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The Dimensions of Secession in California

By Jared Thomas

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper was to determine whether annual income is an indicator of a respondent’s level of support for the Californian independence movement. Ultimately, the analysis here determined that there is not a statistically significant relationship between the income of the participant and their support for secession in California. However, the data analysis did yield that there is a correlation between an index of ‘Support for Secession’, ‘Interest in Secession’ and ‘Seriousness of Claim’ and income. In addition, this research project determined that there is not a statistically significant relationship between the political ideology of the respondents and support for secession. There is, however, a positive relationship between the race and gender of the respondent and support for secession.
Introduction

The United States of America has a rich history of secession movements. The foundation of the state, from a historical perspective, only occurred because one such movement was successful. Throughout history, Americans have demonstrated a repeated willingness to be set apart from the whole in the name of differences of political opinion. In the twenty-first century, this tradition remains a fundamental part of modern political discourse. From proposed referendums in Texas to independence committees in southern Washington, this concept is one that continues to boast impressive news coverage and relevance.

In particular, the concept of secession maintains importance in the state of California. Once an independent nation, its independence movements have gained national prominence. Reasons often cited for this departure include considerable cultural differences, political alienation and varying economic conditions. In order to address the underlying cause, one must first attempt to quantify the background of the secessionist culture that exists in California. Nowhere else in the country is departure from the Union discussed in such a way that garners as much national media attention as often as California does.

The state is depicted in popular media as a paradise for the “Hollywood Elite” and sports a climate that is unlike any other place in the country. The state is, on average, the most diverse in the Union from a demographic per-
spective and its cities serve as examples of both the highest concentrations of wealth and of the most extreme poverty. It should be no great surprise that an independence movement would thrive in these conditions.

The “Cal-Exit” movement is not the oldest in the country. It is, however, the most consequential. California’s economy is one of the largest in the world. Its unique location on the Pacific Coast affords it geo-political importance. The reasons behind this movement’s popularity are as critical as its end result.

I. Literature Review

A. Gaps in the Literature

Academic literature on secession in California is sparse. Despite this deficiency, there is enough literature present to serve as a “jumping off” point for additional research. Any research conducted from here onward will serve as a fundamental building block for further study, but will not have the benefit of past knowledge. In the case of this study, the body of literature discussed above has been used to develop a theoretical basis for the survey design that follows. The information present has informed the design of the questions being asked.

There is limited coverage on the ‘Cal-Exit’ movement. There is a large quantity of “pop-science” and “pop-culture” type pieces from news outlets such as Buzzfeed and CNet. These articles, while providing general information, lack theoretical rigor. They are unfit for use in an academic study. This
is largely because the information they provide is anecdotal. They rely on unrepresentative personal stories to tell a narrative. This narrative does not serve a purpose beyond popular education and entertainment. For the purpose of this thesis, these articles have only been used as background information.

**B. A Definition of Secession**

Secession is classically defined as "the formal withdrawal of a constituent unit from an established, internationally recognized state and the creation of a new state." The relationship between a secessionist subgroup and the larger state is an issue of domestic politics. If a secessionist movement is successful, the relationship is redefined from a domestic one to an international one. Disputes at this point become governable by international law. A successful secession “recasts the link” between the parent and child state. This transitory state is often in dispute as “parent” states refuse to recognize the “child” state as independent. For example, the Chinese do not recognize Taiwan as independent despite Taiwan’s self-governance. Establishing independence is often a more involved process than winning an armed conflict. Gaining independence involves securing this recognition from the parent state for security reasons. It also involves gaining recognition from a collection of other states as an independent international actor.

**C. A Brief History of America’s Revolutions**
There have been a number of successful secession movements in American history. The first real secessionist movement was the Hartford Convention. Due to opposition to the Louisiana Purchase, a group of New England delegates met to discuss secession from the Union. The key proposal debated at the convention centered on ejecting the new western states. Many delegates to the convention felt that the Founders had not intended for the nation to expand westward. Thomas Jefferson’s purchase of an unorganized western territory was outside the bounds of the Constitution and was opposed by the Federalists who made up the majority of the convention.

The most ambitious attempt at secession in American history was the Civil War. The facts of the conflict have been the subject of hundreds of books and thousands of classroom discussions. The importance of the Civil War in this review is the establishment of a parallel in the thinking between it and the Hartford Convention. Both of these movements stem from the idea that the departing section is more representative of the “real America” than the remaining section. This is a common theme in American secession movements. For example, Texas seceded from Mexico because it felt its national identity was more authentically American than Mexican.

As opposed to military or political secessionist movements, several secessionist movements also exist in a cultural space. Chicano activists have created a formidable artistic output of works surrounding the idea that the
federal government’s claim to the western United States are legally and morally unjust. Nominally referred to as “Aztlán”⁶, the proponents of this pseudo-historic ethno-state make sweeping claims of independence. These more ephemeral separatist movements lack the same sort of ‘ultra-American’ thrust as their contemporaries. However, the existence of Aztlán does not invalidate the overwhelming evidence in the literature that supports the ideology mentioned above. This is because they introduce an entirely separate cultural exclusion component. This component can easily be extended to define movements that are more conventional if the argument is made that the “parent state” is excluding the culture of the “child state”.

D. The Theory of Independence

There is a large amount of literature concerning the theoretical aspects of independence movements. The vast majority note that there is little in the sense of specific unifying features. Secessionist movements come in all shapes and sizes. Therefore, independence theories must be broad enough to apply to the vast majority of circumstances while also having enough specifics to avoid being meaningless. There are several theories that are general enough to be useful, but specific enough to draw significant insight.

One theory holds that the question of secession is ultimately answered by the strength of a group of people’s claim to territory. A successful secessionist movement must succeed in proving to the state that its conception of its own boundaries are incorrect. If a party is considered to have a right to
secede, according to Wellman, it must prove that its own territorial claim is stronger than that of the state. In addition, it must also prove that there is no third party with a claim that is inherently stronger than either of them. Therefore, the question of whether or not secession is justified must be answered by whether or not the state’s claim to the affected territory is justified.

"Just Cause Theory (JCT) postulates that secession is only justifiable in cases of "grave injury". This grave injury must not be able to be appeased through traditional means. The theory does not define what a "grave injury" entails. Most contemporary scholars agree that an injury can only be considered grave if traditional means of redressing the grievances have been attempted. If they have been attempted and were unsuccessful, the JCT can serve as a justification.

The alternative to the JCT is known as the "Choice Theory". President Thomas Jefferson wrote this theory in 1816 in a letter to William Crawford. Jefferson held that "If any State in the Union will declare that it prefers separation with the first alternative, to a continuance in union without it, I have no hesitation in saying, 'let us separate.'" In layman’s terms, Jefferson is claiming that the union of a collection of states is dependent on mutual agreement. If a state feels that this arrangement cannot continue, the state can simply leave. The "grave injury" clause is not necessary. A continued union is a matter of preference.
These two theories serve as umbrellas under which there are several other potential justifications. One of the most consequential is that of cultural autonomy. If a minority group feels a majority ruling party is suppressing its culture, then it has the right to secede to protect cultural heritage. In addition, it also holds that a minority group in a political community has the right to cede itself from a majority group in order to expand its existing political rights.

Beyond these general justifications, Aleksander Pavkovic claims that there are five general justifications for secession within the bounds of liberal political theory. Liberal political theory is defined as the theoretical construct that surrounds liberalism, a political philosophy that emphasizes freedom of choice and varying measures of equality. First, Pavkovic claims that secession is justified if a culture is threatened. Second, any group that faces political disenfranchisement has a right to separate from the parent state. Third, a desire to extend democratic participation and, fourth, a desire to extend and develop an independent culture all fall as permissible reasons for secession. Finally, Pavkovic holds that if a group of "like-minded" individuals wants to create a new political order, they have the right to do so. The literature includes several other minor forms of justifications for separatism. However, most are too specific to a circumstance to be viable for this analysis. They are not included here.
There is a comparably large amount of literature concerning the motivations of secessionists. In *The Dynamics of Secession* by Michael Hecter\textsuperscript{xiii}, he argues that secession rarely comes from a singular event. Secession, instead, comes from a wide variety of factors that culminate in separation from the “parent” state.

The most relevant of these factors to the case in California include both alienation and differing economic interests. Despite the fact that California is both the largest economy in the United States and the sixth largest in the world\textsuperscript{xiv}, less than one-third (31%) voted for Donald Trump in the two thousand sixteen election. California is ranked as one of the most liberal states in the Union. The geographic distance that Californians experience from the federal capital of Washington DC also serves as a large psychological barrier to participation in the federal system\textsuperscript{xv}. Representatives and Senators from far removed parts of the country whose value systems are different from those of Californians decide large percentages of federal policy.

California is a hub for technology and research and development. This economic sector is largely outweighed by agriculture in other areas of the country\textsuperscript{xvi}. The legalization of medical marijuana places a burgeoning growth industry opposed to large swathes of the nation both economically as well as financially.

**E. Income and Secession**
The literature tends to support the assertion that an increase in income correlates positively with a support for political change. Specifically, long-term economic growth is positively correlated with desire for political change that works to increase political freedoms. In high-income areas that have sustained large amount of economic growth, liberal economic and political ideas tend to flourish. This leads to higher levels of political activism. It also increases the likelihood for discontent, as empowered citizens prove less likely to tolerate a perceived difference between their expectations for government and the reality of it. When this change occurs, the potential for support for political separation increases, according to Lipset.

This occurs because an increase in income “alters” the perception of democratic values such as tolerance and moderation. An increase in support for democracy has been linked to an increase in these values and vice versa.

Lipset notes that an increase in income leads to a greater preference for democracy. Regimes that did not fit this mold face greater threats to their continued existence when the mean income is higher. When the preference for democracy increases, so does a preference for “liberal and freedom oriented values.”

However, it is unclear whether an increase in income translates to anything beyond nominal support for secession. Inglehart & Welzel demonstrate that democratic elites in wealthy countries often stymie support for indepen-
dence because these citizens tend to be better educated. Because they have received more schooling, they are well equipped to translate secessionist sentiment into reality. Elites, in these cases, are more likely to give into the demands of the citizenry to put off actual secession. In this way, a gap appears between support for secession and the actual action thereof as those wealthy and in power take additional steps to prevent departure from the state itself. Income, according to Welzel, makes the proposition of secession more attractive, but does not translate to an increase in the frequency of its occurrence.

**F. Political Ideology and Secession**

Political ideology could potentially confuse the relationship between income and support for Californian secession. The literature tends to support the claim that the conservative or liberal ideology of a person does not directly affect whether or not they will develop support for a secessionist movement. A historical survey reveals that there is very little in common between the revolutionaries in the Americas in 1776 and the communist rebels in Grenada two hundred years later. While these are not strictly secession movements, the purpose of their inclusion is to demonstrate the wide range of ideologies that can be pushed to the point of advocating for radical political change. This isn’t to say that political ideology should be dismissed. As opposed to partisanship, the primary “ideology” that motivates support for secessionists is a desire for political autonomy.
This desire for political autonomy can be properly termed as nationalism. Nationalism, in the context of secession, can be defined as a shared sense of values and cultures that set one group apart from other groups. A strong relationship between nationalism and self-determination exists. A group of people becomes compelled to act to determine their own form of government when their relationship to their own national identity becomes stronger than their relationship to the national identity of the "parent" country. Little seems to indicate that (modern) conservativism or liberalism has an effect on whether someone decides to pursue independence from the state. Specifically, a liberal state might want to secede from a more traditional society and a conservative one may desire to separate from a union that is less rooted in its values. Instead, the degree to which nationalism is a component of a person’s political beliefs serves as a descriptor.

California’s history of nationalism is not one to balk at. Given the fact that the ‘Bear Flag Republic’ existed as an independent entity prior to its incorporation into the Union, a strong sense of nationalism and identity has always existed in California.

G. Historical Background

The Californian secessionist movement is difficult to term because it often stops and starts. It is prone to sudden surges and equally prone to disappearing. In the twenty-first century, there are a wide variety of independent organizations all working for similar goals. It is important to note
that they often disagree on the methods. The difference in aims has led to a situation that is both confusing from an outsider’s perspective and difficult to study.

The current standard-bearer of the Californian Independence Movement is Yes California. This is the successor organization to Sovereign California, which closed its doors in 2015. Yes California, helmed by Louis Martinelli, was responsible for the trending of ‘CalExit’ on social media. While the group did gain the approval of the Office of the Secretary of State to begin gathering signatures for an independence referendum, they failed to do so before the filing deadline.

The California Nationalist Party seeks to force an exit from the United States through legislation at the state level. This organization, which merged with ‘Californians for Independence’ to prevent the latter’s dissolution, has yet to secure a representative seat in the state. On a yearly basis, it holds a candidate nominating convention in Sacramento.

The movement faced its first major setback with the revelation in 2018 that its public face, Marinelli, was a New Yorker living in Moscow. In 2016, the expat announced that he had opened an embassy in an office space situated in Moscow. This cultural center was designed to educate Russians on the culture of California compared to the larger United States. The aim of this effort was to promote international support for the movement. A group of investigative journalists revealed that the “embassy” was being fronted by
a Putin-backed Russian charity. In addition, information came to light that there had been a major attempt to manipulate Twitter’s trending algorithm in favor of the movement after the victory of Donald Trump. Marinelli was pushed out of the movement by his contemporaries. He subsequently announced his intention to seek permanent residence in Moscow.

After Marinelli’s exit, the credibility of the PAC suffered a major hit. The primary focus of the movement has been image rehabilitation and re-stabilization. Support for secession in California has waxed and waned with media coverage. The survey indicated that support peaked at nearly 1/3 of registered Californians in March of 2017 according to a poll conducted by UC Berkeley. However, since this poll, little data has been collected on the topic. Surveys that have been conducted have only estimated general interest. Two less-academic polls have been conducted in the period since the Berkeley survey, but both have suffered from low sample sizes. This makes the independent verifiability of the results difficult to determine.

**H. Stated Reasons for Californian Secession**

There are several key arguments made by proponents of Yes California for the independence of the state. California, if it were an independent state, would boast the world’s sixth largest economy. The state’s gross domestic product eclipses that of several larger and more well established western democracies such as France. Members of Yes California claim that the state’s economic diversity would lend itself naturally to self-sufficiency and that
most of the potential problems could be offset by a more comprehensive trade partnership with countries in the Pacific Rim. In terms of population, an independent California would be the world’s thirty-fifth most populous country\textsuperscript{xxix}. Proponents of Californian secession argue that a body of this size has no need for a connection with the United States because its tax base is large enough to provide for all essential services it is receiving from the United States currently. In addition, its population, supporters claim, is large enough to support a serviceable military. In addition to statistics, the Yes California movement also uses political differences with the rest of the country concerning the environment as one of the key justifications in its literature. For example, Californians, on average, are more likely to support carbon-reductive or carbon neutral policies\textsuperscript{xxx}. These are a series of initiatives that have proven immensely unpopular in other more rural areas of the country. This is not the only significant “gap” in political opinion. In large swathes of the state, the Republican Party is a virtual non-entity\textsuperscript{xxxi}, a fact that is not representative of the reality in large portions of the rest of the country. Because of the difference in state party composition, the “Overton Window” of viable politics in California is markedly different from that of anywhere else in the country\textsuperscript{xxxii}. Californian secessionists use these political and economic facts and statistics to demonstrate that California’s presence in the Union no longer makes logical sense.
In addition to the numbers, proponents of Yes California also appeal to a legal argument. When Louis Marinelli initially submitted his ballot initiative to the Californian legislature, he compared the annexation of California by the United States to the annexation of Hawaii in 1898. In this document, Marinelli holds that the narrative that the majority of Californians wanted to join the Union was false. Instead, Californians were robbed of the chance for self-determination. Marinelli concludes his argument with the claim that the only way to redress this “grave injury” is through departure from the Union, a clear invocation of JCT.

II. Core Question

The question this research will attempt to address is whether a person’s socioeconomic status has any correlation with a person’s approval or disapproval for the movement for Californian independence from the United States as embodied by the Cal-Exit Movement, Californian Independence Party and related sub-groups. It is my preliminary hypothesis that the wealth a person possesses above a certain threshold will be a sufficient indicator of whether or not a person views secession favorably. This threshold is likely above the poverty threshold and somewhere above an annual salary commiserate with a “living wage” of fifteen dollars an hour. The existing body of research indicates that “white collar” workers will be more likely to entertain more “fanciful” political ideologies when they have the leisure time to do so (see literature review). In this sense, fanciful is not meant in a
derogatory fashion, but to represent the idea that some political positions are more difficult to satisfy than others are. I theorize that this indicator will be able to paint a sufficiently compelling image as to whether or not a person supports an independent California.

III. Research Gaps

The key gap my research is attempting to fill is the question of whether socio-economic status in the average layperson has a measurable effect on whether that respondent supports secession. Demonstrating a clear socioeconomic link through the utilization of California as a modern case study would be a valuable step in determining a clear theory as to what causes support for secession.

IV. Survey Design

The following survey was designed to assess whether there is a positive or negative correlation between levels of wealth among Californians and their support for partition from the United States of America. It must be made clear, however, that this sample is not an entirely random sample of the population of California and is only a random sample of those that utilize the MTurk platform. It is primarily composed of people not only from the state of California.

This poll was administered utilizing Amazon’s “MTurk” service. Participants were paid .10 cents for completing the survey and no other incentives. The survey itself was distributed utilizing the MTurk database and consisted
of ten questions. Those questions and their response options are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With 0 being the least interested and 100 being the most interested, please rate how likely you would be to do additional research on this topic if the opportunity presented itself.</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to respond to indicate from 0-100 in their response for this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 0 being the least serious and 100 being the most serious, please rate how serious you would take the above proposition if it was presented to you</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to respond to indicate from 0-100 in their response for this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a citizen of the state of California?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your sexual orientation?</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to indicate this through a written field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your estimated annual income?</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to indicate this through a written field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your level of political activity, with one hundred being the most active?</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to respond to indicate from 0-100 in their response for this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please provide your age.</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to indicate this through a written field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 0 being the most liberal and 100 being the most conservative, please place yourself on the political ideological spectrum</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to respond to indicate from 0-100 in their response for this question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 0 being the least likely and 100 being the most likely, please rate how likely you would be to THEORETICALLY support California's complete secession from the United States.</td>
<td>Respondents were asked to respond to indicate from 0-100 in their response for this question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the above chart, a “red” square indicates that the respondent chose “No. ”. A yellow or green option indicates that the respondent was directed to the next screen. After the respondent completed the survey, they received a message detailing the purpose of the survey. This was the extent of the survey portion of the experiment.

V. Survey Analysis

The survey, over all, provided a bevy of interesting and relevant data to facilitate an evaluation of the aforementioned hypothesis. In this section, I will denote the steps taken in order to accurately analyze the data, as well as the results of that analysis. While the survey did ultimately serve to answer the question this thesis has been designed to address, it also provided other related insights that help create a compelling picture...more than what a single correlation coefficient might have ultimately allowed.

VI. Procedure

The survey was administered, as stated above, on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The initial target number of survey participants was designated as one thousand, however, after the obvious trolls were removed from consideration, 813 responses were left for analysis. These responses were downloaded in a CSV format in a single batch from the Amazon Mechanical Turk
website and imported into Microsoft Excel for further processing. Each column was given an alpha-numeric representation that would function as its title for analysis in R Studio, starting at V1. Once each column was reduced to either entirely numeric data or “string” data (letters and numbers), I utilized R. Studio to import them as a data set. Once imported into R Studio, I downloaded the ‘GGHUB’ package of commands in order to utilize the COR() function to conduct a Pearson correlation test on the various columns of data.

The Pearson test produces a response between zero and one. A result of one indicates a clear and obvious positive correlation between the value sets. A response of negative one indicates an obvious negative correlation between the two. For my first bit of analysis, I conducted several Pearson tests on the data. The results are detailed in the next section.

**VII. Univariate Income Statistics**

The average income of participants was $52,917.89. The first quartile of the income data is $21,500. The median income is $35,000. The third quartile is $60,000. The IQR of this data set is [21000 - 60000]. From $0-$1000 in annual income, there were sixty-three individual respondents that compromised
7.86% of the data set. From $10,000-$19,999, there were ninety-sixty respondents that comprised 11.97% of the total results. From $20,000-$29,999, there were one hundred and forty-three respondents that comprised 17.83% of the total results. From $30,000-$39,999, there were one hundred and sixteen respondents that comprised 14.46% of the total results. From $40,000-$49,999, there were eighty-seven respondents that comprised approximately 10.8% of the data set. From $50,000-$59,999, there were ninety respondents that comprised 11.22% of the total results. From $60,000-$69,999, there were fifty-eight respondents that comprised 7.23% of the total results. From $70,000-$79,999, there were thirty-four respondents that comprised 4.24% of the total results. From $80,000-$89,000, there were twenty-nine respondents that comprised 3.62% of the total results. From $90,000-$99,999, there were twenty-five respondents that comprised 3.12% of the total results. From $100,000-$109,999, there were twenty-six respondents that comprised 3.24% of the total results. Beyond this point, the grand total of results until the maximum point was ultimately negligible, but is still represented above on the histogram.

**VIII. Pearson Tests on Political Ideology**

I chose to conduct this particular set of variables to analyze and to provide further validity to the connection between income and support for secession. While there was no significant information in the literature to indicate a connection between these values, the vast majority of those sources
were historical and thus insufficient in minimizing the possibility that there has been some sort of shift and political ideology is now a driving factor in the aforementioned relationship.

The goal, through the inclusion of this subsection, is to completely rule out that there is a connection.

**A. Political Ideology and Interest in Concept**

The survey recipients were asked to rank their self-perceived political ideology from 0-100, with zero being the most liberal a respondent could possibly be, and 100 being the most conservative. In a similar vein, the respondents, in a separate question were asked to rank their current level of support for Californian independence from the United States from 0-100, with 100 being the most supportive. Of the 813 valid test takers, everyone responded to these two questions. The Pearson test of the correlation between these two columns of data was low at 0.063. This would seem to indicate that a person’s political ideology has little to no effect on their interest in Californian independence from the United States. The P value is 0.176, and is insignificant.

**B. Political Ideology and Seriousness of Claim**

The relationship between one’s ideology and the validity with which they view the claim is statistically insignificant, however, is notably stronger than the relationship between political ideology and interest in secession. The correlation coefficient between the ‘Political Ideology’ question (Q8) and
the ‘Seriousness of Claim’ question (Q2) was 0.34. While not high enough on
the scale to indicate a strong, undeniable connection between the two, this
amount does seem to indicate that there is at least a weak positive relation-
ship present, meaning that the more conservative a recipient was, the more
likely they were to take the claim seriously as opposed to simply dismissing
it out of hand. The P value for this set of variables is 0. This indicates that
there is sufficient evidence to support the negation of the null hypothesis,
which demonstrates that there likely is a relationship between the political
ideology of the participant and the level of seriousness with which they take
they claim.

C. Political Ideology and Support for Secession

According to the results of the survey, there is little to no correlation
between a person’s political ideology and their support for Californian inde-
pendence. The Pearson test resulted in a correlation coefficient of 0.171621,
which, while positive, still qualifies as a weak connection between the two
different columns of data. The P value is 0.07, and while this does not reach
the traditional 0.05 threshold, this value suggests that we should not com-
pletely rule out the possibility that there is a relationship between these two
variables.

D. Political Ideology Analysis

The weak relationship that the ideology factor demonstrates with the
aforementioned questions seems to rule out its use as a relevant determiner
of what causes an American to out and out support secession or, at minimum, have interest in the idea. The primary take away from these particular Pearson tests seems to be that there is a weak relationship, at best, between support or even interest in the idea of an independent California and the level of conservativeness a person ultimately exhibits. This would seem to indicate that there is another factor or set of factors that could serve as a more accurate predictor for these two vectors other than one’s political ideology, if such a factor exists at all. It is important to note that the relative weakness of this particular indicator does not necessarily mean that there is not another, stronger indicator. The low, but positive, set of correlation coefficients simply indicates that ideology is an insufficient and unideal method of prediction.

IX. Pearson’s Tests on Annual Income

A. SUPPORT FOR SECESSION AND ANNUAL INCOME

There is a weak and almost nonexistent correlation between support for secession and the annual income of the recipient. In short, this means that the amount of money made in one year has little to no effect on one’s support for secession in California. This is not to say that it never has an effect, but instead to say that its correlation (—0.01) is low enough to be unimportant. The observed P-Value of the data set is 0.71. Given the fact that the P Value is greater than 0.05, it fails to provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.
B. INTEREST IN SECESSION AND ANNUAL INCOME

The correlation between interest in secession and annual income is virtually non-existent (0.02). The P value is 0.58 and thus is insufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

C. SERIOUSNESS OF CLAIM AND ANNUAL INCOME

The correlation between interest in secession and seriousness of claim is virtually non-existent (-0.01). The P Value is 0.60 and thus is insufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

D. ANNUAL INCOME ANALYSIS

Ultimately, there appears to be a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between a person’s average annual income and their support for and interest in the ‘Yes California’ movement and its contemporaries. While the correlation coefficient on its own is certainly not strong enough to indicate that it is the sole and unequivocally most important predictor in a person’s support for the movement, its value is low enough to provide an indication that income is not a sufficient indicator of whether or not a person supports secession.

E. INDEX

For an additional piece of analysis, I created an index of ‘Support for Secession’, ‘Interest in Secession’ and ‘Seriousness of Claim’ and measured the correlation between the index and income and the index and ideology.
Compared to the individual values, the results were much more striking. A Pearson correlation test yielded a 0.6, indicating that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the index and the relative level of conservatism of the participant.

The correlation between the index and income, however, was -0.01, which is statistically insignificant.

**F. INDEX REGRESSION**

Utilizing the index as the dependent variable and income ideology, gender, race and political activity as the independent variables, I performed a multi-variate linear regression. The P values for race (0.38) and income (0.69) are sufficiently high to accept the null hypothesis. However, the P values for gender (0.0001), race (0.00120) and political activity (0.0002) are below the 0.05 mark, and thus, are sufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

The rejection of the null hypothesis for gender indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender and the index. The data indicates that for every singular unit of movement in the gender measure, the index increases 1.32 units, pointing to a statistically significant positive relationship.

The rejection of the null hypothesis for race indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between race and the index. The data indicates that for every singular unit of movement in the race measure, the
index increases 1.16 units, pointing to a statistically significant positive relationship.

The rejection of the null hypothesis for the political activity measure indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between political activity and the index. The data indicates that for every singular unit of movement in the political activity measure, the index increases 1.7 units, pointing to a statistically significant positive relationship.

G. TRUNCATION OF NUMBERS

A key problem with the data collected was that there was a heavy skew towards results from lower income brackets and a noted lack of responses in the inverse. This is likely because those that utilize the MTurk service skew heavily towards lower income brackets. Therefore, the long left leaning tails of the data served to reduce potential correlation. The extremities at the upper end that did manifest themselves upset the Pearson correlation formula. In order to determine if there was potentially a stronger relationship in lower incomes levels, I chose to truncate the numbers as a secondary form of data analysis to check for additional correlation.
Generally speaking, the results indicated only a marginally stronger correlation in the data than when the higher socioeconomic values were included in the analysis. For the purposes of the truncation, all subjects reporting an income of over one hundred thousand dollars a year were omitted. However, this change did not yield a strong enough additional insight to merit an addition to this paper. In essence, the addition of this step only served to further emphasize the findings of the earlier research.

X. Potential Problems

There are several potential problems with the survey population that must be addressed before my results can be considered valid. Primarily, it is highly unlikely that the slice of population that utilizes the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) software is representative of the American population at large. The demographic that utilizes MTurk tends to be overwhelmingly male and overwhelmingly white or Asian. There is little African American or Hispanic representation on the platform, an issue that is particularly potent when considering the demographics of the part of the country this survey and this thesis targeted. Another potential problem is that, given the fact that this a survey, all the answers were self-reported. Beyond the problems inherent in self-selection are the issues that come with the fact that I, as it stands, have no way to verify this information. As the researcher, it must be noted that there is no mechanism inherent in collection of my survey data that allows me to test for individual accuracy of the results in relation to the
participant. Therefore, trusting my findings also involves trusting the participants.

Another potential issue comes from the fact that this survey was conducted during a period of time in which the atmosphere of the country is particularly politically charged. While there is no clear metric to indicate this fact, it is common knowledge that the intensity of political discourse is at an all-time high. Therefore, it is entirely possible that support for the movement among those polled was represented as higher than it ultimately is. It is perfectly possible that the level of general discontent in the country right now has artificially inflated the support for secession and left us with a set of results that will be less accurate in six months’ time when tensions, one way or another, have been ameliorated.

However, while there are, as with any research project, potential problems with the data set, they are not sufficiently more severe than those faced by other academic outings to merit the complete and total discounting of this paper’s findings. MTurk is an industry standard and is used by academics on a regular basis. Therefore, while it may not be entirely representative of the population, it is certainly representative enough to pass the base threshold for academic acceptability. The self-reporting problem mentioned above, too, can be disregarded because it is a problem indicative of all surveys and the massive sample size should, theoretically, off set misreporting. Finally, the issue of the political climate is only terribly consequential if this
situation is not the new normal. Given the fact that there is no clear indication that there will be a return to that aforementioned normalcy anytime in the near future, this survey’s results are still worth interpreting and, therefore, can ultimately still be considered valid.

XI. Results

Ultimately, this survey proves that, among Americans, there is little to no relationship between one’s annual income and one’s support for the Californian secessionist movement. It is possible to extrapolate further, based on the framing of the survey, that this feeling is not entirely solely related to that of this particular case. It is highly unlikely that this reality is limited to this instance and that money is no longer a primary indicator of secessionist support, but this would require additional research. Based on the unimportance of both ideology and annual income, this survey does suggest the existence of another variable that operates as the primary indicator for whether or not a person chooses to support such movements, but it does not guarantee it. It is unlikely that there is an incredible degree of randomness to the composition of these types of supporters. The research does indicate a statistically significant relationship between the political ideology of the participant and their support for Californian secession. The research also indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the race of the participant, as well as the gender and degree of political activity and the index. It does appear to indicate that an index of the aforementioned
values in the data section does positively correlate weakly with the income of the participant.

XII. Further Research

While it is my belief that the results of this survey are relevant to the discussion at hand, further research should attempt to increase the sample size of those surveyed, as well as take measures to increase validity by insuring that those participating within the questionnaire are accurately self-reporting. Future researchers should also work to determine what exactly the determining variable (or variables) is, as this particular body of work only served to eliminate two key suspects and suggest race and gender as weak corollaries. Future research should also attempt to isolate Californians out from the dataset and analyze them individually. As the current scholarly research on this topic is relatively thin, any research in any direction would be valuable towards increasing the academic acumen of the topic at hand.
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