

DRUG USE AND SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN BRAZIL'S CLUB SCENE

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BACKGROUND

- Recent reports from Brazil reflect an increase in the prevalence of ecstasy use, as well as increases in seizures, trafficking, and manufacturing of ecstasy.
- Large cities in Brazil now report widespread ecstasy and LSD use, occurring typically among young, urban middle- and upper-class club goers.
- Little is known about the characteristics of club drug users in Brazil, nor about the relationships among ecstasy and LSD use, sexual behaviors, and psychiatric symptomatology.
- Although it has yet to be investigated in the Brazilian context, previous work done elsewhere has demonstrated an association between ecstasy use and risky sexual behavior.

PURPOSE

This study sought to understand the emerging club drug epidemic in the South of Brazil, and to investigate the extent to which Brazilian club drug users are at high risk for both physical and mental health consequences.



We examine the connections of club drug use, risky sexual behavior and psychological functioning in a sample of urban, young, LSD and/or ecstasy users in Porto Alegre, a metropolitan capital city in the South of Brazil.

METHODS

Recruitment of study participants was conducted using a venue-based sampling approach.

Study eligibility criteria included:

- Men and women between the ages of 18 and 39
- Ecstasy and/or LSD use at least once in the 90 days prior to the interview.

Exclusion criteria included current treatment for drug or alcohol problems.

Potential participants were approached by project staff in the primary club scene "hot spots" of Porto Alegre (bars featuring electronic music, nightclubs, rave parties, and after-hours venues and parks).

An abbreviated version of the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs) structured interview was the primary data collection instrument.

This version included the following sections:

- Demographics / Environment
- Substance Use
- Mental Health
- Sexual Risk Behaviors

We conducted standardized face-to-face interviews with 240 male and female ecstasy and/or LSD users.

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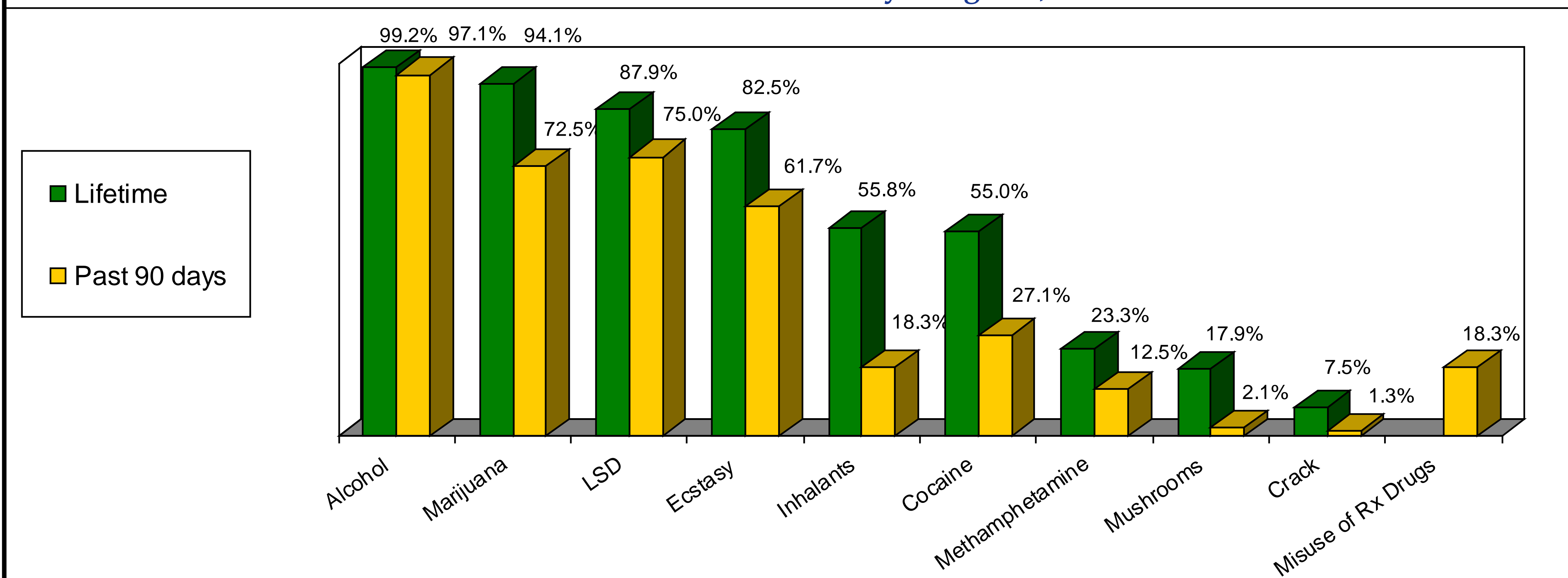
We wish to acknowledge Dr. James A. Inciardi, who served as PI of the study through 2009.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographics, Mental Health and Sexual Risk Behaviors, N=240

	N	%	N	%
DEMOGRAPHICS				
Age (median in years)	22			
Gender				
Male	139	57.9		
Female	101	42.1		
Sexual Preference				
Heterosexual	174	72.5		
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	66	27.5		
Education				
Less than High School	18	7.5		
High School	164	68.2		
More than High School	58	24.3		
MENTAL HEALTH STATUS				
Depression				
Moderate Depression	120	50.0		
Severe Depression	44	18.3		
Anxiety				
Moderate Anxiety	139	57.9		
Severe Anxiety	20	8.3		
SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS				
Past 12 months				
Had sex while drunk/high	189	78.8		
Had 2 or more sex partners	151	62.9		
Had unprotected sex	152	63.3		
Had sex with same-sex partners	69	28.8		

Table 2: Lifetime and Past 90 Day Drug Use, N=240



Logistic Regression Models, N=240

Table 3: Predictors of Multiple Partners

PREDICTOR	UNADJUSTED			ADJUSTED		
	OR	P	CI	OR	P	CI
DEMOGRAPHICS						
Heterosexual Preference	0.469	0.021	(0.250, 0.890)	0.481	0.035	(0.243, 0.951)
Male Gender	1.540	0.113	(0.900, 2.630)	1.410	0.245	(0.780, 2.520)
DRUG USE IN PAST 90 DAYS						
Inhalants	2.520	0.022	(1.150, 5.540)	1.490	0.361	(0.631, 3.540)
Ecstasy	1.800	0.033	(1.050, 3.090)	1.680	0.086	(0.929, 3.030)
Cocaine	5.120	0.000	(2.380, 10.980)	4.460	0.000	(2.010, 9.890)

Table 4: Predictors of Unprotected Sex

PREDICTOR	UNADJUSTED			ADJUSTED		
	OR	P	CI	OR	P	CI
DEMOGRAPHICS						
Heterosexual Preference	1.140	0.650	(0.630, 2.090)	1.160	0.650	(0.618, 2.175)
Male Gender	1.590	0.089	(0.930, 2.720)	1.400	0.234	(0.803, 2.430)
DRUG USE IN PAST 90 DAYS						
Cocaine	3.300	0.001	(1.650, 6.620)	2.870	0.004	(1.400, 5.890)
LSD	1.720	0.077	(0.940, 3.130)	1.370	0.323	(0.730, 2.560)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The sample was largely young and well-educated, and reported using a broad range of psychoactive substances. Although not shown because of space limitations, there were no important gender differences noted in drug use patterns, mental health symptoms, or sexual behaviors. The sample exhibited high levels of sexual risk behaviors, as large majorities reported sex while intoxicated, multiple sex partners, and unprotected sex.

Participants reporting non-heterosexual preference had more than twice the odds, and recent cocaine users more than 5 times higher odds, of reporting multiple sex partners during the past 12 months. Recent cocaine use was the only significant predictor of unprotected sex. Further analyses (not shown) indicate that recent cocaine use was a marker for extensive multidrug use among those participants compared to non-cocaine users.

Sexual risk reduction and substance abuse interventions targeted to this population of club drug users are clearly needed. The investigators' contacts with study respondents revealed that participants in Porto Alegre's club scene regularly access information and engage their social networks through the Internet. As well, they tend to be suspicious of governmental, medical and other expert messages about sex and substance use. Peer-based intervention approaches delivered in an on-line environment may be well received and effective.