 we measure political participation with a question “how often did you discuss politics or public affairs … with the following” and then listing 5 groups: e.g. family and friends, and people who agree with me, people who disagree with me. On both questions, participants use a scale ranging from Never to Several times a day.

Both questions are repeated twice, for online and offline conversations respectively. Each block is started by a short intro, where online/offline conversations are defined as “text-based political discussions that occur on the Internet, such as on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), comments sections and forums” AND as “discussions that occur in situations where you could hear and see the other person(s), such as in a face-to-face conversation, in a video call, or anywhere else”, respectively. The specific context is also evoked in every specific question.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
Participants will be sorted in one of two groups, the online first or the offline first group. This is a question order experiment, where the two dependent measures described above are bundled together into a block, and we randomize whether participants answer first the questions pertaining to offline or online political discussions. That said, most hypotheses concern within-individual analyses.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
1) We rely on equivalence tests to contrast offline and online political hostility. We conduct a between samples test using only answers from participants’ first block and a within samples test using answers from both blocks. We set the boundaries of the equivalence test to correspond to the smallest effect size, which we can detect with 90% power and 5% alpha, given our final sample size (depending on the number of excluded participants).
2) We conduct an equivalence test for correlations relying on our repeated measures of self-reported political hostility (offline vs online). We set the lower bound to r = 0.75, as a somewhat arbitrary threshold for identifying strong correlations.
3) We regress online and offline political hostility on status-driven risk taking. Mismatch hypothesis predicts that the regression coefficient from the online model will be larger. Based on previous findings we expect them to be similar. Contrasts are calculated in SEM.
4) We regress online and offline participation on status-driven risk taking. Mismatch hypothesis predicts that the intercepts will be similar (low SDRT equal participation) but coefficients larger for online participation (selecting *into* online discussions).
5) Relying on the same model as in 4), we would expect that intercepts will be higher for offline (vs online) participation (selecting *out* of online discussions).

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
We exclude participants who in a pre-screening question on political discussions indicate that they *never* follow or participate in political discussions either online or offline.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
We collect a quota-sampled, diverse online sample of US Americans through YouGov. N = 1300.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
As an attention check, we include a modified color test (asking people to enter “decaf” into an open textbox). We will test the robustness of our findings to subsetting to attentive respondents, but our main analysis includes all respondents.

We also note, that unlike our previous study, our current data collection is complicated by the pandemic, which probably reduced that frequency of conventional offline political discussions. We augmented our definition of offline discussions to include real-time interactions over the internet. That said, if a large asymmetry remains, we may need to include covariates for offline/online participation in our tests of self-reported hostility.