

Recruitment of New Hispanic Immigrants in HIV Prevention Research

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New Hispanic Communities and HIV Risk

This RO1 study funded by the NICHD used qualitative research methods to identify and describe *new* Hispanic migrant and immigrant populations their HIV risk in Metropolitan New York, one of the areas most affected in the nation by HIV/AIDS and immigration from Mexico, Central America & the Dominican Republic.

Neither accurate population estimates nor reliable seroprevalence data exist for these increasing and largely hidden and hiding populations who fear deportation, stigma and a system with which they cannot communicate.

The research examined these new communities in urban, sub-urban and rural locations, and compared not only the cultural factors which influence risk of HIV and STIs, but also the environmental factors which provide the context for both risk and prevention.

The study included recently arrived Mexican, Central American (Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) and Dominican communities.

The factors which affect recruitment of participants for an exploratory behavioral research study from new immigrant populations are discussed in this presentation.

Overall Objective of the Study

- To inform policy and program planning which address risks for HIV/AIDS experienced by these groups in the New York Metropolitan area.

Specific Aims of the Study

- 1) Describe the influence of dynamic cultural schema on HIV drug- and sex-related risk behaviors and compare these by sex and culture group (nationality).
- 2) Explore how cultural adaptation and interactions of culture and environment may shape HIV-related risk and protective behaviors in urban and suburban and semi-rural areas of the New York Metropolitan Area.

Specific Aims of the Study

- 3) Describe mobility patterns of these populations.
- 4) Assess attitudes toward, perceived need, and access to HIV prevention services for these populations.

Hispanic Populations in New York

- NY C accounted for 91% of New York State's total increase in foreign-born populations from Central America between 1990 & March of 2000¹
- 136,000 Central Americans resided in NYC and surrounding counties in 2000^{2,3}
- 72% born in El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras³

(¹U.S. Census, 2000a; ²U.S. Census, 2000a; ³U.S. Census, 2000b)

US Census figures underestimate the foreign-born Hispanic populations due to undocumented residents.

(Cordova, 1999)

Justification for the Study

- An initial phase of acculturation can present risks and protective factors that have not been discussed in the literature.
- Coming into a new environment with a high HIV prevalence and new HIV risk factors increase the vulnerability of Hispanic immigrants.
- HIV risk does not depend on greater acculturation.

Sample Characteristics

- 18 or older
- Areas of Residence
 - Westchester and Putnam Counties
 - North Fork of Suffolk County
- Sending Countries: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Dominican Republic
- Time in the US: Less than 3 years

Approach to Data Collection

- Semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews with participants from the target populations
- Focus groups with members of the target populations
- Key informant interviews
- Focus groups with advocates and providers in health and social services
- Ethnographic observation

Sampling Issues

- Hidden or hard-to-reach study population
- Non-feasibility of conventional sampling
- Lack of existing sampling frame
- Stigma

“Like people from Guatemala, yes there are in this area, they come here to the store, but they hide a lot. I have invited the lady from Guatemala that comes by often, but it’s not been possible to interview her, they hide a lot.”

“Como le digo, gente de Guatemala si hay en esta área y vienen aquí a la tienda pero ellos se esconde mucho. Yo ya he invitado a la Sra. de Guatemala que viene siempre aquí y ya ve, no se ha podido hacer la entrevista, ellos se esconden mucho.”

Use of Qualitative Approach

To explore:

- Individual and collective living conditions during and after immigration;
- Continuities and changes in attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with existing social networks and living conditions;
- Attitudes and behaviors related to increased vulnerability to HIV and other STIs, and access to health and other social services.

Lessons Learned

The following strategies were identified as essential to successful recruitment of participants from this largely undocumented immigrant population:

- Development of rapport within sampling communities prior to data collection
- Understanding the potential meanings, costs and benefits of the study as perceived by the target population

Lessons Learned, cont'd...

- Identification of communication channels and legitimate/utilized information sources
- Identification of agencies, social venues, and facilities used (safe spaces)
- Identification of social networks within the study population

Lessons Learned, cont'd...

- Addressing the participants' fear of contact with “the system”
- Designing strategies to address stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS
- Enlisting community leaders in the research process

Summary

- Multiple and creative community-specific strategies are required to identify and recruit research subjects from hidden/hard-to-reach populations such as new immigrants;
- Innovative recruitment strategies also ensure that a diverse sample representing the study population is obtained;

Summary, cont'd...

- Initial exploratory ethnographic fieldwork is pivotal in establishing visibility, credibility and legitimization of study;
- Creative, community-specific recruitment strategies are needed for researching Hispanic population in the US;
- Diversity in the sample should be ensured;

Summary, cont'd...

- Clear communication with community resources and study participants is crucial;
- Involvement of community leaders is essential in gaining trust and collaboration;
- The effects of stigma and discrimination in immigrant populations is an important issue for recruitment;

Summary, cont'd...

- Sensitivity to language issues is important in instrument construction, interviewing *and* recruitment [e.g. terms relating to government authorities and documentation]
- Sufficient time to establish visibility and trust prior to data collection must be allocated in the research plan.



Thank You