

Measuring place-based consciousness in Europe

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Abstract

Place-based consciousness has emerged as a key mechanism for understanding the growing rural-urban political divides affecting many Western democracies. Noting that this research has been confined to the distinct political systems of the United States and Canada, this paper considers the measurement of consciousness in Europe. We develop and test a battery of measures of rural vs. urban identities and resentments in five European countries: Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland. We demonstrate the validity and reliability of our measures and show that they are best understood as comprising a dimension of place-based identity and three dimensions of place-based resentment pertaining to power, resources, and culture. We furthermore find that place-based consciousness is associated with indicators of “left behind” status such as low income and lack of a university education, but is also linked with identification with the political right. This shows how rural-urban identities and resentments can help illuminate the changing political landscape of Western Europe.

Keywords: rural-urban divide; place-based consciousness; identity; Europe

Words: 7,227

1. Introduction

There has long been a political and social divide between urban centers and the rural hinterlands. Rurality, for example, is traditionally associated with greater support for conservative parties and urbanity with support for social democrat or left-wing parties (Caramani 2004; Rokkan 1970). If anything, these divides appear to have deepened in recent years, with ruralites more supportive of authoritarian-populist parties (Maxwell 2019; Scoones et al. 2018; Strijker, Voerman, and Terluin 2015), more mistrustful of politics, and more dissatisfied with the democratic political system (Huijsmans et al. 2021; Kenny and Luca 2021; Zumbunn and Freitag 2023). As such, some scholars argue that rural-urban divides pose a threat to the quality and stability of democracy (Mettler and Brown 2022).

In an effort to better understand these apparently growing divides, researchers have moved beyond the familiar distinction between contextual versus compositional drivers of rural-urban differences, and turned instead to the political psychology of place, i.e., the identities, resentments, and consciousness that characterizes ruralites and urbanites (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Cramer Walsh 2012; Cramer 2016; Munis 2022; Trujillo 2022; Trujillo and Crowley 2022). These place-based attachments and grievances have proved to be powerful explanations of why rural and urban areas are diverging politically. Such research has, however, focused on the cases of the United States and Canada. Although a place-based consciousness does indeed appear to characterize the residents of rural America (and to a lesser extent, urban America), we have little idea whether this holds in other contexts given the role played by political institutions, historical experiences, and culture in shaping citizen's identities and worldviews.

This paper addresses this issue by developing and testing a survey battery for measuring rural and urban consciousness in Europe. We test our battery in five distinct European locales (using five languages): Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland. We demonstrate that our measures of place-based identities and resentments are valid and reliable. As with previous research from North America, we find that European ruralites identify more strongly with their

place than urbanites and more keenly feel resentments. However, in contrast to Munis (2022) and Borwein and Lucas (2023), but congruent with Trujillo and Crowley (2022), we find that place-based resentment is not unidimensional; rather it exhibits the three components of power, resource, and cultural resentment first identified by Cramer (2016). We furthermore show that rural consciousness is linked in Europe with indicators of “left behind” status such as low income and lack of a university education as well as identification with the political right. Our measures of place-based consciousness therefore help illuminate political trends such as the realignment of political cleavages in Western Europe (Ford and Jennings 2020).

2. Existing Research on Rural-Urban Consciousness

In Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) classic account, the rural-urban divide is one of the essential political “cleavages” in Western democracies. This cleavage first arose as a result of the national and industrial revolutions that transformed European societies. However, as societies developed over the course of the twentieth-century, the rural-urban cleavage became eclipsed by the class cleavage. In addition, social scientists turned away from place-based explanations of behaviors and attitudes in favor of more general national-level explanations (Agnew 1987).

Yet there has recently been a recognition that rural-urban divides have risen in importance again. In the United States, several studies have demonstrated rural-urban differences in vote choice and partisanship (Gimpel et al. 2020; Rodden 2019; Scala and Johnson 2017). In Europe, rural (vs. urban) residence has been shown to have even wider political consequences including: greater support for radical right populists (Fitzgerald and Lawrence 2011; Gavenda and Umit 2016; Maxwell 2019; Scoones et al. 2018; Strijker, Voerman, and Terluin 2015); more hostility to immigration (Huijsmans et al. 2021; Maxwell 2020); and less trust in politics and democratic institutions (Kenny and Luca 2021; Lago 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). It is clear that the rural-urban divide is once again a major cleavage in Western democracies.

Three mechanisms have been proposed for how rural vs. urban residence produces divides

in political behavior and public opinion. First is the differing demographic composition of rural and urban areas (Maxwell 2019). As Western societies have become more mobile, economic, cultural, and employment factors have led to a greater divergence between those choosing to live in metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas (Carlson and Gimpel 2019; Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; Jokela 2022). Cities attracted more highly educated people whilst rural areas generally experienced an outward migration of younger people, leaving rural areas older and less diverse (Jennings and Stoker 2016; Ford and Jennings 2020; Scala and Johnson 2017).

Second, and presented as something of a foil to these compositional explanations, are accounts of how rural and urban places differ because of the different experiences encountered by their residents. For example, rural areas are – by definition – less densely-populated than urban areas (Gimpel et al. 2020), which makes it less cost-effective for a wide variety of goods and services to be provided compared with urban areas. A scarcity of resources, whether provided by private enterprises or governments, thus characterizes many rural areas. In turn, these resource scarcities shape political preferences and behavior (e.g., Coquard 2019).

Finally, a third mechanism, place-based identities (Cramer Walsh 2012; Cramer 2016; Trujillo 2022), has recently been proposed for why the rural-urban cleavage shapes political outcomes. Like other forms of social identities (Tajfel and Turner 1979), place-based identities both frame and distort how individuals see the social world (Huijsmans 2023). Following social identity theory, to the extent that individuals identify with a group, they redefine the self in terms of the group's norms and values and also share the group's emotions and frustrations (Mackie, Smith, and Ray 2008). Individuals may further be motivated to favor the ingroup with whom they identify and perhaps disfavor any outgroup (Hogg and Abrams 1988). In this view, rural-urban divides have origins in human psychology as much as they have roots in different experiences or geographical contexts, suggesting a politics of groups as much as a politics of place.

Perhaps the foremost expression of this place-based identity theory of rural-urban divides is the work of Cramer (2012; 2016). Through fieldwork in rural Wisconsin, she develops a concept of rural consciousness, which encompasses people's identities as ruralites and an accompanying

sense of resentment towards urban areas and urbanites that shapes their political attitudes and behavior. Cramer delineates three particular varieties of resentment: “a perception that rural areas do not receive their fair share of decision-making power, that they are distinct from urban (and suburban) areas in their culture and lifestyle (and that these differences are not respected), and that rural areas do not receive their fair share of public resources” (Cramer 2016, 23). She argues that rural consciousness is central to understanding the polarization of public opinion, and politics, in Wisconsin.

Munis (2022) operationalizes and measures Cramer’s notion of rural consciousness by developing a battery of 13 questions and fielding this in a nationally representative survey of US residents. He focuses only on the resentment component of consciousness, but follows Cramer closely by using questions that tap her three varieties of rural resentment, i.e., pertaining to power, resources, and culture. Munis’ battery exhibits good psychometric properties, being internally consistent and showing discriminant validity against related variables such as racial resentment and populism. Generalizing beyond Cramer’s focus on ruralites, Munis applies his battery to both rural and urban residents. He finds, however, that “place-based consciousness” is highest among ruralites.

Subsequent studies have further developed and extended the work of Cramer and Munis. Trujillo (2022) shows that rural identity – but not urban identity or even rural residence – is related to “anti-intellectualism,” i.e., the rejection of expert knowledge. In perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of the concept of place-based resentment, Trujillo and Crowley (2022) develop a 14-item battery following pilot testing of a 53-item battery. They argue that the symbolic aspects of resentment (i.e., power and cultural resentment) are positively linked with Trump support while material aspects (i.e., resource resentment) show a negative relationship.

In one of the few experimental tests in this new literature, Lyons and Utych (2021) find that place-based identities lead to discrimination against people from place-based outgroups and discrimination in favor of ingroups. These findings indicate that place-based identities can trigger the same zero-sum set of appraisals that characterize other intergroup conflicts. Finally, Borwein

and Lucas (2023) extend this line of work outside the United States, to Canada. In similar fashion to Munis, they develop a survey-based measure of resentment that covers the three components identified by Cramer, i.e., cultural, distributional, and representational grievances. Like Munis (and Cramer), Borwein and Lucas (2023) find that rural identifiers show higher levels of place resentment than urbanites or suburbanites.

In sum, political scientists have recently begun examining the psychological aspects of the rural-urban divide. Cramer's landmark work developed the contours of the concept of rural consciousness, which encompasses both place-based identities and resentments. This work furthermore puts forward a three-fold typology of place-based resentments, relating to power, resources, and culture. This conceptualization has been translated into survey research batteries and tested in various ways by several authors (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022; Trujillo 2022; Trujillo and Crowley 2022; Lyons and Utych 2021). Whatever the differences in approach and intent, these studies generally find place-based consciousness to be a powerful lens for understanding the link between rurality (especially) and political grievances.

Notably absent from this growing literature is a consideration of rural and urban consciousness in Europe.¹ This is a considerable oversight given the emerging evidence of rural-urban divides in countries such as the Netherlands (Huijsmans et al. 2021) and France (Brookes and Cappellina 2023). Our approach to measuring European rural vs. urban identities and resentments is discussed next.

¹A number of studies have focused on related issues such as the political geography and political psychology of regional and center-periphery divides within countries, including in the UK (Jennings and Stoker 2016) and in the Netherlands (de Lange, van der Brug, and Harteveld 2023; Huijsmans 2023). While the latter consider how regional resentments vary across the rural-urban divide, their survey measures tap regional attachments and grievances, not rural vs. urban ones.

3. Measuring place-based consciousness

In existing work, a distinction is drawn between a person's identity as a ruralite (or urbanite) and feelings of resentment that follow from these identities. For Cramer, rural identity and resentment are the key components of her concept of rural consciousness: "a strong sense of identity as a rural person combined with a strong sense that rural areas are the victims of injustice: the sense that rural areas do not get their fair share of power, respect or resources and that rural folks prefer lifestyles that differ fundamentally from those of city people" (Cramer 2016, 89). Trujillo (2022) and Trujillo and Crowley (2022) use survey methods to measure place-based identity, finding it to be unidimensional and distinguishable from place-based resentment.

There is less agreement about the dimensionality of place-based resentment. Cramer is somewhat ambiguous on this issue: at times suggesting that resentment is a coherent concept that is expressed in three different ways; at other times stating that the economic, political, and cultural forms of resentment are different "components." Survey-based work arrives at different conclusions. Trujillo and Crowley (2022) argue that resentments are best characterized as three-dimensional, in line with Cramer's original identification of distinct power, resource, and culture components.² Munis (2022), in contrast, finds resentment to be unidimensional, as do Borwein and Lucas (2023) using Canadian data (and a much shorter four-item battery).

In sum, existing research agrees that place-based identities are distinct from place-based resentments. However, there is no agreement as to how the various forms of resentment cohere, e.g., whether resentment is best characterized as a single variable or treated as three distinct (although possibly correlated) variables.

Our approach in this paper is to develop two distinct batteries for measuring place-based identity and resentment in Europe. This allows us to test the dimensionality of resentment, and

²Somewhat confusingly, Trujillo and Crowley (2022) recommend that scholars adopt a two-dimensional, symbolic vs. material conceptualization even though their analyses appear to support a three-dimensional solution.

indeed, the distinctiveness of identity and resentment.

Our point of departure is to ask respondents to evaluate the degree to which they categorize themselves as urban or rural because self-categorization as a group member is a necessary condition for group identification (e.g., Hogg and Abrams 1988). Given the different political geographies of our five cases, the self-categorization question is asked differently across the five countries.³ In Germany, Spain, and Britain, we asked respondents:

“Would you say that you live in an urban place, a rural place, or someplace in between?”

The response set includes three urban categories, (1) “very urban”, (2) “somewhat urban” and (3) “more urban than rural”, as well as three corresponding rural categories, (4) “more rural than urban”, (5) “somewhat rural”, and (6) “very rural”. We treat responses (1) through (3) as respondents’ self-categorizations as urbanites and responses (4) through (6) as respondents’ self-categorizations as ruralites. In France, respondents were confronted with the statement:

“I identify myself as ...”,

with respondents choosing (1) “urban” treated as urbanites, those choosing (2) “rural” treated as ruralites, and those selecting (3) “periurban” sorted into an intermediate category. In Switzerland, a question from the European Social Survey was applied:

“How would you describe the place where you live?”

Respondents are treated as urbanites if they chose the response categories (1) “a big city” or (2)

³Specifically, existing research in France and Switzerland suggested the need to measure the place-based consciousness of residents of two intermediate geographies: in France, peri-urban areas (e.g., Guilluy 2014); in Switzerland, suburban areas (e.g., Kübler 2023). Note that for clarity and consistency, we focus only on the two basic categories of urban and rural in our five samples throughout the rest of this paper, excluding the intermediate category.

Table 1. Questions used to measure place-based identities

Label	Wording
IdDescrip	The term [ingroup] resident is a good description of how I see myself.
IdImport	Being a/an [ingroup] resident is very important to me.
IdConnect	When I meet people who live in [ingroup] areas, I feel connected.
IdValues	I have similar values to other people living in [ingroup] areas.
IdCommon	I have a lot in common with other people living in [ingroup] areas.

The response set is (1) strongly agree, (2) somewhat agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) somewhat disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. In the analysis that follows we reverse the order of these such that higher values represent stronger identity. In the questions, “ingroup” and “outgroup” are replaced with “urban” for rural residents and “rural” for urban residents.

“town/small city” and as ruralites if response categories (4) “country village” or (5) “farm” were selected. The intermediate category was populated by respondents choosing (3) “suburbs”.

Once respondents have categorized themselves as rural or urban, we measure the strength of the corresponding identities using a battery of five questions (Table 1). These questions were developed from previous research on related concepts like national identity (Huddy and Khatib 2007) and partisan identity (Bankert, Huddy, and Rosema 2017). In this regard, we take a similar approach to Trujillo (2022) in measuring place-based identity.

As we have discussed, resentment is more complex a variable than place-based identity. Like Trujillo and Crowley (2022) and Munis (2022), we developed questions tapping all three forms of place-based resentment described by Cramer (2016): power (i.e., relating to the quality of representation); resources (i.e., relating to distributive politics), and cultural (i.e., relating to differences in values and lack of respect). We developed questions to measure all three forms of resentment in Europe. Our questions are presented in Table 2.

4. Research Design

4.1. Data and Case Selection

The concept of place-based consciousness, or more generally, people’s sense of place, is based on one’s place of residence. As such, we would expect local conditions, as well as national political

Table 2. Questions used to measure place-based resentment

Label	Wording
<i>Power</i>	
ResCare	Politicians don't care what people living in [ingroup] areas think.
ResElites	Elites look down on people living in [ingroup] areas.
ResNoSay	People living in [ingroup] areas have no say in what the government does.
ResMPs	There are too many MPs from [outgroup] areas who do not represent the interests of people living in [ingroup] areas.
ResIgnore	Politicians ignore the issues that really matter in [ingroup] areas.
ResMedia	[Ingroup] areas are not represented enough in the media.
<i>Resources</i>	
ResSpend	[Ingroup] areas are usually last in line for government spending on things like roads, schools and healthcare.
ResDevelop	The government spends too much money on the development of [outgroup] areas, while the development of [ingroup] areas falls by the wayside.
<i>Culture</i>	
ResRespect	People in [outgroup] areas do not respect the lifestyle of people in [ingroup] areas.
ResValues	People in [outgroup] areas have quite different values to me.
ResWork	People in [ingroup] areas work harder than people in [outgroup] areas.

The response set is (1) strongly agree, (2) somewhat agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) somewhat disagree, and (5) strongly disagree. In the analysis that follows we reverse the order of these such that higher values represent greater resentment.

institutions and historical experiences, to shape rural or urban identities and beliefs. Existing research on these topics is, however, based on evidence from the United States and Canada, in which rural (or urban) areas differ considerably from those within Europe. For example, in Europe, the rural-urban cleavage was originally the result of industrialization, which precipitated a conflict of interest between the traditional agrarian elite and the emerging industrial bourgeoisie (Rokkan 1970). As such, we cannot assume that concepts and measures designed for a North American setting will operate well in European contexts.

Yet there are also major differences within Europe. Along with the original rural-urban cleavage, European countries vary in the extent to which alternative divides, such as religious, linguistic, and regionalist, are evident, as well as in their political institutions, which channel, dampen or amplify any such divides (see, e.g., Caramani 2004). Our five cases – Britain,⁴ France,

⁴We focus on Great Britain, not the United Kingdom, given the very different political context

Table 3. Sample characteristics and procedures

Country	Survey firm	Type of panel	Sampling scheme	Fieldwork	<i>N</i>
CHE	Intervista	Opt-in online panel	Quota sample: age, region, & rural-urban	2–27 Sep.	1,552
DEU	Forsa	RDD-based online panel	Quota sample: age, gender, educ., & region	18 Nov. – 5 Dec	4,198
ESP	Netquest	Opt-in online panel	Quota sample: age, gender, educ., & region	22 Nov. – 20 Dec.	4,001
FRA	OpinionWay	Opt-in online panel	Quota sample: age, gender, educ., region, & class	23 Sep. – 24 Oct.	3,340
GBR	YouGov	Opt-in online panel	Quota sample: rural-urban, nation, age, gender, educ., & past vote	3–19 Oct.	4,069

All fieldwork dates are in 2022. RDD = random digit dialing. *N* includes completed interviews of respondents that were categorized as urbanite or ruralite and were asked about place-based resentments with reference to either rural or urban areas respectively.

Germany, Spain, and Switzerland – offer variation across all these dimensions. Britain and Germany are two cases that experienced early and extensive industrialization, and therefore a more pronounced rural-urban divide. Germany and Switzerland have been shaped by religious diversity, and Spain and Switzerland by linguistic diversity. The regionalist dimension of politics is currently a significant factor in both Britain and Spain. Our cases also show variation in political institutions: France is a more centralized state, while Germany and Switzerland are federal. Britain and France moreover use majoritarian electoral systems while the other three cases employ proportional systems. As such, although our five cases are not representative of Western Europe, they do vary on many of the key political variables in this region.

We fielded our batteries of survey questions for measuring place-based identity and resentment in the five countries between 2 September and 20 December 2022. The surveys were implemented online by renowned survey companies and, using various quotas, were designed to be representative of the adult, majority-language-speaking population of each country. Survey weights are used for the Swiss, German, French, and British samples to adjust for oversampling and historical experience of Northern Ireland.

pled rural dwellers and to align the sample demographics with population totals. Alongside the place-based consciousness batteries, the questionnaires in all countries included a shared set of demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal questions. Table 3 offers further details broken down by country.

4.2. Empirical strategy

Our analysis of our batteries proceeds in three steps. First, we test the construct validity of our scales, i.e., whether our items cohere into valid measures of identity and resentment as existing work suggests. In doing so, we also adjudicate between two conflicting interpretations of the concept of rural consciousness, i.e., whether the resentment component is unidimensional (as Munis argues) or multidimensional (as Trujillo claims). To accomplish this we fit a series of confirmatory factor analytic (CFA) models and carry out chi-square comparison tests. Since there are missing values (both refusals and “don’t know” responses) in all of our 16 items, listwise deletion would lead to a substantial number of deleted respondents (between 19 and 29 percent of respondents across the five cases). As, such, we fit our CFAs using full-information maximum likelihood (FIML), which produces unbiased parameter estimates in the presence of missing values. It also allows factor scores to be obtained for any respondent who provided at least one response.

In our second analytic step, we examine the reliability of each of our scales. Finally, we describe the nature of place-based consciousness in Europe by examining patterns of identity and resentment across countries, rural-urban divides, and socio-political indicators such as income and left-right ideology. First, we examine the distributions of place-based consciousness by rural and urban areas within each country. Next we examine the associations between socio-political variables and consciousness within each country by rural-urban subsample. We accomplish this by extending our four-factor CFA model into a structural equation model (SEM), which allows measurement error in the four dimensions of consciousness to be included in downstream regression (or “structural”) models. We consider linkages between gender (female vs. other); education (holding a bachelor’s degree or not); income (upper, middle, lower tertile, and no response), age groups

(18-34, 35-49, 50-64, and over 65), and a left-right self-placement scale (recoded to range from -1 to 1).

5. Results

5.1. Dimensionality

We designed our batteries using existing conceptual (Cramer 2016) and empirical (e.g., Munis 2022) work to measure place-based identity and resentment, with five items employed to measure the former and 11 items used to measure the latter. We expect that these design choices will be reflected in the emergent dimensionality of our data. As such, our tests of dimensionality are confirmatory, not exploratory. In addition, we seek to adjudicate between various interpretations of place-based consciousness that have been put forward, namely whether the resentment component is best specified as having one or three dimensions.

We fit and compare four confirmatory factor analytic models in each of the five national samples. First is a two-dimensional model with separate – but potentially correlated – factors for identity and resentment; second is a four-dimensional model with correlated factors for identity and power resentment, resource resentment, and cultural resentment. Third, we examine a hierarchical model featuring two primary factors of identity and resentment, with the latter factor giving rise to three secondary factors of power, resource, and cultural resentment. Finally, we compare also a unidimensional model of consciousness in which identity and resentment are specified as part of a single factor.

The results of these model comparisons are presented in Table 4. Since the four models are all nested, with complexity increasing from the one-factor model up to the four-factor model, formal chi-square tests are possible. We also report some of the standard fit metrics employed in the structural equation modeling literature, such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The results are unequivocal: across all samples, the four-factor model fits the data best. This result is supported not only by the formal chi-square

tests, but also by the fit metrics. The lowest values of the RMSEA and SRMR metrics and the highest values of the CFI metric are obtained in the four-factor case.⁵

Table 4. Tests of Dimensionality: CFA Models

	Model statistic		Difference			RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
	χ^2	DF	χ^2	DF	p-val.			
Switzerland								
4-factor	615	98				.060	.956	.045
Hierarchical 2-factor	696	100	67	2	<.001	.064	.949	.057
2-factor	1256	103	347	3	<.001	.088	.900	.065
1-factor	4195	104	1301	1	<.001	.164	.650	.138
Germany								
4-factor	3106	98				.086	.912	.055
Hierarchical 2-factor	3596	100	237	2	<.001	.092	.898	.072
2-factor	5099	103	453	3	<.001	.109	.852	.079
1-factor	11196	104	1250	1	<.001	.163	.668	.128
Spain								
4-factor	3386	98				.094	.900	.054
Hierarchical 2-factor	3581	100	154	2	<.001	.096	.895	.064
2-factor	5029	103	826	3	<.001	.113	.851	.073
1-factor	11624	104	2101	1	<.001	.170	.657	.133
France								
4-factor	1512	98				.064	.955	.044
Hierarchical 2-factor	1577	100	16	2	<.001	.065	.953	.048
2-factor	3585	103	183	3	<.001	.103	.880	.061
1-factor	9507	104	318	1	<.001	.169	.672	.131
Britain								
4-factor	1158	98				.070	.929	.045
Hierarchical 2-factor	1538	100	203	2	<.001	.076	.914	.059
2-factor	2394	103	369	3	<.001	.089	.879	.065
1-factor	6255	104	1538	1	<.001	.135	.722	.099

Notes: The chi-square difference tests compare each sequential pair of models, with models ordered from most to least complex (i.e., lowest to highest degrees of freedom). The “robust” versions of the RMSEA and CFI indices are presented. CFI: Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Our results show also that the one-dimensional factor model fits particularly poorly, with

⁵In the supplementary materials we show that the same result holds when we split each national sample into rural and urban subsamples.

fit metrics that are weaker than typically stipulated as benchmarks. For example, the RMSEA for these models ranges from 0.14 to 0.17, which is somewhat in excess of threshold values such as 0.10 or 0.05 which are often used to distinguish adequate or good models. It therefore appears unreasonable to treat consciousness as a unidimensional construct. Neither does the simple two-factor model fit particularly well, as the RMSEA is greater than 0.10 in three samples, while the CFI falls below 0.90 in four samples. Finally, the hierarchical two-factor model tends to fit rather well, even if it falls somewhat short of four-factor model. For example, the CFIs exceed or closely approach the threshold value of 0.90, while the RMSEAs are lower than 0.10 in all cases. As such, in situations where simplicity is paramount, and four dimensions of consciousness thought excessive, we suggest that analysts may reasonably adopt the simpler hierarchical two-factor model.

5.2. Reliability

A second consideration is the reliability of our scales. Even if the four-factor model is indicated by the CFA tests, it would be less than ideal if some of the scales showed inadequate reliability. This is particularly a concern for our resource and cultural resentment scales, which have only two and three items respectively. Table 5 shows the Cronbach's alpha estimate of inter-item reliability for various identity and resentment scales across our five samples.

We generally find that our scales are reliable. The five-item identity scale and the six-item Power resentment scales show alphas of greater than 0.80 in all samples, and within rural and urban sub-samples as well. The alphas for the shorter two-item resource resentment and three-item cultural resentment scales are less reliable, with alphas that drop below 0.70 in certain samples. These measures nevertheless remain adequately reliable for short scales, as alphas exceed 0.60. We also provide reliability estimates for a general resentment scale comprising all eleven resentment items should readers be interested in the more parsimonious two-factor model.

Table 5. Inter-item reliability estimates for scales in all samples

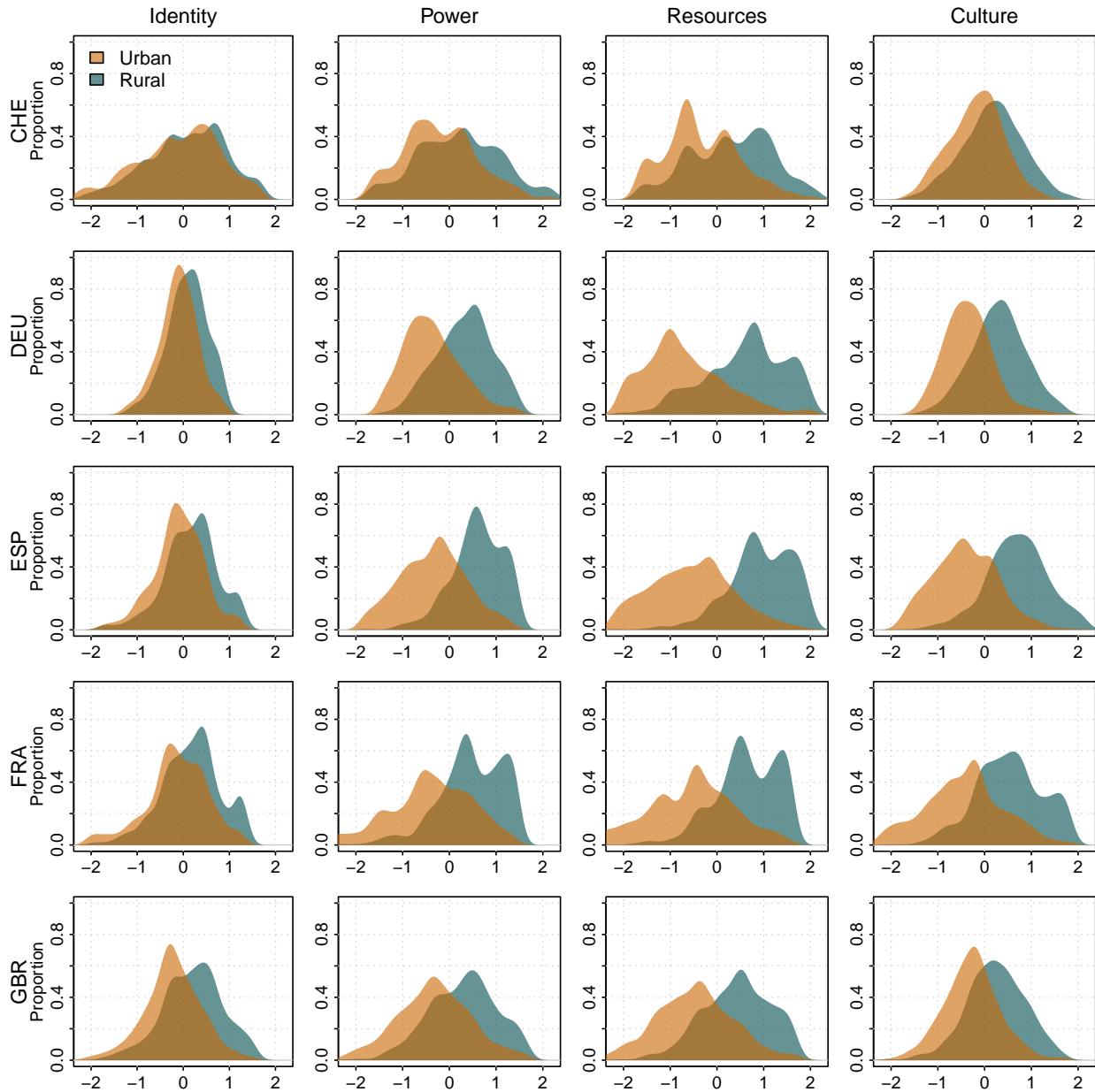
Scale	Entire samples				
	CHE	DEU	ESP	FRA	GBR
Identity (5-item)	.87	.82	.85	.86	.83
Power resentment (6-item)	.89	.89	.88	.90	.85
Resource resentment (2-item)	.86	.88	.86	.88	.78
Cultural resentment (3-item)	.69	.71	.74	.83	.70
General resentment (11-item)	.91	.91	.91	.93	.89
Scale	Urban samples				
	CHE	DEU	ESP	FRA	GBR
Identity (5-item)	.87	.82	.84	.86	.80
Power resentment (6-item)	.86	.86	.86	.88	.85
Resource resentment (2-item)	.83	.72	.72	.82	.69
Cultural resentment (3-item)	.68	.62	.66	.79	.65
General resentment (11-item)	.88	.86	.87	.90	.87
Scale	Rural samples				
	CHE	DEU	ESP	FRA	GBR
Identity (5-item)	.86	.83	.86	.85	.83
Power resentment (6-item)	.90	.88	.83	.87	.84
Resource resentment (2-item)	.84	.83	.80	.81	.69
Cultural resentment (3-item)	.68	.70	.68	.77	.69
General resentment (11-item)	.91	.90	.87	.90	.88

Cell entries show Cronbach's alpha for the relevant scale and sample, based on pairwise Pearson's correlation matrices.

5.3. Patterns of place-based consciousness

Finally, we consider how our four dimensions of consciousness are associated with key demographic and political variables in our five countries. We begin by analyzing the distributions of these dimensions by rural and urban areas (Figure 1). A consistent difference can be observed across all five cases, i.e., urbanites exhibit less place-based consciousness than ruralites. This rural-urban gap is particularly pronounced when it comes to place-based resentments. The prevalence of rural resentment, which has been noted in the American case by Cramer and Munis, clearly holds in our five European cases as well.

Figure 1. Identity and resentments by country and urban and rural residence



Notes: Each figure shows the density distributions of the respective dimension of place-based consciousness (in columns) by country (rows). Each consciousness measure is standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one; the more positive the score, the more the respondent exhibits the dimension in question. Urbanites are shown in brown and ruralites in blue. Estimates of the four dimensions of place-based resentment are obtained using the FIML 4-factor CFA, estimated separately in each national sample.

However, the four dimensions of consciousness vary in the extent to which their rural and urban distributions differ. There is generally more difference between ruralites and urbanites in

the three dimensions of resentment than in their place-based identities.⁶ Indeed, in three cases (Germany, Spain, and France), ruralites exhibit in excess of a standard deviation more resource resentment than urbanites. And in two cases (Spain and France), ruralites have one standard deviation or more cultural resentment. Switzerland always has the smallest rural-urban resentment gap of our cases, with this generally being less than half a standard deviation in magnitude.⁷ We see clearly how place-based consciousness – and in particular, a richer four-dimensional conceptualization – illuminates neglected aspects of rural political culture in Europe.

We now turn to an examination of patterns of association between our four measures of consciousness and socio-political variables such as income, education, and left-right self-placement. We accomplish this by running structural equation models (SEMs) within each country and each rural or urban subsample. As such, these analyses permit socio-political variables to have differing effects for ruralites and urbanites. Results are displayed in Figure 2 (See the supplementary materials for the full results of the SEMs).

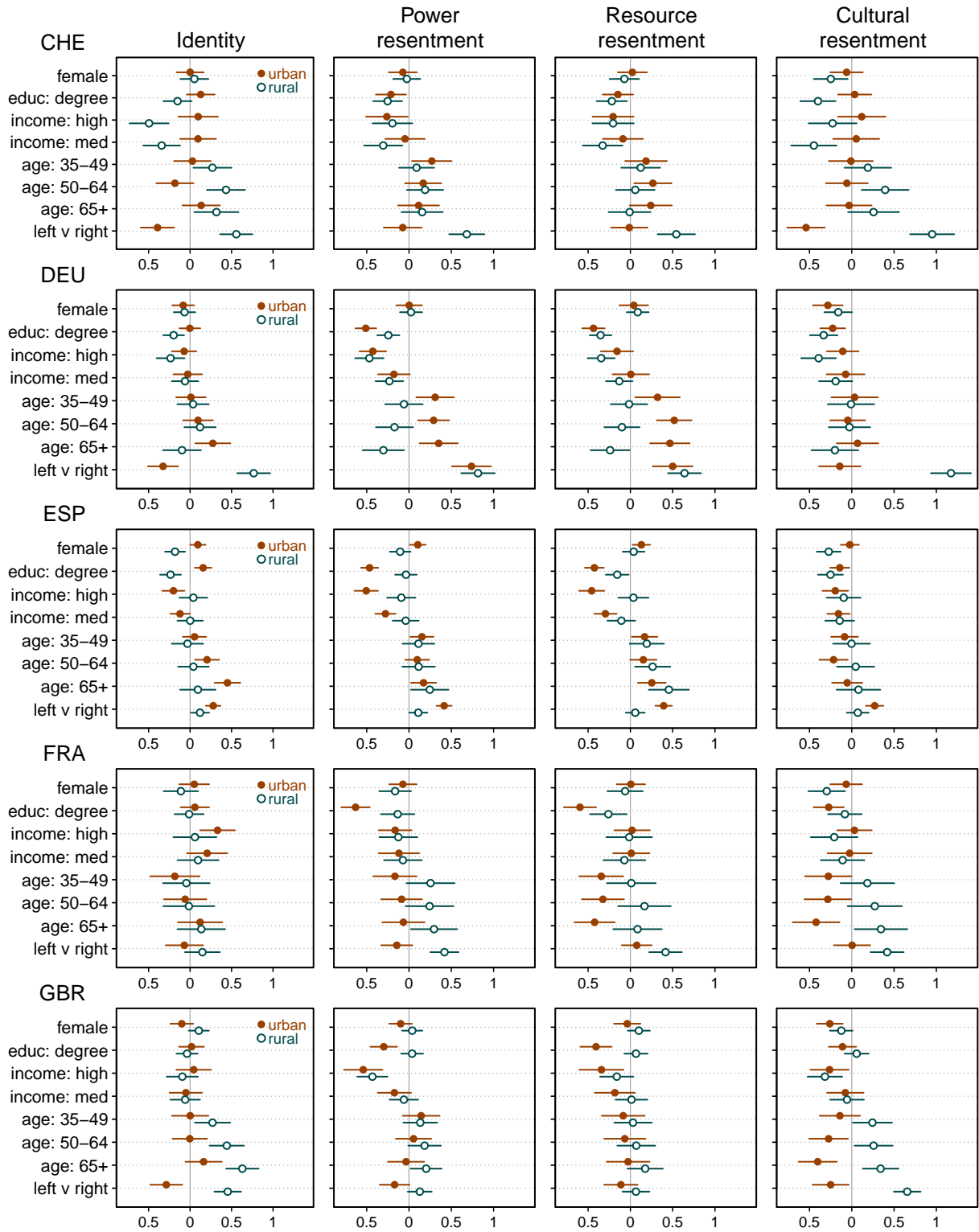
There is little in the way of a consistent and significant relationship between gender and place-based consciousness. There are similarly inconsistent patterns of consciousness across age groups in our ten samples. In Germany, for example, age is associated with more resentment (particularly regarding power and resources), but only for urbanites. In France and Britain, by contrast, age is associated with lower urban resentment, but higher rural (especially cultural) resentment. There are no clear effects of age in Switzerland and Spain.

The associations between income or education and place-based consciousness show clearer and more consistent patterns across our samples. Most notably, there is a negative association

⁶Nevertheless, all these rural vs. urban differences are significant; see the structural equation models in the supplementary materials.

⁷Swiss exceptionalism on this point may be a result of it being a geographically small country in which few rural places are distant from urban places meaning that access to resources and services in rural areas is often better than in other contexts.

Figure 2. Socio-political correlates of place-based identity and resentment



Notes: The points show structural coefficients for the exogenous variables listed in rows on the endogenous latent variables listed in each column, with horizontal bars showing the 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are drawn from SEMs fit separately in each national urban or rural sample, i.e., 10 SEMs are fit in total.

between education and resentment. Put another way, place-based resentment is more pronounced among respondents who do not have a university education. These effects are particularly evident for urbanites in Germany, Spain, France, and Britain.

In a similar fashion, higher-income respondents typically display lower levels of consciousness than low-income respondents (the omitted category and comparison group), although in many instances there are no significant differences. The only higher-income group who show greater place-based consciousness are French urbanites, and here they only differ from low-income French urbanites on the identity dimension.

These findings regarding income and education suggest a general pattern across our cases of a politics of being “left-behind”. To the extent that there is a connection between place-based consciousness and measures of socio-economic status, it is always individuals without a degree or earning in the lowest tertile who express more place-based resentment, particularly power and resource resentment. This shows that place-based consciousness is more evident in groups that have been left behind in modern service-based economies, whether rural or urban.

Yet the most pronounced effects we observe in Figure 2 are those pertaining to the link between left-right identity and place-based consciousness. Beginning with the effects among ruralites, we see, in Switzerland and Germany, that individuals who identify with the political right are particularly likely to also identify as ruralite and to express rural resentment. Results are similar, if more muted, among ruralites in France and Britain. In Spain, however, there is little association between right-wing identity and rural consciousness.

The links between ideological identity and urban consciousness vary even more dramatically across cases and across dimensions of consciousness. In Switzerland, France, and Britain, the associations between right-wing identity and urban consciousness tend to be neutral to negative, i.e., if anything, it is left-wingers in these cases who exhibit aspects of urban consciousness. In Germany and Spain, by contrast, there is a positive association between left-right identity and urban resentment, in which right-wing urbanites tend to express more resentment than left-wing

urbanites.⁸

Whether among ruralites or urbanites, these associations between ideological identification and place-based consciousness are substantial. Since the left-right dimension remains an important orientating principle in European politics, our measures of consciousness allow insight into the resentments that accompany right-wing identity, even for lower socioeconomic status groups and individuals whose interests have traditionally been represented by the political left.

6. Conclusion

Spurred by a recognition that rural-urban divides are growing in political importance, we examine the concept of place-based consciousness across five European countries. In doing so, we develop batteries of measures of rural vs. urban identity and resentments in five languages. Our results demonstrate that these scales are reliable and valid within the five countries.

We find that rural and urban consciousness in Europe is best thought of as comprising an identity as a resident of rural or urban areas as well as three distinct forms of resentment relating to power, resources, and culture. Indeed, we find somewhat different patterns of association between the various dimensions of resentment and socio-political indicators. As such, our European findings depart from unidimensional treatments of place-based resentment proposed in previous work (e.g., Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022) and align more closely with Cramer's (2016) initial formulation.

We have shown that rural-urban consciousness has pronounced patterns of association with indicators of "left behind" status such as low income and lack of a university education. At the same time, we find that rural consciousness is linked with a right-wing identity. As such, our measures of place-based consciousness can help illuminate and explain political trends in Western Europe, such as how increasing levels of education have shifted political cleavages (e.g., Ford and Jennings 2020).

⁸Rossi (2018) similarly finds urban Italy to be the home of populist resentments.

By examining the concept of place-based consciousness across multiple countries, we have demonstrated that sometimes dramatic national variations are evident in this phenomenon. For example, in Switzerland, Germany, France, and Britain, right-wing ruralites hold stronger rural identities and are more resentful than left-wing ruralites. In Spain, in contrast, right vs. left identity does not correlate with identities or resentment in rural areas, but does so in urban areas. And while (low) education is linked with place-based resentment across all samples, the way that this interacts with the rural-urban divide varies across countries. In Switzerland and Germany, both ruralites and urbanites who lack a university education are more resentful. In Spain, France, and Britain however, the effect of low education on resentment manifests primarily among urbanites. These findings underscore the need to examine consciousness in different settings, as we have done here.

Considering the increasing salience of this topic of rural-urban political divides, we recommend that scholars of European politics include our batteries (or a subset thereof) to validly measure place-consciousness in their surveys. Given that we find resentment to be three-dimensional, we recommend that scholars seek to include at least one measure of each dimension.

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