

Migration and HIV: Use of Commercial Sex Workers among Latino Migrants in Durham, NC

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Abstract

This analysis explores use of commercial sex workers (CSWs) among foreign-born Latinos in a rapidly growing immigrant receiving city and discusses implications for the spread of HIV in the U.S. and internationally. Using data from an ethnosexual survey of 442 Latino immigrants in Durham, NC, we describe the prevalence and frequency of CSW use. We then estimate logistic and negative binomial regression models to assess the social and demographic predictors of CSW use, and describe patterns of reported condom use with CSWs and noncommercial partners. Over 28 percent of respondents report using the services of a CSW during the previous year, with rates as high as 46 percent among single men and nearly 40 percent among married men living apart from their wives. While relatively few socio-demographic factors predict the likelihood of CSW use, the frequency of use is sensitive to immigrants' family, migration, and socioeconomic characteristics. Reported rates of condom use with CSWs are high, but fall as familiarity with CSWs increase. CSW use represents an important potential source of HIV infection, not only among migrants but also among their partners residing abroad.

Introduction

Latino deaths in the U.S. from AIDS have increased markedly in recent years and Latin America currently ranks third to Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia as the region with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS worldwide (Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, 2000). AIDS rates have been rising rapidly within rural areas of Mexico and other Latin American countries (Organista, Garcia de Alba, Moran & Carrillo, 1997; Magis-Rodriguez et al., 1995), and among heterosexuals and women (Salud Publica de Mexico, 1995; Karon, et al., 2001). Although migration between the U.S. and Latin America is believed to contribute to the AIDS epidemic, there is little information that directly relates migration to sexual practices in sending

and receiving communities. This renders understanding how migration experience may put migrants and their families at risk a central public policy concern.

Migration, particularly temporary labor migration, is often a lonely and marginalizing experience. Labor migrants spend long periods of time away from their families, in contexts that often have highly uneven sex ratios, where opportunities for heterosexual sex are limited. Use of commercial sex workers (CSWs) in these contexts is common. At the same time, Latin American migrants bring with them from their communities of origin a strong aversion to condom use. It is unknown whether they are able to exercise those preferences with CSWs in the U.S. Alcohol and other substance abuse are common responses to loneliness and boredom when not working, which may further reduce use of condoms. Unprotected sex with CSWs would put not only migrants at risk for STDs, but also their spouses and partners when they return to their communities of origin, since condom use in primary relationships in Latin America is virtually nonexistent.

Durham, NC presents a particularly interesting opportunity to study the relationship between migration and HIV risk. Like other communities throughout the Southeastern U.S., Durham has seen its immigrant Hispanic population explode over the past decade; while Hispanics represented a mere 1 percent of Durham's population in 1990, by 2000 they constituted 8 percent. As a relatively new migration stream, the sex composition of the migrant population is overwhelmingly male. In fact, the Raleigh-Durham metropolitan area had the most highly unequal sex ratio among migrants in the entire country according to the 2000 Census (Suro & Singer, 2002).

This paper examines use of commercial sex workers, a key risk factor in the HIV epidemic, and condom practices among men who visit them, both with the CSWs themselves and

with other partners. We first document use of CSWs by marital status and then model the socio-economic and demographic factors that predict ever visiting a CSW, and the frequency of visits. We subsequently describe and model patterns of condom use with CSWs in Durham. And finally, we explore the condom use patterns of men who visit CSWs with their non-commercial partners to evaluate the risk posed to these women.

Data and Methods

Data for the analysis come from the research project “Gender, Migration, and HIV Risks among Mexicans,” an ongoing study that collects quantitative and qualitative data on immigrant Latinos in Durham, NC and four sending communities in Mexico.

The data for the analysis derive from 442 “ethnosexual” surveys conducted with Hispanic immigrant men in Durham.¹ The ethnosexual survey collects information on several life course domains, including labor, family and fertility behavior, migration, gender attitudes, and sexual practices. The survey design follows a semi-structured interview that is guided by a questionnaire that combines elements of a closed and highly structured survey instrument with the guided conversational techniques prevalent in ethnographic research. This face-to-face and semi-structured interview design is essential given the variability in educational levels and literacy of our target population, and the sensitivity of this population to questions regarding

¹ The selection of interviewees followed random procedures. However, the relatively small size of the Latino Durham community limits the possibilities of applying simple survey techniques and required special considerations to approximate a random sample. Through our previous involvement with the community we identified 13 apartment complexes known to house large numbers of immigrant Latinos. We then conducted a census of all of the apartment units in these buildings, and drew independent random samples for men and women based on the sample of over 2,000 apartments in these complexes. Preliminary evaluation of this strategy that compares our sample with information from the 2000 Census clearly shows that the 13 apartment complexes covered by our survey do a good job of representing the areas of high Hispanic concentration in Durham, NC. However, more established immigrants may be less likely to be captured in the sample. Thus while we cannot claim that the sample is representative of the overall Latino population of Durham, it is far superior to alternative methodologies, such as convenience or snowball sampling, prevalent in other research on small populations.

migration and sexual behavior. We estimate logistic and negative binomial regression models to assess the social and demographic predictors of CSW use, and describe patterns of reported condom use with CSWs.

Preliminary findings

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of use of CSWs by marital status among immigrant Latinos in Durham. While only 5 percent of married men who reside with their spouses report CSW use in Durham, 46 percent of single men and 40 percent of married men who live apart from their spouses do so. That married men living without their spouses report such high rates of CSW use has important implications for the HIV risk to their spouses. It is interesting to note that while married men with absent spouses are as likely as single men to report CSW use in Durham, they frequent CSWs considerably less often than their single peers. This could reflect the greater financial responsibilities of these men who have less disposable income to spend on ‘recreational’ activities. Interestingly, while married men living with their spouses are least likely to visit CSWs in Durham, those who do average as many visits as their single counterparts. This group, while small, also represents a significant risk to HIV transmission among migrants.

In order to assess the role of socioeconomic and demographic factors in predicting CSW use Table 2 reports results from a logit model predicting men’s likelihood of visiting a CSW during the previous year and from a negative binomial model predicting the number of CSW visits. Overall, results show that socio-demographic characteristics are far less important in predicting the likelihood of CSW use than in determining the frequency of visits. This difference across models suggests that while visiting a CSW at least once during the past year is a common and general practice in which Latino men participate in a relatively homogeneous manner, the

number of times they visit a CSW varies in accordance with their family, migration, and economic characteristics.

Preliminary findings suggest that national origin does not play an important role in determining CSW use in Durham, once other factors are taken into account. The same applies to age differences. The relative youthfulness of our sample results in no significant age pattern of the likelihood or frequency of use of CSW once other factors are taken into consideration.

Marital status, on the other hand, has a clear effect on both the likelihood and frequency of CSW use. Married men with their wives in Durham are 17 times ($1/\exp(-2.816)=16.7$) less likely to visit CSWs than single men. However, married men whose wives reside in their country of origin are no less likely than single men to have visited a CSW in the previous year. The pattern of effects is different when we consider average number of CSW visits in the previous year. While married men living without their wives are as likely to use CSWs as single men, their frequency of visits is much lower. The frequency of visits to CSWs among married men whose wives remain in the country of origin is more than 37 percent ($1/\exp(-.327)=1.37$) lower than among single men. Family responsibilities, particularly the need to send money back home, and issues of commitment reduce the frequency of visits to CSW among married men living without their wives in Durham. And finally, even though married men with their wives in Durham were significantly less likely to use CSWs than single men, those who visit them do so at a frequency that is not significantly different from single men.

Results for the effect of years of education show that while schooling plays no role in affecting the likelihood of CSW use, it does significantly reduce the frequency of CSW visits. More educated men are likely to be more aware of the health risks involved in using CSWs, thus they limit their frequency of use. Similar differences across models appear for the effect of

hourly wages. While hourly wages do not affect the likelihood of CSW use, higher wages significantly increase the number of visits. Paying a CSW constitutes a significant expense for migrant workers. Our data indicate that for the average migrant, a 15-minute session with a CSW costs an average of \$30, or roughly 3 hours of his wages. Thus while many migrants visit a CSW at some point during the year, irrespective of income, higher wages allow them to indulge in the practice more frequently.

Duration of Durham residence negatively affects both the likelihood of visiting a CSW and the frequency of visits. As migrants accumulate U.S. experience and become more adapted to the Durham setting, the possibilities for acquiring non-commercial partners increase. Every additional year in Durham reduces men's likelihood of visiting a CSW by 6 percent ($1/\exp(-.062)=1.06$) and also reduces the number of visits to CSWs by 6 percent ($1/\exp(-.059)=1.06$).

Condom Use with CSWs

In the context of high prevalence and frequency of CSW use among Latino immigrants, the overall risk of HIV depends on a wide array of factors including the extent of infection among CSWs, the rate of transmission between infected and non-infected individuals, and the use and effectiveness of protective mechanisms, such as condoms. In the case of Latino immigrants in Durham, a high proportion report always using condoms with CSWs, substantially reducing the risk of HIV. Table 3 shows that 92 percent of Latino men reported always using condoms when visiting a CSW. Willingness to use condoms predominantly arises from Latino men, who report that they were the ones deciding to use condoms 52 percent of the time. Nevertheless, CSWs are significantly involved in promoting condom use. Results show that 25 percent of men reported that the decision was mutual, and a full 23 percent reported that it was the CSW who decided to use condoms.

It is important to note that while condom use with CSWs is common among Durham immigrant Latinos, it falls short of universality. More importantly, the share of men reporting they would always use a condom with a CSW falls considerably, to 86 percent, if they feel the CSW has a good reputation, and falls further still, to 64 percent, if the CSW is well known to them. Thus men with the greatest risk of HIV infection, those who visit CSWs most often, may have further elevated risk because the perceived need to use condoms falls with familiarity with individual CSWs. The nearly nonexistent use of condoms in primary and even casual, non-commercial relationships among immigrant Latinos implies significant risk to these men's partners as well (Hirsch et al., 2002).

A critical next step in the analysis will be to incorporate risk perception indicators, such knowledge about HIV and perceived risk of contagion, into the multivariate models and incorporate into the analysis the determinants of condom use with CSWs, as well as with noncommercial partners. This paper represents one of the first systematic analyses of CSW use among the Latino migrant population, and holds the potential to contribute substantially to our understanding of this important source of HIV risk among immigrants and their families.

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Table 1: Selected Sample Characteristics and Incidence and Frequency of CSW Use

Sample Characteristics		Percent using CSW during last year	Mean # visits during last year	(S.D.)
Total Sample		28.1	7.7	(8.3)
Country of origin (%)				
El Salvador	8.6	15.7	3.8	(1.5)
Honduras	15.6	27.5	7.3	(6.2)
Mexico	70.6	30.1	8.0	(9.0)
Other	5.1	21.7	6.7	(5.1)
Mean age	29.4			(6.9)
Age Distribution (%)				
<=24		35.3	8.7	(11.1)
25-34		23.7	6.6	(5.7)
35+		29.3	8.2	(7.6)
Marital status (%)				
Single	37.6	45.8	8.4	(8.2)
Married w/spouse in Durham	40.3	5.1	8.8	(15.0)
Marred w/spouse in country of origin	22.2	39.8	5.9	(6.3)
Mean years of education	7.6			(3.1)
Educational Distribution (%)				
0-6		26.9	9.0	(10.0)
7-9		30.1	7.6	(7.9)
10+		26.4	5.2	(4.3)
Mean hourly wages	9.9			(3.3)
Wage Distribution (%)				
<=8		27.9	5.3	(4.8)
8-10		33.3	8.4	(8.7)
>=10		23.2	10.0	(10.7)
Mean years in Durham, NC	5.1			(3.0)
Duration in Durham Distribution (%)				
1-3		30.1	9.0	(11.0)
4-6		30.9	7.4	(6.9)
7+		21.1	5.8	(4.7)
Migration Route (%)				
Internal U.S. migrant	44.1	29.2	8.2	(6.3)
Arrived directly from country of origin	55.9	27.1	7.2	(9.7)
N	442			

Table 2: Multivariate Analyses Predicting Likelihood and Frequency of CSW Use
(standard errors in parenthesis)

	Logit model predicting likelihood of use of CSW	Negative binomial model predicting number of visits
Intercept	-0.638 (0.718)	1.714 ** (0.478)
Country of origin (reference: Mexico)		
El Salvador	-0.427 (0.508)	-0.421 (0.454)
Honduras	-0.172 (0.339)	-0.156 (0.225)
Other	-0.386 (0.590)	-0.065 (0.422)
Age	0.019 (0.021)	0.006 (0.014)
Marital status (reference: Single)		
Married w/spouse in Durham	-2.816 ** (0.393)	-0.174 (0.324)
Marred w/spouse in country of origin	-0.381 (0.318)	-0.327 ** (0.107)
Years of education	0.002 (0.039)	-0.067 ** (0.026)
Hourly wages	0.015 (0.043)	0.100 ** (0.036)
Years in Durham, NC	-0.062 * (0.028)	-0.059 * (0.038)
Internal U.S. migrant	0.305 (0.252)	0.140 (0.168)
Dispersion parameter		0.577 (0.087)
Likelihood ratio chi-square	109.1	20.4

* p<.1

** p< .05

Table 3: Reported Condom Use with CSWs

Percent always using a condom	91.7
Who decided to use a condom	
Interviewee	52.2
CSW	23.0
Both	24.8
Percent that would always use of condom if the CSW had good reputation	86.9
Percent that would always use of condom if the CSW were well-known to him	64.2
