RED AMERICA, BLUE AMERICA?

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Abstract

It has been widely argued that partisanship in the United States has become divided between red regions and blue regions, or more specifically, between rural, Republican areas and urban, Democratic areas. Political analysts have discussed the importance of understanding the differences in ideological regions to be able to predict what party will win the majority in the states and what seats that party will win. Because of the lack of available regional data for the most recent presidential election, this paper will show the survey analysis from ANES Time Series study 2012. Using SPSS, the available urban/rural split data will be compared with a number of variables including votes, race, gender, age, etc. When examining the data, a stronger and more interesting relationship came out of the data, that the 2012 election abandoned all traditional voting norms and instead focused on cultural differences between the candidates, essentially proving that the 2012 election was all about race.

Research Question

Does type of Area of Living (rural, urban, suburban) influence how Americans vote?

Literature Review

- *Scalia and Johnson (2017)* Says that Rural America is term that is typically used to describe a remarkably diverse college of places encompassing nearly 75 percent of the U.S. land area.
- United States Division of Agriculture classifies 1,167 metro counties and 1,976 non metro counties in the United States.
- *Blankenship and Parker (2015)* Says the red-blue election maps mask a rural-urban divide within states.
- Josh Kron, *the Atlantic*, the split between urban and rural is often running along party lines and how it can cause political polarization within the state.

Data and Methods

- This paper uses the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) American National Election Study 2012 Time Series Study (ICPSR 35157) which is a pre- and post-election survey. The study maintains and extends the ANES time-series 'core' by collecting data on Americans' basic political beliefs, allegiances, and behaviors, which are so critical to a general understanding of politics that they are monitored at every election, no matter the nature of the specific campaign or the broader setting. The variables that were used in this paper were:
  - Presidential Vote (POSTVOTE_PRESVTWHO)
  - Type of Area (DWELL_BLOCK_URBAN)
  - Gender (GENDER_RESPONDENT_X: SUMMARY)
  - Age (DEM_AGE_R_X)
  - Marital Status (DEM_MARITAL).
- The The only rural urban variable available on ICPSR ANES 2012 Time Series study was the question "Is block urban?" and this variable was the only option available to me. This has issues because the time series survey had 5914 respondents and for this variable 3860 or 65.3 percent were inapplicable and missing, as shown in Table 1. This hinders my study because the information was not complete and the relationship with the other variables would have been more significant if I had adequate access to accurate and robust rural urban data. But as stated before the 2012 election was our only option because of the choice by ANES to not do a rural urban variable for the 2016 election. This is a critical error because out of any election the 2016 election saw a rise of rural Americans turnout for the election and was an extremely divisive election. One of the reasons that 65.3 percent of this data might be missing is error on the Face to face interviews that ANES used in this study series. For the first time in the ANES Time Series history, face-to-face interviewing was supplemented in 2012 with data collection on the Internet. So this might have caused the error in collection of data.

Table 1: Vote for 2012 Presidential Candidates Regressed on a Range of Variables

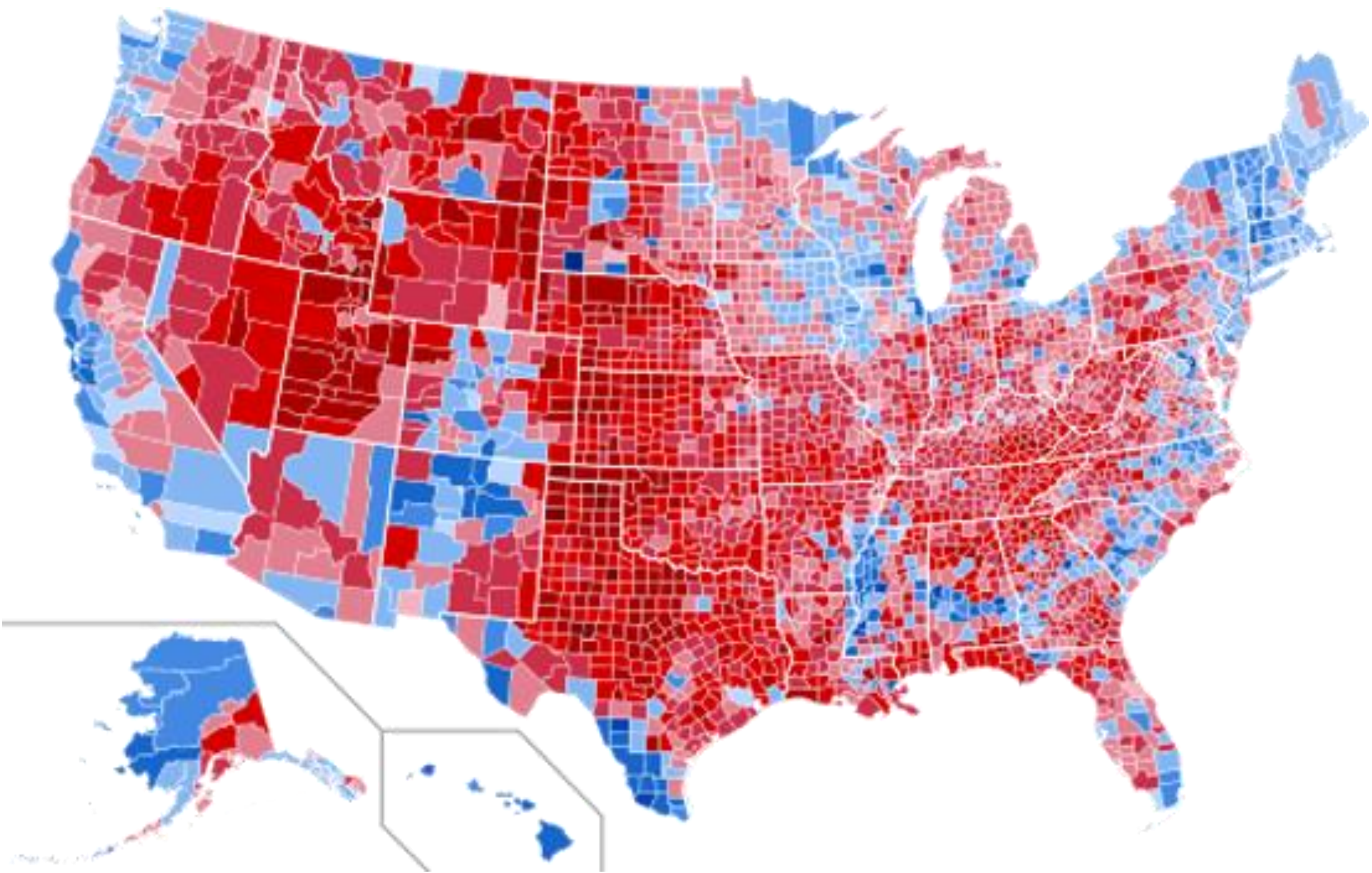|	
Type of Area (1= Rural; 2= Suburban; 3=Urban)	-.02 (.02)
Race: (0 = White; 1 = African American)	-.49*** (.03)
Gender: (1= Male; 2 = Female)	-.03 (.03)
Age: (0= 17-29; 1=30-39; 2= 40-49; 3= 50-59; 4= 60-69; 5= 70 and older)	-.02 (.01)
Marital Status: (0= Married; 1= Never married)	-.13*** (.03)
Constant	1.68*** (.07)
F-Test Number of Cases R²	78.531*** 904 .3

p<.01** , p<.05*

Table 2 Frequency of Type of Area

Rural	433 7.3% (21.1%)
Suburban	1072 18.1% (52.2%)
Urban	549 9.3% (26.7%)
Total Valid Data	2054 34.7% (100%)
Missing	3860 65.3%
Total Data	5914 100%

In parentheses is the percent Valid data

Table 3: Crosstabulation Vote for Presidential Candidate in the 2012 election by Type of Area

	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Obama	135 55%	443 68%	276 84%
Romney	111 45%	211 32%	53 16%

Chi-Square = 57.9**

Phi = .22**

Gamma = -.4**

* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001;

Table 4: Crosstabulation Vote for Presidential Candidate in the 2012 election by Type of Area by Race, White

	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Obama	81 45%	133 44%	42 46%
Romney	98 55%	168 56%	36 54%

Chi-Square = 2.37

Phi = .06

Gamma = -.06

* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001;

Table 5: Crosstabulation Vote for Presidential Candidate in the 2012 election by Type of Area by Race, Black

	Rural	Suburban	Urban
Obama	20 100%	189 97%	152 98%
Romney	0 0%	5 3%	3 2%

Chi-Square = .64

Phi = .04

Gamma = -.02

* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001;

Conclusion

- The findings of this study indicate that it was race above everything else that determined the voting preference of citizens.
- This was not the ideal election to study on this phenomenon because of the lack of available data and the lack of appeal for the Republican candidate. This study would have been much stronger if there was data available for the 2016 election from ANES.
- More research needs to be done on the split between rural and urban and how that affects American politics.
- The 2020 Democratic candidate will need to reinvigorate the Obama coalition if they want to pull out the votes that Obama did in the 2008 and 2012 election season.
- The 2020 election will again show the importance of Rural vs. Urban voting patterns and how if not addressed properly it can decide the election.