

Mano en Mano: first pilot intervention for Latino MSM newcomers to Canada

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Context

- Latino MSM have been showing the steepest rise in HIV diagnoses of the 6 ethnocultural groups (Black, South Asian, Latin American, Asian, Arab/West Asian, Aboriginal) tracked in Ontario, accounting for the largest proportion of HIV diagnoses of the 6 in 2004, and continuing to rise faster than the MSM average through 2006.



Design

- An HIV prevention and sexual health intervention was designed through collaboration between the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples and the OHTN Director of Prevention Research by:
 - reviewing the Latino-specific HIV prevention research literature,
 - consulting with Rafael Díaz (San Francisco State University),
 - ongoing involvement of an advisory committee of 7, 5 of whom were Latino gay men, and



Design

- review of the program just prior to implementation by a focus group of Latino MSM.
- The format and content of the intervention was inspired by *Hermanos de Luna y Sol*, a “model program” for Latino MSM sponsored by the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies in San Francisco.



Participants

- 20 Latino MSM, who were within 3 years of arriving in Canada, attended the first session.
- The 14 who completed all 5 sessions and 1 who completed 2 sessions were reached for final evaluation.
- 8 indicated their immigration status as refugee, 3 as permanent residents (all of whom were married to their male partners), and 4, other statuses.
- no noticeable differences in the demographics of those who completed the program compared to those who did not.

Intervention

The Intervention Objectives:

- Provide experiences of social support, social belonging, and enhanced self-esteem in the context of a Latino gay identity/community;
- Promote critical awareness shape participants' social and sexual lives;
- of social and cultural forces that impact and Increase participants' sexual self-knowledge, with particular emphasis on sexual contexts and situations of personal vulnerability that limit participants' ability to practice safer sex; and
- Facilitate community involvement and activism to support a sense of increased personal agency and self-efficacy (instead of fatalism and victimization) in response to oppressive forces in participants' lives."



“When I am with someone, it is very difficult for me to ask him to wear a condom. I fear rejection.” --participant



The 8 modules of the “Mano en Mano” curriculum:

- 1) Introduction of the program and participants. Bonding phase.
- 2) Impact of immigration
- 3) Sexuality, Gender, Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation. Homosexuality and Gayness.
- 4) HIV and STIs
- 5) Church and Wellesley: Wonderland?
- 6) Casual sex, bars, cybersex and bathhouses
- 7) Friends, love and relationships
- 8) Closure and participants evaluation

“My family knows about me...They don't want me back in my country. If I don't get my residence in Canada I don't know what to do...Sometimes I just don't care anymore.”

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“Mano en Mano” Process

I- Advisory Committee

II- Curriculum Development

III- Curriculum evaluation by the AC

IV- Participants recruitment process helped by key informants and local newspapers

V- Participants were interviewed in order to meet with the requirements of the ethical board

VI- “Mano en Mano” starts. 4 units in one long day and 4 subsequent sessions once per week (8)

VII-Evaluation of the program by the participants

VIII-Interview for one-on-one evaluation with participants



Slide 8

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don't know?

Barry Adam, 4/30/2009

“En *Mano en Mano*, tu entras como amigo y sales como hermano.

In *Mano en Mano*, you enter like a friend you leave like a brother.”



Interesting aspects of the intervention

- Participants received incentives during the intervention
- Many of them continue to visit the centre every Monday night asking for more courses and workshops or just to hang out
- The participants developed a good sense of bonding and friendship and they go out and have fun, overcoming the isolation that many of them had
- -CAP has approved a grant for a year of the **Mano en Mano** project, that will allow for at least for three more groups
- Some of the graduates of the first intervention have asked for the opportunity to co-facilitate some of the new sessions

Evaluation

- Pre-test
 - 3 (of the 15) reported UAI with a regular male partner, 1 with regular male and female partners, and 2 with a casual male partner of unknown serostatus.
- Post-test
 - 2 reported UAI with a regular seroconcordant male partner and none with a casual partner. One of the post-test regular partners was in an open relationship of more than 5 years; the other a monogamous legal marriage.
- Mean score on the UCLA Loneliness scale decreased from 43.27 (sd = 11.29) on the pretest to 40.47 (sd = 8.37) on the posttest.
 - Given the small sample size, the difference between the two means did not reach statistical significance ($t = 1.09$, $df = 14$) using the paired sample T test.



Exit interviews

- Conducted by a research assistant who was not involved with the intervention, Angel Serrano
- Showed
 - a high level of enthusiasm,
 - strong sense of group solidarity,
- Participants subsequently organized and facilitated additional sessions with the assistance of the Centre.

Exit interviews

What participants liked

- Recognizing and coping with situations of personal vulnerability, in particular, feeling at a disadvantage as an immigrant
- HIV prevention and sexual health information
- Dating, love, and relationships between men; how to express oneself better with a partner
- Being able to make a new group of friends
- Asserting self worth in the face of homophobia in families, religion, in home countries, and in Canada
- Personal stories of immigration
- Inclusion of material relevant to HIV-positive people

Suggestions for improvement

- Not enough time to explore full range of issues
- More information about STIs, in particular, how to recognize symptoms
- More audio-visuals
- More on dealing with abuse in relationships
- Should be extended to all newcomers and even to long-term immigrants
- How to adapt not only to “Canadians” but to the whole cultural diversity of Canada
- Groups with a focus on different age groups, immigration status, or sero-status.