

RACISM, GROUP POSITION, AND ATTITUDES ABOUT IMMIGRATION AMONG BLACKS AND WHITES¹

Vincent L. Hutchings

Department of Political Science Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan

Cara Wong

Department of Political Science, University of Illinois Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan

Abstract

Previous research has shown that racial or ethnic prejudice is one of the most influential antecedents of opposition to more expansive immigration policies. In this paper, we explore whether a theoretical perspective derived from the group position model might represent an additional and complementary explanation for immigration attitudes. We also compare how well the prejudice and group position models explain immigration attitudes among both White and Black Americans. Most of the previous work in this literature focuses solely on Whites' attitudes, and it remains unclear how well models designed with this group in mind might also apply to African Americans. We rely upon the 2004–2005 National Politics Study to explore the power of these models. In general, we find that measures derived from the group position model account for immigration attitudes even after controlling for various forms of out-group prejudice. The pattern of results also differs considerably across the two racial groups in our study.

Keywords: Immigration, Prejudice, White, Black, Racial Attitudes, Group Conflict

INTRODUCTION

In December of 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an immigration reform bill that outraged immigrant rights groups. The bill, H.R. 4437, would have converted all undocumented immigrants into felons and also treated those who provided them with assistance—such as social workers and church officials—as felons (Broder 2006). Although this punitive immigration bill was never taken up in the Senate, in the spring of 2006 over one million individuals, mostly Hispanic immigrants, marched in several American cities to protest the proposed

Du Bois Review, 11:2 (2014) 419–442.

© 2014 Hutchins Center for African and African American Research 1742-058X/14 \$15.00

doi:10.1017/S1742058X14000198