

# PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

*Daniela Beyer, Christian Breunig, and Marco Radojevic<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

On May 7, 1999, the German Bundestag passed the German Citizenship Act (Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz, StAG), marking a tremendous change in German citizenship policy. The law enables children born and raised in Germany to become German citizens regardless of their parents' descent, reduces residency requirement for naturalization to eight years, and encourages naturalization of long-settled migrants, in particular *Gastarbeiter* and their descendants (Triadafilopoulos, 2012). The key provision of the new citizenship act introduced radical changes to Germany's citizenship policy and turned a traditionally ethnic conception of nationhood into a more civic identity. It replaced the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (RuStAG) of 1913 which remained in place for nearly 87 years and survived the democratic Weimar Republic, the totalitarian Third Reich, as well as the after-war Bonn Republic.

We can witness similarly profound policy changes in other policy domains and countries. In the spring of 2010, the American president Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). This act is the biggest restructuring of the US health care system since the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. The most fundamental provision is the requirement for all Americans to hold qualifying health insurance, but the act also directed states to regulate insurance exchanges, expanded coverage of poor and uninsured children, and instituted research on the effectiveness of public health.

Both sweeping policy reforms present typical inquiries for scholarly work on punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) in public policy. Public policy often doesn't change for long periods of time because of institutional barriers and political inertia. Yet, from time to time radical large-scale changes and moments of considerable innovation occur. Most changes in German citizenship law, such as the regulatory changes on naturalization in 1977 or the reduction of the residency requirements in 1990, were incremental adjustments. Yet, this tranquility is occasionally ruptured as national policy-makers focus their attention on particular problems such as migration and citizenship, leading to sweeping policy reforms. Viewed over time public policy-making is characterized by a punctuated equilibrium.

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) introduced the concept of punctuated equilibrium to studies of public policy in their book *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. They borrowed the term from the paleontologists Eldredge and Gould's (1972) controversial model

of specification which is “characterized by *rapid* evolutionary events punctuating a history of stasis” (1972, p. 108). Simply put, punctuated equilibrium theory is a policy process model describing stability and change in large-scale policy-making patterns. It contains two distinct feedback cycles. Negative feedback is characterized by routine decision-making at the subsystem level. A small group of institutionally advantaged actors make marginal adjustments and maintain a dominant policy image. Positive feedback occurs when mass political attention focuses on a new or new dimension of a policy problem. In this case, policy change happens because new political actors and jurisdictions become involved. The challenge of PET is to identify systematic processes affecting both types of feedback through the study of issue dynamics across policy domains, countries, and time.

This chapter provides an overview of the theory and methods of punctuated equilibrium theory while drawing examples from European policy-making. Starting with decision-making’s individual level foundation underlying the PET model, it then focuses on how organizational and institutional features lead to punctuations in policy-making. We highlight how focusing events, policy ideas, and institutional venues interact and produce periods of stability interspersed with sudden policy changes over time. The chapter introduces recent methodological advances and illustrates how PET relates to the comparative study of policy agendas. The conclusion stresses that PET has evolved into a general model of policy-making across policy domains, historical contexts, and level of government.

### **Theoretical starting points and basic framework**

PET brings together an underlying individual decision-making and a macro-level policy-process model. In this section we discuss both in turns. As a microfoundation, PET assumes that political actors (either as individuals or organizations) are boundedly rational (Jones, 1999; Padgett, 1980; Simon, 1947). Bounded rationality holds that perfect information is not attainable and can only be processed serially by relying on environmental stimuli. In addition, actors have often multiple, at times conflicting goals and consequently pick the most salient for decision-making. Yet, cognitive limitations and the complexity of the environment, and the uncertainty about the problem-space and outcomes make decision-making challenging.

How individuals process information is a central aspect of PET’s decision-making logic. Decision-making is not so much impeded by insufficient supply of information but more by the scarcity of attention. If attention would not be the bottleneck of decision-making, individuals would be able to monitor their environment and engage in a deliberate and proportionate response to problems as they occur. Instead, individuals regularly make decisions across several issues by reducing information costs through routine problem-solving techniques that enables them to decide quickly and efficiently. The downside of these techniques is that people routinely fail to incorporate new and relevant information. Individuals process information disproportionately; they under-respond to some stimuli and over-respond to others. The two modes of information processing and its consequences for choice correspond to two distinct mechanisms of policy-making.

As a macro-level process model (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012, for an overview), punctuated equilibrium combines two phases: policy incrementalism and large-scale change. Incrementalism (Davis et al., 1966; Lindblom, 1959) was one of the earliest models of decision-making in political science. The basic idea is that policy-makers respond to multiple and complex demands by marginally adjusting existing policies through routine, procedurally driven, and mutually agreed upon decision-making. In budgeting, for example, incrementalists would expect that this year’s

budget will look like last year's plus minus some fair share. Instrumentalists argued that these gradual changes are risk-averse and reduce policy uncertainty.

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) picked up on this tendency toward stability in public policy in *Agendas and Instability* and proposed that three features in the policy-making process can account for it. First, institutions introduce a status quo bias in decision-making. Deliberative bodies, such as legislatures, present formal and informal hurdles for enacting new legislation or changing prevailing policies. Institutional barriers are also erected among different institutions in order to prevent policy change. Policy change therefore requires substantive efforts of cooperation and coordination. Second, the existences of a narrow and stable group of participants at the subsystem level also contribute to policy stability. These policy monopolies comprise of elected officials, bureaucrats, and interest groups who control a particular policy domain's legislative agenda. They aim at maintaining their privileged and beneficial position and therefore work toward marginal adjustments to the system. Third, this institutional arrangement is supported by a powerful idea. Because there is little disagreement on the policy problem at the subsystem level, political actors are able to create a stable and collectively shared understanding about the issue at hand. This policy image can shield the subsystem from new actors' intrusion and provides a template for routine and constrained policy change. Collectively these three features – institutions, policy monopolies, and policy images – create a negative feedback process where disturbance in the policy process is counteracted and policy-making remains incremental.

In contrast, positive feedback mechanisms reinforce changes to the system and lead to a destabilizing policy environment. Periods of sweeping changes in public policy occur when environmental changes, such as focusing events, direct system-wide attention onto a new salient aspect of an issue and elevate it on the political agenda. At this moment, policy monopolies are pried open and new participants are able to expand the scope of conflict to new jurisdictions (Schattschneider, 1960). This process enables political actors to redefine the policy dimension and government's understanding of an issue. Collectively these new pressures lead to agenda instability and disruptive policy change.

Positive feedback cycles have three features in common. First, a shift in macro-political attention precedes radical policy change. The literature on PET is still somewhat vague on the sources of attention shifts at the macro-level. PET scholars mostly rely on Kingdon's (1995) idea about how exogenous and endogenous shocks open up "windows of opportunity." Exogenous shocks, such as a focusing event, galvanize mass political attention on an issue and reveal a critical problem that demands government intervention. Paradigmatic cases include the Three Mile Island or the Fukushima nuclear accidents which highlighted the dangers of nuclear power.

The second feature of positive feedback is a shift in the public policy image. Since a policy image contains empirical observations and emotive appeals, exogenous shocks are not the only way of triggering a re-evaluation of a particular policy. Persistent changes in policy indicators, such as crime rates, air quality measures, or consumer price index, as well as changes in the tone of media coverage can alter the perception of a public policy. For example, the coverage around the German citizenship moved from concerns about *Gastarbeiter* and their place in German society to one where the common civic identity under the German constitution of all people born in Germany was stressed.

Third, the described pressures have institutional ramifications. When political ideas are able to expand the scope of conflict and new participants enter into the policy arena, the existing policy monopoly and equilibrium can no longer be maintained. A new set of policy-makers and institutions exploit this opportunity and claim jurisdiction over an issue. Issue expansion occurs when a particular issue enters several decision-making units in quick succession.

The switch from cozy sub-level to combative national-level political arenas is an important indicator for the occurrence of positive feedback effects. During positive feedback processes, the institutional arena of an issue becomes dislocated and strategically minded political actors tempt to relocate the issue into receptive political venues where a limited set of actors can make authoritative decisions (Pralle, 2003). Venue-shopping is the process by which political actors attempt to move an issue across jurisdiction to secure their desired policy change. For example, migration and *Gastarbeiter* issues in Germany moved their institutional location several times in the post-war period.

The take away so far is: the interaction of policy image and venue characterize feedback mechanisms. Independent decision-making subsystems with a stable policy image lead to policy stability. Shifting attention and mobilization galvanizes new groups and upsets existing policy monopolies. Subsequently, the policy issue is placed in a new location within the government's institutional matrix. These two interaction mechanisms generate a re-enforcing political system that can produce long periods of policy stability interrupted by sudden shifts.

### **Abstraction and expansion**

The framework bifurcated along two paths since 2000. The first fork, spearheaded by Baumgartner, Jones, and a series of collaborators (Baumgartner & Jones, 2015; Jones et al., 2009; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Jones et al., 2003), leads toward an abstraction and generalization of the framework introduced in *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. The theoretical emphasis moves away from concerns about venues, images, and issue expansion to disproportionate information processing and institutional friction. The second fork, often led by European public policy scholars (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Baumgartner et al., 2006; Bertelli & John, 2013; Green-Pedersen & Walgrave, 2014; Mortensen et al., 2011; Vliegthart et al., 2016), expands on and probes into the mechanisms of policy change, widens the empirical domains, and reveals the wide applicability of the initial framework using comparative research designs.

Abstraction and generalization of the basic PET framework was largely achieved by coming back to individual-level decision-making and conceiving organization, including democratic institutions, as problem-solving bodies. Building on works by Simon (1947) and Jones (1999) on bounded rationality, Jones and Baumgartner (2005) asserted that individual and collective choice follow the same four stages of decision-making. In all four, humans and organizations process information: "Information processing may be defined as collecting, assembling, interpreting, and prioritizing signals from the environment" (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 7). Since environmental signals are oversupplied, uncertain, and ambiguous, relevant information's detection is critical. Jones and Baumgartner (2005, Figure 2.1, p. 37) depict a behavioral model of how individuals as well as organizations deal with incoming information and make choices. Individuals recognize an issue, characterize it, assemble alternative solutions, and select one of them. Political systems follow the processes of agenda setting, problem definition, proposal and debate, and finally collective policy choice.

Organizations have one advantage over individuals though. They develop capacities to process some information in parallel. Different subsystems address multiple issues simultaneously. However, the capacity of parallel processing is not unlimited. Governments, especially its leadership, occasionally need to focus on one issue at a time. Prioritization of one issue over all others is essentially the process of agenda-setting and decision-making occurs *in seriatim*. This is what we call disproportionate information processing. The model stands in contrast to the classical incrementalist model which holds that decision-making is able to make proportionate policy adjustments based on environmental changes.

Beyond the flow of information through the political system, PET scholars examine how different stages of the policy-making process and different institutional settings magnify disproportionate responses to new information (e.g., Breunig, 2011). Two key insights structure the logic: decision-making systems vary in the cost structure, and a given cost structure determines the level of resistance to adjust to new information. In contrast to a rational choice conception as an enforcement mechanism, PET scholars identify institutions a retarding force and a force directed at overcoming friction. As a result of friction, a system's linkage between policy inputs and outputs becomes disproportionate.

The combination of the informational and institutional logic results in the general punctuation hypothesis which holds that the interaction of cognitive and collective decision-making constraints produce punctuated policy dynamics in political systems. An important aspect of this model is that collective decision-making bodies are collection of adaptive, rule-guided humans. Therefore, the architecture of individual decision-making affects how organizations make choices. With increasing decision-making costs (in other words: the more difficult it becomes to translate information into policy) policy-making becomes more punctuated.

Among the empirical studies examining these propositions, four stand out. First, Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen (2003) analyze changes in 15 American data sets ranging from policy inputs, such as stock market returns and elections, to policy processes, such as hearings and Congressional quarterly coverage, to policy outputs, including laws and budgets. They show that all series display punctuations and that the severity and occurrence of radical change increases as higher costs are imposed on collective action. Baumgartner and co-authors (2009) employ data from the United States, Belgium, and Denmark and show that in each country increasing levels of institutional friction lead to greater punctuations. This finding leads the authors to conclude that "the effects of the policy process dominate the country effects . . . No institutional design can do away with human cognitive limits" (p. 615). Finally, Jones et al. (2009) examine public budgeting in different types of political systems and for different levels of government. They show that all budgets are severely punctuated, but that differences in their magnitude correspond to country-specific cost structures. In sum, these studies convincingly show that governments are unable to respond smoothly to changes in the environment.

In parallel to the increasing theoretical abstraction of PET, scholars in Europe ask whether the patterns observed in the United States also occur in various European states, within different policy domains, and institutional settings. Many studies indeed uncover similar forms of policy-making. These studies deliver new understandings on how various policy-making processes work and on systematic differences across countries within a PET framework. Baumgartner and colleagues (2014) identified 303 PET-related publications for literature on punctuated equilibrium and public policy. Given this breath, we highlight some innovative works in order to illustrate how the comparative approach and the accompanying infrastructure opens up new research areas. We focus on the role of political parties in the policy-making process, representation, and the particularities of the European Union. Other works examine the media, protest, executive speeches, parliamentary questions, laws, and budgets. Also policy-specific foci on the environment or morality politics, for example, exist.

On the one hand, since the American political system is characterized by a first-past-the-post electoral system with single-member legislative districts and an independent and active legislative branch, political parties play only a minor role in the original PET. On the other hand, in Europe parties are the major reference points around which elections are organized and parliamentary government is arranged. Given this setup, PET scholars are interested in how issue competition among political parties shapes their incentives to bring new issue on the agenda. The goal of these studies is linking party competition with agenda-setting. The

theoretical starting points are Schattschneider's idea of conflict expansion and Budge and Farlie's (1983) about issue competition. The premise is that partisan competition does not operate through position-taking on a given common dimension (typically left-right), but through selective emphasis on competent issues and issue ownership based on incumbent record and partisan constituency (Petrocik, 1996). The basic question is: What issues do parties attend to and why?

Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) provide a valuable answer. They move away from studying spatial competition based on party manifestos and argue that issue competition occurs in parliament where opposition and government clash on a regular basis. Their study of parliamentary activities in the Danish Folketing over 25 years and 23 issues finds that "issue competition is an ongoing struggle between government and opposition parties over the content of the party-system agenda in which opposition parties enjoy a structural advantage over government parties" (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010, p. 258). Opposition parties hold two advantages in particular: they can blame government for unsolved policy problems and they can focus on criticizing the government on whatever issues they deem advantageous. This work suggests that "policy losers," who have limited ability to venue shop in parliamentary systems, at least have the opportunity to "issue shop" extensively. The presented competition logic should therefore be applicable to nearly all political systems that generate a clear government/opposition dichotomy.

While classical accounts of party competition focus on why and when parties choose not to engage with their opponents' issue agenda, they have not put forth a concise argument for when they do. Green-Pedersen (2015) approaches this question, arguing that issue competition consists of a party-specific component, which reflects the issue preferences of the party, and an agenda component, the sum and hierarchy of issues in public discourse. In this theoretical framework parties engage in both issue avoidance and issue engagement. They address other party blocs' issue agenda but respond more frequently to ideologically related parties' issue campaigns.

Through their focus on policy issues, comparative scholars open up new perspectives on representation. Linking constituencies' issue preferences, media attention to MP's parliamentary behavior and legislative activity, Bevan and John (2016) show how British MPs use Prime Minister's questions to represent their own policy agenda. They not only find that issue salience drives parliamentary questions but also that the opposition highlights salient issues the government tries to avoid. Furthermore, (opposition) backbenchers are more prone to address relevant issues for their constituency in their questions and thereby influence their party leaders' questioning behavior.

An institution that matches the byzantine complexities of the American political system is the European Union. Two examples indicate the utility of PET also for the multilevel governance framework. Princen's book on *Agendas Setting in the European Union* (2009) shows that an increasing number of issues appear on the EU's governmental agenda, but gaining access to the decision-making agendas is challenging. This challenge is overcome by a "classic' pattern of venue shopping," akin to earlier findings for the American system. Alexandrova and co-authors (2012) examine the European Council's agenda-setting patterns and find that they are similar to those of national institutions. A fruitful next step would explore "the" European agenda, consisting of all institutions (Council, Commission, and Parliament) and their complex interplay and how EU policies are linked to national policies. PET data and approaches offer unique opportunities for exploring domestic and representational consequences of European integration. Existing accounts suggest that the European level increases policy congruence (Beyer, 2017; Alexandrova et al., 2016).

## Research designs, measurement, and infrastructure

PET is a complex theoretical construct. The spontaneity of the proposed processes and their interactive nature make it difficult to construct appropriate research designs and evaluate PET. Scholars working within the PET framework rely on a number of tools for understanding how policy processes play out: case studies of long-term trends, system-level distributional analysis, and a measurement system that enables regression analysis.

Two types of research design generally dominate public policy studies: cross-sectional examinations of several issues at one point in time and longitudinal studies of a single issue. Baumgartner and Jones's *Agendas and Instabilities* takes advantage of both approaches. They initiated a large-scale data collection for tracing the development of public policy through publicly available documents. They then draw on longitudinal case studies of seven issues – nuclear energy, smoking, pesticides, urban affairs, drug abuse, auto safety, and child abuse – to illustrate how exogenous shocks, change in the public image, interest group participation, and venue access lead to policy change.

In the 2000s, PET scholars have focused on system-level features and processes. This theoretical shift leads to the developments of research designs that rely on system-level comparisons of large amounts of policy changes across issues and over time. In order to accomplish this task, a number of tools are imported from financial economics and complexity research. In particular, stochastic process methods try to ascertain what kinds of probability distributions could have accounted for an observed frequency distribution of outcomes. The classical case is stock market returns which, according to the efficient market thesis, should resemble a random walk and therefore be distributed as a normal distribution. In political science, Padgett (1980) formally showed that incremental budgeting should also be normally distributed and that power law distributions emerge out of serial judgments of boundedly rational decision-makers. PET authors (e.g., Jones et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2014) link the distributional form of policy outcomes to particular models of policy change and show that power law functions are generated by disproportionate information processing and institutional stick-and-slip dynamics.

Figure 5.1 illustrates how different theoretical distributions of change are connected to distinct models of policy-making. Incrementalism implies a normal distribution as policy change occurs through gradual adjustments. In the typical incrementalist model, decision-makers or organizations update from the last period's policy decision. This process is assumed to be random and

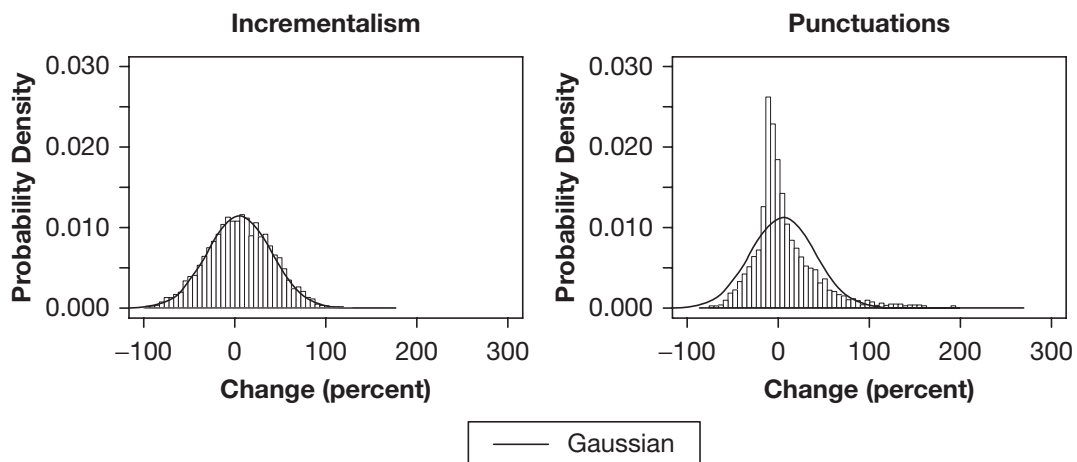


Figure 5.1 Incrementalism and punctuated policy change

Source: Adapted from Breunig and Koski (2009)

relies on making choices based on numerous additive causes. When decision-making is a reaction to changes in information through a combination of inattentiveness and rapid reaction, however, punctuated change distributions emerge. “[T]his pattern of policy dynamics implies that frequency distributions of outputs should display fat tails (indicative of internal reprioritizations and external policy punctuations), sharp central peaks (indicative of internal inattentiveness and external temporal stability), and ‘weak shoulders’ (indicative of a relative lack of moderate change)” (Breunig & Jones, 2011, p.105). This ocular assessment of policy change is supplemented with several statistical measures of policy change data’s distribution.

PET scholars use these tools extensively in order to show that standard models of political science, such as the expectation of election-induced policy change, are unable to describe the uncovered distribution of political change. Existing research delivers robust support for the general punctuation hypothesis. Budgetary studies at all three levels of US government and across advanced democracies are the most notable (e.g., Breunig, 2006; Jones et al., 2009).

In tandem with their theoretical development, Baumgartner and Jones assembled large datasets of political activities under the umbrella of the Policy Agendas Project ([www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)). The data base entails a content-based categorization scheme for publicly available observations, including most important problem surveys, executive speeches, parliamentary activities, interest group organizations, laws, and budgets. The value of the data base is the provision of backward compatible, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive indicators for tracing policy activities across long periods of time. Only with such data can scholars use issues as “tracer liquid” for tracking attention through time and examine policy processes in various political systems (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014, pp. 9–10).

The Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) ([www.comparativeagendas.net](http://www.comparativeagendas.net)) is the natural extension of the Policy Agendas Project. Scholars from nearly 20 countries (the overwhelming majority of which are European) collaborate in developing and assembling systematic indicators of issue attention within their nations’ political systems. The group devised a taxonomy of 19 major topics and over 200 subtopic for classifying political events across time, decision-making venues, and states. CAP therefore essentially is a measurement system where a set of units (political activities) are specified in order to be reliably measured by a definite magnitude (Jones, 2016). The various data bases that make up CAP include more than 2 million comparable events, turning the project into a valuable resource to study European policy-making. It is a treasure trove for public policy scholars.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the punctuated equilibrium model progressed from a framework that captures *Agendas and Instabilities in American Politics* to a richer and more general account of policy-making. A general model of agenda-setting and policy-making in organizations and political systems emerged. Comparative scholarship within the PET framework yielded important insights in how distinct institutional costs create particular stick-and-slip dynamics along the policy-making cycle and across political systems given the model’s core feature of disproportionate information processing. The second comparative extension of the initial PET turned an American policy process theory into an approach for studying European political systems (Green-Pedersen & Walgrave, 2014). Comparative tests of the PET framework are increasingly replaced by broader questions of comparative politics in the last 10 years. Studies of policy process give way to scholarly work that probes into the mechanisms of policy change by re-considering the role of political parties, news media, protests, representation, and various institutional settings.

The Policy Agendas Project as well as the Comparative Agendas Project provide resources for improving and challenging PET. The richness of the data base invites other scholars with an interest in PET to combine the collected information with additional empirical observations. In comparative politics and public policy only the Comparative Manifesto Group offers a comparable public good. In the end then, the most lasting contribution of PET and a greater value to the scholarly community might be the provision of this data base. It helps scholars from different countries and with different interests to engage in important research questions in the future.

## Note

1 This chapter draws heavily on Beyer, Boushey, and Breunig, 2015. Permission obtained from Springer.

## References

- Alexandrova, P., Carammia, M., & Timmermans, A. (2012). Policy Punctuations and Issue Diversity on the European Council Agenda. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), 69–88.
- Alexandrova, P., Rasmussen, A., & Toshkov, D. (2016). Agenda Responsiveness in the European Council: Public Priorities, Policy Problems and Political Attention. *West European Politics*, 39(4), 605–627.
- Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (1993). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (2015). *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner, F. R., Green-Pedersen, C., & Jones, B. D. (2006). Comparative Studies of Policy Agendas. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(7), 959–974.
- Baumgartner, F. R., Jones, B. D., & Mortensen, P. B. (2014). Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking. In P. Sabatier and C. Weible (Eds), *Theories of the Policy Process*, 3rd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Baumgartner, F. R., Breunig, C., Green-Pedersen, C., Jones, B. D., Mortensen, P. B., Nuytemans, M., & Walgrave, S. (2009). Punctuated Equilibrium in Comparative Perspective. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(3), 603–620.
- Bertelli, A. M., & John, P. (2013). *Public Policy Investment: Priority-Setting and Conditional Representation in British Statecraft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bevan, S., & John, P. (2016). Policy Representation by Party Leaders and Followers: What Drives UK Prime Minister's Questions? *Government and Opposition*, 51(1), 59–83.
- Beyer, D. (2017). The neglected effects of Europeanization in the member states – policy-making in directly EU-influenced and sovereign domains. *Journal of European Public Policy* (online first).
- Beyer, D., Boushey, P. D. G., & Breunig, D. C. (2015). Die Punctuated-Equilibrium-Theorie. In G. Wenzelburger & R. Zohlnhöfer (Eds), *Handbuch Policy-Forschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS (pp. 355–378).
- Breunig, C. (2006). The More Things Change, the More Things Stay the Same: A Comparative Analysis of Budget Punctuations. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(7), 1069–1085.
- Breunig, C. (2011). Reduction, Stasis, and Expansion of Budgets in Advanced Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(8), 1060–1088.
- Breunig, C., & Jones, B. D. (2011). Stochastic Process Methods with an Application to Budgetary Data. *Political Analysis*, 19(1), 103–117.
- Breunig, C., & Koski, C. (2009). Punctuated Budgets and Governors' Institutional Powers. *American Politics Research*, 37(6), 1116–1138.
- Budge, I., & Farlie, D. (1983). Party Competition: Selective Emphasis or Direct Confrontation? An Alternative View with Data. In H. Daalder and P. Mair (Eds), *West European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*. London: Sage (pp. 267–305).
- Davis, O. A., Dempster, M. A. H., & Wildavsky, A. (1966). A Theory of the Budgetary Process. *American Political Science Review*, 60(3), 529–547.
- Eldredge, N., & Gould, S. J. (1972). Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism. In T. Schopf (Ed.), *Models in Paleobiology*. San Francisco, CA: Freeman, Cooper & Co.

- Green-Pedersen, C., & Mortensen, P. B. (2010). Who Sets the Agenda and Who Responds to it in the Danish Parliament? A New Model of Issue Competition and Agenda-Setting. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49(2), 257–281.
- Green-Pedersen, C., & Mortensen, P. B. (2015). Avoidance and Engagement: Issue Competition in Multiparty Systems: Issue Competition in Multiparty Systems. *Political Studies*, 63(4), 747–764.
- Green-Pedersen, C., & Walgrave, S. (Eds) (2014). *Agenda Setting, Policies, and Political Systems: A Comparative Approach*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Jones, B. D. (1999). Bounded Rationality. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2(1), 297–321.
- Jones, B. D. (2016). The Comparative Policy Agendas Projects as Measurement Systems: Response to Dowding, Hindmoor and Martin. *Journal of Public Policy*, 36(1), 31–46.
- Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2005). *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2012). From There to Here: Punctuated Equilibrium to the General Punctuation Thesis to a Theory of Government Information Processing. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), 1–20.
- Jones, B. D., Sulkin, T., & Larsen, H. A. (2003). Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions. *American Political Science Review*, 97(1), 151–169.
- Jones, B. D., Zalányi, L., & Érdi, P. (2014). An Integrated Theory of Budgetary Politics and Some Empirical Tests: The U.S. National Budget, 1791–2010. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(3), 561–578.
- Jones, B. D., Baumgartner, F. R., Breunig, C., Wlezien, C., Soroka, S., Foucault, M., . . . Walgrave, S. (2009). A General Empirical Law of Public Budgets: A Comparative Analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 855–873.
- Kingdon, J. W. (2010). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers.
- Lindblom, C. E. (1959). The Science of “Muddling Through.” *Public Administration Review*, 19(2), 79–88.
- Mortensen, P. B., Green-Pedersen, C., Breeman, G., Chaqués-Bonafont, L., Jennings, W., John, P., Palau, A. M., & Timmermans, A. (2011). Comparing Government Agendas: Executive Speeches in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Denmark. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(8), 973–1000.
- Padgett, J. F. (1980). Bounded Rationality in Budgetary Research. *American Political Science*, 74(2), 354–372.
- Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3), 825–850.
- Pralle, S. B. (2003). Venue Shopping, Political Strategy, and Policy Change: The Internationalization of Canadian Forest Advocacy. *Journal of Public Policy*, 23(3), 233–260.
- Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Simon, H. A. (1947). *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Triadafilopoulos, T. (2012). Assessing the Consequences of the 1999 German Citizenship Act. *German Politics and Society*, 30(1), 1–16.
- Vliegenthart, R., Walgrave, S., Baumgartner, F. R., Bevan, S., Breunig, C., Brouard, S., . . . Tresch, A. (2016). Do the Media Set the Parliamentary Agenda? A Comparative Study in Seven Countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 55(2), 283–301.