

PLSC 473: American Judicial Behavior

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Public Opinion: Practicum

Questions:

- Is public opinion on civil rights issues associated with Supreme Court justices' votes?
- Does that association hold even after controlling for justices' ideological views?
- Is that association stronger among moderate justices, or among more ideologically extreme ones?
- Has the strength of that association changed over time?

The Policy Agendas Project



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Datasets & Codebooks

As of Spring, 2014, we have updated our website to include a revised 2014 Topics Codebook and subsequent updates to all datasets. These revisions increase alignment with the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) coding system. Dataset updates include new columns for corresponding CAP codes where appropriate. Archived versions and detailed summary information are available [here](#). We are presently working on further recoding of foreign affairs topics within the NYT Index dataset.

The major topics codebook and a complete list of the Policy Agendas datasets are listed below. Click on each dataset name to expand its description (including date range) as well as to download a .csv of current data and a .pdf codebook that documents included variables.

Except as noted, datasets and codebooks available on this site are © Policy Agendas Project 2013. These datasets are distributed free of charge, with attribution, for the educational and research communities. Policy Agendas Project topic codes and other Project generated variables are released under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial ShareAlike [License](#). For more information visit our [how to cite](#) page.

We are currently engaged in the collection and coding of additional observations for most of our datasets listed below. We continuously make improvements to our datasets and researchers should routinely check for updates. Email us at policyagendas@gmail.com with any questions. Recent changes are listed [here](#). Additional related datasets can be found [here](#).

<http://www.policyagendas.org/page/datasets-codebooks>

Topic-Specific Public Opinion

Major Topic Codes (click below to expand):

1. Macroeconomics	▼
2. Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	▼
3. Health	▼
4. Agriculture	▼
5. Labor and Employment	▼
6. Education	▼
7. Environment	▼
8. Energy	▼
9. Immigration	▼
10. Transportation	▼
12. Law, Crime, and Family Issues	▼
13. Social Welfare	▼
14. Community Development and Housing Issues	▼
15. Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	▼
16. Defense	▼
17. Space, Science, Technology and Communications	▼
18. Foreign Trade	▼
19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid	▼
20. Government Operations	▼
21. Public Lands and Water Management	▼

Topic-Specific Public Opinion

2. Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties

200: General (includes combinations of multiple subtopics)

Examples: Civil Rights Commission appropriations, civil rights violations, Civil Rights Act, Equal Rights amendments, equal employment opportunity laws, discrimination against women and minorities, appropriations for civil rights programs, civil rights enforcement, coverage of the civil rights act, employment discrimination involving several communities (age, gender, race, etc. in combination), taking private property, impact on private property rights, employment discrimination due to race, color, and religion, and fair housing initiatives and discrimination in housing.

201: Ethnic Minority and Racial Group Discrimination

Examples: minority set aside programs, minority contracting and business development, appointment of minorities to federal judgeships, school desegregation, minority discrimination by rental car agencies, FBI hiring and promotion of minorities, race based crimes, investigation of the Ku Klux Klan.

202: Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination

Examples: gender and sexual orientation discrimination in the military, social security inequities affecting women, employment barriers to women, female salary inequities, sex discrimination regulations, equal pay for women.

204: Age Discrimination

Examples: age discrimination in employment, mandatory retirement ages, age discrimination in selection of federal judges, EEOC problems in enforcing age discrimination laws, retirement age policies.

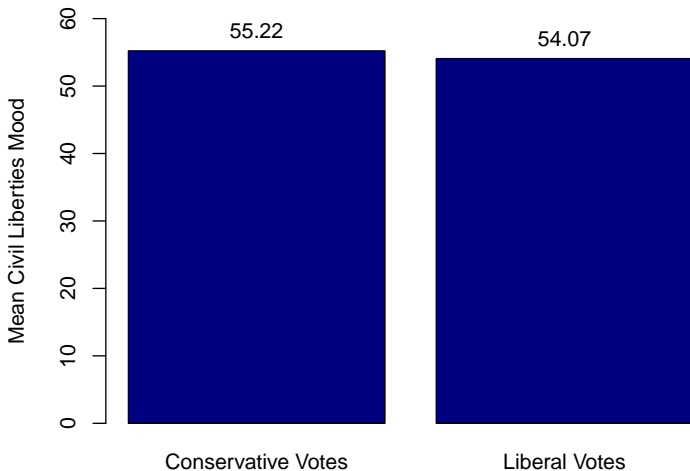
205: Handicap or Disease Discrimination

Examples: discrimination against the disabled, airline discrimination against blind people, employment of persons with disabilities, insurance discrimination of blind people, civil rights of institutionalized persons and the mentally retarded, travel problems of the handicapped, discrimination based on genetics or health conditions, Americans with Disabilities Act.

206: Voting Rights, Participation, and Related Issues

Examples: state discriminatory barriers to voting registration, banning literacy tests, Voting Rights Act and enforcement, free mailing of voter registration forms, lowering the voting age to

Mean Civil Rights Mood, by Vote Direction



Mood and Votes: Correlations

```
> # Correlation:  
>  
> with(CRMerged, cor(CRMood,LibVote,use="complete.obs"))  
[1] -0.1086556
```

```
> # t-test:  
>  
> with(CRMerged, t.test(CRMood~LibVote))
```

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: CRMood by LibVote  
t = 13.02, df = 13540, p-value < 2.2e-16  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
 0.971218 1.315474  
sample estimates:  
mean in group 0 mean in group 1  
    55.21607      54.07273
```

Mood and Votes: Regression

```
> Model <- with(CRMerged, lm(LibVote~ideo+CRMood))  
> summary(Model)
```

Call:

```
lm(formula = LibVote ~ ideo + CRMood)
```

Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-0.8040	-0.4415	0.2026	0.4358	0.6797

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.2624535	0.0478879	5.481	4.31e-08 ***
ideo	0.4746381	0.0128959	36.805	< 2e-16 ***
CRMood	0.0011191	0.0008232	1.359	0.174

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.4713 on 14006 degrees of freedom
(443 observations deleted due to missingness)

Multiple R-squared: 0.09895, Adjusted R-squared: 0.09882

F-statistic: 769.1 on 2 and 14006 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

Mood and Votes: Justice-Specific Correlations

```
# Create a "justice-level" data set:
```

```
JSmall <- ddply(CRMerged, .(JID,justiceName), summarize,  
  SCScore = mean(ideo,na.rm=TRUE),  
  MeanTerm = mean(term,na.rm=TRUE))
```

```
# Sort those data by Segal-Cover score:
```

```
JSmall <- JSmall[order(JSmall$JID),]
```

Mood and Votes: Justice-Specific Correlations

```
# Create a function that calculates the correlation:

func <- function(CRMerged)
{
  return(data.frame(Corr = cor(CRMerged$LibVote, CRMerged$CRMood,
                              use="complete.obs")))
}

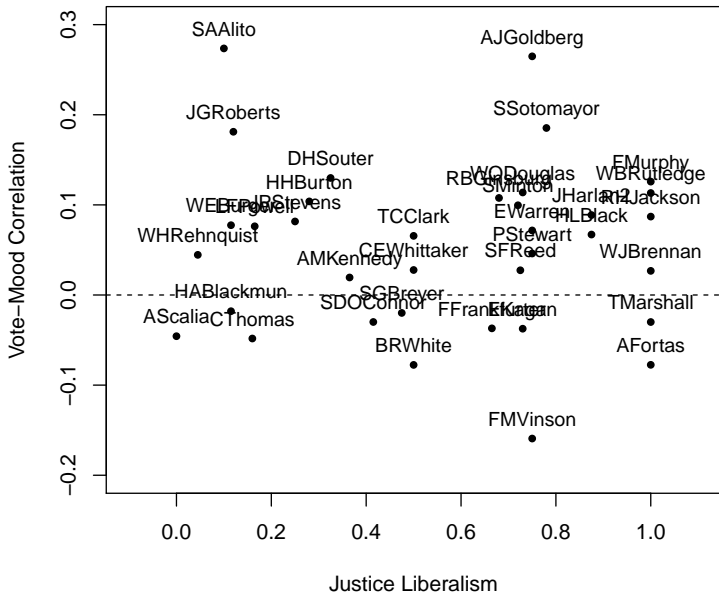
# This command basically says "split the
# data in into separate sets defined
# by JID, and calculate the correlation for each
# of them, then stash it in a file."

JCorrs <- ddply(CRMerged,"JID",func)

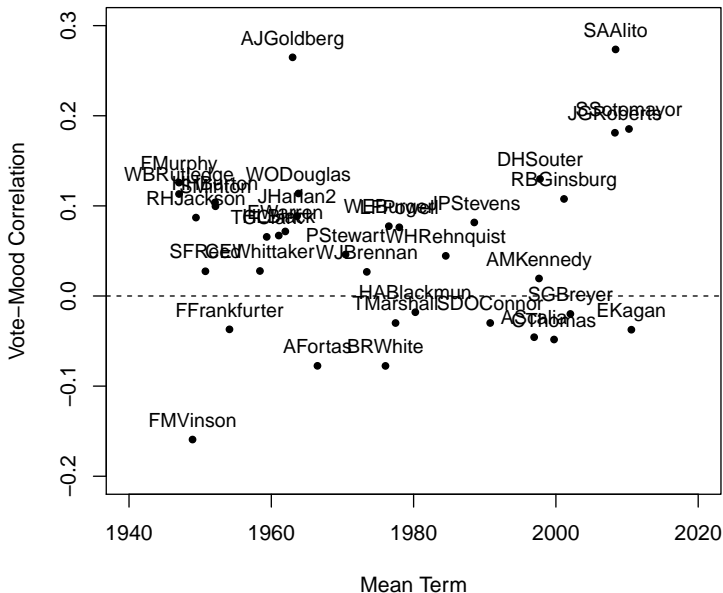
# Merge this with the JSmall data:

JMerged <- merge(JSmall,JCorrs,by=c("JID"))
```

Mood and Votes: Justice-Specific Correlations



Mood and Votes: Correlations By Term



Some Conclusions

Answers:

- There is a weak *negative* correlation between public mood on civil rights issues and the justices votes in cases involving civil rights claims.
- Once we hold constant / control for justices' ideologies, the relationship between public opinion and judicial voting becomes positive, but is still very small.
- While the patterns are not strong, it appears that more ideologically extreme justices are more likely to show a high correlation between public opinion and voting than are more moderate ones.
- In recent years, there appears to be a slight upward pattern in the association between justices' votes and public opinion, though once again the pattern is not very strong.