

This is a dangerous time for quantitative history. On the one hand, sophisticated computer software packages and cookbook statistics texts are widely available, easy to use, and relatively cheap. On the other hand, the low level of statistical expertise of most historians and shallowness of methodological training in even the best graduate history departments guarantees that there will be no stringent controls on the quality of data analysis. Scholars who are deft in their interpretation of "literary" documents and unmoved by logical legerdemain performed

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on "impressionistic" materials too easily cast aside their skepticism and common sense when confronted with a mass of numbers. This mixture of powerful yet easily accessible techniques, an elementary level of training, and a statistically semiliterate audience is a recipe for toxic "social scientific" history.

Johnson writes well, reasons subtly, seems to have examined the relevant manuscript collections, and argues the provocative Beckerite thesis that secession represented a struggle over who would rule at home, as well as one for home rule.¹ Yet if his apologies for the lack of evidence on the conservatives' intent to set up a patriarchal society are ingenious, they are ultimately unconvincing; Johnson grossly exaggerates when he describes the minor changes that the 1861 secession convention made in Georgia's fundamental law as "revolutionary"; and he devotes too little space to the events preceding secession to demonstrate his contention that secession resolved, and was intended to resolve, what he asserts was the "internal crisis of the South" (143).

If his general argument is unconvincing, Johnson's analysis of numeric political and socioeconomic data is disastrous. Unwisely relegating his forty-two tables to an appendix on the ground that if he had included them in the text, "the text would have had to be focused on explaining the tables rather than explaining the past," he also purports to have "tipped my hat to the ecological fallacy and tried to pass by it quietly" by phrasing his discussion in terms of geographic units rather than individuals (64, 193). The former decision simply amounts to a refusal to treat figures as seriously as "literary" evidence, whereas the second is a mere verbal dodge. "High slaveholding Democratic country counties," to use one of his formulations, do not vote; individuals with certain characteristics vote, and even Johnson's circumlocutions can't always disguise this fact (see, e.g., 71).

Moreover, his application of such high-powered SPSS (Statistical Package for The Social Sciences) routines as factor analysis and stepwise multiple regression is deeply flawed. He includes dependent as well as independent variables in a factor analysis, and rather than regress the resulting factors on the dependent variables, he discards the factors altogether (196-202). Instead of normalizing the chief dependent variable, the vote for secession in 1861, by an estimate of the eligible voting population, he introduces turnout as an independent variable. What it could mean, say, for a high turnout to "cause" a low secessionist percentage is beyond me. After running a regression analysis (he always uses all independent variables, so the stepwise procedure is superfluous) on all counties, he subdivides the counties into groups based on the values of each independent variable and runs separate regressions within each group. For instance, he arbitrarily dichotomizes the counties into the eighty-nine which contained more than 30 percent slaveholders and

1 Carl L. Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York* (Madison, 1909).

the forty-three which contain less and regresses the secession vote on the four remaining independent variables separately in each group of counties. If such a procedure indicates that he was testing for nonlinear relationships, he does not say so, nor does he produce theories which might indicate why we should expect nonlinearities, or tests for differences in slopes. Thus, nearly all of Johnson's tables are either irrelevant, insufficiently explained, or misleading, and one can determine very little about what kinds of people voted for and against secession in Georgia (and therefore infer little about their motives) from this book.

I find Johnson's "patriarchal" hypothesis intellectually appealing, but the book flawed by ingenuity without depth of thought, allegation without evidence, and technique without understanding.

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