

Migration, sexuality and HIV risk among Latino gay men in Canada: Building new social strategies for prevention

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This paper introduces the Cuentame! research, an academic/community collaboration, that investigates HIV vulnerability in the Latino LGBT community in Toronto, Canada. Our goal is to better understand their culture codes and ethos in order to formulate better social strategies for HIV prevention for this population. We interviewed 25 Spanish-speaking gay/bisexual/MSM in Toronto to explore how transnational relocation influences sexual expectations and risk practices. Study participants show a high level of awareness about HIV prevention, often before and always after migration. Their migration experiences are traversed by economic rationales, the embodied experiences of race, gender and culture as well as by sexual identity. Most subjects express narratives of empowered opportunity in distancing themselves from oppressive sexual regimes of their place of origin, but at the same time, many migrants trade their new found sense of social acceptance as gay for marginalized statuses defined by ethnicity and diminished social capital. Many are attracted to the sexual citizenship promised by the Canadian state, but for some, becoming racialized migrants occupying marginal social locations, creates potential for heightened HIV risk. A minority of interviewees, who arrive in Canada from privileged backgrounds and cosmopolitan gay scenes consider Canada to be not much different but may seek relationship rights or marriage with same sex partners. Need and desire to establish social and sexual connections in a new environment often characterized by economic vulnerability shape risk profiles that are, in turn, mediated by social capital and citizenship rights.

Biography

Alberto Carneiro Barbosa Souza has completed his Ph.D. in 2013 from FIOCRUZ, a Brazilian Agency of Public Health with a 2-year internship at University of Windsor, Canada, where he joined the Cuentame! research. His master's was in Psychology from Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro. He is a psychologist at Dellas, an NGO in Brazil that offers HIV rapid tests and counselling for recent seroconverted patients. He currently teaches Brazilian Public Health Policies and Social Psychology at Laureate International Universities in Rio de Janeiro and has published several papers in reputed journals in Brazil and abroad.