5-2019

What Do Voting Results of the 2016 State Elections Tell Us About Bias Response Teams?

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April 8, 2019

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DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming)[1] explore the relationship between the existence of university bias response teams (BRTs) and the results of the 2016 US presidential and congressional elections. I propose to extend their study by using the results of the 2016 US state elections. Arguments for and against BRTs are well-known, and rather than repeat them here, I refer readers to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education's (FIRE) *Bias Response Team Report 2017.* Among the most critical claims of BRT opponents is that they chill and repress academic freedom, which has been fundamental to the mission of universities and colleges across the United States for over one hundred years.

I speculate that bias response teams are more common in states in which residents voted more for Democrats and less so if residents voted more for Republican candidates. I will use Republican state senate vote share (if there was a state senate election in that state), Republican state house of representatives vote share (if there was a state house of representative's election in that state), and Republican gubernatorial vote share (if there was a gubernatorial election in that state).

When calculating vote share percentages and when running statistical analyses, I ignore votes cast for candidates who are not members of the Republican or Democratic parties for two reasons. First, they represent only small portions of the total vote. Only about 5.7% of popular

[1] DeGennaro, Ramon P. and Reid Parker. "Bias Reporting Teams and US Elections." forthcoming, Edited Volume, George Yancy, editor.

votes were cast for third-party candidates. Second, the net effect of these votes is almost surely small, because some third-party votes would otherwise have been cast for Republicans and others for Democrats (or not at all); there is no reason to assume that these votes are biased toward one political party. Tau (2016) presents evidence supporting this reasoning.

The data I use on bias response teams are from FIRE. Voting totals are easily available from Ballotpedia (see References section below).

Many universities have established Bias Response Teams, or BRTs. BRTs are organizations that encourage students to report alleged bias instances. In practice, these reports are often anonymous, and they typically lead to extra legal tribunals with few due process protections for the accused. Because accusations of offense are often based on the accused person's speech and/or writings, BRTs have run afoul of the defendant's First Amendment rights. And since awareness of and support for the First Amendment differs between Republicans and Democrats (see Albanese), we ask whether election results are correlated with the existence of BRTs. In DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming) we find that an increase in Republican Congressional vote share is associated with a small decrease in the frequency of BRTs, but Presidential vote shares, Senate vote shares, and the vote shares in the Congressional district of the university are unrelated to the frequency of BRTs. In this study, I extended those results by using the results of the 2016 US state elections.

Table 1 contains sample statistics for key variables. These variables include whether or not a university has a Bias Response Team (0 or 1), the Republican vote share for the state senate election, if there was an election, in a given university's state (R State Senate), the Republican vote share for the state house election, if there was an election, in a given university's state (R State House), the Republican vote share for the Gubernatorial election, if there was an election, in a given university's state (R Gubernatorial), and the percentage of degree-granting institutions in a given state that have Bias Response Teams (BRT %).

The columns in Table 1 are the variable name, the number of observations (N), the mean, standard deviation, the minimum value, and the maximum value. There are 130 schools with D1 Bowl Subdivision teams. We selected these institutions because we wanted a sample of schools that most people would recognize, and to help with data availability (whether or not the school has a Bias Response Team). The sample includes many major private institutions and major public, state-supported universities. It also includes smaller institutions and the three major U.S. Military Academies (Navy, Army, and Air Force). Of the 130 universities in the sample, almost exactly half have BRTs. Because some states have more than one university that fields a Division I team, the state vote share can appear more than once.

Table 2 reports t-tests of the variables R State Senate, R State House, and R Gubernatorial for universities with and without BRTs. I ran several t-tests testing whether vote share differs if a University has a BRT. As can be seen below in Table 2, none of the differences are statistically significant, but all three variables at the state level in individual t-tests are positive. In addition to that, all three t-values are pointing in the same direction as the federal data (see DeGennaro and Parker, forthcoming). Although these test results do not show a significant difference, the data are pointing in the same direction seven out of seven times, which is very likely not the result of random chance. Thus, there is likely a mild relationship between vote share and the presence of BRTs.

As part of this project, I will run regression analyses to further analyze the relationship between Bias Response teams and republican vote share in the 2016 state elections (Senate, House, and Gubernatorial).

Regression Analysis:

I augmented the equations from DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming) with the variables at the state level, and predicted that there would be a negative relationship between BRT presence and Republican vote share. For all 50 states, I estimated a regression:

$$\%BRT_i = A + X*R\ State\ Senate\%_i + Y*R\ State\ House\%_i + Z*R\ Gubernatorial\%_i + e$$

Where

$\%BRT_i$ = Number of institutions with Bias Response Teams in state *i* / number of institutions in state *i.*

R State $Senate\%_i$ = Republican share of the state senate votes in state *I* (if there was a state senate election in that state *i*)

R State $House\%_i$ = Republican share of the state house of representative votes in state *i* (if there was a state house of representative election in that state *i*)

R Gubernatorial%$_i$ = Republican share of the gubernatorial election votes in state *i* (if there was a gubernatorial election in that state *i*)

If institutions in states that voted Republican in 2016 tend to have fewer BRTs, then the estimated coefficients X, Y, and Z will be negative, just DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming) predict for federal data. If these coefficients are negative, this means there is a negative correlation between Republican state voting levels and the frequency of bias response teams. If these coefficients are positive, this means that there is a correlation between higher republican state voting levels and increased amounts of bias response teams. If republican vote share increases along with the number of BRTs, this would be extremely unusual.

Results: Unlike the significant relationship between Republican Congressional vote share and the frequency of BRTs found in my previous study with DeGennaro (forthcoming), the presence of BRTs is not significantly related to state level vote data. However, I do find that there is a significant relationship between Republican State House vote share and the percentage of degree-granting institutions in state *i* with BRTs (see Table 2). A one-percentage point increase in the Republican State House vote share is associated with a 0.115 percentage point decline in the proportion of universities with BRTs in a state. This is rather substantial. The difference between a 45% Republican State House share and a 55% share is related to a decrease in the proportion of universities with BRTs within that state of about 7.28% of the entire range of proportions across the 50 states. This finding very much fits the general premise of this project and the previous work, which is the more a state leans to the right, the fewer

BRTs one should expect.

Table 3 contains the results of estimating Equation 1 Model 1, Equation 1 Model 2, and Equation 1 Model 3. Model 1 uses Republican State Senate Vote Share, Republican State House Vote Share, and Republican Gubernatorial vote share as independent variables. Model 2 uses Republican State Senate Vote Share and Republican State House Vote Share as the two independent variables. Model 3 uses only Republican State House Vote share as an independent variable. The only significant independent variable is the Republican State House Vote Share.

I also ran several logit regressions to test the relationship between the presence (not $\%BRT_i$) of BRTs and state level vote share data. Surprisingly, there was no statistically significant relationship between the state level data and the presence of BRTs. I also ran a regression that adds the new state level data into the previous regression (with federal level data) that DeGennaro and Parker ran. I did not find any new significant relationships. Thus, this result reinforces the results found in DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming).

Table 4 displays the results of a regression analysis from DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming). This table includes four different models of the original regression that predicted a relationship between the presence of Bias Response Teams and federal republican vote shares (Senate, House, and Presidential elections). I have not amended Table 4 in any way from the way DeGennaro and Parker presented it, but included it below to help the reader understand the relationships between federal vote data and BRT presence. As I mentioned above, I did not find any new significant relationships between BRT presence and state vote data, so I did not feel the need to create a new table to include the state level variables (the data related to state level variables came out to be completely meaningless).

Tables

Table 1:

Table 1 includes the sample statistics that are related to this study. The variables will include, but are not limited to, total number, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum are just some of the statistics that will be included.

Table 2:

Table 2 displays the results of t-tests that were run to find out whether or not vote shares within states differ if a university (within a certain state) does have a BRT or if a university (within a certain state) does not have a BRT. This table will include the data for all states.

Table 3:

Table 3 depicts the results of the regression analysis from above. This includes all three models of the regression I mentioned above: one for state senate, state house, and state gubernatorial, one for state senate and state house, and one for only state house. The table will show the estimated coefficients for each of the vote share percentages (state senate, state house, and gubernatorial) and will also display the r-squared values in addition to other statistics.

Table 4:

Table 4 displays the results of a regression analysis from DeGennaro and Parker (forthcoming). This table includes four different models of the original regression.

References:

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Table 1: Sample Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
BRT	130	0.4923	0.5019	0.0000	1.0000
R State Senate	105	0.5433	0.1107	0.2192	0.7671
R State House	110	0.5559	0.0850	0.3261	0.7140
R Gubernatorial	21	0.5254	0.0780	0.4561	0.7000
BRT%***	50	0.0437	0.0353	0	0.1579

Data are for the 130 Division I Football Bowl Subdivision programs. Of the 130, a total of 110 are public, 17 are private, and three are military academies. The complete list is from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_NCAA_Division_I_FBS_football_programs. I use these 130 schools because I wanted a sample of schools that most people would recognize, and because of data availability.
Nine states (Alaska, Delaware, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont) have no university with a Division I Bowl Subdivision program.

BRT_i: = 1 if university *i* in that district has a BRT; 0 otherwise.
R State $Senate_i$: Republican share of the state senate votes in state *i* (if there was a state senate election in that state *i*)
R State $House_i$: Republican share of the state house of representative votes in state *i* (if there was a state house of representative election in that state *i*)
R $Gubernatorial_i$: Republican share of the gubernatorial election votes in state *i* (if there was a gubernatorial election in that state *i*)
$BRT\%_i$: Number of Division I institutions in state *i* that have BRTs / number of degree-granting institutions in state *i,* expressed in percent.

*** BRT% Variable uses FIRE data for numerator, but uses state-level data from the *National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education* (2017) for the denominator.

Table 2: *t*-tests: Do State Vote Shares Differ if a University has a BRT?

Variable	Mean if BRT (N)	Mean if No BRT (N)	*t*-ratio (*p*-value)
R State Senate	0.5370 (55)	0.5502 (50)	0.61 (0.5421)
R State House	0.5463 (57)	0.5662 (53)	1.23 (0.2226)
R Gubernatorial	0.5167 (13)	0.5396 (8)	0.64 (0.5279)

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%

R State Senate$_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the state senate election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

R State House$_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the state house election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

R Gubernatorial$_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the gubernatorial election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

Table 3: State Level Regression Analysis

$$BRT\%_i = A + X*R\ State\ Senate\%_i + Y*R\ State\ House\%_i + Z*R\ Gubernatorial\%_i + e_i$$

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	0.0458	0.1100**	0.1079**
R State Senate	-0.1541	0.0002	
R State House	0.0383	-0.1179	-0.1150**
R Gubernatorial	0.1264		
Observations	12	42	43
Adj. R-Square	-0.1785	0.0667	0.0851

Models 1-3: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%.

$BRT\%_i$: Number of Division I institutions in state *i* that have BRTs / number of degree-granting institutions in state *i,* expressed in percent.

R State $Senate_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the state senate election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

R State $House_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the state house election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

R $Gubernatorial_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the gubernatorial election, if any, in university *i*'s state.

Table 4: Federal Level Regression Analysis

$BRT_i = A + X*R\ Pres_i + Y*R\ Senate_i + Z*R\ House_i +V*Public_i + W*R\ Local_i + e_i$

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Constant	0.812	1.783*	1.80**	1.72*
R Pres	0.050	0.001		
R Senate	0.009			
R House	-0.069	-0.041	-0.040**	-0.031**
Private	0.099	0.008		
R Local	-0.000	0.008	0.008	
Observations	93	130	130	130
Pr>Chi-Square For Regression	0.812	0.272	0.076*	0.041**

Models 4-7: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%.

BRT_i = 1 if institution *i* has a BRT and 0 otherwise,

$R\ Pres_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the presidential election in the university's state (e.g. For The University of Tennessee, this equals the Share of Republican and Democratic vote for Donald J. Trump in Tennessee) , expressed in percent.

$R\ Senate_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for the Senate election, if any, in the university's state, expressed in percent.

$R\ House_i$: Republican share/(Republican share + Democratic Share) for all House elections in the university's state, expressed in percent.

$Private_i$ = 1 if institution *i* is private and 0 if public,

$R\ Local_i$ = Republican share of vote in the congressional district of institution *i*, expressed in percent.