**Expectations and hypotheses**

***Motivations and homophily***

From the perceptive of the cognitive consistency principle, we expect that, at the individual level, those with higher consistency motivation would exhibit more selective approach than those with lower consistency motivation. This implies that such individuals are more likely to be selectively approach to (potentially) attitudinally consonant interpersonal messages. Yet at the same time, prior findings generally suggest that partisans with high consistency motivation are no less likely to “avoid” themselves from potentially attitudinally dissonant messages. This leads us to expect that those with higher consistency motivation would *no less likely* to selectively avoid messages – in other words, they are equally likely to seek out information presented by others irrespective of its congeniality with their prior attitudes. At the same time, as a result of selective approach to attitudinally consonant messages, they are more likely to *be selected by others*, presumably since they communicate clear, strong partisan messages to potential alters in their social networks within the context of online political discussion forum. These two expectations culminate to our first set of hypotheses:

**H1a**: Consistency motivation is positively associated with the propensity of one’s messages being selected by others in the online discussion forum.

**H1b**: Consistency motivation is positively associated with the propensity of selecting others’ messages in the online discussion forum.

Moving from individual level to dyadic level, the cognitive consistency principle leads us to hypothesize positive impact of partisan preference homophily in their message selection dynamics, such that the ego (“focal respondent”) and alters (“potential discussion partner”) are more likely to select each other’s messages if they share same political preferences, such that:

**H1c**: Same political preferences within a dyad increase the propensity of selecting each other’s messages in the online discussion forum (“same candidate preference” & “similar policy preference”).

From the perspective of the understanding principle, we expect those with higher understanding motivation to be more likely to seek out relevant information (more likely to select others’ messages) in general. Yet compared to those who have higher consistency motivation, those with understanding motivations are less likely to clearly communicate partisan messages, let alone they are presumably less expressive of their partisan viewpoints. This would lead them to be less likely to be selected by others compared to those with higher consistency motivation, resulting interesting asymmetries in their message selection patterns. Formally, we expect:

**H2a**: Understanding motivation is negatively associated with the propensity of one’s messages being selected by others in the online discussion forum.

**H2b**: Understanding motivation is positively associated with the propensity of selecting others’ messages in the online discussion forum.

At dyadic level, we expect voters of similar candidate evaluation criteria (“evaluation criteria homophily”) would be more likely to select each other’s messages, irrespective of their congeniality towards their prior attitudes. This is based on the expectation that such information is of high utility to make relevant judgmental decisions regarding whom they should (or should not) support for. While prior literature generally agrees that voters actively glean relevant information from their social networks, they also appear to value political expertise more than shared preferences in selecting whom they interact with (Ahn, Huckfeldt, & Ryan, 2013). Also, Hart et al.’s (2009) research have found that disconfirmation bias (based on consistency motivation) is substantially reduced when individuals encounter messages with higher informational value. Since messages that are similar in terms of judgmental criteria on which others make candidate evaluations may actually contain highly relevant information, and therefore signal high utilities, voters are more likely than otherwise to select such messages especially when they are motivated to make accurate evaluations towards political candidate. Formally, we expect that:

**H2c**: Similarity in candidate evaluation criteria within a dyad is positively associated with the propensity of selecting each other’s messages in the online discussion forum.

Hedonic motivations - definition

Another important motivational underpinning of why people use media in general and interact with each other.

Enjoyment-driven activities – those who found using online discussion forum and interacting with others more pleasurable and enjoyable would be generally inclined to be active, etc.

While it is expected that those who are high in hedonic motivations of using online discussion forums to be more active (i.e., more likely to view others’ messages and engage with others), it is not entirely clear whether and how such hedonic motivation is also related to the propensity of *being selected by others*. Therefore, we simply expect following:

**H3**: Hedonic motivation is positively associated with the propensity of selecting others’ messages in the online discussion forum.

***Endogenous influence of network structure***

Transitivity, cyclic closure, and local hierarchy

H4: There would be more than expected by chance likelihood of transitivity among set of actors, while negative tendency towards cyclic closure in online discussion forums.

Structural equivalence and profile similarity

H5:

Preferential attachment

H6