

# Perceiving Immigrants as American and its Relationship to Attitudes toward Immigrants

Joseph Pang, Sophie Timin, & Christopher Aberson  
Cal Poly Humboldt

## What does being “American” mean?

- There is considerable support that both contact (positive vs. negative) and perceived threats relate to a wide range of measures of bias against immigrants, however, there is relatively little work on how these predictors relate to implicit associations or prejudice.
  - Our work addressed this gap through addition of an **implicit measure** of the **“Americanness” of immigrants** relative to the white majority group.
- We examined the relationship between **intergroup contact** and **intergroup threat** on measures of **discrimination** against **Hispanic/Latino immigrants** in the United States.

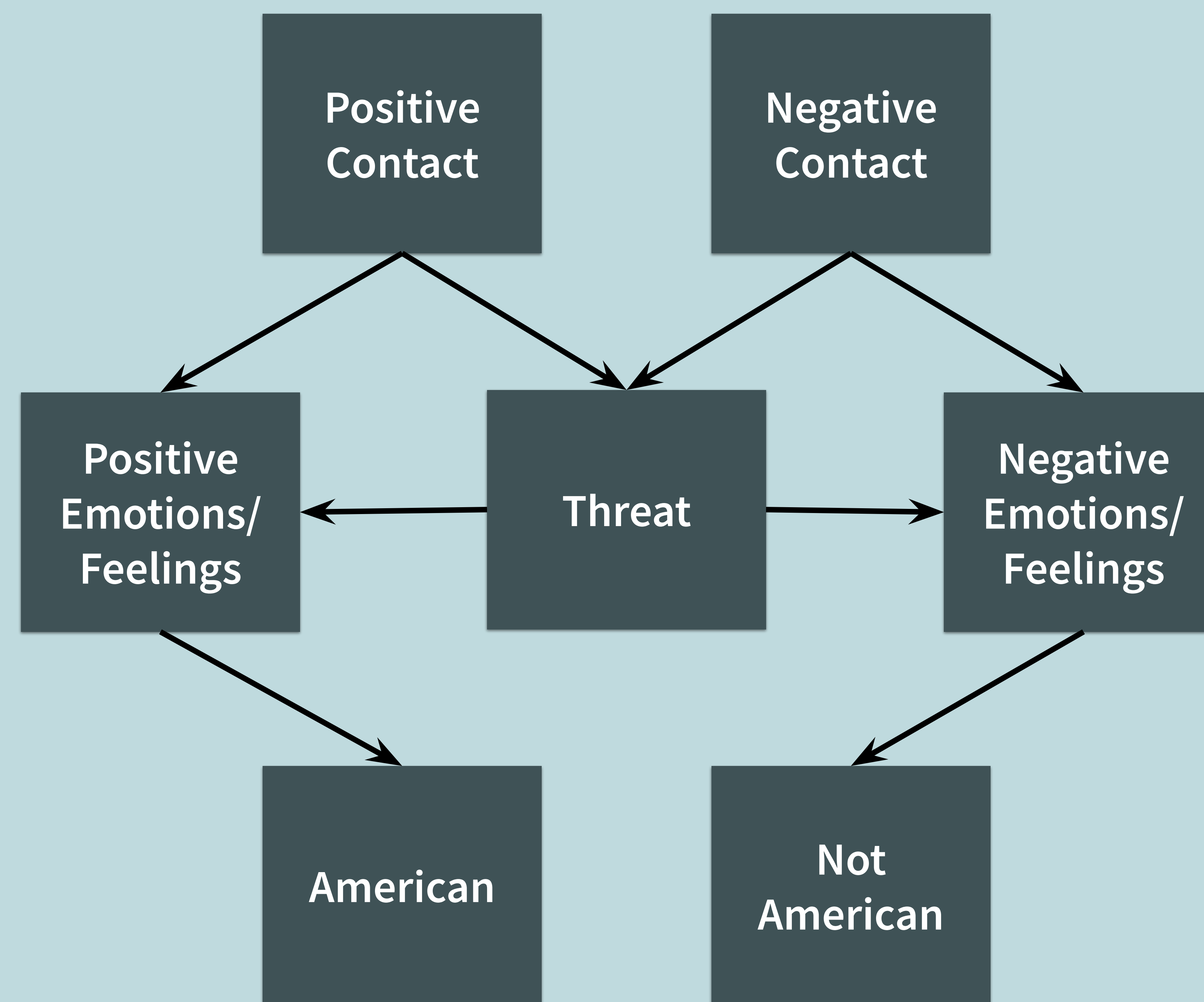
## Methods

- $N = 102$  non-immigrant college students.
- Participants completed measures of attitudes towards immigrants, contact, threat, and perceptions of immigrants as either American or foreign.
- A **multiple regression** analysis was used to measure the effects of attitudes towards immigrants, contact, and threat on perceptions of immigrant identity.

Data, Code & Preprint:



**Contact predicts perceptions of threat towards immigrants, which, in turn, predicts perceptions of immigrants being considered “American”.**



## Results

- Positive contact appears to predict more favorable attitudes and emotions towards immigrants,  $p < .001$ ,  $b^* = .39$ .
- Negative contact appear to predict less positive feelings,  $p < .001$ ,  $b^* = -.36$ .
- Negative contact also positively predicts threat toward immigrants,  $z = 6.94$ ,  $p < .001$ .
  - As a result, people have less positive emotions and feelings  $z = 5.79$ ,  $p < .001$  and more negative emotions and feelings  $z = 3.53$ ,  $p < .001$  towards immigrants.
  - As negative feelings increase, participants were more likely to attribute being American to being White,  $z = 3.39$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## Conclusion

- Contact appears to predict **perceptions of threat** regarding immigrants. Additionally, contact appears to predict if immigrants are **considered “American”** or not by non-immigrants.
- These findings extend our understanding of Intergroup Contact Theory, Intergroup Threat Theory, and the **“American = White” effect**. They demonstrate the importance of **positive contact** and how it can contribute to a more inclusive society in the U.S.