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## Receptivity to Political Cues

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Receptivity to political cues refers to the responsiveness of citizens to signals in political messages. These signals often associate a political viewpoint with a candidate, political party, or ideology (Mondak 1993; Lupia & McCubbins 1998; Berinsky 2009; Malka & Lelkes 2010) or associate a candidate with a political party, ideological label, or interest group (Rahn 1993; Lau & Redlawsk 2001). As a way of reaching a political opinion, receptivity to political cues is often contrasted with systematic processing of substantive political information (e.g., Kam, 2005). Similarly, political cues are distinguishable from policy frames, which are the arguments and phrases that impact the lens through which a policy message is interpreted (Chong & Druckman 2007). Although cues and policy frames can be manipulated independently within experiments, they often co-occur in the real world (e.g., “Republicans oppose expanding unemployment insurance because doing so would discourage work”) (Zaller 1992; Bullock 2011).

Receptivity to political cues is often treated as an example of “heuristic use” in politics. Heuristics are judgmental shortcuts that in theory might enable one to make adequate political decisions with minimal information and effort (Lau & Redlawsk 2001). Some have emphasized how political heuristic use can be an effective supplement to low levels of political information and scarce cognitive resources (e.g., Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock 1993). Others have emphasized the shortcomings of heuristic use (e.g., Bartels 1996; Kuklinski & Quirk 2000), sometimes focusing on particular circumstances in which heuristic use is likely to lead citizens astray (e.g., Lau & Redlawsk 2001; Dancy & Sheagley 2012). The extent to which heuristic use is an adequate substitute for information is normatively important, as many democratic citizens are not very knowledgeable about political matters (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996).

From another standpoint, receptivity to political cues is considered an example of “motivated reasoning,” that is, reasoning that is biased toward reaching preference-consistent conclusions (e.g., Peterson et al. 2012). Rather than reducing the need for effortful thinking, certain political cues (such as party cues) might lead citizens to effortfully direct their thought toward conclusions signaled to be consistent with their

political leanings (e.g., Cohen 2003; Bullock 2011). This might serve the goal of bolstering an important political identity (e.g., Huddy 2013).

Thus receptivity to political cues might constitute sometimes a form of effort-saving heuristic use and sometimes a form of effortful motivated reasoning to reach desired conclusions. Perhaps for this reason, it is unclear whether cue receptivity is generally more common among politically sophisticated or politically unsophisticated citizens (e.g., Lau & Redlawsk 2001; Kam 2005; Tilley & Wlezien 2008; Clarke et al. 2012).

**SEE ALSO:** Identity and the Self; Political Party; Political Psychology; Political Rhetoric; Politics and Language; Public Opinion

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### Abstract

Receptivity to political cues refers to the responsiveness of citizens to signals in political messages. These signals often associate a political viewpoint with a candidate, political party, or ideology or associate a candidate with a political party, ideological label, or interest group. As a way of reaching a political opinion, receptivity to political cues is often contrasted with systematic processing of substantive political information. Similarly, political cues are distinguishable from policy frames, which are the arguments and phrases that impact the lens through which a policy message is interpreted. Although cues and policy frames can be manipulated independently within experiments, they often co-occur in the real world (e.g., “Republicans oppose expanding unemployment insurance because doing so would discourage work”).

**Keywords:** identity, influence, public opinion

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