The Relationships of Intergroup Contact to Social Identity and Political Consciousness

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The impact of three forms of intergroup contact (Mexican descent, other minority, and Anglo) on the social identities and political attitudes of a national sample of native-born persons of Mexican descent was examined. Cast within Tajfel's Social Identity theory, the various social contexts were expected to predict three distinct types of ethnic identity: Cultural Ethnicity (Ingroup contact), Politicized Ethnicity (Ingroup and Minority Outgroup contact), and Assimilationist Ethnicity (Anglo contact). Contrasting political orientations were also predicted for the types of contact, with group-conscious attitudes associated with Ingroup and Minority Outgroup contacts and conservative political attitudes with Anglo contact. Support is provided for the expected relationships between Ingroup and Minority Outgroup interactions and identity and political attitudes. Anglo contact was related to conservative political attitudes.

Social psychologists have long acknowledged that contact between groups affects ethnic relations in a variety of ways (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976; Stephan, 1986; Williams, 1975). Over the years predictions about the impact of contact have become increasingly specific and guarded—a pattern in clear contrast to the global and optimistic view in the research of thirty years ago which generally predicted that intergroup contact would improve ethnic and racial relations. It was thought that contact between individuals belonging to different groups would give each knowledge about the other, would facilitate understanding, and would reduce intergroup tension, and that these experiences with particular members of other groups would generalize to additional members and to new situations.

While some studies supported these predictions, others suggested that contact was an irrelevant or even inhibitory force in shaping positive intergroup attitudes. In an effort to contextualize the effects of contact, Allport (1954) proposed that favorable attitudes would emerge from noncasual,

institutionally supported interaction involving persons of equal status in the pursuit of common goals. Empirical work has confirmed the importance of these conditions for encouraging positive effects (Amir, 1976; Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988), but generally failed to examine the conditions that characterize typical contact between members of different ethnic and racial groups. For example, most studies have examined only superficial liking of single outgroup members in constrained experimental or social settings. Consequently, little is known about the more generalized or longer-lasting effects of contact. Studies have also tended to emphasize the attitudes of members of superordinate groups toward members of subordinate groups. Only recently have researchers begun to examine how contact affects attitudes held by members of lower-status, less powerful groups toward their higher-status, more powerful counterparts (Gonzalez, 1979; Moscovici & Paicheler, 1978). Finally, studies have long overlooked the potential impact of contact on a group member's view of the self and of his/her own group.

This study explores some of these understudied issues by focusing on how naturally occurring intergroup contact affects the attitudes of people of Mexican descent toward their own ethnic group and toward other groups in the United States. It specifies three kinds of contact, that with other persons of Mexican descent, with members of other ethnic/racial groups, and with members of the dominant White majority. These kinds of contact are viewed as differentially influencing two sets of attitudes, those that comprise the *social identities* of Mexican Americans and those that form what we call *group political consciousness*.

This article argues that intragroup and intergroup contacts provide informational contexts in which persons of Mexican descent are able to evaluate the worth of their own group, to evaluate the worth of other groups in American society, and to draw inferences about why groups differ in their level of political, economic, and social resources. Different degrees and types of contact offer different comparison bases and should be associated with distinct social identities and political attitudes.

Contact and Social Comparison:
The Social Psychology of Social Identity and
Political Consciousness

Social identity research among people of Mexican descent has typically focused on ethnic identity—that part of the self-concept that represents one's membership in an ethnic group. In recent years there has been a resurgence of research interest in ethnic identity which Keefe and Padilla (1987) attribute

largely to limitations in using the acculturation model to account for patterns of culture change. Other explanations have been offered for the persistence and mobilization of ethnicity, including macroeconomic and political factors, unique historical influences (Olzak, 1983), and psychological issues (Issacs, 1975, 1979; Smith, 1981).

One of the most prominent psychological theories of the emergence and impact of social identity is offered by Tajfel (1978). This theory defines social identity as the individual's subjective awareness and acceptance of belonging to a particular category. Tajfel suggests that social identity emerges from natural social and cognitive processes of categorization and comparison. Members of social categories are labeled and treated categorically, and, as a consequence, they easily differentiate the groups to which they belong from various outgroups. Once the ingroup/outgroup distinction is drawn, members of one group will inevitably compare their group to the other. Sometimes the comparison produces a positive sense of distinctiveness, sometimes it does not. Tajfel reasons that unfavorable group comparisons contribute to an unsatisfactory identity and produce motivation to find a more positive self-concept. Contact affects the formation of social identity because it affects the probabilities of being categorized and of drawing positive or negative comparisons between one's own group and others in society. Tajfel's theory suggests that for members of disparaged groups—racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, for example—extensive ingroup contact should promote comparison with other group members and social identities in which race and ethnicity are strong. Extensive contact with Whites should produce outward comparisons and identity tension that might be resolved either by denying or embracing ethnic or racial group membership.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) offer two ways members of devalued groups in the United States might cope with the negative comparisons that result from contact with more valued groups. One, the Social Mobility orientation, involves rejecting the "inferior" group membership and identifying with Whites or with being part of the American mainstream. This assimilationist social identity is possible, however, only in flexible social systems that permit "passing" and primarily for fair-skinned, European-looking persons. The other, called the Social Change orientation, involves accepting a changed conception of one's group and/or its position in society. This nonassimilationist identity is apt to emerge from intergroup relations when "passing" is not possible or when segregation, culture, or history produces ingroup pressures against it.

Two types of psychological changes are suggested, though not explicitly delineated by Tajfel's discussion of Social Change orientations. Each in-

volves a new but different understanding of the membership group and should produce two types of identity. In one, the new understanding concerns the group's value and regard in society and produces a new appreciation for its culture and history; in the other, the new understanding concerns the economic and political underpinnings of group disparities and produces a new appreciation for the group's adaptive strengths. The difference between these two types of changes is critical in the emergence of social identity, as one would seem to lead to a culturally based identity and the other to a politically based identity. This distinction between a cultural and political ethnic identity has been drawn in empirical studies of Latino identity. Padilla (1985) found, for example, that one kind of Latino identity is formed of cultural components (shared language and values), another of sociopolitical components (perception of conflict with other groups and of shared oppression), and that individuals with a cultural identity favor reformist political agendas while those with a sociopolitical identity advocate more radical goals and strategies. Gurin (1988) suggests what is involved in these two kinds of orientations and two kinds of identities. Both emotional and cognitive processes are implicated in the emergence of a culturally based identity. Members of derogated groups gain a sense of positive psychological distinctiveness by reevaluating and reinterpreting derogated characteristics that have been applied to their groups. They may come to feel positively about attributes that have been cast negatively by turning them on their heads: Black is beautiful, not ugly or hateful; familism is a cultural strength, not a liability; bilingualism is an intellectual feat, not a deficiency. Or they may alter the basis on which group members compare their group to an outgroup, for example, the use of spirituality rather than wealth or the use of communality rather than individual achievement as criteria for success. Both emotional and cognitive transformations, it is hypothesized, are central in the formation of a culturally based identity.

Cognitive reinterpretations are the more critical processes in the emergence of a politically based identity, although emotions doubtless play some role. Members gain a sense of positive psychological distinctiveness by acquiring a new cognitive understanding of power and social structure in group inequalities. In this process, group members become more sophisticated about the complex causes of group inequalities and no longer believe that the group is solely responsible for its economic and political position. This involves a shift in causal attributions—deemphasizing personal, dispositional causes for more systemic and environmental causes. This form of Social Change orientation should also produce a strong ethnic identity but one that is more political than cultural in its meaning to the individual.

Extensive ingroup contact should foster both types of Social Change orientations, producing culturally and politically based ethnic identities. Sharing cultural events, distinctive foods, a common language, music and a literary tradition, and holiday markers of historical significance with others in the family and in the community helps members of disparaged ethnic groups see value in their own culture and history. In these ways extensive ingroup contact is likely to promote a sense of self as belonging to a valued cultural group. Ingroup contact also helps members see commonality in how they and other group members are treated despite obvious individual variability among them. They begin to understand that this commonality must have a structural foundation. But is ingroup contact alone sufficient to produce both types of ethnic identity? It is predicted that extensive ingroup contact is sufficient for a culturally based identity, but that a politically based identity requires a mix of ingroup and outgroup contact.

A politically based identity and sense of political consciousness require an outward orientation that comes not only from ingroup comparisons but also from comparisons with other groups, in particular with the dominant majority. Williams (1975) delineates factors that foster an outward orientation: frequent intergroup contact, functional similarity on some critical dimension (citizenship, qualifications, language), political rights, exposure to common messages from the mass media, balance in numbers or other distributional characteristics that make outgroups salient in the comparison process. Extensive contact with the dominant White majority by itself, however, may foster an assimilationist identity. Therefore it is argued that a combination of ingroup and outgroup interaction is needed to develop a politically based identity and a sense of group political consciousness.[1]

Another kind of outgroup contact—that with other economically and politically deprived ethnic and racial groups—has received scant attention in the research literature. In a multiethnic society like that of the United States, this kind of outgroup contact is likely to be an important source of social identity. Contact that provides information about commonality across different ethnic groups presses members of each group to grasp the breadth of subordination and its political and economic roots. Members in a particular group cannot easily attribute that group's position in society to its unique culture and history when other groups with different cultures and histories have similar (though not identical) structural positions and relationships with the dominant group. This kind of outgroup contact is thus likely to promote a politically based identity.

In summary, we predict that:

- Extensive contact with Anglos, without comparable contact with people of Mexican descent, will be associated with a mainstream orientation reflected in an assimilationist social identity and in a rejection of political attitudes showing a sense of group consciousness.
- Extensive contact with other persons of Mexican descent will be associated with a culturally based ethnic identity.
- Extensive contact with members of other subordinated ethnic and racial groups, as well as a combination of contact with Anglos and other persons of Mexican descent, will be associated with a politically based ethnic identity and political attitudes involved in group political consciousness.

Method

Sample

The data for this study were obtained from the 1979 National Chicano Survey, conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Interviewed respondents were drawn from a probability sample of Mexican-descent households in the southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, and in metropolitan Chicago. Eligible respondents included heads of households and their spouses who reported backgrounds of at least one half Mexican ancestry, that is, at least two of their grandparents were of Mexican descent. When only one adult in a household was eligible, that person was interviewed; when both were eligible, the respondent was randomly selected. Approximately 11,000 households were screened for ethnicity; 1,360 of these were determined eligible for interviewing. From these, 991 face-to-face interviews were completed. In its final form, the probability sample was representative of approximately 90% of the U.S. population of Mexican-descent adults identified by the 1970 Census (Arce & Santos, 1981).

The survey examined a wide range of issues, all connected to the principal themes of identity and mental health among Mexican-origin persons (Arce, Gurin, Gurin, & Estrada, 1976). The issues surveyed included ethnic and social identity, cultural preferences, associational patterns, political consciousness, mental and physical health, family composition and roles, and labor force participation. The analyses reported here draw extensively from the associational patterns, social identity, and political consciousness sections of the survey.

We focus on the 429 U.S.-born, English-dominant speakers who chose to be interviewed in English. Nativity and citizenship have always been con-

sidered powerful forces for variation in identification (Zavalloni, 1973). Past work on the social identity patterns of the Mexican-origin population confirms this notion by revealing important differences between native-born and foreign-born strata (Dworkin, 1965; Rodriguez-Scheel & Arce, 1981). More recent work by Hurtado and Arce (1987) supports the importance of the nativity distinction and suggests that language may also have an impact on the identity patterns and political attitudes of Mexican-origin persons. Since opportunities for outgroup contact are largely determined by language capabilities, we expected maximal variation in types of contact by restricting our analyses to this subsample. All of the individuals in this subsample spoke English well enough to have contact with Whites and members of non-Spanish speaking ethnic and racial groups.

Measures

Ethnic Identity

Our predictions concern three types of ethnic identity—an assimilationist identity in which Mexican nationality plays little role, a culturally based ethnic identity, and a politically based ethnic identity. The National Chicano Survey included extensive coverage of social identity. Respondents were asked to read through a deck of 31 printed cards, each with a label of a social category, and to select those that "describe how you think about yourself." The social categories depicted class, ethnicity, gender, occupation, and family roles. Factor analyses performed on the responses of this subsample revealed four ethnic dimensions plus an immigrant-worker and family-based identity. These analyses were carried out using the OSIRIS computer package in which the Kaiser criterion is applied to determine how many of the principal components should be rotated for the final varimax solution. The ethnic factors are the focus of this study.

Three of the four factors reflect fairly well the distinctions between an assimilationist, cultural, and political identity. The *assimilationist* identity is represented by identity labels which imply having an upwardly mobile sense of self. It includes the terms working class and middle class, both of which imply a level of economic success beyond that commonly achieved by the Mexican-origin labor force. In 1980, 54% of employed persons of Mexican descent held jobs as unskilled farmers, service workers, or what the Census calls non-precision laborers and operators (Table 169, General Social and Economic Characteristics, U.S. Summary, 1980 Census, Department of the Census). It also includes two ethnic terms (Hispanic and Latino) that vary in meaning across different regions of the country but tend to be used by more

affluent, structurally assimilated Mexican-descent persons who do not identify explicitly with a Mexican heritage. We call this an Upwardly Mobile Ethnic identity.

The *cultural* identity is represented by a factor comprised of the labels Spanish speaker and Mexican. For this sample of native-born, English speakers, thinking of the self as Spanish speaker and as Mexican denotes a tie to Mexican culture. We call this a Mexican Cultural identity.

A third factor represents a *politically based* identity. It includes the labels which gained political significance and acceptance during the Chicano movement: Pocho/Pocha, Indian, Cholo/Chola, Chicano/Chicana, Raza, and Mestizo/Mestiza. The Chicano movement reinterpreted these terms, some of which had previously held derogatory connotations, to symbolize a new sense of pride and political assertion. Applying these terms to the self signifies a new political ethnic identity among Chicanos. We call it an Ethno-Political identity.

The fourth factor, a *nationality* identity, fits our distinctions less well. This factor includes nationality/citizenship terms ranging along a continuum in which foreigner and immigrant anchor one end, with negative loadings, to terms embracing an American identity (American of Mexican descent, Mexican American, English speaker, United States native, United States citizen, and American) at the opposite end, with positive loadings. People with high scores on this factor think of themselves as American and thus this factor might be interpreted as an assimilationist identity. We were not comfortable, however, treating the issue of nationality identification as a reflector of what Tajfel means by Social Mobility and thus we used this factor more in an exploratory than a hypothesis-testing mode.

Additive indices were created for each factor and individual scores were calculated for each respondent. This method, deceptively simple, established a more accurate, multidimensional measure of ethnic identity than has been generated in many studies. Individuals gauged the self-relevancy of all items and received scores on all of the factors. A high score on each identity index reflected a strong identification, a low score only a weak identification.

Political Consciousness

Three dimensions traditionally thought to comprise political consciousness were measured using factor analytic techniques established in previous studies on class, race, and gender consciousness (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980). They included Power Discontent, Political Action Orientation, and Illegitimacy of Subordination.

Power Discontent examined attitudes toward the current power structure by asking respondents if various social groups have "too much," "about the right amount," or "too little" power and influence in American life and politics. Factors analyses performed on their responses yielded a cluster of vocal, subordinate groups and a cluster of influential groups. These items were combined to measure evaluations of the relative power of superordinate and subordinate groups. A high score on the Power Discontent index means that subordinate groups have too little power relative to superordinate groups.

Political Action Orientation examined support for various forms of political activity, including traditional electoral participation and legal reform, and nonelectoral activities such as patronizing or boycotting particular businesses. An index was formed from these items on which a high score indicates support for political activities, a low score lack of support.

Illegitimacy of Subordination examined beliefs about the validity of status differentials between Mexican-origin persons and Anglos. This index assessed awareness of discrimination against people of Mexican descent in schools, work and industry, public agencies, and interactions with the police. A high score indicates awareness of discrimination, hence the perception that group subordination was illegitimate.

Types of Contact

Three forms of group contact were examined: ingroup contact, contact with Whites, and contact with members of other subordinate ethnic and racial groups.

Ingroup contact was measured by asking respondents "How many of your friends (also neighbors and co-workers) are of Mexican descent?" Response categories ranged from "all," "most," "a few," to "none." Scores on these four measures were averaged to give an overall index of extensiveness of ingroup contact across situations.

Anglo contact was measured in a generalized rather than situationally specific manner by asking respondents how much contact they usually have with Anglos, "a lot," "some," "a little," or "none."

Minority Outgroup contact was measured using the same format by asking respondents how much contact they had with Blacks, Asian Americans, American Indians, and other Latinos. Scores on these four measures were averaged to form an overall index of contact with members of other minority groups.

A high score on these three contact measures reflects frequent interaction, a low score little or no interaction.

Results

Frequency of Types of Contact

As indicated above, these measures secured greater detail about the frequency of different types of ingroup contact than about the frequency of outgroup contact. Virtually all respondents had contact with other persons of Mexican descent (see Table 1). Not surprisingly, ingroup contact varied by situation. Friendship was most embedded within the ingroup, neighbor and co-worker relations less. Table 1 shows that 68% indicated that "most" or "all" of their friends were Mexican descendants, but only 44% made comparable statements about their neighbors and 40% about their co-workers. On the summary index 53% of the sample indicated substantial cross-situation interactions with other Mexican descendants.

Minority outgroup contact, in contrast, was less frequent. As noted above, the survey did not ask for the situations in which contact occurred but merely how much contact the respondents had with various groups. The most frequent interactions were reported with Blacks and other Latinos (34% of the sample indicated "some" or "a lot" of contact with members of each of these groups), while less than 20% had this much contact with Asian Americans and Native Americans.

The vast majority of the sample (83%) reported having "some" or "a lot" of contact with Anglos. Thus, of the various non-Mexican groups included in the survey, contact with Anglos was the most frequent. Regional segregation of ethnic and racial groups in the United States lies behind these patterns of contact. The concentration of Cubans in the Southeast, of Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and of the Mexican-descent population in the five Southwestern states (and Chicago) explains why our sample does not have much contact with other Latinos and why our sample has the most contact with Anglos who comprise the only group that is dispersed throughout the region where most people of Mexican descent live.

Controls

Other demographic factors also influence intergroup contact. The youngest respondents and those who reported the least education and the lowest family annual incomes had the most frequent contact with people of Mexican descent. The youngest respondents also had the most contact with Blacks, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other Latinos, though education and income were positively rather than negatively related to minority outgroup contact. Anglo contact was also most frequent among those reporting

Table 1.   Proportion of Sample with Different Kinds of Contact (in percentages) (N = 430)

Ingroup Contact
How many are of Mexican descent?

	Friends	Neighbors	Co-workers
All	13	21	12
Most	56	24	28
Few	30	30	50
None	1	15	10
	100	100	100

Index Range 10-40; Index Mean = 26.01
Background Correlates: Younger, Fewer Years Education, Lower Incomes

Minority Outgroup Contact

	Blacks	Asian Americans	Native Americans	Other Latinos
A lot	10	4	4	13
Some	24	14	11	21
A little	36	31	23	27
None	30	51	62	39
	100	100	100	100

Index Range 10-40; Index Mean = 18.70
Background Correlates: Younger, More Years Education, Higher Incomes

Anglo Contact
How much contact with Anglos/Whites?

A lot	54
Some	29
A little	13
None	4
	100

Index Range 1-4; Scale Range –3.34
Background Correlates: More Years Education, Higher Incomes

the highest incomes and education. In brief, structural advantages were associated with all kinds of outgroup contact, while structural disadvantages were associated with ingroup contact. No casual implication is intended here, however, as cross-sectional data cannot determine whether outgroup contact helps people of Mexican descent become economically and educationally successful or if economic and educational success increases their contacts with members of other groups. Nor can it tell us if contact discourages these kinds of successes or if the least successful end up in more ethnically concentrated situations.

Since age and structural factors were systematically related to types of contact, some of the possible impact of contact on ethnic identities and group consciousness might be attributable to the kinds of people who interact closely with members of their own and other groups. It was important, therefore, to hold these background characteristics constant in assessing the association between type of contact and ethnic identity. We did this by including them as predictors along with the contact measures in explaining ethnic identity and group consciousness. In the regressions reported in Table 2, the first regression coefficient (Beta[1]) represents the effect of contact, holding constant the structural influences of education, family income, and age.

The regression analyses used to test the hypotheses also took into account the interrelationships among these three types of contact. Respondents who reported the most contact with other persons of Mexican descent reported the least contact with Anglos (−.30) and with people from other racial and ethnic groups (−.20), while these two forms of outgroup contact were positively correlated (.24). To assess the independent effects of each kind of contact, the two other contact types were held constant while estimating the effect of the third in the multiple regression analyses. In the regressions reported in Table 2, the second regression coefficient (Beta[2]) represents the effect of each kind of contact, holding constant both the structural characteristics and the other kinds of contact. Comparison of the two Betas allows us to see when most of the effect of these statistical controls is attributable to structural influences and when some of it also derives from the multicollinarity involved in contact types.

To test the prediction that a politically based identity and sense of group consciousness would be most pronounced among respondents with a particular pattern of contact—a combination of frequent contact with the ingroup and some contact with Whites—a third series of regression analyses was run in which a multiplicative interaction term, which represents the combined effect of these two types of contact, was used as an additional predictor of politically based view of the self. In these analyses, both sets of controls were also included.

Effects of Type of Contact

Contact with Anglos was much less influential than predicted. Extensive contact with Anglos was expected to foster an assimilationist view of the self as part of the mainstream (Tajfel's Social Mobility orientation). The simple, uncontrolled relationship between contact with Anglos and an Upwardly

Table 2. Relationship Between Type of Contact and Identity/Sense of Group Consciousness (N = 427)

	Ingroup Contact			Minority Contact			Anglo Contact			Ingroup and Anglo Contact
	r	B¹	B²	r	B¹	B²	r	B¹	B²	B²
Identity										
Upwardly mobile identity (assimilationist)	.064	.059 (.049)	.087 (.051)	.172***	.097* (.048)	.100* (.049)	.183***	.064 (.050)	.064 (.051)	-.247 (.237)
Mexican cultural identity	.015	.030 (.053)	.022 (.054)	-.007	-.023 (.051)	.014 (.053)	-.021	-.041 (.053)	-.034 (.055)	-.013 (.255)
Ethno-political identity	.126**	.128* (.052)	.145** (.052)	.187***	.106* (.050)	.198*** (.051)	-.049	-.064 (.052)	.070 (.053)	.312 (.245)
Nationality identity	-.175***	-.118* (.051)	-.111* (.053)	.080*	.025 (.050)	.003 (.051)	.129**	.058 (.052)	.036 (.053)	-.256 (.248)
Group Consciousness										
Power discontent	.182***	.159** (.051)	.156** (.053)	.000	-.014 (.051)	.012 (.051)	-.069	-.050 (.052)	-.022 (.053)	-.040 (.249)
Illegitimacy of subordination (Mexican discrimination)	.085*	.064 (.053)	.062 (.054)	.075	.105* (.052)	.134* (.052)	-.125**	-.111* (.053)	-.122** (.053)	-.135 (.249)
Approval of political action	.191***	.188*** (.052)	.203** (.053)	.107*	.112* (.051)	.149** (.051)	-.068	-.057 (.053)	-.043 (.053)	.169 (.249)

B¹ Shows relationships between each type of contact and dependent measure controlling for education, income, and age.
B² Shows relationships between each type of contact and dependent measure controlling for the other two types of contact as well as education, income, and age.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Mobile identity was positive and reliable (+ .183); yet the Betas presented in Table 2 (Column 3) are not statistically significant. Comparison of Beta[1] and Beta[2] further shows that it was the structural controls, not the other kinds of contact, that affected the size of the relationship between Anglo contact and our measure of assimilationist identity. (This is true because Beta[2], which represents the effect with both structural variables and other contact types controlled, is not smaller than Beta[1], which includes only the structural controls.) These results show that some of the effect of Anglo contact results from the fact that people who had the most contact with Whites were also the most structurally successful. They held more prestigious occupations and had more schooling and higher family incomes than others in the sample. Since these structural advantages were also positively correlated with an Upwardly Mobile Identity (education, + .260; family income, + .289), contact with Anglos by itself was not a significant, independent determinant of an assimilationist identity.

It was also predicted that people with the most contact with Anglos would hold political attitudes opposed to group political consciousness. The results show consistently negative but quite weak relationships between Anglo contact and the political consciousness measures. The only statistically significant relationship shows that contact with Whites is associated with diminished awareness of discrimination against Mexican Americans.

We raised the possibility that the meaning of contact with Anglos may depend on the total context of a person's associations. The predicted positive assimilationist effects and negative political consciousness effects of contact with Anglos should occur, it was reasoned, only or especially with people who also have little if any contact with other persons of Mexican descent. The interaction terms representing the multiplicative effect of the combination of Anglo and ingroup contact was not statistically significant (see Table 2, Column 4). Those who reported a lot of contact with Anglos but little or no contact with other persons of Mexican descent were no more assimilationist or rejecting of group political consciousness than others in the sample.

Minority Outgroup contact was more influential. By broadening understanding of the ways the stratification system works in the United States, interaction with Asian Americans, Blacks, Indian Americans, and other Latinos was expected to be a source of heightened political consciousness and a politically based identity. Both predictions were supported (see Table 2, Column 2). Contact with members of other racial and ethnic groups was associated with the Ethno-Political identity and with greater awareness of discrimination against Mexicans in schools, public agencies, and other institutions. This kind of outgroup contact also was related to stronger approval of group-based political action.

Table 2 shows that the associations found between minority outgroup contact and a politically based identity and sense of group consciousness were larger when adjustments were made for other kinds of contact. This is explained largely by the interrelationships among ingroup contact, minority contact, and these elements of identity and consciousness. Ingroup and minority contact are both positively related to the Ethno-Political identity, Awareness of Illegitimacy, and approval of Group Political Action, despite the fact that people who have frequent ingroup contact tend not to have frequent minority identity. Beta^2 shows what the effect of each kind of contact would have been were it unrelated rather than related to the other. (Anglo contact had the least impact on these relationships because it is the least associated with these politically based measures.)

Minority contact was also associated with an assimilationist identity, the sense of oneself as upwardly mobile, working or middle class, and as Latino or Hispanic. This unexpected association seems contradictory to the other findings. How can outgroup minority contact simultaneously foster a politically conscious view of subordination and an assimilationist social identity? The explanation is methodological rather than substantive. An item analysis relating each of the four kinds of minority contact shows that it is specifically contact with other Latinos that is associated with identifying as an upwardly mobile person. Contact with Blacks, Asian Americans, and Indian Americans is not related to this kind of identity. Moreover, of the terms on the Upwardly Mobile identity measure the two ethnic ones (Hispanic and Latino) account for the association between contact with Latinos and high scores on this identity measure.

Ingroup contact was expected to be associated with cultural and political bases of identity and consciousness. The results show mixed support for these predictions. Extensive contact with other persons of Mexican descent was associated with a political identity and sense of group consciousness but not with a cultural identity.

With respect to a political sense of self, the results show that ingroup contact was related to having an Ethno-Political identity and with all three indicators of group political consciousness (see Table 2, Column 1). Comparison of the uncontrolled and controlled effects of ingroup contact shows that structural variables and age affected the impact of contact on Power Discontent and Awareness of Illegitimacy. Age in particular affected the association between ingroup contact and Awareness of Illegitimacy. Since the youngest respondents had the most contact with other persons of Mexican descent and were also the most aware of discrimination, the independent effect of ingroup contact was no longer statistically significant. Turning to

Column 4 of Table 2 one also sees that the association between ingroup contact and these measures of political identity and consciousness were equally robust regardless of how much contact individuals had with Anglos. We had predicted that the greatest political consciousness and the most politicized sense of self would be found among people who had a lot of ingroup and a lot of Anglo contact. However, as already noted, none of the interaction terms involving the combined effect of ingroup and Anglo contact were statistically significant.

Perhaps the most surprising negative result in these analyses is that the predicted association between ingroup contact and a culturally based identity was not supported. (See discussion below.)

Another effect of ingroup contact, which was not predicted, shows that extensive interaction with other persons of Mexican descent is related to our measure of Nationality Identity, specifically to a sense of self as a foreigner and as an immigrant.

Discussion

Overall, the results confirmed the predictive power of group contact for social identity and political attitudes among people of Mexican descent. Particularly salient was the political impact of minority contact. People who reported frequent interactions with Mexicans, other Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans clearly thought about themselves as political beings, identifying strongly with Ethno-Political labels and expressing group conscious attitudes. Experiences with people of color, both within the ingroup and with various minority outgroups, evidently encouraged a politicized social change orientation in which previously derogatory labels such as Chicano, Cholo, Mestizo, and Pocho could be recast to convey positive, rather than negative, distinctiveness (Tajfel, 1978). In addition, while these respondents strongly favored political action aimed at improving social and economic conditions for people of Mexican descent, the results suggest they did so for somewhat different reasons. Those with frequent ingroup contact were supportive because they recognized structural power disparities, and those with frequent minority outgroup contact because they recognized the illegitimate and categorical treatment of group members.

Ingroup contact also had some unexpected implications for social identity. One emerged from the exploratory analysis of the Nationality identity in which American and foreigner statuses were contrasted. The results showed that native-born Mexican descendants with extensive ingroup contact identified as "immigrants" and "foreigners," both objectively inaccurate descrip-

tors. Why? Two related interpretations can be offered; each presumes that these labels are politically symbolic. One is that people may identify with a politicized concept known as the radius of sisterhood/brotherhood. This concept represents the idea that the self encompasses not only one's unique attributes and intimate associations but also the experiences of one's cultural brothers and sisters. Thus although these respondents are not immigrants, immigrant and foreigner statuses are recognized as historical realities and, in the current United States political environment, as highly charged political statuses. Politicized persons of Mexican descent may therefore define group boundaries explicitly to include these "outsiders" and identify with labels and experiences that have important political meaning in the community (Apfelbaum, 1979; Dion; 1979; Gurin et al., 1980). Ingroup contact would foster understanding of the community's reactions to the politics of immigration. A second interpretation emphasizes awareness of the oppressive treatment of the Mexican-descent population, no matter how long particular members have lived on this land or been United States citizens. Politicized group members may therefore identify with labels conveying "intruder-outsider" status and reject those reflecting mere technical citizenship that has not assured social, economic, and political incorporation.

In sum, ingroup contact was associated with several political interpretations about the self as a person of Mexican descent. These political interpretations did not require contact with both the ingroup and with Anglos, as we had predicted, however. None of the interactions testing the combined effects of these two types of contacts were statistically significant. Ingroup contact by itself was the critical issue. Of course, direct contact with Anglos is not the only way persons of Mexican descent can draw the intergroup comparisons that should foster a political sense of self and group conscious political attitudes. The media (radio, television, newspapers) and secondhand exchanges provide indirect methods of comparison that are apparently powerful enough for those with the most ingroup contact to become aware of group disparities, conclude that they are largely illegitimate, advocate social change, and use political labels to describe themselves.

Does ingroup contact and this political sense of self imply negative attitudes toward people who are not part of the ingroup? This question has been raised persistently in social psychology since 1906 when Sumner, who developed the terms "the we-group, or ingroup, and everybody else, or other-groups, outgroups," observed that conditions of amity usually exist within the ingroup, while hostility characterizes relations with outgroups. To Sumner, positive feelings within the ingroup depended on negative feelings toward members of the outgroups. Our findings contradict his view and are

consistent with a large body of recent social psychological studies showing that a positive sense of self as an ingroup member can be achieved independently of feelings and reactions to various outgroups and that there is no inevitable connection between ingroup and outgroup sentiments (Stephan, 1986). For our sample, extensive ingroup contact was not related, for example, to an exclusive concern with the powerlessness of their own group. The Power Discontent measure was comprised of judgments not only of the power of Mexican descent persons but also of Blacks, Black militants, and young people. Respondents who had a lot of ingroup contact (and who had developed an Ethno-Political identity) were concerned about the disparities between the power of Anglos and all of these subordinate groups and not exclusively about Chicano-Anglo issues.

An unexpected finding involving ingroup contact was its irrelevance for cultural identity. We had predicted that extensive ingroup interaction would foster a cultural sense of self but found that thinking of oneself as Mexican and as a Spanish speaker was no more characteristic of those with frequent than with infrequent contact with other Mexican descendants. In fact, none of the contact measures were related to this measure of cultural identity. This pattern of results suggests that limited variation in endorsing these two labels might be a possible explanation for the lack of connection between ingroup contact and cultural identity. Perhaps the labels Mexican and Spanish speaker are so much part of the self-views of this sample that actual frequency of ingroup contact could not be influential. A check of the endorsement rates for Mexican (67%) and for Spanish speaker (76%) indicates, however, that there was enough variation to find significant relationships. A second methodological explanation concerns the possible interpretations respondents might have given to this measure of cultural identity. Perhaps they viewed the labels Mexican and Spanish speaker merely as factual self-descriptors that fail to capture the feelings that are normally involved in identifying with a group's culture. If this is true, our social interaction theory may be valid but not testable with this measure. This explanation is supported by an analysis carried out using an index of likes and dislikes of various cultural expressions—Spanish language television, Mexican music, Mexican food, participation in Mexican historical events and traditional holidays. People with extensive ingroup contact felt the most positively toward these representations of Mexican culture. Ingroup contact was also related to a positive feeling toward the idea of children retaining Mexican culture. These questions that asked explicitly for feelings and preferences are thus apparently good indicators of cultural identification. Our conceptualization of identity as acceptance of membership in an ethnic group had led us, however, in

measuring cultural as well as other kinds of ethnic identities to the labels that people use to describe how they think about themselves.

Predictions about the impact of contact with Anglos received only minimal support, and most of the relationships between this kind of contact and ethnic identities proved to be spurious—the result primarily of the structural advantages that people who interact the most frequently with Anglos have rather than of the contact itself. Why was contact with Anglos of such minor importance? Several theorists would argue that it is the nature and outcome of intergroup interaction rather than its frequency that determines its impact on self (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Favorable interactions specifically with more advantaged or valued groups should encourage an assimilationist identity; unfavorable interactions should discourage it. Unfortunately, this measure of Anglo contact asked respondents for frequency rather than context, type, or quality of contact, and thus was probably insensitive to the ways in which relationships between members of devalued and valued groups affect social identity.

Taken together, these results support a dynamic relationship between intergroup contact, social identity, and political consciousness. In general, different kinds of contacts encouraged different ways of thinking about the self and group membership, and within a context both sets of cognitions were logically joined. This pattern was most evident when social identity and political cognitions were explicit and developed, as they appear to be especially in contacts with members of other minority groups of color. The thematic differences suggest that social identity and political attitudes are negotiated products, heavily influenced by context and social interaction.

Note

1. Following Williams, we believe that this pattern of ingroup and outgroup contact must also have particular qualities if the cognitive transformations involved in political consciousness are to take place. Ingroup contact should be intimate and based on interdependence, outgroup contact, nonintimate and competitive. With the data available, however, we cannot test if quality is a critical conditioner of the impact of contact.

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