

# Community-level migration density and HIV/STI risk among Mexican youth



Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública  
México

Bi-National Research Teams

INSP: Sergio Bautista, MSc and  
Pilar Torres, MA

UCSF: Alexandra Minnis, PhD, MPH and  
Christine Tucker, MPH

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# Youth Migration and HIV

- U.S. Latino youth are disproportionately represented among new STI/HIV infections
- Migration enhances HIV/STI vulnerability
- Youth and female migration from Mexico is on the rise

# Research Question

- How does community level migration density influence HIV/STI risk for Mexican youth?
  - The migration journey
  - Acculturation in the U.S.



# Methods

- Formative work
- 24 in-depth interviews with return migrants (15-24 years old) from 2 communities
- Analysis: ATLAS.ti









# Descriptive Results

Low Density Community	High Density Community
Mostly 1st generation	All 2 <sup>nd</sup> /3rd generation
Youth without parents	Family migration
Migrate primarily for employment	Vacation or family reunification
Migrate to obtain resources and return to Mexico	U.S. as a place of residency since children are taken to/born in U.S.

# The Migration Journey

- High risk journey more likely from low density community
  - Weaker “institutions” to support migration
    - Coyotes
- Two quotes

*21 year old female from Tehuacán, migrated at age 18, cost: US \$3,000 (in 2003)*

“We were drinking water from the troughs that were in the ranches on the way. The water was green .. we were a group of 40 people at least. The second day, some of them were absolutely tired, they could not walk anymore, completely devastated. Then the *coyote* had drugs [cocaine] and he started to give us drugs in order for us to keep walking....”



*20 year old female, Jiquilpan, migrated with sister at age 19, cost: US \$1,500 (in 2005)*

"My brother-in-law made the deal with the *coyotes*. He told them we were cousins, he asked them 'please take care of us'. They took us in a car...and they brought us and behaved very well....They took us to a grocery store, they bought soda and they even bought for us a lottery ticket."

# The Migration Journey contd.

- High risk journey more likely from low density community
  - Limited knowledge of the border
  - Migration primarily through desert
  - Perceived vulnerability of women high
  - Strong fear of death
  - Legality vs. illegality



# Social Networks

- Migrants from high density community are more likely to have social networks in the U.S.
- Existing family ties in the U.S. provide benefits for immigrant youth
  - Social and economic support
  - Parental monitoring

# Social Support

“I had a sister-in-law there that helped me a lot, because as I told you, she lived there her whole life. She guided me a lot, how to consult the pediatrician, gynecologist, everything that she knew.”

*24 year old female migrant from high density community*



# Economic Support

"I did not have a job. I did not have a place to live... It was horrible... And that was when I met the father of my baby. He said to me, 'come with me, marry me,' and I said 'no,' it was not my intention... I was going to put up with living in the truck, but I didn't find work and there were not any other options. I went to live with him."

*21 year old female migrant from low density community*

# Monitoring

"In the U.S. it [commercial sex] is very common because many guys go alone, and sometimes they don't have a girlfriend and wherever you go there are women. I think it is mostly age or that they are alone and nobody is pushing them from behind. Their parents aren't over there *jalándote las orejas*. You are alone, you earn your money and you take care of yourself."

*24 year old migrant from high density community*



# Acculturation

- Networks also presented risk for youth in the U.S.
  - Increased exposure to U.S. adolescent culture
    - School
    - Relatives who were more established
  - Facilitated involvement in higher risk activities
    - Gangs
    - Drugs

# Implications for HIV/STI Risk

- High migration density in community of origin may protect youth
  - Trustworthy coyotes
  - Knowledge of the border
  - Increased economic and social support
  - Access to health care information and services
- May also facilitate acculturation to U.S. adolescent risk behavior
- Increase the transfer of knowledge and behaviors back to sending communities in Mexico



# Next Steps



Include variables from community of origin in future studies on migration and acculturation

Explore further how U.S. social networks offer both protective structures and facilitate adoption of risky behaviors

Examine the role of social marketing of HIV/STI prevention between transnational communities

# Questions

Christine Tucker

[chrisytucker@gmail.com](mailto:chrisytucker@gmail.com)