Addressing Racial Injustice and Trauma:
Research, Practice, and Community Engagement

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❖ Euro-American conceptualizations tend to guide theory, research, and practice.

❖ Less attention to individual and collective resilience

❖ Research on sociocultural context and mental health is not readily accessible to the public.

❖ Access to culturally informed psychotherapy is limited.

❖ Need for community education and engagement.

Culturally Informed Psychodynamic Psychotherapy (Tummala-Narra, 2016)

- ❖ Affect and expression

- ❖ Language

- ❖ Indigenous narrative

- ❖ **Effects of social oppression**

- ❖ Recognize complexity of cultural identifications

- ❖ Self-examination

- ❖ 1 in 5 South Asians have reported experiencing a mental health disorder in their lifetime.

- ❖ Mental health problems tend to be more prevalent among South Asian women than South Asian men. However, women in general tend to report emotional distress more than men.

- ❖ South Asian American youth are at high risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Common Sources of Stress: Emotional Distress

❖ Stress related to acculturation and isolation

❖ Stress related to traumatic experience (e.g. domestic violence, violence against women)

❖ Minority stress and the notion of model minority; academic pressure and expectations

❖ Intergenerational and family conflict (Acculturation Gaps between children and parents; shifts in gender roles; aging)

❖ 2nd generation stress: Immigrant Paradox

❖ Legal and financial concerns

Barriers to Seeking Help

- ❖ Underutilization of mental health services

- ❖ Stigma and shame related to mental health issues and seeking help

- ❖ Challenge of identifying distress

- ❖ Silence concerning problems such as trauma and mental illness

- ❖ Model Minority Notion

- ❖ Cultural barriers and problem of locating culturally informed providers and resources

Racism against South Asians in the U.S.

1980's: Racism acquired a systematic pattern

❖ Dot Busters: A number of Indians with significant material success were murdered by young white men who came to be known as "Dot Busters" – reference to the bindi placed on Hindu women's foreheads

Post-9/11: Patriot Act and Special Registration Program

❖ FBI surveillance, investigations; Detentions and deportations; Hostile work environments; Tenant evictions; Restrictions to health and human services; Wrongful job terminations
❖ greater introspection of what it meant to be Indian American, Bangladeshi, Sikh, Pakistani in the U.S.

- ❖ Since 2015: 484 incidents of hate crimes against South Asians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Middle Eastern, and Arab Americans

  - ❖ A 57-year-old Indian man has been partially paralyzed in Alabama when a police officer forced him on ground after receiving report of a 'suspicious person' looking into the garages of several homes

- ❖ Post 2016 Elections: Between Nov 2015- Nov 2017, 302 incidents (45% increase) Trump invoked Hate Crimes

1) Experiences of discrimination predict depressive symptoms among South Asians in U.S. (Tummala-Narra, Alegria, & Chen, 2012)

2) Positive impression management as model minorities (Kanukollu & Mahalingam, 2011) makes it difficult to talk about stress more openly with others.

3) Discrimination is an important risk factor for mental health distress among immigrant youth.

➤ Influence of colonization, caste system, and model minority notion (Inman et al., 2015)

➤ Few conversations about race and racism among families; Assumption that problem of racism will improve for the next generation

➤ Distinct experiences compared with 1.5 and 2nd generations

1.5 and Second Generation Indian Americans (Tummala-Narra et al., 2016)

- ❖ Ethnic identity (positive connection to heritage culture) is a protective factor.

- ❖ Conflict with parents is a source of psychological distress; concerns about burdening parents with problems

- ❖ Stress related to stereotyping and discrimination

- ❖ Dual sense of self in identity development

- ❖ More likely to seek informal sources of support from peers and siblings

- ❖ Desire for more safe spaces to talk about their experiences

❖ Lack of discussion about racism and its impact on mental health in Indian American communities

❖ Making the connection between discrimination and stress in cultural and spiritual communities

❖ Illustration of Chinmaya Mission: Hindu religious and cultural center in Andover, MA (multiple immigrant generations)

❖ Resistance to talking about traumatic events alongside a dire need for help with mental health concerns

❖ Fostering dialogues on suffering as including sociocultural trauma and oppression

Challenging Myths: Stigma and Mental Health

❖ Myth #1: You "have to be crazy" to seek help.

❖ Myth #2: If you don't have a clinical diagnosis (e.g., depression), that you shouldn't address emotional stress.

❖ Myth #3: Talking about emotional stress shows weakness.

❖ Myth #4: Talking about emotional stress will brand you or your family member as sick.

❖ Myth #5: Having emotional stress means that I don't have anything good in my life.

Normalizing Talking about Emotional Well-Being and Stress

❖ Importance of talking freely about emotions

❖ Addressing concerns about burdening someone else

❖ Learning to manage uncomfortable, difficult, and painful emotions

❖ Identifying stress before it reaches crisis levels

Community Discussion

❖ How do you think about emotional stress in your own life?

❖ How about with your family and friends?

❖ Are there indicators of stress that you notice in yourself or in others?

❖ What can we do to support others who are experiencing stress? What advice would you give them?