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978-1-107-13714-1 - U.S. Supreme Court Opinions and their Audiences

Ryan C. Black, Ryan J. Owens, Justin Wedeking and Patrick C. Wohlfarth

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U.S. SUPREME COURT OPINIONS AND THEIR AUDIENCES

This book is the first study specifically to investigate the extent to which U.S. Supreme Court justices alter the clarity of their opinions based on expected reactions from their audiences. The authors examine this dynamic by creating a unique measure of opinion clarity and then testing whether the Court writes clearer opinions when it faces ideologically hostile and ideologically scattered lower federal courts; when it decides cases involving poorly performing federal agencies; when it decides cases involving states with less professionalized legislatures and governors; and when it rules against public opinion. The data shows the Court writes clearer opinions in every one of these contexts, and demonstrates that actors are more likely to comply with clearer Court opinions.

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To Sarah – RCB

To Karen, Wyatt, and Henry – RJO

To Michelle – JPW

To Mom and Emily, for their steadfast support – PCW

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