

Identity Politics and Local Political Culture: The Politics of Gender, Race, Class and Religion in Comparative Perspective

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August 17, 2003

DRAFT: Comments Welcome

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Prepared for delivery at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association,
Pennsylvania Convention Center and Hotel Marriott, Philadelphia, August 28-31, 2003

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of an attempt to answer certain kinds of questions about identity politics and political culture through a comparative analysis of thirty community sample survey datasets obtained from the Roper Social Capital Benchmark Survey. Although our inquiry was primarily driven by a substantive interest in learning about identity politics in various local settings, an important secondary purpose was to explore the potential of the Roper survey as a resource for comparative urban research.

Our binary logit analysis of the national sample survey data showed that each identity variable we studied – gender, race, class and religion – had a statistically significant relationship with one or more of our dependent variables (political participation, ideology, and opinion about immigrants). In our independent replications of that same analysis on data for the community samples, however, the findings in many cases deviated markedly from our results for the national sample. For example, we found that whites in some communities were more likely than nonwhites to be liberal, while in other communities whites were more likely than nonwhites to be conservative. Based on these kinds of variations among communities in the magnitude and even the direction of observed relationships between identity group variables and political outcomes, we concluded that “place matters” and should be taken into account in generalizing from national surveys to local communities.

To investigate *why* place matters, we hypothesized that variations in local political cultures might explain the observed differences among communities not only in the levels of liberalism, electoral politics activity, political protest activity, and so on, but also the differences in the effects of identity group variables on political outcomes. Drawing from the literature on political culture, we constructed a New Political Culture (NPC) index based on such community characteristics as the extent of social diversity, nontraditional families and gender roles, and acceptance of gays and lesbians. Our predictions that the NPC index scores would be positively correlated with a community’s levels of liberalism, electoral and political protest activity and pro-immigrant opinion, and negatively correlated with conservatism, were strongly confirmed. We also found that variations in local political culture helped to explain some but not all of the observed differences in the patterns of relationships between identity variables and political outcomes. For example, we found that whites become more likely and religious people less likely to engage in high levels of political protest with a shift from traditional (low NPC) to non-traditional (high NPC) environments. Variations in local political culture do not appear to be associated, however, with variations in the effects of gender and social class on protest activity.

Despite the limitations of our community samples and of our methods and measures, we think our study contributes some interesting and intriguing findings about the relationships between local culture, group identities, and political outcomes in U.S. urban communities. We also believe our study demonstrates the potential of the Social Capital Benchmark Survey as a rich resource for comparative urban research. It is one that allows scholars to answer different questions about urban political life, as well as the different and higher-order kinds of questions raised by the logic of comparative social inquiry.

Introduction: The Four Kinds of Questions We Attempt to Answer in this Study, with Illustrative Answers

This paper reports the results of our attempt to answer certain kinds of questions about identity politics and political culture through a comparative analysis of thirty community sample survey datasets obtained from the Roper Social Capital Benchmark Survey. Although our inquiry was primarily driven by a substantive interest in learning about identity politics in various local settings, an important secondary purpose was to explore the potential of the Roper survey as a resource for comparative urban research. To motivate the reader's interest, here we formulate and illustrate the four principal kinds of research questions we sought to answer, at least partially, in our study.

The first kind of question is purely descriptive. To what extent does the frequency of a particular political characteristic of interest, such as the proportion of “liberals” or the level of political protest, vary across the thirty urban communities included in our study? The scatterplot shown in Figure 1, the first of many to be displayed in this paper, illustrates an answer based on an analysis of the Roper survey data.

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FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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As seen in Figure 1, the thirty communities range widely in their levels of liberalism (left scale) and levels of political protest (bottom scale). San Francisco (“S.F.”) stands out as an extreme high outlier on both scales, and a clump of five communities (Minneapolis, Boulder, Denver, Boston, and Seattle) is located below San Francisco but still high above the other twenty-four communities. Those communities are clustered around the national norm on both scales, marked by a cross-hatch.

The second kind of question we seek to answer in this paper is: What is the relationship within each community between an individual-level dependent variable of interest (e.g., an individual's political ideology or level of political protest activity) and an individual's gender, race, social class, and religiosity – the four types of “identity variables” we examine in this study? To illustrate the answers we got to this kind of question using the Roper survey data, we found that in San Francisco the race and the political ideology of individuals are strongly correlated (even statistically controlling for six other predictors). Specifically, using the odds ratio (OR) as a measure, whites are nearly twice as likely as nonwhites (OR = 1.84, $p < .01$) to say they are liberal in San Francisco.

The third kind of question is raised by the answers we got to the second. To what extent do communities differ in the magnitude and direction of the relationship observed within each community between a dependent variable of interest (e.g., liberalism) and a given identity variable, such as race? For example, we found a positive correlation between white race and liberalism in San Francisco but a negative correlation between white race and liberalism in Baton

Rouge (OR = .52, $p < .05$). We also found that, of the two cities illustrated here, the relationship observed between race and ideology in Baton Rouge is much closer to the national pattern (OR = .51, $p < .01$) than is San Francisco.

The fourth kind of question is, in turn, raised by the answers we found to the third. If communities differ so markedly in the patterns of relationship among variables (e.g., positive correlation between white race and liberalism in San Francisco, negative correlation in Baton Rouge), what factors might explain those variations? Our approach to an answer to that kind of higher-order question is inspired by recent theoretical and empirical work on urban political cultures. Specifically, as a general formulation, we hypothesize that political cultural differences among communities explain, at least in part, why whites in places like San Francisco tend to be more liberal than nonwhites while whites in places like Baton Rouge tend to be more conservative than nonwhites. In other words, we contend (and try to demonstrate empirically) that the political culture of a place matters. It matters not only as an explanation of why some communities are more liberal than others, for example, but also as an explanation of why the race variable operates so differently and sometimes with opposite effects across the thirty communities we studied. We also expand the scope of our analysis beyond race and ideology in an attempt to test whether differences in political culture explain differences in the patterns of relationship between each of our other identity variables (gender, class, and religion) and various dependent variables measuring political ideology, political participation, and public opinion on the issue of immigrants.

The Study of Identity Politics and Political Culture

Since at least the 1960s, identity groups and social movements have had a major impact on American politics at all levels of government. Edward W. Soja (2000: 279-280) argues that there has been a general movement from a politics of equality defined traditionally in economic terms to a “specifically cultural politics” aimed at understanding “how differences between people are intrinsically created, externally imposed, and culturally represented through a politically charged process of identity formation.” Nancy Fraser (1997), among other scholars, writes that “contemporary ‘postsocialist’ political life” has been both enriched and complicated by the addition of a new cross-cutting axis of conflict she and others call the “politics of recognition” to the more established lines of conflict defined by the “politics of redistribution.” Politicians and the political scientists who study them have had to adapt their thinking to this changing political landscape. The new political forces unleashed by identity politics, contend Plutzer and Zipp (1996: 31) represent “a threat to the current party system and may play a pivotal role in deciding electoral outcomes.” Group identities have had a growing and significant influence on political beliefs (Conover and Feldman 1984), and media coverage of exit polls now almost invariably report which candidate won the “women’s vote” or the “Black vote.”

Philosophers and social scientists have tried to understand and explain these phenomena under such rubrics as the “new social movements,” the “new political culture,” the “politics of difference,” and the “politics of recognition,” often with the aim of reformulating and enlarging established theories of justice and democracy. (See, for example, Tarrow 1994; Inglehart 1990; Calhoun 1994; Fraser 1997; Bickford 1999; Bailey 1999; and Young 2000.) Most of this work has relevance to studies of local government and urban politics. Indeed, much of it was inspired

by case studies and field research in urban settings. “Clashes over identities, values, and cultural attributes,” Robert Bailey (1999:11) writes, “have taken center stage on the urban agenda.” These conflicts, he continues, “are not replacements for the distributional and service issues that have always been part of urban politics but are additions to them.”

Theories of Identity Politics

Here we provide only the briefest survey of selected theoretical perspectives on identity politics drawn from the work of Manuel Castells, Robert Bailey, Iris Marion Young, and Craig Calhoun.

Manuel Castells (1997: 6) understands “identity, as it refers to social actors,” as “the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning.” Unlike “roles” (e.g., worker, mother), which are defined by “norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society,” identities (e.g., gay, Latino, feminist) “are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation” (Castells 1997: 7). Identities and roles can coincide, he points out, but “in simple terms, identities organize the meaning while roles organize the functions” of individuals in society. Similarly, Robert Bailey (1999: 10) encourages his readers to think about the “problematic of identity” rather than about “identity” itself as a category of political analysis. The problematic of identity is “the ongoing dialogue between the changing individual (or self) and the continuity of the collective identity known by its name as a signifier of social meaning” (Bailey 1999: 10-11). An identity is constructed, the dialogue that constructs it is endless, and the constructed identity that is expressed and enacted at any given time may be temporary.

Identity is complex, contingent on context, and selectively drawn from a repertoire of possible alternative self-identities. An individual’s participation in multiple arenas of political action typically involves the assertion of multiple identities. Bennett (1998: 755) argues that the need to manage and express complex identities in a fragmented society is replacing the energy once devoted to “grand political projects,” such as national-building and economic integration. Rorty (1994) observes that the role any identity plays in an individual’s life varies with the context. Bailey (1999: 31) proposes the term “identity multiplexing” to describe the “layering and ranking by individuals of their different identities in different arenas.” For example, a person might express the identity of “African American” when pursuing goals of racial equality, of “feminist” when joining other women to combat sex discrimination in hiring, and of “lesbian” when writing a legislator in support of same sex marriage. Although an individual’s affinity with an identity group (or with the networked array of groups that form as a social movement) might be taken to define his or her identity as a person, Iris Marion Young (2000: 99) contends that “every individual necessarily has affinities with many social groups, and that the lives of different individuals are structured by differing constellations of groups. If each group defines a person’s identity, then how are a person’s multiple group affiliations conjoined?” Identity groups exist and are important, she argues, “but a person’s identity is her own, formed in active relation to social positions, among other things, rather than constituted by them. Individual subjects make their own identities, but not under conditions they choose.” Indeed, some scholars have called for the redesign of political institutions to compensate for the lack of representation and social inequality experienced by some groups (Bickford 1999, Guinier 1994).

In addition to the distinctions drawn above between identities and roles, and between personal identity and identity groups, there are also important differences to note between identities and interests, and between identity groups and interest groups. Calhoun (1994: 27) argues that many mainstream social theorists have sought to avoid confronting what he calls the “internal dialogicality” and open-ended aspects of identity by treating individuals “as though they were unitary and internally homogeneous” and by fixing identity “by appeal to some more ‘objective’ underlying variable or factor.” The most common candidate, he argues, is “rational self-interest. But identity cannot be collapsed satisfactorily into interest or made to reflect it except as part of a personal and/or political project.” Echoing that same theme with an emphasis on economic self-interest, Bailey (1999: 32) writes that identity boundaries tend to be “softer” and more fluid than the “hard lines of economic interest.” Identity should be distinguished from interest, Bailey (1999: 18) argues, because identity “speaks to cultural, psychological, and other nonmarket valuations, whereas interest primarily concerns economic interests, assessed in a rational manner from a unified individual perspective.” Unlike identity group politics in which “the individual ‘identifies’ with the group primarily for psychological or cultural reasons,” interest group politics “is largely about coming together to advance collective economic, budgetary, or regulatory interests that, when dealing with public policy in an economic framework, are usually for economic gain or protection” (Bailey 1999: 13).

Given that the social construction of identity “always takes place in a context marked by power relationships,” Castells (1997: 7-9) conceptually distinguishes three forms and origins of identity building. Legitimizing identity is “introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination vis-à-vis social actors.” An example is the identity of citizen confined to political actions within the limits of established state power. Resistance identity is “generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.” Examples include religious fundamentalism and queer culture enclaves that involve the “exclusion of the excluders by the excluded.” Castells believes this “may be the most important type of identity-building in our society.” Finally, although rare, project identity formation occurs “when social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.” Castells gives the example of feminists who move beyond the defensive stance of women’s identity and women’s rights to “challenge patriarchy, thus the patriarchal family, thus the entire structure of production, reproduction, sexuality, and personality on which societies have been historically based.”

To summarize: Identities are self-defined psychocultural constructs that give meaning and purpose to an individual’s life. They are constructed through a process of internal dialogue and social interaction. Individuals have complex and multiple identities that are selectively expressed in different arenas at different times. Identities are softer and more fluid than the roles and interests that script and drive an individual’s life, although there is some overlap between these. An individual’s social position within power relations limits the choice of identities, but personal identity is not constituted by social position or identity group membership. An individual’s participation in new social movements or identity group politics is motivated more by

psychological and cultural reasons than by economic or materialist incentives. Identity-building through collective and political action can produce the forms of legitimizing identity (supporting the state and the established social order), resistance identity (defensive withdrawal into communal enclaves that exclude the excluders), and project identity (transforming the social structure of power relations at the deepest level).

The Multiple Political Identities of Gender, Race, Class and Religion

The variety of political identities one might investigate, to say nothing of their “multiplexity,” is virtually infinite. The organized political expression of sexual identity, in particular, has created major new fault lines of conflict in U.S. local, state, and national politics in recent years (Bailey 1999; Button et al. 1997; Armstrong 2002). In our study, however, we will focus on four types of identity: gender, race, class, and religion. According to Soja (2000: 279), gender, class, and race have been “the three most entrenched axes of inequality in contemporary American society.” Castells (1997:17) adds that religious fundamentalism in this era has emerged as “a strong and influential source of identity” and has motivated believers to become involved in the political process to fight against social movements and initiatives that challenge traditional patriarchy. These four identity-based cleavages are politically significant not the least because they were major shaping influences in every presidential election race from 1960 to 1992 (Brooks and Manza 1997) and continue to be present and active in politics at all levels of government. Moreover, these four “identity variables,” as we will call them in our statistical work, have stimulated significant theory and research in many different disciplines, including political science.

Gender

The leading example of gender identity as a predictor of political outcomes is the well-known “gender gap.” The term gained prominence during the 1980s because women tended to vote more often for Democratic candidates than did men, largely because significant numbers of men had become more conservative and shifted to the Republican Party. The gender gap has also become a significant issue because women now comprise the majority of eligible voters and turn out to vote at higher rates than men (Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997; Bendyna and Lake 1994; Norrander 1999; Winsky Mattei and Mattei 1998). Research has demonstrated that the gender gap persists across many demographic groups, including those defined by age, religion, region, social class, marital status and educational attainment (Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997, Kaufman and Petrocik 1999, Levitt and Naff 2002). The gap can at least partially be explained by the differing views men and women have of the government’s expected role in helping the disadvantaged, which women tend to favor, and the use of force to resolve conflicts, which women largely oppose (Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997; Mueller 1988; Anderson 1997; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Conway, Steuernagel and Ahern 1997). These gender-related opinions would not necessarily locate men and women at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. For example, women might well be “liberal” with respect to their greater willingness to support government welfare policies and oppose capital punishment, yet “conservative” with respect to issues about family, children and religion (Flammang 1997, Shapiro and Mahajan 1986).

While we know that women are now slightly more likely to vote than men, ascertaining which group is more active in other forms of political participation is more difficult, and the findings are mixed. For example, one study, based on responses to the nationally administered Citizen Participation Survey, found that women were slightly *less* likely to work informally to deal with a community problem, make campaign contributions, contact public official, and affiliate with political organizations (Schlozman et al. 1995). Another study, based on a Roper survey, found that women were *more* likely than men to have signed a petition, attended a public meeting, political rally or speech and to have written to a representative (Conway, Steuernagel and Ahern 1997). There is some evidence, again based on the national Citizen Participation Survey, that men are more likely than women to report that they follow politics and care a great deal about who wins (Conway, Steuernagel and Ahern 1997; Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997). With few exceptions (e.g., Staeheli and Clarke 1995), the relationship between gender politics and local political cultures has not been systematically explored. And as some scholars have pointed out, the overall level of women's political participation may be underestimated by the application of overly narrow definitions of political activity (Flammang 1997, Stowers 1997).

Race and Class

A vast body of research has examined differences in political attitudes and behavior based on race and social class. Both in social reality and in their modes as group identities, race and class are highly correlated, especially in the U.S., The two are often viewed together as a composite rather than as separate facets of identity in political studies (Nelson 1979).

There appears to be a growing consensus among scholars across many disciplines that the industrial-era, production-based conception of class is in dissolution (Pakulski and Waters 1996), although there have been vigorous defenses of the concept's utility and serious efforts made to adapt it for analyzing politics in postindustrial societies (Wright 1985; Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992). In general, social class, typically conceptualized in U.S. research as social status and measured with an index based on education, income and occupational prestige, is positively related to high levels and multiple forms of political participation (Teixeira 1992, Putnam 2000, Nelson 1979, Berry, Portnoy and Thompson 1991).

Research examining the effects of race and ethnicity on political attitudes and participation has produced mixed results. Some researchers have found that nonwhites tend to be more politically active than whites, and others have found the opposite (Berry, Portnoy and Thompson 1991, Nelson 1979, Lien 1998, Teixeira 1992, Citrin and Highton 2002). Research focusing on African Americans, in particular, has generally found that blacks represent a solid voting bloc and have been more liberal than whites on many policy issues and more likely to vote for Democratic candidates (Norrande 1999, Winsky Mattei and Mattei 1998, Kinder and Winter 2001, Radcliff and Saiz 1995). Further, these relationships between race and politics are only partially related to differences in social class (Kinder and Winter 2001, Radcliff and Saiz 1995, Tate 1991). Like women, African Americans, while liberal on many economic issues, often are conservative on social issues, so may not fit the classic notion of "liberal" in every instance (Radcliff and Saiz 1995). While some of these studies have examined whether these effects are influenced by contextual factors (e.g., relative wealth neighborhood, degree of incorporation into social networks), few have sought to understand how "changing the location of things changes

how they interact” (Miller 2000: xi; but also see Huckfeldt 1986). Compounding an already complex subfield of social inquiry, the political mobilization of non-African American groups and identities, including those of growing immigrant populations, has compelled the re-conceptualization of racial identity politics and expanded its scope (see, for example, Hollinger 1995; Browning, Marshall and Tabb, Eds. 2003; Laguerre 2000; Smith 2001).

Religion and Religiosity

There has been a growing recognition among political scientists in recent years as to the importance of religion in explaining American political attitudes and behavior (Guth et al. 1988, Welch and Leege 1991, Billings and Scott 1994). From an ideological standpoint, religiosity is often correlated with political conservatism, especially on social issues, even when other variables are controlled (Guth and Green 1986). At the same time, religiosity also affects political knowledge and participation simply because of the engagement of those who practice religion in a religious community. Religious involvement is a strong predictor of individuals’ contributions of time and money to civic undertakings, even beyond their own churches (Putnam 2000). As Putnam notes, “Churches provide an important incubator for civic skills, civic norms, community interests, and civic recruitment (2000: 66). Those who are most conservative ideologically, evangelicals, are becoming some of the most politically involved people in the country (Putnam 2000, Billings and Scott 1994).

Identity Politics and Immigrants

Social researchers have studied identity-based factors that predict support for, or opposition to, the struggle of immigrants for equal rights. This is particularly since the passage of the highly controversial Proposition 187 in California (1994), which cut off benefits to illegal immigrants (Chandler and Tsai 2001, Alvarez and Butterfield 2000). Using national General Social Science (GSS) survey data, Chandler and Tsai (2001) found that gender, race and income had little or no effect on favorable views toward immigrants, whereas college education had a strong and positive effect. They note, however, that their findings could be improved by focusing on smaller geographic areas where these individual-level variables might have different impacts. Tolbert and Hero (1996) took this approach, hypothesizing that the racial diversity of a county would be an important explanatory factor accounting for the variation in votes for Proposition 187 among California counties. They found this to be the case, although the relationship was complex. Similarly, they found that policy outcomes that particularly affected African Americans and Latinos at the state level were related to the state’s racial composition (Hero and Tolbert 1996).

Political Culture

An earlier tradition of research on political culture conceptualized it broadly as “the important ways in which people are subjectively oriented toward the basic elements of their political system” (Rosenbaum 1975: 5). Much of that work, summarized in Rosenbaum, was based on national or cross-national sample surveys of individuals and operationally defined culture in terms of the political beliefs, values, attitudes and opinions of mass publics.

Elazar (1966), drawing upon historical case materials and demographic data, pioneered the systematic study of political cultures in the American states. Considerable research has looked at the impact of those cultures on state policies and politics, including mass political participation (e.g., Baker 1990, Conway 1989). Erickson, McIver and Wright (1987) found, for example, that state political culture, defined as the state's ideology and partisanship, explained over half the variation in a state's presidential voting. Other scholars have examined the relationship between a state's political culture, broadly speaking, and such issues as female representation among state officeholders (Arceneaux 2001, Norrander and Wilcox 1998).

More recently, Inglehart (1990) and his collaborators in the World Values Survey have studied "culture shifts" associated with the rise of "postmaterialism" in advanced industrial societies. Putnam (1993; 2000) has developed another major branch of political cultural research in his studies of civic traditions in Italy and of the erosion of social capital in the U.S. Clark and Inglehart (1998) have studied the formation of a "New Political Culture" in cross-national urban research using the data archives of the Fiscal Austerity and Urban Innovation (FAUI) Project.

In recent U.S. political science urban research, a number of scholars (e.g., Ferman 1996; Bailey 1999; Sharp 1999) have made attempts to theorize and operationalize "political culture" to broaden the scope of Clarence Stone's (1989) paradigmatic urban regime theory in case research, while others (e.g., Rosdil 1991; DeLeon 1992; McGovern 1997) have used it as a key variable to explain the emergence of outlier "populist" or "progressive" cities. McGovern (1997: 420-421) writes: "Perceptions of one's options in negotiating the political, economic, and social structures that influence local politics and policy making are distilled through whatever cultural prism happens to predominate at any one time and place. What may appear to be an insurmountable barrier within one cultural milieu may suddenly seem like an opportunity within another."

Even studies that have examined the relationship between gender and vote choice on the statewide or local level (e.g., Plutzer and Zipp 1996, Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997, Cook, Thomas and Wilcox 1994, Norrander 1999) have focused more on the individual attributes of the candidates than on how a location-specific context may have come into play. But as noted by Byron A. Miller (2000: 67) in his discussion of social movements, most such movements are "necessarily rooted in places." To understand why some social movements fail and others succeed, one must necessarily consider, along with other variables, place-specific conditions. It is important to learn whether, how, and to what extent local political cultures influence the relationship between identities and political outcomes.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Political Identity as a Variable for Research

With few exceptions, including the ones noted above, most of these studies assessing the impact of specific identities on political outcomes have been based on national samples, single or small N case studies of cities, or at best samples representing the four broad regions of the country. Few have attempted to engage in a systematic comparative analysis of identity politics in local communities, and fewer still have examined the contextual effects of local political cultures.

One major obstacle to such research has been the lack of a widely-accepted framework for conceptualizing and measuring identity as a research variable. The recent work of Abdelal et al.

(2001) represents a major advance in this area, particularly in their explication of the major dimensions along which identities can vary (they propose content, intensity, and contestation). They further offer a construct of an “identity regime,” which they define (2001: 12) as “the environment that governs identity formation” in a society. Although our own conceptualization of identity variables is crude at best, mainly owing to the limitations of the data we analyze, Abdelal et al’s contributions have informed our interpretation of the results.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to comparative research on identity politics and local cultures has been the lack of multi-level community datasets. These datasets would allow systematic comparisons of system characteristics relevant to identity politics, as well as within-system patterns of relationships between identity variables and political outcomes. The Social Capital Benchmark Survey provides a major new resource for comparative urban research that helps to overcome this last obstacle, though that survey was not designed with identity politics research specifically in mind.

Methods and Data Sources

The Social Capital Benchmark Survey

Our study is based mainly on the secondary analysis of sample survey data. The primary data source was the Social Capital Benchmark Survey, which was designed and administered by the Saguaro Seminar at John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. The Roper Center (2001) describes the telephone survey as the “first attempt at widespread systematic measurement of social capital, especially within communities.” Over the period of July-November, 2000, TNS Intersearch interviewers asked the same battery of questions about social life, political attitudes and civic engagement to a national sample of 3,003 adults and to independent samples of adults in forty participating communities (cities, counties, regions, and states). The community sample sizes ranged from 388 (rural southeast South Dakota) to 1,505 (Peninsula/Silicon Valley). The Roper Center’s codebook (2001) contains the interview schedule and methodological details on sample design, index construction, and so on. The codebook, documentation, and the complete dataset (USMISC2000-SOCCAP) can be downloaded from the Roper Center website: http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/scc_bench.html.

Our aim was to exploit this exceptionally rich survey dataset for the purpose of comparative urban political research. As noted earlier, most urban political research is based on qualitative case studies or field work limited to one, two, or at most only a few cities. Many large N comparative studies of cities have been done, but nearly all rely exclusively on aggregate data drawn from the U.S. Census and other sources. National sample surveys, such as the NORC General Social Survey, provide useful in-depth data for studying urban-related political phenomena. Unfortunately, sample size limitations typically restrict geographical breakdowns to, at most, the regional level. Other national sample surveys, such as the Current Population Survey, have huge sample sizes allowing very fine geographical breakdowns, but they typically lack depth of content or political science relevance. Most studies examining the relationship between identities (such as race and gender) and political opinion and behavior are also based on national samples and cannot be disaggregated to the local community level. Finally, most of the

comparative sample surveys that have been conducted at the local level have been restricted to relatively small numbers of local government officials and political elites.

The Roper Social Capital Benchmark Survey is a rare and valuable resource for urban scholars, as well as for those interested in identity politics because it combines depth of content with breadth of coverage at both the national and community levels. It does so by using the same instrument and data collection procedures within a unified research design. Urban political scientists can test hypotheses on the national sample data and then, in effect, conduct up to 40 independent replications on the community samples. (On the importance of replication, see King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 26).

Perhaps most important for our own purposes, the Roper survey dataset allows systematic comparisons of variables observed at multiple levels between and within communities. It allows, in other words, a comparison of the frequency of some characteristic across communities (e.g., the proportion of a community's respondents who engage in political protest). More importantly, it also permits a comparison of the patterns of relationship among variables (e.g., the strength and direction of the correlation between race and political protest) across communities. Przeworski and Teune (1970: 45) state that: "Systems differ not when the frequency of particular characteristics differ, but when the patterns of the relationships among variables differ." Indeed, they contend (50-51), and we agree, that research cannot be considered truly "comparative" unless it is conducted at multiple levels and examines the patterns of relationships among variables within and across systems. Drawing upon the great resource provided by the Roper Social Capital Benchmark Survey, we undertake just that kind of comparative analysis in this study of identity politics and local political cultures in the U.S.

Selection of Roper Community Samples

In designing our research, we decided to include the national sample and only thirty of the forty Roper community samples in our study. Our focus on urban politics led us to exclude the community samples for entire states (Montana, Indiana, New Hampshire, and Delaware), those covering very large regions (East Tennessee, Central Oregon), and those that were predominately rural or small town (Lewiston-Auburn, Maine, Bismark, North Minneapolis, and rural southeast South Dakota). The thirty that remain (which we label "metro" community samples) constitute at best a convenience sample of U.S. urban communities, and they include a variety of jurisdictions and spatial scales: cities, counties, metropolitan regions, and urban-rural regions with a central city hub. Admittedly a potpourri, the reduced set of thirty is nonetheless sufficiently urban while also being sufficiently diverse to allow meaningful comparative analysis and provisional tests of hypotheses. Appendix A lists the names of the thirty community samples, sample sizes, and other descriptive information.

Dependent Variables

In this first phase of what we hope will become a larger project, we focused on political ideology and political participation as the two main areas of substantive interest. We also included a question about immigrant rights to add some policy specificity on a highly contentious issue relevant to our study of identity politics and political culture.

These concepts were operationalized as follows:

Liberalism: The survey asked respondents to classify themselves along a liberal-conservative continuum. We dichotomized this variable such that those who described themselves as very or moderately liberal were coded 1, and those who were middle-of-the-road, very or moderately conservative were coded as 0. (Roper source variable: IDEO, self-reported political ideology.).

Our dependent variable Conservatism was constructed similarly by recoding those who reported that they were very or moderately conservative as 1 and everyone else as 0.

High Electoral Politics Activity: Those who scored “high” on Roper ELECPOL3 variable were coded as 1, those who scored low or medium were coded as 0. High-scoring respondents on this nationally-normed index were more likely to know the names of their state’s two U.S. Senators; to report that they voted in the 1996 presidential election; to be registered to vote; to be very interested in politics and national affairs; and to read a daily newspaper regularly

High Political Protest Activity: Those who scored “high” on Roper PROTEST3 variable were coded 1 and those who scored Low or Medium were coded 0. High-scoring respondents on this nationally-normed index were more likely to report that they belonged to a group that took local action for reform; have attended a political meeting or rally in the past 12 months; have signed a petition in the past 12 months; have participated in a political group; have participated in demonstrations, boycotts, or marches in the past 12 months; have participated in an ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organization; and to have participated in a labor union.

Pro-Immigrant Opinion: Those who strongly disagreed with the statement: “Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights” were coded as 1; those who chose the remaining categories (disagreed somewhat, either/depends, agree somewhat, or agree strongly) were coded as 0. (Roper: IMMIG.).

Independent Variables

The independent variables used in this analysis comprised the four “identity” variables of interest, as discussed in the literature review, and a set of three statistical controls. In addition, we created a seven-item summative scale to measure local political cultures. Labeled the New Political Culture (NPC) Index, we introduce and discuss it at length in a separate section below.

“Identity” Variables

Gender (femdum): Coded 1 if female, 0 if male. (Roper: GENDER.)

Race (whitedum): Coded 1 if White, 0 if Nonwhite. (Roper: RACE.)

Social Class (SEShi): Coded 1 if respondent had a score of 5 or higher on SES index constructed from Roper EDUC and INCOME variables, 0 otherwise. The minimum score is 2 (less than high

school education and less than \$20,000 total 1999 household income) and the maximum is 10 (graduate school education and greater than \$100,000 income.)

Religion (hirelig): Coded 1 if respondent scored “high” on an index constructed from the Roper RELIG, RELMEM, and RELATEND variables, 0 otherwise. Respondents scored “high” if they said they were a member of a church or synagogue and/or attended religious services every week (or more often) or nearly every week.

Statistical Controls

Age (age50pl): Coded 1 for those 50 years or older, 0 otherwise. (Roper: AGE.)

Marital Status (married): Coded 1 for those currently married, 0 otherwise. (Roper: MARITAL.)

Employment Status (working): Coded 1 if working, 0 if not. (Roper: LABOR.)

Analytical Methods

Our principal analytical method was binary logit analysis, based on the model¹:

$$\Pr(y_i = 1 \mid \mathbf{x}_i) = 1 / [1 + \exp(-\mathbf{x}_i\boldsymbol{\beta})],$$

Where

$\Pr(y_i = 1 \mid \mathbf{x}_i)$ is the conditional probability that $y_i = 1$ for an individual given \mathbf{x}_i ,

\exp = the base of the natural logarithm,

\mathbf{x}_i is a vector of an individual’s values on the seven model predictors (femdem, whitedum, SEShi, hirelig, and the three controls), and

$\boldsymbol{\beta}$ is a vector of parameters to be estimated from the sample data by maximum likelihood methods.

Using the Stata 8 logit procedure with probability weights obtained from the sample data, we performed a total of 155 logit estimations of model fits, 31 for each of the five dependent variables (national plus 30 community samples). In all runs, the analysis was restricted to data for citizens aged 22 years or older. This was because one of our key dependent variables, an index of electoral politics activity, included items on voter registration and voting turnout in the 1996 election. The main statistics of interest generated by these runs were the estimated odds ratios for the four identity variable predictors (4 x 155 = 620 of them). These in turn became the

¹ We initially tried multinomial logit analysis on the political ideology variable, which had the virtue of allowing specification of “middle of the road” as the same baseline category for analyzing predictor effects on both liberalism and conservatism. But the sample sizes were typically too small to provide statistically reliable estimates of the large number of parameters involved. Our second-best solution was to run separate binary logit analyses of liberalism and conservatism. For a clear introduction to the binary logit model, see Long 1997: 40-50.

“raw data” we analyzed later with scatterplots and other graphical tools in our comparative study of local communities and political cultures.

The Political Correlates of Gender, Race, Class and Religion: Findings from the National Sample

In this section we report and discuss the results of our logit analysis for the national sample data only. In the section that follows, we repeat that analysis on each of the 30 community samples and then provide a statistical summary of the entire set of 30 results. At the conclusion of that section, we will attempt to make some observations about whether place matters. Specifically, we will examine (1) the range of effects observed for each of the identity variables on political ideology, political participation, and opinion across the 30 communities, and (2) the generalizability of the national sample findings as a model of identity politics to the sub-national urban communities included in our study.

Table 1 summarizes the findings of our logit analysis of the effects of gender, race, class, and religion (as we have measured them here) on each of the dependent variables of interest. The model fits are shown, including estimates of the slope coefficients, standard errors for the coefficients, and odds ratios for each predictor. The estimated slopes/odds ratios for a given predictor statistically control for the effects of the other six, including the three statistical controls. In what follows we will read the table row-wise and discuss the findings for each identity variable across the columns. Bear in mind that respondents were those in the national sample who were citizens, and at least 22 years of age.

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TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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Identity Variables as Predictors of Political Ideology, Political Participation, and Opinion

Gender: As shown in Table 1, women are more likely than men to say they are moderately or very liberal (odds ratio 1.37, $p < .05$). Women are somewhat less likely than men to say they are moderately or very conservative, although that result is not statistically significant (odds ratio .82, $p > .05$). Women are two-thirds as likely as men to participate in a high level of electoral politics activity (odds ratio .67, $p < .01$) and about three-fourths as likely to engage in a high level of political protest activity (odds ratio .73, $p < .01$). There is no substantively or statistically significant gender gap found in the likelihood of having pro-immigrant opinions (odds ratio 1.06, $p > .05$).

Race: Whites are about half as likely as nonwhites to say they are moderately or very liberal (odds ratio .51, $p < .01$). Whites are somewhat more likely than nonwhites to say they are moderately or very conservative, although that result is not statistically significant (odds ratio 1.24, $p > .05$). Whites are about one and a half times more likely than nonwhites to participate in a high level of electoral politics activity (odds ratio 1.56, $p < .01$). Race is not a significant predictor, however, of a high level of political protest activity (odds ratio .94, $p > .05$). Whites

are two-thirds less likely than nonwhites to hold a pro-immigrant opinion (odds ratio .67, $p < .01$).

Social Class: High SES citizens are twice as likely as lower SES respondents to say they are moderately or very liberal (odds ratio 2.01). They are about two-thirds less likely to say they are moderately or very conservative (odds ratio .64). They are much more likely to engage in both a high level of electoral politics activity (odds ratio 2.79) and a high level of political protest activity (odds ratio 2.49) than those of lower socioeconomic status. High SES respondents are also much more likely than lower SES respondents to hold a pro-immigrant opinion (odds ratio 2.68). All of these relationships are quite strong and statistically significant at $p < .01$.

Religion: Nationally, highly religious citizens are about half as likely as less religious respondents to say they are moderately or very liberal (odds ratio .52, $p < .01$). They are more likely to say they are moderately or very conservative (odds ratio 1.66, $p < .01$). They are also more likely to engage in a high level of electoral politics activity (odds ratio 1.69, $p < .01$). Religion is not a significant predictor, however, of a high level of political protest activity (odds ratio 1.13, $p > .05$) or of opinion on immigrants (odds ratio .86, $p > .05$).

Summary

Based on our statistical findings for the national sample, the class identity variable has the strongest association with our dependent variables across the board, except as a predictor of conservatism. Consistent with findings from previous literature, those with a higher SES are more likely to participate in political activity than those with a lower SES. Also confirming previous findings, this study shows that race is an important predictor of liberalism, with nonwhites more likely to classify themselves as liberal and to hold pro-immigrant opinions than whites. These results further show that whites are more likely than nonwhites to engage in electoral politics activity, but no more or less inclined than nonwhites to engage in protest politics, again consistent with previous research. In keeping with the literature, this analysis finds religion to be a strong (positive) predictor of conservatism and an important (negative) predictor of liberalism. Highly religious people are also more likely than those less religious to engage in a high level of electoral politics activity, but are no more or less inclined to engage in political protest activity. Surprisingly, of the set of four identity variables, gender is the weakest predictor overall, although the findings do support the notion that women are somewhat more likely than men to be liberals. Although previous research findings on women's engagement in politics have been mixed, these results show that women are considerably less likely than men to engage in either conventional (electoral) or unconventional (protest) political activity.

Further, reading Table 1 by columns rather than by rows, we can see that all four identity variables contribute to a statistical explanation of liberalism and a high level of electoral politics activity. Only class and religion predict conservatism, however, and only class and gender predict a high level of political protest activity. Finally, only class and race appear to have any association with opinions about immigrants. These findings provide further support for Bailey's (1999) conception of "identity multiplexing" or the notion that people have multiple identities that they must "layer and rank" in different arenas. Based on this survey administered to a national sample, it appears that in studying electoral political activity, it is important to pay

attention to all four identities at issue here. In contrast, in looking at attitudes toward immigrants, the gender of those participating, for example, is inconsequential. The next question to be addressed, however, is how the relation between these identities and political outcomes may be affected by the location in which citizens reside.

The Political Correlates of Gender, Race, Class and Religion: A Statistical Summary of 30 Replications in the Roper Community Samples

The question, “Does place matter?” deserves an answer if we wish to check the robustness and generalizability of national survey findings as a basis for drawing conclusions about identity politics in the U.S. To illustrate the point with an extreme hypothetical, one might conceivably explain the observed non-correlation between race and political protest in our national sample data as a “suppressed correlation.” Let us imagine that in half the nation’s communities whites are more likely than nonwhites to protest and that in the other half nonwhites are more likely than whites to do so. Given that scenario, there is no doubt that race and protest are correlated, but in different and opposite ways in the two different contexts. In a national sample survey, those two equal and opposite correlations would negate each other in a wash, producing an apparent non-correlation between race and protest at the national level. Although seemingly fanciful, we really don’t know if place matters in this way until we take some readings using the same instrument on a range of local communities and check to be sure.

With that purpose in mind, we replicated the logit analysis discussed in the preceding section on each of our 30 community samples. For each sample we produced the same kind of statistical output in terms of model fit coefficients and odds ratios for our four identity variable predictors. By taking this analytical step we were heeding Przeworski and Teune’s maxim (1970: 45), quoted earlier, that “Systems differ not when the frequency of particular characteristics differ, but when the patterns of the relationships among variables differ.” Do the systems (communities in this case) differ? If so, how, and to what extent? And to what extent do the patterns of the relationships among variables observed in those local systems agree with those reported above for the national sample? Table 2 summarizes our results:

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TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

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Here is a guide to interpreting the statistics shown in Table 2.

First, note that in the leftmost column the four identity predictors are grouped in five sets under headings naming one of the dependent variables of interest. The second column recapitulates the odds ratios reported for the national sample in Table 1 above.

The next three columns report, for each identity variable, the median odds ratio, the lowest odds ratio, and the highest odds ratio for that predictor among the 30 community samples. For example, in the first row of numbers, the median community sample odds ratio estimated for the

gender predictor of liberalism is 1.47 (close to the national sample estimate of 1.37), the lowest is .76, and the highest is 2.43. Here we see our first indication that place matters. While nationally women are slightly *more* likely than men to be liberal, in at least one of the community samples studied here, women are slightly *less* likely to be more liberal. The next column shows us that women are less likely to be liberal in 3 communities, but that none of these differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. In 27 communities, women are more likely than men to be liberal (unsurprisingly, consistent with the national sample) but in only 9 of these communities are these differences statistically significant.

Finally, the entries under the “Pattern Fit” column report the number of community samples that mirror the national sample findings in how the four identity variables combine to predict the dependent variable. (See notes at the bottom of the table). Capital letters indicate a positive relationship between the identity and dependent variable, and lowercase letters indicate a negative relationship. For example, in the national model fit predicting liberalism, the code for that pattern is **FwSr**, meaning: (**F**) women are more liberal than men; (**w**) whites are less liberal than nonwhites; (**S**) higher SES people are more liberal than lower SES; and (**r**) highly religious people are less liberal than less religious people. The fact that all four of these symbols are bolded and underlined tells us that all of these relationships are statistically significant at $p < .05$. The entry “4 (18)” next to that pattern code indicates that only four of the 30 community samples produced a pattern exactly like that for liberalism both in terms of the odds-ratios and statistical significance. Eighteen of the 30, however, replicated the national pattern of FwSr based on the odds ratios alone. Conversely, 12 of the 30, including places like Baton Rouge, did not.

Appendix B compactly displays these pattern codes for all 30 community samples and the national sample for all five dependent variables – a total of 155 in all. There one can see, for example, that Baton Rouge has the pattern “**fwsr**” for liberalism, indicating that in this place women are less likely than men to be liberal, whites less likely than nonwhites, higher SES people less likely than lower SES people, and religious people less likely than those less religious. Only the race variable is statistically significant at $p < .10$, however, as symbolized by the bolding and underlining of “w.”). Just skimming each of the five columns shows the differences among the communities in terms of where specific identity variables are or are not important (and in what combinations) with respect to the political outcomes. Note that the significance level of .10 is used here instead of .05 because some of the community sample sizes are quite small relative to the national survey.

With that as background, the following conclusions can be drawn from Table 2. about the generalizability of the national sample findings and about the extent to which place matters in how our four identity variables operate to explain variations in political ideology, political participation, and opinion in the 30 community samples.

- Overall, the median community odds ratios closely track the national sample odds ratios both in terms of the magnitude and direction of identity variable effects.
- However, a comparison of the lowest and highest odds ratios observed reveals that the “patterns of relationships among variables” differ considerably across the 30 communities in terms of both strength and direction. For example, the community sample

odds ratios for race predicting high electoral politics activity range from a low of .26 (York, PA) to a high of 6.46 (Minneapolis), and the odds ratios for social class predicting liberalism range from a low of .68 (Baton Rouge) to a high of 3.18 (Cleveland/Cuyahoga County).

- In only 4 of the 20 comparisons of the odds ratios (measuring the relationships between the 4 independent variables and 5 dependent variables) does a given identity variable have the same direction of relationship with a dependent variable in all 30 community samples. Three of those four are for social class, showing that higher SES respondents are much more likely than lower SES ones to be liberal and to engage in high levels of both electoral and protest politics. The fourth is for religion, showing that in all 30 communities highly religious people are more likely than less religious people to be conservative.
- Of the four identity variable predictors, race is the most variable in its effects across the 30 communities, and most markedly so with respect to political protest activity. In 18 of the 30 communities, whites are less likely than nonwhites to engage in protest activities (OR < 1.0), and in two of them (Charlotte Region and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County) that relationship is statistically significant. On the other hand, in 12 of the 30 communities, whites are more likely than nonwhites to engage in protest (OR > 1.0), and in four of them (San Diego County, San Francisco, Peninsula/Silicon Valley, and Denver City/County) that relationship is also statistically significant. Clearly, place matters most and must be taken into account when generalizing about the effects of race on protest politics.
- Finally, turning our attention once again to the last column under the heading “Pattern Fit,” we can see that the national sample findings can be generalized most confidently to local communities in the area of electoral politics activity. The national pattern of women less active, whites more active, higher SES more active, and highly religious more active is replicated in 22 of the 30 communities. The national sample findings regarding the correlates of liberalism also can be generalized to some extent to local communities; 18 of the 30 communities fit the national pattern. On the other hand, the national sample findings do not generalize very well to local communities in predicting conservatism, protest politics, and pro-immigrant opinions. In more than half the communities in each of those areas, the four identity variables combine in different ways and with different effects relative to the national pattern.

A Political Cultural Analysis of Political Ideology, Political Participation, and Opinion in 30 U. S. Communities

In our introduction, we asserted that “place matters” and that variations in local political cultures need to be taken into account in making generalizations about identity politics in the U.S. We have already seen above that each of the four identity variables in our analysis (gender, race, class and religion) can vary widely in the magnitude and even the direction of its “effects” on a given dependent variable across the 30 community samples studied. Further, we have shown that

the national sample survey results are broadly replicated (at least as to sign) for some of the dependent variables in most or all of the community samples. The identity variable of race, however, in particular, has wide ranging and even opposite effects depending on the dependent variable of interest and the local context. In an attempt to generalize about the effects of race on political ideology or political protest, for example, it matters a great deal whether the community being studied is San Francisco or Birmingham.

In this section, in an admittedly exploratory fashion, we address the question of why place matters and place names (e.g., “San Francisco,” “Birmingham”) are important to know in drawing conclusions about identity politics. Here we are guided by Przeworski and Teune’s (1970: 8) formulation of the question: “In our view, the crux of the problem [of comparative inquiry] lies in the status of the proper names of social systems within general theory. What does it mean that observations of social reality are relative to particular units? The real difference between this assumption and the one disregarding social relativism is that particular social units are treated as predictors, in the same manner as variables are used as predictors in general theories. The status of social units, however, is not the same as the status of variables. The goal of comparative research is to substitute the names of variables for the names of social systems.” In other words, what variables can be used to fully describe the differences between a Birmingham and a San Francisco?

Looking at the problem in this way, we propose to substitute scores on the variable “political culture” (as operationally defined by our NPC Index – see below) for the place names of the 30 metro community samples. This is an attempt to explain not only inter-community variations in liberalism, protest, etc., but also variations in the way a given identity variable (e.g., race) operates in different community contexts. In other words, to continue our example, we will explore the extent to which variations in local political culture explain not only (1) why San Franciscans are more liberal than Birminghamians but also (2) why whites are more liberal than nonwhites in San Francisco while nonwhites are more liberal than whites in Birmingham.

In taking on this challenge, however, we want to emphasize again that the following analysis is exploratory. The analytical methods we use (mainly graphical displays), the structure and content of the data, and the fact that the 30 Roper observations (although diverse) are at best a convenience sample of U.S. communities all fall short of the methodological standards for conducting a rigorous contextual analysis. (For a discussion of those standards and the various pitfalls and fallacies, see Achen and Shively 1995: 219-233.) Nonetheless, we think the results are illuminating and suggestive, and we believe they demonstrate the value of the Roper dataset as a resource for the comparative analysis of local political cultures.

Our analysis follows in four parts.

First, we conceptualize and operationally define what we mean by “local political culture.” The result is the New Political Culture Index, which we use as an analytical tool in all the sections that follow.

Second, we investigate the relationship between the NPC Index and each of the five dependent variables.

Third, we conduct an analysis to check and rule out the possibility that inter-community variations in the distribution of covariate patterns (e.g., female, white, high SES, religious) might explain the observed differences in the level of liberalism, etc. For example, it could be that the main reason San Francisco is so liberal is not because of its political culture (as we have measured it here) or because San Francisco's highly educated and affluent citizens think and act politically differently from the way highly educated and affluent citizens do elsewhere. Instead, it may simply be because a lot more highly educated and affluent citizens live in San Francisco than in most other places, and highly educated and affluent citizens, wherever they happen to live, tend to be liberal.

Fourth, and admittedly most speculative and exploratory as an analytical move, we examine the relationship between the NPC Index and the community-level odds ratios measuring the effects of a given identity variable on a dependent variable of interest.²

Measuring Variations in Local Political Culture

Guided by the theoretical and empirical work of other scholars who have written about urban political cultures, we constructed a single summative scale (labeled here, *pace* Clark and Inglehart, the New Political Culture Index) that combines a number of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of urban social environments that differentiate the more traditional from the more non-traditional or innovative local political cultures. These characteristics include social diversity; non-traditional family structures and gender roles, the presence and acceptance of gays and lesbians combined with a low level of religious traditionalism, and high levels of income and education.

Social Diversity: Several scholars (e.g., Button et al. 1997; Florida 2002) have identified racial and social diversity as a key indicator of innovative local political cultures and creative economies. Button et al. (1997: 15) write: "The demand for innovative policies is usually highest in large, densely populated communities marked by social and economic diversity, what we call the *urbanism/social diversity model*." The strong social networks that form in such environments, they argue, allow groups to "congregate in densely populated neighborhoods in sufficient numbers both to form durable subcultures and to develop a strong sense of political commonality [footnote omitted]. The result, decidedly not a melting pot, is instead a cauldron of distinctive subcommunities marked by religion, race, ethnic identity, class, or other common markers." A fundamental assertion of Florida's creative capital theory (2002: 223) is that "regional economic growth is driven by the location choices of creative people – the holders of creative capital – who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant, and open to new ideas."

Non-Traditional Families and Gender Roles: Other scholars (e.g., Rosdil 1991; Clark and Inglehart 1997; Judis and Teixeira 2002) have emphasized the importance of anti-hierarchical

² (We admit to thinking in cause-effect terms, and we occasionally indulge, as now, in writing it that way. It's easier. But we know, and the reader should know, that the last part of the last sentence should more humbly and accurately read: "...odds ratios estimating the strength and direction of the association between a given identity variable and a given dependent variable." Any other of our lapses into causal language should be interpreted and qualified similarly.)

non-traditional families and changing gender roles as a force behind government expansion to reduce new kinds of inequalities. Indeed, Judis and Teixeira (2002: 163) contend that a “new Democratic majority” will soon emerge that is “intimately bound up with the changes . . . from an industrial to a postindustrial society, from a white Protestant to a multi-ethnic, religiously diverse society in which men and women play roughly equal roles at home and at work . . .”

Strong Gay/Lesbian Presence and Low Religious Traditionalism: Florida (2000: 256) cites the presence and acceptance of gays and lesbians as a leading indicator of the formation of creative capital in local cultures: “Attempts by gays to integrate into the mainstream of society have met substantial opposition. To some extent, homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society, and thus a place that welcomes the gay community welcomes all kinds of people [footnote omitted].” According to Button et al (1997: 205-206; also see Gallagher and Bull, 1996), that indicator is inversely correlated with the strength of local religious traditionalism: “The environments that promote political mobilization among gays and lesbians probably inhibit the development of a parallel social movement among religious traditionalists, the most likely opponents of gay rights legislation according to communal protest theory.”

High Levels of Income and Education: Finally, virtually all of these scholars (most prominently Inglehart 1990 and Clark and Inglehart 1997) view rising affluence and education as driving forces creating the post-scarcity conditions and new value-based cleavages associated with the new political culture at all spatial scales, including the urban.

Constructing the New Political Culture (NPC) Index

Using survey data for all respondents in each of the Roper “metro” community samples, we constructed a seven-item summative scale to tap all the facets of the social environments shaping each community’s local political culture discussed above.

The seven items, computed as percentages of each community sample’s total number of respondents, are:

1. PctNoRel % saying they adhere to no religion (Roper: RELIG.)
2. SingWorkFem: % single working females (Roper: MARITAL, LABOR, GENDER)
3. PctHighSE: % high on SES Index (The SES Index ranges from a minimum score of 2 (less than high school education and less than \$20,000 income) to a maximum score of 10 (graduate school education and greater than \$100,000 income.) Respondents with an SES Index score of 5 or higher were coded as “high” SES. (Roper: EDUC, INCOME)
4. PctMax3race % scoring a maximum of 3 on our constructed Racial Diversity of Personal Friendships Index, which ranges from a low of 0 (no claimed personal friendships with any member of a different race) to a maximum of 3 (at least one personal friend in each of the three other racial groups). (Roper: BWHT, BBLK, BASN, BHISP)

- 5. Unmarried % who are unmarried (Roper: MARITAL)
- 6. PctGayFriend % saying they have a gay or lesbian as a personal friend (Roper: BGAY)
- 7. Partners % who are unmarried, live with a partner, and say they have a gay or lesbian as a personal friend. This is a very rough proxy indicator of the size of a community's gay/lesbian population. Cf. Florida's Gay Index (2000: 255-256). (Roper: MARITAL, PARTNERS, BGAY)

Weighted estimates of the seven item percentages were computed separately for each metro community sample and then entered into our community sample data file. A summative Alpha scale was then constructed using standardized scores for the seven items for each of the 30 metro samples. The average inter-item correlation is .64 for seven items and n = 30 samples. The scale reliability coefficient is .93, acceptably high by conventional standards to justify using this single scale to measure variations in political culture. Scores on this New Political Culture (or NPC) Index range from a low of -1.2 (Fremont/Newaygo County, Michigan) to a high of 2.4 (San Francisco). (Appendix A reports NPC scores for all metro community samples.) The boxplot of the 30 NPC Index scores in Figure 2 below shows that about half the samples fall between -.4 and +.4, and it identifies San Francisco and Boston as high outliers.

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FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

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The Relationship between Local Political Culture (NPC Index) and Community-Level Political Outcomes

Based on our discussion of political culture above, we would expect to find the NPC Index

- positively and strongly correlated with a community's level of liberalism;
- negatively and strongly correlated with conservatism;
- positively but only weakly correlated with the level of electoral political activity;
- positively and strongly correlated with the level of political protest activity, and
- positively and strongly correlated with pro-immigrant opinion.

The five scatterplots shown in Figures 3A-3E provide visual evidence supporting all of these hypotheses.

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FIGURES 3A-3E ABOUT HERE

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Notice that San Francisco is a high outlier on the NPC Index in all five plots and is also an outlier in its level of liberalism (high), conservatism (low), and political protest activity (high). Yet its placement in each graph is in line with the overall pattern of relationship displayed.

A short digression here: In light of these results, and pursuing the goal of substituting variables for proper names, we can easily check whether simply knowing San Francisco’s NPC Index score eliminates the need to identify San Francisco as “San Francisco” in our comparative analysis. First, regress each dependent variable on a dummy predictor scoring San Francisco as 1, the other 29 communities as zero. Second, regress each dependent variable on that dummy statistically controlling for NPC Index. Then compare the results. We will have succeeded in substituting the variable NPC Index score for the name “San Francisco” if the absolute value of the estimated slope for the San Francisco dummy drops from a higher number toward zero (no relationship) in each case. Table 3 below shows the results.

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TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

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As shown in Table 3, all the slopes drop to near zero when our measure of political culture is added to the equation. San Francisco may be deviantly liberal and politically active relative to the other communities included in our analysis, but not for any reasons that cannot be explained, at least statistically, by the composite of political cultural variables captured in our NPC Index.

The Relationship between Local Political Culture (NPC Index) and Deviations from the National Model Predicting Community-Level Political Outcomes

Our method of testing whether differences in demographic composition alone might explain variations among communities in liberalism, protest activity, etc., was to use the national model fits for each dependent variable (see Table 1 above) to compute the expected percent liberal, percent high protest, etc., in each community. This was based on the assumption that the national model applied to citizens 22 years or older everywhere, regardless of place. We would expect to find (1) that the national model does not generalize very well to all communities, with the exception of predicting conventional electoral political behavior, and (2) that the plus or minus “residuals” (i.e., the difference between actual and expected levels of liberalism, protest, etc.) are highly correlated with variations in local political culture.

The scatterplots shown in Figures 4A-4E below provide visual evidence supporting both general hypotheses.

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FIGURES 4A-4E ABOUT HERE

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In each scatterplot, the left scale measures the deviation (“residual”) of a community’s actual score (point estimate from community sample data) minus the predicted score from the national model fit. The bottom axis gives the NPC Index scores. In each plot a horizontal line is drawn at zero on the left scale. If the model fit for the national sample applied generally to all of the

communities included in this study, the residuals for all communities would be approximately zero and all of the data points would fall close to that line.

As can be seen in each plot, however, there is a considerable spread in the residuals around the zero line, thus ruling out differences in demographic composition per se as an explanation of variations in the dependent variable. This means, for example, that San Francisco is not more liberal than other communities simply and only because of its relatively high concentration of liberally inclined highly educated people or its relatively low concentration of conservatively inclined religious people. If that were the case, and if the national model applied generally to individuals regardless of their community of residence, San Francisco's residual would be zero. Further, as can be seen in Figures 4A-4E, the observed residuals are strongly correlated with the NPC Index scores in the ways we predicted. (Pearson r 's are reported at the top of each plot only as rough indicator of the strength of association, not as a test statistic.)

The Relationship between Local Political Culture (NPC Index) and the Effects of Identity Variables on Individual-Level Political Outcomes

There are many different possible explanations of the community sample deviations from the national model fit predictions and of the observed correlations between those residuals and the NPC Index.

One approach to one kind of explanation is suggested by the community differences noticed earlier (see Table 2) in the relative magnitude and direction of the odds ratios reported for each of the identity variables with respect to a given dependent variable. To use the illustrative contrast between San Francisco and Birmingham once again, the estimated odds ratio for white race predicting liberalism in San Francisco is 1.84 (with a corresponding slope of +.610) and the estimated odds ratio for Birmingham is .59 (with a corresponding slope of -.528), both odds ratios statistically significant at $p < .05$. Thus, the same variable, race, is a substantively and statistically significant predictor of liberalism in both communities. But it has a positive slope in San Francisco and a negative slope in Birmingham, meaning whites are more liberal than nonwhites in the former, with just the opposite true in the latter. Why? One plausible hypothesis is that this race variable operates differently and with different effects in different socio-political settings. This example suggests the idea of using the odds ratios themselves (more exactly, in what follows, the slopes) as dependent variables to be explained by contextual differences in local political cultures.

To illustrate concretely the kind of two-level "contextual" analysis we have in mind, consider the statement by Button et al. (1997:205-206) quoted above: "The environments that promote political mobilization among gays and lesbians probably inhibit the development of a parallel social movement among religious traditionalists . . ." (Also see Sharp 2003: 274 for a similar conjecture explaining the waxing and waning of local political mobilization by religious fundamentalists around morality issues as a function of city size.)

One hypothesis that follows from this statement, and that can be provisionally tested on our metro community sample data, is that the odds ratio for the religion identity variable would change sign, from > 1.0 (positive correlation) to < 1.0 (negative correlation) as the community

NPC Index moves from low (more traditional political cultures) to high (more non-traditional political cultures). We would also expect that, as the NPC index score increases,

- women (relative to men) would become more liberal, more politically active, and more supportive of immigrants
- whites (relative to nonwhites) would become more liberal (with “liberalism” taking on a more postmaterialist cast in high-NPC cultures), more inclined to engage in protest politics, and more supportive of immigrants;
- high SES citizens (relative to lower SES) would become more liberal, more likely to engage in protest politics, and more supportive of immigrants; and
- highly religious citizens (relative to less religious) would become less liberal, less politically active generally, and less supportive of immigrants.

Five sets of four graphs each, twenty graphs in all, visually summarize the results of our attempt to perform this kind of analysis. Each set focuses on one of our five dependent variables (liberalism, conservatism, high electoral political activity, high political protest activity, and pro-immigrant opinion.). Within each set, and with respect to a given dependent variable, each graph plots the relationship between the estimated odds ratio/slope for one of our four identity variables (gender, race, class, and religion) and the NPC Index scores for the 30 metro communities.

Figures 5A-5D show the results for liberalism, Figures 6A-6D for conservatism, Figures 7A-7D for high electoral activity, Figures 8A-8D for high political protest activity, and Figures 9A-9D for pro-immigrant opinion.

In each plot, the left scale gives the slope and the right scale the corresponding odds-ratio. To guide visual analysis, a horizontal line is drawn from slope = 0 on the left to the mathematically equivalent odds ratio = 1 on the right. Data points for communities above the line have a positive correlation between the dependent variable and the identity variable predictor; those below the line have a negative correlation. The overall pattern of relationship observed in each graph will provide a visual test of our hypotheses. The robust regression model fit and p-value (shown at the top) are intended to be suggestive only and not a rigorous test.

Liberalism (Figures 5A-5D)

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FIGURES 5A-5D ABOUT HERE
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Figure 5A offers no support for our hypothesis that women tend to become more liberal relative to men in higher NPC environments. Similarly, Figures 5C and 5D, respectively, show no correlation between the SES slopes/odds ratios and the NPC Index or between the religion slopes/odds ratios and the NPC Index. Figure 5B, however, provides strong visual evidence that whites tend to become more liberal relative to nonwhites the higher the NPC.

Conservatism (Figures 6A-6D)

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FIGURES 6A-6D ABOUT HERE

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Figure 6A shows no obvious tendency for women to become less conservative relative to men in moving along the scale from low NPC to high NPC environments. Figure 6B provides stronger visual evidence that whites become less conservative relative to nonwhites in the higher NPC communities. Figure 6C shows the same for high SES individuals. Figure 6D, somewhat surprisingly, offers no support for the hypothesis that highly religious individuals become more conservative in higher NPC environments, and the robust regression slope near zero reinforces that conclusion, despite the fact that robust regression discounts the influence of the high leverage outliers San Francisco and Boston.

High Electoral Politics Activity (Figures 7A-7D)

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FIGURES 7A-7D ABOUT HERE

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Figures 7A, 7B, and 7C, respectively, offer no visual evidence to suggest that the effects of gender, race, or class on conventional electoral political activity vary in any systematic way with the level of NPC. Figure 7D, however, provides very strong visual support for the hypothesis that religious traditionalists become less politically active (relative to less religious people) in more dominant NPC environments – a result that is consistent with the Button et al conjecture discussed earlier.

High Political Protest Activity (Figures 8A-8D)

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FIGURES 8A-8D ABOUT HERE

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Figure 8A does not support the hypothesis that women (relative to men) become more engaged in political protest activity with higher levels of NPC. Nor is there any visual evidence in Figure 8C that the high SES slope/odds ratio predicting high protest activity increases with rising NPC. Figure 8B provides strong visual evidence, however, that whites become more likely to engage in political protest activity (relative to nonwhites) with higher levels of NPC. And Figure 8D offers further evidence, again consistent with the Button et al. conjecture, that religious traditionalists (relative to less religious) tend to become less politically active in higher NPC environments.

Pro-Immigrant Opinion (Figures 9A-9D)

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FIGURES 9A-9D ABOUT HERE

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Finally, to complete our analysis and interpretation of this suite of twenty graphs, Figure 9A offers very strong visual evidence that women become more supportive of immigrants (relative to men) in higher NPC environments. Figure 9B shows the same for whites (relative to nonwhites), and Figure 9C the same for high SES individuals (relative to lower SES). Lastly, Figure 9D suggests, although only weakly, that religious traditionalists (relative to less religious) tend to become less supportive of immigrants in higher NPC settings.

Summary

Overall, the visual evidence provided by ten of our twenty graphs suggests that variations in local political cultures (as measured by the NPC Index) are correlated with, and statistically help to explain, some of the observed differences in the effects of our identity variables on the dependent variables of interest in the 30 metro community samples. The graphs supporting the hypotheses derived from the Button et al conjecture are particularly gratifying, not only because those hypotheses are substantively interesting and important, but also because the visual “tests” on the Roper data produced relatively crisp results demonstrating the feasibility of our methods. Although this study does not qualify as a rigorous contextual analysis, and although the 30 metro community samples do not constitute a representative probability sample of U.S. communities, we believe these findings are sufficiently interesting and intriguing to motivate additional (and better) political cultural research and analysis of this sort.

Conclusions

A growing body of research has shown the significance of identity politics for understanding many of the dynamics and outcomes of the American political process. Historically, the political expression of gender, racial, class, and religious identity has had a shaping influence on an individual’s relative power in the political system and desire to engage in collective action. An individual’s multiple political identities, singly or in combination, can have a major impact on political participation, political ideology, and opinion on policy issues. These identities are not static, however, nor do they operate in a political vacuum. The extent to which identities become politically active, politically mobilized, and politically potent depends on a number of contextual factors, including characteristics of the local political culture in which identity groups and social movements interact with the political system.

In this study, we were able to take advantage of a nationally administered survey, and its replication in 30 local communities, to explore the extent to which local political cultures mediate the relationship between various types of identities and important political outcomes.

Our analysis of the national survey data showed that each identity variable we studied – gender, race, class and religion – had a statistically significant relationship with one or more of our dependent variables (political participation, ideology, and opinion about immigrants). But more importantly, in our study of those same relationships in the community samples, we found that place does matter. The relationships discovered between identities and political outcomes in the community samples deviated markedly, in some cases, from the relationships observed between those same variables in the national sample. Based on these findings, we concluded that “place matters” and should be taken into account in making generalizations about identity politics, especially at the sub-national level of local communities.

Finally, in an effort to assess *why* place matters, we drew from the literature on political culture to construct a New Political Culture (NPC) index. That index measures such community characteristics as the extent of social diversity, nontraditional families and gender roles, and acceptance of gays and lesbians, so we expected that it would be positively correlated with a community’s level of liberalism, electoral and political protest activity and pro-immigrant opinion and negatively correlated with conservatism. Our results, admittedly based on non-rigorous graphical evidence, showed that it was. We also believed that variations in local political culture, as measured by the NPC Index, might help to explain why the magnitude and direction of relationships between the identity variables and political outcomes varied from community to community. Here, based on the same kinds of graphical evidence, our results were mixed. For example, found that whites become more likely and religious people less likely to engage in high levels of political protest with a shift from traditional (low NPC) to non-traditional (high NPC) environments. Variations in local political culture do not appear to be associated, however, with variations in the effects of gender and social class on protest activity.

Despite the non-random character of our sample of communities and the limitations of our methods and measures, we think our study contributes some interesting and intriguing findings about the relationships between local culture, identities, and political outcomes in U.S. urban communities. We also believe our study demonstrates the potential of the Social Capital Benchmark Survey as a rich resource for comparative urban research. It is one that allows scholars to answer different questions about urban political life, as well as the different and higher-order kinds of questions raised by the logic of comparative social inquiry.

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TABLE 3: Comparison of OLS Regression Slopes for San Francisco Dummy Predictor With and Without Statistical Control for NPC Index Scores. N = 30 “Metro” Roper Community Samples

Dependent Variable	Estimated Slope (and P-Value) for San Francisco Dummy:			
	Without NPC Index		With NPC Index	
Percent Liberal	.354	p = .001	.060	p = .135
Percent Conservative	-.267	p = .003	-.047	p = .450
Percent High Electoral	.192	p = .089	.033	p = .720
Percent High Protest	.212	p = .002	.044	p = .363
Percent Pro Immigrant	.203	p = .007	-.014	p = .658

Note: The 30 samples are a convenience sample, not a probability sample, of U.S. communities, so the p-values shown (based on the t-statistic) are at best suggestive and do not constitute a rigorous test.

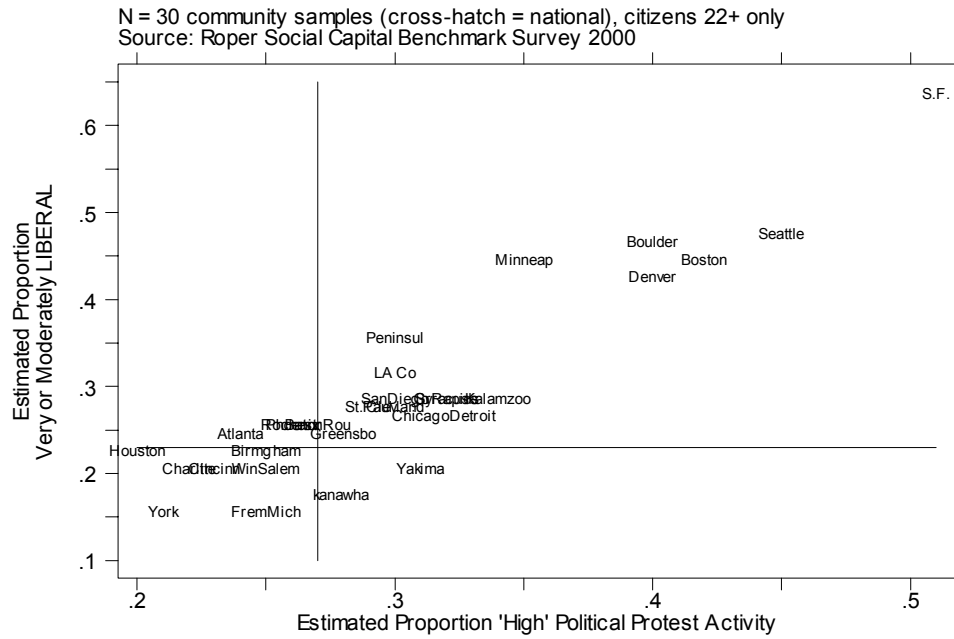


Figure 1: Plot of Proportion “Liberal” versus Proportion “High Political Protest” in 30 U.S. Communities.

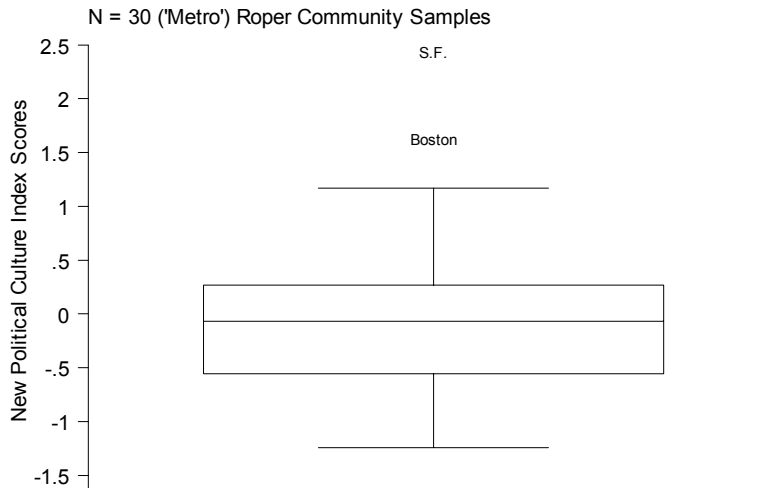


Figure 2: Boxplot of New Political Culture (NPC) Index Scores for the 30 Metro Community Samples