Premigration Factors and Mental Health among Asian Immigrants

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Asian Americans

- Fastest growing racial group
- 5% of the population
- Among Asians, over 60% are immigrants
- Among foreign-born Asians, 76% have entered the US in the past 20 years.
- Two main streams of Asian immigrants
  - Human capital immigrants
  - Southeast Asian refugees

Migration and Mental Health

○ Health implications of large influxes of immigrants

○ "Migration is a complex process with potential mental health ramifications" (Vega et al. 1987)

Stages of Migration: Fabrega Migration Model (1969)

4 stages: Factors attributable to...

leaving a country of origin

the difficulties of passage

the adaptation process in the host society

expectations of social and economic attainment after migration

Pre-migration: Contexts of Exit

Planning	Voluntariness	Motivations/ Reasons for Migration
• well-planned • poorly-planned • not planned	• Voluntary • Involuntary	

Reasons for Migration

○ Portes and Rumbaut (1996) distinguished four types of immigrants
  - labor immigrants
  - professional immigrants
  - entrepreneurs
  - refugees/asylees

Reasons for Migration (cont.)

- Tartakovsky and Schwartz (2001) conceptualized four motivations:
  - *Preservation* of physical, social and psychological security for oneself and family
  - *Self-development* of abilities, knowledge and skills
  - *Materialistic accumulation* of financial well-being, wealth and resources
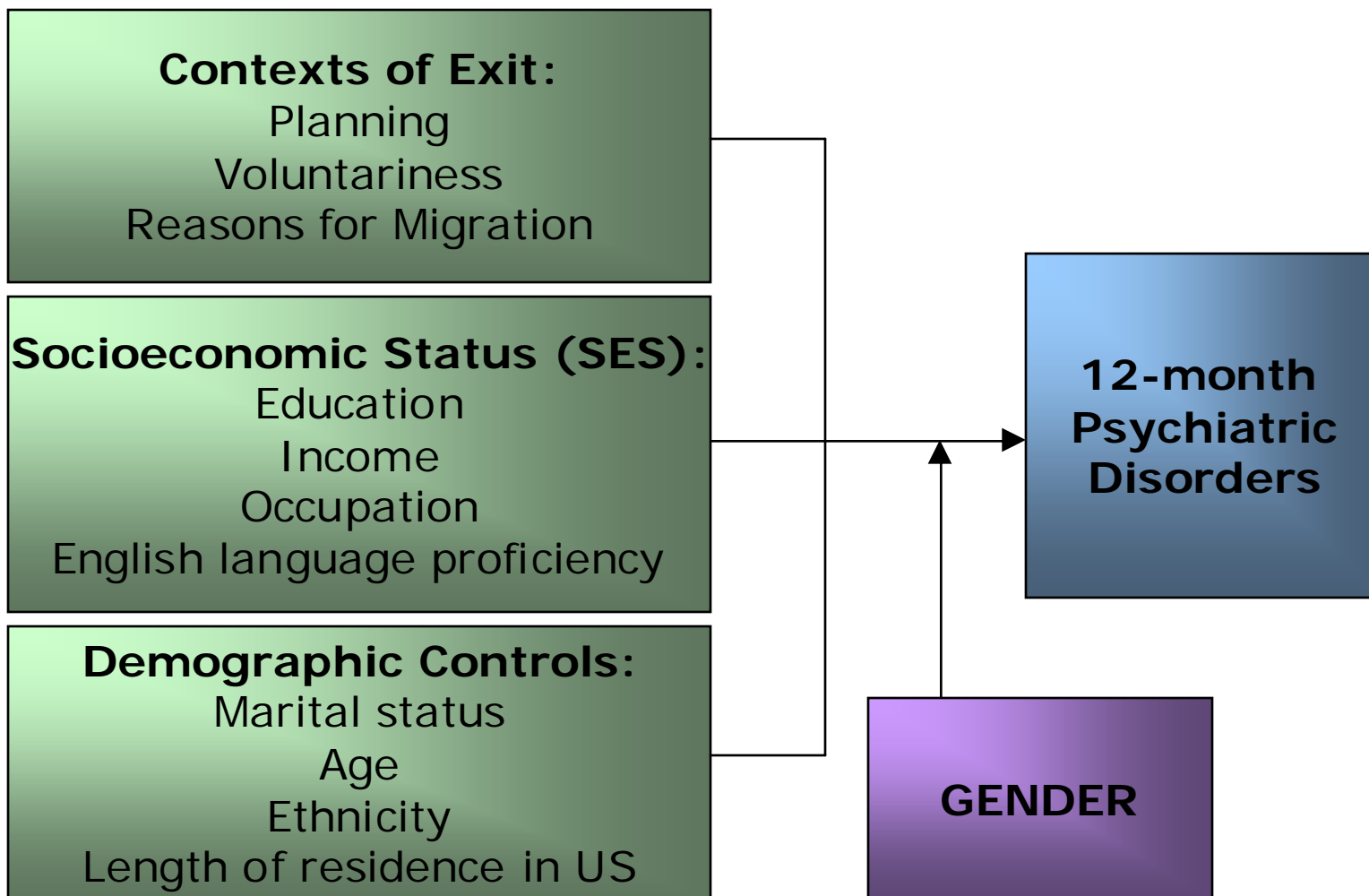 - *Idealism* motivation of building a better society for one's community

Gender and Migration

- In the migration process, men and women have shown differences in
  - motivations
  - career paths
  - social networks
  - etc.

- Very little research has addressed the important role that gender plays in migration and health

Hypotheses

Contexts of Exit:
Planning
Voluntariness
Reasons for Migration

Socioeconomic Status (SES):
Education
Income
Occupation
English language proficiency

Demographic Controls:
Marital status
Age
Ethnicity
Length of residence in US

12-month Psychiatric Disorders

GENDER

National Latino and Asian American Study

Principal Investigators:

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Study Design

○ Data collected from 2002 to 2003

○ Multi-stage stratified area probability sampling design

○ Eligible adults 18+

○ Asians: Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and other Asians

○ Face-to-face interviews using the respondent's preferred language (Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, English)

○ Rich information on immigration and mental health

Characteristics of Asian Immigrant Sample by Gender (Weight mean or weighted %)

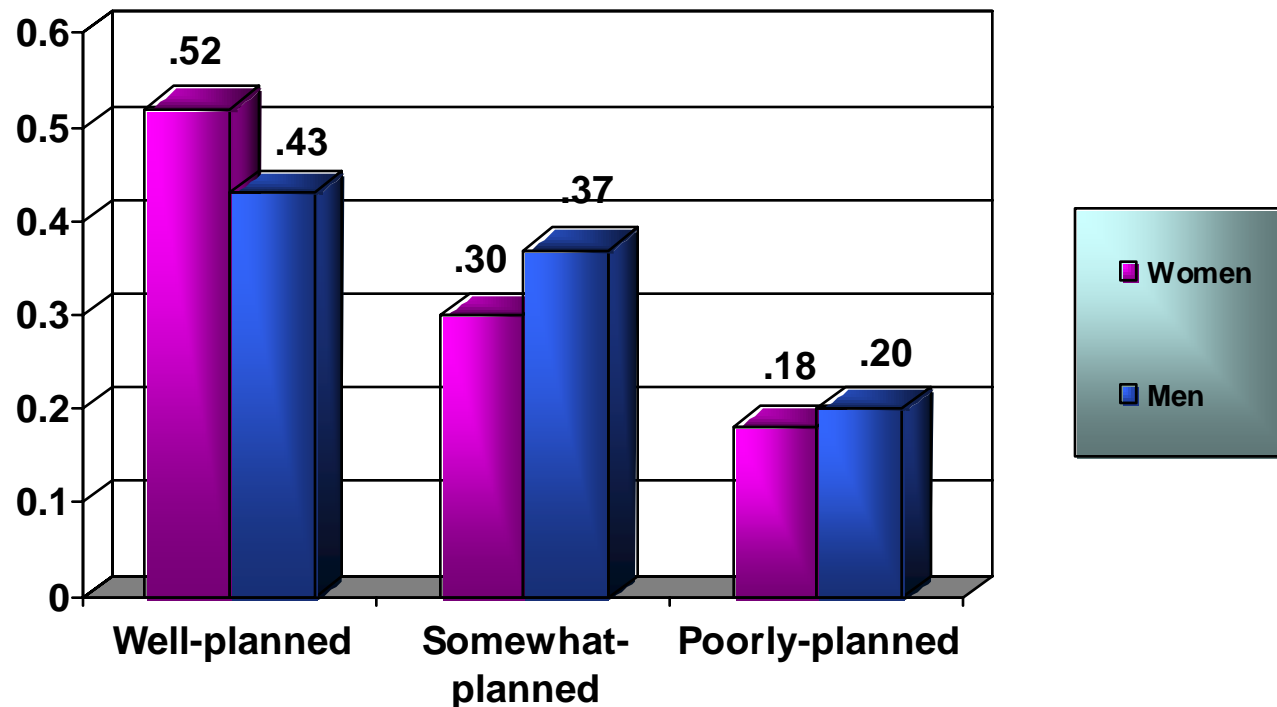| Variables (range)	Women N = 822	Men N = 735	Gender diff.
12-month Psychiatric Disorders			
Affective disorders	4.2%	4.7%	ns
Anxiety disorders	4.2%	5.1%	ns
Age (18-95)	43	42	ns
Married	73%	73%	ns
Ethnicity			
Chinese	30%	29%	ns
Vietnamese	17%	16%	ns
Filipinos	22%	19%	ns
Other Asians (reference)	32%	36%	ns
Length of residence			
0 – 5 years (reference)	18%	19%	ns
6 – 10 years	16%	16%	p < .05
11 – 20 years	34%	34%	ns
>21 years	32%	31%	ns
Socioeconomic-related factors			
Education (0-17)	13	14	p < .001
Education received outside US before 16	87%	85%	ns
Household income (0 – $1,000K) (medium)	$58,750	$65,500	p < .10
Non-employed	38%	20%	p < .001
Good English language proficiency	54%	63%	p < .01

Contexts of Exit - Planning

Planning: Was your move or that of your family to the US:
well-planned
somewhat-planned
poorly planned or not planned at all (reference)

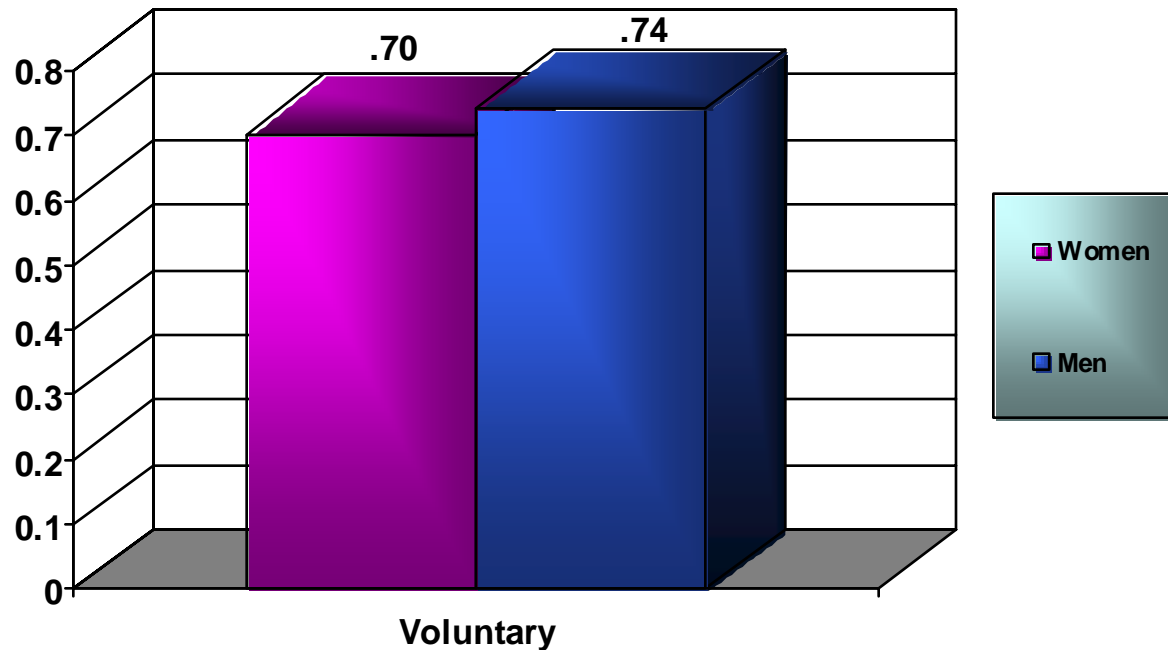|	Well-planned	Somewhat-planned	Poorly-planned
Women	.52	.30	.18
Men	.43	.37	.20

Contexts of Exit - Voluntariness

Voluntariness: Did you move from your country of origin because you or your family:
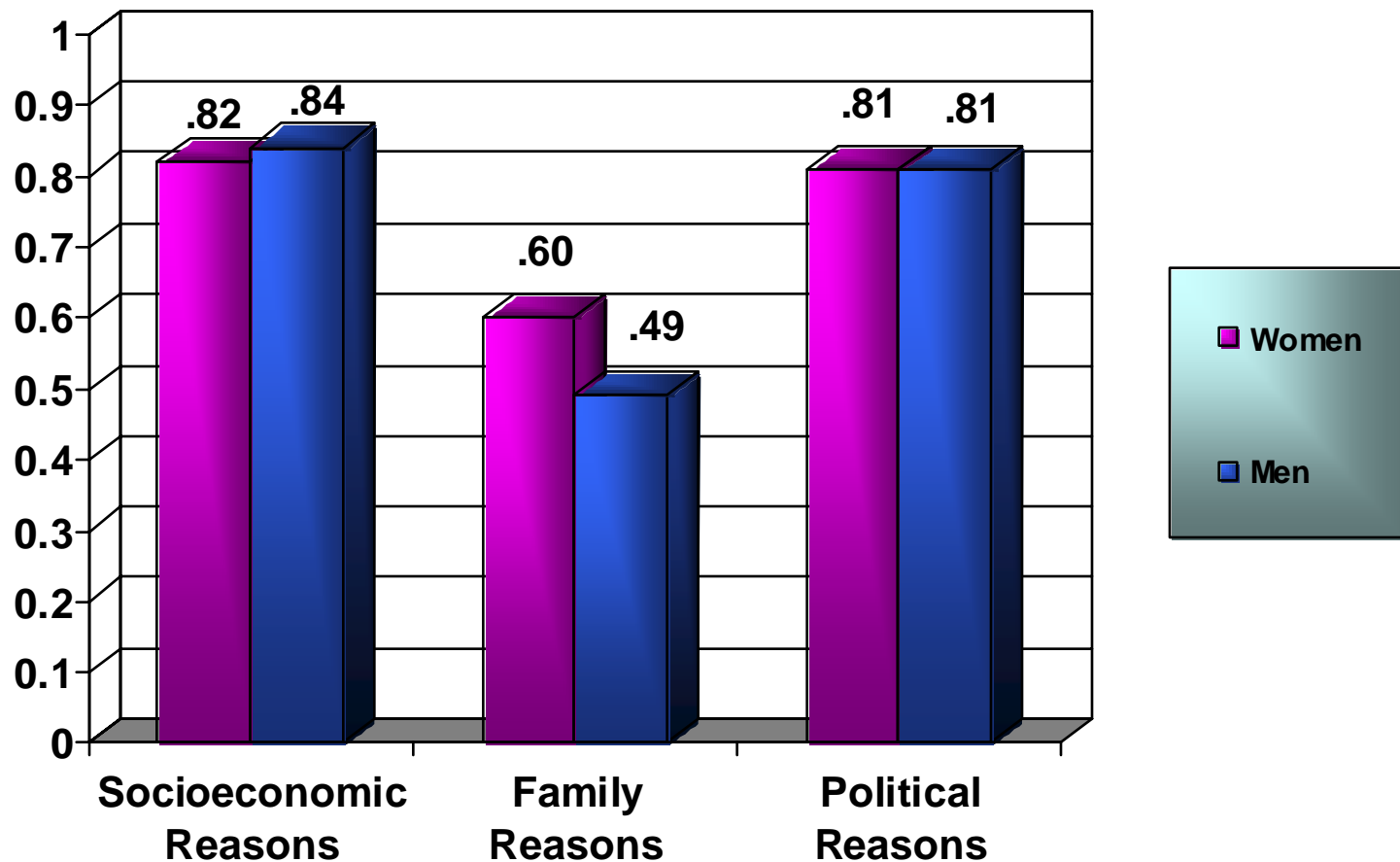Wanted to
had to (reference)

Contexts of Exit: Reasons for Migration

- Socioeconomic reasons
  - To find employment or a job
  - To seek better educational opportunities
- Family reasons
  - To join other family members
  - Because of marital or family problems
- Political reasons
  - Because of the political situation in your country of origin
  - You or your family were persecuted for political reasons

* R chose "very important" for one of the following when asked reason for migration

Contexts of Exit: Reasons for Migration

Odds ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals for the effects of Contexts of Exit and Socioeconomic Status upon 12-month Psychiatric Disorders

	12-month Affective		12-month Anxiety	
	Women (N = 823)	Men (N = 735)	Women (N = 823)	Men (N = 735)
SES Variables				
Education	1.0(0.9-1.1)	1.3(1.1-1.5)**	1.0(0.8-1.1)	1.2(1.0-1.4)*
Income	1.0(1.0-1.0)	1.0(1.0-1.0)*	1.0(1.0-1.0)	1.0(1.0-1.0)
Non-employed	0.8(0.2-2.7)	5.7(2.0-16.1)***	1.1(0.5-2.4)	2.2(0.8-6.2)
Foreign-educated	0.5(0.1-2.2)	0.7(5.1-6.0)	0.5(0.1-4.4)	1.8(0.3-9.8)
Good English	0.3(0.1-0.8)*	0.1(0.0-0.4)***	1.5(0.5-4.7)	0.3(1.1-1.1)
Exit Variables				
Voluntary	2.9(0.6-15)	0.4(0.1-1.2)	1.2(0.5-2.8)	0.6(0.3-1.6)
Well-planned	0.1(0.0-0.4)***	1.3(0.2-8.0)	0.5(0.2-1.0)	1.6(0.4-6.3)
Somewhat-planned	0.5(0.2-1.4)	0.9(0.2-4.1)	0.8(0.3-2.3)	3.1(0.9-10.1)
SES reasons	1.4(0.3-6.4)	5.6(0.6-50.2)	1.6(0.6-4.1)	1.5(0.7-3.2)
Family reasons	0.4(0.2-0.9)*	4.1(1.0-16.2)*	0.8(0.3-2.0)	1.5(0.6-4.1)
Political reasons	1.9(0.4-8.1)	1.6(0.4-6.8)	2.0(0.8-5.1)	0.7(0.3-1.8)

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$ All models control for age, marital status, duration, and ethnicity.

Main Findings and Conclusions

- Contexts of exit variables are more associated with affective disorders than anxiety disorders.

- Gender differences in the relationship between contexts of exit and mental health

  - SES variables are associated with 12-month affective disorders among male immigrants but not female immigrants. Higher education and income are positively related to 12-month affective disorders for men.

  - Planning affects women's affective disorders.

  - Migration for family reasons reduces the odds of having 12-month affective disorders among women but increases the odds among men.

Limitations and Future Research

○ More mental health outcomes need to be considered (focusing on onset of disorders after arriving in the United States).

○ More refined methods (e.g., latent class analysis) are needed to classify various reasons for migration.

○ Theoretical mechanisms for gender differences in migration and mental health need to be explored (e.g., traditional gender ideology).

○ Further explorations on the positive associations between SES and affective disorders among male immigrants are needed.

Thank you!

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