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Abstract

Carman and Wlezien examine the seven-point ideological placements of government institutions--the president, Congress, and the Supreme Court--and policy included in the 1997 Pilot Study. They find that respondents are likely to place the government institutions and policy on the ideological scale and that the distribution of means is sensible. They also find that respondents' placements are positively related. This clustering partially reflects the negative correlation between self placement and placements of institutions and policy, i.e., the more extreme one's self placement, the more distant one's placement of the three government institutions and policy. The clustering also reflects the patterned connection between institutional placements on the one hand and policy placements on the other. That is, respondents' placements of the three government institutions independently predict respondents' placement of policy, and the estimated effects of institutional placements differ understandably. Carman and Wlezien find that measures of self-institution ideological distance predict respondents' "too liberal" and "too conservative" assessments of the separate institutions, which were included in the 1997 Pilot Study. They also find that measures of absolute self-institution distance predict thermometer evaluations of the corresponding institutions, though the estimated effect is most pronounced for Clinton, sharply lower for the Congress, and lower still for the Supreme Court. They suggest that these differences may reflect differences in the function and salience of the institutions. Carman and Wlezien conclude that the seven-point measures capture meaningful information and work well, and should be included in future studies, perhaps as part of the NES core.