

Extreme Recall: Representation of Representatives in the Mind

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In November 2013, we recruited 344 survey participants through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (see [Berinsky, Huber and Lenz 2012](#)). (See [SI 1.1](#) for a description of how we processed this data, and comparison to population benchmarks.) We asked the respondents, “When you think about the Democratic (Republican) party, which political leader(s) first come to mind? Name up to three.” We followed the open-ended question with a multiple-choice question that presented respondents a list of names and photos of political leaders and asked the respondents “Is there another political leader that you haven’t mentioned already who immediately comes to mind when you think about the Democratic (Republican) party?” Among the Democrats, people choose between, Joseph Biden, Barney Frank, Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Harry Reid, Ted Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kerry, John Kennedy, Nancy Pelosi, Al Gore, Barack Obama. And among Republicans, between, Paul Ryan, John McCain, Paul Rand, Sarah Palin, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, John Boehner, Jeb Bush, Michele Bachmann, Ted Cruz, Chris Christie, Marco Rubio, Eric Cantor, Mitt Romney, and Mitch McConnell. We paired the responses with CF-Scores ([Bonica 2013](#)).

We find that people are likelier to recall prominent politicians (see [Figure 1](#)). On average, the people recall politicians who are no more extreme than the median member

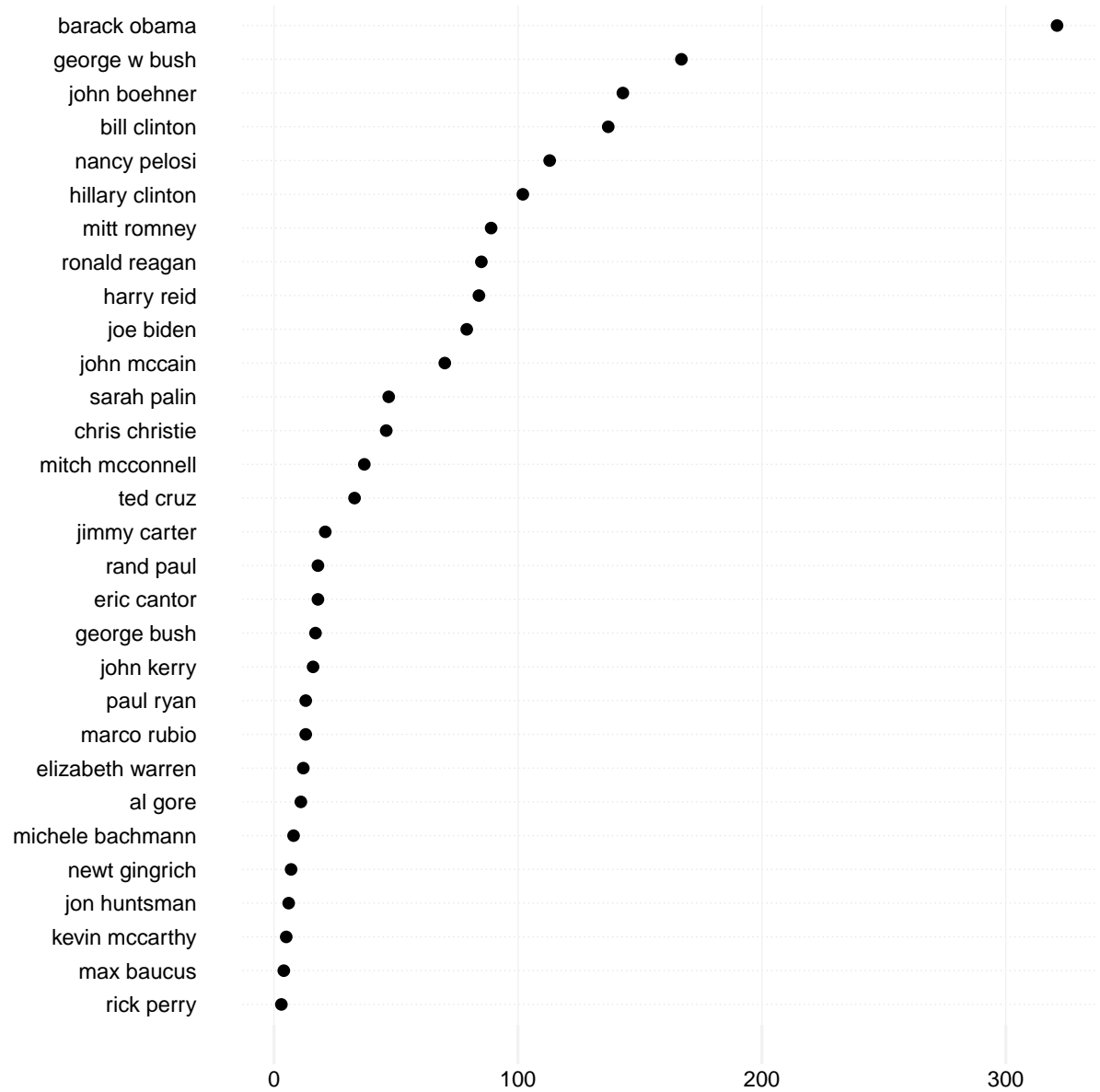
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of Congress. For instance, recalled politicians are more extreme than the Senate mean just 55.6% of the times. And the average difference to the Senate means is a mere .017 (see [SI 1.2](#)). (For comparison, the standard deviation of CF-scores within the parties in the Senate is about .3.) People do recall more extreme politicians earlier but again the bias is substantively not particularly large. However, people tend to *think* that these relatively moderate politicians are ideologically extreme (see [SI 1.1](#)). Thus, the bias may be less in who is covered in the media, and more about how they are covered.

Table 1: Are Recalled Politicians More Extreme than the Median Senator of the Party?

	Extremity Compared to Senate Mean	
	(1)	(2)
Constant	0.017** (0.007)	0.094*** (0.015)
Out Party		0.069*** (0.021)
Recall Order		-0.216*** (0.024)
Out Party x Recall Order		-0.040 (0.034)
Observations	1,725	1,725
Akaike Inf. Crit.	782.323	607.624
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	798.682	640.341
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Figure 1: Distribution of Recall of Politicians



References

- Berinsky, Adam J, Gregory A Huber and Gabriel S Lenz. 2012. “Evaluating online labor markets for experimental research: Amazon. com’s Mechanical Turk.” *Political Analysis* 20(3):351–368.
- Bonica, Adam. 2013. “Ideology and interests in the political marketplace.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57:294–311.

Supporting Information

SI 1 Survey data

Because the answers to the politician recall survey questions were open-ended (respondents typed in names), the responses were quite “noisy” (in addition to misspellings, some respondents just used last names, some just first names, etc) so we had to take several steps to address this. First, we restricted attention to politicians whose exact name was used at least 3 times for at least one of the recall questions (these are the politicians listed in ??). Then, to determine whether other respondents were attempting to refer to these politicians, we checked whether the respondent referred to the same last name (for unique last names), common misspellings of the last or first names (oboma, reed, hilary), and common stems for very difficult to spell names (boe or boh for boehner, mccon for mcconnell). There were two non-unique last names, Bush and Clinton. For the two Bushes: we coded any responses with 2nd, 3rd 4th or 5th word starting with s (for senior), or 2nd-3rd-4th starting with H (for middle initials H.W.) as 'george bush' and code all other responses as 'george w bush'. We coded responses of just 'clinton' as 'bill clinton'. Regarding positions, we coded each politician as 'executive', 'legislative' or 'governor'. We included all party nominees (president or vice president) as executive. Failed candidates for party nomination are included in other categories.

Table [SI 1.1](#) provides a synopsis.

Table SI 1.1: Sample Demographics Compared to Benchmarks

	Sample	2012 ANES	2010 Census
Age			
18-29	23.2%		19.2%
30-49	41.9%		31.7%
50+	35.0%		49.2%
Gender			
Male	53.0%		49.1%
Female	47.0%		50.9%
Race/Ethnicity			
White/Caucasian	87.9%		63.7%
Black/African-American	4.7%		12.2%
Asian/PI	4.1%		4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	n/a		16.4%
Native American	1.0%		1.1%
Other/more than one	2.2%		6.2%
Education			
Less than HS degree	0.0%		8.9%
High school/GED	11.1%		31.0%
Some college/2-year degree	36.5%		28.0%
4-year college degree	41.7%		18.0%
Graduate/professional degree	10.7%		9.3%
Party Identification			
Democratic (inc. leaners)	56.9%	49.0%	
Republican (inc. leaners)	31.0%	39.0%	
No party preference/Other	12.2%	11.9%	

Note: Sample statistics are for sample used for analysis, with N=1,725 and unit of observation of (identified) recalled politician-respondent (respondents who recalled more identified politician are used more often). White/Caucasian category is non-Hispanic for 2010 Census (no separate Hispanic category in race variable for survey).

SI 1.1 Recall Results

Table SI 1.2: Estimated Extremity of Recalled Politicians

	Estimated Extremity	
	(1)	(2)
Constant	0.790*** (0.007)	0.858*** (0.010)
Out Party		-0.104*** (0.012)
Recall Order		-0.058*** (0.013)
Out Party x Recall Order		0.048*** (0.019)
Observations	1,715	1,715
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-977.095	-1,077.039
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	-960.754	-1,044.356
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	