

Voter Partisan Orientations and Use of Political Television

By Kim A. Smith and Douglas A. Ferguson

Dividing voters up into groups from most to least partisan to those politically unattached, this study, based on a telephone survey in Toledo, tests the notion that those most partisan will use the press most for reinforcement of political views while those least partisan or unattached will be more likely to seek information. Findings are mixed but there is evidence that independent partisans—one of the groups studied—is most likely to seek information from television. There are a number of other suggestive findings.

► In the past twenty years, the American electorate has been exhibiting increasingly less partisan voting behavior, with some surveys indicating that approximately one-third of voters now are independents.¹ If this trend continues, media influence on voting behavior can be expected to grow as people enter campaigns less certain about their vote intentions. This study explores the relationship between public affairs media use and partisanship in the context of the 1988 presidential campaign.

Influence of Media on Independent Voters

A number of studies have demonstrated the growing influence of media, especially television, on election outcomes. Analyzing national elections, Keeter demonstrated that candidates' personal qualities became increasingly more important for television-dependent voters between 1952 and 1984, after controlling for educational levels.² Latimer found that those switching votes in a 1982 Alabama state primary were heavier viewers of public affairs television and of higher socioeconomic status than stable voters.³ In the 1976 presidential election, Chaffee and Choe found that 40% of their panel of voters were campaign deciders: voters low in partisanship but who paid close attention to the campaign through the media and voted in accordance with campaign-specific perceptions.⁴

Other studies have shown that partisanship does not dictate patterns of exposure to political information as strongly as research once indicated. Chaffee and Miyo's 1980 campaign study indicated partisan predispositions did not motivate selective exposure to political campaign infor-

► Kim Smith is Associate Professor and coordinator of graduate studies in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Iowa State University. Douglas Ferguson is Assistant Professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at Bowling Green State University.

mation.⁵ Similarly, McLeod, Glynn, and McDonald showed that television reliant voters use candidate image characteristics to make vote choices more so than the newspaper reliant, even after controls for party identification and education.⁶ In a cohort study of students by Stamm, later deciders during the 1984 campaign switched information-processing strategies more often than earlier deciders, suggesting that information seeking is not a simple function of partisanship.⁷

Nature of Partisan Orientations

In most conceptualizations, partisan identification has been defined as a long-term attachment or loyalty to a political party that results from childhood socialization.⁸ Partisan identification has traditionally been measured by classifying independents as "neutral partisans" on a seven-point scale running from strong and weak Republican to weak and strong Democrat.⁹ But as Dennis, among others, has pointed out, this unidimensional measure lumps together political independents who are fundamentally detached from politics and those who are active politically but purposefully choose not to align with a party on a permanent basis.¹⁰ Furthermore, evidence indicates that "weak" Democrats and Republicans tend to be more interested and involved in campaigns than those classified as "strong" partisans.¹¹

In response to these problems, Dennis has developed a Partisan Supporter Typology (PST), which treats independence and partisanship as separate dimensions, allowing more precise classifications of the two types of voters.¹² In its simplest form, scoring of the PST is based on "yes" or "no" responses to two questions: a) In your own mind, do you think of yourself as a supporter of one of the political parties, or not? b) Do you ever think of yourself as a political independent or not?

Crosstabulation of responses to these questions results in four partisan orientation groups: (1) ordinary partisans who only consider themselves supporters of a party and never as independents; (2) ordinary independents who declare themselves independent and not attached to a political party; (3) independent partisans who consider themselves both independent and party supporters; and (4) the unattached who claim not to be independent or partisan. National survey results indicate that only about 30% of voters appear to have a strong attachment to a political party, while over 16% regard themselves as both independent

1. Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Decline of American Political Parties 1952-1980* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

2. Scott Keeter, "The Illusion of Intimacy: Television and the Role of Candidate Personal Qualities in Voter Choice," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51: 344-359 (Fall 1987).

3. Margaret K. Latimer, "The Floating Voter and the Media," *Journalism Quarterly*, 64: 805-813 (Winter 1987).

4. Steven H. Chaffee and Sun Y. Choe, "Time of Final Decision and Media Use During the Ford-Carter Campaign," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 44: 52-69 (1980).

5. Steven H. Chaffee and Yuko Miyo, "Selective Exposure and the Reinforcement Hypothesis: An Intergenerational Panel Study of the 1980 Presidential Campaign," *Communication Research*, 10:3-35 (January 1980).

6. Jack M. McLeod, Carroll J. Glynn, and Daniel G. McDonald, "Issues and Images: The Influence of Media Reliance in Voting Decisions," *Communication Research*, 10: 37-58 (January 1983).

7. Keith R. Stamm, "Cognitive Strategies and Communication During a Presidential Campaign," *Communication Research*, 14: 35-57 (February 1987).

8. E.g., Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960).

9. *Ibid.*

10. Jack Dennis, "Some Properties of Measures of Partisanship," paper presented to the American Political Science Association, New York, New York, September 3-6, 1981a.

11. Jack Dennis, "On Being an Independent Partisan Supporter," paper presented to the Midwest Political Science Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 15-18, 1981b.

12. *Ibid.*

and partisan, 26% as completely independent, and another 28% as totally detached from the political process.¹³

Analyses of national data have resulted in these profiles of people with the four partisan orientations:¹⁴

Ordinary partisans are the traditional strong party supporters. They have moderate levels of political knowledge, interest in politics, and use of the public affairs media. They are older and less educated than those from the other partisan orientation groups.

Ordinary independents are the least concerned about which party wins office. They are quite knowledgeable about politics and spend an average amount of time with the public affairs media, although they tend to have below average interest in politics. They are somewhat younger and more affluent than other voters.

Independent partisans exhibit the highest levels of interest, discussion, political knowledge, and use of the public affairs media of the four groups. They are more educated and about average in age compared to those with other partisan orientations.

The Unattached have the lowest interest in campaigns, political knowledge, and use of the public affairs media. They are usually younger and of lower socioeconomic status than those from the other subgroups.

Use and Avoidance of Political Content and Partisan Orientations

Studies have consistently isolated five specific uses of political media content.¹⁵ Some seek vote guidance for help in making decisions about candidates. Reinforcement is sought from political television by those who have already made a vote decision but seek information from television to bolster it. People also use political television for surveillance to gather information in a nonpartisan way about the candidates and issues of campaigns. Others are excitement seekers who enjoy the contest aspect of an election. Finally, anticipated communications about politics with friends and colleagues motivates others to seek out political content on television.

Research has also consistently shown that avoidance of political content on television takes several dimensions.¹⁶ In some instances, people avoid political television because of general feelings of alienation from the political process. Those who determine their vote choices based on partisanship avoid political television because further information would be unnecessary. Finally, some are relaxation seekers, who prefer to escape with the entertainment content of television.

McLeod and Becker have demonstrated that these uses and avoidances of political television explain variance in political behavior, beyond that of general exposure to the public affairs media.¹⁷ After controlling for television viewing time and frequency of exposure to public affairs media, use and avoidance of items accounted for significant amounts of variance in such effects as issue accuracy, probability of voting, campaign interest, political discussion, and vote switching. Furthermore,

13. *Ibid.*

14. Gerald M. Kosicki, "Political Identity, Time of Final Decision, and Media Use in the 1980 Presidential Election," paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, TN, August, 1985.

15. E.g., Jay G. Blumler and Dennis McQuail, *Television and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

16. E.g., Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures Through Political Effects Analysis," in Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, eds., *The Uses of Mass Communications*, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974).

17. *Ibid.*

the specific uses and avoidance measures were differentially related to the various political effects measures.

Although little evidence exists on this point, partisan orientation may be an important factor which influences the use or avoidance of political media content. Particularly the ordinary independents and independent partisans, given their greater levels of uncertainty about their vote intentions, might be expected to use the political media for surveillance, vote guidance, and perhaps anticipated communication. Ordinary partisans, on the other hand, could be expected to make greater use of the public affairs media for reinforcement of their vote decisions and to avoid such content because their decisions have been made. The unattached might be expected to avoid political media primarily for alienation and relaxation reasons.

Hypotheses

The evidence suggests, therefore, that partisan orientations are related to specific uses and avoidances of political content in the media. Accordingly, these hypotheses were tested in the following analysis:

- 1) The use and avoidance of political content in the media will vary by partisan orientation.

As discussed above, such differences are expected to exist among the four partisan orientation groups, but little evidence exists about the directions and strength of these differences.

- 2) After controlling for age, socioeconomic status, and frequency of exposure to public affairs content in the media, use and avoidance measures will significantly discriminate among partisan orientation groups.

As McLeod and Becker have suggested, use and avoidance measures should discriminate among the four groups, after controlling for relevant demographic characteristics and general frequency of exposure to the public affairs media.¹⁸ If not, the need for including them in political effects studies in conjunction with the PST is questionable.

- 3) Use and avoidance measures will predict political campaign behaviors, after controlling for differences in age, socioeconomic status, frequency of public affairs media use, and partisan orientations.

Multiple regression analyses have demonstrated that frequency of exposure to public affairs media and use and avoidance measures both significantly predict political behavior.¹⁹ However, it is not clear the extent to which partisan orientations might modify these relationships.

- 4) Interactions will exist between use and avoidance measures and partisan orientations in predicting political campaign behavior.

If, as suggested above, partisan orientations are antecedent variables influencing frequency of exposure to the public affairs media and uses and avoidances of such content, then interactive relationships should be apparent in predicting political behavior during a campaign.²⁰

18. *Ibid.*

19. Lee B. Becker, "Two Tests of Media Gratifications: Watergate and the 1974 Election," *Journalism Quarterly*, 53: 28-37, 87 (1976).

Method

A telephone survey was conducted of 400 adults 18-and-over in the metropolitan Toledo area from January 18 through 31, 1988, just prior to the Iowa caucuses. A probability sample of telephone numbers was drawn from the metropolitan directory and the last digit was increased by one. After three call backs, a response rate of 53.9% was obtained, based on total completions and refusals. Although this response rate is low, the demographic composition of the sample was similar to that of the adult metropolitan Toledo population, according to census data.

Partisan Supporter Typology. Respondents were sorted into the four partisan orientation categories, using the questions and the method discussed above.²¹ As a result, 32.7% were classified as ordinary partisans, 20.6% as independent partisans, 24.2% as ordinary independents, and 22.5% as unattached. Compared to national figures, there are fewer independent partisans, more unattached, and about the same number of ordinary partisans and independents in the Toledo area.²²

Political Campaign Behavior. Interest in the 1988 presidential campaign was measured by asking respondents: "How interested are you in the 1988 campaign for the presidency? Very interested, somewhat interested, neither interested nor uninterested, somewhat uninterested, or very uninterested?" Political discussion was measured by asking: "How often do you talk about politics with friends or coworkers? Do you talk with them frequently, sometimes, rarely or never?"

To assess voting behavior, respondents were asked: "In the elections for president since you have been old enough to vote would you say you have voted in all of them, most of them, or none of them?" Party switching was measured by this question: "When you do vote, how often do you vote for candidates from different parties? Would you say often, sometimes, rarely or never?"

Use and Avoidance Measures. Using the categories "a lot," "a little," or "not all," respondents were asked to rate how much each of these use statements applied to their use of television shows that feature political candidates:²³

- a. To judge what political leaders are like (surveillance).
- b. To see what a candidate would do if elected (surveillance).
- c. To keep up with the main issues of the day (surveillance).
- d. To help make up my mind how to vote in an election (vote guidance).
- e. To use as ammunition in arguments with others (anticipated communication).
- f. To judge who is likely to win an election (excitement).
- g. To enjoy the excitement of an election race (excitement)
- i. To remind me of my candidates strong points (reinforcement).

Using the same response scale, respondents were asked to rate how much each of these reasons for avoiding television shows which feature political candidates applied to them:

- a. Because I am not much interested in politics (partisanship).
- b. Because my mind is already made up (partisanship).
- c. Because I prefer to relax when watching television (relaxation).
- d. Because you can't always trust what politicians tell you on television

20. McLeod and Becker, *op cit*.

21. Because of the small sample size, it was not possible to further break the independent partisan and ordinary partisan groups by Democrats or Republicans. Democrats and Republicans within the independent partisan and ordinary partisan groups, however, tend to be similar in regard to most political orientations. See Dennis, 1981b, *op cit*.

22. Dennis, 1981a, *op cit*.

23. See McLeod and Becker, *op cit*.

(alienation).

e. Because some candidates talk down to the audience (alienation).

f. Because some candidates talk over people's heads (alienation).

g. Because they hardly ever have anything to say (alienation).

A factor analysis (not shown) indicated use and avoidance dimensions similar to those found in previous studies.²⁴ Surveillance and excitement indices were constructed from the items indicated above (Cronbach's alphas: .72 and .61, respectively). Vote guidance, anticipated communication, and reinforcement were measured by single items. Partisanship and alienation indices were constructed from the items indicated above (Cronbach's alphas: .61 and .78, respectively). Relaxation was measured by a single item.

Public Affairs Media Use. Public affairs television viewing was an index of the frequency of watching national news, local news, and news specials (Cronbach's alpha: .69). Public affairs use newspaper reading was measured by an index of the frequency of reading about local, national, international stories, editorials, and syndicated columnists (Cronbach's alpha: .65).

Demographic Variables. Respondents were asked: "What is your age?" Socioeconomic status was measured by an index of the last grade completed in school and the before-tax annual income of the respondent (Cronbach's alpha: .55).

Table 1
Standard Scores for Demographic and Political Behavior Variables by Partisan Orientations

Variable ^{ab}	Partisan Orientation Categories				F-test ^c
	Ordinary Partisans	Independent Partisans	Ordinary Independents	The Unattached	
Demographic					
Age	.14 ^a	-.03 ^{ab}	.00 ^{ab}	-.29 ^b	3.23 ^{**}
SES	-.11 ^{bc}	.39 ^a	.19 ^{ab}	-.25 ^c	6.21 [*]
Political Behaviors					
Interest in '88 Campaign	.26 ^a	.25 ^a	-.14 ^b	-.56 ^c	14.69 [*]
Political Discussion	-.01 ^a	.54 ^b	-.05 ^a	-.32 ^a	11.06 [*]
Frequency of Party Switching	-.34 ^c	.06 ^{ab}	.41 ^a	-.03 ^{bc}	9.51 [*]
Frequency of Presidential Voting	.22 ^a	.41 ^a	.05 ^a	-.73 ^b	24.49 [*]
N ^d	119	75	88	82	

^aCell entries are standard scores, calculated by subtracting the overall mean from the group mean and then dividing by the overall standard deviation. As a result, the scores from row to row are roughly comparable.

^bIn each row, means coded with a same letter do not differ significantly at the p<.05 level, based on a Tukey/Kramer test.

^cF-tests result from one-way analyses of variance among the four group means for each variable.

^dThe N for each partisan orientation group varies slightly from variable to variable due to missing data.

*p<.01; **p<.05

Results

The results in Table 1 show a pattern of differences for the demographic and political behavior variables similar to those found in national election studies. The unattached stood out as younger than the ordinary partisans, while independent partisans and ordinary independents had greater socioeconomic status than ordinary partisans or the unattached. Ordinary partisans and independent partisans had more interest in the 1988 campaign and were more frequent voters than ordinary independents or the unattached. Ordinary independents were most likely to switch parties, while independent partisans most often discussed politics of the four partisan orientation groups.

Table 2
Standard Scores for Public Affairs Media Exposure, Use and Avoidance
Variables by Partisan Orientations

Variable ^{ab}	Partisan Orientation Categories				The F-test ^c
	Partisans	Ordinary Partisans	Independent Independents	Ordinary Unattached	
Frequency of					
Public Affairs TV Viewing	.09 ^a	.11 ^{ab}	.00 ^{ab}	-.27 ^b	2.64 ^{**}
Public Affairs Newspaper Reading	.06 ^a	.34 ^a	.14 ^a	-.46 ^b	9.43 [*]
Uses					
Surveillance	.06 ^a	.23 ^a	.10 ^a	-.42 ^b	6.36 [*]
Vote Guidance	.16 ^a	.06 ^{ab}	.00 ^{ab}	-.27 ^b	3.04 ^{**}
Anticipated Communication	.00 ^a	.18 ^a	.03 ^a	-.14 ^a	1.24
Excitement	.12 ^a	.23 ^a	-.10 ^{ab}	-.28 ^b	4.08 [*]
Reinforcement	.13 ^a	-.01 ^a	.01 ^a	-.19 ^a	1.51
Avoidances					
Partisanship	-.02 ^{ab}	-.26 ^a	.00 ^{ab}	.19 ^b	2.57 ^{**}
Relaxation	.10 ^{ac}	-.22 ^a	-.17 ^{ab}	.23 ^c	3.92 [*]
Alienation	-.01 ^a	-.21 ^a	.15 ^a	.14 ^a	2.23
N ^d	119	75	88	82	

^aCell entries are standard scores, calculated by subtracting the overall mean from the group mean and then dividing by the overall standard deviation. As a result, the scores from row to row are roughly comparable.

^bIn each row, means coded with a same letter do not differ significantly at the $p < .05$ level, based on a Tukey/Kramer test.

^cF-tests result from one-way analyses of variance among the four group means for each variable.

^dThe N for each partisan orientation group varies slightly from variable to variable due to missing data.

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

The results shown in Table 2 provide limited support for the hypothesis that the four partisan orientation groups would differ in their use and avoidance of political television. No significant differences were found among the ordinary partisan, independent partisans and ordinary independents for any of the use or avoidance measures. The unattached were less likely than the other three groups to use political television for surveillance. The unattached were also less likely than the ordinary

partisans to use political television for vote guidance and excitement. Similar trends are evident for frequency of exposure to public affairs content in newspapers and on television.

Table 3
Standardized Discriminant Coefficients for Ordinary Independents, Independent Partisans, or the Unattached versus Ordinary Partisans

Comparison ^a		Function
Independent Partisans vs. Ordinary Partisans	SES	.63
	Relaxation	-.50
	Reinforcement	-.57
	Anticipated Communication	.52
	Public Affairs TV Viewing	.27
	F=3.84, df=6/145, p<.01	
Ordinary Independents vs. Ordinary Partisans	Excitement	.92
	Relaxation	.84
	Alienation	-.62
	Anticipated Communication	-.55
	SES	-.42
	Age	.37
F=3.08, df=5/133, p<.01		
The Unattached vs. Ordinary Partisans	Excitement	.73
	Public Affairs Newspaper Reading	.53
	Anticipated Communication	-.49
	Age	.41
	Vote Guidance	.41
	Relaxation	.22
Reinforcement	-.23	
F=5.23, df=7/136, p<.001		

^aIn each comparison, independent partisans, ordinary independents, or the unattached were coded "1," while ordinary partisans were always coded "0." Only public affairs media exposure, uses or avoidance variables significantly discriminating between the two groups being compared are shown. F-tests indicate overall significance of the final models.

The results shown in Table 3 support the second hypothesis that the use and avoidance measures would discriminate among the four partisan orientation groups, after controlling for frequency of exposure to public affairs media content and demographic differences. Independent partisans more frequently watched public affairs television for anticipated communication and less often avoided such content for relaxation or reinforcement reasons than their partisan counterparts. Compared to partisans, ordinary independents more often used political television content for excitement and relaxation reasons, and were less likely to do so because of anticipated communication or to avoid such content because they were alienated. The unattached were more likely than ordinary partisans to use political televisions content for excitement, vote guidance, and relaxation, while less often avoiding such content because they prefer to relax when watching television.

The results shown in Table 4 provide limited support for the third hypotheses that use and avoidance measures would predict political campaign behaviors, after controlling for demographic, public affairs media use, and partisan orientation differences. The demographic vari-

ables accounted for significant amounts of variance in vote frequency and party switching. The dummy variables for the partisan orientation groups accounted for significant amounts of variance in all four campaign behavior variables, while the contribution of the public affairs exposure variables was insignificant in all four cases. The use and avoidance items accounted for significant amounts of variance in political discussion and campaign interest.

Table 4
Betas from Regression of Political Behaviors on Demographic, Partisan Orientation, Media Exposure, Use and Avoidance Variables

Independent Variable	Political Behavior			
	Campaign Interest	Political Discussion	Party Switching	Vote Frequency
SES	.09	.17**	.09	.20*
Age	.04	-.01	.05	.23*
Increment to R ²	.008	.017**	.002	.051*
Independent Partisans	.05	.23**	.02	.11
Ordinary Independents	-.17*	-.04	.27*	-.08
The Unattached	-.29*	-.16	-.01	-.37*
Increment to R ²	.044**	.024**	.058*	.068*
Public Affairs TV Viewing	.13	.06	.06	.06
Public Affairs Newspaper Reading	.11	.19*	.06	.13**
Increment to R ²	.010	.023	.005	.013
Surveillance	.19**	.13	.02	.08
Vote Guidance	.12	-.08**	-.08	.03
Anticipated Communication	-.06*	.09	-.13	-.04
Excitement	.22*	.15	.06	-.05
Reinforcement	.29	.15	-.05	-.01
Partisanship	.00	-.10	-.05	-.13**
Relaxation	-.09	-.10	-.10	-.11
Alienation	-.16	-.09	-.05	-.06
Increment to R ²	.139*	.059*	.031	.032
Total R ²	.304*	.207*	.106*	.289*
N ^a	327	327	305	305

^aNs vary due to missing data.

The results shown in Table 5 support the fourth hypothesis that interactions would exist between partisan orientations and the use and avoidance variables. With only two exceptions, the significant interactions which emerged in this analysis involved a use or avoidance measure. Furthermore, these use or avoidance measures generally interacted with the less partisan orientations: the unattached, ordinary independents, or independent partisans.

Table 5
Betas for Significant Interactions between Media Variables and Partisan Orientations Predicting Political Behavior

Dependent Variable	Significant Interactions ^a	
Campaign Interest N=327 ^b	Newspaper Reading X Ordinary Independents	.75**
	Surveillance X Unattached	.54*
	Vote Guidance X Unattached	.47*
	Excitement X Ordinary Independents	.36**
	Excitement X Unattached	.40*
Political Discussion N=327	Vote Guidance X Unattached	.36**
	Alienation X Independent Partisans	-.42**
Party Switching N=305	Vote Guidance X Unattached	.42**
	Excitement X Independent Partisans	.51**
	Excitement X Ordinary Independents	.50**
	Anticipated Communication X Ordinary Independents	.35**
Voting Frequency N=305	TV Viewing X Ordinary Independents	.79*
	Surveillance X Ordinary Independents	.80**
	Surveillance X Independent Partisans	.51**
	Alienation X Unattached	-.43*

^aIn this analysis, each set of interactions (a media variable X each partisan orientation dummy variable) were fed into the regression equation, after controlling for main effects of all demographic, media exposure, use, and avoidance variables. Only interactions with significant betas are shown.

^bThe Ns for each dependent variable vary due to missing data.

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of using a multidimensional measure of partisanship to assess political effects of the media. Consistent with national studies, only about one-third of the Toledo sample were classified as ordinary partisans, while the rest were divided among independent partisans, ordinary independents, and the unattached. Given the apparent "need for orientation" in elections among these three groups, they should be the focus of future political media effects studies.²⁵

According to the findings of this study, each partisan group appears to have a distinctive orientation to use of political content in the media, even after controlling for frequency of exposure to public affairs content and demographic differences. These findings suggest that the manner in which people use the media may be, at least in part, a function of their partisan orientation. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the causal relationship between partisan orientations and the use of political media content.

Partisan orientations proved to be stronger predictors of political campaign behaviors than the use and avoidance items. However, further analysis indicated that partisan orientations and the use and avoidance measures interacted in predicting political behaviors. These inter-

25. See David H. Weaver, "Political Issues and Voter Need for Orientation," in Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs, eds., *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1977).

action effects were apparent only for the ordinary independents, independent partisan, and the unattached groups, particularly in regard to surveillance, vote guidance, and excitement. These results are consistent with the notion that media use is heaviest among voters with these partisan orientations, because of higher uncertainty about their vote choices.

The results of this study are, of course, descriptive in nature. They provide no knowledge of how people with differing partisan orientations cognitively process political information from the media. As research by Graber has indicated, people have "schema," which are used for processing, retaining, and retrieving information.²⁶ The relationship between cognitive processing style and partisan orientations needs to be explored.

26. Doris Graber, *Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide* (New York: Longman, 1984).