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Richard R. Verdugo

*Independent Scholar (Retired)*

David A. Swanson

*Portland State University*

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The decline of the non-Hispanic white population in the United States of America

Richard R. Verdugo<sup>1</sup> | David A. Swanson<sup>2,3,4</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Independent Scholar (Retired)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, University of California, Riverside, California, USA

<sup>3</sup>Population Research Center, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA

<sup>4</sup>Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

## Correspondence

David A. Swanson, Department of Sociology, University of California, Riverside, CA, USA.  
Email: dswanson@ucr.edu

## Abstract

**Objectives:** The question of a declining non-Hispanic white (NHW) population has sparked debate in the United States. In examining this question, three bodies of research have emerged. One group reports that the decline is real, a second argues that it is an illusion, and the third provides evidence that the decline is concentrated within socio-economic segments of the NHW population. We use the third groups' insight as the starting point for our research objective.

**Methods:** In conjunction with data from Census Bureau sources, we use a series of Regression Models in this inquiry.

**Results:** Our results show that the decline of the NHW population is real and related to factors embedded in the institutional anomie theory (IAT) framework.

**Conclusions:** We conclude that the IAT framework is a suitable approach for examining the question of NHW population decline. However, we suggest that future research consider refining our approach by: (1) using sub-state areas as the units of analyses; (2) examining changes in the NHW population relative to lagged changes in the IAT framework at both the state and sub-state levels; (3) placing our framework into an "algorithmic modeling approach" that employs machine learning; and (4) developing anomie predictors.

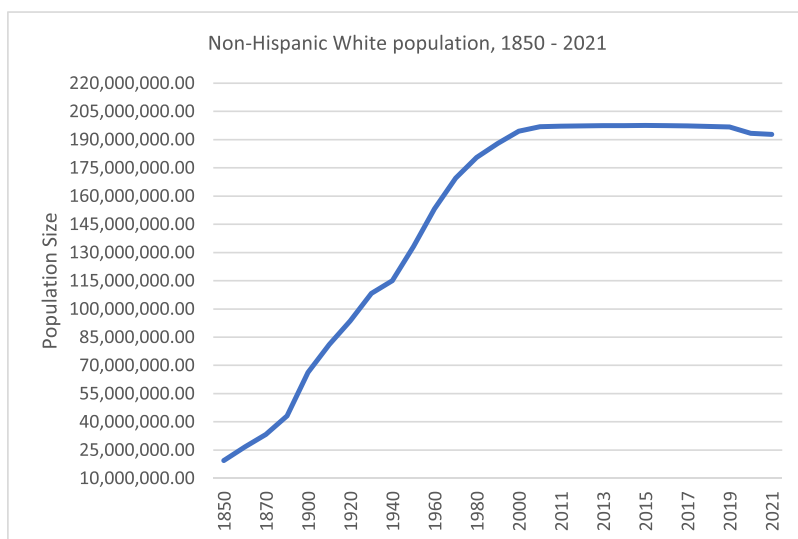
## KEYWORDS

anomie, deindustrialization, institutional anomie theory, majority–minority, modeling culture

While it is part of a larger trend, the decline of "white" populations that characterize many Western, industrialized nations (Kaufmann 2019), the decline of the non-Hispanic white (NHW) population in the United States has led not only to research but also debate (Alba 2020; Frey 2020; Johnson 2020)—and fear among some in the NHW population (Kreuder 2022; Levy and Myers 2021). Given this debate (and

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**FIGURE 1** Change in the non-Hispanic white population, 1850–2021. *Source:* See Table 1.

fear), the ramifications of the NHW decline for the United States are both demographically and socially important. In this article, we provide a perspective on the debate.

For some context, consider Figure 1, which displays the U.S. total population from 1850 to 2020. It shows that while the U.S. NHW population increased monotonically over the period from 1850 to 2010, it then declined both absolutely and relatively between 2010 and 2020. The U.S. Census Bureau expects that this decline will continue both absolutely and relatively. As of 2016, for example, the NHW population was estimated by the Census Bureau to be 197,970 million, which is approximately 61 percent of the total U.S. population; by 2060, the Census Bureau expects the NHW population to be 179,162 million, approximately 44.3 percent of the total U.S. population (Vespa, Medina, and Armstrong 2020, p. 7).

Following this section, we turn to a discussion of the theory of anomie, which provides a general framework for examining NHW decline. Following the section on the theory of anomie, we provide evidence that anomie exists in the United States. In this section, we point out the variation in NHW decline by state, which appears to be linked to several factors, including deindustrialization, a decline in union membership, a decline in immigration by whites and an increase in the population that racially identifies itself as “white in combination with one or more other races.” This section is followed by the specific theoretical framework we use to examine the NWH decline: institutional anomie theory (IAT), which argues that anomic social systems lead to population decline. We then briefly describe and discuss the data and methods we employ within the IAT framework in examining the question of NWH decline, which is followed by our findings and discussions of them. In the final section, we provide our two major conclusions in some detail and conclude with suggestions for future research.

## BACKGROUND

Reporting on the decline of the NHW population is the primary focus of the first research strand (Benjamin 2019; Chavez 2021; Coleman 2010; Frey 2020; Pape 2022; Plascencia 2013; Poston and Saenz 2019; Winders 2011; Xu et al. 2021). While this body of research should be commended for raising and making the decline known, there is little analysis beyond reporting numbers. A second strand of research denies the decline (Alba 2020; Levy, Alba, and Myers 2021). “Deniers” argue that the decline is an illusion perpetuated by the media and is based on the fact that between 2010 and 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau

changed its protocols by parsing out the “white in combination with one or more other races” from the population that racially identified itself as “white alone.” To be fair, it is important to note that the Census Bureau must adhere to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget standards on race and ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau 2021a), which means that these decisions are not made unilaterally by the Census Bureau regardless of whether or not they contributed to the “illusion” of NHW decline.

A third group of scholars (Case and Deaton 2015, 2020) examined factors that hold important implications for analyses of the decline of the NHW population. Case and Deaton (2015, 2020) present a large cache of data showing high mortality and morbidity rates among specific socio-economic strata of the NHW population. A stratum of interest here is composed of middle-aged white males with no college education. Having little resources and/or skills for the new technological and service-based economy, they face an ambiguous future, which may have led to high rates of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, violent behaviors, and other lifestyle behaviors that serve to decrease life expectancy (Sawyer and McDermott 2019; Venkataramani, O’Brien, and Tsai 2021). These findings, in turn, point toward a condition of “anomie,” a topic to which we now turn.

## ANOMIE THEORY

By anomie, we mean an imbalance between culture and social structure: the breakdown of values, understandings, or guidance for individuals to follow. There are three important theoretical approaches, and the third appears to be best suited for developing an understanding about the decline among specific strata of the NHW population. The first approach is represented by the seminal work of French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. In two classic sociological studies, Durkheim used anomie in studying the division of labor (Durkheim 1893) and suicide (Durkheim 1897). Durkheim argued that specific features of industrial society disrupt traditional norms/standards/morals leading to a state of normative deregulation. Consequently, traditional goals are not well conceived, and the social system fails to provide its members with normative limits to their desires.

A second approach is found in the work of American sociologist, Robert K. Merton (1938). Merton was not concerned with the cultural aspects of anomie, for example, the normative components of social action. Instead, Merton believed that American social values were clearly defined in the mainstream egalitarian ideology that emphasized monetary success. Merton’s focus was on the imbalance between socially prescribed means and the ends of social action. He argued that anomie results when cultural goals are overemphasized at the expense of institutionalized means. Agnew (1997, p. 37) correctly notes that “for Merton, normlessness refers to regulating goal achievement, whereas for Durkheim it refers to those norms regulating goals.” Orru (1987, pp. 118–119) also made an important distinction between Durkheim’s view and Merton’s: Durkheim was critical of society’s ill-conceived cultural goals, whereas Merton viewed anomie as the inadequacy of means in realizing culturally sanctioned goals.

Karl Polyani (1944, 1947, 1957) took the position that market principles dominate society and subjugate societal institutions to its dictates. This view set in motion a major change in regard to IAT, the third approach we consider. Messner and Rosenfeld (1994, 1997a, 1997b) begin erecting IAT by noting, as had Merton, that certain cultural values give rise to Anomic pressures. In the United States, the cultural ethos is the “American Dream”: A drive for material success pursued by all members of society under open, individual competition. This ethos emphasizes monetary achievements and gains in status/prestige. However, it fails to acknowledge how goals are pursued and attained. By so doing, it creates pressure to achieve and subtly downplays that one should abide by institutional norms. Under these circumstances, Messner and Rosenfeld (1994, 1997a, 1997b) argue that individuals are likely to veer away from following prescribed normative behaviors in order to achieve the goals emphasized by the “American Dream” ethos. They view a Capitalist market economy as the source of both the cultural ethos and non-normative behaviors because it disrupts societal institutions.

The deprecating of social institutions and their traditional protocols not only leads to their devaluation by market values and requirements but to the penetration of market norms and values into the domain

spaces of social institutions. Society (via its institutions) then fails in its mission: Regulating, controlling, and providing services to its citizens. This is the heart of IAT. And so here, we come to the relationship between IAT and the decline among certain strata of the NHW population—an institutional Anomic social structure that has failed to provide them with appropriate services. The most affected among the NHW population have been the middle-aged, non-college-educated, lacking skills for the new economy and who have little or no resources that would assist them in attaining the “American Dream” (Case and Deaton 2015, 2020). In other words, anomic is a social structural issue, not solely a status issue affecting individuals. We view U.S. states as possessing certain Anomic traits that are related to the decline among certain strata of the NHW population as identified by Case and Deaton (2015, 2020).

What factors are associated with an Anomic social structure among certain segments of the NHW population? It is our view that specific factors include unemployment, being a discouraged worker, poverty, and the lack of medical insurance. In addition to these specific factors, controls must be introduced in the analysis of the relationship between an Anomic social structure and the decline of the NHW population: immigration, deindustrialization, the decline of union membership, and an increase in white multi-racial groups, subjects to which we now turn.

## EVIDENCE OF ANOMIE

### U.S. policy and immigration

An Anomic social structure also affects immigration as the market economy and political ideology dictate policy rather than traditional norms associated with institutional protocols. For example, in the early part of the 20th century, citizens of Eastern European nations (NHWs) were blocked from immigrating to the United States because of their association with Communist, Socialist, or Anarchist movements in Eastern Europe. During World War II, German citizens were blocked from immigrating to the United States due to America’s conflict with Germany. By blocking immigration from Eastern Europe and Germany, U.S. policy inadvertently reduced the contribution to the size of the NHW population. If this were not the case, the NHW population would have been larger.

Immigration from primarily white nations was influential in increasing the size of the U.S. NHW population historically. There were four waves of immigration from Europe, each adding to the size of the NHW population. The first wave of immigration occurred in the 16th to the 18th centuries, mostly from the British Isles. The second wave was composed of Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians arriving in the 1840s and 1850s. A third wave arrived after the American Civil War, primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe during the period 1880 to 1920. A fourth wave arrived after the fall of the Soviet Union and were mainly from Eastern Europe and the former USSR (Alperin and Batalova 2018; Gibson and Jung 2006).

Table 1 displays data on the total U.S. population, the NHW population born in Europe, the percent that European-born NHWs of the total U.S. population, the total NHW U.S.-born population, and the percent NHW European of the total NHW population in the U.S. from 1850 to 2021. Table 1 also displays the decline in both the relative and actual NHW numbers from 1850 to 2021. Moreover, between 2010 and 2021, it also shows there was a decline in the absolute number of NHWs, from 194,527,123 to 192,729,997.

Another way immigrants have contributed to the size of the NHW population has been via greater fertility (see Allen 1877; Atack and Bateman 1987; Gjerde and McCants 1995; Hacker 2016; Hareven and Viknovski 1975; Jennings et al. 2012; King and Ruggles 1990; Main 2006; Newson et al. 2005; Rehr 1998). So, immigration has had a significant effect on the size of the NHW population.

### The deindustrialization of America

The deindustrialization of America created many problems for the United States and its citizens. In the late 1960s, the United States began changing its economic base, moving from an industrial/manufacturing

**TABLE 1** Selected data on the U.S. population, non-Hispanic white (NHW) population, and selected percentages, 1850–2021.

Year	Total USPOP	NHW BORN EURO	PCT TOT POP	NHW US BORN POP	TOT NHW POP	EFB PCT TOTAL NHW
1850	19,965,189	2,086,225	10.4	17,349,880	19,436,105	10.7
1880	50,208,461	5,761,289	11.5	37,368,509	43,129,798	13.4
1900	75,742,511	8,863,030	11.7	57,411,772	66,274,802	13.4
1910	92,350,518	11,757,025	12.7	69,272,652	81,029,677	14.5
1920	106,020,331	11,900,570	11.2	81,741,394	93,641,964	12.7
1990	248,107,628	4,837,097	1.9	183,176,307	188,013,404	2.6
2000	281,421,906	5,406,643	1.9	189,120,480	194,527,123	2.8
2010	309,349,689	5,606,280	1.8	191,325,168	196,931,448	2.8
2020	329,504,815	5,478,958	1.7	187,844,755	193,323,713	2.8
2021	331,893,745	5,679,672	1.7	187,050,325	192,729,997	2.9

Abbreviation: EFB, European foreign-born NHW.

Source: Calculations from the Decennial Census (1850, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1990, 2000); and the American Community Survey (2010, 2020, 2021).

economy to one based on technology and service. The implications for industrial workers were catastrophic: plants closed, unemployment shot up, and communities were left in dire economic distress (Bluestone and Harrison 1984).

Having earned a comfortable living in an industry where education was not a prerequisite, unemployed industrial workers were not qualified for technological or service jobs. To some extent, Case and Deaton (2015, 2020) have identified this aspect in their “Deaths of Despair” research. Other research has found that deindustrialization impacts many aspects of our lives.

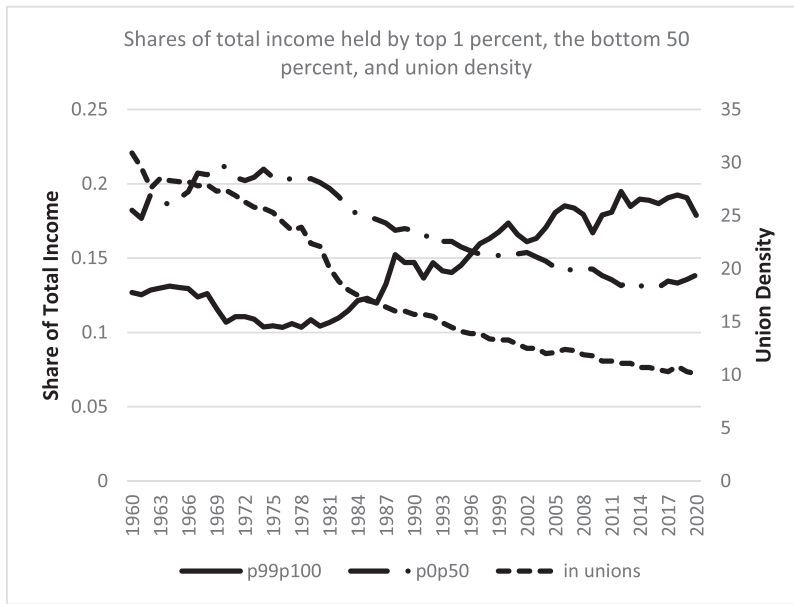
- Deindustrialization is associated with reduced life expectancy (Nosrati et al. 2018);
- deindustrialization is linked to the rise of prescription and illicit opioid overdose mortality (McLean 2016; Venkataramani et al. 2020);
- deindustrialization is related to income inequality (Marmot and Bobak 2000);
- deindustrialization is related to anomie (Kopp et al. 2008); and
- deindustrialization is related to rapid privatization and mortality (Azarova 2017; Schering et al. 2018).

## Fall of the House of Labor

In the 19th century and early parts of the 20th century, skilled and semi-skilled workers began unionizing. These were attempts at taking back control of the labor process. Specifically, workers sought higher wages, stopping wage cuts, creating safer working conditions, and looked for shorter working hours. (For an excellent history on the early years of the union movement, see Montgomery 1987.)

The height of union membership was in 1954 when approximately 35 percent of the U.S. workforce were members of a union. Since then, memberships have been on the decline, and when President Reagan dealt a death blow to the Air Traffic Controllers union, unions lost considerable power. What have been the consequences?

It is our proposition that unions unify the power of labor, and their loss of power has had dramatic negative consequences for the middle and working classes in the United States. Figure 2 displays three curves that summarize the economic consequences for labor. One curve is the share of total income held by the top 1 percent earners; a second curve is the share of total income held by the bottom 50 percent; and the final curve is the union density (percent of total labor who are union members).



**FIGURE 2** Income inequality and the decline of unions, 1960–2020. *Source:* Data on shares held by the top 1 percent and the bottom 50 percent from the World Wealth and Inequality Database: Home—WID—World Inequality Database. Union density data are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov). Abbreviations: p99p100, top 1 percent earners; p0p50, bottom 50 percent; and in unions, union density or share of labor force who are members of a union.

## Multi-racial groups

Alba and his colleagues (Alba 2020; Levy, Alba, and Myers 2021) identified a factor that does, indeed, serve to reduce the proportion of the U.S. population that is white alone, non-Hispanic. It is the growth of multi-racial groups. Indeed, the size of multi-racial groups that include “white” grew from 5.8 million in 2000 to 35.2 million by 2020—a 509 percent change over that 21-year period. In addition, as we noted earlier, the U.S. Census Bureau’s (2011, 2021b) redistricting data show that those who identified as being “white in combination with one or more races, non-Hispanic” increased by 201.5 percent between 2016 and 2020.

There were, of course, significant differences across states. The top five states in terms of changes between 2000 and 2020 in their white multi-racial group size were: Texas (5.6 million), California (4.8 million), Florida (3.3 million), New York (1.1 million), and Arizona (1.0 million). Note that four of the top five have significant Hispanic populations.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR RESEARCH: IAT

As described earlier, IAT is a macro-sociological theory focused on social structure. Its macro focus suggests a specific association between social structure and social action. Specifically, IAT suggests that we might measure the potential Anomic characteristics of social structure and examine patterns and trends leading to a decline in the NHW population. Developing measures of anomic characterizing a given social structure is crucial to our research. We assume that each state in the United States has both a distinct social structure and a distinct level of Anomic characteristics. We hypothesize that these distinctions lead to variation in the decline of the NHW by state. Four benchmark Anomic factors to be examined are measured at the state level and only for NHWs: the unemployment rate, the percent discouraged workers, the percent without medical insurance, and the poverty rate. We refer to these traits as Anomic social structural traits. Thus,

**Proposition 1.** *The greater the anomie characterizing a state, the greater the rate of decline of its NHW population.*

A second assumption we make is based on the labor market factors that need to be controlled. Specifically, we assume that two important Anomic driving factors are a low percentage of a state's labor who are union members, the level of deindustrialization in a state, and the percent whites who identify as multiracial. Thus, we have Propositions 2–4.

**Propositions 2, 3, and 4.** *The lower the percent NHW in a union, the greater the rate of decline among the NHW population in a state; the greater the deindustrialization in a state, the greater the rate of decline among the NHW population; and the greater the percent white multiracial group membership, the greater the rate of decline in a state's NHW population.*

A third assumption we make is that we need to control immigrant size as it has been an important factor in defining the size of the NHW population. Thus, Proposition 5.

**Proposition 5.** *The greater the percent NHW immigrants in a state, the greater the NHW population.*

Because our model is at the social structural level, our focus is NHW population change in a state; our interest is not in the social psychological aspects of anomie. Keep in mind that both Durkheim and Merton viewed anomie as an individual affliction. IAT does not make such an assertion—its focus is at the social structural level. As such, we provide measures of Anomic traits at the structural level, for example, among states, and evaluate their effects on NHW population change from 2000 to 2020.

## DATA AND METHODS

Data for our study are primarily from the 2000 Decennial Census and from the American Community Survey (2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020). Our interest is in state variation in the percent NHWs over this time period. Thus, we have aggregated our data at the state level covering the years 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. We employ five “robust regression” models in this study, each of which is described in detail later. For those not familiar with robust regression, it provides an alternative to least squares regression that works with less restrictive assumptions (Fox 2008), features that we concluded would be useful in our analysis. Specifically, this approach generates regression coefficients that are less influenced by the presence of outliers in the data, which violate the assumption of normally distributed residuals in “ordinary least squares” regression, part of the Markov–Gauss assumptions (Barnett and Lewis 1994; Draper and Smith 1992).

Our analysis is composed of two types of predictors: controls and items reflecting anomie at the national and state levels among NHWs. Variables examined in our study and their operationalization are displayed in Table 2.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Decline of the NHW population nationally

As discussed previously, Figure 2 displays two population curves from 1850 to 2021. The first curve represents the change in the size of the NHW population, and the second is their share of the total U.S. population. The NHW population grew at a significant rate up until approximately 2000 when growth plateaued and began to decline shortly thereafter. From 1850 to 2010, the NHW population grew at a rate of 1,131,390.76 population per year. However, from 2010 to 2021, there was a decline at a rate of  $-381,950$  population per year or a total loss in NHW population of 4,201,450 over the 2010 to 2021 period.

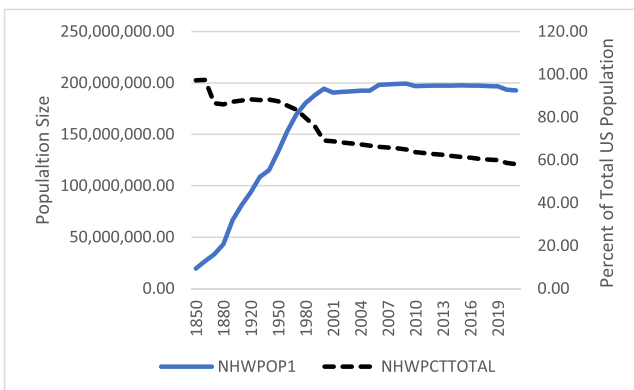
Our second population curve represents the share of the total U.S. population held by NHWs from 1850 to 2021 (Figure 3). There are two important patterns associated with this curve. First, note that from 1860 to 1880, there was a decline in the NHW share of the U.S. population. There are two plausible



**TABLE 2** Variables in our study and their operationalization.

Rate 1 change	Rate1 = $(P_0 - P_t)/y$ . Where $P_0$ = beginning year, $P_t$ = recent year, and $y$ = number of years, (2020–2000)
Pov	Varies from 1 to 501. Poverty status = 1 to 100
Unemp	Those in the labor force, not in school and unemployed.
Disc	Discouraged workers = age 16 to 64, not in school, not in the labor force
Multi	Percent NHW in a state who are multi-racial
Anomic State	Measured by the sum of the following variables pertaining to NHW: the unemployment rate, percent discouraged workers, poverty rate, percent without medical insurance. See the Appendix for Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients
Med	Percent NHW without medical insurance
Deind	Change in labor force in the industrial sector
Immig	Percent NHW immigrants in a state
UN	Percent of NHW labor force in unions

*Note:* The number of uninsured was estimated for the years 2000 to 2007. We used the Cohort change ratio in estimating these figures (see Swanson and Verdugo 2019).



**FIGURE 3** Percent NHW of total U.S. population and size, 1850–2021. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 [data set]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS (2022). <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0>. Abbreviations: NHWPOP1, size of the NHW population; NHWPCTTOTAL, NHW population as a percent of total U.S. population.

explanations: (1) from 1870 onward, Census data include African-American respondents. Prior to 1870, African Americans were slaves and were not included in Census data. In 1870, approximately 4 million African Americans were added to the Census; and (2) The American Civil War ended in 1865, and there were significant losses among NHW males—both Confederates and Northerners (Swanson and Verdugo 2019). The next, long-term decline began in 2000 and continues to 2021.

## Anomic scores and rates of change by state

Table 3 displays Anomic scores by state for the years 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. Scores represent each component of the Anomic Index, and the Index itself, and the last column is the average of the total scores by state.

Data in Table 3 display three pieces of information. First, the average Anomic score for states over the 2000 to 2020 period was 44.55. The average is based on total state Anomic scores—and it is sizeable. Second, the five states with the highest average Anomic scores, in descending order, are West Virginia (67.89), Kentucky (59.24), Arkansas (58.35), Oklahoma (58.17), and Mississippi (56.04). Third, in terms of NHW population loss, the five states with the largest NHW population losses from 2000 to 2020 are:

**TABLE 3** Anomic scores by state, 2000–2020.

State	Anomic00	Anomic05	Anomic10	Anomic15	Anomic20	Average
CT	31.275	33.59	36.41	31.54	31.24	32.811
ME	48.006	49.71	52.22	48.65	44.99	48.715
MA	30.802	33.73	36.35	32.22	31.47	32.912
NH	37.432	39.65	42.11	34.81	34.57	37.715
NJ	33.982	36.15	40.61	34.63	34.67	36.009
NY	40.694	42.73	44.93	38.49	38.42	41.052
PA	38.633	41.97	46.78	40.09	39.34	41.363
RI	35.259	35.86	47.06	36.35	35.23	37.951
VT	34.467	39.08	45.07	35.49	37.16	38.254
IL	33.712	38.47	45.07	36.99	35.83	38.013
IN	42.549	49.34	56.99	48.05	42.93	47.973
IA	34.020	38.26	40.33	34.71	33.53	36.170
KS	34.717	39.42	45.14	39.08	38.97	39.465
MD	32.011	33.87	37.77	33.10	30.99	33.548
MI	37.078	45.54	59.68	47.20	44.23	46.746
MN	29.470	33.99	36.27	28.44	29.99	31.631
MO	41.153	47.79	54.12	48.14	46.44	47.528
NE	29.389	34.26	39.50	32.49	32.48	33.626
ND	32.076	31.94	35.36	33.37	30.64	32.676
OH	38.584	45.48	55.04	44.45	43.60	45.430
SD	28.619	31.86	37.05	34.31	31.33	32.634
WI	30.821	35.64	41.42	33.54	33.32	34.949
AL	51.440	54.02	60.92	56.61	49.31	54.458
AR	59.439	60.15	64.26	56.66	51.25	58.352
DE	31.365	36.34	45.49	38.92	41.89	38.803
DC	31.513	26.20	25.94	18.31	15.75	23.544
FL	51.078	52.49	61.74	52.24	48.26	53.161
GA	46.420	50.15	58.35	51.17	46.94	50.606
KY	53.301	60.57	71.06	58.27	52.97	59.235
LA	57.340	57.72	57.13	53.61	50.08	55.174
MS	50.059	55.02	63.66	58.15	53.29	56.037
NC	43.481	48.92	56.18	48.26	45.23	48.414
OK	62.456	60.79	59.52	53.04	55.02	58.167
SC	44.603	50.83	59.69	51.40	48.12	50.928
TN	44.190	52.51	61.76	53.90	49.09	52.291
TX	43.944	48.52	51.85	45.27	44.73	46.865
VA	38.119	40.37	44.56	40.78	36.47	40.058
WV	72.951	72.85	72.23	62.19	59.24	67.893
AK	41.382	46.80	46.36	44.10	45.44	44.816
AZ	42.557	46.11	56.28	49.74	45.76	48.089
CA	41.073	43.93	53.17	44.00	41.05	44.644

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

State	Anomic00	Anomic05	Anomic10	Anomic15	Anomic20	Average
CO	47.895	44.82	47.01	36.26	36.52	42.501
HI	51.745	45.86	49.31	38.49	42.97	45.676
ID	48.325	53.00	60.68	51.37	45.90	51.855
MT	47.370	48.66	54.41	47.90	43.74	48.415
NV	49.536	49.96	61.80	49.23	50.41	52.187
NM	47.434	49.39	54.67	49.79	51.33	50.522
OR	43.409	50.87	62.78	48.18	45.16	50.080
UT	44.673	45.40	51.23	42.78	36.47	44.112
WA	39.057	45.53	52.57	43.04	40.15	44.070
WY	45.295	44.03	46.23	42.54	42.53	44.126

Source: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 [data set]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS (2022). <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0>.

California (−102,754), New York (−68,491), Illinois (−46,586), New Jersey (−42,329), and Pennsylvania (−41,680).

As stated earlier, we estimated five “robust regression” models. Our primary concern is in identifying variation in NHW population decline over the period 2000 to 2020.

### Model 1: Controls and the Anomic Index

Our first model includes our four controls and the Anomic Index. Results are displayed in column 1 of Table 4. The model accounts for 46 percent of the variation in the percent NHW in a state, which is impressive, yet it is to be expected from aggregate data.

Of the four control items, three are statistically significant at the 0.05 level or less. The only non-significant control item is the percent NHW workers who are members of a union. The signs of controls items are also important. Industrialization, measured as the percent NHW workers in a state working in industrial occupations, is positively related to the percent NHWs in a state. The greater the industrialization, the greater is the percent NHW in a state. In contrast, both the percent NHW immigrants in a state and the percent NHW mixed race population are inversely related to the percent NHW in a state.

In Model 1, we included the index of anomie. Results indicate that state-level anomie has a negative effect ( $b = -0.277$ ) on the percent NHW in a state. That is, the greater a state’s Anomic social structure, the lower will be the percent the NHW population.

### Model 2: Controls, Anomic, and time

In Model 2, we added time as an interval variable. Our expectation is that time will display negative effects on the percent NHW in a state, thus suggesting that the NHW population is in decline. Results are displayed in column 2 of Table 4.

In Model 2, there were some important differences From Model 1. The  $R^2$  value is larger: it goes from 0.460 to 0.523. The pattern of effects among controls remains the same, but the detailed effects display some change. Industrialization, for instance, reduces from 0.661 in Model 1 to 0.069 in Model 2. The negative effects of union membership among NHW workers on the percent NHWs in a state increased from −14.61 to −16.51; the effect of the NHW multiracial groups declined: from −0.72 to −0.57.

**TABLE 4** Results five models of the percent NHW in state.

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Unemp	NS	NS	0.720	1.020	1.060
Deind	0.660	0.069	1.080	1.160	1.110
Immig	-14.610	-16.500	-8.470	NS	NS
Multi	0.720	-0.520	-0.490	-0.600	-0.610
Anomic	-0.270	-0.097			
Unemp			NS	NS	NS
Pov			2.740	2.870	3.580
Disc			-1.330	-1.610	1.790
Med			NS	-0.570	-0.790
T		0.067	-0.050		
2005					NS
2010					NS
2015					-10.590
2020					NS
Cons	73.35	75.40	55.38	58.91	58.69
$R^2$	0.460	0.523	0.598	0.550	0.590

Source: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [data set]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS (2023). <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V13.0>.

Anomie also manifests its influence on the percent NHW population in a state with the inclusion of a trend (or time) variable. In Model 1, a unit change in the anomie Index is associated with a  $-0.277$  decline in the percent NHW in a state. In Model 2, the anomie Index's effect is  $-0.09$ . As expected, time ( $t$ ) had a negative effect on the percent NHWs in a state,  $b = -0.067$ . In short, including a trend variable to Model 2 increased the  $R^2$ , influenced the impact of controls and of the effect of state anomie, and itself exerted negative effects on the percent NHWs in a state.

### Model 3: Controls and Anomie indicators

In Model 3, we added the four anomie indicators and deleted the Anomie Index and the trend variable, " $t$ ." Model 3 differs greatly from Model 2. To begin with, all controls are statistically significant at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. In Model 2, union membership was not significant, but in Model 3, it is. Also, note that including the four items used in computing the Anomie Index reduces the effects of deindustrialization, the percent NHW who are immigrants, and the percent NHWs who are multi-racial.

Regarding the four anomie indicators, only the NHW unemployment rate in a state is not statistically significant. Otherwise, the remaining three anomie indicators are significant. Moreover, the percent NHWs who are discouraged workers and the percent NHW without medical insurance in a state are negatively associated with the percent NHW in a state. In contrast, the percent NHW in poverty in a state is positively associated with the percent NHWs in a state. Adding anomie indicators change union membership from being non-significant to a positive predictor of the percent NHW in a state. Such inclusion also increases the positive association between deindustrialization and the PCTNHW; reduces the effects of the PCTIM; and reduces the effects of the percent NHW who are multiracial. Finally, the  $R^2$  in Model 3 is slightly greater than the  $R^2$  in Model 2: 0.598 versus 0.523.

## Model 4: Controls, Anomie Indicators, and time

In Model 4, we added time ( $t$ ). Results exhibit some important findings. We initially added time ( $t$ ) into the analysis in order to control for trends in the data. Apparently, adding the trend items did, in fact, exert important effects on the percent NHW in a state; the inclusion of time also indirectly affects PCTNHW (Percent NHW) by changing the effects of both controls and specific items comprising the Anomic Index. First, it reduced the effects of union membership (1.02 vs. 0.72) and deindustrialization (1.16 vs. 1.08). Also, the effect of PCTIM (Percent NHW In Migrants) in Model 4 is not significant, although it was in Model 3. By adding the trend variable, we see a reduction in the negative effect NHW multiracial groups have on PCTNHW ( $-0.60$  vs.  $-0.49$ ).

Regarding the anomie elements, we see no change in the NHW unemployment rate in its effects on the percent NHW in a state. However, the sign of NHW poverty changes (2.87 vs.  $-2.74$ ) when adding the trend item. In contrast, the effects of NHW discouraged workers decline in Model 4 relative to Model 5 ( $b = -0.57$ ). The  $R^2$  for the model is 0.550, which is less than the 0.598 in Model 4. In general, then, including the trend item in the analysis was crucial.

## Model 5: Controls, Anomie Indicators, and time dummy variables

In Model 5, we take the trend item to another level by using time as a set of dummy variables: 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. Where the omitted year is 2000, that is, the year 2000 is the reference category. Did this strategy display important differences over Model 4? Indeed, it did. First, the inclusion of time dummy variables changed the sign of PCTUN (Percent of NHW in Labor Force who are a member of a union) and rendered PCTIM non-significant. The inclusion also increased the inverse relationship between the percent NHW who are multiracial and PCTNHW. Second, in terms of the anomie indicators, there was an increase in poverty, discouraged workers, and the percent NHW without medical insurance. Also, while time exerts negative effects in Model 4, the dummies for  $t$  vary in their effect on the percent NHW in a state. The years 2005, 2010, and 2020 are equal to 2000. But 2015 exerts significant negative effects on PCTNHW ( $b = -10.57$ ).

## CONCLUSION

We have two major conclusions. First, the decline of the NHW population is real and second, and we find the decline is related to factors embedded in the IAT framework.

In regard to our first conclusion, we find that the decline of the NHW population is real and represents a demographic change with important consequences for many aspects of life in the United States. We find that the U.S. NHW population declined both absolutely and relatively between 2010 and 2020 (having plateaued in 2000) and that, according to the U.S. Bureau, this decline will continue both absolutely and relatively such that by 2060, the Census Bureau expects the NHW population to be 179,162 million, approximately 44.3 percent of the total U.S. population. Racial and ethnic data from the 2010 and 2020 “redistricting” files produced by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011, 2021b) show this same pattern of decline. These files contain very detailed racial categories, both alone and in combination with other races that include the ethnic categories of Hispanic and non-Hispanic. In 2010, the national number of “white alone, non-Hispanic” was 196,817,552; in 2020, it was 191,697,647. Those who identified as being white alone (not in combination with any other race) and not Hispanic declined by 5,119,905, a drop of 2.6 percent. In 2010, the national number of “white in combination with one or more other races, non-Hispanic” was 5,038,556; in 2020, it was 12,192,639. Those who identified as being “white in combination with one or more races, non-Hispanic” increased by 10,154,083 (201.5 percent). Putting both sets together, the increase of 2,034,098 between 2010 and 2020, which is the sum of (1) those identified as “white alone, non-Hispanic” and (2) those identified as “white in combination with one or more other races, non-Hispanic,” was not sufficient to offset the decline of 5,119,905 between 2010 and 2020 in those

who identified as “white alone, non-Hispanic.” These results show that the “white alone, non-Hispanic” population did, in fact, decline, both absolutely and relatively, between 2010 and 2020.

In regard to the “deniers,” those who argue that the decline of the NWH population is an illusion, their argument appears to be based on a theory of assimilation. In this light, the work by Alba (2020) is informative. Alba makes the argument that the “white in combination with one or more other races” racial category is a form of assimilation/integration among ethnic/racial minorities and is a positive outcome. In contrast, the parsing out of “white in combination with one or more other races,” which decreases the size of the “white alone” population, is divisive and negative. There are at least two problems with Alba’s reasoning. To begin with, the parsing out of multi-racial groups from the “white” racial category would, in fact, reduce the “white” category, given that the respondents identified themselves as “white” rather than the other race(s) they could choose from. However, this same “parsing” can work the other way. For example, a person who was part white and part American Indian may have identified himself or herself as white in 2010 and American Indian in combination with one other race in 2020, thereby reducing the count of “white alone” between 2010 and 2020. However, it is also possible that this person identified himself or herself as American Indian in 2010 and as “white in combination with one other race” in 2020, thereby reducing the population of “American-Indian alone” between 2010 and 2020. This example illustrates the fact that the change to multi-racial categories by the Census Bureau was not a guarantee that the number of “white” people would be reduced between 2010 and 2020. It also is the case that race and ethnic responses for single-race NHW’s were relatively stable between 2000 and 2010 (Liebler et al. 2014). This stability is likely to have persisted into 2020. Given this, we believe it is another (strong) indication that the decline of the NHW population in the United States is real, not an illusion.

The second problem we find with Alba’s (2020) theory of assimilation is that it is outdated. The viewpoint that the trend of multi-racial groups is, indeed, one possible indicator of assimilation. However, assimilation theory has moved beyond the “one path” to assimilation logic presented by Alba (2020). Portes and his colleagues (see Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes et al. 2005) introduce the concept of Segmented Assimilation that: (a) identifies several paths to assimilation/acculturation; and (b) that assimilation may not occur at all—some individuals may not wish to be assimilated, while others acculturate. Their arguments are supported by others (Bankston and Zhou 1997; Verdugo and Swanson 2022).

Our second conclusion is that the decline is related to factors embedded in the IAT framework as found in Table 4. Considering the anomie Index, which was employed in Models 1 and 2, we find it is inversely related to the percent of the population that is NHW (Model 1) an effect that persists when time is introduced (Model 2). Second, when the separate elements of the anomie Index are examined (Models 3, 4, and 5), they generally have effects that persist when time is introduced as do the other independent variables.

Our findings and conclusion lead us to three suggestions. First, we believe it would be a useful next step to develop institutional-level measures of individual anomie, aggregate predictors. For example, the percent of a state’s NHW population who are dissatisfied with the state or federal government’s ability to provide for their economic needs.

Second, we suggest the following two avenues for future research into the topic of NHW decline. First, as is clear from our use of states as the units of analysis, we believe that additional sub-national examinations of the question of NHW population decline are needed. We assumed in this article that each state in the United States has both a distinct social structure and a distinct level of Anomic characteristics and hypothesize that these distinctions lead to variation in the decline of the NHW by state. Our assumption appears to be borne out, given the results of the regression analyses, but further research into the issue of distinctiveness would be useful, and, in addition, perhaps distinctiveness at a regional level. Another approach is to lag change in the IAT index and the other independent variables relative to change in the NHW population and then examine the effects of the former on the latter. This could be done at both the state and sub-state levels. Both of these suggestions lead, in turn, to a third conclusion.

Breiman (2001) introduced the concept “data modeling culture,” whereby one hypothesizes a mathematical model (such as found in our regression models) and attempts to fit it to the data of interest. Another avenue would be what Breiman (2001) calls the “algorithmic modeling culture,” whereby one is

interested in correctly predicting the output data from the input model. An example of this approach can be found in Baker, Swanson, and Tayman (2023) who used a “machine learning” to improve the accuracy of population projections at the census tract level.

Thus, our third suggestion is to use an algorithmic approach to examine the question of NHW population decline, especially in terms of examining change at the sub-state level. In conjunction with the IAT framework. Such an approach has the potential to yield insights into this issue that are not possible with a “data modeling” approach. As Breiman himself noted, neither culture is wholly right nor wrong. Each has a lot to learn from the other (Raper 2020, p. 35). This may turn out to be the case in regard to the question of the decline of the NHW population in the United States should an algorithmic modeling approach be taken and compared to the results of a data modeling approach.

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## ORCID

David A. Swanson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4284-9478>

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