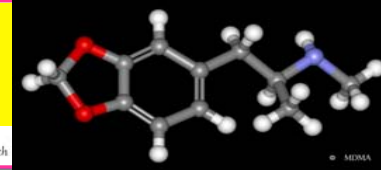




From Youth Dance Culture to Sexual Intimacy: MDMA in Global Context

Jean J. Schensul, Ph.D., Sarah Diamond, Ph.D., Elsie Vazquez, B.A., Stephen Pavey, Ph.D., Emil Coman, Ph.D., Chavon Hamilton, B.S.W.
Institute for Community Research, Hartford, CT. , www.incommunityresearch.org



Introduction

MDMA was developed as a psychiatric medication. Its stimulant, empathic and visual and sensation enhancing properties integrate well with global youth culture. This poster outlines the shift at the turn of the millennium from quasi-public to private use and from enhancing introspection and interpersonal intimacy to improving the quality of sexual experience and contributing to sexual risk.

Global Use of MDMA

MDMA was scheduled in the U.S. and U.K. in 1977 and in the U.S. in 1988. Despite campaigns to prevent use, close clubs associated with club drugs, and restrict supplies by arresting distributors and monitoring borders, it has maintained its popularity over the past 25 years and its role in enhancing youth "pleasure". MDMA use continues to be widespread in Europe, the United States, and Australia, and in vacation centers including the Balearics and Goa. Reports of MDMA use have come from the large Indian cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bangalore and from Hong Kong and the entertainment centers of southern China. Globally, MDMA users tend to be between 18 and 35 years of age. Use reached a peak in 2000-2001, then declined and is now rising again.

Ecstasy Across the Globe



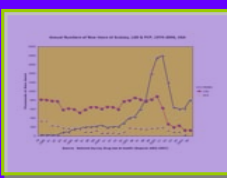
MDMA use – Europe, 2004
European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2004.



Global Pattern of Ecstasy Seizures, 2004
UNODC World Drug Report.

Transitions in the "club" scene in Connecticut.

With the "Rave Act" of 2003, clubs under surveillance reframed themselves as "upscale", and switched to marketing alcohol. Continuing to link drugs to profits, some clubs became known for cocaine use. After 9/11, importing MDMA from Europe, and other production centers became more difficult, restricting access. To avoid detection, users went "underground". Ensuing consequences were drops in reported use, adulteration, price reduction, extension of the market to working class and low income youth....and continued MDMA use.

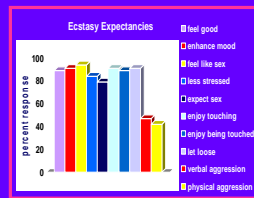


The highly unpopular Rave Act (2003) "prohibited an individual from knowingly opening, maintaining, managing, controlling, renting, leasing, making available for use, or profiting from any place for the purpose of manufacturing, distributing, or using any controlled substance, and for other purposes."



Urban lifestyles Study with Emerging Adults (R01 DA014863: 2001-06)

This panel study used an RDS sampling plan to recruit 548 youth between the ages of 16 and 30. Age was the main criterion for enrollment. 60% were male, 47%, Puerto Rican and 37% African American. Demographic characteristics were similar to the previous study. 20% of respondents at baseline had ever used MDMA; 22% were 30 day users.



Positive expectancies outweighed negative expectancies across the sample.

Ecstasy Users have more friends who buy and use ecstasy in bars, clubs and other settings.

	Never	Ever	%
No. friends use X in bars?	1,37	2,30	.000
No. friends use X elsewhere?	1,41	2,26	.000
No. friends use X in bars?	1,27	2,69	.000
No. friends sell X elsewhere?	1,00	1,84	.000
No. friends buy X in bars?	1,33	1,94	.000
No. friends buy X elsewhere?	1,41	2,28	.000

Ecstasy users' networks include more polydrug users and sex partners.

*Ecstasy Users

	Never	Ever	P-val
% of network that uses X with ego	1.13	33.28	.004
% of network ego had sex with	14.66	19.87	.044
% of network drinks with ego	47.56	58.86	.003
% of network uses drugs with ego	40.88	57.76	.000
% of network uses X with ego	42.79	64.67	.000
% of network uses X with ego	15.33	21.29	.000
% of network uses coke with ego	4.44	12.34	.004
% of network that has odd jobs	17.82	27.38	.000

In 2004 despite the Rave Act, ecstasy was still reported as being sold in bars and clubs.

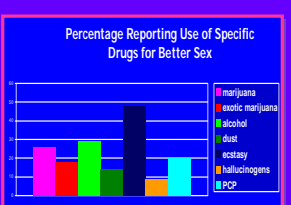
MDMA and Sexuality

MDMA was first noted in the late 1990s as associated with sexuality and sexual risk in articles on its use among European visitors to Ibiza, and gay club goers in New York. Since that time, a number of researchers have reported inconclusive evidence of the association of MDMA with sexuality and sexual risk taking.

From 2000, research in Hartford has showed a continued association of MDMA expectancies and behavior with both party culture and sexual risk. These associations emerge in quantitative data and qualitative interviews and are convincing but also inconclusive in understanding the contribution of MDMA to sexual risk.

Pathways to Hard Drug Use Among Urban Youth (R01 DA11421:1998-2002)

This panel study employed a targeted sampling plan to recruit 401 polydrug users aged 16 – 24, interviewed at 2 time points. 70% were male, 45% Puerto Rican and 38% African American. Over half had not completed high school, and among non-students more than half were not working. Both survey and in-depth interview data were collected. Approximately 39% of youth had ever used MDMA; of these 73% were 30 day users.

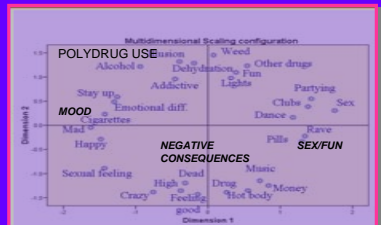


Reports associate Ecstasy for better sex

Significant Differences between Ecstasy Users and Nonusers

- More sex partners last 30 days (p = .008)
- Trade sex for \$\$\$ (p = .02)
- Self-identified Hispanic (p > .001)
- Innovative sex (fingering butthole (p = .07)
- Go down on a woman (p = .03)
- Anal sex (p = .01)
- Anal sex at a club (p = .01)
- Blow job at a club (p = .01)
- Had sex while drunk (p = .01)

- ### Differences between long term users and converters
- Chlamydia (p = .006)
 - Trading sex for money (p = .001)



"You feel like you can go all night forever, nothing hurts....."(young woman X user 5/08)

MDMA and Sexual Risk among Youth (DA 020393: 2007-10)

An MDS analysis of concepts associated with ecstasy shows four clusters validated with focus group discussions. From right clockwise, sex/fun, negative effects, mood related activities, and polydrug use and consequences. Responses to MDMA use are gendered. Some women report in interviews that E reduces pain during sex; men report that E increases their desire to please women. "E makes you do things you would not normally do".

Conclusion

These data show that since the late 1990s, MDMA has been associated with sexual pleasure, and linked with contextual factors that enhance the potential for sexual risk. MDMA has qualities which make it uniquely suited for sexual pleasure. It is reported to enhance interpersonal intimacy, it leads to arousal in men and women and increases sensuality of touch. Men report that MDMA prolongs erection and sexual performance and increases their desire for foreplay. For women it reduces pain associated with penetrative sex and allows for more experimentation. Though many respondents believe that unprotected sex is always associated with MDMA use, actual reports suggest that other factors such as partner relationship, timing and setting are as important in condom decision-making. The next phase of our qualitative study will obtain detailed descriptions of sex with and without MDMA, to sort out the conditions under which MDMA users do and do not protect themselves from HIV risk and the contextual, relational and substance-related explanations for their behaviors.

MDMA Role in Youth Party Culture

At first valued among ravers for its capacity to enhance introspection and empathy, it played a central role in the techno/rave scene of the late 90s by increasing sensitivity to light and sound, enhancing energy and supporting feelings of euphoria and intimacy.

By the late 1990s, rave culture made the transition into the club scene. Studies in gay clubs in NY identified the use of MDMA for sexual enhancement and linked it to HIV risk. In 2000-2001, the music industry promoted the link between MDMA and sex (c.f. Missy Elliott's album "Miss E...so addictive.") This theme was also picked up by advertising, television, the internet and other media



Missy Elliott at Urban Fashion Week, 2001