Proposal for survey time

Racial diversity is increasing in the United States. The demographics of the United States continue to shift, such that non-Hispanic Whites are expected to make up less than 50% of the population sometime around 2040 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014),[[1]](#footnote-1) the prospect of which has been shown previously to increase racial group status threat among White Americans (Craig, Rucker, & Richeson, 2018). In recent work, a partisan divergence in racial group status threat has emerged: White conservatives express high levels of concern that their racial group will lose standing that either increases or simply remains high when the racial demographic shift is made salient, whereas White liberals report relatively low levels of threat that decrease further when the prospect of a racial shift is made salient (Brown, Rucker, & Richeson, 2022). Political polarization over the prospect of a more racially diverse nation may have consequences for Americans’ support for democratic governance, particularly in rapidly diversifying states like Texas, Arizona, and Georgia, which have each implemented a variety of voter restrictions and attempts at electoral interference in recent years.

Here, we propose examining three potential explanations of the observed political divergence in racial group status threat: 1) there might be misalignment in perceptions of racial demographic change, i.e. some groups think the U.S. is diversifying more rapidly than other groups do; 2) shifting racial demographics might be a threat to Whites’ political dominance via the prospect of political realignment, i.e. the “demographics as destiny” argument that as racial minorities become a larger share of the national population, Democrats will acquire an insurmountable supermajority; 3) shifting racial demographics might cue a threat to cultural dominance, i.e. a change in the racial diversity represented in culture/media. By examining how endorsement of each of those beliefs relate to threat, polarization, and support for democratic norms, we hope to illuminate some of the underlying psychological factors driving democratic backsliding.

We are also interested in threat’s effect on attitudes toward speech and censorship, particularly with regard to speech about race. In pilot work on the topic, we find that feelings of racial group status threat increase endorsement of speech censorship, but (as in much existing work on the topic), it is ambiguous whether participants are suggesting increased censorship of hate speech or increased censorship of speech about racism. In fact, currently we see both calls for increased monitoring/sanctioning of hate speech on online platforms and for removal of race-related content from local libraries and public schools. Understanding better what Americans mean when they endorse some increased censorship will help distinguish between these fundamentally different practices.

Alba, R. (2018). What majority-minority society? A critical analysis of the Census Bureau’s projections of America’s demographic future. Socius, 4, 2378023118796932.

Brown, X., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. (2022). Political ideology moderates White Americans’ reactions to racial demographic change. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 25(3), 642-660.

Craig, M. A., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. (2018). Racial and political dynamics of an approaching “majority-minority” United States. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *677*(1), 204-214.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). 2014 National Projections December 2014, (December), 30. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2014/demo/popproj/2014-summary-tables.html>

1. Although this “majority-minority” understanding of racial demographics is oversimplified – notably mis-categorizing multiracial individuals who identify as White and ignoring a historical trend of expanding the definition of Whiteness in the United States to maintain a majority (Alba, 2018) – it nevertheless remains an important force shaping many Americans’ understanding of the country’s future. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)