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POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

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Political Behavior, Vol.12. No. 4, 1990

Abstracts

POLITICAL INFORMATION, SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS, AND DEVIANTS

Michael A. Krassa

This research explores whether an individuals's information about policies is influenced by the political environment in which the person is located. It seeks to determine whether and how the political environment influences one's attention to and retention of political information.

EXPLANING POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION

Robert C. Luskin

Debates over the political sophistication of mass publics smolder on. The more fundamental question, however, is why people become as politically sophisticated or unsophisticated as they do. This paper develops a nonlinear simultaneous equation model to weigh explanations of three general sorts; the political *information* to which people are exposed, their *ability* to assimilate and organize such information, and their *motivation* to do so. The estimates suggest that interest and intelligence, representing motivation and ability,

have major effects, but that education and media exposure, the big informational variables, do not. I consider the reasons and sketch some implications for the sophistication of mass publics, for the study od sophistication and other "variables of event" and for democratic theory.

PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY OF SUPREME COURT DECISIONS: THERE FUNCTIONS OF SOURCE CREDIBILITY

Robert C. Luskin

Public reaction to a Supreme Court decision hinges, in part, on the level of diffuse support enjoyed by the Court prior to announcement of the ruling. Previous investigators have exchanged adamant claims concerning the legitimacy-conferring ability of the Suprme Court, yet these studies have consistently ignored theoretical explanations of the psychological determinants of a recerver's response to an authoritative edict. Examined from the context of a cognitive view of persuasion, the credibility of the Supreme Court as a message source should not be expected to have a simple positive effect on opinion. Instead, unique effects may result from the interaction of source credibility and other components of the process of persuasion. This paper reports the results of a series of experiments that demonstrate that the credibility of the Supreme Court can serve three unique persuasive functions: Source credibility can cue a simple positive response, prompt increased

cognitive effort, and serve as evidence in sopport of a persuasive claim.

SYMBOLIC RACISM IN CANDIDATE EVALUATION: AN EXPERIMENT

Sophie M. Colleau, Kevin Glynn, Steven Lybrand, Richard M. Merelman, Paula Mohan,and James E. Wall

The authors explored the symbolic racism construct to determine whether discrimination in the evaluation of political candidates can be attributed to a combination of traditional values and antiblack affect as suggested by Sears. Using an experimental design where candidate race was manipulated in three conditions, they found that differential racial attributions do operate in the evaluation of political candidates. Contrary to expectations, however, no antiblack affect was found to be at work in the evaluation of the black candidate. Fidings are discussed in the framework of contemporary assumtions of research on racial reasoning.

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