

**Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century**  
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**Autognosis, Life Quality,  
and Spirituality  
in Psychedelic Drug Users**

**Levente MÓRÓ (University of Turku, Finland)**

**Katalin SIMON (Semmelweis University, Hungary)**

**Imre BÁRD (University of Vienna, Austria)**

**József RÁCZ (Semmelweis University, Hungary)**

# Introduction

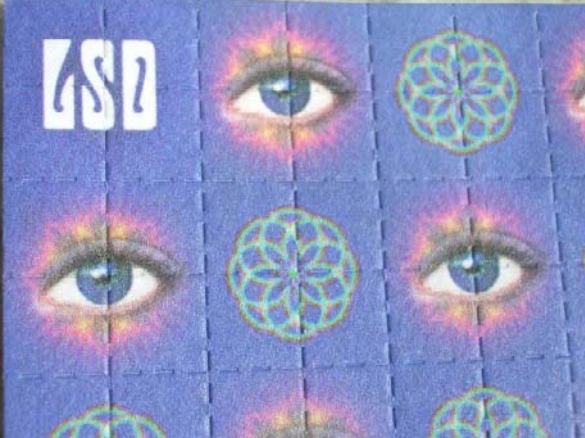
## *Psychoactive Drug Use:*

- complex phenomenon: many drugs & use patterns
- social debates mostly disregard the voices of users
- attention targeted at problematic drug use
- great percent of drug users could be non-problematic

## *Autognostic Psychedelic Use:*

- occasionally seeking psychedelic experiences
- *autognosis* = “to gain self-knowledge”
- *psychonaut* = “explorer of the mind”
- a rarely studied underground subculture

# Major Psychedelics



LSD



psilocybin



mescaline



DMT



salvinorin-A



LSA

# Study Goals

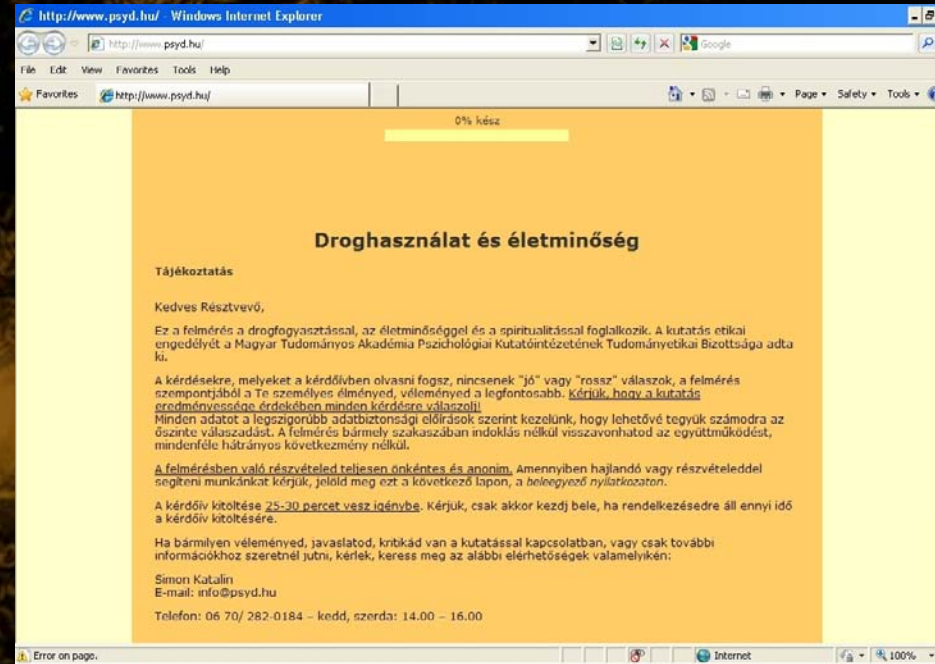
- To contribute to a deeper understanding of a proposed psychopharmacological self-enhancement phenomenon by assessing a non-problematic drug user group
- Comparing: 1) autognostic use of psychedelic drugs, 2) other uses of other drugs, 3) no drug use
- Initial work hypothesis:
  - Differences in life meaningfulness and coping characteristics
  - Autognostic psychedelic drug use associated with
    - enhancements of life quality
    - a higher level of spirituality

# Participants

- Recruited with snowball method from multiple sources
- Purposive sampling in target group:  
Hungarian Psychedelic Community ([www.daath.hu](http://www.daath.hu))
- 796 answer forms received
- 667 adequately completed
- exclusion criteria: problematic drug use
- 589 non-problematic users

# Methods

- online questionnaire
- informed consent
- socio-demographics
- questions about drug use



3 psychological instruments:

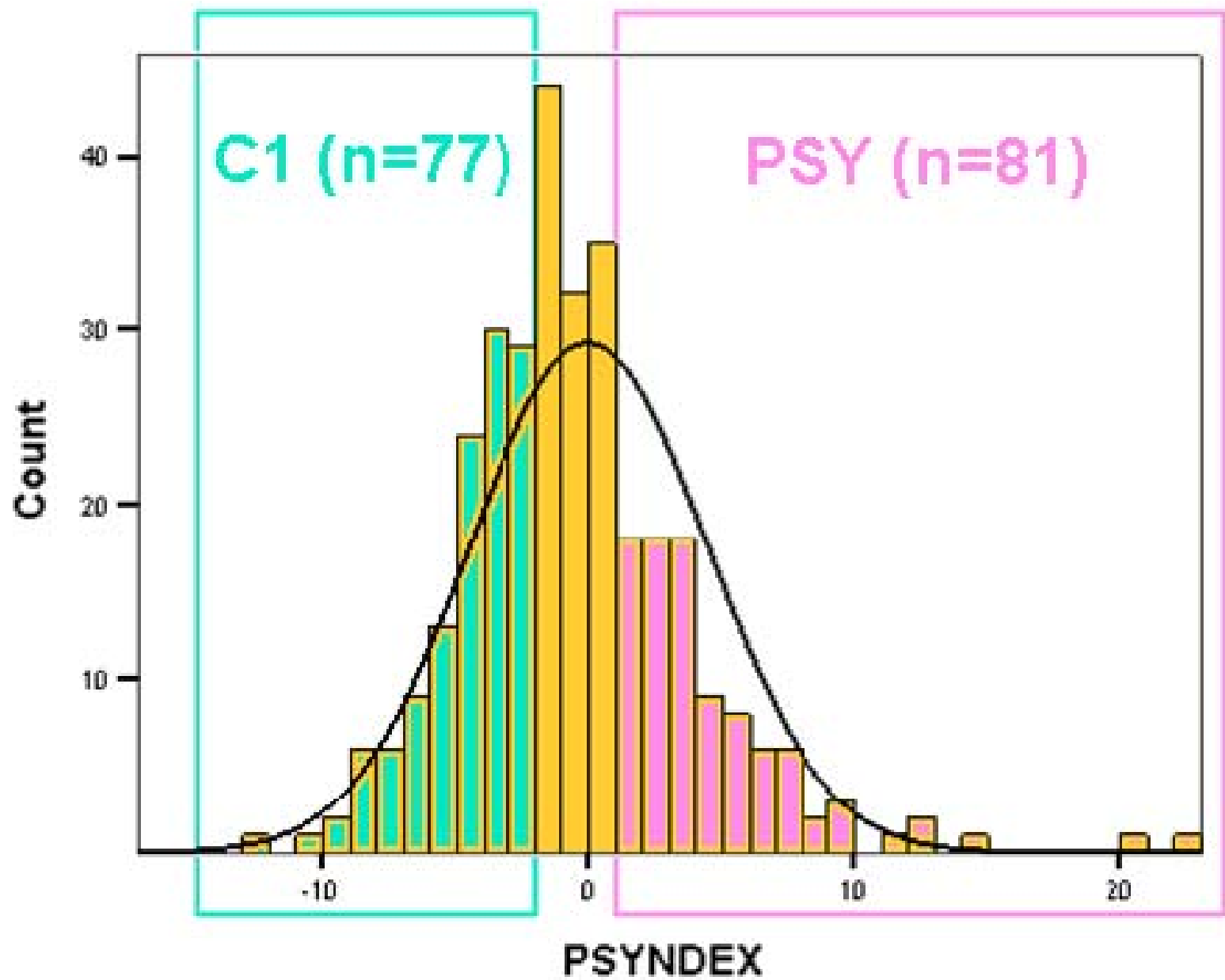
[www.psyd.hu](http://www.psyd.hu)

- coping (PICI)
- meaningfulness of life (PIL)
- spirituality (ISS)

# Participant Grouping

## **PSYNDEX** (“psychedelic index”) score

- calculated for 277 non-problematic drug users
- drug use parameters:
  - (1) number of psychedelic drugs
  - (2) autognostic drug use purposes
  - (3) importance and effects of the experience
- obtained distribution range (-12 to 23)
- separated into roughly equally sized groups:
  - high-scoring (PSYNDEX > 1) -> target group (“PSY”)
  - low-scoring (PSYNDEX < -2) -> control group (“C1”)





Depressants		Alcohol		
		Inhalants		
		Sleep medication, tranquilizers, anxiolytics ( <i>without a diagnosis or prescription</i> )		
		Medical drugs and alcohol combined		
		Heroin and other opiates		
		GHB, GBL		
Stimulants		Tobacco		
		Ecstasy (MDMA)		
		Amphetamine and other stimulants		
		Cocaine		
Hallucinogens	Deliriant		Jimson weed, angel's trumpet, henbane etc.	
	Dissociatives	Ketamine		
		Nitrous oxide (N <sub>2</sub> O)		
		PCP		
	Psychedelics	Minor	Marijuana, hashish	
			New synthetic drugs (2C-B, 5-MeO-DMT etc.)	
			Ibogaine	
		Major	<b>LSD</b>	
			<b>Psilocybe mushrooms</b>	
			<b>Mescaline cacti</b>	
			<b>Salvia divinorum</b>	
			<b>DMT (ayahuasca, yopo etc.)</b>	
	<b>LSA (morning glory, HBWR etc.)</b>			
(fictional drug)		Relevin		

**Table 1: Drug types with categorization**

1. Religious or spiritual practices
2. Self-knowledge and self-examination
3. Self-healing
4. Enhancing mood
5. Avoiding boredom and hopelessness
6. Offsetting a deficiency
7. Increasing social contact
8. Out of curiosity
9. Increasing sensation and pleasure
10. Stimulating artistic creativity/performance
11. Enhancing physical power
12. Rebellion or alternative lifestyle
13. Building personal identity and drawing attention
14. Expressing membership in a group

**Table 2: Drug use purposes**

## **Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI)**

- assesses personality factors behind an individual's resource capacities for long-term coping with stress
- 80 items, developed by Oláh (2005)

## **Purpose in Life Test (PIL)**

- measures a protective factor that meaningfulness of life has on mental health (based on the concepts of Frankl)
- 20 items, developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964)

## **Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS)**

- measures the guiding capabilities of spirituality in a person's life (based on the Religious Orientation Scale)
- 6 items, developed by Hodge (2003)

# Results

- PSY group substance use less problematic than C1
- Psychedelics had positive effect on quality of life
- PSYINDEX – PICI: weak correlation ( $r = .137$ ,  $p < .009$ ) only if problematic drug users included
- PSYINDEX – ISS: correlation ( $r = .339$ ,  $p < .001$ )
- ISS in matched groups: PSY > C1, C2
- # of psychedelic drugs: positive correlation with ISS

# Discussion 1/2

- Great variability and marked differences in the usage patterns of psychoactive drugs that cannot be approached by oversimplified or problem-oriented generalizations
- Exclusion of problem users: evens out subtle differences  
-> Focusing on problem users: likewise biases results
- Religious/spiritual attitude may keep away from drug use, especially if abstinence is valued/required by the community
- ...But: sacramental drug use may also be in accordance with religious or spiritual goals
- **Spirituality may act as a protective factor against drug-related problems for both drug users and non-users**

# Discussion 2/2

- Meaning of *spirituality* is ambiguous
- Autognostic drug use as a “training situation”:
  - deliberately provoked exceptional experiences
  - in order to gain self-knowledge
  - to rehearse coping strategies
- Actual efficiency and benefits still speculative

Next study: qualitative interviews with target group

# Summary

Drug use and its purposes were studied in 667 drug users and non-users with an online questionnaire

Focus on autognostic use of psychedelic drugs

Participants matched and grouped into PSY, C1, C2

Coping, life quality and spirituality were assessed with psychological instruments PICI, PIL and ISS

No differences found in coping and life quality between non-problematic drug users and non-users

Psychedelic drugs less associated with problems

Autognostic psychedelic users had higher spirituality

**Thank you for your  
attention!**

**LEVE@UTU.FI**