

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF INEQUITY

Global Issues and Perspectives



JEAN LAU CHIN,
YOLANDA E. GARCIA,
AND ARTHUR W. BLUME,
EDITORS

The Psychology of Inequity

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The Psychology of Inequity

Global Issues and Perspectives

ARTHUR W. BLUME,
JEAN LAU CHIN, AND
YOLANDA E. GARCIA, EDITORS

Race and Ethnicity in Psychology



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Dedication

This *Psychology of Inequity* three-volume set is dedicated to Dr. Jean Lau Chin (1944–2020). Jean was the primary editor of this work, and the set is a follow-up to *The Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination* (Chin, 2004a–d), a four-volume work, also published by Praeger. Volumes 1–4 of that set respectively covered *Racism in America*, *Ethnicity and Multiracial Identity*, *Bias Based on Gender and Sexual Orientation*, and *Disability, Religion, Physique, and Other Traits*. In contrast to the earlier volumes that explored discrimination experienced by distinct groups, Jean conceptualized the current volumes as a psychological overview of the intersectionality of inequities today. The trio of editors for these volumes examined motivations and beliefs that fuel inequities across the globe and the ways inequities are addressed and interpreted. As the editors finalized the completed chapters for submission to the publisher, the novel coronavirus swept from nation to nation, creating a global pandemic. Consistent with most disasters, the virus has disproportionately ravaged many of those described in these volumes who are already vulnerable due to long-standing inequities. Communities of color, those already disadvantaged by health-care and economic disparities, and those displaced due to war or other hardships have suffered the highest rates of illness and death from the virus, which took Jean and her husband, Gene Chin, in the months of April and May 2020. Jean’s dauntless efforts in the pursuit of justice and equity and her dedication to completing these volumes, even as she began to battle the virus, have resulted in this, her final work. Throughout this set, her voice is heard, drawing attention to inequity and contributing to the solutions that make our world a better place.

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Introduction

The Psychology of Inequity: Global Issues and Perspectives is a unique volume that aims to stimulate scholastic creativity amongst its readers with a refreshingly global approach to the topic of inequity. The book is structured in such a way to connect the dots between local and global inequity, reflecting an interdependent rather than independent perspective. The circumstances of planetary inequity have pushed the boundaries of psychological science and practice to become a global enterprise. Although the circumstances and characteristics of people impacted by inequity differ broadly due to the diversity of global cultures, the presentations of the problems of inequity they face have certain commonalities. With immigration as an example, regardless of where it occurs, there seems to be a shared experience of psychological distress and trauma as well as tremendous resilience that often results from the strengths of global cultures.

People operating under collectivistic worldviews understand and accept the reality of an interdependent existence. Life science disciplines have provided broad empirical evidence to support those beliefs concerning an interdependent planetary order. With all things being connected, it makes empirical sense to examine the interdependent nature of equity and inequity on a global scale. Global inequity in an interdependent existence ultimately impacts the psychological well-being of all, leaving all vulnerable to the consequences of such inequities (Blume, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has been a painful reminder of how global inequity extends its consequences to both individuals and the collective whole (Blume, 2022).

Several shared sources of risk for inequity have been found to bridge generations and national boundaries, and these broad themes of inequity are woven throughout the chapters of this volume. The first common risk

factor for inequity has been the shared history of colonialism that has impacted most, if not all, of the current societies on the planet. Colonialism assumed the superiority and exceptionalism of a colonists over those they colonized, infusing many of the assumptions of colonialism instilled in nations with colonial roots. Hierarchies were deemed to be an acceptable form of social organization within those societies. Exploitation as a colonial value enabled intergenerational wealth and political power for the privileged whereas those who were conquered and exploited were left with intergenerational inequity. Privilege was not only unacknowledged but sanctioned among the mainstream in colonial nations, to the detriment of those who were not granted privilege. Colonialism has sanctioned social inequity between the colonists and the people they conquered or exploited, and many of the psychological consequences of those inequities persist to the present day.

Additional global sources of inequity emerge from social disempowerment and dehumanization. Unfortunately, many of those disempowered by colonialism have been people of color, who have suffered the brunt of psychological consequences globally for centuries. Colonialism has contributed immensely to global inequity in education, health, income, and wealth among people of color (Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2022; Schmelkes, 2021; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022). Immigrants and refugees also experience disempowerment and often are dehumanized by others globally. Being an immigrant or refugee who is also minoritized because of race or ethnicity can compound the experience of inequities with serious psychological consequences.

Intersectionality tends to compound both disempowerment and dehumanization globally. For example, inherent risks of inequity from ethnic and racial discrimination and prejudice are compounded by intersectional risks associated with religious discrimination as discussed in this volume. Women of color also experience significant inequity globally and often are targeted by intersectional acts of sexism and racism in private and public settings, especially the workplace. Since many women of color by necessity must work under difficult conditions and long hours due to the inherent economic inequities they face, the risk for exposure to the psychological distress of sexism in the workplace (e.g., due to low wages and sexual harassment) is likely compounded. The global context of colonization and its racialized and hierarchical reframing of reality have contributed to great stigmatic challenges to those living with intersectional identities. However, with those challenges being acknowledged, intersectionality also provides resilience in the wealth of diverse gifts available at the intersections of identity. In a decolonized existence, the stigma would be eliminated, thereby enhancing the potential gifts of an intersectional identity. Celebrating the richness of diversity would promote equity.

The third global risk for inequity has been associated with the rise of racialized nationalism and populism. Nationalism and populism tend to go hand in hand in colonial nations. Populism tends to have a nationalistic theme that favors the needs of the ethnic majority within those nations (Elias, Ben, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021). The rise of nationalism globally has been a strong driver of xenophobic reactions and discrimination toward people of color, immigrants, and refugees. Nationalism in many ways is a repackaged expression of colonial values that tend to define people by hierarchical us versus them categorizations. The basic values of nationalism tend to gravitate toward superiority and exclusion.

Many of the tactics of nationalistic movements have involved dehumanizing people of color, compounding the collective trauma associated with inequity. Nationalistic groups strongly believe in the protection of national boundaries, despite the evidence that such boundaries are artificial and arbitrary demarcations when considering the psychological well-being of people who live in an interdependent global system. The re-emergence of nationalistic behaviors has compounded the psychological consequences of inequity among people of color and made addressing their concerns much more challenging globally. Resisting and interrupting nationalistic behavior will be an important part of addressing the psychological consequences of inequities among disempowered people of the world.

There is a growing awareness and resistance to the consequences of colonization today. Increasingly, people are seeking to eliminate the vestiges of internalized oppression felt by groups of people who have been colonized. There is a growing awareness of how a colonial mentality continues to pervade our knowledge systems, practices, and beliefs about the implicit superiority of white European and North American colonizers. In psychology, the impact of this colonizing mentality has been destructive to the well-being of people of color promoting their sense of inferiority and marginalized status in society. Our theoretical models can now challenge the status quo, unlike the past where models of distributive and restorative justice and liberation psychology, as discussed in this book, were considered heresy to mainstream empirical psychological science. This colonial mentality reinforces the *othering*, aggravates the conflict between *us versus them*, largely in terms of suggesting the inferiority of people of color, and escalates disparities in health, economic, and education systems between dominant and privileged groups and people of color. Divergent cultural beliefs such as individualism vs. collectivism may well underlie this dichotomy. What is salient is a growing movement toward decolonizing psychology and the world to incorporate new knowledge that empowers and is inclusive of all groups and moves toward eliminating hierarchical inequities related to race, ethnicity, class, etc.

People of color also face the brunt of challenges that unsustainable resource use and global climate change present. Those who experience

the intergenerational inequities discussed in this book set are also at great risk for having those inequities, and their psychological consequences are exacerbated by the consequences of environmental degradation. Those living with income and wealth inequities also tend to live in marginal lands that are threatened by a changing climate. The aftermath of extreme weather events causes the existing disadvantaged groups to suffer disproportionately or create new disadvantaged groups. Due to the lack of resources in coping and recovering from the damage, the disadvantaged groups encounter a greater subsequent inequity. According to the United Nations World Social Report (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020), the climate crisis has a significant impact on populations living in areas that are more vulnerable to environmental degradation and extreme natural disasters. Many who live on these vulnerable and sometimes marginal lands are people of color. This creates and perpetuates further disparities in education, health, work, and living systems, which in turn increases the phenomena of inequities. As such, it is critical to initiate a communal dialogue among all groups of people to address the global crisis of climate change and promote a more equitable world.

Cultural practices for many globally may be at risk due to degradation of traditional lands through resource exploitation and climate change (Norton-Smith et al., 2016). Healing and resilience are often linked to connectivity with the land, especially for Indigenous people, so healing the land would be important to promoting psychological healing for the people. Environmental degradation and climate change also have highlighted shared vulnerability that does not respect boundaries—the inequities that follow will truly be global in scope. Although it is clear that those who are already vulnerable to inequities have and will continue to experience the global psychological consequences of environmental degradation first, eventually the psychological consequences will be shared by everyone. Many new approaches meant to protect people of color from the psychological consequences of inequity are proposed in the book set. Part of the strategy is to decolonize the global environment through education and interpersonal contact. Another important strategy involves protecting the cultural legacy of people of color globally to promote resilience from inequity. Psychologists will be called upon to think globally about the consequences of inequity and to consider thoughtfully how the tools of psychology may be utilized to reduce the threats of inequity globally while simultaneously addressing its intergenerational psychological consequences. Incorporating cultural values and traditions that foster resilience will enhance the likelihood that the interventions will be effective and culturally appropriate.

The chapters in this volume embody the trends discussed above in the context of specific global challenges to advancing equity. Tremendous challenges lay ahead, challenges that widely impact psychological

wellness globally. Many of those challenges have their foundations in the activities of global colonialism, hence decolonizing methods offer the greatest promise for restoration of global equity. As discussed in detail in this volume, decolonized psychology has much to offer in the movement to construct an equitable world.

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CHAPTER 1

Threatening or Marginalized

Muslim Identity and Perceived Inequality
among Minority Muslim Populations

*Gulnaz Anjum, Milan Obaidi, Sania Sohail,
and Roheena Madni*

MUSLIM IDENTITY AND PERCEIVED INEQUALITY AMONG MUSLIM POPULATIONS

“Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be, genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?” (Said, 1978). Edward W. Said (1978) asks this question in his book *Orientalism* while negotiating the binary constructed between the West and the East, or the constructed difference (Said, 1978). This difference or “divide” can also be extended to religion. The premise of the question is whether differences can be “survived humanly” which means whether the inherent hostility that exists within division, which breeds social inequality, can be avoided altogether (Said, 1978). In this review, we aim to explore the psychological factors that influence our perception of other religions and how this influence propagates social inequality. We will briefly look at whether, and why, religion continues to be a significant identity marker for individuals and their groups. Along with this, the positive role of religious identity will also be explored based on the recent surge of published literature that focuses on the positive impacts of religion on physical health and well-being (Talebi & Desjardins, 2012; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011).

Following that, we will dig deeper into the Muslim identity and the consequences of the same for Muslim populations. This literature review,

then, will specifically analyze the effects of social inequality due to Muslim identity by analyzing the experiences of Muslims in their home countries and diaspora Muslims in the Western countries.

NEED FOR RELIGION AS AN IDENTITY MARKER

In his study of aboriginal tribes in Australia, Durkheim proposed that the inclination of the members of the tribe toward following shared rituals, belief systems, and ceremonies was derived from, and to some extent triggered by, the social circumstances that had enabled an environment for involuntary group membership (Hammond, 1988). While societies today may not necessarily reflect the same sense of unity that they once did, we cannot ignore the role of community and social structure in shaping perceptions about not only our belief systems but also that of others.

Religiosity remains a significant marker of identity today; and subsequent research has demonstrated that this is partly due to the psychological benefits it serves humans (Mossakowski, 2003). Primarily, religion incorporates a system of guiding values and beliefs that gradually becomes a part of an individual's identity. Simultaneously, as the relevance and importance of the religious group increase, the same guiding system starts to function as a social apparatus that in turn influences the individual's social identity and starts to interact with other identity markers such as gender and politics (Malcolm, Bairner, & Curry, 2010).

One of the reasons why individuals frequently embrace their religious identity is that it helps preserve their sense of self and a positive social identity. This leads to enhanced self-esteem and increased well-being (Mossakowski, 2003). Studies have demonstrated that the extent of psychological distress experienced by individuals, when caused by depression or low self-esteem, decreases in those who strongly believe in their association with a particular religion (Talebi & Desjardins, 2012; Ysseldyk et al., 2011). The strengthened sense of identification with religion is shown to be associated with the empowerment that results from the notion that one's own religion is the right one and is based on the ultimate truth (Wellman & Tokuno, 2004). The faith, then, that upholds this identity marker—mainly in theistic religions—is reinforced when there is lack of evidence to prove or disprove the foundations of the belief system (for instance, the existence of God).

Another reason that an overwhelming majority around the globe cling to their religious identity may be due to the usefulness of religious coping mechanisms (Ysseldyk et al., 2011). The concept of seeking spiritual support appears to be a significant means of understanding how religiously inclined individuals tend to resist psychological stressors by reinterpreting and resolving stress-inducing experiences through religious activities such as increased praying or spiritual isolation. From this perspective, religion seems to be an important tool for reflection and intrinsic motivation.

It is interesting to note that the way individuals perceive religion also serves to make it an important identity marker in the society and a source of psychological well-being. By accepting that the guiding beliefs propagated by religion inform worldview, individuals tend to extract the purpose and meaning of their life from religious teachings, thereby making religion an integral part of their social identity (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). Some researchers have argued that the need to have a meaningful life and the desire for self-enhancement can drive and impact the extent of religiosity as well (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009).

Till now, we have briefly outlined why religion still persists as a significant identity marker by highlighting the psychological benefits of an individual's association with a religious ideology. The benefits range from positive impacts on self-esteem to fulfilled need for belongingness in the society. Now we will examine how this collective religious identity may not always be empowering in a positive manner.

There is sufficient evidence that being grounded in a religious system with absolute guiding beliefs can potentially promote psychological well-being. This unique advantage, however, has been proven to equally trigger negative consequences when the religious identity is threatened (Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2010). To understand how this happens, let's look at how religion as an identity marker impacts the perception of individuals: People strengthen their faith in religious beliefs when they gain some level of certainty, by whatever means, that what they follow is the ultimate truth. Their social bond with followers of the same religion becomes stronger when there is a positive intragroup comparison where the belief system is reinforced collectively. Such a condensed understanding of their stance fosters a sense of superiority, which is an eventual consequence of the in-group mentality (Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010).

While the in-group cohesion becomes a source of tremendous comfort in times of social, political, and economic distress, it also promotes perceived glorification (Leidner et al., 2010) of one religious identity over the other. In other words, an in-group identification inevitably establishes an out-group stance, which may exacerbate religious intergroup relations if a sense of religious superiority persists. To individuals who genuinely embrace a religious identity for whatever reason, even a covert threat that questions or challenges their belief can have negative psychological consequences (Major & O'Brien, 2005)—although highly engaged individuals tend to experience less distress than those who are in the process of relying on their religious identities.

People also need to belong to their religious and ethnic groups because such identification has clear health benefits for people. People psychologically attach or withdraw from groups based on whether they feel accepted or rejected by the groups around them. For instance, research shows that perceived positive contact creates positive identification perception among

Muslim minority youth living in the United States (Anjum, Aziz, & Castano, 2019), and perceived discrimination undermines the identification of Muslims living in multicultural societies in the West (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Maliepaard & Verkuyten, 2018; Obaidi et al., 2020). Previous research indicates the impressions and experiences of fellow group members are very important for minority Muslim groups such that if other members are discriminated against more regularly, people have an idea that anti-Muslim prejudice is prevalent; thus there can be stronger emotional and behavioral implications for the national belonging of Muslim populations (Stevens & Thijs, 2018).

US VERSUS THEM AND INEQUALITY BASED ON RELIGION

Social identity and self-categorization based on this social identity creates a canvas for dividing people into groups of us versus them. The theories of social categorization and self-categorization (Social Identity and Categorization [SIT]; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) argue for this deep-seated need of humans to divide themselves into distinct groups (Anjum, Kessler, & Aziz, 2019). SIT and work with honor groups support this occurrence of constant self-categorization, which satisfies our need to identify with people whom we see as our own group and under which specific circumstances a person would perceive a collection of people as an in-group or out-group (Haslam, 1997; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005).

Similarly, only a specific constellation of beliefs and rituals would lead to a conception of “our” religious group. This in-group—we/us—is motivated by people’s needs for positive self-regard and esteem (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Being part of such a group can be a very fulfilling experience, but it can also have negative consequences if that positive regard and esteem is not respected and, instead, leads to negative emotions and behavioral outcomes.

Using the analysis of a game between students of the University of Kansas and the University of Oklahoma, the in-group and out-group members evaluated the loyalty and disloyalty of the author doing the commentary in the presence of threat and no-threat conditions. It was concluded that when threat was present, there was a significant relationship between group identification and the loyalty of the author. When the in-group author remained loyal, they were positively evaluated, as opposed to when the author was disloyal (Branscombe, Wann, Noel, & Coleman, 1993).

Aggression and hostile behavior are based on factors that are also associated with violence. A study conducted by Sidanius, Kteily, Levin, Pratto, and Obaidi (2015) suggests that group identification and categorization processes, especially the degree to which an individual identifies with a

group, act as a greater motivation for collective action. It is not the possibility of out-group domination or violence that directly causes collective action but the internalized loyalty that one has to one's in-group (Sidanius et al., 2015). However, the authors suggest that it is also true that intergroup conflict is not caused because individuals will support violent collective action for their group only on the basis of relative religious or social identification; rather, intergroup conflict manifests itself when the in-group and out-group perceive that the survival of their group is contingent upon limited resources and both groups are locked in competition for it. Hence, both factors materialize as predictors of collective action.

ISLAM AS AN ETHNICALLY/ CULTURALLY DIFFERENT IDENTITY

Among Muslims living outside Muslim majority countries, most have immigrant backgrounds and identify as Muslims. Most immigration and acculturation studies have mostly neglected religious identity dimensions; however, in the last decade, studies about Muslim immigrants have increasingly revealed that Muslim identification (religious practices and ethnic backgrounds, practices, beliefs, and sacred values) have become key components for research into communities that identify as Muslim immigrants (Duderija, 2008; Sheikh, 2007; Thomas & Sanderson, 2011).

This Muslim identity is seen as culturally and ethnically different such that the difference between Arab and American cultures also becomes a predictor of incompatibility. Another predictor that research finds responsible for competition and conflict was the perceived threat of American domination over the Arab world (Sidanius et al., 2015). The presence and perception of threat may impact the evaluation of the group identification. In order to explore this facet of group identification and threat, a study was conducted by Branscombe et al. (1993) on 234 undergraduate students (119 males and 115 females). It had the factor of perceived "threat" by in-group and out-group members as a major component that predicted the degree to which in-group members identified with their group.

Obaidi, Kunst, Kteily, Thomsen, and Sidanius (2018) also showed that an out-group hostility is driven by perceived intergroup threat based on how the groups perceive each other as culturally diverse. In an exploration with participants from cultural contexts, including non-Muslim westerners, Muslims in Western societies, and Muslims in the Middle East, they found that identity and intentions to join extremist movements in each group was predicted by symbolic threats, not religious threats. This symbolic threat predicted support and behavioral intentions among Swedish and Turkish Muslims as well as violent intentions among non-Muslim and Muslim Danes, and Muslims in Afghanistan. Multiple studies indicated that participants with stronger religious identification perceived

and experienced higher levels of threat, meaning that people's religious identity has wider implications for prejudice formation and reduction.

McDoom and Gisselquist (2015) based studies on ethnoreligious division and explored various ways of conceptualizing, measuring, and theorizing divisions within ethnically and religiously diverse societies such as that of Mindanao, in the Philippines. According to McDoom and Gisselquist, in order to ascertain the relationship of divisions within society and its adverse impact on quality of life, rather than measuring division as an aggregate, specific outcome variables such as housing policies, intermarriages, or employment data, to name a few, should be looked at (McDoom & Gisselquist, 2015). In subsequent research, McDoom found that ethnoreligious group identification that shapes social interaction can lead to marginalization and experiences of inequality but can at the same time become a source of power as well (McDoom, 2018).

McDoom (2018) found that people of Moro ethnicity, which refers to the collective identity of the several Muslim tribes native to Mindanao, were disinclined to seek economic parity through intermarriage. Those results were interpreted through the strength of ethnocultural or ethnoreligious norms and sanctions that enable greater internal group cohesion. Intermarriage in this study was seen as an indicator of social integration; however, the constraint in Moro intermarriage has implications for the prospects of Moro integration and social interaction in Mindanao (McDoom, 2018). Using a similar area of study, McDoom, Reyes, Mina, and Asis (2019) conducted a study on a large sample in the Philippines and showed that inequality for subnational social groups, such as Indigenous populations, Muslim populations or both (Muslims who are also classified as Indigenous persons) in the Mindanao region, can result in severe disparities in life chances. The authors surveyed for access to basic services such as education, health, sanitary toilet facilities, safe drinking water and electricity within subnational regions, with various social groups that included Muslim populations. The study revealed that Muslim populations that were examined against the five nonincome indicators of inequality were in a much more subordinate position when compared to the other social groups in the Philippines (McDoom et al., 2019).

Inequality and discrimination against Muslims are not only restricted to Muslim diaspora in the West; they also continue to be visible in the Global South. For instance, as a minority group that makes up 5.5% to 8.6% of the population of the Philippines, the Muslim population experiences within-group inequality, and this impacts all nonincome indicators. However, Muslims who classify as Indigenous population experience far worse inequality with respect to access to education. Such inequalities can lead to sociopolitical instability that can become a prelude to civil conflict and strife within any country (McDoom et al., 2019). Muslim minority groups often experience deprivation and relative inequalities based on

the religious group identification. The social groups surrounding them get access to more opportunities and experience greater socioeconomic mobility.

MUSLIM IDENTITY AND HOSTILITY AGAINST MUSLIMS

Interestingly, most psychological research operationalizes and understands this hostility against Muslims in terms of realistic threat. Beck, Charania, Abed-Rabo Al-Issa, and Wahab (2017) discuss the reproduction and production of Islamophobia or Islamoracism following the 9/11 attacks. The authors point to the hegemony of the West and normalized tropes of Orientalism that strengthen Islamoracism. The dominant vision of Islam in the West is often limited to violence against women, an example of which is newspaper articles printed 18 months after the 9/11 attacks that contained content that was heavily focused on women in Afghanistan and references to burkas used as body bags and trash bags. Production of such content then absolves the West of its violent acts and obscures the effects of poverty, occupation, war, and drone strikes that fuel the devastating consequences and threat of assimilating under an Islamic identity (Beck et al., 2017).

Since the 9/11 attacks on U.S. soil, the research on intergroup relations has continued to work with realistic threat models (i.e., Doosje, Loseman, & Van den Bos, 2013; Doosje, Zimmermann, Küpper, Zick, & Meertens, 2009). This protocol lies in contradiction to symbolism of the Western values and perceived Islamic identity.

This is not to say that hostility toward Muslims and their perceived inequality have not been marked. There has also been seminal research contributing to understanding westerners' unequal treatment and hostility toward Muslims (i.e., Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols, 2010; Fischer, Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, Frey, & Oswald, 2007; Fischer, Haslam, & Smith, 2010). More recently, Uenal (2016) and Obaidi, Bergh, Akrami, and Anjum (2019) demonstrated that terroristic threat was theoretically and empirically more distinct from more classical or realistic threat. The nature of the relationship between religion and identity formation continues to be explored: while some scholars insist that religion plays an integral role in cultivating our sense of identity (Bae, 2016), others argue that religion has the tendency to inhibit the process of identity formation (King, 2003).

If there is one thing that an overwhelming majority of researchers agree on, it is this: the inevitable social and psychological impact of religion on an individual's sense of self (Oppong, 2013). Identity and religion, however, don't operate or influence each other in isolation. Other markers of identity such as ethnicity, race, and culture have frequently emerged to serve as explanatory factors when understanding the relationship between religion and identity (Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009).

Haldun Gülalp charted the historical conditions under which the role of Islam as a political ideology took form within Turkey. Based on this political ideology of Islamism within Muslim societies, religion and politics are deemed inseparable, and he further quotes Ali Shari'ati, saying that Islam "is a political ideology that embraces every dimension of human life and thought" (Gülalp, 2002). Gülalp established that under the context of the global modernization project, Islam and the West became fundamentally opposed in their essence. According to this absolute generalization, Muslim societies have an unchangeable essence.

Chao and Kung (2014) discuss how essentialism and a social power dynamic can be causes for negative intergroup outcomes such as prejudice and bias within intrapersonal and intergroup dynamics that exist in societies. They define essentialism as the belief that social groups possess underlying essences that give rise to immutability, without which the individuals cease to be what they are; hence, the essence is indicative of individual characteristics (Chao & Kung, 2014).

The conceptualization of essentialism can be seen in conjunction with Orientalism when it comes to viewing Muslim identity. Said (1978) defines Orientalism as a form of thought dealing with the foreign, based on knowledge that makes hard-and-fast distinctions between the West and the East. Such hard-and-fast distinctions make use of essentialism, which creates and reinforces social categories within society, which then gives rise to the phenomenon of Orientalist essentialism.

This Orientalist essentialism seeps through in secular nationalistic sentiments that imply the recognition of the West as superior and asserts the hegemonic power that the West holds, albeit in a concealed manner. This power forms the core of the global system, and the authentic self of the Muslim community essentially positions and defines itself in relation to the core that it continuously reacts to, resists, rejects, accommodates, or imitates (Gülalp, 2002) in the formation of its identity. Yet essentialism continues to hold, despite immense variations intersections of nationalism and feminism in Muslim majority cultures (Anjum, 2020).

PERCEPTION OF THE MUSLIM IDENTITY IN THE WEST

By exploring why many people around the world have maintained a religious identity, we have tried to establish the importance of the institution of religion and its relevance today. In this section, we will extend our understanding of the psychological underpinnings of having a religious identity—in terms of both its positive and negative consequences. The scope of this literature review will revolve around highlighting how the Western perception of the Muslim identity has an ongoing relationship with the discrimination and stereotyping of the Muslim diaspora present in non-Muslim countries.

Despite the existence of fair representations and discourses, the widespread stereotypical portrayals of the followers of Islam have successfully established Muslims as the “other.” This perception remains widely intact even though the Muslim population in the West has grown drastically. According to a report published by the Pew Research Center (2017a), it was projected that the growth of the Muslim population may triple the present number in some European countries. The persistence of the West to retain the highly stigmatized image of Muslims reflects a form of obsession and willingness to cling to the radicalized Orientalist interpretation of the “Muslim” identity (Malcolm, Bairner, & Curry, 2010; Obaidi et al., 2020).

Although the Orientalist framework is inherently stereotypical in that it explains the Muslim identity from the “outside,” the reason it is extremely problematic is that it constantly instills and reinforces the notion of “us” versus “them.” As we discussed in the previous section, religion on its own is also feeding among its followers the in-group bias; so, when there are tremendous external forces constantly imposing the “otherness” of a religious identity, the in-group bias becomes stronger, often leading to damaging psychological impacts especially on diaspora communities.

The Orientalist depiction of Muslims as barbaric, oppressive, and uncivilized continues to inform the perception of the West. The media has had its fair share of propagating and exaggerating the view that the existence of Muslims in Western society is an undeniable threat to that society. In North America, for instance, the mainstream media has retained a particular angle of portraying Muslims in the post-9/11 era, most of which focuses on how the presence of Muslims threatens the freedom and values of the citizens (Eid & Karim, 2011). Various studies on the perception of Muslims in the West have identified these perceptions as based on labels that deem Muslims as exploitative, dangerous, illegal, ungrateful, and so on (Eid, 2014).

It is also important to note that Muslims and Muslim cultures are associated with negative social and cultural stereotypes, which can lead to negative emotions and outcomes for this population (Anjum, Kessler, & Aziz, 2019; Anjum, Kidd, & Aziz, 2018). Research in social psychology of group dynamics and group emotions has indicated some of the pitfalls for negative group emotions. Group emotions, the common emotions of members belonging to the same group (see Anjum et al., 2018; Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Group emotions have significant outcomes for the group’s perception, their identity, and their functioning (Anjum, Aziz, & Castano, 2019).

Even research outside the bounds of cross-cultural comparisons have indicated that the prevalence of more positive emotions (i.e., higher positive group affect) leads to lower conflict and more cooperation (Barsade, 2002; Totterdell, 2000). Conversely, higher prevalence of negative group affect, that is, more negative emotions, has been associated with lower

cooperation, hostile intentions, and a lack of team coordination (Delvaux, Vanbeselaere, & Mesquita, 2015; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Based on these findings, it can be assumed that due to negative perceptions about Muslims in the West, it is likely that this population experiences more negative emotions compared to other minorities.

MARGINALIZATION AND PERCEIVED INEQUALITY OF DIASPORA MUSLIMS

What emerges as an inevitable consequence of stereotyping and stigmatizing is discrimination and marginalization of the diaspora Muslim populations in Western countries. Among the various forms of “othering,” two prevalent ways in which the Muslim identity is perceived are, first, as rooted in oppression and, second, as a homogenous community. Both of these understandings of the Muslim community are problematic because the former offers a superficial and ill-informed explanation of beliefs and customs of Muslims, and the latter undermines the diversity and heterogeneity within the Muslim community (Saeed, 2007).

In Europe, the spatially marginalized Muslims are held responsible by Indigenous Europeans for their segregation from the non-Muslim residents—some of whom claim with certainty that the reason Muslims reside in small close communities is that they consciously exclude themselves from the larger society to preserve their religious and ethnic identity (Foner & Alba, 2008). Research on these “apparently” ghettoized religious enclaves shows otherwise: it demonstrates how these parallel societies are imposed on Muslims by the Indigenous European population in an attempt to restrict their rigorous integration in the society (Foner & Alba, 2008).

The findings of the Pew Research Center’s (2017b) survey of U.S. Muslims serve as a good starting point to objectively look at the discriminatory experiences of diaspora Muslims living in the United States. Approximately half of the surveyed Muslim Americans stated that over the recent years, maintaining a Muslim identity in the United States has become difficult due to covert and overt discriminatory behaviors. Muslim Americans have consistently expressed that the media coverage of Muslims is neither fair nor accurate. An alarmingly rising percentage of Muslims in America report that they have been victims of social inequality at some point in their life. From confessions of being treated with suspicion and being called out with offensive labels to getting physically attacked or harmed, there is a mounting amount of evidence that demonstrate how the Muslim diaspora in the West continues to feel threatened due to its religious identity.

The Pew survey (2017b) aptly highlighted a category among Muslims that falls victim to unjustified prejudice by the non-Muslim majority: Muslim women. An obvious gender gap was reflected in the findings of the

survey, which showed how Muslim women were more concerned about the worth of Muslims in American society. The discriminatory acts worsening the possibility of social equality for Muslims were more likely to target women who “appeared” to be Muslim. This included women who observed a certain kind of veil or clothing item.

Muslims have also seen marginalization and inequality in other markers of social inequality, such as facing obstacles while accessing basic education and health services. Padela and Zaidi (2018) found significant health differences between Muslim and non-Muslim groups. After reviewing 29 empirical studies for health-care disparities, ethnicity, and location, they found that according to 19 of these studies, the patients reporting a Muslim identity not only faced discrimination in accessing clinical services but also lacked knowledge of health care, as their ideas of health were firmly rooted in Islamic tradition (Padela & Zaidi, 2018). Several examples of research were quoted, most of them related to gynecological or sexual health. One study testing the attitudes of Muslim respondents toward cervical cancer screening showed that many respondents perceived the examination of the cervix to be a threat to the virginity and modesty of unmarried women. This reflects a lack of health education, which can become an obstacle for early detection of cervical cancer (Matin & LeBaron, 2004).

Additionally, lack of cultural accommodation and cultural sensitivity within the health-care system leaves minority groups such as Muslims within Western societies to experience the cost of unmet health-care needs because of a discriminatory health-care system. Based on markers of religious identity such as the hijab, health-care providers assume that these women are ignorant and/or stupid, and as a result of the medical experts’ bias and the stigma surrounding the Muslim identity, they are refused care (Matin & LeBaron, 2004).

Another study outlined the health inequity experienced by Muslims due to Islamophobia and stereotyping of the Muslim identity. Results found associations between Islamophobia, discrimination, and unfavorable health-seeking behavior with poor mental health (Samari, Alcalá, & Sharif, 2018). Rampant social inequality within the society can affect mental health to the extent that Muslim identity may be associated with depressive symptoms as well as anxiety, fear, anger, paranoia, and physical and psychological distress.

COMPOUNDED VULNERABILITY AMONG DIASPORA MUSLIMS, AND IDENTITY AS A BUFFER

We argue that Muslim diaspora populations face compounded vulnerability to their identity. First, they feel more vulnerable as a minority group in the midst of the thriving non-Muslim majority; second, they are stereotyped as a group that is seen as archaic in its traditions and not a