

# Adding Public Opinion to the Agendas Data

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## 1 Opinion and Agendas

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  - From Global to Specific

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- Our team is Frank and myself, as co-PI's and Elizabeth Coggins, as project assistant (with Mel Atkinson and others doing related agendas work).

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- With it, Jones and Baumgartner are able to demonstrate agenda representation, that the problems thought to be most important by the public get disproportionate attention from government.
- There is a major disjunction between the agendas project focus on attention and the public opinion literature, which tilts heavily toward the *direction* of public preferences, not their salience.

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- We know *that* people want government to act, but do not know *what* they want done. That requires a directional measure.
- Public policy mood is such a measure, tapping the left-right direction of public preferences.

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- So I will develop the concept and measurement of Mood and then Elizabeth will do the same for policy-specific moods.

# Public Opinion Data

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- We have all such questions about policy preferences, (about 8,000 of them). These are dated. And so when the same question is posed at different times, it gives us information about opinion change.
- That is our starting point.

# Concept

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- This is a common factor model of opinion. It holds that the specifics of opinion, answers to standard survey questions, are caused by a latent attitude toward a broad array of policy topics.
- Simply put, we assume that people choose the liberal response to a preference question *because* they are liberals (in general) or the conservative response *because* they are conservatives (in general).

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- But that solution will not work because our data do not have those desirable properties.

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  - A Mac version is in progress, but not yet ready for release.

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- It is estimated from all available (domestic) preference data, including some such as abortion and crime that are known to differ from the scope of government controversies.
- That global focus was its original intent.

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- If, for example, health care liberalism is as predictable from global mood as it would be from materials specific to the health care domain, then specifics are just noise around the signal of global ideology.
- To be provocative, I have taken this position from time to time, even though I knew that there is some real information in specific estimates.

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- And then the challenge is to develop public policy preference measures within each of the policy domains.
- That means employing the same measurement solution as in Mood, but restricting the input data to opinion about specific policy domains.
- Elizabeth will take over here and talk about how it is done and what results from it.