

**DRUG USE AND HIV RISK
AMONG MIDDLE-CLASS
YOUNG PEOPLE
IN GUATEMALA CITY
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**



DRUG USE AND HIV RISK AMONG MIDDLE-CLASS YOUNG PEOPLE IN GUATEMALA CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative study explores the relationship between drug use and increased risk for HIV transmission among middle-class young people in Guatemala City. To date, HIV prevention programs in Guatemala have targeted two key populations known to be at heightened risk for HIV: female sex workers and men who have sex with men. However, an important unanswered question remains as to whether users of both injection and non-injection drugs may constitute a third type of key population and a potentially important focus of future HIV prevention activities.

This study employed the PEER methodology, whereby peer-interviewers were themselves drug users and were asked to recruit three friends to participate. The 21 peer-interviewers recruited a total of 62 respondents who participated in three interviews each (for a total of 184 interviews, with 5 incomplete).

Respondents viewed drug use favorably. Drugs were described as social lubricants that facilitate interactions with friends and provide new, pleasurable experiences free from the conventions of a conservative society. Among this group of primarily young, middle-class respondents, drug use was limited almost exclusively to non-injection drugs, specifically cocaine, marijuana, ecstasy, LSD, and mushrooms. Respondents considered drugs affordable and easy to obtain in Guatemala City.

Though respondents associated drug use with some sexual risk behaviors, HIV risk perception among respondents was low. Common fears related to drug use among respondents included pregnancy, detection of drug use, overdose, and addiction. HIV, however, was not expressed by respondents as a major concern, and few knew anyone in their social circle who was HIV positive. Respondents were aware of how HIV is transmitted and the protection offered by condoms, but readily admitted that they were more concerned about pregnancy, and that couples who have a certain level of mutual trust tend to forgo condoms and use only oral contraceptives. Under the influence of drugs, respondents reported being more concerned about pleasure than condom use. Respondents also reported multiple sex partners and occasional commercial sex in their drug user circles. Collectively, these data suggest that these young, middle-class drug users may be at a heightened risk for HIV transmission, especially if the virus should become more prevalent in their tight-knit social networks.

Although few of the 62 respondents had ever tested for HIV, they generally accepted the prospect of getting tested, especially if it was offered for free. This finding, as well as the thematic result of this study, contributed to the development of a subsequent quantitative study on the prevalence of HIV and sexual risk behaviors among drug users in Guatemala City. A list of emic terms, or words or phrases specific to the culture of the population, was also generated for use by researchers in and beyond the subsequent quantitative study. One major limitation of the study is that the peer-interviewer methodology resulted in a homogenous sample. Future research is needed to explore HIV risk behaviors among drug users in lower and upper socioeconomic classes.

INTRODUCTION

Around 62,000 Guatemalans are living with HIV, the majority being adolescents or young adults (UCSF, 2009; UNAIDS, 2008). Though the prevalence of HIV is low in the overall population (less than 1% of adults 15 years or older), the epidemic is thought to be concentrated in key populations, such as sex workers and men who have sex with men. Additionally, the vast majority of funding for HIV prevention programs is directed toward these key populations (Shehane et al., 2008). However, an important unanswered question remains as to whether users of both injection and non-injection drugs may constitute a third type of key population and a potentially important focus of future HIV prevention activities.

Drug use has been documented as a major risk factor for HIV transmission. Due to the potential of exchanging bodily fluids through shared syringes, injection drug use has been the driving force behind the HIV epidemic in some Asian and Eastern European countries, and a major factor in transmission in many other countries, including the United States (Mathers et al., 2008). In recent years however, growing evidence has emerged of the risks related to non-injection drug use, due to its association with sexual risk behaviors. This evidence includes the increased likelihood of unsafe sex while under the influence of drugs, the practice of trading of sex for drugs, and cases where a non-injecting drug user has an injecting partner at heightened risk for HIV (Hoffman et al., 2000; Sanchez et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2002; Howard & Latkin 2006).

Drug use is illegal in Guatemala, and some studies have shown that the most widely used drugs were non-injection drugs like marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, crack, mushrooms, and glue (McIlwaine & Moser, 2004; SECCATID, 2009). Yet few reliable statistics exist on the prevalence of drug use and the demographics of users in the country. Further, as the Ministry of Health and other national entities directing HIV prevention in Guatemala do not generally target drug users as key population, it is important to document the extent to which drug users are at heightened risk for HIV transmission and whether they should be considered a key population in future HIV prevention programs.

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between drug use and behaviors that could increase risk of HIV transmission in Guatemala City. This overarching objective was achieved through two studies: a qualitative study (the topic of this report) and a subsequent quantitative study. The research is limited to Guatemala City, based on the premise that drug use is higher in this urban area (capital city) than in the rest of Guatemala (McIlwaine & Moser, 2004). The specific aims of the qualitative study were to assess types of drugs used, ease of accessing these drugs, sources of drug supply, risk perception for HIV, sexual risk behaviors, use of condoms, and HIV testing among drug users in Guatemala City. A secondary aim was to learn local terminology and colloquial names for drugs. Results of the qualitative study also informed the design of the quantitative survey, which aimed to estimate the prevalence of drug use, evaluate the size and nature of drug use networks, and measure the prevalence of HIV among drug users across socio-economic groups in Guatemala City.

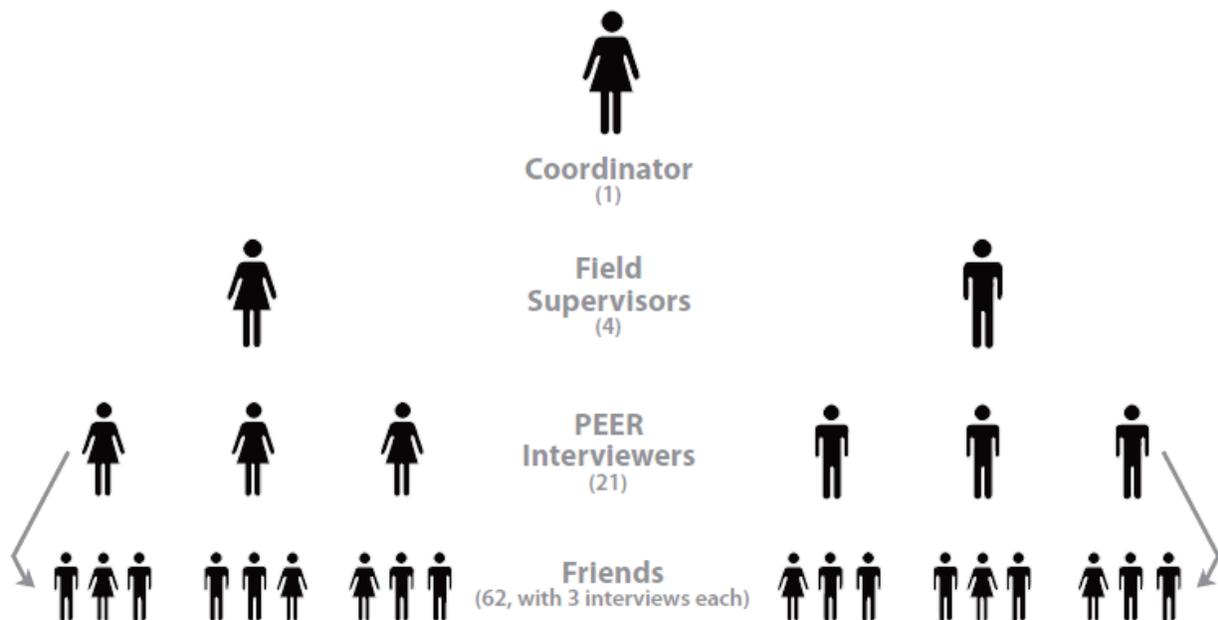
METHODS

The research team used the Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) approach to recruit participants in this study (Price & Hawkins, 2002). The PEER approach has been used in research on sexual and reproductive behavior, maternal health, and the social context of health related behavior (Hemmings, Sakulku & Siphakanlaya, 2008). The qualitative methodology uses a variation of snowball sampling, in that persons from the study population recruit others in their social network to participate. However, the PEER ethnographic approach has two unique aspects. First, the interviewers (described as “peer-interviewers” throughout this report) share the same profile as the respondents, in this case, drug users. Second, the methodology is highly participative, with the supervisors and peer-interviewers taking a lead role in defining the research questions and discussion guides.

Research team and peer-interviewer training

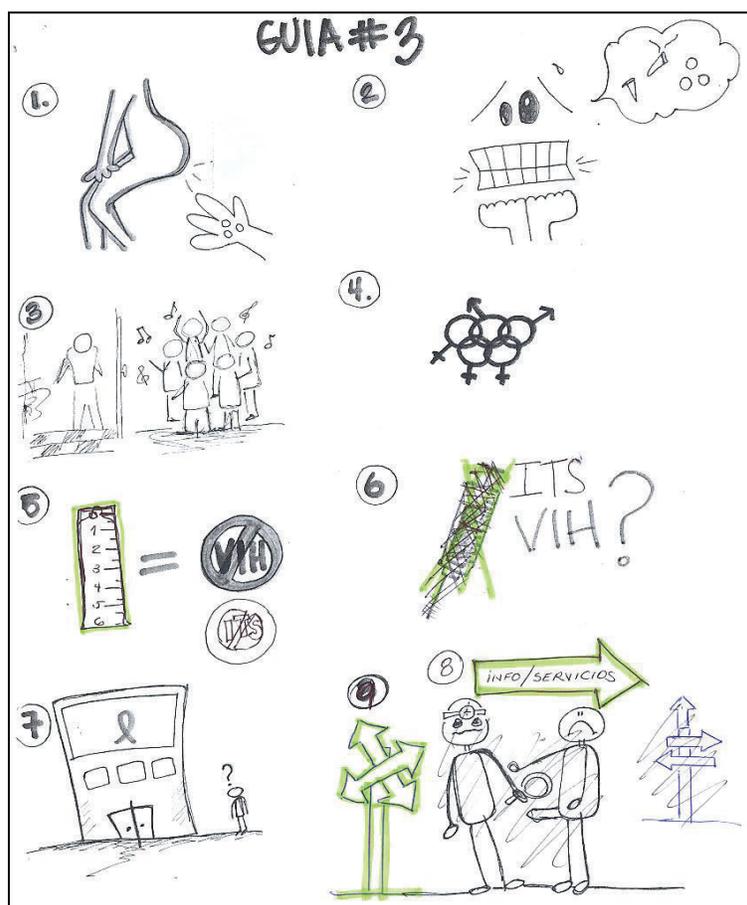
PASMO (The Pan American Social Marketing Organization), a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a regional presence and extensive experience with HIV prevention, implemented this study with technical assistance from Tulane University. The local study director began by identifying one coordinator and four persons to serve as supervisors—three males and one female. These individuals were self-reported to be highly familiar with the local drug scene, though they did not necessarily use drugs themselves. All were university graduates who had previous experience with social science research. After an orientation on the objectives of the study, each coordinator identified and recruited five “peers” who they personally knew to be drug users to serve as peer-interviewers (see Figure 1). Peer-interviewers were required to meet the same eligibility criteria as participants.

Figure 1: Recruitment of process of peer- interviewers and “friends” (respondents)



This data collection team (one coordinator, four supervisors, and 21 peer-interviewers) underwent a week of training and one day of refresher training before initiating the data collection. Topics covered included the objectives of the study, instructions on the use of the PEER methodology, use of the informed consent script, importance of confidentiality, interviewing techniques, and extensive role-playing. Given the participative nature of the PEER methodology, the peer-interviewers themselves designed the discussion guides based on the objectives of the study. They also converted the series of questions to graphics cues to facilitate natural conversation and avoid the consequences of misplacing a sensitive printed discussion guide (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example interview cue card created by peer-interviewer



Recruitment of peers (*amigos*) and conduct of the interviews

Following the training, each peer-interviewer identified three friends (*amigos*)—male or female—who fulfilled the selection criteria for the study to participate in a study of *Party Lovers* (local slang for people who enjoy using drugs). Figure 1 above illustrates this recruitment process. To be included, the *amigo* needed to be at least 18 years of age, be a resident of Guatemala City, be willing and able to give informed consent, and have consumed at least one illicit drug (cocaine, crack, heroin, or ecstasy) in the past 30 days. Although many also smoked marijuana, the use of marijuana alone did not qualify for

inclusion in the study. Additionally, the *amigo* had to be willing to participate in one interview of 90 minutes per week over a three-week period. Socio-economic status and place of residence were not used in formal selection criteria. However, because the supervisors and peer-interviewers referred drug users who were in their social networks, the sample was more heavily middle class than intended or desired.

No personal identifiers were collected, and the peer-interviewer obtained verbal consent from each respondent in order to protect anonymity. The peer-interviewer allowed the *amigo* to determine the interview setting, and typical meeting places were in private homes, cafes, or on the university campus.

The interviews focused on one different topic per week over the three-week period, including daily routines, relationships, and health. All three of these topics were intended to open discussion on drug use and sexual activity. According to the PEER methodology, peer-interviewers did not record interviews or take notes during the sessions (Hemmings, personal communication, 2010). Rather, they waited until the end of the session to recount the conversation as possible into typed notes, and then communicate to their supervisor what transpired in each session during weekly debriefing interviews. Therefore, because direct quotes from the respondents could not be systematically recorded, actual quotes are not included in this article. One of the originators of the PEER methodology further explains the theory behind this methodology in the following quotation.

We do not treat the de-briefing interviews with the peer interviewers¹ as an opportunity to ‘download’ information, word for word [...] Rather, we (the social scientist) treat the de-briefing interview as an anthropologist treats a ‘key informant’ interview. The peer interviewers have gone out into their community and conducted interviews with several friends, in the process developing higher levels of awareness and knowledge about what other people in the community say and think about the issues in question. A particular emphasis is put on gathering real life stories and examples, which people tend to remember quite well. Thus, when the de-briefing interview takes place, it is between a social scientist and a lay expert, and the information collected during this interview is what constitutes the PEER data. The data are a mixture of the stories they have collected from their friends, through the lens of the peer interviewers' own interpretation and views, which in itself sheds light on the values and meanings of the stories (Hemmings, personal communication, 2010).

During the weekly debriefing interviews, the supervisor would probe peer-interviewers for specific details, explore contradictions, and seek clarification on any culturally-specific terms (emic terms) used. These sessions also ensured that the peer-interviewers stayed on schedule and were obtaining the type and quality of information needed. After all interviews were completed, the peer interviewers met for a

¹ Note: in the original correspondence with Hemmings, she uses the term “peer researcher” instead of “peer interviewer,” presumably to reflect the importance of the information provided by this source. However, to avoid confusion in terminology, we have changed the wording in the quotation above to “peer-interviewer” to be consistent with the terminology used in the rest of the report.

final session in which they separately designed a male and a female “prototype” (*arquetipo*) of a typical *Party Lover* drug user in Guatemala City, based on the persons they had interviewed. This prototype could contribute to the design of future behavior change communication programs should they be deemed necessary, among this profile of drug user. A description of the male and female prototype appears in Appendix A.

Emic terms that emerged during the interviews were compiled into a list and translated into Spanish, and subsequently to English. The list of slang terms contributed to the design of the quantitative methods, as well as the understanding of drug use in Guatemala City (see Appendix B).

Data analysis

Thematic content analysis, a method involving categorizing qualitative data into recurrent or common themes, was used to analyze interview transcripts. A preliminary coding scheme was developed based on an initial review of the data and research objectives. Emerging codes were also incorporated as the analysis progressed. The first author coded the interviews and identified the key findings with the aid of NVivo (version 8.0). The research team then organized the content from the interviews around each of the major topics of interest in the research, collectively seeking out patterns or trends across the different interviews.

Human subjects approval

The protocol for this study was reviewed and approved by the Tulane University IRB on January 6, 2010, and by the *Comité de Ética* (Ethics Committee) of the Ministry of Health in Guatemala on October 27, 2009.

RESULTS

A total of 184 interviews were conducted among 62 unique respondents (50 males, 12 females). In this section, we present a synopsis of the results from these interviews in relation to the three study objectives: patterns of drug use, HIV risk, and information useful for guiding the quantitative study.

Patterns of drug use

Respondents provided a wealth of information on drug use in their social circles, including types of drugs used, sources of drugs, cost and availability of drugs, circumstances for using one drug over another, and fears related to drug use.

In general, the sample viewed drug use in a very positive light, and considered drug use as a part of their daily or weekly routine. Respondents regarded drugs as social lubricants, integral in facilitating interactions with peers. Drugs were also a way to have a good time and to experience new sensations or realities, including heightened sexual excitement in some cases. They associated drugs with lively parties, strong bonds of friendship and support with fellow users, and freedom from the conventions of a conservative society.

Respondents made a sharp distinction between recreational drug users and addicts. The respondents in this study considered themselves functional, and disapproved of drug users that had become addicted to the point of isolating themselves, using drugs alone, dropping out of mainstream society (school, job, family), stealing, or openly exchanging sex for drugs. The term *party lovers* underscores the group aspect of drug use, sharing and experiencing with others, in contrast to the isolation of addictive drug use. *Party lovers* tended to consume drugs frequently, and many cited daily consumption of marijuana. They used more potent drugs on weekends and in specific contexts (e.g., cocaine, often in combination with alcohol, for weekend parties; ecstasy for sensual, intense sexual experiences).

Types of drugs used

The use of multiple drugs, simultaneously or sequentially, was widespread among respondents. Although a few mentioned that they or their friends used only one drug (cocaine or marijuana), the vast majority spoke of different drugs used in different circumstances. Although the mixing of different drugs emerged as a common practice, circumstances appeared to dictate a particular drug in other cases (e.g., LSD at concerts with electronic music). Marijuana and cocaine appeared to be the most frequent drugs used by this group of respondents.

Marijuana. Many respondents began drug use by experimenting with marijuana, and then moved on to other drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, and mushrooms, among others. Respondents indicated that they consumed marijuana (often daily) either alone or in a group (e.g., at a party). It is easy to obtain at an affordable price for the middle class (one ounce of good quality marijuana reportedly costs between Q800-1000, or about \$100 USD, and represents a sizable quantity).

Respondents described marijuana as a versatile drug to be used in many different contexts, activities, or moments of the day. Additionally, some described having friends involved in harvesting and processing

the plant as a hobby, and the harvest offered a time for a celebration with friends. Others mentioned obtaining marijuana from farmers or friends/acquaintances that rent parcels of land to cultivate and commercialize the product. Marijuana was viewed as a drug that facilitates social interactions, good times, relaxation and enjoyment (*tirar buena vibra*). Others described marijuana as being able to inspire.

Cocaine. For this group of respondents, cocaine emerged as the most common party drug, and another social lubricant. They described using it among a group of friends (though the composition of this group might change somewhat from week to week). If one member of the group never seemed to contribute to buying or providing the drugs, he/she might not be invited back. Respondents also indicated that they were careful to use cocaine only around people they knew and trusted (*de confianza*). If they didn't feel comfortable with some of the people present, they might instead go into a restroom, car or dormitory room to use cocaine. Because of the strong social associations with cocaine, respondents frowned upon persons that regularly used cocaine in isolation, and interpreted isolated use as a sign of addiction.

Some respondents mentioned that cocaine—used in the right quantities and (sometimes) combined with alcohol—could heighten sexual excitement for women. However, males had to control the quantity of cocaine consumed if they planned to have sex. It was believed that too much cocaine could result in a man's inability to get or sustain an erection, thus putting his manliness in question. The possibility of impotence was of great concern to the males in this study, who did not want their reputations tarnished by female sexual partners who may denounce their ability to perform or satisfy. Women also reported suffering from the sexual effects of too much cocaine in the form of vaginal dryness and discomfort during penetrative sex. Ironically, many respondents viewed cocaine as a key ingredient to great partying and connecting with sex partners; yet for the reasons mentioned above, some admitted that sex under the influence of cocaine was actually not as good as sex when sober.

Several respondents also mentioned that using cocaine helped to mask being inebriated. In fact, some reported that young people living at home initiated cocaine use to cover up appearing drunk when they returned after a party to their parents' house.

Many respondents indicated that they used cocaine throughout the week. The days with highest consumption were Wednesday ("Ladies' Night" at many of the local bars), Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Many used Sunday to recuperate (especially if they had used drugs heavily over the weekend) and prepare for the upcoming week.

According to respondents, cocaine is relatively easy to obtain in Guatemala City. There are known "points of sale" where one can go to buy cocaine including certain houses/apartments, street vendors outside of discos ("chicklet sellers" in local parlance), or other public places. In addition, they reported that some taxi drivers deliver cocaine to private homes. It is also common to have a dealer that is part of one's social circle, who can supply cocaine at a party in a safe, convenient manner. Respondents stated that it was important to know one's dealer and have confidence in him, given that some dealers take advantage of people and mix the cocaine with other substances (e.g., bicarbonate of soda, aspirin, and even Ajax). Respondents recognized that inhaling cocaine laced with other substances could cause serious health problems.

Although some dealers can supply a variety of different drugs to their clients, dealers generally tend to specialize in a specific product or products. Normally those that sell cocaine are dedicated only to the distribution of this drug. However, some of these dealers can also obtain other drugs if they are asked in advance.

Ecstasy. Respondents reported using ecstasy in the form of a pill; the most notable of these pills was referred to as “Ferrari” for its bright red color. Ecstasy intensifies sensation and is used to increase sexual excitation. Respondents associated the use of ecstasy with parties or trips to sites within Guatemala but outside of the capital city (e.g., to Antigua, Lake Atitlan, Puerto, or Izabal). Respondents reported that males might offer it to potential sex partners as an inducement. Ecstasy can only be obtained from certain dealers and is not as easy to procure as marijuana or cocaine.

LSD. Respondents associated use of LSD, also known as “acid,” with parties with electronic music. They described the drug as being able to sensitize the user to perceive reality from different perspectives, while amplifying and enhancing sensations. It can come in the forms of small pieces of thin paper (one cm by one cm) or drops. The sample reported using LSD especially at concerts with DJs or at “raves” (somewhat clandestine parties with electronic music and dancing that last into the early morning or even several days). However, respondents indicated that some people use LSD on their own just to have a “trip.”

Mushrooms. Respondents regarded hallucinogenic mushrooms as attractive because they allow one to interpret reality from another perspective, and to experience different sensations and visions. Some described their experiences as “transcendental,” putting them more in touch with their spiritual side. Mushroom use was related to new age environmentalism, and some respondents reported using them outdoors where they could interact and commune with nature.

Respondents claimed that mushrooms are normally consumed in a small, tightly knit group of friends who could take care of each other to prevent overdosing or to care for a person that may experience negative effects.

Heroin. According to our respondents, heroin is a drug very rarely used by the middle class in Guatemala. Respondents knew of a few cases of heroin users, but these persons tended to be older and wealthier, able to pay up to \$100 USD for a dose.

Crack. Respondents referred to crack as a very addictive product, and one that is consumed most frequently by users in low socioeconomic levels. Users will often consume it at a particular *punto* (point or location), and one respondent described a dealer that hung tennis shoes over an electrical line to identify this *punto*.

Combinations (Candy flip, Hippie flip). “Candy flip” is a combination of LSD and ecstasy. “Hippie flip” is a combination of mushrooms and LSD. One respondent explained that people use a combination of drugs that would purposely have different effects. For example, one drug excites and alters one’s sensations while the other provides relaxation.

Legal Drugs (pharmacy products, veterinary medicines, and poppers). Respondents also reported the recreational use of certain legal pharmaceutical products. Diazepam, for example, is used to help induce sleep after intense partying and drug use. By contrast, those who wish to stay awake for several days in a row, such as medical students studying for exams, may use Ritalin.

Additionally, respondents mentioned the use of a veterinarian anesthesia, *Ketamina*, used for large animals (e.g., horses, cows). When heated in a microwave, the product crystallizes, and can then be pulverized for inhalation. The drawback is that this product causes considerable discomfort in the tissues of the nose.

Several respondents mentioned “poppers,” used to facilitate anal sex (heterosexual or homosexual). Poppers are inhaled, and this relaxes the sphincter muscles. They can be obtained in sex shops.

Risk of HIV associated with drug use

Neither the peer-interviewers (themselves drug users) nor their respondents seemed to directly associate drug use with increased risk for HIV. Although the information obtained about sexual practices, inconsistent condom use, involuntary sex, and related topics indicated that this group could be at heightened risk of HIV, respondents did not directly acknowledge this risk. In this study, we explored possible HIV-related risks associated with drug use and learned the following.

Increased sexual activity

Both male and female respondents saw drug use as a way of connecting with the other sex in a highly stimulating, enjoyable environment, free of the usual inhibitions. Males generally hoped these situations would lead to sex; and females in their circles were often willing partners. At a party or in a disco, the male might offer drugs and/or alcohol as a means of connecting with someone of interest.

Those with a stable partner tended to report more frequent sex. However, many respondents spoke of young men who were unfaithful to their stable partner by having casual sex with other women or with sex workers. A number of these young, middle class males mentioned that if they were not successful in connecting with a young, attractive girl, they would revert to paying for a sex worker. In some cases they would pay in cash. In others instances, they would pay in drugs, as some sex workers are also addicts, primarily addicted to cocaine. Whichever the case, the two parties tend to negotiate prior to the sexual encounter.

Sexual practices

Respondents, who were primarily heterosexual, mentioned both oral and vaginal sex as common sex practices. However, anal sex appeared to also be prevalent among these heterosexuals. In one case, a low-income female respondent reported asking her partner to have anal instead of vaginal sex, because she wanted to keep her virginity. In other cases involving heterosexual couples, anal sex appeared to be a new alternative to explore.

Other practices reported included various forms of group sex, such as two women and one man, two men and one woman, orgies with various participants of the same sex or mixed, and the case of

swingers (partners considered stable that switch partners occasionally to heighten sexual pleasure). Drug use was also mentioned as sometimes being related to bisexual practices.

In the large majority of interviews, the *amigos/as* made various associations between drug use and sexual practices. For example, they reported that cocaine arouses women, but males have to be careful that it doesn't interfere with their sexual performance. One of the main uses of ecstasy is to enhance sexual pleasure, because it makes the persons more sensitive. However, in a handful of interviews, the respondents mentioned that sex was actually better without drugs, because the two people are totally conscious.

Involuntary sex

A few respondents touched on involuntary sexual relations. If a woman had consumed a high dose of drugs (practically to the point of unconsciousness), someone might take advantage of her to have sex.

Inconsistent condom use

Respondents acknowledged that they knew about condom use to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. However, they indicated that under the influence of alcohol and drugs, seeking pleasure and satisfaction took priority over using protection during sex. Some reported doing a quick, subjective "risk assessment" of the prospective partner, taking into account how long they have known the person, their level of trust in him/her, physical appearance, health, socioeconomic level, nationality, and reputation, among other factors. If the partner passed this subjective evaluation favorably, it was less likely that condoms would be used during sex. Also, respondents reported that at the beginning of a relationship or in a casual relationship with an unknown person, condom use was more frequent. However, after several weeks or months, if the relationship continued, often the woman would begin use of oral contraceptives to avoid pregnancy and the couple would stop using condoms. Pregnancy seemed to be a bigger concern to respondents than STIs or HIV.

Respondents reported that sex workers generally insisted on condom use unless there was sufficient economic incentive to not use them.

Sex for drugs

Respondents did not tend to directly acknowledge the transactional aspects of sex for drugs (that is, they did not talk in terms of exchanging sex for drugs). Rather, the discussion of this topic was far more nuanced. For example, a young man—hoping to hook up with a young woman—might give her free drugs or alcohol as a subtle form of inducement. Also, at least one respondent mentioned that young women seem to be attracted to men who have access to drugs because this implies power, money, and status. For young women, feeling attractive and being able to get a man was an important motivator for their behavioral decisions.

Among the few lower-income respondents, transactional sex in exchange for drugs was more evident, especially with sex workers. The drugs involved tended to be crack and cocaine.

Risk perception for HIV

Risk perception entails two dimensions: severity and susceptibility. Severity refers to the perceived magnitude of the problem (should it occur), whereas susceptibility is the perceived likelihood that the individual would actually experience this problem or its negative consequence.

In the case of STIs, especially HIV, these middle- to upper-middle class young people reported to know the potential risk of transmission through sexual relations. However, they did not generally consider themselves susceptible to infection. No one knew anyone that was HIV positive in his or her own social circles. They also did not view HIV as a serious threat, so long as they kept sexual relationships within their social circle. However, they did perceive an increased risk when they went outside their circle of peers to have sex with someone else (e.g., sex workers or foreigners). In such cases, they perceived condom use to be essential.

Again, the most prevalent concern about heterosexual relations among respondents was not HIV, but pregnancy. Although these young people might aspire to parenthood at a later time in life, pregnancy at this point in their lives was considered to carry serious consequences in the short- and long-term future. Many cited the experiences of friends or acquaintances that had gotten pregnant and had to confront the social and financial consequences of having the baby. Because they knew of others that got pregnant, these consequences carried a salient personal susceptibility. In contrast, respondents knew few or no others who had contracted HIV. Respondents reported engaging in pregnancy prevention practices including condom use, withdrawal before ejaculation, oral contraceptive use, oral or anal sex, and the morning-after pill.

Other fears related to drug use

In addition to fears about pregnancy, many respondents reported the following other concerns about their drug use unrelated to sexual behaviors.

Being discovered

Respondents experienced constant worry of being discovered by their parents or other significant figures in their lives, since this could result in loss of economic support or the benefits of living at home, loss of status or social prestige, loss of love and affection, and constant recrimination. An additional worry related to being discovered by the police, which could result in physical aggression or legal problems.

Overdosing

Having an intense experience with drugs and experiencing unexpected reactions was a constant preoccupation among respondents. Respondents expressed the value of knowing one's personal limits to avoid a disagreeable trip from which one might not return. Many reported that for this reason, it was important that members of the group protected and cared for each other. A very solid and cohesive group of *party lovers* feels an obligation to take care of one another, especially if a group member exceeds his or her own limit.

Drug addiction

Several respondents expressed fear of the consequences of drug addiction. They didn't want to "*quedarse asi ...*" (end up that way), as they perceived the case to be of those drug users that isolate themselves and consume drugs alone. Their perception was that when drugs begin affecting an individual's conduct, isolating them from their social group and affecting their appearance, the person has become addicted.

Data used in the design of the quantitative survey

This qualitative study was the first in a two-part research study. In addition to providing numerous insights into patterns of drug use and HIV risk in Guatemala City, it provided information that was used to design the follow-on quantitative study, including the following.

Inclusion of injection drug users in the quantitative study

The research team had initially planned to limit both studies to non-injection drug use, based on the premise that injection drug use was rare in Guatemala. Though results from the qualitative study supported this premise, the research team decided to include users of the full range of drugs mentioned by respondents in the interview so as to collect further evidence on the expected prevalence of injection and non-injection drug use.

Willingness to be tested for HIV

In addition to a survey, the subsequent quantitative study also involves a biological test for HIV. This qualitative work provided useful preliminary information suggesting that HIV testing is low among the target population, as the vast majority of respondents had not been tested and did not know their HIV status.

Nonetheless, a number of respondents expressed interest in being tested, especially if it were free. A few respondents mentioned that private labs give a greater sense of confidence and security in the case of HIV tests, although they would not exclude the possibility of getting tested at the Fundación Marco Antonio, the NGO facility proposed to be used for interviewing and testing in the quantitative study. Located in the downtown area near the central bus terminal, this clinic primarily serves a lower class population. Currently, it largely provides counseling and testing for HIV and other STIs, psychological support, and post-test referrals for seropositive clients. Some *amigos/as* commented that it would not be their first choice for themselves or their friends, though most would probably be willing to get tested there. One respondent had reported getting a tested at the Fundación Marco Antonio clinic. One advantage of a clinic not typically catering to their demographic was anonymity—the risk of being recognized and stigmatized at the clinic was low. Several respondents also expressed the importance of being able to access the testing clinic through public transportation.

Emic terminology

The respondents in the qualitative study—well-educated, many of whom spoke both Spanish and English—used a colorful array of slang terms to describe their friends, activities, drug use, aspirations, fears, and relationships that were previously unfamiliar to even the Guatemalan research team. As a

result, the research team compiled a glossary of terms to aid interviewers conducting the quantitative surveys and similar studies in the future (see examples in Appendix B).

DISCUSSION

This qualitative study served as an exploratory effort to better describe drug use in Guatemala. Though the sample was primarily middle-class young people, the results provide a point of departure for determining similarities and contrasts with other groups, such as lower class drug users. Moreover, in the absence of systematically conducted studies on drug use in Guatemala, it provides insights that merit further research.

First, this study yields further evidence that the vast majority of drug use in this setting is non-injecting, at least among middle-class young people. This finding is consistent with the results of Diaz and colleagues (2009) who reported marijuana, cocaine, and benzodiazepines as the three most widely used drugs in Guatemala. The use of injected heroin was reported as rare and reportedly limited to those of a higher socioeconomic level.

Second, the study reveals the ease of obtaining drugs among this population in Guatemala City. This group of middle-class young people had the economic and logistic means to access the drugs they sought. Access is further facilitated by dealers, who are often members of users' social circles, and are willing to clandestinely deliver drugs to private homes. As research has suggested that drug traffic in Guatemala is rising, it will be important for future research to determine how, if at all, the greater volume of drugs flowing through the country will affect actual consumption among different socio-economic levels (Espach, et al., 2011).

Third, the study suggests that these middle-class *party lovers* are engaging in risky sexual behavior that could increase their risk of HIV transmission, including having multiple partners, unprotected sex, inconsistent condom use, and occasional commercial sex. Among non-injecting drug users in the U.S., these types of sexual behaviors have been associated with higher levels of HIV infection (Wang et al., 2002).

Fourth, this study population worried about several aspects of drug use, such as pregnancy, detection, overdose, and addiction. The concern for HIV, however, was almost non-existent, perhaps due to the low perceived susceptibility related to the fact that very few respondents knew of HIV positive peers. As with young people in other countries, respondents in this study made a keen distinction between recreational and problematic or addictive drug use (Aldridge et al., 2011).

Although this study was conducted from a public health perspective, the results align with a current sociological theory: the "normalization of drug use" by the middle class. This theory of normalization is appearing in much of the literature on drug use among middle-class adolescents and young people, such as in Australia (Duff, 2003), England (Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002); and Brazil (Pratta & dos Santos, 2007). Though more industrialized, these countries are similar to Guatemala in the sense that drug use is illegal but laws are rarely enforced.

Through the data of the subsequent quantitative study, it will be possible to compare HIV prevalence among drug users to prevalence among the general adult population in Guatemala City. Given that the

current qualitative study focused almost exclusively on middle-class young people, it will be important for future research to capture drug use across all social classes.

One of the themes motivating this research was the possible “bridge” that exists between injection drug users and non-injection drug users (Howard & Latkin, 2006). When non-injection drug users chose injection drug users as sexual partners, they run an elevated risk of HIV transmission from their sexual behavior. Given the low prevalence of injection drugs in Guatemala City, this did not surface in this study as a major potential risk factor. However, given the strong focus of this study on middle-class youth, it does prompt the question of another type of bridging: drug use across social classes or other key populations. Further identifying the links between drug use, key populations, and HIV risk in Guatemala will evolve as a central aim of future research.

Limitations of the study

As is the case with all qualitative research, the results cannot be generalized to population outside of the non-randomly selected study sample. Moreover, the authors are keenly aware that the sample obtained does not represent the full range of persons in Guatemala City that use drugs, particularly lower income drug users. The selection of peer-interviewers greatly influenced the characteristics of the study population, given that the methodology was based on collecting information from friends or acquaintances of a similar background and lifestyle. The four supervisors selected peer-interviewers that were not only drug users, but could reliably perform the requirements of the position. These individuals tended to be relatively young, well-educated (university students or graduates), solidly middle class, and “functional” users whose drug use did not impair their ability to complete the tasks of the peer-interviewer role. This homogeneity contributed to group cohesion during training and data collection. However, it meant that the *amigos* that they were likely to identify and interview would also be young, middle class, and relatively well educated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this group represents a substantial part of the drug user population of Guatemala. However, this study does not capture the drug use and HIV risk of the “elites” of Guatemala or of the lower class in which drug use also occurs.

The principal investigator and study director recognized this potential problem early in the training. We explored with the 21 peer-interviewers the possibility that they knew and could interview at least one person of a lower social class (“D” on the standard scale of A-B-C-D-E used by local market research firms to define socio-economic status), based on place of residence, level of education, and occupation (e.g., bartenders, waiters, men who wash cars). Of the 21 peer-interviewers, 11 volunteered to seek out respondents from class “D,” and collectively they interviewed 13 low-income persons (of the total of 62 respondents in this study). This attempt to diversify the study population was not particularly satisfactory, given that the numbers were small; moreover, it violated the philosophy of the PEER methodology, whereby peer-interviewers collect information from those they consider to be “true” peers.

In retrospect, the researchers could have opted for one of two alternatives. The first would have been key informant interviews with quota sampling of persons from different socio-economic levels. However, it is unclear that the respondents would have had sufficient trust with an unknown

interviewer to reveal the types of information that they were willing to share with the peer-interviewer, whom they considered a friend. This observation is particularly relevant, given that drug use is illegal in Guatemala, and drug-related violence has escalated dramatically in the past year in Guatemala City.

Second, it would have been possible to carry out this study using the PEER methodology by collecting data in parallel for different socio-economic groups (i.e., elites, middle class, and low-income drug users). PASMO has used the PEER methodology successfully in low-income populations, including non-literate Mayan women in rural areas; the data collection takes much longer but is feasible. However, in this markedly class stratified society, it would have been necessary to conduct the training and debriefing exercises in at least two and possibly three separate income groups. PASMO has had a recent experience on another study in which low-income interviewers did not report to the training session planned for “all interviewers”; rather, the researchers had to seek them out and hold a separate training in a location where they felt more comfortable. Similarly, wealthy Guatemalans might be willing to reveal their own drug use among “equals,” but would be reluctant to attend sessions among a more diversified group. Given the challenges of identifying and recruiting even one group of drug users (not to mention time and budget), the researchers did not seek to expand the study and collect data across rigid socio-economic groups. Future research should aim to replicate this data collection among other groups in order to yield results reflective of a wider range of drug users in Guatemala City.

Conclusion

These qualitative data suggest that young, middle-class drug users in Guatemala are engaging in behaviors that may increase their risk of contracting HIV. Results suggest that drug users may constitute a third key population in need of targeted HIV preventative efforts. Future research is planned to quantitatively estimate the prevalence of HIV in the population of drug users in Guatemala City and to assess the extent to which that population is a heightened risk for HIV transmission. Results from this qualitative study on patterns of drug use, culture of drug use, and risk behaviors can be used to better design this quantitative assessment and to inform the design of future interventions for this specific population.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The “prototype” of a drug user in Guatemala City

Background. The prototype (*arquetipo*) is a visual and descriptive profile developed by the peer-interviewers of the “typical” person interviewed in the study. This exercise is useful in the development of behavior change communication programs directed to this group, in part because it gives a human face to the group of persons interviewed and provides details that may trigger ideas for how best to reach them.

After data collection was completed, the peer-interviewers had a final session in which they separated into two groups by gender and then proceeded to develop prototypes. Each group began by drawing a life-size outline of the figure onto several sheets of flipchart paper taped together. One of the peer-interviewers served as the model by lying on the paper placed on the floor while others in the group drew the silhouette around him or her. To this silhouette, the peer-interviewers began to add details. They had the option of beginning with external genitalia, and then adding detailed information about the clothes, accessories, piercings or tattoos. The peer-interviewers collectively developed a nickname and story about the figure.

The peer-interviewers in this study developed prototypes of *Tati* (the young woman) and *El Colucho* (the guy with curly hair), shown below. It is striking that neither group gave their prototype a face, which in other studies of most-at-risk populations for HIV has been a very important element. One interpretation of these faceless figures is a quest for anonymity and discretion with regard to this lifestyle.

The female prototype

Tati is 22 years old and lives with her mother and two brothers in Zone 15 of La Colonia Del Maestro. Tati is the middle child and the only girl of her upper-middle-class family.

She studies graphic design at La Universidad Rafael Landivar. Although not one of the best students, she manages to pass her classes with grades close to 65 – 70 points, and "is doing OK." In fact, she is barely scraping by academically, but her mom does not bother with her because she is always at work. The topic that Tati discusses most with her mom is money, in particular when she has to make payments to the "U." Her mom just cares that she passes her classes, so Tati tries to do so to avoid complications at home.



A close friend and "sweetheart" (implying some level of intimacy) sells drugs and is "cool." This feature makes him very attractive to *chavas* (young women) like Tati. However, some of her friends are not so sure that he is as much of a "dealer" as he says ... it could be that he makes this up in order to make connections.

Tati's car is small; it's a blue "Spark." The bumper has a sticker on it that reads "PEACE and LOVE." The car has very darkly tinted windows, which is common in Guatemala; given the prevailing lack of security, people opt to tint their windows to avoid "being monitored." However, everyone in Tati's group knows that tinted windows are not only for security but also for privacy. As it is exclusively hers, Tati keeps inside her car a pipe (for smoking marijuana), beer, shoes, clothes, sweaters, notebooks, a "big board" for her design formats, glue and a plastic case with materials (as a teacher).

She had sex (intercourse) for the first time at age 17 with her boyfriend, who was *pinta* (used drugs). Her older brother knew the guy, so their relationship had to be very discreet. Older brothers are very protective of their sisters, and it especially bothers them to have one of their buddies go out with their little sister.

Tati studied in an all girls' high school, El Bethania, but she got expelled when they caught her smoking at school. After this, she had to transfer to Colegio Ciudad Vieja, where she met her current *traido* (boyfriend).

Tati's parents have been divorced for some time; the mother is currently working in real estate and has a boyfriend. Her boyfriend is a doctor and has *pisto* (money), so he is always inviting her mom to travel. That is good because it leaves the kids home by themselves.

Tati's classes are at night, so her activities revolve around this schedule. Some time ago, she tried to go to the gym and she made an agreement with one of her gay friends. She wanted to go to the gym to get in better shape than she was, but didn't continue because she had a lot to do at the "U" and because she started to *hacer party* (consume drugs). Additionally, there weren't any interesting *culitos* (casual sexual partners) in the gym, because all the *culos* in the gym are so healthy that they are boring.

Even though she goes to the "U," she usually avoids the "EDPs" (general courses that deal with ethics and religion). She likes going to the movies after the "U," to the last show, she likes the Pradera theaters best because tickets cost 10.00 Q (about \$1.25 U.S.). Before entering the theater, she smokes pot with friends and they buy food (Taco Bell) and *guaro* (booze) to sneak into the theater. Sometimes the group consists of only girlfriends, and other times one of her gay friends will join. There are other days designated to going out with her *cuates* (buddies). She always sees her boyfriend, unless she's with her gay friend instead; her *traido* doesn't like gays.

When she's home Tati loves to play Wii with her little brother; she also spends a lot of time on Facebook. Tati is very proud of having been able to get a Mac book out of her dad, "the least he could do since he already has another family" and gives her almost nothing...

Her pet is a chocolate Labrador retriever. He is very important to her; she loves him and even though she doesn't take care of him, she spoils him when she is there. The maid takes care of him and is very discreet about the things she sees... she doesn't say anything... she is cool...

Whenever there is any holiday, Tati takes advantage of the opportunity to go the "Lake" (Lago de Atitlán) with her friends.

An ordinary day in the life of Tati begins at 10:30 a.m. with her watching TV: Sony, HBO, and Cinemax. She has many pirated DVDs and likes independent films. She doesn't listen to much radio. She has an Ipod, but when she does listen to the radio she tunes into *La Infinita* especially at night or while she is driving. From time to time she listens to alternative rock. And although she is interested in cultural activities, she cannot always go, because sometimes they interfere with "el Party."

Since she doesn't like to be alone, she uses her cell phone for company. She is always writing or receiving text messages and calls. Unfortunately the cell phone that she has now is not very good, it is a *frijolito*. She lost the one that they gave her for her birthday. Although she doesn't know it, she will find her cell phone when assembling the tent for another party.

Her group of friends is very similar to her. Even though she is very sociable, she is not popular; she is very *pussy* (vain) and a flirt, but sometimes the party changes her way of acting. Although she is not looking for Prince Charming, she does want to find a guy with money who's cool, who respects her, understands her, goes out to party in moderation, and who will take her on a trip to see the world.

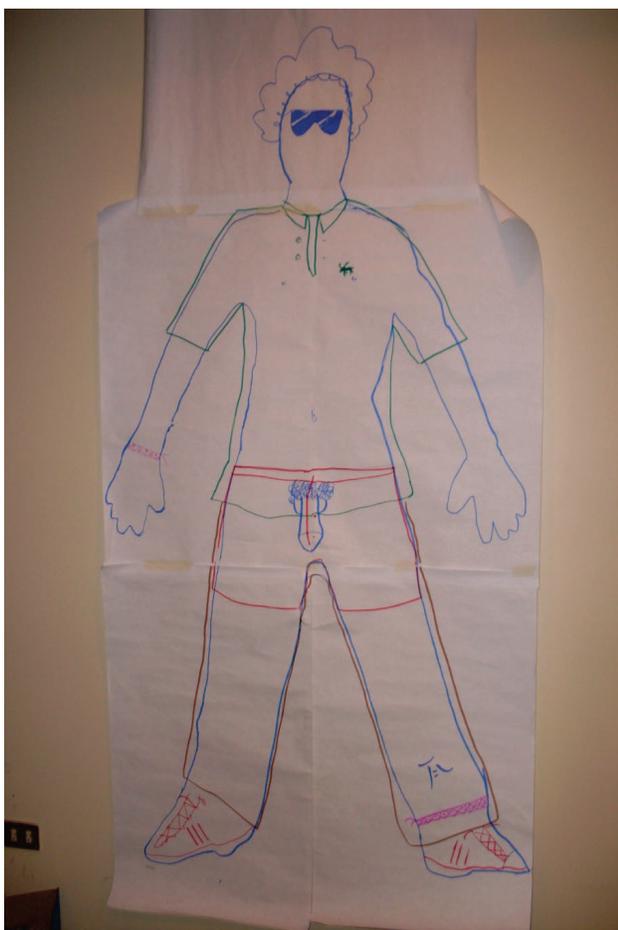
She is currently using birth control pills as a prevention method. These have proven to be very useful, and in fact her mom even buys them. First, as she has a boyfriend and she trusts him, it isn't a big problem not to use a condom, plus condoms also irritate her a lot. Second, with the problems that she has had with endometriosis, the doctor prescribed her pills. That's why she hasn't seen or heard mention of a condom, at least with this guy.

The male prototype

Andrés is a 23-year-old man. His friends call him *Colocho*. He likes to dress casually: T-shirts or polo shirts, especially if he is going to the "U." For work he prefers to wear dress shirts. Also, he usually wears a few traditional bracelets that he bought in Panajachel three years ago.

He lives with his mom, who is 48 years old, and a 17-year-old sister. His house is located in the San Jorge condominiums in Zone 11. His parents have been divorced for 8 years. His dad "got together" with another woman and had two children with her. Andrés has only seen his half siblings a few times.

The house where he lives has a two-car garage, three bedrooms, a living room and a dining room. Upon entering the house you pass through a hallway where you can see photos of the whole family. His mom has decorated the house with elephant figurines, crystal glassware and imitation jade collectables. Upon entering the living room you will see several paintings of La Antigua. On the back patio you will find "Rex," his sister's Cocker Spaniel. The bedrooms are on the second floor.



When you enter his room you see a full-size bed, a night table, a desk, and a closet where he keeps his clothes and the skates that he used to wear when he skated. He has hung a broken skateboard on the wall for decoration. On the same wall you see posters of Bob Marley, Pink Floyd and Metallica, and one from the movie *Clockwork Orange*.

On the desk you find the laptop that his dad gave him, where he does his homework, checks Facebook, MSN, YouTube, his email and porn. On the wall in front of the desk he has a cork bulletin board with some drawings his ex-girlfriend made him, photos of former girlfriends, and concert tickets. In the window he has a small collection of G.I. Joes and other dolls (his childhood toys).

Inside the night stand, there is a collection of rare coins, keys and pogs; one can also see a box of condoms, pirated DVDs, books and some MAXIM magazines. On the table he has a lava lamp that he likes to trip with. At the head of the bed he has a scapular that his grandmother gave him for his birthday "to protect him."

Colocho drives a 2003 Yaris Echo *rodado* (used). He is in his fifth semester studying administration in La Landívar. He just got out of a six-month relationship with a girl. She broke up with him because he posed as a "dealer," and she found out that it wasn't true. Now this girl is going out with a guy who really is a cocaine dealer.

Currently Andrés is working at a 24/7 call center. On a normal day, like Wednesday, he wakes up at 7:00 a.m. He gets up and goes to the bathroom to urinate, smokes a pipe of marijuana and brushes his teeth. He goes downstairs to have breakfast with his mom (cornflakes with milk), bathes and gets ready to go to work. Before leaving he prepares his “kit,” where he brings *papos* (rolling papers for marijuana joints), LSD, eye drops, alcohol gel, lighters and a matchbook that he took from Primavera Suites. He leaves the house at 8:20 a.m. to go to work. In the car he listens to reggae or rock. Some days when he is feeling stressed he will take a couple of hits of marijuana on his way to work. His work schedule is 9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. At 11, when they have a break, he leaves with one of his friends that does drugs to smoke a cigarette and they take advantage of the opportunity to make plans for the weekend. When he leaves work to go home for lunch, he calls his friends from La Colonia to play Wii. Either before or after playing, they go to the terrace to take a couple of hits of marijuana and take a 40-minute “power nap.”

He bathes again and before leaving for the university rolls a joint to smoke in the car while listening to “psytrance.” He arrives at the university at 5:45 p.m., 15 minutes late. He goes to class, and during the breaks smokes cigarettes with his friends and flirts with the *culitos* that he wants to have sex with. Sometimes he meets up with his ex and they fight “because there is still something between them...”

Upon leaving the “U,” he goes with friends to *La Jacaranda* to drink a *litrin* (a liter of beer) and after they go to *Corto Circuito* (Short Circuit). Upon arriving at this bar, they call Chepe, their dealer. He buys a *colmillo* (about three grams of cocaine) and starts to snort it with his friends. By then, it’s 10:20 p.m. At this place he meets up with his *culito* (Sofi) and they drink a few beers. Later they go to the car to do a few lines of cocaine. In the bar a friend named el Chino offers him a *pescadito* (ecstasy), but Colocho tells him that it would be better for Friday, that he wants to do it with his *culito*.

At midnight he sees that he is going to leave with his *culito*. They already got into a couple of little fights but nothing came of it and he is going to drop her off at her house, agreeing to see each other the following day. He returns home. He eats something that he finds in the kitchen, cold pizza. He watches TV, masturbates, and then falls asleep.

Andrés spends his money on marijuana (1- ½ ounces), *culitos*, worthless junk, gas, food and beer. He is always short on money, and tries to get some out of his mom, but he isn’t always successful.

His best friends are El Chino, El Wachas, El Canche, El Coche, El Negro and El Enano. Some are from La Landívar, others are from La Galileo and others are lifelong friends from La Colonia. His girlfriends are La Guicha, La Flaca, La Isa, La Majo, La Sofi, La Luchi, Pame, Mafer and Marian (these last two are sisters). Almost all of them are from La Landívar, and Velvet is from work.

Appendix B: Glossary of terms

The interviews with respondents yielded a large number of slang terms in Spanish or “Spanglish” (a mix of Spanish and English), some of which were unfamiliar even to local staff working in social programs and/or conducting research among most-at-risk populations for HIV/AIDS. The following is a glossary of such terms translated to both Spanish and English.

Slang	Spanish	English
A ley	Con seguridad, con certeza, seguramente	Surely
A moronga	Desesperado, Borracho	Desperate, Drunk
A pija	Desesperado, Borracho	Desperate, Drunk
A verga	Desesperado. Borracho	Desperate, Drunk
Acabar	Eyacular, tener orgasmo	To Ejaculate, Orgasm
After	After Party; fiesta después de la fiesta principal, generalmente después de la 1 am	After Party; a party that occurs after the main or larger party- Generally occurs after 1:00 am
Ajiado	Bajo efectos de ácidos	Under the effects of acid
Ajo	LSD	LSD
Atascado	Persona que consume muchas drogas y no las comparte; adicto	Person who consumes a large quantity of drugs and doesn't share them; Addict
Besar el Oso	Sexo oral vaginal	Vaginal oral sex
Bille	Billete, dinero	Bill, money
Biyuya	Dinero, derivado de “Billete”	Money, word derived from “Billete”
Bravo (a)	Enojado (a)	Angry, mad
Braza	Estado de excitación	Excited state
Brother	Amigo muy cercano	Very close friend
Cabrón (a)	Muy bueno (a) para realizar algo; Persona con mala actitud	Someone very good at something; Person with a bad attitude
Cachar	Atrapar, descubrir, conseguir	Catch, discover, get
Cacho	Un poco	Small amount; A bit

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Cancelar	Ver, doblar, noqueado	Knocked out/ passed out
Cazar	Atrapar, conquistar, aprender	Catch, conquer, seize
Cerdo	Policía	Police
Chance	Trabajo	Work
Chava	Mujer joven	Young woman
Chavo	Hombre joven	Young man
Chichiflix	Relación sexual	Sexual relation, intercourse
Chile	Pene	Penis
Chimar	Tener relaciones sexuales	To have sexual relations
Chimasón	Sexo	Sex
Chimón (a)	Persona que tiene mucho sexo	Person who has lots of sex
Chingar	Molestar, divertirse, salir a divertirse; Arruinar algo	Disturb, to have fun, go have fun; Ruin something
Cholero (a)	Ver <i>Muco(a)</i> También hace referencia a un(a) empleado(a) doméstico(a)	(See <i>Muco</i>) Also refers to a maid/ housekeeper
Chonte	Policía	Police
Choteado	Vigilado; Observado	Observed
Chucho	Egoísta; que consume mucho; aventado; acaparador	Selfish; someone who consumes a lot, takes advantage of others
Chulas	Piedras de crack	Crack rocks
Chulear	Fumar crack	To smoke crack
Chupar	Succionar con la boca; Tomar alcohol	To sip; To drink alcohol
Coger	Relaciones sexuales	Sexual relations
Colmo, colmillo	Aproximadamente tres gramos de cocaína envasada en una pipeta médica desechable; El precio varía dependiendo de la calidad y el lugar de compra. Entre Q 75.00 y Q 175.00.	Approximately three grams of cocaine, packaged in a disposable pipette- The price varies depending on the quality and the place of purchase (US \$ 9.38 - \$ 21.88 aprox.)
Compa	Amigo	Friend.

Compadre	Amigo	Friend
Consolador	Dildo	Dildo
Cotorra	Vagina	Vagina
Cotuzá	Vagina	Vagina
Cuate (a)	Amigo(a), compañero(a)	Friend
Cuaz	Amigo; Compañero que no te deja	Friend who won't leave you behind
Culantro	Referencia a "culo"	Ass
Culero(a)	Acción, situación, sensación o persona decepcionante; Homosexual	A disappointing, action, situation, feeling or person; Homosexual
Culo	Pareja sexual sin compromiso serio; puede ser utilizado para mujeres u hombres	Sexual partner without serious commitment, it may be applied for male or female
Dar alas	Hacer creer a la persona que puede llegar lejos (en un contexto sexual y/o romántico para este estudio); en algunos casos esta actitud es falsa y no se cumple con la expectativa	To convince a person that they can go far (in a sexual and/ or romantic context for this study); in some cases this attitude is fake and expectations are not met
Darse pija	Pelear físicamente	Fight physically
Darse talega	Pelear físicamente	Fight physically
Darse verga	Pelear físicamente	Fight physically
Darse	Consumir drogas, comprar drogas para compartir	Consume drugs; buy drugs to share
De fijo	Con seguridad, con certeza, seguramente	Sure, certain
De ley	(Ver A ley), de seguro	Sure, certain
De un vex	De una vez; Inmediatamente	At once; Immediately
Desmadre	(Ver desvergue); Relajo; Fiesta con muchas personas; Situación problemática	A mess; Large party; Problematic situation.
Despute	(Ver desvergue); Relajo; Fiesta con muchas personas; Situación problemática	A mess; Large party; Problematic situation
Despije	(Ver desvergue); Relajo; Fiesta con muchas personas; Situación problemática	A mess; Large party; Problematic situation

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Desvergue	Relajo; Fiesta con muchas personas; Situación problemática	A mess; Large party; Undesirable situation
Doblar	Quedarse dormido por consumir mucho alcohol, tener mucho sexo o consumir muchas drogas	Knocked out/ passed out; Falling asleep from consuming too much alcohol, having a lot of sex or consuming a lot of drugs
Echar el buitre	Vomitar	To vomit
Echar el burro	Vomitar	To vomit
Echar nuca	Hacer sexo oral	Have oral sex
En bolas	Desnudo(a)	Naked
En pelota	Desnudo(a)	Naked
Enchacar	Acto en el que los policías le colocan las esposas a un individuo	To handcuff a person
Entero:	Completo	In one piece
Ferrari	Nombre de pastilla de éxtasis de color rojo	Red ecstasy pill
Fijo	Con seguridad; Ver de fijo	Sure; To stare
Fingueriar	Introducir el dedo en la vagina	Introduce finger into the vagina
Floja	Mujer con bastante experiencia sexual, hace referencia a la condición de la vagina	A very sexually experienced woman; Makes reference to a loose vagina
Forjar	Acción de envolver marihuana en papel para hacer un cigarrillo	Action of wrapping marijuana in paper to produce a cigarette
Forrarse	Ponerse condón	To put on a condom
Forro	Condón	Condom
Fumar	En el contexto del consumo de drogas, generalmente se refiere a consumir marihuana; También hace referencia a tabaco.	In the context of drug use, generally refers to smoking marijuana; Also refers to smoking tobacco
Gato	Persona mala u objeto de mala calidad	A bad person or an object of low quality
Grolis	Gratis	For free
Guaro	Bebida alcohólica	Alcoholic beverage.

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Hacer el paro	Brindar apoyo	Support
Hacer huevos	Acompañar, apoyar, hacerse responsable	To accompany, to support, take responsibility
Hacer la entrada	Conquistar, enamorar, cortejar	To conquer, to woo, to court
Hecho verga	Lastimado, muy golpeado, en mal estado, destruido, tanto desde el aspecto físico como emocional	Hurt, badly beaten, damaged, can be physical and/or emotional
Hacerse la bestia	Declararse ignorante de la situación, acción o responsabilidad	To plead ignorance of a situation, action or responsibility
Hardcore	Atrevido, de mayor intensidad	Bold, of great intensity
Hasta el hule	Muy drogado	Very high
Hasta la baby	Muy drogado o muy borracho	Very high, or very drunk
Hasta la verga	Bajo la influencia de mucho alcohol o muchas drogas; Lejos	Under the influence of many drugs, or too much alcohol; Far away
Hecho (a) verga	En mal estado, demacrado, arruinado	In poor condition, emaciated, ruined
Hits	Jalar de un cigarrillo o cigarro de marihuana	Pull smoke from marijuana, cigarette or cigar
Horno	Estado de excitación sexual	State of sexual excitation
Hueveo	Robo	Theft
Hueviar	Acto de robar	Act of stealing
Joder	Molestar, hacer daño, arruinar	To annoy; to damage or to ruin
Le llega	Le gusta	To like it
Len (es)	Centavo, dinero	A cent (a penny); money
Lime	Sexo	Sex
Lirio	Litro de Cerveza	A liter of beer
Litrín	Litro de Cerveza	A liter of beer
Litro	Litro de Cerveza	A liter of beer
Llavazo	Acción de colocar cocaína en una llave e inhalarla de ésta	Action of putting cocaine on a key for ease of inhalation

Mamada	Sexo oral; cosa sin importancia; acción no agradable dirigida a otro	Oral sex; Something unimportant; Disagreeable action directed towards another
Mamar	Besar; Sexo oral	To kiss; Oral sex
Mamey	Felación; Sexo oral ejercido hacia el hombre	To practice oral sex on a man
Manguera	Pene	Penis
Mara	Grupo de amigos o personas; Grupo cerrado	Group of friends or people; Close group
Marero	Que pertenece a una mara, o grupo de personas que cometen actos delictivos	Belonging to a gang, or group of people who commit criminal acts
Mentar la madre	Insultar	To insult
Meter la verga:	Tener éxito	To succeed
Me metieron la verga	Me castigaron, me reprendieron	I was punished, I was rebuked
Meter mano	Tocar los genitales, glúteos o senos	To touch the genitals, buttocks, or breasts
Meterla	Tener éxito	To succeed
Meterse mierda	Consumir drogas	To consume drugs
Mita mita	Mitad y mitad	Half and half
Morongasear	Pelear	To fight (physically)
Motero	Persona que consume mota/marihuana	Person who consumes marijuana (also called mota)
Muco(a)	Persona de aspecto poco atractivo, generalmente de clase baja y con gustos no afines a las personas de clase media alta (en términos de música, ropa, estilo de vida, etc.)	Unattractive looking person, usually low class, and with tastes that differ from the upper middle class people (in terms of music, clothing and life style)
Nel	Negación, no	Denial; no
Ni mierda	Nada	Nothing
Ni verga	Nada	Nothing
Ñonga	Pene	Penis

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Paja	Mentira, engaño; masturbación	Lie, deceit; masturbation
Palmar	Morir	To die
Palo	Relación sexual	Sexual relations, intercourse
Paloma	Pene	Penis
Pantalla	Imagen	Image
Papo	Papel para hacer cigarrillos de marihuana	Paper used to roll marijuana cigarettes
Para el tigre	Persona no atractiva físicamente	Person physically unattractive
Paranoiqueando	Experimentar paranoia	To experience paranoia
Pari, Pary, Party	Fiesta, drogas	Parties, drugs
Pasta	Pastilla, éxtasis; Dinero	Pills, ecstasy; Money
Pedo (a)	Bajo efectos de droga	Under the influence of drugs
Pelado (a)	Descarado; Sin dinero; Muy drogado; De mucha intensidad	Brash; Without money; Very high; High intensity
Pepa	Pastilla de éxtasis	Ecstasy pill
Pichinga	Borrachera	Drunkenness
Pija	Pene	Penis
Piz(s)ado (a)	Hace referencia a alguien en una situación difícil, persona en dificultades o carencias	Refers to someone in a difficult situation; Person in distress or need
Plata	Dinero	Money
Polvo	Relación sexual	Sexual relations; Intercourse
Por si las moscas	Por cualquier cosa; Para salir de dudas	Just in case; To be sure
Prendido	Bajo efecto de cocaína	Under the effects of cocaine
Pullones	Tener sexo	To have sex
Pupis	Prostitutas; Trabajadora sexual	Prostitutes; Female sex workers
Pusa	Vagina	Vagina
Pussy	Débil, de poca intensidad o fuerza	Weak, low intensity or strength

Put	Abreviación para prostituta; Mujer promiscua; tiene sexo con varias parejas (conocidas o no)	Abbreviation for prostitute; Promiscuous woman, has sex with multiple partners (acquaintance or not)
Quemar cani(II)a	Cometer infidelidad	To commit infidelity
Quemar el rancho	Cometer infidelidad	To commit infidelity
Quez(s)o	Drogado	Under the influence of drugs
Rata	De mala calidad; masturbación	Poor quality; masturbation
Ratia	Rato; Periodo corto de tiempo	Short period of time
Raz	Rato; Periodo corto de tiempo	Short period of time
Rica (o)	Atractiva(o) físicamente	Physically attractive
Rolando	(Ver rolar) Pasar de mano en mano	Passed from hand to hand
Rolar	Compartir, pasar de mano en mano; También hace referencia a enrollar un cigarrillo de marihuana	Share, passed from hand to hand; rolling a marijuana cigarette
Rollo	Tema, ambiente, estilo	Theme, ambiance, style
Sacar la madre	Insultar	To insult
Shuca(o)	Sucio, sucia. Fácil. Hot-dog vendido en carretas en las calles (shuco-ko)	Dirty. Easy. Special kind of hot dogs sold from street carts
Simón	Si	Yes
Solventado	Bajo efectos de solvente	Under the effects of solvents (paint thinner)
Tacha	Pastilla de éxtasis	Ecstasy pill
Talegaziado	Persona que ha sido golpeada	Person who has been beaten
Talegazo	Golpe	Hit, strike
Talei	Una abreviatura de talega; Pene, verga	An abbreviation of <i>talega</i> . Penis
Tambo	Cárcel	Jail
Tira	Policía	Police
Tirotero	Cocainómano	Addicted to cocaine

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Titi	Policía	Police
Toque	Un poco, cantidad mínima. Jalar de un cigarrillo o cigarro de marihuana; Concierto	A little bit, minimum quantity; A pull from a marijuana cigarette; Concert
Trabado	Enfermo psicológicamente, con patrones sexuales patológicos, uso de fetiches, fijaciones, compulsiones; Ser penetrado	Psychologically ill, with pathological sexual patterns, use of fetishes, fixations and compulsions; To be penetrated
Traida (o)	Novia, novio	Girlfriend, boyfriend
Trama	Comida	Food
Transa	Persona que trafica o hace negocios fuera de la ley	Person who does trafficking, or business outside the law
Trucho	Perteneciente a la Mara Salvatrucha	Gang member from la Mara Salvatrucha
Valer verga	No dar importancia; quedar en una situación problemática, quedarse sin dinero o sin algo necesario en el momento	To not give importance to; To be in a problematic situation; Running out of money or something needed at the moment
Varo (a)	Dinero	Money
Verga	Pene	Penis
Vergo	Mucho, en bastedad	Plenty, in abundance
Viejos	Papás	Parents
Vola(d)o	Bajo efectos de drogas	Under the influence of drugs
Volar hilacha	Relación sexual	Sexual relation
Wakear	Vomit	To vomit
Waro	(Ver Guaro) Bebida alcohólica	Alcoholic beverage
Wato	Marihuana de mala calidad enrollada en papel periódico- precio aproximado Q 10.00 a Q 20.00	Poor quality marijuana wrapped in newsprint- Price range US \$ 1.20 y \$ 2.20
Yeyo	Cocaína	Cocaine