TITLE: HIV Risks Among Deportees on the California-Mexico Border

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STUDY ABSTRACT: The U.S. annually deports >900,000 Mexican nationals. Our team recently identified that deportees who are injection drug users (IDUs) are at an increased risk of testing positive for HIV. Yet, deportees are severely understudied population; data on their sex and drug use behaviors are unavailable. This study aims to fill this public health gap by examining migrants’ sexual experiences during their stay in the U.S., during detention, and following deportation to Mexico.

SPECIFIC AIMS: (1) To identify social and environmental migration-related correlates of risky sexual behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection among IDUs deported from the U.S.; (2) To examine the relationship between deportation history and risky drug use practices that may facilitate HIV transmission among deportees. Methods. Eligible adult male IDUs (n= 400) who were deported from the U.S. and participated in Proyecto El Cuete (NIH: R01DA019829) will complete a new interviewer-administered computer-based questionnaire focused on U.S. migration/deportation experiences, emphasizing risky sexual and drug behaviors engaged in during migration in the U.S., detention, and post-deportation. Interviews last ~45 minutes to 1 hour. Questionnaire data will be analyzed using descriptive and multivariate statistical methods in order to assess the relationships between migration/deportation and unsafe sex and injection behaviors among deported IDUs. Data from this study will be linked to Proyecto El Cuete data via a shared numeric code; this will permit us to include in our analyses other sociodemographic and HIV status data. California Needs: In 2006, 1.2 million deportable aliens were located in the U.S., ~90% are Mexican nationals. Deportees are at an elevated risk of testing positive for HIV; of particular interest to policymakers is whether deportees become HIV-infected in the U.S. or in Mexico. It is critical to improve our understanding of deportees’ health status and health behaviors especially since these persons may have ongoing sexual or substance using networks on both sides of the California-Mexico border. The heavy volume of circular migration of between California and Mexico suggests that the generalization of the emerging HIV epidemic will not be controlled by artificial boundaries. To stem the HIV epidemic in California, data on factors that predispose deportees to HIV are needed and will inform domestic and binational intervention and prevention programs.