

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL THREATS: RISK FACTORS FOR EARLY ADOLESCENT ENTRY TO SEX TRADE IN THE MEXICO-U.S. BORDER

Argentina Servin, MD, MPH

Kimberly Brouwer, PhD; Leah Gordon, MPH;

Shira Goldenberg, PhD; Hugo Staines-Orozco, MD;

Carlos Magis-Rodriguez, MD, PhD and Jay Silverman, PhD



# BACKGROUND

- Sex work is quasi-legal and socially tolerated in the border cities of Tijuana, Baja California (San Diego, California) and Ciudad (Cd.) Juarez, Chihuahua (El Paso, Texas) (Patterson et al, 2013)
- It is estimated that there are approximately registered\* 9,000 FSWs in Tijuana and 6000 in Cd. Juarez that attract clients from all parts of the world (Zamora et al., 2013)
- Adolescents in sex trade are significantly more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, substance use, and HIV/STI infection than adult women (Zimmerman et al., 2003; Oram 2012)
- Lack of systematic data and knowledge about the vulnerabilities and pathways leading to underage entry to sex trade in Latin America

# BACKGROUND



Courtesy

# SEX TRAFFICKING AND ADOLESCENTS IN SEX TRADE



Courtesy of Krissy Meckel-Parker

- Two components of UN definition of sex trafficking (2002):
  - Forced or coerced entry to sex work
  - Entry to sex work under age 18 years
- Different patterns of risk for violence and HIV (Silverman et al., 2011)

# OBJECTIVES

- To determine the prevalence of adolescent entry to sex trade
- To explore individual-level developmental factors associated with adolescent entry to sex trade (<18 years of age) in these two Mexican - U.S. border cities





# METHODS

- ESTIMA (NIDA R01DA033194-01A1 PI: Silverman)
- Nested within a larger parent study (NIDA R01 DA028692 PI: Brouwer) examining social, spatial, and built environmental influences on HIV risk in Tijuana and Cd. Juarez
- Quantitative methods
  - N=603 FSWs recruited via time-location sampling at a variety of sex work venues including bars, clubs, massage parlors, billiards halls and street corners
  - Biological testing for HIV and STIs
- Qualitative methods
  - In-depth interviews with 30 FSWs (15 per city)
  - Screening positive sex trafficking

# ELIGIBILITY



Courtesy of Krissy Meckel-Parker

- Biologically female
- Aged 18 years old or older
- In the past 30 days, exchanged sex for money or goods:
  - At least 4 times
  - With at least 4 clients
- Live in Tijuana or Cd. Juarez with no plans to move in the next 18 months
- Agree to receive treatment for STIs & HIV referral, if applicable

# MEASURES

- **Primary Outcome:** Adolescent entry to sex work
  - <18 years old
  - 18+ years old
- **Independent Variables:**
  - **Child sexual abuse:** Age at first forced sexual activity (<13/13+, none)
  - **Child drug use:** Age first used heroine, cocaine, methamphetamine, inhalants, or amphetamines (<13/13+, none)
  - **Early sexual debut:** Age at first sex (oral, anal, vaginal; <15/15+)
  - **Older partner at sexual debut:** Age difference at first sex (10+ years/<10 years)
  - **Early pregnancy:** Age at first pregnancy (<16/16+, none)
- **Covariates:** current age, education, study site, migration



# ANALYSIS

## Qualitative Analysis

- Lifetime chronologies from in-depth interviews

## Quantitative Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (Chi-square, Fisher's exact test)
- Multivariate logistic regression were used to identify factors associated with underage entry to sex work

# STUDY POPULATION

- Age (median):
  - 33 years old
- Education:
  - 22.2% have less than primary education
  - 39.1% have completed secondary education
- Country of origin
  - 97.7% born in Mexico
- Migration
  - 48.9% had ever migrated

# RESULTS

- Prevalence of adolescent entry to sex trade
  - 25.4% entered <18 years of age
  - 11.8% entered <16 years of age
- FSWs entering as adolescents are:
  - Younger (18.4% vs. 28.8% younger than 25 years old)
  - Less educated (19.3% vs. 30.7% with less than primary education)
  - Less likely to have ever migrated (52.4% vs. 38.6%)
  - More likely to report experiencing violence to force commercial sex trade  
19.7% <16 years of age vs. 8.7% among adults
- More likely to be infected with HIV compared with those entering as adults  
5.9% [9/153] for age <18 years vs 1.6% [7/450] for adults

# RESULTS

**Table 1: Sexual history and drug use history among FSWs in Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and the association with age at entry to sex trade (N=603).**

	18+ Entry (n=450)	<18 Entry (n=153)	OR	95% CI
<b>Sexual history</b>				
Child sexual abuse (<13 years old)	9.1 (41)	14.4 (22)	1.68	0.96-2.92
Child drug use (<13 years)	2.4 (11)	13.7 (21)	<b>6.35***</b>	3.00-13.51
Early sexual debut (<15 years old)	26.9 (121)	57.9 (88)	<b>3.73***</b>	2.54-5.47
Older partner at sexual debut (10+ years)	17.0 (76)	30.0 (45)	<b>2.09***</b>	1.36-3.20
Early pregnancy (<16 years old)	19.3 (87)	44.4 (68)	<b>3.34***</b>	2.25-5.00

\*\*\*≤0.001

# RESULTS

**Table 2: Multivariate logistic regression model assessing association of underage entry to sex trade with sexual history and drug use history among FSWs in Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico N=508**

	AOR (95% CI)*
Child drug use (<13)	
No	Ref
Yes	3.82 (1.63-8.92)**
Early sexual debut (<15)	
No	Ref
Yes	2.46 (1.60-3.80)***
Older partner at sexual debut (10+ years)	
No	Ref
Yes	2.085 (1.30-3.35)**
Early pregnancy (<16)	
No	Ref
Yes	2.06 (1.30-3.25)**

\*\*≤0.01

\*\*\*≤0.001

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

“I remember that **the person who lived with my mother (her partner) was a terrible person**, a very bad man, who abused me. Every time that I was going to take a bath, he would get into the bathroom and make me... **He would force me to do horrible things, things that were wrong and I didn't want to do**, and he would threaten me so I wouldn't tell my mother anything” - Claudia, entry at 12, interviewed in TJ.





# CHILD DRUG USE

“I was in a *calafia* [public transportation] when I met a lady who invited me to go to her house whenever I wanted. She told me, ‘you have your house here’ when she got off the *calafia* and I did. I didn’t have anywhere else to go, because I didn’t have contact with my family. So I started using drugs with that lady, she would tell me ‘come on, for your hardships’... I was *chiquilla* (young), and well I did what they told me. And well trying that, you realize that you want more and then more... She worked in a bar and one day she asked me to go with her, and she told me ‘don’t you want more of what you smoked?’ I told her, yeah why not. Um, ‘If you work [in sex work] you will get more money to buy more’” - Camila, entry at 12, interviewed in CJ

# EARLY SEXUAL DEBUT & OLDER PARTNER

“ I was 15 and he was 25 years old, I was young and naïve, I thought I was in love, right?... I had just finished middle school and I decided to leave with him (boyfriend). We lived together for a while and well I got pregnant, he was my first, and he left me. He was married... That is when I started (sex work) to make money to buy diapers, milk, and all that... I had to pay the expenses and it's hard when you don't have an education. If you only went to middle school or you can only find a job in a factory, you only make like 600 pesos per week and that's not enough for the milk and the diapers.” - Monica, entry at 16, interviewed in TJ



# EARLY PREGNANCY



Courtesy of Krissy Meckel-Parker

**“I was raped and I got pregnant, a neighbor raped me. My father instead of helping me he kicked me out of the house; he hit me and kicked me out. I ended up in the street, I slept on the sidewalks and a woman who owned a bar picked me up from the streets and she sold me [forced her into sex work]. She took me to a bar, I had nothing to lose [...] I really needed my family’s help, and well, they didn’t help me.”**  
- Alejandra, entry at 14 years old, interviewed in TJ

# LIMITATIONS

- Due to the legal and ethical implications of underage sex work, our sample was restricted to women who were at least 18 years of age or older and currently engage in sex work.
- Retrospective data on childhood experiences may be subject to recall bias.



# CONCLUSIONS

- Prevention programs should understand which girls are at highest risk for adolescent entry
- Child drug use, early sexual debut, older partner at sexual debut, and early pregnancy may be vulnerabilities to adolescent entry
- Lack of safety net for vulnerable young girls can put them at risk for being sexually exploited





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# CONTACT INFORMATION



**PI: Jay Silverman, PhD**

Professor of Medicine and Global Public Health

Director of Research, Center on Gender Equity and Health

University of California, San Diego

Email: [jgsilverman@ucsd.edu](mailto:jgsilverman@ucsd.edu)

**Twitter:** [@GEH\\_UCSD](https://twitter.com/GEH_UCSD)



**Argentina E. Servin, MD, MPH**

Project Scientist

Center on Gender Equity and Health

Division of Global Public Health

Department of Medicine

University of California, San Diego

Office Phone: 858-822-5099

E-mail: [arservin@ucsd.edu](mailto:arservin@ucsd.edu)

**Twitter:** [@Dr\\_Argentina](https://twitter.com/Dr_Argentina)