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Sprawl, Spatial Location, and Politics

How Ideological Identification Tracks the Built Environment

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This study explores how spatial characteristics commonly associated with suburban sprawl (including density, reliance on the automobile, neighborhood age, and commuting patterns) help predict voting patterns and individual ideological orientation. I find that, at the county level, greater reliance on automobile commuting and younger housing stock were strong predictors of greater support for the Republican candidate in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, controlling for demographic factors. Using the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS), I also find that greater automobile reliance and younger housing stock, measured at the census tract level, are strong predictors of more conservative ideological orientation among individuals, controlling for other individual and contextual factors. I go on to explore three possible mechanisms driving the relationship between sprawling spatial environments and conservative political outlooks: self-selection, shifting self-interest based on spatial location within the metropolitan area, and shifting social perceptions resulting from the character of the built environment.

Keywords: *suburban sprawl; political geography; ideological identification; neighborhood form; voting patterns*

The relative concentration of Democratic voters in traditional urban areas and Republican voters in suburban areas has become an accepted

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political fact among commentators and political operatives in both parties (Egan, 2006; Lang & Sanchez, 2006). Republican strategists in particular have deliberately targeted voters in newer suburbs thought to be especially receptive to conservative candidates, whereas astute Democratic strategists have sought to win over voters in older suburbs located near central cities. Recent academic research in both the United States and Canada demonstrates that this spatial turn is well founded: Scholars such as Gainsborough (2001) and Walks (2004, 2006) have demonstrated a robust, increasingly important relationship between suburban residence and conservative political orientation in both nations.

This article presents additional evidence confirming the strength of this relationship between conservatism and suburbia in the U.S. context while addressing three additional questions of relevance to political scientists and political practitioners alike. First, given the roughness and lack of subtlety of the traditional central city–suburban distinction, are there more precise measures of the degree of suburbanization (or "sprawl," in common parlance) that can be used to specify which features of urban environments are most substantially related to residents' political ideology and which are not? Second, do the specific spatial attributes of particular neighborhoods help predict individual ideology and local voting patterns independent of individual- and community-level demographic patterns? Third, if central elements of suburbanization, or sprawl, are indeed strongly linked to political ideology, why is this the case?

The article proceeds in three steps. First, I introduce four specific measures of community spatial context derived from the 2000 U.S. Census—population density, transportation mode, neighborhood age, and commuting patterns—and examine the correlation between these measures (taken at the county level) and voting patterns using county-level data from the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. Here I show that these measures of spatial context are strongly correlated with partisan vote composition, even when controlling for a variety of demographic factors as well as regional location. Spatial characteristics commonly linked with increased sprawl are, on balance, associated with more conservative voting patterns.

Second, I examine the impact of these same measures of suburbanization, measured at the census tract level, on individual political ideology using the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) of more than 29,700 U.S. residents. Again, I show that spatial contexts associated with increased sprawl are strong predictors of individuals identifying themselves as conservative. Of interest, the traditional central city–suburban distinction per se turns out to be a weak predictor of ideological identification relative

to more nuanced measures of spatial context (such as neighborhood age and transportation patterns).

Third, I consider three possible explanations for the observed relationship between higher levels of sprawl and increased conservatism: that liberal voters self-select into urban neighborhoods (and vice versa), that residents of suburban environments have (or believe they have) different political interests from residents of urban environments, and that the spatial attributes associated with more suburban environments steer residents to a view of the social world more conducive to a conservative political outlook. Using the SCCBS, I provide evidence indicating that whereas self-selection is indeed important, it likely does not account for all of the observed relationship between suburbanization and conservatism.

The Intersection of Spatial Location and Ideology: Perspectives From Political Theory and Political Science

The political significance of the social-spatial patterns that characterize American metropolitan regions has received growing attention from both political theorists and empirical political scientists in recent years. Among political theorists, Young (1990), Bickford (2000), Kohn (2003, 2004), and L. King (2004a, 2004b) have offered interesting accounts of the nature of urban experience as well as important critiques of dominant patterns of spatial development in the United States.

For the purposes of this article, Bickford's (2000) work is especially helpful because she forwards several interesting hypotheses about the effects of space on the formation of political consciousness. Contending that "the architecture of our urban and suburban lives provides a hostile environment for the development of democratic imagination and participation," Bickford argues that the demographics, spatial orientation, and institutional setting of American suburbs have created quasi-privatized environments that "attempt to root out from the lived experiences of the privileged both multiplicity and its attendant uncontrollability" (pp. 356, 362). Whereas traditional urban spaces consist of an "outside togetherness" in which strangers necessarily comingle, suburban environments are designed to limit the free flow of strangers in and out of places and to limit experiences of "fear, discomfort, or uncertainty." Bickford cites gated communities, common interest developments (CIDs), private shopping malls, and upscale gentrified urban areas as examples of spaces designed on the principles of "seclusion and control." Older urban neighborhoods, in contrast, are said to be more "fuzzy and permeable." Bickford argues that life and work in this new suburban architecture has significant political effects:

> The meaning and experience of "being in public" changes quite significantly in such a context. We are no longer moving with and negotiating around diverse strangers in a shared material world, but rather within a certain kind of bounded space that determines who and what we perceive. And who we "happen" to see regularly as we move through the world has an influence on who we think of as citizens and who we think to engage with as citizens—in other words, whose perspectives must be taken into account when making political decisions. Thus, we endanger the possibility of democratic politics when we settle in these enclosures, particularly when we become so accustomed to the walls that we forget that they are there, for then we begin to imagine that "the world" consists only of those inside our gates. (p. 363)

In practical political terms, Bickford's (2000) assessment leads to the prediction that such suburban spaces tend to generate politically conservative outlooks, that is, outlooks not inclined to challenge the "inegalitarian" and exclusionary features of contemporary metropolitan areas that Bickford deplores. Notably, in Bickford's account, what is important is not simply the demographics of suburbia—such as the fact that suburbs are generally less racially diverse than cities—but the organization of space itself. Space can be organized in such a way as to limit interactions between strangers, constrain incursions from "outsiders," and discourage unscripted, spontaneous activity. On this view, it is not just the demographics of suburbia but also their spatial construction that produce politically significant effects.

Bickford's (2000) theoretical arguments have found empirical support in case study work on social attitudes in six American gated communities conducted by Low (2003). Low's fieldwork suggests that fear of others motivates many residents to choose to move to gated communities, and that the structure of such communities themselves reinforce a sense of fearfulness toward the outside world. Noting that "architecture and the layout of towns and suburbs provide concrete, anchoring points of people's everyday life" that "reinforce our ideas about society as large," Low contends that "the gated community contributes to a geography of social relations that produces fear and anxiety simply by locating a person's home and place identity in a secured enclave, gated, guarded, and locked" (p. 231). The upshot of this qualitative work again is that at least some sorts of suburban environments contribute to and reinforce social attitudes generally consistent with a conservative political outlook.

Turning to more quantitative research, many older studies by political scientists and sociologists attributed differences in voting patterns and social attitudes between cities and suburbs to either individual-level demographic factors or regional differences (Wirt, Rainbowitz, Walter, & Hensler,

1972; Zikmund, 1967). Gainsborough (2001) largely overturned this literature by presenting strong empirical evidence for the proposition that at least in contemporary American politics, spatial location has an independent effect on political outlook. Using data from the National Election Study during the 1988-1992 period, Gainsborough found that suburban residence was a consistent, statistically significant predictor of more conservative social attitudes on issues such as support for aid to cities, aid to African Americans, and increased government spending and social services, even after controlling for a wide range of demographic factors as well as party identification.

Walks (2004) has demonstrated that the link between suburbanization and conservative political outlooks also holds for Canadian metropolitan areas. Using the Canadian Election Survey, Walks found that residence in a central city was a significant predictor of support for the left-wing New Democratic Party in both the 1984 and 2000 Canadian elections, controlling for other demographic factors (including religion and region). Walks also found that by 2000, central city residence and especially outer suburban residence were fairly consistent predictors of more liberal and more conservative attitudes, respectively, relative to residence in an inner suburb. In a follow-up study, Walks (2006) conducted interviews with more than 200 Toronto-area residents from a variety of political persuasions with the aim of exploring the underlying reasons why conservative voters are disproportionately located in suburban environments. Walks concluded that both processes of self-selection and "effects of local experience" were at work in producing a distinctly suburban political outlook.

Although important and interesting work has established a general relationship between suburbanization and political conservatism, we do not know enough about which specific features of suburbia matter most in predicting political ideology. In particular, no study yet has systematically tested the impact of the distinctive spatial features of suburban communities while also controlling for a full range of demographic variables. Most previous accounts of the impact of local context on political behavior place primary emphasis on demographic factors (i.e., Huckfeldt, 1986; Lang & Sanchez, 2006), with relatively little consideration to the possibility raised by Bickford and others that the built environment itself may be substantially related to the formation of political ideology. The present study examines that possibility by exploring the relationship between spatial context and two measures of political orientation: local voting patterns in national elections and individual-level ideological identification.[1]

Disaggregating the Components of Suburbanization and Sprawl

For decades, political scientists examining the impact of spatial location on civic and political behavior have used the traditional distinctions between central city, suburb, and rural areas, sometimes further distinguishing suburbs on the basis of size and proximity to the city (i.e. McKee & Shaw, 2003; Verba & Nie, 1972). Limitations of this categorization of places have long been evident. First, as more polycentric metropolitan areas develop, the distinction between central cities and large suburbs becomes less clear, leading to difficult measurement issues. Similar issues arise in distinguishing "inner" from "outer" suburbs and in distinguishing outer suburbs from neighboring rural areas. Second, suburbs themselves are now far more diverse and complex than a simple "inner" versus "outer" distinction implies (Bagley, Mokhtarian, & Kitamura, 2002; Lang & Sanchez, 2006). Third, the traditional distinctions only provide limited leverage on the notion of sprawl, a particular form of suburban development that has attracted increasing attention in the past decade, and the question of whether sprawl affects political orientation independent of the general effects of suburban residence.

For all of these reasons, this study employs four distinct, continuous measures of spatial context taken from the U.S. Census: the proportion of workers in one's locality who commute out of town for work, population density, the proportion of solo automobile commuters in the locality, and neighborhood age. Taken together, these measures correspond well to the common understanding of sprawl as new, low-density, automobile-oriented developments located predominantly on the fringes of metropolitan areas (Flint, 2006; Leinberger, 2007). Each measure is interesting in it own right, however. Disaggregating the concepts of suburbanization and sprawl in this fashion allows us to distinguish which aspects of neighborhood spatial environments are most strongly related to political identity and which are not, without resorting to the questionable assumption that the various components of sprawl all have similar effects.

Commuting patterns, or "boundedness" in the usage of Verba and Nie (1972), refers to the degree to which residents of a given locale work and live in the same community. Out-of-town commuting is far more common in suburbs than in central cities; residence in a place with fewer out-of-town commuters (i.e., a more bounded place) indicates that one resides in a locality that is functioning as a relatively independent economic unit. (In the SCCBS, the correlation between boundedness and a dichotomous measure of residence in a Census-designated central city is $r = .82$ among metropolitan

area residents.)[2] If the simple fact of residing in an economically independent locale is responsible for the connection between urban residence and liberal political orientation, then we would expect higher levels of boundedness to be associated with more liberal political views.

Population density refers simply to the concentration of person per square mile of land in a given area (in this study, either the county or the census tract). Low density is a defining feature of most concepts of sprawl, and a long tradition of social science has examined the relationship between population density and a variety of outcomes. It often has been theorized that placing people—strangers—together in close proximity and requiring them to share space and public goods shapes social behavior. Wirth (1938) argued that density was conducive to a sense of tolerance, and L. King (2004b) suggests that dense urban environments may lead residents to an understanding of the ways their interests are intertwined with one another, and hence a recognition of the necessity of social cooperation and democratic politics. Because higher density is the most obvious feature of traditional urban environments, it makes sense to test whether density is responsible for observed differences in political orientation across U.S. metropolitan areas.[3]

Reliance on the automobile, measured here as the proportion of workers in one's census tract or county who drive alone to work, is also a common feature of most definitions of sprawl. Differences in transit use patterns reflect striking differences in the shape of urban and suburban built environments: places with higher levels of walking, bicycling, and bus use tend to feature traditional, highly connected street grids, whereas more car-dominated settings feature more insular street patterns, with traffic between neighborhoods concentrated on high-speed connecting streets (Frank, Engelke, & Schmid, 2003). Numerous urban scholars have argued that places organized around facilitating automobile rather than multimodal travel diminish public street life, informal interactions with strangers, and political engagement (Freeman, 2001; Lofland, 1998; Nozzi, 2003). It also has been argued that the experience of transportation may affect the formation of social attitudes, with commuting by car thought to promote a more individualistic mind-set, whereas public transit promotes an appreciation for public goods and community concerns (Sewell, 1991; cited by Walks, 2004).

Neighborhood age, measured here as the median year the housing units in a given county or census tract were constructed, helps capture the difference between older places built around traditional urban design principles and newer neighborhoods built on the suburban fringe. As noted by Oliver (2001), use of this measure helps us distinguish in a relatively fine-tuned manner between older and newer urban settings.

Because these last two measures are relatively unfamiliar, further elaboration on the way these measures capture features of the metropolitan environment that might influence political ideology is appropriate. The presumption is that both of these measures capture variations in the on-the-ground spatial layout of neighborhoods. To validate this presumption, Google Earth was used to collect photographs of hundreds of neighborhoods represented in the SCCBS, sorted as relatively sprawling (more recently built, more car dependent) and nonsprawling (older, less car dependent). Not surprisingly, the nonsprawling locations tended to be located near (or inside) central cities and to be denser than the nonsprawling locales; they also were far more likely to be organized as traditional street grids with many points of accessibility to any given location (see Figure 1).[4] Suburban examples of older, less car-dependent places include Cicero, Illinois; Quincy, Massachusettes; and Compton, California. More sprawling places, in contrast, were far more likely to consist of separated subdivisions with winding, unconnected roads and frequent cul-de-sacs connected with one another by large arterials (see Figure 2). Of importance, some of these are located within the city limits of central cities. Good examples of sprawling places include suburban Guilford County, North Carolina (outside Greensboro); Lakeville, Minnesota, south of Minneapolis–St. Paul; and zip code 46237, located south of Indianapolis within Marion County, Indiana.

This categorization of places according to neighborhood age and reliance on the automobile maps quite well onto Bickford's (2000) description of suburban locations organized primarily around private purposes and lacking the sense of the "public" or being "outside together" associated with cities. Although notions such as outside togetherness are inherently difficult to operationalize, these measures are reasonably good instruments for quantifying the contrast between classically urban and suburban spatial settings and as such should provide a reasonably strong test of the general hypothesis that local spatial context may have politically significant effects.

As Appendix A shows, among metropolitan residents to the SCCBS, all four measures of suburbanization are substantially correlated with one another at the census tract, but not to an overwhelming degree, increasing confidence that each measure captures a distinct neighborhood attribute. This tract-by-tract approach to measuring suburban characteristics should be sharply distinguished from measures of sprawl that take the metropolitan area as a whole as the unit of analysis. At the same time, these variables are not idiosyncratic measures of sprawl; all four spatial variables are substantially correlated in the expected direction (at the metropolitan level) with the index of metropolitan-level sprawl developed by Lopez and Hynes (2003).[5]

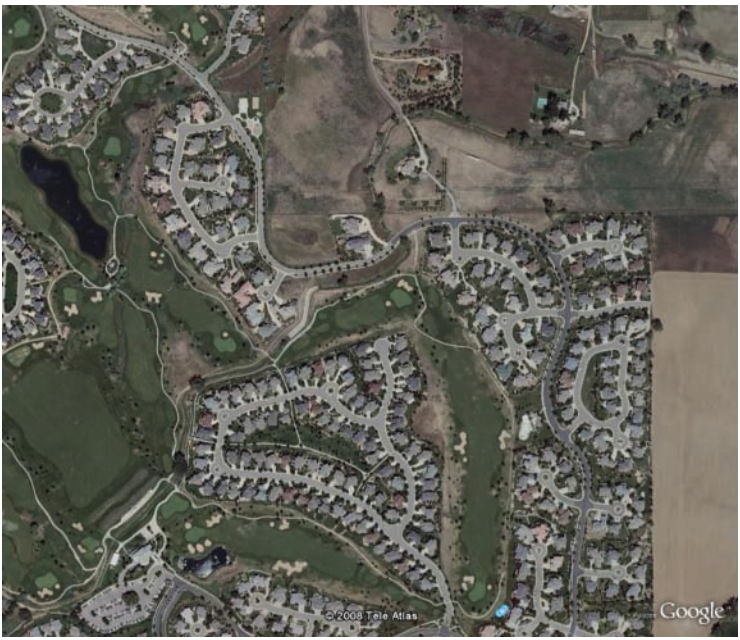
Figure 1
Older, Traditional Urban Neighborhood:
Denver County, Colorado, Tract 36.01

How Space and Ideological Identification Intersect

These more specific measures of urban spatial context may prove of only limited analytic interest if they do not help predict notable political phenomenon. The theoretical discussion above suggests two hypotheses: The first is simply that living in a prototypical urban area should be associated with more liberal political attitudes, that is, that these measures of urban space, taken together, are associated with increased liberalism, even when controlling for demographic factors.

Second, I hypothesize that the specific spatial features associated with suburban sprawl are significantly associated with greater political conservatism. Although low density is an important component of sprawl, the case

Figure 2
Recent, Automobile-Oriented Development: Boulder County, Colorado, Tract 129.03



for density as such being strongly associated with ideological differences is fairly weak (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2003). The case for residence in a more bounded place such as a central city having politically significant effects seems more compelling, but recall that we can find comfortable quasi-suburban enclaves within the boundaries of central cities and that there are many examples of liberal-leaning inner suburbs such as Takoma Park, Maryland. There is thus good reason to believe that the actual design and character of particular metropolitan neighborhoods—captured here by the transportation pattern and neighborhood age measures—may be better predictors of the political views of its residents than whether a neighborhood falls inside or outside the limits of a central city.

Three potential mechanisms by which these spatial characteristics might affect the formation of individuals' political outlooks can be identified. The first is straightforward: It may be that liberals happen to like older, transit-oriented neighborhoods and thus move there or that conservatives hate them and stay away. On the self-selection hypothesis, any observed correlation between spatial context and political attitudes results from the individual preferences that lead people to congregate in one sort of community rather than another.

A second mechanism, emphasized by Gainsborough (2001) in particular, is that living in a particular kind of neighborhood may affect how one comes to view one's own self-interest (call this the "shifting self-interest" account). For instance, even purely self-interested residents of cities have good reasons on quality-of-life and public safety grounds to support policies that reduce urban homelessness or provide opportunities to disadvantaged youth, whereas residents of suburban enclaves have little or no direct interest in the well-being of poor urban residents. Indeed, suburban residents of common interest developments and gated communities may come to have a strong interest in reducing or minimizing taxes because many of their most relevant public goods (including security services) are already being funded out of fees paid to private organizations.

A third possible mechanism, extending a line of reasoning suggested by scholars such as Bickford (2000), Young (1990), Kohn (2003, 2004), and Sennett (1970), is that the quality of the public space we inhabit informs the way we conceptualize ourselves and the world around us; these conceptions of self and world in turn inform our political orientations. Call this the "shifting social perception" account. In the most straightforward terms, it is theorized that built environments organized primarily on facilitating the private enjoyment of private goods—the private car, the stand-alone home—while minimizing unscripted interaction with strangers help produce a more privatistic social and political outlook, which in turn generally translates into a more conservative political orientation.

We begin testing those hypotheses by examining the correlation between each of the sprawl-related measures described above and voting patterns in the 2000 and 2004 elections, measured at the county level. My concern here is not with partisan identification as such but with the related question of how communities differ in ideological orientation. Table 1 shows in descriptive terms how support for a Democrat or Green candidate varies by spatial context within Census-defined metropolitan counties in the continental United States, indicating that conservative voting strength rises in more sprawling settings: As a descriptive matter, support for Republicans is stronger in lower

Table 1
Liberal Vote Share in 2000 and 2004 by County Spatial Context

	2000	2004
81% or more drive alone to work	45.6%	42.9%
Less than 81% drive alone to work	56.4%	54.2%
Density < 219 persons/mile	43.5%	40.4%
Density > 219 persons/mile	55.3%	53.0%
Median house built after 1973	45.2%	43.1%
Median house built before 1973	59.2%	56.9%
% working/living same community < 20%	50.0%	47.0%
% working/living same community > 20%	55.0%	52.9%

Note: Combined county vote shares for Democratic candidate and Ralph Nader. Alaska and Hawaii are excluded. Substantive values for each spatial context refer to the median of the (unweighted) distribution rounded to the nearest whole number. Metropolitan counties only; weighted by voter turnout in county.

density, automobile-oriented, more recently built, and less bounded counties. It is possible, however, that this relationship between space and voting patterns may simply be an artifact of other demographic factors.

To address this possibility, I conduct ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions on "liberal vote share"—the proportion of voters in each county casting a ballot for either the Democratic nominee or Ralph Nader in 2004 and 2004—using each sprawl-related measure as an explanatory factor.[6] Demographic factors controlled for at the county level include median income, proportion of adults with bachelor or graduate degrees, proportion of African American residents, proportion of immigrants, and Census region (South, Midwest, West, or East). Each regression is weighted by total voters in the county in each election.[7]

In both the 2000 and 2004 elections, three of the four spatial variables have statistically significant relationships with liberal vote share (see Table 2). Older neighborhood age and less car-dominated transportation patterns are each positive predictors of more liberal voting in both elections.[8] The density of a county is positively related to liberal vote share but not at a statistically significant level. Finally, the proportion of residents living and working in the same town and city is statistically significant in the opposite direction: Other things being equal, higher levels of community boundedness are associated with more conservative voting patterns.[9]

The cumulative effect of these spatial variables on aggregate voting behavior are substantial and indicate that spatial indicators associated with more sprawl are, on balance, a strong predictor of more conservative voting.

Table 2
Spatial Determinants of County Voting Patterns in 2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections

County Characteristic	2000 Liberal Vote Share	2004 Liberal Vote Share
% college education	.282***	.480***
	(.061)	(.064)
Median income (tens of thousands)	–.017*	–.024***
	(.007)	(.007)
% Blacks	.335***	.394***
	(.040)	(.043)
% immigrants	.247**	.237***
	(.081)	(.074)
Population density (ln)	.0048	.0039
	(.0060)	(.0061)
% live/work same community	–.077**	–.082**
	(.026)	(.026)
% driving alone to work	–.231***	–.197**
	(.060)	(.065)
Year median housing unit built	–.0043***	–.0044***
	(.0006)	(.0006)
South	–.058***	–.041**
	(.013)	(.014)
Midwest	–.005	.022*
	(.010)	(.010)
West	.018	.042*
	(.017)	(.018)
Constant	9.09	9.20
N	845	845
R^2	.701	.702

Note: Predicted combined vote share for Democratic nominee and Ralph Nader. All independent variables measured at the county level. Metropolitan counties in continental United States only. Omitted dummy variable: Eastern region. Ordinary least squares regression weighted by 2000 and 2004 county vote total; robust standard errors.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Simulation analysis using the computer program *Clarify* (see G. King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000) suggests that controlling for all other demographic factors and for region, a county in the 80th percentile on statistically significant sprawl-related indicators (relatively new neighborhoods, relatively high reliance on the automobile, and relatively high rates of out-of-town commuting) is predicted to have had a total liberal vote share (95% confidence interval) of 48.9% (46.7%, 50.9%) in 2000 and 46.9% (44.9, 48.8%) in 2004, respectively. In comparison, relatively nonsprawling counties that

are in the 20th percentile of these same indicators are predicted to have liberal vote shares of 57.4% (56.0%, 58.9%) in 2000 and 54.5% (53.0%, 56.1%) in 2004.[10] Put another way, the cumulative impact of sprawl-related variables on liberal voting share is estimated to be larger in substantive terms than that of median county income and roughly equivalent to the impact of county educational levels. Of importance, the decisive factors are not the mere fact of living in a locale that is functioning as an independent economic center (i.e., a central city) but the more specific spatial differences between urban and suburban settings.

Shaping Individual Ideology: Space and Ideology at the Neighborhood Level

We now press on to ask how well more localized measures of sprawl help predict individuals' ideological orientations. The following analysis employs the same four measures of sprawl noted above but shifts the level of analysis in the independent variables from the county to the census tract level. The dependent variable consists of a five-tiered categorical measure of individuals' self-described political ideology drawn from the 2000 SCCBS. The SCCBS is a clustered survey of more than 29,700 Americans drawn from some 41 geographic communities as well as a national subsample of 3,003 respondents. The SCCBS community samples are drawn from every region of the country and include both larger and smaller metropolitan areas as well as some rural communities.[11] The SCCBS contains geographic identifiers at the census tract level; in this analysis, I merged the SCCBS with relevant census tract indicators drawn from Summary File 3 of the 2000 U.S. Census. 28,810 of the original 29,733 cases were successfully matched, with the missing cases distributed relatively evenly among the community and national samples.[12] Because the key measures of spatial form used here do not capture sprawl as effectively in rural areas as in urban areas, I restrict the analyses reported here to residents of Census-defined metropolitan statistical areas.[13]

As Table 3 indicates, an initial descriptive portrait of the relationship between political ideology and spatial context reveals some striking relationships: Liberals are highly concentrated in nonsprawling places. But this may result simply from the manifold demographic differences between central city and suburban residents. Do spatial features have any independent relationship with individual ideology apart from confluent demographic influences?

Table 3
Individual Political Ideology by Spatial Context

Proportion of SCCBS Respondents Reporting They Are "Somewhat" or "Very" Liberal, Sorted by Census Tract Spatial Characteristic	
Density < 5,828 persons/mile	25.9%
Density > 5,828 persons/mile	40.9%
% working/living same community < 37%	26.1%
% working/living same community > 37%	35.5%
75% or more drive alone to work	25.0%
Less than 75% drive alone to work	24.9%
Median house built after 1964	25.4%
Median house built before 1965	36.1%

Note: SCCBS = Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey. Substantive values refer to the mean of the distribution rounded to nearest whole number. Metropolitan residents only. $n = 24{,}197$.

To address this question, I initially examine the relationship between sprawl-related variables and self-described ideology by conducting an ordered logistic regression, again employing a wide range of control variables at both the individual and community level. Individual-level controls include education, income, age, gender, race, language in which the survey was conducted, years lived in the community, marital status, children at home, religious affiliation by denomination and level of activity, union membership, homeownership status, and employment status. Community-level controls (all measured at the census tract level) include median income, proportion of residents with bachelor or graduate degrees, proportion of residents who have lived in the same community at least 5 years, proportion of African American residents, and region (East, South, Midwest, West).[14] I also control for the local partisan environment (measured by county vote shares for the Democratic and Green parties in the 2000 presidential election). In a subsequent analysis, I employ community sample-level fixed effects. I report robust standard errors, corrected for the clustering of cases at the community sample level.[15] Complete regression results are reported in Appendix C.

Residence in an older neighborhood and in a neighborhood with multimodal transportation systems are both shown to be strong, significant predictors of holding more liberal political views, whereas the rate of out-of-town commuting and tract density have no significant impact.[16] These findings remain robust if we further add fixed effect controls for each community subsample in the SCCBS; this more restrictive model essentially eliminates differences in spatial context between metropolitan areas from consideration and looks only at differences among census tracts within these areas (see Table 4).

Table 4
Spatial Determinants of Individual Political Ideology Among Metropolitan Residents

Census Tract Characteristic	Excluding Sample Fixed Effects	Including Sample Fixed Effects
% bachelor's degree or higher in tract	.888***	.862***
	(.136)	(.123)
Residential stability in tract	.413*	.490***
	(.178)*	(.178)
Median income in tract (thousands)	–.0037**	–.0045***
	(.0013)	(.0013)
Proportion of Blacks in tract	.194***	.210***
	(.060)	(.061)
Population density (ln)	.003	.008
	(.013)	(.014)
% live/work same community	–.057	–.003
	(.084)	(.070)
% driving alone to work	–.757***	–.624***
	(.170)	(.150)
Year median housing unit built	–.0052***	–.0035**
	(.0013)	(.0011)
% voting for Gore in county, 2000	.351*	.304
	(.164)	(.205)
% voting for Nader in county, 2000	3.87***	3.56***
	(.951)	(1.53)
N	23,801	23,801
Pseudo R^2	.051	.053

Note: Predicted likelihood of being more liberal on a scale from 1 (*very conservative*) to 5 (*very liberal*). All contextual variables measured at census tract level. Metropolitan area residents only. Left-hand column presents results without controls for community sample; right-hand column presents results including community sample controls. Additional controls not reported (at individual level): language survey conducted in, household income, education, race, citizenship status, gender, marital status, children in home, union membership, religious affiliation, religious participation, homeownership status, and years lived in the community. See Appendix C for full regression table. Ordered logistic regression. Robust standard errors corrected for clustering by community sample.
*$p < .05$.**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

These results again suggest that the general relationship between suburbanization and conservative political orientation identified by Gainsborough and others may actually reflect a more specific relationship between community characteristics commonly associated with sprawl and conservatism. Indeed, community boundedness per se—a reasonable proxy for residence in a self-contained central city—has little independent impact on political

ideology. Moreover, when we substitute a dichotomous measure of residence in a Census-designated central city for the continuous measure of community boundedness, central city residence again has little effect on partisan affiliation, conditional on the more specific sprawl-related measures.[17]

The cumulative impact of sprawl-related characteristics on political ideology is substantial. Among residents of metropolitan areas, when controlling for all of the factors noted in Table 4, as well as county partisan environment, an individual living in a relatively sprawling neighborhood—in the 80th percentile of both young neighborhood age and reliance on the automobile—is predicted to have a 25.6% (24.5%, 26.8%) likelihood of saying he or she is liberal or very liberal. In contrast, a demographically identical person living in a more traditional urban neighborhood in the 20th percentile of neighborhood age and automobile reliance is predicted to have a 32.4% (30.6%, 34.3%) likelihood of describing one's self as a liberal.[18]

Exploring Why

The previous section has established that the relationship between suburban context and political conservatism remains highly significant even when controlling for an array of demographic factors. Sprawl-related spatial variables clearly have an important connection with individuals' political opinions. But why?

As noted above, three possible explanations present themselves: self-selection, shifting self-interest, and shifting social perception. Limitations of the current data make it difficult to assess in a precise way which of these mechanisms is of greatest importance, but some suggestive exploratory analysis using this data is possible.

The most plausible form of the self-selection thesis is not that either liberals or conservatives are primarily motivated by explicitly political considerations in choosing neighborhoods but that liberals and conservatives value different goods in selecting neighborhoods (Walks, 2006). Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that at least part of the correlation between spatial context and individual ideology is attributable to self-selection of this kind.[19] However, it is also reasonable to assume that not all metropolitan residents can be accurately described as having freely selected into their current residential environments; indeed, in the 2006 Social Capital Community Survey, 38% of respondents in the national sample said they would in fact leave their neighborhood if they could (Saguaro Seminar, 2006). Generally speaking, households with fewer economic resources will have less capacity to move to a preferred neighborhood (Clark & Whiteman, 1983).

Table 5
The Impact of Sprawl on Individual Ideology, Sorted by Household Income, Residential Satisfaction, and Intention to Stay

	(A) Income		(B) Local Quality of Life		(C) Intention to Stay	
	<$30k	>$75k	Low	High	Leave	Stay
Newer neighborhood	–.0047*	–.0063*	–.0031	–.0054*	–.0060*	–.0046***
	(.0019)	(.0026)	(.0028)	(.0021)	(.0024)	(.0013)
% drive alone	–.500*	–.852***	–.670*	–.901***	–.346	–1.072***
	(.212)	(.279)	(.277)	(.251)	(.193)	(.201)
N	6,120	5,074	3,315	9,349	5,115	16,701

Note: Self-reported political ideology on a 1 to 5 scale (higher values are more liberal). Reported independent variables are year median housing unit in census tract was built and proportion of workers driving alone to work in tract. Columns (A) above refer to respondents with household incomes less than $30,000 or greater than $75,000. For both groups, neighborhood age and proportion driving alone to work are jointly significant at the .001 level. Columns (B) refer to respondents rating their local community as a "fair" or "poor" place to live (low quality-of-life [QOL] group) or as an "excellent" place to live (high QOL group). Among persons rating local quality-of-life as "poor" or "fair," proportion driving alone to work is significant at the .01 level in models excluding neighborhood age. Columns (C) sort respondents by their intention to stay in or leave their community during the next 5 years. Students excluded. Among persons planning to leave, neighborhood age and proportion driving alone to work are jointly significant past .001 level. Reported models include all spatial and demographic controls noted in Table 4, except population density and proportion in tract working and living in same place. Metropolitan residents only. Ordered logistic regression. Robust standard errors corrected for clustering by community sample.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Consequently, a useful way to test whether self-selection is the sole factor driving the relationship between spatial context and ideology is to ask whether the same general pattern can be observed among sample respondents with the fewest resources who are least likely to have "selected" into their neighborhoods. Analysis of the 6,120 metropolitan residents in the sample who reported household income of less than $30,000 annually reveals that higher proportions of driving alone in the tract and older neighborhood age are predictors of increased conservatism (jointly significant at the .001 level) among this group[20] (see Table 5). If we further confine analysis to the 2,924 metropolitan respondents with household income less than $20,000, these spatial characteristics are again predictors of increased conservatism, jointly

significant past the .01 level. The persistence of a significant relationship between spatial form and individual ideology even among residents presumed to have the least capacity to move provides evidence of a genuine spatial effect apart from processes of self-selection.

Another way to approach the question is to focus on those residents who appear to be most dissatisfied with their current residential location, that is, persons whose current residential locations are least likely to reflect their actual preferences. Among SCCBS metropolitan residents, 14% rated their local quality-of-life as "fair" or "poor" rather than "good" or "excellent," and 24% of nonstudents planned to move within 5 years. Among each of these subsamples (see Table 5), the relationship between spatial context and ideological views remains statistically significant (at the .02 level in the case of those with lower quality-of-life ratings and at the .001 level among those planning to move). The presence of significant effects even among those respondents who are least satisfied with and least attached to their neighborhoods, and consequently least likely to reside in their current neighborhoods as a matter of choice, again suggests the likelihood of a genuine spatial effect.

Comparing high-resource and highly satisfied metropolitan residents with low-resource and more dissatisfied residents also, however, illustrates that self-selection is almost certainly an important part of the story. In the case of income, as the resources available to respondents increase, so too does that observed relationship between spatial context and individual ideology. As Table 5 shows, the net relationship between proportion driving alone in tract and individual ideology is markedly stronger among those who have household income greater than $75,000 a year than among those with income less than $30,000 a year.

Similar results obtain if we compare those who intend to leave their current neighborhood within 5 years with those who plan to stay, or if we compare respondents with the lowest quality-of-life evaluations to respondents with higher quality-of-life evaluations (see Table 5). The fact that the correspondence between sprawling contexts and conservatism is greatest among those who are most satisfied with and most committed to their neighborhoods, and who have the greatest capacity to live where they prefer, is strong evidence that self-selection must be an important factor driving the overall pattern.

Self-selection, however, is not a compelling explanation for why the link between space and ideological views persists even among those who do not like where they live, those who intend to move in the foreseeable future,

and those who are relatively poor and have less capacity to move. This suggests a likely role for the other two mechanisms noted above: the "where you stand depends on where you sit" notion that the fact of residence in a sprawling environment leads one to construe their political self-interest in a distinctive fashion from urban residents and the closely related but distinct notion that different kinds of spaces and places engender different sorts of social attitudes, a process that has political consequences.

We can only be very tentative in judging the relative importance of these mechanisms based on the evidence provided by the SCCBS. It is noteworthy, however, that when controlling for spatial context (density, neighborhood age, and automobile dependence), suburban residence in itself is not a strong predictor of political orientation. This is significant because if the mechanism of shifting self-interest were of overwhelming importance vis-à-vis the shifting social perception mechanism, we would expect the opposite pattern: What matters most is simply whether one lives in a suburb or city, not whether one lives in a relatively sprawling or nonsprawling place. This set of results, of course, does not disprove the political interest explanation: It may be that residents of older, less car dependent suburbs do have identifiably different interests (perhaps based on their relative proximity to the central city) than newer, farther-flung suburbs. Moreover, the shifting self-interest mechanism and the shifting social perception mechanism are very likely mutually reinforcing rather than separate processes in most circumstances. This set of results does suggest, however, that the specific attributes of neighborhood context help shape political orientation (including how one constructs one's self-interest) in a manner not reducible to the mere fact of suburban residence or to straightforward processes of self-selection.

In any case, mechanisms of community effects and of self-selection are not mutually exclusive. As Gainsborough (2001) stresses, theories of self-selection must explain why liberals or conservatives are systematically attracted to particular places—an explanation that inevitably must refer to specific qualities of actual places. The SCCBS provides evidence both for the proposition that community characteristics associated with sprawl contribute to the formation of conservative political identity and for the notion that the observed relationship between sprawling areas and greater political conservatism in substantial measure reflects differences in the community and lifestyle preferences of liberals and conservatives. In addition, we might suspect that the spatial sorting of residents by political ideology, once it reaches a sufficiently advanced stage, may help create what Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) termed a "reinforcement effect"; not only

might residents of a very conservative suburb be less likely to hear a liberal viewpoint from their neighbors but such areas will likely be targeted and contacted frequently by conservative political activists while being relatively ignored by liberal political activists, further reinforcing the relationship between spatial context and individual political outlook. Further detailed research, ideally involving longitudinal samples, will be required to sort out the relative importance of these mechanisms with greater precision.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the robustness of the relationship between spatial context and political ideology in the United States and shown that a disaggregated approach to measuring suburban context yields useful insight into the specific community characteristics that most impact ideological identification, both at the countywide and the neighborhood level. Among the nation's metropolitan areas, less car dependent and older counties or neighborhoods are strongly associated with more liberal voting patterns and more liberal ideological orientations, respectively. We also have explored evidence showing that the relationship between sprawling contexts and conservative political outlooks is evident among resource-poor households as well as residents who are relatively dissatisfied with or plan to leave their current neighborhoods, suggesting that this finding is probably not simply a matter of Americans sorting themselves out into contexts that fit their preferences.

In the absence of appropriate longitudinal data, debate about the relative importance of self-selection vis-à-vis contextual effects should and will continue. As a practical political fact, however, it matters relatively little whether sprawl is primarily a cause or primarily an expression of a social and political outlook consonant with political conservatism. Theorists of space have long stressed that spatial structures and formations have a dual quality: They reflect the values and purposes of those who construct them and they subsequently help structure the daily life, habits, interactions, and perceptions of those who inhabit such spaces (Bickford, 2000; Lefebrve, 1991). Such, it appears, is the relationship between sprawling suburban contexts and political orientation. Recently built, car-oriented suburbs are constructed according to the proposition that the best sort of community is one that emphasizes the private enjoyment of space while maintaining public order and resisting unwelcome or unsettling intrusions from outsiders. Both

the particular attraction of conservatives to these sorts of places and the role these environments play in reproducing and extending conservative political outlooks are defining features of the landscape of contemporary American politics.

Appendix A
Bivariate Correlation Between Spatial Measures at the Census Tract Level Among SCCBS Respondents

	Metropolitan Residents Only		
		Median Year	
	% Solo Car Commuters	Housing Unit in Tract Built	% Work/Live Same Place
Density (ln)	–.54	–.52	.51
% solo car commuters	—	.50	–.47
Median year housing unit built	—	—	–.36

Note: n = 24,864. SCCBS = Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey.

Appendix B
Summary of Key Spatial Measures at County and Census Tract Level

	M	75th %	*Mdn*	25th %
County level[a]				
Density (persons/sq. mile)	2,634	1,967	817	299
% solo car commuters	74.9	81.3	78.1	73.4
Year median housing unit built	1969	1977	1971	1961
% work and live same place	32.8	43.5	27.7	17.0
Census tract level[b]				
Density (persons/sq. mile)	5,828	7,095	3,293	1,188
% solo car commuters	74.6	84.9	79.7	68.7
Year median housing unit built	1964	1977	1965	1952
% work and live same place	37.4	62.7	33.7	11.4

a. n = 845. Summary statistics for 845 metropolitan counties, weighted by population.
b. n = 24,864. Unweighted summary statistics for census tract characteristics of Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) respondents living in a metropolitan statistical area.

Appendix C

Complete Regression Table for Model Reported in Table 4: Individual and Community-Level Determinants of Individuals' Political Ideology

Independent Variable	Liberal Political Views
Survey conducted in Spanish	–.424
	(.103)***
Homeowner	–.040
	(.029)
Years lived in community	–.0009
	(.0008)
Married	–.189
	(.028)***
Number of children 17 or younger in household	–.071
	(.016)***
Female	.331
	(.028)***
Age 18-25	.104
	(.043)*
Age 26-35	–.007
	(.039)
Age 36-45	–.057
	(.042)
Age 56-65	–.237
	(.043)***
Age 66-75	–.328
	(.063)***
Age 76 and older	–.282
	(.092)**
Age missing	–.148
	(.095)
Less than high school education	–.002
	(.067)
High school education	–.153
	(.046)***
Some college	–.011
	(.036)
Bachelor's degree	.135
	(.045)**
Master's or professional degree	.218
	(.078)**

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

Independent Variable	Liberal Political Views
Doctorate	.449
	(.048)***
Education missing	.346
	(.205)
Income less than $20,000	–.111
	(.043)**
Income $20,000-30,000	–.024
	(.051)
Income less than $30,000 (unspecified)	–.045
	(.108)
Income $50,000-75,000	.073
	(.035)*
Income $75,000-100,000	.042
	(.043)
Income $100,000 and greater	.049
	(.039)
Income greater than $30,000 (unspecified)	–.214
	(.057)***
Income missing	–.275
	(.047)***
African American	.163
	(.051)***
Asian	–.316
	(.093)***
Hispanic	.025
	(.067)
Native American	–.040
	(.150)
Other race	.111
	(.079)
Race missing	.196
	(.126)
Proportion college graduates in tract	.888
	(.136)***
Median income in tract (tens of thousands)	–.0373
	(.0133)**
Residential stability in tract	.413
	(.178)*
Proportion African American in tract	.194
	(.060)***
Density (ln) in tract	.0031
	(.0132)

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

Independent Variable	Liberal Political Views
Neighborhood age in tract	–.0052
	(.0013)***
Proportion driving alone to work in tract	–.757
	(.170)***
Proportion working/living same community in tract	–.057
	(.084)
Active (churchgoing) Protestant	–1.15
	(.047)***
Inactive Protestant	–.715
	(.059)***
Active Catholic	–.848
	(.050)***
Inactive Catholic	–.632
	(.061)***
Active Other Christian	–1.19
	(.050)***
Inactive Other Christian	–.599
	(.061)***
Active Other religion	–.073
	(.109)
Inactive Other religion	.146
	(.092)
Active Jewish	.031
	(.110)
Inactive Jewish	.112
	(.145)
Religion missing	–.355
	(.118)**
Union member	.286
	(.039)***
Unemployed/laid off	–.0061
	(.065)
Disabled	.183
	(.082)*
Student	.108
	(.072)
Homemaker	–.313
	(.051)***
Retired	–.037
	(.050)
% vote for Gore in county, 2000	.351
	(.164)*

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

Independent Variable	Liberal Political Views
% vote for Nader in county, 2000	3.871
	(.951)***
South	.012
	(.073)
Midwest	.029
	(.064)
West	.094
	(.067)
N	23,801
Pseudo R^2	.051

Note: Coded on a 1 to 5 ordinal scale with 5 representing *most liberal*. Excluding community sample fixed effects. Ordered logistic regression. Robust standard errors corrected for clustering by community sample. Omitted dummy variables: age 46-55, earned associate's degree, income $30,000 to $50,000, White, atheist, and employed. For age, education, and income, I employ dummy variables for each category; information on individual's income is collected in categories, with some respondents coded as simply less than or greater than $30,000 annual household income. Cases with missing control data are grouped into a "missing" category for each variable.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Notes

1. Partisan identification and ideological orientation, as students of American politics have long observed, are not one and the same, although there is evidence of an increasingly tight correlation between individual party identification and ideological views in recent decades (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Valentino & Sears, 2005). Clearly, voting patterns and ideology are related and if sprawl is significantly correlated with political outlook, it should affect both voting behavior and ideological identification. Consequently, it is reasonable to look at both indicators of political orientation in attempting to gauge the political significance of sprawl.

2. Among Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) respondents, the mean proportion of persons living and working in the same place is 24.4% among rural residents, 15.5% among suburbanites, and 62.2% among central city residents.

3. Because the distribution of population density is highly skewed at the high end, I operationalize it as the natural log of persons/square mile within a given locality.

4. To quantify this relationship, I first devised a composite sprawl measure from the neighborhood age and proportion driving alone variables, defined as [median year neighborhood built – 1900] + [% driving alone in tract * 100]. I then took photos of the geographic midpoint of representative tracts (oversampling nonsprawling tracts located outside central cities) from each tail (up to the 10th percentile) in the distribution of the composite measure, with no more than five cases taken from any one community subsample (apart from the national sample) to ensure wide regional distribution of selected cases. These photos were then coded by myself and research assistants as either being on a traditional urban grid, not being on a grid, or as

ambiguous/exhibiting a mixed design. Of the 137 tracts taken from the "less sprawling" tail (bottom 10th percentile), 129 were predominantly or entirely located on an urban grid or in a central business district and 8 tracts had a mix of design features. Of the 153 tracts taken from the "more sprawling" tail, 132 were not part of an urban grid; 20 cases were ambiguous or had a mix of design features, and 1 tract exhibited a predominant grid pattern. For these 290 cases, the bivariate correlation between being on a grid and percentage driving alone to work in the tract is $r = -.85$; the correlation between being on a grid and year the median housing unit in the tract was built is $r = -.92$. Census tracts that have a low proportion of persons driving alone to work and are relatively old thus have very little chance of being a curvilinear, suburban neighborhood located on the urban fringe; conversely, census tracts with a relatively high proportion of persons driving alone to work and that are relatively recently built have very little chance of being a traditional urban neighborhood with a high level of street accessibility. In short, although not perfect, these measures do capture meaningful differences in urban design.

5. The Lopez and Hynes index is based on the relative proportion of metropolitan-area residents living in high-density (greater than 3,500 persons/square mile) tracts and low-density tracts (between 200 and 3,500 persons/square mile). Among 326 matched primary metropolitan statistical areas, the correlation between the measures of sprawl used in this study and the Lopez and Hynes index range from $r = .21$ to $r = .54$, with proportion driving alone in the metropolitan area having the strongest correspondence to the Lopez and Hynes index.

6. I also tested alternative models using the proportion of support for the Democratic candidate (taken alone) and a dichotomous measure of whether the Democratic candidate won a given county as dependent variables. In each case, results similar to those reported in the text obtained.

7. Removing the weights from the analysis does not alter the basic findings with respect to neighborhood age, driving alone, or boundedness, but county density becomes a significant positive predictor of liberal vote share in unweighted models.

8. Because community boundedness is positively correlated with older neighborhood age and more multimodal transportation patterns in particular, we will want to know whether the relationship between density, transport patterns, and neighborhood age on one hand and liberal voting on the other is merely conditional on controlling for community boundedness. In a simplified model that drops boundedness, both reduced solo automobile commuting and older neighborhood age remain significant predictors of liberal vote share.

9. Note however that this effect is conditional on the controls for neighborhood age and automobile dependence; if those variables are dropped from the model, boundedness no longer is a statistically significant predictor.

10. The substantive values of variables in the high and low sprawl scenarios noted in the text are reported below:

	2000	2004
Higher sprawl scenario		
% driving alone	82.4	82.5
Year median housing unit built	1978	1978
% employed in same place they live	14.4	14.2
Lower sprawl scenario		
% driving alone	72.3	72.8
Year median housing unit built	1958	1959
% employed in same place they live	46.3	46.3

11. For further discussion of the design of the SCCBS and how it approximates a true national sample, see Putnam (2007). Notably, the key finding reported below—that residence in more recently built, automobile-dependent communities is a predictor of more conservative political views—can be replicated among metropolitan residents of the national subsample of the SCCBS ($n = 2{,}077$) at the $p < .02$ level of significance. (In analyzing this smaller subsample, I drop the nonsignificant measures of tract density and boundedness because of collinearity concerns.)

12. For 69.7% of metropolitan area cases in the SCCBS, census tracts were identified directly from addresses provided by respondents. In the remaining cases, census tract locations were inferred from respondents' zip codes. The census tract–level measures thus contains at least some measurement error; the expected result is downward bias in the reported relationship between tract-level characteristics and individual outcomes. Restricting the analysis only to those cases for which exact identifications were possible does not change the overall findings reported here, nor do the findings change when we add a control for whether the case is an exactly matched tract or not. Likewise, the core results regarding the relationship between spatial characteristics and individual ideology reported below can be replicated at the zip code level, where this measurement issue does not arise.

13. For instance, whereas density is positively correlated with less automobile dependence and older neighborhood age in metropolitan area tracts, in rural areas, density is correlated with greater automobile dependence and newer neighborhoods. On the distinction between urban sprawl and rural sprawl, see Lopez and Hynes (2003). Note, however, that the key findings reported below (of a link between greater sprawl and greater conservatism) obtain whether we include all cases (including rural areas), whether we exclude not only tracts outside of census-defined metropolitan areas but also nonurbanized tracts (i.e., less than 1,000 persons/square mile) within metropolitan areas, or whether (following Lopez & Hynes, 2003) we exclude both tracts outside of metropolitan areas and tracts within metropolitan areas with density less than 200 persons/square mile.

14. I also tested at the tract level neighborhood racial diversity (as measured by the Herfindahl index of dissimilarity); neighborhood income inequality (as measured by the Gini coefficient); proportion of homeowners; proportion of immigrants; and proportion of Hispanics, Asians, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Whites in the tract as possible controls. None of these possible controls were statistically significant and, hence, they were excluded from the reported model.

15. Here I am treating the clustered nature of the SCCBS as what Snijders and Bosker term a "nuisance"; I use this approach in preference to hierarchical models because I am not here exploring possible interactions between community-level and individual-level variables (Snijders & Bokser, 1999). For explanations of the specific cluster-estimating technique employed by STATA to compute these standard errors, see Snijders and Bosker (1999, pp. 250-251), *STATA User's Guide Release 9* (2005, pp. 276-280), and Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2005, p. 34).

16. The findings with respect to neighborhood age also hold up if we model it not as a linear variable but in terms of "period effects." In a model in which neighborhoods are characterized as being built prior to 1940, in the 1940s, the 1950s, and so on by decade, residence in a neighborhood built in the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s is a predictor of increased liberalism relative to residence in a neighborhood built in the 1970s, whereas residence in a neighborhood built in the 1980s or 1990s is a predictor of increased conservatism compared to neighborhoods built in the 1970s.

17. As we would expect, central city residence is a significant predictor of increased liberalism when we omit controls for more specific spatial attributes. Central city residence is here defined as residing in one of more than 400 Census-designated central cities with population greater than 25,000; due to the specific design of the SCCBS, for some cases, central city residence or nonresidence is imputed from other geographic variables.

18. In substantive terms, the high-sprawl scenario involves a census tract with 85.9% of workers driving alone to work and the median housing unit was built in 1979; the low-sprawl scenario involves a census tract in which 64.8% of workers drive alone to work and the median housing unit was built in 1948. The simulation model that produced this estimate drops the nonsignificant spatial variables density and boundedness and, due to computing limitations within *Clarify*, employs simplified versions of the income, age, religion, education, and race control variables compared to the full model reported in Appendix C. Sample size in the regression used for this model is $n = 23, 127$.

19. It is also possible to use the SCCBS data to show variations in residential preferences among liberals and conservatives in a more direct fashion; in analyses (not reported here) of residents' neighborhood satisfaction, I find that self-described conservatives have a stronger aversion to higher density, prototypically urban places than do self-described liberals. This finding supports the supposition that liberals and conservatives have notably differential residential preferences.

20. I here employ a simplified model of sprawl that includes only proportion in tract driving alone and neighborhood age while dropping the statistically insignificant measures of density and boundedness; all other individual and contextual control variables from the full analysis described above are included.

Data Sources

2000 U.S. Census, Summary File 3.

2000 and 2004 presidential election results by county obtained from www.uselectionsatlas.org.

Restricted use version of the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) conducted by the Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Available from the Roper Center, New Haven, CT.

2006 Social Capital Community Survey conducted by the Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Summary results available at http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/2006sccs.htm.

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