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SOCIAL IDENTITY,
INTERGROUP CONFLICT,
and CONFLICT REDUCTION

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The Meaning of American National Identity

Patterns of Ethnic Conflict and Consensus

National identity is one among many often co-existing and overlapping social identities, including territorial, racial, religious, linguistic, and gender identities. The psychological task for individuals is to order and integrate their different collective “selves” (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997). The political task for government is to balance the need for national unity with the competing claims of other group identities. In modern society, emphasizing loyalty to the “nation” and making this the essence of the individual’s political self-definition emerged as the dominant way to boost social solidarity (Greenfield & Chirot, 1994). As an immigrant nation, the United States has always faced the problem of coping with ethnic diversity; the motto *e pluribus unum* expresses the desire for a strong sense of common American identity without indicating the proper balance between the national “one” and the ethnic “many.”

The contemporary meaning of American national identity is the focus of this chapter. Immigration and differences in fertility rates have changed the ethnic and religious composition of the United States (Farley, 1996; Warner, 1993). Compared to 50 years ago, the country is more diverse, with many more people today from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Moreover, this demographic change has occurred in the context of technological transformations eroding national sovereignty in economic life and of the emergence of intellectual trends legitimating the primacy of ethnicity in political life.

Scholars disagree about whether globalization and multiculturalism have weakened Americans’ sense of attachment to the “nation,” particularly among minority groups (Reich, 1992; Barber, 1995; Hollinger, 1997;

Wolfe, 1998; de la Garza, Falcon, & Garcia 1996). There also are conflicting views about the implications of a stronger sense of ethnic, as opposed to national, identity. Some scholars (Raz, 1994; Young, 1990) regard ethnic pride as a source of individual self-esteem among cultural minorities that contributes to the achievement of their group's goals. Others (Schlesinger, 1992; Miller, 1995) claim that the emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness (in-group favoritism) inevitably weakens common bonds and intensifies group conflict (outgroup hostility), raising the specter of cultural and political Balkanization.

This chapter employs survey research to analyze the meaning and political consequences of American national identity in the context of the demographic, economic, and intellectual changes noted above. The conceptualization of national identity formulated here draws on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Thoits & Virshup, 1997) to encompass both self-categorization (or identification *as*) and affect (or identification *with*). However, it goes beyond merely assessing the individual's positive (or negative) feelings about the nation to determine the normative foundations of their sense of American identity.

The content of American identity is the set of ideas and sentiments that form the conceptual framework of nationhood. At the cultural level, this refers to a particular collective representation of the nation indicating the subjective criteria for membership in the national community (Citrin, Haas, Muste, & Reingold, 1994). A given conception of national identity thus includes normative assumptions about how members of different ethnic and cultural groups *should* relate to one another. For example, *must* minority groups assimilate to a dominant language, religion, or political outlook in order to achieve full acceptance as fellow-nationals, or can a nation accommodate loyalty to a variety of cultural traditions? Historical experience suggests that there is no single answer to this question, so it is important to conceive of national identity in a way that recognizes the possibility of several conceptions of "Americanness" vying for popular support.

The next section of the chapter provides a more detailed account of the tripartite definition of national identity that distinguishes among the dimensions of self-categorization, affect, and normative content. The second section summarizes the content of competing ideological conceptions of American identity, with particular attention to their normative assumptions regarding the articulation of strong ethnic identities. The analysis of survey data, presented in the third section, addresses three main questions:

1. What is the degree of national versus ethnic identification in American public opinion, as assessed by several different measures of self-categorization and affective support?
2. What is the pattern of consensus and cleavage among white, black, Hispanic, and Asian respondents? Specifically, do minority ethnic groups have a weaker sense of national identity than whites, and

are there ethnic group differences in how people order their national and ethnic identities?

3. What is the impact of national and ethnic identities on policy preferences? Drawing on symbolic politics theory (Sears, 1993), the final section of the chapter tests hypotheses about the relative influence of these identifications on preferences regarding foreign policy, racial policies, and "multicultural" issues such as immigration and group representation.

These analyses shed light on the impact of a superordinate "American" identity on feelings about "outgroups," both domestic and foreign, and provide a basis for speculating about the implications of different patterns of national and ethnic identity for conflict and cooperation among America's racial and ethnic groups.

The Dimensions of Social Identity

Identity is a slippery concept. It is an assertion of both sameness and difference. One answers the question "What is your identity?" by naming who one is like. This entails drawing boundaries: one is the same as some others and different from everyone else. For this reason, a social identity both integrates and divides.

The first step in measuring a social identity is to determine the basis of *self-categorization*; one identifies the characteristic(s) shared by those with whom one psychologically belongs. We each possess multiple *potential* social identities whose degree of overlap and whose relative significance for our self-concept and behavior may vary (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Moreover, while self-categorization may be the initial step in the formation of a psychologically meaningful social identity, the range of one's options is finite. Biology, the life cycle, social structure, the economy, and the government create the categories that demarcate social identities with potential political consequences. Thus, some social identities are optional and others imposed. Furthermore, the borders dividing identity groups are permeable, but not entirely open. It is easy to be a Bulls fan and then to "exit" psychologically for the Celtics when Michael Jordan retires. It is harder to shed one's nationality or ethnicity and almost impossible to change one's race or sex. Finally, even when one can adopt a particular social identity by self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicker, & Blackwell, 1987), this choice frequently must be affirmed by the agreement of others in the group that you do indeed possess the criteria for membership. The daughter of Chinese immigrants may call herself an American, yet might be told by fellow-citizens of European origin that she does not share their national identity.

Self-categorization refers to "identification *as*," connoting a perceived

self-location in a group, and should be distinguished from “identification *with*,” which indicates positive *affect* toward others in the group and must be measured separately. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) posits that mere awareness of belonging to a group engenders positive feelings about the group and a tendency to act on behalf of other group members, even if they are unknown to one personally. In the same vein, Miller (1995) has argued that the moral value of a strong sense of national identity is that it fosters diffuse feelings of sympathy and obligation toward fellow citizens.

In addition, there is a difference between membership in a group and psychological attachment to it. One can identify with members of a minority group, agreeing that they deserve more access to jobs or political power, without categorizing oneself as a member of that group. This example underscores the potential significance of identities based on shared values rather than sociological similarities and the need to determine the conditions under which “identification *as*” and “identification *with*” are closely connected.

“Identification *with*” entails learning about a group’s defining customs, expectations, and values, and making them one’s own. These common values or ideas define the third component of a social (e.g., national) identity—its *content*. The specific content of a group identity is socially constructed, in the sense that consensual decisions shape and reinforce the normative criteria for membership. Since these criteria are vulnerable to challenge and subject to change, it is important to assess the extent of their legitimacy.

Still, social identities are not automatically political. They are politicized when feelings of identification with a group are combined with a belief in advancing its goals through collective action (Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981). During the British Raj, Indians undoubtedly differentiated themselves cognitively from the English. The emergence of an ideology and organized movement demanding change in the cultural, economic, and legal status of Indians infused this social identity with political content.

The Affective Dimension: Patriotism versus Chauvinism

A nation denotes a group of people seeking or possessing a common homeland. Nationalism as a doctrine asserts that a group of people sharing characteristics that differentiate them, *in their own minds*, from others should be politically autonomous. The affective dimension of national identity (identification *with*) refers to feelings of closeness to and pride in one’s country and its symbols. Many scholars go further, however, and distinguish love of one’s own country from a sense of superiority to other countries (Schaar, 1981; Staub, 1997; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Sullivan, Fried, & Dietz, 1992; Connor, 1993; Taylor 1995). They invoke the concept of patriotism to refer to the positive emotion of love for one’s own people and homeland

and use “nationalism” pejoratively, not technically, to designate arrogance and contempt toward other countries. Writing in this vein, for example, George Orwell described patriotism as defensive and nationalism as aggressive. For Schaar (1981, p. 285), nationalism is a perversion of patriotism, “its bloody brother.” Psychologists developing separate measures for these concepts tend to give the label “nationalism” or “blind patriotism” to name disdain for other countries and a drive to dominate them (Bar-Tal, 1993; Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989; Staub, 1997).

Drawing on social identity theory’s distinction between ingroup favoritism and outgroup hostility clearly is useful when studying national and ethnic identity. The emotive use of the term “nationalism,” however, is unnecessarily confusing. “Chauvinism,” not nationalism *per se*, is the term used here to refer to an extreme and bounded loyalty, the belief in one’s country’s superiority, whether it is right or wrong. Whether patriotism, an ideology of mutual affection among those with a common sense of national consciousness (Kelman, 1997, p. 170), and chauvinism empirically slide into each other, such that caring for one’s own typically is associated with hostility toward others, is a controversial issue to be explored below (see also Brewer, this volume).

Normative Conceptions of American Identity

History shows that the attributes used to define the idea of a “people” or “nation” are numerous and malleable (Greenfield, 1992). Historians distinguish “civic” nationalism, where criteria for belonging are identical to citizenship and so, in principle at least, open to all, from “ethnic” nationalism, where membership is based on a sense of shared blood (Connor, 1993). There is a modern tendency to endorse the principle of ethnicity as the legitimate basis for political autonomy, but there are prominent counterexamples of multiethnic states such as the United States (Greenfield, 1992). As Max Weber put it, nationality ultimately is based on the principle of territory, ethnicity on lineage.

Whatever the specific foundations of a sense of national identity, nationalism, in its neutral, technical meaning, implies that membership in the nation is the citizen’s overriding group loyalty, taking precedence over other available foci of affiliation, including ethnicity, in circumstances where they conflict. If a strong national identity means consciousness of special bonds to one’s fellow-nationals, so that they become, at least symbolically, a large extended family, then constructing a nation may involve psychological losses as well as gains. The development of a national identity may require diminishing or abandoning one’s attachment to other groups, including one’s ethnic group.

The third dimension of our conception of national identity refers to its normative content. This means the particular set of ideas about what makes

the nation distinctive—ideas about its members, its core values and goals, the territory it ought to occupy, and its relations to other nations (Citrin et al., 1994). In a multiethnic society, these ideas lay down the nature of legitimate commitments to subnational communities of descent. In contemporary American politics, liberalism, nativism, and multiculturalism are alternative political theories about how society should be organized and how national identity should be defined. Each proposes a different solution for how properly to balance national and ethnic identities, with conflicting implications for policymakers. The analysis below therefore assesses the degree of popular support for these competing ideas.

The liberal conception of American identity is “civic,” not “ethnic.” Commitment to the national “creed” of democracy and individualism (Huntington, 1981; Gleason, 1980) is what makes one an American. Since belonging to the nation is equated not with shared blood but with common beliefs and customs (Gleason, 1980; Lind, 1995), anyone, regardless of ancestry, can become American through adherence to the dominant set of ideals, which include equality of opportunity and respect. The liberal image of nationality is ethnically inclusive, in principle, if not always in practice (Smith, 1997).

When it comes to ethnic diversity, the liberal conception of national identity is optimistic about the ability of contemporary American society to assimilate newcomers. This means that ethnic Balkanization is not a serious threat, so there is no reason to extirpate the traditions of new immigrants as attempted by the Americanization program in the 1920s. Over time, the largely Asian and Hispanic newcomers will blend into the cultural mainstream, just like their European predecessors. Thus, people are free to honor their ethnic heritage if they wish, without undermining America’s ability to create one people out of many. Still, according to the liberal conception of national identity, when the claims of nationality and ethnicity conflict, the former should take precedence. In psychological terms, liberalism rejects the notion of primordial identities, the idea that differences among communities of descent are *fundamental* and *enduring*, exercising an inherent dominion over the individual’s political conduct.

Rogers Smith (1997) documents the persistent gap between the liberal theory of national identity and more nativist political practices. From the beginning of the United States, the official definition of “Americanness” excluded blacks and Native Americans and consigned women to a lesser role. Then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, restrictive immigration and naturalization laws discriminated on a racialist basis. Asians were denied citizenship, Mexicans were repatriated, and in 1924, immigration was limited to a small number of people of Northern European origin.

The nativist response to ethnic diversity (Higham, 1988) is to insist on cultural conformity. If there is to be immigration, the nation’s policy should favor the admission of people who already are familiar with American political culture (Brimelow, 1995). Once here, newcomers should undergo a

program of indoctrination that cleanses them of their traditional loyalties and imparts knowledge of cultural practices. Nativism thus gives an ethnocentric cast to American national identity. Here, nationality does not simply trump one’s ethnicity; rather, nationality fuses with a particular Anglo-Saxon ethnicity.

Scholars disagree about the extent and the voluntary nature of cultural assimilation of immigrants to America (Gerstle, 1997; Hollinger, 1997; Gordon, 1964; Glazer & Moynihan, 1959). While the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act marked the ascendancy of the liberal conception of citizenship, in previous decades nativism and racism strongly influenced public policy. Gerstle (1997, p. 556) argues that government support for nativism and the end of mass immigration suppressed the hyphenated American identities that had thrived earlier and narrowed the range of acceptable cultural behavior. Even so, nativism never entirely succeeded (Glazer & Moynihan, 1959); every immigrant did not truly “melt” into a single, unchanging political culture.

Multiculturalism is an alternative ideological response to the presence of ethnic diversity in America. The “soft” or “liberal” version of this conception of national identity emphasizes the virtues of cultural pluralism and calls on the government to help ensure tolerance toward minorities (Miller, 1995; Appiah, 1994; Raz, 1994). “Hard” or “radical” multiculturalism goes further, conceiving of the nation as a confederation of ethnic groups with equal rights and construing ethnicity as the *preferred* basis of one’s political identity (Citrin, Sears, Muste, & Wong, forthcoming; Sears, Citrin, Cheleden, & van Laar, 1999).

Unlike liberalism, then, multiculturalism assumes that one’s ethnic identity is essential to one’s personal dignity and self-realization (Raz, 1994). This conception of national identity does hold that differences among communities of descent are basic and persisting. Since no culture is superior to any other, none should be privileged in a multiethnic polity (Young, 1990; Goldberg, 1994). To assure that minority cultures survive and flourish—something that is viewed as indispensable for the well-being of their members—“hard” multiculturalism therefore demands *group* rights and government efforts to preserve minority cultures (Okin, 1997). Without such support, it is argued, the standing of minority ethnic groups inevitably will decline in the face of the cultural and economic power of the numerical majority, and members of minority ethnic groups will lose the core of their social identity.

Multiculturalism emphasizes ethnic consciousness and pride, but provides no apparent basis for social solidarity among America’s ethnic groups save the principle of mutual tolerance (Raz, 1994). Because of this, critics (Schlesinger, 1992; Kateb, 1994) warn that elevating the psychological salience of ethnic identity, as Yugoslavia’s tragic recent history illustrates, will increase group conflict or make it difficult to mobilize citizens on behalf of national goals. In the vocabulary of social identity theory, they claim

that legitimating ingroup favoritism will lead inexorably to hostility and aggression toward outgroups, including other ethnic groups within the American national community.

Research Questions and Method

Discussion about the consequences of changing the balance between national and ethnic identities often proceeds in an empirical vacuum, without much reference to the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of the American public. This chapter employs survey data to present evidence about the following questions: What is the level of patriotism in the United States, and does it differ substantially across ethnic groups? Do white, black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans differ in how they order their national and ethnic identities or in how they conceive of membership in the national community? And does one's particular conception of national identity influence opinions about government policies?

Psychological theories regarding intergroup relations differ in their predictions about the preeminence of ethnicity in how people define themselves politically (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Frederico, 1999; Sears et al., 1999). Our own expectations are guided by symbolic politics theory (Sears, 1993; Sears et al., 1999). This approach assumes that individuals possess stable predispositions established in early socialization (e.g., through parents or mass media) and reinforced by later experience (e.g., through education or work). Ethnicity has no inherent priority in identity formation. Ethnic identification is one potentially significant predisposition, national attachment is another. The relative strength of these identities varies according to one's socialization experiences, and their influence on current behavior depends upon the nature of environmental cues. For example, feelings of national identity are likely to be evoked by international terrorist activities because these raise the salience of one's status as an American, but not by proposals to increase the tax on tobacco.

By emphasizing the role of social learning, the symbolic politics perspective is compatible with either ethnic antagonism or harmony in multiethnic societies. In the American context, it appears that national pride and a sense of the country's exceptionalism are strongly socialized attitudes, and this socialization may mitigate ethnic conflict by integrating diverse groups in an overarching identity (Horowitz, 1985). All the country's ethnic groups are exposed to patriotic norms and the country's liberal political tradition (Hartz, 1955; Lipset, 1996) that transmits belief in individual rights, not group rights. The potency of these cultural messages would predict only minor ethnic differences in national identity and support for multiculturalism.

Symbolic politics theory conceives of national and ethnic identities as structures of valenced beliefs stored in memory (Lau & Sears, 1986). Which of a person's political predispositions influences her political choices partly

depends on the nature of the stimuli she encounters, such as events, policies, and candidates' messages (Zaller, 1992). When a particular attitude such as national pride is evoked, the theoretically predicted response is to act in a way that reinforces one's preexisting orientation. Accordingly, subjective conceptions of national identity are hypothesized to govern opinions about specific issues, such as foreign policy, immigration, or teaching American history, which evoke symbols of nationhood, but not about "neutral" issues, such as protecting endangered species.

The survey method relies on self-reports as the basis for classifying social identities. The main body of evidence here comes from the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS) of the American public aged 18 and older conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (Davis & Smith, 1997). This survey employed a split-sample design and the results are based on the 1,367 respondents of the total sample of 2,094 who were asked questions about national identity. In part because the 1996 GSS national survey included very few Hispanic and Asian respondents, comparable evidence from the 1994 and 1995 Los Angeles County Social Surveys (LACSS), conducted by UCLA's Institute for Social Science Research (Sears et al., 1999) also is reported. The Los Angeles data have special interest since they delineate the degree of ethnic consensus and conflict in an extraordinarily diverse local community where the salience of multiculturalism is a political constant. The 1994 LACSS sample included 279 whites, 231 blacks, 264 Latinos, and 47 Asian respondents, and the corresponding numbers in the 1995 sample were 259, 71, 202, and 47.

The 1996 GSS included a variety of items regarding beliefs and feelings about America. From this set the analyses in this chapter use items covering the different aspects of patriotism and chauvinism, as well as other questions assessing subjective beliefs about the normative criteria for American nationality. Other questions about the respondent's level of pride in distinct features of American society and history were used to provide convergent evidence regarding national attachment. In addition, questions concerning one's political self-categorization and one's level of identification with one's ethnic group provided evidence about the balance between national and ethnic identities.

Public Attachment to America

The present survey evidence shows clearly that most Americans retain a strong, positive sense of national identity. Table 4.1 presents the responses of the 1996 GSS national sample, broken down by ethnicity, to an array of relevant items, with the relatively few "don't know" answers excluded. (For the full wording of the questions, see Davis & Smith, 1997). Table 4.1 groups these questions to reflect the tripartite definition of national identity outlined above and to indicate the composition of multi-item attitude

TABLE 4.1 Beliefs about American National Identity (1996 GSS)

	Total (1367)	Whites (1018)	Blacks (156)	Hispanics (61)
<i>Political Self-Categorization</i>				
Think of self mainly as "just American" in social and political issues*	90%	96%	66%	79%
<i>Affective Attachment to America</i>				
<i>Patriotism scale items:**</i>				
How important is being an American to you? (% saying 'most important thing in their life')	46	47	49	26
How close do you feel to America? (% saying 'close' or 'very close')	81	83	69	83
Agree 'I would rather be a citizen of America than any other country'	91	92	89	79
<i>Pride in Aspects of America</i>				
% saying 'very proud' or 'somewhat proud'				
The way democracy works	83	85	77	81
Its political influence in the world	80	81	77	75
Its history	88	92	69	81
Its fair and equal treatment of all groups in society	57	60	42	51
<i>Chauvinism scale items:</i>				
Agree 'World would be a better place if people from other countries were more like Americans'	40	40	47	47
Agree 'America is a better country than most other countries'	81	83	74	73
Agree 'America should follow its own interests, even if this leads to conflicts with other nations'	44	44	50	39
Agree 'People should support their country even when it's in the wrong'	32	30	41	33
<i>Normative Conceptions of American Identity</i>				
% Saying very or fairly important for a True American:				
<i>Nativism scale items:</i>				
To have been born in America	69	67	82	42
To be a Christian	54	50	77	50
To have lived in America for most of one's life	73	71	84	77
<i>Assimilationism scale items:</i>				
To be able to speak English	93	94	91	85
To feel American	87	89	81	72
To have American citizenship	93	92	93	93
<i>Multiculturalism</i>				
Agree 'It is impossible for people who do not share American customs and traditions to become fully American'	35	34	47	34
Agree 'Ethnic minorities should be given govt assistance to preserve their customs and traditions'	17	11	44	45
Think it is better if groups adapt and blend into larger society rather than maintain their distinct customs and traditions	58	61	56	50

*This question was not asked in the 1996 GSS. The data we report is from the 1994 GSS.

**The items listed under Patriotism, as well as those under the headings Chauvinism, Assimilationism, and Nativism, are the items that were used in constructing these scales for the analyses presented in subsequent

scales. The Political Self-Categorization item asks respondents to consider which identity is primary to them when they think about political and social issues. The Patriotism and Chauvinism items assess the affective dimension of national identity. These items are similar in content to other measures of psychological attachment to the nation (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Staub, 1997). Another set of "pride" questions taps the respondent's sense of pride in regards to specific aspects of American society. The "true American" questions capture normative conceptions of national identity and are modeled on an earlier Traditional Americanism scale (Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990). In addition, several items assess support for the maintenance of diverse cultures within the political community, a core principle of the multiculturalist conception of American identity.

Clearly, table 4.1 shows that patriotic sentiment remains pervasive in the American public. One poll is just a snapshot in time, of course, and the level of positive affect one records will vary with the response categories used to measure the underlying attitude. Nevertheless, the consistency in expressions of pride and belonging is impressive. When asked to rate the importance of being an American on a 10-point scale, fully 46 percent of the 1996 GSS sample said it was "the most important thing in their life." In response to similar questions, 81 percent said they felt "close to America" and 91 percent agreed that they would "rather be a citizen of America than any other country." Responses to the items in the "Pride" subheading in table 4.1 show that this generalized feeling of attachment carries over to judgments about most specific features of national experience. For example, 83 percent of the 1996 GSS sample expressed pride in "the way democracy works in America." However, many fewer, 57 percent, said they were proud of the country's record in treating all groups in society equally. Clearly, one can have a strong sense of patriotism without believing that the nation is perfect.

Nor does everyone extend pride in America to a conviction in the country's superiority. While 81 percent of the 1996 national sample did agree that America is a better country than most others, just 40 percent thought the world would be a better place if people from other nations were more like Americans. Only 32 percent agreed that one should support their country "even when it is wrong," compared to 50 percent who disagreed. Chauvinism, in the sense of a latent hostility toward other nations, is present, but the dominant outlook seems to be just a preference for one's own people and place.

The pattern of answers to the questions about what is important for being "truly American" reinforces this conclusion. Each of the attributes listed was deemed either "very" or "fairly" important, suggesting that most Americans believe that there is a distinct national identity. The more inclusive political criteria—American citizenship (87 percent) and simply feeling American (93 percent)—were chosen more often than the ascriptive qualities of being native born (69 percent) or Christian (54 percent). The ability

to speak English (93 percent) might appear as an ethnocentric criterion, but this is an achieved rather than an ascribed trait and research indicates that within two generations most immigrants do learn the country's common language (Portes, 1996). In fact, language minorities and foreign-born residents are as likely as white or black Americans to emphasize the linguistic criterion for national identity (Citrin et al., 1990).

Multiculturalism asserts the need to maintain minority cultures within America and regards the symbols of assimilation with suspicion, if not outright hostility. The 1996 GSS asked respondents whether they believed it is "better for a country if different racial or ethnic groups maintain their distinct customs and traditions" or if they "adapt and blend into the larger society." Of those who expressed a definite opinion, 58 percent said that "blending in" would be better. (In the case of this question, however, fully 27 percent of the respondents did not express a definite opinion, suggesting substantial ambivalence about the choice as posed. When the respondents without a definite opinion are included, 43 percent of the total sample are in favor of "blending in," while 31 percent favor the maintenance of cultural diversity). Even fewer, only 17 percent of the GSS sample, agreed with the position of many advocates of multiculturalism that ethnic minorities should receive government support to preserve their traditions.

At the same time, there was considerable confidence about the possibility of assimilation. More respondents (42 percent) disagreed than concurred (35 percent) with the proposition that "it is impossible for people who do not share American customs and traditions to become fully American." Perhaps because of this optimism, many Americans may seem to feel that assimilation and maintaining connections to one's ethnic heritage are mutually compatible. Public opinion endorses the importance of a common national identity without insisting on a forced march to cultural conformity. For example, a 1994 GSS poll found that only 26 percent of the public said that "ethnic history is getting too much attention in the public schools," another indication of the tendency to view the existence of a unifying American culture as compatible with respect for pluralism (Merelman, Streich, & Martin, 1998).

Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, we combined the items listed in table 4.1 to construct Patriotism ($\alpha = .64$) and Chauvinism ($\alpha = .66$) indices and summary measures of Nativist ($\alpha = .79$) and Assimilationist ($\alpha = .64$) conceptions of Americanism. Although there is statistical evidence for treating these dimensions as distinct, clearly they are interrelated. Nativism and Assimilationism correlate $.58$ (Pearson's r) in the 1996 GSS sample, and Patriotism and Chauvinism also are associated ($r = .37$). An interesting note is that Assimilationism was more strongly related to Patriotism ($r = .47$) than to Chauvinism ($r = .38$), whereas the obverse was true for Nativism ($r = .29$ and $.45$, respectively), a pattern pointing to a "psycho-logical" bond between an exclusionary definition of American identity and a sense of superiority to other peoples. However, beliefs about the

value of cultural diversity are not strongly related to these variants of positive attachment to the nation. Responses to the question about whether or not groups should blend into the mainstream culture correlated positively, but weakly, with the Patriotism (.13), Chauvinism (.13), Nativism (.07), and Assimilationism (.13) scales. Admittedly, these correlations may be attenuated owing to the use of just a single-item to measure support for assimilation into the mainstream culture and due to the low variance on the scales.

Normative Consensus or Ethnic Conflict?

Although strong feelings of national attachment are the norm, the possibility of ethnic conflict in outlook remains. The nativist prediction that diversity erodes national unity assumes that minority groups are less committed to the idea of a common American identity. The multiculturalist perspective yields a similar expectation. If ethnicity is the dominant criterion of one's social identity, then minority group members should be less likely than those in the dominant ethnic group to view the entire nation as "theirs" and, therefore, to be less likely to express the usual forms of pride and affection.

Despite frequent claims that there is a vast racial divide in American opinion (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), our surveys indicate that ethnic differences are slight when it comes to patriotic sentiment (table 4.1). There is a strong similarity in the outlook of blacks and whites regarding the personal importance of American citizenship. Blacks (69 percent) are somewhat less likely to say they feel "very close" or "close" to America than whites (83 percent) or Hispanics (83 percent), but, again, the overwhelming majority of all three groups express a strong sense of attachment to the nation. In the 1994 LACSS, 79 percent of the whites and 73 percent of the black respondents said they were "extremely" or "very" proud to be an American.

The opinions of Hispanics point to a continuing connection to their countries of origin among recent immigrants. As table 4.1 shows, they are less likely than either blacks or whites to say being an American is important to them, more willing to say they would move to another country, and less likely to say that being born in America or feeling American is an important characteristic of being a true American. The same general pattern exists among the Hispanic and Asian respondents in the Los Angeles data (reported in full in Sears et al., 1999). Only 44 percent of the Hispanic respondents and 58 percent of the Asians in the Los Angeles study felt "extremely" or "very" proud to be an American, but these differences from white opinion are largely because many of these respondents are recent arrivals in the country and are not yet citizens. The findings of the Latino National Political Survey (de la Garza, Falcon, & Garcia, 1996, p. 346) also indicate that after controlling for demographic characteristics, including length of time in the United States, Mexican Americans "express patriotism

at levels equal to or higher than do Anglos." Somewhat surprisingly, the Los Angeles survey found virtually no ethnic differences on the question of whether "it is better if groups change so they blend into the larger society rather than maintain their distinct cultures."

The pervasive patriotic and assimilative tendencies among all ethnic groups frays, however, when one moves from the realm of ideals to judging historical experience. In the 1996 GSS survey, as reported in table 4.1, blacks and, to a lesser extent, Hispanics were less likely than whites to express pride in America's history, in the way its democracy works, and in the treatment of all social groups. Members of minority groups also are less likely than whites to agree that America has provided "people of my ethnic group a fair opportunity to get ahead in life" (LACSS) and more likely to agree that the government should give special assistance to ethnic minorities (GSS). Minority groups, then, clearly display a heightened sensitivity to their collective status, largely agreeing with whites about the goal of *e pluribus unum*, but, as previous research also found (Hochschild, 1995), asserting more often that discrimination and unequal opportunities for minority groups are ongoing problems in the United States.

The normative conceptions of what it means to be a "true American" also are very similar in all ethnic groups. In this regard, blacks are somewhat more likely to endorse what we have termed ascriptive or nativist criteria of identity. They are significantly more likely (by the chi-square test) than either white or Hispanic respondents in the 1996 GSS to agree that being born in America, living in America for most of one's life, and being a Christian are "very important" qualities of national identity. In an important sense, these opinions express the visceral quality of their American roots for the black respondents. African Americans constitute the oldest group of nonwhite immigrants in the country, despite the forcible nature of their arrival. Thus, the symbolic meaning of their invocation of nativist criteria for national identity might well be a positive statement about their own "true American-ness" rather than prejudice toward outsiders.

Symbolic politics theory emphasizes the role of socialization in the formation of social identities and would predict that common exposure to the patriotic themes so dominant in American life would engender high levels of national attachment across all ethnic groups over time. Of course, socialization is ongoing and multifaceted, and there generally are group differences in prior learning and current experience that have an impact on political predispositions (Kinder & Sears, 1985). Table 4.2 summarizes the ethnic group differences in feelings of national identity by comparing their mean scores on the multi-item measures of Patriotism, Chauvinism, Nativism, and Assimilationism Indices, with each variable scored from 0 (low) to 1 (high). The results show that in all three ethnic groups, positive attachment to American nationality prevails. Nevertheless, ANOVA indicates that several of the ethnic differences that do appear around the highly favorable norm are statistically significant. Blacks do have lower mean scores than

TABLE 4.2 Ethnic Differences in National Identity¹ (1996 GSS)

	Mean Score on a 0 to 1 Scale			
	Total	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Affective attachment to America				
Patriotism	.80	.81	.76	.75
Chauvinism	.59	.59	.62	.56
Normative conceptions of American identity				
Assimilationism	.86	.86	.85	.79
Nativism	.64	.62	.79	.60

1. The four attitude measures are additive indices created by summing responses to the several groups of items designated in table 4.1. The response options for each item were first recoded to range from zero to one. After summation, index scores were also recoded to range from zero to one with higher scores indicating higher levels of patriotism, chauvinism, etc. Reliabilities (Chronbach's alpha) for the respective scales are patriotism (.64), chauvinism (.66), assimilationism (.64), and nativism (.79).

whites on Patriotism, though higher scores on Nativism. Hispanics also have lower Patriotism scores than whites, as well as less support for the Assimilationist conception of national identity. Whether one should emphasize the element of consensus or these minor and spotty differences is a matter of debate (compare Sidanius, this volume). But whatever one makes of the divergences among whites, blacks, and Hispanics, clearly the glass of patriotism is much more than half full in every group. The real ethnic divide in American politics emerges on specific policies bearing directly on the status of minority groups, not on conceptions of national identity.

The results of a multiple regression analysis in which race, ethnicity, gender, age, income, education, region, and immigrant generation were employed as predictors of the Patriotism, Chauvinism, Nativism, and Assimilationism scales, respectively, confirm this conclusion. (For space reasons, the full results are not reported here, but will be provided on request.) With the imposition of statistical controls, there is no "race effect" on Patriotism or Chauvinism scores. Blacks remain significantly *more* likely than whites to endorse the nativist conception of American identity, largely because of their greater support for Christianity as a legitimate defining criterion of nationality. This suggests that another social identity, religion, is important to understanding ethnicity, national identity, and intergroup conflict in America.

More generally, there is a striking similarity in the demographic underpinnings of the four measures of national attachment: the elderly, those with lower levels of education, and those residing in the South were significantly more likely to have high, "pro-America" scale scores. Finally, first-generation immigrants were significantly less likely to have high scores on the Patriotism, Nativism, and Assimilationism indices. However, neither second- nor third-generation Americans differ from those with an even

longer family history in the country, once again suggesting that socialization into a sense of national pride and belief in a distinctive American identity does not take long.

National, Hyphenated, and Ethnic Identities

Since citizens can have multiple loyalties (or identities), it is important to assess the intensity of ethnic and national identifications separately. Whether these attachments are complementary or competitive is an empirical matter. The 1996 GSS asked respondents separate questions about how close they felt to the United States and to their own racial or ethnic group. A cross-tabulation of answers to these items show that 63 percent of the white, 65 percent of the black, and 66 percent of the Hispanic respondents expressed feelings of closeness to *both* the nation and their own ethnic group. Among whites, only 11 percent felt close attachment to their own ethnic group, but not to the country as a whole, whereas 24 percent of the black and 14 percent of the Hispanic respondents fell into this category. This suggests a stronger salience of an ethnic identity among blacks, with the possible implication that they would be more likely than whites to privilege ethnicity over nationality when trade-offs must be made. Still, the dominant result is that a large majority among both races expresses affinity to both identity groups. Subjectively, national and ethnic identities in the United States tend to be experienced as complementary rather than competing.

Table 4.1 reports the responses to the political self-categorization question: "When you think of social and political issues, do you think of yourself mainly as a particular ethnic, racial, or nationality group, or do you think of yourself mainly as just an American?" (The data come from the 1994, not the 1996 GSS poll, which did not include the item). This question wording calls for a ranking of identities and explicitly places the choice in a political context. Of the white respondents, 96 percent answered "just an American," compared to 66 percent of the black and 79 percent of the Hispanic respondents (see table 4.1). The uniformity of opinion among whites is consistent with the view of the various groups of European immigrants having "melted," so that their most salient political identity is no longer cultural or religious, but simply a superordinate identity as Americans (Alba, 1990; Waters, 1990; Roediger, 1994).

The 1994 and 1995 LACSS studies asked a similar self-categorization question with equivalent results. In the pooled samples, 93 percent of the white respondents gave the overarching "just an American" self-designation. Blacks (69 percent), Hispanics (70 percent), and Asians (71 percent) were significantly less likely (by the chi-square test) than whites to say they thought of themselves as just Americans. When forced to choose, however, a large majority in all three minority ethnic groups opted for a common na-

tional identity, not ethnic particularity, as their first choice. Moreover, among Hispanics and Asians, those who categorized themselves in terms of ethnicity tended to be first-generation immigrants, suggesting, once again, that the absorption of a sense of national identity is the normal outcome of socialization in this country.

The 1995 LACSS allowed respondents to say whether they identified as *just* Americans or as *both* Americans and as members of an ethnic, racial, or nationality group. As reported in table 4.3, only 17 percent of the whites opted for a dual or hyphenated identity. But, when given this opportunity to choose, a majority in all three minority groups preferred to categorize themselves as *both* Americans and members of an ethnic group and not as exclusively "American." Unfortunately, there are no national data to replicate this result, but it is consistent with other small-scale studies testing social identity theory that suggest the relatively greater salience of an ethnic identity for members of smaller, easily demarcated, homogeneous, and disadvantaged groups (Prentice & Miller, 1999; Brewer, this volume). The historically dominant group in a multiethnic state often fuses rather than hyphenates their ethnic and national identities (Connor, 1993). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the antecedents of these alternative self-categorizations by minority group members. Among immigrant groups, it appears that length of residence in the United States and speaking English diminish the likelihood of identifying oneself primarily in ethnic terms (de la Garza et al., 1996), but these factors could not account for the varied responses of blacks.

Identities and Policy Preferences

The political relevance of social identities rests partly on how they influence attitudes and behavior toward one's own and other groups. A strong sense of group identity is expected to promote conduct that favors one's fellow group members, even in a "minimal group" (Tajfel, 1978). But since there are multiple dimensions of self-identification, how one defines the "I" as "we" when a political decision arises is likely to be significant. Symbolic politics theory holds that broad attitudes, including feelings of national and ethnic identity, are more likely to determine preferences on specific issues when those predispositions are central to an individual's self-definition *and* when they are cued by stimuli associated with the objects of these attitudes (Sears, 1993; Zaller, 1992). For example, a strong sense of Jewish identity is more likely to govern opinions about American policy toward Israel or a mandatory school prayer than the future of the spotted owl. In addition, as shown above, ethnic identity may indeed be more significant for the construction of the social self among some groups than others.

Nationalism is an integrating ideology that overrides the claims of less comprehensive group loyalties. In fact, liberal theorists (Tamir, 1997;

TABLE 4.3 Political Self-Categorization: American, Dual, or Ethnic Identity (1995 LACSS)

	Whites (n = 254)			Blacks (70)		Hispanics (174)		Asians (46)	
	US born (n = 223)	Not US born (31)	US born (68)	Not US born na	US born (59)	Not US born (115)	US born (8)	Not US born (38)	
Just an American Identity	80%	65%	16%	na	24%	4%	13%	3%	
Both American and ethnic identity	17	16	54	na	53	62	63	58	
Ethnic Identity	3	19	29	na	24	34	25	40	

Hollinger, 1997; Miller, 1995) justify holding on to a national identity on the grounds that this sentiment generates feelings of special obligation to and responsibility for the other members of one's national community. If this surmise is correct, then people should be less likely to feel a sense of duty to members of groups who define themselves as somehow outside or different from the national "family." Accordingly, since multiculturalism validates the maintenance of group differences, the stronger one's attachment to an overarching American national identity, the more likely one should be to oppose recognition and support for groups emphasizing their cultural distinctiveness. Alternatively, if the majority group views ethnic minorities as disadvantaged members of a community with a *shared* identity, feelings of national attachment could accommodate, even facilitate, support for policies aimed at helping them.

In considering the political implications of ethnic consciousness, Tyler, Lind, Ohbuchi, and Sugawara (1998) found that assimilated and "biculturalist" members of minority groups (that is, those who emphasize their American identity and dual identity, respectively) were equally likely to express trust in government, to regard existing institutions as fair, and to comply with government policy. Both groups were significantly more likely than "separatist" respondents from the same ethnic group (those emphasizing their ethnic identity) to express these attitudes. The present data show that the relative salience of an ethnic as opposed to national self-identification affects how people evaluate multiculturalist principles (see table 4.4). Minority group members for whom ethnic identification takes priority over national identity generally are *less* likely than those who say they view politics mainly as an American to express pride in America and to agree that their group has had a fair chance to get ahead, and are *more* likely to believe that groups should maintain their own distinct cultures, to deny that political organizations based on ethnicity promote separatism, and to think that people are best represented by leaders with the same ethnic background. (See table 4.4 for results of chi-square tests for statistical significance.)

Table 4.4 also suggests that the association between an ethnic self-identification and support for multiculturalism is stronger and more systematic among blacks than among either Hispanics or Asians. For example, among blacks, 61 percent of those who identified themselves as "just American" felt it is better for minority groups to blend into the larger society rather than maintain their distinct cultures, compared to only 25 percent of those who defined themselves primarily as members of an ethnic group. Among Hispanics, the equivalent figures were 60 percent and 54 percent, a far smaller difference, and among Asians, they were 57 percent and 48 percent, respectively. The future trend in how the different minority groups balance their ethnic and national identities thus has clear implications for the pattern of intergroup conflict over issues of cultural recognition and representation.

Ordinary least-squared regression analysis was employed to delineate the connections between the affective and normative dimensions of national

TABLE 4.4 The Impact of Political Self-Categorization on Beliefs about the American National Community (1994 LACSS)

	Blacks (n = 156)		Hispanics (182)		Asians (8)	
	Just American	Ethnic Identity	Just American	Ethnic Identity	Just American	Ethnic Identity
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Feel extremely or very proud to be an American	81%	54%	53%	22%	61%	33%
Agree that American society has provided people of my ethnic group a fair opportunity to get ahead in life	50	22*	70	63	69	63
Think it is better if groups change so that they blend into the larger society (as in the idea of a melting pot) rather than maintain their distinct cultures!	61	25	60	54	57	48#
Agree that political organizations based on race or ethnicity promote separatism and make it hard for all of us to live together	70	57#	71	52*	70	38#
Leader background doesn't matter for representation	68	40*	67	50*	60	38

Chi-square test of differences between "just American" and "ethnic identity" respondents within each racial/ethnic group:

* p < .05

p < .10

! The percentages in this row represent pooled data from the 1994 and 1995 LACSS.

TABLE 4.5 The Relationship between Attitudes Toward National Identity and Policy Preferences (1996 GSS)

Policy Preferences	Affective Attachment			Normative Conceptions		
	(1) Patriotism	(2) Chauvinism	(3) Patriotism & Chauvinism (patriotism) (chauv)	(4) Assimilationism	(5) Nativism	(6) Assimilationism & Nativism (assim) (nativ)
<i>Multiculturalism</i>						
(A) Need to share American customs	.05	.38**	-.08	.17**	.27**	-.07
(B) Support melting pot as ideal	.20*	.24**	.18	.25**	.01	.33**
(C) Reduce immigration levels	.09	.18**	.06	.26**	.17**	.21**
(D) No cultural benefit from immigrants	.04	.20**	-.01	.11**	.15**	-.01
<i>Racial Policies</i>						
(E) Oppose affirmative action	.02	-.01	.01	-.05	-.03	-.05
(F) Oppose govt. help for blacks	.06	.14*	.03	.12*	.06	.08
(G) Oppose more spending on blacks	.17	.06	.14	-.01	.06	.03
<i>Domestic spending</i>						
(H) Oppose social spending	.03	.03	-.03	.03	.00	.05
<i>Foreign Policy</i>						
(I) Support more spending on defense	.23*	.31**	.12	.19*	.13*	.10
(J) Support protectionism	.18**	.42**	.06	.29**	.23**	.16**

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients for national identity variables in equations with controls for race, ethnicity, age, education, income, gender, region (South), generation, ideology, and party identification.

* p < .05

** p < .01

identity on the one hand and policy preferences on the other. The statistical model estimates the effects of the Patriotism, Chauvinism, Assimilation, and Nativism Scales, (columns 1, 2, 4, and 5 in table 4.5), respectively, on issues related to cultural diversity (rows A–D), racial issues (rows E–G), domestic spending (row H), and foreign policy (rows I–J). The equations included race, ethnicity, age, education, income, gender, region, immigrant generation, partisan affiliation, and liberal-conservative self-identification as control variables. Owing to the small number of Hispanic respondents in the 1996 GSS sample, this analysis is confined to whites and blacks. For simplicity of presentation, the table omits the effects for the control variables and reports only the unstandardized regression coefficients for the measures of national identity (Patriotism, Chauvinism, Assimilationism, and Nativism). All variables were recoded to vary between 0 and 1, and the dependent variables all are scored in the “nationalist” or “conservative” direction. Accordingly, the positive coefficient of .24 for the association between Chauvinism and the Melting Pot item (column 2, row B) indicates that believing that America is superior to other countries is strongly related to the idea that ethnic minorities in the United States should blend into the mainstream culture.

Table 4.5 also reports the results of models that simultaneously included both Patriotism and Nationalism Scales (column 3) and the Assimilationism and Nativism Scales (column 6) as predictors. These equations were designed to provide a tentative estimate of the relative degree of association between each of these affective orientations and normative conceptions of national identity. The results (which are reviewed by comparing the coefficients across columns on a row-by-row basis) do provide some evidence of tension between a strong sense of national identity and multiculturalism. Although the respondent's race has no relationship to these multiculturalist policy positions in the multivariate model, three of the four indicators of national identity predict support for the belief that it is impossible for people who do not share American customs to become fully American (row A). With regard to the question asking whether ethnic and racial groups should blend into mainstream society, Patriotism, Chauvinism, and Assimilationism had statistically significant relationships with giving the melting-pot response (row B). Immigration is the major source of ethnic diversity and new claimants for cultural recognition in America, and Chauvinism, Assimilationism, and Nativism, but not Patriotism, had statistically significant relationships with support for reducing the level of immigration (row C) and disagreement that immigrants have a positive cultural impact on America (row D).

When Patriotism and Chauvinism are included as predictors simultaneously, the more aggressive outlook tends to have the stronger association with opposition to increased cultural diversity in the United States. And when the effects of Assimilationism and Nativism are compared, it is the latter more exclusionary attitude that generally appears to have the stronger

negative relationship to support for multiculturalism. An ethnocentric conception of American national identity, therefore, may intensify internal political conflict by hardening resistance to the demands of cultural minorities for recognition and support.

Table 4.5 also reports on opinions about government efforts targeted at helping blacks (rows E–G) and about spending on domestic social programs (measured by a Social Spending Index combining beliefs about whether the government should spend more on health, education, welfare, and the environment—row H). The results are a virtual mirror image of the earlier findings about the factors influencing opinions about cultural diversity and immigration. In the case of the domestic policy issues, race is strongly associated with preferences, with blacks consistently more favorable toward governmental activism. But none of the four measures of national identity has a statistically significant relationship with scores on the Social Spending Index, opinions about affirmative action, or attitudes about whether the government should spend more to help blacks. The only coefficients in the array that attain conventional levels of statistical significance are the weak associations of Chauvinism and Assimilationism with opposition to special efforts to improve the living conditions of blacks. The results of these analyses indicate that generalized feelings of national attachment neither boost support for assisting one's fellow citizens through government spending nor enhance opposition to policies, such as affirmative action, aimed at assisting blacks or other ethnic minorities.

This may not be surprising, since the controversies over domestic spending and racial policy tend not to be framed in terms that engage attitudes toward the nation's integrity or power. As hypothesized above, the impact of social identities (and other predispositions) on specific policy preferences should vary across political domains. Feelings of national attachment should be strongly engaged only when the specific issues clearly touch on the values of American power, sovereignty, or purity. The data presented in table 4.5 consistently support this proposition. In addition to their effects on beliefs about cultural diversity and immigration, all four measures of national attachment had statistically significant effects in predicting opinions about whether military spending should be increased and on scores on an American Protectionism Index ($\alpha = .65$), constructed by summing answers to items about limiting foreign imports, prohibiting foreigners from buying land in America, and requiring television stations to give preference to American programs.

A final regression analysis, reported in table 4.6, explored potential differences in the connections of ethnic as opposed to national identities on racial policy preferences. Here, responses to both the question “How close do you feel to the United States?” and the question “How close do you feel toward your own racial or ethnic group?” were included as predictors of opinions regarding affirmative action, support for government efforts to help blacks, and government spending for blacks. In this analysis, the vari-

TABLE 4.6 National Attachment and Ethnic Identity as Predictors of Opinion on Race-Targeted Policies (1996 GSS)

	Oppose Affirmative Action	Oppose Special Govt. Help for Blacks	Oppose More Spending on Blacks
<i>Among White Respondents</i>			
Close to own ethnic group (close =1) (white identification)	.07**	.05*	.08*
Close to the US (national attachment)	-.02	-.02	-.03
Sample size (n)	543	546	347
<i>Among Black Respondents</i>			
Close to own ethnic group (close =1) (black identification)	.12	-.05	.09
Close to the US (national attachment)	-.11	.16	.01
Sample size (n)	72	74	50

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients for national and ethnic identity variables in equations with controls for age, education, income, gender, region (South), generation, ideology, and party identification.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

able coding and controls are identical to those reported for table 4.5. However, to distinguish between the impact of ethnic identifications among whites and blacks, these equations were estimated separately for whites and blacks. (Because of the paucity of Hispanic respondents, the analysis could not be replicated for that group.)

To highlight the results, table 4.6 reports only the coefficients for national attachment and ethnic closeness. Confirming the results reported above, positive affect for the nation as a whole has no impact one way or the other on the racial policies queried. There are obviously significant racial differences in policy preferences, but among blacks, feeling close to one's own ethnic group had no great additional influence on support for policies aimed at improving their collective status. The fear of some political commentators that black racial identification leads to a highly distinctive political outlook seems overstated.

Among whites, however, a stronger sense of ethnic identity does have a significant effect across the three policies; white identification seems consistently to increase opposition to government policies designed to help blacks. Given our concern about the impact of ethnic identification on intergroup conflict, these results are sobering. "Identity politics," by which we mean the tendency to judge issues and events in terms of how they affect the standing of one's own group, can juxtapose one's ethnic and national

"selves." While minorities may be more likely to express a strong ethnic identity, counterintuitively, it appears that the effects of ethnic identification are more prominent among whites. In a disturbing way, the results in table 4.6 are a reminder that the evocation of white consciousness, whether through nativist mobilization or through reaction to the assertion of ethnic pride by other groups, can lead to divisiveness and prejudice.

Conclusion

A large body of survey evidence confirms that a positive sense of national identity is pervasive in the United States, as is the belief that there is a unique American identity. In terms of affective attachment, patriotism—the sense that America is "best for me"—was more widespread than chauvinism—the sense that this country is inherently superior to all others. Significantly, too, we found no evidence of a deep ethnic divide in feelings about American nationality. The slightly lower level of patriotism among blacks, as a group, than whites is less compelling than the fact that the large majority of all ethnic groups express pride in and closeness to their country and its symbols. In addition, there is a broad consensus among all ethnic groups regarding the main criteria for American identity.

The strong sense of attachment to an American identity among ethnic minorities should calm fears about the consequences of the nation's increased ethnic diversity. Nearly as much as whites, minority respondents in our surveys rejected the idea of organizing political life along ethnic lines. Furthermore, most of them do not express their primary political identity in purely ethnic terms.

These results do not fit easily into an image of public attitudes as driven primarily by interest-based conflict between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. The symbolic politics perspective outlined here presumes that attitudes and values are acquired through a process of reinforcement, and that the role of purely instrumental motivation often is secondary (Sears & Funk, 1990). The survey evidence suggests that members of all ethnic groups may be attracted to an American identity because of its traditional liberal premises. In both California and national surveys (Citrin et al., 1990, 1994), the criteria of a "true American" chosen as important most often by all four major ethnic groups were egalitarianism and tolerance ("treating people of all races equally" and "respecting people's freedom to say what they want").

The staying power of this liberal conception of American identity may help explain why many minority respondents viewed attachment to the country and a sense of closeness to their own ethnic group as complementary rather than competitive. The results presented above show that minority group members frequently conceive of themselves in dual terms, defining themselves as both Americans and part of a distinctive racial or

ethnic group. Whites, by contrast, generally see themselves as “just Americans”; for them, national and ethnic identities are merged. What is critical, both psychologically and politically, is how the dual identity—national and ethnic—is accommodated intrapersonally. That is, when does the consciousness of being simultaneously American and black lead to a sense of ambivalence that pits the self against either the nation or the group, and how is this conflict among loyalties resolved? The present data reinforce the familiar point that blacks identify with American ideals, not American realities. As James Jones suggests (personal communication), their dual identity reflects recognition of the persistence of what Myrdal (1944) called the “American dilemma.”

In the political domain, a strong sense of national identity consistently was related to opposition to liberal immigration policies and official support for maintaining minority cultures. There is, then, an ideological tension between multiculturalism and nationalism. Strong feelings of national attachment also were associated with approval for increasing America’s military strength, as well as a willingness to take quite drastic measures to reduce the potential impact of foreign interests and influences. These issues, of course, focus on the boundaries between citizens and strangers, a distinction that is less relevant for opinion formation when it comes to domestic spending or racial policies.

The strength of national attachment was unrelated to how whites felt about policies targeted at helping blacks, their fellow-citizens. However, a strong ethnic identification among whites was associated with greater antagonism to affirmative action and more government spending to assist blacks. In this instance, ingroup favoritism does seem to lead to greater inter-group conflict.

The portrait of normative consensus among the general public seems strangely discordant with the seeming prevalence of ethnic competition in American political life. The division of political offices, government contracts, and other benefits among ethnic groups is closely watched by activists. Racial issues deeply divide the country’s two political parties. Given all this and more, what accounts for the failure of the surveys to detect intense disagreements between the “majority” and “minority” groups when it comes to attitudes about national identity?

One answer is that the existence of a gulf between the views of political activists and ordinary citizens is not uncommon. Another possibility is that the current approach to measuring national and ethnic identifications is inadequate. Surveys may pay too much attention to abstract norms and too little to responses to distributive conflicts or actual social encounters among members of different groups. In this regard, researchers should frame issues in a way that asks respondents to make trade-offs among their multiple identities when it comes to allocating costs and benefits. This would enable a more comprehensive assessment of intragroup, as well as intergroup, conflict in how these choices are made.

Another important issue concerns the enduring quality of the tendency of recent immigrants to prefer a dual or hyphenated political identity. The present data indicate that a developing sense of patriotism and a sense of identity as an American are part of the process of acculturation that Hispanic and Asian groups are experiencing. More generally, today’s immigrants, like their predecessors, become “*desocialized* from their native customs over time, even if the emotional significance of attachment to the group persists” (Glazer & Moynihan, 1975, p. 8). Because of this continuing affective tie, appeals to ethnicity still can be an effective strategy for mobilizing political support for the pursuit of group or individual interests (Horowitz, 1985). The utility of ethnicity in political combat, then, may reinforce the tendency of political leaders to emphasize the salience of this aspect of identity and strive to sustain its psychological significance within their ethnic group.

In addressing the unresolved issue concerning the conditions under which hostility toward outgroups accompanies ingroup pride, Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, & Banker (1999) argue for the efficacy of a superordinate common identity in mitigating intergroup conflict. Applied to the larger realm of American national politics, the question posed by social identity theory becomes whether an enhanced sense of ethnic identification among minorities leads toward satisfactory conflict resolutions or toward entrenched Balkanization. Clearly, the mobilization of group consciousness among the disadvantaged can force movement toward less inequality and more social justice. On the other hand, the enhanced expression of ethnic identification in one group tends to be emulated, often provoking resistance to change and the hardening of group boundaries. Whatever the direction of future change in public attitudes, the evidence summarized here points to the advantages of a common sense of American identity founded on the realization of equal citizenship.

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