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## 19. Heuristics and cues

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Citizens in representative democracies are asked to perform a variety of duties, including voting for candidates in federal, state, and local elections, as well as expressing opinions about ballot measures in direct democracy contexts. Are citizens able to perform these duties competently? The answer to this question has been the subject of much popular and scholarly debate, with many observers arguing that citizens are too unsophisticated and uninterested in politics to make good political decisions (Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Achen & Bartels, 2016). Decades of research show that American citizens have little interest in day-to-day political matters and are ignorant of the most basic facts about politics (such as the name of their senators or the institution responsible for deciding whether laws are constitutional). For many scholars, citizens' lack of factual knowledge about politics spells trouble for our democracy, as it suggests that citizens may not be able to form opinions about candidates and policies that reflect their preferences.

Other scholars are less concerned about citizens' lack of factual knowledge about politics and its implications for the health of our democracy. They argue that detailed knowledge about politics may not be necessary, sufficient, or even relevant to citizens' ability to express informed opinions about candidates and policies (see Boudreau & Lupia, 2011). These scholars suggest that heuristics and cues (i.e., information shortcuts) can provide substitutes for detailed knowledge about politics (Downs, 1957; Popkin, 1991; Lupia, 1994; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). Among the heuristics and cues that scholars have examined are party cues (Kam, 2005; Arceneaux, 2008; Bullock, 2011; Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2014), endorsements (Lupia, 1994; Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009; Boudreau, 2009, 2013; Boudreau et al., 2015a, 2015b), experts in voters' social networks (Ahn et al., 2014), racial/ethnic cues (Terkildsen, 1993; McConnaughy et al., 2010; Boudreau et al., 2019b), and public opinion polls (Mutz, 1992, 1997; Boudreau & McCubbins, 2010). These studies indicate that heuristics and cues such as these can enable even citizens who lack factual knowledge about politics to express informed opinions.

In recent years, the scholarly debate about heuristics and cues has begun to shift from a debate about *whether* heuristics and cues provide effective substitutes for political knowledge to a debate about *when* they do so. Stated differently, many scholars now acknowledge that heuristics and cues can help citizens to express informed opinions. However, the circumstances under which citizens use heuristics and cues instead of more detailed political information when forming their opinions are unclear. It is also unclear whether and when heuristics and cues produce the same quality opinions as those formed in response to more detailed substantive information. Thus, scholars' focus has shifted to identifying conditions under which citizens effectively use heuristics and cues in political contexts. To this end, scholars have drawn upon research in psychology to inform their studies of how citizens' individual characteristics, as well as contextual factors, might affect citizens' propensity to rely on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions. They also compare the quality of citizens' opinions when only heuristics and cues are present versus when detailed political

information is also available. Together, these studies identify factors that promote successful cue-taking in political contexts. In so doing, they offer a more comprehensive account of the role of heuristics and cues in helping citizens to perform their democratic duties competently.

In this chapter, I survey the literature on heuristics and cues in political science. To begin, I provide an overview of psychological models on which empirical studies of heuristics and cues in political science are based: dual process models of attitude change. These models identify conditions under which citizens rely on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions, as opposed to scrutinizing detailed information. Then, I describe several political science experiments that test whether and when citizens rely on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions about candidates and policy issues. I also discuss experimental research that examines whether and when heuristics and cues provide effective substitutes for more detailed political information. I conclude by discussing open questions about citizens' use of heuristics and cues in political contexts, as well as new directions for future research on this topic.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: DUAL PROCESS MODELS OF ATTITUDE CHANGE

The theoretical frameworks that guide many studies of heuristics and cues in political science are dual process models (namely, the heuristic-systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) and the closely related elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, 1996)). These models are based on the notion that citizens have limited cognitive capacities. Therefore, they cannot process every new piece of information in detail. Rather, citizens process information differently depending upon the amount of time, energy, and attention they are willing to exert. The more effortful form of processing, known as systematic processing,<sup>1</sup> involves scrutinizing the information and weighing arguments for and against it. The less effortful form of processing, known as heuristic processing, involves using simple decision rules (i.e., heuristics) and cues instead of processing the substance of the information itself (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

As an illustration of the differences between systematic and heuristic processing, consider a voter who is trying to decide whether to support or oppose a variety of ballot measures in a direct democracy election. If the voter engages in the more effortful systematic processing, she might consult a voter guide that provides detailed descriptions of the ballot measures and substantive information about the likely consequences of passing each measure. The voter would spend time thinking critically about the information in the voter guide and perhaps generating counterarguments against it. She would then form her opinion about each ballot measure. In contrast, if the voter engages in heuristic processing, she might rely on cues (such as endorsements) when forming her opinions about the ballot measures. Rather than scrutinizing information in the voter guide, the voter might rely on particular groups' support for or opposition to the ballot measures when forming her opinions. For example, if the voter learns that the Sierra Club has endorsed a ballot measure pertaining to environmental regulation, then she might form an opinion based on her perceptions of the Sierra Club's interests and how they relate to her own. That is, if the voter perceives that the Sierra Club shares her interests (perhaps because the voter is liberal and/or cares about protecting the environment), then she is likely to follow the Sierra Club's recommendation and support the ballot measure (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). On the other hand, if the voter perceives that the Sierra Club's interests conflict with her own (perhaps because the voter is conservative and/or does not value the

environment), then she is likely to ignore or react against the Sierra Club's recommendation (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). This less effortful form of processing does not require the voter to process substantive information about the ballot measures themselves. All she needs to do is rely upon a cue (the endorsement) that signals how she should feel about the ballot measure.

In addition to characterizing these two types of information processing, dual process models identify factors that affect whether and when citizens are likely to engage in one form of processing versus the other. In particular, these models view heuristic processing as the default mode of processing, given limits on citizens' time, energy, and attention. Although it is the default, this mode of processing is thought to result in opinions that are less stable and meaningful than those formed through systematic processing (Chaiken, 1980). Thus, dual process models also identify factors that might induce citizens to shift from heuristic processing and engage in the more effortful systematic processing. In particular, dual process models predict that citizens will engage in systematic processing when they possess both the ability and motivation to do so (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, 1996; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). With respect to ability, citizens must possess the cognitive capacity to scrutinize substantive information and weigh arguments for and against it. With respect to motivation, citizens must be willing to exert the time, energy, and attention that is required to process information systematically (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). After all, it takes more effort to read and weigh detailed arguments in a voter guide than to base one's opinion upon a group's endorsement.

Dual process models provide the theoretical foundation for much political science research that seeks to identify conditions under which citizens will process political information systematically instead of relying on heuristics and cues. Given that most citizens lack knowledge of and interest in politics (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), it is often thought that they will avoid engaging in systematic processing when exposed to political information. For example, scholars show that citizens rely on party cues, as opposed to processing more detailed policy information, when making political decisions (Rahn, 1993; Cohen, 2003). However, more recent studies challenge the notion that citizens will necessarily rely on heuristics and cues at the expense of substantive information about politics (Kam, 2005; Arceneaux, 2008; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010; Bullock, 2011; Nicholson, 2011; Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2014). These studies identify individual-level and contextual factors that induce citizens to engage in more effortful processing of political information. Still other studies challenge the notion that opinions formed in response to heuristics and cues are of lower quality than those formed through the systematic processing of information (Lupia, 1994; Boudreau, 2009; Boudreau et al., 2019a). These studies identify conditions under which heuristics and cues provide effective substitutes for more detailed political information, resulting in meaningful opinions.

## WHEN DO CITIZENS RELY ON HEURISTICS AND CUES IN POLITICAL CONTEXTS?

Drawing upon insights from dual process models, a number of studies in political science identify factors that affect whether citizens rely on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions, or whether they engage in the systematic processing of political information. These studies typically use experimental methods that allow them to manipulate substantive information about politics, as well as heuristics and cues, under carefully controlled conditions. This enables them to identify the mode of processing in which citizens engage. By including

measures of individual-level characteristics and varying the context in which the information is provided, these studies also shed light on the conditions under which citizens have the ability and motivation to engage in the systematic processing of information or whether they will rely on easier-to-use heuristics and cues.

One individual-level factor that shapes whether citizens engage in heuristic versus systematic processing is political knowledge. In her study of opinion formation about a novel scientific issue (namely, food irradiation), Kam (2005) examines whether citizens base their opinions on the political parties' positions (i.e., party cues) or whether they rely on a value that is related to the issue (i.e., their level of trust in scientific innovation). In particular, she conducts a laboratory experiment in which subjects read a newspaper article that discusses a ban on food irradiation that lawmakers are considering. In the control group, the article describes the positions of "proponents" and "opponents" of the ban on food irradiation. In the treatment groups, the political parties are characterized as the proponents and opponents of the ban. Specifically, in one treatment group, Democratic lawmakers are described as supporting the ban, while Republican lawmakers are described as opposing it. In the other treatment group, the Democratic and Republican lawmakers' positions are reversed. Given the low salience and nonpartisan nature of this issue, Kam is able to convincingly place Democratic and Republican lawmakers on either side of the issue. She examines whether subjects' opinions are based on the parties' positions (in which case they should support the ban on food irradiation when their own party supports it and oppose the ban when their own party opposes it) or their level of trust in scientific innovation (in which case they should support the ban on food irradiation if they do not trust science and oppose the ban if they do trust science, regardless of the parties' positions). Her results indicate that whether citizens rely on party cues or their value when forming their opinions depends upon their level of political knowledge. That is, citizens who are aware of basic political facts are more likely to process the information in the article systematically and base their opinions upon their level of trust in scientific innovation. In contrast, citizens who lack this awareness of politics tend to rely on party cues when forming their opinions.

More recent studies provide further support for the conclusion that citizens' level of political knowledge affects whether they rely on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions, or whether they process substantive information systematically. In particular, Boudreau and MacKenzie (2014) conduct survey experiments that examine whether and when citizens rely on party cues versus substantive policy information when forming their opinions about ballot measures at issue in an actual election. The nine ballot measures included in the study address a variety of policy issues, including social issues like legalizing marijuana, fiscal issues like a tax loophole for big businesses, and procedural issues like changing the legislative vote requirement to pass a budget from two-thirds to a simple majority. Respondents assigned to the control group read brief descriptions of these ballot measures before expressing their opinions about them. Respondents assigned to the treatment groups also receive either the political parties' positions on the ballot measures (i.e., party cues), policy information about the likely consequences of passing the ballot measures, or both. By systematically manipulating party cues and substantive information about a broad range of policy issues, Boudreau and MacKenzie are able to examine whether and when citizens engage in heuristic versus systematic processing when forming their opinions.

Boudreau and MacKenzie's (2014) experiments identify several factors that affect whether citizens rely on party cues or substantive policy information when forming their opinions. Like Kam (2005), their results indicate that citizens' level of political knowledge affects the

type of information that they use when forming their opinions about the nine ballot measures. Specifically, citizens with high levels of political knowledge are more likely to use substantive policy information when forming their opinions, while citizens with low levels of political knowledge are more likely to rely on easier-to-use party cues. In addition to identifying the effects of political knowledge, Boudreau and MacKenzie's (2014) results indicate that citizens' strength of partisanship shapes the extent to which they rely on party cues versus policy information. They find that strong partisans are more likely to base their opinions on policy information, while weak partisans are more likely to rely on party cues. Together, these results are significant because they demonstrate that those citizens who are often presumed to be the most biased in their opinion formation (i.e., politically knowledgeable citizens and strong partisans; see Lavine et al., 2000; Taber & Lodge, 2006) are capable of responding objectively to policy information even when party cues are present.

In addition to these individual-level characteristics, existing research identifies contextual factors that shape citizens' reliance on heuristics and cues when forming their opinions. One such factor is the salience of the policy issue. In particular, Arceneaux (2008) uses a survey experiment to examine whether a highly salient policy issue might motivate citizens to process information systematically when evaluating political candidates. In the experiment, respondents are asked to evaluate a fictional congressional candidate. The partisanship of the candidate is manipulated (i.e., Democrat or Republican), as are the nature of his positions on high versus low salience issues. On the high salience issue (abortion), the candidate either takes a position that is congruent with his party's position (i.e., pro-life if the candidate is characterized as a Republican and pro-choice if the candidate is characterized as a Democrat) or incongruent with his party's position (i.e., pro-life if the candidate is characterized as a Democrat and pro-choice if the candidate is characterized as a Republican). On the low salience issue (whether federal versus state and local governments should be responsible for environmental regulation), the candidate is also characterized as taking positions that are either congruent (e.g., in favor of the federal government regulating the environment if the candidate is a Democrat) or incongruent (e.g., in favor of state and local governments regulating the environment if the candidate is a Democrat) with his own party's position. After receiving the information about the candidate's partisan affiliation and issue positions, respondents are asked to express their level of support for the candidate.

The results of Arceneaux's (2008) study indicate that the salience of the policy issue shapes how citizens evaluate a candidate who is affiliated with their own political party. When the candidate takes a position that is incongruent with the party's position on a high salience issue like abortion, citizens evaluate the candidate more negatively. However, when the candidate takes a position that is incongruent with the party's position on a low salience issue like environmental regulation, citizens base their evaluations of the candidate on his partisanship, not his issue positions. Based on these results, Arceneaux concludes that incongruent positions on low salience issues do not motivate citizens to punish their own party's candidate for failing to toe the party line. Interestingly, this is true even among citizens with high levels of political knowledge, who presumably have the ability to process information about the candidate's issue positions systematically. In this way, Arceneaux's results provide support for the notion that both ability and motivation are required for citizens to shift from using heuristics and cues to more systematic information processing.

Other contextual factors that affect the extent to which citizens engage in heuristic versus systematic processing are the nature and amount of substantive information to which citizens

are exposed. As Bullock (2011) notes, some studies that assess whether citizens rely on party cues or policy information when forming their opinions provide only small amounts of substantive information (e.g., three sentences about a policy proposal) in their experiments. These short policy descriptions also tend to be vague in that they convey few details about the likely consequences of adopting a particular policy (e.g., that a given policy will “increase the economic status of women”; Riggle et al., 1992, p. 76; see Bullock, 2011 for further discussion). These aspects of the policy information likely stack the deck in favor of citizens relying on party cues instead of processing the substantive information (see Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2014 for a discussion). Indeed, dual process models suggest that citizens will be more likely to systematically process substantive information when it is detailed and unambiguous (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

To test this proposition, Bullock (2011) conducts survey experiments that provide more extensive policy information (16 paragraphs) about a proposed change to providing health care for the poor. He manipulates whether the policy information describes a change that would restrict or expand health-care coverage, as well as the political parties’ positions on these proposed changes. His results indicate that citizens process and respond to the detailed policy information, as opposed to simply relying on party cues. Based on these results, he concludes that citizens are capable of forming meaningful opinions that are independent of and even at odds with those of their own political party when the policy information is sufficiently informative (see Bullock, 2011, p. 512).

## WHEN DO HEURISTICS AND CUES PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUBSTITUTES FOR DETAILED INFORMATION?

As the studies discussed in the previous section make clear, citizens will systematically process political information when certain individual-level or contextual conditions are met. Otherwise, they tend to rely on heuristics and cues. This raises an important question about whether and when heuristics and cues will promote the formation of meaningful opinions. To assess this outcome, scholars typically examine whether citizens who rely on heuristics and cues arrive at the same opinions or decisions as those who possess detailed substantive information. For example, in his observational study of California voters’ decisions about five ballot measures that sought to reform auto insurance, Lupia (1994) shows that uninformed voters who know the preferences of an endorser (i.e., who possess an information shortcut) are able to make decisions that are comparable to those of more informed voters (i.e., who possess “encyclopedic” information about the ballot measures). In this way, Lupia’s study demonstrates that when uninformed voters can correctly perceive an endorser’s reputation for supporting certain types of policies, they are able to use this cue to help them make informed decisions about ballot measures.

Although Lupia’s (1994) study identifies an important context in which heuristics and cues provide effective substitutes for detailed political information, it also raises questions about whether heuristics and cues will do so on other types of policy issues and with other types of endorsers. Indeed, the ballot measures that Lupia examines focus on a single issue (auto insurance reform) and feature endorsements from prominent groups (the insurance industry, trial lawyers, and consumer groups) that were widely disseminated during a salient, hard-fought campaign. Further, because his study relies on natural variation in whether voters possessed

“encyclopedic” information or could infer the preferences of an endorser, it is possible that the voters might differ in ways other than their possession of information (e.g., political interest, education) that could explain observed differences in their choices (see Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009 for a discussion). Stated differently, without the random assignment of both encyclopedic information and the endorsement information shortcut, it is difficult to know for sure whether heuristics and cues produce the same decisions or opinions as more detailed political information.

To address these open questions, Boudreau et al. (2019a) conduct survey experiments that randomly assign both “encyclopedic” information and cues during a real-world local election. Specifically, they manipulate whether respondents receive a nonpartisan voter guide summarizing candidates’ policy positions (i.e., “encyclopedic” information), political party endorsements of the candidates, a spatial map showing respondents their own and the candidates’ ideological positions, or no additional information about the candidates (the control group). They examine whether and when these types of information help respondents choose the candidate whose policy views are more similar to their own. The results indicate that the nonpartisan voter guide improves voters’ ability to identify candidates who share their policy views, relative to the control group. Importantly, the results also show that the two cues (the political party endorsements and spatial map) provide effective substitutes for the encyclopedic information. That is, they produce similar improvements in voters’ ability to choose candidates who share their policy views. Further, all three types of information are most effective among voters with low levels of knowledge about politics, whose ability to make informed decisions in democratic elections has been of great concern. In this way, the results indicate that these particular heuristics and cues provide effective substitutes for more detailed political information, even among voters who possess little preexisting knowledge about politics.

To address another open question from Lupia’s (1994) study—namely, whether other types of endorsers provide effective substitutes for “encyclopedic” information on other types of policy issues—Boudreau and MacKenzie (2021) examine citizens’ opinions about eight different ballot measures at issue in California. These ballot measures addressed a range of issues that varied in their salience and, thus, in the extent to which citizens’ prior attitudes about them were strong versus weak. Specifically, four of the ballot measures addressed issues that have been debated extensively at the national and/or state level (i.e., legalizing marijuana for recreational use, repealing the death penalty, imposing ammunition limits, and raising (cigarette) taxes). These are policy issues about which respondents likely have considerable information and strong attitudes. The other four ballot measures involve more esoteric state policies and programs where prior attitudes are likely to be weak: requiring a public vote before the state can issue more than \$2 billion in revenue bonds, increasing the vote requirement in the state legislature for changing Medi-Cal fees, granting parole credits to non-violent offenders, and upholding a law prohibiting grocery stores from providing plastic bags.

To examine the effects of other types of endorsers on citizens’ opinions about these ballot measures, Boudreau and MacKenzie (2021) conduct survey experiments in which they randomly assign respondents to receive either information about the top donors supporting and opposing the ballot measures, the Democratic and Republican parties’ official positions on the measures (i.e., party cues), or policy information from a nonpartisan expert. They also include a control group in which no additional information is provided. The results indicate that citizens can use information about donors (whose campaign contributions are analogous to endorsements with dollar amounts attached) and party cues effectively across a range of

policy issues. For example, citizens increase their support for ballot measures that donors affiliated with their own party or its causes support and decrease their support for ballot measures that donors affiliated with their own party or its causes oppose. They respond similarly to party cues. Further, the effects of donor information and party cues are comparable to those of policy information from a nonpartisan expert. In this way, the results indicate that both donor information and party cues provide effective substitutes for more detailed policy information.

Nonetheless, Boudreau and MacKenzie's (2021) study also reveals limits to citizens' ability to use these cues effectively. First, their results indicate that the effects of donor information and party cues are most pronounced on ballot measures where citizens have weak prior attitudes. On salient issues about which citizens have already formed strong attitudes, the effects of these cues are minimal. Second, the findings show that while party cues help citizens with high and low levels of political knowledge to express meaningful opinions, the donor information is only effective among politically knowledgeable citizens. This is because citizens with low levels of knowledge about politics are unable to infer the interests of the donors and relate those interests to their own. For these citizens, a necessary condition for realizing the benefits of donor information—the ability to identify groups with common interests (Lupia, 1994; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998)—is not satisfied on these ballot measures. Third, the results demonstrate that party cues can actually be more effective than detailed policy information among politically knowledgeable citizens. This counterintuitive finding provides support for theoretical models' prediction that an information source with an identifiable political or financial interest in the outcome of a choice will be more useful than advice from an unbiased expert, as long as citizens can determine how the source's interests relate to their own (Calvert, 1985; see also Lupia & McCubbins, 1998).

## CONCLUSION: NEW FRONTIERS FOR RESEARCH ON HEURISTICS AND CUES

The research described in this chapter draws upon psychological theories to identify conditions under which citizens will rely on heuristics and cues versus detailed substantive information when forming their opinions in political contexts. It also analyzes whether and when citizens who rely on heuristics and cues are able to express meaningful opinions. Together, these two bodies of research yield important and unexpected findings. First, contrary to decades of research suggesting that citizens will rely on heuristics and cues at the expense of more detailed substantive information, the research described in this chapter shows that there are conditions under which citizens will engage in the more effortful systematic processing of information. In particular, when citizens are knowledgeable about politics or identify as strong partisans, they will process substantive information systematically even when easier-to-use party cues are available. The nature of the substantive information also affects citizens' willingness to process it. Specifically, when the policy issue is salient or when the substantive information is detailed and unambiguous, citizens will systematically process it instead of relying on heuristics and cues.

Second, contrary to research suggesting that heuristics and cues produce opinions that are inferior to those formed through the systematic processing of information, the studies described in this chapter show that heuristics and cues can provide effective substitutes for more detailed political information. By randomly assigning citizens to receive either detailed substantive



information; heuristics and cues like party cues, endorsements, or spatial maps; or no additional information, these studies are able to compare the effects of each type of information on citizens' opinions. The results indicate that opinions formed through the use of heuristics and cues can be similar to those formed through the use of substantive information. Further, both forms of processing produce opinions that are more in line with citizens' interests, relative to a control group where citizens do not receive additional information. Importantly, this is true even among citizens with low levels of knowledge about politics, whose ability to make informed decisions in democratic elections has been of great concern. Rather than leading citizens astray, heuristics and cues can produce opinions that are comparable to those formed in response to detailed substantive information.

Although the studies described in this chapter identify conditions under which heuristics and cues help citizens to form meaningful opinions, they leave open several important questions. These questions represent new directions that future research on how heuristics and cues affect opinion formation should explore. First, it is not clear from existing studies what, exactly, citizens learn from the heuristics and cues that they receive. The dominant method for studying the effects of heuristics and cues is to conduct experiments that randomly assign particular cues and then compare the opinions of citizens who receive the cues to those who do not. Frequently, the outcome of interest is support for particular candidates or policies. While measuring levels of support can be an effective way to demonstrate that particular heuristics and cues affect opinions, how and why they alter levels of support are not always clear. Do party cues, for example, increase support for candidates because citizens are better able to discern their partisan identities, as the Michigan model predicts (Campbell et al., 1960; Green et al., 2002)? Or, do party cues help citizens discover which candidates or policies are better aligned with their policy interests, as the spatial theory of voting predicts (Downs, 1957; Enelow & Hinich, 1984)? Alternatively, perhaps party cues help citizens to make inferences about candidates' non-ideological traits like competence, leadership, integrity, or intelligence. Identifying these effects requires experimental designs that not only randomly assign heuristics and cues, but that also include measures of how those heuristics and cues change citizens' perceptions of candidates' partisan interests, policy positions, and traits.

Second, existing research largely does not address whether and when citizens will choose to receive heuristics and cues, as opposed to detailed substantive information (for an exception, see Boudreau et al., forthcoming). The reason for this is that nearly all previous experimental studies on this topic assign respondents to receive either a cue or substantive information, rather than let them choose whether and what type of information to consume (see Boudreau et al., forthcoming, for a discussion). In real-world contexts, however, citizens are rarely forced to consume political information (Prior, 2007; Stroud, 2008; Arceneaux et al., 2012). They can ignore voter guides and political advertising they receive in the mail and turn the channel when political content appears on their television screens. For citizens who do choose to receive information, they might opt to read a voter guide, consult a list of political party endorsements, or attend to alternative sources like horserace coverage (Iyengar et al., 2004; see Boudreau et al., forthcoming, for further discussion). Which types of citizens choose to receive political information (e.g., those with high versus low levels of knowledge about politics), what form of information citizens prefer (i.e., heuristics and cues versus more detailed policy information), and how such information impacts the opinions of those who choose to receive it are open empirical questions.

## NOTE

1. In the elaboration likelihood model, the more effortful form of processing is referred to as central route processing, while reliance on heuristics and cues is referred to as peripheral route processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). For simplicity, I use the terminology of the heuristic-systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) throughout this chapter.

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