

# White male fearlessness is explained

October 31 2007

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A U.S. study suggests the relative fearlessness of some white males is due to their cultural identity, and its influence on their appraisal of risks.

Yale Law School Professor Dan Kahan, who led the research, said it's been well documented that white men are less fearful of a broad array of risks than are women and minority group members. But the reasons for the phenomenon have not been clear.

Kahan and his colleagues studied risk perceptions regarding environmental issues, gun ownership, and abortion. They found the cultural identities of white men influenced their perceptions of an activity's risks.

"Individuals will subconsciously adapt their factual beliefs to their values," said Kahan. "If an activity is important to their cultural identities, they will infer it isn't dangerous; if that activity contravenes their cultural values, they will find it dangerous."

The study appears in the November issue of the *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*.

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Citation: White male fearlessness is explained (2007, October 31) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-10-white-male-fearlessness.html>

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