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Abstract

Wlezien examines the seven-point ideological placements of groups in the 1997 Pilot Study. He finds that respondents tend to place groups on the ideological scale and that the distribution of mean placements is sensible. He also finds that group placements are interrelated and reflect an underlying structure, one that is linked to placements of the two political parties. Exploratory factor analysis of group and party placements reveals three dimensions: (1) a "partisan" dimension that contains Christian fundamentalists, gays and lesbians, and the political parties; (2) a "minority" dimension that includes placements of blacks, women, and also gays and lesbians; and (3) a "majority" dimension consisting of whites and men. Wlezien finds that measures of absolute self-group ideological distance are correlated with thermometer evaluations of the two, more ideologically extreme social groups, but not the other, less extreme demographic groups. He recommends including the seven-point group placement items in at least one additional Election Study, in order to provide a more complete assessment. To provide such an assessment, Wlezien recommends using a larger number of groups.