Counting Voices in an Echo Chamber: Cognition, Complexity, and the Prospects for Deliberative Democracy

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"Without the substitution of public opinion as the origin of all authority for decisions binding the whole, modern democracy lacks the substance of its own truth." — Jürgen Habermas[1]

"The voice of the people is but an echo. The output of an echo chamber bears an inevitable and invariable relation to the input." — V. O. Key, Jr.[2]

IV.1 Introduction

Political scientists have accumulated a mountain of evidence suggesting that the average voter is astonishingly uninformed about political candidates, elected officials and political issues.[3] Even in national elections, voters appear to make decisions on the basis of a general lack of information and an unthoughtful processing of what little information they seem to have. They do not even approximate the ideal of an engaged and informed electorate that implicitly or explicitly undergirds most

[1] Habermas (1989b) p. 237.

[2] Key, (1966): p. 2.

[3] This finding is stable and well established for the entire post-WWII era despite dramatic increases in the availability of information and education during this period. For different time slices see: Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954); Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960); Converse (1964); and Delli Carpini and Keeter's careful, comprehensive, and recent study What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters (1996).

normative theories of democratic legitimacy.[4] But if citizens cannot discharge this periodic and seemingly modest demand of democratic politics in a normatively satisfying way, how can we possibly expect them to meet the much stronger demands that deliberative democratic theory would place upon them? Some deliberative democrats suggest that the ignorance and apathy of the public is actually a *consequence* of the small demands made on them under the current system.[5] While I agree that this hypothesis is plausible, I am aware of no systematic evidence to support it. On the other side, both common sense and social science suggest that citizens would only do worse as their tasks became more demanding. Summarizing their conclusions from a series of experiments, Lau and Redlawsk write: "Classic[6] democratic theory sets unrealistic standards for ideal citizens at least in part because it holds unrealistic expectations about the very nature of human cognition."[7] Skeptics

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[4] I say implicitly because some theorists either simply assume an informed public without much discussion, or they do not address it at all, though their argument requires it logically. Some theorists, notably Riker (see discussion above in Chapter 2) and Pateman (1970) argue that many canonical thinkers make no such assumption. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that Madison, for example, would not be dismayed if presented with evidence of the extent to which citizens of the republic lacked even basic knowledge. Similarly, Mill, even if he was somewhat realistic about the contemporary state of public enlightenment, considered it of the utmost importance to remedy the situation before full and equal enfranchisement. See Lazer et. al. (2011) for a discussion.

[5] This is the spirit of Benjamin Barber and Michael Sandel's otherwise different arguments in, respectively, Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age (1984) and Democracy's Discontent (1998).

[6] By "classic" the author does not primarily mean classical Athens, but political theory before the 1950's.

[7] Lau and Redlawsk, "Voting Correctly" (1997): p. 593.

who argue that we have to learn to crawl before we can run have a strong prima facie case.

The question of informed voting is only the surface manifestation of the more general problem of "complexity" which faces all (even moderately ambitious) theories of democracy. Given limited time, motivation, and cognitive resources, how are citizens in large complex democracies to deal with the volume and technicalities of information necessary for self-government? What level of knowledge and participation would warrant realistic claims to public autonomy as envisioned by democratic theory? We can make real progress toward answering these questions only through a sustained engagement between political theory and empirical research.

In section (2), I briefly lay out the "state of the art" in public opinion and voting research and explain why it poses a more radical challenge to democratic theory than is often recognized. In section (3) I analyze the major attempts to answer this challenge from within the empirical literature. I argue that, ultimately, those answers are not successful in salvaging a strong enough notion of democratic autonomy to underwrite deliberative models of democracy. In section (4) I describe, extend, and empirically test a new theory that paints a considerably more hopeful picture of the prospects for approximating deliberative democracy. In the concluding section (5) I summarize the argument and briefly outline an agenda for further research.

IV.2 Public Opinion Research and Its Challenge to Democratic Theory

I suspect that most political theorists, even those familiar with the electorate's ignorance, and skeptical about proposals for "Strong Democracy", would be unsettled by or incredulous of the ascendant theory in public opinion research. In his brilliant book, The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion, John Zaller puts the normative implications of his elite-centered analysis into sharp relief:

> [My theory] makes no allowance for citizens to think, reason, or deliberate about politics: If citizens are well informed, they react mechanically to political ideas on the basis of external cues about their partisan implications, and if they are too poorly informed to be aware of these cues, they tend to uncritically accept whatever ideas they encounter. As normatively unappealing as this implication of the model may be, it is consistent with a large body of theory and research concerning political persuasion. (Zaller, 1992: p. 45)

The rest of the book goes on to add mountains of new evidence for his formulation of the theory, in what one reviewer called "the most significant contribution to the scientific study of public opinion in almost three decades."[8]

Zaller denies that most people even have political opinions or preferences in any meaningful sense. Rather than *having* preferences, he suggests that people

[8] If a cynic is tempted to think that Bartels is inadvertently damning Zaller with faint praise I would challenge him or her to lay out a case that goes beyond an appeal either to the alleged infirmity of the social sciences or to our intuitions that citizens *do* sometimes think, reason, and deliberate about politics, and that their so doing must matter.

construct preference *statements*.[9] Opinions do not predate their elicitation.[10] He argues that framing influences which "considerations"[11] people bring to bear in constructing their preference statements,[12] and that people answer survey questions by averaging across the considerations that are accessible to them at a given time. We observe so much voting and opinion instability because different considerations are activated or accessible at different times.

Zaller's claim that people do not really have meaningful preferences seems to deny common sense. At the risk of oversimplifying his Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) model, a simple example may help to illuminate the form of his argument: in an experiment researchers found that when subjects were faced with the choice of

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[9]I think that there is an implicit ontological picture presented here. The structure of Zaller's (1992) model is naturally conceived of as a description of the mechanical consequence of *the way* people form opinion statements. It is *in* the data. Thus, there seems to be little sense in judging a preference more or less adequate, more or less rational.

[10]Note that Zaller's (1992) presentation is practically the definition of ideology as used by critical theorists. ("*The way* people form opinions is *in* the data"). I think that this is partially a result of giving his theory a realist interpretation prematurely. Of course this does not preclude it from being true, nor do I think that it is Zaller's conscious intention. Nevertheless, it does shroud the possibility that his results might form the basis for their own refutation. This is one reason why social scientific theories tend to be only locally applicable in time and space. (In another context, I present a set of technical arguments for why I think that Zaller's theory does not warrant a realist interpretation. However, I am not skeptical of a weak kind of theory realism in principle, even for the social sciences.)

[11]Zaller (1992) uses "considerations" and "predispositions" interchangeably, and he is very brief on where they come from. I think that this is one of the few soft-spots in the theory. He writes: "[Predispostions] are a distillation of a person's lifetime experiences, including childhood socialization and direct involvement with the raw ingredients of policy issues…[they] also partly depend on social and economic locations and, probably at least as strongly, on inherited or acquired personality factors and tastes." (p. 23) I find it useful to think of them as a mechanical version of Rawls' (1993) "burdens of judgment".

[12]Bartels and others refer to preference statements as "attitudes" in contrast to true preferences. See his "Democracy with Attitudes" (1998).

living with terrible chronic pain or undergoing a risky procedure to stop the pain, they overwhelmingly chose the treatment when doctors said that the procedure had a 95% survival rate, and overwhelmingly chose to live with the pain when the doctor told them that the procedure had a 5% mortality rate.[13] Which is the underlying preference?[14] Zaller's parsimonious theory accounts for a huge range of public opinion phenomena that makes trouble for any "underlying preference" approach attempting to adapt to one or another anomaly. Highlights include: temporal instability, lack of belief system constraint, question wording effects, question order effects, race/gender of interviewer effects, framing effects, the "mainstream" effect, polarization effects, and non-monotonic information effects. With one simple change of perspective Zaller was able to do away with the Baroque theoretical accretions of the previous thirty years.

It is not hard to see how Zaller's picture of the political world, if substantially accurate, undermines the normative foundations of almost any democratic theory, especially a discursive theory such as Habermas's.[15] If deliberative theories of democracy are to be viable as guides to practice, people must, to some relevant extent, be able to: 1) recognize, prioritize, and communicate their pre-deliberative

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[13] Arkes and Hammond(1986).

[14] There are several ways that one could handle this situation without giving up on preferences, but the point is that there are dozens of such results which, until Zaller (1992), were not subsumable under one relatively simple theory.

[15] Even if, pace Kant, ought need not imply can, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter, I think that research into ought is much less interesting if we know that we "can't" even approximately.

preferences — as Habermas puts it, their needs, wants and interests as they relate to the public agenda or its formation; 2) evaluate normative arguments (and their factual evidentiary bases) fairly and efficiently — that is, engage in public deliberation; and 3) base their actions upon these public evaluations and the locally generalizable interests that they generate — that is, integrate their preferences with what all could will as free and equal participants in political discourse. If, however, there are no real preferences, but only preference *reports*, the public sphere is reduced to pre-given considerations and elite information flows. Voters become automatons in an echo chamber.

IV.3 Attempts to Redeem the Public

Though I referred to Zaller's approach as the ascendant theory in political science, there has always been a counter-stream of research. In the early 1990's political scientists mounted their first major counter-attack against the deflationary results stemming from the line of work Zaller represents. Crucially, these dissenters did not argue about the facts of the case (i.e., that most citizens did not generally pay attention to or take account of much political information).[16] Rather, they made the

[16] V. O. Key Jr. (1966) anticipated this line of research by over two decades in The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960. The most important books that sparked the recent revival of interest in this theme are: Page and Shapiro's The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences (1992); Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock's Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology (1991); and Samuel Popkin's The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns (1991). This empirical line of research was bolstered by rational choice theoretic explanations of why and how voters effectively use information short cuts. This has become a huge literature, but see especially McKelvey and Ordershook, "Information, Electoral Equilibria, and the Democratic Ideal" (1986), and more recently Lupia and McCubbins, The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know? (1998).

startling claim that even a moderately attentive, thoughtful, and knowledgeable citizenry is not a necessary condition for the proper functioning of a democratic regime.[17]

These minimalist claims come in two major varieties. The first group appeals to the logic of Condorcet's Jury Theorem (CJT),[18] claiming that the electorate can be "collectively" rational and informed even if individual voters are not. The second group points to the psychological efficiency of decision heuristics, claiming that individual voters can use "information shortcuts" to arrive at the same decisions that they would make if they were more informed. Ultimately, neither variety will prove sufficient to redeem a normatively satisfying picture of public opinion because they concede too much to Zaller from the start.

Put informally, the logic of the CJT is that even if individual voters are uninformed and make a lot of mistakes, in the aggregate these mistakes will tend to cancel out. Thus, all we need is for voters to have *some* information — that on average they can do better than if they picked strictly at random.[19] If their votes are

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[17] For example, Lupia and McCubbins write: "In this book, we concede that people lack political information. We also concede that this ignorance can allow people of 'sinister designs' to deceive and betray the uninformed. We do not concede, however, that democracy must succumb to these threats…Reasoned choice does not require full information…People choose to disregard most of the information they could acquire and base virtually all of their decisions on remarkably little information." (1998: pp. 1-2).

[18] Condorcet, Essai sur l'application de l'analyse a la probabilite des decisions rendues a la pluralite des voix (1785).

[19] In this context I assume that on average any argument or piece of information is not perverse — that its expected value ex ante is not to decrease our chances of getting things right. However, I am recently reminded of the dictum that "a little learning can be a dangerous thing."

even only slightly better than random, with sufficient numbers, the group's decision will converge toward the right answer. In the case of the numbers involved in the national electorate, this "slightly better than random" can be slight indeed. I think that this line of argument is important and helpful in attempting to defeat the problem of complexity. However, for several reasons, it can take deliberative democratic theory only so far. First, there is good reason to believe that under fairly common circumstances the formal conditions necessary for convergence are not met;[20] second, the argument presumes that there is a uniquely correct answer to be found prior to and independent of deliberation.[21] While I do think that there is an

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Consider, for example, a recent debate in the Chicago City Council during which an alderman claimed that the Supreme Court's rulings protecting some pornography as speech showed that the city was obligated to go ahead with a proposal to rename a portion of Michigan Ave., "Honorary Hugh Heffner Way". I do not know whether the alderman was being cynical or stupid.

[20]For example the CJT assumes that errors are uncorrelated. There is a large literature on this in formal methods. For fairly optimistic findings on the closely related issue of the efficiency of various voting rules as aggregating devices, see Chapter 2 above. In a similar vein, empirical research suggests that when matters of fact are at stake, group decision making tends to behave roughly as the CJT would predict. (e.g., Fishkin and Luskin, Bringing Deliberation to the Democratic Dialogue (1999)). This finding is significant for theorists like Habermas who want to make analogous claims for collective normative inquiry as well. The problem, of course, is specifying what the "right answer" is ahead of time. However, if one is a cognitivist (especially of the pragmatist variety) with respect to at least some matters of morals and politics, it is plausible to argue that the finding that deliberative cognition with respect to facts tends to behave as discourse theory predicts should lend some qualified support to the less directly verifiable claim that the same tends to be true with respect to at least some normative claims as well. For strategies to make such indirect inferences see Chapter 3 above.

[21]Habermas has been criticized from all quarters for defending "the one-right-answer thesis" which asserts that in order to make sense of our normative argumentation, we must presume that there is one right answer to the question at hand. Elsewhere I defend a modified version of the one-right-answer thesis, but in the present context it suffices to note that on Habermas's account, we need *not* (indeed cannot) presume that the right answer in some way subsists prior to and independent of our deliberations. Thus there is a limited sense in which our answers are constructed, and therefore are not fully amenable to the logic of the CJT. See Neblo (2005).

"epistemic" dimension[22] to democratic authority, CJT-type arguments ignore the creative, constructive, procedural, and justificatory roles of actual public deliberation.

To see this, consider Fishkin's "deliberative opinion poll". If we only cared strictly about the epistemic value of democratic deliberation, then such polling could serve as a substitute for full blown debate in the public sphere with virtually no loss (because statistical sampling could give us an arbitrarily high degree of confidence that adding numbers would not change the outcome). Yet even people (like myself) who think that there is great value in Fishkin's idea would concede that it does not capture all of what a theory of deliberative democracy is aiming for. [23]

Arguments that appeal to the efficiency of decision heuristics are similarly helpful but limited in redeeming a normatively satisfying picture of public opinion. By "decision heuristic" I mean any cognitive short-cut which allows a voter to form a relatively reliable judgment without full information: for example, if a voter is a life-long Republican and feels confident that her considered judgments on matters of policy are usually those supported by the Republican party, then she might reasonably vote for the Republican candidate in a race about which she has virtually no information. Political scientists have identified many such decision heuristics ranging from the obvious, such as partisan identification, to the odd but plausible case described by Samuel Popkin:

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[22] See Joshua Cohen, "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy" (1986), and David Estlund, "Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority" (1997).

[23] Note that the claim that the "right answer" does not pre-date deliberation is different from Zaller's claim that *individuals* do not have articulable, pre-existing preferences (need, wants, interests). These have opposing implications for deliberative democratic theory.

> When President Ford tried to eat an unshucked tamale, he committed a *faux pas* far more serious than spilling mustard on his tie…To Hispanic voters in Texas, he betrayed an unfamiliarity with their food which suggested a lack of familiarity with their whole culture. Further, tamales were a way of projecting from the personal to the political, of assuming that personal familiarity with a culture and the acceptability of a candidate's policies to a group were linked." (Popkin, 1991: p. 111)[24]

Similarly, when, during a campaign stop at a grocery store, President Bush marveled at check out scanners (they were introduced in 1974), people claimed that the incident demonstrated that he was "out of touch" with the lives and concerns of regular people.[25] Whatever one's view on the reasonableness of such inferences, recourse to decision heuristics is often beneficial, and to some extent unavoidable.[26] Nevertheless, there are at least three major reasons why a deliberative democrat ought not to lean on them too heavily. The first two arguments are practical, while the third is conceptual.

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[24] Quoted in Bartels (1996).

[25] As it turns out this accusation was apparently unfair. Bush's handlers claimed that the comment was about a new generation that could read the code even if the tag was torn and partially missing. If true, however, this only reinforces the point that I am making about the unreliability of heuristics.

[26] As we will see below, though we might have a rough, intuitive sense of what it would mean to have "full information" (or at least more informed versus less informed) a satisfactory definition, if it is well defined at all, would involve the notion of a limit, and hence every decision we make will involve heuristics in at least a minimal sense. Of course, this dilutes the meaningfulness of the term.

First, there is little hard evidence that in real electoral settings decision heuristics work the way they are purported to do. There is evidence that voters use *putative* decision heuristics, but the crucial question is whether by using the heuristics they efficiently approximate how they would have voted under "full information" in a real electoral setting.[27] Indeed, the best study to date that looks into this question finds substantial deviations from the outcome predicted under "full information". [28]

Even if there were such evidence, the most plausible and probably most common class of decision heuristics, "elite endorsements" (e.g., party endorsement, The American Banking Association, the local newspaper, etc.), reverse the flow of what Habermas calls "the circulation of communicative power".[29] He writes: "The results of deliberative politics can be understood as communicatively generated power that competes, on the one hand, with the social power of actors with credible threats and, on the other hand, with the administrative power of officeholders." (Habermas, 1996: p. 341) If we rely primarily on elites to help us choose our legislative elites, then representative democracy becomes, in a sense, representative all the way down. If issues, frames, and actors merely "appear before" the public, rather than "emerging from" the public, then communicative power can no longer serve as a check against

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[27] In section IV below, I try to problematize the idea of "full information" as used in this literature. For evidence that many citizens want to and can learn from deliberative interaction see Neblo et. al. (2010), Burden et. al. (2007), Lazer et. al. (2009), and Esterling et. al. (2011). For an argument as to why such procedures are nonetheless limited, see Neblo (2011).

[28] Bartels (1996) makes this case forcefully. He then goes on to estimate the electoral consequences of information differentials.

[29] Jürgen Habermas (1996a).

social and administrative power as envisioned in Habermas's model mentioned above.[30] We are right back in Zaller's elite-dominated world.

If factions of elite interests happen to conform to factions of mass interests,[31] the elite driven model may be an adequate base for some theories of liberal democracy, but it is fatal to the kind of deliberative theory defended by Habermas and others.[32] Even in his earliest writings Habermas criticized the benevolent-strategic logic that he saw as coming to dominate elite campaigns to influence public opinion:

> [T]he offers made for the purposes of advertising psychology, no matter how much they may be objectively to the point, in such a case are not mediated by the will and consciousness but by the subconscious of the subjects. This kind of consensus formation would be more suited to the enlightened absolutism of an authoritarian welfare regime than to a democratic constitutional state committed to social rights: everything for the people, nothing by the people — not

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[30] Habermas is frustratingly vague on what exactly distinguishes "emerging from" the public from merely "appearing before" the public. It is probably best summarized as the distinction between being authentically generated out of the grass roots, rather than from elites, but in practice this distinction, though crucial, can be quite tricky. See section 8.3.3 of Habermas (1996a). In another context I will attempt to operationalize (or at least provide loose criteria for) this distinction. See also Bachtiger et. al. (2009) for a discussion of deliberative quality more generally.

[31] I take this to be roughly the view of the Yale School pluralists such as Dahl in Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City (1961) (though it is not clear that this model matches Dahl's current normative views. See Democracy and Its Critics (1989)) as well as E. E. Schattschneider in The Semisovereign Public: A Realist's View of Democracy in America (1960). This is also Zaller's view in The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion (1992), his odd but interesting "parable of purple land" in chapter 12. I will come back to this class of arguments below.

[32] Which, of course, does not mean that it is not true, and therefore that deliberative democracy is not viable under forseeably favorable conditions. For now, I am only trying to sketch out the logical and normative relationships between theory and empirical research.

> accidentally a statement stemming from the Prussia of Frederick II (Habermas, 1989 [1962]: p. 219)[33]

Note, however, that the preceding discussion presumes that there is some relatively unproblematic standard against which we can measure what is in a voter's interest. The whole notion of a heuristic presupposes a correct answer pre-dating and independent of deliberation. It ignores the constitutive and legitimating roles for deliberation in a procedural theory of democracy.[34] This omission becomes especially apparent when we look at how "full information" and "correct voting" get operationalized in the empirical literature.

To his credit, Bartels (1996) at least proposes a way to measure "full information". Previous studies had largely skirted the issue and assumed that voters used heuristics efficiently. The mathematical implementation of his approach is fairly complex, but the guiding intuition behind it is simple: in a large sample of potential voters, match groups of people according to several characteristics known to influence vote choice, but exclude the subject's level of political knowledge. Then within those groups, the estimate of what a less-than-fully-informed voter *would* choose under full information is the choice made by the best informed subjects within that group.[35] The gap between the observed choices and those predicted forms an

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[33] Habermas (1989 [1962]).

[34] Again, this does not rule out an epistemic dimension to democratic procedure operating alongside these other dimensions, nor does it preclude us from making reasonable though defensible predictions about where deliberation might take us on a particular issue.

[35] This is not exactly how Bartels's probit model operates, but my simplification seems preferable to a long technical digression.

estimate of the consequences of political ignorance. Bartels finds that those consequences are non-negligible.[36]

Even if one were to argue that those consequences were a modest price to pay for the benefit of using simple heuristics, Bartels's findings are not really useful to a deliberative democrat. This is because his definition of full-information only captures a skewed portion of what a deliberative democrat is after in setting up a normative standard for what a voter would decide under suitably favorable conditions.

To date, this is an ubiquitous problem in applying the results from the empirical literature to questions in democratic theory. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1995) use an approach that is different from Bartels in technical matters, but it has a very similar logical and operational base. Lau and Redlawsk (1997) use a more direct approach by setting up an experiment with phony candidates and issue positions. Subjects make a choice first under conditions that are supposed to mimic the limited information environment of an election. Later subjects read a compact version of all the relevant facts and decide if they want to change their vote. If they do not, they are coded as having voted "correctly" the first time and "incorrectly" otherwise.

The problem with these studies is not just that they don't use a standard useful to deliberative democrats. After all, none of them were trying to create such a standard. There is a more subtle issue at stake. All three studies offer their operationalizations of "full information" in the spirit of avoiding controversial

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[36]I should also mention, as Bartels points out himself, that these results are probably a conservative estimate of lack of information effects because presidential elections tend to be much better publicized than any other matter on which citizens are likely to vote.

normative categories. In attempting to do so, however, they implicitly and unconsciously employ a normative standard that is highly suspect within democratic theory.

They all proceed from formulations of "full information" built on a kind of vulgar "liberal individualism as economic choice" that fails to capture any sense of what Elster has felicitously described as the difference between "the market and the forum". On the economistic model one need take account only of "the facts", and those only so far as they are likely to help you get what you want out of government. For example, Lupia and McCubbins (1998) go so far as to model democracy as a straightforward principal-agent problem.[37] This economistic standard is far from the obvious and neutral choice that the authors implicitly claim. For example, Lau and Redlawsk write:

> Who is to decide what is 'correct'? We are reluctant to define what is 'good' for everyone: even if we were not, we doubt that many people would be willing to accept our judgments. Instead, we begin by defining 'correctness' based on the values and beliefs of the individual voter, not on any particular ideology that presumes the values and preferences which ought to be held by members of different social classes, for instance, and not on any larger social goods or universal values. (1997: p. 586)

[37] See their interesting if ruthlessly reductive analysis in The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know? (1998). Recent research in network theory lends some credence to the idea that cue taking can be quite powerful in building citizen competence. See Lazer et. al. (2008).

I am not claiming that Lau and Redlawsk's standard is uninteresting. Rather, I claim that in order for their empirical results to be relevant to their discussion of democratic theory, they must justify their standard beyond an unsupported allusion to its neutrality.[38] It is not a standard that deliberative democrats, among others, can use.

This is because on the deliberative model of the forum, in addition to "the facts" one needs to attend to the *reasons* offered for a given claim in the context of public deliberation. What is more, the category of "the facts" needs to be enlarged to include the facts as understood and interpreted by one's deliberative partners, as well as their needs, wants, interests and beliefs. Let me be clear that I take it as an open question as to whether the economistic model can accommodate the expanded range of considerations required by deliberative theory: critics of rational choice theory have persistently and mistakenly claimed that it precludes other-regarding preferences and other such considerations.

Nevertheless, at least a few points of emphasis are clearly different. First, whereas on the market model other-regarding considerations are elective and only contingently relevant, on the deliberative model they are obligatory and essentially relevant. The rational choice approach claims to be positive rather than normative.[39]

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[38]Bartels (1996) is more careful to keep his claim descriptive (i.e., what would happen under counter-factual conditions), but presumably the description is interesting because it is relevant to our assessment of how well our democratic system is functioning. This is clearly the context in which the study is introduced.

[39]Though even this characterization is misleading. Rational choice theory *is* normative in the sense of issuing in standards for correct strategic reasoning. It is not, at least straightforwardly, normative in the sense of moral norms. Nevertheless, this point raises an interesting issue with respect to the tenability of RCT's bifurcation of the normative and non-normative. See Putnam (1995) and

Second, even when deliberation is explicitly a part of the picture, there may still be a difference between decision within a group on the one hand, and a group-decision on the other. Or, perhaps the distinction could be best expressed as the difference between "assenting" to a proposition (as in Habermas) versus expressing one's "preference" for a given state of the world relative to others (as in economic models).[40]

Finally, regardless of whether an economic model could, in principle, expand to accommodate the considerations we have been discussing, it is quite clear that nothing in the empirical or formal literature even vaguely takes them into account.[41]

Larmore (1996). For an example of the lengths that RC theorists will go to putatively avoid involvement with normative matters, see Lupia and McCubbins gratuitous Bethamite-behaviorism (1998).

[40]This may seem like excessive parsing of terms, but I have reason to believe that the difference can be important. Above, I presented results from a deliberation experiment. In addition to pre-testing and post-testing subjects as individuals, I asked each deliberative group to come to a group decision. The outcomes were not the same as what would have happened had group members "voted" as they did on their post-tests. No doubt some of this discrepancy is attributable to social conformity or what Elster has called "the civilizing force of hypocrisy". However, in many instances group members explicitly said that they would support the group's decision despite the fact that it conflicted with their privately held beliefs and preferences. They did so in terms that I do not think that it is tendentious to interpret as a folk-formulation of "political liberalism" or "public reason" as used by democratic theorists.

[41]For example, in his study using National Election Study (NES) data, Bartels uses the interviewer's summary evaluation of the respondent's level of political information. As meager as this measure may seem, from a statistical point of view it performs about as well as more elaborate scales that ask questions such as: "what governmental position does Al Gore currently hold?" (About ten to fifteen percent of the voting age public cannot place Al Gore as the Vice President, and less than 50% can name their congressman.) There are several problems with the way that Bartels infers what would happen in an election if the public were "fully informed". Consider, for example, that the standard of "full information" is population dependant in that an amount of information slightly higher than that held by those whose knowledge was rated as "very high" is defined as "full". But if the American public is woefully ill-informed, it is at least misleading simply to define five percent over the median of the top ten percent in the sample as "fully informed". If we were to use a similar procedure to specify "full knowledge of mathematics" I suspect that the result would not take us much past algebra. Or if we were to conduct a large-scale political education campaign, what now counts as full information might turn out to be only "average".

None of the proposed standards are at all a reasonable proxy for the kind of crucial considerations that emerge in the reason giving and empathic role-taking central to the distinctiveness of discourse theory. As I argued above, "the facts" are quite narrowly construed.

None of this is to say that I could construct a measure that avoids all such problems, but rather: 1) that using the term "full information" makes the constructs sound much less ambiguous, controversial, and incomplete than they really are; 2) that such research does not give us a normatively relevant fix on the extent and consequences of the public's state of ignorance; and 3) as a consequence, for a deliberative democrat, there is still no satisfactory response to Zaller's grim diagnosis of the nature and origin of public opinion.

IV.4 The On-Line Model Versus Memory-Salience Models[42]

Rather than trying to show that the ignorance of the public doesn't really matter, I question whether the public is as ignorant and unresponsive as the social scientific evidence to date makes them seem. In particular, I deny that the methods used to establish voter ignorance adequately operationalize most of what political theorists are really interested in.

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[42] Memory-Salience Model is my own term. There is a disciplinary difference between political science and psychology in designating such models, and to complicate matters further, Zaller gives his model a third name, the Receive-Accept-Sample or RAS model. For our present purposes they can all be lumped together without loss. Therefore I just decided on a name that I thought conveyed the main idea well.

The standard method is to interview voters after an election, and ask who they voted for and why they voted the way that they did. This may seem like a very reasonable way to proceed. However, developments in cognitive psychology[43] suggest that it may not be so reasonable after all. The "On-Line Model" of judgment represents the process of how we typically come to an assessment of someone or something as follows: we are bombarded with so much information during the course of our daily lives that when we receive a piece of information, say that Candidate X is pro-life, we adjust our running assessment of Candidate X consistent with our stand on abortion, and then promptly forget why we have made the adjustment. This method economizes on our cognitive resources. But note that if this picture is correct, then the typical voter may have received dozens of such messages and formed a reasonable and reliable assessment of Candidate X given his or her political beliefs, *and yet he or she will appear to be thoroughly uninformed after the fact.*

Thus, for democratic theory, the OLM represents a crucial alternative to Memory-Salience Models. Zaller himself admits that, "If there is a threat to my simplified top-of-the-head Response Axiom, it comes from recent psychological studies of 'on-line' information processing."[44] Indeed, experimental results strikingly favor the OLM over alternative explanations.[45] Once we control for the information

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[43]Hastie and Pennington, "Notes on the Distinction Between Memory-Based Versus On-Line Judgments" (1989). See Neblo (2003) on the role of emotion in deliberative information processing.

[44]Though he goes on to dismiss the OLM for a lack of fit with "real" data.

[45]Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau, "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation" (1997).

that subjects have received but forgotten, what they can actually recall at the time of their vote has no bearing on their choice, while a summary of the forgotten information powerfully predicts their choice.

However, experimental control problems have blocked efforts to test the model in a real electoral setting. This is very problematic because advocates of the memory based model quite plausibly claim that the cognitive mechanism used to assess candidates in the highly artificial experimental setting differs from that used in the extended and stochastic information environment of a real campaign. They claim that until advocates of the OLM can show on-line processing in a real campaign, there are insufficient grounds to give up Zaller's model which can account for real political phenomena quite well. Since both proponents and critics have suggested that there is no practical way to test the OLM in a real election, the debate over this scientifically and normatively important question has stalled. Advocates claim that such strong experimental evidence is enough, while critics of the OLM simply disagree.

The study reported on in this section was designed to test the OLM against the Memory-Salience Model in a real electoral setting, and over the time span of a real campaign. It follows Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau (1997) in structure except at a few key points detailed below. Though I sacrifice some "internal" validity relative to their fully experimental studies, the trade-off in "external" validity (or generalizability) is well worth the price. The two studies are complementary in the sense that the weaknesses of the one are the strengths of the other and vice versa. Thus, if the results of my study are congruent with theirs, then jointly they would

represent a very strong case against Zaller and in support of a more promising picture of citizen competence.

My study overcomes, at least partially, the two most serious obstacles to testing the theory in an open system. First, real electoral settings cannot control for candidates' issue profiles, and thus for the role of partisan cues in signaling voters on how to vote "correctly."[46] What is needed is for the same set of voters to respond to two races: one in which the partisan cues are clear, and the other in which they are unclear. I take advantage of a natural experiment occurring in the 1998 Illinois midterm election. In that election, the Senate race pitted Carol Moseley Braun (D), one of the most liberal members of the Senate, against Peter Fitzgerald (R), one of the most conservative candidates standing for national office, while the race for Governor had George Ryan (R), a pragmatic moderate,[47] running against Glenn Poshard (D), a fiery populist who was perceived to be to the right of Ryan on several issues.[48]

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[46]It may seem peculiar that I am reverting to the traditional account of "correct" voting after arguing above that it is insufficient for the purposes of the deliberative democrat. In this section, though, I am only concerned to establish that the cognitive process used by citizens is On-Line. For this purpose the old standard will do. Since the goal, for the time being, is only to render the deliberative model plausible in the face of Zaller's critique, I can save the more demanding task for another setting. Deliberation experiments are *extremely* resource intensive, and doing them in a real electoral setting, essential to the point of this chapter, can require hundreds of thousands of dollars. To my knowledge, Fishkin is the only scholar to have raised the money and attempted something on this scale. I have some idea for how to improve on (or add to) Fishkin, and to cut costs dramatically, but they are well beyond the scope of this paper.

[47]Ryan's previous record was somewhat more conservative than this designation might suggest, however, his embrace of Democrats such as Richard Daley and Jesse White, as well as many policy positions that he has staked out since taking office (e.g., suspending death sentences and pushing for gun control provisions), I think, make the label a fair description.

[48]For example, Poshard took an (arguably) Democratically atypical position on the following issues: abortion, gun control, veteran preferences, gay rights, term limits, NAFTA, and funding for a third major airport for the Chicago area.

Comparing these two races will give me a lot of leverage in separating out voters' on-line responsiveness to issues versus merely relying on partisan cues.

It is also very difficult to control for the extra-experimental information to which subjects have been exposed. The whole premise of the OLM is that subjects cannot reliably report what they have actually processed, and even if they could we would be, *ipso facto,* back in the realm of Memory-Salience models. I use a memory prompting technique (described below) to get around this problem.

I want to be clear that I am not claiming that the results reported on below count toward establishing that the American electorate adequately approximates Habermas's (or anyone else's) standards for a legitimate and functioning deliberative democratic regime. However, I do want to expose the error of those who claim that the American electorate falls so absurdly short of any meaningful deliberative democratic prerequisites that it renders such theories hopelessly and perversely utopian; their key piece of evidence is not up to that task. Once we have disposed of this dismissive presumption, we can get down to the task of assessing when and why the public sphere does and does not serve the functions assigned to it in democratic theory.

Approximately five weeks preceding the 1998 mid-term election I surveyed a non-random sample of 279 Illinois residents eligible to vote in that election. Fifty-four percent of the subjects were male, 84% were white, and 62% had a college

degree. Party Identification was somewhat skewed toward the Democrats[49] with 38%, Republicans 30%, and 32% calling themselves Independents.

The study was a two panel design with the first survey administered between one and five weeks before the election. The second survey was administered from one to ten days after the election. A total of 214 subjects completed both portions of the survey, yielding a panel attrition rate of 23%. The survey contained the following sub-sections.

Part 1(a): Political Beliefs and Preferences. Subjects were asked to participate in "The 1998 Illinois Politics Survey", an accurate but purposefully vague description of their task. It seems quite unlikely that subjects would figure out the intent of the survey in a way that could affect results.[50] Subjects responded to a series of twenty-six questions asking them: "How would the following attributes or policy positions make you feel toward a political candidate?" Each policy or attribute represented an item that would appear on the "Campaign Fact Sheet" described below. Subjects rated each policy or attribute (e.g., "A candidate who wants to cut the capital gains tax" or "A candidate who is a woman") on a five level scale from "Very Negative" to "Very Positive". In addition, for each item they were asked to "indicate whether you think that the attribute or policy is more likely to be

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[49]The sample drew heavily from Cook County which is primarily Democratic, so this skew is not unexpected.

[50]However, many subjects reported that filling out the survey made them "realize how uninformed they were". Obviously I had to wait until after the second panel to reveal that the premise of the study is that they were better informed (or at least more responsive to information) than they think they are. It is possible that feelings of ignorance drove some of the panel attrition, but I have no evidence either way on this question.

characteristic of a Democrat, a Republican, or Neither/Don't Know." Eliciting this last piece of information served three purposes: first, it allowed me to estimate the perceived stereotypicality of the four candidates involved in the study; second, the data are useful in assessing the political knowledge and sophistication of respondents; and finally, it provides a way to assess the extent to which subjects project policies and characteristics which they favor onto the party and candidates that they favor (i.e., it allows me to test the alternative hypothesis that a subject's vote choice causes his or her perception of issues, rather than vice versa).

Part 1(b): Candidate Attitude Pre-Test. This is the first portion of the survey to depart from Lodge et. al.'s study. Since Lodge et. al. were not dealing with real candidates, there was no question of what information or attitudes that subjects might have of candidates before entering the study. As the first step in controlling for these effects, I asked subjects if they had voted in the most recent primary election, and if so, for whom. For each race I asked "If the election for [Governor/Senator] between Democrat [Glenn Poshard/Carol Mosley-Braun] and Republican [George Ryan/Peter Fitzgerald] were held today, for whom would you vote?" I then asked how "confident" they felt in that choice.[51] Finally, for each candidate subjects were asked first "What policies or characteristics of [Candidate X] do you like?" followed by those that they disliked. After each question respondents were asked to "list as many as you can think of."

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[51]The confidence question offered four choices: not confident, somewhat confident, confident, and very confident. If subjects answered "Neither" or "Don't Know", the follow-up asked if they "leaned slightly" either way or, neither. When combined, the two questions yield an 11 point scale.

Part 1(c): Attitude Survey. Next came a battery of questions asking for standard demographic information, party identification, ideological leanings, subjects' interest in politics and sense of efficacy, and whether they intended to vote in the upcoming election.[52] The second page of this section started with a quick test of their knowledge of contemporary political figures, followed by questions about their media usage habits, and finally, whether they had any litmus-test issues.[53] Obviously this stage was important in gathering subject information, but it also functioned as a "distracter task" to purge subjects' short-term memory of the previous evaluation questions so that they would not interfere with the information exposure/elicitation to come.

Part 1(d): Information Exposure/Elicitation (Campaign Fact Sheet). At this point I split the sample, giving a random half of subjects a campaign fact sheet for the gubernatorial race while the other half got a fact sheet for the Senate race. Thus each half serves as the control group for the other on each respective race.[54] The fact sheet

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[52]Both the pretest and the posttest for this study contained questions included for the purposes of another study on attitudes about race politics in the U. S. I have omitted these items from the descriptions given here.

[53]The question read: "Are there any issues so important to you that you could not vote for a candidate who was on what you see as the wrong side of the issue, even if he or she belonged to your party and was on the "right" side of most other issues?" The following question tried to get at the same thing from the opposite direction: "I generally vote for the candidate from my party, even if his or her opponent is closer to me on a lot of the issues."

[54]I do not have a "global" control group for four reasons: 1) there is no way to get all the necessary data for a true, global control group, because if I only post-tested this group I would have to include the policy evaluation questions before or after eliciting their candidate choices which could induce priming in either direction relative to the experimental post-test; 2) using each half as a control for the other allows us to control for most plausible reactivity problems; 3) given the limited advantages to be gained by splitting the subjects further (for the reasons in [1 and 2] above) the reduction in statistical power is not warranted; and 4) I do have some data that can serve as a global

presented each candidate's party affiliation, personal information (including their education and career highlights), as well as their stand on twenty-four policy issues.[55] I based the format of the fact sheet on Lodge et. al., who in turn based theirs on a local newspaper's format.

Lodge et. al., included a within-subjects manipulation of the candidate fact sheet in their study with the Republican candidate taking consistently Republican policy positions, whereas the Democratic candidate "issue trespassed" on a number of policy questions. Obviously I cannot replicate this condition while dealing with real candidates, but in effect, I have a between-subjects manipulation that does the same thing,[56] because those subjects getting the Senate race fact sheet had a much clearer choice with respect to partisan cueing (Mosley-Braun v. Fitzgerald) than those who vetted the fact sheet for the gubernatorial race (Poshard v. Ryan).

At this point I made another departure from Lodge et. al.: rather than asking subjects merely to read the fact sheet, I had them: "Underline all of the items that you think that you have probably heard about before, either from the newspaper, campaign ads, talking with friends, or other sources." This served two functions.

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quasi-control. Some subjects did fill out only the post-test (and thus I do not have their policy judgments). They do not differ from the main group on any criteria available from the post-test alone.

[55] I used the wonderful public interest web-site "Project Vote Smart" as my primary source of information about candidates' policy positions. I also cross checked the fact sheets with the candidate's campaign offices. I tired to be very inclusive (within space constraints) in choosing issues. After closely watching media coverage of the campaigns, I think that for most subjects I captured almost all of the considerations to which they were likely to have been exposed.

[56] In fact, I would suggest that my manipulation has some advantages over Lodge et. al. because the manipulation is at the level of the race, rather than the candidate. After all, in voting studies we are primarily interested in vote choice, and only candidate evaluation indirectly.

First, I hypothesize that subjects' ability to "recognize" information to which they have previously been exposed is much greater than their ability to "recall" it without the fact sheet as a prompt.[57] By using the results of a parallel experiment described in the appendix, I am able to estimate the false-positive and false-negative rates for the recognition task in this experiment.

Combining those error rates with the items that subjects' underlined, I am able to get a reasonable estimate of what information subjects were exposed to before being surveyed. Crucially, those estimates are largely[58] *independent* of the subjects' top-of-the-head reports of what they liked and disliked about each candidate (from *Part 1(b)* above).[59] In addition, we know that all of the subjects that read one fact sheet or the other were exposed to all of the items on that sheet, whereas their exposure to the items from the other campaign will vary with their attention to politics, political sophistication, and media usage habits.

Directly after going through the candidate fact sheet, I asked a series of questions designed to tap exposure to attack ads. For each candidate I asked two sets of questions based on the negative ads run by their opponent. For example:

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[57] Lodge, McGraw and Stroh, "An Impression Driven Model of Candidate Evaluation" (1989) suggests that the difference between recall and recognition as predictors of candidate choice is small. However, I am using the distinction for a different purpose in this context.

[58] Presumably they are not fully independent because we would expect that what subjects could recall would typically be a sub-set of what they could recognize. However all other tests of the OLM are in the same situation in that "recall" will typically be a sub-set of "message" as defined by Lodge et. al.

[59] It is likely that some subjects could have recalled information about candidates which they neither liked nor disliked, but precisely because they are neutral about those items, I can safely ignore them.

> During the campaign for Governor of Illinois, Glen Poshard (D) has criticized his opponent George Ryan (R) for recent scandals in the Secretary of State's Office.
> Were you previously aware of this criticism? Yes ___ No ___
>
> How does the criticism make you feel toward Ryan?
> Very Negatively __ Somewhat Negatively __ No Difference __ Don't Know __

Lodge et. al. did not include such questions. However, it should be obvious that they are necessary for a real campaign, and that there was no way to incorporate them into Part 1(a) without giving away part of the purpose of the experiment.

Part 2: Delay. After completing all of Part 1 Lodge et. al. randomly assigned subjects to a call-back delay of one to thirty one days. Since I had a fixed election day to contend with, I simply recorded the lag between the pre-election and post-election survey dates and used that quantity instead. While these dates were not assigned using a randomizing device I can think of no pattern at work likely to affect the results.

Part 3: Post-Election Survey. After the election I attempted to contact each subject for the second time. As noted above, I was unable to obtain post-election data from a little less than a quarter of the people who filled out the pre-election survey. The post-election survey asked subjects if they had voted in each race, and if so, for whom they voted, and how confident they felt in their vote choice. If they had not voted in that race, the survey asked why they had not, and for whom they would have voted (if applicable), and how confident they felt in that choice. Finally, for each candidate subjects were asked first "What policies or characteristics of [Candidate X]

do you like?" followed by those that they disliked. After each question respondents were asked to "list as many as you can think of."

My data are roughly consistent with previous studies when it comes to how much of the information that subjects have been exposed to they can recall in their top-of-the-head reports. The modal number of recalls for each *race* was zero,[60] with 31% of my subjects unable to recall *any* policy positions (like or dislike) for *either* candidate. While this may seem high to political theorists, the subjects in my study actually did significantly better than people in Lodge et. al.'s data (54%), and those in the 1998 American National Election Study which Lodge et. al. use as their base comparison (44%).[61] In addition, the recall distribution in my data has a long right tail, with a few subjects remembering quite a bit relative to Lodge et. al..

While recall was low in general, there were some systematic differences driving who recalled what. The recall measures were formed by summing the likes and dislikes for all four candidates (Total Recall), or for the pair of candidates in each race (Senate Recall and Governor Recall). The subject's level of general political

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[60] I tried to be very generous when coding responses. However, mere affective expressions like "X is a jerk" were not counted toward recall since they seem to be expressing precisely what the OLM predicts is available to voters. Also, a few people simply put down the candidate's party affiliation. I did not code this as a recall either since I control for party ID separately in the results presented below. Finally, I have used subject's evaluation of "A candidate who is a woman/African-American" in calculating recall effects whether or not subjects mentioned this as a recall. (I plan to run the analyses without doing so as well). However, I do not count race and gender in the raw tally of recalls unless specifically mentioned.

[61] This is true despite the fact that there was, on average, a larger time lag between the pre-test and post-test for my subjects relative to Lodge et. al. This result is probably due to the fact that a real campaign afforded my subjects more opportunity to refresh and reinforce their memory. The difference from the ANES data is probably driven by the somewhat higher average level of education in my sample and the greater publicity that Senate and gubernatorial races get versus House races.

knowledge was the strongest predictor by far. I constructed this scale from twelve factual knowledge questions plus the NES items that ask how often subjects "talk about politics" and "follow government". The internal reliability is very high with Θ = .90.[62] The time delay between pre-test and post-test was in the expected direction, but was not significant as in Lodge et. al. This result is not all that surprising because

Table IV.1 OLS Regression on "Total Recall"

$aR^2 = .358$	**Coefficient**	**Stand. Error**	**Stand. Coef.**	**P-Value (2T)**
Constant	6.894	1.544	.000	.000
Age	-.005	.027	-.010	.862
Pol. Know.	3.694	.341	.606	.000
Time Lag	-.023	.037	-.034	.545

their data show that most memory decay occurs very early, whereas the shortest delay for my subjects was eight days. In addition, it is certain that at least some of my subjects were exposed to information after the pretest. Lodge et. al. also found significant "Age" effects whereas my data were, again, in the expected direction but not statistically significant. Table IV.1 summarizes these results. Subjects were also somewhat more likely to recall information about the race for which they read the campaign facts sheet. This effect is a different operationalization of Lodge et. al.'s

[62] Theta is given by the formula $(N/(N-1))*(1-(1/\lambda))$ where λ equals the eigen value of the first principle component of the item correlation matrix. This is a generalization of Cronbach's coefficient alpha with the items weighted so as to maximize reliability. The factual items covered Illinois State government in addition to more commonly used questions in order to relate local knowledge to the race for governor.

"depth processing" manipulation and replicates their results, though more modestly. Table IV.2 presents the results from an independent samples t-test for each race.

Table IV.2 Independent Samples T-Tests on Recall by Treatment

Recall Means	Governor Group	Senate Group	P
Governor Race	3.09	2.56	.227
Senate Race	2.86	3.80	.055

Even if voters do not recall much, they may still at least be recalling the things that are most important to them. LBS found no such correlation, whereas I did find a significant correlation in the Senate race, but an insignificant correlation in the race for Governor.[63] Most of the significant effect in the Senate race was driven by voters' recollection of the candidate's stands on abortion (and women's issues more generally which I coded with abortion). Thus, with the exception of abortion, I think that it is still fair to say that in my data what is recalled is not primarily a function of the issue's importance to the voter.

Most citizens remember almost nothing about the issues in a campaign, but what they do remember correlates moderately with their vote choice. On these two points Memory-Salience models and the OLM agree. Where they disagree is on the conclusions that can be drawn from our points of agreement. From voter forgetfulness, Zaller and other advocates of the MSM infer that, for the most part,

[63] I computed "importance" by re-scaling each subject's policy response to range from –2 to 2 then taking the absolute value of each response and averaging over all the issues. I compared this score to the re-scaled average of absolute value of the recalled issues.

campaigns do not mean anything because so little of the information conveyed during the campaign is retained in the voters' memories. Partly from the correlation between recall and vote choice they conclude: a) that most voters do not have preferences in the strong sense, because their behavior seems to be driven by whatever happens to pop into their head at the time of choice;[64] and b) that recall is an intervening variable between exposure to information and vote choice.

In contrast the OLM posits a voter's "on-line tally" as the major mediator between campaign information and vote choice. We cannot observe a voter's on-line tally directly, but we do have a good estimate of what issue positions and candidate characteristics voters have been exposed to, as well as how each voter evaluates those positions and characteristics. With this information we can look at the match between each subject's vote choice and his or her evaluation of the issue positions and characteristics of the candidates.[65] For each voter-candidate pairing I constructed a Message Evaluation Index (MEI) by taking a weighted sum of the evaluation of the issue positions, candidate characteristics, newspaper endorsements, and "attack-ad accusations". I did the same sort of thing to form the Recall Evaluation Index (REI) — i.e., take the weighted sum of each voter's evaluation of any information they were able to recall about a given candidate. If a voter could not remember anything about a given candidate, the REI was set to the neutral point for that candidate. For each

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[64]Of course, as we saw above, the recall correlation is only a small part of his case for the "no real preferences" thesis.

[65]Here I am following LSB with some minor changes.

race, subtract the Republican candidate's MEI from the Democratic candidate's MEI to form their Message Differential (MD). Do the same to form their Recall Differential (RD). *Call voters "responsive" to campaign information to the extent that their Message Differential is significantly related to their vote choice, controlling for partisan identification and Recall Differential.*

Statistical analyses of my data lend strong support for the presence of on-line processing in a real electoral setting. Voters are highly "responsive" to campaign information *whether or not they can recall significant portions of the campaign's content.*

For each election I combined the vote choice and "confidence" follow-up in the following way: I coded voters at 1 if they were "very confident" in their vote for the Republican candidate, 2 if they were "confident", 3 "somewhat confident", 4 "not confident". If they did not express a preference for either or if they chose "don't know" I followed-up by asking whether they "leaned slightly toward" the Democratic candidate (7), or Republican candidate (5) or "neither" (6),[66] and on up to 11 if they were "very confident" in their vote for the Democratic candidate.

I then regressed this variable against Message Differential, Recall Differential, and Part ID, along with several interactions and control variables, for each race.

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[66]It is possible that some voters who chose "neither" on the follow-up question did so because they were so far to the left or the right that they could not even support the mainline candidate on their side of the ideological divide. In these cases, it is misleading to code them at the neutral point. To check for this possibility I extracted all subjects coded at "5, 6, and 7" and content analyzed their "likes" and "dislikes" as well as their "litmus test" issues. It would appear that the only candidate affected by this phenomenon was Glenn Poshard who was abandoned by some liberals who were willing to vote for Mosley-Braun.

In the Senate race, where partisan cues were clear,[67] Party ID was the most powerful predictor, with Message Differential a solid second, and Recall Differential significant but much weaker than the other two. In the race for Governor, where the partisan cues were less clear, Message Differential actually surpassed Party ID in significance, while Recall

Table IV.3 OLS Regression on "Governor Choice" N=214

aR^2 = .459	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**Std. Coef.**	**P (2T)**
Constant	4.101	.967	.000	.000
Age	.019	.012	.088	.116
Gender	-.325	.293	-.060	.269
Education	-.009	.108	-.005	.934
Race	.547	.404	.074	.177
P. Know.	-.040	.213	-.015	.851
Fact Sheet	.233	.285	.043	.415
Party ID	*.427*	*.166*	*.182*	*.011*
Recall Dif.	*.168*	*.071*	*.133*	*.019*
Message Dif.	*.050*	*.017*	*.258*	*.004*
MD x FS	*.067*	*.022*	*.243*	*.003*
MD x PK	*.027*	*.016*	*.155*	*.085*
PK x FS	.285	.309	.070	.356
MDxPKxFS	-.021	.022	-.088	.337

Dependant Variable Ranges From 1 (V. Conf. for Ryan (R)) to 11 (V. Conf. for Poshard (D))

Differential was solidly significant, but last again. This pattern of results is basically similar to LSB's except that there is less dramatic support for the hypothesis that in previous "real election" studies the connection between recall and vote choice was

[67] Descriptive statistics confirm the intuitive claim that the Senate race was more clearly partisan: the standard deviation for the Senate Message Differential is almost twice that of the Governor's MD, and the range is more than double. In addition the bi-variate correlation of Party ID with the Senate MD is higher than the MD for the race for Governor.

artifactual — i.e., that recall was acting as a proxy for the voter's unestimated on-line tally.

Table IV.4 OLS Regression on "Senate Choice" N=214

aR^2 = .497	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**Std. Coef.**	**P (2T)**
Constant	4.588	.932	.000	.000
Age	-.022	.011	-.009	.869
Gender	*.443*	*.257*	*.089*	*.086*
Education	-.019	.099	-.011	.851
Race	*.703*	*.356*	*.104*	*.051*
P. Know.	.117	.212	.047	.581
Fact Sheet	-.282	.267	-.057	.292
Party ID	*.532*	*.176*	*.246*	*.003*
Recall Dif.	*.110*	*.053*	*.133*	*.039*
Message Dif.	*.027*	*.012*	*.257*	*.025*
MD x FS	*.032*	*.013*	*.221*	*.011*
MD x PK	.007	.009	.078	.423
PK x FS	-.454	.289	-.137	.118
MDxPKxFS	-.007	.012	-.058	.545

Dependant Variable Ranges From 1 (V. Conf. for Fitzgerald (R)) to 11 (V.C. for Mosley-Braun (D))

Three corroborating results merit brief mention. First, in the Senate race, the strength of the MD/Vote relationship was considerably stronger among those who got the Senate campaign fact sheet, and vice versa for the gubernatorial race. This suggests that subjects were "responsive" to being exposed to the campaign fact sheets. Second, the MD/Vote relationship was stronger on the post-test as opposed to the pre-test. This suggests that voter's learned from the real campaigns after they participated in the pre-test (if they were political sophisticates).[68] Finally, I tracked

[68]On this point it would be really nice to have a true control group to determine whether participating in the study made subjects more attentive to the respective campaigns. If I could control for this, the pre/post result would constitute good evidence that campaigns do matter.

voters who said that they had "litmus test" issues to see whether recall was necessary for their vote choices to reflect their test. It was not necessary. For example, liberals who claimed that "gay rights" or "abortion/women's issues" was a litmus test for them abandoned Glenn Poshard at roughly the same rate, whether or not they were able to recall his position on those issues.

IV. 5 Conclusion

I have tried to prompt an engagement between political theory on the one hand, and empirical research into public opinion on the other. I argued that democratic theory cannot responsibly ignore empirical and formal research relevant to its claims and premises. In my view, now that deliberative democracy's theoretical elaboration is mature[69] its most urgent research questions center on adapting the theory to our current or forseeably favorable psychological, sociological, and institutional conditions. Given the problem that complexity poses for any "actually existing democracy" my OLM experiment represents a small but significant step toward adapting the deliberative theory that I prefer to the political conditions that I know best — namely, Habermas's discourse theory and the conditions of modern American democracy.[70]

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[69] This is not to deny that there are no theoretical problems left, nor that purely theoretical research is no longer fruitful.

[70] My future research on this topic will focus on the following four goals: first, develop empirical criteria to get a handle on Habermas's distinction between "emerging from" versus merely "appearing before" the public; second, develop theoretical criteria for how much and what kind of approximation to the normative model is adequate; third, explain how on-line responsiveness can be adapted to the needs of a deliberative model given that, by hypothesis, citizens cannot thematize their

In this chapter we have considered only how citizens process information through the filter of their own beliefs and values, without critically examining those beliefs and values. In the next chapter I turn a more critical eye on people's preferences by delving into the motivations behind politically charged attitudes.

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on-line judgments; and finally, develop empirical criteria to test Habermas's model of the circulation of power in society.

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