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# Psychology and Indigenous People

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## Keywords

Indigenous peoples, intercultural relations, colonialism, prejudice, identity, mental health

## Abstract

Whether there are common features inherent to the psychology of Indigenous peoples around the globe has been the subject of much debate. We argue that Indigenous peoples share the experience of colonization and its social and psychological consequences. We develop this argument across four sections: (*a*) the global history of colonization and social inequalities; (*b*) aspects concerning identity and group processes, including the intergenerational transmission of shared values, the connection with nature, and the promotion of social change; (*c*) prejudice and discrimination toward Indigenous peoples and the role of psychological processes to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; and (*d*) the impact of historical trauma and colonialism on dimensions including cognition, mental health, and the well-being of Indigenous peoples as well as the basis for successful interventions that integrate Indigenous knowledge. Finally, we address future challenges for research on these topics.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although environmental science and anthropological research have long investigated Indigenous issues, psychology has been slow to engage with the topic. Only recently have a growing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers examined the intragroup, intergroup, interpersonal, and individual issues related to Indigenous peoples. This article reviews these developments. A major challenge for such an endeavor is identifying whether there are common features that are inherent to the psychology of Indigenous peoples around the globe, beyond what every other human shares. To these ends, United Nations Special Rapporteur José R. Martínez Cobo provided the most influential definition of Indigenous people:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (Martínez Cobo 1983, p. 50)

This definition highlights a fundamental characteristic of Indigenous communities: They share a colonial past and, thus, its associated intergenerational psychological consequences. According to this definition, Indigenous communities have survived and resisted invasion and colonization. This experience gives rise to certain defining features: Contemporary Indigenous groups have a continuing history of occupation of their ancestral lands, share ancestry with the original occupants, manifest their own culture (e.g., religion, lifestyle), and maintain their language (Martínez Cobo 1983, pp. 50–51).

However, the very idea of defining Indigenous people is contested, because an externally created definition may reenact the colonial past. Also, the considerable diversity of Indigenous peoples—approximately 370 million individuals, distributed across 90 countries and representing about 5,000 cultures—belies a universal definition (see Arvin 2015, Chandler 2013, Coates 2004, Greenwood 2013, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). Hence, the United Nations argues that such a definition is unnecessary to recognize Indigenous people's rights (UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). Rather, Indigenous peoples self-identify as Indigenous (i.e., identification is based on group consciousness), and these populations recognize them as members (i.e., identification is based on acceptance by the group). The communities preserve their “sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference” (Martínez Cobo 1983, p. 51). This definition also fits group identity according to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986).

In the face of such numbers and variety, psychology has dealt with Indigenous issues using methodologies and theories mostly developed in Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) countries (Henrich et al. 2010). To acknowledge this limitation, we critically discuss the context in which this research has been conducted, the cultural diversity of the Indigenous communities, the methodological and theoretical limitations of the studies and their conclusions, and the relevance of the living conditions of the Indigenous communities that might have affected the reported findings. Moreover, we acknowledge several authors who warned about the risk of replicating colonialism within the psychology of Indigenous people by imposing Western views that neglect Indigenous knowledge and practices (see Allwood 2018, Kim et al. 2006, Sundararajan 2019).

Herein, we address five main topics that have shaped the common experience of Indigenous peoples around the globe: (a) contextual factors; (b) group processes and social identity; (c) intergroup dynamics between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; (d) how the experience of Indigenous communities relates to individual and interpersonal psychological processes, such as mental health and cognitive differences; and (e) a critique of how psychology as a discipline has approached Indigenous issues, including implications for policy and future research.

## METHODOLOGY

Our review combines several approaches. First, we systematically searched the Web of Science database for psychology articles published in the last 5 years that included one of the following terms: *Indigen\**, *First People*, *aborigin\**, *autochthonous*, *First Nations*, *Native American*, or *tribal*. That search produced over 1,280 hits. We then excluded all articles whose titles or abstracts indicated that the research reported was not, in fact, related specifically to Indigenous peoples or Indigenous issues but rather addressed general questions in psychology using an Indigenous sample. Additionally, we excluded articles referring to ethnic minorities not considered Indigenous (e.g., migrants) as well as articles concerning Indigenous languages, places, plants, medicines, and objects but not referring to Indigenous peoples.

These criteria identified 601 articles suitable for review. From those articles, we discuss here those that best represent the variability of a particular research area, excluding many articles that, though meeting our inclusion criteria, were already represented by those selected. To complement

this search, we consulted relevant reports, books, and working documents that provide information on the history and context of research and policy making concerning Indigenous issues. We also asked researchers from different parts of the world and from different disciplines about seminal texts that we might have missed in our search. Finally, we incorporated some articles published prior to the 5-year limit of the review if they were relevant pieces of research needed to present a full picture of the field.

## THE IMPACT OF COLONIZATION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

From the fifteenth century on, European expansionism aimed at gaining economic power, imposing military control, and installing political, religious, and cultural supremacy gave rise to a process known as colonization (Balandier 2009, Coulthard 2014), which had enduring effects on Indigenous peoples' lives (Lipscombe et al. 2020). Indigenous peoples across the globe shared the experience of being invaded by, and losing their lands to, dominant armed groups and of being politically and economically subdued and subjected to brutalities, including genocide (Wolfe 2006), the rape of Indigenous women, and the killing and kidnapping of children (Braithwaite 2018). Colonization devastated Indigenous communities and, in some cases, led to the complete extermination of some populations and complete submission to the power of colonizers. Many Indigenous peoples, however, resisted and fought for years against the appropriation of their territories, including the Mapuche people in Chile (Bengoa 2000) and the Cherokees, Sioux, and Cheyenne in North America (Brown et al. 2018).

With the arrival of European colonizers, several new diseases created deadly epidemics that killed high proportions of the local population. Christian missionaries often followed and attempted to convert Indigenous people to Christianity, thereby overriding the local Indigenous cultural and religious beliefs. Western schoolteachers then arrived who imposed the knowledge and ideas of the "civilized" world, disregarding Indigenous peoples' traditional worldviews (Coates 2004). The European invaders and their descendants exhibited a high level of racism and considered most Indigenous peoples as barbarians, heathens, and savages who needed to be indoctrinated according to the rules of "civilization" (Jahoda 1999). All these aspects remain central issues that are currently part of the political and reparation agendas of Indigenous institutions, international organizations, and Indigenous leaders across the globe.

Many of the Indigenous societies that were invaded during the colonial period shared at the time, and sometimes still share, several characteristics that indicate a resilience and continuity of identity, including the attribution of a strong value to community life and a significant attachment to traditional lands. As a whole, and taking into account the unique and culturally specific contexts and ways of living of each Indigenous community, Indigenous peoples are often characterized as being deeply connected to distinctive spiritual belief systems, having a high regard for their elders and ancestors, sharing a value system with their communities, and maintaining ancestral rites and cultural traditions, including a strong commitment to caring for the environment (Boas 1904). Maintaining a shared distinctive language has also been critical to preserve the identities of many Indigenous communities, and it reflects a clear mechanism for transferring culture from one generation to another over time (Jacob et al. 2019). Thus, Indigenous peoples have shown a profound sense of belonging and differentiation—critical aspects of a meaningful social identity (Brewer 1991, Tajfel & Turner 1986)—which explains why so many Indigenous people reject assimilation into mainstream societies (see also Liu & Robinson 2016).

## Social Inequality and the Status of Indigenous Peoples

A status and power asymmetry between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is the root of many conflicts over both realistic and symbolic issues (Osborne et al. 2017, Satherley & Sibley

2018, Sibley & Liu 2004). Contextual factors have shaped how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people relate to each other and how perceptions (i.e., stereotypes and prejudice) and behaviors (i.e., discrimination) exhibited by members of majority non-Indigenous groups toward Indigenous peoples have fueled conflicts over several centuries.

Even though in many countries statistics regarding the social conditions of Indigenous peoples remains limited (UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009), a few countries have accessible data (Hall & Patrinos 2012) showing that, compared to the non-Indigenous majority, Indigenous peoples belong to a low-status minority and experience an unreasonably low distribution of social goods. Indigenous peoples face huge disparities in access to, and quality of, formal education and are overrepresented among the illiterate (Carey et al. 2017). Moreover, despite comprising less than 5% of the global population, they make up 15% of the world's poor (Hall & Patrinos 2012, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009), and this picture is even direr in developing countries (Hall & Patrinos 2012, Int. Labour Off. 2007, Macdonald 2012). Overall, child mortality is higher among Indigenous people (Stephens et al. 2005)—they live shorter lives (UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009), have lower rates of upward economic mobility (Bradley et al. 2007, Cornell 2006), and experience higher rates of suicide than do non-Indigenous people (Westerman & Sheridan 2020). The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people's physical and mental health, smoking, and substance abuse (Armenta et al. 2016a, Wolfe 2006), as well as well-being, remains a major concern in many societies (Matheson et al. 2019, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). Indigenous peoples also have a higher rate of unemployment and lower incomes compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Hall & Patrinos 2012, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009).

## Indigenous Peoples and Social Change

Many Indigenous peoples have adopted strategies for social change by resisting the imposition of the colonizers' culture, mobilizing around a collective ethnic identity, and demanding official recognition and self-determination (Coates 2004, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). Although some societies have changed their conceptions about Indigenous peoples, restructuring the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people remains elusive. Confronted with pressures to assimilate following the advent of globalization, Indigenous people are engaged in a daily struggle to maintain their distinctiveness, particularly in urban areas (Hall & Patrinos 2012, UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). Retaining the identity, language, and customs of Indigenous communities is both costly and difficult (Jacob et al. 2019).

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, Indigenous communities have generated collective movements aimed at sharing experiences, highlighting past and present-day injustices, and unifying Indigenous peoples from different continents under common goals (consider, for example, the American Indian movement in the United States, the Indigenous civil rights movement in Australia, the Māori protest movement in New Zealand, the so-called war in the woods in Canada, and the Zapatista movement in Mexico, among others). These common goals include achieving respect, constitutional recognition, better environmental protection, and reparations for the damage inflicted on their communities by colonizers, state policies, and industrial developments (Coates 2004).

This period of collective action resulted in four major successes. First, the publication in 1989 by the International Labour Organization of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (C169) established minimum standards for Indigenous consultation and participation in decision-making processes. Then in 2000 came the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, followed in 2007 by the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also by the United Nations. This

set of initiatives paved the way for Indigenous leaders, communities, and organizations to address inequalities, social issues, and injustices in different societies.

## **GROUP PROCESSES AND INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

By informing knowledge, beliefs, norms, and principles, culture shapes the way in which individuals behave and how they construe abstract concepts (see ojaletto & Medin 2015). Indigenous culture therefore configures Indigenous traditions and customs, intra- and intergroup relations, and the way individuals perceive and interact with the natural environment. Nature and its interdependence with humans are central notions in many Indigenous cultures, which consider connectedness to nature as central to well-being (Lockhart et al. 2019). Indigenous conceptions regarding nature and the relation between humans, plants, and animals are quite different from Western conceptions in many respects. These divergences range from different motivations for generating knowledge regarding nature to the ways in which nonhuman natural elements are conceived. Accordingly, Gonzales (2020) argued that in Western praxis knowledge is based on profit, whereas from an Indigenous perspective, knowledge is based on building sustainable relationships with nature, based on respect, accountability, and affordability. Consistent with this thesis, various studies have shown differences in the ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples conceptualize animals and plants. For instance, ojaletto et al. (2017) showed that Ngöbe Indigenous people from Panama are more likely than non-Indigenous individuals to attribute intentional agency to plants. Similarly, Native American children are more likely than non-Native Americans to take the perspective of an animal when playing (Washinawatok et al. 2017). In sum, many Indigenous groups show a greater connection with nature, which reflects ancestral traditions and contributes to their well-being.

### **Family Indigenous Socialization and Its Positive Effects**

Cultural notions, values, and idiosyncrasies are frequently transmitted through socialization within the family. For example, it was found that when Zapotec Mexican Indigenous parents living in the United States used the Zapotec language and identified as Indigenous, their children—most of them born in the United States—were also more willing to speak the language and to identify as Indigenous (Mesinas & Perez 2016). By doing so, Indigenous parents not only preserve the bond with their communities but also teach their children about indigeneity.

This intergenerational transmission of cultural values has positive effects on Indigenous peoples' well-being and development. Recently, longitudinal data have shown that parental socialization in traditional cultural values (specifically, connection to the country and to kin as well as traditional knowledge) during early childhood is correlated with later well-being and positive socioemotional adjustment among Indigenous Australian children (Dockery 2020). Seemingly, for Indigenous communities in Southeast Asia, being connected to the land and the environment, endorsing traditional customs and norms, transmitting Indigenous wisdom across generations, and highlighting the importance of social cohesion are protective factors that engender resilience (Chua et al. 2019).

### **Indigenous Group Identity**

Cultural values and in-group attachment are beneficial also when it comes to overcoming social, political, and economic disadvantages (Houkamau & Sibley 2014). Identification with an Indigenous group carries numerous advantages for ethnic minorities and energizes collective action. For example, longitudinal data showed that, among Māori people from New Zealand,

perceived discrimination strengthens group identity, which in turn predicts support for Māori political rights. Notably, this stronger ethnic identity also fosters well-being (Stronge et al. 2016). Moreover, it was found that the existence of a superordinate Indigenous identity among different subgroups in Canada (Neufeld & Schmitt 2019), far from threatening or making invisible each subgroup's idiosyncrasies, respects diversity and encourages the exchange of the principles, peculiarities, and practices of each group. Thus, heterogeneity and solidarity are essential components of an Indigenous group identity. This superordinate identity might foster unity and help Indigenous groups to collectively face and respond to discrimination and historical trauma (see Pack et al. 2016). Under certain circumstances, a common ingroup identity with a non-Indigenous group may also promote motivations to work toward social change; for example, identification as Mexican for Indigenous Mexicans and as Chilean for Indigenous Chileans was positively associated with group efficacy to overcome inequality, which in turn predicted future willingness to engage in political action (Çakal et al. 2016).

Language may also foster resistance to disadvantage. Using Indigenous languages can promote group identity and the perception of injustice—two critical antecedents of collective action. Although shared characteristics among non-Indigenous people (e.g., group identity) seem to work also for Indigenous individuals, novel antecedents such as Indigenous language (Droogendyk & Wright 2017) account for Indigenous distinctiveness.

## Indigenous Views of Social Development and Current Group Challenges

Indigenous communities have suffered the imposition of Western strategies to promote social change and development that disparage or eliminate Indigenous ways of acting. That is, institutions and contexts that foster social change are shaped by Western norms that, ironically, undermine Indigenous peoples' confidence in speaking up and taking part in social progress. For instance, the Inuit in Northern Quebec feel they are “not good enough” (Fraser et al. 2019, p. 168) to participate in social development programs, including community empowerment and community development of services. However, the challenging circumstances they face are also perceived as a driver to move forward and to keep hope and positive expectations about the future (Fraser et al. 2019).

How Indigenous peoples confront this challenging social context has also been a topic of study. For instance, using a methodology to co-construct knowledge with Indigenous communities, Atallah et al. (2018) identified four themes of resilience that emerged among the Mapuche in Chile: *newen*, or strength and spiritual life-nature force; *azmapu*, or ancestral systems of social organization and tribal law; *nietun*, or cultural revitalization; and *marichiweu*, or resistance. This reconceptualization of resilience reveals the importance of cultural notions and traditions to understand how Indigenous groups face social disadvantage and maintain hope for the future, and it hints at significant aspects that should be included in interventions that promote ethnic-based equality.

Although traditional values are central to Indigenous cultures, Western social norms have influenced Indigenous development. Among the Awajún from the Peruvian Amazon, traditional markers of prestige including spiritual visions were substituted by Western markers of status (e.g., occupation, income, and speaking Spanish) stemming from the imposition of religious and economic influences on the part of the Peruvian government and American missionaries (Tallman 2018). Together, Western influence and the simultaneous strength of Indigenous worldviews create a coexistence of tradition and adaptation that poses a challenge for Indigenous communities. For example, Mexican Indigenous Maya girls who move from the village to the city to work as street vendors are faced with the challenge of harmonizing traditional Maya principles such as obedience, female humility, and cooperation with urban standards such as individual achievement and academic success



(Tovote & Maynard 2018). Maya girls follow their traditional values and norms that provide safety when working in the city streets with other Maya girls. The challenge of reconciling tradition and adaptation might be especially complex for Indigenous women who experience discrimination based on both ethnicity and gender. To overcome this obstacle, Indigenous Qom women from Argentina report the importance of their alliance with non-Indigenous women as well as the need to redefine traditional gender roles and to question the traditions that oppressed them (Rizzo 2018).

The uniqueness of Indigenous perspectives highlights the necessity to investigate Indigenous conceptions in a systematic way (Arnett 2017). Moreover, the study and application of Indigenous ways of living may help to improve current societies. For instance, an ecological attachment intervention based on Indigenous notions and perspectives, including ecological empathy, ecological mindfulness, and green action, can generate sustainable societies (Kurth et al. 2020).

## **INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Acceptance of cultural diversity and equality among groups has gradually penetrated state policies and public opinion, and it has fostered a more positive vision of Indigenous peoples around the world (Coates 2004). Nonetheless, postcolonial ideologies including historical negation and symbolic exclusion—known as the dark duo (Sibley 2010)—are used to maintain and legitimize social inequalities that are detrimental to Indigenous peoples (Sibley & Osborne 2016). This two-pronged ideological system legitimizes inequalities regarding the allocation of resources among Indigenous people and their representation in the nation's identity, and it is fostered by a social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism among European New Zealanders. For instance, in the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS)—a 20-year longitudinal study of social attitudes—historical negation and symbolic exclusion are associated with greater opposition to resource-specific policies and weaker collective action on behalf of the Māori population (Satherley & Sibley 2018; see also Osborne et al. 2017).

### **Prejudice and Discrimination Toward Indigenous Peoples in Daily Life**

Indigenous peoples have a long history of being targets of prejudice and discrimination across cultures (Coates 2004, Martínez Cobo 1983). Prejudice and discrimination against Indigenous peoples are persistent phenomena that have a negative and significant impact on Indigenous peoples' lives. With advanced theorizing and new ways of measuring these concepts (Brown 2010), studies have focused on both blatant and subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Experiencing unfair treatment, discrimination, and other forms of marginalization is connected with serious negative outcomes, including lower self-esteem and higher substance use, among Native American minority youths in the United States (Galliher et al. 2011). However, youths' ethnic identity, cultural continuity, and resilience may protect against the negative effects of discrimination (Currie et al. 2020, Umaña-Taylor 2016).

Reviewing several studies, Bourhis (2020) documented the high rates of prejudice and discrimination suffered by Indigenous peoples and other minorities in Canada. Experimental studies, for instance, reveal that both social identity needs and competition for scarce resources account for intergroup prejudice, discrimination, and antagonism (Bourhis 2020). The 2017 Public Service Employee Survey similarly revealed that Indigenous peoples and other minority group members in Canada are more likely than White employees to report workplace discrimination and harassment, which is even more likely for members of multiple minority groups (Waite 2021). Moreover, a qualitative study of experiences of racial microaggressions (i.e., daily humiliations that communicate hostile attitudes) in Canada revealed that Indigenous college students often



feel segregated, discriminated against, and perceived by non-Indigenous people as intellectually inferior, second-class citizens (Canel-Çınarbaş & Yohani 2019). Critically, developing social support to access resources, confronting racial microaggressions, and using culturally grounded strategies as a form of resistance were key responses to racial microaggressions among Indigenous peoples in Canada (Houshmand et al. 2019).

Māori people are also the target of prejudice in New Zealand. Satherley & Sibley (2018) developed a culturally specific self-report measure of modern racism toward Māori that consists of five key subcomponents: negative affect, anxiety, denial of historical reparation, symbolic exclusion, and denial of contemporary injustice. Among the NZAVS Māori subsample, 43% of respondents reported discrimination, sometimes at high levels. Critically, higher perceived discrimination is associated with poorer outcomes on multiple social economic and psychological indicators of well-being, including health care access, evaluation of own health, job security, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and psychological distress (Houkamau et al. 2017).

In Argentina, the social representation of Indigenous peoples held by non-Indigenous individuals—captured using the word association technique—showed both subtle and blatant forms of prejudice (Barreiro et al. 2019). The results revealed an anachronistic representation of Indigenous peoples that placed them outside of mainstream culture.

Findings are not as clear-cut when assessing the attitudes of Indigenous peoples toward their own ingroup. Minority group members overtly express an evaluative preference for their in-group but, at the same time, covertly devalue it. It has long been noted that minority groups sometimes internalize a sense of inferiority (Clark & Clark 1939), particularly when they are low status (Jost & Banaji 1994). Indeed, Haye et al. (2010) showed that Indigenous Mapuche explicitly express a moderate ingroup bias but implicitly devalue their ingroup. Conversely, non-Indigenous participants devalue Mapuche people at the implicit level but express no explicit ingroup bias. In a related study, Siebler et al. (2010) used a category-focused implicit association test with Mapuche and non-Indigenous Chilean participants and found that both groups displayed a neutral implicit evaluation of the ingroup but a negative implicit evaluation of the outgroup.

## **Stereotypes About Indigenous Peoples**

Based on the stereotype content model (Cuddy et al. 2008), and using college and nationwide samples, Burkley et al. (2017a) found that, even though most Native American subgroups are judged low in both competence and warmth and elicit contempt, they are also characterized according to both noble and ignoble subgroup stereotypes (Burkley et al. 2017b). Saiz et al. (2009) reported a similar pattern in that attributes associated closely with “mapuchito” (meaning “little Mapuche”) in Chile would describe potentially warm but incompetent people, whereas attributes associated closely with “Indio” would describe particularly cold and unskilled persons—a pattern consistent with the stereotype describing Mapuche people as conflictual, rude, violent, and lazy (Saiz et al. 2008). Sheeran et al. (2019) found that, even though contemporary stereotypes regarding Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian adult mothers share commonalities, Indigenous mothers are perceived as more financially dependent than non-Indigenous mothers.

In the United States, a debate has existed for more than 50 years over the use of Native American sports mascots. Burkley et al. (2017b) found that, when exposed to Native mascots, highly prejudiced people rate Native American individuals as being more stereotypically aggressive than do those with low levels of prejudice. Exposure to a university mascot depicting harmful stereotypes about Native Americans has also revealed that institutional norms play an important role in expressions of prejudice and experiences of belonging (Kraus et al. 2019). Employing implicit association social cognition methods, Saminaden et al. (2010) found that participants associated

Indigenous peoples with animal and child-related traits more readily than they did with people from industrialized societies. Participants also ascribed fewer uniquely human attributes to Indigenous peoples than to their counterparts from industrialized societies regardless of their evaluation of Indigenous peoples. Thus, colonial images of “savages” persist as a cultural residue in contemporary Western societies (Jahoda 1999).

### **Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Discourse and Mass Media**

Discourse perpetuated by authorities, politicians, and the mass media has been an important source of normative influence in shaping prejudices about Indigenous peoples. Liu & Robinson (2016) analyzed continuity and change in discourses of enlightenment and racism toward the Māori through 160 years of New Zealand’s speeches from the throne (sovereigns’ speeches to members of the legislature; 163 speeches over the period 1854–2014). Enlightenment discourses of benevolence are present more often than racism discourses in all periods. Old-fashioned racism was mainly based on ideas of civilizational superiority and accusations of barbarism that emerged during the colonization period. Modern racism predominantly blames Māori for not using the land in productive terms. Interestingly, the prevalence of old-fashioned and modern racism in these speeches declines almost to zero by the twentieth century. A significant shift is observed with the gradual expansion of a symbolic inclusion of Māori in discourses of national identity, which started to reveal the prevalence of biculturalism as the dominant discourse among current elites.

Research has also shown the critical role that the mass media play in shaping how social groups understand themselves and are understood by others. Mass media representations of Indigenous peoples, particularly in the news, have had a detrimental impact on public perceptions of the aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Leavitt et al. (2015) showed that Native Americans are seldom portrayed in mass media, and when they are, they are depicted in a clichéd fashion that reinforces historical stereotypes. They argue that the invisibility of Native Americans in the media undermines their self-understanding by homogenizing their identity, creating narrow identity prototypes, and evoking deindividuation and self-stereotyping. Another example is the defamation of Indigenous Paiwan people—a Taiwanese Indigenous group—by Japan’s public broadcaster NHK (Chu & Huang 2019). Using critical discourse analysis and interviews with key stakeholders, Chu & Huang’s (2019) study revealed NHK’s covert racist discourse regarding the Paiwan people and its lack of sensitivity toward Indigenous peoples in general, both in a documentary series on the history of the modernization of Japan and in its responses to the lawsuits that followed after the broadcast.

### **Identification, Trust, Conflict, and Violence**

In this section, we review studies that extend our understanding of the nature of intergroup relations, spanning from research on conflict and violence to analyses of intergroup trust and of how attitudes may be influenced by multiethnic affiliations. Intergroup relationships involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are characterized by conflict stemming from both actual and symbolic threat (Stephan & Stephan 2000). As is well established by group conflict theory (Sherif 1967), intergroup competition for resources, even if only perceived, can foster prejudice (Brown 2010). Two aspects regarding Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations are relevant here. First, because working the land is at the heart of what constitutes Indigenous identity, one of the main issues of both peaceful and violent contention is land ownership. Given that colonization forcibly removed many Indigenous peoples from their original lands, this is a particularly painful point of contention. Second, cultural distance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is also relevant. Indigenous peoples, mainly those living in rural or more isolated areas, keep

their cultural traditions alive, still speak their own language, and maintain their own health and religious belief systems (Jacob et al. 2019).

Indigenous groups' demands (e.g., recovery of ancestral land, cultural and constitutional recognition, and the creation of independent territories) have become especially salient during the last decades. Alongside peaceful strategies to claim land rights, radical Indigenous activists in some countries (e.g., Chile, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand) have used violence against industrial developments, forestry companies, hydroelectric dam projects, private landowners, and others to draw attention to their demands. This often arises after previous agreements established with the state governments have been broken over the years, undermining trust and increasing the tension and conflict between the parties (Carruthers & Rodriguez 2009, Coates 2004, Isaacs et al. 2020).

In short, social conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, both historically and presently, may foster outgroup derogation when competition for power and resources as well as perceptions of social comparison, threat, fear, and moral superiority are present (Brewer 1999). Using a national probability sample of Māori and European participants in New Zealand, Hamley et al. (2020) identified a distinct response profile reflecting both ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation in Māori and European participants. Whereas the centrality of ethnic identity predicted that response profile among Māori, social dominance orientation predicted it among Europeans. In other words, ingroup favoritism seems to be motivated by attachment to the ingroup for Indigenous peoples and to a preference for group-based hierarchy among majority group members.

Police forces are expected to play a significant role in managing any conflict that involves groups in public spaces (Gerber et al. 2016). The way they have addressed these conflicts has been particularly complex, especially in situations that involved radical Indigenous activists on the one hand and non-Indigenous communities or companies settled in their former territories on the other. For example, the police force in Chile has responded in an increasingly violent way toward Mapuche people, and Mapuche territories have gradually become more militarized (Carruthers & Rodriguez 2009; for a similar example in the Dakotas, United States, see Isaacs et al. 2020). When an official report of a recent clash that left one Mapuche youth dead was contradicted by video evidence that the police had attacked the youth, public outrage led to a credibility crisis for the police and to a questioning of state policies on the advancement of Indigenous causes. Gerber et al. (2018) further investigated this topic by examining Indigenous Mapuche's attitudes toward the violence perpetrated by Mapuche activists and the violence used by police officers. Their results show that higher perceptions of procedurally just policing toward Indigenous peoples predict more support for police violence and less support for violence perpetrated by Indigenous activists. These effects are mediated by perceived police legitimacy and moderated by group identification. Among those who identify strongly with the Indigenous group, perceiving high procedural justice predicts greater police legitimacy, greater support for police violence, and lesser support for violence perpetrated by Indigenous activists.

Although some research points to intergroup tension, individuals' belonging to multiple social, ethnic, and ideological groups may also erode intergroup boundaries. Indigenous peoples in several countries (e.g., Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, New Zealand, and Australia) identify both with Indigenous peoples and their causes and with the non-Indigenous majority group. Indeed, as reported by Pehrson et al. (2011), identifying with both groups could bring about positive outcomes in terms of intergroup attitudes, including support for reparation for Indigenous groups (Pack et al. 2016). In New Zealand, ethnicity is self-defined, and the main requirement to claim Māori identity in Māori communities is *whakapapa* (genealogy). However, after over 160 years of close contact with non-Māori, a large proportion of the Māori population also identify as New Zealand

European. To explore the impact of such multiple identifications, Houkamau & Sibley (2014) examined differences in supportive attitudes toward Māori among individuals who identified as sole-Māori, Māori/European, or European (but with Māori ancestry). Those who dual-identified as Māori/European expressed political attitudes more aligned with those who identified as European. However, dual-identifiers were also similar to their sole-Māori counterparts on several indicators of social and economic status, as they had a similar lower status position in New Zealand [see also Houkamau & Sibley (2015), who explore change and stability in Māori identity across the life span].

Using a behavioral trust game, Carlin et al. (2021) revealed that, contrary to predictions, the lack of a shared ethnic identity between non-Indigenous Chileans and Mapuche people did not decrease intergroup trust. However, shared stances on a policy that would raise taxes to foster development in Indigenous communities increased intergroup trust. Moreover, the more non-Indigenous Chileans identified with the Mapuche and with the political left, the stronger the impact of shared stances regarding pro-Mapuche redistribution policy on intergroup trust.

### Intergroup Contact and Intergroup Relations

Consistent with theories of intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006), Zagefka et al. (2017) showed that positive contact between Indigenous Mapuche people and non-Indigenous Chileans reduces prejudice by increasing outgroup knowledge and decreasing intergroup anxiety. Pack et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study in New Zealand showing how positive contact fosters positive intergroup attitudes and reduces racism against Māori by Pākehā (the Māori term for New Zealand Europeans). Teaching about the Treaty of Waitangi—an agreement made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori *rangatira* (the chiefs) in 1840 that effectively established New Zealand as a British colony—and Māori history, fostering ongoing daily positive contact between Māori and Pākehā, and using Kiwi (a moniker for New Zealander) as an inclusive superordinate identity for both Māori and Pākehā emerge as effective strategies for reducing racism. Maunder et al. (2020) also showed that intergroup contact reduces prejudice against several minorities, including Indigenous Australians, particularly among individuals most prone to prejudice.

Recently, contact research has shifted its attention to identifying critical factors that can promote intergroup contact, including group norms. For instance, in a multiethnic school in the United States that included Indigenous students, students with more positive intergroup contact attitudes (ICA) were less likely to choose friends of the same race/ethnicity than were those with less positive ICA, and their ICA became more similar to their friends' ICA over time (Rivas-Drake et al. 2019). Similarly, Tropp et al. (2016) investigated how perceived school and peer norms predicted interethnic experiences among Indigenous Mapuche and non-Indigenous students in Chile, and non-Hispanic White and Latino students in the United States. Cross-sectional results revealed that peer norms predicted greater comfort in intergroup contact, interest in cross-ethnic friendships, and higher contact quality, whereas longitudinal results showed that school norms predicted greater interest in cross-ethnic friendships over time. The effects of school and peer norms on perceived discrimination varied as a function of ethnicity, suggesting that there are differences in how Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth experience cross-ethnic relations within school environments (see also González et al. 2017).

Although intergroup contact has positive effects, recent work suggests that it can also undermine support for social equality, especially among disadvantaged group members. Using a large and heterogeneous dataset (12,997 individuals from 69 countries), Hässler et al. (2020) demonstrated that intergroup contact and support for social change toward greater equality were positively associated among members of advantaged groups (e.g., ethnic majorities) but

negatively associated among disadvantaged groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, including Indigenous peoples). They also found a positive link between willingness to express solidarity with struggles toward greater social equality (e.g., protesting alongside outgroup members asking for justice for the disadvantaged group) and intergroup contact between advantaged and disadvantaged group members.

### **Acculturation Processes and the Need to Maintain an Indigenous Identity**

Acculturation research (e.g., Berry 1997, Brown & Zagefka 2011) has focused on the identity and socialization challenges faced by members of minority groups, particularly immigrant and Indigenous groups. Many Indigenous peoples are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit their ethnic identity and Indigenous legacy to future generations. Therefore, self-identifying as Indigenous and being seen by others as Indigenous is a fundamental aspect of their identity (Jacob et al. 2019). For Indigenous peoples, the possibility to continue to exist as a group relies on their ability to manage their own destiny and to live according to their cultural practices and forms of social organization. This requires that the non-Indigenous majority assume a different perspective from the one that has prevailed for several years, demanding cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the majority's way of life (Fong et al. 2019).

A large proportion of Indigenous peoples in the world have migrated to cities (UN Dep. Econ. Soc. Aff. 2009). As Brown & Zagefka (2011) have suggested, such migration flows bring members of different groups into contact with one another, and such encounters require both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups to overcome several challenges. On the one hand, Indigenous peoples often need to learn to accommodate themselves to new urban environments that are far different from their original rural areas, and they might experience intergroup anxiety and face discrimination in social environments that are not always welcoming. Non-Indigenous people, on the other hand, often meet Indigenous people with different cultural backgrounds and practices, which they may perceive as threatening to their social identities.

Zagefka et al. (2009) addressed these issues in two longitudinal studies involving non-Indigenous Chilean majority members by testing the effects of acculturation preferences (i.e., non-Indigenous people's desire for the Mapuche to maintain their original culture and to support intergroup contact) on negative affect toward Indigenous Mapuche (see alternative acculturation preferences in Brown & Zagefka 2011). Results revealed that the greater the initial desire for contact, the less negative affect is subsequently expressed toward the Mapuche, even after controlling for initial levels of negative affect. In contrast, the culture maintenance dimension does not influence negative affect, nor does the reverse pattern from negative affect to acculturation preferences, among non-Indigenous participants.

Focusing on the Indigenous perspective, Zagefka et al. (2011) conducted two other studies that systematically confirmed that Mapuche preferences for maintaining their own cultural identity depend on their perceptions of how much non-Indigenous people support cultural maintenance and desire to have contact with the Mapuche. Both perceptions shape the Mapuche people's own acculturation preferences. Mapuche people, the authors argue, are likely to be conscious of how their acculturation options are restricted by the opinions of non-Indigenous majority members. Thus, the endorsement of integration among Indigenous members is facilitated by a perception that integration is also supported by non-Indigenous people.

Building on Sibley & Liu's (2004) examination of Pākehā attitudes toward Māori biculturalism, Sibley & Osborne (2016) demonstrated that the ideologies of historical negation and symbolic exclusion have negative effects on support for social policies relating to biculturalism. In a similar vein, Yogeewaran et al. (2018) confirmed the negative impact of a color-blind ideology, driven by system-justifying beliefs, on support for policies redressing inequalities and promoting

the symbolic inclusion of Māori culture into the national identity. Te Huia (2016) illustrated the importance that Pākehā relate to Māori people, particularly by learning te reo Māori (the Māori language). By doing so, they become aware of the inequalities that exist between Māori and Pākehā and contribute to creating positive change for bicultural relationships in New Zealand.

Group norms play a central role in influencing people's behavior by specifying what is typical or desirable in a group or situation (e.g., Tankard & Paluck 2016). Studies on multiculturalism have revealed that ingroup norms about appropriate acculturation behaviors are correlated with support for multiculturalism (Schalk-Soekar & Van De Vijver 2008). Pro-contact norms could also be a powerful psychological source of influence on one's own acculturation preferences. Indeed, González et al. (2017) conducted a longitudinal study that demonstrated that fostering the development of pro-contact norms and experiencing high-quality cross-group friendship increased the level of identification with the Mapuche of both Indigenous Mapuche and non-Indigenous Chilean school students, which in turn increased the acculturation preferences for integration (i.e., adoption of Chilean culture and maintenance of the Mapuche culture) over time.

Cultural norms also play a role regarding the maintenance of ethnic identity. Based on fieldwork in Amazonian Peru, Bunce & McElreath (2017, 2018) analyzed the dynamics of cultural norms by constructing a mathematical model of the interaction between members of minority and majority ethnic groups. They concluded that the sustainability of minority culture depends on how mutually beneficial interethnic interactions are in a social sense.

Finally, embracing a particular value system could also relate to acculturation options. Stonefish & Kwantes (2017) empirically examined the relationship between values and acculturation among Indigenous inhabitants living in Canada. Their results reveal a strong endorsement of both heritage acculturation and mainstream culture (i.e., biculturalism), though with some variations, which suggests a high degree of integration between the two cultures. Moreover, Indigenous people endorsing heritage acculturation and mainstream culture placed great value on being a reliable member of their ingroup, devoting efforts to enhance the welfare of other ingroup members and supporting social equality and environmental preservation.

### **Collective Memories, Intergroup Forgiveness, and Reparation of Wrongdoing**

Historical loss (e.g., the loss of culture, land, and people as a result of colonization) has been a salient topic in the study of the collective memory of Indigenous peoples. Armenta et al. (2016b) conducted a longitudinal study focusing on the consequences of historical loss among North American Indigenous adolescents. Their findings reveal that the loss of culture and people, as well as cultural abuse, is extremely distressing for Indigenous adolescents. Figueiredo et al. (2019) reveal how representations of the historical past are connected to perceptions of the current and past intergroup relations between Mapuche and non-Indigenous people in Chile. Mapuche people emphasize the need for both reparations related to territorial loss and identity recognition. Jara et al. (2018) examined experiences of misrecognition of violence against Mapuche people during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) in state-sponsored truth commissions in Chile. The Mapuche responded to these experiences with indifference, ambivalence, and cultural resistance.

Clark (2020) uses the concept of silence to analyze historical fragments related to Australian Indigenous history to better understand national historiography and the existing historical knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Grand (2018) analyzes the practices of White American people associated with African American slavery and with the extermination of American Indigenous peoples to make a parallel between the different forms of lack of recognition. African American slavery would elicit guilt among White Americans, whereas the extermination of Native Americans would evoke feelings of shame.

The processes of forgiveness, reparation, and reconciliation after experiencing long-lasting intergroup conflicts are complex and demand considerable effort from all parties involved. It has been argued that intergroup reconciliation requires several structural factors (e.g., political, economic, and other; Klar & Branscombe 2016) and involves multiple psychological processes: the social identities of the groups involved in the conflict (González et al. 2011); the perpetrators' willingness to acknowledge, accept responsibilities, and apologize for the wrongdoing (Hornsey 2016); the role of power relations (Shnabel & Ullrich 2016); cognitive factors at a collective level, including competitive victimhood (Noor et al. 2008); and group-based emotions such as anger, hatred, guilt, shame, empathy, and hope (Brown et al. 2008, Vollhardt & Sinayobye Twali 2016).

Two studies are especially relevant in this regard. In research involving non-Indigenous participants in Chile, Brown et al. (2008) demonstrated the differential consequences that collective guilt and shame can have on support for reparations for the Mapuche people. Collective guilt predicts reparation attitudes longitudinally, whereas collective shame has only cross-sectional associations with support for reparations. Moreover, collective shame moderates the longitudinal effects of collective guilt on support for reparations, such that the effects of guilt are stronger for low-shame respondents. They also found that the relationship between shame and reparation attitudes is mediated by a desire to improve the ingroup's reputation. Čehajić et al. (2009) showed that reminders of ingroup responsibility for non-Indigenous' wrongdoings toward Indigenous peoples generate empathy through perceptions of ingroup responsibility and deflect empathy through a subtle victim dehumanization that decreases attributions of secondary emotions to the victim group.

Researchers have also analyzed negative predictors of reconciliation. Working in the context of the separatist movements of Indigenous peoples in West Papua, Indonesia, Mashuri & van Leeuwen (2018) sought to understand the motives underlying these groups' desire for independence: the need to maintain their own subgroup identity and the need to preserve power. As expected, identity threat increased perceptions of injustice, whereas power threat increased the need for subgroup empowerment. In turn, perceived injustice and need for subgroup empowerment decreased support for reconciliation with the majority group.

Support for reparations can also emerge from solidarity among minority groups. Starzyk et al. (2019) examined how ethnic majority and non-Indigenous minority people in Canada responded to reparations for Indigenous peoples. Their results suggest that, compared to White majority Canadians, non-Indigenous minority Canadians are more supportive of providing reparations to Indigenous peoples due to a complex concatenation of collective victimhood, inclusive victim consciousness, continued victim suffering, and solidarity.

### **Other Forms of Reparation Associated with Abuse and Trauma Among Indigenous Peoples**

Several forms of reparation associated with experiences of trauma and abuse among Indigenous peoples have been reported in the literature. For instance, Braithwaite (2018) addressed the factors affecting victims' decision to disclose or report rape and child sexual abuse among Indigenous peoples in Alaska (see also Du Mont et al. 2017). Reasons for nondisclosure are embedded within the larger social, historical, and political themes of colonialism, oppression, and marginalization. Comas-Díaz et al. (2019) argued that threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events, and witnessing racial discrimination toward Indigenous peoples commonly trigger trauma. They offered a new conceptual approach and culturally informed healing model to tackle racial trauma and urged the inclusion of public policy interventions in the area of racial trauma. Isaacs et al. (2020) provided the example of the trauma suffered by an American Indian community involved



in peaceful demonstrations against the Dakota Access Pipeline following their facing resistance from dominant majority groups and violent responses from the police. This article addresses the barriers faced by mental health professionals providing services on the frontlines and lists potential resolutions, including the development of a crisis response team, infrastructure for communication with individuals onsite, culturally congruent healing, community building, and prayer.

Reparations also pertain to the need to identify students for gifted and talented education programs among underrepresented minorities, including Native Americans in the United States. Peters & Engerrand (2016) provided an overview of past efforts to mitigate inequity, highlighted their successes and limitations, and presented a proposal to facilitate broader thinking about the purpose of identification, the development of talent, and how academic excellence can be spurred while simultaneously increasing equity in gifted education.

Finally, Carey et al. (2017) conducted a case study of the Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples issued by the Australian Psychological Society because of the gap that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on many dimensions (e.g., health, education, mental health, and well-being). The apology is a formal acknowledgment of the failure of the profession of psychology to listen and show respect to Indigenous Australians. Relatedly, Philpot et al. (2013) focused on the meaning of intergroup apologies for their recipients and examined Indigenous peoples' responses to the 2008 Australian government's National Apology to the Stolen Generations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples forcibly removed from their families under previous governments).

## INDIVIDUAL AND INTERPERSONAL DIMENSIONS

For many years, researchers have examined psychological processes such as cognition and perception, personality, clinical disorders, and health disparities among Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations around the world. Similarities—but also differences—have been found. To understand these disparities, it is crucial to consider the past and present intergroup relations previously described, as well as the history of collective trauma, as they can trigger discrimination, social exclusion, and further disadvantages. The consequences of colonialism and forced cultural assimilation are considered the roots of the critical health disparities, substance abuse issues, and high rates of violence observed among Indigenous peoples. Only from this perspective will psychologists be able to understand the complex reality of Indigenous peoples and to improve individual diagnoses and treatments based on individually tailored as well as collective interventions.

### Cognitive Psychology: Differences and Similarities Among Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People

In the sphere of basic psychology, a wide range of studies have examined whether there are differences in the cognitive processes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For instance, Reeve et al. (2018) have shown similar patterns of numerical abilities among Anindilyakwa-speaking and English-speaking children in Australia. Moreover, and in agreement with the effects found for Western populations, research reveals that group discussion improves individual reasoning performance among Indigenous Maya from Guatemala (Castelain et al. 2016).

It is also important to acknowledge that other studies have identified some differences. Disparities in performance on Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices (RCPM)—a widely used measure of general intelligence developed in the United Kingdom—were found between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children from poor rural populations in Mexico (Laborda et al. 2019). However, the overall differences found on RCPM performance were reduced when Indigenous children were similar to non-Indigenous children in certain characteristics reflecting

the influence of poverty on test performance, including nutrition, family education, help with schoolwork, and care at home (Laborda et al. 2019). Thus, potential disparities on cognitive test scores between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations need to be revised considering broader socio-structural factors, including stigma and discrimination, that can promote or hinder children's school performance.

Researchers have also cautioned against the use of tests developed to measure ability and intelligence in Western populations, as they are often applied to non-Western peoples for whom such tests may misalign with the knowledge and cognitive skills relevant in a specific Indigenous context. For example, recent research shows that RCPM may be unsuitable for use with Indigenous Australians unless they have received substantial Western education (Rock & Price 2019).

It is important to understand that context and culture influence how individuals perceive and interpret the social world, which in turn shapes individuals' perceptions and thoughts. To illustrate this point, McNamara et al. (2019) examined how differences in cultural conceptions about how one should think about others' minds influence moral reasoning. Specifically, iTaukei people, an Indigenous group native to Fiji whose members are normatively discouraged from thinking about other people's minds and intentions (and encouraged to focus instead on the consequences of their actions and relationships), judge accidents more severely than failed attempts. That is, when making moral decisions, outcomes seem to be more important than intentions for them compared to other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups who have different cultural norms regarding what is appropriate to think of when making moral decisions and mental state inferences.

Culture may also affect emotional judgments and beliefs. Compared to non-Indigenous Chileans, Mapuche people strongly believe that children should overcome fear and be calm, and that they can learn to control emotions by connecting with nature and by listening and watching elders in the community (Halberstadt et al. 2020). These beliefs are consistent with Mapuche norms that value autonomy and children's will to explore the world (Murray et al. 2015).

## **Discrimination and Its Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being**

Group-based traumatic experiences stemming from oppression may have undermined the well-being of Indigenous peoples, as reflected in their higher rates of mental illness (Wolfe 2006). For example, Indigenous peoples present more symptoms of psychological distress compared to other socially disadvantaged groups in Canada (Matheson et al. 2019). More traumatic events are related to an increase of perceived discrimination stressors, which in turn are associated with more psychological distress (Matheson et al. 2019). The experience of discrimination is also associated with depression. Indigenous youth from American and Canadian reservations who experienced high levels of discrimination at age 12 exhibit a higher risk of presenting high rates of depressive symptoms during early and late adolescence (Martinez & Armenta 2020).

Alarming rates of substance abuse among Indigenous peoples around the world have been linked to perceived discrimination (Armenta et al. 2016a). In addition, a greater illegal drug usage has also been related to Indigenous peoples' structural and social conditions such as the lack of social support and the weakening of community bonds (Cao et al. 2018). Poverty, discrimination, colonialism, and genocide can be experienced chronically, despite their actual duration (see Elm et al. 2019), which can amplify the negative consequences that Indigenous peoples suffer.

The interpersonal (discriminatory experiences) and systemic (institutional processes) barriers that Indigenous peoples encounter in the health care context prevent their access to adequate diagnostic and support services. Importantly, these difficulties are present not only throughout the development of the health condition but also from its very onset. In fact, a recent review suggests

that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with autism in Australia might not be diagnosed or might even be misdiagnosed, although the prevalence of autism in these communities is similar to that among non-Indigenous Australians (Bailey & Arciuli 2020). This suggests the need for improving support health services and for including the recommendations not only of service providers but also of the Indigenous peoples who experience these disadvantages.

Suicide awareness and prevention is a major issue in Indigenous communities throughout the world, given the alarmingly high rates of suicide among Indigenous peoples compared to non-Indigenous peoples. Apart from individual-centered explanations such as mental health issues and substance use, collective and historical-based explanations attributed to colonialization emerge when Indigenous peoples interpret and explain their high rates of suicide. For instance, Cowichan people in British Columbia report that past and current inequalities and the power imbalance they endure in their everyday lives might give rise to suicidal tendencies (Elliott-Groves 2018). This implies that health interventions aimed at preventing suicide need to be based on the engagement of the whole community and on decolonizing approaches that catalyze collective knowledge, self-determined action, and community healing (Trout et al. 2018).

Collectively, this literature shows that a holistic framework that considers socio-historical and community factors needs to be invoked when understanding dimensions of the psychology of Indigenous peoples. In the area of personality development, for example, it is important to pay attention to the specific contextual and cultural factors that affect personality development among particular Indigenous groups. Burack et al. (2019) have proposed that theories from academic psychology, such as social identity theory, are useful, but community-centered perspectives are also necessary to better understand Indigenous personality maturation.

In order to improve Indigenous peoples' well-being and personal development, it is necessary to adopt a culturally based approach. Accordingly, Agner et al. (2020), using *Pilinabā*, a Native Hawaiian framework for health, noted that health is conceived in terms of the extent to which individuals are connected to beauty and nature and of their ability to contribute to the happiness of family and friends and practice their cultural traditions, among other aspects. Avoidance of illness or loss is not included in this Indigenous conception of health. Rather, pain is framed as a part of health and as necessary to connect to the past. This conception diverges markedly from Western traditions and is a testament to the uniqueness of Indigenous communities.

When it comes to mental health (or any other dimension of well-being), non-Indigenous practitioners and psychologists need to have cultural competence to develop appropriate interventions that respect Indigenous perspectives and cultures (Ralph & Ryan 2017). Consistent with this thesis, Zambrano et al. (2021) explored the particularities of alcohol abuse among rural Mapuche communities in the Chilean Araucanía in order to develop a culturally appropriate intervention. They found that strengthening cultural vitality and identity, generating a shared community reflection, and conceptualizing alcohol abuse from the Mapuche perspective were needed to combat problematic drinking behaviors. Hence, the literature shows that a collective approach that integrates the whole community and considers sociocultural aspects is critical to building successful interventions.

## **Discrimination in the Educational Context**

Discrimination and stigma are also at the heart of understanding educational attainment among Indigenous groups. For example, Native American students' academic stress increases when they perceive that other students devalue their ethnic group and that their cultural values and beliefs are discordant with those of majority students—perceptions that ultimately undermine their academic performance (Chee et al. 2019).

Several studies have also found low teacher expectations of Indigenous students. For example, Flanagan et al. (2020) showed that Canadian teachers reported lower expectations concerning the performance of their Indigenous students compared with European Canadian students. Critically, low teacher expectations about Indigenous children undermine both these children's subjective experiences at school and their academic achievement (Turner et al. 2015). This might be explained in terms of self-fulfilling prophecies (Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968) and the effects of negative stereotypes about Indigenous students and peoples (see also Burkley et al. 2017b, Chu & Huang 2019, Haye et al. 2010). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that both interpersonal and structural discrimination continue to perpetuate Indigenous disadvantage in the educational sphere. To overcome this, Fellner (2018) proposes an approach to decolonizing and indigenizing the educational context by deconstructing what is not useful for Indigenous communities and including Indigenous worldviews and best practices, thus transforming ways of knowing, being, and doing in order to build egalitarian educational institutions.

### **The Experience of Violence Among Indigenous People**

Turning now to interpersonal relations, some Indigenous communities show elevated levels of exposure to, and experiences of, violence, particularly toward women and children. Du Mont et al. (2017) found that Indigenous children are more likely than non-Indigenous children to be victims of sexual abuse, although it must be acknowledged that the children's assailants are not invariably Indigenous but are sometimes external to the family or guardians of non-Indigenous heritage. Additionally, Indigenous Australian children are less likely than non-Indigenous children to make an allegation of abuse and to have the case pursued by public prosecutors (Bailey et al. 2017).

The literature has described alarming differences regarding violence and sexual assault also in the case of women. Compared to non-Indigenous women, Canadian Indigenous women are six times more likely to be killed, and American Indian women are more likely to suffer domestic violence and sexual assault (Klingspohn 2018). Worryingly, Indigenous women in need of support to escape a violent situation or relationship may have to turn to support services designed for—and by—non-Indigenous providers who lack an awareness of the structural factors that shape Indigenous communities and women's lives. For support services for Indigenous women to be appropriate, Klingspohn (2018) suggests that they must account for cultural imperatives and practices by including relevant cultural principles and history and involving key community members relevant to women's well-being. It is also necessary to consider this perspective when developing psychological interventions for Indigenous youth who commit sexual offenses. Compared to their non-Indigenous peers, Indigenous youths are more exposed to risk factors for offending, including poverty, antisocial family attitudes, and imprisonment (Adams et al. 2020).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Understanding Indigenous peoples' diversity challenges psychology to take a closer look at colonization and its consequences. This helps investigate whether Indigenous peoples worldwide are similar to each other, and if not, why and how they differ (Muthukrishna et al. 2021). Moreover, comparing Indigenous peoples with non-Indigenous peoples is fraught with difficulties given the traumatic nature of colonization. A consideration of these factors, and of the ongoing legacies of discrimination and poverty in many Indigenous communities, must guide any solution.

In this review, we have highlighted some issues as central to understanding the current state of the research. First, psychological knowledge and interventions on Indigenous peoples

have largely applied Western psychological theory. The inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, traditions, and beliefs can enrich the understanding of the psychology of Indigenous peoples (e.g., Allwood 2018, Kim et al. 2006, Rhodes & Langtiw 2018, Sundararajan 2019) and generate successful interventions aimed at achieving equality. Ignoring these critical factors risks replicating the very type of relationship that colonialism imposed on Indigenous communities (Sibley & Osborne 2016).

Second, despite a burgeoning literature addressing Indigenous issues, most studies rely on ad-hoc surveys or qualitative research. A more comprehensive methodological approach must include large-scale comparative studies, longitudinal studies, and field experiments. Large-scale comparative studies might provide evidence concerning commonalities and differences among Indigenous groups (or with non-Indigenous groups). Longitudinal studies—such as the Longitudinal Study of Intercultural Relations in Chile (ELRI; <https://www.elri.cl>) or the Māori Identity and Financial Attitudes Study/Tē Rangahau o Tē Tuakiri Māori Me Ngā Waiaro ā-Pūtea in New Zealand (Houkamau et al. 2019)—measure psychological and social processes over time, taking a closer look at their dynamics and differentiating between individual and group variability. Field experiments might help to advance the ecological validity of psychological research and to properly test interventions aimed at alleviating some of the negative consequences of systemic discrimination that Indigenous peoples endure.

Third, most research on Indigenous peoples has been conducted by non-Indigenous researchers. Our review is no exception. The processes of exclusion reviewed here as experienced by Indigenous peoples also appear in our discipline. Therefore, exploring in depth the institutional mechanisms that perpetuate such exclusion will enable action to address this rather important problem. Revising the recruitment and selection of students admitted to research-oriented graduate programs might open an opportunity for training more Indigenous researchers in psychology and for integrating their worldview into the discipline. Moreover, the field must take seriously the work of Indigenous academics whose research challenges mainstream perspectives and methodologies. If psychology is to move away from a deficit framing of Indigenous peoples, we must recognize the resilience of Indigenous peoples who have survived despite the legacies of colonization and marginalization.

And finally, addressing the complexity of the many inequalities faced by Indigenous peoples around the world must combine community-based—and, ideally, Indigenous-led—approaches that foster bottom-up social change with policy-based approaches that promote top-down changes. Bottom-up approaches might include collective action and progressive social movements, as well as locally organized initiatives that push the larger population and the institutions toward more inclusive and socially aware actions. Top-down policies should go beyond symbolic recognition and provide concrete forms of reparation, including among others (a) equal access to welfare, institutional participation, and political power; (b) changes in the legal system; and (c) constitutional recognition. Both approaches must also consolidate cultural change based on the development of new social norms that promote and protect equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Of course, psychology can contribute significantly to these bottom-up and top-down approaches by systematically identifying the critical factors and mechanisms that underlie them. Psychologists can also help by speaking up and taking an active role in the current public policy debates regarding the negative psychological consequences that colonization and assimilationist approaches have had on Indigenous peoples, the importance of fostering the development of Indigenous knowledge, and the need to implement concrete reparation programs to restore the damage inflicted by the nation-states. By doing so, our discipline will help Indigenous peoples maintain their unique and distinctive social identity and will value the role they play in societies.

## SUMMARY POINTS

1. The psychology of Indigenous peoples can be described as an effort to study the psychological processes related to the experience of being part of an Indigenous community. Such experiences can only be unified across the multiplicity of Indigenous communities in the world by thoroughly considering the history and consequences of colonialism and postcolonialism.
2. There have been discussions about the necessity of including aspects such as land, language, ancestry, and culture in the definition of Indigenous peoples. However, some approaches that oppose this idea have suggested focusing on self-identification as the only relevant aspect for defining Indigenous peoples. Likewise, some international bodies such as the United Nations have preferred not to propose an official definition.
3. The history of colonization can be observed all over the world, and its consequences in terms of social inequalities affecting Indigenous peoples are evident in many domains, including economic conditions, education, and health. Indigenous peoples have often used collective action to challenge these inequalities.
4. Indigenous peoples uphold the intergenerational transmission of shared cultural values, tend to show a greater connection with nature, and show a propensity toward promoting social change—all relevant tools to confront social disadvantage and energize collective action.
5. Prejudice and discrimination toward Indigenous peoples have been maintained through postcolonial ideologies, racist attitudes, and negative stereotypes exhibited by the public and the media. Intergroup contact, integrationist approaches to acculturation, and policies regarding memory and reparations have been used to improve the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.
6. Cultural and socio-structural factors have an impact on many respects of Indigenous peoples' lives, including their cognition, mental health, well-being, substance abuse, educational performance, and rates of violence, among others. To create successful interventions, it is essential to note that historic trauma and colonialism are the foundation of Indigenous disadvantage. It is also necessary to integrate Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and traditions into Western academic perspectives.
7. Although Western psychology has been criticized for its Western bias, the studies collected in this review show that there is the potential for mainstream psychology to contribute to the aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, if psychological researchers use reflexivity in selecting methods and approaches, embrace questions of interest to Indigenous peoples, and include Indigenous contributors, collaborators, and students in their research programs, there is potential to work within our discipline while still advancing research of value to Indigenous populations.

## FUTURE ISSUES

1. Research on the psychology of Indigenous peoples has failed to avoid replicating post-colonial practices in its relationship with Indigenous communities. Fully embracing a

mutually beneficial relationship with Indigenous communities that values Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and traditions is still a challenge for psychologists.

2. Research on the psychological processes involved in the demands for reparation and the consequences of different forms of reparation needs to be developed. In many regions of the world, Indigenous peoples represent a very significant part of the population; however, research concerning reparation remains underdeveloped.
3. Most research concerning Indigenous issues and Indigenous peoples is based on surveys or qualitative research. An increase in experimental research, including the use of more ecologically valid field experiments, might strengthen this area of study, particularly in aspects regarding causal processes and interventions.
4. Large-scale comparative research would increase our understanding of the differences and commonalities among different Indigenous groups across the world.
5. Likewise, longitudinal research, ideally involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, might provide more detailed information about the ongoing social and psychological processes that underlie the changes that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experience over time.
6. Most research on Indigenous issues has been—and continues to be—conducted by non-Indigenous researchers. Psychological science would benefit from having a more diverse group of researchers pursuing this endeavor, creating new knowledge more relevant to Indigenous peoples, and expanding our shared knowledge base. To do so, it is important to promote the involvement of Indigenous people in psychological research.
7. Research and policy making would benefit from better access to quality information about Indigenous peoples. Today, the disparities in the quality of information around the world are enormous and threaten the development of proper research and policies.
8. Initiatives addressing Indigenous issues need to combine community-based approaches with policy-based approaches to develop social norms that promote and protect equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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