

Suburbanization, Party Identification, and Partisanship in the United States:
An Empirical Analysis, 1952 - 1998

Andy Tuholski, Ph.D.

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Prof. Tuholski at
andy.tuholski@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to draw upon data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) project in order to answer the following two research questions: (1) What is the relationship between suburbanization and party identification in the United States? (2) What is the relationship between suburbanization and partisanship (intensity of party identification) in the United States? For RQ1, it was found that, for each additional 1% increase in suburban respondents as compared to urban and rural respondents, Republican identification rose by 0.272%, independent identification rose by 0.245%, and Democratic identification declined by 0.289%. For RQ2, it was found that suburbanization was associated with an increase in the relative proportions of true independents, independent Democrats, and independent Republicans, and a decline in the relative proportions of strong Democrats and weak Democrats. The main contribution of this study was a triangulation of previous empirical claims related to suburbanization as a right-leaning force in American politics, a triangulation that drew on 46 years of ANES data rather than data from a few Presidential cycles, and a triangulation that also highlighted the importance of independent political affiliations within the context of suburbanization.

Keywords: Politics of place, suburbanization, partisanship, party identification, American politics

Suburbanization, Party Identification, and Partisanship in the United States:
An Empirical Analysis, 1952 - 1998

One of the most contentious questions in American political science and practical politicking involves the urban-rural divide (McKee, 2007). For example, the 2016 election of President Donald Trump was widely hailed (Schaffner & Clark, 2018) as a triumph of the rural (and white) voter and portrayed as part of an ongoing clash between such voters and their urban counterparts, but the urban-rural divide has played an explanatory role in innumerable American political developments from the country's founding onwards.

Although there is substantial empirical evidence for the importance of the urban-rural fault line as an explanatory factor in American politics (Schaffner & Clark, 2018), the importance of a third zone—the suburban zone—has been somewhat elided, although some points of consensus among the political characteristics of American suburbia have indeed emerged. In 2005, Gainsborough established that suburban American voters were less likely to vote Democratic than urban American voters (Gainsborough, 2005). In 2006, Walks made the case for the existence of city-suburban polarization in Canada as well as in the United States, arguing that voters in the suburbs were more likely to be on the political right (Walks, 2006).

While the existence of a political cleavage between suburbs and large cities appears to have been established by the middle of the last decade, there is not yet a consensus on how exactly this cleavage can be characterized. Walks (2006) argued that the suburban voter, in both Canada and the United States, was more likely to be on the

right; however, McKee and Shaw argued that, in the 1990s, American suburban voters parted ways from Republican Presidential candidates (McKee & Shaw, 2003).

Earlier studies were, however, limited by cross-sectional approaches. For instance, McKee and Shaw (2003) focused on the city-suburb cleavage in the context of only two Presidential elections (1992 and 1996). The analyses carried out by Gainsborough (2005) and Walks (2006) were similarly cross-sectional in nature. The larger question left unanswered by the existing body of empirical research is whether the underlying dynamics of party identification and partisanship are changing in the context of suburbanization. Election cycles have their own dynamics, meaning that, for example, the behavior of suburban American voters with respect to the election of Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 is not necessarily likely to yield clues about larger and deeper shifts in party identification and partisanship attributable to suburbanization.

In terms of the politics of place, suburbanization is an independent mechanism of influence on party identification and partisanship. What remains unknown is whether, on a sufficiently long timescale, suburbanization is associated with rising partisanship or, conversely, party identification. The answer to this question has been identified by various scholars—including Gainsborough (2005), Walks (2006), and McKee and Shaw (2003)—as being of special interest to political scientists interested in the American electorate, particularly in the context of polarization and the politics of place. However, the long-term and structural effects of polarization have been difficult to measure, largely for reasons of data insufficiency.

The purpose of this study was to draw upon data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) project in order to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between suburbanization and party identification in the United States?

RQ2: What is the relationship between suburbanization and partisanship (intensity of party identification) in the United States?

On a biannual or quadrennial basis from 1952 to 2000, ANES asked respondents about their locations within either central cities, suburbs, and rural areas. In 2000, however, ANES added numerous telephone respondents, and, after 2000, ANES discontinued its location question as previously worded; 1998 was the last year in which ANES asked its classically worded location question and did not include any participants sampled by telephone. Although the timeframe could be extended by seeking an equivalent of the legacy ANES question about respondent location, the years from 1952 to 1998 presumably constitute a sufficiently broad period of time during which the relationships between (a) suburbanization and party identification and (b) suburbanization and partisanship can be examined.

Technically, ANES does not measure suburbanization directly, raising the point of how this dataset can be validly used to answer the two research questions specified above. However, from 1952 to 1998, ANES's sampling rates for urban, rural, and suburban respondents have changed significantly (see Figure 1 below). In 1952, suburban respondents constituted the smallest sub-sample of ANES respondents; however, from the late 1970s onwards, a plurality of ANES respondents have been from the suburbs. Theoretically, in an approach such as ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, the changing ANES sampling percentages should result in predictable effects on outcomes such as partisanship; in other words, even if the ANES sampling changes do not represent

the actual percentages of suburbanized voters in the United States, they can still be used as predictors of changes in partisanship and party identification, as long as these latter two variables can be rendered continuously. Fortunately, partisanship can be rendered continuously by measuring yearly changes in the distribution of (a) strong, weak, and independent commitments; and (b) party identification ratios.

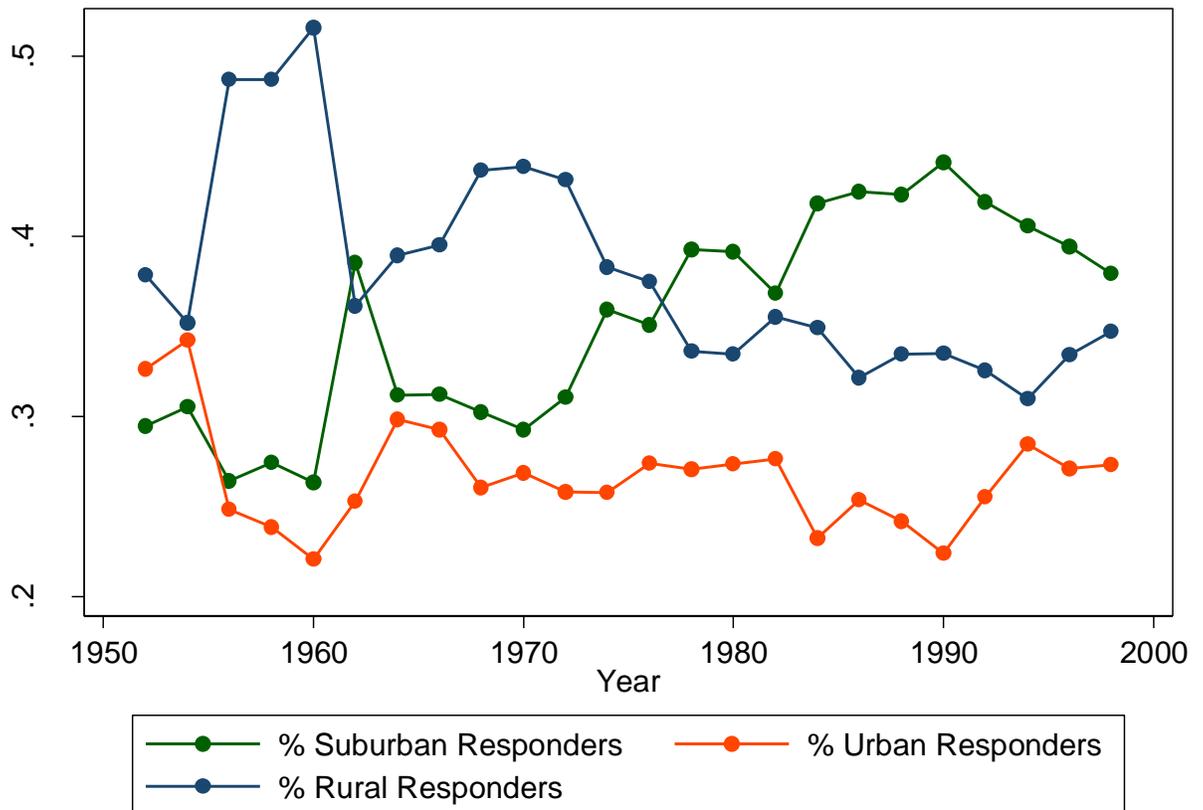


Figure 1. ANES sampling of respondents by location, 1952-1998.

Thus, the longitudinal ANES dataset contains sufficient information to answer the two research questions of the study.

Literature Review

Walks conducted a study (Walks, 2005) on electoral polarization in Great Britain from 1950-2001, a period that very nearly overlaps the 1952-1998 period considered in

the ANES dataset. Walks carried out the study by coding individual regions of Great Britain in terms of their urban, rural, and suburban status; then, within those regions, Walks considered the ratio of support for the Conservative Party versus the Labour Party. Walks found that, from 1950 onwards, there was a steady divergence, such that the suburbs increasingly voted Conservative, while the urban areas increasingly voted Labour. In 1950, there was near-parity between the suburbs and urban areas; by 2001, a person living in a suburb of Great Britain was roughly 1.8 times for likely to vote for the Conservative Party over the Labour Party.

An examination of Walks' (2005) findings indicates that urban areas' support for the Labour Party did not increase as precipitously as suburban support for the Conservative Party. Thus, most of the 2001 divergence between urban and suburban areas in Great Britain was contributed by disproportionate suburban support for the Conservative Party, not by urban areas' added support for the Labour Party. Further analysis revealed that, of the suburbs, the so-called outer suburbs were more right-wing than the inner suburbs.

Walks (2005) pointed out that, after 2001, there were some changes in the observed pattern of polarization, with the suburbs lending political support to the Labour government of Tony Blair. However, Walks argued that Blair's ability to win the suburbs relied on the abandonment of some of the pillars of Labour politics. Overall, Walks concluded that "there is something about the suburbanization process that leads residents of inner cities and suburbs to adopt divergent political viewpoints, regardless of local and national context" (Walks, 2005, p. 515). Walks also noted, in the context of the United States, that suburbanization "would appear notable...for cementing in power the main

party on the right” (Walks, 2005, p. 515).

Walks’ (2005) examination of the urban-suburban cleavage in the context of Great Britain was particularly robust because of the half-century of data on which Walks drew. In the context of American scholarship, empirical analyses have not been as rich. The prevailing narrative among American political scientists involves the intertwining of what Olson described as “upwardly mobile whites’ suburbanization and commitment to Republican policies” (Olson, 2008, p. 706). In American politics, the Southern Strategy imposed a racial calculus on party identification by courting southern white voters away from the Democratic Party (Black, 2004). One unquestionable legacy of the Southern Strategy is the ongoing racial cleavage between Republican and Democratic voters, with the Republican coalition increasingly composed of white voters and the Democratic coalition increasingly composed of voters of color (Reed & Edge, 2010). Insofar as suburbanization was driven by white adults fleeing urban areas—and, in particular, inner cities—suburbanization can be understood as a re-concentration of Republican votes and, in this sense, in terms of a racialized politics of place (Inwood, 2015).

One problem with this narrative is its lack of empirical exactitude. The qualitative story is a compelling and explanatorily powerful one; as the Southern Strategy began to peel away more white voters to the Republican Party, social and economic forces were driving many white voters out of cities and into the suburbs. Thus, in theory, there are good reasons to believe that suburbanization would provide an impetus to Republican identification and partisanship. However, this theoretical account requires extension; as in Walks’ (2006) study of Great Britain, empirical tools are required to better quantify the political impact of suburbanization. Moreover, also in Walks’ study, such tools should

draw upon sufficient data to identify a genuine effect of suburbanization on a divergence in political attitudes.

McKee and Shaw (2003) studied the effects of suburbanization on American Presidential voting and reached a number of interesting conclusions. First, largely on the basis of election results from the 1990s, McKee and Shaw reached the premature conclusion that the Republican Party was losing the suburbs. McKee and Shaw were working with a dataset that included nearly 50 years, and they reported results that were based on the entirety of these data. However, McKee and Shaw were tempted to draw one of their conclusions based on a narrowing of the suburban vote in just three elections. Over a sufficiently long timespan, there will always be unexpected or inexplicable political results; the purpose of working with a longer dataset is to ensure that anomalies generated in local contexts are smoothed over in the larger explanatory picture.

Using a logistic regression model, McKee and Shaw (2003) quantified the impact of suburbanization on Presidential voting, and, even though they drained some force from their results by prematurely arguing for the curtailment of a Republican advantage in the suburbs, they provided a valuable estimate of the impact of suburban residence on Presidential voting. However, the study had several important limitations, one of which was the failure to treat for independent status. McKee and Shaw's results were dichotomized to reflect votes for the major party candidates; although this approach was of practical use given the dependent variable of candidate choice, it failed to capture an important political orientation—that of party independence. Even though there was only one independent Presidential candidate in the years covered in McKee and Shaw's analysis, voter independence is still an important measure to track, especially because it

remains a relatively underexplored phenomenon.

For example, Oliver and Mendelberg offered a compelling explanation of why white clustering leads to political polarization (Oliver & Mendelberg, 2000), noting, in particular, that a clustering of uneducated white voters leads to especially hostile out-group effects that manifest themselves in political identification and partisanship. However, this kind of argument is most compelling in the context of rural political demographics. As Oliver and Mendelberg acknowledged, the clustering of low-education white voters is more likely to take place in rural areas, not in suburbs. If so, then there are good conceptual reasons to believe that the clustering effects of white voters in suburbs might express themselves in a more independent-leaning form of Republicanism, as the white occupants of suburbs—while still susceptible to racialized political expression—are likelier to have more education and represent a broader spectrum of political opinion, thus resulting in an independent-leaning Republicanism.

Out-group effects are, from one point of view, too broad an explanatory category to adequately account for the function of American politics of place. With respect to the cleavage between urban America and its two counterparts—rural America and suburbia—it is certainly possible to go beyond the trope of in-groups and seek a more particular model of political behavior. One possibility is that the distinction between the American urban center and everywhere else can be understood as the distinction between rival political narratives. Steven Gregory, for example, has argued that American urban life has been understood in two divergent ways, that is, as a reflection of “racialized forms of inequality” (Gregory, 1998, p. 6) versus “a breakdown of family values and structure” (Gregory, 1998, p. 6).

For those who believe that the difficulties in American urban life reflect deep structural problems—including the intertwining of racism and poverty—the most obvious political solution is the aggressive support of a welfare state that is keyed to addressing these problems on a structural level. Without conflating the policies of the Democratic Party with those of an ideal welfare state, it is still possible to argue that, in the past several decades of political history in the United States, the Democratic Party has done far more than the Republican Party to address the kinds of structural issues that plague urban Americans. On the other hand, the Republican Party's response to urban problems has been, as Gregory pointed out, a politics of self-blame in which black irresponsibility and criminality are held to make urban life irredeemable. Indeed, the dynamics of white flight appear to rely on some such construction of social reality, with white flight—mainly to the suburbs—subsequently coded as a segregated escape from the most obvious manifestation of the welfare state and towards a zone of greater structure and self-determination, regardless of whether such political goods actually exist in the suburbs (Musterd, 2003).

In another context, Bates once wrote of African civil strife as part of a competition for modernity (Bates, 1974) that reflected ethnic competition and other factors. In the United States, the clash between urban areas and suburbs can also be understood as a competition for modernity, one that has given rise to rival blocs divided along racial and political identification lines. As Gregory (1998) and other scholars (Boustan, 2007; Katznelson, 1973; McHugh, 1987; Tolnay, Adelman, & Crowder, 2002) have narrated, the trajectory of American urban centers has been influenced by the steady migration (both national and international) of people of color to such centers, where they

have sought to reduce their vulnerability through political participation.

For much of the twentieth century, urban centers hosted intense competitions for modernity, as entrenched white political interests resisted the influx of non-white people and their political interests, which leaned in the direction of the welfare state rather than towards the *laissez faire* arrangements that benefited white capital owners and their allied classes. This competition certainly continues, but, in many ways, has been diluted by the phenomenon of suburbanization, which has simply allowed wealthy, mobile whites to evade the existing competition for urban political influence by relocating their influence to a new space—the suburbs (Emerson, Chai, & Yancey, 2001; Pulido, 2000; Renzulli & Evans, 2005).

In this sense, suburbia is not merely a social or geographic convenience but an explicitly politicized—and racialized—space. This change can be understood not merely in terms of social and political competition but also, more broadly, in terms of political psychology. For example, in another context, Dixon and Durkheim have argued that: “desegregation may alter not only the relationship between self and other, but also the relationship between self and place. As such, it may be experienced as a form of dislocation: an event that undermines shared constructions of place and the forms of located subjectivity they sustain” (Dixon & Durkheim, 2004, p. 455). Thus, for many white residents of urban spaces in the United States, the influx of non-white peoples and the resulting desegregation has led to the demonization of urban spaces as incomprehensible zones of crime, irresponsibility, and the alien, and, concomitantly, to the construction (both literal and figurative) of suburban spaces as more hopeful and autonomous alternatives.

Clearly, then, there are good theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that there is a cleavage between urban and suburban zones in the United States, with urban zones more inclined towards the Democratic Party and suburban zones more inclined towards the Republican Party. However correct such an assessment might be, it is not very precise, because there are numerous shadings of political identification and partisanship that it fails to capture. To begin with, neither the existing empirical research nor the theoretical discussions about the politics of place capture the phenomenon of independent voters.

Second, as part of the same gap in the literature, there is little discussion about how extreme the cleavage age—for example, in terms of strong versus weak identification with the major parties. In Bishop’s memorable phrase, the American electorate is increasingly living in “communities of sameness” (Bishop, 2009, p. 5); without denying this conclusion, there is a substantial spectrum of sameness that has yet to be properly understood in the context of the politics of place. There is substantial scope for empirical research that can add to what is known of the relationships between suburbanization, political identification, and political partisanship in the United States.

Methodology

The methodology of the study was based on the use of OLS regression. The following 10 OLS regressions were carried out in the study. Of these regressions, the first three pertained to RQ1, and the last seven pertained to RQ2.

Table 1

Summary of Regressions

OLS Regression #	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
------------------	----------------------	--------------------

1	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying Republican
2	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying Democrat
3	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent
4	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying strong Democrat
5	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying weak Democrat
6	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent Democrat
7	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent independent
8	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent Republican
9	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying weak Republican
10	% suburbanite respondents	% identifying strong Republican

All data for the study were obtained from ANES's longitudinal dataset (ANES, 2017) under ANES's scholarly use guidelines. The coding procedures used to create ratios from the ANES variables have been discussed as part of the research questions; it should be briefly noted that, because ANES reported raw numbers as well as total respondents for each respondent category noted in Table 1 above, ratio generation was an elementary procedure. Stata software was utilized for all statistical procedures and graphic generation purposes.

Findings

The findings have been presented separately for each of the research questions of the study. Each section of the findings contains relevant inferential statistics, model interpretation, and accompanying graphic support.

RQ1 Findings

The first research question was as follows: What is the relationship between suburbanization and party identification in the United States? Before answering this

question, the ANES data on party identification were log-transformed and graphed in order to illustrate the rapid growth in independents from 1952 onwards.

An important caveat is in order when considering these data: It is not clear whether the changes graphed in Figure 1 below reflect intrinsic changes in the American electorate or changes that are driven by changes in ANES sampling strategy. Indeed, as the regression models for RQ1 and RQ2 indicate, it seems to be the case that ANES's initial reluctance to sample extensively from the suburbs is as likely an explanation of the change in party identification as any other given factor. Thus, the purpose of presenting data related to changes in party identification is not necessarily to claim the existence of intrinsic identification changes, but, rather, to provide a backdrop to regression models in which both party identification and strength of partisanship are held to be motivated by the percentage of suburban Americans included in ANES surveys.

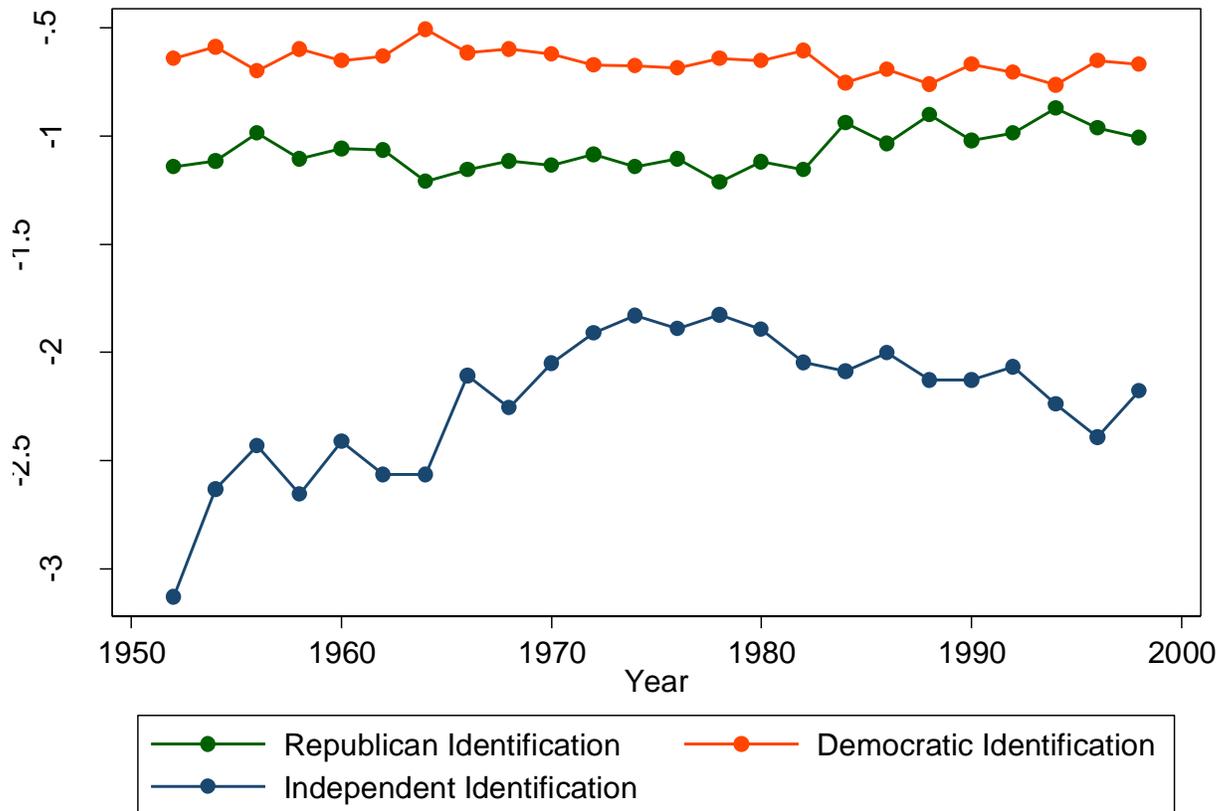


Figure 2. Change in party identification, 1952-1998. Note: Data have been log-transformed to better capture rates of change.

Next, OLS regressions were used to measure the relationship between the percentage of suburbanites sampled in each ANES year and the dependent variables of Republican, Democratic, and independent identification, treated as percentage values (for example, Republican identification in a given year was calculated as the total number of people identifying as Republican divided by the total number of people in that year's survey). The OLS results appear in Table 2 below. For each regression, appropriate inferential statistical figures and measurements have been provided, facilitating an easy comparison of the three regression results.

Table 2

Effects of Changes in ANES Suburban Respondent % on Changes in Party Identification

%*

	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Republican	.018	6.480	0.107	2.550	0.272	.228
Democrat	.007	8.960	0.097	-2.990	-0.289	.289
Independent	.029	5.430	0.105	2.330	0.245	.198

*Constant not reported

Each of the OLS models was significant at $p < .05$. As reported in Table 1 above, it was observed that, as the percentage of suburbanites surveyed by ANES increased, the percentages of ANES respondents who self-identified as Republicans and independents increased, whereas the percentage of ANES respondents who self-identified as Democrats decreased. Scatter plots of these three results have also been provided below (see Figures 3, 4, and 5).

The OLS regressions suggest that, encompassing the 1952-1998 period, suburbanization is a force that appears to promote Republican and independent identification while working against Democratic identification. As this result is based on 24 ANES datasets spanning half a century, it is more robust and reliable than previous results that have been based on a limited number of Presidential election cycles. The entire thrust of post-war suburbanization in the United States appears to be structurally aligned with the spread of Republican and independent identification at the expense of Democratic orientation, which remains a largely urban phenomenon. Of interest in this finding is the prominence of independent identification, which has not been seriously

considered in the literature on the relationships between suburbanization, political identification, and political partisanship.

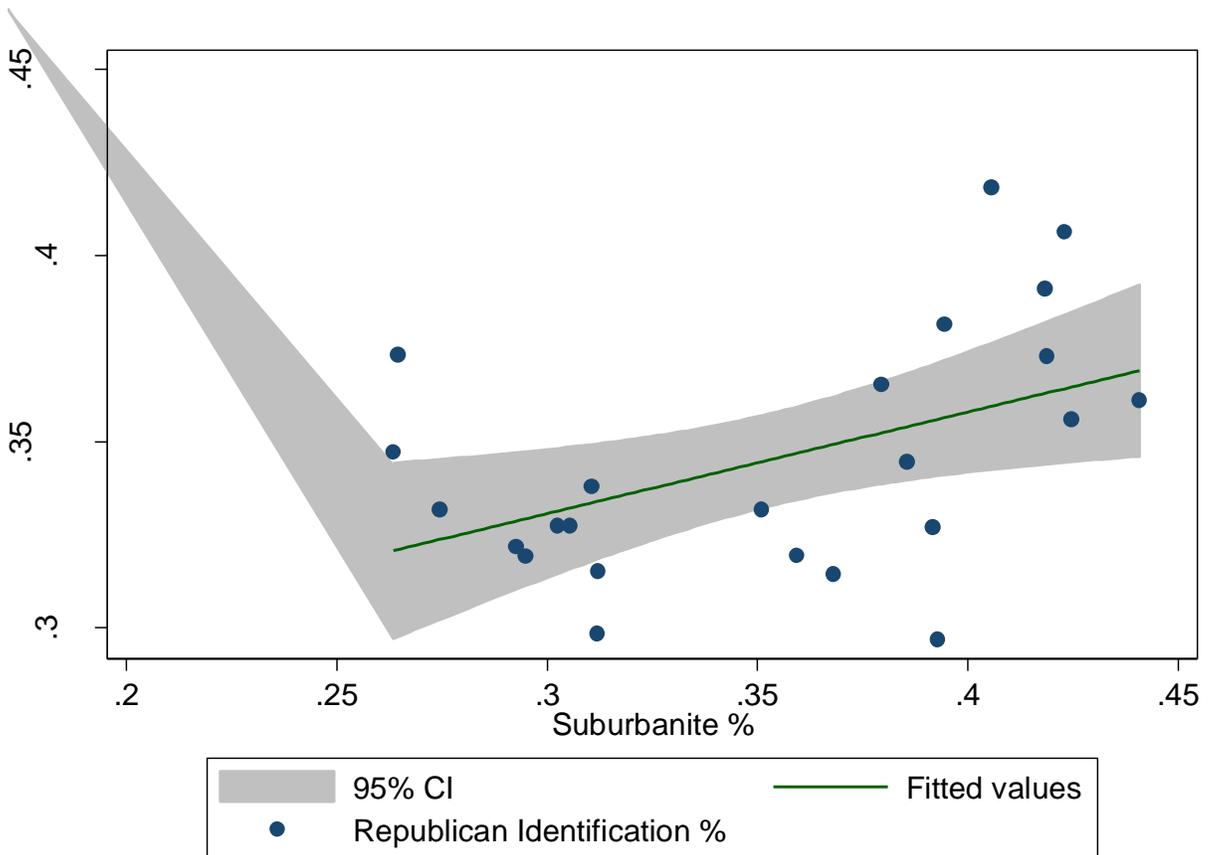


Figure 3. Relationship between suburbanite % and Republican identification % in ANES data, 1952-1998. Note: OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

While the ANES dataset consulted for this study was longitudinal in nature, the findings illustrated in Figures 3, 4, and 5 should be approached from a cross-sectional perspective. For example, it is possible that the phenomenon of declining Democratic identification associated with suburbanization is not a function of passing time *per se* as much as it is a function of the intensity of suburbanization. Given that the initial ANES surveys did not sample extensively from the suburbs, and that the later ANES surveys increased the relative proportion of suburban participants, statistical analysis could lead to the

unsupported conclusion that suburbanization's effect on political identification is a time-dependent effect whereas, given ANES's sampling strategy, it is likely to be a cross-sectional effect.

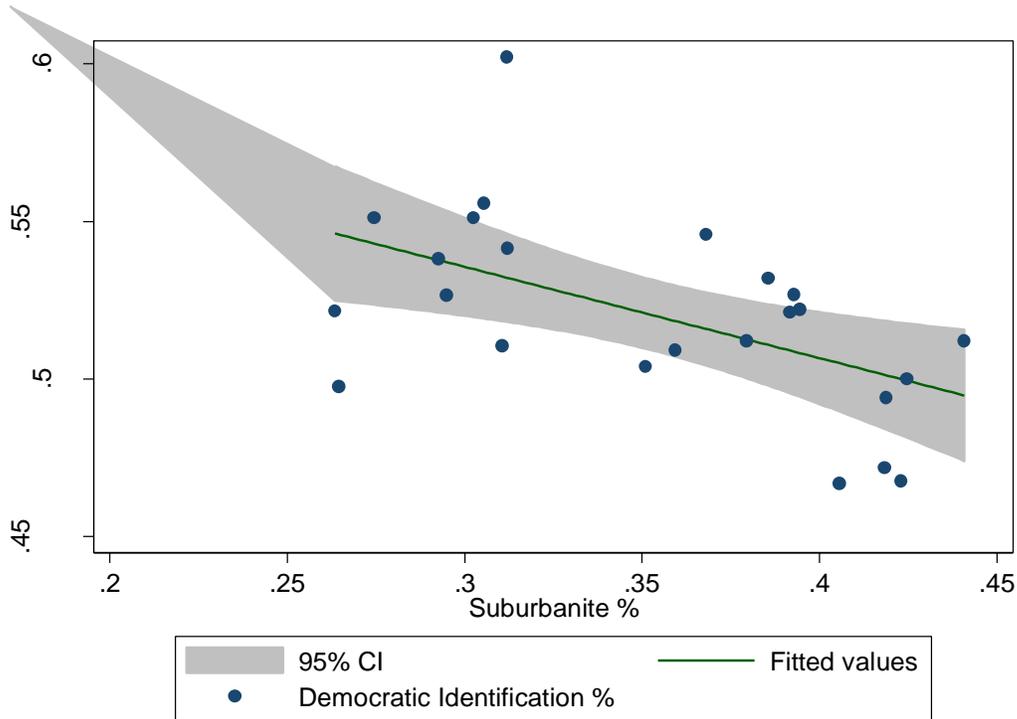


Figure 4. Relationship between suburbanite % and Democratic identification % in ANES data, 1952-1998. Note: OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

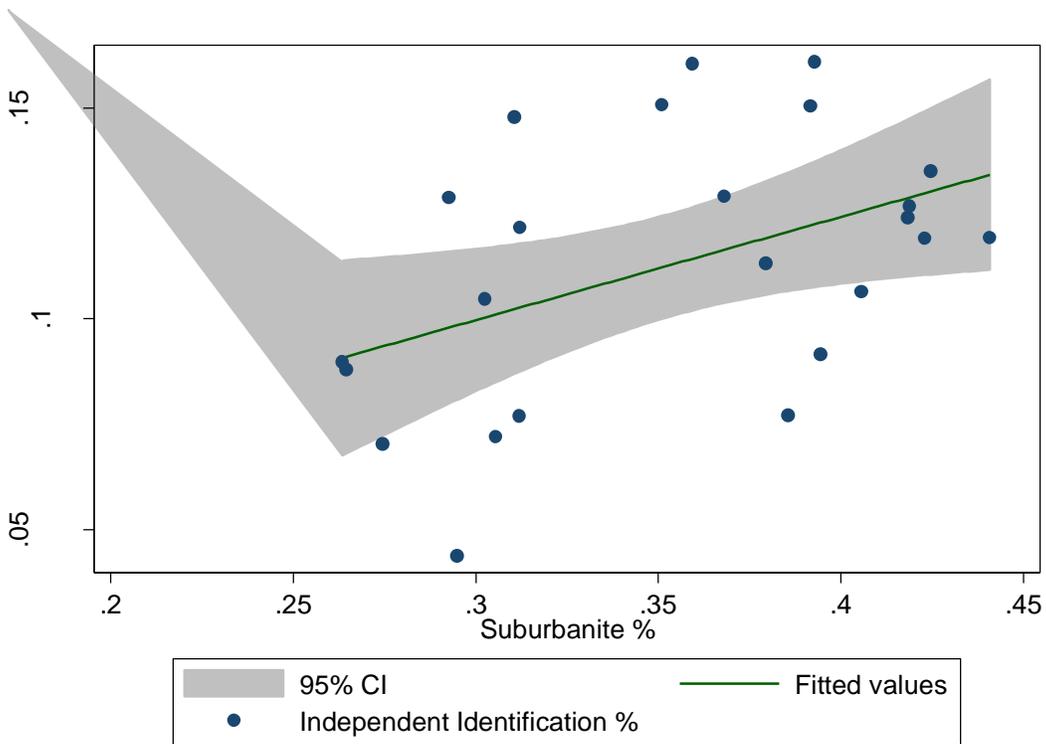


Figure 5. Relationship between suburbanite % and independent identification % in ANES data, 1952-1998. Note: OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

Finally, the quality of the regressions for RQ1 was tested through the Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroscedasticity. None of the regressions displayed heteroscedasticity, as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Heteroscedasticity Testing Results, RQ1

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying Republican	0.440	.505
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying Democratic	1.010	.314
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent	0.460	0.499

RQ2 Findings

The second research question was as follows: What is the relationship between suburbanization and partisanship (intensity of party identification) in the United States? The ANES dataset measures partisanship in numerous ways, one of which involves asking participants to classify themselves as strong Democrats, weak Democrats, independent Democrats, independent independents, independent Republicans, weak Republicans, and strong Republicans.

The first step in answering this research question was to regress the percentage of suburbanites in each ANES year on the dependent variables of partisanship. Partisanship was calculated in the same manner as party identification was calculated for RQ1. For each year, the number of people identifying in each partisan category (for example, strong Democrat) was divided by the total number of participants in that year, yielding a ratio. This ratio then served as the dependent variable for the independent variable of percentage of individuals in a given year who were suburbanites. This procedure was kept constant for both the RQ1 and the RQ2 analyses.

The OLS results have been summarized in Table 4 below. The results triangulate and extend the findings generated for RQ1. An examination of Table 3 indicates that the phenomenon of suburbanization only benefited independent-leaning Democrats and Republicans; thus, the gains for Republican identification observed as part of the analysis for RQ1 might be attributable to a disproportionate gain in the percentage of independent Republicans in American suburbs. However, the results for RQ2 agreed with the results

of RQ1 insofar as suburbanization was observed to actively weaken ties to the Democratic party. Thus, as in RQ1, the analysis for RQ2 supported the larger conclusion that suburbanization is inimical to Democratic orientations.

What Table 4 contributes in the way of new empirical knowledge is related to the shadings of partisanship. Both identification and partisanship occur on spectrums, not as binaries (Blank & Shaw, 2015; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Jacobson, 2003; Stanig, 2013). Thus, it is particularly important for scholars as well as political parties themselves to understand the effects of suburbanization on partisanship in a more nuanced manner—for example, with reference to the strength of partisanship. As ANES distinguishes between seven kinds of partisanship (as conceptually aligned with party identification), it is possible to extract the effect of suburbanization on partisanship in a more precise manner than has been achieved in the previous empirical studies discussed in the literature review.

Table 4

*Effects of Changes in ANES Suburban Respondent % on Changes in Partisanship %**

	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²
Strong Democrat	.026	5.650	0.094	-2.380	-0.224	.197
Weak Democrat	.076	3.450	0.097	-1.860	-0.180	.130
Independent Democrat	.016	6.800	0.078	2.610	0.203	.228
Independent Independent	.065	3.740	0.097	1.930	0.188	.140
Independent Republican	.004	10.130	0.069	3.180	0.219	.306
Weak Republican	.272	1.270	0.035	1.130	0.040	.052
Strong Republican	.303	1.110	0.071	-1.050	-0.074	.046

*Constant not reported

At an Alpha of .10, five of the seven regressions whose results are reported in Table 4 above were significant. A review of the Beta coefficients indicates that, as the percentage of suburbanites included in the ANES survey increased, the percentage of strong Democrats and weak Democrats decreased, whereas the percentage of true independents, independent Democrats, and independent Republicans all increased. Interestingly, there was no significant effect of changes in the percentage of sampled suburbanites on either weak or strong Republican identification. These findings indicate not only that suburbanization is associated with stronger independence but also that

suburbanization is acting against Democratic partisanship. Considered in zero-sum terms, the dynamics of suburbanization identified in the regressions listed in Table 2 benefit Republicans over Democrats.

A comparison of Beta coefficient values indicates that suburbanization does more to increase the share of independent Republicans ($\beta = 0.219$) than it does to increase the share of independent Democrats ($\beta = 0.203$). In terms of absolute values of the Beta coefficients, the largest effect of suburbanization was on the reduction of the percentage of strong Democrats ($\beta = -0.224$). A scatter plot of this relationship appears in Figure 6 below. Three additional scatter plots follow (see Figures 7, 8, and 9 below). Because the relationship between suburbanite % and weak Democrat was not significant at $p < .05$, it was not graphed.

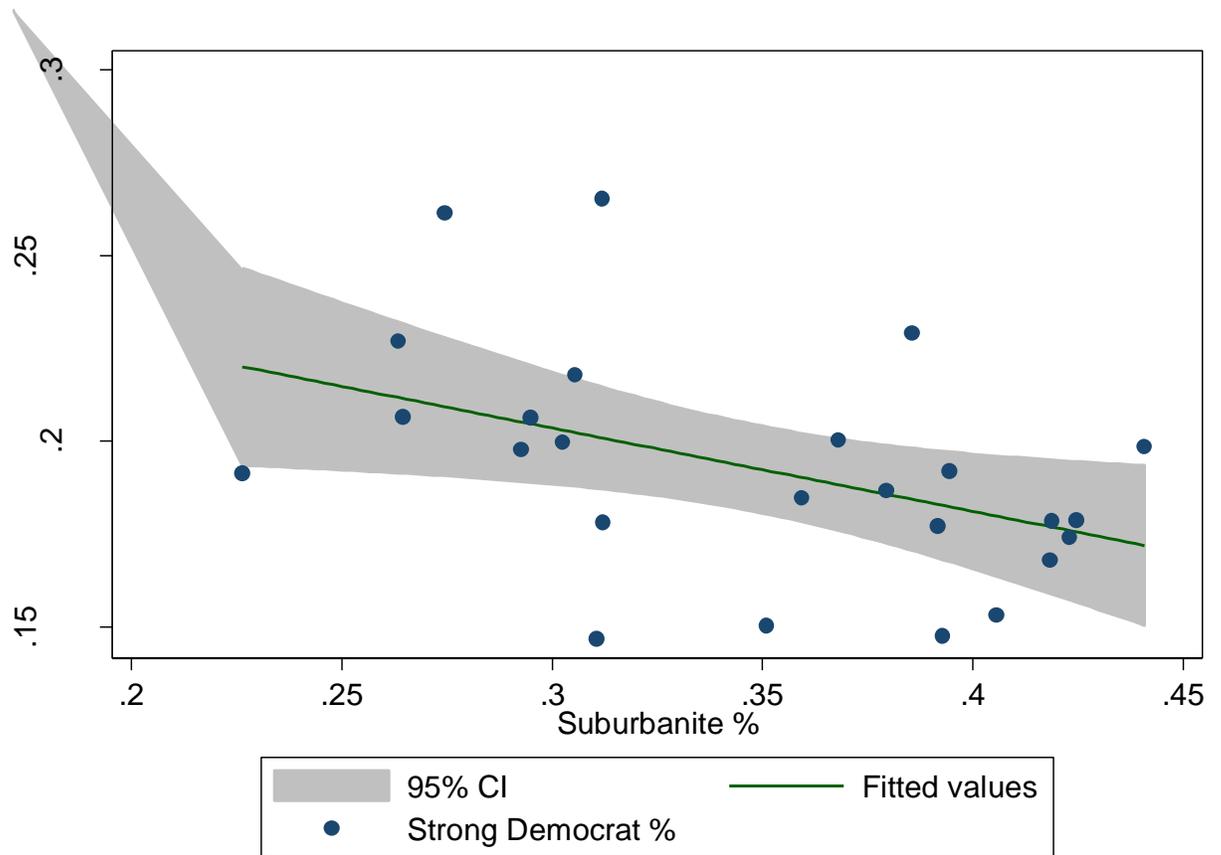


Figure 6. Relationship between suburbanite % and strong Democrat % in ANES data, 1952-1998. Note: OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

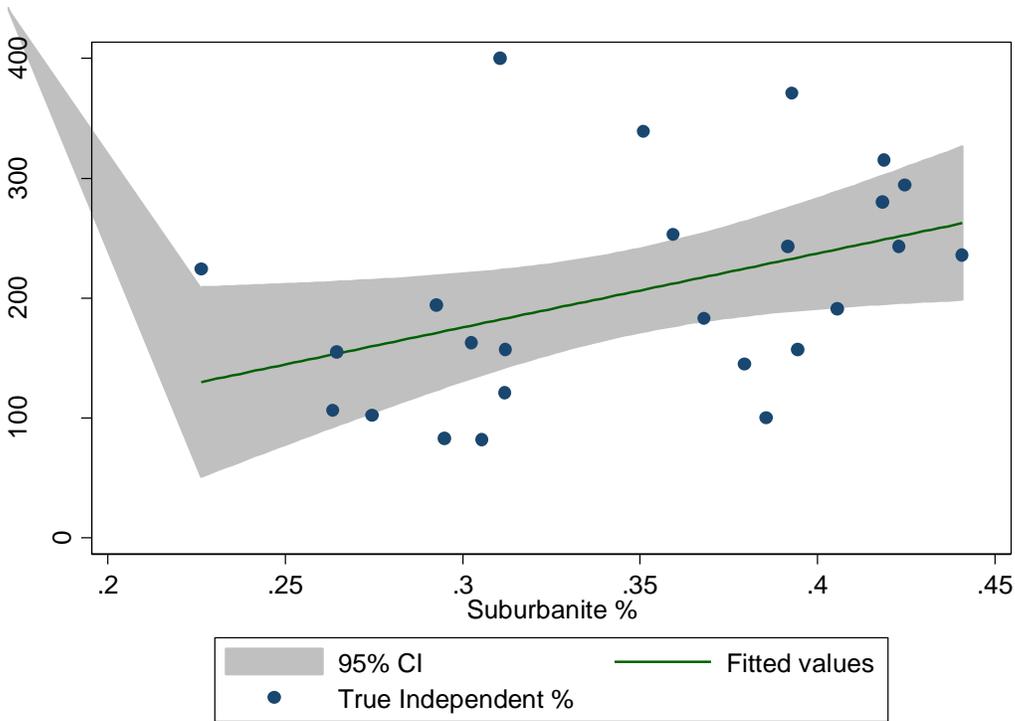


Figure 7. Relationship between suburbanite % and true independent % in ANES data, 1952-1998. Note: OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

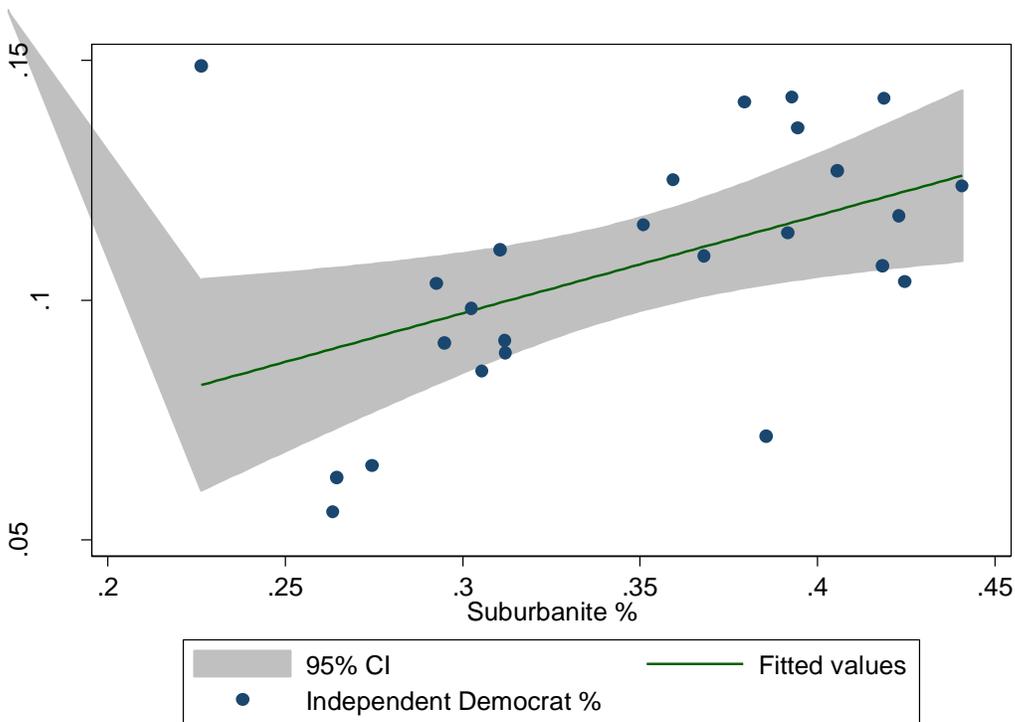


Figure 8. Relationship between suburbanite % and independent Democrat % in ANES

data, 1952-1998. *Note:* OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

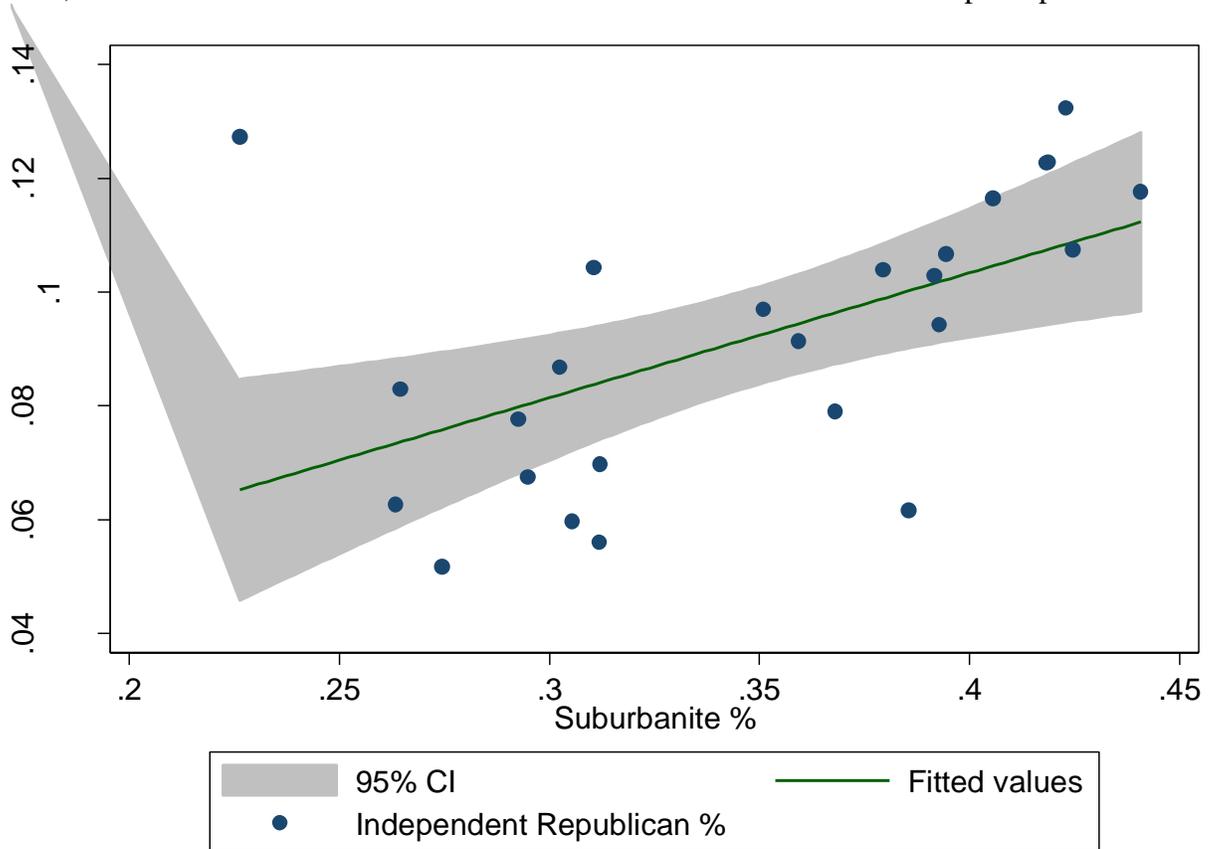


Figure 9. Relationship between suburbanite % and independent Republican % in ANES data, 1952-1998. *Note:* OLS line of best fit and 95% confidence interval superimposed.

The analyses for RQ2 added substantially to the insights generated for RQ1 while reinforcing the same basic finding, which was suburbanization's support of Republican and independent orientations at the expense of a Democratic orientation.

Finally, the quality of the regressions for RQ2 was tested through the Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroscedasticity. Several of the regressions displayed heteroscedasticity, as indicated in Table 5 below. The use of bias-correcting regression approaches did not substantially alter the properties of these regressions, so no bias-corrected results have been reported.

Table 5

Heteroscedasticity Testing Results, RQ2

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	χ^2	$p > \chi^2$
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying strong Democrat	1.340	.246
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying weak Democrat	6.940	.008
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent Democrat	6.680	.010
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent independent	0.850	.357
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying independent Republican	7.570	.006
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying weak Republican	3.090	.079
% suburbanite respondents	% identifying strong Republican	0.270	.606

Limitations

The study had numerous limitations. One of the main limitations was the assumption that the percentage of suburbanites sampled in ANES surveys from 1952 to 1998 could serve as a proxy variable of suburbanization. However, even if the percentage of suburbanites cannot properly be considered a proxy variable for suburbanization, it was still sufficient for purposes of inclusion as an independent variable in OLS regression models. A more serious limitation was the absence of covariates, which could have played an important role in explaining the nature of the relationship between suburbanization and aspects of political identification and partisanship. It is also possible that the relationships between suburbanization and the dependent variables of party identification and partisanship were spurious, and that the spuriousness of these relationships could have been uncovered through the inclusion of the appropriate covariates. McKee and Shaw (2003) were interested in the question of whether the margin by which the suburbs went Republican was shrinking over time; one of the limitations of the current study was that, with the available ANES data, such time-bound effects could not be measured. Because ANES sampling criteria have changed over time, and not necessarily in ways that reflect the underlying demographic distribution across urban, suburban, and rural populations, time-series analyses of the kind capable of identifying breakpoints in urban support for Republicans could not be carried out on the basis of ANES data.

Despite these limitations, the study reached, or helped to support, several important conclusions, as discussed in greater depth below.

Discussion

Roughly speaking, America has gone through three great eras in terms of the politics of place. At its founding, America was overwhelmingly rural (Kulikoff, 1989); over the course of the nineteenth century, alongside the unfolding of the Industrial Revolution, America became increasingly urban (McKelvey, 1963). After the Second World War, suburbanization gathered pace, as more and more middle- and upper-class people fled urban centers—often as part of the white flight phenomenon (Crowder, 2000; Frey, 1980; Galster, 1990), but for other reasons as well (Mieszkowski & Mills, 1993).

Rural America has not recovered demographically; America's population gains have come largely in urban and suburban settings, and, in political terms, the influence of rural America can be plausibly described more in terms of Constitutionally guaranteed representational advantages than in terms of raw demographics. Although the vagaries of the Electoral College continue to ensure that the votes of rural American voters are disproportionately important, there is no evidence that rural America is experiencing the kind of economic and cultural revitalization that would attract renewed population growth. Rather, with the ongoing erosion of agriculture as a contributor to gross domestic product, and in step with trends of suicide, drug abuse, and cultural collapse, rural America faces a demographic abyss whose existence has been well-documented (Case & Deaton, 2015; Rudd, Aleshire, Zibbell, & Matthew Gladden, 2016).

In light of these facts, the rural-urban divide is, perhaps, of less long-term political importance than the urban-suburban divide. American suburbia, in contrast to the American countryside, appears to have a strong future, whether understood in demographic, economic, or cultural terms. If so, then it is particularly important to frame

ongoing American political trends in terms of the suburban-urban divide.

The analyses of ANES data carried out and reported upon in this study strongly support the conclusion that the suburbanization of America is associated with an erosion in support for the Democratic Party and an increase in the influence of independents, including independent-leaning Republicans or Republican-leaning independents. This trend is of paramount importance for the major political parties to understand and act upon. Political scientists should also dedicate substantially more attention to exploring the underlying rationale for, and characteristics of, American suburbanization's political dynamics. Given that suburbanization is more strongly associated with independent than with Republican political affiliations, it seems as if many voters from within the suburban population remain available, at least in theory, to the major party that best knows how to appeal to them.

The main contribution of this study was a triangulation of previous empirical claims related to suburbanization as a right-leaning force in American politics, a triangulation that drew on 46 years of ANES data rather than data from a few Presidential cycles, and a triangulation that also highlighted the importance of independent political affiliations within the context of suburbanization. Further empirical research is certainly necessary to better understand the politics of place as they pertain to American suburbia, especially after the geographic complexities of the 2016 Presidential election. One particularly fruitful area for such research could be the incorporation of time-series analysis. As discussed earlier, substantial variation in suburban sampling in the ANES datasets prevents these datasets from being used in ordinary time-series analyses, because apparent time-based effects might be cross-sectional effects related to sampling

decisions. If so, then scholars should continue identifying and extracting true time-series data that can address the question of whether (a) the divergence in party identification and (b) the intensity of partisanship are genuinely increasing over time. Utilizing time-series analyses in these contexts could allow scholars to understand unfolding trends in identification, partisanship, and suburbanization that could not be measured in the current study.

References

- ANES. (2017). Time series cumulative data file. Retrieved from http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf.htm
- Bates, R. H. (1974). Ethnic competition and modernization in contemporary Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, 6(4), 457-484.
- Bishop, B. (2009). *The big sort: Why the clustering of like-minded America is tearing us apart*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Black, M. (2004). The transformation of the southern Democratic Party. *The Journal of Politics*, 66(4), 1001-1017.
- Blank, J. M., & Shaw, D. (2015). Does partisanship shape attitudes toward science and public policy? The case for ideology and religion. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 658(1), 18-35.
- Boustan, L. P. (2007). Black migration, white flight: the effect of black migration on northern cities and labor markets. *The Journal of Economic History*, 67(02), 484-488.
- Case, A., & Deaton, A. (2015). Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(49), 15078-15083.
- Crowder, K. (2000). The racial context of white mobility: An individual-level assessment of the white flight hypothesis. *Social Science Research*, 29(2), 223-257.
- Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2004). Dislocating identity: Desegregation and the transformation of place. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24(4), 455-473.

- Emerson, M. O., Chai, K. J., & Yancey, G. (2001). Does race matter in residential segregation? Exploring the preferences of white Americans. *American Sociological Review*, 66(6), 922-935.
- Fiorina, M. P., & Abrams, S. J. (2008). Political polarization in the American public. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 563-588.
- Frey, W. H. (1980). Black in-migration, white flight, and the changing economic base of the central city. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(6), 1396-1417.
- Gainsborough, J. F. (2005). Voters in context cities, suburbs, and Presidential vote. *American Politics Research*, 33(3), 435-461.
- Galster, G. C. (1990). White flight from racially integrated neighbourhoods in the 1970s: the Cleveland experience. *Urban Studies*, 27(3), 385-399.
- Gregory, S. (1998). *Black Corona: Race and the politics of place in an urban community*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inwood, J. F. (2015). Neoliberal racism: The 'southern strategy' and the expanding geographies of white supremacy. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 16(4), 407-423.
- Jacobson, G. C. (2003). Partisan polarization in presidential support: The electoral connection. *Congress & the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies*, 30(1), 1-36.
- Katznelson, I. (1973). *Black men, White cities: Race, politics, and migration in the United States, 1900-30 and Britain, 1948-68*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kulikoff, A. (1989). The transition to capitalism in rural America. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 46(1), 120-144.

- McHugh, K. E. (1987). Black migration reversal in the United States. *Geographical Review*, 77(2), 171-182.
- McKee, S. C. (2007). Rural voters in Presidential elections, 1992-2004. *The Forum*, 5(2), 1-24.
- McKee, S. C., & Shaw, D. R. (2003). Suburban voting in presidential elections. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 33(1), 125-144.
- McKelvey, B. (1963). *The urbanization of America, 1860-1915*. Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Mieszkowski, P., & Mills, E. S. (1993). The causes of metropolitan suburbanization. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7(3), 135-147.
- Musterd, S. (2003). Segregation and integration: a contested relationship. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(4), 623-641.
- Oliver, J. E., & Mendelberg, T. (2000). Reconsidering the environmental determinants of white racial attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 574-589.
- Olson, J. (2008). Whiteness and the polarization of American politics. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(4), 704-718.
- Pulido, L. (2000). Rethinking environmental racism: White privilege and urban development in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(1), 12-40.
- Reed, P. D., & Edge, T. (2010). Southern strategy 2.0: Conservatives, white voters, and the election of Barack Obama. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(3), 426-444.
- Renzulli, L. A., & Evans, L. (2005). School choice, charter schools, and white flight. *Social Problems*, 52(3), 398-418.

- Rudd, R. A., Aleshire, N., Zibbell, J. E., & Matthew Gladden, R. (2016). Increases in drug and opioid overdose deaths—United States, 2000–2014. *American Journal of Transplantation, 16*(4), 1323-1327.
- Schaffner, B., & Clark, J. A. (2018). *Making sense of the 2016 election*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- Stanig, P. (2013). Political polarization in retrospective economic evaluations during recessions and recoveries. *Electoral Studies, 32*(4), 729-745.
- Tolnay, S. E., Adelman, R. M., & Crowder, K. D. (2002). Race, regional origin, and residence in northern cities at the beginning of the Great Migration. *American Sociological Review, 67*(3), 456-475.
- Walks, R. A. (2005). City–suburban electoral polarization in Great Britain, 1950–2001. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 30*(4), 500-517.
- Walks, R. A. (2006). The causes of city-suburban political polarization? A Canadian case study. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 96*(2), 390-414.