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## COUNTRY AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

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### LONE STAR NATIONALISM: TEXAN IDENTITY, NEGATIVE ATTITUDES ABOUT GLOBALIZATION, AND CONCERN ABOUT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION PREDICT TEXIT SUPPORT

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*In the context of deglobalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a unique rise in secessionist and independent movements across the globe. Even in the United States, secessionist sentiments are brewing, as many Americans feel that their state should leave the Union; especially in Texas. Texit (Texas-Exit) is a political project promoted by the Texas Nationalist Movement, which is aimed to establish the Second Republic of Texas to escape American decline. To understand the predictors of voting to leave the United States, Texans (N = 1076) completed a survey which measured their identities and political orientations in addition to a mock Texit referendum vote to either 'Leave' or 'Remain' in the U.S. The findings indicated that Texan identity, negative attitudes about globalization, and concern about illegal immigration positively predicted a 'Leave' vote, while identification as a Democrat, U.S. Citizen, and Global Citizens predicted a 'Remain' vote. The results of the research are framed in relation to claustropolitanism and the desire for stability and safety in a violently changing world.*

**Keywords:** *Texas, nationalism, Texit, politics, claustropolitanism, social identity theory.*

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‘Son, don’t ever ask a stranger if he is from Texas.  
If he is, he will not be long in telling you about it.  
If he is not, don’t embarrass him by asking.’  
*Beauford Jester, Governor of Texas, 1947*

As the popular saying goes, ‘Everything is Bigger in Texas,’ including the pride Texans have in their home. Over the past two centuries, Texas has held the status of one of the most famous and powerful states in the United States, as it competes with its sisters, California, Florida, and New York. Today Texas dominates in several economic domains including ranking 8<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world, which is due in part to being a leader in crude oil and natural gas production, export revenues, farming, and livestock production (Christianson 2024). Texas has experienced significant growth in the technology sector, attracting numerous Fortune 500 companies to relocate their headquarters to the state (Holmes 2024). Additionally, discussions are underway to establish a Texas currency reserve and launch a stock exchange in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metroplex, informally dubbed ‘Y’all Street’ (Osegueda 2024). Texas is also at the forefront of the knowledge economy, as *The Wall Street Journal* ranked twenty-nine of the colleges and universities in the state on their top best colleges in the U.S. (Dearmore 2024). In terms of population, Texas is host to over 30 million inhabitants, primarily located within the Texas Triangle, a megalopolis which includes DFW, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston (Fechter 2024; Woodruff *et al.* 2024). The population of the state is one of the most diverse in the country and includes a mix of native-born residents, domestic migrants from the United States, and a large, international community from around the world (U.S. Census, n.d.). Thus, it is not surprising that in the current decade, some of the fastest growing towns and suburbs in the United States have been located in Texas (McNair 2024).

However, it is not just the contemporary, material conditions that foster a strong sense of pride in Texans. Texas is also distinguished amongst other states in the United States through its status as an independent republic prior to joining the Union (Wharton 1922). The Texas Revolution of 1836 resulted in secession from Mexico and the formation of the Republic of Texas, which instantaneously became mythologized and has been a part of the cultural fabric of the state and its people for the past two centuries (Cummins and Scheer 2016; Ginn 2016; Henson 1979; McComb 1989). Since then, Texans have been characterized (albeit by Texans) as being the exemplar Americans, embodying the norms of masculinity, individualism, grit, and friendliness (Ginn 2016; Jester 1947; Josephy 1991; Mellard 2009; Wharton 1922). This identity has been reinforced through institutional efforts to cultivate and sustain a strong sense of state pride (Kökény 2004; Nackman 1975; Ramsdell 1929). Additionally, Texas adopted an anthem in 1929 (‘Texas, Our Texas’ by William Marsh; Spain, 2020), state motto in 1930 (‘Friendship;’ State Motto, 1995), and pledge in 1933 (‘Honor the Texas Flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one and indivisible;’ Spain, 1952), while the United States lagged behind, adopting the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ in 1931 (National Anthem, 1931), the Pledge of Allegiance in 1942 (Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, 1942), and the national motto in 1956 (National Motto, 1956). Thus, Texans have not been lacking in identity reinforcement over the past 179 years, which has been institutionally promoted at a quicker rate when compared to the United States.

As Texas has grown in domestic and international significance, so has the interest in Texas seceding from the United States (Pomarański 2020). The most influential organization for secession is the Texas National Movement (TNM), led by Daniel Miller. The TNM advocates for a state-wide referendum vote amongst the citizens of Texas to leave the United States and form a second Republic of Texas (Miller 2018). Modeled after Brexit, the Texit movement advocates for a peaceful secession through a democratic process (Howell and Perry 2012). The movement does not lack support, as their main webpage claims that there are over 600,000 supporters registered of the TNM and over 53 of country level organizations across the state (including the highly populated Bexar, Travis, Dallas, Harris, and Tarrant counties; The Texas Nationalist Movement 2025a; 2025b). Additionally, the TNM has seen significant political success during the 2024 election cycle. For example, the ‘Take Texas Back Pledge,’ which involves political office holders and candidates to commit to working toward an independence referendum vote; presently, there are sixty-five office holders across the state who have taken the pledge (Sallinas 2024; Take Texas Back, n.d.). Further, the TNM attempted, and ultimately failed, to include a referendum vote in the Republican primary ballot; however, they notably were able to submit a petition with over 140,000 signatures from registered, republican voters (Johnson 2023). Thus, while there is not currently widespread public support for a Texit referendum in Texas, it is important to consider the ways in which the desire for self-determination, safety, and community in the face of deglobalization find a home in nationalism across different socio-political contexts.

According to Miller (2018), the United States is a failed state and the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents the conclusion of the democratic project. In his manifesto, he identified several areas of concern, including the national debt, the size and power of the federal government and the over-militarization of the United States' actions both internationally and domestically. Additionally, he cites specific drawbacks to Texans for remaining in the United States, namely the marginalization of representation in congress and the disproportionate amount of money paid in taxes versus funding received. Lastly, he claimed there is a cultural erasure occurring, where Texans are losing their unique way of life in the homogeny of globalization. These sentiments are reflected in the discourses of TNM supporters, who feel that they are not listened to on the national stage, their way of life is in danger, and that secession is the fulfillment of a responsibility to take on the role of ‘true’ Americans and live up to the principles of freedom and liberty established by the Texas founding fathers (Pérez-Boquete and Bello 2023).

### **Global Secessionism**

There has been a significant rise in new states across the world due to the process of secession (Fazal and Griffiths 2008). For example, between the 1800s and 2000s, the number of countries increased from 37 to 192, with the majority of these new country formations occurring after World War II. The rise in secession is largely explained by the collapse of empires and the Soviet Union. Past scholars have argued that one of the important aspects of independence movements across the globe has been the emphasis on self-determination and liberty (Fazal and Griffiths 2008). However, factors such as war, economics, cultural and ethnic differences, and nationalism also contribute to the trends in global secessionism.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been four successful secession movements across the globe, originating largely from violence, war, and ethnic discrimination. In the aftermath of the breakup and war in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo and Montenegro seceded from Serbia in 2006 and 2008, respectively (Kelmedi and Pedraza 2022; Ker-Lindsay 2009). In Africa, South Sudan successfully separated itself from Sudan in 2011 (Sarwar 2012). Similarly, Timor-Leste achieved independence in 2002 after being a colony of Portugal and under the rule of Indonesia (Dolven *et al.* 2012). Presently in South East Asia, the autonomous region of Bougainville secured a public mandate to secede from Papua New Guinea in 2019; however, progress toward actual independence has made little progress (Connell 2020).

In addition to Bougainville, there are many independence movements attempting to build public support for secession. For example, Scotland has desired to become independent from the United Kingdom, even securing a referendum in 2014, which ultimately failed to achieve popular support (Colledge and Ingram 2023; Kopasker 2014; Liñeira and Henderson 2021). Additionally, Catalonia has also experienced significant organizing to secede from Spain (Muñoz and Tormos 2015; Pradillo-Caimari *et al.* 2023). Other notable examples include ‘The South is My Country’ movement in southern Brazil (Cook 2019) and Québec independence in Canada (Béland *et al.* 2021; Pinar 1992). Two of the most recent instances of secession includes the British retreat from the European Union (Brexit) in which the public voted via a national referendum to discontinue their political association with continental Europe (Dennison 2023), and the growing desire of Greenlanders to dissolve ties with the Kingdom of Denmark (Agneman 2022).

Within the United States, secessionist sentiments are not a unique political feature, as there have been several independence groups across the country, each aiming to remove their state (or states) from the federal organizing structure (Pomarański 2020). The fact is, secessionism in the United States is growing in popularity. For example, in 2024, YouGov identified that around 23 % of Americans across the country would support their state leaving the United States (Bickerton 2024). The highest levels of support were from respondents in Alaska (36 %), Texas (31 %), and California (29 %). However, these numbers are likely unstable, as other polling indicated that in Texas, only 23 % of respondents indicated support for secession; yet, 45 % indicated that secession was possible, and if it were to happen, 44% believed Texas would be successful (R&WS Research Team 2024).

### *The Case of Brexit*

To understand secessionism, it is important to consider the factors associated with a successful separation; to that end, Brexit serves as the exemplar for 21<sup>st</sup> century independence movements. At the time, the popular vote in favor of leaving the European Union was a surprise to many; however, in the past decade since the national exit, scholarship has begun to put together the pieces to explain the underlying motivations of those who voted to leave (Dennison 2023). Considering contextual factors, those who lived in areas of the UK which historically had to rely on manufacturing were more likely to vote to leave (Becker *et al.* 2017); additionally, areas which saw increases in immigration were also predisposed to voting to leave the EU (Arnorsson and Zoege 2018). Connected to these material conditions, negative attitudes toward immigration, low education, high unemployment, and older age were each important, individual con-

tributors to Brexit (Becker *et al.* 2017; Bowman and West 2021). These factors are directly tied to the dual concepts of globalization and nationalism, which seemed to be the overarching narrative of Brexit. Thus, while independence movements may be motivated by a desire for self-determination, the secessionism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be distinct from its 20<sup>th</sup> century counterpart in that it is caught in the friction between globalism and nationalism.

### **Globalism and Nationalism**

The tensions between globalism and nationalism can help to explain the levels of support Texit and secession movements across the globe. Globalism is an ideological orientation and material reality which promotes the interconnectedness of nations, cultures, and peoples across the globe (Teo 2023). Often referred to as cosmopolitanism, a healthy line of scholarship has been dedicated to studying global citizenship identification, which represents a suite of positive beliefs about the interconnectedness of the world and are integrated into the self-concept (Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 2013, 2018). On the other hand, nationalism is the psychological and political orientation whereby the nation and those identified as ‘true nationals’ are prioritized over outgroup members, fostering a sense of exceptionalism and superiority (Blank and Schmidt 2003; Kosterman and Feshback 1989). The tension between globalism and nationalism can be explained through the lens of claustropolitanism, which describes the unmasking of the cosmopolitan ideals of an interconnected, global community as a colonial project (Arneil 2007; Bowden 2003; Brabzon 2021; Kofman 2005; Redhead 2011, 2017; Yemini and Maxell 2018). In the face of this breakdown, citizens to either double-down into their cosmopolitan ideals and embrace a global citizenship identity or retreat toward the safety of nationalism (Teo 2023).

The global citizenship identity exists within a reliable psychological model with consistent antecedents and outcomes (Reysen *et al.* 2013). For example, global citizenship identification is predicted by global awareness, which involves both knowing about and feeling connected to people and cultures from across the world. Additionally, identification is also predicted by living in environments which promote the normalization of global citizenship, either through interactions with other highly identified people or by engaging with people or artifacts from a diversity of cultural backgrounds (Reysen *et al.* 2021). Regarding outcomes, global citizenship predicts social justice and environmentalist beliefs, as well as a desire to engage in intergroup helping behavior and feel a moral responsibility to act in ways that benefit the world (Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 2013, 2018). Past research has indicated strong ties between a liberal political orientation and global citizenship, as not only are the two constructs highly related, but that liberal orientation also predicts the various outcomes of the global citizenship model (Katzarska-Miller *et al.* 2014). Further, research has indicated that Texan identity is also positively related to global citizenship identity (Jenkins *et al.* 2012). However, the relationship observed was much smaller, as compared to liberal political orientation. Despite this documented relationship, it seems unlikely that creating new national borders would be agreeable for someone who endorses global citizenship ideals.

In contrast to global citizenship, nationalism and national identity provides a coherent sense of self for individuals, who can rely on the nation's norms to inform their behavior and identity construction, especially in the event of uncertainty or crisis (Alves

*et al.* 2024). As Miller (president of the Texas Nationalist Movement; 2018) articulated, Texans should support *Texit* as a means to save themselves from the forthcoming apocalyptic finale of the United States, primarily through economic hardship and cultural erasure. One of the most common features of nationalism is a negative attitude toward immigration and a concern that immigration will change the culture of the nation (Beyer and Matthes 2015; Bracic *et al.* 2023; Ko and Choi 2021; Kulig *et al.* 2021; Taniguchi 2021; Thompson 2022). Additionally, factors like earning a lower income and low education attainment predict anti-immigration attitudes (Dražanová *et al.* 2024; Kim 2023). In the context of Texas, immigration is a tense political issue, primarily due to the historical relationship with Mexico and the large portion of Hispanic Texans in the state. *Texas Trends* reported that immigration and border security was the top issue for Texas voters, with 47 % indicating that it would influence their vote in the presidential election (Adams *et al.* 2024). Since 2021, the current Texas governor, Greg Abbott, has overseen Operation Lone Star, which is the policy of the Texas government to use the Texas National Guard and Texas Department of Public Safety to monitor and police the southern border with Mexico and prevent immigrants from entering the state (Garcia 2024; Hernandez 2022).

### *Identity*

In addition to negative attitudes toward globalization and immigration, nationalism also relies on identity to bind the group together in a shared sense of community and destiny. For example, one point of contention in the scholarly literature regards the role identity played in the outcome of Brexit (Dennison 2023). British identity is thought of as a civic identity category, which is related to diversity, globalization, and respect for national institutions, while English identity may sit more squarely within an ethnic identity category, where culture, language, and birth are important aspects of the construction of the self (Howley and Waqas 2020). For example, stronger English identity, as compared to British identity, was predictive of a Leave vote in the referendum, while a stronger Scottish identity was associated with a Remain vote (Henderson *et al.* 2021).

Similar to the United Kingdom context, there are also competing identities in the United States. One potential delineation within national identity is the distinction between 'United States' and 'American,' which has not been fully explored in the research literature. For example, identification with the United States is associated with higher political engagement, the desire to keep up with current events, and more consistent voting, which suggests a more civic element to the identity (Byrd 2023). However, American identity is also associated with civic responsibility with regard to engaging in politics, but also includes ethnocentric views of being an American (*e.g.*, White, Christian, being born in the United States; Schildkraut 2007). The ethnic component of the American identity has been significantly explored, as the normative expectations of being an American are heavily associated with whiteness (Devos and Mohamed 2014; Graeber and Setzler 2021; Tafoya *et al.* 2022). In the context of Texas nationalism, it may be pertinent to disassociate United States from American identity, as Texans who support secession may have low identification with the United States as a civic institution, but still maintain their sense of 'Americanness.'

### *Texan Identity*

One aspect of identity in the United States that has not been explored as much is the relationship between state and national identities. Part of this is due to Americans being primarily ‘nationally minded’ in that the state level politics do not receive as much commitment or engagement when compared to nationwide issues (Hopkins 2018). However, Bulman-Pozen (2014) suggested that state-level identity is still important, as it constitutes the ‘real’ American experience for citizens, especially for those who are ideologically in line with the dominant political party of the state. Past quantitative research has indicated that state-level identity fosters a sense of connectedness amongst people and is related to subjective perception of democratic health in their state (Pears and Sydnor 2022). However, state-level identity is generally not as strong as national-level identity (*Ibid.*).

State-level identity in Texas is likely the most important element in the Texas nationalist movement, as Miller (2018) argued that Texans have inconsistent opinions about secession due to their dual identities as both Americans and Texans, which results in a ‘hokey-pokey’ (p. 174) with *Texit*, where Texans only support the movement when their preferred political party loses the national presidential election. In 2014, the University of Texas / Texas Tribune poll reported that while only 27 % of Texas respondents reported identifying as Texans more than Americans, the leads in Texas identity were in younger people, and notably, Hispanics (Blank and Albertson 2014). Additionally, Reysen and colleagues (2014) reported that friends can accurately predict how strongly someone identifies as a Texan. Thus, it seems reasonable to postulate that it is a healthy identity category and operates similarly to other social identities in that it contains distinct historical, cultural, and political implications which lend itself to nationalist and secessionist sentiments.

### **The Present Study**

Presently, global politics is experiencing the contraction of globalization which has led to the claustropolitan society which is marked by paranoia and instability and a rejection of cosmopolitan ideals of a multicultural, interconnected world (Brabazon 2021; Redhead 2011, 2017). From this context, nationalism represents a deglobalization effort for citizens to flee back into the safety of their nation-states (Teo 2023). Secessionist sentiments could thus be characterized as a regional specific form of nationalism, which could facilitate a sense of stability and is marked by increases in identity with the state and a suspicion of outsiders, including immigrants (Alves *et al.* 2024; Beyer and Matthes 2015; Blank and Schmidt 2003; Kosterman and Feshback 1989). While much work has been conducted with regard to American identity, very little has been state-level specific (Schildkrout 2007). However, given the history of the state of Texas, and the institutional investment in fostering a sense of identity in Texans, it may provide fertile ground for Texas Nationalism to gather support for the *Texit* project (Miller 2018; Nackman 1975). Thus, the present study aimed to assess the predictors of a hypothetical referendum on Texas independence. Given the multiple potential variables which may influence a voter, several predictors were chosen in relation to the different domains of political life (*e.g.*, state-identity, national-level identity, political affiliation, attitudes toward globalization and immigration). It was hypothesized that Texan identity would be the strongest, positive predictor for a supportive vote for *Texit*.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedures

Participants ( $N = 1076$ ) were recruited from social snowballing, community sampling, and at universities across the state of Texas. Inclusion criteria required that participants be over the age of 18, reside in the state of Texas, and consent to participate in an online survey. After affirming consent, participants completed a short demographic questionnaire, a series of political identity and orientation items, as well as questions related to Texit. Data from the present study can be accessed via the Open Science Framework ([osf.io/rsbft](https://osf.io/rsbft)).

The demographics of the sample differed from the 2020 U.S. Census results of the state of Texas (Table 1). The sample consisted of a disproportionate number of women, as well as participants who identified as White or multiracial. Additionally, participants were younger than the population of Texas. These limitations in generalizability are likely due to the university recruitment procedures deployed for building the sample, as 54.7 % of a sample identified as being a student, faculty, or staff member at a university or college.

In addition to demographics, participants disclosed information regarding their residency in Texas. On average, participants had lived in Texas for over 20 years ( $M = 25.25$ ,  $SD = 14.02$ ), and 71.5 % of the sample indicated they were born in the state. The majority of participants resided in the Metroplex (e.g., Fort Worth, Dallas), the Upper East (e.g., Tyler, Texarkana), and the Northwest (e.g., Wichita Falls, Abilene) regions of Texas (Table 2). Further, a majority of participants indicated they were born in Texas (71.4 %) with a minority of whom indicating they belonged to a First Family of Texas (17.8 %).

Participants also disclosed details about their political orientation and voting behavior. A majority of the sample indicated they were registered to vote (85.6 %). When asked which party they typically vote for, a plurality indicated they voted for Democrats with a sizable minority who indicated they did not vote at all (Table 3). Lastly, when asked how they would vote on a Texit referendum, the majority indicated they would vote to stay in the United States (82.1 %).

### Materials

#### *Texan Identity*

To assess Texan identity in the present research, participants completed a three-item, 7-point Likert-type measure (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 7) of Texas identity (e.g., 'I strongly identify with other Texans'; Reysen *et al.* 2014;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### *Political Identity*

To assess political orientation, the participants indicated to what degree they identified with the major two parties in the United States (e.g., Republican, Democrat) on a 7-point, Likert-type measure (*not at all* = 1 to *very strongly* = 7).

#### *Globalization*

Three measures were utilized to assess the global, political orientations of participants. First, participants completed a two-item, 7-point Likert-type measure (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 7) for global citizenship identification (e.g., 'I strongly identify as a global citizen'; Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 2013, 2018;  $\alpha = .92$ ). Second, partici-

participants completed a four-item, 7-point Likert-type measure (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 7) to assess their opinions about illegal immigration (e.g., ‘Illegal immigrants pose a problem for national security’; Beyer and Matthes, 2015;  $\alpha = .92$ ). Lastly, participants indicated whether they agreed with the statement ‘Globalization had a negative impact on my life,’ using a 7-point, Likert-type measure (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 7; Reysen et al. 2020).

#### National Identity

Participants completed two measures, each being three-item, seven-point, Likert-type measures (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 7) for identification with Americans (e.g., ‘I am glad to be an American,’ Reysen et al. 2013;  $\alpha = .81$ ) and U.S. Citizens (e.g., ‘I see myself as a citizen of the United States,’ Reysen et al. 2013;  $\alpha = .77$ ).

#### Texit Referendum

Lastly, participants were asked, ‘If a vote was held to determine if Texas would leave the United States, you would vote to...’, which included two, forced choice options: ‘Leave the United States’ and ‘Remain in the United States.’

Table 1

**Sample Demographics with 2020 Texas Census Results for Reference**

		Sample		Population
		<i>M (SD)</i>	Median	Median
Age		32.79 (13.95)	30.00	35.90
		#	%	%
Gender	Male	418	39.20	49.90
	Female	614	57.50	50.10
	Other	28	2.60	N/A
	Unknown	7	0.70	N/A
Race	White	616	57.70	39.75
	Black	94	8.80	11.82
	Native /Pacific Islander	8	0.70	0.39
	Asian	30	2.80	5.36
	Hispanic	210	19.70	39.26
	Multi-Racial	92	8.60	3.04
	Other	5	0.50	0.39
	Unknown	12	1.10	N/A

*Note.* The study differed in collecting racial/ethnicity from the U.S. Census, in that participants completed an open-ended question regarding their racial identification; the responses were coded and presented as close to the U.S. Census format as possible for general comparative purposes. <https://data.census.gov/profile/Texas?g=040XX00US48#populations-and-people>.

Table 2

**Regional Distribution and Percent of ‘Leave’ Vote on a Texit Referendum by Region**

	#	%	Leave Vote (%)
Metroplex (e.g., Fort Worth, Dallas)	269	25.20	22.70
Upper East (e.g., Tyler, Texarkana)	212	19.90	18.40
Northwest (e.g., Abilene, Wichita Falls)	135	12.70	15.60
West Texas (e.g., Midland, Odessa)	98	9.20	16.30
Central Texas (e.g., Waco, College Station)	85	8.00	17.60
South East (e.g., Beaumont, Port Arthur)	53	5.00	11.30
Upper Rio Grande (e.g., El Paso, Fort Davis)	46	4.30	6.50

Table 2 continued

Alamo (e.g., San Antonio, New Braunfels)	45	4.20	11.10
Gulf Coast (e.g., Houston, Sugarland)	38	3.60	26.30
Capital (e.g., Austin, San Marcos)	35	3.30	11.40
South Texas (e.g., Laredo, Corpus Christi)	33	3.10	15.20
High Planes (e.g., Amarillo, Lubbock)	18	1.70	33.30

Note. Regional distinctions were adopted from the Texas Comptroller.

Table 3

### Self-reported Voting Behavior of Participants and Percent of 'Leave' Vote on a Texit Referendum

	#	%	Leave Vote (%)
Democrat	495	46.40	4.40
Republican	273	25.60	38.10
Don't Vote	143	13.40	21.00
Other Party	55	5.20	14.50
Independent	43	4.00	11.60
Libertarian	33	3.10	48.50
Can't Vote	12	1.10	16.70
Green	7	0.70	42.90
Write In	4	0.40	0.00

Note. Two participants did not answer the question.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the present study was preregistered on March, 24, 2024 (REDACTED) to test the hypothesis that Texan identity would be the strongest predictor of a 'Leave' vote for a Texit referendum. Prior to collecting data, a power analysis was conducted in *g\*prime* to determine the ideal number of participants to test the hypothesis ( $N = 857$ ;  $z = 1.64$ , power = .90,  $\alpha = .05$ ). As the present study collected more participants than the recommended number, it was determined appropriate to proceed with the analysis.

Table 4

### Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Texit Vote										
2. Texan ID	<b>.28</b>									
3. Born in Texas	.03	<b>.21</b>								
4. Republican ID	<b>.31</b>	<b>.50</b>	-.01							
5. Democrat ID	<b>-.36</b>	<b>-.34</b>	.07*	<b>-.52</b>						
6. Global Citizenship ID	<b>-.27</b>	-.06	-.01	<b>-.16</b>	<b>.24</b>					
7. Globalization	<b>.32</b>	<b>.29</b>	-.01	<b>.41</b>	<b>-.35</b>	<b>-.28</b>				
8. Illegal Immigration	<b>.37</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>-.09</b>	<b>.67</b>	<b>-.49</b>	<b>-.27</b>	<b>.52</b>			
9. American ID	-.01	<b>.56</b>	-.03	<b>.35</b>	<b>-.11</b>	<b>.10</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.38</b>		
10. U.S. Citizen ID	<b>-.07*</b>	<b>.51</b>	-.02	<b>.29</b>	<b>-.03</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.08*</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>.88</b>	
<i>M</i>		5.01		2.85	3.90	4.02	2.92	3.82	5.25	5.46
<i>SD</i>		1.71		2.02	2.03	1.85	1.71	1.85	1.41	1.27

Note. Bolded values indicate significance  $p < .01$ ; \* =  $p < .05$ ; ID = Identification.

Prior to hypothesis testing, correlation and descriptive analyses were conducted for the variables (Table 4). All of the variables tended to show small to moderate interrela-

tionships. Significantly high relationships were between American and U.S. Citizen identification and Republican identification and opinions about illegal immigration. Nonsignificant relationships were demonstrated between Texan identification and global citizenship identification, as well as the majority of relationships with being born in Texas.

To test the hypothesis that Texan identity would be the strongest predictor for a 'Leave' vote on a Texit referendum, a hierarchical, logistic regression analysis was conducted utilizing four models, which included variables for competing explanations (Table 5). The first model included only the Texan identity variables, the second model added the political identity variables, the third model included the global politics variables, and the fourth model included the national identity variables.

The results of the analysis indicated that Texan identity was the strongest predictor of a 'Leave' vote in a Texit referendum. Thus, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis. In addition to Texan identity, viewing globalization as negative and opinions about illegal immigrants were also significant, positive predictors. Negative predictors included identification with the Democratic party, global citizenship identification, and U.S. Citizen identification.

Table 5

**Results of the Hierarchical, Logistic Regression Analysis with Predictors for a 'Leave' Vote on a Texit Referendum**

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B(SE)	$\chi^2$	OR	B(SE)	$\chi^2$	OR	B(SE)	$\chi^2$	OR	B(SE)	$\chi^2$	OR
Texan ID	.62(.07)	72.42	1.86**	.33(.08)	16.24	1.39**	.25(.09)	8.79	1.29**	.54(.11)	24.91	1.71**
Born in Texas	-.16(.20)	0.61	0.85	.17(.22)	0.62	1.19	.29(.24)	1.50	1.33	.07(.24)	0.07	1.07
Republican				.12(.05)	5.62	1.13*	.05(.06)	0.73	1.06	.10(.07)	2.21	1.11
Democrat				-.44(.06)	51.83	.65**	-.33(.07)	25.56	0.72**	-.26(.07)	14.67	0.77**
Global Citizen ID							-.25(.06)	18.46	0.78**	-.17(.07)	7.91	0.84**
Globalization							.16(.06)	6.32	1.17*	.14(.07)	4.21	1.15*
Illegal Immigration							.12(.08)	2.23	1.13	.20(.09)	5.46	1.22*
American ID										-.15(.17)	0.79	0.86
U.S. Citizen ID										-.52(.64)	8.97	0.59**
Nagelkerke	.16			.29			.35			.41		
-2LL	816.13			727.40			679.87			638.50		

Note. \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; ID = identification. A follow-up analysis was conducted utilizing dummy variables for race (white vs non-white) and gender (men vs. not men), both variables were insignificant in the overall model while the original findings were retained.

### Post-Hoc Analysis on Identity

In a follow up analysis, the researchers wanted to assess if there were significant differences between Texit supporters and non-supporters regarding identification as Texans, Americans, United States citizens, and global citizens. The rationale for this analysis was due to Texan, United States citizen, and global citizen being significant contributors for the model, while American identity was not. Thus, a series of independent t-tests were conducted utilizing a Bonferroni correction to assess differences in identity between the two groups. Overall, those who supported Texas leaving the United States had a stronger Texan identity than those who supported remaining in the United States. Additionally, those who voted to remain in the U.S. had stronger United States citizen and global

citizen identity. However, neither group demonstrated a significantly stronger American identity.

Table 6

#### Mean Comparisons for Identification

	'Leave' Voter <i>M (SD)</i>	'Remain' Voter <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Texan	6.04 (1.45)	4.79 (1.68)	-9.51*
American	5.22 (1.53)	5.26 (1.37)	0.31
U.S. Citizen	5.27 (1.39)	5.50 (1.24)	2.23*
Global Citizen	2.95 (1.87)	4.25 (1.77)	9.03*

Note. \* Indicates  $p < .013$ .

## DISCUSSION

The present study represented the first attempt to capture the predictors of secession support in the state of Texas. It was hypothesized that Texan identity would be the strongest, positive predictor of participants' voting to Leave the United States. Based on the findings, the hypothesis was confirmed. Past research on Brexit and Texas nationalism has indicated that the politics and the qualitative support for the movement involves a rejection of globalization, a desire to preserve the unique culture and history of the state, and to exercise self-determination (Fazal and Griffiths 2008). All of these factors reflect the political aspiration of other independence and secessionist movements across the globe, especially with regard to Brexit (Dennison 2023). Collectively, these movements also tend to conform to the expectations of claustropolitanism (Brabazon 2021; Redhead 2017), as secession may represent a pathway to escape the fallout of globalization (Teo 2023). Thus, the present findings contribute to the overall understanding of de/antiglobalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by investigating a specific movement within the United States; additionally, it represents the first psychological study to find support for the theory of claustropolitanism.

Overall, the findings point to two main conclusions. First, affinity for Brexit is primarily supported through social identification as a Texan, with minor contributions from a negative subjective experience of globalization and a concern for illegal immigration. Thus, Brexit could be understood as a form of identity politics, which is responding to claustropolitanism. Second, the primary negative predictor of Brexit support was from identification as a Democrat, with minor contributions from identification as a global citizen and as a United States citizen. We postulated that these identities may point toward a commitment to not only cosmopolitanism, generally, but also represent a civic-oriented form of nationalism. Lastly, it was surprising that neither identification as a Republican, nor as an American, were significant predictors in the model. These findings may point to the self-conceptualization of Texans as exemplar Americans and the perception of Brexit as a legitimate, American political project, despite being anti-United States. Together, the findings point to a Brexit as being at the center of the claustropolis, where identity and secession are seen as legitimate methods for seeking safety from the dystopia of the United States. On the other hand, those against Brexit seem to be motivated by an affinity for the unfulfilled promises of cosmopolitanism, as well as a commitment to the institutions of the United States through civic identification.

As hypothesized, Texan identity was the strongest predictor of Brexit support. From a social identity perspective, this finding aligns with prior research on nationalism, which suggests that identity fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces the self-concept (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner *et al.* 1986). Through an investigation of Texas history and culture, it is reasonable to understand why Texan identity would support Brexit, as the group norms for being a Texan involve a strong sense of individuality, resilience, and anti-authority sentiment (Nackman 1975). These group norms have been institutionally refined over the past two centuries through specific legislation to preserve the historical knowledge and mythos of the state, as well as craft rituals to reaffirm group membership (*e.g.*, pledge, motto, and anthem). These Texas rituals predate the one of the United States and work to preserve Jester's sentiment of Texans being unique amongst other Americans in the Union (1947).

However, Texan identity was not the only factor associated with Brexit support, as both negative subjective feelings about globalization and a concern for illegal immigration were also predictors. Both variables point to the ethos of claustropolitanism, which includes a rejection of globalization and cosmopolitanism, as well as a wariness and concern about outsiders. As these two constructs were paired together, Brexit might be understood as a deglobalization response to claustropolitanism, whereby the impulse is to fortify and protect the in-group at the expense of other groups (Teo 2023). Based on the political activities of the State of Texas in the past four years, notably Operation Lone Star, this conjecture seems to hold some external validity (Garcia 2024; Hernandez 2022). These findings also reflect the concerns of those who supported Brexit, which was also a movement based in identity, a rejection of European cosmopolitanism, and anti-immigration attitudes (Arnorsson and Zoege 2018). Thus, both Brexit and Brexit could be understood as similar phenomena.

On the other hand, global citizenship was a negative predictor of Brexit support, which was not a surprising finding. Past research has demonstrated that liberal political orientation and global citizenship share significant variance; so much so, that they both predict the prosocial outcomes in the global citizenship model (Katzarska-Miller *et al.* 2014). In the context of de/antiglobalization, global citizenship could be described as either a commitment to the unfulfilled promises of cosmopolitanism, or could advocate for an antiglobalization sentiment, which would prioritize the collective good of nations (Teo 2023). In either case, this political sentiment runs counter to the Brexit project, which prioritizes one nation over others. Additionally, if global citizenship is rooted in the colonial project of international capitalism (Bowden 2003), the disruption caused by a successful Brexit (and the economic fallout of the United States losing a highly productive state) would create an unstable economic environment, which would run counter to the aims of the cosmopolitan project. Regardless of the underlying political aims of global citizenship, it was still expected that it would negatively predict Brexit support.

Further, identification as a United States citizen was a significant, negative predictor of Brexit support. On the surface, this finding makes intuitive sense, as someone who strongly identifies with the institution of the United States would logically reject the prospect of one of the fifty 'indivisible' states leaving the Union. However, when juxtaposed to the finding that American identity was not a predictor in the model, it creates an interesting tension between the two constructs. Past research on nationalism has de-

lineated ethnic and civic nationalism, which uniquely contributes to supporting secessionist movements (Boulter 2020). For example, in the case of Brexit, Scottish nationalism was comparatively more civic in nature than English nationalism, and the results of the Brexit referendum demonstrated that Scots were less likely than the English to vote to leave the European Union (Henderson *et al.* 2021). Thus, it could be that the category of 'United State citizen' is unique in comparison to 'American,' as it may represent a civic loyalty to the nation-state, rather than a metaphysical identification. Regarding American identity, a follow up analysis reported that there were no significant differences in level of American identification between those who did and did not support Textit. One explanation for this absence of difference could be due to the way in which Texas history and culture portrays Texans as the exemplar Americans (Wharton 1922). While past research on American identity has demonstrated that it does contain elements of civic loyalty to the United States (Byrd 2023), within the context of Textit, it could be that one can maintain a strong sense of 'Americanness,' without committing to a specific nation-state, as long that state embodied the group norms and ideals of America. Thus, Texas being the ideal America should not disrupt supporter's sense of being Americans.

Additionally, identification with the Republican party was not a significant predictor. This finding is notable given that most media coverage on Textit, and even the TNM, keeps a strong association with the Texas Republican Party. Thus, it was surprising to find that Democratic identification, but not Republican identification, was a significant predictor in the model. One explanation could be due to differing levels of identification with one's state, as those who do not conform to the dominant political ideology of their state tend to have lower identification than those who do (Pears and Sydnor 2022). In this case, as Texas is a primarily Republican state, those who identify as Democrats are not likely to strongly identify as Texans. However, as Hanson and company (2019) reported, the identity construction of liberals and conservatives are notably different; for example, liberals focus on issue-based politics, while conservatives focus on general, political values to determine their standing on a specific issue. Thus, Textit may receive more negative attention from liberals due to it being a unique political project that violates their personal values of institutional loyalty and multicultural inclusiveness, while conservatives are hesitant to dismiss Textit, as it may represent their political values of limited government, individualism, and constitutionalism. However, this distinction may be unique to the context of Texas, as it is uncertain if a similar relationship would exist in a traditionally liberal state, like California. Thus, caution is warranted regarding the generalizability of this finding to other secessionist movements in the United States.

Lastly, it was reported that being born in Texas was also not a predictor in the model. The researchers initially thought this measure would be important, as ethnic nationalism tends to prioritize being a native of the place, and Texas has curricular requirements for students to be immersed in the lore of Texas in public school (Henson 1979; McComb 1989). However, upon reflection of the modern landscape of Texas being a popular migration destination, being born in the state may not matter if those who are moving to Texas are quickly adopting a strong Texan identity. While this is not confirmed, it could be similar to adult, religious conversion experiences, where those who are converted take on a stronger identity and a zeal for the spiritual and moral expecta-

tions of adherence, as compared to those raised in the religion (Bieder 2021). From this perspective, the small, but positive correlation between being born in Texas and Democrat identification could be explained as native Texans being less committed to the group norms than their migrant counterparts.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While the present study represents a significant contribution in understanding the role of claustropolitanism in support for secession within the United States, there are several limitations to keep in mind when interpreting the results. First, the sampling of the present study was not able to capture representativeness in relation to the 2020 census data. The most notable problem with this involves the comparatively low percentage of Texit support reported, as compared to past polling (Bickerton 2024). However, it may not be as much of an issue regarding the predictive model tested, as more representation from older, conservative, men in the sample would likely not have altered the present findings significantly. While the researchers attempted to balance the sample with social snowballing and social network recruitment, it was difficult to overcome the convenience sampling from psychology undergraduate participant pools, which tends to overrepresent young women and liberals as compared to the general population (Markle 2024).

Further, the present study deployed a constellation of proxy variables to capture claustropolitan orientation, as a validated psychometric measure is currently not available. The theory of claustropolitanism originated in the humanities and represents a critique of the dominant sociological priority given to cosmopolitanism. As such, the present study represents the first attempt of its use in the domain of psychology. Due to this limitation, the researchers utilized variables such as identity, concern about illegal immigration, and attitudes about globalization as a means to capture this phenomenon. However, future psychological research should interrogate this theory regarding its internal and external validity to determine if these proxies were effective. For example, it would be useful to have a measure of claustropolitan orientation which could be utilized to explain individual-level commitments to political projects in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Similarly, while the study did find support for the notion that Texit conforms to similar independence and secessionist movements across the globe, the findings of the present study speak directly to the Texas context and should not be over generalized. To that end, future research should consider cross-cultural methodologies to investigate how similar and different these movements are to each other. For example, Texit and Brexit may be similar, but they are distinct political phenomena as the relationship between Texas and the United States is different from the prior relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Even within the United States, Texas, California, and Alaska, which all show significant secession support (Bickerton 2024; Pomarański 2020), are politically and culturally unique states within the Union. Thus, the dynamics at play in Texas will likely be different in other states. Additionally, the present study did not survey Texas nationalists specifically, nor those who were politically activated in the TNM. Rather, the present research attempted to understand the general predictors of Texit support outside of political engagement with the project. While past research on Texas nationalist discussion forums seems to corroborate the

present findings (Pérez-Boquete and Bello 2023), it would be useful for future research to engage with this group directly to understand their underlying motivations for Texit.

Lastly, for the sake of parsimony, the present study only included Republican and Democrat identification in the model. While the political climate in the United State lends itself to these two dominant parties, they may not represent the variance in political attitudes and leanings of the American people. For example, had identification with third parties been included in the model, we would expect Libertarian identification to be a strong, positive predictor of Texit, while Green party identification to be a strong negative predictor. Further, while identification suggests adherence to group norms, it does not represent ideological commitment. Thus, it may be fruitful for future research to include political ideology in addition to identity to gain a more holistic picture of Texit support. A similar issue is present with Texan identity, as the present study relied on the construct to represent the cultivated group norms of Texas; however, what it means to be a Texan and the psychosocial implications of said identity is presently unclear, which could be remedied with future research.

### Conclusion

The present research explored the role of identity and claustropolitanism on support for a Texit referendum and reported that while Texan identity was the strongest positive predictor of a 'Leave' vote, several variables associated with the breakdown of globalization and rise of claustropolitanism frame the political project. Notably, feeling like globalization has a negative impact on one's life and a concern about illegal immigration provided secondary support for Texit support. Thus, the findings point to the power of identity as an organizing principle for nationalist and secessionist sentiments in the context of deglobalization, as people strive for identity certainty and safety in a world becoming more chaotic and unpredictable. While presently the majority of Texans do not support a secession referendum, one day the Lone Star may offer the security and protection for citizens facing the Claustropolis and provide hope for those left behind in the wake of deglobalization. When this happens, the Texas nationalists will be ready to fulfill the prophecy of Sam Houston, the first President of the Republic of Texas and the first Governor of the State of Texas: 'Texas will again lift its head and stand among the nations.'

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