Background on Brown's Taubman Center Poll
2017

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, the Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy at Brown University's Watson Institute determined to take a deep dive into the nuances distinguishing various corners of "red" and "blue" America. In what ways are certain communities caught in "bubbles" that distinguish them from the rest of the country? Which threads tie disparate demographic groups together? To answer those questions, the Taubman Poll identified five separate communities—each representative of one of the fifteen categories established in the American Communities Project—and partnered with Red America Blue America (RABA) Polling to take public opinion snapshots of how voters in each locale viewed important issues.

The counties studied in the Taubman Poll are generally representative of certain *types* of counties— meaning that they have demographic and ideological similarities to other counties around the country. For example, Kent County, Rhode Island is what might be termed a "Working Class Suburb" similar to Macomb County, Michigan, Stark County, Ohio, or Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. Like Kent County, each of these counties *switched* from the Democratic column in 2012 (Obama) to the Republican column in 2016 (Trump). Studying one county in each category can enhance our understanding of similar counties across the country.

Two of the counties Taubman and RABA selected to study *switched* from the Democratic column in 2012 (Obama) to the Republican column in 2016 (Trump). One *switched* from the Republican column in 2012 (Romney) to the Democratic column in 2016 (Clinton). One polled for the Democratic nominee in both elections and one for the Republican nominee in both elections.
Brown's Taubman Poll chose to focus their research on the following five communities:

- **Working Class Suburb (*Obama*/*Trump*)**: Kent County, RI
- **Diverse Rural South (*Obama*/*Trump*)**: An amalgam of Bladen County, NC, Richmond County, NC, Darlington County, SC and Calhoun County, SC
- **Upper Middle Class Exurb (*Romney*/*Clinton*)**: Chester County, PA
- **Wealthy First-Ring Suburb (*Obama*/*Clinton*):** Arapahoe County, CO
- **Rural Midwest (*Romney*/*Trump*):** An amalgam of Cass, Clay, Hardin, and Page counties in Iowa

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Kent County, RI
(*"Working Class Suburb"* moving from Blue to Red)

- Kent County, RI, is one among several dozen counties around the country that might be deemed a "working class suburb." Generally, these are counties situated near major Northeastern and Midwestern cities. Typically, they are less wealthy, less educated and less diverse than the cities nearby[1]. Counties with a similar profile:
  - Macomb County, MI
  - Luzerne County, PA
  - Stark County, OH
- Having voted for Obama in 2012, counties with similar demographics swung towards Trump in 2016. This presidential year, Donald Trump was the first Republican to win Kent County since Ronald Reagan in 1984[2]. The vote breakdown in the presidential elections from 1980-2016 is as shown[3]:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	46.7%, 38,336 votes	46.1%, 37,788 votes
2012	40.0%, 31,567 votes	57.7%, 45,564 votes
2008	40.2%, 33,780 votes	57.6%, 48,406 votes
2004	43.2%, 33,699 votes	54.9%, 42,830 votes
2000	34.2%, 25,291 votes	58.9%, 43,265 votes
1996	28.0%, 19,992 votes	57.3%, 41,018 votes
1992	30.6%, 25,217 votes	43.6%, 35,934 votes
1988	47.8%, 34,314 votes	51.8%, 37,221 votes
1984	56.2%, 40,427 votes	43.5%, 31,352 votes
1980	39.9%, 28,331votes	44.2%, 31,350 votes

Demographics and History
- According to statistics collected by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015, the racial demographics of Kent County are as follows: 93.1% white, 2.6% Asian, 2.0% African American, 4.4% Hispanic or Latino, 0.4% American Indian.[4]
- The median household income in the county was $64,383 and median income per person in the county was $34,824. Approximately 9% of the population lives at or below the poverty line.[5]
- Kent County's economy was once fueled by saw mills, iron factories, and textile factories. When many of the mills and factories closed down in the 1950s, the entire community suffered.

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[1] http://americancommunities.org/county-types/middle-suburbs/
[2] https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/rhode-island-the-most-elastic-state/
[3] http://uselectionatlas.org/
[4] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/44003#headnote-js-a
[5] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/44003#headnote-js-a

Bladen County, NC, Richmond County, NC, Darlington County, SC, and Calhoun County, SC
(The "*Diverse Rural South*" moving from Blue to Red)

- These counties, all located near the North Carolina/South Carolina border, are among hundreds of counties in the southeastern U.S. that have relatively large African American populations—even if they are still majority white. Communities in this region tend to be relatively isolated and frequently impoverished.[6]
- Obama won many of these counties in 2012—but Trump won many of them in 2016. Unlike in working class suburbs where many voters *switched* from the Democratic to the Republican columns, many presume that voter *swapping* flipped the diverse rural south from the Democratic to Republican columns.[7] This theory suggests that African American voters who cast ballots for Obama in 2012 did not vote in 2016, and white voters who cast ballots for Donald Trump in 2016 had not voted in the previous election.[8] The vote breakdown in these counties since 2008 are as follows:

Bladen County, NC:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	53.8%, 8,550 votes	44.4%, 7,058 votes
2012	48.6%, 7,748 votes	50.5%, 8,062 votes
2008	48.7.0%, 7,530 votes	50.7%, 7,846 votes

Richmond County, NC

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	53.7%, 10,383 votes	44.0%, 8,501 votes
2012	48.1%, 9,332 votes	51.0%, 9,904 votes
2008	48.8%, 9,424 votes	50.3%, 9,713 votes

Darlington County, SC

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	50.5%, 14,989 votes	46.8%, 13,888 votes
2012	47.9%, 14,434 votes	51.3%, 14,457 votes
2008	49.6%, 14,544 votes	49.4%, 14,505 votes

Calhoun County, SC

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	50.2%, 3,787 votes	47.3%, 3,573 votes
2012	47.3%, 3,707 votes	51.6%, 4,045 votes
2008	47.8%, 3,695 votes	51.3%, 3,970 votes

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[6] http://americancommunities.org/county-types/african-american-south/

[7] https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/clinton-trump-vote-maps-2016/

[8] https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/registered-voters-who-stayed-home-probably-cost-clinton-the-election/

Demographics and History:

- In 2015, Bladen County, NC's demographic breakdown was as follows: 60.8% white, 34.3% African American, 7.9% Hispanic/Latino, and 3% Native American.[9] Approximately 25% of the total population lives below the poverty line. Only 13.8% of the county's inhabitants hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Hurricane Matthew flooded much of the county in September/October 2016. Duke Energy's $500 million green energy expansion includes a new solar plant in Bladen County that promises to grow the local economy.[10]

- Estimates from 2015 suggest that Richmond County, NC's demographic breakdown was as follows: 62.1% white, 31.6% black, and 6.4% Hispanic or Latino. About 28% of the population lives below the poverty line. Only 12.8% of the population possesses a bachelor's degree or higher.

- U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that Darlington County, SC's demographic breakdown was as follows: 56.5% white, 41.2% black, 0.4% Native American, 0.6% Asian. 21% of the population lives below the poverty line. A small number of residents have attained a college education or higher, 16.9%. [11]

- As of 2015, Calhoun County, SC's demographic breakdown was as follows: 55.9% white, 41.7% black, and 3.2% Hispanic or Latino. 21 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Nearly 17% of inhabitants hold a bachelor's degree or higher. [12]

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[9] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/37017,44003

[10] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/45017

[11] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/45031

[12] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/45017

Chester County, PA
(*"Upper Middle Class Exurb"* moving from Red to Blue)

- Chester County is one of the more than 200 counties nationwide that are situated on the fringe of major metropolitan centers. Exurban counties are characteristically wealthy, and a greater proportion of their populations hold college degrees. They typically boast white-collar companies in the technology, medical, and finance sectors.[13]
- Counties with a similar profile: Fort Bend County, TX
- Romney did very well with upper middle class exurban voters in 2012—but Trump lost many of these counties in 2016.
- Like many exurbs, Chester County has traditionally voted Republican. Obama was the first Democrat to win the county in 2008 since 1964.[14] Although Pennsylvania went to Trump in 2016, Chester County switched into the Democratic column, with Clinton defeating Trump in the county by 9.4%. The vote breakdown in the presidential elections from 1980-2016 is as shown:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	42.5%, 116,114 votes	51.9%, 141,682 votes
2012	49.4%, 124,840 votes	49.2%, 124,311 votes
2008	44.8%, 114,421 votes	54.0%, 137,833 votes
2004	52.0%, 120,306 votes	47.5%, 109,708 votes
2000	53.3%, 100,080 votes	43.7%, 82,047 votes
1996	48.7%, 77,029 votes	41.0%, 64,783 votes
1992	43.7%, 74,002 votes	35.2%, 59,643 votes
1988	67.0%, 93,522 votes	32.1%, 44,853 votes
1984	70.1%, 92,221 votes	29.6%, 38,870 votes
1980	60.9%, 73,046 votes	28.6%, 34,307 votes

Demographics and History

- Chester County is the highest-income county in Pennsylvania and the 24th highest county in the nation. As of the 2015 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the county was 86.4% white, 6.4% black, and 67.3% Hispanic/Latino. The median income per household estimated in 2015 was $85,976. 6% of inhabitants lived under the poverty line in 2015. Approximately 50% of Chester County's inhabitants hold a bachelor's degree or higher.[15]
- Chester County, though a traditionally rural area, is now the fastest-growing county in the Delaware Valley and one of the fastest growing in the entire Northeast. The county is home to several significant banking groups, technology corporations, and other white-collar companies that have their bases in the Malvern borough (i.e. Liberty Property Trust, Vishay Intertechnology, Siemens Healthcare, Ricoh Americas Corporation, etc.). Likewise, Customers Bank is located in Phoenixville. West Chester is home to the corporate headquarters of VWR International, CBM, and Synthes Medical Company, among others.

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[13] http://americancommunities.org/county-types/exurbs/
[14] http://www.cnbc.com/2016/11/08/in-a-well-off-pennsylvania-county-voters-are-divided-on-election-day.html
[15] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/BZA010214/42029

Arapahoe County, CO
(*"Wealthy First-Ring Suburbs"* becoming increasingly Blue)

- Like similar wealthy first-ring suburbs, Arapahoe County, CO is densely populated, diverse, and boasts some of the surrounding metropolitan region's wealthiest neighborhoods. In 2012, Obama dominated these counties—and Clinton maintained and often expanded that lead.[16] Counties with a similar profile:
    o Montgomery County, MD
    o Snohomish County, WA
    o Pima County, AZ
- Arapahoe County voted for the Republican ticket in every election from 1960 to 2004 (the only exception being 1964). However, in 2008 Obama won the county in his first election by nearly 13 points, and Clinton carried the county by more than 14 points in 2016. The vote breakdown in the presidential elections from 1980-2016 is as shown[17]:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	38.63%, 117,053 votes	52.76%, 159,885 votes
2012	43.99%, 125,588 votes	53.90%, 153,905 votes
2008	42.78%, 113,868 votes	55.69%, 148,224 votes
2004	51.42%, 119,475 votes	47.45%, 110,262 votes
2000	51.47%, 97,768 votes	43.49%, 82,614 votes
1996	50.78%, 82,778 votes	41.90%, 68,306 votes
1992	39.26%, 72,221 votes	36.21%, 66,607 votes
1988	60.23%, 95,926 votes	38.37%, 61,113 votes
1984	71.91%, 107,556 votes	26.67%, 39,891 votes
1980	62.19%, 79,594 votes	23.55%, 30,148 votes

Demographics and History
- Arapahoe County is the third-most populous county in Colorado.[18] As of 2015, estimates suggest that the county is 77.9% white, 11% black, 5.9% Asian, and 18.9% identify as Hispanic/Latino.[19]
- The median household income, estimated in 2015, was $63,265. 9.2% of the population lives in poverty, and 40.1% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.[20]
- One city within Arapahoe County, Greenwood Village, has a median household income $124,441.[21] The city of Cherry Hills Village's median family income reaches above $200,000.[22]

[16] http://americancommunities.org/county-types/urban-suburbs/

[17] http://uselectionatlas.org

[18] http://www.colorado-demographics.com/counties_by_population

[19] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/08005,00

[20] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/08005,00

[21] http://www.city-data.com/city/Greenwood-Village-Colorado.html

[22] http://www.city-data.com/city/Cherry-Hills-Village-Colorado.html

An amalgam of Cass, Clay, Hardin, and Page Counties in Iowa
(Counties that represent the "*Rural Midwest*" becoming increasingly Red)

- Cass, Clay, Hardin, and Page counties in Iowa are indicative of the hundreds of counties that constitute the Rural Midwest. They are overwhelmingly white, rural and isolated.[23] Some of the Rural Midwest has moved beyond pure agriculture; some counties boast incorporated industry, and others are home to n agricultural plants and state prisons that employ sizable portions of the population.
- Romney won most counties in the rural Midwest in 2012—but Trump padded that lead considerably. Although many of these counties saw their populations fall between 2012 to 2016, Trump drew many more voters from these counties.[24] The vote breakdown in recent presidential elections is as shown[25]:

Cass County:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	66.82%, 4,761 votes	27.38%, 1,951 votes
2012	58.53%, 4,217 votes	39.67%, 2,858 votes
2008	54.49%, 4,006 votes	43.68%, 3,211 votes

Clay County:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	68.20%, 5,877 votes	26.10%, 2,249 votes
2012	58.23%, 4,951 votes	39.81%, 3,385 votes
2008	51.83%, 4,355 votes	46.72%, 3,925 votes

Hardin County:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	61.57%, 5,254 votes	32.66%, 2,787 votes
2012	52.48%, 4,670 votes	45.80%, 4,075 votes
2008	48.70%, 4,315 votes	49.58%, 4,393 votes

Page County:

Year	Republican Candidate	Democratic Candidate
2016	69.46%, 4,893 votes	25.65%, 1,807 votes
2012	61.42%, 4,348 votes	36.91%, 2,613 votes
2008	59.12%, 4,351 votes	39.41%, 2,900 votes

Demographics and History

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[23] http://americancommunities.org/county-types/rural-middle-america/

[24] http://americancommunities.org/2017/01/how-trump-became-president/

[25] http://uselectionatlas.org

- Cass County's demographic makeup is as follows: 97.6% white, 0.3% black, 0.5% Native American, 0.4% Asian, 0.8% two or more races, and 2.4% Hispanic/Latino. Median household income is at $43,750. 13.9% of the population lives below the poverty line. 19.9% of inhabitants holding a bachelor's degree or higher.[26]
- Clay County's demographic makeup is as follows: 97.2% white, 0.8% black, 0.3% Native American, 0.7% Asian, 1.0% two or more races, and 3.3% Hispanic/Latino. The median household income is $50,389. 11.6% of the population lives below the poverty line. 19.3% of Clay County's inhabitants have a bachelor's degree or higher.[27] Great Lakes Airlines was once headquartered in Clay County's Summit Township, but the company relocated in 2009 to Wyoming.[28] Eaton Manufacturing, which makes hydraulic pumps and motors, was once the biggest employer in Spencer, employing as many as 800 people. The company is planning to shut down its Spencer plant in September 2017, with a total of 210 layoffs.[29]
- Hardin County's demographic makeup is as follows: 96.1% white, 1.6% black, 0.4% Native American, 0.6% Asian, 1.3% two or more races, and 4.3% Hispanic/Latino. The median household income is $51,019. 9.6% of the population lives below the poverty line. 18.2% of the county's inhabitants have a bachelor's degree or higher.[30] Hardin County is one of ten counties in Northern Iowa to benefit from a Prestage Foods pork processing plant that will create a total of 3,072 jobs.[31]
- Page County's demographic makeup is as follows: 93.9% white, 2.6% black, 0.8% Native American, 1.2% Asian, 1.5% two or more races, and 2.9% Hispanic/Latino. Median household income is $43,912. 15.7% of the population lives below the poverty line. 20% of Page County's inhabitants hold a bachelor's degree or higher.[32] The city of Clarinda, which opened a new Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing in March 2017,[33] was home to one of the largest mental health centers in Iowa until its closure in 2015.[34]

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[26] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/19029,08005,00

[27] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/19041,19029,08005,00

[28] http://www.worldjournals.org/articles/eng/Summit_Township,_Clay_County,_Iowa

[29] http://siouxcityjournal.com/business/local/eaton-to-shutter-spencer-iowa-plant-next-year/article_d0b68446-c355-52dc-abcc-11114c429965.html

[30] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/19083,19041,19029,08005,00

[31] http://www.prestagefarms.com/prestage-foods/prestage-plant-net-gain-iowa/

[32] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/19145,19083,19041,19029,08005,00

[33] http://www.clarindaherald.com/news/local/iwcc-launches-advanced-manufacturing-program/article_fa2632d0-14ac-11e7-9cc8-93390e024f9b.html

[34] http://www.omaha.com/news/iowa/clarinda-struggles-to-fill-former-mental-health-institute/article_36224419-5f05-5bcf-8f12-ee2032f5f5ff.html