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CONTENTS

Contributors xiii

Series Foreword xvii
Frederick T. L. Leong

Acknowledgments xxi

Introduction: Challenges Facing Racial Minority Immigrants 3
Pratyusha Tummala-Narra

I. CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA AND RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES 13

1. Wounds That Never Heal: The Proliferation of Prejudice Toward Immigrants in the United States 15
Angel D. Armenta, Miriam J. Alvarez, and Michael A. Zárate
The Current Political Climate 16
Myths About Immigration 17
Consequences of Prejudice 19
Threat in the Face of Change 21
Hot Topics in Research and Future Directions 24
Conclusion 25

2. Multifaceted Profiling and Violence: Experiences of Mexican and Central American Migrants to the United States 31
Hannah W. McDermott and Ricardo C. Ainslie
Clinical Vignette: Past and Present Violence 32
Four Sources of Violence Shaping Immigrant Experience 33
Discussion and Concluding Thoughts 43

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3. Xenophobia and Racism: Immigrant Youth Experiences, Stress, and Resilience **51**
Amy K. Marks, G. Alice Woolverton, and Marit D. Murry
Theoretical Framework: Promoting and Inhibiting Environments *53*
Xenophobia: Research on Risk and Resilience *55*
Discrimination: Research on Risk and Resilience *57*
Case Studies From Community-Based Research: Profiles of Trauma, Stress, and Resilience *60*
Intervention Efforts and Future Directions *62*
Conclusion *64*

4. Racism and Xenophobia on U.S. College Campuses **69**
Anmol Satiani and Sindhu Singh
Impact of the Broader Sociopolitical Climate on College Campuses: White Supremacy and Threats of Violence *70*
Racist Language on College Campuses *71*
Experiences of Students of Color on College Campuses *72*
Experiences of International Students on U.S. College Campuses *73*
Role of Psychologists in Addressing Racism and Xenophobia on Campuses *80*
Conclusion *81*

5. Microaggressions Toward Racial Minority Immigrants in the United States **85**
D. R. Gina Sissoko and Kevin L. Nadal
Review of Racial Microaggressions *86*
Taxonomy of Microaggressions Toward Racial Minority Immigrants *88*
Case Examples *96*
Recommendations for Research, Clinical Work, and Policy *98*

II. SPECIFIC FORMS OF TRAUMA IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES **103**

6. "Forever Foreigners": Intergenerational Impacts of Historical Trauma From the World War II Japanese American Incarceration **105**
Donna K. Nagata and Reeya A. Patel
Immigration History as a Context for Wartime Incarceration *106*
Incarceration and Traumatic Stress *108*
Long-Term and Intergenerational Impacts of the Incarceration *112*
Resilience in Response to the Incarceration *116*
Seeking Redress as a Form of Community Resilience *118*
Present-Day Implications and Recommendations *119*
Conclusion *122*

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7. Sociopolitical Trauma: Ethnicity, Race, and Migration **127**
Lillian Comas-Díaz
Sociopolitical Trauma: Theoretical and Empirical Framework *128*
Migration and Sociopolitical Trauma *129*
Migration and Resilience *131*
Coloniality: Colonial Mentality and Cultural Imperialism *132*
Decolonial, Liberation, and Culturally Responsive Psychological Approaches *134*
Treatment Illustration: La Flor de Izote (The Izote *Flower)* *138*
Recommendations *140*
Conclusion *141*

8. Racial Stress and Racialized Violence Among Black Immigrants in the United States **147**
Marisol L. Meyer, Monique C. McKenny, Esprene Liddell-Quintyn, Guerda Nicolas, and Gemima St. Louis
Black Immigrant Populations in the United States: A Sociohistorical Overview *148*
Population *149*
Experiences With Racial Trauma and Racialized Violence *149*
Discrimination and Disparities *150*
Beyond Coping: Efforts to Empower Black Immigrants *152*
A Model for Understanding the Psychological Trauma of Racism Among Black Immigrants *153*
Discussion and Conclusion *159*

9. An Examination of Racial Minority Immigrants and the Trauma of Human Trafficking **165**
Indhushree Rajan and Thema Bryant-Davis
Overview: Human Trafficking, Traffickers, and Victims *166*
Impact of Racism and Sexism on the Prevalence of Human Trafficking *168*
Human Trafficking and Barriers Related to International Law and Law Enforcement *169*
Human Trafficking and Barriers to Mental Health Services *170*
Clinical Issues and Recommendations *171*
How Does Culture Inform the Clinical Lens? *173*
Case Study: Patience—Cultural Issues Informing Clinical Work With Survivors *174*
Special Focus: Human Trafficking Trends and Figures for Asian Immigrants *175*
Conclusion *179*

10. The Rippling Effects of Unauthorized Status: Stress, Family Separations, and Deportation and Their Implications for Belonging and Development **185**
Carola Suárez-Orozco, Guadalupe López Hernández, and Patricia Cabral
Migration, Stress, and Traumas *187*
Social Belonging and Exclusion *191*
Recommendations for Practice and Research *195*
Conclusion *197*

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11. Interpersonal Violence and the Immigrant Context **205**
Pratyusha Tummala-Narra
Prevalence and Context of Interpersonal Violence *206*
Conceptualizations of Interpersonal Violence *208*
Multiple Marginalizations *211*
Impact of Interpersonal Violence *215*
Securing Help *218*
Case Vignette: Mita *219*
Recommendations for Research and Practice *221*
Conclusion *222*

III. RESILIENCE AND IDENTITY **227**

12. Coping With Trauma: Resilience Among Immigrants of Color in the United States **229**
Germine H. Awad, Flor Castellanos, Jendayi B. Dillard, and Taylor Payne
Macrolevel Factors Related to Immigrant Trauma *229*
Microlevel Factors Related to Immigrant Trauma: Interpersonal Discrimination *232*
Protective and Resilience Factors *233*
Recommendations for Research and Intervention *236*
Case Example: The Hanna Family *237*
Conclusion *239*

13. Resilience and Identity: Intersectional Migration Experiences of LGBTQ People of Color **245**
Matthew D. Skinta and Nadine Nakamura
Theoretical Framework *246*
Intersectional Identities in Context: Peeling Back the Layers *247*
Trauma and Resilience *250*
Vignette: Kamal's Experience *254*
Recommendations *257*
Conclusion *258*

IV. KEY STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION **265**

14. Bullying Prevention for Asian American Families: Collaborations With School Districts and Community Organizations **267**
Cixin Wang, Jia Li Liu, Kavita Atwal, and Kieu Anh Do
Bullying of Immigrants *268*
Bullying Toward Asian Americans *269*
Collaboration With Asian American Community Organizations and School Districts *272*
Relationship Building With the Community *273*
Problem Identification *274*
Developing Culture-Informed Intervention and Evaluation *275*
Discussion *278*

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15. Toward a Liberatory Practice: Shifting the Ideological Premise of Trauma Work With Immigrants **285**
Lara Sheehi and Leilani Salvo Crane
Psychological Effects of Immigration *287*
Conclusion *300*

16. Human Rights, Policy, and Legal Interventions **305**
Diya Kallivayalil and Robert P. Marlin
How Can Psychologists and Mental Health Care Providers Endorse a More Explicit Human Rights Frame, and How Is This Compatible With Our Ethics Code? *306*
Conclusion *317*

Afterword: Looking to the Future **321**
Pratyusha Tummala-Narra

Index 327
About the Editor 341

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Introduction

Challenges Facing Racial Minority Immigrants

Pratyusha Tummala-Narra

In the United States, few issues are more polarizing than immigration. We live in a time of heated debates surrounding immigration policies, such as those affecting Dreamers, migrant families, and refugees and asylum seekers. We also face controversy concerning building a wall at the U.S.–Mexico border and whether the United States should open its borders to people fleeing persecution, poverty, and natural disasters. Immigration policy continues to be in significant flux as political polarization within the United States has escalated, contributing to new forms of oppression and human rights violations.

Political ideologies on immigration are fueled by a growing anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly directed at racial minorities, within the United States and globally. This sentiment has been further heightened in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as racial minorities are both victimized by the virus at disproportionate rates and blamed for causing and spreading the virus in the United States. In fact, the COVID-19 outbreak has brought to the foreground fundamental disparities in health and access to health care among racial minorities. Racial minorities, particularly African Americans, Latinx Americans, and Native Americans (e.g., Navajo Nation) from low-income backgrounds, have been facing alarmingly high levels of infections and deaths due to COVID-19. Public health guidelines requiring social distancing typically do not consider the lack of resources such as clean water, health care, and health insurance, higher density housing, and greater exposure to the coronavirus in the workplace among many racial minority communities. The inadequacy of

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P. Tummala-Narra (Editor)
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these structures is also evident in prisons and detention centers, underscoring racial and economic disparities and race- and class-based oppression in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Despite the rise in xenophobia and racism in recent years and long-standing structural inequality and race-based violence within U.S. society, many Americans are engaged in resisting hate and discrimination directed against immigrants and racial minorities. In fact, the call to address structural violence and discrimination against these communities has been reawakened.

To situate the context of racial minority immigrants, it is important to consider the growth of immigrant populations in the United States. In 2017, approximately 44.4 million immigrants resided in the United States, composing 13.6% of the population. This number reflects an increase of more than 4 times the number of immigrants as in 1960. U.S.-born children of immigrants (i.e., second generation) compose an additional 12% of the population, and it is projected that by 2050, first-generation immigrants will account for 19% of the overall population and the second generation will account for 18%. Additionally, approximately one fourth of the foreign-born population is unauthorized or undocumented (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Since the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, increasing numbers of immigrants have arrived to the United States from Latin America, Asia, Caribbean, and Africa; in contrast, immigration prior to 1965 was dominated by immigrants from Europe and Canada (American Psychological Association [APA] Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012). The growing presence of non-White immigrants has not only marked increasing cultural diversity and pluralism in the United States but has also been met with significant anti-immigrant sentiment. Throughout U.S. history, people considered to be non-White have become racialized upon arriving and, therefore, negotiate their social position within the context of the American racial hierarchy. Racism and race-based violence directed against racial minority immigrants stand alongside the longstanding history of genocide and slavery in the United States and ongoing racism directed against Native Americans and African Americans. Prior to leaving their countries of origin, many immigrants are unaware of the entrenched nature of American racial injustice. Nevertheless, immigrants and their children are socialized into American notions of race and inevitably are exposed to stereotypes and discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and other social locations.

Although xenophobia and discrimination are pervasive within various regions of the world, they take unique forms in U.S. society. In more recent history, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, sparked a rise in Islamophobia, and subsequently, the profiling of people perceived to be Muslim has become normalized. Since 2016, the country has seen a rise in explicit forms of racism and stereotyping that have become increasingly normalized in public discourse, bearing important implications for the physical and psychological safety and well-being of immigrants and their children. The term "Trump effect" has been coined by psychologists to describe the notable

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increase in racialized, xenophobic, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic bullying in schools since the presidential election of Donald Trump (Zimbardo & Sword, 2017). At the time we are completing this volume, the COVID-19 outbreak is rife with racist sentiment and attacks against Chinese Americans and those who are perceived to be of Chinese or East Asian descent. Amidst the pandemic, race-based violence, particularly police brutality, against Black men and women persists.

The real struggles that many immigrants face when leaving behind loved ones and a familiar cultural, religious, and linguistic context, and their resilience in the face of these losses and separations, remain largely invisible in public discourse in the current xenophobic state. Anti-immigrant policies and actions, such as threats to ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), separation of migrant children and parents, and a ban on entry of Syrian refugees and individuals from predominantly Muslim countries, have created profound fear and helplessness among many immigrant families. As such, there is a dire need for psychologists and other mental health practitioners and researchers to engage in deeper inquiry into the experiences of racial minority immigrants and in resisting policies that threaten their basic sense of safety and humanity.

AIMS OF THE BOOK

The literature in psychology concerning immigration has grown significantly over the past 20 years and has spanned issues of education, mental health, and policy (APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012). Additionally, a number of books focused on immigration have made important advances that have sparked an expansion of research and clinical theory. For example, some books have addressed specific types of discrimination (e.g., racism), the diagnosis and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder from a global perspective, acculturation among immigrants, and the experiences of specific immigrant communities (e.g., Asian American, Latinx American, women). In 2012, the American Psychological Association published its Presidential Task Force on Immigration Report, which provides a broad and comprehensive review of the literature on the psychology of immigration, particularly that related to mental health and education. The report identified various gaps in the empirical and clinical literature that must be filled to broaden and deepen existing understandings of the immigrant experience within a broader socio-ecological framework. For example, the report calls for the use of multiple research methodologies (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods), increased attention to the development of culturally informed interventions (e.g., psychotherapy, community- and school-based interventions), and improved training for psychologists in conducting research with and providing services with immigrant-origin individuals. The report also calls for more research focused on the experiences of vulnerable groups of immigrants, such as undocumented immigrants and victims of trafficking.

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Currently, clinicians are contending with how best to help their clients cope with racism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression within an uncertain and unpredictable social and political climate. Relatedly, multicultural researchers are examining the effects of the current political climate on individuals, families, and communities. Many of us who are racial minority psychologists also bear the burden of examining the effects of this climate on our personal lives and our professional work. For example, I am keenly aware that the research that I have been conducting is focused on the current crises facing immigrants. I am also aware of the ways in which I have modified my clinical practice since the 2016 presidential election, as I work with clients who are in crisis due to the terrifying circumstances created by overtly anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric and policies. Most recently, I have observed the profound impact of illness and death related to COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders on clients' anxiety, depression, and isolation and have observed the challenges of accessing adequate mental health care among individuals who are uninsured or hold undocumented status. This book is an effort to document what we, as multicultural researchers, scholars, and practitioners, are learning about the impact of the sociopolitical climate on racial minority immigrants from the various contexts in which we engage (e.g., research, clinical practice, community-based intervention). Another primary aim of the book is to highlight theory, research, and practice concerning various types of trauma and oppression faced by racial minority immigrants, such as racial profiling, deportation, trafficking, interpersonal violence, and intersectional discrimination. A third purpose of the book is to underscore the link between historical trauma and ongoing trauma faced by racial minority immigrants in the United States as way of understanding the precipitants and processes that underlie oppression of immigrants and of identifying strategies for reducing harm and resisting oppression in our work.

I am truly grateful to the authors of this volume, as they are dedicated to this line of inquiry that is so critically important, especially in this historical moment. The authors of this book are expert researchers, scholars, and clinicians, each with a unique focus on trauma and the immigration experience. Their expertise includes areas such as the psychology of xenophobia and prejudice, profiling, racial and political trauma, historical trauma, trafficking, deportation trauma, interpersonal violence, developmental processes such as identity and intersectionality, clinical and community-based interventions, and human rights.

Because the psychological literature contains a number of classifications concerning immigrants, it is necessary to clarify the terminology in this book. *Racial minority immigrants* and *racial minority immigrant-origin individuals* refer to individuals who either migrated to the United States from another country or are the children or descendants of these immigrants and who are classified or perceived as racial minorities in the United States. *First-generation immigrants* refers to those who arrive to the United States as adults, *1.5-generation immigrants* refers to those who arrive to the United States by age 12 years, and the

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second generation and *later generations* refer to individuals who are born and raised in the United States. *Identity* refers to various aspects of individual and collective identity, such as ethnic identity, bicultural identity, and racial identity, and it refers to intersections of experiences based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, social class, authorization or documentation status, and dis/ability, among other factors. Additionally, authors in the book provide specific definitions that guide their perspectives on immigration and trauma.

This book is not designed to be a comprehensive guide to the psychology of trauma or to the psychology of immigration. Rather, it is a necessary step in examining the growing complexity of trauma and traumatic stress experienced by racial minority immigrants. This book makes a unique contribution to the field in that it provides nuanced perspectives on how the historical and current sociopolitical climate in the United States affects traumatic experiences of racial minority immigrants and extends literature concerning the impact of multiple marginalization and traumas occurring both within and outside of immigrant communities. The book approaches trauma with serious attention to rising nationalism and xenophobia, shifting economic and political structures, controversy over immigration policy, alarming rates of displacement within nations, war, trafficking, terrorism, and deportation. As such, there is an emphasis on both crisis states of the immigrant experience (e.g., deportation, fear of deportation, racial and religious-based violence) and complex traumatic experiences rooted in repeated violence and discrimination.

Although the implications of the current sociopolitical climate for the well-being of immigrants and their families are considered herein, the issues raised are not just pertinent to the present context. Rather, the topics reflect historical and ongoing trauma faced by immigrants, and they are relevant to contexts outside of the United States. It is important to note that different racial minority subgroups in the United States face shared and distinct forms of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination, profiling, and violence, based in historical and contemporary perceptions of specific racial minority groups. For example, a Moroccan immigrant may become racialized and be perceived as African American by people in mainstream context; subsequently, that person's ethnicity and heritage culture may be dismissed in service of maintaining racialized hierarchies and perceptions in the United States.

The book does not aim to address social injustice faced by every racial minority immigrant group or that faced by every subgroup within any particular immigrant community. However, it emphasizes the importance of intersectionality and heterogeneity of experiences across and within different racial minority immigrant groups. With that being said, I want to recognize that some areas of great importance are not covered in depth, such as the experiences of immigrants with disabilities, older adults, multiracial immigrants, and transnational adoptees. This omission, at least in part, reflects the limited attention to these aspects of immigrant experience in theory and research. I further recognize that this book was largely written prior to the

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global spread of COVID-19 and is therefore limited in scope with regard to discussion of the impact of the virus outbreak on immigrant communities. It is my hope that future work will expand into all these areas, particularly when considering the vulnerability to victimization among some subgroups of immigrants.

The authors in these pages address the following key questions: (a) What are the traumatic experiences of racial minority immigrants in the present-day United States? (b) What are the implications of these experiences for mental health and identity? (c) What does resilience look like among racial minority immigrants coping with and resisting oppression? (d) How can psychologists help in coping with the traumatic effects of oppression and resist further oppression in the face of crisis and ongoing uncertainty? The chapters explore both stress and resilience experienced by racial minority immigrants, and they include clinical and community-based illustrations that bring deeper understanding to theoretical perspectives and empirical findings. It is worth noting that the clinical illustrations have been anonymized and that they are not intended to reflect comprehensive experiences of people who are affiliated with or identify with any particular racial, ethnic, or religious group.

The theoretical perspectives driving the chapters are diverse, reflecting the multifaceted experiences of racial minority immigrants. Specifically, the chapters reflect various perspectives, such as multicultural, feminist, womanist, minority stress, biopsychosocial, psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, complex trauma, liberation psychology, human rights, and integrative frameworks. Developing a clear understanding of the experiences of racial minority immigrants requires multiple theoretical lenses, and therefore, authors with diverse theoretical knowledge were invited to contribute to this volume. An overarching framework that underlies these various approaches is the socioecological perspective, described in prior reports concerning immigrant and racial minority populations (APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012; Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019). For example, the *APA Presidential Task Force Report on Immigration* and the *APA Revised Multicultural Guidelines* (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019) integrated Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) bioecological framework to guide understanding stress and resilience among immigrants and racial minorities. Bronfenbrenner's model emphasizes the interaction of multiple layers of a person's ecological context, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem in determining outcomes regarding one's development and psychological well-being. The ecological perspective has been expanded more recently by García Coll and Marks (2012) to an integrative contextual framework, in which social position factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class contribute to the promotion or inhibition of positive growth among minority youth. These overarching socioecological approaches consider active forms of racism and discriminatory policies directed against immigrants and the impact of this stress on mental health and on intersectional experiences of context and identity. The authors provide their own theoretical perspectives, which guide their empirical and clinical work,

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bearing in mind the various social position factors and layers of ecological context that shape immigrants' experiences (APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012; García Coll & Marks, 2012).

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into four separate but overlapping sections: (a) context of xenophobia and racism in the United States, (b) specific forms of trauma in immigrant communities, (c) resilience and identity, and (d) key strategies for intervention. Some important general themes are evident across these sections, including trauma as rooted in systemic injustice and oppression; bridging historical racial and political trauma with contemporary oppression; multiple contexts of trauma in the migration process (pre- and postmigration, in transit to the United States); rise in explicit racism and other forms of bias and discrimination; heterogeneity of sociocultural and intersectional experiences across and within different immigrant groups; unique experiences of immigrants across different developmental periods (e.g., children, adolescents, emerging adults); multiple marginalization occurring within and outside of one's ethnic and religious communities; role of cultural beliefs, acculturation, discrimination, and policy in shaping the experience of and strategies for coping with trauma; and finally, strength and resilience of racial minority immigrants. These themes, while wide in scope, reflect the complexity of immigrants' experiences in the contemporary United States. Each chapter takes on at least one of these themes, aiming to provide a more in-depth analysis of a particular type of traumatic experience, traumatic stress within a specific immigrant community, or a key approach to intervention.

Part I, Context of Xenophobia and Racism in the United States, consists of five chapters that present the problems of explicit and more subtle forms of xenophobia and racism as manifested within the broader sociopolitical climate and policy and within specific developmental and interpersonal contexts pertaining to racial minority immigrant youth and adults. Armenta, Alvarez, and Zárate (Chapter 1) provide an inquiry into contemporary prejudice in the United States and some important factors contributing to White perceptions of immigrants as a threat to American society, such as the fear of social and cultural change and a sense of national nostalgia. McDermott and Ainslie (Chapter 2) explore profiling of Mexican and Central American migrants and specifically complex traumatic stress rooted in four distinct sources of violence directed against these migrants, including violence in the premigration context, during the migration journey, in the postmigration context, and within U.S. immigration policies. Marks, Woolverton, and Murry (Chapter 3) use an integrative risk-and-resilience model of immigrant youth development to examine how interactions within different contexts, such as families and schools, and messages regarding immigrants in broader society shape children's and adolescents' mental health, academic outcomes, and sense of

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resilience. Satiani and Singh (Chapter 4) present compelling clinical evidence from their practice in a university counseling center showing a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and racism on U.S. college campuses. They explore the effects on racial minority immigrant students' and international students' safety and well-being and on students' efforts to resist oppression. In the final chapter of this section, Sissoko and Nadal (Chapter 5) present a taxonomy of microaggressions (i.e., eight themes) experienced specifically by racial minority immigrants, underscoring the prevalence of everyday microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations that affect individuals' mental health and identity.

Part II, Specific Forms of Trauma in Immigrant Communities, focuses in depth on different contexts of exposure to trauma, highlighting distinct types of traumatic stress faced by racial minority immigrants and their resilience in the face of this stress. The six chapters in this section address historical and ongoing trauma such as the incarceration of Japanese Americans, racial and political violence against Latinx immigrants, and racialized violence against Black immigrants. They also address specific types of explicit traumas such as trafficking, deportation, and interpersonal violence. Nagata and Patel (Chapter 6) provide an important lens into historical trauma, specifically the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, a series of traumatic events with important implications for subsequent generations of Japanese Americans and for current U.S. policies concerning separation of migrant families and placement in detention centers. They remind us of the cyclical and repetitive nature of anti-immigrant sentiment and policies and why it is critical to recognize and resist longstanding national and global patterns of propagating xenophobia and racism. Comas-Díaz (Chapter 7) presents a new theoretical understanding of sociopolitical trauma as distinct from posttraumatic stress disorder and as directly caused by social, political, and systemic factors such as racial oppression, coloniality, and cultural imperialism. She further presents a decolonizing approach to resisting oppression and emphasizes the resilience of immigrant communities. Meyer, McKenny, Liddell-Quintyn, Nicolas, and St. Louis (Chapter 8) examine trauma faced by Black immigrants in the United States while underscoring the diversity of experiences within and across different Black immigrant communities. They provide a model that recognizes racialized violence as a form of complex trauma and places at its core the interaction between individual, interpersonal, and systemic factors in the experience of traumatic stress and resilience.

Part II proceeds with a chapter authored by Rajan and Bryant-Davis (Chapter 9), who examine local and global race-based and gender-based discrimination within human trafficking, with a special focus on Asian and South Asian survivors of trafficking. Suárez-Orozco, López Hernández, and Cabral (Chapter 10) focus on traumatic stress rooted in family separations and threats and realities of deportation and its implications for youth growing up in unauthorized homes. They underscore the problem that these youth face in accessing structural and social belonging. My chapter on interpersonal

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violence (Chapter 11) completes this section of the book, exploring the complexity of conceptualizing interpersonal violence, such as sexual violence, within different immigrant communities. I also explore immigrants' experiences of multiple marginalization, occurring within and outside of their ethnic and religious communities.

Part III, Resilience and Identity, consists of two chapters that focus on how racial minority immigrants negotiate resilience and identity in the face of individual and systemic oppression. Awad, Castellanos, Dillard, and Payne (Chapter 12) use a model of cumulative racial/ethnic trauma for Americans of Descent to discuss protective and resilience factors among racial minority immigrants, in particular Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Americans. They draw attention to the importance of understanding legal protections, cultural strengths, ethnic identity, religious faith, and social supports in coping with and resisting oppression. Skinta and Nakamura (Chapter 13) explore how the global persecution of LGBTQ people shapes intersectional identities and traumatic experience prior to, during, and after migration and how resilience plays a significant role in lives of LGBTQ immigrants and asylum seekers. They provide a compelling analysis of the complexity of navigating stress across and within multiple communities and contexts.

Part IV, Key Strategies for Intervention, includes three chapters that present culturally informed approaches to community-based intervention, assessment and clinical practice, and advocacy. Wang, Liu, Atwal, and Do (Chapter 14) describe an innovative community-based intervention focused on preventing bullying of racial minority immigrant youth, in particular, Chinese American and Sikh American children and adolescents. Their work underscores the importance of researchers collaborating with schools and specific immigrant communities to address race-, ethnicity-, and religious-based bullying. Sheehi and Crane (Chapter 15) challenge Eurocentric conceptualizations of trauma that underlie diagnosis and clinical practice with immigrants. They use a liberation psychology framework to guide recommendations for clinicians, shifting away from the notion of trauma as an individual disorder. Kallivayalil and Marlin (Chapter 16) provide an important case for adopting a human-rights framework in conducting research, practice, and teaching within psychology and other mental health professions. While focusing on legal advocacy and community-based collaborations, they argue that psychologists have a responsibility to protect clients and research participants from human rights violations and to provide improved education and training about human rights statutes within the profession.

Together, the authors of this volume bring to the foreground the importance of practitioners, researchers, and educators engaging with the complexity of trauma and violence faced by racial minority immigrants and with the crisis of xenophobic and racist actions directed against racial minority immigrants both in the present and in the future. Bearing witness to trauma experienced by immigrants is especially critical in a historic state marked by turmoil and uncertainty. Furthermore, developing an in-depth understanding of the impact

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of the current sociopolitical climate on immigrant individuals and communities, and recognizing immigrants' resilience and resistance—both of which are ethical imperatives of psychologists—can guide future theory, research, practice, and training.

The book is intended for practitioners, researchers, and educators across different disciplines (e.g., psychology, social work, psychiatry) who are interested in traumatic stress and the experiences of racial minority immigrants and how these experiences are connected with broader American society. It will also be of benefit to graduate students in psychology, social work, and psychiatry training programs, where education concerning culturally informed and trauma-informed research and practice with immigrants is sorely needed.

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