Race, Reform, and Regulation of the Electoral Process

RECURRING PUZZLES IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

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Explaining Perceptions of Competitive Threat in a Multiracial Context

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The United States has undergone a dramatic demographic transformation in the last several decades. For example, as recently as 1980, the U.S. census reported that White Americans represented over 79 percent of the total national population. Most of the remaining fraction of Americans was of African descent (11 percent). Hispanics and Asian Americans were a much smaller share of the population at 6 percent and 1 percent, respectively.[1] In the ensuing twenty years, however, increased immigration and relatively high birth rates have resulted in a surprisingly rapid growth in the number of Hispanic and Asian Americans and a concomitant decline in the proportion of Whites. According to the most recent census, Whites now represent 69 percent of the national population whereas Hispanics account for almost 13 percent and Asian Americans – the fastest-growing ethnic/racial group in the country – make up almost 4 percent. The share of Blacks in the population has held fairly steady over the past twenty years at 12 percent, although their rate of increase remains much smaller than is the case for Asians and Hispanics.

As the racial environment in this country has grown increasingly complex, the old Black-White binary perspective on American race relations is being joined by, and perhaps replaced with, a newer racial dynamic. That is, in addition to the traditional political divide between Whites and African Americans over such hot-button issues as affirmative action and bussing, the nation is increasingly confronted with contentious disputes over the rights of language minorities and immigration issues. For example, in May 2006, more than 1 million mostly Hispanic immigrants marched in several large cities to protest what they perceived as punitive immigration reform measures pending before Congress.[2] In addition to the protests, organizers also called for immigrant employees to stay home on the day of the march to protest what they viewed as increasingly prevalent and negative stereotypes about immigrant workers. Many businesses throughout the country reported being affected by the boycott.

Another interesting element in this increasingly complicated racial environment is that Hispanics and Asians are not just clashing with Whites as they seek economic

and political clout, but also with African Americans. This conflict among racial and ethnic minority groups has mostly played out on the local level. For example, on the political front, Blacks and Hispanics expressed different political preferences in the 2005 New York City mayoral contest pitting Mayor Michael Bloomberg against former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer. Interestingly, Bloomberg is a Republican yet he garnered 47 percent of the Black vote, a normally staunch Democratic constituency. Ferrer, who is of Puerto Rican descent, retained the support of most Hispanics (62 percent) but because of the lack of support among Whites (31 percent) and tepid support among Blacks, he lost by a substantial measure to the incumbent (Saul and Colangelo 2005). Similar political battles between Blacks and Hispanics have occurred in Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami. Blacks (and Hispanics) have also clashed with Asian Americans. Perhaps the most infamous example occurred in Los Angeles in the early 1990s, when a Korean-American liquor store proprietor fatally shot fifteen-year-old Latasha Harlins for allegedly stealing a $1.79 bottle of orange juice. Not long after this incident, the L.A. riots unfolded after the not-guilty verdict in the trial of four White officers accused of beating Black motorist, Rodney King. Korean-owned shops were apparently targeted during the unrest that involved a multiracial group of participants including Hispanics (43 percent), Blacks (34 percent) and Whites (14 percent) (Nasser 1992). In spite of the generally Democratic leanings of racial minority groups, tensions and disagreements over immigration remain high.

A number of theoretical perspectives have been developed to account for the racial attitudes that likely emerge from the nation's increasingly complicated racial atmosphere. As detailed more fully further in this chapter, however, we argue that the group position perspective offers the most comprehensive explanation. In this work, we seek to elaborate on, and test the empirical implications of, the group position theory of racial attitudes. Specifically, we examine the scope and determinants of perceptions of racial group competition among a broad national sample of Americans including Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans. We believe this is the first such scholarly examination of these groups and these issues at the national level. Although our results are generally consistent with the group position model, our findings diverge in important ways from other work in this literature.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Scholars have offered a number of theoretical explanations to account for intergroup conflict (see, e.g., Adorno et al. 1950; Allport 1954; Blumer 1958; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sniderman and Carmines 1997). Most of these theories have been developed with Whites, or superordinate groups in general, in mind. However, more recently, a number of researcher have sought either to adapt existing theories or to develop new ones that recognize and attempt to explain the views of racial minority group members (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Kaufmann 2003;

Oliver and Wong 2003; McClain et al. 2006). In this paper, we examine the effects of several different theoretical perspectives on perceptions of zero-sum competition among both Whites and racial minorities.

Classical Prejudice

The classical prejudice explanation for intergroup conflict is most closely associated with the work of Gordon Allport (1954). According to Allport, interracial hostility is primarily borne out of particular psychological dispositions rather than objective material conditions. That is, individuals come to view members of another racial or ethnic group as competitors because of socially learned feelings of aversion and the preadult acquisition of negative out-group stereotypes. From the perspective of this influential model, feelings of intergroup hostility are not the rational byproduct of clashing group interests or individuals' particular social circumstances, but rather a consequence of cultural ideas about, and emotional responses to, out-group members.

In the view of this model, feelings of competitive racial threat are similar to, and likely a consequence of, prejudiced and stereotypical attitudes (Sears and Kinder 1985). As a result, this theory would predict that individuals who embrace negative out-group stereotypes should also endorse the view that success for out-group members comes at the expense of in-group members.

Although, as indicated earlier, this theory was developed to explain White attitudes about African Americans, there are some reasons to believe that it should also apply to emerging minority groups such as Hispanics and Asian Americans. For example, a variant of the classical prejudice model, symbolic racism, has been extended beyond the Black-White divide and successfully applied to issues of immigration, Native American rights, and language policy (Sears et al. 1999; Bobo and Tuan 2006). Moreover, the classical prejudice explanation need not apply only to Whites' attitudes about racial minorities but can also be applied to the racial attitudes of racial minority groups themselves. Sniderman and Piazza (2002), for instance, find some limited evidence that prejudice influences the attitudes that Blacks have about Whites and Jews. Further, McClain and her colleagues (2006) report that negative stereotypes about Blacks influence the views that Latinos in North Carolina have about perceptions of commonality with African Americans. For all of these reasons, it is conceivable that racial prejudice will influence perceptions of racial group competition for Whites as well as minorities.

Neighborhood Context and Interracial Contact

Another explanation for intergroup hostility locates the source more in an individual's immediate surroundings than in psychological disposition. Actually, there are at least two seemingly inconsistent expectations about how one's racial

environment might influence perceptions of competitive racial threat. An extensive literature in political science and sociology has found that increases in Black population size (usually measured at the county or metropolitan level) are associated with greater racial conservatism among White Americans (Key 1949; Giles & Buckner 1993; Glaser 1994; Taylor 2000). The link between Black population density and racial conservatism has often been characterized as "the threat hypothesis." That is, Whites' negative racial attitudes increase in the face of larger minority populations because these larger numbers spark Whites' racial fears as well as resentments over the prospect of competition for scarce local resources.

A competing view about the effects of racial context holds that interracial proximity leads to greater racial tolerance rather than increased interracial hostility (Oliver and Wong 2003; Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe, and Combs 2001). According to this perspective, racial animosity is largely a consequence of ignorance. As individuals from different racial and ethnic groups come to interact more with one another, negative stereotypes break down (Allport 1954). This perspective is known as the contact theory and has been shown to apply to both Whites and racial minorities (Oliver and Wong 2003). Indeed, Oliver and Wong (2003) argue that the power threat hypothesis and the contact theory can be reconciled in that the former generally measures context at the larger aggregate level of the county or metropolitan area. This is important because Blacks and Whites, for example, are often in close proximity to one another at the county level even as they remain separate in their own segregated communities. Contact theory, on the other hand, highlights the importance of direct interracial interaction. This is more likely to occur in smaller geographic units such as the neighborhood. It is at this level, they argue, that racial context should lead to more tolerant attitudes.[3]

Assuming that the expectations of the contact theory take precedence when measuring more compact geographic units, we expect that individuals who live in less racially segregated communities will also be less likely to adopt a zero-sum attitude about interactions with out-groups. Additionally, individuals who report more interracial friendships should also be less likely to view other racial groups as competitive threats. Oliver and Wong (2003) do not test these propositions directly in their analyses of the 1992–1994 Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality as they rely on census tract data on the neighborhood racial characteristics of their respondents. Still, implicit in their analyses is the notion that greater neighborhood racial diversity affects attitudes about interracial hostility through the mechanism of meaningful and positive contact across racial lines. If true, then presumably self-reports of the racial make-up of one's friendship networks and neighborhood racial composition should capture much of what is gauged with more objective measures. Finally, although we do not consider this possibility here, it should also be the case that the expectations of the power threat hypothesis kick in at more expansive levels of racial context. That is, at the metropolitan or county level, greater racial diversity should lead to heightened levels of competitive racial threat.[4]

Group Identity

A third explanation for intergroup conflict posits the importance of in-group identity. Most of the research on the relationship between group identity and racial attitudes has been done with respect to White attitudes about Blacks. In general, researchers have found only a small and inconsistent linkage between higher levels of in-group identity among Whites and negative racial attitudes toward African Americans. Adherents to the prejudice explanation for racial conflict have interpreted this to mean that Whites' racial attitudes are not significantly driven by a need to protect their racial group interests (Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997). Thus, in-group identity should have limited influence among Whites, although whatever effects it does produce should lead to greater hostility rather than less.

What little research there is on the effects of group identity among racial minorities suggests that these attitudes are likely to promote greater tolerance rather than increased hostility (Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Davis and Brown 2002; Kaufmann 2003; McClain et al. 2006). Among Blacks, for example, a number of racial studies have found that greater support for the sentiment that what affects the racial group will also affect the individual ("linked fate") is associated with less animosity directed at Whites (Gurin et al. 1989; Herring, Jankowski, and Brown 1999; Davis and Brown, 2002). Similarly, both Kaufmann (2003) and McClain and her colleagues (2006) find that a greater sense of linked fate among Latinos translates into increased perceptions of commonality with African Americans. The explanation for this latter finding seems to be that as Latinos move away from ties to their country of origin and instead adopt a broader quasi-racial group identity, they view their groups' circumstances as similar to that of Blacks and thus perceive them more as fellow travelers rather than competitors. In light of this emerging literature on Blacks and Latinos, this model leads one to expect that for these groups, and perhaps other racial minorities, greater levels of group identity should be associated with lower levels of interracial conflict.

Group Position Theory

The final theory we examine in this chapter is the group position theory. Herbert Blumer introduced this theory in 1958, and it maintains that intergroup hostility is not simply the product of negative affect or stereotypes about salient out-groups. Bobo and Hutchings (1996) expound upon the underpinnings of this theory in some detail:

[According to the group position model] *feelings of competition and hostility emerge from historically and collectively developed judgments about the positions in the social order that in-group members should rightfully occupy relative to members of an out-group.* The core factor in Blumer's model is the subjective image of where the in-group *ought* to stand vis-à-vis the out-group (Bobo and Hutchings 1996, p. 955, italics in original).

Blumer lists four elements as important to the development of a sense of group position. The first element is the belief in in-group superiority or at least a strong sense of in-group preference. This concept is in many ways analogous to the concept of group identity discussed earlier in the chapter. The second element in the group position framework is the view among in-group members that out-group members are different and alien. This perception is akin to notions of negative stereotyping and prejudice discussed earlier. The third element is a sense among the in-group members that they are entitled to certain rights, resources, and privileges. Finally, this model maintains that in-group members fear that out-group members desire a larger, and illegitimate, share of the in-group's rights and privileges.

As with most other theories addressed in this chapter, the group position model was originally designed to explain White attitudes about African Americans. Bobo and Hutchings (1996) however, demonstrated that the theory could be extended to racial minorities in their study of Los Angeles. In addition to applying the theory to non-White groups, Bobo and Hutchings also explored an important, albeit implicit, proposition of the model, namely that perceptions of racial alienation are a primary determinant of perceptions of competitive racial threat. By racial alienation, Bobo and Hutchings meant that, given the history of race relations in the United States, some racial group members were more likely to feel a sense of racial group entitlement even as others were more apt to feel that their group had been disenfranchised and discriminated against. In the context of the multiracial setting of their analyses, they argued that racial minority group members, perhaps especially native-born African Americans, were most likely to express such feelings of alienation, *but whatever group one belonged to, such feelings should be highly predictive of perceptions of zero-sum competition.*

In addition to broadening our scope beyond negative affect and stereotypes, the group position theory has the advantage of incorporating elements from some of the other theories we examine in this paper. That is, as with the classical prejudice model, the group position theory anticipates an important role for negative out-group stereotyping and concerns with maintaining social distance as predictors of intergroup hostility. Similarly, in-group preference or group identity is also an important element of the group position theory. However, unlike some recent work on the racial attitudes of racial minorities, the group position model expects heightened levels of group identity to be associated with greater racial hostility. This is because individuals who identify more strongly with their group should also feel a greater sense of threat when out-groups are perceived as encroaching on their groups' "territory." Finally, with respect to the effects of the racial environment on intergroup attitudes, the group position theory is much more consistent with the power threat hypothesis than contact theory. That is, as others have argued, part of the reason that larger minority populations are theorized to produce greater racial conservatism is that such cues trigger a sense of competitive threat among the dominant group. As a result, although meaningful interracial contact may ameliorate perceptions of

competitive threat to a degree, the group position model would not expect them to have a significant impact on these attitudes.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to fully explore the determinants of intergroup hostility, we designed the National Politics Study (NPS). The primary goal of the NPS is to gather comparative data about individuals' political attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, and behaviors at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Our survey went into the field in September 2004, shortly before the presidential elections, and concluded a few months later, in February 2005. All of the 3,339 interviews were conducted over the telephone. The interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish, depending on the preference of the respondent, and the overall response rate was 31 percent.

We believe that the NPS is the first multiracial and multiethnic national study of political and racial attitudes. Unlike previous efforts to study these issues, we have not focused on a single city (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; McClain et al. 2006), a single state (Bobo and Tuan 2006), or a small group of cities (Oliver and Wong 2003).[5] Instead, our study is based on a national sample of individuals, aged eighteen years or older, from a variety of different racial and ethnic groups. Specifically, we interviewed 756 African Americans, 919 non-Hispanic Whites, 404 Caribbean Blacks, 757 Hispanics, and 503 Asian Americans.[6]

There are two additional advantages that the NPS represents relative to previous multiracial surveys. First, the NPS does not concentrate solely on attitudes about racial minority groups, but also focuses on the views that other racial and ethnic groups have about Whites. That is, both the 1992 Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS) that serves as the dataset for the Bobo and Hutchings (1996) article on interracial tensions in Los Angeles, and the 1992–1994 Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI), which serves as the primary dataset for Oliver and Wong's (2003) study of intergroup prejudice, exclude questions about hostility directed at Americans of European descent. We believe that it is important to examine all sides of the complicated racial debate in this country if we are to fully understand the determinants of intergroup conflict.

A second advantage of the NPS has to do with its timing. Although both the LACSS and the MCSUI represent important, and indeed groundbreaking, efforts to catalog and ultimately explain the racial views of a diverse group of Americans, their proximity to the Los Angeles riots may have influenced responses. The fact that the LACSS was fielded in L.A. County and it was also one of the cities represented in the MCSUI survey simply amplifies this concern. In short, it is possible that the level of racial conflict reported in these studies is at least partially a result of the heightened racial tensions of the time. That the NPS was fielded over ten years after these studies allows researchers to ascertain with greater confidence the overall

levels and determinants of perceptions of competitive racial threat in the absence of any national, high-profile, racialized incident.

The NPS included multiple measures of the concepts discussed above. Our primary dependent variable, *perceptions of competitive threat*, was measured with two items originally developed in 1992 for the LACSS (see Bobo and Hutchings 1996). The questions were worded as follows: "More good jobs for [INSERT GROUPS] means fewer good jobs for people like me;" and "The more influence [INSERT GROUPS] have in politics the less influence people like me will have in politics." Respondents from each of our five racial/ethnic groups were only asked about the remaining four groups in random order. Response options ranged from "strongly agree" to "disagree" to "strongly disagree." Although we present some initial results of each item separately, for most of the rest of this chapter, these items are combined into a scale. This variable, as with all other primary independent variables in our analyses, was recoded onto a 0–1 scale. Higher values on this scale correspond to greater support for the concept of zero-sum competition.[7] The specific wording of all of our independent variables is described below.

RESULTS

Mapping the Distributions of Zero-Sum Competition

In Table 3.1, we present the mean scores on each of the two racial conflict measures, as well as the scale of the two items. The respondents' race or ethnicity is shown on the horizontal axis and the race of the target group on the vertical axis. The first column presents the results for the Whites in our sample. With respect to the job competition item, we find that a small, although by no means trivial, fraction of Whites endorse the view that more good jobs for other racial and ethnic groups means less for their group. On average, about 20 percent of the Whites in our sample endorse this view. Interestingly, no significant distinctions are made across groups for White respondents: Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Afro-Caribbeans are all treated more or less the same when it comes to Whites' beliefs about competition over jobs. Furthermore, these results are somewhat lower than what Bobo and Hutchings (1996) report for Los Angeles. In their study, they found that about 28 percent of the Whites in their sample endorsed the notion of zero-sum competition, with Asians typically perceived as the most threatening and Blacks as the least threatening.

Among African Americans, as shown in the second column of Table 3.1, perceptions of competitive racial threat are markedly different than for Whites. For one thing, Blacks are about twice as likely as Whites to agree that more good jobs for other racial groups come at the expense of people like them. Additionally, there is far more variance shown among Blacks with respect to which groups they view with the greatest suspicion. Among Blacks, the most troublesome competitors, by far, are Whites. On average, about half of African-American respondents indicate that

Afro-Caribbeans represent an interesting case for the study of perceptions of competitive racial threat. This is because although they are racially indistinguishable from African Americans, their immigrant background and different cultural affinities have, at times, brought them into conflict with Black Americans (Waters 1999). As a result, it is not at all clear whether they should view the world in a manner similar to other Blacks or if their perspective is more similar to groups with larger immigrant populations such as Asians and Latinos.[8] Results for Afro-Caribbeans are presented in the fifth column of Table 3.1. As it turns out, this group perceives relations with other racial groups in ways almost identical to African Americans. As with other Blacks, about half of Afro-Caribbeans indicate that more good jobs for Whites means fewer good jobs for people like them. Slightly more than one-third adopts a similar position with respect to Hispanics and Asian Americans. And, not surprisingly, other Blacks are seen as the least threatening group, although approximately one-third endorsed this view.

The middle portion of Table 3.1 presents the results for the item on political competition. The most remarkable difference between this item and the jobs question is that perceptions of zero-sum competition are generally higher. White respondents represent an exception to this rule because, again, slightly less than 20 percent indicate agreement with the notion that other racial groups represent competitive threats to their group. Blacks also make little distinction between the two items when the target groups are other racial minorities. However, with respect to Whites, fully 57 percent of African Americans identify this group as a competitor to their racial group. Latinos are also more likely to view Whites as competitors in the political arena, with 53 percent endorsing this view. Latinos also view the remaining groups as greater threats with respect to politics, but the increase is not as large as with Whites.

As with other racial minority groups, Asian Americans are also far more concerned with Whites in the political arena than in the job market. Fifty-eight percent of Asians – the highest percentage among all groups in Table 3.1 – regard greater political influence for Whites as coming at the expense of Asian Americans. The remaining groups are also viewed as more threatening in the political arena, but as with Blacks and Latinos, Asian Americans are clearly making a distinction between their concern with the political power of White Americans and their perceptions of other racial groups. Finally, Afro-Caribbeans adopt a view very much equivalent to that of African Americans. Slightly more than half consider Whites to be a serious competitor for political influence, with slightly more than a third adopting similar beliefs about other racial groups.

The zero-sum competition scale, shown at the bottom of Table 3.1, captures the overall reactions to these items for the racial groups in our study. In general, Whites are least likely to agree that other groups are their competitors, and Blacks and Afro-Caribbeans are the most likely to see Whites as their main source of competition. Asian Americans and Latinos fall somewhere between these two groups, but their

TABLE 3.1. Mean scores on the zero-sum competition scale by respondents' race and race of target group

Target groups	Respondents' race					F-Stat.
	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Afro-Caribbean	
Job Competition						
Whites	–	.50	.42	.36	.50	19.3*
Blacks	.18	–	.31	.28	.32	31.6*
Hispanics	.20	.38	–	.27	.38	46.4*
Asian Americans	.19	.40	.32	–	.38	54.7*
Afro-Caribbeans	.19	.33	.30	.26	–	29.6*
Political Competition						
Whites	–	.57	.53	.58	.55	2.6*
Blacks	.18	–	.38	.40	.34	73.6*
Hispanics	.19	.37	–	.37	.35	55.9*
Asian Americans	.18	.37	.36	–	.36	69.3*
Afro-Caribbeans	.18	.32	.35	.35	–	58.5*
Zero-Sum Scale						
Whites	–	.54	.47	.47	.53	8.4*
Blacks	.18	–	.34	.34	.33	67.5*
Hispanics	.20	.38	–	.32	.36	63.6*
Asian Americans	.18	.38	.34	–	.37	81.7*
Afro-Caribbeans	.18	.32	.32	.31	–	54.3*

Notes: * p ≤ .05.

Whites are their competitors in the job market. In contrast, only about one-third of them express similar sentiments when it comes to Afro-Caribbeans. Although still relatively high, this lower level of perceived threat makes sense because Blacks and Afro-Caribbeans share the same racial identification even if their cultural values are sometimes at odds. Hispanics and Asian Americans fall somewhere between these two poles at .38 and .40, respectively. These figures are roughly comparable to what Bobo and Hutchings (1996) report in their study of intergroup conflict in Los Angeles.

Latinos, as represented in the third column of Table 3.1, adopt views much more similar to Blacks than to Whites. As with African Americans, Latinos perceive relatively high levels of zero-sum conflict with other groups. The levels are not quite as high as for Blacks, however. Still, Whites are again identified as the most threatening group, with all other groups scoring some ten or more points lower.

Among Asians, as presented in the fourth column, Whites are also viewed as the most threatening, but the effects are considerably reduced relative to Blacks and, to a lesser extent, Latinos, at least in the realm of job competition. In the case of both Latinos and Asians, the share of respondents who see group relations in zero-sum terms is analogous to results from the LACSS.

views are generally closer to African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans than they are to Whites. Additionally, although there are some interesting differences between perceptions of job and political competition, the overall pattern is about the same for both items as reflected in the scale. For these reasons, all of our subsequent analyses rely on the zero-sum competition scale.

Determinants of Zero-Sum Competition

Now that we have determined the absolute levels of support for the proposition of competitive racial threat, we turn to assessing the best explanations for these attitudes. To answer these questions, we have developed measures of all the theoretical concepts described earlier in this paper. We measure racial prejudice with two items, one tapping notions of social distance and the other negative out-group stereotypes.[9] Group identity is measured with the traditional linked fate item as well as a question tapping whether it is more important to respondents "being American, being [RESPONDENT RACE], or are both equally important to you?"[10] The concept of racial context was measured with two items. The first asks simply, "How would you describe the ethnic mix of your current neighborhood where you live? Would you say it is mostly White, mostly black, mostly Hispanic, mostly Asian, or mixed?" Respondents who indicate that their own racial group is predominant in their neighborhood receive a value of 1, and all other responses are coded zero. The second measure of racial context asks, "How would you describe the ethnic mix of your group of friends? Would you say your friends are mostly White, mostly Black, mostly Hispanic, mostly Asian, or mixed?" Respondents who indicate that their friends are either mostly "mixed" or mostly from a racial group other than their own are coded 1 with all other responses coded zero. Finally, the concept of racial alienation was measured by asking respondents how much discrimination they believed their group encounters in the United States and how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following question: "American society just hasn't dealt fairly with people from my background."[11] As with all of the other primary independent variables, responses were re-coded onto a 0–1 scale to ease the interpretation of coefficients across variables. All subsequent analyses also control for education, age, gender, and household income.[12]

We turn first to an examination of the results of our analyses for Whites, as shown in Table 3.2. A number of our hypotheses are supported for Whites, with perhaps the greatest explanatory power captured in the prejudice measures. Without exception, Whites who reject interracial marriage in principle (about 20 percent) are also more likely to view other racial groups as competitive threats. The magnitude of this effect across racial groups ranges from 10 to 16 points. Interestingly, the negative stereotype item is most significant in the case of African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, the two racially Black groups. This is probably due to the fact that the stereotype about laziness has historically been applied most strongly to Blacks (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997). This variable is only marginally significant when Latinos

TABLE 3.2. *Determinants of perceptions of zero-sum competition for whites*

Target groups	Blacks	Latinos	Asians	Afro-caribbeans
Intercept	.04 (.04)	.13* (.04)	.12** (.04)	.09* (.04)
Prejudice				
Interracial Marriage	.10*** (.02)	.16*** (.03)	.14*** (.02)	.14*** (.02)
Negative Stereotypes	.19*** (.03)	.06+ (.04)	-.02 (.04)	.11** (.04)
Group Identity				
Linked Fate Perceptions	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.03+ (.02)
Racial Identity	.08** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.08** (.03)	.09** (.03)
Racial Context				
Segregated Neighborhood	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.02)	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Racially Mixed Friends	-.03* (.01)	-.03 (.02)	-.03+ (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Racial Alienation				
Opportunity Structure	.05* (.02)	.09** (.03)	.07** (.03)	.05* (.03)
Perceived Discrimination	.11*** (.02)	.11*** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	.10** (.03)
Adjusted R sq.	.23	.21	.21	.22
N	833	830	830	831

Notes: * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001 for two-tailed test. Models also control for education, age, gender, and household income.

are the target group, and the size of the coefficient is less than one-third that for African Americans.

The group identity measures, particularly racial identity, also contribute significantly to attitudes about competitive racial threat. The sizes of the coefficients are smaller compared to the indicators of prejudice, but they are consistent across all racial groups and all positive. Thus, although previous work has found only sporadic and relatively weak support for the idea that Whites' racial attitudes are affected by group identity, we find moderately strong support for its influence. We find little support for the racial context variables. Although Whites who indicate that they have a racially diverse group of friends are somewhat less likely to endorse zero-sum perceptions, the effects are relatively mild and inconsistent across groups. Residence in racially homogenous neighborhoods has essentially no effect on the dependent variable. This effect seems to run counter to the findings of Oliver and Wong (2003), although they relied on more objective measures rather than the subjective measures we utilize here.

TABLE 3.3. *Determinants of perceptions of zero-sum competition for blacks*

Target groups	Whites	Latinos	Asians	Afro-Caribbeans
Intercept	.04 (.07)	.20** (.07)	.11 (.07)	.14* (.07)
Prejudice				
Interracial Marriage	.00 (.04)	.13*** (.04)	.04 (.04)	.07+ (.04)
Negative Stereotypes	.16*** (.04)	.04 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.11** (.04)
Group Identity				
Linked Fate Perceptions	.09** (.03)	.06* (.03)	.05 (.03)	.05+ (.03)
Racial Identity	.13** (.05)	.03 (.05)	.10* (.05)	.07+ (.04)
Racial Context				
Segregated Neighborhood	.01 (.02)	−.02 (.02)	−.02 (.02)	−.00 (.02)
Racially Mixed Friends	−.04+ (.02)	−.03 (.02)	−.01 (.02)	−.01 (.02)
Racial Alienation				
Opportunity Structure	.21*** (.04)	.07+ (.04)	.11** (.04)	.05 (.04)
Perceived Discrimination	.17** (.06)	.08 (.06)	.10+ (.06)	.03 (.05)
Adjusted R sq.	.18	.07	.06	.07
N	698	694	696	694

Notes: * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001 for two-tailed test. Models also control for education, age, gender, and household income.

The racial alienation items also work as anticipated. Indeed, although the magnitudes are somewhat smaller compared to the prejudice items, the alienation measures are the most consistent predictors in the model. Each measure is related to each target group with coefficients ranging from 5 points to 13 points. Clearly, a significant determinant of perceptions of racial group competition is, at least for Whites, the sense that one's racial group has not fared as well as it should have in America. Interestingly, this sense of racial disenfranchisement has a much more consistent effect than was demonstrated in the Bobo and Hutchings (1996) examination of Los Angeles. They found that racial alienation only affected perceptions of zero-sum competition when the target group was Blacks. It is unclear whether these broader effects are due to the larger national sample or to the greater salience that Hispanics and Asian Americans have taken on since the 1990s.

Table 3.3 presents our results for African Americans. Here, the results seem to differ somewhat, depending on the target group. In the case of Whites, the most powerful explanatory variables are both measures of racial alienation. The coefficients on the

opportunity structure item and the perceived discrimination item are .21 and .17, respectively. This translates into a roughly 20 percent shift in support of the view that Whites represent a competitive threat as one moves from the least to the most alienated. The next most influential variable is the stereotype measure. Recall that, in the case of Whites, this measure does not ask about the group's propensity to be lazy but rather whether Whites want to keep minorities down. Blacks who subscribe to this view are significantly more likely to view Whites as competitors.

Group identity also plays an important role in shaping views about competitive racial threat with Whites. Unlike some previous research, however, we find that higher levels of group identity are associated with more insular racial views rather than the reverse. Although contrary to some recent work, this finding is very much in keeping with the theoretical expectations of the group position model.

When the target group is Latinos, we find that racial alienation plays a much smaller role. Although the opportunity structure item achieves borderline statistical significance, the magnitude of this effect is much smaller than was the case for Whites. Further, in contrast to the situation with Whites, the social distance prejudice measure turns out to be a strong predictor of the view that Latinos' success comes at the expense of Blacks. The negative stereotype item has no effect here. The group identity items are also less powerful compared to when Whites were the target group, but the results are significant for the linked fate item and, again, positive. Finally, the racial context measures fall well short of statistical significance. These findings may differ from the MCSUI results because of the broader sample on which we rely.

The effects for Asian Americans are, in some respect, closer to what we uncovered for Whites. Here we find that Blacks who believe that the opportunity structure has been closed to their group or who believe that their group has faced discrimination are most inclined to view Asians as competitors. The only other significant variable is the linked fate item that, again, suggests that higher levels of group identity are associated with a greater likelihood of viewing Asians as a competitive threat.

When Afro-Caribbeans are the target group, as shown in the last column of Table 3.3, almost all of the predictors appear to be muted. This is not unexpected because of all the groups in our study, Afro-Caribbeans are the most closely aligned with African Americans. And, as we saw in Table 3.1, Blacks seem the least concerned with encroachments from this group. Still, although the racial alienation measures are predictably weak for this group, we do find that the stereotype measure predicts support for the view that more for this group means less for African Americans. Interestingly, the group identity measures also achieve borderline significance, although again, they suggest that higher levels of identity are associated with greater concern about the implications of success for other groups.

In Table 3.4, we examine the effects of our predictor variables on the racial attitudes of Hispanic Americans. For this group, the largest and most consistent predictor variables are the racial alienation measures, especially the item about the opportunity structure in America. Further, as with Blacks, the effects of these variables are

TABLE 3.4. Determinants of perceptions of zero-sum competition for Latinos

Target groups	Whites	Blacks	Asians	Afro-Caribbeans
Intercept	.16*	.14*	.25***	.22***
	(.07)	(.07)	(.06)	(.06)
Immigrant	.01	.06**	.07**	.07**
	(.03)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Prejudice				
Interracial Marriage	-.02	.04	-.01	.02
	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Negative Stereotypes	.11**	.12**	-.05	-.01
	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.05)
Group Identity				
Linked Fate Perceptions	.04	-.01	-.01	.00
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Racial Identity	.14**	.04	.05	.03
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Racial Context				
Segregated Neighborhood	.02	.04+	.04	.05*
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Racially Mixed Friends	-.02	-.01	-.03	-.02
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Racial Alienation				
Opportunity Structure	.17***	.12***	.10**	.10**
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Perceived Discrimination	.10*	.03	.02	.02
	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Adjusted R sq.	.12	.10	.09	.09
N	692	689	688	688

Notes: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ for two-tailed test. Models also control for education, age, gender, and household income.

TABLE 3.5. Determinants of perceptions of zero-sum competition for Asians

Target groups	Whites	Blacks	Latinos	Afro-Caribbeans
Intercept	.26**	.08	.15*	.22**
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)
Immigrant	.07**	.13***	.11***	.11***
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Prejudice				
Interracial Marriage	.06	.09*	.05	.04
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Negative Stereotypes	.03	.16**	.12*	.01
	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)
Group Identity				
Linked Fate Perceptions	.08*	.06+	.07*	.06+
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Racial Identity	.06	.01	.03	.04
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Racial Context				
Segregated Neighborhood	.06	-.01	.01	-.02
	(.05)	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)
Racially Mixed Friends	-.04	.00	-.00	-.02
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Racial Alienation				
Opportunity Structure	.28***	.09**	.10**	.07*
	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Perceived Discrimination	.01	-.03	-.09+	-.06
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Adjusted R sq.	.19	.13	.12	.08
N	412	411	413	411

Notes: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ for two-tailed test. Models also control for education, age, gender, and household income.

especially strong when the target group is White Americans, as shown in the first column. Only when Whites are the reference group do both variables achieve statistical significance. Negative stereotypes about Whites and racial identity also play an important role in structuring perceptions of competitive racial threat, but the racial context variables again fail to achieve statistical significance.

When the target group is African Americans, racial alienation still plays a prominent role in organizing Latino perceptions of intergroup conflict. Negative stereotypes about Blacks also play a significant role here, although interestingly, group identity does not. Finally, whether or not one was born in this country also contributes to perceptions of competitive threat. As Kaufmann (2003) also found, immigrants are more likely to view Blacks as competitors than Latinos who were born in this country.

In the case of Asian Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, Latinos attitudes are structured almost entirely by measures of racial alienation and immigrant status and nothing else. The one exception occurs for the neighborhood racial composition variable. In the case of Afro-Caribbeans, this variable achieves statistical significance, which is in keeping with the general thrust of Oliver and Wong (2003) but not their specific findings. That is, although they find that Latinos – at least in Los Angeles – are more likely to adopt negative stereotypes about Blacks when their neighborhoods become more racially isolated, they do not find this to be the case for perceptions of competitive threat.[13] In any case, the effects are not especially large relative to the effects of alienation and prejudice, but they do mirror the borderline effects found when Blacks are the target group.

The results for Asian Americans are presented in Table 3.5. Once again, the most consistent predictors are for the racial alienation items, especially the indicator of attitudes about the opportunity structure. When Whites are the target group, this variable is more than three times the size of any of our other primary independent variables. Linked fate perceptions also play an important role in shaping Asian attitudes about other groups. As with African Americans, higher levels of linked fate are associated with a greater propensity to view Whites as competitors for scarce resources. The only other significant variable when Whites are the target group is immigration status. Asian Americans who were not born in this country are more likely to view relations with White Americans as zero-sum.

With Blacks as the target group, the only other variables aside from the alienation item to achieve statistical significance are the prejudice variables, the measure of immigration status, and, to a limited extent, the linked fate item. For Asian Americans, both opposition to interracial marriage in principle and the acceptance of negative stereotypes about African Americans contribute to the perception that greater success for Blacks comes at the expense of Asians. In the case of immigration status, the effects are particularly large. Indeed, immigration status is a consistently significant variable across racial groups, but the effects are particularly large for Blacks. This finding may reflect some of the tensions that Asian immigrant group have had with African Americans in a number of cities across the country (Kim 2000). Results similar to African Americans are uncovered when Latinos and Afro-Caribbeans are the target groups. Immigration status is an important predictor, as are linked fate perceptions and, at least in the case of Latinos, negative stereotypes. Racial context variable again fails to achieve statistical significance. The one noteworthy departure from previous results is the effects of perceived discrimination. Although the effects are of only borderline significance, the coefficient is negative when Latinos are the target group, suggesting that alienated Asians are less likely to view Latinos as competitors. This finding runs counter to our theoretical expectations, but its singular nature suggests that we should not read too much into this result.

In our last table, we examine the determinants of zero-sum perception among Afro-Caribbeans. Once again, we find that the most consistent effects occur for the measures of racial alienation, particularly the opportunity structure item. Also, similar to all other groups in our analyses, racial alienation is most strongly triggered when Whites are the target group. No other variable comes close to matching the magnitude of this effect for Afro-Caribbeans. In addition to racial alienation, we also find that the racial diversity of one's friendship network influences perceptions of competitive threat. As with Whites in Table 3.2, Afro-Caribbeans who socialize with a more diverse group of friends are also less likely to view Whites as competitors. Negative stereotypes and immigration status also contribute to perceptions of competitive threat, although these effects are of only borderline statistical significance.

The second column of Table 3.6 presents the results for other Blacks as the target group. Given that all Caribbean Americans in our sample racially identify as Black,

TABLE 3.6. *Determinants of perceptions of zero-sum competition for Afro-caribbeans*

Target groups	Whites	Blacks	Latinos	Asians
Intercept	.19+	.41***	.34***	.30**
	(.10)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)
Immigrant	.07+	.13***	.10**	.08*
	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Prejudice				
Interracial Marriage	-.02	.06	.01	.04
	(.06)	(.05)	(.06)	(.06)
Negative Stereotypes	.11+	.02	.11+	.02
	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)	(.07)
Group Identity				
Linked Fate Perceptions	.00	.02	-.00	-.04
	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)
Racial Identity	-.08	-.14*	-.15*	-.06
	(.08)	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)
Racial Context				
Segregated Neighborhood	.05	.02	.02	.02
	(.04)	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Racially Mixed Friends	-.08*	-.03	.02	-.02
	(.04)	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)
Racial Alienation				
Opportunity Structure	.20***	.04	.12*	.12**
	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Perceived Discrimination	.10	-.08	-.08	-.01
	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)
Adjusted R sq.	.10	.07	.06	.02
N	354	355	353	354

Notes: + p ≤ .10 * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001 for two-tailed test. Models also control for education, age, gender, and household income.

we do not expect the same effects for our independent variables. As anticipated, the racial alienation items fall short of statistical significance (similar effects occurred for Blacks when Afro-Caribbeans were the target group) for this group. Similarly, the prejudice items and racial context measures have no effect. In the case of racial identity, the effects run counter to what we have uncovered with other groups. The negative, and statistically significant, coefficient on this variable indicates that respondents who identify with their racial group are also less likely to view other Blacks as competitive threats. Only in the case of immigrant status are results consistent with the results of previous groups. Here we find that Afro-Caribbeans born outside the United States are more likely to view other Blacks as competitors for their group.

In the case of Latinos and Asian Americans, very little achieves statistical significance beyond the alienation variables. When Asians are the target group, the one exception is the immigrant status variable. Once again, Afro-Caribbeans born outside the United States are more apt to view the out-group as succeeding at the expense of their group. This is also true in the case of Latinos. Interestingly, for this group, the racial identity measure is also significant and has a negative sign. This may be due to the fact that many Afro-Caribbeans hail from parts of the world that are also heavily populated by Hispanics.

CONCLUSION

This work has sought to describe and explain perceptions of intergroup conflict among a multiracial national sample of Americans. In general, we found that such perceptions varied across groups, although a majority – or near-majority – of racial minority group members perceived relations with Whites in zero-sum terms. We examined four distinct, although not necessarily competing, theoretical perspectives to account for these attitudes: the classical prejudice model; the group identity model; the racial context hypothesis; and the group position model. Although we found some support for each of the theories we examined, the group position model provided the most consistent and comprehensive explanation.

Building on the work of Bobo and Hutchings (1996), we argued that an important implication of the group position model was that individuals who felt that their racial or ethnic group had been alienated by society should feel most threatened by the economic and political success of other groups. Our measures of racial alienation turned out to be highly predictive of perceptions of competitive racial threat for Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans. In the case of Whites, both measures – attitudes about the nation's opportunity structure for their group and perceptions of discrimination against the in-group – were predictive of perceptions of zero-sum competition with racial minorities. For other groups, the measures were somewhat more uneven. For example, in the case of Black respondents, neither measure worked very well when the target groups were Latinos or Afro-Caribbeans. In the case of Latino respondents, perceptions of discrimination were only significant when Whites were the target group. In the case of Afro-Caribbeans, perceptions of discrimination never achieved conventional levels of statistical significance. We suspect that much of this unevenness is a result of the applicability of the concept to the relevant target group and the length of time each group has had to develop socially constructed grievances in the United States. That is, it is not surprising that a sense of group position should not characterize relations between African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, given the significant overlap in these identities. Similarly, the particular grievance regarding discrimination should be applied less often to other racial minority groups because they are likely not

seen as the primary source of discrimination. For racial minorities, this distinction is reserved for Whites, and for this target group, the racial alienation measures are typically more consistent and more powerful.

Both racial prejudice and group identity also demonstrated an important influence on perceptions of competitive racial threat. This was particularly true for White respondents, for whom the racial prejudice measures were usually the most powerful predictors. Still, these results are not inconsistent with the group position model. As indicated earlier in this chapter, this theory anticipates a role for negative out-group stereotypes and in-group preference in structuring attitudes about intergroup conflict. However, the classical prejudice model is usually interpreted as dismissing the importance of group interest concerns. Our results undermine this view of prejudice. Further, although contrary to some previous work, we find that in-group preference works very much as anticipated by the group position model. Individuals who express greater levels of group identification are also more likely to view other groups as competitors. We found that this was true both of Whites and racial minorities. The one exception to this pattern was among Afro-Caribbeans. We found that, alone among the groups in our sample, their sense of competition with other Blacks and Latinos decreased as their level of group identification increased. Interestingly, even among Afro-Caribbeans, this relationship did not occur when either Whites or Asian Americans were the target group.

We found little support for the contact hypothesis in our analyses. Almost without exception, we found that the racial make-up of one's neighborhood or friendship network had no effect on perceptions of zero-sum competition. Our results run counter to the findings of Oliver and Wong (2003), although their work is based on objective measures of racial context whereas we relied on more subjective measures. In future versions of this research, we hope to incorporate additional objective measures or racial context to sort out the discrepancies between these two sets of findings.

Aside from the support and extension of the group position model, our analyses also demonstrate that the increasing complexity of racial politics in this country has not diminished. A significant fraction of Whites, and at times a majority of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Afro-Caribbeans, continue to view race relations in zero-sum terms. Moreover, a sense of racial alienation is overwhelmingly embraced by racial minorities and contributes mightily to perceptions of intergroup conflict.[14] The growing number of immigrant groups may complicate our discussion of racial politics, but we see no evidence that the color line will be any less problematic in the twenty-first century than it was in the twentieth century.

NOTES

1 In this paper we use the terms "Black" and "African American" interchangeably. Similarly, we also use the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" to describe the same population. "White" describes all Americans of European ancestry.

2 According to some reports, as many as 600,000 people marched in Los Angeles, 400,000 in Chicago, and somewhat smaller turnouts were recorded in San Francisco, Houston, and other location throughout the country.

3 Oliver and Wong (2003) recognize that self-selection may account for some of these effects. That is, individuals predisposed to be racially tolerant may be more likely to seek out interracial neighborhoods in which to live. Although they find some support for this among Whites in their data, this does not apparently explain the positive effects of interracial contact among Blacks and Latinos.

4 In later versions of this work, we plan to geo-code the survey data so that we can examine the effects of broader, and objectively defined, racial contexts on perceptions of racial competition.

5 Kaufmann (2003) relied on a 1999 *Washington Post*/Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University survey in her examination of Latino attitudes about African Americans. Although this survey contained a significant number of Latinos (2,417) and Whites (1,802), it included only 285 Black respondents. Additionally, the survey included a small national sample, but was primarily based on a variety of state level samples including California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Washington, D.C.

6 Unlike in the U.S. Census, respondents were not asked whether or not they considered themselves Hispanic before the racial question. Instead, the Hispanic category was treated as a mutually exclusive option alongside the traditional racial categories. Afro-Caribbeans were identified by asking respondents if they consider themselves to be of "Caribbean or West Indian descent," or if they or any of their ancestors are "from any of the following countries: Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Guyana, Haiti, or Panama?" These latter countries were singled out because we have learned from prior surveys that sometimes individuals from these countries do not consider themselves to be from the Caribbean. Only respondents who had previously identified themselves as Black and answered affirmatively to either of the two items mentioned above were classified as Afro-Caribbean.

7 As with all other attitudinal variables in our analyses, those few respondents who indicated "don't know" or "refuse" were re-coded into the midpoint.

8 Fifty-two percent of the Afro-Caribbeans in our sample were born outside of the United States, compared to 55 percent of Hispanics and 75 percent of Asian Americans. Only 3 percent of African Americans and 6 percent of Whites indicated that they were born outside of the United States.

9 Attitudes about social distance were measured by asking respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "I would approve if someone in my family married a person of a different racial or ethnic background." Negative stereotypes were measured by asking respondents "where would you rate [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] in general on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 indicates lazy and 7 means hard working and 4 indicates most [RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP] are not closer to one end or the other." Both items have been re-coded onto a 0–1 scale so that higher values indicate greater racial prejudice. Since the laziness variable has less historic applicability to Whites, we have substituted a more relevant negative stereotype for this group: the belief that Whites are racially prejudiced. Specifically, this item asks, "On the whole, do you think that most White people want to see [R RACE, except Whites fill in "racial and ethnic minorities"] get a better break, do they want to keep [R RACE, except Whites fill in "racial and ethnic minorities"]

down, or don't they care one way or the other?" Responses are re-coded on to 0–1 scale.

10 The linked fate question asks, "Do you think what happens generally to [R RACE] people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" Respondent who indicate that the answer is "yes" to this question are then asked if it affects them "a lot, some or not very much?" Responses to this question were re-coded onto a 0–1 scale, with higher values indicating greater support for linked fate. For the racial identity item, responses were also re-coded on to a 0–1 scale, with priority given to ones racial identity coded as "1."

11 Specifically, the questions on perceptions of discrimination asks, "Now I would like to ask you about how much discrimination or unfair treatment you think different groups face in the U.S. Do you think the following groups face a lot of discrimination, some, a little, or no discrimination at all?" Response options range from "a lot" to "some" to "a little" to "none."

12 In the case of Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans, we also control for immigrant status. Kaufmann (2003) has shown that Latino immigrants are less likely than others to view their interests as being in common with Blacks.

13 Oliver and Wong (2003) measure these attitudes exactly as we have in the NPS.

14 For example, we found that 80 percent of Blacks either strongly agreed or agreed with the notion that America has not dealt fairly with their group. Comparable percentages among Whites, Latinos, Asians, and Afro-Caribbeans were 15 percent, 47 percent, 47 percent, and 54 percent, respectively. Similarly, more than 90 percent of Blacks believed that their group faced at least some discrimination in the United States. About 41 percent of Whites, 84 percent of Hispanics, 71 percent of Asian Americans, and 81 percent of Afro-Caribbeans view their groups as experiencing at least some discrimination.

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PART II

Courts and the Regulation of the Electoral Process

Overview: Mapping Election Law's Interior

David Schleicher

This chapter is full of innovative and highly individual work. While each piece is valuable on its own, together they form something of a cross-section of contemporary work in election law, providing us with an opportunity to see the interests and ambitions of the field as a whole. After a decade in which theoretical engagement took a bit of a back seat to studying the machinery of elections, the pieces in the chapter reveal a field in which scholars are once again asking big questions about how law interacts with and shapes the practice of democracy. Each piece builds on methodological insights of election law's first generation of theoretical work, which was created to understand how the Supreme Court addresses, and should address, problems like legislative self-dealing and limits on minority representation. But they apply them to new problems, taking the study of election law outside of the confines of the courthouse or even outside of the country, examining questions ranging from how to change the process through which election laws are created in the first place to what form judicial review of election law should take in transitional democracies. Further, they each incorporate new ways of thinking about the bodies that either regulate or are regulated by election law, adding to previous models ideas about how voters develop political opinions, how opinions affect the perceived legitimacy of elections, and how courts decide election cases. If the first generation of work in the field provided both a methodology for studying election law and a map of the coastline of the possible issues election law scholars could address, the papers in this section reveal a field ready to explore a vast interior of possible topics.

Before launching into this bout of navel-gazing, though, it is worth it to discuss – very briefly – the history of the study of the field of the "law of democracy" or election law.

When the field was created in the 1990s, its ambitions were very, very big indeed. It was decidedly not simply an effort to study election law rules, but rather a deeper inquiry into the role law plays in self-governance. In an article summing up the state of the field near the end of the decade, two of its leading figures, Samuel