

# Power Relationships and HIV Prevention among Female Sex Workers in Tijuana: Preliminary Data and Methodological Considerations

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# Project Goals

- Study power, sexuality, and health from the perspective of the female sex workers (FSWs)
- Examine role of community initiated social organizations as a potential mechanism for addressing social inequalities
- Results could promote social organizing as a mechanism to empower women

# Study Site: Tijuana, Mexico



Source: [www.pickatrail.com](http://www.pickatrail.com) (altered)

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# Why Tijuana?

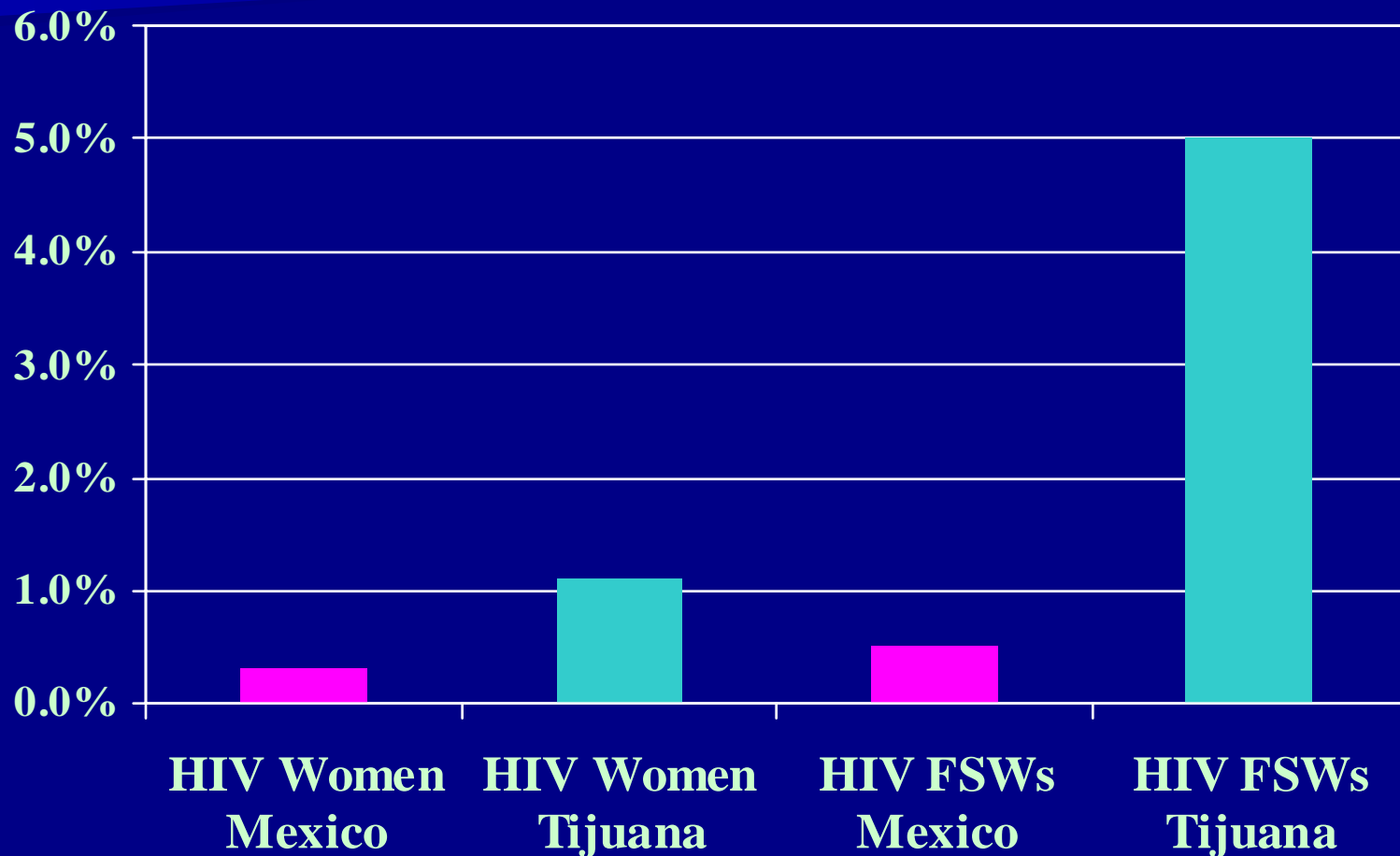
- Busiest land border in the world
- Popular sex tourism destination
- Mexican region with 2<sup>nd</sup> highest HIV rates
- HIV/AIDS rate among FSWs is much higher than the general population
- Has one of the only community initiated social organizations for FSWs in Mexico

Source: Bucardo et. al. 2004; Brouwer et. al 2006; Castillo et. al. 1999

# HIV/AIDS in Tijuana

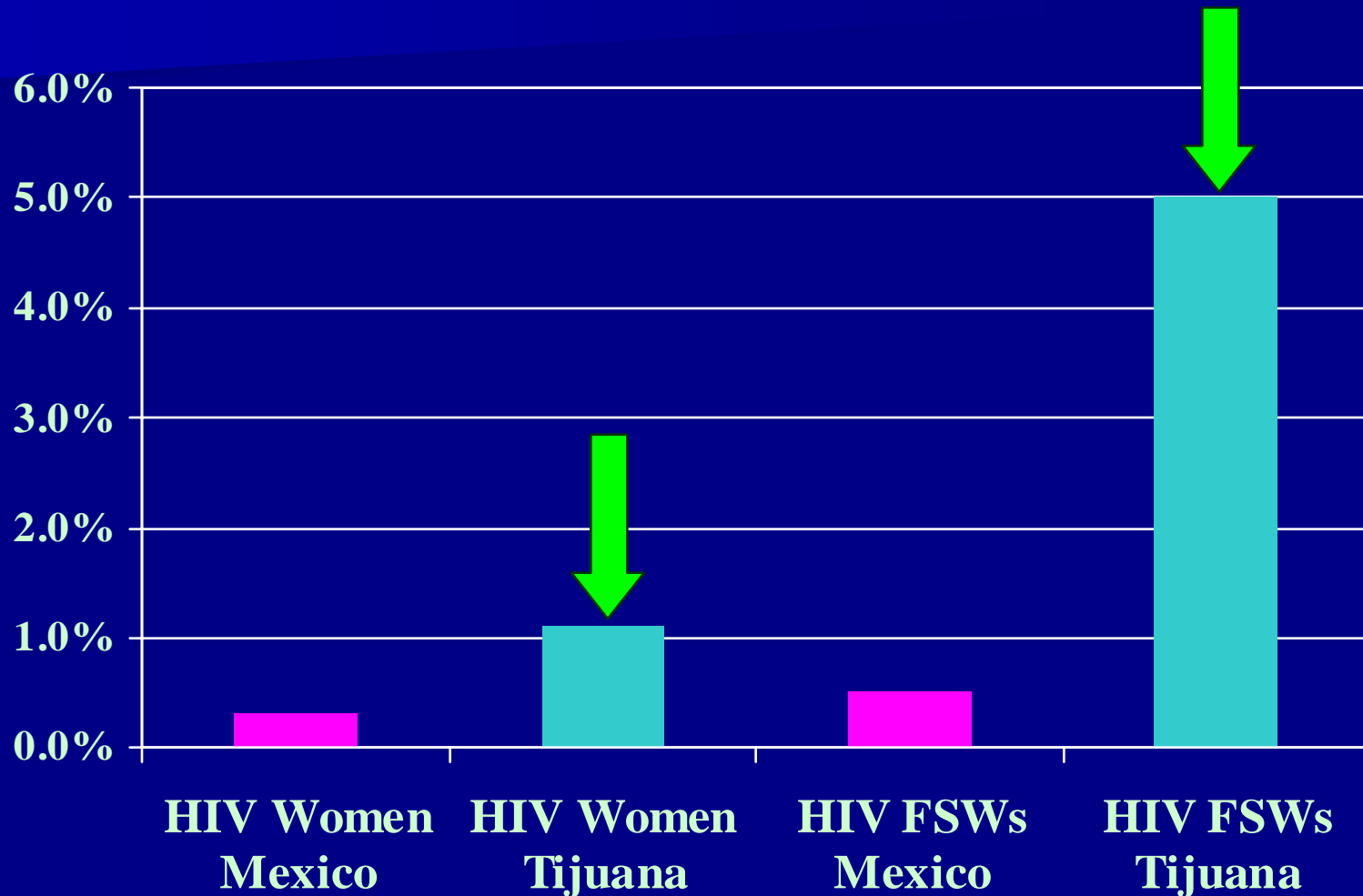
- Number of infected adults 15-49: 1/125
- Rate 3x higher than national average
- Hypothesized reasons for high rates
  - Proximity to U.S.
  - Migration and population mobility
  - Low levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge
  - Substance use
  - Sex work

# Comparison of HIV Rates Among Women and Sex Workers in Mexico



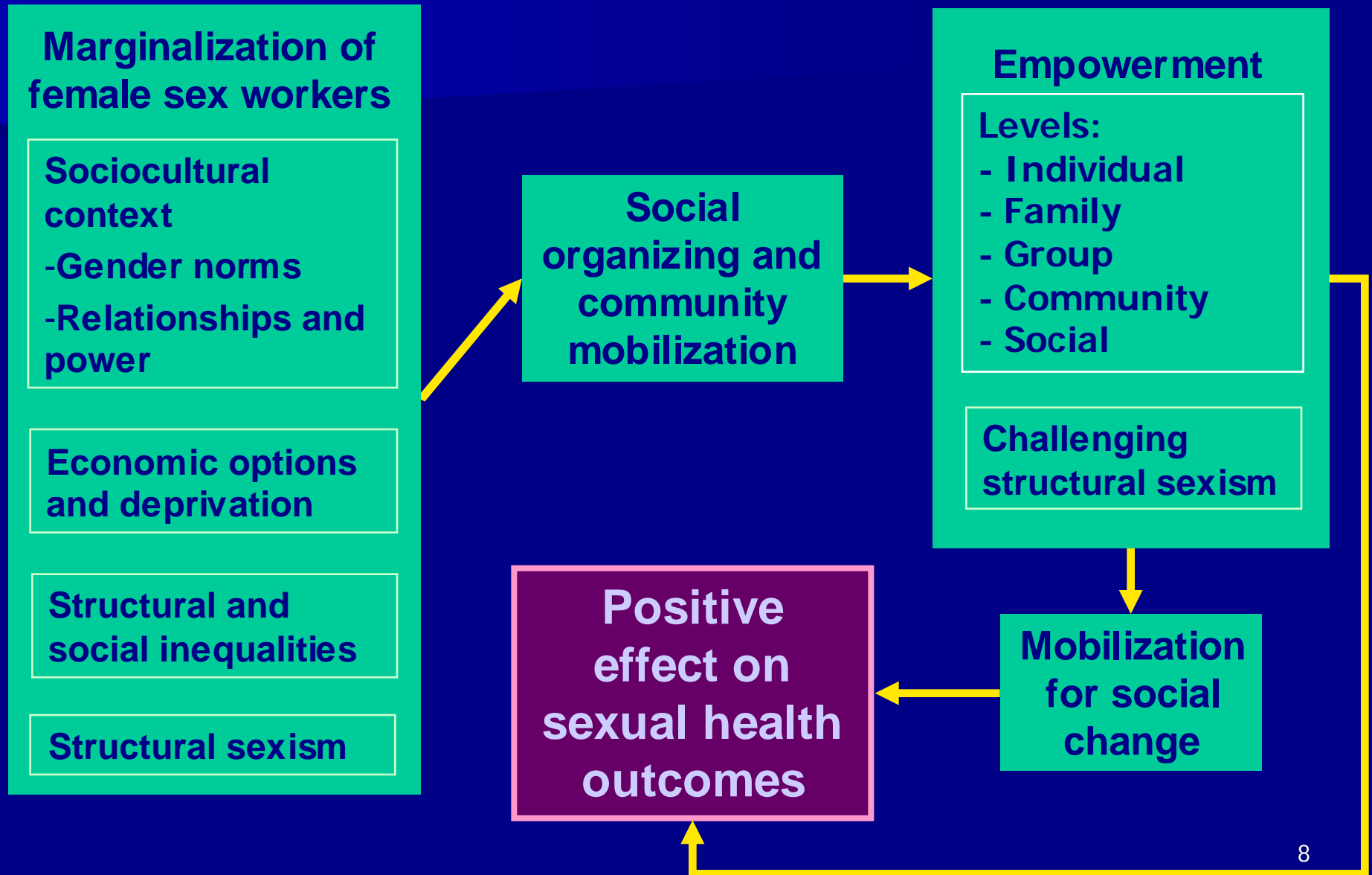
Source: CONASIDA 2006; Brouwer et. al 2006; UNAIDS 2007

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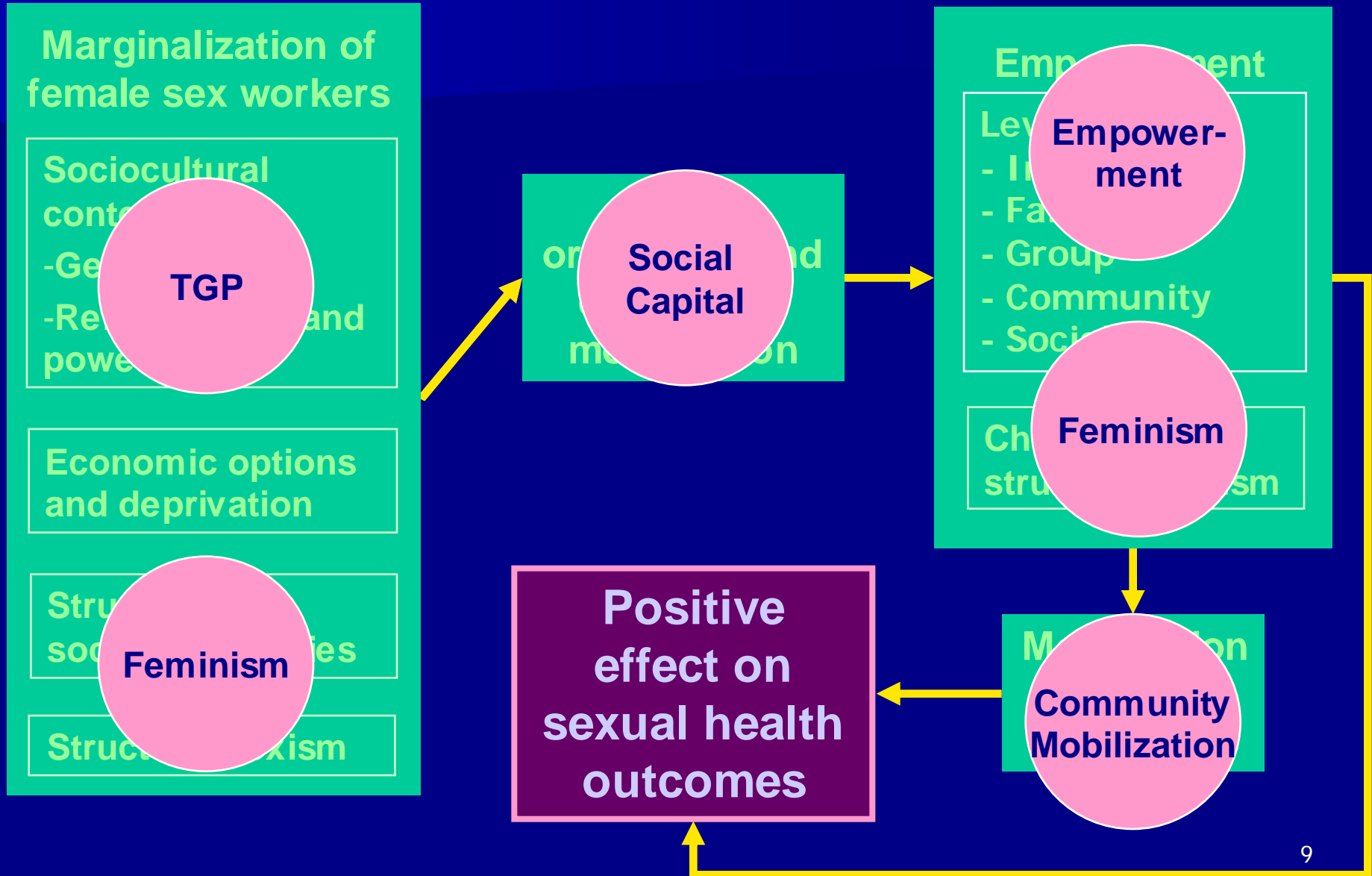
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# Theoretical Foundation

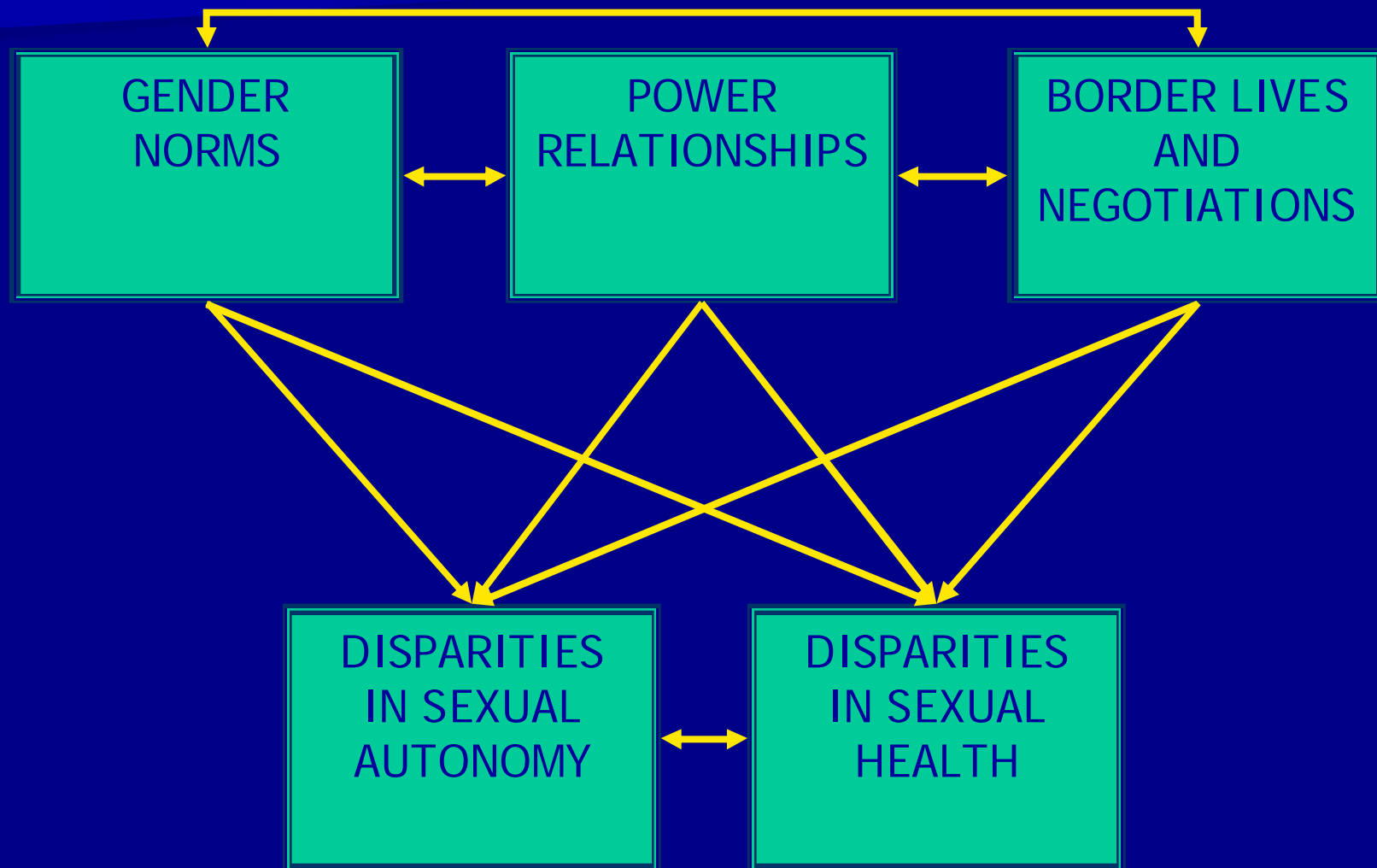




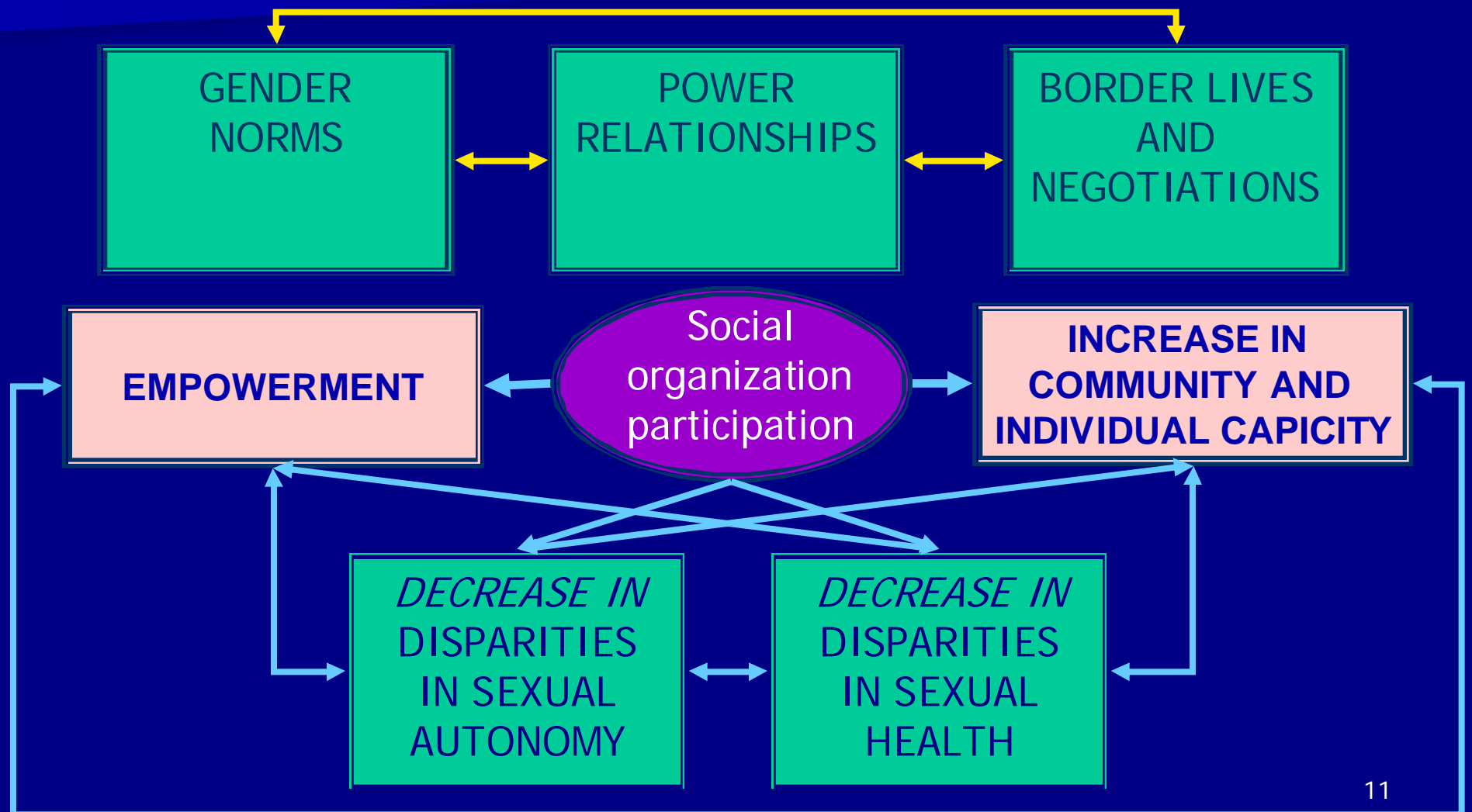
# Theoretical Foundation



# Theoretical Foundation: Gender, Power, and Sexuality



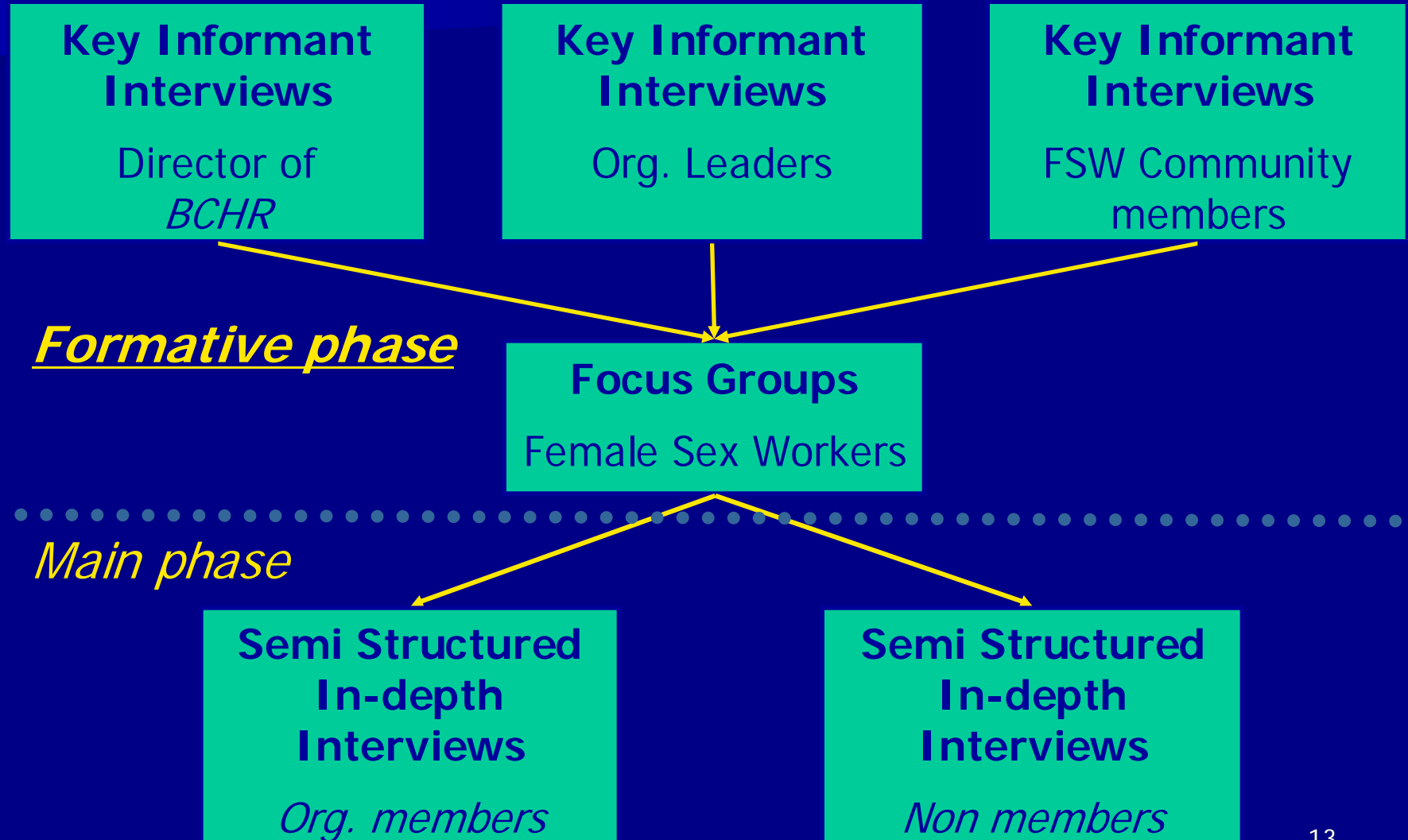
# Does participation in social organizations reduce disparities in sexual health autonomy and sexual health?



# Methodological Approach

- Multi-stage qualitative study
- “Bottom-up” approach
- Community involvement and collaboration
  - Bi-National Center for Human Rights
  - Maria Magdalena Vanguard Organization of Free Women
  - Tijuana Municipal Health Center:  
*Departamento de Control Sanitario*

# Research Process



# Data Collection: FSWs Sample Sizes

	<b>FSWs Organization Members</b>	<b>FSWs Non-Organization Members</b>
<b># of key informant interviews</b>	<b>2 – 3</b>	<b>2 – 3</b>
<b># of focus groups</b>	<b>1 – 2 (~ 8 FSWs/group)</b>	<b>1 – 2 (~ 8 FSWs/group)</b>
<b># of semi- structured</b>	<b>10 – 20</b>	<b>10 – 20</b>

# Preliminary Findings: Female Sex Workers in Tijuana (1)

- Age range of FSWs estimated at 14 to 50s
- Street-based and establishment-based
- Clients are both foreign and local men
- Mexican and foreign born FSWs
  - Street based sex workers primarily Mexican
  - Most from other areas in Mexico such as Puebla, Sinaloa, and Tlaxcala



Source: [www.pickatrail.com](http://www.pickatrail.com) (altered)



# Preliminary Findings: Female Sex Workers in Tijuana (2)

- Many deny having *padrotes* (pimps)
  - Most establishments FSWs have managers
  - Husbands/partners are often the pimp
- Women will not respond to the term "*prostituta*"
  - Refer to themselves with terms such as:
    - "*trabajadoras sexuales*"
    - "*sexo servidoras*"

# Preliminary Findings: Regulation of Female Sex Work (1)

- “Legal” within *zonas de tolerancia*
- Currently 7300 FSWs are registered
- Need to have valid working permit
  - Health exams needed
  - Permits monitored by *Inspección y Vigilancia Municipal*

# Preliminary Findings: Regulation of Female Sex Work (2)

- Required to be tested for STDs monthly and HIV every 4 months
- FSWs are required to pay for their health exams
- No way to track those who do not come in for medical exams
  - Many have left Tijuana

# Methodological Considerations

## ■ Community access

### □ Community “buy-in”

- Participants need to accept the research team and research process

### □ Safe places for interviews

- Free from coercion
- Safe from bosses, police, and other FSWs

### □ Time to interview

- Time constraints do to conflicting priorities

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# Study Limitations

- Non-probability sample
- Research exhaustion on part of FSWs
- Potential for social desirability
- Cultural and social differences between researcher and participants
- One person to code and analyze data
- Other factors not included in study may affect sexuality and health



# Tijuana



# Tijuana Municipal Health Center



# Project Support

- This project has been supported by funds from:
  - UCLA School of Public Health Global Health Training Program
  - University of California *Quality in Graduate Education*



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# Thank You!

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