
Alcohol Use as a Determinant of HIV Risk Behaviors Among Recent Latino Immigrants in South Florida

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Information on the association between alcohol use and Latino sexual risk behavior prior to immigrating to the United States is scarce. Given this population's rapid growth, documenting the influence of alcohol use on recent Latino immigrants' (RLI) sexual risk behaviors is essential. Data prior to immigration were retrospectively collected from 527 RLI ages 18–39 years. Quantity and frequency of alcohol use during the 90 days prior to immigration and pre-immigration sexual risk behaviors were measured. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationships. Males, single participants, and participants with higher incomes reported more alcohol use. Higher alcohol use was associated with lower condom use frequency, having sex under the influence, and more sexual partners among all participants. Results point to the importance of creating interventions targeting adult RLI men, given their likelihood to engage in alcohol consumption, sex under the influence of alcohol, and sex with multiple partners without using condoms.

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During the past two decades, HIV researchers have documented multiple behavioral risk factors associated with HIV infection (Cashman, Eng, Simán, & Rhodes, 2011; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2010). This research has recently expanded to include social and cultural

determinants associated with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among Latino immigrants. Most research concerning Latino immigrants has primarily focused on exploring HIV risk behaviors after they have immigrated to the United States and lived there for many years (Shedlin & Shulman, 2006; Zsembik & Fennell, 2005). However, understanding pre-immigration behaviors and investigating whether

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recent immigrants engaged in risky sexual behaviors prior to immigrating will provide health care practitioners with an opportunity to plan appropriate and more effective prevention interventions for foreign-born immigrants. This type of pre-immigration data can inform the literature and future interventions as pre-immigration lifestyle behaviors may affect post-immigration health behaviors. Findings from extant research have indicated that immigrant Latino males in the United States and their counterparts in Latin America associate condom use with casual sex (Ibanez, Van Oss Marin, Villareal, & Gomez, 2005). Another significant factor is the use of commercial sex workers (CSW) among the Mexican immigrant male population in Durham, North Carolina; use of CSW among this population was shown to increase during the first year of arrival to the United States and continued to increase before peaking at 4 years after arrival (Parrado & Flippen, 2010a). The risky sexual behavior continued for approximately one decade before declining and stabilizing back to the level at the initial time of immigration (Parrado & Flippen, 2010b). Knowledge regarding pre-immigration risky sexual behaviors will assist health care providers in determining how immigration and cultural norms affect sexual health behaviors.

Furthermore, investigating the alcohol use behavior of recent Latino immigrants (RLI), most of whom are relatively young and thus at high risk for alcohol abuse, may yield important information on the health status of these immigrants given the deleterious health and social consequences associated with alcohol abuse, including the risk of engaging in unprotected sex (Malow et al., 2012). Documenting the alcohol use and risky sexual behaviors of young adult Latinos will begin to address a gap in the literature; the limited extant literature suggests that the longer Latino immigrants reside in the United States, the higher their rates of alcohol abuse (Caetano & Clark, 2003).

Data on pre-immigration condom use among RLI from countries other than Mexico are lacking. Parrado and Flippen (2010a) found Mexican migrant workers in the United States to be 10 times more likely to report use of a CSW in the previous year in comparison to their counterparts in Mexico; this behavior could be addressed by understanding social and economic pre-immigration factors. Limited education has been found to be associated with

RLI males having less knowledge about HIV. Furthermore, RLI males perceive themselves as having less risk of acquiring HIV and are less likely to use condoms; increases in education and self-efficacy have been associated with increased condom use (Albarracin, Albarracin, & Durantini, 2008). Research on condom use among Latino women in Latin America and the United States has indicated low condom use due to cultural stigma associated with condoms, low levels of education, and being in a stable relationship (Freitas da Silveira, Silva dos Santos, Béria, Horta, Tomasi, & Victora, 2005).

Research on White non-Latino samples has indicated that alcohol significantly influenced risky sex practices among men and women (sex without condoms, sex with multiple partners, sex for money; CDC, 2010), and alcohol use has been associated with neurological impairment and poor condom use skills (Malow et al., 2012). However, the association between alcohol use and sexual risk behaviors among Latinos prior to immigrating to the United States has rarely been investigated (Shedlin & Shulman, 2006). The scarce research that exists has measured the significance of pre-immigration alcohol use primarily among Mexicans. In fact, among several correlates studied, pre-immigration alcohol use was most consistently associated with post-immigration alcohol use in the United States among low-aculturated Mexican immigrants (Loury & Kulbok, 2007). However, acculturation levels among Central Americans have also been significantly associated with alcohol use (Marin & Posner, 1995).

Acculturation is a byproduct of immigration; it is the intersection of two independent cultural environments and is the process by which immigrants change their behaviors, attitudes, and cultures to match those of the host society (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Latinos with low acculturation tend to embrace their traditional cultural values and beliefs more devoutly (Loury & Kulbok, 2007). Therefore, low-aculturated Latinos, such as RLI, are more likely to maintain many of the alcohol use and health risk behaviors exhibited prior to immigration. HIV behavioral risk factors have been shown to differ by place of birth (CDC, 2009). Given the varying prevalence of alcohol use in Latin American countries, including the Caribbean, documenting the influence of alcohol

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