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[TITLE:] HIV RISK AMONG MEXICAN IMMIGRANT MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM)

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BACKGROUND: Latin American immigrants are often assumed to have higher HIV risk than their U.S.-born counterparts. Analysis of data collected by Dr. Rafael Díaz and his team showed the opposite to be true: recent Latino immigrant MSM had lower HIV risk than US-born Latino MSM. Furthermore, HIV risk was higher among immigrant men who had lived in the U.S. 11 years or more. Focusing on Mexican immigrant MSM, this study investigates the reasons for such differences.

METHODS: Ethnographic participant observation and in-depth interviews with 150 MSM. The sample includes Mexican immigrants, U.S.-born Latinos, and sexual and romantic partners of Mexican immigrants. Interviews are transcribed verbatim; read, summarized, and discussed as individual cases; coded using an extensive formal coding scheme; and analyzed using QSR N6.0, a qualitative software program. This presentation will be based on a preliminary round of analysis.

RESULTS: Particular paths of migration and forms of incorporation into US gay communities appear to lead to distinctive forms of HIV risk among subgroups of the immigrant population. In this presentation I describe patterns of incorporation detected to date and examine specific contextual factors such as environments of drug use, rules of participation in Internet chat rooms, and dynamics of cross-cultural relationships that lead to HIV risk within them. I pay special attention to shifts in sexual identity and sexual behavior that result from migration.

CONCLUSIONS: Analyzing sub-cultural and contextual factors, and differences in the migration paths and forms of incorporation into urban gay communities, may be an important tool to develop better targeted HIV prevention programs for Latino immigrant MSM. Rather than relying on assumptions about immigrant populations, HIV educators

must consider various specific challenges, forms of resilience, and personal changes that are associated with international migration.



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