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Mind, Will and Choice*

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Much of what we recognize as political is a function of choice. Political phenomena such as elections, wars, legislation, and protests occur because people choose to take particular actions at particular times. For scholars, the concept of *choice* is important because it primes us to consider not just the existence of an action, but also the volition that produced it. Such priming of volition is why news of important, unusual, or controversial political phenomena is often followed by the question, "Why?"

Scholars answer this question in many ways. Some emphasize attributes of those who make the choices. Others focus on the context in which the choices are made.

Individual-centered and context-based explanations are sometimes posed in opposition to one another – as if the validation of one approach necessarily undermines the other. In this essay, we argue for the benefits of integrating the two approaches. While

there are several ways to examine the interactive effects of individual and contextual variables, we base our argument on a particular method of integration. The method entails using tools and concepts often associated with individual-centered analyses to clarify the relationship between context and choice.

We offer this chapter in response to the editors' invitation to write on "mind, will, and choice" in the domain of contextual political science. We find the invitation interesting for at least two reasons. First, political choices have long been explained as products of *mind* or *will*. Second, advances in several scientific fields shed new light on choice and its cognitive antecedents. Therefore, in what follows, we use the method of integration described above to show that new advances in the study of human thought not only aid individual-centered analysis by challenging old notions of mind and will, but also help scholars study contextual effects more effectively.

Our essay is organized into five sections: this introduction, three sections respectively entitled "Mind," "Will" and "Choice," and a brief conclusion. In "Mind," we argue that many questions about how context affects choice are better answered by focusing on the brain instead of the mind. In "Will," we make a parallel argument for focusing on preferences instead of wills. The key premise of these two sections is that brains and preferences, as the foci of decades of empirical study, are more amenable to reliable measurement and transparent analysis than are minds and wills – about whose measurability there is much less consensus. The key conclusion of these sections is that incorporating insights about brains and preferences – concepts often associated with individual-level analyses – into context-oriented research designs can provide greater clarity about how, when, and why factors such time, place, language, and culture affect

political choices.

In “Mind” and “Will,” most of the studies cited in support of our key conclusion are experimental. These experiments document how deliberately altering specific aspects of a controlled domain affects critical attributes of focal phenomena and can provide excellent vehicles for evaluating causal hypotheses. While social science experiments are tools often associated with research on individual-level phenomena, they can be powerful tools in contextual analyses. If, for example, a specific contextual factor is presumed irrelevant to a particular political interaction, then a well-designed experiment that varies whether or not the named factor is present can be sufficient to reject the hypothesis. Several of the studies we cite have this attribute and, hence, provide an effective means of understanding why certain interactions of context and cognition affect choice.

In the section entitled “Choice,” we draw on non-cooperative game theory to complement the perspective of the laboratory experiments cited in “Mind” and “Will.” Scholars use this brand of game theory to present two or more situations that differ by perhaps only one attribute. They then work through the variation’s logical implications. While this approach (which, we will suggest is akin to a thought experiment) is not often associated with context-based political analysis, we show that it has been used very effectively to identify key causal attributes of important contextual variables (that have been empirically verified).

In sum, we contend how and when context affects choice is a function not just of traditional contextual variables such as time, place, language, and culture, but also of increasingly well-understood properties of brains and preferences. At the same time, we come to understand that answers to many questions about choice that were once

answered strictly in terms of mind and will are not context independent. For a wide range of political inquiries, therefore, constructive and clarifying answers can emerge when we integrate knowledge of context and cognition.

I. Mind

How does context affect choice? Our answer is based on a simple model of human action that follows from scholarly efforts in many disciplines. Following Clark (1997), we describe this model as *{mind, will, choice} = f(brain, body, world)*. Interactions among brain, body, and world create feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and preferences. They determine the range of actions a person thinks he can take and the consequences he associates with his actions.

In this model, the body is the intermediary between brain and world. Unlike the brain, it has direct contact with certain parts of the world. Its physical construction provides a conduit that translates environmental stimuli into electrical impulses and chemical reactions that travel to the brain. It simultaneously converts products of brain activity into embodied actions (e.g., an arm movement or a flight response).

The brain, in turn, "processes information" by receiving, transforming, and manufacturing the impulses and reactions described above. In the brain-body-world correspondence, the brain is distinguished from the mind. The brain is a discrete physical object with measurable attributes. While remaining mysterious in some ways, its basic anatomy and functional properties are increasingly well understood. Indeed, many well-

documented tests show how electrical activity and chemical reactions correspond to consciousness and subconscious brain activities.[1]

The *mind*, by contrast, is a centuries-old philosophical construct. Among the concept's problems when applied in an analytic framework is that it is sometimes used to refer to what we now understand as parts of the brain, sometimes refers to the brain itself, and sometimes refers to products of a brain-body-world interaction. Despite this lack of clarity, many political theories, folk theories, and contemporary common wisdoms about social reasoning are based on conjectures about minds. One problem with this legacy is that twentieth century research on brains has exposed many of these conjectures as false. Fortunately, these new studies can yield improved measures of cognitive functions that, if attended to by theoreticians, can improve our ability to understand and explain many political interactions.[2]

Consider, for example, the case of deliberative democracy.[3] The idea of deliberative democracy has gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly after the writings of Jürgen Habermas (see, e.g., Fishkin 1991; 1995). Habermas describes a context – the ideal speech environment – in which allocating speech rights in an equal manner increases civic competence. In recent years, the concept of ideal speech environments has moved from a philosophical endeavor to an icon for democratic reformers (see, e.g., Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Ackerman and Fishkin 2004). While seeking uniformly to improve civic competence, many such efforts are based on mind-based predictions about the consequences of deliberation that 20th century research on brains contradicts.

For example, many deliberation advocates describe communication as a process where participants will leave privileging certain pieces of information rather than others.[4] But under what conditions would a deliberative encounter lead a participant to favor one claim over another? A necessary condition for such an effect is that the target audience for these critical pieces of information pays attention to them and thinks about them for at least some minimum amount of time.

A challenge for deliberative advocates is the fact that the capacity of the part of the brain where such information would have to be initially processed – working (or short-term) memory – is very small (Kandel et al. 1995, 664). Moreover, the modal decay rate of items that are ever admitted into working memory (i.e., the items to which we pay attention) is best stated in terms of milliseconds. As a consequence, unchangeable physical attributes of working (or short-term) memory force us to ignore everything around us. To get our attention, an utterance must fend off competitors – such as aspects of prior or future events – with which a person may be preoccupied, the simultaneous actions or utterances of others, background noise, and so on. Therefore, people pay attention to only a tiny fraction of the information that is available to them and can later recall only a tiny fraction of the things to which they paid attention.

Moreover, even if a piece of information is attended to, an exercise such as deliberation can increase a participant's competence only if the information is processed in a particular way that leaves *a unique cognitive legacy* in long-term memory (henceforth, LTM). The physical foundation of LTM is found in the distribution of specialized cells throughout the brain. Chemical reactions within and across these cells generate activation potentials for particular kinds of mental responses. You can think of

activation potentials as corresponding to probabilities of recalling things you once noticed. What we usually call learning involves changing these activation potentials. The physical embodiment of learning that smoking is highly correlated with lung cancer, for example, is a change in activation potentials that makes you more likely to associate pain and death with smoking. Therefore, if one person's attempt to increase another's competence through deliberation does not lead to a change in another person's activation potentials, the latter person's competence will not increase. However, not any change in activation potentials is sufficient to increase competence – the change must cause participants' LTMs to produce "ideas" that induce them to take different and more competent actions than they would have taken absent deliberation.

An implication of these facts is that claims about the positive impact of deliberation – on individuals or the societies in which they are members – will be true only if they are consistent with physical and biological processes that govern what the target audience will attend to (short-term memory) and remember (LTM) about the event. Many deliberation advocates fail to recognize the existence of such conditions, instead adopting the approach that if people are put into a room together and each given a chance to speak, all participants will walk out enlightened. This practice is tragic because it leads well-intentioned people to invest time and effort into deliberative efforts that are destined to fail even though research on attention, memory, and persuasion make the problems knowable in advance.

Our increasing knowledge of even basic brain functions places ominous clouds over the landscape of claims about deliberative effectiveness. Applied research brings more reason for doubt.

Deliberation is said, for example, to increase engagement, tolerance, and justification for individuals' opinions (see Mendelberg 2002). However, Schkade et al. (2000, 1139) ran studies on over 500 mock juries and found that "the principal effect of deliberation is often to polarize individual judgments." Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) review a growing literature on the topic that conveys many similar insights.

A parallel claim is that opinions formed via deliberation with conflicting perspectives are presumed to better capture the "will of the people" by ensuring quality opinions that approximate truth, reasonableness, and rationality (Mill 1859, 23; Dewey 1927, 208; Kinder and Herzog 1993, 349; Benhabib 1996, 71; Bohman 1998, 401; Fishkin 1999, 283; Dryzek 2000, 55; Mendelberg 2002, 180). Lupia and McCubbins (1998) use communication models and a range of laboratory experiments to reveal conditions under which communication *decreases* participants' competence (i.e., they identify conditions under which the most knowledgeable people in a room are not the most persuasive). Sanders (1997) reaches a similar conclusion by focusing on how power relationships tip the balance of communicative effectiveness in favor of socially privileged groups. Moreover, Goodin and Niemeyer's (2003) work casts doubt on empirical claims about the impact of deliberation's communicative element. They show that information given to respondents in advance of a deliberative exercise had a far greater impact on participants' attitudes than the communication that followed (also see Parkinson n.d. on limitations to deliberation via mass media).

While studies such as these can be used to criticize the deliberative democracy movement, a more enlightened use for them is to improve it. Deliberative democrats are correct in presuming that contextual variations *can* affect when and what citizens

communicate to one another. The key to achieving success, and avoiding a waste of the goodwill and human capital devoted to such efforts, is knowing when, why, and how deliberation's effect is beneficial. Approaches that combine knowledge of communicative contexts with rigorously tested principles of human cognition will provide greater clarity about what contextual alterations are necessary or sufficient to make deliberation deliver the normative benefits its supporters desire.

II. Will

How do people decide to choose one candidate, policy, or action rather than another? In many cases, the question is answered by using the concept of will. While framing the volition of individuals, majorities, and collectives in terms of will has been effective in the past, will is problematic as an analytic concept. Chief among the concept's problems is how to measure it.[5] A common response to the problem of measurability is that preferences now play the role once occupied by will in political analysis.

We define a *preference* as "a comparative evaluation of (i.e., a ranking over) a set of objects" (Druckman and Lupia 2000, 2). For example, imagine that an individual faces a choice between two alternatives – Policy A and Policy B. In this case, the individual may prefer Policy A to Policy B, prefer Policy B to Policy A, or be indifferent between Policy A and Policy B.[6] Seen in this light, if a contextual variable is hypothesized to *cause* a choice, then at least one contextual variable must affect an actor's preference in a particular way (e.g., the variable causes the actor to change his revealed preference from

some option A to some option ~A).

While many scholars study political preferences, few focus on how context affects preferences. As Mutz et al. (1996, 5) explain, "More often than not, our topics of study and the methods we employ fail to take into systematic account the power of situations to influence political attitudes." Beck et al. (2002, 57) agree, stating "most studies of voting behavior in the United States and other democracies have paid little attention to context, viewing vote choices as the product of a 'personal' rather than a 'social' calculus" (see, e.g., Zaller 1992, 2).

While we concede that the literature on preferences has focused on individual – rather than contextual – differences, we read it as being anything but silent on the matter of contextual effects. To this end, we offer two examples where experiments in contextual variation clarify important attributes of political preferences.[7]

In the first example, careful attention to context influences a long-standing debate about how information affects preferences. The debate regards two prominent models of political preference formation: the memory-based model and the on-line model. The memory-based model's core premise is that, when asked to express a preference, people search their memory for information and base their preference on that information. This search can be extensive (e.g., such as computing relative candidate issue positions over a large number of issues and characteristics, Kelly and Mirer 1974), or it can be haphazard (e.g., the information that happens to be easily accessible in memory at that moment, Zaller 1992). An example of the latter form of memory-based reasoning occurs when an individual bases her preference over two candidates entirely on one attribute that comes easily to her mind because it was just on the news.

The core premise of on-line models, by contrast, is that people form and maintain a running "evaluation counter" of certain objects (e.g., Lodge et al. 1989; 1995). When a person encounters new information, he or she brings an affect laden "evaluation counter" (i.e., running tally) into working memory, updates it given the new information, and then restores the counter to long-term memory. The new information need not be remembered directly. Therefore, when asked to express a preference people retrieve the evaluation counter, and, in contrast to memory models, not the discrete events on which the summary evaluation is based.

Initial work in political science either asserted the primacy of one model over the other (see, e.g., Zaller 1992, 279; Lodge et al. 1995, 119) or focused on the moderating role of individual differences such as political sophistication (McGraw et al. 1990; McGraw and Pinney 1990; also see Krosnick and Brannon 1993, 965; Jarvis and Petty 1996). There was little attention to context.

Rahn et al. (1994) took a different approach. They pointed out that some political contexts create simple communication environments, such as when candidates give sequential speeches, while others are more complex, such as when candidates debate. Drawing on social cognition research (e.g., Fiske et al. 1983), Rahn et al. argue that complex settings increase the difficulty of comprehending, integrating, and adding information to an on-line evaluation, especially if the information is unfamiliar and the audience is not motivated. In other words, context matters. They predict that non-sophisticated individuals will not engage in on-line processing in complex contexts, but will do so in simple settings. In contrast, they predict that sophisticates will engage in on-line processing in both contexts.

To test the hypothesis, they implemented an experiment in which some participants watched two candidates offer sequential speeches (simple context) while others watched a two-candidate debate (complex context). The information offered in each context was identical. Their findings support their hypotheses: non-sophisticates engaged in memory-based processing in the complex setting and on-line processing in the simple setting. Sophisticates, by contrast, always processed on-line. Individual differences depend on context, with sophistication only mattering in complex settings. This study shows that the applicability of memory-based and on-line models depends, in part, on attributes of the context in which the information is presented (also see Redlawsk 2001).[8]

In the second example, experiments in contextual variation clarify how framing affects preferences. A framing effect occurs when differently worded, but logically equivalent, phrases cause individuals to alter their preferences (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; 1987). An example of such an effect occurs when people reject a policy program after being told that it will result in 5% unemployment but prefer it after being told that it will result in 95% employment.[9] Many scholars interpret such effects as evidence that citizens do not have well-formed or coherent preferences about important social issues.

Many framing studies, however, pay limited attention to context. While they vary context in one way – by presenting a singular phenomenon in two different ways – few question the extent to which their subjects' reactions are context-dependent.[10] For those who want to claim that results from classic framing studies apply to political actors generally, knowing the answer to such questions is critically important.

Druckman (2005) explores the impact of social contexts on framing. He builds on

memory accessibility research (e.g., Fazio and Olson 2003) and behavioral decision theory (e.g. Payne et al. 1993) to specify the conditions under which framing effects will occur. He tested his predictions with an experiment on more than 500 participants. The experiment involved four classic framing problems with four conditions. The *control* condition mimicked the classic framing experiments – he presented each problem to participants using one of two frames (e.g., either an unemployment frame or an employment frame). The *elite competition* condition added to the control condition a second framing of the problem – specifically, it included a counterclaim where participants received a "re-framing" of the problem (e.g., those who had received the initial unemployment frame received a re-framing with the employment frame). Two inter-group discussion conditions added to the control condition the opportunity to discuss the problem with three other participants. In the *homogenous discussion* condition, all participants received the same frame. In the *heterogeneous discussion* condition, participants received different frames.

The experiment reveals how contextual attributes moderate or eliminate framing effects (also see, e.g., Bless et al. 1998; Druckman 2001b). The control condition closely replicates the classic studies by showing substantial framing effects. Context matters, however, because the effects disappear or are severely minimized in all of the other experimental conditions. In other words, changing the context to allow elite competition or inter-personal discussion limits or eliminates framing effects (also see Druckman and Nelson 2003). Since such factors are important attributes of many political contexts, it is incorrect to presume that framing affects political preferences generally in ways that the

original framing studies suggest.[11] As a result, classic framing studies provide little or no evidence about the quality of citizens' attitudes in many important political contexts.

These two examples are part of a growing population of studies (e.g., Kuklinski et al. 2001; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Sniderman et al. 2004) that deliver important insights about political preference formation and change. While these studies differ in many ways, they share the attribute of considering psychological processes and contextual variations simultaneously. At their best, such studies demonstrate that the value of a distinctly political psychology, over psychology as traditionally recognized, comes from adding to the psychologists' careful treatment of human cognition special attention to the unique social dynamics and challenges that characterize political settings. The value added comes from contemplating the context.

III. Choice

In this section, we turn to research that is useful for identifying contextual effects though it is not typically associated with contextual political science. Specifically, we focus on non-cooperative game theoretic work that falls under the rubric of "The New Institutionalism." Scholars use this research to derive empirical predictions about how certain contextual variables, such as formal and informal bargaining or legislative rules, affect individual perceptions, preferences, and choices (see, e.g., Shepsle 1989; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002).

The typical non-cooperative model built to clarify contextual-institutional

variables takes the following form. First, present a political context, complete with a description of the relevant actors, their preferences, the actions available to them, and their beliefs about all aspects just mentioned. Use deductive logic to derive a logically coherent conclusion about what choice every actor will make. Second, vary the context in a specific way and use the same logic to draw a parallel conclusion. Third, compare the two conclusions. If the conclusions are the same, then we would expect the contextual variation to have no impact on the behaviors described in the model. If the conclusions are different, we would expect empirical evidence to show that context matters.

Non-cooperative models have changed the way that many political scientists think about legislatures, elections, and the bureaucracy. In an important sense, the models are akin to thought experiments that can be used to derive robust empirical predictions about context. We offer, as an example, work on coalition formation in parliamentary democracies.

The defining feature of parliamentary democracy is that the viability of the government (i.e., the executive and the cabinet) depends directly on the willingness of all possible legislative majorities to support, or at least to tolerate, its existence. In other words, if any majority of members of parliament votes to replace the existing government, it ends.

In many cases, this requirement places a premium on coalition building and maintenance, since parliamentary democracies rarely contain single parties that control a majority of legislative seats. Questions about how coalitions form and which parties are included in government are among the most important that scholars of parliamentary democracies can pursue. These decisions affect what politicians become powerful, what

legislation is passed, and important aspects of the quality of citizens' lives.

Initial coalition formation theories posited parties as seeking to join governments while sharing the spoils of office as narrowly as possible. Using cooperative game theory, they predicted "minimal winning coalitions" in which the governing parties collectively control a majority of parliamentary seats, but only just so (e.g., von Neumann and Morgenstern 1953; Riker 1962). For example, if a hundred-person legislature has three parties, where Party A has 40 seats and Parties B and C have 30 seats each, the minimum winning coalition is one between B and C as no other combination of parties (e.g., "A and B" or "A and C") has a sum of seats less than 60.

Many scholars viewed this approach as unsatisfactory. Chief among their complaints was that the conclusions depended on the assumption that politicians care about gaining office and winning perks rather than policy. A subsequent generation of theories paid greater attention to policy and predicted that governing coalitions would form only among parties who were close ideologically (Axelrod 1970; De Swaan 1973).

While the minimal-winning and policy-aware theories differed in many ways, subsequent research revealed them to share one unfortunate attribute – neither predicted the actual membership of governing coalitions very well (see, e.g., Laver and Schofield 1990, 96). What was missing was a consideration of context. As Strøm et al. (1994, 306) put it, these theories were "operationalized at a level general enough to bear upon a range of political systems…data come from standard sources and are used with no contextual interpretation" (also see Laver and Schofield 1990, 195-216).

This changed as researchers began to use non-cooperative game theory to incorporate contextual variables into coalition formation theories (see, e.g., Laver 1998).

Scholars increasingly recognized that countries employ different rules that regulate the coalition formation and policy-making process, and they modeled these differences by specifying coalition outcomes in the presence or absence of different institutions (e.g., Austen-Smith and Banks 1988; Baron 1991; Lupia and Strøm 1995). For example, some countries (e.g., Germany, Italy) require investiture votes such that a majority of legislators must vote in favor of an incoming government, while other countries (e.g., Denmark, Norway) have no such requirement – meaning that a government can assume office as long as a majority does not vote against it. The models show that investiture requirements constrain the formation of minority governments – in which the parties in government do not control a majority of legislative seats. As Laver and Schofield (1990, 207) explain, "an investiture requirement forces an incoming government to survive on the basis of its program and cabinet taken as a whole, rather than on the basis of a package of proposals that can be considered one at a time." Minority governments, by contrast, survive by stringing together varying majorities on different issues, even if a majority does not support its overall existence (see Strøm et al. 1994, 311-312). As Martin and Stevenson (2001, 46) later verified, whether or not a country requires investiture votes is an important determinant of the viability of minority governments.

The investiture vote is just one of many contextual variables that shape coalition governments. Others include the presence of a formateur party, no-confidence votes, electoral rules, powers of parliamentary committees, and bi-cameral legislatures (e.g., Strøm et al. 1994; Martin and Stevenson 2001; Druckman and Thies 2002). A growing number of scholars are now using non-cooperative game theory to first isolate correspondences among contextual/institutional variables and coalition choices and then

use these findings as the basis for rigorous empirical tests. The combination of these activities has produced much more accurate empirical predictions about many facets of coalition governance (Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Müller and Strøm 2000). For example, Martin and Stevenson (2001, 47) report that relying only on office and policy preferences leads to an 11% success rate in predicting coalition formation whereas models that include institutional features increase the predictive success by an additional 33%.[12] In short, empirical and theoretical studies of coalition formation and termination that include key institutional attributes perform dramatically better in terms of predictive success than do studies that neglect these contextual variations.[13]

Explaining and predicting the actions of individuals and groups requires more than knowledge of the actors and their preferences; it also requires an appreciation of the context in which actions are taken. The kinds of complex thought experiment facilitated by methods such as non-cooperative game theory offer a powerful method for understanding how different contexts influence actions.

IV. Conclusion

Choice has always been a focal concept in the study of politics. When the goal of scholarship is to explain choice, volition becomes relevant as well. Advances in many scientific fields are giving researchers more reliable ways to measure important aspects of volition and to evaluate causal hypotheses about choice. Political science has, and will, continue to contribute to this endeavor. Our biggest comparative advantage, however, is

in our ability to combine other disciplines' ideas with deep knowledge of, and sustained attention to, a set of critically important social contexts. Context, not methodology, is what unites our discipline. It is what causes scholars from distinct intellectual traditions such as philosophy, sociology, economics, and psychology to want to be in a single department, attending each other's research seminars and jointly training graduate students at institutions of higher learning all over the world. Political Science is united by the desire to understand, explain, and predict important aspects of contexts where individual and collective actions are intimately and continuously bound. Our comparative advantage is valuable and we should encourage researchers to leverage it whenever they can. At the same time, integrating new knowledge about brains and preferences, and inferential methods that allow strong tests of causal hypotheses, can improve the empirical reliability and substantive relevance of contextual political science. In other words, the desire to highlight the role of context in political analysis and the desire to provide scientifically rigorous explanations of political choice are inherently complementary.

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Notes

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[1] For reviews of relevant research, see Kandel et al. (1995), and Cacioppo et al. (2002).

[2] See, for example, Churchland and Sejnowski (1992), Schacter (2001), and Pinker (2002). For an efficiently packaged overview of central debates among cognitive scientists see McCauley (1996).

[3] This example follows from one presented in Lupia (2002).

[4] See, for example, the contrasting descriptions of deliberation by Ackerman and Fishkin (2004), Lupia (2004), and Posner (2004).

[5] Social choice scholarship including that of Arrow (1963), McKelvey (1976), and Schofield (1983) has convinced many people to question even the existence of collective will. While this work proves that some universal claims about attributes of collective will are logically inconsistent, Lupia and McCubbins (n.d.) demonstrate that such results are often overinterpreted. Specifically, the proofs are not sufficient to negate all possible propositions about collective intent.

[6] It is worth noting that preference and choice are not one in the same. A person can prefer Kucinich to Kerry among Democratic candidates for president, but vote for Kerry in a primary election because Kucinich is perceived as certain to lose to the Republican nominee. Research in social psychology also shows regular disconnects between preferences and behavior (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken 1993, chapter 4).

[7] We focus on contextual influences beyond the well-known and widely acknowledged

direct effects of elite rhetoric and inter-personal conversations (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954).

[8] Another dynamic that appears to influence processing strategy is the type of choice under consideration. Specifically, the on-line processing research focuses on candidate evaluation whereas memory-based work often focuses on survey response more generally. In the former case, people may anticipate evaluating candidates (i.e., they know that they will have to vote), and thus, they form on-line evaluations (see Hastie and Park 1986, 262). In contrast, most people do not anticipate answering survey questions, and thus, they cannot access on-line evaluations when a surveyor surprises them with a question (see Kinder 1998, 813-814; Druckman and Lupia 2000, 11-12). While features of the choice do not directly form part of the context, it is another often understudied dynamic of political preference formation (see Payne et al. 1993; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Taber 2003).

[9] Political communication scholars use the term "framing effects" to refer to situations where by emphasizing a subset of potentially relevant considerations, a speaker leads individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions. For example, if a speaker describes a hate group rally in terms of free speech (or public safety), then the audience will base its rally opinions on free speech (or public safety) considerations (e.g., Nelson et al. 1997). These types of framing effects are *distinct* since they do not involve logically equivalent ways of making the same statement (see Druckman 2001a).

[10] Since Tversky and Kahneman do not specify a theory of information processing (see Jou et al. 1996, 2; Fong and McCabe 1999, 10927) their work provides no direct

information about the robustness of their findings to reasonable contextual variations.

[11] Two other findings are of note. First, consistent with other evidence that the nature of the conversational context matters (e.g., Mutz 2002), Druckman finds that, compared to the homogenous discussions, the heterogeneous discussions exhibit a stronger moderating effect on framing. Second, Druckman explores the moderating impact of individual level variables. Echoing Rahn et al.'s results, he finds that expertise does not have an effect across contexts; rather, it only matters in the homogenous conversation conditions. In this case, the conversations appeared to simulate thought among experts who showed no susceptibility to framing effects. Non-experts were susceptible, however. This is further evidence that individual differences are context specific (also see, e.g., Lau and Redlawsk 2001).

[12] Successfully predicting 44% of coalitions formed is impressive when one considers the enormous number of possible configurations of coalitions at a given time.

[13] Experimental studies, such as Fréchette et al. (2003) and Fréchette et al. (n.d.), also validate focal predictions of this approach.