SUMMARY

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This project sought to analyze voting behavior in six states in the United States. The two supervising professors authored a paper in December of 2006 entitled “Does the Media Matter? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effect of Newspapers on Voting Behavior and Political Opinions.” In this paper, they put forth a field experiment that gauged the effect of media bias on voting behavior. They found that a shift in public opinion, as measured by the likelihood to vote for a certain political party did in fact occur. The media influence in this experiment consisted of newspaper subscriptions to either the Washington Times or the Washington Post. This SRO project broadens the scope of the research question of media influence on political opinion by exploring on a state-level basis voting behavior according to political party.

My main task was data collection and manipulation. I obtained the state-level election results for the states from their respective state departments. The data we used were current precinct-level state election results (congressional and gubernatorial) from the years 2000, 2002, and 2006. Econometric analysis necessitated the data be input in a particular format, I was able to convert and manipulate the data within Stata so that each state-level office within each precinct would have a variable indicating whether a Democrat, Republican, or Other won. Further analysis on the clean data will be conducted.

Because of this project, I became acquainted with Stata, which I had relatively little experience working with. This is invaluable to me, as I will be undertaking a year-long senior essay in the upcoming school year and will invariably use Stata often. I was also interested in the topic and scope of the project. This is the first time I have been able to utilize economic analysis in a political science question.

I feel that the SRO experience could be strengthened in the future. Information and supervision during the project were mainly conducted through other research assistants. However, I enjoyed the opportunity to be able to investigate and examine a current research question through an economic lens.