

First U.S. survey on 'whiteness' conducted

September 7 2006

A first-of-its-kind U.S. survey shows there's more recognition of racial identity and of the social privileges that come with it than was thought.

The assumption behind prior scholarship and diversity training initiatives was that whites overlooked their own race.

"For some white Americans, racial identity is so fixed, so taken for granted, that 'race' becomes something other people have," said study co-author, University of Minnesota Associate Professor Doug Hartmann.

University researchers found a majority of whites polled (74 percent) said they believed their own racial identity was important to them, and a similar majority saw prejudice and discrimination as important in explaining white advantage.

At the same time, minorities were found more likely to see their racial identities as important and to see structural reasons for racial disparities.

"The fact of the matter is that people claim white identity for defensive as well as progressive reasons," said survey co-author Paul Croll, a University of Minnesota graduate student.

The telephone survey of 2,000 people nationwide was part of the American Mosaic Project, a 3-year study that looks at race, religion and cultural diversity in the contemporary United States.

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