

# VOTING BEHAVIOR AND PROPOSITION 19 TO LEGALIZE MARIJUANA IN CALIFORNIA

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## Abstract

This paper examines some of the possible factors that may have influenced voting behavior during the vote for Proposition 19 in California. The proposition would have essentially legalized marijuana within the state. The analysis looks at factors such as race, percentage of foreign born persons within a community, education level, income level, and support for Proposition 8 to eliminate same-sex marriage. The units of analysis were the 58 counties in California. The analysis shows that race, controlling for outliers, had little to no correlation with that of the percentage support for legalization of marijuana. Per capita money income, percent of persons within a county with a bachelor's degree or higher, and opposition to Proposition 8 were all statistically significant in a positive correlation with support for Proposition 19.

## Research Question

What factors may have influenced support for California's Proposition 19 to legalize marijuana?

## Literature Review

- The legalization of marijuana has been a controversial issue for some time now in America and there are focal points for both support and opposition concerning the issue. Robert MacCoun and Peter Reuter (2011, 47) argue that one such focal point is the cost of enforcing prohibition of drugs with little to no results to show for the expense.
- As time progresses, so does our tolerance of medical marijuana use as seen by more and more states allowing such use to those who are diagnosed with certain illnesses. Ethan Nadelmann argues that "neither drug legalization nor enforcement of anti-drug laws promises to 'solve' the drug problem" (1989, 939).
- Kan et al. (2007, 6), prominent voices on the controversy of legalizing marijuana, acknowledge that the majority of people fall somewhere between wanting full legalization and full prohibition of marijuana usage.
- While it is unclear how exactly race factors into support for the legalization of marijuana, there is research that studies minorities and drug use among various minority groups. William Kornblum conducted research on impoverished minority groups in urban areas finding that these groups, and African Americans in particular, are prone to the use of narcotics due to a variety of reasons stemming from "race and class discrimination" throughout history (1991, 418).
- Dembo et al. (1976, 184-185) argue that there are two theories where education can affect marijuana use. The first is the idea of youthful rebelling against the "establishment" while the second theory is more focused on a psychological feeling of alienation among peers, both of which are experienced in college to a certain degree. This supports the idea that as education level increases, exposure to new ideas increases, and should increase support for the legalization of marijuana.
- Income level is closely related to education level. One can expect that as education level rises, income level also rises. Armand Mauss (1969, 357) conducted a study of college students that factored in socio-economic level to see what levels were more apt to use marijuana. Mauss (1969, 357) found that the upper socioeconomic class was "strongly predictive of marijuana use for boys" and decreased in effectively predicting marijuana use as socio-economic status decreased.
- In the 2008 General Election in California, Proposition 8 to eliminate same-sex marriage was up for vote. The measure passed with 52.3% of votes in favor of the proposition. Same-sex marriage is largely considered a socially liberal idea which coincides with the socially liberal idea of legalizing marijuana. This provokes the idea that counties that supported same-sex marriage by opposing Proposition 8 in 2008 in California should also have support for Proposition 19 to legalize marijuana usage.

## Data and Methods

The units of analysis studied for this research were the 58 counties in California.

### Dependent Variable:

Percentage of the vote in favor of Proposition 19 per county

### Independent Variables:

- Support for gay marriage represented by opposition to Proposition 8 in the 2008 General Election
- Percentage of white persons within a county
- Percentage of black persons within a county
- Percentage foreign born persons within a county
- Per capita money income
- Percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher

## Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub> - As the percentage of white persons within a county increases, support for the legalization of marijuana will increase.
- H<sub>2</sub> - As the percentage of black persons within a county increases, support for the legalization of marijuana will decrease.
- H<sub>3</sub> - As the percentage of foreign born persons within a county increases, support for the legalization of marijuana will increase.
- H<sub>4</sub> - As education level increases, support for the legalization of marijuana will increase.
- H<sub>5</sub> - As per capita money income increases, support to exist in for the legalization of marijuana will increase.
- H<sub>6</sub> - As the percentage of voters who supported allowing gay marriage 2008 increases, support for the legalization of marijuana will increase.

## Variables, Characteristics, and Sources

Table 1

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	Median	S.D.	Source
Percent of Support for Prop. 19	31.7	64.1	44.797	44.700	7.810	California Secretary of State
Percent White	56.1	94.9	83.881	87.600	9.428	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Percent Black	0.3	15.3	3.695	2.350	3.421	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Percent Foreign Born	1.6	36.8	15.267	16.750	9.830	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Percent Bachelor's Degree+	10.3	51.3	21.572	17.600	9.637	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Per Capita Money Income	13239	44939	21000	19000	6181.413	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Percent of Support for Gay Marriage	24.7	75.2	43.381	40.950	13.413	California Secretary of State

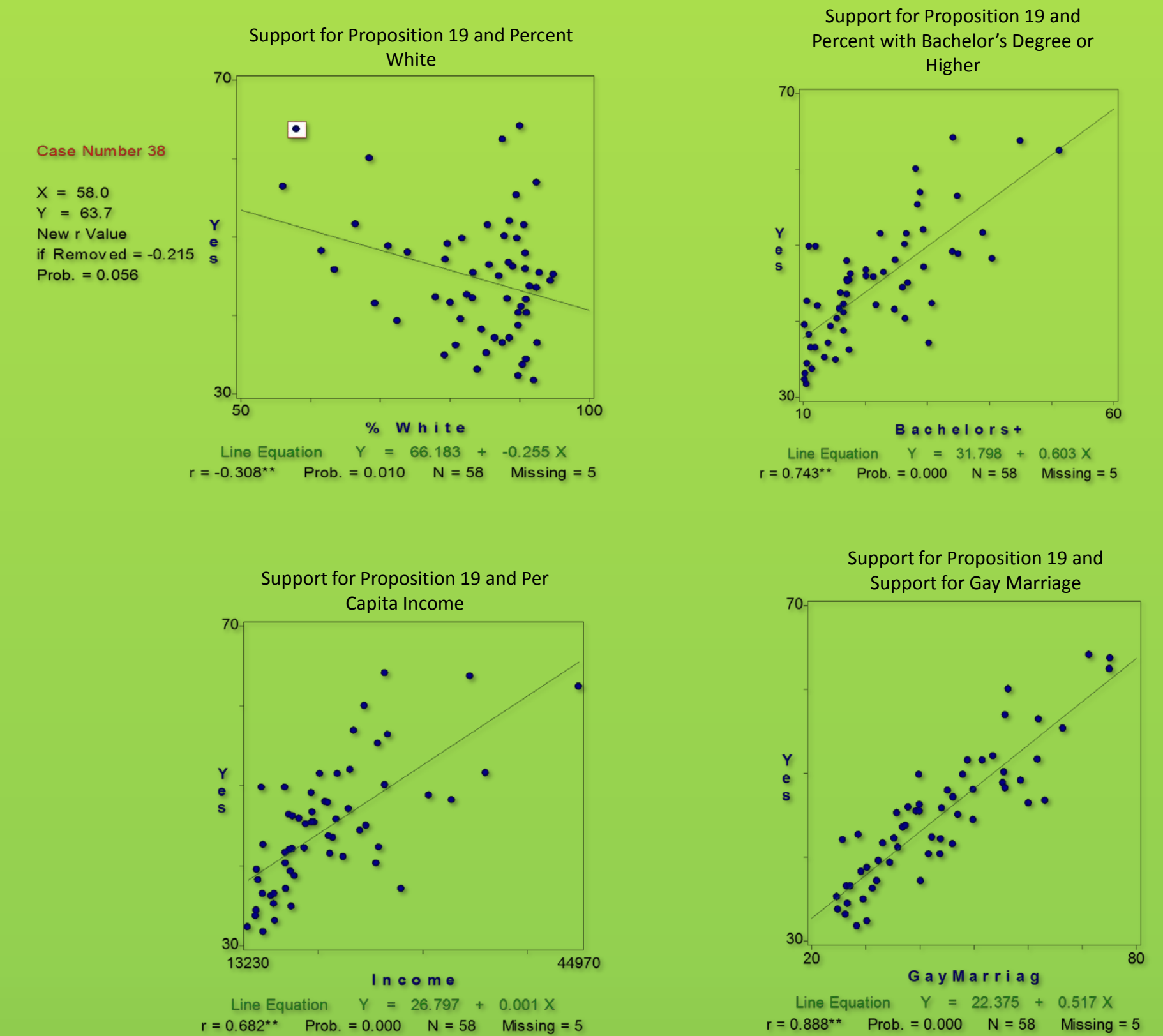
## Findings

### Correlation Analysis

Table 2

Independent Variables	Correlation
% White	-0.308**
% Black	-0.002
% Foreign	0.071
Bachelors +	0.743**
Income	0.682**
Gay Marriage	0.888**

N=58 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01



## Conclusion

The findings show that there were three strong factors that aided in predicting support for the legalization of marijuana. Percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher, representing education level in this study, had a statistically significant correlation, positively increasing support for legalizing marijuana. This supported the hypothesis that as education level increases, support for Proposition 19 also increases. Per capita money income was also found to be a strong predictor of support for Proposition 19, having a positive correlation. Counties that supported gay marriage in 2008 were found to be strongly correlated with those that supported the legalization of marijuana in 2010, as predicted. This supports the idea that both propositions were associated with the same socially liberal ideology. It also supports the idea that both per capita income and education level are correlated with support for Proposition 19.

Race, after controlling for an outlier in percentage of white persons within a county, was shown to have little to no correlation with that of the percentage support for legalization of marijuana. Even percent foreign born had no correlation with support for legalizing marijuana. This advances the idea that race is not a factor in deciding who supports the use of marijuana and that the use of marijuana crosses racial boundaries. While certain minority groups may be more prone to exposure of harder narcotics, marijuana seems to be a drug that does not follow along the same trend as others.

In conclusion, three findings were shown to predict support for legalizing marijuana, allowing us to reject the null hypotheses for H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, and H<sub>6</sub>. These were education level, per capita income, and support for gay marriage. Race was found to have no correlation.