The Rationalizing Voter

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Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology

About the Book

Political behavior is the result of innumerable unnoticed forces and conscious deliberation is often a rationalization of automatically triggered feelings and thoughts. Citizens are very sensitive to environmental contextual factors such as the title “President” preceding “Obama” in a newspaper headline, upbeat music or patriotic symbols accompanying a campaign ad, or question wording and order in a survey, all of which have their greatest influence when citizens are unaware. This book develops and tests a dual-process theory of political beliefs, attitudes, and behavior, claiming that all thinking, feeling, reasoning, and doing have an automatic component as well as a conscious deliberative component. The authors are especially interested in the impact of automatic feelings on political judgments and evaluations. This research is based on laboratory experiments, which allow the testing of five basic...
About the Book
“This is the most important book written on public opinion in the last quarter century, and it will drive research to come for years. It is a mustread for anyone interested in the basic foundation of democracy: public opinion.”
—James N. Druckman, Northwestern University

“For decades Milt Lodge and Chuck Taber have been pioneers in the effort to incorporate knowledge from psychology and neuroscience about the unconscious, affectively charged processing of information to enrich standard models of decision making in political science. This is their magnum opus, and it shows how successful the effort has been. Every reader will learn something important from this book.”
—John T. Jost, New York University

“Lodge and Taber’s The Rationalizing Voter makes a major contribution to the study of voter decision making. The primary argument of the book is that almost everything we do (including almost everything political we do) is guided by fast, reflexive, and unconscious information processing in the brain. If the authors are right – and I think they are – the book might be better titled “The Illusion of Choice in Democratic Politics.” No scholar of elections and voting behavior can ignore this work.”
—Richard R. Lau, Rutgers University

Contents
1. Unconscious thinking on political judgment, reasoning, and behavior; 2. The John Q. Public model of political information processing; 3. Experimental tests of automatic hot cognition; 4. Implicit identifications in political information processing; 5. Affect transfer and the evaluation of political candidates; 6. Affective contagion and political thinking; 7. Motivated political reasoning; 8. A computational model of the citizen as motivated reasoner; 9. Affect, cognition, emotion: which way the causal arrow?