



## A Comment on "Correction: Does State Political Ideology Change Over Time?"

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Brace et al. (2004: 537) assert that mass political ideology in the American states is "overwhelming[ly]" stable, based on their analysis of three longitudinal measures of citizen ideology: Berry et al.'s (1998) indicator; an annual measure they construct from data made available by Erikson, Wright and McIver (hereafter called the "EWM-based indicator" for convenience); and a measure they construct from GSS and ANES surveys (hereafter called the Brace et al. measure). Brace et al. (2004) believe that the EWM-based indicator and the Brace et al. measure are valid indicators of mass ideology, but they say our measure "capture[s] something different from mass ideology" (537). The principal evidence for this claim is a very weak empirical relationship between the Berry et al. indicator and the other two (both with Spearman  $r$  values less than .08), and a stronger observed relationship between the EWM-based and Brace et al. measures ( $r = .44$ ).

The corrected correlations reported by Brace et al. (2006) paint a strikingly different picture: the strongest correlation is between the Berry et al. and EWM-based indicators ( $r = .48$ ), and there is a slightly weaker relationship between the Brace et al. indicator and the other two (both  $r$  values around .44.) Thus, the basis for claiming that our indicator is invalid—its lack of empirical fit with the other two measures—vanishes when Brace et al.'s erroneous analysis is corrected.

In fact, the new corrections still understate the strength of association between the Berry et al. and EWM-based indicators relative to the relationships between the Brace et al. (2004) indicator and the other two. Each of the correlations presented by Brace et al. (2006) is based on a different set of state-years,<sup>1</sup> which means they cannot be directly compared. If we make them comparable by calculating correlations across the full set of state-years for which all three measures are available (the 35 states observed by Brace et al. 2004 in all even-numbered years between 1978 and 1998), the correlation between the EWM-based and Berry et al. indicators rises to .66, while the correlation between the

Brace et al. indicator and the other two remain nearly the same (.43 with Berry et al., and .44 with EWM-based).

Brace et al. (2006) state that "corrections Berry et al. have made to [the Berry et al.] measure" may have resulted in an indicator that "could produce fundamentally different results. . . ." That is not the case. We have periodically updated our measure, using these occasions to fix a small number of errors in the original measure of citizen ideology. However, the documentation accompanying our data at the ICPSR web site cited by Brace et al. (2006) notes these changes and reports that the correlation between our original scores and our revised scores exceeds .995. Thus, researchers who employed the original version of our citizen ideology measure, including Brace et al. (2004), need not be concerned about the substantive effects of our revisions.

Finally, Brace et al. (2006) correct an "estimation error" in Table 3 of their original paper, a table used to substantiate their previous contention that citizen ideology in the American states is stable. Brace et al. (493) believe the "fundamental point of their [2004] article does not change" when the erroneous estimates are corrected. In Berry et al. (forthcoming), we challenge the validity of Brace et al.'s (2004) conclusions about ideological stability. Nothing in the revised results for Table 3 changes the nature of our criticism, or alters our conviction that citizen ideology varies across states and over time, in ways that are relevant to our understanding of policy choices made at the subnational level.

### REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> The correlation between the EWM and Brace et al. measures is based on 35 states in all even-numbered years between 1978 and 1998, that between the EWM and Berry et al. measures is based on 48 states in all years between 1977 and 1993, and that between the Brace and Berry measures is based on 35 states in all even-numbered years between 1974 and 1992.