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**THE VARIETIES OF
ECSTASY EXPERIENCE:**

**Ecstasy an Exploration of Body, Mind and Person in Sydney's Club
Culture.**

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Anthropology)

By

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At the

Department of Anthropology
University of Sydney, Australia

August 2010

Statement of Authorship

I hereby certify that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a higher degree or diploma at any other tertiary institution. Information extracted from other published and unpublished sources has been properly referenced in the text and included in the bibliography.

..... Sean Leneghan

.....

Abstract

This is a phenomenologically grounded ethnographic study of the life-world of ecstasy users in the socio-cultural contexts of raving and clubs in Sydney, Australia. The thesis espouses existential-phenomenology as a framework for describing and understanding these experiences. I argue against and reject the widespread mechanistic-materialist paradigms that inform bio-medical and bio-psychological interpretations of drug-use and non-ordinary states of consciousness.

As an alternative to these dominant reductionist perspectives I draw on a holistic organismic approach and the application of phenomenology to ethnographic field research. More specifically, my exploration of the experiences of ecstasy is based upon a dialogal phenomenology which enabled me to generate a processual morphology of the varieties of ecstasy experience and the users' mode of being-in-the-world. Through this endeavour I also argue for a phenomenological foundation of the study of drug-use and non-ordinary states of consciousness in general.

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The photos contained in this thesis were taken by a good friend and professional photographer, Darren Hart, who elegantly captures the awesome beauty, excitement and dynamic worlds of the Sydney club and rave scenes.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother Margaret Leneghan (1943-2006) – who believed in my dreams and made me believe that I could achieve them. With the deepest of affection may your beautiful soul rest in peace. For your wisdom, Irish stoicism and laughter lives on in me.

The first piece of philosophical wisdom that I can recall is the ancient maxim of the great sage Confucius: "Use the time – for it is later than you think!" *Ergo*, I have decided to use the time to think about a few things pertaining to ecstasy use and non-ordinary states of consciousness.

"dimidium facti qui coepit habet: sapere aude, incipe"

"He who has begun is half done: dare to know!"

(From Horace's first book of Epistles)

When they tell you what you *can't* do,

And *why* not,

Just go ahead and do it anyways.

Graffiti on footpath

leading into The University of Sydney,

2002.

It is interesting to find that Sydney is a corruption of St Denis
...St Denis was that saint who converted the pagan Gauls to Christianity...
However, the name Denis is yet another corruption of the martyr's original

Athenian name, Dionysus.

Thus we may say that Sydney's patron is Dionysius which,
In view of the blithe and irrepressible character of the city
As it has developed, is gratifyingly suitable.

Ruth Park, in *A Companion Guide to Sydney*.

Quoted in Fiona McGregor's

Chemical Palace

2002.

Introduction

Sartre considers man's relation to the world the concrete starting point for his philosophizing (Strasser, 1969: 23).

1.0 *The theoretical itinerary of the project*

Essentially, this thesis is an ethnographic study of the life worlds of ecstasy users in the socio-cultural contexts of raving and clubbing in Sydney, Australia. My orientation for describing and understanding these experiences is grounded in the tradition of existential-phenomenology. Drawing upon this tradition, I argue against the dominant mechanistic-materialistic paradigms that inform bio- medical/ psychological interpretations of drug-use and non-ordinary states. Offering an alternative to these dominant reductionist perspectives I draw on a holistic organismic approach and the application of phenomenology to ethnographic field research. More specifically, my exploration of the experiences of ecstasy is founded upon a dialogal phenomenology which enabled me to generate a processual morphology of the varieties of ecstasy experience and the users' mode of being-in-the-world. Through this endeavour I also argue for a phenomenological foundation in the research of drug-use and non-ordinary states of consciousness in general

With the benefit of hindsight, the germinal seeds of this project were unconsciously sown in my late teens and my undergraduate studies at university. At the tender age of sixteen, I began a series of intellectual dialogues with my father at the Cosmopolitan café in Kings Cross Sydney. In these exchanges my father related how he had spent considerable years researching the history of philosophy of science and comparative religion. His primary interest was to trace the development of the notion of the Absolute in various world philosophical traditions and in the rise of the modern scientific *Weltanschauung*. His main enthusiasm, however, was for Kant's monumental Copernican Revolution in philosophy. This has aroused in me a deep curiosity for philosophical thinking – especially the constellation of thinkers identified with modern existentialism and critical theory (Nietzsche, Marcuse and Sartre). Following my disillusionment with six years of Catholic education, I took up an undergraduate degree, majoring in psychology, sociology and anthropology. When I

enrolled in university, I had initially intended to major in psychology since I had imagined that it was the subject which would allow me to *understand other people* and perhaps help other people to understand themselves (and hopefully work out a little of myself). What I found was that the subjects taught in psychology - behaviourism, cognitive psychology and neuroscience - did not seem to tell me a great deal about what people were actually like. Classical Sociology appealed to me at the time as did the History of Anthropology. While still clinging to psychology I was indecisive as whether to major in sociology or anthropology. But two semesters of statistics and neuropsychology convinced me that I was in the wrong place. Around the same time my burgeoning interest in the history of philosophy, philosophy of science, existentialism and Marxism began to mature.

I opted for anthropology and began an extended honours project in 2000, which examined various philosophical, psychological, socio-historical and ethnographic examples of human beings going 'mad' in several cultural life-worlds. The idea for this project emerged in a dialogue with my anthropological mentor who suggested to me "that someone like you should study madness!" I asked if that was allowed; he said that it would be a good topic *for someone like me*. I walked away excited at the prospect - but a little perplexed at what he was trying to get at. I began to research and ponder questions such as: what is it to go mad? How does the surrounding (sane?) community interpret such experiences? Following instruction from my mentor I began my initial foray into phenomenological philosophy. I wanted to know what existential phenomenology had to say about empirical aspects of these experiences. Within the duration of the honours year, I poured myself into trying to disambiguate the dense and often impenetrable works of existential-phenomenological thinkers such as May (1958), R. D. Laing (1967), Schutz (1970; 1973; 1978) and Straus (1963; 1966) -- to name but a few. During my research I discovered an obscure article by a certain Dr. Wulff (1995/ 2009) who was at the time a practicing psychiatrist in Germany. Based upon a conceptual blending of Husserlian and Schutzian phenomenology Wulff's work seemed to offer theoretical insight into thinking about instances of 'Divine madness' (Connor, 1982) and 'God intoxication' in comparative South East Asian ethnographies. At the end of the day, my honours examiners stipulated that I did not sufficiently demonstrate, or ground, a genuine phenomenological orientation within the experiential field of evidence. That is, I failed to accurately ground my theoretical

perspective within the respective ethnographies. I was further chastised for not having broken out of my self-consolidated middle-class idealisations of madness, which would entail really thinking with the tools of phenomenological analysis in order to transcend these illusory (I should amplify it as delusory) casts of consciousness. Nevertheless, I was strongly encouraged, armed with additional readings, to continue pursuing my intellectual trajectory both theoretically and ethnographically beyond the honours year.

Coming up a little short of a first class honours, I decided to enrol in a PhD at the Department of Public Health and Medicine at the University of New South Wales (hereafter UNSW). Over the next two and a half years I worked with Prof. Maurice Eisenbruch and Prof. Robyn Richmond in generating a 40,000 word literature review detailing a proposed ethnography of ecstasy. I had at that point never attended a rave party. As I recall, the initial stimulus for this project emerged in a free association exercise with Prof. Eisenbruch, where he asked “what do you want to do?” to which I replied “I don’t know!” “Yes -- *you do*”, he insisted. And so I put together a short literature review by looking up some articles on ecstasy. In my preliminary survey of this material there was clearly a strong bias towards the medico-scientific models and paradigms for thinking about drug use. Many of the scientifically ‘neutral’ studies of ecstasy were coloured by the ideology of ‘risk, toxicity or therapeutic’ models, which is to say, by a *predetermined* understanding of the phenomena (Henry & Rella, 2001). So as to avoid this kind of unconscious projection onto the phenomena, I adopted a phenomenological orientation entailing the suspension of one’s cultural ideological grounding. Alongside the more conservative material on ecstasy, I read a number of historical, sociological and psychological works on drug use and altered states of consciousness¹. This was to develop a feel for the field and to maximally broaden the scope and latitude of my own thinking. Several interrelated questions spiralled through my mind: what happens on ecstasy? What is the cultural context of its use? Why has the ecstasy culture become such a widespread and popular socio-historical movement? These questions set the background for *the* primary question - ‘what does

¹ E.g. Bakalar and Grinspoon, 1984; Bourgois, 2006; Bourguignon, 1973; Campbell, 2001; Dobkin De Rios, 1977; Du Toit, 1977; Dunlap, 1961; Furst, 1972; Grinspoon and Bakalar, 1997; Grob, 2002; Hayes, 2000; Hayter, 1968; Hughes, 1999; Inglis, 1975; Jay 1999; Lee and Shlain 1995; Masters and Houston, 2000; Michaux, 1966; Moore and Alltounian, 1978; Ratsch, 1989; Siegel, R. 1989; Strassman, et al. 2008; Tart, 1969.

ecstasy actually do?’ These specific points of curiosity were further set against the two themes that ran implicitly throughout my honours thesis: what are altered states of consciousness and what is the nature of normal consciousness in general?

Certain irreconcilable differences in orientation (including my first experience with ethics committees) led me to leave UNSW. I enrolled at the University of Sydney (hereafter Usyd) and rewrote the entire literature review proposing a project which would develop into the present thesis. A protracted second round of ethics negotiations ensued. During this time I delved deeper into the areas of history and philosophy of science – particularly in the areas of ontology and epistemology. I wanted to explore the origins, genesis and philosophical underpinnings of especially the mechanistic paradigm of the mainstream psychology and neurobiology. Historically, how the fields of behaviourism, neuroscience, cognitive-science, and neuropsychology were formed? Why do they claim and maintain supremacy both within the academic discourses on ecstasy and the broader public’s self-interpretations? I began to formulate a critique, based on existential phenomenology, of the neurological and cognitive paradigms which maintain *ideological* supremacy both within the academy and the broader public domain. In order to comprehend the present hegemony of the mechanistic paradigm I turned to an examination of the socio-historical development and ascendancy of the notion of mechanism. This entailed clarifying the underlining metaphysics of this paradigm within the history of Western thought.

1.1 *The cosmo-ontology of mechanism*

All scientific thinking - without exception - contains implicit or explicit *metaphysical* presuppositions (Strasser, 1974: 277-294; see also Burt, 1980). Arguments that make anthropological claims about *what it is to be human* - e.g. that *Homo sapiens* is that instinctually driven animal determined by automatic physiological responses to its environment - advance both an *ontological* and a *cosmological* sets of presuppositions about, what human beings are, and our place in and relationship with the universe. The dominance of mechanism in contemporary scientific thinking is not the net result of the ‘progressive march of science’; as a cosmo-ontology, its socio-historical lineage is contained in ancient materialism that was to take a more definitive form in the modern era (Lange, 1925).

Proponents of the mechanistic cosmo-ontology maintain that the universe, and everything in it, is best understood as a *mechanical system* comprising of matter in motion and subject to natural law. As a *metaphysical* doctrine mechanism is both deterministic and materialistic, in that it argues that all phenomena (including the natural-living world) are comprehensible through universal mechanical laws. In the Western canon, such a position can be traced to the early Greek atomists – Leucippus, Democritus (5th century), and Epicurus (late 4th century) – who posited atoms in the void. But it was some twenty-two centuries later, in the 17th century, that mechanism, as a coherent philosophy crystallized in Descartes’ doctrine of automata. Taking issue with Descartes’ dualism La Mettrie (1996; Vartanian, 1953; 1960) offered his comprehensive cosmo-ontology in *The Man-Machine*. Embracing matter and discarding the immaterial ‘soul’, Le Mettrie sought to demonstrate how matter can explain all natural phenomena, including the ‘soul’ or psyche. *L’Homme Machine* marks the first fully-fledged philosophical exposition of this position. In his view, all forms of conscious life (sensation, thinking, volition, emotions) are contingent upon the “organic machine”, which operate according to the structuring and functioning of the central nervous system. In his work Le Mettrie helped to lay the groundwork for modern exponents of Western materialism (Grof, 1985; 2000) which sought to reconcile Descartes’ dualistic conception of the soul as a distinct thinking substance (*res cogitans*), inhabiting the spatial-material extended thing (*res extensa*), i.e., mechanistic body. The triumph of this paradigm set the agenda for psycho-biological science and the eventual dominance of materialistic schools of thought. What is important to emphasise is that the absentee ‘soul’ (psyche) is replaced by the brain itself (including the central nervous system). Materialism emerges as the governing paradigm of science and the brain comes to be seen as the central locus of the machine producing thought. This position is advocated in the recent works of Marvin Minsky (1987; 2006) who maintains that humans are quintessentially ‘meat’ or ‘emotion’ machines. As a coherent paradigm, mechanism assumes ideological saliency both within the academic discourses and the broader public’s imagination.

Within the *ideology* of mechanism the numerous living-biological functions of the organism are replaced by an identification of living beings with machines and its associated metaphors: the “hard-wiring” of the brain, switching “off” after a day at

work, to “running low on fuel”, “running out of batteries”, regular “breakdowns”, “burning-out” etc. A number of commentators have explored the pervasive anthropological implications of the ‘human-as-machine’ in the life-worlds of citizens in advanced capitalism (Mumford, 1970; Stein, 1985: 8-9), the self-identification of children with their computers (Turkle, 1984: 281-319), the worker as ‘human motor’ (Rabinbach, 1990), the mechanised world of corporate management (Morgan, 1986: 19-39), ‘Taylorist man’ on the factory floor (Doray, 1988: 72-86; Kakar, 1970), or the ‘strategies’ of corporate management (Morgan, 1986: 19-39). Closer to the topic of this thesis, with the gradual efflorescence of the club and rave culture, the German group *Kraftwerk*, began to synthesise electronic music, blurring the line between human and machine, with one of their most popular albums being aptly titled: ‘*The Man-Machine*’ (1978).

Of course the reverse is also possible as machines may be described in terms of the living body:

Here we have our locomotive with its boiler in place, and with its wheels fitted into their axles... The animal is taking shape; we now have to connect the viscera to the limbs, and cover it with a protective shell. The part which connects the viscera to the limbs is simply the connecting rod (Turgan in Doray, 1988: 82; see also Jonas, 1966: 108-134).

Nonetheless, whatever similarities may metaphorically be drawn between them, machines are fundamentally not the same as human beings. Despite the cases being advanced for AI, phenomenologists (Dreyfus, 1993; Heidegger, 1983; Jonas, 1966) are adamant in making a clear distinction between organisms and technology. No matter how sophisticated machines are, as human constructions, they categorically belong to the realm of inorganic matter. Although both machines and humans are composed of matter the former do not possess egoic embodiment, i.e. the dynamic organismic system of ‘blood, flesh and bones’ that is always totalising and intentionally related to the world. It is this conception of ‘human being’ that phenomenological and psychoanalytic anthropology is concerned with.

Returning to a critique of mechanism, the Marxist-psychiatrist Doray (1998) cites the strong parallels between the dehumanization and reified conditions of workers under capitalism - who feel as they are ‘automatons’ in the Taylorist factory - and

mechanistic theories which seek to explain and interpret their malaise. R. D. Laing (1971: 22) famously put this matter in a nutshell: "...people who experience themselves as automata, as robots, as bits of machinery, or even as animals... are rightly regraded as crazy. Yet, why do we not regard a theory that seeks to transmute persons into automata or animals as equally crazy?" In short, existential-phenomenologists reject the major tenets of mechanistic science on the grounds of conceptual confusion, which the philosopher Whitehead aptly called 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness'.

1.2 *Von Uexküll's biological thought*

Historically, there was significant paradigmatic shift in the field of biology (and by implication anthropology) initiated by the great vitalist Jacob Von Uexküll. His critiques of the cosmo-ontological claims of mechanistic physiology, where organism is investigated as an assemblage of parts in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry, facilitated further development in the holistic conception of organismic life. By rejecting the mechanism and Darwinism² Uexküll (1986; 1982) redirected theoretical biology towards the peculiarities of the *organism as a subject*. Hence, his biology "constitutes a polemic assault on mechanistic biology's reduction of Mother Nature's great masterpiece to an accumulation of inconsequential particles in a state of insignificant flux" (Hoffmeyer, 1997: 55).

The philosophical underpinnings of Uexküll's biological thought derive from Kant's critical idealism, with its key epistemological thesis that *reality is a constituted phenomenon*, which is to say, that an organism's reality is not simply an external 'objective fact', Rather, it is a phenomenon constituted as the function of the total physiologico-anatomical structure of the organism and its activity. Consequently, every object in the environment exists through its relationship to the organism's (subject's) inner-world (*Innenwelt*), whilst the organism (subject) is definable through its relation to specific objects in its environment (*Umwelt*). Thus, subjects and objects exist as an inseparable unity, that is, in a dynamic reciprocal relationship. Uexküll's application of Kantianism to biology emphasises that the constitution of *our* body,

² Especially because of "its prejudice in interpreting evolution as a "progress" from the lowest forms of life to man" (Cassirer, 1950: 205). For the historical context of Uexküll's work, see the discussion by Cassirer (op. cit. pp. 117-216).

especially the sense organs and central nervous system, is indispensable for exploring experiential reality in reference to a neuroscientific frame of interpretation³. As Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963: 13):

Thus the form of the excitement is created by the organism itself, by its proper manner of offering itself to actions from the outside. Doubtless, in order to be able to subsist, it must encounter a certain number of physiological and chemical agents in its surroundings. But it is the organism itself-according to the proper nature of its receptors, the threshold of its nerve centres and the movements of its organs-which choose the stimuli in the physical world to which it will be sensitive. "The environment (*Umwelt*) emerges from the world through the being or actualization of the organism"- an organism can only exist if it succeeds in the world as an adequate environment.

Thus contrary to the cosmo-ontological assumptions of the mechanistic paradigm, for an organismic approach to existence:

The crux of the argument is that organisms do themselves interpret and respond to their environment. As a response to external change an animal might, for example, home in on selected areas of its habitat. One dramatic example of this was shown in the case of the locust, which altered not only its behaviour but its anatomy, as a response to climatic disorder. Organisms can also alter the environment in which they live... Although the organism is of course shaped by the interplay between genes and environment, the environment is also to some extent shaped by the organism. The organism plays an active role in its own construction (Hoffmeyer, 1997: 57).

This is to say that an organism's anatomical-physiological constitution is not merely determined by external forces from the environment as the mechanists advocate. Von Uexküll's thinking has influenced and resonates with a number of thinkers that are confluent with the phenomenological orientation of this thesis (e.g. Buytendijk, 1987, 1972; Gehlen, 1998; Goldstein, 1995; Grene, 1974; Jonas, 1966; Plessner, 1969). All of these thinkers advocate what may be described as an organismic approach to existence that rejects the frameworks of mechanistic materialism. Conceptually the organismic cosmo-ontology reaches its apex in Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963), his first (and much neglected) book which represents the

³ A full anthology and celebration of Uexküll's organismic approach has been given its due in the special issue of *Semiotica*, 2001: vol. 134 (1/4).

philosophical synthesis of the work accomplished by pioneers of neurobiology, philosophical biology and anthropology.⁴ The combined efforts of the Neo-Kantian and phenomenological tradition presented a formidable challenge to the proponents of mechanistic thinking leading to a major shift in scientific and philosophical thinking in anthropology, biology, and related disciplines. The resultant movement away from mechanistic science to what Grof has appositely called (1985) ‘The Dawning of a New Paradigm’ is one frame of reference for the explorations contained in this dissertation.

Although von Uexküll’s work remains largely unappreciated in biological and anthropological circles, his contribution to the field of bio-semiotics has been considerable (Kull, 2001). I draw attention to his ‘new biology’ in order to stress that *the biological dimension is the primary level of analysis, for all organisms are open living dynamic systems*. Far from discounting the biological dimension to non-ordinary states of consciousness and drug-use – I am stipulating that the knowledge of the *bios* is to be placed at the centre of anthropological theorising, in combination with ethnographic exploration of the cultural contexts and experiences of these phenomena. In this respect, when thinking about how to understand the non-ordinary states brought forth by drug-ingestion, Buytendijk’s formulations described in his largely ignored *Prolegomena to an anthropological physiology* (1972) can provide, to my mind, a more accurate framework for thinking about the reports contained in this ethnography. Needless to say, this perspective would be equally applicable to all studies of ‘non-ordinary states of consciousnesses’.

In his classic, but understudied work, Buytendijk introduces the concept of an anthropological (hereafter ‘human’) physiology in accordance with Strasser’s (1969; 1974; 1985) application of Husserlian phenomenology into the human sciences (the primary method of this thesis). In his works Strasser (1974: 65-88) makes an incisive critique of scientific ‘objectivism’ and by implication materialistic-mechanistic paradigms. This perspective sets forth the theoretical and methodological prerequisites for a “new ideal of scientific knowledge” that is grounded in phenomenology. Following Strasser’s lead, Buytendijk argues for a radical revision of

⁴ A remarkable contemporary appraisal and development of philosophical biology and anthropology is given in Evan Thompson’s (2006) *Mind in Life: Phenomenology and the sciences of the Mind*.

the classical concepts of 'subjective' and 'objective' in furthering our understanding of the human *physiology*. The driving idea informing Buytendijk's analysis involves an examination of the association between the objectified 'body' (*Körper*) of natural scientific thought and the actual *experiences* of someone's body (*Leib*). In line with phenomenology's resolution to the troublesome Cartesian dualist metaphysics (Spicker, 1970), Buytendijk's conceives of the body and mind as an inextricable unity. This psycho-physical unity has been appositely rendered as the 'wisdom of the body' (Cannon, 1939), 'comportment' by Merleau-Ponty (1963), and more recently the 'mind in life' (Thompson, 2007). Buytendijk uses the terminology of *lived experience* (*Leib*) to think about and examine a number of the elementary physiological functions that bring to light the universal physiological dynamics of 'being human'. By putting the subject (the human) at the core of physiology, Buytendijk follows Husserl's return to the life-world as the existential grounding of all human experience⁵.

1.2.1. *Biology and Anthropology as complementary frames of reference*

As living organisms human beings belong to the biological field, the subject matter of biological sciences. The discipline of comparative biology studies the human species both from a comparative approach to other living beings and seeks to generate a methodology which is not an exercise in physicalist reductionism, i.e., explaining human existence in reference to either chemistry and/ or the laws of physics (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 65-70; Grene, 1974; Haeffner, 1989; Hoffmeyer, 1997).

In existential-phenomenology the essential living wholeness of the organism in the world is the subject of investigation, description and clarification (Goldstein, 1995, von Bertalanffy, 1966; Haeffner, 1989; Strasser, 1974; Thines, 1977). This essential wholeness is in contrast to the mechanistic positions that espouse reifying perspectives on the organism. Reification is the process where human phenomena are perceived as if they were 'things' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Berger and Pullberg, 1965; Gabel, 1975). Due to the historical conflation of humans, animals, and

⁵ Some contemporary neuroscientists follow this course which has generated a broad interest in human embodiment (Valera, 1995) and neurophenomenology (Laughlin et al., 1993). To these can be added Shannon, (2008) and the philosopher Dreyfus (1993) who provide one excellent starting point for a phenomenological critique of mechanistic and computational frameworks for thinking about consciousness.

machines, existential phenomenology seek to maximally clarify and describe the phenomenological distinctness of any given being and its mode/s of existence. The anti-mechanistic position of existential phenomenology relates directly to the von Uexküllian tradition indicated above. Therefore, I have taken this wholeness, the 'being-in-the-world' of the person, as my starting point for thinking about drug use and non-ordinary states of consciousness in relation to neurobiological concerns.

1.2.2. Existential Indeterminacy: Rejection of Mechanism

As mentioned above, the vital realm of human beings is biological. This 'Mind in Life' (Thompson, 2007) or 'Embodied Mind' (Valera et al., 1995) is the position that I am embracing as the background of my ethnographic and phenomenological exploration of ecstasy use. In opposition to the determinism of mechanistic science, phenomenology recognizes the existential indeterminacy of organismic consciousness. An interesting example of this position is argued by Barnes (2005), who convincingly synthesises Sartre's phenomenology and Edelman's neuroscience. Edelman's own exegesis can be seen in *Wider than the Sky: A Revolutionary view of Consciousness* (2005), which details the incomparable complexity of the human brain. Notwithstanding the entirety of the central nervous system, the brain weighs only three pounds but contains nearly 30 billion neurons (nerve cells) with 1 million billion connections (synapses). Time and time again, Edelman stresses the 'hyper-astronomical' numbers of possible neural patterns which is nothing less than the 'exquisite detail and individuation' of a given organism's CNS. I mention Edelman in order to stress the indeterminacy and individuation of the human organism – for although there maybe similarities and universal phenomenological experiences in non-ordinary states of consciousness, it is the unique, particular I-ness that is my starting point. This perspective also allows for a constructive rejection of any scientific reductionism wherein the phenomenology ('higher order') of drug experiences is explained by recourse to 'lower order' neurological *cum* physiological states. One example is given by Hobson (2001) who asserts that "modern neuroscience has permitted us to build the scientific base that Freud wanted but which psychoanalysis had to do without". This, in Hobson's view has led to a 'new unified conceptual framework', a 'paradigm shift' which now shows how 'processes previously considered to be exclusively psychodynamic are actually embodied in the anatomy of physiology' (Ibid; xi). Rather than asserting a radical revision of dynamic

psychology' (xii) Hobson is maintaining the *status quo* in academic thinking on drugs, one which refuses to critically enquire into its own presuppositions and foundations in the life-world. As I noted above in the historical survey of mechanistic paradigm, following Le Mettrie the absentee soul or psyche is replaced in modern materialism by the brain and central nervous system. This excludes the intentional experiences of users' "I" states from their explanations and/ or interpretations, and, by the same token, misses the ontological significance of the brain's neurobiological constitution and dynamics in the context of its living embodiment. This perspective is most clearly indicated in the following quote from Ey (1978:123-24):

...the organization of the brain corresponds neither to a reflex chain (not even a vertical one), nor to a mosaic of centres, nor to a homogenous mass without localization. This is precisely because the brain itself is a dynamically structured organism. Rooted in the needs of its body, it *never ceases to construct its own world at each moment of its time*. Since it is not a mechanism but, as Bergson foresaw, is the organ of indeterminacy, the complementary isomorphism of the field of consciousness and the organization of the brain (Ruyer) ceases to be a logical and moral problem. Far from reinforcing the mechanistic prejudice of its "automaton", this image of the living, waking, creative brain instead establishes its function of personal "autonomy". So great a revolution has taken place in our conception of the nervous "system" that the very term "system", which implies rigidity and fixed order, may itself even appear inadequate.

1.3 *A defence of existential-phenomenology*

Reflecting on the disarray in the sciences Max Scheler (1961: xii), one of the key progenitors of the phenomenological movement, writes:

In ten thousand years of history, we are the first age in which man has become utterly and unconditionally problematic to himself, in which he no longer knows who he is, but that he *knows that* he does not know. It is only by firm resolution to wipe the canvas clean of all traditional answers... and to look upon man with a radical methodological alienation and astonishment that we can again hope to gain some valid insights.

What emerged from this disorder in metaphysics was an urgent need to establish a programme for a philosophy of scientific method for thinking about the place of human beings in nature. This would involve coming to see the world with 'different eyes' (Plessner, 1978: 25)⁶. As we saw with von Uexküll's 'new biology', there was a renewed 'critical attitude' (in the Kantian sense) taken up *vis-à-vis* the existing natural

⁶ In this connection, Plessner's (1969: 151-156) much underappreciated discussion of the 'positionality' through which "living natural systems are distinguished from the non-living" is also of significance. Here should also be mentioned the contributions by Portmann, Gehlen, Buytendijk and Goldstein. See Spiegelberg, (1972) and Grene (1974) for a survey of their works.

sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) by thinkers such as Dilthey (1989), Rickert (1986), Weber (1947) and Cassirer (1950; 2000). Paralleling this programme phenomenologists such as Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Gurwitsch and Schutz provided their own distinct and rigorous foundations for the human sciences. The starting point for such an examination entails a radical return to the immediate evidence of conscious experience that is unavailable to ‘common sense’ and the orthodox ‘scientific method’. I shall expand on these themes below.

The primary aim of the phenomenological method is to provide a critical base or matrix for empirical investigations and analysis of the concrete situations of everyday-life. As a rigorous methodology for the social sciences, phenomenology uncovers and clarifies the invariant structures of the life-world in which the intentional directedness of consciousness constitutes all human action. For the purposes of this dissertation I am advocating Husserl’s science of the *Lebenswelt* – the ‘life-world’ – as a phenomenological foundation for ethnographic enquiry (Jackson, 1989; 1996; Strasser, 1974: 65-74). The concept of the life-world was introduced by Husserl late in his writings to delineate the “world of immediately encountered existence, the humanly felt and lived orbit of concrete awareness, the *Lebenswelt* or Life-world” (Natanson, 1964: 126). This realm of experience was to become the central thematic for phenomenology: an unbiased description and analysis of the structural features of this largely unreflected upon experience of every-day life. The phenomenology of the life-world is rooted in the circuitous and reflexive approach of critical self-suspension (*epoché* or reduction) and a sustained empathic grasp (*verstehen*) of a mode of existence. In turn, this epistemological reflexivity allows for invariant structures of the life-world to be explored and accurately described.

Earlier in this Introduction I explained the influences of my own life-situation that eventually stimulated me to develop my own relation to phenomenology and to ultimately undertake an ethnographic exploration of drug use. My thinking about drugs and non-ordinary states did not materialize as a spontaneous product of inward contemplative effort. I was consciously building upon the philosophical tradition that I was *thinking with* in my attempt to tackle these phenomena. What I sought to cultivate in the course of my research was a hermeneutical attitude (Strasser, 1969:

251-253), i.e., a consistent attempt and struggle to explicate that which is *unknown to me*. This involved reading and thinking through a number of key texts in existential-phenomenology (e.g. Luijpen, 1969) before entering into the field of direct contact with consumers of ecstasy.

This hermeneutical frame of reference, often indexed by the label ‘reflexivity’, has led me to realize that our desires, interests, motivations, neurotic conflicts, etc., will heavily influence the questions posed and modes of interpretation undertaken in the course of research. Hailing from divergent theoretical backgrounds some thinkers have called this orientation ‘personal knowledge’ (Polanyi, 1964) and in the ethno-psychoanalytic tradition ‘countertransference’ (Devereux, 1967; see also Stein, 1984; 1985). Despite their differences, these two works draw full attention to the researchers’ own experiential engagement with the world in their pursuit of knowledge. Especially in this context, Polanyi (1964: xiii-xiv) is worth quoting:

I start by rejecting the ideal of scientific detachment... I want to establish an alternative ideal of knowledge quite generally. Hence the wide scope and also the coining of a new term that I have used for my title: Personal Knowledge... Such is the personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding. But this does not make our understanding subjective.... Such knowing is objective in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality... Throughout this book I have tried to make this situation apparent. I have shown into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is to be known.

Agreeing with Polanyi’s orientation, I sought to cultivate a phenomenologically informed reflective frame of reference *vis-à-vis* the participants encountered in this ethnography. I do not equate a sustained reflective attitude with ‘post-modern’ narcissistic mirror-gazing (‘self-reflexive’ anthropology). On the contrary, a critical attitude of this kind facilitates the primary methodological aims of a phenomenologically grounded ethnography (Mimica, 2009). An epistemologically reflective approach is by no means foreign to the canonical aims of traditional socio-cultural anthropology as they were historically formulated (Spiro, 1996). As I stated in the opening paragraphs of this thesis my own intellectual trajectory and hence the creation of this project were not through an abstemious contemplative effort: we are always practically and passionately involved in the world. Nonetheless, there is the need for a detachment from the immediate mundane world of pragmatic concerns, so

that a critical position can be generated. This is crucial if common-sense and/ or ideological forms of knowledge replication are to be avoided.

In this respect, the aims and methods of phenomenology are complimentary to the aims and ideals of socio-cultural anthropology (Bidney, 1973; Spiro, 1996). Put differently, claims about the human existence should always be established empirically first and inductively generalized from specific case studies. Hence it is also the case that every ethnography (or clinical situation) as an original exploration of human life worlds can confirm or invalidate existing theoretical models, paradigms or theories. This has led me to put on hold (critical-self suspension) my own prejudices and generate an original ethnography that has sought to openly and accurately describe the “ecstasy-mode of being-in-the-world” whilst simultaneously avoiding the narcissistic distortions of the ‘unexamined’ or uncritical observer (see Devereux, 1967; La Barre, 1978; Stein, 1985: 14-22).

When I say ‘unexamined observers’ I have in mind those researchers who zealously replicate the dominant scientific paradigms without being sufficiently critical of what they are bringing as supposedly ‘neutral’ scientists to an understanding of the human situation. It is this blind adherence to intellectual ‘fads’ (naïve scientism) that the phenomenological tradition seeks to critique and ultimately replace with a “new scientific ideal” (Strasser, 1974). Openness to alien life worlds seeks to move beyond these defensive methodic ‘suits of armour’; by removing our cognitive visors we may come to appreciate and understand more fully the scope and enigma of human existence. Such an approach is anathema to those who are spellbound by the methods and results of medico-scientistic thinking, who despite the indefinite field of human possibility continue to uphold what La Barre (1978) calls ‘obsessive-compulsive’ methodologies. It may be that pressures of pursuing academic careers, grants and prestige under the intensifying bureaucratic cutbacks of academic environments leads to an institutionalised replication of this situation (La Barre, 1978: 263-264; Stein, 1985 15-17). If this defensive situation is maintained then the possibility to truly open up and be challenged by the meanings, affects, situations etc. arising in the ethnographic encounter remains marginal. For it is precisely in the ethnographic encounter that what one finds out about the people s/he works with will invariably

diverge from one's pre-existent cultural anchorage and defensive frameworks (Stein, 1985: 14-15).

To reiterate, I take as my primary lead those phenomenologists⁷ who stress the description of a life-world under consideration as foundational for social and anthropological research. The methods, principles and practices allow for a sustained examination of the life-world *as it is lived* by its inhabitants: the intentional activities of human beings who live and act in and continuously constitute their social worlds are brought into relief. This has allowed me to deepen my thinking about the traditional issues of comparative anthropology and cognitive science in relation to my subject-matter. For me, the main questions are: What is the phenomenology of the ecstasy experience? What do consumers go through in these non-ordinary states? What sorts of desires, affects, changes to cognition and bodily states are ecstasy users undergoing and exploring? How do the pleasures of their highs and peaks compare to the lows and discombobulated states associated with coming down from these substances? Is there a viable existential project in ecstasy consumption? Or do the ethnographic data suggest a more problematical perspective in what users can achieve in pursuing these states? I will return to these questions in the Conclusion. Beyond these it is also important to ask questions such as: are there universal (cross-cultural/pan-human) and invariant structures of the ecstasy experience? How are these meanings and specific cultural manifestations given specific expression in the socio-cultural context of ecstasy use and experience?

1.4 *Dialogal phenomenology*

R. D. Laing (1967: 17) famously opens the *Politics of Experience* with one of the central themes of social phenomenology:

The other person's behavior is an experience of mine. My behavior is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is to relate my experience of the other's behavior to the other's experience of my behavior. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is *interexperience*.

⁷ For instance: Husserl, 1970; Gurwitsch, 1966; Schutz and Luckmann, 1973; Luckmann, 1983; Bidney, 1973.

In this field of interexperience I do not experience your direct experience of yourself. What I do experience is my experience of your experiencing. And thus Laing (Ibid: 19) observes that within this incessant dialectic "... I experience you as experiencing yourself as experiencing me. And so on". In the ethnographic context the main orientation is to strive to maximally open oneself to other people's experience taking their experience, to the best of one's ability, on their own terms and thus allowing them to become palpable. Or, to put it in Laing's terms, to let 'other's experience become my own'. In order to explore and describe the features of an alien life-world I also strive to suspend my pre-existing and largely taken-for-granted (to the point of being unconscious) socio-cultural life-world. Rather than some sort of self-annihilation of one's cultural universe, this involves being critically reflective of one's presuppositions and then suspending them. Most importantly this included not only all of my prejudices, but the ingrained *scientific* presuppositions that I had internalised about drugs and non-ordinary states in my undergraduate career. A number of ethnographers have taken up similar methodological concerns⁸. However, I have selected Strasser's (1969; 1974) project of a dialogal phenomenology as my central methodological guide⁹.

My application of Strasser's dialogal approach and the phenomenological method of self-suspension enabled me to frame and critically reflect on my informants' *accounts of their own experiences* within their socio-cultural context. Ethnographic or sociologically guided approaches to ecstasy (e.g. Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994; Duff et al., 2007, Eisner, 1994) are different from reports collated in clinical contexts (Adamson, 1985) or open and closed interviewing techniques (Hammersley et al., 2002). I have given a synopsis of the major works on ecstasy in the 'review of the field' section of this thesis (Appendix 6. Ecstasy Literature: A Brief Survey). It goes without saying that these data can be used in a complementary fashion.

The core of this ethnography is drawn from the 300, 000 words of interviews, notes and conversations with informants. Thus I have distilled from their accounts, reflections and self-interpretations a number of the major areas surrounding the

⁸ For instance see Jackson, 1989, 1996, 1998; Mimica, 2009.

⁹ A similar approach of 'dialectical phenomenology' is detailed in Aron Esterson's classic work *The Leaves of Spring* (1970).

ecstasy experience. This corpus of data was also supplanted and augmented by my own ethnographic observations and phenomenological reflections on my own ecstasy experiences. Swayed by a piece of practical wisdom - "if you want to learn to swim, you have to jump in the water and get wet!" - I decided to partake in ecstasy consumption with certain informants within the ambit of this project. I am aware of excellent ethnographic material that has *not* been gathered by a methodology entailing the researcher's direct participation in the drug-induced state (Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994). That said, at the time it seemed to me to be the best way to go about opening-up and exploring the phenomenology of ecstasy. All told, in the duration of the fieldwork I used ecstasy on approximately 35 nights. The insights gained from these experiences allowed me to reflect on my own and other users' experiences. Many of these insights were littered throughout my own self-interpretive journal entries. Unlike the systematic and comprehensive accounts of ecstasy use in clinical settings (Adamson, 1985) or sophisticated self-reports (e.g., Saunders 1995: 6-12), I deliberately elected not to prioritise my own self-experiences¹⁰ in this thesis. My aim was always to concentrate and bring to light as faithfully as possible the informants' own experiences with these substances. This is not to downplay the importance of my own experiences with ecstasy use since it allowed me to generate a number of Malinowskian styled (1967) journal entries which served as a comparative corpus of data. In the *post facto* interviewing process I encouraged the informants to freely explore whatever aspects of their experience they wished to talk about. Even though I am aware of 'professional ethics' masquerading as research methodology (Devereux, 1967: 83-102)¹¹, there was one area that I consciously and deliberately censored and that was explicit discussions about dealing¹².

¹⁰ See Appendix 3 on Personal Experiences.

¹¹ Devereux (1967) writes "A great many professional defences are simply variations of the isolation defence which 'decontaminates' anxiety arousing material by repressing or negating its affective content and human as well as personal relevance".

¹² This was linked to a number of factors: the informants' paranoia of undercover police combined with my own wish to protect their anonymity and avoid potential prosecution. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the users I encountered in the field initially thought that I was an 'undercover cop'. In the entire duration of my fieldwork I only met 'undercover police' once. It was obvious to everyone around me that they were police officers - who appeared to be trying to set up the group I was with for drug possession by asking them if they had any 'disco bickies'. One of the senior ravers I was with remarked that she had dated a police officer for sometime and this enabled her to identify them immediately through their cop-like *casual* dress code, ignorance about drugs in general, and blatant obviousness as police.

Returning to the main discussion, a compelling articulation of this kind of research is presented in Shanon's methodological/ theoretical chapters in his *The Antipodes of the Mind* (2002). His own 'radical phenomenology' is set against background in cognitive science and philosophy (Shanon, 2008). But it is in his work on ayahuasca (op cit. 2002) that Shanon offers a comprehensive methodology for studying drug use and modifications (non-ordinary states) of consciousness. For me it is important to notice that his 'radical phenomenological' method bears some direct parallels to the dialogal phenomenology espoused in this thesis.

I have mentioned above some of the history of ideas that led to the establishment of philosophical biology, anthropology, phenomenology ("pure" or "transcendental") and the eventual emergence of existential-phenomenology (Jackson, 1996; 1998; 2005; Spiegelberg, 1960). As I also discussed, the primary approach to this ethnography is informed by Strasser's adaptation of Husserlian framework as a methodic guideline. By starting from a subject-matter (be it people, events or things) the phenomenologist seeks to describe it *as it appears*¹³ in his or her consciousness. The central task and question of dialogal phenomenology is then to describe "*how a world arises* in a dialogue between me and the other" (Strasser, 1969: 22), who, of course, through "the dialogue as an active-receptive interplay" (ibid. p. 65) is approached as a "you". It is important to point out that for Strasser the mutual "attunement" constitutive of the dialogal situation is not just the commonly privileged "harmonious" mode but includes also negative modalities for "without tensions, differences of opinion, divergencies of practical and theoretical approaches, the dialogue would soon come to a standstill. A "you" that cannot contradict the other cannot really speak with him (*sic*)" (ibid. p. 65). In this perspective the dialogal phenomenology facilitates the practice of critical ethnographic reflection and suspension in the context of *real* rather than idealised interpersonal engagements.

Although I have participated 'on-and-off' in the rave/ club scenes for a number of years – I have never really considered myself *a raver or clubber*. At times there was a strong temptation for continual and total immersion – to 'go native - off chops' – and to take on the full culture of raving. But, as some informants noticed, I have always

¹³ Hence the famous motto of the younger Husserl "back to the things themselves!" (*Zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*)

been a free-spirited intellectual. I am first and foremost an anthropologist and this project of knowledge has led me down and back out of the proverbial rabbit hole. Since the time of the primary fieldwork I have focused on formulating an understanding of the life-world of ecstasy users and developing my professional life as an ethnographer. What I found in this distinct life world during my ethnographic explorations constitutes the bulk of this dissertation (Chapter 3)

Thus far, within academic anthropology I have found a mixed reception to this kind of research ranging from outright dismissal, indifference, murmurs of corruption; ‘a lowbrow subject matter’ - ambiguity and unease - to excitement, curiosity and recognition. It is my belief that this kind of work and more broadly psychedelic research will become more pervasive and entrenched over the coming years, as the subject matter and thinking surrounding it are far too interesting and relevant to be continuously ignored. Having presented some preliminary remarks concerning my personal trajectory and orientation towards the ethnographic research I now turn to a chapter-by-chapter overview of the thesis.

1.5 Overview of thesis

Chapter 2: Ethnography of rave parties

This chapter presents an overview of the socio-cultural context of ecstasy consumption, namely rave events and clubs. In this chapter I also reference a number of established works (e.g. Collin, 1997; Garrett, 1998; St John, 2004) on the rise, magnitude and transformation of this trans-national movement. Many attendees commented on the changing nature of ‘raving’ – noting the commercialisation and absorption into the ‘mainstream’ of such events. These ethnographic details set the background for the experiences described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Ecstasy Experience: A Dialogal Ethnography

This chapter is the centrepiece of the thesis. From the large ethnographic corpus comprising several hundred thousand words of transcriptions of informants’ self-accounts I have selected the statements that most cogently express the inner horizons of the use and experience of the drug. These “inner horizons” pertain to the users’ (rather than to my) subjectivity, albeit through my mediation. Within this framing, the text is manifestly authored by my informants in relation to me as the interlocutor who

solicited their accounts. However, simultaneously and less overtly I am also the unifying mediator of their self-accounts since it is me who has executed the selection of numerous fragments, i.e., extracted them from their original contexts of narration, and integrated them into a new whole, constructed in terms of an overall thematic perspective which configures them into a new synthetic unity. This “construction” should be understood as the work of a phenomenologically grounded interpretation. That is, it is a hermeneutic endeavour whereby my empathetic handling of my informants’ accounts has retained their individuality, while transforming them into a new totality which is a dialogal ethnography of the “experience of ecstasy” in the context of the rave parties. Accordingly, although my overt comments and clarifications are so to speak minimalist, the very composition of the chapter, both through the selections of the parts, and their thematic orchestration into a whole, comprised of nine distinct sections, is nevertheless the product of my interpretive engagement with the “raw” material. And precisely through this articulation I have striven to retain much of these testimonials’ “rawness” which alone conveys the unique *Welt-Stimmung* (world-mood) and the overall dynamic trajectory – I will characterise it as a *processual morphology* - of ecstasy experience. It is this trajectory as a whole that configures the distinctiveness of the ravers’ “E-mode” of being-in-the-world. The following are its essential lineaments.

Section 1: General Phenomenology presents a general survey of the being-in-the-world of ecstasy users. This section is distinguished from the others in its internal composition, as I have synthesised specific aspects of the ecstasy experience into a broad phenomenology. I provide examples of the preparatory activities and adjuncts (magnesium etc.) that are used to alter or modify the experiential modalities of ecstasy. A brief outline of the stages of ecstasy use is given which are elaborated in subsequent sections. I also introduce a number of activities that take place in the primary sites of ecstasy consumption such as working and play. Specific cognitive changes are given illustration that is unique to users’ experiences (“E-mode”): emotional “amplification”, active touching, mind-body dissonance and an internal monologue. Examples of the changes in the facial region such as gurning, chewing gum and facial contortions are explored. The latter sections provides reports of “fuckdness” and instances of “freaking-out” and “losing it” – including snapping out

of these modalities. Reports of hallucinations accompanying ecstasy use are also detailed.

Section 2: Peaks, Plateaus and Comedowns

In this section I cover ethnographic reports focussing on of the spectrum and dynamics associated with the “peak” or “onset”, “plateau” (primary phase) and “comedown” modulations in the world of ecstasy use. Since the general term “ecstasy” covers a range of different substances available for consumption on the black market, examples are also given for the types and composition of pills, pill testing and their self-interpretations by users. Moreover, I selected several categories of reports that illustrate the contrast between the general “being-in-the-world” and how following these experiences users then come to reflect back, on the normal (paramount) reality of everyday life. Changes to emotional and affective experiences are given as well as the varieties of modulations in users’ sexuality. Reports covering philosophical, religious and spiritual dimensions of ecstasy use that are often ignored or occluded by medico-scientific reports are documented and clarified. Lastly, the phase or modulation in users experience is illustrated from primary reports that seek to interpret the phase of ‘coming down” off ecstasy.

Section 3: Altered Bodies and Minds

This chapter gives a number of reports on the numerous modifications in users’ ecstatic-mode of ‘being-in-the-world’. These altered psycho-physical states cover a wide-ranging spectrum of experiences that pertain to the modified life-world of ecstasy users. The selected examples range from modifications that are typical in non-ordinary states of consciousness: altered spatial experiences and temporality, self-perception of changes to the body image. Here are included the “raw” accounts relating to the intensification of intra-bodily evacuation such as urination, defecation, sweating, fatigue, emesis, and hydration. Further modifications in appetitive pulsation are overviewed such as drinking and eating. Users seeking assistance due to adverse reactions and self-reflective-interpretations are provided.

Section 4: Peak and Effects

In this section the experiential morphology of ecstasy use is given further depth and articulation through users’ accounts. As the title suggests I selected to cover those

initial phases of consumption ('the honeymoon phase') as well as the initial modulations in consciousness accompanying ecstasy use. Many of these states such as peaking and rushing and blissful-euphoria are dominant in the ecstasy world. These include the common experiences of rolling, egoic dissolution and plateauing. A number of various states that follow primary consumption are reported. These range from the peaceful afterglow to severe fatigue, postloading, and stress on the body. More radical 'negative' experiences are discussed including psychotic episodes and radical collapse.

Section 5: Social interaction

Although the users' self-accounts explicated in this thesis are generated from the existential "I-ness", i.e. first-hand accounts, this section explores and maps out changes in users' social orientation to the world, i.e. the modified intersubjective field resulting from ecstasy use. These social dimensions are inclusive of intimacy and communication with others, modified and intensified connections with others such as deepened empathy, encountering 'randoms' and voyeurism. Particular attention is given to the modifications and fluctuations of egoic states on ecstasy such as the softening of the ego and defensiveness. Finally, users' evaluations of the authenticity and inauthenticity of the social sphere are presented.

Section 6: Isolation and Unity

This section represents a continuation of the modulations of the social and existential world of ecstasy users. Two major themes run through this section outlining two distinct phenomenological categories in the "E-mode of being-in-the-world". First, I present those instances of withdrawal from the social sphere, ranging from mild pre-occupation to instances of total "cosmic isolation" (being alone). Second, are the more celebrated and widely known "unification" (Peak) experiences that are variously described as egoic states of "Oneness", "fusion" "synchronisation", and "love". Most of these states are manifested in the communal sphere of socialising and/ or fervent ecstatic dancing. Childlike behaviours are also mentioned alongside gender differentiation in the ecstatic state.

Section 7: Scatting and Comedowns

Within this section I explore the changes in the “E-mode” resulting from the post-plateau phase that is commonly known amongst users as “scatting”. This state can be seen as phenomenologically distinct from the “onset”, “plateau” phases of ecstasy experience. As I understand it, the term “scatting” describes not only the temporal sequence of coming down from ecstasy use (“scat day”) but the radical dissolution of the world engendered in such states as “scatting out” or “being-scattered”. The first set of phenomenological descriptions presented in this chapter covers a variety of the existential states of being-scattered. This is followed by a number of activities that are typically undertaken on a scat day. A number of sections are then presented detailing the world mood (*Stimmung*) brought forth in the “scattered” mode of being in the world. These include negative effects and cognitive states such as hate, worry, being schizoid and total fatigue. Finally examples at the sites (“scat parties”) and common activities (cleansing the “filth” by a “ritual shower”) for further transformation of the psycho-physical changes brought forth in this distinct state are offered.

Section Eight: Tolerances, Addiction, Reconstitution and Fading Away presents the culmination of various experiences resulting from ecstasy consumption. I especially pay attention to those aspects of ecstasy use that are concerned with the passions for repeated consumption (e.g. “addiction”) as well as strategies for moderating use. Since users are aware of and actively seek to counteract the potential adverse consequences of regular and intense use, a number of reports explore the attraction to these “scenes”, “bodily awareness” and “health”. Reports on activities that are prior to taking ecstasy (“preloading”) and following use “reconstitution” and “resting up” prior to “returning to baseline” are presented. This is followed by consumers’ reports on the tendency with repeated use to “lose the magic”, build up both “tolerance” and “immunity”, that may ultimately lead to a sense of total disillusionment with these scenes, leading to the abandonment of this existential project and a return to the “normal” or “real” world.

In Chapter 4 (the Conclusion), by drawing on the concept of multiple realities, I reflect on the structure of ecstasy experience and point to its universal aspects. The elucidation of the latter is a task for my future research. Reflecting further upon the entire trajectory and morphology of ecstasy experience I also discuss the question of whether there is a viable existential project in ecstasy consumption. The answers I

offer resonate fundamentally with the terminal self-assessments of the users themselves. As such, their final words express the truth of the Sydney socio-cultural context of ecstasy use and experience.

The Socio-Cultural Context of Use: Raves and PC

1. Introduction

The context of ecstasy use and the concurrent rise of the culture of the 'chemical generation' within rave/ club scenes has been explored and examined from a number of socio-cultural perspectives (Collin, 1997; Cohen, 1998; Duff et al., 2007; Garret, 1999; Griffin, 2005; Hammersley et al, 2002; Malbon, 1999; Saunders 1995; St John, 2004; Thomas, 2002)¹⁴. Undoubtedly there are numerous sites and ways for using ecstasy outside of the rave/ club/ or 'Doofing' scenes¹⁵ (Saunders, 1995, 1996; Saunders, 1997; Saunders et al, 2000). Some of these include live music events, the use of ecstasy at one's own home, at a friend's house, or at outdoor locations. Nonetheless, it is the case that the socio-cultural context of ecstasy consumption has, and remains, primarily anchored in these public sites (Duff, et. al., 2007; St John, 2004), both within the Australian context and internationally (Johnston et. al. 2004a; 2004b; Riley and Hayward, 2004).

One account suggests the word 'rave' and 'raving' originated in the Black British dance scene (with Jamaican influences): "all these connotations frenzied behaviour, extreme enthusiasm, psychedelic delirium, the black British idea of letting off steam on the weekend – made "raving" the perfect word to describe the acid house scene's out-of-control dancing" (Reynolds, 1999: 77). Historically, the phenomenon of raving appears to have exploded in the West in the 1980's where outdoor dance parties in the UK and Western Europe first became popular (Collin, 1997; Reynolds, 1999). With the focus on DJs playing electronic dance music the culture grew rapidly, so that by the late 1990's raving had become 'globalized', fragmenting into context specific variants (sub-cultures) through many parts of the world (U.S.A, Britain, Israel, Thailand, Germany, Canada, Australia etc.). Hence, the phenomenon of raving has come to represent an ever-expanding globalized culture of the trans-national

¹⁴ I have presented a survey of some of the qualitative studies I have been able to locate within the duration of this project in appendix 6.

¹⁵ A colloquial term for an outdoor party held in Australia. A Doof is an outdoor event usually held in large outdoor areas either in the country or outside of metropolitan areas. They are similar to raves, but they usually have an atmosphere of psy-trance or Goa. It seems that from the reports I collected some ecstasy consumers felt that Doofs tend to attract participants from alternative life-styles.

consumers of mixed socio-economic or class backgrounds varying in specific geographical contexts (Collin, 1997; Reynolds, 1999). Concomitantly, there has been a gradual shift in this time for holding raves as ‘underground/ counterculture’ events to a more mainstream-commercialised composition (Duff, et. al., 2007: 6-7).

Certainly a number of informants emphasised the problems inherent in calling modern events ‘raves’ and the people participating in such events ‘ravers’. Whilst recognising this, I have used the terms ‘ravers’ and ‘raves’ to broadly describe those people partaking attending the respective sites of consumption in the pursuit of ecstatic experiences: whether they are induced by ecstasy or through other means (e.g. rhythmic dancing). A number of informants also stressed that not all people attending these events take drugs and may have no interest in doing so. One of the significant points that emerges in the context of this thesis is that ecstasy consumption in raving/ clubbing sites has come to constitute a significant milieu for the ‘*life-styles*’ pursued in the ‘*leisure time*’ of the trans-national mixed-class consumers in late capitalism; these activities continue to be the key situations for ecstasy experimentation and consumption (Ibid). I return to this discussion in the Conclusion of this thesis.

Part of the original world view of ravers is the acronym of P.L.U.R (‘peace, love, unity and respect’, see Ch 3. 2.9.0). This ethos of the raving culture contains within it a tolerance for those using ecstasy and other substances in order to heighten or stimulate the overall PLUR of attendant ravers (Malbon, 1999). This idealised message was¹⁶ a general *Weltanschauung* that allowed ravers to socialise (Ch 3. 5.), dance (Ch 3. 6.3.0-6.3.3), use various drugs, buy consumer goods and play and have fun (Ch.3.1.9.0) and so on. As in the state of Victoria, the Sydney rave/ club scene boomed since its inception in smaller underground settings to become a highly mainstream commercial enterprise. Alongside the major club scene in Sydney (such as ‘*Sublime*’ at Darling Harbour), some of these rave events regularly host crowds between 8, 000 – 15, 000 (or more) at venues such as the Macquarie University Atrium, Olympic Park Homebush or the Metro in the City. With the rapid spread, promotion/ commercialisation and absorption/ acceptance of the rave culture into mainstream society there has been a steady increase in the consumption of ecstasy in

¹⁶ A number of informants in Sydney commented that PLUR had become passé and the target of ironic satire. One clubber (CG) humorously added an additional ‘R’ to PLUR – to stand for ‘Responsibility’.

Australia (see the EDRS published by NCARC)¹⁷. Although the primary focus of this thesis is to internally examine the phenomenology of ecstasy consumption - these experiences are invariably situated within the socio-cultural context of use.

2. Rave

2.0 Powerhouse Productions

The large scale events that I attended (e.g. 'Godspeed', 'Utopia' and 'Prophecy') were hosted and organised by Powerhouse Productions (hereafter PP). These events were held at 'mega' venues such as Sydney Olympic Park and The Atrium at Macquarie University. The events would be widely advertised months beforehand in magazines such as 3D World and on the Powerhouse Productions website. Typically, these large-scale raves would only take place every couple of months often on the long-weekends of public holidays such as Easter Weekend.

2.1 St Johns Ambulance

In raves, officials working for Saint John Ambulance Australia would be stationed at a designated area(s), often separated by privacy barriers or they would work in areas around the venue. The teams of medics would be set up in the 'chill out areas' or a designated safe area. I did not interview any of these officers as they were often too busy at the events, dealing with numerous situations. A number of ravers commented that the medics were volunteers, some of whom were ex-ravers. Anecdotally, some of the more common situations they would have to deal with would be adverse drug-combinations, drug-overdosing, heat-exhaustion and dehydration.

2.2. Police and Security

Due to the illegal status of ecstasy in Australia and abroad a large number of police and security guards patrol raves events. This was certainly the case at the events (hosted by PP) that I attended. The police would have a central point outside of the main area where they would set up and maintain their operations. This included a tent where ravers suspected of possession could be interviewed, searched, stripped and searched. Many of the ravers I talked to felt that this was a strong infringement of their civil rights. Moreover, ravers suspected of possession by Police could be

¹⁷ (NDARC) The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre are associated with the University of New South Wales (UNSW). The (EDRS) is the 'ecstasy and related drugs reporting system.

publicly searched. This could involve being instructed to stand up against a wall and being searched by Police with rubber gloves (the searching officer would be of the same gender). The patrols around the raves often looked for ecstasy consumers publically 'dropping' ecstasy or dealing. Many of the people attending these events felt intimidated by what they felt to be the excessive Police presence. This sentiment was exacerbated when the Police started using sniffer dogs to search people publically. A number of people that I met at these events said they objected to this and that it would be an incentive to stop attending altogether.

2.3. Dropping

Most of the people using ecstasy that I met would be cautious of where they would hide their drugs (bras, down pants, bodily orifices e.g. mouth, anus, vagina), and exercised caution so as to avoid being seen publically taking them. Typically, this would be done insidiously, such as: dropping (oral ingestion) prior to the event, or in toilets, or with others blocking the view of others. A number of consumers that I met would smuggle ecstasy and other illicit substances such as Speed into events in all kinds of contraptions such as: medicinal bottles, drink bottles and even pacifiers. One informant (CG) was always cautious and a little paranoid when taking ecstasy at these settings: "one of the first things that people learn when you go to a rave and you are pulling out pills and you keep your back to the wall or something like that, you always have got to be heaps sketchy, heaps on the edge".

2.4. Raves General

2.4.1. The Entrance to Events

The following notes are taken from my field notes a large scale rave at 'Godspeed' (2-12-2006). A number of the mainstream rave events that I attended were held at the Acer arena at Olympic Stadium Homebush. Tickets at the door were \$110.00 for general admission (a small number of cheaper tickets are available by presale \$82.00 at this event). There were often ticket scalpers outside of the box office offering discounts on unwanted tickets. The long line up was filled with an atmosphere of chatter and excitement. I estimated it took one hour to get to the front entrance. Representatives from The Church of Scientology would walk up and down the line offering flyers to the rave attendees outlining the 'facts' of their drug use (ecstasy and marijuana pamphlets). I heard a number of ravers laugh ironically at these pamphlets commenting 'well, I have never read anything on drugs!' Many of these leaflets were

discarded on the floor and walked over. Some ravers kept these flyers for aesthetic purposes like being put up as posters on their walls at home.

The long lines for admission would move slowly to get into the venues. This was not simply due to the sheer volume of people attending these events (8, 000 – 13, 000 were the figures I was told). Prior to being allowed to enter, all ravers would be searched at the main entrance. Both sexes were split into two separate lines, with a further streaming of the line if you had a bag (including bum bag) in your possession. I hear a young man next to me remark 'I wish he had brought a bag', as with fewer people bringing bags, that line is moving a lot faster. The official security guards for Acer Arena are dressed in black pants and yellow shirts. At the entrance they perform a full-body search from socks (shoes stay on) – up and down the legs to the area around the crotch, then the under arms, turn around, back, and collar of shirt. They do not look in my mouth (some ravers hide pills in their mouths) or check my hair. Next my wallet is taken out and gluts are patted down. Another man next to me laughs saying that he always comes to raves just for the search – 'getting your ass rubbed by a guy in rubber gloves'. The body search is followed by a bag search by two guards. On this particular occasion they do not check my wallet or cigarette case, although on other occasions they have done so. At the main entrance is a large sign saying 'strictly no pass outs'. Frequently, attendants would find these signs humorous and ironic and take photos. Tickets are then scanned and attendees pass through turn-stools into the main event. Most of the areas in the event are open to be freely roamed around. Certain areas are off bounds to the main crowd such as the backstage. I noticed that there were a number of VIP tickets that were available for purchase on the PP website that would grant you access to these exclusive areas. Although I did not attend the VIP area at this event those that purchased these tickets (\$30) would be able to have a sectioned off party and be able to meet DJ's.

2.4.2 Some stalls

There are the usual stalls that are set up at raves: vendors selling water, Powerade, clothing stalls marketing "pill-freak t-shirts". The drapery has a large line up with the cost per item being \$2, which is then wrapped up in a plastic bag and a receipt given. The girl standing next to me is instructed that if she wants to come back and get things from her handbag the first visit is free and the next visit is two dollars. So the

girl asks if she can pay the two dollars now. I quietly snigger, thinking she will definitely be back at some stage on a 'mission' (see Section 1.9.1).

2.4.3. The Drinking area

Areas for alcohol consumption are separated from the main arena. As raves can be underage-events, identification is checked as people queue up for admission to the bar. A tiger strip band is placed around each raver's wrist after showing ID. A range of beers and spirits is available, with energy (e.g. Vodka and Red-bull) drinks being popular. The drinking area extends out onto a large balcony where smoking cigarettes is allowed. Smoking and socialising would be popular in these areas.

2.4.4. Rave Commercialisation

A number of users commented on the ongoing commercialisation of the rave scene (Collin, 1997; Griffin, 2005; Reynolds, 1999; Malbon, 1999). What was seen as a socio-political movement increasingly became a commercial enterprise. A number of clubbers at Sublime (venue in Sydney Darling Harbour) commented on the changing nature of the scene, noting the movement away from occupying spaces such as abandoned warehouses in favour of legal clubs and venues. A man in his 20's (studying marketing at The University of New South Wales) described how clubbing and raving was now a large scale marketing enterprise, with DJ's and promoters earning thousands of dollars. Some ravers have become jaded with the excessive commercialisation. (CM) related how he turned up to Transmission at the Atrium at Macquarie with continuous advertisements being played during the sets of music. This was seen as a form of branding that detracted from the quality of "having a good time". He also felt this was in stark contrast to the Bush Doofs held in the outback. In contemporary raves, the overt commercialisation of these events was obvious. They were advertised widely in popular magazines such as 3D World, with tickets being sold at major record shops. One of the nights leaving Olympic Park the promoters were handing out show bags as I was leaving the main gate. When I refused to take a show bag, he shouted at me that I was 'letting the tribe down'. I looked in one of the bags of another raver as we got on the train. It was replete with advertising for upcoming events. This advertising would contain psychedelic colours and imagery.

2.5. Groups at Raves

There are a number of groupings within the raving community. The promoters of the raves are seen to be the organizers, marketers and the profiteers behind these events. The organizers lease spaces to stalls at the raves such as Rushin clothing that specializes in rave paraphernalia, jewellery stalls and vendor (food and drink) outlets. There were numerous drug dealers that I encountered during my visits. As I stated in the Introduction, I elected not to focus on these areas so as not to incriminate those concerned. However, I observed that dealers would often have runners that would act as intermediaries in deals that were being made. For example, the intermediary would make a call asking for availability and then placing the order. The person buying the drugs would be told to wait in a certain location after giving the money to the intermediary. They would then return with the order and slip it into the persons hand and instruct them to go and take it in the toilets, so as not to arouse public suspicion from security, plain or undercover police. I had also heard anecdotal stories of the promoters of the clubs doing large scale distribution on the premises. That is, they would organise the event and then supply the ecstasy as well as other substances such as speed, ice (methamphetamine) and marijuana etc. The financial side and commercialisation of raving and clubbing in general was emphasised by many of the informants that I spoke to. Other ravers commented on the 'normal' composition of the people attending. Comments like "we are just normal people who work nine-to-five and enjoy clubbing on the weekends!" This was in stark contrast to the ravers who saw themselves as the 'misfits' and 'rejects' of modern society – who would all come together and take ecstasy in unity and acceptance. Some ravers spoke of authentic 'ravers' as those who have being raving for at least two years and have continued to do so. That is, by participating in the events they would gradually transform themselves – learning the music, dancing, socialising and culture.

2.5.1. Photography in Clubs

Clubs have regular photographers who take pictures upon request and process them at the back of PC. On one occasion I approached a photographer with a friend who was about an hour into the drop. He emphasised that I should ask him to take the photo which I thought was a strange request in this state. Nevertheless, I smiled then gave him the five dollars. He took an excellent shot which he printed on a white card at the back of the venue. I asked him if he did the shots for the entire rave scene and he

handed me his business card. I told him that I may contact him in the future if I needed some shots for my thesis.

2.5.2 CDs given out in venues

When entering PC there would be a main table set up with three or so of the organizers. They would have a cloak room available for \$2, which was always popular during the cooler seasons. On the table would be a number of pamphlets advertising upcoming events and CDs from various DJs. The CDs were usually just burnt into plain disks with black or blue texture highlighting the artist's name and/ or song titles. On a number of nights I was handed CDs by resident DJs who were playing that night. Sometimes this would be to promote their work to a broader audience. At other times it seemed to be a gift, for turning up and supporting the venue. I played a number of these CDs when I would arrive home and start coming down.

2.5.3. Candy or Kandy Ravers

The colourful bracelets, necklaces, and key-rings worn by some ('candy') ravers are known as Candy. These luminescent and multicoloured beads are usually bought at bead stores by the hundreds or thousands. Commonly, the beads are made of fluorescent colours such as yellow, green, pink, blue etc. They may be made of plastics, wood or metals that are threaded around plastic strings. These are available on reels at bead shops. These decorative beads can be combined with letter-beads spelling names, DJ's, events, and so on. Some ravers adorn their wrists with several bracelets or their entire arms – from wrist to shoulder. More rarely I saw some ravers wearing candy around their neck – layer after layer. Sometimes whistles or pacifiers would be attached to these necklaces. The whistles could be blown during different songs or at the end of song-sets to signify approval of the DJ's selection, or the quality of music in general.

The sheer amount of candy that some ravers would wear would mean that they attach it to their pants via chains, string or even shoelaces to the waist or backpacks. Backpacks may be worn to keep changes of cloths, water bottles, toys, spare candy etc. Bum-bags were more common, usually placed around the shoulder/ upper back down to the hips rather than being placed around the waistline. In terms of active

touch (Ch 3.1.17.0) candy may serve to augment the enhanced sensations of wearing the bracelets during intoxication or having them touched and played with by others. They often would be the centre of conversation amongst wearers and those interested in them, e.g. ‘how did you make them?’, ‘where did you get that one from?’ and so on. Although they have an undeniable aesthetic quality Candy items serve an emotional, sentimental or spiritual purpose. This can be linked to a good friend, or a particular event that the candy was received at, an action such as shuffling or a feeling such as PLUR (Ch 3.2.9.0).

In the instances that I saw candy being exchanged it was through a deep and genuine interaction where the wearer would take off one of their candy pieces e.g. a bracelet, and attach it to the other person’s wrist. The raver could then hold onto this item to remember the interaction. Many of the candy bracelets would circulate through different events and places, as they are swapped between friends and fellow ravers to create new groupings and social networks¹⁸.

Perceptually these beads are striking in their presentation, especially when in rave or club-conditions; they glow in the dark under strobe and ultraviolet lights. Several ravers related how they would go to bead stores together for days out in order to purchase the huge amounts and varieties of beads. Candy-ravers may refer to those who maintain an overt style or appearance or they may dress normally, but be filled with the raver ethos (PLUR). Some ravers derisively call young ravers, especially those under the age of 18, ‘candy Ravers’ to point out their inexperience and the difference from the seasoned ravers. The more experienced ravers would often make fun and deride the younger candy ravers. The name¹⁹ also implies that candy ravers are seen as younger ‘try hards’ who aren’t what they claim but like to act in an exaggerated manner and have yet, to establish themselves. Many of the attendees at large-scale events would be under 18. Some of the ravers in their mid-twenties

¹⁸ This was also commonly done by exchanging mobile phone numbers. Some ravers had difficulty entering or remembering their number when on ecstasy. Moreover a name-event such as ‘Petra-Prophecy’ would allow you to later recollect where you met them and who this person is. I should say that these rave-specific exchanges made me think about Malinowski’s descriptions of the Trobriand *kula* and Mauss’ famous theory of ‘The Gift’ and human sociality.

¹⁹ It may also be that the candy-ravers are called so because they adorn themselves with large amounts of plastic beads and colourful bracelets. Or etymologically candy – being like a child’s lolly - may be associated with the more youthful aspects of raving. See Childishness and E (Ch 3.6.7.0).

remarked that seeing younger crowd getting ‘fucked up’ on ecstasy and falling down on the ground was depressing. They would also stress that the younger generation had to learn how to use drugs responsibly (with an extra ‘R’ being added to PLUR for responsibility’). A DJ informant opined that “you would have to go raving for two consecutive years before you could call yourself a raver”. Another informant told me that the candy style of fashion originated in the early days of raving, where dealers would wear bright ‘Candy’, so as to be easily identifiable in the crowd: making the purchase of ecstasy easier for consumers.

Anecdotally it was suggested that some ravers used to exchange ‘candy’ such as Mars Bars (chocolate bar), sherbet or lolly-pops when introducing themselves to others at raves. This could serve a number of functions, such as enjoying something sweet to eat on ecstasy, lessening the teeth-grinding (bruxism) and possible to smuggle pills in.

2.5.4 “Feral ravers”

A number of informants commented on feral ravers as a distinct group within the modern club/ rave scenes. Usually ‘feral’ is a colloquial term employed in Australia to designate someone who is aesthetically unpleasant and maintains low standards of sanitation. The term feral may thus designate those who grow their hair out or choose not to use sanitation products. This would be added to by the intense perspiration from being in hot and crowded venues, that would lead to layers of ‘filth, grime and oil’ to cover the surface of the skin. I met a number of attendants at PC who explained their love of the venue. They felt that many of the other clubs would be discriminatory, refusing them entry because they did not dress or appear in the right manner. The feral ravers that I observed tended not to dress up in elaborate Candy or Phat pants, preferring to wear more casual and comfortable attire. One young man told me he had been refused entry to Sublime at Darling Harbour on the grounds that he had a mullet hairstyle. He explained that he liked the organizers of PC who had set up the event so that all people would be welcome as long as they would get along and avoid violence.

2.5.5 *Godspeed – an ethnographic sketch*

The entrance to the Metro is on the corner of George Street in Sydney’s CBD. There are two ropes with poles attached directing the crowd inside the venue. Three security

guards dressed in black and red stand on the outside, checking identification prior to entry. The usual acceptable forms of ID are: drivers licence, proof of age card or passport. This is an over 18's event, so they are strict with admissions. The event was advertised on the Powerhouse Productions (PP) internet site and magazines such as 3D World, which is distributed freely in shops in Sydney. The throbbing bass is audible from the outside building. Unlike larger raves such as Utopia, there is no line up when I arrive at nine o'clock (an early start time). After a quick ID check I am patted down: underarms, chest back and waist, then around legs to ankles. The security guards ask me to empty all of my pockets. A number of bum bags and back packs are being emptied and checked. Once passed the checks the ravers walk up metallic stairs to the main foyer of the Metro. A ticket collection box with a ticket girl and ticket collector sell and collect the tickets to the event. These could be purchased pre-sale (\$49) on the PP website or bought at the venue upon arrival (\$69). The organiser takes my ticket and scans it with infrared and disposes of it in a bin behind him.

As I walk in there are a number of signs indicating that there will be a lockout after 2 o'clock. The ticket office continues to sell tickets to those walking in. Behind the ticket box to the left are a few wooden tables that are set up with two sellers from PP. They are selling black shirts displayed on cork boards with rave insignias on them, for \$25 a piece. On the table is advertising for the upcoming event 'Utopia: Home Grown' to be held on Saturday 14th August at the Hordon Pavillion, Royal Hall of Industries (9pm-6am). There are a number of printed out smaller flyers with the timetable for the event (free). These are typical for such events as they allow the ravers to see who will be playing at what time, in what area. The event is structured in the following way. There are two main music areas. The main area in the Metro is called the Godspeed arena. The smaller, called the HSU arena, is next to the main bar in the main foyer of the Metro²⁰.

²⁰ The following music programmes for that night was: **Godspeed Arena:** 9:00-10:30 Weaver; 10:30-11:30 Bioweapen; 11:30-12:30 Toneshifters; 12:30-2:00 Toneshifters; 2:00:3:30 Tommyknocker; 03:30-05:00 Neophyte; 05:00-06:00 Suae. **HSU Arena:** 09:10:00 Convict; 10:00-11:00 Dillytek; 11:00-01:00 Matrix vs. Shadower vs. Erase MC; 01:00-2:00 Xdream; 02:00-03:00 Kid Finely; 03:00-04:00 Pulsar; 04:00-05:00 Midshifters; 5:00-06:00 Closed.

The smaller HSU area has four main speakers. They are stacked in piles of two. There are two blue lights pointed towards the DJ area. This smaller area is where most of the ravers congregate at the beginning of the night. As they walk in, many of them socialise, sitting on stools, standing and walking around. The bar is popular at the beginning of the night; it serves alcohol. Many ravers buy beer or spirits and sit, drink and talk.

Posters are put up all around the event advertising the upcoming Utopia (as above). Within about an hour – by 10:00 - the smaller area has filled up with a couple of hundred people. Most of the crowd is dressed casually. There are a number of male ravers in Phat pants and girls wearing leg warmers. It's a cold winter in Sydney, but many of the ravers are wearing shorts or short skirts. There is a smaller area to the left of the main bar section for entering stuff into the cloakroom. It cost \$4 and has a sign saying that care will be taken - but no responsibility assumed for lost items. Many ravers put their bags with warmer cloths into the cloakroom.

There are two main doors leading into the dance room of the Metro. In the earlier stages of the night there are not many ravers in the main area. The seating area which cascades back six levels has all of the seats removed so that everyone can stand or sit down and watch what is going on. There are two large screens (approximately 4 by 5 meters) with Godspeed flashing on them. This screen displays all kinds of psychedelic visual images as the different tracks of music play. Above the main dance floor are three rows (four on each row) of large lights pointing down on the crowd. The main dance floor is largely unattended in the first two hours of the night, with most of the ravers gathering outside in the smaller area.

Two hours into the night there are now three DJs at the smaller HSU area working together changing tracks and signalling to the crowd. Each time one set of music finished the crowd cheered. The DJs are sipping drinks wearing headphones as they mix in the tracks. The main bar is filling up quickly, as more ravers pour in and begin to drink beer and shots of spirits. It is \$9 for Beck's and around \$5 for a can of VB (Victoria Bitter). Smaller bottles of water are also popular. About ten per cent of the crowd is wearing green glow in the dark bracelets. In contrast to some of the larger events (such as Utopia) there does not appear to be many 'candy ravers'. The 18+

restrictions have led to a crowd mostly in the early to mid-twenties. Most of the crowd is in casual dress (shorts, jeans, pants, t-shirts). A smaller number have full raver apparel (Phat pants, leg warmers, sunglasses). A few of the girls are wearing decorative face-masks and fancy dress costumes (Halloween themed). A few of the younger men are dancing with their shirts off.

In the HSU area two DJs are gradually working the crowd into faster and more frenzied dancing. As the tempo changes in tracks the DJs themselves dance and direct the mood through their body language. The crowd is beginning to dance more intensely. There are some men dancing the Melbourne Shuffle at the back of the dance floor where there is more space to move. The majority of the crowd is bopping one leg to the other as they are shoulder-to-shoulder on the dance floor. On the flyers the PP organisers uphold a "NO LADS" policy of admission. However, many of the crowd are dressed in shorts, hats, shoes and shirts that fit that style. They also appear to be dancing like LADS (see glossary) with their arms pointed down and/ or pointing up in the air as they jump from foot-to-foot.

By midnight the main Godspeed arena has completely filled up. There are two DJs in the main area. Most of the ravers are on the main dance floor (approximately 20 by 30 meters). The cascading stairs, normally for seated crowds at live music concerts, are now filled with ravers watching, dancing, sitting, talking and moving around. The sound is incredibly loud and powerful. One has to speak loudly, directly into the person's ear, in order to hear anything. Around 100 or more people are using their mobile phones to film the event. In the darkness one sees lots of glow-bracelets, glow-sticks and mobile phones. A number of rave toys such as spinning-tops and glow balls also glow in the dark. When the set changeover occurs at roughly midnight the lasers come on. Two dark green high definition lasers spread out over the crowd. Like the lights the lasers are synchronised with the music's tone and beats. Above the back of the seating area and to the left there are two sound and light technicians. They are working with computers and sound boards co-ordinating the screens, lights, lasers, sound etc. When the lasers are moving horizontally and vertically, dividing the space of the arena, smoke is released, giving further visual amplification to the sensory stimulation. Just off from the main dance floor in the Godspeed arena there is a smaller bar selling water and beer. It appears to be set up so that ravers do not have to

walk out into the main area to get a drink during the long and intense dancing. The heat produced by the entire crowd dancing together; dancing harder and faster is increasing the temperature. On a winters night I can stand inside with a t-shirt and still feel very hot.

At the back of the Godspeed arena is a small chill-out area that is filled up. The temperature is significantly cooler outside, as the open breeze blows throughout the corridors of the surrounding buildings. This is the designated smoking area where ravers may come out to cool off their bodies so as to avoid overheating, drink fluids, talk, kiss, hug, make phone calls, meet new people, take time to enjoy the ecstatic experience on its own or engage in introversion. There is also a laneway out the front of the Metro Theatre running adjacent to George Street. This is also used as a chill-out area; it is also where people can come outside and meet each other as they arrive. The bouncers occasionally tell people not to sit on the side next to the Metro Theatre and to move across the road.

The next few hours constitute the main build up/ peak/ plateau period of the night. Standing from the back of the main dance floor one can observe the change in intensity of the music and the dancing as the ecstasy peaks during the night. Security guards watch down on the crowd from four different angles as the event unfolds.. More and more water is consumed as the peak period takes effect. The dance floor and surrounding areas look like small rubbish heaps with plastic beer glasses, cups, water bottles, and cigarette packets, worn out glow bracelets littered around the place. Cleaners do not come in until the lights come on at the end of the evening and clean up the dance floor.

2.6. PC: a venue for pleasure

The primary site that the ethnography for this thesis was generated from was an event called PC (pseudonym). PC was a shifting event that had a number of locations (anecdotally I was told eight in all). One of the organisers related to me that at regular clubs in Sydney the venue owners would instruct DJs what music they could and could not play. Annoyed by this situation PC was created as an ongoing event with the specific intention that DJs could play *anything* they wanted, especially their own styles of music. In this setting the main idea would be that patrons were invited to

really feel free to have a good time. This setting facilitated all kinds and variants of narcissistic-hedonism. The pursuit of these highly pleasurable/ interesting/ fun activities and the full-spectrum of these activities constitute the bulk of the processual morphology presented in this thesis.

PC began in 1997 where the organisers would put on various events by hiring a number of venues for the purposes outlined above. Normally this involved paying a fee for the venue hire for the night. Their recurrent problem was that they had to advertise constantly in order to get patrons into a venue to cover their costs. This in itself was costly enterprise (about \$1000 a week) which the organisers paid for out of their own pocket. There were other associated costs which approximated to \$2000 a week. Despite this, the organisers did not wish to charge admission more than \$10 for members or \$15 for general admission. Sometimes they would lose money, depending on how many people turned up to any given event. In this situation the organisers sought and secured sponsorship for a six month period (\$5000) and in combination with their own money they managed to continue with their venture for a number of weeks. Finally, by April 1998 they stopped losing money and from that point on they had a regular DJ line up.

PC was intended as a place where one could come in and experience something that could not be experienced anywhere else. The organizers would design and set up the venue in such a way that it was inviting and the patrons were encouraged to really 'let go' and maximally enjoy themselves in any number of activities such as socialising, dancing, 'picking-up' etc. The idea behind PC was to give *the feeling that people could do anything* in this place - as long as they were non-aggressive towards other patrons. Hence, patrons were allowed entry on the basis without a strict dress code. This would add to the feeling that they could also *do whatever they wanted*. These venues attracted ravers (some feral and to a lesser extent candy ravers), as well as gay and straight people. According to an organizer the people running PC regularly gathered as a close knit circle of approximately 20-30 people. In this setting who became an intimate group, or 'a family',²¹ in that after a regular event was over they would all go to someone's place and continue (scat) partying together.

²¹ I heard a number of times patrons saying "everyone here is just like family".

The dominant aesthetic quality of PC venues was a very dark ambience to the point of it being totally shadowy. The organizers would come in and decorate these venues with the help of many volunteers. They would generally arrive at the venue and begin to set up at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This would involve putting the numerous decorations to change the environment of the venue. The lights were changed in both the main area and the toilets. Scaffolding was erected for the DJs with a lot of industrial piping deployed throughout the venue. This would create a dim, yet colourful ambience. The venue was then lit with back-lighting, rope-lighting and strobe lights. These lights were brought in by one of the organizers who had his own van. As the event was becoming established more and more lights were being brought in and so was the logo of PC that was displayed in a banner. The DJ box would be set up with turntables and other accessories so that there would be good lighting effects on the DJs who were playing on that occasion.

One of the organisers further explained that normally bars would organize the furniture of the venue so that the crowd would congregates around the bar area. This would encourage the buying and consumption of alcohol. At PC the organizers would rearrange the spatial orientation of the furniture away from the bar, making it easier for patrons to freely move around further facilitating the enjoyment of the event. Here there was a crew of about 20 people that would help to set up PC, run the event and then take everything down at the end of the night. They would change the clusters of chairs and tables so that people could talk easier, socialise and move around without getting caught in one area such as the bar. There would also be a number of black inflatable chairs to lie upon. These chairs would serve as popular places for talking during ecstasy consumption and for taking rests from the intense bouts or sets of dancing. Thus the organiser's main intention in creating PC was to make it easy to get around the venue. Along with the props, on a regular PC night there would be a cloakroom set up that would have a large box of coat hangers and have rack for hanging jackets, gloves, scarfs etc.

On special event nights such as Porno PC the organizers would also obtain pornographic imagery and the music that would go along with the 'undergroundish' and 'dirty' theme. They would obtain from pornographic shops items such as boxes of old-porn magazines and distribute them throughout the venue. Gadgets and other

merchandise like pens with penises and condoms were put out on the tables. The door was decorated and there would be prizes (either be records or cash) for the best dressed in pornographic theme. Live videos of porn would play on multiple TV screens throughout the event. An informant related to me that on one night a group of patrons were 'getting friendly' and they started having sex on the couches. No one interfered, including the bouncers. The bouncers for these events would sometimes allow the patrons freedom to do whatever they felt at the time. Occasionally they would give the organizers and patrons a 'hard time' concerning ecstasy use.

Anecdotally, the organizers mentioned an attendee called the "shelf-meister" who would come in every week and take people into the toilets drop their pants and put ecstasy pills up people's anuses. This was his regular job in performing a 'community service'. He was not employed by the venue, but would do this out of his own volition.

In sum, PC was a venue organised to facilitate in the kind of narcissistic-hedonism that are associated with the 'E-mode-of-being-in-the-world'. I have selected a number of these first-hand accounts detailing the spectrum of these non-ordinary states that are actively pursued and achieved by the consumers of ecstasy. These reports constitute the bulk of the primary ethnographic corpus of this thesis. It is to these experiences that I now turn to in Chapter 3 'Experiencing Ecstasy: A Dialogal Phenomenology'.

Experiencing Ecstasy: A Dialogal Ethnography

0.0.1 The Prologue: The Origin(s) of Ecstasy

There are a number of competing narratives as to what the exact ‘origin of ecstasy’ is (Holland, 2001: 11-21; Saunders; 1997: 6-13; Thomas, 2002: 83-96). Most academic accounts agree that the origins of the substance lie with the German pharmaceutical company Merck. The above sources also examine the use of ecstasy in psychotherapy, popularisation in bohemian underground circles and eventual explosion into popular culture. Several popular ‘origin’ accounts suggest the drug was patented as a weight loss pill or aid to psychotherapy. This popular mythology is now considered discredited (Holland, 2001: 11-12; Saunders, 1997: 7). Saunders (op cit, 7) alludes to the first use of ecstasy in America as an adjunct to psychotherapy and personal growth: “they regarded it as a sacrament which could allow them to be their true, uncorrupted selves in the state that God created mankind before ‘the fall’: and they named it *Adam* for that reason”²². Ecstasy was synthesised by Alexander Shulgin in 1965 and was subsequently tested by the US army as a possible ‘truth serum’. For the purpose of this thesis I have given a synopsis of an article printed in *The Age*²³ detailing what I believe to be the most accurate explanation as to the ‘true origins’ of ecstasy. This article is a retelling of the first systematic examination of Merck’s archive in Darmstadt by Freudemann, Öxler and Benschneider-Reif (1996; 2006). After I located the article in the *Age*, I corresponded directly with Merck via email to conform these reports. The major finding of their archival research is that the first synthesis and patent of MDMA was not, as is popularly believed, as an appetite suppressant, but that on the contrary “Merck wanted to find and patent pathways leading to haemostatic substances” (Ibid: 2).

Merck has released archival evidence clearing up the urban myths surrounding ecstasy. Following more than two decades since ecstasy first exploded into the mainstream club and rave scenes it is now clear that patent 274350 (it was not identified as MDMA at the time) *was patented as a blood clotting agent in 1912*. At

²² Many of the colloquial terms are included in a glossary (appendix 1) ‘the language of ecstasy’ at the end of this thesis.

²³ (<http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/...408071412.html>)

this time there was no experimentation with humans or animals. It was Alexander Shulgin who synthesised the drug in 1976 and decided to test it upon himself. Shulgin is often referred to as the 'Godfather of Ecstasy', but the true 'father' of ecstasy was an anonymous German chemist known as Anton Kollisch who would be unaware of the enduring legacy he would leave.

Section 1. General Phenomenology

1.1.0 Digestive terms among ravers

Among ravers a recurrent terminology occurs within the idiom of digestion. This describes both the imbibing of ecstasy and digestive metaphors for the drug itself. In this example one informant noted these associations in the way users describe taking pills: “oh sure, there is munching pills, eating pills, and calling them Bickies instead of a strong psychotropic substance” (CM).

1.2.0 Heat Transformation after Use

Metaphors of heat transformation were often employed to describe various stages of ecstasy use. For example, during intense and prolonged dancing some users would feel themselves “burning up”, their “brain frying”; or conversely, when coming-down the physical effects of pills would leave you: “feeling pretty fried after consecutive uses, there is no better word for it than being baked or fried. There is just that frazzled look – ooeeerrrh” (RoB).

1.3.0 Initial Preconceptions

The following reports indicate some user’s reflections prior to taking ecstasy. I asked them to think about what they thought about ecstasy: what is it? What are its effects? How, if at all, did these perspectives influence the taking of the drug and their initial experiences?

(DiH): “Well from high school I thought that ecstasy made you very excitable and stimulates you in a way, in much more of a way than coffee does. Then when I was in the scene it seemed to be like *very* loved up. I remember people saying that it makes you feel like you have a great deal of empathy with everyone around you, makes your senses more sensitive – especially touch and sight. I used to have a very strong-stance of anti-drugs, um, I just didn’t want to touch anything at all, and I didn’t want to touch anything for a long period of time; but after seeing my brother and ex-girlfriend on it, I was like you know, well maybe I will give it a try one day and I decided to try it on New Year’s Day 2006. And yeah, I had a really good experience. I was also told by my brother who wanted to make sure that I did it properly, making sure that I did it the right way making sure that I ate the right way, and knew the risks and the challenges involved. And also to take care of myself afterwards (post-loading), have a

good rest; the next day, eat a nice meal and take some extra vitamins, and also some 5-HTP – or 5-Hydroxytryptophan”.

(PP): “In school my parents were pretty strict and they went to public school, but it was still pretty like had a pretty hard profile... and it was always like drugs are bad and all that sort of stuff of course. But I um, probably started smoking pot and drinking and stuff pretty early, but I have always seen ecstasy as a harder drug, so I didn’t do that... and I knew people that were. But I didn’t go anywhere near that until not long ago actually, maybe four years ago”.

(HG): “I always considered that ecstasy was quite a soft drug, along with Marijuana. I had an idea that speed was a bit dirty, um, so I didn’t really want to try that so much, basically I saw ecstasy as a party and dancing drug, so I had no idea, so that people might say – go to someone’s house and hang around a living room, have dinner and have ecstasy or anything like that. I always associated ecstasy with, nightclubs raves, specifically dance”.

1.4.0 Preloading, Preparation and Post-loading

1.4.1 Preloading

Preloading is the various actions taken prior to ecstasy consumption which seek to counteract the neurotoxic and adverse effects of the drug. These actions may include the taking of Vitamin-B to enhance the effects of 5-HTP and/ or using Vitamin C to minimise ecstasy’s potential neurotoxicity. It is commonly held that Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP) is a valuable aid in reducing the adverse side-effects of ecstasy use, e.g., gurning and coming-down or “crashing” (neurotoxic damage). Finally, some of the preloading activities would also be employed in the post-loading stage, i.e. 5-HTP may be taken by some as they are coming-down to minimise possible adverse effects.

1.4.2 Orange juice – Vitamin C

(MoJ): “I have had friends freak-out on ecstasy. For anyone on ecstasy you just give them some orange juice and they will be fine, generally speaking, if they have had too much. That is a preparation thing that I do, if I know that I am going in for a big weekend like a five day festival or something. I will take a vial of vitamin C tablets,

just in case. I always find that if I have a couple of vitamin C tablets it clears the air. I figured that out after a nurse friend of mine told me that what they give overdose cases - is vitamin C injections. If you want to get clear, OJ is the way for sure. And it is the same with the Wheat Grass; it is high in vitamin C”.

1.4.3 Magnesium

Some users report preloading with magnesium which is thought to be a muscle relaxant that helps with the unpleasant effects of gurning, particularly the involuntary jaw clenching (Metzner and Adamson, 2001: 197). (DiH) “I don’t really notice gurning too much. But I do bring chewing gum with me all of the time. I also know that gurning can be combated by taking magnesium prior to taking ecstasy. You take a couple of magnesium tablets, and that will actually stop the jaw from clenching. I have tried that and it works. Magnesium – well for me it was never a problem – OK – if someone would suffer from jaw clenching or teeth grinding; but if people suffer from it I recommend it to them. Yeah, you take the tablets and it works like a charm”.

1.4.4 Preparation

Other preparatory activities would be undertaken to change the outcome of the ecstasy experience, e.g., being well-rested before a night out (for maximal energy and to be able endure sleep deprivation) and eating well and being in a good mind-set. Some users would ensure that they eat properly so as to avoid the unpleasant effects of food deprivation (*‘Ecky-stomach’*) and defecating when on the drug (*‘E-crap’*): “it ruined his entire night, because you rock up to a rave and the only things that you can do in those cubicles is like snort... the only thing that is clean is the top of the toilet, and the rest of the toilet is like throw-up on the toilet - *shit everywhere* and a perfectly clean patch right on top of the toilet” (CG).

Prior to consumption at a chosen venue various activities may be undertaken to affect the outcome of taking ecstasy or to ease into the general mood. One informant (HG) would routinely prepare by going out to a pub after work and having a few beers, then drop ecstasy, followed by one or two more beers, followed by water. A longer example is given by (LiM): “You have your pre-drinks as you say. I usually have a few Gin and Tonics, 2 or 3 Gin and Tonics and maybe one beer. And then I take a pill, usually one whole one. In between this time, I usually smoke marijuana, maybe, I

can't smoke weed in a pub, so it is usually beforehand or on a side-street. And the weed will just act as a bit of a stimulant for me, it gives me a lot of topics to talk about, raconteur and be the centre of attention, you know – have a good time. You know, why waste your time going out if you are not going out with your friends, I believe, so I always have a few topics to talk about”.

1.4.5 No Preparation

Some users do not preload. (MoJ) “There is really no preparation for me. And often I find that preparation leads to disappointment somehow - because there are expectations that aren't met up too. I guess because I have been doing it for so long that it is a *very* focused thing to be able to do, practice (playing music) for hours and hours and hours. And I often find it very comforting just to be able to be at the piano and even if I am not doing hardcore practice it is therapeutic for me to sit down and play and that usually puts me back into the good books. And from there making sure that I eat right. The day after, but I have certainly never prepared myself for going into drug-taking”.

1.5.0 Brain Chemistry: Explanations and Interpretations

Most of the participant's self-reports interpreted the effects of ecstasy in terms of underlying neurological processes. As I argued in the Introduction, these self-interpretations reflect the medico-scientific perspectives that phenomenology rejects as reductionist. It strikes me that these purely materialist accounts give full scientific reality to the material substratum of the brain and CNS, by simultaneously cutting out the person and their world in their descriptions. Others expressed their ambivalence and ambiguity in trying to comprehend the effects of the drug: “I don't know – it's all a chemical process isn't it? I don't know if it is the chemicals reacting together in your brain – I don't know what it is! If they are already there and are just dormant, maybe the drug increases your ability to tap into these... connections” (EnG). And finally, some users emphasised the inexplicable or ineffable nature of ecstasy use “there is no way that you could explain it to anyone” (Anon raver).

The neurotransmitter serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine, or 5-HT) is synthesized in serotonergic neurons in the central nervous system and enterochromaffin cells in the gastrointestinal tract of animals including humans (Malberg & Bosson, 2001: 29-38).

The strong association of the interplay of serotonergic neurotransmitters and the various effects of ecstasy are wide-spread in popular and academic discourse. A typical scientific-medical explanation of the effects of ecstasy asserts that “a massive serotonin release is responsible for the subjective effects of ecstasy”, wherein “the increased release of serotonin significantly increases serotonin receptor binding, leading to significant changes in the neuron’s firing and is primarily responsible for feelings of empathy, happiness and the enhanced sensation of touch” (Campbell, 2001: 106-108).

For example, the participants in this ethnography explained ecstasy effects in terms of chemically induced alterations to the brain and the central nervous system: “from my understanding of ecstasy one of the things that it basically does is that it raises the neurotransmitter serotonin in your brain, much more so than what your brain normally pumps out...serotonin is the principal chemical in your brain that regulates mood” (DiH). Other user’s associated higher levels of serotonin with elevated/ euphoric/ blissful moods (4.5.0), rapid heart rate, and dilation of the pupils (Mydriasis; see also 1.13.0 ‘eye-wobbles’).

In this discourse, ecstasy leads to a release and increase of serotonin in the brain which produces the ecstatic high. Thus, the danger of excessive amounts of serotonin release with ‘overloading’, or long term use, can produce serious problems with maintaining equilibrium in the brain. At some point the equilibrium of the brain will fall ‘serotonergic burnout’ (or serotonergic syndrome) and a spontaneous overload of serotonin may subsequently occur (Henry and Rella, 2001: 78-79).

Only one user I met reported this, although I believe it to be more common amongst heavy users. (Anon) found that he could no longer peak and saw this as a result of long-term use over a number of years (see also 8.9.0 and 8.12.0). As alluded to, (HG) maintains that regular ecstasy use would lead to a diminished capacity for the brain to naturally reproduce serotonin. Thus in a single night, with the taking of four or five pills, the brain could become irreparably damaged. However, experientially he felt no noticeable changes from taking ecstasy: “well - none that I can attribute straight away to ecstasy use” (laughs).

Using excessive amounts of ecstasy may induce 'overloading', leading to total 'burnout', in common parlance a 'frying of the brain', which appears to be connected with the intense heat generated in crowded dance parties with intense and prolonged dancing: "Frying the brain would imply that you have stimulated your brain to such an extent that it is beyond normal capacity to work, or there is something wrong. If you use my serotonin example, it would be that you pump the brain so full of serotonin that the brain just can't - maybe it can still function - maybe it can never really inhibit other areas of the brain or you're just not getting as much serotonin as would normally be produced by the brain" (HG).

In the medico-scientific literature, and the reports of many users themselves, serotonergic release on ecstasy is often associated with intense subjective effects of the drug, e.g. euphoria, happiness and being 'loved up'²⁴. When I ask (StE) how ecstasy produces this 'lovey' feeling, he replies that he doesn't know for sure, but does see the serotonin feeling as an overriding sense of 'feel good', which people with depression may try to achieve through taking anti-depressants. Thus in a general sense ecstasy is seen as analogous to these pharmaceutical substances.

Contrary to the widely held view that most altered/ drug-induced states are ineffable and inexplicable (see for Tart, 1969 for a synopsis of this point) in their articulation and thematization, many users can describe the ecstatic state through metaphor/ similes and analogies. One common interpretation is that being on ecstasy is like "unplugging all of the wires of a computer; all of the wires and all of the cords, and then putting them all back in at random" (DrP). That said, this participant often felt that ecstasy was 'fucking with my brain', that is, damaging the nerve endings in the brain. As mentioned above, it is believed by some users that ecstasy use stimulates the brain by overproducing serotonin. Hence, there is a sense that there is a limited amount of serotonin after each/ and/ or repeated usage. By implication, some users worry that this perceived constant stimulation of the brain overproduces serotonin, effecting a point where the brain can no longer produce a normal equilibrium (serotonergic/ burnout). As a consequence depressive states usually known as

²⁴ For a synopsis of how MDMA is thought to work on the brain see (Malberg and Bonson, 2001: 29-39).

‘Suicide Tuesdays’ or ‘Midweek Blues’²⁵ may follow repeated usage. Both idioms depict the depressive period following regular ecstasy use. This is thought to be due to depletion of serotonin levels caused by the MDMA high. And hence, some users engage in pre- and post-loading activities to minimize these adverse effects (1.5.0).

1.6.0 Different Stages of Effects

There are several general stages of being on ecstasy that are customarily divided into a number of discrete states: the peak, plateau, comedown, afterglow and returning to baseline (Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994; in this thesis see 1.7.0, 2.6.0, 2.16.0, 4.3.0, 4.7.0). Before turning to more detailed phenomenological descriptions of these states, I present some more specific instances of moods and actions within the primary phases. Some of these other modulations will be expanded upon in subsequent sections of the thesis: e.g., the ‘chatty stage’ (5.4.0) where ‘sometimes you’re in the mood to talk shit’; or the ‘touchy feely stage’ (1.17.0) where you may get in the ‘mood for hugging’.

(DiH): “I would say there are three main stages in taking a pill. There is a come-up which is the initial stages... so the first half an hour to the two hours when you start feeling a little bit different... some pills are not very clean (also known as ‘dirty’ or ‘bad’ pills 2.1.0) and you start feeling a sickly feeling in your stomach. You start feeling a bit nauseas, at that point you start feeling a bit more relaxed and things start swaying a bit in some cases, to the point where you start getting very hot and your vision starts to get a little bit blurry, and you find yourself, almost trying to stop smiling. It is like you are very happy inside and it’s a very, very wonderful sort of experience. It’s like for someone who has never taken drugs before it is like ten times happier than you have ever had in your life... And that usually lasts for an hour or so, it really depends upon the pill as some pills are fast hitting and other pills are not as strong it just depends on the chemical make-up. Then again a lot of the pills around might not contain MDMA that might contain MDE or MDA or some other sort of substance that sort of mimics MDMA, but doesn’t have the exact make-up of it”.

1.7.0 Ecstasy: Some General Effects

²⁵ This is experienced and interpreted to be linked to a serotonin dip that may arise with repeated use, especially within the days following the ‘afterglow’ (see below).

1.7.1 Background Influences on the Conceptualisation of the Experience

It became clear in the course of the fieldwork and subsequent interviews that the phenomenological descriptions presented in this thesis were anchored in the socio-cultural background of the users. For this reason I have included a chapter on the “cast of players” to give some more concrete details of the informants background. In one interview a number of informants critically reflected on their own social-background, especially the way their university subjects had influenced the way they recounted and interpreted their experiences and perspectives on ecstasy: (MM) “Because we are all at uni, Mr B is doing psychology and philosophy and Jack is doing neuroscience and philosophy”. The users also noted the specific language they used to describe the drug’s effects.

1.7.2 Factors Influencing the Experience

For (DiH) the effects of ecstasy arise from multiple influences, e.g. the actions of the user during the night, how hot it is and the duration that ecstasy has been sitting in the stomach, “I have found times when I have been sitting on the couch and a pill would take up to two hours or longer”.

1.7.3 Amplification of Emotions

Some users see ecstasy as an emotional ‘amplifier’. However what identifiable emotions were perceived as being amplified and how this was subsequently interpreted depended upon the user. (MM) “I find that it amplifies my happy emotions, but in my personal opinion, it dampens my sad emotions”... “I’m a pretty happy guy normally; and when I am on it, if I am feeling good at the time... I am feeling better and more social as well... and doing more ‘stupid stuff’ and ‘crazier’”. This amplification is seen to allow the user to ‘open up’ emotionally and connecting to others. (BeO) expressed doubt as to whether these amplified emotions were real “I think that the amplification...it’s not real in the sense that you don’t have those feelings when you’re not on the drug”. He suggested that these feelings may be present to a lesser extent in normal day-to-day reality or that being on the drug may tap into and release the heightened emotions.

Alternatively, (MrB) found that ecstasy facilitated his willingness to engage with the surrounding music, people or environment. Elaborating further he explains: “it is sort

of like it is a melting into things around me; it is like a focus towards good things as opposed to fear – to take my mind away and make me look at things”. In this state he would be more directed to things that are more comfortable, and less likely to be distracted by “negative-distrustful situations”.

(MrB) also describes the ecstatic experience as an energy field where communication is increased far beyond normal life. Accordingly, ecstasy may be seen as “a spot light that makes only the happy colours and only the positive emotions just appear more real in our heads whereas in everyday life they are there... It could just be an amplifier of positive signals in our head”.

1.7.4 Changes to Personality

When on ecstasy some informants believe parts of the personality remain intact “its not always absolute you know” (CM). One informant describes how when high on lots of drugs - parts of himself would “get in the way” leading to an awkwardness in the experience. This occurred in an attempt to reach out and be intimate with a close friend “Like I am a very physically intimate person, I enjoy hugs and I hold my friends hands... sometimes I reach out... and I know what he is like... and there is moments of awkwardness...and I hold myself back” (CM).

Moreover, this participant felt that internal conflict may occur with the intensification of emotions in the bonding experience “I’m a naturally fast bonding person... [drugs] bring emotions to the fore, and you feel very close to people quickly. And if you do this over an extended period of time people will feel closer to you than your family” (CM). But upon meeting ‘*randoms*’ on ecstasy, the tension between the drug-induced ‘accelerated’ state and the ‘natural’ state, can lead to the realization that you don’t know people very well.

1.7.5 Focus Gain and Loss

(CM): “Ecstasy I think, kind of takes you away.... Perhaps, that makes it sound like you are detached from what is going on; I think it also just makes you aware of what is going on, and focuses your attention on things between personal feelings of well-being, and connections with other people, it focuses your attention on these kind of

things, and elation, and that kind of thing. It focuses, on those parts of the human experience”.

1.8.0 Fun and Playfulness

Many users explain the attractiveness of ecstasy and the pleasure of the experience in terms of fun, playfulness and euphoria accompanying consumption: “it’s just so much fun’ (CG). Many users would cite the numerous pleasures of the experience (some are discussed throughout this thesis) including using Vicks Vapour Rub, exchanging Candy, sucking on pacifiers, playing with toys, massaging, ‘missions’, showering, driving, sex or just being on the drug itself: “You can just sit there being high on ecstasy; it is enjoyable and is a very pleasurable experience. You are warm, you feel good. You feel really good” (CM).

1.9.0 Missions

Going on a *mission* or ‘mish’ would be a random or purposeful activity whilst on ecstasy in order to achieve a certain aim. Due to the difficulty of coordinating several users at once and encountering randoms missions often take longer than planned. Here is one example:

(AdaM): “To a lot of people, from what I understand, a mission is what someone else set you as a challenge. As in, go and collect this or whatever, so you would go and head off somewhere and come back with it, almost like going and playing fetch. No one else would set the mission for me, I would have an urge to go and walk down to the corner stall and buy stuff for the simple fact that it tastes sweet or it’s something different to do or, the chip packets look amazing right now. I remember walking into the convenience stall, the colours in this place are awesome, and I was a little bit perturbed as to what the guy behind the counter was thinking, and I’m sure he was probably used to it, but I didn’t really care. I was there, and I was looking at the gold writing on the chip packets for example, and it was just like, that’s awesome, it just blows your mind and it is stupid because it is just such a little thing, that you see every single day but, when you are in that state it’s a completely different thing... The missions for me were something to do, you sort of just get into that frame of mind, where having something to occupy myself, ya’ know, you have been dancing all night, or you have been outside sitting down talking to someone or whatever, but, you

just get this burst of, I don't know if it is energy or whatever, but it is just, I need to be doing something, I need to set myself a target and do it. So I'd do that and walk down the road and I would buy sherbet for example. It never seemed to taste as good as you thought it was going to – in that state you can really taste how sweet it is and it is almost sickening.

1.10.0 Ecstasy and Working

A number of users would work whilst on ecstasy or engage in working when others are using. I asked some users to reflect on this experience.

1.10.1 Photographing in a Club

In this example, (RoB) turns up to work in the post-comedown (just prior to returning to baseline), “Up until I lost my camera, which would have been January last year, since then I have I missed two *PCs* (venue). I spent the majority of them sober, or at least mostly sober, a little bit of E would help you relax and make you a little bit more social, less timid about rocking up to strangers to take a photo, in compromising positions often. And so it would often get a little bit messy, to just loosen up. I may be running around when you can't see straight to take decent photos. I just got sick and tired of blurry photos, and then when I got my camera to some professional level I sort of went, if I drop this and break this camera I am screwed. That's a lot of my money down the toilet, and then I can't use it properly. I can't use it properly when I am trashed so I might as well sober up and stay sober. But at one rave they would not let me in with a camera so I'm like, '*Illlewww*, not feeling all that happy about it, spend a hundred bucks on a ticket to go and get some photos and got told you can't take your camera in”.

1.10.2 Selling CDs at a Venue

(MM): “I had Phoenix convince me that selling CDs at a rave would be really fun. And I was doing that and I was getting off on it, and it was like ‘wow!’ this is the most pleasurable selling that I have done in my entire life”.

1.10.3 Turning up to Work

(StE): “I think ecstasy use goes back to the sixties when everyone was, when all of the avant-garde were doing LSD, I think you can just picture that – the same sort of loving was going on. You know it was the occasion, but it just wasn't done on a

Hippie farm in some country town in the US, it was just Monday morning – to front up to work with ‘Red Eyes’ if you know what I mean”.

1.11.0 Memory Changes – Losing Recollection

The ethnographic data presented in this thesis were collected *post facto* – and as such I was attentive to the possibility of distortion in accuracy of drug reports and my own countertransference reactions to the experiences reported – particularly when it came to the ethics of academic research (Devereux, 1967). The dynamics of altered states of consciousness (ASC) can make it difficult for some users to describe and recollect accurately aspects of the actual drug experience. However, I believe that this thesis is a testimony to the fact that ASCs are open to productive phenomenological investigation, description and analysis (Shanon, 2002: 13-41) When I asked some long-term users how they would describe ecstasy they explained that with time they could come remember the sensation. However this was still difficult: “It’s like describing an orgasm - how can you describe an orgasm”? (CG) “It’s harder to remember the feelings and things” (CP). Another participant (HB) describes how after repeated use over an 18 month period he stopped using ecstasy as he was no longer getting the desired effects (losing the magic 8.9.0). Albeit, he then recalled on a recent rave where his drink was spiked and he experienced a tease of the ecstasy again “and I was like: “HAW-YEAH - *this is what it feels like*”. Thus he could recall that state, but could no longer remember exactly what ecstasy was like.

1.12.0 Breathing Intensification

Deep and intense breathing often accompanies the initial peak or rush on ecstasy. For example, when a pill is coming on too strong, some users sit down to stabilise themselves if breathing becomes too intense. In this situation, (WW) viewed breathing as a ‘control mechanism’, in that she would want to still be aware and in control, rather than sitting back and letting the drug overtake her (fuckdness 1.22.0). To maintain bodily control she would sit and roll her head back, eyes rolling in the back of her head and just ‘go-with-it’. In this state, she found that her breathing would synchronize with her heartbeat: “so that I would go... “*rr-hh-rr-hhh....rr—rr-hh-rr*” [deep forceful breathing], with little bumps in the inhalation/ exhalation. Moreover, she described how breathing out becomes more difficult, where she would feel there is a kind of pulse, where things are moving through you with concerted exhalation.

Thus, there is not always a clear breath out, only a need to breath slower to cope with the intensification of breathing²⁶.

1.13.0 Eye Wobbles (*Nystagmus*)

Nystagmus is the medical term describing the involuntary movement of the eyes. In this ethnography participants often referred to these eye movements, which may arise at different stages of the ecstatic experience, as the ‘wobblies’ or ‘eye-wobblies’. Some users learned to play with these movements in a fun and novel way. Others felt they could control these effects to achieve specific aims (e.g. maintaining composure on drugs so as to appear straight). Some informants reported eye-wobblies at the peak-plateau phase about two hours into the drug state. For other users this was more noticeable towards the end of the plateau: “It is at the end, it happens towards the end. Like I go up and as I am coming down, that is when it all starts to go ‘phe-ow’, and your face starts to go... and you can’t control your face” (AuE). These inadvertent movements of the eyes were seen by some users as fun and cute and by others as an embarrassing loss of control (Fuckdness 1.22.0).

Eye wobbles may be seen as aesthetically unattractive when the eyes seem to move in any direction they want to: “like the other day, my girlfriend – her eyes were just all over the shop; and I kept telling her to put on her glasses” (FrN). In this state the eyes may appear shrunken into the head or enlarged – ‘bug-eyes’ - or may appear to be going inwards or outwards. Similarly, (AuE) reported seeing a ‘lazy-eye’ at the end of the plateau, where one eye is perfect and the other “just started wandering off”. He recalled a man pointing this out: “hey mate, were you looking over there and at me at the same time”? He responded that he wasn’t doing that, and asked “what are you talking about?” So he crossed his arms and he went “oh fuck!”

1.14.0 Honesty, Truth Serum

There is a popular discourse that ecstasy was first manufactured by Merck as a ‘truth serum’ (1.1.0) and was subsequently trailed by the US army in the 1950’s for similar reasons (Saunders, 1997: 7). This association is reflected by users who describe ecstasy as an easy-going emotional openness, a lowering of inhibitions and a lowering of your guard (defensiveness). Accompanying the lowering of defensiveness is an

²⁶ This manifest simultaneously with other potential peaking symptoms e.g. eye wobbles, increased heart rate, sweating, touchiness, euphoria etc.

increased capacity and/or compulsion for telling the truth: “Like the voice in the head that you talk to yourself with, you lose a lot of that, so you say things that you may not often want to, that you would normally be too shy or, reserved to say to people or in public sort of thing, sort of being more outspoken in a way. But, I don’t think that that is necessarily any more false or honest about a person; it is just blunter - less tactful” (RoB).

1.15.0 Internal Monologue – knowing you’re on drugs

Certain users notice a distinct point on ecstasy when they can still recognize and comprehend that *they are on drugs*. Hence, there is awareness that one’s actions and pronouncements result from drug ingestion. However, the internal voice of being on ecstasy is not always there: “incessantly repeating you’re on drugs! You’re the responsible one! You are not having any fun... blah, blah, blah! It is just there when you need it to be there, so that you can sit back and go: ‘I need you to be there’. Whilst on ecstasy you would not want that voice to be there all of the time” (WW).

In certain instances, the internal monologue may completely disappear or overwhelm the user. For example, when ‘freaking out’ (1.22.0) and/ or losing egoic control (1.24.0), the user may no longer be able to recognise that they are under the influence of drugs (there is no reality testing). If the capacity for reality testing is lost overwhelming emotional states such as fear, panic and anxiety may overwhelm consciousness so that the user may no longer be able to imagine being able to be ‘normal’ again (i.e. return to baseline 8.8.2). One user described these situations as ‘getting fucked up’ and ‘messy’ where one is likely to require external help, e.g., medical assistance. Moreover, in this state, some users may lose the capacity to do a lot of other ‘normal things’ e.g. talking, walking and focusing.

Here (WW) explains “the brain is working really fast” so that some users intuitively know to “go along with the drug” (or just going “with the flow”). However, if users let themselves go too far with the drug they could end up in a ‘head space’ where they feel “I am too fucked up, I’m gone - I’m out”. Having lost the ability to recognize that they are still on drugs and control their actions, the users self-perception and judgment by others may become seen as being too ‘fucked up’. Hence, “those not in the drug

state would find it difficult to follow the logic of people who are fucked up, but would still be able to help them out of this state” (WW)²⁷.

1.16.0 Mind-Body Dissonance

When abstemious (WW) she would sit back and watch what people are doing on ecstasy. She observed that it appears that for the users - their mind is doing one thing - and their body another. For example, certain consumers could be so deep in conversation that they would not be consciously aware of what their body is doing. The conversation could be about something “amazingly abstract”, while they rubbed their thighs and held hands without realising it; and then at a point, they would look down and go: ‘Oh! We have been holding hands and we are really sweaty!’, ‘Oh my God! How long have we been holding hands for?’ At this point, users may also be tapping their feet on the ground or more visibly gurning. Some users would remind each other to stop gurning because it is a largely subconscious (and involuntary) action. Thus with gurning, the intensity of jaw clenching (bruxism), teeth grinding and enhanced corporeal feelings (e.g. active touch) may lead to cognitive conflict where continuing a conversation and dealing with one’s body simultaneously can be very difficult.

In this dynamic state everything may appear to be happening very quickly. This is especially so during the peak to plateau. Here (WW) describes a “three second memory”²⁸, where she would be watching someone gurning and say: “don’t chew, don’t chew”. And then realise, that comment was ten minutes ago. By then, she recalled, something else had distracted her: “Ah, *there’s a dog with a puffy tail!* Whhoo-hoo”.... When you notice that you are gurning and you may be talking about something completely different; in that, one aspect of your actions may become dominant (e.g. talking) - whilst the other becomes subconscious (bodily movement). Sometimes, it may be that if you find something physical to talk about - such as focusing upon the fact that you are rubbing your thighs - then the physical and the mental synchronise. But when you talk about other things, your body is going to appear to be doing its own thing, until your reminded; at that point you shift your

²⁷ One user – outside of PC - explained that you can talk someone out of ‘losing it’ or ‘freaking out’ by getting their mind off themselves and guiding them back into the familiar – especially common day things which they like e.g. sport, cars or getting them up dancing.

²⁸ See memory changes 1.11.0

focus from what you are talking about to what you are physically doing, e.g. tapping your feet”.

1.17.0 Active Touch

Most users emphasise the sensual and embodied experience of ecstasy use; as (CM) states “it’s not a particularly cerebral drug”. Some of the more significant bodily elements include: letting loose, drinking, intense breathing and smoking, eye-wobbles, dancing, cuddling and kissing, sucking and touching. The intense bodily pleasures derived from ecstasy are one of the primary reasons cited by users. The intensification of the whole bodily experience is frequently experienced, where “you feel everything times one hundred”. These feelings varied from “being really alive”, that everything “is happening right now”, to an intensification of one’s “awareness”, “seeing” and “hearing”.

Massaging is seen by many as an extremely pleasurable activity on ecstasy - with users massaging each other; especially around the neck, shoulders and head regions. I watched as one raver massaged a girl on the shoulders. He emphasised that it was bad drug etiquette to touch the aroused breasts of females when they are vulnerable on ecstasy. I also observed lines of massagers sitting back-to-back at larger raves and clubs. As one clubber describes: “People would come up behind me and touch your neck and things like that and that felt awesome, I think it just like giving you goose bumps and it was just an awesome feeling... I didn’t really go and touch anybody else except a little bit with ‘A’, but she used to come up to me and stroke the back of my neck or you know – kiss me – and it was just like awesome... It sends a chill down your spine, I don’t know, it’s not like it is a sexual feeling, or anything like that, it’s like a heightened sense of that person touching you” (AdaM).

Another user (MM) found that everything would become more sensual with the ‘come on’ (peaking 4.3.0), but that he never noticed touching his body in this condition. He quickly added, that since the main activity he undertook on ecstasy was dancing he didn’t concentrate internally, in the sense that he would allow the feeling of the music to ‘wash all over him’ and just go along with that.

1.18.0 Gurning, Facial Contortions, Pacifiers

Gurning is a verb used to describe a variety of distorted facial actions. Typically, a gurn involves projecting the lower jaw as far possible forward and the covering of the upper lip by the lower lip. The term can also specifically refer to the myriad facial contortions of people under the drug ecstasy. Bruxism (from the Greek *brugmós*, *gnashing of teeth*) involves the grinding of the teeth and is typically accompanied by the clenching of the jaw. Generally speaking, it is an oral parafunctional activity that occurs in most humans at some time in their lives.

Gurning may occur at different phases of the ecstasy experience and have different durations of intensity. Certain items such as lolly pops, pacifiers or magnesium may be used to counteract gurning (1.4.0 and 1.4.4), so as to avoid losing control of the face or to lessen or avoid the uncomfortable effects the next day (e.g. sore cheeks i.e. Trismus, worn down teeth, jaw paralysis). “Gurning – yeah – it was quickly pointed out by friends and quickly alleviated by using Chuppa-Chops” (DrP).

Some informants had no knowledge of the origins of the term, but were familiar with the common saying s/he is “gurning like a farm cow”. Informants describe the experience as typically consisting of a constant chewing and licking of the lips and a protrusion of the tongue. Often there is an exaggerated moving of the jaw side-to-side and ‘hectic teeth chattering’ and grinding of the teeth²⁹, with some users muttering repeatedly “yeah-yeah-yeah” (LiM). The entire facial area, seemingly emanating from the mouth appears to be moving by its own accord, albeit usually out of synchronisation. One informant believed this to be a subconscious movement, as you nearly always see people with that intense movement around the oral region.

(SoC) “I reckon by gurning you can actually feel the peak coming on, though when I start munching my teeth, I’m like ‘Oh... wait on... something is going to happen.... something is *about* to happen”. And that is usually when the peak comes on”. Around the same time in the peak “I find that I start losing touch with reality a bit, and everything is a bit dream like, the universe is kind of shaking left and right... (MM); or further into the plateau, “Oh yeah, I reckon it [gurning] comes on right at the peak. About an hour into the peak, I start getting really, *really* fucked. This effect gives

²⁹ (CG) was anxious and concerned about how his dentist would identify his drug use from his worn down teeth.

gurning increasing intensity” (MM). Gurning is also an easy and familiar way for users to identify other people on ecstasy: when you see them continuously smacking and licking their lips then “you know they’re on ecstasy” (DrP).

When gurning, some users will openly converse with other people³⁰, although this appears easier if the other user knows that you’re on drugs. If they don’t know you’re on drugs the gurner may try to hide the effects through gum, lolly pops, or a pacifier etc. or try to consciously control these movements (to maintain control and face): “I like to be in control of my own body. I like to try and control it so it is not as horrible as if you see some people with their mouths are going from left to right, their cheeks and their jaws and it is actually the drug going through their body, it is taking effect – if you see those silly cartoons and they drink a potion, and the potion works through their body, it is pretty much like that with drugs as well” (LiM).

1.19.0 Chewing Gum

Some users enjoy chewing gum whilst on ecstasy to cope with gurning to alleviate teeth grinding, the chewing of the cheeks and controlling the protrusion of the tongue. Gum is often carried in pockets and bum-bags and given out freely by friends or randoms to assuage the effects of gurning. (PP) explains that chewing gum usually helped with the uncontrollable jaw movements, although he did not take any notice of the flavour of the gum. Concurrently, this user found the tasting of a new piece of gum or sugary drinks such as Coke on ecstasy unpalatable: “there is too much stuff going on, that is so sweet or peppery like chewing gum, it’s like too much. But you have a new piece sometimes (laughs)”.

Following a night of gurning and chewing gum to alleviate the severity of adverse effects (e.g. teeth grinding at the peak) users may awaken with a soreness of the jaw and aching cheeks from all of the muscle movement. (HG) notes that gurning and gum chewing varies from user-to-user “And the last time that I took a pill, I found that I was doing “*qrrirep, qrrirep, qrrirep*’... Like making a noise with the back of my tongue and the top of my mouth kind of thing a lot, I wasn’t chewing at all - I was just going ‘*qrrirep*’”.

³⁰ See ‘E talk’ (5.2.0)

1.20.0 Control Loss and Gain

A number of informants expressed concern about losing control and falling unconscious in the ecstatic experience. For example, (WW) after having her drink spiked and being carried out of a club, worried about possibility of overdosing and having other people in a club thinking, “look at that fucked up bitch, look at what she is doing to herself”. She felt that the drink spiking wasn’t her fault, but emphasised that if she had binged on pills, surpassing her known limit, that excessive drug use was unacceptable: “like, if I purposely went: ‘I am going to get retarded, someone is going to have to look after me. I don’t care how retarded I get’”. This excess would lead to a loss of control, which would entail a deliberate “forgoing any level of care for your being” and numerous health risks and the embarrassment of having to be publicly carried out of the club.

Another informant (DiH) experienced a loss of bodily control and balance from excessive ecstasy use. Although he had not personally witnessed people falling over and collapsing from the rising body temperatures that emerge with intense and crowded dancing, he did stress the importance of moderate ecstasy use, particularly for inexperienced users: “for instance, double dropping or taking two pills at once when you are still very junior in the drug scene is a big NO, NO. I found that out very early in my drug career” (DiH). He also noted that the excessive use of MDMA could result in the loss of bodily coordination such as the ability to walk or having to lie down: “my breathing was very heavy, and everything was a complete blur. And I really needed someone to take care of me for several hours”.

Other informants disagreed that drug use would result in a loss of bodily control. One participant decided to alternate his usual practice of taking acid (LSD) at night, and popped during the day to behold all of the colours of the Harbour Bridge, walk around the city, and do some writing. Upon trying to board a bus with a can of Dr Pepper he was stopped by the driver who shouted at him, waved his arms and insisted that he get off the bus. The driver then swore profusely and put his arm out to stop the informant from boarding the bus. Reflecting on his situation, “at the time I was like why do I have to be on acid”? (LiM) mused on the common belief ‘that you lose control on drugs’... ‘that you can’t control who you are’. But despite being on LSD – “at that time I was super high on acid – I acted in the same way as if I was sober”. He also

maintains that it is the person's constitution and not just the drugs *per se* which may or may not cause the loss of control, depending on their idiosyncrasies, level of experiential use and social background. Finally, (CP) felt that on ecstasy the personality is basically normal, and there is an increase in confidence "like normally confident, but it's easier to maintain. Like if anything happens it's easier to hold onto. You can control what happens at a much higher level".

1.21.0 Fuckedness and Being Fucked Up

The intensity of the ecstasy experience is often referred to as being 'fucked', 'fucked up' or less frequently as 'fuckedness'. A number of the typical symptoms of these states include: eye wobbles, profuse sweating 'like a fiend', nonsensical (E) talk, losing bodily coordination, e.g. not being able to dance or walk properly, stand up and, more rarely, hallucinating. Fuckdness may be achieved by taking multiple pills, e.g. two or more at once, although several participants said that this depended on the user. In larger quantities, taking four or five pills, speech would become difficult or non-existent (sustained rush/ peak), the eyes would be half closed and rolling about (nystagmus) and the face may get swollen or 'puffy' (gurning). The ensuing two ethnographic examples describe it as the following:

(MM): "I was at drinks on Saturday for someone's birthday, in a bar in the Cross like a lounge where there was Jazz music type of thing. And one of my friends, very unexpectedly decided to take a pill. The only person there, no one else had even mentioned the fact; they looked at her sitting in the corner. Gurning, like we were 18 again, and it sort of became a bit, I think because she had had such a big break it was that, it was like starting over again. She looked like it was one of her first times kind of, um. It was interesting to me that at one stage that I want to be more fucked than that so I would take 3 or 4. It is not really that nice thinking about that now. But that's definitely what that level of fuckdness was – looking at her... she couldn't open her eyes, but I didn't want just that, I wanted tingling and either excessive dancing or we would get to the point where I would have to sit down and take a breather. Um, that level of fuckdness for me was symbolized by the hallucinations; it didn't help when you were in a dodgy club".

(MM) further explains being 'fucked': "I start excusing myself, like "hey listen! I'm really sorry, but *ehrhreh*... jaw starts wobbling and I really feel like going *ehheher*, and I really feel like saying: 'I hear what you are saying but can you give me sec'. It's like, that's OK, just enjoy it, *enn-joooy* it. And they can tell, even though I'm pretty fucked, I'm like, I'm saying man - I'm having a good time, and they are hearing me and they are like do you know what, fuck my conversation, are you OK, do you need some water or something. And they are probably on pills as well, but I am like hyper-sensitive. I am always the most fucked one in the room, and then all of a sudden I am going to have to spew and like '*bluuur*'. That's when I start gurning hard, like I spew and that's like, I have gotten rid of it, my body has said you have had enough ecstasy, in fact you had so much, and so I am going to reward you by making you *so happy* - that you can't do anything".

1.22.0 'Freaking Out'

During the ecstatic experience some users experience adverse reactions to drugs usually known as 'freaking out', 'bad' or 'negative' experiences ('losing it' 1.24.0). Here is one example I directly observed: I walk up to the Atrium at Macquarie University to attend the large scale rave "Godspeed". There is a police unit 70 or so meters from the main entrance to the event. A dozen or so officers are looking down at a girl in a stretcher who appears to be in agonizing pain. I ask one of the female officers what is going on. She explains that a girl in her early 20's has completely 'freaked out' from drug overdose. The girl is strapped down to a stretcher so her arms and legs can't move. She is screaming uncontrollably, muttering incomprehensible sentences and wailing. The Police Officer explains to me that those in these situations normally snap out of it in 10 to 20 minutes. She is also deeply concerned that this situation has been going for an hour. They are not sure what she has had. She continues to scream and rant. All they can do is reassure her and wait.

Some informants commented on these states "Some people can be put into a very bad zone, and the outcomes of which, are unpredictable" (JaK). Sometimes, polymorphous drug-use can be attributed to these adverse reactions: (MM) "they are usually doing a lot of amphetamines on the side", "it's like if you are on acid and ecstasy you would be candy-flipping". However, instances of such negative states can and do occur on ecstasy (with dosage, and as one user noted the 'set and setting' also

influence the experience). Another user felt, that after having freaked out a few times he came to associate the experience with hallucinating “seeing things that aren’t there” (SaN). He perceived this as “something that shouldn’t be happening... that starts happening” (such as hallucinating), wherein “you can’t comprehend the experience”.

(WW) explains how group dynamics when someone is freaking out may actually worsen the situation. “If someone is freaking out it makes things worse because they actually look far worse than the problem actually is. This may be in a group where someone brings to everybody’s attention that something is wrong and everybody’s mind jumps to the worse possible conclusion: and they go ‘what, what, where is so and so?’ And their brains are just going everywhere [clicking fingers] and playing out the worst scenarios. Everyone knows someone is freaking out – and the hysteria around the person freaking out may worsen the situation. But when people come up and freak out to me on pills, if we are in a group, they will come up and they will be clawing their way over, with their eyes as wide as anything. They will have a ‘jaw out to ear’ – and I’m just going, I’m really scared, *I’m really, really scared*. I’m like it’s alright like..... But then what makes it worse is that you see people around them who have been dancing and they look over and they see something/ someone who looks like they are distorted from the inside-out, and you will see them, “*what, what. What’s wrong, what’s happening, what-what-what? Is-she-OK-is-she-ok? Ppsdddaarbbllweeeelllallayeeya*”. This, she continues, just makes the other person feel worse, because “now its two people that you have to sit down”, and essentially she adds, “if you just told that person to sit down and chill out they would be alright”.

“That is the way that my friends describe that freak-out to me, it is the rush, which is so overwhelming, that they don’t know what to do... um, I think a lot of people don’t like the rush at first; but I kind of, I don’t like it, but I can bear it. But I think, I’ve had a couple of friends who hadn’t actually done drugs till very recently, and that’s what happened to them. And that is exactly what they described, it was too intense, they didn’t know what to do, and that feeling of ‘shit! Am I going to be normal again?’”

1.23.0 Snapping Out of it - to Help Others

I asked a number of ecstasy users if it was possible to do anything constructive when someone starts ‘freaking out’, or whether they would be too ‘out of it’ to be able to do anything. (ChA) “If my friend starts fucking out, and he starts getting in trouble, that’s when I just snap out of it. I will stop – I will suddenly not get the body rush. Like the second time that I took it, my friend – it was her first time, and she started flopping around on the floor, with her eyes rolling and stuff. I have gone from totally off my guts to – *oh shit! This could possibly kill her and snap out of it.* Like I wouldn’t have passed any tests or anything, but, I felt quite sober at the time, I suddenly lost all that euphoria, I suddenly lost it all. ‘Oh shit!’ this went straight to - got to look after everyone”.

1.24.0 Losing it

Some users may potentially ‘lose it’ during the drug-induced state. This may be due to ‘*candy flipping*’ where a user may go too far with mixing drugs such as LSD and ecstasy or ‘*overloading*’ by taking large quantities of ecstasy (4-5 pills was seen as a lot for even experienced users).

In one example (HB) watched as a friend completely lost it: “his mind snapped... he was in a different room to the rest of us, even though we were all sitting in a circle”. Another user observed: “He went too far. We were all sitting around in a garage at a mate’s place smoking Ice, and after a night out at a club or a rave or something he is sitting beside me doing one of those introverted, alone – completely by himself in his own little world, speaking, like mumbling to himself. And all of a sudden he would pipe out half way through a sentence, really loudly, and we would all just sit there and look at him and go ‘what!’, ‘what are you talking about?’” (HG).

(AmA) was catching a train back from a rave at Olympic Park: “I remember when we were sitting in a train and we were going back to my house, and ‘Liquid-man’³¹ was sitting in the corner, flipping-out and another person was losing it on the other side. And we had old people, and a number of commuters, come and sit-down with us and we were all trying to sit there... I tried not to laugh and then I started to pull stuff out of my bag and prune stuff. I think I started to pull all the candy out of my bag and people started looking at us strangely”.

³¹ ‘Liquid-man’ was named so, because of his profuse sweating when dancing on ecstasy.

1.25.0 Hallucinating

Hallucinations may arise in a variety of drug induced states (Merkur, 1998: 1-5).

Commonly associated with psychedelic and psychotropic substances such as LSD, I obtained some reports on hallucinating on ice, marijuana³² and ecstasy. Hallucinations could manifest within the ecstasy peak, plateau, and comedown, or during the returning to baseline, and even weeks after consumption. One user associated ecstasy with “thinking different things... but not hallucinating in an LSD way” (StE).

Whether or not the contents of hallucinations were experienced and evaluated as terrifying or pleasurable varied. Many of these symptoms and the content of hallucinations provoked excitement, comparisons and conversations of mutual interest. The emergence of hallucinations on ecstasy is unpredictable, with diverse symptoms spontaneously manifesting. Hallucinations were evaluated negatively when they emerged in the context of ‘freaking out’, a ‘bad pill’ or something was going wrong during the ecstasy high (e.g. throwing up, overwhelming nausea). Positive evaluations often pointed out the fun as well as enjoyable and interesting aspects of hallucinating. At times hallucinogenic states may become so overwhelming that users have to cease activities such as conversing or dancing, compelling the user to sit down or go to a quieter area (e.g. outside of the venue), so as to stop ‘freaking’ other people out. From a number of reports that I collected on hallucinations, here are four examples:

(WW): “With hallucinating, it is not imagining something, it is seeing something that is real and is turning into something else; so it is never anything that I think of when I see it, it’s something... say I was holding a tissue, because my eyes go weird... turning into a bunny. *But I would never just see a bunny*; it would have to be something there to make it look like that.... [These hallucinations manifested] because they physically were so incredibly overwhelming, more so than anything that you have ever experienced. When I closed my eyes, I would see the most fucked up kaleidoscope that I have ever seen; when I opened them it was tenfold. I was sitting in a bar in Thailand and I thought I was on a boat, literally knowing full well where I actually was; and my body and my eyes couldn’t physically get there... it became more frustrating, that the voice was there it just became quite taxing on my brain trying to think of the things that were normal. I just got really distracted by the fact

³² See Appendix 4 other drugs.

that my eyes weren't – I couldn't see anything that was real, um, granted it did get better after a while; I was like just going with this and it wore off a bit which helped, um, there was a time – where I had to look after one of my friends who thought she was going to die. That's my theory as to why it was a bad place, because I did eventually get better when I got her up as well. But that other world was the fact that *nothing was real*. Like when I hallucinate on E, I really tried hard to stop my eyes shaking, I knew it wasn't there, with this nothing I didn't make anything go away – nothing made the fairies go away – nothing made the pirate standing there - go away. Nothing made my friend who was sitting right there stop looking like a cat – and my friend sitting there - stopped looking like a goldfish – that's true Goldfish-cat-Pirate, like it is the most I would never do it again. I think it became more frustrating more than anything, because my brain was like - it will go - it will go. That was the odd thing, not being able to get any element of reality, except my brain being like *you're on drugs*. That was the only element of reality that was left, nothing else was the same, because I would look at my body, I didn't really have legs - I would have like tentacles or something, I had fingers that were that long and, straw, you know like, the only thing that was really left was me trusting myself that I was on drugs – *which is pretty scary*".

(AdaM) "On the hallucinating topic - I remember one night I was with a new girlfriend at the time, we drove out to the middle of Dural, well beyond that, well which is bush. I pulled over when it was starting to hit, I remember sitting there and, it was possible that the pill had acid in it or something along those lines, um, I remember when I was sitting there and I was actually, it felt like I was travelling through time, like I was, I could see everything around me, but my mind was blocking out that was there and I was visualizing looking at the passage of time, from above. I saw, myself being born, I saw my parents meeting for the first time, I saw my grandparents for the first time, I saw world war one, it just kept going backwards and backwards, I saw after that Jesus walking around teaching people his thing. Before that I saw dinosaurs roaming the earth and before that I saw the...obviously whether this was anything that actually happened. This is from what I have heard, before that I saw the earth completely, just tropical, there was no animals or anything there was just plant life, before that I saw the big-bang, I saw massive explosions and worlds forming, and before that I was in complete, sorry when I say before that – it actually

happened after. I went backward again before the big-bang and I basically saw nothingness, there was coloured gas clouds in their – I felt like I was travelling through time and it was very, very vivid. Um, after that it replayed itself all forward again, um, everything happened pretty much the same way. I remember there was no wars however; and I got to what was supposed to be the present, or what I thought was supposed to be the present, and I assumed that because there was no wars or anything like that – that the human race had advanced so much further, um, I remember imagining myself calling my friend on his/my mobile, and saying ‘hey mate, what are you doing tonight’, yeah no worries I’ll come over jumping, flying to Jupiter and meeting him at his house, which is bizarre, I know. But that was the end of that episode, by the time my girlfriend I was sitting there with – and she saw in the trees – I can’t tell you exactly because it was her experience, every single leaf on the tree was a dove. It looked like there were doves in the trees, and she was imagining that and telling me about that the whole time. So I guess, there was some sort of hallucinogenic drug involved in that pill, um, because obviously if we both sort of went through, weird experiences”.

(CP) “The first time that I properly hallucinated was the night after the first time that I took pills and, (when scating out) we went to the pub and got a bit drunk as well as being scattered and then smoked away at weed. And I was in the kitchen alone, and I am just staring out the window in the wall like etches turns into puzzle pieces and then they explode and fly across my field of view and then they would disappear on the other side, and I would just stare at it and go hmmm, maybe I should go back upstairs where there is people around (laughs)... The other time was when I was just smoking pot and like there was a split second and I just thinking about society and like, I just built up the universe and stars and everything were going on, which was like instantaneous, and I sat there.”

(FrN): “One thing that happened through taking it too much is that I used to hear my phone going off. And it actually got to a stage where I could see my phone going off. Like, I remember this happening a few days after I had taken anything. I remember one time when I was at the gym, and I saw my phone going off and I could hear it and I said to the guy next to me and he said ‘no’, and I was like”!?

Section 2. Peaks, Plateaus and Comedowns

2.1.0 The Good, the Bad and the Dud

Most users would assess, prior to consumption and/ or during the experience, the type(s) of pill(s) they were imbibing: such as whether it is/ was ‘speedy’ (speed based), ‘smacky’ (heroin based) or ‘lovey’ (MDMA based). Self-interpretations of their own experiences would often be framed in terms of whether it was a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ pill – depending on what the perceived effects the pill(s) had. Of course, some pills had no or negligible effects (dud pills 2.1.2).

2.1.1 Bad Pills

(DrP): “The only bad experience that I have had was in Brisbane when I took a tablet and it made me feel sick and I went outside and vomited. It might have been the tablet or the fact that I had a few drinks that night. That is the only time it has ever happened”.

(WW): “When you are on bad pills the first stage doesn’t get any better; that intense initial stage doesn’t go, when that feeling doesn’t alleviate; it doesn’t allow you to get up and dance and you know the moment when it is just died down a little bit. With a bad pill either that feeling doesn’t go away and/or it makes you feel sick. You can’t control that feeling or it doesn’t work and you throw it up, because it just doesn’t sit with your stomach”.

(DiH): “Ok, firstly I would say that the vast majority of pills that I have had have been quite good where I really enjoy the night and really have a good time. I would get little to no discomfort in the stomach area. However, because the industry is not regulated you do get pills that have too much of a substance, some bad substances in it, or a concatenation of substances that don’t work well with each other. I can remember a pill from a few years back called a KLM; now if you go onto www.pillreports.com it was listed there. This pill was given to me free in a club by a friend. And I thought “yeah, I have already had a few pills and I am feeling quite lovely, and I took it”. And normally I do research on a pill beforehand, ask my friends

make sure I get it from reliable sources³³... But in this case I thought “here is a free pill - I will just take it and have a good time”. Unfortunately it was a very, very bad pill; it was the worst one that I have had ever. I was throwing up for 24 hours. It was a very, very horrible pill. And with experience you sort of learn, you learn to minimise the risk by getting a substance from reliable sources, not taking large doses to begin with, and if you have got a pill tester kit, test the pills to make sure it has got some of the substances that it does have inside of it: which in my case is a MD-xx based substance”.

2.1.2 Dud Pills

(AuA): Often felt disappointed after the peak period where he would get some blurred vision with the realization that the pill was fading. “The openness of the peak would dissipate so that it becomes difficult to walk-up to someone and say: “Hi how’s it going? What are you up to”? Hence, even when you do not feel like are about to come down or whatever and you just straighten up. Like the random people that you meet at four o’clock in the morning, just walking home by themselves - and you just start to have a chat. You think at this time: “why can’t I just walk up to someone and just have a chat”? Why does everyone have their blinkers on, going forward – like everybody is sitting in the bus and can’t hear anything? And there are 50 people on that bus. It’s like why can’t somebody talk to me!”

(DrP): “One other time, I am usually really quick to come on and I knew something was wrong after about half an hour, and I waited an hour and then two hours, and then I was like “take the other one”. And I took the other one, and by two in the morning everyone else is fine, everyone else was dancing around and nothing had started. I had been sold two Panadol. And I remember at three o’clock I had to go get the car keys off a friend and go and sleep in the car, and it was just the worst because it was so, so bad. Everyone was out of it. I knew exactly how everyone was feeling and I couldn’t get there. They were such a level above me mentally and I couldn’t get there – which was one of the most frustrating experiences of my life, not being able to attain that euphoria that everyone else had”.

³³ Some users would look up internet sites like “Bluelight” and “Pill report”.

(LiM): “I have had fake pills maybe two or three times in my life, like sherbet or some shit. The first time that I took them I was having such a goodtime with my friend we didn’t care at all. The next time that we took them I was sober – I said ‘didn’t you think that they tasted sweeter than last time?’ But I just thought that was because we were drunk, not because it was sherbet. I couldn’t tell if it worked the first time, I was so drunk. Then I took them on Saturday and a few days after, with my girlfriend and as soon as I paid for them and tasted them I was like ‘these are fake!’ I only had 2 drinks at that stage, so it was maybe because I was very drunk, or was just excited having a goodnight, but I knew they were fake the first and second time I rang up my dealer, and had a bit of a yell. But what can you do – it’s not David Jones – there is no refund policy”.

2.2.0 Different Pills – Different Effects

It is well-known that there are diverse substances that are sold and taken as ecstasy. These are often divided into types of pills. Here are some of the more common denominations in Sydney and Melbourne.

2.2.1 Taxonomies of Pills

(MoJ): “I put pills into a couple of categories – there is the ‘Love’ kind and the ‘Speedy’ kind. There doesn’t seem to be anything else: it is either going to make you more up [speedy] or it is going to make you more ‘Love’ (6.5.0 and also 2.9.0). There never seems to be a kind of idle ground for me. But I have never had two pills that are the same - even from the same batch it is always slightly different. But then it is really hard to compare it to something else. Like people go “these pills are great they are better than these ones”. And it is like “why are they better than that: because these ones have heaps of speed in them. And these ones are good because they don’t or whatever”. I have never really given a shit about what is in the pill, you are paying \$30 bucks for something that is going to do something. And if it doesn’t *do* anything, then you know it is pretty shit. So I never hunt down specific types of pills, I will take what I can get. It is a drug world out there, and I am not going to bicker with the person who is selling it to me. In that sense, *I just want the fucking drugs*”.

(AJ): “There are different things in different pills... as you take them, if you crunch a little bit off the edge so you can taste it and you sit there and rub it around your mouth

a little bit, you can tell, not down to the ratio, more generally what's in them. Like MDMA has a kind of liquorice smell. MDA, which is similar to MDMA, is a little more 'head-fucky', more energetic; but it doesn't give you that 'floaty' feeling that MDMA has. But it does give you shitloads of energy. It's got a kind of chemical smell, that's kind of hard to describe. So it's not so much that one drug will affect a whole bunch of people the same way".

(SaN): "I said before that on drugs sometimes you want to have sex and sometimes you don't. That also has to do with what sort of chemicals or substances are in the actual pill itself. There is 'Pill Report' (a website) so you can see what's in them; a lot of people don't really test pills. Very rarely do I buy pills from someone that I don't know. I always buy pills or drugs from about three or four different people. And they would know the effects because someone else has had them before me. The different pills can be described as: speedy, smacky or like trippy they make you sort of see things; or when they don't work, or duds. Some have mixed effects; like the last time I had a pill was at Transmission (name of a rave event) which was a couple of weeks ago. That one was actually what I describe as a 'rollercoaster', so it has highs and lows. No straight out effect where it would come on, where you would be absolutely high. It comes in waves, so it would come and then it would go away, and then it would come back, and then it would go away again and then eventually it just would not come back again. I didn't have any real come down. There wasn't really a bad effect afterwards from it, it just sort of went away... and that was it".

2.2.2 *The Question of Purity*

What is sold as ecstasy in Australia usually contains around 30-40% MDMA. Due to its illegal status ecstasy is often mixed and sold with other substances such as: amphetamines, MDA, MDEA, ketamine, PMA, glucose, paracetamol, pseudoephedrine and the benzodiazepines Diazepam and Rohypnol (Campbell, 2001: 104). I asked a number of users about what they were ingesting.

(HG): "There are some stages in some pills that you take, I mean obviously MDMA and pills can be cut with who knows what and so often they will have different effects because they will have very different effects, because often they will have a very

different cocktail of drugs within them, some can be so-called smacky, some can be who knows what. So you can have very different experiences”.

(StM): “A lot of the time, I was never really one of those people who would go around hugging everyone anyway, ok so you know how some people like *chargy* pills and some people like *cruisy* pills right; so the *chargy* pills make you want to get up and dance and run around and stuff. I always used to like the *smacky-cruisy* pills because I would sit there and listening to the music and people came up to talk to me and if not, that’s cool”.

One user explains that the same pills can have varying effects on users when taken by different people. (LiM): “Someone might actually take the same pill, you are like the ‘King of the Party’, you’re like, you’re Oscar Wilde holding out somewhere, it is interesting and it happens to all of my friends as well, eat the same pill and a different night it acts differently.”

2.2.3 Mood (*Stimmung*)

Another user attributed the effects of ecstasy to the overall ‘mood’ of the user in the drug induced state. (AdaM): “Personally I think it is more to do with what sort of mood you are in at the time. Um, I’ve done a fair bit, and sometimes you want to dance and you have all this energy in you and you can’t stop. At other times you can’t stop and you want to y’know – share that empathetic relationship. I remember another time I wanted to be alone, I wanted to – I was going through some issues at the time, and I wanted to sort through what was going through my head, and I wanted to give myself closure, referred to as self-discovery – introspection”.

2.2.4 Smacky Pills

(CM): “If we are talking about different experiences on ecstasy that is usually more a sign of amphetamines in a pill. People who haven’t used much will often use the term ‘Smacky’, to describe a pill that knocks you around a lot. That can even describe lots of different states on it. I find, people who haven’t had enough to compare, will all use the word ‘Smacky’ to describe anything that takes you off your feet. And that can be from the intense love experience, um, to just an out of it, numb sort of feeling”.

2.3.0 Purity: Changing Composition of Ecstasy

There is a widespread sense amongst long-term users that the quality and composition of ecstasy has degenerated from the introduction of the substance since the late 1980's. Pure MD-xx substances, especially MDMA is no longer perceived to be the norm. With many users commenting on the distilled and composite 'crap' that is now in ecstasy.

(StE) comments on the changing composition of ecstasy in the Sydney drug scene from the early 80's to present: "If people were being honest, depending on what is in their pill of course, in the early days the pills were a lot more pure: so the feelings were a lot more genuine, but as we went through the early nineties and started mixing the pills with a lot of stuff there was all sorts of, there was a potentiality of having something that made you forget. As the years went on the pills were slightly different in quality, and their side-effects I guess. I think that most people remember what went on".

Similarly, (SoC) remarks on a lack of purity: "It just shows you how much that ecstasy has changed. It is just a clear indication of the shit that they put in it now".

2.4.0 Composition of Pills

In this example, a consumer reflects upon the debates and concern within the drug scene as to the composition of pills. Some users prior, during and after the experience speculate/ and/ or make definitive pronouncements as to what is in differing pills. Some users would consult internet sites as Bluelight to ascertain the purity and contaminants in pills on the market. One dealer expressed his cynicism at these sites by explaining that dealers would write positive reviews for those pills which they were selling, literally using these sites as free advertising, to drum up hype for selling their product. In the example below skepticism is shown to the belief that there is heroin (smacky pills) and/ or, Meth (speedy pills which keep you awake) in ecstasy containing psychedelics.

(CM): "There is no heroin in pills. There is Meth and there is no LSD. Because I've had enough LSD to know, that is my drug these days and it has a very different effect. LSD is active in very small doses; it is active in 90-1000mics (micrograms) - that is nothing, so it's not worth it putting it in pills. Because a pill is very small, the amount

of money that they can sell that they make on heroin, it's a hundred bucks, and man – they are not going to sell a pill for thirty bucks, if it is heroin”.

2.5.0 The Normal Life World Compared to Ecstatic Life World

2.5.1 The Everyday World

(WW): “In the non-drug state ‘normality’ involves the ability to concentrate, maintain attention span and listen to others for extended periods of time. In a normal state you still have a perspective on the importance of things; where you are not as easily distracted by other things that are completely unimportant. In the normal state people keep things in, which are seen as not necessarily a bad thing: where they are able to select what they are able to say and choose who they say it to. It also entails being able to respond or ignore other people, if you wish to do so, whilst having the capacity and concentration span long enough to be able to offer and receive input in conversation. This occurs in a balanced way: being able to offer and receive in a conversation without having your brain freak out too much if it is concentrating too long on something. Some normality in the drug-state would also imply being able to do things and not get lost or too distracted. Because people get lost very easily on ecstasy as they walk around and don't know where they are, or distracted as they were meant to meet someone and they have been talking to a ‘random’ for half an hour. In the drug state and around people there is also a perceived ‘normality’: this is being able to maintain or take control of the situation if necessary. Hence, the most normal people within a group who are on drugs are the ones who can still tell other people within the group (that they) are fucked.”

(DiH) Was part of a minority of ravers in Melbourne who attended raves over a long period of time without using drugs for a change from the pub/ alcohol scene. He contrasts the drug scene with ‘normal life’ (2.5.0). “From day-to-day life where you have the reality of taxes, work and responsibilities as an adult, going to school, going to work, being a good member of society and not breaking any laws. Whereas on the weekends, or sometimes during the week if that was your thing, there is a place where you mingle with people who – yes – they on average probably about 70% plus, are on some sort of substance or other, are there to have a good time, who are on drugs, but happy, not sort of violent on drugs just, like my first five years in the scene I did not see one sort of fight or an argument at a rave”.

2.5.2 Normality on Ecstasy

(WW): In contrast, when you are having conversations at the latter parts of the peak/plateau, those conversations are 'dirtied' with physical distractions: legs tapping, hands grasping, eyes-rolling etc. or by others that are in similar states of movement or 'fuckdness' (1.21.0). Whilst gurning the conversation isn't normal either: as gurning isn't a normal way of behaving. Moreover, whilst on E you cannot usually respond as you normally would: either you are too distracted or your responses are too enhanced by the drug. Thus, users may awake the next day and say 'I didn't say that' or 'do that' that is not normal. And if I wasn't on drugs I would not have said those things".

(DiH): "The rave scene in Melbourne is different to ordinary life as there are people taking non-taxed drugs, having the time of their life and are full of bliss. And you can come away from using ecstasy and think to yourself 'why isn't everyday life like this?', 'Why aren't people just happy and nice to each other in the street and more interested in meeting other people'?"

2.6.0 Onset to Peaking

The onset of the ecstasy experience may be anywhere from 5-45 minutes (depending on administration, purity and users tolerance). The physical effects of ecstasy can be overpowering to the user at the onset of the experience. When preloading (1.4.1) some users would smoke marijuana or drink a few beers to ease into the onset. Hence, some users would be stoned, tipsy or tired, when waiting for the ecstasy to 'kick-in' on anywhere from half an hour to two hours. Usually, the onset is closer to 45 minutes where one's body will start feeling a little bit tingly, some muscle tensing and a smooth onset or 'rush' will begin. It is widely known that many of the pills imbibed in Australia are not pure MDMA (see Purity 2.2.2). Typically, with the onset of a pill - the 'come on' - there is an increase in the intensity of breathing and rapid increase in heartbeat and temperature. A number of users would feel nauseas, anxious and vomit (3.22.0 and 3.23.0). Some users seek to control and/or alleviate this state by sitting down (5.12.0) and not running around and by breathing with the pulsation of the heart so as to avoid freaking out. Here are some varying reports of this phase of the ecstasy experience.

(HB): presents a fairly typical self-report of the 'come on': "it is just like sitting down and trying to getting a relaxed like you were saying you take it and you sitting around waiting for it to come on; and you wait 30 maybe 40 minutes... sometimes it is heaps faster sometimes it only takes 20 minutes - it depends on what you have taken. But you start to feel like a float, or a tingle, you start to notice that something is changing, feeling it coming on and all of a sudden – the serotonin just dumps in top your brain or something, it just kicks in, and you just gradually climb and then plateau".

(CG): "It feels like someone has flicked a switch. Like if you have a high content of MDMA it may take like 30 minutes, in taking up pills and I reckon about 20-25 minutes, I will start to feel like a bit of an edge, a bit of a float and that is when I know to smoke a cigarette, and then, whilst I am smoking that cigarette, that's when it *bang* lifts me up, and I usually have to sit down, you lift up to a higher level. In the space of about a minute to 30 seconds you come up and you spend about 5 – 10 – 15 minutes just on this climb and then it plateaus out. I would always sit down at the wall across the road, and I would just be sitting there and I would feel it come on, and I would just be stretching and leaning back and my arms going 'orrh', arching all the way back and just stretching out, and it is just like a real nice feeling when it is coming up through you and you just, like, yeah, you just feel nice for a while".

However, the onset or come-on is not always immediately experienced with typical symptoms. (CP) would often miss the onset, subsequently realizing that he had been high for 10 minutes. On other occasions the come on would be really slow and gradual, where he would notice "that it is different now.... like you notice that it is different, but it has been different for a while".

2.7.0 Desensitization to Surroundings

In contrast the heightened sensitivity of psycho-bodily alterations, such as active touch, emotional elation and euphoria - some users also felt a de-sensitisation to their surroundings on ecstasy. (FrM) if "I was off my head and somebody came in and said "your mum has been in a car accident", I wouldn't really be able to get sad". This informant maintained that ecstasy acts as a barrier to the user's real emotions (5.7.0). He explained that through drug taking 'additional' emotions arise that are not

normally present when you are not on drugs “Like, I find that it is hard to have real emotions when you are on it”.

2.8.0 Opening up and Decreased Defensiveness on Ecstasy

A frequently identified effect of ecstasy is its ability to help users ‘open up’ and decrease in ego defensiveness (Saunders, 1997: 46; Metzner and Adamson, 2001: 184-185). These examples illustrate a number of typical experiences.

(EnD): “I feel so much more open to everybody and for me this has spread into my entire life. I learned to open up – as I have now experienced this kind of openness and now I can be into that all of the time, allowing me to ‘go with the flow’ and just meet things as they come. Like my first MDMA experience allowed me to meet them for who they are and connect with them on that level. And I will be interested in who you are, what you’re doing and why we are meeting. It’s great”.

(AdaM): “I was always against doing drugs, but when I started doing ecstasy no one judged me as a junkie or whatever, and through talking to people I found that they were going through what I was going through. I don’t know if it lowers your inhibitions, or if you want to go and do more, but the main thing ecstasy does is that it allows you to open up to other people. Not that I have been ashamed of opening up who I am, but when it comes to opening up to complete strangers, that can be hard”.

(ChA): “I guess it also breaks down being scared of what people will think of you. If you’re there trashed as well, you have something common already. And you are most likely going to be told off, or if you say whatever. And usually with pills and that, people end up just opening up to something”.

2.9.0 Peace/ Love/ Unity/ Respect or ‘P.L.U.R’

P.L.U.R. (peace, love, unity, respect) is seen by some as the overarching attitude of the rave scene. ‘Plurring’ is also seen as a highly enjoyable altered state of consciousness which has similarities to ‘connecting’ (5.5.0), ‘syncing’ (6.3.1/ 2), ‘love’ (6.5.0) and other unificatory experiences (6.6.0). One clubber remarked “when you just sit there Plurring for ages. It’s the best”. Another user (CG) would regularly joke that another ‘R’ should be added onto PLURR – to include ‘responsibility’. At present, (MM) believes the PLUR had largely left the rave scene. “Peace Love Unity

and Respect, which is this early 80's ethos that we are all one, and we are all happy. I reckon it died out around, maybe in the last few years Plurring is now really shunned and looked down upon".

2.10.0 Moods and Emotions on Ecstasy

Ecstasy users often speak of the emotional and sensual aspects of the experience - entailing a whole range of various feelings. Within the state many users undergo and explore an 'amplification' of certain emotions which 'come out more', although these affects are seen as controllable by some. Seen in this light, ecstasy may stimulate emotional compulsions which bring forth certain accentuated moods, entailing a broad range of experiences. Many users actively pursue the positive euphoric states the drug induces: (MM) "the happiness on ecstasy is always much more than the sadness that I feel the next day, in that, the come-up is always much more amazing than the negative feelings that arise the next day. The come up may be a plus ten, whereas the next day is a minus three". However, the more he took ecstasy, the less he experienced the emotional negativity associated with coming down. In comparison to other informants, he felt no major changes in the height of the peak with repeated use³⁴.

2.11.0 Crying on Ecstasy

I observed a number of female users crying on ecstasy during the peak-plateau. One of them was comforted by her male partner on a couch and the other sat by herself on the dance floor. (WW) recalled crying when she was sad and going through a bad time. "It's the onetime that it [ecstasy] has made me cry, really frightening; I was like 'oohhh', that's why I hadn't done it for so long. That is the only time that I have actually physically cried. Like I felt sad before but, it's that weird sadness when you know there is nothing to be sad about, but you just feel down. That's what was different about the last time, that I actually had something to be sad about; although I have known people who have had constant bad comedowns - to a place where they would cry quite often. Um, it would be more so, girls than guys, but guys definitely have emotional comedowns".

2.12.0 Massaging

³⁴ Unlike most of the users interviewed in this ethnography he did not report 'Losing the magic' (8.9.0).

Along with the intensification of libidinal-bodily sensuality, massaging can be a highly pleasurable activity in the ecstatic experience (Metzner and Adamson, 2001: 201-202). The stroking of ears, back of neck, back of head, and rubbing of the back and shoulders was very popular. Others would hold hands, rub forearms and thighs. Some clubbers used massaging tools, such as the 'orgasmatron' an 8-pronged metallic massage tool that would clasp around the head to stimulate the skull region.

(WW) "You use your hands to massage the back of your head, or you go from the top of your head with your fingers, the top of the head from the skull to the neck, where you hold out your arm and your forearm, just sort of pitter-patter your fingers along your fore-arm or just rubbing the ears. A number of users report getting a sore lower back muscles the next day and there is an association for some users with this pain being caused by the draining of the spinal fluid (3.24.0). Experiencing acute back pains (WW) attributed this soreness to extensive dancing and being tense everywhere afterwards.

(DiH) Pioneered an augmentation of hand to skin massaging by utilising massage gloves with vibrating tips; he would walk up to people during the night – guy or girl – and go 'massage?'. "Many people would say 'keep going, keep going' and *bang!* You have made a friend instantly. Similarly, if you are massaging the right girl at the right time: *bang!* You have picked up" (laughs).

2.13.0 Being off your Head/ Chops/ Face/ Dial

The state of being on ecstasy was referred to by most users as being: 'off chops', 'off their head', 'off their face' or 'off their dial'. For example "it was shocking seeing 'P', facing a Turkey, and making clucky noises chasing a Turkey around a paddock 'off her head'. But 'P' did take it a little bit far" (RoB).

2.14.0 Religious and Metaphysical Experiences

A wide variety of religious and metaphysical experiences have been reported on ecstasy (Adamson, 1985; Holland, 2001: 182-208, 358-369; Saunders, 1997: 182-192, 255, 279; Saunders et. al. 2000). There is also evidence that ecstasy has been used as an adjunct to spiritual practices, such as yoga and meditation (Eisner, 1994: xli; Saunders, 1997: 182-194).

(CM) heard of a Benedictine monk who would use ecstasy to commune with God³⁵. He explained further, that although an agnostic, he would use the term 'God' to describe his experience on drugs. Nonetheless, even though God was an accurate term for describing these experiences he felt that there was probably a personal or chemical explanation for these ecstatic states. He surmised that the ecstatic experience epitomised the human desire for transcendence.

(DrP) "On ecstasy you may hug and kiss, but usually its more hugging and telling the people around them how you feel about them. You may incessantly talk nonsense, but it is an expression of love for friendships that allows you to get closer to people spiritually. Coming from a religious family 'my brother is a minister', but I am not religious; 'but if I could ever be close to God, this is the way I would describe it'". The experience was so amazing that he felt that he had to repeat it, with a caveat that it wasn't good in large doses.

Taking ecstasy in a social environment (SoM) repeatedly experienced 'unificatory' (Merkur, 1998: 91-163) experiences: "I have had spiritual experiences on ecstasy, like I have felt completely one with people... when I am taking ecstasy around other people I feel like a sense of unity. This unity is something intangible, a sense that you all are connected to all of these people without having to know or say their name. You will look at them and you will know that you are both experiencing the same thing, and you give yourself away to the music as one and you look around you and you see all these other people that you feel some connection with".

2.14.1 Non-Spiritual

Some informants did not view their ecstasy in spiritual/ religious terms after long-term and repeated use "I'm not very religious - so there wasn't any kind of God involved. I never sensed being in touch with God" (StM). When I asked another informant if he had experienced or heard of spiritual states on ecstasy he replied "Nah, not in the eastern suburbs mate"³⁶ (laughs)... it wasn't happening around people I knew"... I'm sure it freed up a lot of thinking, a lot of stuff for a lot of thinking" (StE). (HG) saw his ecstasy use as 'messing with the chemicals in the

³⁵ Compare with an interview with MDMA and Spirituality (Holland, 2001: 358).

³⁶ The Eastern Suburbs is an affluent part of Sydney.

brain', which produces enjoyable effects, but "it would never put you in touch with some sort of higher being". He could sympathise with people who underwent such experiences, for ecstasy does "at least for a little while, give you a different take on reality... But I didn't walk around and find Jesus under the couch or something".

2.14.2 Other Drugs are More Spiritual and/or Philosophical

Some users found that other substances, e.g. DMT, LSD, psychotropic mushrooms, hashish and ayahuasca were more conducive to spiritual/ metaphysical experiences. Reflecting on the spiritual dimension of drug taking (DiH) suggested that people have more religious experiences on substances other than ecstasy: "I would say acid and mushrooms, more your psychedelic sort of drug. They have a way of bringing you closer with nature and sort of moulds your perception and understanding of reality, like I have had times where I have taken mushrooms, and I have just had massive conversations with myself in my head, like why are things the way they are and why are we here, and do we have a purpose in life? You really ask those sorts of philosophical questions".

2.15.0 Sexuality and Ecstasy

Here I present the ethnographic reports which reveal the changing nature of sexuality through the use of the drug. In this section I have also included an abbreviation for each informant's sex: M/ F. I should say that the majority of reports are from male informants. Again in terms of the material these were the best self-accounts. I have many self-reports, but not all of them were as informative as I would like them to be. As such I have included an additional appendix (5) which may be consulted for additional accounts.

2.15.1 Private Sexuality

(CM - M) "Sexuality is a big taboo in the ecstasy scene and these taboos continue to restrain the ecstasy experience. People on ecstasy may be feeling very sensual, but overt sexuality is still very taboo in public places... I don't bond with very many guys in the scene; most of my friends are female. I occasionally get a bunch of pills with my girlfriend and we will sit at home naked in bed, doonas on, and the lights turned off. The music is on and we will sit there and eat pills and enjoy each other's bodies,

it's a perfectly reasonable thing to do; I think that is part of the motivation and effects of talking ecstasy to express these desires that are in all of us".

2.15.2 Platonic Ecstasy Experiences

(DiH - M) "I have had both sorts of experiences (sexual and platonic) whilst I was on ecstasy. Generally I found that while I am at the peak or the major part of the experience, I just want to be friends with people, I want to converse with people, I want to be close to people with a bit of physical contact; I want to see smiles and I want to see other people having a good time as well. So when I am on the peak I just want to feel like that I am part of something new, part of something fun".

2.15.3 Sexual Ecstasy Experiences

(DiH - M) "And as the night sort of progresses and the peak wears off and you sort of start to comedown, I find that is the part of the night where you will find people will generally becoming a lot more horny and flirtatious... and yeah... wanting to get to the business end of the night. So generally on the comedown is when I want to have sex... I have had my fair share of friendly pashas on E. I guess it is like most drugs in that it does lower your inhibitions and you do things that you wouldn't do, or wouldn't feel confident enough to do while sober. Yeah, I have pashed and played with my friends before and we have had good times and we have picked up many times at a club many times even when I wasn't looking to pick up. Because it just happens you know. I suppose that is part of the fun as well".

(ChA - M) "You meet someone randomly, a nice girl and we were making out within 30 seconds to a minute. It was weird because I didn't know this person and barely got her name. That was definitely the drugs, because I wouldn't have done that normally".

(DrP - M) "What I saw some guys do while on ecstasy was outrageous with dancing with woman and men, being really forward going and latching on and grabbing them. I saw people do that, and it works sometimes, whether or not they had something going on, through eye contact or whatever, I was always much shyer and did my own thing. But just internally, I was having a fantastic time anyways. It didn't matter to me. It just didn't matter -- alcohol would get me down and you were disappointed, and you think you've missed out; ecstasy was just a totally different experience. It was a

spiritual thing, that didn't necessarily involve going home with someone... The thing that I liked about ecstasy is that it didn't change my basic personality, so there were certain things that I wouldn't do when I was sober and I didn't do them when I was on ecstasy either".

(StE - M) "Something that did emerge was kissing men on the cheek, hugging or kissing them when they are on ecstasy. This became more in tune with my emotions and if I really liked the guy and the mates then I would. We still do that and that came from the ecstasy culture, I certainly believe that. And we got into the habit of including male or female, giving each other a kiss on the cheek, which I would never have done. You don't do that and hug. You would never kiss one of your mates on the cheek. But we would plant one on the cheek, we would hug them and we would kiss them and that is something that stayed with me, I think that was established through ecstasy culture through that sense that: WOW! Your fantastic and come and give us a hug and a kiss. So that is interesting I think".

(MoJ - M): "My experience with ecstasy and sex has been incredibly varied. There have been times where I have not wanted sex, physical contact or even thought about it in anyway. At other times that is all I could think about: it was just what I had to do. *I have certainly experienced the shrunken member, that's for sure. All men have experienced that on ecstasy.* I have also seen females having problems. My ex-girlfriend (of 18 months) had real problems having straight sex, she didn't enjoy straight sex and she only wanted to have sex on drugs. So our sex life during normal times was relatively non-existent. It took the party and the drugs to get her into it, but then subsequently she had a lot of trouble orgasming, a lot of trouble achieving orgasm due to the lack of sensitivity. She was only interested in having an orgasm and was only really able to achieve that, um, due to a lack of trying on my part, hours and hours doing whatever I could to try. But it was like she could not release, she could not let go of herself enough to be able to experience that. And one of the reasons that we had such a bad sex life is that we never had straight sex and we never developed that level of intimacy. For me, I have had other sex experiences on ecstasy that have just been *divine*, like everything – 8 hour full-on session. With everything from massages - to whatever; in particular I get very sensitive, I am *incredibly sensitive* when I am on ecstasy; I get the whole rush of serotonin coming down. That was

probably my most negative experience with drugs and sex was with my ex-girlfriend. I am often hesitant to explore my sexuality on ecstasy because I am afraid of not being able to perform or not being able to make that connection or sometimes I feel that I could not have the abilities to satisfy the other person; and I guess that is a little bit of paranoia creeping in. Overall, I would say at the moment ecstasy has had a hindrance on my sexual life and since I have started my sexual life partially due to my experience with my ex-girlfriend, I have yet to actually come back from that”.

(LiM - M): “There is an actual condition for the sexual fetish about touching people’s skin. It is just an extension of normal behaviour. I’m not a big skin ‘toucher’. I like kissing my girlfriend on ecstasy a lot and having sex with her. I like marijuana as an aphrodisiac or as an enhancement of sexual encounters as well. Ecstasy for me it makes me more sexually heightened, but at the same time, it makes my genitalia tired. It is interesting... I feel like whilst on ecstasy that I keep on having fantasies of something - explicit and very clear, but at the same time you *don’t want to have sex*. You don’t want to – it feels like too much work, you just want to enjoy the psychedelicalness of the lights and this and that. Some nights I am on ecstasy and I will be more sexually heightened and shit, because I don’t have a girlfriend with me at the time”.

(MM - M): “I can come on pills with a lot of concentration. I have read reports about people taking acid, pills and Viagra at the same time (*candy flipping/ sextasy*) and they reckon it is the most mind blowing experience. I have had pills and Viagra at the same time (*sextasy*) and it doesn’t make it easier to cum (i.e. ejaculate), but it does make it easier to get it up. Man, it can be very difficult getting him to rise to the occasion. I have made an association that sex on pills is really fun; but it is really different because sex normally for me is always working towards a climax and the climax is kind of the goal, and when you have that climax it is kind of finished. Whereas on pills because contact feels so good it is the actual act of sex that I want to prolong, I didn’t really need to cum”.

(FrN - M): “Yeah you think about sex heaps on ecstasy, but you never fire up... I don’t feel that same kind of sexual attraction on ecstasy as I do on alcohol. When I’m coming down after that first peak I sometimes get quite aroused like I will often go

home and pillage my girlfriend for three or four hours. Like, we have this thing called “achieving the impossible”, which as you can imagine, is where you go home and belt yourself senseless until you cum - and literally it takes well over an hour to get there. But I don’t find that horniness happening whilst on the pill. I have an appreciation of the gorgeous girls walking around a nightclub, but it is like that disconnect – it is like your brain isn’t connected to your penis anymore. Because normally you would feel that insane urge to go very there and just you know be physical with them. It’s not that intense. But when I go home - I am so horny”.

(StM - F): *“I have heard of guys talking to their penis on ecstasy. One of my friends, he is a – the person whose house it was had small brothers and sisters and so they had toys in the bathroom. And he was trying to take a leak and it wouldn’t come out, and he looks up and hallucinates this little toy in the window winking at him going “you-can-do-it”. We used to have sex when we were coming down, for hours and hours on end. Like five or six hours, you wouldn’t think it would be possible, because that is a long time to be having intercourse. There is shrinkage, so his dick does get soft: so penetration is difficult sometimes. But it is not really a question of getting it up, because neither of you can really cum when you are in that state anyway. Ok, for me as the one being penetrated, you can’t cum, but you are really sensitive still, so and even though he wasn’t that hard, everything feels good; maybe in the same way that dancing feels good. I think you are all over the place. Like this is going to sound really disgusting: but you know you are coming down, but you are still on it and your jaw is grinding and sometimes your tongue is hanging out. It is not that sexy when you think about it. I remember that usually we would stop because someone had fallen asleep or something. But that wouldn’t be late until the next morning or something, and then you just sleep for the rest of the day”.*

2.16.0 The Comedown

The emergent period following the peak-plateau is usually referred to as the comedown (adj. coming-down). This occurs after the primary effects of ecstasy wears off. Many users describe this as a state of fatigue and the beginning of being scattered. Most users said that the more ecstasy that you have taken the worse the comedown will be and the longer it will last. Some people seek to avoid the adverse effects of comedowns by pre/ post-loading (1.4.4 and 8.7.3). Generally, the phase of the

comedown begins with the post-plateau and lasts until the user drifts into sleep (which may then be followed by the afterglow 4.12.0 or *serotonin dips*). One informant describes the comedown as like being 'hung-over', but worse, where the drugs are wearing you out slowly and gradually fading out of your body. In this state many users have lost muscle tone, and water loss from sweating and dehydration from the night before.

Comedowns are interpreted in both positive and negative terms. An example (SaN) of a good comedown is being relaxed and being able to eventually go to sleep. Although hung over you can still go out and do whatever you feel. Conversely, a 'bad' comedown is when you feel dirty, stuffed and trashy and you can't do anything or go anywhere.

In the course of his ecstasy use (HG) was taught by a lesbian friend to learn to enjoy, rather than dread, the comedown. He explains that in the comedown you are still in a mentally altered state, but because a lot of people experience a sharp contrast to being in the peak, a lot of people don't enjoy it. Gradually you learn to separate the two phases - so that you can enjoy the comedown and the peak. He did not feel the need or use any antidotes or supplements in when coming down. His friends would get 'shit-faced drunk' or have a Bloody-Mary to help them to sleep. Most of his friends said they hated the comedown and would smoke marijuana to mellow out until they eventually would pass out. (WW) suggested people comedown in a variety ways "people will just smash sleeping pills they will have pot, they will have anything, but my close friends when they know that we will not sleep, we try and drink until we get tired. It seems the most sensible I guess... and safe" (laughs).

(FrM): Recalls coming down with his girlfriend who was asleep next to him and having numerous imaginary conversations that he believed to have taken place during the night. On another night he recalled constantly hearing the songs that had been playing during the evening whilst he was coming down. He was walking after a rave, in a singlet and shorts with three other girls through Town Hall in Sydney's CBD "we were *charging* like there was no tomorrow". It was their first time on ecstasy, and he recalls it being around midday and his head being really scrambled: "like I could hear

the music, but I couldn't get to sleep that night". He could constantly hear the songs and that was the first time that he had experienced hearing the music afterwards.

(WW): "I feel like I have no minerals or vitamins or anything in my body whatsoever. And that is especially bad for me because I live a pretty healthy lifestyle aside from when I go out. Um, yeah, like I do a lot of exercise and eat, like it's a thing in my family it's all regimented, but a thing that happens all the time, it's quite active. So the day after, I sort of feel like I have nothing in my system, I feel like I weigh 4 kilo less; I probably do weigh four kilos less than the day before. Um, my face hurts, around here [cheeks and jaw], although that eases off the more that you do it. But I hadn't done it for ages and the last time I did it I hadn't done it for a long time – and my face was aching. And it just made me, it almost made me angry, I was like "why did I do that to myself again, that's why I stopped doing it for a while". My jaw hurts! And then feeling sad – for no reason really, cause like I said I was with that guy for a really, really long-time, and then that ended and then it just so happened that we did drugs for the first time in ages, and then the day after – *shot-to-shit* (i.e. devastated). Something that would have normally saddened you, in a normal way and you would have been a bit down, just like it would make me kind of "*oohhh I'veee neveeer been soo saaaaad inn myy liiife, God*"; yeah, it wasn't good. But when you feel like you can cry for no reason and it almost aggravates me because I know that I'm crying for no reason. When you know it's your fault and you did it to yourself, you know it is happening, but you still do it".

(StM): Describes leaving a rave and coming down and returning home. "We were coming back in the morning, and we were catching the train back and one of my friends was still 'beaming' (eyes-wide-open), he was just mashing his teeth and staring at everyone with these wide open eyes and because we were still coming down as well, we were feeling really, really paranoid because obviously we were probably the only ones in that carriage that were on ecstasy, so we had to sit them down and try and keep them still, it was really tough and really scary. And we were like 'oh my god! Someone is going to tell the guard or call the cops or something'".

(MrB): "The comedown seems like an intrusion of cares and things... things that come into mind, that are an issue. In coming down off ecstasy the mind starts

becoming aware of uncomfortable things, things that are going to happen... that are no longer situated in the here and now and everything starts coming out. It is a change in a focus. I don't know if time actually changes, or whether the things that I am thinking about... start to be detached from what is in front of me. It is hard to say from ecstasy, because there is a peak and then there is a scatter and then you go back to normal. It is not like it just fades away; and the scatter is pretty unique experience in itself so. There is a draining feeling at the onset of the comedown where it feels like something has just dropped; this drop usually happens after the peak - gradually intensifying within the comedown; but it doesn't usually make me think 'oh shit! I am coming-down... I better do something about it'. It is a good feeling in itself and it just makes me sort of ah, try and engross myself in whatever I am doing right now and to bring out the best feeling that I can, while the comedown is waning and that can sometimes just mean doing nothing really".

(MM): "I find that the second that the plateau wears off, I think about coming down which is generally about two hours after the peak, it can be as long as four hours, I realize "wait a minute! I am not as high as I was". The rest of the night I am like "holy shit, I am high and I am only going to get higher". And then I freak out a bit in a good way, and I am going to get higher than I already am. And I keep on getting higher and higher until it reaches a blissful plateau where I realize, I don't think I can get any higher than I already am. But then in a second I feel as high as I was a minute ago. That is when the head-fuck kicks in. Then if I am not as high as I was a minute ago then in ten minutes I am going to be ten times less high than I am now, then in four hours I am going to feel that comedown and I do not feel as high as I was, I start looking six hours in the future and I had better remedy this situation pretty quick because otherwise, I am going to be very sober very quickly".

(MoJ): "So you have gotten to a stage where enough is enough, you have been on a drug all night, and things are starting to get a bit shit and it is kind to just get out of my own head you know, so... [it is shit] when there is a lack of conversation, that is the first indication that things are going bad... and that the end is nigh: both with other people and in my own internal monologue. I have a fairly sustained inner monologue at the best of times, and even at the worst of times it keeps me going when I am by myself, but certainly when there is the long silent pauses in your own head

and in conversation, for me that is a wind-down and it is time to remove myself from the situation... During the comedown that is where all of the shit starts stirring again. And, for me if there is any possibility of getting more drugs at that stage to get back to where I was (peaking), that is what I want to do and that makes the whole experience even worse, um cause you know you can experience all of that again, but you can't have it anymore. I guess that is that real kind of addict approach where you feel like you will need it to continue and you can't get it and you won't be able to get it - so everything is fucked - so to speak... I'm going to be a little bit arrogant here and say that I am not really affected by the comedown. I seem to be able to manage it pretty well. I have never really got to that curl up in a ball type stage. For me there seems to be, I seem to have the ability that I can tell myself that it is OK that I have taken a drug and this is just an effect of the drug and it will soon pass, as it has done every other time; also, coupled in with doing other things - like smoking pot or making it a pleasant experience as possible. For me, I like to enjoy my comedown, I find that it can often be a quiet and reflective time and I never really have any severe and negative effects from it. Other than my normal mind coming into play and reminding me of all of the things that you need to do and not wanting to do them. Like I have got to make that phone call but I can't today, I am just coming down, I just want to chill".

(LiM) found the majority of his comedowns enjoyable. He would come home at the highest point before the comedown takes full effect and play music and drums. He particularly enjoys the heightened connection that he feels with his girlfriend when coming down. "I actually enjoy a lot of my comedowns, I usually come home and, eh, listening to music as much as playing drums, the highest of the period why I am on ecstasy or on acid or something. Because I enjoy the sleep part of it, in terms of the love connection, this is especially with my girlfriend I get a – a sense of connection above just the normalcy of day-to-day things sometimes. There is more of a connection, there is something there: otherwise I wouldn't take drugs when I go out. And I enjoy talking to these people too, but at the same time it is very superficial for me to last for me, those 2 or 1 hours for, and I just go, 'that was a good night'. I don't think it is going to change my life or, you know this is going to bring oneness to the world or things like this".

Section 3. Altered Bodies and Minds

3.1.0 *Internal Monologue – the ‘Little Voice’*

(RoB) “I feel that there is a point where when you’re on drugs, that you still know that you are on drugs and that what you’re doing and saying are a direct result of being on drugs. If you lose that sense you may start to become scarred (e.g. start ‘freaking out’ 1.22.0) and it becomes difficult to foresee becoming normal again”. Accompanying the loss of the internal monologue one user felt an increased capacity for honesty (1.14.0): “like the voice in the head that you talk to yourself with, you lose a lot of that, so you say things that you may not often want to, that you would normally be too shy or reserved to say to people, or in public. It is more outspoken in a way. But, I don’t I don’t think that that is necessarily any more false, or honest, about a person; it is just more blunt - less tactful” (RoB).

3.2.0 *Spatial Changes - Ego Boundaries*

Reports of egoic dissolution (Saunders, 1997: 46-47), in this case spatial barriers, are commonly experienced on ecstasy. In this state various active bodily touching becomes highly pleasurable: cuddling, touching, stoking, massaging, and ‘puppy piles’ (ravers lying all over each other).

(MoJ) “I believe that all kinds of physical barriers dissipate. I have certainly had that with all of my male friends where it comes to point where you are all on ecstasy, and you go ‘mate, I love you’. And you would hug and you don’t care about sitting to someone close and you can touch legs and put your hand on your friend’s leg. It doesn’t matter - it is not gay or anything. And there is that freedom I guess - the utopia or whatever”.

Some users experience negative spatial effects from ecstasy. (HG) “It is a different thing for different people. A girl I was talking to went out and took pills on Saturday night and she went into a club and she couldn’t stand the claustrophobia, she didn’t enjoy the confined space. She said to me that, she liked taking pills at festivals or something like that, where there is a lot of open space”.

3.3.0 *Synchronising Use*

(HG) would carefully synchronise his ecstasy use along with his friends: “We drop it together and try and experience it as a group so that we are going through the same

stages, like the come up, of the MDMA experience together. We all took the same pills from the same dealer and it worked really accurately. There was a slight difference in how it affected some people faster or slower than others. So the peak and the comedown might be slightly different, but we were all going through the same effect the drug had together”.

3.4.0 *Changes in Temporal Experience*

(MoJ): “I have had some incredible experiences with time on drugs. For me when I am on drugs it seems like that is just an endless corridor of time, between then and then, that sometimes I can feel like years are going by and sometimes it can just go (clicks fingers) - like that. And I often find that I sort of lose time, when I am not paying attention to it, so those four hours can slip past because I wasn’t really paying any attention to what I was doing in that time. But at the other end of the spectrum if I am really focused on playing a song or something, that five minutes can feel like five hours. And the gamut of emotions that I feel throughout that time is just incredible. Everything from – every conceivable thought seems to come into play. But again, it is only when I am focused on the time that, that it seems to go slower, any other time it seems to slip past”.

(WW) “A lot of time passes when you are touching and talking complete shit on ecstasy: this is useless crap, well not useless, but something that you would never normally think twice about. You may pick something off the floor and it looks like this – or it doesn’t look like this. Or you may start hallucinating from taking too much. Everything becomes more interesting and has so much more potential. Like every part of your body becomes more interesting and has the potential to add to your evening. If I am in that state it is because the pill has hit me intensely and my mind will go into a place where you just have to let it go. And it’s hard to get your brain back into the usual dance phase of the evening. Later in the evening you may look at your watch and go ‘shit, shit, *shit!* What the hell happened to the entire evening?’ This may be at 2 am to going on a complete bender for the whole weekend”.

3.4.1 *Existing in the World-Mood of Nowness*

(AdaM): “I wouldn’t look at my watch if I tried to, it would hardly make sense of what I am trying to tell them, or if I did I had forgotten what time it was, a second

later anyway. I guess it wasn't so much that things seemed faster or slower more that it didn't really matter, about the future. There was no thought about tomorrow I have to go to work, and I have this, and I have this. And you think about all the normal day-to-day worries that you have. I was basically enjoying myself at the time, for what was happening there, it was as if there was no tomorrow, y'know. Obviously at various stages of the night, when you're not as tired or whatever, you know you might stop to think about, I have got to get home soon or whatever. But um, I can see what you are saying about the sense of *Now* – it was as if nothing else mattered, that was it”.

(PenT): “I think that ‘Now’ is also connected to being mainly in the evening, like overnight, as opposed to during the day, because you get the sort of feeling of, when you are in the one place and all these people are on the same sort of level doing the same sort of thing, you all sort of get connected and being in that one place makes you feel comfortable... You are not focusing on anything in the past or anything in the future because everything right now is *perfect*, you don't need to go anywhere you don't need to do anything, you can just live right now cause there is nothing else to do, like you don't have to have a worry about having to go to work tomorrow cause, there is nothing planned, you don't have to worry about where you are getting money from because you have already got it, and that sort of thing, you just live in that moment...”

(PP): “I guess the main thing that I can think of is a really heightened sense of hearing and awareness and visual sort of stuff. But it was like I could hear a lot more and be really focused on it, but at the same time I couldn't I would focus on it at the time, but I couldn't think about it for too long, my concentration wasn't like, I would be like: “Oh! There is somebody over there”. But when I saw somebody over there or just say a flash of light I really saw it, like it was really intense, but I couldn't think about that, that was the moment and then, the next moment came along. But I didn't really get, like the most important thing is to me and having my friends around and like people I could talk to when it first starts coming on, then there is cigarettes, chewing gum and water, they're are like the most important things ever.”

3.5.0 Child-Like Wonder

(AmA): “When you were saying you look at the world with a child-like wonder, well it’s very similar to what people do any way when they look at the world through angry eyes, their perception of everything changes.... You can see that the sky was overcast and not that it was about to get sunny and that sort of thing, so seeing what a sense of wonder is probably just another emotion and we are not used to using them”.

(RoB): “I think that fits into the child-like wonder, it’s just the way people are perceiving things at the time, that’s the way the environment, after you look through the filters, after you look through the looking glass, what is there, what you perceive through there, may not be *what is really there*, you can build it into a magic moment or you can build it into any – you build it into all kinds of things...So I think that’s just the way people are, um, articulating – either way they articulate or perceive that experience is individual and ever-changing depending on the what is going on around them or whether they are expressing that before they get into it”.

3.6.0 Aesthetic Modes

Merkur (1998: 14) designates two primary modes of aesthetic experience in non-ordinary states of consciousness. In the first, drug users experience the aesthetic in a passive way, watching and attending, rather than directing attention to the phenomena. The following two examples correspond to the second typology which, in addition to the passive experience, includes a more actively focused self-conscious attitude in the aesthetic experience.

(DP): “I can remember in 93-94 at a party called ‘hand-in-hand’ at the Hordern Pavillion and I was introduced to a girl, I don’t remember her name. I remember I must have been peaking and we were dancing and chatting, nothing more, just dancing and chatting, and we agreed to meet for coffee the next day. I remember going she is really cool, and I really like her, she is absolutely gorgeous and I remember when I was talking to her that she was just gorgeous. And the next day when I met her she was nothing like, *nothing like*, what I thought she looked like, not even close. In appearance, and I remember thinking “oh my God, those drugs have just totally changed my optical capabilities because that is not who I was picturing that I was going to meet this morning, so I will never forget that. Like I had a picture of her and the person sitting there were just too different – it was chalk and cheese.

Put it this way she wasn't attractive to me at all in the morning. Whereas the night before I was thinking she is just the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen. I was totally and completely fucked up on ecstasy".

(PP): "I guess the main thing that I can think of is a really heightened sense of hearing and awareness and visual sort of stuff. But it was like I could hear a lot more and be really focused on it, but at the same time I couldn't; I would focus on it at the time, but I couldn't think about it for too long, my concentration wasn't like, I would be like: 'Oh! There is somebody over there'. But when I saw somebody over there or just say a flash of light I really saw it, like it was really intense, but I couldn't think about that, that was the moment and then, the next moment came along. But I didn't really get, like the most important thing is to me and having my friends around and like people I could talk to when it first starts coming on, then there is cigarettes chewing gum and water, they are like the most important thing ever".

In these reports the user is conscious of the pseudo-hallucinatory nature of the aesthetic apperception, which has arisen from an intrapsychic drug-induced state (Merkur, 1998: 15). In recalling these experiences the user (DP) is conscious that the changes in apperception have resulted from a rational encounter with an immediately beheld objective reality. Moreover, there is a conviction of the truths gleaned from this state, as reality testing was still largely intact, and thus the revelatory and concrete pseudo-hallucinatory nature of these experiences was clear upon reflection. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis I am arguing that the intrapsychic states that arise from drug use are varieties of the imagination taken in the broadest sense. The aesthetic reports above are example of the user's imagination augmenting what sense perception takes as given in the empirical world. Although there is a break with empirical reality these experiences modify and then readapt the user back into empirical reality testing.

3.7.0. Heart rate - Blood Flow Increase

(SaN): "Ecstasy definitely increases your heart rate and makes your blood flow around a lot quicker. Excessive drug use or any drug use can cause irregular heart-beat, which is really bad".

(WW): “I feel my heart beating quite fast, so breathing in is trying to control that which doesn’t really work, because it just keeps going. If I didn’t try and control this beating I would feel a bit sick as well, a bit overwhelmed”

3.8.0. Changes in Body Image

(LiM): “The effect of acid working for me on the body is when your hands and muscles feel like they are expanding or increasing sometimes: and you have to stretch. On MDMA and pills I will also feel my body expanding a bit, the joints are getting a bit bigger - enlarged, flexible and stretching. You have to actually stretch. And your body fluids feel like it is increasing – your body feels like it is getting bigger – and for me that also happens when your mind expands at the same time. That’s when the drugs are working when your body is changing. It is interesting that your mind changes with the body”.

3.9.0. Walking - Locomotive Changes

(FrN) “When people walk they walk with a certain gait, and this is the way I can tell if somebody is on it. Because people walk with this, it’s an efficient gait, the way that they stride, but sometimes I notice that when people take pills they know that one leg goes after the other, but they forget how to do it. And that is always a funny one, I have seen so many of my friends walking around, they don’t bend their knee, they just have this straight leg. And you can see this confusion on their face. And I find this funny. This is early on – later when they – people have that elevated rate of movement they just look like they are ice skating they are moving so fast, their arms are moving around. But this is generally early on, but before that. Because I don’t get that same euphoric feeling that I used to get” (‘losing the magic’ 8.9.0).

3.10.0. Defecation and Urination

Changes in defecation and urinary habits are common for most ecstasy users. These reports detail the changes in these physiological processes.

3.10.1 Defecation

(LiM): “Sometimes when you take a pill you have to go to the bathroom urinating, even defecating - doing a shit. You can’t stop it for who knows why, depending on what is in the pill and what you ate that night, how you feel, if you have had a bad day, if you have got an upset stomach – who knows!”

(DiH) “I always get *pill crap* usually when I am coming up as the pill is kicking in. I have an overwhelming sense to go to the toilet and have a shit. And I find that when I am on the toilet, and letting it rip, I can feel myself going side-to-side and getting smiling and happy, and getting a bit hotter, and you start feeling really good. I’m not sure about the urination part of it, but I find that when I am coming up I get a sensation that I need to defecate, in my stomach I used to feel like I had a poison in there, I am not really sure and I have not really read that much about it”.

(CG): “Oh man! I have got to be at the club like 11 o’clock so, have a shower at nine, leave nine-thirty, and at around 8 o’clock and the pill kicks in and *bamb!* And I’m like you have gotta hold this off for an hour, because your body just knows and it cleans it, if you *don’t*, *I swear to God*; if you don’t take a crap before you go to the club basically you rock up to the club, it can be very bad, it can ruin your night, it can be on your mind, I have seen people shit themselves - I have seen it”.

3.9.2 Urination

The retention of urine during the primary ecstatic experience is usually followed by regular and heavy urination when coming down (Bryden, et al., 1995)

(MoJ) “I tend to piss every twenty minutes to half an hour, certainly when I am coming down. And it seems like that I am forever pissing, which is really annoying. I guess this is my body cleansing – so to speak - and the kidneys finally working again. For me there is definitely a point where things sort of clam up, I guess you could say and I don’t go to the bathroom for a couple of hours, and there is a noticeable colour difference after that time. Before that sort of break in going to the bathroom, the colour could be pretty much normal if not a little lighter, the colour of urination could be a bit lighter. But after that period of not going to the bathroom it is always a lot darker, a lot stinkier. But I try to maintain hydration as best as possible”.

(LiM): “When going to the toilet, my mate and I will be like ‘I have *broken the seal*’: which means it is going to be a night where I am going to keep going back forth to the bathroom urinating. So that’s what I mean when your body and mind are at one with ecstasy - although it is sometimes a bit hit-and-miss”.

3.10.0 *Jaw Clenching (Bruxism)*

Bruxism is the medical term for jaw clenching which tends to manifest with gurning (see 1.18.0). Here I wish to foreground the more acute aspects of this involuntary oral behaviour as reported by some users. One user tried to eliminate the frequent jaw clenching by springing his jaw out and keeping the teeth and jaw slightly open: “When the teeth are not touching, clenching can be avoided; although by protruding the jaw too much you may end up with your tongue between your teeth” (SoC). These facial contortions action may appear strange to other users and the gurner may get told to stop (control themselves). For others this was seen as unavoidable and was seen as a normal outcome of taking ecstasy. Jaw clenching can be fun: “I start playing with the tongue ring at that point’ (AmA). However, the implications of gurning and grinding are well known - ‘lots of people get dental damage (SoC)’. The following presents a more elaborate account (FrM).

“I learned how to stop myself chewing and I actually like to show other people how to do it. If you are chewing too much just breathe out as long as you can. Like not to the point that you are coughing, but just take a deep breath and breathe out. You can get people to stop who are just absolutely wrecking their teeth. And they wake up the next morning, and I just say breath out for as long as you can. And that always stops me chewing for two minutes or so. Like, I went to Field-day on the weekend and I didn’t chew once. And all of my friends were “Ow - my jaw! And I had 7 pills over the course of the day and I didn’t chew, because I had gone out the night before. As I was saying, my body doesn’t respond anywhere near as well the second night when my body is already physically drained.... I have felt little things come off my teeth from time-to-time. It is the first time that I feel that I have peaked like that euphoric, that time the next day, my jaw was – I couldn’t open my jaw – I couldn’t get more than a one or two centimetre gap between my teeth, it was just so painful. But I understand the sentiments about needing to go to the dentist. And there are two reasons why I don’t chew: I don’t want to look like somebody who has lost the ability to maintain control. I like to have fun, if you can avoid clenching... I don’t find it attractive when people are doing that, and so that is why I try and stop myself”.

3.11.0 *Oral Cravings*

Many users enjoy smoking cigarettes on ecstasy both more frequently and in larger quantities - even if they are non-smokers. (LiM) detests cigarettes, precisely because of the intense oral fixations associated with ecstasy. He believes that part of the mind is set on wanting something in the mouth, when on ecstasy, which he compared to a childhood phase of wanting something in your mouth constantly. Other users saw this as projecting an image of coolness or having something to do whilst on ecstasy. (LiM) further believed that ecstasy works on the part of the brain that wants something or experiences something that you haven't had in a long time - that used to bring joy and pleasure when you were a child. Thus, he had to consciously wean himself off cigarettes whilst on ecstasy, saying that he didn't want them. This was the little voice in his head (internal monologue 1.15.0) that had to say "I don't enjoy them sober or by themselves", so "I don't want them", "Why do I smoke them when I am on ecstasy?", "Do I like them subconsciously"? I don't like that they make my fingers smell, and it is obviously just one drug that is making me want something that is, and cigarettes are the easiest way to substitute it. And I know with ecstasy that I want something in my mouth – wanting saliva in it as well: the insides of your mouth turn different while on drugs" (i.e. salivation changes 3.12.0).

3.12.0 Salivation

A loss of salivation and a dry mouth and throat are common symptoms on ecstasy (and marijuana and cocaine). Some users drink water, energy drinks, alcohol or use lolly pops to increase dampness. (FrM) "I feel that my mouth is dry on ecstasy, when I am off my face... I will always drink water". Like most users, he would also drink plenty of water to replenish the loss of fluids resulting from the excessive sweating brought out by intense bodily exertion such as dancing and walking up and down stairs at venues. Within the more crowded venues it is difficult to ignore the pervasive smells of bodily sweat generated on the crowded dance floor.

(FrM) often noticed a loss of saliva when on ecstasy explaining: "I sweat a lot, walking up to the stairs, and I always drink so much water, so I don't generally notice; like I notice when my mouth is dry, on cocaine I really feel that someone has sat there with cotton balls and taken every drop of water out of my mouth. I feel that my mouth is dry on ecstasy, but when I am on cocaine, when my tongue touches the roof of my mouth, it is so much dryer, when I am off my face I will always drink water. When I

have coke I feel that I have been walking throughout the desert for a few days, like that dryness – I would say it's the same throughout. But in the heightened state I don't really enjoy it as much, but it definitely is there why I am at the peak". Similarly, (LiM) describes while "you lose a lot of saliva – you get a bit of that with marijuana - but not so much. But ecstasy especially - and speed as well".

3.13.0 Sweating and Dehydration

Continuous or intermittent sweating on the palms, head and underarms is common on ecstasy. Excessive sweating and increases in bodily temperature, resulting in dehydration, manifest with the intense and prolonged dancing on ecstasy.

3.13.1 Sweating

(WW) would run her fingers through her entire scalp whilst sweating on ecstasy. The palms of her hands exuded so much sweat that she had to clench her hands to dissipate the moisture. She felt the production of moisture was primarily due to the heightened sensuality of ecstasy, which in turn, was compounded by the heat and lack of air circulation in clubs. She describes how the body works really hard on ecstasy as the heart rate (3.7.0) and body temperature increase and water and weight loss result through profuse sweating (3.13.1). Several users noted that additional substances such as marijuana and alcohol could lead to further rapid dehydration.

(RoB) interpreted the sweating on ecstasy as resulting from the body's attempt to break down the toxic chemicals, removing them from the CNS system: "The easiest way to remove these chemicals is through the sweat pores, nymph glands and urine. This is because most of the stuff in ecstasy isn't natural, so the body instantly starts to break it down".

3.13.2 Dehydration

Severe dehydration – sometimes leading to Hyponatremia (Henry and Rella, 2001: 75-78) can arise with excessive heat and water loss on ecstasy. (StE) "I have been around women who have collapsed and either been asleep for hours and or been medicated and or been in hospital. It can be completely overwhelming for people, and I have seen athletic big guys take too much and collapse... and then have to be resuscitated".

3.14.0 Wanting “Something” on Ecstasy

A number of users described incessantly wanting ‘something’ on ecstasy, but felt ambivalent as to *what exactly* they wanted. Example (AuA): “it’s like what am I going to do? I’m going to smoke another cigarette. I really, really, *really* want something – cigarette. *Cigarette*. And so you go – I’ll know what I’ll do – I’ll go for a walk - and I will buy some chewy. And that will fix it. And you buy your chewy - and then you’re like – cigarette. You will be chewing your chewy, and smoking your cigarette and you will be like, I don’t know what else there is. What else could I possibly want? And it is this feeling that you need something, but you don’t know what that need is”.

(AgA): “But some pills make you do that too, even when you’re out in the club, you’re like just kind of edgy, and it’s not that; but it’s like, you’re sort of like you want something. There is something that, you smoke a cigarette and you’re like, no, no, that’s not the right thing. You go and have a dance - no that’s not the right thing! You go outside and sit down, no, no, no it’s not that either. Like what is it? And it’s nothing. But it is not in all pills. It is just some. I don’t know what’s in ecstasy - to make you do that!”

3.15.0 Gastrointestinal Changes

Reactions throughout the digestive system can sometimes lead to nausea, cramps and vomiting. The following are three accounts of adverse gastrointestinal reactions on ecstasy.

(HeL): “It’s like my stomach! It’s just so empty... ‘*Oohhh*’... and you get ‘chemi-guts’; like you haven’t eaten in a day and a half, except for pills and base and things like that; and all your stomach is doing is turning in those drugs and stomach acids and things like that. You just go “*arrggg – I feel sick, need to eat – but can’t*”. Cause food is not right – right now”.

(WW) would frequently vomit from pills when things didn’t ‘sit right’. She called this reaction “*go-E-gut*”, which is when there are too many drugs in the stomach. This would be followed by a sort of comfortable nausea – as once the ‘*go-E-gut*’ passes: “You are going to feel heaps better. It is not pure nausea because you don’t feel light-

headed or anything. It does feel like the chemicals are fighting, and the *go-E-gut* is slowly, slowly coming up to your throat. And it is only a matter of time before you get it up and you feel better. The *go-E-gut* is always dry reaching and it is never anything solid, it is usually like water or if I try to drink water it always makes me feel worse. So it is like chemicals moving around in my tummy almost like I have drunk too much water, so I'm careful not to drink too much water because that would obviously end badly³⁷ yeah even if I have just a little bit of water sometimes it feels like it is too much, so I need to have a bit of sugar or just control the feeling and almost like breathing harder in and out will overcome that feeling and it will sit back and be OK, yeah just going with it so you settle back into the feeling, like I feel like sometimes when it hits you it is quite overwhelming for the first few, whether it be 10 or 15 minutes or sometimes less, sometimes longer, but the first stage might be a bit overwhelming physically so you need to take measures just to settle back into it, that's what I mean by going with it just getting over that first stage that is a bit huh, that makes you breathing harder and makes you want to control it, just to go with that until it eases down a bit I think. But once I get it up - I'm fine. Just recently I have done it heaps, just have to have a spew. And for some reason it doesn't bother me, because I know that it is just not settled well-enough - and then afterwards its fine. This only ever happens after the first one as well".

(CG): "In the last year I have gone to a number of different events. I don't routinely take pills anymore. It is not like I go out each Friday; it is just once every few months. When I go out now, and I know that I have got pills coming in, so I am going to be dropping the pills then and doing something. I'm thinking about it for a few days before, and going, this is going to be sick, running around smoking all the cigarettes and shit and you think it is going to be awesome. But when you finally get around to the event on the day your body feels it - it just knows - you start metabolizing more quickly, you become heaps gassier and stuff like that. And you get little stomach cramps, like farting like, yeah... and you get stomach cramps".

3.16.0 Kidneys and Lower Back Pain from Excessive and Heavy use

Some users exercised caution to avoid binging on ecstasy after witnessing excessive use on numerous occasions during the week. Other users would remain 'clean'

³⁷ I did not come across reports of 'hyper-hydration' a rare phenomenon on ecstasy.

(abstain) during the week and party on the weekend (*'going natural'*). Binging could lead the body having potentially strong reactions. One user felt his body saying: "hang on mate, what are you putting into my system" (StE). Regular binging, dancing and dehydration would increase the likelihood of liver and kidney problems and lower back cramps.

3.17.0 Fatigue, Tiredness

One user commenting on the intense and prolonged ecstatic dancing on ecstasy (6.3.0) remarked that "Unless you are fit when dancing for long periods on ecstasy, all of a sudden the pain level breaks through the euphoric haze and your legs just buckle underneath you: you go "whhhrrr- whew... where!?!" (RoB).

3.18.0 Altered Muscle Tone and Atrophy

Approaching the end of the night many users would complain of severe loss of muscle tone (3.18.0) and water content in the body (3.26.0). In this state, the muscles may be experienced as having completely "melted", giving the contours of the body a "liquefied" smoothness and layer of filth on the skin (7.6.0). This is also influenced by the intensification of heat produced by locomotive movement (walking, running, jumping ecstatic dancing 6.3.0, etc.) and the accompanying rise in bodily temperature. These modifications of the body may generate a hyper-libidinal surface for touching, massaging, kissing/pushing, hugging and stroking etc. (1.17.0). What parts of the body are most affected or desirable to touch depended on the user. Below are two examples:

"You will definitely lose muscle-tone. It's like you've been lifting weights, especially in your lower-body, not so much in your upper-body, but more so in your lower-body. That's generally because they're not really using the upper-body as much in dancing... They may look like skeletons the next day" (SaN).

"It's similar to doing bench presses for six hours - your muscles are just wrecked. At the latter end of the night, the muscles tend to hurt more as the 'methanoic acid' (lactic acid?) builds up, which is produced when your muscles break down. Basically by doing this, you're going through enforced muscle growth" (RoB).

3.19.0 Penile Shrinkage

Many male users report a shrinking of the penis when taking ecstasy (Saunders, 1997: 57). One new user found this to be common, but not always persistent: (CP) “when I first started it, I used to get shrinkage, but that stopped happening”. Related to changes in the bodily morphology and sexuality are the changes in male arousal, “Yeah, I guess the thought of having sex with someone seemed like a great idea – and the shrinkage thing happens. It seems as though it would be very hard to get an erection you know – but if it did happen – then I guess it is going to be a long night” (MoJ). Nonetheless, as the following example illustrates penile shrinkage could be transformed through sexual excitation, allowing the users to achieve heightened arousal and delayed ejaculation. Other males find these circumstances more difficult:

(SoC) “The worse thing is ‘*Chem-cock*’ - I can’t cum at all. I have heard so many stories where people can’t get it up - and man - I get so toey on pills; I turned to my girlfriend and said I want to have sex, and she said “you won’t get it up”, and I go, and I just flopped it out and she goes ‘*put-it-away*’, and I go ‘I told you I could get it up though!’. And she goes, ‘I don’t understand how you can get it up’. Scat-day sex is a good way to pass the time; you pass the time because you couldn’t do anything else. But if you have sex, its like 5 hours later ‘oh fuck! At least I’m fit now!’”.

(SaN) explains that shrinkage occurs when the muscles of the penis work by being relaxed and not tense (Saunders, 1997: 47). When the penis muscles are no longer relaxed it will be standing and hard. On ecstasy, the muscles are tensing up which would cause shrinkage. He explained for girls it is similar, as the vagina would get smaller and tighter on ecstasy.

3.20.0 Phosphenes: ‘Static’

Phosphenes may appear in the visual field as lights and colours in non-drug induced states, e.g. applying pressure to the eye-balls. Phosphenic images are stimulated by the internal firing of optical neurons that are inactive in the visual field (Merkur, 1998: 12). The appearance of Phosphenes is a common phenomenon in drug induced states. The following reports are from consumers who regularly reported seeing ‘static’ in their visual field coming down and in the days following consumption. (AmA) regularly experienced tiny spots of light in the visual field called “static”. It seems to me that this specific phantasy is linked to the inner-world (*Innenwelt*) of the

user who experiences perceptual changes when coming-down. The association the user makes is with the external environment (*Umwelt*) of late/ techno-capitalism, in this case, the lived perceptual field being imagined to the static seen when there is no clear channel on television. With regular use of ecstasy these lights came to be seen, for some users, as a normal part of the comedown. In this situation (AmA) would sometimes lie and play games with her partner as they would both playfully enjoy the static by focussing at a stationary object such as a light globe and then moving the eyes, and thus the static, in various directions.

3.21.0 *Sleeping Patterns*

Most users would experience insomnia after taking ecstasy and/ or other stimulants (e.g. speed). After first using ecstasy (CP) found himself lying in bed unable to sleep; upon closing his eyes he would see himself at work stacking cases of beer on the shelf. He would then realize that he was lying in bed when he re-opened his eyes and would be back at work when he closed them again. Realising he was scating-out he got on the computer for a while and then went to the pub to drink some wine.

When unable to sleep some users would engage in what (StE) called 'continuous partying', or '*kicking on*' at different venues for after-parties. This would often involve double-dropping or using stimulants to 'take the edge of the comedown'.

(SaN) explains how sleep is important in everyday life and the longer that you stay up on drugs the worse it will be for your body. With continual sleep deprivation the body will get to a point of exhaustion and tiredness (fatigue 3.18.0) where you become slow, worn-out and sluggish. At some point you may collapse and pass out from tiredness. Sometimes he knows that he had taken enough drugs for the night so that he would not take anymore. As the more drugs that you take in one night the worse it will be the following days. (SaN) would then go home and try and rest and sleep around mid-day following the scat, being trashed and then hung-over during the night so as to be prepared for work on Monday. Sometimes he would feel good enough to get out of bed and go to work and do other things. On heavier nights of use he would stay awake for two or three nights "literally lying in the lounge room in front of the TV, because I can't physically go out and do anything".

3.22.0 *Emesis*

Vomiting (emesis) on ecstasy is a regular experience for certain users. HB found that he would purge at midnight every Friday night, just before the pills came on. This would happen, he explained, simply because “the body just knows”. For (DiH) vomiting generally occurs on a bad pill, an overly strong pill, the mixing of substances (e.g. ecstasy and speed/ alcohol) or the user did not eat properly. Certain informants also maintained that one’s tolerance (8.10.0) to ecstasy also influenced whether a user would vomit. More rarely, (HB) would vomit every Friday night around midnight so as to purge the body. This sudden, but predictable emesis was interpreted and experienced by (HB) as the body ‘just knows what to do’”.

3.23.0 *Good Pills Make you ‘Spew’*

Other users viewed vomiting as a good indication of good quality ecstasy. (SoC) would vomit upon taking pills, “if I don’t have a spew, I feel like I have been fuckin ripped off”. (MM) gives a more detailed account: “Well sometimes you can spew and you see little bits of the pill in there, and you sift through the spew and find little bits of the pill – pick them out and put them back in. I judge how much I need by how quickly, I spew, because if I spew, like if I take a full pill and I spew, well I probably didn’t need to take that much possibly, so what I will do is I will take half a pill, and if I spew off that, well that probably means that that was enough for me. And I’m still at the same height because, say for example if I take a full one, it just digests a dose of half, and then spew the rest back up, so if I have taken half. But I then have some friends who will just sit there and I am not kidding man, eat three pills - and like nothing - nothing at all. It is like different systems, different biological organisms who have, resistances and stuff, like I am actually hyper-sensitive to basically almost everything. I also make sure that if I haven’t spewed that I won’t go up to the front of a rave because I don’t want to impact on everyone’s happiness. For example, I will try to feel a pill trying to come on, I will try and go outside, and go to a secluded corner where no one is going to be affected by me spewing. I know that when the feeling does come on, it is an instant reaction; like if anyone has ever spewed off pills, like you don’t go “Oh, I think I am going to *spewarr*....” - it just comes out. Pills are more like projectile vomit. It’s like *ARRRGRR*. A tiny little bit of spew as well, it’s frothy and disgusting. Like I always plan for it and I never ever, spew on fucking anyone or, or I don’t spew in fucking sinks, or on the dance floor. Like when you feel that pills

are going to kick in real strong, just go and sit down and in the arena, if you want to spew, spew through the gates”.

3.24.0 Spinal Fluid

A pervasive myth surrounding ecstasy use is that the drug ‘drains your spinal fluid’ or ‘fuses your spine together’. Beck and Rosenbaum (1994: 101) make a compelling suggestion that the origin of this myth may be a combination of spinal tap research and a misinterpretation of the origins of the neck and back aches that accompany intense dancing on ecstasy. This is further reinforced by kidney strain and dehydration.

(SaN) “I’ve heard, but I don’t know if it is true, that by taking ecstasy the fluid in your indivertible disk gets drained. Like I have had it and I don’t associate it with my kidneys, I associate with the spine. J gets back pain, she is walking all hunched over, like fully hunched over and looking over at the ground, like her back hurts so much. I don’t know if your spine would lose its fluids due to ecstasy. My kidneys have endured a lot worse than ecstasy (laughs). SaN states that what actually travels throughout your spinal cord is blood or is it fluid. “I know that your spinal cord basically attaches your spine together. I don’t know. I could understand in massage-wise... having a massage would probably help with circulation. And relaxing, helps your muscles to loosen up”.

3.25.0 Appetitive Changes

3.25.1 Appetites on Ecstasy

Alterations in appetitive desires emerge with ecstasy use. Generally there is a marked decrease in the desire to ingest solids and an increase in the desire for fluid intake.

Most users see ecstasy as an appetite suppressant: there is ‘no desire to eat whatsoever’, it’s ‘horrible’ eating, ‘it doesn’t munch properly in your mouth’.

(JN) “You always buy random shit on scat-day that you don’t really want. And everyone knows how painful it is, because your mouth is so dry and, you just don’t want to be eating. I can’t eat – you just can’t eat on scat-days! All you need is Jubes and water, cause everything else tastes foul. I tried Coke, and it just tastes – *absolutely wrong! And you can’t taste food*. Particularly when you have been smoking the entire night before because you have been on pills or whatever.... Some things could be alright, unless they curdle in your stomach because you haven’t eaten in a day and a

half'. Despite the lack of hunger, others noted the enhancement of palliative sensations: eating – 'it's just really enhanced' (CG).

(MoJ): "I eat more fruits and vegetables. On the day that I am coming down I usually try to force down a couple of raw foods. I find that my body is much better at accepting those greasy burgers or something like that; something which is just *not good*. Try to put the positive back in - *so to speak*. Powdered wheat grass which is disgusting for most people, but it alkalizes your blood, so your blood loses acidity and becomes more Ph neutral which is going to make you feel better, no matter what - always. Yeah, that is one of my saving graces I guess".

(CP): "The day after my first use of ecstasy I tried to eat a chicken roll and it took me like an hour and a half, as I wasn't that hungry. I couldn't swallow because I had no saliva to try and get it down. After that I never really got hungry. I couldn't eat. And then I didn't eat, I kept feeling light headed. When I ate a chicken burger it was like adrenalin, energy inside me".

3.25.2 *Able to Eat After Repeated Usage*

(FrN): "So I got to the stage that I now understand how ecstasy works. It shocks your system – you parasympathetic nervous system. And that is why you don't eat – and because it is such a shock to your system, that is why these things happen as well... the lack of eating... the *scatness*; and it got to the stage where I would do 8 pills in a night. The most I have ever done is about 14, and I was standing up talking to people, yeah... just too many nights in a row... and all these effects that I consider... like the after effects... just stopped happening to me. Like I went to a rave, and I had 7 or 8 pills and I went straight to Macdonald's as soon as the rave ended and I ate 4 hash browns, a McMuffin burger. And my friends were just sick watching me eat, it made them physically sick. And it doesn't do that to me anymore. And I used to think it was pretty funny like, the fact, it didn't have the same effects for me as well".

3.26.0 *Hydration*

A desire for increased fluid intake, i.e. Polydipsia, often accompanies ecstasy use (Holland, 2001: 75-78). Even though some cases of severe dehydration and to a lesser

extent internal drowning have arisen with ecstasy use, the following reports illustrate commonplace instances of fluid intake and thirst on the drug.

(MM) “To me, the day after, if I try and hydrate myself, no matter how much water I drink, it takes a long-time to feel actually hydrated again. I get dry mouth to indescribable levels. During the night I can hydrate myself, I can make myself feel better, my palette gets dry very quickly, but the day after coming down I, no matter how much water that I drink, like I will have a mouth full – nothing - it won’t do anything. It still just takes sleep and probably food actually, and just time for it to get back to normal”.

(StM): “Yeah, you just sip and skull because you know. Your mouth goes – I don’t know if I was really that thirsty but that my mouth was really, really dry, so um yeah, I guess the environment of a rave is really hot and crowded as well, and you end up sweating and stuff, and then people just tell you to keep on drinking more water so you just do it. For me it was like trying, because you hear so many bad things about how dangerous drugs can be and stuff, so there is a certain part of you that wants to be safe; keeping you hydrated and not overheating because we were always told that that is one of the most dangerous parts of doing it so. Maybe a bottle an hour. You buy it, and sometimes it would be really, really expensive so you try and fill it up in the toilets, and sometimes you would have warmer hot water in the toilets to stop people from filling them up so, I don’t know, I never used to eat whilst I was on it. I know that some people do, but I find that quite strange because your stomach doesn’t feel like it can handle anything, but for me it was all of the vomiting and stuff so. I just didn’t want to eat; I think when you are on this situation eating is probably the last thing on your mind.... I wouldn’t feel like eating for days afterwards. Because what we used to do was get instant noodles and crush them up into a mug and then sort of eat them that way; it was the only thing that you could keep down the next day right. So yeah, but I know a lot of people, like my brother who doesn’t like to do it anymore because he can’t eat afterwards, so he says that it just takes too much out of him”.

3.27.0 Maintaining Hydration

A number of users would carefully monitor their fluid intake in the course throughout the evening to avoid dehydration. Posters on toilets doors at the venues would

recommend one glass of water per hour so as to avoid the possibility of dehydration or internal drowning from excessive water intake.

(LiM): “I like to take good care of myself while I am on drugs. I know that drugs make you sweaty and make your eyes red. To look the normal takes a bit more water drinking than usual. So I drink the 250-500mls of water an hour while I’m on ecstasy, which can dry your mouth out and can make you sweaty and sometimes your body temperature, can elevate slightly”.

(CP): “I didn’t get dehydrated, because I didn’t dance... I drank water, one or two glasses over the course of the night. I wasn’t getting too thirsty, just being careful”.

(SoC): “And drinking and smoking. Cold water going down the back of your throat is just the most amazing feeling, and you just sit there and go I just want to keep drinking, it feels like there is a waterfall going down the back of your neck. *Yeah, yeah - and that’s what it is - it is a waterfall*”.

3.28.0 Hospitals and Ambulances

Various complications arising from overheating, dehydration, bad pills, and drug-combinations etc. means that some users require hospitalization and ambulance care. Here are three reports of these complications.

(Rob): “There was a girl under 15 who was working at a clothing stall at one of the raves, at one of the Hyper-Speeds. She rocked up, after she has snuck out of hospital, and gotten back into the rave. She had been taken off by the ambulance, because she had overdosed, and she was around the corner trying to get more. Now that’s not smart”.

(StM): “Some users would collapse basically. I used to be around a lot of people in night clubs who would just collapse. I think they would lose consciousness because they go into a state of something - I don’t know what it is called - but they are unconscious. I have had several friends who have had their stomachs pumped... y’know you are mixing ecstasy with alcohol. You see in the early days no one knew that you didn’t need to have alcohol to have fun with the pills, so people in those days

would still be drinking heavily and taking pills heavily so it was a real learning process to realize that you don't need to drink 15 schooners of beer to enjoy the benefit of the pill. So a lot of people we knew used to have less alcohol and still get the full effect of those sorts of pills”.

(Anon): “Ecstasy is more like an enhancement. I had a friend who took a pill and all of a sudden he started having problems breathing and chest pains. He was like - fuck! He was having chest pains, and he said to his girlfriend like, she wasn't a drug-taker and he said “oh listen I've got a bit of chest pains I just took a pill, um, I'm just going to go to hospital to get a check-up, make sure that I'm OK”, and she was like “you *going to fuckin die!*” And he's like “no I will be fine”. And she was like “you're going to fuckin die”. And he raced himself to hospital and he was all relaxed. But she was crying and screaming: “You are going to fuckin die”. He is in an emergency room lying down, with wires on him, and he was like you know what “I'm going to relax, be cool and chill. I'm going with the flow” She is screaming, going what are you going to do to yourself, you are going to die. How am I going to live without you? And it turns out that he had pneumonia and when he took the pill, it had a bit of speed in it and it exacerbated the effects. So he was fine, perfectly fine. But his girlfriend was making such a scene that he was going to die; if it wasn't for her he would have been completely fine, but she was just completely freaking him out. And he managed to retain his mindset somehow with his girlfriend fucking screaming that they should maintain this really smooth calm, collected mind-frame. And he knew that everything would be fine, because he had faith in the hospital and stuff. If she had been the one who had took the pill, fuck! Who knows what would have happened, she might have panicked so much that she would have called the ambulance. I think it is important the mindset that you are in, you never know what would have happened”.

3.29.0 *Looking at Oneself in the Mirror*

There are varieties of self-perception on ecstasy. Here some reports ranging from highly positive apperception, to self-distortion and psychotic.

(DrP): “It was looking at my eyes in the mirror... that did it. I would go and look at myself in the mirror and just go “*you are just having such a fantastic night*”. And I would be so happy with myself, it wasn't so much being in love with my-self; just

really content with the decision that I have made to take the drug and be out that night”.

(AuA): “When gurning I always spend so much time looking at myself in the mirror and concentrating really hard and at the end, I feel it so much in my face, it feels like it comes to a point that my nose like, “arrgghh”. Touching my face... Feeling my jaw lock up and you can tell it feels like the jaw is sticking out going ‘uurree”.

(MoJ): “There is nothing scarier than looking at your-self in the mirror at 4 o’clock in the morning and saying “wow, that person is really fucked up - and that person *is me!*” I’m like, “Oh man what are you doing - oh that’s me”. At that time of the morning I get quite embarrassed by my own sight”.

(AnY): “I remember I gave my mate a pill and he started freaking out thinking that his teeth would cave in or some shit. He actually went to the bathroom looked in the mirror and he actually thought that “they” were going in, and he thought that he was chewing on his teeth or some shit like that. He was just *fucking gurning*, gurning something chronic”.

(SaN): “Yeah, there will generally be weight loss. This is because when you have drugs you really can’t eat food or you can’t stomach food. So you generally don’t eat for a couple of days, and your stomach shrinks, because there’s no food going into your stomach – it can take 28-48 hours, sometimes even longer. Your stomach basically just shrinks. And the other thing is your sweating it out as well. And you lose a lot. You can definitely notice in the mornings when you come home, basically when you looking in the mirror your stomach is more sucked in, your stomach is a lot tighter than your bladder. Sometimes different drugs create, or can create, a lot of weight loss much faster like speed. Sometimes, like every now and then, as a joke we can laugh, and say someone who goes around with no shirt on. They have too much speed. They look like they are about two inches thick, you can see all their ribs and all their bones sticking out like a skeleton”.

(AmA): “A lot of people, like when I started out taking a lot of drugs would be at PC Friday night, end up Saturday staying at somebody’s house; Saturday night going out,

Sunday staying at somebody's house, getting trashed on Sunday night. Going home - going to work Monday. It would not occur to me to eat, since I was trashed and had no appetite, or I was scattered and had no appetite, and I felt sick. So I wouldn't eat until Tuesday or Wednesday, and eventually it got to a point where I had no appetite at all, so if I didn't remember to eat, I didn't eat - so I lost a lot of weight. And the only point that I realized it was one day when I was having a shower and I broke the mirror and I was seeing all of my rib bones, on both sides and I went 'what!' And I stopped and took a look and there was bones sticking out. I had really nice muscle definition, but I didn't actually have much of the fleshiness there, it was just sort of bones and muscle. It wasn't attractive and my face had gotten hollow and I just hadn't noticed because I was working during the week and partying on the weekends.

Working during the week and partying on the weekends. It just didn't occur to me to stop... I got into a great cycle - it was awesome, I was fine, I was having fun. I just didn't realize... No nothing. No effects, until I realized *I was fucked*. Yeah, I sort of went 'damn!' Then I went out and started eating Macca's a bit more often".

Section 4. Peaks and Nadirs

4.1.0 *The Ecstasy 'Honeymoon'*

The initial or experiential phase of first taking ecstasy is sometimes referred to as the ecstasy 'honeymoon'. Some users associated this period with the intense 'magical experiences' ('Peak experiences') that reoccur prior to the build-up of tolerance (8.10.0) with repeated use. The example below is given by a consumer who has passed beyond the honeymoon phase.

(CM): "When I try to concentrate on the feeling of ecstasy, it is there... but fleeting. You try to remember that overwhelming good feeling: particularly when you first start taking it, when it is new, it is something that is very special. And the ecstasy honeymoon doesn't come again. Well, when people first start taking ecstasy they love it, and they keep taking it, and they take it, and take it, and they have amazing times. And then you get over it and you stop taking it, that it is a very common thing. From my observations people often move on to regular amphetamine use. Sometimes you will come back to pills again. If you have been off it for a while, you can get some fantastic highs, but it doesn't have that magical feeling anymore" ('losing the magic' 8.9.0).

4.2.0 *Initial Reactions and Peaking*

The following examples illustrate various users' early reactions to ecstasy – the 'come-on' in the first half an hour or so. In the initial opening up to hyper-libidinal states some users encounter resistance to losing control (1.20.0). The resulting transformation opens the world in a whole new mode of being e.g. stroking one's body, intense breathing, E-talk etc.

(LiM): "I take a pill and I wait for it... it usually takes about half an hour to two hours to kick in. At that stage - I am usually tipsy or a bit stoned. Your legs are a bit heavy, but you are not feeling an ecstasy high yet... When you get this your body will start getting a bit tingly about 45 minutes depending on how strong the pill is".

(WW): "In the beginning the physical effects of the drug are overpowering. Your heart is beating really fast and you are just trying to breathe and control it all; you go

with the pulse as you start breathing a bit harder. In dealing with the come-on it's usually better to sit down so that you don't freak yourself out running around. In the second stage I sit down and have a cigarette - well many a cigarette - because sometimes they feel a whole lot better (laughs). And I feel like I hit a state where I sit down and *just feel it*.... and if you are sitting with someone, it is all very touchy. Like if I am sitting next to one of my best girlfriends, I will always, always hold her hand. I will sit next to my friend and I will grasp her hand tightly, and I like I will either stroke, our hands or her forearm or something that's in close proximity, because obviously sensations are heightened, so anything that you feel, you don't want to sit there and just grope in mid-air so you have to find something to touch. And I always find that conversations with people are always very close, like you are always sitting close to someone and you are always touching something, same with a cigarette, and occupying your body that way, if your mind is being occupied somewhere else, your body is occupying something else".

4.3.0 Peaking - The Rush

The terms peak or peaking are widely used to describe a variety of drug experiences such as LSD, Mescaline and ecstasy. These terms usually delineate those states that are infused with euphoria, interconnectedness and ecstasy. A catalogue and analysis of these states was set out by the humanistic psychologist Maslow in *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences* (1964). More recently, these states have been further elaborated upon in Merkur's (1998: 96-98) *The Ecstatic Imagination* and Beck and Rosenbaum's classic study *The Pursuit of Ecstasy* (1994). The following are some reports detailing peak experiences.

(DiH): "The way I describe the peak is that your body shakes and it feels like a 'tingly-ness'. It just comes and goes in waves. This is felt during the peak or just after the plateau. Sometimes, when you peak you go: 'wow! That was really short lived!', and then you find that 15 minutes later you will have another sort of peak. That has something to do with the chemical makeup of the drug".

(BeO): "The Peak will depend on the type of pill that you are getting. No two pills are exactly the same. Pure MDMA is less varied than other pills. It may seem like the same chemical all the time, so you actually get more of a constant sensation from it.

I'd liken it more to a sense of adrenaline, a similar feeling to when you get a rush of adrenaline in your body, from some sort of stimulus that would be the initial feeling. And then, a sort of sense of *clarity* - at the same time it is a little bit hazy - a pure sense of adrenaline in the beginning, that's why you get a big rush in the beginning as your body reacts to the pill you can get a tingling up the back of your neck; and you feel all tense and excited, butterflies... But when the clarity, the clearness kicks in, it tends to take away the adrenaline".

(CM): "When the pill comes on there is a threshold where you paying attention to your body. At this point some people are not able to articulate themselves anymore; they are like: "can't speak at the moment, can't say much"... This experience can be very overwhelming, particularly when it puts you in a very dream like state, I am talking about ineffability. And you will see fragmented images very similar to like when you are in a dream. I have a lot of trouble remembering ecstasy highs; it feels like recalling a dream. However, on good ecstasy, when you take enough of it, reality seems disjointed and non-linear. At peaks of it you will sometimes see, the 'cause-follow-the-effect; you will see something - and then after that you will see why it happened, whatever your interpretation of that. That's the peak. I find the nausea of the peak will normally go with that lovely - *very* altered sense of reality. With the rush there is first a rise of energy; you're twitching, you start feeling warm, and your heart rate increases; especially with ecstasy you get a lot more warmth - lots of warmth in your face. As it progresses there are lots of physical signs: increased tactile response, increased empathy, that's a hard one to say - but, then there is classic responses - such as eyes rolling, cheeks drooping, the "*psssphhpthh-ppphhwwweew*", that's my giveaway, the jaw starts going around".

(MoJ): "Sure. Well for me if I just take a straight pill at about half an hour later, I get a rush from the back of my head the cerebral cortex area and it is a tingling that starts and it goes all the way down my back and throughout my nervous system and it just seems to extend throughout my entire body. That way I always know when it is coming on because I get a bit of cold sweat on the back of my neck, followed by the rush of endorphins of whatever it is; and then it is *on* - so to speak. So when I am on drugs I often have a ferocious appetite for more and that initial rush has come and gone and it is time for the next level so to speak and, I guess I have had innumerable

experiences where, of being up all night and all day and getting to the point where I so called need more drugs to keep going and to get to that next buzz, but I have not been able to acquire any and have subsequently had a shit comedown or whatever. But the buzz when you are already on ecstasy, you might get it from touching someone, or get that buzz from dancing for half an hour, for me it is listening to an amazing piece of music whilst I am on drugs so, so if I have deep conversation it might re-excite to action, I guess that is being aware of my own drug experience and trying to accentuate and get the most out of the drug experience. And a joint on ecstasy will enhance the experience, occasionally it won't, depending on how much booze I am drinking".

(AuE): "I feel like it is like you have being wearing a fishbowl all over your head your whole life – and when you peak - it comes off and everything is so much clearer. Like there is no fuckin midst or anything, everything is just beautiful and perfect".

4.4.0 Letting Go

A number of users described being able to let go on ecstasy in order to let the drug overtake them, e.g. when they are dancing ecstatically. This state is unpleasurable for some users as they prefer to maintain egoic control, and hence, do not like 'letting go'. A number of users said they recognised this distinct state and would seek to 'let go' or 'go with the flow' to maximise the experience.

(MoJ): "Letting go is really hard to describe. I think there is a point on ecstasy where you can get yourself to physically where you can release and let go. However, on ecstasy there are still inhibitions that will stop you from completely letting go. For example, if you are in public view and you are gurning, there is a strong possibility that you won't get into the music because you are worried about what you look like. Like when I have let go, eyes closed and am dancing, suddenly a thought may come into my brain "I'm fucking thirsty... well now I need to go and get myself some water... Well shit look out for that dude over there... I am *so fucked up, WOW!*" And then there will be a shift in attention and focus I will observe myself again; there is a completely different world when I open my eyes".

On a strong pill (HG) would lose perception to a point where he would stop noticing what was going on and things would get blurry and hazy. He would spontaneously

snap out of this state and then perception would just ‘open-up’ again so that he could once again identify who and what was going on around him. Changes in perception are different. There can be a degradation of perception, because you get slower when you are looking at some things. Or when you are peaking you can be much more focused on what you are doing, but you neglect perceiving other things. But you can switch back on or snap back into reality if you need to. Overall the perception is ‘lost up’ in what you are doing. “So for me part of the attraction of ecstasy is getting lost in the music. I would definitely get involved while dancing with the music, so that peace in the music would bring about peace in me. So that I could mellow out and just go with the flow. I think the music and darkness allowed me to isolate myself in this way and allowed me to just get into my own zone: so that I would just dance with my eyes shut in my own little space”.

4.5.0 Euphoria, Happiness and Bliss

Ecstatic experiences often are described in terms of a state of sublime euphoria, happiness and bliss (Saunders, 1997: 46-47; Campbell, 2001: 111). Below are a number of accounts of euphorogenic induced phenomena.

(MoJ): “The closest time that I have ever experienced euphoria was being on ecstasy, Liquid Acid (GBH) and having nitrous oxide – WOW! WOW! WOW! – *E-u-p-h-o-r-i-a*.”

(SoC): “My favourite feeling on pills is the euphoric feeling - *yeah* - that just beats everything. This is where your whole body and mind, it almost feels like you are floating above the ground; it practically feels like you feel skinnier inside your own body. That is what I get, it is almost like my bones are not moving - it is really weird... It is almost like that you go numb, you know when you do ‘nangs’ (gas bulbs) and you just sit back and go “ohhrrhhrr”; it is almost like that, not as intense, but so constant”.

(DrP): “Euphoric didn’t even do justice to the way I felt. The drugs in those days were \$60 a tablet. I lived in Great Britain for 12 months where it was much cheaper and readily available. I was probably doing a little bit more frequently in those days – so I was hanging out with some cool people in London and I just got totally obsessed with

the whole night club scene I thought that nightclubs were just the answer – I wanted to become a DJ. I do a bit now, I am not really good but I just do parties and stuff, like I have turntables at home, but I reckon that is due to ecstasy and my night club experiences. I got into the dance music like you wouldn't believe and I am still into it. I can put music on and take myself back to situations where I feel that some of those experiences have been burned into... I can almost get myself back to that feeling... *it was happiness*. Just such a strong happiness - it was so fantastic to be alive. Life was just so, so, fantastic”.

(HG): “And also you feel extreme happiness like you have been hoping to get into this course or get this job for ages and ages and ages and you just receive this letter to tell you that you have made it, that is the sort of feeling with that high and that joy, and you get that feeling for the rest of the day; you are feeling and you are floating and you are talking to people and you are far more *nicer* to people. And people will respond to you much better, but you have days where you are just there. But, I know that when you feel real happy it is a chemical reaction within your brain. You will get that same sort of chemical reaction, the same sort of feeling when everything has gone right and gone your way. And you are just having a great damn day and nothing seems to be able touch you at the moment”.

(Rob): “Ecstasy fills you with a very euphoric feeling and a perceived sense of connection. You become more optimistic; like when users are first head-over-heels-in-love and there is that Goofy-Grin-thing. When nothing knocks them down - they are like - yep - *everything is wonderful*. In a way it sort of gives you that heightened sense of belonging. It also reduces your inhibitions and fears a lot of the time”.

4.6.0 Active Touch in the Rush

(MM): “I feel like it is fireworks of happiness. Going off inside of my head and sometimes going off, like a wave of pleasure that washes across my body, like I will start in my head and I will wash all the way down to it and then I will start again. And like something as simple like a little bit of stimulus like touching or hugging can make a firework erupt from where it is *yeah, totally*. The fireworks are the waves of euphoria. You perceive pleasure all the way through your body. Where you're no longer at baseline and your already at a plus 2 (out of ten), already in a state of mild

euphoria and the contact will set off an even higher euphoria, such as a plus 6 or plus 8. And when you peak, the point explodes all the way through. For example, a hug creates a large area of stimulus – a large wave. So when you cuddle people all the places that you have contact is, is like all little fireworks and pleasures and you go “shrrww” shooting through your body. For me, the light of a firework is analogous to the euphoria of the sensory experience. It’s a metaphor for (the light) and the way it spreads throughout the body”.

(WW): “You can get to a point where everything tingles and you want to feel the tingle. So you see people stroking the shins back and forth with palms - legs extended. If you see someone sitting in a club – up straight and knees down with a drink – to me that is a drinking position. I think a lot of girls touch their head tingling. With longer hair you continuously want to run your fingers through your hair. Many people enjoy the tingling by touching. It’s all very euphoric – you can’t stay still. I don’t think it would be possible for my body to stay still. The reason that I put my fingers through my hair is that I feel like I definitely sweat a lot, around my hair. And if you have longer hair there is sweating around the neck as well. I think and feel as if I want to take control of it and do something whilst it’s there”.

4.7.0 Plateau

Following the come-on/ rush/ peak, the plateau constitutes the central core of ecstasy experiences. The ineffable nature of the primary experience was expressed by many users: “It is such a weird sensation that it is so hard to put into words” or the common perception that “so many people just tell you that you just have to take it to know what it is like” (HG). The following are accounts recollecting the primary phase of ecstasy use. Some informants believe the plateau was named due to the intense changes in the experience following the peak/ onset the ecstatic experience would then stabilise and smooth out. This is illustrated in the two reports below.

(EnD): “For me the plateau is the time when I am most open and I am really receptive to things that come in my direction. I get some really great insights into myself and the world. In that plateau period of receptivity I get the wave part, which is for me when I am being more creative and I am putting more of my own personal energy out there”.

(CG): “Oh man! Once you are *up there* – like you spend 10 to 15 minutes getting up there, then you spend half an hour or an hour just cruising all night, like nothing can touch you; you spend 10 to 15 minutes in that moment building up to it and an hour and a half being there. It disappears so slowly - you don’t even notice that point at which it goes. So when you are up there on that peak and you are plateauing-out, you constantly have moments of ups and downs - like it is constantly in waves; and I think those waves are what make you appreciate it a lot more. You will have a moment where you become really agitated and then all of a sudden you’re not. You’re not with it. Like it is *not* right. And so in that moment you will get a single thought which will be: let’s go up and have a dance... and you will go up there and you will run up onto the dance floor and you will start dancing and then you will recover that – that high – that “Nowness” and you feel like so ONE and with it – to the music like it is so nice and perfect. And you will do it for a while and then you will start getting tired and “oorrh”, and you become agitated and you would sink back down and come down a bit, and then you would be like “I’m going to go outside and have a cigarette. You walk outside and have a cigarette and start talking to people and you just start talking to some random person and in that moment you would feel a connection in the ‘Nowness’ and ‘Wholeness’ which comes on in waves and then comes off. And then you can sit there and get lost for 15 or 20 minutes and then eventually you get distracted and then you comeback down and back onto another wave”.

4.8.0 Rolling

Rolling may be used as a term to describe the actual experience of the plateau. One informant likens rolling to “when you walk while on E, it is so effortless and smooth as if you're rolling. Like when Sonic the Hedgehog powers up before zooming somewhere--his legs turn into a blue spinning blur” (Anon). The term may also imply a general world-mood of smoothness or it may also describe the ecstatic experience in terms of emotions and feeling: “it’s a smooth pill”. Another (Anon) user related an international comparison: from a D.E.A website. Drug dealers used to hide the pills in Tootsie Rolls by melting the chocolate around the pill and then selling the Tootsie rolls to people: and hence ‘rolling’. Several other users’ suggest the term “rolling” comes from the waves of euphoria that hit you when you're on ecstasy. Thus upon reflection, when on ecstasy users report surges or waves of euphoria that hit you in “rolls” every few minutes (‘they just keep rolling in’). Therefore, some users see

being on ecstasy is not a constant plateau or high, but more like a 3-4 hour roller coaster ride. As Saint Jude – The patron of Lost Causes surmises “God only knows where it started, but the term really fits... rolling, as in moving along with little effort on sheer momentum. Once the drug’s effects start it usually just... well, rolls right along on its own... you don’t feel like you are making an investment or effort in whatever you are doing” (Thomas, 2002: 48).

4.9.0 Washing Over and ‘Chargyness’

Like the rush or the peak of the experience, but not exclusive to this phase of ecstasy is the idiom expressed of ecstasy washing over the body. One user describes ecstasy washing over her as the drug comes on: “The good news is that you can learn to deal with the "coming up" stage and can incorporate it into the experience (she deals with it by just laying back and letting the drug take hold, not talking too much, just letting it wash over you (WW). Whereas, (StM) finds it hard to talk much, or do anything remotely complicated while coming up.

(FrN): elaborates on the waves of euphoria and energy - usually called ‘chargyness’ e.g. “I’m charging on pills”. “When I feel I’m there I feel like I am getting energy getting put into my body, as in the light. It’s like being given energy from the atmosphere around me; but it is not how I would describe that ‘chagy’ feeling, it’s not that kind of increased elevated movement. So I like to just sit there and enjoy it, and let it wash over me, drawing-in energy. And that generally lasts for 5-10 minutes and then after that, after getting the energy in, that is when I want to get the energy out. That is when I want to stand up, and I dance like a bit of a nutter. I don’t shuffle, I do my own variation on it; it has just developed”.

4.10.0 Smoking Pleasures

Regular and social smokers both emphasised the marked difference when smoking on ecstasy, whereby the action, taste, inhalation, effects of the cigarette and exhalation (watching the smoke) were all augmented. These four excerpts exemplify smoking on ecstasy.

(HG): “I would constantly smoke cigarettes throughout the entire experience; I’m not sure that has any effect on me... Ah yes, I think I used to just feel it more, that

sensation of smoke coming down your throat, um, into your lungs, but I would feel it differently. Um, I found that I smoked more on ecstasy, I think that a lot of that, might have something to do with always wanting to do something with your hands - - fidgeting”.

(WW): “When you smoke it is like a wave of lightness that goes through you, upon inhaling the smoke everything is more sensitive. So you can feel the smoke go into your lungs, breathing it out is almost so light it is almost – effortless. Sometimes it is so light it becomes the complete opposite, so that it is cumbersome to actually have a cigarette. That was later in the night when the pill started affecting me differently. At the beginning stage smoking is something to do; you are quite intrigued by little things, like pulling out a cigarette - lighting the cigarette, putting the lighter back in your bag or fiddling with the clasp on your bag, because it is all a bit hard to deal with really. It is almost like accomplishing a task that rewards you with something extremely light and fluffy and hmmm... The thing I can remember most about inhaling a cigarette is that when you are on drugs, it is the completely different feeling to when you inhale tobacco on ecstasy and when you smoke it straight. Smoking is enjoyable for a different reason. With drugs it is lighter and calmer experience, which is probably why people who don’t smoke - do it on drugs as well”.

(AuE): “You know when you go to a rave in winter and you have been on a hot fucking dance floor the whole time, and you go outside for a cigarette and it is just like *“phewom”*, “oh I can breathe again”, and then smoking a cigarette is like the biggest contradiction!”

(LiM): “I have given up cigarette smoking; I used to smoke while I am on ecstasy. I used to smoke two and a half packets with a friend. When we are pretty much non-smokers the rest of the week – the rest of our lives really... And I never really saw the benefits of smoking them without being on other drugs. For me it doesn’t do anything, when I am not on something such as ecstasy or speed”.

4.11.0 Drug Induced Paranoia

Some users talked about the paranoia of repeated drug use. This was linked to judgements surrounding drug use, the illicit nature of drug taking (parents, friends,

work colleges, police etc.), and the drug-induced state itself. Generally speaking, there was an intensification of paranoia in some users when coming down; particularly when they would leave the dark enclosed venues of raves and go into open daylight, boarding public transport such as trains or driving cars. These three reports provide further insight into paranoid experiences.

(SaN): "Paranoia definitely comes into drugs. The effects of paranoia manifest when coming down off the ecstasy. You can feel the psychological effects of ecstasy changing with all of the chemicals running throughout your body. He states that paranoia arises from use of hallucinogenic substances such as acid or mushrooms. Here you can either see things which aren't real or see things that are real, but they appear bent and twisted. Paranoid hallucinations may appear to do things that in 'real life' they shouldn't. Some people can either interpret that as a good or a bad effect, depending on the person".

(CG): Gives an example where paranoia can intensify coming-down. "You can be sitting there at a table and somebody will ask you a question; and instead of just taking it at face value, you go 'oh, they meant someone else', and then their mind starts going they meant 'nah', and then they meant "this" and, before you know it you have gotten somewhere that you don't even remember the original point, but you are just thinking that everyone in the room is lying – I'm just sitting here: but they are aware of me being a dickhead, they are... Thus it appears that everyone else is talking about me and looking at me - they are all thinking it, but they are just not saying it".

(MoJ): "Paranoia is probably the biggest and the hardest one to deal with: it is the sense that everyone is talking about me, and not to me, and everyone is against me. Or I am isolated and I don't know any of these people even though they are my close friends. Who am I? And what am I doing here? You know... Yeah and the frustration of not being able to experience what I want; for instance I would want to have a good time on drugs and if I wasn't having a good time on drugs then the frustration could be the most paramount thing, and my brain telling me I am not having a good time. And I can't have a good time because what I wanted is not happening, and it is not going on right now. So then, the frustration just snow-balls, and just gets into the paranoia territory and it is like "oh well, it's your fault": if you were a better person

you would be fine. Here you are taking drugs and being anti-social -- what the fuck is going on with that? So yeah, I guess there have not been too many real negative experiences. I have never freaked out. I certainly have never lost my shit. I have never had any kind of health problems whilst on drugs. I have certainly never OD'ed and none of my friends ever have. The positive experience for me - far outweighs the negative”.

4.12.0 Afterglow

The afterglow is generally experienced for a few hours to the following days after initial consumption. Compared by some to the feeling of post orgasmic sex, there may be a sense of calmness, warmth and completeness after ecstasy use has receded. Some users continue to feel an elated state and heightened sensory experience prior to returning to baseline. Here are two examples.

(AmA): “You do get the *afterglow* which is mostly when you're scat. If you have a good time on the weekend, it's that lingering feeling that you still know that you've had a good time. You know, you still have a little smile, because you've gone out and you have had a good time. You have seen your friends. And you know the feeling when you are back to normal: then suddenly things sharpen up, and you sort of go “right, I can sort of focus”, all my thoughts are a bit more this, that and the other. Your thoughts are just sort of floating through and grazing through, and coasting through that happy glow motion, and you sort of get that ‘all right, back to reality’. Also in the afterglow, you feel the toxins leaving your system. Like, if you suddenly lost a lot of iron from your blood, you would feel, rather dizzy; you would feel a little bit floaty; you might feel like the world is floating around you, because you have lost something in your body. Now when you have had your drugs, when they reach your body, they are going to leave something in their wake, sort of, that feeling that you have lost something”.

(MoJ): “Well, often I will still feel a little bit of clarity, when I wake up, which depends on the weekend, but I still have that *little taste of the love*. And I can experience that for probably another day, and then usually after the next day, it will take a turn for the worst in my own, in the level where my psyche is at. Usually the day after for me is usually quite nice and enjoyable and pleasant as long as I don't

have to do anything too hard or stressful, and I can just float through that day with no problems, go to sleep without a worry, and it is usually the day after that I get grumpy. But usually the day after I am, I can still *see the love*, as they say, and I can still experience it, it is still something quite special. For me playing piano the next day is always very good. And being creative – I have done countless gigs the day after and haven't slept. This is a bit of a comedown thing I guess. I have gig at four in the afternoon; I have been up, all night, and all day, on drugs, drinking... whatever. It can be a big thing to worry about, but as soon as I am sitting in front of the piano playing, I just close my eyes... and that is a bit of a release for me. Definitely, I often do my best work when I am coming down, on piano – and being creative, especially playing Jazz because it is improvised bass. I find that I often have deep epiphanies playing music when I am coming down, and I often find that the connection that I have with musicians is a lot deeper and that, everybody seems to play better – which is funny. And even me, I have often had the best gigs when I am coming down, yeah”.

4.13.0 Top Shelving

Although oral ingestion is the most common form of ecstasy consumption, parachuting (crushing up pill in tissue soaking it in water, cutting off ends and dropping parachute), snorting, smoking, sprinkling it onto marijuana cones ('snow coning') and injection ('banging up' or 'blasting' pills) are some of the alternative routes of parenteral administration (administration by any other means than the mouth). This section describes anal administration, known as 'top shelving' (also shelving or shafting), which is thought to accelerate and heighten effects of ecstasy. The association appears to be linked to 'top shelf' spirits (superior quality), as anal administration produces the most efficacious effects due to the rapid absorption of the drug through the blood vessels of the anus.

(MM): "I haven't done that, but I know people who have gone the top shelf. It's like a depository, and if you put it in there it multiplies the effect by three. The good thing about it is that I always spew of every pill. When I spew off this one, I don't ever lose any of it, because it is still inside (laughs) -- it's in the oven! I have a mate in Canberra and his mate is a prostitute, who I went to school with and anyway, I made a new friendship with her, but her boy-friend told me that – he was straight as like 'Straighty-180', and he tried lots, and now all he does is every weekend, he takes

three pills and puts it in his arse at once (laughs)... and he sits there gurning in a corner, so that he can't move, so he has never gone back. OK, so I did it once, and I never really saw the appeal, and when one of my friends started doing it regularly, like having an amount in the bum, I got like a bit – standard procedure, *standard procedure*”.

(FrN): “Anyway that I can get high I will try. Generally speaking, I get my first three pills of the night is up the nose in the mouth and up the bum – I shaft them - I don't know if it works any better, but there must be a reason that people stick it up their bum. And in that respect if I am going to shaft one I make sure that I go to the toilet beforehand. Because you don't want to stick \$25 bucks up your arse and it comes out 5 minutes later – ‘top shelving’. Make sure that you don't want to crap it out, I often hear from people that they wouldn't shaft it because they would be worried about crapping it out. I find that it is quicker, even if it is in the sensation. I like it because you can feel it working; I am paying for it so I like to feel it working, even if it is not adding to my experience. Whereas with racking you can feel it in ‘the drop’, as they call it, and then you get that nasty arse taste hitting your tongue. And the other thing about racking is you spend half the night pulling pills out of your nose. If you gave me a syringe and it was a trained professional sticking it in, I would probably do it. That is the one thing – I realised as I got older that I would never do this and never do that, but it is just a drug. It is like people who do alcohol and say, I will never touch pills they're filthy, it is still a drug”.

4.14.0 Negative Drug Experiences

4.14.1 Fatigue

(HG): “I have haven't seen much of the messy side. Most of the people that I have ended up taking pills with are people who would be just as happy on the weekend and would get really tired. Most of my school friends I have gone out and taken pills, even a few years after they started taking them, and we didn't actually do them together. And that wasn't even a clubbing night and this was the difference. We went out for a music party and took drugs and went to someone else's party again and we had to work in the morning which was the first time that I took speed as well. I ended up meeting a friend, and at 7.30 in the morning we took a vow to meet each other outside

the casino for drinks, just to make sure that we both got to work, and so were at work at a quarter to ten and the boss wasn't there, so we poured ourselves beers".

4.14.2 Postloading Sickness

(FrN): "I like to take one as I am leaving the club, because going to D-D's³⁸, especially... there is nothing worse than walking home at nine in the morning, on a winters morning in a singlet. Like that was the most unbearable thing about leaving the city is the bus trip home, the next morning. So when I started dealing I always made sure I had one for the trip home. And I always used to get sick, because I would run around in a singlet, because I was exposing myself to the elements. My tonsils used to flare up. Like if you had a bit of Hubba-Bubba (chewing gum), and then you blew it and you closed it, that is what my tonsils used to look like, they became so inflamed. And I used to take a cold medication Sunday through to Thursday. By Thursday everything was better again – ready for Friday night pills".

4.14.3 Saying 'Goodbye' when Coming Down

(DrP): "The worst experience that I ever had was probably just seeing friends and saying good bye to friends in the morning. They would say they are going to have some more pills and that we should come along. I can't imagine why you would want to keep going, there would have to be an end to it. That's why I would never hang out with those people, I never knew how or where they ended up, but once day light hit... as soon as I felt tired and felt like I started needing sleep, then I used to just get in a cab and go home. And the people I took it with were on the same wave length as well. I never had any peer pressure to go further, even though I had money and the finances to do it, and I had access to the drugs, maybe because I was a late bloomer, I was probably about thirty-thirty one. I mean I am a high school teacher and I often bumped into ex-students and that made me realize that I have just got to be careful here so, I was lucky to get away with what I did in many respects. So I don't have any experiences with the really bad side of it, most of our friends we all got married and had kids and it all just faded away".

4.14.4 Stress on the Body

³⁸ D-D's is a popular Day-club (opens around 7am-12am) in the Sydney CBD.

Regular use of ecstasy and the intense changes in 'life-style' would place major stress on the body. Most users I met were observant of this stress, whilst others even when experiencing adverse symptoms would continue with their consumption. One of the lighter symptoms that I observed was a nose bleed after dropping one pill. Another user (JN) experienced a wide variety of adverse effects with repeated use that would place major stress on the body e.g. throwing up regularly, weight loss, teeth grinding, skin changes (flaking, oil dryness), liver dehydration and pain in the intestines and stomach.

(CM): "Drugs put your body through a lot of stress. Anyone who takes drugs for long enough will either become completely oblivious to their body or become very in tune with it. If you're in a really bad mood, it's because you haven't slept or you haven't eaten in a certain amount of time, and you know what you need to maintain yourself. But, you have had a lack of sleep, your body knows you haven't eaten; these things put you in a bad mood. With ecstasy all the chemicals interacting with your body can often aggravate that state as well as relax your body. Generally, on ecstasy I feel fine and happy. But I have had plenty of serious drug freak-outs, including a few very scary ones, which have been triggered by ecstasy. So there is a period on ecstasy when your already anxious and stressed and social circumstances are very awkward sometimes, particularly with people who you don't know. Because you have been hanging out for them for two days, you have just met them, you're hanging out with them, everything is going good, but you forgot their names, your stressed, it's an awkward enough situation to hang out with people that you have just met for long time. Then you add drugs in the mix, and anything can happen, hey.... But even after ten hours that is enough stress; it doesn't need to be two days".

4.14.5 Gurning Out

(CG): "Negative experiences tended to happen more as you built up tolerance. The fact is that it wasn't necessarily that on that particular night you were in a shitty state. On ecstasy a shitty state of mind can mean that the drug doesn't do anything for you, right, or it might just make you Gurn-out, so that you are lying with your eyes closed for two hours".

4.14.6 Fighting on Drugs

It is about three hours into a major rave 'Utopia' when I walk outside the dance floor to cool down and get some fresh air. The chill out area is spacious at these large scale events which can regularly hold more than 10,000 people. Outside there are two large groups in a verbal altercation that has developed into a large scale gang fight. Many of the ravers are standing around in disapproval shouting out, that you don't come to a rave to fight. One of the young men standing nearby remarks that they must have had 'angry pills'. He looks sincere – I ask if he thinks they are not on ecstasy, but he insists that they are angry pills that make you that way. The fight is quickly broken up by security that comes running in. In the next few minutes one of the major organizers steps into the middle of the two groups – looks at them both and tells the security to throw them out. They are then ejected from the premises.

(LiM): "People forget the time when the drugs just make you have a shit night, because you didn't eat that dinner and your stomach is ruined and you have to go home. They forget at times that they don't work as they should, they forget times that their friends get into trouble because they are trying to buy drugs, or, while using drugs at a venue you go out somewhere else while you are on drugs and you want to keep going and you go to dodgy and dodgier places because they are open later and later. And you put yourself at more risk. I have had to be a witness in brawls on Oxford Street, because people ironically, high on the ecstasy pills, are fighting. The cops were interviewing me and the interesting thing is that the guy that was involved in the brawl, used to go to my primary school. I was out with this group of Irish people, two girls and a guy, he started a fight with Irish people, and then the taxi driver got in, and the bouncer had to bash one of them. The cops came up to them, I had to give my name, and that guy's name which is 'L'. Ecstasy does not always bring out the best in everyone - no – I think it goes much deeper than that. But, yeah you can meet people and have a wonderful time with them, but they are the type of people, usually you have the best times with people who are strangers".

4.15.0 Radical Collapse Experiences

I observed a number of ravers collapse, which may have been due to a combination of influences such as: bad pills, over consumption, intense-dancing (overheating and exertion) and dehydration. The following account is from a young female raver who collapsed and ended up in a critical state.

(CeL): “I was at a rave and I collapsed. I thought it was a good thing that people cared for me when I was obviously in trouble; if I was left alone - I would have died. It was a good thing that there were lots of people who actually cared. ‘A’ got one of his friends to take me to the bathroom, because I was barely capable of walking, but then she left me in the bathroom – and I stumbled out of the bathroom in the chill-out area and passed out on the floor, then he saw me and carried me to the first aid room. But everyone was so high that they were incapable of common sense... Because I used to treat the rave scene as escaping my problems, and having a fantastic time, and escaping reality, and all that kind of stuff. But then after that experience I saw it as fucked up, and people just taking drugs, and you know, I just thought that the whole thing was fucked up, and I didn’t want anything to do with it - for a very long time. It took me a very long time to come to terms with it”.

4.16.0 Drug Induced Psychosis

Psychotic episodes may occur in the ecstatic experience or when coming down. Here are three reports.

A Man acting as a Dog

(CG): “There was no violence in PC (venue) and there was never any fighting. I only ever once saw fighting inside there and that was because there was a guy who was on some sort of speed psychosis or something and he just went ‘skitz’ (Australian slang for schizophrenia). A young man had climbed onto the bar and began howling and acting like a dog. And the bouncers were chasing him... he was on Ice or something. He was just fucked as he was in some sort of form of psychosis. Once again it goes back to what’s in the drugs themselves; everybody reacts differently to different substances in their body. And drugs basically alter your perspective and your view on everything. In some senses it doesn’t take much for someone to ‘Snap’ and to really start ‘freaking out’ and saying things which they shouldn’t say or they don’t mean to say, it just comes out”.

An Elaborate Conspiracy

(CM): “I’ve had some pretty bad ones. One night I had been ‘on’, and I had had a pill, and we were at Vortex which is an Industrial/Rock place – POWER NOISE – it’s like

PPPHHHTTHHH, off beat rhythms and stuff, very loud and very hard, not that danceable, with a bit of a beat. A place full of people dressed up in ridiculous over-the-top outfits like shoes and platforms, and feathers... But it is a bit of an intense environment, and I was a bit out of it, I had one pill and had a mad time, twenty minutes later I had a second pill... I usually take pills 20 – 40 minutes apart, that way the first hits and then the second one hits and you keep that peak for longer; I was the first one to turn to powder in the bag; I have all the powder so that it comes on a lot stronger. And I was going through some personal issues at the time and stuff, I ended up using all of the people whom I was very close with and my best friends and some serious betrayals like, like ridiculous conspiracies. I was a bit paranoid at the time; I had a little problem with paranoia using lots of speed. In the weeks before that, using all this big elaborate conspiracy, involving a whole heap of people. For a week I was terrified for an entire time. Fortunately, I had good friends so it was all OK”.

Playing Mind Games

(RoB): “I think that most of the madness stuff comes from playing games with your own head, and running scenarios like: “what if this was to happen? What if this was real? What of the other? Or what if this situation was occurring? And they start playing those ‘what if’ scenarios, and once the conception and the paranoia sets in, those ‘what if’ scenarios become way more scary and realistic and they start to pull your head apart. And I have watched different people fall apart massively. Like their brain works in ‘what if this’, ‘what if life was like this’, or ‘what if this was happening’. What if I was this? – So they were playing scenarios or head-games with themselves”.

Section 5. Social Interaction

5.1.0 Ecstasy Interaction

This section gives brief examples of the changing social dynamics engendered in the drug-induced state. Both reports are indicative of a heightened narcissistic empathy and positive reinforcement of desires.

(AuA): “You are more open to what people need to do it’s like, “I need to this”, “Ok” *boom* [clicks fingers], and you understand that that is going to make them, *feel a lot better* in the way that they are feeling at the moment. Like if I need to go and get some water now. You understand their needs. You might go your separate ways for a while and meet up later on the dance floor. It’s like I totally understand what you are going through that’s cool – do it and we’ll meet up later”.

(AgA): “Like when you are sitting outside for a while. And you want to keep sitting outside smoking cigarettes and that person wants to go for a dance, ‘cause they heard a mad song. And you’re like “OK I will catch up with you in a second” and your happier being there on your own even, because that’s what you want to do and the other person wants to do something else. Sometimes you really get conflicts about that. But usually it’s like let them be. Let it go. That’s cool. Nobody goes “don’t do that”. *Sweet* just let it go”...

5.2.0 Intimacy on Ecstasy

With the increased empathy, ego dissolution, opening up and active touch – what some users refer to as PLURRING, there may arise a strong sense of intimacy.

(CM): “A big part of ecstasy is intimacy, different people who take the same drug will respond differently, it affects their personality – so if the person likes to cuddle - they are going to want that more on ecstasy; but some people will have physicality issues and they will show they care by hanging out and sharing and talking. Some people respond negatively to intimacy”.

(StM): “I don’t know about the intimacy and all of that. No because I wasn’t happy with him, so I don’t know if ecstasy can really change that right when it really comes down to it, so sure you would be more affectionate towards one another, but in terms

of true intimacy, I don't think so, because I didn't want that. I probably only felt something close to that the first couple of times. And then after that I can't even imagine feeling that way with other people".

(AmB): "I noticed changes in my relationship with my partner and my friends as you could no longer end up in cuddle-puddles with people – as this becomes less appropriate as you develop intimate relationships with other people... Cuddle-puddles (*'puppy-pile'*) are everywhere at raves. Its where there are guys and girls lying all over each other sucking pacifiers, giving back rubs, passing teddy bears around and feeling *all warm and fuzzy*... For me doing cuddle-puddles would stop trust from building in a relationship, as things can happen and the line moves".

5.3.0 E-Talk

Drugs may have any number of possible modifications in linguistic performance and comprehension. The example below reflects what (DiH) identifies as 'E-talk'. In this state there is recognition that there is a linguistic change in emotional openness and exuberance and overall conversation flow. These modifications of psychic equilibrium may be seen as emotional exuberance felt as an irresistible compulsion to talk fervently and communicate. Merkur (1998: 20) sees this as a phantasy which interrupts the temporal perception and concomitantly translates this apprehension into a semantic performance. Recognition of these changes may lead to generation of neologistic terms such as 'E-Talk' to describe these fluctuations. The ensuing reports provide several variations in linguistic modalities.

(DiH): "'E talk' is random conversations with random people. Meeting someone and just talking about any sort of bullshit that comes into your mind: a Star Wars film, the state of the nation, or how you're feeling. Like the amount of conversations that I have started with randoms when I was so fucked - shit! "What are you on tonight?" It's just incredible! And you hear about it all of the time. And it is just about expressing yourself and just talking about anything and not feeling, troubled or concerned or worried, or stressed about anything, you just talk. That was me in the traditional days, being the extraverted person I was - I always loved meeting new people, regardless of their race and their sexuality and their gender or any other bullshit issues that we take seriously in real life: just talking to people because they

are there. I have started conversations with people who were having a good time, to people who were looking a bit sad, to a bit sick. It starts by itself when you are having a good time. You just go up and say 'hey! How are you doing, I'm T. How is your night going? You know'. And you can just work your way up by just starting a non-threatening conversation, to get a laugh in a matter of moments. And I suppose that is some of the beauty of it, it is something that you can just do".

5.3.1 *Compulsion to Talk and Nonsense*

The compulsion to talk or say anything on ecstasy can be overwhelming. (AuE) "I know I do on pills, this is what I do when I am on pills, I cut people off, and I can't listen to other people off. I have to talk, and I will be talking to myself... Like, *I have to talk*". Alternatively, certain linguistic utterances may appear as nonsensical, illogical or incomplete when someone on ecstasy is trying to comprehend others. For example (SoC) explains "and the conversations that you are having just seem like blah, blah, blah"...

5.3.2 *Random E-Conversations*

Certain users report an excessive efflorescence of ideas and a desire to talk on ecstasy. Merkur (1998: 16) notes that these states often reflect a desire to communicate emotional exuberance rather than clearly communicate ideas (in contrast to perspicacity, clarity and intimacy). Here are three examples.

5.3.3 *Random Things*

(WW): "It is just such random things that you say on ecstasy. So if you said something really stupid like: someone you know, but not necessarily that much, looks like so and so, looks like someone, leading on from no conversation; and this is the first thing that you said to them in a while, their conversation would probably pitch in for another 15-20 minutes about the detail and how or why you thought this, why it is important, and why. It would end in a justification of what you just said, being like: "it is not because I am fucked – I actually think this"... It's obviously because *you are fucked*. A lot of things you think back when you are speaking about and you say yep, that's valid it's not crappy-speak. You are not talking gibberish; its actual things but, they're almost too abstract for everyday conversation or conversation with someone that you don't know that well".

(RoB): “If you don’t know them, it just means you’re more likely to make a fool of yourself. Like it doesn’t really matter, heaps of people just start talking randomly to the person next to them, and just like, ‘I-love-you-man’, it’s like ‘I don’t even know your name’. I have stopped in mid-sentence, and I have no idea of what I was about to say, I have no idea of who you are, I’m sorry. Mid-conversation, I’m just left, I don’t know what I was saying, and who you are, and what is going on. ‘Oohhh, this is embarrassing – blah, blah, blah – blah, blah, blah’”.

5.3.4 *Talking Shit*

(HG): “I always felt I was trying to get across a point where I was obviously talking shit, because people were just like “uuhhh, what the hell are you talking about”. Um, not often though I think that only happened to me once or twice, but I have never felt like, that I got the sense that it was the drugs that were talking, with ecstasy. Actually with any drug taking, but with ecstasy, I have never had that experience where, it may decrease my inhibitions to talk about some things, but they were things that I would have talked about anyway. That I might talk more about it but, but I never got the sense that it was ‘THE DRUGS TALKING’!”

5.4.0 *‘Cracking’ when Talking*

Not all ecstasy induced conversations exhibit the smoothness of PLURRING. This case shows how ‘cracking up’ leads to a breakdown in the ability of users to reciprocally understand each other’s point of view.

(WW): “Cracking up is when you do not have all of the elements that you need to carry on a conversation. When I ‘crack it’, I can’t ‘decipher’, so I leave the conversation. I may realise that I have imagined people saying things that they haven’t or that I believe that I have made something up; it’s also when I can’t work out what is right or wrong. In this state you’re the one who is fucking up a conversation for everyone else. So it’s when you can’t decipher who is talking shit or not, that’s when you lose your brain – and I give up. Some people keep going and they are like “NO I’M RIGHT!” I just go – ‘no, I’m out. I’ve got nothing. I’ve got no brain, sorry’”.

5.5.0 Connections on Pills

Profound connections and bonds are often formed in the primary duration (plateau and/or comedown) of ecstasy use. These reports illustrate the power and desirability of such experiences.

5.5.1 Deeper Connections

(MoJ): "Well for me I guess it is like the ability to let the guard down, to take away those blocks and the walls and just having the ability to be completely open to anything and anyone. And then to just developing some kind of appreciation for whatever the hell they are going to say, and however they feel. Also, I think that is a socially specific point, so that if there is one point of focus in a room. At some point if that person knows what they are doing. Or they know how to control a crowd or whatever, or they are trying to tailor an experience. The people invariably are going to accept whatever that focus of attention gives them. And they will be elevated especially by drugs in that experience. Surrounded by people that they love or whatever or even just a room full of 'randoms' - like 300 people in a room listening to one DJ, that is a focus of attention. Like that guy is not going to do it for you; you are either going to love or hate him. Cause there is that one focus of attention. Although, someone else may be at a party where the focus of attention is a lot more varied; I think that experience is completely different. I don't think there is a moment of complete interconnectedness with all of those people, because there is no one focus of attention; I guess I am going to get a little bit Hippie on you now and talk a little bit about, mind projection and the ability of people who are a bit loose in a room to connect with each other beyond physical realms, or whatever. To me - intuition - like a spiritual intuition, it's like you are no longer faced with a person in front of you, if anything you are just around another soul and that soul is just projecting their feelings and you are acknowledging those. I have had many times, however trivial they may be, where you sort of turn to someone and you look at them and they look you in the eye. And you look at each other and you both say the same song at the same time. Or you both go "beer" - there is some kind of instant acknowledgement of the fact that you can actually think the same thing at the same time just by looking at each other and by being in each other's presence. And for me it is something that I really enjoy, is finding that intuition. It is a very rare thing for me to find people who can deal with it, who can deal with the idea that it is possible, even with people who are fucked up

on drugs of psychic ability and all of that kind of thing. I was brought up with all of that stuff, so for me it is however seriously you want to take it sort of thing. I definitely feel the empathy, and I know that feeling where there is an instant recognition that you have similar thoughts at the same time, and similar feelings you know. But, if you put people in a room and stick them on drugs and let them talk at some point or another there – that point is it's going to happen, it is inevitable, and that's probably, whether or not it is intentional or not, yeah”.

5.5.2 *Connections Leading to Bonds*

(CG): “You walk up to the people and you meet other people that are feeling in the same way, on the same night and when you meet that person, they are feeling the same way and you are both on that same wave length, and you can instantly connect with somebody, like on that wave length”.

(ChA): “I had a different feeling. And the closest I ever got to that feeling on ecstasy was I used to play ice hockey and I was playing with a team of guys that I didn't like and every time we scored a goal we would be like yeah, hugging and going yeah! The same thing with drugs you go into phases they are your best mates, you score a goal and you get that same sort of *Yeah* and you're all acting stupid. And that is the exact same feeling that I got from ecstasy but it lasted longer than ten seconds of scoring at the goal. It lasts for you know... the way that I describe it is like scoring a goal, and like – you are suddenly friends with people that you don't like, you start making friends really quickly and you start making your life story and shit like that, it's like a connection sort of thing”.

5.6.0 *Empathy and Sympathy*

5.6.1 *All Encompassing Empathy*

The empathic effects of ecstasy are widely known (Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994). In the ecstatic state more than mere sympathy is felt by the user, who without losing their identity is able to feel “within” the other (Metzner and Adamson, 2001: 186). In his typology (type 13) of ecstatic states Merkur (1998: 125) outlines the features of the ‘Empathic Mode’ of unitive phenomena. Here, the user is observing the effects of other's behaviour very closely, so that there is a heightened sense in the imagination and feeling of other's emotional states. “At the same time, the experience of empathy

with the other person is brought to union with the self through an emotional response to the other person's feelings (Ibid. 125).

(DiH): "You feel a loving sense of empathy with everyone around you, even complete strangers that you have never met before".

(EnD): "Empathizing. Seeing what you have in common with someone. Sharing, experiences. Laughing! Being happy for that person to be in the world" (laughs).

(MoJ): "The 'D & M' factor – the *deep* and *meaningful* conversation. I can certainly recall a number of instances, listening to a friend explain what they had considered the wrong things that they had done in their life. And how they were such a bad person for having done those things and having *empathy* for them immediately. As such being able, to just totally accept who they were and their experience and what they were trying to get off their chest. There was another time we were having a deep and meaningful, and uh, one of my friends was talking about how he was sexually abused as a child. And I don't know whether it was empathy or sympathy I felt, I guess it's a fine line. It is a bit of a double edged sword with the ecstasy thing, because you feel pretty much empathetic with everyone about everything. But you also have that emotional side of it: the love and sympathy factor. It is certainly like "wow, I know exactly what you are talking about". I guess it is hard for me to differentiate my empathy and sympathy for people in certain situations. I guess the sympathy is only when it is a negative thing that arises. The empathy has occurred innumerable amounts of times I guess. When you *connect* with someone, and you can just talk about anything, although I am sure there is a point where empathy comes into play".

5.6.2 Ambiguous Empathy

(LiM): "For me it is *not* putting my-self in someone else's shoes. I don't believe I can ever do that. Even when I am on drugs I don't try and do that. After being around a lot of people on drugs, ecstasy makes me feel like I can understand other people. It does make you want to talk to other people, to understand them - to be in their shoes. This is the part that misses most people – the actual action of going over and talking to someone who you usually wouldn't or just a stranger, that you wouldn't otherwise, if

you weren't on drugs. It is that part of wanting *to be* with others rather than wanting to understand them. Most people want to understand others after they have been with them. And most people are scared of people they don't know; like in Australia it is Muslims etc. In making you want to talk to other people, that is where the empathy actually comes from. In wanting to talk to other people – you can begin empathize with them”.

5.7.0 Inhibitions and Blockages: Maximum Restraint and Reduction of Inhibitions

I noticed after interviewing one informant (CG) that a number of other users would be cautious and paranoid about ‘indicating’ to others that they were on ecstasy. I observed another user telling a random not to suck on a lolly pop in the club – as this was a blatant way of ‘indicating’ to others that you are on drugs. From the second example given by (CG) it appears that the word describes actions that disclose one is on ecstasy – so users and non-users would urge or demand that the user maintain the bodily comportment of ‘normality’, i.e. the non-drug state. The metaphor may also be linked to the technological environment of the Sydney metropolis – indicating being an action undertaken when driving to show other drivers what one is planning on doing on the road.

5.7.1 Maintaining Control

(MoJ): “I know those people quite well. One of my very good friends from Canberra is exactly that kind of person. He maintains face – no matter what. They are all about that I am in complete control; I can take as many pingers (pills) as I want, and I can do anything that any normal person can do at any time. They have no qualms with talking to the police, or doing stuff like that. They have got no worries performing day-to-day tasks that seem difficult when you're off your face. They don't think about that, they just do it. And I admire that – but those people don't tend to have as good a time, and for me I feel sorry for those people, because they don't seem to have as good a time. They can't seem to let go, they are too worried about the impression that they are giving to everybody else”.

(CG): “This one time I was at the club when I had just gone outside for a cigarette. They had just introduced a complete smoking ban inside the club, so I went outside to smoke a cigarette. I was just standing there, looking cool, probably on the phone

talking to somebody non-stop and just going slowdown man, slowdown. And I walked back into the club and the bouncer just stops me. I had spoken to him a few times before. He just stops me and basically says like “you’ve got to stop indicating”. “You know your turning left, when you mean to turn right, just indicating all over the place. Just stop indicating”. And I was like “sweet-as”. That was probably the moment where I was like “shit - I’ve got to make a conscious effort here to inhibit myself. I used to go out with mates, when I was 15-16 and just get shitfaced, just walking around Balmain for three or four hours, stumbling around causing havoc. And nobody really went ‘oh, what the fuck are you doing that for’, unless it was something really stupid. And then when you start going to pubs, you walk into a club you have to act in a certain way. You have to hide it to a certain degree; you have to hide what you are doing, because otherwise you get kicked out”.

(FrN): “You feel that you can just walk up and talk to people, and you come across the occasional dickhead who has this complete tough guy or bitch mentality. And its like are they like that because of the way the drug has affected them, or they are ‘way up’ (high – peaking) so you can’t approach them. The majority of people have a good time on it; and you will see all these people who stick out like sore-thumbs, and they act completely anti-social, and especially given the circumstances, where does this closed personality come from”?

5.7.2 Losing Inhibitions and Ego Selectivity

(PenT): “I found that E helped me and a number of other people ‘come out of their shell’, shaping me into the person I am today. Although I used to be a big nerd at high school coming into the scene really helped me to lose my inhibitions and just talk to anyone about anything”.

(MM): “Ecstasy reduces your inhibitions to really open up and put your heart entirely on the line: you say some of the most beautiful things that you could ever imagine”.

(SaN): “Ecstasy definitely has to do with your emotions and losing your inhibitions. When you’re on drugs you become more open, to be able to speak and stuff and be able to open-up and talk about things that have been troubling you. Sometimes you just can’t control your emotions. I’ve had it happen to me a couple of times, just for

some reason you just start crying, but there is no good reason for just actually crying. You just cry. Or you may start laughing, which may become uncontrollable”.

(DiH): “With ecstasy and most drugs, I find that you do lower your inhibitions and you feel a lot more comfortable. You can also be very selective as you can approach some people and have a good conversation with them. Or there are other people that you might want to avoid: even when you are feeling very high, warm and cuddly”.

(DrP): “I think that ecstasy lowers your inhibitions even more so than alcohol: to be open to having conversations. I remember the first time that I took E hanging out and I remember meeting this girl and I just wanted to massage her shoulders. I didn’t even know her. And it wasn’t so much sexual I just had a bond, I remember just wanting to show her, I want to massage you – this really strong desire to give her a back massage”.

5.7.3 Further Ego Softening

(AuA): “I generally think it is still lowering the inhibitions. I get like that. The next day I am like ‘ohh, why did (I say so much) - that was too much information’. Like imagine telling everything, this is what has happened to me in 20 years of being alive *bah, bah, bah!* When you normally talk to someone you omit certain details that you don’t think are appropriate for that person that you just met or whoever your talking to in such a situation and then that sort of barrier gets lifted, and you don’t worry about omitting details which are *probably not that appropriate* for someone you have just met. And you tell them everything, it’s like you have never talked to anyone before in your entire life and your tongue was cut out and you’ve just got one back and it’s like boob-ba-boop-ba-boop. Definitely the next day: aaaohr NO! I hope I never see that person ever again!”

5.8.0 Strangers: Randoms

People taking ecstasy at large scale clubs and raves would generally not know each other. The term for unfamiliar users is ‘randoms’. Some users would have numerous conversations and interactions with randoms over the course of a night, with some users collecting large quantities of random phone numbers in their mobiles. Other users would engage in deeper interactions with random strangers due to the opening

up, intimacy and pursuing general PLUR type experiences (especially ecstatic dancing and random conversations). But not all users articulate this as such.

(WW): “When you do pills you are usually in a group of people who plan to do it together, which has probably done it before; obviously you make new friends as you always do when you are out on pills. Sometimes I think that paranoia sets in when you don’t know who other people are. It’s just that thing of not wanting people to touch you, if you don’t want someone to speak to you. I think that is when randoms really make you a bit ‘antsy’ and you do not have a good time. It can send you into a bad place sometimes. Either they are received really well, and you make friends, or it doesn’t go very well. If you have got someone who is clearly underage, and have done it for the first time and is clearly off their chops, they may be grabbing you going ‘WHAT’S YOUR NAME, I’M ON EEE’, I’m like ‘oh, don’t touch me, please’. There is a point where you go, ‘I know where you are coming from, and it’s alright. But I just don’t want you to touch me right now’. Yeah it sometimes gets a bit; yeah it’s also more noticeable the day after (scatting out). I’ve had it all the time day after when, I’ve been with people who I’ve planned to be, and instantaneously I’ve been ‘I’ve got to leave. I’ve got to go home. Like I can’t be here right now, I have to fix my being somehow’; I either have to be certain people to fix it that weird feeling the day after, I think”.

(HG): “I have never had some random stranger come up to me and go ‘oh you’re great can I give you a hug’. I have never really experienced that *per se*”.

5.9.0 Kissing and Pashing

With the increased sensitivity and focus in the oral region prolonged kissing and pashing were actively pursued by certain users at specific points of the night. I observed a number of girls playing and experimenting with bi-sexuality on ecstasy. One anonymous male Ice user (early 20’s) told me his two straight male friends got intensely sexually excited pashing on Ice, which turned him off the drug.

(SaN): “Yeah, most definitely... pashing or kissing *is special* and is something that you would often remember: people can just stand there pashing forever. It can start becoming too much of a thing where you can start – well - kissing everyone. Well it’s

not so much in guys, as in guys kissing everyone, as guys kiss girls. Occasionally a guy would kiss another guy. It wouldn't be that common. And sometimes, just like kissing one after the other”.

(HG): “I have never had drugs and sex – so I have never done ‘Sextasy’. I have kissed on the come-down. While I was doing it at clubs I never really thought about pashing someone while having my own kind of moment with the music. I have pashed people on ecstasy after the peaks done. But even then, no – it wasn't that different. I was kind of indifferent to it – the girl I was kissing was also my boss and I didn't actually find her that attractive beforehand. But, for some reason I thought it was a great reason to pash her at the time - I think she decided it was a great idea to pash me. Um, and, well the experience definitely wasn't bad but, I don't remember it being incredibly different. I think it was more just doing something while I was coming- down as well”.

5.10.0 Voyeurism

Voyeurism was a highly pleasurable activity during the ecstatic experience. Whether watching others, lasers, smoke etc. many informants commented on their desire to watch and look at others on ecstasy.

5.10.1 Heightened Visual Perception

I am sitting at PC (venue) with (AmB) on a bar facing the dance floor. She is about two hours into the pill. I ask about what sort of effects one gets when taking ecstasy. She replies that there is any number of changes in the way that you look at things, in the way that your attention is focused on things and in the way you interpret them. I ask for examples of this. She says that last Friday she was sitting outside (across the road from the venue) when she noticed all of the minute small cracks in the wall. She further explains that things like this which may seem trivial in day-to-day life can take on a new significance allowing you to see things differently. As we are sitting on the table she looks up into the lights, lasers and smoke that envelop the dance floor. She says that the way that she sees is affected by the feeling of the ecstasy. Everything looks so much better. Everything is so much better.

(AdaM): “A lot of people would sit there and stare at the lasers, for example, I don’t know how much damage it has probably done to your eyes. I remember one time that the lasers basically are in a flat line and there was the laser at eye level, so I spent a while looking up above and down below the laser so and I was just mesmerized by the patterns the smoke was making. As the lasers have gone through the smoke, basically the smoke was moving and the lasers were fairly steady. It’s not so much that you see anything differently, but you notice it more. Your perception of everything that is happening is sort of – seems like it is heightened I guess. You just – it is a completely different experience to anything that you have ever experienced before, and you just want to soak in as much stuff as much as you can”.

5.10.2 Watching Others

It is around 5.00am at PC (venue) I have sat down after a long set of dancing. My muscles are hot from the exertion. I drink a glass of cool water. I am watching the dance floor – looking at how various people’s styles of dancing move with the music. I look around the rest of the room. There is an older raver who is sitting across from where I am sitting. He doesn’t say anything – but I can feel an unpleasant look. It’s as if he is pissed off that I have been dancing longer than him. I begin to think about how there may be egoism attached to who can dance the longest and hardest. He is nodding his head and looking at me with disapproval. His girlfriend is looking at him offering him comfort – as if to say it’s alright – you done well. Here is another example of watching.

(StM): “And y’know I would sort of just watch everyone else, because we used to when we used to go to parties and stuff, we used to end up splitting up anyway, and once in a while we would re-group, and someone would find someone else, and you would sit here and massage each other or hug and stuff like that”.

5.10.3 Watching and Analysing

(LiM): “It is hyper-real. You remember every detail of the cut or the dress or the form of the movement, the sense of the visuals coming into the fore. This is, even when I see people, and what they are wearing, you can get a sense of fetishism sometimes, you can go “wow”, you can see, you know if someone is wearing something strange or something, very fitting for their body, you can look at it and you can remember it,

and go that is a good outfit. You have a chat about it for 10 minutes or something, or your girlfriend about what that person is wearing and how that shirt works on them, or blah, blah, blah – this and that. You can fetish about other people. My girlfriend and I especially enjoy this part when we are on drugs, just talking about how other people interact; and the conventions between the sociological and the rules of where they are dancing. My girlfriend and I would analyse this and have a discussion for an hour or two, sometimes just sitting there and having, a look at this guy over there. We would give them nicknames, they would move around and if the guy got slicked back it is Mr. slick-back, or what-not. It does make things clearer sometimes. It can make social rules and conventions, the way people's mannerisms, when they are on drugs it all becomes very clear, if you're in the right setting if you're the frame of mind to look at those kinds of things. Most people aren't. Most people just want to get drugged up most of the time- even myself, just have a bit of a dance and you know go and keep drinking; have a few drinks and what not. If you're in the mood in can also give you a good tool to look at relationships and how people interact, these kinds of things”.

5.11.0 Drug Etiquette

Several informants commented on the respectful etiquette in the drug scene. For example, whenever people would accidentally bump into one another or touch in PC (venue), they would immediately apologize and say ‘sorry, have a good night’.

(CM): “The first rule of drug etiquette is that when you are high on drugs it is the only time you are allowed to lick someone else's property. It comes from, racking up lines of speed on a plate; we used to have a big long list of rules that are drug etiquette. One of them is licking their plates and their CD cases and stuff, because there is speed on it; I wouldn't normally lick a CD-case, but when it is covered with drugs it's alright, when we're high. And one of those other things is rubbing the thighs of someone that you just met in a purely non-sexual way. If you're talking to them and getting really closer, and putting the hands on the leg and you just give them a hug, there is nothing bad about it, you just do it, male –female it doesn't matter. You can't do that normally, you can't look in the eye of someone that you have just met and talk about personal issues; you can look at them and say I think you're beautiful. Normally, the person is not going to be receptive to these things. That goes in reverse as well; you would not be receptive to those things. If someone came up to you and started rubbing

your leg and telling you, you are beautiful, or you would be talking to them for an hour when they started doing it, you would be a bit taken back, even if it is someone that you know really well”.

5.12.0 Sitting Down

Many of the ravers/ clubbers would sit and socialise on the floor, especially in the outdoor/ indoor “chill out” areas where there was no seating. Most users would either sit down at some point during the evening to relax, cool-down, talk, watch, meet people, hug or kiss etc. At raves, participants were not allowed to sit at certain events on the edge of the dance floor, even when exhausted from dancing, they would be told to move on or stand-up by security. Some users would simply sit and watch, talk and touch or sit back and enjoy the drug experience.

(SoC): “Sometimes sitting down is just like the best thing, to lie sitting on your arse with a few people around you, just looking up at the sky, just looking at each other and talking. It is like the best feeling that you can have”.

(HB): “There are other times when you just want to sit there and you just can’t be fucked talking, you just want to have a good time”.

5.13.0 Positive Evaluations of Authenticity

One informant expressed that he never believed anything that anyone says on ecstasy, as it is ‘the drug talking’, and ‘not the person’. Users differ as to whether or not ecstasy lowers your inhibitions, opening up and ‘amplified’ genuine sentiments that could not be expressed otherwise; or whether the ‘E-talk’ was largely false.

(ChA): “I see ecstasy as more as an amplification of your personality, rather than being on it as being manufactured: I don’t know. I have met up with people who I have, best mates for the night thing, and years after they still remember you and are like “hey”! So you might not be the greatest mates while you are on it, but you still recognize the person and you say ‘hi’”.

(MM): “Some of the nicest things that ‘J’ has ever said to me have been while we are off our faces on pills. I have never doubted the authenticity one bit. We have talked

about it afterwards. Since I was already in a relationship, it has enhanced the feelings that I have already had”.

(EnD): “Everything is real. Everything is natural - even though it’s more”.

5.14.0 Negative Evaluations: Inauthenticity

In these reports the users see the ecstatic experience as drug-induced and fraudulent.

(LiM): “On a night out you get: ‘you are such a wonderful person’; ‘you’re a top-bloke’. These are common things that you hear, ‘oh this person is great! This person is great!’ They probably mean it at the time, but you know there is a sense of coming together and liminality. At the same time there is a wide-spread sense of cynicism about it, it is very superficial as well. Yeah, as I said when people go ‘he is a great bloke, blah, blah, blah...Oh, you’re a legend’, for ten, twenty minutes, for two hours max, err, these are the people that are on drugs as well and so, you usually don’t know enough about them to take their comments more than just the sense of convention, their doing it out of convention, that’s to say that you are a great bloke. You meet someone on drugs and you have a chat to them within ten minutes it seems to be the convention for most people. For most people they take drugs and sit at the bar and come up to you and talk about stupid stuff. And for about five minutes there they are like ‘you are a great bloke, mate you are a great bloke’. You are a legend and you take it at face value - I don’t really put too much stock in”.

(PenT): “Although ecstasy helps you to get perspective on things, like the deep and meaningful discussion that you have with friends, there is a flip-side to it. So that when you are coming down, many people feel that these experiences are fake, i.e., they only happen because you are on ecstasy”.

(BeO): “It is created by a chemical that is actually ingested, which maybe, from what I have read or learned, that is affecting certain stimuli, creating an emotion where a chemical is released. All the feeling that you get and the sensations have been chemically induced and it is not based on actual physical interaction or something that is real, it is just created by some chemical. I start to analyse it too much the feelings that I get when I am on it, and I actually recognize them for what they are, and I don’t want to be governed by something, chemical, making me feel something that isn’t due

to actual interaction or a stimulus in my life, apart from something that I have just ingested. I don't want this chemical to take away from a true feeling that I have in my everyday life. I don't trust what I say or do on ecstasy. Too many people exhibit the same behaviour when they are on it. When there are a hundred people who all talking their head-off and feel this closeness or touching. Who want to touch or feel intimate, and there is a hundred people in the room all feeling intimate, and then the next day they are not like that. Or if you have known them your whole life and they didn't ever exhibit those behaviours before you start to realize that there is some common factor going on. And normally that common factor is the ecstasy or they will all be exhibiting similar behaviours, not even intimacy, they will all be talking to each other, or best friends, with people that they have never met before or strangers. It just seems too coincidental that you have hundreds and thousands of people all acting the same. And that common factor is the drug. That is probably the thing that made me realize that it is not real. Once I had realized it wasn't real, I stopped experiencing all the other stuff".

Section 6. Unity and Isolation

6.1.0 Isolation Experiences

6.1.1 Positive Isolation Experiences

(MM): “I find that when I am isolated on ecstasy - I spend time reflecting. This depends on where I am in the peak; generally before and after I think about why it is that I want to have the drug or why it is that I even go searching for this. Or what part of me, what part of my soul is searching for; what is this motivation? What is this yearning within me to have this experience? When I am on the plateau of the peak – generally I am experiencing a state of total bliss and I am like by myself. Why wouldn't I do this all of the time, why am I waiting for so long to experience this again; because this is what it is to be alive! I don't get that when I am with other people. I am too busy talking or doing; whereas when I am by myself I can just sit there and go “wow!” be talking and almost be blown away that I am here just experiencing life, without any extra religious overtones, anything of that, just forget about that, it is not even important next to the importance of *the fact* that I am here experiencing these things”.

(JaK): “I also mentioned the positive aspects of isolation – the meaning is clear – being by yourself can allow you to become aware of what your body is doing now, how it is dealing with the drug in a physical sense but also in a like: you centre yourself, and manage all of those fluctuations in the thought patterns and emotions that were a bit crazy when there was a lot of stimulation around but when you are by yourself and you are not being swamped by sensory information then you can better attend to house cleaning in your own head”.

6.1.2 Negative Isolation Experiences

(HB): “Sometimes you end up in very separate places. You are like a little island in a world. It more starts to happen towards the end of the night I find, but when people start to Scat-out, because that is when that insecurity comes on soon”.

(HG): “Like when we went to Famous, and HB was like I want to go home I feel sick and he was just standing by himself. I'm like no I have to review this club and we have to be here until 6am ... There has been nights since the pills stopped working

(dud pills), there has been nights that I have just gone straight to a rave or to a club and I just haven't connected with the people, but there has also been times where I have taken pills and I have just sat there and had people come up and go 'hey man, how's it going do you want to have a chat?' And I have just sat there and gone 'naaa, not right now man, just leave me I just want to be able to sit and listen to the music, smoke my cigarettes, and just be alone. Thanks, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to be rude'".

6.2.0 Isolation and Preoccupation

The first report illustrates an intense isolation experiences on ecstasy. In the second example (WW) explains how she preoccupies herself when alone on ecstasy by extending herself through talking and touching.

(DiH): "Yes I have felt isolated on ecstasy. I would say this is one of the bad ones, it is a substance that you don't really want to do by yourself. And you have got to make sure that you are in a good frame of mind before you take them. Because like most drugs it doesn't just change you completely, it enhances what is already there. I have had a couple of nights that I had just broken up with my girlfriend and I went to a club and I was feeling down so I take a pill and feel a bit better. But I didn't have my friends there and I felt really alone, even though there were people having a good time. Even the ecstasy couldn't make me feel better because deep down inside I was feeling quite hurt and alone and disassociated from the rest of society and the world. So my recommendation is to always make sure that you are with people that you trust and to make sure you are in a good state of mind before you take anything".

(WW): "It's rare to see someone totally fucked or by themselves; If they are, they have usually had a bad pill, or they have had a bad time; it's either, that you are occupying yourself with anything and everything, or you can't talk to anybody or anything and you have to sit in the same spot by yourself, and let it pass. I have had nights where I do not want anyone to touch me. I am not having a bad time, but like I have a friend she has – we were trying to work out why she never wants anyone to touch her. She reckons that she has ADHD, and she reckons either it is a combination of the medication that she is on, or her personality that even in her normal life that she has to be doing something, but when it has changed she does not want anyone to

touch her, she doesn't want that normalcy. We were just talking about this the other day; her nick-name is "smacky", because she sits there not wanting anyone... It is not a bad thing, she is not having a bad time, she is not pissed off at anyone, she does doesn't want the touchiness, which is interesting. Because some nights all I want to do is to talk and touch... and other times I just sit by myself and just let it pass".

6.3.0 Ecstatic Dancing

(AdaM): "When you take drugs, sometimes you will be in the mood to dance; you will just want to dance. Other times you want to sit outside and talk to someone, or just to be alone. Then some-nights you just want to do a bit of everything. I guess that's probably why a lot of people spend a lot of time outside, cause there was a lot of people who weren't in that kind of high energy type of mood".

6.3.1 Tuning In

(DrP): "I remember that dance experience being a whole new light that was the music for me that does it, that dance beat that 80-100 beats per minute was so different to Rock and Roll. I would just dance - and I am pretty fit and athletic and slim - so the tablet would come on very quickly for me; so after 15 minutes to half an hour I would be just gone; and I would just be having the time of my life probably for the next four to six hours and I would dance non-stop. I would get a sore back, and I did still have lower back pain, but that was from dancing... It was more about movement and tuning into the track that was being played. I can always remember almost certain tracks that are played now I can say, 'oh they played that just after the Kylie finished in 94'. The memory I have of the tracks whilst on ecstasy influenced the wiring of my brain to a point where it said 'I am at this moment'".

(MM): "I like when you are dancing and just the act of dancing is making these fireworks go off, and then all of a sudden you can walk outside and feel the coolness. Being up the back of a rave is such a good experience man, because you can still see all the lasers and shit. Because you have a lot of room and the people there are pretty chilled dancers and I generally find that the people that have been to more raves tend to hang up the back. I also love going up to the DJ and waving to him and you can see a smile, because he knows that you have spoken to him before and you go up front.

But you can't dance and there are people, limiting you in front and the barrier can be fun, like its dirty-dancing".

(SoC): "I don't like feeling that I am being cramped in, like you almost get – claustrophobic. Like at Daft Punk I wasn't in the Mixer I was sitting back, and there was all this room sitting in front of me, like I could sit back and enjoy it all. The Mixer is right in the mosh pit. I feel squished, and it just gets scary and it almost ruins it, because I hate feeling closed in, I like having this freedom to have my whole body around instead of having to limp it. I always find that after the festival, I just feel that after a festival that I am just a better dancer because of having all that room. Because up the back is where all the good dancing happens. But if I hear this stuff come on for the first time, and everyone goes this song sounds really cool. And I go "I FUCKING LOVE THIS SONG!" And there is certain songs that just make me fly even higher".

6.3.2 Group-Synchronisation

(FrN): "Like when I first started going clubbing, I used to just move my feet, just literally moving one foot in front of the other, back and forth; and as my experience of taking drugs in clubs continued, would just feel the music. That ability, when you lose all inhibition, that ability to move to the beat properly, where sometime you feel a bit constrained if it doesn't occur naturally to you. And I love to dance, and because I have gone out I have received a lot of compliments. And so after the ecstasy washing all over me for ten minutes I feel the desire to get out and just dance. Although I don't get the same amount of energy that I used to get out of it, I will only dance for five minutes at a time and take a rest. When I used to just dance – jumping on my feet for 8 hours or something. And the next day my calves were absolutely liquefied. Like, I couldn't even walk because I had been jumping up and down. I don't get that same consistent level of energy, I have to sit down, have a break and have a Red Bull or something".

(MM): "The interesting thing is that you will be dancing along and there will be a piece of music which is deliberately designed almost to trick you like it will the beat won't drop in, in will drop in four beats late, but you feel everyone miss the beat they are all professional dancers they have been dancing for like 8 hours at a time for four years, and everyone misses that one beat, and you can feel it across the entire dance

floor, everyone feels that I hope no one saw that. But you can feel lit without anything, like”.

(HG): “If you’re dancing to a song, and then all of a sudden they change the music from one type of music to another type of music – you may feel I don’t know how to dance to this. You’re kind of dancing, but you don’t really feel like you are doing it well, or that you are expressing yourself to the music very well. Losing yourself in that sense I found I was – I felt at least – that I was in perfect sync – with what was going on the mood and music the Bass and music – all with how I was dancing. So in my zone - for me was just being... enjoying everything that was going on with the music and I felt that I was dancing, in perfect kind of harmony with it. As compared to being distracted or tired... *tuning-in* is a good metaphor for doing the dance movements. You could stop and look around and you might open your eyes a bit and then you would see, experience what is going on around you, and the mood, the music, the smoke and the lights, but mainly it’s the God knows how many other people, dancing around you. And you kind of feel that they are experiencing it too, which is also a good thing, and then you will be able to turn to some of your friends, and then you could look at them and say ‘how good is this! This is brilliant!’ And you kind of share that, which you have your own kind of zone, and you open your eyes and you would be dancing with friends and you would be ‘Oh my God this is brilliant!’ So you would be able to share it as well. That is the Zone, so to speak, that I am talking about. I did notice lines in the dancing. And what would often happen is when you are clubbing you would be dancing and facing the DJ, and often there would be lines of people that would be dancing towards the music as opposed to other kinds of music where you are dancing face-to-face, kind of with someone, but they are next to me and they were facing the speaker zone; well in some ways I think that you are looking at the source, I mean, the source of what – like if you want to say that the music coming out and the DJ that is putting it on, is a form of expression and he’s dictating what you are listening to. I think that the idea is that you are, kind of waiting to see what they are going to do next, or having a figure for where that is coming from. Like if some really good song comes on, and I would be there to cheer at a DJ and clap them on and clap them off and a lot of people idolize a lot of DJ’s, like the famous song “God is a DJ”. People I knew like girls would end up going out with DJ or people who were becoming DJ’s”.

6.3.3 *Individualistic Dancing*

(AmA): “I would notice people dancing by themselves. With the people that I go out with, the dancing is in a circle. I don’t know why people dance by themselves. It’s just like that long continuous dancing, pointing up to the ceiling – to the beat. I kind of feel that I never really got to that ecstasy stage, that a lot of people talk about: where it is very individual, and it is all very overpowering, and euphoric and “whhoooO”. In a lot of my stages if I danced I would jump, and be very happy and very bouncy. I would get more into the movement and the beat, with somebody, rather than by myself. If I was by myself I would be sitting still, if I’m dancing, I’m dancing with people. But I think that is just because of the people that I go out with, I have always been very close to people and always dance together, and have a good time. The same people for ages, I was going out for the same people for a long time. Yeah, I can see the people who do their own little dance moves, in their own little circle, they are just in their own place. And I don’t think they would want to be anywhere else”.

6.4.0 *Individuality, Family and Community*

(CM): “When clubbing etc. becomes a regular event, people get to know who they interact with; it becomes an extended family to use a metaphor that you are there to interact with. And if you are there again, then they will interact with you again. But they may not necessary only be interested in interacting with you outside the club. There is definitely a very high communal aspect. I consider it like, it’s more like church, like Anglican Church, in that everyone goes once a week and everybody knows one another. People aren’t necessarily close, but they know who everyone is. They are friendly to each other, you can go off and have fun with them, and have a shared experience which is important. So people can be less about being individuals and more about interaction. Like they would talk to whoever is there, but they wouldn’t necessarily ring those people up to go and do stuff with. So I think what people are looking at, when they are looking at the Tribal and the community, I think once upon a time, in the Mythical land in the birth of rave which we all hear about, this might have been... this is where rave ideals are promoted – of a perfect shared experience – which is a big part of the attraction: the Summer of Love Ideal. It’s the underlying cultural ideal that people aspire to that is presented and promoted as this ‘*happy little world*’; whether that is a commercial enterprise or a reflection of what

the people involved want themselves... I'm not sure. And sometimes you get involved with stuff like that, you get a small little community and a bunch of people who come together and they are all on drugs and they use the drugs and music, and they start handing out stuff. I think that the majority of this is commercial stuff which claims to be the ideal. When an individual is involved and money and drugs - these things all get in the way. The illicit nature of drugs and drug dealing and commercialization basically destroys those communities that start forming. If you're talking about being in the scene, a lot of people talk about the reason that people go and take drugs and go clubbing is they want to go and have a good time. The majority of people want to go and have fun. And you start *doofing* - there is a community there, regular people sharing experience regularly, y' know, and I think a lot of people want it to be that family thing. And I think it can develop in certain circumstances. Personally I avoid lots of that more sceny-bigger-star family stuff, and I pick the people who I think are important and who are worthwhile and I spend time with them and with those people. They become your good friends because you will hang out with them for 48 hours, and then you will go and spend the next 48 hours or 72 hours with them, sitting in front of computers and walking around the city and laying around on floors and you share a lot with them, you sit down and you open up; and there can be some really powerful bonds made there. But I think these are unique situations, lots of people will force, because ecstasy makes you feel so strongly and drugs in general and there is this idea floating around of community and family and lots of people draw that line, they consider that they will have a few powerful conversations with someone or moments and then they start making that bigger than what that really is".

(DiH): "One of the good things in the rave scene, at least in the early days is that everyone was everyone else's friend. And if someone else was in trouble then you would have a hundred people taking care of you, or other people saying are you OK mate do you need someone else giving you water. 'Can I get you a *Chuppa Chup*' (i.e. a lolly pop)? And you have lots of concerns for people - which is very reassuring. It is almost like for people who didn't have a family at home, or a place to belong to could go to a place, have some fun and listen to great music, and find some like-minded people and feel safe in that environment. It is a very accepting; at least it was a very accepting scene".

(MM): “When you see people in the environment for the first time, some people really let go and they start taking off cloths and it’s like they in this society which doesn’t give a fuck about them, it doesn’t give a fuck about whether they are happy or not, everyone is in this rat race and they are all in it for themselves and all of a sudden they go to this club and they find all these people who are so fucking happy and are one, and they are like “oh, do you mind if I dance here?”, “don’t ask me man you are one of us, just come and dance with us” and things and all of a sudden they are just feel so liberated they just take off the shirt and go too crazy, which makes other people feel uncomfortable, they are liberated by finally finding a social group that they finally fit into. It is interesting to see a lot of older I.T. (information technology) people, I have known a fair few and like they went to PC (venue) as well, they would find that they were isolated in this city – they sat there all day and only had contact with a computer and only had – but they come to these events to feel liberated and have conversations. They feel like one and it is like the opposite of what they experience in their job. Like I know two who are really integral to a point of attending every event regardless of family, commitments or social commitments they will say this is the number one thing in my life; to hold this kind of scene together and to keep all of these friends and to make an effort outside of these events still try and keep contact and still try and keep that unity as much as possible existing all the time”.

6.5.0 Love

Ecstasy is sometimes colloquially referred to as the ‘Love Drug’. In this section I give several users’ reports where there is a direct experience or presence of love. An insightful collection of phenomenological reports is presented in Adamson’s (1985) *Through the Gateway of the Heart*³⁹. These experiences are often lived and interpreted in terms of spirituality. As I argued in the Introduction there are a number of dimensions to human existence, drug use and non-ordinary states of consciousness that is often overlooked in the materialist/ mechanistic frameworks.

(MoJ): “First of all there was the unexpected love for myself and the acceptance for myself -- finally. That was kind of scary in a lot of ways, to experience the kind of self-love that I did, especially in those early years when I was taking ecstasy, because

³⁹ A pseudonym for Ralph Metzner.

I always had issues with myself and self-loathing as opposed to self-love. So that was a big eye-opener, that it was OK to love myself ‘WOW, it’s ok’. And from there the empathy that I would have for the friends around me and the *love* seemingly deepened and it is amazing how, sometimes the drug can make you connect with people, on such a deep level seemingly, on such a deep level. You can have the same conversation straight, and people don’t connect. When they have the same conversation fucked up, and suddenly you are best friends for life and your whole outlook changes.”

(SoC): “The second time I ever did pills I met someone that day and ended up asking them out. After about two hours of talking we would just be like - everything was clicking and I was like “I think - I’m in love with you”. Of course – I wasn’t (laughs), but at the time... because I don’t like to think that, like I don’t like to rely on drugs to have emotions and feelings. I don’t let them affect me that way. Like I try not to tell people that I love them when I am on drugs, because I don’t know if that is me or if that is the drug. Sometimes I can’t tell the difference... I have nothing against that, but for me personally, I can’t bring myself to do that because I do not want to rely on a drug, to express myself. I told my current girlfriend, I won’t tell you “that I love you”. I will say nice things, because I can normally say nice things. I won’t say that “I love you” because I think that is really powerful, it the most powerful thing that you can say to someone. So for me to say it on a drug, I don’t think that it is the same”.

(CP): “You get really happy and confident. A lot of people lose track of time; there seems to be a lot more time. Like when an hour has gone past and it seems like ten minutes and apparently that’s what a lot of people have. To sum up the experience I was singing - almost like *being in love*”.

6.6.0 Unification Experiences: Being ‘One’

In their celebrated work *The Varieties of the Psychedelic Experience* (2000: 247-313) Masters and Houston documented several ‘religious and mystical experiences’ pertaining to the ‘integrative level’ of psychedelic experiences. The following phenomenological accounts do not reflect religious experiences *per se*, but do correspond to the peak experiences outlined by humanistic psychologists (Maslow, 1964; Merkur, 1998: 94) takes up this thread of thinking in constructing a number of

phenomenological typologies for thinking about discrete types of unitive phenomena. This argument is extended by Merkur's assertion, which is correct I think, that the imagination invariably accompanies perception in altered states, and thus, that these experiences represent varieties of fantasies which filter and actively construct the drug induced experience (Ibid. 1-5). In these examples we see that realistic apperception or reality testing of the external world remains active and largely intact: that is, the user is aware of the feeling of unity behind their surrounding world. In all of the examples the occurrence of spontaneous unificatory "peak" experiences are evaluated in a positive manner; although once the experience has passed the integration or dismissal of these experiences depended on the user.

(DiH): "You're there to have a good time and you do feel one, one with everyone around you, it is the experience. I suppose that is why they have the unity in PLUR (2.9.0), you don't see you're self as an individual you see yourself as one with everyone around you. And I have to say - that it feels great. So it's like, if you think of all of *the most positive things in your life*... you can just go up to anyone".

(StM): "I guess you have these little romantic thoughts where everyone is on pills, so we must all be feeling really happy and really good about each other, so one of the most common things that you would hear at a rave would be "how are you feeling?" Everyone will ask you even if you don't know them, "how are you feeling", "how are you going"? You have a sense that you are part of something bigger; that would be more or the ideal. I don't think that is really always the case, or you might feel that it stops being that way after you have been to a few of them so... It is not about you and the other person. It is about you and the music. I don't know how to verbalize it... For me, it sometimes felt like the music was an extension of what was going on inside of me, in the sense that, sometimes when you dance you can see the music; and when you are dancing, it is sort of your self-trying to - it's going to sound clichéd, it's like you are becoming One with the music right, the biggest cliché ever; there is a sense that you really get that. You know you are becoming One with the music because you are moving in time with it, that's the whole thing of it and, and your body becomes a medium for the music to flow through. So when you say you can see it, it's reflected in the way that you are moving your body. But when I say see, it is not just a visual

thing, it takes concrete form in the way that you move your body, and it becomes tangible, where it wasn't really before".

(AuE): "Everyone is experiencing the same thing... Everyone is feeling that 'One' feeling at the same time and it just brings you all closer... and it almost feels like you are one with someone else, that's what I was saying when I asked that girl out after two hours of knowing her, because the unity was just there and it felt like I was, it felt like – honestly all it felt like was that I was meant to be with this person. But then 17 hours later I was like sorry but what I did was totally inappropriate, it's not going to work out. I then woke up and saw that she wasn't all that hot".

6.7.0 *Childishness and E*

I observed a number of what appeared to be childish mannerisms when watching users on ecstasy, such as sucking, cuddling, giggling, and playing with toys. These initial observations led me to ask users if they thought ecstasy may induce regressive states such as: playfulness, suckling, pre-genital sexuality, oral cravings, omnipotence etc. Phenomenologically, it is common for users to experience noetic states where they are experiencing the 'world for the first time' as is described in AmA's report with 'child-like wonder'. In the second example, the user is actively aware of the regression to an infantile orientation where he is all loving. It seems that there are a number of regressive aspects to ecstasy use that are touched upon elsewhere in the ethnographic corpus.⁴⁰ Interestingly (and paradoxically), (MJ) continues to maintain an adult capacity for deep and meaningful communication.

(AmA): "'R' would sometimes be babbling incoherently, I think on ecstasy you are more naked and raw; or a more primitive, almost sort of juvenile, version of you. It gives you a little bit of the wonder that you had back when you were a kid - cause it just floods your brain with happy. With happy – you have neurotransmitters, so you have a slight sense of your childhood back, in the way that you perceive and interact with people. But I wouldn't say it makes you more honest, a more honest attitude would be your day-to-day inner brain... These days a lot of people are more relaxed towards exercise. So that when you are a kid you are always running around doing

⁴⁰ (e.g. fun and playfulness 1.8.0; Active touch 4.6.0; Opening up 2.8.0; Sexuality 2.15.0; Voyeurism 5.10.0; Unification experiences 6.6.0; Childishness 6.7.0).

things. So dancing for two hours when you are a kid isn't a big deal – so you don't think about it you just run around and do whatever – which is sort of what ecstasy makes you do, because it gives you childlike... sort of feeling: it surprises you”.

(MoJ): “In my ordinary life my ego is a very dominant, in terms of how I will behave and how I will react. And when I take ecstasy those reactions seem to be in some ways seem to be - feel that I am going back to a younger form of myself – regression – so it is like a childhood state, it is like: love everything, love everyone and they are smiling and they are happy and joyful all of the time. And for me it is a regression to that state, but then intellectually you may feel that you are expanding. I don't know if that is the case necessarily. But it is amazing how you can have this dichotomy of that ultimate childhood experience where everything is new and fantastic and “wow”. And the ultimate adult thing where it is I will have the most in depth and interesting conversation with this person. Also, going back to the regression thing, I also find myself, catch myself grabbing things – or doing this “*I want this now. Give it to me NOW*” - type feeling. I find that especially being in bars around other dudes, when there is the whole macho testosterone thing going on, it is like the competitive side of me comes out a little bit more in terms of just pushing in front of someone in the line, or having someone push in front of you in the line. It is not acceptable, it's not on, and I'm going to tell you it's not on – but *I still love you* – that kind of vibe”.

6.8.0 Gender Difference on Ecstasy

Many of the female informants I talked to see men as becoming ‘feminized’ or ‘childlike’, i.e. ‘cuddly’, ‘cute’ and/ or ‘affectionate’ when on ecstasy. Although there are numerous physiological changes for both sexes, some of which are discussed in this thesis, other effects are sex specific. For example, the penile shrinkage in men is comparable to the vaginal dehydration experienced by woman; as one clubber delicately put it: “I don't mean to be crass – but the snatch dries up on ecstasy”.

(MoJ): “I find that men have more limitations than woman – there is definitely a difference between the way men and woman experience ecstasy. For me, men are more scared about being embarrassed, because they don't know how to deal with embarrassment. Whereas women tend to be more open – this is more in their nature anyway. They are less concerned about what other people think, and they are less

concerned with embarrassing themselves – saving face. And guys, there is that whole macho aspect, who is the ‘top dog’ – and who is going to be our leader and who is going to show the way, and who is going to show that they are completely with it. They are so better intellectually than everybody else that they should say how things should go down”.

Section 7. Scatting and Comedowns

7.1.0 Scatting Out

7.1.1 Disconnected Synapses

Following the plateau users gradually move into and identify the phase of the experience that is usually referred to as ‘coming down’, being ‘scattered’ or ‘scat’. The following excerpt illustrates a self-interpretation of the brain being ‘disconnected’, using biological metaphors.

(WW): “I’ve never had the little dots (Phosphenes 3.20.0). One of the girls that has that dot thing, she described this really well as the way you are the day after is like – you’re not connected. She was like: say your brain has like synapses – say the synapses in your brain are like this – and so you have got - say your brain connects A with B. And A is a piece of rubbish and B is the rubbish bin. Instead of opening where the rubbish bin is and putting the rubbish in the bin, your brain skips the step and puts it in the sink. Like the day after, I have done this so many times, I will make a cup of tea and put salt in it, instead of sugar. Or like, instead of putting a bowl in the dishwasher I will open the fridge to put the bowl in the fridge; life connections which are just logical - you skip, and you miss a step. That happens the day after when I feel like that’s the same when you’re on it and you’re having a conversation with someone and you just skip ahead, without telling them and they are like “hang on, hang on wait! What! And you’re like ‘hang on, didn’t say that because your brain is moving faster than your mouth can’. So your brain is running like times four and your mouth is running at times three. So sometimes you have to catch up with yourself. I feel like the day after your kind of physically dealing with that ‘trying to catch up’ as well. I have done that many a time, like done really weird stuff: like having just forgotten that someone has called, or forgotten to do really routine things, just completely *fucked them up*”.

7.1.2 Scatting

(DrP): “Scatting is a very good word, you are very, very scatty and you can be in the kitchen and try and think what am I doing, “oh that’s right I am making toast”. I guess that for me because I planned the night so well in advance and because I was prepared I had no engagements. So often scatting was planned around whether or not I had a

family lunch. I couldn't go to a family lunch – I never went to a family lunch the next day, just to make sure that I didn't have any engagements on Sunday. And I will just hang out with friends. I do remember, my mother calling in on me – when I was coming down – I was getting back up with alcohol on Sunday afternoon and being pretty wired and my mother came into the house, and saw me dancing with a friend and I was like oh fuck “mum what are you doing here”. She said “you are obviously having a fantastic time”. I sort of got away with it, I just told her I was drunk, you know which I probably was but, it was very much a secret society”.

7.1.3 Scattered

These examples provide further insight into the phenomenological dimensions of the scattered state.

(MM): “I do like getting rid of the anxiety when coming down. Scattered is actually an altered state of consciousness in itself; I find that a really entertaining time to take a lot of drugs because my brain is basically fried anyway: so it is time to load up with *K* (ketamine) and speed. Well, imagine your brain is a bucket full of marbles. That's your brain at the start of the night. At the end of the night it is like you turn the bucket over, and drop the marbles all over the floor like, you pretty much lose your marbles; you will be like really scattered. If each one of these marbles represented a thought, and they were nice and cohesive because they were touching at the start of the night. When you're scat it's like tipping them upside down and like in some cases spinning them around and trying to find them. And your thoughts are everywhere, and they kind of connect wrong things: like, you say, or you make a lot of slip ups, you say the wrong-word in place. Other people are in the same state, so you can have a giggle, but the whole point is that you're willing to – on scat day parties - *you are all going to make an absolute idiot of yourself*. There is going to be people of all different states of scatterdness. I have been to very few parties where it has actually been a problem. Normally the point of scat-day party is to sit around and talk-shit and you know that everyone is really forgiving, because you're all scattered and you're trying to get your point of view in”.

(SoC): “When you are scat - it is your inner state. Like you can go into a mental, even though the drug ecstasy doesn't put you in that state; once you have gone through it

and you are cleaning out your system, you are in that six to twelve hour period. That is when you can get into that serious mental state; like when you are stoned or take LSD to a degree, you can get into that huge mental. Cleaning your system out is like putting stuff into your body – and then flushing it out. It's as simple as that. It's like alcohol - it's like having a hangover to alcohol - but it is different. The comedown is not the same as a hangover. Like when you scat – like when you are on drugs it is all about mental perception; you can be on a drug and have a good time or be on a drug and have a really shit time. Your mind is what makes the difference where you are in your mind and it's the same when you are on scat, you can hang out with friends and just get into like a long drawn-out... just talking shit for hours with some friends. Sometimes you have no one to hang-out with, so you end up lying in your room trying to go to sleep and going into these mental sort of for hours sort of just dreaming half just mind working”.

7.2.0 Scatting: *Grappling for Reality*

(MrB): “It is because your concentration is incredibly shot, especially your verbal concentration. When I get scattered I take more ecstasy unless I have a lot of weed to smoke. The weed doesn't help with the concentration. But the sense of scatterdness is the sense that all that your thoughts aren't really connecting in a flow; it is all just happening... it's all segmented: you will have a thought and it might not finish before something else will come into your mind. And you might try and say it and as you try and say it, you may fumble and sometimes people will look at you strangely. When it gets into the scatter when I am going down there is no semblance of normalness”.

(MM): “I think that the experience is like your thoughts aren't very sequential, you and try, you have the idea that you want to get across to someone, like I love scat-day parties and I love ‘fuckin-pushin-on’ (or ‘*kicking on*’)”.

(AmA): “And your sense of reality - you start thinking about sorts of strange things, like ‘am I really here, or am I sleeping?’ Or ‘what is going on here?’ I have had that a lot with random scat-days, you are sitting there and someone will say something really strange, and then everyone will sit there and go, ‘that was really weird’. Now that I think about it, and you get into all these strange discussions about, trees and leaves, and all sorts of random things that have nothing to do with anything. But at the

time it is interesting to explore these concepts because most people, in everyday life would go ‘I’m not gracing that with an answer, I’m not going to discuss it’. But a lot of the times we were scattered, we would go ‘whooohhh - you probably could look at it that way’. And because you are scattered, you are looking for a frame of reality, so to speak, so that you can try getting your head back together - back into the real world”.

7.3.0 *Fatigue and ‘Flakyness’*

Some users explain the feeling of being ‘*flaky*’ as when you are slipping in and out of reality. This tends to occur primarily when coming down (hence scattering); flakyness intimates being split internally, divided into flakes, with further insinuations of brittleness.

Some of the symptoms reported by users of ‘flakiness’ include intense exhaustion, remaining in the scattered state between sleep and insomnia (3.21.0), eye-wobbles (1.13.0), a fatigued composure (3.17.0) and an inability to do anything constructive due to drug-induced full-body ‘*shutdown*’.

(AmA): “There is incoherence and the sort of loss of interest in things, because you are still sort of floaty and coasty, everything is still a bit blurry. You get that and it gets longer each time; depending on what you take it could last longer. You may feel worse or you may not really feel much when you come down. It really depends on the drug, but often the more that you take drugs the longer that the scatter effects will last... more lethargy and apathy. You sort of sit back and people go, “oh come out to the pub”, and you go “not really, I just want to sit here”. You don’t feel sorry for yourself and you don’t really feel much so you just sit there and go I don’t care – just want to sit”.

(MM): “I have been to scat-day parties where the pre-event went for like 3 or 6 hours, and the scat-day party went for like three days. You know that you get there you are feeling quite peppy, and you are still kind of high. And as you start to come down, you start feeling like your body is becoming really lethargic and heavy”.

(RoB): “I just go to bed at that point I’m not a big fan of the scat-day thing, I’m still going and I’m fine or I’m mildly trashed or, majorly trashed depending on the situation and I, once I start getting to that flaky point, I just go to bed, wake up and feel fine”.

(SaN): “But there is one thing that would cause that (flakyness), literally you work your body so hard, that in a sense, you’re exhausted, so it doesn’t really want to work”.

7.4.0 Negative Scat Experiences

7.4.1 Isolation

(AuE): “When I come home scattered, like if it is a full house, I can’t be fucked talking to anyone, I can just pretend that I am asleep and not talk to anyone, I close my eyes and if anyone is trying to talk to me I am just like roll over and trying to ignore them. I just don’t like talking to my family when I am feeling that shit”.

7.4.2 Worrying as you Return to Reality

(HG): “As soon as the sun comes up and everyone starts to lose that moment of ‘Now’ and they go “Oh fuck! I wish I was back like 60 hours ago. I wish I could do that all again. I think that is why the scat gets so bad for some people, cause they wish they were back then, like they all start worrying about different things cause you not just enjoying the moment anymore, you have to think about other things, like you have to go out and find somewhere to go, to find something to do because you have to plan where you are going, and think about everything all over again, which is hard because you are generally on drugs”.

(PenT): “It’s like - I have gotta go to lunch and I can’t eat... Oh fuck! I have got to go and see the family - and my eyes are huge” (‘bug-eyed’ or ‘beaming’).

7.4.3 Hate

(Gil): “Yeah, I hate other people when I am scat”!

(AuE): “As long as everyone else is scat, I hate it when there are straight people there”.

7.4.4 Schizoid-Fatigue

(Soc): “The last year the time that I actually did them... well the first time I did them I did half, the second time that I did them I was at a festival and I did four and a half, and the next day I actually couldn’t talk. And the reason that I couldn’t talk is that I was scared that my tongue was actually going to jump out of my mouth. I was so frightened of saying something stupid; my body was so stuck in a hole and didn’t want to move and that feeling that I was almost lifeless. And I sat there and I saw everything going on and I knew it was happening and it was happening at a normal pace, but everything was catching up so much slower and my body-and-my mind wasn’t one: it was in two different spaces. And I just couldn’t process everything at the same time, and because of that I was pretty much useless to myself and anyone else, and I didn’t want to go home because I didn’t want my family to see that. And the minute that I did go home, I went straight to the shower and straight to bed, cause that was the only thing that I could do. I couldn’t sit there and actually face them and actually talk to them, because I knew that nothing was actually going to come out. And they just go”.

7.5.0 Scat-Day Parties

Scat day parties are usually held at a house (called by some a Scat-house) where users congregate to party through the scattered state. DJ decks may be used to play music, with some users curling up on couches and blankets. Others would smoke joints or gather around a shisha (water pipe) to get stoned and alleviate the comedown. Many users would use this time to clean up after a rave and remove the dirt, oil and ‘filth’ (7.6.0) accumulated during the night by taking a (ritual) shower (7.7.0). Some users would *double drop* or take amphetamines to ward of the scatterdness. These two reports illustrate two typical scat parties.

(MM): “I make all my friends at scat-day parties. When you are at a rave it feels like you are making the deepest connections of your life, but I find that it is not until the after party that deep connections are formed. At a typical rave I spend half the time off drugs and then I take drugs at about 12 or 1 o’clock. I peak and I come down at the end of the rave around 6’oclock. I still am kind of bouncing a little bit, but I am like the rave is over, this is kind of the end of that scene. Like I go back to the scat day party and I start indulging in other drugs, sometimes more pills sometimes Kat,

generally 'K'⁴¹ and speed, but like different drugs which aren't necessarily happy drugs or introspective drugs. I find that on the comedown when I am talking to people even though there is not that sense of euphoria - I still have that sense of connectedness. And the same sense of empathy, but like less euphoria, and in generally introspective drugs it kind of multiplies even though even when I am on ecstasy, when I can *really hear you* when I am on pills. This is more real - and I still really hear you. That is where I make like my lifelong friends. The friends that I have got through the years are the ones that I have made at scat day parties. Like the ones that I have been to the rave scene with, whereas the ones that I have made friends with at the scat day parties, well like that rave was an event that was like in a bubble, and when you go back in to that bubble you can be friends with anyone, but when you leave that bubble and come back to reality, the scat day is inside of the sphere that we call reality, and even though you are still high on all of these drugs you are in someone's lounge room rather than in Utopian Wonderland. So I generally have lots of one-on-one situations within a group of 16 rather than a one-on-one experience in a group of 3000. On scat day it is almost impossible to be negative, because if you use that time to reflect on the best time that you have had, then all of a sudden all of the negative feeling that you feel are almost pale in comparison to the beauty that you experienced the night before.... Well funnily enough one of my best friends - our friendship started at a scat-day party, it was the first scat-day party that I had been to in Sydney, we had all the DJ's from the night before at Pc, came back, I think there were national DJ's from Melbourne, anyway... It was packed, there was people smoking Ice on the floor, there was fuckin drugs going around everywhere, people fuckin loading up speed, and cups of coffee. And anyway I had a big bag of speed, and a mirror and nowhere to sit. So I'm looking around and I saw this guy and I walked over and said if I came over and sat down next to me, do you reckon I would give you a lighter or two. And he goes "you're the type of friend I want to keep!" Shot them across, a few grams later, and a few coffees I forged a friendship which has gone strong for three years now, and every Easter we celebrate it by taking copious amounts of drugs together".

⁴¹ Slang for 'ketamine'.

(WW): “We called it the ‘House of Love’ actually, cause (laughing) – we always went to the same house, because the same girl always had a free house, we all sit together and I don’t smoke that much pot. Just if I was having a lot of problems sleeping I would have, maybe some in trying to make me go to sleep, a lot of the time it would almost send you a little bit more loopy. Like the combination of the two for a lot of people didn’t work very well, it would almost; we described it as ‘actually losing your brain’. Like we would be sitting around talking and not only would the conversations be about complete shit... you would lose your way half way through. Certain people would have to stop talking because it’s like “*aaarrwwrr, aaaaarwwgg*, I don’t know what to say I can’t speak, I’ve lost my brain”. I think it is a lot different if you are by yourself than if you are with other people. It is a different experience. Like the same thing is going on in your head but, when you are trying to convey it to someone, it becomes a little bit more confusing”.

7.6.0 Skin Oil, Grime and Filth

(WW): “It is all the sweat and dirt that you have still got when you are coming down. Even if you can tell with the drug has worn off and you don’t want to move any more, you can feel it underneath. There is just that feeling like, I can’t describe it because I don’t know how - but there is just that feeling that is still more – still reminiscent of what you were feeling. Like a 1000 times less, but you still feel like you have had the drug in you. And I feel like it is just underneath the skin. And I feel like it is just underneath the shin; I feel like that makes me aware that there is crap on all my limbs. And that is the reason that I need to change my cloths and change, have a shower essentially. And I always have to wear track-suit pants – always... *Why is that I ask?* To be comfortable... *Sorry (laughs)*”.

(MoJ): “The grease factor for me, I would call that a layer of grease – it’s more like an animal fat kind of grease. Often I will have that BO thing going on as well. You know the pilly BO, and you need to take a crap and it is going to be a pilly crap, and everything just needs to be cleaned. You need a scrub - plus the experience of having a shower when you are coming down is just awesome, it is just an amazing feeling. *It is just phenomenal!* I have probably had a shower at every stage of the game of taking ecstasy in terms of where I am at in the experience. I have a pill, and then have a shower and then the rush comes on, and it is just WOW! Just so much more intense

because of the feeling of the water coming down, and at the same time that rush is coming down. And at the height of the peak of taking ecstasy of having a shower with someone else, and really just sort of having an amazingly sensual time with the water and with each other”⁴².

(MM): “And you have been out dancing and you can feel the scum of the night on you. And you come home and when you hop in the shower you feel the water touch you. You feel this wash of cleanliness, that you have been waiting for and when you are out, you are like “I can’t wait to get home to have a shower, because I feel so dirty”. And then when you hop under that shower you actually feel that you have removed this dirty skin that when you have been raving the night before covered you in grime”.

7.7.0 *Ritual Shower*

Upon arriving home a number of users would ritually clean the oil, grime and filth (7.6.0) that had built up during the night from dancing, hugging and profusely sweating. The elation, bodily pleasure and euphoria peaks activated when showering is described in these three reports.

(MM): “Oh, and *how good* is scat-day shower? It is like you are washing off years – it is like you have been locked in a fucking pyramid full of cobwebs, dust and disease, and you are purifying it; you purify stuff underneath your skin as you do it. When you shampoo your hair, and you didn’t know there was so much dirt in my hair, and you feel like this wash has come over. *Oh*, and the soap!”

(WW): “Oh! I LOVE THE RITUAL SHOWER! OOOhh, yes, yes, yes, ohh – yes. At the ‘house of love’ [scat day house], we would go back and there is always a point – say we go home at three, there is always a point at 5.30 where I have got blisters; like I look at my feet and I have got blisters from the stupid shoes that I have been wearing, or I’ve got dirty hair because I have been sweating and dancing so much. And I’m just like – suddenly – the ecstasy wears off, “oh I actually stink – oh my God! And I look up and I have got cuts from hitting my foot or something, because you’re fucked and you don’t feel pain as much as you would. So you go “oh my God,

⁴² See further examples in ‘The Ritual Shower’ (Section 7.7.0).

I'm going to wash myself'. So you go into the shower and undoubtedly you think you're in there for 10 minutes, you're always in there for about 35. It's just the – it's like *the rush all over again*. But, it's material, like the rush is something that you can feel, but you can't see, this is just it - all over again. It is almost like a resurge, like once you feel like you are coming down. If I feel like I am coming down and it is coming light I will run to the shower because it is like, it comes back again. It makes you feel more *fucked* – I think. Yeah, *I love the ritual shower*. And *washing your hair* – washing your hair, oh! It's great. It's like I was saying before when you're out and your running your fingers through your hair, obviously you have to do that, but rub your hair – when you're washing your hair, and it's like fun all over again (laughs). I then I recruited everyone else to the shower idea they thought I was crazy: I was like no, no, no – and I was like try it, and he was like “yeah all right”, and he was like “OH MY GOD – IT WAS THE GREATEST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE”!

(DiH): “I wasn't that concerned about the oiliness, stinky-ness of the night; I found that the biggest concern about having a shower the next day was the fact that on ecstasy your muscles do hyper-tense a lot. You don't really realize it, until like you sit down or until you actually get into a shower, and let the hot water distress you and sort of loosened up your muscles; which becomes like an amazing feeling again. So I didn't really care how much I felt dirty, except for the muscle tension”.

7.8.0 Cleaning

As discussed in the previous sections (7.2.0, 7.3.0, 7.6.0) users often feel dirty, flaky, tired and discombobulated when scattig. To occupy themselves some users would engage in a fervent ‘cleaning’ – and thus projecting/ externalising their inner-world (*Innenwelt*) onto their household environment (*Umwelt*). (MM) “What I do - is I clean my house so it is *fucking immaculate*; I love to be in this clean house to start off with; and then I start on ‘nangs’ (whip cream bulbs), and the floor is filled with them, and I don't care. I am not going to clean it up until tomorrow”.

Section 8. Tolerances, Addiction, Reconstitution and Fading Away

8.1.0 *Appetites and Passions for Drugs*

Many users noted the immense passions and appetites for ecstasy that some users would indulge in a single, or consecutive nights ('going on a bender'). The desire to activate and maintain peak states and ecstatic highs led some users to drop numerous pills throughout an evening – even when their tolerance had peaked.

(FrN): “In relation to ecstasy what is great is going out and having a good time with your friends, dancing – *being able to dance generally* – that is such a fun experience and that is what I liked about the situation. That is what made me go out. It wasn't a craving for the drug. They say that 'once you pop, you can't stop'. Once the night starts, I go until my brain fizzles. Like I just keep on taking them until I run out of money or my brain says this isn't working anymore 'you have had too many'. But I have never felt a drug when it isn't an appropriate situation, if you can call it that. I have never sat in the middle of the day and said to myself that I can go some drugs right now. I have only ever done it in a social environment, especially with ecstasy. I found that with cocaine – if you gave me a mountain, I would do the mountain of coke. The only time that I have done drugs at home by myself, is after the first time that I did cocaine. I went home and I just did the rest in a bag. And I just sat there, and when the bag was gone I was like I wish I could get more. I just want to consume it every time I ever do it, when I am high, it's embarrassing, but it is something that I have noticed, if there was cocaine on this table here and there was a white speck. If I am on coke then I want it. I have the most insatiable appetite for it where I would never stop doing it. But with ecstasy, I don't think it has the same insatiable properties that cocaine has”.

8.2.0 *Moderating drug use*

One user had indicated that his philosophy of taking drugs was the Golden Mean: expressed in common parlance as “anything in moderation”. Some users would moderate their use to avoid the detrimental effects of excessive use and addiction. This would also allow for the positive effects to be experienced on a regular basis.

(DrP): “I knew people in England who would go out on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Three nights a week on pills, and I always fought not to get into that situation. But I must admit that I had a neighbour come over here on Saturday and say that he was going out to the races on a Bucks day, and he was taking some drugs, and I said to my wife ‘how the fuck can he go out all day and drink, then go to a strip joint when you have had any amphetamines. How do you do it?’ I couldn’t do it. I can’t go out on a night like that. I am just physically exhausted. But if you give me a pill, then I would stay. I don’t generally equate a good night out - unless there are drugs involved. I just don’t see a night out being *anywhere* near as good, until you have drugs. And every footballer and male athlete would agree with me. And one of my biggest and staunchest protectors said ‘mate you have got to tone this down a bit; this is not good for you’. Just a little pep talk, but he probably was the first to stop doing it; saying it is no good and too expensive, ‘we have had our fun it is time to grow up a bit’. But I knew. I have had worse experiences on Cannabis, being brain fucked, than I did with ecstasy. I guess that is because I never put myself in a situation where I had to be at work and teach coming down from ecstasy. I never let myself do it. If I have taken a pill – the last few times that I have taken it over the last ten years, I just followed the advice of people to just take Monday off, don’t even try. So I had always organized on Friday afternoons to get Mondays off. And if I took it on a Saturday night you need more than 24 hours to sort of clear it for me, but even some times on Tuesday it would be that I am just tired. The reason that I was tired is that I didn’t sleep enough because my body clock was out of rhythm. But I never really felt that it was the actual MDA, MDMA in my system fucking my head up. It is just because I am physically tired and I have danced for 8 hours, I am probably dehydrated and my body clock is fucked because I didn’t sleep on the night.... So we used to plan our nights; like I can remember being in the gym working out with people and saying to each other *three weeks to go! Three weeks to go!* Getting excited three weeks out about what we were wearing how we would pack our chewing gum, lollies, sunglasses, money, and one ticket, in a bum bag. It was just such an adventure, going over to people’s houses 5 o’clock in the afternoon and getting ready, it was just the Antz-Pantz of having a night out. The whole thing was just so exciting. It was like going away on an overseas trip, because you were going on a journey that involved being straight for about four or five hours and then suddenly leading into that euphoria around midnight or two, and even to the last minute detail of knowing when

to take it like. You would want it to be coming on just after the show, so we needed to take it after about quarter past eleven, so we wouldn't want anything down on paper but it was very well planned and orchestrated. And we would look after each other, in that respect, to make sure that we were watching each other. To us it was a big deal considering the financial outlay and the potential that the drugs had to make you feel so fantastic was worth respecting. And, I guess that is why we only took one or two, two became the limit”.

8.3.0 *Telling people you use*

The illegal status of ecstasy in Australia (Holland, 2001: 154) and the stigma behind illegal drug use, leads many users to conceal their drug use in public, family or private relationships.

(CG): “It’s because taking ecstasy is a criminal offence. And because it’s criminal people say you’re a criminal. Like in the professional environment or I’m not going to go to my parents’ friends or family and go ‘yeah, I do ecstasy all the time, I was on acid, I smoke weed – what are you going to do about it’. It’s just not socially acceptable, and people form an opinion based upon that and so it becomes unprofessional. So people just regard it as, you just can’t do it. I’m trying to create a professional career for myself and you just can’t mention it to a lot of people. You’ve got to keep guard of it, because you never know who will tell anybody else. Yeah, well you could go and tell somebody that I go and get off chops, like I don’t tell anybody at work, except for the select few people that I know very well and they know that I do it. And even then I don’t tell them the extent to which I do it”.

8.4.0 *Multiple Dropping*

This example shows how some users do not moderate their use in pursuing the ecstatic state and take escalating quantities in seeking to bring forth these experiences. Most users that I met would take between one to three tablets during a night out. Users taking 5 or more were often described as ‘crazy’, ‘hard’ or ‘wasting money’. I interviewed one user who took 22 during a weekend *bender* (FrM). Multiple droppers would seek to maximise the ecstatic state through a series of timed use. ‘*Double dropping*’ – taking two or more pills at once - would sometimes be used when coming down, in order to ‘kick on’. As the following example suggests a number of users

would keep multiple pills on them in case of dud or weak pills to get the most out of the night.

(RoB): “Yeah, that’s what’s missing out of a lot of stuff these days, in my opinion; people have no education on why they do ecstasy, and what will enhance it and what will subtract from it. And they also have no common sense about it. They don’t realize that if you have eaten three pills and they haven’t done anything, the fourth one is not a good idea, because if three didn’t do it, four is not going to do it. And if they are just taking a long time all of a sudden, four kicking in once really hurts; but it is an easy enough mistake to make you go ‘*bom*’, didn’t do, ‘*bom*’, didn’t do it. So you just keep going hoping it’s going to do something. But once you have gotten past two or three, and it hasn’t done anything by then. Give up”.

8.5.0 Addiction

Drug addiction was discussed amongst some of the users that I talked to. Whether those who were consuming ecstasy were addicts - and exactly what the addiction to ecstasy is - became an interesting area to think about.

8.5.1 Feeling the waves

(MoJ): “I have had various stages of addiction to drugs. For me addiction is an unnecessary need for something, it is a desire as opposed to a need. For me, it is one of my egos, telling me I need to do something or wanting; even though I know that one of my other egos know that it is not good for me. And that it is not helping me in any way shape or form. I guess I’m kind of addicted to the overall feeling of the ecstasy (laughs) – it’s like a wave that keeps on coming – actually it doesn’t, that’s the problem. I guess I’m not really a raver, or in any kind of drug scene. For me it has never really been an issue, like I am not dependent on a certain venue for me to get my drugs or for me to get my experience. For me, it is totally up to me how I enjoy my drug, and probably 80% of the time it is at home in that safe secure environment. And tying that into the addictive factor is having the desire to feel that way at home and getting caught in the trap of saying that it is OK to be on drugs at home because you’re not hurting anybody and you’re not embarrassing yourself by being out in public. So there is a permission somehow to be fucked-up at home and it is OK to be on drugs at home, cause you’re not going to get into trouble the cops aren’t going to

bother you. That, I guess, is the most dangerous side of my potential addiction to ecstasy. Luckily, I am not in a financial or social position to be able to acquire the drugs whenever I want, so I guess that has been a blessing in disguise for a long time. Lack of money has stopped that addiction from coming full-ball. And ecstasy has never gotten in the way of me doing my job, I certainly wouldn't go and teach piano on ecstasy, but I could certainly do it the day after with no problems at all. So the only limiting factor for me with ecstasy is the inability to drive anywhere or the inability to really do normal things, like the washing, or paying bills, or anything like that, because you just don't care about that shit".

8.5.2 *Attraction of the Scene*

(HG): "The addiction behind it, I think, would be the scene and not the actual drug. The drug facilitates the scene. Whereas going to a club and taking drugs is an event. People that I know found it a lot easier to go 'oh no, I can't be assed doing that anymore', 'I'm too busy or I can't afford it anymore', or 'I'm a bit over the scene'. Most of the people that I used to know don't do it anymore; I can understand how some people can find it addictive but, as far as addictive drugs go, it's quite different with ecstasy".

(AmA): "Well, I went through that and flashed my self - ripped! The whole time I was doing it I was paying attention to what everyone else was doing. I wouldn't try to keep up like everyone else did. I think it also depends on the person, on your attitude towards drugs and taking them and why you actually take them. I get to a point where I go 'I-don't-really-want-anymore', like you just can't take anymore. Oh you say: 'come on, come on, come on have this', and you just can't take anymore. You think it is for fun and that you are just going to go forever. Like, that's enough. But some people just keep going and going and going. I had problems with having too many drugs. I lived in a party house, where I lived with a dealer, so it was pretty much a case of, rock-up home on Friday night, lines, pills the whole weekend had gone. But eventually it got to a point where I would start getting, really frazzled and I would take drugs and I would just go bang! Just sit there, because I would be just *fucked*; I would not be able to function much. And then during the comedown, and after the comedown it would take longer, and longer and longer to sort of, get the mental capacity back to function normally. You would have problems structuring sentences,

you would have troubles remembering things, you would sit there and go ‘oh I wanted to talk to you, and you wouldn’t be able to remember a name’ – you couldn’t remember names - that sort of thing. Little things like that would start to frazzle (hyper-stress) your nerves and you would start getting more and more upset with it and the more upset you got the more difficult it became. It would just spiral out of control. So like the more that you take drugs – the more you feel comfortable doing so. With this you can spiral out of control, because you don’t realise the amount of damage that you are doing to yourself – which can easily lead to more problems. Like you do find that with people who go a bit hard a bit fast, and they just suddenly burn out. They either, just disappear for a while, and come back and say, right, I’m better and people go ‘what do you mean, better!’ Like they go ‘what do you mean you’re better, you just disappeared’. And you would go ‘burnt out, let’s take a break’. Come back six months later and everyone goes: ‘what happened?’”

8.6.0 Habituation to ecstasy

I asked (RoB), a more experienced ecstasy user, how he used substance(s) so as to balance tolerance and minimise addiction. Habituation to ecstasy was linked to both drug tolerances (8.10.0) – as users would need to take more to get the same effects and escalating addiction – seeking to reactivate and recapture peak experiences.

(Rob): “It’s like fitness, you don’t jump straight into the track and field, you try to squeeze into it. Like I spent 8 years in a Roadie, and you kind of spend a lot of time on Speed as a Roadie, ‘cause of the hours, and just the life-style that goes with it. And you learn to eat food whilst speeding, which is something, that everyone has challenges with. And you just gradually edge/slide further into it. So it is not like – from out of nowhere going from normal healthy life-style. You are just slowly easing into it... so you are not just going ‘bang’ (popping) three nights a week or more, the occasional double night – and your body adjusts to it. If you just jumped into it and started a lot of the ways that kids do these days, you will end up just burning out, or just damaging yourself. But if you edge yourself into it, then if you edge yourself into it, you will find it is challenging to try and sustain it”.

8.7.0 Body awareness and health

8.7.1 Bodily awareness

(CM): “This comes back to what I was talking about before ‘bodily awareness’. Some people use lots of drugs and become oblivious to their body. It just becomes all about categorical responses: drugs go in, these feeling come out. So you don’t really pay attention to what their body needs, it’s about living the dream and having a goodtime. Lots of people will take drugs, and the next day they feel like shit all day; I try to look at why I feel terrible, analyse your body, look at what is going to make it good, what does it need: it needs rest it needs food. But you may not be able rest because you have taken too many drugs. I can’t eat very well, so let’s try and get some kind of sustenance in. I’m stressed out because I’m sitting around with a bunch of sketchy assholes who are all staring at each other funnily. You either make friends with someone or go home... or ring up someone who it doesn’t matter, if you’re both out of it, you-know. This may result from a lot of drug-using, extended periods of sleep deprivation, especially if you’re a regular amphetamine user. A regular amphetamine user needs to stay high all the time, you smoke drugs for five days and then you pass out for three days. You don’t sleep, but you do get naps. You need to work out your body – because your body is under a lot of stress. So if you want to keep on feeling good you need to work out what to take to keep on feeling good. In using acid is even more so; because the whole time that you are on acid you are under a lot of stress”.

8.7.2 Preloading: Getting the Most out of the Experience

This report may be compared to other preloading (1.4.1) activities which seek to maximise the pleasurable effects of ecstasy, whilst minimising possible adverse reactions.

(FrN): “Generally speaking, unless circumstance don’t permit such as a back-to-back night, where you don’t really fare well because your body is trashed. I believe that you need to be in a good physical state to get the most out of a ‘euphoric elevated’ state. Or whatever you want to call it – ‘charged up’ - to be in a good state. I will try and get a good night sleep, so that when I wake up after a good twelve hours sleep and I just throw one down straight away, just to see what happens. Like I do Health and Exercise Science at uni, and I understand the importance of being healthy and how that physically affects your body. Like when you are healthy, alcohol affects you faster and leaves your body faster. I’m not sure how it works with ecstasy, but I understand the importance of being healthy, in terms of being able to enjoy the

experience. But, generally I try to eat, because I did have that weight losing experience. If possible eat protein shakes, during and after. Because I found that when you have been going for a while, that feeling that you get when you have had too many pills and too much water and you get, and your stomach is kicking itself (3.15.0), I don't know for what reason. I have found that a protein shake does make you feel a lot better. And that in turn can heighten the rest of your experience for the rest of the night, because you are fuelling your body a bit more because otherwise your body's energy sources are just depleting".

8.8.0 Reconstitution

By following the various phases of the ecstatic experience, from preloading to onset, peak, plateau, comedown, afterglow and so forth, I began to think about how it is that users reconstitute themselves after these intense and often psycho-physically draining ecstatic experiences. The following reports touch upon some of the aspects of reconstitution.

8.8.1 Resting up

(DrP): "You wouldn't eat much on the Sunday. Look, what I loved about taking ecstasy was Sunday night. I had the most positive experiences than the night after where I could go out on a Sunday night again, I wouldn't be working on Monday because it would be school holidays, because my wife is a teacher at the time as well, we would often meet on Sunday afternoon at 5 or 6 and if we drank two or three schooners, on a Sunday afternoon we would be halfway back to where we were on Saturday night, just loving it again. By Monday without having to work, I think that in a work situation where you would have to talk and explain yourself, you would get exposed very easily. Like my mother was on the phone asking me about something, and I was probably a bit hazy".

8.8.2 Returning to 'Baseline'

(RoB): "Recovery - returning to baseline. Baseline is like your normal un-medicated self, and then things have gone up, and then comedown and go back down to baseline. So then they come back up to base-line. The equivalent of being unaffected by anything, like unaffected by anything, self-inflicted medication. A lot of people are not very good at self-monitoring it, but you will see it referred to; that terminology is what is in *Pihkal* and *Tihkal* (the classic books by the Shulgins), both are monitoring

the effects of certain drugs. They monitor from normal, the up, the down, and back to when they feel normal. And baseline will be the moment that they feel normal again”.

8.8.3 Long recovery

(HB): “After eight months of taking pills I wasn’t good until Wednesday or something, like half-way during the week. And that is why I stopped taking ecstasy, because the little tiny high that I was getting wasn’t worth the four days of being scattered”.

8.9.0 Losing the magic

Most users of ecstasy encountered in this ethnography would actively pursue the sustained manifestation of ‘peak experiences’ (e.g. 2.6.0, 2.9.0, 2.14.0). However, when these states are continuously and regularly sought out, there tends to be a concomitant decrease in intensity and regularity of these states. This may be attributed to “cumulative tolerance” (Holland, 2001: 69), habituation and a drop in the purity of ecstasy. As discussed, the initial ‘honeymoon’ phase of ecstasy use is associated with these ‘magical’ peak experiences; and thus the waning out of one’s ability to experience these peaks is commonly known as ‘losing the magic’ (Holland, 2001: 68-69; Saunders, 1997: 59-61).

(MoJ): “Yeah, *losing the magic*. For me the rush has seemingly gotten less intense over the years. Certainly in the earlier years, I would have deep breaths, tingling skin, and the heavy-headed feeling, where I would just want to lay my head back. But I don’t seem to get that as heavily anymore. I guess it is hard to remember those times when it was coming on relative to the experiences that I have now. For instance a couple of weekends ago I took two pills at once, and it was about one o’clock in the morning and I had been drinking quite a lot. I mean that alcohol plays a big part in the effect of ecstasy, but I never even got that part for that initial wave of that initial rush, it just sort of crept up on me and I went ‘oh God, I’m fucked up now, OK here we go’... and that’s kind of cool”.

8.10.0 Tolerance

The cumulative tolerance that increases with repeated ecstasy use is firmly documented (Campbell, 2001: 115; Holland, 2001). Below are some examples.

8.10.0 Chemical Tolerance: is it all in the Mind?

(CG): “Everybody has a different aim with taking ecstasy. This is related to how you build up a chemical tolerance, which is the way that the chemical works. It is also the way that your brain works and it is unavoidable: it happens to everyone. At the other end of the scale, people will tell you that it is all in your mind. Well, they might not tell you – but they believe, that this is all a purely a mental thing. They will say “I can’t get there anymore; it is my own mental process that is stopping me from getting to that peak”. So I think there is undoubtedly a tolerance that builds up due to the chemical. Actually, it can’t be due to the chemical, the only thing it can be due to is like if you keep drinking alcohol you will build up a tolerance as your brain gets better at metabolizing it. Because the brain gets used to ecstasy, it can just get through it quicker, and so you need more of it to get there. And so, it has probably has got more to do with your brain actually metabolizing; but, then again how much of that are your actual own thoughts? As I said earlier, ecstasy is like a feeling where you get real happy like you have just gotten the job that you wanted. Is that then your thoughts which are creating the chemical imbalance? Or, is that the chemical imbalance that is creating your thoughts”?

8.10.0 Going Natural: ‘I can’t Peak’

(JN) describes a point where there is an increase in tolerance where you can no longer peak and/or your body is ‘wrecked’ (burnout). At this point some users would disengage from ecstasy use in a period called “*going natural*”. Initially, he suggested that this resulted from chemical tolerance, where the pills stopped working. But after stopping use for several months and then taking a pill, and still not having it work, it made him wonder - what else it could be? “Like if the chemical is not working anymore... why else would it not be working? Why would I not get as fucked as I used to, like when I first started taking it? It just takes a little bit more”.

8.10.3 Loss of Touchiness

(FrN): “I have lost the enjoyment of touching; the second time where I was acting like a gronk, where those real “*oh my God*” touch moments happen. I was with these girls and we were constantly touching each other all night. Just rubbing ears and just touching all night; and these were attractive girls so it was a pretty pleasant experience that night. And we were constantly rubbing each other all night, touching

the hair, neck massages, touching ears. I think it is my tolerance that is increasing; I don't feel that same desire to touch. I get that hands touching thing, but I don't have the same desire to touch. That loss is a fairly common thing with other people. But I have taken a fair few pills and I don't do that anymore – because of circumstances of being out so much, my tolerance has increased”.

8.10.4 Losing the Loving Feeling

(StM): “A lot of people say that on subsequent occasions that you don't ever get that feeling back - not in full anyways - and I would probably support that. I have never really felt the same as I did on that first night. Just everything was bright you know, even if things were not perfect; even with everything having its flaws and things not being fair; the world in general I mean and bad things happening and for some reason. I thought there was still some reason behind all of that, even if all of the suffering that goes on in the world is really, really hard to explain. You feel a sense of validation for all of the suffering - not just your own, but everyone else's as well. So when you are on ecstasy you don't have those feelings, everyone is OK. The first time you don't have those feelings, because I think that the peak is intense enough that it manages to, sort of override it and all of the social anxieties that you feel, but after you're first pill, I think that that feeling starts to come back. Maybe because you have been exposed to the substance already and with any substance you develop a certain tolerance for it and you are able to control yourself better. So after you have done it a few times you don't get that feeling of 'the walls coming down between you and other people' so much. When you take the drug it is only for one night of your life, you still have to get up in the morning, go to work and go to uni, and so you know it is like 5% - if you spend the whole weekend doing it 15% of your whole life, and you still have this other huge amount of time that you are not on it, and you still have to be out in the world and you know and try to survive out there somehow and in the end it is not enough to get you through anymore. When you first start doing it you can get yourself through the week by saying, the weekend is coming up soon and I can go and get fucked up again and everything will be great, but then after a while you just.... I don't know how to explain it”.

8.11.0 Immunity and Ecstasy

(DiH): “Like any substances, alcohol for example, the longer you take it, the more that your body gets used to it, it will start building an immunity to it. And the same goes for MDMA and serotonin production. Basically your brain starts losing the function of producing its own serotonin, or restoring its own serotonin rapidly enough. So what actually happens is that you cause a bit of brain damage; not a lot of people realise that it is actually a bit of brain damage that you are causing. One of the reasons I take *5-HTP* is to minimise that brain damage that occurs... So like I used to ask a number of people when I was going out ‘do you take 5-HTP?’ and they would answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’. HTP is a precursor to serotonin which stimulates the production of serotonin in the brain in a natural way. 5-HTP is made from the seeds of an West African plant called *Griffonia simplicifolia* ... So when you are taking ecstasy your serotonin levels artificially increase so that in the next 12-18 hours your serotonin levels decrease below normal and healthy levels. So that taking 5-HTP at the right time will start the production of serotonin and you will think and feel the way you normally do. So I’m not sure how exactly it causes brain damage, but I’m pretty sure that if you keep using without replenishing your serotonin you will get problems”.

8.12.0 Long-term User: Disillusionment and Facing the World

For certain users of ecstasy there emerges a gradual disillusionment with the scene over time: often called the ‘jaded raver’. A number of common influences contribute to the perceived inauthenticity (5.14.0) of the scene and the experiences pursued within it, losing the magic (8.9.0) and deleterious psycho-physical effects e.g. getting to ‘fucked up’ (1.21.0) or severe comedowns (2.16.0).

(StM): “For about six months I was probably taking ecstasy every week, as a regular user. Outside of those six months, I would take it once every six months - so intermittent use. I actually never used to take that much, maybe because I am small, but I started off on quarters and that was enough to get me peaking. And the most I ever went up to was half - ever. So it was low dosages, but it was still enough. And I stopped; there have been studies about memory loss, but I don’t think that anything has been proven decisively right? But for me, I was having trouble, even though I was not taking as much as most people do. I was having trouble remembering things. I was at uni and I needed to get good marks, because I wanted to do graduate studies and I wanted to keep up that kind of life-style I couldn’t... so why did I stop? Well, I

think that since the first time that I took it, I kind of liked it, so I kept on taking it for a while. But I realized that I couldn't keep on doing that, if I wanted to get good marks. And since then, every few months if someone else had some I would take it with them, but I probably wouldn't have gone and sought it out on my own. It would have been impossible to keep doing it and keep on studying at the same time. When you take it, I was always out for a few days, like you have no sense of focus. Sometimes for a day... but up to a week. I remember trying to go to work a day or two after taking pills and y'know. I used to temp back then and so you are sitting there at the desk and you have to call someone, and you can't punch in the right phone number and you have tried 20 times and you can't do it, you just can't put in the right 7 digits of numbers. Then you are thinking 'fuck! I have got to stop man!' That was probably the worst of it.

But I eventually realized that the physiological effects of the drug, and even worse, the detrimental lifestyle attached to it were causing memory problems and an inability to focus, but also fatigue, lack of sleep, lack of a healthy diet, etc. You realize that your quality of life is starting to suffer and also that you are no longer functioning properly in daily life. Then your relationships start to suffer, too. The people you encounter in the course of life... if they don't know that you take pills then they wonder why you're so distant and distracted, and not quite present most of the time... they don't understand why you're too scattered or just plain exhausted to behave in the manner expected of you in a given social relationship. If they do know about the pills, they may be worried, and wonder why you would do something like this to yourself. It can also reinforce their negative stereotypes of drugs and the people who take them. Some people just plain judge you. So from the physical stress also emerges an internal psychological conflict that is very difficult to bear. In short, the world of the ecstasy lifestyle, i.e. the rave scene, is incompatible with the social-milieu in which we presently exist. There's no space or tolerance for those who cannot keep the two separate and prevent the effects of 'raving life' from spilling over into 'real life'; so ultimately, you make the choice of one over the other.

The rave scene and 'real life' will always be distinct from one another. This is exactly why ecstasy is so appealing – it opens up your imagination to a whole alternative way of being in the world. But in the end, that promise remains unfulfilled. You realize

that no matter how beautiful life is when you're on ecstasy, this is an illusion (or delusion!). You're basically lying to yourself about the state of the world.

Maybe this is why the ecstasy experience is so sensitive to the power of suggestion. You're actually playing a huge part in constructing this other state of consciousness for yourself and for other people. People constantly tell you that you're having a good-time; you're always telling yourself the same. You want to believe. But it's not true faith because you're always aware that it's not real, and that in a few hours it will all be over. This is something hugely disappointing, yet inescapable. If there was some way to remain fucked off your head all the time, without the constraints of time, money, relationships, etc. then it would be a different story!

Other than that, for me, it was really a form of escapism... y'know you are in your early twenties. You are unhappy with your life, you are confused about your relationships, and you are having problems with your family and all sorts of other things. And it provides some kind of peace, I guess, in the midst of all of that. And after a while you realize that it is not the answer and you try and find your peace the hard-way I guess. So finding peace the hard way is...trying to (because it is an ongoing, unending, existential project) see life not only for what you want it to be – we must never let go of that – but trying to see life for what it actually is, and accepting it. No matter how hard it is. This eventually led to me consciously trying to make choices that were not always easy, but which were what I felt was right. You try to be brave. You try to understand things on a deeper level. You laugh at the absurd. You try not to take things as seriously. You focus on the things that do give you pleasure, whether those things are family, close friends, reading, writing, food, fucking, dancing, whatever. It doesn't mean that life isn't still hard, most of the time. But you try to let this throw into relief the beautiful moments, which for some reason seem to increase when you choose to accept the ugliness. The peace you gain, iota by iota, is imperfect. It's not at all a feeling you could describe as 'ecstasy'! But whatever it is, it's far more authentic than an ecstasy high.

This I think, is accepting life in all of its ugliness, and still being able to wake up in the morning and face it, and finding some kind of meaning in your life, regardless of how shitty and absurd life is in the first place, that is the hard way. The easy way is

you pop a pill and after the first few times it is not as great as the first time, but it is still an easier way to face this crushing futility and hopelessness that life can be: because you get fucked off your mind for a night. And that's that".

Conclusion

4.1 *The general ethnography*

In the preceding ethnographic corpus I have presented a processual morphology surveying the existential experiences and social dynamics of consumers of ecstasy (and other substances) in the socio-cultural context of Sydney raves and clubs. I situated this morphology within the framework of existential-phenomenology, a more specifically a dialogal phenomenology, that allowed me to describe, organise and understand these ecstasy experiences. This orientation to the primary ethnographic material opens up certain novel possibilities for further understanding the existential worlds and social dynamics of ecstasy users. Looking at the corpus as a whole I have come to share in the astonishment and enthusiasm of Bruce Eisner (1994) who after completing his own considerable research into ecstasy encountered Jerome Beck (co-author of *The Pursuit of Ecstasy*, 1994) at a conference at Berkeley. In this situation Eisner's recalls that Beck's topography of the MDMA trip was congruent with his own findings. As previously stated, the nine sections contained in this thesis may be compared and contrasted with the findings of established qualitative works on ecstasy (Appendix 6: Ecstasy literature). In this sense, the data collected in this thesis may possess broader relevance to disciplines outside of anthropology, such as sociology, psychiatry and cognitive science. If the separate chapters of this thesis are taken together as a coherent whole, one can get a more comprehensive sense of how a phenomenologically guided ethnography can inform us about the life world of ecstasy users.

It is my contention that the experiences that ecstasy users described in the ethnography of this thesis represent a distinct "province of reality" in the life-worlds of the metropolitan late capitalism. By this I mean that within the specificities of varying socio-cultural contexts there is a self-contained structure and experiential style in the dynamic continuum of the stream of consciousness that marks these states as distinct from the 'every-day world'. This formulation is consonant with phenomenological conception of "multiple realities" developed, following James (1950), by Schutz, (1970),⁴³ as well as with the studies of the phenomenology of LSD

⁴³ See also Berger and Luckmann (1966).

(Masters and Houston, 2000) and contemporary perspectives on non-ordinary states (Shanon, 2002: 30-40; Merkur, 1998). Here it is useful to recall that for phenomenologists the everyday reality in which we act and orientate ourselves is also “taken for granted”. Ethnography and comparative anthropology powerfully illustrate that this everyday life world is both socially constructed and culturally-historically relative. There is thus a multiplicity of life worlds on earth. Our own particular life world is the shared reality that we act and partake in. However, at the same time relative to the modification of our consciousness (emotional fluctuations, falling into and awakening from sleep, dreaming, reveries, etc.) we transit from one reality to another that interrupt or shock us out of this everyday reality. We live in the ebb and flow of consciousness in everyday life.

It is these dynamic modifications in the stream of consciousness that are precisely what cognitive researchers (Masters and Houston, 2000; Shanon, 2002: 39) and psychoanalytical thinkers like Merkur (1998) have explored and mapped out. These non-ordinary states should be described and investigated as “other realities” *sui generis*. Seen in this light, one can see parallels between how we conceptualise these ‘other worlds’ of experience and what is traditionally called ‘altered’ or non-ordinary states of consciousness.

Now in terms of the literature on ecstasy that I briefly surveyed it seems that the phenomenology of ecstasy that is so frequently and passionately discussed by consumers of ecstasy remains ignored, disparaged and/ or unexplored in contemporary academic discourses. From my reading of the literature, many of these academic positions continue to replicate the mechanistic-materialism that I argued against and rejected in the Introduction. Given this situation and in conjunction with the main orientation of this thesis, I have endeavoured to make an ethnographic contribution to the existing field of ecstasy research and those disciplines that are concerned with non-ordinary states of consciousness⁴⁴. In the Introduction I set forth my case for advancing a dialogal ethnography which allowed me to faithfully bring to light and clarify the direct experiential stream of consciousness of ecstasy consumers

⁴⁴ This may be any number of disciplines (psychology, sociology, history, psychiatry, philosophy, cognitive science etc. etc.) that are interested in what usually goes under the rubric of “Psychedelic Science”. As noted, the substantial compilations of the existing literature can be found at www.MAPS.com or “Psycholytic and Psychedelic Research: A Complete International Biography (Torsten Passie, 1995) which can be found on Google Search.

mode of being-in-the-world. Here my aim was to gain a positive and constructive understanding of ecstasy users' life worlds whilst foregrounding the fact that they are always *persons* living and intentionally directed to the world. This is in contrast to those mechanistic-materialist frameworks that reify the living subject. For the subjects-and-their-life worlds with whom the ethnographer works with are always much more than the theoretical imputations and models that any scientist employs in order to interpret and understand them. I have kept this point in mind in avoiding the reductionism of bio-medical/ psychological perspectives.

Beck and Rosenbaum (1994) characterised their own sociologically-minded ethnography as “exploratory”⁴⁵, necessitating a discovery style of research that, like the approach advanced in this thesis, avoids the imposition of prejudiced notions, theories, models etc. A significant difference in my own orientation has been a direct participant-observational ethnography, where I decided to involve myself in ecstasy consumption with the informants. Nonetheless, this approach can also facilitate in the kind of comparative method that Beck and Rosenbaum (1994: 161) productively employed in their research.

As mentioned, once I had collected, collated and synthesised these reports through my own selective process and understanding I generated the nine sections comprising the primary corpus of ethnographic material. I could then reflect on it and make my own theoretical conclusions as to the specificities of the ecstasy consumption in the context of Sydney raves. Looking back at my own situation during various stages of this project, I was conscious that undertaking a project like this would be a long and arduous task. It would require working through several intellectual traditions to acquire the requisite tools for continuing my critical research - both theoretically and ethnographically – into non-ordinary states of consciousness⁴⁶. I deemed this necessary if I was to transcend my delusional middle-class cast of consciousness in

⁴⁵ “Grounded theory stands in sharp contrast to most methodological approaches, which ostensibly seek to verify pre-existing theories or hypotheses. A major problem with such preconceived hypothesis testing is that data which cannot be forced into questionnaires or selectively picked are often discarded. To overcome this narrow focus, grounded theory places a high emphasis on theory as process. The theory is viewed as an ever developing entity determined by the emerging data” (Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994: 161).

⁴⁶ It would also require the constant generation of willpower in an academic work situation of incessant bureaucratic hurdles and the social field generated therein.

order to achieve a more genuine anthropological knowledge. Reflecting on the orientation of this project I have come to understand the previous errors in my thinking as an ingrained delusional cast of consciousness, what the Marxists identify as a pervasive condition in capitalism known as 'False Consciousness' (Berger and Pullberg, 1965; Gabel, 1975). I return to this point at the end of this Conclusion.

In arguing against and rejecting materialist-mechanistic accounts I drew upon the holistic organismic approach (the post/ Uexküllian tradition) and the direct application of phenomenology to ethnographic field work. In turn, this procedure allowed me to reflect on users' non-ordinary states or modifications in consciousness based on Strasser's (1969) dialogal method used in conjunction with Malinowskian (1922) styled ethnography. By approaching drug-induced states as a distinct world's, or a realm within the flux of "multiple realities", it is productive to adopt a scientific framework and methodology that is able to describe these experiences as accurately as possible from the users' point of view, without conceptually distorting the phenomena through ingrained prejudices and preconceived notions. As such, I worked phenomenologically from the particular 'I-ness' of users' experiences in relation to my own concrete use of ecstasy. After collecting and collating a large ethnographic corpus I systematically worked through these reports thematically organising the kaleidoscopic experiences into chapters and sub-headings. Large quantities of these self-accounts were culled from the primary ethnographic corpus, with certain areas being sorted into respective appendixes. This was to ensure minimal repetition and to keep the work centred on the phenomenological ethnography of ecstasy.

I also set forth my own passionate interest in understanding ecstasy in terms of reflecting on my own existential trajectory. This point is crucial if we are to avoid an 'anthropologist on mars' scenario or 'anthropology as bird watching'. I further argued for the necessity of the phenomenological critical self-suspension as a method that when applied to ethnographic based fieldwork allows the phenomena – in this case experiences of ecstasy - to emerge and be grasped 'as they appear'⁴⁷. Importantly, this technique stands in opposition and in contrast to those 'orthodox' medico-scientistic approaches to thinking about ecstasy – i.e. those closed-minded approaches that often

⁴⁷ Let us recall the famous catch phrase of Husserl's phenomenology 'back to the things themselves' – which is beautifully captured in Jackson's book title "Things as They Are" (1996).

blindly and/ or rigidly adhere to their own methodological ideals commonly seen in models and theories of risk, toxicity and/ or therapy (etc.) (Henry & Rella, 2001). As I have emphasised, for the phenomenologists these reductionist (either bio-medical or bio-psychological) interpretations tend to eliminate or distort the totality of the phenomena they are purportedly seeking to study. In rigidly adhering to these frameworks contained in their methodological 'suits of armour', these thinkers can only see a partial view of the world and the broader nature of the phenomena in question.

4.2 *An overall summation*

When taking a bird's-eye view of the entire corpus the reader may ascertain a degree of cohesiveness in the completed ethnography. However, I wish to emphasise that these experiences are invariably fragmentary and incomplete. In other words, they represent piecemeal objectifications arising in and describing partial experiences within the life world of ecstasy consumers. For the phenomenologist, the objectifications arising in the life world do not reveal all human experience. Similarly, the theoretical imputations of the ethnographer do not and cannot capture, or describe *all* occurrences in the life world. As stated, it is a fact that other people's lives are always more than the ethnography and the concepts that we use to explore them. Although some commentators (e.g. Tart, 1969) have rightly noted the ineffable and inexplicable nature of non-ordinary states, I go along with Shanon's (2002) affirmation that empirical studies of these 'other worlds' are not only possible, but are highly productive in revealing ("bringing forth") the actual experiences of the users themselves for empirical and theoretical analysis.

The data in this thesis raise classical debates in anthropology concerning the universality and context-specific manifestations of human experiences. Tentatively it seems that the ethnographic material presented in this thesis represents a coalescence of the trans-national culture of the mixed-class city people (Collin, 1997; Reynolds, 1999; Saunders, 1995; Hammersley, 2002) with the universal psychic constitution of the human species (Devereux, 1967, 1978; Merkur, 1998). In order for the universal structures of ecstasy experiences to be further established inductive generalising from empirical studies of this kind (context specific) could be made employing the "glory of anthropology, the comparative method" (La Barre, 1978: 265). This could be done

using any number of the established works that I have surveyed in appendix 6 (ecstasy literature) or studies that are currently being undertaken in cross-culturally specific contexts. Although I have cited a number of works on ecstasy there is a paucity of comparative literature in the life worlds of ecstasy users representing the trans-national mixed-class consumers. Nevertheless, it certainly appears that many of the major phases of the ecstatic experience are shared by the comparative data contained in the works that I have listed in the section on literature to date.

Many of the works cited in my review of the existing literature also cover phenomenological and qualitative reports of ecstasy experience. However, when examining the field as a whole, the masses of literature published on the neurotoxic debates and 'underlying neural mechanisms' are clearly disproportionate⁴⁸: first-hand accounts that are attuned to the phenomenology of ecstasy users' own experiences are lacking from the medico-scientific models and interpretations of drug use. As I have pointed out these medico-scientific approaches reify the subject and his/her life world: either the person is treated as an 'object' of science or is merely looked at as an externality (on 'objectivism' see Strasser, 1974: 67-69).

Notwithstanding the tremendous interest and relevance of questions of neurotoxicity, therapeutical applications and/ or 'explanations' that seek to locate the supposed 'underlying neural mechanisms' of ecstasy, what to my mind is the most interesting dimension to ecstasy use, is the users' actual subjective experiences, i.e., what actually happens to people when they use ecstasy. Judging by the literature I have surveyed in this thesis, a methodology and theoretical framework for exploring and understanding these experiences is not sufficiently developed in a systematic fashion in many of the qualitative studies of ecstasy. One gets the sense that you can read any number of excellent studies in the literature cited, all of which outline their own specific approaches (in e.g. Adamson and Metzner, 1985; Beck and Rosenbaum, 1994; Duff, 2001; Hammersley, et al., 2002; Hayes, 2000; Saunders, 1997), but that a detailed and overarching framework for making intelligible the substantial qualitative data is still lacking in the field on ecstasy research. The most detailed approach for

⁴⁸ See the brief review of the qualitative literature provided in the Chapter on 'Ecstasy Research' (e.g. Eisner, 1994: 185-187; Saunders and Doblin, 1996: 237-273; Saunders, 1997: 288-330; Saunders, Saunders and Pauli, 2000: 246-265).

understanding the subjective effects of ecstasy that I have been able to locate is elucidated by Beck and Rosenbaum (1994: 159-169) in their appendix A theory and methodology. Perhaps, this deficiency could be further addressed by researchers in the field of ecstasy by critically drawing from the existing frameworks based on the studies of different substances (e.g. LSD, mescaline etc.) such as Grof (1985, 2000), Masters and Houston (1966), Merkur (1998) and Shannon (2002)⁴⁹. Therefore the holistic organismic approach, and the more specific dialogal phenomenology employed in this thesis, can also be seen as making a contribution in a 'search for a method', i.e., a methodology for studying non-ordinary states of consciousness and drug-use in general (see Shanon, 2002: 39, for an alternative framework).

There remains the critical question of getting a better understanding of what specific project(s) and/ or experiences that users' are pursuing through the ecstasy experience. I have endeavoured to get a better comprehension of this state of affairs by espousing a framework of existential-phenomenology, wherein the life world of ecstasy users are unveiled and accurately recorded by direct engagement with consumers in respective field sites. I now turn to some concluding remarks of my interpretation of the ethnography.

4.3 *Ecstasy in the Sydney rave/ club context: A viable project?*

In the Introduction I briefly mentioned my early interest in critical theorists such as Nietzsche, Marcuse and Sartre. This appeal of the insights from critical tradition has led me to think about the types of experiences and the project(s) of ecstasy use in undertaking and completing this ethnography. It seems to me, that in the context of the Sydney raves/ club culture there is a problematic project inherent in the constant 'pursuit of ecstasy' and more specifically the possibility of self-transformation engendered in these states. Although the ethnography in this thesis has brought into relief the disparities in the of types of ecstasy experiences consumers may potentially go through⁵⁰, it appears to me that in the pursuit of ecstasy, with its intensity of peak experiences (e.g. the euphoric and blissful states of the 'ecstasy honeymoon'), would eventually lead to problems, adverse effects and negative experiences. For some users

⁴⁹ See especially Shanon's (2002) discussion of these issues in the concluding sections of *The Antipodes of the Mind* (chapters 22-23).

⁵⁰ This must always be situated in the respective sites of consumption, i.e., the socio-cultural context of use.

this would lead them to cut back on the volume or rates of consumption, or alternatively, desist with regular ecstasy use. At certain times some users would cut down on their consumption dramatically ('going natural') or endure the numerous possible adverse effects of repeated and heavy ecstasy use ('going hard') such as '(serotonergic) burning-out', 'losing the magic', 'fatigue', 'spacy-ness', 'disillusionment' etc. Judging by these reports, it seems that the main experiences that are pursued in the "E-mode of being-in-the-world" are a smorgasbord of narcissistic-hedonistic experiences such as the numerous states mentioned in the chapters of this thesis: the 'synaesthesia' of the senses, heightened sexual experiences, 'PLURRING', euphoria, elevated emotional exuberance, 'ecstatic dancing' and so on. As mentioned in Chapter 3 these states and styles of experience may be understood by what the humanistic psychologists call peak experiences. Many of the varieties of these often beautiful and highly pleasurable experiences are described in exquisite detail in Merkur's (1998) typography of unificatory experiences. Hence, many of the sections contained in this thesis can be seen as powerfully illustrating the beauty, pleasure, insights etc. that can be experienced in these non-ordinary states consciousness (e.g. Peaking 4.3.0, Unificatory Experiences 6.6.0, 2.14.0 Religious and Metaphysical Experiences 2.14.0 etc.). From the material collected, bearing in mind the actual context of the experiences, it would appear that at the time this study was undertaken that the project in late capitalist raving and clubbing in Sydney is primarily one of narcissistic-hedonism (Fun and playfulness 1.8.0, 2.15.0 sexual experiences, 4.5.0 Euphoria, Happiness and Bliss 4.5.0). Thus the quote prefacing this thesis by Ruth Park aptly conveys the essence of the project of ecstasy use: "Thus we may say that Sydney's patron is Dionysius which, in view of the blithe and irrepressible character of the city as it has developed, is gratifyingly suitable".

It is unclear to me at this point whether the 'original raving' that was set outside of state parameters was more strongly orientated towards human freedom when compared to the commercialisation of raves and clubs that many informants observed. Most of the reports I collected, even when asked directly, did not see a political (or spiritual) dimension to raving or clubbing. As for the intimations of divine transcendence, the informant's remark – "Nah, not in the eastern suburbs mate" (Ch 3.2.14.1), shows the very real improbability in Sydney of such a project by means of ecstasy. I think that Storm's concluding reflections capture most poignantly the truth

of the Sydney ecstasy project: taking a pill is “the easy way”. One has to embrace life and awaken, and that is the “hard way”. Of course some of the consumers of ecstasy, being aware of this predicament, did exactly that.

Earlier social theorists emphasised the compromised and/ or dwindling project of human freedom in all areas of capitalist life worlds. In this sense, Marcuse’s (1964) description of ‘One-Dimensional Man’ and Fromm’s (1941) insights about the deep-seated ‘Fear of Freedom’ of capitalist citizens are as relevant as ever. Perhaps no other modern philosopher has thought through and authentically lived this situation than Sartre (Cohen-Solal, 1998). The Marxist-phenomenologist Eugene Paci (1972: 289-443) makes a persuasive case for the parallels between the radicality of Husserl’s phenomenology that insists upon *a return to subjectivity* and Marx’s own philosophical stance “To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself”. I opened this thesis by asserting with Sartre that the act of philosophising begins in our own existential situation. Throughout this thesis I have maintained a phenomenological perspective that places existential indeterminacy at the centre of analysis. Nearly a decade later after the commencement of this project I will close, in the spirit of philosophical anthropology, with Ernst Cassirer who pens at the opening of *An Essay on Man* (1954: 3):

That self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical inquiry appears to be generally acknowledged. In all the conflicts between different philosophical schools the objective remained invariable and unshaken: it proved to be the Archimedean point, the fixed and immovable centre, of all thought...Self-knowledge...is the first prerequisite for self realization. We must try to break the chain connecting us to the outer world in order to enjoy our true freedom.

Appendix 1.

Glossary of Terminology

I have included a short glossary of drug slang - 'the language of ecstasy' - that is contained in the users' reports. This language reflects the experiences contained in the alternative worlds or realities of non-ordinary states of consciousness that are engendered by drug use. Undoubtedly there are many terms and phrases that have not been included in this glossary. A comprehensive undertaking of this kind is beyond the scope of this thesis. Where possible I have indicated terms that are specifically Australian slang or colloquial speech. Several broader and more detailed glossaries of drug and 'street-slang' terminology can be found in *The Australian Illicit Drug Guide* (Campbell, 2001: 350-372) and/ or in the Vaults or Erowid, 'Drug Slang and Terminology': <http://www.erowid.org/psychoactives/slang/slang.shtml>. I have excluded the medical terminology contained in the thesis.

Adam: is the name for MDMA that originated on the West Coast of the USA. This name may be etymologically connected with reports of ecstasy as inducing a sense of "being returned to a natural state of innocence before guilt, shame and unworthiness... and so are the feelings of connectedness and bonding with fellow human beings, animals, plants and all forms of energies in the natural world" (Adamson and Metzner, 1985: 4).

Afterglow: the period after the comedown where some users feel a residual happiness, warmth, euphoria, hence after-glow.

Antsy or Ancy: hot, uncomfortable, anxious and/ or irritable.

Baseline: the drug-free state prior to ingestion or the point of returning to this state after consumption. Some users use this line to gauge how long the drug's effects last or when they should use it again.

Beaming: describes the wide-eyes and pupils of users who are peaking on ecstasy, e.g. 'she is really beaming hard'! A mechanistic metaphor related to 'high beams' of automobiles (also bug-eyes).

Bender: a drug party or sustained period of drug use, e.g. "we went on an all-night bender". Etymologically opposed to being 'straight' (see straighty-180'); this is a person who is drug-free and/ or abstains.

Blasting/ banging up: the injection of substances.

'Breaking the Seal': the first toilet visit to engage in urination in the course of dropping a night on a pill. This saying is more commonly associated with alcohol ingestion and the concomitant repeated toilet calls.

Bug-Eyes: the noticeable enlargement (or shrinkage) of the eyes on ecstasy.

Burn-out: Psycho-physical exhaustion/ problems associated with excessive drug use. Some see this as a result of 'going (too) hard'.

Candy-flipping: Using LSD and ecstasy simultaneously and thus experiencing a dual (kaleidoscopic) drug spectrum with the effects of each of the drugs moving in an out of the other.

Charging: peaking on drugs, e.g., ecstasy or cocaine. This may describe the heightened euphoria, energy or movement associated with these states.

Chem-Cock: (Aust. Slang) The shrinkage of the penis (and testes) on ecstasy. This is usually noticed by male users when they are urinating or coming down. This may persist for several days after use.

Comedown/ coming down: The period of time marked a change in state from peaking/ plateau to 'coming down'. This can last for 6-8 hours and may involve tiredness, scating, lack of hunger etc. Some users do not report coming down. There also may be smooth or harsh comedowns.

Class 'A' Drugs: it includes ecstasy, LSD, heroin, cocaine, crack, magic mushrooms and amphetamines (if prepared for injection). Class A drugs are considered to be the

most likely to cause harm and carry severe penalties under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and using them is illegal in Australia.

Cruisy (pills): an easy free-flowing-feeling on ecstasy. This is compared to smacky or speedy pills.

'Disco-bickies': name for ecstasy associated with the rave/ club scene and digestive terminology.

Doofing: Outdoor raves usually held in the bush or an open landscape.

Double-Dropping/ dunking: Taking two or more pills at once. This may be at any time. Some users would space this out during the night. Others would do so when coming down to delay the comedown.

Ecky-Stomach 'chemi-guts': The feeling/ sensation of the digestive system when on ecstasy. This was accentuated in the comedown where users would feel a nauseating emptiness from the inability to eat following being on ecstasy.

E-Crap: Defecating when on/ or coming down from using ecstasy. The numerous changes in the psycho-physiology of the body, including eating, drinking and digestion lead some users to report difficulty or urgency in defecating and a change in the odour of faeces.

E-Talk: Tendency for some users to engage in rapid and long conversations or monologues. Often E-talk can be linked with 'talking shit' or interpretations that this is 'the drug talking' and not the person.

Eye-Wobbles: The rapid movement/ oscillation of the eyes on ecstasy. Some users play with this state and find it fun and amusing.

Flaky/ ness: Flaky: A person who is slipping in and out of reality from (excessive) drug use. Symptoms of 'flakyness' may include 'coming apart' (see fuckdness), nodding off to sleep, eye rolling, slumped composure and a refusal to do anything

constructive due to drug-induced full-body 'shutdown'. Oscillating between states of consciousness and unconsciousness especially in the comedown where users may be excessively tired, but unable to sleep from ecstasy or amphetamine use.

Freaking Out: Being overwhelmed or losing it in the ecstatic state. This may involve being overtaken by fear, terror, anxiety and/ or confusion.

Frying the Brain: Associated with the intense heat and release and eventual depletion of serotonin resulting in numerous psycho-physical problems

Fucked-up, Fuckdness, fucked: (also known as floored from excessive ecstasy use).

Gabba: a style of electronic music that is a sub-genre of electronic techno.

Going-hard: Partying really intensely. Repeated use of drugs in large quantities.

Going Natural: Term for going clean or abstaining from ecstasy for a duration of time to clean out the (CNS) system. This may result from binging (going hard) or increasing tolerance to the drug.

Going with the flow: Loosening or easing egoic control when in the drug state as opposed to maintaining tight control (compare to indicating).

Gurning/ have a gurn/ gurner: Protrusion of the upper or lower lips and a seemingly uncontrollable licking around the mouth. The term refers to these actions whilst on ecstasy.

Happy-Meal: combining ecstasy with another drug such as LSD. The term may be derived from the McDonald's combination menu item.

Honey-Moon phase: The initial phase of taking ecstasy where the intensity and duration of peak experiences is maximal. Hence the honeymoon phase is often seen as to contain the best possible experiences with ecstasy that may be unrepeatably with increasing tolerance, habituation and addiction.

Indicating: The failure of some users to consciously maintain one's bodily comportment so as to appear not to be on ecstasy (i.e. at baseline); hence they may be 'indicating' that they are on drugs.

K/ Kat/ Special K: Ketamine.

Kick-in: when the effects of the drug take effect.

Kick/ ing-on: decision to move to the next venue or house to continue partying (maybe associated with football to keep the ball in play).

Losing the Magic: The gradual diminishing of the effects of ecstasy with repeated use – this is especially so with reference to the 'magical' peak experiences of the honeymoon phase of ecstasy use.

Melbourne-Shuffle: a style of dancing that originated in Melbourne with a fast heel-and-toe action (sometimes with accompanying arm movements). Some dancers may put talcum powder below their feet for smoother dancing. This style is thought to have originated from stomping (which is an Australian adaptation of Celtic dancing).

Midweek-Blues: Some users report an extension of Suicide Tuesdays or depressive dips from singular or repeated use of ecstasy. This is a time where the body is thought to be reconstituting itself prior to returning to baseline.

Missions: Occasionally called a 'mish' in Sydney – missions are actions that may arise at any point of the ecstatic experience in order to accomplish a certain task, desire, inclination. For example, going to the car to get glow sticks, walking to the corner store for 'supplies' such as cigarettes, Chuppa Chops, OJ, energy drinks or finding someone at a large rave when mobile phones are not working are all missions. Being on ecstasy, the randomness of events and people involved can make missions short and fun or long and arduous tasks.

Munted: (Aust. Slang) A state of 'trashiness' that usually involves gurning, and/ or incapacity to orientate oneself existentially and socially. The term possibly derives

from the terms mullered (extreme intoxication) and cunted (vulgar slang under the influence of drugs; tired; worn out). Signifying a state of chemical intoxication.

Nangs/ whippy bulbs/ whippets: Whipped cream bulbs available in supermarkets. Contains nitrous oxide, more commonly known as laughing gas.

'One' - being/ feeling: A Commonly reported state of raving that can occur at various stages of the night, usually during the peak/ plateau. These states are generally seen as highly desirable, blissful, euphoric and energetic. There may be a feeling of unification within oneself, with others, with all life, a spiritual or divine presence.

Overloading: Taking too much ecstasy – either consecutively in time or in a phase of continuous use.

Pash/ ing: Australian slang for long and intense kissing with the lips, tongue and exchange of saliva.

PC (venue): The main venue where fieldwork was conducted for this thesis. The club would shift around various locations in the Sydney metropolitan area. It was run by DJ's, committed clubbers and ravers. It has since ceased as a regular event.

Peak/ ing: The period around the onset at the height of the experience. This is interpreted by some users as the dumping/ release of serotonin in the brain at the onset of the experience. Other users may use metaphors of climbing, flying or getting high, all of which indicate an upward existential mood, action and/ or feeling.

Pill-Crap: Urgent sense of needing to defecate on ecstasy; and/ or the act of defecation in this state.

Pingers: pills or ecstasy in general.

Plateau: The main or core experience of being on ecstasy. Following the peak/ rush there is a smoothness and stabilization in the primary phase lasting a couple of hours (3-5) before the comedown sets in.

PLUR/ ring: P.L.U.R. (peace, love, unity, respect) is seen by some as the overarching attitude of the rave scene. 'Plurring' is also seen as a highly enjoyable altered state of consciousness which has similarities to 'connecting', 'syncing', 'E love'.

Postloading: Activities undertaken after using ecstasy in order to minimise the adverse effects that may potentially arise from using the drug.

Preloading: Activities undertaken prior to ecstasy consumption.

Punching: quickly inhaling a cone from a water pipe, e.g. 'punching a bong'.

Puddle Pile: a user sitting alone in a corner on ecstasy.

Puppy Piles: Users lying over each other bodies, cuddling, stroking, kissing or light petting etc. and hence forming a pile of puppies.

Racking up: The cutting up of a drug such as speed/ cocaine ecstasy etc. and then inhaling it through the nasal passages; this is usually done with a credit/ bank card and a note rolled up.

Randoms: Strangers to the user in the scene (e.g. club/ rave/ house party).

Randomness: The unpredictability of events/ people/ oneself within the drug state.

Ritual Shower: Upon arriving home a number of users would ritually clean the oil and filth that had built up during the night from dancing, hugging and profusely sweating. The elation, bodily pleasures and euphoria activated by the ritual shower are similar in form to Peak experiences discussed in the thesis.

Roll/ ing: May be used to describe the plateau experience such as the waves of euphoria or the general world-mood of the ecstatic state.

Rush: Feeling in the onset or peak of the ecstasy kicking in. This is often accompanied with the rapid intensification of elevated and euphoric moods.

Scat/ tered: The state following the peak/ plateau of ecstasy (and other drugs). Hence, scat day is the morning and day of coming down from ecstasy.

Skitz/ oid: Going 'mental'/ 'losing it' or 'psyching out'. This is a colloquial abbreviation from schizo/ phrenia (e.g. she skitzed out man).

Shaboo ('shabs'): Ice (Methamphetamine).

Straighty-180': someone who does not use drugs.

Serotonergic Burnout: an overuse of ecstasy which according to some users, results in the bodies inability to continuously produce an equilibrium of serotonin and thus, an inability to reattain peak experiences (losing the magic). These states may be felt as depressive, lethargic, flaky and scattered.

Serotonin Dips: following the comedown and/ or afterglow some users experience depressive moods ('suicide Tuesdays) and burnout. This is thought to result from the depletion of serotonin, and hence, may be referred to as a 'dip'.

Sextasy: having sex on ecstasy or combining Viagra and ecstasy for sensual and heightened sex.

Shutdown: upon reaching a point of total psych-somatic exhaustion users may experience total 'shutdown'.

Smacky (pills): ecstasy that is thought to contain heroin, due to the smacky (heroin like) effects.

Static: The Scheerer's phenomenon is the appearance of tiny bright dots moving quickly along squiggly lines in the visual field, especially when looking into blue light. Self-interpretations of ecstasy saw this as static during the comedown where

some users would play around with their visual field in relation to external objects (e.g. a light bulb).

Suicide Tuesdays: a name for the day(s) following the comedown when 'serotonin dips', exhaustion, weight loss etc. can all contribute to impair 'normal functioning'.

The Drop: the taste of the drug in the throat or palate when racking up or dropping drugs such as speed or ecstasy.

Top-Shelfing: anal administration of ecstasy, thought to be more efficacious in bringing forth the effects of the drug.

Tuning in: harmonizing oneself with the beats and rhythm of the music, and/ or others around you – especially when on/ dancing on ecstasy.

Virgin raver: someone who is attending a rave for the first time.

Virgin popper: a first time user of ecstasy.

Wrecked: a psycho-physical break-down from excessive ecstasy use.

Appendix 2.

'The Cast of Players'

Primary Participant's Socio-Cultural Background

In the anonymous biographies given below all ages are dated at the approximate time of participation in the scenes of ecstasy consumption. Due to the sensitive nature of this research, a number of participants preferred to remain anonymous (Anon.), i.e. to have their profile and personal details remain confidential. Where possible, these micro-biographies are closely worded by the participants themselves. The topography of the residential areas that the participants reside in is significant for understanding the respective self-experiences contained in this thesis. Most of the participants come from the Greater area of Sydney (with two from Melbourne). The most affluent area of Sydney is the Eastern Suburbs with medium to high density housing. This is also the case with the North Shore of Sydney that is generally regarded as a more politically conservative region. The Inner-West, Northern Beaches and Southern and Western Suburbs represent medium/ lower to poor socio-economic residents.

(MM – 'Meow Meow'): Grew up in Canberra in a middle-class family. He lived in an abusive family situation during high school before moving around the East Coast of NSW and eventually settling into an IT job at 21. Through his participation in the drug scene he left behind corporate ideals of making lots of money and fell in love with studying science at university. Since then he has lived with a number of girlfriends in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. He began using recreational drugs in small amounts which increased exponentially over a 6 month period (early 20's). This excessive use of recreational drugs led to psychiatric admission and hospitalisation and abstinence for a one year period. Nonetheless, he maintains that the 'loss of magic' that is common in the scene, is due to the decrease in the quality of drugs that are now available. Since leaving IT he has been working in a number of different jobs in this profession and retail. He continues to reside in the Eastern Suburbs with a friend. More recently he has taken an interest in learning drums and guitar (Rock Music) and is pursuing contact juggling. In the near future Meow Meow hopes to continue his studies in Science at the UNSW and to work in science communication.

(CeL – ‘Celina’): Preferred to remain anonymous.

(MrB – ‘Mr. B’): Born in London, UK, Mr. B migrated to Australia at age 3. He grew up with his mother and step family in the inner parts of Sydney. As an adolescent, he was ardently opposed to drug use; ‘why bother taking harmful drugs when you can drink alcohol like everyone else?’ he thought. When he realised that alcohol was as dangerous, or even more dangerous than many illegal drugs, he became more open to experimentation and at 16 smoked marijuana. The experiences astonished him and led him to pursue personal studies in psychology. Within a year of trying cannabis, he began exploring ecstasy and methamphetamine use, and also enjoyed semi-frequent ingestion of Valium (diazepam) and Ritalin (methylphenidate). He considered ecstasy to be a superior social lubricant to alcohol due to its sensory enhancing properties.

Taking illegal drugs resulted in Mr. B socialising with people from Sydney’s underground culture. The musical interests of these people tended to associate drug use with dance music, of which he became a big fan. He began to dance at illegal parties and also amongst the homosexual community in Sydney. Since the interview, Mr. B has rarely ingested ecstasy. He is finishing his Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in psychology and philosophy, and nowadays uses mostly cannabis, LSD, and other psychedelics drugs (psilocybin, DMT, mescaline) when available. He enjoys the heightened experience provided by these drugs and the special way of thinking that comes with this mind-state. Mr. B still enjoys ecstasy on special occasions, but is dismayed by the quality of pills that are presently available.

(JaK – ‘Jack’): a 21 year old male first used ecstasy at age 16 after coming in contact with a group of older friends. He continued to escalate his use during the first 6 months, with a peak of about 1-3 pills a week, but only as singles. The context for most of his experimentation took place at friend’s houses, parks, beaches etc. This consumption remained tied to intimate relations within a group of old/ new friends with whom the experience was shared. Further use subsequently dwindled over 10 months to fall back to roughly 2-5 tablets per year, mostly at concerts and raves. He first attended a rave about one year after the first ecstasy experience. Jack has completed a bachelor of science from Usyd with majors in neuroscience and psychology. At 22 he now rarely uses ecstasy and is much more in favour of the occasional hallucinogenic experience (e.g. acid and mushrooms).

(CP – ‘Chris Physics’): was 21 at the time of participation. A single male who was in between studying computers and television, he lived at home and would go out recreationally clubbing: “it was all about going out with mates”. He continues to work in the hospitality industry and plans to travel to England. He is not into clubbing any more as he felt that the more he used – the less enjoyable it was (see section on ‘losing the magic’).

(CG: ‘Casper Gordon’ or ‘Casper’): At the time of interviewing (2005) Casper was 19 and living with his parents in the Inner-West of Sydney. He worked part-time within retail while completing a TAFE⁵¹ Diploma. He entered into the club scene shortly after finishing school in 2003. Prior to turning 18 he had little experience with drugs other than marijuana, having only taken ecstasy on occasion. A self-confessed “rocker”, he had little interest in dance music or the dance scene. However, on turning 18 he started going to upmarket clubs and taking various drugs with older friends. He quickly became disillusioned with this scene, due to what he regarded as its superficial nature. In late 2004 he was introduced to the rave scene by a close friend and started taking ecstasy and similar *Class ‘A’ Drugs* on a regular basis. By late 2005, he had slowed down as he became increasingly conscious of the reduced effects of the drugs and the high cost of sustaining a strong link to the related social scene. He has since completed a university degree and is now working within a corporate environment. Several years ago he took up DJ’ing and maintains loose connections to the rave scene, attending the occasional rave and club. Overall, his drug usage has diminished although he still takes ecstasy, speed and cocaine on the odd occasion as well as some hallucinogens such as LSD and Magic Mushrooms. Casper has no regrets over his previous dalliance with drugs or involvement in the rave scene. He is highly motivated and envisages a successful corporate life within his respective field. In the near future he is considering either going back to university or moving to Europe.

(PenT – ‘Peanut’): at the time of interviewing Peanut was a 21 year old female who was working in the retail industry selling games. She started going out to raves with friends at the end of 2005 moving into PC (venue) in 2006 until it was shut down. She

⁵¹ An acronym for ‘Technical and Further Education’.

lived at the Upper North Shore with her parents and boyfriend. Peanut started using ecstasy regularly at the end of 2005 into 2006 when she began dealing at PC. Around the same time she noticed that the ecstasy had stopped affecting her (Aug 2006). She has continued with intermittent use, but is glad that ecstasy no longer affects her in its full capacity as she watched a number of friends consuming massive quantities (15-20 pills a night, typically from 9pm onwards). 'Peanut' now (2010) lives with a few friends and is getting back to who she was many years ago, prior to entering the scene, "doing the things I've wanted to do for ages. Well I've just wanted to stop going from one dead end job to the next. I want to find something I could build a career from in the future. I also want to travel outside of Australia".

(JN - 'Jimmy Neutron'): was a 20 year old male at the time of interviewing who was in between jobs. He lived in Drummoyne with his partner 'Peanut', whilst working as a promoter of PC. Both were dealing in drugs. He preferred PC to raving because it was smaller and had a more personal feel where you know the people and there is minimal police presence. After years of use he started losing the magic he began dealing which prompted him to start using *Shaboo* (Ice). He subsequently would get sick and vomit every morning. He had finished his HSC (the last two years of high school, i.e., the higher school certificate) and undertook a number of computer courses. He did not complete all of these due to sickness and unwillingness. JN started using ecstasy in smaller quantities (2-3 a night) but then escalated his use to 10-15. He eventually had to deal to support his use with 'Peanut' where they would have to "sell X to eat X amount". The relationship with 'Peanut' ended in 2009.

(SaN - 'Sarin') a 20 year old male who was Dee-Jaying in the club scene and a regular clubber and raver at (PC - venue). I lost contact with him shortly after interviewing him.

(WW - 'Wonder Woman') was in between studying Arts at Sydney University and The University of New South Wales. She worked part-time in hospitality whilst studying and would club around the Eastern Suburbs. She also joined a rock band.

(AmB - 'Amba'): in 2005 Amba was 19 and just entering the rave and club scene. Having grown up in Canada, she moved to Sydney with her mother at 13. Her interest

in the rave scene was sparked through listening to Happy Hard Core which she found to be inspirational to her raving. She was working in full-time accountancy where she found the office politics boring. Amba became heavily drawn into the scene 'every weekend' for about two years (19-21). She continued to work where she moved into a party house but she eventually cut down on her use. She began to see that taking drugs occasionally could augment the experience of going out rather than just getting trashed. More recently, with the unstable economic climate, she was made redundant twice and hopes in the near future to get back into steady work. She is no longer able to take ecstasy due to conflicting medication, but does aim to improve her health as she settles down into a mature relationship.

(RoB - 'Rob'): was a 26 year old male who grew up in the Northern Beaches (Sydney). Upon entering the scene he was doing casual work having finished studying Graphic Design at Hornsby Tafe. He worked as a photographer within the rave and club scene where he would 'take photos of trashy people' and then touch them up with photo-shop so that they 'looked respectable'. He would take ecstasy nearly every 'weekend' (in his own words 'Thursday to Sunday'), but eventually decreased his usage with time. That is, he went from taking 1-10 pills in two nights to dropping 21 - 10 pills every three months. He found that over time he grew bored with the repetition of the scene, but was able to sustain interest in the scene through work. Although he found it to be good fun, he grew tired of seeing everyone going out to get 'fucked up'. He also came to appreciate the risks involved in taking drugs, especially the possibility of getting arrested. Following his long involvement in the scene he decided to stabilize himself in a relationship with Amba and get back into photography. He plans to study Electrical Engineering so as to have a steady job to support a family in the future.

(AJ - 'AJ'): was 25 at the time of interview and was in a relationship with Amba who was his clubbing partner. He resided in Wahroonga in Sydney's north Shore. He describes his use of ecstasy, speed and weed as recreational. He worked in (Woolworths) full-time. When raving or clubbing, "going out on a Friday night usually turned into a whole weekend event, even to the point of needing to go away for a quiet weekend". While he was living in group house - with a resident dealer - it was starting to put strain on the relationship with Amba. He decided to move out of

this situation, relocating to far North Queensland. He now only uses recreational substances on the very odd occasion.

(AdaM – ‘Adam’): was a male aged 20 and was working in retail/ sales whilst attending (PC) venue. He resided in Baulkham Hills where he lived with a large family. He had a diverse group of friends, some of whom he clubbed and raved with.

(CM - ‘Crack Matt’): male 24 who was a student at Usyd and was living at Stanmore by himself (in between relationships). He had been using recreational drugs since he was 18 in the Sydney alternative scene. He started hitting the club and rave scene when he was 21-22. At this point he drastically increased his use of ecstasy and amphetamines. Over the following year he started using Ice, which eventually led to a complete breakdown. At present, he tends to avoid clubs, preferring to occasionally use ecstasy and psychedelics at Bush *Doofs*. He left the club/ rave scene for the reasons of his own personal well-being – citing the repetition, monotony and destructiveness of those particular scenes. This year he is undertaking an Honours Degree in Linguistics at Usyd in order to pursue an academic career. He currently resides with his girlfriend and holds a steady job. Eventually he hopes to travel the world documenting languages.

(FrM – ‘Freeman’): At the time of interview Freeman was in between bar jobs whilst studying Health Science at the University of New South Wales. He first tried ecstasy in April 2006 at a Rave whilst in his final year at school. Introduced to drug and rave culture by his best friend he began taking ecstasy once every 3 months and progressively increased from once a month in July to every week by September. By this time he started selling ecstasy as a means to pay for his escalating use. His usage increased to taking 8-15 pills at a time - multiple times in a given week. In November his friends were concerned with the sheer volume of ecstasy that he had consumed. After having a group of ‘lads’ try and stand over him on New Year’s Eve (NYE) 2006 he decided to stop dealing and did not consume a pill for 3 months. Returning intermittently to the rave and drug culture over the past few years Freeman doesn't have the same experience from ecstasy he once did. At the present time (Feb 2010) he only consumes ecstasy once or twice a month, although his tolerance is still very high having had 19 pills on NYE entering 2010. As an alternative to ecstasy, Freeman has

now takes acid (LSD) more regularly as a way to experience the intense visual and sensory stimulus previously attained through taking ecstasy.

(DiT – ‘Ditch’): a male 22 who was living in Melbourne. He was studying an Advanced Diploma of Information Technology at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and working in the field of IT. He was living at home with his girlfriend. Over the seven years of raving he would take one pill every couple of weeks or, usually, one pill a month. This would give him sufficient time to recover and to ensure that tolerance did not build up too quickly. Ditch described the Melbourne scene as “awesome” in terms of the music, people and the drugs. He started decreasing his use when a number of people died from using *gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid* (GHB) and there was a perception that the quality of ecstasy was dropping. He later found that he was diagnosed with “Bi-Polar” and had been charged with possession of marijuana. All of these influences along with the body slowing down with age have led him to cease using ecstasy. Currently, he is in between jobs, although he hopes to continue to work in IT as a project manager with responsibility for support roles. This would allow him to earn enough money to travel to Argentina to see his family again.

(HG – ‘Hat Guy’): a 27 year old male who at the time of the interview was working in hospitality, doing part time studies at University and travelling to and from the UK. “Most of my experiences in the scene came from working and partying in hospitality although I often spoke to friends who were in the clubbing scene”. He is no longer working in hospitality and his contact with the scene has diminished. “Some of my closer friends have suggested getting back into it for one night only over New Year’s but I doubt that will happen as most of us have other plans this year”.

(StE – ‘Steve’): a 24 male who was doing his first degree for a small software company and was in a relationship with his long-term girlfriend. In between working full-time Steve would go clubbing on a regular basis. He continues to work in the area of the ‘Commercialization of Innovation’ and has settled down into family life since 2003.

(StM - 'Storm'): At the time of her raving Storm was 20 years, from an immigrant family, single mother. She was doing her undergrad degree at a university in Sydney, whilst doing temp work part time. She was living with boyfriend's family because of family problems. She had had been attending raves with her partner and their friends. At the present she is single, in her late twenties pursuing a professional career. Although Storm is adamant that she wants to "chuck it all in to be a novelist and poet and win the Nobel Prize for literature.... Fuck Obama he doesn't deserve that shit". She continues to smoke marijuana and drink and want to try LSD and mushrooms, but does not rave anymore.

(DrP - 'Doctor Phil'): was born in 1966 and began taking ecstasy in 1993 (age 27) at a NYE dance party. Growing up on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, alcohol and marijuana were the only drugs available to him, but the dance scene and the associated 'good times' led him to add ecstasy to the substances he chose for celebrating weekends and holidays. Undergraduate and post graduate study in Education and a career in high school teaching helped keep 'boundaries' on his ecstasy use for fear of potential adverse long-term effects. Extended periods of school holidays allowed him to recover from occasional usage of ecstasy (4-6 times per year). He continues to enjoy a highly successful career as a Head Teacher and has been married for nearly 10 years with 2 children. He still uses ecstasy with his wife on very rare occasion such as weddings or end of year celebrations. He has no regrets about his past usage.

(DeN - 'Dean'): in 2005-7 Dean was a 33-35 year old gay man living in Sydney. He held a position as a national manager in a well-known multinational corporation. Along with his partner at the time, he started smoking crystal on Friday nights after work as a social activity and a way of unwinding from the demands of a stressful career. This continued as he struggled to cope with the ending of the relationship later in that year. Fridays turned into Saturdays - and weekends quickly became about getting sex to fill the void of the loss and recurrent insomnia. Subsequently, he began to suffer sleep deprivation and constantly fatigue at work. As an antidote, he started doing crystal before work and sometimes during the working day. He eventually resigned from his job as the struggle to maintain the balance became too difficult. Within one month he had become an intravenous crystal user and was dabbing in

GHB (gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid). In the ensuing three months he had gone through all of his savings and was on the verge of losing everything. This culminated in him falling asleep with a cigarette in his hand and having to be dragged out of his burning apartment. He was picked up at the hospital by his mother the next morning so decided to move home for six months to get his life back on track. He was diagnosed with 'chemical depression' and treated for drug-addiction. At the present time, Dean has returned to full-health, he is employed, enjoys his work, appreciates what he has in life especially his good health. He is also training to compete in his first triathlon.

(LiM: 'Liam'): Was studying Philosophy and Media at Usyd and working as a journalist in the Inner West.

(MoJ): is a 29 year old male residing in Melbourne city. He is trained as a classical pianist and plays regularly at local venues. He continues to use ecstasy occasionally at parties.

(AgA; BeO; ChA; EnG; AuT): The following group were a group of friends who used to go out to some festivals, clubs and house parties. They held part time jobs and studied. Most were from Central New South Wales some residing in the Eastern Suburbs.

Appendix 3. A Phenomenology of Ecstasy Experiences: A Personal Account

My first recollections of ecstasy were in the mid-nineties when I was living in Sydney. At the time I was studying for the finishing years of high school (HSC). I became aware of the substance through friends who were selling it to locals around the Darlinghurst, an inner-city residential area. It was seen as a trendy ('yuppie') drug that made you 'feel really good' and allowed you stay up all night dancing. It was not until two years later that I first tried ecstasy in an underground night club in Kings Cross. Although it was many years ago, I vividly recall the random sweating bodies with scant accentuated clothing grooving into the late hours of the night to the pounding music. Leather pants and Morrissey shirts were at their heyday back then. As I elaborate upon in the Introduction, seeking some adventure I moved from Sydney to spend most of my early twenties living in Townsville, North Queensland doing my undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology. At that time there was no visible ecstasy culture in that region.

As I mention in the Introduction to this thesis, I had a continuing interest in madness, with its affinities with altered or non-ordinary states of consciousness. At the time when I decided to undertake my PhD project on the ecstasy culture in Sydney I had no real interest in the rave-culture – indeed I had never been to a rave. My first experience with ecstasy was at a small underground club in Kings Cross when ecstasy was selling for \$60-\$90 a pill. I had about four nights on ecstasy in the Kings Cross and Oxford Street regions of Sydney, preferring to go out drinking when clubbing and socialising.

In the context of field work my first use of ecstasy was at *Prophecy* (Feb 2004) an event attended by some 13, 000 ravers. After meeting two random ravers in the drinking area, I dropped half a tablet sitting against a wall, so as to avoid the possible gaze of police and security. A number of ravers sat around and chatted about the music, costumes and outfits and the event itself. Upon entering the altered state I found it uplifting and internally overwhelming; I could no longer focus on external conversations. I was more internally focused upon the overpowering feelings coming

over me. The whole body felt alive and beautiful. I smoked a couple of cigarettes to occupy myself. Smoking was *so much better*. The feeling of the butt around the lips was nice. The inhalation would go right down the throat caressing the sides. The combination of the drugs is good. “Fuck-I-love-smoking-on-ecstasy” I thought smiling at a man next to me. The guy next to me concurred “It’s good isn’t it?” I sat in the large concrete outdoor area known as the chill out area: there are several stalls selling bottled water, soft drinks, lolly-pops, chewing gum etc. This is an outdoor area where you can come out to socialise, cool off from dancing, meet people, arrange deals, pick up, go on rides, walk around and explore the area etc. From what I could understand, a friend of the group I was with had been caught by the police with a number of ecstasy tablets. There was panic amongst the group; their concern was that he would give up a number of dealers who had provided the ecstasy to the police. Feeling highly energized and a little anxious, I sat and tried to make sense of the situation. Normal cognition has changed. I can’t think straight or focus properly. Hands keep on moving about. It’s difficult to look at one particular space let alone follow a whole conversation. A more experienced raver walks up and grabs me by the hand and says “follow me”. She zigzags me throughout the massive crowd – moving from room to room: each area playing a specific type of music such as ‘happy-hard-core’ and ‘drum and bass’⁵². Everything is extremely random, i.e. sequential events do not follow normal reality. Short conversations are common and spontaneous: ‘hi how’s it going’, ‘how are you feeling’, ‘where are you guys going’.

We enter the main dance floor. There is thousands of ravers dancing, talking and walking around the open dance floor. Some sit in rows looking at the awesome lasers and smoke. It’s a visually spectacular – with all of the sense heightened there is something to stimulate each area. I am instructed in learning the dancing styles of *Melbourne Shuffle* and *Gabba*. (JN) hands me a pair of glow-sticks for dancing. They are bright yellow - like light sabres from Star Wars. I begin to hop and jump side-to-side in synchronisation with the main beats of the music. I am mesmerised by the afterglow as I move the sticks around. I circle them around and do my best to move into the music. We all dance in a line – facing towards the front of the auditorium where the main DJ is set up. Tuned in with the music - the lasers and lights are truly

⁵² See Glossary for elaboration of terms.

incredible. There is so much energy around, bodies moving from side-to-side. I watch them for sometime and notice a lot of people taking photos and recording on their mobile phones. Those ravers that do not sit on the floor or stay on the dance floor walk up and down the multiple stairs of the arena. You can stop on the stairs, but there is security everywhere moving people all around. It's a good vantage point for seeing all of the ravers – indeed the whole event itself in action. Time passes quickly when I am dancing. I get so caught up in one song after another. As the speed of the rhythms change so do the inner moods. It's like the body knows what to do in each song. I don't have to think about it – you can just let go and get into the hard dancing. By getting into it, I mean that your expression, thought, bodily movements, creativity, feeling, passion all infuse with the ecstasy and the music – so that you feel you lose the normal ego-functioning and become at 'One' with the music. It's as if the music is acting upon you in a very direct way – changing all the sensations, perceptions and moods within – allowing you to put all of feelings and sensations back out into the people around you. The heart races faster, the heat of the body feels like it is making the ecstasy more intense: I feel completely absorbed in the music. There is much euphoria and smiling both within and around me. Sustained euphoric-bliss...

I am then walked into a smaller room playing slower music. A number of ravers ask me the point of my study 'what is it that you are looking for?' I do my best to explain, but realize this is best done in the normal state. (JN) hands me Vics Vapour Rub, which I inhale through the nostrils. It has a pleasant, but strong smell. I feel slightly uplifted. We talk about the music styles for a while. Before walking around and exploring the venue. There is a large slippery-slide outside, like the ones found at the Easter show. The line-up is long. It looks like fun but I can't be bothered lining up. Having danced for a while I sit down by myself in the outdoor area. The wind cools my body as I drink a bottle of water. There are hundreds of bottles of water scattered all over the floor. Lots of ravers sit and walk around. A girl asks me to massage her back for a while. She lampoons the young people attending 'fucking candy ravers are everywhere', 'don't you just hate candy ravers'? She has a male friend who does not use ecstasy. I am told that he is 'anti'. He doesn't say much, just a quick hello. I walk

around trying to navigate the crowds. There is more randomness⁵³. I can't find anyone. The mobile phone network is not working. It may be overloaded from the huge amount of calls being made.

I go back into the main dance floor. The music has gotten more intense. People are peaking around me everywhere. I can feel their happiness and energy flowing through me as I dance with a large crowd. I lose myself for some time. A while later – I can no longer keep track of time – I end up sitting outside cross-legged watching the crowd. The plateau is wearing off slightly, I don't feel energized anymore. I meditate for some time. I can't work it out clearly. It's crazy – I have blown myself away. I must look so fucked up, I feel a sense that the universe has become aware of itself and that I am but a small expression of the many. My sense of self is obliterated. A clear and distinct sense that I am seeing the Oneness. I sit for some time. A number of ravers join me and try to start a conversation. I can't talk and I don't know what to say. A young man smiles and says 'just imagine we are strangers meeting at a bus stop'. I don't usually talk to people at Bus Stops and I still don't know what to say. The situation is funny, but doesn't make any sense. It's incomprehensible. Eventually security comes through the crowds in lines sweeping everyone inside. I feel like we are cattle that are being herded as the venue has made its money and now the 'dirty-sweaty-ravers' are being ejected outside.

The sun is not quite up yet. We sit outside the venue and have some small talk. I walk towards the train station at Homebush. There are a number of people exercising in synchronised routines wearing Red Weet-Bix outfits. I look at a number of ravers walking past – we smile and laugh to one another. Strange, funny and ironic I think. The line-up for the trains is busy. Many of the ravers are looking through the bags we were handed as we walked out. I am told by an organiser standing at the exit that this makes me part of the tribe. Many of the ads on the flyers are psychedelic. They look great in the altered state. I sit next to my friend who has been chatting to me earlier in the night as the train comes. They all seem so happy, laughing at my inability to hold

⁵³ Randomness is the strangeness and temporal incomprehensibility of what is happening in one's surroundings. Lights flash, bodies are shifting, and moving, the music is incredibly loud. Conversations come out of nowhere as you walk around the rave, on missions, or just exploring the space. As you can start conversations with all sorts of people on ecstasy – that would further break down the constitutional style of experience; it's difficult to know what is going to happen next. This can be really interesting, funny, silly, embarrassing etc. depending on the experience and the situation one is in.

a conversation. My eyes are stinging from the Vics Vapor Rub that one of the ravers sprayed in my eyes telling me it would make the lights look cool. I explain my irritation – ‘that’s gold’, as they laugh – and tell me not to do that in the future as you could go blind. I board the train for Central. The carriages are mostly empty. A girl behind me strongly urges me not to think and not to look out the train window: ‘don’t look at the sun’, ‘whatever you do, don’t look at the light man’. I do. Reality begins to dawn on me. Horrible thoughts of persecution and paranoia stream into my mind, bubbling forth into my consciousness. I am off my face and alone. What am I doing here? How am I going to cope today? What is the university going to think of my study? My staff in the department are all going to think that I’m just a fucked up drug idiot. Panic and paranoia completely overtake me. I cringe in the carriage. Everyone around me looks like Wastoids⁵⁴ I want to get home to darkness and soft music. Many of the ravers lie down in the train from tiredness, covering themselves with jackets. Total exhaustion. I get a cab home – decide to pretend that I am drunk, but it doesn’t feel right. I don’t think the cab driver can tell. I don’t really care anyways.

I can’t sleep for hours. I feel a sick sense in my stomach. My eyes are hurting and my head is ringing from the music. I smoke a few more cigarettes to pass the time and play some music. Eventually I get up to go for a swim at the local pool. Still no appetite. I later return home and pass out for a long time.

Porno Plastic: God Experience

I catch a cab to PC (venue) to arrive at the beginning of the night which is around 10.30pm. Before the club is opened for a dance venue it is open as a regular bar, with football playing on the TV’s and a live band in the background. Most of the patrons are having ‘after work drinks’ and are unaware of the venue re-opening after 11pm. I sit and have a quiet beer and then walk down the road to another local bar playing funk. There is a special ‘porno’ theme tonight at PC: hence ‘Porno PC’ is what the event is advertised as. These events are regularly put up on the internet site for the club. When I arrive back at the venue people are lining up to get in. The ticket price is \$25, \$10 more than the usual \$15 admission. Proof of age is required in the form of a drivers licence, passport or proof of age card issued by the Australian Government.

⁵⁴ A state of complete ‘Fuckdness’ – extremely tired, pale, loss of weight, eyes rolling around or closing ‘on the nod’, no energy left, can’t talk properly, mind is mashed to shit etc.

The two bouncers at the front check the ID and direct the crowd into the venue. There is a table with ticket sellers on the right as I enter. Laid out on the table are a number of CD's from resident DJ's promoting themselves. These are usually given away with admission. There is a make-shift cloak room where coats, jumpers etc. can be taken off. This is useful as it would be easy to forget where you leave things in the course of the evening.

The walls of the venue are covered with pornography and XXX-rated movies are showing all over the six LCD screens throughout the venue. The clubbers are mostly dressed in porno theme from pimps, sluts, professional costumes (e.g. nurses) and erotic/ bondage are favourites. At the beginning of the evening there is catching up with friends and people that I have met at the venue. I ask a dealer to get me a pill and he asks me to meet him outside in the gutter. I give him the \$30 (standard price) and he gives me an 'Orange Lightning-Bolt' (orange pill with lightning bolt insignia carved into face of tablet). He tells me that this is really good MDMA and hands it to me in a small satchel bag. Having been told to drop in private, I walk back into the venue and go into the men's toilets. I take half of the pill in order to assess its strength, washing it down with some water from the basin. Walking back out of the toilet usually fills me with some excitement due to the anticipation of the pill coming on and the crowd slowly working into the groove of the music. It's only a matter of time before the ecstasy comes on. The music is pounding away in the background. Most people socialize, talk and walk around in their small groups.

The pill comes on smoothly and feels distinctly different and stronger from previous ecstasy that I have tried. As I am sitting on a table with high chairs facing talking to (AmA) I am filled with an incredible warmth, calmness and clarity. I smile a lot and feel warmth and happiness. It's really hard to hold back these overwhelming feelings. (AmA) is excited and is telling the others that I have been lucky enough to get a 'cap'. She tells me this is a really highly sought after experience. I notice a stark contrast between my surroundings and the way I am feeling. I do not feel sexual. On other occasions I feel a heightened sexuality on ecstasy in looking at women dancing and want to dance next to them. I look up and stare at the massive LCD screens. There are two cleaning shaven porn stars fucking and performing oral sex. (AmA) blithely remarks that she could easily do better than that. I ask why she doesn't try it. She

looks at me strangely. What I find so soothing is that I am able to talk openly about my relationship problems and inability to find a loving relationship in Sydney. It's as if I completely trust those around me and that they are reciprocating this back to me. I do not feel the need to dance. There is no hyper-energy or speediness' in this pill. As I sit there I am just completely content. I think to myself "if there is a God – this is exactly what it must feel like – completely filled with love. No sense of selfishness, fear or random thoughts. Just complete love. There is no conflict within, no distractions, no messiness in the sense of time. The feeling is unmistakable and ubiquitous. I walk outside with (AmA) and another male friend. The pill is coming on really strong, I feel I have completely lost my normal ego-sense and boundaries. We sit and smoke a cigarette. We are all dressed in porno-style dress. (AmA) is dressed like a school girl with high white socks and a mini skirt. I feel like an emotionally enthused child fumbling for Amba's thigh. I have flashes of sexual imagery – the compulsion for physical intimacy is overwhelming. I want to *feel* her -- to feel her desire as I touch all over her body. *I am so off my face*. Can't really talk or communicate verbally. But I REALLY WANT TO TOUCH. Even the slightest stroking of the finger can feel so much more erotic and sensual. Although I am thinking direct sexual thoughts – it is more like a field of closeness and care that I am entering into. Once you go past that barrier, which I have often been afraid of that voice within going – "it's wrong... there is a line that out of respect you do not cross". Touching is absolutely incredible. It feels so much better than normal bodily or sexual contact. Many times more... It's exciting but also intimidating to play with and explore. After a few soft strokes along the thigh, she smiles and tells me I need to get up, go inside and have a dance. Our mutual friend 'MD' is walking around the outside of us watching and loudly saying "we have a *toucher*, we have a *toucher*!" I feel ambivalent and stumble back inside. Many of the interactions can be so intense on the dance floor. People are coming up and hugging and holding you... with the music going through you, altering my mood and psychic disposition – fluctuating the pace and rhythm moves up and down, controlled by the DJ, engendering fluctuations in consciousness. Sometimes I feel like I am being carried by the music into a bouncing happiness. I want to jump around, and laugh and smile at everyone. It's so strange but it's there – I feel psychically connected with the people around you. You are linked in with each other. You can really sense strongly if the person next to you is excited, euphoric, up-beat. Sometimes I would notice those going through more negative

emotional states. One of the young men I met a few weeks ago, walked out onto the dance floor. He tries to dance but is overwhelmed by the negative thoughts coming out of his own psyche. He looks at me with disgust and self-loathing. "Fuck, I'm so paranoid – if I go out there I will just scare everyone away from the dance floor just by what I am thinking". I look over and see that this is the case. Sometime later I sit down with (AmA) watching the crowd and talking shit about stuff. I feel we are becoming friends. Another guy walks up behind us and stands over us. It is the guy from the dance floor. He is emanating bad vibes again. It feels like he is judging me, monitoring and assessing the way I am talking. I look at him and ask if everything is OK? "He says he is just listening, but I know that he is lying". This interrupts the otherwise smooth flow of conversation, he tells me to continue. I relate a story of meeting a professor at Usyd who is renown in Australia for being one of the nation's leading MDMA researchers. I had met him at the Manning bar one night over a few beers. I ask him if he has some advice on contemporary ecstasy research. He looks at me and asks what area I study ecstasy from? I reply I am an anthropologist. He laughs out loud and sarcastically intimates that there "must be some sort of Tribal Aspect to it." I ask him what he thinks anthropology is – and why neuroscience would have the answers to such questions. He dismisses me in front of his PhD cohort. They ask me to come to their labs and see 'real science', being an open-minded type of guy and mildly interested, I do so. In the labs are several television screens showing three or four rats that have been administered MDMA. The neuro-scientists are wearing white lab coats and are holding clip-boards, recording all of the details every five minutes of what the rats are doing. Initially, I am bemused and somewhat curious, I ask "what are the rats doing now?", "they are coming down says one of the investigators". "Do you play them any deep trance to ease them out of it?" They don't seem to appreciate the irony of the situation. (AmA) smiles at me. We get back up and dance for a while.

Heat Transformation (and Massaging)

On night at the Atrium, the main entertainment area of Macquarie University (North Sydney) I meet and dance with a girl (BG) who is studying aeronautical engineering at UNSW. She asks me for a cigarette as I am talking to a small group of ravers from Canberra. They are suspect of my project and object that the police may use it to further control them. They do not want to talk about drugs. One of them is irate that I have suggested that drugs are central to raving. She says I can't say that it's all about

the drugs. And she stipulates that there are a number of ravers who come out that DO NOT USE DRUGS. I take note of this as I walk off with my new friend. Our initial conversations begin very friendly and smoothly well into the plateau phase. After dancing at the front of the dance floor for a few songs, where the music is loudest and most of the crowd congregates, we decide to sit down at the side of the dance floor to cool down. I ask if she would like a massage, she replies 'I'm a girl, I live for massages'. I remember thinking I am so out of it... she sits in front of me, in between my legs and lifts up her hair so as to reveal the nape of the neck. She slides in touching me. It's so relaxing. I touch her softly with care. It is like there is a field that is been given off from people around them, I can almost sense what they are feeling or thinking without them talking. In this position the touch of the skin feels as if each person is pleasurable melting into one another. She moans softly as I needle into the shoulder and back muscles. Her desire is equally as pleasurable for me - as is the feeling of her skin. The surface of the skin has become hot and sweaty from dancing. It feels a million times better than normal. I carefully touch the ears, neck and hair. It's playful and extremely intimate. Another one of the ravers sees us massaging and comes over and sits behind me and start massaging my back. He doesn't say anything - you don't need to - everyone knows it's an awesome feeling. The muscles are heated up from all of the dancing. The skin feels alive and moist. It like all of the barriers have gone and you are going deep into someone's core psyche. After moaning with pleasure, she gets up and nestles in behind me. Although my skin and muscles are hotter, some of my muscles still feel tense. I lean back into her. It's a bit uneasy at the same time, because normally it takes a lot longer to be able to get this close and intimate with someone so quickly. She stares at me, with a sexy suggestive smile - she looks like she wants to kiss passionately. Time is in complete 'Nowness'. At the same time as knowing that this will feel really good, I don't feel the need. It's as if to engage in sexual activity would somehow ruin this moment of intimacy and comfort. We look deep into each other's faces and eyes. Smiling. We decide to hit the dance floor again. Losing ourselves in the music and crowd, I notice that I have become extremely hot, especially on the forehead. (BG) pours some water over my head and offers me a drink. She explains that some ravers would use a wet tea-towel to wrap around their heads to prevent overheating. A good idea - it could prevent heatstroke. The coolness just feels beautiful and alleviates some of the concern I have about melting my brain. We walk outside and smoke a cigarette. There is a young guy

(around 18) who mutters that he has taken 5 pills at once. He looks as though he has gone into meltdown. He is no longer able to talk due to the intensity of ecstasy. He spurts out several words as he is gurning really hard. His tongue flickers around his mouth: he is breathing really heavily. I feel really cold and am beginning to worry about getting sick from the massive changes in temperature. I've left my stuff in the cloak room. The cold is freezing me up. He kindly offers me his jacket to put on. There is a huge difference in the temperature between the dance floor and the coolness of the breeze at 5am in the morning. (BG) catches up with some of the people she came with. They are speaking in what sounds like some sort of strange Eastern European dialect. I think she asks them if I can come back to the after party and hang out. They look at me up and down and staunchly reply "NO – he may not"! So much for the PLUR I think. The rave is coming to an end and the place is closing up. Security is moving everyone out, herding them like cattle through the exits. The sun is coming up slowly and many of the ravers are starting to feel the pills wearing off. Some take speed and amphetamines to slow and take the nasty-edge off the comedown. Most of the crowd congregates outside. It's confusing with so many people walking around – looking for each other. Lots of calls are being made on mobiles. Everyone looks so different in their appearance. Pasty white faces. The skin looks filthy from dirt and oily shit. Everyone has inflated bug-eyes. Some can't walk properly as their legs have melted from hours of intense dancing – with a little water and no food. I notice that the skin is still highly sensual as I brush against a girl, both of us enjoy that moment. Many of the ravers go to the car park and drive home – I follow a few of the guys I know and they offer to drive me to central station. The driver hands me a CD to hold as he prepares for the journey. It has a couple of lines of speed on it. He snorts them down. Two of the others rug up in the back of the car. Good idea I think. He puts on the music – more dance music – it all keeps us all going on track. It seems important to keep some sense of continuity going. The music and the vibe can be reassuring, rather than the silence of reality. The shock from the light, coming down from the drugs, and the slow dawning of reality can be devastating. It can slowly drive you mad. The feeling of brain drain as all of the chemicals have left your body and you feel desiccated and burnt out. Usually I feel like I am dying. I don't really feel like talking to anyone around me. I become introverted. Sometimes it's fun to talk shit to pass the time.... Thinking on your own can really do your head in. We drive for a while. I feel powerless – knowing that the driver is off his face. But he

seems to be doing a good job co-ordinating through the traffic. I ask him if he finds it difficult driving when coming down. He says that it can be pleasurable as long as you do not get pulled over by the Police. We stop at a service station and wander in picking up some soft ice creams and drinks.

I get dropped off at Central and head home awaiting a long-comedown. I usually put on slower music and smoke some cigarettes. I often wish I had company or a girl with me. I wait a few hours before going to the local swimming pool. Sitting in the cool water is always refreshing. I imagine it to be a fountain of youth, bringing me back from the previous night's trashiness, dirt and toxins in my body. Usually I can eat after that and fall into the beautiful rejuvenating sleep. The next couple of days I feel spacey – floating around as I walk down to the local bus stop. I feel like a nicer person with little libido or aggression. Everything has a heightened glow. The birds singing are clearer; the sky seems a radiant blue. I stop and smell the flowers and notice how green the leaves are in the bushes and shrubs as I walk past. The afterglow can be pleasant, but I don't feel as strong to face up to the conflicts and madness of modern city living.

'Brain Zaps'

The day after the weekend of rave-partying I am lying in bed at home. As usual my entire body feels smaller in stature as I have lost a lot of fluids and weight from the previous two nights. This is most notable when I try to put on pants and notice that my waist line has shrunken an inch or two. I feel a calm 'spacy-ness', everything seems 'nicer' and more pleasant. I am startled by a number of sharp pains that feel like they are occurring at the top of the cranium. Lasting only a few seconds these zaps in the head produce anxiety, I am worried about this. Do they result from poor quality ecstasy? Is my brain dysfunctioning from being overheated? Is there a chemical imbalance? Although I only get these once, it's enough for me to drop off and moderate my use from once a week to once a fortnight.

Missions

At (PC) the regular group of ravers that I see would often go on 'missions' – or a 'mish'. This could occur spontaneously at any time of the night as someone decided that they need 'something'. This could be going to one's car that is parked up the

street or to the local Seven Eleven to pick up supplies. It was also be meeting people to coordinate the night or buy ecstasy, marijuana etc. Missions would often be funny and 'random'. For example, often the aim of the mission would be to go to the shop to get 'something', but one was not always sure what that something is. The walk would usually be very chatty and playful. Walking into a brightly lit 7/ 11 could be strange as it was obvious to everyone else that you are off your face. The most popular items for missions would be: picking up OJ (orange juice bottle), energy drinks (e.g. V), water, cigarettes, lighters and sweet lollies (especially Chuppa Chops). I noticed that it occasionally took me sometime to select what I wanted to buy. The environment seems so foreign and strange. I would just stand staring at the ice-cream machine for a few minutes, trying to work out what would taste good in this state. The completion of missions would be a return to the venue. At larger scale raves I noticed that missions would get side-tracked as there are so many randoms that would be encountered that the point of the mission would be forgotten

Changes to Personality

One of the more pronounced changes I felt from using ecstasy was feeling that I was becoming a "nicer" person. I was less likely to judge other people. More open to seeing who they are beyond my knee-jerk stereotypical reactions. There was more kindness and compassion in the way I would relate to people. I would really listen to people that I would not normally associate with. The PLUR and positive aspects of the main phase of the experience appear to be fused into the psyche. I no longer would feel confrontational or aggressive. There were definite changes to the personality in the post-use period, but it is difficult to put the finger on exactly what they are. Sometimes I would become worried or anxious that I was beginning to let the drug state overcome my normal reality (addiction?). Taking drugs semi-regularly led me to feel that I was moving through multiple realities. With regular usage (once per week) this could become overwhelming. Since it took 3-4 days for the afterglow to wear off, if I dropped on the weekend the cycle would just begin again.

Sexuality

One of the most disturbing changes to the personality was the marked drop in libido from regular use. With the energy exerted through prolonged and intense dancing, the resultant loss of appetite and not eating properly for a day or two; my sex drive would

all but dissipate. The shrinking of the testes and penis would last for a few days. It felt as though I was being castrated: I felt more like a pubescent-boy than a man. One partner was worried about my use and the changes it was having on me. Having never tried ecstasy she would be disturbed by my come downs. When I had sex the intimacy was incredible. The entire surface of the body was ultra-sensitive, kissing and pashing were completely different. Sexual arousal was much more intense, with orgasm being more prolonged. This would be followed by long rest periods of sleep, where I would roll myself up into a cocoon and hibernate.

Fun and Playfulness

I am sitting in (PC) at one of the high chairs on a table talking to three or four or the regulars about one and a half hours into dropping; along with the intense bonding experiences there is lots of smiling. One of the guys pulls out an 'orgasmatron'⁵⁵, which is an eight pronged metallic massage tool. In the plateau stage the neck, face and skull are highly sensitive. It feels amazing having the spider-like tool rubbing into the various points of the skull. (AmA) talks to me as she plays around with moving the points around my head. It sends waves of pleasure rippling throughout my body.

Spinning tops are used by some as a tactile and visual source of playfulness. These tops would be like normal children's spinning tops, but would have built-in lights, e.g. blue and red. A young man comes up to me in the middle of the plateau as I am sitting down trying to focus after working into ecstatic dance. Since the lights are heavily darkened, what holds my focus (amongst the throbbing music) are the bodies of dancers – shifting surfaces - in the incandescent lights, flashing strobe and lasers. Sitting on one of the three seater black leather couches a young guy comes up holding one of the spinning tops in action. It does appear like an amazing blur of colours – it holds my gaze for some time. I thank him sincerely for bringing it over. A thought flashes through that it is kind of silly, but it is still fun.

Turning up to Work

In my initial usage of ecstasy in the field I underestimated the power that even one dosage can have. After coming down on a Sunday I turn up to tutor in a class on the

⁵⁵ See Glossary

Monday. I feel anxious and begin to panic before walking into the room. Surely everyone will notice that I am not really myself. I repeatedly tell myself that no one will notice. When I begin speaking my voice seems different, as does the tone. In fact I notice that I seem like a completely different person. When I lift my hands from the desk that I am sitting on - they are pouring with sweat. There are two hand prints on the desk and a class of 30 students looking at me. I subtly lift my shirt and clean the perspiration off the desk. No one will notice I think. Then my forehead erupts with sweating and pangs of hot rushes. There is also sweating on the back of my neck.

After three or so weeks I notice that in the days after my muscles are beginning to seize up. I turn my spine when sitting at my desk and my entire back cracks. It feels as though the proper chemical balance in my tendons is off - and that there is a lack of hydration in the muscle tissues.

Memory changes

One of the most common experiences from taking ecstasy was the inability to recall the entirety of the evening, or even significant parts of it. Sometimes the various parts of the experience would appear as intense 'flashes' or seem surreal. The closer to the experience, the more vivid my recollections would be. I also noticed that with repeated use that I began to forget simple things and my ability to recall memories was impaired.

Honesty

Approximately one hour into a MDMA cap I have gotten up after feeling an overwhelming peak experience and walked outside into an open area. I am walking alongside a best friend who has also dropped simultaneously. I start feeling anxious as something within me feels like exploding with love. I can't control my body so I am walking around back-and-forth. My breathing has become intense. I feel like crying with euphoric-bliss. There is a strong compulsion to show how much I CARE – HOW MUCH I LOVE. It seems like there is a part of me that does not get any expression that is bursting out. I want to hug and embrace my brother and everyone. I am told 'that's OK' – just calm down. I can't stop, so he sits me down and we start doing Kung Fu stretches in order to try and channel the power of the experience into something good and positive.

Mind Body Dissonance

On numerous occasions I feel that I am able to maintain conversations – or thoughts, emotions, fantasies are swirling through my head – but I can also observe/ notice/ sense that my body is doing something else on its own. Sometimes this would be my sweating palms clasping together or rubbing up and down my arms. I would also feel the need to rub my thighs up and down – as there is an excess of energy and it has to go somewhere! But this is not always a total focus of attention. You can still maintain conversations and be observing what ‘they are doing over there’. At other times you can work on bringing this dissonance into alignment – like when I am trying to ‘synchronise’ with the music in the dance state.

Gurning

It is well past the plateau and we have left PC and are driving in three cars back to Hunters Hill to a large house overlooking the harbour. When we arrive we sit on the roof and look out at the view. I am chewing uncontrollably. I look over at (JN) --- he asks me how I am travelling. I tell him that I can't stop grinding my teeth and that this I worrying me. He says that he has been getting the same thing all night. I am worrying about grinding my teeth down and doing damage. I think a pacifier would be a good idea, but can't bring myself to wear one. I try chewing some gum, but the gum isn't thick enough and it doesn't taste good. It is the cheek muscles and the jaw that are doing most of the most intense movement. My tongue and lips are not really moving.

About four hours into a MDMA session at a house party. I have been drinking non-stop for the last two hours without doing any exercise which is disturbing. I try to sit down and talk to a number of people around me. My tongue is protruding around the upper lips. I can't stop licking. My eyes feel enlarged and seem to be popping out of my sockets. I feel the top of the tongue stocking over the lips and caressing the short hairs above my upper lip. Although I am drinking a lot of water there is not a lot of saliva in my mouth or on the tongue itself. Some of the others look at me strangely when I can't stop doing this, but say nothing. It's as if there is nothing happening – but everyone knows that it is. I keep on going as I can't stop it, but I find the movement disturbing rather than pleasurable.

Smacking Out (One version of 'Fuckdness')

It is a Friday night at PC (venue). The regular dealer has dropped the price of pills to \$25. I have heard of smacky pills, but have yet to take one. Just under an hour after the drop I start feeling nauseas. I can't co-ordinate my body to move. I do not feel up, in the mood to dance or talk. The pill feels terrible. I am becoming worried that things may get worse. A friend comes up and tells me that I have had a smacky pill. And that is OK, because everyone gets them at some point. He advises me to lie down on of the couches and smack out. I am losing co-ordination of my body. I feel heavy and sickly. Horrible random thoughts and images flash through my mind. I can't stop them. A bouncer comes up to me and gently rubs his hand across my face and asks if I'm alright. I say that I am tired. He asks me to sit up. I sit like this for some time. I do not feel sociable and decide to go home and sleep it off.

Freaking out (meltdown)

I walk up to the Atrium at Macquarie University to attend the large scale rave "Godspeed". There is a police unit 50 meters or so from the main entrance. A dozen or so officers are looking down at a girl in a stretcher. I ask one of the female officers what is going on. She explains that a girl in her early 20's has completely freaked out from drug overdose. The girl is strapped down to a stretcher so her arms and legs can't move. The officer explains that they normally snap out of it in 20 minutes or so, but is concerned that this one has been going for an hour. They are not sure what she has had. She continues to scream and rant.

Meltdown (Hospital)

It is midweek at a local pub in Newtown Sydney. I am talking to a guy from Europe who is despondent about meeting good woman in Sydney. An attractive, well dressed blond woman walks past in her late twenties. She comes back and sits on the man's lap and starts to flirt and sweet talk him. It looks to me as if all his Christmases have come at once. One minute he is complaining and the next there is a blond sitting on his lap hitting on him. She starts pushing him wildly. At this point I realize that she is not drunk. After about 10 minutes of kissing and talking she suddenly falls off his lap onto the floor and doesn't get up. We lift her up. I look into her eyes – they are rolling into the back of her head. Her forehead is burning up – she is going into a complete state of meltdown. It's horrible to watch. The bouncers come and walk her to the

front. They sit her on a chair – but she has lost all motor co-ordination. I hold her heads up straight with both hands. She is trying to lick my nose and face. We ask her what she has had, but she cannot talk at all. Her eyes are now completely rolled back; it looks like she is about to OD. The manager of the club wants to leave her outside on the foot path. A number of the crowd insist that they call an ambulance. He says that she shouldn't take disco biscuits if she can't handle them. An ambulance is called and arrives. As the woman is put on the stretcher her friend walks down from upstairs. The manager is very angry with her. She explains that they were out earlier together and have dropped 5 pills and had some speed and a few drinks. The ambulance officers chide her for not staying by her side, saying that she is in serious trouble. They take her to hospital.

Onset to Peaking

We are sitting at a house party. There are about 12 of us sitting at the edge of a balcony at a large modern unit in Surry Hills. The pills are supposed to be nearly pure MDMA. I have not taken a full-strength cap for about 6 months. At first the onset is subtle as I notice that it is coming on really strong. It feels like a powerful waterfall of beautiful emotions moving through my body. I am sighing and moaning with pleasure. I place my hands around my head, as the bliss emanates from my head and pours throughout my lower body. One of the guys looks at me and smiles “they are really good aren't they?” I start to panic after some time as I want to start blathering to everyone how fantastically wonderful they are as people. But part of me knows that they will think this is just the drugs talking. I ask my friend to stand me up and walk me outside, past the glass doors into an open-courtyard. The air is cooler outside and it is darker, there aren't the bright lights and the music blaring. I stop and take a moment to unload all of the sincerity in my heart: “I just really want to say that you have been the best of all possible friends to me”, I keep repeating the words I am saying are true.... and the emotion is many times amplified. He looks at me like I am way out of control and tells me to sit down on the floor. The Peak is so hard and intense; the emotions flood my mind in several directions. Up UP UP UP – euphoric bliss everywhere. I'm breathing really heavily, my heart is racing and my arms and legs are moving about everywhere. My friend guides me into a seated forward recline. I stretch out my legs forward and he pushes on my upper back so there is a deep stretch in moving forward. That feels so good. I can just try and focus on the

movement of the muscles as the tension is let out. Another guy from the house comes outside and joins us. He is watching and imitating our movements. It feels like we have small exercise circle going on now. As a few more of the people inside walk out and join us – we all start going into all the standard exercises of Kung Fu. After a few rounds I stand up and feel amazingly good and energised. I want to run around everywhere, hop and jump up in the air. I turn to my friend who I have been pouring out my heart and we start play fighting. The hits become harder, to the shoulders and the abdomen. One of our elder and stronger friends rushes in and stops us. He is yelling at us that these things can get out of hand when people are off their faces on drugs. We look at each other and hug and walk back inside.

I notice that as many of the conversations pass during the night that I have started gurning and that I can't stop. I try to drink one glass of water an hour, but the thirst does not stop. My tongue licks all around – especially reaching for my nose and upper lips. It feels really good, but I feel like a demonic animal. The drug has overtaken me and I can no longer be in control of what is happening.

Vomiting (and internal music dialogue)

I am walking back from a club at Kings Cross with a friend who has come out with me for the night. We are trying to find an after party club – and we are walking around looking for the Hellfire club in Surry Hills. We have no idea where it is. The ecstasy still feels like it is powerfully coursing its way through me. What is also interesting is that the music seems to be playing on in me. The distinct rhythm of the song is erupting from within me – my body walks to the beat. I sway my head side-to-side as the beats go up and down. I still feel that I am in the club. It's not faint – but loud. We walk down Elizabeth Street and arrive at a small convenience store. I decide to buy some Coke and a sausage roll... thinking it will be a good idea to eat. I have been smoking cigarettes for the last couple of hours, and the taste is still distinct in my mouth. I feel dehydrated. The saliva has dried up from my throat and mouth. I drink some of the Coke, it tastes sickly sweet. And munch of the sausage roll. I continue to talk to my friend. The conversation is choppy. Basic motor functioning is still in operation – the higher cognitive functions seem impaired. I get through most of the sausage roll before I begin spewing violently all over myself and then on the concrete. It's coming out black – like the Coke – and I am coughing and spitting. We decide to

clear out as we have no idea where Hell Fire is: so I say good night to my friend and walk home.

Moderating Use

I begin by only taking half a tablet at a time with the total of one pill per evening. This seems like a sensible place to start. I am aware that ecstasy is a powerful psychotropic substance that could be dangerous if taken in large quantities in a reckless and irresponsible fashion. I find that one pill tends to leave me a bit drained for the next couple of days. I don't feel myself. There is weight loss from all of the dancing, sweating, not eating and the drug's effects. I usually feel more pleasant as a person, but with repeated use I start to feel that I am becoming feminized. You are more in touch with your sensitive side and feelings that are dormant in day-to-day reality. You relate differently to those around you as you normally would as a man. The feminization feels like the testes are shrinking and the aggression is dissipating. You feel softer and more caring. Less likely to judge others. More open to crying and expressing how you feel. I ask some of the ravers if they ever moderate their use and they tell me every now and again its sensible to go 'natural' – this means that you are no longer existing in the toxic state, you are returning to Baseline for a sustained period of time: returning to the 'natural' state. I find that when I turn up to the club that I want to get on the ecstasy. It's not like a strong physical addiction, but more of a psychological excitement; a recollection of the last time I was there with all of the sensations, thrills, dancing and fun. I decide after two months of regular use to cut down on my use as it is making major changes to my life. My sex drive is dropping, I can no longer think clearly on a weekly basis. I am losing weight and the pills are still feeling good. I do not experience a purely magical phase – a honeymoon – and I find that the best ecstasy is sometime after my initial experiences with it (7th time is by far the best). I measure the good to bad pills on a spectrum of the effects that they have.

Dud Pills

Dud pills can ruin an entire evening. I have only ever bought one of these. When I was slightly drunk I asked one of the dealers the standard line "do you know where I can get a pill?"; he replied there are some cheaper pills going around at \$25. I bought one which looked like a big white Panadol. It did not taste like ecstasy normally does, so I was thinking that I had just been ripped off. It is really annoying sitting around

waiting for something to happen... waiting... waiting and then nothing. After having paid the entrance fee, transport costs etc. – I then had to weigh up – to buy another pill from someone else – or to just let the whole thing go. I could not find another dealer, so I decided to have three beers and call it a night. I also realized the difference of not being on ecstasy in the way people would interact with you. When I was clearly not in the ecstatic state – many of the ravers would not come up and say hello or anything. Sometimes I wondered if this was because I was a single male. Going in groups seemed to make a difference to how other people would perceive me. There was a sort of – “if you’re with us then you’re in – and we are in it together”.

Urination (when coming down)

I arrive back at a warehouse in Melbourne after taking an MDMA cap at around 5am. I have made a friend with a woman. We lie down in bed together, but she does not want to talk, kiss or cuddle. This is frustrating me immensely. I feel dirty and sweaty and seedy. I lie there in that maddening in-between state of coming down. The smoothness of the plateau has worn off and I no longer feel good. Time has come to a grinding standstill. There is a silence from the absence of music which is disconcerting. My stomach and insides feel disgusting. It’s like they have been emptied altogether. Tired and empty. Occasionally I get up to have a cigarette, just to pass the time. They don’t taste as good compared to when you are coming up or in the plateau stage. When I lie down again I feel like my body wants to expunge the litres of water that I have been drinking during the night. I walk over to the toilet. My testes and penis are shrunken. It looks like the genitals of a child that have yet to reach puberty. When I begin to urinate standing up it continues to flow. It feels like two or more litres have come out in one go. I have not being able to go to the toilet all night and then suddenly it all comes out at once. When I have finished I go and drink some more water. This seems like a good idea as I have just lost a whole lot of water and it may help to detoxify the nasty chemicals from my body more quickly. I find that as I am coming down that I urinate five or six times, although not as much water passes as with the first ‘massive piss’.

Kidneys, Muscle tone and Tiredness

I have been dancing for about six hours at Godspeed a large scale rave. The intensity of the music carries me through to the end of the night. I had noticed that in between

the sets of music that the DJ has been playing many of the ravers sit down in the chill out area or on the outskirts of the dance floor. During phases of dancing I notice the massive build-up of lactic acid in my legs. It's literally like the muscles feel as if they have completely melted. With the dehydration engendered by the constant sweating my belt size is a few notches smaller. My innards feel as if they have shrunken. When I feel my opposite arm I can feel how all of the skin texture has changed: a panacea of grimy, sweaty filth over heated smoothed out muscles. My lower back is aching. I feel unstable as I walk around; my legs are shaky, but still sort of energised. I then feel that it isn't just the pain around the spine; it is my kidneys that have been put under stress. I place my hand on my back and notice that the morphology of my body has changed. It's like the water has left – and the muscles are overworked and stressed out. As I have stopped dancing and am walking out of the main dance floor I am overcome by fatigue. I feel like a glow-stick that has burned brightly for some time and is fading out. The rest of the party goers are not looking too hot either. They look really burn outs.

Appendix 4. 'Other Drugs'

Within the various localities of drug taking sometimes called in Australia 'The Scene' or the 'drug scene', there are some milieus where ecstasy is more prominent and visible such as raves and clubs. However, it is the case that many other substances are also used in these sites (i.e., polymorphous drug use). As (CM) wryly remarks "There can be pure experiences on the ecstasy, but that is not happening in the real world". The imbibing of multiple substances was widespread at the primary field sites where I conducted my ethnography. The reports that follow have been included as an appendix to illustrate how ecstasy can be mixed with various other substances to produce various effects during the evening.

4.1.0 LSD

I found that some users would mix LSD with ecstasy engaging in 'candy-flipping' (Appendix 4.2.0). Here are reports from two users. There are numerous well-known detailed accounts of LSD (Dunlap, 1961; Grof, 1988; Masters and Houston, 1966).

(CM): "If you take acid or speed, particularly if you take acid, the chances of you having a good or a bad time are more up to you. But ecstasy is fun in itself. How that manifests differs from person to person. However, I think ecstasy has a lot less variation than lots of other stuff. LSD really crumbles reality. You really have to take everything afresh and everything that you deal with may become new. It may be anything in your environment that is making you uncomfortable. And that can be your body, and that can be people around you, it can be lots of things, and you have to learn how to handle that. With drugs you put them in your body and your body reacts. I see LSD as a summer time drug: because you can't get locked up in doors because you will go crazy".

(ChA): "Someone else told me that acid actually fuses two parts of your brain together, which I thought was kind of funny (laughs). You know how you get hallucinations and your perception and your imagination and bits of the brain sort of somehow get joined or something. I'm no scientist, but don't think that is the case. I rarely get hallucinations on acid. They get a different sort of a kick out of it. Yeah

there are a lot of myths.... If you have 5 standard doses of acid you are declared legally insane or something... It's like, man I do five on the weekend (laughs)".

4.2.0 Amyl Nitrate

(CM): "Amyl nitrate is the stuff, that inhalant that you get from the sex shops... it's a rush... its warm. You have to get the stronger stuff than *rush*. 'Red Satyr' - it has a huge penis on the box. Yeah, they sell it on the sex-shops on Oxford Street, for trash bags and people fucking: they use it when they are orgasming. But it is just a warm rush feeling and with a head-spin. On ecstasy it is such an overwhelming feeling, it's an incredibly intense warm and strong feeling. It's like a couple of minutes of intense warm comfort... I like mixing it with other drugs, but not with ecstasy. Yuk!"

(StM): "We used to do pot when we were coming down; I have heard of people doing poppers and stuff. I actually tried *Rush* afterwards when I was at a friend's place – *amyl nitrate* – basically it is associated with gay orgasm, because it relaxes your anus or something (laughs). But apparently it is safe as well, unless you get it on your skin or inside of your nose or something. I think it burns if you get it inside of your nose and it can do a lot of damage. But other than that I think it is pretty safe. I could just not stop laughing every time that I took a hit, even pot doesn't make me do that, so they would give it to me and then I would just crack up for five minutes, so, that was really cool and I like that – that's amyl, not ecstasy. I would assume its like Vic's as well. Perhaps it wouldn't make much of a difference because the effects only last a minute or so. I remember my face feeling really hot and it made me laugh, and other than that, not that much. It wasn't one of those things that really effects everyone at a really deep level, because I didn't feel different towards other people, as you would on a pill".

4.3.0 Candy-Flipping

(MM): "I was candy-flipping, which is taking acid and ecstasy at the same time, at Earth Dance. I was dancing in the electro-room and I felt a bit uncomfortable, because when I am on acid I feel a bit weird when I am dancing. Like, it is not quite right or something. Anyway I am dancing along and staring at the screen, and all of a sudden I see these visuals, and it is like there is an X-Ray of a baby, crawling along, and all of a sudden it flashes to this screen and it just says "*you have more power than you think*". And I got freaked out because I was like, it is actually telling me I have these superpowers and I was tripping, and I was like 'I do'! And I had to leave like, I

couldn't look at the signs anymore, like I was thinking this baby has more power than you think and I walked off, I looked at the bricks and they were all forming around me like fucking crazy”.

(JN): “I never really did it much... I have had tripstasy, once or twice, which is like acid and ecstasy in the one pill. But a *Happy Meal*⁵⁶ or candy flipping was like having a tab and a pill, which was like a little bit hectic and I never went that far. But um - tripstasy was fun”.

(HG): “I was scattered from tripstasy the next day, driving from the club to my friend's house at about, six in the morning, the lights looked a lot better, they were much shinier and brighter and the colours just looked nicer - everything looks better on acid. I went to my mate's house walked around the suburbs for a couple of hours and got back. I lay down in his bed with this other girl and then looked at the ceiling, she had little pieces of paper blue tacked to the ceiling and I thought they were buses moving around. Then I saw watermarks, in laced sweat patterns, spinning around the ceiling and etchings of the Statue of Liberty moving across the ceiling and I was just lying there going ‘wow, this is fun! How *very* interesting’”.

4.4.0 Alcohol

Many users of ecstasy would compare taking ecstasy with alcohol citing the differences in the different scenes. For some users the experiences associated with ecstasy were more enjoyably than alcohol – some of which are detailed in the ethnographic corpus of this thesis (e.g. ecstatic dancing, the openness in engagement with others etc.). Other users would mix these substances with varying results.

A Bad Combination

(AuA): “I never drink when I take drugs. I won't drink. I might have two beers but, I won't drink. On purpose because it makes ecstasy less sharp and really hazy; you just seem more *fucked*, as opposed to you know, getting the good effects where you feel sharp; and you see everything is really sort of standing out. For me, when I am good I can tell where I am, like I'm feeling good and I'm feeling revved-up. If you're drinking when you're doing ecstasy it takes that away. You can feel all the good

⁵⁶ This may be named for the association with the McDonald's menu item, where a 'Happy Meal' contains several food items together.

effects, but they are really dull; you can feel sort of insulated and really drunk, where you don't really know where you are, and just like 'ggrrahh'".

Good Combination

(EnD): "I reckon that sometimes it is a good combination though. I don't know – I couldn't say a rule that would work for me, but I think I would normally drink, I nearly always have drink and dugs together, but I wouldn't probably be that bothered about drinking so much, because I'm preoccupied when I'm in the mood – in the zone – I'm doing my thing, but if it is just alcohol".

(ChA): "I kind of mongrel when I'm on it. I love it – for me it is more of a social thing. When I drink on it I get more social and I love it. And often I get too revved-up. Like my friends, they go 'stand up coward! Start dancing', I'm like 'I'll have a few beers – screw you guys'".

4.5.0 Ice (Methamphetamine)

Ice Popularity

(SaN): "One drug that's increased rapidly is Ice. That's on the news at the moment as it has become commercial. I think what is happening with Ice is like when younger people are all smoking cigarettes because they think it is cool. There seems to be a lot of younger people that are smoking Ice. I suppose Ice is not expensive, but I don't really know. I have tried Ice, but I didn't like it in a sense, the after effects are really bad. It's mainly taken by younger kids now, like I know 12 and 13 year olds who have smoked Ice".

(RoB): "Ice has become far more popular, although it is far less social drug than ecstasy. It is social to start with and then it becomes massively anti-social. Like people can start playing head-games on Ice, and that spread across to a lot of the scene".

General

(JN): "I have had Ice for a while, but I have never really noticed any aggression within the people that I was with or any of the people".

(MM): “If you don’t know what it is to be on Ice, then you won’t be able to see when another person is on Ice. If you don’t know what an Ice user looks like, it may seem like a full-on intense driven-person, and is just like ‘down the line’. A sales person a really gun-ho sales person who is not on Ice, behaves like an Ice user, and everyone else is like he is incredible!”

(FrN): “I had this preconception about Ice that you need the self-control not to end up in a back alley. Even when I was taking other drugs, I will never do that. My friends were like, you do it once, and either it is not for you, or you spend the rest of your life sitting in some back street, licking the inside of a pipe out. And when I did it once, I had been up for a few days and I was like I need something with a little extra punch to keep me going, because I am so bugged. And I thought afterwards, that was pretty stupid of me because, if what they told me is true that I could have been completely addicted to it. But since I didn’t feel that compulsion to keep on using it like with cocaine. Like I have done it three times in my life and it just wakes you up”.

Ice Comedown

(MM): “But it was interesting to see the difference between the Ice come down and the ecstasy come-down. People on Ice comedowns do crazy shit, like punch holes in walls and like break their hands and like – fuckin just go nuts! It is a completely different type of scattered. When you smoke Ice it puts you in a scattered state straight away. But to stop the scattered state you have to just keep on smoking Ice. It will be like: “we are getting a bit scat lets smoke some Ice, and get up a bit” Then after 20 minutes they are like I’m starting to feel scat again, ‘fuck it! I will smoke some more Ice’. Their body has not even processed the previous dose and they are just going higher and higher and it all just sets up this FUCKEN GIANT COMEDOWN; which like, if you have ever experienced it – is like the *most horrible fuckin* three days of your life – like that comedown actually puts a pill comedown to shame. I actually don’t even care about coming down right now. Like you think this is bad – fuck – try not remembering your own name because you are so scattered.”

4.6.0 Marijuana Use

Smoking to Alleviate Comedown

(MM): “I find that a bong at the coming down stage takes the edge-off, and it takes the anxiety away, but it increases the paranoia. Like I get visual and auditory hallucinations when I smoke weed on a comedown (laughs)...When I’m coming down I’m detached, and marijuana makes me more detached. Plenty of people smoke marijuana coming down – so it is like a desirable state to be in, personally I don’t use marijuana when I am by myself. I used to use it a lot, years ago; it just makes you to detach. The only way to come down off pills is with a big pile of speed”.

(CG): “We tend to smoke weed on our scat. What we will do is to sit around in a big group with five or ten people and chop up a big bowl and we will just pass around a bowl and everyone will just talk randomly and there will be 5 conversations at once, for 2 hours straight. And it just gradually gets louder over two hours. If you smoke weed coming down I have seen people go into those bad places where you can get into that internal place from scat and weed can help you get there. So if you are not in the right place and in the right frame of mind, amongst friends like you can be scat, smoke weed and it can fuck you over, *I have seen it rape people*. I know when I sit down with a group of friends and I am like ‘let’s have a smoke’, we are all scat and I can feel safe with all of my friends. Nobody has anything to worry about and everyone is just relaxed and cool and things will flow for hours and hours”.

(SaN): “Smoking pot will slow you down in a way, it will relax you. I have experienced some bad effects from smoking it in that it brings the ecstasy back on so that you can start peaking, and if you’re tripping it can bring trips back on. Pot can cause paranoia and hallucinations - definitely. When smoking pot you get the munchies. Some people use pot to stimulate hunger when they are coming down, when you don’t feel like eating. I guess the easiest way to explain it would be like if there was some sort of chemical imbalance within your body – that for some reason you have to go and eat food. Like I may have eaten an hour before I smoked weed, but a short time later – you fell hungry for some reason, like the need to eat food”.

4.7.0 Speed (Amphetamine)

General Effects

(CM): “Amphetamine usage goes hand-in-hand with taking ecstasy. There can be pure experiences on the ecstasy, but *that is not happening in the real world* – there

everyone who uses ecstasy pretty much uses speed regularly. What type of experience you get on ecstasy will very often depend on which pills you've got. There are usually amphetamines in them – it is very common. But well, you don't know necessarily what you are getting. If you use speed or amphetamines you're going to, it gives you an effect but then you use it, it fills you full of energy and gives you certain feelings, but the person comes out a lot more. Speed is a big drug for me I really like it, but not all the time. I don't eat it much these days, and that is because I had a problem with it – with Ice and amphetamines. But I will have speed before I go out – whilst I go out – and then I have pills when I feel like it; and then the next morning the pills start wearing off, so you start coming down, and you have to have speed to keep going. It brings you back up, picks you back up, all day and the next day, it's just a pure stimulant; it makes you feel good, with lots of energy, makes you want to talk garbage. It also makes you extremely rational, like um, as in you have to rationalize everything. And you become very good at – if you have too much you get a bit incoherent and babbling. I find personally it makes me quiet able to develop, rational arguments as well, it makes you a demon at scrabble. It also makes you want to sit there and flash light everything, and have serious philosophical discussions”.

(Rob): “Speed is a diuretic so it makes you need to go to the toilet more, so you lose a lot more water. You're constantly a bit more energetic, and you have a tendency to tone up”.

Comedowns

(WW): “Oh - speed comedowns are fucked up. Speed is the worst, speed *is the worst*. It's fucked. Yeah, in the worse comedown that my ex had; he spent 17 hours in bed awake, like rolling. Like I couldn't even lie next to him because he was like I can't have anybody next to me. Lying in bed, he was there for 17 hours. And it was pretty – *yuck*”.

4.8.0 GHB (gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid)

(DiH): “I have taken ecstasy with various other substances in the past including acid and *juice*, or GHB, if you want the proper term. Candy flipping is taking ecstasy with acid, I found that very early in my drug career; acid is not a substance that I use for myself, and it had a very unusual reaction with me. It made me throw up the next day

constantly. So after my second time taking acid I figured that out, OK, I will not touch acid ever again. But GHB is sometimes called liquid ecstasy; it is also called *juice* and a few other things – otherwise known as *gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid* or GBL which is sometimes sold in Australia, which is the one that I usually get a drunken sort of feeling, but still in control... I find that I have usually taken GBH as a substitute for ecstasy. I have taken it once or twice with ecstasy as well, but I don't recommend mixing it with anything. It is very hard to find a safe dose on that substance. It can be dangerous, and there have been many, many bad cases. Including many other raves, where GHB as it is primarily called, and a lot of people are being taken away by ambulances. It is one of those substances that you have to respect a lot more than ecstasy, because the chances of you dying a very, very real".

4.9.0 Ketamine – 'Special K'

Ketamine is a common recreational drug which induces what some users refer to as a dissociative anaesthesia that is used on humans and animals. Its street name 'Special K' is probably a word play on the breakfast cereal with the same name.

(WW): "I think that the closest that I have ever been to being totally gone, is probably ketamine, just because the effects are, it sounds stupid, but it's the most incapacitating for your brain, as well as your body. When you are also on pills a lot of people are able to be upright and are able to dance, and run around. That sort of feeling is elevated from a normal way of being. You're unable to move your legs – sure it is fun, but it is not normal behaviour. People take ketamine for the pure experience of being *completely fucked*; it is not a social drug. It makes you lose the capacity, if you take too much - to literally – *fuck out* – pass out, and have to be taken somewhere. In that respect it's quite dangerous. That's why I have never done too much of it, because I don't want to lose that ability. So depending on your size, what drugs that you take and maybe gender the outcome is different; but probably not when you get up to that level of drugs. I'm definitely glad that I didn't take anymore at that stage, because I wouldn't want to be at that place where I didn't know what I was doing, which is ironic, because a lot of people take drugs for that exact reason."

4.10.0 Cigarettes on Ecstasy

This section can be read in conjunction with and is an extension of the sections on Smoking Pleasures (4.10.0) and Oral Cravings (3.11.0).

(MoJ): “Cigarettes and ecstasy seem to just go hand in hand. For me I smoke a lot when I am on ecstasy. Absolutely. Primarily it is an internal feeling so that when inhaling, I sort of feel that the smoke is going down and inside. And then it is the power of blowing it out and watching... you control this apparition sort of thing as it comes out. I don't know, but it is like you can feel the rush or the lack of oxygen or the nicotine or something. It is like that buzz thing again. It gives you that little taster, the little up that you needed or whatever. Yeah, I always need to buy an extra pack of smokes, if you know what I mean, before I have a big weekend because I know I am going to get through it all”.

(WW): “I would say smoking runs on from that wave of lightness that goes through you; when inhaling the smoke, everything is more sensitive, so you can feel the smoke go into your lungs; breathing it out is almost so light it is almost – effortless. For me it is so light that smoking becomes the complete opposite – it is cumbersome to actually have a cigarette. But that was later, when the pill started affecting me differently. At the beginning stage of a pill I think it is something to do, because you are intrigued by little things: so pulling out a cigarette, lighting the cigarette, putting the lighter back in your bag; or just fiddling with the clasp on your bag, because it is all a bit hard to deal with really. It is almost like accomplishing a task that rewards you with something extremely light and fluffy and hmmm... I think the thing I can remember most about inhaling a cigarette when you are on drugs is that the feeling when you inhale tobacco, is different to when you are sober and inhaling tobacco, it is enjoyable for a different reason. I think with drugs it is lighter, it makes smoking a cigarette different. Probably a much lighter experience, which is probably why people who don't smoke, do it on ecstasy as well; it is probably a lot easier to do”.

(HG): “One of the other things is that I would constantly smoke cigarettes throughout the entire experience; I'm not sure that has any effect on me. Ah yes, I think I used to just feel it more, that sensation of smoke coming down your throat - into your lungs; but I would feel it differently. I found that I smoked more on ecstasy, I think that a lot

of that might of have something to do with always wanting to do something with your hands - - fidgeting”.

4.11.0 Vic's Vapour Rub

One of the legal substances that has been co-opted into the rave and club scenes is Vics vapour Rub which is normally sold at chemists as an aid to cold and flu. I saw a number of ravers who would socially pass this around to friends and others in their vicinity as a booster that would allow you to feel more up during the dancing. Some ravers would keep this in their top-pocket for quick access when dancing. I also heard anecdotally that some ravers would smuggle in amphetamines using these bottles, whilst describing it to the security as ‘medicine’.

(CM): “Well I have had a little bit of Vic’s. Even when you have it when you are straight, you feel it all through your nose and sinus cavities: it’s cold and icy and it is refreshing. When you are hot and hyper-sensitive and you are on drugs, it’s a very strong experience. It is like having – touching something that feels good, it’s like when you are on acid and you have a heightened sense of taste. It’s just a bit of a fun feeling I guess, just a physical. If you spray it in your eyes, as I have heard some people do, it will really sting. Some people pass it around on the dance floor or in the chill out areas”.

(SaN): “Every now and then I have a bit of Vic’s if someone else is having it. I don’t really carry it on me anymore. What Vic’s basically does when you sniff it is that it opens up your air-plug and your nasal passage and your airways, and it just allows you to breathe more. So when you sniff it you can breath and suck in more air, you can basically just suck in more oxygen, more air. And that’s what creates more of a rush, because there’s sudden burst of more oxygen in your blood stream. As far as spraying it in your eyes, that’s something that I have heard about. It’s more of a recent thing, but spraying into your eyes is dangerous. I don’t know what real effects it would have, other than making your eyes sting really bad. And from what I’ve been told it can make you go blind, like it can burn your eyes”.

(StM): “The whole Vic’s sort of thing where you get those little nose inhalers and stuff like that... It is that stuff you get from the chemists and it is supposed to open up

your navel cavities, I guess when you have got a cold. I think there are probably two reasons why it feels good when you are on a pill. The first is that dilation of your nasal passages so that everything is becoming more open and on the other hand is the coolness of it as well: the menthol or whatever it is. For me it had a calming effect. Since you are sort of all over the place at that point on ecstasy - so taking a hit of that Vic's inhaler thing, sort of brought you back a little bit, from being all over the place".

Appendix 5. Sexuality

In the main ethnographic corpus there is a clear partiality in the reports presented on male sexuality. This is also the case in the appendix below. This may represent a bias in the data due to my own countertransference in talking to woman about sexuality, which may be seen as a sexual act in itself (Devereux, 1967). Or it may be that men found it easier to talk about sex with a male researcher. I note that I had consciously made a decision prior to fieldwork *not* to get involved with any female informants during fieldwork. This I felt would make the ethnographic situation clearer to the informants and myself.

(StE: M) “Most of my mates, they were just blue collar guys – they weren’t uni-educated or anything like that, a lot of them left school early. There would be big guys who were part of our group, who during the week they were big thugs and bully boys who would be taking a couple of pills and then [after taking ecstasy] they would turn around and be gentle giants - if you know what I mean – it is profound. And then the next day they would be going through the withdrawals and then return to being themselves. I also think constitution-wise, the parallel for me is alcohol. It is medically known that woman needs to have less alcohol than blokes, full stop. So I think, they don’t make woman’s ecstasy tablets, it is one size so you are going to be taking the same as a man, but they are going to have more affective, more impact on them. So if they have any outcomes they are going to be exacerbated or increased”.

(FrN: M) “Bodily touching and rubbing felt amazing, but I didn’t feel horny. I met some girls who did feel horny at the end of the night, but I don’t get that horniness. My girlfriend gets to that stage easily where she wants to take me then and there. But I feel like dancing. So maybe you have noticed the difference between men and woman”.

(CP: M): “The sex drive is not really there, well it is, but it’s not really prominent on the list of priorities. It was mainly talking. Some people like to hug... Its less about sexual love, you love everyone and you love yourself so much, you feel incredible

confident you can do whatever you want. You're not afraid of people; you can hug and talk to people. Everyone is more sociable. You're just really happy".

(AmA: F): "It depends on the person really. I really didn't notice any detrimental effects when you are on it. But in the after effects there usually is a drop in libido. This is because you're trashed and your body is busy enough coping with the chemicals that are in your system, so it is not going to be adding more to it. And when you are recovering from it as well, your body doesn't have the energy or all of the hormones involved, you don't have the energy. So the longer that you take drugs, the longer that the scatter effects last and you will notice a longer drop in sex drive from that".

(RoB: M): "Also when you come down you are not feeling all that happy, you are feeling a bit melancholy. And it is not the emotions that are conducive to anything but pity sex, and no one wants pity sex. This is when you are feeling bad, like when you are not feeling all that popular and you are feeling depressed, it's like the reassuring cuddle but taken to a far more extensive level. If you're not feeling happy it is not something that is going to have a positive effect on your libido. You need to recuperate. So I think people refer to the drop in the libido, having their libido control them on ecstasy, to actually trying to being control of their libido. In the after effects the overwhelming urge is not there anymore".

(SaN: M): "On ecstasy I like looking and admiring girls; drugs play tricks on your mind sometimes. And no offence to the not so good looking girls, but sometimes the not so good looking girls – well everyone can become good looking. There's times when you're on E that you can feel really horny, and you can literally root anything. And there are other times when you're not fussed and it's not in your mind. It's still there but sex is not that common anymore. The reason that I can see it becoming less common at the moment is because of the age of the people in the scene".

(StM: F): "Being on pills is incredibly sensual. Your sense of touch is especially heightened, but basically everything feels good, even sniffing on a menthol inhaler. Massages feel great, kissing feels great, hugging feels great. But for me, even though it's sexually charged, there's no edge to it. I spent hours having sex with my boyfriend

when we were coming down. It's comforting and it passes the time. But it's not really like 'real sex'. You have sex to expand the sensation of E and also to cushion the come-down. But ultimately, the sex is subordinate to the drug experience. Things like desire, lust, sexual attraction, the drive to 'get off', were missing from the equation. Physically, you're there having sex with each other, but the other person isn't the focus, and mentally, both of you are in different places.

Appendix 6.
Ecstasy Literature:
A Brief Survey

A number of wide-ranging surveys on the field of ecstasy are readily available (e.g. Campbell, 2001; Holland, 2001; Saunders, 1995; 1997)⁵⁷. As I alluded to in the Introduction, in these reviews there is a dearth of data on the experiential (phenomenological) dimensions of ecstasy and their respective socio-cultural context. This is easily seen when the qualitative works are compared to the vast and detailed works on neurological and physiological effects of the drug. It should be pointed out that I am aware of some major texts on ecstasy (Peroutka, 1990; Stolaroff, 2005), including the outstanding contributions of Sasha Shulgin and Ann Shulgin (1991; 1997), which are beyond the scope of the present work. Similarly, I will not deal with a number of works that focus on the socio-cultural context of raving/ clubbing and Doofing rather than ecstasy *per se* (Garrett, 1999; St John, 2004). Therefore I do not see this section as 'a complete survey' of the literature. That said, within the duration of this project (2001-2010) I searched through library catalogues, internet data bases and major book listings. What I have endeavoured to provide is a synopsis of some of the major qualitative works on ecstasy, especially those outside of the parameters of the neurological/ medical debates and perspectives. As stated in the Introduction, these reductionist perspectives often occlude and mystify the social and/ or existential and socio-cultural contexts of the drug usage. Undoubtedly there are always publications in press that I have not located and even more projects 'that have never seen the light of day'. Moreover, the literature listed is focused on book publications rather than journal articles. Nevertheless, these established works serve as a good point of departure for further research and thinking about the qualitative aspects of ecstasy.

⁵⁷ To the best of my knowledge, the largest and most comprehensive review of this kind can be found at the www.maps.org a site that is continually updated for the existing literature on MDMA and related compounds. The famous site www.erowid.com also contains a wealth of detailed information on ecstasy (most other drugs) – including numerous phenomenological reports (usually known as 'trip reports').

MAPS Review⁵⁸

The major literature review of the English language material on ecstasy was undertaken by Baggott, Jerome and Stuart (2001) and has been continually updated on the MAPS website. In this monumental survey of the field a 'conservative' bias is clearly stated by the authors themselves. Their exclusive focus on the medico-scientific studies – may be linked to directly influence policy formation and market forces. However, as I argue in this thesis, these perspectives are ultimately representative of the objectivistic science that the existential-phenomenologists were seeking to overcome.

The Pursuit of Ecstasy: The MDMA Experience (1994) by J. Beck and M. Rosenbaum is the culmination of two sociologically-minded researchers into ecstasy in the United States. It is both broad in scope and provides a systematic insight into the worlds of some 100 plus ecstasy users. This is the first sociological study of its kind and is the closest approximation to an academic ethnography of ecstasy use. This work contains seven chapters – ranging from the experiential dimensions of ecstasy use to policy recommendations. A number (A – H) of Appendix's also cover methodology, participant's demographics and further user life-style data. In my assessment it is the closest published work to the present study.

Holland's *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide* (2001) is a compendium to ecstasy including 24 chapters that cover a range of topics in MDMA research. The first section covers a number of diverse subject matters, e.g., the history of MDMA, what does it feel like to be on ecstasy, MDMA and the brain, the chemical composition, and debunking of myths and rumours. In the second section there are essays on medical risks, mental health problems, the question of brain damage, the legal status of ecstasy around the world and minimizing risk with ecstasy. The third part discusses the potential clinical uses for MDMA in the treatment of PTSD, depression, schizophrenia and MDMA's use as an alternative medicine. The last chapter contains an essay by Douglas Rushkoff on ecstasy as a prescription for a cultural renaissance, Rabbi Zalman Schachter on MDMA and spirituality, and an interview with Rick Doblin on MDMA's promise as a prescription medicine. Of particular interest for qualitative

⁵⁸ See MAPS website.

researchers are the chapters by Metzner (Chap. 12) and Rabbi Zalman Schachter (Chap. 23) on the spiritual dimensions of ecstasy use that I discuss in the Conclusion.

Through the Gateway of the Heart: Accounts of Experiences with MDMA and other Empathogenic Substances (1994) Metzner, R.

This book is edited by Ralph Metzner (Sophia Adamson is a 'pen name'), who selected a number of detailed phenomenological accounts of ecstasy use. As I have argued in the Introduction the medico-scientific approaches exclude in their reductionist methods the psycho-spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of ecstasy use. In this work what comes to the fore is the socio-cultural context of use in a variety of clinical settings that are primarily, although not exclusively, from the West Coast of the USA. Many of these highly insightful reports reflect the user's own self-explorations, whereas a number of other accounts are deliberately guided and/ or mediated by a therapist for specific outcomes. Additionally, reports of group exploration in structured or ritualistic settings are also presented.

Nicolas Saunders *Ecstasy and the Dance Culture* (1995) and *Dance, Trance and Transformation* (1996 written with Rick Doblin) represents a continuation and expansion of Saunders's encyclopaedic work on ecstasy culture. These volumes bring together a remarkably diverse collection of reports, studies and anecdotes and so on, from numerous sources such as users self-reports, academic thinking and media clippings.

Ecstasy Reconsidered (1997) is Saunders' third book which extends on the extraordinary range of topics covered in his earlier works, e.g., the history of ecstasy, general, sociological and social effects, the dangers and risks of toxicity, adverse psychological effects, ecstasy's use in psychotherapy and spiritual settings, personal safety and problems with the drug. In terms of qualitative research, at the end of the book there is another compendium on consumer's personal accounts.

The Book of E: all about ecstasy (Push and Silcott, 2000), the culture surrounding ecstasy use is discussed from a variety of angles. The authors do not set out to give a comprehensive history of the rave scene or 'acid house' movement which can be found in (see Collin, 1997; Garret, 1998; Reynolds, 1999), but to focus on ecstasy

itself. The result is a “big fat compendium in which the kaleidoscopic realities of E – the zillion and one truths that are equally valid – could be told in many ways”

(Forward: vii). Aiming to create a book that was practical to the ecstasy users, Push and Scott discuss a number of different areas: the politics of the drug, legal issues surrounding its use, neurological debates and current research.

This is Ecstasy (2002) Thomas, G.

This book comprises of five chapters. The first chapter considers the socio-cultural context of ecstasy use in raves, where the experiential/ phenomenological accounts of ecstasy are largely anchored. Chapter two looks at the global manufacturing and trafficking of ecstasy. Chapter three examines the history of ecstasy use, particularly its employment as an adjunct to psychotherapy. The fourth chapter discusses the effects of ecstasy on short and long-term health. The final chapter covers the media hysteria, government controls and the backlash by users themselves.

Ecstasy: The MDMA Story (1994) Eisner, B.

The 1994 print is the second expanded edition of Eisner’s detailed work. This book opens with an historical overview of MDMA before turning to a discussion of the nature of ‘Empathogens’ (a term coined to describe the process of allowing a ‘touching within’), where transformations within the psyche are possible. In contrast to the socio-cultural settings of raves/ clubs and ‘Doofs’, Eisner presents the uses of ‘Entactogens’ within psychotherapy, as well as user’s own personal quests for self-actualization through these substances. Again I note the contrast between users pursuing peak experiences in rave contexts and the use of ecstasy on psycho-therapy. Also included are informative chapters on experiences of users, a guide for users, future possibilities. The appendixes contain MDMA’s ‘family tree’, a report on the current neurotoxicity of MDMA, and a bibliography of ecstasy literature.

Tripping (2000) Hayes, C.

This compendium brings together approximately fifty ‘psychedelic’ narratives - or self-reports on a variety of drugs. The reports range across substances such as LSD, Morning Glory Seeds, Peyote, Opium and PCP. There are over half a dozen phenomenological self-interpretations on MDMA/ MDA ranging from episodes of self-affirmation to ‘bad trips’.

Altered State: The Story of the Ecstasy Culture and Acid House (1997) Collin, M. The author tracks the development of the ecstasy culture from its origins in the psychedelic underground and gay disco movements of America in the '70s, through the utopianism of acid house and the illegal spectators of the late '80s, to the crystallization and zenith of mass drug culture in Britain's 1990's. This is a detailed socio-historical account that can be read in conjunction with (Reynolds, 1999; Garret, 1998) which examines the interplay of ecstasy and the culture associated with the drug. This work powerfully illustrates how a symbiotic culture (the music, venues, cloths etc.) developed historically in Britain, Europe and the USA.

Ecstasy and the Rise of the Chemical Generation (Hammersley, et. al., 2002) provides in-depth interviews with 229 Glaswegians (residents of Glasgow Scotland) employing questionnaires. The primary data that are collected are supplanted by in-depth interviewing through recorded sessions. These reports are further illustrated by quantitative methods such as tables and statistics. The main areas examined in this work are how users got involved with ecstasy, the various types of ecstasy users, and the role of ecstasy in their lifestyles and where they are at now? Overall, this book is filled with qualitative data and interpretation. Although the book does not claim to be phenomenologically informed it does give full primacy to letting the users speak for themselves about their own experiences. As such, the ethnography contained in this work can be used for complimentary and comparative purposes.

The Australian Illicit Drug Guide (Campbell, 2001) examines a number of drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, magic mushrooms etc. in the Australian context. The chapter on ecstasy covers general historical and sociological topics as well as medical and physiological effects. There are details on consumer's profiles and demographics relating to the Australian context. The appendix contains a detailed and useful bibliography on the ecstasy literature.

Clubbing: Dancing, ecstasy and vitality (1999) Malbon, B.

In this work Malbon offers a number of firsthand accounts by users in the socio-cultural context of clubbing and/ or raves. He uses a framework for understanding

ecstasy experiences primarily in terms of Freud's and Storr's conceptualisations of oceanic experiences and Marghanita Laksi's 'ecstatic experiences' (see especially the chapter in Part two - *Moments of ecstasy: oceanic and ecstatic experiences in clubbing*: 105-134 and *Three Stories of Afterglow*, 170-180). The main qualitative sections on ecstasy use detail the oceanic experience, the ecstatic experience and the uses of ecstasy in the clubbing experience. Additionally there are informative sections on pre-clubbing, 'dropping', revelatory first hand experiences, coming up, the stripping of ego defences, elation and euphoria, intensity and withdrawal and coming down.

E: The Incredibly Strange History of Ecstasy (2008) Pilcher, T.

This is a recent compendium that covers some of the socio-historical dimensions of ecstasy and the specific contexts of use. Overall, this is a detailed and beautifully illustrated book. However, given the publications in this listing alone, excerpts from Pilcher's back-cover appear to be somewhat exaggerated: "this is the first book of its kind to examine the rise of MDMA, rave culture and dance music, and the development of a distinct culture through the drug's influence on music, design, fashion, and the wider culture and society"... and that this book is "the most comprehensive account yet published on the history and continuing cultural influence of the drug that changed the world".

The Secret Chief Revealed: Conversations with Leo Zeff, pioneer in the underground psychedelic therapy movement (2005)

Myron Stolaroff brings into dialogue the life and work of Leo Zeff, a monumental pioneer of psychedelic therapy. The major focus of the book is on the therapeutic techniques that were explored by Zeff using various psychedelic substances. In Appendix 1 five in-depth interviews are given of subject's personal experiences. The accounts given are prompted by Zeff's general questions and prompts, albeit as these experiences are truly expansive and unique, Zeff allowed for the individuals to explore these myriad areas of understanding for themselves. Each personal account is several pages long with commentary and insights presented by Zeff on a case-by-case basis.

The Politics of Ecstasy: The Politics of MDMA Research (2000) Grob, C.

This article provides a detailed social history of ecstasy, from the drugs creation to its emergence in the British, American and cultures elsewhere. There is a superb coverage of the debates and politics surrounding ecstasy research, particularly the historical polemics, propaganda and ongoing research into the neurotoxicity of MDMA.

Dropping, Connecting, Playing and Partying: Exploring the social and cultural contexts of ecstasy and related drug use in Victoria (2001) Duff, et. al.).

This ninety page report is a qualitative research project into the social and cultural contexts of ecstasy and related substances (ERD's) in Victoria (Australia).

Methodologically, this research was undertaken using a number of approaches including participant-observation ethnography, in-depth interviewing and subject recruitment. The report focuses on a number of social and cultural areas, for example patterns of use, settings of use, with whom use occurs, time and frequency of use, the profiles and social networks of users and how change occurs over time according to users age and gender (Duff et. al., 2001: 16). In addition to the primary ethnographic focus of this report there is a discussion of the importance of cultural context of EDR use and recommendations for Australian policy.

In *Generation ecstasy: into the world of techno and rave culture* (Reynolds, 1999) presents an encyclopaedic history of the rise of the rave culture from its inception and development in the 1980's to the late 1990's. Along with Collin (1997) and Garrett (1999) this work provides an impressive and detailed chronicle of the socio-historical rise of raving as a trans-national movement.

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