

Suburban Places and Political Opinion: Integrating the American Community Survey and the National Suburban Survey

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Background: Politics and Suburban Typologies

- ▶ Suburban communities are diverse. How is this diversity linked to political diversity?
- ▶ Development of new suburban typologies (Mikelbank, 2004)
- ▶ Policy-oriented analysis of suburban diversity's implications for regional policy (Orfield [2002]; Pastor [2001, 2009]; Brookings)
 - What politically differentiates suburbs from cities and from one another?
- ▶ Political science research on the effects of suburban location at the local and national levels (Gainsborough, 2001; Oliver, 2001)
- ▶ Enhancing poll data by sorting respondents according to suburban type

Data: The National Suburban Survey (NSS)

- ▶ Conducted in four waves (2008-2010) by Princeton Survey Research Associates International
- ▶ Instruments/questionnaires developed in consultation with PSRAI and an advisory committee
- ▶ Surveyed 1000 suburban residents and 549 urban and rural residents between September 15-28, 2010
- ▶ Survey focused on confidence in government, opinions on current issues, economic condition, and community problems
- ▶ Land line and cell phone; English and Spanish
- ▶ Reports available at http://www.hofstra.edu/academics/CSS/css_poll.html.

Data: The American Community Survey (ACS)

- ▶ American Community Survey (ACS)
 - 2005-2009 data for U.S. places inside metropolitan areas (OMB definition), outside of principal cities
 - Initially included county subdivisions from “strong MCD states” that included no more than one (whole or partial) incorporated place

Methods

- ▶ Linking the datasets
 - Used self-reported ZIP Codes from the NSS and Missouri Census Data Center MABLE/GeoCorr crosswalk to assign survey respondents to relevant places and county subdivisions
 - About 1/4 of suburban respondents “lost” in non-place areas – currently adding additional subdivisions to assign more cases and provide consistency across regions

- ▶ Suburban types
 - Higher / lower income suburbs (vs. median household income in places / subdivisions)
 - Higher / lower poverty rates (vs. median poverty rate)
 - Majority minority / Majority non-Latino white
 - Faster / slower-growing suburbs (vs. median population growth rate)
 - More / less dense suburbs (population / square mile)
 - Older / newer suburbs (median year constructed before or after 1960)

Satisfaction / Approval 1

	Urban (1)	Higher-income suburban (2)	Lower-income suburban (3)
“All in all, are you [satisfied] with the way things are going in this country?” (Q1)	.346 (.0216)	.239* (.0230)	.257 (.0292)
“Do you [approve] of the way that Barack Obama is handling his job as president?” (Q2)	.622 (.0227)	.457* (.0272)	.498* (.0339)

*significantly different from column (1), $p < .05$; †significantly different from column (2), $p < .05$

Satisfaction / Approval 2

	Urban (1)	Majority non- Latino white suburban (2)	Majority- minority suburban (3)
“All in all, are you [satisfied] with the way things are going in this country?” (Q1)	.346 (.0216)	.237* (.0191)	.334 (.0502)
“Do you [approve] of the way that Barack Obama is handling his job as president?” (Q2)	.622 (.0227)	.446* (.0229)	.620† (.0500)

*significantly different from column (1), $p < .05$; †significantly different from column (2), $p < .05$

Confidence in Institutions 1

“In general, how much confidence do you have in...” (Rated 1-4)	Urban (1)	Low-poverty suburban (2)	High-poverty suburban (3)
“...the federal government?” (Q3a)	2.55 (.0381)	2.51 (.0475)	2.45 (.0586)
“...the local government?” (Q3c)	2.72 (.0395)	2.82 (.0459)	2.60† (.0599)
“...your local public schools?” (Q3d)	2.82 (.0448)	3.02 (.0545)	2.96 (.0605)

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Confidence in Institutions 2

“In general, how much confidence do you have in...”	Urban (1)	Majority non-Latino white (2)	Majority-minority (3)
“...the federal government?” (Q3a)	2.54 (.0382)	2.46 (.0396)	2.62 (.0987)
“...the local government?” (Q3c)	2.72 (.0395)	2.72 (.0397)	2.75 (.0976)
“...your local public schools?” (Q3d)	2.82 (.0448)	3.03 (.0437)	2.83 (.108)

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Hot topics, September 2010

	Urban (1)	Majority non- Latino white (2)	Majority- minority (3)
“[...]Given what you know about the new health care law, do you have a generally [favorable] opinion of it?” (Rated 1 to 4; Q14)	2.46 (.0525)	2.11* (.0542)	2.48† (.121)
“Do you think the U.S. should keep troops in Afghanistan until the situation has stabilized[...]?” (Q11)	.433 (.0225)	.472 (.0223)	.357 (.0492)

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Economic condition (HH/neighborhood)

	Urban (1)	Majority non- Latino white (2)	Majority- minority (3)
“How would you rate your personal financial situation?” (Rated 1-4; Q22)	2.30 (.0400)	2.40 (.0386)	2.14† (.0900)
“How would you say your personal financial situation compares to two years ago?” (Rated -1 to +1; Q23)	+.0097 (.0321)	-.175* (.0330)	-.211* (.0755)
“Over the course of the next year, will your finances [get better or worse]?” (Rated -2 to +2; Q24)	+.6027 (.0476)	+.316* (.0500)	+.579 (.109)
“Since Sept. 2007, have you or someone you know lost a house due to foreclosure?” (Q29)	.343 (.0210)	.356 (.0210)	.528*† (.0500)

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Community Problems

	Urban (1)	Higher-income suburban (2)	Lower-income suburban (3)
“Crime, drugs, and violence” are problems in the community (Q31a)	.693 (.0202)	.490* (.0262)	.646† (.0308)
“Public schools do not provide quality education” is a problem in the community (Q31c)	.525 (.0226)	.321* (.0250)	.485† (.0332)
“Abandoned and run-down homes” are problems in the community (Q31e)	.457 (.0221)	.276* (.0234)	.504† (.0324)

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What about age, density, and growth?

- ▶ Few significant differences found between these types of suburbs (so far)
- ▶ Most significant differences (in political opinion, economic condition, and community problems) occur between cities and fast-growing, less-dense, and post-1960 suburbs
 - This may be an effect of regional variations
- ▶ Slow-growing/declining, more-dense, and pre-1960 suburbs tend to occupy an intermediate position on most survey items

Next steps

- ▶ Future directions
 - More county subdivisions, more significance
 - Cluster analysis
 - Measuring overlap/correlation between place types
 - Importance of individual- vs. community-level factors
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