



Exposure to Partner, Family and Community Violence: Missing Links in Young Latina Women's Risk for Unintended Pregnancy

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE
Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

Background: Lifetime exposure to violence and reproductive health



- IPV increases women's risk for unintended pregnancies
- Impact of childhood exposure to violence (inter-parental violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect) on health including pregnancy risk:
 - Increased risk for violence in adolescent and adult relationships.

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- Pregnancy ambivalence*
- Contraceptive ambivalence*

What if the disconnect between a young woman's desires regarding pregnancy and her contraceptive nonuse is not necessarily something she can fully control?

- Reproductive coercion
 - birth control sabotage
 - pregnancy coercion

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Background: Gang Violence and Reproductive Health

Gang exposure and pregnancy incidence among female adolescents in San Francisco:

- High pregnancy rates
- Pregnancy risk associated with partners' involvement in a gang

(Minnis 2008)



Methods: Ethnographic Interviews

Exploring life stories
In-depth narrative interviews
Young Latina women ages 18-34
Recruited from Homeboy Industries (gang intervention program in LA) – already receiving services
Certificate of Confidentiality



Results

Demographics (N= 20)

- age range 18-34
- 14 identified as Mexican, 2 as Hispanic (El Salvadoran), others unknown
- 11 U.S. born, 8 born in Mexico, 1 unknown
- 11 identified as gang-members
- 15 have ever been pregnant; 11 pregnant 2+ times
- 18 have had childhood exposure to violence
- 17 have had partner physical or sexual violence
- 11 reported pregnancy coercion



Early exposure to gangs & community violence

"We grew up in LA. My dad is gang-related. My mom was/is very loyal to my father. There was a lot of drug selling in the house. We had a lab at home to cook heroin and coke. My dad and uncle thought it was funny to watch me fight other little girls, I was 5. I was trained to be violent. I had to hold the dope and the gun when I was 7. My dad would tell me to hold it and don't ask questions. My dad would hit my mom when he was angry. Those are the first memories I have." – Adriana, age 34



Lifetime Exposure to Violence

"My Step-father was abusive, always beating up on my mother (even when she was pregnant) and abusing me when I was the age of 5. ... My mom didn't know, I guess she didn't know any best at the time. Growing up he was beating me up, molesting me, and beating my mom. He'll start coming to my bed, and start grabbing me...my breasts, down there, messing with me, and I'd used to get frozen. I didn't know what to do, I was scared of him. This went on from the age of 5 to almost 14. Mom said she would leave him but she would come back to him. She was trying to be old-fashioned, trying to be like: you have to have your dad." – Carmen, 30



Forced Sex, Contraception, and Pregnancy

"I didn't want to have a baby at that time. I didn't want to have sex after what I went through but I don't know why I did. My bf would hit me if I didn't have sex with him. At 17, he would force me to have oral sex with him, and I didn't want to. ... I didn't know about (contraception) at the time. I didn't know nothing about the pill, about condoms. I would let him just do whatever he wanted to...because of what I went through I thought that that was normal. I was 17 when I had my 2nd child. I didn't want to be pregnant then either. I knew about contraception then ... I don't think he tried to stop me from having it, I just don't remember why I didn't. I don't remember saying I'll get on the pill. For me it was just like, I won't have sex. But then most of the time it was forced." - Isabel, age 24, 4 children, first at age 14



Reproductive Coercion

“One of my boy friends wanted to get me pregnant. He did it on purpose. He didn’t wear a condom on purpose. I was just like ‘what did I get myself into?’ He’d start with a condom on and then take it off. I’d be very mad and upset but it was an on-off relationship while he went to jail. I always ended up going back to him. I lost his virginity to him and I think he was obsessed with me. He still didn’t leave me when I was with another person. He was trying to get me pregnant to keep me and make me stay with him.” - Cecilia, age 22



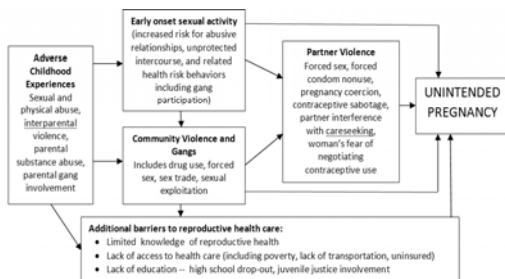
Mistimed or Unwanted Pregnancy

“When I found out I was pregnant, I didn’t want to have her. It wasn’t planned, it just happened, although I wanted to be pregnant with him. I wasn’t on birth control at the time. I didn’t even pick the name for her. I didn’t want to have a daughter and have her go through the same thing that I went through.”

– Maria, age 23



Family, Community, and Partner Violence and Pregnancy Risk



Lifetime Exposure to Violence and Pregnancy Risk

Implications for Policy

Implications for Clinical Practice including trauma-informed approach in juvenile justice system

Implications for Gang Intervention Programs



Limitations

- Small, non-representative, convenience sample
- Content saturation reached quickly
- Reliance on self-report leading to potential recall bias and biased interpretation of male behavior
- Focused on young women only, need to better understand male perspective, male pregnancy intentions

(Minnis 2008)



Final Thoughts

- Powerful and moving experience
- Elevated pregnancy risk as a result of family and community violence as well as forced sex and pregnancy coercion by male gang-affiliated partners
- Women told us about missed interventions in schools, and the need to talk (and normalize what had happened) and to heal
- They came from homes and communities where this is all anyone knows, all they knew until Homeboy Industries



What would have helped you?

"I think counselors at school need to go at them, they don't come at you... a girl counselor coming inside the school in our classes, trying to talk to us and tell us: you know girls, many cruel things could happen to you, but there's always the right choice to make. And tell you a heads up, what to do and what to choose right. Even there are things going wrong in your house, there are a lot of programs that could help. If I knew there were a lot of programs, I would have gone and it would have helped." --
--Sofia, age 19



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Questions?

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