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Rainbow Coalition in the Golden State?

Exposing Myths, Uncovering New Realities
in Latino Attitudes toward Blacks

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1970s and 1980s Blacks and Latinos appeared close to forming a “rainbow coalition” that would work for the political and social benefit of both groups. Large metropolitan cities with sizable minority populations, like New York, Denver, and Los Angeles, saw Black-Brown coalitions to elect African American and Latino mayors, and continuing cooperation seemed to be in the best interest of both groups. In Los Angeles, Latinos were brought into the Bradley coalition over time and became important partners in electing African Americans to office in California. In Colorado, Blacks alongside Hispanics were a big part of the coalition to elect Peña as mayor of Denver. However, in recent years the possibility of a rainbow coalition has come into question, largely as a result of the rapid growth in the Latino population, which has doubled from twenty million to forty million since 1980. Latinos have now surpassed Blacks as the largest minority group in the United States, and many have argued that cooperation has given way to conflict based on real and perceived competition for resources between Blacks and Latinos.

California presents an interesting test of this theory of conflict between Latinos and Blacks. Because it has the largest Latino population in the United States and the largest Black population of all the western states, the potential for competition or conflict or both between



the groups there seems high. Anecdotally, some have claimed to find evidence of conflict, at least in the political arena. In 2001, Blacks uniformly voted against the Latino mayoral candidate in Los Angeles, in 1994 they backed Proposition 187, and according to Vaca (2004), some Blacks even worked against the enforcement of equal opportunity laws for Latinos in L.A. This suggests that Latinos in California may see Blacks as direct competition for political and social resources.

Some data point to intergroup conflict between Latinos and Blacks outside the Californian context. McClain et al.'s 2006 article on intergroup conflict in North Carolina found that Latinos did not trust African Americans, and political coalitions were unlikely. Kamasaki and Yzaguirre (1994–95) have argued that Latinos are chronically underrepresented at the federal, state, and local levels and that some Latinos believe that Black leaders invoke solidarity on issues of mutual concern but use their political power to advance Black interests over mutual ones. Multicity studies have also found that Latinos are politically disadvantaged in cities with Black majorities or pluralities and that increases in the Black population have a negative effect on Latino education and income and lead to higher rates of Latino poverty (McClain and Karnig 1990; McClain and Tauber 1998). In a detailed study of intergroup attitudes in Houston, Mindiola et al. (2002) found that Latinos held more negative stereotypes about Blacks than vice versa and also that they were much cooler toward the idea of interracial dating and marriage than Blacks were, suggesting that prejudice exists in the Latino community toward Blacks. However, it is not clear if these findings can be generalized to the case of California. For example, U.S. congresswoman Maxine Waters, who is African American, represents a Los Angeles district that is majority-Latino and has been reelected eleven times with overwhelming Latino support. Thus, it is unclear whether Latinos actually perceive Blacks as threats to their group position and, if they do, exactly what kind of threat they are seen to be.

In this essay we argue that findings pointing to conflict tend to misrepresent this variable and that a new measure is needed to accurately assess Black-Brown relations. To this end we have designed new measures utilizing the Latino National Survey (LNS) to standardize Latino perceptions of competition with Blacks in California. Our analysis intends to shed some light on the exact areas of perceived competition by looking at Latino perceptions across several sociopolitical arenas in California, including gaining access to jobs, education and schools, and city and state government employment and achieving political repre-



sentation. By examining these individual-level factors across each specific arena, we can determine how context shapes Latino perceptions of competition with African Americans. Additionally, this study represents an improvement over past studies in that it compares the perceived competition with Blacks with the perceived level of competition Latinos have with other Latinos, which allows us to separate racially based threats from those based simply on a general sense of competition.

The LNS also provides the advantage of isolating Latino perceptions of competition with African Americans while accounting for perceptions of overall competition. We believe that this is critical. Much of the previous literature has suggested that Latinos maintain negative attitudes toward Blacks, including the perception of African Americans as economic competitors. However, we contend that it is necessary to take into account the propensity of Latinos to view *all* groups as competitors—including co-ethnics. With the ability to test this theory through the LNS, we believe we can provide some needed clarity to the coalition politics literature.

McClain et al.'s (2006) study represents an important new area of research, given the rapid growth of the Latino immigrant population, often in urban areas with large Black populations. However, that study was limited to mostly Mexican immigrants in one southern city, with the entire Latino sample involving fewer than two hundred persons. Additionally, the Latino population in McClain et al.'s study was a relatively young one, having grown by approximately 7 percent between 1990 and 2000. The dynamics of competition between Latinos and Blacks in California are likely to differ from McClain et al.'s findings because these groups have long had contact with each other and, in the case of Los Angeles, have even been political partners. Through the rich sample sizes of the LNS, we intend to provide a more complete picture of Latinos attitudes toward African Americans in California, which will include a detailed analysis of the Afro-Latino population in the United States, allowing us situate California in the wider context of national Black-Brown relations.

COMPETITION AND INTERGROUP ATTITUDES BETWEEN LATINOS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

According to Blalock (1967), competition between minority groups occurs when they strive for the same finite objectives so that success for one reduces the probability that the other will attain its goals. This



has been defined as the zero-sum game of politics. Scholars have found that Latinos and African Americans often find themselves in this competitive situation. For example, Latinos have been found to make less progress in terms of socioeconomic well-being and political power in cities with Black majorities or pluralities (McClain and Karnig 1990). Further, biracial coalitions are less likely to occur when one group maintains a class or power advantage over the other (Giles and Evans 1986; McClain and Karnig 1990; Browning et al. 1990). This situation is reinforced by conditions associated with residential concentration of Latinos and African Americans (deteriorated living conditions, lack of services, lack of viable employment, etc.), placing members of these groups in direct competition with one another for access to limited resources, jobs, and government representation (Alozie and Ramirez 1999; Kerr et al. 2000; Betancur and Gills 2000). Therefore, it seems as though the changing demographics of the last half-century have provided the background for intensified competition between Latinos and African Americans, particularly in areas like Los Angeles, with large populations of both groups.

Research in the area of racial and ethnic interactions and intra-group attitudes has been focused almost exclusively on how African American's view Latinos (but for Pantoja and Lopez 2004). This work has been particularly interested in how these attitudes might impact coalitions between the groups, with many finding evidence that Blacks' feelings of distrust and hostility toward Latinos have prevented political alliances between the two groups (Bobo and Massagli 2001; Bobo et al. 1994; Dyer et al. 1989; Mindiola et al. 2002). Despite this prevailing view, Pastor and Marcelli (2004) find that Blacks in Los Angeles are "ambiguous" in their views toward Latino immigrants and, in fact, view Latinos more as political allies than as economic competitors.

However, an emerging literature is developing that focuses on Latinos' attitudes toward African Americans. Among this scholarship, Bobo and Hutchings (1996) find that Latinos are surpassed only by African Americans in their propensity to view other racial/ethnic groups as competitors. In addition to perceptions of competition, scholarship in this area has also suggested that Latinos tend to harbor negative stereotypes of African Americans. For instance, Johnson, Farrell, and Guinn (1997) find that a majority of Asian Americans and a large percentage of Latinos view Blacks as less intelligent and more welfare dependent than their own groups. Similarly, the McClain et al. (2006) study of Latinos in North Carolina found that Latinos' ste-



reotypes of Blacks are more negative than their stereotypes of Whites. Specifically, nearly 57 percent of Latinos in this study felt that few or almost no Blacks could be trusted, and nearly 59 percent believed that few or almost no Blacks are hard working (McClain et al. 2006: 578). Particularly when these perceptions are contrasted with the significantly less negative perceptions of Whites in the study, Latinos (at least those in North Carolina) appear not to have strong feelings of commonality with Blacks. This supports earlier work that suggests both African Americans and Latinos feel closer to Whites than to each other (Dyer et al. 1989). In a comparative study, Pantoja and Lopez (2004) find splits between White and Black attitudes toward programs like affirmative action, but Latinos and Asians are positioned somewhere in the middle. Interestingly, a recent study by Gonzalez (2009) found that Blacks in Washington actually held some of the most liberal views regarding immigration policy, with Blacks significantly more likely than Whites to favor amnesty or a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Blacks were also more likely to strongly disagree that immigration is changing the culture of the United States for the worse. The liberal views held by Blacks in Washington toward immigration policy suggest that the question of intergroup relations is a much more complicated one than it is typically portrayed as.

We expand on this research by analyzing the overall perceptions of competition and racial identification in Latino's perceptions of competition with African Americans in California, where there is a large Latino population that also has a long history of working alongside Blacks both socially and politically. With rising Latino populations throughout the country, what must be taken into consideration is not only how a newly established population such as those in McClain et al.'s (2006) study perceive competition with Blacks but also how this differs for larger, more established populations.

GROUP THREAT

Theoretically this study is based on Blumer's (1958) group position theory, which is also often referred to as group threat theory. Blumer argued that prejudice is composed of four dimensions: a feeling of superiority, a belief the subordinate group is in some way intrinsically different or alien, a sense of entitlement to certain privileges or advantages, and finally a suspicion that the subordinate group is a threat to these privileges or advantages. Blumer's model seems logical for dom-



inant/subordinate relations, but he never addressed how his theory would function for two groups occupying similar social positions.

Hubert Blalock filled in some of the gaps that were left unaddressed in Blumer's model by specifically focusing on minority group relations (Blalock 1967). He argued that competition between minority groups occurs when they strive for the same finite objectives, so that success for one reduces the probability that the other will attain its goals.

Bobo and Hutchings (1996) further expanded on Blumer's model to make it applicable in a multiracial context and enlarge it beyond the White/non-White dichotomy. Using data from the 1992 Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS), Bobo and Hutchings tested self-interest, prejudice, and stratification belief models in addition to Blumer's. They argued that racial alienation plays a role in perceived threat, with those groups who feel more alienated more likely to perceive other minority groups as a threat. Because Blumer's model recognizes three of these dimensions (social stratification, prejudice, and self-interest) and could easily be expanded to include the fourth (racial alienation), it was found to be the most parsimonious theory for explaining prejudice as a result of group threat. Bobo and Hutchings tested perceived competition across four dimensions: political, housing based, job based, and economic. They found that alienation did increase perceived threat for Latinos and that in addition to social stratification beliefs, prejudice, and self-interest also had effects.¹

Bobo built upon this earlier work with Hutchings in 1996. In this article Bobo provided evidence that greater feelings of subordination lead to greater racial alienation, which in turn leads to a greater sense of competition with other minority groups. Bobo also found that 40 percent of the Blacks and Latinos in his sample tended to see competition in zero-sum terms and that, when assessing threat, a host of variables have to be taken into account. These include the economic resources of the group, the specific social domain in question, and the prior history, overtness, and intensity of conflict between minority groups. This is largely in line with Blumer's (1958) argument that a group's sense of social standing is predicated on a number of historical factors.

BLACK-BROWN RELATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

Questions remain regarding how group threat operates for Latinos specifically in the Californian context. As mentioned earlier, perceived conflicts between Blacks and Latinos over mayoral candidates, state laws,



and equal opportunities in the past can serve as a basis for perceived competition. Yet there are few studies exploring Latino feelings of intergroup competition with Blacks, with most studies focusing instead on the Black perceptions of competition or threat from Latinos. For instance, Earl Ofari Hutchinson (2007) cites a 2006 Pew study that found that Blacks are more likely to believe that a family member lost or did not get a job because an immigrant worker was hired instead. This may be a real rather than an imagined threat according to the findings of Waldinger (1997), who found evidence that employers in Los Angeles were more open to employing Latino immigrant workers than Blacks because of more negative evaluations of Blacks as a group. Erin Kaplan (2007), writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, argues that Blacks are tired of being conflated with Latinos, and there is competition between the groups, but this is largely perceived more by Blacks than by Latinos. Blacks feel they are expected to “minimize their identity and self-interest to join a new ethnic order” in which Latinos are the majority. In an earlier article for the same newspaper, Kaplan (2006) also points out that Blacks feel as if they are being pushed out of formerly African American neighborhoods by Latino immigrants, who also take jobs that were formerly filled by Blacks. However, this perception does not always square with reality. Pastor and Marcelli (2004) note that public opinion among Blacks does not necessarily view Latino immigrants as competitors and that Latino immigrants do not crowd Blacks out of service-level jobs.

Perceptions of competition between Blacks and Latinos are no doubt driven, at least in part, by the large demographic shifts in the minority population of Los Angeles that began in the 1960s with the accelerating growth of the Latino community. By the 1970 U.S. Census, Latinos had surpassed Blacks as the largest minority population in the city of Los Angeles at 19 percent, although Blacks were a close second at 17 percent. However, the growth rate of the Latino population increased substantially, and by 2000 they represented 40 percent of the population of Los Angeles. Over this same period of time, the population of Blacks in Los Angeles declined to 11 percent (Sonenshein and Pinkus 2002). The demographic increase alone suggests the possibility of increased competition between Latinos and Blacks for economic and social resources, but Sonenshein and Pinkus also note that the number of Latinos who have voted in the mayoral elections has increased from 10 percent in the 1993 election to 22 percent in the 2001 election. While the Black vote share has also increased, from 12 to 17 percent, the declining Black population of Los Angeles suggests that even poten-



tial future increases will likely be modest, while the Latino vote share is likely to grow at a much more rapid pace as more individuals within this traditionally young demographic reach voting age.

The increasing vote share of the Latino community suggests that, beyond competition for economic and social resources, there is the possibility of increased political competition between Latinos and Blacks in Los Angeles. Sonenshein and Pinkus (2002) point out that no multiracial coalition stepped in to replace the Bradley coalition of Blacks and Jews that had kept the mayor in office for twenty years with the support of the Latino community. Instead they acknowledge that Los Angeles could see a two-headed minority movement, with both Blacks and Latinos representing substantial enough voting blocks to make for attractive coalition partners both for each other and for Whites. The result is a more complicated political scene and one in which the possibility of political competition exists. However, this competition does not seem to have surfaced so far at the mayoral level, and the election in 2005 of Antonio Villaraigosa may suggest a return to coalitional politics in Los Angeles.

There is evidence that Latinos may also see Blacks as a threat in California. In a 2002 survey David Sears found that Latinos reported themselves to be in conflict with Blacks more often than with any other ethnic group. However, this was largely based on gangs and crime rather than social or political competition, with 76 percent reporting gangs and crime as the source of intergroup conflict, compared to 48 percent who saw jobs and income as a cause of conflict (Sears 2002). Crime was also found to have an effect on Latino perceptions of Blacks in a national New America Media poll that was reported by Kristin Bender in a 2007 *Inside Bay Area* article, in which 44 percent of Latinos reported being afraid of Blacks because they were believed to be responsible for most of the crime.

A forthcoming study by Mark Sawyer based on the 2007 LACSS found that Latinos were coolest toward Asians, followed by Blacks, and overwhelmingly felt the latter preferred welfare to work and were involved in drugs and crime. Furthermore, Latinos were also significantly less likely than Blacks to report political commonality between the groups, with only 27.6 percent of Latinos believing this, while 40.7 percent of Blacks believed that the two groups had political commonality. Tanya Hernandez (2007) reports that Latinos prefer to maintain a social distance from Blacks and listed them as their least desirable marriage partners, which may indicate Latino prejudice against Blacks.

Oliver and Wong (2003) found that there were differences in Latinos'



perceived competition with Blacks in Los Angeles and Boston. Latinos in L.A. were much more likely to report intergroup competition with Blacks than Latinos living in Boston. Furthermore, those Latinos living in less heterogeneous neighborhoods in Los Angeles were more likely to harbor negative stereotypes of Blacks and to have perceptions of zero-sum competition with Blacks. Increases in the Latino population in California has also driven conflict with Blacks according to Betancur (2005), who notes that competitive tension is driven by different agendas regarding immigration, bilingual education, and job opportunities. Finally, Bobo and Hutchings (1996) found that both preferred social distance and racial alienation increased Latinos' perceived competition from Blacks in Los Angeles County.

All of these findings suggest that Latinos harbor some negative attitudes toward Blacks and may see them as competitors in some cases. Yet the picture is not as clear as it may seem. A 2007 report from the Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University found that Latinos listed race relations between Latinos and Blacks as a lesser threat (23 percent) than either global warming (38 percent) or traffic congestion (40 percent) (Guerra and Nuño 2007). This suggests that there may be issues of salience in regard to Black-Latino competition, at least in regard to how this is reported in surveys. If this 2007 report had asked only about Black-Latino relations, then 23 percent would seem like a relatively large proportion, but when those relations are placed in a larger context they are shown to be of less concern than everyday issues like environment problems and gridlock.

Yet, these previous studies do not compare Latinos' perceived threat from Blacks with their perceived threat from other Latinos. As is often pointed out by Latino scholars and politicians, the Latino community is far from a homogeneous one, being composed of a variety of ethnic groups as well as established Latino-American communities and communities of recent immigrants. By examining the perceived threat from Blacks alongside the perceived threat from other Latinos, we can assess whether group threat is racially based or based more generally on a sense of competition. Without the inclusion of perceived intragroup competition in California, it is difficult to assess how racially motivated intergroup competition actually is.

Scholars have also noted that competition can extend to other segments of the political environment, including political representation and the drawing of electoral districts (Meier and Stewart 1991; Gay 2001). For example, election results from 118 large multiracial school districts



indicate that when Latino population increases, Blacks lose political representation (Meier and Stewart 1991). Further, Claudine Gay finds that African-American voter turnout is lowest in districts that have a majority Latino population (Gay 2001). Elsewhere, as the Latino population has increased, some majority-Black districts have turned majority-Latino, with implications for the representation of Black interests in Congress.

There is clearly political competition between Latinos and Blacks; however, we question whether this competition is salient to the general population rather than only to those most attuned to the political dynamics in these communities. We contend that concern for the relative level of political representation and for government-specific jobs may be relevant only to the segment of the Latino community most interested and concerned with politics. For example, Latinos continue to vote overwhelmingly for Black congressional candidates in California, Texas, and New York, even as the Latino population outnumbered the Black population. Rather than exhibiting all-out conflict, Latinos typically support African American candidates for office.

One recent example highlights the possibility of both conflict and cooperation in the same district. In 2006, when the Thirty-Fourth Congressional District in California held a special election, the two candidates competing over the seat were a Black woman and a Latina. The district population was split almost exactly between Blacks and Latinos. In the primary, voters supported their co-ethnic candidate in a very close and bitterly fought campaign. When the African American candidate emerged victorious, some pundits questioned whether Latinos would go on to support her in the general election and in future elections. Despite almost universal support for the Latina candidate in the primary, Latino voters quickly backed the Black candidate in the general election and in all subsequent elections.

THE IMPACT OF RELATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF COMPETITION IN LATINOS' ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACKS

The LNS provides the opportunity to account for Latinos' perceptions of competition with Blacks *relative* to perceptions of competition with other groups as well as with other Latinos. Previous work has found Latinos to have high perceptions of conflict and competition with African Americans. However, this research has not been able to control for general perceptions of conflict or competition. Research interested in the contextual determinants of racial animosity among Whites has found



that individuals faced with economic adversity tend to exhibit not only a generic distrust of out-groups but also feelings of relative deprivation, anxiety, and alienation (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). Similarly, African Americans in urban ghettos tend to have a “deep suspicion of the motives of others, a marked lack of trust in the benevolent intentions of people and institutions” (Massey and Denton 1993: 172). Gay (2004) has also found that African Americans living in low-income neighborhoods tend to believe that racism limits their individual life chances, as well as the overall socioeconomic attainment of Blacks as a group. We contend that it is likely that Latinos, primarily those who are foreign-born, have similar worldviews marked with perceptions of competition.

During the 1980s many of the nation’s major cities went through rapid demographic transformations, and government cutbacks left new immigrants and older residents in poor sections of these cities directly engaged in competition for scarce resources (Jones-Correa 2001). The upward concentration of wealth in the United States in the last two decades has been coupled with declines in real wages and lack of investments in urban neighborhoods, putting the Black and Latino working class in a disadvantaged position (Jennings 2003). Not surprisingly, foreign-born Latinos have been found to perceive greater competition with African Americans than their native-born counterparts have (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Rodrigues and Segura 2004; Jones-Correa 2001; McClain et al. 2006).² However, we contend that this trend does not necessarily reflect Latinos’ hostility toward Blacks but possibly reflects a more general worldview that includes high perceptions of competition. Thus, Latinos in California may be just as likely (if not more likely) to perceive competition with other Latinos as with Blacks. By accounting for this important trend, we are able to isolate competitive attitudes toward African Americans from competitive perceptions more generally. Testing of the two specific hypotheses will add significantly to our working knowledge of not only coalition politics among Latinos and African Americans in California but the nature of internal competition among Latinos as well.

DATA AND METHODS

As previously noted, the data for this study are from the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS). The LNS, a “national” telephone survey of eighty-six hundred Latino residents of the United States, seeks a broad understanding of the qualitative nature of Latino political and social life in America. In this essay, we focus primarily on the data from Cali-



fornia, including twelve hundred interviews with Latino respondents. The universe for the survey includes only adult Latinos (eighteen years of age and older), with surveys conducted in the preferred language of the respondent (English, Spanish, or both languages).

With the ability to account for perceptions of competition across various contexts as well as the ability to analyze perceptions of competition with African Americans relative to other Latinos, the LNS is the only dataset available to address the research questions driving this analysis. To take advantage of the unique approach and rich sample sizes of the LNS, we have implemented a wide range of statistical analyses in order to provide a comprehensive investigation of Latino perception of social and political competition. The first stage of the analysis consists of a series of descriptive statistics to determine the degree to which Latinos perceive African Americans to be competitors for economic and political resources *relative* to the perceived competition with other Latinos. Because of the large overall sample size in the LNS, we are able to observe statistically significant relationships between Latinos in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California, and this serves as a starting point for the presentation of our results.

We then present results from multivariate regression models to test a host of explanatory variables on overall perceptions of Black-Brown competition in California. In particular, we are interested in whether Latinos in the city of Los Angeles are more or less likely than Latinos elsewhere in California to perceive competition with Blacks.

Variable Construction

One of the most important contributions in this essay is the construction of the dependent variables. Most studies cited above rely on a single measure or an index of Black-Brown conflict that focuses on how Latinos perceive Blacks or how Blacks perceive Latinos. However, a Latino respondent's perception of Blacks alone is meaningless without perceptions of a comparison group. In this study, we construct a measure of Black-Brown competition based on how much competition Latinos perceive with African Americans relative to how much competition they see with other Latinos. For example, if the dependent variable was social trust, and on a 0–10 scale a respondent assigned a value of 3 to trust in Blacks, then on its face that value would appear to be very low and may appear to represent an “anti-Black” attitude. However, if we asked the same respondent how much he or she trusted



other Latinos, and that person once again assigned a value of 3, then the full context illustrates that the attitudes are not anti-Black; rather, the person has low levels of trust in general, for both his or her own in-group and an out-group. Almost every previous study of Black-Brown conflict has relied on a single measure of positive or negative viewpoints toward just one group, either toward Blacks or toward Latinos. In this project, we take advantage of two series of questions within the LNS and create a relative measure of Black-Brown competition, a significant improvement in understanding race relations.

First, respondents were asked, “Some have suggested that Latinos are in competition with African-Americans. After each of the next items, would you tell me if you believe there is strong competition, weak competition, or no competition at all with African-Americans? How about

1. in getting jobs?
2. in having access to education and quality schools?
3. in getting jobs with the city or state government?
4. in having Latino representatives in elected office?”

From these four questions, we created an overall index of competition with African Americans, as well as four dependent variables, one for each domain of competition. However, this is only half of the story. We are interested in knowing whether the perceived competition is a unique Brown versus Black phenomenon or if competition is also perceived with other Latinos. Thus, we used the exact same series of questions again later on the survey, asked with respect to competition among Latinos: “Some have suggested that [insert country of ancestry]³ are in competition with other Latinos. After each of the next items, would you tell me if you believe there is strong competition, weak competition, or no competition at all with other Latinos?” and the same four items were used: jobs, education, government jobs, and elected representation. By combining the Black competition index with the Latino competition index, we are able to arrive at an overall relative measure of Black-Brown competition.

The combined index ranges from -8 to $+8$ (see figure 7.1), where a value of -8 represents “high competition” with Latinos and “low competition” with Blacks. In contrast, a value of $+8$ represents “high competition” with Blacks and “low competition” with Latinos. Respondents who had the same value for both groups, regardless of what that value was, are scored as a zero, because they saw no difference in the amount

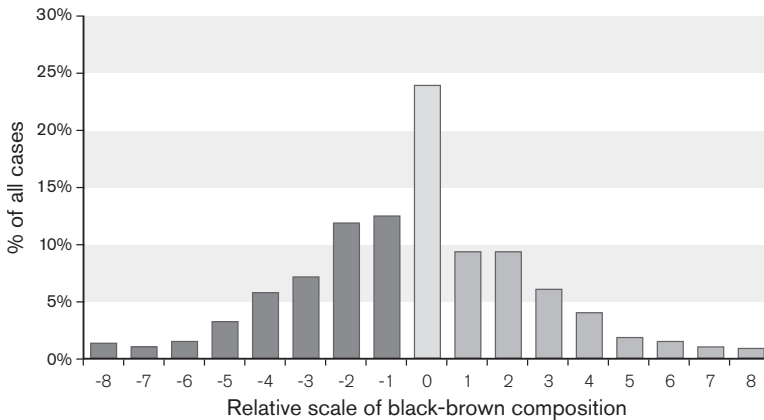


FIGURE 7.1. Distribution of dependent variable, showing Latinos' perceptions of their relative competition with other Latinos (blue) and Blacks (yellow).

of competition between Latinos and Blacks and Latinos and other Latinos. The basic frequencies of the full sample depicted in figure 7.1 strongly suggest that this measure provides a much clearer picture of Black-Brown competition.

We rely on a variety of well-known independent variables and some new ones in predicting Black-Brown competition. Standard demographic variables include age, education, income, gender, marital status, and homeownership. Here, we are particularly interested in class-based variables such as income, as well as an evaluation of personal financial situation and employment status. We also include many standard ethnic variables to test culture-based hypotheses, which include religion (Catholic), immigrant generation, immigrant neighborhood, Spanish usage, Latino-linked fate, importance of maintaining Latino culture, and identification as American. With respect to political variables, we include interest in politics, a political knowledge index, and party identification. (Complete coding instructions for all independent variables can be found in the appendix.)

The last grouping of variables is the least familiar yet the most interesting in this analysis. Several variables related to social interaction, contact, and association with African Americans are included to determine whether or not exposure to the Black community has a positive or negative impact on how Latinos view competition with Blacks. The first of these variables is called Black skin and is a dummy variable for



whether or not the Latino respondent described himself or herself as having very dark or dark skin, a very interesting question that has rarely been included on surveys of Latinos, even as scholars promote similar research in Latin America on skin color (see Sawyer et al. 2004; Sawyer 2005). Next, two variables related to social interactions, Black friends and Black workers, are included as dummies and measure whether the respondent's friends or coworkers are mostly Black or mixed Black and Latino. In contrast to these two social interaction variables, two additional variables relate to self-reported negative experiences with African Americans, whether the respondent has been a victim of a crime or experienced discrimination by an African American. Finally, two variables measure how much Latinos feel they have in common with Blacks. The two questions related to this measure asked Latinos how much they had in common with other Latinos and with other racial groups on social and political issues. Black commonality is based just on the respondent's responses to how much he or she has in common with Blacks and ranks the relative placement of Blacks on the 1–8 scale, given how the respondent rated each other group. So if a Latino respondent had 5 out of 8 in common with Blacks but had 4 of 8 in common with Asians, 3 of 8 with Whites, and 6 of 8 with other Latinos, then Blacks would be “ranked” second in terms of commonality.

Finally, we control for the percentage of the population that is Black within the city in which the Latino respondent resides, to test whether or not population dynamics contribute to feelings of competition. For example, Latinos in cities with a very small Black population may not see much competition with Blacks, because they do not come into frequent contact, whereas Latinos residing in majority-Black cities may see Blacks as their competitors. At least, this has been the proposed theory by journalistic accounts in California. We test this through the inclusion of two population variables, percentage Black and percentage Black-squared (as of the 2006 U.S. Census Current Population Survey), the latter being included because population is unlikely to hold a simple linear relationship. In full, we employ seven variables specifically related to race.

THE RESULTS

The first set of results is a comparison of mean averages for the Black-Brown competition dependent variable. Using the relative competition variable, we compare the mean level of competition perceived by several different geographic subgroups of Latinos. A negative mean value

TABLE 7.1 LATINOS' PERCEIVED BLACK-BROWN COMPETITION,
COMPARISON OF MEANS

Variable	Index of Perceived Competition
CA as a whole	-0.2949
Rest of the U.S.	-0.1648
L.A. metro area	-0.2867
Rest of CA	-0.3022
L.A. city	-0.4303
CA—foreign born	-0.4014
CA—second generation	-0.0339
CA—third generation	0.0345
CA—fourth generation	0.0571
Total LNS Sample	-0.1829

demonstrates that the group perceives more competition with other Latinos, and mean values greater than zero demonstrate that the group perceives more competition with African Americans—as depicted in figure 7.1 above. Table 7.1 reports bivariate means for Latinos across different geographies, as well as across generations. As a point of comparison, we provide the overall average score for the national LNS sample at the bottom, which registers as -0.18 .

For California, the degree of Black-Brown competition is actually lower, at -0.29 , suggesting Latinos in the Golden State view even less competition with Blacks than is perceived by Latinos elsewhere in the United States. Further, there is no validity to the claim that competitive tension is particularly high in Los Angeles as compared to the rest of the state. First, the L.A. metro area (the counties of L.A., Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) has a mean competition level of -0.29 compared to -0.30 for the rest of California. Further, looking just at the city of Los Angeles, we find that Latinos there have an even lower degree of perceived competition with Blacks, -0.43 . These results make it clear that Latinos in Los Angeles (and California) do not perceive overwhelming competition with Blacks.

Finally, while some previous research suggests immigrants are more likely to hold anti-Black attitudes (McClain et al. 2006), we find a clear linear pattern showing that the foreign born (both citizens and non-citizens) perceive the least amount of competition with Blacks, which increases slowly through the fourth generation of the U.S.-born population segment. Latino immigrants in California have an average com-

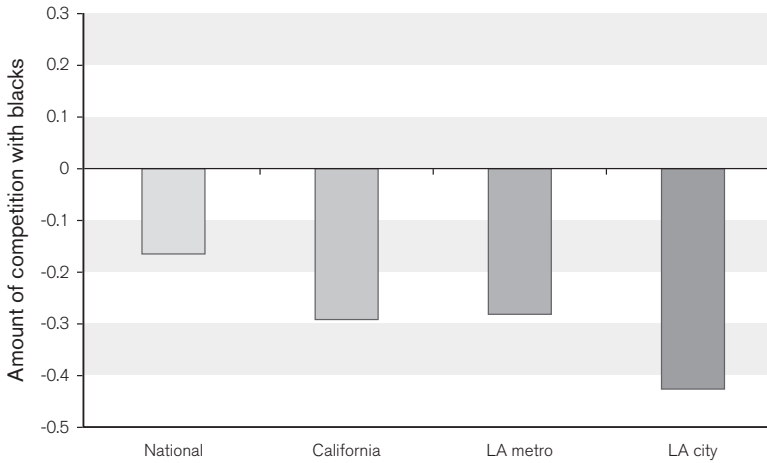


FIGURE 7.2. Latinos' perceptions of Black-Brown competition, by region.

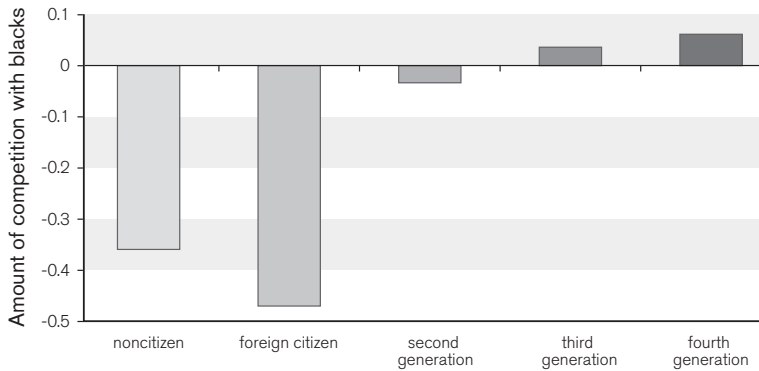


FIGURE 7.3. Latinos' perceptions of Black-Brown competition in California, by citizenship and immigrant generation.

petition score of -0.40 compared to a positive score of 0.057 by the fourth generation. The fourth-generation average is still low (recall that it varies from -8 to $+8$), but the positive value suggests that by the fourth generation, Latinos may, on balance, perceive Blacks as their competitors. Contrary to McClain et al. (2006), who argue that pre-existing notions of anti-Black attitudes preoccupy new arrivals from Latin America, we show that the much more exhaustive dataset from the LNS dismisses the notion that Latino immigrants perceive competition with African Americans in California.



Building on the bivariate comparison of means, we next move to a multivariate regression analysis in which we test four key hypotheses through a more rigorous set of analyses. Here, we look for statistically significant results related to resource competition (income and education), political awareness, acculturation, and Black social context. Table 7.2 contains results for two ordinary least squares regressions using the four-item index of combined Black-Brown competition. The first regression, in column 1, uses the nonrelative measure of competition, that is, only the perceived competition with Blacks, without taking the perceived competition with other Latinos into account. The second regression, in column 2, is our primary interest; it uses the relative measure of competition with other Latinos and ranges from -8 to $+8$. We encourage readers to compare the relative measure of competition across the two regressions and focus more heavily on the second one.

Among the resource and lifecycle variables, age demonstrates a positive and significant relationship in both models. This suggests that older Latinos are the most likely to view competition with Blacks in California and that the younger cohorts are unlikely to view competition. Again, this finding stands in contrast to the media's sensationalizing of Black-Brown conflict among young people in the schools of Los Angeles. Though our data do not include individuals under eighteen, the trend in the data does not support this claim whatsoever. If Latinos had strong feelings of competition with Blacks when in school, there is no reason to expect that this would suddenly decline when they reach eighteen. Additionally, no relationship is found with income, rejecting the hypothesis that lower-income Latinos see more competition with Blacks. Instead, we find that those who perceive their personal financial situation to be improving tend to see somewhat higher competition with Blacks in California.

Moving to the next set of cultural variables, the two regressions show different results. First, Latinos with a high sense of linked fate with other Latinos, as well as those who feel it is important to maintain a clear Latino culture, appear to perceive more competition with Blacks in column 1. However, notice that this relationship does not hold in column 2, where we provide our better-developed measure of Black-Brown competition. A strong ethnic identity, as measured by a sense of linked fate and the perceived importance of Latino culture, does not have any effect on perceptions of competition with Blacks when competition with other Latinos is also taken in to account. Further, looking at other variables such as language and Catholicism makes clear that cultural differences are not contributing to perceptions of competition

TABLE 7.2 PREDICTORS OF LATINOS' PERCEPTION OF BLACK-BROWN
COMPETITION IN CALIFORNIA

	1		2	
	Competition with Blacks		Relative Competition (Other Latinos Included)	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
Age	0.0134	0.0064*	0.0147	.0069*
Education	-0.0015	0.0254	-0.0156	0.0273
Income	-6.0e-06	6.3e-06	-2.7e-06	6.8e-06
Finances better	0.1948	0.1218	0.4558	0.1310***
Unemployed	0.3008	0.3097	0.4141	0.3331
Female	-0.1919	0.1777	0.0791	0.1911
Married	-0.0939	0.1829	-0.3194	0.1967
Homeowner	-0.0626	0.2099	-0.0297	0.2257
Catholicism	0.1017	0.2014	0.3272	0.2168
Generation	0.1436	0.1087	-0.0017	0.1169
Spanish language	0.0777	0.0929	-0.0934	0.0999
Spanish 'hood	0.1586	0.1006	0.0854	0.1082
Linked fate with other Latinos	0.1819	0.0933*	-0.1171	0.1005
American identity	0.2801	0.0914***	-0.1182	0.0983
Maintain culture	0.5319	0.1679***	0.0170	0.1806
Political knowledge	-0.0221	0.0915	0.0818	0.0984
Party (7 point)	0.0166	0.0525	-0.0515	0.0565
Black skin shade	-0.1187	0.2666	-0.5402	0.2868†
Black friends	-0.0747	0.4215	-0.5324	0.4533
Black coworkers	0.2337	0.5299	0.2967	0.5699
Black crime	-0.5617	0.5195	0.0552	0.5589
Black discrimination	-0.1425	0.5164	-0.3221	0.5554
Black commonality	0.1280	0.0487**	0.1023	0.0524*
City of L.A.	0.3816	0.2794	-0.2615	.3006
Black population	0.0517	0.0334	0.0794	0.0359*
Black pop.-squared	-0.0021	0.0011†	-0.0020	0.0011†
Constant	2.392	1.065	-1.454	1.146
N	952		952	
Adj. R-squared	.0378		.0169	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .010$; *** $p < .001$; † = .10

with Blacks in California. None of these variables is statistically significant in our relative measure in column 2. And although the immigrant generation showed significant results in the bivariate analysis reported above in table 7.1, once additional control variables are considered, we find no statistically significant relationship between generation and Black-Brown competition.

Finally, we turn our attention to a series of race-related variables,



which are particularly relevant to understanding Black-Brown competition. Latinos with self-reported dark skin were in fact less likely to see Blacks as their competitors, according to the negative coefficient results in column 2. This is a particularly interesting result and suggests that darker-skinned Latinos in California may be racialized by the larger White population in such a way that it causes them to view a sense of commonality and connection with African Americans. However, our results for Latinos' view of commonality with Blacks suggest the opposite. Latinos who believe they have much in common with Blacks also tend to view more competition with Blacks in California. This should give us pause in how we interpret a measure such as shared commonality, because it may imply not that these two minority groups are in a partnership or coalition but rather that they correctly observe similarity in their social circumstances, which could lead to more perceived competition.

Last, we want to focus on the findings from the Black population variables. Looking at column 2, we note that the two variables are both statistically significant, yet they have opposite effects. This is a common phenomenon with nonlinear relationships when a squared term is introduced. So, on the one hand as the percentage of the Black population goes up, competition also increases. However, the negative values on the squared term indicate that at some point, an n-shaped curve will emerge, whereby a larger Black population actually decreases perceived competition. These findings illustrate that increases in the Black population do lead to increases in perceptions of competition, as is suggested by the literature, but there is a tipping point, after which further increases actually decrease the level of perceived competition. This is a fascinating finding, suggesting that although some population challenges exist, large Black and Latino populations can coexist with little competition. One potential explanation for this finding is that necessary social interactions cause an increase in the level of integration of the Latino and Black communities after the Black population reaches a particular level. Because the regression coefficients are difficult to interpret on their face, we offer a graphical presentation of the population results in figure 7.4. Again, controlling for the percentage of Black population within the different cities in California, we test how Latinos living in each city view competition with Blacks. The X-axis, at the bottom of figure 7.4, measures the Black population in a city ranging from 0 to 50 percent, while the Y-axis, on the left-hand side, measures Latino respondents' perceived degree of competition with Blacks.

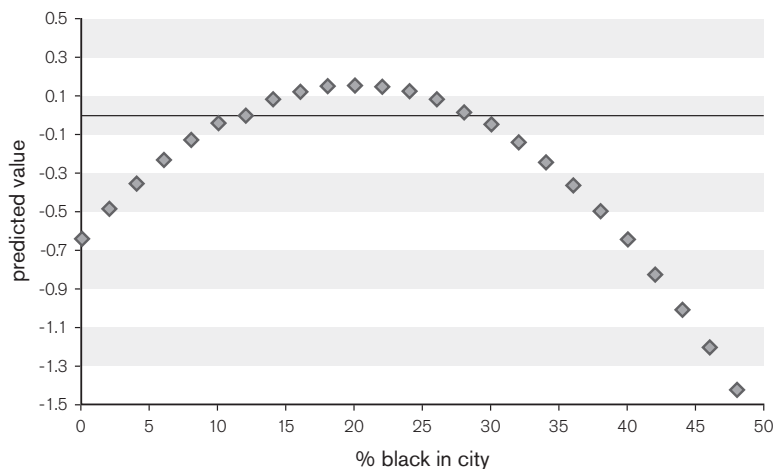


FIGURE 7.4. Latinos' perceptions of Black-Brown competition, by Black population percentage.

Values below zero indicate Latinos do not see competition with Blacks, while values above zero represent perceived competition.

Moving from left to right, as the percentage of the Black population in a city increases, we witness a slow but steady increase in Latinos' perceived competition with Blacks; however, this slope levels off in cities that are about 20 percent Black and then begins to decline much more rapidly as the Black population further increases. So in the presence of smaller African American populations—cities ranging from zero to 20 percent Black—Latinos see more competition as the population increases. However, this stands in stark contrast to the perception in cities with medium and heavy Black populations, which actually report far, far lower levels of Black-Brown competition. One possible explanation for this n-curve could be that cities that are in the 15–25 percent Black range were perhaps 45–50 percent Black ten or twenty years ago, before witnessing rapid Latino population growth. Therefore, some perceived competition exists on both sides as a result of the population replacement that has occurred, though our current data do not allow us to explicitly test this theory. In contrast, cities that maintain a large Black population have more successfully incorporated Latinos as partners, leading Latinos to view very low levels of competition, as depicted in figure 7.4.

Looking to our statewide data, we note that in cities with small



Black populations, such as Anaheim, Santa Ana, and San Jose, Latinos do in fact view lower levels of competition. At the same time, Latinos residing in cities with the largest Black population, such as Oakland, Inglewood, Richmond, and Carson, also perceive relatively low levels of competition with Blacks. In contrast, Latinos in cities with medium-sized Black populations, such as San Bernardino, Rialto, Lancaster, and Moreno Valley, tend to perceive higher rates of competition with Blacks. These same cities also had among the highest Latino population growth rates during the 1990s and 2000s, possibly creating more rapid displacement of Blacks by new Latino residents.

CONCLUSION

The 2008 presidential election highlighted the potential for conflict and also cooperation between Latinos and Blacks. At the outset of the contest, misguided observers speculated that Latinos would not vote for a Black candidate because of simmering feelings of competition between the two minority groups. Indeed the primary election results in California pointed to huge losses for Barack Obama among Latino voters. However, this sense of Black-Brown competition was both fabricated and exaggerated, as Latino voters preferred Hillary Clinton because of her high name recognition, extensive Latino outreach, and prominent endorsements from Latino officials (Barreto and Ramírez 2008; Barreto et al. 2008). Latinos were not casting ballots against Barack Obama on the basis of his race but instead for Hillary Clinton on the basis of her Latino outreach, visibility, and endorsements. Indeed, when the final votes were cast, the headlines proclaimed that Hispanic voters were a crucial component of the Obama coalition, delivering a 70 percent vote share to the Democrat, noticeably higher than for the two previous White Democrats who had run for president.

Seven years earlier Latino mayoral candidate Antonio Villaraigosa received less than 20 percent of the Black vote, and commentators were quick to point to Black-Brown competition through anecdotes and single examples. However, it is now well known that in 2005 Villaraigosa received about half of the Black vote and further increased his margin in 2009. An important rejoinder here is that we should focus on what the data tell us and not on what one or two opinionated columnists think. In this essay, we have provided a comprehensive look at Latino public opinion toward African Americans, using data from the 2006 Latino National Survey, focusing on data from the state of California.



In short, we find that only a small minority of Latinos in California view competition with Blacks and that, in comparison, California, especially Los Angeles, has even lower levels of perceived Black-Brown competition than elsewhere.

While the final election outcomes in November 2008 refuted the Latino-Black competition hypothesis with 70 percent of the Latino vote going to Obama, it drew considerable attention throughout the campaign cycle. Here, we argue that claims of mounting competition over public policy, elected office, jobs, and education is far overstated, at least from the perspective of Latinos in California. We demonstrate that traditional measures of Black-Brown competition are flawed because they lack a base of comparison. Using a relative measure of competition, we argue that Latinos actually view a higher degree of competition with fellow Latinos and that perceived competition with Blacks is not emblematic of anti-Black sentiment.

More recent research in Los Angeles has concurred with these results, finding less conflict and more cooperation between Latinos and Blacks (Guerra and Nuño 2007; Sawyer et al. 2008). While Latinos may view a moderate degree of competition with Blacks, most also view a moderate degree of competition with fellow Latinos. Thus, the perceived competition is not racially motivated but rather is based on realistic observations of their political and social environments. At the same time that Latinos view some competition with African Americans, they also view a good deal of shared commonality and even a sense of linked fate with Blacks. If anything, the Obama campaign and its successful Latino outreach highlighted the possibility of a broad minority coalition, bringing together Latinos and Blacks over their shared interests.

As the Latino population continues to grow in California, quite often alongside the existing Black population, we encourage scholars to develop new, more precise measures of intergroup relations. Whether we are measuring conflict or cooperation, we should not evaluate in-group/out-group attitudes in a vacuum but rather by using a relative methodology.

Finally, it is important to note that this essay has examined only Latinos' viewpoints of perceived competition with Blacks. As Latinos now represent the largest minority group in America, surpassing African Americans in thirty states, it may be that Blacks actually view more competition with Latinos than Latinos do with Blacks. While reliable data are an obstacle, future studies should examine both groups simultaneously to fully understand the dynamics of Black-Latino relations.



APPENDIX: VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION

TABLE 7.3 VARIABLE CONSTRUCTION FOR PREDICTING BLACK-BROWN COMPETITION

Independent Variables	Description
Age	Continuous; 18–98
Education	Categorical; 0 = none; 4.5 = less than 8th; 10.5 = some HS; 12 = HS grad; 14.5 = some college; 16 = college grad; 18 = graduate school
Income	Categorical with missing income replaced using income imputation
Finances better	Personal financial situation; 1 = worse; 2 = same; 3 = better
Unemployed	Dummy; 1 = currently unemployed
Female	Dummy; 1 = female
Married	Dummy; 1 = married
Homeowner	Dummy; 1 = homeowner
Years address	Continuous; number of years lived at current address; 0–90
Catholic	Dummy; 1 = Catholic
Generation	Categorical; 0 = foreign-born noncitizen; 1 = foreign-born citizen; 2 = second; 3 = third; 4 = fourth
Spanish (scale)	Categorical; 1 = English only; 2 = English, a little Spanish; 3 = English, adequate Spanish; 4 = fully bilingual; 5 = Spanish, adequate English; 6 = Spanish, a little English; 7 = Spanish only
Spanish 'hood	Index, see LNS question L23; 0 = no Spanish services available in community; 1 = 1 of 3 services in Spanish; 2 = 2 of 3 services in Spanish; 3 = 3 of 3 services in Spanish
Political knowledge	Index, see LNS questions J10, J11, J12; 0 = 0 of 3 correct; 1 = 1 of 3 correct; 2 = 2 of 3 correct; 3 = 3 of 3 correct
Party (7 point)	Categorical; 1 = strong Dem.; 2 = weak Dem.; 3 = lean toward Dem.; 4 = indep.; 5 = lean toward GOP; 6 = weak GOP; 7 = strong GOP
Black skin shade	Dummy; 1 = self-identify as having very dark or dark skin (see LNS question E16)
Black friends	Dummy; 1 = friends are mostly black or mix of black and Latino (see LNS question G6)
Black coworkers	Dummy; 1 = coworkers are mostly black or mix of black and Latino (see LNS question G7)
Black crime	Dummy; 1 = victim of crime committed by black (see LNS questions L18/L19)
Black discrimination	Dummy; 1 = experienced discrimination by black (see LNS questions N2/N4)



TABLE 7.3 (continued)

Independent Variables	Description
Black commonality	Index, see LNS questions G1A/G2A; 1 = nothing at all in common; 8 = a lot in common
Linked fate with Latinos	Categorical; 1 = none; 2 = little; 3 = some; 4 = a lot
American identity	Categorical; 1 = not at all; 2 = not strong; 3 = somewhat strong; 4 = very strong
Maintain Latino culture	Categorical; 1 = not important at all; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important
Black population	Continuous; % black among population in city where respondent lives
Black population-squared City of L.A.	Exponential; squared term of % black among population Dummy; 1 = resides in city of Los Angeles

Latino National Survey = LNS

NOTES

1. Black had the highest level of racial alienation, followed by Latinos and Asian, who differed little from one another.

2. The McClain et al. (2006) study also confirms the role of nativity in Latinos' attitudes toward African Americans, as approximately 93 percent of the sample utilized in this study is foreign-born. However, this study suggests that this trend may be a result of Latino immigrants arriving in the United States with negative stereotypes regarding Blacks that were formulated in their country of origin. In fact, a sizable literature focused on discrimination and racial stereotypes in Latin America addresses this issue (de la Cadena 2001; Dulitzky 2005; Guimaraes 2001; Hanchard 1994; Mörner 1967; Sweet 1997; Wade 1993, 1997; Winant 1992).

3. For example, the question might have read, "Some have suggested that *Puerto Ricans* are in competition with other Latinos. After each of the next items, would you tell me if you believe there is strong competition, weak competition, or no competition at all with other Latinos?"

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