

**THE SPATIAL ORIGINS OF NATIONAL POLITICS:
PLACE AND RACE IN THE FRAGMENTED METROPOLIS**

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the State University of New York at Albany
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
Department of Political Science

2002

ABSTRACT

My research begins with the difficulties that political scientists have had in explaining Americans' inability to support a governing political agenda over the last thirty years. The predominant structural approach to understanding American national politics has faltered in the face of fluctuating levels of partisan support and split ticket voting. My dissertation shows that American national politics may still be subject to coherent structural analysis even given these challenges. The key to such an approach is the proper specification of structure.

This dissertation reviews the growth and differentiation of political structure in Detroit and associates this structure with vote choice in national elections. Using survey research, this study shows that the places that make up metropolitan Detroit predict political behaviors and attitudes above and beyond individual-level factors such as race, income, sex, and age.

Most critically, this dissertation shows that much of the ambiguity and volatility associated with national election since 1968 is reflected in returns from the region's white working-class suburbs. This may be explained by a structure of conflicting political geographic pressures, as conditions in these suburbs reflect the difficult socioeconomic position of their working-class residents.

As my dissertation supports a new structural understanding of American politics, it warns that as the increasingly distinct places that make up urban America influence our political participation, preferences, and perspectives, the American democracy is evermore threatened by the spectre of balkanization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though preparing this dissertation often seemed like a solitary project, involving many long hours doing the sorts of things one must do to produce such a thing, I am very thankful that in many ways, I was never truly alone. Though I would like to thank each and every thoughtful, caring, helpful, and loving person that helped to bring me to this point, I am afraid that the limits of my memory and the space allotted here prevent me from mentioning some. I hope that they know that I do indeed appreciate all that they have done for me.

I would like to begin at beginning, by thanking all of the people who worked so hard and with so much care during my most formative years in Elmira to give me the kind of encouragement and challenges, affection and assistance without which I could not have succeeded. First among these good people are the many educators who guided me so well. I wish to thank especially the Sisters of Mercy and lay teachers at Notre Dame High School and especially Sister Beatrice, who planted the seed of political philosophy within me so long ago. I would also like to thank the professors and staff at Saint John Fisher College in Rochester. I must especially mention Dr. John Harman who was my advisor and mentor in Political Science. Though John is an excellent professor, his character is what influenced me most of all. Even as I am proud to call John my friend, part of me will always be his student. I would also like to thank my friends from college. I am glad to have been able to mark the academic, professional, and personal challenges and joys of these intervening years with Wayne Sneath, Mark Hickey, Mike Yonko, and Mike Guzik especially.

And then there are the many people in Albany and at SUNYA who educated and sustained me in many and various ways. I am very glad to have had the privilege of receiving a first rate education at Rockefeller College. My thanks go to the excellent faculty there whose classes and advice I grew so much in. I would also like to thank the staff, especially Ellie Leggierrri, without whose bottomless patience with my administrative incompetence I would most certainly not be graduating. I must also and especially thank my many friends at SUNYA and in the Albany community. Despite the challenges, together we comprised a community of support as we shared advice, assistance, and ever so many good times. Thank you Grace Kelly, Nick Jenny, Tim Gordonier, Jim Freeman, Steve Livingston, Jim Ketterer, and so many others who made my life in Albany a rich one indeed. In this present project, I must thank especially Chris Grill, who has been something of a dissertation soul mate, whose long conversations and wit regarding a range of issues relevant to this project and things generally dear to me have been a real joy.

I would also like to thank the folks in Albany who I worked with at the Center for Legislative Development. Nan Carroll, Jim Ketterer, Clare Yates, Marlene Boland, et al all sustained me as I prepared to leave Albany for Detroit. Thanks must also go to Dr. Michael Malbin, for opportunities and challenges at the Rockefeller Institute. I would also like to express my warm thanks to the folks at the Appalachian Regional Commission Program Unit at the State Department.

Roger Swanson, Karl Horstmann, Regina Daly, and Norma Poletto all, in character, spirit, and dedication, made serious work the joyful and meaningful thing that it should be. I thank Karl especially for his company and many words of wisdom and encouragement.

I wish to thank the many friends and colleagues who have supported me and made my life a richer place here in Detroit. I thank especially the faculty, students, and staff of the Department of Geography and Urban Planning. Gary Sands, Robin Boyle, Eugene Perle, Laura Reese, and George Galster have been particularly helpful in this project, as they and others have contributed to my personal and professional life here. Thanks must also go to Kami Pothukuchi for so much good company and counsel. I also wish to thank all of my dear friends, truly my family in Detroit, at St. Paul's Cathedral who have given me great personal and spiritual support these last many months. I thank especially Meredith Hunt for the friendship and counsel that she has given to me in what has been both a very exciting and yet enormously challenging time. I also wish to thank the students and friends who have made my life in the Motor City very much happier. I must thank Bennett Rice, Jill McGrath, and Mark Moroni especially for their assistance in this project, though there are so many others here who deserve much from me. I am glad to call them all my friends.

I would like to thank the people who have worked particularly closely with me throughout my time at Rockefeller College. Peter Breiner and Anne Hildreth challenged me especially with more patience and better humor than I deserved.

But most of all, I must thank Todd Swanstrom. Todd has impressed me with his intelligence and professionalism, insight and wisdom, and his commitment to the intrinsic values of our cities and our political society. Todd has taught me, worked with me, counseled me, supported me, assisted me, cheered me up, and shepherded me throughout my education at SUNYA and in my professional career. I can hardly imagine how difficult my time at Rockefeller College would have been without him. I will always be Todd's student. I am very thankful for this and feel honoured by it. I am even more grateful to call Todd my friend.

I would also like to thank my family, most of whom learned long ago that "when are you going to graduate?" is not a good question to begin a conversation with. I thank them all for their patience and support. Above all, I wish to express my enormous gratitude and deep love for the people who have been behind me and for me, supported me and educated me, loved me and were patient with me, counseled me and cared for me, my parents Robert and Elizabeth Sauerzopf. They are educators and professionals, they are dedicated to their community and to their family and to all that is well, right, and good. They are in all of these things the most good and loving people I know. They are most dear to me and so, I dedicate this dissertation to them, with all of my love.

Detroit, 2002

Precis

Section I

Place and The Problem of the Present Period

Chapter 1

The Problem of the Present Period

Chapter 2

Understanding Electoral Volatility in the Present Period: Towards a New Approach

Chapter 3

Place and Political Alignment

Chapter 4

The Political Structure of Urban Space

Chapter 5

Cross Pressures

Section II

An Interpretive Geography of Detroit: Structure versus Will

Chapter 6

Detroit and Windsor: A Telling Comparison

Chapter 7

The Dialectic Of Structure and Will, and The Policies that Made Detroit

Chapter 8

Fragmented Space: A Structure of Sprawl and Inequity

Section III

A Quantitative Political Geography of Metropolitan Detroit

Chapter 9

The Changing Social Economy of Urban Space: The Fragmentation of the Detroit Region

Chapter 10

Detroit Area Election Study: Electoral Structure in Metropolitan Detroit: The Eccentricity of Stability and the Normality of Volatility

Chapter 11

Place, Attitudes, and Action: The Geography of Public Opinion and Political Participation in Metropolitan Detroit

Conclusion

Works Cited

Appendix A

An Interpretive Geography of Detroit: Structure versus Will

Figure A - 1: Recent Aerial Photograph of Downtown Detroit and Its Surrounds

Figure A - 2: Detroit's Book Tower

Figure A - 3: The Ruins Of Detroit's Magnificent Michigan Central Railroad Station And Michigan Central Railroad Headquarters Building.

Figure A - 4: Scenes from the Michigan Theatre

Figure A - 5: Commercial Devastation in Detroit

Figure A - 6: Residential Devastation in Detroit

Figure A - 7: The Ruins of Detroit's Packard Motors Complex

Figure A - 8: Land Use in Canton Township In 1967

Figure A - 9: Land Use in Canton Township In 1973

Figure A - 10: Land Use in Canton Township In 1998

Figure A - 11: Residential Housing Developments in Canton Charter Township

Figure A - 12: Approximate Location of Paradise Valley

Appendix B

The Changing Social Economy of Urban Space: The Fragmentation of the Detroit Region

Figure B - 1: Detroit Area Places

Figure B - 2: Dispersion of Income across Selected Detroit Area Places

Figure B - 3: Detroit Area Block Groups By 1989 Median Household Income

Figure B - 4: Dispersion of House Values across Selected Detroit Area Places

Figure B - 5: Detroit Area Block Groups by 1990 House Values

Figure B - 6: Selected Detroit Area Places by Median Housing Construction Year

Figure B - 7: Selected Detroit Area Places by Relative Median Household Income over Time

Figure B - 8: Selected Detroit Area Places by 1980-1990 Changes in Relative Household Income

Figure B - 9: Selected Detroit Area Places by Relative Market Position over Time

Figure B - 10: Central Tendency and Dispersion of Relative Market Position Figures for Selected Detroit Area Places

Figure B - 11: Selected Detroit Area Places by 1980-1990 Change in Relative Market Position

Figure B - 12: Selected Detroit Area Places By Inter-Census Population Change

Figure B - 13: Distribution of Black Persons in the Detroit Region, By Locality

Figure B - 14: Detroit Area Census Tracts By 1990 Population And Race

Figure B - 15: Distribution of Persons among Selected Detroit Area Places by Race and Income

Figure B - 16: Relative Housing Market Positions for Selected Detroit Area Communities

Appendix C

Detroit Area Election Study: Electoral Structure in Metropolitan Detroit: The Eccentricity of Stability and the Normality of Volatility

- Figure C - 1: Selected Detroit Area Places By 1996 % Party Plurality
- Figure C - 2: 1996 Detroit Area Votes for President
- Figure C - 3: Selected Detroit Area Places By 1996 Presidential Voter Turnout
- Figure C - 4: Metropolitan Place Category Criteria
- Figure C - 5: Detroit Area Geopolitical Place Category Check-Off
- Figure C - 6: Test For Detroit Area Distressed Central Urban Places
- Figure C - 7: Test For Detroit Area Threatened White Working-Class Places
- Figure C - 8: Test for Detroit Area Middle-Class Places
- Figure C - 9: Test For Detroit Area Wealthy Places
- Figure C - 10: Selected Detroit Area Places by Geopolitical Categories
- Figure C - 11: Total Potential Electorates for Sample Places
- Figure C - 12: Total Actual Electorates for Sample Places
- Figure C - 13: Comparative Electorates
- Figure C - 14: Voter Turnout
- Figure C - 15: Adjusted Voter Turnout
- Figure C - 16: Total Votes For President
- Figure C - 17: Party Percent of Major Party Votes
- Figure C - 18: Percent Presidential Party Pluralities
- Figure C - 19: Average Index of Volatility
- Figure C - 20: Selected Detroit Area Places by Average Index of Volatility
- Figure C - 21: Index of Volatility
- Figure C - 22: Index of Potential Effective Volatility
- Figure C - 23: Average Index of Effective Volatility
- Figure C - 24: Index of Difference
- Figure C - 25: Selected Detroit Area Places by Average Index of Difference

Appendix D

Place, Attitudes, And Action: The Geography of Public Opinion and Political Participation in Metropolitan Detroit

- Summary of Regression Models
- Derivation and Coding of Independent Variables
- Derivation and Coding of Dependent Variables
- Table D - 1: Political Participation Models
- Table D - 2: Presidential Vote Models
- Table D - 3: Party Identification Models
- Table D - 4: Feeling Towards Political Figures Models
- Table D - 5: Attitudes on Crime Models
- Table D - 6: Racial Attitude Models
- Table D - 7: Support for Affirmative Action Models
- Table D - 8: Perception of Political Efficacy Models
- Table D - 9: Marginal Probability Effects Estimates for Selected Detroit Area Places
- Table D - 10: Summary of Survey Responses by Place
- Addition of Cases to Primary Place Categories

SECTION I

PLACE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE PRESENT PERIOD

THE PROBLEM OF THE PRESENT PERIOD

The Decline of the New Deal Coalition and the Problem of the Present Period

Structural Analysis

In their efforts to interpret national elections, modern scholars have relied on structural understandings of American politics. Most of these approaches fall within the realignment paradigm, which is introduced below. Generally speaking, structural analysts find meaning in elections beyond the narrowly defined personalities or styles of candidates, the "mood" of the voters, or other details particular to specific elections. Rather, modern scholars explain elections by looking at interactions between macro-level political trends and forces, such as economic structures, class, ethnicity, and culture. In this context, the broad trends that shape the political agenda also orient the political preferences of individuals through the groups that define their interests. Therefore, from a structural perspective understanding elections is more a matter of social scientific analysis than it is the telling of so many stories.

The Problem of the Present Period

Throughout most of American history national politics has been defined by political periods dominated by strong parties with well-defined agendas. However, since 1968 no party has been able to garner enough popular support to control the national agenda. The electoral ambiguity and volatility that have followed have made structural analysis of national politics increasingly problematic.

- *the previous period*

Conditions since 1968 are most striking when considered in light of the politics of the era that preceded it. With the advent of the New Deal in 1932, American politics became characterized by strong electoral support for Democratic candidates. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, an amalgam of policies, appeals, and constituency groups, superseded a generation of Republican control with a period of activist Democratic governance that culminated in the 1960s with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. The coalition of constituencies that gave the Democratic agenda a decisive majority throughout this period included a range of sometimes conflicting groups including African Americans, Jews, liberal intellectuals, southern whites, and urban working-class whites.

The latter group was especially important. Whereas the South provided solid support for Democratic candidates since Reconstruction, it was the votes of working-class whites, most of whom resided in the urban North, that put the Democrats over the top in national elections. Furthermore, it was this group's

interests that defined most of the New Deal agenda. Roosevelt's and Truman's pro-labor stance and broadly redistributive fiscal policies can be viewed as responses to the needs of working-class voters. As implementation of this agenda extended the Federal Government's influence to nearly every aspect of American life, the relationship between citizens and their government was redefined radically. However, the electoral structure that underpinned the Democratic Party began to unravel towards the end of this period.

The Condition of the Present Period: Volatility and the "Failed Republican Realignment"

- *post 1968 electoral ambiguity*

The dominant structural approach to national politics is realignment theory, which is reviewed below. From this perspective the aging New Deal coalition, like the party structures that preceded it, was due to pass away as changing social, economic, and political conditions made its appeals and policies increasingly irrelevant. In this view, the New Deal should have been replaced in the sixties or early seventies by a new generation of politics dominated by a new party structure, supported by a different group of constituencies, and guided by an agenda all of its own. However, most analysts agree that this has not happened.¹ Although the previous period of Democratic power has ended, it has not been replaced by a similarly strong and coherent party structure. Rather, national politics seems to have shifted into a period of disorganization or perhaps an incomplete Republican realignment.

The political ambiguity that defines contemporary politics is associated with changes in the ways that voters identify with the parties. Today, neither party can claim a dependable majority of the electorate. Although the Democrats lost identifiers in the present period, the Republicans failed to make substantial enough gains to launch their party into true majority status. Rather, it is the ranks of those who are attached firmly to neither party that seem to be deciding elections.² This is reflected in election results that show essentially two things: Fewer people are turning out to vote and votes for national candidates are less informed by party loyalty. The latter is manifest in high levels of ticket-splitting and significant election to election fluctuations in the party preferences of voters.

- *divided government*

These conditions have resulted in divided government, where for most of the last thirty years neither party has been able to control the Presidency and both Houses of Congress at the same time. As a consequence, neither party has been

¹See Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisber, "Dealignment and Realignment in the Current Period," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, eds. Niemi, Richard G. and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993). (For full citations information for all works cited, see Works Cited.)

²See James L. Sundquist, "The 1984 Elections: How Much Realignment?" *Brookings Review* (Winter 1985). For a historical view on the post-New Deal rise of the independent voter see also, Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John E. Petrocik's "The Decline of Partisanship," In *Classics in Voting Behavior*, eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

able to effect significant changes in the activities and structures of government guided by a consistent policy agenda. Instead, partisan conflict in Washington has resulted in only incremental adjustments to national policy.

Although divided government has occurred on occasion throughout American history, most examples of it have been brief exceptions to the norm of majority party control. In retrospect, many instances of divided government can be understood as transitional periods during which control of the government shifted from one party to another. Most other examples are exceptions that are understandable within the context of continuing majority support for the dominant party.³

Such was the case during the previous Democratic era, which lasted from 1932 to 1968. Throughout this period, the Democratic Party controlled the Congress and Presidency with minor exceptions, those being two Congresses in which Republicans gained majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives (in 1947-8 and 1953-4) and Eisenhower's two presidential terms, which lasted from 1953-1961. These exceptions, however, did not reverse the general direction of national policy defined by the New Deal. Since the end of the New Deal era, however, divided government has been the rule. The result has been a period of American politics during which neither party has been able to effect a consistent policy agenda.

The present period began with the political turmoil of the 1968 presidential election, which ended in the narrow victory of Richard Nixon over Hubert Humphrey. From 1968 to 1988, Republicans won five out of six presidential elections. Republican presidents of this period seemed to be unified in their efforts to direct national policy away from the New Deal agenda. They criticized the Democrats' expansion of the domestic purview of the Federal Government by arguing that the New Deal's massive welfare, regulatory, and development programs were inefficient, burdensome, and sometimes destructive. Along these lines Republican presidents advanced deregulation and varieties of "new federalism," whereby authority and funding for a number of programs were devolved to state and local governments.

As Republican presidents defined a new policy agenda with some success, Republican control of the Executive could have been the cornerstone of a new generation of structured politics. Indeed, the one exception to Republican control of the White House in this period was Jimmy Carter's administration, which began with his narrow victory over Gerald Ford in 1976. Carter's election was understandable as an exception because it occurred in the wake of the Watergate scandal, a stagnant economy, the first of a series of oil supply shocks, and other social and economic pressures.

³See Walter Dean Burnham's "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?" in *The End of Realignment?* ed. Byron E. Shafer. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

Though exceptional, Carter's presidency did not represent a return to the New Deal. The course plotted by his administration, like Eisenhower's, was not altogether inconsistent with the policies advanced by the Republican presidents who came before and after him. Although Carter failed to articulate an essentially new national policy agenda, attenuated themes of government retrenchment, new federalism, and deregulation consistent with the Republican program of this time resonated in his administration. Furthermore, Democrats failed to enact significant new domestic policies during Carter's presidency. The one exception to this was a compromised version of Carter's national energy policy.

The long string of Republican presidential administrations that defined the first two decades of the present period, and the consistency of the policies advanced by them, might have grounded a new period of Republican dominance. However, Republican presidents failed to reshape the national policy agenda as thoroughly as the Democrats had during the New Deal era. Republican efforts were frustrated by the fact that throughout this period the Democrats maintained their control of the House of Representatives, though Republicans held the Senate between 1980 and 1986. Divided government, along with continuing Democratic control of large numbers of governorships and state legislatures, challenged the view that the political structure had realigned towards the Republicans.

- *explaining divided government*

Although the period between 1968 and 1992 was one of divided government and falling turnout rates, both of which indicated a weakening of the parties, it was characterized by an apparent stability. Towards the end of this time Byron Shafer argued that the division of government between a Republican executive and Democratic Congress was rooted in interactions between the long term issue preferences of voters, the appeals of the two parties, and critical differences between the branches of government.⁴

- *volatility*

However, the apparent structural stability of divided government ended with the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. Here, for the first time since Jimmy Carter's presidency, the Democrats held the White House as well as majorities in both of

⁴Shafer contended that the Presidency is naturally suited for the advancement of the nationalism and social conservatism shared by most Americans and advocated most forcefully by the Republican Party. As a consequence, Republicans controlled the Executive. On the other hand, the House of Representatives is structured to advance the domestic spending programs that have been central to the popular fiscal liberalism advanced by the Democrats. It was therefore natural for the Democrats to control the House. Meanwhile either party could take control of the Senate, institutionally positioned as it is between the House and the Presidency. For Shafer, divided government was caused by the failure of either party to dominate all three of the broad agendas supported by a majority of voters in this period (social conservatism, nationalism, and fiscal liberalism.) See Byron E. Shafer "The Notion of an Electoral Order: The Structure of Electoral Politics at the Accession of George Bush," in *The End of Realignment?* ed. Byron E. Shafer (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

the Houses of Congress. The marginalization of the Republican Party did not last, however. Republicans took control of both Houses of Congress in 1994, the first time they had done so since 1952.

After the 1994 election, the case was made that the Republicans were on the verge of achieving their long sought realignment with a weakened Democratic president, newly won control of Congress, and a majority of offices on the state level.⁵ In response, several authors noted that structural conditions were not favorable to a lasting Republican majority.⁶ Indeed, volatility returned with the reelection victory of Bill Clinton in 1996, the strength of which would have been unimaginable to many only a year earlier. In the meantime, Republicans have suffered diminishing majorities in the House, and the Senate. In 2000, the Republicans retook the White House in an extremely narrow and bitterly contested election, which was finally settled in the Supreme Court. Shortly following this victory, however, they lost their razor thin majority in the Senate upon the defection of a moderate Republican from Vermont.

The present period, unlike any in American history, lacks the consistent governing majorities that are the hallmarks of structured politics, traditionally understood. *Prima facie* electoral instability; ambivalence on the part of many towards the parties; low voter turnout rates; increasingly weak party identification; ticket splitting and divided government define the politics of the last thirty years. As a result, Republicans have failed in their efforts to substantially redefine government while the Democrats have been hard pressed just to defend an array of domestic programs that had their roots in the previous era.⁷

the context, problem, and broad dependent variable

It seems that it is not only the New Deal coalition that has faded in the present period but also the politics of strong parties and consistent agendas that defined American politics in the past. The condition of the present period is the context of this dissertation; the failure of either party to solidify majority status, or perhaps the "incomplete Republican realignment," is the broad problem with which I will deal. The larger dependent variable to be explained therefore is the

⁵See Alan Abromowitz, "The End of the Democratic Era? 1994 and the Future of Congressional Elections Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 48 (December 1995), Rhodes Cook, "Rare Combination of Forces May Make History of '94,'" *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 53 (April 15, 1995), and Harvey C. Mansfield's "Real Change in the USA," *Government and Opposition* 30 (Winter 1995)

⁶See especially, Everett Carl Ladd, "The 1994 Congressional Elections: The Postindustrial Realignment Continues," *Political Science Quarterly* 110 (Spring 1994), Stephen Gettinger, "94 Elections: Real Revolution or Blip on the Political Radar?" *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 52 (November 5, 1994), and Benjamin Barber's response to Mansfield, "Letter from America: The 1994 Elections - - Herbert Hoover Redux?" *Government and Opposition* 30 (Spring 1995).

⁷The Nixon Administration failed to fundamentally restructure the Federal Government, though it had some success in implementing New Federalism. See John Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983).

electoral volatility of the present period that has prevented either party from forming a stable governing majority.

Sources of Instability in the Present Period

The place to begin searching for the roots of electoral instability in the present period is in the end of the previous Democratic era. Portions of the coalition that gave the Democratic Party its governing majority shifted in ways that cost the Democrats their national majority but failed to leave the Republican Party in a position of dominance. The two largest sources of group support for the Democrats in the previous era were southern whites and working-class voters. The softening of support from these groups for the Democrats in the present period has been associated with the decline of the New Deal coalition and may be partly responsible for some of the electoral volatility and political ambiguity that define the present period.

- *the nationalization of the South*

Many have noted the importance of the softening of southern support for national Democratic candidates that began in the previous period. The decay of the "solid South" is generally associated with the shift there towards a genuine two-party system. This has occurred as the political divisions that define the Democratic and Republican Parties nationally have eclipsed the resentment over the Civil War and Reconstruction that limited Southern support for Republican candidates in the past.⁸

- *the alienation of working-class whites*

Working-class voters are probably even more critical to understanding declining Democratic power. This is the case because when working-class voters joined the New Deal coalition, they put the Democrats over the top in national elections.⁹ Furthermore, their interests were the focal point of the New Deal agenda. In the end, though factors intrinsic to the South caused Southern voters to react to a changing Democratic Party by moving towards the Republicans in national elections, more essential changes destabilized working class voting as they drove the Democratic Party's decline.

Working-class voters in the North reacted to the new association of the Democratic Party with social liberalism and civil rights in ways that bear some similarity to the response of southern whites. However, northern working-class whites faced additional material and social pressures that destabilized the group

⁸See chapter 3 in Everett Carl Ladd, *Transformations of the American Party System: Political Coalitions from the New Deal to the 1970s* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).

⁹This was especially the case with urban ethnic voters. See Carl N. Degler, "American Political Parties and the Rise of the City: An Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 51 (June 1965), Duncan MacRae and James Meldrum, "Critical Elections in Illinois: 1888-1958," *American Political Science Review*. 54 (September 1960), and Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* 3d ed., rev. (New York: Harper, 1971).

and compounded the effects of the new liberalism as an external threat. As a consequence, working-class voters, beginning in the sixties, have shifted away from the Democratic Party.¹⁰ This trend was reflected in the power of populist Republican rhetoric questioning government involvement in social matters and became undeniable with the phenomenon of the "Reagan Democrats." The loss of consistent working-class support, along with a general restructuring of the electorate, cost the Democratic Party its solid majority position in presidential elections after 1968.

It is arguable that trends in working class voting have caused more than a softening of Democratic support however. These changes, along with other shifts in elections and the electorate, may also contribute to the political instability manifest in divided government. This is suggested in attitudinal research showing that although self-identified members of the working-class have drawn away from Democratic association, they have not re-identified with the Republican Party. Rather, they have become ambivalent towards both parties.¹¹

the narrow dependent variable

This dissertation will not explain all of the electoral shifts relevant to the present period. Rather, it contributes most directly to an explanation of the political ambivalence and electoral volatility of working-class voters, particularly those residing in the North. In the process, it sheds new light on how some other constituency groups and the parties themselves have been redefined in the present period. The behavior of Northern working-class voters therefore is the focused dependent variable of this dissertation.

¹⁰See Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991): 60-61.

¹¹See Harold Stanley and Richard Niemi's "Partisanship and Group Support Over Time," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3d. edition eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

UNDERSTANDING ELECTORAL VOLATILITY IN THE PRESENT PERIOD: TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH

Following is a review that illustrates the challenges that volatility and ambiguity pose to traditional understandings of national election politics. This discussion begins with an introduction to realignment theory and the ways that realignment scholars and others have tried to explain the problems of the present period. The discourse that resulted has our ability to understand the present period through structural analysis in some doubt. The chapter concludes by introducing urban space as a framework that may ground a more useful understanding of politics in the present period.

Realignment

Since the fifties, realignment theory has dominated scholarly interpretations of American elections. Realignment is attractive because it lends neat periodicity to political change as it subjects voting trends to laws analogous those that drive the natural world. As a structural analysis that promised to make sense of an otherwise impossible multitude of details, realignment seemed to fulfill the essential goals of social science.¹² However, present conditions appear to defy structural analysis and so represent significant challenges to the paradigm.

V. O. Key Jr. conceptualized critical realignment in 1952.¹³ In "The future of the Democratic Party," Key argued that political realignments are often precipitated by historical "catastrophes," such as the Civil War and Great Depression. Key noted, however, that such events are not sufficient in themselves to cause realignments. Rather, realignments are the result of a long decline in the salience of the previous political order. Therefore, catastrophic events, when they happen at the right time, cause otherwise inevitable shifts to occur in the dramatic form of realigning elections.¹⁴

Key later clarified realigning elections as "a category of elections in which voters are . . . unusually deeply concerned, in which the extent of electoral involvement is relatively quite high, and in which the decisive results of the voting reveal a sharp alteration of the preexisting cleavage within the electorate. Moreover, the realignment made manifest in the voting in such elections seems to persist for several succeeding elections."¹⁵ Key continued to develop the concept, articulating the theory of secular realignment in 1959, which explains gradual

¹²From a conversation with Todd Swanstrom.

¹³See Everett Carll Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot: The Uselessness of 'Realignment' for Understanding Change in Contemporary American Politics," in *The End of Realignment?* ed. Byron E. Shafer. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

¹⁴See V. O. Key Jr., "The Future of the Democratic Party," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 28 (Spring 1952).

¹⁵See V. O. Key Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics* 17 (February 1955).

shifts in the electorate that eventually result in partisan turnovers.¹⁶ Secular trends have since become central to understandings of electoral periodicity.¹⁷

- *dialectical realignment*

Key's work has led to a massive literature seeking to apply periodicity to American politics.¹⁸ The premiere contemporary scholar of realignment is Walter Dean Burnham. In 1970, Burnham presented what is perhaps the strongest statement of realignment in terms of its implications. In *Critical Elections and the Mainstreams of American Politics*, Burnham "put the phenomenon at the operative center of American politics" and developed the "inherent periodicity" of electoral realignment.¹⁹ Here, Burnham argues that critical realignments result in the comprehensive restructuring of the legal, governmental, and normative dimensions of the American political system with profound and lasting impacts.

In a more recent work, Burnham developed realignment as an elegant base-superstructure dialectic.²⁰ Here the base is composed of the constantly shifting economic and demographic conditions that define the essential parameters of national politics. Meanwhile, the superstructure is made up of the constants of the Constitution and deep-seated political norms along with somewhat more changeable factors such as government functions, administrative agencies, laws, and electoral alignments.

Though the superstructure must be grounded in the base ultimately, it plays a conservative function by staving off the political effects of base shifts. It does this by structuring political norms and expectations in accord with an ever more anachronistic order.²¹ However, as the social and economic pressures of the ever

¹⁶See V. O. Key Jr., "Secular Realignment and the Party System," 21 (May 1959).

¹⁷Walter Dean Burnham and Carmines and Stimpson incorporate secular trends in this manner. See Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainstreams of American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970) and Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimpson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of the American Party System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁸For a discussion and extensive bibliography of the realignment literature see Harold F. Bass Jr., "Background to Debate: A Reader's Guide and Bibliography," in *The End of Realignment?* ed. Byron E. Shafer (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

¹⁹See Byron Shafer, "The Notion of an Electoral Order."

²⁰See Burnham's "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?" in *The End of Realignment?* ed. Byron E. Shafer. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

²¹This was the case, for instance, with the reform era. After 1896, reformers worked to ensure their power in the structure of American politics as they changed the terms of the political contest. Measures presumably aimed at preventing partisan corruption amounted to a political-depoliticization of government. Reducing the electoral and governing role of mass parties resulted in a lasting demobilization of the lower classes, and so had its own logic. Changing the terms of the political debate and excluding these citizens from effective political activity prevented a large slate of progressive issues from substantially impacting the political agenda. Tom DeLuca draws a critical comparison between Burnham's arguments about political depoliticization and E. E. Schattschneider's theories of how political forces seek advantage by shifting the parameters or rules of debate towards those more favorable to them. See Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995).

evolving base mount beyond the superstructure's ability to contain them, the superstructure breaks free to catch up with the base once again, like tectonic plates do when they shift in an earthquake to relieve mounting pressures beneath. Realignment reduces tension in the political system because it makes the superstructure more relevant to new conditions. The result is a new period of political stability. This breaking away together with the transformation of the superstructure explain the periodicity of electoral history as inherent to the structure of American politics.

- *the realignment paradigm: a proliferation of theories*

Since Key, there have been many variations on the realignment theme. Though many of these are not as complex or philosophical as Burnham's, most are anchored in partisan shifts. Everett Carll Ladd, though critical of realignment, does justice in summing up the consensus as follows:

Three key ideas are common to the varied disciplinary statements of the realignment model: that certain elections are of special importance to partisan change; that these critical elections occur with a rather precise frequency or periodicity--usually, every 32 to 36 years; and that with realignment, a decisive, unidirectional shift occurs in partisan control over the agencies of government, as a new majority party appears at all levels and relegates its predecessor to the dustbin of history.²²

Though there is considerable variation within the paradigm, Ladd's is a useful synopsis. From this perspective the present period, beginning in 1968, is problematic. The 1968 election occurred 36 years after that which ushered in the New Deal and represents a significant change -- the end of the last Democratic era. However, "a decisive, unidirectional shift in partisan control over the agencies of government . . ." has not occurred, and neither has the Democratic Party been relegated to the "dustbin of history."

The Present Period in the Context of Realignment Theory

- *dealignment*

Some scholars question the usefulness of viewing the last thirty years in terms of a partisan shift by arguing that the previous era has ended in dealignment. Here, neither party can effect a consistent majority because their influence on voting has been eclipsed by a multitude of other vote-determining structures such as the mass media, individual campaign organizations, PACs, et cetera.²³ The effect of the number and conflicting nature of these structures is that voting decisions, although still influenced by mass aggregating forces, appear to be more informed by individual level impressions of candidates than by anything else.

²²See Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot."

²³See Martin P. Wattenberg, "Views of the Parties: Negativity or Neutrality," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3rd edition eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

- *realignment with a dealignment effect*

However, Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg contend that arguments for the end of partisan alignment are premature.²⁴ They note that although there is considerable agreement that we face *effective* dealignment, this condition can be explained within the context of realignment approaches that include parties. These include "a movement in levels of party support;" "a transformation in the support coalitions for the parties;" "a shift in the issue bases of the parties . . . or a change in public policy direction following a change in party control of the presidency," et cetera. (p. 325.) Any one of these essentially partisan changes can result in a realignment that leaves neither party in a majority position. That is, although a relative weakening of parties may explain some of the lower turnout rates and split-ticket voting of the present period, recent trends in national elections can still be understood in partisan terms.

- *the partisan meaning of group membership*

Along these lines, Harold Stanley and Richard Niemi contend that the present period represents a sub-partisan realignment of some of the groups that make up the parties' constituencies but that these shifts have not resulted in a clear majority for either party. They argue that changes in party identification for individuals still occur within the context of group identifications that have partisan significance and that the underlying group coalitions of both parties have changed as the partisan meanings of groups have gradually shifted.²⁵

The group shifts that they identify are suggestive. Although African Americans and Latinos are now more likely to associate with the Democrats, individuals who identify with unions and the working-class have moved away from Democratic identification, though they have not shown a positive realignment towards the Republicans. The natural speculation is that members of unions and the working class have tended to vote more erratically and more frequently for Republicans since the mid-sixties as the partisan orientation of their groups became more ambiguous. It is significant that while the Democrats have both gained and lost the support of certain groups in the present period, the Republicans have gained little from new group associations, save for regular church goers.²⁶ This fact may be associated with the "incomplete Republican realignment" of the present period. On the other hand, as the Democratic Party has lost its majority status, it has become strongly identified with minority groups.

²⁴See Richard G. Niemi and Herbert Weisberg, "Dealignment and Realignment in the Current Period," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3rd. edition eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

²⁵See Harold Stanley and Richard Niemi, "Partisanship and Group Support Over Time," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3rd edition eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

²⁶ Stanley and Niemi's study did not look at the religious right per se, which has made a significant contribution to Republican ranks.

Historical Interpretations of Race and Class Pressures in the Present Period

The changes in group-party identification identified by Stanley and Niemi suggest a critical relationship between race and class in the present period. The stronger identification of minority groups with the Democratic Party may be associated with the reduction of working-class Democratic identification. Stanley and Niemi's data do not allow them to make a strong connection between these group shifts. However, others have used different kinds of information to relate the growing association of minorities with the Democratic Party to the alienation of critical groups of white voters with the Party. Among them are Thomas and Mary Edsall.

In *Chain Reaction*, Thomas and Mary Edsall give substance to this association by interpreting voting data and survey research from a number of sources within a historical context of politics and policy in the present period. Their analysis brings to bear a stew pot of economic and social/racial pressures that negatively affected many Southern and working-class whites during the present period. Given the opposing agendas of the two parties during this time, these stresses caused these core constituencies to reconsider their support for the Democratic Party.

Problems for the Democrats began in the 1960s. Lyndon Johnson, having won a landslide victory in 1964 with heavy Democratic majorities in Congress, seemed poised to bring activist government to new heights. With a booming economy and what seemed to be unbeatable electoral support, Johnson began an unprecedented expansion of liberal welfare programs and civil rights. At Johnson's peak however, issues were brewing that would undermine the support of key Democratic constituencies for the new agenda, particularly moderate income whites.

- *material and social pressures*

Early in the present period, the working-class were stressed by the high tax rates necessitated by Johnson's military mobilization and new domestic spending commitments. Tax pressures were later compounded by the stagnant but inflationary economy of the seventies, which eroded working-class job security and buying power. These material stresses occurred alongside growing reservations among working-class and Southern white voters about the rights revolution and the social activism of the Great Society. Furthermore, the increasing dysfunction associated with poor urban black neighborhoods and the shift of the civil rights movement towards more activism in the North increased the dissatisfaction of Northern working-class whites especially. Together, material and social stresses undermined the Democrats' majority as they made Republican candidates' calls for restricting government's domestic activism more appealing to core Democratic constituencies.

- *race and rights, activism and dysfunction*

Given the Democratic Party's new association with rights and opportunities for previously marginalized minorities and the poor, changes in the civil rights movement were central to the public's reexamination of the Democrats. As activists turned their attention to the North, the focus changed from demands for formal racial equality, such as voting rights for blacks in the South, to calls for integration, affirmative action, and equal outcomes more generally.

Many moderate-income whites living in Northern cities felt threatened by the possibility of new competition from blacks for jobs, schools, housing, and other goods of urban life. The affect of the new activism was exacerbated by assertions of black power and separatism. Voters that had previously considered themselves to be racially tolerant, particularly in the North, reconsidered their views in light of these challenges.²⁷ Unfortunately, the new agendas of civil rights leaders and liberal policymakers coincided with a reality of rising urban crime rates, inner-city riots, and increases in the level of social dysfunction associated with impoverished inner-urban black communities.²⁸

The targeted nature of the anti-poverty programs and rights reforms initiated during Johnson's administration led working-class whites to identify federal activism with benefits for lower-class blacks who were often seen as dysfunctional, irresponsible, or even criminal. As the Edsalls note, the previously marginalized people who were receiving new forms of public assistance and legitimacy were, for many, those least deserving of these benefits. Meanwhile, working-class whites, concerned about their own declining status, felt left behind and even cheated by the new Democratic agenda. In short, working-class whites resented the new agenda as proffered by judges and other elite policy leaders who did not have to pay personally, as they did, for the new policies and the growing inner-urban dysfunction that were associated with them. Republican rhetoric advancing social conservatism and limited government therefore appealed to white working-class resentment as it represented a populist alternative to an out-of touch elite liberalism.²⁹

²⁷Jonathan Rieder, in his case study *Canarsie*, offers substantial evidence that this was the case. Rieder's findings are consistent with Carmine's and Stimpson's thesis in *Issue Evolution* that race and related issues redefined the national political debate away from the New Deal agenda towards one between new liberalism and traditional conservative social values. See Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), and Edward G. Carmine and James A. Stimpson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of the American Party System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²⁸The growing association of blacks with urban dysfunction in this period has been well documented. See especially, Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). This situation led to the white backlash identified by Thomas and Mary Edsall, as well as a strong response from conservative academics. See Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991). An example of this can be found in Edward Banfield's *The Unheavenly City Revisited* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974).

²⁹For a critical understanding of the power of populism as it relates to realignment, see Kevin Phillips's *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1990).

The addition of race to the national agenda was perhaps the most critical factor leading to the demise of working-class support for the Democratic Party. Indeed, race transformed the way many thought about policy in general. The Edsalls identify a process of racial filtering, whereby increasing numbers of the white working-class reinterpreted liberal policies as racial policies even when they were not essentially racial. Others have argued that race in the present period became an "easy issue," that is, a broadly salient issue with the power to reorient political views on a range of topics.³⁰

Through racial filtering, safety nets for the deserving poor became entitlements for lazy blacks, civil rights became federal guarantees of equal outcomes determined by race, defendants' rights aided and abetted criminals, often inner-city blacks, et cetera. As the Edsalls note, a major problem for the Democratic Party was that its leadership did not, or could not, appreciate and react to the anger of white voters who felt threatened by the new agenda.³¹ At the same time, Republican politicians have been accused of playing the race card by employing racially coded messages to tap the ugliest fears of white voters.³²

- *race and place*

Although a significant portion of racial animosity felt by whites towards lower-class blacks may have resulted from sociocultural racism, Jonathan Rieder points out that racial animosity in the present period had complex roots.³³ In studying Canarsie, a threatened ethnic white working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, Rieder found that the racial fears of Canarsie residents occurred in the context of objective threats posed by their proximity to the dysfunction of severely distressed black neighborhoods.³⁴

Liberal policies and court orders required working-class whites to compete with blacks in ways and threatened their security from spreading lower-class neighborhoods. In this context, Republican promises of less government

³⁰Martin Gilens found that the strongest determinant of individual level white support for welfare is whether reciprocity is subjectively associated with blacks. See "'Race Coding' and White Opposition to Welfare," *American Political Science Review* 90 (September 1996), and Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimpson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of the American Party System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989). However, Michael Hagen finds that while Republicans may have attempted to benefit from racial animosities, attitudinal research shows a decline in racial animosity over the present period. See "References to Racial Issues," *Political Behavior* 17 (1991).

³¹Kevin Phillips, in the *Politics of Rich and Poor*, also points out that the Democratic leadership lost touch with its central New Deal constituencies, particularly the white working-class, early in the present period. Byron Shafer offers an excellent critical discussion of internal organizational factors that prevent parties from controlling the nature of their appeals in the face of changing circumstances. This discussion is not unrelated to Phillips, and focuses on the problem of leadership recruitment. See again, "The Notion of an Electoral Order."

³²See Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*.

³³Donald Kinder and David Sears found that the political attitudes of suburban whites were effected more by symbolic racism than any assessment of objective threats posed by group competition with minorities. See Kinder and Sears, "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life," *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology* 40 (1981).

³⁴See Jonathan Rieder's *Canarsie*, for a case study of a white working- and lower middle-class Brooklyn neighborhood facing the pressures of integration, crime, property value instability, and other economic stresses in the seventies.

intervention were easy for working-class whites to interpret as promises for less affirmative action, less busing, less housing integration, et cetera.³⁵ The irony caused by these stresses, wrapped as they were around race, is that for moderate income whites activist government, precisely the thing that had made the Democratic Party so important to them in the past, went from being a good thing to being a bad thing.

- *Republican appeals and economic stresses*

The confluence of socioracial pressures and the new liberalism that came to define the Democratic agenda in the minds of many might have caused working-class whites as a group to realign towards the Republican party in national elections. This apparently did not happen. The failure of working-class whites to strongly re-identify with the Republican Party may draw from the fact that the social and racial pressures that should have pushed them in that direction occurred in the context of serious material stresses.

Higher taxes, a stagnant economy, and a soft job market in the present period left many working-class whites without the secure promise of the good jobs and rising incomes that had previously been their tickets to middle-class life. Republicans seem to have failed to effectively respond to these economic conditions even as they, in combination with social / racial pressures helped to push working-class whites away from the new Democratic agenda. Therefore, "countervailing" economic stresses in the present period may partially explain why working-class whites as a whole did not re-identify with the Republican Party. The term "Reagan Democrat" seems to reflect this ambiguity.³⁶

The connection between race, class, and politics in the present period, which authors have identified using more interpretive or historical approaches, can be summarized as follows: In the North particularly, new social issues, colored by race, contradicted the socially conservative perspectives that have been associated especially with the ethnic whites that make up much of the working class.³⁷ The values of hard work, personal responsibility, and opportunity for the "little guy" that had been legitimized by the New Deal now seemed to be undermined by new forms of "social engineering." As their social values were challenged, working-class whites faced new economic pressures that neither party responded to adequately. Although these stresses may have prevented a Republican realignment, they reinforced negative views of the new liberalism by ensuring that new liberal policies would be associated with greater competition from lower-income individuals. As working-class whites' economic insecurity threatened their efforts to escape from the dysfunction growing within many central cities, abstract social concerns became palpable threats. As minorities and especially poor minorities found stronger incentives to support Democrats in

³⁵See especially Edsall and Edsall *Chain Reaction*.

³⁶See especially Kevin Phillips's *The Politics of Rich and Poor*.

³⁷See Samuel G. Freedman, *The Inheritance: How Three Families and America Moved from Roosevelt to Reagan and Beyond* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) and Jonathan Rieder's *Canarsie* for findings consistent with the Edsalls' argument on this point.

national elections, many working-class whites were drawn away from the Democratic Party but failed to find sufficient reason to identify with the Republican Party.

Realignment versus Post Structural Analysis

Realignment and Dynamic Issue Evolution

Though the interpretations of race and class pressures reviewed above should inform serious understandings of politics in the present period, they do not add up to a systemic analysis with the structural simplicity of realignment theory. On the other hand, Edward Carmines and James Stimpson have developed a model of political realignment that brings race to bear as the most significant factor structuring politics in the present period.

Carmines and Stimpson connect race and class in a sophisticated secular theory of periodic realignment.³⁸ Their issue evolution approach relies on periodic cycles of cross-generation party identification and attitudinal transmission. These are re-initiated at critical times by powerful polarizing issues.

However, the political alignments that result are not permanent. This is the case because though party identification tends to be transmitted well from one generation to the next, the intensity of the political attitudes that initially formed those identifications in the first place wanes as the issue dichotomy ages and loses its relevance.³⁹ As partisan opposition becomes less oriented by strongly defined differences over important issues, the strength of party identification held by newer voters softens. As a consequence, the electoral structure eases towards a more passive equilibrium. When this happens, the electorate is vulnerable again to a realignment of partisan identifications upon the advent of more salient issues.⁴⁰

Carmines and Stimpson argue that race is the issue that defined the structure of the present period. As the contention over governmental responsibility for employment that split New Deal era voters between the Democrats and Republicans softened, events conspired to make race broadly salient. While before the sixties the two parties were hardly distinguishable on this issue, race redefined the parties beginning in the 1950s -- in part through the actions of policy makers. Race became a simple and broadly salient or "easy" issue. As such, race had broad enough appeal and clear enough relevance to restructure

³⁸See Edward Carmines and James Stimpson, *Issue Evolution*.

³⁹Here, Carmines and Stimpson confirm Paul Allen Beck's theory of socialization. See Beck, "A Socialization Theory of Partisan Realignment," in *The Politics of Future Citizens*, ed. Richard Niemi (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

⁴⁰Richard G. Niemi and M. Kent Jennings also make the case, citing empirical data, that issues eventually overtake inheritance in party identification. See "Issues and Inheritance in the Formation of Party Identification," in *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3rd edition eds. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993).

individual assessments of the parties along a range of policies and positions.⁴¹ However, the authors assert that the current alignment has been attenuated by relative party decline and by the weakness of race compared to more critical issues in the past, such as the Depression or Civil War. In other words, the system has both realigned and dealigned.

Post-Structural Analysis

The complexity of contemporary realignment approaches reviewed above and catalogued by Niemi and Weisberg results from the simple fact that the ambiguity and volatility of the present period are not easy to explain by more straightforward analysis. As realignment scholars have had to confront increasingly anomalous conditions, what was a relatively simple theory has become ever more varied and complex. Realignment is a paradigm in trouble.

Everett Carll Ladd has made a strong case for replacing structural analysis with post-structuralism, arguing that electoral history is most understandable in terms of social trends.⁴² For Ladd, electoral volatility is natural to a system of staggered elections and complex government. In part, the decline of parties has allowed a return to this default condition. However, recent social changes have exacerbated the instability that would have attained regardless. For Ladd we have embarked on a politics of the post-industrial, where waiting for realignment is like waiting for Godot.⁴³

Influences of the postindustrial setting on the party system are varied and profound, and easily traced. For example, an electorate with high levels of formal education, which receives its political information largely through national communications media of great institutional autonomy, must be far less dependent on political parties for cues and direction than were its predecessors.

Similarly, vast growth in occupations involved in creating, manipulating, and disseminating ideas, as opposed to producing things, has transformed the labor force. Organized labor, which developed in the industrial era, became a major economic and political force during and immediately following the New Deal as union membership soared. [However today,] labor has become a far more feeble element in national politics generally, and in the Democratic coalition specifically. (p. 32)

Ladd argues that factors endemic to the "post-industrial" period make subjectively felt social issues much more important as vote determinants than

⁴¹See especially, Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimpson, "The Two Faces of Issue Voting," in *Classics in Voting Behavior*, ed. Richard G. Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg (Washington, D. C.: CQ Press, 1993).

⁴²See Everett Carll Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot."

⁴³Ladd's reference to the play "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett, indicates his affinity for the post-modern. Prima facie, the "plot" is limited to individuals waiting for someone named Godot about whom no one seems to know much. Yet, the characters spend a great deal of time waiting and talking about waiting. The frustration with this dialogue is analogous to some of the frustration one finds in the realignment literature. One can infer that attempting authoritative structural analysis is a waste of time. Though Ladd's project is not to transcend structure in full, the effect is to insulate electoral data from the sort of comprehensive structural analysis promised by the realignment paradigm.

voters' economic class, ideology, or party associations.⁴⁴ Ladd's conclusions bode poorly for the Democratic Party and traditional conceptions of political accountability in general.⁴⁵

The new political consciousness that Ladd identifies critically distinguishes his analysis from less complex versions of dealignment. However, although his work brings to bear a number of important insights, to argue the political future as he has is to give up any serious framework for analysis beyond saying that we can't say much. Accepting Ladd, analysts would be left sifting around in the political sandbox of so many details particular to specific elections, as pundits do. But Ladd's work must be judged by its usefulness and not by the irritation it might cause to those favoring structural analysis.

The Realignment Response

Burnham confronts Ladd's post-structural challenge directly.⁴⁶ Although he credits Ladd's analysis with critical qualities, he contends that scholars who fail to recognize structural realignment in the present period do so because they fail to properly specify realignment. Burnham argues that strong partisan turnovers are only one form of realignment. Exclusive reliance on them is why we are still "waiting for Godot."

For Burnham, the 1968 vote represented more than the defeat of Hubert Humphrey. It also meant the end of the Democratic Party's old nomination process and so resulted in an essential change in the structure of national politics. In the absence of internal party control over presidential nominations, the political system realigned away from strong party domination. Changes in the function of political institutions, including government, brought about by this realignment have resulted in new norms of political action. These include ticket splitting, which is understandable as a response to the fragmentary nature of the new political structure. Elite behavior has also changed in accord with efforts to survive and compete in a system of weak parties and divided government. For instance, instead of working exclusively through party organizations, candidates today court individual voters and other sources of support directly.

Burnham goes on to argue that the absence of powerful mass parties in the present period compounds the demobilization of the lower strata of the social economy, including the working-class, that began in the reform era. For Burnham, present period demobilization, divided government, and the popular appeal of conservative rhetoric are associated with low public estimations of

⁴⁴Ladd's post industrial politics is not dissimilar to the "new political culture" that Terry Nichols Clark identifies. See "Structural Realignments in American City Politics: Less Class, More Race, and a New Political Culture," *Urban Affairs Review* 31 (January 1996).

⁴⁵Ladd contends further that the current political condition contributes to general skepticism about parties and government. See also, Seymour Martin Lipset's "Malaise and Resiliency in America," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (July 1995).

⁴⁶See Walter Dean Burnham, "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?"

government. These views seem to be consistent with government that is neither defined by nor responsible for any consistent agenda.

In sum, Burnham interprets the ambiguity of the present period in terms of a complex of multiple and contradictory electoral structures rather than simply the result of a new political culture or the end of structure. He is therefore in essential agreement with Sidney Blumenthal as well as with Aldrich and Niemi that the present period represents a post-partisan structural alignment.⁴⁷

It seems that what makes Burnham's work most distinct from Ladd's is the idea that people do not come to politics as individuals. Rather, their attitudes, perspectives, and preferences are structured by the political system. The problem of the present period, therefore, is that it is defined by weak, fragmented, and countervailing structures. This frustrates and alienates citizens. The result is political volatility and withdrawal.

On the other hand, Ladd begins with the individual and with society. In the absence of strong parties and related mass aggregating structures, social trends have become more important. Voting has become less regular as people have increasingly asserted their individual values within or in spite of these trends.

The Crisis of Realignment

Burnham's analysis is impressive in its comprehensive complexity. One might wonder, however, if any analyst would have come to the same conclusions about the politics of recent decades had realignment theory never existed. It does seem that in order to save realignment, Burnham relaxes its parameters to where the theory loses the simplicity that made it so attractive in the first place. Although there are important philosophical distinctions between Burnham's and Ladd's approaches, it is questionable how much *effective* difference there really is. Whereas post-modern analysts seem to uphold the demise of structural interpretation as a good, realignment theorists have had to relax their paradigm for what are perhaps more instrumental reasons. In the end, because both approaches lack specificity, they seem to allow an almost infinite reinterpretation of the facts.

Towards a new understanding

In conclusion, although attitudinal researchers, the Edsalls, and other scholars have identified trends that help to explain Democratic decline, efforts to fit the specifics of present period political conditions into structural analysis have been frustrated. Carmines and Stimpson make a good start, however, in their analysis of race and realigning structure. Race and class pressures have clearly affected the politics of the present period. Therefore, efforts to understand the politics of recent decades should include them. I argue that this can be done within a

⁴⁷See Sidney Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign* (New York: Scribners, 1982) and John Aldrich and Richard G. Niemi, "The Sixth American Party System: The 1960s Realignment and the Candidate Centered Parties," Unpublished paper cited by Walter Dean Burnham in "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?"

structural framework if we investigate the structures that make these forces most meaningful.

a new direction in structural analysis

Although many of the factors that organized voters and their interests in the previous Democratic era have weakened, the urbanization of American society has produced a new structure of politics and society. Throughout the present period, urban areas have grown in their power to arrange people and activities within them in consistent and politically relevant ways. As such, an analysis of electoral politics in terms of the structure of metropolitan space may lead to a more coherent understanding of the present period. Such an approach promises to organize the findings of attitudinal researchers better, as it provides an additional context for the more historical and interpretive work of authors such as Kevin Phillips and the Edsalls.

Metropolitan analysis may also contribute to our understanding of the electoral volatility critically associated with working-class voters. I will show that the inner-ring suburbs in which large numbers of urban working-class whites live have compounded and even generated a number of strong and politically relevant pressures on their residents. These stresses conflict in ways that have cut across the appeals of both of the parties. As a consequence, neither party has been able to effectively respond to all of these pressures, a fact also partially rooted in the political structure of metropolitan space. This condition has frustrated the ability of voters living in these places to find consistent comfort in the appeals of either party.

Although my place-based analysis does not speak to periodicity per se, it strengthens structural analysis in the face of post-structural nihilism. Furthermore, such an approach is not exclusive of traditional scholarship. Rather, metropolitan place is a mechanism through which other factors such as class, parties, issue agendas, and policies achieve more coherent significance. This is because the places that make up urban areas coordinate a multiplicity of influences.

PLACE AND POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

Looking at Place

Some scholars, working outside of the realignment paradigm, have used place to interpret the politics of the present period. Though place-based approaches have not dominated electoral analysis, they have an important history and should be understood within the context of more critical discussions of the ways that places can influence political attitudes and interests.

Scholars used geography to understand divisions in American politics before the advent of the realignment paradigm. Early analysts understood political alignments in terms of regional divisions.⁴⁸ The deepest political distinction between regions in the United States has always been that between the North and South. The political importance of this historical schism reverberates to this day. Although it still makes some sense to consider national politics in the context of regional distinctions, analysts in this century have found political divisions created by the growth of urban areas to be increasingly useful.

Different interests and norms associated with cities and rural areas played a major role in turn-of-the-century politics. At that time, reformers worried about the social and political affects that urban neighborhoods had on their residents as the nation's cities were becoming overcrowded with poor immigrants.⁴⁹ Reformers' suspicion that cities corrupted traditional social and political values were consistent with a long-standing anti-urban tradition that is unique to American politics. This bias goes back at least as far as Thomas Jefferson's deep distrust of cities. Jefferson believed that the rural farmer, independent in means and mind, should be the backbone of the new republican society. He worried that life in cities threatened the physical health of residents as it corrupted their moral and political virtues, turning them into the volatile and easy to manipulate masses of sophisticated but decadent European society.⁵⁰

The Power of the Ghetto

The most severe conditions associated with cities today, those in the distressed inner-city ghettos, have been the focus of a great deal of recent scholarship. Some of this work echoes the concerns that reformers shared earlier about the effects of slums on their residents. Scholars have shown that inner city ghettos

⁴⁸See Samuel Eldersveld, "The Influence of Metropolitan Party Pluralities in Presidential Elections since 1920: A Study of Twelve Key Cities." *American Political Science Review* (1949).

⁴⁹For an example of this see Jane Addams, "Why the Ward Boss Rules," *The Outlook* (April 2, 1989).

⁵⁰See Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom, *City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994): p. 181.

affect their residents' political attitudes and behavior.⁵¹ Furthermore, differences between ghettos and other places have been associated with serious political divisions in urban areas.

The central thrust of much of this scholarship is that *where* one is poor impacts individuals beyond the fact of poverty itself. Living in ghettos isolates residents from mainstream social and economic opportunities. More critically, the concentration of poverty in these places distorts the world-views of residents, fostering divergent understandings of broader political realities.⁵² These perspectives are made manifest in oppositional identity and street culture, which are understood as resulting from profound social and political alienation.⁵³ Some inner-city residents have become so disaffected that they have adopted radical explanations of their disadvantage, including genocidal conspiracy theories.⁵⁴

The flip side of this alienation is the radical disconnection of many suburban whites from the problems of the inner city. Although the segregation of the ghetto prevents many kinds of contact between ghetto residents and others, radical differences between the inner city and other parts of metropolitan areas reinforce cognitive distance, which further prevents the formation of mutually beneficial coalitions.⁵⁵ That many suburban residents seem to believe that they have nothing in common with inner-city residents probably results from more than their efforts to avoid the people and problems of these places. These feelings also reflect the real separation of the ghetto from the rest of metropolitan America today. The consequence is a structure of mutual distrust.

The power of the ghetto to isolate residents and divide urban areas is preliminary justification for a broader investigation of the ways that metropolitan areas affect and divide their residents. Although many political

⁵¹ Cathy Cohen and Michael Dawson have found that living in concentrated poverty neighborhoods intensifies feelings of political alienation and other views that isolate ghetto residents. See "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics," *American Political Science Review* 87 (June 1993).

⁵²See especially, William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁵³See Elijah Anderson, "The Code of the Streets," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1994). Anderson describes a counterproductive culture of poverty that is nurtured by segregation and concentrated poverty. Such cultural theses are not dissimilar in their effects to William Julius Wilson's understanding of the cognitive limitations imposed by the ghetto's milieu of poverty, save that Wilson denies that cultural styles are adaptations of blocked opportunities. See *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

⁵⁴See John Dilulio, "My Black Crime Problem and Ours," *City Journal* 6 (Spring 1996). Such conspiracy theories include the belief that the proliferation of crack in the ghetto is a white conspiracy. Unfortunately, the lack of political will on the part of American society to tackle urban poverty, exacerbated by private disinvestment, gives substance to inner-city anger. While there seems to be no evidence for the specifics of many of the genocidal theories brewing in today's ghetto, there may be more truth to the general thrust of these views than Dilulio gives credit. See especially Mike Davis, "Who Killed L. A: A Political Autopsy," *New Left Review* (January/February 1993).

⁵⁵See especially Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). Jonathan Kozol, discusses the radical effects of spatial separation in East Saint Louis, an almost all black and poor municipality radically segregated from the more affluent suburbs that surround it. Most white residents completely avoid this city and so mutual understanding between place-based constituencies in this area is non-existent. See *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York City: Harper Collins, 1991).

scientists have ignored place, there has been little explicit resistance to using it.⁵⁶ This lack of contention may draw from the fact that place-based analyses are not exclusive of most other approaches.

Urban Place and Electoral Alignment

The urbanization of America has been as important a demographic shift as westward expansion was and can be associated with major trends in national politics going back at least as far as the dawn of the twentieth century.⁵⁷ Samuel Eldersveld discovered decades ago that the preferences of voters living in the nation's twelve biggest cities largely determined the outcomes of presidential elections.⁵⁸ In his study of presidential election returns from 1920 to 1948, Eldersveld found that the New Deal realignment was caused by a significant shift towards the Democrats of voters living in the nation's twelve largest cities.⁵⁹

However, well-documented post-war changes, including suburbanization, restructured the nation's metropolitan areas in ways that would have profound political impacts. These changes include the serious erosion of the ability of large city electorates to *determine* many presidential elections.⁶⁰ When Todd Swanstrom and I updated Eldersveld's data, the figures showed that a dip in the relative power of central city electorates indicated in Eldersveld's figures for 1948 marked the beginning of a long-term decline that continues to the present.⁶¹ This erosion of central city power was caused by post-war suburbanization. As many residents moved beyond the city lines into new suburban developments, their voting seems to have shifted towards the Republicans relative to those who

⁵⁶However, James Gimpel and Jason Schuknecht argue that place, at least as defined by population size and density, does not structure political preferences. See "The Content of Urban-Rural Cleavage in American Voting Behavior," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (Washington D. C. September 2000).

⁵⁷See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins," *Atlantic Monthly* 270 (July 1992).

⁵⁸See Samuel Eldersveld, "The Influence of Metropolitan Party Pluralities in Presidential Elections Since 1920. Eldersveld broke with the more commonly held view of the time that electoral alignments were essentially regional in nature (North versus South, for example). Eldersveld found that electoral behavior was more usefully understood as structured by urban and non-urban groups, with urban voters deciding presidential outcomes.

⁵⁹More recent authors have analyzed the New Deal realignment in terms of urban voting and found that urban ethnic voters were critical. However, there is some disagreement as to when this group shifted towards the Democrats. Samuel Lubell suggests that there was an Al Smith realignment in 1928 among these voters, that presaged Roosevelt's. See *The Future of American Politics*, 3rd edition, (New York: Harper, 1971). Duncan MacRae and James Meldrum make the case that this urban group shift occurred in 1924. See "Critical Elections in Illinois: 1888-1958." *American Political Science Review*. 54 (September 1960). David J. Alvarez and Edmund J. True, on the other hand, find evidence suggesting that urban ethnic groups voted supported Democratic candidates strongly throughout the period from 1896-1924. See, "Critical Elections and Partisan Realignment." See "Critical Elections and Partisan Realignment: An Urban Test Case," *Polity* 5 (Summer 1973). Eldersveld does not dis-aggregate the city vote as these authors do, but shows a distinct overall shift in city voting in 1932 that has lasted to the present. See "The Influence of Metropolitan Party Pluralities."

⁶⁰See especially John Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁶¹See Richard Sauerzopf and Todd Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996," 35:1 *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1999).

stayed in the cities.⁶² Just as the movement of Americans into cities restructured national politics after the turn of the century, newer divisions between cities and suburbs changed politics again.

Suburbanization and Political Identification

A few authors conducting attitudinal research in the 1950s recognized that residents were becoming more Republican as they moved to the suburbs. However, scholars took different approaches to understanding how moving to the suburbs changed voters' preferences. Louis Harris noted in 1954 that city Democrats who moved to the suburbs often faced Republican Party registration advantages of eight-to-one. Harris theorized that peer pressure was enough to encourage many newcomers to identify with the Republicans.⁶³ Scholars also argued that Republicanization had material roots. Here, as residents acquired middle-class property and status accouterments in the suburbs, they found new reasons to identify with conservative interests.⁶⁴ Fred Greenstein and Raymond Wolfinger dubbed this process objective mobility.⁶⁵

In 1958, Greenstein and Wolfinger formulated what was perhaps the most sophisticated early interpretation of the growing disparity between Democratic cities and Republican suburbs.⁶⁶ These authors take into account three potential explanations: The first is a selection dynamic, whereby suburbs attract disproportionate numbers of Republicans from the cities. This process makes the suburbs more Republican and the cities more Democratic than they otherwise would be. The authors did not discount selection, but argued its inability to explain the magnitude of growing differentiation. The authors also considered suburban socialization as posited by William Whyte Jr., whereby suburbs, as "second melting pots," transform their residents. Here, because new residents are immersed in a milieu long dominated by conservative politics, they change their political views in order to fit in. Under these circumstances, becoming Republican can be a social psychological imperative.⁶⁷

⁶²Though Eldersveld's updated voting statistics only allows direct comparison between major city and extra-city state-wide votes, it is difficult to explain the magnitude of voting trends in terms other than this shift.

⁶³See Louis Harris's *Is There a Republican Majority?* (New York: Harper, 1954): p. 122. Harris is cited by Jerome G. Manis and Leo C. Stine. Manis and Stine argue against the Republicanization thesis. However, their research is limited to the analysis of a new suburb of a small metropolitan area and so their findings are not generalizable. See Manis and Stine, "Suburban Residence and Political Behavior," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1958).

⁶⁴See "The Suburban Voter: Which Way Does He Lean?" *Newsweek* (April 1, 1957). Also cited by Manis and Stine, this work argues that "[w]hen a city dweller packs up and moves his family to the suburbs, he usually acquires a mortgage, a power lawn mower, and a back-yard grill. Often, though a lifelong Democrat, he also starts voting Republican."

⁶⁵See Fred Greenstein and Raymond Wolfinger, "The Suburbs and Shifting Party Loyalties," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1958).

⁶⁶See again, "The Suburbs and Shifting Party Loyalties."

⁶⁷See William H. Whyte Jr., "The Transients," in *Prize Articles of 1954*, ed. Llewellyn Miller (New York: Ballentine Books, 1954).

To these views Greenstein and Wolfinger added a psychological dynamic that includes aspects of both selection and socialization, arguing that one's move to the suburbs is pregnant with the desire to enter the middle-class. For the city émigré, becoming Republican completes a subjectively driven identity transformation. And so, individuals are both self selected and transformed in a process of subjective mobility. This theory presaged more recent psychological approaches to identity politics.⁶⁸

Suburbs versus Cities: The Conventional Wisdom

Scholars applying place-based analysis today agree that big city electorates no longer have enough influence to determine most presidential elections. However, the voters of large metropolitan areas, taken as a whole, comprise a solid majority of the national electorate.⁶⁹ Therefore, considering how urban areas might structure the political interests and perspectives of their residents may contribute to our understanding of national political divisions.

The leading metropolitan approach to national political alignment today associates the decline of the Democratic Party with post-war suburban expansion. William Schneider has advocated this view most strongly.⁷⁰ His analysis, advanced just prior to Bill Clinton's election in 1992, defines the "conventional wisdom" of place politics in recent years.

For Schneider, the suburbs have marginalized once dominant city electorates similar to the way that the big cities overwhelmed rural voters at the turn of the century. The end of rural power was symbolized by the defeat of William Jennings Bryan, who became so strongly associated with rural interests that he could not extend his populist appeal to urban voters. The result of his defeat was a new political alignment that put big cities in control of the national agenda and permanently marginalized the interests of rural America. Schneider contends that the Democrats will fail once again if they are not able to appeal to suburban voters.

For Schneider, suburbanization has had a strong impact on national politics in part because suburban residence is an essentially political choice. Schneider argues that suburbanites generally favor private space and activity over the

⁶⁸Greenstein and Wolfinger's thesis is critically reminiscent of more contemporary social theory offered by William Connolly and others discussed by Tom DeLuca in *The Two Faces of Political Apathy*. Latter day social theorists such as Connolly attempt to transcend social models that rely on either a strongly independent rational actor or one who is fully subject to socialization mechanisms beyond his control. Rather, individuals are engaged in dynamic relationships with their structural and social surroundings. See William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991) and Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

⁶⁹See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins." This fact is confirmed by data presented by Peter Nardulli, Jon Dalager, and Donald Greco in "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections: An Historical View and Some Speculation," *PS Political Science and Politics XXIX* (September 1996).

⁷⁰See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins."

vicissitudes and dynamic interactions of public environments.⁷¹ As individuals ratify their preferences for privacy and control by moving to the suburbs, they avoid contending for interests and values within the broader democratic arena. And so, the political choice that many suburban residents have made is essentially anti-political. This is Schneider's most critical assertion. Insofar as it is true, this analysis has serious implications for metropolitan areas and, perhaps, for the national political discourse as well.

Suburban removal limits metropolitan political discourse and ends in gated communities and similarly exclusive housing developments. Many of these arrangements provide their residents with amenities and services that are normally the responsibility of municipal governments, such as recreational facilities and security patrols. These places represent the farthest extension of the suburban spectrum, which ends in the severing of residents' mutual obligation towards other urban groups.⁷² Unfortunately, as they withdraw from urban problems, suburban residents exacerbate them by taking the most lucrative benefits of area economies (high paying jobs) and removing personal wealth to the suburbs. The result is a cycle of inequity that increases real political and social divisions within metropolitan areas.⁷³

Schneider contends that suburban preferences for privacy and control over civic life have significance beyond metropolitan areas. These choices, now manifest in the structure of urban America, have changed national politics in essential ways. The Republican Party has become the champion of the *private* pursuits and individual rights of those metropolitan residents who have "made it" -- middle-class white suburbanites. On the other hand, Democrats have become identified with the less advantaged and minority residents of the cities as they have pursued an array of *public* programs designed to serve them and the places that they live in. Schneider's party-place-group dichotomy gives a spatial dimension to Carmines and Stimpson's politics of race and to the general thrust of racial and class group shifts identified by Stanley and Niemi. As the Edsalls also note, new place-group associations have put the Democratic Party's traditional agenda in the losing category of American politics.⁷⁴

⁷¹Schneider's most critical contribution here is the interpretation of suburban residence as a political as well as aesthetic choice. Here, life-style preferences are part and parcel to a political orientation towards the private.

⁷²For critical discussions of gated communities, see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, (New York City: Random House, 1990) and Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom, "Suburbanization and the Roots of the Urban Crisis" in *City Politics*. The irony of places is that while they promise community, they effect an anomie lifestyle.

⁷³As this cycle continues, the distinctions between the inner-city and suburbs become reified. Here, differences are seen more as flowing from natural tendencies of different groups rather than from their living environments. The most egregious academic manifestation of this naturalization is presented by Charles Murray in *The Bell Curve*. See Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The bell curve : intelligence and class structure in American life* (New York: Free Press, 1994). Edward Banfield posited an earlier version of Murray's general thinking in *The Unheavenly City*. These beliefs are the academic analogues of extreme political views found in the ghetto.

⁷⁴Ted Lowi in *The End of Liberalism* and Massey and Denton, in *American Apartheid*, note the negative effect of inter-municipal political division on American democracy. See Ted Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States*, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).

These trends have serious implications. Schneider argues that if the Democrats are to recover their national majority, they will have to move to the center of American politics and thus to the suburbs.⁷⁵ However, they might not be able to do this. Schneider contends that just as the interests of rural Americans differed from urban interests at the turn of the century, cities now reflect very different political interests compared to those of the suburbs. Today, cities and their residents have a strong interest in a number of Federal programs that the suburbs do not need and that suburban residents do not want to pay for.

- essential political difference

Beyond mutually exclusive preferences over programs and spending priorities, the city-suburban dichotomy may split residents by issues that get to the core of what citizenship is all about. The difficult nature of the present debate over gun control takes on new meaning in the context of urban political geography. In inner city environments, the presumed rights of individuals to carry guns must compete with the danger that the proliferation of guns in these places represents for residents. It is therefore difficult for many city residents to find satisfaction in the gun lobby's assertion that "guns don't kill people, people kill people." Furthermore, in cities where services are often stretched to the breaking point, it is hard to see how enforcing "laws that are already on the books," which the gun lobby contends would eliminate most criminal gun violence, could ever be accomplished effectively. On the other hand, in safer places the same efforts to control guns that many city residents may demand can be easily interpreted as governmental intrusions on individual rights. The debate over guns, then, is a political problem that is intensified by geographic divisions that ensure that any solution will violate one group's expectations of government.⁷⁶

The gun issue is just one example of how the divergent realities of cities and suburbs may translate into essentially different political interests and views. In general terms, suburban residents are more likely to expect that the public sector will provide efficient services to those who render the fees (taxes) and that government will limit its restrictions of individual rights by limiting its activities. On the other hand, city residents often seem to be more interested in a government that helps them and the places that they live in with public programs.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Schneider's specific recommendation, prior to the 1992 election, was that the Democrats pursue a suburban rather than regional election strategy. While Bill Clinton has found success in this approach, city pluralities were still important to his 1992 and 1996 victories. See Sauerzopf and Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996."

⁷⁶ The geographic differences over gun control is evident in the present efforts of several big cities to sue the nation's gun makers for massive damages. In response, a coalition of gun makers aired a dramatic television advertisement during the 2000 Republican National Convention that accused cities, along with trial lawyers and the Clinton Administration, of attempting to put them out of business in order to limit the rights of Americans to purchase guns. The symbolism of the advertisement was intense, as it identified guns as essentially American and cities as something less. The ad showed the flag, symbolizing the fundamental rights of American citizenship, being ripped into shreds piece by piece.

⁷⁷ Of course, the Federal Government has had a huge impact in the suburbs through massive transportation expenditures and housing subsidies in the form of mortgage underwriting and tax advantages for homeowners. However, these programs are not as visible or memorable as government's more direct

Because Schneider's analysis is essentially demographic, he does not go so far as to argue that places shape residents' political outlooks. Rather, he views the political differences between cities and suburbs essentially as reflections of the preferences of the people who live in them. However, as differences between city and suburban residents' expectations of government grow, we are drawn to wonder if perhaps people's political views reflect the places that they live in at least as much as political differences between places reflect residents' preferences.

- *implications of the conventional wisdom: urban political isolation and danger for the Democrats*

Schneider contends that as a consequence of growing interest divergence between declining cities and growing suburbs, the Democrats may be just as trapped in the cities today as the Populist Democrats of Bryan's time were stuck in the country. Beyond consequences for the Democratic Party, Schneider argues that urban interests will become just as marginalized in the national agenda as rural concerns have *regardless of what the Democrats do*. In his view, either the Democrats will be able to compete by leaving the cities behind or the cities will control a minority Democratic Party incapable of assisting them.⁷⁸

Schneider's view was shared by many political commentators and seems to have informed the general thrust of national policy in the Clinton era. No significant new urban policy initiatives were advanced in this period. The fact that Republicans controlled Congress throughout most of Clinton's presidency does not seem to be enough to explain this. The Clinton Administration did propose some initiatives for cities, such as EZ/EC (Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community programmes), but most of them were small and largely symbolic measures.

Clinton tried to appeal to urban voters by advancing the causes of social and racial justice in general and symbolic ways while aiming progressive policy initiatives and other appeals to a wider spectrum of voters.⁷⁹ His hope seems to have been to placate city voters while reaching out to a more suburban constituency. In doing so he might have avoided the serious pitfalls inherent in the political differences between cities and suburbs. However, as with any compromise, the end result is not wholly satisfactory to either constituency.

involvement in the cities, which is clearly visible in urban development and anti-poverty programs, including public assistance. See especially Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom, *City Politics* and Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁷⁸ The situation may be even worse for the cities. While rural voters remain over-represented in the Senate and Electoral College, city residents receive no such institutional advantage in the structures of either federal or state governments.

⁷⁹ This actually includes calls for more gun control in the wake of a series of extremely violent and high profile mass shootings in the suburbs, particularly in schools. If suburban residents are sufficiently frightened by new forms of gun violence, then the issue becomes a perfect one for the Democrats because policies to regulate guns do not require major new spending programs and so can bridge the city-suburban political interest division. Meanwhile, rural voters *still* lose.

Clinton's approach brought charges from both liberals and conservatives that his Administration lacked an agenda based on consistent principles.⁸⁰

The "wishywashiness" of the Clinton agenda reflects the continuing ambiguity of politics in the present period. Although the lack of a coherent agenda may be less than satisfactory to many, the deeper concern for the Democrats and the cities must be the very real possibility that Schneider's assumptions are correct. If that is true, then the Clinton approach will run its course and the cities and perhaps even the Democratic Party will ultimately lose as underlying differences between cities and suburbs deepen.

However, Schneider's conclusions and perhaps even the policy agenda of recent years are based on assumptions that require investigation. Schneider assumes that city electorates have become so marginal that both parties can afford to ignore them. He grounds his analysis further in a dichotomous understanding of metropolitan political space that pits central cities against an image of the suburbs that is uniformly middle-class. However, both assumptions are questionable. Data indicate that city electorates, though declining, are still important. Further, though Schneider's view of middle-class suburbs has critical power, many suburbs fail to live up to this image.

Challenging the Assumptions of the Conventional Wisdom

Only a few studies have been conducted that analyze national election returns from large cities over time. When returns for big cities are compared to votes from their respective states and suburban counties, they show that the growth of the suburban electorate has indeed reduced the ability of the cities to influence national elections. Although the studies that are available support Schneider's general assertion that cities are becoming more isolated politically, they also indicate that cities continue to influence national elections and that they have the potential to make an even larger impact. Furthermore, although none of these studies analyze the suburban vote below the county level, a careful examination of extra city returns suggests that the suburbs are more politically complex than Schneider assumes.⁸¹

Despite his underestimation of the importance of city voters, Schneider's analysis would still have much purchase if all of today's metropolitan suburbs fit the middle-class image he advances. But this view is incomplete. There is a growing awareness that many suburbs are becoming more like the central cities in their social, demographic, and material characteristics. I will discuss this in detail later.

Further, aggregate election statistics suggest that Schneider's understanding of the politics of suburbia is not wholly adequate. If Schneider's assumptions were completely true, we would expect to see gradually increasing Republican

⁸⁰ This was a consistent theme of the 2000 Republican National Convention.

⁸¹ See Sauerzopf and Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections: 1920-1996." See also Nardulli, Dalager, and Greco, "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections."

electoral power through the present period in proportion to the growth of the suburbs. However, such a relationship is not clear. Moreover, election data indicate generally weaker and less consistent support for Republican presidential candidates in the suburbs relative to central city Democratic voting.

The updated data for Eldersveld's sample cities and states indicate greater election-to-election fluctuations in extra-city partisan support compared to the gradual concentration of central city Democratic returns. Nardulli et al's data show that much of this volatility can be found in the suburban counties of major metropolitan areas. Significant suburban Democratic voting and partisan volatility raise important questions: From whither the volatility and Democratic support and; can the Democrats get around the city/suburban dilemma by encouraging greater Democratic voting in the suburbs while appealing to vital urban constituencies?⁸² A closer look at the suburbs reveals potential answers to these questions and suggests a more accurate interpretation of place and politics in the present period.

Just as there are important political differences within cities, a point William Jennings Bryan failed to exploit in 1896, suburbs differ from each other in ways that may influence politics.⁸³ We need to expand our understanding of suburbs to account for the potential political effects of differences between them. Doing so does not negate Schneider's analysis of middle-class suburbs. However, recognizing that there are suburbs that do not fit this image and that their residents may respond to politics differently challenges the comprehensiveness of his assumptions.

Below is a review of ways that divisions between the places that make up metropolitan areas are understood to structure politics. This discussion suggests a number of ways that different kinds of suburbs may lead their residents to adopt distinct political perspectives, attitudes, or preferences. This review is followed in the next chapter by an alternative schema of metropolitan political alignment that uses the varied political geography of America's suburbs to explain some of the the political ambiguity and electoral volatility that the conventional wisdom's city-suburban dichotomy cannot.

⁸² Of course, the Republicans could try to bridge the gap and find support in the cities. George W. Bush's emphasis on education and his support of vouchers, which promise urban residents the ability to save their children from dysfunctional city schools would seem to be a way of appealing to urban voters individually without initiating any major new public programs to benefit cities that would alienate suburban voters.

⁸³ The point about Bryan is ironic. For Schneider, the Democrats lost the 1896 election because city voters overwhelmed Bryan's rural constituency. However, Brian might have won had he successfully extended his populist appeal to urban working-class voters who might otherwise have supported him. Schneider's failure to consider this interpretation is consistent with his understanding of suburbs. Suburbs today are as a whole analogous to the cities of Bryan's time, but not in the way Schneider asserts. Suburbs, like the cities of the turn of the century, are not a monolithic whole, rather there is considerable inter-suburban variation. Democrats can find sources of support in the suburbs of this time as Bryan could have in his, but only if they transcend the conventional wisdom of this time in a way that Bryan evidently could not do early enough. (He did forge new relationships with the urban working-class in later elections.) On Bryan and related historical issues, see Judd and Swanstrom, *City Politics* (pages 109-113), on suburban differentiation, see Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis: Political Fragmentation and Metropolitan Segregation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991). and Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997). Orfield is especially interested in interest coalitions between some suburbs and cities.

Metropolitan Fragmentation and the Politics of Place

As differences between the cities and suburbs are essential to understanding divisions in American politics, so are differences between the suburbs. In most major metropolitan areas in the United States, the suburbs are divided into numbers of independent municipalities. This is important because localities play a stronger political role in the United States than they do in other developed countries. The greater political role of urban municipalities stems in part from the fact that the United States has proportionately more of them. Furthermore, many state constitutions give municipalities significant political independence and land use control. This makes localities more important than they are in nations where they are not much more than administrative subdivisions.⁸⁴

Local autonomy affects politics partly because it intensifies residents' identification with the political interests of the places that they live in. In this condition, when a municipality is given more freedom or when its purviews are limited, its residents may feel affected too. As residents identify themselves with the position and interests of their municipalities, they imbue these places with naturalistic rights similar to those that are more normally associated with individuals.⁸⁵ As suburban localities develop stronger identities, residents come to identify more with the interests of the places that they live in than with the interests that they might share with people living in other parts of the metropolitan area. Indeed, insofar as places are pitted against each other in competitions for development or policy benefits, residents may view the interests of others in the region as opposed to theirs. This condition fragments the politics of metropolitan regions and diminishes the interests of the larger urban society. Suburban fragmentation therefore has serious consequences for the democratic dialogue in addition to the schism between central cities and suburbs reviewed above.⁸⁶

The power of municipalities to divide citizens is intensified by the fact that they are often differentiated from each other by social and economic characteristics. The racial and class group divisions that structure national politics are reflected in differences between metropolitan places. On the broadest level, this is manifest in the political divisions between the cities and their middle-class

⁸⁴See Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis*.

⁸⁵Ted Lowi, in *The End of Liberalism*, is particularly concerned with the animation of municipalities that are, in legal fact, only the instrumentalities of state governments that have no federal constitutional standing. Judd and Swanstrom provide a related discussion of the social meaning of American municipalities. American municipalities are much more the result of private economic pursuit than they are in Europe. Judd and Swanstrom effect a connection between American individualism and the "rights" we endow municipalities with. See *City Politics*.

⁸⁶Norton Long was especially concerned with the breakdown of urban community caused by municipal fragmentation. He argued that metropolitan areas are properly considered in terms of the classical polis, where regional reform must be grounded on a substantive shared identity as well as interests. See *The Unwalled City: Reconstituting the Urban Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1972). See Todd Swanstrom, "Philosopher in the City: The New Regionalism Debate," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 17 (1995) for a critical review of present efforts to contend with metropolitan political fragmentation in light of Long's philosophical approach. Ted Lowi relates inter-municipal division to decline in the national democratic debate. See *The End of Liberalism*.

suburbs. However, suburbs are also divided from each other by a range of social and economic attributes that have political significance.⁸⁷

Metropolitan Fragmentation, Individual Preferences, and the Selection Effect

- *the fragmentation of local government*

To some extent, distinctions between municipalities reflect the sorting of individual-based residential choices. As residents go shopping for suburbs, they use localities as shorthand indicators of a number of relevant qualities. Residents begin their decision making with municipalities instead of neighborhoods because unlike neighborhoods, which are not always well defined and which have a tendency to change, suburban municipalities are clearly defined places that offer some assurance that conditions within them will remain stable. These qualities draw from the ability of these places to regulate land use and related advantages, including the fact that they often come with their own schools or co-terminus school districts and other services. As these advantages enable suburbs to limit the types of people and activities that locate within them, their autonomy usually prevents the courts or other policy makers from forcing change by integrating their housing and schools with people from other municipalities.⁸⁸

- *suburban selection and eccentricity*

Many authors have noted that suburbs maintain their distinction by excluding undesirable residents.⁸⁹ Gregory Weiher, however, argues that exclusion is not enough to explain growing differences between localities. Rather, he contends that municipalities also recruit residents. He offers a dynamic collective action model based on the choices that residents make between suburbs to explain the development, maintenance, and accentuation of differences between localities. He calls the result inter-municipal eccentricity.⁹⁰

At the heart of his model are the cognitive maps of regions that residents use to decide where to locate. These schema are based on residents' perceptions of relevant differences between municipalities. Because these perceptions have some basis in reality, when individuals move to a municipality that they find affordable, comfortable, or otherwise attractive, they are likely to reinforce the qualities that made the locality stand out in the first place. As the choices of individuals with similar means or preferences aggregate, suburbs become more differentiated from each other and more homogenous within. Residents' cognitive maps of the region are reinforced in turn. The consequence is a

⁸⁷See Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics* as well as Gregory Weiher's *The Fractured Metropolis*.

⁸⁸See especially, Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis*.

⁸⁹See especially, Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, Ted Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins," William W. Goldsmith and Edward J. Blakely, *Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), Judd and Swanstrom, "The Politics of Metropolitan Fragmentation" in *City Politics*, Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, and especially Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics*.

⁹⁰See *The Fractured Metropolis*.

growing differentiation between places beyond the socioeconomic stratification that the land market would produce if it were not distorted by municipal boundaries.

This selection process works to the greatest advantage of affluent homebuyers because they can choose among any of the localities within their region. As such, these residents can live in the most exclusive municipalities that provide the best material, social, and environmental benefits. However, as Weiher points out, the selection process also provides well-defined options for members of less privileged groups such as African Americans.⁹¹ Although Weiher makes a critical addition to our understanding of metropolitan interest differentiation and suburban homogeneity, he views place primarily as a sorting mechanism, not as transforming residents' identities or interests.⁹²

Affective Municipalities: Depoliticization in the Middle-Class Suburbs

J. Eric Oliver argues that homogenous residential suburbs represent an even more insidious threat to democratic politics beyond any problems that might be caused by fragmentation or the politics of avoidance.⁹³ Oliver argues that people do not just withdraw from politics by moving to the suburbs, rather *they are also withdrawn from politics by the suburbs*. As residential suburbs depoliticize their residents, their participation in politics declines.

The power of many suburbs to withdraw residents from politics draws in part from the fact that their governments are based on reform models. Local elections in many of these places are at-large, pro forma, and legally or effectively non-partisan.⁹⁴ The administrative suburb therefore compounds the political anesthesia of homogeneity by constricting opportunities for debate about essential and stimulating issues, including the nature and ends of government. Although some residents select suburban life as a means of avoiding politics, many residents are de-politicized as a consequence of their living in these places. This point is reminiscent of social criticisms leveled against the suburbs by Mike Davis, Kenneth Jackson, and others.⁹⁵

⁹¹Blacks are often attracted to municipalities that already have a black presence because they promise easier entry and more tolerance. This, and the graduated white flight that often results, drives racial tipping. Massey and Denton employ a similar model of tipping in *American Apartheid*, noting that increasing integration of suburbs is oftentimes more reflective of a transitional phase than it is of a stable equilibrium.

⁹²Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton make a critical addition to this hypothesis by adding that suburban residents often more actively contribute to accentuation as they employ recruitment and exclusion tactics to maintain desired characteristics. These include information control and other tactics used to attract desired residents and discourage those who are not wanted. An example is the careful placement of real estate advertisements so as to target the most desirable groups. See *American Apartheid*.

⁹³See J. Eric Oliver, "The Influence of Social Context on Patterns of Political Mobilization." Oliver, J. Eric. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (San Francisco, 1996).

⁹⁴A number of authors make this point. See also Albert Karnig and B. Oliver Walter "Decline in Municipal Voter Turnout," *American Political Quarterly* 11 (October 1983).

⁹⁵See Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* and Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*. Oliver's concerns about the lack of political community of these places are similar to those expressed by Robert Bellah et al. Robert N Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

Oliver's analysis contributes to our understanding of the cognitive distance between suburban residents and central city dwellers. Suburban residents do not just disengage from urban problems; many are never required to relate to them in the first place. The implication is that the most substantive political distinctions between residents living in different parts of metropolitan regions may not be a simple matter of choices made. If the most essential political choice of all, the choice of whether or not to participate in politics, can be determined by forces intrinsic to places, then the power of fragmented space to divide residents politically may be very deep indeed.

The Material Impact of Municipalities

The idea that places and political choices structure each other is broadly applicable. Because the places that make up metropolitan areas vary, different conditions within them should affect residents in different ways. Myron Orfield has argued persuasively that the relative economic positions of municipalities structure the political interests of residents.⁹⁶

For example, the material advantage of wealthy suburbs may affect their residents' political interests. Affluent suburbs use their greater wealth to maximize their control over what people and activities locate within them. They don't need to accept anything less than the residents and businesses that will increase or maintain their advantage. Residents of these places enjoy a number of advantages that draw from the wealth and exclusivity of these places. As a consequence, they are not likely to favor initiatives such as inter-municipal school integration, burden-sharing, or regional government that might threaten their advantage.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, residents living in distressed places are much more likely to favor policies that redistribute metropolitan tax revenues, infrastructure expenditures, development, and other goods.

As Orfield connects the material positions of places with the political interests of residents, he adds that the places that make up urban America are not neatly sorted among distressed central cities and affluent suburbs. Rather, the suburbs are comprised of secure residential municipalities that fulfill the stereotypical view of the suburbs and places that are ever more threatened by the sorts of problems that have come to define the central cities. Because material conditions in the latter group of suburbs place them between the cities and wealthier suburbs, they will structure political interests that are more ambiguous than those defined at the economic poles of the region. Together, the material differences between places create political divisions within a region, with the distressed suburbs taking a swing position between the city and the more affluent suburbs. Orfield's view is significant to electoral alignment and contributes to my understanding of the political interest divisions of major metropolitan areas. However, I will add to his material approach a social dimension that contributes to our understanding of inner-ring suburbs.

⁹⁶See Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics*.

⁹⁷Myron Orfield illustrates such opposition in *Metropolitics*.

Place as Context

The above discussion shows that places can influence politics because they sort residents in politically meaningful ways, or because they structure residents' material interests, or even help to determine whether or not residents will find politics stimulating enough to participate in. These approaches fall into two broad categories of geopolitical analysis. Either places aggregate residents by politically relevant characteristics including their political preferences or they structure or transform the political interests or perspectives of their residents. However, places may structure politics in ways that are more complex than those included within this dichotomy. Places may reflect their residents' perspectives and reinforce them at the same time.

Places can affect politics in such subtle ways when they become contexts for dynamic and mutually reinforcing social milieus. Within these environments, shared views reflected in the social environment are projected back upon the individuals who contribute to those views. By affecting residents with a milieu of shared perspectives, these contexts reinforce or limit the views that residents bring to them. Because places sort people by like characteristics, they can become particularly strong contexts of shared interpretations and experiences, thus magnifying any variety of views latent in the class, social background, or experiences that residents have in common.

Places may create politically meaningful contexts in a variety of ways. As they do so, they can make many forces in the political system more powerful than they would be otherwise. As an example of this, William Julius Wilson argued that the concentration of poor persons in the inner-city results in a social milieu that helps to keep residents from escaping their underclass condition.

Almost all ghetto residents suffer from severe personal disadvantage, but their individual problems are compounded by the fact that they are surrounded by others who are in the same boat. As individuals are submerged in an environment of disadvantage, personal failure, and the dysfunction that often results, their knowledge of how to compete and cope in mainstream society is limited.⁹⁸

Massy and Denton, Cohen and Dawson, and others have also found context to have political significance.⁹⁹ Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague provide an excellent justification and review of contextual theory.¹⁰⁰ They advance a supple understanding of relationships between context and individual choice by arguing that although the broad parameters of a person's judgement are determined by the context in which they live, people also seek and contribute to

⁹⁸See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

⁹⁹See Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*. Cathy Cohen and Michael Dawson find that neighborhood poverty politically isolates individuals beyond that which would be predicted by individual attributes. See "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics." *American Political Science Review* 87 (June 1993).

¹⁰⁰See Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague. "Citizens, Contexts, and Politics," in *State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada Finifter (Washington, D. C.: American Political Science Association, 1994).

environments that they find meaningful.¹⁰¹ Their work provides a critical justification for analyzing politics through place because it challenges the distinction between groups of people and the places that they live in. This idea seems to be ever more validated in the differences between the places that make up urban regions. Increasingly, the material and substantive qualities that are normally associated with political groups define the places that make up metropolitan America today. As such, perhaps a better understanding of place will give new meaning to the politics of the present period.

¹⁰¹William Connolly makes a similar case for a complex interrelationship between individual choice and contextual identity. See *Identity\Difference*.

THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF URBAN SPACE

This chapter introduces the general hypothesis that the cities and suburbs that make up America's metropolitan areas structure national politics. By saying that urban places structure national politics, I mean that they at least organize people within urban areas in politically meaningful ways. But places may do more than this. They also seem to shape or organize many of the material and social interests that people bring to politics.

More critically, the cities and suburbs that make up our metropolitan areas may effect the interests, perspectives, and preferences of their residents as well as reflect them. This position is difficult to quantify. However, the possibility that this is the case suggests that political scientists should reconsider the groups that are usually understood to determine national politics. Many of the group divisions that are essential to understanding American politics may be *caused* by urban geographical structures at least as much as these structures reflect group divisions.

The concept that urban areas structure national politics is open to a number of interpretations that deserve investigation beyond this dissertation. Nevertheless, I believe that my work will contribute to the view that divisions within metropolitan America inform the politics of the present period. The broad model of metropolitan division that I construct in this discussion informs my research generally. Following this chapter, I will introduce a model of the threatened white working-class suburbs that may explain some of the political ambiguity and electoral volatility that have been critically associated with working-class voters in the present period specifically.

broad hypothesis

America's large metropolitan areas structure some of the most important divisions in national politics today. This is my broad hypothesis and I will apply it to a new understanding of politics in the present period.

To understand the national political significance of metropolitan areas, we need to consider the places that make them up. The literature reviewed above shows that central city and suburban constituencies behave differently in national elections. But metropolitan areas are more complicated than this city/suburban dichotomy suggests. Indeed, they are comprised of a diversity of different kinds of places. In order to understand better relationships between urban space and national politics, we need to account for some of that variety.

My analysis is most applicable to urban regions in the North. I draw my work around these areas because they are the homes of most of the nation's white

working-class voters, a group that has been identified as critical to the decline of the New Deal and the volatility of the present period. I argue that a closer look at the places in which these voters live will contribute to a better understanding of their failure to align with either political party. As such, a more careful analysis of northern metropolitan areas may contribute to a better understanding of the problems of politics in the present period.

Northern urban regions are also generally useful to understanding political differences between groups of people, including working-class voters, because they sort residents in especially powerful and politically meaningful ways. The intensity of racial segregation within these regions is most striking. Beyond this, people and opportunities are sorted by a number of other relevant characteristics into ever-greater numbers of distinct and independent suburban municipalities. These places can structure and divide the political interests of metropolitan residents in a variety of ways. Insofar as different regions do this in similar ways, our metropolitan areas structure national politics.

Many metropolitan areas do not look quite like those in the North. Blacks and whites have traditionally lived closer to each other in Southern cities, even as Southern society was highly segregated.¹⁰² Furthermore, counties are the most important local governments in many Southern states. As such, local government in Southern urban areas tends to be less fragmented. Also, in the Southwest many cities have what David Rusk calls elastic borders, which means they expand to incorporate their suburbs. As their systems of local government are more unified, the spatial inequities that divide residents' political interests are less severe.¹⁰³

Although I limit my analysis mainly to urban areas in the North, the broader project of understanding political alignments through urban space is promising. Although urban places may be less rigidly differentiated outside of the North, people and opportunities are spread unevenly across every major metropolitan area in the United States. As such, all of these metropolitan regions have the power to sort and divide residents within them in ways that may be relevant to national politics.

Urban Political Geography

Describing Urban Space: The Bull's Eye

The material and social forces that have shaped American urban geography have resulted in an arrangement of space that is repeated in most of the nation's large metropolitan areas. This pattern sorts people, activities, and resources by a hierarchy of more or less well defined concentric zones and is often referred to as the urban bull's eye.¹⁰⁴ Characteristics specific to regions, including physical

¹⁰² See especially Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁰³ See *Cities Without Suburbs* (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁴ See especially Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, and Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics*.

geography and historic population shifts, distort the bull's eye pattern in every metropolitan area. Even so, an arrangement of space roughly consistent with this pattern is usually evident.

In every area that follows this pattern, the center of the bull's eye is a densely developed commercial district located in the heart of the central city.¹⁰⁵ However, concentrated poverty neighborhoods are usually found just beyond these downtown areas. Most of the nation's poor urban "underclass" residents, a disproportionate number of whom are African American or Latino, live in these inner-city ghettos. Most of these neighborhoods are in advanced stages of decline and define the social and economic bottom of the urban spatial hierarchy.

Beyond the inner-city ghettos, cities contain a variety of neighborhoods that generally improve with their distance from the core. However, ghettos have grown in size throughout the post-war period, and cities are becoming increasingly identified with these places and their residents. Furthermore, rising levels of poverty through most of the present period in conjunction with declining infrastructures and tax bases have distressed most of the nation's large central cities. These pressures and other facts about central cities, such as the diversity of residents and land use within them, distinguish cities from most of their suburbs. Although cities are made up of different kinds of neighborhoods, they can be thought of as geographical units because many of the social and economic conditions that occur in various areas within them have system-wide effects. Today, conditions within central cities are increasingly defining them as disadvantaged.¹⁰⁶

In fragmented metropolitan areas, suburban municipalities structure space beyond the central cities more consistently than do central city neighborhoods. This is the case for metropolitan areas in the North generally.¹⁰⁷ These suburbs are arranged in successive rings that increase in prosperity and decrease in age with their distance from the urban core. The first ring is made up of older suburbs whose residents are predominantly white and working-class. As these places age however, they are beginning to decline and so are becoming more

¹⁰⁵ Some metropolitan areas have come to have multiple centers as development has spread around more than one central city. This is the case for the Albany, New York metropolitan area, which has three major downtown areas: one each in Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. Multiple centers distort the bull's eye pattern as development fills the spaces between the central cities. This can result in somewhat more ambiguous characteristics for some of the places located in the interstices. However, the general thrust of the bull's eye analysis, the hierarchical arrangement of space around centers, remains valid even in these more complex situations.

¹⁰⁶ See William Lucy and David L. Phillips, *Confronting Suburban Decline: strategic planning for metropolitan renewal* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁷ The proportion of space structured by central city neighborhoods versus that shaped by suburban municipalities varies with the size of the central city in relation to the metropolitan region, among other factors. New York City represents an exception to the general pattern in the North because when the City was created by the consolidation of five boroughs (counties) at the turn of the century, a very large amount of space became included within the City. Indeed, at that time New York City's government was truly a metropolitan government. There continues to be an extraordinary diversity of places within New York City and they are arranged around multiple commercial centers, although Manhattan residents would insist that there is only one Downtown! Although the New York region is unique, the City's suburban municipalities clearly define space in patterns similar to those found in other areas.

vulnerable to the in-migration of lower income and minority residents from the central cities. Many of these suburbs are also experiencing rising crime rates and other social problems normally associated with the cities.¹⁰⁸ Beyond these suburbs are newer and more stable white middle-class municipalities, leading to the prosperous suburbs developing at the metropolitan edge.

As noted above, the bull's eye pattern is distorted in every urban area by a number of local factors. For instance, a wealthy suburb may be located near to the city among the working-class suburbs. Such a place may be able to maintain its position if it has enough prestige to sustain a solid market for its housing or if it can erect barriers sufficient to exclude less desirable residents and development.¹⁰⁹ Other distortions may be caused by physical features such as hills and rivers, or by transportation routes. Still others result from demographic shifts that are peculiar to a region.¹¹⁰

However, the bull's eye remains a useful model of the ways that most urban areas arrange residents and the resources that are most relevant to them. A cross-section of a typical urban area that fits the bull's eye pattern reveals a spectrum of places that reflects the social, economic, and racial hierarchy of American political society. It seems that people are related to each other within urban space in ways that are similar to their arrangement within the American social structure. I call the result the urban *sociospatial structure*.

The Sociospatial Structure

At its simplest but still meaningful level, cities and many of their residents are near to the bottom of the sociospatial hierarchy. Middle- and upper-class suburbs are at the top, while the inner-ring working-class suburbs are positioned between the two.¹¹¹ Like the social structure, the sociospatial structure concept is more than descriptive. In it, places, like social strata, determine as well as reflect relationships between individuals vis-à-vis the goods of metropolitan life. That is, the concept of a sociospatial structure implies that the differences between places are not just *reflections* of the wealth or social position of most of their

¹⁰⁸ See Paul Glastris and Dorian Friedman, "A Tale of Two Suburbias: : The Decline of Blue-Collar Suburbs and Growth of 'Edge Cities' Create a New Kind of Isolation," *U. S. News and World Report* (November 9, 1992), Rob Gurwitt, "Saving the Aging Suburbs," *Governing* 6:8 (May 1993) 36-40, Myron Orfield, *Metropolitcs: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997), and John McCormick and Peter McKillop "The Other Suburbia: An Ugly Secret in America's Suburbs: Poverty," *Newsweek* (June 26, 1989) 22-24, for discussions of these trends.

¹⁰⁹ See Myron Orfield, *Metropolitcs*.

¹¹⁰ For instance, in the Detroit region, suburbs began as extensions of City neighborhoods. They developed this way because when many residents moved into the suburbs, they simply moved outward into the suburbs that were closest to them and the most like the places that they were moving from. Because different regions within the City were associated with different classes and ethnic groups, these areas have advanced into the suburbs to form distinct radial projections. However, this only distorts the bull's eye pattern in Detroit, it does not negate it. See Robert Sinclair and Bryan Thompson, *Metropolitan Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* Robert Sinclair and Brian Thompson, *Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* (Cambridge Mass.: Ballinger A subsidiary of Lyppincott Company, 1972).

¹¹¹ This schematization is inspired by Myron Orfield's analysis but includes a social dimension. See *Metropolitcs*.

residents. Places also *determine* the position and opportunities of their residents vis-à-vis those who live in other places.

Also like the social structure, the sociospatial structure is complex. Its division here into three general categories of places is somewhat arbitrary. Each place within a region is distinct from the others in ways that may affect residents. However, this tripartite division of urban space represents a significant improvement over conventional understandings that merely divide urban regions into cities and suburbs. Furthermore, this model does not preclude the analysis of other types of places. Rather, it is intended as a beginning towards a better understanding of how urban space structures political divisions that have national significance.

The Metropolitan Political Gestalt

I argue that just as many people seem to judge their political position in terms of the interests of their group or class within the social structure, they may also do so with respect to their location within the urban sociospatial structure.¹¹² Indeed, the two are almost certainly, inextricably, interconnected.

Below I develop a general structural model of metropolitan areas, employing a synthesis of critical views of place, that shows how divisions between distressed central cities, wealthier suburbs, and threatened working-class suburbs can affect the political positions of residents. This synthesis informs the analysis of metropolitan political alignment that follows. Though much of what proceeds from here falls in the realm of "general knowledge," various parts of it are more directly informed by the work of Myron Orfield and others.

The Political Power of Place

My model of metropolitan political space is based on the idea that the places that make up urban regions can influence the political positions of their residents. They may do so insofar as they structure residents' material interests and social perspectives.

- economic structure and political space

Municipalities structure material opportunities for their residents in a number of ways that can impact their political interests or perspectives. These include the fact that they determine the tax rates that residents must pay and the quality of services that they will receive in return. These services include education, which largely determines how successful a person will be.¹¹³ The economic condition of

¹¹²Many authors make this general point. See especially, Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997), and William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins," *Atlantic Monthly* 270 (July 1992).

¹¹³ See especially, Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York City: Harper Collins, 1991).

a place also determines residents' access to the goods and services that are provided by the private market because the market distributes opportunities differentially among places. The economic position of a place is also reflected in the physical environment in ways that can advantage or disadvantage residents. For example, wealthy municipalities can prevent obnoxious or even dangerous things from being located within them whereas poorer ones often cannot. Perhaps most importantly, the material position of a place determines residential property values. Because home equity represents such a large portion of so many people's net worth, places significantly determine how wealthy their residents will be.

Insofar as places determine their residents' economic wellbeing, they shape the objective material position that residents bring to the political system. Furthermore, because different localities within urban regions structure different material opportunities for their residents, they organize groups of people with political interests that are more different from each other than they otherwise would be. As a consequence, politics must begin with differences between the needs of people that would not exist or not be as powerful if people were not grouped into places that structure different opportunities for their residents.

However, differences between places affect politics in more active ways because they also structure residents' *subjective* understandings of what their interests are and how they are related to those of people living in other parts of the region.¹¹⁴ To put it briefly, residents who live in a place with a lot of problems are likely to understand that those problems put them at a disadvantage. They are therefore likely to want the political system to do something about it. On the other hand, residents who live in advantaged places are likely to want government to either accentuate that advantage or just leave them alone. As a consequence, material differences between places can create different political preferences among residents.

These interests are often opposed to each other. The simple reality is that advantaged municipalities are in a better position in large part because they are able to get more of the goods that metropolitan economies have to offer and pay fewer of the costs. Meanwhile, poor places are stuck with a disproportionate share of regional problems while their access to the resources that could be used to deal with them is limited. More important than any reality that there might be to such zero-sum theories is the fact that residents are likely to view benefits for some places as coming at the expense of others. Such understandings, informed in fragmented urban space, can severely divide political perspectives within a region.¹¹⁵

- society and political space

¹¹⁴I draw especially from Myron Orfield. The simplest manifestation of this is concern over property values.

¹¹⁵ See especially, Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics*.

The social affects of place cannot be rigidly specified because they are complex and manifest themselves in ways that are specific to places. However, a general understanding of the ways that social divisions can be created or intensified by places is essential to a fuller understanding of how metropolitan space structures politics.

Places often group residents by characteristics that are related to social class, ethnicity, or even culture. Because social characteristics are often associated with particular viewpoints, places may generate social milieus that affect residents' attitudes or perceptions of themselves. These attitudes or perceptions may inform residents' political views.

But just as places relate residents' economic interests to those of people living in other places, places can also relate people to each other in metropolitan society. When people say that a suburb is working-class or black or upper-class, they generally mean to identify it by social qualities at least as much as by the municipality's fiscal health or by the race or incomes of most of its residents. Any us-against-them mentality structured by material interest divisions between places can be compounded by residents' perceptions of social differences between places.

Social distinctions between places defined around race are probably the strongest of these forces.¹¹⁶ But there are others. White residents living in a predominantly white working-class municipality are likely to feel more social hostility towards the central city if they associate problems there with its minority residents or "those people." This is the case because the social qualities that residents may associate with racial differences help to define a place whose residents are of another race as an "other" place. But many of the residents of white working-class municipalities may also like to "stick it" to the wealthy suburbs insofar as they associate these places with snobby, WASP, or bourgeois residents. Such conceptions of otherness are central to the idea that growing differences between places are Balkanizing politics within urban regions.

The balkanization effect is increased when residents go from identifying places with people to understanding people in terms of the places that they are from. As places become increasingly distinct from each other and are associated with stronger social identities, the spatial stereotyping of residents becomes more of a problem.¹¹⁷

The proximity of socially distinct places to each other may also affect social perceptions in ways that have political meaning. For example, it is likely that residents of a white working-class suburb will feel more threatened by blacks, and feel more hostility towards them, if their suburb is located next to a

¹¹⁶ See especially Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

¹¹⁷ See Joleen Kirschenman and Kathryn M. Neckerman, "We'd Love to Hire Them, But: The Meaning of Race for Employers," in *The Urban Underclass*, eds. Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 1991).

distressed black city.¹¹⁸ If an otherwise similar suburb is located at a “safe distance” from these places however, its residents may have fewer negative feelings towards blacks. As a consequence, their political views may be less informed by race.

Following is a brief discussion that shows how the broad categories of urban places identified above can influence the political interests of residents. The schematization presented here is based upon the synthesis of material and social place affects presented above. The result is a general interpretation of urban political geography that is consistent with the broad divisions that define national politics today. Following this review is a more specific analysis of inner-ring white working-class suburbs and the ways that these places may be associated with the electoral volatility of their residents.

Interests at the Poles of Metropolitan America

The municipalities that are located at the opposite ends of the metropolitan bull’s eye, the distressed central cities and their middle- to upper-class suburbs, are clearly defined places that structure the social and economic positions of their residents in powerful ways.

conservative interests in the suburbs

Most secure middle- to upper-class suburbs are strongly associated with the political conservatism of their residents. This is reflected in higher levels of Republican Party identification and voting.

- *material structuring*

The conservatism of many of the residents of these places may be due in part to the fact that they attract disproportionate numbers of individuals with conservative interests and values.¹¹⁹ However, these places may also reinforce conservative interests. They can do so in part because they are materially advantaged. As such, these places do not need the kinds of public assistance and development programs that Democrats have tended to advocate for cities. Furthermore, these places can structure interests that are opposed to the Democratic agenda insofar as they generate preferences for lower taxes and limited government, especially by higher levels of government. Opposition to liberal policies may stem in part from the fact that they also threaten to redistribute opportunities and resources in ways that could diminish the relative advantage of these places and their residents. Examples of such policies include

¹¹⁸ In Canarsie, Jonathan Rieder found that residents’ close proximity to black ghettos greatly intensified their feelings of fear and hostility towards blacks. See *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall also identify the proximity of working-class whites to ghettos as critical to their political views. See *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991).

¹¹⁹ See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins."

busing and public housing. Therefore, these places may reinforce group interests in Republican political appeals specifically.¹²⁰

A better understanding of the power of wealthy suburbs to materially structure conservative interests can be had by considering how residents' interests would be framed in their absence. If metropolitan areas had comprehensive regional governments, then the wealthy residents of these areas would have to live in the same municipalities as poorer residents. As such, they would also have to live with their material needs and also with many of the more general economic problems that are excluded from wealthier places, such as aging infrastructure. In this circumstance, wealthier residents might continue to favor policies that would reinforce their individual advantage. However, they would probably also be more interested in policies to confront some of the more serious problems faced by metropolitan areas that are presently contained mostly within distressed central cities.

- *social structuring*

Beyond material interest structuring is the fact that most of the residents of these places occupy the higher ends of the socioeconomic structure. These places may therefore produce social milieus that reinforce residents' conservative values insofar as these perspectives are associated with their social class. Furthermore, because these suburbs are very different places from central cities, in both material and social ways, their residents are likely to view themselves as distinct from the residents of cities. This would intensify their understanding of their interests as being different from or opposed to those of the central cities.

liberal interests in the cities

Central cities are larger and more diverse places than wealthier suburbs and so must structure the political interests or perspectives of their residents in more complicated ways. Nevertheless, most of the residents of these places appear to prefer liberal policies because they vote in overwhelming numbers for Democratic candidates.¹²¹ We must wonder how such eccentric levels of support for Democratic candidates can come from places with such diverse residents. The short answer to this question seems to be that cities are places that generate interests in the Democratic policy agenda beyond what many of their residents would perceive if they did not live in these places.¹²²

- *material structuring*

¹²⁰These points represent, in part, a synthesis of William Schneider's and Myron Orfield's analyses.

¹²¹ See Richard Sauerzopf and Todd Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996," 35:1 *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1999).

¹²² See Hal Wolman and Lisa Marckini, "Changes in Central City Representation and Influence in Congress," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Urban Affairs Association (Toronto, April 17, 1997).

Despite the fact that most cities contain a variety of residents and neighborhoods, they influence the material interests of their residents in fairly clear ways. Cities are engaged in a losing competition with wealthier suburbs for resources, affluent residents, attractive development, and the general goods of metropolitan life. As a consequence, their tax bases have declined as their expenses have grown. Therefore, cities generate interests in government assistance programs for them and their residents. These interests are in accord with the Democratic agenda generally.

Central city problems stem in part from the fact that a disproportionate number of their residents face serious challenges, including poverty, which often translate into social dysfunction. The problems of poverty and dysfunction can affect residents' material interests in at least two ways: as *individuals* who must deal directly with either their own problems or those of others and as *residents* who must live in places that are disadvantaged by these problems.

First, these problems affect the interests of *individuals*. Certainly, people who face serious problems will be interested in government programs that promise to help them. However, individuals facing deep socioeconomic disadvantage are also not very likely to vote. This probably accounts for much of the lower voting rates that we see in cities. Perhaps more importantly, because urban space is more diverse and public, cities are places where the problems of some people can affect many others. Therefore, residents of central cities, regardless of their personal economic position or even their subjective political values, have an interest in somehow solving the problems of other residents or at least in keeping those problems from effecting them.

Second, the aggregation of poverty and dysfunction within cities affects the interests of *residents* because it disadvantages the places that they live in. These problems increase demands for city services as they decrease available resources. Therefore, city residents do not just have an interest in government programs to confront these problems; they are also more likely to want those programs to be paid for by society at large. As such, they have an interest in *federal* programs specifically.

This analysis of interest structuring is consistent with differences between the policy agendas of the two parties. While Democrats have continued to advance federal responses to the social and development problems that disadvantage cities, Republicans have advocated devolving responsibility for these problems to states and local governments.

These are just some examples of how cities can structure the interests of residents in ways that may lead some to draw different political conclusions than they might otherwise. Generally speaking, if there is a problem located within a city and the federal or state government will not solve that problem, then city residents are going to have to pay for that problem somehow. The costs are not just limited to higher tax rates or reduced services. Residents may also be exposed to higher crime rates, pollution, the dangers or inconveniences caused by crumbling infrastructure, reduced property values, or perhaps even the

expense, inconvenience and heartbreak of ultimately having to move out of the city. Insofar as residents are able to make these associations, they are likely to respond positively to Democratic promises of assistance and view Republican appeals for devolution and smaller government more skeptically.

I have argued that the cities can reinforce or create interests in Democratic policies for many individuals beyond what they might otherwise feel if these places were not separate entities or if they did not concentrate disadvantage. As with wealthier suburbs and Republican interests, the power of cities to intensify Democratic interests can be illustrated by considering what would be the case in their absence. If urban regions had unified governments, then many of the residents who live in cities and favor federal responses to local problems might prefer some aspects of the Republican approach to these challenges. Although they might still seek government funding for local problems, they might also prefer the devolution of programs to the local level, allowing metropolitan regions to tailor programmatic efforts more closely to specific problems.

- *social structuring*

The social structuring of political interests in central cities must be complex. Because central cities are more diverse, they are not likely to effect a comprehensive social milieu. However, a case could be made that living amongst diverse groups of people encourages generally liberal views. Because city residents are constantly exposed to others who view their world in essentially different ways, they may internalize a sense of empathy or understanding for others consistent with the “multicultural” or cosmopolitan values associated with modern social liberalism.¹²³ Such a perspective would also be opposed to some of the policies advanced by more socially conservative candidates.¹²⁴ For example, many of the social appeals made by Republican candidates in recent decades, such as opposition to abortion choice or advocacy of prayer in school, are consistent with fundamentalist Christian views. But residents living in large and diverse cities, regardless of their own religious views, are repeatedly reminded of the fact that many people do not share these perspectives. They may therefore be more reluctant to apply particular religious values to public policy.

More certainly, cities seem to attract and/or retain larger numbers of people with liberal political preferences. This is most clearly the case with African Americans. In every major metropolitan area with a significant black population,

¹²³ See especially, Gerald E. Frug, *City Making: Building Communities without Building Walls*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity & City Life* (New York: Knopf, 1970).

¹²⁴ J. Eric Oliver argues that city environments are more stimulating politically in comparison to their homogenous middle-class residential suburbs. He suggests that the lack of diversity in these suburbs is part of the reason for the depressed levels of participation he finds there. Of course, political stimulation through diversity is not the same thing as political liberalism through diversity. See "The Influence of Social Context on Patterns of Political Mobilization," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (San Francisco, 1996).

most of the region's blacks live in the central city. African Americans as a group have supported Democratic candidates overwhelmingly since the New Deal. Therefore, much of the extra Democratic support found in cities probably comes from African American group support. Cities may attract a range of residents with more liberal or Democratic preferences too, such as urban bohemians or members of other left-leaning sub-cultural groups. On the other hand, Schneider's view that these places actually repel residents with conservative values, or residents who simply do not want to have to deal with a wide variety of people and their problems in public space also has merit.

- *interests in opposition*

Any interests that a particular place may structure are most meaningful in relation to the interests that other places within a metropolitan area may generate. In metropolitan America today, cities frequently structure interests that are opposed to those structured by their more wealthy suburbs, and vice versa. These opposite interests can divide politics in serious ways. This is especially the case insofar as the conditions that distinguish cities from their better suburbs exacerbate the sociopolitical opposition that already exists between their residents.

The oppositional identity that results is a potentially useful addition to understanding the metropolitan political dynamic and is suggested in political animosity across urban regions that often seems to go beyond what would be predicted by different material interests alone. Insofar as such opposition relates to national policy agendas and political appeals, it structures and divides national politics.

The above discussion is generally consistent with the conventional view that national politics is structured by serious political differences between cities and their suburbs.¹²⁵ If this analysis were comprehensive of metropolitan regions, then the deterministic conclusions of the conventional view would be difficult to avoid. That is, the ever-expanding suburbs would marginalize the cities and the Democratic agenda with stable Republican majorities. However, not all suburbs are like the wealthier ones that fit this analysis. Metropolitan areas contain many kinds of places including suburbs that are not advantaged. These places structure their residents' political interests in ways that are different from both the cities and the wealthier suburbs. This complicates the political structure of metropolitan America and may help to explain why political conditions in the present period do not seem to be wholly consistent with the assumptions of the conventional view.

conflicting interests in the "other suburbs"

Social and material factors appear to structure political interests within the cities and their more affluent suburbs in ways that are coordinated or additive. That is, in affluent suburbs, both social factors and material conditions seem to

¹²⁵ See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins."

structure conservative interests. On the other hand, both of these groups of forces tend to structure liberal interests in the central cities.

However, these factors are not coordinated in the places that define the middle ground between central cities and their more affluent suburbs. Social and material pressures within the threatened white working-class suburbs can be understood as pulling their residents' interests in opposite political directions. This position is central to my critical hypothesis, and I will develop it in more detail below. In simple terms, these suburbs are materially threatened in ways that would increase their residents' interest in many portions of the Democratic economic agenda that appeal to the central cities. However, the proximity of most of these places to inner-city social dysfunction and the association of these problems with the minority residents who live in the central cities, would tend to make conservative social appeals more attractive to the residents of predominantly white inner-ring suburbs than they might be otherwise.

As a consequence, the political interests associated with these places do not represent a mid-point between those of the cities and those of the wealthier suburbs. Rather, residents of these places are subjected to a conflicting combination of social and material forces. Insofar as these forces actually affect the political preferences of the residents of these places, residents are prevented from finding broad satisfaction in the appeals of either major party. Conflicting social and material pressures in these places may therefore explain the softer and more volatile levels of partisan support in national elections that have been identified in the suburbs generally.

Conclusion

Understanding the present period within the context of the above gestalt promises a new understanding of electoral politics that both contributes to current structural approaches and corrects the assumptions of Schneider's dichotomous geographic analysis. Complex place-based analysis, though not a replacement for realignment theory, promises a better-specified relationship between structural factors and present period electoral conditions.

My broad hypothesis rounds out a more comprehensive place-based understanding of present period structure. Here, central cities produce the core of Democratic presidential support and are largely responsible for declining turnout rates. The growth of middle-class suburban electorates, associated with high turnout rates and consistent Republican voting, have made Republican presidential candidates more competitive. However, the threatened working-class suburbs do not fit into either of these two categories. I believe data will show that their electorates have voted at lower rates than the middle-class suburbs and have not provided consistent election-to-election support for either party in presidential elections. I believe that the political position of these places will explain much of the political ambiguity or the "incomplete Republican realignment" of the present period.

CROSS PRESSURES

Synopsis

My dissertation is guided by the general hypothesis that major divisions within metropolitan areas structure national politics. Most electoral scholars do not look at urban space as a source of national political structure. However, some analysts have shown that large cities can aggregate voters or otherwise structure political interests in ways that may draw their residents towards the Democrats. Meanwhile, our nation's suburbs seem to have had the opposite affects. These efforts help to explain the decline of the New Deal majority and the rising power of the Republicans in national elections during the present period. However, the Republican Party has failed to solidify a national governing majority even though the suburbs have grown enormously throughout the present period.

The “failed Republican realignment” stems in part from the fact that suburban voters have not favored Republican candidates as strongly or consistently as city voters have supported Democrats. One might conclude from this that suburbs do not structure political interests as strongly as the cities do. However, I argue that relatively weaker and more volatile levels of support for Republican candidates in the suburbs are not just the results of a *general* weakness of suburban political structure.

The conventional wisdom, which is expressed so well by William Scheider, emphasizes essential political differences between cities and their suburbs that are based on an image of the suburbs that is consistent with middle-class and wealthier places. These kinds of suburbs should structure Republican interests strongly. If all or almost all of the suburbs fit these stereotypes then we would probably have had a Republican realignment in the present period because the suburbs grew so much during this time. However, many suburbs do not fit this image. The most important of these are the distressed or threatened suburbs that mark the middle ground between the cities and wealthier suburbs. These suburbs may structure political interests in very different ways from either the cities or the better suburbs. Indeed, I argue that they do, and in ways that are consistent with the partisan ambiguity and electoral volatility that have prevented a true Republican realignment.

Critical Hypothesis

Formally stated, I hypothesize that economic conditions and social/racial pressures associated with the nation's threatened white working-class suburbs have helped to pull many of the residents of these places in opposing political directions throughout the present period. These conflicting political forces, which are intrinsic to these suburbs, have helped to prevent many of their residents from finding long-term satisfaction with either party's agenda. As a

consequence, neither party has received consistent levels of support from these places. Therefore, I hypothesize that residents' ambiguity towards the parties will be reflected in high levels of electoral volatility. In this condition, the voters of these suburbs will have shifted in the strength or direction of their partisan support from election to election throughout the present period. That is, they are swing voters. Political ambiguity structured by these places should also be manifest in higher levels of ticket splitting and more non-voting among residents.

Following is a table showing the three major groups of places that I begin with and their residents' political behaviors as my general model of metropolitan political space and my critical theory of working-class suburban structure predict them.

Hypothetical Structure of Metropolitan Political Behavior in National Elections in the Present Period

	General Partisan Position	Ticket-Splitting	Voter Turnout	Election-to-Election Volatility (Swing Voting)
Distressed Central Cities	Democratic	Low	Very Low	Low
Threatened White Working-Class Suburbs	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Depressed</i>	<i>High</i>
Middle-Class and Wealthier Suburbs	Republican	Low	High	Low

Cross Pressures

My critical hypothesis is based on the theory that our working-class or "other suburbs" expose their residents to opposing political forces or cross-pressures that create conflicting political stresses. My model is inspired by Seymour Martin Lipset's theory of cross-pressures, which explains the withdrawal of citizens at the lower ends of American society from politics as a result of their exposure to contradictory economic and sociopolitical forces.¹²⁶

Lipset's hypothesis is an example of cognitive dissonance theory, which was conceptualized by Leon Festinger in the fifties.¹²⁷ Festinger argued that people invest a great deal of psychological capital in the cognitive schema that they develop to make sense of their reality. Because of this, when they face conditions that conflict with their world-views, they experience cognitive dissonance, which is psychologically untenable. People who find themselves in this position are not likely to resolve the conflict by readjusting their world views. Rather, they are

¹²⁶See Seymour Martin Lipset, Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

¹²⁷See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

more apt to try to avoid the problem subjectively by ignoring evidence that conflicts with their cognitive understandings of reality or by reinterpreting their observations in accord with these schemata.

In Lipsett's application of cognitive dissonance theory, he argues that people at the lower ends of American society are placed in a difficult situation because although their economic position would recommend their support for leftist politics, they are also influenced by conservative social appeals advanced by the elite to legitimize the political system. For Lipset, these people are more likely to respond to conflicting cognitions represented by their economic reality and the predominant political philosophy by withdrawing from politics rather than by supporting leftist politics.

[Lower voting rates for working-class individuals] may be due in part to the fact that the lower strata in every society are influenced by their life experiences and their class organizations to favor those parties which advocate social and economic reforms, but at the same time they are exposed to strong upper-class and conservative influences through the press, radio, schools, churches, and so forth. Though their social and economic inferiority predisposes them against the *status quo*, the existing system has many traditional claims to legitimacy which influence them. The lower strata are, therefore, placed in a situation of not only less but also conflicting information, and of opposing group pressures. (*Political Man* p. 213.)¹²⁸

In essence, my critical hypothesis applies Lipset's understanding of cross-pressures within the context of working-class suburbs. I therefore define economic stresses and conservative influences as material and social place pressures rather than simply as class pressures. However, the place pressures that I specify are particularly troublesome because they do not just split residents' interests between the parties. They also divide residents' interests among the parties in opposite and irreconcilable ways.

The material interests that these places define are in accord with the general thrust of many of the liberal economic policies advocated by Democrats in the present period but are threatened by many Republican policies. On the other hand, the social position of these places can threaten residents in ways that can make many of the social appeals of Republican candidates more attractive while making much of the Democratic social agenda more threatening. The racial animosity of working-class whites towards urban blacks that seems to be intensified within many of these suburbs is probably the most powerful of these social stresses. Below is a very simple schematic that shows how the social and material cross-pressures that are generated within these suburbs divide residents' interests vis-à-vis the social and economic agendas of the Democratic and Republican Parties in the present period.

¹²⁸Lipset cites Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and McPhee's findings in *Voting* as evidence of the relationship between political withdrawal or non-voting and the inability of many at the lower levels of the social structure to resolve conflict between class pressures and social values identifications. See Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee, *Voting*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

Cross-Pressures in the Working-Class Suburbs

	Relation to Democratic Agenda	Relation to Republican Agenda
Material Interests	<i>Consistent</i>	<i>Opposed</i>
Social Interests	<i>Opposed</i>	<i>Consistent</i>

Insofar as these places have influenced their residents politically, their residents will have had a difficult time finding satisfaction in either party's overall agenda. This will have resulted in weakened party identifications, greater electoral volatility, and lower voter turnouts in the present period.

The conflict caused by these pressures is compounded by the fact that they are all negative, which makes the inability of either party to respond to them in a comprehensive way especially troubling. Following is a more complete definition of these suburbs that provides a more detailed illustration of the cross-pressures that they produce.

Defining Threatened Working-Class Suburbs

In simple terms, the places that I am concerned with are suburban municipalities located in large metropolitan areas, usually between distressed central cities and secure middle-class suburbs. They are older and more urban than the more upscale and leafy residential suburbs that lie farther out. Though their housing is largely comprised of owner-occupied single units, it is becoming less attractive. These places frequently contain considerable amounts of aging commercial and industrial development. Once places that attracted droves of the middle-class seeking a new suburban lifestyle, they have become overdeveloped and filled with aging and unattractive infrastructure. Though most of their residents are working-class whites, these suburbs are becoming more susceptible to the in-migration of minority and poor residents. Declining real property values and personal incomes indicate this threat.

Beyond this brief description, these places are best understood in terms of the politically significant cross-pressures that they subject their residents to. Following is a review of how material and social cross-pressures may be structured within these places in ways that can affect their residents' political interests and preferences.

Material Pressures

Most of the threatened white working-class suburbs had their beginnings as booming middle-class suburbs early in the post-war era. They became working-

class places a generation later when their original residents moved out. As the middle-class left for the newer suburbs, working-class residents took the opportunity to buy their older homes and escape growing problems in the central cities.

- *physical decline*

In the first few years after their transition to working-class places, (usually around the beginning of the present period) housing and other infrastructure in these suburbs maintained much of their value. Frequently, these places were protected by buffer zones comprised of the central city working-class neighborhoods that remained between them and the minority ghettos that were expanding from the core. Additionally, the central cities continued to provide ample numbers of white working-class families eager to move to the inner-ring suburbs, which supported property values and helped to prevent the in-migration of poor and minority residents. In this condition of relative security these suburbs could, for a time, share economic interests with the newer middle-class suburbs.

However, as the present period progressed, these places came to face a number of economic challenges that are more normally associated with the central cities. Some of these problems are rooted in the physical condition of these places. Most of the development in these suburbs was built in the early post-war period or before and is becoming less attractive with age. Problems with the quality of the housing stock in these places are especially serious. The overwhelming majority of housing in most of these suburbs predates the 1960s, with the lion's share of it having been constructed shortly after World War II. Built during a period of high housing demand, and serious shortages of labor and materials, much of this housing was constructed by large developers who could effect economies of scale by filling enormous tracts of land with hundreds or even thousands of modest and essentially identical mass-produced homes.

Even when houses were built individually, contractors usually cut costs by minimizing the size of homes and simplifying architectural features. Often the porches, fireplaces, formal entrance halls, and even dining rooms that distinguished the middle-class homes of a generation before were eliminated, as were quality interior moldings, complex roof-lines, and other ornamental features. Contractors also reduced costs by using as many of the newly available mass-produced construction components and cheaper man-made building materials as possible. These products include prefabricated roof trusses, standard eight-foot studs, man-made siding and roofing materials, and plywood doors. As a consequence, many individually constructed homes from this period have a mass-produced look. Although these efforts enabled many families to own their own homes who would not have been able to otherwise, the result today is that most of houses in these suburbs are rather small, minimally built, and lacking in distinctive character by contemporary standards.

The unattractiveness of vast tracts of these homes is compounded by commercial blight. Inner-ring suburbs contain early post-war shopping districts or "miracle miles." Under-planned and over-developed, these strips are filled with run-down shopping plazas, junky looking car dealers, fast food joints, and increasing numbers of empty buildings. The aesthetic incongruity and increasing shabbiness of these environments are unattractive to higher end retailers and developers and negatively impact the images of these places in the minds of prospective residents. Problems with declining housing and commercial development are exacerbated by the unsightly and otherwise unwanted industrial plants or brown fields, decaying public infrastructure, and massive freeways that burden many of these suburbs or otherwise degrade the environments within them.

distressed municipalities, pressured residents

These problems affect *individuals* because they make their suburbs less desirable and their homes less valuable. But they also disadvantage *residents* because they weaken their municipalities. Generally speaking, as the economic positions of these places decline, their expenses mount and their tax bases shrink. As a consequence, many of these municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to provide quality services at affordable prices. That is, the same fiscal vice that devastated the cities earlier is squeezing the older suburbs today.

Physical conditions within these suburbs combine with their weakening fiscal positions to limit their ability to stop the urban decline that is rapidly approaching their borders. Pressured to find new sources of tax revenue, many of these suburbs have only short-term development options. Frequently, these places try to stabilize tax bases by accepting less attractive investment that will only exacerbate their problems in the long run. These options often include big-box discount retail and other low value added commercial development such as warehousing facilities.¹²⁹ However, because most of these places have very little undeveloped land left, they are limited in their ability to accept even marginal development.

As a consequence of these trends, Orfield finds that some inner-ring suburbs are losing ground more rapidly than their central cities.¹³⁰ This is the case in part because the physical structure of these places leaves them with fewer long-term options than the central cities. They lack the diversity of land use, cultural resources, graceful neighborhoods, formal parks, location near to waterfronts,

¹²⁹An example of this would be a suburb's having to settle for a new warehouse discount store or a scrap metal firm instead of upper-scale housing or a high-tech corporate office campus. See Myron Orfield's *Metropolitics*.

¹³⁰I have gathered data on the Detroit area that confirms this. See comparative tables in my research design. The disposability of place deserves discussion. The metropolitan middle-class that first abandoned the cities for these suburbs, continue to build and expand the periphery of metropolitan areas, leaving their previous residences to successively less well healed residents. The cumulative effects of avoidance and resultant segregation spread ever outward and result in massive material losses quite beyond those that would have accrued naturally within more mixed municipalities. (See Myron Orfield's *Metropolitics*.) Unfortunately, the cumulative impact of individual instrumental actions does not necessarily result in a greater social or material good. This is the case for at least two reasons. The ability to materially ratify one's residential interests is not distributed evenly and the choices themselves are not strictly individual. Rather, they are structured by artificial municipal boundaries. This is compounded when the intrinsic values of place and community are not included in one's judgement of the good.

and other intrinsic qualities that still make most central cities attractive to corporations, young professionals, and at least some affluent residents.¹³¹ As the products of short-term planning, most of these suburbs will have very little left once their cookie cutter housing and aging commercial strips lose their appeal.

As these places are growing ever more like the central cities they are shaping material interests that are more in line with those found in the cities. Their salvation is not likely to be found in policies that structure metropolitan America presently or in policies that pit the suburbs against the cities. These suburbs have an objective interest in metropolitan-wide solutions that bring greater equity to the distribution of development and resources.¹³² Furthermore, insofar as these places structure the material interests of their residents, their residents have a greater interest in many of the economic components of the Democratic policy agenda. These would include federal aid for public school systems and other municipal services, redevelopment assistance, and funding for infrastructure improvement.

- *relative interests*

However, places can do more than structure their residents' objective wellbeing, they may also impact their perceptions of security and chances for success. As the residents of these places watch their property values fall, their schools become less reputable, and the physical condition of their suburbs decay, they are likely to view these problems in relation to the growing prosperity of the outer-ring suburbs and to increasing central city blight. As they do so, residents may connect what is happening to their places with what may happen to them if they cannot escape. But their suburbs may trap them.

The material position of inner-ring suburbs is analogous to that felt by many members of the working-class as individuals. The remaining working-class, those who missed the middle-class boat, reached a point of economic stagnation and decline in the present period. They became trapped in an increasingly untenable position between the poor and the professional middle-class at a time when their hard fought suburban status became increasingly threatened. Residents' declining socioeconomic positions felt within the context of increasing place pressures may lead them to identify with urban political interests more strongly than with middle-class suburban interests. This would result in more support for a broader agenda of economic security, activist government, housing and educational aid programs, and metropolitan burden sharing. This is essentially Myron Orfield's hope. His efforts towards metropolitan reform in the Minneapolis - St. Paul area have been based on aligning interests between central cities and these suburbs against those of the wealthier suburbs and have met with some success.¹³³

¹³¹See again, Myron Orfield, *Metropolitica*. These advantages include libraries and universities, cultural institutions, classic housing stock, Victorian parks, et cetera. In the development of the post-war suburbs, little attention was paid to the intrinsic or aesthetic value of community and space.

¹³²This is consistent with Myron Orfield's argument in *Metropolitica*.

¹³³See again Myron Orfield, *Metropolitica*.

Social Pressures

Threatened white working-class suburbs can also create or intensify a number of social pressures that may impact residents' political interests and preferences. However, whereas the material stresses associated with these places may draw residents towards the Democratic agenda and away from the Republicans, many of the social pressures associated with these places appear to have had the opposite effect.

- *aggregation of interests*

White working-class suburbs have been associated with the social conservatism of their residents in the present period.¹³⁴ This may begin with the fact that these places have attracted and retained large numbers of residents who are most likely to subscribe to traditional or socially conservative views, which draw in part from the ethnic immigrant heritages that continue to resonate in many working-class families. These values emphasize familial obligations, individual responsibility, and self-sufficiency, all of which have been advanced explicitly by Republican candidates throughout the present period.¹³⁵

On the other hand, the Democratic Party came to be associated with a new liberalism since the 1960s that often appeared to challenge these values. The targeted welfare entitlements, integrationist court rulings, and affirmative action programs that defined this agenda were viewed by many working-class whites as antithetical to traditional notions of individual responsibility and to the idea that rewards should be based upon hard work or merit.

To make matters worse, for many sharing these values, the new social policies appeared to benefit precisely the wrong people. Minorities, the urban poor, the accused, and others who found new opportunities or protections were often seen as undeserving of public assistance and legitimacy insofar as they didn't appear to live up to traditional expectations of decent and responsible behavior.¹³⁶

Unfortunately, benefits for these people came during the sixties and seventies when many working-class whites were facing social stresses that were symbolized in the general social upheaval of the time, which included the civil rights revolution, the sexual revolution, women's liberation, urban riots, and numerous and varied protest movements. These trends and events challenged traditional perspectives and were followed by the declining wages and reduced job security that threatened to derail the advance of the working-class in the seventies and eighties.

¹³⁴ See Stanley Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

¹³⁵ See especially Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991).

¹³⁶ See especially Johathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985) and Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction*.

In this context of change and threat, many working-class residents of these suburbs came to resent the Democrats for having sold them out in order to advance what they saw as essentially un-American values and to help people who they believed were not worthy of public assistance or legitimacy.¹³⁷ Indeed, Stanley Greenberg found high levels of resentment against the Democratic Party among the residents of working-class suburbs in the Detroit region.¹³⁸ Republican leaders like Jean Kirkpatrick and Ronald Reagan tapped into this resentment when they asserted that 'I did not leave the Democratic Party, the Party left me.'

- *the environment of social conservatism*

These places may have done more than attract disproportionate numbers of people who were hostile to the new liberalism however. Conservative social values and the political attitudes that were consistent with them may have been intensified within these suburbs through the social milieus that have been associated with ethnic white working-class neighborhoods. Jonathan Rieder found that in Canarsie, a mostly Jewish and Italian working-class neighborhood in New York City, bad experiences with urban lower-class blacks and feelings of resentment towards the "silk stocking" liberal Democrats were constantly reinforced as they were the regular topic of conversation within the community.¹³⁹

¹³⁷See *Chain Reaction*. Jonathan Rieder found that the working-class residents in the Canarsie neighborhood of New York were drawn away from the Democratic Party in large part because they resented the party's apparent support of "undeserving" inner-city blacks. William Connolly, in *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), lays the philosophical groundwork for resentment stemming from the confrontation of traditional working-class identity with the expansion of rights and assistance given to formerly marginalized groups that are not perceived to be deserving of the legitimization. This resentment is fueled by the declining status of the working-class in this period. (See especially his discussion page 78 relating to angry white males.) The pressures on working-class identity that Connolly discusses effect cognitive dissonance in essence.

¹³⁸ See *Middle-Class Dreams*.

¹³⁹In *Canarsie*. Jonathan Rieder finds a strongly rooted environment of social conservatism in an ethnic working-class neighborhood located within New York City, a place not unlike many white working-class suburbs.

- *the sociospatial structure of racial division and social conservatism*

While analyzing social milieus requires the in-depth study of communities, which is beyond the project of this dissertation, conservative social interests are shaped in the threatened white working-class suburbs in other ways that can be defined more objectively. These places can structure social perspectives and interests powerfully insofar as they define the social position of their residents in relation to other places and the groups of different people that live in them.

The threatened white working-class suburbs are socially positioned between the distressed central cities and the wealthier suburbs. This ambiguous position creates intense pressures that can affect the political interests of residents. Racial distinctions between the residents of declining white suburbs and the minority ghettos located within the central cities probably cause some of the most powerful of these stresses. The inner-ring white working-class suburbs are even more severely pressured by threats that have a racial dimension insofar as their location near to inner-city neighborhoods intensifies perceptions of spatial group differences and makes the threat of ghetto spillover more palpable.

Aside from any bigotry that might be felt by some of the residents of these places towards poor inner-city minority residents, their proximity to ghetto areas makes them subject to dangers that they would not have to face if they were located at a "safer distance" from these places. These include residents' greater risk of falling victim to some form of social pathology associated with these ghetto areas or of having to engage in a negative competition with central city minorities for the general goods of urban life.

Furthermore, fears that urban problems such as crime, social dysfunction, squalor, and declining schools will spill over city boundaries into the white working-class suburbs upon the in-migration of urban poor minority residents may be reinforced by experience. Aside from ghetto residents themselves, it is those who live in the working-class areas near to them who will pay the heaviest price for these problems if they are not resolved or contained. That price can be staggering. Just as working-class suburbs were once middle-class places, the ghetto has been enveloping more and more formerly working-class neighborhoods in the cities, from which many of the residents of white working-class suburbs fled from a generation earlier. As a consequence, many residents of white working-class suburbs have seen what can happen to their neighborhoods if they "fall."

Working-class residents that get caught by the front lines of ghetto expansion stand to lose much of what they invested in; not the least of which is their social environment and status. The declining social position of working-class suburbs exacerbates proximity pressures, which is evidenced in rising crime rates and troubled schools. Working-class suburbs are becoming "the other suburbia,"

increasingly defined by their inability to maintain the quiet safety that defines more affluent middle-class suburbs.¹⁴⁰

Because of this and because these problems seem to be so clearly associated with the dysfunction of minority residents particularly, it is hard for the residents of white working-class suburbs to avoid associating their problems with the dysfunction of many inner-city minority communities. It is a tragic irony of Metropolitan America today that the association of poverty, dysfunction, and minorities with place both *personalizes* the nature of the threat expanding from the central city and *objectifies* the people who are supposedly causing the problem of the ghetto in the minds of many whites. In this condition, place has the power to make "those people", those blacks or Puerto Ricans or any others who must live in the ghettos to appear to be *the* problem. In this sense, racial and economic segregation intensifies racism and its affects on political interests. This is Balkanization, where social, economic, and political views are framed not by understandings of the social economy or land markets or other objective factors, but by the sociospatial opposition of groups based on race and other identities.

The first impulse of residents of the white working-class suburbs that are socially threatened within this structure is not likely to be one favoring aid to central cities and their poor minority residents. Rather, a siege mentality is more plausible. The palpable threat of the ghetto gives inner-ring suburban residents an immediate interest in opposing affirmative action and integrationist policies that would threaten their already weak position. The tenuous social conditions in these suburbs are also likely to make the conservative get-tough-on-crime or law and order appeals advanced by many Republican candidates more attractive.

Myron Orfield's hope that increasingly similar material interests between central cities and declining working-class suburbs will ally them in a progressive political coalition may underestimate the depth of the racially colored social resentment and fear that can affect the residents of threatened white suburbs.¹⁴¹ Although objectively understood material interests may push the residents of these suburbs towards more cooperation with central cities in the resolution of economic disparities, social opposition will likely frustrate these coalitions in many metropolitan areas.

Many residents of white-working suburbs moved to them for a reason. They wanted to be suburban, which is to say that they did not want to live in the cities and that they didn't want to be associated with them or their residents. To identify with central cities in a political coalition may threaten social distinctions

¹⁴⁰See especially, Scott Minerbrook, "A Tale of Two Suburbias: The Decline of Blue-Collar Suburbs and Growth of 'Edge Cities' Create a New Kind of Isolation," *U. S. News and World Report* (November 9, 1992). Minerbrook's attention to declining blue-collar suburbs is intended to challenge the myth of suburbs as monolithically middle-class. See also John McCormick and Peter McKillop "The Other Suburbia: An Ugly Secret in America's Suburbs: Poverty," *Newsweek* (June 26, 1989).

¹⁴¹Myron Orfield's success in Minneapolis - St. Paul may not be easily universalizable owing to the relatively mild race and poverty problems there compared to most northern industrial cities.

that are part of working-class suburban identity.¹⁴² And so, social / racial pressures reinforce working-class associations with the white middle-class suburbs in opposition to the central cities.

Conclusion of Cross Pressures

Within the context of national election politics in the present period, these conditions exert conflicting stresses on the residents of inner-ring suburbs. The central cities, the minorities that live in them, and the problems that are too frequently associated with these places and people, represent serious social threats to the residents of many working-class suburbs. At the same time, these places are becoming more like the cities as they are losing in their economic competition with the wealthier suburbs. The fact that neither political party has been able to respond to all of these stresses has frustrated the ability of the residents of these places to find the agendas of either party wholly attractive.

The fact that the parties have not responded effectively to the problems of these places and their residents draw in part from the fact that these suburbs are not like the places that the parties are rooted in. Geography, it seems, has trapped the parties as much as it has trapped the residents of the other suburbs. Just as the Democrats risk alienating their central urban base if they reach too far into the suburbs, the Republicans may be prevented by their wealthier suburban constituencies from attending to the more urban like problems of the older suburbs.

The cross-pressures that result are exacerbated in the political structure of metropolitan regions where local party organizations are similarly divided on the issues but also separated geographically between the central cities and the wealthier suburbs. Local Republican politics, frequently dominated by more affluent suburban constituencies, can take an anti-urban bias which may have a social appeal to working-class suburbanites. But these political organizations often do not respond sufficiently to the economic problems of declining inner-ring suburbs in part, perhaps, because they cannot do so without appearing to help the central cities or diminishing the advantage of the wealthier suburbs. Meanwhile, local Democratic organizations are traditionally based in the central cities, which exacerbates the concerns of the residents of white working-class suburbs about whose interests the Democrats will advance first.

These stresses at the national and local level boil down to the fact that in the context of metropolitan America today, there seems to be no way for either party to really appeal to the inner-ring suburbs without appearing to help the “wrong” constituency and harm the “right” one. This problem, which frustrates national politics and prevents the resolution of serious problems within metropolitan regions is driven by intense material, social, and political divisions that have been growing between cities and wealthier suburbs. The problem of national

¹⁴²William Connolly grounds working-class identity in opposition to the immorality associated with central city pathology. If we accept this position, then working-class security is not only based on material issues, but also on opposition to the ghetto. See *Identity\Difference*.

politics in the present period is therefore to some significant extent the problem of metropolitan America.

dissertation project

The project of this dissertation is to execute a research agenda informed by the cross-pressures hypothesis elaborated above. I will show that in relation to cities and middle-class suburbs, the threatened inner-ring working-class suburbs are associated with electoral volatility, declining attachment to the parties, and depressed turnout rates.

Problems posed by present period electoral conditions to structural electoral scholarship form the general context of my work. More generally, my work will contribute to the view that the inequitable separation of people within fragmented metropolitan areas is associated with an increasingly frustrated national polity. Understanding the political importance of metropolitan space is preliminary to advancing any agenda that might heal the deepest disparities within our urban areas and mend the fragmented national political discourse.

Such an agenda will have to be based on more than interest alignments within metropolitan areas, and include new understandings of these areas as political societies with identities and interests more powerful than those of individual places that make them up. As Todd Swanstrom notes in agreement with Norton Long, material interests are not sufficient to ground lasting metropolitan coalitions. Rather, it is necessary also to achieve a new identification with the metropolitan area as a whole political community and transcend more parochial associations.¹⁴³

Summary Research Design

The final chapters of this dissertation present data and analysis that supports the theories of metropolitan political geographic effects outlined above. Because the details of my research design are elaborated extensively within these chapters, a comprehensive research design is not necessary here. Rather, I present here a brief summary of the approach that I have taken to explore the relationships between place and politics outlined above.

I hypothesize that place has both aggregate and individual effects that impact the structure of political interests, attitudes, and actions in ways that are significant to national politics. To investigate such effects properly, a variety of data must be looked at severally and in concert. We need information about the places that make up our metropolitan areas and we need information about the nationally significant political preferences and behaviors of the residents of those places. Furthermore, in order to access the effects of places on individuals as well as

¹⁴³See Todd Swanstrom, "Philosopher in the City: The New Regionalism Debate," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 17 (1995).

groups, we need individual information about a sampling of persons who live in a variety of places that we know something about, places that we can define materially and politically.

In an ideal world (from the perspective of one looking to investigate and substantiate political geographic effects) we would have ready access to national election statistics for all of the places (cities, townships, smaller units) that make up our metropolitan areas. We don't. Indeed, we really don't have anything that approximates such a resource with the minor and problematic exception of the Record of American Democracy data set. The reasons for this are discussed below. We would also need good information on the material conditions that define the places that make up our urban regions. We have plenty of that in the form of Census data, primarily. We would also have good survey research data that would tell us where the respondents live and give us information about their political attitudes and actions as well as a variety of their individual attributes that might, as well as the places that they live in, predict their political behaviors and preferences. We have precious little data of this kind for the simple reason that attitudinal and political behavioral researchers have not been all that interested in exploring place effects, so they have often either not bothered to geocode their data or otherwise collect samples in a way that would facilitate geopolitical analysis of their survey research data.

- In the absence of large national geocoded survey research data sets and published local election returns, a metropolitan case study, rather than a broader national election/political attitudinal study, is most appropriate to investigating the hypotheses advanced here. This is the course that I have taken and to execute it, I selected the Detroit metropolitan region. Detroit made a lot of sense for the following reasons:
- With approximately 4.5 million people, the region is quite large by national standards.
- Regional space is arranged in something resembling a classical bull's eye pattern of metropolitan development. This not only makes Detroit typical, it creates the differentiated space upon which my general understanding of metropolitan political structure rests.
- Detroit regional space is comprised of scores of distinct places in the form of independent municipalities with stable boundaries. This fact is important to the political structure of this and so many other American metropolitan regions. It also facilitates the sort of analysis that this dissertation seeks because these municipalities make excellent units of analysis.
- The Detroit region has a long and particularly tragic history of racial conflict and segregation, which at once contributes to the region's political geography but also competes with place as a factor influencing people's political attitudes and actions.

- Some of the best geocoded political survey research data available anywhere are to be found in the form of the Detroit Area Study, which is discussed and cited in full below.

Following is an introduction to the Detroit metropolitan area that highlights some of the more significant factors that have contributed to the development of the region's political geographic structure. This review emphasizes the agency of the region's political actors as well as material structural factors that have shaped the region over time. After this substantive introduction, there is a quantitative analysis of the region followed by an aggregate election study and an analysis of geocoded survey research. These studies divided the region's places into four primary geopolitical categories that facilitate aggregate election and attitudinal analysis.

Critical Components of the Dissertation

Broad Problem Statement

Most of American history can be divided into periods where major parties built governing coalitions based on support from consistent majorities of voters. During these periods, relatively consistent partisan agendas dominated the political system. However, from 1968 to today, the present period in American politics, this has not been the case. Both parties have been frustrated by their inability to build an electoral majority strong and stable enough to allow them to effectively pursue a coherent policy agenda. Their failure stems from ambiguity and volatility in national elections characterized by voter apathy, split-ticket voting, declining attachment to parties, et cetera. As these problems represent challenges for the political system, they frustrate structural approaches to national electoral analysis.

Broad Dependent Variable

The broad dependent variable that needs to be explained is the inability of any party in the present period to build a governing coalition based on a strong and stable electoral majority.

Focused Dependent Variable

Political instability throughout the present period appears to stem in part from the weakening party attachments of working-class whites. Members of this group, once the backbone of the New Deal, have weakened in their support for Democratic candidates but failed to support Republican candidates consistently. They have become the swing voters. Explaining this may go some distance towards explaining the problem of the present period.

Broad Hypothesis

Contrary to the claims of some that national electoral politics are no longer highly structured, I argue that they are but that most scholars have been looking in the wrong places for structure. I hypothesize that growing divisions within the nation's large metropolitan regions are structuring the political positions of their residents in ways that influence national politics.

Critical Hypothesis

I hypothesize that most of the white working class residents of metropolitan areas live in places that stress their residents in conflicting

ways. These stresses or cross-pressures have helped to frustrate residents' ability to find satisfaction with either party's agenda in the present period. This has resulted in lower levels of attachment to the parties and higher levels of electoral volatility.

Dissertation Project

The project of this dissertation is to show associations between the different places that make up an urban region and national voting trends. More specifically, this dissertation will show relationships between white working-class suburbs and the political volatility of their residents.

SECTION II

AN INTERPRETIVE GEOGRAPHY OF DETROIT: STRUCTURE VERSUS WILL

DETROIT AND WINDSOR: A TELLING COMPARISON

Detroit is a vast and sprawling region located across the river from its sister city, Windsor, Ontario. Though the two areas have similar industrial economies and share a history of interdependence, they contrast sharply. Windsor, of course, is smaller. With an estimated 300,000 residents in 1999, the area contains less than one tenth of the Detroit PMSA's 1990 population of 4.3 million.¹⁴⁴ However, the important differences between the two regions go beyond statistics.

Windsor, like Detroit, is an industrial city and contains many cultural and commercial institutions similar to those in Detroit and other American cities. Windsor's population, like Detroit's, advanced the suburban frontier in the post-war period. Windsor has the suburban expressways, shopping centers, and developer built housing that Americans find so familiar. However, Windsor lacks the blighted slums, industrial wreckage, abandoned land, and the vast seas of homogenous suburbs that have come to define Detroit. Furthermore, in contrast with its neighbor, whose half-empty center looms across the river, Windsor impresses the observer as an urban whole, a much more integrated city with a strong and unified identity.

The contrast between the two areas is sharpest at the point where they come together, their centers. Although downtown Windsor has suffered somewhat from recent competition with suburban shopping malls, it is still filled with stores, all variety of restaurants, and various entertainment establishments ranging from the mainstream to the exotic. Windsor's streets are clean and comfortable and they feel safe. Considerable attention has been paid to them as public places, which is evident in outdoor plantings, attractive "street furniture," and other details. On a nice evening, it is the rare sidewalk in downtown Windsor that is empty. A beautiful promenade park, sandwiched between the river and a scenic drive, transformed Windsor's riverfront long ago. There, people can stroll along miles of shore complete with beautiful views of the Detroit River and Detroit's looming skyline.

Windsor's center stands in sharp contrast to Detroit's. Though Detroit's waterfront includes a few parks, they are small and isolated. Access to the river is generally restricted by large-scale commercial, residential, and industrial developments. Downtown Detroit is generally an alienating place. Its streets, in the main, are bleak and disconcerting urban deserts. An exception to this is Detroit's heavily policed Greek Town, a small enclave that has been the only continually popular shopping and entertainment district in downtown for decades.

¹⁴⁴ See Statistics Canada at <http://www.statcan.ca> and the Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census at <http://www.census.gov>.

Although loft conversions and some new commercial and entertainment developments are transforming a few sections of downtown Detroit, there is little residential or retail life there yet. Whether the new developments will knit across the great expanses of decay to form what Mayor Dennis Archer and others hope will be a “destination downtown” remains to be seen.

It is obvious that downtown Detroit has not always been an alienating place. Although there is far more street life in Windsor today, Detroit’s center covers a much larger area and most of its streets, buildings, monumental churches, and parks were more impressively and elegantly constructed than Windsor’s. The remains of downtown Detroit not only evidence former wealth, but also attest to a pride in public space that seems to have been lost somewhere along the way. Certainly, what pride remained in 1961 was insufficient to prevent the City from demolishing its stately nineteenth century City Hall in favor of a parking garage.

The differences between Detroit and Windsor go beyond these however. Downtown Windsor has no defined edge. Rather, commercial and institutional development taper off as they mix with the City’s neighborhoods. Windsor’s neighborhoods are not highly defined or specialized places either. Rather, they flow, one into the other, across mixed-use space, creating the effect of an interconnected urban whole. Though Windsor contains both poverty and wealth, they are not segregated into extensive slums and wealthy enclaves.

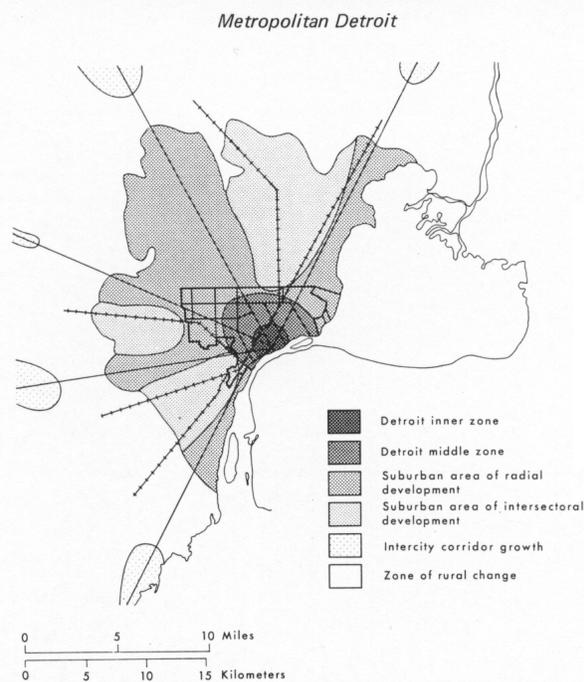
In contrast, Downtown Detroit ends abruptly, and is encircled by a wide ring of devastation. Viewed from the sky, the remains of the nineteenth century neighborhoods that comprise this band have a patchy and threadbare look. As houses are abandoned, burned, and demolished, these neighborhoods are being reduced, lot by lot, into meadows. With a few small exceptions, the decay of these neighborhoods has advanced uninterrupted since new freeways, all converging around the center of the City, cut deep and wide gashes through these places in the 1950s and 1960s. See Figure A - 1 in Appendix A.¹⁴⁵

Beyond these areas, the City of Detroit is comprised of great expanses of declining and pockmarked neighborhoods, abandoned commercial and industrial complexes, and a few middle- and upper-class enclave neighborhoods.

Beyond the City, Detroit’s suburbs have filled with large-scale low-density housing developments. Most of these were built after World War II to accommodate the region’s rising population and the growing numbers of white residents who were fleeing the City. Many suburban localities filled with development fairly quickly. Because of this, the neighborhoods in these places have a monotonous quality about them as the majority of their housing was constructed within a narrow range of styles. As a consequence, though each suburb has its distinct qualities, many are defined by sameness within. Furthermore, similar suburbs are clustered close to each other. This has happened in part because the suburban areas that people moved to were to a significant extent predicted by the parts of the City that they were moving from.

¹⁴⁵ All figures for section I of this dissertation can be found in Appendix A.

In their analysis of the region's development, Robert Sinclair and Bryan Thompson note that middle-class and wealthier residents extended many of the more upscale areas in the City as they moved out along Detroit's great radial avenues. Collectively, the suburbs that resulted constitute what these authors call the suburban areas of radial development. Meanwhile, working-class households moved to peripheral areas that were extensions of the City's working-class neighborhoods. The working-class suburban clusters that resulted are sandwiched between the middle- and upper-class radial suburbs as they follow the rail lines that drew industrial production from the City's center outward. As a consequence these places, called suburban areas of interstitial development, generally contain a mixture of working-class housing and industrial and commercial plant.¹⁴⁶



Even as they wrote in the late seventies, Sinclair and Thompson noted that this understanding of the suburbs was only part of the story. Within the radial structure, the peripheral suburbs are generally favored at the expense of the older inner-ring ones. As people with means continue to move into newer housing at the periphery, the older suburbs closer to the core are down-graded as they are left to purchasers with fewer means. Therefore, the arrangement of Detroit's suburban space can be thought of as a hierarchical bull's-eye distorted by the effects of radial avenues and rail lines.

¹⁴⁶ See Robert Sinclair and Bryan Thompson, *Metropolitan Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* Robert Sinclair and Brian Thompson, *Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* (Cambridge Mass.: Ballinger A subsidiary of Lyppincott Company, 1972).

As a consequence, most of the declining working-class suburbs are located near to the urban core while most of the better middle-class and wealthy places are located farther out. The most obvious exceptions to this arrangement are the most prestigious of the older suburbs, including the Grosse Pointes.

Aside from such exceptions, a slice of the metropolitan bull's eye from the City's center through the range of suburbs towards the wealthier periphery results in a spectrum of places that roughly mirrors the arrangement of people within the social structure. And like the social structure, Detroit's sociospatial structure does not produce an even dispersion of opportunity. Rather, whatever variation there is between the suburbs stands in sharp contrast to the schism that distinguishes all of them from the distressed core. This dichotomy is more than physical or economic; it is also racial. Most of the City's residents are African Americans, while the majority of suburbs have populations that are almost all white.

The above comparison introduces differences between Detroit and its Canadian neighbor that require explanation. The importance of such a project goes beyond Detroit. The features that have come to define the Detroit region, though extreme, are far from unique to American cities, particularly northern ones. When it comes to the distribution of people and activities, and the connection of urban centers to edges, American cities like Cleveland, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Toledo, some larger than Windsor, some smaller, have more in common with Detroit than they do with its Canadian neighbor.

Because similar material forces have shaped North American cities, it is obvious that they are not sufficient to explain all of their development. The simple fact that American urban areas, in contrast to their Canadian counterparts, are more divided places where people and opportunities are inequitably distributed across segregated space, requires more comprehensive analysis. The discussion that follows shows that while economic changes account for much of why the region is what it is today, these forces have worked within the context of decisions whose origins and consequences explain much of the difference between cities like Detroit and cities like Windsor. Furthermore, many of these decisions, because they have so profoundly shaped urban space in the Detroit region, have become powerful and lasting structural factors themselves.

From a Small Outpost to a Sprawling Industrial Giant

In a formal sense, Detroit is one of America's oldest cities. European influence began 300 years ago when this spot along the Detroit River became a French fort. In the decades to come, Detroit remained a small frontier trading center as well as an important defensive post controlling southern access to the waterways connecting Lakes Erie and Huron. However, unlike its eastern counterparts, settlement in Detroit remained modest for a long time. The Detroit region began growing in earnest following the completion of New York's Erie Canal in 1825. The city became a significant urban center in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when to trade and break of bulk industries such as timber, it added industrial production.

Before the advent of the automobile, Detroit was perhaps best known as a major manufacturer of iron products, particularly stoves. As industrial production and trade brought wealth, Detroit grew into a compact but prosperous city. Detroit filled its waterfront with port facilities, tanneries, iron works and other industrial plant. Just inland, however, the city boasted a thriving commercial center complete with radial boulevards and elegant parks. The tightly packed buildings of this period, those that made Detroit a walking city similar to its eastern counterparts, are almost completely gone. However, a few elegant town houses and some battered commercial buildings remain, isolated souvenirs from the city's pre-automobile past. The wealth of the city in the decades before the turn of the century is evidenced in what remains of band of Victorian homes that surround downtown and were built from the middle to later nineteenth century. Though today these neighborhoods seem very close to the city's center, most are located within walking distance of downtown, at the time of their construction, they marked the suburban edges of the City.¹⁴⁷

As Detroit began to consolidate its position as a center of industrial production in the latter half of the 1800s, it embarked on a series of transitions that have dramatically altered the City and region. Henry Ford's perfection of mass automobile production in the early decades of the twentieth century attracted hundreds of thousands of new residents seeking work in the City's burgeoning automotive industry. Many of these new residents were escaping stagnant rural economies while others came from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the decades to follow, as farming in the South mechanized, many thousands of African Americans came too, looking for the jobs and homes that Detroit promised as they sought escape from racial persecution and the poverty of the South and its sharecropping system.

As all of these newcomers stamped Detroit indelibly as a working-class town, the city was also made a place of intense racial division and conflict. The city's race riot of 1943 and the massive inner-city conflagration of 1967 are only the most notable examples of the decades of racial animosity and violence that have defined the region. Detroit has never recovered from these wounds. Racism, and a structure of segregation and poverty continue to poison the entire area.

As the city grew with large factories producing cars and their many components, its borders exploded with the construction of new working-class housing, streets, trolleys, railroads, and other infrastructure. Upon its older radial plan, Detroit rapidly superimposed haphazard grids of streets to accommodate the hectic development. The quiet Victorian enclaves of wealth at the edges of the city were quickly engulfed by more obnoxious but productive housing and industrial plant. As a consequence, these neighborhoods, though relatively new, pitched into a rapid descent as their original residents sought refuge far from the factories, hotels, laborers' homes, shops, and crowding streets that today, in varying states of decline, cover most of Detroit.

¹⁴⁷ From conversations with Eugene Perle, Professor of Geography and Urban Planning at Wayne State University.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Detroit became a truly major city. In its downtown, investors built an impressive collection of ornate and uniquely styled pre-depression skyscrapers. Detroit's center was more than a place of major commerce though; it was also popular. Its department stores such as Kern's, Crowley's, and the mammoth J. L. Hudson's, were packed with activity throughout the day. Beyond these anchors, downtown contained scores of restaurants, clubs, beauty salons, five and dimes including Detroit's own S. S. Kresge's, small shops, and dozens of theatres grand and small. Because of the relative wealth of the region's laborers and the around the clock shift production of the industrial economy, Downtown hummed with constant activity.

Sadly, many of the grand buildings are gone or have been vacant for years or even decades. Others, like the fantastically ornate Book Tower, have grimy facades and crumbling lobbies, slowly falling apart as they are left only partially occupied by the more marginal business tenants of the area. (See figure A - 2.) The abandoned skyscrapers and grand hotels combine with the stripped but spectacular Michigan Central Railroad Station, dozens of empty factories, and rotten or burned out mansions to make Detroit a city of monumental ruins. The most magnificent ruin is the railroad station. This great but violated pile of stone has become the most famous icon of Detroit's decay. (See figure A - 3.) In its fate, the Michigan Theatre is perhaps the most appalling of the ruins. Located in the heart of downtown, this ornate monument was not fortunate enough to be left to rot in peace. Rather, it has been converted into a parking garage to serve offices in the commercial in which it is located. Even in decay, its interior, decorated by the intricate remains of a truly grand theatre, may well rank as the most ornate parking garage in the nation. (See figure A - 4.) The ironic symbolism of the theatre's destruction is clear and compounded by the fact that the building that houses the Theatre is constructed near to the site of Henry Ford's earliest shop, where as a young man he designed and built his first cars.¹⁴⁸

Structural Foundations of Urban Change

The collapse of downtown Detroit and the City's general decline are commonly associated with the radical restructuring of the region's economy throughout the century, which was driven by the automobile and automotive production. Certainly, the car has had a profound effect on Detroit. Relative to the size of the city, and certainly to the metropolitan area, Detroit's downtown is small. Its stunted growth is consistent with the fact that industrial production, which dominated the region's economy throughout the century, is an inherently low-rise activity. Furthermore, automobile transportation rather than mass transit structure regional land use. Accelerating car sales necessitated larger auto and components plants. Because these new factories required enormous amounts of space, they had to be located some distance from the city's center. Furthermore, Ford, the early leader, imposed high wages on the industry, giving many of Detroit's factory workers unprecedented purchasing power. As a consequence of the Fordist economy and the later successes of organized labor, workers

¹⁴⁸ Historic placard. See also, David Lee Poremba, *Detroit in its Historic Setting: Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), page 173.

purchased cars and moved out of the City's crowded center and into their own detached homes by the hundreds of thousands.

Prior to the Depression, Detroit's transformation into a city of low-density residential neighborhoods was well underway. To accommodate the new automobile society, investors built hundreds of curbside plazas, banks, theatres, service stations, diners, and other stores along the city's radial avenues. As these streets developed into busy automobile shopping districts, interior blocks filled with single family homes that, upon their completion, defined most of the City by the middle of the twentieth century. In the years just following World War II, the City of Detroit's massive space, a little shy of 20 miles at its greatest width, became almost completely developed in a pattern that prefigured the post-war suburban developments that transformed every major American metropolitan area. As such, Detroit is rightly thought of as a prototypical Los Angeles. It is the original suburban city.

Following the Depression and Second World War, Detroit suffered from a serious housing shortage. The City had become overcrowded with laborers, returning G. I.s, and their families all vying for a supply of housing limited by a rapidly expanding population and years of stagnant home construction caused by the Depression and World War II. As post-war construction of modest homes boomed, Detroit's neighborhoods spilled over the City's borders into rapidly developing suburbs, most of which wasted little time incorporating into independent localities. This expansion has continued throughout the post war period. In a process assisted by federal transportation and housing policies, commercial and housing developments, residents, and industry have anticipated and followed each other to the suburbs, bringing most of the new industrial plant and nearly all of the commercial and retail development of the last fifty years into the suburbs.¹⁴⁹ But development in the region's suburbs represents more than regional growth. The City of Detroit continues to suffer a four decades long crisis of unabated decline. Wealth, commercial activity, and numbers of people have not only increased in the region, they have moved, leaving the urban core impoverished and half-abandoned as personal wealth and the new economy disperse unevenly across the suburbs.

Extensive tracts of the middle and working-class neighborhoods that defined Detroit as a leafy residential city only a few decades ago have descended into something quite remarkable, suburban slums. As the city's avenues, the region's original suburban commercial arterials, stretch for mile after mile in decay and abandonment, (see figure A - 5) vast swaths of the residential neighborhoods that fill their interstices have declined and become pock-marked with vacant homes and empty lots. Photographs of these neighborhoods, semi-feral as they have become decayed and over-grown with tall grass and wild trees, could be passed off as pictures of depressed villages in rural Appalachia. Some neighborhoods have disappeared altogether. They are wild meadows now, the homes of

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion of these trends and their socioracial contexts and consequences, see Thomas Sugrue, *The Origin of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

pheasants, rabbits, and other creatures. (See figure A - 6.) The relative beauty of these green spaces is dissected by abandoned streets and tarnished by the knowledge of all that is human that has died within them. To the eyes of one from the Eastern United States, which associate urban poverty with high concentrations of the poor stacked into inner-city tenements, Detroit's suburban slums are truly shocking.

An Economic Understanding of Change in Detroit

Enormous post-war changes in the region's economic structure explain much of the area's advance into the suburbs and some of the devaluation of property witnessed in the core. These forces include the decentralization of industrial production and great increases in wealth for the area and its residents.

From a structural view, Detroit and its companion municipalities in the core suffer because they are older, because their industrial plant is insufficient to modern production, and because their housing and shopping centers are no longer desirable or convenient when compared to newer suburban models. One of the most prominent examples of industrial obsolescence is the massive Packard complex, which is empty because it is a multi-story factory built around an antiquated production process.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Packard's inability to afford the up-front costs of constructing more efficient facilities undoubtedly contributed to its demise. As the Big Three spent massive amounts of cash to move their production into new plants in the suburbs and other regions of the country in order to reap greater efficiencies of flexibility, scale, and specialization, the smaller manufacturers were trapped in the central cities. As such, these places became dumping grounds for the worst kind of industrial waste, the factories themselves. The Packard Plant is only now being razed, bit by bit, nearly a half-century after its closing. (See Figure A - 7.)

There are many such empty plants in Detroit and other sites, like the Uniroyal factory, which have been demolished but whose lots remain toxic brownfields. All of these facilities were rendered inefficient by their specialized multi-story construction, poor access to modern shipping, lack of additional land for parking and horizontal expansion, and made untouchable by site pollution. Similarly, Detroit's retail districts, even the curb-side plazas strung along the city's avenues, cannot accommodate modern automobile shopping, which is anchored by centrally managed malls and big-box plazas set amongst vast parking lots.

A market dominated by high-income labor has also rendered much of the City's housing stock inherently unmarketable. Detroit is a model for later suburban development nationally not only in that its space was arranged around the automobile, but also because a great portion of its housing was constructed in extensive tracts of similar single family homes. The economic consequence of this is that when changes in home construction styles and platting render a particular kind of house or street plan undesirable, entire sections of the City lose their market value.

¹⁵⁰ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origin of the Urban Crisis*.

Taking a driving tour of Detroit's working-class neighborhoods can be a great lesson in the growing wealth of American labor. As you drive from the urban center to the newer suburbs, you can see decade to decade improvements in the size and quality of working-class housing. The consequence is that homes that were once the great accomplishments of workers and their families now seem impossibly small. Age also brings additional costs for repairs and abatement of contaminants like lead and asbestos. For a small bungalow with little intrinsic value, the added cost of dealing with these problems can render any serious rehabilitation economically irrational. In any case, the physical decline and contamination of many of these houses handicap the financial health and physical wellbeing of the residents who must live in them. These problems compound to create extensive tracts that are in advanced stages of decline. As a consequence, individual homes in these places cannot attract buyers who might be willing to invest in them if only they were located in a more promising area. In sum, there are more aging, small, and simply built bungalows in Detroit than there are residents who are willing or able to pay for them. The majority of Detroit's labor can now afford better.¹⁵¹

As a consequence of being left with most of the region's older working-class homes, the city's housing problems are twofold. The lower income people who purchased these houses as their previous owners moved out were frequently too poor to maintain them. This problem extends to the large numbers of the city's more substantial units that also declined as they became homes to residents with modest means. Beyond this market shift is the fact that regardless of financial ability, Detroit simply does not have enough people left living in it to fill its housing stock. There is a glut of housing in the region consigned to the low-income category and most of it is in the City. One chronic problem that results is that the City cannot afford to tear down abandoned houses fast enough. Large numbers of empty or even burned out homes depress the marketability of the houses that remain, as they have become something of a hallmark of Detroit.¹⁵² (See figure A - 6.)

These economic realities explain a significant amount of the disinvestment that has devastated the urban center. Many believe that just as individuals and industry have been served by moving to the suburbs, society has profited from the growth of inherently more efficient and desirable suburbs and the abandonment of less cost effective or pleasant places in our urban centers.¹⁵³ However, though material factors are necessary to explain the crisis of Detroit's decline, they are not sufficient.

¹⁵¹ See Alvaro Cortes, Kristin Palm, Marion Shipp, Charles Smith, and Peter Zeiler, *A Comprehensive Housing Policy for the City of Detroit* (Detroit: Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Wayne State University, 1999).

¹⁵² See again Cortez et al, *A Comprehensive Housing Policy*.

¹⁵³ For a discussion along these lines that is most relevant to Detroit and Michigan, see Samuel R. Staley's "'Urban Sprawl' and the Michigan Landscape: A Market Oriented Approach," (Midland, Michigan: Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 1998).

THE DIALECTIC OF STRUCTURE AND WILL, AND THE POLICIES THAT MADE DETROIT

Federal policies and their local implementation directed and compounded the economic and demographic trends that restructured the region in the post-war period. Federal housing policies, embedded in tax codes and FHA and VA mortgage insurance practices, contributed to the effects of the region's high wage economy by encouraging more residents to move into new owner-occupied housing in the last remaining undeveloped areas at the edges of the City and into the suburbs. As housing development spilled over Detroit's borders into the inner-ring suburbs after the War, these places were filled with thousands of acres of the area's own versions of Levitt style homes. The subsidized suburbanization of housing worked simultaneously with the decentralization of industrial and commercial development, which was enabled, in part, by generous depreciation limits and other policy incentives. Taken together, the suburbanization of residents, commerce, and industry reinforced each other as they compounded incentives for businesses and residents to move out. This process continues today.¹⁵⁴

Though these policy incentives subsidized suburban development, the extent of the region's expansion would not have been possible without massive post-war Federal transportation expenditures, which enabled the construction and continuous expansion of limited access urban expressways. Detroit's wide radial avenues functioned as early suburban arterials. However, their at-grade intersections slowed traffic and so restricted the practical extent to which the suburbs could grow. The region's post-war federally funded highways were planned to replace these avenues as suburban expressways. They work as such because they intersect in Detroit and include frequent access points. In so doing, they constitute a system capable of moving a much greater amount of traffic much faster than the avenues ever could. The result is a huge low-density metropolitan area wholly dependent upon a three tiered road system.¹⁵⁵

The first tier is comprised of the local streets that flow into the second tier, the old radial avenues and newer large streets. The most noteworthy of these are the mile roads. These are large and expanding parallel roads that run east to west and are separated by exactly one mile. The "zero mile" is Campus Martius, the traditional center of downtown Detroit. The mile roads do not appear in numbered form officially until Seven Mile Road.¹⁵⁶ Eight Mile Road, the most

¹⁵⁴ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). For a more general discussion, see Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁵⁵ For a substantial review of Detroit area transportation development and the politics thereof see Robert Mowitz and Deil Wright, *Profile of a Metropolis: A Case Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1962).

¹⁵⁶ There are other mile roads in the City, such as McNichols, which is generally known as Six Mile Road. Unfortunately, they are not signed as such, which can be very confusing to an out of townner trying to navigate City streets based on directions from locals.

famous of them all, defines the northern border of the City, both officially and psychologically. The mile roads succeed one another northward into Macomb and Oakland Counties, one after the other, all the way up to 38 Mile Road. There is a symbolism about these roads that is worthy of note. Their names, reminiscent of the numbered streets that are found in most American cities, testify to the fact that Detroiters think on an automobile scale. The larger of the second-tier roads, including the mile roads, are in sections limited access highways. All of the second tier roads are used for what passes in Detroit as "local traffic" and connect with the third tier arteries, the expressways anchored by the Interstate highways.

Taken together, Federal housing policies and transportation expenditures radically restructured the region. As they subsidized suburban development, they tipped the balance against Detroit by increasing the relative advantage of moving to the suburbs versus dealing with the City's aging housing and commercial plant.¹⁵⁷ At first glance, housing and transportation policies in the region appear to be reasonable accommodations of the demands for the housing and infrastructure necessary to advance the new wealth and freedom of American society. They have indeed contributed to the region's material growth as they have increased economic opportunities for large numbers of residents.

The Biased Effects and Intentions of Policy Implementation

However, if public policy is to be understood as a rational or objective response to economic conditions or the aggregation of private decisions, and so an innocent factor inseparable from natural development, then the results of policy should be judged on those grounds. That is, policies should be rational within system expectations, at least in intent. Unfortunately, many of the effects of policy in the region run counter to reason. Furthermore, area development policy implementation appears to have been intentionally biased against the objective requirements of many of the region's people. The consequence is that as Federal policy contributed to wealth and opportunity in the suburbs, it furthered the destruction of those same goods for the people of the urban core beyond changes that the market alone would have attained. In so doing, these policies have encouraged sprawl and related system imbalances that have had terrible human costs as they have made the whole region less efficient than it could be.

Cataloguing the range of prejudiced policy decisions and their effects on the region is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The racist and anti-urban bias of post-war national urban development policy has been documented by numerous authors and shown to have had consistently negative effects in city after city.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, the biased policymaking process and its effects on Detroit are commonly understood in the region and quite thoroughly presented in a critical context by Thomas Sugrue.¹⁵⁹ However, a brief summary will show that post-

¹⁵⁷ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

¹⁵⁸ See especially Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

¹⁵⁹ See *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

war development policies are best understood as *decisions* made within a context of an anti-urban bias informed by racism and fragmented metropolitan space. This analysis connects the racial and sociopolitical structure of our metropolitan areas to national policymaking in critical ways.

- Housing Policy:

Federal transportation and housing policies did more than facilitate individual freedom in a new material context. They accelerated the destruction of urban neighborhoods, furthered central urban disinvestment, and encouraged urban flight and suburban sprawl in ways that have resulted in excess peripheral development, central urban abandonment, and related inefficiencies and inequities across segregated space.

mortgage underwriting

As Thomas Sugrue shows, the racial segregation of housing in Detroit began in earnest in the early decades of the twentieth century as massive numbers of African Americans poured into the City seeking escape from Southern poverty and racism. The initial segregation of these new residents was driven in part by the same economic factors that cause most new immigrant groups to congregate in specific places. The poverty of the African American immigrants relegated them to some of the lowest income neighborhoods in the City. The specific places to which they moved moreover were those that already had the highest numbers of black residents. These included Black Bottom and Paradise Valley most famously. Such areas promised easier entry than the poor white neighborhoods did.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, unlike every other immigrant group in Detroit's history, blacks never escaped their initial concentration in enclave neighborhoods. Rather, those places expanded and merged to form massive ghettos.¹⁶¹

In the decades following the Second World War, segregation and urban decline trapped the majority of black residents in the most disadvantaged places of the region. The inequities and division caused by these forces have been devastating for many of the region's black residents, and have resulted in system-wide dysfunction. Unfortunately, this structure of inequity, which began with economic and demographic factors as well as the summed effects of innumerable individual acts of racism, was exacerbated and extended by Federal housing

¹⁶⁰ The importance of race is illustrated particularly well here. As Sugrue notes, although Paradise Valley was hardly a well to do neighborhood, it was not completely poor. Many black merchants and other members of Detroit's small black middle-class lived there. The fact that Paradise Valley was mostly black was more important to determining that the new immigrants would live there than was its economic status. Aside from the intense segregation that resulted, the sad consequence is that the area was overcrowded and it, along with many of its more successful residents, were finally sunk with larger numbers of the poor than the neighborhood could accommodate.

¹⁶¹ This pattern was repeated in many American metropolitan areas. See Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

policies. Perhaps the most critical of these were the federal mortgage insurance programs.

Federal mortgage underwriting began in the thirties in the Home Owners' Loan Corporation's efforts to stem the crisis of foreclosures. After World War II, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans' Administration (VA) underwriting programs replaced the HOLC. These programs enabled the unprecedented extension of home ownership to a majority of American households in the decades following the War and so contributed to the wealth and quality of life of great numbers of citizens. Unfortunately, in the critical years following the Second World War, these same programs also severely limited the opportunities of a significant minority of Americans by race and place, as they were anti-urban and racist in intent and effect.

FHA practices excluded African Americans from the best housing opportunities of the post-war era, as they effectively required new suburban developments to be for whites only. HOLC began the process by building racial and ethnic demographics into its system of neighborhood rating with a scale that defined neighborhoods by every major ethnic and racial group. A neighborhood's rating increased as its concentration of residents of English and Dutch descent did. Lending in a neighborhood with significant numbers of residents who did not fit these categories, especially blacks, was considered more risky.¹⁶²

The FHA later implemented these basic standards in its underwriting practices. Banks followed, opting to use FHA maps as an off the shelf method of determining risk for non-federally insured lending. As a consequence, the FHA, banks, and the real estate and housing development industries worked together to prohibit black entry into newly developing areas at or beyond the City's boundaries. As they were excluded from suburban home ownership and all of the advantages that went with it, blacks were relegated to places deprived of affordable credit for home purchase and improvement.¹⁶³

FHA and VA underwriting practices intensified the concentration of blacks in the inner city in two ways that radically distorted the regional housing market. First, these policies encouraged large numbers of white households to leave the City for new homes in the suburbs, thus concentrating the black presence in the City. At the same time they excluded black entry into what might have otherwise become integrated suburbs. As they did so, these programs actively disadvantaged blacks and other urban residents by accelerating central urban disinvestment.¹⁶⁴

FHA and VA underwriters compounded the damage that they did through racist practices with more directly anti-urban actions. Underwriters gave their highest ratings to new single-family homes built in neighborhoods filled with nothing

¹⁶² See especially Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

¹⁶³ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* and, more generally, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid*.

¹⁶⁴ See again Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

but the same. As such, developer built housing in the suburbs set the standard. The more intrinsically urban a house and its neighborhood setting was, the less likely was a prospective homeowner to get a federally guaranteed mortgage for it. These policies precluded huge portions of Detroit from the highest rating categories and so greatly reduced the numbers of residents who could afford to buy them. Any intrinsic advantages that newer homes in the suburbs had over their Detroit counterparts were therefore compounded by FHA and VA policies that artificially boosted demand for them as they devalued older homes, homes in multiple unit dwellings, or homes in mixed-use neighborhoods. FHA and VA practices did not only devalue the less desirable housing in working-class or poor neighborhoods, they also devalued much of Detroit's substantially constructed middle-class housing. As such, they depressed the City's housing market generally.¹⁶⁵

In conclusion, the bifurcated and inequitable housing market that FHA and VA practices initiated increased both positive and negative incentives for white residents with means to move out of the urban center. As such, in a complex of compounding effects, the FHA and VA, along with their partners in the banking and real estate industry, fulfilled their own prophecies. They helped to create a central city housing market so weak that lending in much of it in fact became a very bad risk.

Even assuming good intentions, lenders and homeowners insurance companies would be justifiably nervous about doing business in Detroit today. Indeed, as they realized that their houses had no market value, thousands of Detroiters simply walked away from their homes and any mortgages or taxes that they might have owed. As a consequence, the City of Detroit has taken possession of a huge percentage of the property within it. Unfortunately, because owners simply disappeared, the economic and legal liabilities that the City has incurred by owning so many abandoned homes and so much land are compounded by title clearance problems. As such, even when properties become marketable again, the City usually has a difficult time transferring them back into private ownership.¹⁶⁶

As FHA and VA policies responded to the very real need and equally understandable desire for new housing in the post-war era, they contributed to the opportunities of millions of households and fuelled a decades-long construction boom in the suburbs. It can be argued that the sum effects of these policies have been beneficial for the economy as a whole and in so far as that is true, that they were essentially rational. However, they have also dichotomized our urban areas as they have produced excess growth in the periphery and accelerated disinvestment in the core. This has restructured the region towards a system where sprawl and disinvestment feed on each other in a destructive cycle that has a life of its own, continually working to polarize area development towards further inequity and inefficiency. The result in Detroit is a badly distorted regional housing market that is neither rational nor healthy.

¹⁶⁵ See again Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

¹⁶⁶ See Cortes et al, *A Comprehensive Housing Policy for the City of Detroit*.

Perhaps policymakers, with the best of intentions, simply made mistakes. This is probably part of the truth. However, insofar as these policies were implemented with biases that go beyond legitimate estimations of the housing market, their motivation and intent were not innocent. Although it is almost certainly true that many FHA and VA underwriters, bank officers, and real estate agents were themselves anti-urban or racist, we can never know the extent of their bias. FHA defenders may argue that the agency's practices were at worst no more than responses intended to preserve the security of underwritten mortgages from the devaluation that a racist market would ensure if integration were allowed. In other words, FHA and VA underwriters were in the business of securing federal housing investments and not in the business of social engineering. Regardless of how we interpret their intent, we can certainly say that they responded to a racist housing market by compounding segregation rather than by challenging or at least ignoring it. In so doing, they intensified the racial imbalance latent in the market.

By working for racist whites instead of the explicit principles of American democracy within the letter of enabling legislation, underwriters effected and exacerbated racism in Detroit's housing market and so in its geopolitical structure more generally. As they helped to bifurcate the region, and every other major metropolitan area, they exacerbated the division of Americans by space, race, interests, and opportunities. In so doing, they committed enormous harm to our democratic system and its promise of a decision making process that enables each group to win at least some of the time. Perhaps in so doing, they not only violated pluralist principles, but also showed pluralism's inadequacy as a theory of American politics.¹⁶⁷

public housing

Unfortunately, mortgage-underwriting programs were not the only Federal policies that biased the housing market. Since shortly after its inception during Roosevelt's administration, Federal public housing, originally intended to provide sanitary homes for a range of residents with modest means, was limited by hostile legislation and incompetent administration in Washington and, in many cases, wholly racist and corrupt local implementation. The post-war disaster that public housing became in many cities is well documented, but a few points are worthy of mention here.

On the national level, public housing was handicapped by Court actions that effectively required that the units to be owned and administered by local housing authorities and not the Federal government. As such, participation in public housing became voluntary. If a municipality did not want to have public housing, it simply did not establish the requisite authority. As a consequence, one of the most effective ways for a locality to exclude the poor has been to do nothing. On the other hand, central cities had little choice. With large numbers of poor residents, acres of slums, and in need of Federal cash, central cities had

¹⁶⁷ See Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid*.

no practical option but to establish housing authorities. As such, central cities became the official homes of this targeted but hardly universal benefit. Following the Second World War, Congress further handicapped public housing by effectively reserving it for the poor exclusively.

Despite these handicaps, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's legendary incompetence in its oversight of local housing authorities, it took cities themselves to make public housing a truly vicious engine of segregation and poverty concentration. Thomas Sugrue shows that contrary to the efforts of some progressively minded Detroiters, the City segregated public housing and concentrated much of it into four high-rise projects. These tower-in-the-park quads were sited in neighborhoods that were already facing serious challenges. As such, the projects intensely concentrated and isolated poverty within as they accelerated the demise of the neighborhoods around them.¹⁶⁸

The segregation and concentration of public housing can be interpreted as responses to at least two related factors. The structure and practice of public housing forced Detroit to accommodate almost all of the region's public housing tenants. Regardless of how widely the City distributed public housing, it would still all be located within Detroit. Dispersal would therefore impact a disproportionate number of City neighborhoods. This was not acceptable to the majority of Detroit's residents, who vigorously opposed the integration of the poor and especially the poor blacks that would result. The opposition to a more equitable distribution of public housing was effective because just as the public housing burden was limited mostly to Detroit, so was the political responsibility for it. City officials had to take all of the heat all of the time. On the other hand, if the Federal Government had maintained its responsibility for siting, it might have been able to use its more distant authority to distribute public housing more equitably.

Metropolitan development might have been more balanced as well. With equitable siting, one of the most important but artificial advantages enjoyed by the suburbs would have been compromised, their exclusivity. As such, their ability to attract residents from the core beyond the region's legitimate need for more housing would have been lessened. The equally beneficial flip side of this would have been more attractive cities. In combination, these effects may have slowed the sprawl and central urban abandonment that have so badly distorted the region. Unfortunately, even given the decision to concentrate public housing, its complete disaster was not preordained. Vigorous and responsive management of the projects, along with the provision of appropriate services, could have prevented them from becoming the hellholes that they did. With assistance and guidance from HUD, the City has taken steps more recently to remove its public housing from HUD's list of most troubled authorities.

¹⁶⁸ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Recently, Detroit's public housing authority has worked hard to demolish or rehabilitate its old high-rise apartment projects and deconcentrate the city's public housing population.

In its local implementation, which begins with the choice of whether to have it in the first place, public housing is perhaps the clearest example of how national housing policies have intensified the structure of segregation and inequity in metropolitan space by giving local racism effect. Furthermore, the failure of the Federal Government to respond aggressively to these destructive dynamics until late in the game may be understood as a response to urban areas whose inequitable and racially divided structures inform national politics.

- Transportation Policy:

Post-war transportation policies are frequently seen as responses to the growing needs of a mobile society. As such, like federal housing policy, they may be interpreted as inseparable from structural and market forces. As discussed above, federal highway expenditures changed the region as new expressways enabled the dramatic post-war expansion of Detroit. Although growth was essential to the economy and provided many residents with new opportunities, excessive expansion has had negative consequences. As with housing policy, federal transportation initiatives accelerated sprawl and central urban decline beyond levels predicted by an efficient metropolitan system.

The new highways have also changed the region's society in troubling ways. For instance, the separation of people across so much space can diminish the connections that residents feel towards each other. These feelings are essential for the synoptic views necessary to confront regional problems as such. Unfortunately, people have been more than passively affected by low-density development. Transportation policies have actively divided residents by race and class across inequitable space. As a consequence, people are not only separated from each other by place; their interests are defined in opposition across space.

restructuring beyond reason

Detroit's highway system has grown throughout the post-war period. As discussed above, these roads enabled the growth of the region into a low-density automobile dependent system. But the highways have not just facilitated expansion; to a significant extent they have also caused it. This is suggested by the fact that peripheral development continues to accelerate along these routes even as the region's population is now growing only slowly. As a consequence, the post-war suburban expansion that began by addressing the dual problems of population growth and a shortage of adequate housing and other plant in the City, continues at a rate that significantly exceeds present rates of population and economic growth.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) estimates that between the years 1990 and 2020, the Detroit metropolitan area will consume 27,000 acres of land as a consequence of the construction of new housing in the suburbs to replace abandoned housing in the region's urban core. See Jim Rogers, Edward Limoges, Jeffery Jones, Jeff Nutting, and Gerald Rowe, *The Past and Future Growth of Southeast Michigan: Population, Households, Jobs, and Land use, 1965-2025* (Detroit: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, 1998).

This is happening partly because new highway construction provides residents and developers with incentives to move from their present locations into new areas. The expressways represent an immediate subsidy since the costs of new highways and related development infrastructure are paid for by the system as a whole. Moreover, newly developing areas promise escape from any problems that might be associated with extant areas. As a consequence, land and infrastructure in the region are being transformed into disposable commodities. New infrastructure at the periphery frequently makes it seem cheaper or easier for individuals and businesses to leave older problems behind. Unfortunately, these problems are not only material in nature, they are also social.

The effect is a dynamic *process* of system imbalance. As residents and developers build redundant infrastructure at the region's edge, waves of devaluation reverberate back to the core, where they end with abandonment. This cycle of surplus development and devaluation further intensifies incentives to leave older areas for new ones on the periphery. As developers and residents with means push to be where the getting is good, the distribution of wealth and opportunity across space only grows more unbalanced. In the end, places and infrastructure are not the only disposable commodities left behind by this system, the people who are unable to ride the wave are too.

This system distortion is compounded by numerous other costs including the growing distances that residents and others must travel to conduct their business and personal affairs. To the economic, environmental, and resource inefficiencies that result must be added enormous and growing amounts of time spent traveling that could be better utilized doing more productive things or simply attending to essentially personal needs for leisure, reflection, and family life.

As with federal housing policies, transportation planning in the region could be viewed as an innocent response to changing economic conditions and public demands for more opportunities and greater choice.¹⁷⁰ Certainly, to some extent it has been a responsive enterprise. Indeed, residents, businesses, and political leaders in the suburbs continue to demand the extension of the region's primary and secondary expressways as they find the original radial highways insufficient to commuting between the suburbs. However, as the region becomes covered with highways, the notion that individual market decisions necessarily aggregate into system-wide efficiencies becomes more questionable.

Regional highway planning has done more than enable residents and businesses to leave Detroit's presumably less efficient space and infrastructure behind. By cutting wide gashes through the City, the new expressways aggressively isolated, dissected, and decimated neighborhood after neighborhood. To the cost of the destruction of these communities must be added the lasting spatial fragmentation of the City.

¹⁷⁰ See Robert Mowitz and Deil Wright, *Profile of a Metropolis* for a review of the history of this policy discourse.

Part of the problem rests with the style in which the expressways were constructed. In an effort to reduce the safety, noise, and visual impact of the highways on the City, planners decided to place them in deep trenches. Given the decision to run so many expressways through the city, this in itself may have been a good choice.¹⁷¹ However, sloping banks of earth rather than perpendicular cement or steel retaining walls contain most of the trenches. As a consequence, their added width consumes an enormous amount of space. Parallel surface roads and frequent access ramps increased their consumption of land further. The one great advantage of their earthen banks is that the expressways, from the view of the driver, are really quite pretty. Their landscaped slopes make them more like parkways than interstate highways and shield those driving on them from views of the decimated urban spaces that surround them. Indeed, you can drive through the whole City on this system without seeing much of it at all.

Some might argue that retrofitting the City with expressways was not really a choice, but necessary to its continued competitiveness. However, even if we accept this, there is still the problem of routing. Highways were slammed through the poorest and blackest sections of the City in a highly predictable fashion. The destabilization or elimination of neighborhoods that resulted caused tens of thousands of personal tragedies as residents were forced from their homes and communities. In the most notorious example, the City's most famous black neighborhood, the densely populated Paradise Valley area, was essentially eliminated by the construction of Interstate 75 and related redevelopment. In this instance at least, urban renewal was indeed "Negro removal." (See Figure A - 12.) However, there were really no places for the dislocated residents to remove to except other low-income neighborhoods in the City. The cycles of dislocation that resulted destabilized the City's black communities as they accelerated white flight and property devaluation across Detroit.

In the end, the expressways have provided no discernable benefit for most of the City with the possible exception of downtown, where what limited commercial development that has occurred since the highway system was completed might not have been viable otherwise. Even so, the decline of most of downtown has gone unabated through the post-war period. (See Figure A - 1.)

Most of these arterial highways could have been routed around the densely populated core neighborhoods that they destroyed. Indeed, some could have avoided the City altogether and still accomplished their main mission as regional and national highways. One of the most obvious differences between Windsor

¹⁷¹ Another option that was seriously considered, and nearly approved, was the elevation of the highways on huge slanting pylons above the City's streets. The visual effect, which some policymakers found exciting, would have been a futuristic aesthetic similar to something one would see in a Jetsons cartoon. (See Robert Mowitz and Deil Wright, Profile of a Metropolis.) However, although these highways would have accomplished the goal of making Detroit famous after a fashion, it is doubtful that this arrangement would have been any less disruptive to the City and its neighborhoods. Given that so many hazardous materials are transported on Detroit's expressways in trucks that occasionally crash, it also would have been extremely dangerous.

and Detroit is that although King's Highway 401 and other large roads function as suburban expressways in Windsor, they do not dissect the City's core. Rather, surface boulevards bring traffic gradually but efficiently into highway access points beyond downtown. In the Detroit region, however, things are different. In the suburbs, the expressways seem to have been planned with some respect for suburban municipal boundaries or follow other logical paths. In the City, however, they cut great gashes through neighborhood street grids. In the process, they radically dissect Detroit space.

The fact that the places that make up Windsor are much more connected to each other must be more than coincidentally associated with the different planning philosophy that predominated in that City. One could counter here that the essential difference between Detroit and Windsor is one of size. Detroit's larger population and economy required larger roads. However, in the United States, cities upon cities, regardless of size, were slashed with huge limited access highways, suggesting not only the dominance of a different transportation planning philosophy here, but also a lower value placed on cities and the people who lived in them by policymakers generally.¹⁷²

roads not taken

Decisions not made are frequently more telling than those made. Regional and state transportation planners and policymakers had the option of not dissecting the City in such a destructive way. To the list of unnecessary negative social and economic impacts that the highways had on the City must be added the differential citizenship that these decisions imply. Race, place, and class informed who would be harmed and who would be helped by this new system. As the system subsidized the movement of white residents and businesses to the suburbs, it helped to trap and isolate most of the region's poor minority residents with distance and disadvantage. Though these second-class citizens were in the weakest position to benefit from the new system, they were forced to pay the highest price for it by far. Beyond the material and social costs suffered for these highways by so many of the City's residents are the lasting legacies of distrust and resentment.

regional transit

Equitable highway planning was not the only transportation policy road not taken in Detroit. Like public housing, perhaps the more telling failure of transportation policy is that over which local decision-makers had the most control, public transit. As the last of Detroit's trolley lines were ripped out in the 1950s, the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) replaced them with a City bus system that was later followed by a second system for the northern suburbs of Macomb and Oakland Counties called SMART. SMART was to have

¹⁷² For an excellent review of the history of these actions in the New York City area, see Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

been merged with the City's system to create a regional transit authority. Several crucial failures have prevented that from happening.

However, limited efforts have been taken to provide regional transit. DDOT serves some of the suburbs in Wayne County, but its routes do not extend into Oakland and Macomb Counties. Meanwhile, a few SMART lines extend into the City. Unfortunately, these efforts have not produced a system capable of moving people efficiently or equitably throughout the region. Despite the extension of SMART lines into the City, access from Detroit to the northern suburbs is limited by the weakness of SMART, which is hampered by the infrequency of its busses and a limited number of routes. More importantly, due to poor coordination between the two systems, making connections between DDOT and SMART routes is almost always difficult and frequently impossible. This reinforces the divisions between Detroit and its suburbs where they are strongest; those defined by Eight Mile Road.

The result of the failure to build a coordinated transit system is that the quality of public transportation in the region is low. It is frequently difficult or impossible to go from one place to another without a car. This severely disadvantages Detroiters who do not have access to automobiles, generally the same people who were left behind by the housing and transportation policies reviewed above.¹⁷³ But as this system hurts individuals, it affects Detroit as a whole as restricted opportunity aggregates to weaken the City's tax and consumer bases. Apparently, it is not enough that most of the opportunities have moved to the suburbs. The last remaining option for lower income city residents to access these opportunities, and so partially transcend their spatial segregation, was precluded as well.

Like the biases discussed above, this failure not only hurts the residents of the City, it handicaps the whole area as it distorts regional markets by limiting access from both sides of the city-suburb divide to employment and employees, stores and customers, et cetera. Indeed, the frequent and growing complaint of businesses in the region's suburbs is that they cannot find employees to fill entry level positions. The shortage of retail workers is so bad that slick advertisements for retail service jobs extolling their superior pay, benefits, and working conditions are piped through the music systems in area malls. Detroiters might line up for these jobs if they could but reach them. Instead, City residents who do not have cars frequently find that competing for lower paying jobs in Detroit makes more sense than applying for opportunities in the suburbs when the added time and expense of getting to those jobs are taken into consideration.¹⁷⁴

Beyond such market imbalances, there is no region-wide entity responsible for regulating taxicab and private commuter transportation services. Nor is there any regional provision of public ambulatory services for the elderly and handicapped. Finally, the area cannot take advantage of coordinated mass

¹⁷³ See Robyn Meredith, "Jobs Out of Reach for Detroiters Without Wheels -- Poor Bus System Creates Disparity" *The New York Times* (Wednesday, May 27, 1998, Page one of the Nation section).

¹⁷⁴ See again, Robyn Meredith, "Jobs Out of Reach for Detroiters Without Wheels."

transit as the essential planning and development tool that it is in better-managed areas.

Other opportunities have been lost as well, including a regional light rail system. Federal funds for such a system were restricted by the Ford administration when area policymakers failed to agree on a coordinated system plan. As a result, the system was reduced to the People Mover, perhaps the most unique and useless light rail system in the nation. The People Mover is an elevated line that runs two automated trains around a small loop through downtown. It has been likened to an amusement park ride. It is, in effect, a lunchtime express that moves people from office towers to, most commonly, Greek Town. It also helps to bring people from parking lots to major entertainment events. To its credit, the People Mover provides impressive views of downtown and is fun to ride. However, it is not the engine of development and opportunity that a larger system could have been.

The failure to coordinate a transit system is rooted in the same division of the region's polity by race, class, and space that have frustrated most efforts to resolve regional problems. It is, in essence, a complex political failure with roots in suburban racism and perceived interest advantages across space, as well as a mentality of separatism in Detroit based on racial differences and other perceived interests in opposition. The political, racial, and material differences, real and perceived, that have frustrated transit policy are fed by that failure.¹⁷⁵ In other words, the "us versus them" mentality that prevents regional transit is compounded by the lack of regional transit. In the end, as individuals are represented and benefited by the system differentially, the efficiency, productivity, and livability of the entire metropolitan region suffer.

In conclusion, the region has become what it is today because it has undergone massive economic changes whose effects have been made more particular by specific and biased policy choices. Of the two forces, economic changes and policy implementation, the latter accounts for the most disturbing differences between Detroit and Windsor. Policy implementation in the region has given destructive effect to economic changes by holding back certain people in declining places while advancing others to new opportunities at the periphery. The division of the region's people by race, class, and opportunities reinforces differences between the City and its suburbs, blacks and whites, as it makes the region less efficient and more dysfunctional and reduces its ability to confront regional problems today and in the future.

FRAGMENTED SPACE: A STRUCTURE OF SPRAWL AND INEQUITY

- place: the missing link

Post-war economic changes and policy incentives restructured the region. However these forces do not explain the extent of the area's transformation. Most importantly, they fail to explain the radical segregation of residents by race and class and the homogenization of space that define the area today. Simply put, though these forces have hurt older areas and subsidized newer ones, it seems that their primary effects were to distribute advantage among individuals and groups by specific characteristics, including race. However, with the exception of earlier housing policies, these forces were not explicitly segregationist and so should not have resulted in the sharp separation of people and activities that we see today. This is most true with regard to the segregation of African Americans. Therefore, beyond federal policies and market forces, the places that make up the region must be among the forces shaping the region.

The power of place over the region's political society is suggested in the failure to build a regional transit service and the inequitable distribution of public housing. When Federal policies were funneled through localities, the effects were segregationist. However, as important as the structuring of policy is, the effects of place go beyond it. Every critical aspect of the metropolitan area is structured by the places that make it up. Places shape and transform the region by continually moving and sorting people and activities by a number of critical factors. As a consequence, people and activities are segregated into increasingly defined places. The greater consequence is that the fortunes of residents and so their interests are determined by the places that they live in at least as much as they are by other factors more normally associated with individual interests. The process is dynamic and continues to reshape the region. Places and the people that live in them are ever more defined in opposition to each other as residents are divided into groups of winners, losers, and those who are losing. As this happens, the region expands and divides in ways that are different from more unified and integrated areas such as Windsor.

- the fragmentation of local governance: a structure of sprawl and inequity

Places shape the region in large part because they are political units with land use powers. As places use these powers to attract certain kinds of development and restrict the variety of people who locate within them, other factors work through places to reinforce segregation and accelerate the bifurcation of the region through the combined forces of sprawl and disinvestment. Unfortunately, sprawl and segregation only reinforce the distinctions between localities that make places important to begin with. As such, Detroit's local government structure can be thought of as a dynamic system of sprawl and inequity.

the multiplication of municipalities

The fragmentation of local government is extreme and growing. As population spreads, the number of localities that comprise the area increases. For the most part, cities are not annexing neighboring development. Rather, townships are incorporating as development reaches them. With each decade, the area is divided into more localities.

This was not always the case. Prior to the 1920s, Detroit was comprehensive of most of the metropolitan area. Detroit's boundaries grew as development spread from the center. However, later in the twentieth century the City was restricted by the incorporation of places around it into independent municipalities. Detroit has not annexed any land since 1926 when it added a large portion of Redford Township to its western fringe. As such, David Rusk defines Detroit as one of the most inelastic cities in the United States. Since Detroit stopped growing, expansion beyond its borders continued at a rapid pace. The resulting sprawl now surrounds Oakland and Macomb's traditional urban centers, Pontiac and Mount Clemens, and is spilling across the tri-county boundaries to reach Flint. If this expansion continues, unbroken suburban development will soon extend to Ypsalante, Monroe, Port Huron, and perhaps even Toledo, creating a mini megalopolis in Southeast Michigan.

The expansion of the region increases the numbers of localities within it and so the structure of local governance becomes ever more fragmented. The developed region presently includes large portions of Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland Counties and scores of municipalities and county subdivisions. Though these counties contain a total 41 cities and townships, as of 1990 the 60 of these with 1990 populations of over 10,000 clustered around Detroit to constitute the most developed part of the area. With a total 1990 population of 3,408,258, these places contained about 87 % of the tri-county region's 3,912,679 persons. Detroit is by far the largest of these. At nearly 20 miles in width, it is estimated to have about one million residents. But that figure is down from 1,027,974 in 1990 and its 1950 peak of 1,849,568 persons. Warren, a working-class suburb separated from Detroit by Eight Mile Road, has the second largest population, about 144,864 persons in 1990. There are other large suburbs including Dearborn, Livonia, and Sterling Heights with populations ranging from about 89,000 to 117,000 persons. However, more than half of the region's suburbs had populations of less than 40,000 in 1990. Together, these places cover a huge area. The distance from the southeastern to northwestern corners of the developed region is roughly 40 miles.

In the face of the increasing fragmentation, there is no entity responsible for regional issues with the minor exception of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), which has limited transportation planning authority. This is remarkable. There is this large and growing thing called the Detroit metropolitan area and yet, there is no mechanism by which to identify, articulate, and effectively pursue its interests. Managing growth would seem to be among these interests. While the lack of regional authority represents a choice of sorts,

this condition handicaps the metropolitan system and restricts choices in many ways.

- the fragmentation of interests

The restriction of Detroit's borders and the division of the region into scores of localities are not natural but rather the results of decisions informed by the values of separation and exclusion. The processes began at the edges of City. As Detroit grew, many of its neighborhoods failed to maintain the qualities that their residents found attractive. In response, developing areas just outside of the City lines began to incorporate. In declaring their independence, residents sought to preserve their neighborhoods through local control over land use, services, and taxation. Many of the early suburbs were really neighborhoods with governments. Their small sizes attest to this. Later, in a trend that continues today, whole townships incorporated as cities or charter townships as they began to develop.¹⁷⁶ The newer suburbs have performed different functions than the older ones. Early suburbs incorporated to *preserve interests* already in place. The later incorporation of whole townships *defined interests* across large areas before they became filled with development.

prefiguring suburban space

The predetermination of suburban space can be seen in the region's rapidly growing suburbs. One good example is Canton, which is located on the western edge of Wayne County. Incorporated as one of Michigan's first Charter Townships in 1961 when it was still mostly rural, Canton has since been consuming its land with successive tracts of similar housing. The process will be completed soon when Canton runs out of land. When it does, the township will be a nearly unbroken sea of middle-class housing. The few exceptions to this will include some big box retail along Canton's largest roads.

The monotony of Canton's development suggests that it is the result of planning. However, this is not entirely true. Certainly, zoning ordinances limit that which is built in Canton. However, the township's plan of 1976, written shortly after it began its first phase of rapid development, called for a healthy mix of land uses. Had Canton been able to follow this plan, it could now look forward to a more sustainable mix of activities as well as a more lucrative tax base. Unfortunately, Canton appears to be falling short of its goals.

¹⁷⁶ The Charter Township Act, P.A. 359 of 1947, provides additional governmental authority for townships. This act, as amended, permits a township with a population of 2,000 or more to incorporate as a charter township with additional authority to perform desired governmental functions. The charter of such a township is contained within the statute, which is fairly detailed and comprehensive. It is uniform for all charter townships and cannot be altered by local election or otherwise. The statute ... authorizes the appointment of a township superintendent with specified optional powers and, if charter township incorporation is voted by the electorate, a general tax of up to 5 mills for municipal purposes. *A qualifying charter township is also made immune, to a substantial degree, from annexation by a city.* Today there are 127 Charter Townships in Michigan." From the Michigan Township Association's web-site at <http://www.mta-townships.org/> -- emphasis mine.

Canton Land Use Trends

	Agriculture / Vacant	Industrial	Commercial	Residential
1976 Plan Goals	10,220 acres 44% of total	2,470 acres 10.6% of total	1,225 acres 5.3% of total	9,300 acres 40.1% of total
1990 Reality	10,158 acres	832 acres	785 acres	7,851 acres
1994 Reality	8,362 acres 38% of total	886 acres 4% of total	906 acres 4% of total	8,958 acres 43.5% of total
1990-1994 % Change	18% decrease	8% increase	15% increase	18% increase

Note: 1976 data are from "Future Land Use Plan" Charter Township of Canton, produced by IMPACT: Improved Planning Action and adopted by the Canton Township Planning Commission in 1976. 1990 and 1994 data are from "The Canton Township Comprehensive Plan," produced by the Canton Department of Planning and Development in 1996.

The above table includes a sample of Canton's land use goals as they were established in 1976. Also shown in the table are actual land use statistics for these categories for 1990 and 1994. The table shows that by 1994, Canton roughly achieved its final goals for these primary land use categories. However, it is equally evident from these data that the township will not be able to sustain this balance of land use. By 1994, the percentage of land that was vacant or left for agricultural uses had already declined to 38% of the township's total acreage. This figure is significantly less than the Township's ultimate goal of preserving 44% of its land for this category. Furthermore, it only took four years, from 1990 to 1994, for the amount of vacant and agricultural land in Canton to drop by 18%.

On the other hand, by 1994 Canton had already surpassed its ultimate goal of having 40.1% of its land developed for residential use. By that year, 43.5% of its land had already been developed as residential space. Furthermore, 1994's 9,499 acres of residential development represented an 18% increase over the 1990 figure. The overwhelming majority of that acreage, 5109 acres, was developed as subdivisions. This represented a total of 23.5% of all of Canton's land in that year. Residential subdivisions were also consuming Canton's land faster than any other residential land use category. They took 25% more land in Canton in 1994 than they did in 1990. Individually constructed single-family homes, which occupied 3,499 acres, or 16% of Canton's land in 1994, increased their take by 16% from 1990. In comparison, land occupied by multiple family developments constituted only 541 acres, or 2.5% of all of Canton's land in 1994. Land devoted to this use increased by 10% from 1990-1994.

These trends indicate that Canton's land is being rapidly covered by residential subdivisions and, to a lesser degree, individually constructed single family homes. Some commercial/retail development is also appearing in Canton to serve all of its new residents. However, land devoted to agricultural purposes or left vacant is rapidly disappearing. If these trends continue, and they are continuing, Canton will soon be almost completely covered by single family homes, most of which will be located in developer built subdivisions.

Maps in figures A - 8 through A - 10 illustrate Canton's transformation from a rural township in the 1960s to a predominantly suburban residential place by 1994. See figure A - 11 for a recent aerial photograph of some of Canton's housing developments.

how suburbs prefigure development: the exercise of will in structure

Although localities like Canton may not be able to plan every aspect of their growth, they structure development nevertheless. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that development is prefigured by the existence of these places. Certainly there seems to be some amount of determinism about Canton's transformation into a middle-class residential suburb. Even though a suburb may not be able to plan all that happens within it, development begins with the locality and the fact that it must function within the context of a region filled with others.

Localities actively and passively structure land use. The effects, taken together, determine what people and activities will locate within places and how people and activities will be arranged across the metropolitan area. First, a locality's position within its region determines the best development that it can attract at any given time. Whether the place indeed gets that quality of development is determined by decisions made within the limits of the place's position in the region. The same principle of choice within the realm of the possible can be applied to efforts of exclusion.¹⁷⁷

Second, suburban localities structure the region with more homogenous development than would occur in less fragmented areas because individuals decide where to locate based on the characteristics that are associated with specific municipalities. That is, individual choices are aggregated by localities more than they are by something less well defined such as an area or neighborhood.

Different municipalities have different levels of control over the qualities that they are associated with and so have different levels of control over what residents and activities they will attract. Furthermore, their ability to attract specific kinds of residents and activities affects how much control they will have in the future. However, even in instances where a municipality has essentially no control over its image, it will have an image nevertheless and so locational decisions regarding it will still be structured by understandings of the locality vis-à-vis the other places that make up the region. The aggregation of so many choices can either reinforce a suburb's planning process or sink it.¹⁷⁸

In short, municipalities sort people and activities because they seek to attract and restrict development *and* because they aggregate and organize individual decisions *as a passive function of their very existence*. Taken together, the suburbs sort people and development in a process not unlike fractional distillation, where

¹⁷⁷ See Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis: Political Fragmentation and Metropolitan Segregation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

¹⁷⁸ See Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis*.

grades of suburbs separate out people and activities by their economic clout and other relevant characteristics. The only difference is that unlike the different components of crude oil, residents and developers are active participants in this process. The consequence is a much more intense interest differentiation across metropolitan space than would occur in the absence of fragmented local governance. Furthermore, because municipalities are actors that can continually represent and reinforce the parochial interests that develop within them, they never stop sorting people and activities.¹⁷⁹

the suburbs and the neighborhoods

Like Canton, most of the suburbs have shaped interests within them. Although many of the older suburbs have declined in recent decades, most restricted unwanted residents and development more successfully than the City's neighborhoods did. Furthermore, the newer suburbs of the region have shaped their growth by attracting particular kinds of investment and residents while restricting others. For many people who left Detroit for the suburbs in the post-war era, part of what made the suburbs attractive was their exclusivity. Residents sought not only new housing and opportunities but also the stability that these places promised. In other words, they were buying new opportunities for themselves and the restriction of those opportunities for others.¹⁸⁰

Residents continue to seek exclusivity and escape from the people and activities that they do not like. People move to Canton for more than a new house or better schools. They also know that the schools are not likely to change soon and that everything that will be built around their new house will be just like that which has already been constructed. They are buying a guarantee that is expressed in zoning ordinances and reinforced by a market that is sure to fill Canton with more people looking for the same thing. The summed effects of such decisions on the structure of interests in the Detroit region can be seen in a comparison of Detroit's neighborhoods and the suburban system that has replaced them.

Detroit was and is a city of neighborhoods. They all have names: Rosedale, Brightmore, Indian Village, Cork Town, Woodbridge, Mexican Town, Pole Town, et cetera. Many of these places were promoted by developers and had distinct identities. However, most of these neighborhoods are relatively small, broken up by different land uses, and distributed like ingredients in a badly tossed salad. That is, some regions were built up with higher numbers of working-class neighborhoods, such as the Eastside, while others came to have more middle-class areas, such as the Westside. But few places in the City are extensive enough to preclude a short distance from any point within them to a different kind of neighborhood. Although many of the neighborhoods are in decline and some have vanished, Detroit's legacy as a city of neighborhoods

¹⁷⁹ See Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis* especially.

¹⁸⁰ See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)..

continues. The City still has the most diverse mix of residential areas and land uses in the region.

At first glance, as a collection of distinct places the suburbs appear to distribute people and activities in a way that the City and its neighborhoods once did. Indeed, as noted above many of the suburbs began as extensions of City neighborhoods and so the earlier differentiation of the City's regions is reflected in radial projections through the suburbs.¹⁸¹ However, the suburbs define much larger places. Furthermore, development within these places is more homogenous. While a suburb may contain a significant amount of retail or commercial development as well as housing, these activities are segregated from each other. Canton is a good example. While developer built housing continues unbroken for miles, Ford Road contains nothing but retail or access points to residential cul-de-sacs. It does not contain housing per se. Furthermore, even though most of Canton's residential developments are similar; they are intensely separated from each other.

Canton's residential space, like that in most of the region's township cities, is highly privatized. Canton is not a neighborhood or even really a collection of neighborhoods understood in the traditional sense, but rather a great aggregation of similar housing developments. The same can be said of most of the newer suburbs. However, the suburbs, like the City's neighborhoods, are distinct from each other. Furthermore, similar kinds of suburban municipalities tend to be clustered near to each other creating massive collections of like environments.

The effective difference between the City's neighborhoods in the past and the suburbs today is therefore a new relationship between interests and space. In the past, a variety of factors including race, ethnicity, religion, education, and wealth determined where people stood in the social structure and as a consequence, in what kinds of neighborhoods they lived. Today, because place is so rigidly structured, people's socioeconomic standing is increasingly determined by where they live at least as much as by the other things that make them who they are.

fragmentation and dichotomization

Beyond the growing division of interests between suburbs, fragmentation helps to explain the deeper dichotomization of the region into places that are gaining from sprawling development and those that are losing the battle against central urban disinvestment. This is because inter-suburban differentiation and intra-suburban homogenization are components of system processes that impact places differentially. A locality's control over development is exercised within a regional competition that defines places as those that are winning, those that are losing, and those that have lost.

¹⁸¹ See Robert Sinclair and Bryan Thompson, *Metropolitan Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* Robert Sinclair and Brian Thompson, *Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change* (Cambridge Mass.: Ballinger A subsidiary of Lyppincott Company, 1972).

Canton is developing as a middle-class suburb because it can. Its location at the far edge of one of Sinclair and Thompson's regions of interstitial development prevents it from becoming a wealthy suburb.¹⁸² Auburn Hills's location next to Pontiac, a distressed central city, precluded higher end residential development there too. Auburn Hills therefore sought the more profitable commercial office and industrial park development that its location made possible. Auburn Hills has successfully attracted this development and boosted its position as a profitable peripheral suburb of Detroit, thus preventing its decline into a distressed inner-ring suburb of Pontiac. Canton's remote location prohibited that kind of lucrative development but enabled it to become a peripheral middle-class suburb. Troy and Rochester Hills can do better as upper middle-class suburbs and do. Taylor, on the other hand, has very little choice. Because it is generally considered undesirable by the region's middle-class residents, this peripheral interstitial suburb has become a hodge-podge of mixed working-class residential, industrial, and lower-end retail development, taking anything it can get.

As each new suburb seeks to attract the best possible development, it competes against other suburbs trying to do the same. Since the region's population is growing only slowly, these places are competing to attract the best residents and development that they can get from the parts of the region that are already developed, while leaving the less desirable behind. Better-heeled residents are therefore drawn from one place to another in a zero sum game.

Oftentimes, lucrative development is transferred in a zero sum game too. This was the case when Auburn Hills snatched Chrysler's world headquarters from Highland Park in 1991, leaving that distressed central city in a deep and continuing crisis. Auburn Hills won the same game against Detroit when it successfully attracted the Detroit Pistons basketball team from their downtown home. More recently, The City of Detroit took the Detroit Lions football team back from Pontiac's Silverdome. The Lions will resume play in Detroit in their new Ford Field home in 2002.

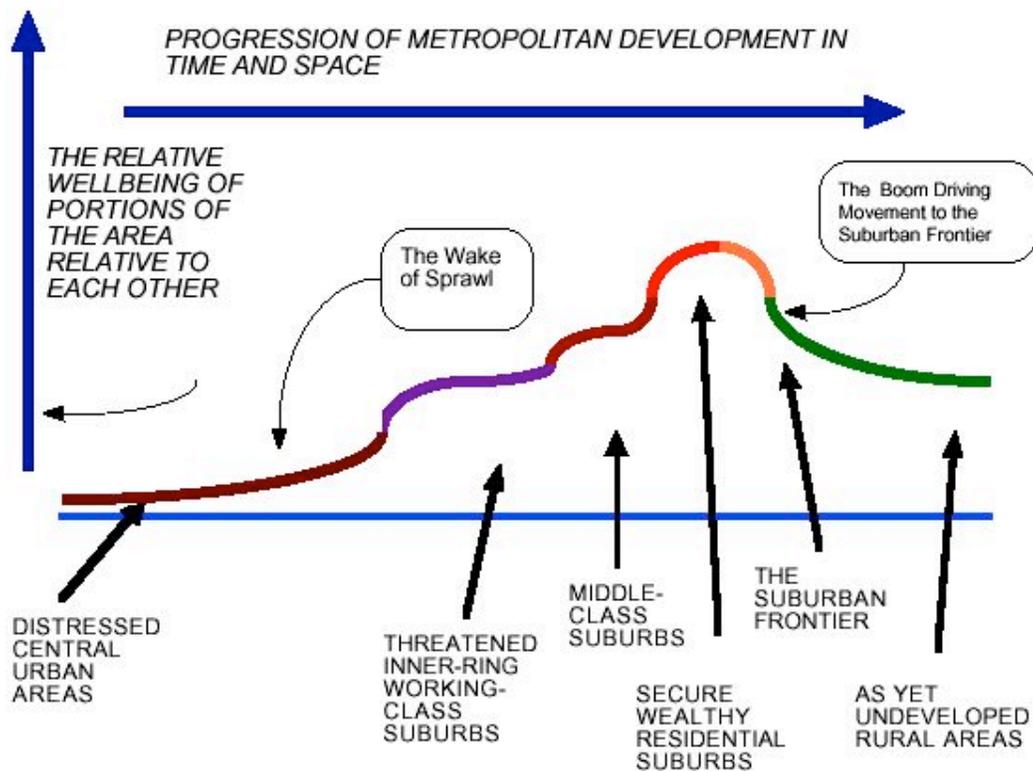
Development is also taken from the center indirectly, as retail stores, higher end services, entertainment, and commercial offices follow residents to the periphery. Sometimes, businesses simply move or expand peripheral operations as they downgrade and finally close core locations. J. L. Hudson's was forced to do this when it built new department stores in the suburban shopping malls to follow the growing numbers of customers there. In 1982, after years of cutting back services and closing floors, the company finally abandoned its flagship store in downtown Detroit, a department store that once rivaled even Macy's in size and scope. The S. S. Kresge Company, another Detroit area firm, made similar choices. When Kresge's pioneered big box discount general merchandise retail with its K-Mart chain, the company made only minimal new investments in the City as it closed all of its S. S. Kresge's five and dime stores there. Other times, the game is won when new businesses open in the outer suburbs while hangers on in the declining core falter and eventually go out of business. In the process, the peripheral suburbs are not only sharpening the differences between each

¹⁸² See *Metropolitan Detroit: An Anatomy of Social Change*.

other as they attract residents and development differentially; they are increasing advantage and sprawl at the periphery while accelerating decline and abandonment in the center.

Today, only the bravest retailers open stores in Detroit. But that may be changing. There is so much unmet demand there that when K-Mart opened a new "Super K" in the northern fringe of the City, the store became an instant success. Indeed, according to a K-Mart properties executive with whom I spoke recently, the new Super K in Detroit is the chain's most successful store in terms of gross sales per square foot of store space. The store is so successful, in fact, that the firm has found keeping the shelves fully stocked to be a serious logistical challenge. Other firms have been successfully tapping the City's under-served market, including national drugstore chains, providing services for City residents heretofore unavailable.

However, the advance of the periphery at the expense of the core continues more generally. Indeed, the region's older malls, most located near to the City in the inner-ring suburbs, are downgrading to discount shopping centers in the face of the newer and more upper-scale malls that are opening farther out, such as Great Lakes Crossing in 1998, Michigan's new mega-mall. The continuing shift of retail from the core to the periphery is important because retail's location determines access to important goods and services as well as jobs and tax revenues. But the movement is only perhaps the most obvious example of larger shifts of residents and commercial development that have left much of the core vacant and the inner-ring suburbs in decline while the peripheral suburbs boom.



As Detroit runs out of middle- and working-class residents able or willing to leave for the new suburbs, the peripheral localities are pulling residents from older suburbs like Allen Park and Warren, which were the Cantons of the forties and fifties. Therefore, the new suburbs are attracting residents and development from inner-ring suburbs in the same way that the inner-ring suburbs drew their development from the City in the forties and fifties.

Lower income residents in the inner-ring suburbs, like poor residents in the City, either cannot afford to move or are increasingly less able to. Their shrinking options stem from the fact that their property values are declining in relation to advancing prices at the periphery. For the residents who are left in the inner-suburban ring, the City gets closer every year. This is because the weakening market position of these places means a softening of the property value differential that has protected them from the in-migration of lower income residents and the diminution of suburban advantage and status that they bring. Unfortunately, while newer suburbs complain of growing pains, many of the older suburbs can hardly feel sympathy, as they have no options left but to fight the losing battle to keep their better-heeled residents and commercial development from moving farther out.

In sum, the fragmentation of local governance is a structure of sprawl and inequity. The system produces inequity because it sorts people and opportunities differentially among the places that make up the region. It structures sprawl as inter-municipal competition forces each peripheral suburb

to pull in as much of the core's declining supply of residents and development as fast as it can, before another can get them. Because this is accelerating the collapse of the core as it accelerates peripheral expansion, the system increases incentives for those closer to the center who can move farther out to do so sooner rather than later. This creates enormous stresses for the people who have been left behind in the center and for those who are afraid of losing the suburban security that the inner-ring suburbs can no longer guarantee. The fact that the differentiation of space is overlaid with a deep racial dichotomy only contributes to the forces pulling the periphery from the core. Detroiters cannot feel safe. They must continue to watch the core expand and worry about the day when it will catch up to them.

system dysfunction

Rather than a market good, the inter-municipal fragmentation of the Detroit region results in multidimensional system dysfunctions. There are a number of potential reforms that could address the region's problems and help to bring integration, balanced development, and a unity of interest to the region. These might include burden and tax base sharing, metropolitan-wide planning and service coordination, et cetera. These would limit the negative powers of place as they would create of some sort of body capable of representing the region as such. Such reforms would increase the efficiency and productivity of the system, as they would advance the quality of life for the majority of residents. However, advancing and implementing such measures are made more difficult with each passing year.

Anyone seeking to advance cooperation and reform must first address the simple fact that it is the nature of the region's dysfunction to militate against cooperation and shared interests. As the system divides people by social and economic characteristics into places that are in competition with each other for the goods of metropolitan life, people understandably see their interests in opposition to those who live in other places. These are the foundations of balkanization.

- the fragmentation of identity

The power of the area's localities to fragment interests is evidenced in the identities associated with them as well as in their economic position or physical characteristics. Although most of Detroit's neighborhoods are essentially suburban, in the region the word suburb means a place other than the City defined by some form of local government. Individual suburbs are associated with physical characteristics but perhaps more significantly, they are also identified with images of the kinds of people living in them. For instance Taylor, a suburb that developed haphazardly after the war and is filled with industrial and shipping facilities, declining retail, and large numbers of modest income white working-class families, is often referred to as Taylor-tucky, the poor white Appalachia of the region.

Each suburban locality, like Taylor, has an identity that positions it within the popular cognitive map of the region. Despite whatever housing stock and services may be found in particular parts of Taylor, many people simply wouldn't consider moving there because their class aspirations are incompatible with Taylor's image. Despite what the residents of places like Taylor may believe, for most of the rest of the residents of the area, it seems that if you live in such a place you are by definition not really middle-class. What internal diversity Taylor actually has is therefore threatened by its position within the place-identity structure or shared cognitive map of the area. As residents make moving decisions based on the identities that they wish to be associated with, they accentuate the characteristics of the place that successfully attracts them or is unfortunately stuck with them, as the case may be.

Because spatial identities are so important, localities try to reinforce the most advantageous image that they can. This can lead to a healthy competition of sorts, where municipalities work to spiff up retail districts or improve services. However some efforts can be divisive. This is especially the case when identities are reinforced in opposition to those of other places. Sometimes, localities take the direct route and simply change their names. The most crass example of this was the renaming of East Detroit to Eastpointe in the 1990s. In so doing East Detroit, a declining inner-ring white working-class suburb located east of Warren along Macomb County's southern boundary (Eight Mile Road), sought to capitalize on its rough proximity to the Grosse Pointes. (East Detroit is actually located northwest of the Pointes.) But East Detroit was almost certainly looking for more than association with the Pointes. The suburb was also seeking to reinforce its distinction from the distressed and black City of Detroit. As a Macomb County official told me, "it was all about race, pure and simple." East Detroit is so unlike the Pointes that it hasn't fooled anybody. However, the message that Eight Mile Road is still *the* race line was heard throughout the region. Insofar as solving the region's problems requires building bridges of understanding across municipal lines, East Detroit widened the distance across Eight Mile Road that will have to be spanned when it so strongly asserted its identity in opposition to Detroit.

When Pontiac Township incorporated as a city in the 1980s, it appears that its leaders were also trying to distance the locality from a negative place identity. This time, the source of the problem was the Township's neighbor to the west, Pontiac. Pontiac is the region's *other* old, distressed, and increasingly black central city. The township dropped Pontiac upon incorporation and became the City of Auburn Hills, named after the old Village of Auburn Hills located within it. As with all of the hills, heights, and mounts in this mostly flat region, one the topographical legitimacy of Auburn's Hills is suspect. (Knolls would be a more accurate description.) These suffixes seem to bear little relation to physical geography. Rather, they are better indicators of a place's position within the region's sociospatial structure, presumed or achieved. Thus, also, from Dearborn Township to the City of Dearborn Heights in 1963 ; from Farmington Township to the City of Farmington Hills in 1973; and from Sterling Township to the City of Sterling Heights (1966). Furthermore, Avon Township changed its name to the City of Rochester Hills in 1984 to secure its identification with prestigious Rochester.

Places in the region try to market the best identity that they can. Those identities are associated with people and activities and help to attract more of the same. There seems to be some truth to the notion that birds of a feather flock together, but only if we understand the flocks as things made possible by a structure of fragmented space. The flocks are not really natural. They are more like chickens trapped in coops. The analogy is appropriate because even if people are better than chickens, their ability to choose where they live is limited in emotional and practical economic fact. The sorting of residents by well-defined places means that the social structure of the region, the arrangement of people by their possession of the goods of metropolitan life, is increasingly defined by space.

Perhaps more troublesome is that as with any social structure, Detroit's socio-spatial structure seems to recreate itself in the minds of residents who define who they are and how are related to others by the places that they and others live in. The intention of separation built into the local government system of the region has resulted in a structure of division that re-creates itself quite beyond those intentions. As individuals suffer from spatial and cognitive separation, the synoptic view of the region as an interconnected whole, a single polity, is diminished. Detroit as a shared political society is dying.¹⁸³

As destructive as the spatial fragmentation of identity is, it is also ironic. In the sum total of presumably individual decisions, residents are increasingly defined by spatial groupings structured by the places that they live in. Their individuality then, is diminished in a sense. When the spatial fragmentation of identity is added to the fragmentation of interests, the notion that places define many of the characteristics and identities more traditionally associated with the classes or groups becomes more arguable.

¹⁸³ Timothy Bledsoe found divergent political attitudes among survey respondents in Detroit on a range of issues, particularly dealing with public affairs and satisfaction with government. Bledsoe found that attitudes in Detroit diverge in ways that are predicted by respondents' location even after a range of individual-level predictors were taken into consideration. See "From One World Three: Political Change in Metropolitan Detroit," (Detroit: The Center for Urban Studies, College of Urban, Labor, and Metropolitan Affairs, Wayne State University, 1990).

SECTION III

A QUANTITATIVE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT

THE CHANGING SOCIAL ECONOMY OF URBAN SPACE: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE DETROIT REGION

Racial Segregation and Resource Dispersion: The Transformation of Metropolitan Detroit.

Since the Second World War, millions of Americans have helped to reshape our urban areas by moving away from the nation's central cities into new homes in the suburbs. The suburban housing developments that have come as a part of this process have separated us from each other. They have done so by spreading us ever more thinly across metropolitan space and dividing us among distinct places. These often come in the form of independent suburban municipalities. As the towns and cities that proliferate with suburban sprawl divide us from each other ever more efficiently, they reduce our urban political societies to aggregations of distinct places. In the process, synoptic space is traded for parochial place.

In the processes, our aging central cities have been left behind. Many of the residents of our urban centers have been abandoned too, along with their neighborhoods. With each passing decade, ever-greater percentages of these residents are poor, or are members of disadvantaged minority groups, or are both. In other words, our central cities have become cities of the vulnerable. We are generally familiar with this story. However, most Americans probably do not fully appreciate the immensity of our suburban transformation, nor do they know the depth of the tragedy that has befallen cities like Detroit and many of the people who have been trapped within them.

In the scale and depth of its decay, Detroit resembles a third-world city, images of which are remarkably absent from the mainstream news and media.¹⁸⁴ Detroit's decline is manifest in thousands of abandoned houses, crumbling and vacant commercial buildings and factories, acres of empty land come meadows, and a downtown pocked with abandoned lots, forgotten streets, and shuttered and crumbling skyscrapers. These ghosts of Detroit's past haunt the handful of new developments that have brightened small sections of the City's otherwise bleak commercial center. Detroit's post-apocalyptic panoramas only hint at the power of the City to restrict its residents' access to opportunities, either by reducing their objective chances to achieve the goods of metropolitan life, or by restricting residents' perceptions of the possibilities that are available to them.

¹⁸⁴ For instance, the popular network television situation comedy "Home Improvement" was supposed to be located in the Detroit area. However, the most obvious economic and racial geographic realities of the area were never addressed.

The City of Detroit and its distressed neighbors are surrounded by vast expanses of suburban housing and commercial construction. As these developments sprawl towards the suburban horizon, they change. With each new suburban boundary come different qualities and styles of houses, different mixes of resources, activities, and opportunities. Furthermore, just as cities have become reserves for particular kinds of people, so have each of the region's suburbs. These facts about the Detroit area, about its center and its suburbs, may have profound implications for our metropolitan politics and for our national political discourse insofar as they are repeated across urban America.

Stacked against common knowledge, this study's analysis of metropolitan Detroit's urban transformation presents nothing really new. It is the magnitude of the changes that have reshaped the region, and some particularly disturbing details about them, that need to be better understood. My most critical findings about the region's post-war transformation can be reduced to the three essential dynamics that are outlined as follows:

- *People and resources have been distributed unevenly amongst the cities and townships that make up the Detroit region. As this has happened, the area's localities have come to be identified with the opportunities that their residents enjoy.*

Many people understand metropolitan space in terms of a simple dichotomy between central cities and their suburbs. However, there are substantial differences amongst the suburbs that make up the Detroit region too. Furthermore, as more benefits accrue to the advantaged suburbs, and more opportunities are taken away from the localities that are already in trouble, the differences that separate the suburban municipal haves from the have-nots continue to grow. As a consequence today, many of the area's more troubled suburbs are not as distinct from the region's distressed central cities as their residents would probably like to believe, at least not in material terms. Furthermore, they are becoming more like the City every year.

- *The processes of dispersion and fragmentation that are transforming the region move across urban space as the area grows, building the frontier suburbs and favoring them with advantage while punishing most of the older suburbs with decline.*

The processes by which advantaged suburbs become wealthier, and poorer suburbs follow the region's center to decline, occur in space as well as in time. As a consequence, the places that make up the region are not only growing farther apart economically, they are becoming more distant from each other geographically. This is to say that today's middle-class suburban areas are located farther away from the area's working class suburbs than the working-class suburbs of two or three decades ago were.

With a few exceptions, the region is consuming its urban center and older inner-ring suburbs as it builds new middle-class and wealthy suburbs at the

periphery.¹⁸⁵ The geographic expansion of the region, and transformation of the places within it, can be pictured in organic terms and likened to the consumptive growth of certain varieties of molds and fungi. As a fungus, or colony of fungi, consumes all of the food in a particular place, it spreads out from its center to consume new sources of nutrition on its periphery. Eventually, the fungus no longer takes the shape of a spot or blob, but rather becomes a ring. The ring of vigorous growth widens as the center is depleted of its food and abandoned. Between the center and the periphery are found concentric rings of growth, which are successively arranged in various states ranging from vigorous youth at the periphery, maturity farther in, and decay in the center.

Post-war development in metropolitan Detroit has been almost exclusively consumptive as such. Development is constantly drawn to build on the region's suburban frontier and beyond it. As people and resources rush out to participate in the development that is advancing the fringes, the center and those who cannot afford to leave it are abandoned. This spatial dynamic does more than accelerate the deprivation of the region's distressed core. It expands the core, and in the process puts ever-greater distance between those who are left behind and everybody else. Indeed, this dynamic draws the people of the region apart, as it creates vast and expanding blocks of space that are defined increasingly by the kinds of people who live within them.

However, though the fungal analogy is a very useful means of describing post-war development patterns in the region, it is not an appropriate foundation for understanding regional growth. Fungi grow by natural processes. Detroit's accelerating consumption of land, fragmentation of space, and inequitable distribution of people and resources are not natural. They are the products of our individual and collective agency; they are choices.

- *The region remains divided in an intense structure of racial segregation that separates Detroit into two metropolises, one black and one white. These sides remain separate, unequal, and unreconciled to each other.*

Even as the suburbs have developed into a proliferation of places that are ever more varied one from the other, (but ever more homogenous within), the region remains split in two, along racial lines. Among the many and serious consequences of this is a terrible racial inequity that affects every aspect of metropolitan life. Though the region's older inner-ring suburbs are becoming more like the City of Detroit materially, they and all other regional suburbs retain substantial advantages over the region's distressed central cities, where almost all of the region's black persons live. The result of this is a severe spatial inequity that disadvantages the residents of "black Detroit" regardless of whatever personal opportunities they enjoy. In this respect at least, places

¹⁸⁵ There are a few exceptions to this, including the Grosse Points, which are nationally recognized urban enclaves that border the City of Detroit and amount to a collection of neighborhoods with municipal status.

do more than reflect the opportunities of their residents, they generate (or restrict) them.

Critically, the lines that define black Detroit are coterminous with the region's distressed urban center. That is, they are essentially one and the same with the boundaries of the City of Detroit and a handful of its smaller distressed neighbors. This puts most of the region's black residents at a severe material and political disadvantage as it identifies them and their neighborhoods with some of the region's most intractable social and economic problems. These effects are critical to the lasting power of racial segregation in the region. Racial segregation constantly reinforces itself by weakening the competitive position of African Americans and by reminding white residents of whatever "costs" of integration they might fear.

Therefore, even as the economic differences between the area's declining white inner-ring suburbs and the City of Detroit are eroding, the deep racial division that separates black Detroit from white Detroit reinforces the social chasm that separates the City from its declining white suburbs.

Summary of Metropolitan Structure

In short, as the region is fragmenting into a proliferating variety of places, which are increasingly identified by the advantages that their residents enjoy, the area remains split into two very different groups of places: black cities and white suburbs. The juxtaposition of diverse economic fragmentation and socio-racial polarization may have profound implications for the region. Certainly, this tension is problematic for the suburbs that are closest to the region's race line, the inner-ring suburbs. In their economic decline, they are being drawn ever deeper into the challenges that have distressed the region's core. That is, from an economic standpoint, they are getting ever closer to the City of Detroit.¹⁸⁶ However, these suburbs remain on the white side of the area's race line. Economically, they are as urban as they are suburban. Socially, they remain white suburbs. Taken together, the region's economic and social geographies subject the residents of these places to unique and conflicting challenges.

Findings

A Note on Data and Maps

I analyzed Census data for the Detroit area and the counties and localities that make it up to discern the trends introduced above. My data come from the 1960,

¹⁸⁶ The movement of these suburbs towards the City of Detroit materially is occurring in the dimensions of economy and space in both objective and relative ways. Economically: These suburbs are declining by objective measures and they are declining even more severely by relative measures, compared to the region's middle-class and wealthier suburbs. These places are getting closer to the region's distressed core in geographic terms. This has been happening as Detroit's distressed neighborhoods have expanded to reach the borders of the City, and so the boundaries of these suburbs. Meanwhile, the prosperous periphery moves ever farther away.

1970, 1980, and 1990 Bureau of the Census's Census of Population and Housing. Specifically, my data are taken from the Detroit Area Metropolitan Data Books published for these years. Because my emphasis is on the municipalities that comprise the region, most of the data that I use here are for the cities and townships that were defined by the Bureau of the Census as metropolitan places in 1990. This means that as of 1990, they were located within the metropolitan area and had at least 10,000 persons living in them. For the most part, these places are the City of Detroit and the suburban cities and townships that surround it to form a large cluster of almost unbroken urbanization. Most people living in the region would recognize these municipalities, generally, as comprehensive of the metropolitan region.

Because the area is so large and fragmented by so many localities, I use GIS (Geographic Information Systems) maps to identify and illustrate relevant spatial trends. GIS software packages are sophisticated instruments that can perform a variety of complex spatial analytic functions. As such, GIS promises to improve our understanding of spatial relationships in the social sciences and in other endeavors where place matters. My present spatial analytic needs are relatively simple. I want to identify and introduce synoptic relationships between Detroit's changing places and electoral trends. Therefore, I use GIS to make a series of social, economic, and political area maps. I then compare these to illustrate associations between metropolitan places and politics in the Detroit area.

GIS maps have a number of advantages over more conventional spatial data presentations, such as tables and graphs. Furthermore, maps can frequently illustrate relationships between any variety of variables in space better than statistics such as correlation coefficients can. Maps are superior to these methods because they enable more natural and interpretive images of the synoptic relationships and local details that shape, define, and divide a metropolitan area.

I prepared my maps at Wayne State University's Stilgenbauer Cartography Lab, which is located in the Department of Geography and Urban Planning, College of Urban, Labor, and Metropolitan Affairs.¹⁸⁷

Dispersion of Incomes and Housing Market Values: A Snapshot of Metropolitan Detroit

Figure B - 1 in Appendix B shows the counties, cities, and townships that make up the developed portion of the metropolitan area.¹⁸⁸ This reference map may be used to locate places in the region whose names are sometimes obscured on the analytical maps by the colors, shading, and symbols used to present data within them.

¹⁸⁷ I used the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) *Community-2020* area analysis package that includes pre-loaded information from the 1990 Census. Maptitude, a GIS application that is available separately from its manufacturer, Caliper, drives the package. Maps displaying election data and indexes that I prepared with Census and voting data, were prepared by loading that information into Maptitude. Charts, tables, and other figures were prepared with the Apple Computer Corporation's Apple Works 5.

¹⁸⁸ All figures in this chapter can be found in Appendix B, unless otherwise indicated.

- *The Dispersion of Household Income: A Bull's Eye with Exceptions*

The map in Figure B - 2 is a snapshot of 1989 median household incomes for the places that make up the Detroit region, as reported in the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. This map indicates a positive correlation between the aggregate household income of a metropolitan city or township and its distance from the urban core. That is, generally speaking, the farther away a city or township is located from the region's center, the higher its residents' incomes are likely to be. The result is a rough bull's eye pattern of income dispersion, with median household incomes generally increasing from the area's deprived center to its wealthier peripheral suburbs. This pattern suggests that spatial forces affect the distribution of household incomes across the region in a systemic fashion.

A few cities and townships do not fit the synoptic pattern of inter-municipal household income distribution. For example, Inkster, which is located to the south and west of the City of Detroit, suffers from substantially lower aggregate household incomes compared to its neighbors. On the other hand, the Grosse Pointes, a collection of small residential municipalities situated between the City of Detroit and Lake St. Claire, enjoy far greater aggregate incomes than their proximity to Detroit would predict. There are also some small municipalities located in the southeastern corner of Oakland County that enjoy exceptionally high median household incomes.

These exceptions to the general pattern of income dispersion can be better understood by taking a closer look at these municipalities. Each of these suburbs is distinct from its neighbors in ways that affects its ability to attract and retain residents.

The Grosse Pointes are, in many ways, the most exceptional municipalities in the region. As one drives from the City of Detroit into the Pointes, as they are casually referred to, one is struck by how quickly and substantially the surroundings change. Crossing any of the roads that bound the Pointes is like entering into another world.

The Pointes were developed as middle-class and wealthy urban neighborhoods during the 1920s.¹⁸⁹ They were incorporated into independent municipalities as a means of protecting them from the demographic, commercial, and industrial pressures that destroyed many of Detroit's wealthy neighborhoods early in the twentieth century. The Pointes have remained wealthy because they are special in ways that enable them to attract and retain much wealthier residents than the other places that are near to them.

As home to many of the area's most wealthy, powerful, and prominent residents, the Pointes are synonymous with prestige. Their long association with the

¹⁸⁹ See David Lee Poremba, ed. *Detroit in Its World Setting: Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), page 241.

region's highest social circles has made them forever attractive to those who themselves wish to be thought of as having achieved a higher class standing. The Pointes are also favored by their location near to downtown Detroit. Since few of Detroit's middle and upper-class neighborhoods have proven truly resistant to decline, the Pointes offer rare safe havens for middle, upper-middle, and upper-class housing near the metropolitan core. Furthermore, unlike the new-rich suburbs, the Pointes offer distinct and older craft-built homes similar to so many of those that have been abandoned in the City. The Pointes also enjoy the Lake St. Claire shoreline. The lakeshore adds enormously to property values in the Pointes as it enables some of the best views in the area. Furthermore, the shore hosts a number of unique and attractive features such as private and public waterfront parks and the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club.

However, these advantages would not be sufficient to attract and retain wealthier residents if it were not for the fact that the Pointes are municipalities too. Their status as such certifies their advantage and enables them to promise their residents a favorable balance of taxes and services. There are many areas in the City of Detroit that were once indistinguishable from the Pointes, including a number of neighborhoods near to them. In the end, however, these places could not give their residents the guarantees that an independent municipality often can. Because of this, many of them stopped attracting the region's wealthier residents.

The City of Inkster is also exceptional, but in ways that make it something of the opposite of the Pointes. On the whole, Inkster's residents do not enjoy the levels of household income found in the municipalities that surround them. Although Inkster's neighborhood to the south and west of Detroit is not exactly wealthy, most of the residents of this area enjoy solid working and middle-class incomes. Inkster's exceptionally low median household income can be understood in the context of the city's history.

Henry Ford developed Inkster as housing for many of his African American employees. In this, Inkster was something of an experiment in social engineering. The long-term consequence of Henry Ford's actions, in combination with the racism that continues to poison the region, is that this mostly black suburb has never succeeded in attracting wealthier residents. Just as the Pointes' municipal status helps them to attract disproportionate numbers of wealthier residents, Inkster's municipal status, its identity as a specific place, keeps it from attracting residents whose incomes compare with those living in the suburbs that surround it.

Two other lower income places that don't appear to belong where they are located are the City of Pontiac, which is located to the northwest of the City of Detroit, and the City of Mount Clemens, to Detroit's northeast. Both of these are older central cities that have been engulfed by Detroit's suburbs. The City of Pontiac is a distressed central city that, in many ways, resembles Detroit. Mount Clemens has fared better than Pontiac, but is still burdened by many of the challenges that are being faced by most of the nation's traditional urban centers.

There are other, more subtle variations that texture the bull's eye distribution of household incomes in the region. The most pronounced of these is the relative concentration of higher incomes in the region's northwestern suburbs, which are located in Oakland County. Higher income residents have long followed the construction of railroads, boulevards, and expressways into this area, which is distinguished by its hills and lakes, rare commodities in a region that is, for the most part, constructed on a relentlessly flat lake plane.

Higher incomes have also concentrated in Grosse Ile and a handful of suburbs near to it, all of which are located near to the Detroit River, south of the City of Detroit. Grosse Ile and its neighbors are the wealthiest of Detroit's "downriver" suburbs, which begin just south of Detroit and continue in succession to Gibraltar or so. Some of the suburbs that are located inland from these, such as Lincoln Park, Allen Park, Southgate, and even Taylor, are also considered downriver communities. The City of Wyandotte centers the downriver area. It is an old city and has become downriver's principle urban center. The downriver suburbs share social histories, material features, and a physical isolation from the City of Detroit. That separation is caused by the intrusion of an extensive industrial area located along the River Rouge, between the City and the downriver communities. These factories, which include Ford's massive River Rouge Complex, a Marathon petroleum refinery, and a variety of other industrial and shipping facilities, help to isolate downriver and maintain it as a distinct sub-region within metropolitan Detroit.

A final point worth mentioning is that there is a significant difference between incomes for the City of Detroit and its most distressed central city neighbors such as River Rouge, Ecorse, and Inkster on the one hand, and most of the area's suburbs on the other. Insofar as income goes, although there are substantial differences that define the region's suburbs by groups of places, there is a pronounced gap separating most of these places from the distressed core.

inter-municipal diversity versus intra-municipal homogeneity

Thus far, my units of analysis have been the individual city or suburban municipalities that make up the developed portion of the metropolitan area. I use cities and suburbs here because my election analysis is based on these units, and I want to draw associations between inter-municipal voting patterns and the dynamic structures identified here. However, aggregating social and economic data by localities may disguise substantial intra-municipal variations. I tested this possibility by looking at area median household incomes aggregated by census block groups, the smallest geographic unit for which such data are available.¹⁹⁰ Figure B - 3 shows the regional dispersion of 1989 median

¹⁹⁰ Census block group data are useful for this kind of analysis, where large numbers of block groups are compared to form a synoptic picture of regional space. However, data for individual block groups tend to be less than fully reliable since they are calculated from relatively small samples of Census responses.

Although block group data can show variations in aggregate social statistics across space, they cannot truly prove either the heterogeneity or homogeneity of a population within a particular area. I take variations of

household incomes by Census block groups. The map includes municipal boundaries for the purpose of comparison.

The map shows that for the most part, the previous analysis does not disguise serious variations in household incomes within municipalities. The most important exception to this is the City of Detroit. For all of the middle-class flight and racial homogenization that Detroit has suffered over the decades, it remains the most diverse city in the region. This is reflected in this map in the juxtaposition of middle-class and wealthy enclaves with the poor neighborhoods that have come to cover most of the City.

The City of Dearborn is also characterized by an unequal distribution of incomes across space. Dearborn is distinct in this regard because it is made up of a wide variety of neighborhoods. Dearborn's residential areas range from places that were developed with housing that is identical to, but less deteriorated than, that which is found in more distressed sections of the City of Detroit, to wealthy enclaves filled with the homes of automotive executives. Ford Motors is headquartered in Dearborn, and several important Ford manufacturing and development facilities are also located there. Dearborn also includes a variety of large commercial retail areas ranging from its traditional downtown to modern strip plazas and shopping malls. Included among these areas is Arab Town, a commercial retail center dominated by Arab and Arab American owned businesses. The diversity of land use that characterizes Dearborn goes a long way towards explaining the significant variations in median household incomes across the city.

Aside from Dearborn, the region's newer outer ring suburbs showed the greatest variation in 1989 median household incomes across space. This makes sense given that in 1990, these traditionally agricultural townships were becoming suburbs. Therefore, significant areas within these localities had been covered with new, higher income housing developments while others retained large proportions of people engaged in the lower income pursuits that have been more traditional to these places. This juxtaposition caused substantial variation in median household incomes from block group to block group. This variation will probably decrease, as these places become more fully settled with middle or upper income residential developments.

- *The Dispersion of House Values: Another Bull's Eye with Exceptions*

Figure B - 4 shows that area residential property values are distributed amongst the region's cities and townships in a pattern that is almost identical to the arrangement of median household incomes.¹⁹¹ However, when we compare this to the dispersion of house values across Census block groups, as in figure B - 5,

these aggregate data across block groups as sufficient evidence of variations within municipal populations, not as absolute proof.

¹⁹¹ Residential property values are 1990 median specified owner occupied house values, as reported by the Bureau of the Census.

we find that residential property values are even more uniformly spread within cities and townships than are household incomes.

This finding confirms the old adage that the most important factors in determining the value of a house are location, location, and location. In metropolitan Detroit, it seems that location is reasonably synonymous with locality. The big exceptions to intra-municipality homogeneity here are, once again, the Cities of Detroit and Dearborn, and the rapidly developing suburbs located on the edge of the Metropolis. There is also a line of unexpectedly low property values running north-south through the middle of Sterling Heights and Warren. This exceptional area can be explained by the fact that it includes an old railroad corridor, which is surrounded by industrial and commercial development, along with some of the least attractive housing in the area.

By placing municipalities within ranges of median housing construction year, Figure B - 6 shows that aggregate incomes and house values are, with a few exceptions, strongly correlated with the age of a place's housing. As it lends an element of physical structure to our understanding of the dispersion of incomes and opportunity across space, the map suggests a dimension of time. With some exceptions such as the Pointes, the general trend seems to be that wealth and market values follow new housing. More prosperous residents, it seems, generally dispose of places with older housing.

Metropolitan Dispersion in Space and Time

incomes

To better illustrate changing economic relationships between urban places over time, and so further our understanding of the dynamic dimensions of metropolitan structure, I compare income and house value data for area cities and suburbs from 1960-1990. Comparing income and residential property value values across time can be problematic because these indicators are measured in dollars, and the market value of the dollar changes dramatically from decade to decade.¹⁹²

¹⁹² One solution to the contingency of money is to show such figures in adjusted dollars. I rejected that approach because national changes in the purchasing power of dollars are not necessarily consistent with conditions in specific urban areas. Metropolitan regions are best thought of as multidimensional systems that may share much in common with each other, but undergo economic (and other) transformations at varying rates and intensities. While standard inflation adjustments are suitable for tracking national economic indicators, they do not account for variations between metropolitan markets. Mechanisms that can track the performance of places relative to each other within a regional context are needed. Therefore, I have reduced median income and house values for places to numbers proportional to metropolitan figures reported by the Census for the same years. The metropolitan figures used are for the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) for 1990 and its equivalent units for previous decades. Because these indicators position places in a way that corrects for conditions specific to a given metropolitan system, they could be used to compare the performance of places categorically pooled for several metropolitan regions. Although my study is limited to the Detroit area, a similar analysis relating demographic and economic changes in places across numerous metropolitan areas could be accomplished using such measures.

I get around this problem by looking at the Detroit region as a system of relationships. Among other things, a metropolitan area is a *system* of relative labor prices and property values. From a system perspective, the monetary values of incomes or house values for places only really matter insofar as they relate cities and suburbs to each other within the broader context of urban space. Therefore, in this view, proportional house values and income figures are just as useful as actual figures. Furthermore, proportional figures be compared across time as well as space, to illustrate trends in regional housing markets and the distribution of individual economic opportunities more generally.

By recalculating house values and incomes figures for places as proportional to metropolitan figures,¹⁹³ we can track changes in the distributions of incomes and property values within the region over time. As a result, we can better understand inter-municipal income and property value distributions as dynamic structures that are always shaping and changing the relationships between the cities and suburbs that make up the region.

Figure B - 7 shows four maps that illustrate changes in the distribution of median household incomes among Detroit area cities and townships from 1960-1990.¹⁹⁴ The relative income for a place in a given year is the median household income for its residents shown as a percentage of the corresponding metropolitan figure.¹⁹⁵ Over time, aggregate household incomes have become less evenly spread among the places that make up the region.

Although the 1960 map shows some differentiation of incomes, overall differences between places are relatively small. Furthermore, the figures for most of the places included in the analysis hover close to the metropolitan average. However, the differences between municipalities become more pronounced with each passing decade, to where they are quite intense by 1990.

The growing differences between municipalities by incomes may result from two simultaneous trends. First, the places that make up our urban regions have become more distinct from each other in ways that impact their ability to attract and retain residents by a number of factors including income. Part of the reason for this is physical. Following World War II, suburban developments have been constructed on ever-larger scales. In this process, many suburbs have become filled with nearly identical housing and other amenities.

However, though development *within* many suburbs has been quite homogenous, there are substantial and growing differences *between* suburbs in this regard. The differences stem in part from the fact that different suburbs were constructed at different time periods. The quality of the housing stock and

¹⁹³ By percentage.

¹⁹⁴ Information for some places is excluded in these maps because they had populations of less than 10,000 and so were too small for detailed data to be included in the Census of Population and Housing metropolitan data books and were dropped from my sample.

¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the number of places for which median household income is included in printed Census reports declines as we move back in time. This accounts for blank spots that appear in the 1960 and 1970 maps and is also a problem for house values.

other amenities that differentiate these places reflects that. As the decades go by, the variety of suburbs from which one may choose grows. This situation is being compounded by the fact that today suburbs are being constructed variously as wealthy, or middle-class, or working class places. The differences between these places are strongly associated with their location at the periphery. Some portions of the region's suburban frontier are simply more desirable to wealthy residents than are others. Variations between the places that make up the region by income may also stem from the growing disparity between household incomes that has affected American society generally through much of this period. The consequence of these trends in space is a rather intense and growing segregation of metropolitan Americans by income.

A closer look at these maps shows that more than dispersion and polarization are taking place however. Income is not just moving away from the central cities into the differentiated suburbs, it is doing so in a wave pattern that sees wealth visit, and then leave, the older inner-ring suburbs. Suburbs that gained relative advantage by this measure earlier in the study period are now yesterday's news as they are losing higher income residents to the newer suburbs.

Figure B - 8 illustrates the magnitude of this change. This figure maps 1980-1990 changes in relative household incomes for area places and shows that all of the region's inner-ring suburbs are declining by this measure. Indeed, a large number of these places are falling at rates that are matching those for the central cities. Meanwhile, more prosperous suburbs have experienced dramatic gains. Pronounced differentiation of area places by income is not only a fact in the region, but also a dramatic and continuing *process*. The conclusion of this dynamic, should it continue, will be the radical segregation of area residents by income across ever-wider expanses.

house values

Figure B - 9 xxxx shows much the same trends for area house values. I compare aggregate residential property values for area localities over time with an indicator that I call "relative market position." A place's relative market position is its median specified owner-occupied house value, as reported by the Bureau of the Census for a given year, calculated as a percentage of the metropolitan median figure for the same year.¹⁹⁶ This indicator is the best means of comparing residential property values over time because, like the proportional income measure used above, it adjusts for inflation. But this measure makes substantive sense too. Residential property values should be considered within the context of a metropolitan market. Comparing property values thus indicates the rank order, at any given time, of places by the desirability of the homes within them, along with changes in that order across time. Such comparisons have enormous consequences and can even be self-fulfilling when the public uses them, or perceptions of them, to decide whether or when to move, and to where.

¹⁹⁶ As with relative income figures, the metropolitan figure used here is for the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) for 1990 and its analogues from previous Census reports.

Although few people engage in a comprehensive review of market statistics when they decide where to live, most people have a general idea of where market values are going up and where they are going down. As many consider these trends, others are restricted by them.¹⁹⁷ If you are a resident of the area and want to be able to move to any of a variety of specific places, it really doesn't matter how quickly your house may be increasing in value so much as how quickly others' house values are increasing.

If values are increasing in the places that you want to move to faster than they are in your locality, then for your purposes, your property's value is falling. Each year that these trends continue, you will have fewer residential options left open to you. When people make moving decisions based on their fears that this will happen to them (and "it" has happened to many in the region over the decades) they intensify the very problem that they are trying to avoid; they collectively turn their fears into a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁹⁸ So trends in relative market positions give us a synoptic view of what is happening to Detroit area space as they illustrate the context and consequences of individual housing market choices.

The collapse of house values in the core is striking in relation to the growth of values in the most favored newer suburbs. While in 1960, residential property values for most of the places for which data are available hovered around the metropolitan average, by 1990, core communities such as Detroit, River Rouge, Ecorse, Inkster, Highland Park (the lowest), and Hamtramck had fallen to less than half of the system figure. On the other hand, values in more favored places had risen by 1990 to between twice and six times the regional average. A wave pattern similar to that for median incomes can be seen here. Between 1960 and 1970, many of the suburbs closest to Detroit actually increased their housing market positions relative to the central urban places. However, by 1990, most of these same places sank to average or below average standing in the regional housing market.

Figure B - 10 shows the aggregate effects of these trends by comparing average relative house values for all municipalities included in the study (for which data are available) from 1960-1990, with the standard deviations for the same figures, and places, and years.

The average relative market position for area municipalities initially rose with the addition of new suburbs to the region. However, it has begun to decline as larger numbers of the area's older suburbs lose in the regional housing market in the face of increasing strength for the newer suburbs. On the other hand, despite a slight dip for 1970, the variance of relative market positions for the places that make up the region has increased significantly as the region's cities and suburbs

¹⁹⁷ Gregory Weiher discusses this dynamic in relation to a broader metropolitan municipal selection mechanism. See *The Fractured Metropolis: Political Fragmentation and Metropolitan Segregation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

¹⁹⁸ See again Gregory Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis*:

have become ever more distinguished by their positions in the regional housing market. So, as the region's wealthy suburbs become proportionately more attractive, and the less marketable cities and suburbs become ever less so, the area's soft market center is spreading to include more and more municipalities.

The movement of places in the regional housing market is dramatically illustrated in figure B - 11 xxxxx, which suggests most strongly which places will be the haves and which the have-nots in the future. This map shows that all of Detroit's neighbors, except for the Grosse Pointes, are slipping or falling in the regional housing market. Many of Detroit's suburbs, particularly to the west and south, are losing market position at *faster* rates than Detroit's. Southfield, to Detroit's north in Oakland County, is falling especially fast. Southfield is a modern middle-class suburb with substantial new office development that has seen a dramatic influx of middle-class African American residents over the last two decades. Census statistics and observation suggest that white demand for housing in Southfield is drying up. The loss of white buyers may be responsible for the speed at which Southfield's housing has lost market position.

The decline of Detroit's other suburban neighbors is perhaps more alarming. Optimistically, Detroiters may find some comfort in the hope that the fall of Detroit's property values is reaching its bottom. However, nobody can take solace in what is happening in the region's inner-ring suburbs. They are losing market ground rapidly and headed in Detroit's direction. Most of these suburbs are completely developed with post-war era housing located near older industrial and commercial construction. These cookie cutter working-class houses are simply not as desirable as they used to be. As their housing ages, and as higher income residents continue to look for more substantial homes in greener pastures, the value of these former working and middle-class refuges can only fall.

The movement of people within the region, which is associated with the changing distributions of incomes and property values discussed here, is illustrated in figure B - 12. Along with wealth and property values, people are moving to the region's periphery. This map illustrates the wave patterns that I introduced above. Over the decades, people, wealth, and housing demand have moved into, and then out of, successive rings of suburbs, pushing the region's periphery, and the boundaries of its distressed core, ever outward.

a word of caution regarding the inner-ring suburbs

Despite the dim future that these data suggest for the region's inner-ring suburbs, some have been encouraged by recent and substantial increases in property values within many of these places. But hopes that the inner-ring suburbs will be saved from the forces that have devastated so many neighborhoods in Detroit should be reconsidered in a broader context. Low interest rates and a strong regional economy produced an area-wide boom in residential property values. The 2000 Census will illustrate where that has left area property values better than available assessment figures and patchy real estate industry reports can. What is clear now is that the forces driving the polarization of area incomes and house values, especially the push to advance the periphery with surplus development, have not essentially changed. Indeed, they appear to be accelerating.

Houses are being built in the region's outer suburbs at a fever pitch as residents push the metropolitan frontier ever outward. The developments that are rapidly covering recently rural suburbs like Canton are immense and uniformly middle-class. These attractive forces, along with fears that the property values in the older suburbs will decline, are drawing more and more residents with means away from the inner-ring.

Property owners in the inner-ring suburbs should understand that although the dollar value for their homes has gone up, unless they intend to leave the region altogether when they sell their homes, they have not gained. Some of the recent increases in property values in the inner-ring suburbs may stem from the fact that economic prosperity and an easy credit market have enabled poorer residents to buy homes that they could not have purchased a few years ago. For the longer standing residents of these older suburbs, this is not good news. Now, even college students are buying houses in these places because mortgages for homes in them are often more affordable than apartment rents in the City. And yet, these places were once solidly middle and working-class suburbs.

Although property values are increasing in many of these older suburbs in monetary terms, it is likely that they are actually losing ground vis-à-vis the regional housing market. With each passing year, any hope that homeowners living in these older suburbs might have of selling their house in, let us say, Warren, and using the proceeds to move to a new home in Canton, perhaps, diminishes.

conclusion of property values

The proliferation of metropolitan municipalities and their homogenous development accentuates differentials in area housing prices, accelerates the differentiation of property values between places, and drives people with means to move farther and faster out of areas with declining property values into places that are on the upswing. The system results of fragmented governance, service provision, and homogenous land use and development are the consumption and

disposal of space and intensifying segregation of residents by individual, group, and locational opportunities.

These results have profound implications for metropolitan political society as they make citizenship a differential quality. People living in more advantaged places get more from their governments and have a better chance at achieving the material and essential goods of metropolitan life for where they live, regardless of what individual advantages they may or may not enjoy. Political society is also threatened insofar as the segregation of people into differentially advantaged places militates against citizens' adoption of synoptic views of metropolitan society, the understanding that "we are all in this together." Furthermore, this growing segregation by opportunity is highly inequitable for those trapped in distressed places and very stressful for those seeking to escape the places that "are next."

Segregation and the Entrapment of African Americans in the Declining Core

As Detroit area space sorts residents ever more efficiently into places that are increasingly differentiated by the opportunities that their residents enjoy, it is segregating them by race to the greatest disadvantage of most of the region's black residents. African American Detroiters are highly concentrated in the region's most distressed cities and almost absent from its advantaged suburbs. This intensely structures the opportunities associated with place against almost all of the region's black residents.

Although the City of Detroit retains a few middle-class residential areas where most of the region's more prosperous black residents live, the City and its systems cannot provide its more wealthy residents with the same services, at the same low price, that the advantaged suburbs can. Furthermore, the general level of physical decay and socioeconomic distress found in the City must affect all of its residents beyond the straightforward challenges of poor services and high tax rates.

Residents of Detroit are not surrounded as their middle-class suburban neighbors are by stable residential neighborhoods that go on for miles. Since mainstream retail has largely abandoned Detroit, residents do not have easy access to many of the opportunities that suburbanites take for granted, such as general merchandise retail, clean and well stocked convenient stores, do-it-yourself home hardware stores, national chain clothiers, and discount automotive service centers. The unavailability of these amenities is symbolic of the myriad of small ways that living in a distressed area hurts residents, regardless of any individual-level advantages they might enjoy.

Figure B - 13 illustrates the intensity of racial segregation in the region. Each dot represents 500 persons who are black as reported by the Bureau of the Census for 1990. Detroit's distressed central cities are almost perfectly outlined by the concentration of dots within them.

Figure B - 14 provides a close-up of the places near to the region's core that illustrates the intensity of the racial divide. This map shows that there are many neighborhoods in the City of Detroit where there are essentially no white persons. And yet, just across the city's boundaries are suburbs that are almost exclusively white. Furthermore, along much of the City's border, which has become, essentially, the region's "race line," the transition from all black to all white areas is abrupt indeed. A notable exception to this is Southfield. Unfortunately, it appears that this locality is on the way to becoming a black middle-class suburb, not an integrated one as so many in the area had hoped.

Figure B - 15 xxxxx suggests the effects of racial segregation in the region on the distribution of opportunity. Simply put, the area's black residents have been left to share their homes with the most disadvantaged people in the region. It hardly matters whom, in fact, is being segregated -- African Americans or poor people. The implications for the region's black residents remain the same.

As spatial disadvantage hurts black residents in material ways, segregation may be taking a more substantial sociopolitical toll. African Americans living in black cities segregated from the rest of the metropolitan, state, and even national polities are easy targets for varieties of economic and political discrimination that are highly destructive and frequently hard to prove. More seriously, many forms of spatial discrimination, such as the location of a new mega-mall far beyond the reach of many Detroiters or legislative acts that strip Detroit of advantage, independence, or authority, are quite legal, and often easy to justify in non-racial terms.

Perhaps even more poisonous to the political and economic atmosphere of the region, and to its African American residents specifically, is the increasing identification of the region's black residents with the dysfunction of the places that they must live in. As divisions within metropolitan space frame a socioeconomic structure that heretofore was associated with group and class distinctions, the understanding of African Americans as a group is determined by negative images of black cities.

As place structures group stereotypes, blacks find many of their successes as individuals washed out in a sea of negative spatial group images. This racial dichotomization makes it much harder to overcome divisive understandings of the area with the metropolitan perspectives necessary to address the region's problems. The sum of negative actions taken by individuals and political society in reaction to these images can only reinforce the objective isolation and disadvantage suffered by the residents of Detroit and its distressed companions.

A Note on the Geography of Political Interests

The metropolitan region and its residents suffer as a consequence of these trends. If a metropolitan area is best understood as a social, political, and economic system, then the Detroit region is a system in trouble. Fragmentation of the region divides residents by place-structured interests and perspectives into winners, losers, and those who are losing. In the long run the affects of

intensifying fragmentation and segregation on residents' perspectives of who they are and how they are related to others may be even more serious than any of the actual material consequences.

Some might hope that a majority constituency of the losers and losing could be forged between residents and leaders in the area's distressed central cities and threatened inner-ring working-class suburbs.¹⁹⁹ From this, political influence might be drawn strong enough to tackle the metropolitan-wide problems that are creating and intensifying inequitable suburban development and central urban disinvestment with new regional housing, transportation, and land use planning, and development policies.

Unfortunately, the stark racial division of the region works against such an option. The result is that although residents in the declining white inner-ring suburban communities have a strong material interest in supporting policies that would rebalance the system in order to stabilize the core, this may not be enough. Racial animosity may very well prevent such cooperation. For Detroit at least, the successful road to healing from the wounds that fragment the region is not likely to include the creation of new divisions.

In the next chapter, I present an analysis of national election returns from the region that shows that the spatial divisions reviewed here are indeed associated with residents' political preferences. These findings are not only significant for the Detroit area, they also suggest powerful relationships between urban space and national politics more generally.

¹⁹⁹ Myron Orfield is a strong advocate of this general approach. See *Metropolitica: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997).

DETROIT AREA ELECTION STUDY

ELECTORAL STRUCTURE IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT: THE ECCENTRICITY OF STABILITY AND THE NORMALITY OF VOLATILITY

Political Fragmentation: Geopolitical Structure and Volatility in Metropolitan Detroit

Metropolitan Dichotomy and Diversity

The preceding chapter shows that Detroit area localities have become distinguished from each other by their residents' access to the goods of metropolitan life. The dispersion of people and opportunities across the region that has been a part of this has not occurred at random, but rather has followed a *loose and dynamic* bull's eye form. This *general pattern* appears to result from *processes* by which better-healed residents, resources, and whites generally, have left the core for the suburban periphery. In the course of these shifts, the suburbs have expanded enormously, as have the boundaries of the region's depleted center.

The structure of metropolitan Detroit challenges common views of our urban areas as divided neatly between distressed central cities and their residential suburbs. In Detroit, it is more accurate to say that the area is split between its deteriorated and largely African American central cities and rings of progressively advantaged white suburbs. So, even as diverse suburbs compete with each other for residents and development, the distressed central cities stand apart. The schism that separates the region's core from its periphery is deep in its scale and implications, and it is first and foremost about race.

Detroit's race line hurts most of the region's black residents as it relegates them to the distressed cities. It also poisons the area's political society, as an ugly dynamic of race, place, and power informs almost every major political and social discourse. In this, it hurts all of the region's residents. However, aside from African Americans living in the core, the structure of Detroit's racial segregation threatens the residents of the older inner-ring white working-class suburbs most. If the race line "fails to hold," then the "ghetto" will engulf these places rapidly.

Introduction to Geo-electoral Structure

In this chapter, I review presidential election data that I collected for the Detroit area municipalities included in the study above. In tracking voting returns from 1960-1996, I show that a number of trends in the spatial arrangement of voter preferences and turnout rates are strongly associated with the social and economic patterns of metropolitan structure reviewed above.

The people of the Detroit region have become separated from each other by their partisan political preferences. At the most general level, the region's wealthier suburbs comprise strong Republican territory. The residents of these places turn out to vote at high rates and tend to support Republican candidates consistently and strongly. On the other hand, Detroit and its central city neighbors have become filled with people who are not very likely to vote. However, those who do cast ballots in the core are extremely likely to vote for Democratic candidates.

In contrast, the places that fail to fit into the distressed city / wealthier suburb dichotomy, those that share variously with both the region's center and the outer suburbs, the threatened white inner-ring suburbs, are characterized by electoral instability. Their residents support Democratic candidates some years and Republicans others. Their residents are also less likely than are those of the wealthier suburbs, but more likely to vote than are those living in the core.

These associations are consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space and my more specific hypothesis regarding the affects that the threatened inner-ring suburbs have on their residents' voting. Furthermore, as these associations structure local political issues and the regional distribution of power, they are relevant to national party strategies and some of the broad outlines of the American domestic policy debate. As such, associations between metropolitan space and political preferences must be taken seriously.

The Results

I begin my study with a snapshot of the 1996 presidential election in Metropolitan Detroit. I then analyze votes trended for every presidential election between and including the 1960 and 1996 contests by presenting a variety of voting data and indicators through graphs and maps.

For the latter project, the time tracked analysis, I pool voting data from area localities by several geopolitical categories. I developed these groups using data gathered for the quantitative analysis of the region that I presented above. These categories are also informed by my general model of metropolitan political structure and my specific hypothesis regarding the political position and electoral effects of the threatened white working class suburbs, which have been associated with political volatility in the present period.

The presidential election data show striking associations between voting behavior and place. This in itself is not surprising, but the connections that I find are remarkable for their magnitude. Unfortunately, aggregate data cannot tell us exactly why places are associated with political preferences. Does place just sort

people by individual factors that predict political preferences and proclivities? Or, do localities affect people's political preferences too? Though in either case the consequences are serious, the latter possibility suggests ominous threats to the future of American political society. If places are molding the group associations, interests, or perspectives that structure politics, then the people that must engage each other in order to make progress on important political issues, regional or national, are drawing farther apart. To contribute to our efforts to find critical place effects, I will present research using place-coded attitudinal survey data in the next chapter.

The 1996 Presidential Election

In 1996, presidential party preferences and voter turnout rates in the Detroit area were highly associated with the fragmentation of advantage and racial segregation that define the region. Figure C - 1 in Appendix C shows how constituencies differed from each other by their party preferences.²⁰⁰ Places that are not colored in this map, like Center Line, were not included in this election study because their populations are too small (under 10,000 in 1990). Places in this map are colored and shaded by the magnitude of the percent party pluralities that their residents returned in the 1996 presidential election. This indicator, percent party plurality, is calculated by subtracting the percentage of major party votes for president²⁰¹ that went to the Democratic candidate (Bill Clinton) from those that went to the Republican nominee (Bob Dole). This measure is especially useful because it indicates the intensity and direction of the partisan preference of the voters from a given locality regardless of the actual number of votes that they cast.²⁰² Therefore, the indicator allows us to compare the partisan preference expressed by the voters of one place with those of another.

This map shows that the localities that comprise the region are substantially differentiated by the preferences of their voters in a way that follows the distribution of house values and incomes among them. The region's advantaged outer suburbs as well as the Grosse Pointes all provided Bob Dole with strong levels of support by this measure. However, no suburb came close to giving Dole the intensity of support that Bill Clinton received from the distressed cities in the core. An astonishing 94.7 % of the people who voted for either Clinton or Dole in the City of Detroit marked their ballots for Clinton. Only 5.3 % of them

²⁰⁰ All figures in this chapter are presented in Appendix C. I obtained the voting data used in this study from the county elections offices of Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties. The data are complete, final, and certified vote tallies.

²⁰¹ In this case, votes for Bill Clinton and for Bob Dole combined. Votes for third party candidates are not included in the total.

²⁰² A figure of zero here would indicate a perfect split between support for the two parties while a figure of -100 would indicate that all of a place's major party votes went to the Republican candidate. Significant third party candidacies make this measure problematic because it assumes a dichotomous choice. I do not believe that total votes for third candidates in the present period have been strong enough to essentially invalidate this measure. Regardless, the time-tracked analysis to follow includes some measures of support for the three most important third-party candidacies of the present period. The designation of negative and positive figures here by party is strictly for categorical definition and does not imply any partisan prejudice.

chose Dole. This translates into an 89.5 percent party plurality for Detroit. Only Harper Woods gave the Democrats more concentrated support. However, Clinton performed nearly as well in most of the region's poorest cities as he did in Detroit. Detroit's Democratic majority was drawn from 276,807 votes cast for Clinton compared to only 15,377 ballots marked for Dole. Compared to Dole's numbers, Ross Perot's 5,517-vote take doesn't look too shabby. (1996 Election data and related indicators for all area places used in this study are presented in Figure C - 2.)

Clinton's performance in the City of Detroit and other core cities should be considered in light of metropolitan figures. From the three counties that include all of the cities and suburbs used in this study, Clinton received 620,873 votes compared to Dole's 501,010. Therefore, Clinton won 55.3 % of the major party vote in the tri-county area. That was enough to give Clinton a comfortable lead over Dole in the region, but he owed a great deal of that lead to the powerful concentration of support that he received from the region's core.

Bill Clinton also received solid support from the region's inner-ring suburbs. Even so, voters in these places were much less likely to support Clinton than were those who cast ballots in the core. Rather, they selected Clinton at rates comparable to those by which the advantaged suburbs supported Dole.

The major exception for party preferences in the suburbs came from Southfield, Detroit's neighbor in Oakland County. Southfield voters gave Clinton a level of support approaching that which he enjoyed in the core, with 78.1 % of those who cast ballots for president selecting Clinton. Southfield is essentially a middle-class suburb. Voters from most of these places supported Dole at least marginally. The exceptionally high levels of Democratic support from Southfield may be explained by race. By 1990, about 30% of Southfield's residents were black persons. This almost certainly played a role in shifting Southfield's returns so powerfully towards Clinton because African Americans, as a group, have tended to support Democratic candidates very strongly for decades.

Overall, these trends show that there is a great deal of variation in the party preferences of suburban voters. The distribution of partisan choices amongst area suburbs is highly correlated with the regional dispersion of advantage. Voters from more advantaged suburbs tended to support Dole strongly while residents of the declining suburbs supported Clinton.

Contrary to the gradations of partisan support which distinguish the suburbs from each other, a deep schism separates most of these places from the radically concentrated Democratic voting found in the City of Detroit and its distressed central urban neighbors. This dichotomization of party preference is probably more than coincidentally related to the intense racial segregation of the region and the severe distress of the central cities relative even to the declining inner-ring suburbs.

Voter turnout rates are also distributed differentially across the region. Figure C - 3 shows a strong positive association between spatial advantage and voter

turnout. Turnouts for places are figured in the standard way, by calculating the total number of votes for president as a percentage of the estimated number of eligible voters, which is a place's estimated voting aged population.²⁰³

This map shows that residents who live in the region's distressed cities are far less likely to vote than are those who reside in the more advantaged suburbs. Detroit's wealthiest suburbs, including the Grosse Pointes, sent the largest proportions of their voting aged populations to the polls. Turnouts for these places ranged generally from the mid-60s into the 70s. On the other hand, most of the region's poorest cities had voter turnout rates ranging in the low 40s. However, Pontiac, the region's "other" large distressed central city, located in Oakland County, ranked second lowest of all of the places in this study by this measure. Only 35.9 % of the estimated number of eligible voters who lived in Pontiac that year cast ballots for president. Detroit appears to have fared better, with a 42.4 % voter turnout.²⁰⁴ Hamtramck's residents were the least likely in the region to vote for president in 1996. Only about 27.3 % of the residents of this city voted. Hamtramck, a small city surrounded by the City of Detroit, is home to a large number of immigrants. This fact makes voting aged population a poor estimator of the eligible electorate for Hamtramck particularly, and so helps to deflate the turnout estimate.

Just as with incomes, house values, and party preferences, voter turnout rates vary significantly between the suburbs with residents from the most advantaged places generally turning out at the highest rates. However, these variations do not compare to the differences between suburban turnout rates generally and the deeply depressed voting rates managed by the residents of the distressed core cities.

²⁰³ Some scholars use votes as a percentage of registered voters instead. I do not for two reasons. Registration laws and procedures change from state to state and so such figures are often not really comparable. Furthermore, registration itself is part of the participatory process. In the end, what really matters is how many people, of those who could have voted, actually did vote. My measure is problematic in at least a couple of respects because it relies on census estimates of voting aged population (here, persons aged 18 and older). Not all voting aged residents are eligible to vote. This is especially a problem in cities with high immigrant populations and in smaller places with exceptionally high populations of institutionalized or imprisoned persons. The problem of immigrant populations inflating the number of eligible voters may be partially counterbalanced by the undercounting of urban populations. Regardless, general turnout trends and relationships are more important than minor errors caused by such population estimate problems. A more serious difficulty arises from the way that I have had to estimate voting aged population for places between Census reports. I use straight-line extrapolations between reports. As we are waiting for the 2000 Census figures, my voting aged population figures for the 1992 and 1996 elections are based on 1980-1990 vectors. Because population trends are not even, this has likely skewed turnout rate estimates. Preliminary Census estimates suggest that the rate of population decline in Detroit has slowed relative to what it was in the 1980s. Meanwhile, increases in population for fast developing suburbs like Canton have undoubtedly accelerated in the 1990s. These trends would affect the turnout differential shown here between Detroit and its faster growing suburbs. Specifically, Detroit's actual turnout rate was probably lower than it appears here because this estimate is based on a voting aged population figure that is probably a bit too low. The same can be said of the fast developing suburbs. Their actual turnout rates are probably somewhat lower than those that appear here since their rate of population increase may well have accelerated in the construction boom of the 1990s. All in all, I am confident that none of these issues are significant enough to invalidate the general snapshot picture of area turnout rates here.

²⁰⁴ I expect these numbers to change once 2000 Census data are used to re-adjust voting aged population figures for these places. See note above.

Defining Political Space

Although this snapshot indicates strong associations between urban space and voting, to understand better the relationships between the dynamic arrangement of people and opportunity in the region and the political structure and volatility of the present period, we need to consider voting trends across time.

To facilitate my analysis of relationships between metropolitan space and the structure of national party preferences, I sorted the places that I selected for the study in the previous chapter into four main geopolitical categories and three residual ones. The four primary groups are distressed central urban places; threatened white working-class places; middle-class places, and wealthy places. The specific criteria for defining these categories are listed in Figure C - 4. These characteristics were selected from Census Bureau indicators such that, taken together, they define places vis-à-vis each other by their age, their position in the regional housing market, the racial makeup of their residents, and their residents' economic well-being. As such, these criteria access, directly or indirectly, most of the spatial factors that are relevant to my earlier theoretical review of how places affect their residents' political interests and preferences.

All of the municipalities that are included in the study are listed by their geopolitical specifications in figure C - 5. Figures C - 6 through C - 9 include categorical indicators for every place selected for the study, for each of the four main geopolitical categories, respectively. These tables also show which criteria each place met for each of the categories, respectively, and indicate the inclusion of places therein.

- Distressed Central Cities

Generally speaking, the four main groups define a spectrum of municipalities that ranges from severely distressed to highly advantaged places. At the low end of the spectrum are cities that have low median incomes and house values, declining relative house values, very high numbers of black residents, high numbers of poor persons, and the oldest housing stock in the region.

The region's central cities have become distressed as a result of decades of disinvestment, middle-class and white flight, concentration of poverty, rising social dysfunction and declining municipal and private infrastructures. The toll of these trends has been enormous. Vast swaths of the City of Detroit have essentially collapsed, leaving neighborhoods, industrial complexes, commercial districts, and whole boulevards little more than ruins. As the central cities watched their tax bases disappear, demands on public services increased. Their educational, social, transportation, and public utility service systems have deteriorated. As a consequence, residents are frequently left without the normal services and securities of modern city government.

Despite all of these challenges Detroit continues to be among the most diverse places in the region. Some of Detroit's socioeconomic heterogeneity comes from the fact that the City retains a few extensive middle-class and wealthy neighborhoods. These are sometimes fortified with private security services. Furthermore, their residents are generally able to pay for individual services such as private schools, which help to insulate them and their children from the decay and dysfunction that surrounds them. Unfortunately, because of the extra expenses required to maintain a middle-class quality of life in the City, Detroit continues to lose its middle-class residents. The City's population is bifurcating into a large number of poor and moderate-income households on the one hand and a minority comprised of the fairly wealthy residents on the other.²⁰⁵

My general model of metropolitan political space predicts that these places will be associated with high levels of Democratic support and low voter turnout rates in national elections during the present period, the last 30 years or so.

- Wealthy Places

The region's well to do suburbs define the opposite, advantaged, end of the metropolitan spatial spectrum. Exceptionally high median household incomes and house values characterize the region's wealthy places. Furthermore, the positions of these places are improving as their property values continue to increase relative to the regional market. These areas have low numbers of black residents and insignificant poverty rates.

Substantively, these suburbs are worlds apart from the urban core. Their extensive upper-scale neighborhoods are located far from the more obnoxious facts about this sprawling industrial region. Residents in these places enjoy the best public services for the best prices. The public amenities that many of them enjoy are of a quality more normally associated with private services, schools, or country clubs. These advantages seem to be unshakably secure as the wealthier residents of the region continue to seek refuge and opportunity in these places.

My general model of metropolitan political space predicts that these places will be associated with high levels of Republican voting and high voter turnout rates in national elections during the present political period, the last thirty years or so.

- Threatened White Working-Class Places

Threatened white working-class places are economically and physically closest to the central cities. Though they are suburbs, they do not fulfill the conventional suburban image as secure leafy refuges for the middle-class. Rather, many of the residents of these places are materially insecure, positioned as they are between

²⁰⁵ See Alvaro Cortes, Kristin Palm, Marion Shipp, Charles Smith, and Peter Zeiler, *A Comprehensive Housing Policy for the City of Detroit* (Detroit: Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Wayne State University, 1999).

those who have made it and those who are challenged regularly by poverty and under-employment.

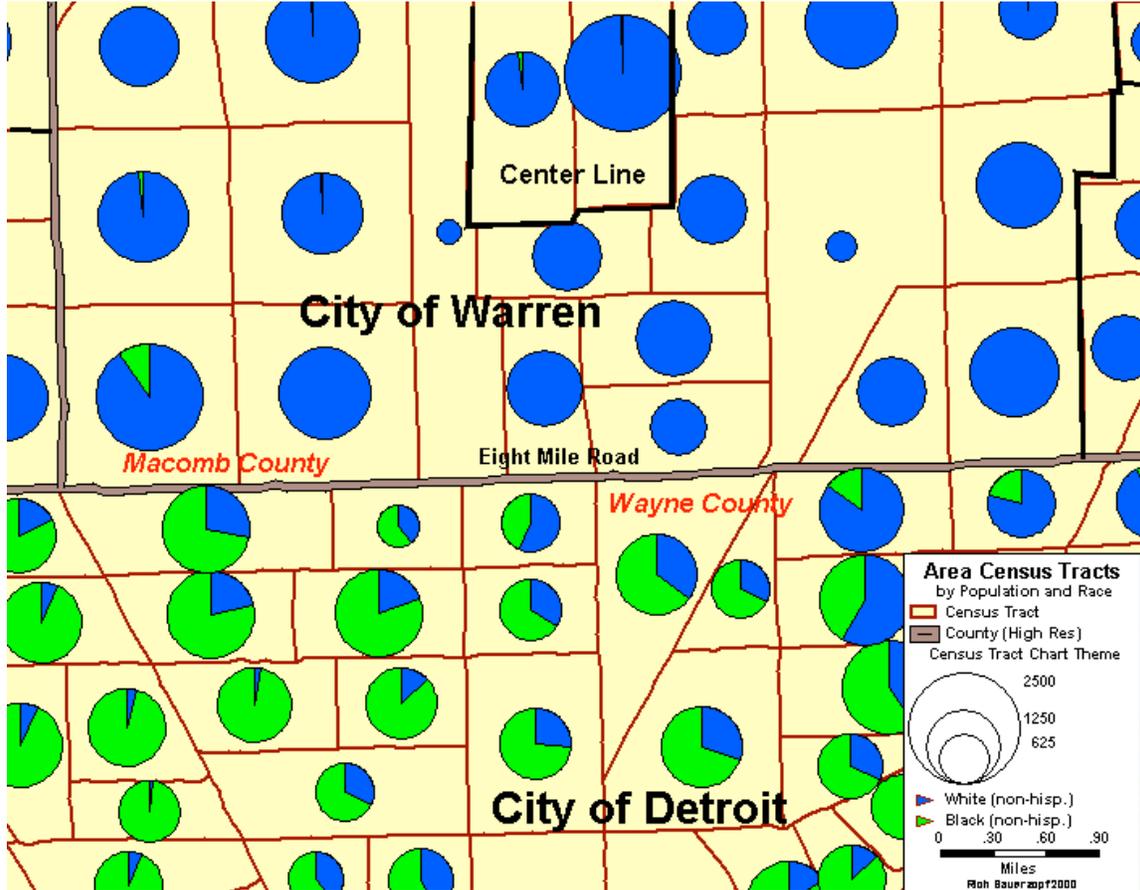
The economic status of these residents is mirrored in their physical location. Housing values and incomes in the threatened white working-class suburbs range from regional averages to numbers significantly below these values. Much of their housing is older and less attractive, the product of post-war assembly line style construction. The relative housing market positions of these places slipped between 1980 and 1990. These suburbs' neighborhoods are generally located near to expressways, industrial complexes, commercial buildings and plazas, and other obnoxious things.

Though the overwhelming majority of persons living in these older suburbs are white and non-poor, many of these places border the distressed core cities with their large poor and minority populations. In short, the social, economic, and physical characteristics that make places suburban are not secure. There is relatively little protecting these places from the urban decline that has devastated Detroit.

These places are important from a geopolitical standpoint because they are ambiguously defined vis-à-vis traditional understandings of the differences between cities and suburbs. These suburbs are growing ever more like the central cities from which many of their residents came. They are ever less secure from economic decline and the in-migration of lower income black residents who also want to flee the core but whose first stop will necessarily be these increasingly affordable suburbs.

Efforts by residents to keep lower income and minority households out of these suburbs, and so preserve the most powerful symbol of suburban distinction that these places retain, their whiteness, are likely to prove increasingly difficult. The residents of these places, who fled the central cities but cannot afford to keep running, are therefore becoming trapped in suburbs that are increasingly like distressed central cities. The city is catching up with these places and their residents need only look across the boundary into the pockmarked and crime-ridden remnants of their old city neighborhoods for a reminder of what that can mean.

My critical hypothesis predicts that these suburbs will be associated with electoral volatility (swinging patterns of party support) and depressed voter turnout rates in presidential elections during the present political period, the last thirty years or so.



- Middle-Class Suburbs

Middle-class suburbs constitute the fourth category and are located economically and geographically between the threatened white-working class suburbs and the wealthy suburbs. These areas have above average median household incomes and house values. Their populations are almost exclusively white and non-poor. Their housing stock is newer and in many, housing is still being constructed on what undeveloped land remains.

If recent trends in area land consumption continue, however, these places will become the region's next declining suburbs. Certainly, many of the ingredients are already in place. Residential neighborhoods are often found relatively close to major shopping malls, expressways, gargantuan commercial strips, office complexes, a few newer factories, and similar amenities that were they to decline, would be much more obnoxious than they already are. In other words, these places really are just newer versions of what the inner-ring suburbs were in the 1940s and 1950s. They are not qualitatively different from them in the way that the wealthy suburbs tend to be. Furthermore, developers are constructing housing and other developments in these places so rapidly that they are in

serious danger of running out of developable land soon. This is a major problem that has trapped the inner-ring suburbs in a state of decline. However, for the time being, their populations are growing and their housing remains competitive on the regional market.

A few of the region's places do not fall into the four primary geopolitical categories because the conditions that define them straddle some of the category criteria in ways that cannot be accommodated for otherwise. These categories are:

- **Distressed White Places:** Only Hamtramck falls into this category. Along with Highland Park, Hamtramck is completely surrounded by the City of Detroit. This enclave city is still predominantly white but is otherwise distressed.
- **Threatened Transitional Places:** These are places that meet all of the criteria of threatened white-working class places except for the fact that they have significant black populations. The assumption implied by the term transitional is that the percentages of their residents who are black will continue to increase and their economic status will continue to decline.
- **Middle-Class Transitional Places:** Only Southfield fits this category, which was created to accommodate the fact that Southfield is essentially a middle-class suburb with a large and growing black population. Southfield is on the road to becoming *the* region's black middle-class suburb.

Again, the specific criteria for these categories are laid out in Figure C - 4. Figure C - 10 is a map that illustrates the cities and suburbs included in this study by the geopolitical categories to which they have been assigned. Although none of the criteria used to define these places are specifically locational, that is, based on geographic location per se, this map reflects the region's social and economic geography more generally.

A Methodological Note

Following is a presentation of electoral indicators that show how constituencies from selected Detroit area municipalities performed in presidential elections from 1960-1996. Because the geopolitical positions of these places are defined by their standing in 1990, this analysis is made somewhat more complicated by the fact that there have been so many changes in the region between 1960 and 1990.²⁰⁶

The problem could be resolved by re-categorizing places with each successive Census. Analyzing such shifting groups of localities might be appropriate if the only goal were to identify and analyze the fairly precise geopolitical structures in each decade. In this, one might hope to follow voters as they move from place to

²⁰⁶ See the quantitative spatial analysis of the region presented above.

place, but the aggregate data that are available through Census and voting records simply do not allow this.

Even so, such a project might not be without rewards for historical scholarship. However, I wish to show how the metropolitan area is arranged in ways that are relevant to politics today. Furthermore, I want to illustrate how, materially, economically, and politically, the region as a geopolitical structure has come to be what it is. In these pursuits, I identify dynamic pressures that are associated with the consistent structuring of Republican and Democratic preference in the more advantaged suburbs and the distressed cities respectively. And, I show that changes in the metropolitan area have distressed the inner-ring suburbs in ways that are associated with the inability of their voters to find a consistently attractive appeal in the messages of either political party.

Political Preference in the Present Period: Structure at the Poles and Frustration in the Middle

Who's Voting?

The cash currency of American politics is votes. If the cities and suburbs that we live in help to determine our voice in larger political discourses, then the numbers of votes that come from our places matter. In metropolitan America, central cities have been fighting a losing battle to bring sufficient votes to bear in national politics. Meanwhile, the suburbs have been able to bring ever-greater numbers of voters to the polls. The central cities' disadvantage has been compounded by the fact that their residents have become increasingly less likely to vote compared to suburban voters more generally.²⁰⁷ This study of metropolitan Detroit presidential election returns confirms these trends.

Figure C - 11 illustrates trends in the growth and decline of voting aged populations (potential electorates) for the four geopolitical categories used in this study. The figure's pie graph charts show that although the urban core contained a solid majority of the total sample's potential voters in the 1960 election, by 1972, the voting aged populations of these places had declined to well less than half of the sample total. By 1996, the urban core mustered little more than one quarter of the total voting aged population for all sample places. Even so, these places retained a slight edge over the working-class suburbs, which together comprise the next largest potential electorate in the region.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ See Richard Sauerzopf and Todd Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996," 35:1 *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1999), Peter Nardulli, Jon Dalager, and Donald Greco, "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections: An Historical View and Some Speculation," *PS Political Science and Politics* XXIX (September 1996). See also William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins," *Atlantic Monthly* 270 (July 1992).

²⁰⁸ Because these figures are based on straight-line extrapolations between Census reports, figures for the 1990s are relatively suspect since they are based on a continuation of the 1980-1990 trajectory. The figures for inner-ring working-class suburbs do not seem to follow a perfectly straight line from 1980-1996 on this graph. That is probably due to a rounding error.

Between 1960 and 1972, the inner-ring suburbs enjoyed the largest gains in potential voters as they picked up a flood of new residents fleeing the City of Detroit. Since that time, the working-class suburban potential electorate has been declining slowly, as middle-class and wealthy places have enjoyed steady gains. Though working-class suburbs comprised the second largest numbers of potential voters as recently as 1996, their decline prevented them from surpassing the central cities. Furthermore by 1996, the potential electorates of middle-class and wealthy places taken together exceeded the working-class place total. Indeed, by 1996, none of the geopolitical groups of places enjoyed a clear numeric advantage over the rest.

Although central urban and, later, working-class places diminished in their numbers of potential voters vis-à-vis the middle-class and wealthy places by this measure, voting aged population estimates for 1996 suggest that they should still be able to powerfully influence election outcomes for the region and, indeed, the state. However, when we trend actual electorates (the numbers of people who cast votes for president), we see a different picture. The distressed central urban places, the core cities, have experienced a relatively sharp decline in the numbers of their residents who actually vote. This has reduced the potential influence of central urban voters relative to declines indicated in Figure C - 11.

Figure C - 12 compares total numbers of votes for the four primary geopolitical categories and shows that while in 1960 the proportional distribution of votes for area places matched that for voting aged population, by 1996 the distressed cities fell into second place behind the working-class suburbs. Meanwhile, total votes cast for president from the wealthy and middle-class suburbs respectively came much closer to the numbers cranked out by the distressed central cities. In short, whatever proportional advantage the core cities maintained in numbers of potential voters was eroded by the fact that relatively fewer of their residents voted. Figure C - 13 illustrates the relationships between actual and potential electorates for each of the four primary geopolitical categories used in this study.

A brief look at voter turnout rates brings voting aged population and total returns together to illustrate how the likelihood that residents will vote can inflate or depress the influence that a place has in an election, apart from the size of its potential electorate. Turnout rates for all place categories have declined significantly in the present period, making changes for the categories somewhat difficult to distinguish. See figure C - 14. I have corrected for this problem by employing a method similar to that used by Nardulli, Dalager, and Greco in their 1996 county based national election study.²⁰⁹ Nardulli et al compared the election to election turnout rates of constituencies defined by geopolitical categories based on counties by showing rates proportional to U. S. figures. That is, for each election, they illustrated categorical turnout rates as percentages of national figures, allowing them to gauge the actual impact of differential fluctuations in the turnouts for groups of places over time.

²⁰⁹ See "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections."

I do the same thing for my pooled geopolitical constituencies, though I use Michigan turnout rates as my baseline. This type of correction shows changes in turnout rates in a way that illustrates the impact of the likelihood of a place's potential electorate to vote on the place's overall influence in elections.²¹⁰ Figure C - 15 shows that effective (proportional) turnout rates for the geopolitical categories used in this study have diverged significantly through the present period. Whereas early in the study period eligible residents from the four main categories turned out to vote at rates that were relatively close to the state-wide standard, by the 1996 election, trends left the distressed urban places far below state-wide turnout rates and wealthy places far above. This means that relative to the numbers of votes that these places could have returned, the distressed central cities were significantly disadvantaged vis-à-vis the wealthy suburbs. This is the case because during this period, central city residents became much less likely to vote than the residents of the better-healed localities. Meanwhile, middle-class and working-class suburban voting rates hovered near Michigan turnouts throughout this period, though the working-class inner-ring suburban turnout rates declined sharply relative to Michigan rates towards the end of this period. These findings are consistent with my general and critical models of metropolitan political space.

The substantive analysis that this data will support is quite simple: With all other factors being equal, the region's distressed central cities are not influencing presidential elections as strongly as they could be and wealthy places are impacting votes at rates significantly above those for other places in the area. Votes are the cash currency of electoral politics. If politicians are rational actors, then they will be most responsive to or be the most interested in the people who are most likely to vote, all other factors being equal. By this logic, the distressed cities have become more handicapped in the process of determining national policy than they otherwise should be, while the wealthier places enjoy more influence by cranking out proportionately larger numbers of votes.

Even more important than these facts are the reasons behind differential turnout rates. We can speculate on their effect but what do they mean? Aggregate data cannot answer this question because it cannot get into the heads of the people whose collective behavior is producing these results. Individual distinctions such as income and education are associated with higher turnout rates and perhaps as such, places just aggregate people by their habits and preferences.

Any coincidental explanation along these lines comes with serious implications. However, the alternative (but not exclusive) analysis comes with much more ominous implications for our polity: places may be generating many of the opportunities and perspectives normally associated with the group positions of individuals in the social structure. If this is true, then what we are seeing in the central cities may be alienation and withdrawal from a political system that is neglecting residents' needs. Meanwhile, the residents of wealthy places may be tied much more closely to that same geopolitical structure because it serves them

²¹⁰ Using state turnout figures is especially appropriate since presidential elections are won or lost in the Electoral College.

well. The implication of this line of reasoning is nothing short of differential citizenship, the end result of compromising the essential principles of our public philosophy, of equal protection and the idea of the United States as a truly representative democracy.

How are People Voting?

distressed central cities and wealthy suburbs

Figure C - 1 illustrates the distribution of presidential party preferences across the region in the 1996 election. As telling as the dispersion of vote choice in any one election can be, we need to track the party preferences of the region's place-based constituencies over time to understand the *dynamic* relationships between Detroit space and election trends. Figure C - 16 contains graphs illustrating the total votes for Democratic, Republican, and major third party candidates that were returned from each of the study's four main geopolitical categories from the 1960 to 1996 elections.

Though the distressed central cities have suffered from declining turnouts and voting aged populations, they have continued to contribute large numbers of votes to Democratic tallies. Indeed, central city Democratic vote totals have not changed much since 1972. This is the case because most of the decline in the numbers of votes cast for president from the core cities has come at the expense of the Republicans. The concentration of Democratic support in the central cities has enabled these places to continue to influence national elections in Michigan substantially, even in the face of huge losses in the numbers of votes that the core cities can bring to bear in these contests.

The concentration of Democratic support in the distressed cities is illustrated particularly well by comparing central city returns to 1992 and 1996 tallies from the threatened white working-class suburbs. In these elections, the working-class suburbs, which contributed about as many major party votes for president as the central cities did, gave Ross Perot more votes than the central cities gave to Bush and Dole respectively. The central cities' extreme Democratic pluralities make it possible for them to wipe out huge numbers of Republican votes in the suburbs. As such, though the cities struggle to bring votes to bear in national elections, their influence over presidential elections remains far from negligible. This concentration of central urban Democratic support in the face of declining numbers of voters matches trends found by Todd Swanstrom and me in our study of 12 of the nation's largest central cities.²¹¹ Although there are no studies extant that compare metropolitan municipal data across multiple urban regions, these earlier findings suggest that Detroit area election trends are not unique.

At the opposite end of the metropolitan spatial spectrum are the region's wealthy suburbs. These graphs indicate that these places have given Republican presidential candidates strong and steady support throughout the study period. However, the advantage that the Republicans receive from these places is not

²¹¹ See "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996."

nearly as concentrated as the support which the central cities have come to give to the Democrats. Furthermore, though the numbers of voters that these places have been contributing to elections have been increasing steadily, they are still relatively small. In recent elections, these suburbs have produced only about half or fewer of the numbers of votes cranked out in either the core cities or the threatened white working-class suburbs.

In sum, although Republican candidates can count on fairly consistent margins of support from the wealthy suburbs, these votes are not at all as critical to Republican victories as the enormous central city Democratic pluralities are for the Democrats. If metropolitan Detroit were comprised only of advantaged suburbs and distressed central cities, every Democratic presidential candidate would have crushed his Republican opponent in regional vote tallies during the present period. Fortunately for the Republicans, the region is also comprised of working-class and middle-class suburbs.

These findings are consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space.

working-class and middle-class suburban votes

The region's threatened white working-class suburbs have sent steady numbers of voters to the polls throughout the present period. In part, this reflects the fact that the size of their potential electorates, or the numbers of voting aged persons who live in them, have remained relatively stable since the beginning of the seventies. See again Figure C - 11. This fact itself suggests that all is not going well for these places. Regardless of that, electoral stability in these places ends with the size of their actual electorates, the numbers of people who vote for president in any given election. When we look at which candidates the voters of these places are casting ballots for we see a considerable degree of volatility. That volatility is further expressed in the disproportionately high numbers of votes from these suburbs for Ross Perot. More specifically, Perot's success in these places suggests considerable dissatisfaction within them with the major parties. These findings are consistent with my critical hypothesis regarding the political effects of these suburbs.

The same trends of volatility and third party support are evident in the area's middle-class suburbs, if to a lesser extent. However, these places gave the Republicans relatively more support in every election. The middle-class suburbs are distinguished from the threatened suburbs also by the steady and continuing growth in the numbers of votes that they contribute to presidential elections. The fact that the numbers of eligible voters living in these places has been increasing, contrary to the stagnancy of the working-class suburbs, undoubtedly contributes to the growth of their actual electorates.

Party Choice

The above analysis tells us something about the influence, direction, and stability of area electorates. However, the numbers of votes that are cast vary so much

across these places and between elections, that it is difficult to compare concentrations of partisan support between places and elections. Nevertheless, such comparisons are critical to understanding the more essential associations between the places that make up the region and the political preferences of their residents.

Changes in the concentration of partisan support over time can be better illustrated by adjusting for differences in the sizes of area electorates. I have done this by comparing the percentage of major party votes that went to Republican and Democratic candidates from these constituencies for all of the elections covered by this study. Figure C - 17 shows four stacked bar graphs that compare the percentages of the major party votes returned from these places for the Democratic and Republican candidates for president, for all of the elections included in this study. Each of these graphs has a white line positioned at the 50 % mark to help show which candidate won a plurality from a given geopolitical constituency, for a given election.

central city and wealthy suburban party preferences

This presentation shows clearly the growing intensity of Democratic support coming from the distressed central cities. It also shows the relatively stable and substantial levels of support for Republican candidates in the region's wealthy places. But there are differences. The tendency of voters from wealthy places to support Republican candidates has not been quite as strong as the concentrations of support that the Democrats have enjoyed in the central cities. Furthermore, though central urban Democratic support has only increased in this period, wealthy suburban support for Republican candidates has flagged in recent elections. Additionally, relative central city Democratic support increases with every election from 1972 to 1996 with the exception of an almost imperceptible dip in 1988. However, changes in levels of party support for the wealthy places, though relatively small, fluctuate slightly in accord with national trends. On the contrary, central urban party preferences have only gotten more Democratic, in opposition to fluctuations in national tallies.

middle-class suburbs

Middle-class places have supported the parties in a way that is much more in sync with national trends with the exception that their support for Republican candidates consistently exceeds national rates. Though Democrats did better in these places in years where the Democratic candidate won the national election, Republicans still tended to carry these places. The exception is 1968, a year in which these places gave the Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey a slight edge, though Republican Richard Nixon beat Humphrey in the national election. Since that election, Republicans carried these suburbs every year except for 1996, when their voters gave Bill Clinton a razor thin plurality. Like the other two suburban categories, the middle-class suburbs supported Republican candidates most strongly in the middle elections of the present period. However, that support is softer and more volatile election to election compared to what the Republicans enjoyed from the wealthy suburbs.

threatened white working class places

Since 1972, voters' partisan preferences appear to have fluctuated more wildly in the region's threatened white working-class suburbs than in the other places that make up the region. Compared to the other suburbs included in this study, these places gave Republican candidates comparatively less support in every election. Even so, support for Democratic candidates declined sharply beginning with the 1972 election, a trend that is also evident in returns from the middle-class and wealthy suburbs. This trend in suburban party preferences was not reversed until 1988. Declining Democratic support in the Suburbs through the 1970s and 1980s ran in complete opposition to the pattern of increasing Democratic support witnessed in the region's distressed core cities.

High levels of volatility in party preference, in combination with lower overall levels of support for either party, have caused the inner-ring suburbs to swing between the parties near to the 50 % mark, often crossing it. In the process, voters in these places have frequently given majority support to one party only to take it away in favor of the other party in the next election. As these suburbs have flip-flopped in their partisan support, the levels and directions of their partisan choices in presidential elections have come close to matching national trends. Indeed, these places predicted the national victories of candidates with perfect accuracy except for 1968, when they supported Democrat Hubert Humphrey and 1976, when they gave Republican Gerald Ford a very slight lead over Democrat Jimmy Carter, the national victor. To further facilitate comparisons of party preferences among these geospatial groups, I have superimposed the data from Figure C - 17 in a line graph in Figure C - 18.

Volatility in the Present Period

White working-class voters have been identified as a critical swing constituency in national politics during the present period. The volatile party preferences of these voters have certainly contributed to the most essential problem of our time for both the political parties, which is the inability of either to solidify a consistent electoral majority. This has also been a problem for those political analysts who have attempted to find structural explanations for national election politics in the present period.

I have quantified the volatility of place based electorates in a statistic that I call the index of volatility. The instrument is calculated as the difference in the percent party plurality registered by a given constituency between consecutive presidential elections. The index only measures the magnitude of change in a constituency's party preferences between elections; it does not indicate the direction of change or whether that change translated into group movement from majority support for one party to another.

The index is defined precisely in Figure C - 19, which also includes a table of volatility scores for the 48 individual municipalities (places) included in this study. These scores are averages of all of the volatility scores for each of these

places for all of the elections included in this study. The table also indicates the geopolitical designations of each locality. The working-class suburbs dominate the upper end of the range of average index of volatility with few exceptions. Only a handful of these suburbs had low enough average levels of volatility to fall into the bottom half of the table and none were included among the 17 places that registered the highest average levels of stability (lowest levels of volatility) in party preference.

Voters from the region's middle-class suburbs returned more stable election-to-election party preferences throughout this period compared to the working-class suburbs. Their party preferences were not *that* stable, however. Among the 17 places included in the study that had the most stable party preferences, only two are middle-class places. These 17 places included all of the six distressed urban places except Inkster and seven of the nine wealthy places. The balance is comprised of threatened transitional places and Hamtramck, the only distressed white place. Southfield, the other category defining city, ranked towards the median by this measure.

Just as with turnout rates and party preferences, volatility is distributed across the region in a way that is associated with the area's material and social geographic structure generally. The map in Figure C - 20 shows a strong correlation between volatility and the material, economic, and demographic patterns that define space in the region. Places that are especially wealthy or distressed show very stable average levels of election-to-election party support.

The short conclusion that can be drawn from this map is that voters' political preferences are generally more consistent or more structured in those of the region's places that are most rigorously defined by their social and economic position within the metropolitan region. On the other hand, the most ambiguously defined places in the region, the inner-ring working-class suburbs, have voters who, as a group, are much more likely to shift their party preferences from one election to the next. A disproportionate percentage of Macomb County's municipalities, many of which are quintessential working-class suburbs, are highly volatile by this measure. This confirms Stanley Greenberg's analysis of these suburbs as a major source of swing votes in Michigan.²¹²

Figure C - 21 illustrates index of volatility figures for the study's geopolitical categories. These values are trended through time over the entire study period. The upper line graph illustrates pooled index of volatility figures for these places. These values are calculated from pooled voting statistics, which is to say that for a given geopolitical category, such as wealthy suburbs, all of the Democratic votes for president for all of the municipalities within that category are pooled together. The same is done for Republican votes for president. These figures are then used to calculate percent major party pluralities. These pooled pluralities are then used to calculate each inter-election change in percent major party plurality, the index of volatility, for each of the given categories. In other

²¹² See *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

words, the geopolitical categories themselves, as opposed to the individual localities that make them up, are used to define the constituencies from which these index of volatility figures are calculated.

The line graph that appears at the lower end of the figure illustrates average index of volatility figures for the primary spatial groups in the study. These figures begin with index scores calculated for all of the individual municipalities that make up the four primary geopolitical categories severally. These individual municipal figures are then averaged for each category. Comparison of the two graphs indicates that trends for the pooled index of volatility figures generally match those for the average figures. This comparison helps to validate our consideration of the voters of these categories as comprising distinct constituencies for this analysis. This is the case because averaged figures might mask large differences among the municipal constituencies that make up a given category, especially if those differences coincided with the size of individual municipal electorates. Since trends in averaged and pooled figures match each other relatively well, we can be surer that the geopolitical categories as they are constructed here tell us something about the structure of volatility in the metropolitan area. The smaller inset bar graph in Figure C - 21 shows pooled category index figures for the four geopolitical groups, averaged for all of the election interstices across the period.

The two line graphs in Figure C - 21 show that electoral volatility in the region's working and middle-class suburbs increased sharply for 1968-1972. These figures account for much of the higher average levels of volatility registered for these places overall and illustrated in the inset bar graph of average index figures. The high levels of volatility for these places at this time reflect their voters' dramatic shift from supporting Democrat Hubert Humphrey in 1968 to Republican Richard Nixon in 1972. For the Detroit region, this was the realigning election that could have been, but wasn't. The movement of working- and middle-class suburban constituencies to the Republican Party in 1972 was not followed by a solid and lasting shift in the regional structure of party preference in favor of the Republicans. But for a brief time, Republicans enjoyed greater levels of support from these places. The decrease in volatility for the working- and middle-class suburbs over the next two elections reflects a "settling in" of these constituencies into a pattern softer and not-so-stable Republican support.

In terms of party preferences, the 1970s and early 1980s was a wild ride in the region's working- and middle-class suburbs. For the voters of the region's white working-class suburbs especially, high levels of volatility during this period may have resulted from voters' subjection to intensely conflicting class and geopolitical pressures. For individuals, this was a time of economic stagnation and price inflation. These challenges were compounded by numerous social challenges, which stemmed in part from political conflict over Vietnam and the disruption of traditional social values associated with the civil rights movement and social and sexual revolutions of the late sixties and seventies. The economic demise of Detroit, and the attendant flight of its white and middle-class residents in the wake of the 1967 riots and the 1973 election of Detroit's first black mayor,

Coleman Young, added a geographic component to the social class pressures already faced by many residents of these places.

effective volatility

The level of electoral volatility associated with a given place suggests a number of things about the place's voters potentially. But changes in the party preferences of a place-based constituency are of greatest consequence insofar as they effect actual regional, state, or national election outcomes. The ability of places to change the results of general elections through shifts in their voters' partisan preferences depends on a combination of the size of their electorates and the magnitude of volatility that they bring to the polls. For instance, all things being equal, a small shift in party preference coming from a very large place, such as the City of Detroit, can have a greater impact on system-wide election outcomes than might a tiny constituency that undergoes a huge shift in party support.

In order to gauge the effects of electoral volatility for the places that make up the region, I developed a measure I call the Index of Potential Effective Volatility. This instrument shows the percentage of the region's votes that change as a result of a swing in a constituency's partisan preferences. Figure C - 22 defines this measure and shows that between 1968 and 1972, the shift of the region's white-working class suburbs towards Nixon accounted for just shy of 15% of the votes cast in the region. In other words, had the 1972 balance of the partisan preferences of these voters remained identical to that of 1968, Democrat George McGovern's regional vote take would have increased by nearly 15 %, an enormously significant figure.

After 1972, shifts in the party preferences of the voters of these places have continued to have the largest impact on regional election outcomes. 1980 is the only exception to this, when shifts in the party preferences of voters in the central cities had a slightly greater impact. With this one exception, the working-class suburbs have been and continue to be the region's biggest source of swing votes.

The results for the region's distressed central cities are just as telling. Though central city electorates comprised the largest portion of voters in the region throughout much of the period, *changes* in the party preferences of these voters have not had much of a *marginal* impact on regional vote tallies since 1972. This is the result of the fact that the party preferences of the central city voters have shifted so slowly during this period, relative to the other places that make up the region. Changes in the party preferences of voters from the region's wealthy suburbs have also had relatively little impact on regional vote tallies. This stems from a combination of the stability of the party preferences of these voters and the relatively small size of this constituency in relation to the region as a whole.

Figure C - 23 lists index of effective volatility figures for all of the cities and suburbs included in the study, averaged across the study period. I have included this table here primarily for informational purposes, since grouped figures are much more informative owing to the fact that these municipalities vary so greatly in size. One comparison from this table is especially worthy of note however. The City of Detroit weighs in with the highest average level of effective volatility, contributing partisan swings that account for a study-wide

average of over three- percent of all votes cast for president in the region. The City of Warren, Detroit's most well known white working-class suburb located just across the border in Macomb County, produced inter-election partisan swings that accounted for nearly one percent of those votes. However, today Warren's population is roughly one tenth of the size of Detroit's. This further illustrates the disproportionate magnitude of electoral volatility that the region's working-class suburbs are capable of effecting.

The Normality of Volatility and the Eccentricity of Stability

Weak and ever shifting levels of support for the two major parties have defined national election politics throughout the present period. The weak and fluctuating party preferences of the working-class suburban voters in this study follow national election trends closely. In this light, these voters' choices are not the exception, but more the rule. Rather, it is the region's distressed central cities and wealthy suburbs, with their strong and stable levels of party support for the Democrats and Republicans respectively, that are exceptional.

I have quantified relationships between the party preferences of area constituencies, as defined by the four spatial categories used in this study, with the choices of voters in the balance of the State of Michigan and the metropolitan area.²¹³ To accomplish this, I used the index of difference, which measures how distant the party preferences of a place's voters are from those of a larger electorate.²¹⁴

Basically, the index compares percent party pluralities for places (geopolitical categories) and the larger systems in which they are included (the state and metropolitan area here). In simple terms, the index works by subtracting the percent party plurality figure for a place from that of the state or metropolitan area. Therefore, if the party preferences of the place and the state or region to which they are compared are equal, then the value of the Index would be zero. On the other hand, if they are as opposite from each other as they could possibly be, with 100 % of the voters in a place voting for the Democratic candidate and all of the voters in the state voting Republican, the index would max out at 200. Of course, such a figure is practically impossible. It would also be theoretically impossible, save for the fact that I calculated the metropolitan and state percent party plurality figures that I use so that they do not include votes from the places that I compare them to. I adjusted the figures thus in order to gauge more accurately the divergence of the partisan preferences of the constituencies in question with the balance of voters in the state and metropolitan area. Like the index of volatility, this instrument is party blind, which means that it does not measure the partisan direction of difference between a constituency's vote choice and system preferences, only the magnitude difference.

²¹³ As defined by Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland Counties.

²¹⁴ David Olson developed this instrument in the early 1990s, when he was a doctoral student in political science at the Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy in the State University of New York at Albany.

Figure C - 24 shows that the party preferences expressed by Detroit's white working-class suburbs matched most closely those of Michigan and the tri-county Detroit region (Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties) throughout most of the study period. Indeed, the index value for these places nearly flat-lines for several of the elections in each of the comparative analyses, indicating the fact that the party preferences of the voters of these places essentially matched those for the balance of Michigan and the region. These relationships are so consistently close that a political pollster might be tempted to use poll results from these places as stand-ins for predicting regional and state party preferences in presidential elections.

However, no pollster in his or her right mind would consider using central city or wealthy suburban voters for such a purpose given these results. The gap between the party preferences of central city voters and the rest of those who voted in the region and state are very substantial. The region's wealthy places have returned party pluralities that have been quite consistently eccentric vis-à-vis regional and state preferences throughout the study period.

On the other hand, The region's distressed central city voters began the study period by returning party preferences that were relatively closer to those for the balance of the region and state. However, from 1964 through to the 1980s, the partisan direction of city returns became increasingly eccentric due to ever more concentrated levels of Democratic support. The party preference of central city voters became extremely Democratic by 1996. As a consequence, the only way that the index of difference for the central cities could get much higher would be if voters in the rest of the region and state were to move farther away from the cities, in a more Republican direction. In other words, by 1996, the party preferences of the region's central city voters were about as eccentric as they could be. The eccentricity of central city voting in the Detroit region is essentially consistent with the figures that Todd Swanstrom and I calculated for a sample of the nation's twelve large cities. However, the City of Detroit, which was included in our study, returned the most extremely eccentric party preferences of all of our cities during the 1990s.²¹⁵

Figure C - 25 maps Michigan base index figures for each of the municipalities included in the study, averaged for all elections in the study period. This map shows that eccentric party preferences are associated with the region's municipalities that are most clearly defined by social and economic conditions. On the other hand, the middling places in the region, those that do not represent social and economic extremes, returned more "normal" party preferences, as defined by statewide party pluralities.

Conclusion

Along with ticket-splitting, the election-to-election volatility of Americans' party preferences that has come to define the present period has frustrated the efforts

²¹⁵ See "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996."

of both parties to construct electoral majorities large enough and stable enough to sustain consistent policy agendas. These conditions have confounded political analysts as well, and led many to argue that the era of structured national politics is over, that lack of structure is the new name of the game. Yet, this study shows that the conditions that define at least some of the places that comprise our metropolitan areas are associated with the party preferences of their voters. These conditions, *these places*, are also associated with the likelihood that residents will vote.

In simple terms, we know that the voting aged residents of the Detroit region's wealthy suburbs are very likely to vote and when they do, they are significantly more likely to vote for Republican candidates than for Democratic ones. On the other hand, the voting aged residents of the region's distressed central cities are rather unlikely to vote. However, almost all of those who do vote for president cast ballots for Democratic candidates.

The powerful associations that I have found between the most extremely defined places in the Detroit region and their residents' participation and preferences in presidential elections have significant implications for national politics. The fact that Republican candidates for president do not attract significant numbers of voters from Detroit's distressed central cities is disconcerting. It appears that Republican presidential candidates have no message for the residents of these places that is compelling enough to lead significant numbers of them to the polls and cast ballots for the GOP.

Republicans are not the only ones who should be concerned about this fact however. Anybody who accepts the most basic tenets of the American democratic public philosophy should be worried by the potential balkanization of politics that these results imply. Party preferences in the region's wealthy suburbs are not as concentrated as they are in the central cities. However, returns from these places also indicate a degree of political segregation. The separation of people by their political preferences can easily distort the kinds of broader democratic dialogues that must occur if we are to deal effectively with many of the social and economic problems that challenge us, both in our urban regions and in our national polity. In addition to these higher concerns, these findings are consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space and suggest that urban space is a good place to look for electoral structure in the present period.

However, when we look at the region's distressed white working-class suburbs, and to a lesser extent the middle-class suburbs, we get a different picture. The party preferences of the voters living in these places have been quite volatile. This is especially the case for the working-class suburbs. The unpredictability of these voters' party preferences are consistent with national election trends, as are the low and falling turnout rates associated with these suburbs. In short, present period voting in these places doesn't seem to be very well structured at all.

It may also be the case that the region's distressed central cities and wealthy suburbs do not really structure party preferences. Rather, these associations

could be explained by the aggregation of individuals within these cities and suburbs whose personal economic, racial, and social interests, taken together, account for consistent group patterns of political choice. From this perspective, in short, central city and wealthy suburban voters are not spatially structured groups, but rather are collections of people who for individual reasons happen to tend to engage presidential elections in consistent ways. From this view, the ambiguity and volatility of the party preferences associated with region's middling suburbs may be nothing more than the result of the fact that these places do not attract and retain residents by their political preferences.

Even if associations between the region's places and residents' political preferences are only matters of coincidence, they are still important. Votes are the cash currency of American electoral politics. Therefore, insofar as party preferences are aggregated by places, politicians will respond to places. The necessary result of this is the differential representation of citizens by the places that they live in. If the Republicans come to dominate national politics, central city residents will likely lose in policy debates that affect metropolitan places. Even the Republicans who live in these places will lose. Vice versa for wealthy suburbs and Democratic domination of the national agenda.

A more frightening possibility, however, is that my general model of metropolitan political space and my more specific hypothesis of the political effects of threatened white working-class suburbs are essentially correct. My general model of metropolitan space is based on the premise that very disadvantaged and very advantaged places do more than attract and retain residents by their political preferences, or by personal characteristics that predict these preferences. They also structure or form the political attitudes and actions of the people who live in them. They may do so by any of a variety or combination of related factors, all of which are rooted in the fact that the social and economic conditions that define these places are pretty extreme. The simplest of these factors are the social and material interests that are so strongly structured by these places. These conditions are likely to affect residents' political perspectives and preferences above and beyond many of individual factors that shape them.

In my critical hypothesis, I hold that the partisan ambiguity and volatility associated with threatened working-class suburbs are also structured by place. In this case, however, social and racial conditions pull residents' party preferences in one direction (Republican) while material circumstance pull them in another (Democratic). The result of these conflicting stresses or cross pressures is the greater difficulty by which the residents of these places find satisfaction with either political party's agenda. The results are political ambiguity (the fact that neither party tends to get high levels of support from these places), electoral volatility (the fact that party preferences tend to swing significantly between elections), and electoral withdrawal in the form of low voter turnouts.

The data presented support my general model of metropolitan space and my critical hypothesis of white working-class suburban effects. If my general

approach to urban political space is correct, that it structures residents' political attitudes and actions as well as reflects them, then we have a model that contributes to a structural understanding of American electoral politics in the present period. Unfortunately, we also have a number of potential but very serious implications for our national political society. As noted above, the aggregation of political preferences by place can lead to differential representation under certain circumstances. However, critical associations between metropolitan space and political perspectives and preferences may be much more ominous, for the places that are making up our metropolitan areas are becoming ever more distinct from each other in ways that are associated with political interests and preferences. As such, the places that we live in may be generating ever more extreme political differences among place-based constituencies. This is the recipe for political balkanization.

Unfortunately, as intriguing as the associations that this analysis have brought to light are, and as many questions as they raise as well as answer, the data presented here cannot resolve the question of how it is, precisely, that metropolitan space is related to political preferences. There is more aggregate work to be done. Though I do not believe that political structure of the Detroit region is entirely unique, the comparison of data from a number of representative metropolitan areas might serve to further confirm the national significance of the trends identified here. The above study also lacks data that can answer our most critical question. Do political differences between places reflect their residents' individual perspectives and preferences? Or, more critically, are these attitudes and actions also informed by the places that people live in? The following study seeks to answer this critical question by using survey data from the Detroit metropolitan area in a way that tests for the effects of geopolitical places, as defined here, on a range of respondents' attitudes and actions. The goal is to see if, after a number of individual characteristics are accounted for, the places that they live in still predict what they think about politics and how they engage politics.

PLACE, ATTITUDES, AND ACTION: THE GEOGRAPHY OF PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

The Structure of Metropolitan Political Space: Coincidental or Critical Effects?

Thus far in this section, I have shown that over the last 40 years or so the people of the Detroit area have segregated themselves, or have been segregated, by the cities and suburbs that make up the region. These places, which frame the region's social, economic, and political geographies, have become increasingly distinguished from each other by the racial identities of their residents, and by their residents' access to the goods and opportunities of metropolitan life. As people have become separated from each other thus, they have also become increasingly surrounded in their own cities and suburbs by neighbors who are likely to express similar preferences in national elections.

The associations that I have found between the social and economic geographies of the Detroit region and the voting choices of area residents are consistent with my general model of urban political structure. These findings also support my more critical cross pressures hypothesis about how threatened white working-class suburbs affect their residents' political interests and preferences.

Due to the limitations of the aggregate data used in my election study, however, I cannot say whether the associations between places and politics that I have identified are coincidental or critical. That is, we are left asking the questions: Do the political choices that distinguish place-based constituencies result merely from the sorting of residents amongst places by any variety of individual characteristics which might determine their political attitudes and actions? Or, more critically, are residents' political values and choices also affected by the places that they live in? To put these questions very simply, do people make the politics of the places that they live in, or do places make the politics of the people who live in them?

The Purpose of the Chapter

In this chapter, I seek to move closer towards answering these questions by testing the effects that places have on their residents' political attitudes and actions. Specifically, I will test whether places predict residents' political perspectives and choices above and beyond the effects of a variety of individual factors that are known to influence such things. These factors include race, age, income, sex, union membership, and level of education. If places do predict residents' political perspectives and preferences in addition to the effects of such individual attributes and circumstances, then we will have more evidence for the

position that places, at least as defined by this study, critically affect the divisions that shape and frustrate our national polity.

My general model of metropolitan political space informs my search for spatial effects. My model begins with the fact that our nation's large metropolitan areas sort residents by race, income, and other attributes and circumstances amongst a variety of distinct localities. I have grouped these places into four primary categories: distressed central cities, threatened white working-class suburbs, middle-class suburbs, and wealthy suburbs. Political differences between these places surely reflect the political perspectives and preferences that their residents bring with them. As it happens, these preferences can draw from the same personal attributes and circumstances that help to determine what kinds of cities and suburbs people are likely to move to in the first place. This is in essence how places exert coincidental place effects: They sort residents by individual attributes and circumstances that coincide with particular political interests and preferences. The end results of this are aggregate differences in the political preferences of place based constituencies.

However, owing to a variety of qualities and interests *intrinsic* to them, the places that make up our metropolitan regions may affect their residents' political perspectives and preferences beyond what their personal circumstances and attributes would predict. According to my model of metropolitan space, the aggregate political differences that we witness amongst the places that make up our metropolitan areas are not only reflections of the collective propensities of their residents. They are also affects of these places on their residents.

According to my general model of metropolitan political space, the intensity of challenges faced by the nation's large distressed central cities should draw their residents towards more liberal political values and Democratic identification and voting. My general model predicts that middle-class and wealthy suburbs will have the opposite effects on their residents' political perspectives and preferences.

In addition to testing for these general place effects, this portion of my research will test my more specific hypothesis regarding the most enigmatic and politically volatile places that make up our metropolitan regions, the threatened white working-class suburbs.

My model of these places relies on a cross-pressures hypothesis which views them as *socially* and *racially* aligned with the more prosperous middle-class and wealthy residential suburbs. That is, the residents of these suburbs are more likely to identify their localities as white middle-class suburbs than as central cities. Whatever social or cultural identification which residents of these places feel towards middle-class suburbia can only be reinforced by the alienation that many may feel towards the distressed central cities, an alienation charged with fears of the social and racial threats that these places represent. On social issues, therefore, these suburbs should effect conservative or "Republican" political views and may effect unsympathetic views towards blacks.

On the other hand, these places are facing mounting material challenges that have heretofore been more commonly associated with the nation's distressed central cities. Therefore, on *material issues*, these places should effect more progressive or "Democratic" views.

From this perspective, these places are not just midpoints between our distressed central cities, which are increasingly peopled with minority persons, and our wealthier white suburbs. Rather, they are torn between the social and material poles of the metropolitan region in ways that uniquely stress their residents.

My cross-pressures hypothesis predicts that white working-class suburbs will depress their residents' feelings of political efficacy and reduce the likelihood that they will vote. This model is also consistent with the prediction that these places will decrease the likelihood that their residents will identify with a party; cause their residents to be ambivalent towards the parties; encourage their residents to adopt a socially conservative "get tough on crime" stance; foster negative racial stereotypes amongst their residents; and generate opposition to affirmative action.

Methodology

To test for critical place effects, I use survey data from the 1989 Detroit Area Study (DAS).²¹⁶ This study taps numerous political attitudes and behaviors for a sampling of Detroit area residents.²¹⁷ These data are especially valuable for my purposes because Census Tracts corresponding to respondents' home addresses are recorded for most cases.

This geocoding permits researchers to identify survey respondents by the places that they live in, as long as these places are comprised of Census Tracts.²¹⁸ Once respondents are assigned to places, these localities can be tested alongside other variables for their ability to predict political behaviors and perspectives.

The 1989 DAS is particularly useful for my work because in it, respondents were asked a rich variety of political behavioral and attitudinal questions, many having to do with race, which are relevant to my general and specific models of political space. Furthermore, this survey was conducted after the present period of politics had matured and when associations between race, place, and politics consistent with my models were well established in metropolitan Detroit.

²¹⁶ See Steven J. Rosenstone, *Detroit Area Study, 1989: Political Participation in the Detroit Area* [computer file]. 2nd ICPSR Version, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, Department of Sociology, Detroit Area Studies [producer] 1989). The DAS is comprised of a series of detailed topical attitudinal surveys conducted in the Detroit metropolitan area by the Sociology Department at the University of Michigan and produced by the Detroit Area Studies for the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

²¹⁷ That is, residents of Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties. These counties include all of localities covered by my election study.

²¹⁸ Because this level of geocoding, along with answers to various survey questions, might allow a person to determine the identity of a given respondent, ICPSR makes the place codes for the 1989 Detroit Area Study available through a special license agreement only.

My effort to explore the effects of places on political perspectives and preferences using the 1989 Detroit Area Study is not unprecedented. In 1993, Cathy Cohen and Michael Dawson used data from this survey to test whether contextual poverty predicted any of a number of politically relevant attitudes and behaviors.²¹⁹ They used Census Tract data to define places in the City of Detroit by the percentage of persons living within them who were poor. In this, they sought to identify places by their depth of contextual or environmental poverty. After they sorted and coded selected places by a series of dummy variables, they used ordinary least squares regression and probit analysis to test for significant place effects.

Their study concluded that living in a poor neighborhood predicts certain of residents' political views and actions above and beyond what their sexes, races, incomes, and other selected individual characteristics do. Their findings support the general view that places affect their residents in political ways. More ominous are their specific findings, which suggest that by living in a poor neighborhood, a person is more likely to be alienated from politics regardless of his or her individual circumstances and attributes, including income, race, and age.

The spatial variables:

This portion of my study is modeled after Cohen and Dawson's work. The biggest difference between their design and mine is that I define place differently. Whereas Cohen and Dawson define places as Census tracts sorted by the percentage of persons who live within them who are poor, I use the four primary groupings of cities and suburbs that I used in my voting study.²²⁰

To these four spatial categories I add a fifth residual one, which includes respondents from all of the municipalities that are contained within my minor categories as well as those who lived in places not covered by my voting study.²²¹ I added this fifth group so that these five mutually exclusive variables, taken as a whole, would be comprehensive of all of the geocoded cases included in the 1989 DAS data set.

I coded these five spatial categories as a series of dummy variables and used the category "middle-class suburbs" as the spatial reference group for all of the models. Therefore, estimates of the effects of living in the area's distressed central cities, threatened white working-class suburbs, or wealthy suburbs on a respondent's answers to given queries can be interpreted in relation to the effects that living in the middle-class suburbs would have.²²²

²¹⁹ See Cathy Cohen and Michael Dawson, "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics," *American Political Science Review* 87 (June 1993).

²²⁰ This was possible since the 1980 Census tracts used to geocode the 1989 Detroit Area Study do not straddle any of the municipal boundaries that I use to define places in my study.

²²¹ For complete documentation of the parameters of my spatial categories and a comprehensive listing of the specific Detroit area localities included within them, see Appendix C.

²²² In other words, a positive association between residence in the region's distressed central cities and liberal values, as indicated by the analysis of these models, means that respondents are more likely to be

The dependent variables:

My list of dependent variables also differs from Cohen and Dawson's. Specifically, I test for the ability of places to predict whether respondents voted and for whom, and to predict their party affiliations. Furthermore, I test for spatial effects on respondents' attitudes on crime, on race, and on important and controversial political personalities contemporary to the survey. I also test the ability of places to predict responses to questions that gauge political efficacy and opinions on affirmative action. The specific dependent variables that I use are discussed in more detail below.²²³

The independent variables:

I saw no reason to change Cohen and Dawson's selection of individual-level (control) predictors except that I considered respondents' union membership in all of the models. When I analyzed respondents' opinions on criminal justice policies, I also tested whether they reported having been a victim of a crime.²²⁴ All of my models test the effects of respondents' income, education, race, sex, and age, and also whether they are poor just as Cohen and Dawson do. Since these variables have been shown to affect political attitudes and behaviors in many studies using survey research, it is most appropriate to test the predictive powers of place against them here.

Furthermore, I modeled my coding of all of the study variables that are measured on an interval scale after Cohen and Dawson's fractional approach. That is, I re-coded values for these variables, such as age, as fractions of 1. This approach facilitates the comparison of non-standardized ordinary-least-squares regression coefficients.

Analysis of models with dichotomous dependent variables:

When testing multivariate models with non-dichotomous dependent variables, Cohen and Dawson used ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression. I do too. However, when they analyzed models with dichotomous dependent variables, they used probit analysis whereas I use logistic regression or logit analysis.²²⁵

liberal for living in these places than they would be if they lived in the area's middle-class suburbs, all other variables accounted for.

²²³ Complete information on these instruments, including the specific wording of the questions asked and the formulae by which they are coded for this study, is included in Appendix D.

²²⁴ For these regressions, I took into account whether the respondent reported having been a victim of crime in the last 12 months.

²²⁵ OLS is problematic when applied to models with dichotomous dependent variables, which are generally coded zero or one. This is because OLS can lead to predicted values for dependent variables that are either greater than one or less than zero, either of which would be nonsensical. Probit and Logit avoid this problem as they estimate the *probabilities* that dichotomous dependent variables will equal one or zero, yes or no, voted or didn't vote, et cetera, given specified values for the independent variables (predictors) included in the model. See Alfred DeMaris, *Logit Modeling: Practical Applications* (London: Sage Publications, 1992) and Tim Futing Liao, *Interpreting Probability Models: Logit, Probit, and Other Generalized Linear Models* (London: Sage Publications, 1994).

There is effectively no difference between the outputs of these two techniques and therefore no reason why they cannot be used interchangeably.²²⁶

I selected logit for the ease with which it can be used to estimate the probability that a hypothetical (average) respondent will answer affirmatively to a given ‘yes or no’ question, such as whether or not the respondent voted.²²⁷

To test for the effects of places on the likelihood that a hypothetical or “average” respondent would give an affirmative answer to a dichotomous question, I calculated a probability estimate for the hypothetical respondent who “lives” in the place in question and an estimate for one who does not. I then compared the two (by subtracting one from the other).²²⁸ The result is a marginal probability estimate, which gauges the effect that living in a place has on the likelihood that the “average” respondent will answer affirmatively to the yes or no question that I want to test, all other predictors held constant.²²⁹

Although marginal probability estimates lack some of the ease of interpretation associated with OLS estimators, they are the most straightforward and most honest means of gauging the impact of selected attributes or circumstances on responses to yes or no questions.

²²⁶ See again Tim Futing Liao, *Interpreting Probability Models*.

²²⁷ Probability estimates are calculated by inserting specified values into the logit regression formula and calculating the result. The result is then transformed via a standard formula into a probability estimate. The hypothetical respondent (or case) used in all of the marginal probability calculations below is a non-poor, non-minority, male with survey average income, age, and education.

²²⁸ That is, I subtracted the probability estimate for the hypothetical respondent who did not “live” in the spatial category in question from the estimate for the same respondent who did “live” in that kind of place. I calculated marginal probabilities thusly for every regression model in which logit analysis showed a statistically significant spatial effect.

²²⁹ Marginal probabilities estimate the change in the likelihood that a hypothetical respondent will answer affirmatively to a yes or no question (dependent variable) caused by a specific change in one of that respondent’s characteristics or circumstances (independent variables).

Such marginal probability estimates are calculated by creating a hypothetical (average) respondent (defined by values for all of the independent variables) and using logit model coefficients (and a transformation function) to estimate the probability that that respondent will answer positively to the question that we are interested in predicting. Then, we change the hypothetical respondent’s characteristic or circumstance (independent variable) that we want to test in the way that we want to test it. For example, we might increase the hypothetical respondent’s age by ten years or we might want to have that respondent living in a distressed central city whereas in the previous probability calculation, the hypothetical respondent was not living in such a place. We calculate a new probability estimate based on the adjustment made in the hypothetical respondent’s circumstance or characteristic in question.

By comparing (subtracting one from the other) the two probability estimates thus calculated, we can estimate the impact that the specified change in the hypothetical respondent’s circumstance or characteristic in question (independent variable) would have on the probability that the respondent would answer yes to the question (dichotomous dependent variable).

Low Ns:

Unfortunately, there are problems with my use of the 1989 Detroit Area Study. This survey was designed to test racial attitudes especially. For this purpose, black and central city residents were over-sampled. This facilitated Cohen and Dawson's work because it enabled them to find reasonable, if not ideal, numbers of respondents for each of their place categories. However, suburban respondents were effectively under-sampled for my purposes. The result is low numbers of respondents for each of the three suburban spatial categories used in this study. Since the 1989 DAS is the best survey available for my purposes, I use it despite this problem. I discuss the consequences of this weakness in my review of findings below.²³⁰

The Findings

General findings:

It is not my purpose to develop comprehensive models of political attitudes and behaviors through regression analysis. Rather, my primary goal is to find out whether places predict political attitudes and actions even after the effects of all of the most likely individual-level predictors have been taken into account. In keeping with this purpose, my discussion emphasizes the magnitude and significance of regression coefficients and partial probability estimates for places and other predictors, and does not review measures of overall model performance.

The Results:

- *Overview*

Of all of the independent (control) variables tested in my models, race was the strongest predictor of political actions and attitudes.²³¹ The race variable is dichotomous and indicates whether or not a person is black.²³² Sex, age, union membership, and especially income and education also tended to predict

²³⁰A detailed summary of the models and a comprehensive report of the coding of variables used in this study, as well as a summary table of survey responses by place category, are provided in Appendix D. Also in Appendix D is a list of conditions under which some respondents were included in one of the three suburban spatial categories used in the election study who did not live in any of the localities explicitly defined by the study category. Limited numbers of respondents were added to the study thusly to increase the numbers of cases that could be included in each of the suburban spatial categories. These few inclusions are justified on substantive grounds. Whereas there is insufficient Census data to define every municipality in the metropolitan area by the spatial categories used in the election study, there are a number of localities that can be clearly identified as fitting into one of these categories based on partial Census data and substantive observation. These few municipalities are left out of the election study but small numbers of 1989 Detroit Area Study respondents from them are included in this analysis.

²³¹ Again, see appendix D for complete results for all of the models tested.

²³² This is a reasonable measure since the Detroit area's population is almost entirely comprised of persons who are either white or black. So the overwhelming majority of respondents who are not black are, in fact, white.

respondents' answers to selected queries. However, the predictive power of these factors varies considerably from model to model.

The strength and direction of most of the individual-level predictors were consistent with common sense and the body of survey-based political behavioral and attitudinal research. There was one notable surprise in these findings, however. Individual poverty turned out to be a poor predictor of political attitudes and actions except when it came to feelings of political efficacy, which poverty influenced significantly.

Places, as I define them, did not predict political attitudes and preferences as well as many individual factors, though there are significant exceptions to this. Rather places tended to reinforce the effects of individual characteristics associated with majorities of their residents. In short, my analysis suggests that when places impact politics, they tend to enhance the effects of the social and economic factors that define most of their residents.

The fact that places frequently played a secondary role in predicting political attitudes and actions may reflect survey sampling problems and related issues as well as any actual weakness of place as a critical source of political attitudes and actions.²³³ As I noted earlier, this survey was not sampled with the intent of testing the place effects that I am interested in. It can be used for that purpose, but only with the understanding that it is a less than ideal instrument. As such, places may have stronger actual effects on politics than are indicated by these findings.

On the other hand, the 1989 DAS was sampled to find racial effects. This analysis finds strong and highly significant racial effects in nearly all of the models tested. However, these results are more than the products of good sampling. Understanding politics in the Detroit region begins with the knowledge that the region's political society is deeply divided by race. This division is caused by, and given expression in, racial segregation and the separation of classes of suburban whites by their distance from the region's African American core.

- *Voting and other forms of political participation*

As vote tallies from the places that make up our metropolitan regions change, the balance of political power amongst them shifts accordingly. These shifts can have significant repercussions for national politics insofar as the various place-based constituencies found within our urban regions represent distinct or competing political interests and perspectives.

²³³ In particular, the place categories used in the aggregate study could not be broken down into more tightly defined categories, which might have shown stronger place effects, because the numbers of respondents from each of the smaller suburban categories would have been too low for statistically significant analysis.

A good case in point is the decline of the electoral influence of the nation's large central cities. The ability of central cities to influence national politics has diminished as the numbers and proportion of votes that they bring to bear in national elections have fallen.²³⁴ As William Schneider warned almost a decade ago, these trends have led to the marginalization of the urban agenda within the national political discourse.²³⁵

As my election study shows, Detroit's distressed central cities have suffered a severe decline in the contributions that they have been able to make to regional vote tallies in recent decades. As central city electorates decline, so must the influence of central city issues over national politics.

Some of this decline stems from the continued suburbanization of the region's population. But falling central city turnout rates have further limited the numbers of votes that these cities can bring to bear in national elections. On the other hand, the more prosperous suburbs of the Detroit region have enjoyed increasing numbers of residents and higher voter turnout rates. Both of these factors combined to increase the influence of the advantaged suburbs on national elections at the expense of the central cities.

Understanding the causes of variations in turnout rates across our metropolitan areas is essential to a more comprehensive understanding of the political structure of metropolitan America. The fact that turnout rates have fallen faster in central cities than they have in other places may be caused by the tendency of central cities to attract and retain disproportionate numbers of persons whose personal characteristics and circumstances make them less likely to vote, and vice versa.²³⁶ This is almost certainly part of the story. Disproportionate numbers of central city residents have lower incomes and/or lower levels of education. These characteristics are consistently associated with lower voter turnout rates. 1989 DAS survey respondents with more modest incomes and lower levels of education were no exception.

However, it may also be the case that central cities themselves, or environmental conditions specific to them, are somehow depressing voter turnout rates. If this is true, then the social and economic marginalization suffered by so many of the residents of these places are compounded by a political demobilization that is driven, at least in part, by the places in which they live.²³⁷

The Findings

²³⁴ See Richard Sauerzopf and Todd Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996," 35:1 *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1999) and Peter Nardulli, Jon Dalager, and Donald Greco, "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections: An Historical View and Some Speculation," *PS Political Science and Politics* XXIX (September 1996).

²³⁵ See "The Suburban Century Begins."

²³⁶ William Schneider makes this claim. See "The Suburban Century Begins," *Atlantic Monthly* 270 (July 1992).

²³⁷ See especially, Cohen and Dawson, "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics."

I calculated partial probability estimates for the effects of places on voting using logit results from my analysis of the 1989 Detroit Area Study. These estimates suggest that residence in the region's distressed central cities reduced the likelihood that the "average" respondent voted in the 1988 presidential election by over 22% compared to the effect of residence in the middle-class suburbs.²³⁸ This is evidence that something about life in central cities may be demobilizing residents. That is, it suggests that these cities are exerting critical political effects upon their residents.

Disproportionate numbers of the residents of these places suffer from lower incomes and lower levels of education. Residents with lower levels of education and income were significantly less likely to vote than others. Therefore, it seems that the region's distressed central cities only depressed further the already reduced chances that many of their distressed residents would vote.

Contrary to the negative effects of central cities, and the lower incomes and levels of education that characterize most of their residents, being black increased the likelihood that the "average" survey respondent would vote by almost ten percent. Indeed, being black significantly increased the likelihood that an otherwise "average" respondent would engage in every kind of participation that I tested for, which in addition to voting includes giving money to political candidates and organizations, attending political meetings, and working for a political candidate, party, or group.

These findings may reflect the mobilization of much of Detroit's African American community through churches, community groups, and other organizations that contribute to the City's reputation for populist politics. It may also reflect the obvious relevance of national politics to the rights and opportunities of African American citizens.

These estimates suggest that if the region's central cities were not depressing voter turnout, the area's black residents, almost all of who live in these places, would vote in higher numbers. Cities, and the African Americans who live in them, would have a greater impact on national politics. If the segregation of African Americans into distressed central cities depresses black turnout and, therefore, black political power, then segregation is more than the result of the marginalization of African Americans; it is also an election to election cause of it.

Higher levels of education and income made respondents more likely to vote. However, residence in a wealthy suburb, the places most filled with people who enjoy the privileges of education and wealth, actually *decreased* the likelihood that a respondent would vote by about 22 % compared to residence in a middle-class suburb. This effect is the same as that for central cities. Residence in these

²³⁸All partial probabilities are interpreted in this manner. They are calculated as the affects of residence in a place on the likelihood that a respondent will respond positively to a question relative to the effect that residence in a middle-class suburb would have on the same respondent. The respondent is hypothetically defined as a non-poor white man with a survey sample average income, age, and education. For a review of partial probability estimation parameters used for the logit models, including a definition of the prototypical respondent, see note above. See table of marginal probability estimates in appendix D.

places also decreased the likelihood that a respondent would report having contributed funds to a candidate, party, or group by about 16 %.

These findings are curious. Upon first consideration, we might expect that wealthy places would encourage higher turnouts. Certainly, they are associated with the highest turnout rates in the metropolitan area. However, if these marginal probability estimates reflect true place effects, then we must conclude that the higher turnouts associated with the region's wealthy suburbs are the result of individual predictors and would be even higher if it were not for the demobilizing effects of these suburbs. This finding is consistent with J. Eric Oliver's analysis of homogeneous residential suburbs and his finding that these places, lacking in diversity and substantive political issues, have a depressive effect on the likelihood that their residents will engage in politics.²³⁹

Residence in a working-class suburb decreased the likelihood that the average respondent voted by over 25 % compared to residence in a middle-class suburb. This finding is consistent with my theory that pressures associated with these places discourage residents from participating in politics.

Places had no significant effects on whether respondents attended meetings or worked for candidates, parties, or political groups. Race and education predicted these forms of participation most robustly.

Implications

In conclusion, although place does not predict most of the forms of political participation tested, places significantly and substantially influenced whether survey respondents voted in the 1988 presidential election. This is important given how critical voting is to the distribution of influence in the national political discourse.

If these results are consistent with the actual effects of the nation's metropolitan places on voting, then central cities help to demobilize their already disadvantaged residents.²⁴⁰ The same can be said for threatened white working-class suburbs. On the other hand, wealthy suburbs are associated with high voter turnout rates despite the demobilization that residence within them causes.

The first two results are consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space and my specific hypotheses regarding threatened white working-class suburbs. The latter finding, that wealthy suburbs depress voter turnout, is in line with J. Eric Oliver's findings regarding homogeneous residential suburbs places. However, the residents of such places consistently turn out at high rates. The levels of wealth and education enjoyed by the residents of these places probably account for this.

²³⁹ See "The Influence of Social Context on Patterns of Political Mobilization," paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (San Francisco, 1996).

²⁴⁰ Again, relative to middle-class suburbs.

It is interesting that all of these places reduced the likelihood that respondents living in them went to the polls, compared to the effects of the region's middle-class suburbs. This finding is not inconsistent with my general model of metropolitan political structure. Middle-class suburbs are where the political action is. Candidates for national office have been competing ever more aggressively for votes from these places. In the process, they have been speaking more directly to the middle-class suburbanites than they have to any other place-based group.

So metropolitan political reality may include something like this: Middle-class suburbs are the going concerns in urban America today. As a consequence, politicians go out of their way to appeal to their residents. This attention increases the likelihood that the residents of these places will vote. Numbers of voters and appeals from candidates continue to reinforce each other, ever strengthening the position of the middle-class suburbs in American electoral politics.

On the negative side of this equation are the distressed central cities. Considered political "lost causes" by Republican candidates and givens by the Democrats, the residents of these places have enjoyed little attention from national political campaigns in recent decades. Simply put, the residents of these places are not affirmed in national politics; they are not given many positive reasons to vote. Rather, negative reasons stand in as poor substitutes. These include the threat that a Republican administration would be even worse for cities than a Democratic one.

This interpretation suggests that turnout rates for places may be more elastic than some think. Place effects do not necessarily translate into political givens when these effects are drawn from the ways that politicians and political parties act in space. If politicians were to appeal to the cities more aggressively, their residents might vote in larger numbers.

But seeking voters from metropolitan places thus is a risky proposition, for divisions within metropolitan America often make getting votes from one place come at the expense of votes from another. As the interests intrinsic to the places that make up metropolitan America become ever more disparate, it will become increasingly hard to make appeals that resonate with voters across regions.²⁴¹

Unfortunately, places may do more than boost voter interest by attracting the attention of candidates and parties, et cetera. There may be qualities intrinsic to cities and suburbs that encourage or depress voting. J. Eric Oliver makes such a claim in his critical analysis of the homogenous administrative suburbs and their depressive effects on political participation. On the other hand, distressed conditions within the nation's central cities may also demobilize voters. This is suggested in Cohen and Dawson's work, which is consistent with the broader social scientific literature on concentrated poverty effects.²⁴²

²⁴¹ See William Schneider, "The Suburban Century Begins."

²⁴² See "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics."

None of these specific approaches seem to explain well the depressed voter turnouts that we find in the threatened white working-class suburbs. For instance, votes from the residents of these places were also hot commodities in the 1980s. The aggressive efforts of candidates to attract voters from these places might have shown up in higher turnout rates. However, we need to keep in mind the difference between *individual voters* and the *residents of a suburb*.

My analysis suggests that these suburbs depress voting because neither party has been able to respond to both the material and the socio-racial positions of these places within the American metropolis, despite their aggressive efforts to attract working-class voters. In other words, I contend that cross-pressures intrinsic to these suburbs have translated the appeals of the parties into irreconcilable claims. This frustrates *residents'* orientations towards politics and turns many of them away from voting. The above findings are consistent with this theory.

- *Presidential vote choice*

As my election data illustrate, there are strong associations between the places that make up the Detroit area and voter support for candidates in national elections. These associations must result in part from the sorting of residents among places by individual characteristics and circumstances that happen to predict voter preferences as well as residential choices. But differences in election returns between places may also result from the effects of places on the political preferences of those who live within them. If places affect voters' choices thus, then the political differences between places may do more than reflect national political divisions. They may also *structure* national political differences.

The 1989 Detroit Area Study asked respondents which candidate they voted for in the 1988 presidential election. Residence in the area's distressed central cities and threatened working-class suburbs had strong and significant affects on how respondents voted, even after the effects of all of the study's independent level predictors were taken into account.

The Findings

I estimate that living in a distressed central city decreased the likelihood that the "average" respondent voted for Bush by about 25% compared to the effect of residence in one of the area's middle-class suburbs. This result is highly significant. However, life in the urban core did not make respondents more likely to report having voted for Dukakis. This finding at first appears inconsistent with my general model of urban political structure but it is not inconsistent with the fact that Dukakis, like most Democratic presidential candidates since Jimmy Carter, distanced himself from the party's urban roots in an effort to reach out to suburban voters.

Residence in white working-class suburbs decreased the likelihood that the "average" respondent voted for Bush by nearly 45 %. This result is also highly significant. Residence in the area's working-class suburbs attracted respondents to Dukakis, making them more likely to report having voted for him by a whopping 88 %.

The magnitude, direction, and significance of these effects at first appear to contradict my hypothesis that these places break down the partisan positions of their residents. However, these findings really only tell us about vote choice in one election, they tell us nothing about respondents' partisan voting choices over time (stability or volatility) or their longer term orientation towards the parties.

Residence in the region's wealthy suburbs did not predict whether respondents reported having voted for Dukakis or Bush. My failure to find any place effects for these suburbs is inconsistent with my general model of metropolitan political structure, which would predict that these places encourage Republican voting.

With the exception of respondents from white working-class suburbs, respondents' race had the strongest impact on vote choice. Being black, all other factors held constant, made average respondents about 47 % less likely to vote for Bush and about 17 % more likely to vote for Dukakis. The difference is worth considering. It seems that being black turned respondents away from Bush much more than it attracted them to Dukakis. This is consistent with the fact that just as Dukakis limited his appeal to the central cities, he resisted fully embracing the political concerns of African Americans. Though the above findings suggest that Dukakis's efforts to bring the blue collar Reagan Democrats back into the fold met with some success, one wonders how many black and inner-urban voters he lost to non-voting as a consequence of the marginalization of their agendas in his campaign.

Union membership also increased the likelihood that respondents would vote for Dukakis (by about seven percent) and decreased the probability that they would vote for Bush (by about 17 %).

There were two unexpected results of these tests. Advanced age and higher levels of income each increased the likelihood that respondents would vote for Bush *and* for Dukakis! Indeed, the effects of education on the likelihood of each of these possibilities are almost identical.

These results do not seem to make very much sense except when considered in the context of the model as a whole. Clearly, race, union membership, and place of residence account for most of the likelihood that respondents voted for *either* Bush *or* Dukakis. That is, race and place accounted for most of the choices between the two that respondents made. Furthermore, a significant percentage of the respondents did not vote. It is therefore possible that the age and education estimators predict the likelihood that respondents *voted* at least as much as they influenced whether voters selected Bush or Dukakis specifically.

Implications

The most direct and immediate way by which people affect politics and public policy is by voting. Indeed, political conflicts and the public policy discourse are structured around elections, past and anticipated. If the places in which people live affect the ways that they vote, then places structure American politics and policy in essential ways. This analysis cannot prove such a direct and critical connection between place and politics, but it adds substantially to the evidence that relationships between place and politics are more than coincidental.

- *Party identification*

The above findings suggest that places help to determine whether and how their residents will vote. As such, they encourage us to take the possibility that metropolitan space structures national politics seriously. However, decisions as to whether to vote or not, and for whom, may be structured by places in complex ways. It is unlikely that places have much magical power to turn people into Democratic or Republican voters. Rather, places probably influence voting, and thus the structure of national politics, more essentially by influencing residents' more fundamental orientation towards politics. If places do affect the longer-term perspectives and values that residents bring to the polls, if they affect residents' political perspectives in essential ways, then their impacts on national politics are essential and lasting. That is, if places shape residents' political attitudes and perspectives, then metropolitan areas should be considered to be among the foundational elements of national politics.

I begin my investigation of the relationships between urban space and residents' political orientation with an analysis of the impact of places on party identification. This is a good place to start because people's party identifications tend to connect their specific voting preferences with their more general political orientation.

The Findings

My analysis of 1989 Detroit Area Study survey responses shows that residence in the working-class and wealthy suburbs that make up the Detroit region affected respondents' party identification. However, residence in the region's distressed central cities had no significant impact on party identification after all of the individual predictors were taken into consideration.

Living in a wealthy suburb increased the likelihood that "average" respondents identified with either party by about 18 % compared to the effect of residence in the region's middle-class suburbs. Neither the central cities nor working-class suburbs affected whether or not respondents identified with a major party.

However, working-class suburbs predicted *which* party respondents were likely to identify with. These places increased the likelihood that respondents reported identifying with the Democratic Party by over 50 %, though the result is not very significant. They increased the likelihood that a respondent identified with *or*

leaned towards the Democratic Party by over 60%. On the other hand, residence in these places also increased the likelihood that respondents identified with the Republican Party by over 12 %. This figure is highly significant.

The fact that these places predicted both Democratic and Republican identification is consistent with my theory of how these places affect their residents politically. In this view, these places exert conflicting political pressures on their residents that at once attract and repel them to and from both parties. The result of this is what I have called *effective* dealignment, a condition in which aggregate (effective) associations between these places and the party preferences of their residents appear weak and ambiguous.

Residence in the region's wealthy suburbs increased the likelihood that respondents identified with the Republican Party by about 20%. This finding is consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space.

Again, race was the strongest predictor of respondents' party identifications and in this, a powerful "race gap" is evident. Being black increased the probability that the otherwise "average" respondent identified with a (any) party by 13 %. Being black also increased the likelihood that respondents identified or leaned towards the Democratic Party by over 40 % and decreased the likelihood that respondents identified with the Republican Party by about 50 %. Union membership also had strong and significant effects on respondents' choices amongst the parties in favor of the Democratic Party and to the disadvantage of the Republican Party.

Higher levels of education made respondents more likely to identify with the Republican Party and less likely to identify with the Democrats. On the other hand, respondents with advanced age were more likely to identify with the Republican Party.

There was also a "sex gap." Being a woman made the otherwise "average" respondent more likely to identify with the Democratic Party and less likely to favor the Republicans.

Implications

In conclusion, where places impact respondents' party identifications, the effects are consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space and my specific hypothesis regarding threatened working-class suburbs. These effects are sizeable and significant. However, residence in the region's distressed central cities did not predict party identification after the individual characteristics and conditions of the respondents were taken into consideration. My general model of metropolitan political space predicted that the central cities would effect Democratic identification. However, party identification is not the only indicator of people's essential orientation towards politics. Indeed, as noted above, it is something of a halfway point between persons' more foundational political perspectives and political behaviors such as voting.

- *Feeling Towards Political Figures*

It seems likely that people's opinions towards political figures are informed, at least in part, by their essential orientation towards politics. That is, it would seem that people who hold generally liberal or progressive views are more likely to think well of liberal politicians than of conservative ones, et cetera.

The 1989 DAS survey asked respondents to gauge their opinions regarding numerous well-known political figures of the time. Respondents told interviewers how favorably they felt about these persons by gauging their feelings with "feeling thermometers," which range from zero for the lowest possible estimation of the politician in question to 100 for the highest. I tested the ability of Detroit area places to predict respondents' feelings about George Bush, Michael Dukakis, Jesse Jackson, Ronald Reagan, and Coleman Young. Places predicted respondents' estimations of these political personalities in only a few instances. When they did, the effects were not very strong.

The Findings

Residence in one of the region's distressed central cities marginally increased the likelihood that respondents had a favorable view of Coleman Young. However, residence in the region's working-class and wealthy suburbs had no effects on respondents' feelings towards Young. In 1973, Young was elected the first African American Mayor of Detroit. Young had served as a pilot in the famous all black Tuskegee Air Corps during World War II, was a notable figure in the civil rights movement, and a controversial politician. Young's populist, and occasionally racially charged, rhetoric at once reflected and exacerbated the racial and class divisions that were separating the region's suburbs ever more from the City of Detroit.

Because of these factors, and because Young was so directly involved in political conflicts with the region's two large suburban counties, Oakland and Macomb, I expected that places as I defined them would predict feelings about Young rather strongly. They didn't. This finding is not consistent with my general model of metropolitan political structure. Rather, race and age accounted for almost all of the difference of opinion about this man that was explained by my models. Being black and being older substantially and significantly increased the likelihood that respondents reported favorable views of Young.

Residence in the region's working-class suburbs marginally increased the tendency of respondents to think poorly of George Bush and Ronald Reagan, but the effect for Bush is not very significant.

Race and sex were the strongest overall predictors of respondents' feelings towards these political figures. Being black substantially and significantly decreased the likelihood that respondents would feel favorably towards Reagan and Bush but increased assessments of the Democratic politicians, including Jesse Jackson and Coleman Young. There was a "gender gap" as well. Being a

woman increased the likelihood that a respondent would think well of Dukakis but decreased feelings towards Reagan and Bush. The gender gap was not nearly as strong as the race gap however.

Implications

The scarceness and weakness of place effects on respondents' feelings towards politicians contemporary to the study does not support my general model of metropolitan political structure. However, these findings may have as much to say about feelings for political figures than they do about metropolitan political structure. These feeling thermometers may gauge personal opinions as much as they test essential political orientations, perhaps more so. Places do not need to structure personal feelings about politicians in order to critically impact residents' orientations towards politics more generally.

- *Attitudes on Crime*

Crime has been one of the great obsessions of urban America throughout the present period. During much of this time, Republican candidates have been accused of using crime as a "wedge issue" to associate the nation's increasingly black, poor, and dangerous central cities with the failure of liberal social welfare and criminal justice policies.²⁴³ Because attitudes on crime would seem to be so essentially related to attitudes on race, social welfare policy, and a host of other issues more generally associated with people's political orientations, it makes sense to test whether places affect them.

The Findings

The 1989 Detroit Area Study asked respondents numerous questions about crime. I directed my inquiry towards those that spoke to respondents' attitudes on policies related to crime prevention. My goal was to tap the effects of places on respondents' more general political orientations through their opinions in this policy area.

Living in the region's distressed central cities increased the likelihood that the "average" respondent supported creating new jobs as a means of reducing crime. This finding is highly significant and very consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space. Central cities also slightly reduced the likelihood that respondents would approve of stiffer jail sentences as a means of reducing crime. Though this result is also consistent with my general model, it is only marginally significant. Residence in the region's wealthy suburbs slightly decreased the likelihood that respondents would support more gun control as a means of reducing crime, but this result was only marginally significant. Generally speaking, the effects of places on respondents' attitudes on crime prevention policy were unimpressive.

²⁴³ See especially Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991).

Implications

The generally poor showing of place in this area should be considered along with the fact that none of the independent variables tested in these models turned out to be very robust predictors. This includes whether or not a respondent reported having been a victim of a crime. It may be that a substantially different specification of these models would improve the overall predictability of respondents' attitudes on these issues. It may also be the case that such opinions are simply too subjective to predict well with the sorts of measures included among these data. Regardless, no addition of variables would make the spatial instruments used here more significant than they already are.

The Findings

Although places did not predict attitudes on criminal justice policy well, the region's distressed central cities and threatened working-class suburbs did effect respondents' estimates of the seriousness of crime. Residence in one of the region's central cities increased the likelihood that the "average" respondent would consider crime a serious problem by over 42 % compared to the impact of residence in a middle-class suburb. Residence in a working-class suburb increased the likelihood that such respondents considered crime a serious problem by over 24 %. Wealthy suburbs had no significant impact on respondents' estimations of the seriousness of crime. After residence in the region's central cities and working-class suburbs, the only other statistically significant predictor of respondents' estimations of the seriousness of crime was race. It was a distant third, however, and being black contributed a mere three percent to the likelihood that an otherwise "average" respondent would consider crime a serious problem.

Implications

It makes sense that people's perceptions of the seriousness of crime are affected by the places that they live in. After all, criminal acts happen in places, and the likelihood that they will happen varies substantially across the localities that make up our metropolitan regions.

People's perceptions of the seriousness of crime, rooted in the places that they live in, may influence their opinions on a range of related political issues. If so, then appeals such as the notorious Willie Horton ad of 1988 make sense as ways to tap into the place-based perceptions of many of those who live in the nation's working-class suburbs that crime is a serious problem. The photograph of Willie Horton shown in the ad, depicting him as a menacing and unkempt black man, probably reinforced the spatial and racial urgency of crime for the ad's suburban white working-class audience.

Place clearly influenced respondents' estimations of the seriousness of crime. If this finding reflects real place effects, then place structures a significant set of interests which metropolitan residents bring with them to the national political

discourse. Any political divisions that may be wrought of this may be reinforced by efforts on the part of political candidates and strategists to capitalize upon it.

- *Attitudes on Race and Affirmative Action*

The Findings

I tested the ability of places to predict some of the 1989 DAS respondents' opinions on race. I selected indicators of racial attitudes to tap into respondents' estimations about why it is, generally, that African Americans have not been as successful as members of other groups have, such as "ethnic" immigrants, in achieving social and economic status. The places in which respondents lived had no significant effects on these opinions. Race was such a powerful predictor that it seems to have worked to the near exclusion of all of the other variables tested. The same can be said for attitudes on affirmative action, with one exception. Residence in the region's distressed central cities increased the likelihood that respondents would support affirmative action.

Implications

These findings, or lack thereof, are not consistent with my general model of metropolitan political space nor do they support my specific hypothesis on the geopolitical effects of threatened white working-class places on their residents' attitudes on race.

These findings support the position that differences of opinion amongst place-based constituencies on these matters result from the spatial sorting of people whose individual circumstances and attributes predict racial attitudes. In other words, they are probably the result of coincidental place effects, not critical ones.

However, I noted above that proximity to the central cities might be critical to white suburbanites' racial attitudes. To test for proximity effects, I would need a larger and better-distributed sample of respondents from the white working-class suburbs that border the region's distressed and mostly black urban core.

- *Perceptions of Political Efficacy*

A number of political analysts have argued that people's estimations of whether or not they can effect political change (their feelings of political efficacy) help to determine if and how they participate in politics.²⁴⁴ As such, the distribution of feelings of political efficacy can shape the distribution of political participation and power amongst constituency groups.

The Findings

²⁴⁴ For one of the most critical reviews of the relationships between people's perceptions of their own effectiveness and political power, see Tom DeLuca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

With the exception of the region's distressed central cities, the places that I tested had marginal effects on their residents' estimations of their ability to influence political decisions. Residence in the region's threatened white working-class suburbs made respondents less likely to feel that they could influence decisions affecting them, but the effect is slight and not very significant. Residence in these places also decreased respondents' feelings that they could influence decisions affecting their communities. This finding is also minor but it is statistically significant. Although small, these effects are consistent with my hypothesis that pressures intrinsic to these places frustrate their residents' feelings of political influence.

The failure of the region's distressed central cities to depress respondents' estimations of their political efficacy is not consistent with my general model of urban political space. However, the ability of working-class suburbs to predict reduced feelings of political efficacy is consistent with my general model of metropolitan political geography. It also supports my more specific understanding of the effects of these places on their residents' sense of political power.

Residence in the region's wealthy suburbs marginally decreased respondents' sense that they could influence political decisions affecting themselves. This is a curious result since the promises of responsive and responsible government are included amongst the great attractions of these municipalities. But responsive and responsible government in these places are services for fees rendered more than they are the results of any participatory democratic process. As J. Eric Oliver notes, there is little about these sorts of places that gets the political juices of their residents flowing.

Being poor reduced respondents' feelings of political efficacy somewhat. As slight as these results were, they were the strongest showings for poverty as a predictor of the political attitudes and actions tested in my models.

Political efficacy was predicted most strongly by education, which had very large and highly significant effects on respondents' feelings on these matters.

Implications

Although the effects are not large, the fact that residence in the region's working-class suburbs decreased respondents' feelings of political efficacy is consistent with my critical hypothesis regarding the ways that cross-pressures intrinsic to these places frustrate their residents' connections to politics.

Conclusion:

In Search of Critical Place Effects:

The Project in Context

My voting study found strong associations between the places that make up the Detroit region and the political preferences of their residents. Other studies, which look at broader but less sophisticated local election data, suggest that my findings are not unique to Detroit.²⁴⁵ Such strong associations between urban localities and the political preferences of their residents can tell us much about the distribution of political interests and power in America. The implications of these political divisions for our metropolitan areas and for our nation may be quite serious.

However, we should be even more concerned about the possibility that places do more than arrange people by their political proclivities and preferences. Places may actually help to determine the political attitudes and actions of their residents. If this is the case, then the political positions of places are more than the mere aggregations of the preferences and choices of the individuals that live in them. Places help to determine their residents' political positions as they shape the political perspectives and preferences.

The implications of the latter, more critical view of place are potentially serious. If our cities and suburbs shape our political perspectives as well as reflect them, then our separation from our neighbors will only grow more serious with time. From this perspective, one can imagine a point of no return upon which the self-reinforcing differences between the place-based constituencies that make up our metropolitan areas grow so severe, that separating individual preferences from oppositional place-based interests and identities may become impossible. In such a scenario, addressing the gamut of urban issues, including inter-municipal inequity and conflict, would become an ever more distant dream, as there would be no more room for the shared perspectives that are necessary for such a project.

Ultimately, if places do affect the political perspectives of individuals, then the ways that we have segregated ourselves will no longer be a mere matter of choice. We may become a balkanized political society made of different spatially defined metropolitan groups, each with increasingly less to say to each other. Aggregate Census and Election data for the Detroit region suggest that we have traveled some distance down that road already.

Summary of Findings

In the attitudinal and behavioral analysis presented above, I tested the ability of the places that I explored in my election study to predict survey respondents answers to a variety of questions about their political perspectives, preferences, and their participation. Places affected respondents' answers to these questions with some frequency, particularly those regarding voting. When places helped

²⁴⁵ See Richard Sauerzopf and Todd Swanstrom, "The Urban Electorate in Presidential Elections, 1920-1996," 35:1 *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1999) and Peter Nardulli, Jon Dalager, and Donald Greco, "Voter Turnout in U. S. Presidential Elections: An Historical View and Some Speculation," *PS Political Science and Politics* XXIX (September 1996).

to predict respondents' answers, they usually did so in accord with my general and critical models of metropolitan political space and threatened working-class suburbs. Places were particularly good predictors of the voting choices and party identities of their residents. This is especially important since these decisions impact the structure of American politics so directly. However, places did not strongly predict the variables that I used to test respondents' more essential, deeper, or longer term attitudes on crime, race, and affirmative action. Places did not significantly impact how liberal or conservative respondents considered themselves to be. Places did predict respondents' judgements as to the seriousness of crime and they impacted their feelings of political efficacy.

It seems that the closer we get to political action, to voting, the stronger are the effects of place. As we move into less immediately active, yet more essentially political areas, we find fewer place effects. From this we can say that these findings support the general position that places structure national politics through their effects on residents' party identification and voting. These findings are consistent with my general and critical models of metropolitan political space and working-class suburban cross-pressures.

However, we don't know how deeply places affect their residents' political orientations. The findings do not strongly and consistently support the position that places shape attitudes on race and affirmative action, which are thought to inform our orientation towards the agendas of the political parties. It is possible that there are components of our essential orientation towards politics that are strongly influenced by places but not represented in these models. But, it is also possible that the addition of more individual control variables to these models would wipe out the modest essential place effects shown here.

Although these findings support the view that places influence or structure their residents' political perspectives and preferences, they should not be interpreted as proof of critical place effects. This is the case for a few important reasons. First of all, this is only one study using a limited cross sectional data set that was not designed to test for the place effects that I am looking for. These data cannot be stretched to do much of anything more sophisticated than either Cohen and Dawson or I have already done with them in this regard.

Finally, and perhaps most seriously, these data do not allow us to test one particularly important alternative to critical place effects, the possibility that people's residential decisions are informed by their political perspectives and preferences. This is William Schneider's contention.²⁴⁶

Survey analysis may never be a fully satisfactory means of testing for place effects but, used in conjunction with aggregate research and analysis, and more

²⁴⁶ See "The Suburban Century Begins." Juliet Gainsboro confronts the issue of sorting contextual effects from attraction effects. See *Fenced Off: The Suburbanization of American Politics* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001).

substantive or qualitative analysis, it can contribute to the case for critical place effects.

Improving Survey Research

To improve survey research as a means of testing for relationships between places and political attitudes and actions, researchers will have to include careful geographic sampling in their designs, so that the data gathered can provide reasonable numbers of cases for the places to be tested.

Designing survey research to better test place effects also means including questions that allow researchers to define residents in space more precisely. Since contextual effects must vary with the length of time a resident is exposed to them, asking residents when they moved to where they are, and from whence, are questions that may help to identify and better specify place effects. Our efforts to find and specify place effects might also benefit from appropriate time series survey data.

Furthermore, there is nothing magical about geography. If residential environments affect people's political orientations, they must do so through place based mechanisms that are subject to understanding and, given appropriate data, to testing. Survey researchers could further efforts to find place effects by identifying a range of possible characteristics of places that could be tested through survey questions. Furthermore, researchers could test a variety of experiences or relationships that residents might have with the places that they live in. By gathering and analyzing more and better information about the places that respondents live in, and the relationships or experiences of respondents with those places, researchers could make enormous contributions to our understanding of the relationships between place and politics in America.

Although my findings contribute to the preponderance of evidence for critical spatial effects, they cannot prove them. Perhaps nothing will prove place effects to their most dedicated critics, but the better models that could be drawn from more appropriately designed attitudinal and behavioral studies could do much to further confirm the theory that place matters.

This dissertation began with some of the most serious problems that have vexed political analysts throughout the last thirty years or so. These problems include the repeated inter-election partisan shifts, or electoral volatility, that have come to define national politics. This apparent volatility, or ambivalence on the part of many voters towards the nation's two traditional parties has prevented both parties from building strong and sustainable governing coalitions. As a consequence, the present era in American national politics, the period that followed the fall of the New Deal coalition upon Richard Nixon's presidential victory in 1968, has not been defined by a broad and consistent policy agenda. Rather, Republicans have found their efforts to essentially change the structure and function of American national government largely frustrated while Democrats have had to concentrate on preserving their past programmatic achievements at the expense of crafting and enacting much in the line of significant new policy.

The problem of the present period is a serious one for both political analysts and for the American polity generally. For political scientists, the volatility and ambivalence of the American electorate in the present period raises difficult questions about the ways that scholars have come to understand national politics. Most particularly, these conditions threaten realignment theory as an adequate or even accurate explanation of American national politics. As realignment scholars have struggled to fit increasingly anomalous conditions within their structured view of politics, post-structural scholars have made the ever-easier case that politics is the consequence of an impossible multitude of individuals' impressions of candidates' personal characteristics, styles, and abilities and the fickle fluctuations of popular social issues.

Post-structural electoral analysts therefore might be thought of as arguing that although they do not know much about national elections, nobody else does or can ever know much either. As unattractive as this perspective may be to structural analysts, it has to be taken seriously in light of the electoral volatility and political ambiguity of the present period, which suggest that voters' choices, and therefore politics really, are indeed not directed by strong structural forces.

Conditions in the present period present even larger problems for American political society. In the absence of strong parties capable of building lasting governing coalitions, the national political discourse has often been reduced to contests that are largely personal in nature and fail to result in policies that address the problems of American political society on any fundamental level. Such conditions make it difficult for the American voter to discern who, if anybody, is responsible for national economic, social, and political conditions. Insofar as this is the case, real political accountability, the centerpiece of American democracy, is in jeopardy.

Given this larger context, this dissertation looked for an alternative structural explanation of American national politics in places that have been largely ignored by electoral scholars and yet, have ever more become the very real contexts that most of us now live in, our major metropolitan areas. In this, this dissertation sought to show that some of the broadest national political divisions are at least reflected in or correlated with the racial and socioeconomic class divisions that increasingly define America's urban geography. This is the broad hypothesis that informed the dissertation. Broadly speaking, this dissertation sought to increase our understanding of the general division between "Democratic cities" and "Republican suburbs."

More narrowly, this dissertation sought to show that particular suburbs within these regions, the increasingly threatened older inner-ring white working-class suburbs, are sources of much of the ambivalent and volatile voting that has characterized the present period. This narrow hypothesis was informed by the theory that these places subject their residents to social or racial and economic cross-pressures. Socially and racially, these places are white suburbs and so would seem to give their residents a social interest in identifying with the "Republican suburbs." However, from an economic standpoint, these places are increasingly distressed and so ever more share material interests with the distressed central "Democratic cities." The stress and ambivalence of this geographic position is more than coincidentally related to the pressures undoubtedly felt by many of their white working-class residents throughout much of the last thirty years or so, pressures that have been associated with white working-class political volatility, with the "Reagan Democrats."

Investigation of the first and broadest hypothesis began with a review of the few studies that are available today that analyze national election returns for the present period broken down for samplings of metropolitan counties or large central cities and their respective states. These studies suggested that metropolitan regions divide residents by their political preferences. Specifically, they suggested that the metropolitan electorate has become increasingly polarized between more solidly and consistently Democratic central cities and more volatile Republican suburbs. However, in each case, the data were not aggregated at sufficiently fine levels to provide a clear picture of metropolitan electoral patterns. This is the case because truly local-level election data for individual suburbs are generally not available. As a consequence, studies heretofore have had to rely on either a sampling of central city and extra city election returns or nation-wide county data as proxies for election returns by individual cities and townships.

In both cases, we are left wondering whether metropolitan regional space is really a strong basis upon which to consider national election returns, particularly in the case of the suburbs. Specifically, we cannot say for sure where the volatility of suburban voting comes from. Even if we could, we would still not know what the relationship is between metropolitan space and electoral preference is. That is, we would not know whether the places that make up our urban regions influence the political choices of their residents or whether the

votes that come from them merely represent the aggregation of residents within them who have similar political preferences and proclivities.

To explore the relationships between urban political structure and national voting behavior, this dissertation employed a multidimensional case study of metropolitan Detroit. The study began with a substantive history of post-war development in the Detroit region. The purpose of this was to show that the area was transformed through the post-war period by the multiple processes of suburbanization and central urban disinvestment into a region that ever more sorts its residents by race and class. This segregation, this sorting of people by their access to public and private resources and opportunities, the goods of metropolitan life, was driven both by structural and sociopolitical factors. In other words, the social and economic geography of Detroit, the context within which the citizens of the region must live, is the product both of objective material forces and decisions made. This structure has a number of political consequences, not the least of which is that it reinforces racial and class distinctions as it traps most of the area's disadvantaged African American residents in distressed cities while it protects most of the region's wealthier white residents in advantaged suburbs. Meanwhile, large numbers of the region's white working-class residents find themselves trapped in the increasingly threatened places that are economically and geographically pressed between the two.

The severity of regional socioeconomic and racial segregation and the trends that brought it about were illustrated in a quantitative geographic analysis of the region. This study used time tracked Census data for the places that make up the region. These data, and a number of indexes based upon them, were analyzed and illustrated using a relatively new tool in the social sciences, GIS, or Geographic Information Systems digital maps. The quantitative data used in this portion of the study were selected in light of the substantive analysis that proceeded it. They were then used to divide the region into four primary geopolitical analytical categories for the purposes of exploring and analyzing relationships between urban space and election returns in the region for national elections from 1960-1996. These categories were distressed central cities, threatened white working-class suburbs, white middle-class suburbs, and white wealthy suburbs.

The analysis based on these categories, the Detroit Election Study, showed that national election voting returns and turnout rates for the places that make up the Detroit region were indeed consistent with both the dissertation's broad and more focussed hypotheses regarding the relationships between urban space and political preferences. There were two findings that were of particular interest. The region's distressed central cities, principally Detroit, have come to produce extremely lopsided returns in favor of the Democrats. However, as Democratic voting became more concentrated, voter turnout rates dwindled steadily, eroding the cities' ability to support Democratic candidates against suburban Republican pluralities. Meanwhile, the region's white working-class suburbs have indeed been sources of electoral volatility. This volatility, these inter-election shifts between Democratic and Republican support, were found to be

quite extreme in some instances. Turnout rates in these places have also suffered throughout the period, but not as badly as those in the central cities have. Beyond these findings, the region's middle-class suburbs were also associated with electoral volatility, though the inter-election shifts have been less severe and the overall concentration of Republican support has been generally higher. Meanwhile, wealthy suburbs produced the highest turnout rates and the highest and most consistent levels of Republican support in national elections. These findings were consistent with the dissertation's broad hypothesis.

This election study found strong associations between the places that make up the Detroit region and the voting choices of their residents that were consistent with both the dissertation's broad and narrow hypotheses. These findings are significant. Setting aside the potential causes of these associations, the associations themselves have implications for national politics. As they show that support for the parties is divided among the places that make up our metropolitan regions, they suggest that political representation for urban residents in national elections and the politics that result will be determined, in part, by the places that they live in.

That is, regardless of an individual's own political preferences or membership within the various groups that are supposed to comprise our pluralistic polity, residence will "place" citizens politically. These spatial associations also have implications for the national political parties themselves, as the Democratic Party fears becoming trapped in the central cities while the Republican Party seeks to solidify its more volatile suburban base. These implications, for both citizens and the parties, are intimately connected. If metropolitan electoral divisions become a stronger part of the logic of American politics, the policies that result may only reinforce actual differences between the places that make up our urban regions. Places and politics might then become locked in a mutually reinforcing cycle of division.

The magnitude of the associations between places and electoral behavior found in the Detroit region, coupled with their potential implications for national politics alone justify further investigation of the relationships between metropolitan structure and national politics more generally. However, aggregate data alone cannot answer what are perhaps the most interesting questions about the potential relationships between urban places and political preferences. Although we now know that the ever more diverse and distinct places that make up the Detroit metropolitan region are associated with different voting behaviors of their residents, we do not know why.

Places may simply sort residents in the region by any number of individual -level (meaning non-spatial) characteristics that themselves determine political preferences. These might include race, income, education, religion, ethnicity, social group membership, et cetera. For a variety of reasons, including racial segregation, the structure of the regional housing market, ethnographic trends, and the geographic distribution of employment, this is undoubtedly the case in part. Here, the relationship between place and political preference can be called coincidental. That is, political preferences coincide with places but are actually

determined by other individual factors, which themselves largely determine the location of persons within the region.

Places and political preferences may be critically related. That is, there may be qualities particular to the places in which people live that influence their political choices, particularly whether to vote and for whom. This dissertation presented a number of arguments as to how places may influence residents thus. These range from material interest structuring to social milieus that reinforce particular political views.

Places may also simply sort residents by political interests. That is, Democrats may simply tend to prefer to live in central cities and Republicans may, all things being equal, prefer to live in suburbs.

Of these three possibilities, critical associations between places and political preferences are the most interesting and come with the most serious potential implications for American politics. If urban places form and reinforce political preferences and proclivities, then as these places become ever more distinct from each other in the characteristics that count, the politics of metropolitan America and perhaps the nation as a whole will become ever more divided.

The final study of this dissertation addressed the question of whether places themselves influence political preferences and behaviors. Aggregate data of the sort that this dissertation relied upon to this point is ill suited to address this issue because it cannot tell us who the people are within the places that make up the region that are voting, and for whom. To begin to answer these questions, we really need data for individual residents. That data is available, in limited fashion, from the Detroit Area Study data set analyzed here. Analysis of political attitudinal and voting survey research data geocoded by the four primary place categories used here showed that after residents' race, sex, education, income, and other relevant personal characteristics were taken into consideration, residence in particular kinds of places often did predict party preferences and participation in the 1988 presidential election in ways that were consistent with the dissertation's general and narrow hypotheses. Though these findings do not prove critical place effects, they add to the preponderance of evidence for them.

The conclusions that this dissertation's research findings will bear are as follows: The places that make up the Detroit metropolitan region are strongly associated with the voting choices of their residents in national elections. These associations have developed over time in ways that are relevant to national politics. The region's distressed, predominantly minority central cities continue to be strong sources of support for Democratic presidential candidates, even as the total number of votes that they contribute to national elections has been declining steadily. This is the case because Democratic voting has become extremely concentrated within these places, reducing Republican returns to marginal levels. The region's wealthier suburbs have returned fairly consistent, but less strong, levels of support for Republican presidential candidates over the last forty years, with relatively high turnout rates. Returns from region's white middling suburbs, especially the region's threatened inner-ring suburbs, have been volatile

and turnout rates have been depressed compared to those in the wealthier suburbs. The places that make up the region predicted voting choices and party preferences above and beyond a number of other, individual level, predictors in a number of instances as found in the analysis of survey research data from the Detroit Area Study.

These conclusions show that metropolitan places, at least within the Detroit region, have been associated with national political divisions in recent political history. In so doing, these findings suggest that further research in this area is justified. Such research would address the limits of this dissertation. These limits include first and foremost the fact that this analysis is merely a case study of the Detroit region. Although the Detroit area shares much with many of the large industrial metropolitan regions located within many of the nation's largest states, which are most critical to national election outcomes, it is not identical to them. The area has even less in common with many of the nation's newer and fastest growing urban regions in the South and West. The differences between Detroit and many other regions include the level and intensity of political fragmentation in the region and the fact that non-black minority groups, such as Latinos and Asians, are not very well represented in Detroit. These facts do not, in themselves, negate the argument that urban place matters. Rather, they suggest the need for comparative analysis that is sensitive to economic, social, and ethnic differences between regions and perhaps a different definition of place in some of the nation's other urban areas, particularly in those that are not highly fragmented by the proliferation of so many independent municipalities (cities and townships).

This dissertation also shows the limits of the ability of survey research analysis as it currently stands to show place effects. Quite simply, there is a serious shortage of quality survey research that is at all useful for showing local-level political place effects. Much survey research that is available is either not coded for place or is not coded in a fashion that allows such local level analysis. Even when it is, such as with the data used here, the data are generally not sampled in a way that provides desirable Ns for a variety of local level places. Ns are not the only limitation one finds with current survey research data. Academic surveys have not been designed with the investigation of place effects in mind more generally. There are a variety of questions about place that could and should be included in surveys used to explore the relationships between place and political attitudes and actions.

Addressing these research needs is justified not only by the evidence that is accumulating behind the argument that urban regions structure or influence the national political dynamic, but also by the implications of the potential relationships between urban space and politics suggested here and elsewhere. Principle among these are the spectres of fragmentation and balkanization that loom over the urban regions in which most of us live, and the potential consequences thereof for the way we live and interact within our cities and in our national political society. On a brighter note, a better understanding of the relationships between our fragmented cities and our divided national polity may lead to more fruitful political responses to both of these problems. In other

words, addressing the sprawl, fragmentation, segregation, and inequity that define our metropolitan regions and building broad support for a an effective national policy agenda may be essentially connected projects.

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