



Mental Health Impacts for International and Foreign Born Students: Current Policy Reform

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Our Focus

1. Student Background & Statistics (Allyson Lynch, M. Ed.)
2. Physical, Mental and Academic Impact (Cassandra DeQuevedo, LMHC)
3. Clinical Treatment Considerations (Sarah Dionne, LICSW)



1.2 million

Number of international students studying in
the U.S. (2017-18)

International Student Statistics

- Top International Countries: China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Vietnam
- In top 200 universities serving international students worldwide, U.S. only has one in the top 50 (*Times Higher Education, May 2018*)
- Universities across the U.S. are experiencing sharp drops in their international student population (at least 7% country-wide)
- Application numbers will continue to drop for both international and American students

Collegiate Logistics

- Can only drop below full-time once per academic level (heavy work load)
- Can only take one on-line course per semester (limited flexibility)
- Are charged double the tuition and fees
- Cannot take work study jobs
- Cannot obtain SSN until finding an on-campus job
- Very strict off-campus work authorization rules
- 20 different types of visas (student, visitor, work, etc.)
- Job fairs: “We do not hire international students. U.S. citizens only”
- Political climate
- DACA

Changing attitudes about studying in the US

One-third of 2,104 international students considering college in the US for 2017 or 2018 said their interest decreased in light of the political climate, in a February 2017 survey of students from 150 countries. Their reasons:

Concerns about the US presidential administration: **68.9%**



Worried about travel restrictions for international students: **54.6%**



Worried about my personal safety: **52.5%**



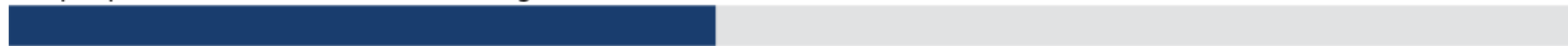
It is too expensive to study in the US: **50.2%**



Prejudice and/or discrimination against people from my country: **48.0%**



The people of the US seem less welcoming to international students: **45.3%**



SOURCE: EAB/Royall & Company: Effect of the Current Political Environment on International Student Enrollment, 2017|
Jacob Turcotte/Staff
<https://www.csmonitor.com/EqualEd/2018/0702/International-students-to-US-Do-you-really-want-us>

Campus Recommendations

- Reach out to your International Student Office(s)
- Participate in a “welcome” event/day for them
- Hire students when feasible, both American and International
- International Living & Learning Community (ILC)
- Culture Shock Talks, Cultural Festivals, buddy programs
- Reach out to them during holidays/breaks as they may be lonely, unable to visit family
- #YouAreWelcomeHere

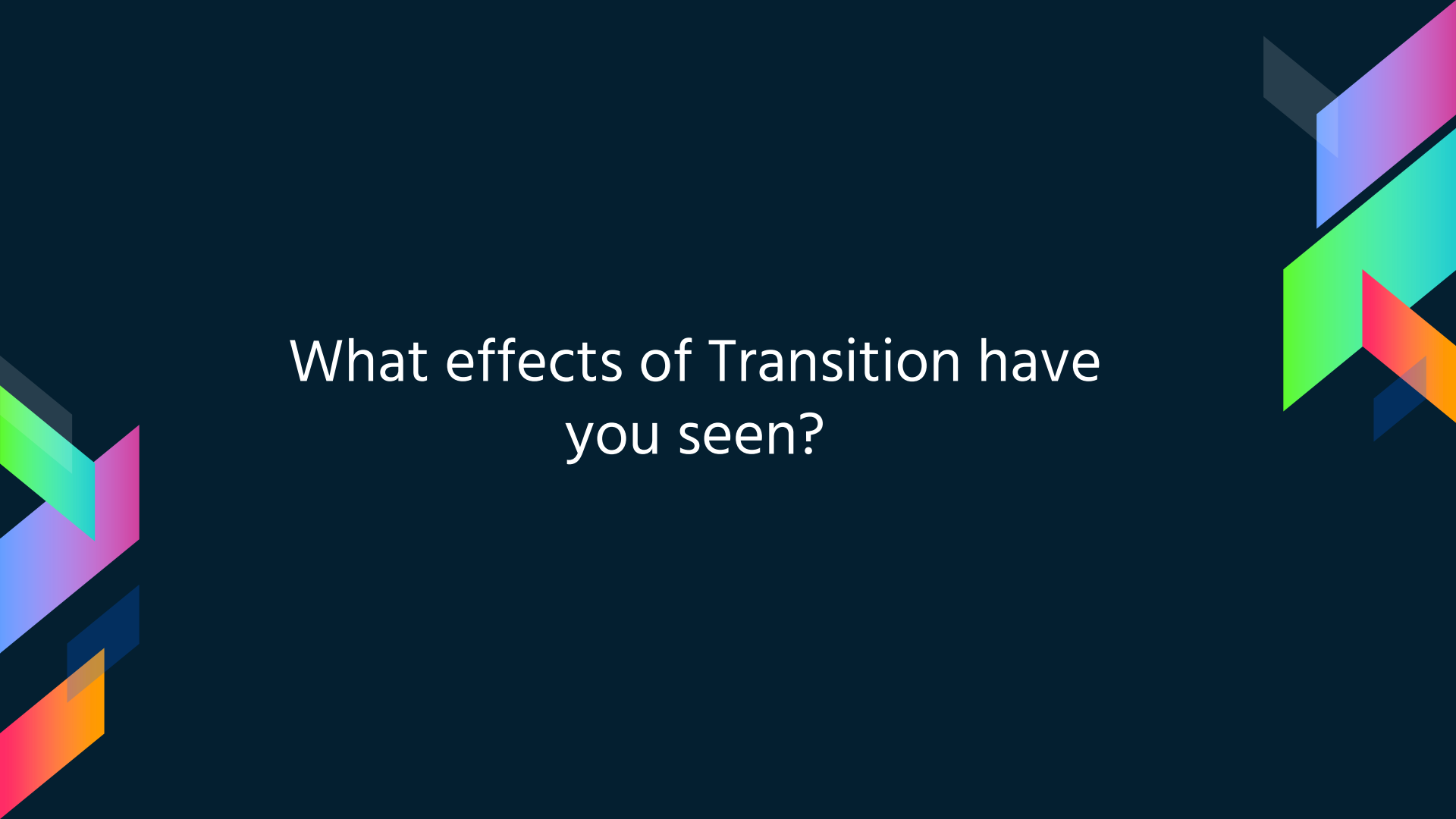


Today's International Student: Mental, Behavioral, & Physical Impacts

Transitioning is Hard Enough

- Decline in social and economic status
- Separation from family/social supports
- Lack of language proficiency
- Isolation from one's cultural background
- Sense of loss/homesickness/social isolation
- Culture shock: New systems, styles of comm/behavior, demands of daily living
- Cognitive Distress
- More at risk for psychological issues--Largely ignored (Mori, 2000)
- Uncertainty, Fear, Anxiety
- Less likely to utilize services (Alavi, Shafeq, Geramian & Ninggal, 2014)

(Singaravelu & Pope, 2007)

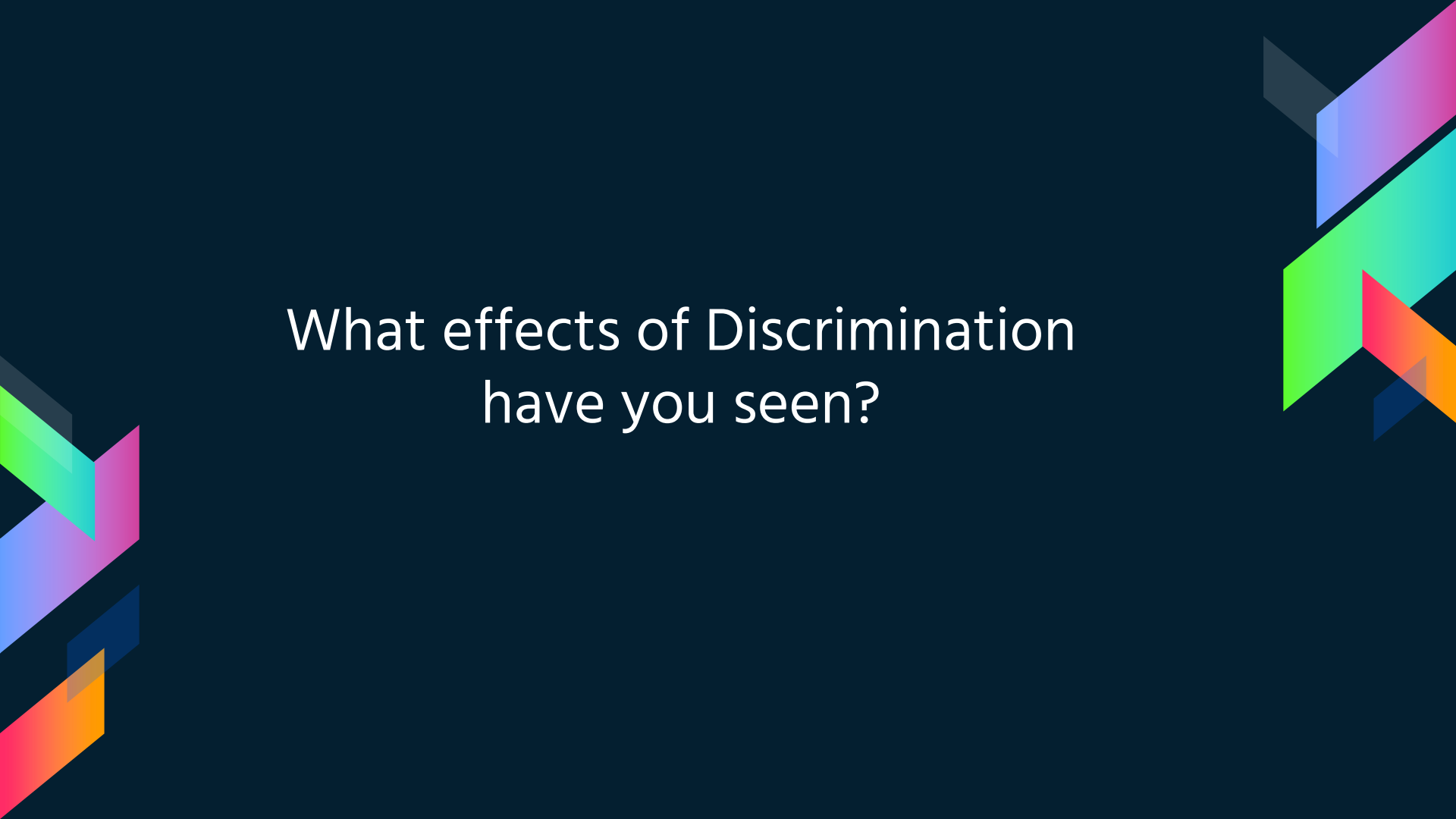


What effects of Transition have
you seen?

And then there's Discrimination & Prejudice

- First time being member of minority group
- US: Social groups defined by Race instead of by religious/geographical/ethnic/cultural Stereotypes
- Native Language/Accents
- Anti-immigrant/Xenophobic attitudes
- Hostile-World Scenario (Shenkman, G., & Schmotkin, D. , 2013)
- Reinforced by real acts of discrimination
- Apparent Skin Color
- Intersectional Component

What effects of Discrimination
have you seen?



Constant uncertainty creates...Chronic Stress

- Chronic Uncertainty: Identity, How to act, How to succeed
Dreamers (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007)
- Pressure: Academic, Family, Financial
- Worry about Future—constant change
- Anxiety, Insomnia, Muscle Pain, High Blood Pressure, Immune System (Baum & Polsuszny 1999)
- Heart disease, depression, obesity (Baum & Polsuszny 1999)
- Stress hormones → impairments in memory, attention, emotion processing (Lupien, Juster, Raymond & Marin 2018)

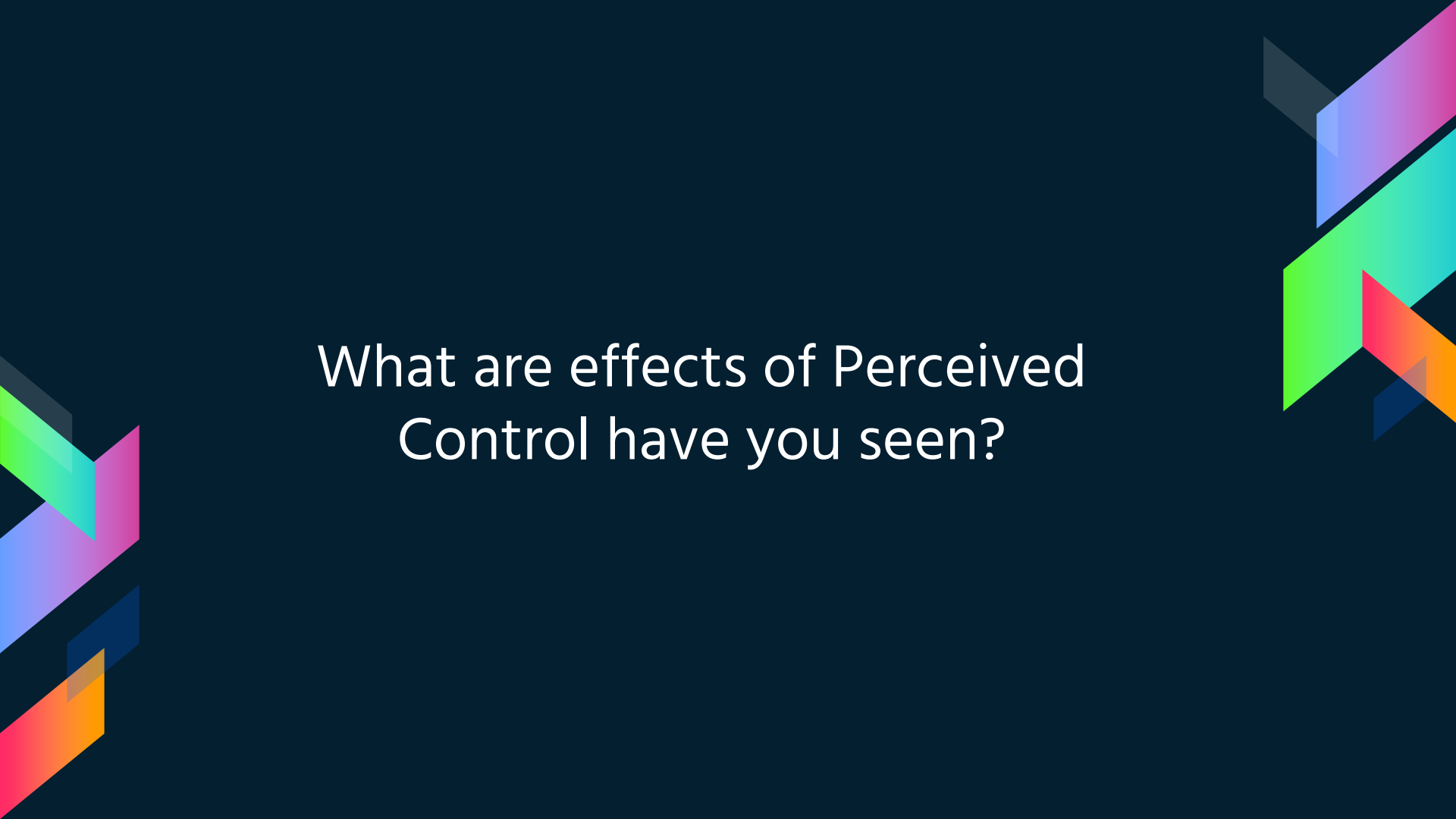
What effects of Chronic Stress
have you seen?



Perceived Control




- Higher/Faster Cognitive Functioning
- Better Performance in Cognitive Tests
 - Higher Verbal Intelligence
 - Better Memory
- Greater Psychological Adjustment
- Mitigates Hostile-World Scenario
 - Elevated Emotional Distress
 - Negative physical health Effects
- Poor/Slower Cognitive Functioning
 - Lower Verbal Intelligence
 - Memory Impairment
- Increased Mental Health Issues



What are effects of Perceived Control have you seen?

How to support students in Counseling

- › International and foreign born students are already dealing with higher levels of stress than their U.S. born counterparts.
- › Current administration adds:
 - › Loss of stabilization
 - › Loss of sense of safety
 - › Loss of feeling in control
 - › Chronic unpredictability

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- › Due to these added stressors, students are presenting with symptoms associated with:
 - › Trauma symptoms
 - › Lack of feeling as though they have control over their lives
 - › Treatment goals should involve:
 - › Increasing sense of safety to manage trauma symptoms
 - › Increasing sense of self efficacy, control, and resiliency

Increasing sense of Safety to Address Trauma SX's

- > Brain impacts on trauma
 - > When experiencing chronic stress, fight or flight response can become stuck in the “on” position.
 - > This leaves person in chronic hypervigilant state.
 - > Higher level functions in the Prefrontal Cortex become suppressed.
- > Work with student on increasing sense of safety in day to day.
- > SAFER Model

How can we address experiences of lack of control?

- › Increasing resiliency
- › Increasing mastery and self-efficacy
- › Perceived Self-Control
- › Hostile World Scenario
- › Minority Stress Theory

Nakash et al., 2017

Reflecting on our own cultural identity

- › We need to be aware of our own cultural identity and privileges and how that may impact relationship.
- › Research finds that majority of clinicians fall under “Blindness” category of multicultural competence
 - › Educated on cultural differences but are either afraid/ unsure how to address culture or unaware of its impact

Moleiro et. Al., 2018,
Alfaro & Bui, 2018

Reflecting on our own cultural identify

- › Studies have found clinicians of cultures outside of White/European tend to be more culturally competent.
- › Language that we use in our day to day life creates and influences internal biases.
- › The potential perceived power dynamic in the therapeutic relationship can contribute to student's experience of systemic institutionalized discrimination

Moleiro et. Al., 2018, Alfaro & Bui, 2018, Mollah et al., 2018

Important cultural influences on treatment approaches

- › For students from Middle Eastern countries
 - › Concepts of predeterminism and fatalism creates resistance to idea of proactive change.
 - › More concrete, best to focus on CBT, specific problem solving.
 - › Tangible goals and HW assignments
 - › Potential negative stigma of mental health.
 - › Sense of self worth and esteem often depends on whether one is valued and appreciated as member of family or community.

Important cultural influences on treatment approaches

- › For students from South Asia
 - › South Asian Identity is complex due to diversity in countries, sociopolitical histories, religions and other cultural influences.
 - › Shame can be main socializing force that guides and shapes behavior
 - › Inability to handle stress is seen as shameful.
 - › More narrative, collaborative work.
 - › Less focus on goals, more focus on relationship

Important cultural influences on treatment approaches

- › For students from Latin America
 - › Focus on social networks, developing closeness in local supports.
 - › Potential negative stigma of mental health.
 - › DACA students may feel isolated from community if they have to hide their identity.
 - › Strong emphasis on “saving face” ¿que diran? And maintaining prestige and dignity
 - › Understand family expectations.

Delgado-Romero & Sanabria,
2007; Siemons et al., 2017

Important cultural influences on treatment approaches

- › For Students from Africa:
 - › Diverse and complex cultures
 - › Many cultural norms stem from coping skills to survive centuries of colonialism
 - › May only be aware of advantages, less aware of social problems re: living in the U.S.
 - › Be aware of culture-bound nature of many Western mental health theories
 - › Etiological differences in mental health disorders
 - › May prefer active and directive counselors who come across as knowledgeable experts.

Case Studies

- > Student is 20 y.o. male from Syria. He had come to the US a couple years before starting college when things started to become dangerous locally for him. He came from a wealthy family, and his parents were able to get him out during a relatively good time. As a result, he had assimilated to US culture quickly, and felt caught in an identity battle of wanting to be as Americanized as possible. This left him feeling disconnected to both his home culture and adoptive culture. Turmoil continuously increased where his family lived. His family was able to get out, but they were not able to come to the US because of travel blockages. He engaged in risky behaviors including drinking to excess, driving fast while intoxicated, and engaging in almost compulsive sexual experiences. He reported feeling “numb, disconnected, and not caring about anything.” He had many friends in the fraternity he was a part of, but explained that he didn’t feel that those friendships were reliable because he could not “trust” friends the same way he used to in Syria where “loyalty” and “pride” in friendships/self was essential. Student became disconnected with family but continued to report homesickness.

Case Studies

- Female student 22 y.o. in her senior year, first generation U.S.. Parents emigrated from El Salvador. Parents do not speak English and student serves as primary support for connecting parents to US culture. Student presented with disengagement from classes, inability to focus and complete assignments. Initially guarded, student eventually identified stress relating to feeling as though her peers do not understand her. Student feels stress in regards to parents' immigration status and emotional impact of current ICE and children detention, and feels like none of her supports at the university can relate, including her white clinician.

THANK YOU

Questions?

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