

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CURRENT IMMIGRATION POLICY AND SENTIMENT

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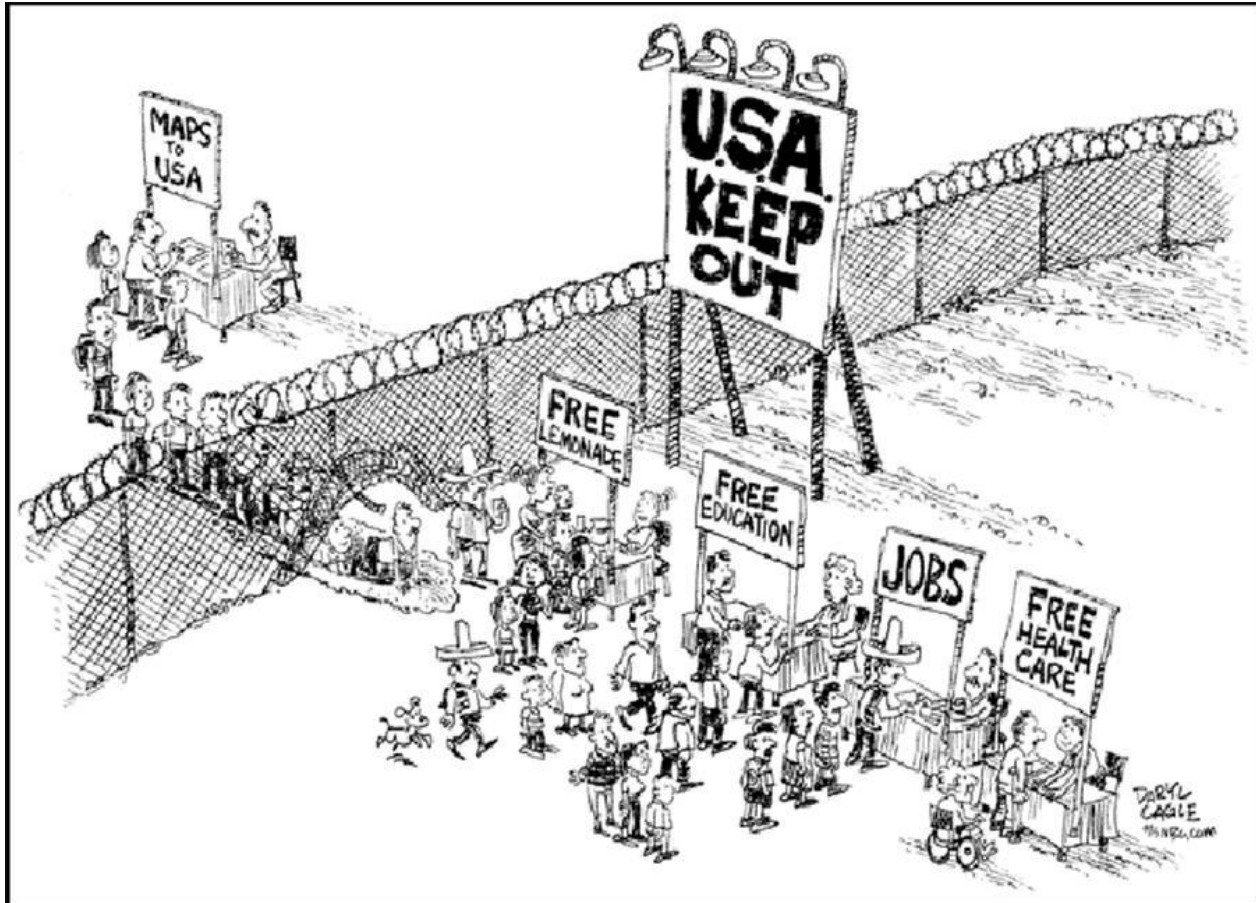
# Pre-Migration Context

- Consider reasons for why people migrate (e.g. family reunification, parental employment, education, poverty, war, persecution, environmental disaster)
- Nature of the pre-migration context—access to family and peer support
- Separation from family (e.g. grandparents, relatives) and friends
- Separation from familiar social, cultural and linguistic context
- Hope for a better future for family and for oneself

# Post-Migration Context

- Importance of migration for whole family and for oneself
- Optimism co-exists with sense of disorientation and sometimes disillusion
- Xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment, racism
- Immigration policy in flux: “Muslim ban” on travel, and ending of DACA as examples; Living with the unknown

# Prevailing Stereotype



**“Illegal immigration” overwhelming the nation**

# Stampedes



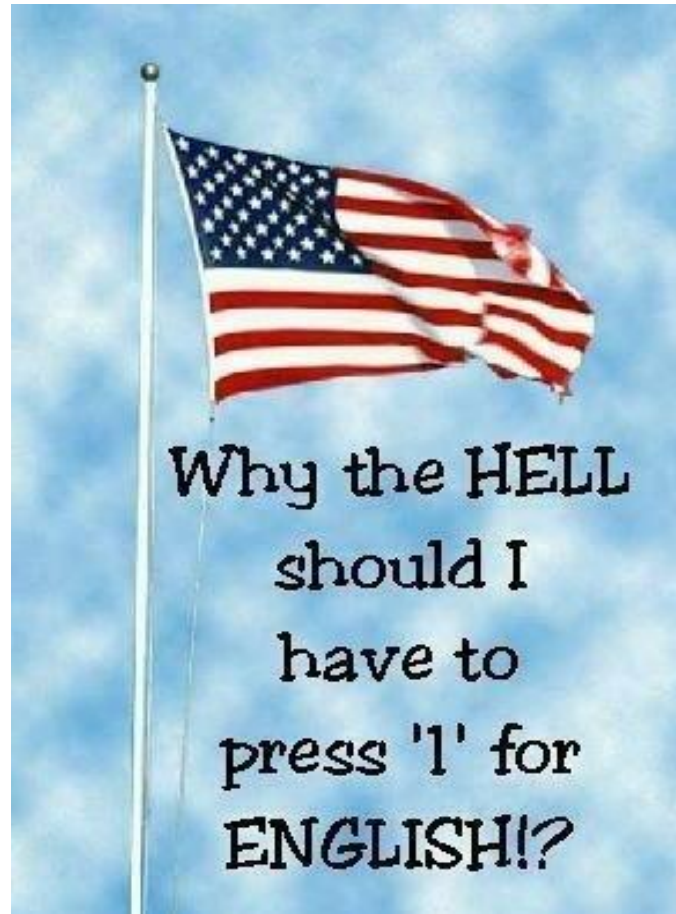
# Taking our jobs



# They are frightening



# They force us to change our lives





# Recognizing language shift in current political climate

- Language used to describe immigrants under current federal administration: “rapists”; “criminals”; “threatening”
- “Domestic terrorists”—referring to American Indians/Native Americans and allies protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline
- Re-framing language as a prelude to fascism, white supremacy, slavery, and genocide
- The internalization of stereotypes

# Acculturative Stress

- Stressful events/appraisal of events related to the acculturation experience
- Linked to psychological outcomes
- Discrimination is a component of acculturative stress
- Immigrants of color experience higher levels
- Uncertainty of immigration policy and deportation
- Stress of having to hide one's ethnic identity

# Presenting Problems in Clinical and Educational Contexts

- Most immigrants adapt well to their new living circumstances.
- Studies suggest that 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants may experience **less psychological distress** compared to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants (Alegría et al., 2006). This is even more heightened in current context.
- It's possible that their psychological distress is going **unnoticed**.
- Many of the mental health problems particular to the immigrant experience can be linked to **acculturation, discrimination and trauma**.
- Fear of deportation heightened since Trump's election; Deportation as the presenting problem.

# Acculturation-Based Presenting Problems

- Changes in gender roles
- Intergenerational conflicts



# Trauma-Based Presenting Problems

- Migratory trauma
  - Pre-migration
  - Migration
  - Post-migration
- Interpersonal violence



# Discrimination- & Racism-Based Presenting Problems

- Discrimination
- Profiling and Deportation



Poster by Ester Hernandez against SB 1070

# RACE AND TRAUMA: Examples in U.S.

- Native American genocide
- African slavery
- Japanese Internment Camps of WWII
- Racial profiling and violence
- Deportation
- Anti-immigrant sentiment and racism
- Anti-Muslim sentiment and discrimination
- Anti-Semitism

# Impact of Racism

- Racism related to physical health problems (high blood pressure, premature births)
- Racism related to mental health problems (depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal behavior, and family conflicts)
- Racism affects identity



# Impact of Discrimination

- Contribute to atmosphere of fear and anxiety and compromise in sense of safety
- Overt and subtle or aversive forms of racism both have detrimental effects, possibly even more for second generation
- Feeling of “second class” person
- Lack of sense of belonging (e.g. perpetual foreigner)
- Decreased use of mental health services

# Recommendations

- More safe spaces within and outside of the school and work contexts for dialogue on cultural adjustment, racism, and profiling
- Training for educators and clinicians regarding the impact of migration, stress, and trauma (including racial trauma)
- Increasing access to support through building awareness in school and work communities about emotional well-being and how to access help
- Recognizing the impact of immigration status and policy, and becoming aware of changes in policies
- Engaging in collective efforts—advocacy and activism