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INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DUR E AZIZ AMNA'S *AMERICAN FEVER*

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Abstract

Immigration plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals and usually they tend to have a better life through it. But the intergroup conflicts not always pave the path for the immigrants to have equal opportunities in the new places. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of Henri Tajfel, the research probes how immigrants are facing intergroup conflicts, experience alienation and negotiate identity. The exploration of the experiences of the protagonist in the novel American Fever (2022) posits that intergroup conflicts significantly impact the immigrants and the social comparison between groups increase the risks of homesickness and otherness in the host country. These experiences greatly affect the social identity of the people. The dynamic nature of identity is significantly highlighted by its reconstruction either through the assimilation with new culture or by being closer to norms of in-group. The research finds out that group membership and in-group favoritism play a crucial role in the lives of individuals that boost their self-esteem.

Key terms: Immigration, Intergroup conflicts, Social identity, Social comparison, Belonging, Henri Tajfel

Introduction

The twenty-first century is an era of migration as migration takes place on large scale and people move from one place to another either permanently or for a short time period for various reasons. Individuals often tend to move to other places to increase their social status or improve their livings, yet it happens that immigration reinforces the conflicts between in-group and out-group and the immigrants being members of out-group in the host countries experience the problems of identification, identity crises, cultural displacement and marginalization. All these issues reshape their self-perception and reconstruct their social identity. The immigrants and diaspora negotiate their identity and struggle for the sense of belonging. Literature plays a vital role to underpin real life experiences and South Asian English Literature has a significant place to address these issues faced by diaspora and immigrants in the recent times. It probes the problem of identity and belonging and sets the grounds for the exploration of dynamic nature of identity (Alhaisony, 2023).

The process of identity formation and social identification remains constant because many social and psychological factors such as intergroup conflicts, cultural shifts and power relation shape and reshape individual's identity. Identity is not static and is multidimensional (Hall & Gay, 1996). But sometimes intergroup differences are accentuated in a way that internal variations of group members are ignored and a general notion is set about them and individuals of outgroup are identified through this generalized perception. This results in posing a fixed identity of members of out-group (Ielisieieva, 2024).

Dur e Aziz Amna is a diaspora author in Pakistani English literature who in her debut novel *American Fever* (2022) challenges the notion of fixed identity and through the experiences of her characters, reveals how immigration affects the social identification of individuals and social mobility is not always fruitful and having worse experiences, individuals

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Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

construct and reconstruct their social identity through their group membership. Hira, the central character of the novel, reconstructs her social identity after facing intergroup conflicts and exclusion in America. As Taylor (1994) argues:

> Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. (p. 25)

Hira weaves the tapestry of an ideal life with the hopes to spend luxurious time in America during her one-year stay. But dreams cannot be actualized always. That is what happens with her and during her stay, she always swings between hopes and reality. Her experiences of exclusion create hinderances to spend a dream life in the new country and have great impacts on her self-perception and psyche. She is always identified as a member of outgroup. For her survival she has to be accustomed of many new ways of life. Immigrants and diaspora face many problems for their adjustment that can negatively affect them and they often question their sense of belonging (Kanwal et al., 2025).

The research probes the novel through social identity theory (SIT) by Tajfel to negotiate the formation and reconstruction of identity. Social identity theory presents the social psychological approach to the formation of identity and posits how individuals construct their identities through their group membership. In the process of social categorization, association with a group plays a crucial role. Individuals develop a sense of belonging through their group membership. To strengthen their sense of belonging, they tend to build a positive affirmation towards their in-group. At the core of this sense of belonging a distinction is made between in-group and out-group that often leads to biasness towards the people who don't belong to the same group and results in intergroup conflicts. It happens that individuals' behavior works according to accentuated pattern. The ingroup favoritism is exaggerated and out-group differences are accentuated and this is how social identity is strengthened. (Tajfel, 1981). The exploration of the novel through this perspective elucidates how group membership constructs social identity. The immigrants facing challenges for being member of out-group restore their self-esteem through their in-group favoritism.

Research Objectives

I. To analyze the role of intergroup conflicts in prevailing the sense of alienation experienced by immigrants
II. To examine the significance of group affiliation in identity negotiation and identity construction of Hira

Research Questions

I. How do intergroup conflicts prevail the sense of alienation among the immigrants?
II. Why does group affiliation matter in identity negotiation and identity construction of the protagonist, Hira?

Statement of Problem

In the recent globalized century, migration greatly impacts the identification of individuals and they have to grapple with the dilemmas of identity in cultural displacement. Identity crisis has emotional and psychological influences on individuals and facing conflicts and different cultural and social challenges, they experience sense of alienation in new countries. The students who migrate to study in the western countries navigate the dynamic nature of identity and their hopes to cherish equal blisses shatter. Intergroup conflicts and out-group discrimination reshape their identity. The study explores the novel *American Fever* to posit how immigrants and diaspora reshape their identity through their group membership. The novel has been explored through the postcolonial and diasporic perspectives to study the themes of illness and diasporic bodies, but the social and psychological perspectives remain

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Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

unexplored. The study unearths the intergroup relations to shape identity of immigrants and challenges the fixed notion of identity.

Research Significance

The research significantly illuminates the role of intergroup conflicts in reshaping immigrants' social identity. The individuals on facing problems of othering and exclusion in the host countries either assimilate with the dominant culture or boost their self-esteem through ingroup favoritism. The research posits the place of group membership in individuals' life. It also makes clear that the students who move from one pace to another navigates on the border of identity and the challenges they face there greatly influence them. The emotional and psychological influences of identity crises on individuals are demonstrated by applying Tafel's lens on *American Fever* (2022). The study also fills the gap within existing researches by exploring the text within the framework to posit the dynamic nature of identity. It also illuminates that South Asian novels have tendency to deal with global themes.

Literature Review

There are many moments in the immigrants' life when they experience homesickness. The people, living in a country where the people are not only different but also stranger, yearn for home. The emotional attachment with motherland and the sense of alienation make the diaspora feel otherness and experience homesickness (Attiba et al., 2023). In the context of migration, illness becomes a tool to represent disruption of identity. The cultural displacement navigates the dichotomy of health/sickness and the illness of the protagonist in new place becomes the symbol of trials of postcolonial bodies. The ailment does not remain to the physical boundaries of body but prevails to psychological dimensions and becomes the metaphor for diasporic belonging (Zahid et al., 2025). Homi K. Bhabha argues the diaspora pass through three phases: unhomeliness, mimicry, and hybridity. The experience of diasporic life reveals the problem of adjustment in new places. Although diaspora mimic the people of new place yet the nostalgia for home remains with them and intensifies the feeling of alienation. They do not fully assimilate with the new culture and it forms their hybrid identity (Sugiarto et al., 2023).

Yousaf and Shaheen (2024) expand the exploration of complexities of cultural conflicts and intricacies of identity by positing that power dynamics have a significant impact on identity and diaspora faces identity crises in shifting powers and cultures. People negotiate identity in power dynamic; they have to learn new language and strive to adjust in new culture by adopting many new ways of life but the problem of otherness remains still. Aziz et al., (2025) argue the strangeness experienced by migrated people in postcolonial context with their longing for home posits that cultural displacement causes sense of alienation. They emphasize cultural displacement as a result of migration. The experiences of alienation on new places have negative impacts on migrated people and this often leads to the feeling of trauma and loss. The sense of loss of home becomes intense in cultural displacement and results in identity crises.

The research work of Qasim et al. (2024) is an exploration of how cultural displacement results in hyphenated identity of diaspora and migrated people. The complexities of challenges of identity faced by diaspora have been addressed through the journey of the protagonist. Her stay and experiences encapsulated the struggles diaspora face for their survival in new places. They try to maintain their cultural identity but the adoption of new ways of life for their adjustment results in hybrid identity. In the process of assimilation, diasporic identities are formed under and new environment sheds the color of mother culture. Palli et al., (2023) explore the elements of postcolonialism in novel *American Fever* (2022) through the lens of Edward Said's postcolonial theory. The purpose of research is to have a textual analysis of the novel to probe how far the elements of post-colonialism are represented. Hira's experiences during her stay in America exposed that she was a colonial subject for Americans and the novel

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Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

critiques the American Dream through the sense of alienation experienced by Hira at both places at her school and at home. The researchers argued that there are many issues of post-colonialism discussed in the novel and one of them is othering of the individuals who migrated to America and are not its natives.

Social Identity Theory

Human identity is an intricate phenomenon and remains in constant change under different situations. Circumstances shape and reshape the identities of individuals in different social contexts. Black people face miseries because of their skin color and deviation from traditional gender roles becomes a hinderance to be recognized positively and the conflict between societal expectations from females and their desires to enjoy life independently results in the construction of social identity that cannot be easily acceptable (Ramin & Yadollahi, 2014). Niannian (2022) demonstrates the role of gender in the formation of social identity. A woman can form her social identity by challenging the set pattern of recognition within a society. By resisting the derogation, she boasts her self-esteem to claim her self-identity by challenging the hierarchal relationship between upper class and lower class. By maintaining her ingroup favoritism and rejecting the false notion of nobility, women construct their new identity.

Social identity theory posits how individuals construct their identity through categorization. Social interactions and social communication contribute to the identification of characters. The characters act according to the rules of their group and promote their group identity through in-group favoritism. The more they align with the norms of their group, the stronger their group connection becomes. The individuals categorizing themselves in more than one social category and acting according to their in-group social norms construct their multiple identities (Muradina, 2019). The diaspora don't eliminate the loyalty towards their home country and their in-group favoritism hinders in the way of their adjustment in new places. The question of loyalty with motherland and the duty towards new home impact the psyche of diaspora in way that they experience distress and trauma (Al Marebi et al., 2022).

A person's affiliation with multiple groups such as religious, cultural and national develops his sense of belonging; and constructs his identity. The individuals' identities are not constructed through self-perception but the external factors such as political upheavals shape their identities. The socio-political context reshapes their identity and puts them into the us/them dichotomy. The social comparison and identification demonstrate the interplay between sense of belonging and dynamics of identity within the context of partition (Saeed et al., 2023). Sari (2015) explores the dynamic nature of identity by positing that a person's identity is formed through his self-realization that he belongs to a certain group and by the influences of social environment where he lives. Since childhood individuals are taught to maintain in-group favoritism by protecting and supporting their group. But as individuals are exposed to society, their self-experiences affect the formation of their identity. Their realization that group differences should not be the cause of violence in society makes a change in her identity.

Theoretical Framework

Henri Tajfel originated his social identity theory (SIT) in 1970s and revolutionized the field of social-psychology by enhancing the scope of the formation of identity from personal to social domain. He argues that to understand the social phenomena, personal identity and interpersonal relationships are not enough but the mediation on intergroup processes through which individuals acknowledge their belonging to group is fundamental. He defines social identity in the sense of an individual's acknowledgment that "he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of his membership can only

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CJSSR
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be defined through the effects of social categorizations segmenting an individual's social environment into his own group and others" (Tajfel, 1981, p.258).

Social identity theory focuses the individual's portrayal of self and recognition of identity in social actualization. Individuals affiliate with groups and this affiliation defines their identities. This self-identification bolsters their identity. Individual not only makes his self-definition through his membership with a certain social category but he also attributes positive or negative image of himself through this membership (Tajfel, 1981). There are both chances-either a person can develop more likeness towards his group or feeling dissatisfaction with his own group, he can assimilate himself with another dominant group of society. When a person, feeling dissatisfaction with his own group, moves to another group for either reason, this is called social mobility. Individuals tend to be less identified with their own group and try to raise their status by affiliating or moving to another group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The development in the understanding of complex social structure changes the meaning of social identification of persons and at different times, social identity can be switched on though one cannot fully understand these ways through which change occurs (Tajfel, 1981).

SIT posits the view that social categories (social groups) contribute a great deal in the formation of individuals' identities (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Society does not consist on a single group but there are many social categories such as people belong to diverse races, class, cultures and religions, and also there are biological categories. Tajfel (1979) argues individuals put themselves into categories through a psychological process and as a result group behavior is formed. This cognitive process of self-categorization is the identification of I moving to group as we. This is a logical process through which individuals categorize people. But after categorization, the similarities within ingroup are exaggerated as individual tends to share the collective behavior of group or social category with which he thinks to belong. These group boundaries are mere the product of arbitrariness and not fundamental in achieving superiority to out-group as all humans build their recognition of affiliation with ingroup through their mental process of association and fondness for the people who share same norms (Tajfel, 1981). Although this process of association with a certain group is not formed in a logical way yet these shared norms with ingroup people are the causes to look outgroup people as others and often considering them as inferior. These notions of considering one's group superior to other group is not a reliable process and difficult to interpret as "judgements of human characteristics in complex social situations are much more uncertain and ambiguous than the judgements of lines in a laboratory setting" (Tajfel, 1981, p.133). The validity of these judgments comes under the question because of its subjective nature and lack of objectivity and logical occurrences. More a trait or assumption is shared by people of ingroup, more it becomes valid without any rational confirmation (Tajfel, 1981).

Tajfel (1981) challenges the earlier concept of established identity as a driving force of social behavior. His theory is layered in a cognitive linear order of three processes connected with one another in a way that forms the structure of identity and individuals are recognized socially.

Social Categorization

In this order first step is of social categorization. Individuals try to simplify the complexities of social system by organizing them and others into groups. They categorize themselves as a member of certain group or category. This categorization plays a significant role to set their attitude towards other members of this group and towards individuals who don't share the same traits.

Social Identification

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Next to it is social identification. After categorizing individuals into groups, people tend to identify themselves with a group, they try to assimilate more and more with their ingroup and adopt the patterns of ingroup. They are accentuated with their group norms to enhance the status of their group and seek coherence through assimilation in the complex social structures. They develop the sense of ingroup favoritism.

Social Comparison

Ingroup favoritism leads towards the third process that is social comparison that develops a psychological mechanism of othering causing the tension between in-group and out-group. This process of recognition of one's self with a certain group often distorts the perception of others by considering them as more different from ingroup as they actually are. In this process, individuals compare their traits and behavior with the members of out-group. They develop the sense of in-group superiority through intergroup differences.

Social identity theory plays a significant role to develop the sense of belonging with a certain social category and individuals form their identity through this group membership and social identity is constructed. The social identification being a member of a group shapes the attitude of others towards an individual. It defines the intergroup relations and conflicts. This theory significantly contributes to analyze how Hira reconstructs her social identity after experiencing intergroup conflicts and how ingroup favoritism enhances individuals' self-confidence and self-concept.

Analysis

American Fever (2022) by Dur e Aziz Amna is not just a fusion of humour and fun but the exploration of the novel unfolds the deep layers of meaning and explicitly posits how immigration affects the identification of individuals and intergroup relations influence social identity. SIT posits if individuals feel dissatisfaction with their group membership, they tend to move towards another group to raise their status and change their condition. Before going to America, Hira sees America as a place where she can have all what is not here in Pakistan. She wishes to move to another group that is her social mobility. "How could it not be—the wide expanse of a new country, a year of immersion in English, freedom, freedom, freedom?" (Amna, 2022, p.30). For her, America is not less than a blessing. Having the hopes to raise her status and seeing her in-group insufficient to provide the opportunities that the great America can, she travels to that place. But her one year stay tells the story that social mobility not always results in what one expects. Her experiences depict how immigrants, facing intergroup conflicts, reshape their social identity. The first step is how she is socially identified.

Social Identification

Hira has hopes that America is a multicultural country and all types of people are welcomed there and are provided equal opportunities in all aspects of life. But during her stay, she finds that she is not identified as the American natives and the people of host country identify her as a member of out-group. In her school, she is identified as other. During break time, when she is sitting with other fellows in cafeteria, a native student points her out that she is not same as Americans. During their conversation, Kyle addresses her by her native group identity. "Wasn't talking to you, Miss Pakistan" (Amna,2022, p.99). Calling her Miss Pakistan shows that although she considers America a land for people from diverse cultures yet she remains an outsider, a person who is not an American. She tries to mix up with them and often joins her host mother in church services yet her host mother introduces her in this way: ""Have you met our Pakistani girl, Hira?" she asked Mrs. Sinclair, one of the women who sang with her. Mrs. Sinclair beamed at me" (Amna, 2022, p.78). Although she tries her best to be identified as her host family yet she remains an outsider for them. The experiences of otherness become intense when not only she is identified as an outsider but her group is also perceived as danger and the members of his religious group are misrecognized. Her Muslim fellow,

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Hamid, is identified as a threat. "A couple of boys had taken to calling him Ahmed the Terrorist" (Amna, 2022, p.80). Hearing about her Muslim fellow as a terrorist, she experiences the sense of alienation that hinders in her adjustment in school. Calling the member of out-group as a threat and terrorist reflects that intergroup relations are packed with biasness and to retain self-confidence, the people of dominant group boost their self-esteem by neglecting the good traits of individuals from out-group. They enhance the status of their group by attributing negative traits to out-group.

Hira experiences otherness when she wears her Pakistani dresses. The Americans not welcome her with her cultural dressing but stare her making her realize that she is not one of them. From the first dawn of her stay to every single day she dons her cultural dress, the people's gazes are on her. "By the time the car rolled into the school parking lot, I desperately wished I was wearing anything else. Amy had looked sideways twice while driving but hadn't said a word. No doubt everyone would stare" (Amna, 2022, p.98). This passage illustrates how the association and adoption of set of traits of a group leads to the anxiety or confidence. Hira's self-consciousness shows that how privileges are awarded through group identification and being identified as someone different hinders to cherish the benefits to be socially acceptable being a member of in-group in the host country. Her identification as a member of out-group leads her to the second phase of the formation of her social identity.

Social Comparison

When individuals categorize themselves and are identified by others, there comes the phase of social comparison. Social comparison plays a vital role to shape individuals' attitude towards their in-group and out-group. Being identified as an outsider, Hira compares herself with her host family and other persons of host country. Her comparison is not an outcome of her prejudice towards Americans but being identified as an outsider prompts her to compare how her group is perceived and how the other group is regarded. During a congregation she presents her religious culture.

> "Muslims fast for thirty days, which means no food or water from dawn to dusk." Many in the congregation shook their head in disbelief. Perhaps the pastor had organized this so his flock could know how good they had it, showing up once a week in Lakeview Football jerseys. (Amna,2022, p.105)

She sees that the differences between cultures are perceived as something to judge out-group. Islamic culture is regarded as illogical. The group differences become the marker of in-group superiority as it seems that the pastor has gathered his group members to show that their religion gives them more relaxation and they are having good. This in-group favoritism boost their self-esteem and Hira's group norms are seemed as inferior and full of hardships.

> "How did you like our service?" Mrs. Sinclair asked. "The music was beautiful," I said, forcing a smile. "You guys did a great job." "It must be very different from a mosque," she said. "Sometimes, when Henry called from Kabul, I could hear the azan in the background. Such an imposing sound." "Yes, especially when it's accompanied by the bass of American bullets," I snapped back. (Amna, 2022, p.80)

Mrs. Sinclair, one of the host country members, draws a comparison between Hira's religion and her own. The downwards comparison of out-group religion explicitly posits that Hira is not treated on equal levels and she experiences misrecognition. Her religious practice sounds unpleasant to the non-Muslim Americans and their attitude towards her culture and religion manifests out-group biasness through social comparison. Mrs. Sinclair's attitude toward azan shows how social comparison bears intergroup conflicts and comprehending out-group practices inferior and imposing impacts the social identification of individuals.

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Kelly and Amy, the host family members, often compare their group with Hira's. When she goes for sport practices, Kelly compares their groups and shows low feelings for her group. The comparison is often drawn between both groups on the basis of their clothes. Hira wears modest dresses and experiences judgments because what she dons. While she goes for sports practices, Kelly introduces her to the coach and tells her: "Hira will practice in leggings because she is Muslim" (Amna, 2022, p.62). She considers her culture superior providing full freedom instead Hira's culture as a narrow culture. Amy also asks such questions that show Hira's modesty confines her to the religious expectations not letting her enjoy the freedoms Amy and other American girls enjoy. The group conflicts are further highlighted when Kelly asks Amy to be grateful being a non-Muslim American. "I'm sure everyone understands, Hira," Kelly said. "Amy, this should teach you to be grateful. Not everyone grows up with the freedoms you take for granted" (Amna, 2022, p.63). This comparison between cultural norms marks how group differences are perceived prevailing a sense of isolation among immigrants. Hira feels exclusion when Amy asks questions one after other about her religion. Group boundaries are often maintained by religion and the conflicts between two religious groups mark the individuals other.

> "And this beautiful scarf, is it for modesty?" she asked, fingering the gauze of my dupatta. "No, it's an embellishment," I replied. Of course it was for modesty. Of course, its purpose was to hide my breasts and my hair and my neckline, but I wasn't going to give her the satisfaction. (Amna, 2022, p.106)

Mrs. Sinclair asks Hira the purpose of wearing a scarf during church services. She is well aware that why Hira wears scarf, but she asks to mark the differences between two groups. Hira sees that her dressing is reduced to a cultural stereotype. She maintains positive affirmation of her group by not providing satisfaction to Mrs. Sinclair's desires. She protects her group by rejecting the judgmental gazes.

The cultures of home and host countries are not same, even Hira faces challenges in accessing cultural appropriate food. The food culture of both places is in contrast with each other. In Pakistan, Hira ate desi food and halal meat. She never struggled to fill her belly on her own. But at her host mother's home, she has to eat either fast food or there is no food at all.

> Most days, I got home from practice and walked straight to the fridge, opening the door and hoping its contents had magically transformed into food I could heat up and eat. … Even when we all ate together, Kelly preferred foods like spaghetti squash and chicken Caesar salads. I often went to bed with my stomach gnawing at itself. (Amna, 2022, p.114)

Having no access to cultural appropriate food, Hira thinks back home where there was abundance of food. Later, when Hira visits Zahra during vacation, she sees that Zahra enjoys cultural appropriate food and she has not to face the problem of halal food for being with the Pakistani migrated family. A comparison is drawn between both host families. Hira's host family is native non-Muslim American and with them she often feels alienation. And having lack of cultural appropriate food increases the risks of health. It greatly affects her health. On the other hand, Zahra is with a Muslim migrated family, and with them she never experiences home sickness or exclusion.

Not only Hira is perceived as an outsider by non-Muslim Americans, but she also feels that she has no sense of belonging with them. She compares both families and reflects that Zahra has developed a strong bonding with her host family. Even Hira experiences a sense of familiarity with them. She thinks about Kelly; she doesn't grow a healthy strong bond with her. It seems to her that for Kelly she is just a part of her duty. Even with Amy, her host sister, she doesn't develop a feeling of intimacy. There is no sense of inclusion with them. She thinks about Amy: "To her, I was only an object of casual interest, an add-on to her daily life. And I

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

didn't help matters" (Amna, 2022, p.78). The bond between them was not full of biases but there's no deep feelings of connection either. The only person with whom she can feel intimacy is Hamid, an Omani student.

> At the time I thought it unusual, a quirky coincidence, that my closest friend at an American high school happened to be an Omani boy, . . . I've since learned to recognize the specific closeness that comes from being outsiders together. (Amna, 2022, p.77).

The comparison between the relations with the members of ingroup and out-group posit that how far intimacy is developed between them. Both Hamid and Hira develops a sense of belonging with each other. They both feel at home in each other's presence. When Hira becomes sick and doesn't come to school, Hamid experiences alienation at school. He tells her how lonely he felt surrounded by all these Americans and how much difficulty he faced to be adjusted there. She thinks: "In their own way, he and Hamid had formed a friendship that seemed to transcend the fact that he still called Hamid a terrorist every now and then. Cruelty and intimacy often sit together" (Amna, 2022, p.120). The friendship between ingroup and out-group is not as transparent as water, yet there remain some untold biases between them.

Reconstructing Social Identity through Ingroup Favoritism

The cultural displacement aligned with the sense of alienation intensify the fragility of identity in a country where unfamiliarity is experienced by the protagonist throughout her stay and psychological effects question the sense of belonging. Hira's experiences of being a member of out-group immigrants greatly influence her self-perception. The feelings of being an outsider become the reason of her homesickness. The psychological impacts of social comparison between Hira's home culture and her host country intensify the feelings of alienation. Before going to America, she dreamt of having equal opportunities in the new land but when she experiences the biased attitude of Americans towards her group, it triggers her memories of happy life back at home. She realizes that she never has the sense of belonging with the Americans.

> The truth—I was bloody bored. It is hard to overstate how much of an abstraction a new country remains to the foreigner, and for how long. America was a concept, and I was there to testify to it. It was metaphor, and not the thing itself. Nothing I did there had any material weight; nothing sated, nothing seeped. (Amna, 2022, p.89)

The American culture, the language, the soil, the people remain unfamiliar to her. The expectations she has back home all fade away. After experiencing otherness, Hira develops in-group favoritism. She rejects the notions to be more assimilated with Americans to get socially identified. She sees her Pakistani life more relaxing. She decides to go back before the end of official time of exchange program. "Returning to that life—comfortable and familiar, among people who have been shaped by the same biases, whose tongues rove the same way inside their mouths—seems very appealing" (Amna, 2022, p.207). Hira reshapes her social identity through ingroup favoritism. She recalls the time that she has spent in Pakistan with her own people. Her stay can't fade away the memories of old days; the days she spent to weave the dreams of an ideal life in America. Instead of getting more similar to Americans, she gets closer to her own group.

> I will live in Urdu again, answer phone calls with salam and address shopkeepers with bhai, suniye ga. I will walk around, invisible again, because I will look the same as everyone else. Sundried shalwar kameez, the halcyon light of early summer, leaves floating around the backyard. (Amna, 2022, p.208)

Before saying a final good-bye to her host country, she thinks about the life in upcoming days in Pakistan. She will not have language barriers, no experience of unfamiliar or odd gazes

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

and not to be judged on wearing her cultural dresses. The out-group experiences in America make her closer to her in-group than ever before. She boosts her self-esteem through her group membership and reconstructs her social identity- an individual from Pakistan.

Conclusion

Immigration plays a significant role in the lives of both, the people who move to other places and the people who are from the host countries. When people migrate to the countries where there are cultural differences, they experience out-group discrimination and identity crisis. The cultural differences hinder their ways to be socially identified same as the people of host country. Hira, the protagonist of the novel, face these challenges when her group is socially compared by the Americans. The Americans don't include her to their social life. She experiences exclusion whenever she represents her home culture. All the time during her stay she feels alienation even in the presence of her host family. Hira's social identification as a member of out-group and social comparison where her group is considered as inferior greatly impacts her. She rejects the notion to be assimilated with Americans to have equal opportunities and socially identified same as them. Instead, she boosts her self-esteem through her group membership. She reconstructs her social identity through her in-group favoritism. She thinks of her life back at home and decides to leave America before the decided time of end of exchange program. Her experiences of being a member of out-group influence her social identity and instead of absorbing into the cultural norms of America, she reshapes her social identity by adopting her home culture. The research posits that immigrants facing the challenges of identity tend to reshape their social identity being more assimilated to the practices and norms of their in-group. Thus, the group affiliation plays a crucial role in the identification and acceptance of individuals.

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