

Vietnamese Refugees and Immigrants: Health, Mental Health, and Trauma

NARHC, Niagara Falls, NY
June 2016

Mary Keovisai ▪ Isok Kim ▪ Wooksoo Kim ▪ Sarah Richards-desai ▪ Asli Yalim
Immigrant and Refugee Research Institute (IRRI)

Overview/Agenda

1. Background/Purpose
2. Data/Sample Characteristics
3. Study 1: Social Determinants of Health
4. Study 2: Life Course Perspective
5. Conclusion/Implications

Background: Vietnamese Migration

Waves of Vietnamese migration

- 1st wave (1975-1977): the fall of Saigon
- 2nd wave (late 1970s): the “boat people”
- 3rd wave (80s & 90s): Amerasians & political prisoners

Throughout, a mixture of “refugees” as well as “immigrants” have arrived in the US from Vietnam

Differences among Vietnamese Americans aren’t addressed in the literature

Background: Refugee vs. Immigrant

	Refugees	Immigrants
Definition	International (UNHCR)	Federal (US)
Motivation	Forced/involuntary	Voluntary
Screen/Interview process	Detailed	Basic
Migration duration	Months/Years	Day(s)
Initial resettlement services	Yes	No

Purpose of the Studies

Explore and examine the differential experiences of refugees and immigrants in regards to physical and mental health outcomes.

Data Source & Sample Selection

National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), 2002-2003

Multi-stage, stratified probability sampling

Secondary data analysis: restricted NLAAS data

Foreign-born, Vietnamese American adults (N=502)

- Refugees: n=291
- Immigrants: n=211

Overall Sample Characteristics

	Refugees (n=291)	Immigrants (n=210)
Age*** (18-95)	45.6 (1.10)	37.8 (0.85)
Sex** (Female=1)	44.0%	61.6%
Marital status (married=1)	74.1%	71.9%
Education* (in years)	12.4 (0.35)	11.6 (0.29)
Poverty status (below poverty threshold)	24.8%	29.4%
Employment status (unemployed)	36.7%	37.1%
Insurance status*** (insured)	85.6%	75.1%
Age at immigration (in years)	28.7 (1.23)	28.1 (0.91)
Limited English proficiency (Fair/poor)	70.9%	78.9%
<i>Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001</i>		

Overall Sample Characteristics (cont'd)

	Refugees (n=291)	Immigrants (n=210)
Outcome measures:		
Chronic medical conditions***	1.45 (0.13)	0.88 (0.10)
Psychological distress*	1.42 (0.05)	1.24 (0.04)
Trauma types:		
Pre-migration***	1.85 (0.14)	0.84 (0.12)
Post-migration**	0.56 (0.07)	0.29 (0.05)
Physical**	0.54 (0.05)	0.34 (0.05)
Psychological***	1.83 (0.11)	0.75 (0.09)
<i>Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001</i>		

Study 1: Social Determinants of Health

- The individual's health is largely determinant on their circumstances and their surrounding environment
 - a. Social/economic context
 - b. Structural and material factors
 - c. Intermediary/psychosocial factors
- Migration as a specific SDH factor (i.e., more than just different culture/language)

Study 1: SDH for Foreign-born Vietnamese

- A challenging, but different environment, for immigrants and refugees
- Social/economic factors
- Structural factors
- Material factors
- Psychosocial Factors

Study 1: Methods

Measures:

- Outcome variable: *Chronic Medical Conditions (CMC)*
- SDH variables of interests:
 - Structural factors (Discrimination, Neighborhood environment)
 - Material factors (Poverty, Employment/insurance statuses)
 - Psychosocial Factors (Physical and psychological trauma)

Analyses: Weighted descriptive and Poisson regression analyses.

Study 1: Results

Variables	Immigrants		Refugees	
	IRR	95% CI	IRR	95% CI
Age	1.01	[0.98 - 1.04]	1.02**	[1.01 - 1.04]
Sex (f=1)	1.71**	[1.15 - 2.55]	1.15	[0.92 - 1.44]
Education	1.04*	[1.01 - 1.08]	0.99	[0.96 - 1.02]
Age at immigration	1.02	[0.99 - 1.06]	0.99*	[0.97 - 1.00]
LEP (fair/poor=1)	0.56	[0.26 - 1.23]	0.99	[0.75 - 1.31]

Study 1: Results

Variables	Immigrants		Refugees	
	IRR	95% CI	IRR	95% CI
Age	1.01	[0.98 - 1.04]	1.02**	[1.01 - 1.04]
Sex (f=1)	1.71**	[1.15 - 2.55]	1.15	[0.92 - 1.44]
Education	1.04*	[1.01 - 1.08]	0.99	[0.96 - 1.02]
Age at immigration	1.02	[0.99 - 1.06]	0.99*	[0.97 - 1.00]
LEP (fair/poor=1)	0.56	[0.26 - 1.23]	0.99	[0.75 - 1.31]
Everyday discrimination	1.05	[0.91 - 1.20]	1.18*	[1.01 - 1.39]
Neighborhood environment	0.96	[0.72 - 1.28]	0.99	[0.81 - 1.21]

Study 1: Results

Variables	Immigrants		Refugees	
	IRR	95% CI	IRR	95% CI
Age	1.01	[0.98 - 1.04]	1.02**	[1.01 - 1.04]
Sex (f=1)	1.71**	[1.15 - 2.55]	1.15	[0.92 - 1.44]
Education	1.04*	[1.01 - 1.08]	0.99	[0.96 - 1.02]
Age at immigration	1.02	[0.99 - 1.06]	0.99*	[0.97 - 1.00]
LEP (fair/poor=1)	0.56	[0.26 - 1.23]	0.99	[0.75 - 1.31]
Everyday discrimination	1.05	[0.91 - 1.20]	1.18*	[1.01 - 1.39]
Neighborhood environment	0.96	[0.72 - 1.28]	0.99	[0.81 - 1.21]
Poverty Status	1.27*	[1.03 - 1.58]	1.35*	[1.03 - 1.77]
Employment status	1.01	[0.78 - 1.32]	1.30*	[1.00 - 1.69]
Insurance status	1.43*	[1.03 - 1.98]	1.59*	[1.05 - 2.41]

Study 1: Results

Variables	Immigrants		Refugees	
	IRR	95% CI	IRR	95% CI
Age	1.01	[0.98 - 1.04]	1.02**	[1.01 - 1.04]
Sex (f=1)	1.71**	[1.15 - 2.55]	1.15	[0.92 - 1.44]
Education	1.04*	[1.01 - 1.08]	0.99	[0.96 - 1.02]
Age at immigration	1.02	[0.99 - 1.06]	0.99*	[0.97 - 1.00]
LEP (fair/poor=1)	0.56	[0.26 - 1.23]	0.99	[0.75 - 1.31]
Everyday discrimination	1.05	[0.91 - 1.20]	1.18*	[1.01 - 1.39]
Neighborhood environment	0.96	[0.72 - 1.28]	0.99	[0.81 - 1.21]
Poverty Status	1.27*	[1.03 - 1.58]	1.35*	[1.03 - 1.77]
Employment status	1.01	[0.78 - 1.32]	1.30*	[1.00 - 1.69]
Insurance status	1.43*	[1.03 - 1.98]	1.59*	[1.05 - 2.41]
Physical trauma experience	1.23*	[1.05 - 1.44]	1.17**	[1.05 - 1.31]
Psychological trauma experience	1.10	[0.95 - 1.28]	1.14***	[1.06 - 1.22]

Study 1: Results

- Both refugees and immigrants:
 - *Being poor* associated with higher count of CMC
- Immigrants:
 - *Being female, low education, insured, & physical trauma* were significantly associated with higher CMC
- Refugees:
 - *Greater everyday discrimination, being unemployed, & psychological trauma* significantly associated with higher CMC

Study 2: Life Course Perspective

- Examines/highlights the twists/turns of diverse life paths
- Key Element:
 - a. Life events
 - b. Historical time
 - c. Ecological factors

Study 2: LCP for Foreign-born Vietnamese

- Sociodemographic factors
 - Age, Sex, Education, Age at Immigration, Limited English Proficiency
- Historical life events
 - Pre- and post-migration trauma
- Ecological life events
 - Racial Discrimination
 - Everyday Discrimination

Study 2: Methods

Measures:

- Outcome: Psychological distress
- LCP variables of interests:
 - Pre- & Post-migration traumas
 - Racial discrimination
 - Everyday discrimination

Analysis: Weighted descriptive & linear regression analyses

Study 2: Results

VARIABLES	Vietnamese Refugees (n=291)		Vietnamese Immigrants (n=211)	
	b	SE	b	SE
Sociodemographic Factors:				
Age, in years	0.01	(0.00)	0.00	(0.01)
Sex (female=1)	0.14*	(0.05)	0.07	(0.07)
Education, more than HS	-0.14	(0.08)	0.08	(0.08)
Age at immigration	-0.01*	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.01)
Limited English proficiency	-0.04	(0.11)	-0.08	(0.10)
Trauma Factors:				
Pre-migration trauma	0.08**	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)
Post-migration trauma	0.10*	(0.04)	-0.03	(0.02)
Discrimination Factors:				
Racial discrimination	-0.02	(0.07)	0.09*	(0.04)
Everyday discrimination	0.17	(0.09)	0.04	(0.02)
Constant	1.77***	(0.31)	1.40***	(0.26)

Study 2: Results

- **Immigrants:** *Greater racial discrimination* was associated with psychological distress
- **Refugees:** *Being female, older age at immigration, pre- and post-migration trauma* were associated with psychological distress

General Discussion

- Clear distinction between Vietnamese refugees and immigrants
- Importance of applying theories (SDH & LCP) in examining health & mental health outcomes
- Effects of different categories of trauma

Limitations & Strengths

- Cross-sectional data (nationally representative sample)
- Measurement issues:
 - Recall bias
 - Social desirability was controlled statistically
 - Measures validated across cultures
- Other confounding factors

Takeaways

- Utilization of migration history in healthcare setting
- Paying attention to trauma related to post-migration (i.e., re-traumatization, triggers, etc.)
- Glimpse into long-term consequences of trauma & resettlement experiences for recent arrivals
- Future studies should also examine resilience factors related to health outcomes

Thank You!
Questions?

isokkim@buffalo.edu