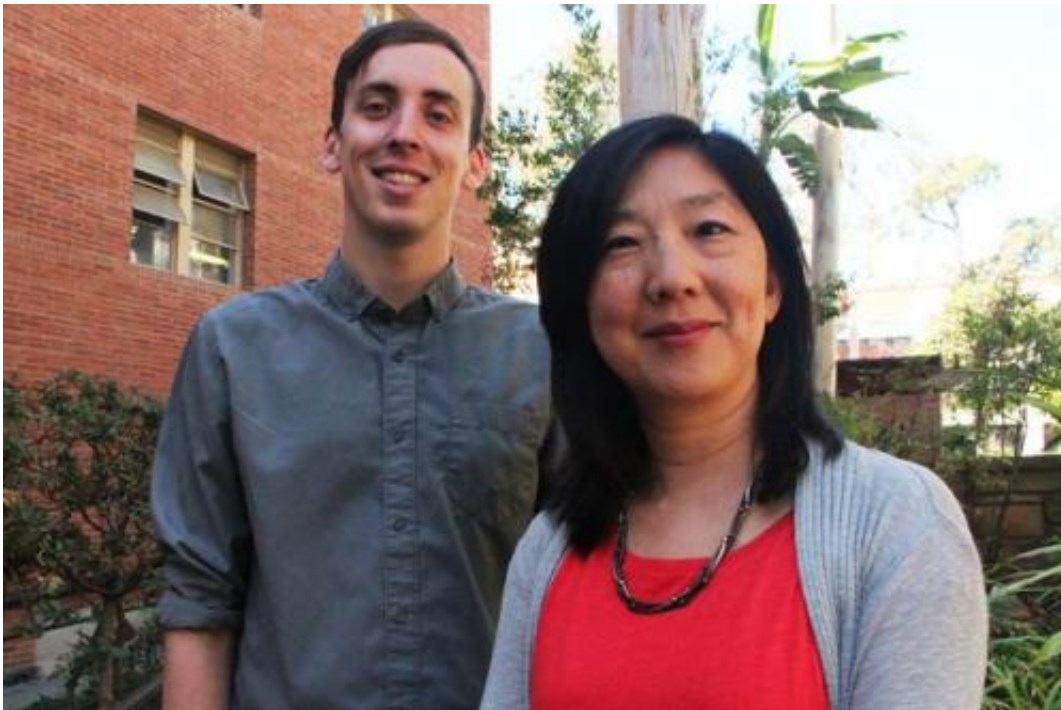


## Soon to become a minority in the US, whites express declining support for diversity, psychology study finds

October 3 2014, by Stuart Wolpert

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Doctoral student Felix Danbold and professor Yuen Huo found that white Americans' favorable views of diversity tends to diminish if they understand that whites will soon be a minority in the U.S.

(Phys.org) —White Americans may view diversity and multiculturalism more negatively as the U.S. moves toward becoming a minority-majority nation, UCLA psychologists report.

As part of their study, the researchers divided 98 [white](#) Americans from all regions of the country—half male, half female, with an average age of 37—randomly into two groups. One group was told that whites will no longer be the majority in the U.S. by 2050; in fact, this is likely to be true as soon as 2043, according to some projections. The second group was told that whites would retain their majority status in the U.S. through at least 2050. All participants were then asked a series of questions about their views on [diversity](#).

"Whites feel lukewarm about diversity when they are told that they are about to lose their majority status in the United States for the first time," said Yuen Huo, UCLA professor of psychology and the study's senior author.

Using a seven-point scale—where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 7 meant "strongly agree"—subjects were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements like "One of the goals of our country should be to teach people from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds how to live and work together" and "Americans should understand that differences in backgrounds and experiences can lead to different values and ways of thinking." Those who believed whites would continue to be the majority gave an average response of 5.67, while those who believed that whites would no longer be the majority gave an average response of just 5.15.

"We see a significant reduction in the endorsement of diversity when white Americans are exposed to current projections of future demographics," said Felix Danbold, a UCLA psychology doctoral student and the paper's lead author. "Most Americans view diversity in positive terms, but many white Americans who see the actual demographic projections, and the loss of their majority status, end up being less enthusiastic about it."

Those in the study who identified themselves as Republicans gave average responses of 4.5, compared with 5.8 for Democrats and 5.7 for independents. Thirty-six percent of the participants were Democrats, 21 percent were Republicans and 31 percent were independents.

Support for diversity was also higher among women, with an average response of 5.7; men's average response was 5.1.

The researchers say the results are related to whites feeling threatened in a way that is distinct from their concerns about economic competition or clashing cultural values. They concluded that the demographic changes are threatening whites' sense that they best represent the American identity.

"Whites have long benefited from being seen as the ethnic group that best represents what it means to be American," said Huo, a faculty member in the UCLA College. "Thinking about a future in which whites are no longer a numerical majority threatens this claim to the American identity and, we have found, results in a reluctance to embrace diversity and greater support for newcomers to assimilate to American society."

The "threat to identity," Danbold said, is often overlooked in discussions about why whites are uneasy about changing demographics.

In a second study, researchers showed that whites who perceived that the relative size of their ethnic group was rapidly declining also expressed a greater interest in having other [ethnic groups](#) assimilated to their own. The researchers again explained this reaction as whites defending their group as "best representing what America stands for."

In this study—involving 194 white Americans, with the same gender split, same median age and geographic profile as the first—researchers also asked how well different ethnic groups represent the values and

ideals of America.

Seventy-three percent rated whites significantly higher than other ethnic groups as best representing America. Just 27 percent viewed African-Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans and white Americans—America's four largest ethnic groups—as equally representative of American values and ideals.

Those who felt that all ethnic groups represent America equally well supported diversity even when thinking about their group's declining share of the U.S. population.

Participants were also asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements including "The growth of other ethnic groups has increased the tax burden on members of my ethnic group" and "Social services have become less available to members of my ethnic group because of the growth of other ethnic groups." On a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 represented the strongest agreement, the average score was 3.04.

**More information:** "No Longer 'All-American'? : Whites' Defensive Reactions to Their Numerical Decline" Felix Danbold and Yuen J. Huo *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 1948550614546355, first published on August 19, 2014 [DOI: 10.1177/1948550614546355](https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550614546355)

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