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PHARMACOKINETIC AND NEUROCHEMICAL CORRELATES OF CONTEXT-DEPENDENT BEHAVIORAL SENSITIZATION

Peter Lawrence Bonate

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Medical Neurobiology Indiana University

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Joseph N. Hingtgen, Ph.D., Chairman

Co-Chair verman, Ph.D., Peter в.

Doctoral Committee

han M.D., Ph.D.

Anantha Shekhar,

William J. Bride, Ph.D. Mc

August 20, 1996

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ABSTRACT

Peter Lawrence Bonate

<u>Pharmacokinetic and Neurochemical Correlates of</u> <u>Context-Dependent Behavioral Sensitization</u>

Repeated, intermittent psychostimulant administration results in sensitization, an increased behavioral response to subsequent drug administration. The mechanisms underlying sensitization are not understood. Previous research has shown that following repeated, intermittent cocaine or amphetamine administration, brain drug levels are elevated compared to animals administered a single equimolar dose. Thus, sensitization may be the result of altered drug distribution upon repeated administration. Psychostimulant-induced sensitization has also been shown to be context-dependent and to demonstrate crosssensitization between psychostimulants. Using cocaine as the test drug, the purpose of this study was to determine whether cocaine levels are altered in a context-dependent manner and if cocaine levels are altered in contextdependent cross-sensitization.

A reversed phase HPLC assay using ultraviolet detection was developed for cocaine analysis in biological matrices. In a 1-day context-dependent sensitization

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paradigm, rats previously administered cocaine in the testing cage had increased locomotor activity, decreased striatal cocaine clearance, and increased striatal volume of distribution following cocaine challenge compared to saline controls and animals administered cocaine in their home cage. Behavioral differences between groups were greatest immediately following drug administration, whereas pharmacokinetic differences were not apparent until later time periods. No difference in plasma cocaine concentration, striatal dopamine content, or striatal dopamine metabolite content was observed among groups.

Cross-sensitization between cocaine and amphetamine was also found to be context-dependent. Animals administered 0.75 mg/kg amphetamine daily for 8 days demonstrated context-dependent sensitization following cocaine challenge. There was no difference in striatal cocaine content or plasma cocaine levels. These results suggest that context-dependent sensitization is independent of brain cocaine levels and is due to other processes.

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