

Party drugs and party people: Examining the 'normalization' of recreational drug use in Melbourne, Australia.

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Published

Saturday, January 1, 2005 - 12:00

Publisher

International Journal of Drug Policy

Volume

16

Issue

3

Page(s)

161-170

Abstract

This paper reports the findings of survey research recently completed in Melbourne, Australia among a sample of 379 bar and nightclub patrons. Drawing from the work of English researchers Howard Parker and Fiona Measham, this study examines the 'normalization' of young people's drug use and the links between this drug use and young people's 'time out'--their leisure time and 'cultural consumption' habits. The paper outlines the research participants' use of alcohol and other drugs including measures of both 'lifetime' and more recent use; the prevalence of illegal drug use within the peer group; the general accessibility and availability of illegal drugs, as well as participants' knowledge of various drug-related risks and harms. The use of alcohol and other drugs was found to be widespread, with 96% of survey respondents identifying as 'current drinkers', whilst 56% reported the 'lifetime use' of illegal drugs. Just over a third (35.2%) reported the recent (last month) use of an illegal drug, typically ecstasy, cannabis and/or amphetamines. I conclude that such findings provide further support for the claim that drug use is becoming increasingly normalized within youth populations in Australia. The paper closes with a brief discussion of the implications of these findings in terms of the design and

implementation of drug prevention and harm minimisation strategies in Australia and elsewhere. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009 APA, all rights reserved) (from the journal abstract)

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