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### THE POLITICS OF MOTIVATION

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THE POLITICS OF MOTIVATION

*ABSTRACT: Taber and Lodge offer a powerful case for the prevalence of directional reasoning that aims not at truth, but at the vindication of prior opinions. Taber and Lodge's results have far-reaching implications for empirical scholarship and normative theory; indeed, the very citizens often seen as performing "best" on tests of political knowledge, sophistication, and ideological constraint appear to be the ones who are the most susceptible to directional reasoning. However, Taber and Lodge's study, while internally beyond reproach, may substantially overstate the presence of motivated reasoning in political settings. That said, focusing on the accuracy motivation has the potential to bring together two models of opinion formation that many treat as competitors, and to offer a basis for assessing citizen competence.*

Criticizing citizens' abilities to form coherent political preferences is a favorite pastime of scholars and pundits. Many focus on citizens' lack of information or their inability to draw on coherent ideologies. In "Motivated Skepticism in Political Beliefs" (2006), Charles Taber and Milton Lodge shift the focus to motivation. The question is not whether citizens possess sufficient information or hold information-organizing ideologies, but rather, whether they are sufficiently motivated to analyze new information in an even-handed way. While Taber and Lodge exhibit appropriate caution in drawing normative conclusions, they are fairly resolved that most citizens lack the motivation to integrate new information in an unbiased fashion.

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However, under reasonable political conditions citizens may be more fair-minded and engage in more accurate processing than they did in Taber and Lodge's laboratory.

### *Accuracy vs. Directional Goals*

When forming an attitude, an individual can put forth varying levels of effort in the service of one or more *motivations* or *goals* (Kruglanski 1989; Fazio 1990; Fazio 2007, 610 and 617).<sup>1</sup> A motivation (or goal) is a "cognitive representation of a desired endpoint that impacts evaluations, emotions and behaviors" (Fishbach and Ferguson 2007, 491). Striving to obtain a goal motivates particular actions; the goal of forming an "accurate" preference means that an individual takes actions with the hope of generating a preference that is the "correct or otherwise best conclusion" (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756). What the "best outcome" entails is, of course, not always clear, and thus an accuracy goal is best understood relative to alternative goals such as a directional (or, in Taber and Lodge's language, "partisan") goal. When motivated by a directional orientation, one takes actions with the hope of defending prior beliefs or behaviors.<sup>2</sup>

The problem highlighted by Taber and Lodge is that when individuals possess a directional goal, they tend to integrate new information in a biased, instead of even-handed, fashion. They often subconsciously interpret new information in light of their extant attitudes (Redlawsk 2002). The result is *motivated reasoning* (or what Taber and Lodge call "motivated skepticism"): the tendency to seek out information that confirms priors (i.e., a confirmation bias), to view evidence consistent with prior opinions as stronger (i.e., a prior-attitude effect), and to spend more time counterarguing and dismissing evidence inconsistent with prior opinions, regardless of their objective accuracy (i.e., a disconfirmation bias).<sup>3</sup> As David P. Redlawsk (2002, 1025) explains, encountering contrary evidence may encourage people with directional goals to become even more favorable to the direction that is consistent with their prior opinion (also see Bullock 2009, 1112).

As Taber and Lodge point out at the beginning of their paper, motivated reasoning pervades political thinking. Political examples are easy to generate. For instance, when people receive new information about George W. Bush, they interpret it in light of their existing

opinions about Bush. Thus, a pro-Bush voter might interpret information suggesting that Bush misled voters about the Iraq war as either false or as evidence of strong leadership in a time of crisis, rather than an accurate indication of incompetence or deception. Such voters may then become even more supportive of Bush. This type of reasoning occurs when people possess sufficiently strong opinions to guide their reasoning processes. It also takes place in the presence of partisan cues that anchor reasoning (cf. Rahn 1993; Bartels 2002; Gaines et al. 2007; Gerber and Huber 2009 and 2010; Goren et al. 2009; Groenendyk 2010). Thus, people may interpret a policy depending on whether the policy's sponsor is a Democrat or Republican. A Democrat might interpret a policy sponsored by a Democrat as favoring Democratic principles (e.g., environmental protection), whereas she would see the same policy as opposed to such principles if sponsored by Republicans. Similarly, Democrats (Republicans) may think the economy is doing well during a Democratic (Republican) administration even if they would view the same conditions negatively if Republicans (Democrats) ruled (e.g., Bartels 2003; Lavine et al. forthcoming).

Prior to reaching such biased information evaluations, individuals tend to seek out information that supports their prior opinions and tend to evade contrary information (Hart et al. 2009). Lodge and Taber (2008, 35–36) explain that motivated reasoning entails “systematic biasing of judgments in favor of one’s immediately accessible beliefs and feelings . . . [that is] built into the basic architecture of information processing mechanisms of the brain.” A further ironic twist—given the value often granted to strongly constrained attitudes—is that motivated reasoning occurs with increasing likelihood as attitudes become stronger (Houston and Fazio 1989, 64; Redlawsk 2002). When motivated reasoning occurs, individuals will miss out on relevant information and/or misinterpret information that may otherwise be helpful (Fazio and Olson 2003, 149; Jerit 2009; Druckman and Bolsen 2011; Lavine et al. forthcoming).

Yet it is important to recognize that motivated reasoning does not always occur. It requires the pursuit of the aforementioned directional goals of upholding and maintaining a desirable conclusion, even by rejecting disconfirming information, which results in self-serving biases in the process of knowledge acquisition (Kunda 1990). When individuals instead aim to form accurate opinions—or “correct” preferences (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756)—they carefully attend to issue-relevant information, invest cognitive effort in reasoning, and process the information

more deeply, using more complex rules (Kunda 1990, 485). The result is to form preferences with an eye towards what will be best in the future, rather than to simply defend prior beliefs.

### *Motivated Reasoning in Politics*

Taber and Lodge's goal is to explore the extent to which motivated reasoning occurs in political situations. They explain that the "empirical status of selective attention and, in particular, selective exposure can be best characterized as uncertain" (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756; cf. Gerber and Green 1999). In their study, Taber and Lodge invited student participants to a session that focused on two partisan, contentious issues: affirmative action and gun control. The participants first reported their prior attitude about one of the issues (e.g., affirmative action), and the strength of that attitude. After being encouraged to "view information in an evenhanded way so [as to] explain the issue to other students," participants selected to read eight of sixteen possible pro or con arguments about the issue (Taber and Lodge 2006, 759; cf. Taber et al. 2009, 144).<sup>4</sup> This tested for confirmation bias. Participants next reported their updated opinion on the issue and answered demographic questions.

In the next stage of the study, participants reported their opinions on the other issue (e.g., gun control), were again told to be "evenhanded," were asked to rate the strength of four pro and four con arguments, and then reported their updated opinions. This tested for the prior-attitude effect and disconfirmation bias. Taber and Lodge report stark evidence that participants evaluated arguments that were consistent with their prior opinions as more compelling; spent more time counterarguing incongruent arguments; and chose to read arguments that were consistent, rather than inconsistent, with their prior opinions. These dynamics led to attitude polarization: Respondents developed more extreme opinions in the direction of their priors. Sophisticated participants and those with stronger prior opinions registered the most significant effects (also see Kahan et al. 2009; Taber et al. 2009). Taber and Lodge (2006, 767) conclude: "Despite our best efforts to promote the evenhanded treatment of policy arguments in our studies, we find consistent evidence of directional partisan bias—the prior attitude effect [i.e., evaluations of arguments supporting prior opinions as more compelling than opposing arguments], disconfirmation bias [i.e., extra

effort devoted to counterarguing incongruent messages], and confirmation bias [i.e., seeking out consistent information]. . . . Our participants may have tried to be evenhanded, but they found it impossible to be fair-minded.”<sup>5</sup>

The implication is that when it comes to contested political issues, people tend to engage in directional processing. The less sophisticated and those with weaker attitudes, who displayed little or no motivated reasoning, were not seen as pursuing accuracy goals. Rather “those with weak and uninformed attitudes show less bias in processing political arguments . . . not because they possess a greater sense of evenhandedness, but rather because they lack the motivation and ability to engage in attitude defense” (Taber and Lodge 2006, 767). These individuals are seen as being entirely unmotivated, perhaps relying loosely on whatever considerations happen to be accessible.

### *It May Not Be as Bad as It Seems*

As with all their work, the details of Taber and Lodge’s study and their own inferences are beyond critique. Yet Taber and Lodge may significantly understate the possibility of individuals pursuing accuracy goals, and thus overstate the prevalence of motivated reasoning.

First, on its face, their instruction to form accurate opinions seems reasonable; however, upon further examination, the instruction may not have been sufficient to stimulate an accuracy goal. Lord et al. (1984) find that inducing people to form accurate preferences requires, not just encouraging them to be unbiased, but also inducing them to consider alternative arguments (i.e., “consider the opposite”). Taber and Lodge’s manipulation asks respondents to put their prior opinions aside and requires them to “explain the debate” to others. However, individuals may have understood this to mean that they need to present some facts to others, but *not* necessarily to justify their opinions; they may not have been induced to consider alternative considerations or the process by which they formed their opinions. In many experiments, this is done by requiring respondents to justify their specific opinions (e.g., Tetlock 1983; Redlawsk 2002). David A. Houston and Russell H. Fazio (1989, 65) explain that removing attitudinal bias requires “directing people to focus on the nature of the judgmental process.” This accentuates the distinction between process accountability (i.e., considering the opinion-formation

process) and outcome accountability (i.e., explaining what you think but not necessarily justifying it) (e.g., Creyer et al. 1990; Lerner and Tetlock 1999).<sup>6</sup> In short, a stronger manipulation—one that may, in fact, mimic some political contexts, in which individuals are socially pressured to explain the basis of their opinions—may stimulate accuracy.

Second, Taber and Lodge's student sample was skewed towards Democrats (Taber and Lodge 2006, 757). Respondents thus may have expected that they would be discussing the issue with like-minded partisans (given that they were told they would discuss the issue with "interested students"). Philip E. Tetlock (1983, 74) explains that "accountability leads to more complex information processing only when people do not have the cognitively 'lazy' option of simply expressing views similar to those of the individual to whom they feel accountable." Thus, contexts that involve a greater mix of opinions may generate less motivated reasoning.

Third, Taber and Lodge, for good reason given the mixed prior evidence, opted for highly contested and politicized issues. On these issues, individuals may possess relatively strong priors (the distribution may be high in terms in strength), and may have felt particularly comfortable clinging to polarized positions given well-known partisan divisions. The implication is that these issues were especially prone to stimulate directional biases.

Fourth, Taber and Lodge measured prior opinions and follow-up opinions within a single session, in close time proximity. Respondents may have felt the need to maintain consistency so as to appear reliable. A greater delay between the initial expression of opinion and the evaluation of information could lead to less bias.

In sum, motivated reasoning may occur with much less frequency when participants are induced to consider alternative perspectives or to reflect on their reasoning process; when there is greater accountability to people who disagree; when less contentious issues are in play; and/or when opinions are explored over a longer period of time. These dynamics are found in certain political situations where individuals interact with heterogeneous populations (e.g., Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004) and where they form opinions on many issues over longer time periods (e.g., Chong and Druckman 2010).

With these considerations in mind, my colleagues and I implemented an experiment that focused on a salient but presumably less contentious issue: energy policy (Bolsen et al. 2011). We provided respondents, who



came from a representative sample of the United States, with information about the (bipartisan) 2007 Energy Independence Act and asked them their opinions about the Act. Instead of measuring prior attitudes at that time, we focused on partisan motivated reasoning, having measured respondents' partisan identifications at a much earlier date (e.g., Goren et al. 2009). We randomly exposed respondents to conditions stating that Republicans supported the law; that Democrats supported the law; or that some Republicans and some Democrats supported the law (suggesting within-party disagreement). This last condition captures cross-partisan, but not universal, support (see Cooper and Young 1997). Thus, partisan respondents received cues from their own party, the other party, or a mix of members from each party.<sup>7</sup>

We also varied respondents' motivation by randomly telling respondents (a) that partisanship is important for passing coherent programs, and that they would have to later justify why they affiliate with their party; (b) to consider alternative perspectives, and to keep in mind that they would have to later explain the reasons for their opinions; or (c) nothing at all (i.e., no motivational manipulation). Condition (a) prompted partisan motivated reasoning (i.e., directional goals) while condition (b) served to induce accuracy judgment by forcing respondents to focus on the nature of their decision-making (and not just the issue per se).

We found strong evidence of partisan motivated reasoning (e.g., Democrats support the policy when it comes from Democrats, but not when the same policy comes from Republicans) when we provided cues from either the same or the other party *and* either prompted partisan identification or did not manipulate motivation. However, motivated reasoning disappeared when we either induced people to form accurate decisions or when the cues were cross-partisan. We also found that motivated reasoning disappeared for ambivalent individuals (i.e., those less trusting of their party) (also see Lavine et al. forthcoming).

Our results accentuate the conditional nature of motivated reasoning (as least when it comes to selective perception).<sup>8</sup> Rather than being an inevitable political decision-making process, its occurrence depends on the individual and the context. Ambivalent individuals—even if they possess otherwise strong opinions—may be more motivated to process information with accuracy in mind. Another individual-level moderator is cognitive drive; Lilach Nir (2011) reports that those high in “need for cognition” (e.g., those who enjoy complex thinking) and low in the “need to evaluate” (e.g., those who do not constantly form opinions) are

less likely to engage in motivated reasoning (also see Stanovich and West 1998). Also, Markus Prior (2007) reports that nominal material benefits (\$1) can reduce partisan differences in perceptions of objective conditions.

As suggested, context also matters, as there are various political situations in which individuals anticipate having to elaborate on the rationale for their opinions, leading them to processing accuracy (e.g., Sinclair n.d.). The role of social expectations in prompting accuracy seems to be a particularly fruitful area in need of more study, given that social expectations often condition motivations (e.g. Tetlock 1983; Tetlock et al. 1989; Lerner and Tetlock 1999). Additionally, competitive or conflictual information prompts the accuracy motivation (e.g., Chong and Druckman 2007; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). The effect of the cross-partisan cue in our energy policy experiment likely stemmed from individuals learning of within-party conflict on the issue. Finally, situations that stir anxiety (e.g., natural disasters, terrorist threats) enhance the accuracy motivation (Atkeson and Maestas 2011).<sup>9</sup>

### *Accuracy Motivation as a Normative Ideal*

I have argued that certain circumstances can imbue individuals with an accuracy motivation that enables them to avoid the ostensible biases of motivated reasoning. As explained, this is particularly relevant for those with strong prior opinions, who are most likely to engage in motivated reasoning in the first place. That leaves open the question of how weakly opinionated individuals operate—and, indeed, people have fairly weak opinions about many political issues. It seems that the accuracy motivation also improves—albeit in a distinct fashion—the content of the opinions for those with weak priors. Consequently, the accuracy motivation serves as a relatively strong criterion for evaluating citizen competence.

Taber and Lodge make clear that the fact that those with weak prior opinions appear more even-handed should not be taken as an overly salubrious outcome. Instead, what may be happening is that those with weak opinions—who often are less politically sophisticated—form opinions with little thought whatsoever. In other words, they construct opinions based on information culled from their memory and/or contextual stimuli (see Lavine, Huff, and Wagner 1998). The process

resembles what John R. Zaller (1992, 76) calls “making it up as you go along,” where people “are heavily influenced by whatever ideas happen to be at the top of their minds.” Often what is at the top of their minds (or accessible) is whatever they have just heard (e.g., from political elites). This occurs because individuals are basing their preferences on salient information, without consciously considering the reliability of the information (see Druckman 2001 for discussion).

This situation underlies the well-known equivalency-framing effects, where logically equivalent words or phrases cause individuals to alter their preferences (Druckman 2001 and 2004). For example, people evaluate a hypothetical economic program more favorably when described as resulting in 95-percent employment rather than 5-percent unemployment, or they support a crime-prevention plan when told that 10 percent of all young people have committed a crime but oppose it when told that 90 percent have not (Quattrone and Tversky 1988). Similar effects occur across a wide range of domains: bargaining, financial, health, legal, and political (e.g., Kühberger et al. 1999; Levin et al. 1998; Kahneman 2000, xv). Analogous dynamics occur with non-hypothetical “real” issues, such as when support for the Gulf War depended on whether it was described as “using military force” or “engaging in combat” (Mueller 1994, 30). People offer greater support for free speech when the question is about “forbidding” speech instead of “not allowing” it (Schuman and Presser 1981, 277; Bartels 2003).

Opinions such as these border on un-interpretable (Druckman 2001) and they violate the invariance axiom that underlies standard models of rational decision making. When people prefer an economic program described as resulting in 95-percent employment but then oppose the same program when told that it will result in 5-percent unemployment, it is impossible to determine if they support or oppose the program: The preferences are irreconcilable. It would be senseless to argue that people’s preferences changed because they came to believe that avoiding 5-percent unemployment is more important than ensuring 95-percent employment, or vice versa. Political elites enjoy tremendous leeway in these situations, since citizens follow whatever information they happen to hear more often or more recently. In such contexts, political preferences may reflect seemingly arbitrary or momentary variations in contextual stimuli (Fazio 1990, 87).

Yet there are constraints—and one of the central ones is the motivation to be accurate, which brings in its train the likelihood of consciously

processing information.<sup>10</sup> Various factors have been shown to increase motivation and, accordingly, vitiate or eliminate these types of framing effects. These factors include high cognitive ability (Stanovich and West 1998), asking people to think about their preferences briefly (Takemura 1994), and inducing them to provide a rationale for their opinion (Sieck and Yates 1997). Context also matters. Of particular relevance in many political settings is that competition between arguments and discussions among people with competing perspectives tends to stimulate motivation and conscious processing, leading to the dampening of arbitrary effects (Druckman 2004; Chong and Druckman 2007).

This evidence makes it clear that opinions—even weak ones—are not inevitably malleable; there are realistic conditions that motivate individuals with weak priors to be accurate and to avoid basing preferences on unassessed information. Indeed, Druckman 2004 replicates four classic equivalency framing-effect experiments and shows that the effects disappear with the addition of competition between information or conversations among heterogeneous groups.<sup>11</sup>

In short, all else constant, the motivation to be accurate limits arbitrary influences on weakly formed opinions. What this implies is that the accuracy motivation has the potential to minimize motivated reasoning among those with strong prior opinions and to limit arbitrary information effects among those with weak prior opinions. While making statements about what constitutes a “better” opinion is always a murky endeavor, it seems reasonable to claim in both cases (i.e., weak and strong priors) that opinions are improved due to the accuracy motivation.

Consider Jane Mansbridge’s (1983, 25) suggestion that “enlightened preferences” are those that match the preferences we would have if “information were perfect, including the knowledge [individuals] would have in retrospect if they had had a chance to live out the consequences of each choice before actually making a decision.” Of course this is an inaccessible state, but presumably engaging in *processes* of decision making that minimize motivated reasoning and “making it up as you go along” increase the likelihood of a decision reflecting what it would have been in the counterfactual state. As such, one can assess the normative desirability of an opinion based on the extent to which individuals employ an accuracy goal and/or by (experimentally) comparing decisions with those that are made under accuracy motivations.

This approach has the advantage of not requiring that opinions be based on any particular substantive information, and thus avoids what

Arthur Lupia (2006) calls the “elitist move.” It also means that individuals can possess weak priors that lack ideological constraint, and need not possess copious information or particular abilities (Parker-Stephen 2010). Efforts to enhance “voter competence” would be better off focusing on inducing the accuracy motivation rather than providing information alone. Moreover, citizens would not be expected to engage in extensive reasoning across multiple dimensions, as normative rational-choice models prescribe (e.g., Edwards et al. 1963). Instead citizens should aim to process information consciously and to consider multiple perspectives. The motivation to be accurate also is likely to provide a lower threshold than that required in the well-known dual-process models of persuasion. In these models, motivation requires more extensive analyses of the logic of arguments (see Chaiken and Trope 1999).<sup>12</sup>

In sum, the motivation to be accurate serves as a realistic and flexible standard by which one can evaluate democratic competence. Not only is it obtainable, but it also enjoys a number of other advantages over alternative approaches. This standard addresses E. E. Schattschneider’s (1960, 132) concern that “the most disastrous shortcomings of the system have been those of the intellectuals whose concepts of democracy have been amazingly rigid and uninventive.”

\* \* \*

Taber and Lodge sought to provide a strong test of motivated reasoning, given that prior evidence was far from conclusive. This may have led them to a design that maximized the effects. Thus, one should be cautious not to overgeneralize their results. Clearly, the only way to gauge the pervasiveness of motivated reasoning is to conduct more research.

That said, Taber and Lodge’s approach has intriguing implications in terms of its applicability to political opinion formation more generally. The role of the accuracy motivation plays a common role in models where individuals have strong prior opinions (e.g., online models of opinion formation) and where individuals have weak prior opinions (e.g., memory-based models). This suggests that two approaches that many political scientists treat as competing models might be joined (e.g., Druckman and Lupia 2000).

Moreover, building on Taber and Lodge's thoughtful concluding discussion about normative implications, I have argued that the accuracy motivation constitutes a plausible basis for assessing citizen competence—one that contains a number of attributes relative to extant approaches. Instead of assessing how much information people possess or whether they maintain coherent ideologies, the roots of good citizenship may lie with the motivations that drive people to process information in different ways.

#### NOTES

1. I follow much of the psychological literature on motivation by equating "motivation" with "goals."
2. In focusing on two major categories of motivation, I follow Taber and Lodge (2006, 756). Note, however, that directional motivation encompasses a range of distinct goals, including defending prior opinions and/or partisan identity, impression motivation, and behavioral motivation (see Kunda 2001). Additionally, it is likely that motivations interact, so people may be aimed partly at accuracy goals and partly at directional goals (e.g., Lodge and Taber 2000; also see McGraw 2003, 396). Finally, motivation should not be equated with effort or elaboration (Fazio and Olson 2003, 151); to lack an accuracy goal is not necessarily to be lazy, as one can put forth great effort in pursuit of a directional goal (even though this would do little to ensure an accurate outcome).
3. Motivated reasoning has deep roots in psychological research of the 1950s and 1960s (see, for example, Festinger 1957), and more contemporary research by Lord et al. (1979) and Kunda (1990) (for early political-science applications, see Sears and Whitney 1973). Lodge and Taber (2000, 186) initially introduced motivated reasoning as an extension to Lodge's work on on-line (OL) processing (e.g., Lodge et al. 1989 and 1995; also see Redlawsk 2002, 1023 for a discussion of how the recent work moves beyond the older work). While OL reasoning is not necessary for motivated reasoning, it does increase the likelihood of it occurring. For further discussion, see Druckman et al. 2009 (also see Goren 2002; Braman and Nelson 2007). Also note that I employ the term "motivated reasoning," but this should be viewed as synonymous with Taber and Lodge's "motivated skepticism" and Lavine et al.'s (forthcoming) "partisan perceptual screen."
4. The specific instruction for the affirmative action issue, available at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/polsci/ctaber/taberlodgeajpso5.pdf>, was: "At the conclusion of the experiment, you will be asked to explain the affirmative action debate to a group of interested students. The arguments presented on the following screen will give you a chance to prepare to do this. We understand that you may already have an opinion about affirmative action, but we would like you to set your feelings aside and consider the arguments fairly. Please be as objective as possible."

5. Their results appear to contradict the ideal of Bayesian reasoning (see Redlawsk 2002; Kim et al. 2010; although also see Bullock 2009 for a general treatment of Bayes).
6. I thank Thomas Leeper for this point.
7. We also included a condition that said both parties support the Act; this condition mimicked the in-party cue results for Democrats and Republicans.
8. Redlawsk 2002 finds that the accuracy motivation does more to vitiate selective perception than selective attention; this is a topic clearly in need of more work (also see Hart et al. 2009).
9. Braman and Nelson 2007 reports that the likelihood of motivated reasoning in new situations depends on how closely they resemble known cases.
10. Individuals also need to have the opportunity to deliberate, meaning that they have at least a brief amount of time (e.g., seconds) to consider alternatives (Fazio 1990, 2007). There are other constraints as well. For example, a recently heard piece of information shapes preferences only if one possesses a basic understanding of how that information relates to a preference (i.e., the information must be available in the individual's mind; see Higgins 1997). Also, people undoubtedly possess weak attitudes on many political issues (e.g., Fazio 1995, 249; Kinder 1998, 814), and some take this as evidence of widespread lack of interest and arbitrary preference formation (e.g., Zaller 1992; Levy 2002; Kahneman and Tversky 2000; Bartels 2003). Yet the empirical evidence is far from clear, and presumptions of widespread arbitrary preferences are overstated. Fazio (2007, 619, 624) explains: "I have to admit some bewilderment regarding recent discussions portraying all (or virtually all) attitudes as momentary constructions," which are "contradicted by existing data. . . . The case for malleability has been overstated" (also see Martin and Achee 1992).
11. It is not surprising that most of the studies that document arbitrary opinion-formation processes exclude competition (see Wittman 1995 for discussion).
12. The focus on accuracy can be expanded to include other attributes. For example, citizens often exhibit myopic behaviors, and one could incorporate a future orientation criterion (see Lenz 2011). Similarly, accuracy motivation by itself may not always be sufficient to obtain the "best" outcomes and may need to be coupled with the ability to successfully employ distinct decision-making strategies (see Payne et al. 1993; Kunda 2001). Regardless, accuracy serves as an intriguing basis for any conception of competence.

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