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Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Public Opinion Formation

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Abstract
A key characteristic of democratic politics is competition between groups, first of all political parties. Yet, the unavoidably partisan nature of political conflict has had too little influence on scholarship on political psychology. Despite more than 50 years of research on political parties and citizens, we continue to lack a systematic understanding of when and how political parties influence public opinion. We suggest that alternative approaches to political parties and public opinion can be best reconciled and examined through a richer theoretical perspective grounded in motivated reasoning theory. Clearly, parties shape citizens' opinions by mobilizing, influencing, and structuring choices among political alternatives. But the answer to *when* and *how* parties influence citizens' reasoning and political opinions depends on an interaction between citizens' motivations, effort, and information generated from the political environment (particularly through competition between parties). The contribution of motivated reasoning, as we describe it, is to provide a coherent theoretical framework for understanding partisan influence on citizens' political opinions. We review recent empirical work consistent with this framework. We also point out puzzles ripe for future research and discuss how partisan motivated reasoning provides a useful point of departure for such work.

1. Introduction

In a democracy, power and influence is not simply a given, it is obtained through competition and conflict waged between groups. The most important groups are often political parties who fight for public opinion as a means of winning office and legitimizing their policy activity. Although parties were not initially part of the idea of democratic politics, political elites quickly realized the need for organizing collective action and formed political parties (Aldrich 1995). Since then, political parties have proven critical to elections, and today, political parties provide the key link between citizens and democratic leadership. Political parties are fundamental to democratic competition and representation. Indeed, many see democracy as "unthinkable" without political parties (Schattschneider 1942: 1).

However, despite generations of political science research on political parties and citizens, we continue to lack a systematic understanding of how political parties affect democratic representation in general and public opinion in particular. Indeed, the role of political parties in public opinion formation has engaged two major, yet unresolved debates. First, do parties lead or follow public opinion? For more than 50 years, scholars have debated if citizens evaluate parties based on their policy preferences, or parties influence citizens' policy preferences, yet we are still awaiting a firm answer (e.g., compare Goren 2013; Lenz 2012). Second, when parties lead opinion, *how* do parties work to influence opinions? Much existing literature sees party identification as the basis of public opinion formation, but scholars have presented a number of distinct ways of conceiving parties and there is little agreement on *how* parties influence citizens' opinions (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook n.d.; Bullock 2011; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Petersen, Skov, Serritzlew, and Ramsøy n.d.; Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012).

In this article, we review and advance a theory of motivated reasoning – an emerging theoretical perspective within political psychology – to show there are no simple answers to the above unresolved questions about when and how political parties influence citizen political reasoning and decision-making. Obviously, parties both influence citizens' political opinions *and* citizens' evaluations of political parties are influenced by their opinions. Moreover, parties can work in different ways to influence citizens. We argue that the contribution of motivated reasoning, as we describe it, is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding that parties can work in different ways – under specific conditions that relate to both citizens' motivation and effort. Our key argument is that depending on an individual's type of motivation and amount of effort spent on political reasoning, political parties can be more or less influential, and when parties are influential, they can exert their influence in psychologically different ways with distinct consequences for reasoning processes and opinion outcomes.

We begin in the next section (Section 2) by describing why political parties are fundamental for understanding public opinion and how extant work conceives of partisan influence on opinion formation. If politics cannot be understood without parties, then political psychology cannot be understood without an account of *partisan* psychology. Yet the unavoidably partisan nature of political conflict seems to have had too little influence on scholarship into political psychology. Accordingly, we find it useful to begin by locating recent political psychology work on political opinions within a framework taking the fundamental role of political parties into account, before we review different approaches to understanding partisan influence.

In Section 3, we build on theory of motivated reasoning to lay the foundation of our argument that the magnitude and nature of partisan influence on opinion formation depends in

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systematic ways on citizens' motivation and effort. Without rich theory, the ubiquity of parties and partisanship might easily bolster a view of human reasoning dominated by automatic partisan bias, a perceptual screen that filters politics through partisan predispositions and spits out attitude-reinforcing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors abundantly. We suggest that such a view of partisan political reasoning is flawed because a lack of psychologically grounded theory means that it draws – from evidence of the *existence* of biases – beliefs about the *prevalence* of those biases and mechanisms by which those biases occur. Section 4 presents a number of conditions that regulate when partisan motivated reasoning will be prevalent or limited. This review provides initial support for our argument that variation in citizens' motivation and effort is a key to understanding when and how parties will matter for opinion formation. Finally, Section 5 discusses how our argument advances understanding of the role of political parties in opinion formation and points out a number of puzzles ripe for future research.

2.   The Influence of Political Parties on Public Opinion

Our aim in this section is to review the role of political parties in public opinion formation. We do this by first presenting a "partisan conflict-predisposition model" of public opinion formation that locates political parties within the broader context of recent public opinion work in political psychology. Next, we provide a typology of extant approaches to partisan influence on citizens' political preferences and point out critical unresolved tensions between these approaches.

a. The Need for Political Parties in Understanding the Psychology of Public Opinion

Political psychologists have devoted great interest in illuminating how citizens in modern democracies perform two fundamental tasks: selecting candidates for public office and forming preferences over public policy issues. The former task is the principle mechanism linking

citizens to political decisions through institutional representation; the latter task is necessary in order for citizens to send meaningful signals to political decision makers about their preferences for policy outcomes (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012: 201-202; for a theoretical discussion of the role of preference formation in democracy, see Althaus 2006; Dahl 1989).

Much of the recent developments in political psychology have attempted to better understand individuals' politically relevant characteristics and how those characteristics cause or, at least, moderate opinion formation and voting behavior. In essence, this research has been concerned with probing a deeper understanding of what Kinder (1998) calls the "primary ingredients" of public opinion: individuals' personality traits, values, principles, group affiliations, and material interests that make citizens inclined to – or predisposed to – prefer one policy over another or vote for one candidate rather than another. This work can be broadly summarized as a "predisposition model" of public opinion formation (see Figure 1) and reflects the psychological nature of current theorizing.[1] Collectively, the result of this recent line of work is an impressive deepening of our understanding of individuals' political predispositions and their sources.

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

Yet, this focus is only one half of the story: we know more about predispositions of the "choosers" but not, from this work, enough about the "choices" citizens make from the alternatives available to them (cf. Sniderman 2000). Citizens do not make political decisions in a vacuum. While humans are born with and socialized into predispositions, they are not born with the political information necessary to apply these predispositions to the specific tasks citizens are

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[1] See the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2013) for thorough reviews of these recent developments, including research on evolution (Sidenius and Kurzban 2013), biology and genetics (Funk 2013), personality (Caprara and Vecchione 2013), material self-interest (Chong 2013), ideology (Feldman 2013), and group attachments (Huddy 2013; Kinder 2013).

expected to perform in a democracy: forming policy opinions and candidate preferences.[2]

According to McGraw (2000), "[t]he social context in political cognition research is largely ignored, even though citizens learn and think about the political world in complex social environments" (821).

Thus, understanding public opinion formation requires acknowledging that the choices individuals make as citizens are shaped both by their predispositions and the political context. Predispositions only become politically meaningful and consequential in a context, when activated and used. Yet, the transition from individual predispositions to political choices does not necessarily come naturally; the tasks of citizenship are cognitively taxing and predispositions do not always clearly map onto the chaos of political realities.[3]

Who or what facilitates the application of predispositions to political decisions? Political parties, we argue. Parties have recently (re-)emerged as a major focus of political psychology research and our aim is to make the case why political parties should be given center stage attention in understanding processes of public opinion formation. Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen (2012: 2) explain, "As central as individual actors are, it is the political *parties* that are the enduring foundation of American political conflict. Political leaders enter and exit the public stage, but the parties and their symbols, platforms, and group associations provide a long-term anchor to the political system." Indeed, Sniderman (2000: 81) argues political parties are

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[2] As an example, Hibbing (2013: 481) writes that "Biological approaches are not useful in explaining why individuals deeply concerned with the security of the United States advocated isolationism in 1935 and interventionism in 1955 (for this we need to turn to research on framing)."

[3] For example, Feldman (2003: 489) notes that "there is still little theory that specifies how values or value structures should be related to political attitudes" and "[r]esearchers also have not devoted enough attention to the conditions under which values will be strongly related to political attitudes." Likewise, Kinder (1998: 807) observes, "Group-centrism requires that citizens see for themselves a connection between a political dispute on the one hand, and a visible social grouping on the other. [...Hence,] group-centrism depends on how citizens understand issues, which in turn depends on how issues are framed in elite debate" (Kinder 1998: 807). Even apparently straight-forward material self-interest only matters for political opinion under specific conditions (Chong 2013). Political preferences are therefore not a simple application of political predispositions.

crucial for citizens' decision-making: "Citizens can overcome informational shortfalls about politics, not because they (mysteriously) can simplify public choices effectively, but because these choices are systematically simplified for them."

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

To illustrate how political parties matter for public opinion, Figure 2 presents a "partisan conflict-predisposition model" of public opinion formation. The lower part of the figure shows the typical relationship studied by political psychologists (cf. Figure 1): individual predispositions translating into political choices of policies and candidates. However, the impact of individual predispositions on political preferences is conditional, dependent on political context.[4] Facilitating this application of human predispositions to political decisions are political parties, who act both to structure the set of alternatives from which citizens can choose and to also activate, mobilize, persuade, and inform citizens to choose particular alternatives from those made available by the structure of political competition (Aldrich 1995). Sniderman and Bullock (2004: 338, 346) describe this fundamental role of parties:

> in representative democracies citizens do not directly choose the alternatives. They only get to choose from among the alternatives on the menu of choice presented to them. That menu is simplified, coordinated, and advocated above all through electoral competition between political parties. Accordingly, we claim that citizens in representative democracies can coordinate their choices insofar as the choices themselves are coordinated by political parties. (…) On our view, it is parties and candidates that do the heavy lifting necessary for consistency in public opinion (346).

Thus, political parties are crucial in two ways, as illustrated by the two arrows in Figure 2. First, parties structure and provide the alternatives – policies and candidates – that citizens can choose

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[4] In this way, we suggest that new approaches to political psychology – like biology and personality – are best studied within a broader framework that takes account of partisan political conflict. Mondak et al. (2010: 85) share this view of "situation-disposition interactions" when they write that "these approaches should not be seen as alternates to environmental perspectives, but rather as complements. […] Environmental forces influence political behavior, but how and to what extent they do differs as a function of individuals' traits. Likewise, psychological dispositions and even genetic differences contribute to patterns in political behavior, but the expression of these effects will often be contingent on the situation" (see also Hatemi and McDermott 2012, 308).

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among.[5] Second, parties mobilize citizens and tell them how they should understand the political choices before them and, by implication, what political predispositions should be applied and how.[6] Parties serve, as Disch (2011: 109) describes, as a politically "mobilizing" force, whereby "citizens learn from communications that recruit them to a side in interparty conflict." Rosenblum (2011: 301) adds, "party antagonism focuses attention on problems, information and interpretations are brought out, stakes are delineated, points of conflict and commonality are located, the range of possibilities is winnowed, and the relative competence on different matters is up for judgment." Citizen reasoning – the basis for democratic representation – can therefore not be understood without grasping the role of partisan political conflict in that reasoning. Through these two mechanisms – structuring choices and connecting them to predispositions – conflict between party organizations invites citizens to the political table (see Schattschneider 1960, 137; Dahl 1971; Riker 1982). Given that partisan conflict is a fundamental feature of democratic politics, an adequate political psychology of public opinion needs to place political parties center stage.[7]

Whereas the framework in Figure 2 serves to highlight why political parties are fundamental for public opinion formation, it does not, by itself, provide answers to the two unresolved questions we mentioned in the introduction: first, when and to what extent do parties influence citizens' political preferences, and, second, when parties lead opinion, *how* do parties

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[5] For an empirical study explicitly linking the supply of options to individual choices, see Kriesi (2005).

[6] In Jerit, Kuklinski, and Quirk's (2009) words, "Citizens often hold no definite beliefs at all about the consequences of a given policy until they encounter debate about it, giving politicians important opportunities to influence their decisions by creating or changing those beliefs" (103).

[7] This argument about the crucial role of political parties echoes the views of political elites advanced in some of the seminal work on public opinion, even if not always explicitly referring to political parties. Thus, Converse (1964: 211-12) noted the potential of political elites to create coherent political opinions among citizens by transmitting to them ideological "packages" of beliefs telling people "what goes with what." Similarly aware of the pivotal role of (partisan) political elites, Key (1966: 7) asserted that, "in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we would expect, *given the clarity of the alternatives* presented to it and *the character of the information* available to it" (emphasis added).

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work to exert such influence? Therefore, we next review alternative approaches to these questions and we point out some fundamental tensions in this literature.

b. The Influence of Political Parties

One longstanding debate about the relationship between political parties and public opinion is whether parties lead or follow public opinion. There is strong empirical support for claims that citizens evaluate parties based on how they think the parties perform in office (e.g., Fiorina 1981; Lenz 2012) and how they see the parties connect to their values or principles (Goren 2013; Tomz and van Houweling 2008). Yet, there is also contrary evidence that parties' policy positions influence citizens' opinions (e.g., Carsey and Layman 2006; Highton and Kam 2011; Lenz 2012). Thus, the debate about whether partisanship is the result of a "running tally" evaluating partisan performance or partisanship work as a "perceptual screen" coloring how citizens view political issues is more profitably seen as a question about under what conditions parties influence citizens' preferences. In other words, this debate is a question about how much weight predispositions such as values and principles have when citizens form opinions and evaluations, as was illustrated in Figure 1. If a citizen forms opinions based on parties' position-taking on the issue, predispositions might have less weight on opinion (i.e., in Figure 1, the correlation between individual predispositions and choice would weaken). Thus, the question about *when* parties influence opinion can be translated into a question about what criteria or considerations citizens rely on when forming opinions, including party cues or some other criteria such as policy principles or other information (e.g., Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; see Druckman n.d. for a review of prominent criteria used for opinion formation). As

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indicated, the theoretical perspective we present will help specifying when parties matter relative to other criteria.

This leads us to the next question of how parties influence opinion. Since the authors of *The American Voter* more than half a century ago noted that "[i]n the competition of voices reaching the individual the political party is an opinion-forming agency of great importance" (Campbell et al. 1960: 128),[8] a large literature has indeed demonstrated that parties do influence citizens' policy opinions, voting preferences and perceptions of reality. The dominant view of partisan influence on public opinion is aptly summarized by Goren, Federico, and Kittilson (2009: 806):

> "When someone hears a recognizable partisan source advocating some position, her partisan leanings are activated, which in turn lead her to evaluate the message through a partisan lens. If the cue giver and recipient share a party label, the latter will trust the former and accept the message without reflecting much on message content. But if the cue giver and recipient lie across the partisan divide, the recipient will mistrust the source and reject the message, again without much reflection."

Thus, it is widely believed that what political parties say and do in policy debates has a marked influence on citizens' policy views (see Gilens and Murakawa 2002: 25-31). Yet, whereas this impact of parties is fairly established there is no scholarly agreement on how (i.e., through what psychological mechanisms) parties matter to citizens' political reasoning, and despite more than 50 years of work on parties and partisanship there is a surprising lack of empirical work trying to disentangling the various explanations of the effects of party cues (see recent discussion by Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook n.d.; Boudreau and MacKenzie n.d.; Petersen, Skov, Serritzlew, and Ramsøy n.d.).

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[8] Similarly, Downs (1957) writes that "most of every party's emanations are either attacks on its opponents or defenses of itself, so it emphasizes the very elements from which party differentials are formed" (226-227), linking citizens' choices among political alternatives directly to the information espoused by those alternatives.

Two major approaches have been advanced to account for how parties influence opinion. One builds on seminal insights by Downs (1957) and considers parties (or party cues) as informational shortcuts that provide relatively simple information that can guide preference formation through heuristic processes. We argue that the implications of this perspective have received relatively little empirical attention. The second account follows the work of party identification advanced by Campbell et al. (1960) and view partisanship as an emotional and identity attachment to the party as a group. This perspective has received more attention empirically, and has lately been further developed under the heading of "partisan motivated reasoning," but we argue this work has emphasized too heavily the "biasing" influence of parties and the "blind" followership of partisans.

These two approaches differ in their view on what motivates citizen reasoning about politics. The first approach sees parties as an informational shortcut that helps citizens to form "accurate" opinions that are consistent with their values, interests or real-world developments. Conversely, in the other approach, citizens are motivated by a "directional" goal to reach a certain desired conclusion, namely forming an opinion in a particular direction that is consistent with their party identification, regardless of how the opinion fits with other considerations (e.g., values or reality).[9] However, we suggest that within each of these approaches the way party cues matter for opinion formation is also a function of the amount of effort that citizens spend on political reasoning. That is, how party cues matter also depends on the extent to which citizens actively attempt to make further inferences from a party cue or actively seek to justify an opinion. Table 1 provides a typology of these approaches to partisan influence, distinguished by the type of motivation driving citizens (accuracy or directional motivation) and by the amount of

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[9] We will later formally define what we mean by accuracy and directional goals.

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effort citizens are motivated to invest in opinion formation (low effort or more effort).[10] We now

explain in more detail how parties can influence opinion according to each of these approaches.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

c. Political Parties as Informational Shortcuts

The Downs inspired approach emphasizes the party cue as an informational shortcut. Lacking

substantive knowledge of even major policy issues debated over longer periods of time

(Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeper 1996), citizens can take advantage of parties'

endorsements of policies and candidates to form preferences without having to pay attention to

substantive content of positions of these policies and candidates. Thus, a "party cue" or

endorsement is a piece of simple information linking a party to a policy position or a candidate.

Party cues provide explicit information about which political party (or parties) supports or

opposes a given policy or candidate.[11] As Carmines and Kuklinski (1990: 254) explain, "Each

message alone—the "who" and the "what"—has limited value, but together they represent a

potentially useful and readily interpretable piece of information." By relying on party cues,

"people can compensate for an inaccessibility to original information and simultaneously deal

with the overload of secondary political messages that characterize contemporary society"

(Carmines and Kuklinski 1990: 255).[12]

    As seen from this perspective, the pivotal role of parties, empirically and normatively, is

that they enable citizens to make reasonable political decisions without possessing a great deal of

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[10] The minimal requirements for citizens fitting into either cell in the figure is that they have at least some affiliation with a political party and at least some mininal knowledge about the parties (e.g., recognizing party labels; see Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012)

[11] Petty and Cacioppo (1986: 18) explain that "cues refer to stimuli in the persuasion context that can affect attitudes without necessitating processing of the message arguments."

[12] This view echoes Downs' observation (1957: 233) that the citizen in modern democracy "cannot be expert in all fields of policy that are relevant to his decision. Therefore he will seek assistance from men who are experts in those fields, have the same political goals he does, and have good judgment."

information. In other words, "people can be knowledgeable in their reasoning about political choices without necessarily possessing a large body of knowledge about politics" (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991: 19). Parties thus supplant high-information demands placed on citizens: "When citizens can use endorsements to cast the same vote that they would have cast if they had better information, the finding that citizens cannot recall minute legislative details is irrelevant" (Lupia 2006: 228; also see Hobolt 2007; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Mondak 1993; Popkin 1991). This conception of partisan influence on opinion falls into cell (1) in Table 1. This said, Lau and Redlawsk (2001) show that partisan endorsements can sometimes lead citizens astray if the parties take positions contrary to their ideology or broader reputations and partisans in turn end up supporting policies that are inconsistent with their values (also see Kuklinski and Quirk 2000; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012; Dancey and Sheagley 2012). Yet, if parties take positions in line with the values and interests of their followers, they actually help citizens' decision making, but too little work as explored these possibilities.

Party cues might also be influential beyond allowing citizens to form an opinion by simple cue-taking. As Bullock (2011) notes, a cue can be used "to *infer other information* and, by extension, to make decisions" (p. 497, emphasis added; see Aldrich 1995: 48-50; Lodge and Hamill 1986; Popkin 1991: 13-17). Given political parties have established reputations (Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012; Snyder and Ting 2002) citizens can use a partisan endorsement to make inferences about the possible content or implications of a policy proposal. As an example, political parties are perceived by citizens to be connected to particular societal groups (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Nicholson and Segura 2012; Stubager and Slothuus 2013) and hence party cues can help citizens reason about the consequences of a policy for those groups (e.g., if a European

Social Democratic Party supports a policy, it might be taken is the policy will benefit low-income groups). Likewise, parties' reputation for endorsing certain values might help citizens connect their values to policy preferences (Petersen, Slothuus, and Togeby 2010), or parties' reputation for handling or "owning" certain issues might influence how their messages are interpreted (see Cohen 2003; Iyengar and Valentino 2000; Kuklinski and Hurley 1994). Thus by knowing a party cue, citizens make further sense of the policy but still without having to scrutinize the substantive details of that policy (see cell 2 of Table 1). In such instances, the party would help to increasing the correlation between a predisposition (e.g., a policy principle) and choice (e.g., an opinion), cf. Figure 2. We raise this potential influence of parties as a possibility ripe for further research, while recent work tends to have downplayed the informational role of parties and focused instead on the second perspective of parties.

d. The Emergence of "Partisan Motivated Reasoning"

The second perspective considers the influence of political parties on citizen decision making as a consequence of citizens' deep, emotional attachment to a political party. Identification with a party is considered a durable and central part of the individual's identity and, therefore, when a party cue is present, an individual's party identification will be activated and guide reasoning (see cell 3 of Table 1).[13] The partisan endorsement is seen as a call for support for one's group (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Schickler, and Palmquist 2002; Greene 1999; Petersen et al. n.d.).

Partisan influence through processes of identity or emotional attachment can be automatic and effortless but can also, if the individual sees a need for actively defending one's party

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[13] Campbell et al. (1960) emphasize that following a party cue often involves minimal effort. Thus, "party leaders are [not] able as a matter of deliberate technique to transmit an elaborate defense of their position to those in the electorate who identify with the party. To the contrary, some of the most striking instances of partisan influence occur with only the simplest kind of information reaching the party's mass support" (128).

identification, involve more effort (see cell 4 in Table 1). As we describe in much detail in the following sections, a citizen faced with a party endorsement that contradicts their predispositions must reason their way from that position of dissonance to support for the party's stance (or, alternatively, some other end). To explain why and how parties therefore influence citizens, recent work has drawn on the theory of motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990; Taber and Lodge 2006). The premise of this theory is that all reasoning is motivated in the sense that when individuals attend to and process information, they are driven by specific motives or goals. While one can have many goals, for now we do as most research on motivated reasoning and party cues and follow the lead of Taber and Lodge (2006) to focus on two broad categories of goals: "accuracy goals" which motivate individuals to "seek out and carefully consider relevant evidence so as to reach a correct or otherwise best conclusion" and "directional goals" which motivate them to "apply their reasoning powers in defense of a prior, specific conclusion" (756).[14] While the relative strength of these competing motives varies from individual to individual and from one situation to another, most work on public opinion suggests that partisan motivated reasoning serving directional goals pervade citizens' reasoning about politics and yields normatively troubling biases (though see discussion by Druckman 2012; Kruglanski and Boyatzi 2012).

Partisan motivated reasoning can be powerful because, as noted by the authors of *The American Voter*, an individual's party identification "raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation" (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960: 133).[15] More recently, Lodge and Taber (2013; Taber and Lodge 2000;

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[14] In Section 3 we revisit this distinction.
[15] But Miller (1991) argues that "the notion of a 'perceptual screen' is a rather static and limited view of cognitive processes. The metaphor of a screen suggests that some information passes through while other information does

2006) have integrated a large body of psychological work into a theory of motivated political reasoning. They argue that upon encountering political objects such as a well-known politician or an issue, automatic affective responses will activate directional goals leading to motivated reasoning: the tendency that citizens seek out new evidence that is consistent with their prior views (i.e., a "confirmation bias"), evaluate attitude-consistent arguments as stronger ("prior attitude effect"), and spend considerable energy in denigrating arguments that run counter to existing beliefs ("disconfirmation bias") (see Kruglanski and Webster 1996; Kunda 1990; Lord et al. 1979). Many studies demonstrate that partisans show dramatic differences in their perceptions and interpretations of key political events such as economic changes and war (Bartels 2002; Gaines, Kuklinski, Quirk, Peyton, and Verkuilen 2007; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012), prior attitudes color the evaluations of arguments (Druckman and Bolsen 2011; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Taber and Lodge 2006) and subsequent search for information (Druckman, Fein, and Leeper 2012), and citizens are willing to spend more time and effort on processing information in order to reach conclusions consistent with their party identification (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook n.d.; Petersen et al. n.d.; Taber and Lodge 2006). These partisan biases are more pronounced when partisan differences are made salient or individuals are motivated to rely on their partisanship (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook n.d.; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010).

This recent work on motivated reasoning has likely helped to bolster a perception of political parties as having "massive" influence on citizens, either because citizens "do not attempt to think for themselves about the communication they receive" (Zaller 1996: 18, 49), or

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not, and it focuses our attention on the acquisition of information while ignoring its storage and retrieval from memory" (In Lodge et al. 1991, 1371).

because when they do they see the political world through a partisan lens. Thus, according to recent studies, partisans follow their politicians "rather blindly" (Lenz 2012: 3) and "without much reflection" (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009: 806), and "a committed partisan will generally have little difficulty finding an interpretation that nullifies unwanted implications of the new facts" (Gaines et al. 2007: 959). Indeed, Taber and Lodge (2012: 249) maintain, "*defense of one's prior attitude is the general default* when reasoning about attitudinally contrary arguments, and it takes dramatic, focused intervention to deflect people off a well-grounded attitude" (italics in original). Thus, rather than citizens accepting party cues for their informational value in forming opinions, the motivated reasoning literature – following from work in *The American Voter* tradition – sees citizens following parties through longstanding loyalties.

In sum, we see the fundamental tension between parties as a biasing influence and parties as an important information source as one of the most significant unresolved puzzles in political psychology. On the one hand, political parties can help citizen decision making by structuring and simplifying choices, and the partisan label of a policy or candidate potentially conveys useful information if the party has a well-established reputation or is connected to social groups (Aldrich 1995: 48-50; Downs 1957; Petersen, Slothuus, and Togeby 2010; Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012). As such, "[p]olitical parties (…) have the potential to educate citizens and enable them to make more carefully considered choices" (Chong and Druckman 2007: 637). On the other hand, parties mobilize citizens in part by forming their partisan identities and hence creating strong emotional bonds between parties and, at least, some citizens (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Gerber, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Party identification

can work as a "perceptual screen" (Campbell et al. 1960: 133) that potentially can distort

perceptions and bias evaluations.

We take the view that all of these perspectives can be best examined through a richer

theoretical perspective grounded in motivated reasoning theory. Clearly, parties shape citizens'

opinions by mobilizing, influencing, and structuring choices among political alternatives. But the

answer to *when* and *how* parties influence citizens' reasoning and political opinions depends on

an interaction between motivations, effort, and information generated from the political

environment (i.e., through competition between partisan groups). We elaborate this theory and its

implications in the remainder of this article.

3.   Psychological Foundations for Motivated Reasoning

Under what conditions do we expect particular connections between predispositions,

partisanship, and political opinions? Where motivated reasoning is often treated as a juggernaut –

an unstoppable partisan force that blinds everyone to everything, ruining the hopes for an

idealized deliberative politics – the same literature that predicts extensive partisan biases also

points to well-specified theoretical expectations about the nature of opinion formation under

conditions of varying motivation, effort, and context. Those conditions follow logically from

general theories of motivated cognition (see Kunda 1999; Fiske and Taylor 2008).

Citizens bring to politics the same psychological architecture they bring to all of

individual and social life and a psychological tendency to set out and strive toward particular end

states or goals (Pittman and Zeigler 2007). This general human psychology, when brought into

the partisan realities of contemporary politics, produces patterns of cognition that can be

described as "partisan motivated reasoning." This term has come to connote something far more

biased, perhaps even sinister, than the psychological phenomena it accurately describes. We

therefore call on the reader to approach the remainder of this article with fresh eyes. Perhaps

most importantly, *motivated* reasoning does not mean *biased* reasoning because "motivated"

instead signifies striving toward some goal. We adopt the standard definition that a motivation is

a "cognitive representation of a desired endpoint that impacts evaluations, emotions and

behaviors" (Fishbach and Ferguson 2007, 491; see also Kunda 1990, 480).[16] In this way, "goal,"

"motivation," and "need" are conceptual synonyms and this broad definition allows motivated

reasoning to take many forms, depending on what goals individuals are striving toward and the

reasoning strategies they adopt to satisfy those goals.

The extant literature focuses primarily on two such goals: accuracy goals and directional

goals (see Kunda 1990). These two categories of goals have also been referred to as accuracy

and partisan (Taber and Lodge 2006), cognition and evaluation (Nir 2011), accuracy and

defensive (Hart et al. 2009), and directional and nondirectional (Molden and Higgins 2005). We

choose "accuracy motivation" because of its conceptual clarity, referring to "the desire to form

accurate appraisals of stimuli" (Hart et al. 2009, 557) and "directional motivation" because of the

term's necessary breadth, though many of the directional goals we will discuss are "defensive"

of particular identities, attitudes, or beliefs.[17]

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[16] Here, "cognitive representation" is meant to distinguish motivations (or goals) from other psychological
constructs like values, attitudes, or schema. Kunda offers "wish" and "desire" as synonyms for motivation.

[17] Indeed, we feel Taber and Lodge's use of "partisan" as a synonym for all defensive motivations – particularly
when their empirical evidence looks at motivated defense of attitudes rather than identities – has led others to both
conflate motivated reasoning with partisanship and narrow theorizing about motivated political thinking to
exclusively identity-defensive reasoning without regard for other directional goals. As such, the subsequent political
science literature has been imprecise in its reference to motivations to defend attitudes, partisan identity, and one's
own self-image. In most uses within political science, taking the lead from Taber and Lodge, directional goals can
be understood as those that relate to the preservation, protection, and defense of prior attitudes, beliefs, behaviors,
and identities. But, other directional goals, like the need for cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris 1983), which is
a desire to feel considerable effort has been put into one's reasoning, and need to evaluate (Jarvis and Petty 1996),
which is a desire to hold opinions and evaluations of objects, might also be familiar to some readers.

These outcome goals, in most theories of motivation, also serve higher order goals (Gollwitzer 1990; Kruglanski et al. 2002), like belongingness or social attachment (Baumeister and Leary 1995) or self-preservation (Hart, Shaver, and Goldenburg 2005), but we do not focus on these hierarchical goal structures here, except to say that goals are not omnipresent; they fluctuate across time, persons, and context (Fishbach and Ferguson 2007). And goals are also substitutable: whatever value is obtained from satiating one goal is plausibly satiable through the fulfillment of other goals. Thus there is little reason to believe that individuals always feel the same motivations or that the value obtained from a particular goal-striving activity cannot be substituted by striving toward that goal in a different way or toward a different goal entirely. [18]

Goals are diverse and even when a goal is to arrive at a predetermined conclusion, activities that aim to satisfy that goal do not necessarily produce bias.[19] Indeed, theoretical claims like "[f]or these motivated reasoners [...] candidate evaluation may be more about reinforcing existing feelings about candidates than about revising them in the face of new information" (Redlawsk 2002, 1022) make assumptions about how citizens are motivated and, indeed, that citizens are motivated at all. Biases might come from lack of effort, from intentional striving for reinforcement seeking, from constraints of the information environment, from failed attempts at evenhanded deliberation, or, of course, from a self-serving motivation. Labeling all biases and indeed all reasoning as motivated (read "biased") misses the central contribution of goal theories to our understanding of political cognition.

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[18] Of course, it is possible that individuals are driven toward multiple goals. Individuals might desire both to reach accurate conclusions and to defend their prior views. Individuals might also have hierarchically and/or temporally organized goals where striving toward one goal serves a long-term or higher-order goal like maintaining a positive self-image. The consequences of these motivational interactions, and goal systems in general, are the subject of some theorizing in psychological literature but have not faced considerable empirical scrutiny. If political psychological work continues down the current trajectory of motivated thinking as a central object of study, these matters must eventually come to the forefront of theory-building.

[19] When the "motivated" in motivated reasoning takes on the connotation of bias, it evokes an unnecessary normative tone. As Kruglanski (1999) writes, "[w]hereas evidence is a legitimate basis for one's conclusions, to which one might readily admit, goal most definitely is not" (57).

[FIGURE 3 HERE]

Because motivations are desired end states and not outcomes per se, they manifest in *strategies* that individuals – consciously or unconsciously – employ in an effort to obtain those desired end states (Gollwitzer 1990).[20] As such, motivated thinking need not obtain those outcomes: accuracy motivation need not produce "accurate" or unbiased outcomes nor directional motivations always produce bias that directly corresponds to the desired conclusion. For example, in Taber and Lodge's (2006) research, biased search strategies and counterarguing are observable, strategic implications of attitude-defensive motivations, but they are not evidence of those motivations per se. Strategies are employed to satisfy goals, but because goals are fluidic and strategies substitutable, there are multiple paths to obtaining any outcome and those paths are shaped by the broader political context (see Figure 3). The continued pursuit of a goal and the continued expense of effort on a reasoning task thus depend on how well a given strategy provides feedback about goal satisfaction (see also, Fishbach, Shah, and Kruglanski 2004). Strategies that "feel" accurate will be continued in pursuit of an accuracy goal and strategies that do not provide that feedback will be abandoned. For example, Greyer, Bettman, and Payne (1990) provide explicit feedback to decision makers regarding information search strategies and find that feedback about the accuracy of one's search increases normatively desirable strategy (greater balance in information search). By contrast, feedback about effort alone (i.e., amount of searching) has no effect on subsequent behavior. This suggests that strategies are responsive to goal-relevant feedback, while perceived variations in one's reasoning effort has little effect on the form of subsequent reasoning.

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[20] Though we will not discuss it here, a growing literature discusses "strategy-related motivations" which shape how individuals go about reasoning in general, be it under an accuracy or directional goal (for an early review, see Higgins and Molden 2004). These strategy related needs are satisfied when individuals engage in reasoning tasks that "fit" with their general (stable-personality or situational) orientations for "prevention" or "promotion."

A core distinction between motivated theories and cold cognitive approaches to reasoning is the implications of increased effort on both strategies and reasoning outcomes, like decisions, judgments, evaluations, and choices. The cold cognitive view of accuracy as a universal reasoning objective treats effort and accuracy as synonymous: more reasoning will give better answers. For example, Stroh (1995) suggests that decision-making strategies are efficient when they maximize accuracy and minimize effort, essentially relying on the optimal amount of effort necessary to make the "right" decision. Similarly, Zaller (1992) suggests that citizens' opinions could be improved by greater knowledge of and attention to politics (see also Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). As Kruglanski (1989) argues, however, "processing large bodies of information prior to making a judgment or having high motivational involvement in a topic need not improve accuracy and could even detract from accuracy in some circumstances" (401). This highlights the conditional outcomes of increasing effort highlighted by motivated reasoning theory. Obtaining accurate or correct outcomes (e.g., choices, decisions, or judgments) might be a desirable end state for some individuals, but not for others. And simply desiring accuracy does not mean one will obtain it, given other motivations, the external resources available (e.g., information), and time and cognitive limitations.[21] The Kruglanski quote makes clear why a purely cognitive

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[21] Of course, being accuracy motivated does not necessarily lead one to reach more accurate judgments, decisions, and conclusions (Molden and Higgins 2004, 304-305), because reasoning must interact with the stimulus information available in one's environment. Besides, there is no consensus on how to determine whether or not conclusions are "accurate" – a deficit that problematizes research on partisan motivated reasoning and its effects. There are at least three common ways to evaluate accuracy: (1) by assessing judgment against an externally set criterion, (2) by defining accuracy as interpersonal consensus, and (3) by measuring accuracy by a judgment's utility, i.e. that more useful conclusions are more accurate (Kruglanski 1989, 395-397). Kruglanski also suggest that a variation on the first of these criteria (called the "phenomenal approach") might involve assessing accuracy by a subjective criterion set by an individual, an approach somewhat similar to Lau and Redlawsk's (1997) idea of "correct voting." Evaluating the accuracy of political reasoning requires a clear definition of accuracy, which is – by any of these criteria – more or less subjective. Accuracy motivation most directly relates to the "phenomenal" and "correspondence" views of accuracy: individuals satiate a motivation to be accuracy by either feeling that they have arrived at an accurate conclusion or are evaluated as such by an outside agent who assess correspondence between a conclusion and some criterion. Thus, one could satiate an accuracy motivation without actually being accurate, but as we will see next, the conditions that encourage an accuracy motivation are also those that seem likely to depend

theory of reasoning is inadequate: if biases and errors were solely attributable to lack of effort or ability, then simply more reasoning effort applied to more considerations would resolve errors and biases. But correcting errors and biases is not only a matter of more reasoning, but a matter of encouraging particular kinds of reasoning (see Druckman 2012).

[FIGURE 4 HERE]

When reasoning is motivated (be it toward accuracy and/or directional end states), individuals might expend more or less effort, but motivated reasoning expects that it is the underlying motivations that shape one's conclusions far more than the amount of effort one expends at the reasoning task. We illustrate this in Figure 4, which shows accuracy and directional motivations as independent goals, which can vary in intensity. As individuals invest greater effort in reasoning (moving out from the origin at the lower-left), the amount of information acquisition and cognitive deliberation they are likely to produce increases. Yet, unlike purely cognitive models of reasoning which view citizens as expending insufficient effort at overcoming automatic biases and thus expect increased performance with increasing effort, Figure 4 makes clear that motivations condition reasoning as effort increases. Those who are directionally motivated diverge from those who are accuracy motivated because increased effort toward distinct goals is likely to push motivated reasoners into distinct cognitive strategies in service to their distinct goals. With different strategies employed, reasoning toward distinct goals should produce heterogeneity in reasoning outcomes rather than convergence on "best" or "correct" outcomes.

In this way, the impact of predispositions and information from partisan conflict on opinions is conditional on the motivations and effort involved in reasoning (see, again, Table 1).

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on either (1) social definitions of accuracy or (2) inescapable political "reality constraints" (Kunda 1990; Molden and Higgins 2004).

As an example, reliance on easy heuristics (such as party endorsements) is a low-effort means for a directionally motivated partisan to bolster their prior attitude toward a policy or candidate. Reliance on an expert endorsement, by contrast, provides a similarly low-effort means for an accuracy motivated citizen to choose a candidate to vote for. Neither involves considerable effort, but the underlying motivation behind the reasoning task will affect what evidence individuals select, how that evidence is evaluated, and what voting decision they ultimately make. Accuracy motivated individuals might also favor high-effort reasoning, by searching for candidate positions on a number of issues and evaluating personal characteristics of each candidate. Directionally motivated individuals can similarly favor high-effort reasoning, engaging a similar information selection strategy but evaluating that information in confirmatory ways or searching for a large number of justifications of their already arrived-upon vote choice (perhaps as dictated to them by a party cue).[22]

Directional motivated reasoning is not a general motivation to defend all of one's prior beliefs, attitudes, identities, and behaviors but instead to the prioritized defense of a small number of those features, potentially at the expense of other psychological objects or expressed behaviors. For example, the dissonance literature explained that individuals might change their expressed attitudes to comply with patterns of behavior that run contrary to those attitudes (Festinger 1957). When deciding how to vote, a Democratic partisan strongly opposed to abortion must compromise their partisan identity or their abortion attitude when faced with a choice between two run-of-the-mill Democratic and Republican candidates. This voter might compromise their views in service to their identity (by denigrating their own views, rationalizing

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[22] An important point is that effort is unipolar, ranging from zero to essentially infinite effort. Differences in reasoning strategies and resulting evaluations attributable to effort may be difficult to detect if citizens only vary over a small range of this possible effort spectrum. Similarly, even when citizens expend *more* effort, they may not be engaging in *high* effort in any absolute sense.

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their vote choice, or misbelieving the credibility of the candidate's stated position) or compromise their identity in service to their views (by defecting to another party). The partisan motivated to defend one's party identification should favor the Democratic whereas the partisan motivated to defend one's attitude on abortion should favor the Republican (see Carsey and Layman 2006).[23] And the more effort they expend on reasoning their way to a candidate choice, the more likely these two differently motivated versions of our hypothetical voter are to diverge in the candidate they eventually settle upon and the rationalizations they construct for making that choice.[24]

Our explanation of partisan motivations is thus, in short, that people adopt different reasoning strategies when motivated to obtain different end states. And the observable strategies and reasoning outcomes (e.g., evaluations, judgments, decisions, and choices) reflect an interaction between goals and effort rather than a consequence of differences in effort alone. Bias in strategies (e.g., selective exposure) and bias in outcomes (e.g., self-serving evaluation of candidates' ambiguous policy positions) emerges when directional motivations successfully shape reasoning and/or when striving toward accuracy motivation does not actually produce accuracy. Politics invites both accuracy motivations and numerous forms of directional motivation, each of which may shape reasoning in inherently different ways. This is intuitive, we think. From partisan politics, comes a partisan psychology, which – operating on more general

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[23] Directionally motivated reasoning necessarily prioritizes one desired conclusion; other (less) desired conclusions may be sacrificed to satisfy that overarching goal. It is for this reason that the term "partisan motivated reasoning" should be reserved for the defense of partisan identities rather than a general label for all political reasoning.

[24] A common approach in this situation might be to ask: which of these two voters made the right choice (see Lau and Redlawsk 1997)? The answer to that normative question is, we feel, less important and far less interesting than the empirical question of how and why the two voters – identical in all ways except a contextual variation in the importance of two desired end states – reason about the choice laid out before them by the partisan political system. Both the goal of affirming one's partisan identity and the goal of affirming one's political viewpoints fall under the umbrella of partisan motivated reasoning, but reasoning under those two motivations predicts two different outcomes rather than the same outcome. It is the variation in the primacy of different motivations that therefore becomes incredibly important for shaping how citizens reason and what choices they make.

cognitive principles – makes sense of the political world in heterogeneous ways, conditional on citizens' psychological motivations.

4.　　Some Conditions for Motivated Reasoning

We have argued the interactions between parties and between parties and citizens are instrumental for how citizens connect their predispositions to political opinions. Most extant discussions of motivated reasoning point to evidence linking partisanship to particular reasoning strategies and patterns of opinion. Here we focus instead on the numerous factors that might drive reasoning toward end states other than defense of one's partisan identity, modify reasoning strategies, and/or constrain directionally motivated reasoning.

a.　　Varieties of Directional Motivation

As we just described, directional motivations come in many forms and can be held simultaneously. When partisan identity motivations are at work, citizens might favor party-endorsed policies rather than policies that follow logically from their values or self-interest. Similarly, when other motivations are at work, citizens might favor policies that run contrary to their party's position. For example, Klar (2013c) uses an exit poll of Democratic votes to study how partisan identity interacts with another powerful identity (in this case, voters' status as parents). Klar finds that threatened identities trump the influence of other identities, even when primed. Democratic voters thinking about their children were willing to oppose policies favored by the Democratic party. When identities compete, then, partisan motivated reasoning becomes far more complex than is typically described (also, for a critical review of identity research, see Huddy 2002).

The tension between motivations (including partisan motivation) raises important questions about political independents. Jerit, Kuklinski, and Quirk (2009: 116-121) speculate that for the politically "unaligned," rhetoric about the implications of policies becomes far more important than it does for those with strong partisan affinities. The unaligned have little reason to accept the cues of the partisan elites (to let their affinities lead them to obvious opinions), so if these individuals engage with and reason about policy debates, identity-defensive reasoning should play little role. Indeed, Klar (2013a) shows that the personal importance of one's "independent" identity dramatically shapes the ways that political independents engage with politics, in contrast with partisans whose engagement is largely a function of ideology. Independents' desire to defend their non-partisan identity may translate into reasoning strategies that are skeptical of attempts at partisan influence, possibly yielding an unbiased reasoning strategy in satisfaction of a directional motivation.

The relationship between identity strength and motivated reasoning is similar to the relationship between attitude strength and motivated reasoning. The goal to defend attitudes is proportionate to the strength of those attitudes, with stronger attitudes – those held to be more personally important or, perhaps, held with greater certainty – demanding need for defense and weaker attitudes producing lower defensive motivation (see Leeper 2013; Visser, Bizer, and Krosnick 2006; Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons 2003). For example, Holbrook et al. (2005) show that important attitudes also increase the amount of attitude-relevant information individuals acquire. Leeper (2013) shows that individuals motivated – through primed self-interest – to defend their prior attitudes polarize over-time in response to new issue-relevant information. By contrast, individuals primed to have weaker issue attitudes moderate in response to new information, ultimately holding opinions that reflect the consideration of contradictory

evidence. The selection of highly contentious issues on which individuals have strong attitudes (see, for example, Taber and Lodge 2006) might bias research toward findings evidence of strong directional motivations and their effects. Thus, the operation of motivated reasoning will look differently for individuals depending on what issues are at stake and how intensely they need to defend their prior attitudes or identities.

b. Accuracy Motivation

Accuracy motivation can also limit the intensity and impact of directionally motivated reasoning. When individuals desire to reach correct conclusions, they are less likely to defend attitudes and identities in the course of reasoning. As Kunda (1990: 483) notes, "[p]eople do not seem to be at liberty to conclude whatever they want to conclude merely because they want to… They draw the desired conclusion only if they can muster up the evidence necessary to support it… In other words, they maintain an 'illusion of objectivity'" (Kunda 1990: 482-483). Or, in a more recent account, "despite the motivation to maintain harmony between identity and evaluations, political reality sometimes make this difficult to do" (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012: 9; also see Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson 2010).

This can occur when individuals are held accountable for their decisions or their decision-making process (see Lerner and Tetlock 1999). For example, Tetlock (1983a) shows that when individuals know they will be held accountable for their decisions, they generate more complex explanations of their positions, particularly when they anticipate interactions with dissimilar others (Tetlock et al. 1989). Similar research has shown that accountability for the *process* of one's decisions produces more evenhanded search strategies and lowered defensive motivation regarding one's decision (for a review, see Lerner and Tetlock 1999: 258). Chaiken (1980)

shows accountability to decrease dependence on peripheral cues and increase reliance on argument content. Tetlock (1983b) shows that accountability decreases reliance on first impressions, such as initially hearing about the guilt or innocence of a criminal defendant. Klar (2013b), going further, shows that accountability not only decreases partisan bias (in the form of support for party-endorsed policies), but that even strong partisans (those initially primed to have strong affinity for their party) are less persuaded by partisan cues when socially accountable.

The social basis for accuracy motivation seems important and may be driven by more fundamental needs, such as belongingness (Baumeister and Leary 1995), but accuracy motivation can also be driven by other factors. Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook (2013) show that simply by instructing survey respondents to consider an issue in "an evenhanded way," those individuals are less likely to manifest partisan biases in their opinions. In a more thorough account, Groenendyk (2013) has described accuracy motivation in the political context as the desire to be "a good citizen;" desiring to be well-informed and aware of alternative viewpoints might help encourage reasoning strategies that satiate accuracy motivation. Kam (2007) demonstrates this experimentally by showing that when campaigns prime citizens to think about their civic duty, they engage in greater information seeking, think more about candidates' positions, and reason in a more evenhanded way.

Other ideas about the origins of accuracy motivation have also been put forward. Work by Kruglanski and colleagues (e.g., Kruglanski and Webster 1996; Dijksterhuis et al. 1996) suggests that accuracy motivation can also be understood as a willingness to forgo "cognitive closure," allowing reasoning to take place over a longer period of time. As another example, Redlawsk (2002) argues that memory-based processing might emulate accuracy motivated reasoning, but Druckman and Leeper (2012) suggest that memory-based processing encourages recency biases.

Others have found that providing a monetary incentive leads partisans to provide more accurate answers on factual knowledge questions (Bullock, Gerber, Huber, and Hill 2013; Prior, Sood, and Khanna 2013). Similarly, a healthy debate has waged about whether personal involvement might produce accuracy motivation, with Johnson and Eagly (1989) arguing that elaborate message processing (and thus presumably a need for accuracy) results from outcome involvement while value-relevance reduces persuasion (presumably due to a defensive motivation). Petty and Cacioppo (1990), by contrast, argue that involvement increases elaboration (message processing effort) but the effect of that elaboration is contingent on other factors such as argument quality and cognitive responses (Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman 1981; Petty and Cacioppo 1984). In another vein, Valentino et al. (2008) show that anxiety increases the quantity of information seeking and that search translates into greater information recall. Anxiety may, therefore, be one way to drive citizens to a need for accuracy.[25] Enthusiasm, by contrast, seems to have little impact on information-seeking. These results suggest that future work could benefit from examining linkages between affect, motivation, and reasoning strategies.[26]

c. Reality Constraints

Constraints imposed by political reality can also shape reasoning regardless of what motivations are in play. An accuracy motivated reasoner in a world of biased information might struggle to arrive at a "correct" decision; a directionally motivated reasoned in a balanced information

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[25] Gadarian and Albertson (2013) note, however, that such anxiety-induced information seeking may bias the types of information sought out. They find that anxiety drives a tendency toward seek out and agree with threatening information. Gadarian and Albertson's results revisit the finding from Lodge and Hamill (1986) that while politically interested individuals do a better job remembering information about candidates, they do so in a manner that is consistent with their prior political schema (i.e. they better remember information consistent with their expectations than information that disconfirms their prior views of candidates).

[26] Indeed, Lodge and Taber (2005) argue that because cognition is inherently affective, most individuals will automatically be biased due to the affective charge of considerations stored in memory.

environment can both self-select into congruent information but also be forced to find contradictory evidence. The latter can happen if the citizens is exposed to strong contradictory arguments (Druckman et al. 2013) or the accumulated evidence of the bad performance of one's party (Slothuus and Petersen 2013) make it increasingly difficult for defensive citizens to maintain the "illusion of objectivity" and form policy preferences in line with position-taking of their party. Partisans can also have formed their own view of reality (e.g., the state of the economy) at odds with the arguments their party uses to justify a new policy, hence making it difficult for these partisans to follow their party (Slothuus 2010).

Moreover, reality might cause partisan ambivalence which, in turn, can undermine the seemingly unavoidable force of partisan affiliation. Lavine et al. (2012) argue that when partisans experience ambivalence towards their party, they become less likely to rely on party cues and hence less inclined to just adopt a policy position merely because it is sponsored by their party. Partisan ambivalence "occurs when long-standing *identifications* are contradicted by short-term *evaluations* of the parties' capacities to govern and deliver benefits to the public" (2012: xiii). The latter can happen, for example, if one's party "presides over economic downturn" (xiii). Thus, if one's party is perceived as responsible for bad economic performance, the motivation to maintain consistency by to one's party identification can erode, just as the party being responsible for governing over a good or bad economy might also lead out-partisans to alter their evaluations of the party (Lebo and Cassino 2007).[27]

Biases arriving from directionally motivated reasoning might also be mitigated by the contents of one's memory. Kunda describes how the mechanisms of biases judgments arrive principally through biased memory search, which is driven by confirmatory hypothesis testing. Asking questions like "Is my desired/expected conclusion true?" (Kunda 1990: 495) inevitably

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[27] Portions of this paragraph are drawn from Slothuus and Petersen (2013).

leads one to confirmatory evidence, if such evidence is available in memory. Having a diverse[28]

store of accessible information in memory might lead one to evidence contradictory of one's

conclusion, if sufficient effort is expended on the search. This is what classical cognitive

explanations of biases have expected. But more effort is no guarantee of unbiased search or the

retrieval and acceptance of disconfirmatory evidence from memory.[29] A better strategy is to

engage in different kinds of search. Asking one's self "why might my opinion (or party) be

wrong?" is far more likely to lead one to evidence tempering attitudinal or partisan bias than

asking a confirmatory question. Yet we do not know when, why, or even if citizens regularly ask

these kinds of disconfirmatory questions during political reasoning.

Indeed, asking such questions might be a particularly effective strategy for satiating

accuracy needs, but the tendency to engage in confirmatory strategies in reasoning (Nickerson

1998) may mean that individuals are unaware that the most comfortable strategy may be

ineffective for obtaining genuinely correct or accurate outcomes. Without awareness of the

impacts of different reasoning strategies, individuals – even those motivated to be accurate with

the resources to be so – may not be able to obtain unbiased decisions. Of course, defining what

an accurate, right, or correct conclusion might be is a far more difficult, perhaps existential,

question. Kruglanski (1989), for example, describes three ways of evaluating accuracy: a

correspondence between a judgment and a criterion (e.g., the researcher-observer's arbitrary

measure of accuracy), interpersonal agreement (i.e., consensus), or the subjective experience of

the individual (e.g., I feel that I made an accurate judgment). What then are we to make of the

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[28] The use of "diverse" here is critical. Many scholars argue that having more information improves decision-making (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Bartels 1996). Yet, Downs (1957: 241) rightly points out that the only additional piece of information that improves one's decision is the piece of information that would change it.
[29] As Kruglanski (1989: 401) describes, "processing large bodies of information prior to making a judgment or having high motivational involvement in a topic need not improve accuracy and could even detract from accuracy in some circumstances."

perhaps common view, expressed by Berenson (1952) that citizenship requires "accurate observation," meaning "the electorate is required to perceive political realities clearly and objectively, with an absence or only a small amount of subjective distortion" (321)? Assessing whether accuracy motivation produces accurate outcomes depends on which of these metrics of accuracy is adopted (if any of them is actually reasonable); accuracy motivation should induce individuals into reasoning strategies that provide them a subjective experience of accuracy or correctness, but that may not correspond with "objective" accuracy (if it exists in politics at all).[30]

Politics may be a particularly difficult context for assessing the impact of accuracy motivation (or even reasoning under low directional motivation) because much of politics is ambiguous. Unlike other domains, much of political reasoning requires the evaluation of ambiguous and perhaps biased information. As Gaines et al. (2007: 959) argue, facts about the political reality "generally require interpretation before they have any bearing on policy opinions," and interpretations, in turn, "afford individuals leeway to align factual beliefs with undeniable realities and yet continue to justify partisan preferences." For example, even concrete indicators like economic statistics are inherently ambiguous. Yet unambiguous information provides much less room for directional motives to bias perceptions and judgments, which can sometimes happen even in politics. Christiansen (2013) shows that once the economy turned unambiguously bad during the economic crisis, the large partisan gap in economic perceptions narrowed markedly. Similarly, parties may have incentives to influence reasoning through the strategic provision of ambiguous information, for example about economic conditions, their policy positions (Tomz and van Houweling 2009), or the impact of proposed policy (Jerit 2009).

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[30] Because politics is articulated by partisan competition, citizens' political reasoning is imperfect cognition in an imperfect world. That imperfect reasoning applied in the idealized politics of Berelson and some other "democratic theorists" (see Althaus 2006) might look quite different.

d. *The Value of Directional Motivations*

Lastly, it is worth highlighting that directional motives are also sometimes desirable, by conventional standards of democratic citizenship. Since Converse (1964), the maintenance of coherent, stable political viewpoints has been seen as an essential feature of citizenship. Zaller (1996), for example, writes disparagingly about citizens "making it up as you go along" (76). Even earlier, propaganda and resistance to influence were principal concerns driving early scholarship by Harold Lasswell (1927) and the media research of Lazarsfeld and Columbia colleagues (e.g., Katz and Lazarsfeld 1959; McGuire 1969) and early research on attitudes by Carl Hovland and collaborators at Yale (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953).

The defense of attitudes and identities is politically important, if citizens are expected to present coherent viewpoints over-time. Too much openness to influence can also invite manipulation (see Kruglanski and Boyatzi 2012). The widespread and rapid abandonment of parties, politicians, or policies in the face of minor counterevidence could aggregate to declining trust in government and the production of unstable political coalitions. Citizen passion, which drives political participation, is tied to stable self-identifications and strong attitudes (Boninger, Berent, and Krosnick 1995) and the defense of self-interest has been cited (by some) as one of the few objective normative goods, even if it inconsistently shapes citizen attitudes and behavior (see, variously, Bartels 2008; Sears and Funk 1991; Mansbridge 1990; Green and Shapiro 1994).

Following one's party is also a reasonable strategy insofar as parties provide information that might help citizens make sense of policy issues and candidates and arrive at more informed preferences than they would be able to without the structuring help from partisan competition. Thus, taking cues from parties is a way for citizens to navigate in politics. As illustrated in

Figure 2, one way parties work is by structuring political choices in such a way that citizens can make meaningful and consistent choices (Sniderman 2000). Accordingly, echoing Key (1966: 7), to the extent that parties provide informative cues and information about political reality, citizens can arrive at normatively desirable beliefs and opinions. Partisan motivated reasoning, then, should encourage us to blame the parties at least as much as the partisans for biases in the public's reasoning (see Chong and Druckman 2007: 637; Schattschneider 1960).

Defensive motivations therefore have a proper place in political reasoning, as they do in reasoning more generally. As Groenendyk (2013: 140) notes, even while parties "nurture affective attachments [i.e., party identification] that undermine citizens' motivation to hold them accountable," citizens' directional attachments to attitudes can still hold parties accountable through interest group action. The continuing amalgamation of "motivated reasoning" and "bias" is thus unfortunate both for the familiar failure to acknowledge accuracy needs and for giving directional motivations a universally negative connotation. "Following the sport" and "rooting for the team" are both reasonable parts of politics (Parker-Stephen 2012).

Of course, the extent to which we can expect particular patterns of reasoning in aggregate within electorates (or across them) will depend on the prevalence of particular motivations. Recent evidence by Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook (n.d.) finds "strong evidence of partisan motivated reasoning" (30), including in situations where they did not manipulate processing motivation (i.e., did not instruct respondents to pursue accuracy vs. directional goals). Taber and Lodge (2013) argue that directional motivations are common and perhaps the default, automatic way citizens reason in politics (see also Lodge and Taber 2005). Goren, Federico, and Kittilson (2009) suggest that attempts at cross-partisan persuasion are necessarily clouded by derogation of the out-party source. Yet, Druckman et al. (2013) find that context matters. When polarization

is high, reliance on partisan cues (presumably due to the defense of party affiliations) overwhelms reasoned arguments. When polarization is low, however, the content of arguments wins out, with citizens relying heavily on provisioned information to reason about the issues at stake. As we have shown, the psychological architecture for citizens to reason politically in service to multiple goals is present in everyone. The question is open, however, about how often that architecture is put to use in service to those goals and how effective it is at producing a variety of outcomes.

5.   Discussion

As this review has made clear, there is much left to be learned about citizens' reasoning in a partisan world. Here we briefly suggest some questions in search of researchers before offering some concluding remarks.

a. Puzzles

Firstly, empirical research into motivated political reasoning must examine the causes of different motivations (i.e., when do people experience accuracy or particular directional motivations), how do those motivations interact with the political context (i.e., when do politics, the media landscape, and other factors constrain the motivated reasoning strategies)? In a review of political cognition research, McGraw (2000: 821) notes that "citizens bring multiple goals to their thinking about the political world, and we have barely scratched the surface in understanding the conditions under which different goals are elicited, as well as the consequences of those goals for political cognitive processes." Accuracy motivation in particular has received insufficient attention (see Druckman 2012). The literature points to accuracy motivation emerging in small group and dyadic discussions, when individuals are held

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accountable, and when they care about being good citizens. Are there other conditions when an accuracy motive emerges? And when is accuracy motivation felt more rather than less strongly?

A second important point is that many citizens are not partisans nor is partisanship the only political identity. How do citizens reason in a partisan world when they themselves are unattached to those parties (see, e.g., Klar 2013a)? If defensive motivations come in two types – attitudinal and identity-based – then it is clear that independents should hold attitude-defensive motivations like any other citizen. But how do identity-defensive motivations work for identities that are not represented by political elites? And what about competing political identities? The emphasis in recent work on partisan motivated reasoning ignores the reality that it is a rare individual who only identifies with a political party but no other societal or political group (Klar 2013c). How do these competing motives shape reasoning?

Third, and quite similarly, the motivations important to American politics, where much motivated reasoning research has been conducted, may differ from those in other contexts. Does political reasoning work differently when partisan conflict operates differently? For example, do lower amounts of party system institutionalization (like those seen in Latin America) lead individuals to hold partisan identities in different ways? Do these parties provide different cues, structure politics in different ways, or connect citizens' dispositions to political choices along different dimensions? Expanding research on motivated reasoning into contexts with multiple parties, niche parties, different partisan media, and other conditions will help to bolster the evidence for citizen reasoning.

Comparative work might be particularly important for understanding the impact of party endorsements (e.g., Brader et al. 2012; Coan, Merolla, Stephenson, and Zechmeister 2008; Lupu 2012; Merolla, Stephenson, and Zechmeister 2008; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Relevant

questions include whether parties are more effective at providing cues on issues that they own (Iyengar and Valentino 2000), or if parties more effectively can frame issues in terms of values that the party has a reputation for advocating (Petersen et al. 2010)? Whether Argentines, Canadians, Americans, and Danes understand parties, identify with them, and respond to their behavior like citizens in other countries is an open question; synthesizing cross-national research is a task ripe for future work (see Bullock 2011: 511-12). Indeed, party endorsements often imply information about the structure of partisan competition (one party's support is often another party's opposition). Understanding what inferences citizens draw from party cues in different contexts is critical for understanding the limits of motivated reasoning.[31]

Some final puzzles relate to the enterprise of motivated reasoning research. How can we know that motivational dynamics and not some other process(es) are at work in citizens reasoning? While "motivated reasoning" has become a convenient label to apply to any study of bias or partisan differences, use of the label requires evidence that motivations – indeed, the putative directional/defensive motivations – are at work. According to Kunda (1990: 491), "[i]n order to determine whether directional goals are exerting an influence on reasoning, it is necessary to compare the responses of subjects holding opposite goals to the same messages with opposing conclusions." Thus, experiments where motivations are primed are the best – and perhaps only – way to clearly distinguish the effects and mechanisms of motivated reasoning. As such, evidence of motivated reasoning from seminal observational studies (e.g., Taber and Lodge 2006; Taber, Cann, and Kucsova 2009) should be read with some skepticism. Förster, Liberman, and Friedman (2007) provide a useful toolkit for distinguishing the priming of goals from

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[31] Of course, the impact of information from partisan competition on political reasoning is contingent on individuals actually receiving that information. Gilens and Murakawa (2002) ask whether citizens ever actually receive party cues in the real world. As far as we know, there is little research to answer that question (for a laboratory example, see Lau and Redlawsk 2001).

priming other non-goal concepts (e.g., like implicit priming of racial attitudes), but this work has not yet been translated into political science (as is often the case with basic psychological work, see Druckman, Kuklinski, and Sigelman 2009).

Demonstrating the impact of motivations is critical to disentangling whether goals as opposed to some other cognitive process are at work (Tetlock and Levi 1982). This is an important question because the answer has enormous normative implications. Cognitive explanations of reasoning explain variations in citizens' opinions according to the success or failure at (effortfully) acquiring and ("correctly") processing the wealth of available political information, where motivational perspectives do not see such differences as failures to reason correctly. The motivational view thus invites a broader discussion about what makes opinions of high or low quality beyond the typical refrains of information and effort. When do individuals make good decisions, judgments, and choices? When do they make bad decisions, judgments, and choices? The novel contribution of motivated reasoning theory to this line of inquiry is the idea that individuals vary in the extent to which making accurate decisions is satisfying versus the extent to which reinforcing one's prior beliefs, attitudes, or identities is satisfying. A cold cognitive theory of citizen reasoning expects that all citizens ought to – and therefore are – satisfied by being accurate; motivated reasoning acknowledges that the desire to be correct can easily be trumped by or interact with a desire to reinforce particular conclusions. Understanding the differences between effort-focused cognitive approaches to reasoning and personality-focused motivational approaches is essential to understanding the scope of biases in reasoning and thus the reason why motivated reasoning provides a valuable contribution to psychological theorizing.

b. *Conclusion*

Writing under a concern for democratic health, James Madison writes in Federalist X about the risks of faction and the strategies that might be undertaken to quell their deleterious effects. Madison's disdain for parties is popular in democratic theory (see, for a review, Rosenblum 2010). Tocqueville (2000: 174) perhaps says it best: "parties are an evil inherent in free governments." Tocqueville is right about the democratic proclivity to yield partisan conflict but we feel his view is incorrect in asserting that such tendencies are necessarily undesirable.

The ideal world devoid of partisan conflict that Madison envisions is a dystopia: it is a world where the average citizen – otherwise concerned with matters of self and kin – is called up to make sense of the chaos of political realities on their own and form opinions without the institutional coordination of professional political combatants. Such a world is not democracy as we know it; such a world is not democracy at all. Schattschneider (1960: 138) tells us that "[d]emocracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process." Democratic politics is a system of partisan competition acted out before a civic audience, whose involvement determines winners and losers. Politics is naturally partisan, so too are citizens.

A bird's eye view of the empirical literature tell us that partisan reasoning is poor reasoning and that citizens (and democracy as a whole) might be better off in a world without parties and without partisans. Yet, the unavoidable reality of partisan reasoning in a partisan world must invite research into how human psychology operates within these constraints rather than longing for the unattainable. Political psychology, properly engaging with the realities of partisan competition, thus becomes a critical discipline both for examining the public's role in the allocation and distribution of political power, but also in advancing understanding of human

cognition and behavior in the ubiquitous social phenomenon of contemporary politics. Political psychology is often thought to lie at the periphery of political science and psychology; we think the stakes are higher. Political psychological research is vital for furthering knowledge of the human condition. Viewing partisan citizens reasoning in a partisan world can help to answer not only political questions, but also psychological questions like "how do we make sense of other people and ourselves?" (Kunda 1999).

This article has advocated for the use of a rich theory of partisan motivated reasoning for understanding opinion formation in an unavoidably partisan world. Central to this perspective are the ideas that human activity results from basic human needs, with higher-order motivations in service of those needs, and that politics is fundamentally and unavoidably partisan. Under the shadow of political polarization, accepting the fundamentally partisan nature of politics and political reasoning can feel like a pessimistic rejection of democratic ideals. Yet parties can be good and partisanship positive. Regardless of the normative implications, democracy entails government with parties and citizens with partisan affinities. The empirical puzzles therefore lie in when, why, and how parties, partisanship, and the political environment shape human reasoning, not in the futile quest to hold citizens or democracy to arbitrary normative standards.

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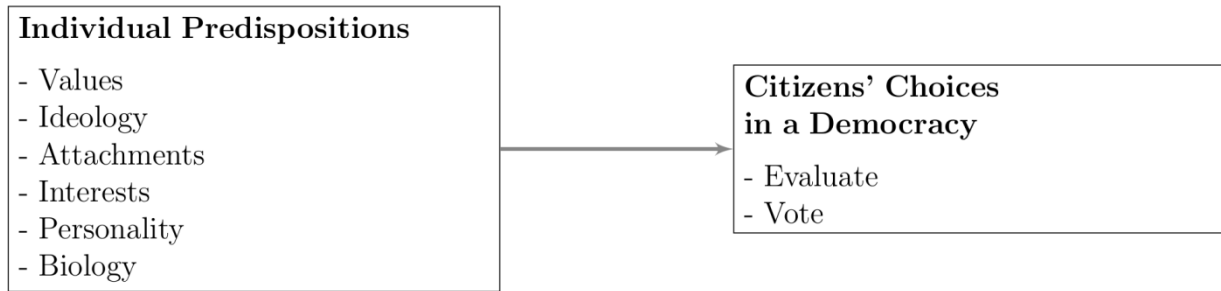**Figure 1. "Predisposition Model" of Public Opinion Formation**

Figure 2. "Partisan Conflict-Predisposition Model" of Public Opinion Formation
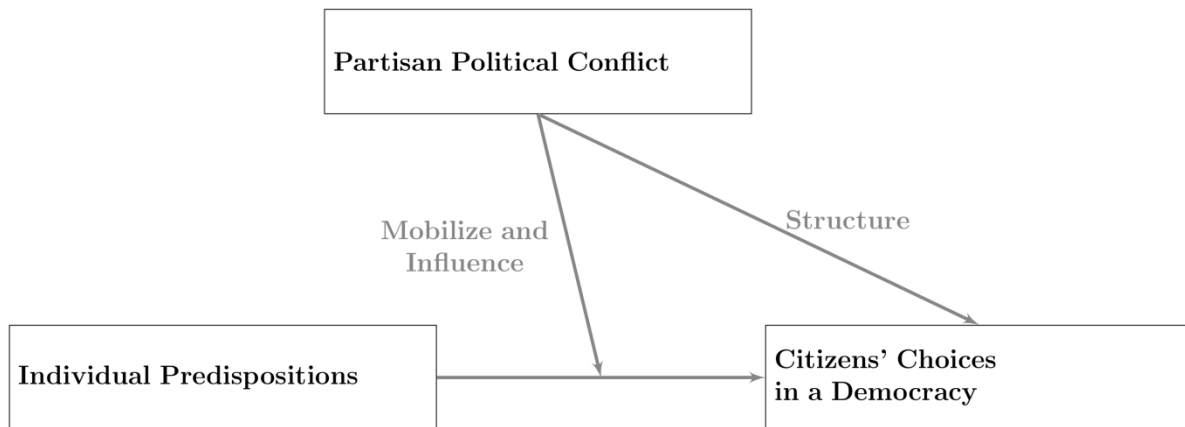

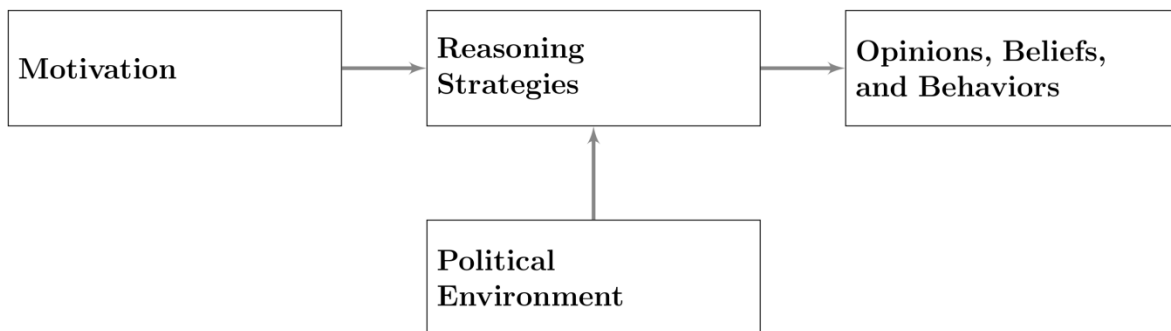**Figure 3. Strategies as Mechanisms of Reasoning Outcomes**

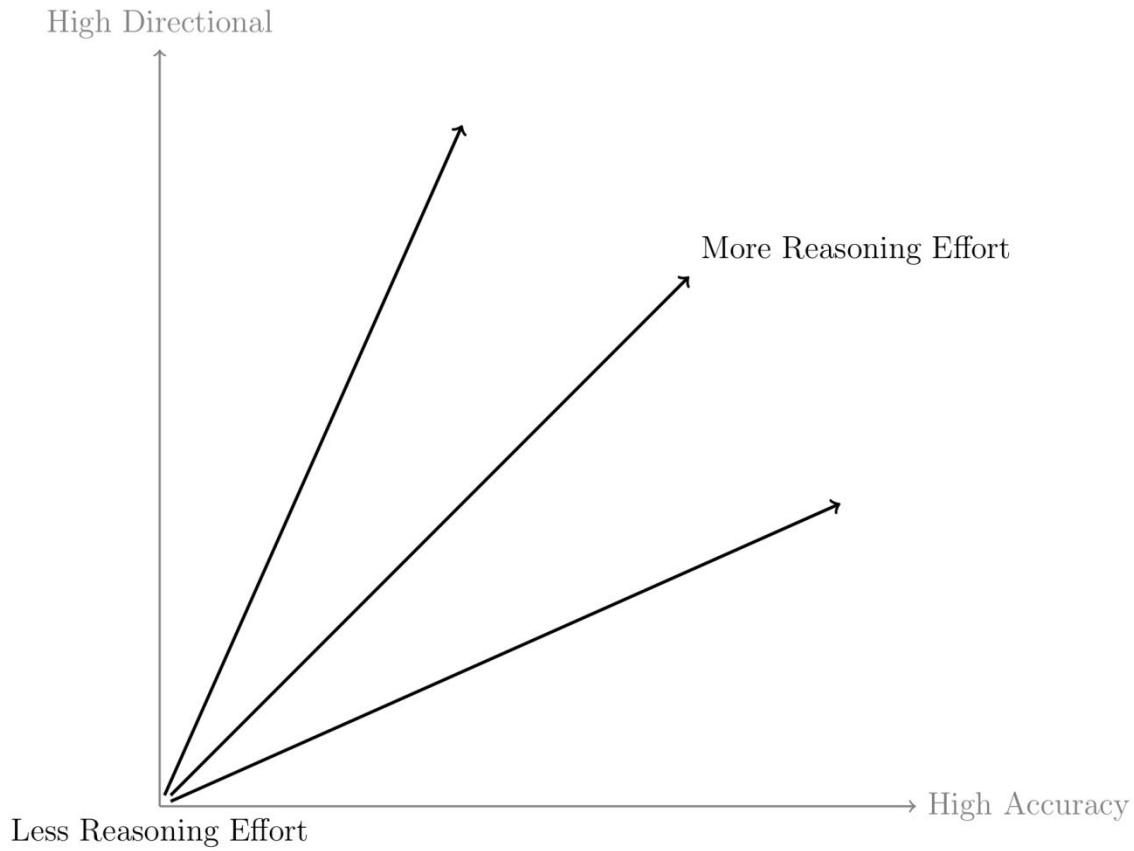**Figure 4. The Motivation-Effort Interaction**

Table 1. Four Ways Parties Can Influence Opinion, Conditional on Motivation and Effort

	Accuracy Motivation: Political Parties as Informational Shortcut	**Directional Motivation: Political Parties as Objects of Identification**
Low Effort	(1) Take position of "likeminded" party	(3) Follow party as group, adopt policy position conforming to group norms
More Effort	(2) Use party label to make inferences of policy content, implications for values, etc. before taking a position	(4) Partisan motivated reasoning where partisans actively seek to justify taking party-consistent position (e.g., through confirmation and disconfirmation biases)