PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL GROUP COMPETITION: EXTENDING BLUMER'S THEORY OF GROUP POSITION TO A MULTIRACIAL SOCIAL CONTEXT*

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Perceptions of threat occupy a central place in race relations in Blumer's theory of prejudice but few direct efforts to study such perceptions exist. Extending Blumer's reasoning, we hypothesize that such perceptions are driven by a group's feelings of racial alienation within the larger social order. The more that members of a particular racial group feel collectively oppressed and unfairly treated by society, the more likely they are to perceive members of other groups as potential threats. We also examine whether such perceptions spring from simple self-interest, orthodox prejudice such as negative feelings and stereotyping, or broad beliefs about social stratification and inequality. We use data from the 1992 Los Angeles County Social Survey, a large multiracial sample of the general population, to analyze the distribution and social and psychological underpinnings of perceived group competition. Our results support the racial alienation hypothesis as well as the hypotheses positing effects for self-interest, prejudice, and stratification beliefs. We argue that Blumer's group-position framework offers the most parsimonious integration and interpretation of the social psychological processes involved in the formation of perceptions of group threat and competition.

Ongoing immigration from Asia and Latin America and the earlier internal migration of African Americans out of the rural South have made most large cities in the United States remarkable multiracial conglomerations (Waldinger 1989). An immediate sociological concern raised by the growing heterogeneity of urban areas is whether members of different groups view one another as direct competitors for scarce economic, political, and social resources (Olzak 1993). Such perceptions may influence the potential for coalition formation and cooperation among groups as well as the prospects for open antagonism and conflict.

We pose two questions about the nature of interracial tension in modern urban centers: (1) To what extent do Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians view one another as locked in competitive social relations; and (2) what are the social and psychological underpinnings of such outlooks? Although these questions are often the subjects of media attention and speculation, the extant sociological research on interracial attitudes provides limited descriptive or theoretical guidance in answer to these questions.

Most research mapping the basic distribution of racial attitudes focuses almost exclusively on Whites' views of African Americans (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956; Taylor, Greeley, and Sheatsley 1978; Apostle et al. 1983; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Tuch 1987; Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Kluegel 1990; Steeh and Schuman 1992; Bobo and Kluegel 1993). To be sure, the classic literatures on social distance (Bogardus 1928, 1933) and

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on social stereotypes (Katz and Braly 1933) have posed questions about many different groups. Yet these important research traditions have two limitations: Typically they rely on samples of college students and they emphasize change over time in relative rankings on a social distance scale (Owen, Eisner, and McFaul 1981; Smith and Dempsey 1983; Crull and Burton 1985) or on a stereotyping scale (Ashmore and Del Boca 1981; Stephan and Rosenfield 1982). While informative, such research bears only indirectly on the question of group competition and conflict. In addition, research that draws on multiracial samples of general populations has rarely reached beyond examination of the demographic correlates of attitudes (Dyer, Vedlitz, and Wochel 1989), tightly focused case studies (Starr and Roberts 1982), or a concern with beliefs about discrimination (Sigelman and Welch 1991) and processes of assimilation (Portes 1984; Portes, Parker, and Cobas 1988; Uhlaner 1991).

For these reasons, we undertake research on the issues of perceived group competition and conflict. At a theoretical level, we explore and extend Blumer's (1958) theory of prejudice as a "sense of group position." This view of the social psychology of group relations directs attention to feelings of threat from other social groups, identifying such feelings as dynamic forces in intergroup social and political relations. There are few direct empirical studies, however, of Blumer's concern with perceptions of threat as a core variable in intergroup relations (Jackman 1994). Some research has inferred feelings of threat based on compositional preferences (Smith 1981; Schuman et al. 1985) or in-depth interviews (Wellman 1977). Virtually all studies that attempt direct measurement of feelings of competitive threat are secondary analyses of data designed for other purposes and, again, focus exclusively on Whites' reactions to African Americans (Bobo 1983, 1988a, 1988b; Giles and Evans 1986; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Glaser 1994). Hence, an examination of feelings of competitive threat among Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans provides a unique chance to test these ideas empirically and to generalize Blumer's model to an increasingly important case: relations within and between racial minority groups.

We bring systematic data to bear on these questions. The 1992 Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS) included new multiple-item measures of feelings of competitive threat. The sample covers one of the most heterogeneous areas in the nation and includes an oversampling of African American and Asian American respondents. It includes a battery of measures of intergroup attitudes tapping group affect, stereotypes, and feelings of social distance. The LACSS also includes measures of core beliefs about social stratification such as commitment to individualism and inequalitarianism (Kluegel and Smith 1982; Feldman 1988). Thus we can determine whether racial prejudice and beliefs about the U.S. opportunity structure shape perceptions of group competition.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Previous research offers four theoretical accounts of intergroup hostility that explain why Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians may come to feel competitive threat from one another.[1] These models include simple self-in-

[1] Notions of race and ethnicity, although often ascriptive and based on observable, heritable features like skin color, eye shape, hair texture, and so on, are fundamentally social constructions (Stone 1985; See and Wilson 1989). Although racial distinctions often result in sharper and more persistent group barriers compared to ethnic distinctions (Lieberson 1980; Stone 1985; Omi and Winant 1986; Waters 1990), we conceive of race as a special case of an ethnic distinction. Racial and ethnic categories and labels vary over time and place in meaning and salience. We use the labels "White," "Black" or "African American," "Asian" or "Asian American," and "Hispanic" or "Latino." Because our analysis refers to these groups we use the term "race" or "racial" rather than "ethnic." These broad categories may conceal important subgroup differences. Our questionnaire and current usage of these terms reflect our reading of current patterns of discourse. Pretest results suggest that these terms are familiar, understood, and generally noncontroversial. With regard to the questionnaire, it was impractical to distinguish among the several largest Latino (i.e., Mexican, Colombian, Nicaraguan, Salvadorean, Puerto Rican) or Asian groups (i.e., Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Japanese) in the Los Angeles area. Social interaction and discourse often rely on stereotypes linked to these broad social categories. Blacks, particularly middle-class Blacks,

terest models, classical prejudice models, stratification beliefs models, and Blumer's theory of group position. These models are not intrinsically opposed to each other, and we consider ways to fruitfully integrate them.

The Simple Self-Interest Model

This familiar explanation of interracial hostility rests on a straightforward pocketbook logic. There is, in short, an objective basis for conflict: Hostility between members of two racial groups reflects an underlying clash of material interests—mainly economic interests, but sometimes political interests as well (Kluegel and Smith 1986:18–19, 25–27). Some specifications of this approach ignore notions of group identity, attitudes, and the whole apparatus of subjective interpretation and assignment of meaning to "social facts" (Citrin and Green 1990; Sears and Funk 1991). Objective personal vulnerability to economic or political deprivation provides the direct basis for interethnic hostility.

The objective quality of an individual's private life may also be directly affected in noneconomic ways. For instance, the changing racial makeup of one's neighborhood can impose costs or burdens, such as changing availability of services, lessened ability to interact with and draw on neighbors for social support, and the introduction of different cultural patterns (Rieder 1985). Similarly, the racial composition of work groups and associates may change, potentially altering expected patterns of interaction, performance, and reward in the workplace (Waldinger 1986). Strict job opportunity, wage competition, and patron-client exchange relations thus are not the only areas in which groups may encounter clashes of "objective" individual interests.

The self-interest model offers relatively clear statements about the determinants of hostility. Individuals who face unemployment, who are concentrated in low-status occupations, who have low incomes, or who face racially changing neighborhoods and workplaces, are most likely to feel threatened by competition from members of other minority groups. Each of these statuses is an objective condition indicating a direct personal vulnerability to displacement, loss, or the imposition of costs of adaptation resulting from racial change in one's social environment.

The Classical Prejudice Model

The classical prejudice approach is almost the polar opposite of the self-interest model. The most widely accepted version of the classical prejudice approach is the sociocultural model (Kinder and Sears 1981; Pettrigrew 1982; Katz 1991; Duckitt 1992).[2] This perspective,

often complain that Whites respond to the category "Black" and ignore social class cues and other individuating factors (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1990; Cose 1994; Feagin and Sikes 1994). Complaints of blanket stereotyping are increasingly heard from Asian Americans and Latinos as well.

> For many Asian Americans, the Los Angeles riots brought home a sobering truth: The one thing they all have in common is that many other Americans cannot tell them apart. The fear that joined the wealthy fourth-generation Japanese-American in Bel Air to the war-scarred, welfare dependent Cambodian refugee in Long Beach was a wake-up call to anyone with black hair and almond eyes: No one is safe from anti-Asian anger. . . . Many Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese Americans say their shops were damaged because rioters thought they were Korean. And some have accused Korean immigrants of making trouble for all Asian Americans by treating blacks badly. (Susan Moffat, "Splintered Society: U.S. Asians," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1992, p. A1)

In one of the most shocking hate crimes directed at an Asian American, two unemployed White Detroit auto workers beat Vincent Chin to death, mistaking the Chinese American Chin for someone of Japanese ancestry. Increasing interaction across national subgroup boundaries, state policy use of the category "Asian," and anti-Asian attitudes and violence have contributed to an increase in a "pan-Asian" ethnic identity (Espiritu 1992). In addition, ethnicity is less "optional" for those groups defined by easily visible physical markers typically understood in "racial" as opposed to ethnic terms (Waters 1990).

[2] Other models include the authoritarian personality approach (Adorno et al. 1950), with its emphasis on Freudian psychoanalytical principles and personality structure, and the frustration-aggression model (Dollard et al. 1939), with its emphasis on internal psychological dynamics and processes of scapegoating. Although each model identifies important forms of prejudice, these models do not currently enjoy the wide accep-

associated with Allport (1954), locates interracial hostility in individual psychological dispositions rather than in objective reality. Accordingly, it is the socially learned feelings of dislike and aversion, as well as the stereotypes that undergird such feelings, that occasion racial conflict. Such feelings may, in fact, have little real social or economic basis. Whereas a substantially rational calculus underlies racial conflict in the self-interest model, a psychological and largely irrational calculus underlies the classical prejudice model (Jackman 1994). The prejudice approach emphasizes the social learning of cultural ideas and affective responses to particular groups, whereas the self-interest approach points to the material conditions of the individual's current social existence that are claimed to drive the level of hostility.

The classical prejudice model does not expect expressed feelings of competitive threat to differ sharply from other expressions of prejudice (Sears and Kinder 1985). That is, measures of perceived threat should correlate highly with other dimensions of prejudice, such as negative affective responses to groups, stereotypes, and other aversive reactions. In short, perceived threat is only one of several forms of prejudice toward outgroups learned on an individual psychological basis. As such, threat should be closely linked to the familiar indicators of prejudice, like negative affect, stereotypes, and desires for social distance from members of an outgroup.[3]

Allport's model of prejudice emphasizes the irrational component of group hostility (Schuman and Harding 1964; Jackman and Muha 1984; Katz 1991). One factor in this irrationality is ignorance about members of an out-group (Stephan and Stephan 1984). The learning of feelings and stereotypes takes the place of direct experience and knowledge. Accordingly, any factor that imparts information and knowledge, such as higher education, should reduce levels of prejudice and hostility.

The Stratification Beliefs Model

Individuals' beliefs about social inequality may affect whether they perceive members of other groups as competitive threats. The dominant stratification ideology in the United States holds that opportunities are plentiful and that individuals succeed or fail largely on the basis of their own efforts and talents. As a result, inequality of valued social outcomes is seen as not only fair, but necessary because of differential effort and ability (Huber and Form 1973; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Feldman 1988). The core of this ideology is captured in the term "individualism," which has both descriptive or existential dimensions and prescriptive or normative dimensions. Accordingly, individuals obtain valued social outcomes by dint of their individual qualities. By implication, the more one adheres to existential and normative individualistic beliefs, the less inclined one is to view members of other racial groups as competitive threats. Indeed, this reasoning from individualistic value and belief premises informs criticism of group-based social policies like affirmative action (Glazer 1975; Sowell 1984).

As Kluegel and Smith (1986) emphasize, however, the dominant ideology may encounter challenging beliefs. Some individuals may reject individualistic views of inequality and adopt more structural views (Huber and Form 1973; Bobo 1991). The structural outlook recognizes systematic social constraints on opportunity based on social class, racial or gender discrimination, or other institutional barriers. Some maintain that structural thinking encourages a perception of members of other racial and ethnic groups as potential competitive threats. Cheng and Espiritu (1989) use this line of reasoning in attempting to explain the appearance of greater overt social conflict between African Americans and Korean Ameri-

tance of the Allportian or classical sociocultural model of prejudice (Pettigrew 1982; Katz 1991; Duckitt 1992).

[3] Early research on prejudice saw little need to distinguish attitude components or dimensions (Harding et al. 1954). Critics of the unidimensional view of prejudice argue that racial attitudes are multidimensional (Brigham, Woodmansee and Cook 1976; Jackman 1977; Bobo 1983). Nonetheless, some prominent analyses still assume a strong underlying prejudice-tolerance dimension that organizes most, if not all, racial attitudes (Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Weigel and Howes 1985; Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn 1993).

cans in Los Angeles than between Korean Americans and Latinos in that same city. They argue that the Latino and Asian American populations, which are more often foreign-born, should view opportunities as plentiful in the United States and as less constrained than in their countries of origin. Correspondingly, recent immigrant groups should be less likely to see other such groups as competitive threats compared to groups that arrived earlier.

Blumer's Group Position Model

Under the group-position model, intergroup hostility does not spring simply from material conditions, or simply from individual learning of negative feelings, beliefs, and orientations toward out-group members. *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 (Blumer 1958).[4] Although this model initially referred to a dominant social group's view of a subordinate group, we suggest that the framework is more general. To extend the framework, we focus on the individual-level dynamics of perceived threat and theorize about the attitudes of both dominant and minority racial group members.

Blumer's model explicitly incorporates negative feelings and beliefs as well as a concern with the material conditions of group life. As such, the model provides the frame for a coherent sociological *synthesis* of the self-interest approach, the classical prejudice approach, and the stratification belief approach. Individual psychology, cultural values, and self-interest are situated in a more complete vision of a "sense of group position" and the larger social processes that define such shared images of appropriate group status (Bobo and Tuan 1995).

Blumer identifies four elements as important in establishing the sense of group position: (1) A *belief about in-group superiority* or in-group preference exists, which in a traditional social science vocabulary could be termed "ethnocentrism." (2) In-group members view members of *out-groups as "alien and different,"* which invokes the notion of out-group stereotyping. These first two elements incorporate the core variables of group identity-affective attachment and stereotyping found in the classical prejudice model. For Blumer, however, two additional elements are necessary to make prejudice a dynamic social force: (3) The sense of group position involves assumptions of *proper or proprietary claim over certain rights*, resources, statuses and privileges—those things that in-group members are duly entitled to. (4) Out-group members desire a greater share of those rights, resources, statuses, or privileges that are "understood" to "belong" to the in-group.

The interweaving of these factors—group identity, out-group stereotyping, preferred group status, and perceived threat—thus constitute the fully developed "sense of group position." Blumer held that such ideas emerge as leaders or significant segments of social groups contend with one another through public discourse and political struggle. Thus, the sense of group position is not reducible to learned individual feelings of group identity, affect, and stereotyping as emphasized by the classical prejudice model. Instead, a long-term social and historical process is shaped by the exchange of ideas among organized leadership segments of racial groups. This exchange sparks, hones, disseminates, and thereby creates shared ideas about where the in-group ought to stand in the social order relative to other groups (Blumer and Duster 1980; Lal 1995).

For our purposes, this theoretical model has two implications. First, it directs our atten-

[4] In fact, Blumer (1958) stressed the subjective and normative thrust of the sense of group position:

> Sociologically it is not a mere reflection of the objective relations between racial groups. Rather it stands for "what ought to be" rather than for "what is." It is a sense of where the two racial groups *belong*. . . . In its own way, the sense of group position is a norm and imperative—indeed a very powerful one. It guides, incites, cows, and coerces. It should be borne in mind that this sense of group position stands for and involves a fundamental kind of group affiliation. . . ." (P. 5)

(See Bobo and Tuan [1995] for a fuller elaboration of the group position model.)

tion to perceived group competition or a group's zero-sum access to important social resources. This focus moves beyond the attitudes considered by the classical prejudice model (affect, stereotyping, social distance preferences). Critically, the group-position model assesses the degree to which individuals feel their group is threatened with the loss of significant resources to other social groups (LeVine and Campbell 1972). A focus on perceptions of zero-sum competition for social resources flows from Blumer's emphasis on the relational or positional character of racial prejudice and the sense of threat posed by an out-group to a preferred group position.

Second, we maintain that such perceptions are rooted in *race-specific* beliefs about the society's opportunity structure. Blumer's emphasis on the dominant group's beliefs about its status and entitlements resembles but differs from the stratification beliefs model. Because we want to extend Blumer's framework to include racial minority group members, we focus on the closely allied concept of *racial alienation*. Racial alienation ranges along a continuum from the profound sense of group enfranchisement and entitlement typical of members of the dominant racial group to a profound sense of group disenfranchisement and grievance typical of members of subordinate racial groups. Members of a racial group who feel alienated and oppressed are more likely to regard other racial groups as competitive threats to their own group's social position.

Feelings of *racial alienation* have a collective dimension and become culturally shared. They emerge from historical experience and the current social, political, and economic niches *typically* occupied by members of a racial group. To understand why members of one group feel threatened by members of another group, individuals' feelings about the treatment, conditions, and opportunities that have historically faced members of their own group must be measured.

The degree of racial alienation is assumed to correspond to a group's historical position in the social structure. With their institutionalized privileges, members of the dominant racial group rarely feel alienated in this sense. Indeed, the more secure the relative power, economic, and status advantages of the dominant group, the less alienated and threatened they will feel. Members of subordinate racial groups, with their institutionalized disadvantages, will often feel such alienation. Among subordinate racial groups, the level of alienation will vary based on group differences in the persistence, pervasiveness across domains of life (i.e., economics, politics, education, etc.), and degree of inequality of life chances. This argument implies that members of more recent (and voluntarily incorporated) subordinate groups will feel less alienated than will members of long-term (and involuntarily incorporated) subordinate groups. In short, the greater the degree of racial subordination, the greater the feeling of racial alienation. By implication, the overall tendency to perceive members of other groups as competitive threats will correspond to the overall degree of racial alienation.[5]

This is an important point because it differentiates the group-position model from the simple self-interest model. We do not expect objective personal vulnerability to racial change to strongly drive feelings of threat or to drive judgments about the degree of racial alienation. *Feelings of alienation and threat are the product of social and collective processes that derive from the long-term experiences and conditions that members of a racial group have faced. These feelings are shaped, as Blumer argued, by an on-going process of collective social definition that*

[5] Racial alienation is a dimension of collective memory (Schuman and Scott 1989), with reference to racial and ethnic stratification. It is part of how the macro-level and historical dimensions of group experience are felt, perceived and understood at the microlevel (Schuman and Hatchett 1974). "Particular instances of discrimination may seem minor to outside white observers when considered in isolation. But when blatant acts of avoidance, verbal harassment, and physical attack combine with subtle and covert slights, and these accumulate over months, years, and life times, the impact on a black person is far more than the sum of individual instances. . . . The micro-level events of public accommodations and public streets are not just rare and isolated encounters by individuals; they are recurring events reflecting an invasion of the microworld by the macroworld of historical racial subordination" (Feagin 1991:114–15). Feelings of racial alienation reflect the accumulated personal, familial, community, and collective experiences of racial differentiation, inequality, and discrimination.

cannot be reduced to the current status of individuals. This suggests that the longer the history of relations between dominant and subordinate group members, the more fully crystallized is the sense of relative group position; the shorter the history of group contact and interaction, the less well crystallized the sense of group position is likely to be.

Race-specific beliefs about opportunity differ from general values and beliefs about opportunity. To feel, for instance, that Latinos historically have not been treated fairly in the United States is different from (even if related to) general societal ideas of the work ethic, reward based on merit, and the necessity for unequal reward as an incentive to achievement (Kluegel and Smith 1986).

Although they point to different mechanisms and dynamics and sometimes differ in expectations, the self-interest, prejudice, stratification beliefs, and group-position models are not mutually exclusive approaches to intergroup attitudes and relations (Bobo 1988a, 1988b). Indeed, we argue that the group-position model provides an intellectually coherent reconciliation of perspectives often treated as competing.

HYPOTHESES

H_1: *Simple Self-Interest.* Individuals with low socioeconomic status or who experience changes in the racial composition of their neighborhoods or workplaces are more likely to regard out-group members as significant competitors for scarce social resources.

H_2: *Racial Prejudice.* Individuals who hold more aversive attitudes (i.e., negative affect and social distance feelings) and negative stereotypes are more likely to regard out-group members as significant competitors for scarce social resources.

H_3: *Stratification Beliefs.* Individuals who view the U.S. opportunity structure as fair and open are less likely to perceive out-group members as significant competitors for scarce social resources.

H_4: *Group Position.* Individuals who feel that their group is racially alienated are more likely to perceive out-group members as significant competitors for scarce social resources.

DATA AND MEASURES

The data come from the 1992 Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS), a county-wide, random-digit dialed, computer-assisted telephone survey of adults living in households. The survey oversampled telephone numbers in zip code areas with high concentrations of Blacks (65 percent or more) or Asians (30 percent or more) to generate larger numbers of Black and Asian respondents. To capture Los Angeles' large Latino population, a Spanish version of the questionnaire was developed. Spanish-speakers and those who preferred to respond to questions in Spanish were interviewed in Spanish.

A total of 1,869 respondents were interviewed: 625 Whites, 483 Blacks, 477 Latinos, and 284 Asians. Owing to a split-ballot design for some measures, some portions of the analysis are based on fewer cases.

Interviews were conducted by trained student interviewers enrolled in a course on survey methods and by the professional interviewing staff of the UCLA Survey Research Center. The student interviewers received 12 hours of training. The LACSS employs a 12-call callback procedure, systematically varying the day of the week and time of day, before dropping any numbers from the sample. The study had an overall cooperation rate of 55 percent. Interviews averaged 38 minutes in length. The distributions of sample characteristics on key social background variables closely resemble data from the 1990 Census for each group (Bobo et al 1994).[6]

[6] We compared the LACSS data to 1990 Census distributions for nativity, sex, education, age, family income, and occupation. The only noteworthy differences emerged for the education variable, which is typical for telephone surveys. Our sample, particularly the Black and Latino samples, is better educated than the population at large. Not all households have telephones, and telephone coverage varies by social class and race: Affluent households and White households more often have telephones than do poor or Black and Latino households (Groves and Kahn 1979; Thornberry and Massey 1988). In particular, individuals lacking a high school diploma are underrepresented in the LACSS data. In addition, because of the many Asian nationality groups and languages—19 different countries of origin were represented among Asians—it was impractical to develop additional foreign language translations

Following the procedure developed by O'Neil (1979), we assessed possible nonresponse bias across a wide range of questionnaire items including measures of racial attitudes and found no signs of such bias (Greenwell, Strohm, and Bobo 1994).

RESULTS

Levels of Perceived Threat

Four items gauge respondents' perceptions of threat or zero-sum competition for scarce social resources. These items spanned the life domains of jobs and economics, politics, and residential space. The items on group competition were asked as part of a split-ballot design in which group-targeted questions were asked of a randomly selected one-third of respondents. The items, which involved a strongly agree to strongly disagree response format and referred either to Blacks, Asians, or Hispanics, were:

Job competition: More good jobs for (Asians/Blacks/Hispanics) means fewer good jobs for members of other groups.

Political competition: The more influence (Asians/Blacks/Hispanics) have in local politics the less influence members of other groups will have in local politics.

Housing competition: As more good housing and neighborhoods go to (Asians/Blacks/Hispanics), the fewer good houses and neighborhoods there will be for members of other groups.

Economic competition: Many (Asians/Blacks/Hispanics) have been trying to get ahead economically at the expense of other groups.

We determine whether feelings of zero-sum competition differed according to the racial group targeted in the question (e.g., are Blacks more likely to be seen as zero-sum competitors by others than are Asians or Latinos), by the domain at issue (i.e., jobs versus housing), or by the race of the respondent. Table 1 shows the mean scores for each of the items—the higher the score the greater the feeling of zero-sum competition. Information on two types of tests are reported. The final column shows F-test results for overall between-group differences. Within-group F-test results for differences in reaction to each targeted group are shown in the body of the table (e.g., do Latinos feel a greater threat from Asians than they do from Blacks, or do Asians feel greater threat from Blacks than they do from Latinos).

Several patterns emerge. At the broadest level, the mean scores reveal only moderate levels of perceived zero-sum competition. This moderate threat of competition holds across race, targeted group, and life domain. Although scores can range from a low 1.0 to a high of 5.0, most mean scores are between 2.0 and 3.0. The highest mean score of 3.29 occurs for Black respondents' perceptions of job competition with Asians. The lowest mean score (2.43) occurs for White respondents' perceived competition for residential space with Blacks. In sum, significant numbers of people of all racial backgrounds see group relations in zero-sum terms: 28 percent of White respondents gave "agree" or "strongly agree" responses on average to the four zero-sum competition items, compared to 40 percent for African Americans, 39 percent for Latinos, and 24 percent for Asian Americans. Yet, the tendency to see group relations in zero-sum terms is not the majority view of any racial group. Indeed, most individuals deny that interracial relations are structured in a zero-sum fashion.

Groups differ in their reactions to the three targeted minority groups. Depending upon the respondent's race, some groups are seen as more threatening than others. Black respondents tend to perceive greater zero-sum competition with Asians than with Latinos in all four domains. The summary scale scores for Blacks reveals significantly greater threat from Asians than from Latinos ($F = 4.10$, $p < .05$). Likewise, Latino respondents tend to perceive greater zero-sum competition with Asians than with Blacks. Latinos' score on the summary scale is significantly higher for Asians than for Blacks.[7] A similar pattern

of the questionnaire. Thus, although 70 percent of our Asian respondents were foreign-born, this figure is substantially below the 1990 Census figures for Los Angeles County (88 percent).

[7] The Latino sample is largely of Mexican ancestry (66.2 percent); the remainder is divided among Central American (20.5 percent), South American (5.0 percent), or other Hispanic ancestries (Puerto Rican, Caribbean). No significant differences were found on the competition summary scale scores for Latinos of Mexican ances-

Table 1. Mean Scores on the Zero-Sum Competition Scale by Respondents' Race and Race of Targeted Group: Los Angeles County Social Survey, 1992

Domain and Race of Target Group	Respondents' Race				*F*-Statistic
	White	Black	Latino	Asian	
Job Competition					
Blacks	2.58	—	2.76	2.82	$(2.55)^{ns}$
Latinos	2.85	3.15	—	2.55	$(8.76)^{***}$
Asians	2.87	3.29	3.05	—	$(6.06)^{**}$
Political Competition					
Blacks	2.60	—	2.88	2.96	$(6.17)^{**}$
Latinos	2.93	2.68	—	2.76	$(2.67)^{ns}$
Asians	2.98	2.90	3.08	—	$(1.02)^{ns}$
Housing Competition					
Blacks	2.43	—	2.77	2.68	$(6.23)^{***}$
Latinos	2.58	2.82	—	2.63	$(2.43)^{ns}$
Asians	2.82	3.00	3.01	—	$(1.78)^{ns}$
Economic Competition					
Blacks	2.55	—	2.98	2.86	$(9.57)^{***}$
Latinos	2.63	2.82	—	2.62	$(1.88)^{ns}$
Asians	2.84	3.24	3.15	—	$(6.76)^{***}$
Zero-Sum Competition Summary					
Blacks	2.53	—	2.85	2.83	$(10.18)^{***}$
Latinos	2.75	2.87	—	2.64	$(2.66)^{ns}$
Asians	2.87	3.10	3.08	—	$(4.13)^{*}$

Note: Brackets and asterisks indicate significance levels for within-group comparisons and *F*-statistics.
$^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$ (two-tailed tests) ^{ns} difference not significant at $p < .05$

emerges among Whites, who consistently feel least threatened by Blacks and most threatened by Asians, with Latinos typically falling in between. Asian Americans tend to perceive a greater threat from Blacks than from Latinos, but this difference does not meet conventional criteria of significance for any of the individual items or for the summary scale ($F = 3.11$, $p = .07$).[8]

The items measuring competition appear to tap a well-defined attitude. Within each racial group, the perceptions of zero-sum competition measures yield reliable scales. Among all respondents Cronbach's alpha for

try versus Latinos of other Hispanic ancestries. Latinos' significant perception of greater threat from Asians than from Blacks was confirmed within the Mexican ancestry group ($F = 4.26$, $p < .05$), and was in the same direction but of borderline significance among Latinos with non-Mexican ancestry ($F = 3.52$, $p = .08$). That Blacks and Latinos both express feeling a significantly greater threat from Asians than from one another contradicts the expectations of Cheng and Espiritu (1989). However, it is consistent with impressions derived from media reports (Dunn 1992), focus group research (Bobo et al. 1994), and the high level of Latino involvement in the violence against Korean merchants during the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings (Johnson, Farrell, and Oliver 1993).

[8] The Asian American sample is very heterogeneous and includes Chinese (30.7 percent), Japanese (26.0 percent), Filipino (17.0 percent), Vietnamese (7.4 percent), Korean (4.9 percent), Indonesian (4.6 percent), and other Asian ancestries (9.5 percent). We compared mean scores on the summary scales targeting Blacks and Latinos for four Asian groups: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and all other Asians. Within each ancestry group, the pattern of differences mirrors those shown in

the summary scale scores for each target group is above .70.[9] Hence, the remaining analyses rely on average scores across the four items for a given target group.

Social Location of Perceived Threat

The self-interest model (Hypothesis 1) contends that individuals in economically vulnerable positions or who face other burdens as a result of ethnic change perceive greater competition from members of other groups. Table 2 shows mean scores on the competition summary scale by race of respondent, race of target group, and each of the social background and self-interest measures. We find no consistent or strong effects of the social background and self-interest measures: only 16 significant effects emerge from the 81 tests (9 tests for each of 9 variables). No background or self-interest variable consistently influences perceptions of zero-sum competition across respondent's race and target-group's race.

Nonetheless, a few patterns are worthy of note. Among White respondents, perceptions of threat from each targeted group are influenced by level of education, but in a nonmonotonic fashion. The most highly educated Whites (16 or more years) usually express the least sense of competitive threat, while generally those with a high school degree (12 years of education), not the most poorly educated, express the strongest competitive threat. Whites with high incomes tend to perceive less threat than their low-income counterparts. Asian American and Latino respondents who are foreign-born tend to perceive greater competition with Blacks than do their native-born co-ethnics. Equally interesting is the comparative lack of consistent effects for employment status and exposure to a changing neighborhood or workplace.

Having found at best only weak support for the self-interest model, we turn to a multivariate examination of the influence of prejudice, stratification beliefs, and sense of group position on perceptions of zero-sum competition. We use three indicators of prejudice: a measure of negative affect, a measure of negative stereotyping, and a social distance measure. Each measure refers to a specific target group (Blacks, Asians, or Latinos). We use four measures of stratification beliefs: a belief in an individualistic explanation of poverty, a belief in a structural explanation of poverty, a belief in the necessity of unequal economic outcomes (inequalitarianism), and a belief in the efficacy of individual hard work and effort (individualism). Each of these measures has been used in other research and is discussed more fully in the Appendix. To tap the concern with racial alienation, it was necessary to develop new measures. We use responses to four Likert-type response items to gauge racial alienation (see Appendix).

Perceptions of the Dominant Racial Group

Whites' perceptions of zero-sum competition appear to involve a blend of racial alienation (at least in relation to Blacks), prejudice, and beliefs about inequality. The results shown in Table 3 thus provide some support for the group-position model (Hypothesis 4) and the prejudice model (Hypothesis 2). However, we find no effects of background variables on Whites' perceptions of minorities as zero-sum threats (Hypothesis 1). Also, the pattern of effects for stratification beliefs is the opposite from that predicted by Hypothesis 3.

Whites' perceptions of Blacks as zero-sum competitors increase with increasing racial alienation, with negative stereotyping, social distance, and ironically, increasing income. The positive net effect of income may have a basis in self interest in that many Whites perceive the beneficiaries of affirmative action

Table 1: A nonsignificant but consistent tendency to perceive greater competition with Blacks than with Latinos. Japanese Americans, the Asian ancestry group with the highest proportion native-born, tend to consistently express the lowest levels of threat. The statistical power of these comparisons is constrained, however, by the small number of cases for specific national-origin categories.

[9] Within each racial category alphas are well above .60. Among White respondents, alpha for Blacks as the targeted group is .77, for Latinos it is .67, and for Asians it is .81. Among Black respondents, the alpha for Latinos as the targeted group is .73 and for Asians it is .78. Among Latino respondents, the alpha for Blacks as the targeted group is .71 and for Asians it is .68. Among Asian respondents, the alpha when the targeted group is Blacks is .72, and it is .76 when the targeted group is Latinos.

Table 2. Mean Score on the Competition Summary Scale by Respondents' Race, Race of Targeted Group, and Social Background Variables: Los Angeles County Social Survey, 1992

Background Variable	Targeted Group: Blacks — White Respondents	Blacks — Asian Respondents	Blacks — Latino Respondents	Asians — White Respondents	Asians — Latino Respondents	Asians — Black Respondents	Latinos — White Respondents	Latinos — Black Respondents	Latinos — Asian Respondents
Nativity									
Born in U.S.	2.52	2.56*	2.65*	2.85	2.95	3.11	2.78	2.89	2.40*
Foreign-born	2.68	2.93	2.96	2.97	3.13	2.83	2.59	2.64	2.75
Age									
18–27	2.37	2.83	2.97	2.96	3.04	3.10	2.82	3.05	2.82
28–37	2.52	2.93	2.91	2.77	3.05	2.97	2.82	2.76	2.50
38–51	2.43	2.76	2.60	2.87	3.31	3.16	2.65	2.74	2.70
52–92	2.70	2.83	2.80	2.90	2.87	3.09	2.79	2.92	2.34
Sex									
Male	2.49	2.81	2.88	2.80	3.02	3.06	2.77	2.81	2.47*
Female	2.58	2.88	2.82	2.93	3.12	3.12	2.74	2.91	2.82
Years of Education									
0–11	2.75**	3.50	3.01	2.90***	3.18	3.21	3.27***	3.20*	2.87
12	2.88	3.10	2.86	3.49	3.03	3.21	2.65	2.92	2.92
13–15	2.57	2.73	2.71	2.88	3.01	3.07	2.93	2.96	2.80
16 or more	2.34	2.79	2.67	2.60	2.86	3.01	2.55	2.48	2.49
Employment Status									
Not in labor force	2.41**	2.76	2.90	3.15**	3.20	3.11	2.81	2.88	2.64
Unemployed	2.77	2.67	3.20	2.25	3.21	3.19	2.70	2.79	3.00
Employed	2.81	2.85	2.79	2.78	2.99	3.09	2.72	2.85	2.63
Occupation									
Lower blue-collar	2.63	3.54	2.71	2.93*	2.96	3.75**	3.00	3.14	2.87
Upper blue-collar	2.71	2.83	2.94	3.14	2.97	3.37	2.81	3.08	2.67
Lower white-collar	2.33	2.87	2.71	2.88	2.96	2.95	2.73	2.65	2.72
Upper white-collar	2.31	2.62	2.72	2.59	3.14	2.66	2.61	2.79	2.49
Family Income									
Less than $10,000	2.77	2.81	2.96	3.19**	3.15	3.32	2.43*	3.21*	2.75
$10,001–20,000	2.62	3.00	2.93	3.42	3.15	3.11	3.19	3.08	3.08
$20,001–30,000	2.12	2.75	2.70	2.99	3.06	3.19	2.84	2.74	2.61
$30,001–40,000	2.58	3.09	2.82	2.85	3.13	3.02	2.73	2.74	2.39
$40,001–50,000	2.33	2.82	2.41	2.62	2.69	2.98	2.79	2.64	2.56
$50,001–60,000	2.87	2.45	2.53	2.40	2.55	2.64	2.51	2.37	2.54
$60,001 or more	2.48	2.74	2.75	2.78	2.87	3.00	2.58	2.51	2.46
Neighborhood Changing									
Yes	2.61	2.84	2.87	2.77	3.10	3.11	2.78	2.77	2.64
No	2.45	2.83	2.82	2.93	3.05	3.09	2.72	2.94	2.63
Workplace Changing									
Yes	2.65***	3.00	2.83	2.59	3.12	3.18	2.81	2.67	2.40
No	2.36	2.83	2.77	2.81	2.96	3.06	2.70	2.90	2.68
Not in labor force	2.77	2.80	2.94	3.02	3.20	3.12	2.83	2.90	2.66

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Note: Boxes indicate significant differences in mean scores for each variable within racial group categories.

Table 3. OLS Coefficients for Regression of Mean Score on the Competition Summary Scale on Selected Independent Variables: White Respondents in the Los Angeles County Social Survey, 1992

	Targeted Group					
Independent Variables	Blacks	(S.E.)	Latinos	(S.E.)	Asians	(S.E.)
Constant	1.36	(.81)	.11	(1.03)	1.67	(1.12)
Background						
Native-born	−.00	(.14)	.28	(.16)	−.07	(.18)
Education	−.11*	(.05)	.01	(.05)	−.06	(.05)
Income	.05*	(.03)	−.07	(.03)	−.04	(.04)
Male	.15	(.10)	.11	(.12)	.01	(.14)
Age	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	−.00	(.00)
Neighborhood changing	−.04	(.10)	.05	(.11)	.02	(.14)
Workplace changing	.10	(.14)	.14	(.17)	−.09	(.22)
Not in labor force	.15	(.25)	−.27	(.32)	.23	(.37)
Unemployed	.25	(.31)	−.48	(.41)	.06	(.44)
Upper blue-collar	.15	(.23)	−.38	(.28)	.17	(.35)
Lower white-collar	−.13	(.20)	−.40	(.26)	.22	(.34)
Upper white-collar	-.05	(.20)	−.44	(.26)	.13	(.33)
Prejudice						
Negative stereotypes	.12*	(.05)	.15**	(.06)	.02	(.06)
Social distance	.23***	(.06)	.08	(.06)	.34***	(.07)
Negative affect	.00	(.00)	.01*	(.00)	.00	(.00)
Stratification Beliefs						
Individual poverty	.06	(.05)	.17*	(.07)	.04	(.07)
Structural poverty	−.12*	(.05)	.00	(.06)	.04	(.07)
Individualism	.02	(.05)	.08	(.06)	.05	(.07)
Inequalitarianism	.06	(.06)	.08	(.06)	.20***	(.06)
Group Position						
Racial alienation	.28**	(.08)	.13	(.11)	.09	(.60)
Adjusted R^2	.45		.31		.35	
Number of cases	168		164		170	

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

to have been middle-class Blacks (Wilson 1978, 1987). Highly educated Whites and Whites who attribute poverty to structural causes are less likely to see Blacks as competitive threats. These patterns suggest that Whites who adopt a conventional liberal interpretation (i.e., structural) of the status of Blacks are less likely to see Blacks as a collective threat.

Racial alienation is significant only for Whites' reactions to Blacks. However, feelings of social distance do increase Whites' perceptions of zero-sum competition from Asians—the other *racially* distinct group. The lack of an effect for feelings of social distance in response to Latinos may suggest that racial distinctions differ from ethnic distinctions (Lieberson 1980; Stone 1985; Waters 1990). Nonetheless, negative stereotyping, another important aspect of prejudice, increases Whites' perceptions of Latinos as zero-sum competitors as it does for Blacks.

Stratification beliefs influence Whites' perceptions of Latinos and Asians as zero-sum competitors for social resources. The specific

variable with a significant effect differs depending on whether Whites are reacting to Latinos or Asians, but the logical basis of the effects seems similar. Attributing poverty to individual failings increases Whites' perceptions of threat from Latinos, while a commitment to notions of unequal reward (inequalitarianism) increases Whites' perceptions of threat from Asians. In effect, Whites who see relative socioeconomic success or failure in individualistic terms are more likely to perceive Latinos and Asians as competitive threats.

Taken as a whole, these patterns have two implications. First, Whites' perceptions of threat from minority groups have complex determinants and do not seem strongly rooted in a simple self-interest calculus. Second, there are meaningful similarities and differences in the underlying bases of response to the specific target groups. Whites' responses to African Americans and to Asian Americans appear to be based on a perceived racial distinctiveness as indicated by the influence of feelings of social distance on perceived threat.[10] Whites' responses to Latinos and African Americans share a basis in negative stereotypes of these groups, perhaps because of the relative economic disadvantage of both groups. Otherwise, Whites' response to African Americans differs in important respects from their reactions to Latinos and Asian Americans. For Whites' views of African Americans, the model explains more of the variance, the racial alienation measure has a strong effect, and a belief in a structural explanation for economic inequality is important. For the model explaining Whites' reactions to Latinos and Asian Americans, racial alienation has no effect, and it is individualistic thinking about inequality that is important for perceptions of threat. A large proportion of the Latino and Asian populations are recent immigrants who were admitted to the United States under conditions largely controlled by members of the dominant racial group. The differential responses of Whites to Blacks as contrasted to Latinos and Asians thus seem linked to the historical experiences of these minority groups and to their current relative position in the U.S. economy and polity.

Racial Minority Group Perceptions

Table 4 shows models predicting perceptions of zero-sum competition among minority respondents. To simplify the presentation, we pooled the data for the relevant pair of outgroups (e.g., Asians and Latinos) when predicting competition summary scale scores for a particular target group (e.g., Blacks), and included interaction terms where necessary. In general, racial alienation is the most consistently influential factor, but measures of prejudice (negative affect and social distance), one of the background measures (low income), and individualistic beliefs about the nature of inequality (i.e., individualism and individual poverty) sometimes contribute to perceptions of zero-sum competition.

Specifically, perceptions of competition with Blacks increases with increasing racial alienation, particularly so among Asian respondents as compared to Latinos as shown by the large and significant interaction effect. In addition, the greater the social distance Asians and Latinos prefer to maintain from Blacks, the more likely they are to see Blacks as competitors. The background variables and the stratification belief variables do not directly influence whether Asians and Latinos perceive a threat from Blacks.

For Blacks and Asians, rising racial alienation increases the perception of competition with Latinos. (The test for an interaction was not significant.) Negative affect increases perceptions of threat from Latinos among Blacks and Asians as well. However, there is an interaction between individualism and race, with individualism playing a much larger role among Asians than among Blacks. Asian American respondents who accept the idea that hard work yields positive rewards are more likely to view Latinos as a competitive threat. We also find a significant negative net effect of income: Blacks and Asians with low incomes perceive a greater threat from Latinos than do Blacks and Asians with high incomes.

For Black and Latino respondents, we find that as racial alienation rises so does the perception of Asians as competitors. Blacks and

[10] In an analysis of views on racial residential integration, Bobo and Zubrinsky (1996) find a similar pattern among White respondents.

Table 4. OLS Coefficients for Regression of Mean Score on the Competition Summary Scale on Selected Independent Variables: Black, Asian, and Latino Respondents in the Los Angeles County Social Survey, 1992

	Targeted Group					
Independent Variables	Blacks[a]	(S.E.)	Latinos[b]	(S.E.)	Asians[c]	(S.E.)
Constant	3.63***	(.80)	2.67**	(.94)	.39	(.87)
Background						
Asian	−.92	(.64)	−.92*	(.46)	—	
Latino	—		—		.42	(.52)
Native-born	−.19	(.11)	−.23	(.15)	−.07	(.16)
Education	−.07	(.04)	−.00	(.05)	−.02	(.04)
Income	−.06	(.03)	−.11***	(.03)	−.07*	(.03)
Male	−.03	(.10)	.11	(.11)	.13	(.10)
Age	−.00	(.00)	−.00	(.00)	−.00	(.00)
Neighborhood changing	.09	(.10)	.20	(.10)	.21	(.11)
Workplace changing	−.12	(.14)	−.06	(.16)	.21	(.16)
Not in labor force	−.25	(.22)	−.27	(.26)	.09	(.23)
Unemployed	.00	(.30)	.01	(.39)	.23	(.37)
Upper blue-collar	−.06	(.17)	−.15	(.26)	.06	(.18)
Lower white-collar	−.09	(.18)	−.21	(.25)	−.19	(.20)
Upper white-collar	.06	(.20)	.02	(.26)	−.17	(.22)
Prejudice						
Negative stereotypes	.02	(.04)	−.01	(.04)	.04	(.04)
Social distance	.17*	(.07)	−.09	(.06)	.03	(.05)
Negative affect	.00	(.00)	.01***	(.00)	.01***	(.00)
Stratification Beliefs						
Individual poverty	.03	(.06)	.04	(.06)	.19**	(.06)
Structural poverty	.03	(.06)	−.03	(.06)	.05	(.06)
Individualism	.03	(.06)	−.07	(.07)	.01	(.06)
Inequalitarianism	.04	(.06)	.11	(.06)	.11	(.06)
Group Position						
Racial alienation	−.10	(.10)	.19*	(.08)	.21*	(.10)
Interactions						
Asian × racial alienation	.60**	(.19)	—		—	
Asian × individualism	—		.34**	(.12)	—	
Latino × negative affect	—		—		−.01***	(.00)
Adjusted R^2	.20		.28		.24	
Number of cases	203		205		245	

[a] Predicting whether Latinos and Asians (pooled) perceive competition with Blacks.

[b] Predicting whether Blacks and Asians (pooled) perceive competition with Latinos.

[c] Predicting whether Blacks and Latinos (pooled) perceive competition with Asians.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Latinos who attribute poverty to individual failings are more likely to regard Asians as competitive threats. But prejudice also influences perceptions of threat from Asians, at least among Black respondents as shown by the significant interaction term for the negative affect measure. Self-interest also matters: Blacks and Latinos with low incomes are more likely than those with high incomes to regard Asians as competitive threats.

Racial Alienation

The effects found for the racial alienation measure and its central place in our extension of Blumer's group-position theory require us to clarify the nature of racial alienation. We wanted to measure shared beliefs about the treatment received by and opportunity offered to one's racial group in the larger social order. The working theory leads us to expect that such beliefs are strongly anchored in group membership per se, and are less powerfully shaped by individual background and status characteristics. The results of OLS regression models predicting racial alienation scores strongly support this hypothesis.

Model 1 in Table 5 shows the impact of racial background on racial alienation, with dummy variables for Black, Latino, and Asian respondents compared to White respondents (the omitted category). Members of each racial minority group score significantly higher on racial alienation than do Whites. The Black-White gap is particularly large ($b = 1.18$; $p < .001$), nearly twice the size of the Latino-White ($b = .65$; $p < .001$) or Asian-White difference ($b = .49$; $p < .001$), and the gap is more than a full standard deviation unit in magnitude. Furthermore, the racial background variables alone account for 34 percent of the variance in racial alienation scores! Model 2 reports coefficients for a model that adds the social background and self-interest variables to Model 1. Each of the three race variables continues to show large differences from Whites in degree of racial alienation net of these controls.

Model 3 adds interaction terms for the most plausible sources of differential effects across racial background to Model 2—namely nativity, education, and income. Only one interaction is significant. As income rises, feelings of racial alienation decline among Whites, but the opposite effect occurs among African Americans—increasing income tends to increase Blacks' feelings of racial alienation.[11] Feelings of racial alienation tend to decrease with age among all races. In the presence of numerous interaction terms, the main effect coefficients for the race dummy variables are, of course, not meaningful when viewed in isolation.

Overall, these results point to a relatively clear-cut, largely race-based, but also partly class-based continuum of racial alienation. White Americans unequivocally have the least sense of racial alienation. At the other end of the continuum are African Americans, who express the greatest sense of racial alienation. Between these two are Asian Americans and Latinos, who do not differ significantly from one another in their feelings of alientation.

CONCLUSIONS

Feelings of competitive threat from members of other racial groups have complex determinants. The patterns depend on the racial background of who is doing the looking as well as on the background of who is being looked at. The full set of results confirm aspects of the group-position, classical prejudice, stratification beliefs, and self-interest models. Perceptions of competitive group

[11] We also examined models of racial alienation separately for each racial group. Among Whites we found significant negative effects of education, income, and native-born status. These effects suggest that increasing privilege in the class hierarchy tends to reduce feelings of racial alienation among Whites. For Blacks, we found a significant *positive* effect for income, which confirms Feagin and Sikes's (1994) contention that movement into the middle class often deepens African Americans' sense of never being fully included in the "American mainstream." Although the signs of the coefficients were in the same direction and were roughly comparable in magnitude to those observed among White respondents, none of the individual variables had significant effects on racial alienation among Asian or Latino respondents. These patterns for racial minority respondents are consistent with our main contention that feelings of racial alienation are not significantly shaped by individual-level status characteristics.

Table 5. OLS Coefficients for Regression of Racial Alienation Score on Selected Independent Variables: Los Angeles County Social Survey, 1992

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Independent Variables	Coefficient	(S.E.)	Coefficient	(S.E.)	Coefficient	(S.E.)
Constant	2.20***	(.03)	2.87***	(.28)	3.22***	(.29)
Race						
Asian	.49***	(.05)	.42***	(.06)	−.36	(.49)
Black	1.18***	(.05)	1.16***	(.05)	.31	(.51)
Latino	.65***	(.06)	.54***	(.07)	.07	(.68)
Background						
Native-born	—		−.07	(.05)	−.16*	(.08)
Education	—		−.02	(.02)	−.02	(.02)
Income	—		−.02	(.01)	−.07***	(.01)
Male	—		−.01	(.00)	−.01	(.04)
Age	—		−.00***	(.00)	−.00***	(.00)
Neighborhood changing	—		−.01	(.04)	−.01	(.04)
Workplace changing	—		.03	(.06)	.02	(.06)
Not in labor force	—		.07	(.10)	.02	(.10)
Unemployed	—		.10	(.14)	.04	(.13)
Upper blue-collar	—		−.08	(.09)	−.09	(.09)
Lower white-collar	—		−.03	(.08)	−.04	(.08)
Upper white-collar	—		−.09	(.09)	−.11	(.08)
Interactions						
Native-born × Asian	—		—		.12	(.13)
Native-born × Black	—		—		−.30	(.46)
Native-born × Latino	—		—		.12	(.14)
Education × Asian	—		—		.53	(.46)
Education × Black	—		—		−.30	(.46)
Education × Latino	—		—		.13	(.66)
Income × Asian	—		—		.03	(.03)
Income × Black	—		—		.15***	(.02)
Income × Latino	—		—		.05	(.03)
Adjusted R^2	.34		.35		.38	
Number of cases	1,190		1,190		1,190	

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

threat thus involve genuinely *social*-psychological processes that are not reducible to a single cause nor to purely individual-level psychological dynamics.

We find that perceptions of competition and threat from other racial groups can be reliably measured. Such perceptions, while not acute in our data, are fairly common. Substantial percentages (though typically less than 50 percent), of Whites, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians perceive members of other groups as zero-sum competitive threats for social resources. African Americans, closely followed by Latinos, are most likely to see other groups as competitive threats, and non-Hispanic Whites tend to be the least likely to hold such views. These patterns reflect the historical and contemporary forms of racial subordination these groups have faced (Blauner 1972; Almagauer 1994).

Perceptions of group competition tend to be based on a mix of racial alienation, prejudice, stratification beliefs, and self-interest. As expected under the group-position model (Hypothesis 4), individuals who perceive members of their own group as generally facing unfair treatment in the larger social order tend to be more likely to regard members of other groups as competitive threats. Straightforward self-interest effects (Hypothesis 1) tend to emerge among minority respondents, but not among Whites. African American and Latino respondents with low incomes are more likely to perceive other groups as zero-sum competitors. Prejudice contributes to perceptions of threat as well, but the salient dimension of prejudice hinges on both the target group and the background of the respondent (Hypothesis 2) and education was not a consistent factor. Most important for our larger argument, however, perceptions of threat involve more than classical racial prejudice.

Stratification ideology also matters (Hypothesis 3), but the relevant aspects of stratification ideology is contingent. More important, the patterns are unexpected. Structural thinking, rather than increasing perceptions of threat, decreases Whites' tendency to view Blacks as competitive threats. Individualistic thinking is more consistently important than is structural thinking. However, rather than decreasing perceptions of threat, individualistic thinking tends to encourage Whites to view Asian Americans and Latinos as competitive threats, to encourage Asians to view Latinos as competitive threats, and to encourage Blacks and Latinos to view Asians as competitive threats. We speculate that these differential patterns are the legacy of the civil rights movement and antidiscrimination struggles led by African Americans that may increase sensitivity to structural constraints when focusing on Blacks. Also, the recent and often economically motivated immigration of many Asian Americans and Latinos may make striving for individual achievement salient when focusing on these groups.

Two patterns are particularly intriguing: the gaping disparity in feelings of racial alienation in the U.S. social order that separate Blacks and Whites, and the strong impact of racial alienation on Whites' perceptions of threat from Blacks given the absence of any impact of racial alienation on Whites' perceptions of threat from Asians or Latinos. Given our conceptualization of racial alienation as a collective and historically developed sense of group position in the social order, it is telling that Whites and Blacks occupy the extremes of the continuum, and that among Whites racial alienation is distinctly linked to perceptions of African Americans. A narrow framing of this result holds that those Whites who have feelings of racial alienation probably have Blacks in mind as the comparison group toward whom they feel a special sense of grievance. A broader framing, and one that we think comports well with the remarkable depth and tenacity of anti-Black racism in the United States (Lieberson 1980; Massey and Denton 1993; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Oliver and Shapiro 1995), is that African Americans currently constitute a unique cultural reference point for many White Americans—African Americans are the proverbial "faces at the bottom of the well" (Bell 1992; also see Feagin and Sikes 1994).

Under either frame, Whites perceive African Americans as competitors in a fashion that differs from their perceptions of Asians and Latinos. That difference appears to involve assumptions about the racial order as a whole. Among Whites, to be sure, aspects of prejudice and stratification ideology increase the chances of perceiving members of *any* racial minority group as competitors. However, White responses to African Americans also suggest a connection to ideas about appropriate status relations among racial groups. We hasten to emphasize, first, that Whites in our Los Angeles sample perceive a low absolute level of threat from Blacks relative to the threat they perceive from Latinos and Asians. Second, the recency of Latino and Asian immigration may leave many Whites with a less well-crystallized sense of group position relative to these groups, hence the weak effects for the racial alienation measure.

Blumer's group-position theory, we believe, provides the most parsimonious framework for integrating the full set of results. Like Jackman's (1994) intergroup ideology approach, Blumer's model views interracial hostility as the product of the historical forging of group identities and attachments, intergroup images (i.e., stereotypes), and as-

sessments of collective interests and challenges to those interests. This perspective recognizes the factors specified in the self-interest, classical prejudice, and stratification beliefs models. None of these models, however, can account for the complexity of our results. Blumer's group-position model provides the most comprehensive theoretical leverage and goes further to emphasize that identity, stereotypes, values, and assessments of interests are shaped historically and involve a collective and relational dimension between groups that powerfully engages emergent normative ideas about appropriate group statuses and entitlements.

Blumer places perceptions of group competition and threat at the core of his sociological analysis of prejudice. We have shown that such perceptions can be reliably measured and that they have meaningful social and psychological underpinnings. Future research on perceptions of group competition needs to move in several directions. Such perceptions should be regularly monitored in a variety of social settings. Large multiracial samples from different communities will make it possible to assess the effects on perceptions of threat of such power resources as relative group size, degree of political organization and leadership, skill levels, and relative group economic inequality (Blalock 1965; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989).

As part of this effort, coverage of the items tapping perceived threat should be expanded to assess whether and why racial minorities perceive White Americans as competitive threats. In hindsight, this was a serious omission in our survey design and should be a high priority in future research. Greater attention should be devoted to disentangling the microlevel processes of within-group interaction and socialization that pass on distinctive group perspectives on the social order, such as feelings of racial alienation. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the part played by perceptions of threat in debates on racially relevant social policies such as affirmative action and immigration.

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Appendix. Methods of Index Construction

PREJUDICE

Negative affect was measured using three 0- to 100-degree "feeling thermometers": one for "Blacks," one for "Asians," and one for "Hispanics." Respondents were told that a score of 0 meant unfavorable or cold feelings toward a group, that a 100 score meant favorable or warm feelings, and that scores of 50 meant neutral feelings. "Don't know" responses were few (less than 5 percent) and were scored at the neutral point of 50. For our analyses, scores were *reversed* so that high scores indicate negative affect.

Stereotyping was measured using race-group specific seven-point ratings for three bipolar traits: (1) intelligent—unintelligent, (2) prefer to be self-supporting—prefer to live off of welfare, and (3) easy to get along with—hard to get along with. The items share small to moderate positive intercorrelations across each racial target group for all respondents. "Don't know" responses were few and were scored as neutral. The scores on the three items were averaged to create a target-group-specific (e.g., anti-Asian stereotype) index of negative stereotyping. Similarly formatted and constructed items and indi-

ces were used by Bobo and Kluegel (1993), by Farley et. al (1994), and by Bobo and Zubrinsky (1996).

Social distance feelings were measured with responses to two questions—one concerning residential integration and one concerning interracial marriage. Respondents were asked: "How about living in a neighborhood where half of your neighbors would be (Asian American/Black/Hispanic American)?" and "What about having a close relative or family member marry an (Asian American/Black/Hispanic American)?" The response format allowed respondents to indicate that they would be "very much in favor of it happening," "somewhat in favor of it happening," "neither in favor nor opposed to it happening," "somewhat opposed," or "very much opposed to it happening." "Don't know" responses were few and were scored at the mid-point. The items share moderate correlations across target groups among all respondents. The scores for the two items were summed and then averaged with high scores indicating greater social distance.

STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Individualism was measured using responses to two Likert-type items: "If people work hard they almost always get what they want," and "Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really have only themselves to blame." *Inequalitarianism* was measured using responses to two Likert-type items: "Some people are just better cut out than others for important positions in society," and "Some people are better at running things and should be allowed to do so." "Don't know" responses were few (less than 5 percent) and were scored at the mid-point. Each pair of items shared moderate positive intercorrelations and were more highly correlated internally than across constructs. The items were taken from the National Election Study and the measurement properties and correlates of the items have been analyzed in detail by Feldman (1988).

Individual poverty was measured using responses to two Likert-type items concerning poverty. One item blames poverty on "loose morals and drunkenness" and the other item blames poverty on "lack of effort by the poor themselves." *Structural poverty* was measured using responses to two Likert-type items. One item blamed poverty on the "failure of society to provide good schools for many Americans," and the other item blamed the "failure of industry to provide enough jobs." "Don't know" responses were few (less than 2 percent) and were scored at the mid-point. Each pair of items shared positive intercorrelations and were more highly intercorrelated internally than across constructs. The items originated with Feagin's (1975) 1969 national survey and were repeated in a 1982 national survey (Kluegel and Smith 1986) and in the 1990 General Social Survey (Bobo and Kluegel 1993).

GROUP POSITION

The items tapping *racial alienation*, which used Likert-type response formats, were: "American society owes people of my ethnic group a better chance in life than we currently have"; "American society has provided people of my ethnic group a fair opportunity to get ahead in life"; "I am grateful for all of the special opportunities people of my ethnic group have found in America"; and "American society just hasn't dealt fairly with people from my ethnic background." The items have strong face validity as measures of alienation. Each item speaks to the condition of the respondent's group as a whole, and calls for judgments of broad historical sweep rather than of immediate or short-term circumstances. There were few "don't know" responses to these items—2 percent or less among White, Black, Latino, and Asian respondents. The overall reliability of the scale was acceptable (alpha = .65). The items shared moderate intercorrelations across all groups, and the individual items correlated well with the summary *racial alienation scale*, which is an average score across the four items. The group-specific alphas, however, were less than ideal (alpha = .58 for Whites, .53 for Blacks, .52 for Latinos, and .42 for Asians). There was no single unequivocally weak item in the set. Although the "grateful for special opportunities" item generally had a low correlation with the "fair opportunity" item, it also had the strongest correlation with the "hasn't dealt fairly" item. Hence, we used a scale based on all four items.

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