Identity, Contact, and Health Among Majority and Minority Ethnic Groups in Mexico and Chile

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Abstract

This chapter explores the relationships between social identity, intergroup contact, and health among mestizos and indigenous people in Mexico and Chile. Building on social identity theory and self-categorization theory, in Mexico and Chile important identities are based on ethnicity and nationality. There is widespread discrimination against indigenous people in both nations. While the protective influence of social relationships on health is well documented, it is not known whether this also applies to *intergroup* contact. We report two questionnaire-based studies (total $N = 1000$). Participants were asked about their direct and extended intergroup contact, their identification with subordinate and superordinate categories, and several health-related variables. Results revealed a complex pattern. For example, in both studies direct and extended outgroup contact had exclusively beneficial effects on physical and psychological health among indigenous participants while their impact for mestizo participants was more mixed. Results are discussed according to the meaning of sub-versus superordinate identities in Mexico and Chile and the divergent effects of intergroup contact on health-related variables.