White Demographic Anxiety and Support for Torture of Terrorism Suspects

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White Demographic Anxiety and Support for Torture of Terrorism Suspects

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ABSTRACT

In this study I use a survey experiment to test whether the prospect of White demographic decline affects attitudes toward treatment of terrorism suspects. I find that when White subjects are informed that Whites are projected to become a demographic minority in the United States by 2060 they are more likely to approve of the use of torture on terrorism suspects. In contrast, White subjects who are informed that Whites are expected to remain a demographic majority through 2030 are not. I also find that the effect of White decline salience on support for torture of terror suspects is mediated through a heightened perception of threat due to terrorism.

Does racial anxiety affect attitudes toward torture of terrorism suspects? More specifically, does the fear that Whites are slated to become a minority in the United States in the next several decades make them more likely to endorse physically punishing treatment of individuals accused of terrorism? This is a crucial question given the heightened racial resentments that characterize our current political moment, ongoing public policy debates over the use of physically abusive treatment of terrorism suspects and in light of scholarship suggesting that the use of torture is counterproductive for reducing terrorism.

The United States is projected to become a “majority-minority” country by 2044. The US Census Bureau predicts that the percentage of White, single-race, non-Hispanic Americans will dip below 50 percent around 2044 and will further decline to around 44 percent of the national population by 2060. Although these projections have been parsed and critiqued, the demographic decline of White Americans and the expected shift to a majority-minority country have received considerable media and popular attention. A slew of recent academic studies demonstrates that the impact of projected White demographic decline, and corresponding abatement of White economic, political, social and cultural dominance in the United States, has a significant impact on individuals’ political attitudes and policy preferences. Using a variety of survey experiments, researchers have found that, when informed they are expected to become a minority population over the next several decades, Whites are more likely to express negative attitudes about non-Whites, to express greater political conservatism and to support
right-wing political movements like the Tea Party or politicians like Donald Trump. White demographic decline also affects individuals’ policy preferences. For example, Whites who are informed that the United States is slated to become a majority-minority country are more likely to support reducing legal immigration and tightening immigration standards, favor rolling back affirmative action policies, support retrenchment of welfare and healthcare programs and favor increasing defense spending. These empirical findings are consistent with studies showing that individuals endorse conservative political and policy positions as a reaction to societal uncertainty and threats, including challenges to social status.

In this study, I investigate whether the prospect of White demographic decline has a similar effect on individuals’ attitudes toward counterterrorism practices, specifically the use of physically punishing techniques on terrorism suspects. The use of techniques such as waterboarding, electric shocks, beatings or stress positions on terror suspects is a practice that has been at the center of contentious political discourse and policy debates in the United States since revelations in 2004 that US forces were employing “enhanced interrogation techniques” against detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Consequently, scholars have sought to better understand the factors that prompt people to voice support for the use of these controversial tactics. Previous scholarship has considered the role that partisanship and ideology, religiosity, gender, past victimization, perception of effectiveness, legal commitments, retributive impulses, desire to reinforce social order and the identity of the person subject to the abuse play in prompting ordinary individuals to endorse the use of torture.

**Demographic Change, Status Loss, Anxiety, Threat and “Getting Tough” on Terrorism**

In this study I investigate another factor prompting support for the use of torture on terrorist suspects in the United States: heightened anxieties and perception of threat engendered by the prospect of White demographic decline. My theoretical argument linking demographic changes to support for torture is straightforward. When Whites are informed that they are declining as a percentage of the national population, and when they contemplate the prospect of becoming a racial minority in the United States in the near future, they face the prospect of losing the social, political, economic and cultural dominance they have traditionally enjoyed. The prospect of such a loss engenders feelings of anxiety and insecurity, leading affected individuals to increase their assessment of the threat terrorism poses to the United States. This, in turn, fosters a more hawkish “get tough on terrorism” mentality that increases individuals’ support for torture of terror suspects.

Each of these components are informed by theoretical logics and are, themselves, supported by empirical literatures. I explain each component below.

**Loss of Dominant Status**

The first component involves the association of changing demographics in the United States with challenges to the traditional dominant status of Whites. Whites have enjoyed
a dominant status economically, politically, socially and culturally in the United States since before the founding of the country. That status, in part, is anchored in the minds of many Whites to their demographic majority. Changing demographics which threaten to relegate Whites from a majority to a non-majority plurality within the United States help to stoke feelings of White anxiety and threat. The relative decline of Whites as a percentage of the population is frequently perceived by them as a zero-sum force that will entail marginalization and will strip them of their dominance while elevating the status of non-Whites. Several studies illustrate this phenomenon. When demographic decline and the rise of a majority-minority United States are made salient for Whites, they exhibit increased concern that their racial/ethnic group’s status will decline relative to other groups that are experiencing population growth. Put simply, many Whites will perceive demographic change to have unfavorable implications for the distribution of economic, political, social and cultural power in the country.

Anxiety, Insecurity, Fear and Assessment of Risk

In the second component, anticipation of the loss of their dominant status provokes feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear among Whites. This phenomenon is observed in studies by Burrow et al. and Leach, Snider and Iyer. This is significant, as feelings such as insecurity, anxiety and fear have been found to prompt individuals to amplify their assessment of all sorts of personal and general threats, including national security threats like terrorism. A host of studies demonstrate that increased anxiety raises individuals’ perceptions of risk while causing them to overestimate threats.

Getting Tough on Terrorism

In the third component, insecurity, anxiety, fear and increased perception of threat—all of which are enhanced by the prospect of loss of dominant status by Whites due to demographic changes—drive individuals to support hawkish and highly punitive counterterrorism policies and practices, one of which is torture of terror suspects. In layperson’s terms, anxious individuals are quick to see danger in the world and are prompted to call for extreme means to mitigate threat and restore personal and societal security. Anxious and fearful individuals favor addressing the threat of terrorism by supporting “get tough” counterterrorism policies, one of which is the use of torture on recalcitrant terror suspects.

There are several processes that link anxiety and perception of threat with support for “getting tough” on terrorism and permitting the violation of human rights of terror suspects. Each are supported by a robust literature. The first is a confluence of two sets of empirical findings in the literature: anxiety and perception of threat are associated with rejection of out-group rights and the American public largely associates terrorists with out-groups. A large genre of research demonstrates that members of dominant social groups who experience feelings of insecurity and enhanced perception of threat express higher levels of prejudice against and lower levels of tolerance for the political rights and civil liberties of members of other social groups. At the same time, experimental research shows that what comes to mind for survey subjects when they hear the word “terrorist” or “terrorism” is an act of political violence perpetrated by members of
out-groups—particularly foreigners, Muslims or people from Middle Eastern countries—rather than in-groups.\textsuperscript{28} It is expected that anxious and threatened individuals are more likely to favor subjecting suspected terrorists, who are assumed to be racial, ethnic, social or religious “others,” to harsh treatment.

The second process more specifically argues that the perception of White demographic decline, in tandem with other factors, such as racist attitudes, authoritarianism and right-wing political ideology, stimulates social dominance orientation in individuals that drives them to support harsh criminal justice sanctions.\textsuperscript{29} Studies in the criminology literature have found a relationship between heightened anxiety due to immigration, living in close proximity with non-White minorities—both of which correspond with demographic changes and perception of decline of white dominance—and support for more punitive treatment of criminals in sentencing or in application of the death penalty.\textsuperscript{30} Increased perception that Latinos pose an economic and political threat prompts Whites to support granting law enforcement greater leeway in conducting stops and searches and in using force against criminal suspects.\textsuperscript{31} It is easy to see how racial and demographic anxieties might affect support for harsh treatment of terror suspects in a similar way.

Finally, several studies empirically link increased perception of threat with hawkish national security policies and practices, including the use of torture. A number of studies find that survey or experimental subjects with a heightened sense of threat are more likely to favor reducing civil liberties and militarizing counterterrorism practices in exchange for maximizing personal safety.\textsuperscript{32} In an experiment, Lerner et al. found that more fearful subjects were more likely to endorse national security policies, such as deporting foreigners who lack documentation and limiting ties with Muslim-majority countries.\textsuperscript{33} Survey research by Aizpurua et al. finds that individuals who report higher levels of perceived personal threat in the context of terrorist threats are more supportive of national security policies that compromise civil liberties, particularly the liberties of out-groups like Muslims.\textsuperscript{34} Perception of threat due to terrorism also increases desire for muscular retaliation against enemies\textsuperscript{35} and has been found to drive support for anti-terrorism policies pursued by the Bush administration.\textsuperscript{36} In a public opinion study, Lizotte found that increased threat perception prompts male subjects, but not women, to support the application of torture.\textsuperscript{37} All of these empirical findings are consistent with the expectation that anxious individuals who fear for their safety are more likely to support harsh treatment and physical abuse of terror suspects.

**Hypotheses**

Given my theoretical expectations, I therefore test the following hypotheses. First, I expect White demographic decline to prompt White subjects to become more supportive of the application of torture on terrorism suspects:

\textbf{H1. White subjects who are informed that Whites will become a minority population in the United States in the future are more likely to support physically abusive treatment of terrorism suspects.}

To further evaluate my theoretical model, I also test whether White demographic decline drives support for torture by inducing subjects to increase their assessment of the threat posed by terrorism:
The impact of White demographic decline salience on support for physically abusive treatment of terrorism suspects is mediated through increased perception that terrorism is a threat.

Research Design

To test the hypothesized relationship between White demographic anxiety and support for physically abusive treatment of terrorism suspects, I conducted an online survey experiment using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The experimental design is straightforward and generally mimics that used by a number of other scholars. After recruiting and obtaining informed consent from subjects, I asked them a set of questions to determine their basic demographic profile (age, gender, income, employment status, education level, etc.), their partisan leanings and political ideology and their inclination toward authoritarianism or discriminatory attitudes.

The study employs three groups composed of two treatment conditions and one control condition. Subjects were assigned randomly to the conditions. Across all conditions, subjects were asked to read a fictitious news story that first presented factual anodyne information about the projected growth of the overall US population and the increase of the aging population derived from the US Census. All subjects, regardless of condition (treatments and control) read this same preliminary news information. Subjects assigned to the first treatment condition (“White Population Remains Majority”) were also provided factual US Census information indicating that Whites are projected to remain the majority of the US population through 2030. Subjects assigned to the second treatment condition (“White Population Declines to Become a Minority”) were provided other factual information from the US Census projecting the White population of the United States to decline to a point in 2060 whereby Whites will be a minority and non-Whites will be a majority. The purpose of the second treatment is to provoke a sense of looming decline of White dominance, anxiety of threat among subjects as they contemplate the prospect of a non-White majority future in the United States. The control condition provided subjects with only the anodyne information provided to all groups about the growth of the overall and aging population of the United States. For the control group, any information about future White or non-White populations was omitted. After reading the news story, the subjects were asked about their support for the application of physical pressure on terrorism suspects in custody. The treatments and control condition are explained in greater detail below.

The survey instrument used for the study is available in the Appendix.

Subjects and Sample

For the experiment, I recruited 652 initial subjects using MTurk. I limited participation to adult residents of the United States. The overall participant sample had the following demographic features: The median subject was between 25 and 34 years old. Around 55.7 percent of subjects were male. Of respondents, 52.2 percent had obtained a bachelor’s degree or graduate degree and 58.3 percent reported being employed full time, while 25.6 percent reported being employed part time. Only 6.6 percent stated
that they were unemployed and were looking for work. The median household income for the sample was between US $35,000 to $49,999 per year. Participants hailed from 48 US states and the District of Columbia. The median household income for the sample was between US $35,000 to $49,999 per year. Participants hailed from 48 US states and the District of Columbia. In terms of regions of the country, around 18.1 percent hailed from the Northeast, 32.1 percent from the South, 22.1 percent from the Midwest and 27.6 percent from the West. Around 47.3 percent of subjects identified as Democrats while 23.9 percent identified as Republicans. In terms of political ideology, 58.9 percent indicated that they were liberals, 22.3 percent that they were conservatives and 18.5 percent that they were moderates.

I constructed post-stratification weights to make the survey sample more representative of the US population. To do this, I collected data from the US Census Bureau and from Gallup to create auxiliary variables measuring the current averages for gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, household income, regional population, partisan affiliation and political ideological identification distributions in the United States. I divided these US population averages by the sample averages to produce individual weights for each attribute. I then combined these individual attribute weights together to form a multiplicative aggregate weight for each subject. The aggregate weight ranges from .019 to 9.892 and has a mean of .520. Table 1 in the Appendix lists the weights and how they were constructed for each of the individual attributes. The results presented in the article are produced using these weights.

To make sure non-US residents did not participate, I prescreened and excluded prospective subjects who accessed the survey from non-US-based Internet service providers. To further check, I also included a question on the survey about the subject’s country of residence and excluded those who indicated that they resided outside of the United States. A total of 33 prospective subjects were determined not to be US residents and were excluded from the study. I also screened and excluded participants who employed virtual private networks or servers (VPNs or VPSs). This further reduced the number of eligible participants. These two sets of exclusions resulted in 619 subjects undertaking and completing the survey experiment.

My primary interest is in the effect of White demographic decline salience on White subjects. Consequently, most of the estimations are conducted only on White subjects, who constituted around 74.4 percent of the sample, or about 461 out of 619 subjects who were eligible and completed the survey. However, I also conducted one estimation, reported below, on the full sample that includes non-White subjects. The results of this estimation are consistent with the other models that include only Whites illustrating the robustness of the findings.

I included two questions in the survey to help determine whether subjects carefully read the news stories and were paying attention while answering survey questions. These were simple factual questions about the news stories, requiring subjects to recall whether the story projected the US population to grow or decline and the name of the federal agency (the US Census Bureau) mentioned in the story. To identify subjects who might have been “straight-lining” or randomly answering questions in the survey, I included a question asking who is the current president of the United States. A total of 44 subjects missed one or more of these questions. In most of the estimations, I included these subjects in the sample. However, as a check, I also ran one estimation, described below, excluding subjects who missed one or more of the attention check
questions. This model reproduces the main results of the study, indicating that the findings are not affected by such respondents.50

The survey was fielded on Tuesday, 21 May 2019, opening at 9:30 a.m. and closing at 6:30 p.m. (EST). The median subject took 8.1 minutes to complete the survey. The minimum amount of time a subject took was 2.0 minutes while the maximum was 46.9 minutes. Each participant who completed the survey received $1.50 in compensation.51

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for the study measures subject support for the use of physically punishing tactics against terrorism suspects. The variable is an ordinal, Likert scale measure of subject response to the question, “Do you support using techniques such as waterboarding or physical pressure on terrorist suspects?” The available responses were: “strongly support,” “somewhat support,” “neither support nor oppose,” “somewhat oppose,” and “strongly oppose.” Subjects were also given the option to answer, “I don’t know.” These responses were excluded from the analysis, a practice I employed for all questions in the survey with an “I don’t know” response. The distribution of subject responses to this question are graphed in Figure 1. Support for harsh treatment of terrorists was not popular. Only a quarter of the sample, around 25.1 percent, expressed some level of support or approval for the use of physically punishing treatment of terror suspects. More than half of the sample—around 58.1 percent—expressed opposition. Around 9.3 percent of subjects indicated that they strongly supported harsh treatment of suspects, while 15.8 percent somewhat supported such treatment. Around 13.9 percent indicated that they neither supported nor opposed physical abuse of terror suspects. Around 18.4 percent somewhat opposed and 39.7 percent, a plurality, expressed strong opposition.
Treatments

The independent variable for the study utilizes the treatment and control condition categories discussed previously. As noted, subjects were randomly assigned to read one of three short news vignettes. Each vignette was designed to look like a news blurb from the Associated Press that described a recent report from the US Census Bureau on population projections for the next several decades. All vignettes read by the subjects contained information indicating that the U.S. population was projected to continue growing through 2058. All vignettes also stated that the aging population of the United States is projected to increase through 2060. The vignettes contained column charts illustrating the growth of the US population and the growth of the population aged 65 or older from 2020 to 2060 (see appendix). For subjects assigned to the control condition (n = 153\textsuperscript{54}), this was the only information provided in the vignette.

Subjects assigned to the first treatment (n = 154\textsuperscript{55}) were presented with additional information. In this treatment, subjects were informed that, while the non-White population was projected to continue growing, according to the Census Bureau the White, non-Hispanic, non-mixed-race population of the United States was projected to remain a majority through 2030. Moreover, subjects assigned to the first treatment were presented with an additional figure: a pie chart showing that the ethnic/racial breakdown of the United States in 2030 will be 55.5 percent White and 44.5 percent non-White. The purpose of this information is to reduce White demographic anxiety among subjects by reassuring them that non-Whites will continue to constitute the minority of the US population through the near future. Consequently, my expectation was that subjects assigned to this treatment would not experience a sense of threat and would not exhibit higher support for physically abusive treatment of terrorism suspects.

Subjects assigned to the second treatment (n = 154\textsuperscript{56}) were also presented additional information beyond the anodyne statistics about US population growth and growth of the aging population. But, in contrast with the first treatment, the additional information was intended to provoke feelings of White racial anxiety and sense of threat over changing demographics in the United States. In this treatment, subjects were informed in the news vignette that the non-White population is expected to grow dramatically in the coming decades. By 2060, subjects are informed, non-Hispanic, non-mixed-race Whites are projected to become a distinct minority of the US population. This vignette also contains a pie chart showing that, by 2060, Whites are projected to constitute 42.6 percent of the US population while non-Whites are projected to constitute a majority of 57.4 percent of the population. My expectation was that subjects presented with such information would experience higher levels of racial anxiety, enhanced sense of threat, and would be more inclined to express support for physically punishing handling of terrorism suspects.

As a result of random assignment of subjects to the treatment and control categories, the treatments and control condition groups are reasonably balanced in terms of subject age, gender, ethnicity, education level, employment status, income level, partisan affiliation, political ideology, region, and rating in terms of authoritarianism and discriminatory attitudes. The average variance for these subject attributes across the treatments and control condition is .007, suggesting that no one group of subjects differs significantly from the mean value for all subjects across groups.
In the multivariate ordered logistical estimations, described in more detail below, I also included a set of covariates that allowed me to hold constant subject demographic features. These include ordinal measures of subject age, education, income and political ideology and dichotomous measures of gender and ethnicity/race, employment status, partisan affiliation and region. I also controlled for subject attitudinal features that previous studies have found to be important predictors of human rights violations, torture and punitive criminal justice practices: authoritarianism and discriminatory or racist attitudes. Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study can be found in Appendix Table 2.

Table 1. Treatment effects, one-way ANOVA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment category</th>
<th>Support for torture of terror suspects</th>
<th>Variance between groups</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average ordinal support score</td>
<td>Percent that “Somewhat” or “Strongly” support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) White population remains majority</td>
<td>2.153</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>8.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) White population declines to become minority</td>
<td>2.426</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ranges between 1 (“Strongly Oppose”) to 5 (“Strongly Support”) for using techniques such as waterboarding or use of physical pressure on terrorism suspects.

1Calculated by collapsing into dichotomous measure where 0 = “Oppose” or “Strongly Oppose” and 1 = “Support” or “Strongly Support.”

2One-way ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc comparison tests.

*indicates treatment categories are different with probability $> \chi^2 \leq .1$.

**Covariates**

In the multivariate ordered logistical estimations, described in more detail below, I also included a set of covariates that allowed me to hold constant subject demographic features. These include ordinal measures of subject age, education, income and political ideology and dichotomous measures of gender and ethnicity/race, employment status, partisan affiliation and region. I also controlled for subject attitudinal features that previous studies have found to be important predictors of human rights violations, torture and punitive criminal justice practices: authoritarianism and discriminatory or racist attitudes. Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study can be found in Appendix Table 2.

**Tests and Results**

I used two analytical techniques to determine whether White demographic decline salience prompts subjects to support harsh, physically punishing treatment of terrorist suspects. First, I conducted one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests on the treatments with Bonferroni post-hoc comparison tests. These tests determined that the impact of the treatments on the dependent variable, support for physically punishing counter-terrorism tactics, varies significantly. Subjects assigned to the second treatment, who were informed that Whites are projected to become a minority in the United States by 2060, exhibit higher levels of support for physically punishing terror suspects than do subjects assigned to the first treatment, where Whites were projected to remain in the majority through 2030. This is illustrated in Table 1.

The average score for the ordinal measure of the dependent variable—the Likert scale for support for terror suspect abuse—is higher for subjects in the second treatment (average = 2.426 on a 1–5 scale) than for subjects in the first treatment (average = 2.153 on a 1–5 scale). To aid interpretation of this result, I collapsed the dependent variable into a binary measure coded 1 for subjects who “somewhat” or “strongly” supported physically abusive handling of terrorism suspects. Subjects who were assigned to the second treatment and who were informed that Whites are projected to become a minority in the United States are 8.7 percent more likely to somewhat or strongly
Table 2. Effect of White demographic decline on support torture of terrorism suspects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2:</td>
<td>1.452***</td>
<td>1.284**</td>
<td>1.602***</td>
<td>0.965*</td>
<td>1.268**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites decline</td>
<td>(0.407)</td>
<td>(0.454)</td>
<td>(0.464)</td>
<td>(0.396)</td>
<td>(0.467)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to minority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites maintain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Control:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.274*</td>
<td>−0.273*</td>
<td>−0.289**</td>
<td>−0.289**</td>
<td>−0.252*</td>
<td>−0.274*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>−0.464</td>
<td>−0.342</td>
<td>−0.433</td>
<td>−0.433</td>
<td>−0.379</td>
<td>−0.413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.318)</td>
<td>(0.326)</td>
<td>(0.324)</td>
<td>(0.324)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
<td>(0.333)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.843**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.321)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>−0.360*</td>
<td>−0.388*</td>
<td>−0.381*</td>
<td>−0.381*</td>
<td>−0.309*</td>
<td>−0.371*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.155)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>−1.179*</td>
<td>−1.233***</td>
<td>−1.185*</td>
<td>−1.185*</td>
<td>−1.055**</td>
<td>−1.177*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.471)</td>
<td>(0.474)</td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
<td>(0.396)</td>
<td>(0.516)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income level</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>−0.440</td>
<td>−0.259</td>
<td>−0.381</td>
<td>−0.381</td>
<td>−0.156</td>
<td>−0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.526)</td>
<td>(0.511)</td>
<td>(0.528)</td>
<td>(0.528)</td>
<td>(0.472)</td>
<td>(0.548)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.867****</td>
<td>0.724***</td>
<td>0.842***</td>
<td>0.842***</td>
<td>0.753**</td>
<td>0.879***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>0.945*</td>
<td>0.835*</td>
<td>0.961*</td>
<td>0.961*</td>
<td>0.776*</td>
<td>0.875*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.443)</td>
<td>(0.436)</td>
<td>(0.449)</td>
<td>(0.449)</td>
<td>(0.380)</td>
<td>(0.466)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminatory</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.576</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.526)</td>
<td>(0.538)</td>
<td>(0.535)</td>
<td>(0.535)</td>
<td>(0.452)</td>
<td>(0.543)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>−0.847</td>
<td>−0.666</td>
<td>−0.853</td>
<td>−0.853</td>
<td>−0.705</td>
<td>−0.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.577)</td>
<td>(0.510)</td>
<td>(0.537)</td>
<td>(0.537)</td>
<td>(0.459)</td>
<td>(0.582)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>−0.032</td>
<td>−0.063</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>−0.121</td>
<td>−0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.503)</td>
<td>(0.532)</td>
<td>(0.513)</td>
<td>(0.513)</td>
<td>(0.451)</td>
<td>(0.536)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>−0.899*</td>
<td>−0.680</td>
<td>−0.865*</td>
<td>−0.865*</td>
<td>−0.836*</td>
<td>−0.881*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.484)</td>
<td>(0.463)</td>
<td>(0.491)</td>
<td>(0.491)</td>
<td>(0.400)</td>
<td>(0.512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut 1</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>−0.684</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>−0.772</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.811)</td>
<td>(0.762)</td>
<td>(0.795)</td>
<td>(0.795)</td>
<td>(0.688)</td>
<td>(0.830)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut 2</td>
<td>1.658*</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>1.325</td>
<td>1.642*</td>
<td>0.449</td>
<td>1.587*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.851)</td>
<td>(0.788)</td>
<td>(0.821)</td>
<td>(0.839)</td>
<td>(0.706)</td>
<td>(0.864)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut 3</td>
<td>2.668**</td>
<td>1.512*</td>
<td>2.335**</td>
<td>2.653**</td>
<td>1.515*</td>
<td>2.602**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.819)</td>
<td>(0.764)</td>
<td>(0.805)</td>
<td>(0.806)</td>
<td>(0.702)</td>
<td>(0.849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.837)</td>
<td>(0.781)</td>
<td>(0.851)</td>
<td>(0.827)</td>
<td>(0.746)</td>
<td>(0.889)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.13***</td>
<td>6.62***</td>
<td>7.24**</td>
<td>7.24**</td>
<td>7.58***</td>
<td>7.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>Whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samples</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>non-Whites</td>
<td>attention</td>
<td>check</td>
<td>excluded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All estimations ordered logistical regressions.

*p ≤ .1.

**p ≤ .01.

***p ≤ .001.

1Subjects that failed attention checks excluded.

support terror suspect abuse than those assigned to the first treatment and who were informed that Whites would remain a majority. Finally, Table 1 shows that the variance between the treatment groups is high and significant ($F=2.24^*$).
Second, I conducted a set of multivariate tests using ordered logistical estimations. The results of these tests are presented in Table 2.

In model 1, the second treatment—where White demographic decline is made salient—is run by itself with covariates and is a statistically significant, positive predictor of mistreatment of terror suspects. Post-estimation marginal effects simulations determine that subjects assigned to the second treatment, and therefore informed that Whites are projected to become a minority, have a 32.9 percent increased probability of either “strongly supporting” or “somewhat supporting” the use of physical pressure on terror suspects when the second treatment is included by itself, with covariates, in the estimation. In model 2, the first treatment—where White maintenance of demographic majority status is made salient—is run by itself with covariates. It is found to be statistically significant and negative. Subjects assigned to the second treatment have a 16.6 percent reduced probability of strongly or somewhat supporting mistreatment of terrorists. In model 3, treatments 1 and 2 are run together with the control condition excluded as the reference category. In this estimation, subjects in the second treatment are again found to be more likely—around 29 percent increased probability—to strongly or somewhat support physical abuse of terror suspects. However, the coefficient for the first treatment is not significant. In model 4, the second treatment and control condition are included in the model and the first treatment is excluded as the reference category. In this model, the second treatment is again significant and positive and marginal effects simulations demonstrate that making White decline salient increases the probability that subjects will strongly or somewhat endorse mistreatment of terror suspects by 36.2 percent. The control condition is not significant.

Models 1 through 4 included only White subjects from the sample. To check if the findings are reproduced when using the full sample, I reran both treatments as predictors for both White and non-White subjects. The results are summarized in model 5. Again, making White demographic decline salient prompts subjects to support physical abuse of terrorist suspects. The second treatment is a significant and positive predictor, and marginal effects simulations reveal that when subjects are informed that Whites are projected to become a minority they have a 21.6 percent higher probability of strongly or somewhat supporting physical punishment of terrorists. This result underscores the robustness of the main findings, but also suggests that the impact of White decline salience on attitudes toward abuse is, not surprisingly, more substantial for Whites.

Finally, in model 6 I reran the main analysis using the all-White sample but excluding subjects that failed one or more of the attention checks. Here again, subjects who were assigned to the second treatment and were informed that Whites are projected to become a minority by 2060 were significantly more likely to endorse abuse of terror suspects: such subjects had, as a group, a 28.3 percent higher probability of strongly or somewhat supporting physically harsh treatment of terrorists. This test helps to confirm that the main results found in models 1 through 4 are not affected by subjects who may not have paid close attention when reading the news vignettes or answering survey questions.

Several of the covariates are also significant in the estimations. Across all models, age, education level and employment status are significant negative predictors. This suggests that older, more highly educated and unemployed subjects were less likely to support terror suspect abuse, regardless of condition assignment. Conservative subjects with
### Table 3. Test of mediation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Mediating variable</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Total effect (^1)</th>
<th>Direct effect (^2)</th>
<th>(a) (^3) M → (X)</th>
<th>(b) (^4) M → (Y)</th>
<th>Indirect effect (^5)</th>
<th>Percent mediated (^6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2: Whites</td>
<td>Increased perception of terrorism as threat</td>
<td>Support for physically punishing handling of terror suspects</td>
<td>.224*</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.152*</td>
<td>.444***</td>
<td>.067*</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decline to minority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.115)</td>
<td>(.110)</td>
<td>(.073)</td>
<td>(.070)</td>
<td>(.034)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Total effect = \(X \rightarrow Y\).

\(^2\)Direct effect = \(X\) (when M, mediator, is included) \(\rightarrow Y\).

\(^3\)\(a = X \rightarrow M\) (mediator).

\(^4\)\(b = M \rightarrow Y\).

\(^5\)Indirect effect = Total effect − Direct effect.

\(^6\)Percent mediated = Indirect effect/total effect.

Mediation occurs when total effect, \(a\) and \(b\) and indirect effect are all significant.

Tests are multivariate and include the following controls: age, male, education level, unemployed, income level, Republican, conservative, authoritarian, discriminatory attitudes, Northeast, Midwest, South.

\(*\)\(p \leq .000\).

\(*\)\(p \leq .1\).
authoritarian tendencies were significantly more likely to support harsh treatment of terrorist suspects. Income, partisan affiliation, discriminatory attitudes and most of the region indicators—the exception being the South, which is significant and negative in most models—were not found to be significant.

**Mediation Test**

Recall that I theorized that the impact of White decline salience on support for physical punishment of terrorism suspects is mediated through increasing perception of threat. More specifically, I argue that the prospect of becoming a demographic minority in the United States provokes feelings of threat, insecurity and anxiety among Whites and this raises their assessment of physical security threat prompting them to endorse “get tough” practices on perceived sources of threat. To test the link between White decline salience and support for abuse of terror suspects, I conducted a mediation test. In the test, the mediator is whether the subject regards terrorism to be a significant threat. To construct the mediator, I asked respondents the following question: “How big of a threat do you think terrorism is to our country?” Respondents provided a four-point Likert scale set of responses: “strong threat”, “moderate threat”, “small threat”, and “not a threat at all”. Around 15.8 percent assessed terrorism to be a strong threat, around 36.8 assessed it to be a moderate threat, around 40.7 percent, the plurality, regarded terrorism to be a small threat and 5.2 percent stated that terrorism was not a threat to the United States at all.

Table 3 presents the results for the mediation test. It provides support for the contention that White demographic decline salience increases subject support for abuse of terror suspects by raising a subject’s assessment of the risk or threat of terrorism.

Increased assessment of terrorism as a substantial threat to the country is found to be a significant mediator. Subjects who were informed that Whites are projected to decline to minority status are significantly more likely to assess terrorism as a national threat (column “a” in Table 3) and this assessment is a significant predictor of support for terrorist suspect abuse (column “b” in Table 3). The mediation test, furthermore, found that around 29.9 percent of the impact of White decline salience on support for subjecting terror suspects to physically abuse is mediated through increased perception of terrorism as a threat or risk to the United States.

**Conclusion**

The results of the study provide preliminary evidence that, in addition to other factors, such as age, education level, employment status and political ideology, White demographic anxieties affect White Americans’ attitudes about the application of physical abuse or torture against terrorism suspects. Whites who are led to believe that Whites are destined to become a minority in the United States are more likely to regard terrorism as a significant security threat and are more likely to support torture of terror suspects. These findings suggest that some policy preferences regarding counterterrorism are amplified by ethnic group or racial identity politics in the United States. That said, it is important to underscore this finding is preliminary. More research is needed to test
the underlying causal relationship between White demographic decline salience and support for the use of torture in counterterrorism. Moreover, the study leaves some important questions unanswered that should be addressed in future investigations.

First, does the identity of the terrorism suspect matter? In this study, the racial, ethnic, religious and ideological characteristics of the theoretical terrorist perpetrator were not provided to the subject. It is possible that White demographic decline salience prompts White subjects to regard foreign terrorist actors—for example, jihadi terrorists from the Middle East—as more threatening and therefore worthier of abusive treatment, but not domestic terrorism suspects that seem less alien. Future research could manipulate treatments to determine if White demographic decline prompts a similar response to domestic, right-wing, White nationalist terrorist perpetrators.

Second, does the type of physical abuse matter? In the study, subjects were simply asked about their attitudes toward “physically punishing” interrogation techniques. Only a few specific examples were used, and they included some of the types of techniques that have been prominently discussed by political figures or the media (e.g., waterboarding). Psychologically punishing techniques were not specifically mentioned and subjects were not presented with an array of possible types of abuses. Related to this point is the issue that in response to the revelation of detainee abuses during the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, many types of interrogation techniques have been made illegal or have been identified by policymakers and military officials as prohibited. It is possible that making White demographic decline salient to subjects prompts them to endorse only some types of interrogation techniques; for example, only those that are perceived as less physically grueling or those that have not been banned or made illegal. Future studies should investigate the role these factors play.

Third, what effect do ambient current events play? It is reasonable to assume that subjects’ attitudes about racial demographic trends, the threat of terrorism and the use of torture against terror suspects are affected by discussions of current political and social issues. Contemporary issues, such as the detention of migrants, the militarization of the US border with Mexico, heightened racial tensions, burgeoning White identity politics among conservative politicians and voters and the Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality likely affect attitudes about racial politics, national security and the treatment of terrorism suspects. Also, terrorist events themselves are liable to shape perceptions of national security and the type of counterterrorism policies that should be pursued. This suggests a need to revisit the relationship between White demographic anxieties and treatment of terrorism suspects in the context of current events.

Finally, future work could consider the role that misinformation and presentation of demographic trends data play in shaping White attitudes toward torture of terrorists. Commentators observe that depiction of demographic changes in the United States by media and political figures often lacks proper context and nuance. This has the potential to fuel White demographic anxieties that inadvertently play into the hands of extremist political actors who wish to exploit public sentiments. Presenting the public with a more carefully crafted depiction of future demographic trends may serve to calm anxieties and, by extension, reduce support for torture. Moreover, different sources of information are likely to affect Whites’ demographic anxieties and counterterrorism preferences. Individuals who rely on mainstream prestige press versus opinion media
versus social media may have different reactions to demographic trends that may affect their support for torture of terrorism suspects. Future research could delve into how the presentation of information and the source of information on demographic changes in the United States affect individuals’ attitudes about torture.

Notes


36. Huddy et al., "Threat, Anxiety and Support for Antiterrorism Policies."

37. Lizotte, "Gender Differences in Support for Torture."

38. Prior to conducting the experiment, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from my home institution. IRB approval number study # 00012425.

39. Use of MTurk to recruit experiment subjects is common in social science research. Indeed, Craig and Richeson, "On the Precipice of a ‘Majority-Minority’ America," use an MTurk recruited subject pool for their study on the impact of White demographic decline salience...


41. The appendix is available at https://sites.google.com/site/jamesapiazzapennstate/james-a-piazza-penn-state-research.

42. MTurk requires its members (“Turkers”) to be 18 years or older. As a further check to make sure the sample only included adults, I excluded any participant who indicated that they were under 18 years of age.

43. Note that these descriptive statistics are for the entire sample, not just the sample of White subjects used in most of the models in the analysis. The descriptive statistics table (Table 1) presents the descriptive statistics for White subjects, which is the sample used in most models.

44. Subject age was measured in age categories, as explained below.

45. The only states not represented within the sample were Delaware, Nebraska and South Dakota.


47. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

48. Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.


50. See David J. Hauser and Norbert Schwarz, "Attentive Turkers: MTurk participants perform better on online attention checks than do subject pool participants," *Behavior research methods* 48, no. 1 (2016): 400-407. Hauser and Schwarz found that MTurk survey subjects were, on average, more attentive than respondents recruited through subject pools.

51. Calculated to provide subjects with at least US federal minimum wage compensation, assuming the typical subject took ten minutes to complete the survey.

52. Note that the question underlying the dependent variable does not specify the exact type of physically punishing treatment meted out to terrorism suspects. I did this deliberately to allow the subjects themselves to define what constitutes “physically punishing” treatment and to avoid the possibility that the legality of a particular technique might affect subjects’ responses. Moreover, the question is limited to physical abuse, not psychological abuse of terrorists. Many techniques employed against terrorism suspects do produce psychological stress. However, for the sake of simplicity, I limited the question to only physical abuse. Finally, I do not identify the identity of the perpetrator in the question about treatment of terrorist suspects. I did this intentionally to avoid biasing the responses of subjects. Previous experimental research has found that the religious identity of the terrorist suspect affects the likelihood that subjects will support harsher counterterrorism measures against terror suspects. See Piazza, James A. "Terrorist suspect religious identity and public support for harsh interrogation and detention practices." *Political Psychology* 36, no. 6 (2015): 667-690.

53. All US Census projections contained in the vignettes are factual and taken from Census Bureau figures. Sources: Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortmanm, “Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060,” Current Population Reports,
White subjects in the sample only. For all subjects, 205 were assigned to the control condition.

Whites only. For all subjects, 206 were assigned to treatment 1.

Whites only. For all subjects, 208 were assigned to treatment 2.

See survey instrument. Question 1.: “What is your age?” Measured on a 1–6 ordinal scale.

See survey instrument. Question 5: "What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?” Measured on a 1–6 ordinal scale.

See survey instrument. Question 7. “What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?” Measured on a 1–8 ordinal scale.

See survey instrument. Question 10. “In general, do you think of yourself as [extremely liberal to extremely conservative]” Coded on a 1–7 ordinal scale where 1 indicates “extremely liberal” and 7 indicates “extremely conservative.”

See survey instrument. Question 3. “What is your gender?” Coded 1 for subjects who indicated “male.”

See survey instrument. Question 4. “Please specify your ethnicity.” Coded 1 for subjects who indicated “White.”

See survey instrument. Question 6. “Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?” Coded 1 for subjects who indicated “Not employed, looking for work.”

See survey instrument. Question 9. “Generally do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent or other?:” Coded 1 for subjects who indicated “Republican.”

See survey instrument. Question 8. “What U.S. state or territory do you reside in?” Coded 1 for residents of Northeastern states.


See survey instrument. Questions 13 and 14. “Now I would like to know more about your attitudes toward raising children. Do you think its more important for a child to have [respect for elders; independence]? Do you think it is more important for a child to have [curiosity; good manners]?” Coded 1 for subjects that indicated “respect for elders” and “good manners.”

See survey instrument. Questions 11 and 12. “Please tell me whether your agree or disagree with the following statements. I think that discrimination against other groups is a problem today. [strongly agree to strongly disagree] I think that members of other groups are too demanding in their push for equal rights. [strongly agree to strongly disagree].” Coded 1 for subjects that disagree or strongly disagree that discrimination against other groups is a problem today and who agree or strongly agree that members of other groups are too demanding in their push for equal rights.

Note that only White subjects are included in the sample analyzed in Table 2. When all subjects are included, ANOVA tests also show the treatments to be significantly different from one another (F = 2.76*), and subjects assigned to the second treatment are 6 percent more likely to support or somewhat support harsh handling of terror suspects.

Full results available from the author.
Note that for model 4 I reweighted the sample by including race as a factor. Model 4 also includes a dichotomous control for the race of the subject—coded 1 for White subjects.

It is possible that multicollinearity affected the results for Republican partisanship, and discriminatory attitudes. Indicators for conservative political ideology, Republican partisanship, authoritarianism, and discriminatory attitudes are correlated with one another. Collinearity diagnostics do not generally indicate that multicollinearity is a problem among the variables in the estimations. The mean Variance Inflation Factor score for the models is 1.34 while the condition number for the variables is 16.92. However, as a check I reran all models, including only one of these four covariates at a time in the estimation. Each are found to be a significant positive predictor of support for terror suspect abuse. These tests do not change the core results of the study, however. Results available from the author.

I use a multivariate structural equation test of mediation.

As is the case for the question underlying the dependent variable, this question is deliberately open-ended. It does not specify the type of terrorist threat that the country faces. It may be that certain types of terrorist perpetrators, such as foreign jihadi terrorists as opposed to domestic right-wing terrorists, are more likely to be perceived as very threatening. Identifying a specific terrorist perpetrator here may bias or otherwise affect the results. That said, future research might examine how terrorist perpetrator identities condition the relationship between White demographic anxieties and support for torture of terror suspects. I note this as a future avenue for research in the conclusion.

Note that the sample used for these responses was only Whites. For the full sample the distribution was: 16.8 strong threat, 39.4 moderate threat, 38.1 small threat and 4.3 no threat at all.


For example, an experiment conducted by Myers and Levy demonstrates that how news media presents information on demographic changes affects individuals’ reactions to those changes. See Dowell Myers and Morris Levy, “Racial population projections and reactions to alternative news accounts of growing diversity,” The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 677, no. 1 (2018): 215-228.

Acknowledgments

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.
Appendix

White Demographic Anxiety and Support for Torture of Terrorism Suspects

Appendix Table 1. Weights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Study sample proportion</th>
<th>(Actual) population proportion</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Weight (population proportion/sample proportion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Male</td>
<td>0.557</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity: White</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity: Non-White</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: Less than B.A.</td>
<td>0.478</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: B.A. or higher</td>
<td>0.522</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party: Republican</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>1.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party: Democrat</td>
<td>0.4733</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>0.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 18 to 24</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 25 to 34</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 35 to 44</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 45 to 54</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 55 to 64</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category: 65 to 74</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>2.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: Midwest</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: Northeast</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: South</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: West</td>
<td>0.276</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: Less than $25,000</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $25,000 to $34,999</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $35,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $150,000 to $249,999</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>3.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: $250,000 or more</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>5.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology: Liberal</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>0.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology: Conservative</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>1.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology: Moderate</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>Gallup</td>
<td>1.892</td>
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</table>

Appendix Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Obs.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<tr>
<td>Support for torture of terror suspects</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>2.348214</td>
<td>1.396447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief terrorism is threat</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>2.641758</td>
<td>.810017</td>
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<tr>
<td>White population declines (Treatment 2)</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>.3340564</td>
<td>.4721719</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population maintains (Treatment 1)</td>
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<td>.3340564</td>
<td>.4721719</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control condition (No mention of White population)</td>
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<td>.3318872</td>
<td>.4714023</td>
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<td>Age category: 18 to 24</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>White¹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
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<td>Unemployed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹For full sample including Whites and non-Whites.
Survey Instrument

I. Screen for VPN:

Warning!

This survey uses a protocol to check that you are responding from inside the U.S. and not using a Virtual Private Server (VPS), Virtual Private Network (VPN), or proxy to hide your country. In order to take this survey, please turn off your VPS/VPN/proxy if you are using one and also any ad blocking applications. Failure to do this might prevent you from completing the HIT.

For more information on why we are requesting this, see this post from TurkPrime (https://goo.gl/WD6QD4)

II. Screen for participants based outside of the United States:

Thank you for your interest in our study.

Our system has detected that you are attempting to take this survey from a location outside of the U.S. Unfortunately, this study is directed only towards participants in the U.S. and we cannot accept responses from those in other countries (as per our IRB protocol).

Thank you for your interest in our study.

For some reason we were still unable to verify your country location. We ask you to please assist us in getting this protocol correct. Please enter your MTurk worker ID below and contact the requester for this HIT to report the problem.

Once you click Next, you will be taken to the survey (and certifying that you are taking this survey from the U.S. and not using a VPS). We will be checking locations manually for those who reach this point and you will be contacted if this check identifies you as violating these requirements.

III. Introductory text and consent agreement:

You are being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to find out what Americans think about current issues such as national security, terrorism, counter-terrorism policies, immigration and religion.

As a participant in the study, you will first be asked some basic background questions about yourself including your thoughts about politics and other issues. You will then be asked to read a short news brief. After reading the news brief, you will be asked a final set of questions about your opinion on some current issues in the U.S. The questions should take around 5 to 7 min to complete.
IV. Pretreatment Questions:
Q1. What is your age?:
   Below 18 years old
   18 to 24 years old
   25 to 34 years old
   35 to 44 years old
   45 to 54 years old
   55 to 64 years old
   65 to 74 years old
   75 years or older

   [If below 18, thank and then end survey]

Q2. What is your country of residence?
   Please specify ____________________________

   [If not U.S., thank and then end survey]

Q3. What is your gender?:
   Female
   Male
   Other, please specify ______________

Q4. Please specify your ethnicity:
   White
   Hispanic or Latino
   Black or African American
   Asian
   American Indian or Alaska Native
   Middle Eastern or North African
   Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
   Other, please specify _____________

Q5. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
Less than high school degree
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED [General Educational Development])
Some college
Associate’s degree
Bachelor’s degree
Graduate degree

Q6. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?
Employed, working 1 to 39 hours per week
Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
Not employed, looking for work
Not employed, NOT looking for work
Retired
Disabled, not able to work

Q7. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?:
Less than $25,000
$25,000 to $34,999
$35,000 to $49,999
$50,000 to $74,999
$75,000 to $99,999
$100,000 to $149,999
$150,000 to $249,999
$250,000 or more

Q8. What U.S. State or territory do you reside in?:
State or territory, please specify _________________

Q9. Generally do you think of yourself as a?:
Republican
Democrat
Independent
Another party, please specify ______________
No preference

Q10. In general, do you think of yourself as?:
Extremely liberal
Liberal
Slightly liberal
Moderate, middle of the road
Slightly conservative
Conservative
Extremely conservative

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.
Q11. I think that discrimination against other groups is a problem today.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Q12. I think that members of other groups are too demanding in their push for equal rights.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Now I would like to know more about your attitudes towards raising children.
Q13. Do you think it is more important for a child to have?:
Respect for elders
Independence

Q14. Do you think it is more important for a child to have?:
Curiosity
Good manners

V. Treatments
Subjects randomly assigned to one of the following groups:
0. Respondents not prompted on White majority or minority (Control)
1. Whites projected to remain a demographic majority through 2030 (Treatment 1, Whites Maintain)
2. Whites projected to become a demographic minority by 2060 (Treatment 2, Whites Decline)

Now I'd like you to read a short news story. Please read it carefully as I will ask you questions about it later.

Control Condition. No Mention of White Population

1 May 2019
Associated Press. WASHINGTON, DC — “Census Bureau releases preliminary projections.”

Census Bureau officials released preliminary projections for the growth of the U.S. population over the next several decades. A spokesperson for the Census said that the population is expected to continue growing and will reach 400 million by 2058. Other countries, particularly in Western Europe, are expected to decline in population. The Census Bureau reported that the aging population will also continue to increase. By 2060, nearly than one in four Americans will be 65 or older. The Census Bureau also released some figures that show these trends.

As shown in Figure 1, the population of the United States is expected to continue growing through 2060.
Figure 1. U.S. population will continue to grow.
U.S. Population in millions, 2020 to 2060, U.S. Census Projections

As shown in Figure 2, the aging population of the United States is also projected to continue growing through 2060.

Figure 2. U.S. will continue to age.
Percent of Americans Aged 65 and Older, 2020 to 2060, U.S. Census Projections

Treatment 1. White Population Remains Majority

May 1, 2019
Associated Press. WASHINGTON, DC – “Census Bureau releases preliminary projections.”

Census Bureau officials released preliminary projections for the growth of the U.S. population over the next several decades. A spokesperson for the Census said that the population is expected to continue growing and will reach 400 million by 2058. Other countries, particularly in Western Europe, are expected to decline in population. The Census Bureau reported that the aging population will also continue to increase. By 2060, nearly than one in four Americans will be 65 or older. Census officials also stated that while the non-White population is expected to grow, White Americans are projected to remain a majority of the U.S. population through 2030. The Census Bureau also released some figures that show these trends.

As shown in Figure 1, the population of the United States is expected to continue growing through 2060.
Figure 1. U.S. population will continue to grow.
U.S. Population in millions, 2020 to 2060, U.S. Census Projections

As shown in Figure 2, the aging population of the United States is also projected to continue growing through 2060.

Figure 2. U.S. will continue to age.
Percent of Americans aged 65 and older, 2020 to 2060, U.S. census projections.

As shown in Figure 3, Whites are projected to remain a majority of the population of the United States through 2030. Non-Whites are projected to remain a minority.

Figure 3. Whites will remain a majority in the United States.
Whites as a percentage of the U.S. population in 2030, U.S. Census projections.
**Treatment 2. White Population Declines, Becomes Minority**

May 1, 2019

Associated Press. WASHINGTON, DC – “Census Bureau releases preliminary projections.”

Census Bureau officials released preliminary projections for the growth of the U.S. population over the next several decades. A spokesperson for the Census said that the population is expected to continue growing and will reach 400 million by 2058. Other countries, particularly in Western Europe, are expected to decline in population. The Census Bureau reported that the aging population will also continue to increase. By 2060, nearly than one in four Americans will be 65 or older. Census officials also stated that the non-White population is expected to grow dramatically. By 2060, White Americans are projected to be a minority of the U.S. population. The Census Bureau also released some figures that show these trends.

As shown in Figure 1, the population of the United States is expected to continue growing through 2060.

**Figure 1. U.S. population will continue to grow.**
U.S. Population in millions, 2020 to 2060, U.S. Census Projections

As shown in Figure 2, the aging population of the United States is also projected to continue growing through 2060.

**Figure 2. U.S. will continue to age.**
Percent of Americans Aged 65 and Older, 2020 to 2060, U.S. Census Projections

As shown in Figure 3, Whites are projected to become a minority of the population of the United States by 2060. Non-Whites are projected to become the majority.
Figure 3. Whites will become a minority in the United States. Whites as a percentage of the U.S. population in 2060, U.S. census projections.

VI. Posttreatment question about support for physically punishing counterterrorism tactics

Now I would like to ask for your opinion on a current issue in the news.

Q15. Do you support using techniques such as waterboarding or physical pressure on terrorist suspects?

- Strongly support techniques like waterboarding or physical pressure
- Somewhat support techniques like waterboarding or physical pressure
- Neither support nor oppose techniques like waterboarding or physical pressure
- Somewhat oppose techniques like waterboarding or physical pressure
- Strongly oppose techniques like waterboarding or physical pressure
- Don't know

Q16. How big of a threat do you think terrorism is to our country?

- Strong threat
- Moderate threat
- Small threat
- Not a threat at all
- Don’t know