The Urban/Suburban/Rural Cleavage in Canadian Political Opinion

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I. Introduction

In a cover story article about Canada's economic turnaround over the previous decade and its emerging "cool" essence, the September 27, 2003 edition of *The Economist* offered a critical observation of our nation, which stated, "the most visible cleavage in Canada is not between French-speaking Quebec and the English-speaking rest, but between five large urban areas (dynamic, successful, with many immigrants but with strained public services) and the rest (mainly rural, declining economies with high unemployment, kept alive by federal aid)" (The Economist 2003: 15). Following the 2006 Canadian federal election, much discussion focused on this so-called urban/rural cleavage. Indeed, the Conservative Party of Canada won overwhelming support in many of the rural regions of Canada but failed to win a single seat in Canada's three largest cities, evidence of political differences across rural, suburban, and urban Canada. In Michael Ignatieff's campaign to lead the Federal Liberal Party, he referred to the cleavage as the "most significant national unity challenge facing our country" (Authier and Thompson 2006).

Contrastingly, Canadian political scientists appear to have largely neglected the rural/urban/suburban continuum, despite the relevance of the issues and the availability of data on the topic. As such, we know relatively little about the existence, sources and consequences of the rural/suburban/urban cleavage. This paper seeks to address this gap.

The few who have examined the question offer different perspectives on its consequences for political representation. Some blame the expansion of suburban areas at faster rates than the downtown urban cores in Canada and the United States as a reason why political parties target the interests of suburban and urban fringe voters over urban voters, perpetuating an urban/suburban cleavage (Dale 1999; Gainsborough 2005; Walks 2004b). Others include rural areas with suburban among the areas being favoured over urban ones, pointing to provincial governments for evidence in this regard.[1] As Thomas suggests, "political parties at the provincial level are aware that there are electoral rewards for mandates and policy initiatives favouring the value orientations and economic interests of their more homogenous suburban, small town and rural populations, which are often over-represented in seat distribution" (Thomas 2001: 434).

On the other hand, Cutler and Jenkins claim that we should expect a political system that is less responsive to rural interests in the future as those areas continue to depopulate. They acknowledge differences in attitudes exist between urban and rural Canadians but claim that "on the whole, the differences are unlikely to be an obstacle to future constitutional and social accommodation" (Cutler and Jenkins 2000: 18). They argue that federal parties are unlikely to align themselves along the urban/suburban/rural cleavage given the very small percentage of Canada's total population composed of rural residents and the heterogeneity of interests across rural areas in the country.

This paper examines Canadian political opinion so that a clearer picture of whether and why opinion differs across rural, suburban or urban areas of the country can be developed. Using

[1] Thomas (2001), for example, points to the situation in Ontario under the governance of the Progressive Conservatives in the 1990s and that of Quebec under the Parti Quebecois during the same time as the main evidence of this.

the 2004 Canadian Election Study survey data, the political attitudes and demographics of people living in these communities in Canada are first examined for evidence of a cleavage. Following this, analyses are conducted to assess whether differences among rural, suburban and urban Canadians are the product of social, economic and demographic characteristics or a function of living in a particular type of location. While the difference between rural and urban Canadians can, for the most part, be attributed to education and generational differences, the suburban/urban cleavage appears to be more nuanced.

II. Literature Review

The most commonly identified distinction in the political opinions of rural, suburban and urban Canadians lies in support for socially conservative ideologies. The urban/rural cleavage in Canada has often been identified as one between "two distinct electoral groupings: 1) progressive-heterogeneous-large urban; and 2) conservative-homogeneous-smaller cities (edge) and rural areas" (Thomas 2001: 438). Cutler and Jenkins' analysis suggests that while the cleavage may not be as great as has been argued, there are differences of opinion between rural and urban regions in their attitudes on issues such as homosexuality and feminism, with a ten percentage point gap between urban and rural Canadians on both issues (Cutler and Jenkins 2000). Thomas claims that people living in rural and suburban areas are more socially conservative and homogeneous than those living in urban areas (2001: 433). Blais et al. find that rural respondents give less support to abortion rights, gun control, immigration, and public health care than their urban counterparts (Blais et al. 2002: 137-155).

Explanations for what is driving these differences are less consistent. Cutler and Jenkins suggest that one explanation is the more traditional rural culture that helps to explain more conservative opinions (2000). Other explanations focus on socio-demographic differences and their role in shaping attitudes. Cutler and Jenkins, for instance, also argue that differences in opinion between rural and urban Canadians stem partly from differing levels of education (2000). Others have noted the importance of differences in age, income, immigration status, and religiosity between urban, suburban, and rural residents for understanding opinion differences (Rodden 2005; Thomas 2001). Rodden, for example, makes note of the declining importance of religion in urban areas of the United States, compared to its relative strength in rural ones (2005).

Another school of thought links the rural/suburban/rural cleavage to support for materialism versus post-materialism. Inglehart first introduced the notion of post-materialism in 1970, when he hypothesized that, "the basic value priorities of Western publics had been shifting from a Materialist emphasis towards a Post-materialist one – from giving top priority to physical sustenance and safety toward heavier emphasis on belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life" (Inglehart 1990: 66). His main hypothesis was comprised of two sub-hypotheses, the scarcity hypothesis: that one's individual priorities reflect his or her economic environment, and the socialization hypothesis: that one's values reflect the economic conditions that existed during his or her formative years, rather than his or her present situation (Ibid.: 68). Post-materialist value shifts therefore occur in prosperous societies and over generations.

John Carter suggests that the urban/rural cleavage in the United States is partially due to the propensity for urban Americans to be supportive of post-materialism while rural and suburban residents are more likely to be materialists. Carter bases his analysis on Inglehart's theory, arguing that post-materialists place a greater value on having a say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities, on making cities and countryside more beautiful, and on freedom of speech (Carter 2002). In contrast, materialists value a high level of economic growth, strong defence forces, maintaining order in the nation, fighting rising prices and a stable economy (Carter 2002). He notes that, "post-materialists are best described as highly educated, urban, young, well-paid professionals. They have lower incidence of church attendance and usually smaller families" (Carter 2002: 11). Years earlier, Carmines and Layman made a similar claim that the growth in urban centres in the US was leading to a more post-materialist society over time (Carmines and Layman 1997). Similar arguments have been made for attitudinal shifts in Australia (Jackman 2002). Although post-materialism has been argued to "fit" less well in the Canadian context (Bakvis and Nevitte 1987), Nevitte has shown that support for post materialism increased between 1981 and 1990 (Nevitte 1996). As such, there is reason to believe that it might account for attitudinal cleavages across rural, suburban and urban Canada.

Finally, rural, suburban and urban Canadians have been found to differ on their feelings towards government and politics more generally, manifest in their level of political cynicism. Some attribute this to differences in circumstance that have encouraged greater self-reliance and interdependence in rural and suburban areas than in urban centres, where reliance on social programs and a redistributive agenda have flourished. This difference of circumstance is argued to manifest itself in support for conservative ideals in rural areas and liberal ideals in urban areas given differences in the day-to-day issues faced and how they are dealt with differently (Rodden 2005; Forrest et al. 2001).

Along similar lines, Forrest et al. characterize the urban/rural cleavage in Australia as, "a primary versus secondary economy" division (Forrest et al 2001: 167). Australia, they argue, is comprised of modern, urban, industrialized areas that have embraced rapid social and economic change and more traditional, less industrialized areas that have not embraced social and economic changes but rather uphold the notion of "countrymindedness." According to Aitkin, the essence of 'old' Australia consists of agrarian ideologies emphasizing the economic centrality of the primary production sector, the moral superiority of rural life and assertion of the need to maintain a strong rural base to national life (Forrest et al. 2003: 168). Beginning in the 1920s, this "countrymindedness" has resulted in an ingrained conservatism that continues to permeate the sense of being in rural farming communities.

This mirrors the urban/rural split in the province of Saskatchewan where the circumstances of those living in its urban areas are much different from those in more rural ones. Doskoch (2003) points out that while there has been economic growth in Saskatchewan's largest cities, its rural economy has worsened over the past quarter century, resulting in a pronounced discontent with government in these regions of the province. The "farm crisis", he argues, is a major contributing factor to the worsening economic conditions of rural Saskatchewan. According to John Courtney, "rural Saskatchewan is not just mad at the NDP, it's mad at government" (Bergman 2000: 114).

The idea that people hold governments accountable for the state of the economy is not a new one. Writing about the link between economic conditions and electoral patterns, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier showed that economic conditions shape election outcomes in the world's democracies, citing that, "The citizen votes for the government if the economy is doing all right; otherwise, the vote is against" (2000: 183). Tellier (2006) has shown that the economic voting hypothesis holds at the provincial level in Canada. As such, public opinion towards the government is likely to be favourable in areas where the economy is prospering, which for the most part includes Canada's largest cities, and less favourably in areas that are not experiencing good economic conditions, which includes many rural areas of Canada. Additionally, Gainsborough has shown that in the US "the most striking and consistent differences between cities and suburbs are the role of attitudes about government and the effect of retrospective economic evaluations" (2005: 454). She further notes, "not only do suburbanites have less supportive attitudes about government on average, but they weight these views more highly in their decision about which party to support and which presidential candidate to vote for" (Gainsborough 2005: 454). There are reasons then for believing that attitudes towards the government will vary across differently populated areas.

In the Canadian context, Stephen Dale's 1999 book *Lost in Suburbia* offers an explanation of the shifting political ideology in the "905 belt" of suburban Toronto-Hamilton. Dale claims that both the manner in which suburbs are planned and the lifestyle of the suburbanite lead to the adoption of right-wing ideologies. The cost of living in suburbs, for example, and the stresses associated with the suburban lifestyle have led to less trust of government, more self-reliance, greater support for lowering taxes and less government intervention. Dale notes:

> The suburbanite will quite happily pay user fees to cover the cost of a service he or she uses, but will chafe at writing a cheque for taxes to be applied to some greater but more distant public good. The attitude that citizens should have to pay taxes only to support services they directly use is also encouraged by the compartmentalized nature of suburban life; it's difficult to see any greater social good arising from government spending when you pass most of your day in the workplace, at home, and in your car, spending little time in public places and having few opportunities to glimpse into the lives of people who are less well-off and more likely to be in need of some kind of government assistance (1999: 10).

Dale's contribution to our understanding of the attitudes of suburban Torontonians is qualitative and has not been tested on a large representative sample. His understanding of why suburbanites might differ from other Canadians and, in particular, his explanation for their increased cynicism towards government are nevertheless worthy of consideration.

In that vein, Ailsa Henderson has demonstrated that both rural and suburban areas reveal lower levels of political efficacy, which might be linked to differences in levels of political cynicism. In a study of regional political cultures, she noted that, "rural and mid-northern constituencies have a larger proportion of low-efficacy respondents than urban constituencies in 'have' provinces" (2004: 606) and that "suburban Toronto and Vancouver have a larger proportion of low-efficacy respondents than metropolitan Toronto" (Ibid.). Although different

from the cynicism that exists in rural areas, lower levels of political efficacy might nevertheless shift opinion in the same direction for suburbanites as it does for rural people.

From the literature available on the topic, we can see that three main themes surround the nature of the rural/suburban/urban cleavage. First, there is a difference in the level of support for social conservatism amongst those living in rural and suburban areas versus those living in urban centres. There also appears to be a difference of support for post-materialism/materialism in rural, suburban and urban areas. Finally, the literature suggests that the cleavage is characterized by greater political cynicism in rural and suburban areas when compared to urban centres. As for potential causes for these differences, the two dominate explanations focus on socio-demographic differences across the areas and on cultural differences driven in part by economic forces.

III. Data and Operationalization

The paper proceeds in the following manner. First, using the 2004 Canadian Election Study (CES), attitudinal differences in social conservatism, post-materialism, and in the level of political cynicism across urban/suburban/rural areas are identified.[2] Second, these attitudes are regressed on religiosity, generational cohort, level of education, income level and area of residence to identify the independent role of each in shaping thinking on these questions.

The nature of residence variable identifies whether the respondent lives in a rural, suburban or urban area. The 2004 CES classifies area using respondent postal codes according to Statistics Canada's Postal Code Conversion File 2003 (2003). The original coding of the variable included 5 areas according to Statistics Canada geographical classifications (see Appendix for a description of variables).[3] These categories were collapsed into three broad categories: urban, suburban and rural. According to our classification, urban areas are those defined by Statistics Canada as 'urban core' which are "large urban areas around which a CMA or CA is delineated" [4] and which has a population of at least 100,000 persons in the case of a CMA or between 10,000 and 99,999 persons in the case of a CA" (Statistics Canada 2003: 25). Suburban areas have been classified as those within a CA or CMA but peripheral to the urban core (includes secondary urban cores, urban fringes, and rural fringes inside CMAs and CAs). These areas are considered suburban in that they are within commuting distance of an urban core. Rural areas are those areas outside of CMAs and CAs and urban areas of less than 10,000 outside of CMAs and CAs. In the regression analyses the omitted category is urban.

To measure social conservatism, a belief system which holds that the principles of natural law, traditional family values and social mores should be upheld in society, an additive index of

[2] The principle investigators of the 2004 Canadian Election Study were André Blais, Joanna Everitt, Patrick Fournier, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. The survey was completed by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University.

[3] One category of the original variable (0 = postal codes linked to dissemination areas only) was excluded from the analysis since these postal codes could not be adequately matched to geographic areas.

[4] Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) are composed of one or more municipalities adjacent to an urban core with a population of 100,000 or greater and Census Agglomerations (CAs) are composed of one or more municipalities adjacent to an urban core with a population of 10,000 or greater.

social conservatism is created. The first variable in the index gauges respondents' support for the statement that society would be better off if more women stayed at home to raise their children.[5] A second variable asks respondents if they favour or oppose same sex marriage. Three additional variables gauge the respondent's support for "newer lifestyles," their willingness to adapt his or her perception of "moral behaviour," and their overall support for "traditional family values." The variable was recoded into a 1 to 4 range, and so that increasing values correspond with increasing levels of social conservatism.

To create a measure of post-materialism, two variables that ask respondents to identify their first and second most important goals among a list of four. The goals are: 1) fighting crime, 2) giving people more say in important government decisions, 3) maintaining economic growth and 4) protecting freedom of speech. Respondents who selected the first and third options as their two most important goals were coded as materialist; those who selected the second and fourth options were coded as post-materialist. Respondents who selected some other combination were coded as mixed. This is a fairly standard four-item materialist/post-materialist value index, and is similar to the question from the World Values Survey (WVS) that is used to gauge post-materialism (Inglehart and Abramson 668; Carter A-1). The index ranges from 1 to 3, with 1 corresponding to "materialist," 2 to "mixed" and 3 to "post-materialist" attitudes.

Political cynicism is the third variable created. The literature shows that people in rural areas and the suburbs are less likely to be trusting of government than their urban counterparts, albeit for different reasons (Bergman 2001; Dale 1999; Doskoch 2003; Gainsborough 2005; Henderson 2004; Rodden 2005). To measure political cynicism, an index is created from six variables: the first variable measures how often people think political parties keep their election promises, the second asks respondents how much they believe government cares about them, the third asks how much they feel that political parties are the same, the fourth asks how much they agree that politicians are ready to lie to get elected, the fifth asks whether they believe that politicians lose touch with the people after being elected and the final variable asks how widespread they feel that corruption and bribe-taking are among politicians. Factor analysis was employed to test whether the index measures a single underlying attitudinal dimension given the diversity of the constituent attitudes (see Table 1). As shown, the variables load onto a single component that accounts for 40 percent of the variation in all the variables. Thus it appears reasonable to combine these variables into a single index labelled "Political Cynicism".

Table 1 about here

The second step of the analysis is to investigate what factors might account for differences in attitudes across residents living in urban, suburban and rural areas. In order to do so, the three attitudinal indexes are regressed on a set of variables identified as potential drivers of the urban/suburban/rural cleavage. The first independent variable, level of education, refers to the highest level of education obtained by the interviewee. The education variable is recoded into three categories: those having obtained a high school diploma or less, those with some post-secondary education, and those with a bachelor's degree or more. In the regression analysis, the lowest level of education is the omitted comparison category.

[5] For the exact wording of the questions, responses and index creation please refer to the Appendix.

The second variable, generational cohort, classifies respondent by generation to allow for an evaluation of Inglehart's post-materialism thesis (Inglehart and Abramson 1999). Four generations are coded: the pre-baby boomer generation, whose members were born prior to 1945, the baby boomer generation, whose members were born between 1945 and 1959, the generation X cohort, whose members were born between 1960 and 1969, and the post-generation X cohort, including those born after 1969. In the linear regression analysis, the baby boomer generation is the omitted category and comparison group.

Income level is measured using a variable from the Canada Election Study, which asks respondents to report their family income, before taxes, from the previous year. To recode this variable into a variable that can be more easily used, a coding scheme is created so that a new variable for income level ranged from 1 to 3. The low-income cut-off was chosen because the low-income cut-off for a family of four was $30,940 in 2001 according to Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada 2004). The cut-off for high income was made at $80,000 per year because the average household income in 2004 was $76,100 for a two-member family (Statistics Canada 2005). Two dummy variables representing low income and high income are created, with moderate income as the comparison group.

Finally, religiosity was suggested as a possible explanation for differences in support for social conservatism in different areas and it is measured here as the degree to which religion occupies an important place in one's life. This survey question is recoded into a series of dummy variables, for the non-religious, those with low levels of religiosity, and those with high levels of religiosity. Moderate religiosity acts as the comparison group

IIII. Presentation of Findings

The first step in the analysis is to assess differences in the attitudes of Canadians living in urban, suburban and rural parts of the country on our three attitudinal measures: social conservatism, post-materialism, and cynicism. Of the three independent variables, social conservatism reveals the greatest strength of association to the nature of the area where one resides. As shown in Table 2, the greatest proportion of rural respondents falls into the "high social conservatism" category, 34 percent. Within the suburban and urban areas, on the other hand, the proportions of respondents revealing similar attitudes are much lower at 21 and 19 percent respectively. Alternatively, a much larger share of urban respondents fall in the low social conservatism category, 22 percent, which is ten points greater than respondents in rural areas. In general, the table suggests that social conservatism tends to decrease with levels of urbanization. Suburbanites, however, are somewhat more socially conservative than suggested by this conclusion, with a full 48 percent of respondents revealing moderately high levels of social conservatism.

Table 2 about here

Post-materialist attitudes reveal less differentiation across the nature of the area in which one resides. As Table 3 reveals, roughly one quarter of all Canadians are found to be materialist,

close to 60 percent are mixed and between 15 and 17 percent hold post-materialist attitudes. Where one lives appears to matter little to one's attitudes on this question.

Table 3 about here

The relationship between political cynicism and nature of residence suggests that the key difference on this question is found between urban and other Canadians. As Table 4 reveals, the largest share of respondents in each area reveal moderately high levels of political cynicism. Urban residents, however, appear slightly less cynical than other respondents. While 43 percent of urban respondents can be classified as having low and moderately low levels of political cynicism, this share falls to only 36 percent of rural respondents and suburbanites. Rural and suburban residents reveal remarkably similar levels of political cynicism.

Table 4 about here

The next step is to evaluate potential explanations for the variation in attitudes across rural, suburban and urban areas. Table 5 provides a breakdown of level of education, generational cohort, level of income, and religiosity for respondents within rural, suburban and urban areas. The data reveal that only religiosity does not significantly differentiate respondents in these areas.

Table 5 about here

Education reveals the strongest linear relationship to the nature of residence variable. Where 55 percent of rural residents reveal low levels of education, 47 percent of suburbanites and only 35 percent of those in urban areas reveal similar levels. Given the role that education plays in shaping political attitudes generally, it seems likely that educational differences may account for attitudinal differences across those living in rural, suburban and urban areas. A similar pattern is found for generational cohort: the most recent generational cohort (Post-Generation X) is more likely to be found in urban areas of the country, while the oldest one (Pre-Baby Boomer) is most likely to be found in rural ones. Baby-Boomers and Generation X'ers are most likely to be found in the suburbs. As such, generational cohort may help to account for attitudinal differences across the three areas. Income also reveals significant differences. While a plurality of residents in each region enjoys a moderate household income, respondents in the suburbs and in urban areas reveal higher incomes than those living in rural areas. Where 22 percent of rural residents enjoy high household income, the equivalent share among suburban and urban residents is 31 percent. Income differences, then, may play a role in shaping attitudinal differences across areas as well. Religiosity reveals comparatively less in the way of differentiation across the three areas and as such is expected to play less of a role in differentiating attitudes. Although a slightly higher share of residents in rural areas reveals moderately religious attitudes, the differences are small and not statistically significant.

Tables 6, 7 and 8 provide the results of the regression analyses for each of the attitudinal indexes in our analysis. The objective of the analyses is to assess the degree to which area of residence plays an independent role in shaping attitudes. Social conservatism, shown in Table 6, reveals the strongest associations to the set of explanatory variables included in the analysis. Increasing levels of education have a dampening effect on such attitudes and members of the

Pre-Baby Boomer Generation reveal more socially conservative attitudes. Both of these effects help to explain the strength of social conservatism in rural areas. Religiosity is also strongly associated with social conservatism, but its overall role in explaining rural attitudes on this measure is likely to be small given the relative absence of variation in the strength of religiosity across urban, suburban and rural areas. Importantly, however, the coefficients for both the suburban and rural dummy variables are robust and statistically significant (at the $p<0.10$ level). This suggests that differences in social conservatism across rural, suburban and urban areas cannot be explained by differences in education, generational cohort or religiosity. Where one lives appears to matter for how one thinks on this issue.

Table 6 about here

Post-materialism reveals comparatively little in the way of social differentiation (see Table 7). Only three dummy variables enter significantly into the equation. Those with a high level of education are found to be somewhat more post-materialist, as are members of the Post-Generation X cohort and respondents with low incomes. While the two former would appear to align with our theoretical understanding of factors shaping post-materialist attitudes, the latter is more difficult to explain. Importantly, the little variation in post-materialist attitudes uncovered across urban, rural and suburban areas is largely explained by these factors. Neither of the coefficients for the suburban and rural dummy variables is substantive in size nor statistically significant.

Table 7 about here

The regression analysis results for the political cynicism index are found in Table 8. The results reveal that higher levels of education have a dampening effect on cynical attitudes. Alternatively, respondents with low incomes reveal higher levels of political cynicism than other respondents, as do those who are non-religious or exhibit low levels of religiosity. As in the results obtained for the post-materialism index, neither of the coefficients for the suburban and rural dummy variables is substantive in size nor statistically significant suggesting that area matters little for differentiation Canadians on this question.

Table 8 about here

IV. Discussion

Of the three attitudes tested, social conservatism proved to be the strongest in differentiating rural, suburban and urban Canadians. This confirms the assertions of Thomas, as well as Cutler and Jenkins. Thomas speculated that rural and suburban Canadians are “more socially conservative and homogeneous” than their urban counterparts (Thomas 2001: 433) and Cutler and Jenkins wrote that rural Canadians differ from those in urban areas in their outlook on moral issues such as feminism and homosexuality (Cutler and Jenkins 2000). However, while Cutler and Jenkins’ claim that the divide is due in part to differing levels of education appears to be somewhat verified by the data, their assertion that it is also due to rural people being more traditional may also be accurate. Indeed, even after accounting for socio-demographic factors

such as differing levels of education, there still appears to be a divide between rural and urban Canadians based on their nature of residence. Therefore, it may well be that rural people are more traditional in their outlook than are people in urban centres. However, this traditionalism might not be the product of differing levels of religiosity, but a traditional essence that goes along with living in a rural setting; although rural Canadians might be modestly more religious than urbanites, the distinction appears to be insignificant in accounting for differences in social conservatism. As such, the notion of "countrymindedness", which Forrest et al. claim exists in Australia and has resulted in a pervasive conservatism among rural people, may also exist in the Canadian context.

Much of Walks' research has focussed on the cleavage that exists between suburban and inner city voters in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. His goal is to find what it is about the "suburbanization process" that causes suburbanites to adopt right-wing ideological stances while inner-city residents adopt positions on the left. According to Walks, "it is unclear whether such a divergence is due to the socio-demographic characteristics of inner city and suburban residents (and thus to the uneven distribution of social groups between suburbs and cities) or whether political differences between cities and suburbs can be explained by place of residence" (Walks 2004a: 270). The findings in this study suggest that the latter explanation, at least in terms of social conservatism, cannot be dismissed. Where one lives can shape one's view of political questions. This runs contrary to Zikmund's argument that "all parts of a particular metropolitan area share common problems and a common political, social, and economic environment. The urban stockbroker and the suburban stockbroker are likely to differ politically only on intra-metropolitan issues, and the same holds for the urban blue-collar worker and his suburban counterpart" (1967: 27). The fact that this was written in the 1960s when the notion of suburbia was still quite fresh suggests that the division is a phenomenon that has taken hold over the past few decades and may be likely to continue to intensify as the suburban areas grow larger.

We ought to be careful, however, in exaggerating our findings. Rural, suburban and urban Canadians do not appear to be divided in support for post-materialist/materialist ideals. While the data reveal that rural and suburban Canadians were more likely to be of the materialist group and urban residents in the post-materialist group than their counterparts, the differences are quite minimal and not statistically significant. Furthermore, after conducting linear regression, there is no evidence that one's nature of residence is linked to his or her support for post-materialism/materialism. These findings run counter to results obtained by others who argue that urbanites are more post-materialist than rural residents in their outlooks (Carter 2002, Carmines and Layman 1997, Jackman 2002). In the Canadian context, at least, post-materialism does not appear to follow patterns found elsewhere.

Political cynicism also revealed little in the way of differentiation by nature of residence, albeit slightly more than that revealed for post-materialism. Rural and suburban Canadians are more likely to be cynical than are their urban counterparts. These findings parallel those found elsewhere, and add to the conclusion that those living in rural and suburban areas are less trusting of government than urbanites (Gainsborough 2005, Dale 1999, Henderson 2004, Walks 2004a). In fact, it is quite interesting to note that the level of political cynicism was very similar between rural and suburban respondents and stood in stark contrast to the level of cynicism reported by urban respondents. Importantly, the phenomenon disappears when levels of

education and income are controlled. On this particular attitude, socio-demographic characteristics across the three areas account for the apparent attitudinal differences.

V. Conclusion

The data in this study suggest that a rural/suburban/urban division does exist in Canada but that it is not found across all attitudes and, in some instances, it can be explained by the particular socio-demographic characteristics associated with the residents in each area. In fact, it is only for the differing levels of support for social conservatism that when socio-demographic factors are removed, a division still exists. For the other two variables tested, post-materialist/materialist support and political cynicism, the division is either insignificant or weak.

While the findings suggest that one's level of social conservatism is affected by where he or she lives irrespective of socio-demographic factors, it remains unclear whether this phenomenon is a product of living in the area over time or is the result of like-minded people choosing to live in similar areas. Dale suggests that the former is true. In describing Dale's conclusions, Walks states that "there may be something ubiquitous about suburban lifestyles that leads residents to adopt right-wing views" (2005: 387). The alternative explanation suggests that "individuals self-select into particular environments motivated by a set of core values, tastes, or lifestyle preferences that may cut across class, race, or other such lines of identity." (Walks 2006:392).

It is perhaps the case that both of these trends are part of one greater phenomenon; urban centres have become bastions of progressive, public life with a diversity of lifestyles while the suburbs and rural areas are more private and homogenous. It is likely that the trend is due to two intervening factors: people congregate in either urban, suburban or rural areas depending on their ideological predilections; and living in a location where a certain ideology and belief system are prominent has an effect on the individual.

While it is important to be cognisant of the differences in political opinion that exist between rural, suburban, and rural Canadians, the extent to which the division exists should not be over-stated. Indeed, neither the strength of the division before accounting for intervening socio-demographic factors, nor the significance of the division after taking said factors into account were particularly resonant. As such, the division may not warrant the alarm that some suggest it should; whether or not the differences between rural, suburban, and urban Canadians noted in this paper, while present, qualify as a true cleavage remains up for debate. As Timothy Thomas has stated, "not all emerging differences are considered to be cleavages. Measurable differences that risk creating tension and perceptions of inequity and that have important implications for public policy are the ones that are considered cleavages" (Thomas 2001: 432).

Walks (2004b) has examined the degree to which the growth of suburban electoral districts in Canada's largest cities affected the influence of the inner city Members of Parliament (MP). He compared the federal situation to the provincial case in Ontario and found that it was dependent on the party that took power. He observes that because urban MPs have historically been elected under the Liberal banner more often than they have been under that of the

Progressive Conservatives, ministers have been disproportionately named to cabinet from urban ridings. Conversely, because of the "over-representation" of suburban Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP) of Ontario, they wielded more influence during the Tory rein of the 1990s than did urban MPPs.

That being said, a moderate division in terms of support for social conservatism may not qualify as reason to proclaim that a rural/suburban/urban cleavage exists in Canada. However, one might expect that as suburban areas expand, we will likely see an omnipresent division between Canadians living in suburban or fringe areas and those living in urban cores. The first evidence that this may be occurring may be the election of the right-of-centre Conservative Party of Canada in 2006, which is primarily comprised of rural and suburban MPs. As the suburbs continue to expand, the Liberal Party of Canada, which up until now has been the "natural governing party," could be supplanted by the right-of-centre Conservative Party of Canada based on the political predilection of suburban voters combined with the votes of rural constituencies. If this trend is sustained, it could have long-term consequences for political representation and public policy in Canada and as the significance of the division increases, it may well qualify as a more prominent cleavage of political opinion.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Political Cynicism (Component Matrix)

	Component 1
Party Cynicism	0.587
Government Cynicism	0.661
No Choice in Parties	0.564
Politicians Lie	0.692
Politicians Soon Lose Touch	0.657
Corruption Present in Politics	0.662

Percentage of Variance Explained: 40.8%
Cronbach's Alpha: 0.698

Table 2: Social Conservatism by Nature of Residence

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
Low Social Conservatism	12.4%	10.4%	21.6%	18.2%
Moderately Low Social Conservatism	23.0%	20.9%	28.6%	26.4
Moderately High Social Conservatism	31.8%	47.8%	30.6%	32.9%
High Social Conservatism	32.7%	20.9%	19.2%	22.5%
Total	217	115	615	947

Note: Cramer's V = 0.14, $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Post-Materialist/Materialist Support by Nature of Residence

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
Materialist	24.6%	24.4%	23.9%	24.1%
Mixed	60.6%	60.6%	59.2%	59.7%
Post-Materialist	14.8%	14.9%	16.9%	16.2%
Total (N)	683	315	1828	2826

Note: Cramer's V = 0.02, $p > 0.5$

Table 4: Political Cynicism by Nature of Residence

Level of Political Cynicism	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
Low Cynicism	4.5%	3.4%	6.9%	5.9%
Moderately Low Cynicism	31.4%	33.0%	35.6%	34.2%
Moderately High Cynicism	44.9%	44.3%	43.8%	44.1%
High Cynicism	19.2%	19.3%	13.7%	15.7%
Total (N)	354	176	907	1437

Note: Cramer's V = 0.07, $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Level of Education, Generational Cohort, Income Level and Religiosity by Nature of Residence

*Education***	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
Low Education	54.7%	47.1%	34.9%	41%
Moderate Education	27.3%	31.7%	33.9%	32%
High Education	18.0%	21.2%	31.1%	27%
Total N	967	429	2521	3917
*Generational Cohort***				
Pre-Baby Boomers	28.3%	24.9%	25.0%	25.8%
Baby Boomers	32.2%	33.6%	29.3%	30.5%
Generation X	21.1%	24.2%	21.0%	21.4%
Post Generation X	18.4%	17.4%	24.7%	22.4%
Total N	962	426	2537	3925
*Income**				
Low Income	33.9%	22.7%	27.4%	28.5%
Moderate Income	43.8%	46.2%	41.6%	42.6%
High Income	22.3%	31.1%	31.0%	28.9%
Total N	861	370	2235	3466
Religiosity				
Not religious	3.8%	3.7%	5.3%	4.7%
Low Religiosity	12.1%	15.6%	14.1%	14.1%
Moderate Religiosity	45.3%	42.7%	42.4%	42.4%
High Religiosity	38.8%	38.0%	38.2%	38.2%
Total N	794	347	1953	3094

Note: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$; Cramer's V: education= 0.13; generational cohort= 0.06; income= 0.07; religiosity= 0.03

Table 6: Social Conservatism Regression Analysis

Variable	***B Value***
Constant	11.87
Moderate Level of Education	- 0.57**
High Level of Education	-1.42***
Pre-Baby Boomer Generation	1.20***
Generation X	0.30
Post-Generation X	0.31
Suburban Residence	0.64*
Rural Residence	0.441*
Low Income	0.18
High Income	-0.05
Non Religious	-1.49***
Low Religiosity	-0.80**
High Religiosity	1.64***

Note: * = p<0.1, ** = p < 0.05, *** = p < 0.01. Adjusted R^2 = 0.22

Table 7: Post-Materialism/Materialism Regression Analysis

Variable	**B Value**
Constant	2.82
Moderate Level of Education	.007
High Level of Education	0.14***
Pre-Baby Boomer Generation	-0.03
Generation X	-0.03
Post-Generation X	0.07*
Suburban Residence	0.02
Rural Residence	0.02
Low Income	0.06*
High Income	-0.03
Non Religious	-0.01
Low Religiosity	0.02
High Religiosity	0.02

Note: * = p < 0.1, ** = p < 0.05, ***=p<0.01, Adjusted R^2 = 0.01,

Table 8: Political Cynicism Regression Analysis

Variable	B Value
Constant	16.65
Moderate Level of Education	- 0.43*
High Level of Education	-1.30***
Pre-Baby Boomer Generation	-0.08
Generation X	0.27
Post-Generation X	0.17
Suburban Residence	0.40
Rural Residence	0.37
Low Income	0.43*
High Income	-0.26
Non Religious	1.44***
Low Religiosity	0.49*
High Religiosity	-0.11

Note: * = $p < 0.1$, ** = $p < 0.05$, ***=$p<0.01$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.05$

VI: Appendix

Social Conservatism Index

CES Name	Question Wording
cps_p14	Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children.
cps_il_3	Do you favour or oppose same-sex marriage, or do you have no opinion on this
mbs_a7	Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of society
mbs_a8	The world is always changing and we should adapt our view of moral behaviour to these changes."
mbs_a9	This country would have many fewer problems if there was more emphasis on traditional family values

Post-Materialism Index

CES name	Question wording
pes_goal1	Here's a list of FOUR goals. Which goal is most important to you personally? 1, fighting crime; 2, giving people more say in important government decisions; 3, maintaining economic growth; or 4, protecting freedom of speech?
pes_go_a	And which is the second most important to you?

Political Cynicism Index

CES name	Question wording
cps_p6	Do political parties keep their election promises most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever?
pes_g3	I don't think government cares much what people like me think.
pes_g7	All federal parties are basically the same; there isn't really any choice.
pes_g8	Politicians are willing to lie to get elected.
mbs_e5	Those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people.
mbs_h14	How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is among politicians in Canada?

Other variables

CES Name	Question wording or values
uaratype	0 = postal codes linked to dissemination areas only (omitted from analysis); 1 = urban core (coded as urban); 2 = urban fringe (coded as suburban); 3 = rural fringe inside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Census Agglomerations (CA) (coded as suburban); 4 = urban areas outside CMAs and CAs (coded as rural); 5 = rural fringe outside CMAs and CAs (coded as rural); 6 = secondary urban core (coded as suburban)
cps_s11	In your life, would you say religion is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all

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