

Zingher Reaction Paper: An analysis of the changing social bases of America's political parties: Group support in the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections

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The article in question is taken from Elsevier's Journal of Electoral Studies. It is not part of any specific volume of the Journal and seems to originate online. The author of the paper is Joshua Zingher, a professor of Political Science at Old Dominion University in Virginia. The topic of this paper is electoral studies, given the specific journal it is in. The author, like many people, found the outcome of the 2016 election to be very odd, and the author thinks that the cause of this may be from some sort of shift in the way that people voted. The author had less of a thesis and more of an investigative goal. He wanted to "assess how the party coalitions have changed in the two most recent presidential elections" (Zingher, 1).

The actual execution of the author's argument is a bit different than how he initially set out. Despite saying that he will look at the two most recent elections, the author begins with a discussion on how the party demographic has changed over the past several decades (Zingher, 2). This is an interesting choice by the author. On one hand, it shows some uncertainty in his conclusion by not directly paralleling his thesis, but on the other hand, it shows that his argument is applicable outside the scope of the argument, which favors the argument. Despite having an awkward start to the essay, the author goes on to have a very mathematically driven discussion about the party coalitions in these particular years.

The bulk of the author's argument is mathematical in nature. There is a statistical analysis, specifically a test of correlation, on a specific group's likelihood to vote democratic given a certain group membership (Zingher, 2). This type of analysis is very strong in terms

of being cross sectional, but can be subject to not being complete. The author remedies this by determining politically relevant groups, while this is not specifically defined, it is shown to be one of either religion, income, race, ethnicity, education, age, gender, and location. What I found to be inconsistent was some of the multivariate combinations. The study found a need to distinguish between White college graduates and White non-college graduates. Perhaps if this was more the focus of the essay the author would have put more care into this aspect of the cross-sectional study. The author then goes into a discussion about more recent elections and of the coalition changes there.

The author talks mainly about the key changes in groups as to whether or not they vote Democrat or Republican. He specifically notes that there is not much change on either side. The most significant change the author found was between 2012 and 2016, where White college graduates went from voting democrat to republican (Zingher, 4). The author also points out the relative stability in all other groups as evidence against his argument of explaining the outcome of the 2016 election. It is at this point where the author turns to other explanations. He suggests that instead of coalition factors, the explanation might lie more in turnout, as the turnout for African American voters in 2016 was down from 2008 and 2012 (Zingher, 4). While this article is definitely mathematically sound, this is less true when it comes to other biases.

One thing I found persistent through this article is a slight bias to the democratic side. This is present in representing the democratic regression as positive as opposed to negative (Zingher, 2). There is no way to avoid a bias this way, especially if there are only two options and one is (literally) negative. Despite this, it still does question the view of only the white college graduates being a recent turnover to democrats. Whether or not this is because of a bias is up for debate. The numbers for WCG in Table 2 on page 4 are very similar between 2000 and 2016, so this calls into question what the article is saying about the democratic party. Using similar logic, we can say that between 2008 and 2016, the protestants have been leaning more towards the democratic side, even if it is very much still heavily on the

republican side and the difference was only by 5%. Despite the very few flaws, I definitely enjoyed this article.

This article was definitely very interesting for me. Coming from a more mathematically intensive major, it was refreshing to see some math in an article, even if it was limited. The concept of a regression and correlation coefficients was more familiar to me than a discussion about the constitution or public opinion. This made for a fairly engaging read. This allowed for me to better understand the argument and how it evolved throughout the article. This article also changed how I personally understood the 2016 election.

This article definitely better clarified the 2016 elections. Before I read this article, the election seemed to almost be a mystery. The talks of possible interference mystified it even more. However, by reading this article, it seems more and more that the election was more normal than anything else, and that previous elections were more the outliers. The explanation of declined African American turnout made so much more sense than anything I heard on the news about this election. Overall, this definitely had to be my favorite article from the semester so far, as it feels as if the clouds have been lifted on so many odd concepts.