

PLSC 473: American Judicial Behavior

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Washington Program

Washington, D.C., is a city that offers a wide variety of academic, professional and cultural opportunities for undergraduates. From Capitol Hill to CNN and the Smithsonian, students have the chance to gain valuable on-the-job experience and work with professionals in their fields. The Penn State Washington Program gives students the opportunity to tap into all the resources the city has to offer.



Internships

Established in 1995, the Washington Program was started to give students a complete Washington experience, including internship placement and credit, housing, and special events and programs. Students from all areas of the University have participated in the Washington Program. Over the years, they have worked for organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, CNN, the Environmental Protection Agency, the office of Sen. Arlen Specter and the Organization of American States.

<http://comm.psu.edu/current/washington-program>

SCOTUS and Public Opinion

The Case *Against* Influence

- Institutional Factors (tenure, etc.)
- Constitutional Constraints
- Judicial Norms
- Demographic Differences
- Diffuse Signals

SCOTUS and Public Opinion

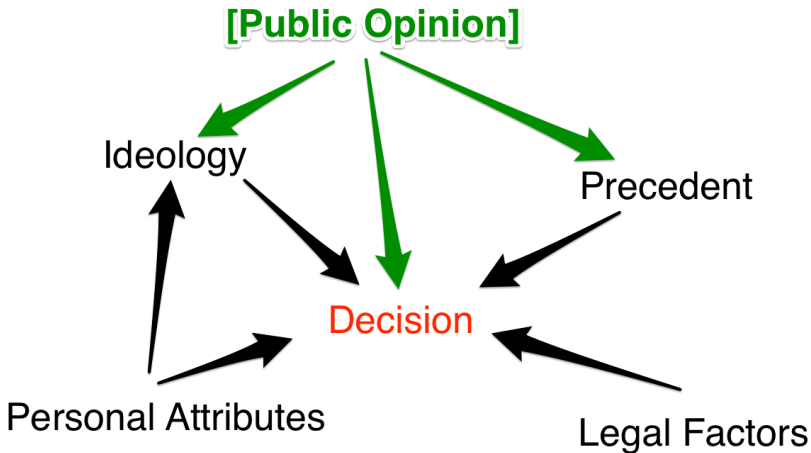
The Case *For* Influence

- Judges Are Human Too
- Enforcement / Implementation
- Institutional Legitimacy
- Indirect / Remote Constraints

SCOTUS and Public Opinion: Challenges

- Measurement
 - Who's Opinion?
 - On What?
 - When?
- Causal Path?
- “All Else Equal”

SCOTUS Decisions (So Far)



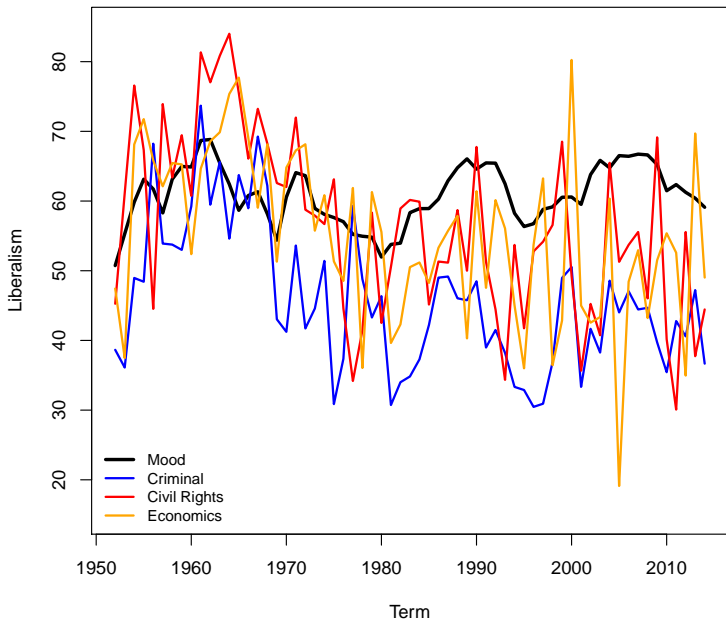
McGuire and Stimson (2004)

- Outcome: **Aggregate Court Liberalism**, by Term (1953-1996)
- Three Issue Areas
 - Criminal Procedure
 - Civil Rights and Liberties
 - Economics
- Only in Cases where the Court Reversed
- Predictor: Stimson's (1999) **Public Mood** indicator

Findings:

- *Positive* associations between “mood” and SCOTUS voting
 - Criminal Procedure = 0.71
 - Civil Rights and Liberties = 0.78
 - Economics = 0.52
- Also related to a “latent” Court Liberalism measure

Replicating McGuire and Stimson

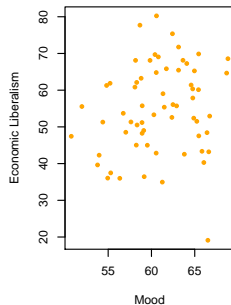
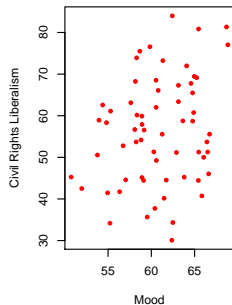
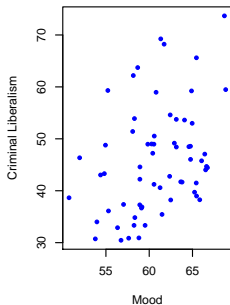


Replicating McGuire and Stimson

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	term	Mood	CrimLibPct	CLLibPct	EconLibPct
term	1.0000	0.1985	-0.5026	-0.5492	-0.4384
Mood	0.1985	1.0000	0.3471	0.2466	0.1578
CrimLibPct	-0.5026	0.3471	1.0000	0.4899	0.5627
CLLibPct	-0.5492	0.2466	0.4899	1.0000	0.4421
EconLibPct	-0.4384	0.1578	0.5627	0.4421	1.0000

Replicating McGuire and Stimson



Future Challenges

- *Control for other factors* (e.g., ideology)
- “Lags”?
- Issues in cases → issue-specific opinion?